

HEINZ SWOBODA

# DINO's GARAGE

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY  
ULI EHRET





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# FOREWORD



*Dino's Garage* is the story of little Dino and his family. It's up to you, the reader, to decide if it is real or make-believe. But remember, there could always be a kernel of truth.

The cars that Dino encounters in his father's garage all have their own stories and their own personalities. They talk about their experiences, their wishes, their dreams and their fears. This is a book for children and adults alike – especially if they love cars, as I do. I've always been fascinated by the story a car can tell, which is how the idea for this book came about.

I would like to thank my own family: my lovely wife, who gave me a beautiful boy and a beautiful girl, and her family, who have welcomed me with open arms into their house and their garage. I'd also like to thank the wonderful Uli Ehret, who transformed my words into stunning watercolour pictures. And last but not least, thanks to Robert Weber, who helped me turn this crazy idea into an actual book.

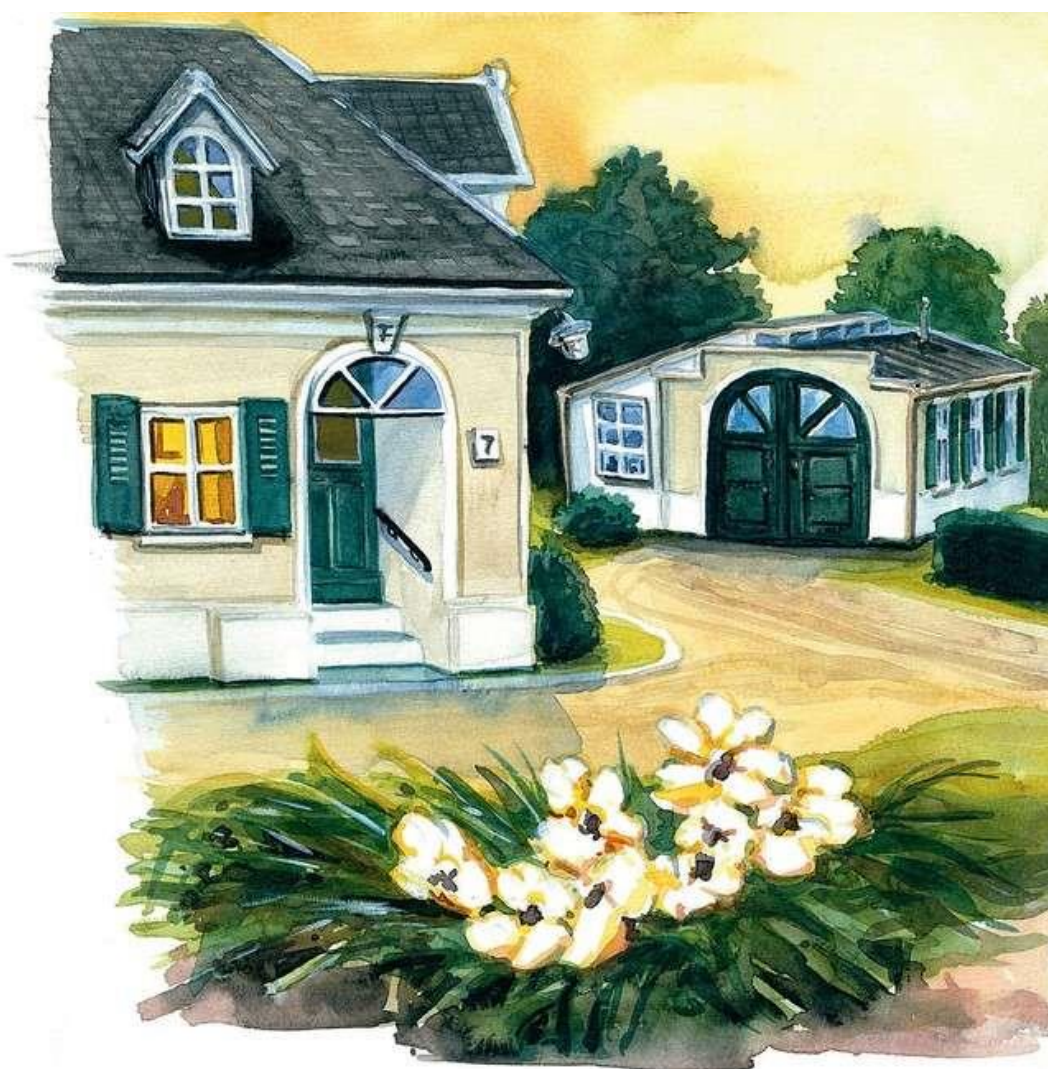
I hope everyone enjoys this book immensely. And while reading it, please keep in mind: just because you can't believe it doesn't mean it isn't true.

**Heinz Swoboda**

# DAD'S SECRET TALKING CARS



Little Dino and his dad Ferdinand, whom everyone calls Ferdi, live alone in a house on the outskirts of Vienna. Not quite alone, though, because next to the house is an old garage with lots and lots of cars, so-called classic cars, some rather old and some a bit younger.





But in the last few years, it has been rather quiet in the garage. Dad used to spend a lot of time with his beloved cars, his “treasures” as he called them. He looked after them, he drove around in them, he even spoke with them and they spoke back.

Indeed, they told one another lots. The cars told him about the adventures they had experienced before they came to Dad’s garage, and Dad told them about his life, what his passions were and how happy he was when his son Dino was born. Dad was always very careful to keep it secret that he spoke with the cars and that they spoke with him.





However, all that suddenly changed one day when Dad's beloved wife, Dino's mum, had a dreadful accident and never returned home. Dino was just four years old at the time, and since then, he missed his mother terribly, as did his father. Father and son rarely visited the garage any more since she was gone.

Dad just did the minimum required for his cars, and the chats with his "treasures" gradually became fewer and farther between over the years until they stopped altogether. The loss of his wife was simply too painful to bear. It seemed like nothing could cheer him up any more.

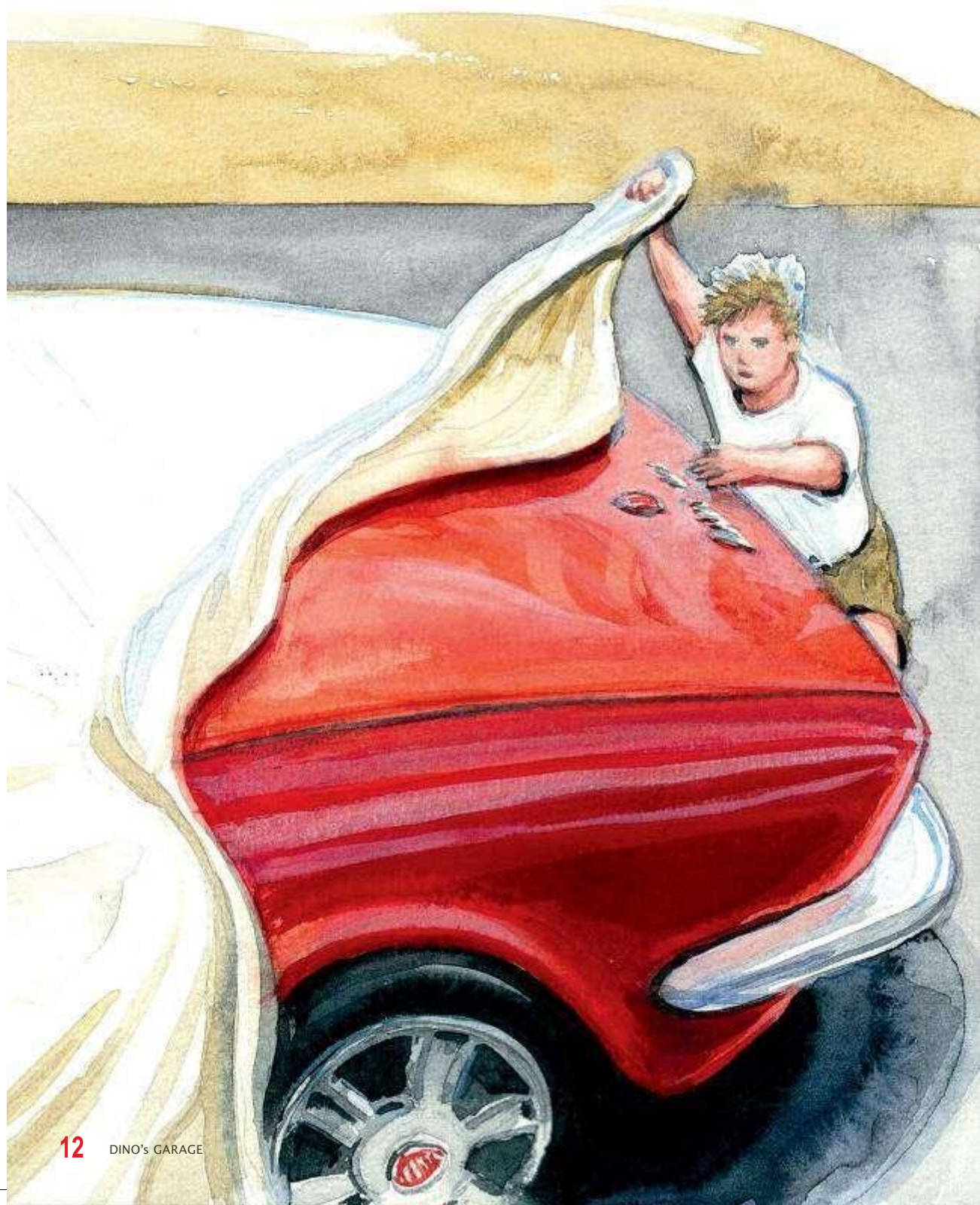
Many years later, on a very special day, his eighth birthday, Dino has gone outside one last time before bedtime. As dusk falls and Dino stands at the door of the house, he hears a clatter coming from the garage. The green garage door is usually locked. Dino isn't supposed to go in there, since his dad has forbidden him from entering the garage alone. But the curiosity...

