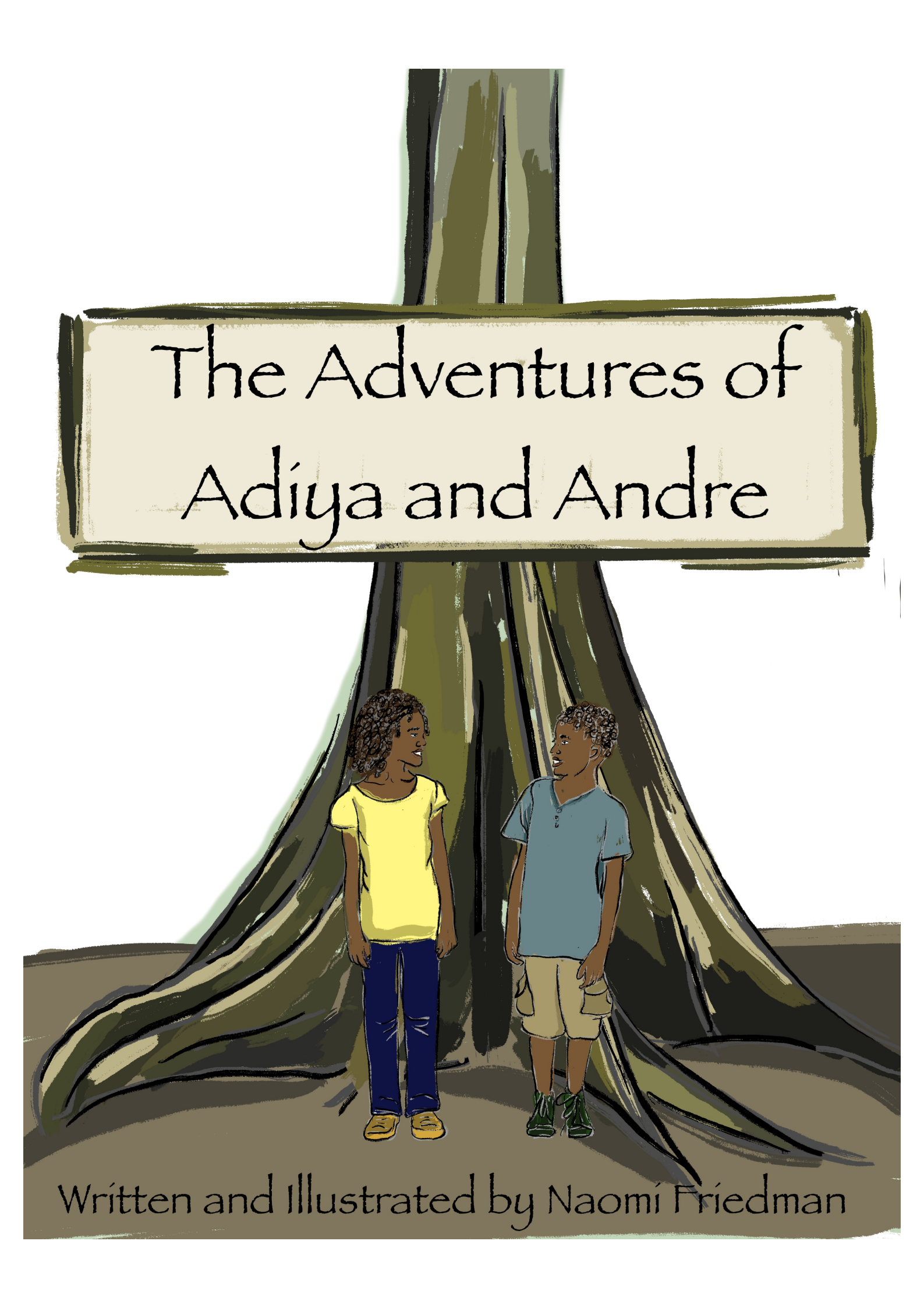


The book cover features a large, stylized tree with a thick trunk and spreading roots. A rectangular sign is attached to the trunk, displaying the title. At the base of the tree, a young girl and a young boy stand facing each other. The girl is on the left, wearing a yellow shirt and blue pants. The boy is on the right, wearing a blue shirt and tan shorts. The background is a plain, light color.

The Adventures of Adiya and Andre

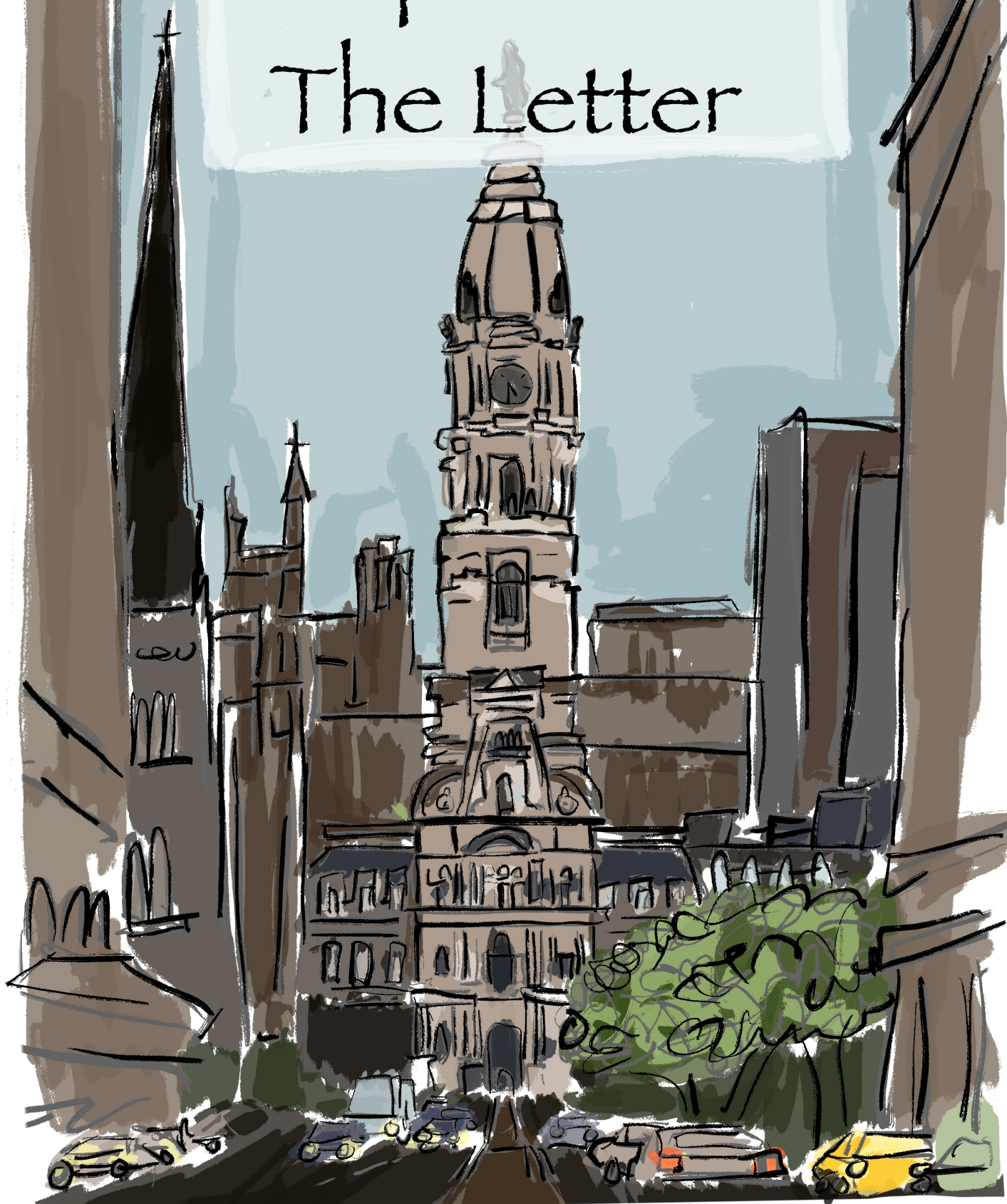
Written and Illustrated by Naomi Friedman



Dedicated to
the kids of
Mbakaou

Chapter One

The Letter





Hello! My name is Andre and I was born and raised in West Philadelphia. My mom and dad are immigrants from Cameroon, a country in West Africa. One day my mom came to me with a letter...

