

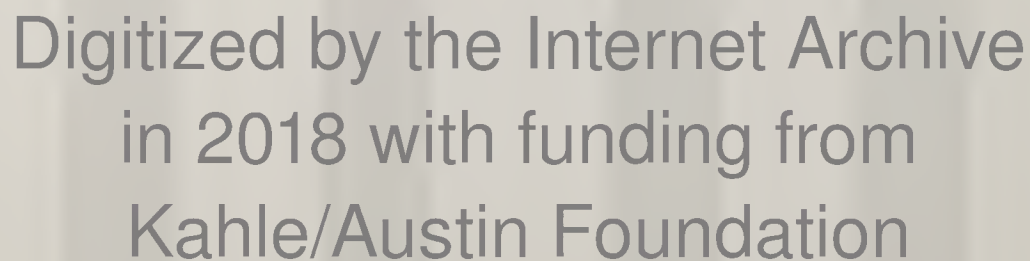
SAM AND EMMA



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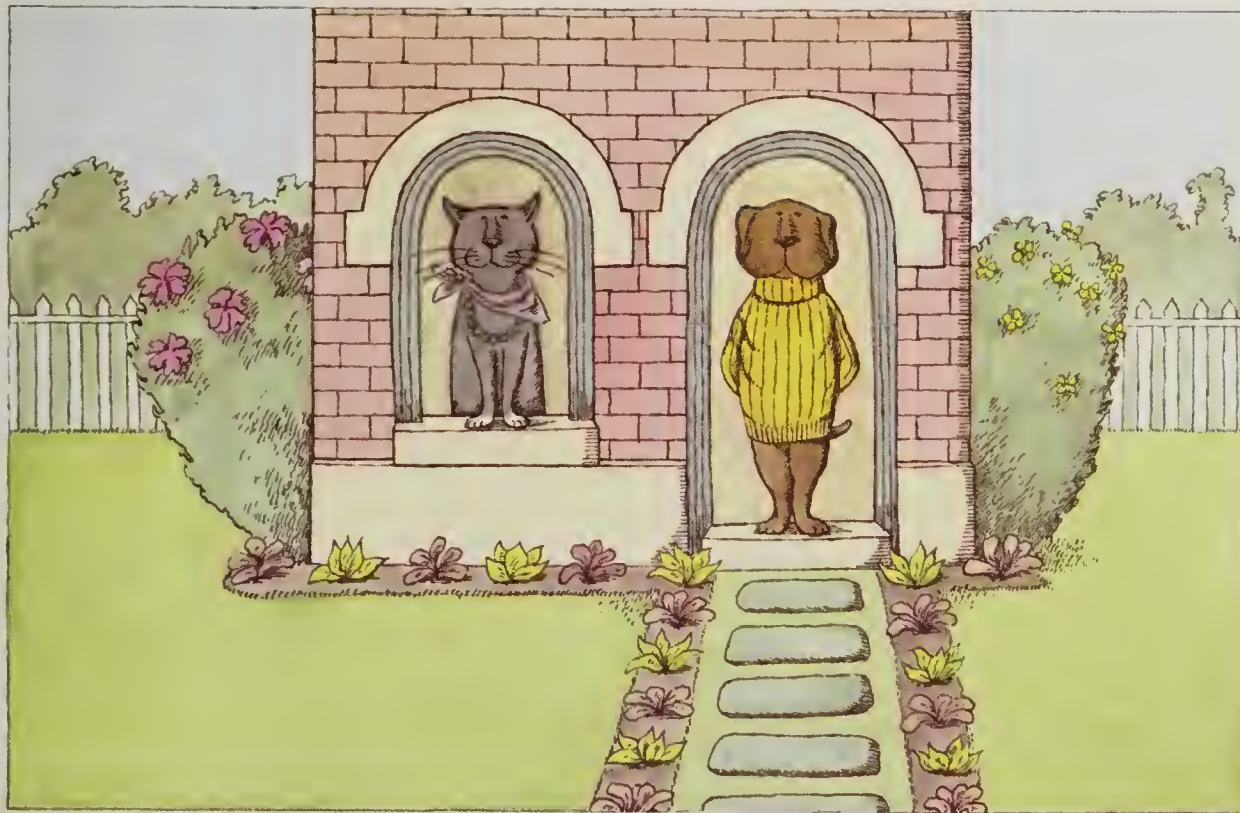
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*For Laura Michelle Becker
who lives in Brooklyn*



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Sam and Emma lived quite content
in a house
with a garden
where they didn't pay rent.



