



THE GINGERBREAD BOY

A long time ago, when stories were true, a little old woman and a little old man lived together in a little old house. They were happy enough, but sometimes they were lonely.

“I wish we had some company,” said the little old woman.

“Someone to bring us a cup of tea,” said the little old man.

The little old woman clapped her hands. “I know!



I'll make a little boy out of gingerbread. He will have raisin eyes, a smiley mouth, a cherry nose, and three shiny cherry buttons on his coat. I'll cook him in the oven until he is done—and he'll keep us company forever and ever." And she went hurrying into her kitchen to weigh and mix and stir.

Very soon there was a wonderful smell of hot gingerbread.

"When will our gingerbread boy be ready?" asked the little old man.

“He’ll be ready when the clock strikes three,” said the little old woman.

Sure enough, just as the clock struck three, there was a tap tap tapping from inside the oven.

“Let me out! Let me out!” called a voice.

The little old woman hurried to open the oven door, and the gingerbread boy jumped out.



“Welcome, gingerbread boy!” said the little old woman.
“Welcome to our home!”

“And we’d like you to make us a nice cup of tea,” said the little old man.

The gingerbread boy looked left, and the gingerbread boy looked right, and he frowned at the little old man.

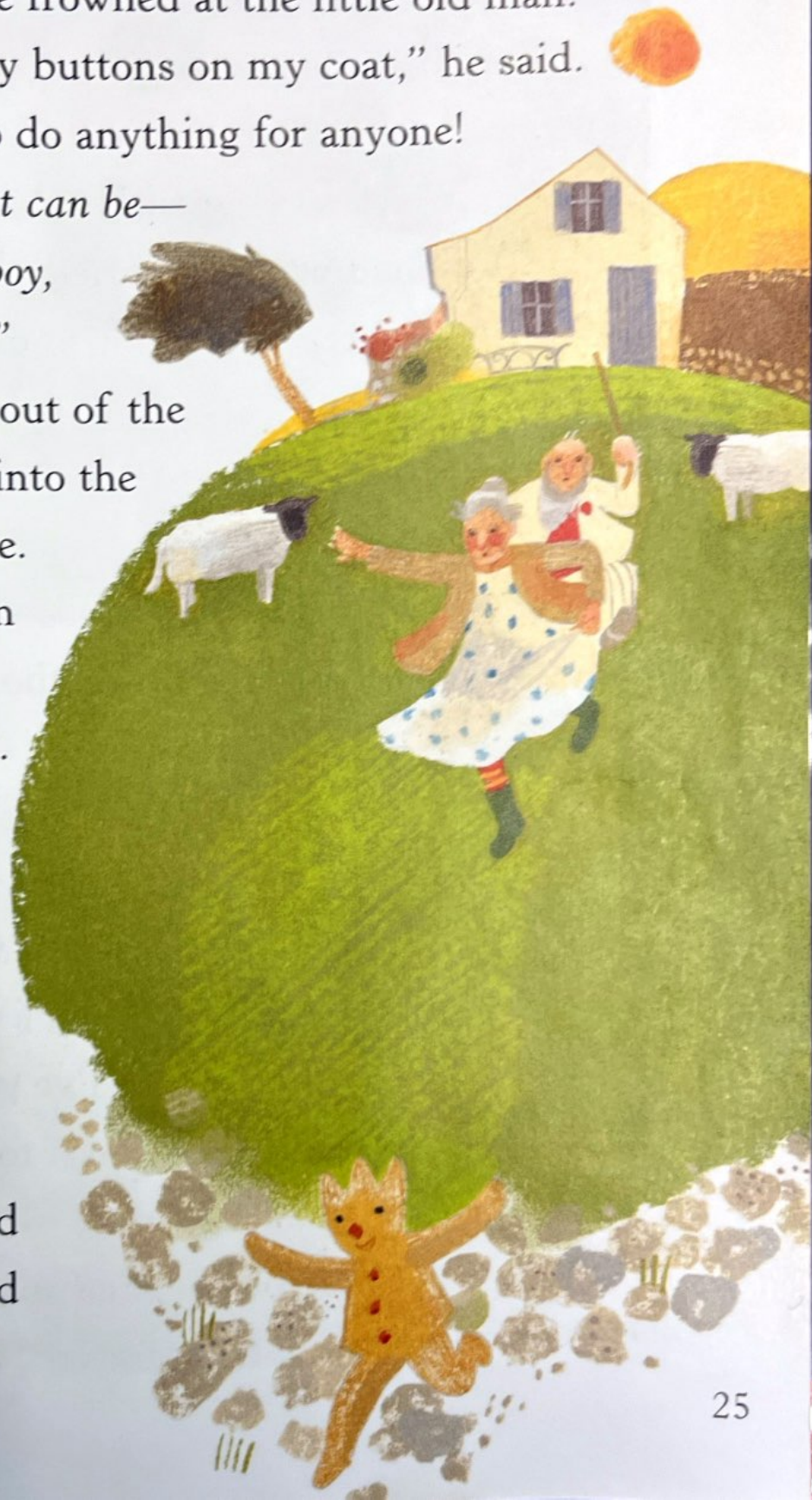
“I’ve got three cherry buttons on my coat,” he said. “I’m much too smart to do anything for anyone!

