

FLORA

— AND THE —

RUNAWAY ROOSTER

By John Claude Bemis

Illustrated by
Robert Crawford

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To all the new friends I made in Rwanda, whose generosity and kindness helped create this story.

— John Claude Bemis

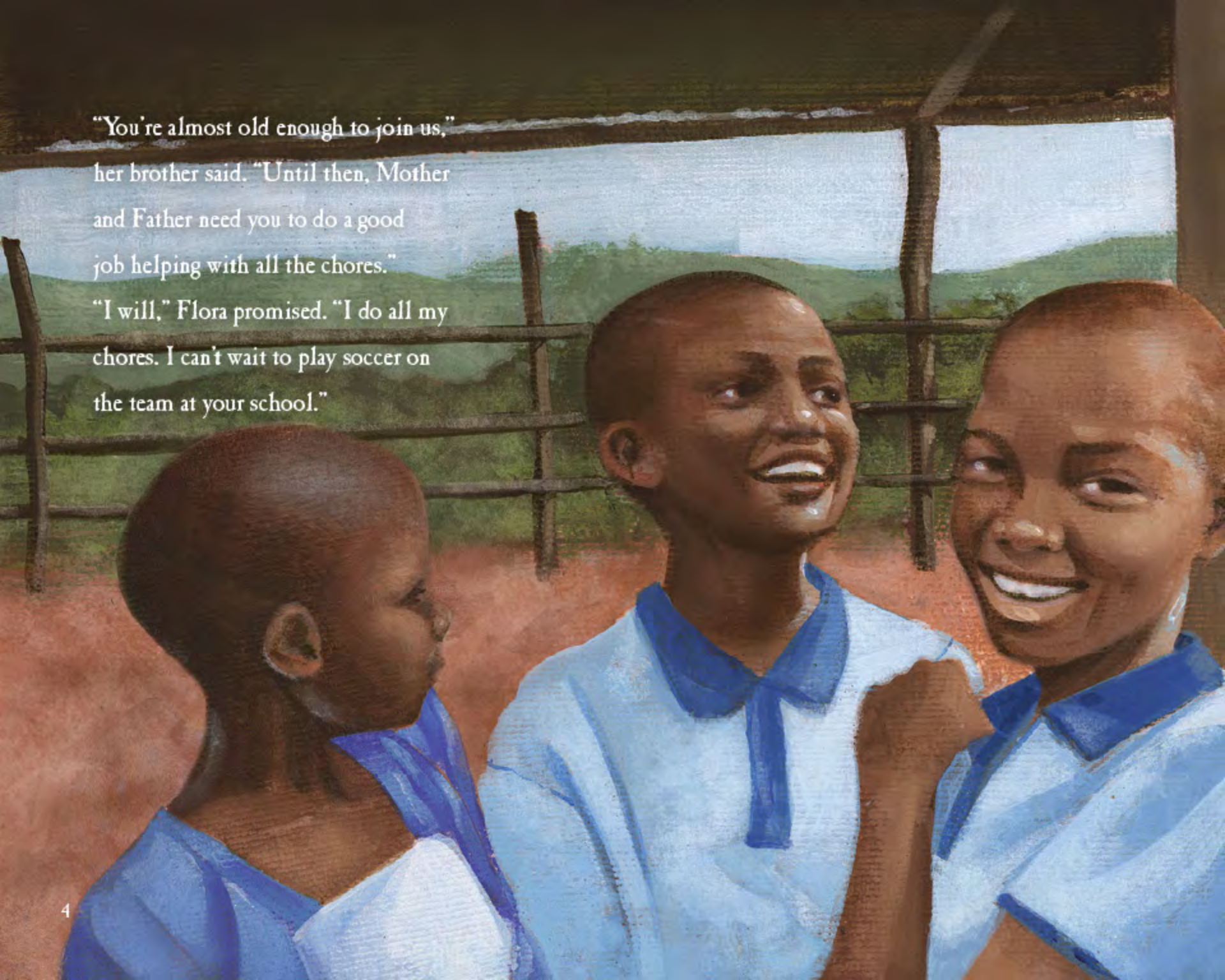
To Terri, the love of my life who inspires me and keeps me young.

