



## The Rolling Plum.

On the topmost branch of a plum tree grew a fine red plum. From his perch he could see all the fruit trees in the orchard, and over their heads he could see Mr. Brown's farmhouse.

"How I should like to go and see the world," he said. "It looks a wonderful place."

"See the world, indeed," laughed the mother tree, "you'll be picked up and eaten one of these days, and that's how YOU will see the world. I know, because I've seen it happen so many times."

The plum felt very sad, but he said to himself, "I won't be eaten! I'll go and see the world instead."

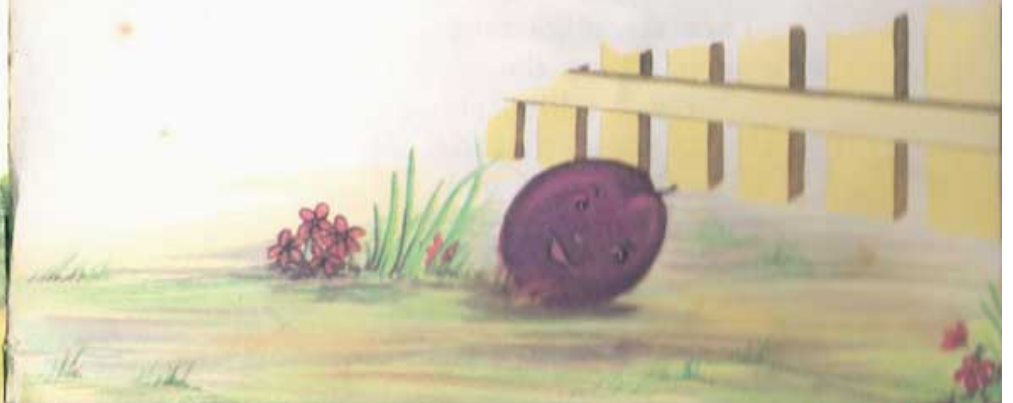


So, one day when old Mr. Wind came rushing through the orchard, the plum at the top of the tree shook himself right off the branch, and down he fell on the soft grass beneath.

"Oh! oh! oh!" cried all the other plums. But the fallen plum only laughed. "Don't you worry yourselves about me, I'm off to see the world. Ho! ho! ho! off I go!"

He came to the gate, and slipping underneath it, found himself on the dusty road.

The plum rolled merrily along, his beautiful coat getting grey with dust, but he didn't care about that. "This is the great world," he said, "and what does a dusty coat matter when one is off to see the world?"





Soon he came to a farm-house,  
and just as he passed the gate,  
a little kitten ran out.  
It saw the rolling plum  
and made a dash for it.

“Ho! ho! ho! off we go!”  
cried the plum as he went racing off  
with the kitten running behind him.  
But the kitten soon gave up the chase,  
for it saw a leaf to play with.

Then the plum sang a song  
as it went rolling along,

“I’m a rolling plum,  
and you can’t catch me,  
for I’m off to look  
at the world, you see.”

After a while the plum met  
an old woman coming across the road.

“My, here’s a fine plum,” she said,  
“I’ve a good mind to take it home,  
wash it, and put it in a pie.”

“Ho! ho! ho! off we go!”  
called the plum, as he twisted himself  
out of reach of her clutching fingers.

The old woman ran after him,  
and a merry race it was while it lasted,  
but she could not run far or fast,  
so she sat by the roadside to rest  
while the plum went on alone.

“I’m a rolling plum  
and you can’t catch me,  
for I’m off to look  
at the world, you see,”  
sang he, as he rolled happily away.





