The Boy, the Bag, and the Wineskin

A story about grace, identity, and what we were carrying all along

1. A Boy Sets Out


1

There was once a boy who lived in a warm, safe home. One morning he set out for a walk, following the road that curved away toward places he had never seen.

2. The Gift of the Bag


2
At the first corner, an old man sitting
beside the road called to him.
“Come here, boy. Where are you going?

At the first corner, an old man sitting beside the road called to him.

“Come here, boy. Where are you going?”

“For a walk.”

“Good for you. There is so much out there for a simple boy like yourself.” He lifted a small cloth bag, clean and well made, with a drawstring at its top. “Take this along. You will find things worth carrying.”

The boy folded it into his hand. It seemed useful enough, so he hung it at his side and walked on.

3. The First Marble


3
The boy folded it into his hand.
It seemed useful enough, so he hu
it at his side and walked on.

At the next corner, a woman called from her porch and placed a marble in his palm. “Keep this. It will remind you to be careful who you become.”

4. Another Marble


4

A little farther on, a man on a bench gave him another. “This one will remind you to measure yourself.”

Every house along the road had someone sitting near it, and everyone had something to offer — marbles of discipline and hard work, approval, usefulness, strength, certainty, appearance, comparison, fear. Each one was bright and smooth, each one given with a good reason.

Be more disciplined. Work harder. Do not disappoint people. Do not let them see your weakness. Make sure you look like one of us.

5. The Bag Grows Heavy


A little farther on, a man on a bench gave him
"This one will remind you to measure yoursel

At first the boy accepted them politely. Then gladly, because people smiled when they saw his bag growing full, and before long he was proud of the sound the marbles made together when he walked. The bag grew heavier, but he did not notice. He had forgotten he had ever walked without it.

This is who I am, he thought.

6. The Man Without a Bag


Every house along the road had someone sitting near it, and everyone had something to offer — marbles of discipline and hard work, approval, usefulness, strength, certainty, appearance, comparison, fear.
Each one was bright and smooth, each one given with a good reason.
Approval
Usefulness
Discipline & Hard Work

One day, farther down the road, he saw a man who was not sitting beside it. The man was walking, unhurried, with no bag at his side. He stopped to look at a flower growing through a crack in the sidewalk. He helped an old woman carry her basket. He listened as a child explained something that seemed very important.

7. “I See You”

At first Morley accepted them politely. Then gladly, because people smiled when they saw his bag growing full, and before long he was proud of the sound the marbles made together when he walked.

This is who I am,
he thought.





The boy watched him a long time, then called out, “Where is your bag?”

“I do not have one.”

The boy opened his and held it out. “Look.”

