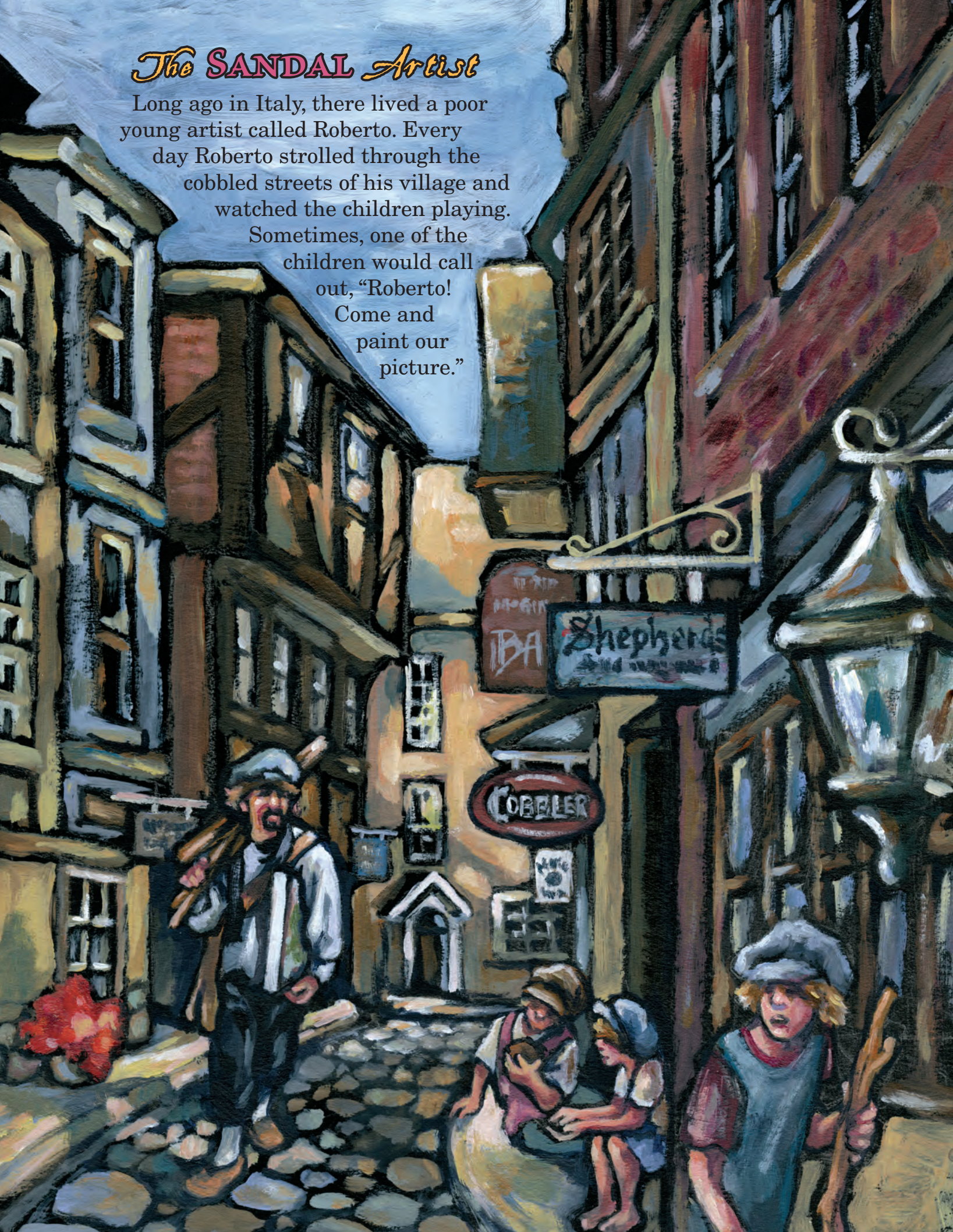


The SANDAL Artist

Long ago in Italy, there lived a poor young artist called Roberto. Every day Roberto strolled through the cobbled streets of his village and watched the children playing. Sometimes, one of the children would call out, "Roberto! Come and paint our picture."

