PAOLO

EMPEROR OF ROME



WRITTEN BY
MAC BARNETT

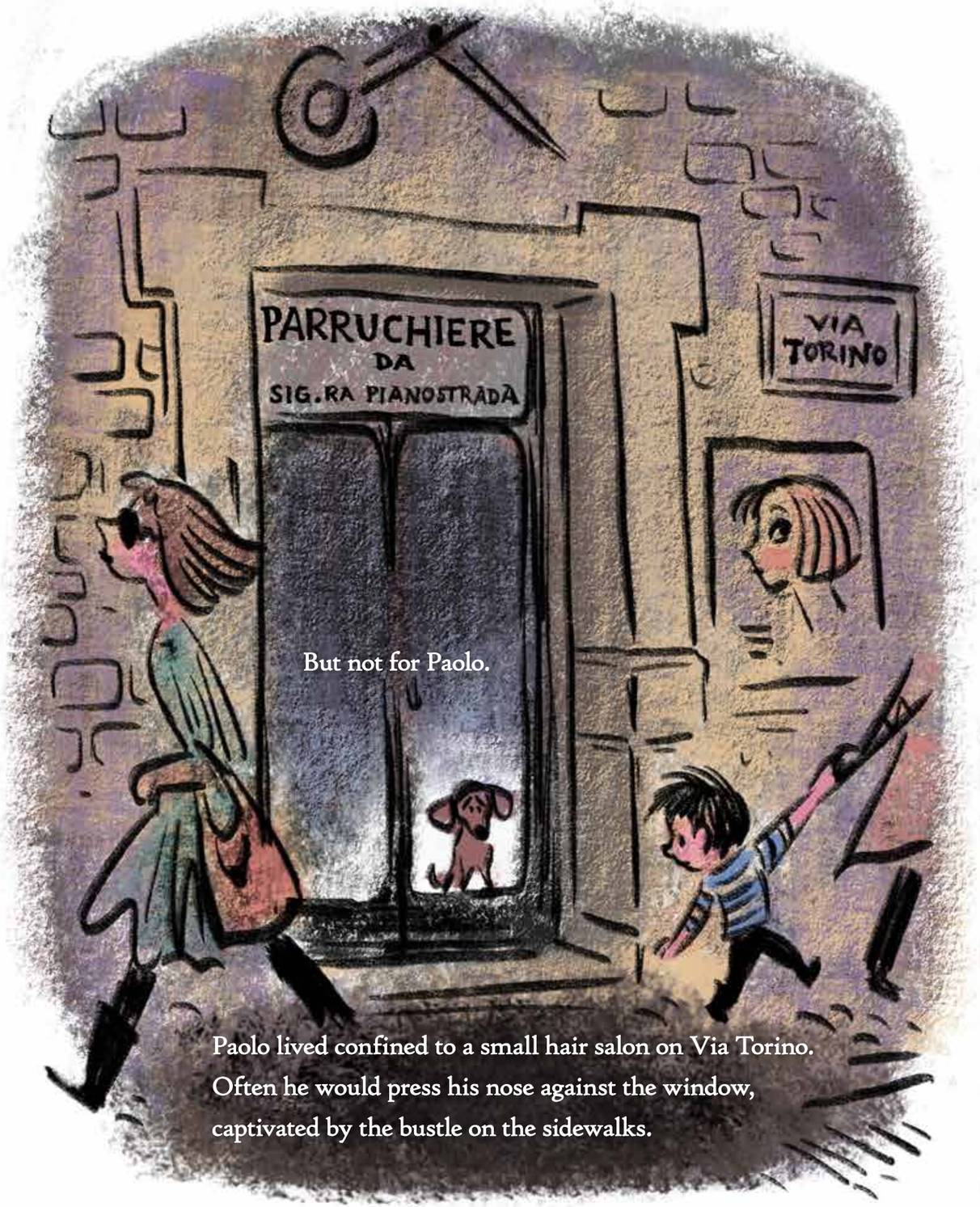
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Ah, Rome! The eternal city.
A place of fountains, food, and music.
A place of chaos and beauty.
Above all, a place of freedom.

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But not for Paolo.

Paolo lived confined to a small hair salon on Via Torino.
Often he would press his nose against the window,
captivated by the bustle on the sidewalks.



"Get away from there, Paolo!"
Signora Pianostrada would shout.
"You're smudging the glass."

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All night Paolo dreamed
of the sweet life in Rome,
and all day he did the same.
(There was not much else to do in the salon.)
"Lazy Paolo," said Signora Pianostrada.

