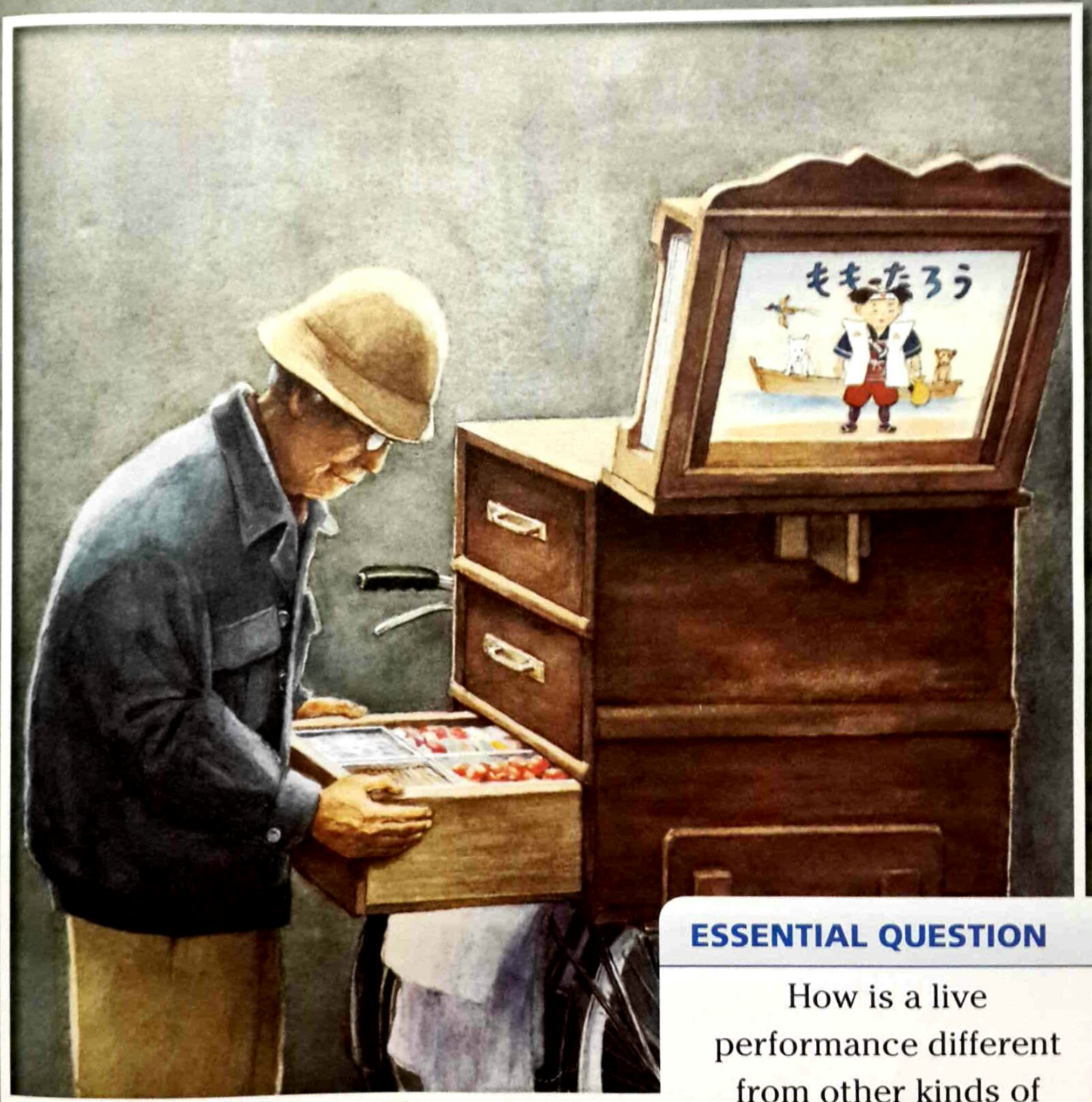


# KAMISHIBAI MAN

by Allen Say



## ESSENTIAL QUESTION

How is a live performance different from other kinds of entertainment?

