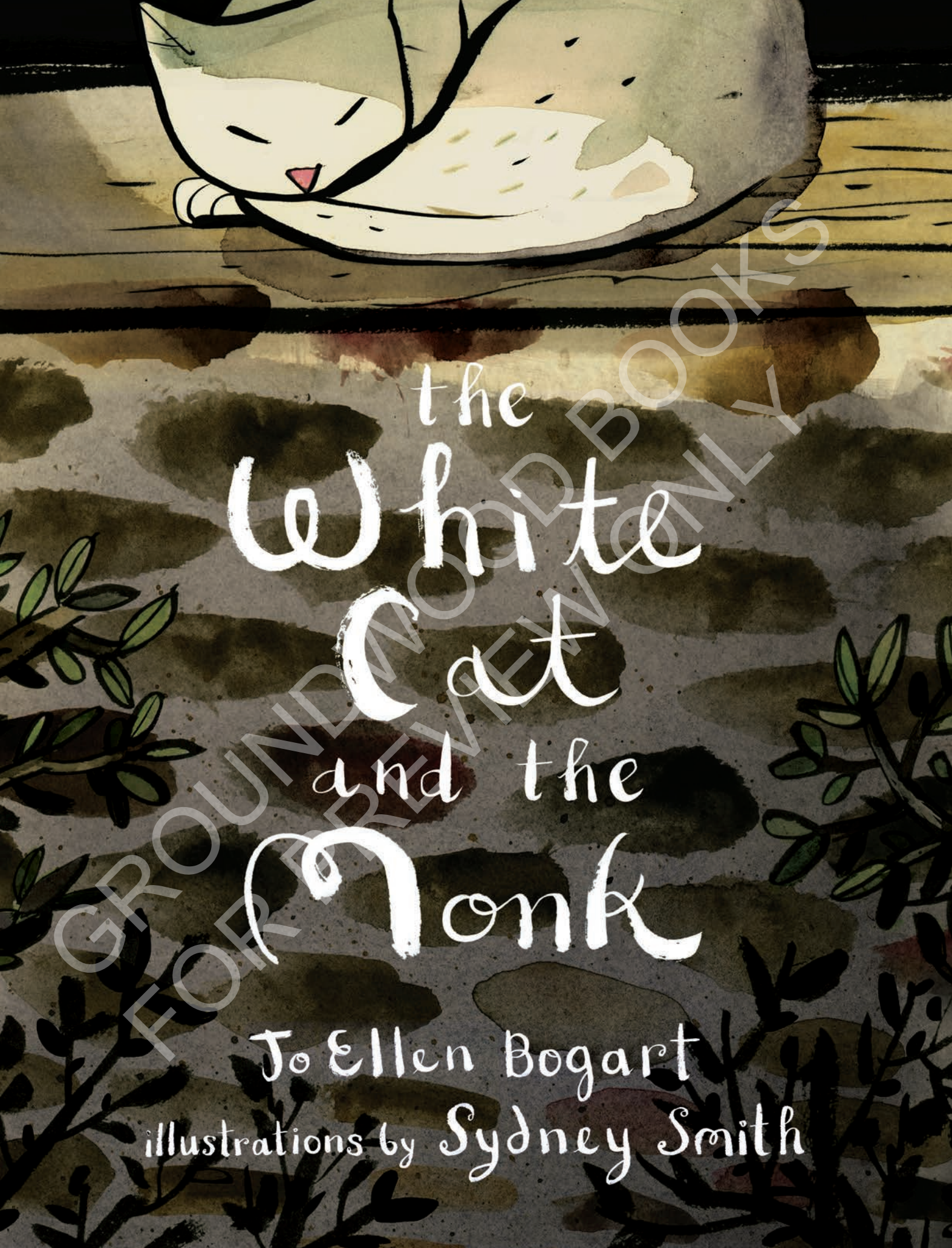


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A RETELLING OF THE POEM "PANGUR BÁN"