"ANDRE, YOU HAVE SO MANY COUSINS IN CAMEROON, I WANT YOU TO GET TO KNOW WHAT LIFE IS LIKE OVER THERE. IN YAOUNDE, THE FRENCH CAPITAL OF CAMEROON, YOU HAVE A COUSIN NAMED ADIYA AND SHE REALLY WANTS TO TELL YOU THE STORY OF THE ANIMALS SHE LOVES".

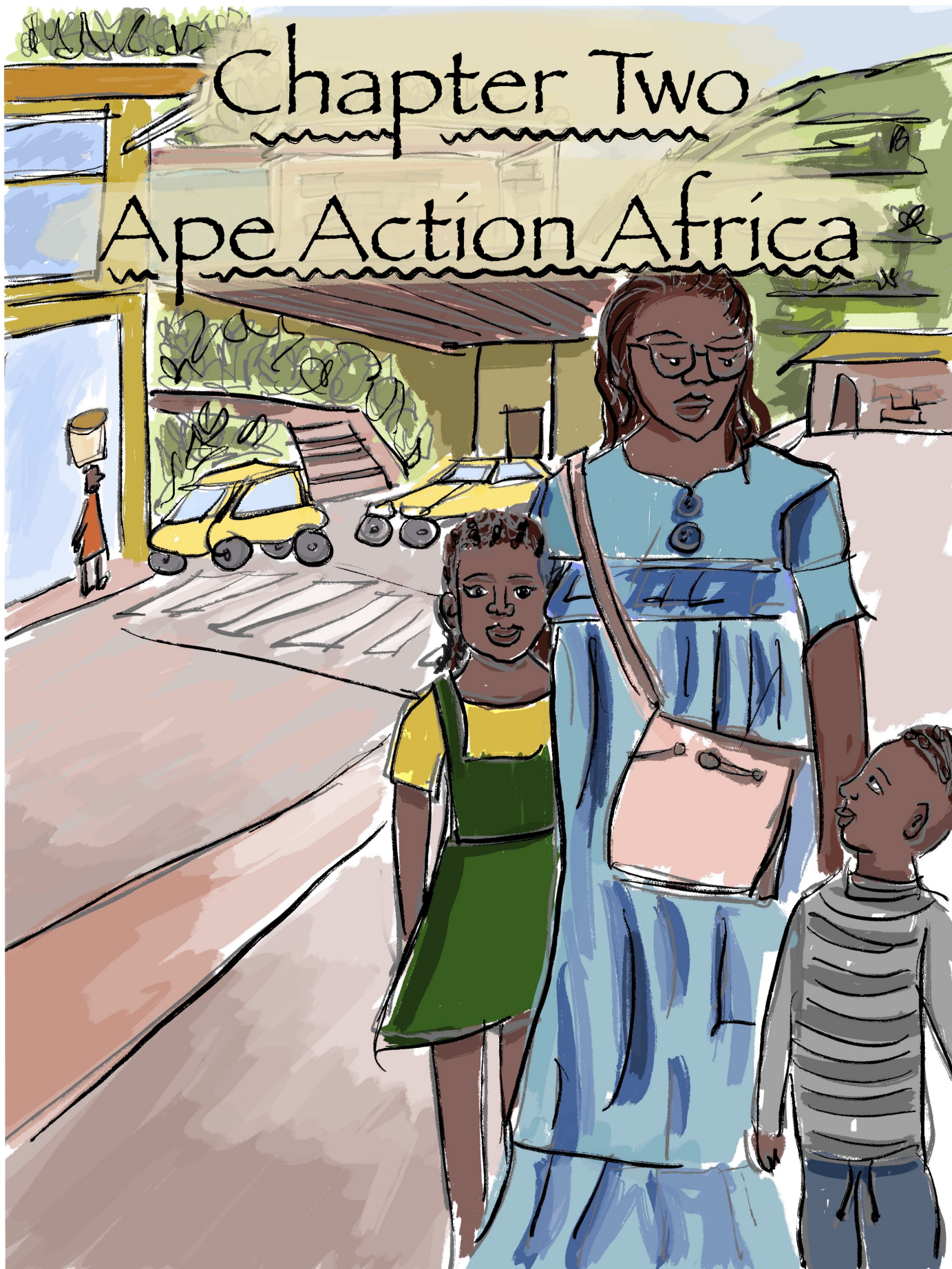


I was so excited to read what she wrote me, and I couldn't wait to write back to her soon. I ripped open the letter and saw that she wrote to me in French, the language they speak in her city, so I imagined everything she wrote while my mom read it to me...



Chapter Two

Ape Action Africa



Hello Andre! My name is Adiya, and I was born in Yaoundé where your parents are from. I love my life here, my friends, and the house that I live in in a neighborhood called Bastos with my mom, my dad, and my little brother. My dad works for the ministry of forest and fauna. He loves his work and always tells me that he is excited to teach me about the richness of the forest.

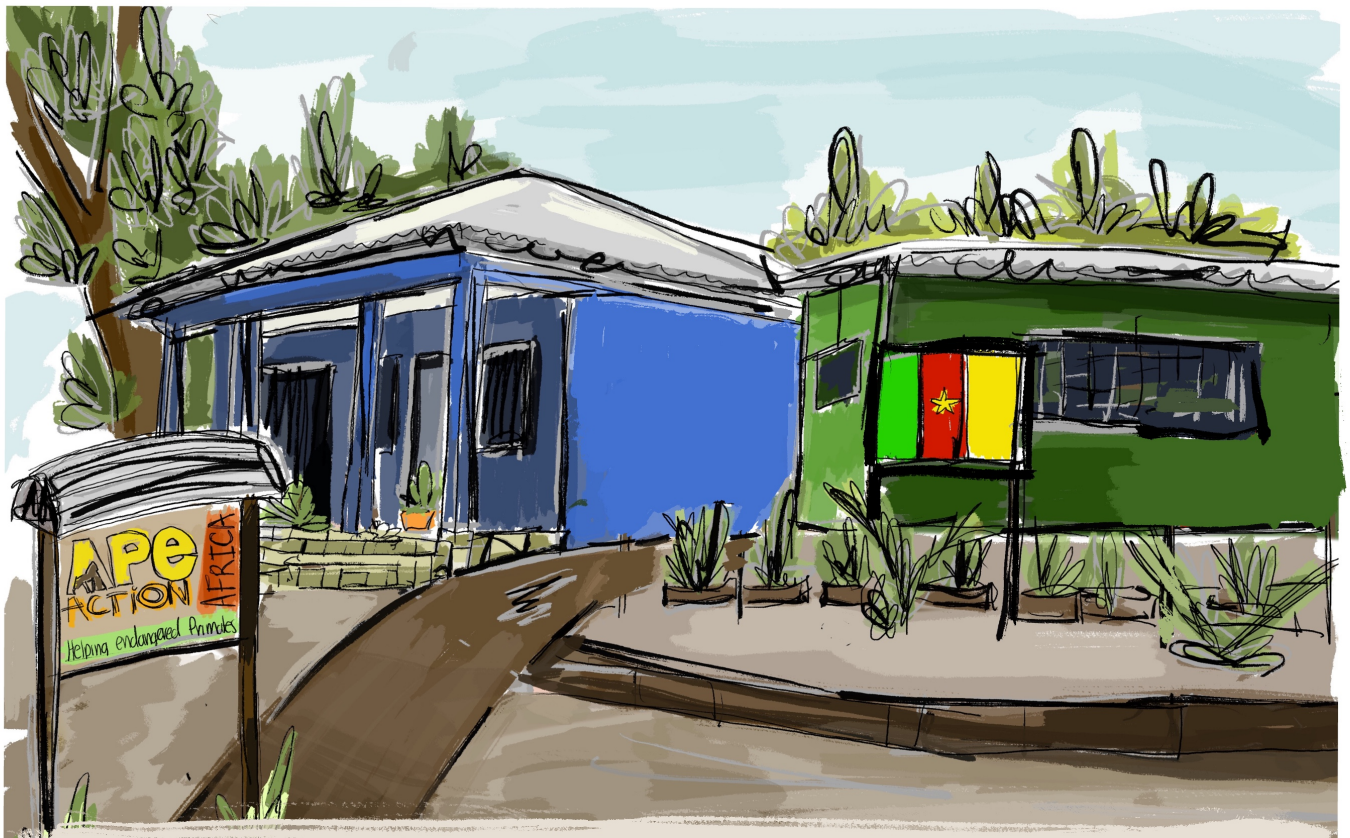
"HER FAMILY SOUNDS JUST LIKE OURS!"



