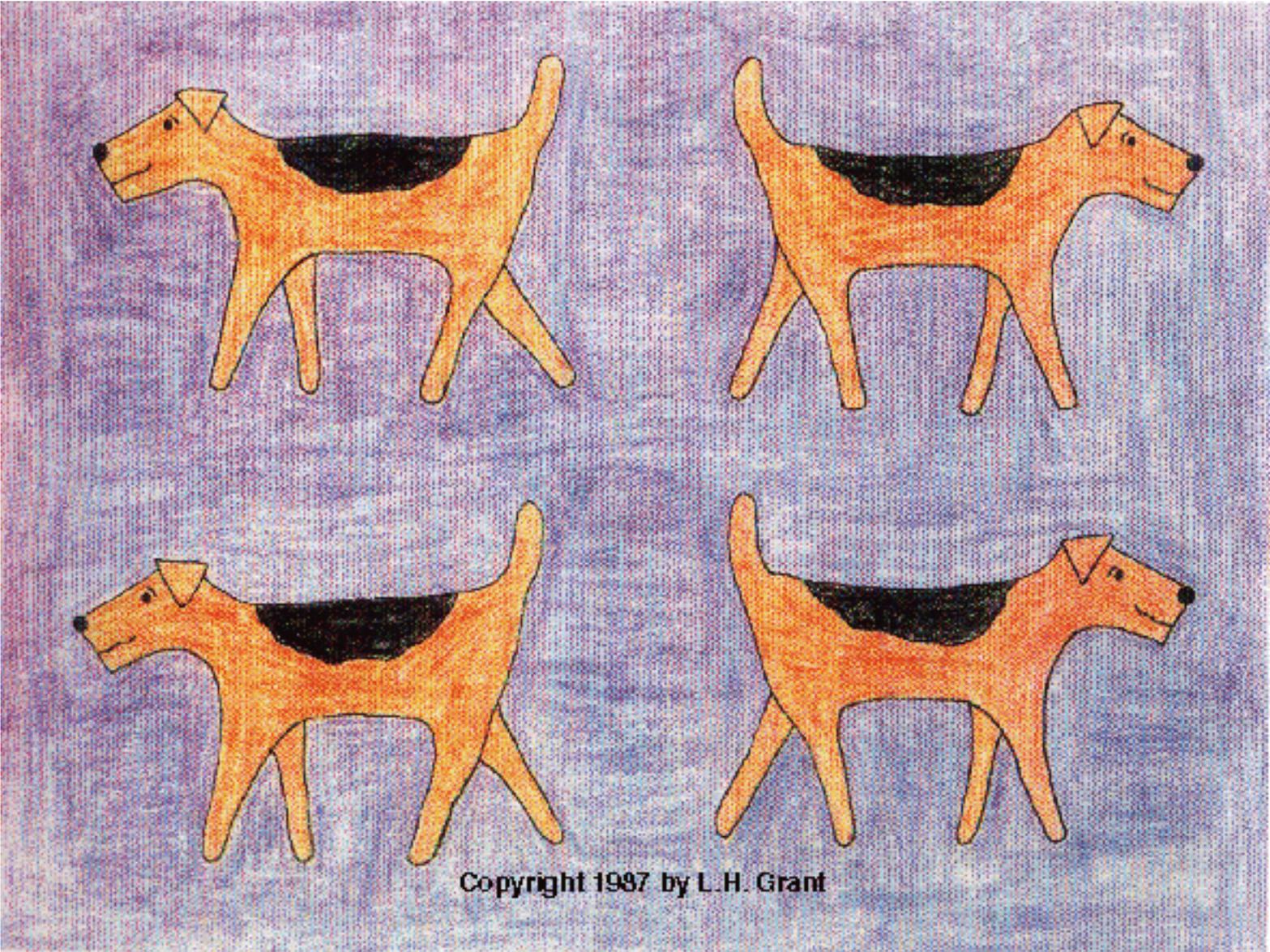


A DAY WITH CHARLIE

by
L.H. Grant

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