Not so long ago in Japan, in a small house on a hillside, there lived an old man and his wife. Even though they never had children of their own, they called each other "Jiichan" (jee chan) and "Baachan" (bah chan). Jiichan is Grandpa, and Baachan is Grandma.

One day, Baachan said, "Jiichan, you haven't said a word in three days."

"Umm, I've been thinking how much I miss going on my rounds," he said.

Baachan stared. "How many years has it been?" she asked.

"Umm, yes, quite a while . . . but my legs are good. And I've kept the bicycle in good order."

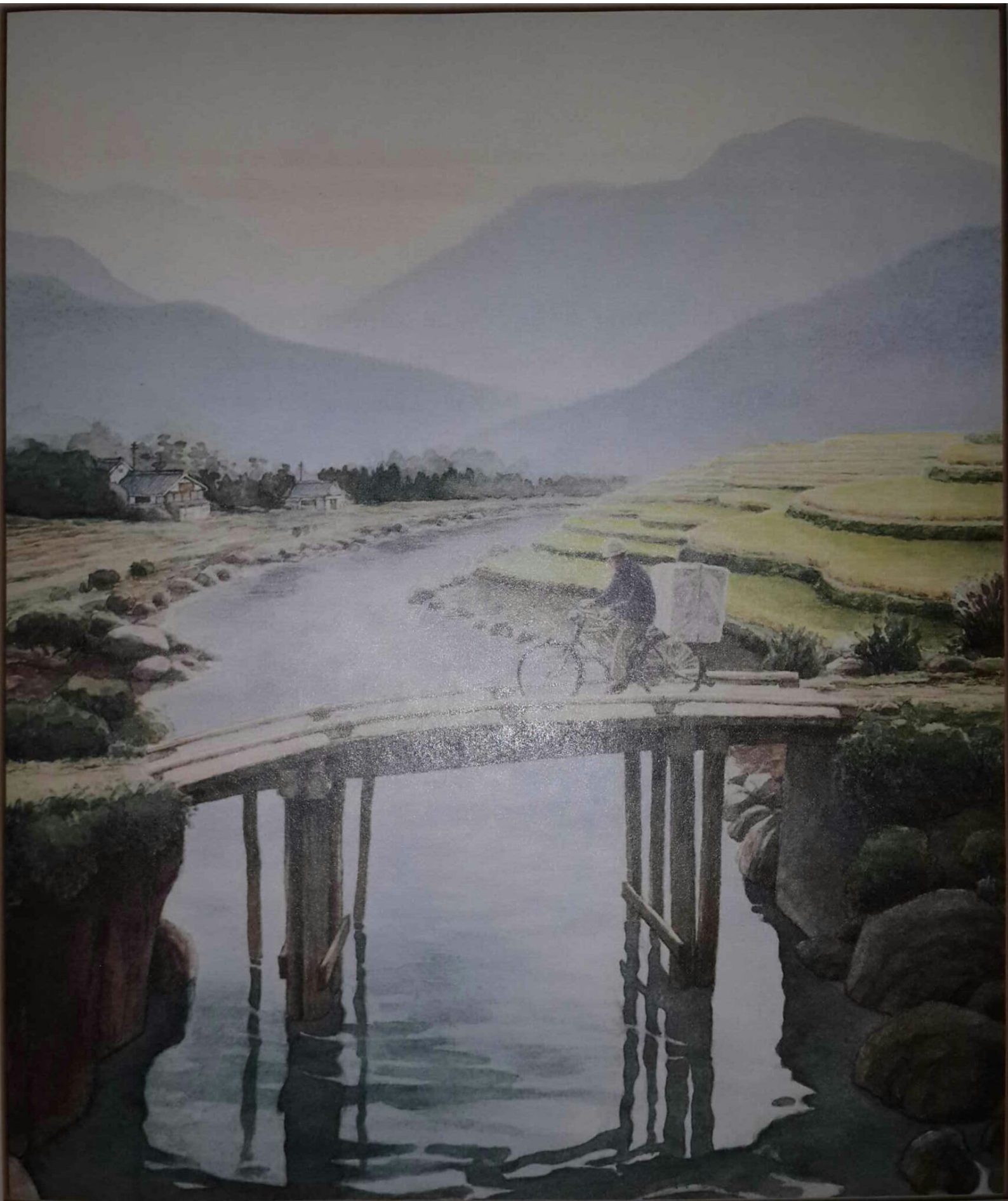
". . . I don't know. But one day won't hurt, I suppose. Should I make some candies?"