Sam was a dog, very gentle and kind.



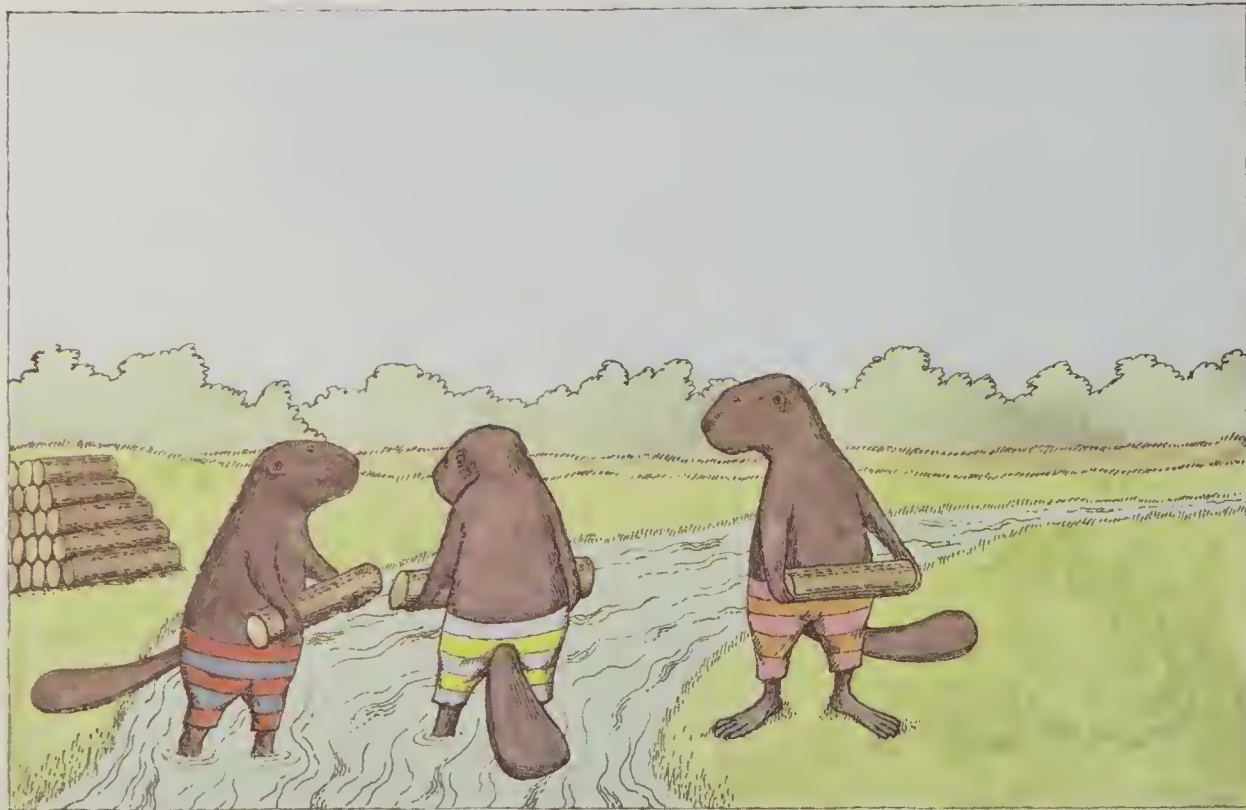
Emma, a cat, seldom troubled her mind
about much of anything—except herself.



One day in the garden, Emma said,
“Oh-h-h, but I’d like to go traveling.
Sam, couldn’t we go?
I mean just for the day, Sam. Please say yes!”



And she was climbing the gate as Sam said, "I guess."
Then he scrambled after her
and they were on their way.



They hadn't gone far from their own backyard
when they came on some beavers
who were working hard at building a dam
across a brook.



