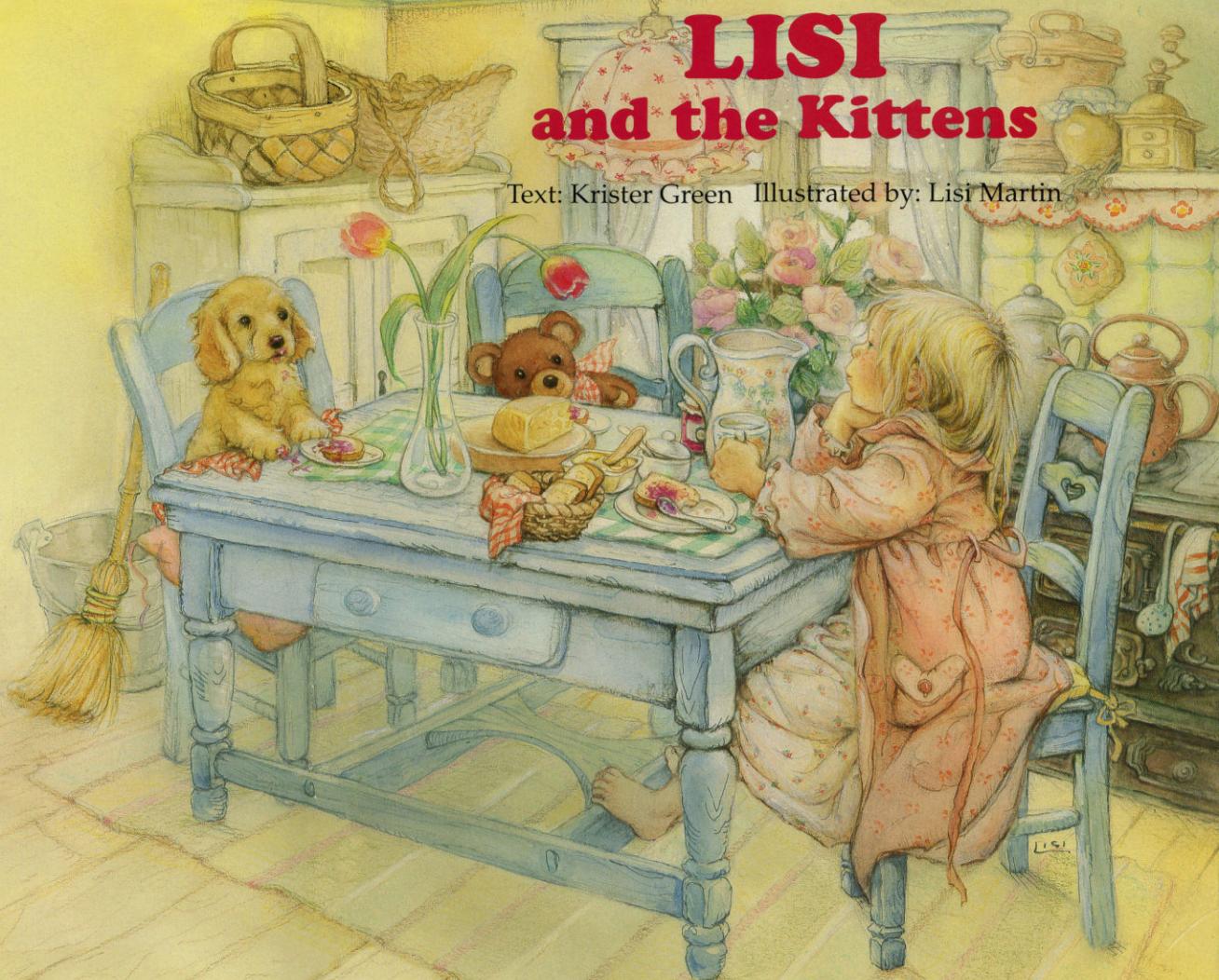


Lisi Martin has become well known for capturing the poignant memories of our childhood on paper. In Lisi and the Kittens, Ms. Martin lyrically depicts a warm, humorous story of children and their determination to find a home for soon-to-be homeless kittens. Adults and children alike will find themselves magically transported to this wonderful world of make-believe so exquisitely illustrated by Lisi.