"That would be very nice," Jiichan said.



The next day, Jiichan rode his bicycle down the hillside in the first light of morning.

“Umm, how many years has it been?” he asked himself. “And do I remember such a fine morning? All so fresh and young . . . Well, good morning to you, rickety old bridge, still going strong after all these years, um, mmm.” He began to hum a tune that his mother used to sing when he was a small boy.

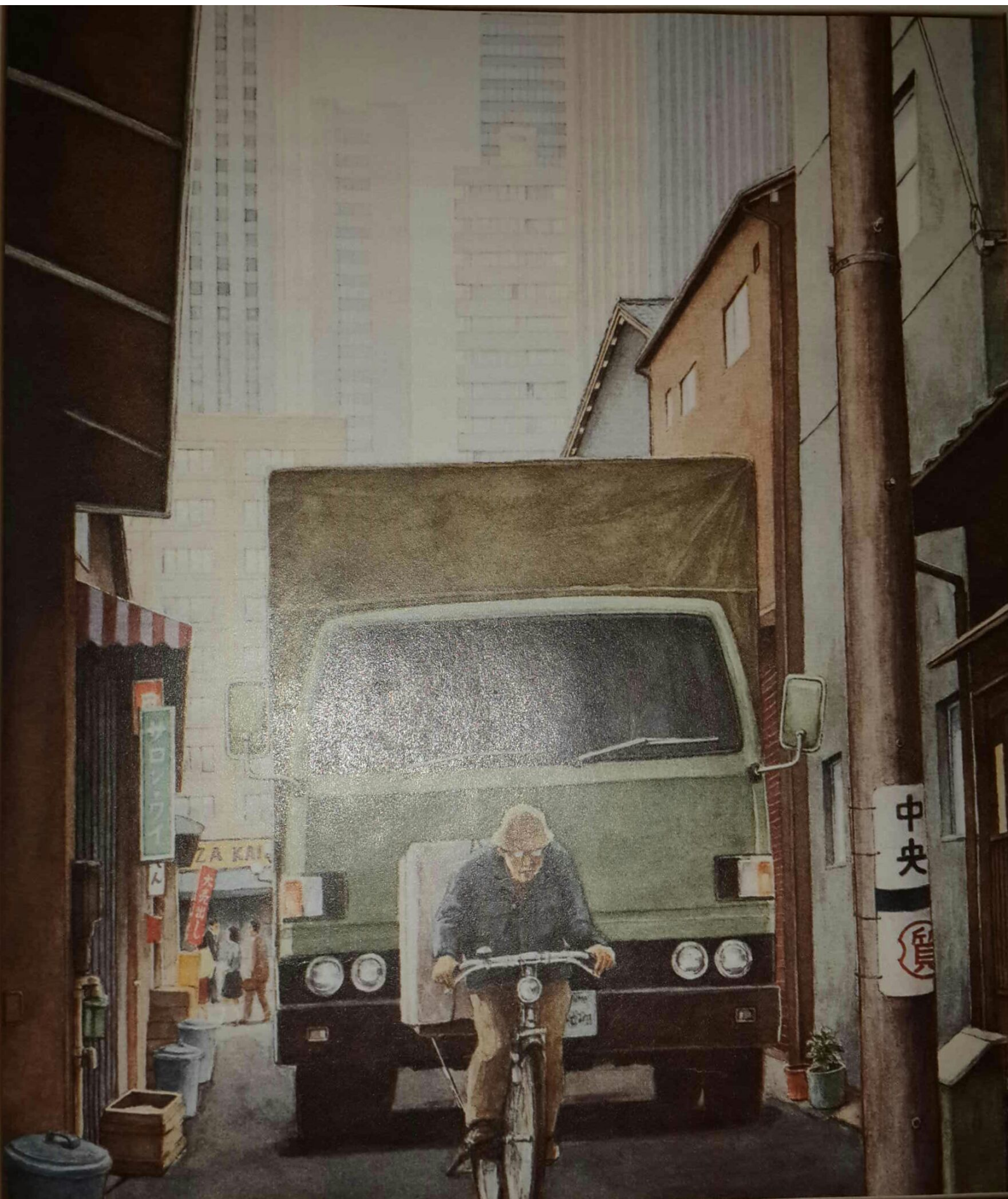


When he came to the city, he stopped humming.  
“This isn’t right,” he said. “I must have taken a  
wrong turn . . . but there’s that old house I used to go  
by every afternoon . . .”

