



Beato is a curious cat exploring different countries around the world. On his next trip, he sets out on an adventure to Israel where he rides a camel, floats in the Dead Sea, and learns about the Holy Land.

www.BeatoGoesTo.com

Check out Beato's other adventures in *Beato Goes to Greenland* and *Beato Goes to Indonesia*.

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SUCHETA RAWAL

BEATO GOES TO ISRAEL

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Beato Goes to Israel

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BEATO GOES TO ISRAEL

BY SUCHETA RAWAL

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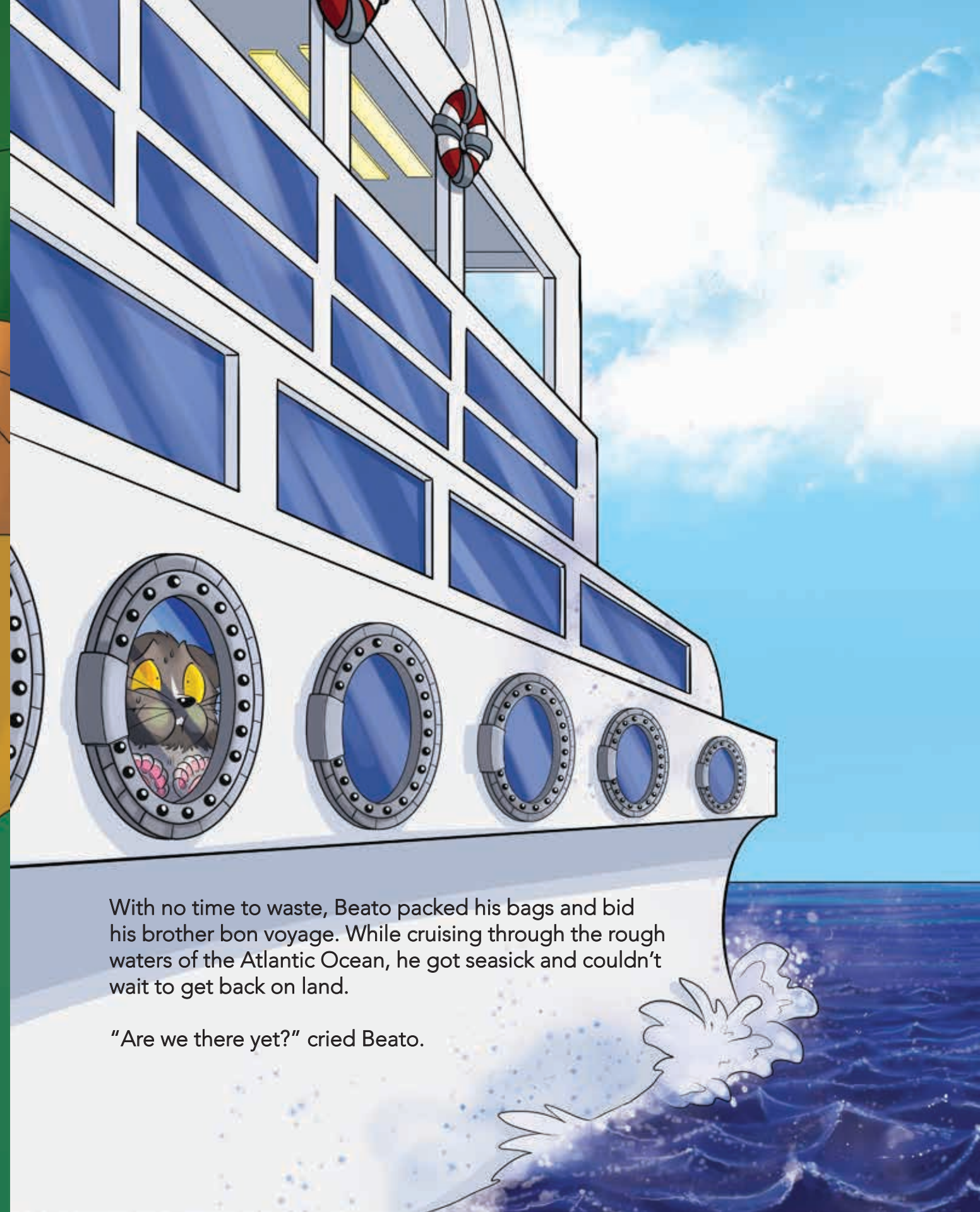
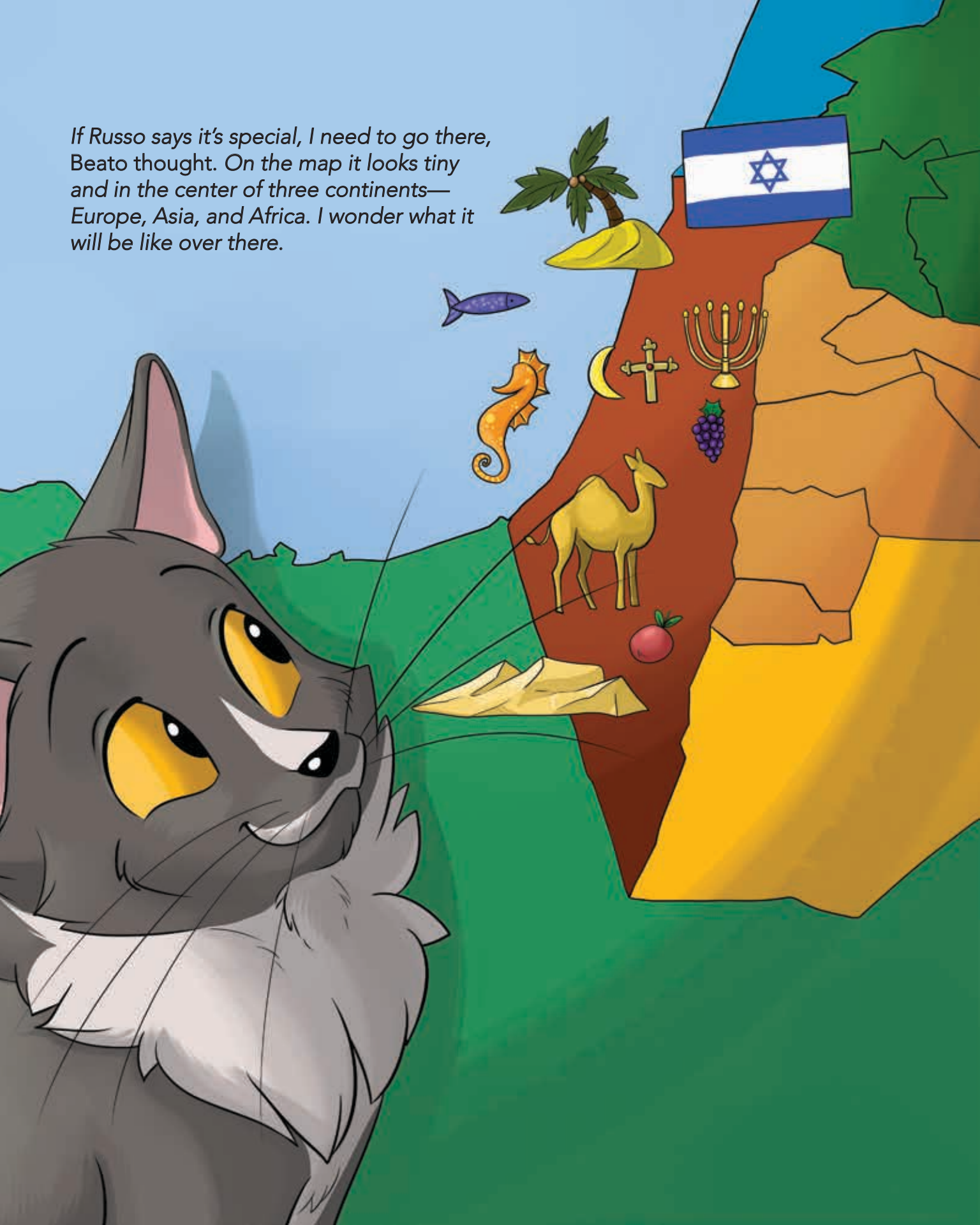
On a rainy Sunday afternoon, Beato looked out of his window, wondering where his next adventure would take him.