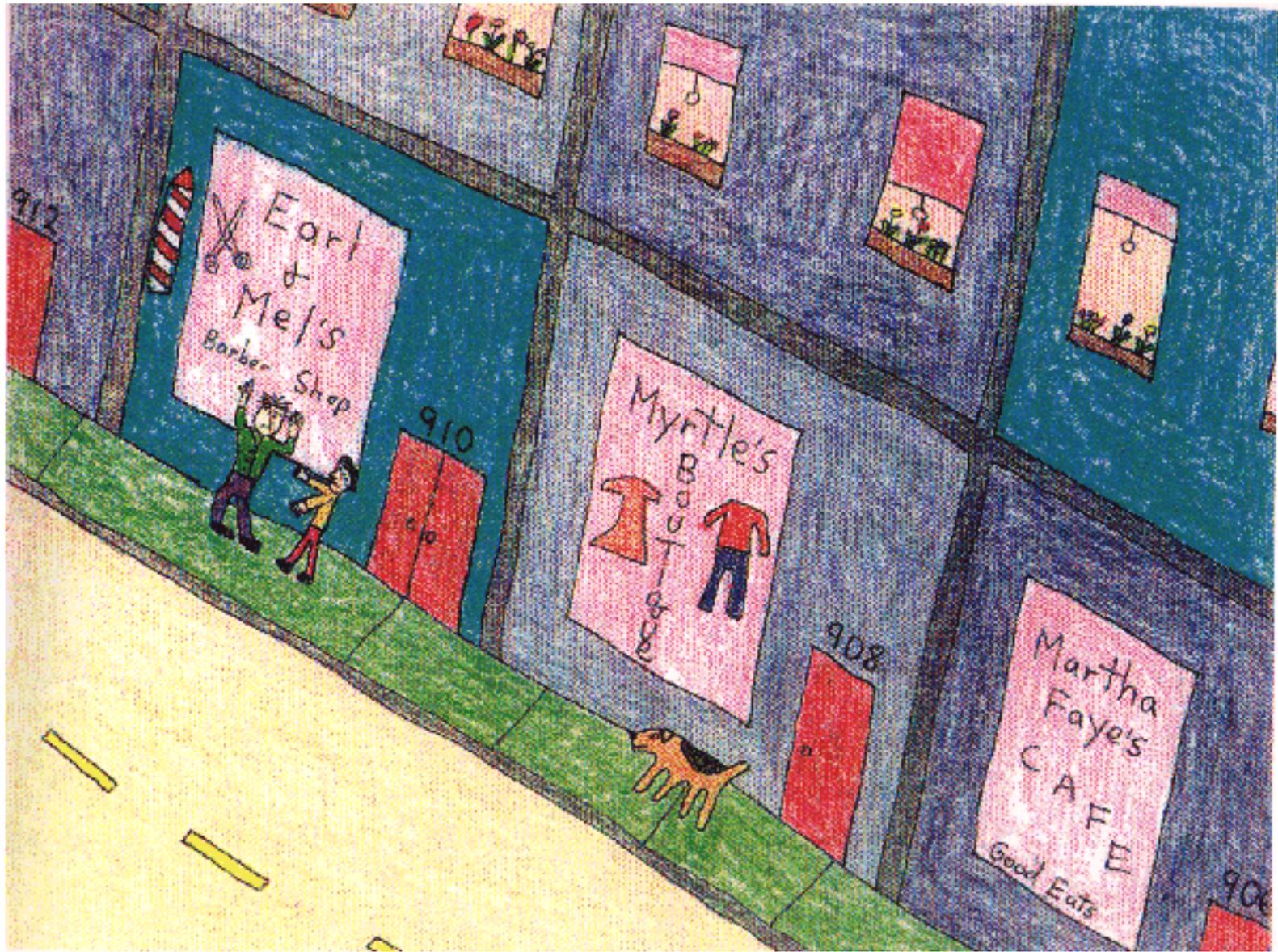
The sun was never without a friend for Charlie was always there welcoming its return for another day.



