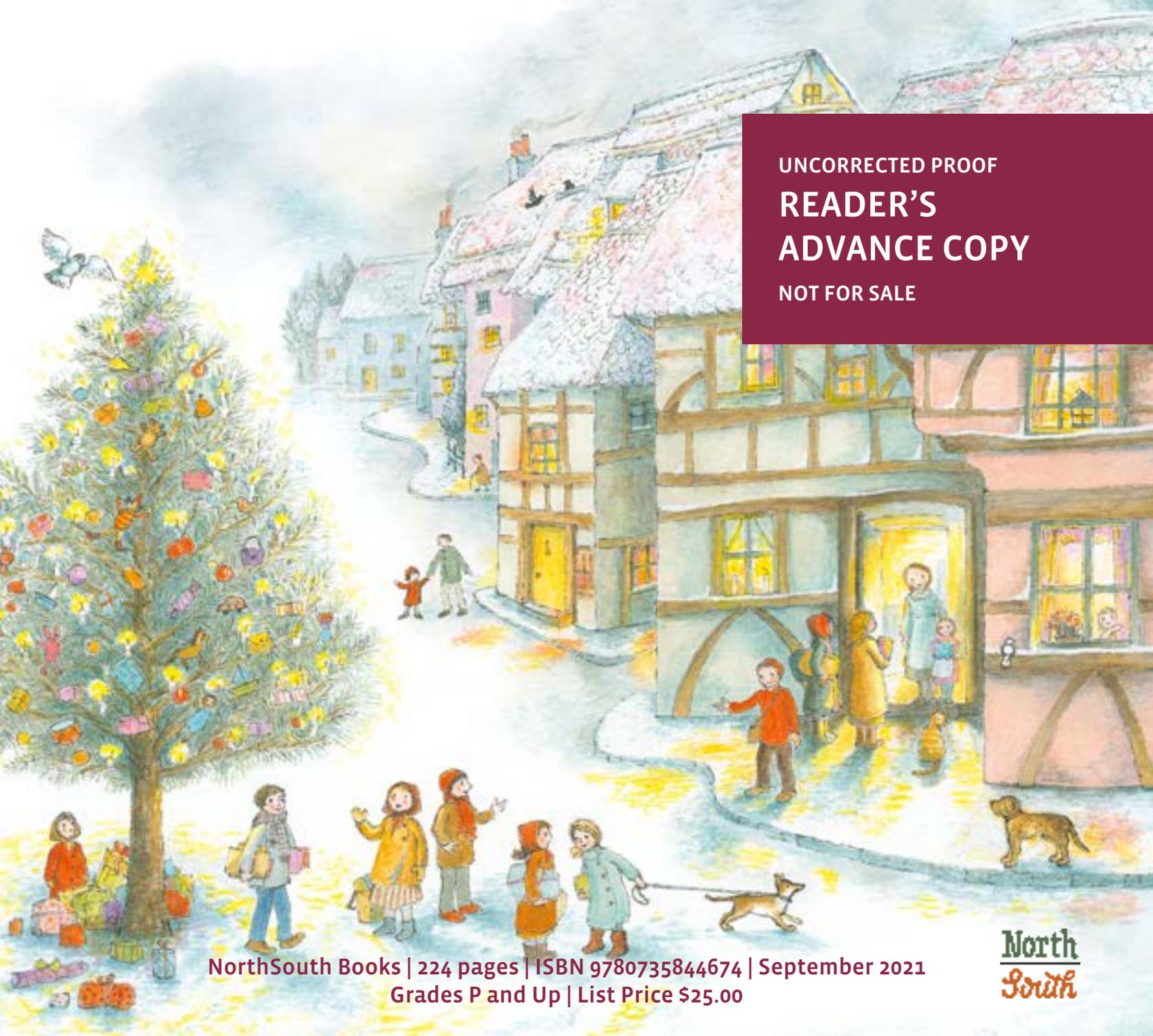


*Bernadette Watts*

# *Stories for Christmas*

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**North**  
**South**







# Stories for Christmas

Bernadette Watts

Bernadette Watts, known throughout Europe simply as Bernadette, has illustrated many dozens of folk- and fairy tales. Born in England, she loved to draw from childhood. She studied at the Maidstone Art School in Kent, UK, for a time under the tutelage of Brian Wildsmith and was also mentored by David Hockney. Bernadette's many beautiful books include *The Snow Queen* and *The Bremen Town Musicians*. Bernadette finds her inspiration in nature. Today she lives and works in Kent. She has been illustrating for NorthSouth Books and NordSüd Verlag since the beginning of her career fifty years ago.

*Dedicated to the loving memory of my brother Sam—Bernadette*



**North  
South**

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# The Little Snowflake



## Winter is coming!

High in the sky, higher than you could ever see, the snowflakes gathered. They came together in huge crowds, whispering all the time about the journey they would soon make to earth.

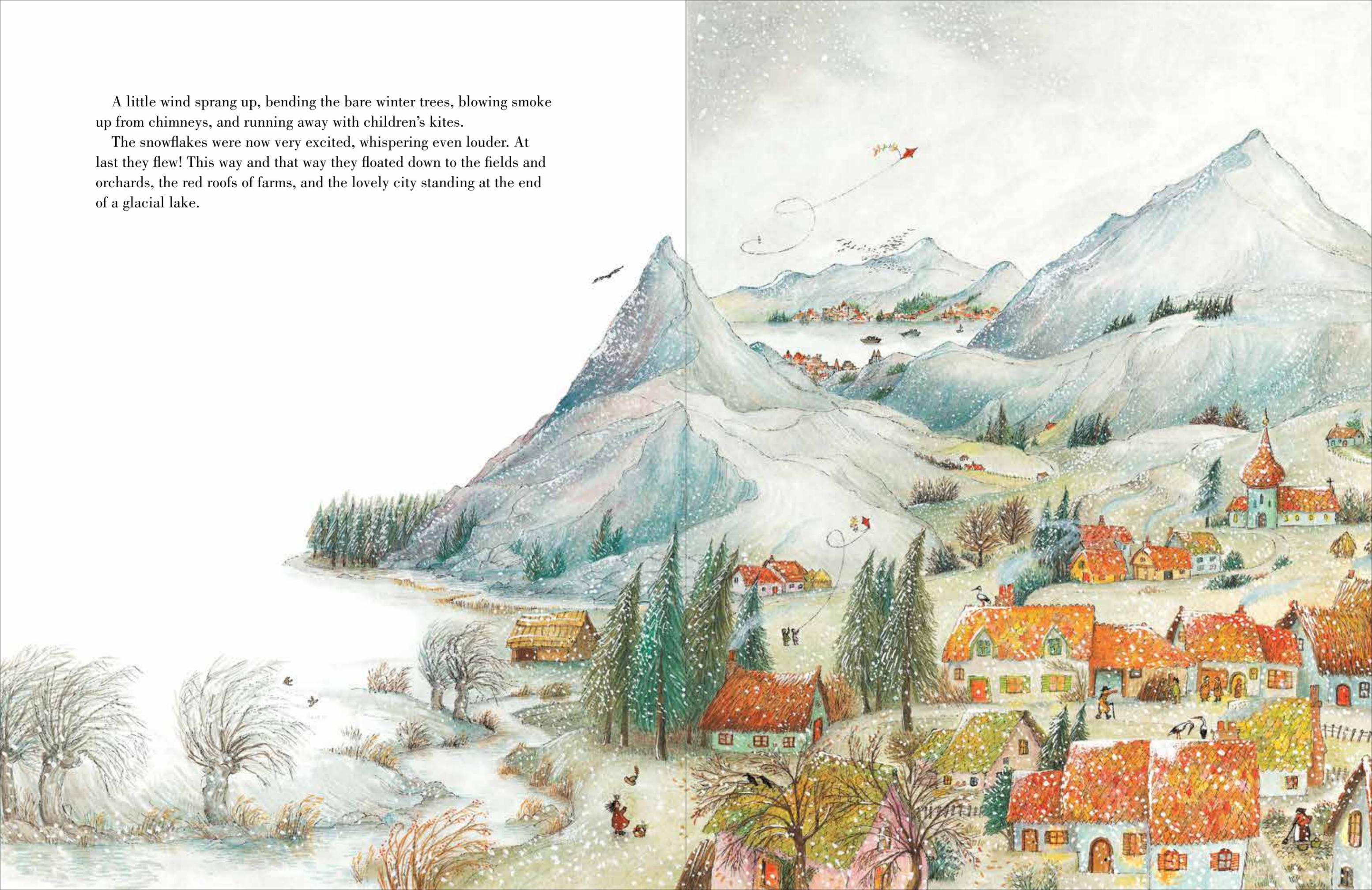
Each snowflake had a different dream to tell. And now the snow-clouds stretched from horizon to horizon!

The snowflakes were poised like dancers, ready to fly through the air.



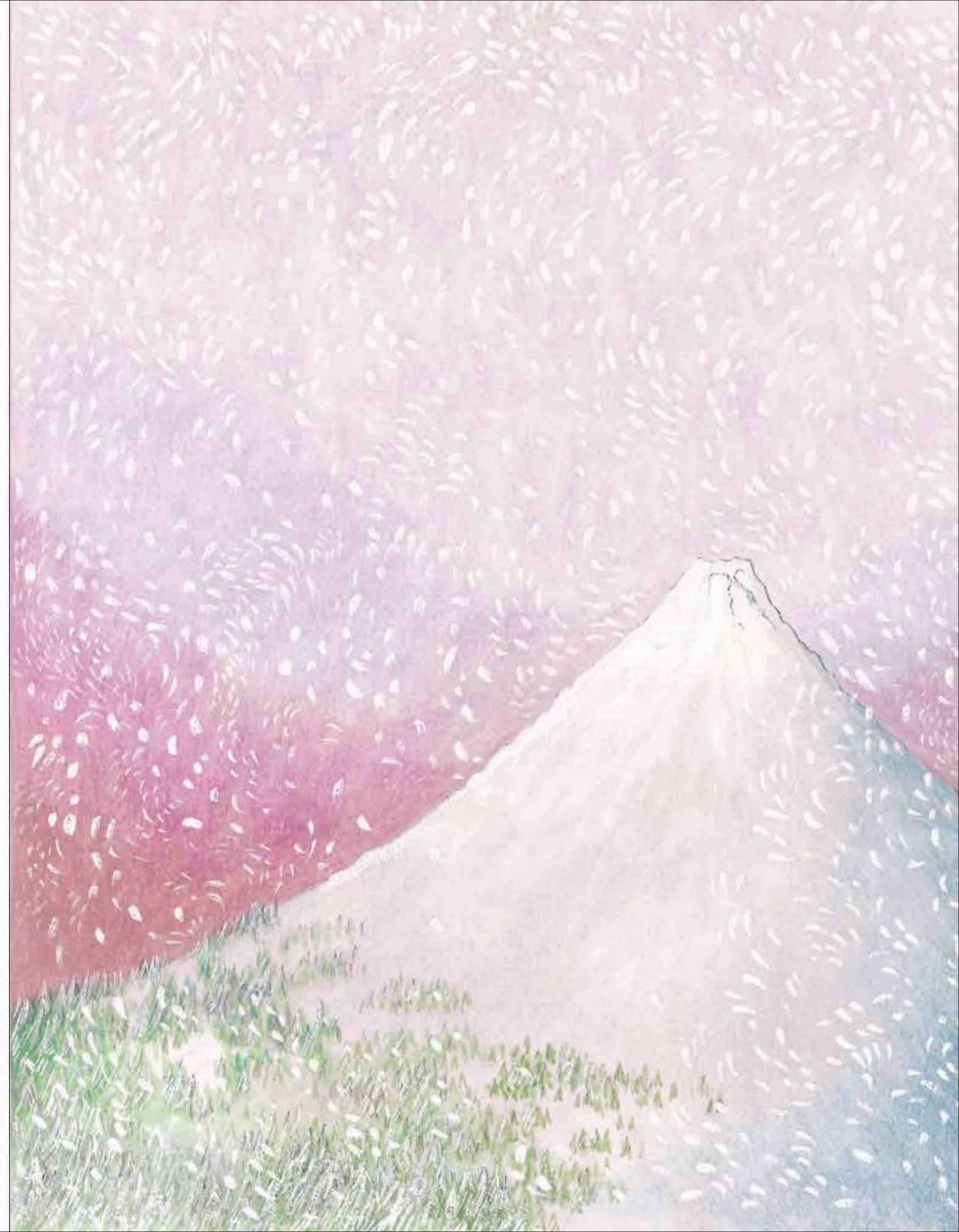
A little wind sprang up, bending the bare winter trees, blowing smoke up from chimneys, and running away with children's kites.

The snowflakes were now very excited, whispering even louder. At last they flew! This way and that way they floated down to the fields and orchards, the red roofs of farms, and the lovely city standing at the end of a glacial lake.





“But I am not staying here!” said one snowflake, “I will travel much further until I come to the most beautiful mountain in the world, and I will sit on the very top of it, so that all the people can look up and admire me.”





Another snowflake replied, "I will fly to a different land, to a great forest, and there I will settle on the branch of a tree.

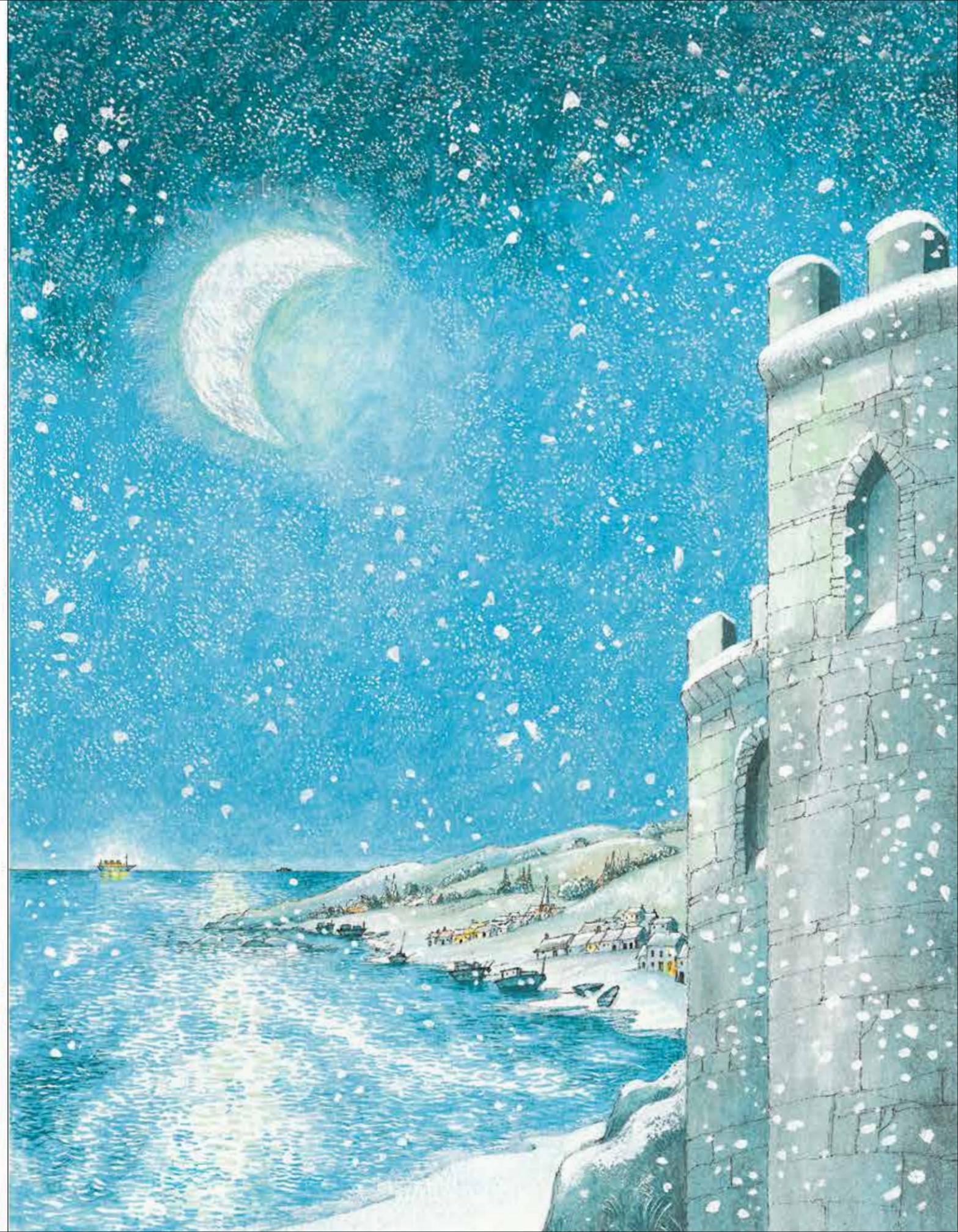
And I will watch the caribou and bear, the lynx and raccoon, and even the red squirrel who sleeps in that very tree."

“Oh, so boring!” sang out another snowflake, who felt very grand and proud, and believed herself to be superior due to her size. “I will fly in another direction for many, many miles, until I come to the jewelled domes and golden pinnacles of a wonderful castle, St. Basil’s, which has been painted all over by the rainbow. I will stand on its pinnacle and my beauty will outshine every other jewel.” The smallest snowflake listened in awe to all these grand plans, but said nothing. She held her dream to herself, quietly in her heart.



The winter wind blew stronger, dragging night clouds across the sea. The snowflakes looked down and saw great ships mid-ocean, their decks alight with lanterns and tired little fishing-boats asleep in dark harbors.

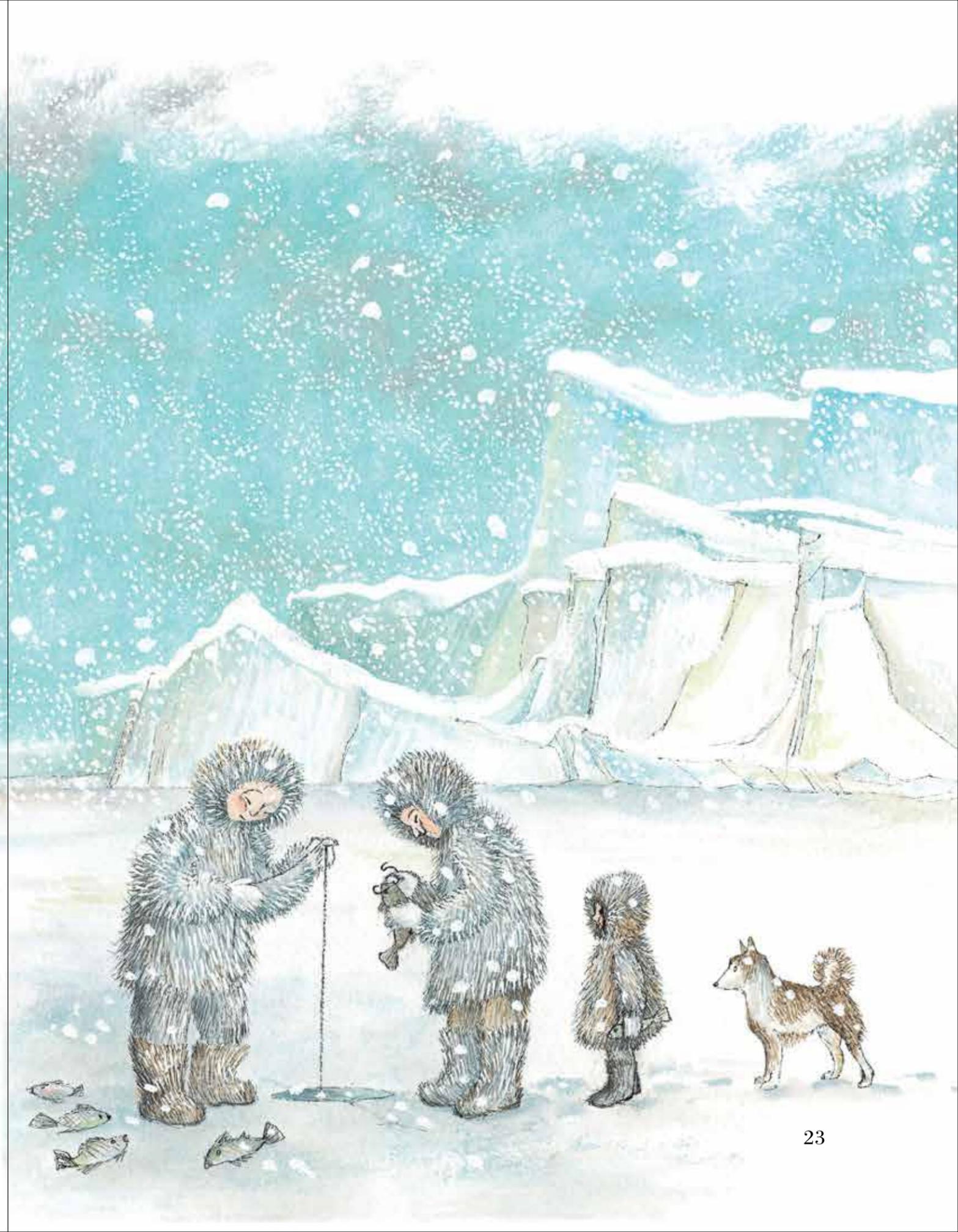
None of the snowflakes settled on the sea. They blew on, across the land. They scattered this way and that. Some settled on ancient oak trees, some on cottage roofs, others along garden fences or the battlements of castle walls.





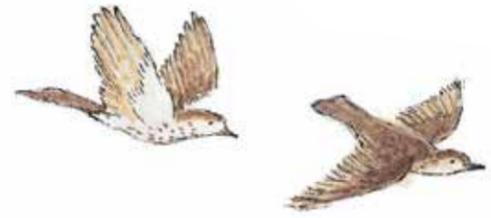
Other snowflakes traveled on.

One whispered to another, “I still have so far to go—to a land of ice, where little round homes are built of snow, and the people cut holes in the ice to take fish from the freezing sea below. Many of my cousins are already there and they will give me a great welcome. But tell us, littlest snowflake, where will you go?”

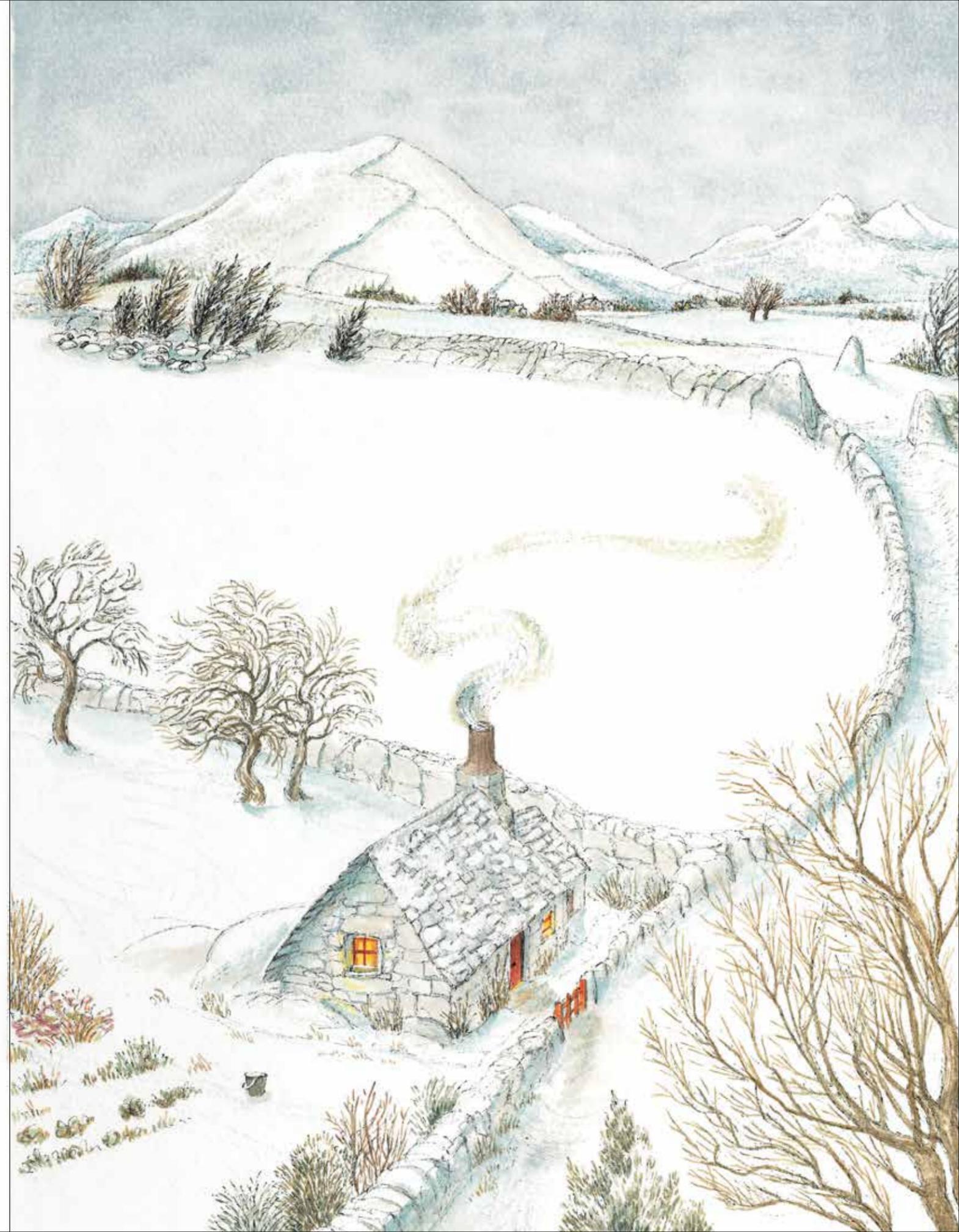


Now the littlest snowflake did not have such a wide education as the others and knew very little about the world.  
“I just want to be warm,” she replied.  
The other snowflakes around her shuddered with horror and drew away.  
“Warm! Warm! Oh, no! Never warm!” they muttered.  
But the littlest snowflake flew on, her dream safe in her heart. Through the night she flew over wild and rocky places, across wide moors, until dawn touched the sky. Against the first light she saw tiny cottages with gray slate roofs, and mothers with their children looking up at the morning sky. The snowflakes were less in their numbers now, most of them having come to rest.





And so at last the littlest snowflake knew she was home. She flew over a little bridge standing on a stream, over a wall, and into a garden with apple-trees. She fluttered down by the wall of a cottage and onto a window-ledge. Some other snowflakes crowded together on the window-ledge, but there was room enough. On the ledge and against the window stood a small window box filled with earth, and it was here the little snowflake took her place.





Peeping through the windowpane her heart filled with joy at all she saw inside this tiny cottage.

There was a table set for one. There were pictures on the wall and shelves full of books. But best of all was the fireplace filled with brightly burning logs, and a kettle standing on the hearth.

“How warm and friendly it is in there,” murmured the little snowflake.

The other snowflakes made no reply. Maybe they spoke a different language.

The little snowflake lay in the window box a long time. Some days everything remained still. Other days the wind brought in more and more snow so that the garden around the cottage and the track leading up to it were quite lost.





One day the snowflake felt the tiniest movement beneath her. Green shoots were beginning to push up though the earth in her window box.

Day by day the sun grew warmer. Sunbeams played on the window box and the green shoots grew taller until buds appeared, as white as pearls. They were snowdrops, the first signs of spring.

Everyday the littlest snowflake peeped through the window into the warm room. But when she told the other snowflakes about the boiling kettle and the hot casserole-pot, which stood by the fire, they ignored her.

So she told the tallest snowdrop about these wonders, and also about her dream to feel warm herself.

The snowdrop nodded and leaned over her like a friend.