One day he came to me with an idea:



My dad wanted to take me to Ape Action Africa, a place where they rehabilitate injured apes. He heard about this place at work and thought it would be a good chance to show me the primates of Cameroon.



The next day, we took a taxi and arrived at Ape Action Africa after an hour. A woman with blonde hair and tattooed arms welcomed us with a smile.

"WELCOME! I AM THE DIRECTOR AND I AM EXCITED YOU CAME TO VISIT OUR CENTER"

She pointed her finger at a man that wore big green boots and a shirt that said "Ape Action Africa" and then told us to follow him.

During the visit, our guide told us stories about how the employees and volunteers of Ape Action Africa take care of the big monkeys and other primates that live there.





"OUR MISSION IS TO WORK WITH LOCAL COMMUNITIES TO PROTECT MONKEYS".

When we arrived at the chimpanzee enclosure, our guide yelled some names:

"MAC ! RONNIE! SONG !"

Slowly, Ronnie came close to me and I could clearly see him. The worker gave him some food, and we watched Ronnie eat and drink water. He looked a bit like my little brother!

"IN THE PROTECTED ZONE OF OUR SANCTUARY, THE PRIMATES ARE PROTECTED FROM POACHERS. THE LOCAL COMMUNITY WORK WITH EXPERTS AND VOLUNTEERS TO TAKE CARE OF THE MONKEYS".

At the end of our visit, the director thanked us for coming and told us to spread the word about the importance of monkey conservation... so here I am writing to you... spreading the word!



Chapter Three

Curiosity



I began asking my mom so many questions...



"WHAT IS POACHING?"



"POACHING IS THE ILLEGAL HUNTING OF ANIMALS".

"WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO PROTECT WILDLIFE?"

"PROTECTING WILDLIFE IS IMPORTANT BECAUSE IT KEEPS NATURE HEALTHY, AND WE WANT WILD ANIMALS TO BE ON THIS EARTH AS LONG AS POSSIBLE".

Then she kept reading...

Coming back to the house I told my brother all about the monkeys I saw. I told him that there was a little chimpanzee that made me think of him, there was a Putty Nosed monkey that had a little white nose, and the gorillas made me laugh. My brother was mesmerized by my stories, and we spent the whole night drawing monkeys together.



My dad came in and told us it was time to go to bed. He tucked me in, and asked me if I wanted to continue my journey to discover biodiversity and see chimpanzees in their natural habitat.



"THERE ARE EXPERTS OF CONSERVATION THAT LIVE IN A VILLAGE NAMED MBAKAOU WHERE THEY OFTEN TALK ABOUT THE ANIMALS OF THE FOREST. THEY LIVE NEXT TO A PARK CALLED MBAM AND DJEREM NATIONAL PARK WHERE THEY CAN SEE THE MONKEYS AND OTHER WILD ANIMALS WITH THEIR OWN EYES. DO YOU WANT TO GO?"

I was scared. I had never left the city before, and I always heard stories about the dangerous creatures that live in the forest. At the same time, I was really curious...



...so I looked at my dad and said

"I'LL DO IT!"

My dad smiled and said

"YOU WILL LEARN TO LOVE THE FOREST,
YOU WILL SEE!"

The next morning, after saying goodbye to my mom and little brother, we left for our grand adventure.