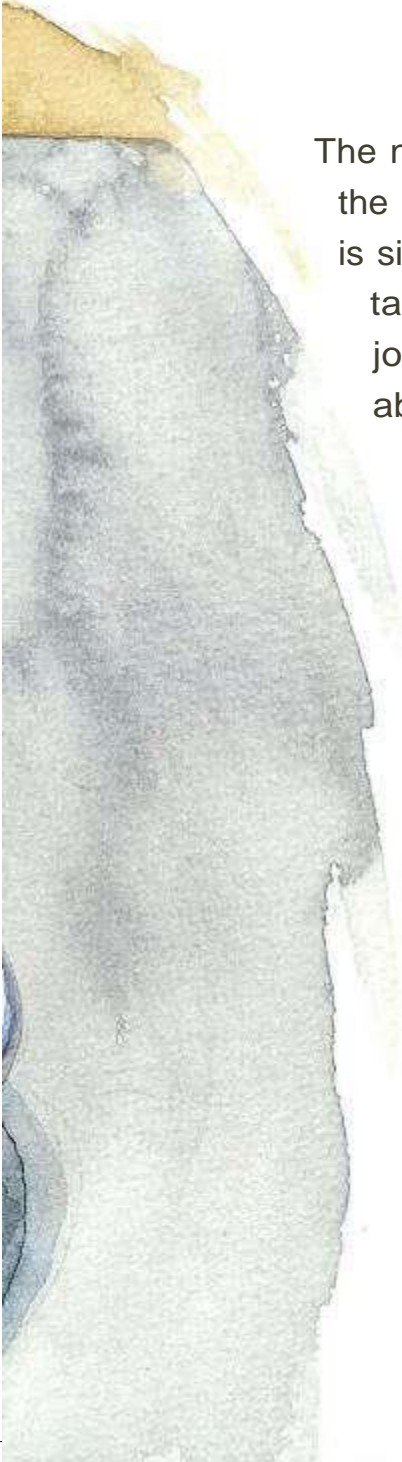
He carefully opens one part of the big door, which surprisingly is unlocked today, and has a look inside to see what has made the noise. He can't identify anything apart from Dad's dusty old cars. He is just about to leave again when he hears a noise. Strange, thinks Dino, it must have been an animal which has wandered in – there are indeed a lot of cats in the area.











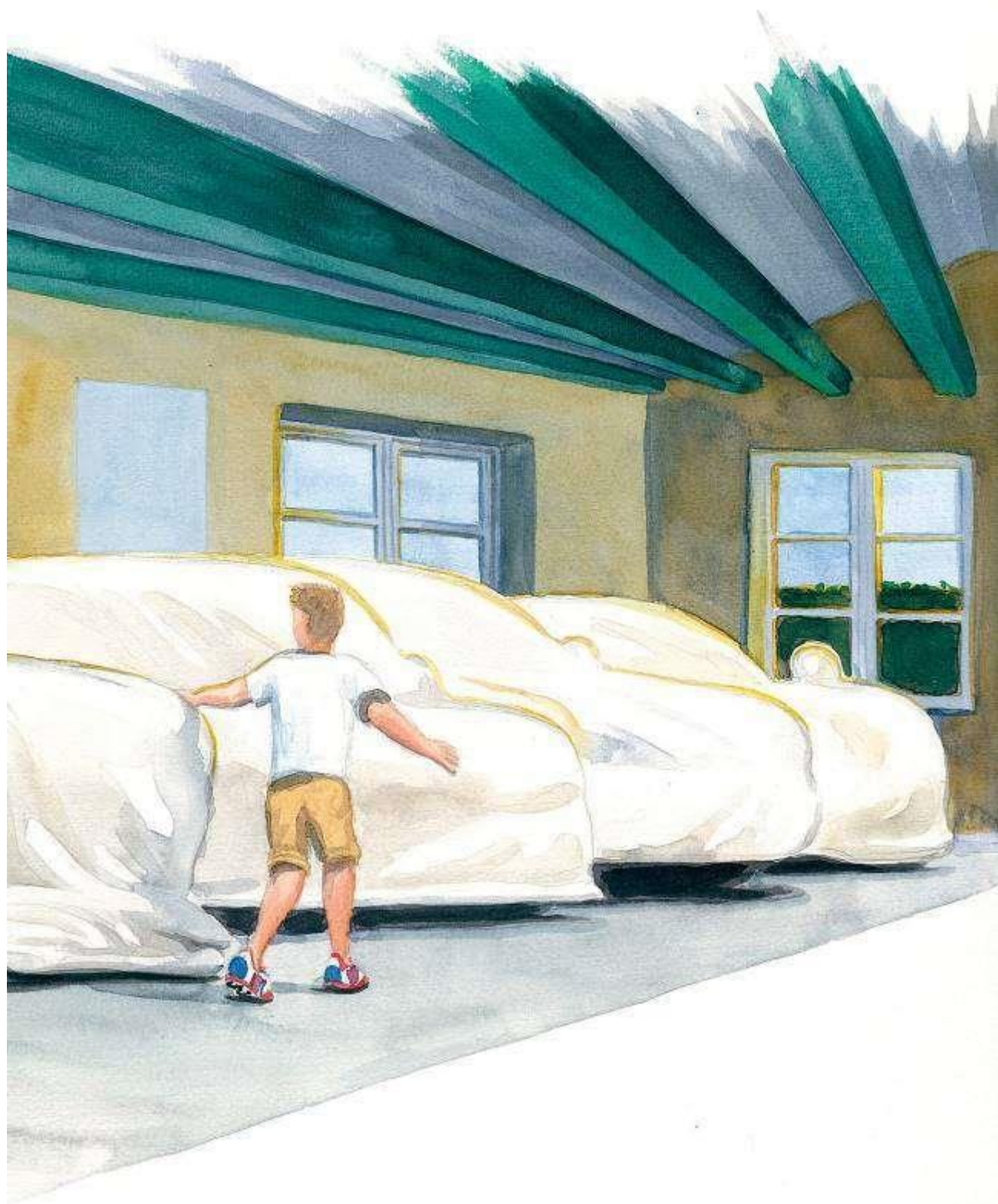
The noise comes from the furthest corner of the garage where a partially uncovered car is sitting. All the others have covers and tarpaulins on them – their pyjamas, as Dad jokingly called them when he still talked about his cars. Although Dino isn't that happy about being in a dimly lit garage, he walks over to the covered car and carefully lifts the dusty cover.

It is a Fiat. Its name is under the round logo on the bonnet: "Dino". The writing is a bit strange, but he can decipher it. The little boy is bewildered and quietly says to himself: "It's got the same name as me." Whereupon a gentle voice comes from the Fiat Dino: "I know."







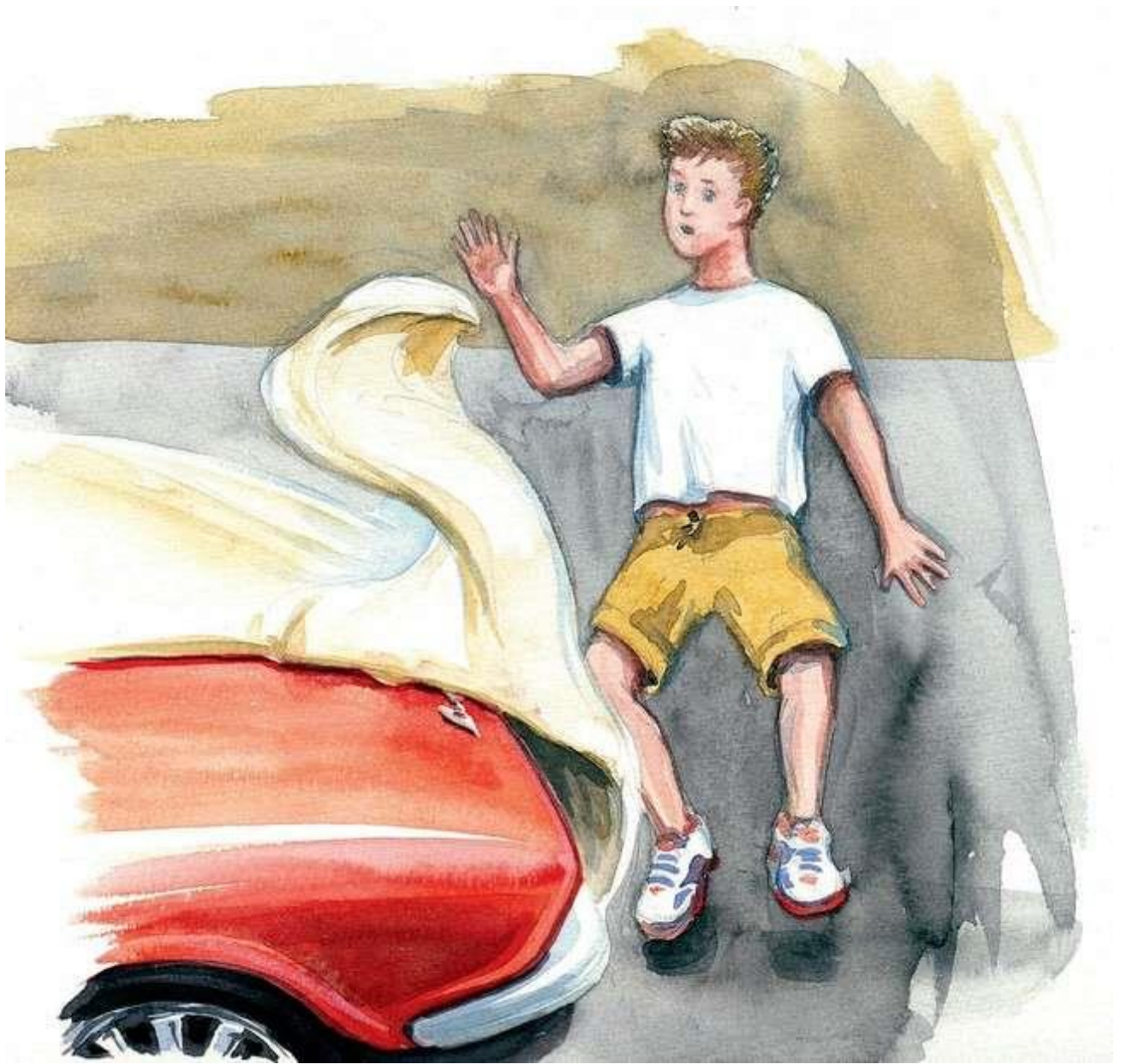


Startled, Dino jumps backwards and throws the cover over the car again. He stands rooted to the spot while the Fiat continues to speak: "Your father named you after me because I was his favourite car." Little Dino can't move for fear, but at the same time, he is filled with curiosity.

"You can talk," he says to the red car, "you can really, really talk!"

"Yes I can," says the little Fiat. "I've been living here for over twenty years. I was the first classic car your father bought. He used to drive me a lot. Look, I've still got a little dent where he bumped into a traffic sign. It just seems like yesterday..." Dino can't believe that the car is really talking to him.

Suddenly, the other cars begin to speak quietly under their covers. They say hello to each other, and also to the young boy, who still isn't sure whether this is real or just a dream. He can hear their voices coming from all corners. "Hello, little Dino," they say, "ciao Dino."