— Robert Crawford

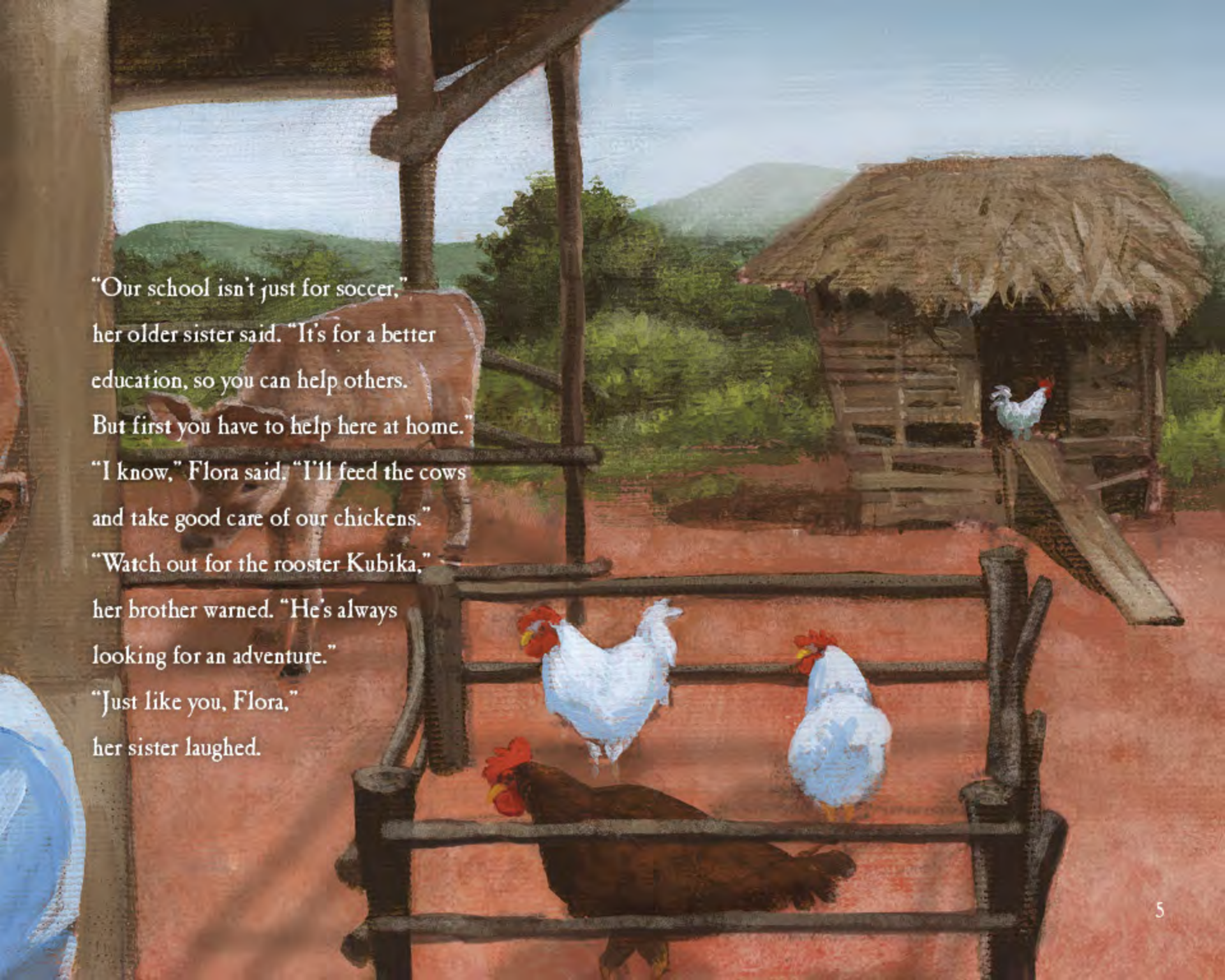




Flora lived in a little village in Rwanda, high in the mountains of Africa. More than anything, she wanted to go with her older brother and sister to their fine school in the city. At the local school Flora attended in her village, girls didn't play soccer, but she had heard that girls could play soccer at her brother and sister's school in the city.



“You’re almost old enough to join us,”
her brother said. “Until then, Mother
and Father need you to do a good
job helping with all the chores.”
“I will,” Flora promised. “I do all my
chores. I can’t wait to play soccer on
the team at your school.”

