



Martina

the Beautiful Cockroach

A CUBAN FOLKTALE

RETOLD BY
CARMEN AGRA DEEDY

ILLUSTRATED BY
MICHAEL AUSTIN



Martina

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The story of Martina the Cockroach and Perez the Mouse is one of the best known in Latin America, but there are also Persian, Indian, Spanish, and African variants of this tale. Carmen Agra Deedy's interpretation weaves some traditional motifs along with her own plot twists and childhood memories. Visit our website to learn more about Martina the Beautiful Cockroach at www.beautifulmartina.com



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Summary: In this humorous retelling of a Cuban folktale, a cockroach interviews her suitors in order to decide whom to marry.

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In memory of Abuela Graciela and Abuela Ofelia.

Thanks to my family, of course:
Papi and Mami; Katie, Erin, and Lauren;
Tersi, Ben, and Jordan.

And a special note of thanks to the children of
Holy Innocents' School and Davis Academy.

—C. A. D.

For Dad and Elisa

—M. A.

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ATLANTA

Martina Josefina Catalina Cucaracha was a beautiful cockroach.

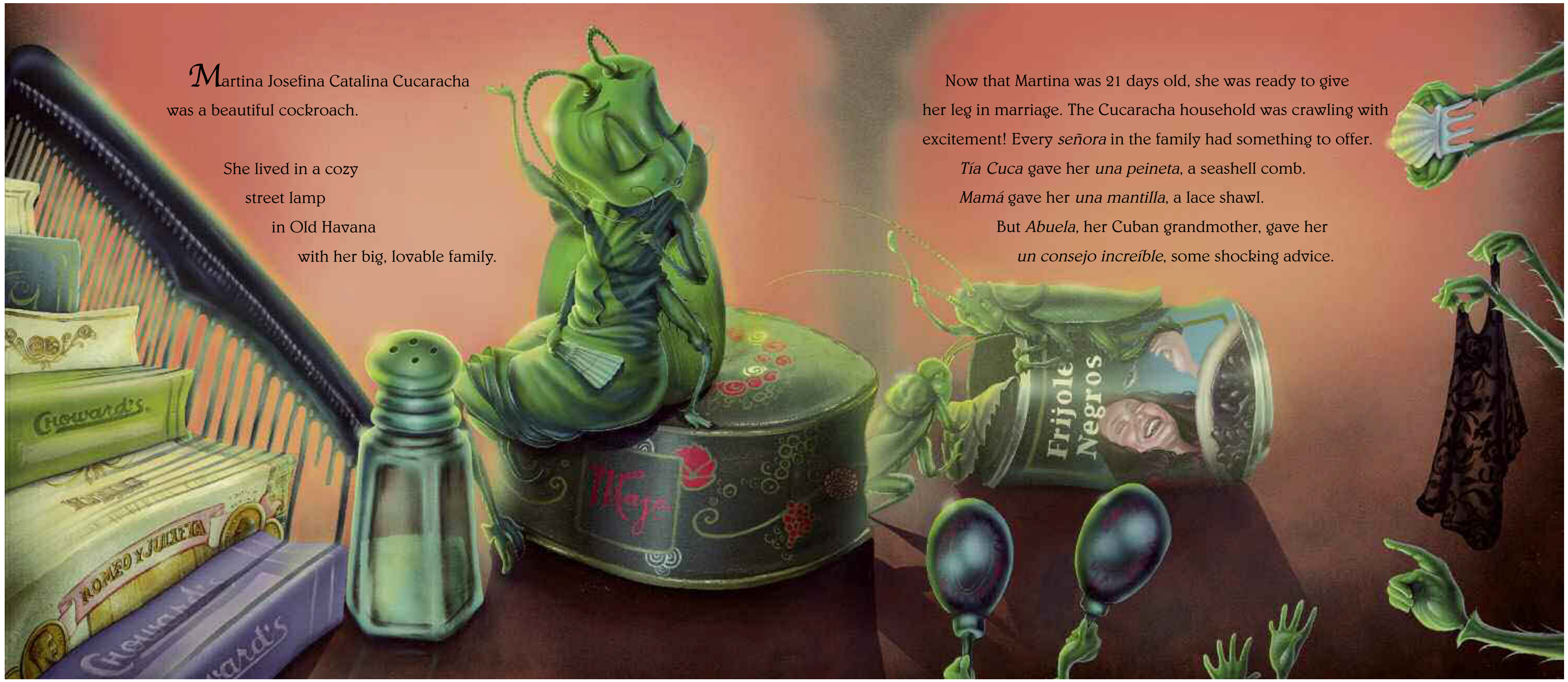
She lived in a cozy street lamp in Old Havana with her big, lovable family.

Now that Martina was 21 days old, she was ready to give her leg in marriage. The Cucaracha household was crawling with excitement! Every *señora* in the family had something to offer.

Tía Cuca gave her *una peineta*, a seashell comb.

Mamá gave her *una mantilla*, a lace shawl.

But *Abuela*, her Cuban grandmother, gave her *un consejo increíble*, some shocking advice.



“You want me to do WHAT?” Martina was aghast.

“You are a beautiful cockroach,” said *Abuela*. “Finding husbands to choose from will be easy—picking the right one could be tricky.”

“B-b-but,” stammered Martina, “how will spilling COFFEE on a suitor’s shoes help me find a good husband?”

Her grandmother smiled. “It will make him angry! Then you’ll know how he will speak to you when he loses his temper. Trust me, Martina. The Coffee Test never fails.”

Martina wasn’t so sure.

