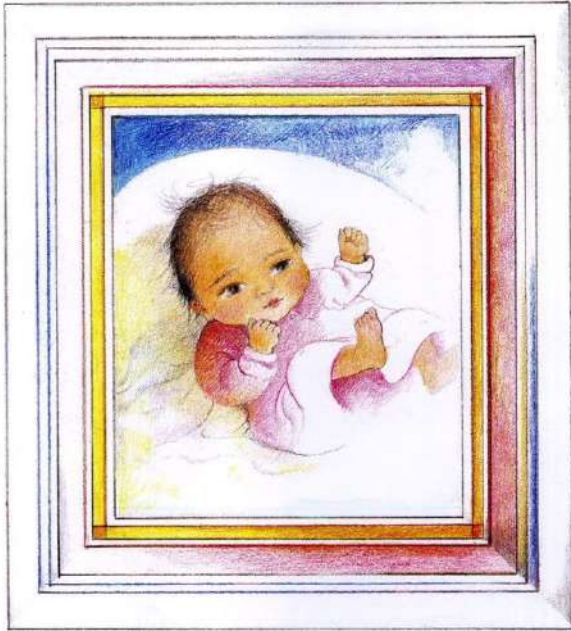
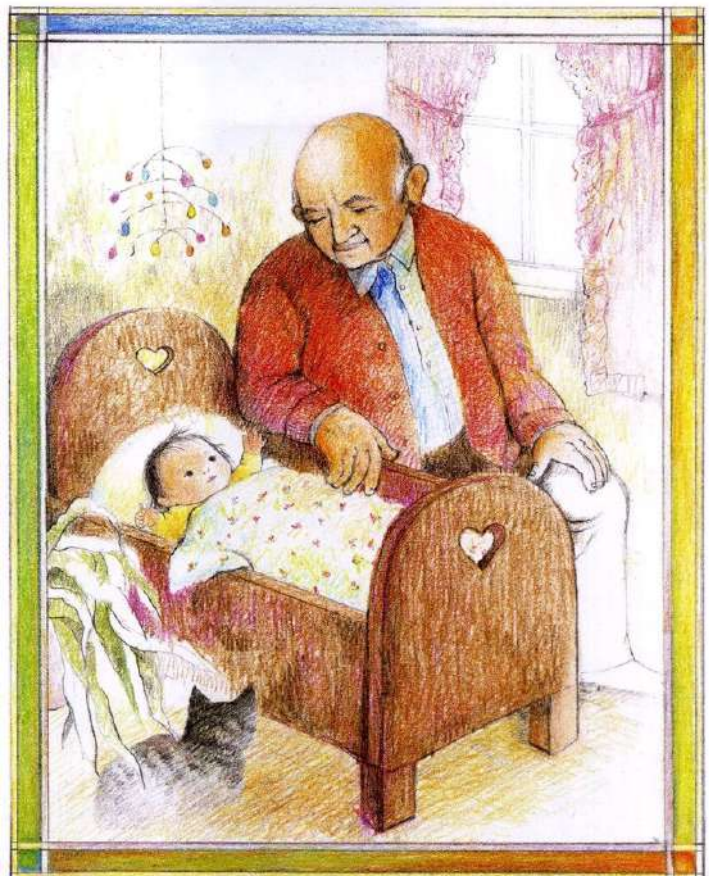