A vibrant illustration of a rural scene. In the foreground, a wooden fence made of thick logs separates the viewer from a dirt courtyard. Three chickens are visible: two white ones with red combs and one dark brown one. In the middle ground, a brown cow stands near a wooden structure. To the right, a rustic hut with a thick thatched roof sits on a wooden platform. The background features rolling green hills under a clear blue sky.

“Our school isn’t just for soccer,”
her older sister said. “It’s for a better
education, so you can help others.
But first you have to help here at home.”

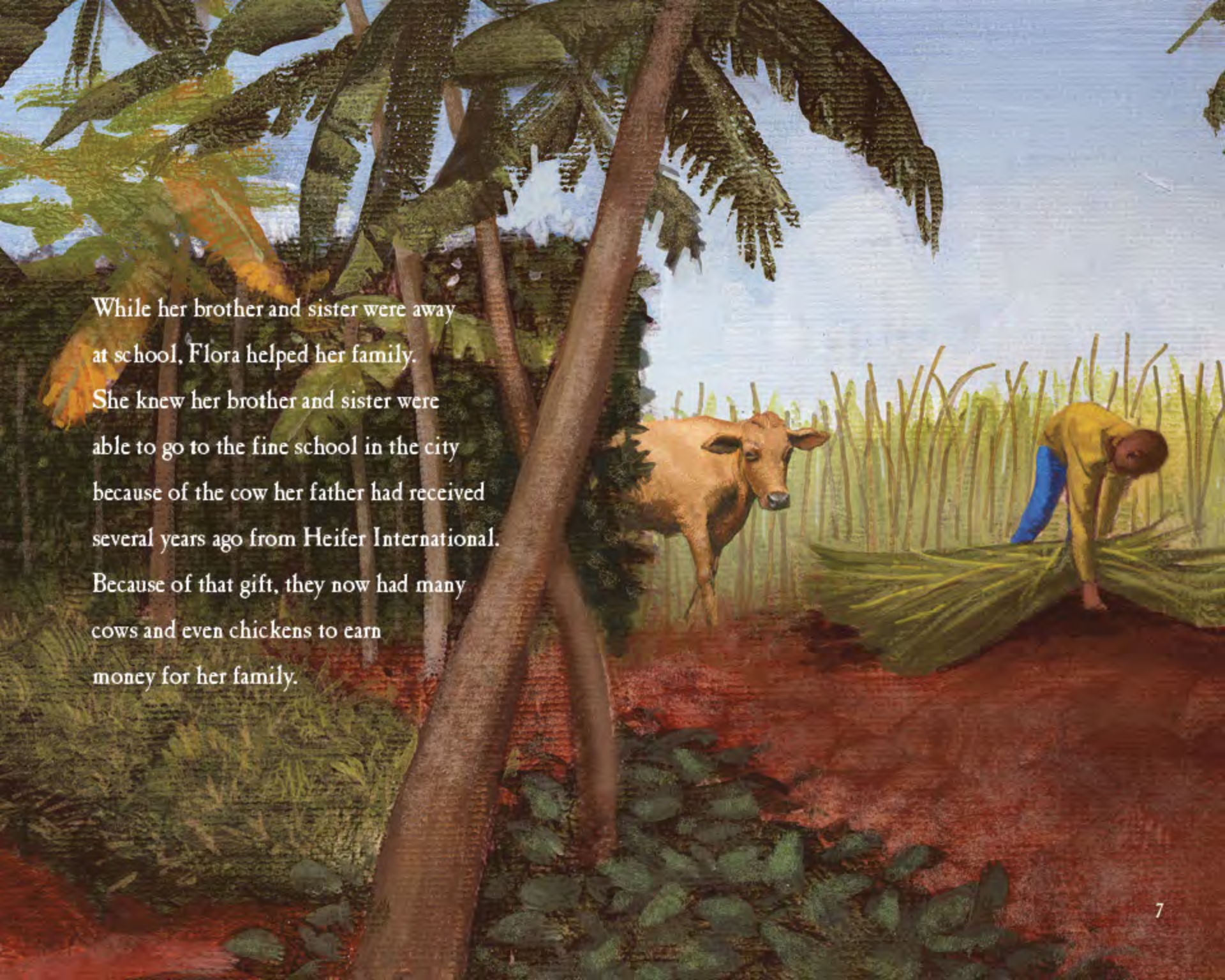
“I know,” Flora said. “I’ll feed the cows
and take good care of our chickens.”