LISI and the Kittens

Text: Krister Green Illustrated by: Lisi Martin





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"Two more days!" thought Lisi happily. "Two more days to my birthday." Lisi was almost seven years old. Monday was her birthday and she couldn't wait. Today was only Saturday. Two days can be a very long time if you are almost seven.

Lisi lived in a lovely yellow house with her Mother and Father; her younger brother, Andrew, and Tom, her puppy.

"Lisi," said Father, "We are going to hang new wallpaper in your room. I have found some very nice blue-striped wallpaper in the attic and your room does need redecorating."

"I don't like blue!" Lisi pouted. When you are a girl who is almost seven, you want pink wallpaper, not blue. Everyone knows that.

"Lisi!" scolded Mother. "Don't be like that. You should be glad your room is getting redone."

"Yes," Father said, "I would be very happy to have such nice wallpaper in my room. I have arranged for Nelson to come by and put it up as soon as he can."

"I don't care what they say," thought Lisi, "I hate blue wallpaper. I want pink!"





Saturday was a busy day at Lisi's house. Father was working in the cellar, Mother was doing the laundry, even Andrew was busy cleaning his room. Lisi finished her chores then went out to the garden to play.

It was a beautiful spring day! The sun was shining and all the trees were beginning to bloom. Lisi lifted Tom up to let him smell the appleblossoms.

Just then the gate opened and in walked Nelson. "Hello, is your Mother home?"

"Yes," answered Lisi, "but she is rather busy. Maybe I can help?"

"Well, do you know what room has to be decorated?" he asked.

"Of course," replied Lisi. "Then let's get started!" said Nelson.

Lisi helped Nelson set up and afterwards went to help Mother. There was a lot of laundry to do. As they were finishing, Mother called out, "Is someone here?"

"Yes, good afternoon," answered Nelson as he peeped out from behind the door. "I'm almost finished. Would you like to see. It's going to be very nice."

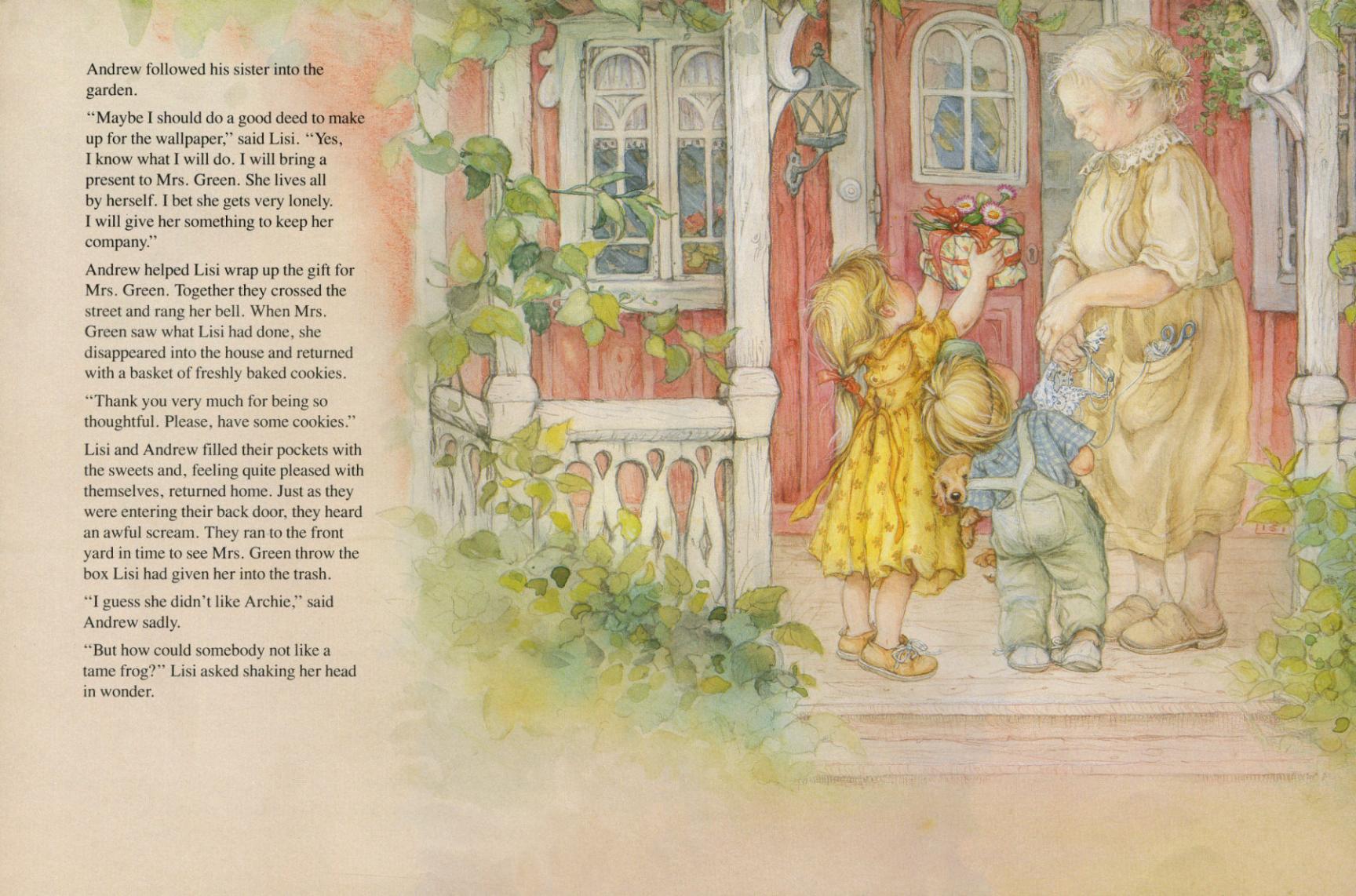
"Nelson!" gasped Mother, "Who told you to wallpaper my bedroom?"