"Russo, where do you think I should travel to next?" he asked.

"Hmmm...how about Israel? I've heard it's a special place!"



If Russo says it's special, I need to go there, Beato thought. On the map it looks tiny and in the center of three continents—Europe, Asia, and Africa. I wonder what it will be like over there.



With no time to waste, Beato packed his bags and bid his brother bon voyage. While cruising through the rough waters of the Atlantic Ocean, he got seasick and couldn't wait to get back on land.

"Are we there yet?" cried Beato.

Beato finally arrived in Jaffa, a port city in Israel. As soon as he got off the ship, he saw cats in all colors and sizes, hundreds of them! They played around boats, took naps on fishnets, and ate fresh fish from the shore. He had never seen so many cats before!

Did I arrive in Cat Land? he scratched his whiskers and wondered.

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A pretty girl noticed Beato dragging his luggage, looking lost. She walked up to him and said "You seem new in town. Do you have any friends here?"

"Eh, no. This is my first time in Israel," replied Beato.

"Would you like to come to a party tonight? You can make some friends there."

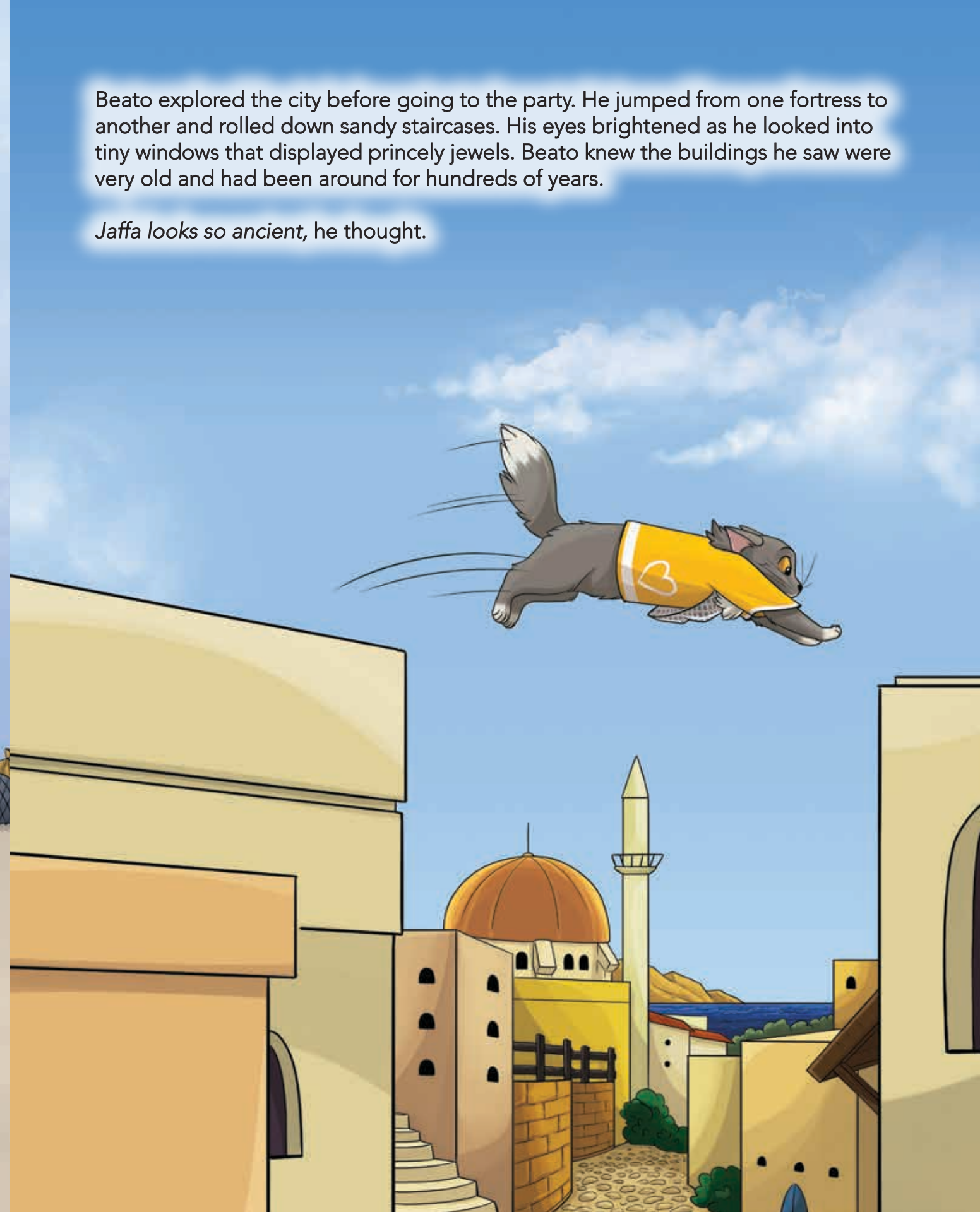