“Watch out for the rooster Kubika.”

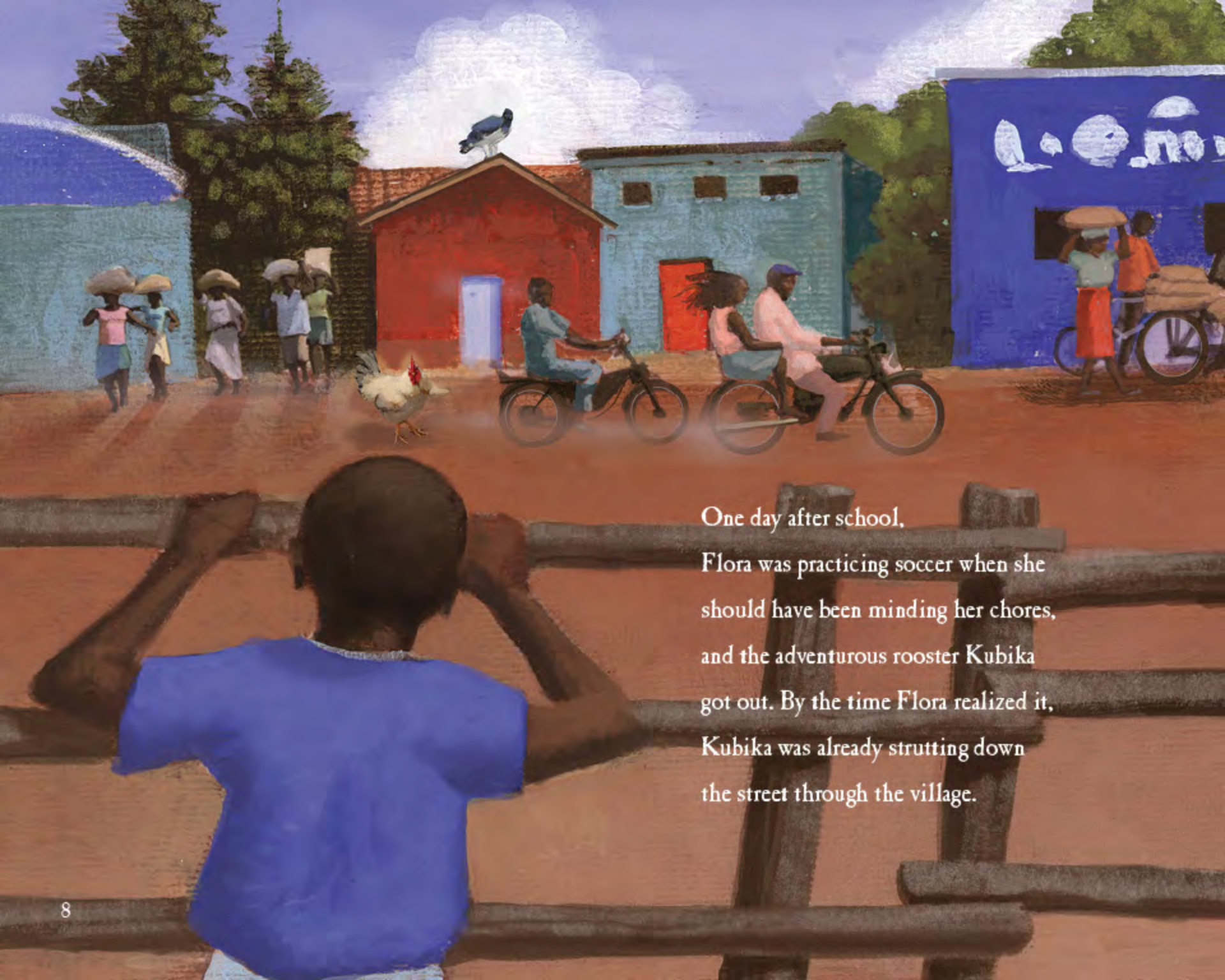
her brother warned. “He’s always
looking for an adventure.”

“Just like you, Flora,”
her sister laughed.