"I did, Mother," said Lisi. "You and Dad liked that blue-striped wallpaper so much I felt you should have it."

"Elizabeth!" exclaimed Mother.

"Oops! I think it's best for everybody if I go into the garden for awhile," thought Lisi.

And it was.



Andrew followed his sister into the garden.

"Maybe I should do a good deed to make up for the wallpaper," said Lisi. "Yes, I know what I will do. I will bring a present to Mrs. Green. She lives all by herself. I bet she gets very lonely. I will give her something to keep her company."

Andrew helped Lisi wrap up the gift for Mrs. Green. Together they crossed the street and rang her bell. When Mrs. Green saw what Lisi had done, she disappeared into the house and returned with a basket of freshly baked cookies.

"Thank you very much for being so thoughtful. Please, have some cookies."

Lisi and Andrew filled their pockets with the sweets and, feeling quite pleased with themselves, returned home. Just as they were entering their back door, they heard an awful scream. They ran to the front yard in time to see Mrs. Green throw the box Lisi had given her into the trash.

"I guess she didn't like Archie," said Andrew sadly.

"But how could somebody not like a tame frog?" Lisi asked shaking her head in wonder.



Brian was Lisi and Andrew's best friend. He lived next door and, just like Lisi, was almost seven. The children played together nearly every day.

One day last summer, the three friends decided to play shop. They cut lots of flowers from their gardens and set up a stand on the pavement. Just before the shop was ready to open, Andrew climbed up the big birch tree with the long garden hose. Carefully, he crept out onto the branch that hung right over Lisi and Brian's flower stand.

Before long, Mr. Jones walked past. "Would you like to buy a flower?" asked Lisi.

"No, thank you," replied Mr. Jones.

"Oh, but these are very special flowers," said Brian, "they will protect you against the rain."

Mr. Jones laughed. "It is a beautiful day! There isn't a cloud in the sky. I don't think it will rain today."

"Well, you never can tell!" said Lisi. "Maybe you should buy some just to be safe?" With that, Lisi gave Andrew the secret signal. Andrew quickly turned the hose on. A fine rain started to fall.

"What is all this?" Mr. Jones asked angrily. "It can't be raining! The sun is shining! Oh, bother!" he said as he stomped away.

For the rest of the afternoon, the sale went very well. That is until Dad came home. When he discovered the children sprayed water on everyone who did not buy flowers, they had to close the shop immediately.

Then there was the day Lisi, Andrew and Brian decided to help Dad by cleaning the garden. They picked up all their toys putting them neatly away in the shed. Then they swept the driveway. The last thing they had to do was to get rid of the big sack of leaves by the flagpole.