The sun talked to Charlie and now it was telling him that it was time to take his kid to school. So, he went home and met Arnaud just as he was leaving the house. They played along the way and when they arrived Arnaud waved goodbye as he walked inside. Once again Charlie was alone, his whole day ahead of him.



He turned and headed down Main Street hoping to see some friends. On his way through town he passed by Earl and Mel, the town barbers. They were arguing with each other. “Nothing new there,” thought Charlie. This morning they were fighting over whose turn it was to sweep the floor. Yesterday they argued over whose watch was right and the day before that they argued about the weather.



Charlie continued on his way, mindful of the traffic with horns honking and people yelling.



He went on until he came to the bakery where he stopped and looked in the door. Alex and Viola Jenson were busy putting their pastries in the display cases. Charlie thought they seemed rather sad. He knew that they were very lonely since their only child had gone off to college. Charlie hoped that they would feel better soon as he went further down the street.



He turned at Sycamore Avenue and went down several blocks until he came to the house of his friend, Emily. Emily had been ill for some time and could not attend school. She missed being outside but she especially missed her playmates.

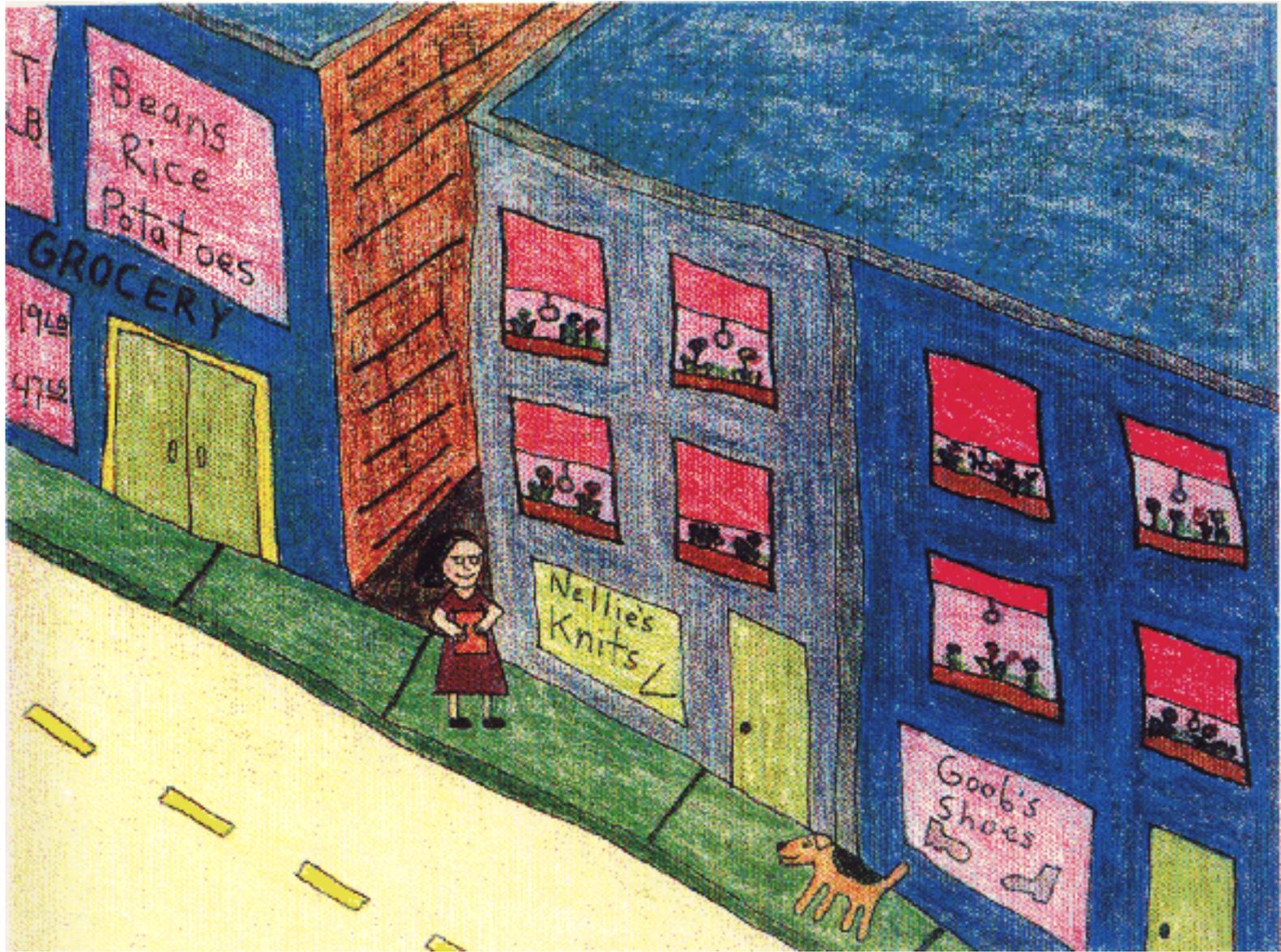


Charlie jumped up and placed his paws on the window ledge. When Emily saw him she rushed over to the window with a big smile on her face. She gave Charlie a hug and a kiss as she said, "Oh Charlie, my only friend. I wish you could stay with me forever." Charlie wanted to help her but he knew that his place was with Arnaud. However, he stayed with Emily as long as he could and they both had a wonderful time but it was now getting late and Charlie had several things that he wanted to do before he headed home. So, he kissed Emily goodbye and went on his way.



A short while later he came upon Mrs. Humphries, the widow, as she was leaving the grocery store. “What timing,” thought Charlie.

Mrs. Humphries, seeing Charlie, called out to him. “Charlie, come here. I’ve got something good today.”



He went over and was greeted with a pat on the head and a smile. “Here Charlie,” said Mrs. Humphries as she unwrapped an old piece of cheese and handed it to him. Charlie quickly took hold of the cheese and rewarded her kindness with a wag of his tail as he walked past her and turned down the alley.



