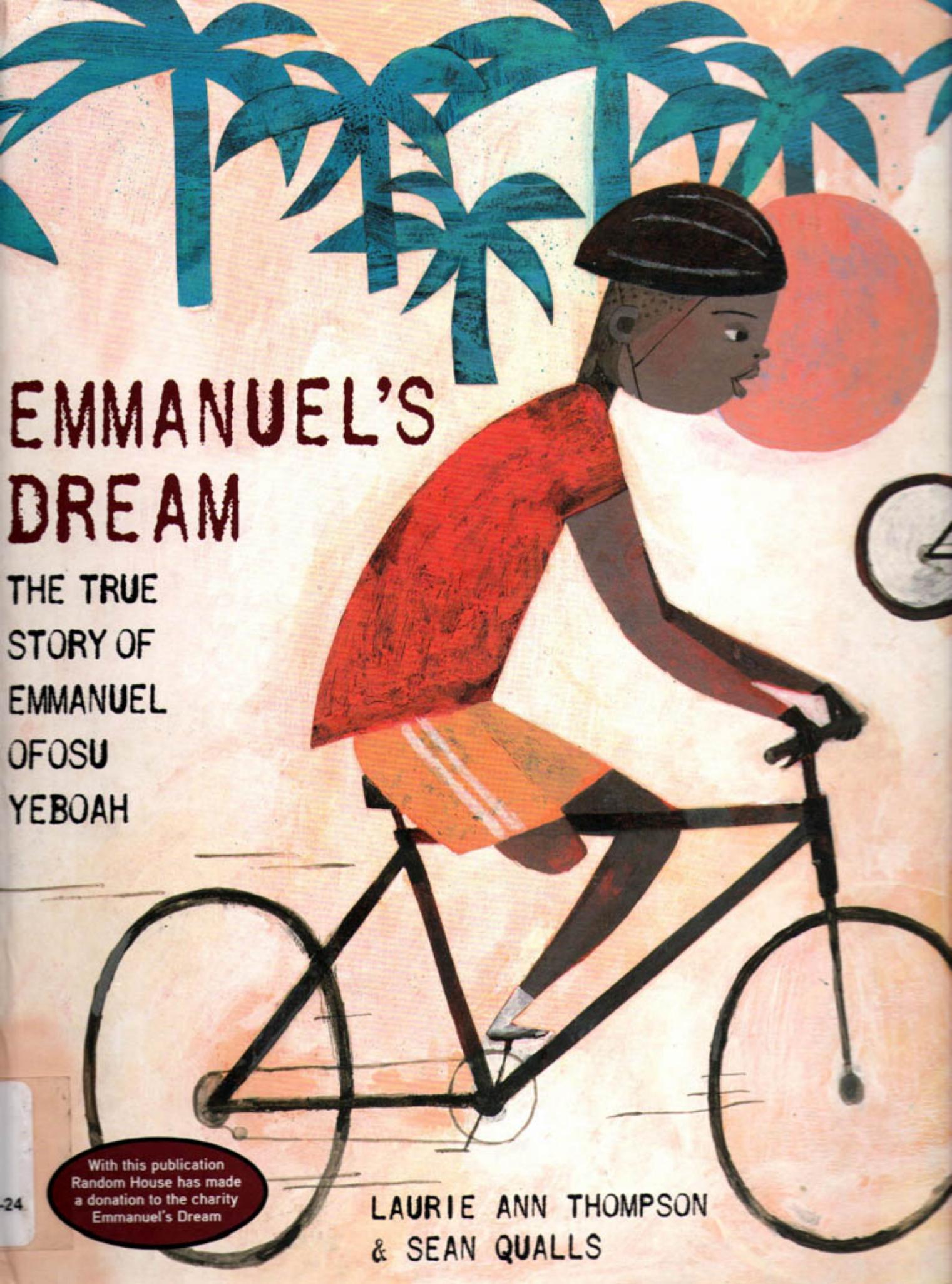


# EMMANUEL'S DREAM

THE TRUE  
STORY OF  
EMMANUEL  
OFOSU  
YEBOAH



With this publication  
Random House has made  
a donation to the charity  
Emmanuel's Dream

