

CATHERINE THE GREAT AND HER TEATIME TAGALONGS



In a land full of toys that's far, far away, lives a bright little girl who loves to play. She's Catherine the Great, spelled with a "C," a sweet, smiling cherub as cute as can be, from her round, rosy cheeks to her chubby, pink toes, from the curls on her head to her small, button nose.

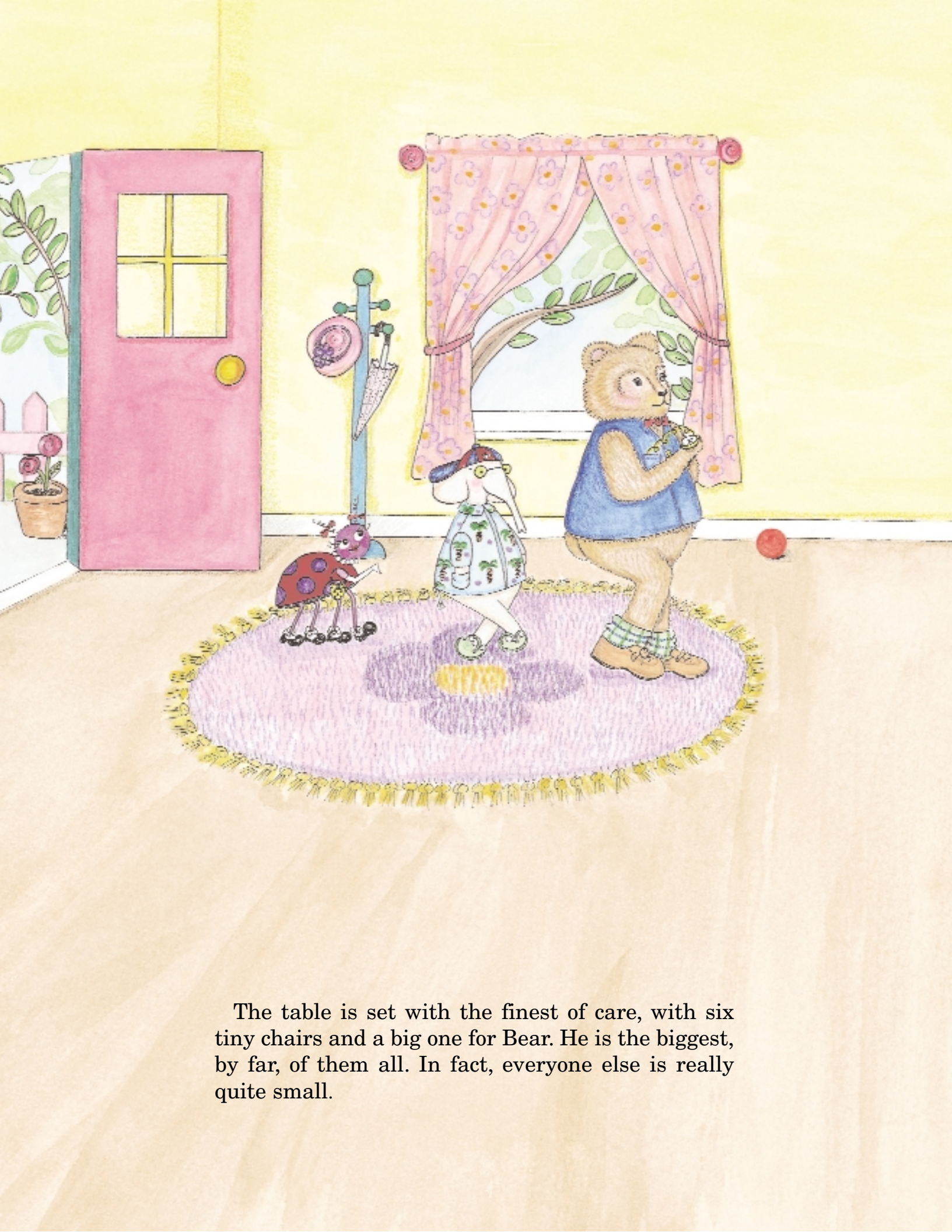


But it's her eyes that sparkle and sing and dance and say so much with only a glance. And that's not all. They can read and see . . . all the goodness in everything. She is the key!

And even though Catherine is an only child at home, she never gets bored since she's never alone.



There's Baby Doll and Lamb and Eddie Elephant.
It's true! Big Bear, Bonnie Bunny, and Lady
Ladybug, too! And while the whole day is fun, the
best time of all is just after lunch but before evening
falls. At three o'clock sharp, Catherine sets out
for tea and the tagalongs climb to her house in the tree.



The table is set with the finest of care, with six tiny chairs and a big one for Bear. He is the biggest, by far, of them all. In fact, everyone else is really quite small.



“C’mon with the tea and the crumpets already!” he shouts to Catherine as she holds the pot steady. But Catherine won’t rush and pays him no mind ‘cause she knows in his heart Bear is really quite kind. He’s just in a rush and can’t stand to wait, even when no one around him is late.



“Be patient, Big Bear,” Catherine says with a grin. And Bear takes the deep breath that will relax him. And while others just think that Bear’s big, loud, and tall, it’s Catherine who sees he’s the softest of all. So it doesn’t surprise her when the others just stare as Bear helps Lady Ladybug pull out her pink chair.

“This way, young lady . . . come, come take a seat. Let’s drink our fine tea and share something to eat.”

Now Lady Ladybug is, shall we say, a girl's girl, from her polka-dot purse to her lashes that curl. "Yes, yes, Mr. Bear, I should like that a lot, but I won't share my treat; no I won't. I will not. I should like my own tea and my own little scone. And I don't want to share. Please leave me alone!"



How selfish Lady Ladybug often could be, but there was much more inside her that Catherine could see. Lady Ladybug never wanted to share because she never knew anyone really to care. If Catherine could just convince her she's wrong, she'd learn how she's loved by all tagalongs.

"Lady Ladybug don't you know how your friends like you near? How they huddle so close and lean in just to hear? The stories you imagine and tell to yourself are better, I'm sure, than any book on the shelf."



And with that, Lady Ladybug looked at the toys and confidently told them the story of Joy. Joy laughed a faint laugh, “Yeah, this one’s for me,” as she peered from behind a branch on the tree. The little lamb was outside, too shy to come in, so she strained to hear about the race she would win.



Lady Ladybug whispered, "It was close to a tie, but the lamb ate still faster, pie after pie." It was a silly, short story that made everyone laugh about a pie-eating contest 'tween Joy and a calf!

