

STORIES
to grow by *plus!*

Derek and Michelle Brookes

Needy AND Greedy



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It was a bright sunny morning. The two fishermen, Hans and Frederick, laughed and talked as they made their way down the rocky incline that took them to the secluded cove where they had left their boat. No one knew for sure how or when Pirate's Cove got its name. Legend had it that pirates in times past often retreated to this tiny cove. It was fun to imagine that they may have left behind some of their precious booty, perhaps in one of the many limestone caves that the water and waves had carved into the rocky cliffs facing the sea.

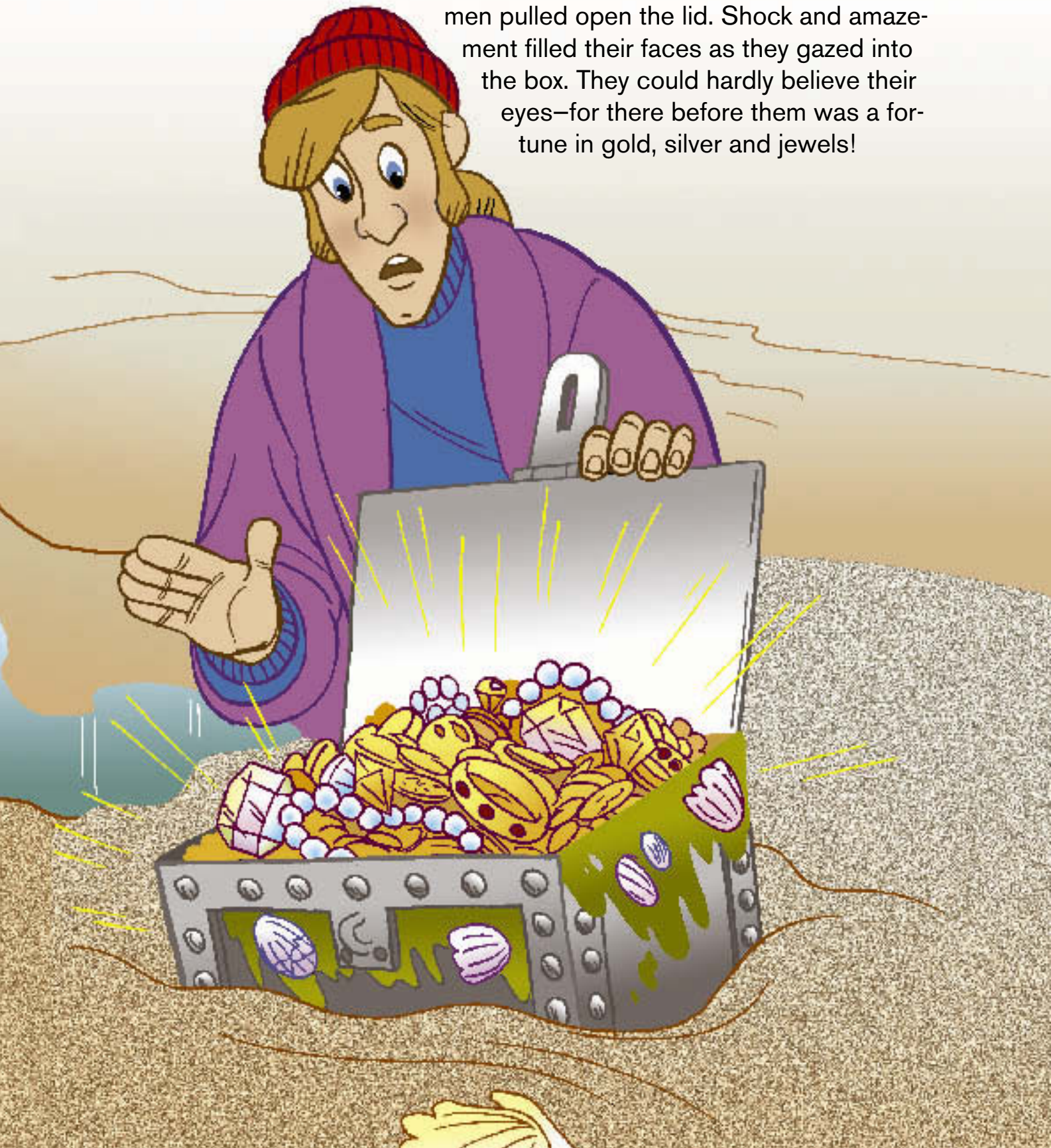


Frederick and Hans, however, were not thinking about pirate treasure this morning. They carefully carried their nets, fishing gear, and food down to the small beach inside the cove. A terrible storm had pounded the coast in the night and huge waves had washed away some of the sand even inside the cove. They wondered if their small boat had survived the storm. They had tied it securely to a tough little tree that had managed to take root and grow among the rocks well up and away from the water. At first sight it appeared to have been damaged, but as they came closer and removed debris that had been tossed about by the storm, they were happy to find it all in one piece. They hadn't fished the night before because of the storm, so they were eager to go out this morning. Together the men pushed the boat down to the shore.



