

WILLIAM STEIG

Doctor De Soto





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SQUARE
FISH

FARRAR, STRAUS AND GIROUX
NEW YORK

*To Delia, Sidonie, Sylvain, Estelle, Kyle, Molly,
Reid, Tina, Serena, Zachary, and Zoe*



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Doctor De Soto, the dentist, did very good work, so he had no end of patients. Those close to his own size—moles, chipmunks, et cetera—sat in the regular dentist's chair.

Larger animals sat on the floor, while Doctor De Soto stood on a ladder.

For extra-large animals, he had a special room. There Doctor De Soto was hoisted up to the patient's mouth by his assistant, who also happened to be his wife.



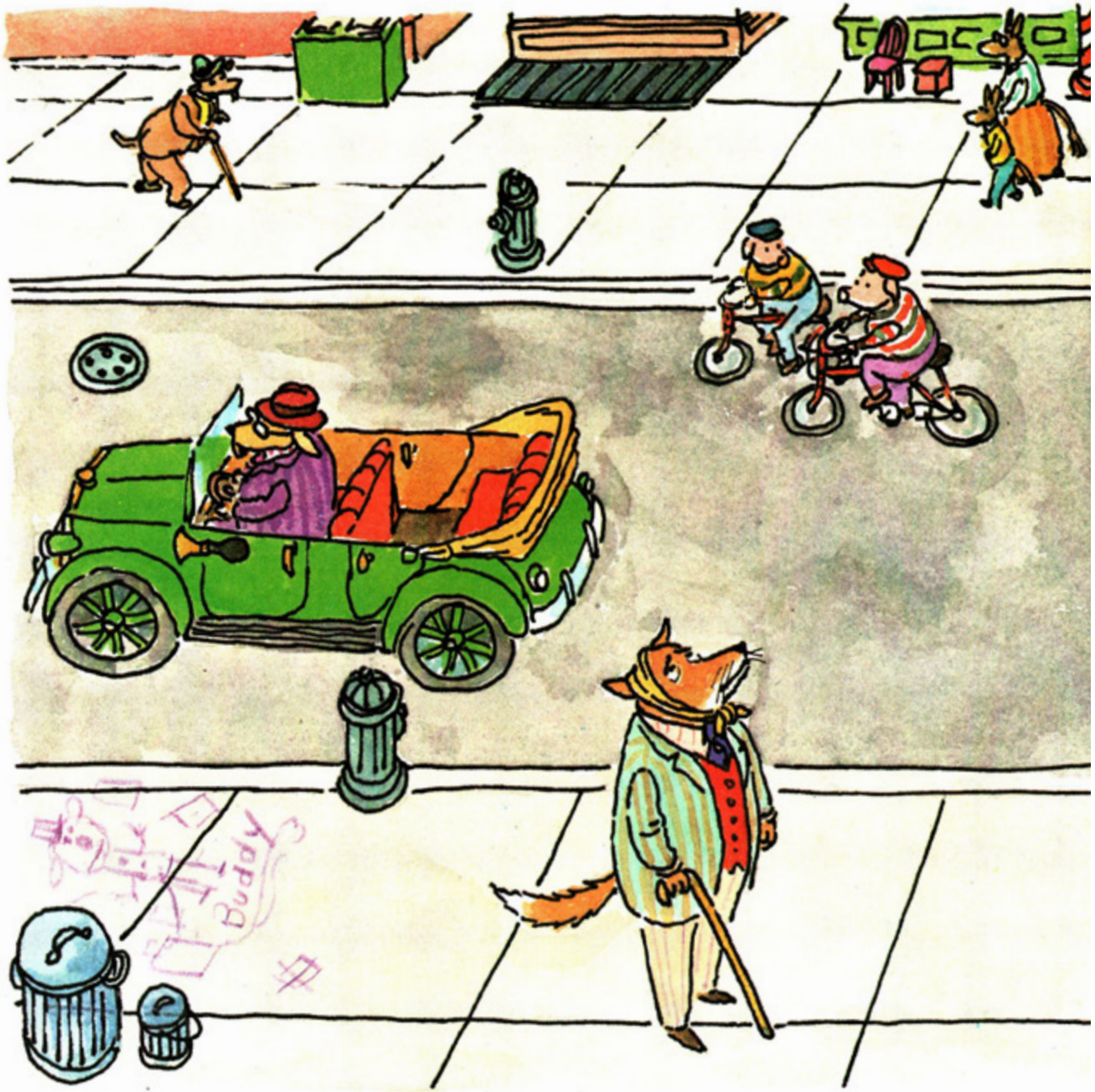




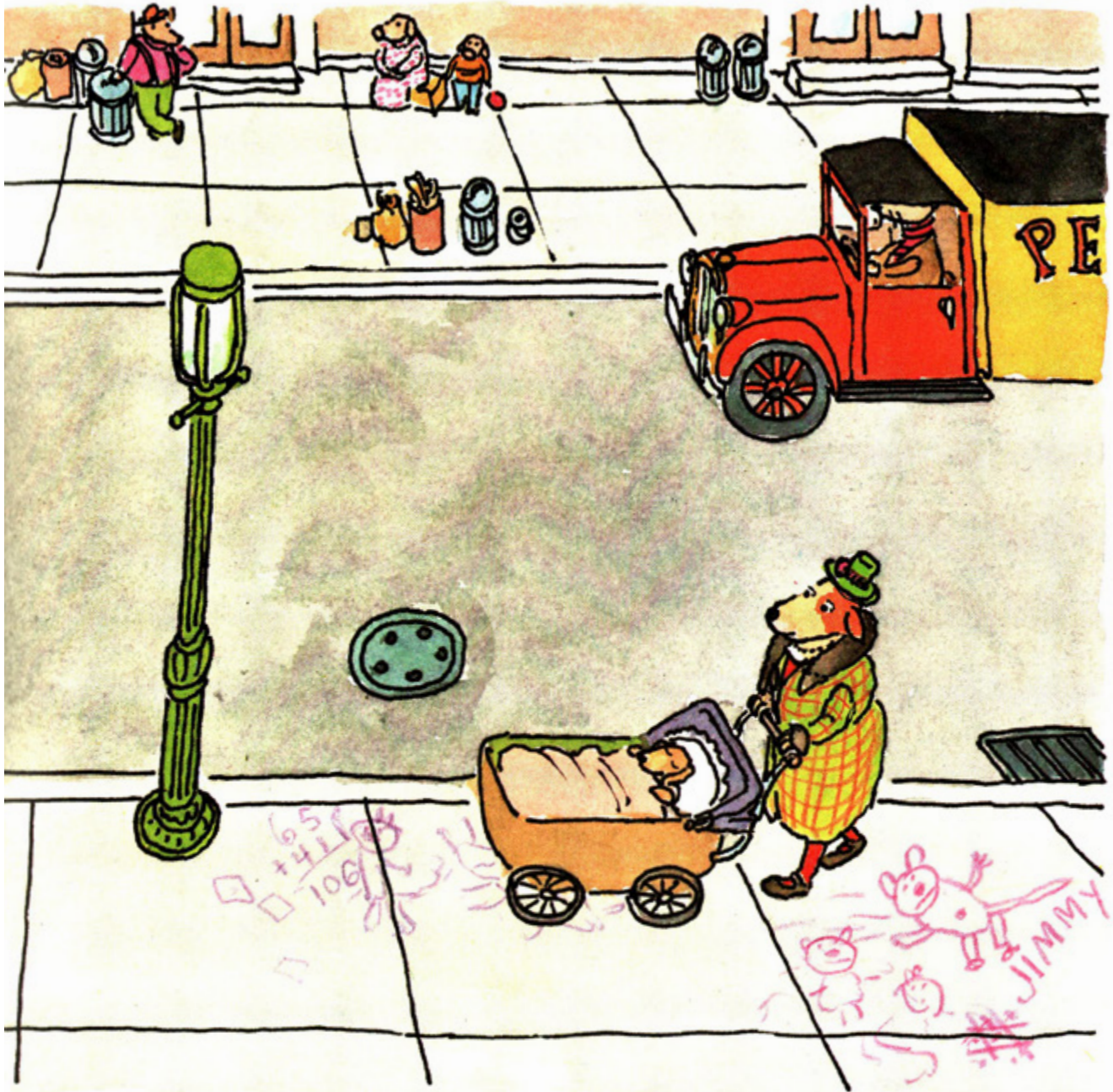
Doctor De Soto was especially popular with the big animals. He was able to work inside their mouths, wearing rubbers to keep his feet dry; and his fingers were so delicate, and his drill so dainty, they could hardly feel any pain.



