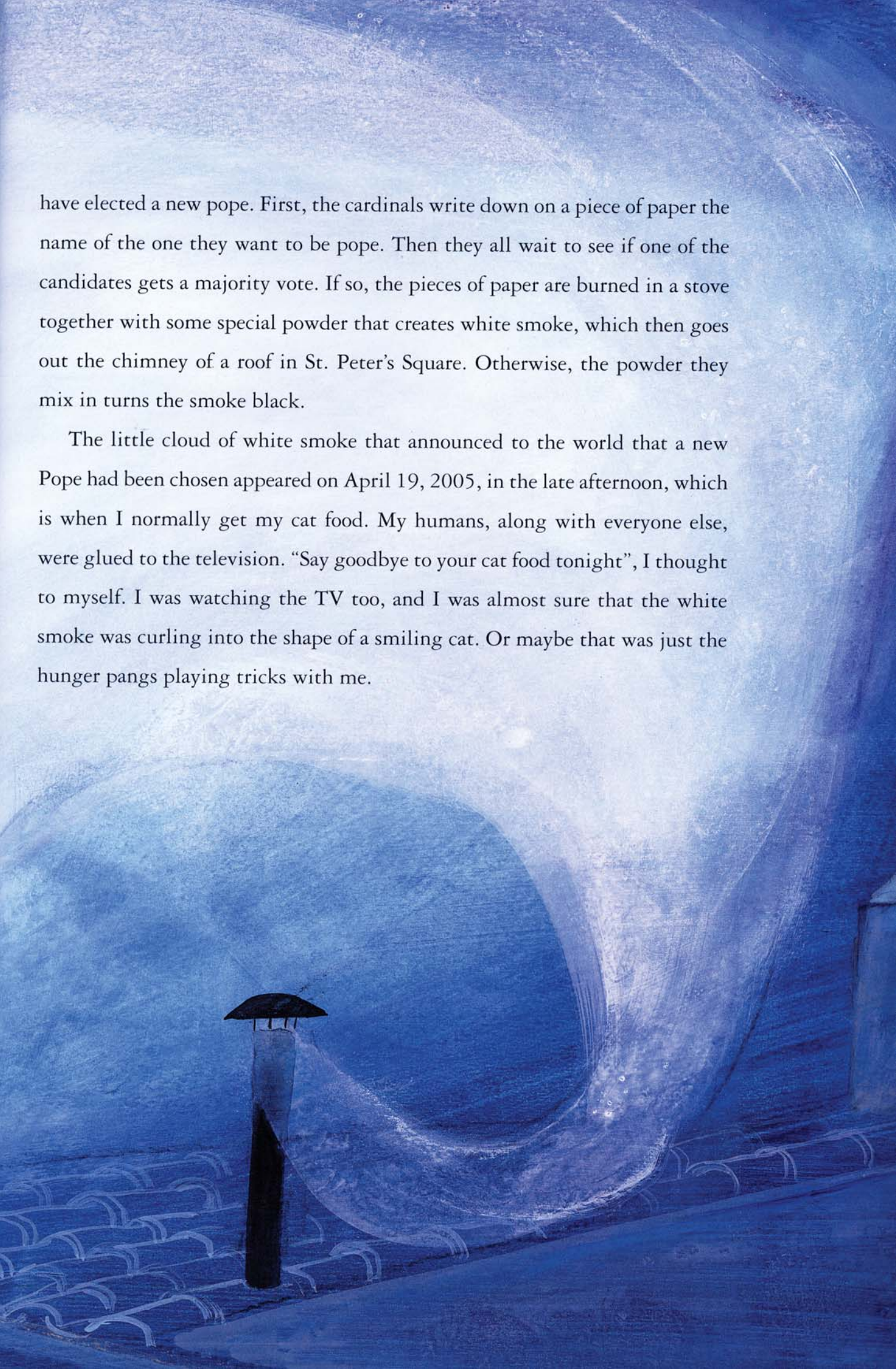
A blue-toned illustration of a cathedral interior. The architecture features high, vaulted ceilings with ribbed arches and several arched windows. The lighting is soft and ethereal, creating a sense of depth and grandeur. In the lower right foreground, a brown tabby cat is sitting and looking towards the left, towards the cathedral's interior. The overall mood is contemplative and serene.

On April 2, 2005, Pope John Paul II died. Joseph was filled with sorrow that day because he had lost a best friend as well as his longtime “boss”. It turns out that Joseph was the one who celebrated the funeral Mass, for he had been the head of all the cardinals for some time. More than three million people listened to the funeral homily he gave in St. Peter’s Square that day, while over ninety television stations transmitted his words live across the globe.

The Italians have a saying that goes like this: When one pope dies, you make another. In other words, life goes on. It’s a little sad, but that’s what happens; after the funeral of a pope, another one quickly needs to be elected because the Church cannot go on without someone to lead the way forward. In order to choose a new pontiff, all the cardinals meet together in the Sistine Chapel. None of them can leave the meeting until they are in agreement about which one among them should take on such an important task. Of course, they are allowed to eat, drink, sleep, and think about their cat (at least those fortunate enough to have one), but they can’t go home until they

A blue-toned illustration of a chimney emitting a large plume of smoke. The chimney is a dark, vertical structure on the left side of the image. From its top, a thick, billowing plume of smoke rises and curves to the right, filling most of the frame. The smoke is rendered with various shades of blue and white, suggesting movement and texture. The background is a deep, textured blue. The overall style is painterly and atmospheric.

have elected a new pope. First, the cardinals write down on a piece of paper the name of the one they want to be pope. Then they all wait to see if one of the candidates gets a majority vote. If so, the pieces of paper are burned in a stove together with some special powder that creates white smoke, which then goes out the chimney of a roof in St. Peter's Square. Otherwise, the powder they mix in turns the smoke black.

The little cloud of white smoke that announced to the world that a new Pope had been chosen appeared on April 19, 2005, in the late afternoon, which is when I normally get my cat food. My humans, along with everyone else, were glued to the television. "Say goodbye to your cat food tonight", I thought to myself. I was watching the TV too, and I was almost sure that the white smoke was curling into the shape of a smiling cat. Or maybe that was just the hunger pangs playing tricks with me.