Hans busied himself loading and getting the boat ready to launch while Frederick worked on the net a little distance away. Suddenly Frederick called out, "Hans! Come here! Look what I've found!" Seeing how excited his friend seemed to be, Hans dropped what he was doing and ran over to him. There, still partly buried in the sand by the water's edge, was the top end of what appeared to be a sturdy box of some kind. Using their hands the two men quickly dug the sand away to reveal a wooden chest covered with barnacles. The chest was held shut by a large rusted metal padlock, which gave way when Frederick hit it with a rock. With much effort the two

men pulled open the lid. Shock and amazement filled their faces as they gazed into the box. They could hardly believe their eyes—for there before them was a fortune in gold, silver and jewels!



Hans gasped, "Will you just look at this! We're rich!"

"What do you mean 'we'?" said Frederick. "This treasure is mine because I found it first!" Hans could not hide the look of shock on his face. Seconds before they had been the best of friends, sharing the toils and joys of their simple life together, but in one moment everything was different. Frederick was different. A greedy and selfish gleam filled Frederick's eyes. Hans looked away in dismay. He had wrongfully assumed in the joy of the moment that his lifelong friend and partner in business would naturally share the treasure with him.

"Of course, Frederick," Hans mumbled. "It's yours. It's all yours! You found it, so it is yours!"



Frederick glanced over at Hans and saw the deep hurt in his eyes. For a moment Frederick felt bad and his heart softened. Hans had been his closest friend since boyhood. They had shared everything, all their hopes and heartaches. Working long hard hours together, they had finally earned enough money to buy a small fishing boat, and they operated a stall together in the local fish market. They would catch fish, usually at night, then their wives would help them sell the fish during the day. Money was very difficult to earn, times were tough, and the fish were few. Still, somehow they had kept going and always had just enough to feed their growing families.

Now, here at last were riches enough to provide comfort for both their families for a long time to come. Frederick struggled with his conscience. A voice spoke in his heart, "Frederick, you need to share this fortune with your friend." Frederick looked into Hans' hurt, disappointed eyes. He was about to say that he was sorry and would be happy to share it, when another voice spoke:

"Don't be a fool, Frederick! Hans is happy being a fisherman. He has no head for business. He is too softhearted and trusting. Whatever you give him he will waste or give away to anyone with a sad story. You'd better keep it all, even for his sake. You can give him what you like later."



Frederick was confused. He didn't know which voice to listen to. To share would mean less wealth for him. Visions of owning a large house full of servants and himself wearing the best of clothes and being greeted with great respect by all the people of the town began to fill Frederick's head. *I will never have to work hard again, he thought, I will be a gentleman of ease. I have worked hard and deserve this good fortune. If Hans had been meant to have it, he would have found it first!*

Frederick's face hardened a little, "I'll pay you two gold coins to help me get this treasure safely to my house."

"You don't have to pay me anything!" Hans answered. "I'll be happy to help you for nothing. I am still your friend even if you are rich." Hans tried to smile a little and laugh through his hurt. *What is happening to my friend?* he wondered.

"What shall we do with the boat?" he asked.

"Oh, forget the boat," Frederick replied. "I don't need it anymore. I'm rich now." Then feeling generous, he added, "You can have the boat and my part of the stall at the fish market." *There!* he thought to himself, *I have given Hans his reward and he will be happy.*



The chest was too rotten to be moved, so they decided to take the treasure out of the chest. It was not easy to get it up the steep incline. In fact, it took several trips to carry it all up to the top. Frederick was so afraid that someone might come along and find his newly found wealth and steal it that he hated to leave it hidden up near the road for any length of time. Hans offered to either stay with it while Frederick climbed down for more, or else to go down and get more while Frederick kept watch. Frederick was about to agree to staying at the top and letting his friend do the hard work of climbing up and down, when that same dark voice spoke to him:

“How can you be so silly! If you let Hans go down to get more, he will take some and hide it without you knowing. If you leave him alone up here with the treasure he might just decide to take it as his share and take off with it. And you would never get it back.” Evil clouds of mistrust and suspicion filled Frederick’s mind. A new fear entered his life, a fear of losing his wealth. He had to find a way to protect it not just from Hans but from everyone else as well.

“Well, what do you want to do?” Hans asked.

“I think we should hide what we have carried up, and go down together and get the rest,” Frederick replied. “It’ll be quicker that way,” he added, trying to hide his mistrust of his friend.



Later, Hans walked to town and borrowed an ox and cart from a neighbor. "What? Have you caught so many fish today, Hans, that you need my cart to bring them all to the market?" his neighbor asked jokingly. Hans could only reply that it was Frederick who wanted to use the cart to pick up something heavy that he wanted to take to his house. Frederick had made Hans promise not to tell anyone about his good fortune. He was very afraid of losing it before he got to enjoy it.