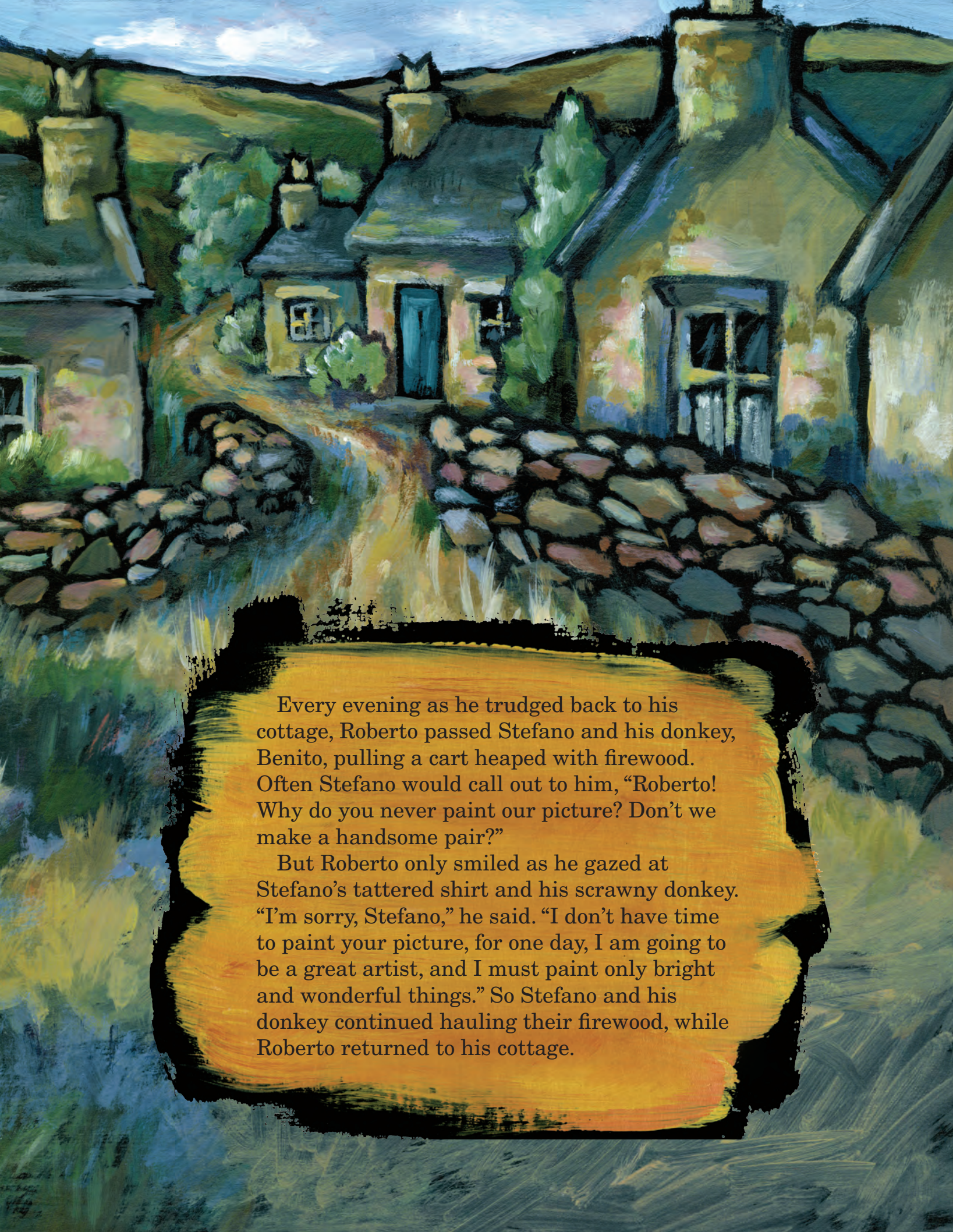




But Roberto only laughed. “No!” he said. “One day I am going to be a great artist, and I must practice painting only beautiful things—not ragged children.” So the children went back to their games, and Roberto headed off into the countryside to paint lush, green meadows and cool, lavender forests.



