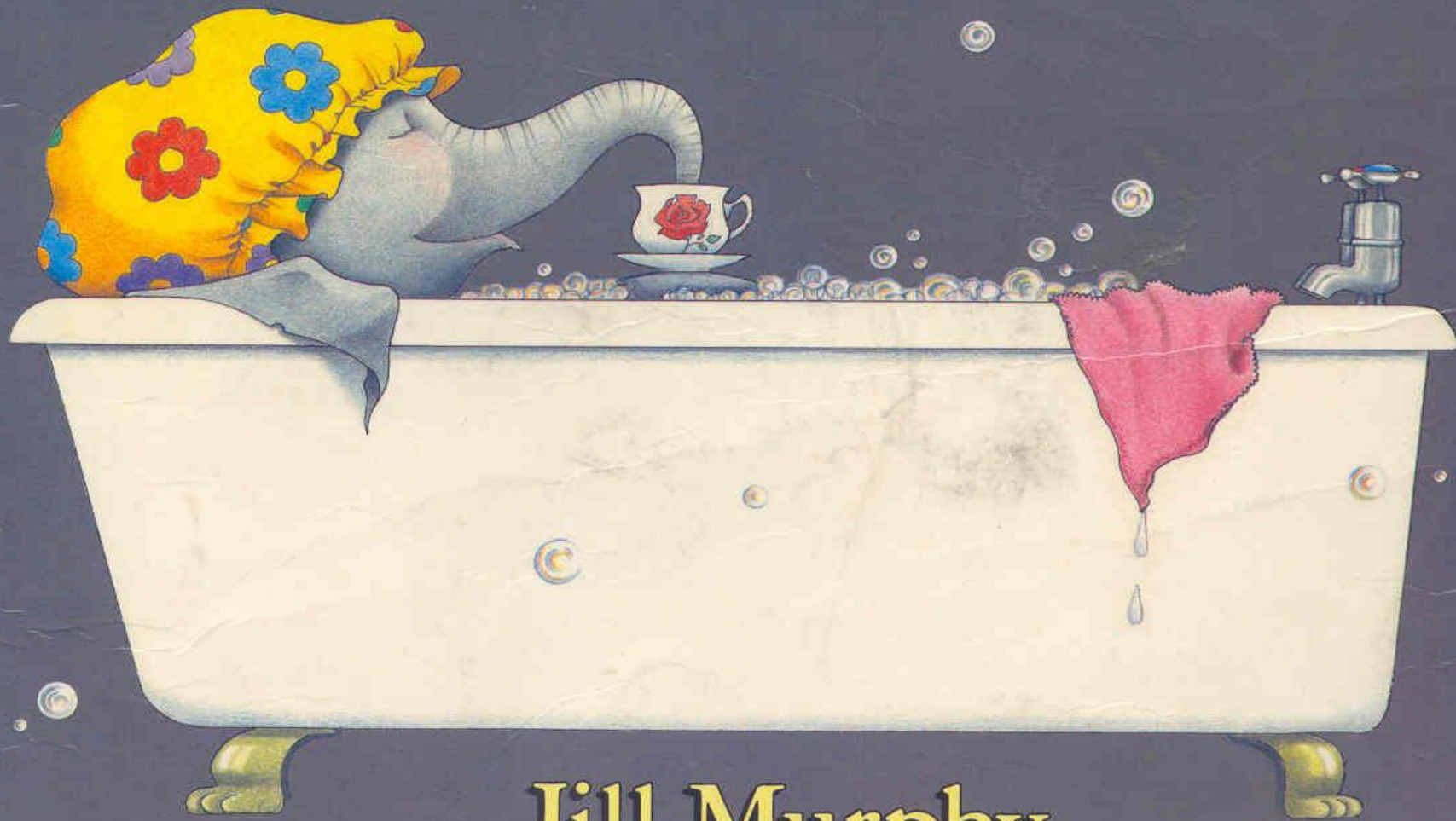


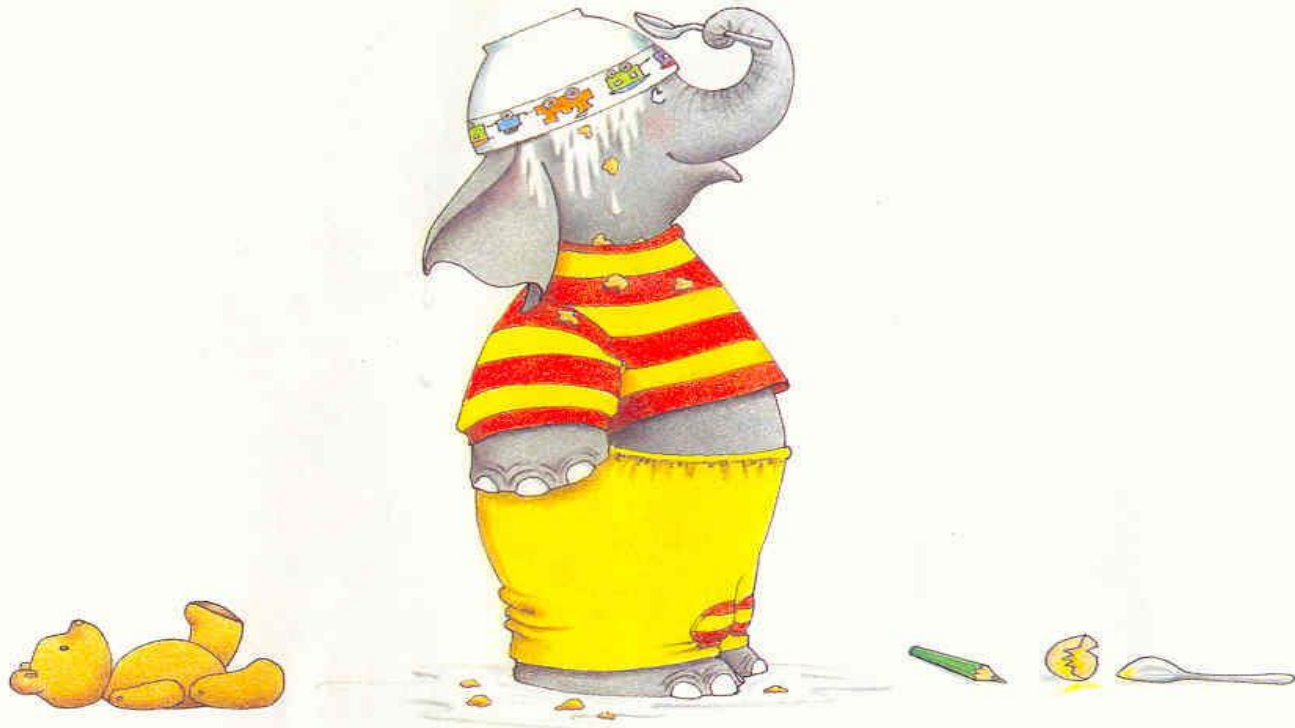


Five Minutes' Peace



Jill Murphy

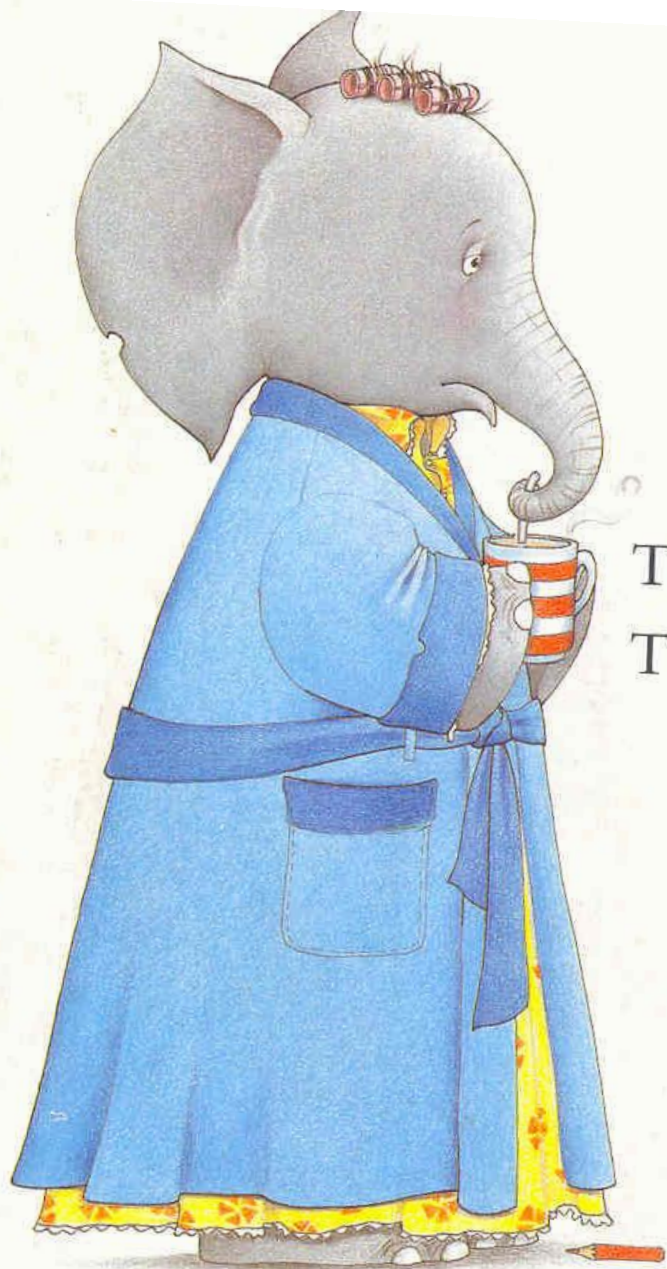
Five Minutes' Peace



Jill Murphy



WALKER BOOKS
LONDON



The children were having breakfast.
This was not a pleasant sight.