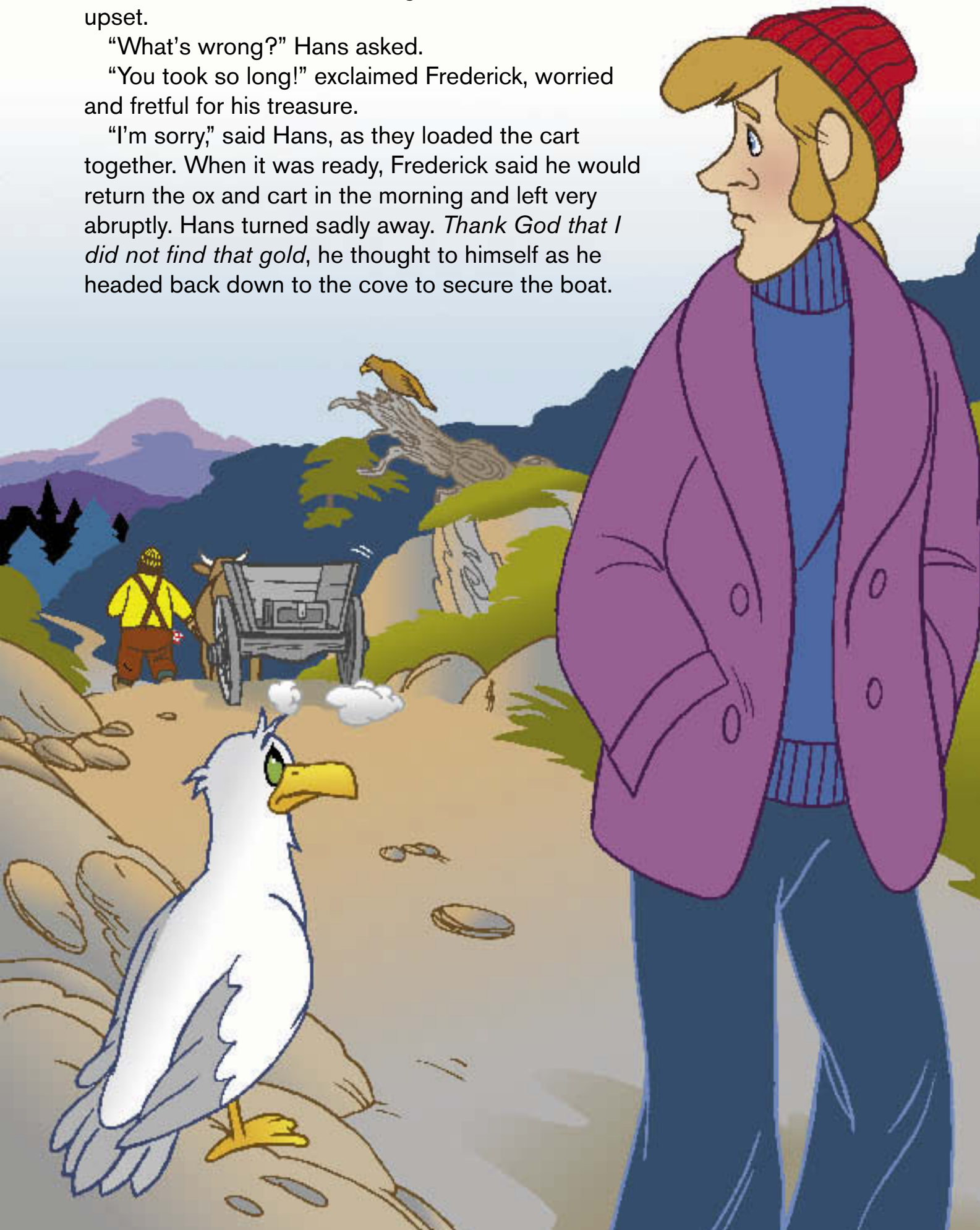
As Hans led the animal and cart back to where Frederick was hiding with his newfound treasure, he thought back over the past years they had worked together. They had seen happy times together. A sad salty tear rolled down Hans' cheek. He brushed it away quickly. Frederick would soon see him, and he did not want to seem sad about his friend's good fortune. "Don't worry, Hans," a kind voice within seemed to speak. "There is a much greater treasure for you."

Not far up the road, Hans came to the place where Frederick was hiding. But rather than being thankful for all the extra trouble he had gone to, Frederick was upset.

“What’s wrong?” Hans asked.