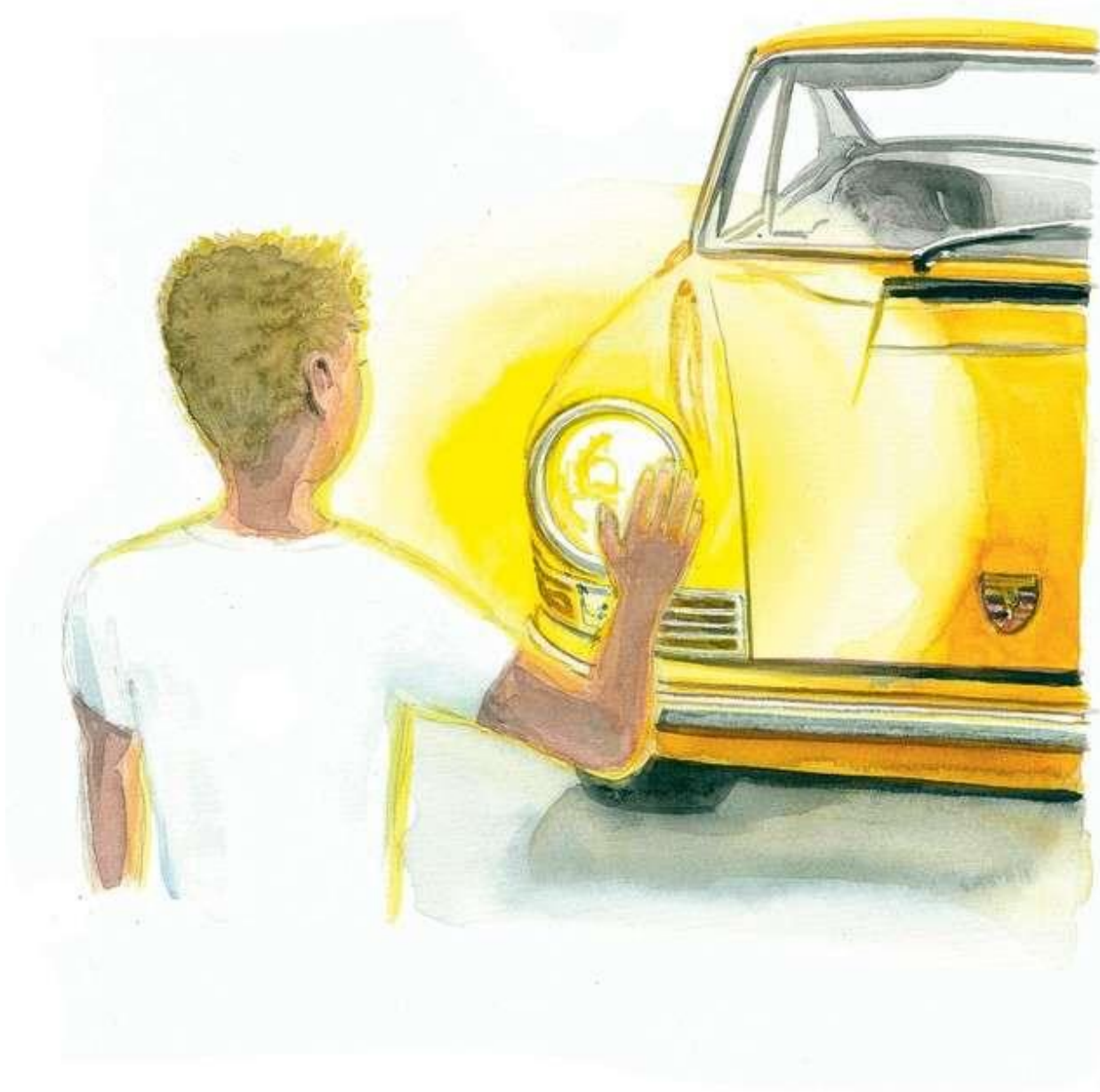


Dino summons up all his courage. Carefully, one after the other, he uncovers each car. And he can't believe his eyes: the cars are chatting with each other, moving quietly around the garage and flashing their headlights.

Little Dino is absolutely amazed and lost for words. Now, it is getting rather late and already dark outside, so he only has a few more minutes in the garage. He has another look at all the cars, chats with them briefly and listens to them. Then he has to go home again, since Dad is undoubtedly waiting for him already. He says his goodbyes, promising to come back soon, and closes the big garage doors. After walking a couple of steps towards the house, Dino turns around and races back. He tugs the garage door open one more time because he still can't quite believe what happened. But, indeed, there they are, still standing in a circle and chatting with each other, exactly as he left them a moment ago.

"Don't you believe us, Dino?" asks the yellow Porsche 911. "W-why, of course I d-do," stutters Dino, "I just thought I was dreaming." Again, he promises to return tomorrow. The cars answer with a quick flash of their headlights which lights up the whole garage.

Having arrived back home still rather confused, Dino sits down at the table for supper. Of course, his father knows something is up, because he has noticed that Dino is acting differently. In answer to why, Dino's cheeks flush and he asks: "No, nothing's the matter. What do you mean, Dad?"







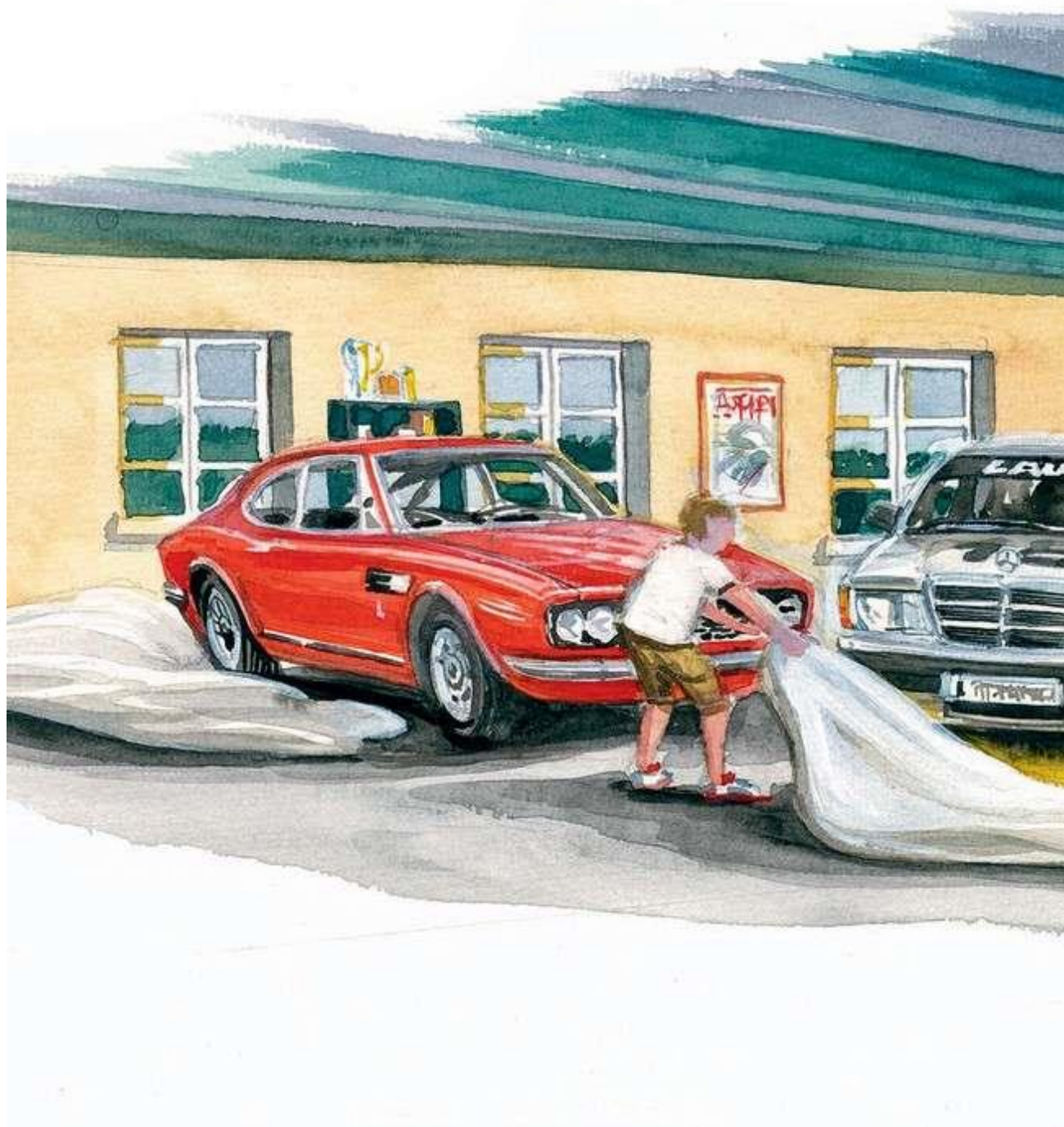
Dad smiles and stops the questioning, because what Dino doesn't know is that Dad has seen him coming out of the garage, turning around and talking to someone at the garage door. He already knows that Dino has discovered the secret all on his own.