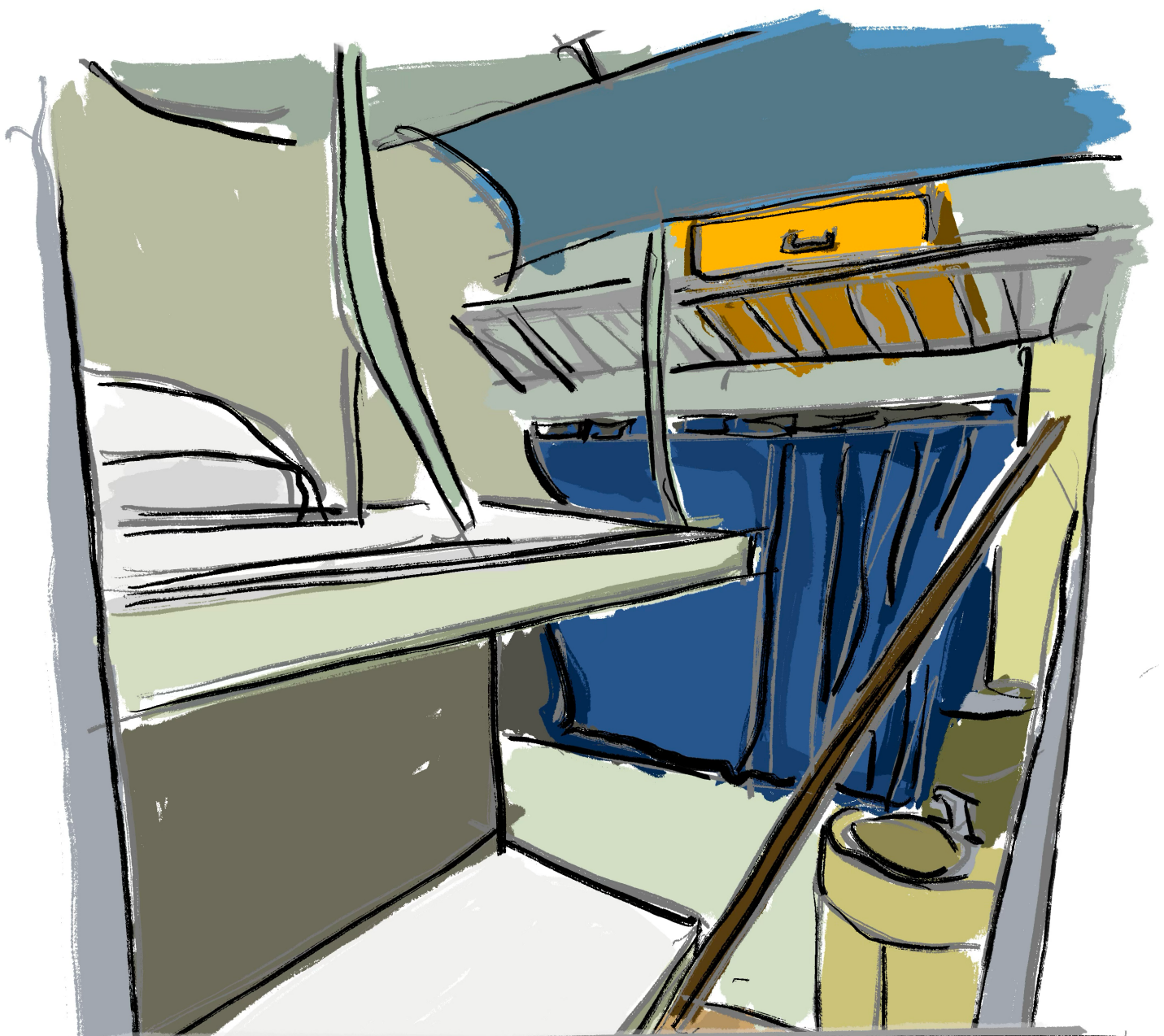


I thought to myself how I have never left the city before either. Philadelphia has always been my home, and I love the parks we have, but I want to explore the wild forest just like Adiya.

Chapter Four

The Journey



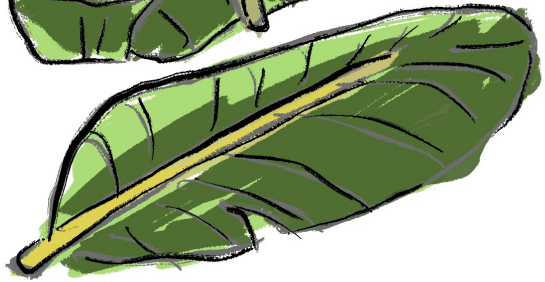


At 7:00pm, we got on a train headed to Ngaoundal, set to arrive the next morning. When the train started moving, I saw Yaoundé disappear behind us in the window. My dad and I shared a train cabin that had two beds, and it was very comfortable.

The train ride lasted 12 hours and we slept most of the way. Throughout the night, I heard sounds outside the train every time it stopped. At every station, there were people selling bananas, mangos, bobolo and more...



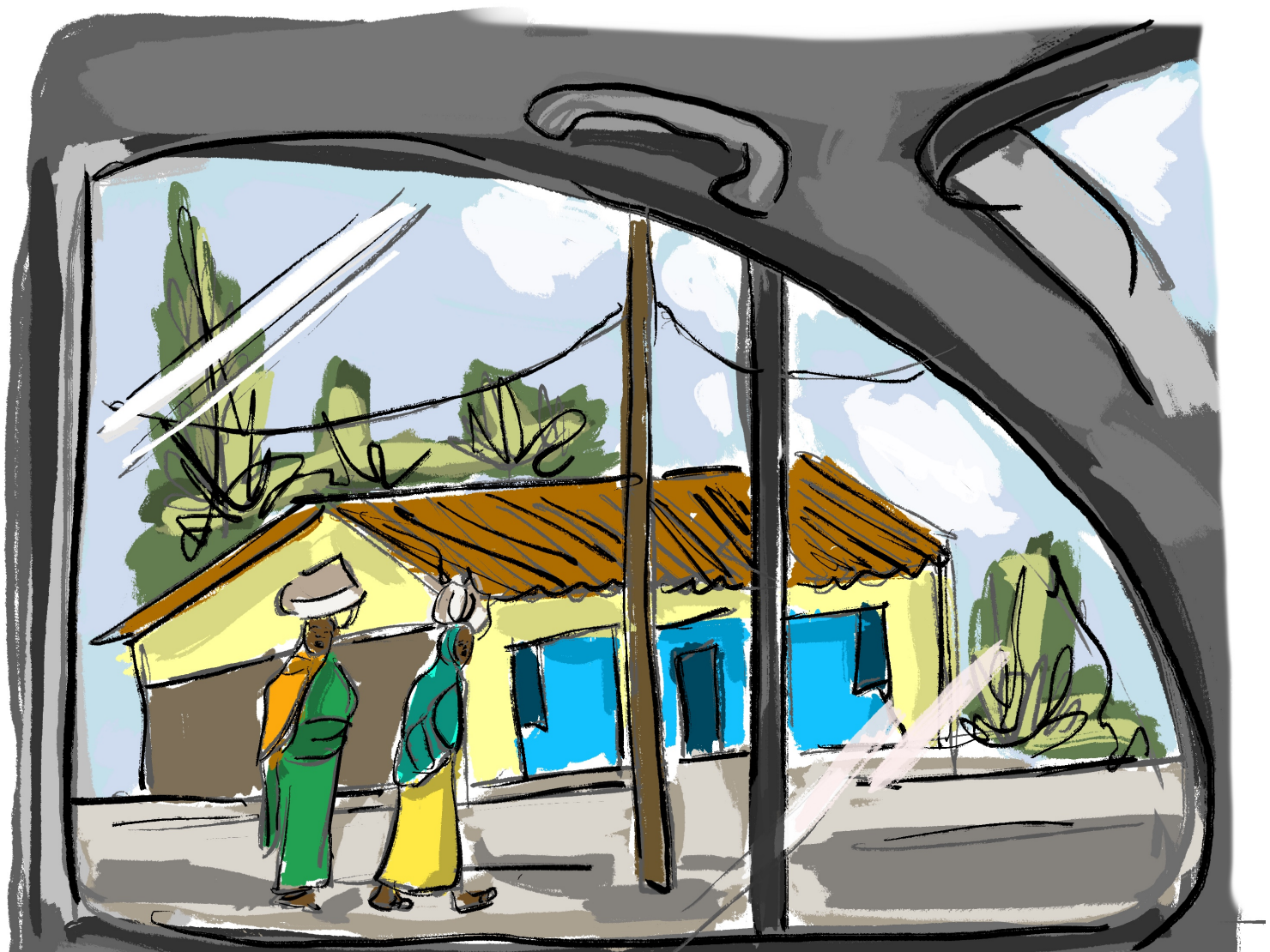
"BOBOLO! I KNOW BOBOLO! I WONDER IF IT TASTES DIFFERENT IN CAMEROON."



Bobolo is made of a root vegetable called cassava that is similar to a yam. It is wrapped in banana leaf and can be eaten with different stews. It is one of my favorite traditional foods.

The next morning, I woke up with the rise of the sun. I stuck my head out the window and waved hello to the passengers in the nearby train cars.

