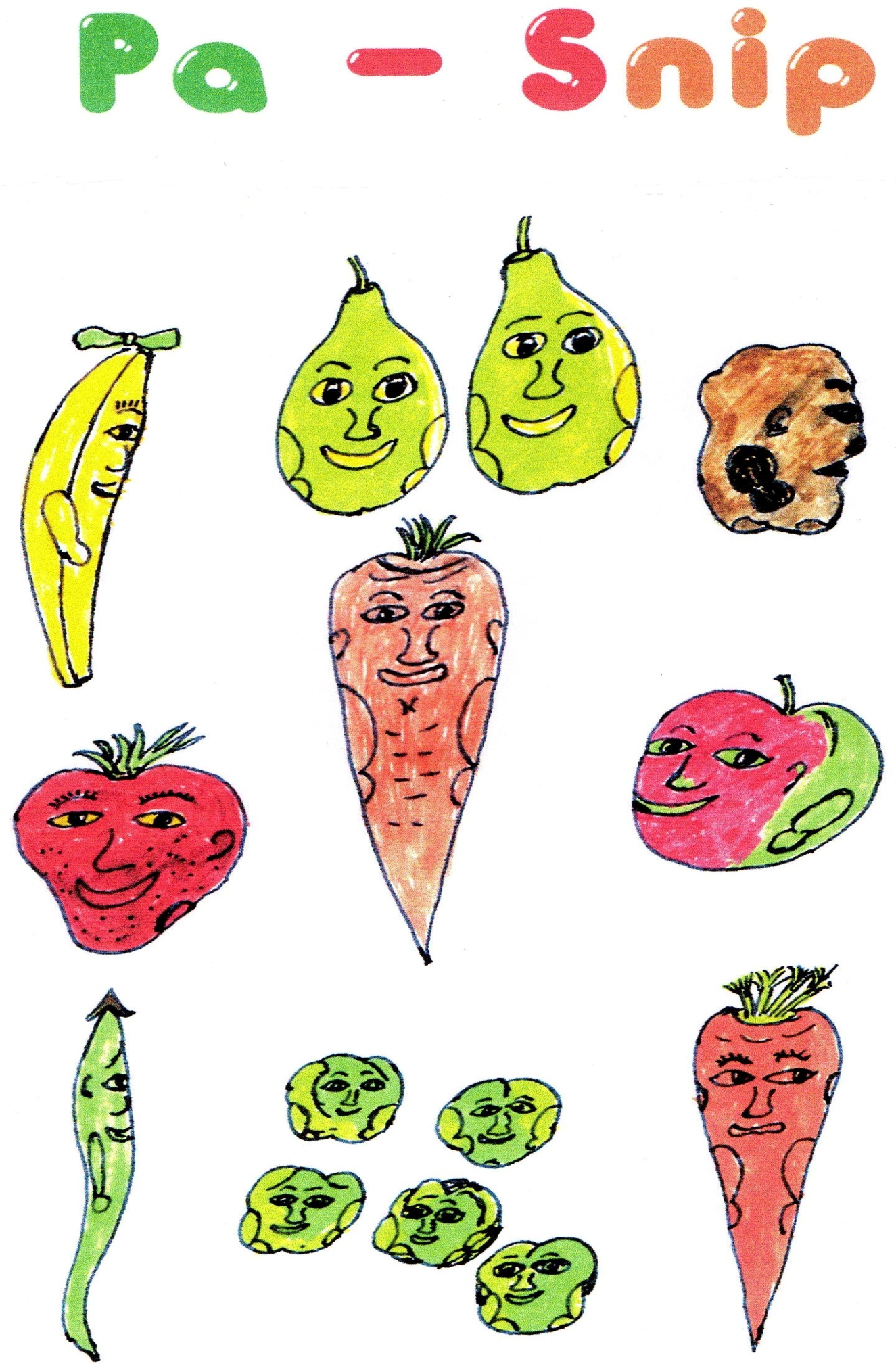
**I’m beautiful too**

[Carrie]

It was getting light in the shop with the green and yellow door. The shop would soon be open and all the fruit and vegetables inside were getting excited.

“I wonder who will buy me?” said a big orange, looking up at the pink paper-lined box on the shelf above him. “I expect it will be the first customer who comes in. They will see how big and round and juicy I am and buy me first of all.”

“They’ll look at me first,” said Ms. Ruby the strawberry, from her place in the pink box. “I’m the most beautiful in the whole shop!”

“Never,” exclaimed the yellow banana. “I’m Lady Anna. “I’m the most beautiful fruit in here!”

“What about me?”said Carrie, the carrot, “Look at my lovely orange colour and my fabulous green top.”

“You’re not beautiful,” scoffed Lady Anna. “But I suppose you’re better looking than a potato”

The sprouts, Becky, Jenny, Bruce and George, began to laugh and soon the twin pears were giggling with them. The potatoes fixed all their eyes on them and stared angrily.

“Now don’t be unkind,” said Pa Snip. “We are all fine looking in our own way - even me with all my brown dimples.” Then to stop an argument, he said, “I think Carrie looks lovely, but she is the only one in this pink box who has not had a story about her. I’ve thought of one and there’s just time for me to tell you before the shop opens.”