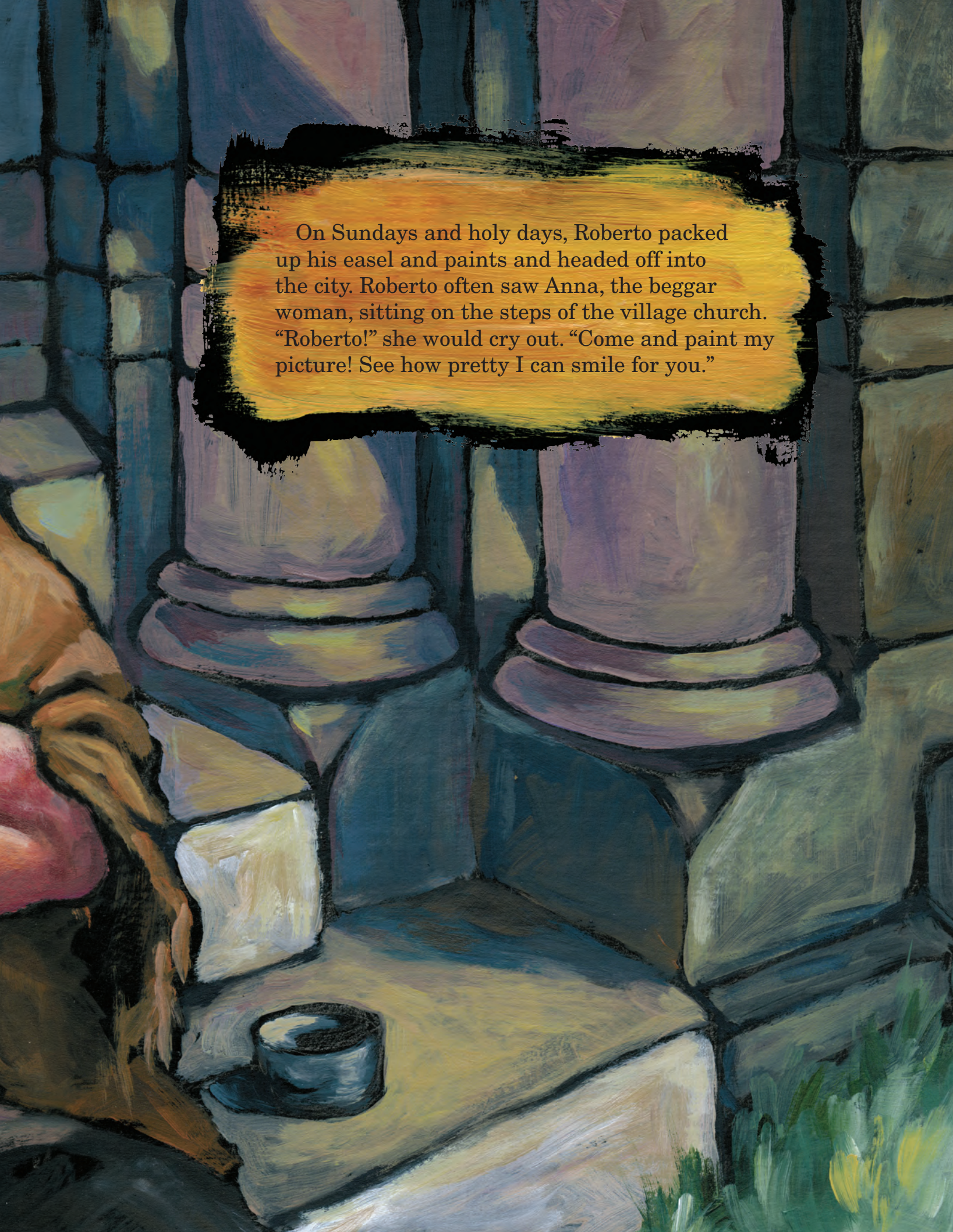




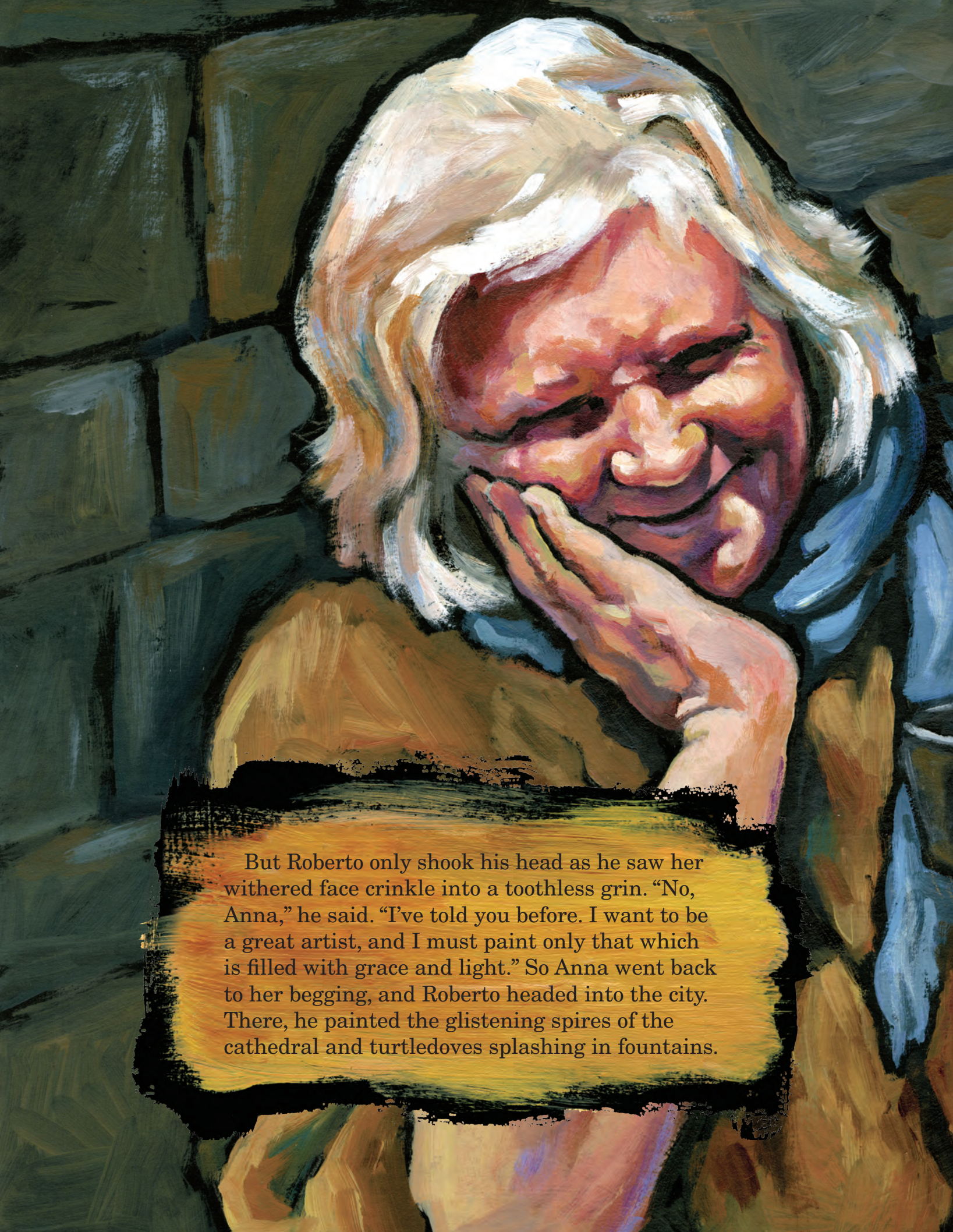
Every evening as he trudged back to his cottage, Roberto passed Stefano and his donkey, Benito, pulling a cart heaped with firewood. Often Stefano would call out to him, “Roberto! Why do you never paint our picture? Don’t we make a handsome pair?”

But Roberto only smiled as he gazed at Stefano’s tattered shirt and his scrawny donkey. “I’m sorry, Stefano,” he said. “I don’t have time to paint your picture, for one day, I am going to be a great artist, and I must paint only bright and wonderful things.” So Stefano and his donkey continued hauling their firewood, while Roberto returned to his cottage.



The background is a painting of a stone wall. The stones are rendered in various colors including blue, purple, yellow, and green, with visible brushstrokes. A large, irregular yellow shape with a black border is superimposed on the wall, containing text. In the bottom right corner, there are some green and yellow brushstrokes that look like grass or plants. In the bottom left, there are some brown and orange brushstrokes that look like a shadow or a corner.

On Sundays and holy days, Roberto packed up his easel and paints and headed off into the city. Roberto often saw Anna, the beggar woman, sitting on the steps of the village church. "Roberto!" she would cry out. "Come and paint my picture! See how pretty I can smile for you."



But Roberto only shook his head as he saw her withered face crinkle into a toothless grin. “No, Anna,” he said. “I’ve told you before. I want to be a great artist, and I must paint only that which is filled with grace and light.” So Anna went back to her begging, and Roberto headed into the city. There, he painted the glistening spires of the cathedral and turtledoves splashing in fountains.