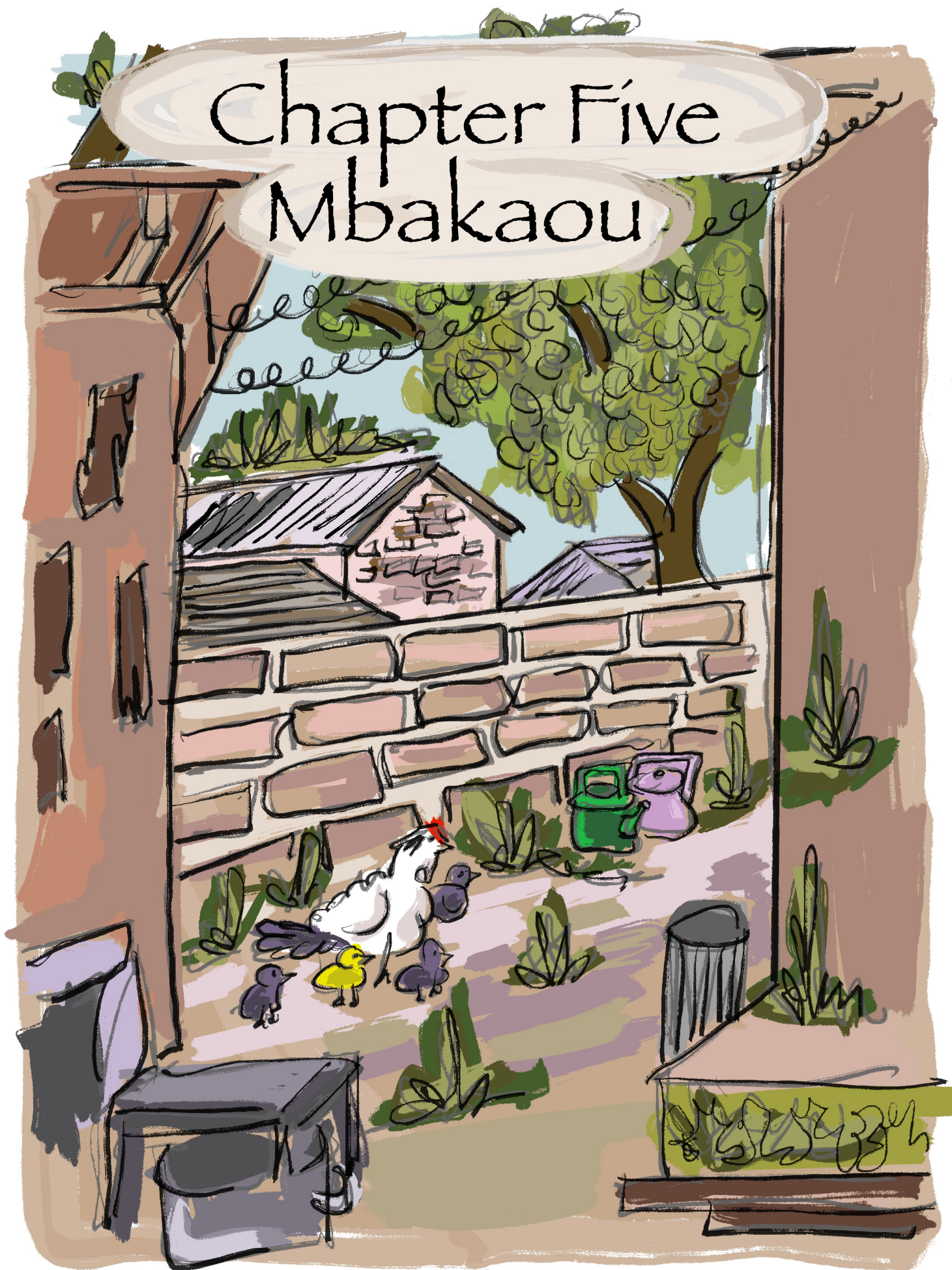




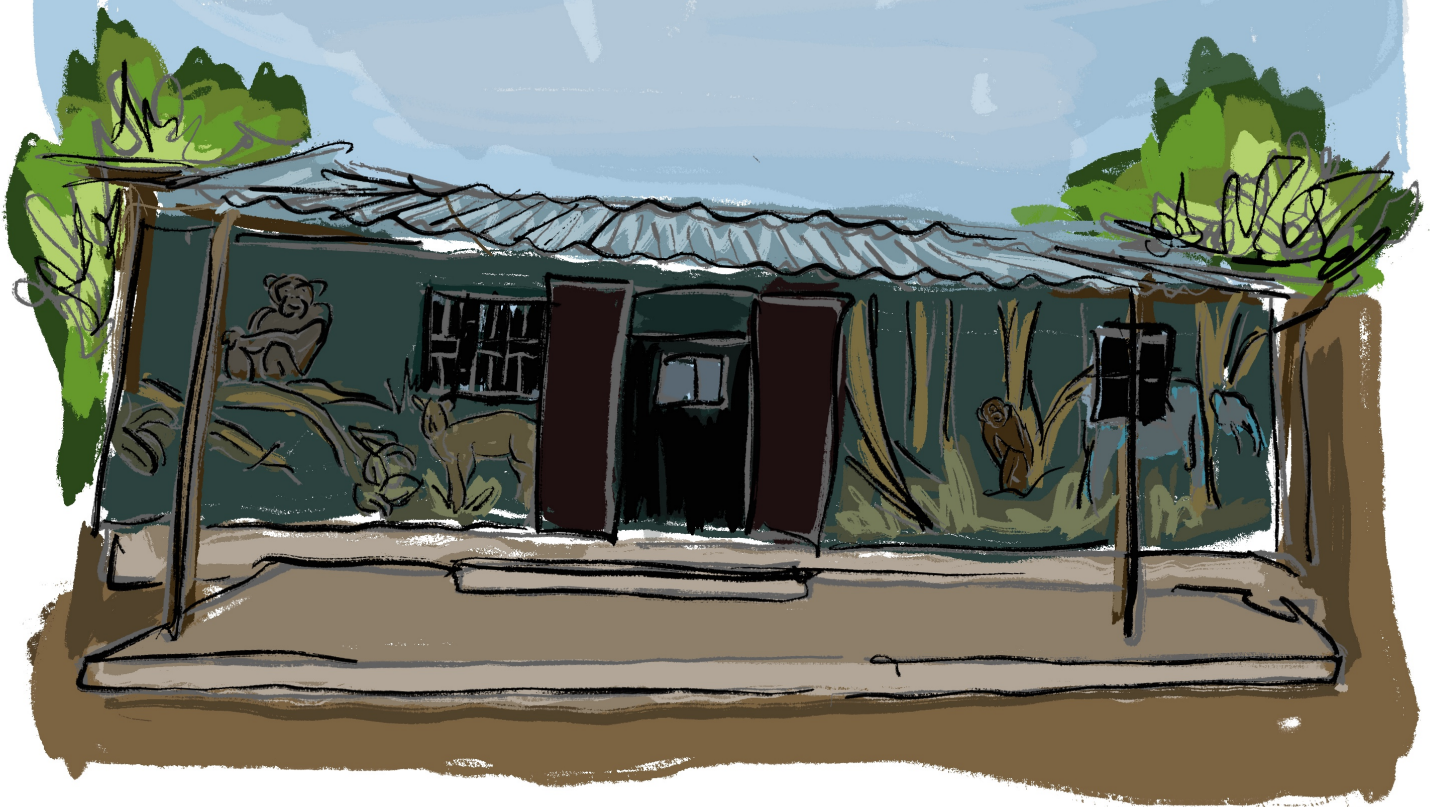
At around 7:00 am, we arrived at the station, and we were met by a taxi.

Along the road, I saw many small villages. We stopped in the biggest one called Tibati. There, we bought some grilled corn and other important supplies for our stay in Mbakaou.

Chapter Five Mbakaou



At the Mbakaou wildlife education center, we were greeted by a crowd of kids, some very young and some older. Everyone was curious to know more about me and my dad. The education center had a beautiful painting of the forest and chimpanzees. We put our suitcases in the bedroom and then a boy approached us and said his greetings.



"SIR, MY NAME IS CURTIS. WELCOME TO
THE VILLAGE!"



He took me by the hand and gave me a
tour of his village while introducing me
to everyone.



