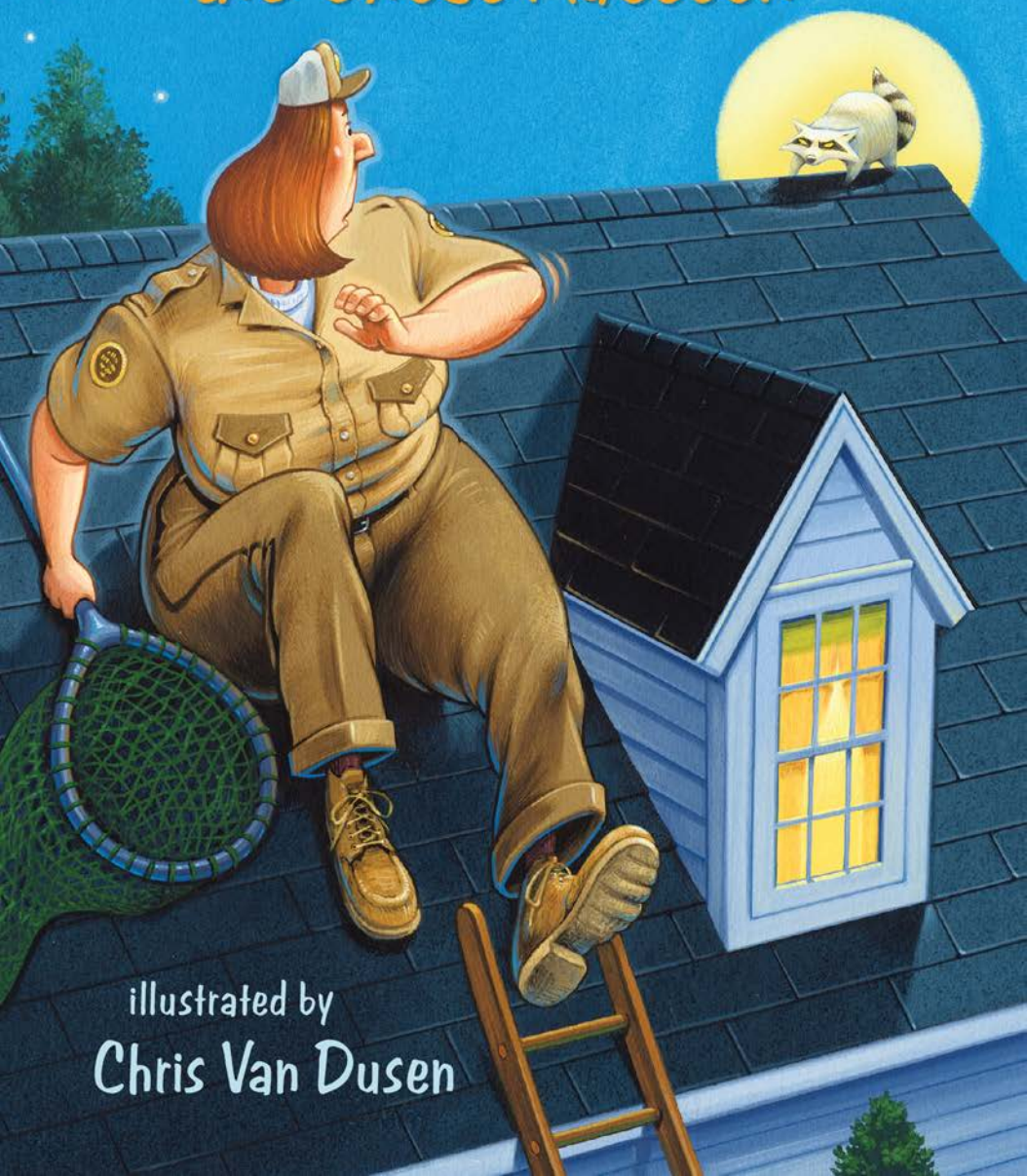


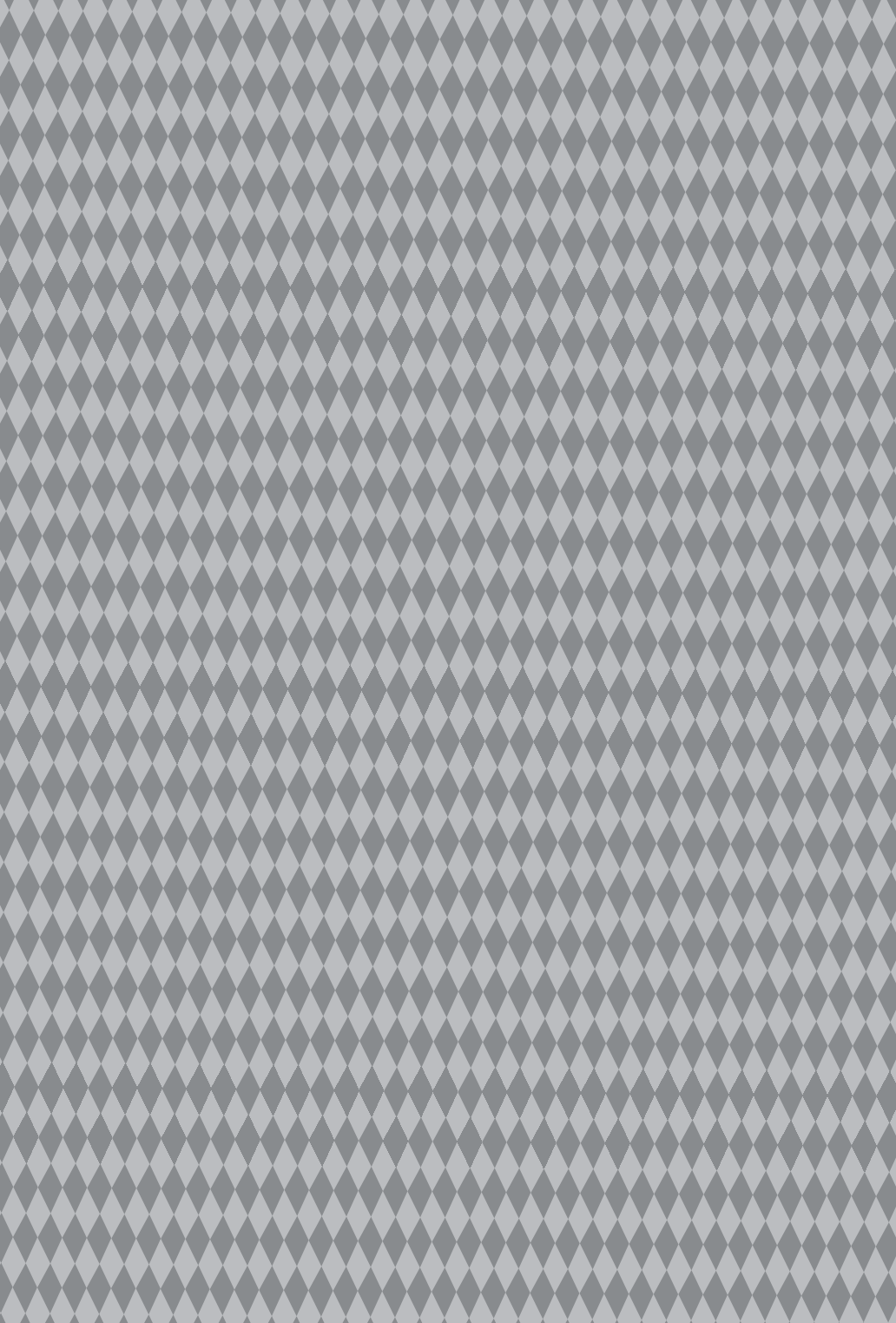
KATE DICAMILLO

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the Ghost Raccoon*



illustrated by  
Chris Van Dusen

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# *Francine Poulet Meets the Ghost Raccoon*



**Kate DiCamillo**  
illustrated by **Chris Van Dusen**



CANDLEWICK PRESS

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are either products of the author's imagination or, if real, are used fictitiously.

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*For Lisa Beck, who is good in every crisis*

K. D.

*To my friends Dave and Terri, with love*