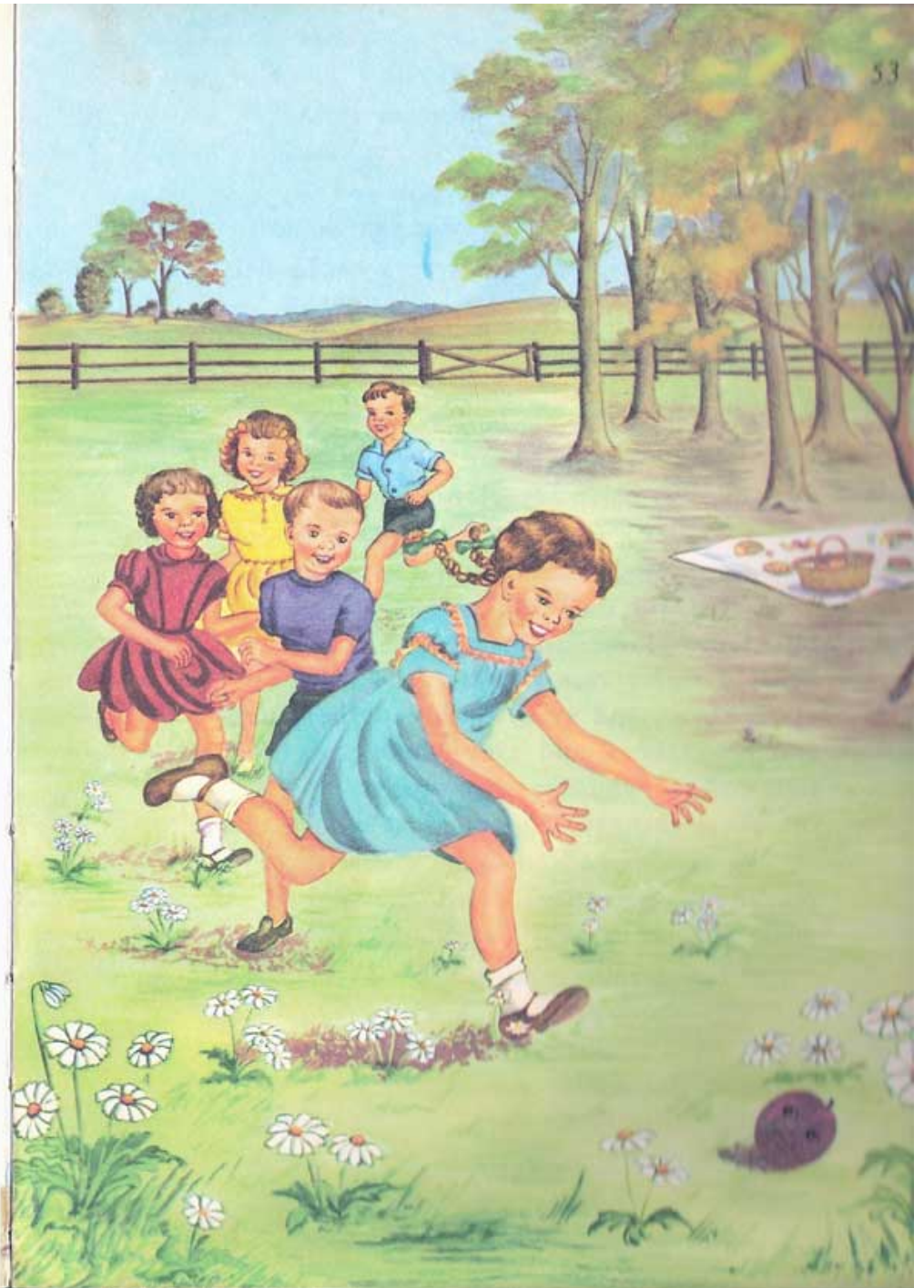
Presently he saw a gate  
leading into a meadow.  
There were daisies growing in the grass.  
“What a pretty place,” thought the plum,  
“that’s the way for me,”  
and under the gate he went,  
and away over the cool green grass,  
which wiped all the dust from his coat  
and left him looking smarter than ever.

A party of boys and girls  
were having a picnic in the shade of the trees  
which grew at the side of the field.

One of the children noticed the plum  
twirling by.

“What a lovely plum,” she said,  
“I’ll have it for tea.”

After the plum she went  
as fast as her legs could carry her,  
and behind her ran all the others  
eager to join in the chase.





“Ho! ho! ho! off we go,”  
called the plum.  
What a merry race it was to be sure!  
Here, there, and everywhere led the plum,  
and here, there, and everywhere  
followed the children, but always  
the plum managed to keep just out of reach.

At last, tired and out of breath,  
they flung themselves down, laughing  
while the plum went on alone.

“I’m a rolling plum  
and you can’t catch me,  
for I’m off to look  
at the world, you see,”  
he sang gaily, as he rolled far, far away  
from the picnic party.

After crossing the meadows  
he came at last to a brook.

A boy was sitting on the bank  
catching minnows in a net.

His sharp eyes soon spied the plum.

“I’d like a fine juicy plum to eat,”  
said he, but the plum only laughed.

“Ho! ho! ho! off we go.”

Then began the hardest race of all,  
for the boy ran his hardest with his net  
in his hand, and all the time the plum  
rolled faster and faster.

Many a time the net came down  
and almost caught him, but always  
he managed to twist himself aside.





Then the boy made one last dash.  
Down came the net.  
“ Hurrah,” said the boy,  
“ I’ve caught you at last, have I ? ”  
But he hadn’t. When he lifted the net  
there was no plum to be seen.  
He hunted everywhere, but no fine, fat plum  
was to be found.

In the end, he went back to his fishing  
feeling very puzzled, and when the plum  
heard his footsteps growing faint  
in the distance, he sang his song joyfully,

“ I’m a rolling plum  
and you can’t catch me,  
for I’m off to look  
at the world, you see,”

for the plum was there all the time.  
He had tumbled into a hole in the grass,  
and had been keeping very still and quiet.

“ Ho ! ho ! ho ! off we go,”  
said he. “ I may as well go on  
and see what I can of the world.’  
But he could not go.  
He twisted and turned, but he was stuck fast.



“ Well, here I am, and here I must stay.  
I feel very tired after running all those races,  
so I’ll have a little nap, and, perhaps,  
I can get out of this hole when I wake.”

So he cuddled down and was soon  
fast asleep in the warm earth.  
His sleep was long and sound,  
for all through the winter he lay there,  
and did not even know when Jack Frost came.

One fine Spring morning he awoke.  
“ Now, I’ll get out of this hole  
and go and see the world again,” he said.  
“ Ho! ho! ho! off I go.”

So he stretched his head  
till he could peep out at the world,  
but he could not roll away, for while he slept  
he had grown some little white roots,  
which kept him fast in the ground.  
Higher and higher he lifted his head,  
till at last he could see across the field.

Each year since, he has grown taller  
until now he is a fine plum tree,  
and when people walk through the meadow,  
they often stop to admire him.

“ I wonder how a plum tree came to grow  
in the middle of a field,” they say.  
But we know, don’t we ?



ROUND-ABOUT STORIES