LAURIE ANN THOMPSON  
& SEAN QUALLS

# GHANA

# EMMANUEL'S DREAM

THE TRUE STORY OF  
EMMANUEL OFOSU YEBOAH

KOFORIDUA



ACCRA

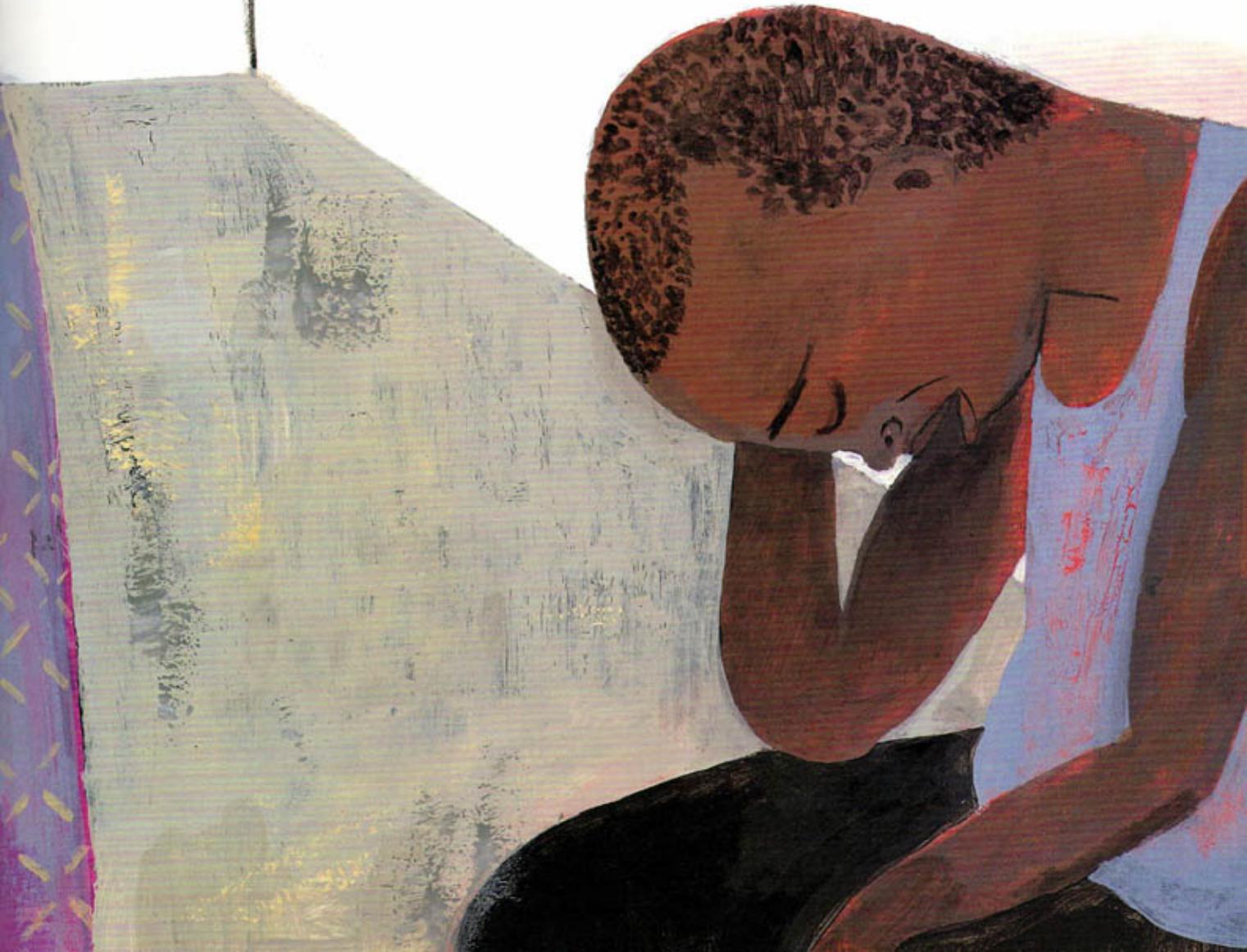
BY LAURIE ANN THOMPSON  
ILLUSTRATED BY SEAN QUALLS

schwartz & wade books • new york





In Ghana, West Africa, a baby boy was born:  
Two bright eyes blinked in the light,  
two healthy lungs let out a powerful cry,  
two tiny fists opened and closed,  
but only one strong leg kicked.

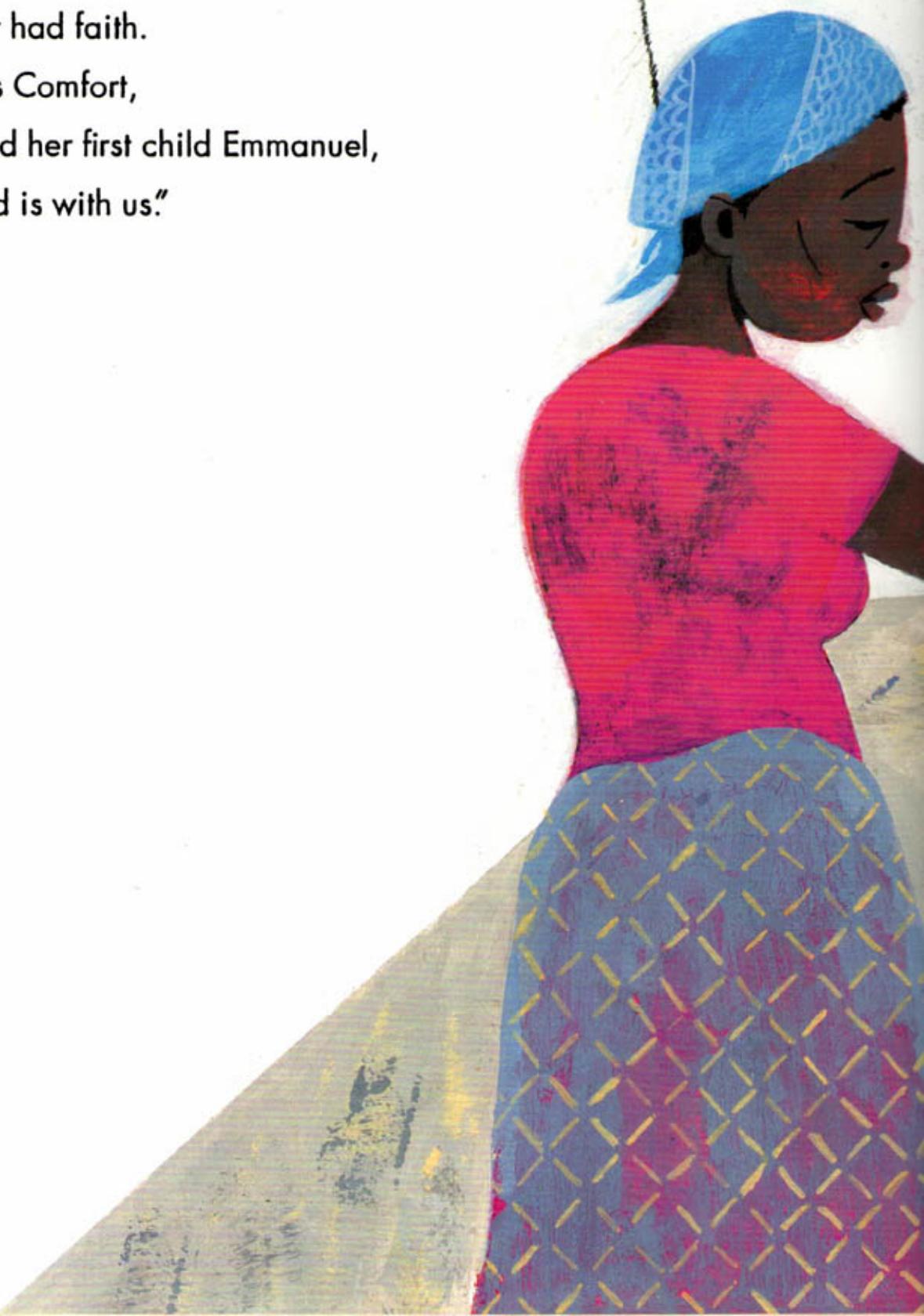


Most people thought he would be useless, or worse—  
a curse.

His father left, never to return.

But his mother had faith.

Her name was Comfort,  
and she named her first child Emmanuel,  
meaning "God is with us."





As Emmanuel grew,  
Mama Comfort told him he could have anything,  
but he would have to get it for himself.