The children tried with all their might, but they could not move the sack. "What can we do?" moaned Andrew, "It's much too heavy for us!"

"We'll pull it up to the top of the flagpole. No one will think of looking up there!" said Lisi.

Carefully, they fastened the sack to the flag's rope. "On the count of three," called Lisi, "everyone pull. 1-2-3!" The children pulled together. The bag of leaves was hoisted to the very top of the flagpole.

"Now," stated Lisi, "we have to fasten the rope on the hook so the sack won't fall down." But, the hook was too high for any of them to reach. They looked around for something to stand on.

"The box!" shouted Lisi and Brian. Both children let go of the rope at the same time and ran to fetch the carton.

At that very moment, Dad happened to look out of the window and saw what the children were up to. "Oh my goodness!" he exclaimed and rushed out the door.

"Help! Help!" Andrew screamed. "The sack is too heavy for me!"

Dad reached the flagpole just as the sack landed on top of his head. Bump! Dad fell and landed right in the roses. "Help! Help!" Andrew cried again.

"Andrew," Lisi called, "where are you?"

"Up here!" called a voice from above. And there was Andrew at the top of the pole swinging in the breeze just like a limp flag!



The sun shone through the window waking Lisi up early. She snuggled under the covers. Then she realized what day it was. It was Monday—her birthday! Oh, how she had longed for this day! It was wonderful to be seven years old!

She was going to have a birthday party. All of her friends were invited. Mother and Father had spent the entire morning arranging the table in the garden. Lisi couldn't wait.

Finally, it was time. Her guests arrived and brought her many gifts. They played games and sang "Happy Birthday". And, of course, they ate lots of ice cream and cake. Everyone was having such fun!

Lisi ran into the house to get some more lemonade. Mother was having a tea party for some of the ladies. One of the women, Mrs. Snow was talking. Lisi waited politely for her to finish before asking Mother for some more.

"Yes," said Mrs. Snow, "if I don't find a home for these two little kittens by Friday, I will have to send them away. I've tried to find a nice home for them, but nobody wants them."

How horrible! Lisi couldn't believe what she was hearing. Two kittens and nobody wants them! Send them away! That sounded frightening.

Lisi ran out to the garden to tell her friends. "Oh how terrible!" said Mary. "How can they be so cruel!" cried Stephanie.

They all decided to go home that evening and ask their parents if they could keep the kittens.

"Today is Monday," said Lisi. "Friday will be here very soon."



Lisi waited for the mothers to leave. When she saw Mrs. Snow, Lisi asked if she could walk home with her to see the kittens.

"Of course you may," Mrs. Snow answered. When they got to her house, Mrs. Snow told Lisi the kittens were on the back porch. Lisi opened the door very slowly and peeked in. She did not see any kittens, only a big basket with a blue and white blanket.

Suddenly, the blanket began to move. Lisi tiptoed over to the basket and started to laugh. There, playing in the blanket, were two of the cutest kittens she had ever seen.





"Oh, they are so adorable!" she cried. "I wish I could keep them." Lisi played with the kittens for awhile but soon had to go home. She petted them once more before she left. All the way home, Lisi couldn't help but think how terribly mean Mrs. Snow was.



The next day Lisi asked her mother and father if she could keep the kittens.

"I'm sorry, Lisi, but we already have a dog. One pet is enough," Mother said.

"If somebody doesn't take them, they will be sent away!" Lisi pleaded, but Mother and Dad would not change their minds.

Lisi and Andrew asked all of their friends but none of them were allowed to keep the kittens either. "This calls for a plan," Lisi told Andrew. Together they went into the garden to think. Lisi laid in the hammock and thought and thought. She thought so hard her head was ready to burst.

"Maybe we should put up a "For Sale" sign," Andrew said.

"Of course!" cried Lisi. She was so excited she almost fell out of the hammock. "Let's have a parade with posters and signs. We can get all our friends to help!"



Early the next morning, the friends met in the big field. Lisi and Andrew brought the crayons and cardboard; Brian and Stephanie brought the hammer and nails; Mary and George were in charge of finding the sticks they would use to nail the signs to.

They worked very hard. Finally, they were finished. The little party of demonstrators marched through the neighborhood streets. When they reached the center of town, Lisi climbed onto a box and shouted as loud as she could, "CAN YOU HEAR ME?"

