

MIA'S TEA PARTY

It was the day before Mia's birthday. All the invitations for the tea party had been sent out, and the house was busy with preparations. Mother had begun slicing apples for apple dumplings. Father was setting up the dining room so that there would be enough room to display all the delicious snacks and desserts that Mother was baking. Her brother, Lucas, had gone outside to wash and brush Pegasus' coat.

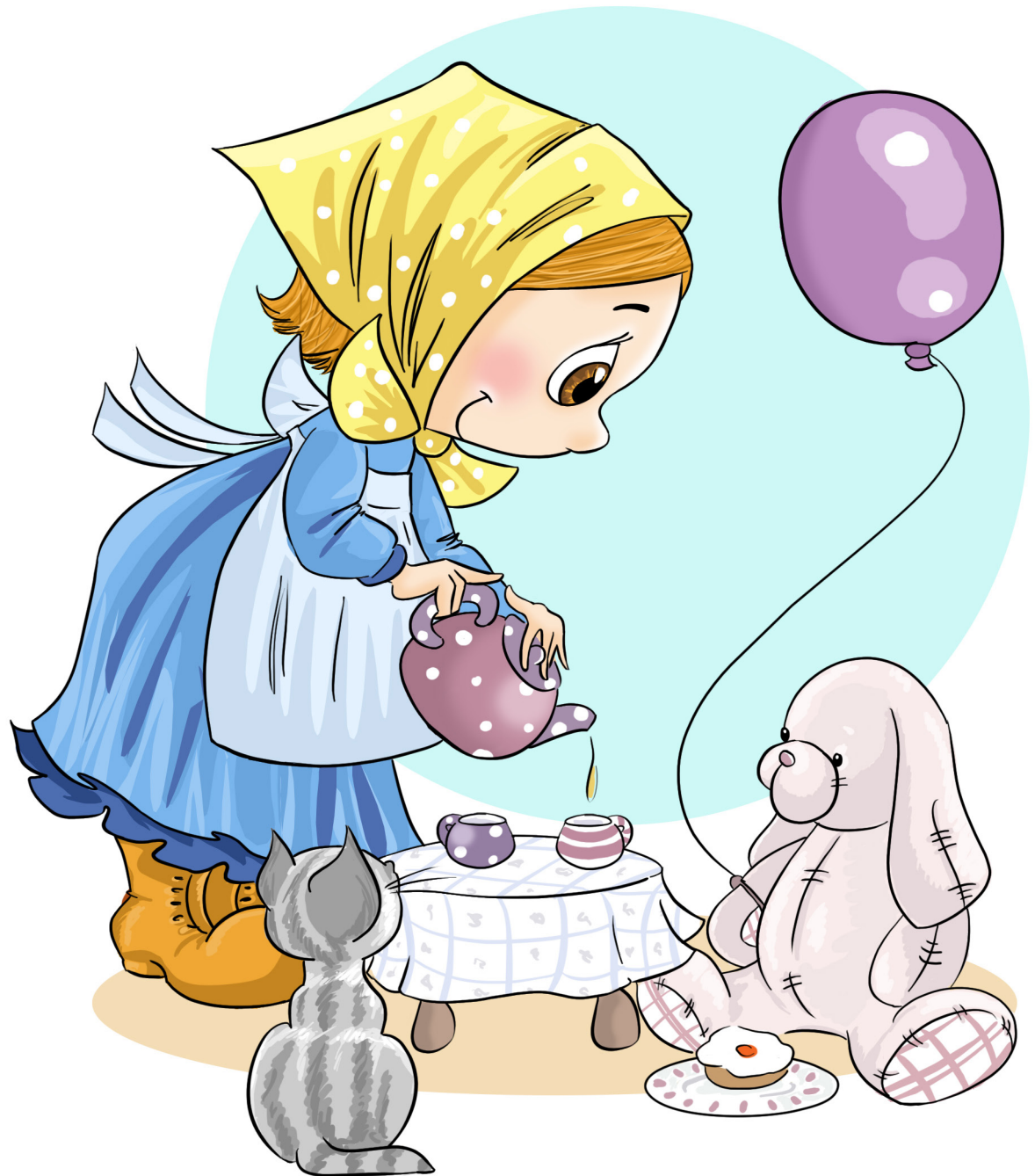
Mia was so excited! With two baskets in her hand, she raced to the patch at the front of their house to pick strawberries.

