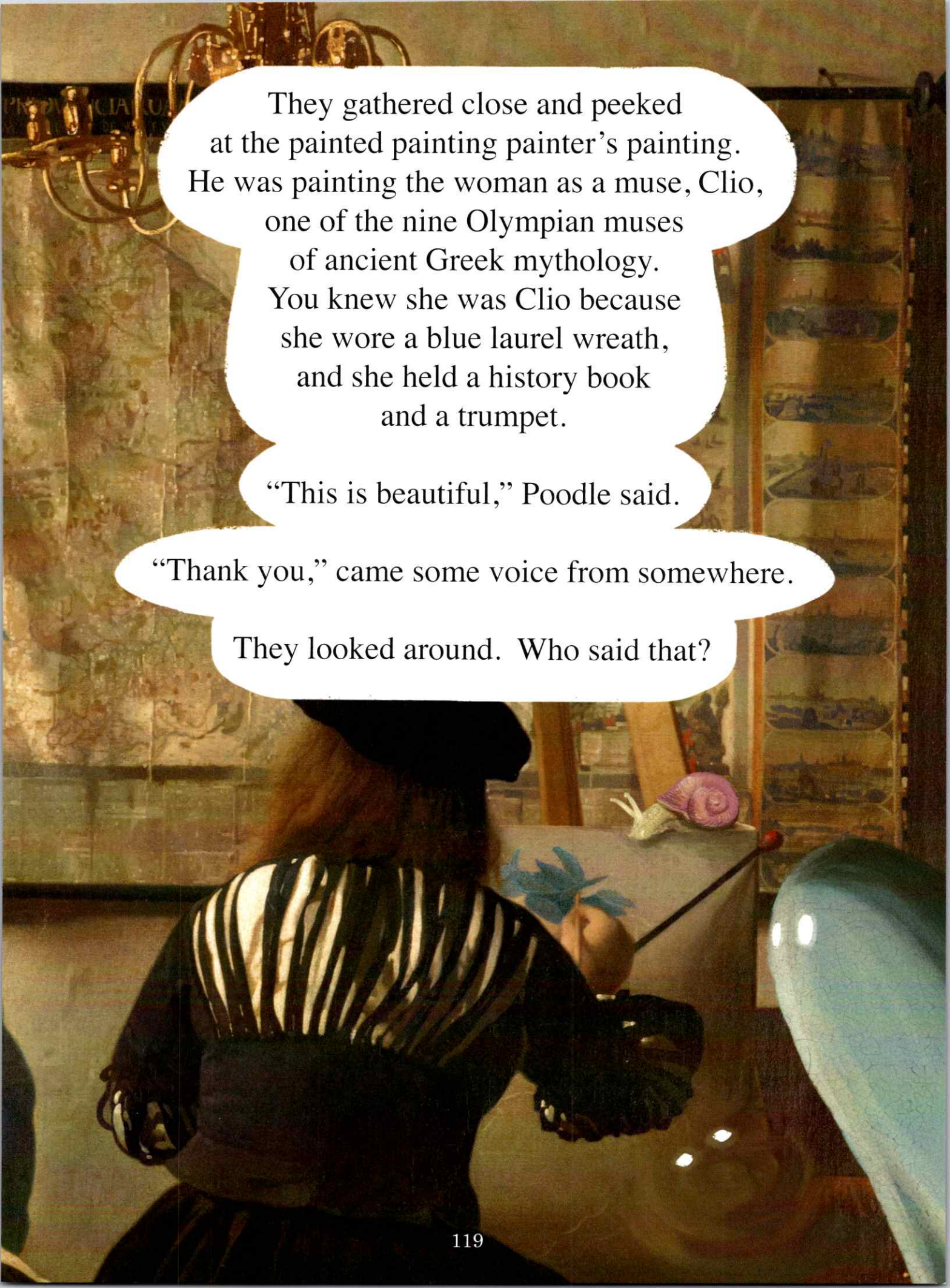


The background of the page is a painting. It depicts a woman from behind, wearing a black and white vertically striped dress. She is looking towards a painting on the wall. In the upper left, there is a golden chandelier. In the upper right, there is a tall bookshelf filled with books. The scene is set in a room with warm, golden light.

They gathered close and peeked
at the painted painting painter's painting.
He was painting the woman as a muse, Clio,
one of the nine Olympian muses
of ancient Greek mythology.
You knew she was Clio because
she wore a blue laurel wreath,
and she held a history book
and a trumpet.

"This is beautiful," Poodle said.

"Thank you," came some voice from somewhere.

They looked around. Who said that?



“Was that you?” asked Poodle,
whispering over the painted painter’s shoulder.

“No,” the painted painter replied.

