

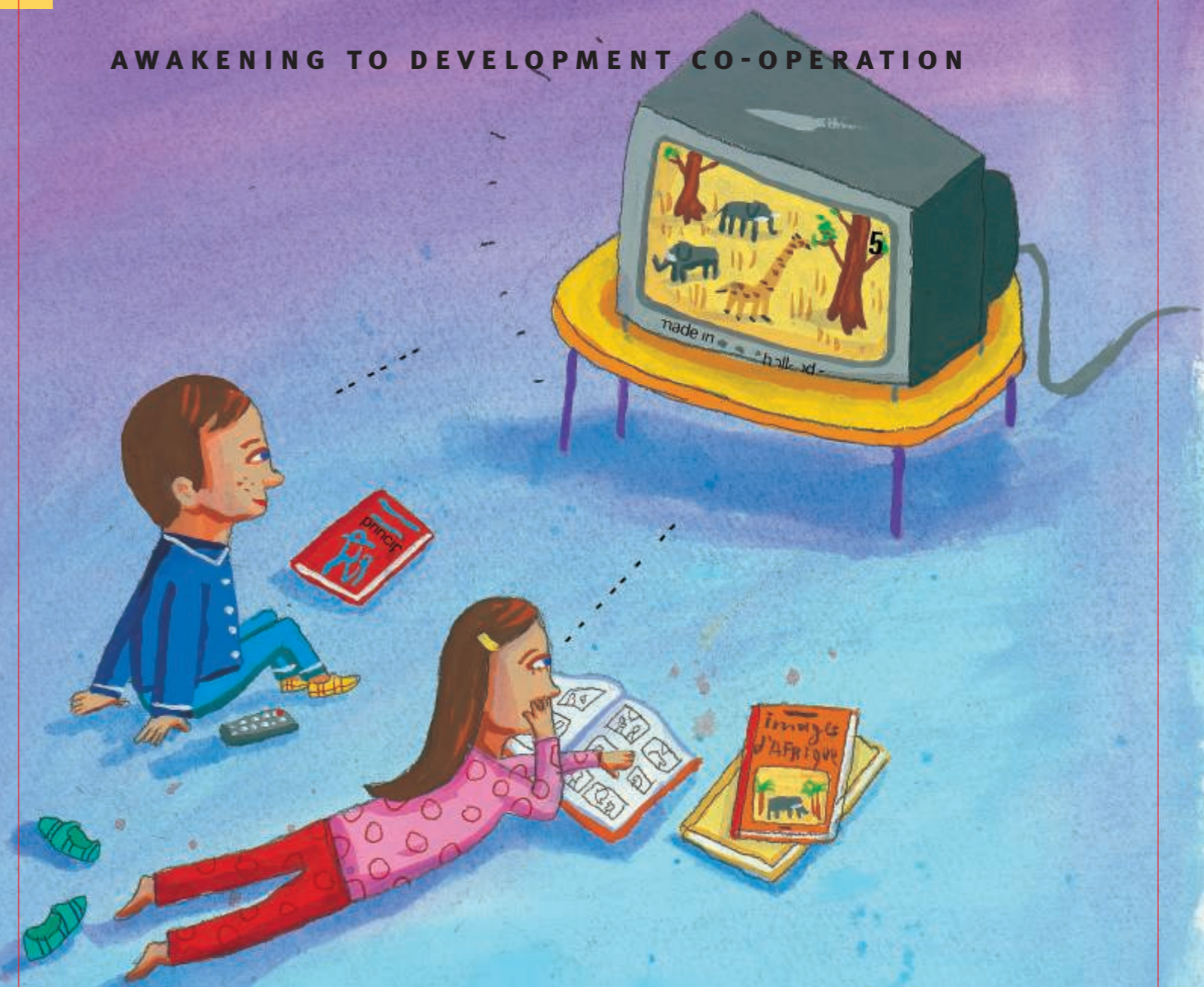
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Mathias and Amadou – AWAKENING TO DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION

  
 DEVELOPMENT

# Mathias AND Amadou

AWAKENING TO DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION



EUROPEAN  
 COMMISSION  
 DE 116

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AWAKENING TO DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION



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**T**his little book tells a story just like the ones I used to enjoy telling my two children.