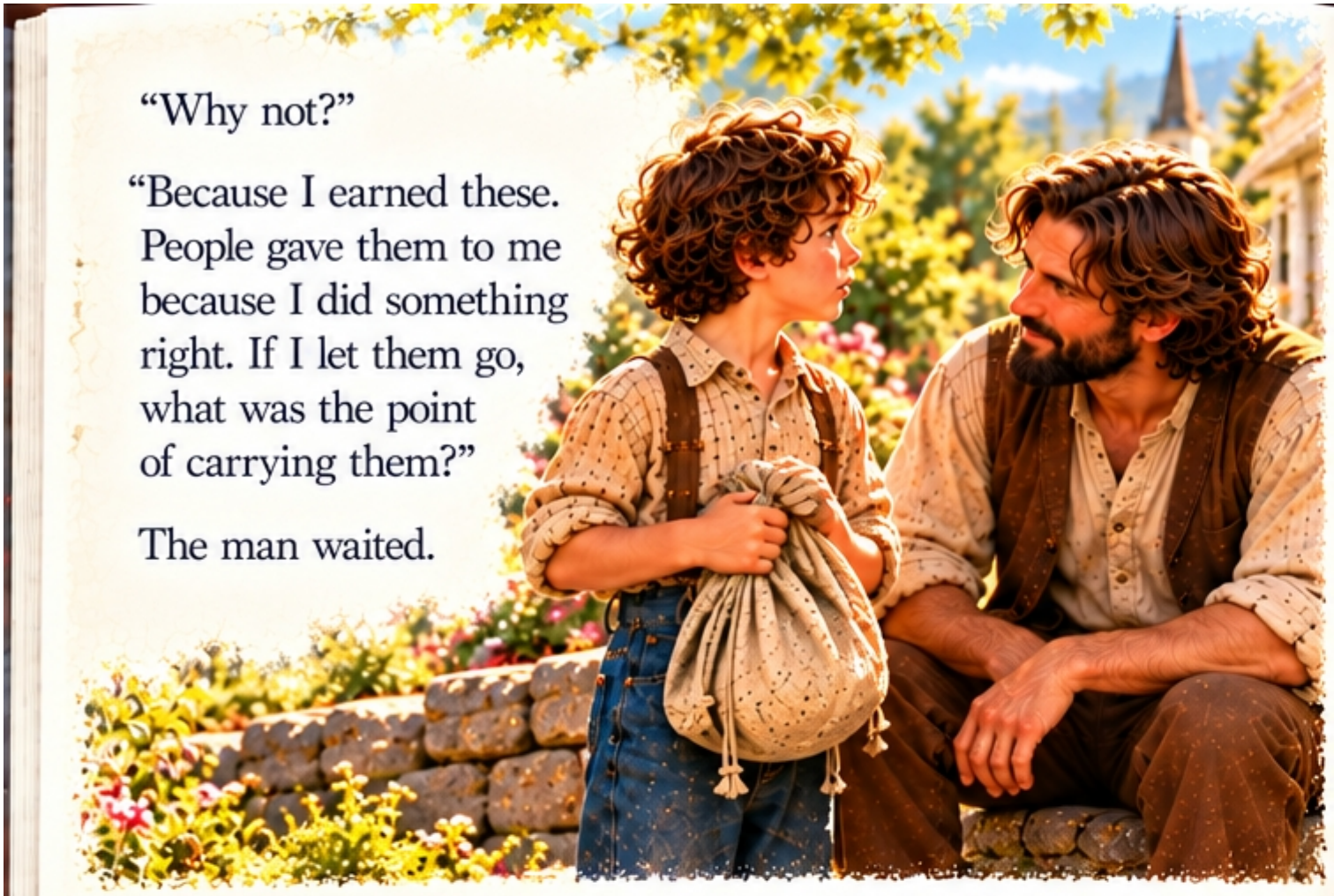
But the man did not look at the marbles. He looked at the boy.

“I see you.”

“Then take them,” the boy said. “They are part of me.”

“No,” the man said gently. “You have carried them. That does not make them you.” The boy pulled the bag close to his chest. “I see someone curious. Someone who notices. Someone who wants to create, and to love.”

8. What If I Cannot Let Go?



"Why not?"

"Because I earned these. People gave them to me because I did something right. If I let them go, what was the point of carrying them?"

The man waited.



"What if people are disappointed in me? What if they think I've gone soft, or stopped caring?"

"Some will," the man said.

"That is theirs to carry, not yours."

The boy looked down into the bag. For the first time, the marbles did not look quite so beautiful. Still, his hand tightened around the drawstring.

“I cannot just put them down.”

“Why not?”