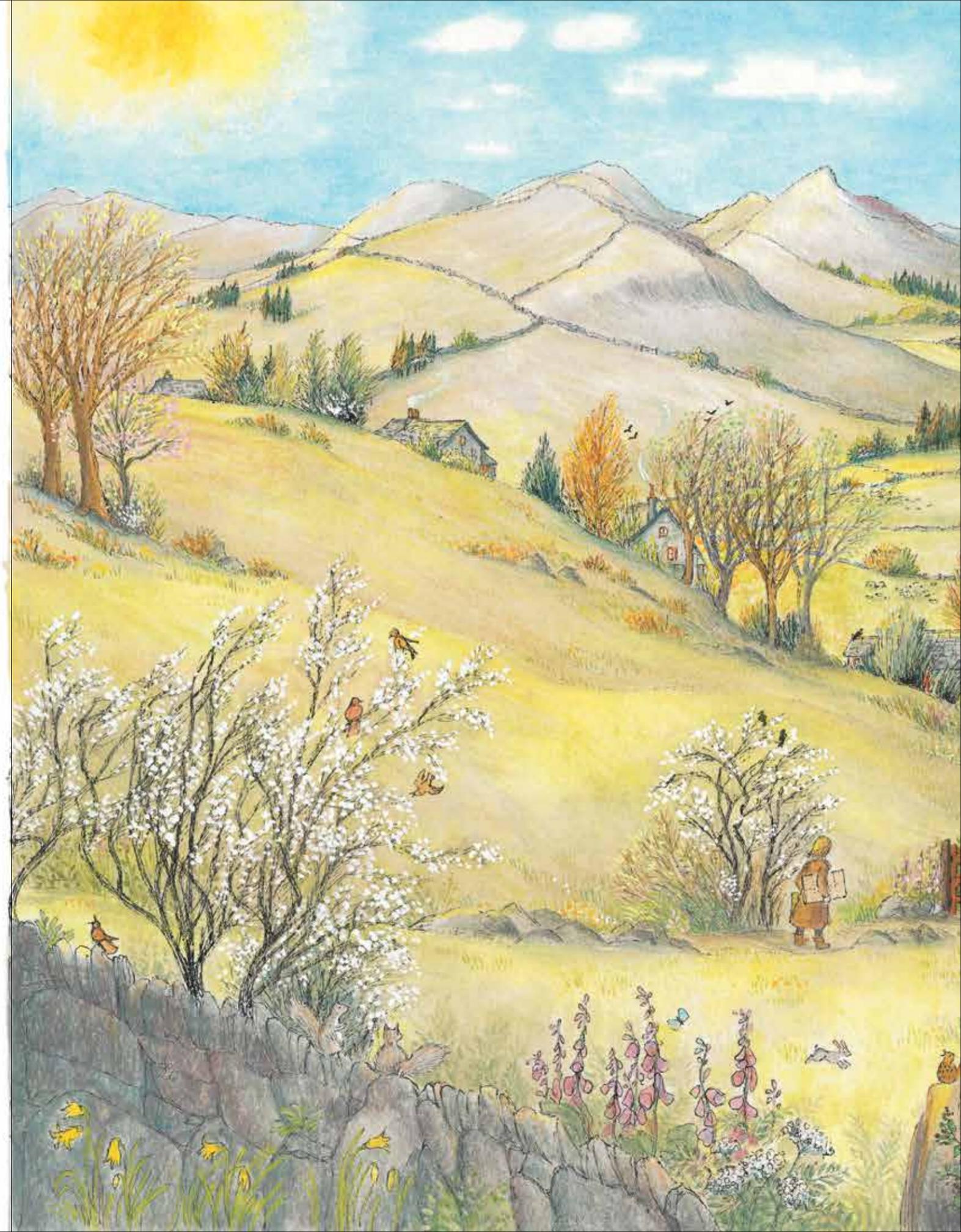


Soon the apple trees and black thorn bushes were covered with blossoms. Among their roots, primroses and violets flowered. Birds sang busily from every bush and tree. The window-ledge was bathed in sunshine so that the snowdrop flowers all opened.

Most of the snowflakes on the window-ledge also went away.

The little snowflake looked up at the tallest snowdrop who was even taller now. She had never seen anyone so handsome! Love filled her heart with such warmth that she melted away with joy.

**It was spring!**



# The Little Drummer Boy





In a faraway town there once lived a little drummer boy called Benjamin.

Benjamin played his drum every day, in front of shops and market stalls, by the doors of houses, or in front of the inn.

Benjamin was a poor orphan. He had no home. He slept where he could, in summer under a tree, in winter in some corner between buildings away from wind and snow.

When people felt happy they danced to his lively tunes. When they felt troubled his music gave them peace. Many people were kind to the poor boy and would bring him bowls of hot soup or some bread.





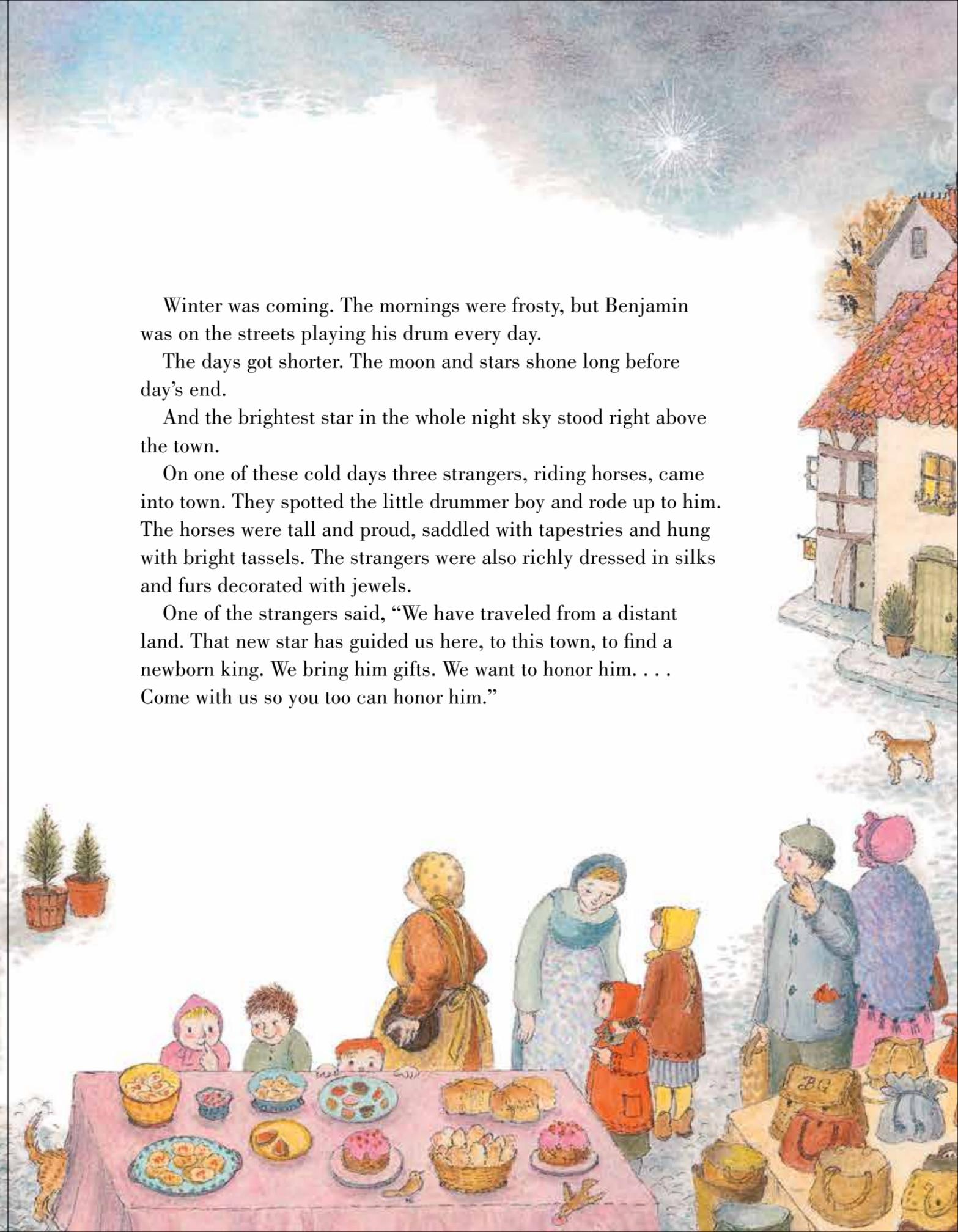
Winter was coming. The mornings were frosty, but Benjamin was on the streets playing his drum every day.

The days got shorter. The moon and stars shone long before day's end.

And the brightest star in the whole night sky stood right above the town.

On one of these cold days three strangers, riding horses, came into town. They spotted the little drummer boy and rode up to him. The horses were tall and proud, saddled with tapestries and hung with bright tassels. The strangers were also richly dressed in silks and furs decorated with jewels.

One of the strangers said, "We have traveled from a distant land. That new star has guided us here, to this town, to find a newborn king. We bring him gifts. We want to honor him. . . . Come with us so you too can honor him."



The strangers gazed up at the star that shone so brightly right above the inn.

The second stranger said, "That is the place where the newborn king lies in his cradle. . . . Little drummer boy, come with us to honor him."

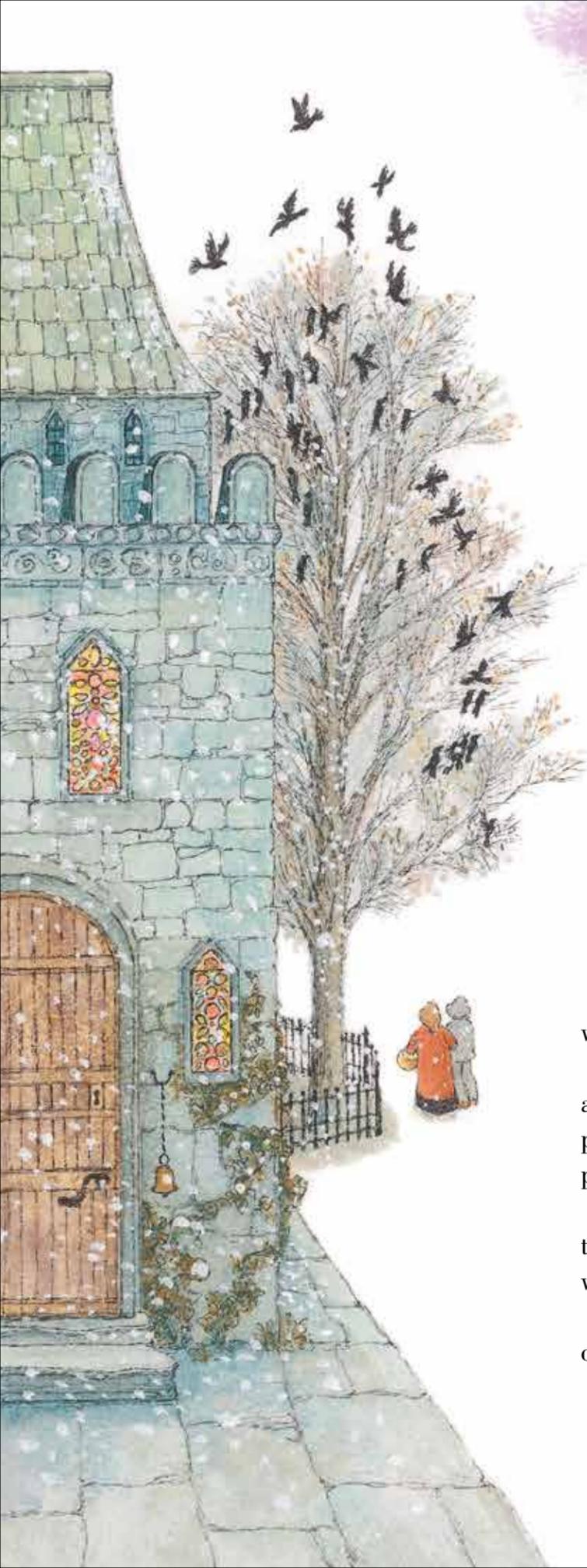
The strangers turned their horses toward the way that led to the inn.

But the third stranger looked back at Benjamin and said, "That's a merry tune you play. It fills my heart with joy. . . . Come with us to honor the newborn king."

"Oh no!" replied Benjamin. "I am too poor and shabby to visit a king! And I have nothing to give him."

The stranger paused for a moment, smiled kindly at the poor boy, but then turned his horse around and followed his companions.



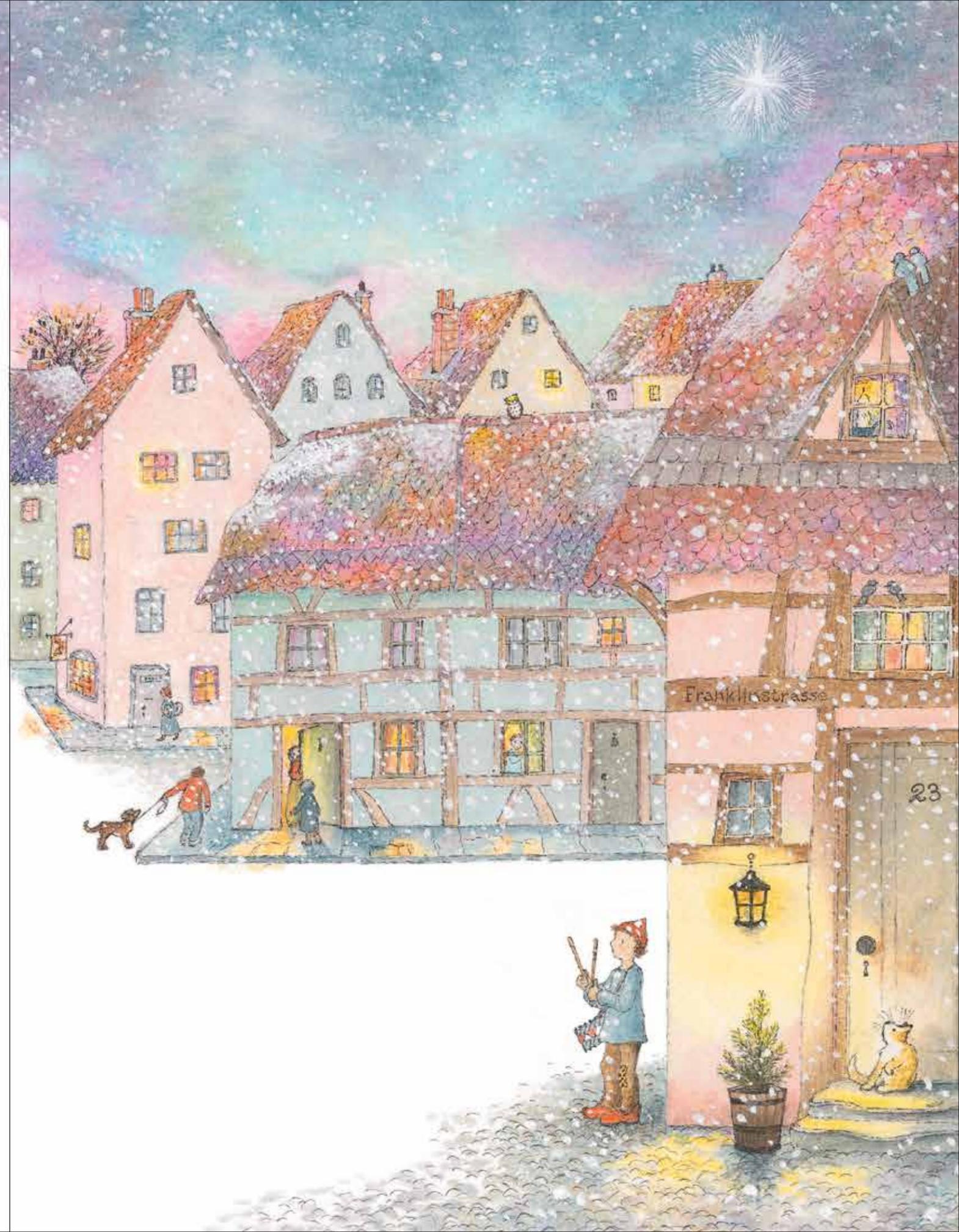


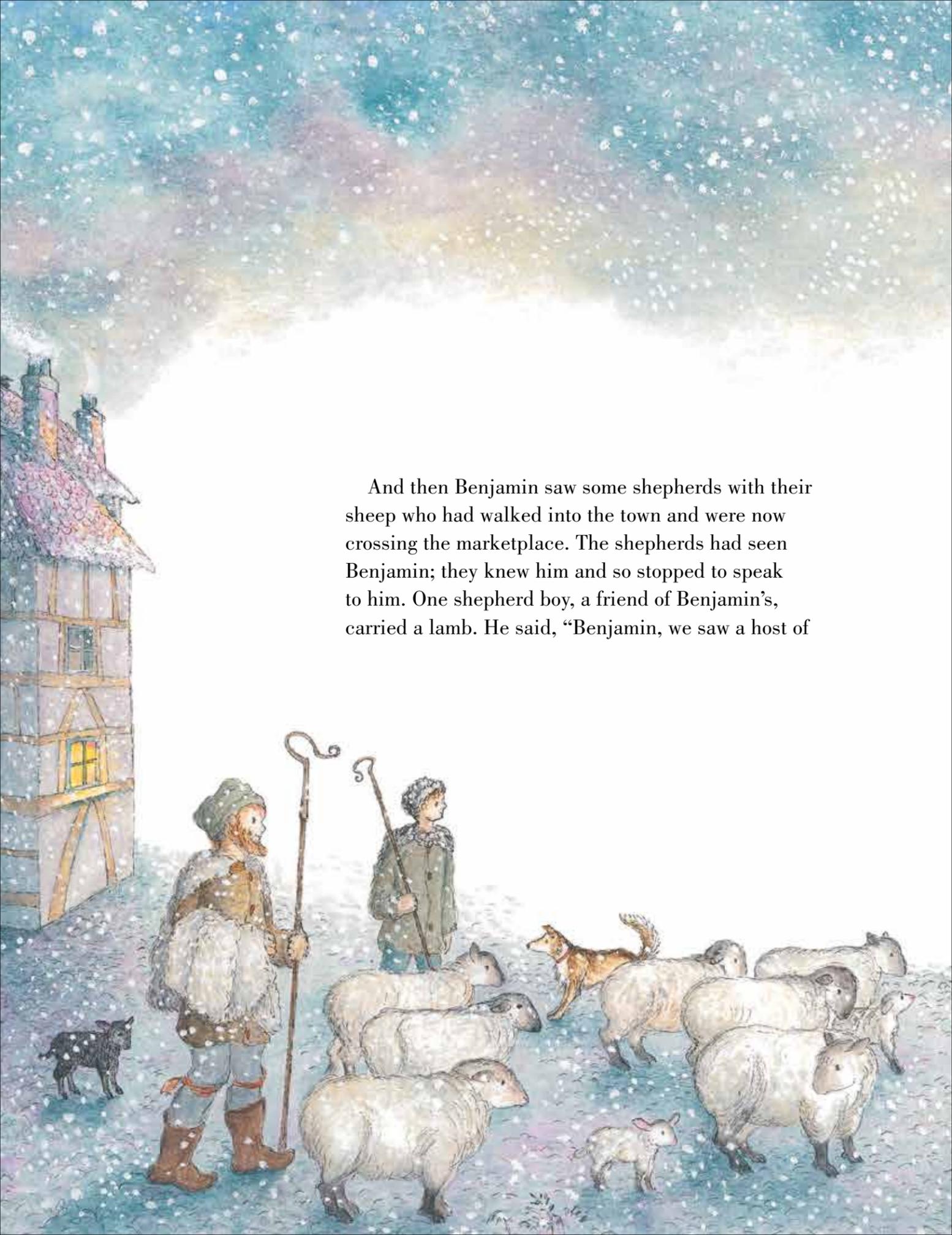
Benjamin stared after them and wondered if they too were kings.

He shivered in the cold, jumping up and down to keep warm. But he went on playing merry tunes on his drum for the people who were hurrying home.

House doors were firmly shut against the cold wind. Then candles and lanterns were lit in the windows.

Then as it got darker, the first flakes of snow drifted down.



A detailed illustration of a snowy town square. In the foreground, two shepherds in heavy winter clothing and hats stand with their crooked staffs. They are surrounded by a flock of sheep of various sizes, including a small lamb. A dog is also visible among the sheep. In the background, there are half-timbered houses with snow on their roofs and a large, ornate stone tower with a pointed roof. The sky is filled with falling snow and a soft, colorful glow from the rising star.

And then Benjamin saw some shepherds with their sheep who had walked into the town and were now crossing the marketplace. The shepherds had seen Benjamin; they knew him and so stopped to speak to him. One shepherd boy, a friend of Benjamin's, carried a lamb. He said, "Benjamin, we saw a host of

A detailed illustration of a snowy town square. In the foreground, two children in winter clothing stand with their sheep. One child is holding a small lamb. A dog is also visible among the sheep. In the background, there are half-timbered houses with snow on their roofs and a large, ornate stone tower with a pointed roof. The sky is filled with falling snow and a soft, colorful glow from the rising star.

angels above our fields this evening. The angels spoke to us! They told us a new king has been born . . . here in this town. We are bringing a lamb, and some fleeces, to keep him warm. The angels said to follow that big new star shining over the inn. Come with us, Benjamin, to honor him."

Benjamin shook his head sadly. "I am just a poor drummer boy, a beggar with nothing to offer a king.

"And I am so cold now so I must find some sheltered place to curl up and sleep."

One of the shepherds gave Benjamin some of the food they had carried with them.

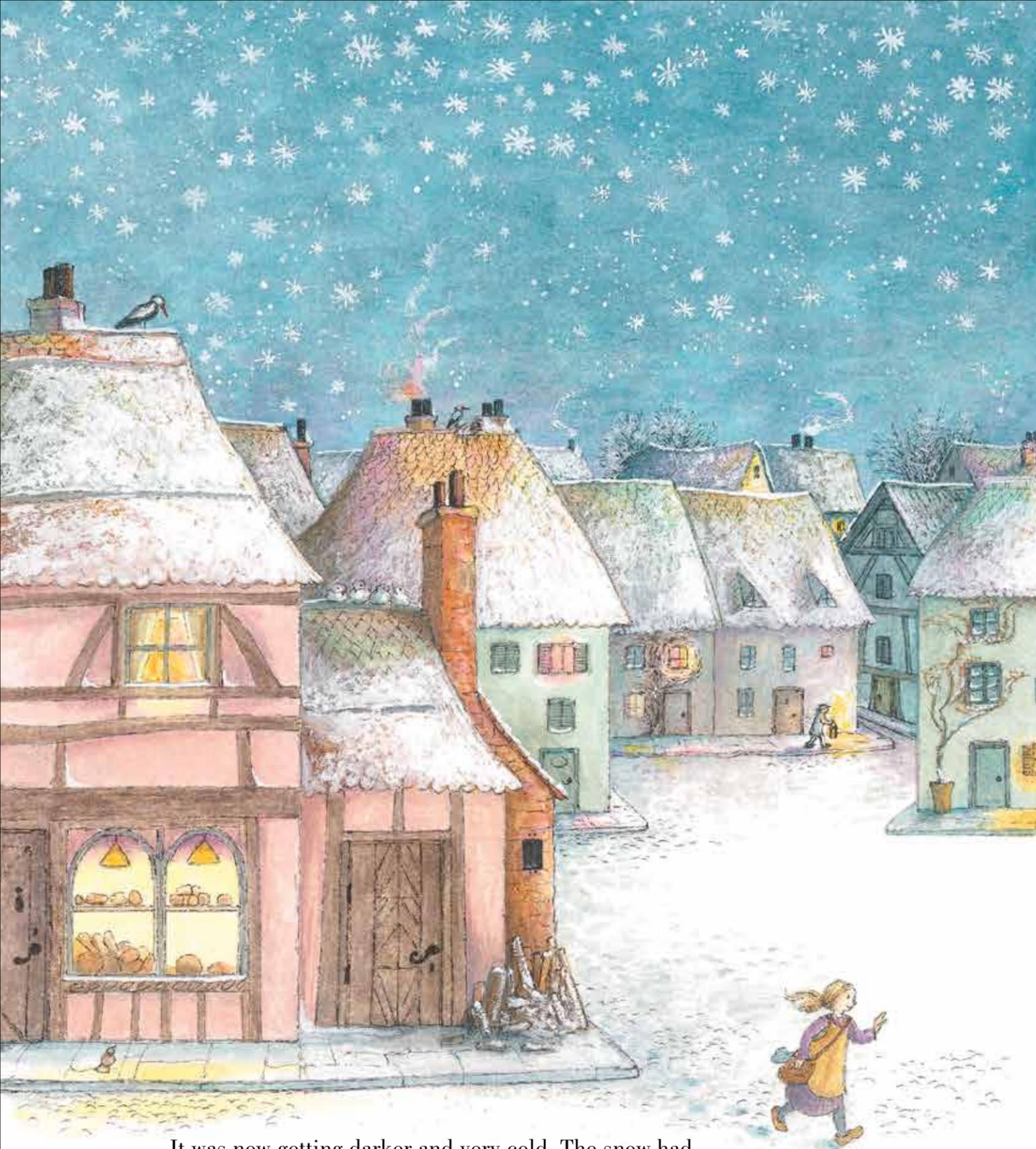
Then, all together, the shepherds said again, "Come with us!"

But Benjamin just shook his head again.

The shepherds and the sheep and their sheepdog turned into a side street that went around the houses and into the way that lead to the inn.

The little drummer boy felt sad to see them go.

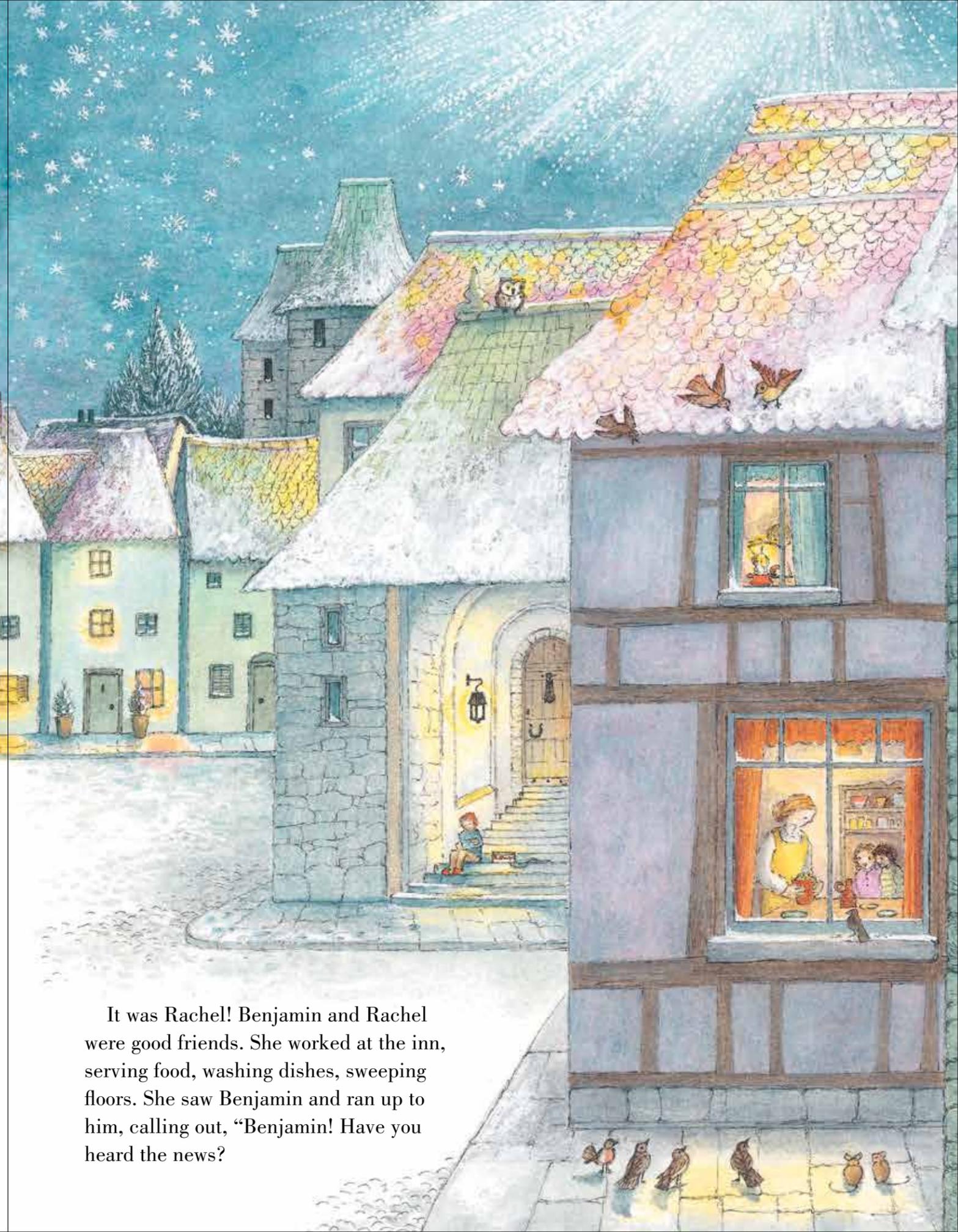




It was now getting darker and very cold. The snow had stopped falling, but the streets had frozen.

Benjamin found a place to shelter. He felt so sad and lonely.

Suddenly a girl came running along. Her clogs clattered on the frost-hard road. Her hair streamed out in the wind.



It was Rachel! Benjamin and Rachel were good friends. She worked at the inn, serving food, washing dishes, sweeping floors. She saw Benjamin and ran up to him, calling out, "Benjamin! Have you heard the news?"

“A new king has been born. See that bright star right over the inn?  
That is where he lies!

“I am going to see him and give him these little warm shoes. Come  
with me!”

But Benjamin said, “Look at me in old ragged clothes. . . . I have  
nothing to give. . . . I cannot come.”