"Sure, why not?" replied Beato.

She gave him directions to the place and said to ask for her name, Helena.



Beato explored the city before going to the party. He jumped from one fortress to another and rolled down sandy staircases. His eyes brightened as he looked into tiny windows that displayed princely jewels. Beato knew the buildings he saw were very old and had been around for hundreds of years.

Jaffa looks so ancient, he thought.



That evening at the party, Beato saw many of the same cats he'd seen earlier at the port. They talked about soccer, cartoons, and books. It was fun to see a friendly bunch meowing in tunes he didn't understand!



Helena gave Beato a brief history of Jaffa. "For the past 7,000 years, Egyptian, Greek, Arab, Jewish, Ottoman, French, British, and Roman kings and traders have been coming to Jaffa. It is one of the oldest port cities in the world. That is why we all look different and speak different languages."

"Is the rest of Israel like this too?" inquired Beato.

"Israel is a small country but diverse. Why don't you come with me and see it for yourself," offered Helena.



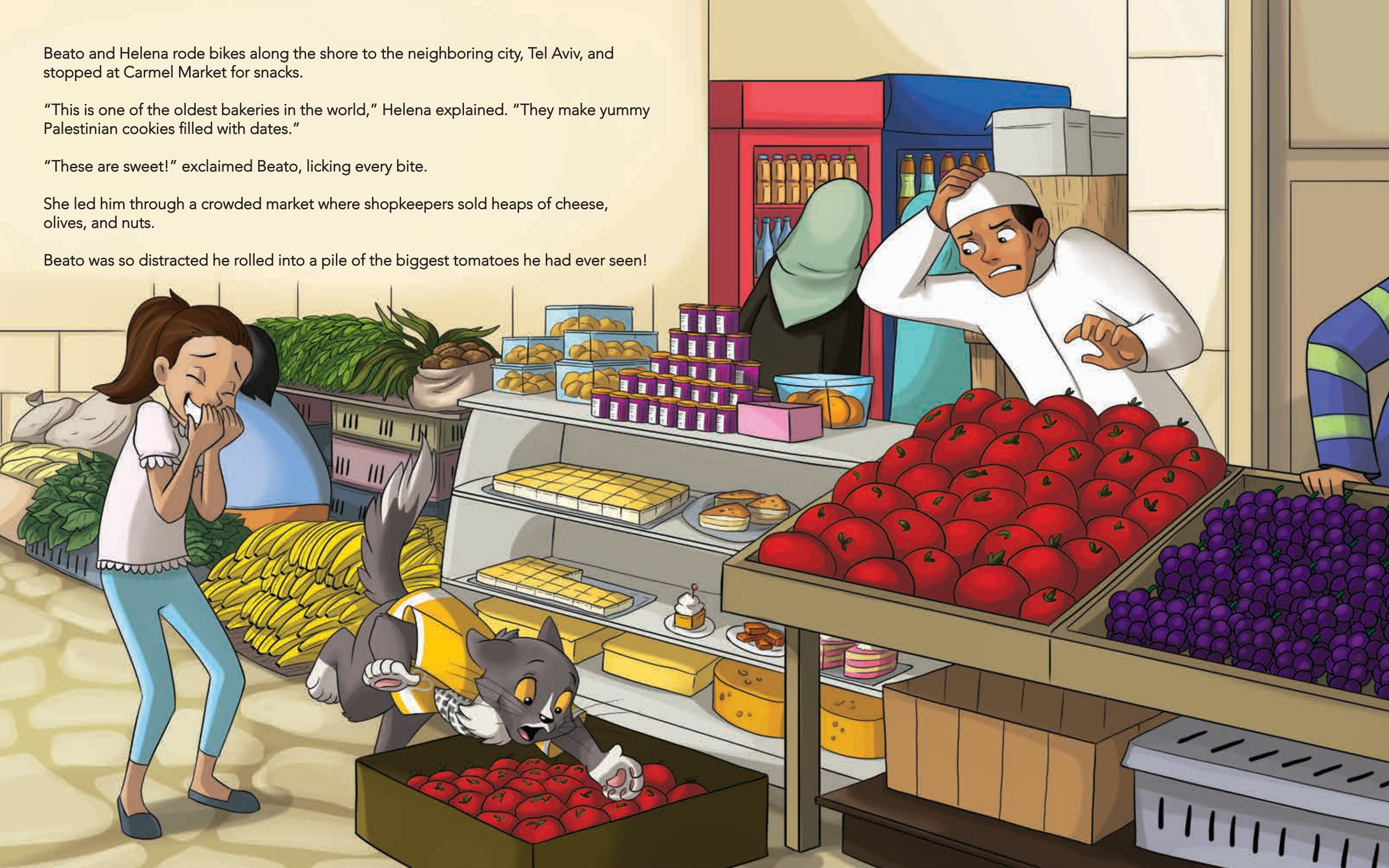
Beato and Helena rode bikes along the shore to the neighboring city, Tel Aviv, and stopped at Carmel Market for snacks.