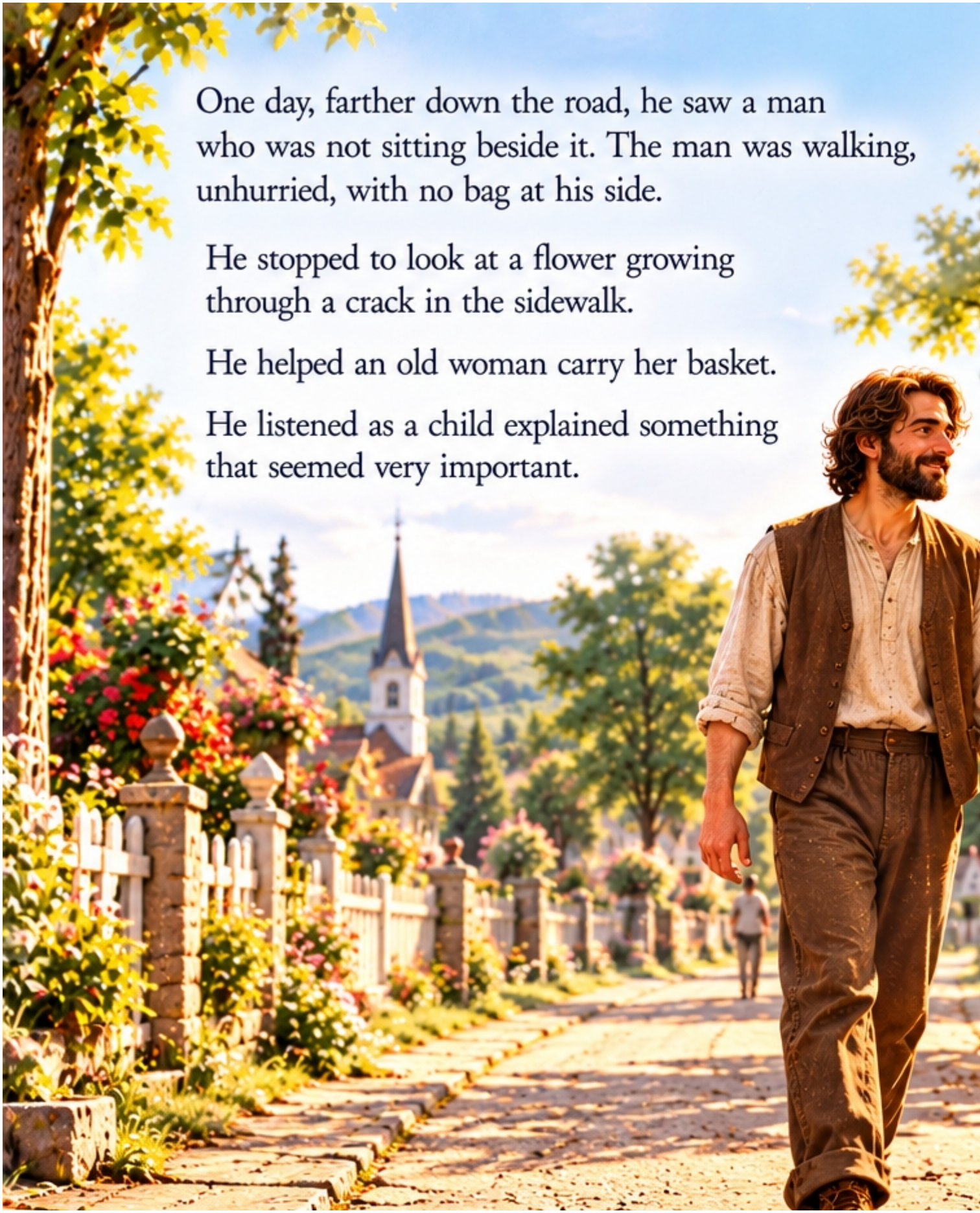
“Because I earned these. People gave them to me because I did something right. If I let them go, what was the point of carrying them?”

The man waited.

“What if they were right?” the boy asked. “What if I really do need to be more disciplined, more careful, more certain? What if I put them down and everything falls apart?”

“Those things may seem to help you walk the road,” the man said. “But they were never meant to tell you who you are.”

9. What If I Am Nothing?


One day, farther down the road, he saw a man who was not sitting beside it. The man was walking, unhurried, with no bag at his side.
He stopped to look at a flower growing through a crack in the sidewalk.
He helped an old woman carry her basket.
He listened as a child explained something that seemed very important.

“What if people are disappointed in me? What if they think I’ve gone soft, or stopped caring?”

“Some will. That is theirs to carry, not yours.”

The boy looked into the bag — twenty marbles, each polished by someone certain they knew what he needed. “What if I put them down and I am nothing underneath?”

“That is the one I cannot answer for you,” the man said. “You will have to find out.”

10. The First Marble Down



"Why not?"

"Because I earned these. People gave them to me because I did something right. If I let them go, what was the point of carrying them?"

The man waited.



"What if people are disappointed in me? What if they think I've gone soft, or stopped caring?"

"Some will," the man said.

"That is theirs to carry, not yours."

The boy stood beside the road a long time. At last he drew out the first marble, a little blue one with a white swirl, and held it like he was saying goodbye to an old friend.

“Can I put one down?”

“You may. It is your choice.”