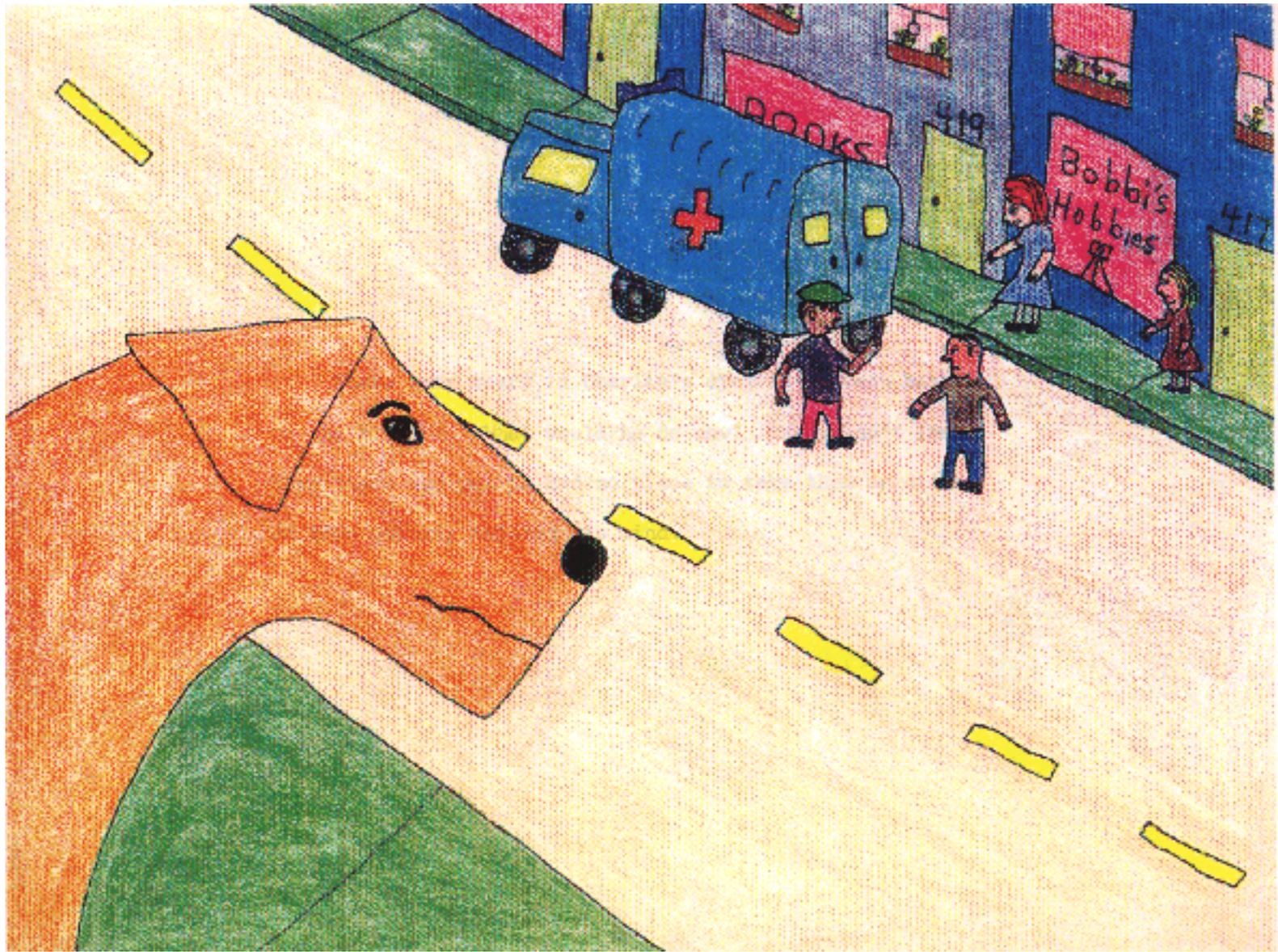
He thought the alley a strange place. A dark cold area that was inhabited by things and people that were meant to be hidden, not seen, heard or thought about.



Passing a couple of garbage cans and a pile of old crates he found what he was looking for, a box of five playful kittens. But something was wrong. Their mother was missing. Charlie set down the cheese so the hungry kittens could eat. “This wasn’t like Ingrid,” he thought. She had always been there when he came with food.