Mrs Large took a tray from the cupboard. She set it with a teapot, a milk jug, her favourite cup and saucer, a plate of marmalade toast and a leftover cake from yesterday. She stuffed the morning paper into her pocket and sneaked off towards the door.



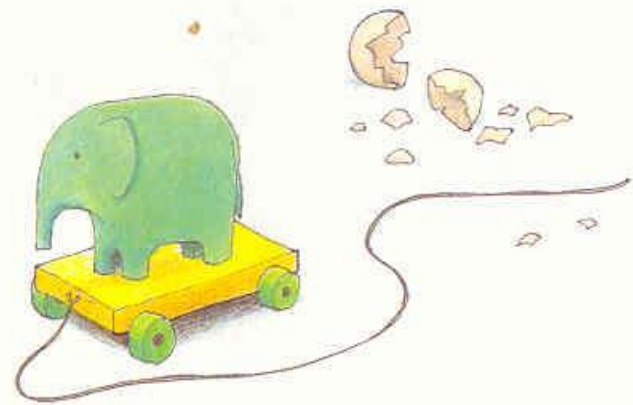
‘Where are you going with that tray, Mum?’ asked Laura.

‘To the bathroom,’ said Mrs Large.

‘Why?’ asked the other two children.

‘Because I want five minutes’ peace from *you* lot,’ said Mrs Large.

‘That’s why.’







‘Can *we* come?’ asked Lester as they trailed up the stairs behind her.

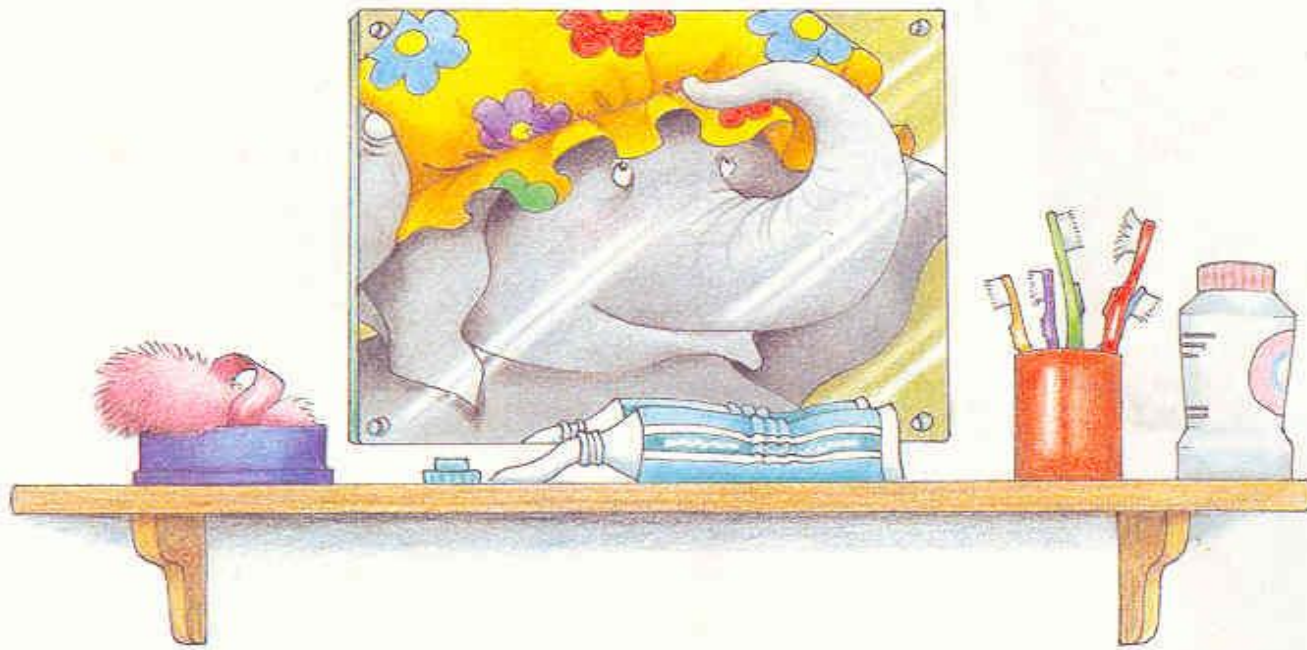
‘No,’ said Mrs Large, ‘you can’t.’