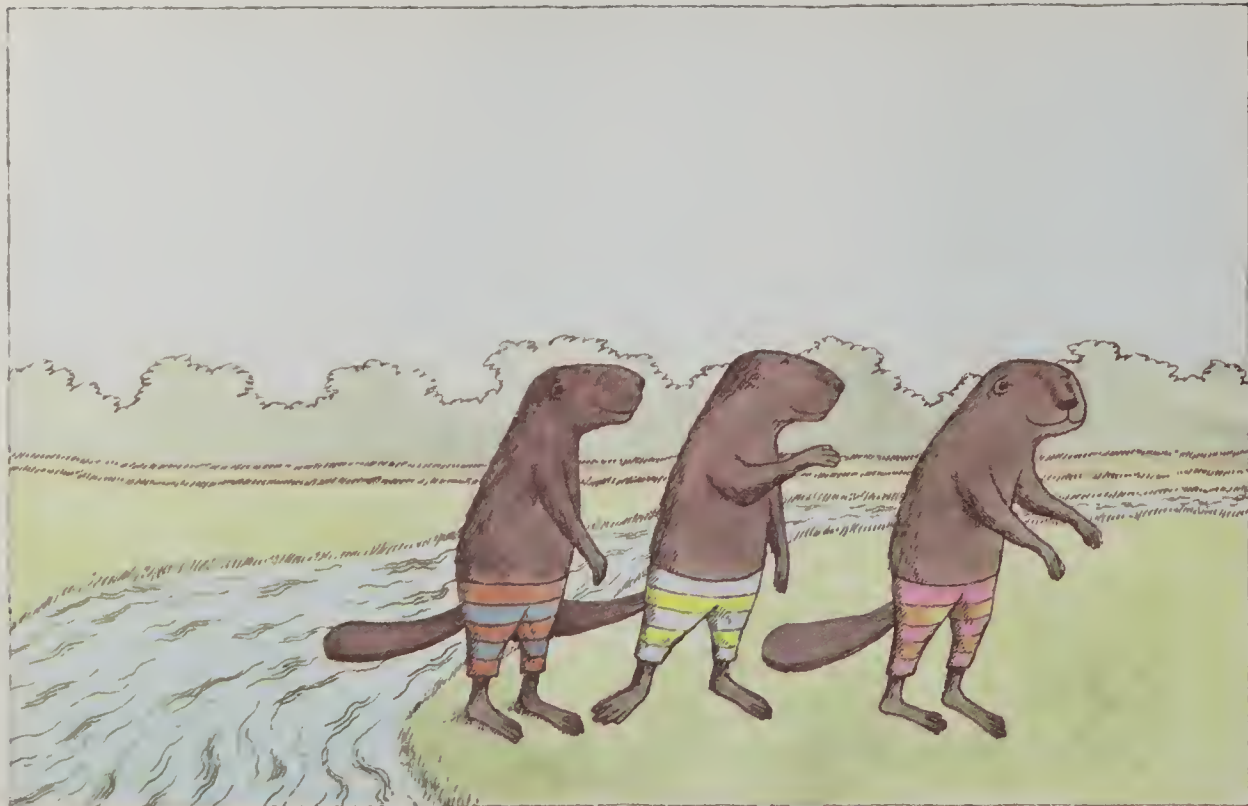
“Aren’t they ugly!” shrieked Emma.
“Oh, Sam. Just look!”
And she put up her nose—and her tail.



But Sam was already saying hello,
chatting and smiling
and wanting to know if the beavers would mind
if they watched for a while.



Then he introduced Emma, who managed to smile—
though very coolly.
She didn't like them.