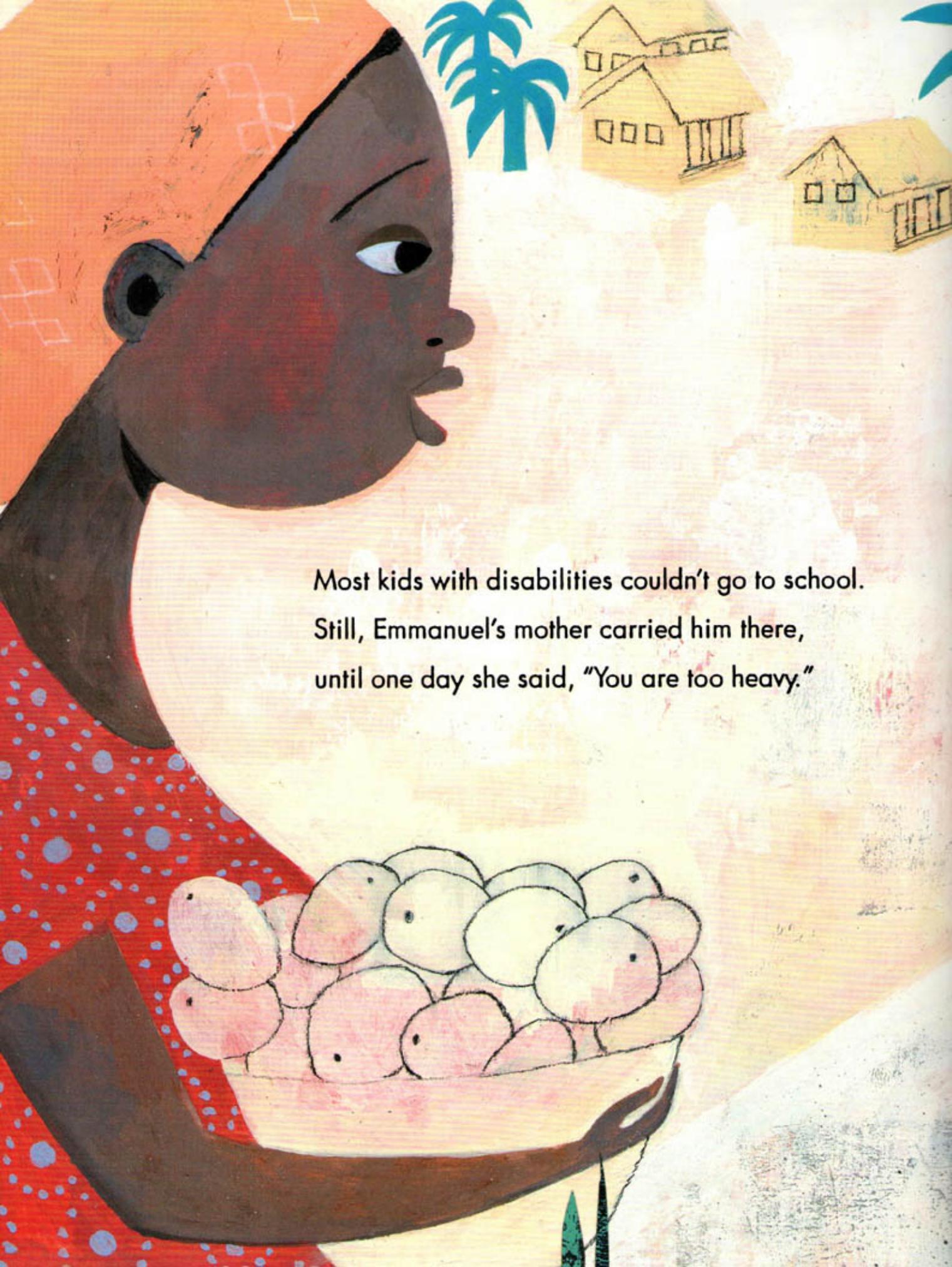
He learned to crawl and hop,



to fetch water and climb  
coconut trees.



He even shined shoes to earn money.

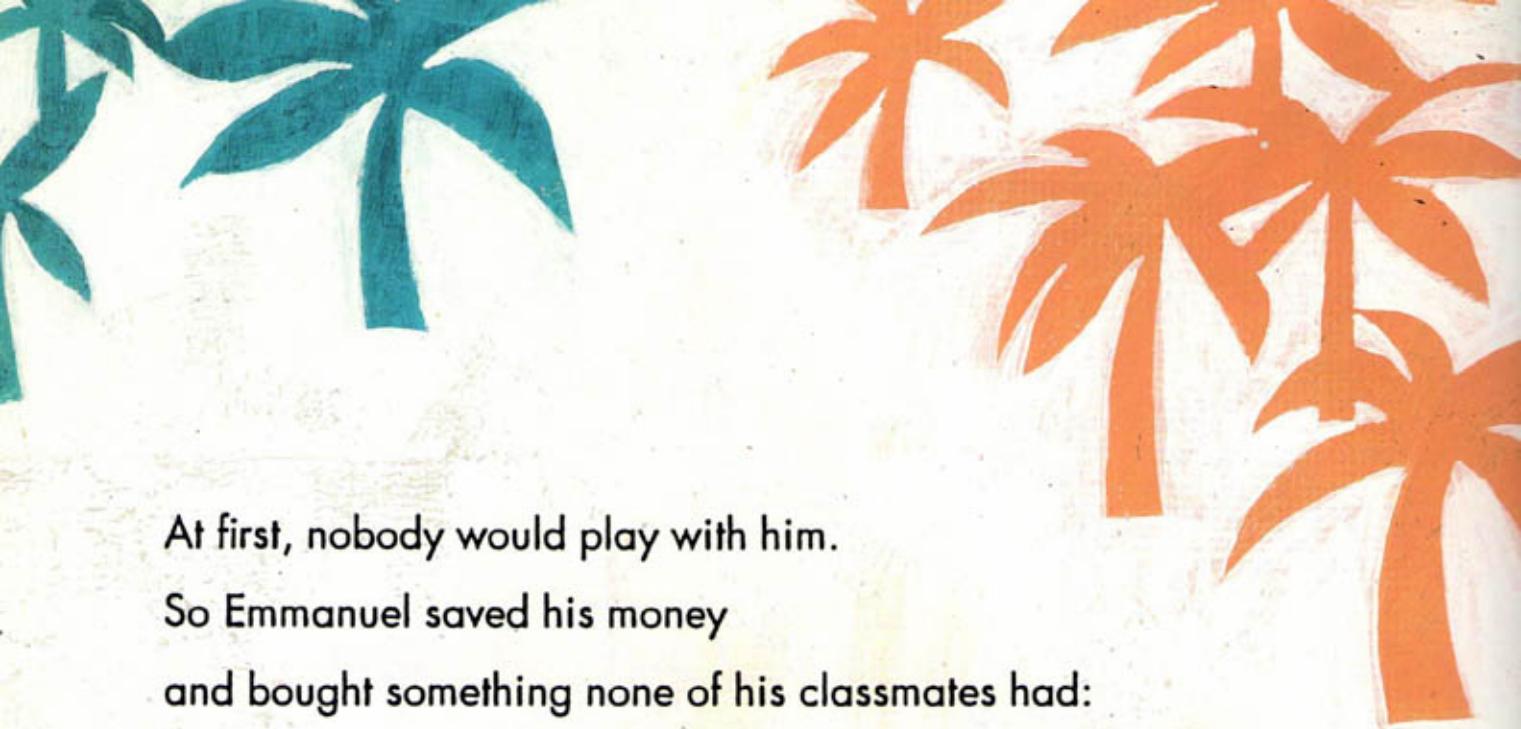


Most kids with disabilities couldn't go to school.  
Still, Emmanuel's mother carried him there,  
until one day she said, "You are too heavy."



From then on, Emmanuel hopped to school and back,

two miles each way,  
on one leg,  
by himself.



At first, nobody would play with him.

So Emmanuel saved his money  
and bought something none of his classmates had:  
a brand-new soccer ball.