JO ELLEN BOGART

ILLUSTRATIONS BY
SYDNEY SMITH

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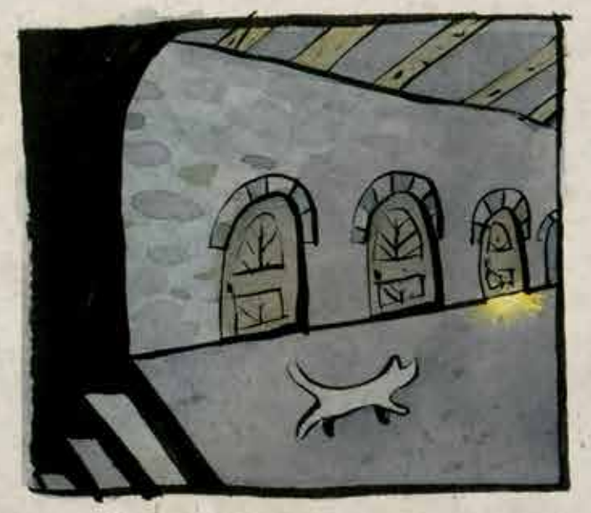










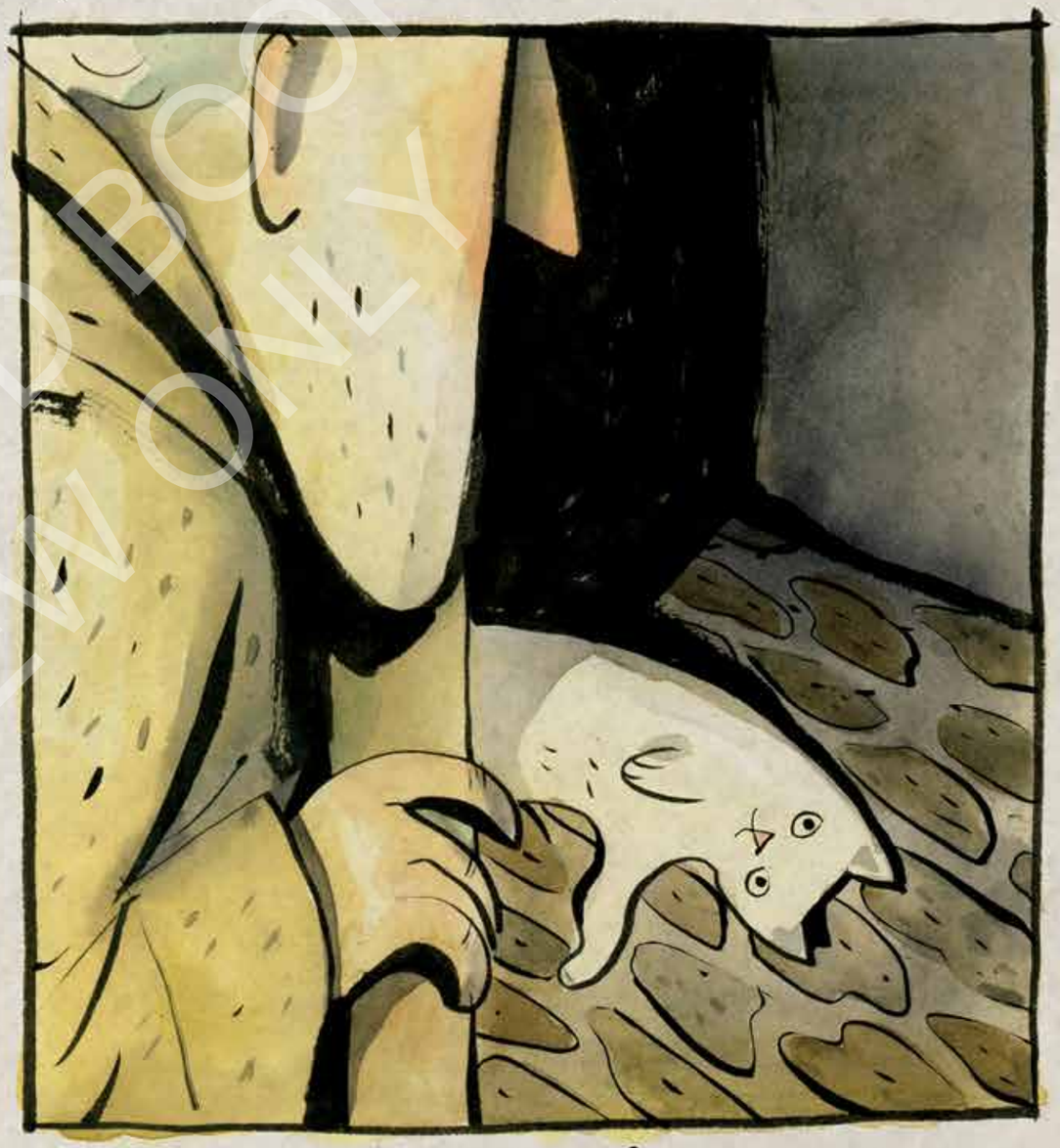