It took Pa Snip a little while to get started, because he was trying to make up the story very quickly. Carrie began to think there would not be time for her story, but at last he began.

Carrie was once just a tiny brown seed together with hundreds of others in a little paper packet. On the outside of the packet was a picture of beautiful slim carrots looking just like Carrie would be. One day, a gardener took the packet of seeds into his garden in Norfolk. He dug over some ground, raked it to make the soil very fine, and then made a little straight hollow groove with a stick. As he worked he was being watched by Jemma and Jamie. Jamie was his black cat, and Jemma was his little grand-daughter.

The gardener opened his packet of carrot seed and carefully poured some into his hand. Pinching the seeds between his fingers he dropped them into the hollow he had made in the ground. Carrie was one of those seeds, but just as she left the gardener’s hand the wind blew and carried her away under the

hedge.

Carrie did not know she should not really be there. She dropped on the soft ground and soon the gardener who was raking the soil back over the seeds, pushed some into the hedge. It covered Carrie too. There, under the hedge, Carrie grew. She put out a tender white shoot in the darkness which went down, deep into the ground. Then another shoot went up and up to look for the sky. Quickly, the shoot which had gone up above the ground turned into beautiful bright green leaves. Carrie looked out through her green leaves and saw the other carrots. They were growing in their straight row and they all had green tops like hers.

“If I grow tall,” thought Carrie. “The gardener will see me and put me with the others. He will see how beautiful I am.”

So Carrie swelled out into her orange carrot shape under the soft ground by the

hedge. Her green leaves grew taller above the ground. Carrie wriggled in the ground till her orange top was showing under her green leaves.

“The gardener must see how beautiful I am.” She kept telling herself. She wriggled in the ground till she pushed herself up to be seen, but the orange part of her above the ground began to turn green like her leaves. Carrie was horrified. “I’m going green like my leaves,” she cried. She tried to wriggle back into the ground but the more she moved about the more she came out of the ground. Carrie called to a beetle who was scurrying past.

“Please cover me up. I’m going green.” The beetle was happy to help. “I want to be beautiful like the other carrots in the row over there,” she told him.

“Huh,” the beetle laughed as he dug up a shower of dirt and scattered it round Carrie. “You look like any other carrot to me.”

“Oh dear,” cried Carri. “The gardener will never notice me.” But he did!

At the moment when the beetle went away, the gardener’s little grand-daughter ran down the path. She had a pad of paper and some crayons in her hand. She saw the beetle hurrying away. It made her look into the hedge.

“Look granddad. There’s a carrot in the hedge. Isn’t it’s green top beautiful. It’s just what I want Granddad!” Jemma told him all about the painting competition for the village fete.

“We have to paint a beautiful flower or plant. There‘s a special prize for something no-one else has done.” She pointed to Carrie. “I’m going to draw and colour the carrot top ! She sat down on the path, and spent a long time drawing and colouring. Her picture was very good. Carrie could see what Jemma was doing and felt very proud.

“My green top,” she said. “Its so beautiful that it’s being painted! But if only the little girl could see what a beautiful orange carrot I am down in the ground.”

The beetle crawled past again. Carrie knew what she wanted him to do.

“Beetle,” called Carrie. “Help me! Dig me out. Make a big hole all round me.”

“But you just wanted me to dig you in,” said the beetle. “Make up your mind!”

“Don’t argue,” called Carrie. “Just get me out.” The beetle dug all round Carrie while Jemma went on colouring her green picture.

“Faster, faster,” Carrie kept calling to the beetle. The beetle looked tired, and ran away under the hedge. Carrie thought he had given up, but he had not. In a moment he came back with his family and soon five beetles were digging. Carrie began to show bright orange in the ground.”

When the gardener came back he looked at Jemma’s picture, then he looked at Carrie, and then he said, “It’s a good picture, but why not paint the whole carrot. The orange and green will go nicely together. While he was speaking, the gardener reached right across the row of carrots and into the hedge. He took hold of Carrie’s green leaves and pulled.

“Don’t ruffle my top!” shouted Carrie, but the gardener did not stop pulling. Slowly, ever so slowly, Carrie felt herself dragged out of the ground right to the tip of her tail. It took a long while because she had grown so long and big.

Granddad laid Carrie on the grass for Jemma to draw and colour her

picture. When it was finished she held it up. Carrie could see it. She was thrilled. She was looking at a picture of herself ……. and it was really beautiful!

The gardener picked up Carrie. “I’ll take this one indoors,” he said. “It will do for dinner today.”

Carri did not mind being Granddad and Jemma‘s dinner. After all she was in a

beautiful picture. Everybody would say. What a beautiful carrot! They would remember her long after diner time. She hoped Gemma would win a prize for her painting.

“I still don’t think she would be as beautifully orange as I am,” said the orange.

Pa Snip looked down at him from the pink-lined box on the shelf and said,

“All of us are different. Carrie will be her own beautiful colour. We are all beautiful in our own special way.”

Nobody saidy anything more until Pa Snip spoke again. “It’s nearly time for the shop to open,” he said. I think we should all have a sleep. It has been a busy night.” He looked across the pink box to where Mr. H. Appy lay. “Perhaps Mr. Appy will sing his song to make us sleepy.” But Mr. H. Appy was already fast asleep.