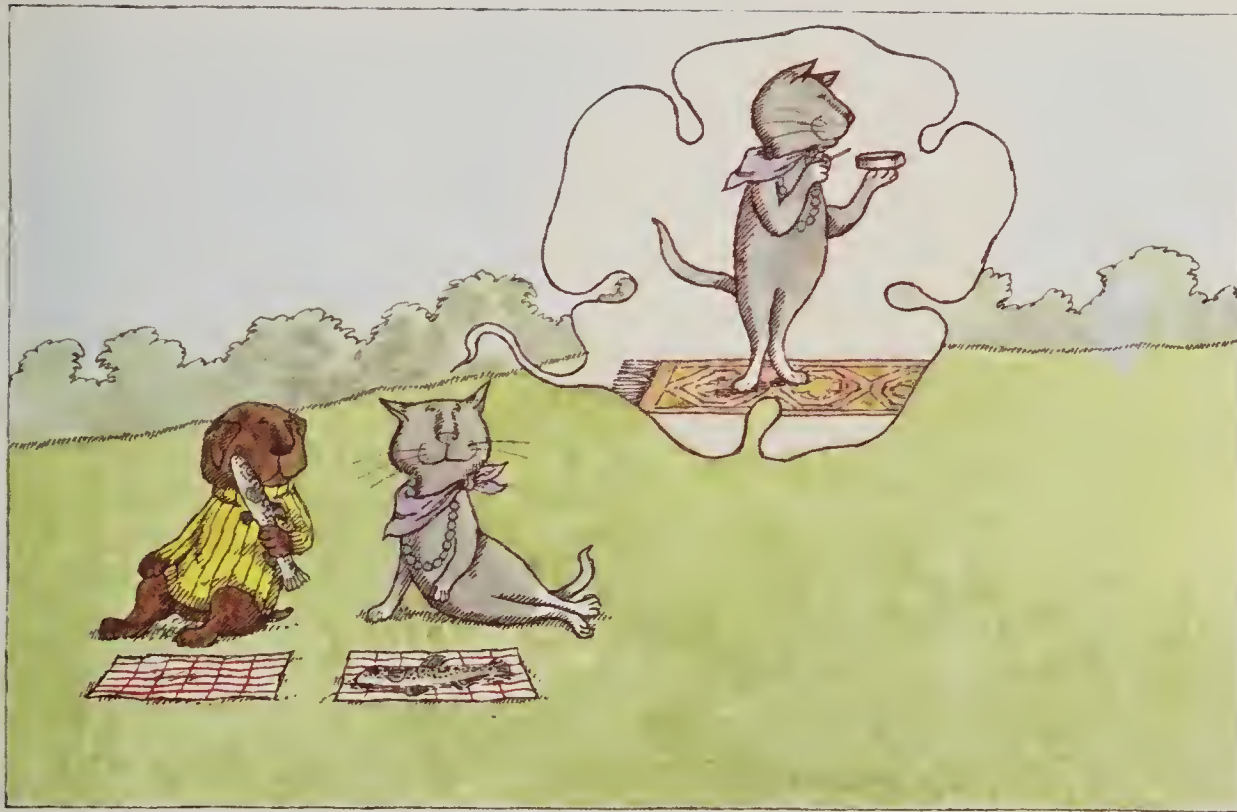
The beavers just grinned.
They were very polite.
“Would you join us for lunch?
Please, stay for a bite.”



“Of course,” said Sam, quite ready to dine.
Emma said coldly, “Yes. That would be fine.”
But she wanted very much to leave.



So up from the stream the beavers brought trout.
Sam began eating,
but Emma stared out into space.
“I just couldn’t dream of possibly eating
fish out of a stream.



“At home,” she explained, “they come in nice little tins, all neatly arranged.”

“Just try some,” Sam whispered, but Emma refused to. Sam was embarrassed.