"This is one of the oldest bakeries in the world," Helena explained. "They make yummy Palestinian cookies filled with dates."

"These are sweet!" exclaimed Beato, licking every bite.

She led him through a crowded market where shopkeepers sold heaps of cheese, olives, and nuts.

Beato was so distracted he rolled into a pile of the biggest tomatoes he had ever seen!



"Tel Aviv is Israel's capital and the biggest city. It is a great place to explore and play," said Helena.

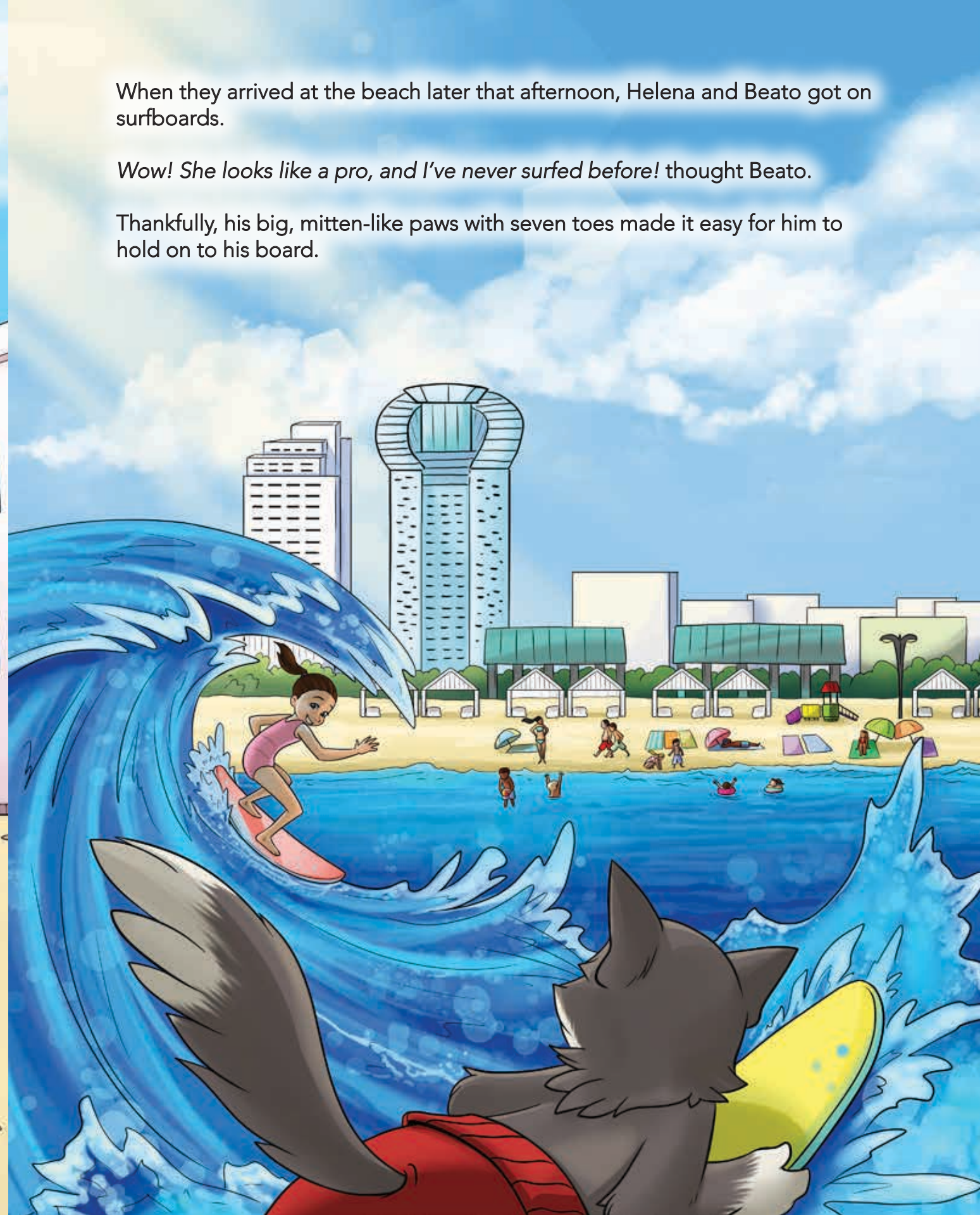
She chased Beato around the orange trees, and he ended up in the middle of a soccer game. *Might as well join in!* he thought.