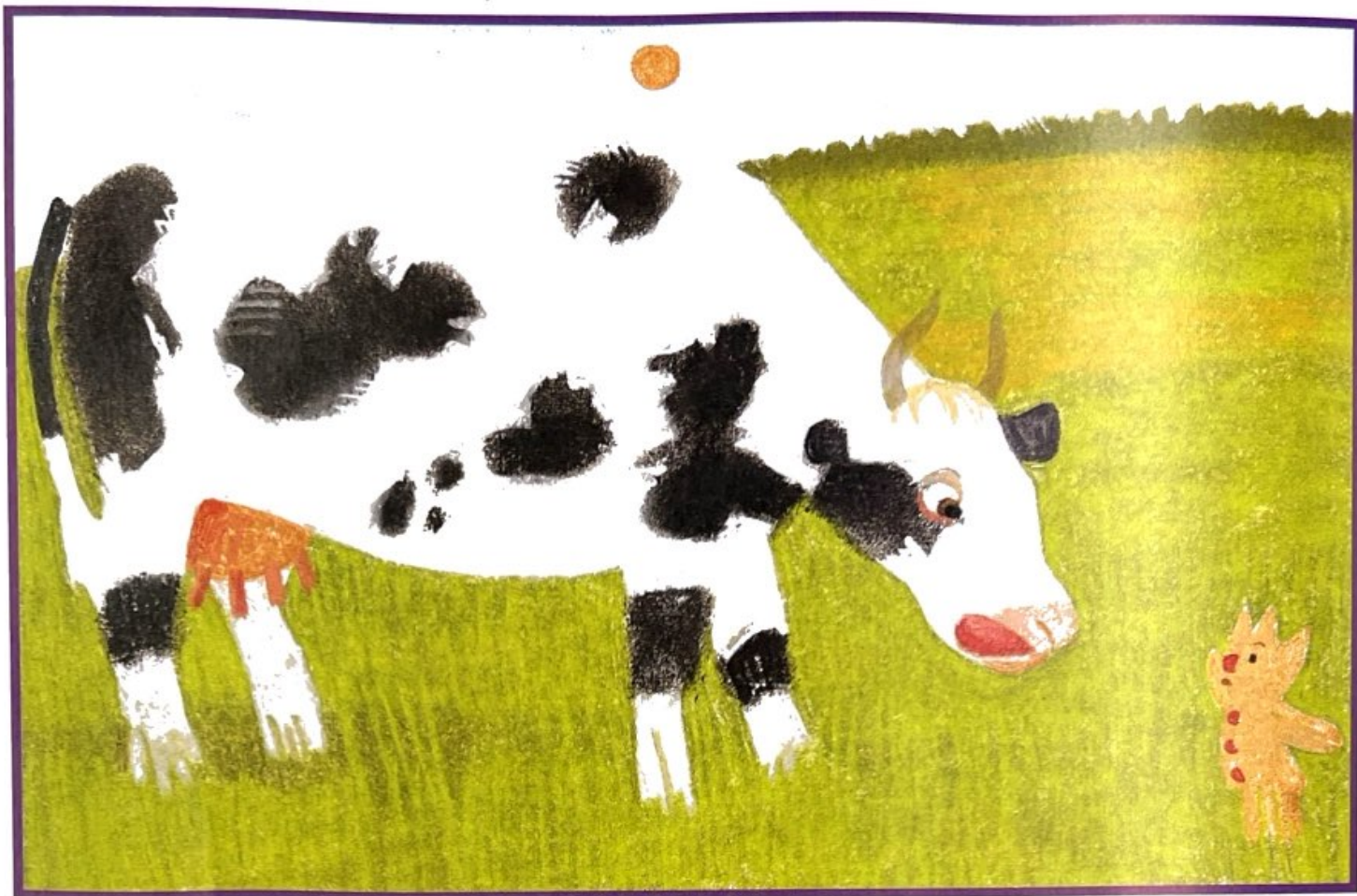
*I’m as smart as smart can be—
I’m the gingerbread boy,
and you can’t catch me!”*

And he ran straight out of the open kitchen door and into the wide wide world outside.

The little old woman and the little old man went hurrying after him.

“Stop! Stop!” they called, but the gingerbread boy did not stop. Away and away he ran, over the green grassy field, and the little old woman and the little old man puffed behind him.