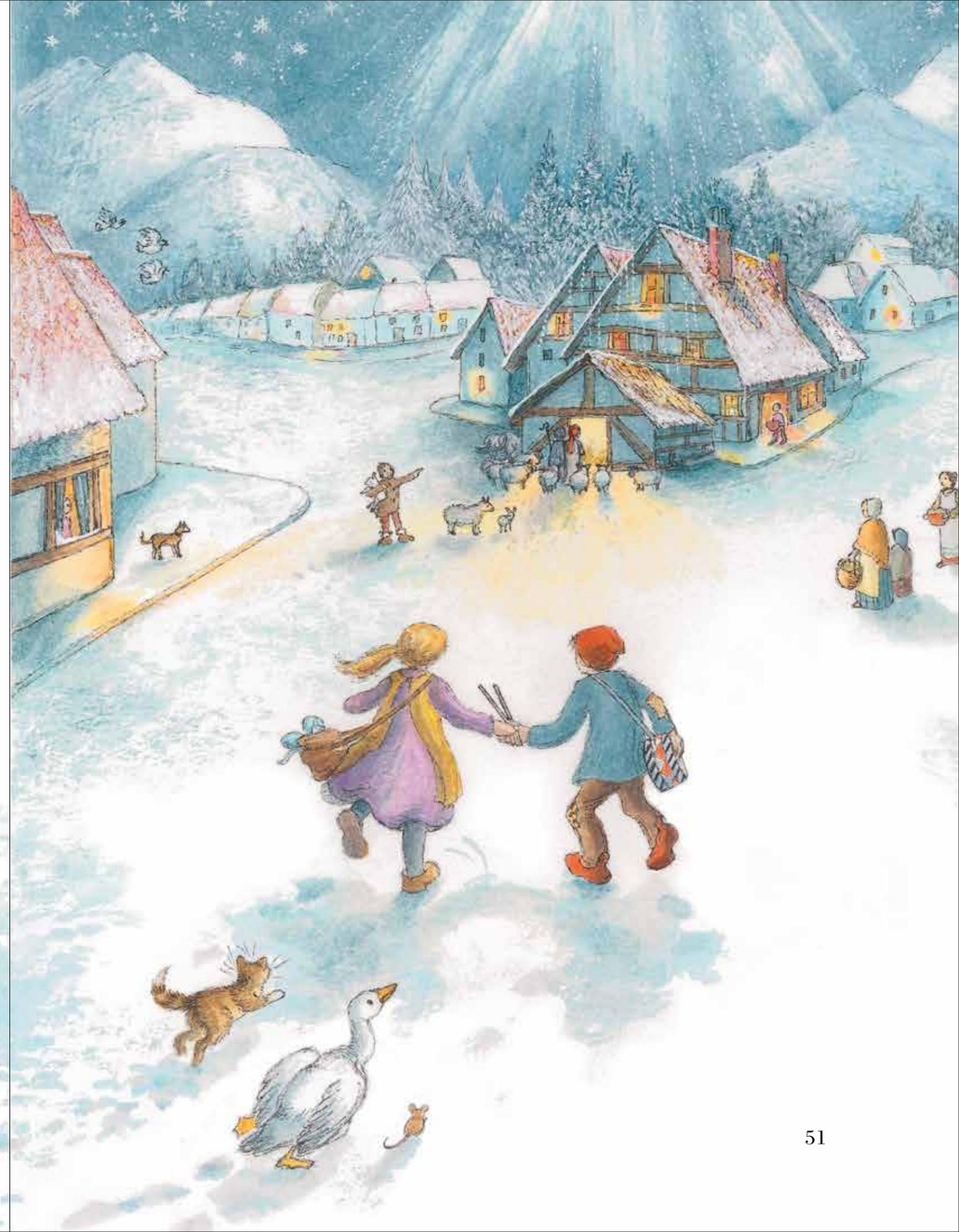
Rachel said, “It does not matter. Look at me too! A serving girl in  
old clothes nobody else wants! But I must honor the newborn king.  
He will not look at our clothes, only into our hearts. Come with me,  
Benjamin . . . now!”

She then took Benjamin’s hand and together they ran toward  
the inn.

From afar they saw the shepherd boy, still holding the little lamb.  
The shepherd boy called out, “Rachel! Benjamin! Come, follow me!”  
And he pointed to the stable, which stood in front of the inn. The  
stable door stood wide open, and light streamed out across the snow.  
The shepherd boy turned, and clutching tightly to the lamb he ran  
across to the stable.

One of the rich strangers and one of the older shepherds stood  
outside. Then they carefully went in, and the shepherd boy followed  
them.

The herd of sheep standing outside peeped shyly through the  
doorway.

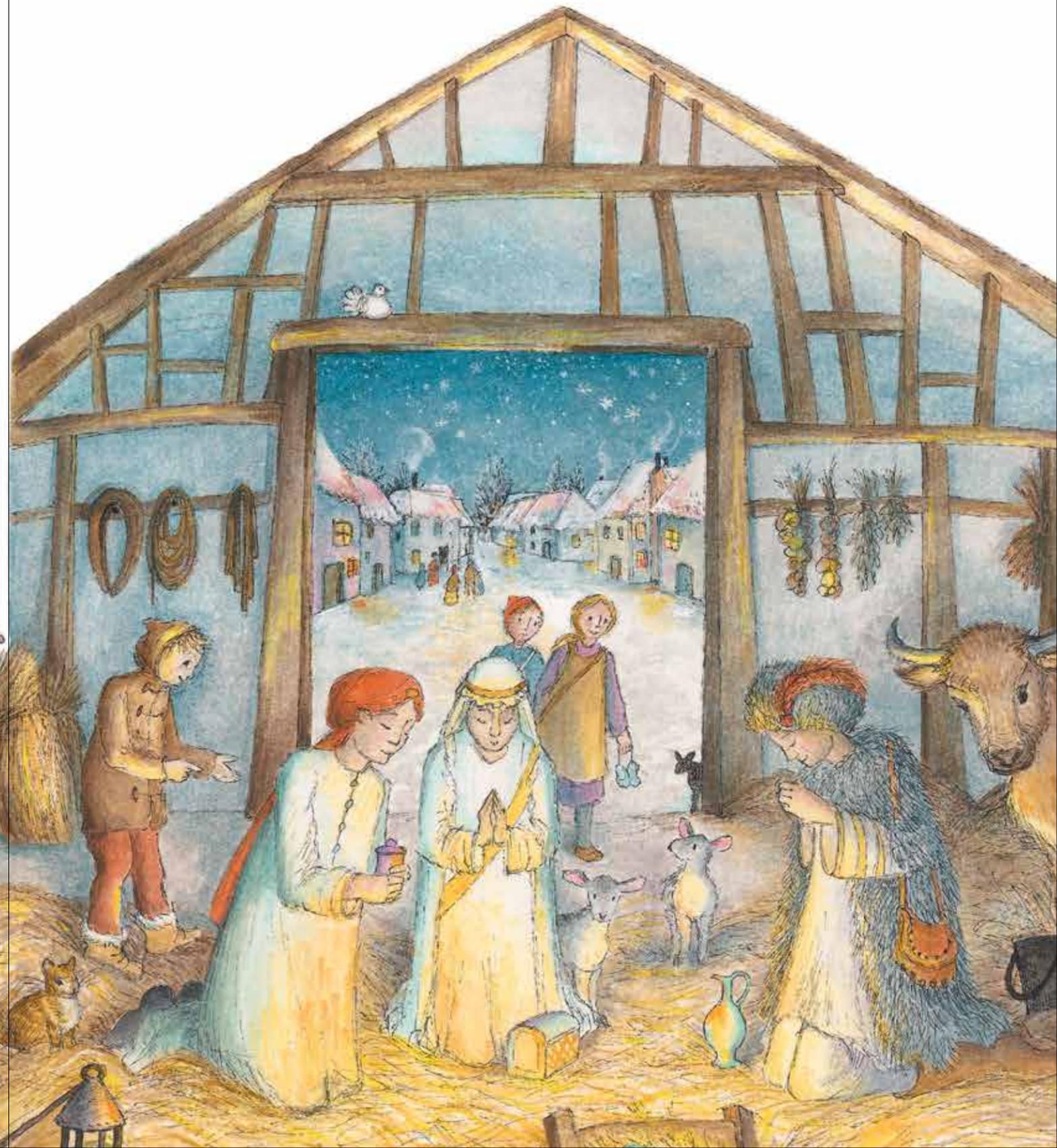
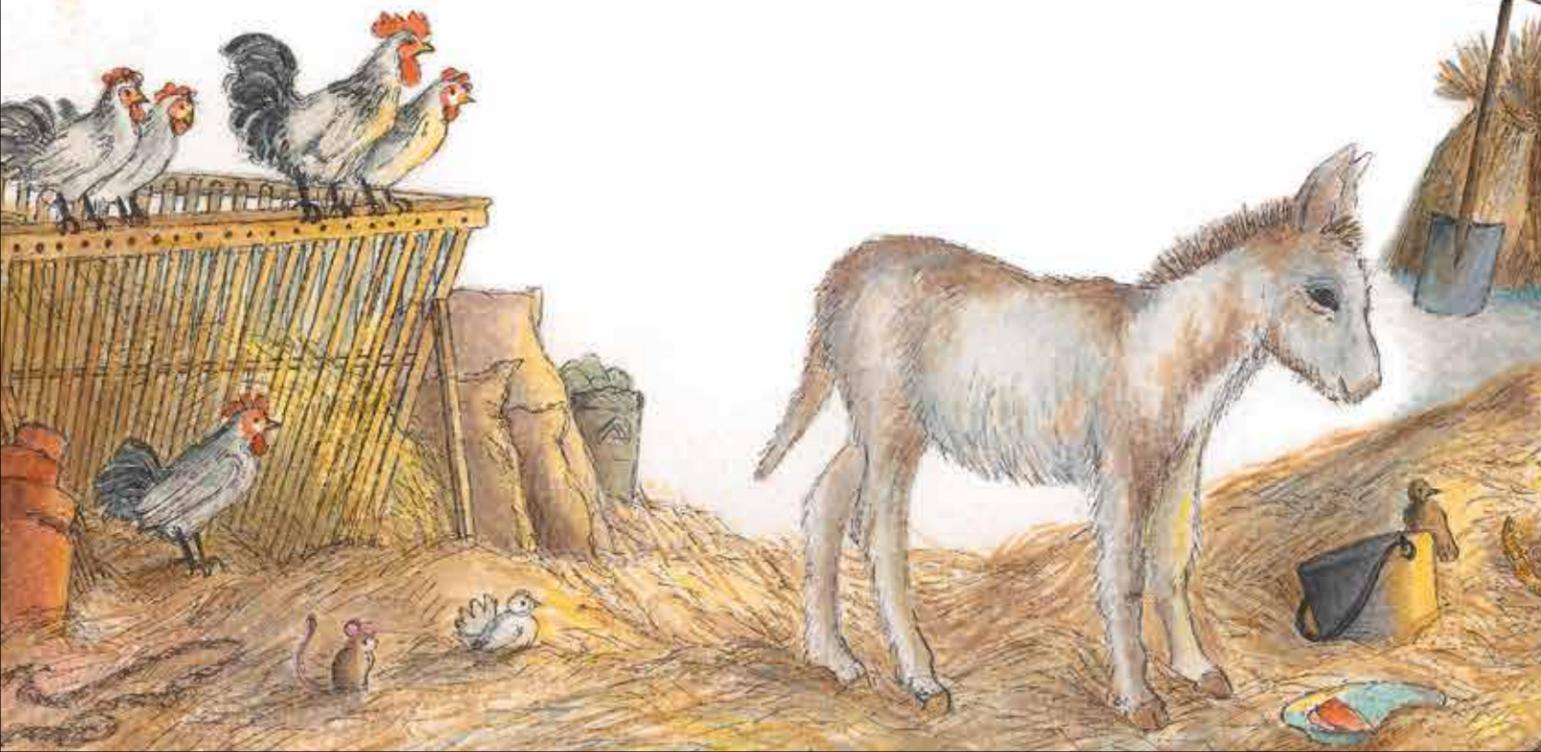


Rachel and Benjamin came to the open doorway and looked in.  
The three strangers knelt in the straw. The shepherds stood quietly at the back, but the young shepherd boy stepped forward and put down the lamb.

There were animals in there too; a donkey stood on one side and a big ox on the other side.

It was very peaceful inside the stable. Even the chickens were quiet.

Rachel held Benjamin's hand very tight and pulled him into the brightness and the warmth.



There in a simple crib lay a tiny baby, his mother and father on either side.

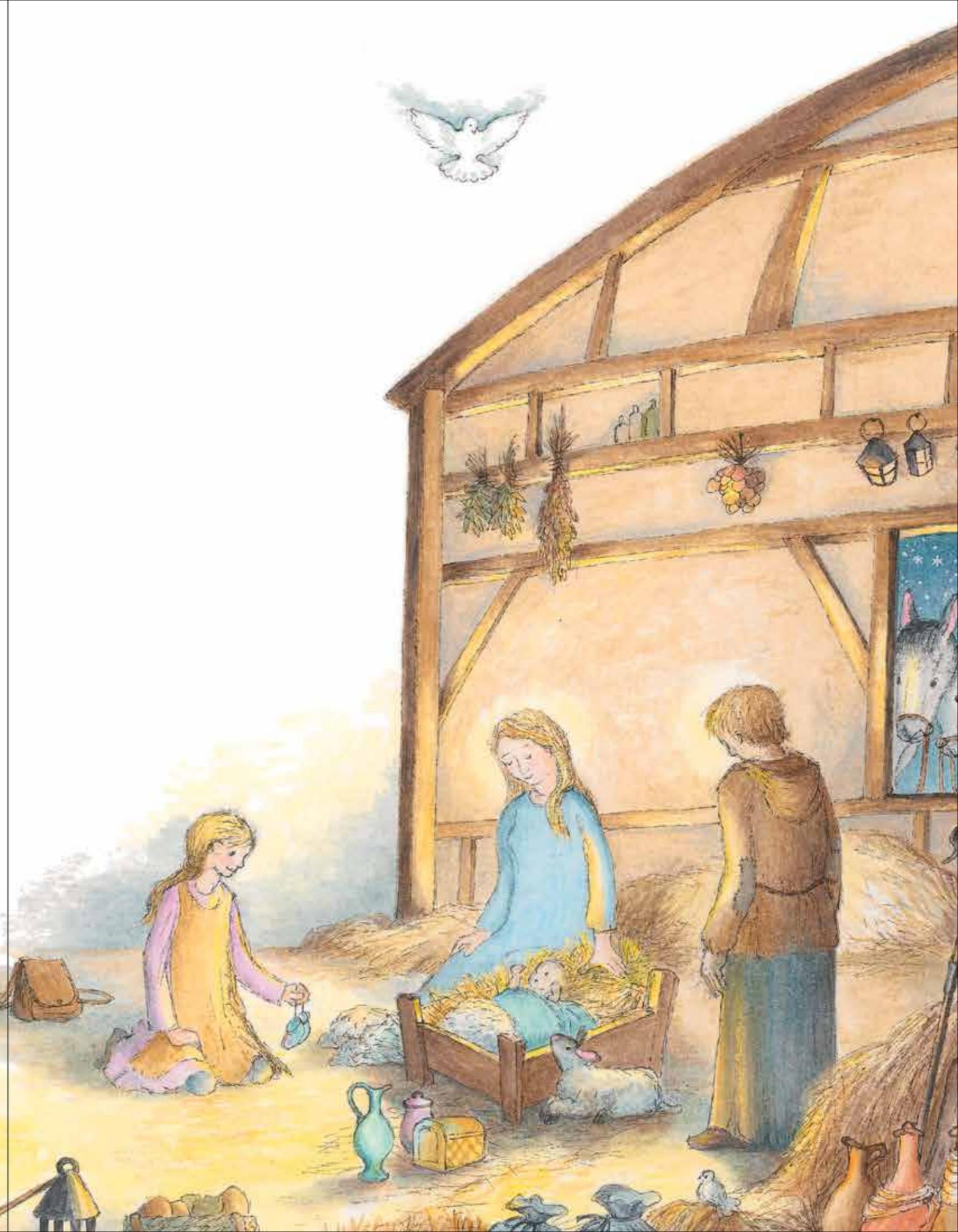
Rachel pulled Benjamin to the front.

One of the strangers whispered, "Here is our newborn king. We bow before him."

The three strangers laid gifts before the little family and then stood back.

The shepherds came quietly to the crib and put down the fleeces. The lamb lay close to the child. Then Rachel put down the tiny, warm shoes too. She smiled at the baby and the baby smiled back.

But the little drummer boy had nothing to give. He stood there feeling awkward and useless.

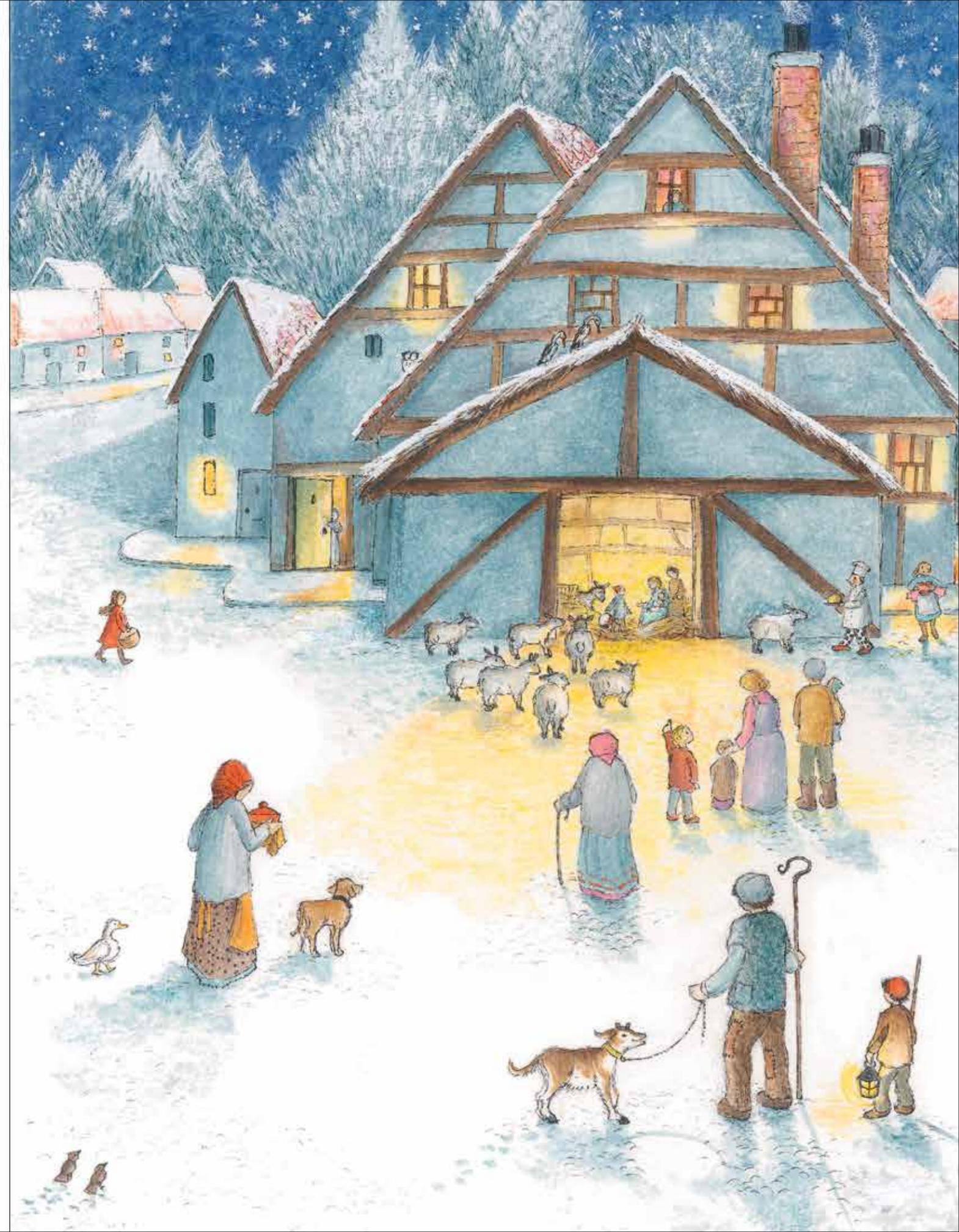


The child's mother looked kindly at the little drummer boy.  
She said nothing but only smiled.

Suddenly Benjamin said, "Shall I play my drum for the new king?"  
The mother and father nodded and smiled happily.

So Benjamin played a gentle tune. . . . The baby waved his tiny  
hands and kicked his tiny feet.

Benjamin played on . . . lullabies and songs. . . . The baby  
laughed with delight.



The little drummer boy felt his heart fill with joy. He felt warm.  
He felt loved.

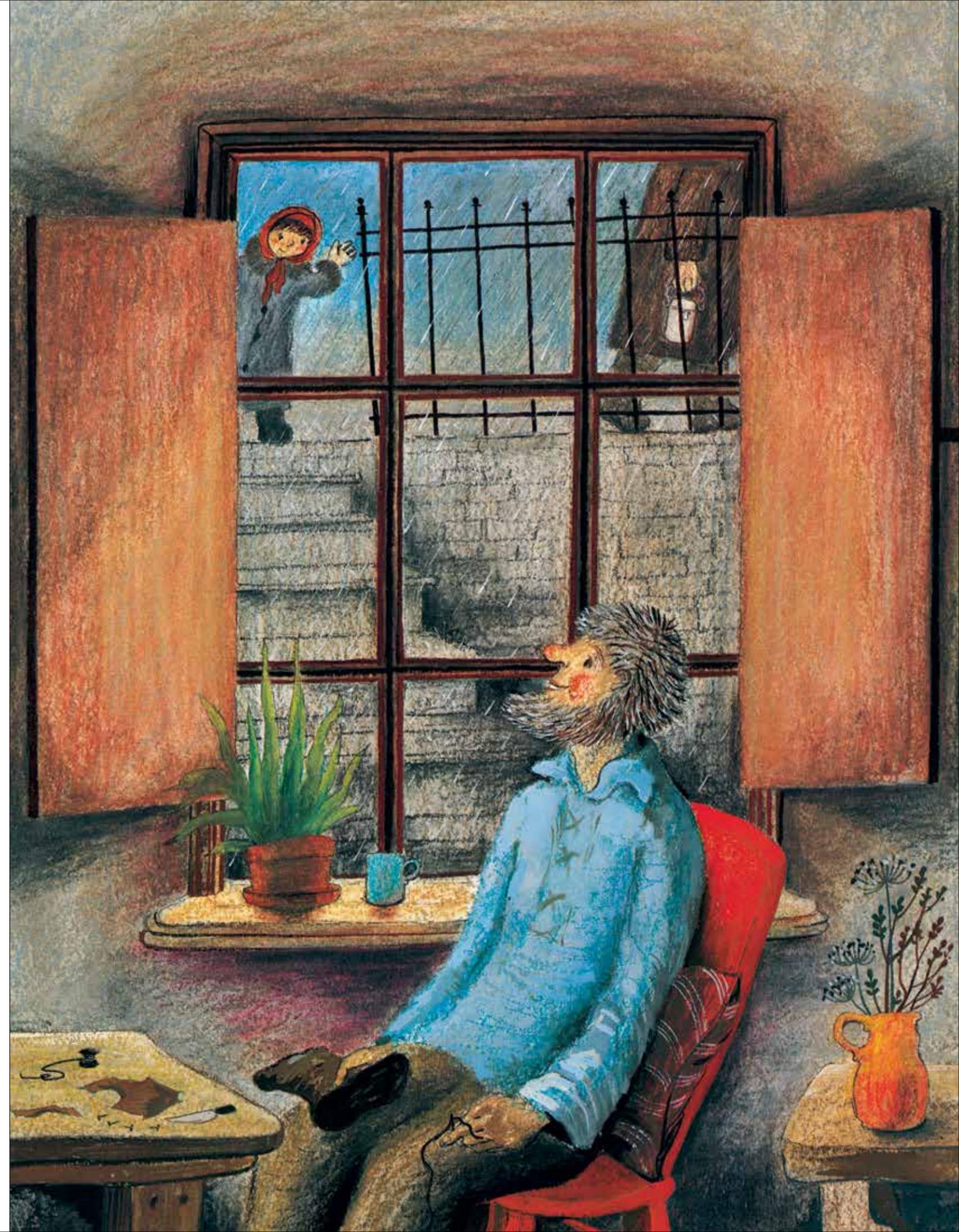
He played on and on. There was never a winter night filled with such  
wonder and happiness.



# Shoemaker Martin



In a small town in Russia there once lived a man called Martin, who earned his living mending shoes. He lived and worked in a basement room. Through the window, all he could see of people passing by were their legs. But he still recognized most of them, as there was scarcely a pair of boots or shoes in town that he had not mended at one time or another.





Martin worked all day until it became too dark for him to see his work. Then he would make a pot of tea, light the lamp, and take down his big Bible from the shelf. He read many pages, and the more he read, the happier he felt.

One winter evening, he went on reading till it was very late, and he reached the story of the rich man who invited Jesus into his home. Martin thought hard. "If Jesus comes to visit me, what would I say? What would I do? How would I welcome him?"

Still thinking about this, Martin fell asleep.



“Martin!” called a voice suddenly. Martin woke up. But no one was there. Then he heard the voice again. It said, “Make sure you watch the street tomorrow, because I shall be coming!”

Martin sat up and rubbed his eyes. Had he really heard those words or was it just a dream? He looked carefully around the room but saw nobody. He turned out the lamp and soon went back to sleep.



The next morning, Martin got up very early, before dawn. He lit the stove and put the kettle of water on it. As he ate his breakfast, he looked out of the window, wondering whether it had been a dream last night or whether he really would see some unfamiliar shoes belonging to a very special stranger.

Still pondering, he set to work. Just as he was cutting a piece on leather, Martin heard footsteps outside. He looked up but saw only poor old Stefan the street sweeper. Stefan was stamping his feet and blowing into his freezing hands in an effort to get warm.



Quickly, Martin opened the window and called, "Come on in, Stefan, and warm up a bit. The kettle's just boiling!" Stefan staggered in.

"Don't bother to wipe your feet. Sit down by the stove!"

Stefan sipped the hot tea that Martin gave him, and when he felt warm again, he thanked Martin gratefully before leaving.

"Don't mention it! Come anytime," replied Martin.



Martin drank a cup of tea himself, then made some cabbage soup for later. When next he looked out of the window, he saw a young woman standing huddled out in the bad weather with a baby in her arms. She was trying to wrap up the baby to shelter it from the cold wind, but she scarcely had anything to wrap it in except her thin, shabby dress.

Martin went up to the door and called her in.



He gave her some of his hot soup and brought his old coat to put around her shoulders. It was big enough to protect her and the baby. Afterward he played with the baby and made it laugh. Finally Martin fetched some money from an old trunk and gave it to the mother to buy milk.

The poor woman bowed and thanked Martin most gratefully before she left, feeling much better.





Martin finished off the soup and cleared away the dishes. Later, as he sat at work again, a shadow fell across the window, and Martin looked up eagerly; but it was just townsfolk passing. Some of them he knew and some he didn't, but nobody in particular caught his attention or seemed like a special visitor.

All at once he heard shouting outside on the street. A market woman was dragging along a poorly dressed boy who had stolen one of her apples. She tugged him by his hair, and the boy protested and struggled to get away.

Martin hurried out and separated them. "Let him go, grandmother," he begged. "He won't do it again. If we punish someone so harshly for taking an apple, what punishments would we expect for our sins that are far, far worse?"

The boy and the woman looked at Martin and then looked at each other. Quietly, the boy asked the old woman to forgive him and offered to carry her basket along the road.





Martin wanted to finish stitching one of the boots that had to be delivered tomorrow. Soon it was dark. The lamplighter passed by, lighting the streetlamps. Martin finished the boot. Then he put his tools away and swept the scraps of leather from the floor. He took down his lamp from the nail on the wall and placed it on the table so he could read once again the passage from the Bible that had been so much on his mind since last night.

Suddenly, he had the feeling that somebody was moving behind him. He looked around, and this time it really seemed there were some people in the room; but Martin could not make out who they were.



Then the voice whispered in his ear, "Martin, didn't you recognize me?"  
"Who?"  
"Me!" And out of the shadow stepped Stefan, smiling.  
"This was me too," the voice said again. And the woman with the baby came forward! She smiled, and the baby laughed.



"And this was me as well," the voice said. And the old woman appeared, together with the boy who had taken the apple. Both of them were smiling! Martin looked at them all in amazement, and then each one vanished.

Then the shoemaker realized that his dream had come true after all. Jesus really visited him that day, and he, Martin, had taken him in. Martin was overcome with joy.

He began reading from the Bible where it had fallen open. It was a different page from the one he had read last night. At the top on the page he read: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these brethren, ye have done it unto me."



Varenka

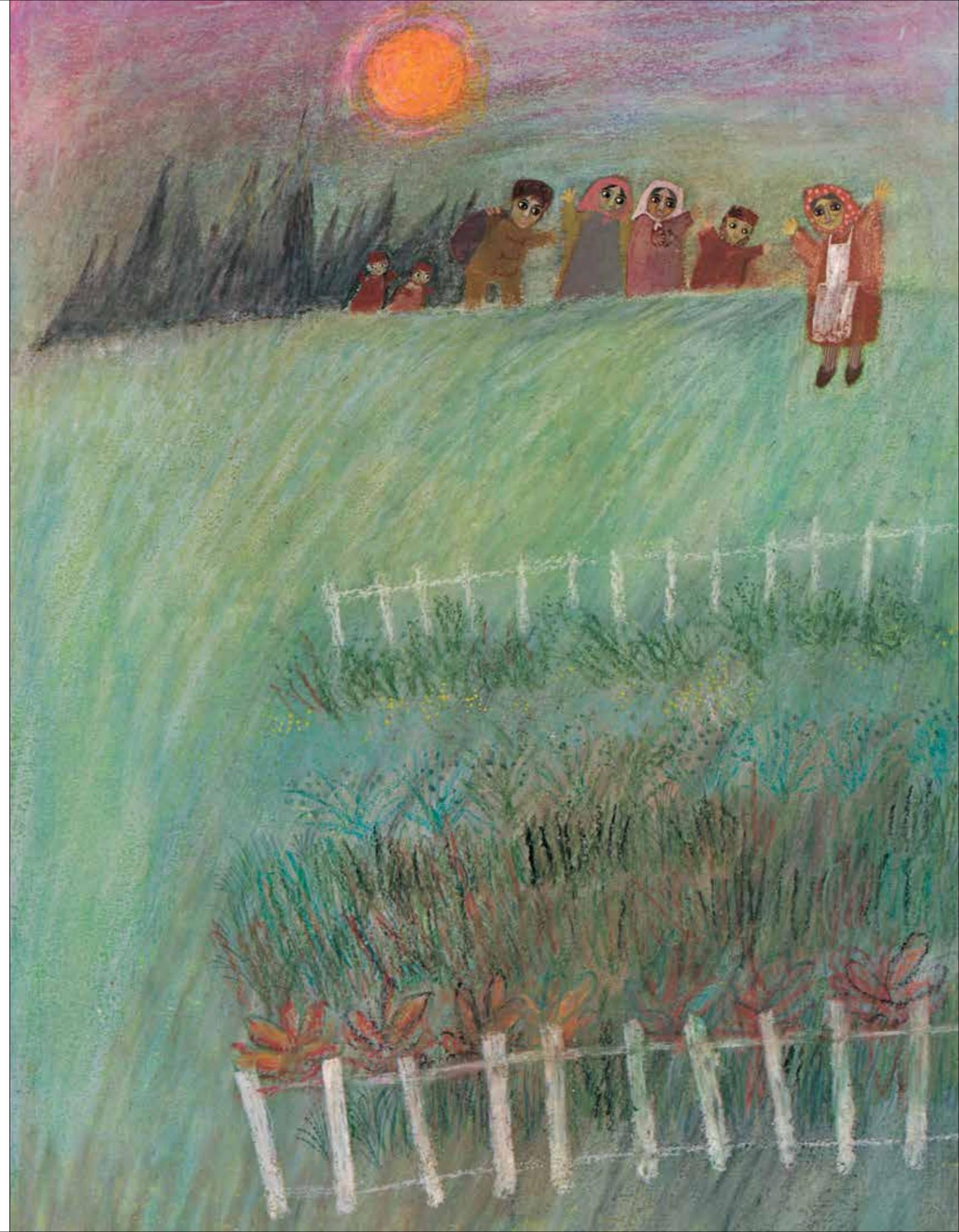


Long ago a widow named Varenka lived in a little house in one of the great forests of Russia. The house stood in a clearing among the trees, where few people ever went. Inside, Varenka had all she needed—there were tables and chairs, bins to hold bread or cheese, and shelves to hold the dishes. There was a statue always surrounded by wildflowers. At night, Varenka, like all Russian people at that time, slept in an alcove above the warm stove.