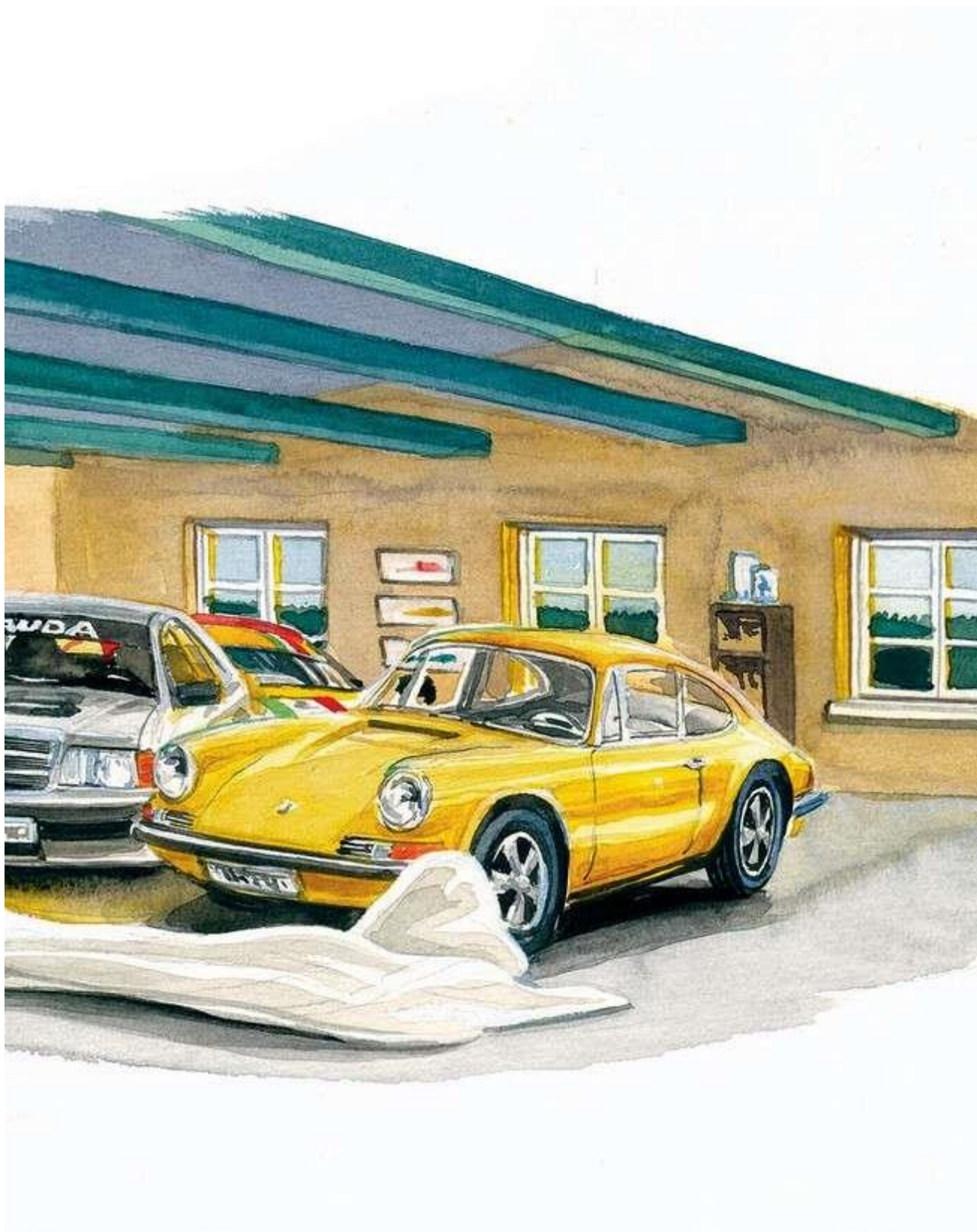
Later that night, Dino is put to bed by his father, as every night. He is tossing and turning so much that Dad asks him what is wrong. "Nothing, really," begins Dino, "but Dad, I have to tell you something..." And in the middle of the sentence, exhausted, he falls fast asleep.

The next morning before breakfast, Dino asks his father excitedly if he can run over to the garage. He just can't wait. Smiling, his dad asks why. "Just because. I, um..." stammers the boy. "Of course you can," says Dad, "but don't be too long."

Dino has never run so fast between the house and the garage before. He opens the big green door, and sure enough, all the cars in the garage greet him with a cheerful: "Good morning, Dino!" He is so happy that he is lost for words.

The cars are all uncovered and trundling around him. They are moving slowly and carefully, because Dad has told them never to speak to anyone except him – and especially not to his son, as not to frighten him. Dad had planned to tell Dino his secret himself at the right time.







# THE LITTLE FIAT DINO

Dino is dying to learn more about the cars, so he asks his namesake how it all started with him and Dad. The red Fiat rolls back a bit and starts to recount the story of how he was bought as a classic car in very good condition. For a couple of years after that, he was the only car in the garage. He was driven regularly at shows and rallies and was very well looked after. But his dream was really to have lots of friends, a big family, maybe even a cool Dino convertible as a partner someday.



He proudly talks about the time he spent with Dad. In the beginning, he spoke only Italian, so Ferdi and he didn't quite understand each other. From Italy, he had come to Carinthia in Austria, which was where he started to learn German. He hasn't lost his accent completely, much to little Dino's amusement. And he hasn't lost his Italian pride – after all, he is a Ferrari.

The Fiat explains in a shortened version why he is a Ferrari and which other Ferraris there are, such as the street version Ferrari 246 – which, as he proudly points out, has the same engine as him. It's a fine six-cylinder racing engine, lots of power, but also a bit of a diva, because the little Ferrari engine isn't always running smoothly.

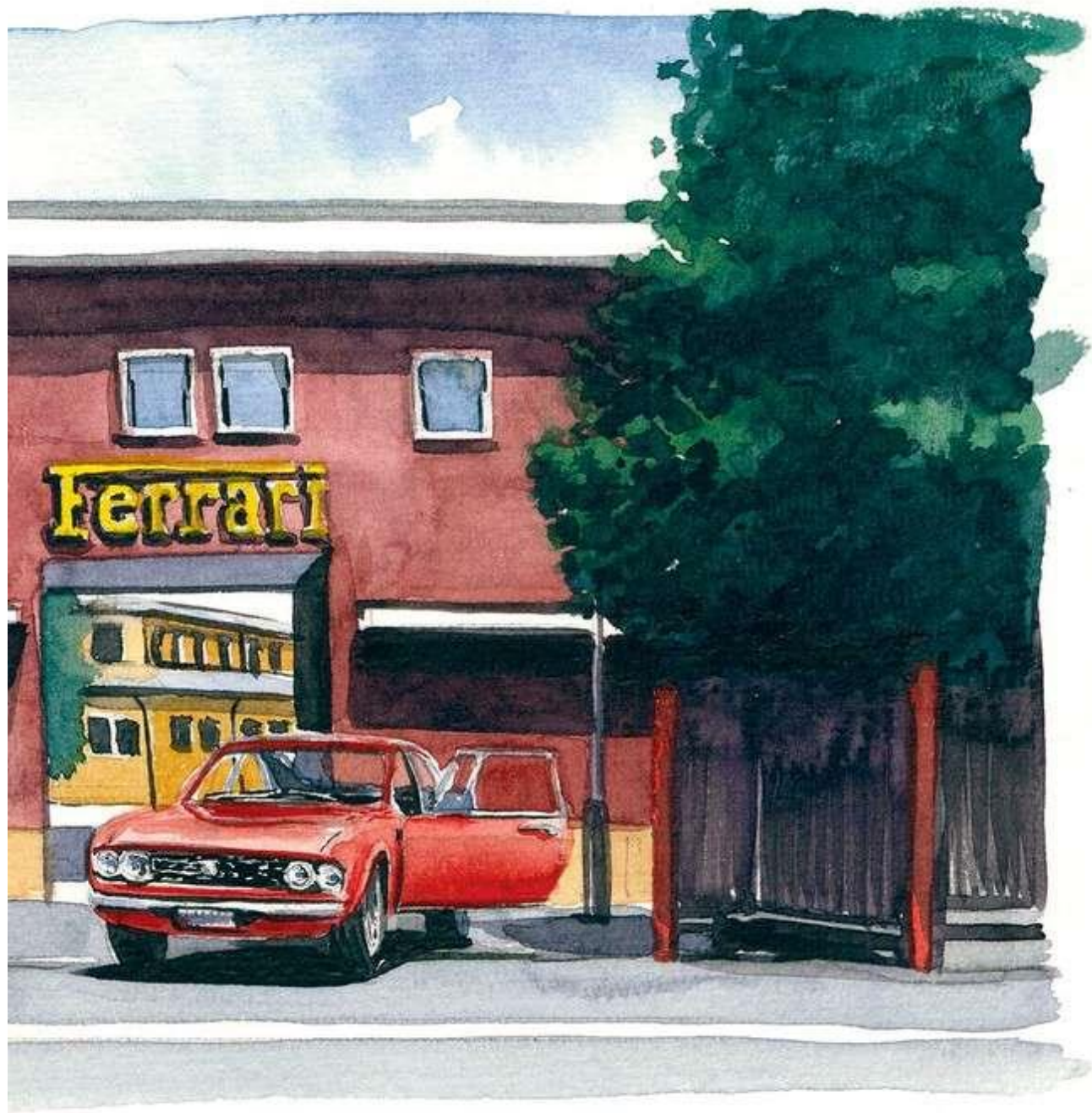
He also talks about his travels abroad with a friend, a BMW 2002 which is about the same age as him. One time, they drove to the Ferrari factory in Maranello, where the Fiat Dino was told that he was also “one of them” and that he shouldn't be sad that the word Ferrari wasn't written on his bonnet.



As proof of his origin and heritage, he keeps a photo in his glovebox that he likes to show to others. There he is, posing in front of the Ferrari factory in Maranello. Little Dino looks at the photo and is pleased for the Fiat, which is almost bursting for joy.

The Fiat tells Dino about his beginnings when he sat outside a public garage, dirty and dusty. There were many other cars as well, but they were all grey and sad like him, because they were never driven and totally neglected. It was cold and uncomfortable. Nobody even charged up his battery, he says, sounding very sad. Occasionally, he was rolled outside – those were his highlights. But then, he always had to go back inside the dusty garage again. Dino listens intently to the Fiat's story, as do all the other cars.







He always wanted friends, says the Fiat, but he was alone for a long time. Then, when he was finally with Dad, gradually more and more cars came. Dad bought them from all over the world.

One rally has especially stuck in his mind. It was his first big event, here in Austria. He can't remember the name, though. "Hmm," he ponders, "what was it called again?" He just can't recall. The yellow Porsche asks: "Oh, come on, where



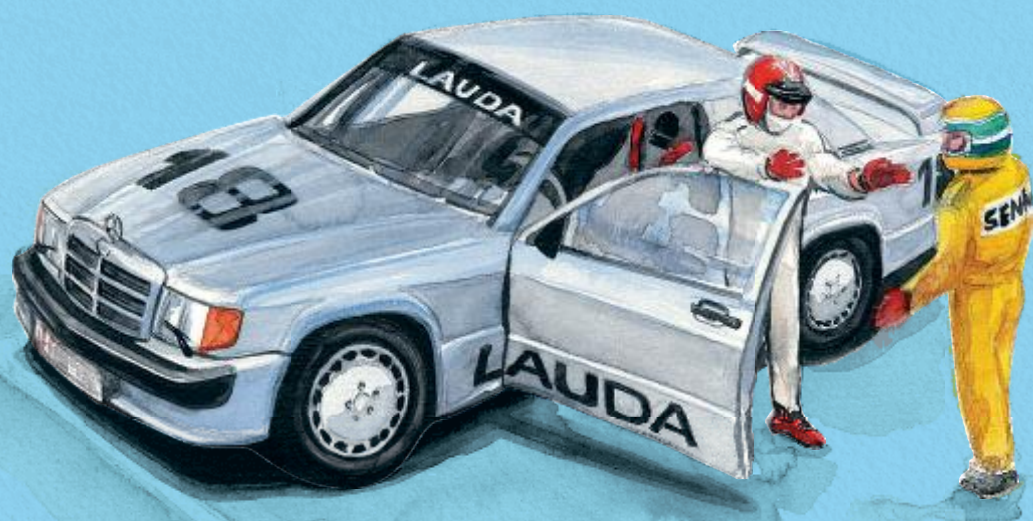
was it, what did it look like?" Beautiful scenery, replies the Fiat, in the mountains. "It was sometime in summer, there were many other classic cars, and I was just about the youngest of them all." Alas, the name still eludes him.

