

Can you whistle,
Johanna?



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One afternoon when Berra and I were bouncing up and down on our homemade seesaw, I told him that I was going to visit my grandfather to eat cake, because it was his birthday.



“And then he’ll give me five dollars,”
I said.

“Does he give you money when it’s his birthday?” asked Berra.

“Yep,” I said. “He gives me money every time I see him.”

“Wow. He must be all right then,”
said Berra.

“He is,” I said. “And then I’ll give him a big cigar.”

Berra looked up at the clouds longingly. “I wish I had a grandfather too,” he mumbled. “What do they do exactly?”

“They take you out to tea,” I said.

“And they eat pigs’ trotters.”

“You’re joking,” said Berra.





“No, it’s true,” I said. “Pigs’ trotters in jelly. And sometimes they take you to a lake to catch fish.”

“Why don’t I have a grandfather?” Berra wondered.

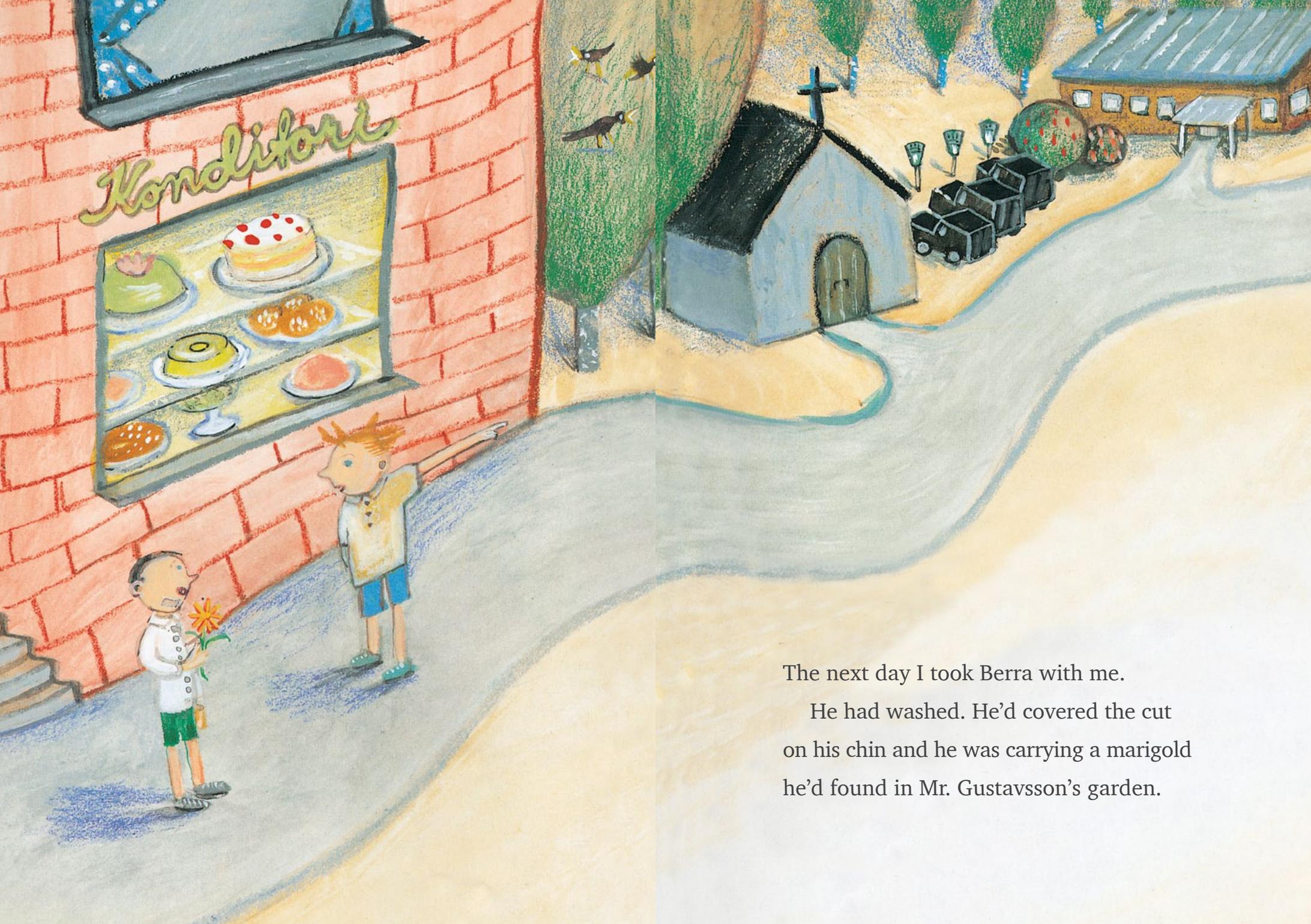
“I don’t know,” I said. “But I do know where you can get one.”

“Where’s that?” asked Berra.

“I’ll tell you tomorrow,” I said. “I’d better go now. I have to put on a white shirt and comb my hair.”

When I jumped off the seesaw, Berra shot down and hit his chin.





The next day I took Berra with me.

He had washed. He'd covered the cut on his chin and he was carrying a marigold he'd found in Mr. Gustavsson's garden.

“Do I look all right?” he asked.

I nodded, because you don’t often see him looking so clean.

We went past the bakery and its warm toasty smells, and past a clump of trees where the birds always sing. Then we carried on past the chapel where the hearses are usually parked, shiny in the sun.

And then we were almost there.

“There,” I said. “That’s where you can find your grandfather. There are lots of old men in there.”

I pointed to the old people’s home.