‘What shall *we* do then?’ asked Laura.

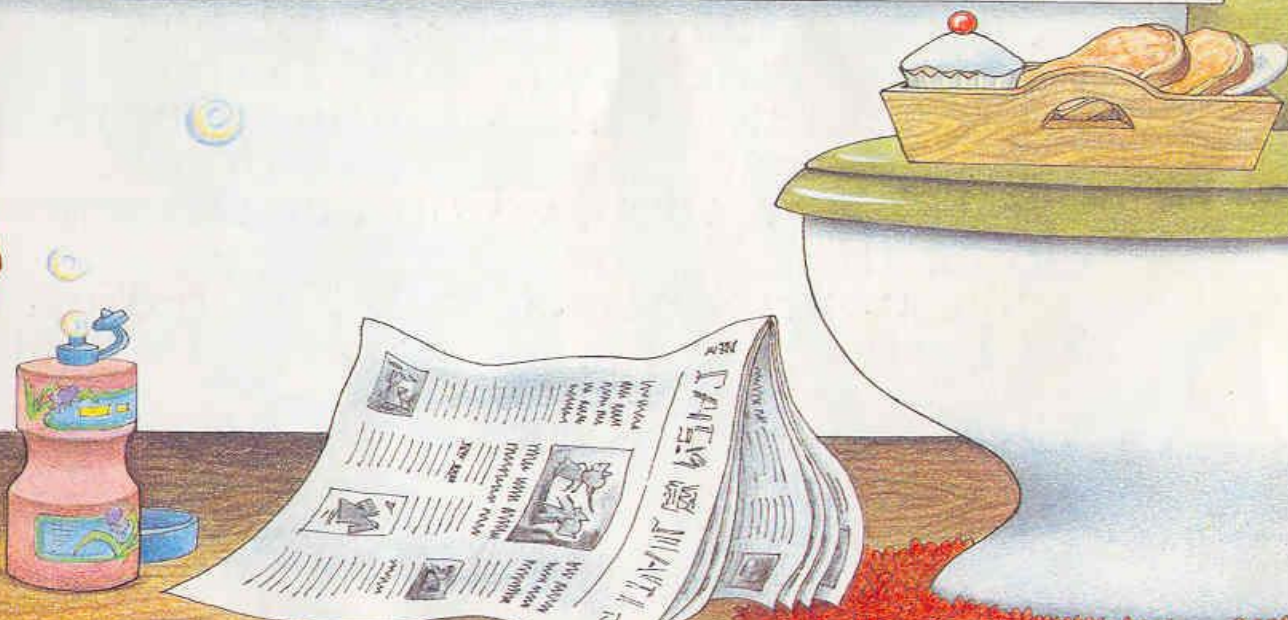
‘You can play,’ said Mrs Large. ‘Downstairs.

By yourselves. And keep an eye on the baby.’

‘I’m *not* a baby,’ muttered the little one.



Mrs Large ran a deep, hot bath.
She emptied half a bottle of bath-foam into
the water, plonked on her bath-hat and got in.
She poured herself a cup of tea and lay back
with her eyes closed.
It was heaven.





‘Can I play you my tune?’ asked Lester.