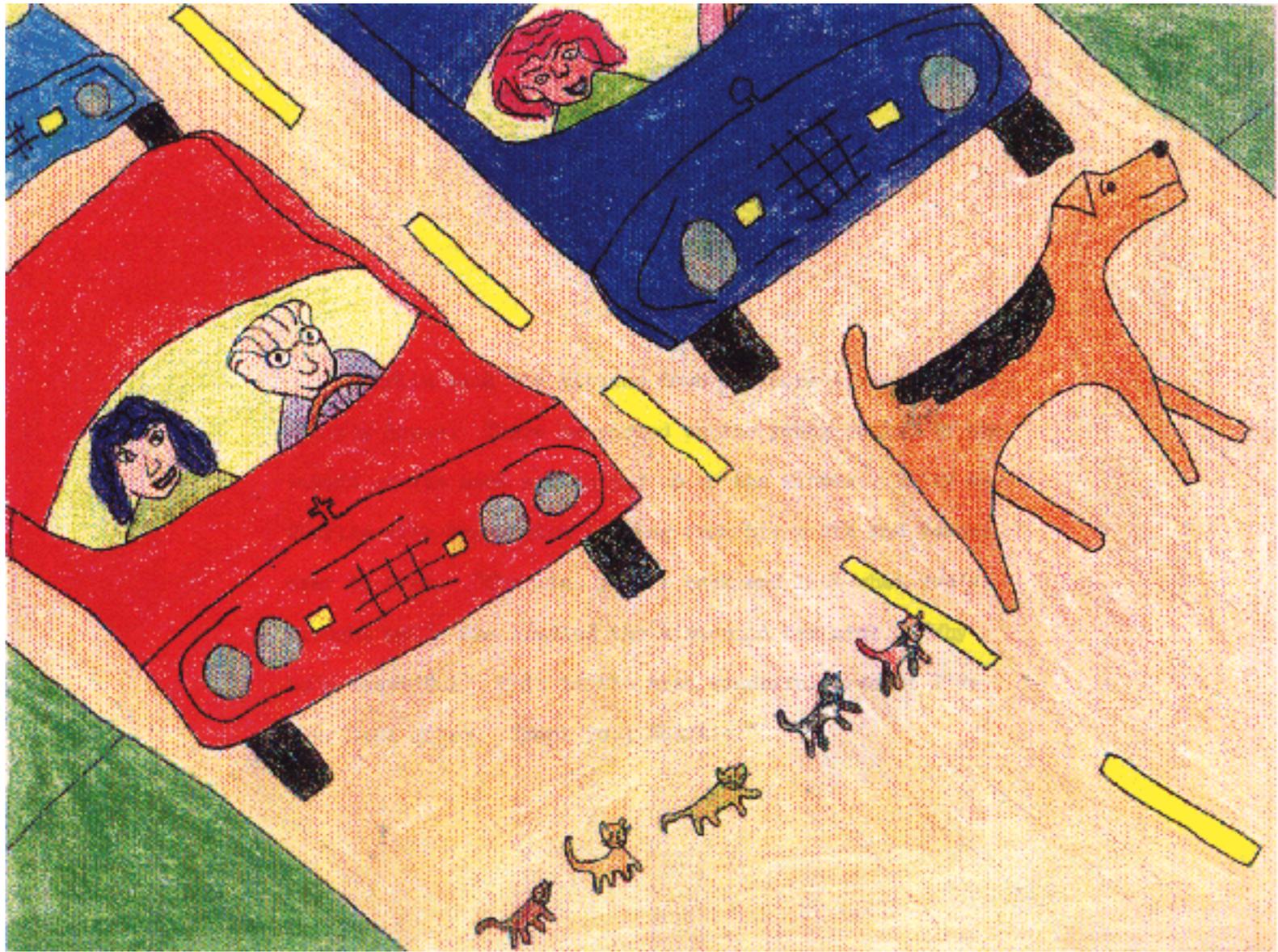
He ran to the end of the alley and looked out into the street. Charlie didn't want to believe his eyes but he knew it was true. Ingrid had been hit by a car and was now being taken away for burial.