Well, she shouted so loudly people a street away turned around. "HELP US SAVE THE KITTENS! DON'T LET THEM BE SENT AWAY! ADOPT A KITTEN, TODAY!"

Lisi stopped, the children looked around, but nobody came forward. Nobody wanted the kittens. "We've got to do something," Lisi thought. "I know what to do." She climbed back on to the carton, screaming even louder than before, "HELP SAVE THE KITTENS! ONLY ONE PENNY!"

By now, there were lots of people gathered around to see what the commotion was about. Brian found an old tin can and passed it through the crowd collecting money. Everyone put pennies into the tin, although some didn't even know what the collection was for!

When the children returned to the field, Brian counted the money. "Fifty pennies, I doubt that's enough to save the kittens."

"Somehow we must get lots more," Lisi said, "but how?"

"Why not sell paper flowers?" suggested Stephanie.

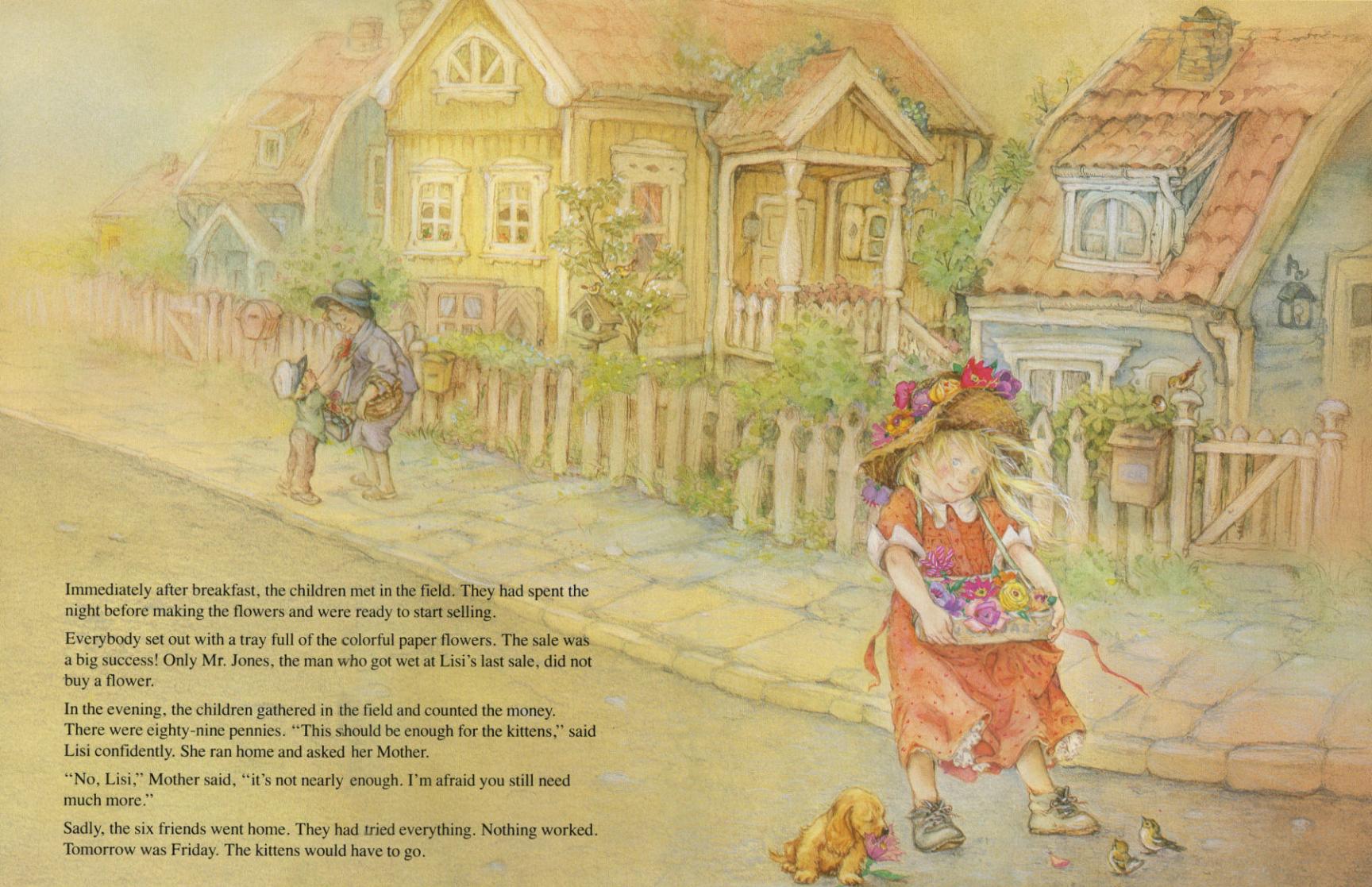
"What a great idea!" yelled the children.