Mrs Large opened one eye. ‘Must you?’ she asked.

‘I’ve been practising,’ said Lester. ‘You told me to.

Can I? Please, just for one minute.’

‘Go *on* then,’ sighed Mrs Large.

So Lester played. He played ‘Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star’ three and a half times.



In came Laura. 'Can I read you a page from my reading book?' she asked.

'No, Laura,' said Mrs Large. 'Go on, *all* of you, off downstairs.'

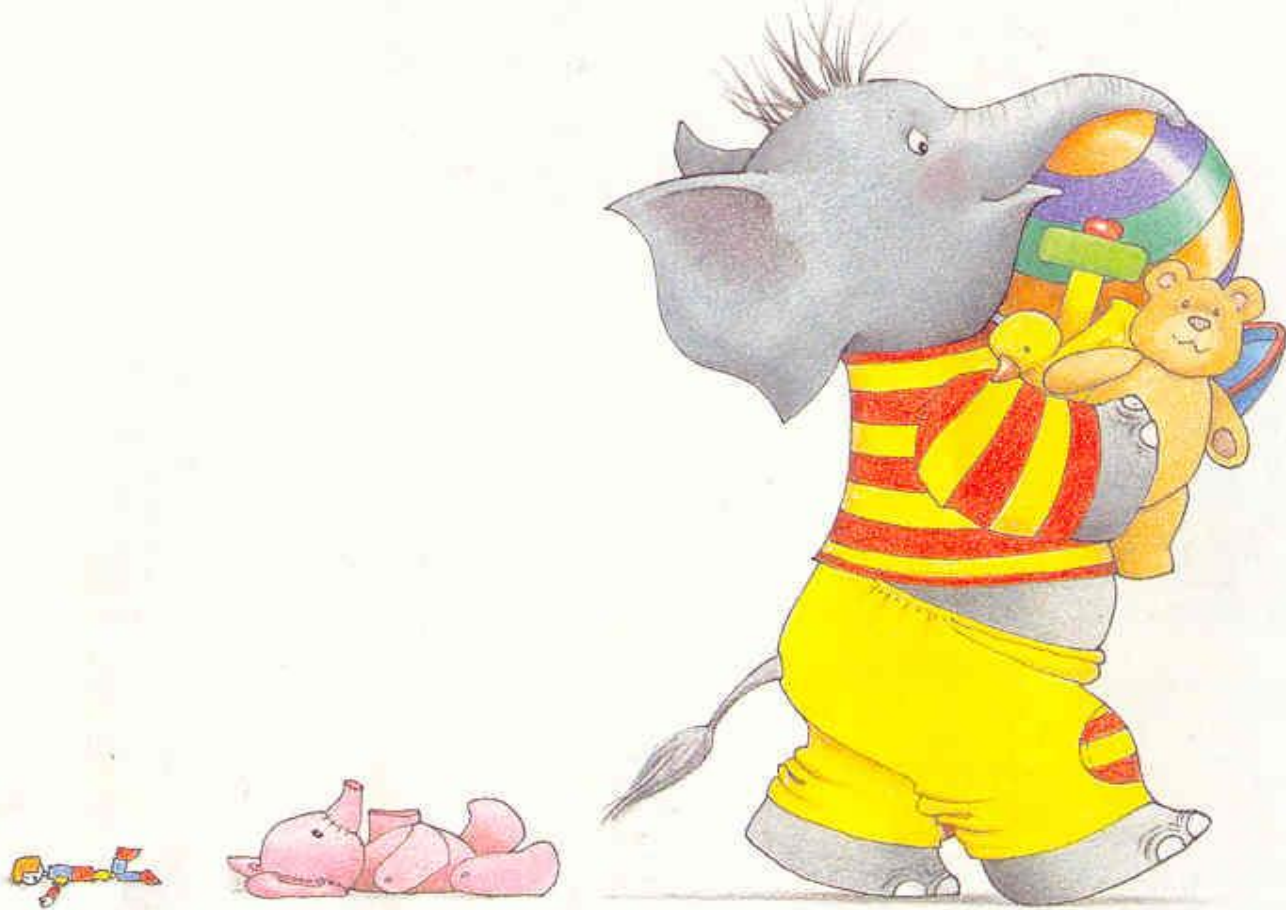
'You let Lester play his tune,' said Laura.

'I heard. You like him better than me. It's not fair.'