When they arrived at the beach later that afternoon, Helena and Beato got on surfboards.

Wow! She looks like a pro, and I've never surfed before! thought Beato.

Thankfully, his big, mitten-like paws with seven toes made it easy for him to hold on to his board.



The next day, they visited Mount Zion in Jerusalem. Beato went into a purring frenzy at the Mount of Olives because olives were his favorite fruit.

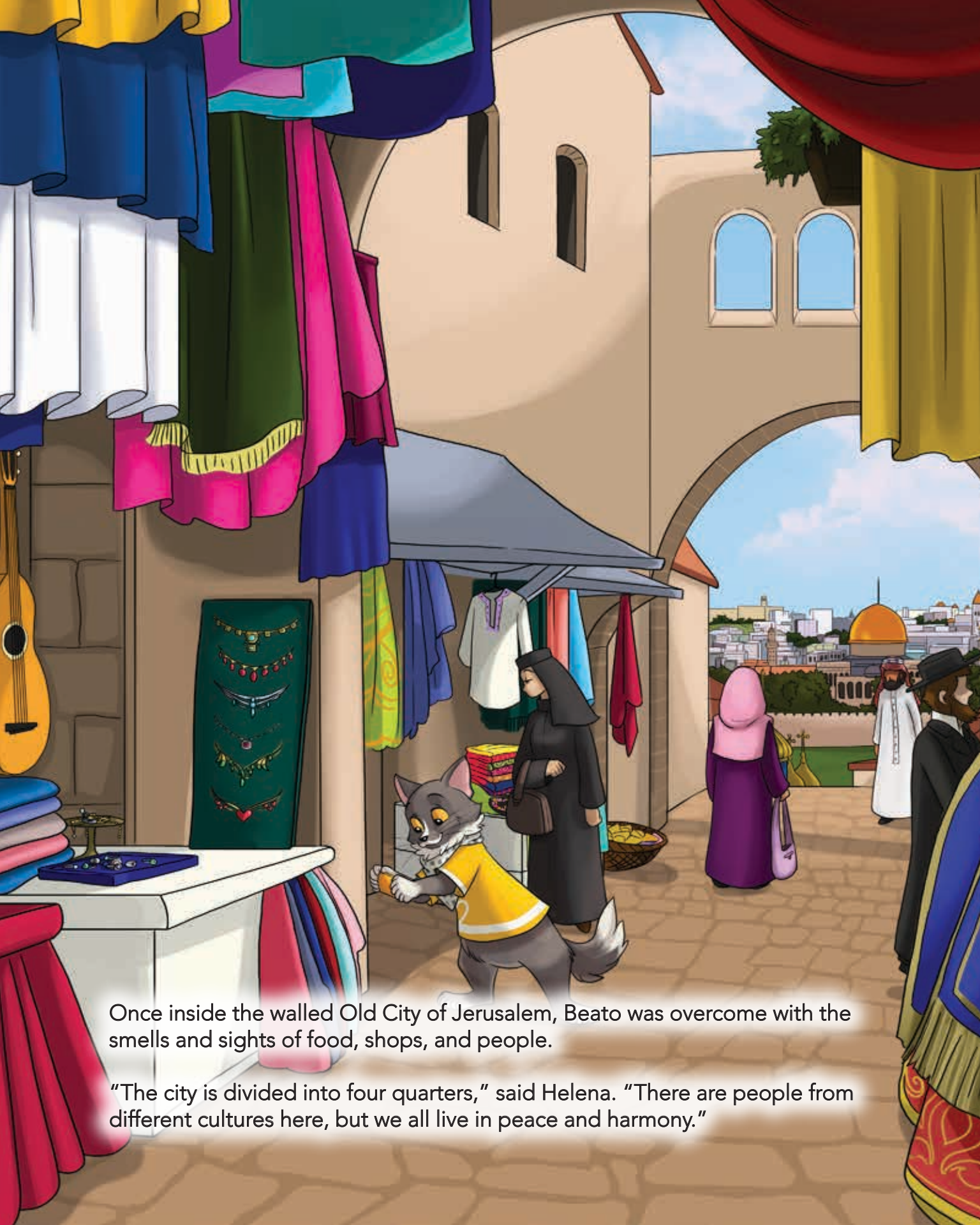
"Did you know these olive trees have been around for 2,000 years?" Helena informed him.



"Can we go on a donkey ride?" cried Beato, spotting an old man and a donkey.

"Sure!" responded Helena. "Christians say Jesus Christ arrived in the Holy City of Jerusalem on the back of a donkey."

Beato was amazed as he saw the city of Jerusalem in front of him.



Once inside the walled Old City of Jerusalem, Beato was overcome with the smells and sights of food, shops, and people.

"The city is divided into four quarters," said Helena. "There are people from different cultures here, but we all live in peace and harmony."



"We are now at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, one of the most sacred places for Christians. It's where Jesus resurrected."

Helena walked up to the altar and said a prayer.

I'm witnessing something that happened thousands of years ago! Beato was thrilled.

Beato and Helena raced through underground tunnels that went across the Old City, all the way to the Western Wall. There were hundreds of people sticking prayer notes inside the cracks and crannies.

