

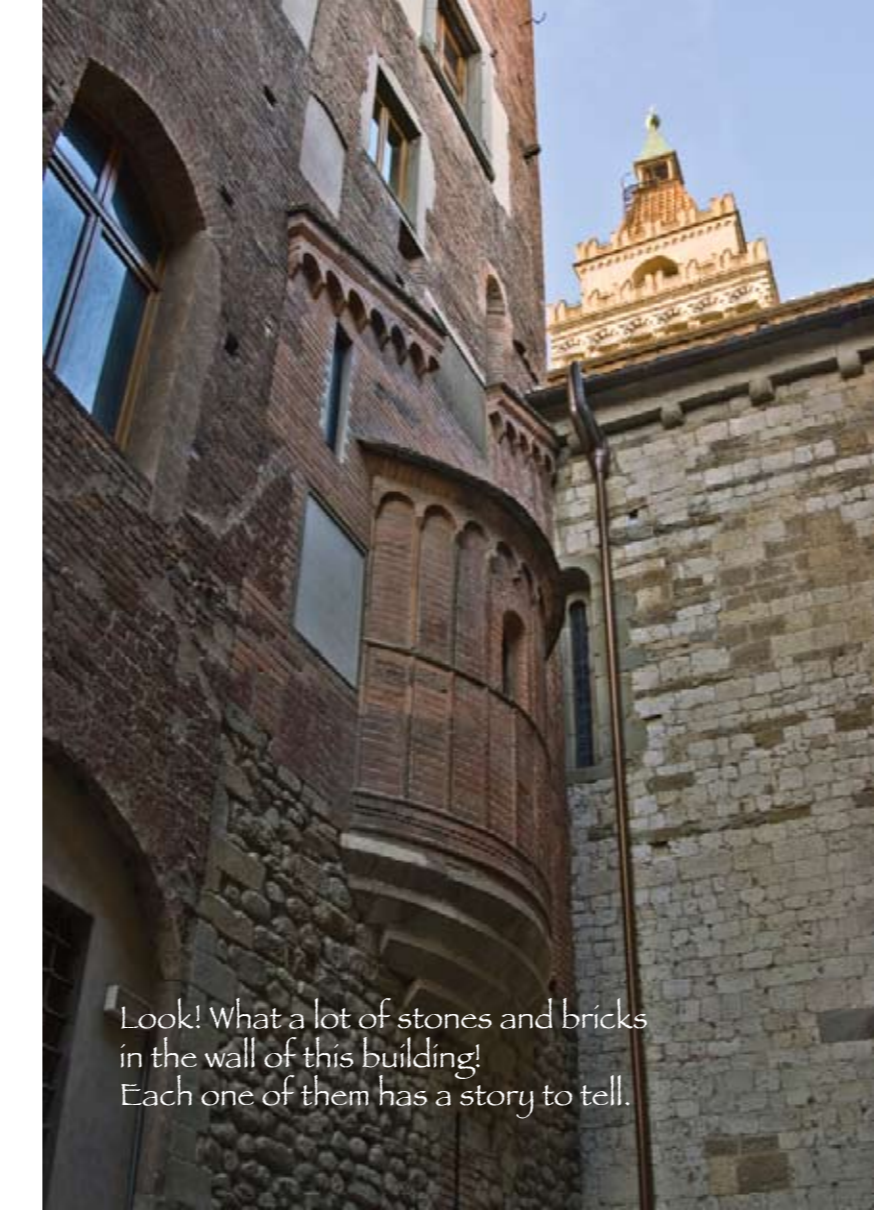


This is Piazza del Duomo in Pistoia

My journey starts here!

Walking three feet from the ground I step on a smooth round stone warmed by the sun.
- Why is it round?
- The River Brana has smoothed it, as we do with clay. Rivers have patient hands and deep pockets where collect all sort of things when they run down the mountains: logs, leaves, pebbles, even a whole village. People often forget to keep their pockets clean and so terrible disasters happen...