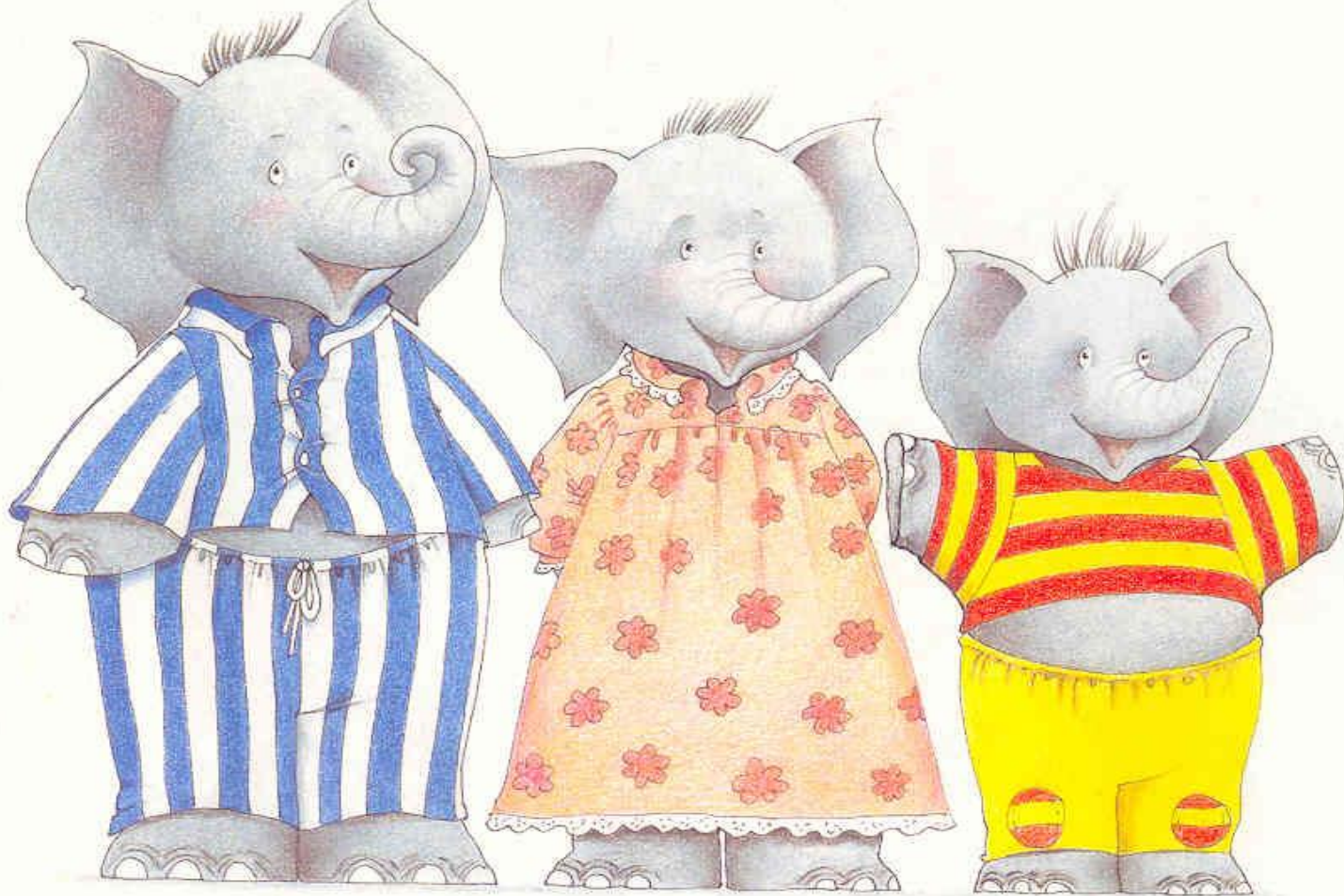
'Oh, don't be silly, Laura,' said Mrs Large.

'Go *on* then. Just *one* page.'

So Laura read. She read four and a half pages of 'Little Red Riding Hood'.



In came the little one with a trunkful of toys.
'For *you!*' he beamed, flinging them all
into the bath water.
'Thank you, dear,' said Mrs Large weakly.



‘Can I see the cartoons in the paper?’ asked Laura.

‘Can I have the cake?’ asked Lester.

‘Can I get in with you?’ asked the little one.

Mrs Large groaned.