Being a mouse, he refused to treat animals dangerous to mice, and it said so on his sign. When the doorbell rang, he and his wife would look out the window. They wouldn't admit even the most timid-looking cat.



One day, when they looked out, they saw a well-dressed fox with a flannel bandage around his jaw.



“I cannot treat you, sir!” Doctor De Soto shouted. “Sir! Haven’t you read my sign?”



“Please!” the fox wailed. “Have mercy, I’m suffering!” And he wept so bitterly it was pitiful to see.

“Just a moment,” said Doctor De Soto. “That poor fox,” he whispered to his wife. “What shall we do?”



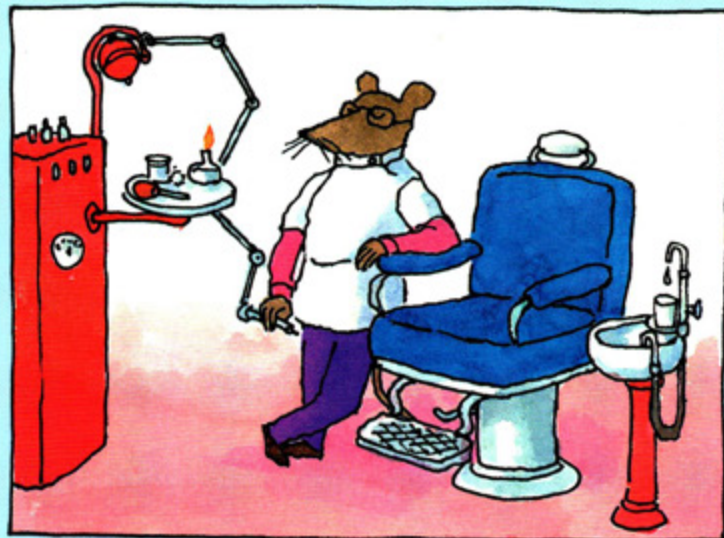
“Let’s risk it,” said Mrs. De Soto. She pressed the buzzer and let the fox in.



He was up the stairs in a flash. "Bless your little hearts," he cried, falling to his knees. "I beg you, *do* something! My tooth is killing me."



“Sit on the floor, sir,” said Doctor De Soto, “and remove the bandage, please.”



Doctor De Soto and his wife treat the toothaches of animals large and small. His expertise is so great that his fortunate patients never feel any pain. Since he's a mouse, Doctor De Soto refuses to treat animals who have a taste for mice. But one day, a fox shows up and begs for relief from the tooth that's killing him. How can the kindhearted De Sotos turn him away? But how can they make sure that the fox doesn't eat them once his tooth is fixed? Those clever De Sotos will find a way.

"I cannot imagine childhood without Steig. . . . [*Doctor De Soto* is] filled with great fun and read-again delight."—*The Dallas Morning News*

"This is one of those picture books that are so good I'd just like to quote the whole thing."—*Philadelphia Inquirer*

"A marvelously satisfying story . . . guaranteed to please."—*Los Angeles Times*

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