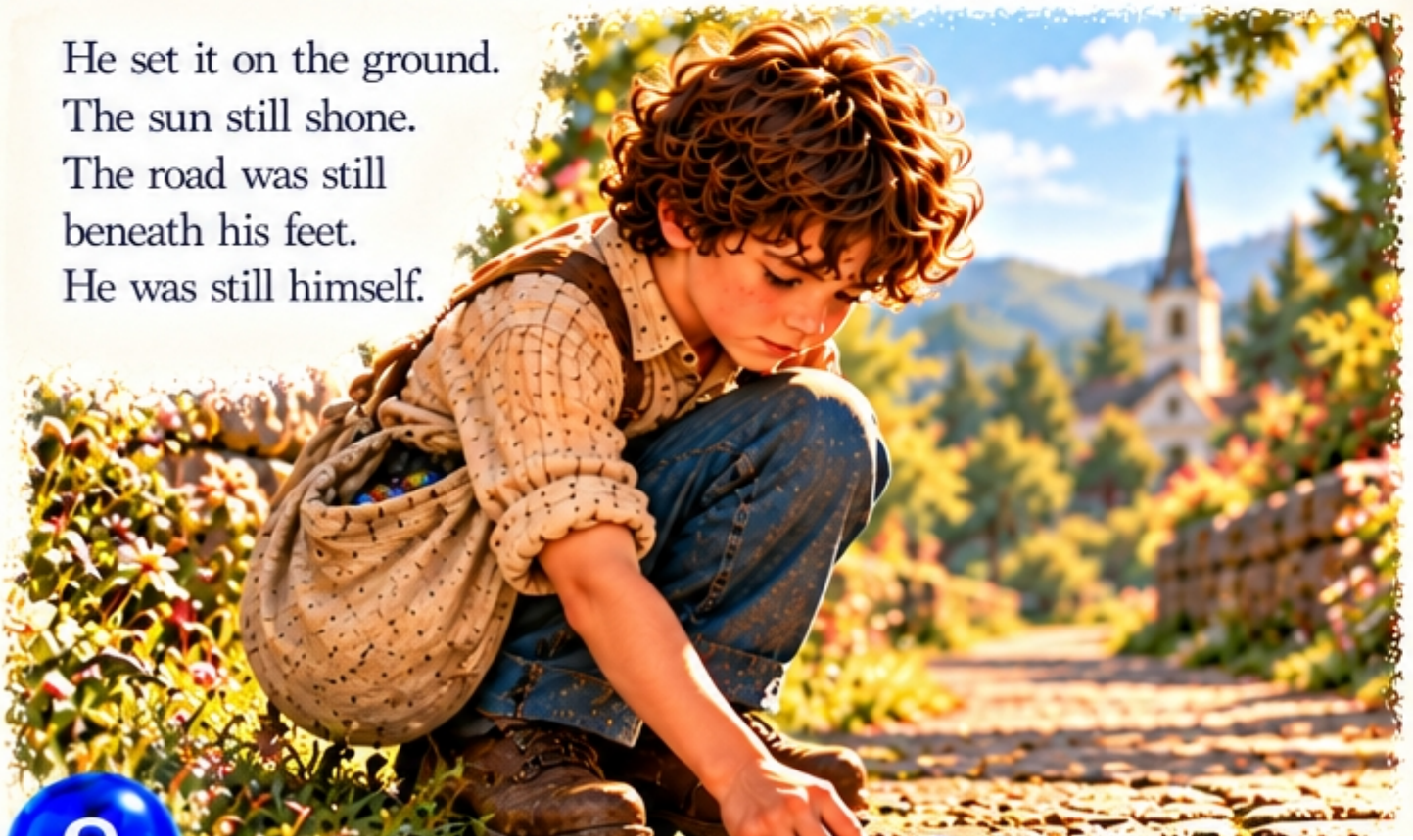
He set it on the ground. The sun still shone. The road was still beneath his feet. He was still himself.

11. Room to Breathe

The boy stood beside
the road a long time.



He set it on the ground.
The sun still shone.
The road was still
beneath his feet.
He was still himself.



At first he felt nothing. Then, almost at once, he wanted it back. But before he reached for it, he noticed something: a subtle easing, as if some tension had let go the moment the marble left his hand.

He looked at the marble on the road, then at his empty palm. Putting it down had not taken something from him. It had given him room to breathe.

He left it there.

12. One by One


The boy watched him a long time,
then called out,
“Where is your bag?”
“I do not have one.”
The boy opened his
and held it out. “Look.”
But the man did not look
at the marbles.
He looked at the boy.
“I see you.”