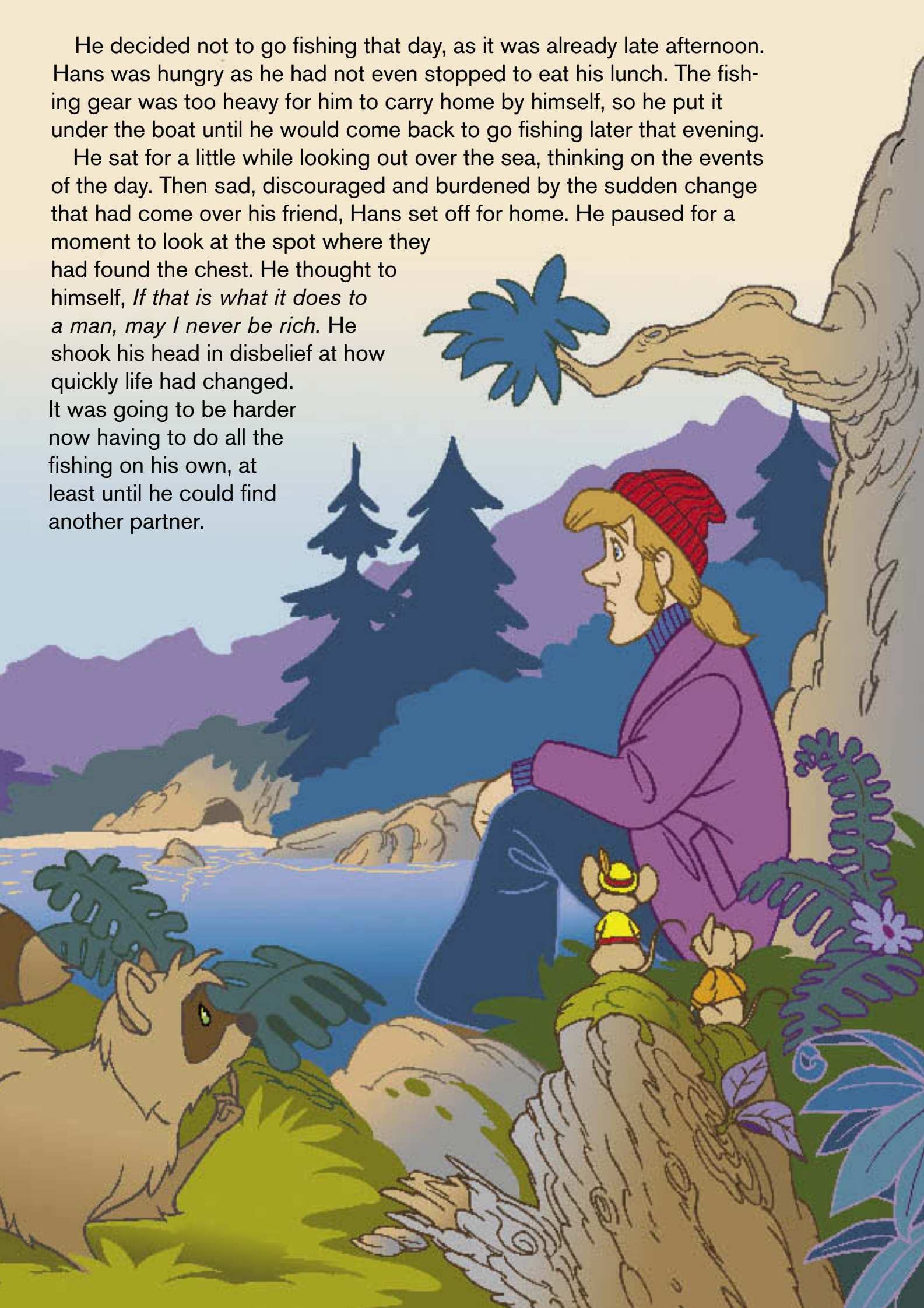
“You took so long!” exclaimed Frederick, worried and fretful for his treasure.

“I’m sorry,” said Hans, as they loaded the cart together. When it was ready, Frederick said he would return the ox and cart in the morning and left very abruptly. Hans turned sadly away. *Thank God that I did not find that gold*, he thought to himself as he headed back down to the cove to secure the boat.



He decided not to go fishing that day, as it was already late afternoon. Hans was hungry as he had not even stopped to eat his lunch. The fishing gear was too heavy for him to carry home by himself, so he put it under the boat until he would come back to go fishing later that evening.

He sat for a little while looking out over the sea, thinking on the events of the day. Then sad, discouraged and burdened by the sudden change that had come over his friend, Hans set off for home. He paused for a moment to look at the spot where they had found the chest. He thought to himself, *If that is what it does to a man, may I never be rich.* He shook his head in disbelief at how quickly life had changed. It was going to be harder now having to do all the fishing on his own, at least until he could find another partner.





The sun was already low in the sky when Hans neared home. Then he noticed someone slumped over on the side of the road just ahead of him. For a moment he was concerned that Frederick may have been robbed or in trouble, but as he came closer he found that it was a stranger resting by the road. The man stirred and Hans called to him, "Is everything okay, stranger?"

"Oh, yes," came the reply. The man spoke with an accent and clearly was not from that area.

"Have you traveled far?" Hans continued, interested and concerned for the welfare of this weary traveler.