In the end they *all* got in. The little one was in such a hurry that he forgot to take off his pyjamas.



Mrs Large got out. She dried herself, put on her dressing-gown and headed for the door.

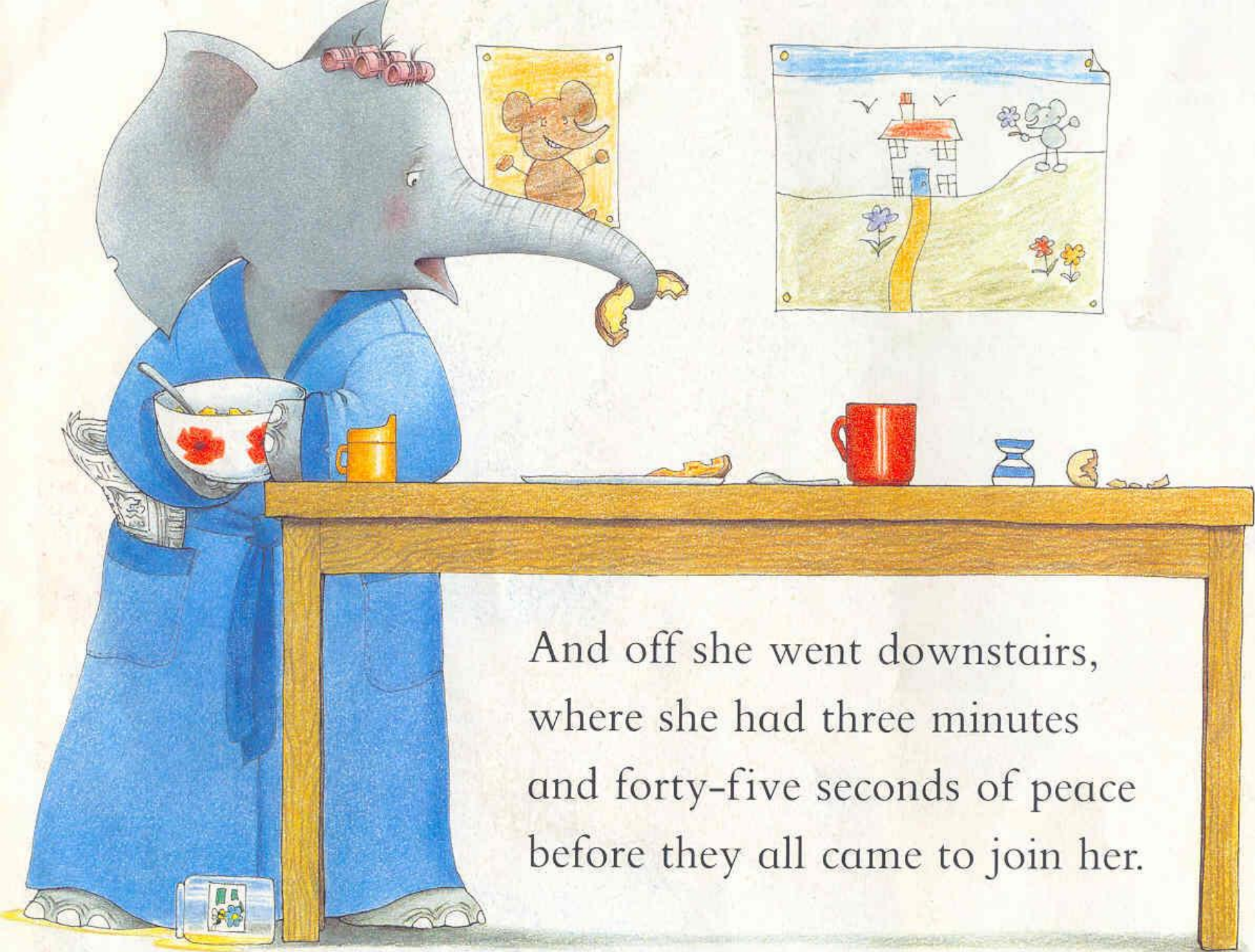
‘Where are you going *now*, Mum?’ asked Laura.

‘To the kitchen,’ said Mrs Large.

‘Why?’ asked Lester.

‘Because I want five minutes’ peace from *you* lot,’ said Mrs Large.

‘That’s why.’



And off she went downstairs,
where she had three minutes
and forty-five seconds of peace
before they all came to join her.