The man never told him which marble to drop, and never hurried him. One by one, with lessening reluctance, the boy emptied the bag. Some marbles fell quickly. Some he held a moment too long. Some made him cry. Some he had forgotten were even there.

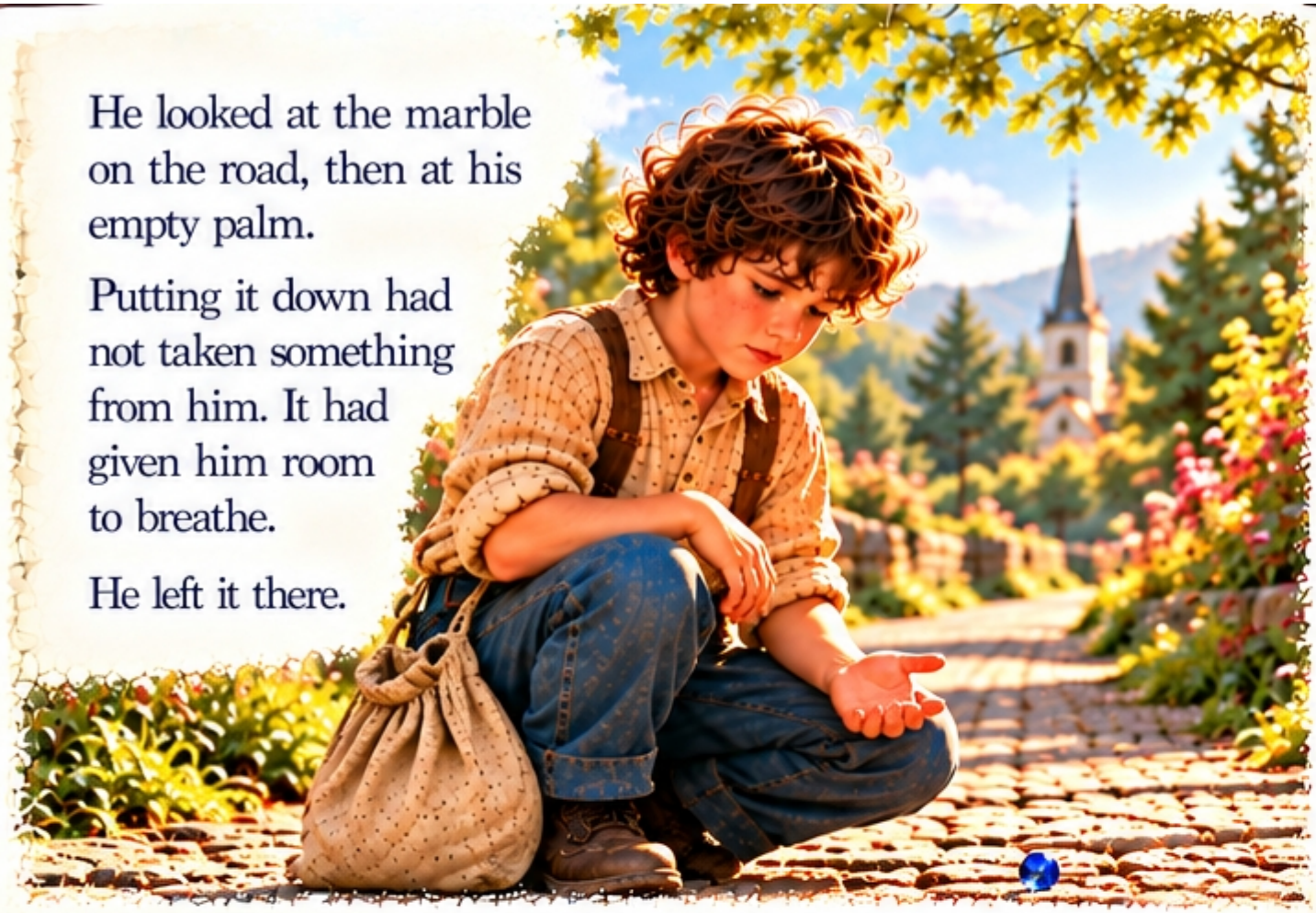
At last they lay scattered across the road, still bright and perfectly round, but no longer his to carry.

13. What Do I Carry Now?

He looked at the marble on the road, then at his empty palm.

Putting it down had not taken something from him. It had given him room to breathe.

He left it there.



Some marbles fell quickly.