Of course he would share it . . .  
if he could play, too.

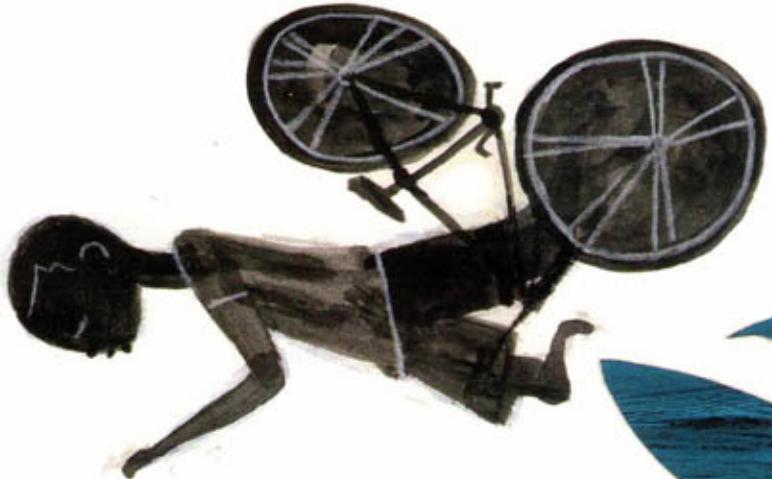
Lunging and spinning on crutches  
his grandmother had found for him  
and kicking the ball with his good left foot,  
Emmanuel earned their respect.







His new friends sometimes used their lunch money to rent bikes.  
Would Emmanuel be able to join them?  
His friend Godwin pushed him fast so he could balance.



Over and over again, Emmanuel fell—hard—but finally . . .

he rode!



When Emmanuel was thirteen,  
Mama Comfort got very sick.  
She could no longer sell vegetables at the market,  
and Emmanuel's sister and brother were too little to work.