"The Western Wall is the holiest place where Jews can pray," Helena whispered as she wrote a prayer. "Jewish pilgrims from all over the world come here to pray for peace."



"Let's go check out the Muslim quarter now," said Helena. They walked through an Arabic bazaar and saw a beautiful blue building with a golden dome.

"Al-Aqsa Mosque is a holy place in Islam. It's believed the prophet Muhammad flew on a buraq (boo-rahk) from Mecca to Heaven and then to Jerusalem," said Helena.

"That is so cool!" exclaimed Beato.

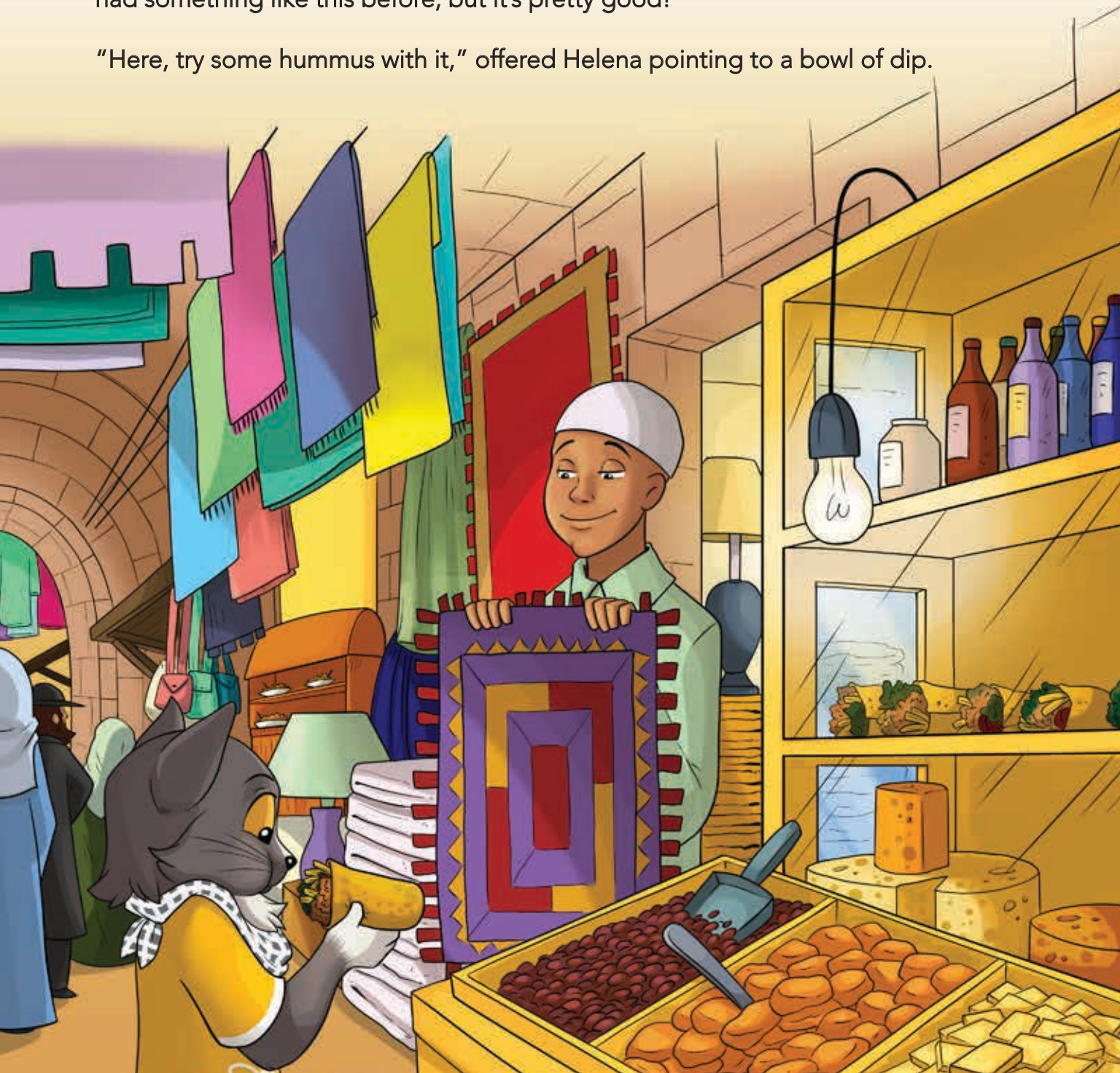


Beato's stomach grumbled. The colorful food stands were tempting him. *I wonder what they are eating here*, he thought as he tried to get Helena's attention.

"Ah, those are falafel (faal-aaa-faal)." Helena offered Beato a plate of fried chickpea balls. "You have to eat them with your hands."

Beato was not a vegetarian, but he took a big bite and liked it. "Wow! I have never had something like this before, but it's pretty good!"

"Here, try some hummus with it," offered Helena pointing to a bowl of dip.



"Helena, what is that?" Beato asked, pointing to a strange-looking red fruit.

"That is a pomegranate. Here, take some." Helena peeled off the skin and presented Beato with some juicy red pearls. "Did you know that a pomegranate has 613 seeds? The Jewish holy book, the Torah, also has 613 mitzvot, or commandments. It is believed you'll become wise and righteous if you eat this."

"Really? I'll eat them every day!" Beato promised as he finished the sweet fruit.



"We still need to check out the fourth quarter, where the Armenians live," Helena told Beato.

On their way, they passed by the famous Saint James Monastery, where one of Jesus' followers was buried.



Beato heard loud drumming coming from the street and asked, "What's happening?"

They rushed over and found a group of Armenian folk dancers practicing. Beato and Helena jumped in and started dancing.