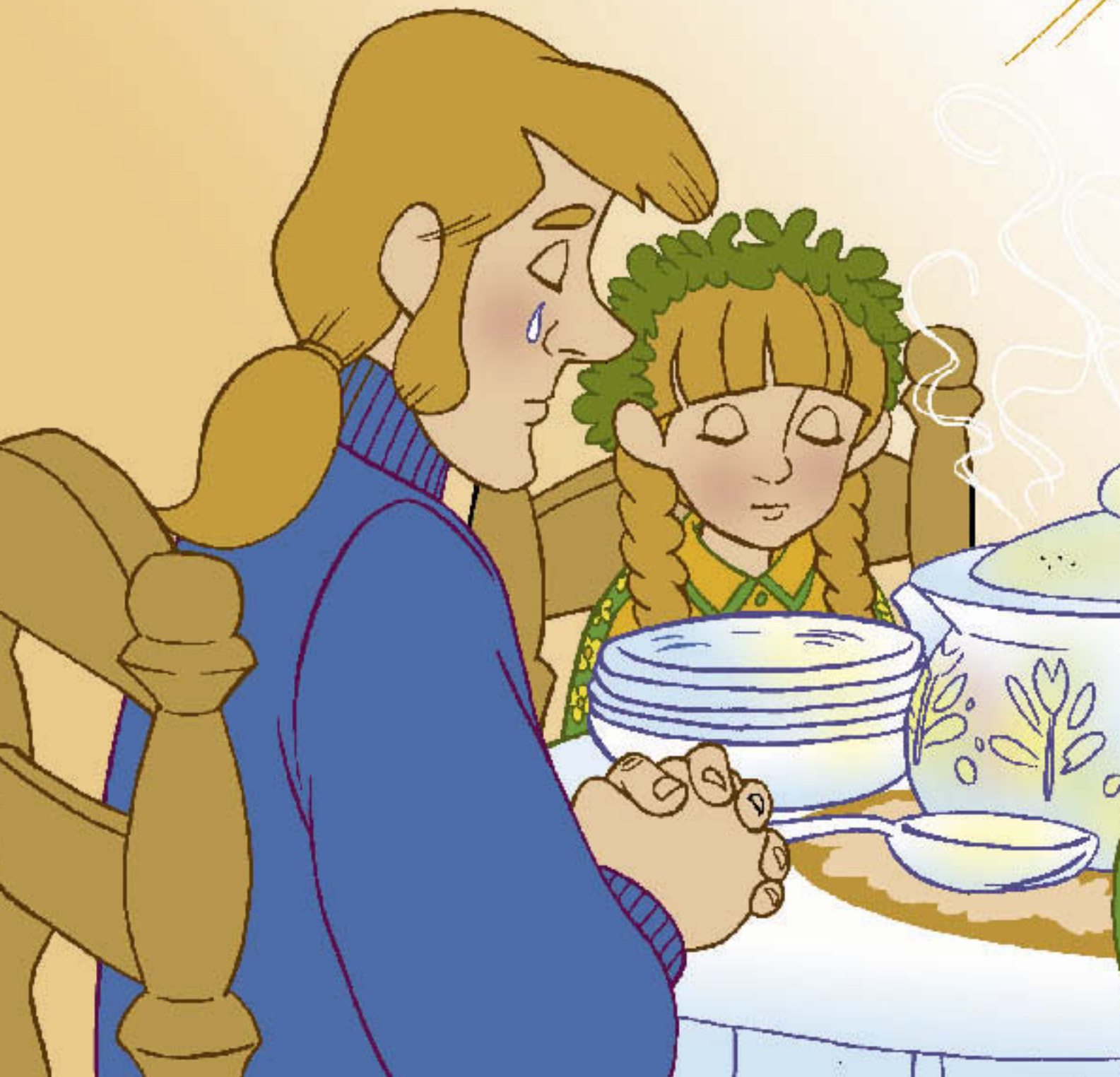
"Yes, a great distance," he replied.

"My cottage is very near, my friend. Come to my house and have supper with me and my family," Hans invited.

"God bless you, kind sir," the stranger replied, obviously touched by Hans' kindness.

Hans' wife and children greeted him at the door. Helga was a happy soul, not bothered at all by the extra unexpected mouth to feed. She made a little joke about never knowing what kind of fish Hans would come home with next. She poured warm water into a basin for the stranger to wash his hands and face, and gave him a clean towel to dry them with. The man had a very kind and gentle face and seemed to have only one small bag of belongings.

The family sat down to eat, but before they began, the stranger asked if he might pray for the meal. The words their visitor spoke were words that Hans had never heard before in his life. He spoke straight from his heart to God with such love, appreciation and sincerity that the room itself seemed to fill with the presence of God.





That evening Hans and his family learned all about God's great love, and the story of why Jesus had come to Earth and given His life to save them. When the man spoke of how Jesus had been betrayed for thirty pieces of silver by His own dear friend, Hans began to weep. He did not explain why. He could not. Soon Hans and his wife and children bowed their heads and prayed again with the stranger. This time they prayed to ask Jesus, God's Son, to come into their hearts and fill their lives with His love.

A wonderful peace and joy filled them. The stranger got up and took a large leather-bound book from his bag, opened it and read to them. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear My voice and open the door I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me."

The man then said, "In this book are written the Words of God. These words are more valuable than gold or silver, for in them you will find truth, light, and life eternal. I want you to learn to read and understand what is written in this book, so I will leave it with you and your family until I come again."



Then, before Hans or his wife could say much of anything, the man stood up, thanked them for the wonderful meal and evening together, and said that he had to continue his journey. He picked up his bag and slipped out the door. Hans looked at his wife in amazement and said, "But where will he go? It is getting late and there is no place to stay in town. We must have him stay with us tonight!"

Hans jumped up from his place at the table and ran quickly out the door to find the stranger. He was nowhere to be seen. Puzzled, Hans went all around the outside of the cottage. The man was gone. But where? Surely he couldn't just disappear into thin air!—Or could he? Mystified, yet filled with joy, Hans returned to his family, rejoicing for the wonderful thing God had done for them that evening.





Many years passed. Frederick had built himself a fine new house high up on a hill overlooking the sea. Sometimes in the late afternoon he would walk out on his balcony to watch the fishermen preparing their nets on the beach far below. The sight brought back memories of the years he had spent fishing with Hans. He used to have many friends, Hans and the other fishermen, but not any more. His beautiful house rarely held the sound of laughter in its large, richly furnished rooms and hallways. Frederick was lonely, for he had not learned that the secret to happiness is to share what you have with others.