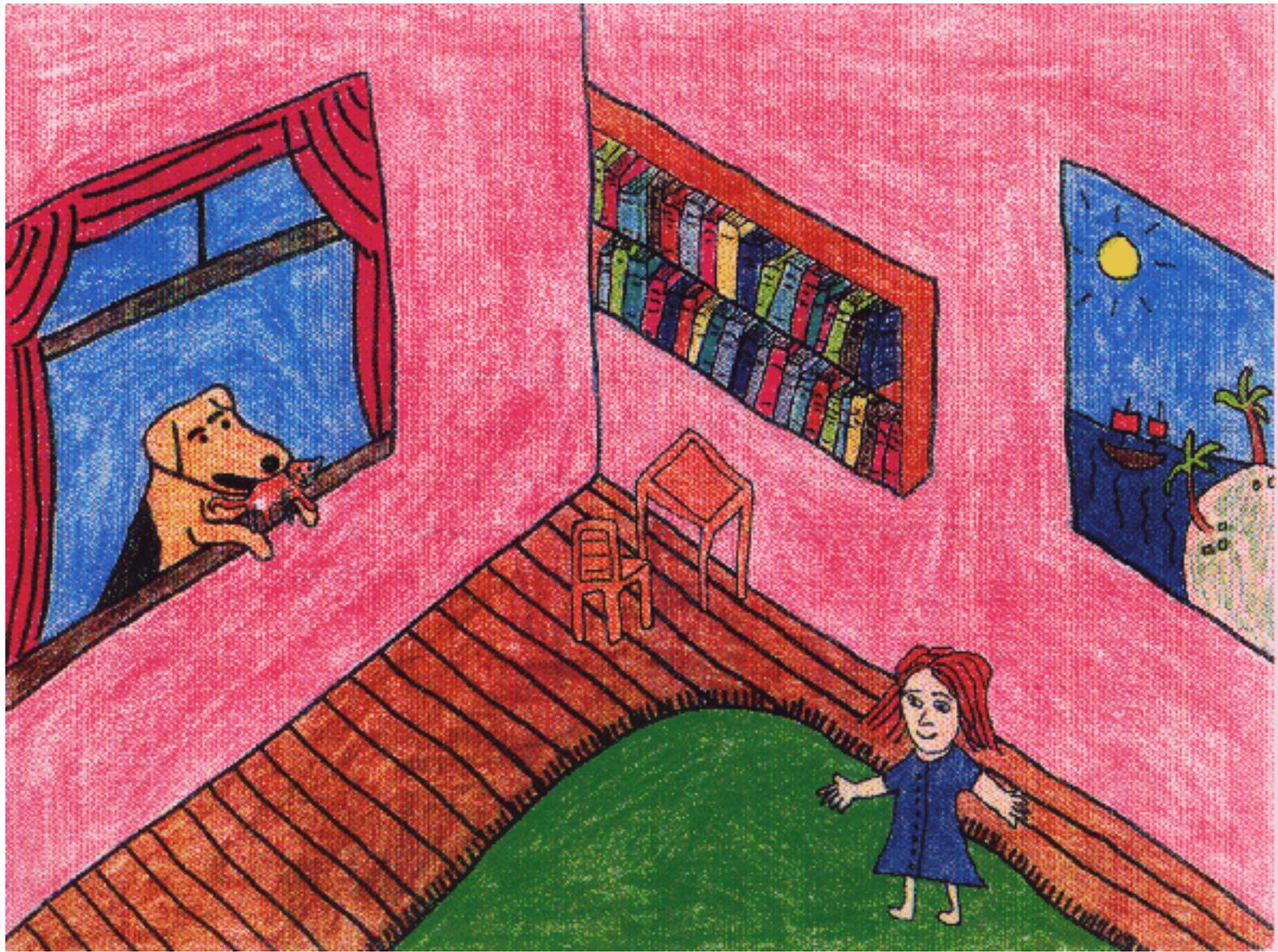
There were tears in Charlie's eyes as he went back to the kittens. What would he do now? He couldn't leave them there and yet he had no place to take them or did he? An idea quickly entered his mind.



He gathered up the kittens and motioned for them to follow him. They went down the alley to the street where they turned and headed for the intersection. When the sign said “walk” Charlie led the kittens across the street. For once there were no horns honking or people yelling. They were all looking at this amazing sight of a dog leading five kittens. For a few seconds they forgot their problems and looked at the world in a new way.



Charlie took the kittens down Sycamore Avenue to Emily's house. There he picked up the young calico by the scruff of its neck and jumped up to the window. Emily saw Charlie with the kitten hanging from his mouth and rushed over to them. "Charlie, you're back and look what you've brought me." She cradled the kitten in her arms. "Why he's beautiful. This is the most wonderful present I've ever been given. Thank you, Charlie."



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