"What is the date today?" Helena asked.

"It's January 24th," Beato replied after checking his phone.

"It's the Jewish holiday Tu BiShvat (too-bee-shee-vat), and we should celebrate!"

They headed to a kibbutz (ke-boots), a beautiful community with gardens, playgrounds, swimming pools, and a dining hall. They joined everyone and picked fruits from the trees.

"You have to eat ten kinds of fruits and drink four cups of wine to mark the New Year of the Trees," said Helena as she fixed her plate.



"Are you ready for some exercise?" asked Helena. "We're going to the Bahá'í Gardens in Haifa. It's the resting place of the prophet Herald of the Bahá'í religion."

They climbed nineteen terraces all the way up the slope of Mount Carmel.

"It's a great view from up here. I can see the city of Haifa, Hills of Galilee, and the Mediterranean Sea!" Beato observed.



"Did you know that more than half of Israel is desert?" asked Helena.

"Does that mean we can see camels here?" asked Beato with excitement.

"Camels have been here since the ninth century. I'm sure we can find some!"

They arrived at the Negev Desert and found a special species of one-humped camels.



Beato's camel became scared when a group of horsemen charged toward them.

"Don't worry! We're only practicing our riding skills. We're not here to harm you," said one of the horsemen. "We are Bedouins, a nomadic Arabic tribe. We love to race horses and camels."

Oh, good, I'm not being attacked! thought Beato



"Now, Beato, I am going to show you some magic!" exclaimed Helena.

She led him into a lake and asked him to get in the water.

"Oh wow, I'm floating!" Beato couldn't believe what was happening.

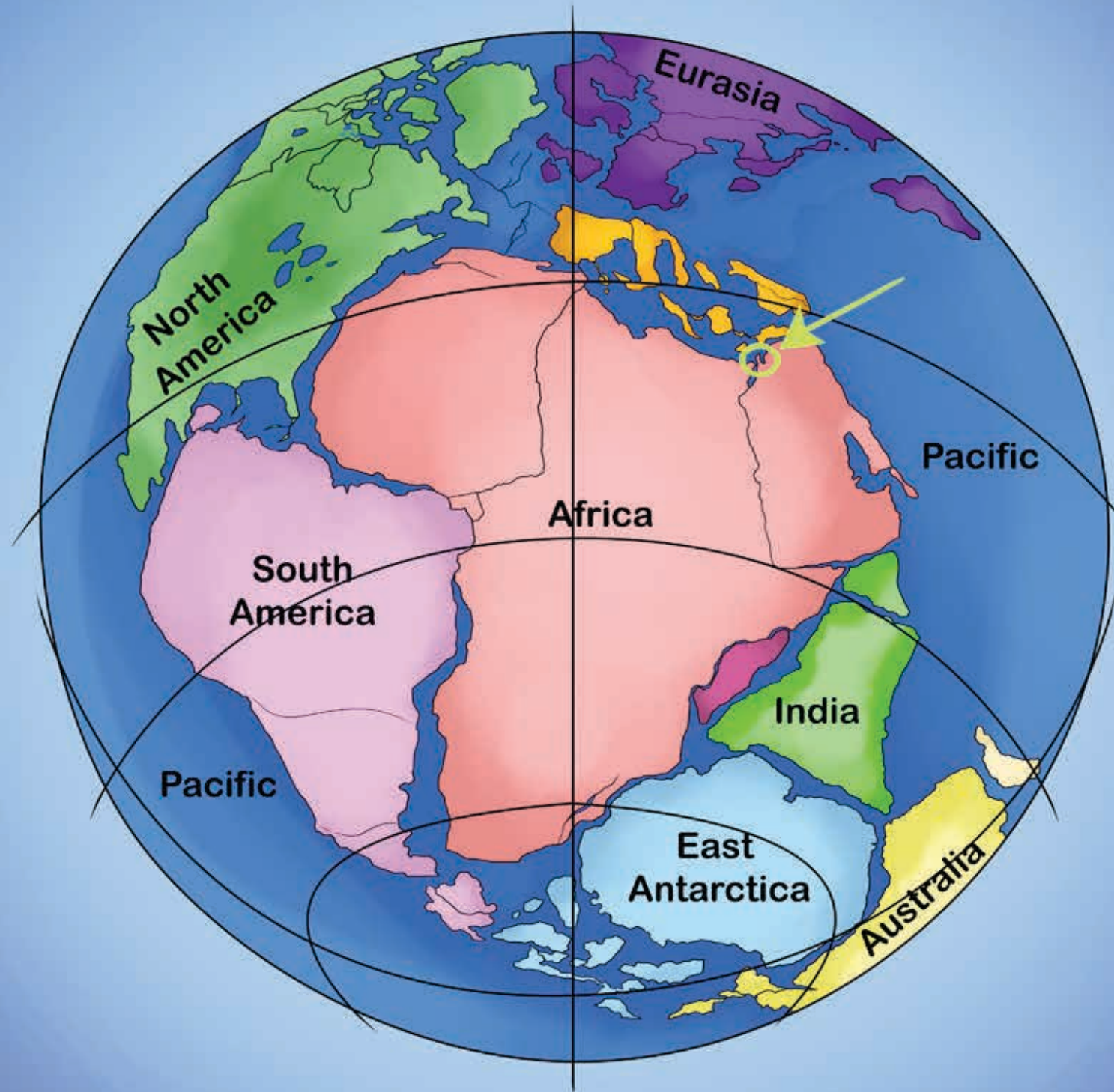
"You're in a lake that is ten times saltier than ocean water. Plants and fish can't survive here, so it's called the Dead Sea," Helena shared.



