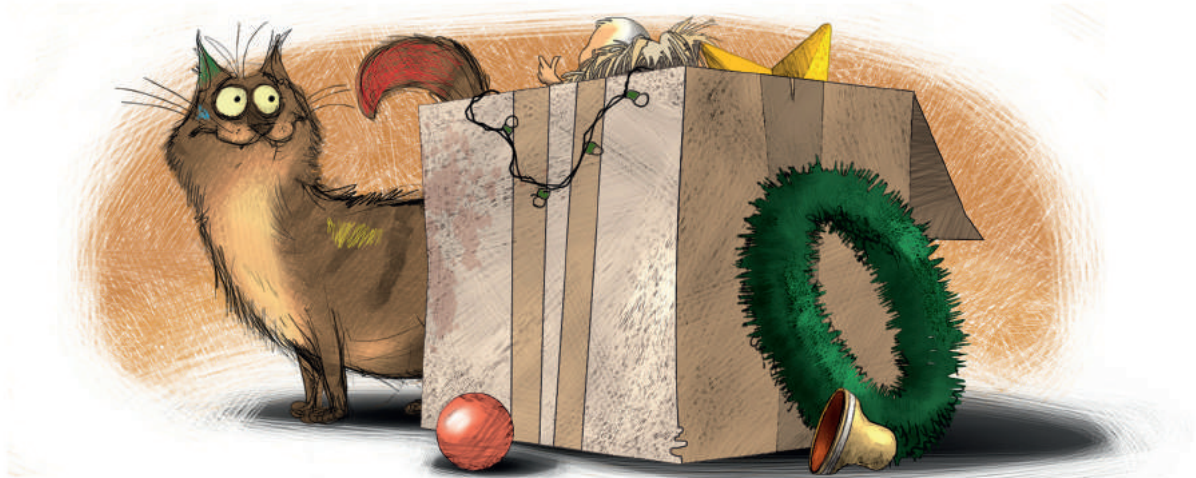


Oh no! Christmas again!

Álvaro Magalhães
Ilustração de Carlos J. Campos



Smells like problems

Picasso woke up and looked around. Everything was in the right place, everything quite still, nothing was moving, nothing was happening and that was exactly what he wanted. He went to the window and peeped outside. It was snowing. That was probably the reason he couldn't see Van Gogh. He should be inside his doghouse. No. There he was. He was coming from the street with another bone. That was all he did lately. He buried the bone and rushed out looking for more. That was unusual. What was he doing?



That was when Picasso smelled something. But what? A problem. He wasn't absolutely sure what problem? He only knew it was coming and that he could smell it. He didn't even know what the smell of a problem was like but he smelled it anyway.

A little while after Van Gogh arrived with another bone. It looked as if he was in a contest.

"Hey, why are you so busy?" asked Picasso.