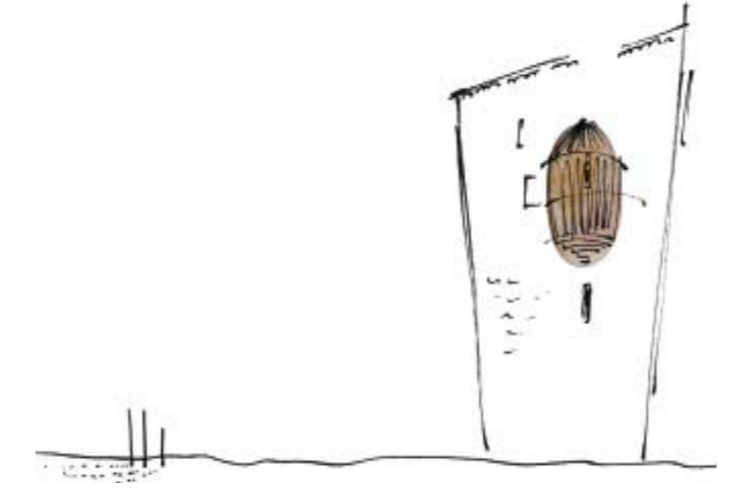
- Where is the river? I can't see any stream of water round here.
- It flowed near here even before the city was built. I imagine the stream. The city has disappeared. We find ourselves on a grassy hill where thousands of smooth round stones appear from the ground. Below us, the Brana sparkles jumping among the rocks while, on the opposite bank, among the debris and the reeds, a heron has just caught a frog.



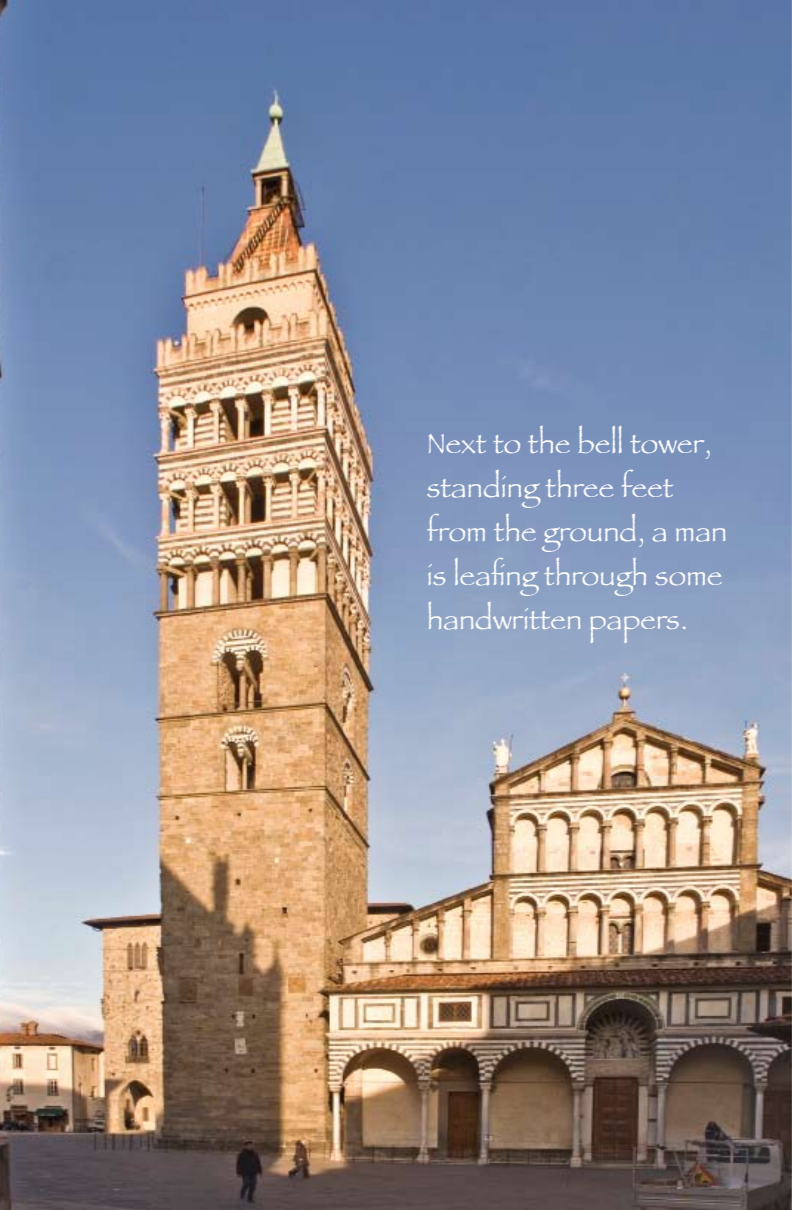
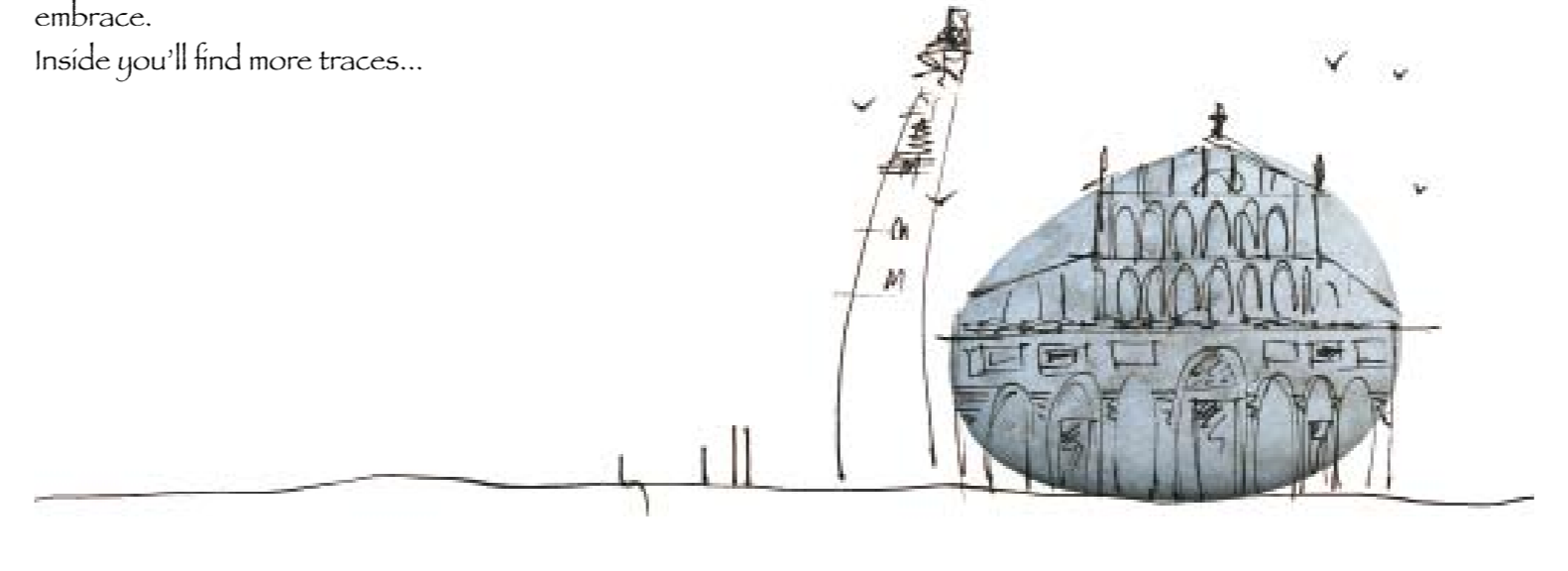
Look! What a lot of stones and bricks in the wall of this building! Each one of them has a story to tell.