All of a sudden, he exclaims: "Ennstal Classic! Yes, that's what it was called. In a town named Gröbming. It was like paradise there."





# NIKI'S MERCEDES





The Fiat has hardly finished his sentence when the silver Mercedes yells: “Hahah, I was there too once! I was there too!”

The small Mercedes – nicknamed “Baby Benz”, as Dino has learned by now – starts to tell his story about when he took part in the first race at the new Nürburgring circuit with his ultra-famous VIP driver Niki Lauda. It was in 1984, and they came in second behind a talented newcomer named Ayrton Senna, who was still unknown at the time.

“Yeah, yeah, our great racing car,” the others mutter. They have obviously heard the story many times already. “But please, do go on,” says the old yellow Porsche 911.

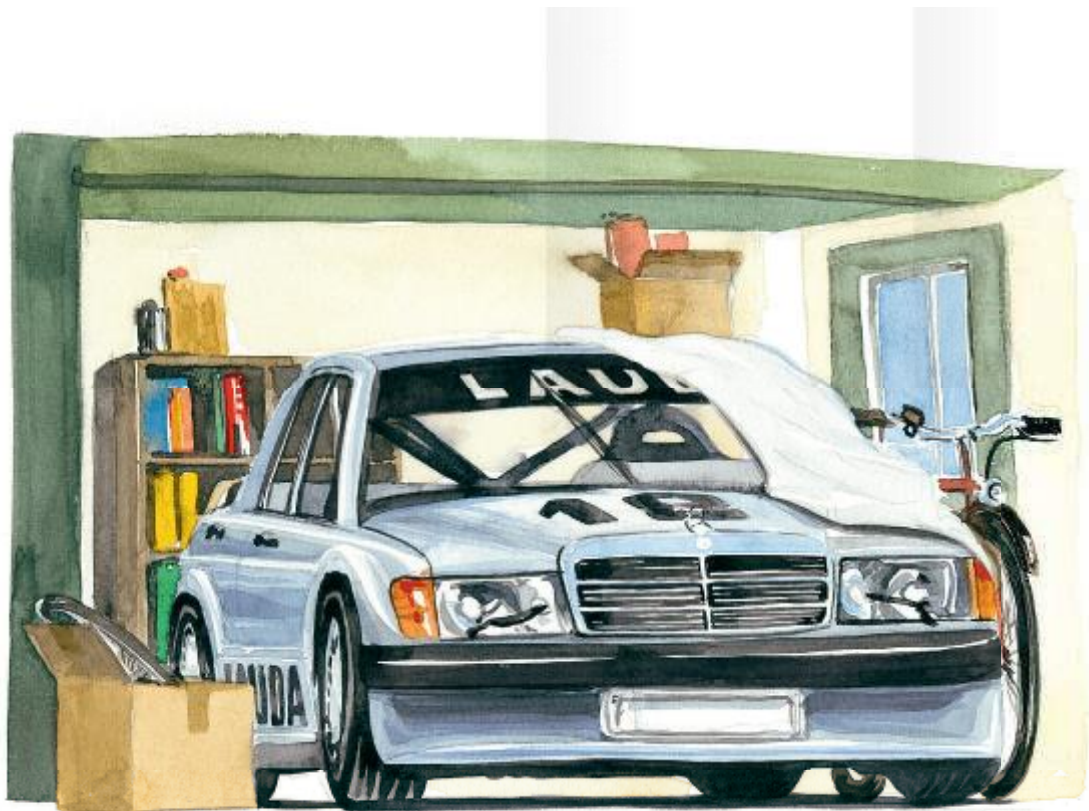
The little Mercedes recounts that he also spent a lot of time in a garage. He was almost forgotten about, never restored or tidied up, never received a new coat of paint. It’s not that he wasn’t loved, but they kept him in exactly the same condition as on his big day at the Nürburgring race.

Sometimes, the Mercedes was shown to the public, and eventually, when he was sold after 30 years, he ended up in Dad's garage in Vienna. That was the first time he ever left Germany, and it felt a little strange, as he admits to Dino and the others.

Previously, he was done up a bit by Mercedes in his birthplace of Stuttgart, but no one gave him much attention or really believed his story. He was on display with the other Mercedes cars, but neither they nor the passers-by nor the potential customers who came to look at him noticed his start number or his racing equipment. The mechanics couldn't really help him, either, as they didn't know exactly what was wrong. He just didn't run well. He coughed, spluttered and had trouble starting. They couldn't even drive him on the road as his tyres were so-called slicks, without a tread.

Nonetheless, he is proud of his time in Stuttgart, because he was at the famous Mercedes factory. There, he was closely inspected, and several experts came to look at him and talk about him – unfortunately, he couldn't understand what they were saying, as they spoke very quietly. He just hoped that they weren't planning on taking him apart or, worse, scrapping him. But on the contrary: just a few weeks

later, he was loaded on a car carrier trailer and taken to Vienna. There, a specialist named Markus, one of Dad's good friends, used all his skill and enthusiasm to restore him to his former glory. Quickly, in only two night shifts, because shortly afterwards, the Mercedes was to enter his first rally at the Ennstal Classic in Austria. He had never heard about the event before. All the cars are laughing: "You two were at the same rally. That is funny!"





Enthusiastically, the Mercedes continues to tell of how he was allowed to drive a couple of very fast laps on the Red Bull Ring. Finally, he was back on a race track and once again the centre of attention – even though he was by far the youngest car at the event. The others, so-called classic cars, were much, much older than the little Benz, but it didn't bother him in the slightest.

"I told you, they're all much older than us," says the red Fiat. The little Benz nods and proudly shows off his original stickers, start number, original seat, seat belts and the roll cage which protects the driver in the event of an accident. "Come on in, have a seat," he tells Dino and opens the door for him. Whilst Dino proudly turns the steering wheel in the oversized driver's seat, the Mercedes continues with his story. At the Ennstal Classic, many spectators talked about him. Could he really be the Lauda Mercedes, they wondered? A car in such splendid condition? When he heard them, he just chuckled at himself, said nothing, and enjoyed his time at the event.







But the best of all, he remembers excitedly, had been when Dad told him some very special news: “You will meet your star driver again.” What a magnificent surprise! There were plans for a magazine article about him and “his” driver, Niki.

From that moment on he couldn’t sleep any more. Then the day came, earlier than expected, when the little Mercedes was supposed to meet his racing driver Niki. Beforehand he was cleaned, polished, filled up with petrol, and even got a new battery. Then he was loaded on a trailer and transported. Wait a minute, he had thought, why don’t they let me drive myself? But Dad didn’t want anything to happen to him on the way to the important appointment with the Formula 1 World Champion. He spent the night in the trailer, which he was unaccustomed to, but the thrill and the anticipation outweighed his apprehension.

Then the big moment came: the man with the red cap arrived and stopped in front of him. He opened the door, sat inside, ran his hand over the seat and began to tell his story about the race back in 1984. They had started from the back and passed one car after another until they were in second place a few laps before the finish. Niki had tried to overtake, but the young Brazilian Senna just pipped him to the post by two seconds.

“Yes, I remember that race very well,” said Niki. “We came in second, but only because, unlike the others, we hadn’t had the time to test and set up the car beforehand.” At that, the little Benz quietly smiled and nodded in agreement.

The little Mercedes was very proud when Niki was sitting at the steering wheel again, and later when they were both posing for the photographer. And to top it all off, he even got an autograph on his roof. That had always been one of his biggest wishes, and now it had come true.

No sooner had it started than it was over. Niki looked at him once more, turned around and was gone as quickly as he had arrived. The little Benz wasn’t quite sure if he had dreamed the whole episode, but the autograph on his roof proved that it had really happened. “We remember how proud you were,” say the other cars, “when you returned to the garage and told us everything about your big day.”

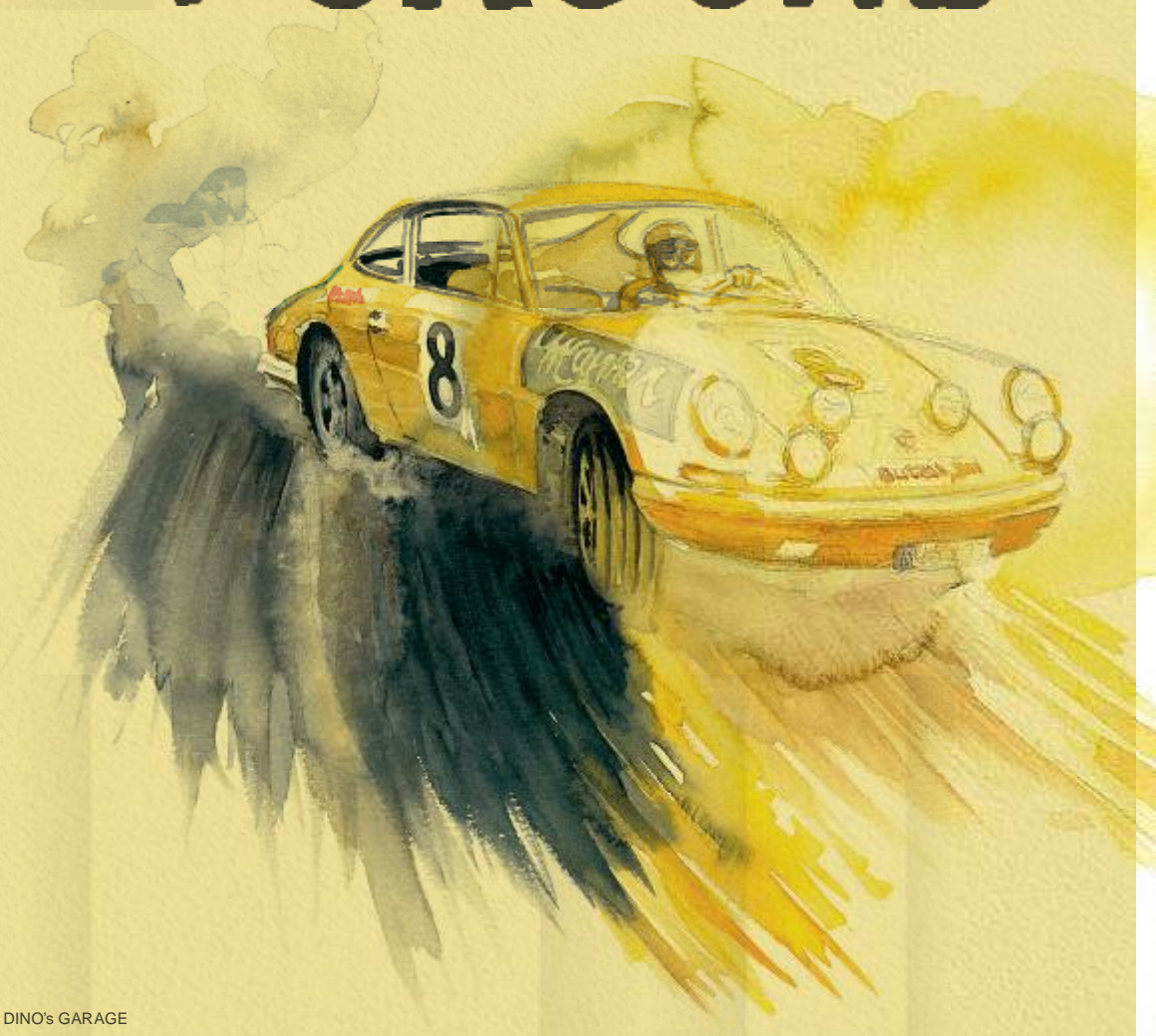
“Ah yes, a racing car. I used to be one too...” murmurs a voice from the corner where the yellow Porsche is standing. Dino, who is still sitting in the little Mercedes, gets out and walks over to the other car. “Please tell us,” he says to the Porsche. “What is your story?”