"HERE IS WHERE YOU CAN FIND THE
BEST GRILLED FISH... OVER THERE IS
WHERE MY MOM GETS HER HAIRCUT...
THERE IS WHERE THE GOATS LIKE TO
SLEEP... AND HERE IS WHERE THE CHIEF
OF MBAKAOU LIVES..."

The chief's home was right next to the education center, and our next stop was to meet him. We took off our shoes at the door, and we sat down at the table to discuss the park near Mbakaou. The chief explained...

"THE PARK IS VERY IMPORTANT TO MBAKAOU. BEFORE THE CREATION OF THE PARK 30 YEARS AGO, I NEVER SAW ANY WILDLIFE IN THE VILLAGE. BUT AFTER THEY CREATED THE PARK, I STARTED TO HEAR CHIMPANZEES. TODAY, I SOMETIMES EVEN SEE SOME ANIMALS WALKING THROUGH THE VILLAGE LIKE ELEPHANTS!"



We thanked the chief for his time, for the warm welcome, and for letting us stay in his village.



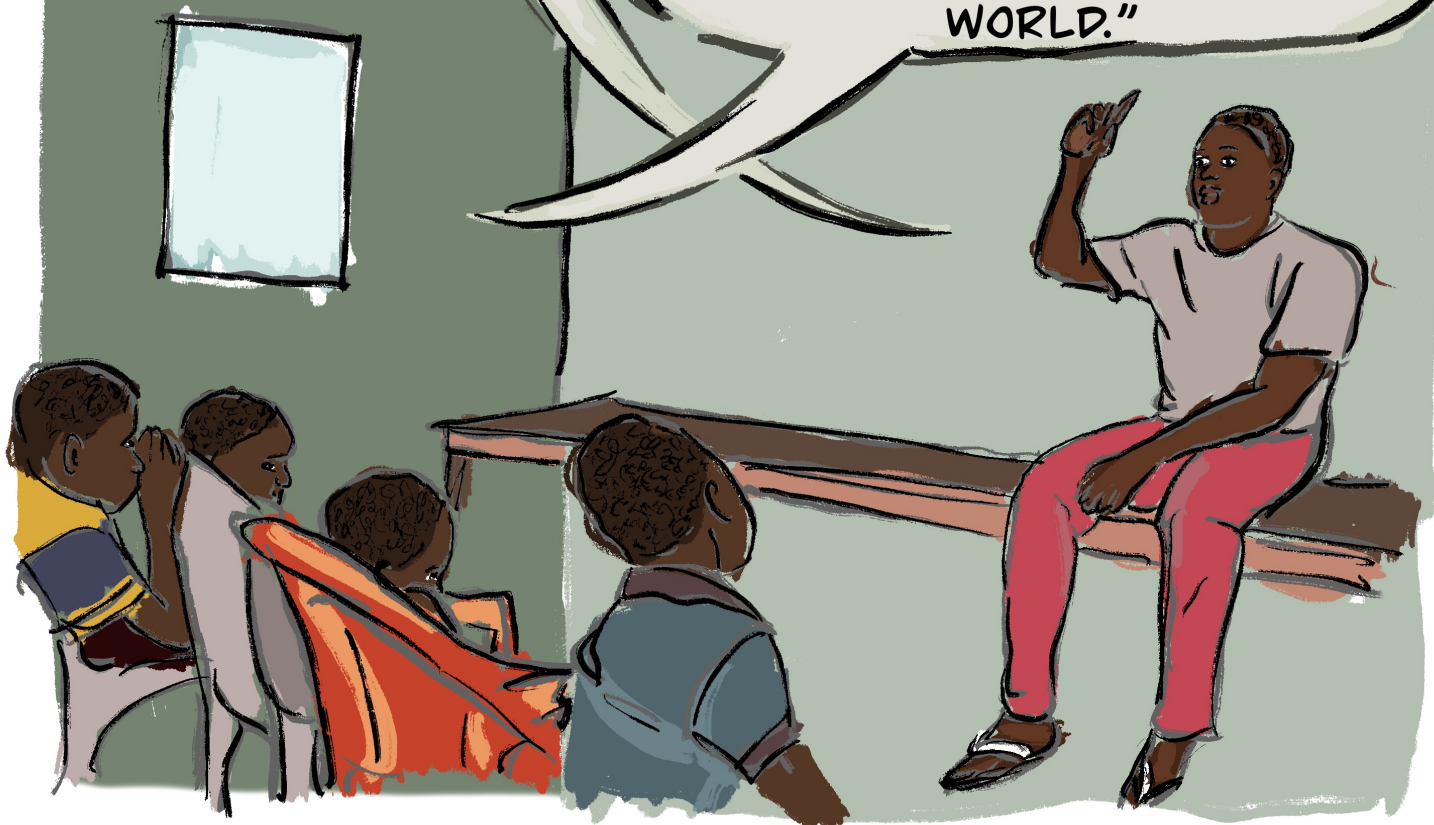
Chapter Six

The Questions

The following days, we attended classes at the Wildlife Center in Mbakaou. The teacher asked the class questions, and every time someone would raise their hand and explain something new about the forest.

"WHY IS THE PARK
IMPORTANT"

"IT GIVES US RESOURCES LIKE
WATER, FISH TO EAT, WORK FOR
OUR PARENTS, AND IT GIVES US
THE OPPORTUNITY TO MEET
PEOPLE FROM AROUND THE
WORLD."