# The Two of Them

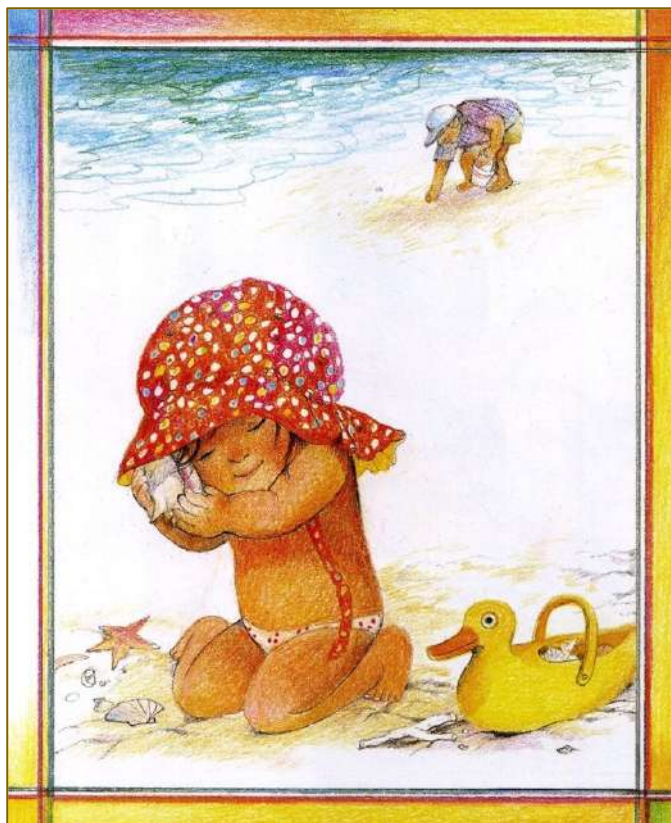


The day she was born,  
her grandfather made her a ring  
of silver and a polished stone,  
because he loved her already.  
Someday it would fit her finger.

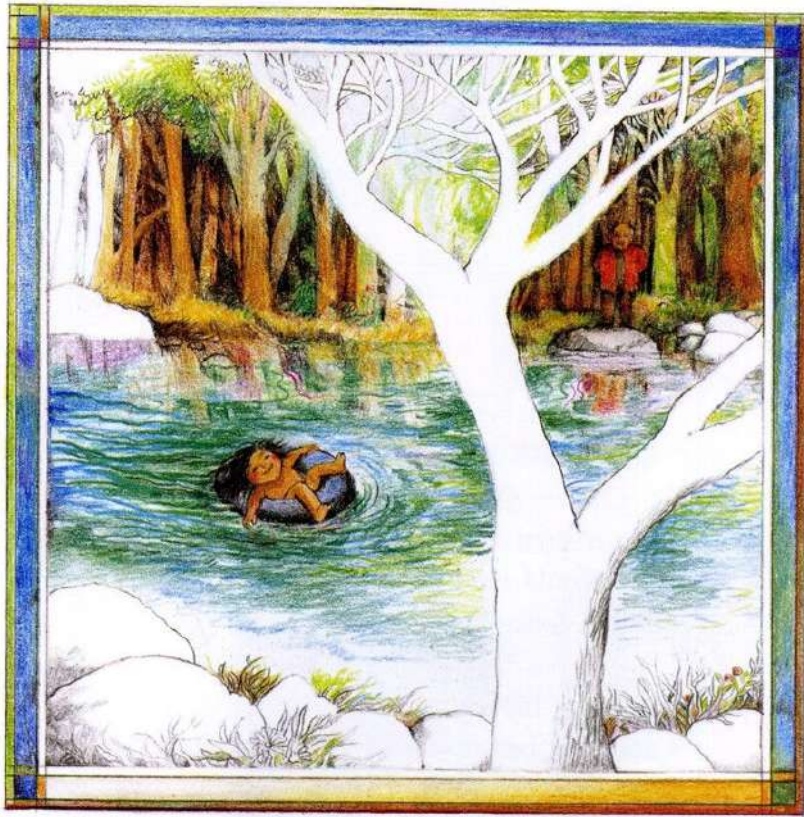
He made a bed her size  
and covered her  
with a rosebud blanket  
to keep her warm,  
and sang her lullabies  
she did not yet understand.



He brought her food from his store  
to help her grow  
and caught her before she fell  
when she took her first steps.