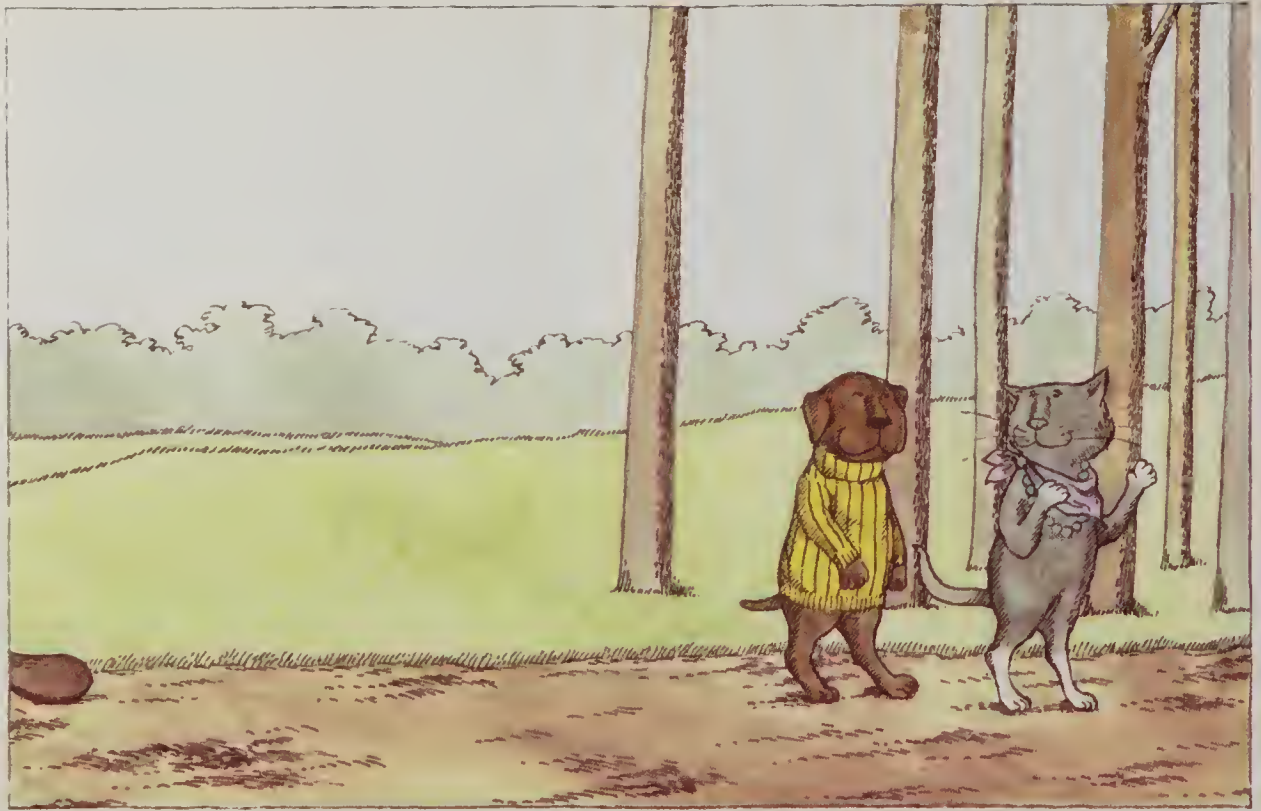
“It’s not what she’s used to,” he said.



The beavers answered that they understood.
Though they didn't, of course. The fish looked quite good.
They themselves ate only leaves and bark,
but everyone they knew liked fish.



So Sam and Emma said their good-days,
and the beavers got up and walked them a ways.



As soon as they'd parted, after all shaking hands,
Emma said loudly to Sam,
"Oh, my lands!
Weren't they dreadful!
And so ugly!"



“Well, I liked them,” said Sam,
but before more could be said,
two porcupines climbed down from a tree just ahead.



Emma burst into laughter.

Sam sternly said, "Shush!"

and he waved a hello as he busily rushed to get Emma away
before the porcupines could hear her.

"You'll hurt them," he said, "the way you behave."



“But creatures like that have no feelings to save,” answered Emma. “They’re fat, and all spikes, and such hard little eyes.”

“Well, Emma,” said Sam, “you may be no prize. I mean, to them.”



And he tried to explain.

“If you lived in the forest and were exposed to its ills,
you might be glad to be covered with quills.

Then nothing could harm you,
or bite you, you see.”



“Well, I’d rather be eaten alive—
and be me,” answered Emma.
Then she saw the raccoons.
She stopped short in her tracks. “Now, Sam,
just what are those?”



Sam thought for a moment. "Raccoons, I suppose."
"Well, they're really quite pretty," Emma said,
and then smiled. "They're a little like cats,
though they haven't our style."
Sam just shook his head.



The raccoons tottered toward them, their eyes squinted tight.

“I’m sorry,” said one,

“but this light is so bright,

and raccoons, as you know, don’t go out much by day.”

“No need to be sorry,” said Sam.

“It’s OK.”



But Emma didn't think so.

"Don't go out much by day? Now what's that all about?"

"They sleep," explained Sam, "and at night they go out."

"They sleep all day long?

Well that's simply lazy.

And to stay up all night is perfectly crazy."



“You’re not a raccoon,” said Sam.

“Thank goodness!” was the answer.

The raccoons waved and climbed into an old hollow log.