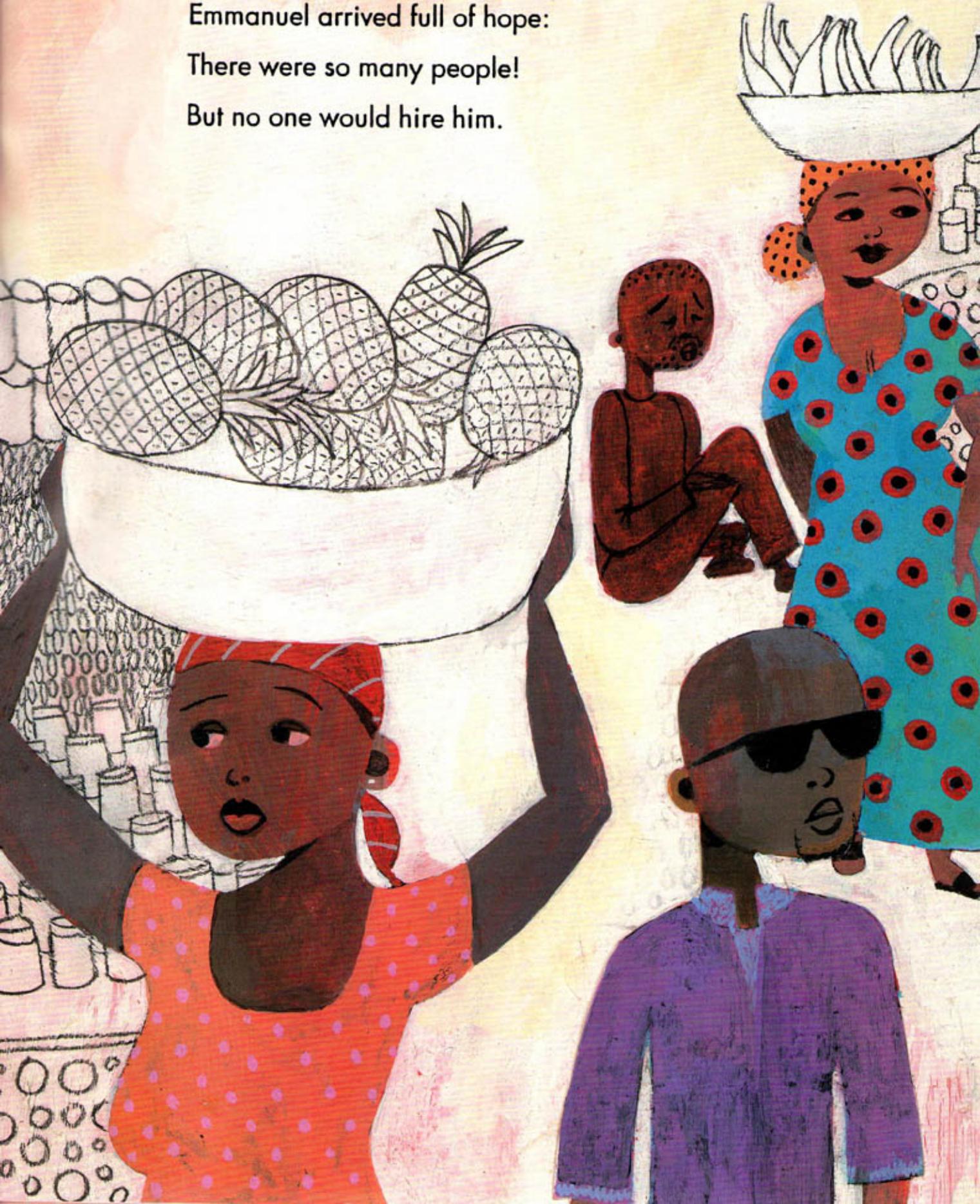


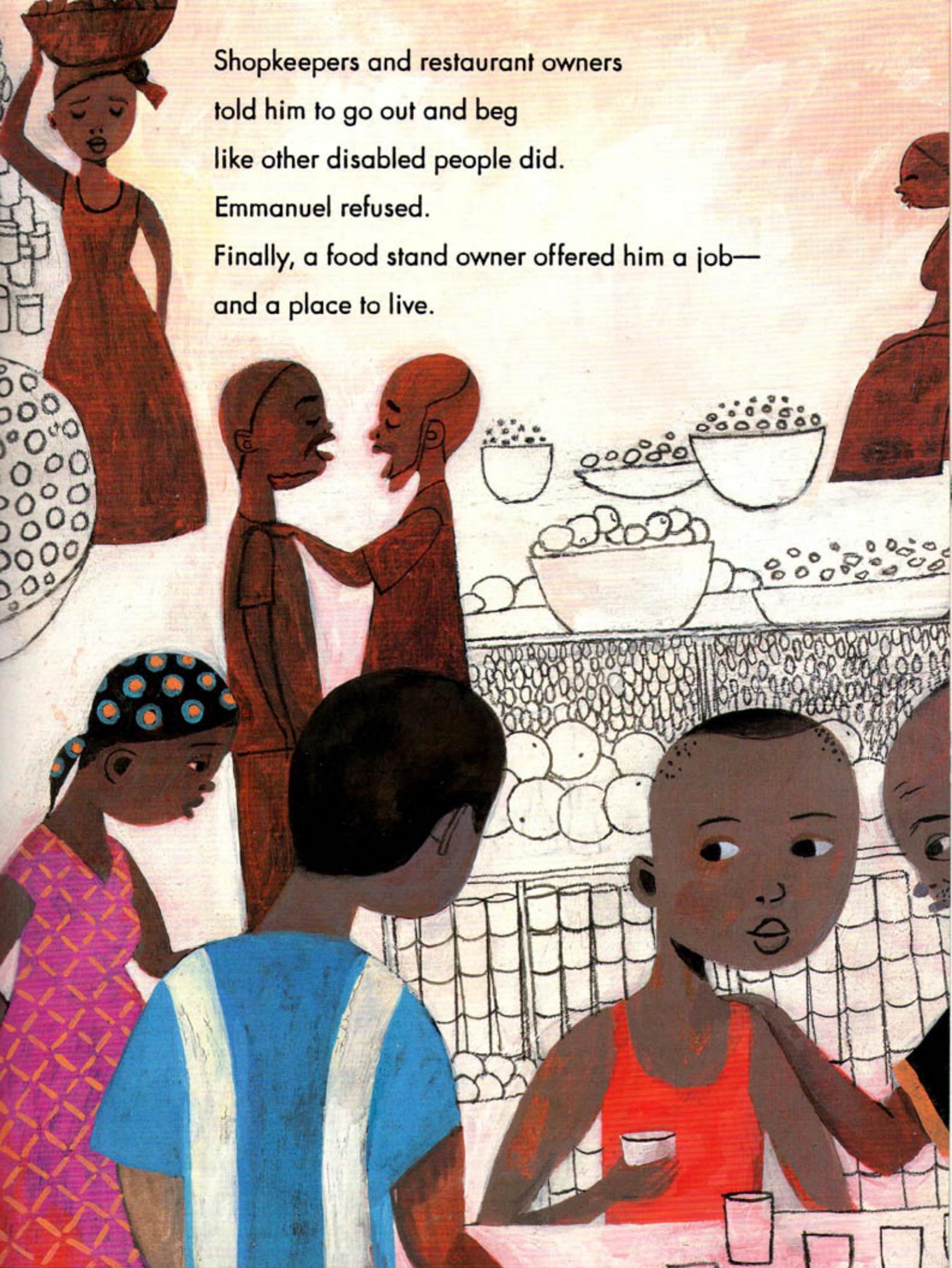
He would have to support them.

Against his mother's wishes, Emmanuel snuck out  
and boarded a midnight train to the bustling city of Accra,  
one hundred and fifty miles away,  
alone.

He didn't know it then, but it would be two years  
before he saw his family again.

Emmanuel arrived full of hope:  
There were so many people!  
But no one would hire him.





Shopkeepers and restaurant owners  
told him to go out and beg  
like other disabled people did.  
Emmanuel refused.

Finally, a food stand owner offered him a job—  
and a place to live.



When Emmanuel wasn't serving drinks,  
he kept busy shining shoes.

He earned money  
and sent it home.

One morning when Emmanuel went to buy shoe-shining supplies,  
the shopkeeper thought he was there to beg  
and scolded him.

Insulted, Emmanuel slammed his money  
down on the counter.

The shopkeeper apologized,  
but Emmanuel would never forget.

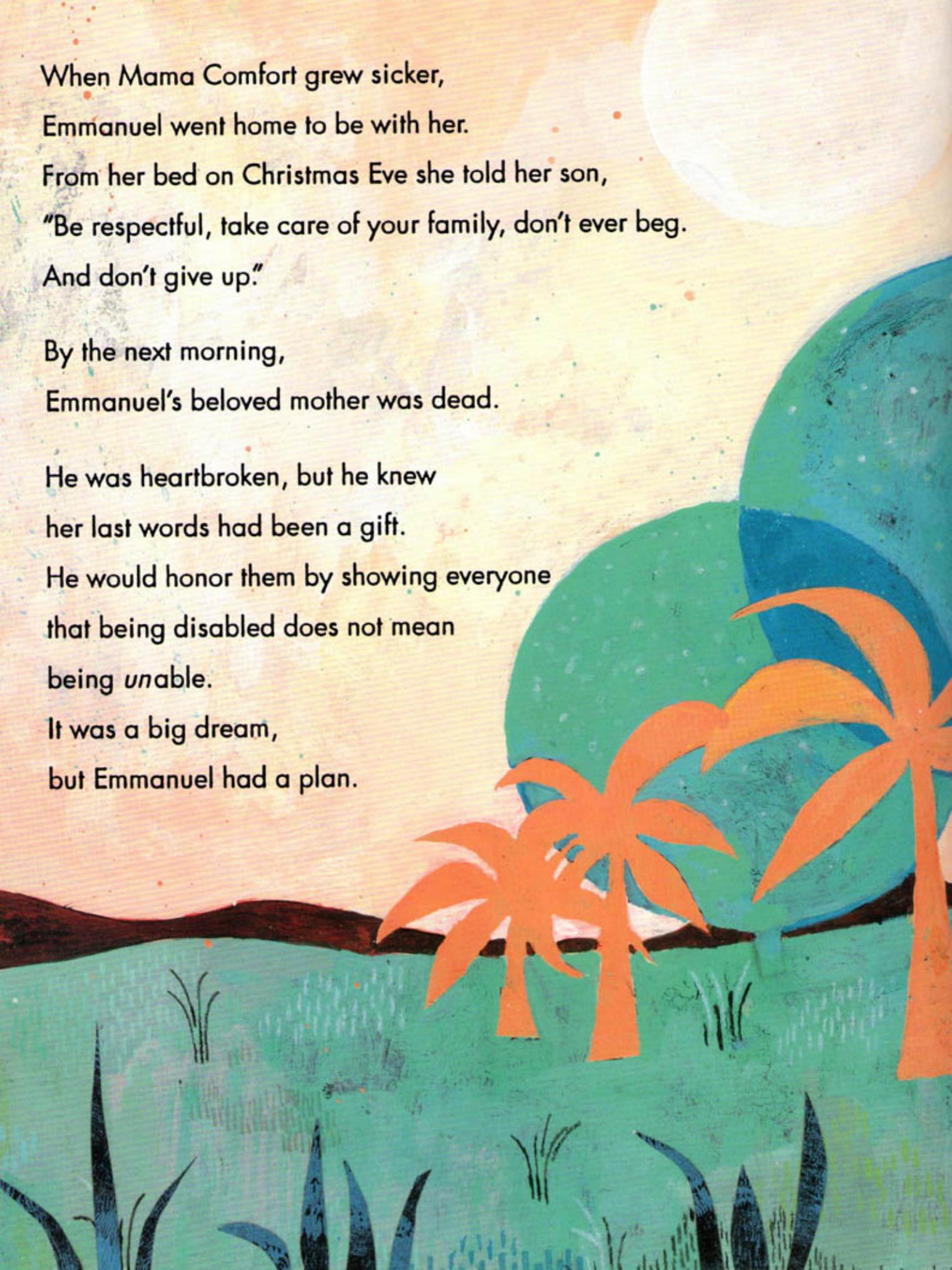


When Mama Comfort grew sicker,  
Emmanuel went home to be with her.  
From her bed on Christmas Eve she told her son,  
"Be respectful, take care of your family, don't ever beg.  
And don't give up."

