

The Rusty Needle

MIRIAM WENGERD

Illustrated by Lisa Strubhar

A Gift for...

From _____

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A soft, painterly illustration of a young girl with fair skin and rosy cheeks, seen in profile from the side. She is wearing a dark, textured black hooded coat. Her right hand is reaching out to turn a small, dark, round knob on a vertical-grained wooden door. The background is a warm, textured wash of brown and tan colors, suggesting a rustic or aged setting. The overall style is gentle and evocative, typical of children's book illustrations.

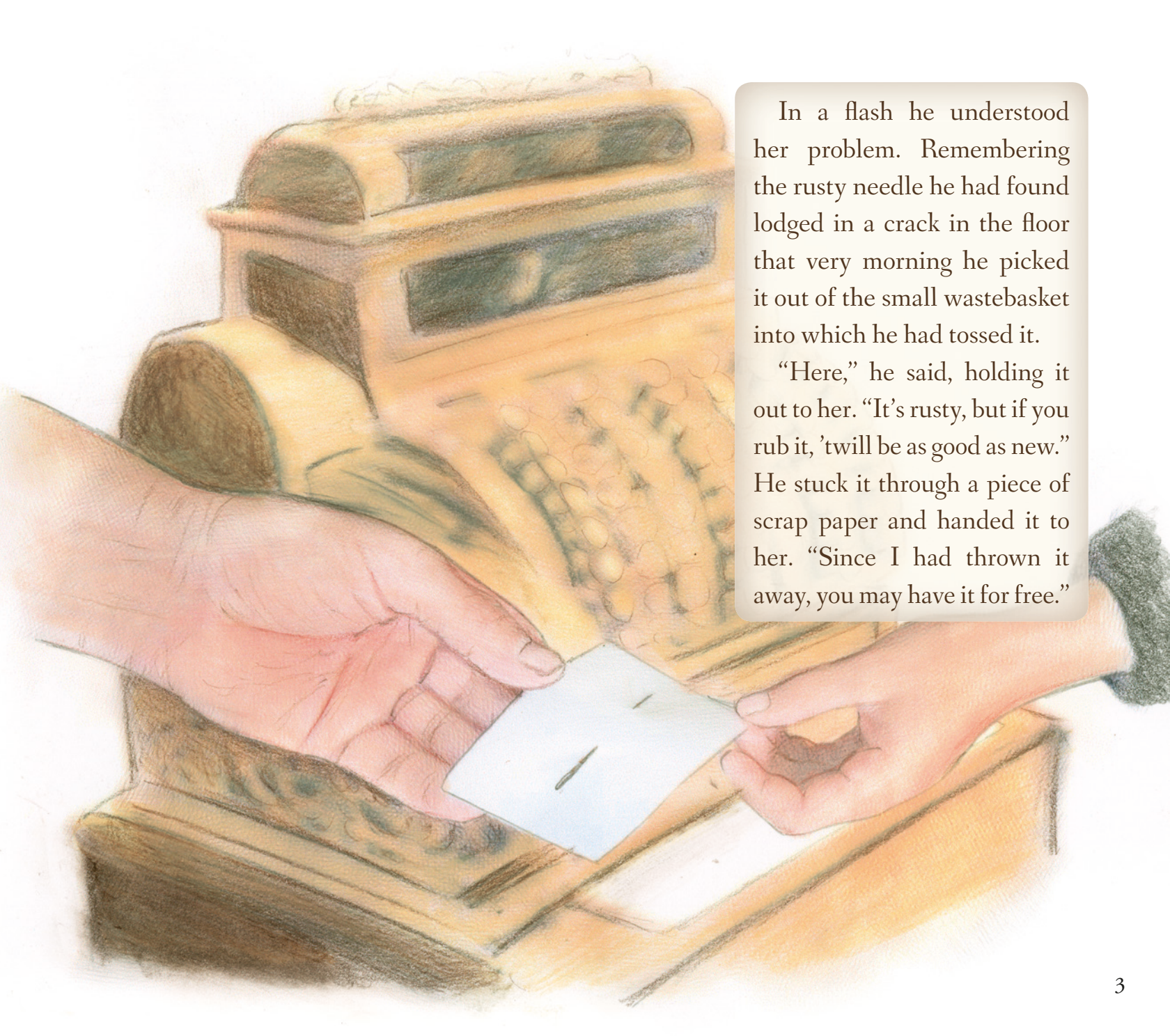
There was an old store at the edge of a little town. A blustery wind pushed broken leaves across the cracked floor of its front porch. A red-cheeked girl in a worn black coat hurried up to the brown wooden door. Her cold fingers turned its shiny black knob. She stepped inside to the cozy warmth.



As Mary made her way down the aisle filled with sewing supplies, her bright eyes skimmed quickly over the display of shiny needles. Then her heart sank as she saw that they cost more than she had in the little black purse in her hand. She paused a moment, thinking, *“How sorry Grandma will be if I can’t buy her a needle.”*

The elderly storekeeper saw her hesitation. “May I help you, young lady?” he asked kindly.

“I came to get a needle for Grandma,” Mary answered slowly. She twisted her thin purse in her hands.



In a flash he understood her problem. Remembering the rusty needle he had found lodged in a crack in the floor that very morning he picked it out of the small wastebasket into which he had tossed it.

“Here,” he said, holding it out to her. “It’s rusty, but if you rub it, ’twill be as good as new.” He stuck it through a piece of scrap paper and handed it to her. “Since I had thrown it away, you may have it for free.”



“Are you sure, sir?” she asked.
“I’ll gladly pay you for it.”

“No,” he insisted. “If you think your grandma will be satisfied with it, take it home for her.”

“Oh, thank you,” Mary said as she carefully tucked it into her thin black purse. Turning, she left the store. Leaning into the cold wind, she made her way down the gravel road to Grandma’s house.