“How disgusting!” said Emma,

“not even a *dog* would live like that.”



Then she suddenly knew what she'd said,
and she turned.

"Sam, I didn't mean you."

But she could see that he was hurt.



“You don’t like anyone,” said Sam,
“that’s easy to see.”
“Oh, I do! I like you, Sam,
and I rather like me.



“But these others, they could learn to live more like we do.”

“But, Emma,” said Sam, “they don’t want to be you.

Please think—we’re all different and it’s not a bad plan.”



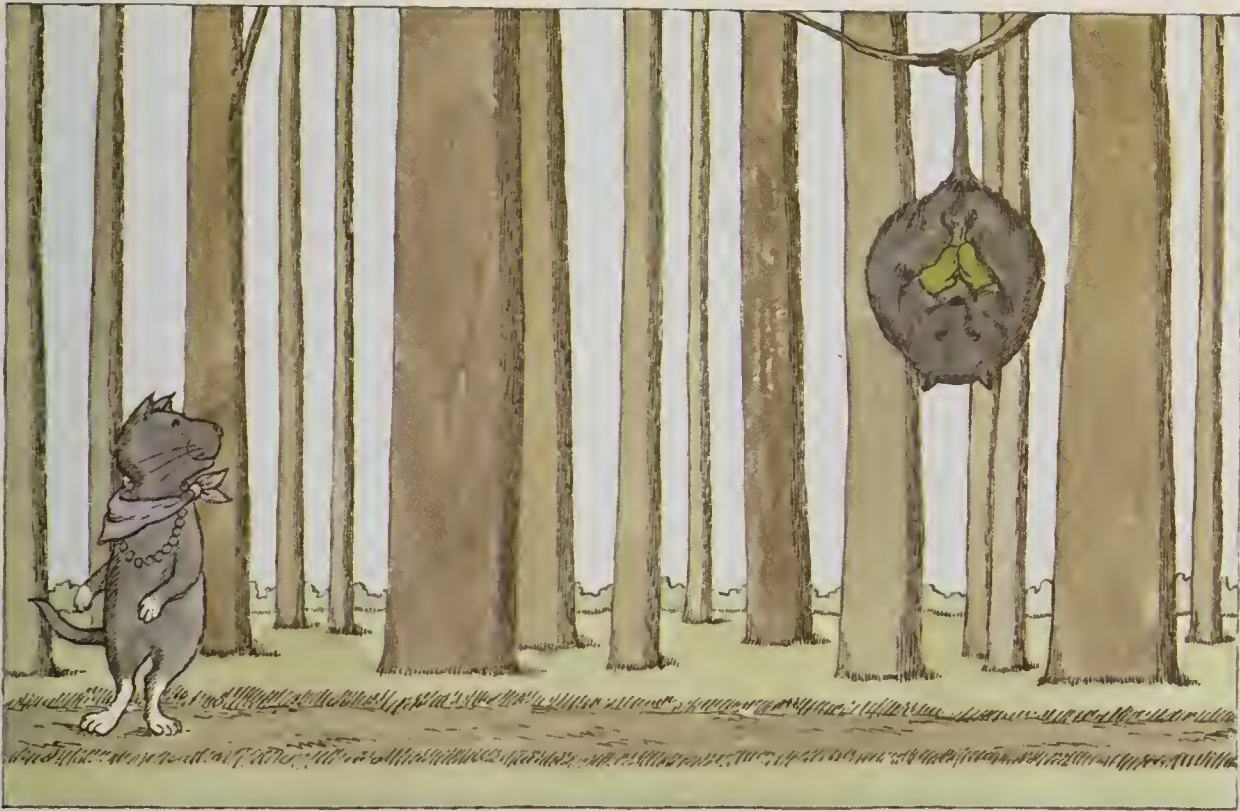
“I’m thinking,” said Emma, “as hard as I can.”
And Sam continued.
“I *like* you,” he said, “you’re my very best friend.



“But you must allow others to prefer to be them.”

Emma wasn't listening now,
she was staring up into a tree.

“That all must be true, Sam—I know I'm not bright—



but surely some creatures are not really right.”
And she nodded up at a possum Sam didn’t yet see
hanging down like a ball
by its tail from a tree.



“Well, I’ll be!” said Sam.