By the next morning,  
Emmanuel's beloved mother was dead.

He was heartbroken, but he knew  
her last words had been a gift.  
He would honor them by showing everyone  
that being disabled does not mean  
being *unable*.

It was a big dream,  
but Emmanuel had a plan.







Emmanuel had a sharp mind,  
a bold heart,  
and one strong leg.

All he needed was a bike.

At first no one would help.  
They thought his plan,  
to bicycle around Ghana,  
was impossible.

Then Emmanuel wrote to the Challenged Athletes Foundation,  
all the way in San Diego, California.





They sent him a bike . . . plus a helmet, shorts, socks, and gloves!



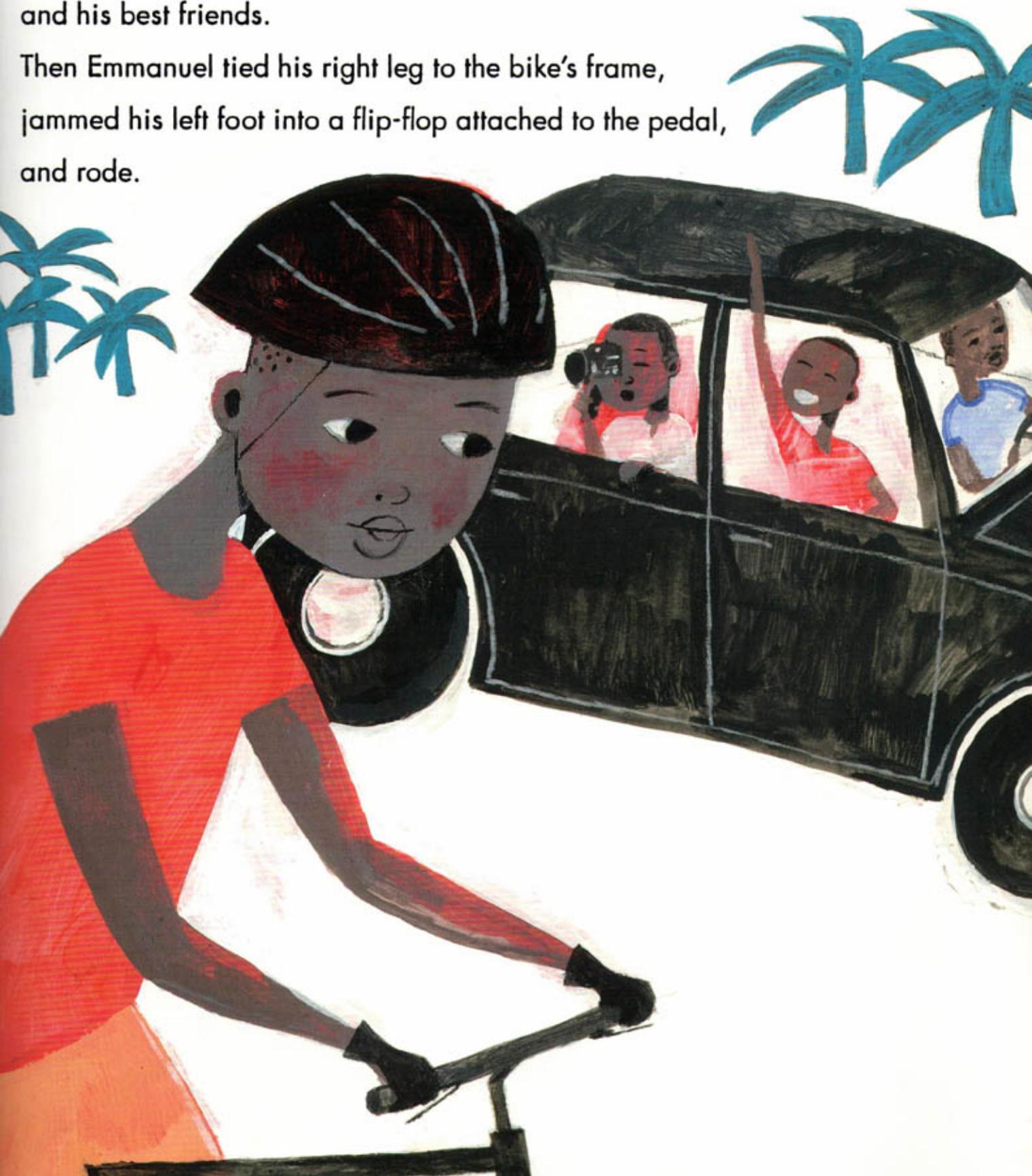
Emmanuel started training for the long ride.

He persuaded the king of his region to give him a royal blessing.

He went door to door asking for additional support.

Finally, he hired a taxi to follow him with drinking water, a camera, and his best friends.

Then Emmanuel tied his right leg to the bike's frame, jammed his left foot into a flip-flop attached to the pedal, and rode.



Emmanuel pedaled through the bustling city of Accra.

He pedaled through rain forests,  
over rolling hills,

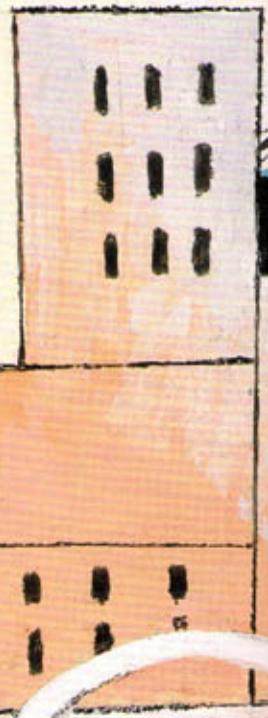
and across wide, muddy rivers.

He pedaled past odum forests and plantain farms  
and through the market city of Kumasi.

He pedaled as trucks roared past on the narrow highways  
and wild animals stalked his thoughts.