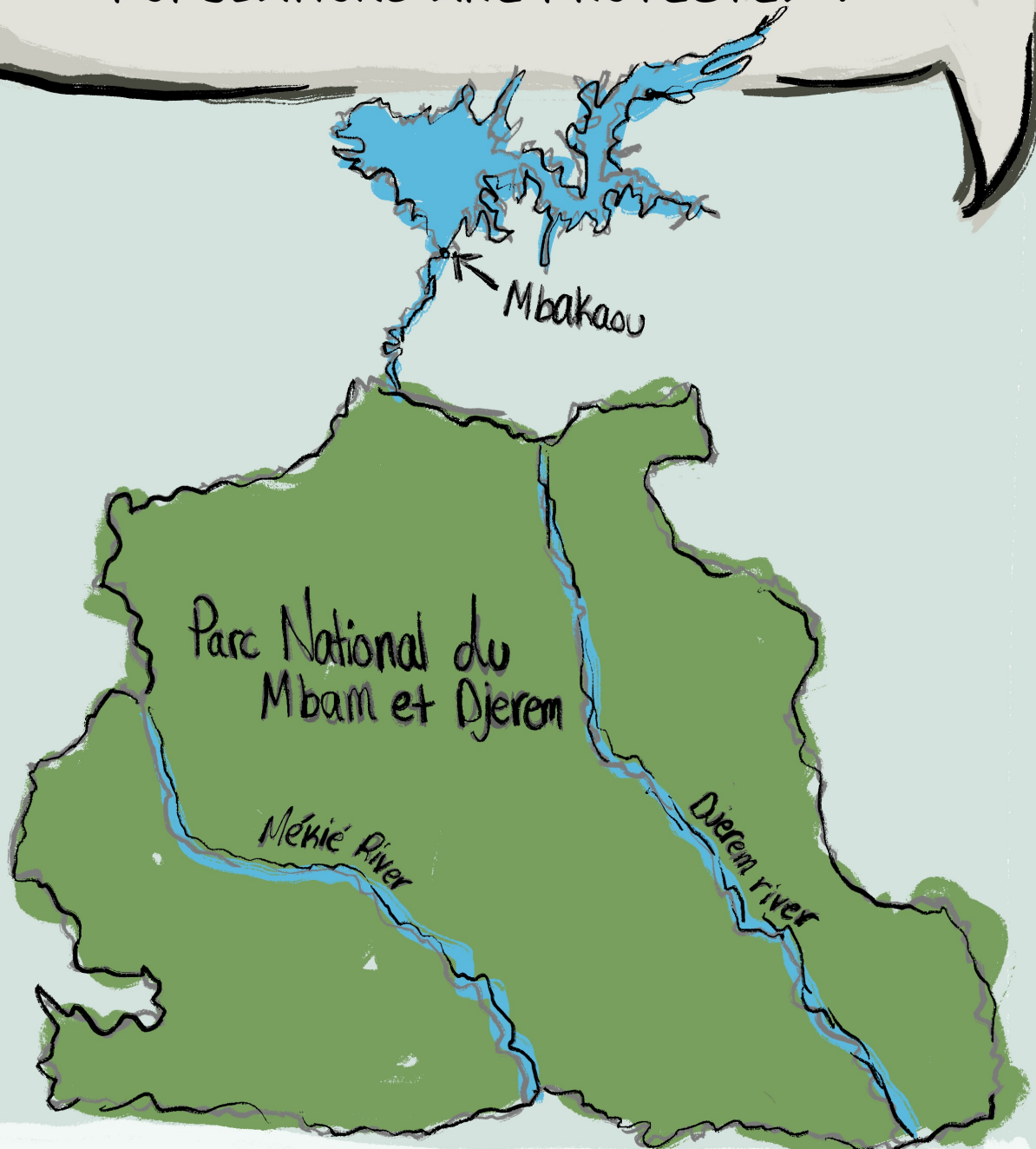


"WHY ARE THE ANIMALS IN THE PARK
IMPORTANT?"

"CHIMPANZEES AND ELEPHANTS SPREAD
SEEDS OF PLANTS THAT CAN GROW INTO
TREES WITH FRUIT THAT WE CAN THEN EAT.
CROCODILES AND HYENAS PROTECT US FROM
SICKNESS BECAUSE THEY EAT INFECTED
MEAT."



"HOW DOES THE PARK PROTECT THE ANIMALS?" ... "IT CREATES A PROTECTED ZONE WHERE HUNTING IS NOT ALLOWED AND ANIMAL POPULATIONS ARE PROTECTED".



At the end of my three days in Mbakaou, I learned so much about the forest that I stopped being so scared of it.

On our last day in Mbakaou, Curtis told me how his father works at a biological surveillance station called Ganga that is in the forest. He told us that he goes there once a month for 10 days to make sure there are no hunters. Sometimes Curtis goes with him, and this time me and my dad would come as well.



Chapter Seven

In the Forest

The journey to Ganga started with a motorcycle ride to a river named the Djerem. We then took big wooden canoes with two professional rowers on each one. They rowed for five hours straight to get us to our destination! Along the way we saw hippopotamus that stuck their heads out of the water and snorted water out of their nose. My dad told me that there were crocodiles in the water too, but we didn't see them.



The rowers talked to us about the meaning of the name Mbakaou :

"MBAKAOU TRANSLATES TO "WAIT IM COMING!" THE STORY GOES LIKE THIS... THERE WERE TWO CLANS THAT WERE MOVING TO A NEW PLACE. ONE OF THEM WENT AHEAD AND THE OTHERS IN THE SECOND CLAN TURNED INTO HIPPOS AND FOLLOWED, SHOUTING "WAIT, I'M COMING!" AFTER THE HUMANS".

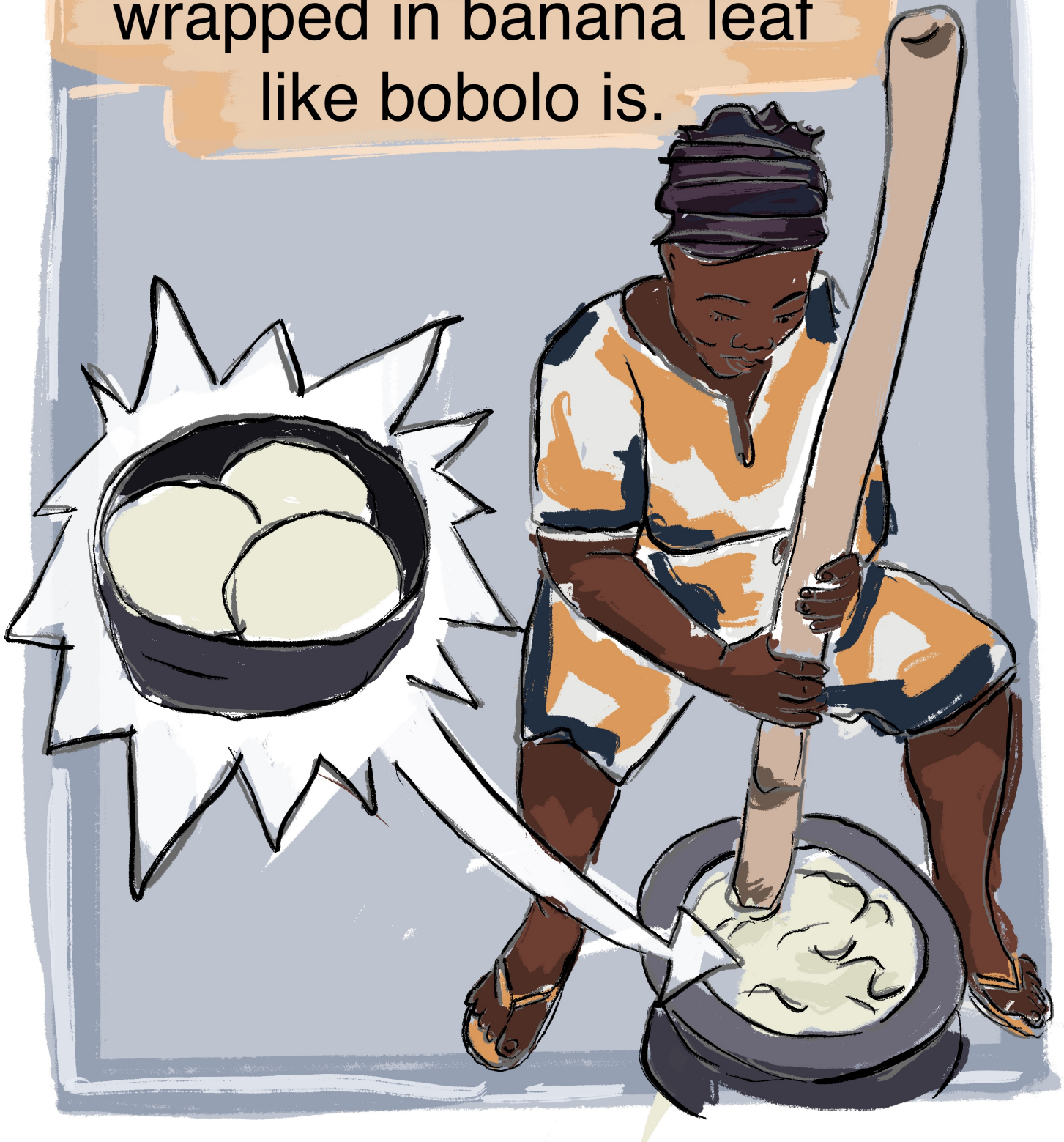
I imagined some of the hippos that we saw in the water as the people I met in Mbakaou, and I started to name each one I saw after them.



When we arrived at the shores of Ganga, we walked about 30 minutes to get to the camp. Everything was so green and connected in the forest, and the camp was magnificent. For dinner, we had fufufu and fish that was freshly caught. Then for breakfast the next morning we had spaghetti omelettes!