A black-and-white cow saw the gingerbread boy running by.

“Ooooh, little gingerbread boy,” she mooed. “Come here and let me eat you!”

The gingerbread boy looked at the cow, and he made a face.

“Yah! Boo!” he shouted. “I’ve got three cherry buttons on my coat! I’m much too smart to be eaten by a cow!

I’m as smart as smart can be—

I’m the gingerbread boy, and you can’t catch me!”

And he ran away from the cow and into the woods.



The black-and-white cow went trundling after him as fast as she could go.

“Stop! Stop! Come back and be eaten!” she mooed, but the gingerbread boy did not stop. Away and away he ran, in between the trees, and the black-and-white cow and the little old woman and the little old man puffed behind him.

A big brown horse saw the gingerbread boy running by.

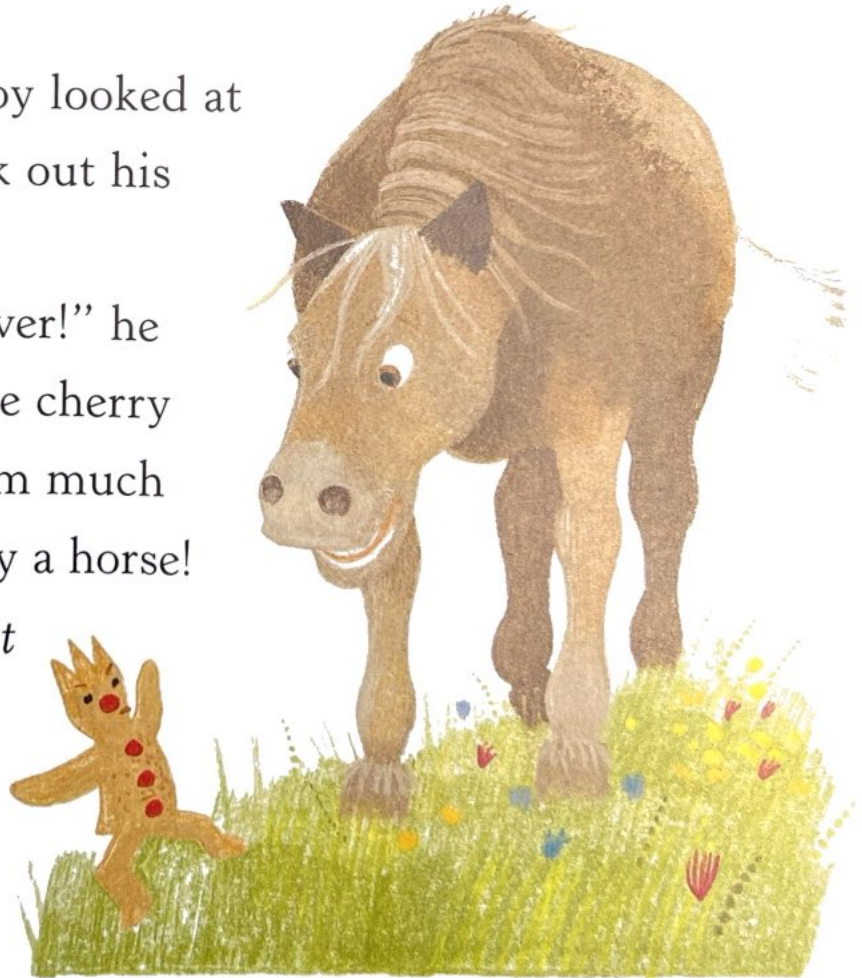
“Hey, little gingerbread boy,” he neighed. “Come here and let me eat you!”

The gingerbread boy looked at the horse, and he stuck out his tongue.

“Never! Never! Never!” he shouted. “I’ve got three cherry buttons on my coat! I’m much too smart to be eaten by a horse!

*I’m as smart as smart
can be—*

*I’m the gingerbread
boy, and you can’t
catch me!”*



And he ran away from the horse and along the riverbank.

The big brown horse went galloping after him.

“Stop! Stop! Come back and be eaten!” he neighed, but the gingerbread boy did not stop. Away and away he ran, beside the rushing river, and the big brown horse and the black-and-white cow and the little old woman and the little old man puffed behind him.



A brown and whiskery fox saw the gingerbread boy running by.

“Good afternoon, young sir,” said the fox. “My! What a hurry you’re in!”

“I’m running away from a horse and a cow and a little old woman and a little old man!” said the gingerbread boy.

“I’m as smart as smart can be—

I’m the gingerbread boy, and they can’t catch me!”



“Oh my,” said the fox, and he smiled a cunning smile. “Why don’t you swim across the river and leave them all behind?”