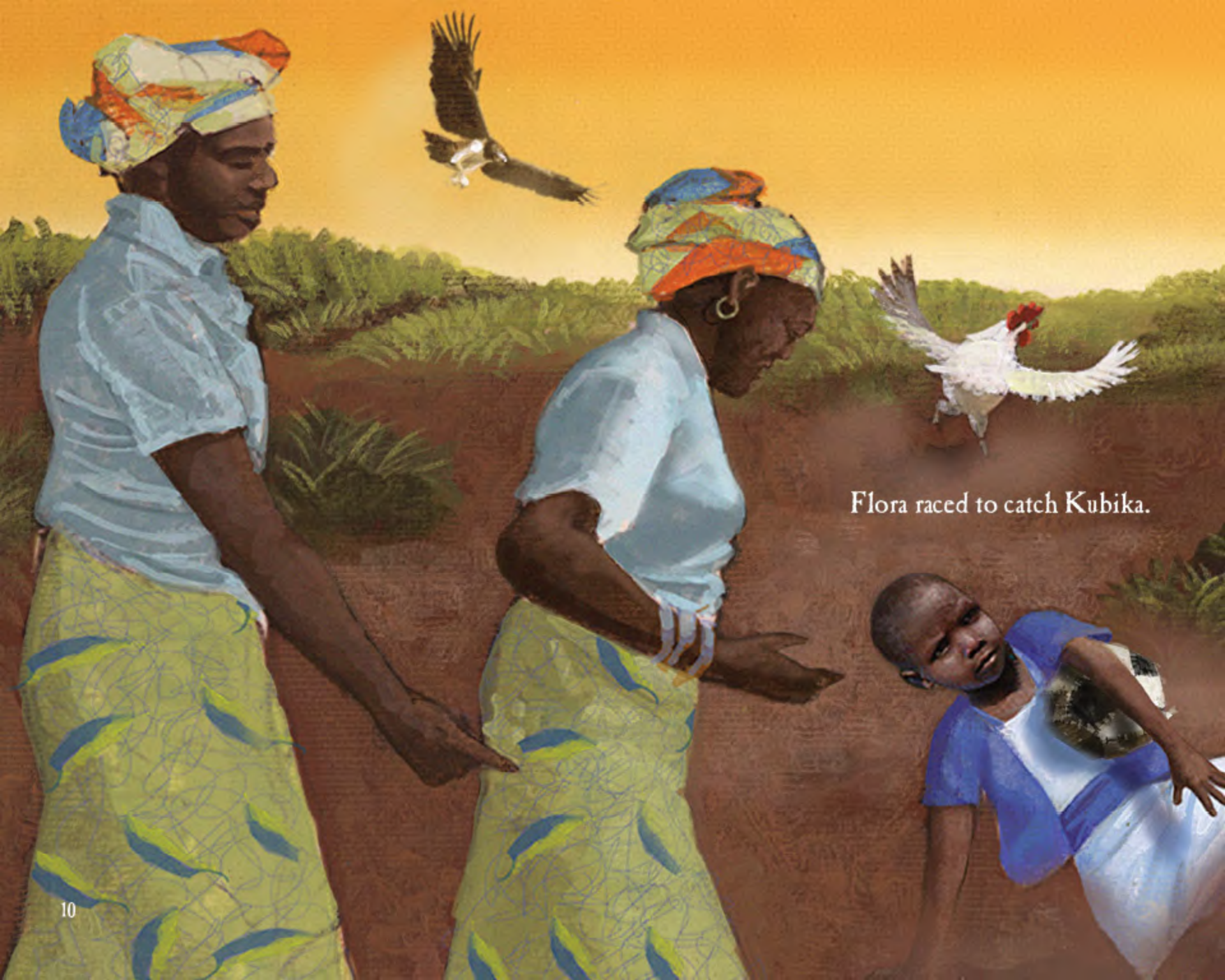
A painting of a rural scene. In the foreground, a large, thick tree trunk leans from the left. The ground is reddish-brown soil. In the middle ground, a brown cow stands facing left. To the right, a person wearing a yellow shirt and blue pants is bent over, working with a large green net or tarp on the ground. The background features tall green grasses and a bright, hazy sky. The overall style is that of a textured oil or acrylic painting.