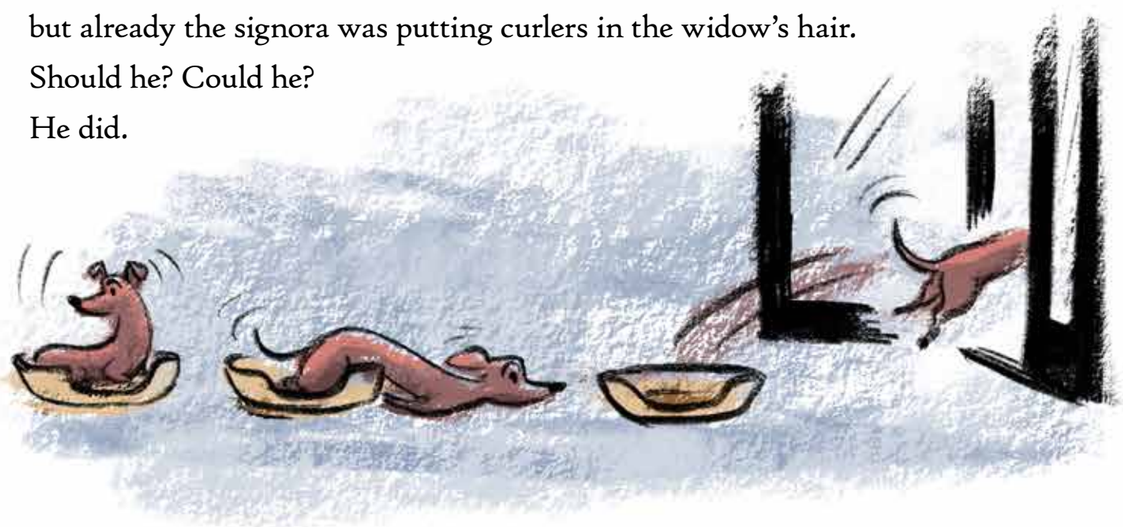
Sometimes the signora would open the door to sweep a pile of ladies' hair out onto the street. Paolo would run over, his nails clicking on the tile floor, but the signora would block the exit by simply lifting her foot. On these occasions, Paolo could just poke his nose outside and, sniffing, smell all the smells of Rome—salty, sour, meaty, flowery. That was all Paolo got of liberty: a whiff.

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Oh! But one glorious day there was a breach.
The widow Garibaldi, arriving for her weekly
appointment, failed to shut the door behind her.



Paolo waited for the mistake to be discovered,
but already the signora was putting curlers in the widow's hair.
Should he? Could he?
He did.

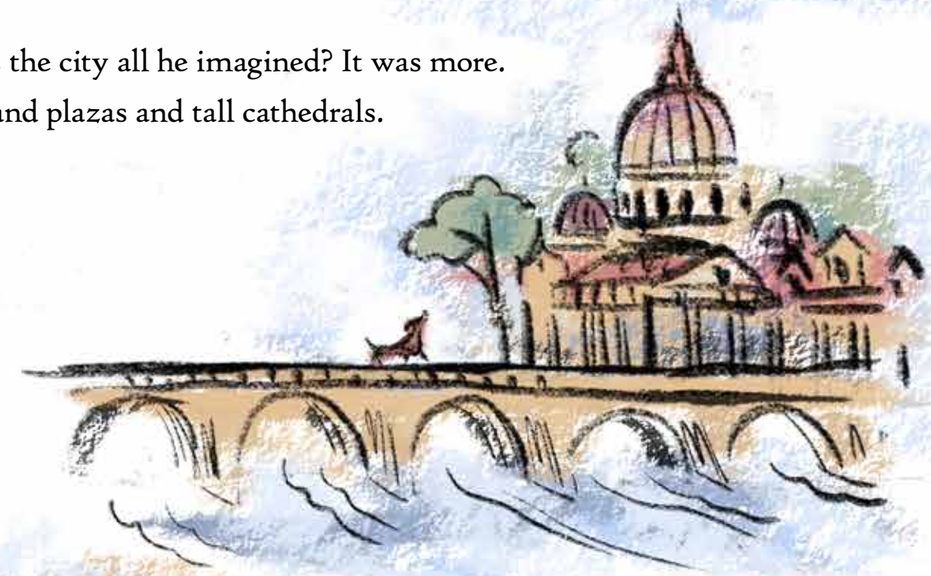




Paolo was free!

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And was the city all he imagined? It was more.
Bridges and plazas and tall cathedrals.



Ruined temples





and busy cafés.

And statues! Statues of humans
and gods and horses. Statues of lions that
shot streams of water from their mouths.





And high on a hill, topping a column,
a statue of a proud she-wolf,
the mother of Rome.
"How like this wolf I am," said Paolo.
"But whereas she is made of stone,
I am made of muscles,
and can go wherever I please."
But wherever should he go?

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Of course! The Colosseum.

Paolo stood on the ground of the great arena.

Here, thousands of years ago, men and dogs were kept in cages and forced to fight. “How beautiful to build such a towering marvel,” said Paolo, “and how cruel to fill it with barbarism.”

The little dog’s soul swelled up so he thought his ribs would burst.

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