Some he held a moment too long.

Some made him cry.

Some he had forgotten were even there.



He held the empty bag in both hands. “What do I carry now?”

“What have you carried from the beginning?”

The boy looked down at the bag. “Nothing.”

“Not there.” The man nodded toward the pocket over the boy’s heart.

14. The Wineskin Within


One day, farther down the road,
he saw a man who was not sitting
beside it. The man was walking,
unhurried, with no bag at his side.
He stopped to look at a flower
growing through a crack
in the sidewalk.

The boy reached inside. His fingers closed around something soft and warm — a little wineskin, full and sealed. He drew it out slowly.

“Where did this come from?”

“It was there when you left home. Before anyone told you what you must carry to be enough.”

He held it against his chest. It rested there as if it had always belonged.

15. What Was Given to You


The boy watched him a long time,
then called out,
"Where is your bag?"

“What’s in it?”

“What was given to you. Life, love, mercy, joy — enough for the road ahead, and enough to share.”

The boy looked at the empty bag, then at the wineskin he had carried over his heart without knowing it was there. “It was here all along.”

“Yes.”

“All I ever needed was with me the whole time.”

The man smiled. The boy set the empty bag on the road and walked on.

16. People React

But the man did not look
at the marbles.
He looked at the boy.

"I see you."



"Then take them,"
the boy said.
"They are part of me."

"No," the man said gently.
"You have carried them.
That does not make
them you."



The people along the way shook their heads when they saw him without it. *You will regret this. You will get lost. You will have nothing to show for yourself.* He did not argue with them, and he did not condemn them. They were only passing along what had been passed to them. They had never met the man of grace.