While her brother and sister were away at school, Flora helped her family. She knew her brother and sister were able to go to the fine school in the city because of the cow her father had received several years ago from Heifer International. Because of that gift, they now had many cows and even chickens to earn money for her family.



One day after school,
Flora was practicing soccer when she
should have been minding her chores,
and the adventurous rooster Kubika
got out. By the time Flora realized it,
Kubika was already strutting down
the street through the village.





Flora raced to catch Kubika.



The clever rooster was too quick, however, and he slipped away.



Flora hurried after Kubika and nearly caught him when “Wham!” she ran into her friend Gideon. Unlike Flora who was able to attend the local school, Gideon’s family couldn’t afford to send him to any school. He worked every day, delivering milk on his bicycle, hoping to raise enough money to pay for the school uniform and books.



"Where are you going in such a hurry?" Gideon asked her.

"My naughty rooster Kubika got out of our courtyard," Flora said. "I can't let him get away."

"I'll help you," Gideon said. "Which way did he go?"

"That way!" She pointed down the path leading down the mountain.

"That's too steep for my bike," Gideon said.

But Flora, who was never afraid of an adventure, said,

"No it's not. Hop on!"








Down the bumpy path, Flora pedaled the bike with Gideon clinging to the back for dear life. Down from the village they flew, until they reached the fields of Mother Yasenta. Gideon was glad to get off.





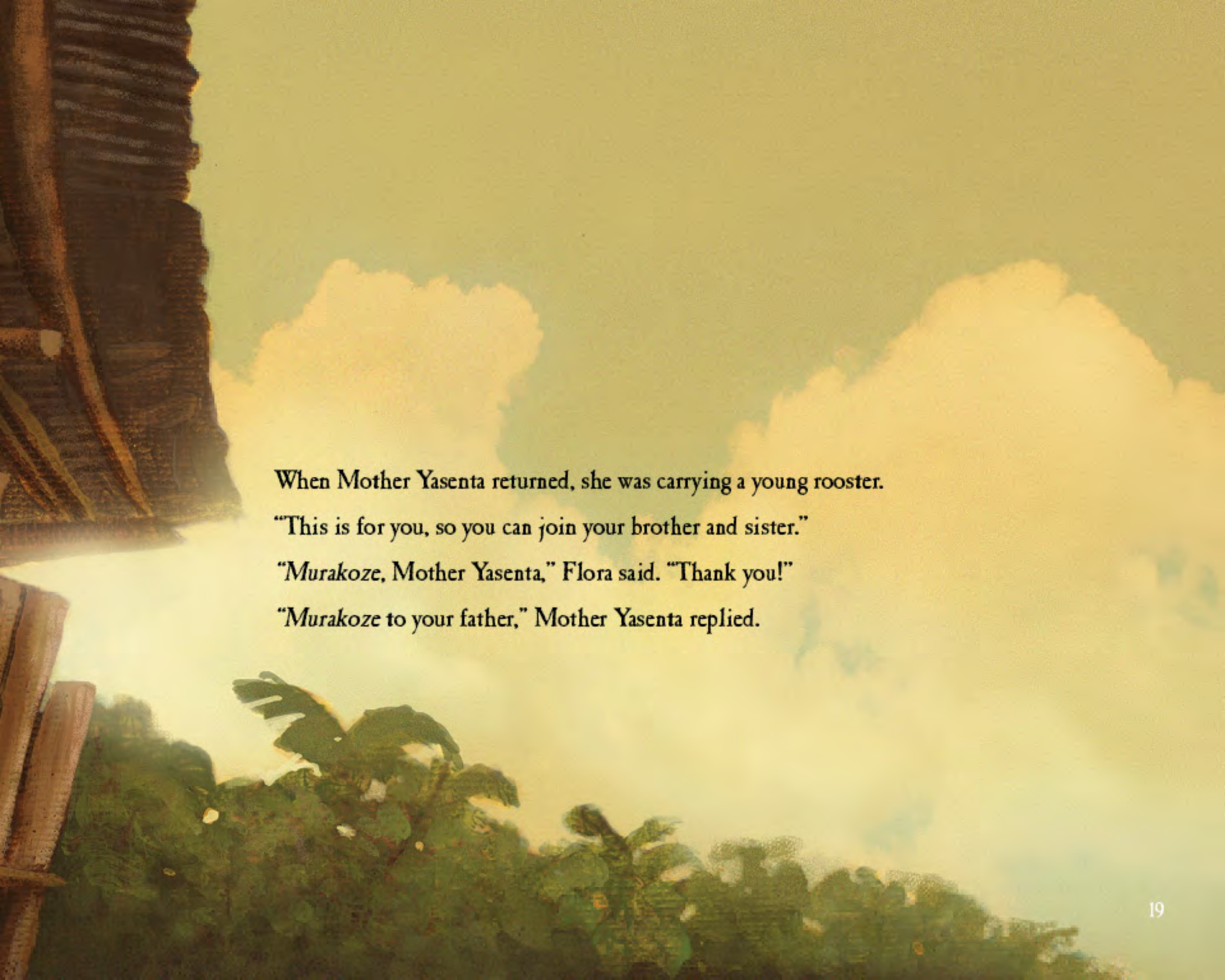
“I have keen eyes,” Gideon said. “I’ll spot that runaway rooster.” Flora and Gideon looked everywhere, but Kubika was nowhere to be found. When Flora heard an eagle cry, she covered her face and said, “Oh no! Kubika has been caught by an eagle!” Mother Yasenta came out from her field. “*Muraho!* What’s the matter, Flora?”