Varenka lived contently in her house until one morning when people came past and stopped to speak to her. "We are in a hurry," said the leader. "Over there in the west soldiers are fighting and many people are dead. A terrible war has broken out, and every day the soldiers come nearer. We are fleeing before something happens to us. Pack up a bundle, good Varenka, and come along with us."

Varenka was afraid, but she said, "If I come with you, who will comfort the travelers as they pass on their journeys? Who will care for the children who wander and get lost in the forest? And who will shelter the animals and feed the birds when winter comes? There is no one here except me, so I must stay. But hurry and be gone, my friends, and God be with you."





So the people hurried along and the widow was left alone. “Surely I can hear guns and cannons,” she said to herself. “Today they are in the distance, but tomorrow they will come nearer. What will become of me?”

She bolted the door and closed the windows. As the sun went down over the woods, Varenka prayed to God, and said, “Please build a wall around my house so that the soldiers will not see me.”

Then it was evening and everything was peaceful. Varenka could no longer hear the guns. Instead, all the birds sang before they tucked their heads under their wings to sleep. Doves murmured and a nightingale began to chant. But God did not come and build a wall around her house.

The next day, Varenka went deep into the woods to gather kindling. Again she heard the guns in the distance. “Oh dear,” she said. “They are nearer today. What is going to become of me and my house?”

Before nightfall Varenka arrived safely home. An old man was waiting for her. He was all alone except for a small white goat. It was Peter the goatherd. “Why are you here?” cried Varenka. “Why aren’t you home with your goats and chickens, your geese and sheep?”

Peter replied, “My cottage is burned down and the soldiers have taken everything except this little goat who has escaped with me. Please give us shelter as we have nowhere to go, and soon it will be night and wolves will eat us both.”

So the widow took in Peter and his goat. She made them comfortable by the stove and gave Peter hot soup to drink. Then again she prayed to God: “Please come quickly and build a wall around my house so that the soldiers will pass by and not see Peter or the goat or me.”



Night fell, and all the forest was still. The flowers folded their petals together. The small animals that lived in trees or in holes in the ground curled up and fell asleep. But God did not come and build a wall around Varenka's house. The next morning, everything was just the same.



The widow went out to search for mushrooms and herbs. Suddenly she came upon a young man sleeping in a hollow tree. “Wake up!” Varenka cried. “Wake up, now. You cannot stay here or the soldiers will find you. Listen. Can’t you hear the cannons crashing in the forest? They are very near.”

The young man answered, “Yes, I have come from over there where the war is raging. Everything is destroyed. The land is on fire. I escaped into this deep forest, and now here I am, poor Stepan, with no home except this hollow tree.”

“My poor boy,” said Varenka. “Come home with me, and I will give you food and warmth.”

So Stepan went with Varenka to her house. In one hand he carried a painted picture and in the other a white flower in a pot; he was an artist and that was all he had left in the world.





When the three friends had eaten supper, they said their prayers together, and Varenka said in her heart: “Please, God, come quickly and build a wall that is high and strong around my house. Then the soldiers will not find Stepan or Peter or me.”

All night long, peace reigned in the forest, and the only sounds were the call of owls and the bark of foxes. In the morning, Varenka looked out the window and was filled with fear when she saw no wall had been built around her house.

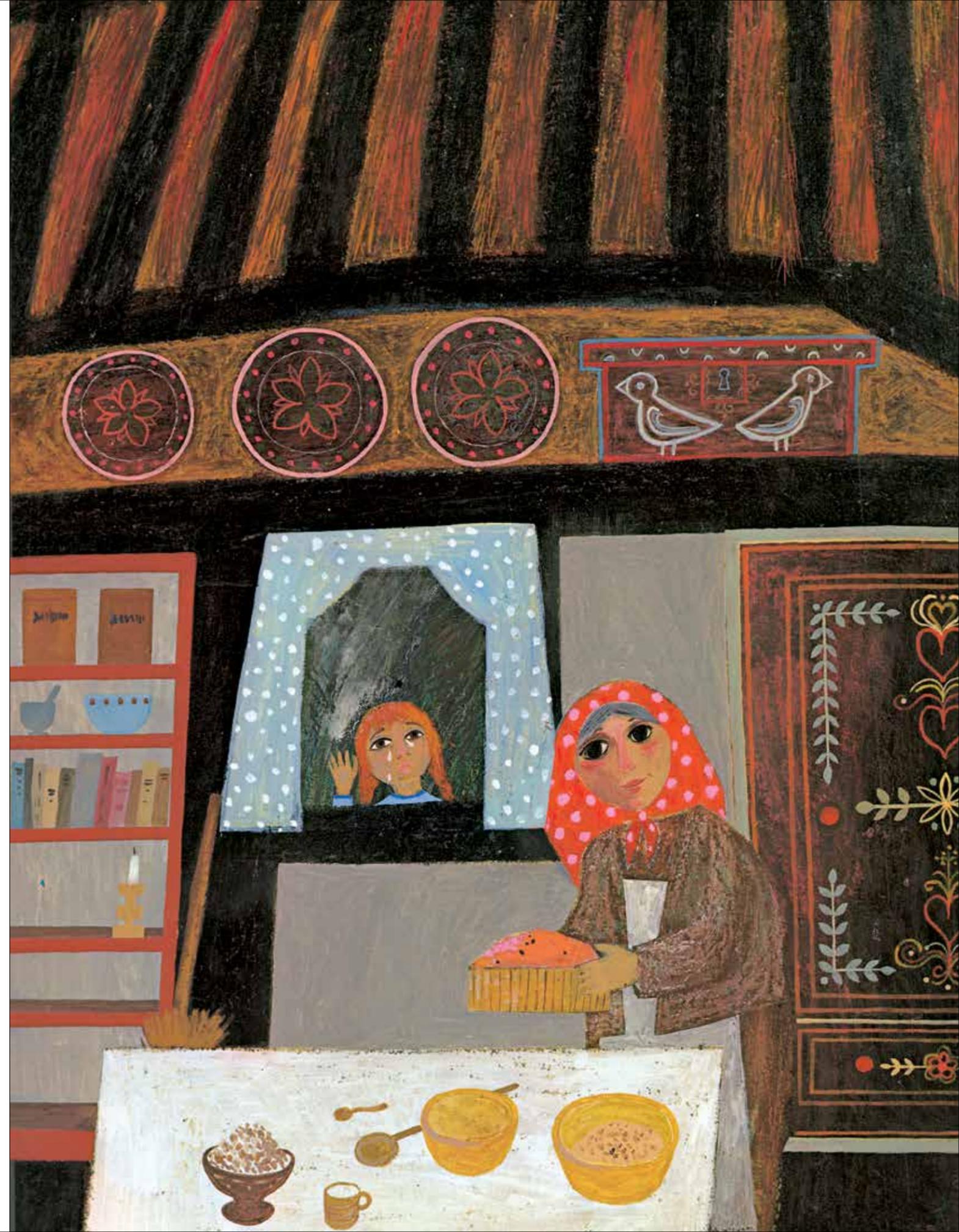
That day, Varenka made the oven very hot and baked bread and cake. While they were cooking, there came a sound of weeping from beneath the window, and outside was a small girl crying bitterly and holding a dove in her arms.

“My dear,” said Varenka, “who are you and what are you doing here? Can’t you hear the terrible noise of fighting? You should be at home with your parents.”

“Oh, dear grandmother,” said the child. “I am Bodula Mietkova and I am all alone except for my dove. My mother and father are dead because of the fighting. And now I am running away. But I smelled cake cooking here, and it made me feel hungry.”

“Bodula, come indoors. We are a little family here, and now you are the youngest.”

So Bodula went inside, where she was given cake and tea. Throughout the day the four friends could hear the guns all around, and they felt that their time had come. In the evening Peter played the balalaika and they sang old Russian songs. Varenka could remember her own mother singing those songs over a baby’s cradle. As the day ended and the moon came up, the gentle music brought them peace.

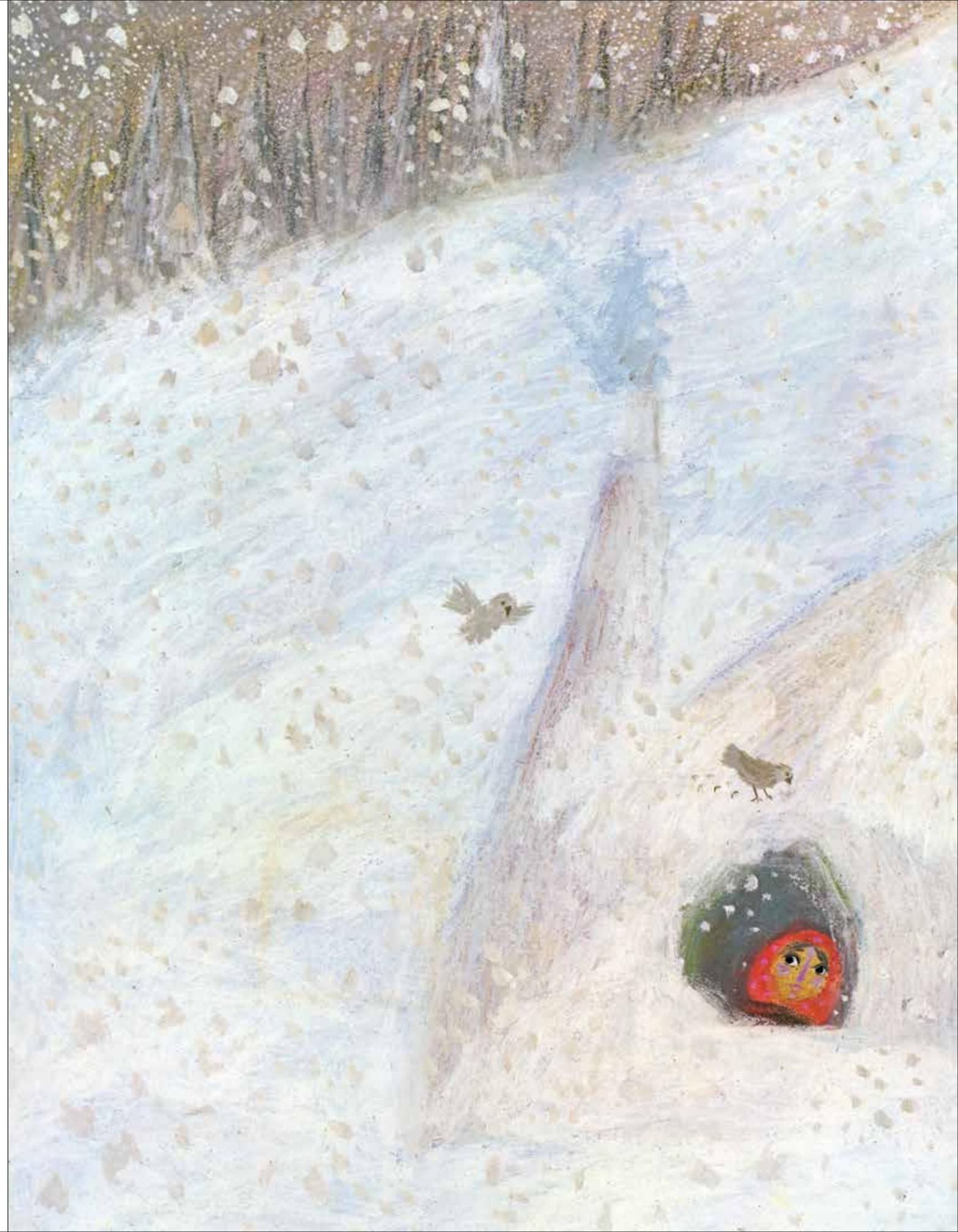


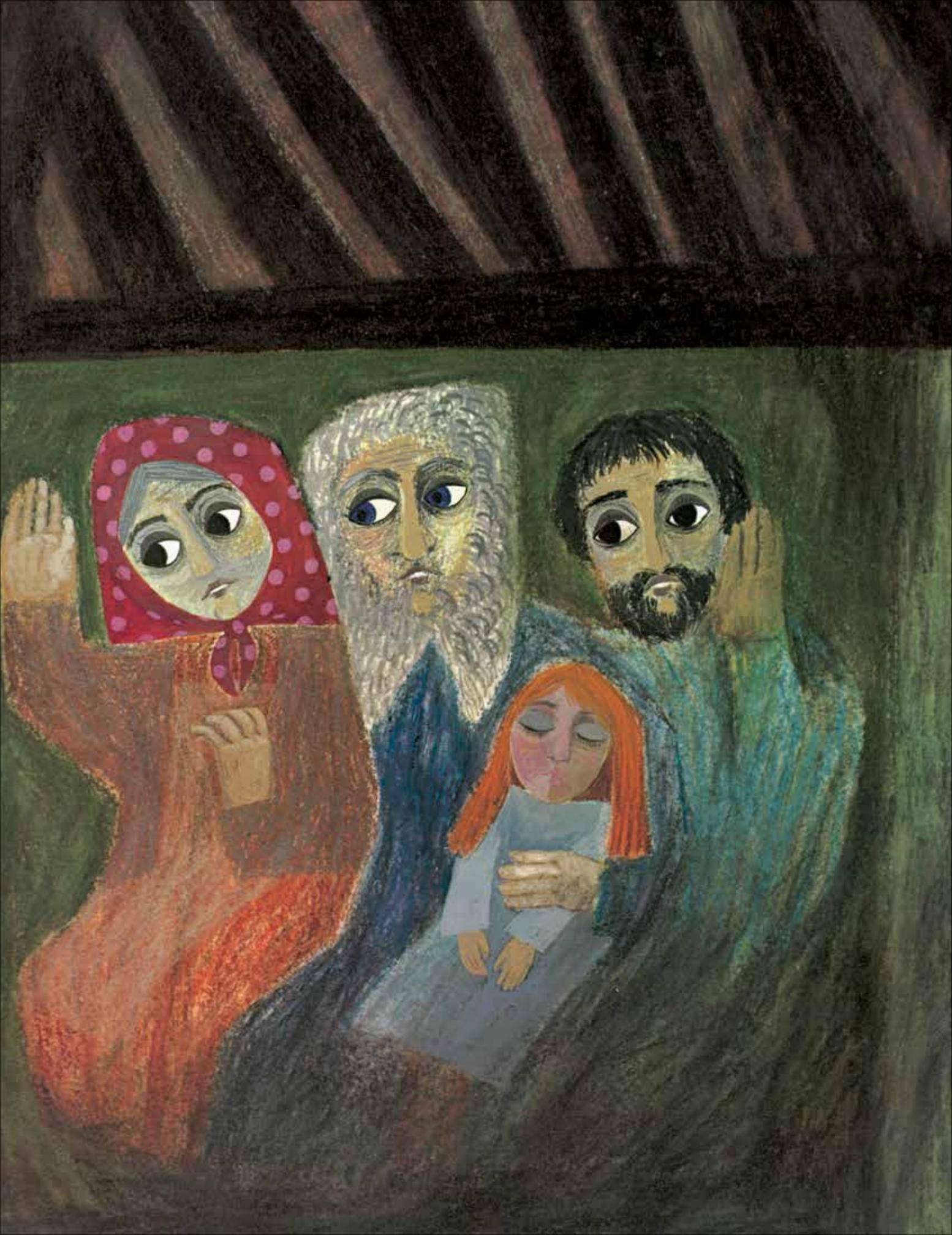


That night they prayed together, and Varenka said, “Tonight, dear God, please build a wall that is so high and so strong no soldiers will see my little house. And then we will be saved, the child with her dove, the artist and his flower, the old man and his goat, and even me. I am afraid that it is almost too late, for tomorrow the soldiers will be upon us and all will be lost.”

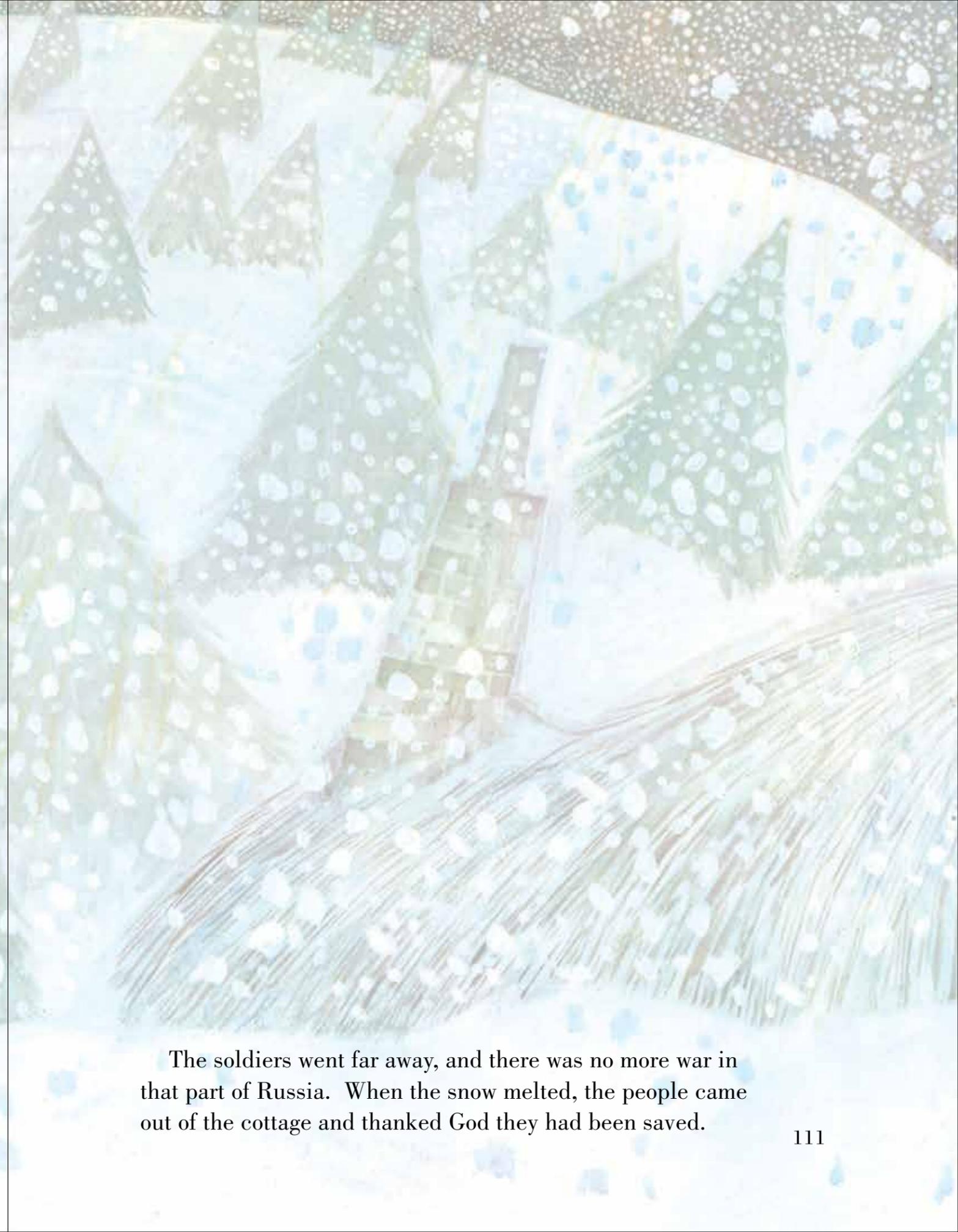
That night it was very still. And in the stillest part of the night came a gentle sound all around the house. Varenka peeped out the window and saw that snow was falling heavily. It was as high as the windowsill and was still falling.

The snow fell all night long, growing deeper and deeper, and at dawn the little house, with all the people safe inside, was quite hidden.





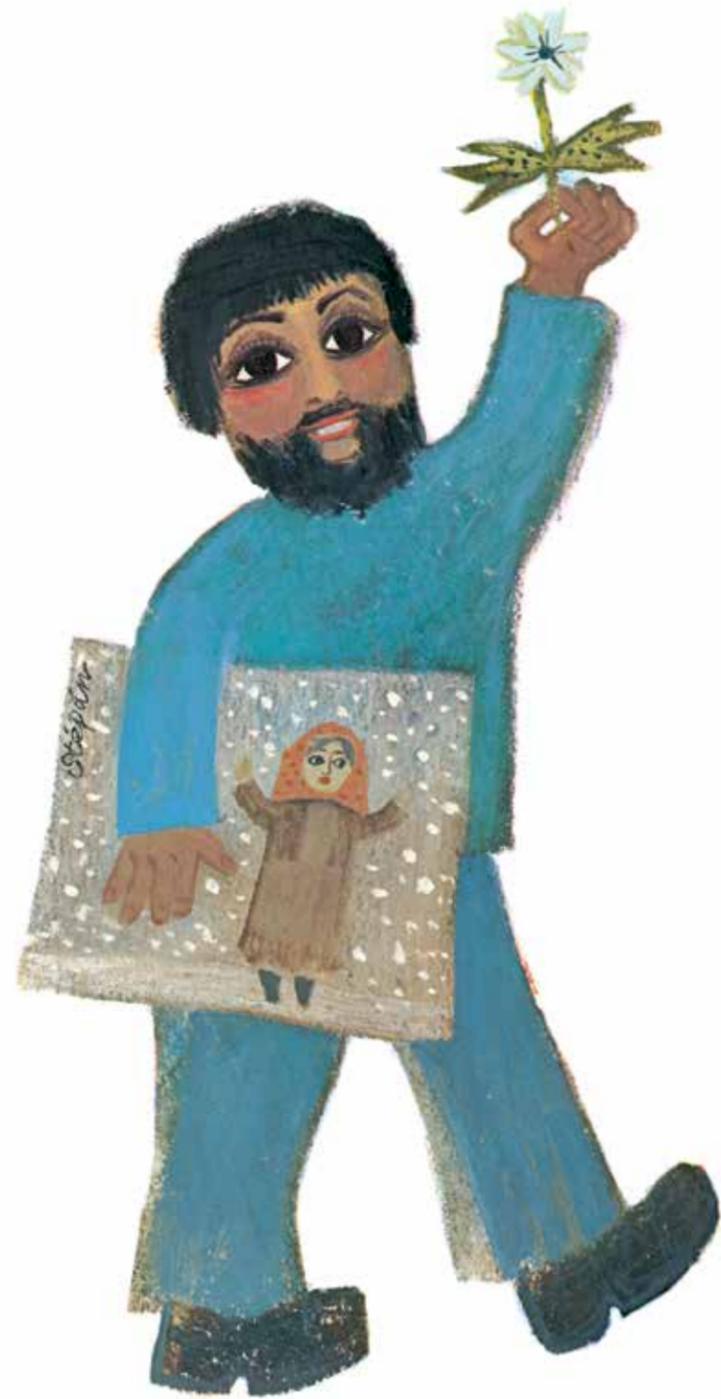
At midday fierce soldiers came by, making great noise. Inside the house the people were very frightened. And then the soldiers were close indeed to the cottage. But they passed without seeing it, because it was so deeply hidden by the fallen snow.



The soldiers went far away, and there was no more war in that part of Russia. When the snow melted, the people came out of the cottage and thanked God they had been saved.

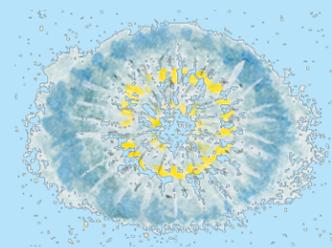
Springtime came. The goat had a kid. The seeds from the white flower grew into fresh new flowers. The dove flew far away to tell the world that peace had returned.





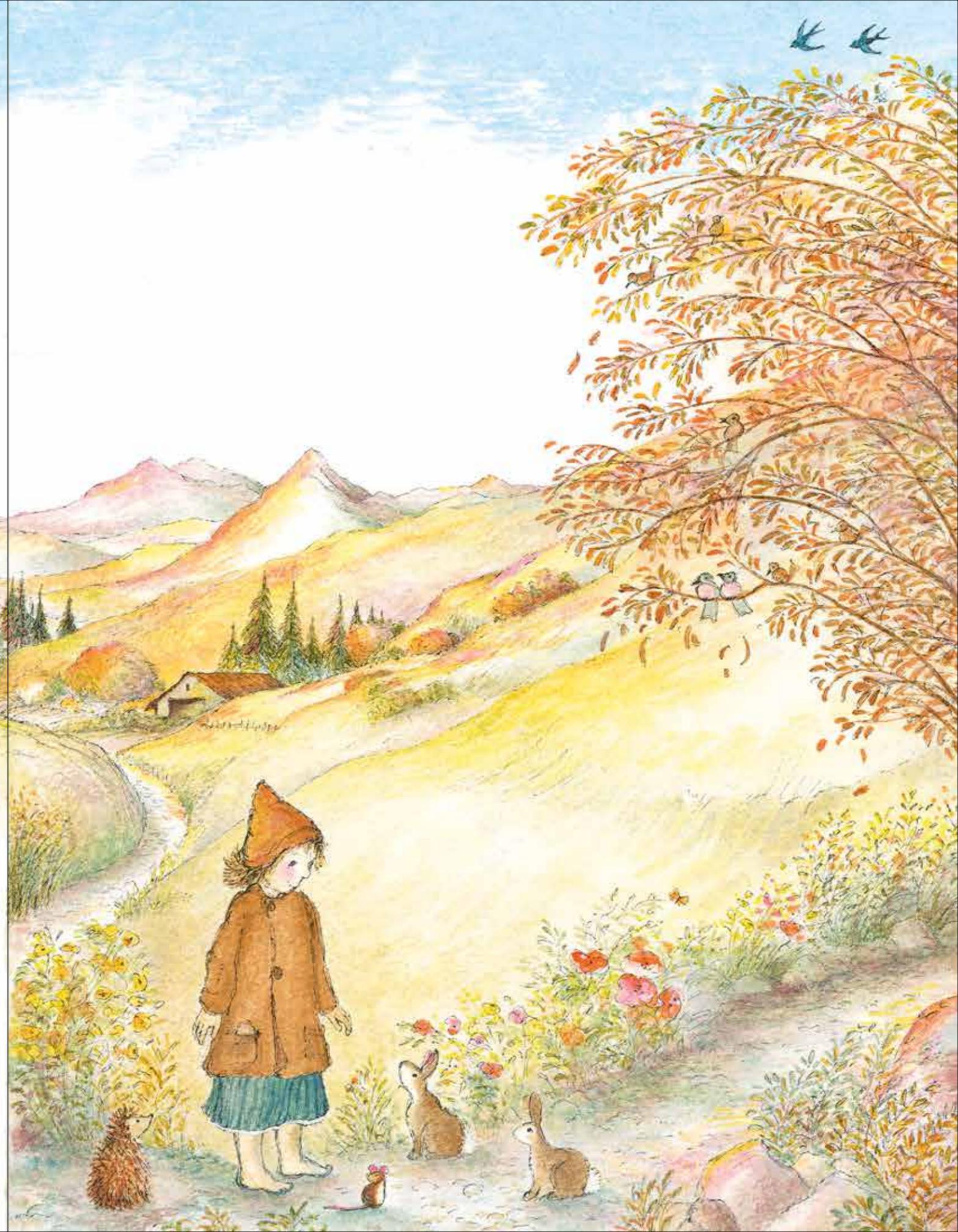
And Stepan, because he was an artist, painted pictures to tell the story of the wall that was built of snow around Varenka's house.