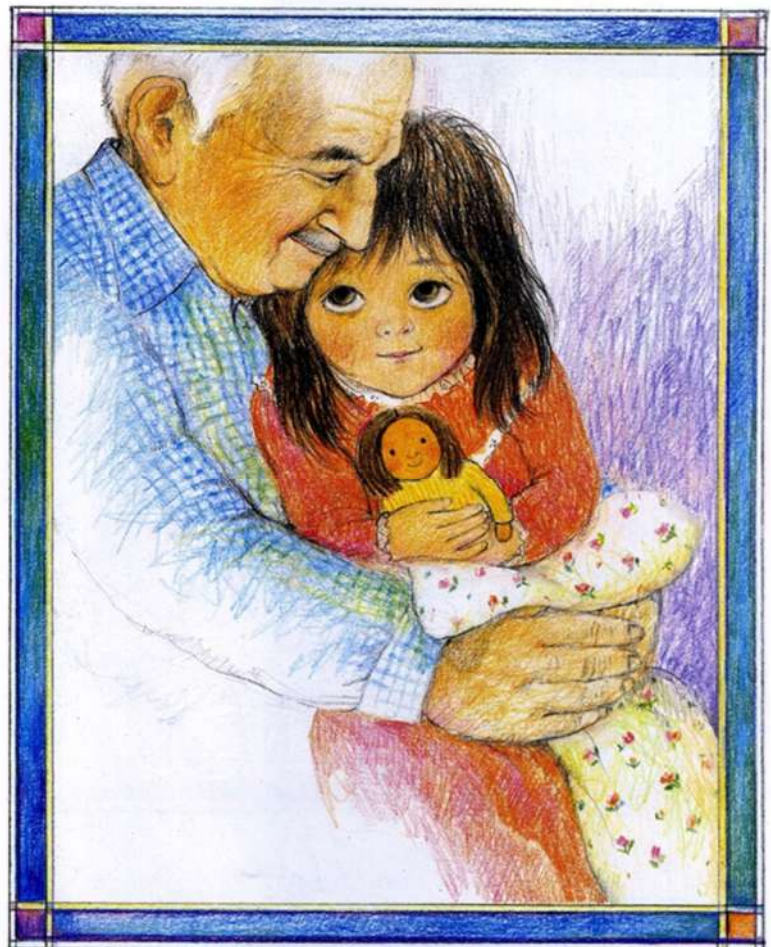
In summer they swam in the ocean  
and collected shells together,  
and her grandfather watched  
from under the shade  
of a big umbrella  
as she made a castle in the sand.



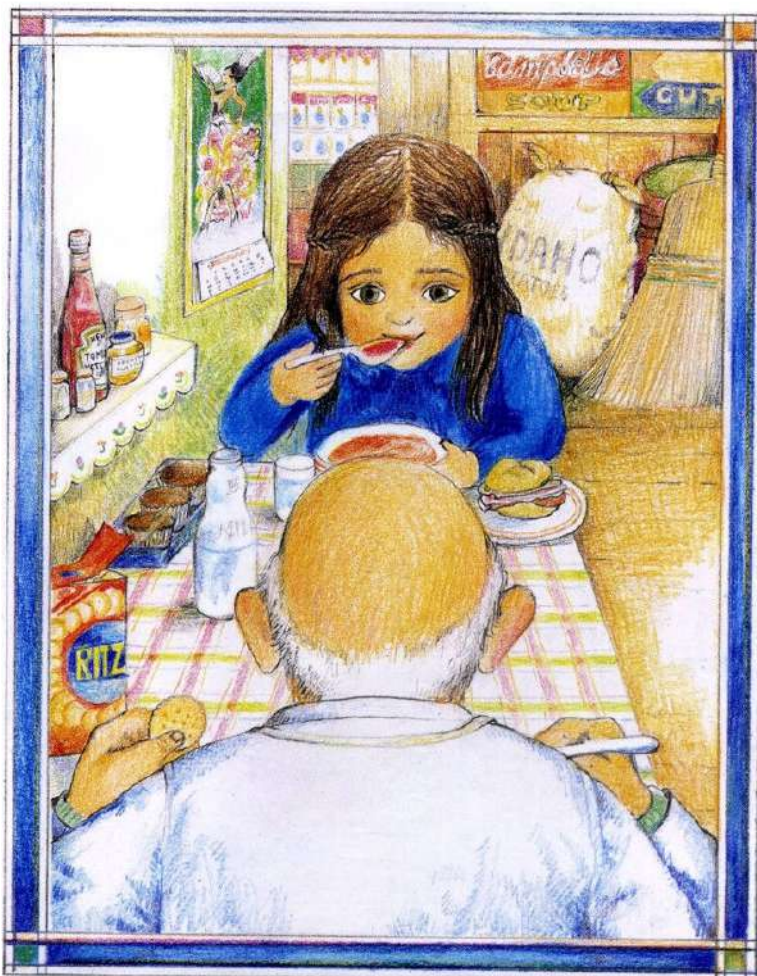
Sometimes they went  
to the mountains  
and walked in the woods,  
and she floated down  
the creek on a rubber tire.