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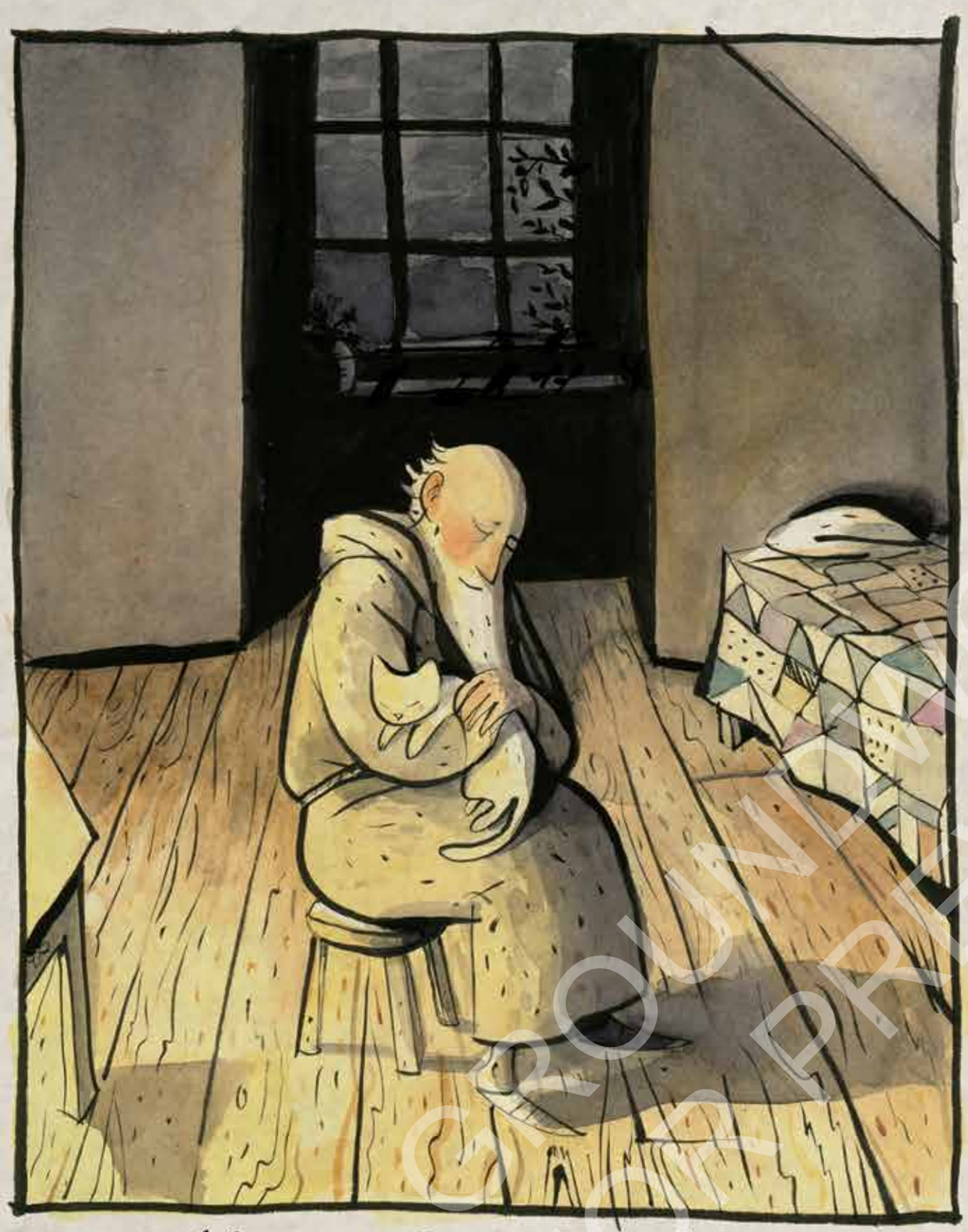


I, monk and scholar,



share my room

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with my white cat, Pangur.