“Yes,” said Emma, quietly.

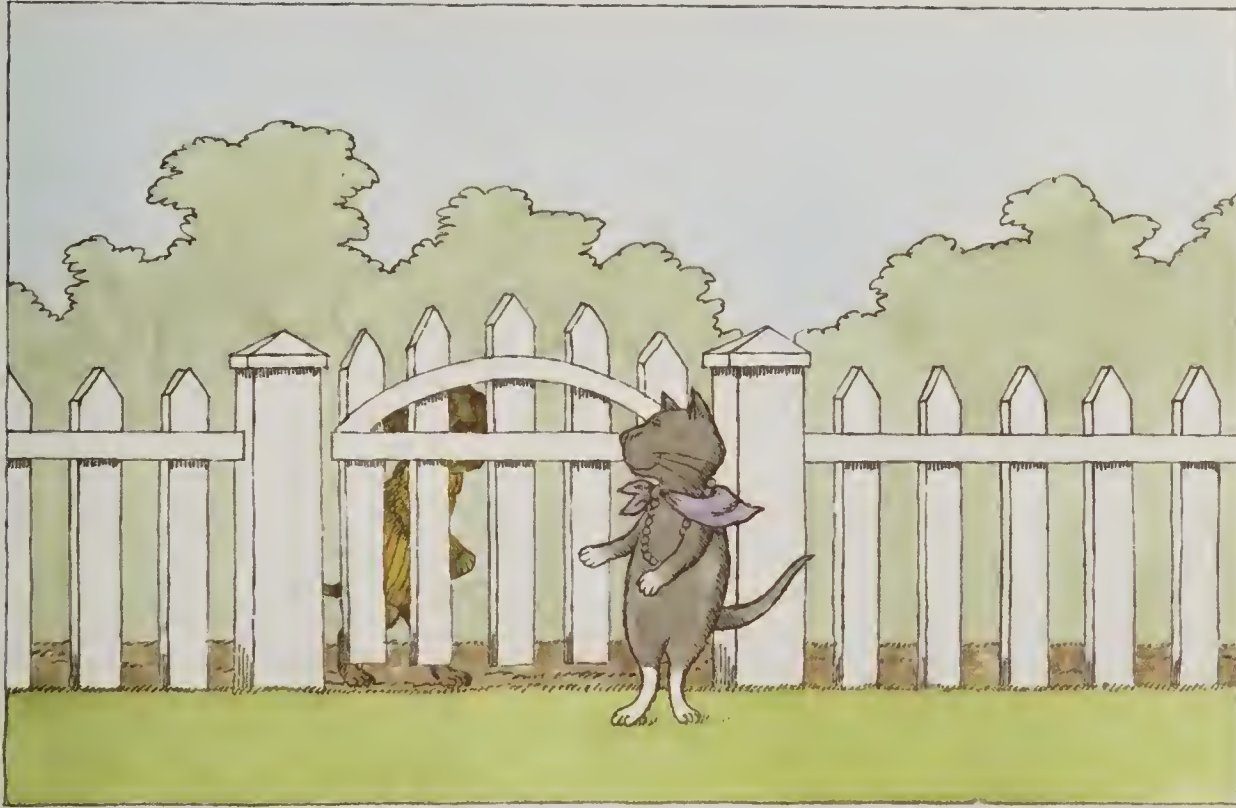
“I don’t know,” said Sam, “what he’s doing in that tree.
But I’m sure he has reasons,
so let’s just let him be.”



Then they both began running as fast as they could
and they ran until they came to the edge of the wood
and they could see their garden gate.



“Say what you will, Sam,” Emma said then,
“but the best thing all day is to be home again.”
“Well, Emma,” said Sam,
“—and this is all that I’ll say—
if you think,
you might find you’d learned something today.”



But Emma was already climbing the gate into the garden.
She was waiting as Sam came scrambling through.
“What you’ve said, Sam, I know,
it’s all perfectly true.
We *must* understand others,
and I’ll try to, you’ll see!



“But , Sam, while I’m trying, you must understand me.”

She smiled.

“That’s fair,” said Sam.

And they ran in to supper.

SAM AND EMMA

DRAWINGS BY EDWARD GOREY

DONALD NELSEN



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