A chilly wind had begun to blow, but Mia, busy with her strawberry picking, didn't pay attention. As she filled her baskets with strawberries, she smiled at thoughts of the party the next day. "I'll wear my pretty dress with the bows on the sleeves—the one that flares when I spin. Mother has promised to make apple dumplings and strawberry tarts and pecan pie, and we'll drink apple cider. It will be so wonderful!"

Everything seemed to be going perfectly. With her baskets filled, Mia ran back into the house.

"Dear me," said Mother, "you picked enough strawberries to feed all of Golden Sun Valley." She felt Mia's rosy cheeks and said, "It's cold outside. Why didn't you put on your overcoat?"

"Oh, I wasn't out for long," said Mia, as she rubbed her arms for warmth.



That night during dinner...

"Achoo!" Mia's eyes had begun to water and her nose had turned bright red. "Achoo!"

"Oh, darling, I think you've gotten chilled," said Mother.

"I can't have a cold! I have to be fine for tomorrow!" said Mia as she sneezed again. "I'm fine, truly." But her eyes began to droop and her cheeks were flushed.

"I think that bed is what you need right now," said Father. "We'll see how you are feeling in the morning."

Mia felt too tired and miserable to say anything. Father picked her up and carried her to her room. As he tucked her into bed and prayed with her, Mia's last thoughts were of the tea party and that she must be better by morning.



Although Mia didn't feel as bad the next day, she wasn't fully better. It was decided that the tea party would have to be delayed until Mia had recovered.

Lucas came into the room to comfort her.

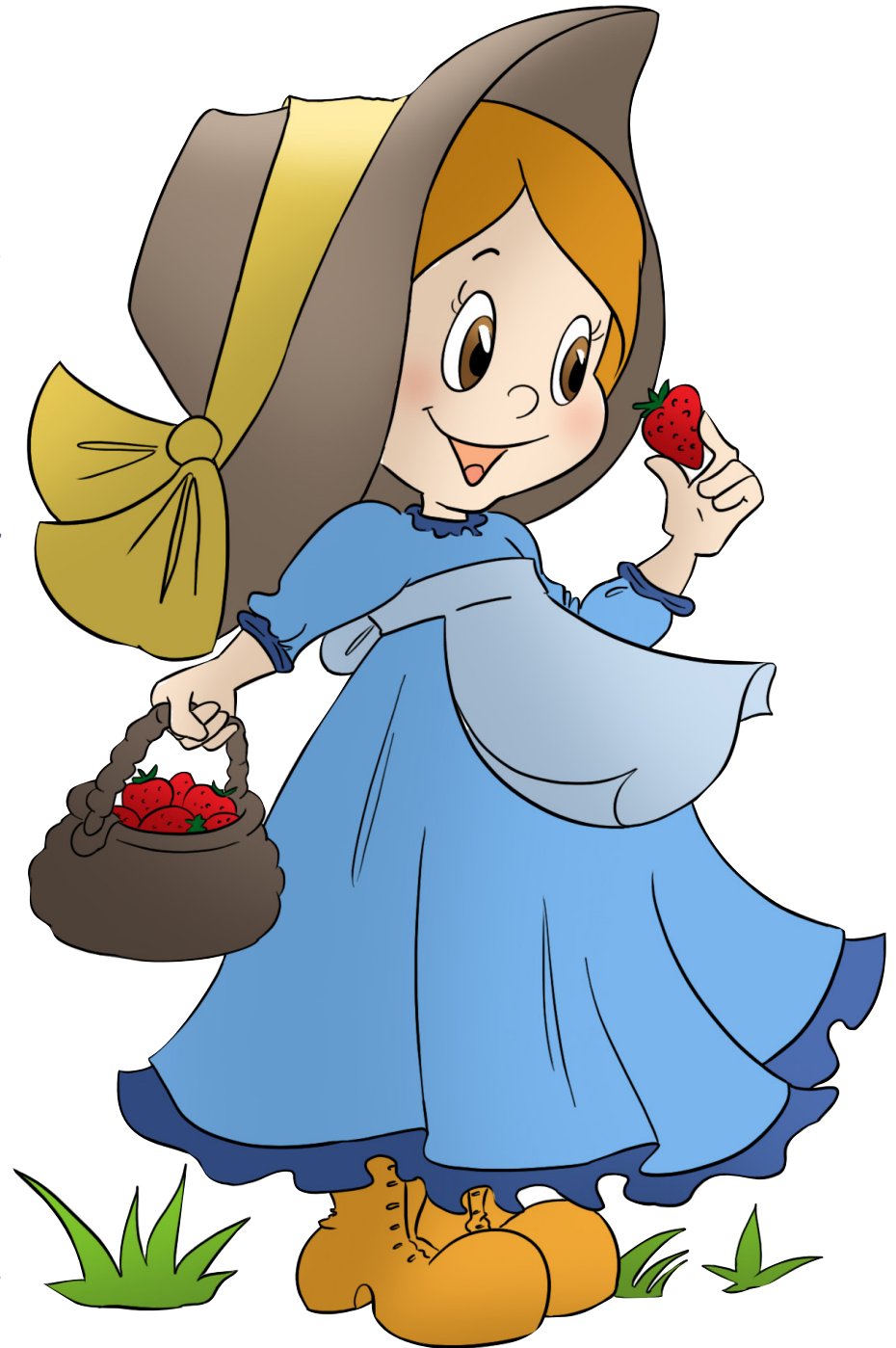
Mia huddled deeper under the covers. "Mother says I've caught a chill and that I need to rest to recover. Now I won't be able to have any of my friends over for the tea party!"