# THE YELLOW PORSCHE



The others laugh. "Yeah, that is a really good story," says the red Fiat, "listen to this, little Dino." The first sight the others got of the yellow Porsche was as he arrived on the back of a tow truck. He was ugly, neglected and stuck together with bits and pieces. He couldn't even drive himself and had to be pushed into the garage. Apart from the wrecked engine, his tyres were completely flat, he was painted in a hideous red, and he had seats that didn't match with the rest of the interior at all. The Porsche had given up all hope and didn't believe that he would ever be allowed to run again.

However, he always claimed, from the very beginning, that his owner was a famous racing driver and that he had been a real rally car. But the others didn't believe him. "Yup, we thought he was just making up stories," mutters a very flat orange car from the corner.

The Porsche even showed the other cars magazine articles and photos which he had on his back seat. But since he was red at the time and the photos showed a yellow racing car, the others remained unconvinced. They thought his claims were ridiculous. One day, he was taken away, accompanied by the laughter and mocking of the others: "Hahah, he is probably going to the scrapyard, or he'll be taken to bits and sold."



However, he wasn't going to the scrapyard, but to the town of Salzburg, some 300 kilometres away. Dad took him there for a full restoration. The others, meanwhile, didn't believe he would ever return. Some said they'd always been sure he was lying. He's obviously been scrapped, they said, he doesn't exist any more.

But to everyone's surprise, he returned after two long years. He came back in a smart closed trailer usually reserved for very valuable cars, which is why no one recognised him at first. And he had his old colour again, a beautiful yellow. Only when he showed off his original chassis number did the others believe that he was indeed their old acquaintance.





He pointed out that his new, old colour was called “Bahama Yellow”, which prompted a round of laughter. But the other cars respected him now, and some even envied him, because he had been restored beautifully. He stood there shining and everything was as good as new.

The most important thing: he was able to drive again, which he proudly demonstrated as he started his engine. The tyres, the chassis, everything was in its original state. Even his radio was working again.

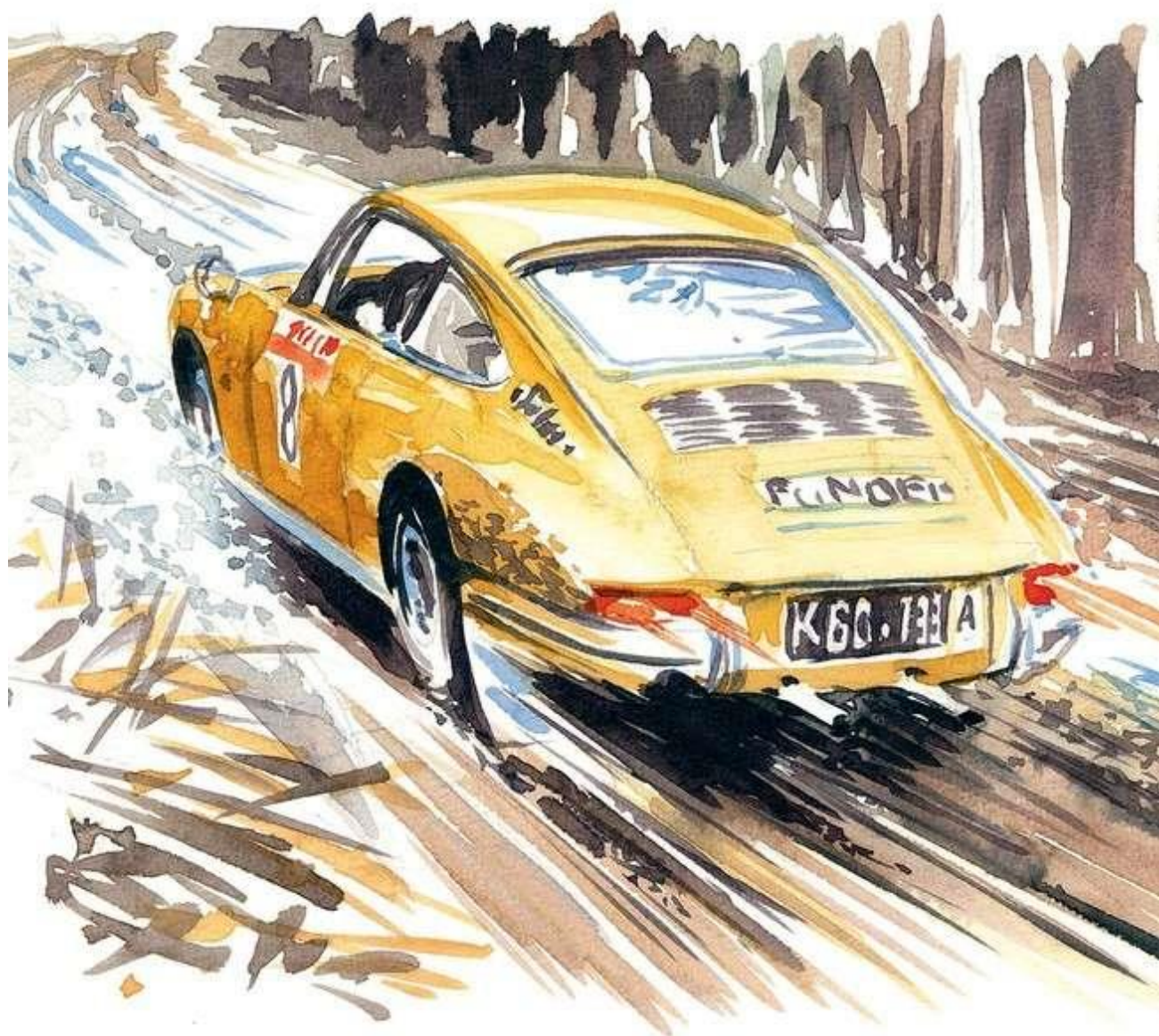
The others hailed him as a hero after his return. No one doubted any more that he was a rally car and knew many famous racing drivers. The most impressive of them all had



been Jochen, an adventurous daredevil with a crooked nose and heaps of charisma and charm. The Porsche was so proud to have been driven by this ambitious young driver, who indeed went on to become Formula 1 World Champion – and had a fatal accident the same year. “A tragic story,” murmurs the yellow Porsche, “very sad...”

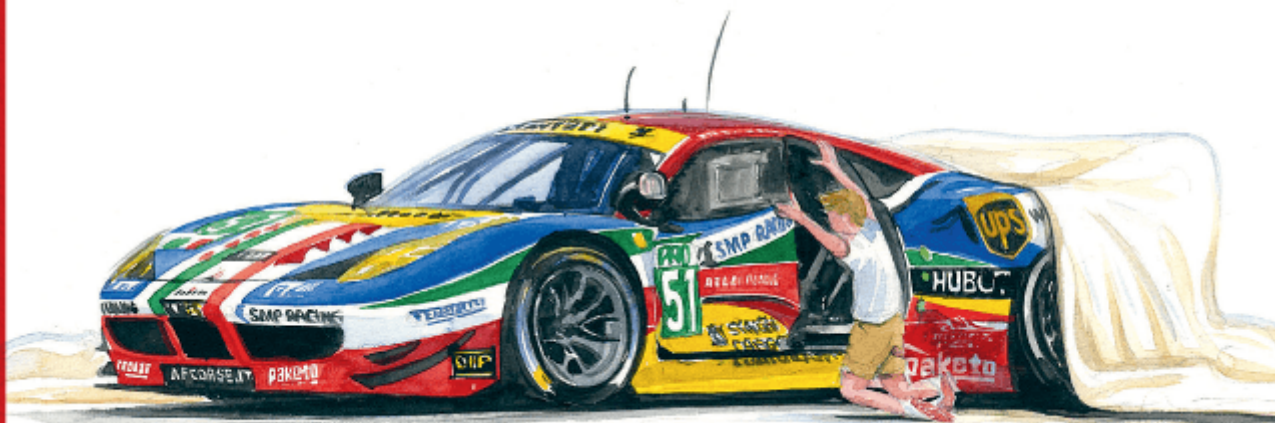
“Please go on,” Dino and the other cars encourage the Porsche. “Okay then, have a look at this,” he says. He has numerous old magazines and newspapers which Dad left on the back seat, and proudly shows them to the others. His big presentation was at the “50 Years of Porsche 911” event in Salzburg where he was admired by all the spectators. He is utterly content with the new life Dad has given him, and extremely happy to be back in the garage with the others.