When her bed was too small,  
her grandfather made another  
for her to grow into,  
and a shelf for the books  
she would read,  
and a doll to hold.

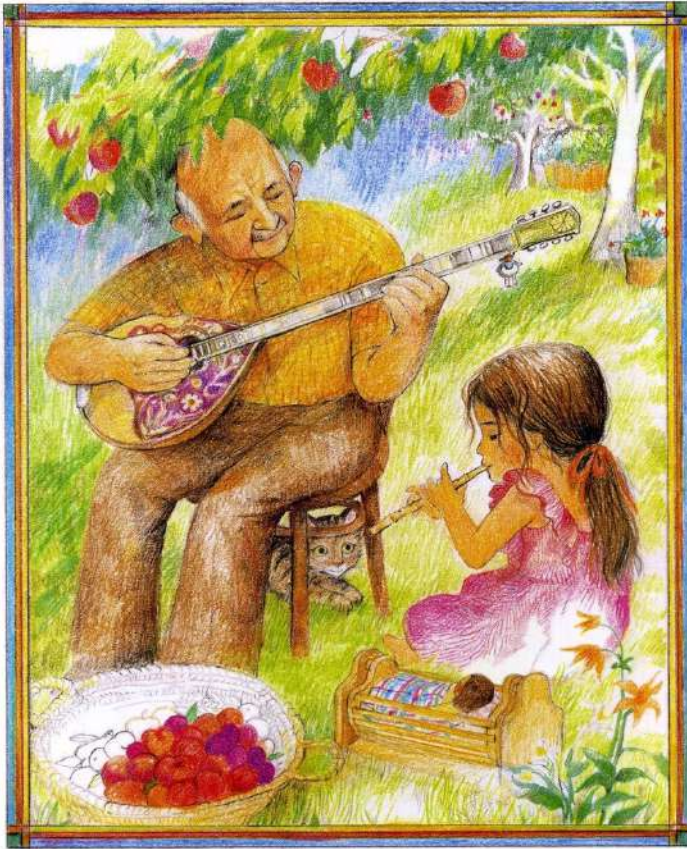
He sang her songs,  
and told her stories of long ago  
that had been told to him.  
Some he made up,  
and some were about his love  
for the little girl.



She helped him in his store after school and loved the smell of the sawdust he sprinkled on the floor when it rained.



Sometimes she gave out the wrong change, but at lunchtime, when they ate their hot soup, he laughed about it, because she was just learning to count.



Then her grandfather  
gave up his store and grew fruit  
in his garden instead.

They picked apples and plums  
and tomatoes,  
and there was more time.

He made a cradle for her doll,  
and a flute of bamboo,  
and they sat under the trees  
and played music together.

And every year she loved him even more than the things he made for her.