Hard times had taken their toll in the little fishing village, and many people lived in poverty. Even though Frederick could have used some of his wealth to help the poor people, he didn't seem to notice or care. He had his own problems, or so he would say. Frederick now owned most of the fish markets along the coast, and many fishermen had to pay him very high rent to secure a small space in his markets to sell their fish.



But fish and finances were not on his mind this evening. Frederick's eldest son, Sammy, was in serious trouble again. Frederick didn't yet know all the details, but he was furious with him and had come out on the balcony for a few moments to cool off. *I gave him the best! I gave him everything he ever wanted!* Frederick reviewed his relationship with his son in his mind.

A small voice then seemed to speak to him, "Perhaps that is the problem. You gave your son everything, but you never taught him to be responsible or concerned for others. No wonder he has grown up so selfish and self-centered and inconsiderate." Frederick stopped short in his tracks, stunned by this terrible thought. *Could it be that my own example of selfishness and greed has helped to create such a problem son?* For a moment his mind flashed back to that day so long ago when he declared that the treasure was all his and saw the hurt look in Hans' eyes.





Down the hill from Frederick's house, closer to the shore, stood Hans' simple little cottage. Here was a very different scene. This particular afternoon, Hans sat happily in his old wooden rocking chair, the family cat competing with the old leather-bound Bible for a place on his lap. His mind drifted back to his early years. He smiled as he remembered the day he and Frederick took their boat out for the first time. He remembered their joy, Frederick's happy face with the wind blowing in his hair. *Poor Frederick*, he thought, *I don't think I have ever seen him truly smile again since he found that terrible box.* Frederick was not a happy man any more. Now he didn't get along well with his wife or anyone. Hans looked up and smiled as his own dear wife brought him a cup of warm broth and gave him a kiss on the forehead. *Dear God, I am so blessed. I am such a wealthy man. If only I could share some of my riches with Frederick.*

Just then his daughter Beatrice poked her head in the door. "Hello Father!" she said.

"My beautiful daughter, come right in," said Hans. In came Beatrice pulling with her a bashful Cedric. Cedric and Beatrice were in love. Hans could tell! Cedric's family had a lumber mill inland. He was a good boy and would make a good husband for her. Beatrice was the baby of the family, and the last to leave home. Hans smiled contentedly; life had been so good to him.

"Still reading, Father?" Beatrice asked, touching the well-worn Bible in her father's lap. Many nights she had sat enthralled by his side as he had read them stories from that book. Hans treasured the book and read it often. Through its pages he and his whole family had come to know and love Jesus as their Friend and Savior.





Love, Joy, Peace, Longsuffering, Gentleness, Hope and Praise were constant guests at Hans' home, and many of his neighbors frequently visited the warm little cottage. Even in the darkest and most difficult times, Hans' home was alight with contentment and peace. And, of course, many came and met a constant guest in Hans' house—Jesus. Hans never made a lot of money, but his family always seemed to have enough. Whenever they had a little extra, they happily shared it with others.





While sitting in his rocking chair, Hans suddenly felt an urgency inside him. "I don't know why," he said, "but I just feel very sad for my old friend Frederick tonight. Would you mind if we all prayed for him right now?"

Cedric was not too sure he wanted to pray for someone so selfish as old "Fishhook Fred," as he called him. "That man never does anything for anyone," he grumbled, "without some hidden hook and line attached to it!" Beatrice, however, soon convinced him that the man was more to be pitied and prayed for than to be hated.

"Yes, Father, let's pray for him," said Beatrice. "It most certainly couldn't do any harm!" So right then and there Hans and his daughter, and a somewhat reluctant Cedric, bowed their heads and prayed for Frederick.



Calmer now, Frederick decided to go back inside the house. He sat down in his favorite chair and picked up the paper. He was about to open it to the financial section, when he noticed a small headline: "POVERTY LEVEL IN COASTAL FISHING COMMUNITIES REACHES ALL-TIME HIGH." Then below, in a small two-inch square were the words "GOD IS LOVE." God is love? The words seemed to come alive. Frederick began to read. The article spoke of the terrible poverty in the fishing community and how one man's great faith and love for God had helped so many have the courage to keep going. The article spoke of a simple saint, a man named Hans, whose house and hands were always open to the poor to share what little he had.



Frederick's face flushed. Could this Hans be his old friend? It had to be! His wife, who happened to pass through the room at that moment, was surprised to see Frederick looking so troubled and deep in thought. "Are you all right, my love?" she asked.

'My love'—I haven't heard those words in years; how sweet they sound, thought Frederick. She placed her hand gently on his shoulder. He reached up and softly patted her hand. "I'm fine," he said. "I was just reading this article."

"Oh, the one about Hans," she said.

"So this fellow is really him?" queried Frederick.

"Why, of course. Everyone knows about Hans. You two used to be such friends. Why don't you go and see him?" She was surprised at her own words. Hans' name had not been mentioned for many years in their household. Frederick had long since forgotten such friendships. He looked up hesitantly.

"Yes, go on! It will do you good," she encouraged.





As though pulled by a force greater than himself, Frederick rose from his chair. "I will!"