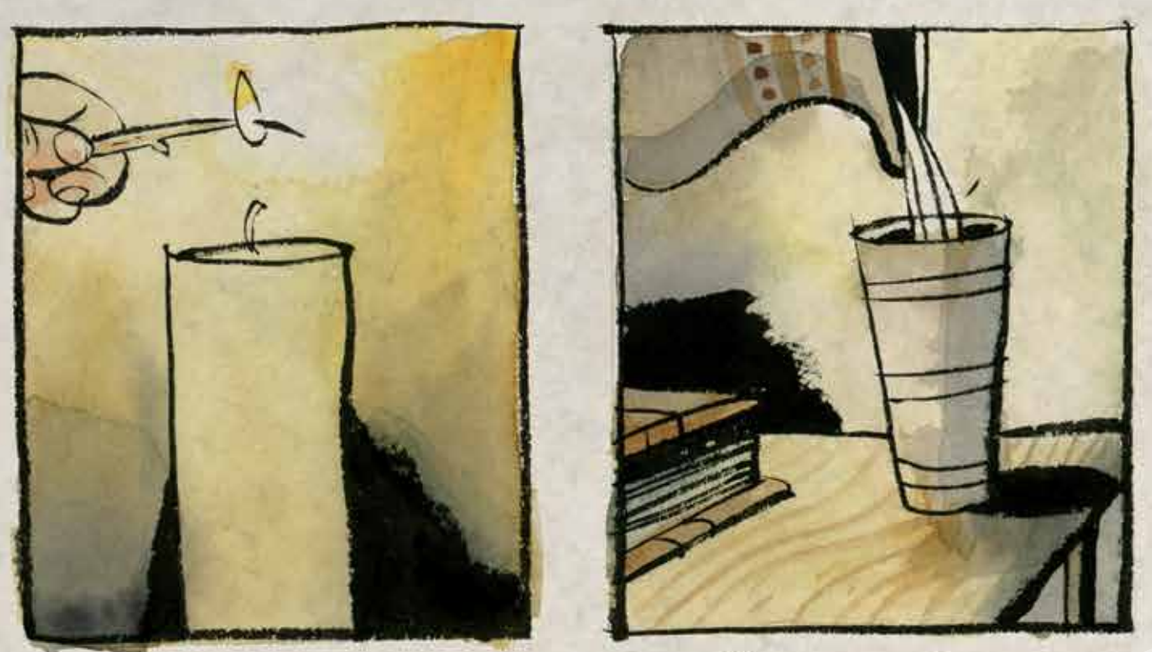


By candle's light, late into the night,



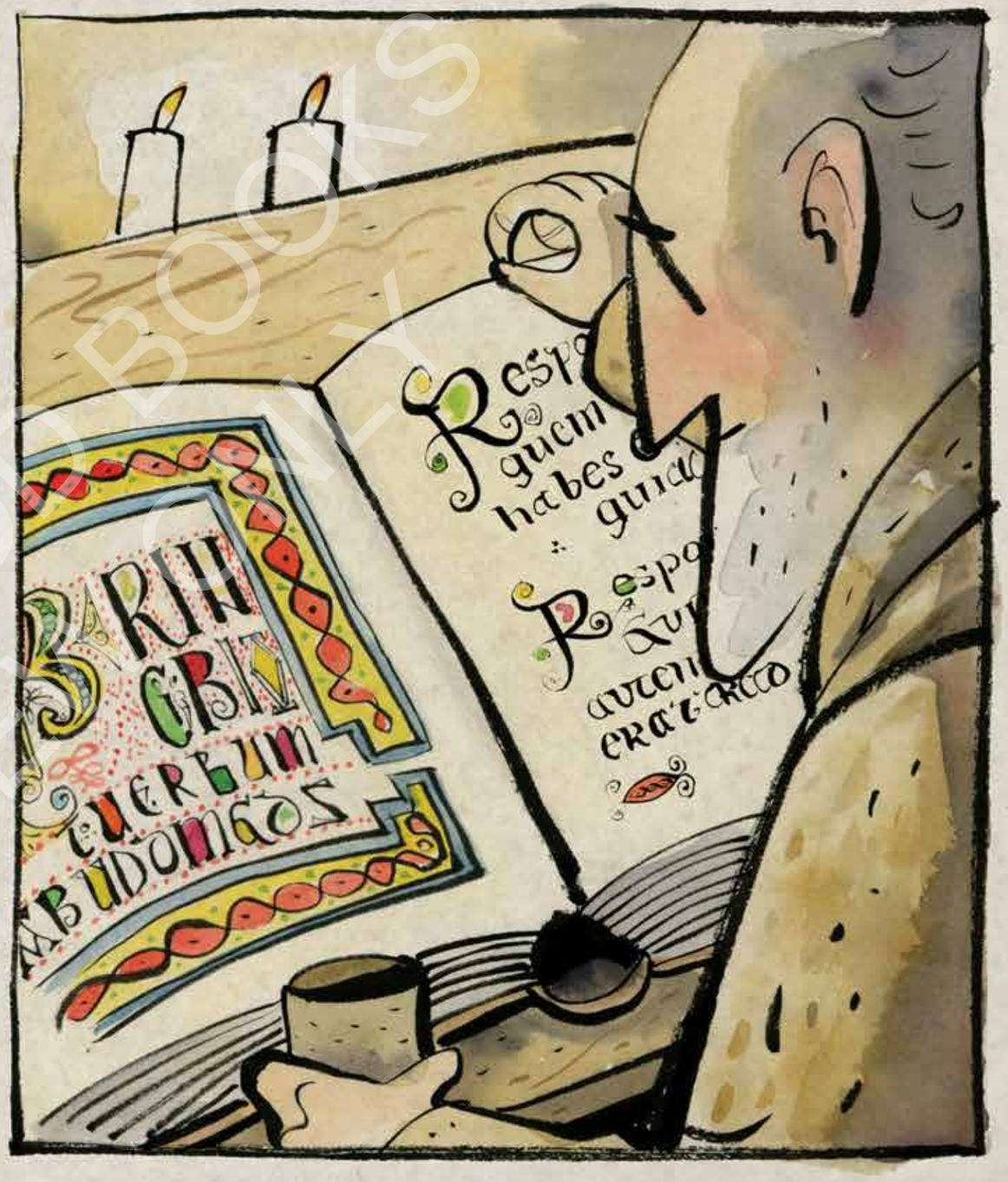
we work, each at a special trade.