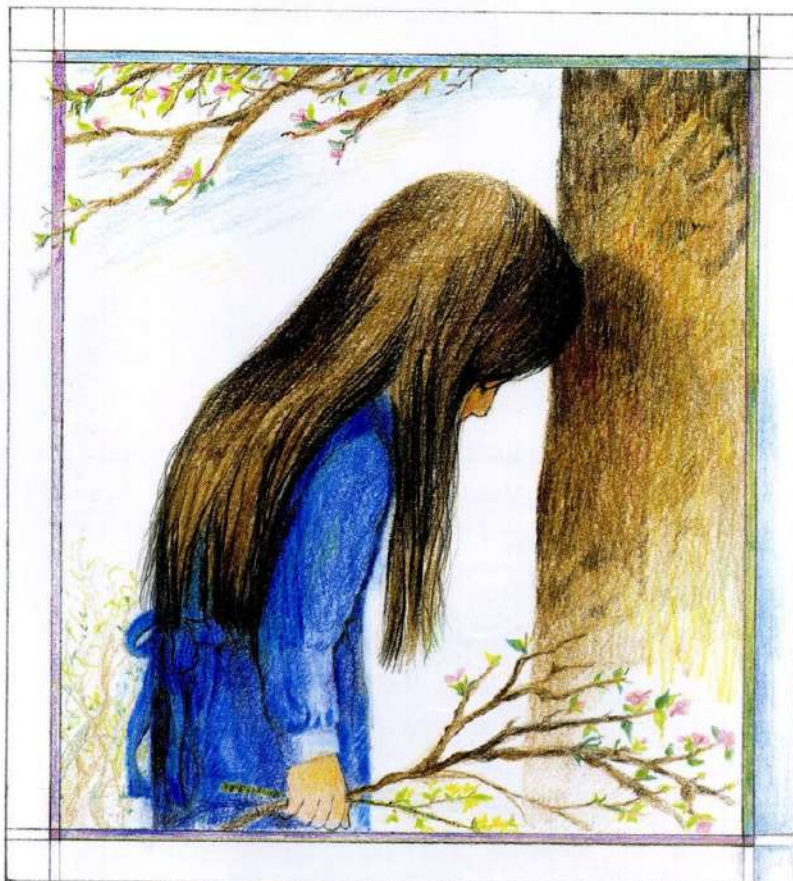


Time passed,  
and the ring fit the little girl's finger,  
and it seemed, suddenly,  
that grandfather was an old man.

One night he became ill,  
and after that,  
part of him could not move.

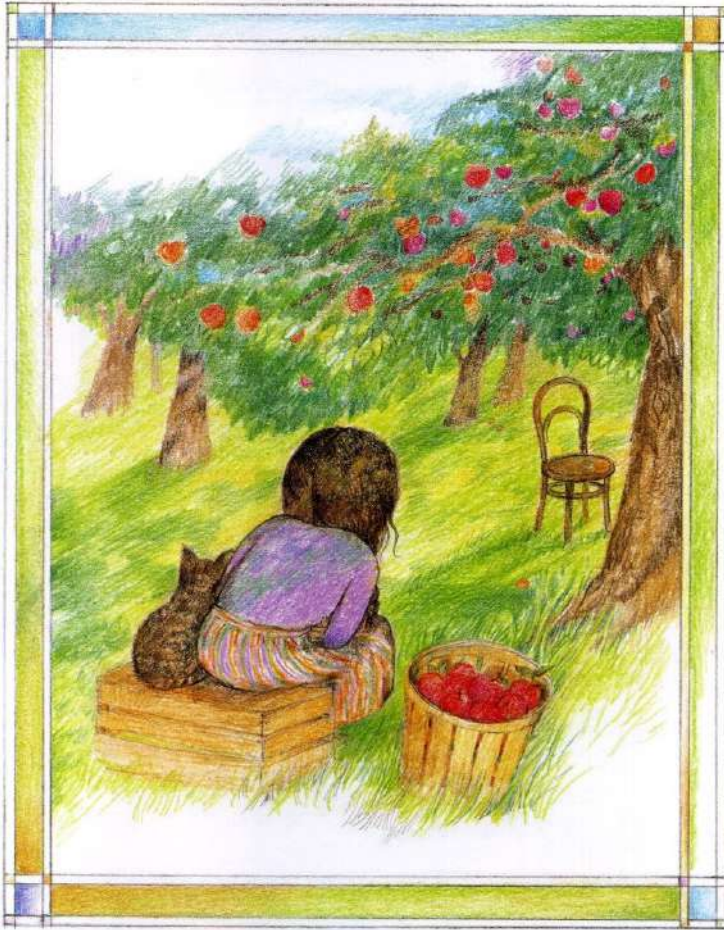
The girl wheeled him in his garden,  
and cut apples for him to eat  
and saw that his cup was full.

At night she tucked him in bed  
and sang to him  
and told him stories  
he had told her.  
Some she made up,  
and some were about hot soup,  
and sand castles,  
and floating in the cool water  
on a rubber tire,  
and of her love for him.  
She said, "Good night, Papouli,"  
and he answered with a kiss.



She knew that  
one day he would die.  
But when he did,  
she was not ready,  
and she hurt inside and out.

It was spring,  
and she cut blossoms  
from his trees  
and gave them to him,  
and said, "Good night  
forever, Papouli,"  
but he did not answer.



The blossoms became apples  
which hung unpicked on the tree.  
She picked them,  
knowing he would not want them  
to fall and rot.

She thought of the tree,  
once bare, then in blossom,  
and now bearing fruit for her to pick.  
The tree would change with the seasons,  
again and again.

She would be there  
to watch it grow,  
to pick the fruit,  
and to remember.