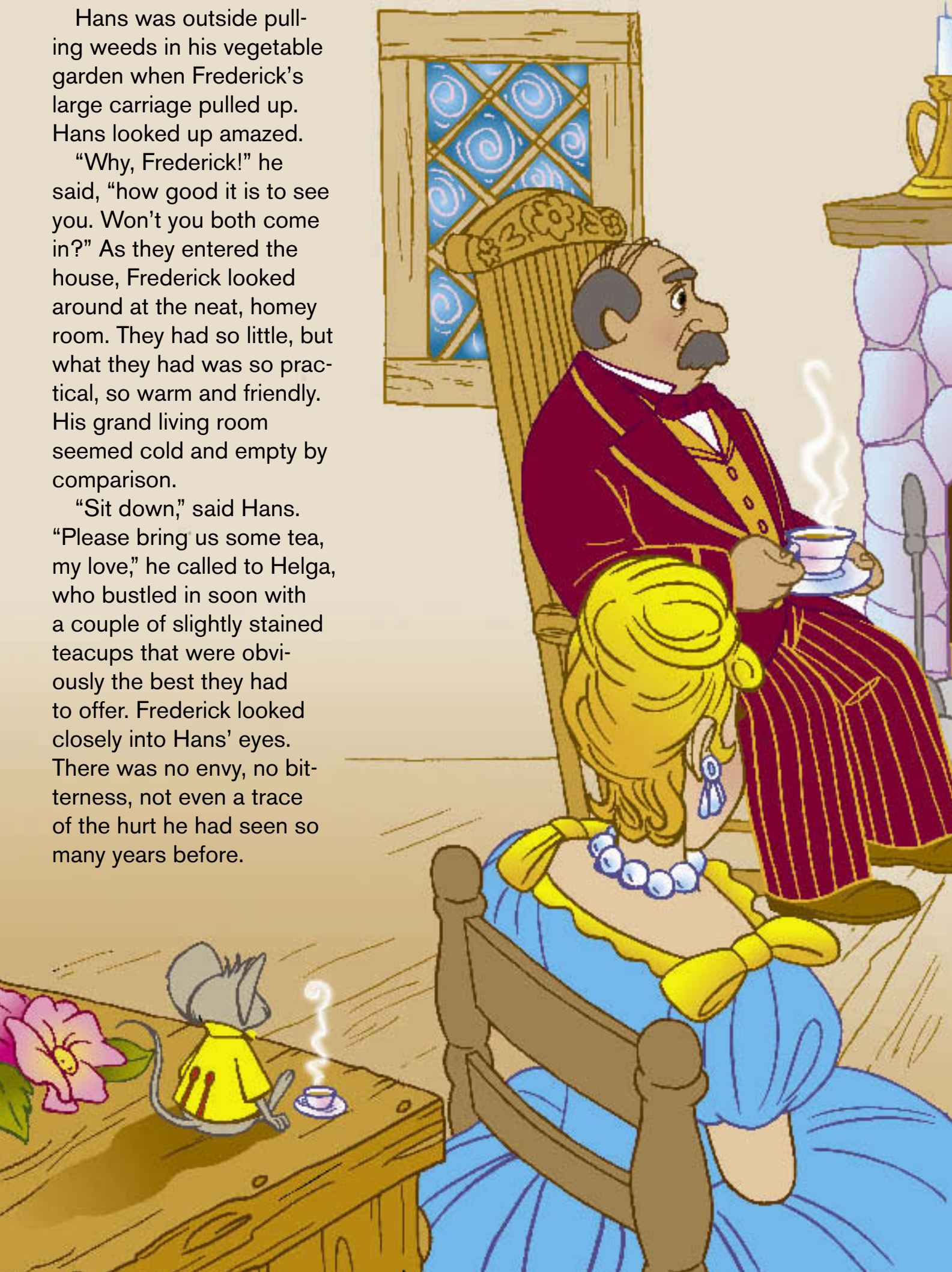
"And I'll come with you!" she said, dashing off to get their coats. If anyone could help her husband find peace and meaning in life, Hans could, she thought.