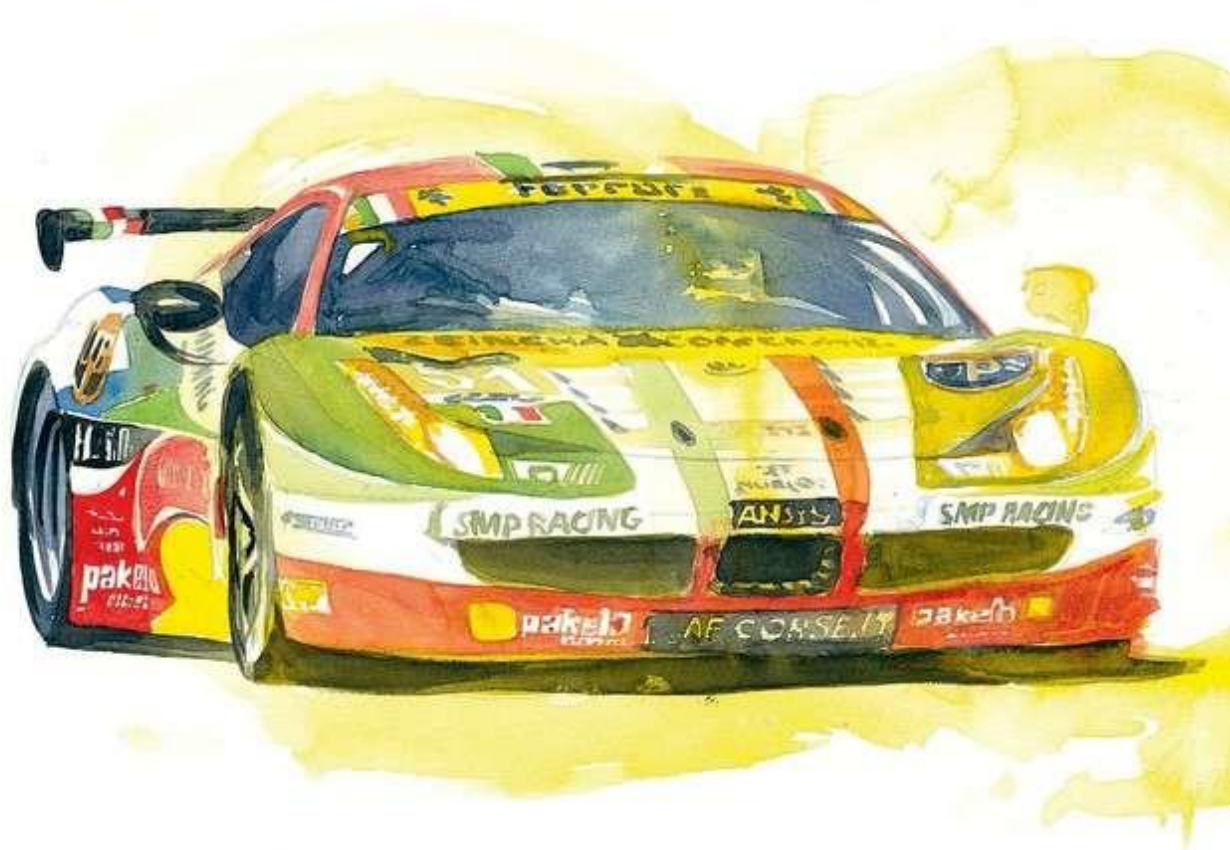
FERRARI,  
AS QUICK AS  
LIGHTNING




“And who are you, then?” asks little Dino as he carefully points towards the colourful, sticker-covered car which is silently sitting in the corner.

“That was something else, how our Italian friend came to be here,” says the Fiat Dino. “Go on, tell me,” responds Dino, and the red Fiat begins telling the story.

The first time they had set eyes on the Ferrari was when something was unloaded in front of the garage and carefully pushed inside. Everyone was surprised to see an almost new Ferrari, a race car, completely covered in stickers and sporting some war wounds from his last race. He was really sleek and low, almost frightening for the others. At first he didn't speak at all, but as the big green doors closed and everyone rolled around him, he began to talk. “He always talks very loudly, he's almost screaming,” says the Fiat. “It's only to be expected, as racing cars don't have exhausts!” Dino glances over at the Ferrari, but he can't tell whether the race car is listening.



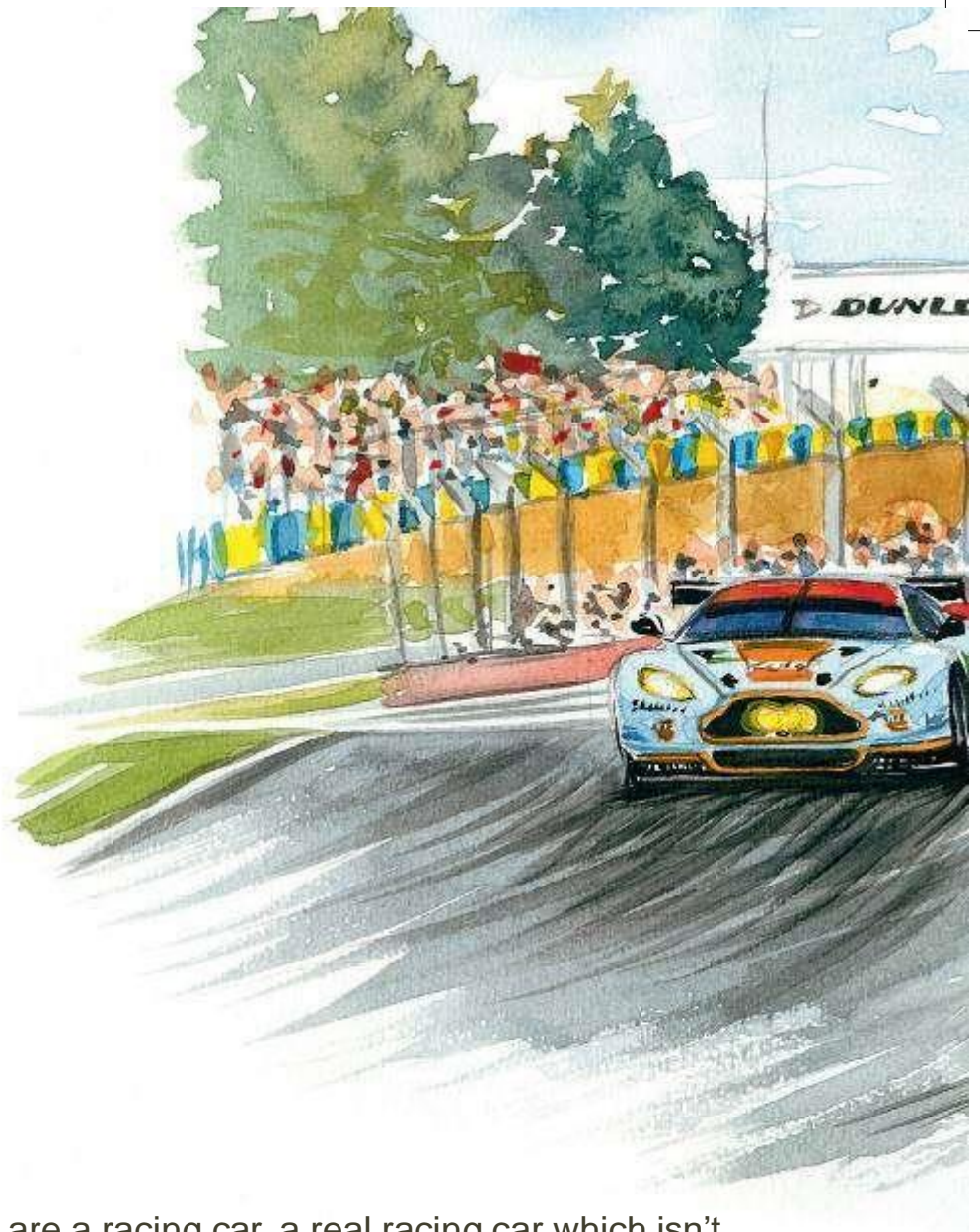




Sometimes, when he is in a good mood, the Ferrari talks about his three drivers, a Finn and two Italians. One of them even used to race in Formula 1. They are full-blooded racing drivers, and they used to drive the proud, loud Ferrari on tracks all over the world. Twice they took part in the famous 24-hour race at Le Mans in France, and both times they were on the podium.

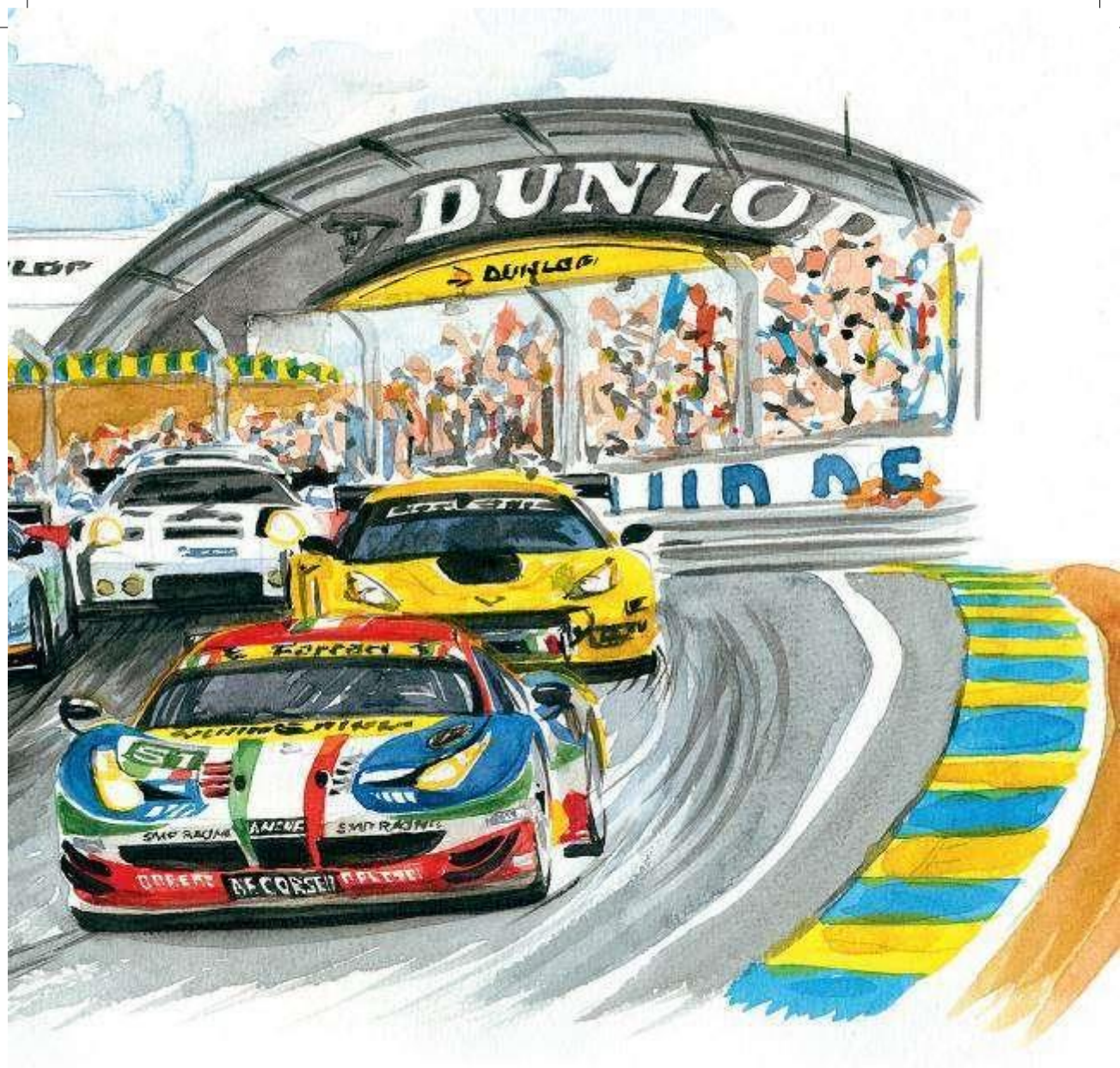
“Wow,” says Dino and carefully approaches the Ferrari, “now I know which race car this is. He became world champion in his second year of racing, my Dad told me that story many times.” The others are speechless.