# The Star Child



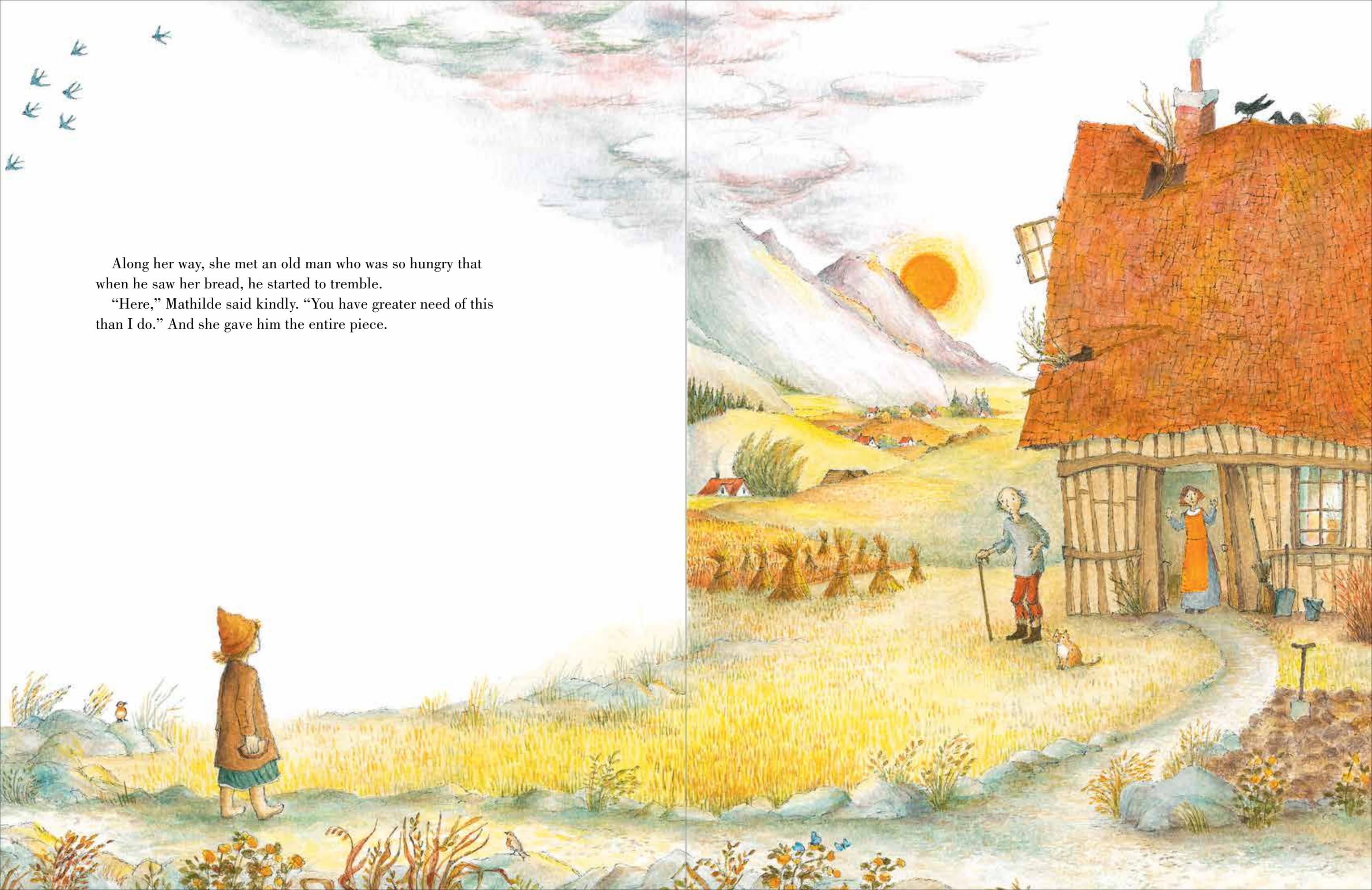


There was once a little girl named Mathilde who had no mother or father. She had no home to live in, nor bed to rest on at night. All she had were the clothes on her back and a piece of bread that some kind soul had given to her. But she had a loving and courageous heart, so she set out across the land to see what might happen.



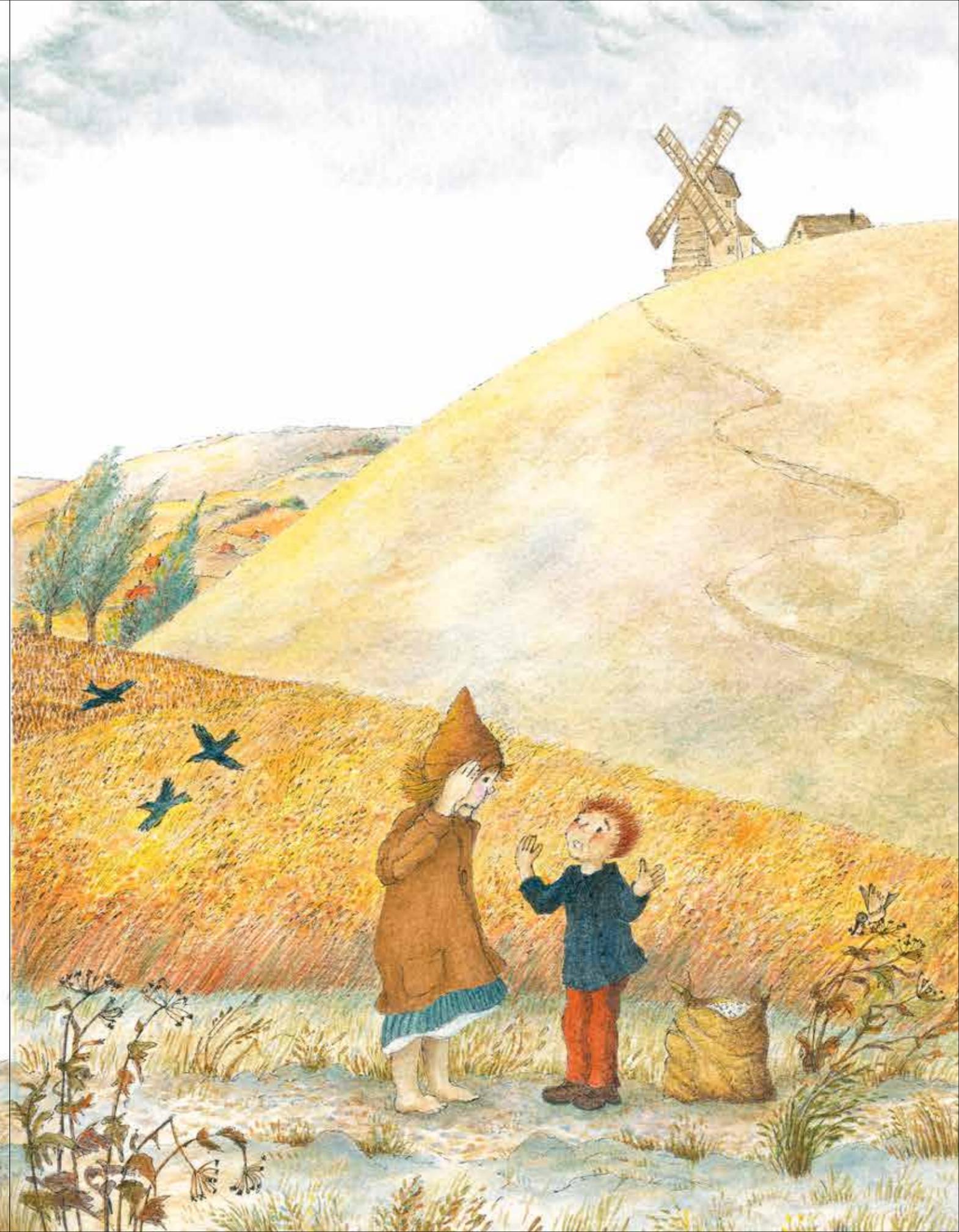
Along her way, she met an old man who was so hungry that when he saw her bread, he started to tremble.

“Here,” Mathilde said kindly. “You have greater need of this than I do.” And she gave him the entire piece.





She went along. After a while, she met a little boy whose ears and cheeks were raw with cold. Mathilde said to him, "Would you like my hat? My head is warm enough for me."

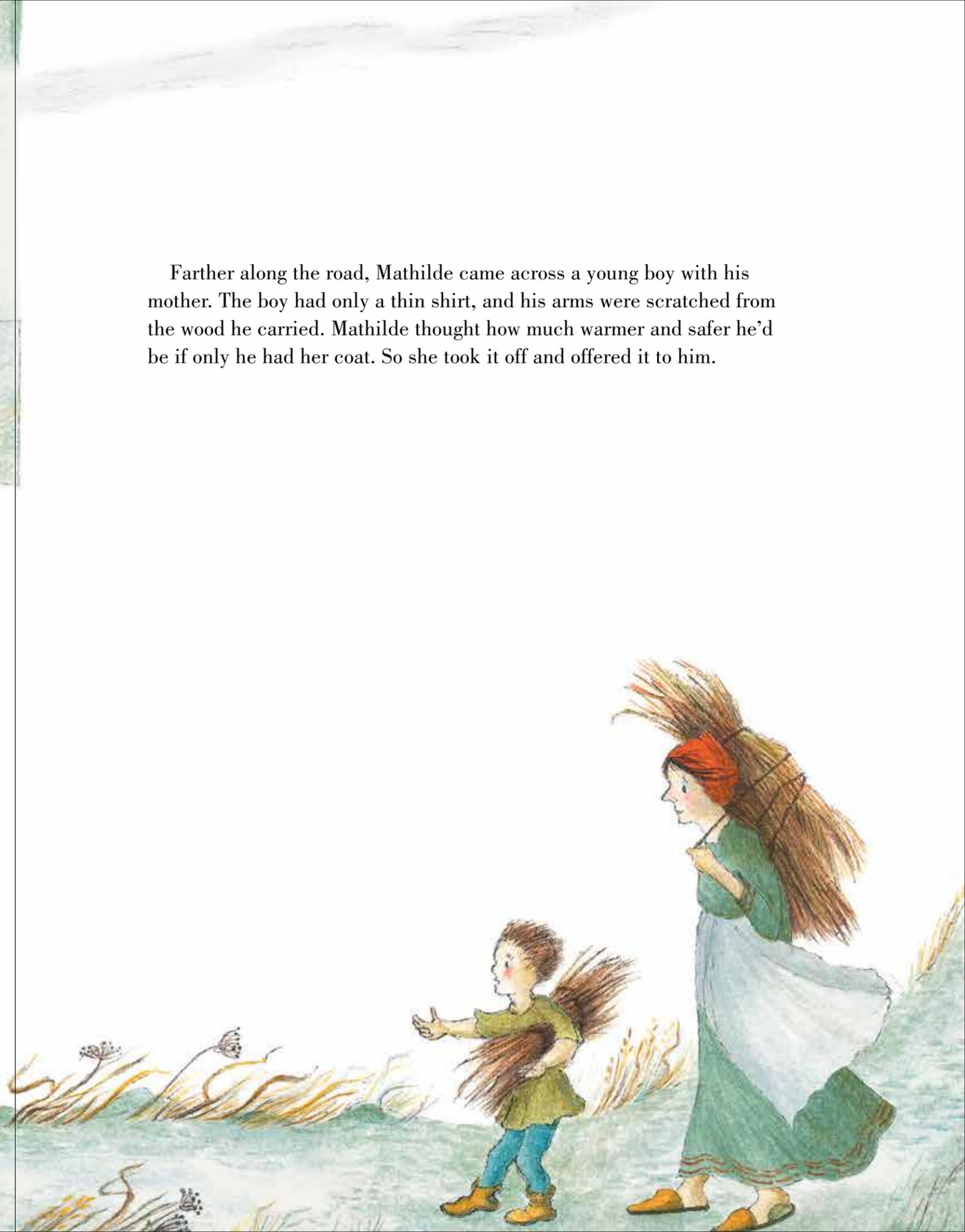




The little boy's eyes opened wide in surprise when he put on the soft hat. "Thank you," he said, and his happiness made her heart grow warm.



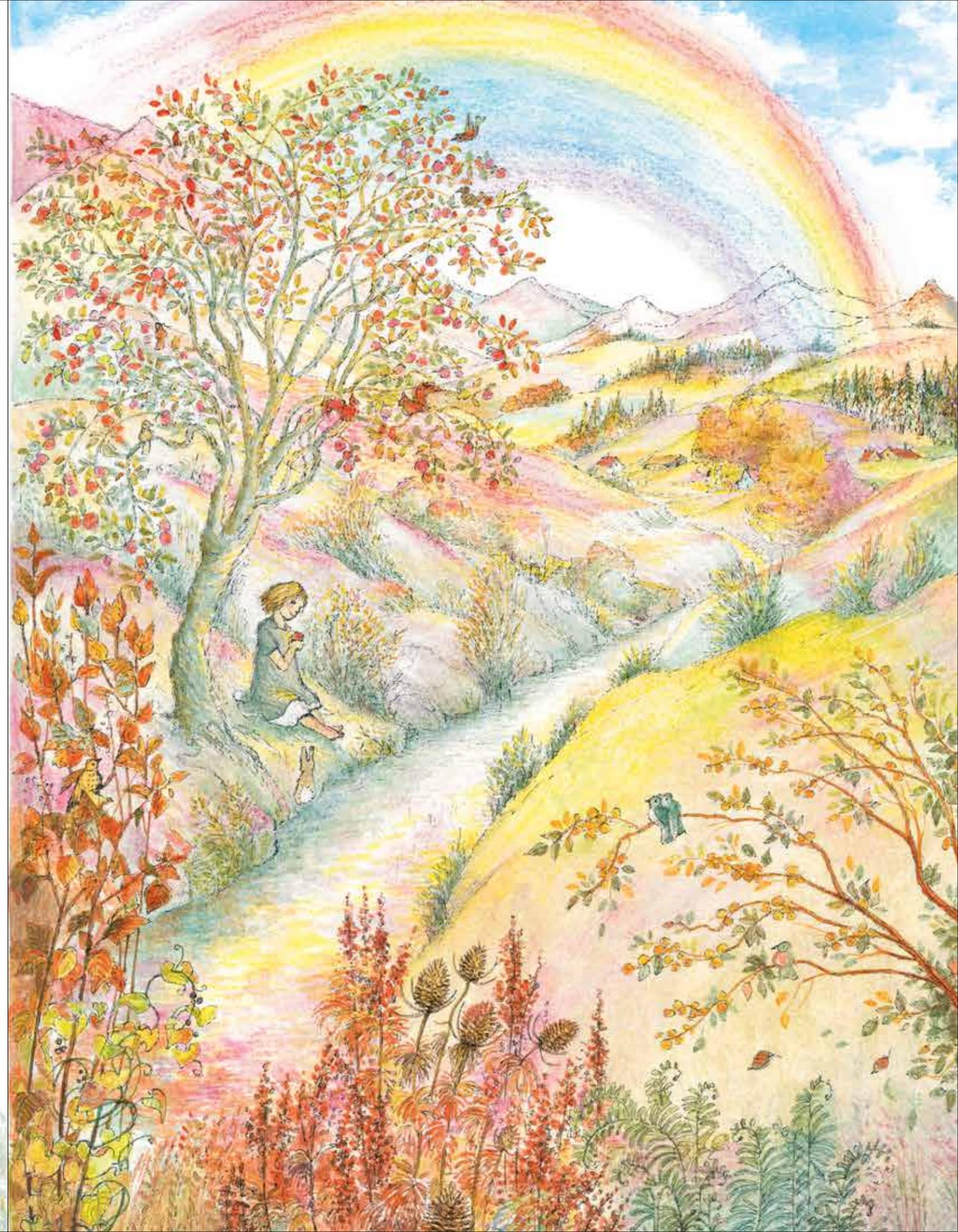
Farther along the road, Mathilde came across a young boy with his mother. The boy had only a thin shirt, and his arms were scratched from the wood he carried. Mathilde thought how much warmer and safer he'd be if only he had her coat. So she took it off and offered it to him.



The coat was a little big, but it was so warm that the boy was delighted.



Mathilde went on her way. The sun was starting to go down, and she was a bit hungry and was growing cold. But as she sat under a tree to rest her feet, she thought about the people she had been able to make happy, and that helped.



Soon after she started walking again, she met a child out on the road with tears in her eyes.

“What is wrong?” she asked.

“I have no dress to wear. All I have is this sack. It’s so itchy, it keeps me from sleeping.”

Mathilde thought about what to do and decided that she could live without her own dress. “Here,” she said, “take mine. It is long and soft. It will last a long time.”

The girl was so happy she hugged Mathilde like a sister.



Wearing just her shift, Mathilde went into the woods hoping that she would find a place to sleep for the night. She thought perhaps she could curl up beside a warm deer or a family of rabbits.





But there in the woods she met a family so poor, their young child had nothing to wear but a piece of dirty cloth.





Mathilde thought, "It is night, and I am in the forest. Nobody will see me undressed if I give this child my shift."

So she pulled it off and gave it to the child with her blessings. Though it was late and the child was surely tired from walking, she danced away wearing the new white shift.

At last Mathilde found a clearing where she could rest her head for the night. With her heart full of joy, she looked up at the stars, which seemed unusually bright that night.

Then a miracle happened. Some of the stars loosened their hold on the dark sky and fell. They whirled through the night, showering sparks of light, and rang like bells when they landed at her feet. They had become shining golden coins.

Then the mists between the stars wove themselves together and floated down to form a dress of finest linen, a shawl of lace, and boots as soft and warm as eiderdown.

In this way Mathilde was rewarded for her kindness, and she was able to grow into a happy young woman with enough for herself and more left over so that she could always help a stranger in need.



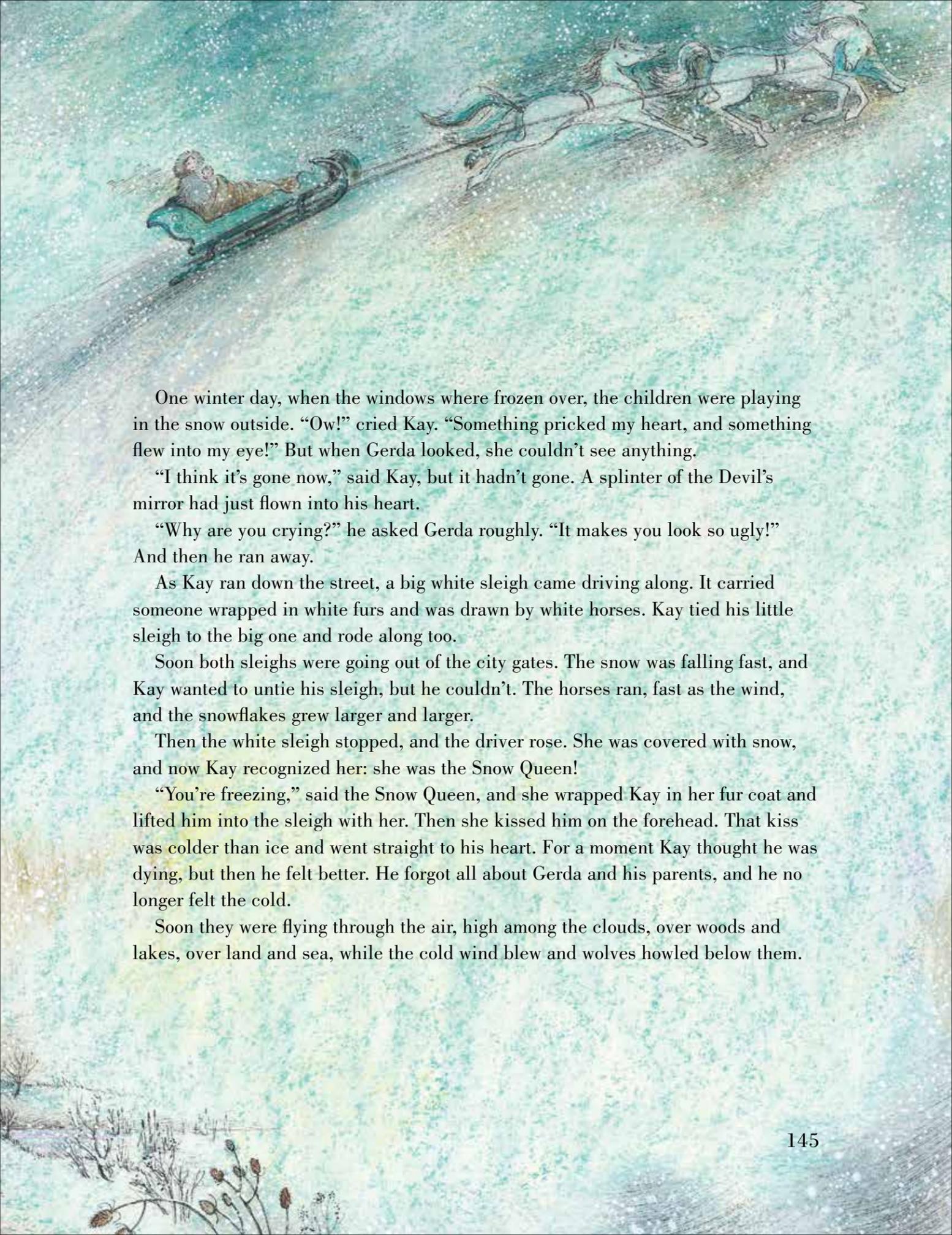
# The Snow Queen



Once upon a time, two poor children lived in an old city. They were not brother and sister, but they loved each other as if they were. The boy was called Kay, and the girl's name was Gerda. They lived in two attic rooms opposite each other.

In summer they could climb over the rooftops to play together. There were roses growing in the window boxes, and the two children often sang a song, which went:

*In the vale grow roses wild,  
Where we meet the Holy Child.*

A soft, painterly illustration of a winter scene. In the upper right, a sleigh is being pulled by two white horses across a snowy field. The sleigh contains a small figure, likely Kay. The background is a vast, hazy landscape with a castle or city visible in the distance under a pale, overcast sky. The overall style is delicate and atmospheric, with a color palette dominated by whites, greys, and muted blues and greens.

One winter day, when the windows were frozen over, the children were playing in the snow outside. "Ow!" cried Kay. "Something pricked my heart, and something flew into my eye!" But when Gerda looked, she couldn't see anything.

"I think it's gone now," said Kay, but it hadn't gone. A splinter of the Devil's mirror had just flown into his heart.

"Why are you crying?" he asked Gerda roughly. "It makes you look so ugly!" And then he ran away.

As Kay ran down the street, a big white sleigh came driving along. It carried someone wrapped in white furs and was drawn by white horses. Kay tied his little sleigh to the big one and rode along too.

Soon both sleighs were going out of the city gates. The snow was falling fast, and Kay wanted to untie his sleigh, but he couldn't. The horses ran, fast as the wind, and the snowflakes grew larger and larger.

Then the white sleigh stopped, and the driver rose. She was covered with snow, and now Kay recognized her: she was the Snow Queen!

"You're freezing," said the Snow Queen, and she wrapped Kay in her fur coat and lifted him into the sleigh with her. Then she kissed him on the forehead. That kiss was colder than ice and went straight to his heart. For a moment Kay thought he was dying, but then he felt better. He forgot all about Gerda and his parents, and he no longer felt the cold.

Soon they were flying through the air, high among the clouds, over woods and lakes, over land and sea, while the cold wind blew and wolves howled below them.

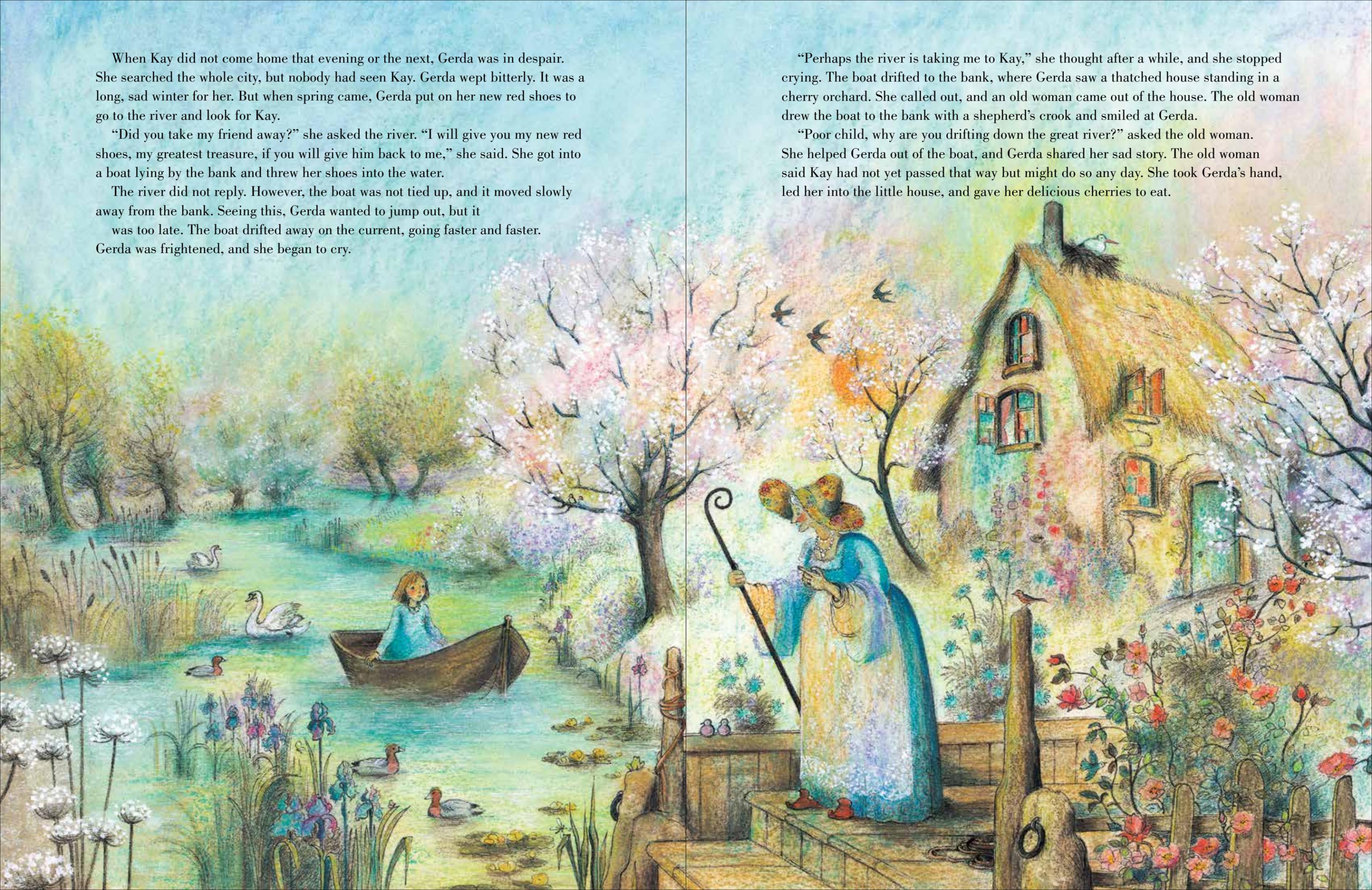
When Kay did not come home that evening or the next, Gerda was in despair. She searched the whole city, but nobody had seen Kay. Gerda wept bitterly. It was a long, sad winter for her. But when spring came, Gerda put on her new red shoes to go to the river and look for Kay.

“Did you take my friend away?” she asked the river. “I will give you my new red shoes, my greatest treasure, if you will give him back to me,” she said. She got into a boat lying by the bank and threw her shoes into the water.

The river did not reply. However, the boat was not tied up, and it moved slowly away from the bank. Seeing this, Gerda wanted to jump out, but it was too late. The boat drifted away on the current, going faster and faster. Gerda was frightened, and she began to cry.

“Perhaps the river is taking me to Kay,” she thought after a while, and she stopped crying. The boat drifted to the bank, where Gerda saw a thatched house standing in a cherry orchard. She called out, and an old woman came out of the house. The old woman drew the boat to the bank with a shepherd’s crook and smiled at Gerda.

“Poor child, why are you drifting down the great river?” asked the old woman. She helped Gerda out of the boat, and Gerda shared her sad story. The old woman said Kay had not yet passed that way but might do so any day. She took Gerda’s hand, led her into the little house, and gave her delicious cherries to eat.



As Gerda ate the cherries, the old woman combed her hair with a golden comb, and gradually the little girl forgot her lost playmate.

This old woman was an enchantress, but not a wicked one. She only worked a little magic for her own pleasure. She wanted to keep little Gerda with her because she was lonely, so she hurried out into the garden and touched the beautiful roses with her magic crook, and they all sank into the earth. She did not want them to remind Gerda of her home with the roses growing in the window boxes, for that would remind her of Kay, and then she would go away.

The old woman took Gerda into her flower garden. How beautiful and how fragrant it was! It had every flower you could imagine!

Gerda played in the flower garden for days. She knew every flower in it. Even though there were so many, she thought one flower was missing, though she did not know which.

Then one day she saw a rose on the old woman's sun hat, a rose the enchantress had forgotten.

Gerda ran into the garden. "Kay, Kay! I was going to look for Kay!" she cried, and she began to weep. As her tears fell on the ground, the roses grew again.

"Roses, do you know where Kay is? Do you think he's dead?" Gerda asked them.

"We have been down underground, but your Kay wasn't there," said the roses.

"He is not dead."

How happy Gerda was! She ran straight out of the old enchantress's flower garden into the wide world to look for Kay.





As Gerda left the kind old enchantress's garden, she left summer behind her too. In the forest the leaves on the trees were golden.

"Oh, I have wasted so much time!" sighed Gerda, and she ran on and on until her feet were tired and sore and she had to rest. Suddenly a crow came hopping up to her.

"Caw, caw!" called the crow, flying ahead. Thinking the bird would lead her to Kay, Gerda followed it.

They came to an avenue where the leaves were falling one after another. A castle stood at the end of it.

