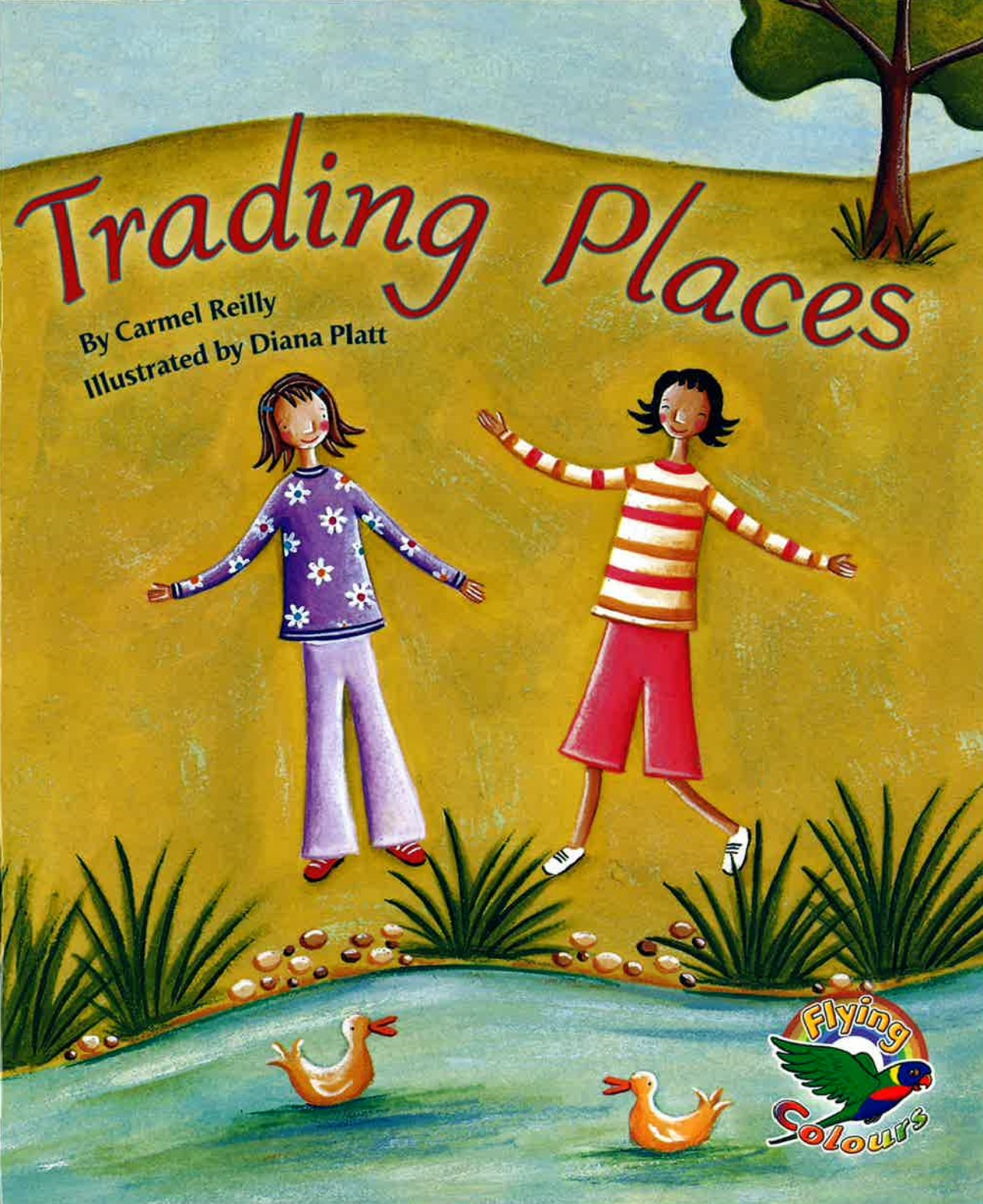
Trading Places

By Carmel Reilly
Illustrated by Diana Platt



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Chapter 1

Big Families, Small Families

Lily played at Meg's house after school. When she got home she said to her mum, "Meg is so lucky to have a big family. There's always something happening, and she always has somebody to play with."

"Oh well," said Lily's mum. "Every family is different. Remember, there are good things about small families too."

Lily shrugged. "I suppose so, but it just seems so quiet around here sometimes with just me."

"I have a suggestion," said Mum. "If you'd like some company, perhaps you could invite Meg to stay over for the night this weekend."

"That's a great idea, Mum! I haven't had anyone to stay since we moved," said Lily. "I'll ask her tomorrow."

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On Friday, Meg and Lily walked back to Lily's place after school.

Meg followed Lily through the shop that Lily's mum and dad owned and up the stairs to where they lived.

"I love your place," Meg said as she put her bag down on the bed. "You're so lucky that your mum and dad are artists, and you can use the studio downstairs for painting too."

Meg walked to the centre of the room, twirled around and threw her arms out wide.

"And look at your bedroom. It's huge and you have it all to yourself," she said. "I can't believe how perfect it is. I'm so excited about staying here tonight."



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Lily and Meg lay in bed that night talking.

"It's so nice and quiet here," said Meg. "But … do you ever get bored being on your own?"

"Sometimes," replied Lily quietly. "You don't know how lucky you are to have brothers and sisters to play with."

Meg laughed. "It's not always that great! You should come and stay at our place and see what it's really like!" she said. "In fact, why don't you come over next weekend?"

"I'd love to!" said Lily.

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Chapter 2

Dinner at Meg's

The next Saturday, Lily's dad dropped her off at Meg's place just before dinner.

Meg took Lily's bag and carried it into her room. "We'll fix up your bed later," she said. "Come and have something to eat."

Lily followed Meg into the dining room where Meg's family were already sitting around the table. Someone brought in an extra chair for Lily. She sat down, squeezing into the narrow space between Meg and one of her brothers.

Meg's mum and dad carried plates of food from the kitchen.

"I hope you like curry and rice," said Meg's mum as she put one of the plates in front of Lily.

Lily wasn't certain whether she did or not because her parents never made curry. She poked it with her fork, and wasn't sure if she wanted to eat it.

When she glanced back up again, she realised that everyone else at the table had begun eating. She was shocked to see that some of them were almost finished.

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Meg's brother turned to Lily and laughed. "You'd better hurry up," he said. "When we've eaten ours, we'll start on yours."

"Don't take any notice of him, Lily, he's only joking," said Meg.

But Lily wasn't sure. She looked anxiously at Meg's brother and quickly began to eat her food.



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