"I'm sorry," said Lucas. "Maybe there is still something that we can do, even though the tea party will have to wait. How about I tell you a story? You love stories ... would you like that?"

"What will the story be about?" inquired Mia, forgetting her sadness for a moment.

"Do you know the shiny trophy that is on the bookshelf downstairs?"

"The one that you won at the fair racetrack with Pegasus?" Lucas nodded. "Father says that you did so well to win that race," said Mia eagerly, always pleased to hear of her brother's exploits.



Lucas smiled. "Did you know that I hadn't planned to race Pegasus at all?"

"I didn't know!" exclaimed Mia.

"I had grown the largest, most beautiful pumpkin ever, and I was to enter it in the pumpkin contest. But only a week before the fair, our goat, Artemis, escaped from his pen, and that was the end of my pumpkin."

"How sad you must have been!" Mia could understand the sort of disappointment that Lucas must have felt.

Lucas continued. "Yes, I was very sad and disappointed. Much of my perfect pumpkin was inside Artemis' stomach, and I would have nothing for the fair."

"What did you do?" Mia asked.

"I was angry and upset," Lucas explained. "I wouldn't come into the house. I felt sorry for myself all day. When I finally went into the house for dinner, Father came and sat with me. He was sorry that my pumpkin was gone, but he asked me how long I planned to be sad and feel sorry for myself. He prayed with me and then suggested that I instead count up all the things that I was still looking forward to at the fair."

"By the time that was done, I felt much better. I was still a little cross about losing my pumpkin, but thinking about other things helped me not be so sad. We then began to think of what else I could compete in at the fair. And that's how I came to race Pegasus."

"And you won!"

"I did. And now I think I am glad that Artemis ate the pumpkin. If he hadn't, I might never have started entering Pegasus in the local races." Since that time, Lucas and Pegasus had competed in a number of small events and had done very well in all of them.

"I wish that I didn't mind so much about my tea party. It's not nice feeling sick, and I really don't want to have to stay in bed," said Mia, realizing that Lucas' story had a lot to do with what had happened to her tea party as well. "What should I do?"

"We can pray. That's what Father did with me when I was feeling sad that day, and it helped so much."

Bowing their heads, Lucas prayed. "Dear Jesus, thank You for how You always help things turn out right. Even when something happens that isn't so nice for us at first, You can make everything better in the end. Please help Mia to be happy even though she is sick, and show us if there is anything else that we can do today that will be fun for Mia on her birthday."



“And thank You that I’ll still get to have my party and wear my dress, even though it will be on a different day. Amen,” added Mia, finishing the prayer.

Mia was feeling much happier already. Even having to stay in bed was nice, especially when Lucas kept her company.

Father came in, carrying the checkers box under his arm. Seeing Mia’s smile and Lucas sitting on the chair next to her bed, he knew that something good had happened and he was proud of them both. “Well,” he said, “even though Mia is in bed, that shouldn’t stop us from celebrating her birthday!”