Now they have both grown up and I am European Commissioner for **development cooperation and Humanitarian Aid**.

These words may seem a little strange to you, but they are so very important.

What they mean is simply that, since we all live on the same planet, it is only right that richer people do what they can to help poorer people.

Maybe when you have read this story you will understand better and, like us grown-ups, feel you want to do something to help.



**Louis Michel**

MEMBER OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION  
RESPONSIBLE FOR DEVELOPMENT AND HUMANITARIAN AID





Mathias and his sister Amélie really like watching TV in the evening before they go to bed. Tonight, there's a documentary about animals in Africa.

– Imagine, Amélie, all those elephants and giraffes just walking around free all over the place... Africa must be a really big place...



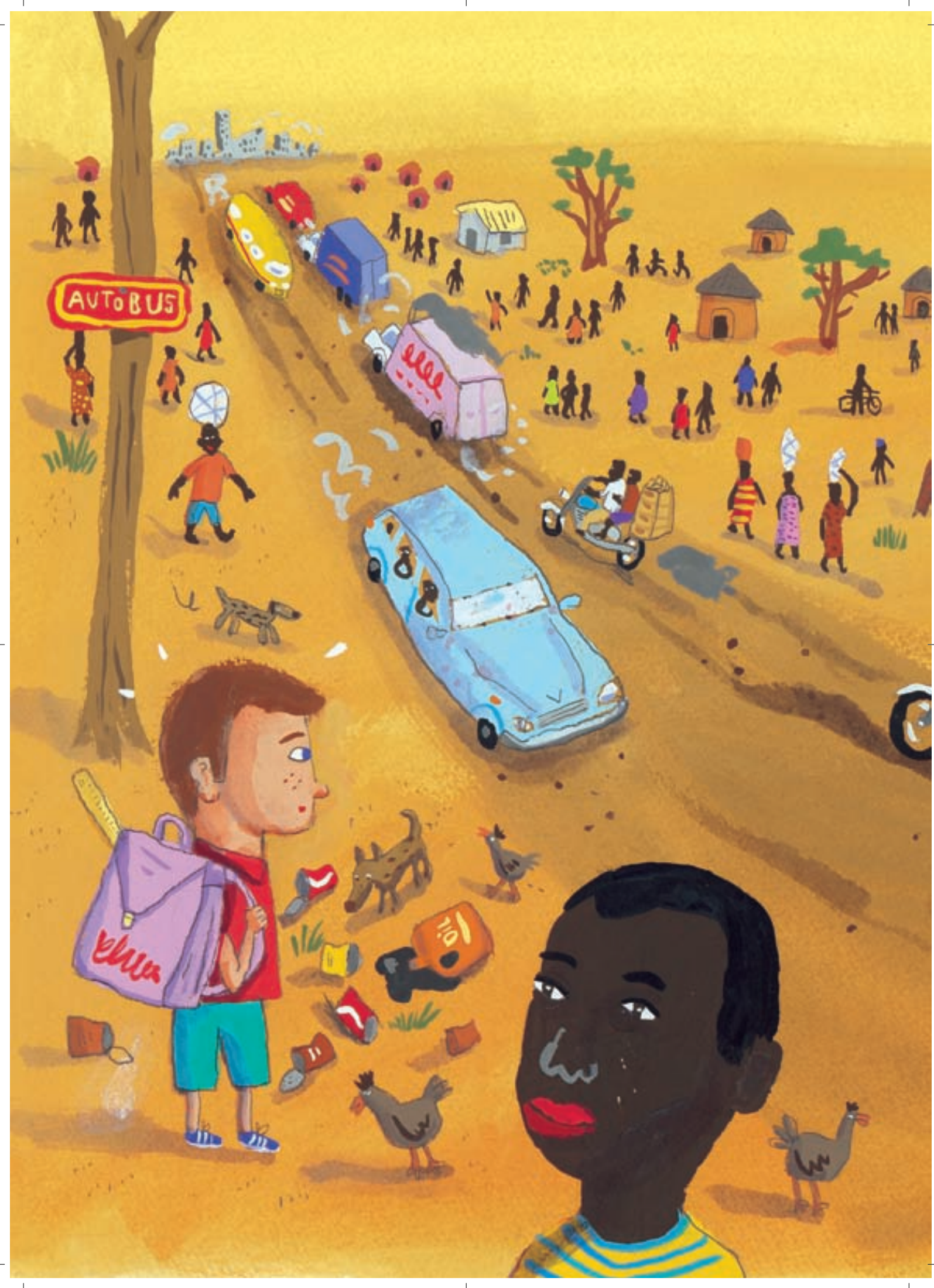
That night, Mathias fell asleep in no time at all, and **he had a dream.** He dreamt that he was in Africa but, strangely, it wasn't really at all like what he'd seen on TV...