"Caw, caw!" called the crow again, and it disappeared into the castle. As Gerda followed, her heart beat quickly.

They went through many magnificent rooms until they reached a bedchamber with two golden beds in it. A princess lay in one, a prince lay in the other, but there was no little Kay!

Gerda was sad, but the princess was very kind and asked Gerda to share her story.

"We will help you as much as we can," the prince and the princess told her, and they dressed Gerda in silk and velvet, and gave her warm fur boots and a muff for her journey.

Outside the castle gates stood a coach of pure gold, driven by a fine coachman. The princess helped Gerda into the coach and wished her luck, and off she went again in search of Kay.



Gerda rode through a dark forest, where the golden coach glowed like a torch. Some robbers saw it and rushed over to it.

“Gold!” they cried. “Pure gold!” And they seized the horses’ reins, took the coachman prisoner, and pulled little Gerda out of the coach.

Suddenly a little robber girl appeared.

“I want to play with that girl!” she cried. “I want her to give me her muff and her clothes, and sleep in my bed with me! I want to ride in that coach!” And the robber girl pushed Gerda into the coach, tore her muff out of her hands, and told her to take her boots off. Then they drove on, farther into the forest.

“Are you a princess?” asked the little robber girl.

“No,” said Gerda, and she told the little robber girl her story, and how much she loved Kay.



The coach stopped in the yard of the robbers' castle, which was half in ruins, with ravens and crows flying out of the holes in the walls.

"You shall sleep with me tonight," said the little robber girl; and as she took a long knife out of a crack in the wall, she laughed.

"What is that knife for?" asked Gerda, frightened.

"I always sleep with a knife beside me," said the little robber girl. "You never know what may happen." And she went to sleep with one arm around Gerda's neck and the knife in the other hand.

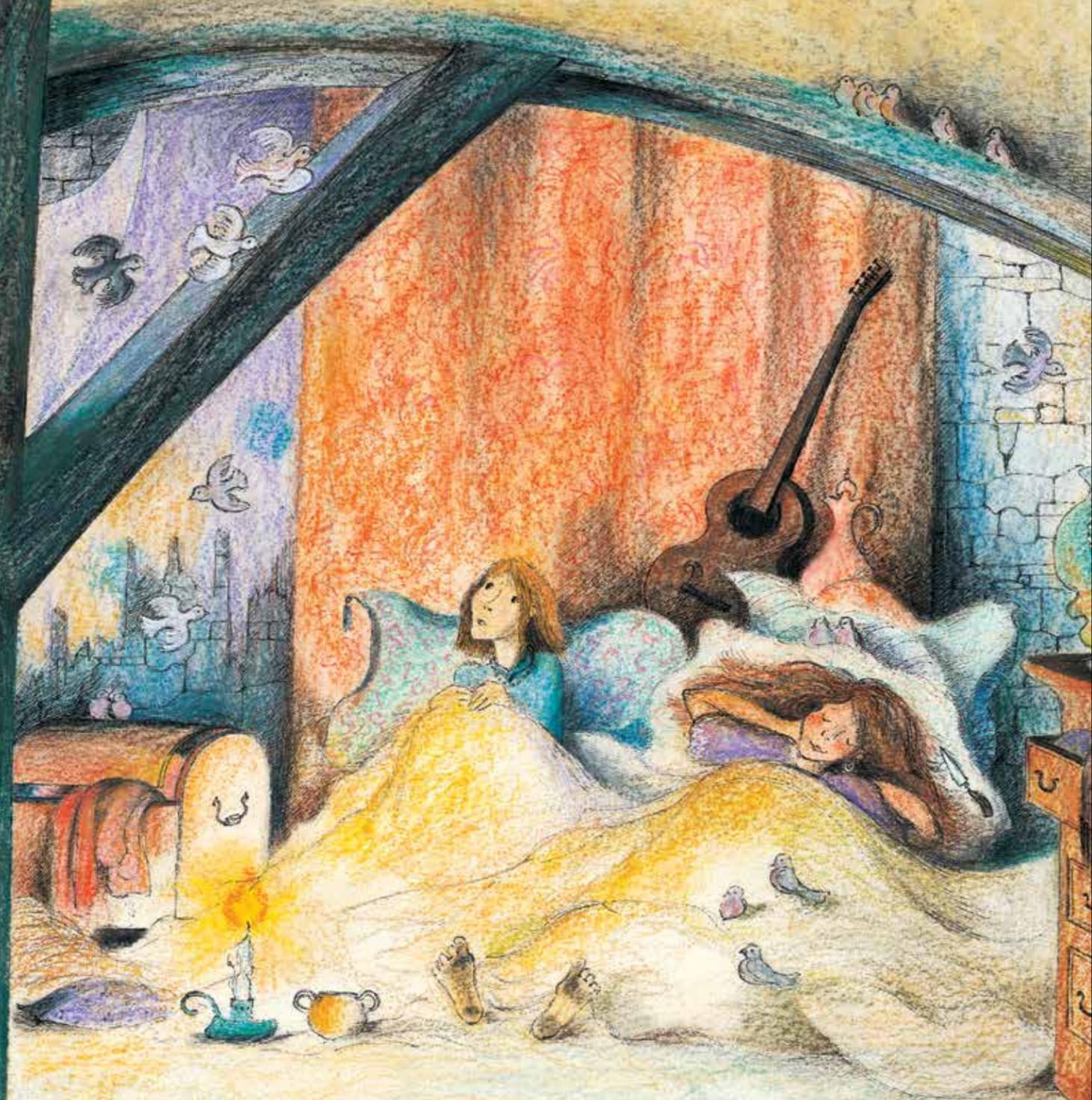


But Gerda could not sleep. Then the doves began to coo.

"Coo, coo, coo! We have seen little Kay. He was in the Snow Queen's sleigh, riding away above the treetops. Coo, coo! Ask the reindeer. He knows the Snow Queen's realm!"

Gerda looked out the window and saw a reindeer peering in.

"Yes, my home is far in the north," said the reindeer, "where we run free in the great valleys. Even farther north the Snow Queen pitches her summer tent."

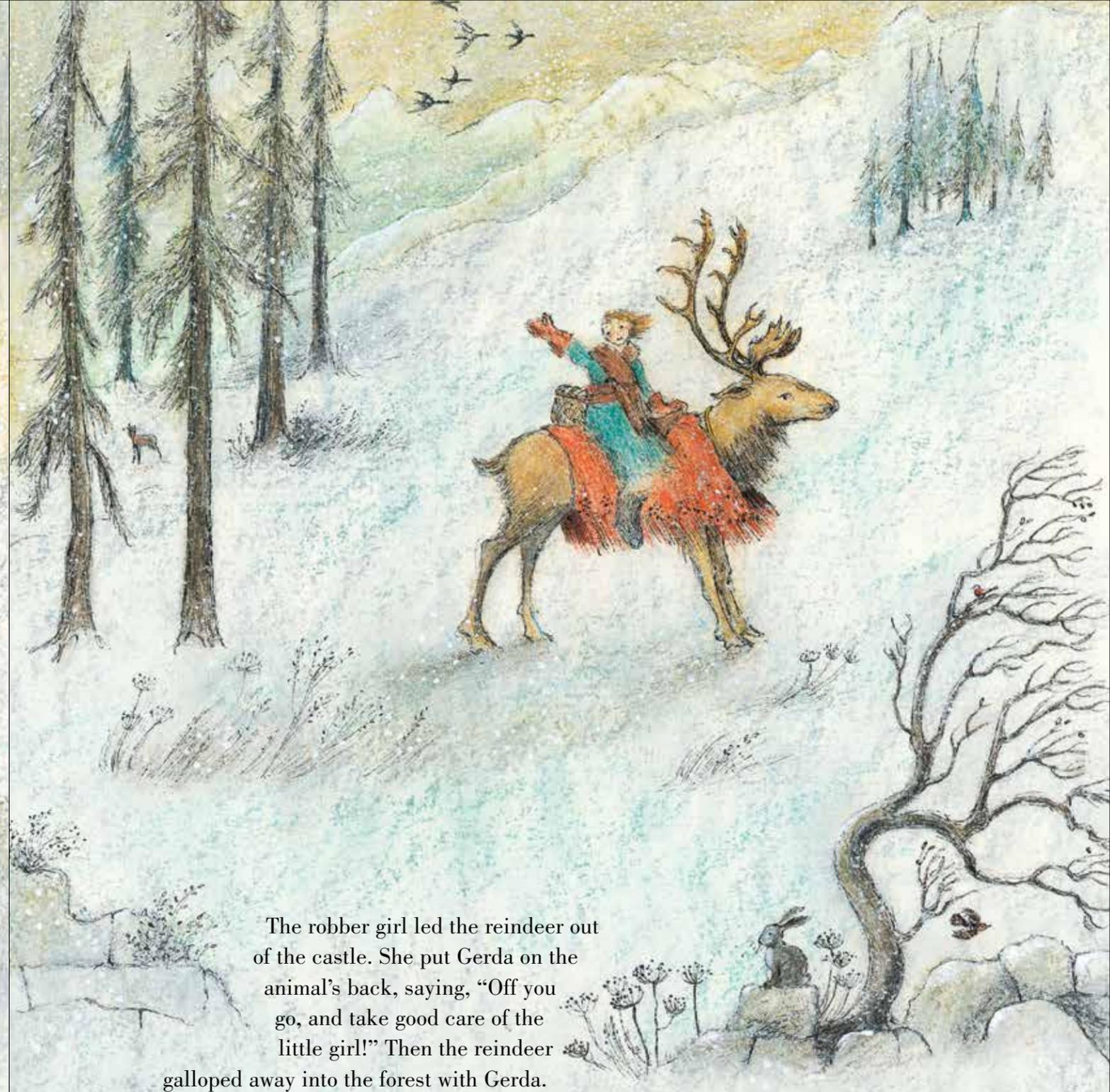


"You have seen Kay! He is with the Snow Queen! Then he's still alive! Oh, Kay, I will go north and look for you!" whispered Gerda, and she went to sleep at last, with new hope in her heart.



Early in the morning Gerda told the robber girl all that the doves had said, and the robber girl decided to let Gerda go and take the reindeer with her.

“And here are your fur boots,” said the little robber girl, “because it will be cold, but I’ll keep the muff! It’s too pretty for me to give it away. However, I don’t want you to freeze, so here are my mother’s big mittens, and two loaves and a ham so you won’t go hungry.”



The robber girl led the reindeer out of the castle. She put Gerda on the animal’s back, saying, “Off you go, and take good care of the little girl!” Then the reindeer galloped away into the forest with Gerda.

Gerda waved her hand in the big mitten and heard the robber girl call good-bye. Then they raced away over stumps and stones, over swamps and plains, and through the great forest as fast as the reindeer could go.

The reindeer ran on with Gerda day and night. She ate her loaves and she ate her ham. At last they came to Finland. The reindeer took Gerda to an old Finnish woman who knew all the secrets of the far north. They went into her cottage, which was so hot that Gerda had to take off her fur boots and her thick mittens. The woman put a piece of ice on the reindeer’s head, and then the reindeer told her Gerda’s story.



“I know how wise you are,” said the reindeer. “Can’t you give this little girl a potion that will make her strong enough to overcome the Snow Queen?”

The Finnish woman took the reindeer into a corner and whispered to him, “Kay is very happy with the Snow Queen. He is under her spell and has forgotten his parents and little Gerda.”

“But couldn’t you let Gerda have something to give her power against the Snow Queen’s magic?” asked the reindeer.

“I can give her no more power than she already has,” said the Finnish woman. “Don’t you see how powerful she is? Even the wild robber girl granted her wishes. Her power lies in her loving heart! But listen: the Snow Queen’s realm begins two miles from here. Take the little girl to the big bush with the red berries and then hurry back before it gets too cold for you!” After saying this the Finnish woman put Gerda on the reindeer’s back, and off they ran again as fast as he could.

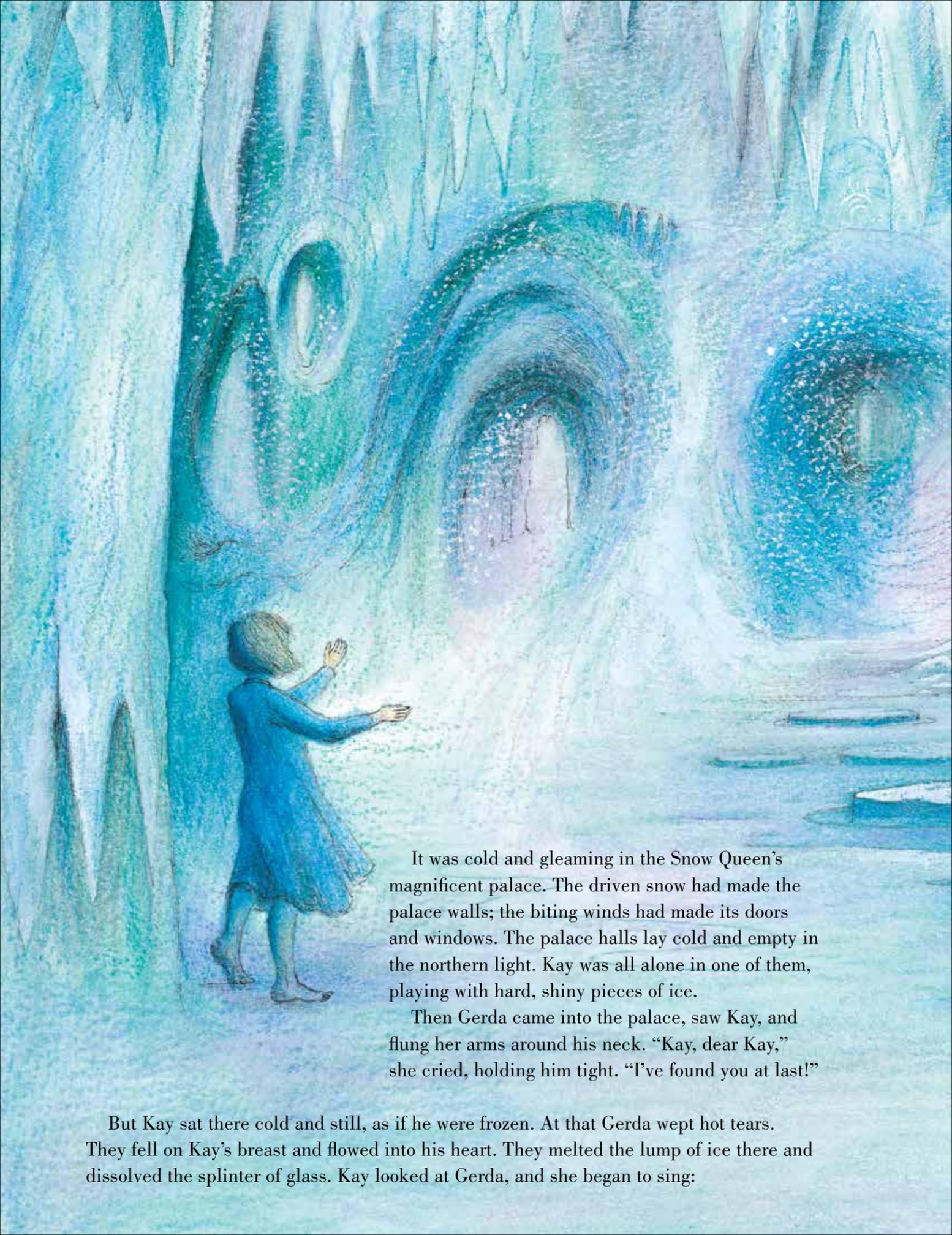


“Oh, I have left my boots behind! And my mittens too!” cried Gerda as the cold stabbed her like a knife. But the reindeer dared not turn back. On and on he ran.

When they reached the bush with the red berries, Gerda climbed down to the ground. The reindeer kissed her, and big, shiny tears ran down his cheeks. Then he ran back to the Finnish woman as fast as he could go, for he feared the Snow Queen’s icy realm.

There stood poor Gerda, barefoot, in the middle of that terrible, ice-cold country. It was so cold she could see her own breath.

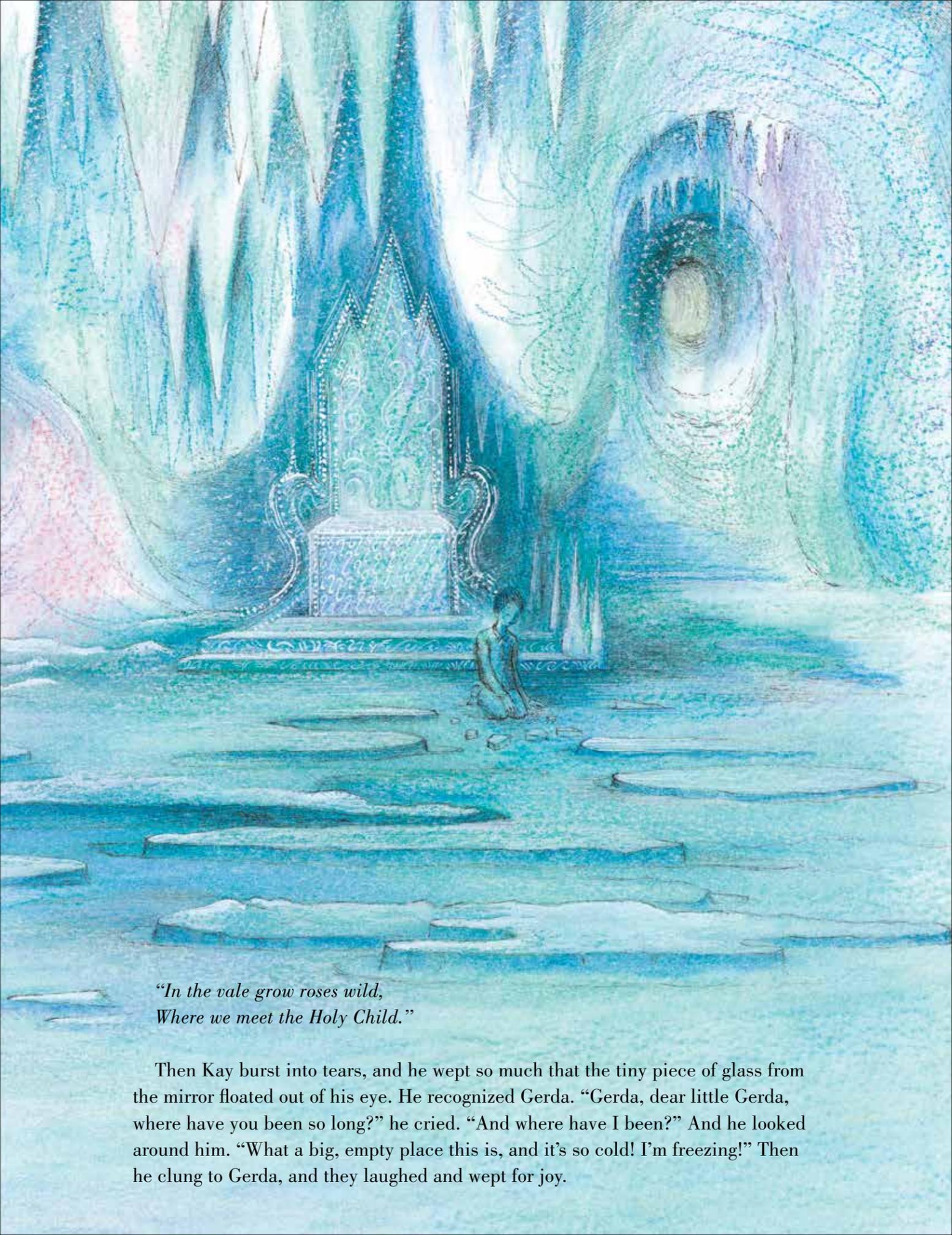
In her despair, little Gerda prayed. When she had said the Lord’s Prayer, she was surrounded by angels, who drove away the snow and the cold. Gerda went boldly on, straight into the snowstorm, for she knew the Snow Queen’s palace must lie where the snow fell most thickly.



It was cold and gleaming in the Snow Queen's magnificent palace. The driven snow had made the palace walls; the biting winds had made its doors and windows. The palace halls lay cold and empty in the northern light. Kay was all alone in one of them, playing with hard, shiny pieces of ice.

Then Gerda came into the palace, saw Kay, and flung her arms around his neck. "Kay, dear Kay," she cried, holding him tight. "I've found you at last!"

But Kay sat there cold and still, as if he were frozen. At that Gerda wept hot tears. They fell on Kay's breast and flowed into his heart. They melted the lump of ice there and dissolved the splinter of glass. Kay looked at Gerda, and she began to sing:



*"In the vale grow roses wild,  
Where we meet the Holy Child."*

Then Kay burst into tears, and he wept so much that the tiny piece of glass from the mirror floated out of his eye. He recognized Gerda. "Gerda, dear little Gerda, where have you been so long?" he cried. "And where have I been?" And he looked around him. "What a big, empty place this is, and it's so cold! I'm freezing!" Then he clung to Gerda, and they laughed and wept for joy.

Gerda kissed Kay's cheeks, and the color came back into them; she kissed his eyes, and they were wet like hers. She kissed his hands and feet, and he felt warm again.

They held hands and left the castle, talking about the roses at home. Wherever they passed, the icy winds died down and the sun came out.

When they came to the bush with the red berries, the reindeer was waiting with a sleigh and some warm clothes the Finnish woman had given him. He took them both to the borders of that cold land. Here the first green shoots were emerging, and here they parted.

"Good-bye!" called the reindeer. The first little birds were beginning to sing, and the buds in the wood were green. Spring had come!

Hand and hand, Gerda and Kay began their journey back. On their way they met the little robber girl.

"A fine sort of fellow you are, wandering around like that!" she said to Kay. "I wonder if it was worth going to the ends of the earth just for you! Tell me what happened, Gerda, and how you found Kay!" So Gerda and Kay told their story, and the little robber girl smiled and took their hands, and promised that if she ever came to their city she would visit them. Then she rode away into the forest.

Next Gerda came to the castle where the prince and princess lived, and they were magnificently entertained there. Wherever they went, spring broke out.

Finally in the distance they heard church bells ringing and saw the tall towers of the city where they lived.



They came into the city and then to their home. They climbed the stairs and went in, and found everything just as it used to be. But as they walked in through the doorway, they realized they were grown up now.

There were roses at the open window. Kay and Gerda held hands. They had forgotten the cold magnificence of the Snow Queen's realm as if it were a bad dream.



Looking into each other's eyes, they understood the old song:

*In the vale grow roses wild,  
Where we meet the Holy Child.*

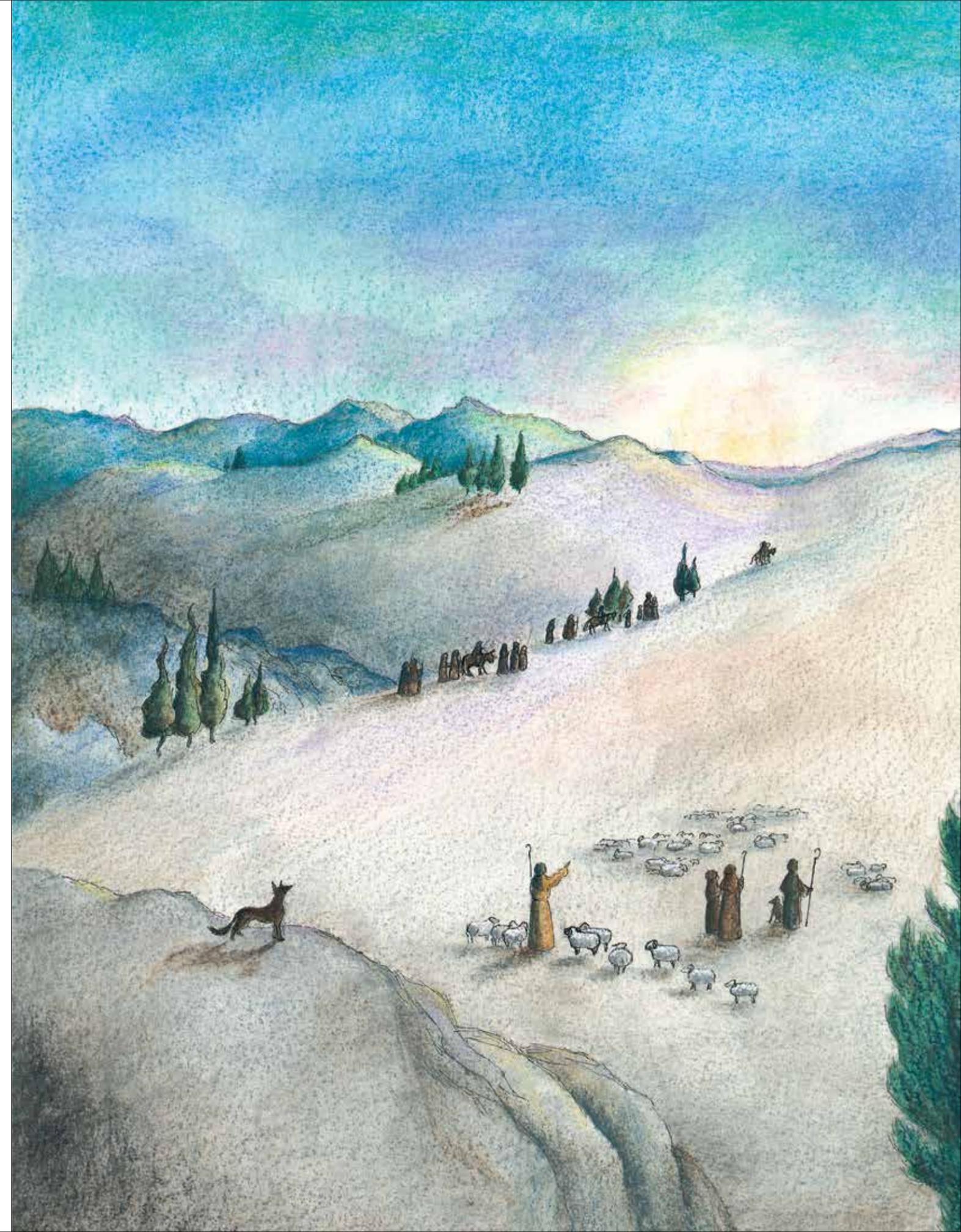
There they stood happily, grown up yet still children at heart.  
And it was summer, warm, glorious summer.