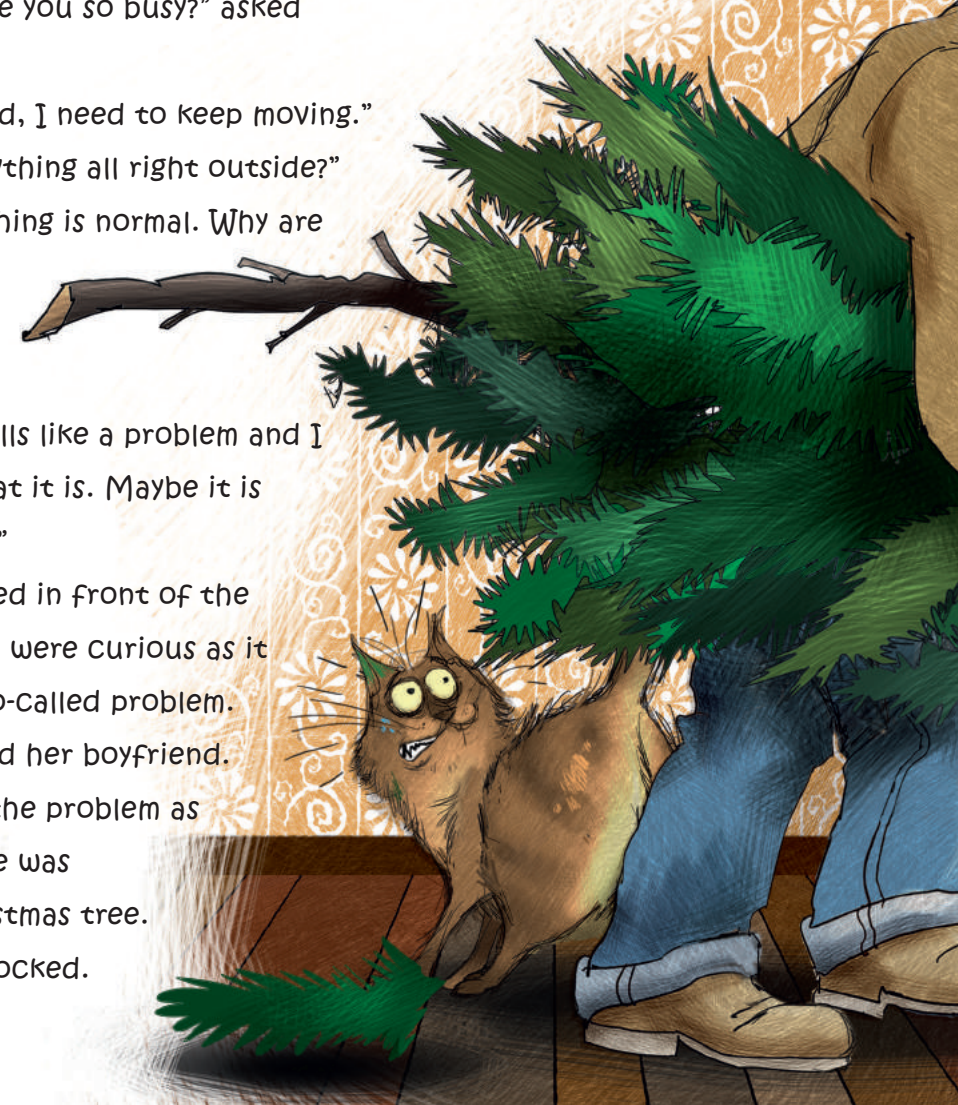
"It's very cold, I need to keep moving."

"OK. Is everything all right outside?"

"Yes. Everything is normal. Why are you asking?"

"I don't know." Picasso replied "It smells like a problem and I don't know what it is. Maybe it is still on its way."

A car stopped in front of the house and they were curious as it could be the so-called problem. It was Sofia and her boyfriend. And that was the problem as well because he was carrying a Christmas tree. Picasso was shocked.



“Oh no! Not Christmas again!”

he said. “But it was Christmas just a few days ago. It hasn’t been a year yet. Are they celebrating Christmas every month now? This must be the big problem I was anticipating. Christmas is a big problem.”

“What is thing thing Christmas?” asked Van Gogh.