C. V.







# *Chapter One*

**F**rancine Poulet was an animal control officer.

She hailed from a long line of animal control officers.

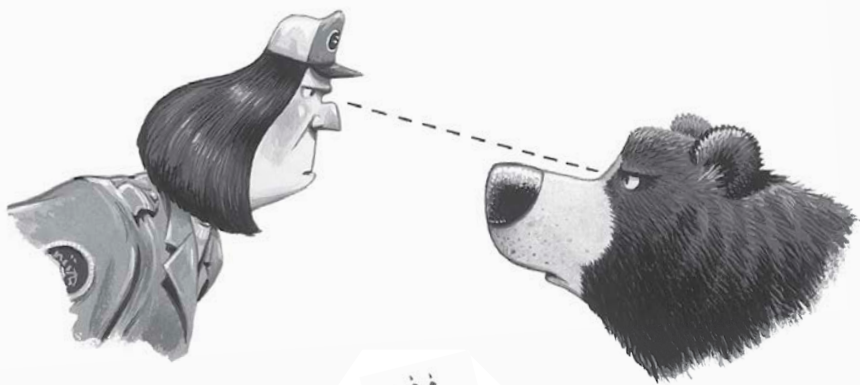
Francine's father, Clement Poulet, had been an animal control officer, and Francine's grandmother Nanette Poulet had been an animal control officer, too.



Francine had won many animal control trophies—forty-seven of them, to be exact.

In addition, Francine was the Gizzford County record holder for most animals controlled. She had successfully and officially and expeditiously (for the most part) captured dogs, cats, rats, pigs, snakes, squirrels, chipmunks, bats, raccoons, and, also, fish.