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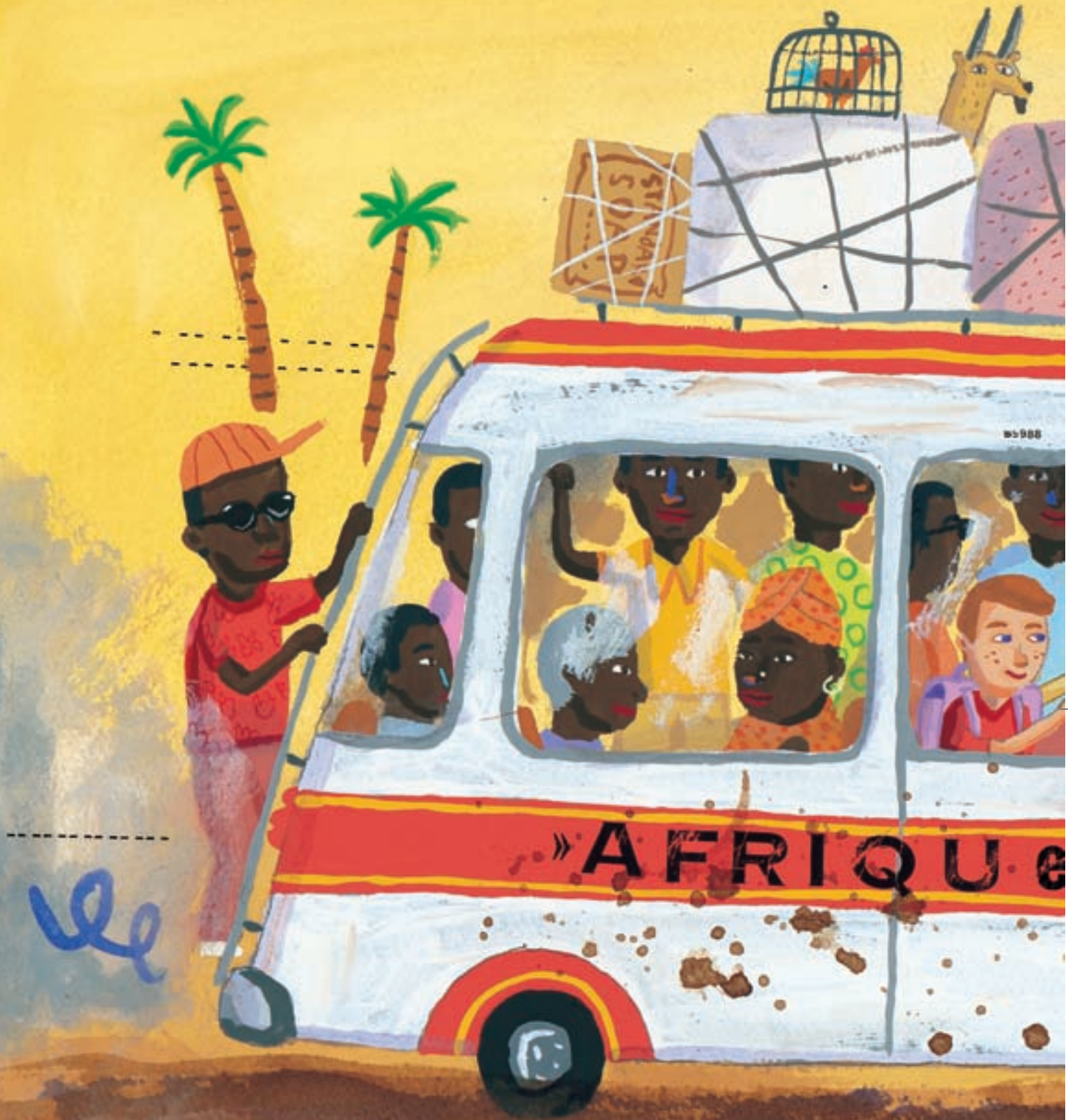








