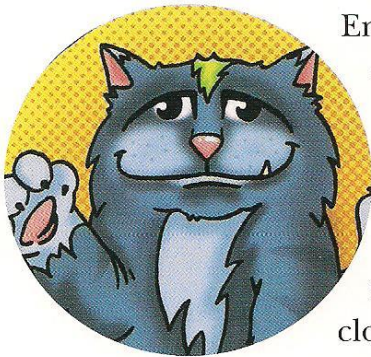


# MEGABYTE

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illustrated by Walter Wisler



Erin Conner calls her cat Megabyte for two reasons. The first reason is his enormous mouth. He can eat a plate of cat food in two mouthfuls.

The second reason he's named Megabyte is because he's a high-tech cat. He stalks the vacuum cleaner. He stares at the socks and T-shirts being flung around and around inside the clothes dryer. He tries to catch them through the

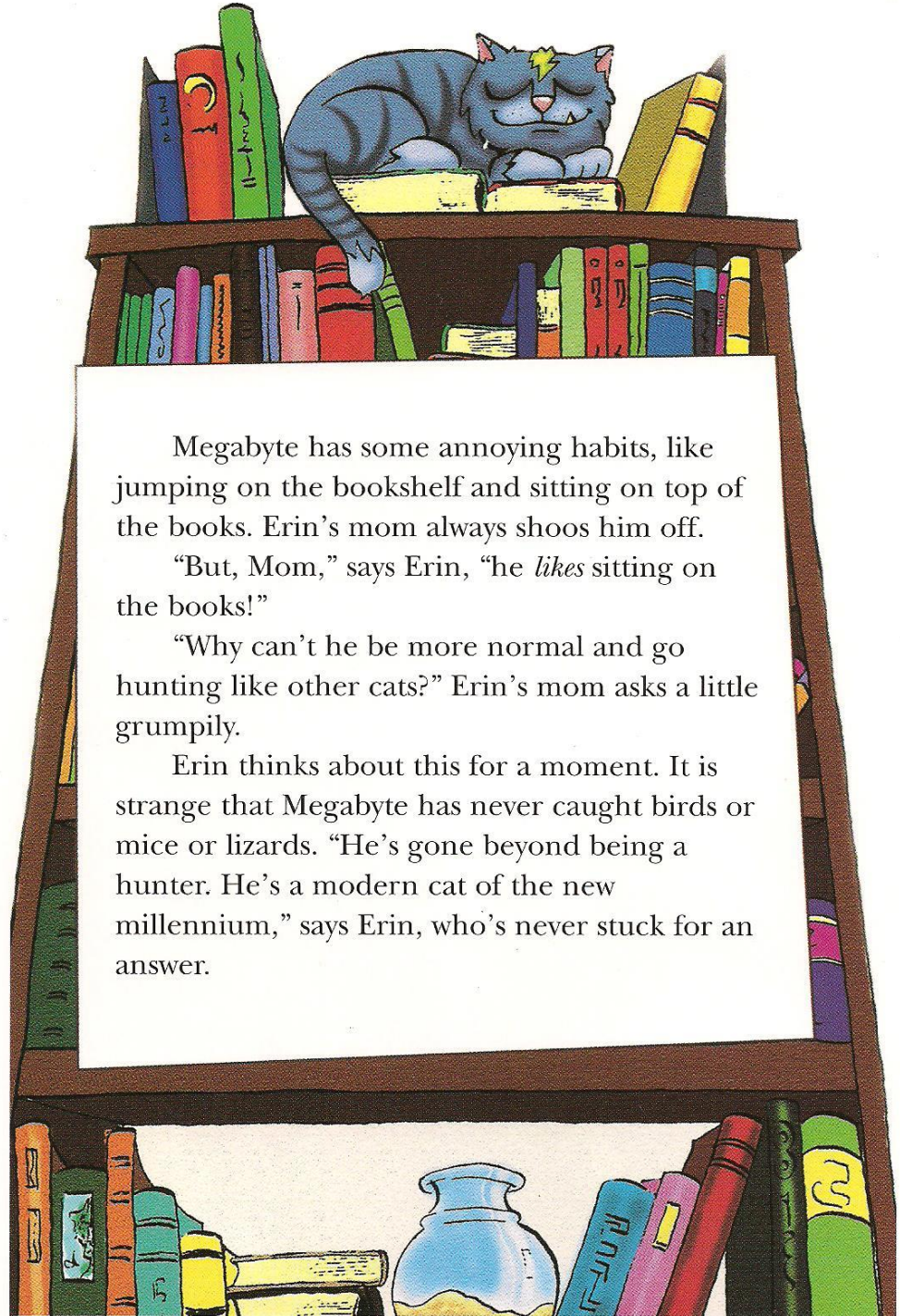
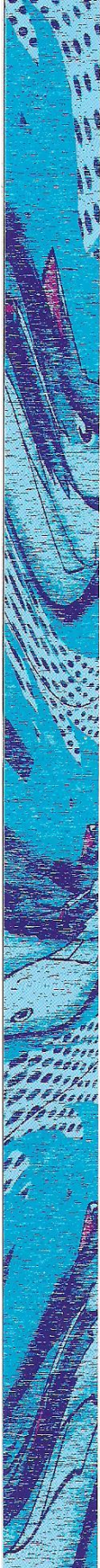
little window. He purrs in time with the electric can opener when it's opening his can of cat food.