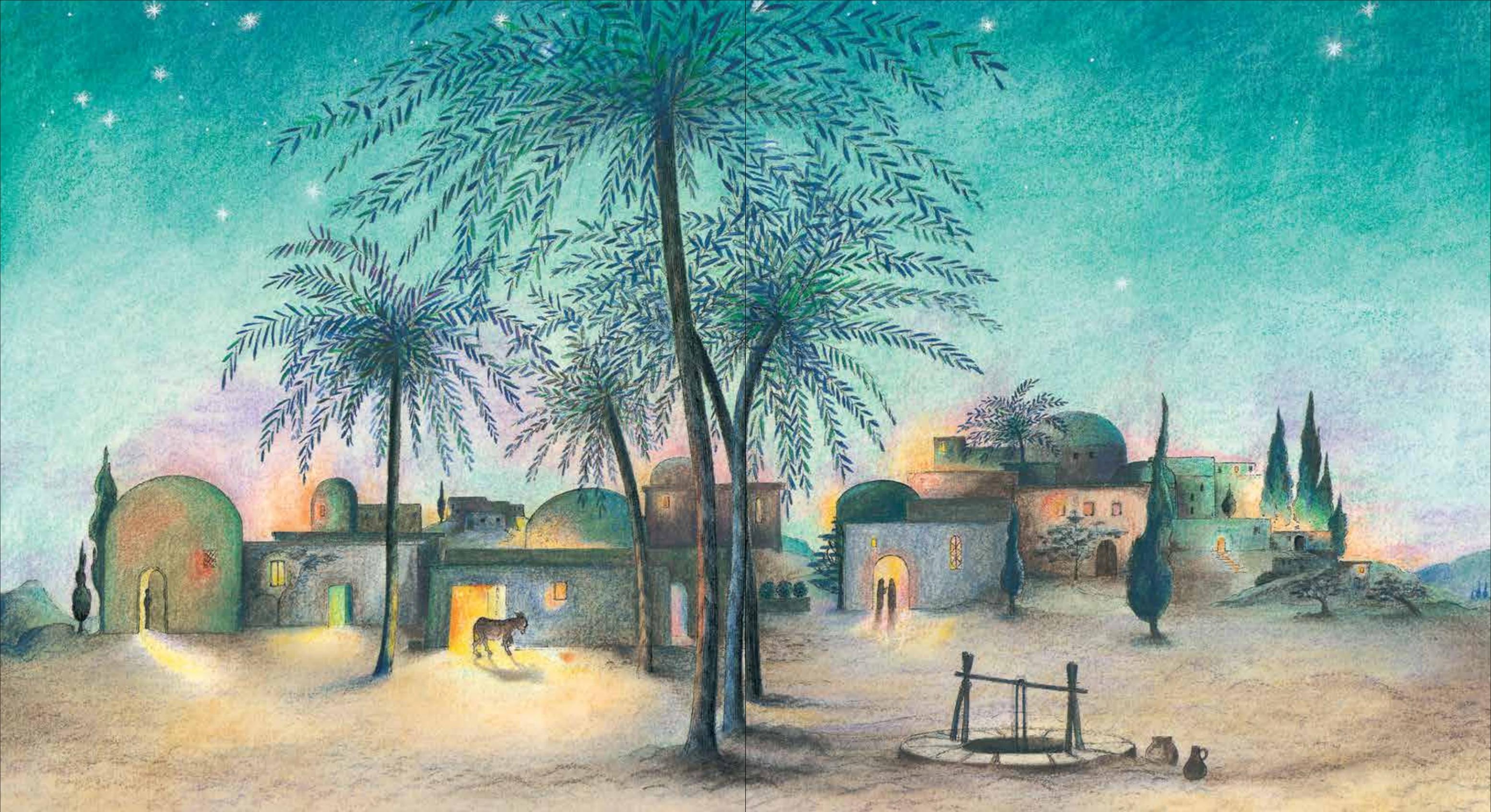


# The Little Donkey



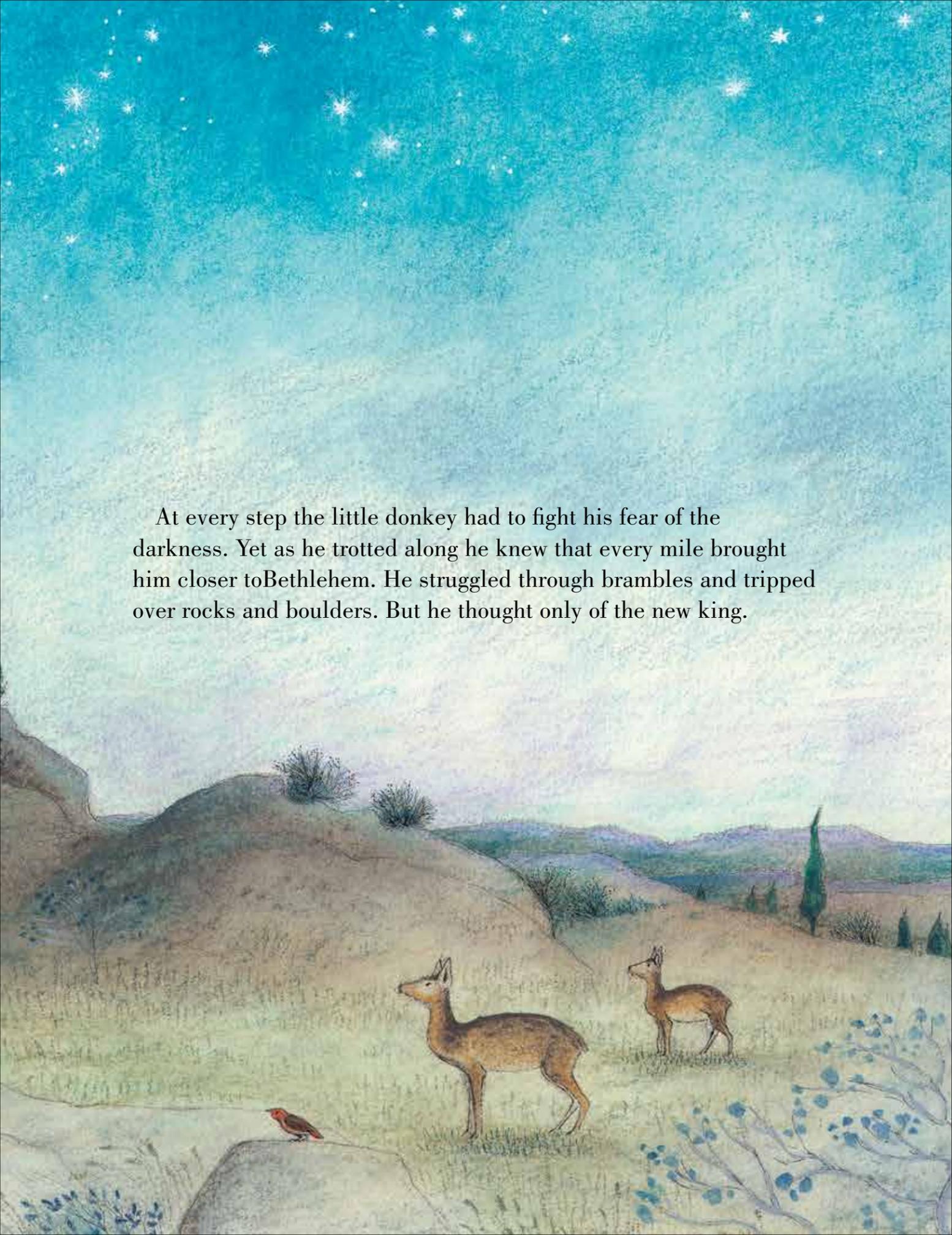
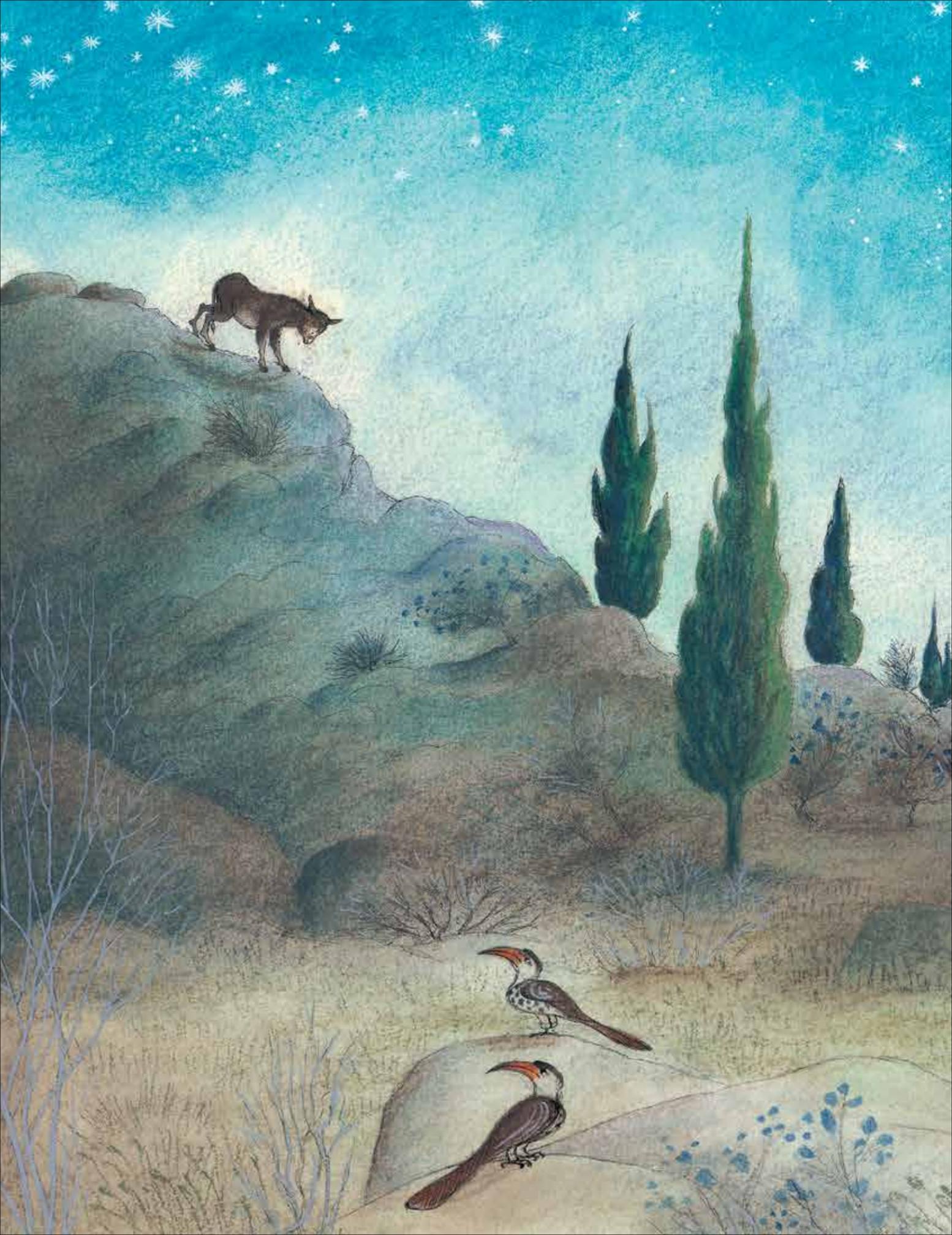
Long ago, a baby was born in a stable in Bethlehem. His mother laid him to sleep in a manger full of hay, for there was no other place for him. Many people traveled from far and wide to see the baby for themselves because they believed he was born to be king.





News of the new king's birth even reached the ears of a little donkey. But the donkey's master told him the story was untrue and forbade him to go to Bethlehem, saying, "A king is born in a palace, not in a stable."

But the donkey believed the story, and he longed to visit the new king. His longing filled his heart. He knew he must leave his master and go to his king. So at nightfall, he quietly left.



At every step the little donkey had to fight his fear of the darkness. Yet as he trotted along he knew that every mile brought him closer to Bethlehem. He struggled through brambles and tripped over rocks and boulders. But he thought only of the new king.

Soon he met a camel.

“Where are you going?” the camel inquired.

“To Bethlehem, I am going to visit the new king.” The camel sneered, “Nonsense! You would not be allowed to visit a king; you would be chased away!”

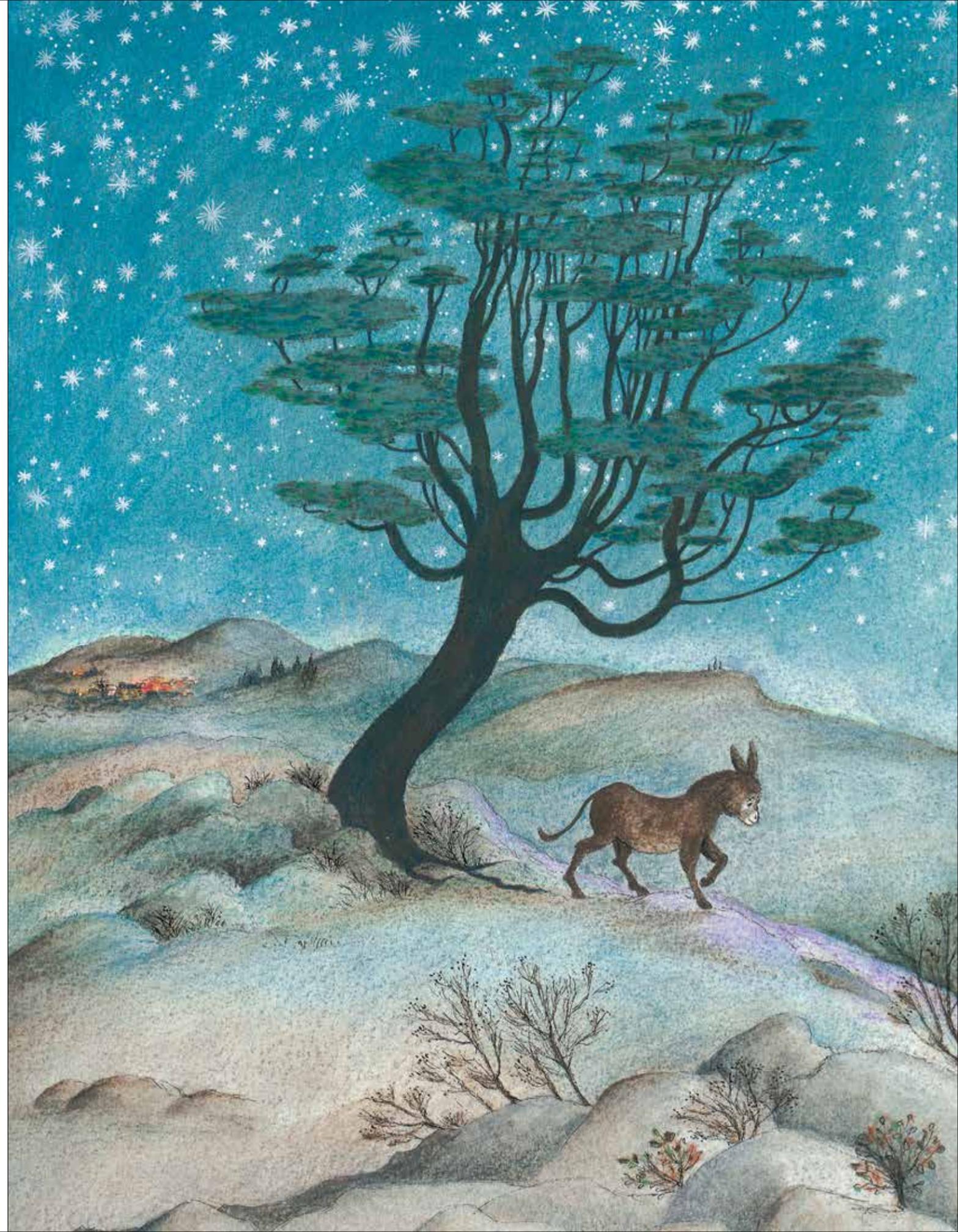
“Why?” asked the donkey sadly.

“Because you are a donkey and a donkey is a lowly, stupid beast,” answered the camel haughtily as he strolled on.

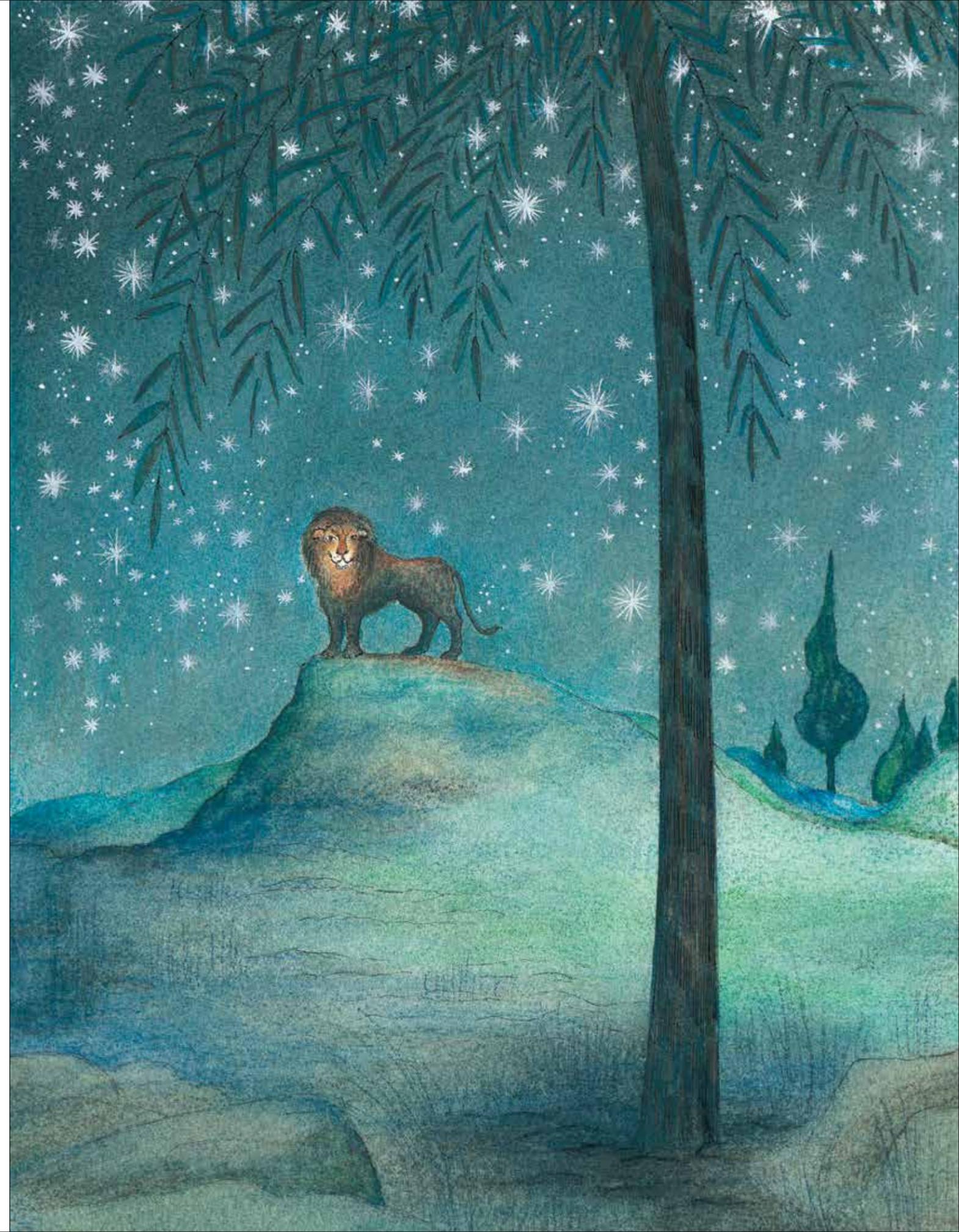
The little donkey was hurt and confused. He nearly turned around to go home.



“No!” he said stubbornly to himself. “No, I will not give up my journey. I will go on, and I will visit the new king.” He stamped his hooves and then trotted onward along the stony pathway.



Suddenly a lion appeared out of the darkness. The donkey told the lion he was on his way to visit the new king. The lion roared with great disdain, “No king would want a visit from you. Look at me! King of all the animals, I am the only animal important enough to visit another king.” He tossed his mane and turned his back on the humble donkey.

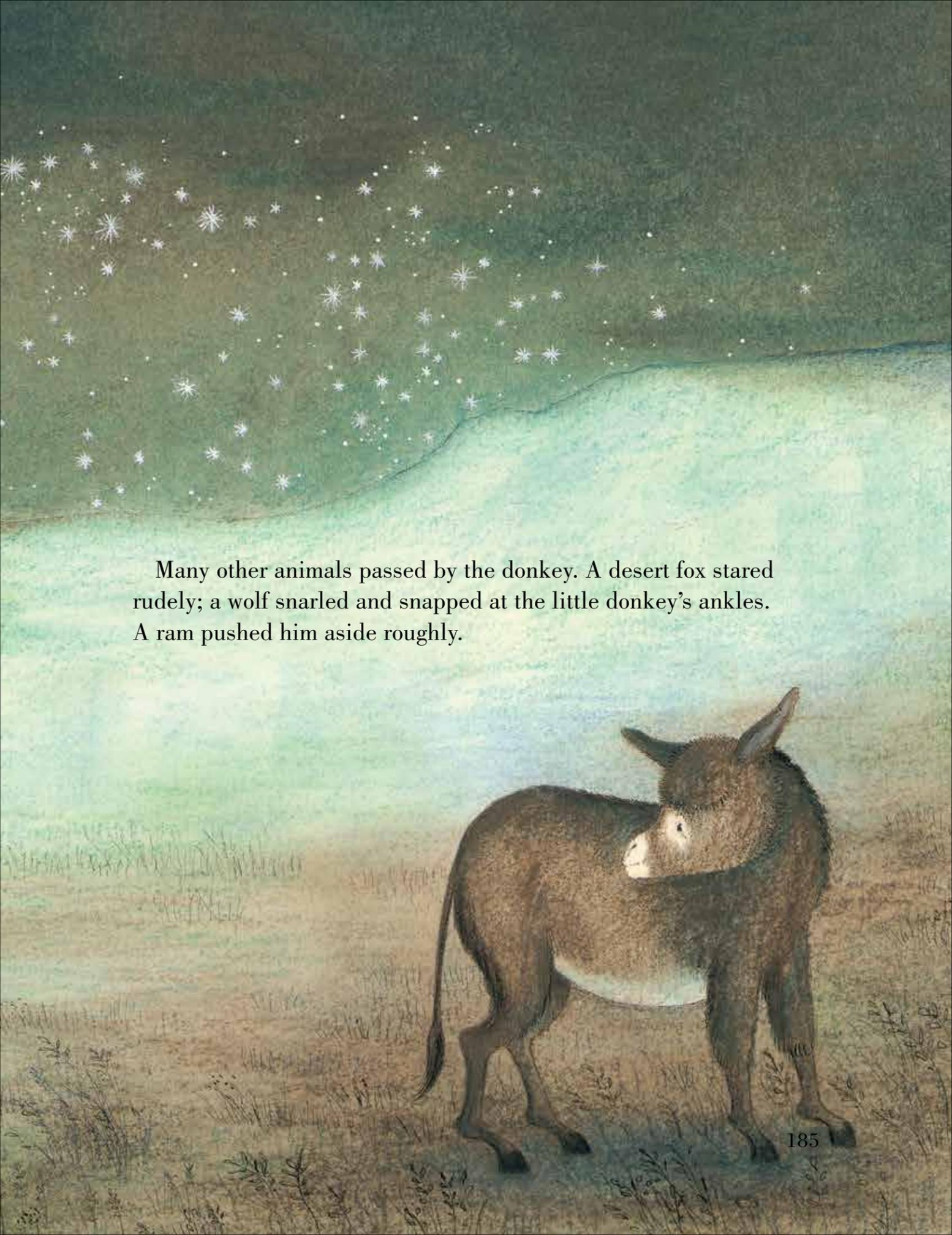




A hyena slunk up. "You silly donkey! Do you believe any king would even notice you? You were born to bear loads, not to stand in the presence of a king."

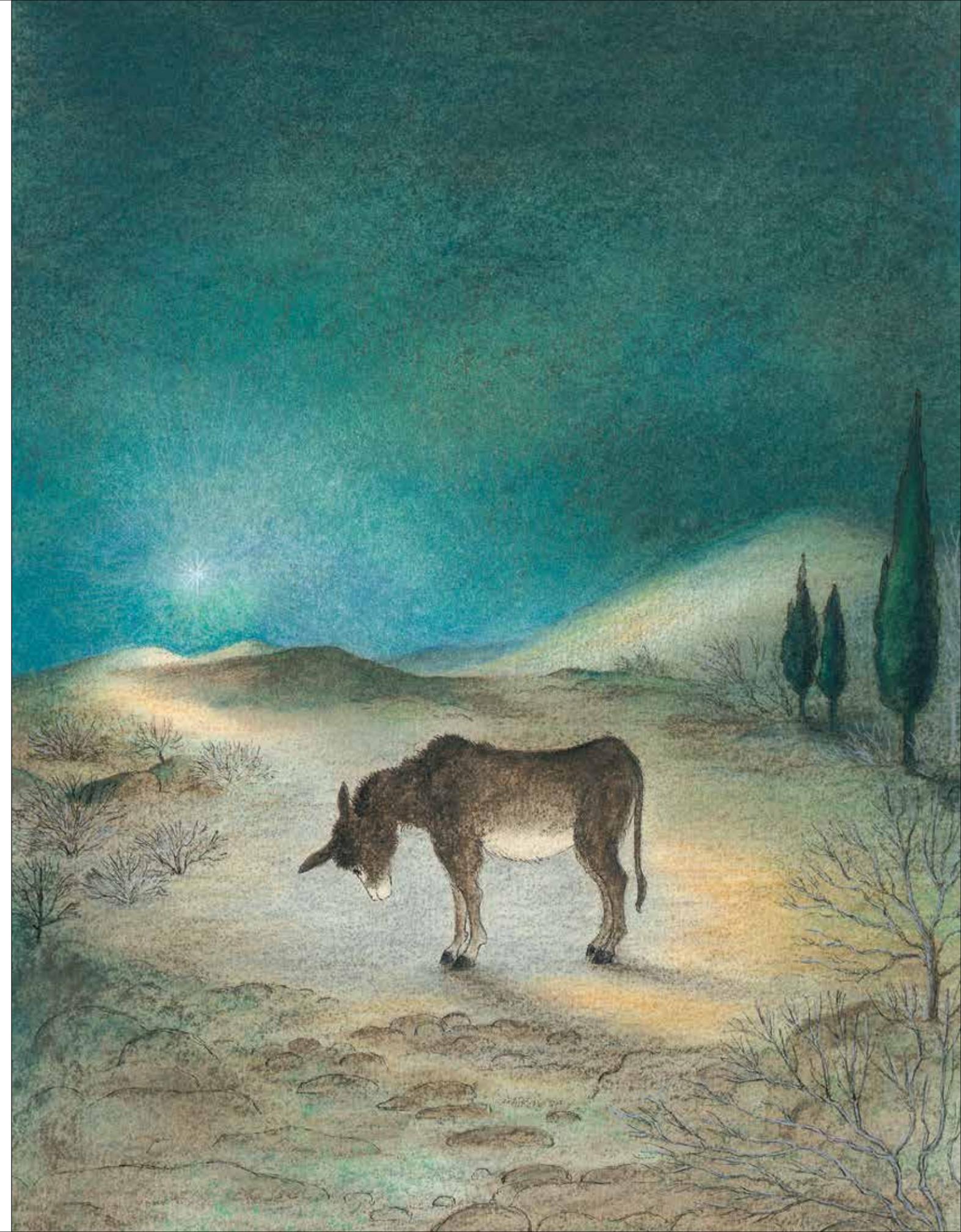
She laughed spitefully and disappeared into the night.



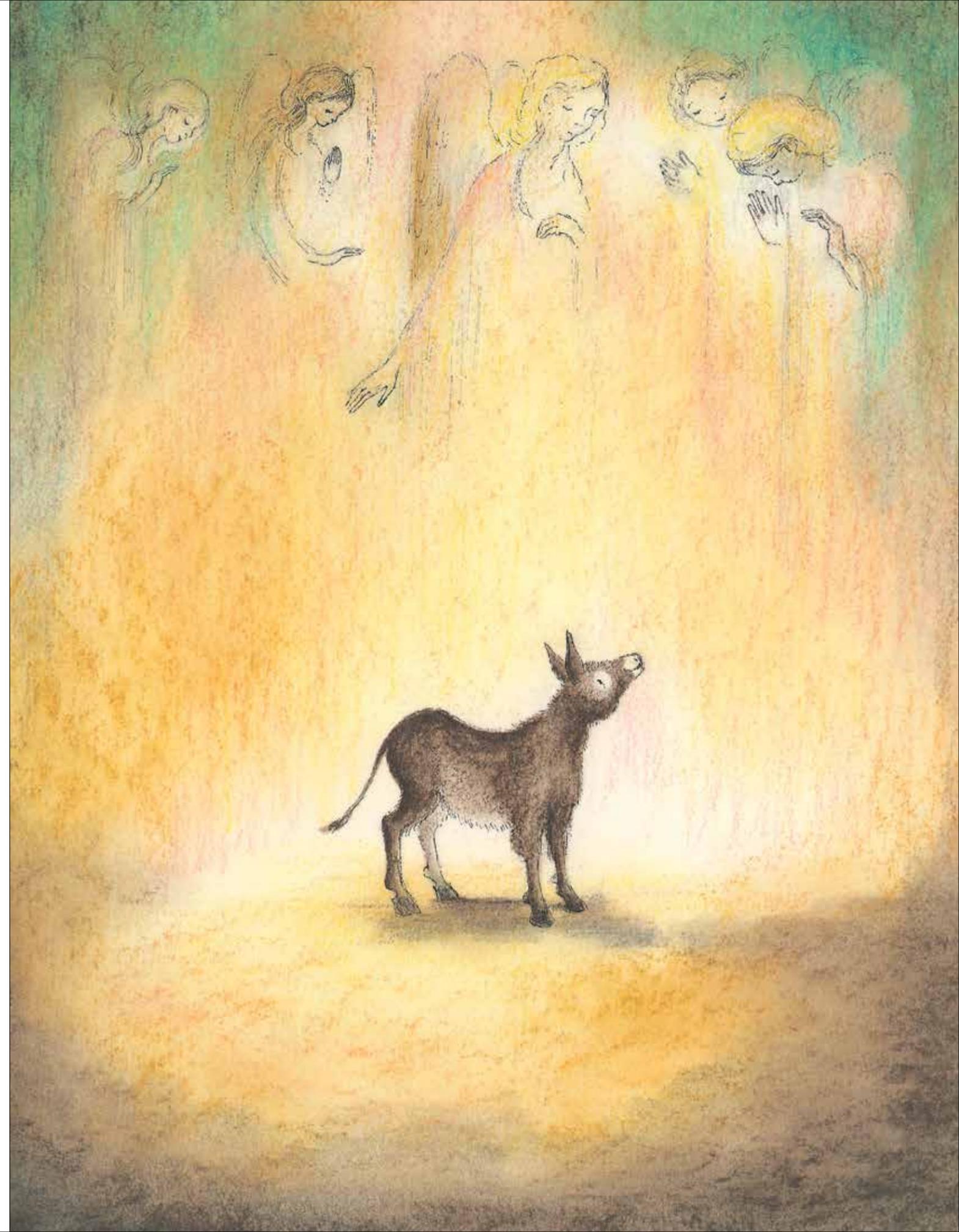


Many other animals passed by the donkey. A desert fox stared rudely; a wolf snarled and snapped at the little donkey's ankles. A ram pushed him aside roughly.