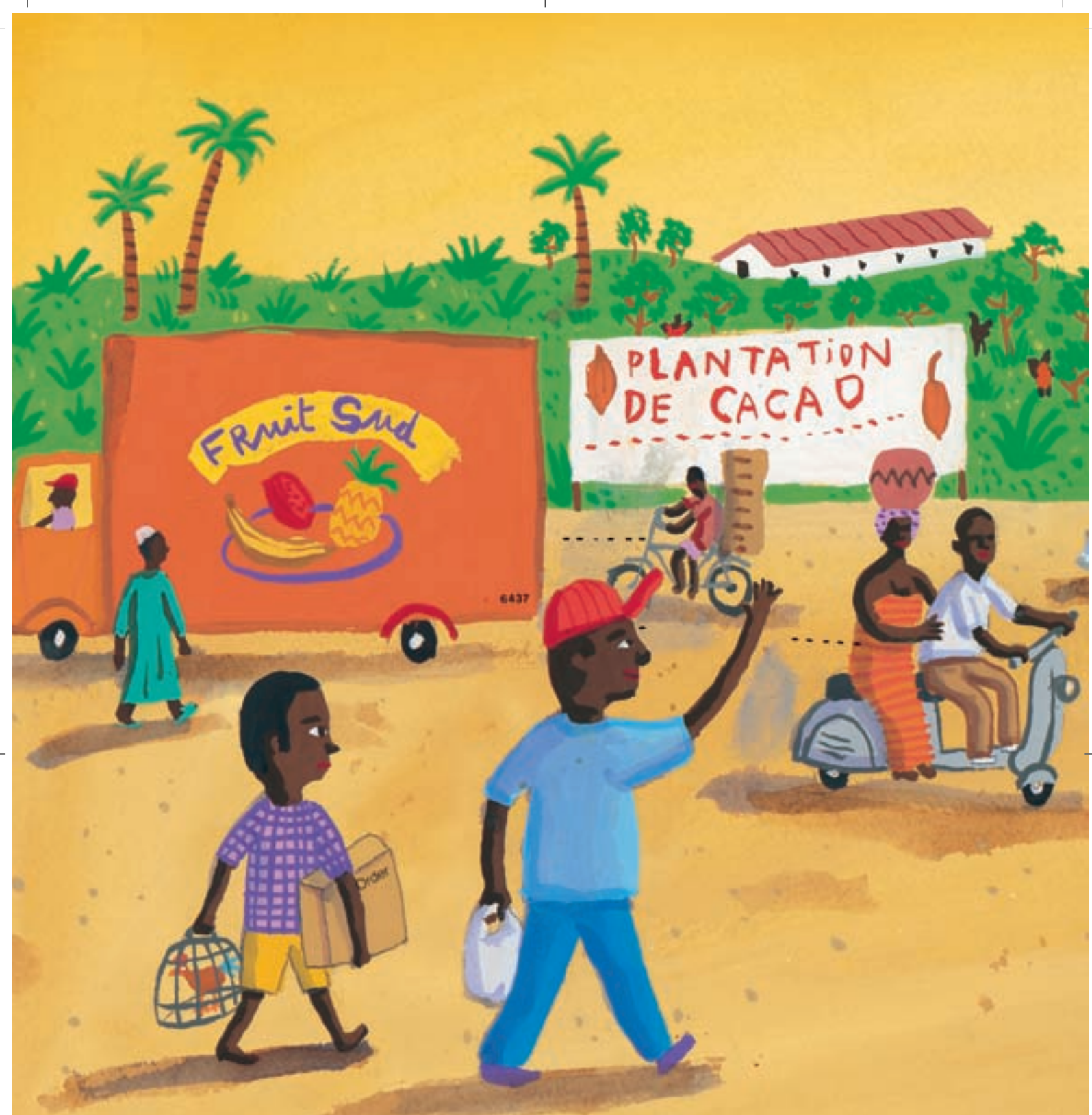
He dreamt that he woke up with his feet in the sand. He had his satchel on his back and was waiting to catch the bus to school, like every morning, only here it wasn't the same at all...