Foufou is also made from cassava, except it is more like a bread, and it is not wrapped in banana leaf like bobolo is.





During the day, Curtis
and I went with the
biosurveillance team
and explored the forest.
With our big rubber
boots and rainjackets,
we went on a new
adventure every day at
Ganga. It was so cool to
see Curtis' dad in the
forest - he understood it
like the back of his own
hand!

"WHAT IS A BIOSURVEILLANCE TEAM, MAMA?"



"IT'S A TEAM OF SCIENTISTS THAT MAKE SURE THE FOREST IS HEALTHY, ANDRE. IT IS IMPORTANT TO MONITOR THE FOREST IN CASE THERE IS ILLEGAL HUNTING OR A NEW FAMILY OF CHIMPANZEES MOVES INTO THE AREA."



I imagined myself all dressed up to go into the forest just like those scientists and Adiya.



"ONE DAY I'M GOING TO BE ON THE BIOSURVEILLANCE TEAM, MAMA!"

Chapter Eight

The Wild Chimpanzees



We saw and heard many wild animals.

We saw Colubus Monkeys, elephant poop, and the underground burrows of pangolins. We heard baboons yelling and Putty Nosed monkeys laughing. Then, on the third day we heard our first chimpanzees!



The guides told us to get down close to the ground to make as little noise as possible, and then finally we saw them! There were three chimpanzees and a baby. We watched them pick insects off of each other and knock fruit down from the trees. I accidentally stepped on a twig and the chimpanzees were gone in the blink of an eye.

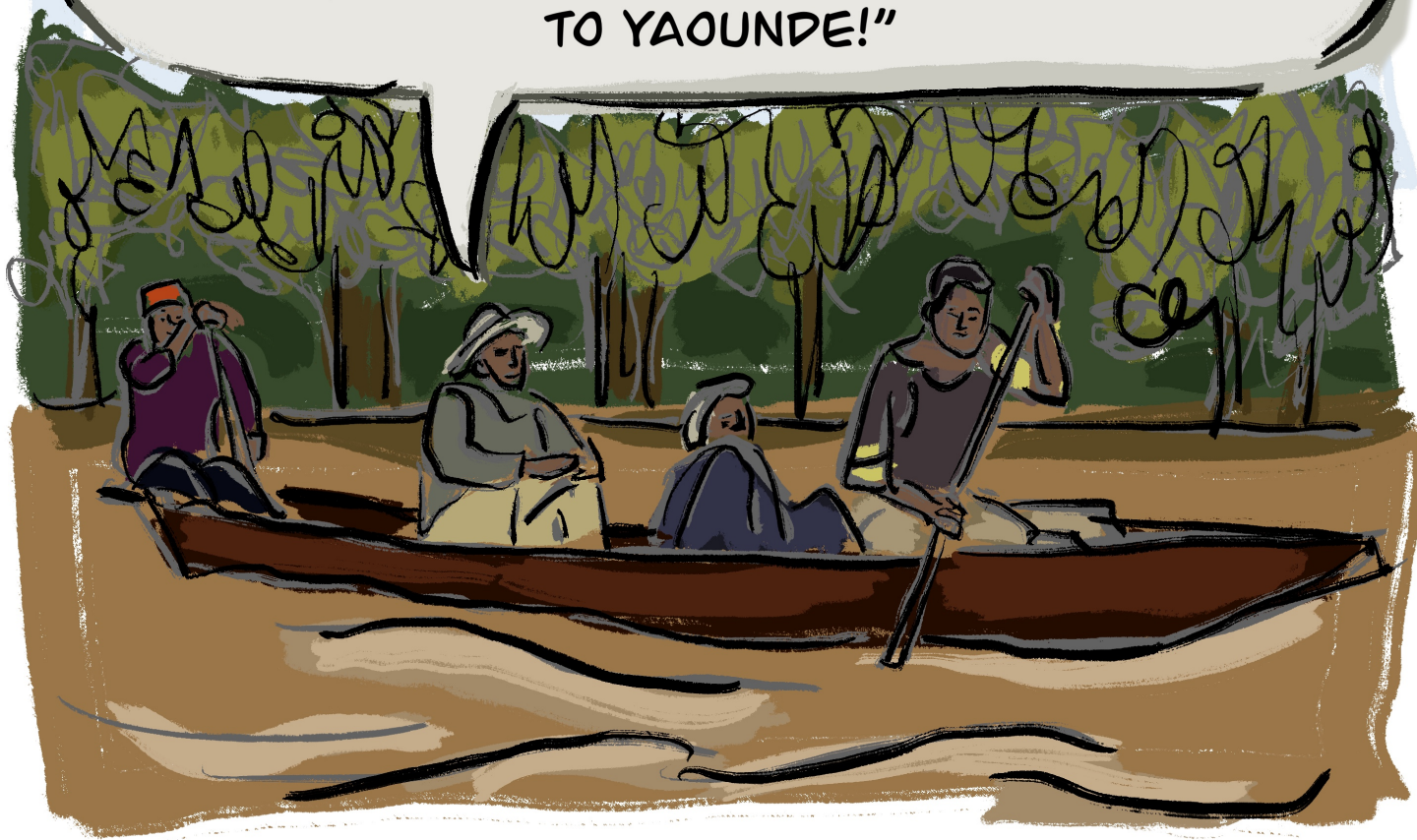
Curtis' dad explained...

"THAT WAS SO COOL! WE DON'T WANT CHIMPANZEES TO GET USED TO HUMANS BEING AROUND THEM. IF THEY DID, THEY WOULD BE EASY TARGETS FOR POACHERS. THE TYPE OF CHIMPANZEE FOUND HERE IS LIKE NO OTHER IN THE ENTIRE WORLD. THE WORK THAT WE DO HERE PROTECTS THEM AND HELPS US UNDERSTAND WHAT MAKES THEM DIFFERENT FROM OTHER CHIMPANZEE SPECIES".



At the end of our stay at Ganga, I had learned so much about the forest. I saw the beauty that my dad had always talked about. There was nothing to fear. While we were on the way back to Mbakaou in our wooden canoes, Curtis and I couldn't stop talking about the animals in the forest:

"YOU ARE LUCKY! YOU SAW THE BEAUTY WITH YOUR OWN EYES AND LEARNED FROM THOSE THAT WANT TO KEEP IT SAFE. OTHERS DON'T HAVE SUCH AN OPPORTUNITY. THIS IS WHY YOU HAVE TO TALK ABOUT THE ANIMALS WE SHARE THE EARTH WITH TO THE WHOLE WORLD WHEN YOU GET BACK TO YAOUNDE!"



And this is why I am writing to you,
Andre! I want you to hear about the
world out there and be one of the
people that are working to protect it.



Chapter Nine

Returning to Yaounde

When we returned to Mbakaou, there was a crowd that was excited to welcome us back.

The chief of the village and the teacher from the education center came out of the crowd holding two badges.



They put the badges on Curtis and I. We were officially junior rangers!

"YOU ARE NOW RESPONSIBLE FOR TAKING CARE
OF WILDLIFE AND EDUCATING THE WORLD ABOUT
THE FOREST."



saying goodbye to everyone was so sad,
but I knew that I would return soon. How
could I stay away from the forest for
long?

I was so excited about everything that Adiya wrote to me. I began to realize that the world is so big, there are so many animals out there, and so many ways of life different than here in Philadelphia. I wanted to tell Adiya all about the squirrels and the robins and all the other animals I see every day here in my backyard. I was so excited to start my own journey to discover biodiversity.



I picked up a pen and started
writing...

"Dear Adiya...."