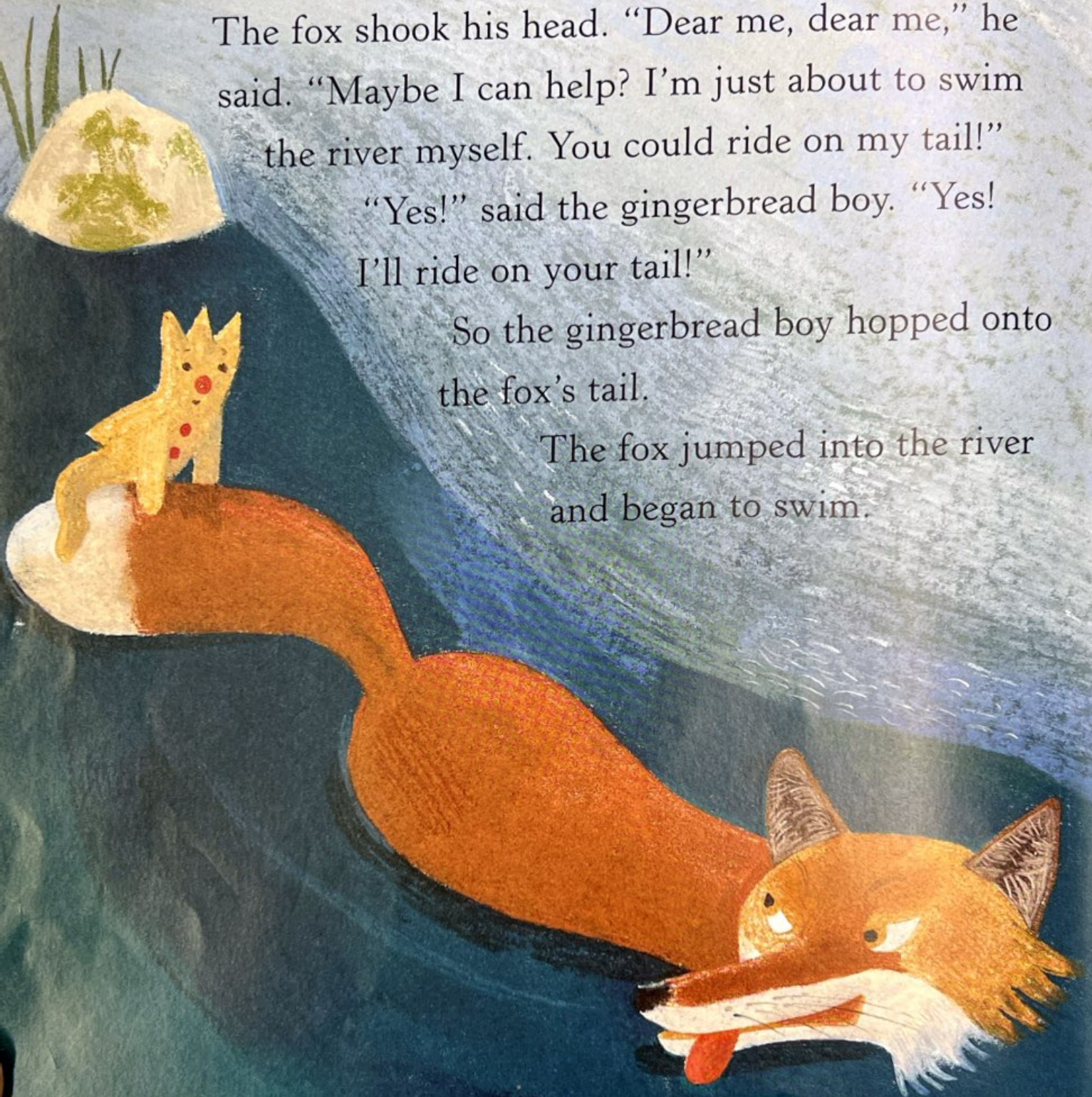
The gingerbread boy stopped. He looked at the river. “I don’t think I can swim,” he said.

The fox shook his head. “Dear me, dear me,” he said. “Maybe I can help? I’m just about to swim the river myself. You could ride on my tail!”

“Yes!” said the gingerbread boy. “Yes! I’ll ride on your tail!”

So the gingerbread boy hopped onto the fox’s tail.

The fox jumped into the river and began to swim.



He hadn't gone far when he said, "Gingerbread boy, you're too heavy for my tail. Climb up on my back!"

The gingerbread boy scrambled onto the fox's back, and the fox swam on. He swam and he swam, and then he said, "Gingerbread boy, you're too heavy for my back. Climb up on my nose!"

The gingerbread boy balanced himself on the fox's nose, and the fox swam on.

He swam and he swam and he swam until he reached the bank on the other side of the river.

Then he licked his lips, and he tossed the gingerbread boy up in the air—and he gobbled him ALL up.



YUM YUM YUM!