Andrew jumped up. "I bet we can sell thousands!"

"The kittens would be very rich then," laughed Mary.

"We'll cut out the flowers tonight and sell them tomorrow," decided Lisi. "After all, we only have two more days to save the kittens."





Immediately after breakfast, the children met in the field. They had spent the night before making the flowers and were ready to start selling.

Everybody set out with a tray full of the colorful paper flowers. The sale was a big success! Only Mr. Jones, the man who got wet at Lisi's last sale, did not buy a flower.

In the evening, the children gathered in the field and counted the money. There were eighty-nine pennies. "This should be enough for the kittens," said Lisi confidently. She ran home and asked her Mother.

"No, Lisi," Mother said, "it's not nearly enough. I'm afraid you still need much more."

Sadly, the six friends went home. They had tried everything. Nothing worked. Tomorrow was Friday. The kittens would have to go.

When Lisi went outside the next morning, Brian and George were waiting for her. "Could you come up with any new plans to save the kittens?" they asked.

"Yes," answered Lisi. "they need a Mother and a Father. That is the only way they can be saved. Brian, you and I are going to be their parents. We are going to get married!"

"Are you crazy, Lisi? I can't get married today! George and I have to play ball this morning."

"Then we will have to do it quickly." Lisi said urgently. "Think of the kittens, Brian."

"Oh, alright," reluctantly, Brian agreed. Lisi scurried to the attic and returned with a hymnbook and some old party clothes. "It must look like a real wedding, or it won't work," she said. "George, you can be the minister."

Solemnly, George took his place. "Will you, Lisi, be mother to the kittens?"

"Yes," she replied.

"Brian, will you be father to the kittens?" he asked. But Brian did not answer. He was looking over at his pals who were waiting for him to play ball.

"Brian!" George prompted, "answer the question."

"I guess," said Brian.

"I now pronounce you Mother and Father." Brian ran home to tell his mother the good news. His Mother told him he still could not keep the kittens. Lisi's Mother would not change her mind, either.



"But Mother," Lisi gasped, "don't you understand? The kittens will be sent away today if we can't help them! It's Friday, we don't have any more time!"

"No, Lisi. We already have Tom. One pet is enough."