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Far more than any fame, I enjoy the peaceful pursuit of knowledge.





I treasure the wealth to be found in my books.

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Pangur has his own pursuit,
his game of chase and catch.



The silent hunter, he sits and
stares at the wall.

He studies the
whole
that
leads to the
mouse's home.

He studies the hole
that leads to the
mouse's home.

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My own eyes, older and
less bright than his,

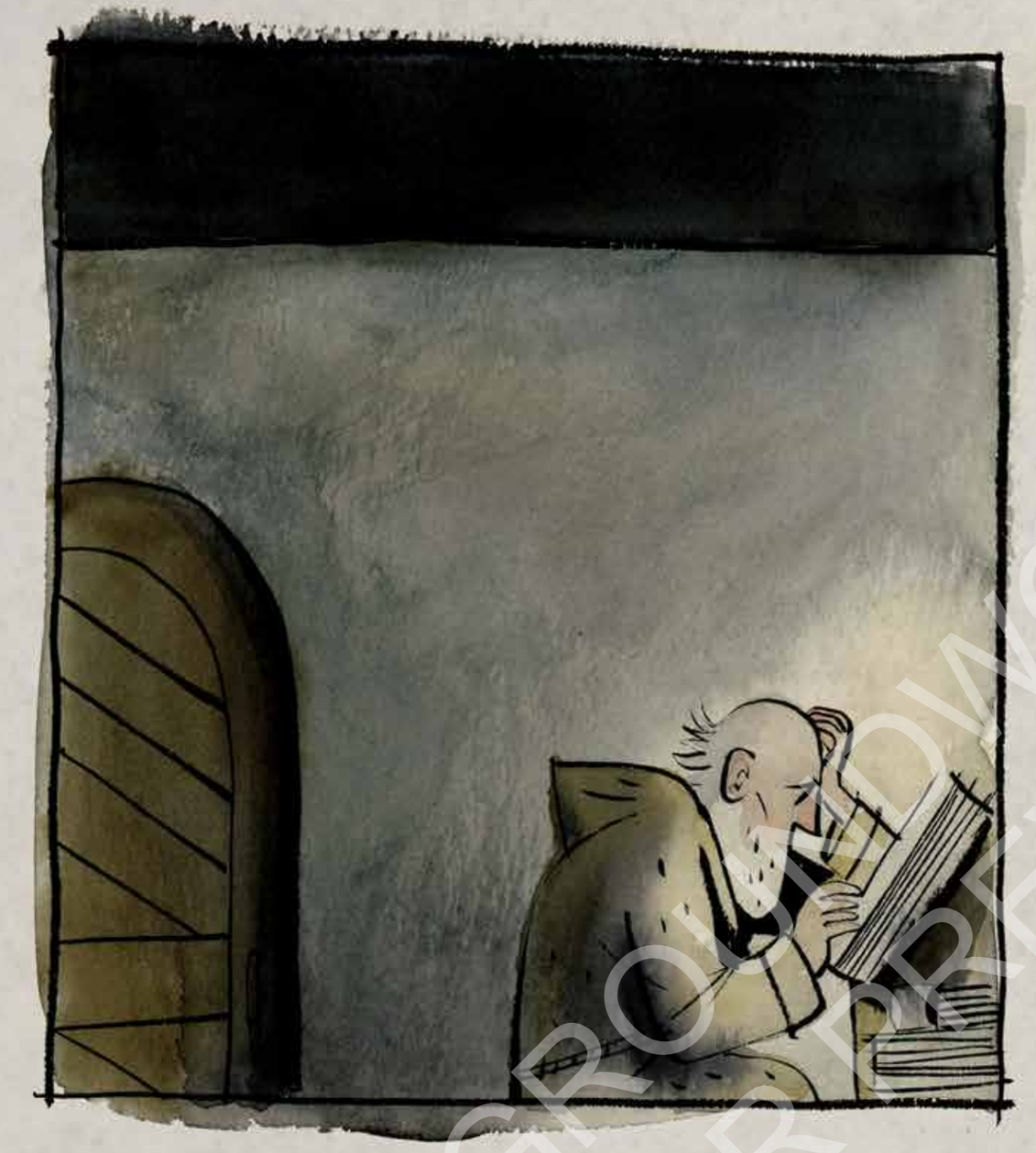


study my manuscript,
hunting for meaning.



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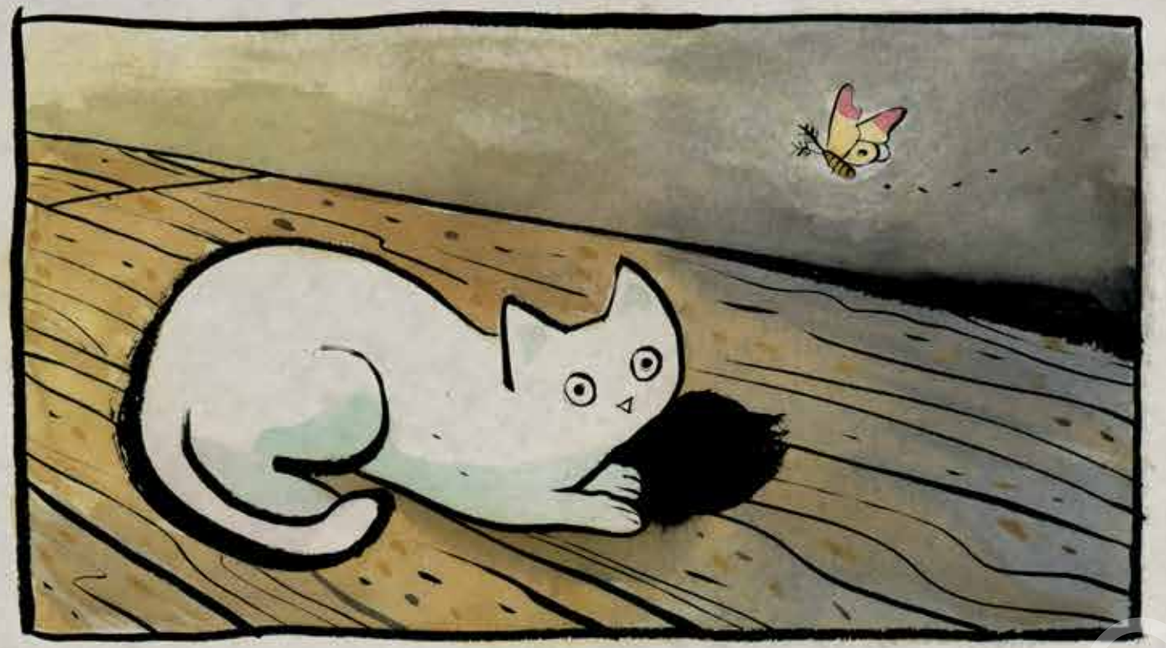
Each page is a challenge.

Pangur does not disturb me
at my work,



and I do not disturb him
at his.