One time, Francine had faced down a bear. The bear and Francine had stared at each other for a long time.



The bear blinked first.

Francine Poulet was an excellent animal control officer.

She was never, ever afraid.

Late one afternoon in May, the phone at the Animal Control Center rang.

Francine Poulet was sitting at her desk. She answered the phone. She said, “Animal Control Officer Francine Poulet here. How may I help you?”

“Yes, hello,” said the voice at the other end. “Mrs. Bissinger speaking.”

“Uh-huh,” said Francine.

“I am being tormented,” said Mrs. Bissinger.

“Yep,” said Francine.



Everyone who called the Animal Control Center was being tormented in one way or another. Francine was never surprised to hear about it.



Nothing frightened Francine Poulet, and nothing surprised her either.

“A most unusual raccoon has come to reside on my roof,” said Mrs. Bissinger.



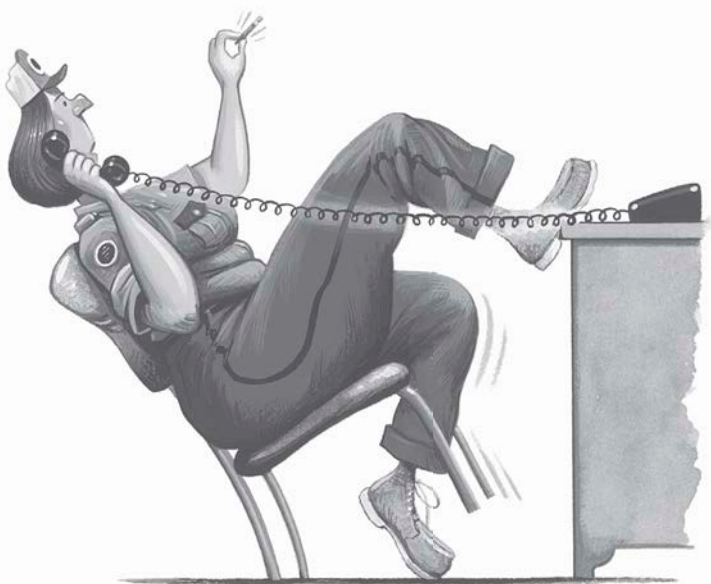
“Right,” said Francine. “Raccoon on the roof. What’s your address?”

“Perhaps you were not listening,” said Mrs. Bissinger. “This is not your average raccoon.”



“Right,” said Francine, “not your average raccoon.” She leaned back in her chair. And then she leaned back a bit farther.

Francine leaned back so far that the front legs of the chair lifted off the ground. This was a bad habit of Francine’s. Her father, Clement Poulet, had tried to break her of it, but he had never succeeded.



“One of these days, Franny,” her father used to say, “you are going to tip all the way backwards in that chair and whack your head, and then you will be sorry.”

Clement Poulet was dead, and it been many years since he had warned his daughter about chair-tipping. Francine missed Clement. She even missed his dire predictions. However, she had yet to tip all the way backward and whack her head. Francine had been gifted with an extraordinary sense of balance.

“This raccoon,” said Mrs. Bissinger, “shimmers.”

“He what?” said Francine.

“Shimmers,” said Mrs. Bissinger. “He seems to glow. In addition, and more disturbingly, this raccoon calls my name.”



Francine slowly lowered the chair legs to the floor.

“Interesting,” said Francine. “The raccoon says, ‘Mrs. Bissinger’?”

“No,” said Mrs. Bissinger. “He says ‘Tammy.’ He screams my first name. He screams it like a banshee. Perhaps this raccoon is a ghost raccoon?”

“There are no ghosts,” said Francine Poulet. “And there are no ghosts of raccoons.”

“Be that as it may,” said Mrs. Bissinger, “there is a shimmery raccoon on my roof who calls my name. And so on.”

“Right,” said Francine. “The address?”

“Forty-two fourteen Fleeker Street,” said Mrs. Bissinger.





“I’ll see you tonight,” said Francine.

“Bring a ladder,” said Mrs. Bissinger. “The roof is very steep and very high. You are not afraid of heights, are you?”

“I am not afraid of anything,” said Francine.

“How inspiring,” said Mrs. Bissinger. “I look forward to making your acquaintance.”

“And I look forward to catching your raccoon,” said Francine. She hung up the phone. She leaned back in her chair and studied her trophies, all forty-seven of them. She started to hum.

Francine’s father had always told her that she was like a refrigerator.

What he said exactly was, “Franny, you are the genuine article. You are solid.



You are certain. You are like a refrigerator.  
You hum.”

Francine leaned back in her chair. She  
balanced the chair on two legs.

“A talking ghost raccoon?” she said.  
“I don’t think so.”

She hummed louder. She leaned back  
farther.

“Watch out, Mr. Raccoon,” said  
Francine Poulet. “I am going to get you.”



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