"Tell me something. Is Israel really the center of the world?" asked Beato.

"That's a great question, Beato. A long time ago, all of the continents were connected. What is now Israel was perhaps in the middle of the world back then," Helena explained.

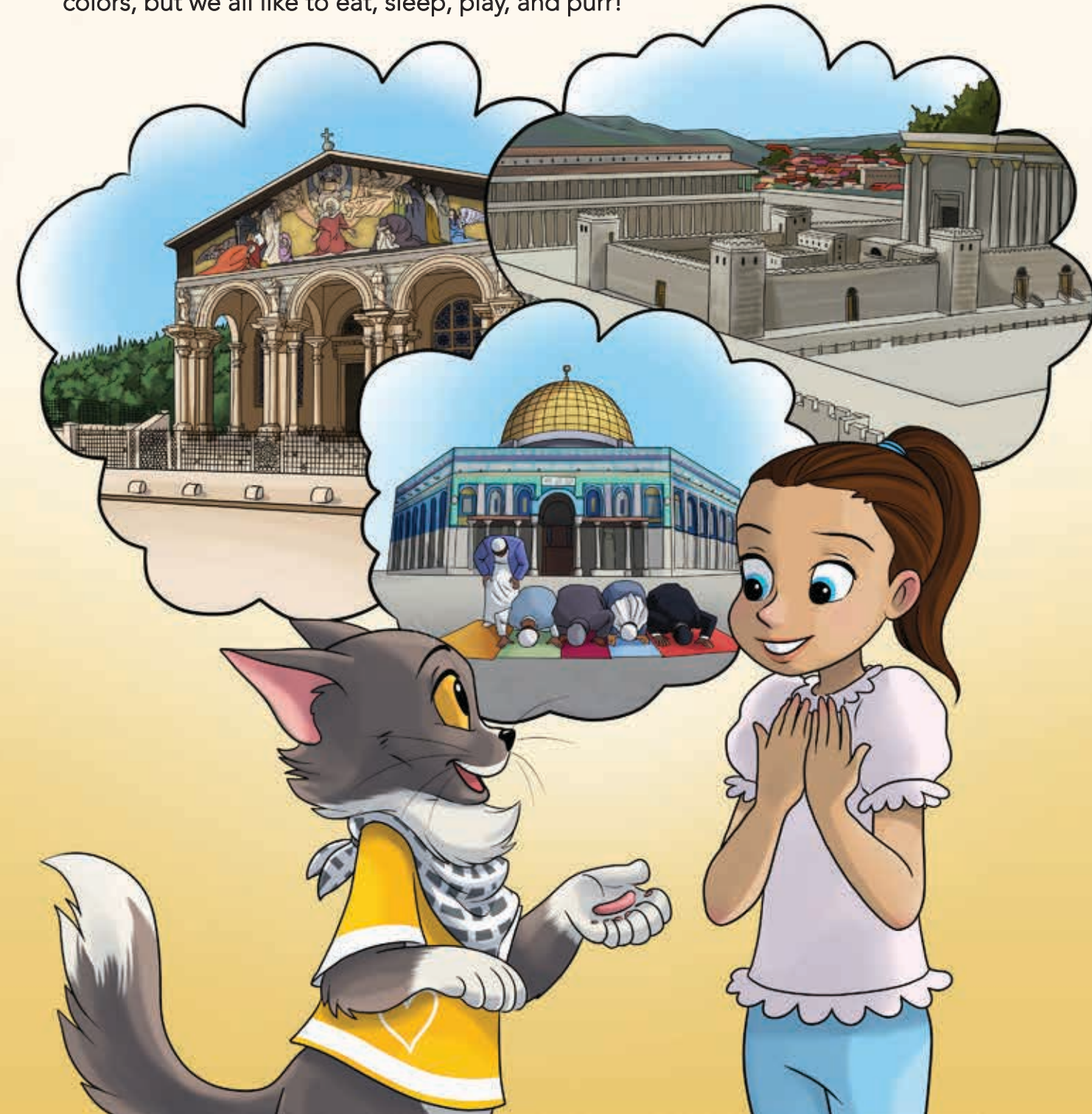
I bet Russo will be excited to hear that, Beato thought, missing his brother.



"So Helena, you showed me all these places but never told me if you are Jewish, Christian, or Muslim," said Beato.

"Well, I respect every religion and love all of God's people. We may look different, but we are the same, aren't we?" Helena replied.

"You're absolutely right, Helena! Even we cats come in different shapes, sizes, and colors, but we all like to eat, sleep, play, and purr!"



"I learned so much about Israel and its people thanks to you, Helena. You are a special person in a special country."

"I'm glad you came to visit. You are a special cat, Beato!" Helena bid him goodbye.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Sucheta Rawal is an award-winning food and travel writer, cooking instructor, and philanthropist. As the founder of the nonprofit Go Eat Give, Sucheta's personal mission is to raise cultural and diversity awareness of different countries with adults and kids. The organization connects people around the world through volunteer and cultural immersion tours, cooking classes, speaker events, and blogs.

Originally from India, Sucheta moved to United States at the age of seventeen and has traveled to over sixty countries. She has been a freelance writer for various print and digital publications, including *CNN*, *Creative Loafing*, *CheapOAir*, and *The Huffington Post*. She also motivates students and adults to follow their own passions and travel with a purpose, by speaking at corporations, schools, travel shows, and conferences. Sucheta was named one the top five most influential cultural bloggers in the world by The Foundation of Florence.

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