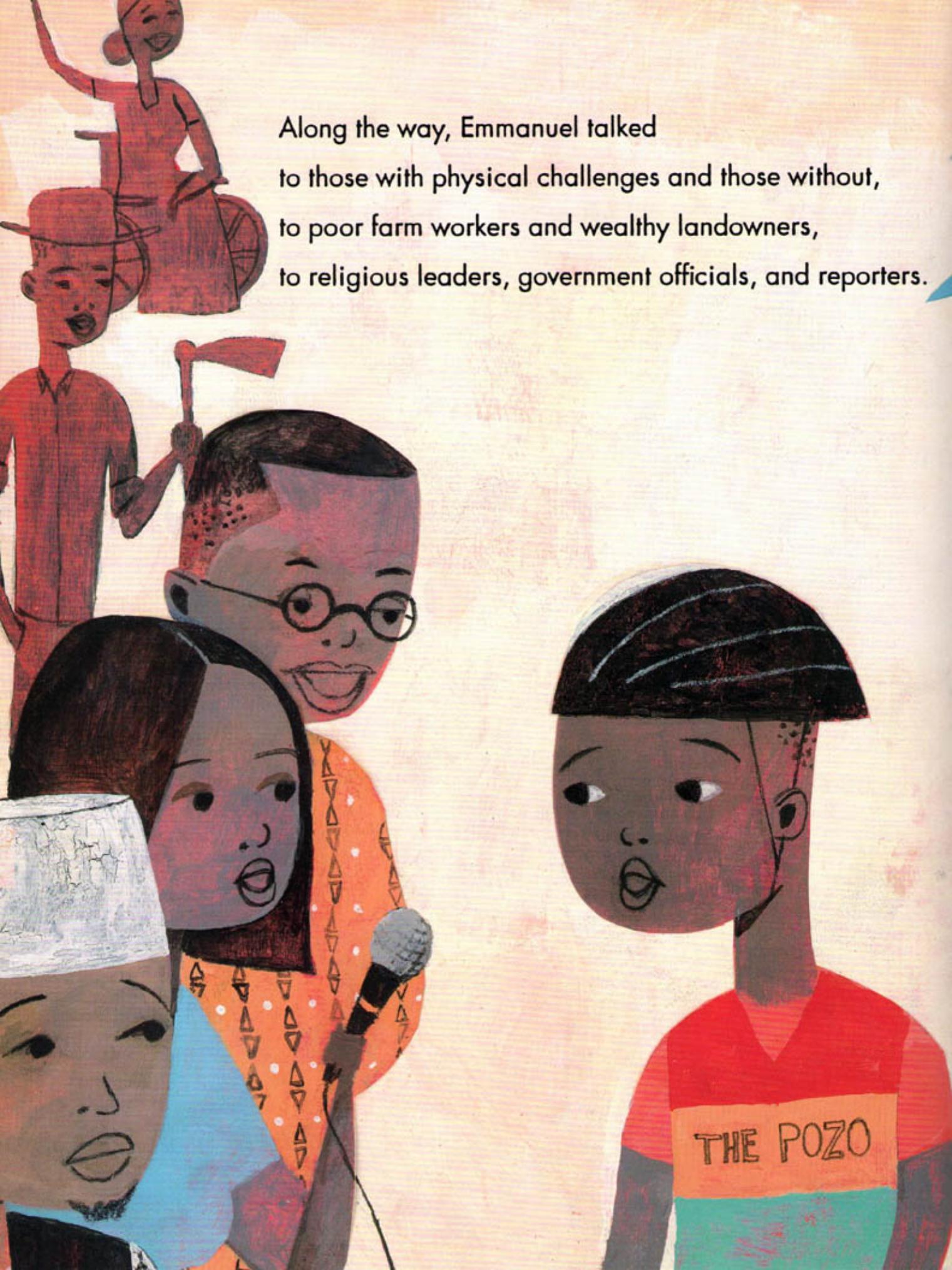
He pedaled through vast grasslands  
and into the ancient city of Tamale.

He rode up, down, across, and around his country,  
proudly wearing the colors of its flag  
on a shirt printed with the words THE POZO,  
or "the disabled person."

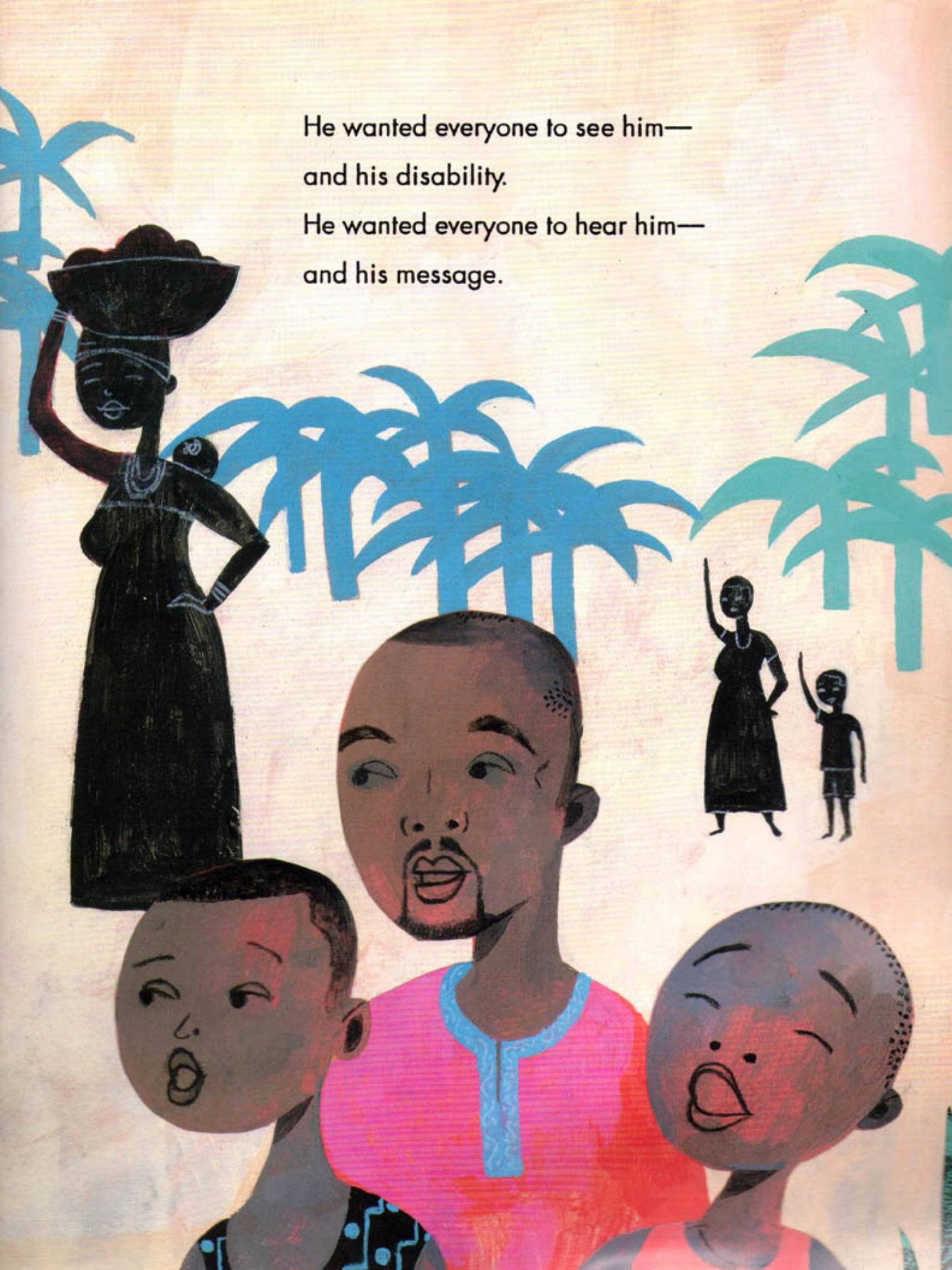


# 茂 茂





Along the way, Emmanuel talked  
to those with physical challenges and those without,  
to poor farm workers and wealthy landowners,  
to religious leaders, government officials, and reporters.