There used to be an ancient street here, but a bishop, who was very powerful and probably very bossy, decided to build his house right upon it. It was a huge grey castle, made of smooth round stones. The tower was the symbol of his power over the city. As centuries passed, smooth round stones went out of fashion so the bishop who followed, modified the building. The dark manor became a luxurious palace. Look at the bricks up there! That was his private chapel.

The surrounding city hasn't changed much: the walls, the churches, the market square, the river, everything has remained in the same place.



There's a lot of things happening under the Cathedral's porch. Rattling noises. Dust. Workers going in and out.
- What's happening?
Scipione de' Ricci informs us that he has ordered to disassemble the Chapel of San Jacopo.
- Oh no! It's too late, we can't see it anymore...
- Not quite. There are still some traces left behind! Look at the golden leaves and flowers on the top of that door. And over there is a painting of San Jacopo who protects the city holding it in his embrace. Inside you'll find more traces...



Next to the bell tower, standing three feet from the ground, a man is leafing through some handwritten papers.

- In the year of our lord 1175, I myself Guido, the notary, finished copying the Statute of Consuls of Commune of Pistoia. This parchment document has survived the cruelty of time and today is the oldest statute of a Commune that can be admired in Italy.
- What is a Commune? It sounds like "common", which means to share things, as I share toys with my brother. We always argue about toys!
- But eventually you come to an agreement and you both are satisfied, aren't you? A Commune, in the Middle Ages was an agreement to live together peacefully.