A car horn **blasted** at him, then another.

“Why are there so many cars all of a sudden?  
Look at these tall buildings! You’d think I was in  
another country!”

A truck blasted its horn behind him.



中央

賃

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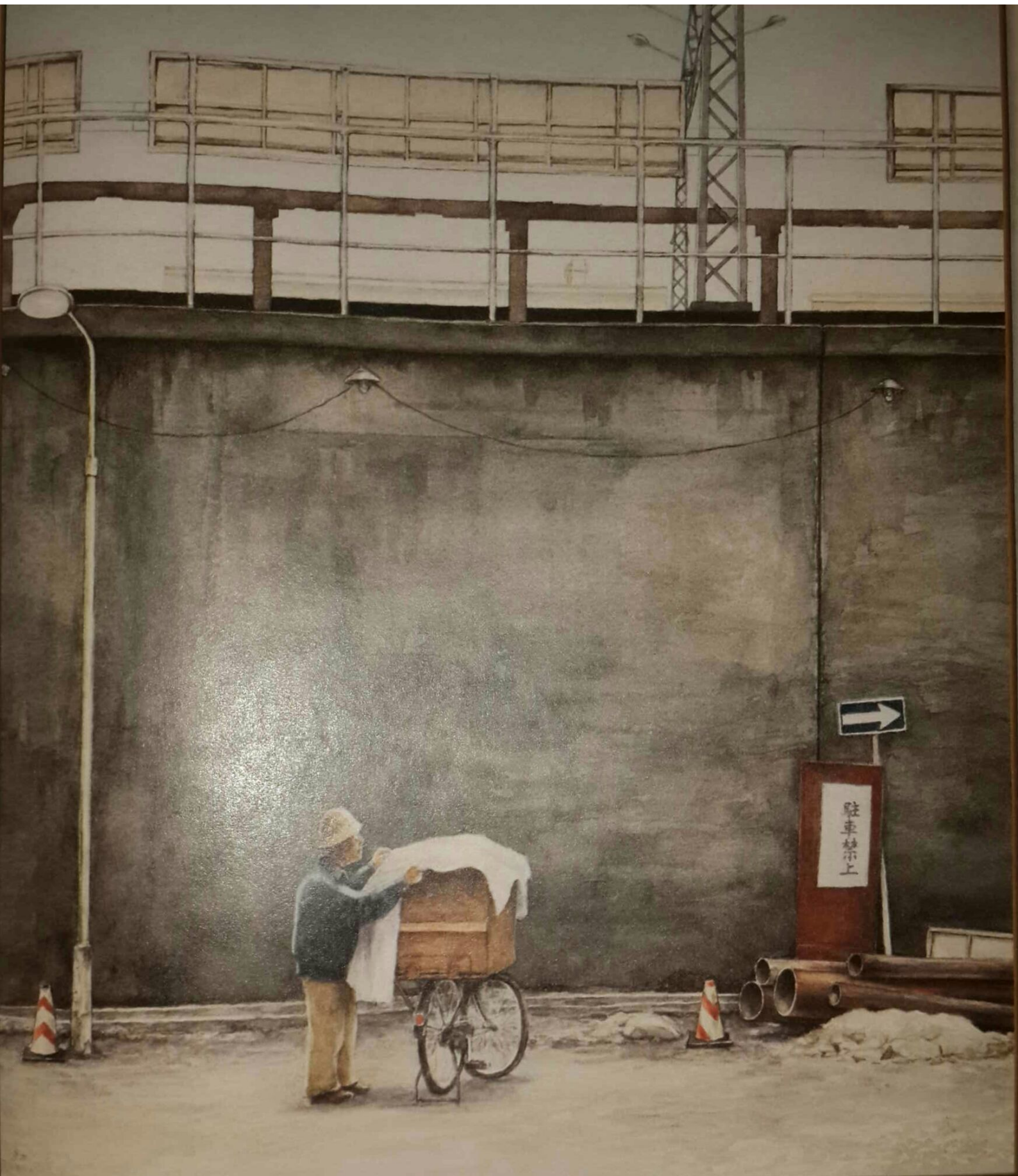
He pulled into a **vacant** lot and panted. “Can’t a man ride his bicycle in peace? Don’t remember such **rude** drivers.” Catching his breath, he looked across the street and gaped.