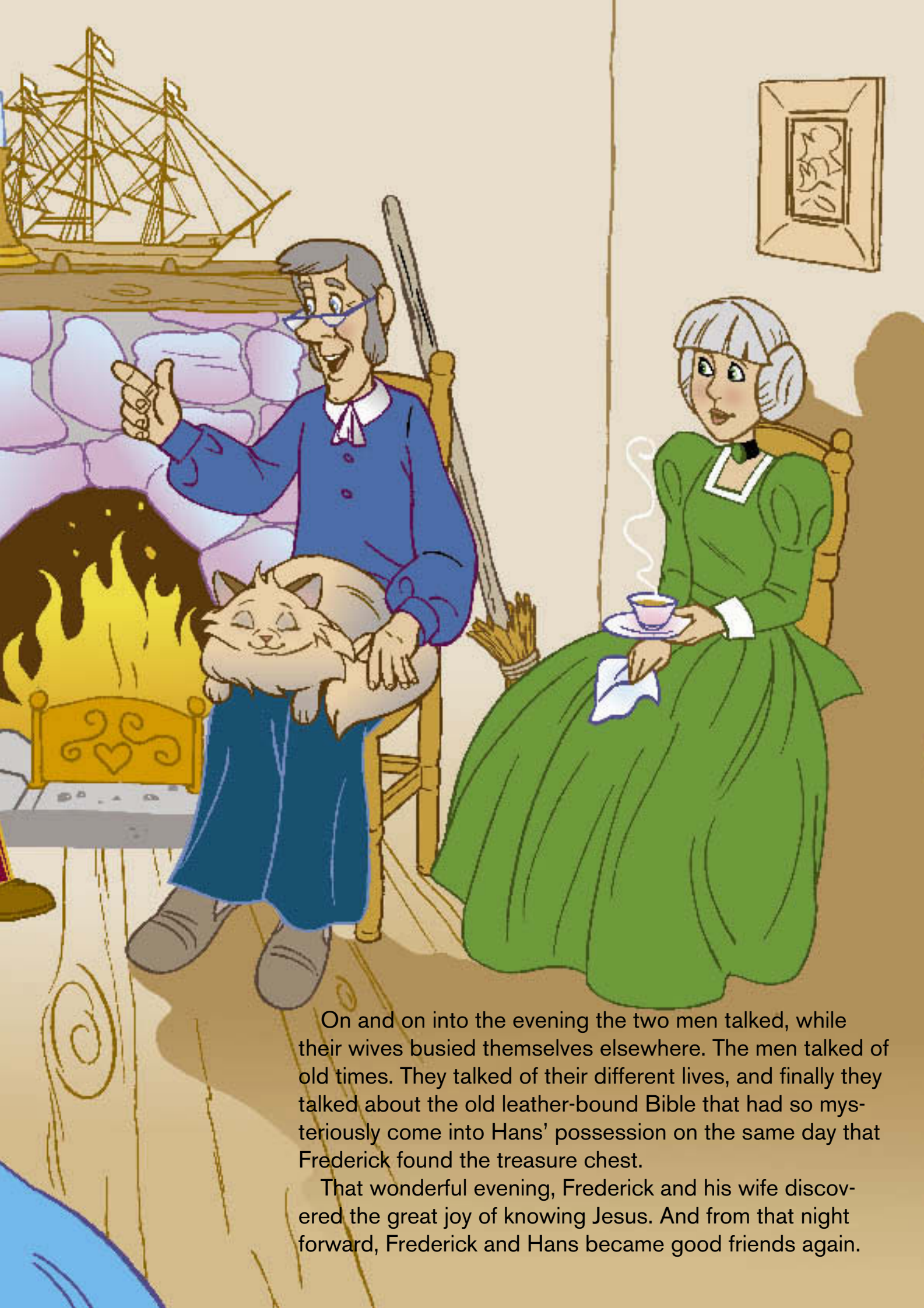
Soon Frederick and his wife found themselves outside Hans' gate. Frederick was still a bit surprised by his own impulsive actions. Hans' house was much as he remembered it: the sturdy wooden hut had grown a room or two, fish were set out drying in the late afternoon sunlight, the garden was well kept, and the air was perfumed with the faint smell of seaweed. A hundred memories tumbled back into his head.

Hans was outside pulling weeds in his vegetable garden when Frederick's large carriage pulled up. Hans looked up amazed.

"Why, Frederick!" he said, "how good it is to see you. Won't you both come in?" As they entered the house, Frederick looked around at the neat, homey room. They had so little, but what they had was so practical, so warm and friendly. His grand living room seemed cold and empty by comparison.

"Sit down," said Hans. "Please bring us some tea, my love," he called to Helga, who bustled in soon with a couple of slightly stained teacups that were obviously the best they had to offer. Frederick looked closely into Hans' eyes. There was no envy, no bitterness, not even a trace of the hurt he had seen so many years before.





On and on into the evening the two men talked, while their wives busied themselves elsewhere. The men talked of old times. They talked of their different lives, and finally they talked about the old leather-bound Bible that had so mysteriously come into Hans' possession on the same day that Frederick found the treasure chest.

That wonderful evening, Frederick and his wife discovered the great joy of knowing Jesus. And from that night forward, Frederick and Hans became good friends again.

When Frederick returned from visiting Hans, he went and made things right with his son, Sammy. He apologized for having failed him so badly by not teaching him about the true riches in life, the joy of giving. At first Sammy was suspicious that this was just another of his father's tricks to get him to do what he wanted. But as the days passed, he saw his father truly dedicating his life and his fortune to helping and caring for the poor fishermen he had exploited for so many years. Sammy was determined to find out what Hans had done to him. "I think this man is jealous of my father and is just trying to get hold of his money. I must find out for myself."



Find out he did. Soon Sammy also discovered Jesus, and his life changed. He began reading from Hans' big book all about the wonderful Man who one day had visited some fishermen by the Sea of Galilee, and how their lives and the world were never the same because of it. Sammy wanted to be like those men who gave up all that they had to follow Jesus. In time, Sammy became a missionary doctor who always told people that: "God transformed my selfish father into a kind generous man in just one day!"



“Hans! Look what I found!”

Fredrick and Hans have been fishing partners for years at Pirate’s Cove, until one day they stumble upon a wooden chest.

Needy and Greedy is a story about friends and the discovery that drove them apart. Can anything bring them back together again?

**Enjoy another terrific
“Story to Grow By,”
about friendship,
selfishness, forgiveness
and love!**