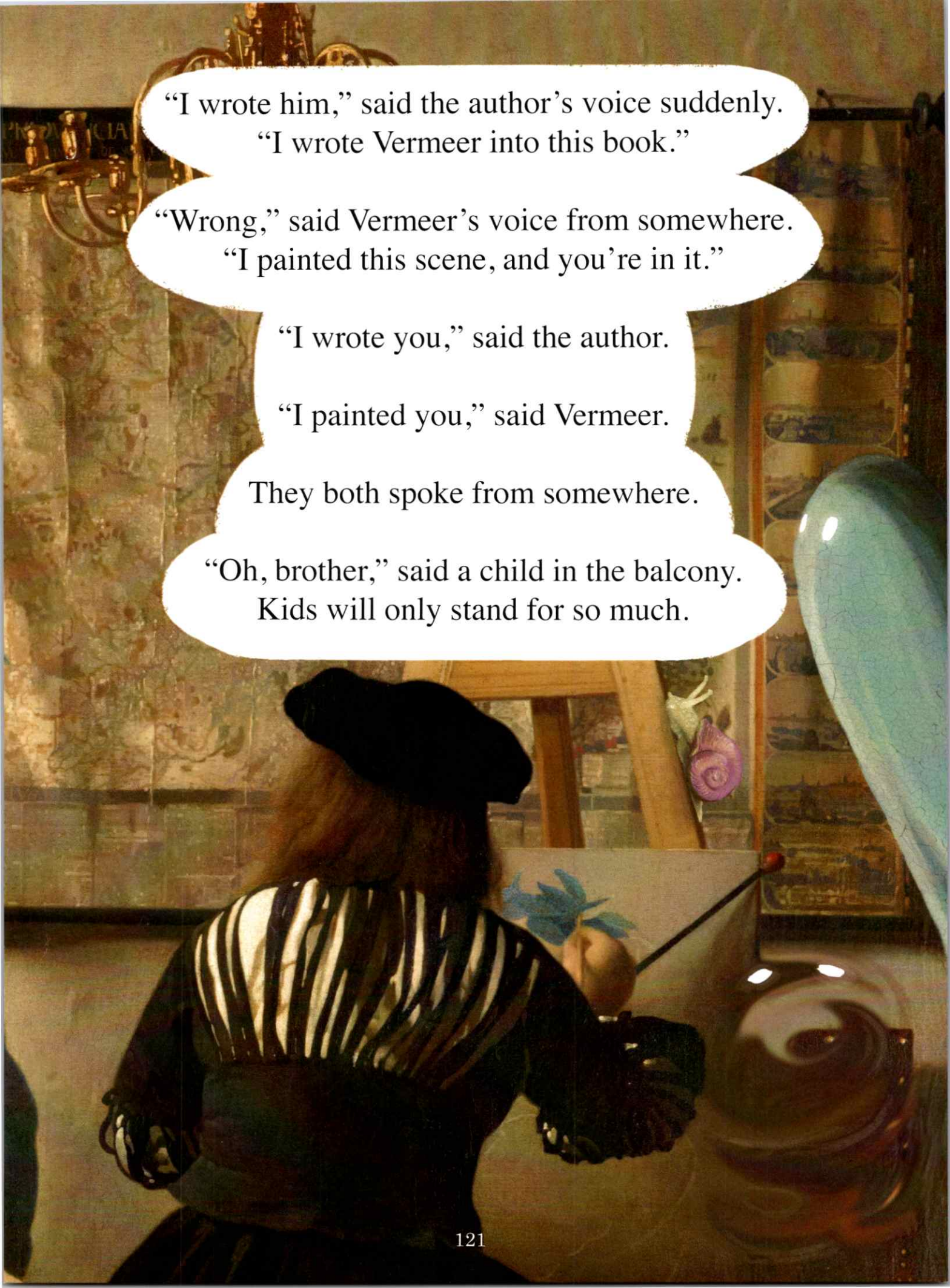
“That’s Vermeer. He does that.
He painted me in here, and now I’m older.
I’ve been sitting here for four hundred years,
working on this laurel wreath.”

Poodle did not dare to comment.

“Where is Vermeer?” he asked, looking about.

“Up there somewhere,” said the painted painter,
gesturing toward the ceiling.

“I don’t know where he is. I never see him.
I just appear as he paints me,
like fog condensing on a leaf.”



"I wrote him," said the author's voice suddenly.

"I wrote Vermeer into this book."

"Wrong," said Vermeer's voice from somewhere.

"I painted this scene, and you're in it."

"I wrote you," said the author.

"I painted you," said Vermeer.

They both spoke from somewhere.

"Oh, brother," said a child in the balcony.

Kids will only stand for so much.