He wanted everyone to see him—  
and his disability.

He wanted everyone to hear him—  
and his message.

The farther Emmanuel rode,  
the more attention he got.  
Children cheered.

Able-bodied adults ran or rode along with him.  
People with disabilities left their homes and came outside,  
some for the very first time.  
The young man once thought of as cursed  
was becoming a national hero.





He completed his astounding journey,  
pedaling south to the sea and back up to Accra—  
nearly four hundred miles—in just ten days.



But Emmanuel's success goes even further than that.  
He proved that one leg is enough to do great things—  
and one person is enough to change the world.

**"In this world, we are not perfect. We can only do our best."**

**—Emmanuel Ofosu Yeboah**

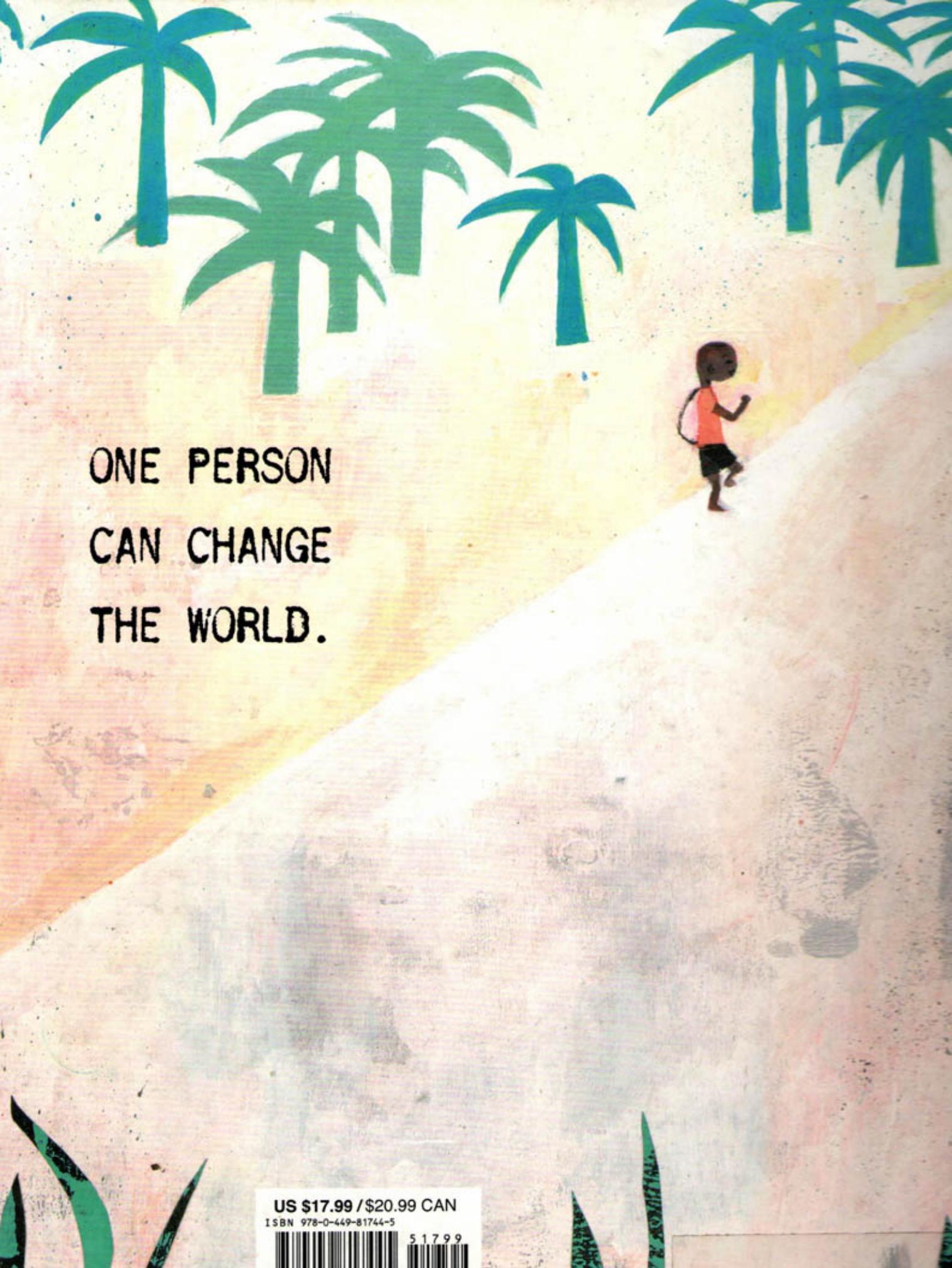
### **Author's Note**

Emmanuel still isn't giving up. Since completing his first long-distance bike ride across Ghana in 2001 at the age of twenty-four, he has competed in major athletic events, won international awards from Nike and ESPN, and carried the Olympic torch in Cairo, Egypt, in 2004. He starred in a documentary about his life called *Emmanuel's Gift*, and he appeared on *The Oprah Winfrey Show*.

In 2006, thanks in large part to Emmanuel's bike ride and his continued political activism, the Ghanaian Parliament passed the Persons with Disability Act, which states that people with physical disabilities are entitled to all of the same rights as the rest of the country's citizens. "I am very happy for my disabled brothers and sisters in Ghana," said Emmanuel, "[but] this is just the beginning."

Today, Emmanuel continues to work on behalf of the disabled. He maintains a scholarship fund to help children with disabilities attend school, and he helps organizations distribute wheelchairs to those in need. In addition, he works closely with Ghana's government to pass laws protecting the rights of disabled citizens, and he speaks to political leaders, independent organizations, and schoolchildren around the world to deliver the message that disability does *not* mean inability.

To find out more about Emmanuel and his activities, including the progress of the school he is building for children with and without disabilities, please visit the Emmanuel Educational Foundation and Sports Academy (EEFSA) website at [EmmanuelsDream.org](http://EmmanuelsDream.org).



ONE PERSON  
CAN CHANGE  
THE WORLD.

US \$17.99 / \$20.99 CAN

ISBN 978-0-449-81744-5



51799