“My rooster got away,” Flora cried. “I was supposed to take care of him. Now my parents will never let me go off to school with my brother and sister.” Mother Yasenta pondered this. “When your father’s cow had its first calf, he gave it to me. He passed on the gift. And now look! I sell the milk and have bought more land, all because of his gift. So I gave my first calf to another family. I passed on the gift. That is how we help each other. Wait here, child.” Mother Yasenta went back to her house.







When Mother Yasenta returned, she was carrying a young rooster.

"This is for you, so you can join your brother and sister."

"*Murakoze*, Mother Yasenta," Flora said. "Thank you!"

"*Murakoze* to your father," Mother Yasenta replied.





Flora and Gideon headed back up the path to the village. Flora was grateful for Mother Yasenta's gift but worried what her parents would say. She had lost their rooster Kubika, after all.



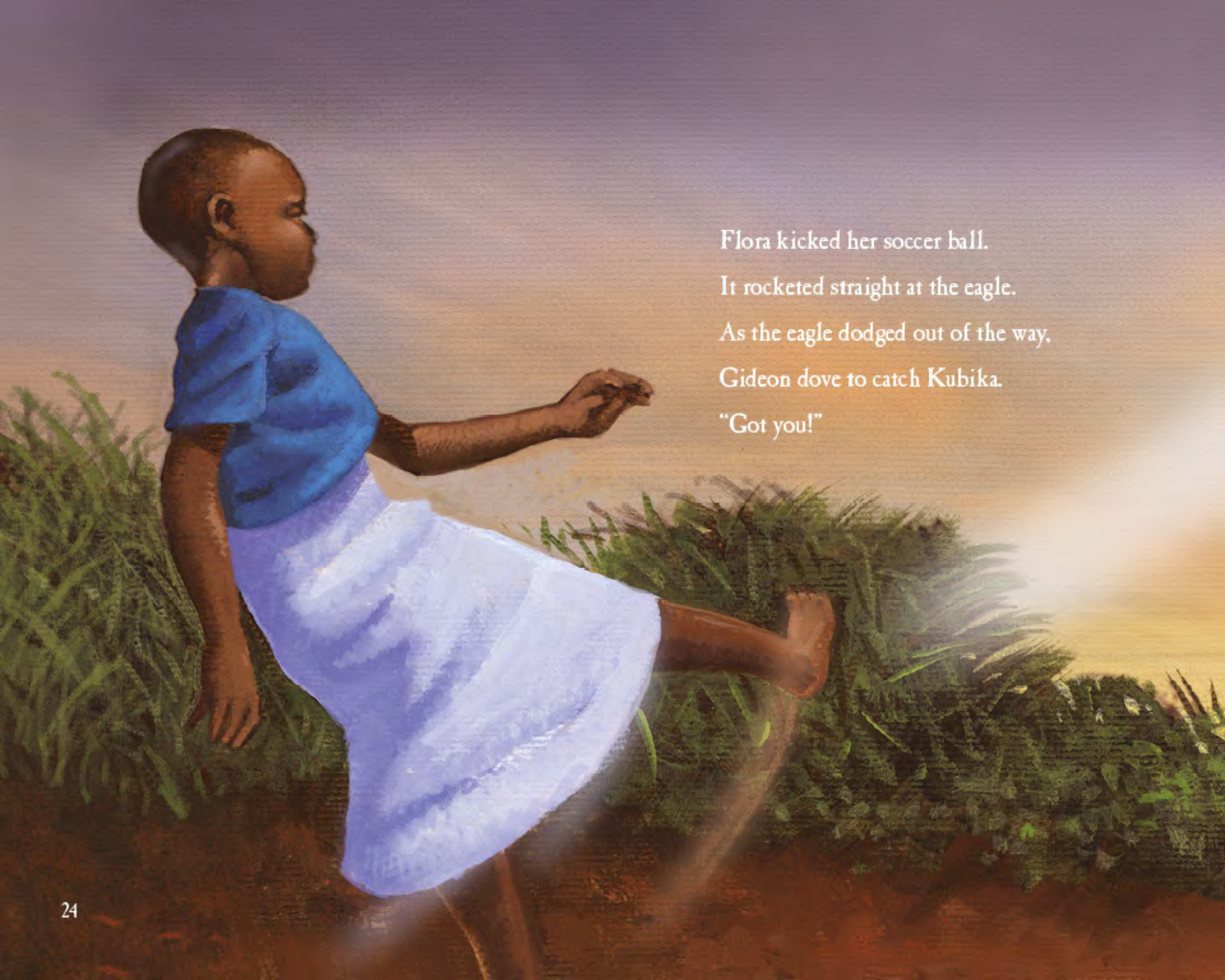
“Look!” Gideon shouted. “Isn’t that Kubika?”