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We are each content, with all we need to entertain us.

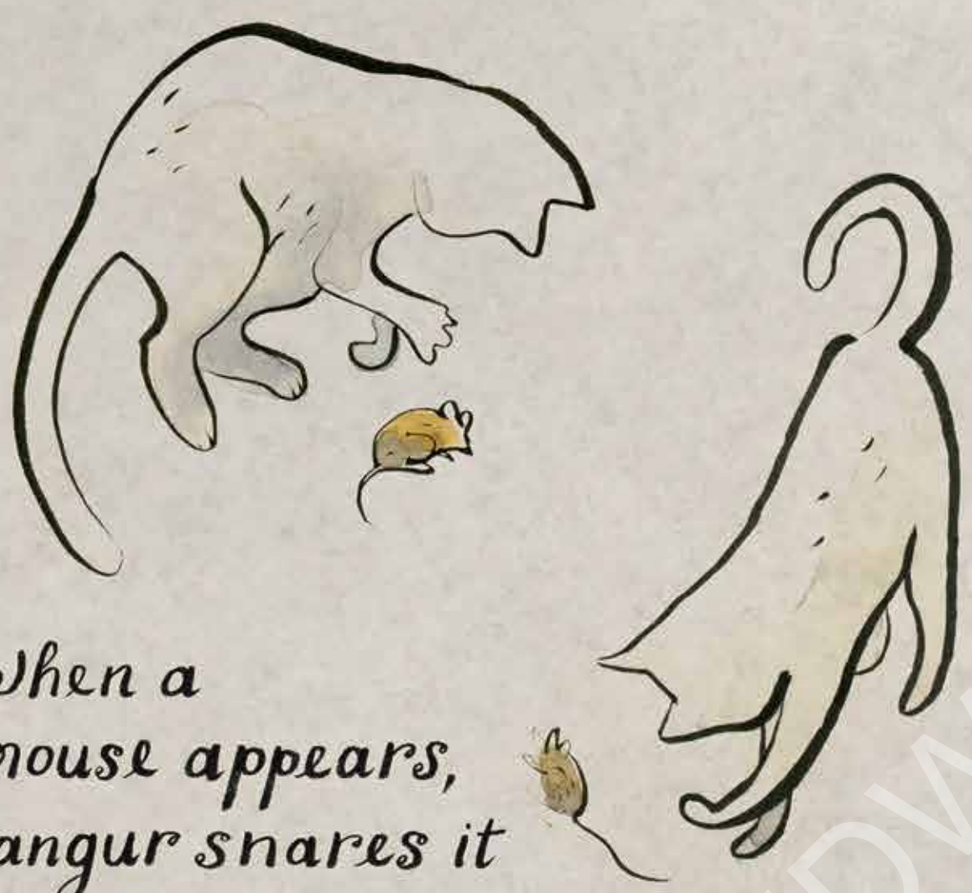


Ours is a happy tale.





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When a
mouse appears,
Pangur snares it
with his needle claws.





He feels joy at catching his prey.

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I feel joy as I find, at last,
the answer to my puzzle.





In our tiny home,
Pangur finds his mouse...

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and I find light
in the darkness.

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Author's Note

More than one thousand years ago, in the ninth century, an Irish Benedictine monk, whose name has never been uncovered, stopped in his studies to write down his thoughts. In rhyming couplets, he described his companion, a white cat who shared his small room. He found similarities in their pastimes. Each was seeking something.

Was the monk hoping to share his thoughts with someone who would read his poem? Was his imagination enhanced by the candle flame dancing in the darkness of the night? Amidst his study of the words of others, did he take pleasure in creating something of his own?

The notebook containing the poem was probably produced in the Reichenau Abbey, in southern Germany, or in the nearby region. It was given the name *Reichenau Primer* and can now be found in the monastery of St. Paul in Carinthia, in Austria.

The poem, called "Pangur Bán," is a peek into the time and mind of one poet. It has been translated many times by various people and has become well known and loved. In this book, the words have been inspired by a number of translations written over many years. The story of the monk and his cat can also be seen as a timeless tale that is played out again and again all over the world wherever a person is at work accompanied by a beloved pet.

In Irish, the word *bán* means white. Pangur has been said to refer to the word *fuller*, a person who fluffed and whitened cloth. We might think, then, that Pangur Bán was a cat with brilliantly white fur. Perhaps he even glowed in the candlelight.

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