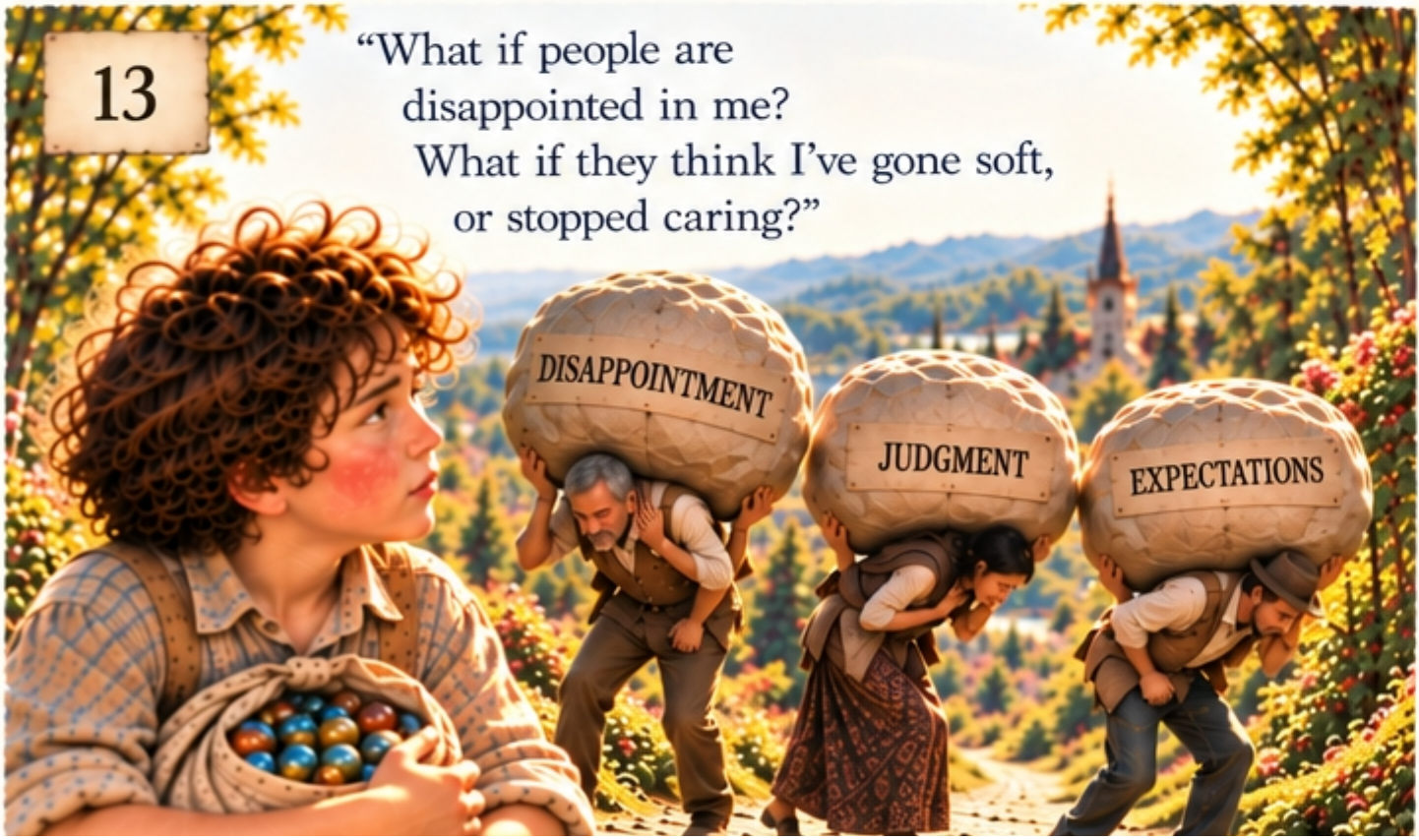
17. Seeing Again

12

"Those things may seem to help you walk the road," the man said. "But they were never meant to tell you who you are."

13

"What if people are disappointed in me? What if they think I've gone soft, or stopped caring?"



As he walked, he began noticing things again — flowers in the cracks, old women with baskets, children taking a long time to say what they meant. And whenever the road asked something of him, the wineskin over his heart held what he needed: strength enough to help, patience enough to listen, courage enough to be honest, light enough for the next few steps.

18. The Little Girl


17
"That is the one I cannot answer for you," the man said. "You will have to find out."
The boy stood beside the road a long time. At last he drew out the first marble, a little blue one with a white swirl, and held it like he was saying goodbye to an old friend.
"Can I put one down?"
"You may. It is your choice."
He set it on the ground. The sun still shone. The road was still beneath his feet. He was still himself.

Around a bend he came upon a little girl sitting beside the road. At her feet was a small cloth bag, clean and well made, and she held it out toward him.

“Would you like one?”

He remembered how important his own bag had once seemed — the sound the marbles made, how he had believed that sound was the sound of becoming someone.

19. I See You

The boy watched him a long time, then called out, "Where is your bag?"

"I do not have one."

The boy opened his and held it out. "Look."

But the man did not look at the marbles.
He looked at the boy.

"I see you."

"Then take them," the boy said. "They are part of me."

"No," the man said gently. "You have carried them.
That does not make them you."

The boy pulled the bag close to his chest.

"I see someone curious. Someone who notices.
Someone who wants to create, and to love."

The boy looked down into the bag.
For the first time, the marbles did not look quite so beautiful. Still, his hand tightened around the drawstring.

"I cannot just put them down."



He did not take the bag. He did not pull it away from her. He did not lecture her.

He knelt beside her and looked at her the way the man of grace had once looked at him.

“I see you.”

Then he pointed, gently, to the pocket over her heart.

20. It Was Yours All Along

"Not there."

The man nodded toward the pocket over the boy's heart.

The boy reached inside. His fingers closed around something soft and warm — a little wineskin, full and sealed. He drew it out slowly.



"What's in it?"

"What was given to you. Life, love, mercy, joy — enough for the road ahead, and enough to share."



She looked down, uncertain, and reached inside. Her fingers closed around something soft and warm. She drew it out slowly — a little wineskin, full and sealed, one she had never known was there.

“It was yours the whole time,” he said.

21. The Gathering


"I cannot just put them down."
"Why not?" the man asked.

People passed them throughout the day. Some carried bags heavy with marbles, their shoulders bent under the weight. Some carried bags still empty, waiting to be filled, glancing at every house along the road. Some hurried past without looking up. A few stopped, uncertain why, the way the boy himself had once stopped.

Now and then, someone came walking with a small wineskin resting near the heart instead of a bag at their side — and they did not come with instructions or demands. They came with water, or bread, or a song, or simply their company, and sat down.

The boy and the girl welcomed them all. When someone came by bent under a heavy bag, they made room on the ground beside them, and said nothing about what should be put down.

No one was made to prove they belonged there.

22. Grace Is Enough

Grace was enough.

It had been there all along.