Dino inspects the Ferrari a bit more closely. The car stands motionless and takes no notice of the little boy. The Ferrari’s bodywork is covered in beautiful-looking stickers from sponsors who used him as advertising. Inside, there are lots of smaller stickers which show where he has been. “He was even transported by airplane, to Japan and to America,” explains the Fiat Dino. “He has won many races there.”



“You really are a racing car, a real racing car which isn’t allowed on normal roads, aren’t you?” asks little Dino. “Is that why you only have one seat?” Suddenly, the Ferrari’s yellow lights flash and he begins to speak in a bellowing voice, startling Dino. “Scusi! Sorry, little man!” shouts the Ferrari. “But I don’t have an exhaust, I just can’t talk more quietly. You are a very nice little boy, and as you know, we Italians love kids. So that’s why I’m going to talk to you just like I did with your Dad.”

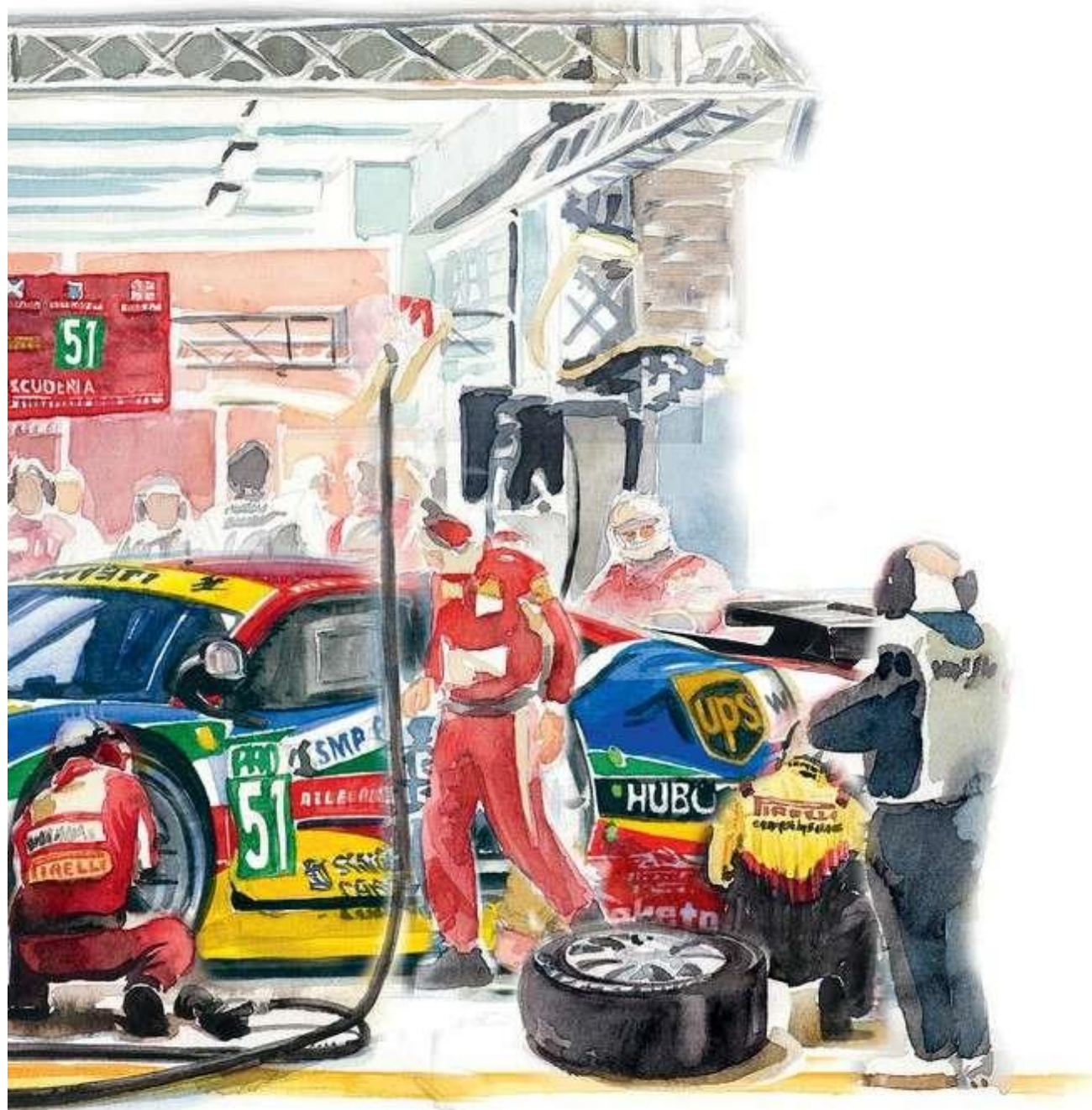




He tells Dino that the other cars tease him because he is not authorised to go on the road. They make fun of him because he always needs to be transported to places instead of driving himself. But after all, he is a race car. “Do you want to hop in and have a seat?” asks the Ferrari as he opens his extremely light door.













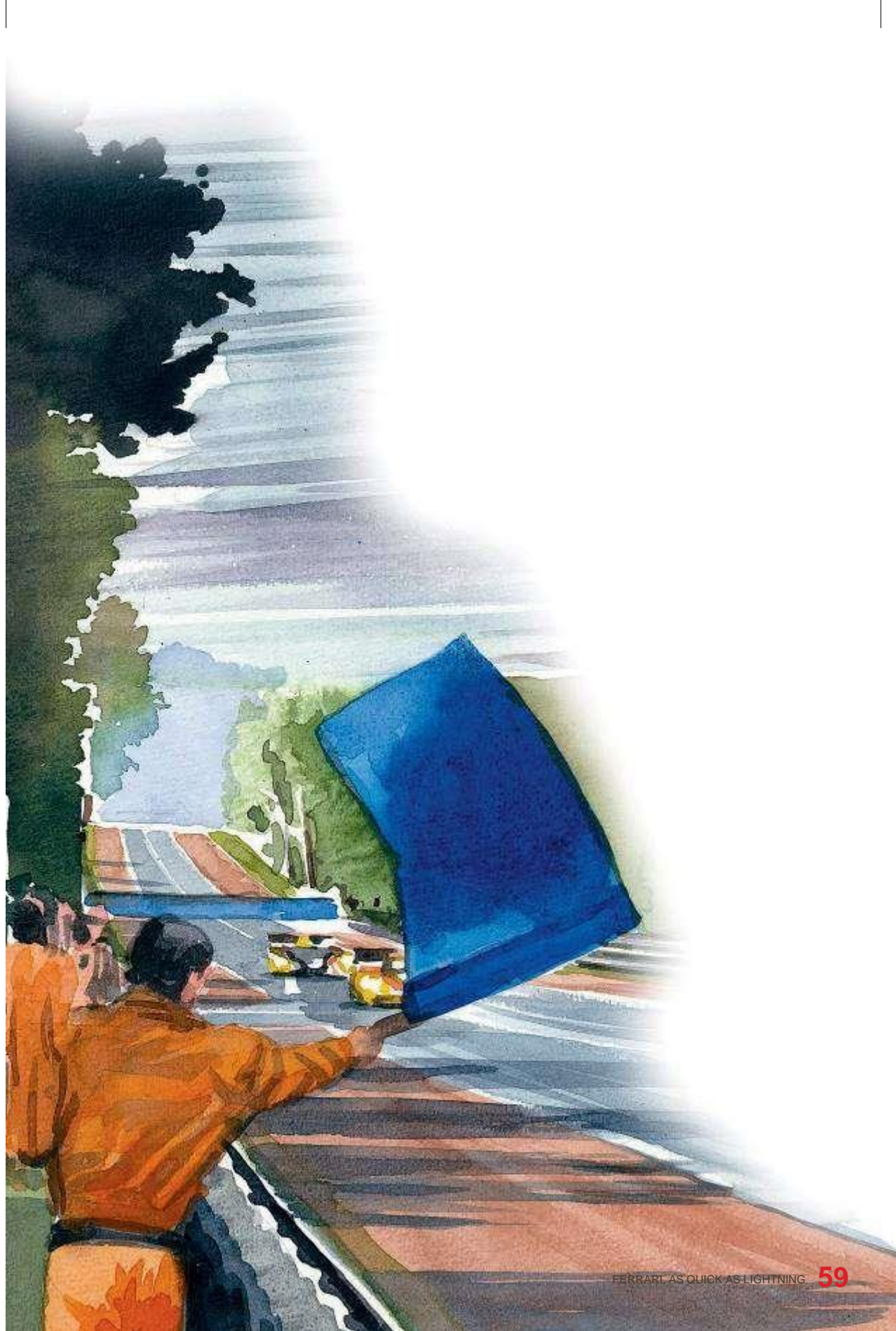
Dino, still a bit unsure, climbs inside. He tries to reach the pedals and turn the steering wheel. "Don't touch anything! And don't move any of my switches, either!" hisses the racing car. "Oh no, of course not!" Dino answers promptly. The Ferrari continues his story. On those occasions when he is allowed to go out on a race track, there are always engineers and mechanics who look after him and take good care of him. Of course, they all speak Italian like he does, but here in the garage, the other cars don't understand him. "I do!" interjects the Fiat. "Yeah, yeah, you do," answers the Ferrari, slightly annoyed.

“Please tell me what you got up to with Dad,” asks Dino.

“The first adventure after my racing career was in England at a really big event,” begins the red sports car. He just had to race up a hill twice, but it seems that Dad was a tad too ambitious, because he ended up in the straw bales in front of more than 100,000 enthusiastic fans. Dad was angry about his mistake, but the Ferrari just laughed about it. “It happens,” he shrugs. “And then what?” Dino wants to know.

“Then they took me back to the factory in Italy, and in no time at all I was repaired. I got my old stickers on again, and soon I was back in the garage with my new friends.”

Dino just can’t believe the stories he has heard...







Dino glances at his new watch, the one he received yesterday for his birthday, and realises that it is almost midday. How time has flown! Now he has to go home for lunch. He promises the cars that he will certainly, without a doubt, be back. He climbs out of the Ferrari, leaves the garage and closes the big door behind him.

Deep in thought, he wonders if he should share his exciting new secret with his dad or if he should keep it to himself...?







## IMPRINT

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All cars have been or are in possession of the author. All their narrations are based on true chassis histories that were researched and written down for kids in this book.