“Can this be? There’s that old noodle shop . . . used to be the only building here—that and a nice park all around. Now look at all these shops and restaurants. They chopped down all those beautiful trees for them. Who needs to buy so many things and eat so many different foods?”

#### **ANALYZE THE TEXT**

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**Cause and Effect** The city has grown, causing more traffic. What is another result, or effect, of the city growing larger and busier?



Shaking his head, he slowly took the canvas off the box on his bicycle. He propped up the stage and checked the story cards inside, patting each painting. Then he opened the bottom drawer in the box.

“Umm, you little jewels,” he said, and started to hum again. “Thank you, Baachan—you make good candies, just like in the old days.”

From the top drawer he took out two wooden blocks, and holding one in each hand he hit them together. A sharp, loud clack rang out.

“Come gather around me, little ones, your kamishibai (kah mee shee bye) man is here again!”

*Clack, clack!*

“Come get your sweets and listen to my stories!”

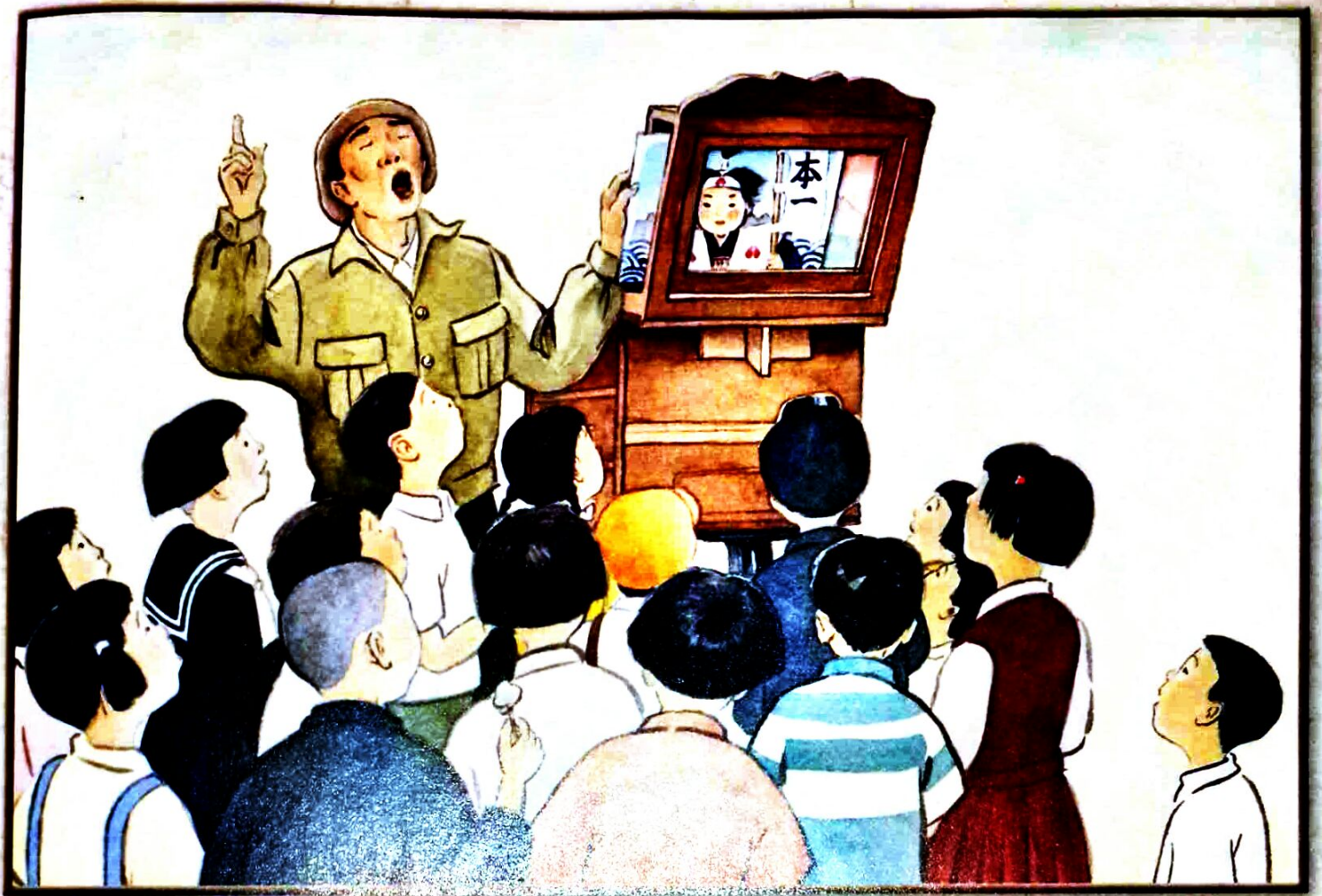
*Clack, clack, clack!*



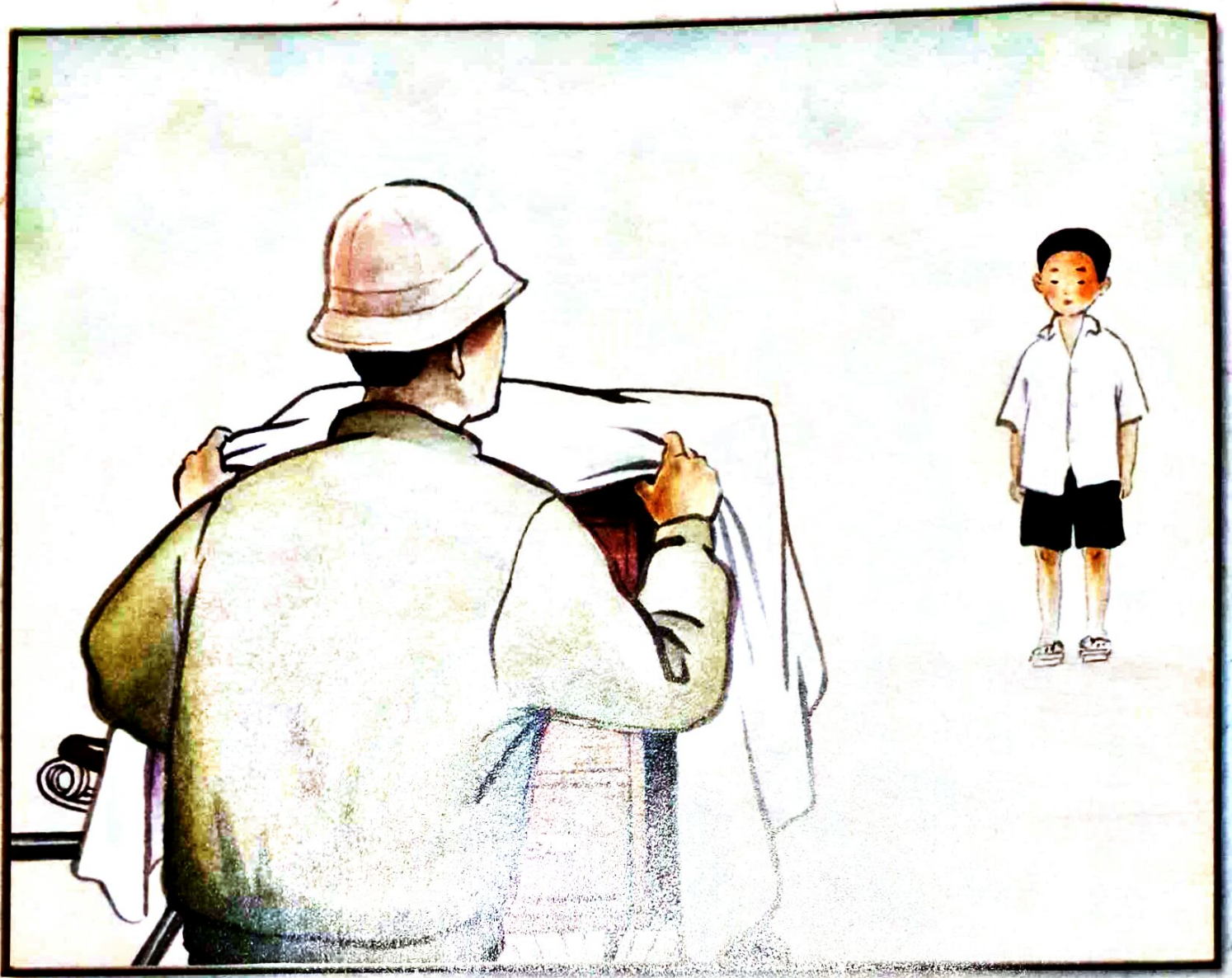


“Ah, yes, I can see you now, all your bright faces, claspings coins in your little hands, so happy to hear my clappers, so happy to see your kamishibai man!

“Patience, everyone! You’ll get your sweets, each and every one of you; I have all your favorites—red ones and green ones and the soft ones on sticks. And here comes that boy, the one who never has any money . . . umm, I’ll get to him later.