Flora might never have seen the rooster if it hadn’t been for Gideon’s keen eyes, but there Kubika was, pecking away under a patch of sorghum.

Flora and Gideon weren’t the only ones who spied him.


Down from the sky streaked the eagle.





Flora kicked her soccer ball.
It rocketed straight at the eagle.
As the eagle dodged out of the way,
Gideon dove to catch Kubika.
“Got you!”





When they returned to her house,
Flora said, "Wait here."
She brought Gideon one of her hens.
"I want you to have her," Flora said,
"and I want you to keep the rooster
from Mother Yasenta."



“But Mother Yasenta gave him to you,” Gideon said. “What would she say if I kept him?”

“That we have to pass on the gift,” Flora replied. “If her rooster helps you earn enough money to go to school, I think Mother Yasenta would be very happy.”

“*Murakoze*, Flora!” Gideon said, before he hurried back home.



“Where have you been?” Flora’s mother asked her.

“Kubika got away,” she said, “but Gideon helped me catch him.”

“You have to watch out for that rooster,” her mother warned.

“He’s always looking for an adventure. Just like you.”



Flora smiled. Her adventure chasing Kubika had been fun, but better still, her adventure had taught her how to pass on the gift.







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One gift — one animal — can change a life. And so, the world. Since 1944, Heifer International has distributed gifts of animals ranging from earthworms to water buffalo, goats to geese and cows to camels — and of course, chickens. This non-profit organization's mission is to end hunger and poverty and care for the Earth. Heifer approaches this mission by supplying intensive, Earth-friendly agricultural training and farm animals to poor families around the world. As of this writing, Heifer International has helped more than 20 million families achieve lives of independence, dignity and self-reliance. The impact of each gift is multiplied as families agree to "Pass on the Gift" of their livestock's offspring to another family in need, widening the circle of hope.

Flora and the Runaway Rooster
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Description of the work: "Flora and the Runaway Rooster" is a children's book that demonstrates how the gift of farm animals can help a struggling family earn enough to eat and send their children to school. "Passing on the Gift" multiplies the effect of the original gift, as families agree to give the offspring of their animals to another family, allowing them to achieve lives of self-reliance. John Claude Bemis tells a tale of two Rwandan children — one a "have" and the other a "have-not." Until, that is, the escaped rooster Kubika is caught again and another gift is passed on. Robert Crawford's intensely colored illustrations show the beauty of the Rwandan countryside and paint a picture of helping and hope.

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