Erin is sure that Megabyte could do a whole lot more than that if their household were more high-tech. She imagines what he could get up to if they had a DVD, satellite TV, and computer.

Erin is an expert on the computer at school. Even her teacher, Mr. Todd, asks, "Erin, what do we do now?" He always listens when she explains how to open files or insert graphics.

Erin would love to be able to use a computer at home, but they don't have one. Instead, she plays with Megabyte.



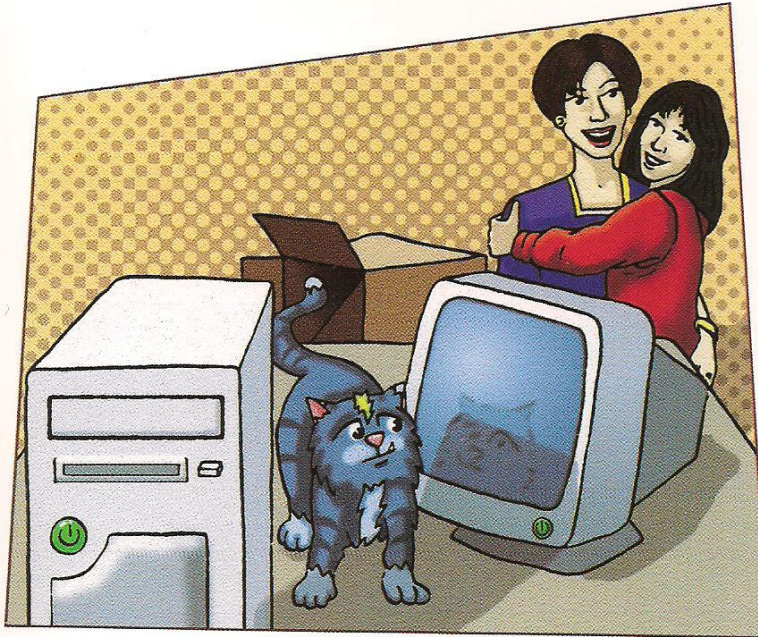


Megabyte has some annoying habits, like jumping on the bookshelf and sitting on top of the books. Erin's mom always shoos him off.

"But, Mom," says Erin, "he *likes* sitting on the books!"

"Why can't he be more normal and go hunting like other cats?" Erin's mom asks a little grumpily.

Erin thinks about this for a moment. It is strange that Megabyte has never caught birds or mice or lizards. "He's gone beyond being a hunter. He's a modern cat of the new millennium," says Erin, who's never stuck for an answer.



Then, one day, Erin's mom brings home a computer! It's an older model, and it has a mouse and some software. "Mom, I love you!" yells Erin, hugging her hard.

In no time, Erin has the cables hooked up, the computer turned on, and the

software installed. Megabyte takes an interest, too. Erin has to push him away when he jumps on the table and blocks the screen. "Get down!" she tells Megabyte sternly.

After the computer has been in the house for a day, Erin and her mom agree on some rules. There'll be no computer time until Erin's homework and the dishes are done.

Each evening, Megabyte finds a spot on the windowsill near Erin. Erin gazes at the screen while Megabyte stares at the little grey shape under Erin's right hand. It has a very long tail and goes click, clack, click. Megabyte sits very still, watching.

On Saturday, Erin switches on her computer and reaches for the mouse. It's not there! She feels around where it ought to be. There's only a frayed grey cable. Erin peers at it more closely. It looks like something has chewed through the cable—something with a big mouth and very sharp teeth.





“Megabyte!” screams Erin.

Erin searches Megabyte’s favourite places. He isn’t behind the couch or on the windowsill. He isn’t under the bed or on the bookshelf. He isn’t in front of the clothes dryer. Erin looks in the patch of long grass in the yard, and there’s Megabyte with the mouse in his claws, chomping on its long grey tail.



Megabyte looks Erin straight in the eye. His look seems to say “I may be a modern cat, but I’m still a cat!”