“So, which story will it be today? The mighty ‘Peach Boy’! Born from a giant peach! But wait, let’s start at the beginning, umm . . . Long, long ago, there once lived an old man and his wife who had no children . . .



“After ‘The Peach Boy,’ ‘The Bamboo Princess’ was a nice change, a gentle story. Then my favorite, ‘The Old Man Who Made Cherry Trees Bloom.’ And when I was finished, you all went home happy, except for that poor boy. ‘Would you like a candy?’ I asked once. He said, ‘I don’t like candies!’ and ran away.



“Then one night I was going home and saw a crowd of people gathered in front of a shop. They were staring at something called television. I was curious too, but not for long. It showed moving pictures; they were all jerky and blurry and had no colors at all.



“It wasn’t long after that when television antennas started to sprout from the rooftops like weeds in the springtime. And the more they grew, the fewer boys and girls came out to listen to my stories.

“How can they like those blurry pictures better than my beautiful paintings? I asked. But there was nothing to be done. As I went around the **familiar** neighborhoods, the children started to act as though they didn’t know me anymore.



“Even so, I went on clacking my clappers, and one day a little girl poked her head out the window and shushed me. Imagine, a little girl shushing me. The kamishibai man was making too much noise!

“I sat on a park bench and ate a candy for lunch. How could the world change so quickly? Was I a bad storyteller? Then that boy came, the boy who didn’t like candies. ‘Why aren’t you watching television?’ I asked. ‘I don’t like television!’ he said. ‘But you like my stories,’ I said, and he nodded his little head.



“I got up and set the stage. ‘What’s your favorite story?’ I asked. ‘Little One Inch,’ he answered. So I told him the story of a brave little boy who was only one inch tall. And as I told the story, the boy never looked at the picture cards in the stage. He was looking at me the whole time, with his mouth wide open. He even smiled now and then.



“When I finished the story, I started to take out some sweets to give him, but he was already running away. ‘Wait!’ I shouted, but he kept running and never turned his head. That was the last time I saw that boy. That was the last day I was a kamishibai man . . .”

#### ANALYZE THE TEXT

**Analyze Illustrations** Read the text and look at the illustration. How do the two parts work together to set the mood?





It was dark when he got home. Baachan was watching the evening news. The kamishibai man was the featured story.

“I see you had a busy day,” she said.

“It was a good day.” Jiichan nodded.

“Will you be going out tomorrow?”

“Umm, yes. And the day after.”

“Then you need more sweets.”

“That would be very nice. Umm, could you make it twice the usual amount?”

“I’ll see if I have enough sugar,” she said, and shut the television off.