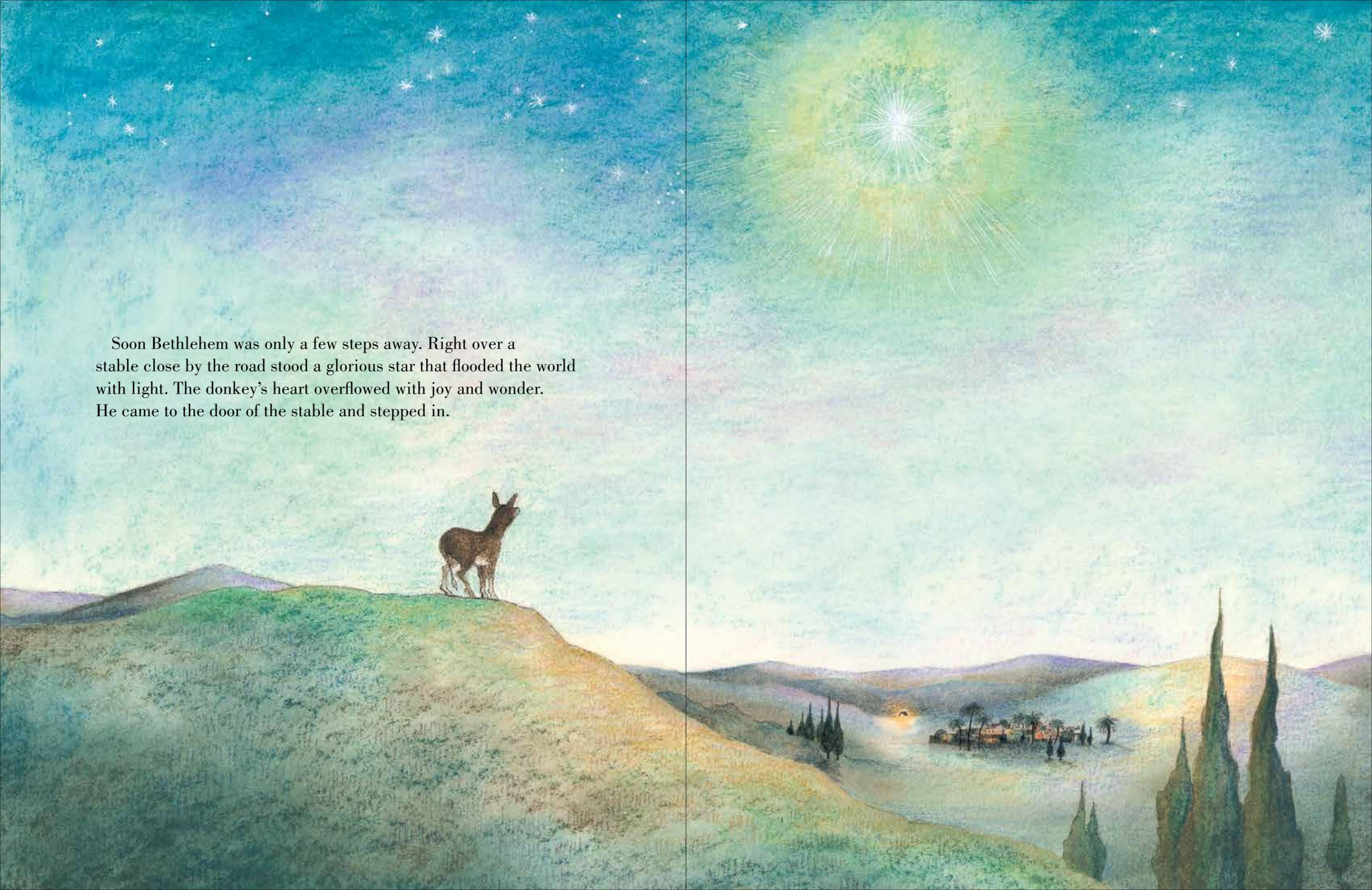
The little donkey felt so worthless that he dared not hold his head up. It was so dark he stumbled about and began to lose his way. Was there not even one star to comfort him?



Suddenly a great light seemed to surround the little donkey. His fear and distress faded into the darkness. Slowly, he lifted his head, and he saw above him angels in golden robes who guided him once again onto the road to Bethlehem.



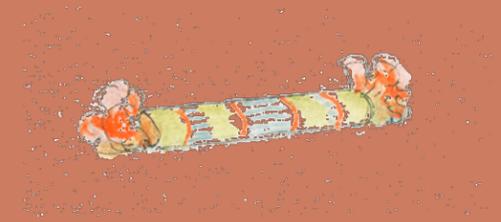
Soon Bethlehem was only a few steps away. Right over a stable close by the road stood a glorious star that flooded the world with light. The donkey's heart overflowed with joy and wonder. He came to the door of the stable and stepped in.



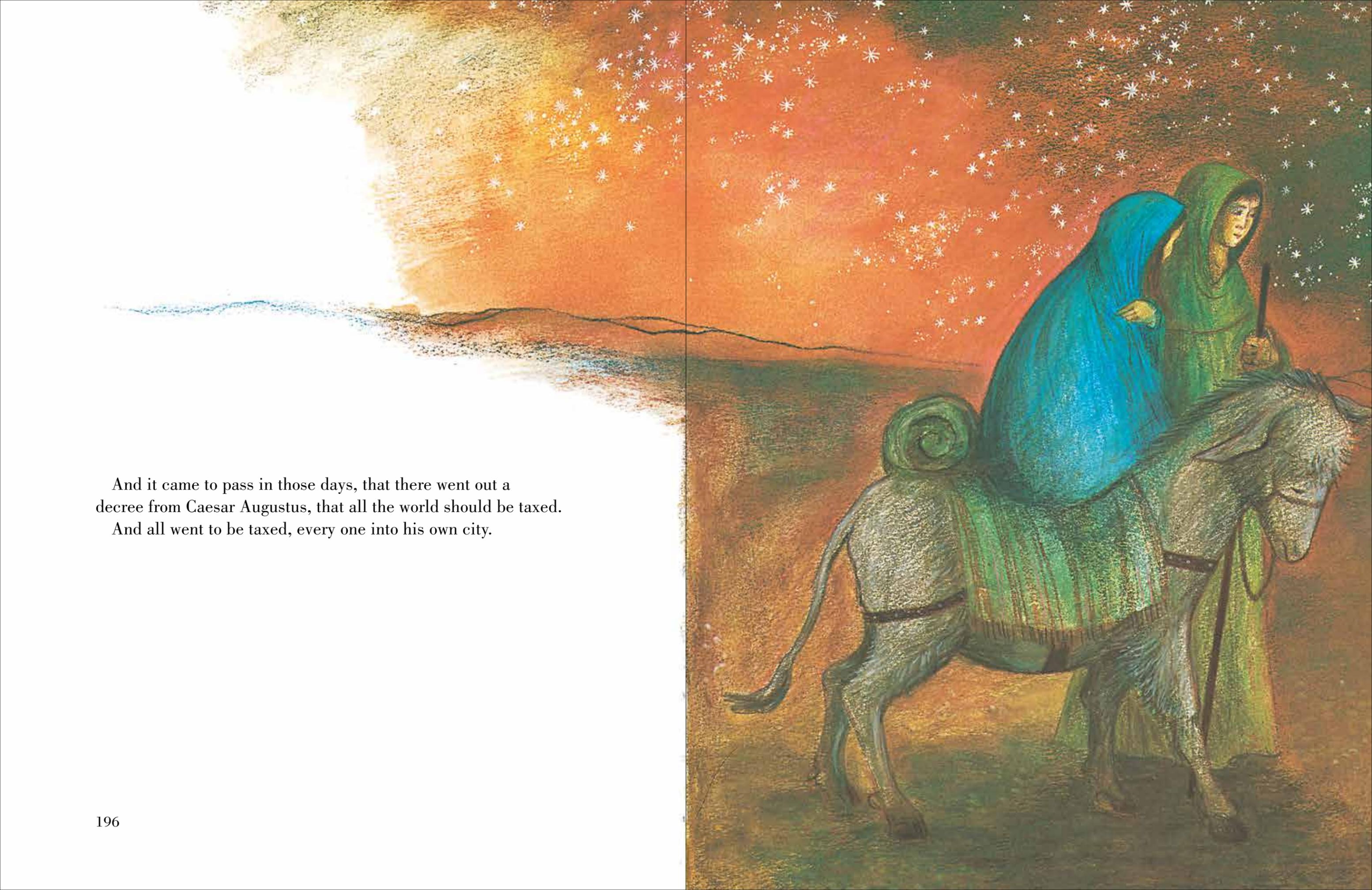
There in the hay, just as the story had said, lay the little child,  
and Mary and Joseph stood by him. The baby laughed merrily to see  
the donkey. He stretched out his hands to him and smiled. The little  
donkey bowed before his king. His journey had ended.



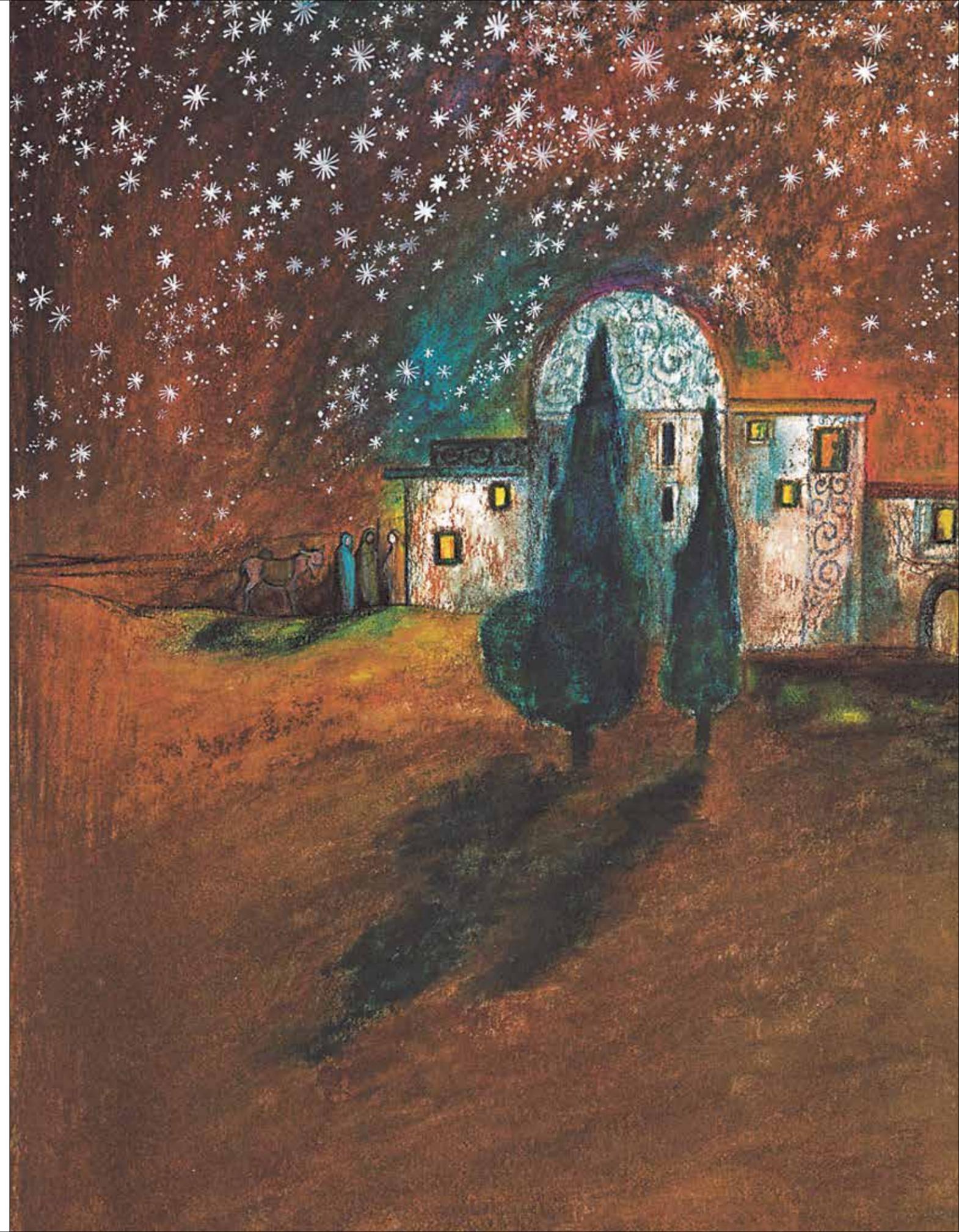
# The Christmas Story



And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a  
decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed.  
And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city.



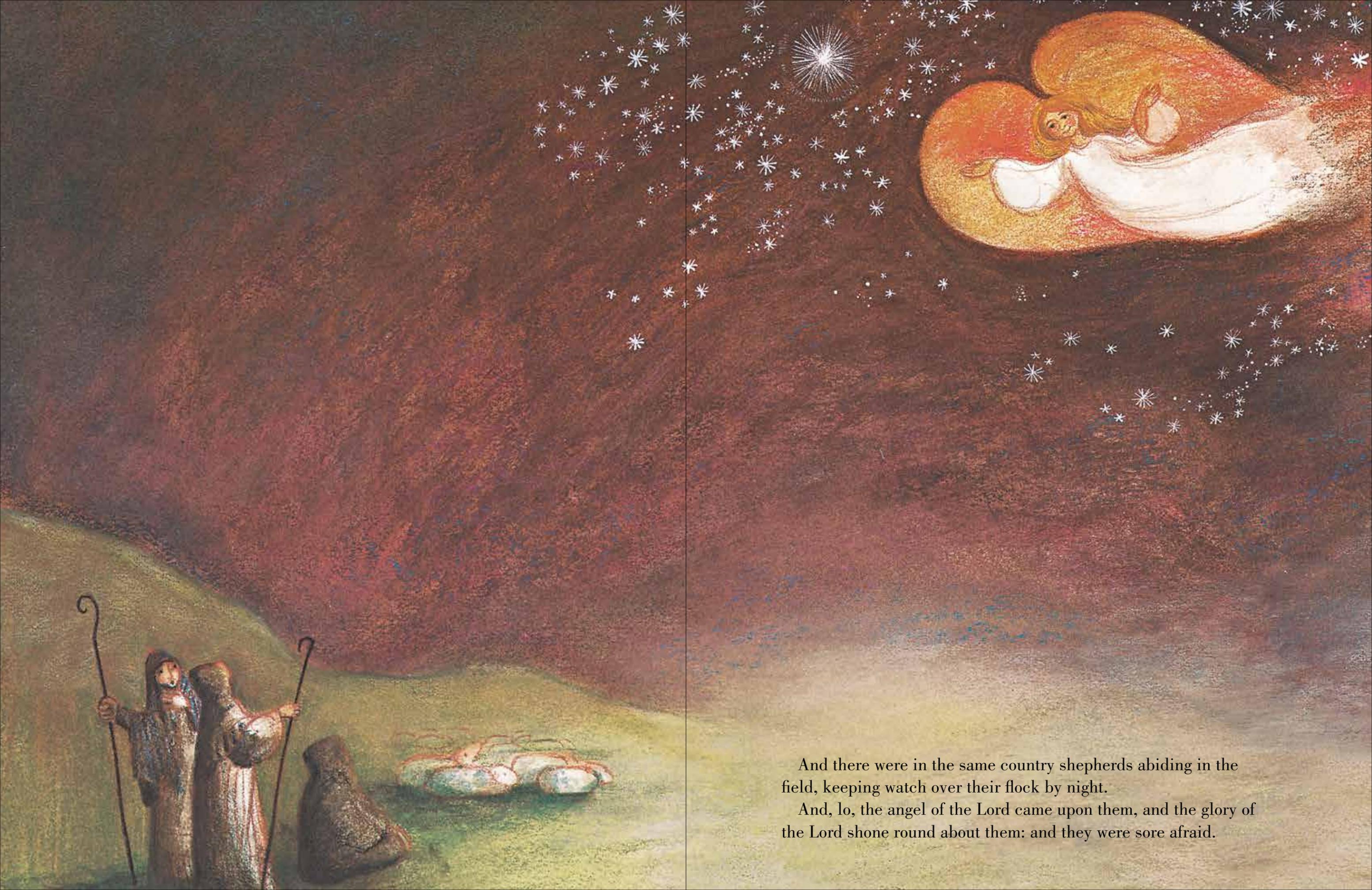
And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem (because he was of the house and lineage of David), to be taxed with Mary, his espoused wife, being great with child.



And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.

And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.





And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.  
And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

And the angel said unto them, "Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

"For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.



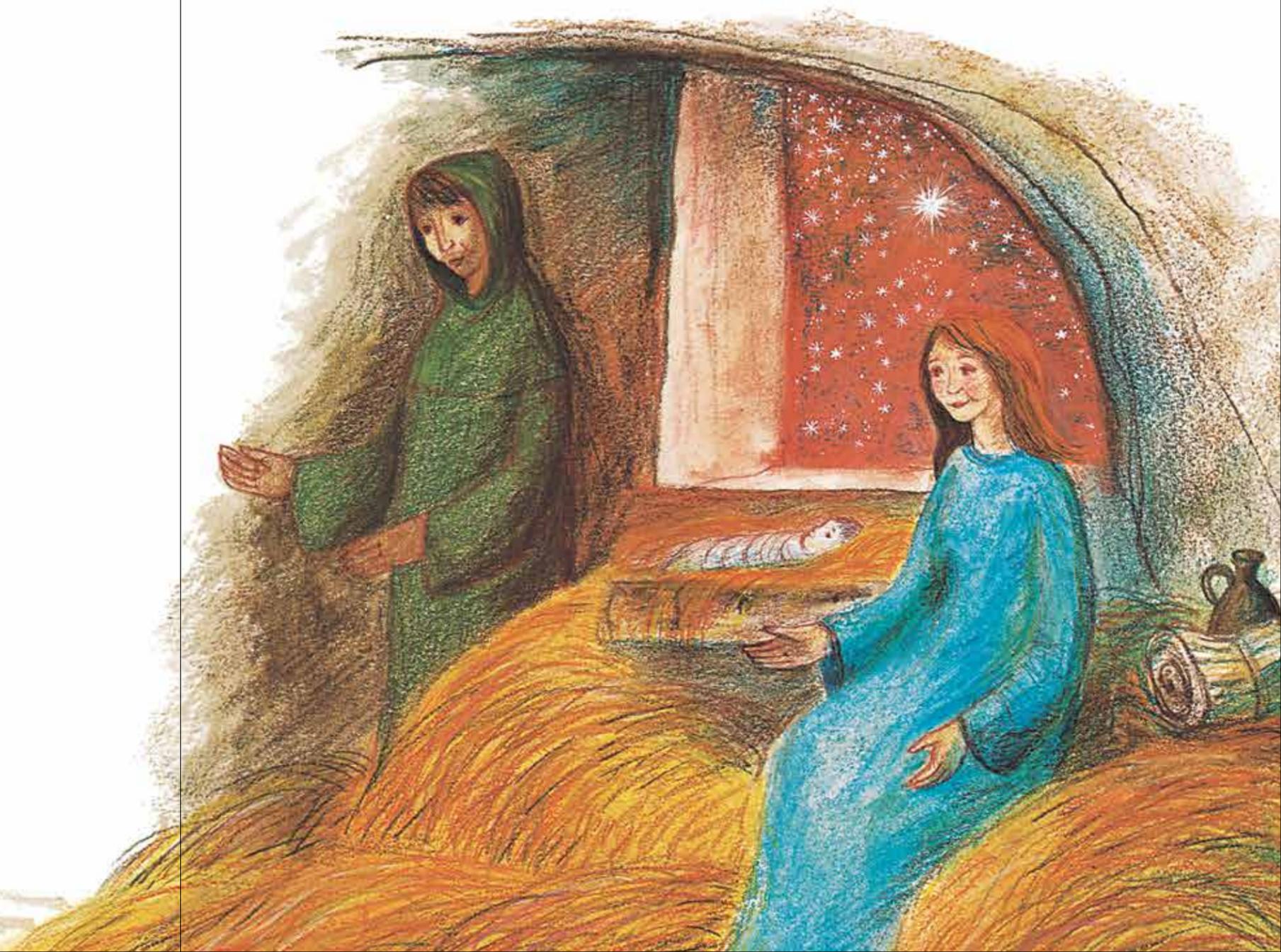
"And this shall be a sign unto you; ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger."



And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men.”

And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one another, “Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.”

And they came with haste, and found Mary, Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.



And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child.

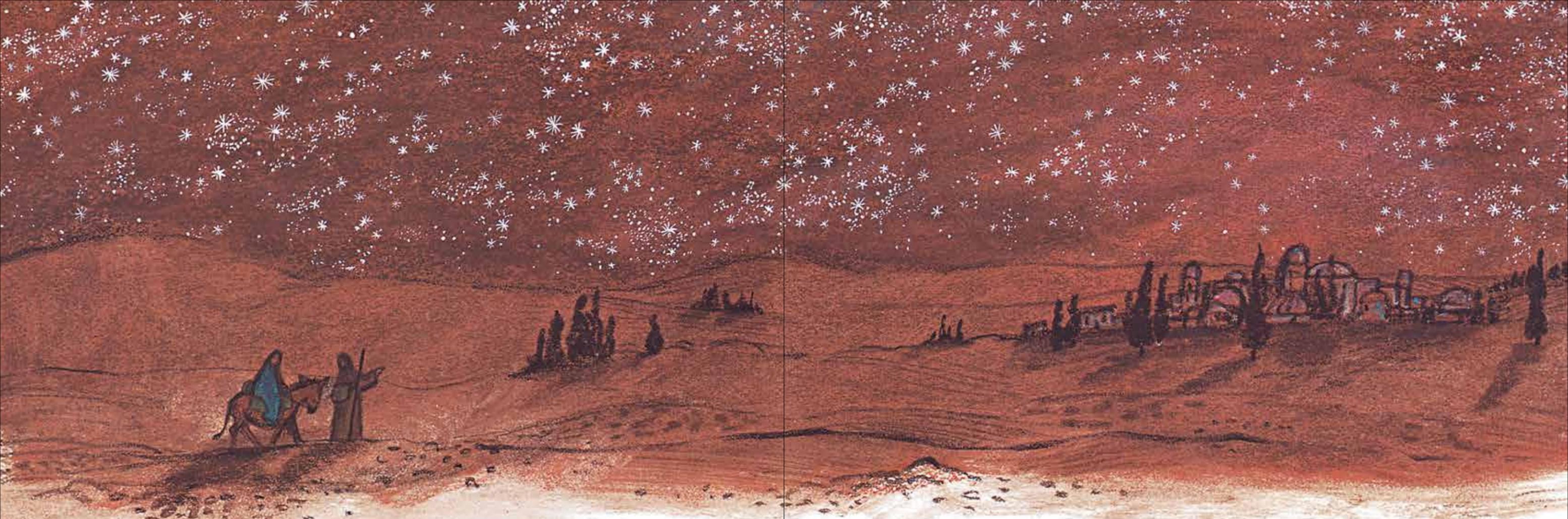
And all they who heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.

But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.



And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as was told unto them.







## How I Became an Illustrator

### Afterword

Born in 1942, I was a “war baby,” one of those born to accept difficulties, to be resilient, to be patient, and above all to embrace all the good things: flowers dancing under a hedge, vegetables freshly gathered, a homemade toy, or that real scarcity—a new book of stories.

When my mother was alone with me we would walk every day along a country lane and gather kindling for our fire. Telegraph poles touching the clouds stood along the lane; and at the top of each pole, along horizontal arms, were rows of black jam jars, which nobody ever took down. The wind in the wires was my father’s voice from far, far away singing to me.

My father, a stranger, came home just before my second birthday. We moved to a desolate farmhouse, and my father went every day to a camp holding prisoners, Italian and German, who were gradually being returned to their own countries. I walked with my father

across endless fields with the prisoners who worked digging irrigation ditches and who also sang foreign songs to me. One young German cut sticks from a hedge and wove me a sturdy little basket. It’s still with me.

It was from that early time I learned to love the countryside: trees, flowers, birds and little animals, the weather—sweeping cold winds or the sun dappling across streams.

Something was wrong between my parents, and my mother ran away to Paris where her sister lived. My father had to go to work. So my baby brother and I were placed in an orphanage. Then began the most awful two years of my whole life. I was four years old. My father visited just before Christmas and took me in the dark afternoon to a big shop in the town and bought me a green velvet dress. I did not want the dress. I wanted to go with my father—back to the safety and the kindness of home.

Being resilient and resourceful, even at that age, I resolved to escape from the orphanage. Around the hard gray treeless yard was a stone wall. One day I climbed up onto the top of the wall.

Other children called up, “What can you see? What is there over the wall?”

“It’s wonderful!” I called back full of lies. “There are peacocks, flowers and magic trees, and wild animals!”

So I became an illustrator that day. All illustrators are liars, embroidering and overcoloring the realities, making a magic story from a little event.

I had learned to live in my imagination.

My father collected my mother from France and then me from the orphanage. Family life resumed.

On my sixth birthday my father gave me a little book. It was in the Every-

man series, bound in soft blue; the title was *Grimm’s Fairy Tales*. Every night, safe in my home bed, my father read me one of those tales, and after a time I knew the main stories by heart. After the bedtime reading it was tucked under my pillow.

Twenty years later I used that book for the words in the books I began to illustrate.

In the postwar years shortages continued, including paper. But my father managed to get me paper, as I loved to draw. My parents kept and dated every drawing I made, and recently a Japanese friend bound them together in an album.

Then my father got me a small notebook, lined pages, and a hard cover; and in that I wrote my first stories with colored illustrations in the margins.



The battered remains of that book are now in a Japanese illustration museum.

At high school I began to have aspirations to be a writer, a serious novelist. Many years later I realized that our most important books are those provided in early childhood. I failed to be considered to go to university as I was “erratic and unreliable, and seems to live in a dream.”

So I left school with no road before me. In 1961 I became a student at Maidstone College of Art studying book design and book production. Illustration lessons, one day a week, were taught by Brian Wildesmith, then unknown.

One day he brought a children’s book into our classroom: *A B C*, his first book published by Oxford University Press.

The free-flowing designs of the pages, the brilliant colors were absolutely new in the world of children’s books. I wondered if I could do the same sort of thing.

Having completed my book design course, I moved to another part of the college and studied fine art, drawing, and painting, for a further year.

One day I was struggling to draw a figure, using a rubber more than a pencil.

The teacher sat down next to me and kindly said, “Why don’t we turn the paper over and start again?”

Slowly he drew the skeleton, the clothes, the hair, and facial expression . . . but only one side.

He passed the pencil to me saying, “Now you draw the other half.” His name was David Hockney.

In the early 1960s there were many small publishing houses in London, and I trailed my portfolio around them trying to get work. The disappointments, the lack of interest aside, and continual trudging week after week . . . Never give up. Always believe.

Eventually I arrived at a big tall house in Notting Hill, the home and publishing office of Dennis and Margaret Dobson . . . and six children, one secretary, and one traveling salesman. A house full of books and music, children’s toys, piles of manuscripts on desks, aromas of cooking coming up from the basement kitchen . . . and enthusiasm.

Margaret Dobson immediately commissioned me to illustrate *Stories from Everywhere*, and I was given a check for £50 . . . called an advance.

I started the illustrations. But my mother had become increasingly ill with depression. I shared a room with her; but she refused to let me have a table and chair, and I had to work sitting on the floor.

My mother then refused to pull back the curtains, so the room was in constant half-darkness. Added to that



1967

was the constant cigarette smoke and stench of alcohol.

I went up to London with a few of the illustrations I had managed to accomplish and told Margaret Dobson that I could not continue.

Margaret replied, “You can stay here; the attic room is free.”

I packed a bag, gathered all my art materials and my typewriter together, and left my parents house the following morning.

I escaped . . . as I had attempted to from the orphanage . . . escaped from the horror and the grayness into a bright new world. It was spring 1966.

Living in a publishing house I met a lot of people. One day Dennis Dobson introduced me to a publisher from Switzerland, Dimitri Sidjanski. “Hi, kid,” he said.

“Oh, hello, you must excuse me,” I replied. “I have to go out somewhere.”

I found out there was going to be a

book fair in Germany in a city called Frankfurt, where publishers from around the world congregated. I had never been to Germany.

I got a train ticket to Dover, then a boat across the sea to Calais, then another train across Europe, changing at Koln, and arrived with my rucksack and portfolio at the Frankfurt train station. I probably took a picnic with me.

Unfortunately, I did not realize a ticket was required to get into the fair. Standing by the main gate, wondering what next to do, along came Dennis Dobson’s secretary. She asked me where I was staying . . . but I had no hotel room and planned to sleep at the station.

Luckily she had a second bed in her hotel room.

It was another trudge around the huge exhibition halls. On the second day I saw one stand much more colorful than all the others.



Pictures had been pinned up on the walls. Very politely I asked if I could speak to the publisher please, to show my work.

“Mr. Sidjanski is a very busy man, he has a meeting now with a very important American editor—Anne Beneduce from Philomel Books. Sorry, he has no time.”

I returned six times to that stand.

Mr. Sidjanski, whom I sort of recognized, came forward. “What do you want? Why do you keep coming here? I am very busy.”

“Please could you spare five minutes?”

“Okay, five minutes . . . but hey, kid, have I met you before?”

I showed Dimitri Sidjanski my portfolio including some large illustrations for Grimm’s fairy tale “Little Red Riding Hood.”

“Would you like to come to Zurich, meet my family, see my little publishing house in our front room? You say

you have no money to get to Switzerland? Okay, kid, here is enough money. You can buy a plane ticket when you get back to London.”

A week later, in November 1967, I was on a Caravelle airplane, beautiful swept back wings, comfortable, elegant, and a plastic tray with a meal, bread, Swiss cheese, cake, and a little pat of butter stamped with a picture of a cow wearing a bell round its neck.

“Hi, kid. Good journey?” Dimitri said at Zurich Airport. A car stood outside, the back filled with books.

“We have to go into the city first to deliver some new books, then we go to Monchaltorf to my home.”

Home.

June 2020

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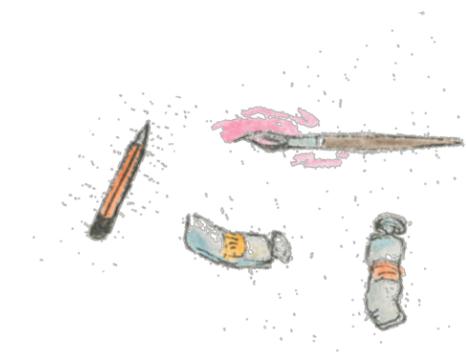
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a palette to fit each story.”  
—Eric Carle*

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