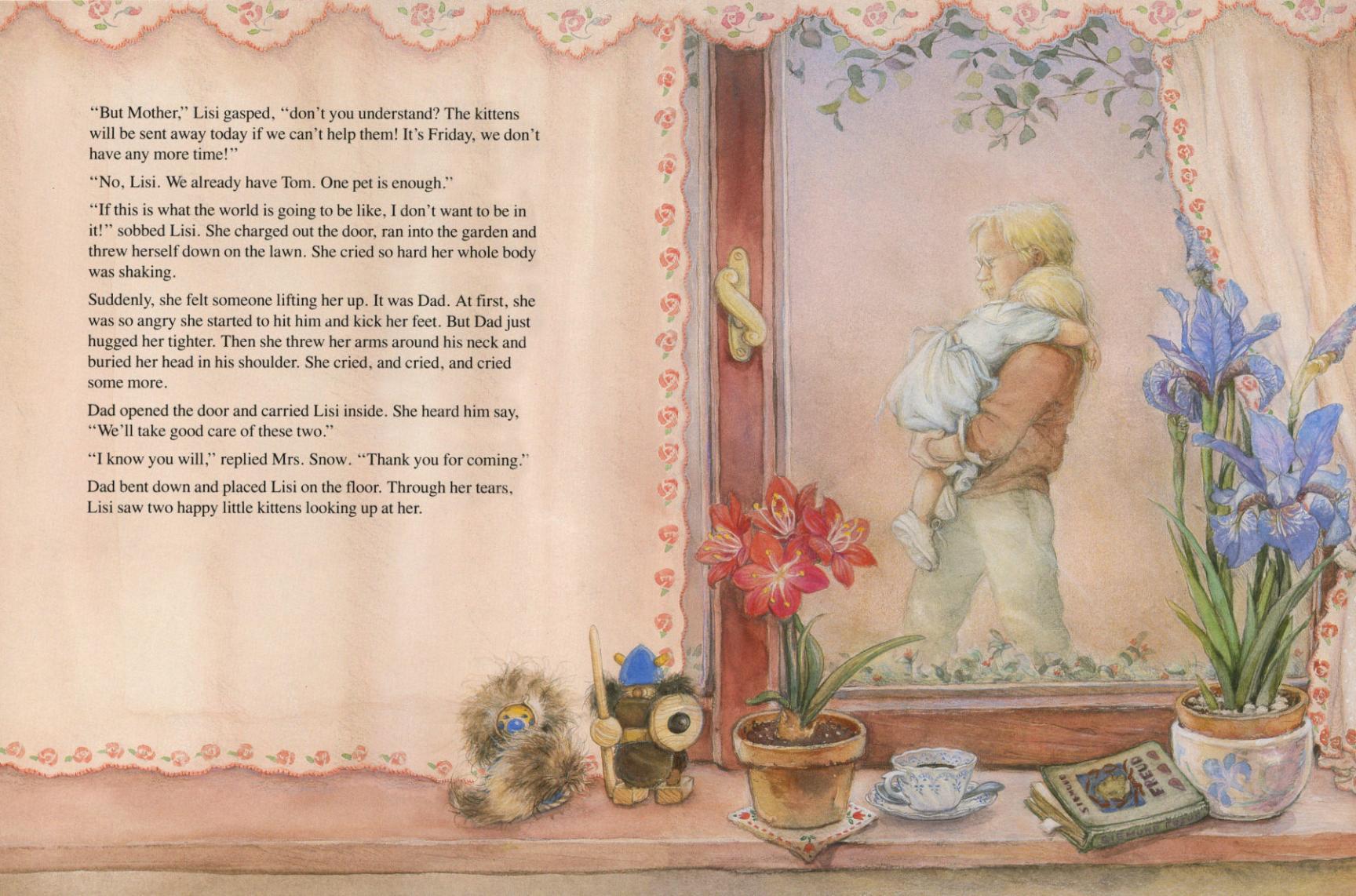
"If this is what the world is going to be like, I don't want to be in it!" sobbed Lisi. She charged out the door, ran into the garden and threw herself down on the lawn. She cried so hard her whole body was shaking.

Suddenly, she felt someone lifting her up. It was Dad. At first, she was so angry she started to hit him and kick her feet. But Dad just hugged her tighter. Then she threw her arms around his neck and buried her head in his shoulder. She cried, and cried, and cried some more.

Dad opened the door and carried Lisi inside. She heard him say, "We'll take good care of these two."

"I know you will," replied Mrs. Snow. "Thank you for coming."

Dad bent down and placed Lisi on the floor. Through her tears, Lisi saw two happy little kittens looking up at her.





Dad and Lisi each carried one of the furry kittens home. When Andrew saw them, he shouted, "Hip, hip hooray!" and jumped with joy.

Mother came running out to see what was going on. When she saw the kittens, she was not so pleased. "I thought we agreed, no more pets!"

Father shrugged his shoulders, "I couldn't bear to see the kittens sent away after the children worked so hard to save them."

Before Mother could say anything, she heard someone calling. "Excuse me." It was Mrs. Green. "Perhaps I can help. What if the kittens come live with me? I am all by myself and would enjoy their company. The children could play with them whenever they like."

"That's perfect!" cried Mother. Lisi and Andrew laughed and gave each other a big hug.

Later that evening, when Mother and Father came to kiss Lisi goodnight, she asked sleepily, "Mother, would we have been allowed to keep the kittens if Mrs. Green hadn't wanted them?"

"Yes, Lisi, I think so," said Mother smiling.

Dad also smiled. You see, it is quite possible to love someone very much—even if she was responsible for putting the wallpaper with the blue stripes in your green bedroom.