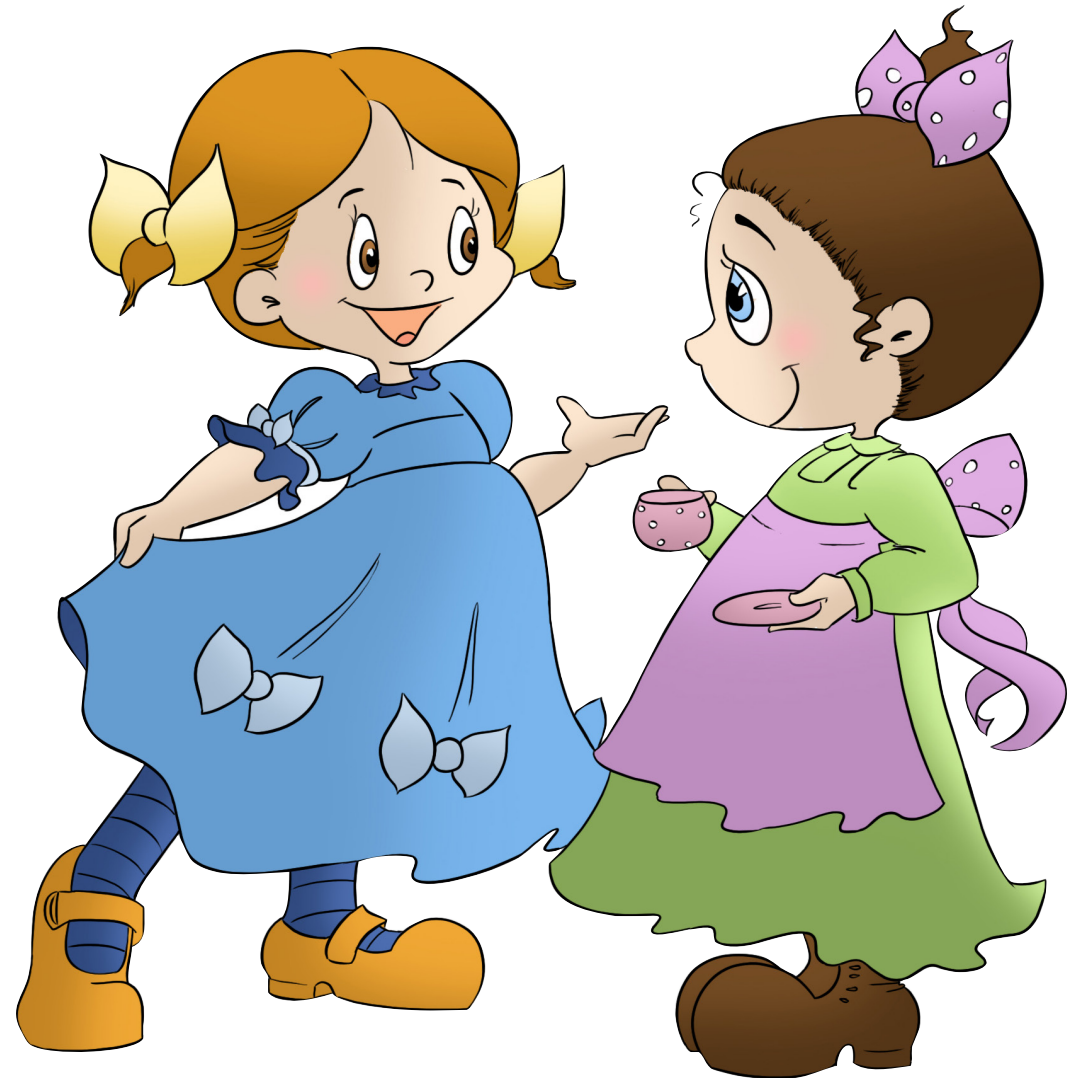
The rest of the day was filled with fun and laughter. Father played checkers with Mia, and then Mia played checkers with Lucas. Mother brought them all steaming mugs of herbal tea and plates of sliced fruit. Afterwards, Father told stories from when he was a boy, and then Mother sat on the bed and sang songs with Mia.



A week later, on a sunny afternoon, the long-awaited tea party took place. Mia was wearing her pretty dress with the ribbons. Mother served apple cider to the guests, while Lucas let Mia and her friends ride Pegasus.

“Weren’t you very sad, being sick on your birthday?” Sarah asked Mia as they stood waiting for a piece of pecan pie.

“At first I was sad, but then I realized that I didn’t really need to be,” Mia said, feeling quite grown up. “It was a



special day even though it wasn’t a tea party. And we get to celebrate my birthday again today with all of you!”

The End