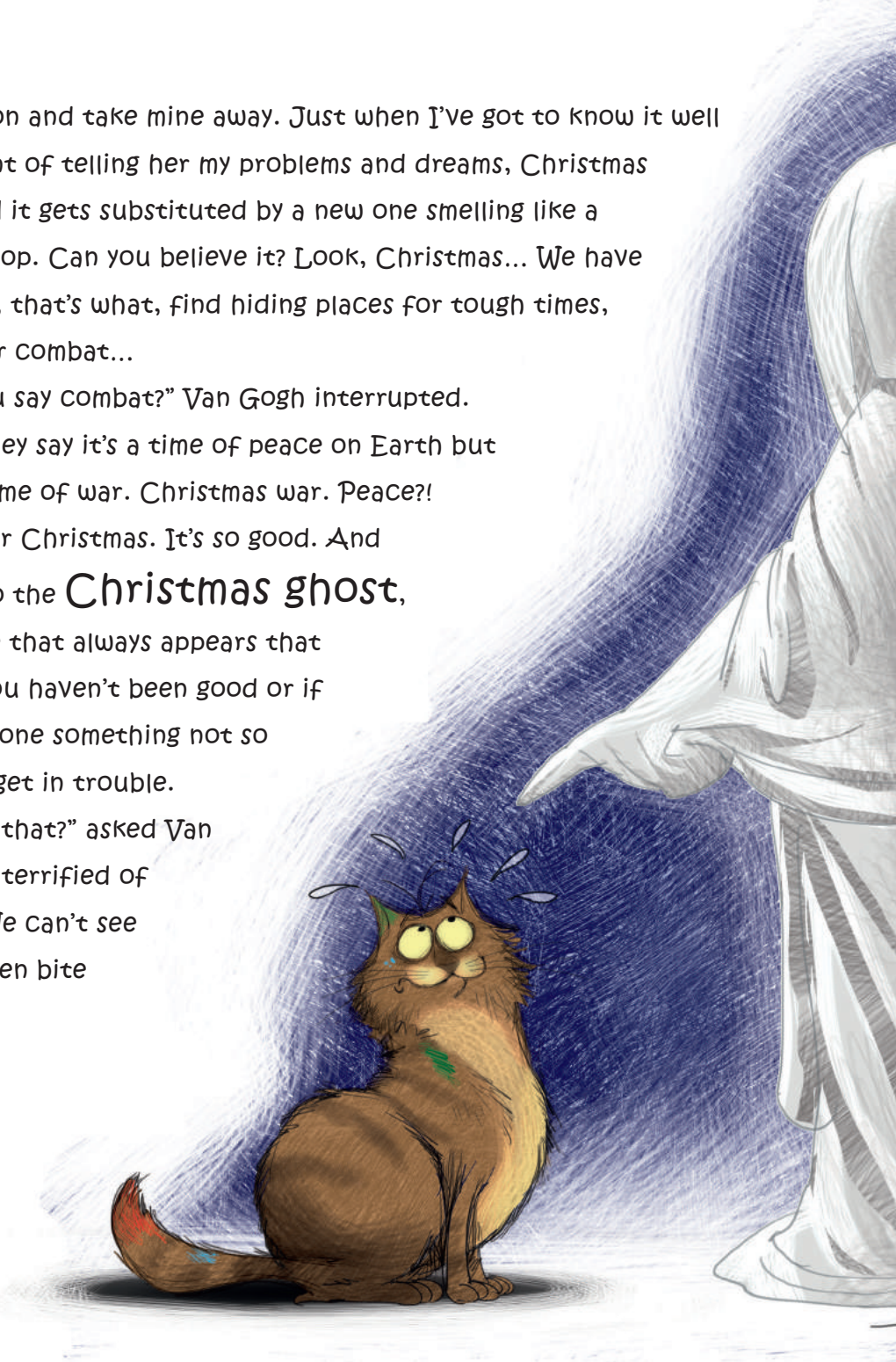
“You don’t even want to know. The house changes, life changes, the city changes, two-paws change... Goodbye routine. At Christmas, nothing good ever happens. It’s always freezing cold and people listen to annoying Christmas Carols all day long. But the worst thing is the arrival of the suspicious guests: Sofia’s nephews and nieces, her mom who has an extra paw and that’s the one that hurts the most. She hits me with it when she wants to pass and it hurts like hell. I call her three-paw. And they exchange gifts. With me, too. Unfortunately. Every year they give me a

new cushion and take mine away. Just when I’ve got to know it well to the point of telling her my problems and dreams, Christmas arrives and it gets substituted by a new one smelling like a Chinese shop. Can you believe it? Look, Christmas... We have to prepare, that’s what, find hiding places for tough times, prepare for combat...

“Did you say combat?” Van Gogh interrupted.

“Yes. They say it’s a time of peace on Earth but no, it’s a time of war. Christmas war. Peace?! That’s after Christmas. It’s so good. And there’s also the **Christmas ghost**, an horrible that always appears that night. If you haven’t been good or if you have done something not so good, you get in trouble.

“Who is that?” asked Van Gogh. “I’m terrified of ghosts... We can’t see them or even bite their legs.”



"It's a white figure, that looks like a two-paw wearing a sheet" Picasso explained.

"Could it be a two-paw wearing a real sheet?! Lots of things aren't what they seem to be. How do you know it's really the Christmas Ghost?"

"Because it says 'I'm the Christmas Ghost'."

"Ah!"

Van Gogh worried "I thought I had enough problems with the Doghouse Ghost"

"Now I'm the one asking: Who's that?"

Van Gogh explained better "When I'm about to close my eyes, I hear a voice saying

~ ~ ~ 'Get out! This doghouse is too small for both of us.' ~ ~ ~



"Gosht! Who could it be?"

Van Gogh looked at the painting of a dog on the wall



"Look!
It's him!"



"That was Miró" Picasso said. "He died two years ago."

"Yes, and now he is a ghost and at night he wants to sleep in his ex-doghouse and says it's too small for both of us."

"Well, he was a fat dog, indeed, he needed room. But how do you know it's Miró's ghost? Have you seen him?"

"You can't see ghosts." Van Gogh said a bit aggravated. "But the voice sounds like a dog like that. Now that I can see him... Who else could it be? Wasn't it his doghouse before I arrived?"

"Yes, it was." Picasso said. "But Miró was a good dog. He wouldn't be capable of throwing you out."

"Yes, he would." Van Gogh said "Even good dogs like their homes, don't they?"