The bus was full to bursting. The road was so bad that Mathias bounced up and down like a ball every time it went over a bump. He kept knocking into the people next to him who propped him up to stop him falling over.



– You’ll get used to it, you know...  
Amadou laughed and helped Mathias to stand up. It’s true he was used to it.  
He took this bus every day with his father.

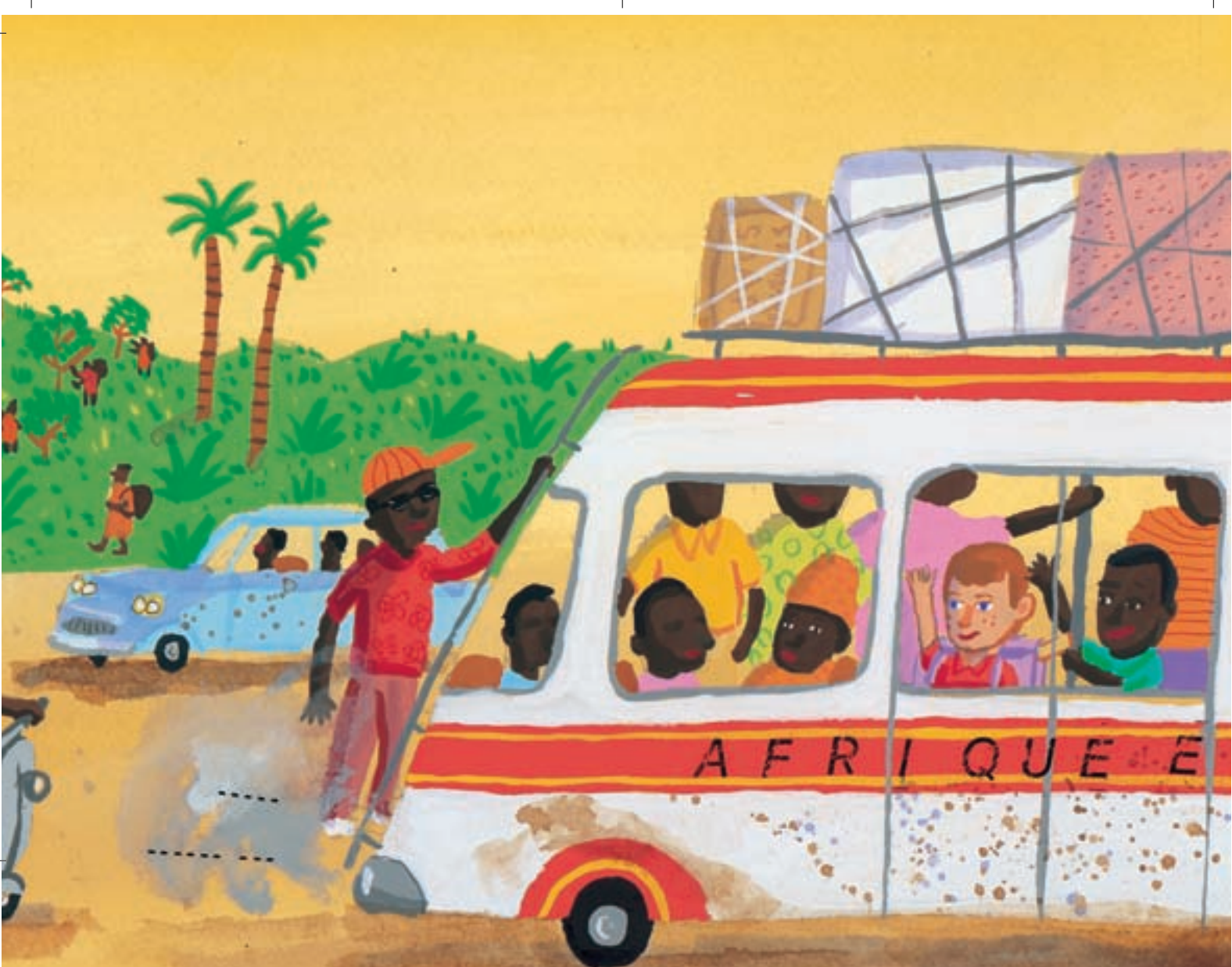


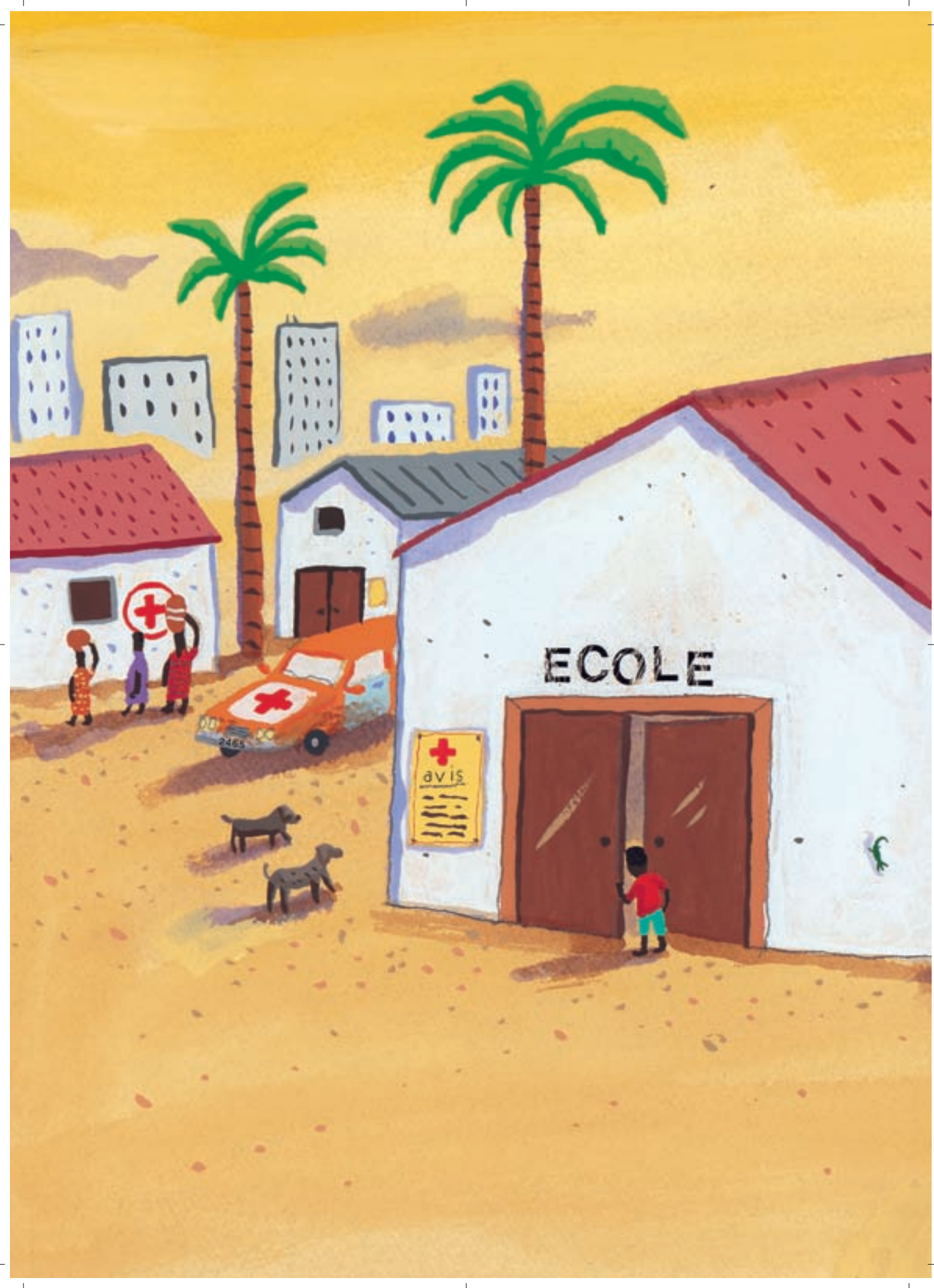
In the next village, Amadou's father got off the bus. He worked on a big cocoa plantation. Children the same age as Mathias and Amadou also got off the bus with him. Mathias was a little surprised:

- Where are they going?
- To work in the plantation, like my father...

Amadou smiled:

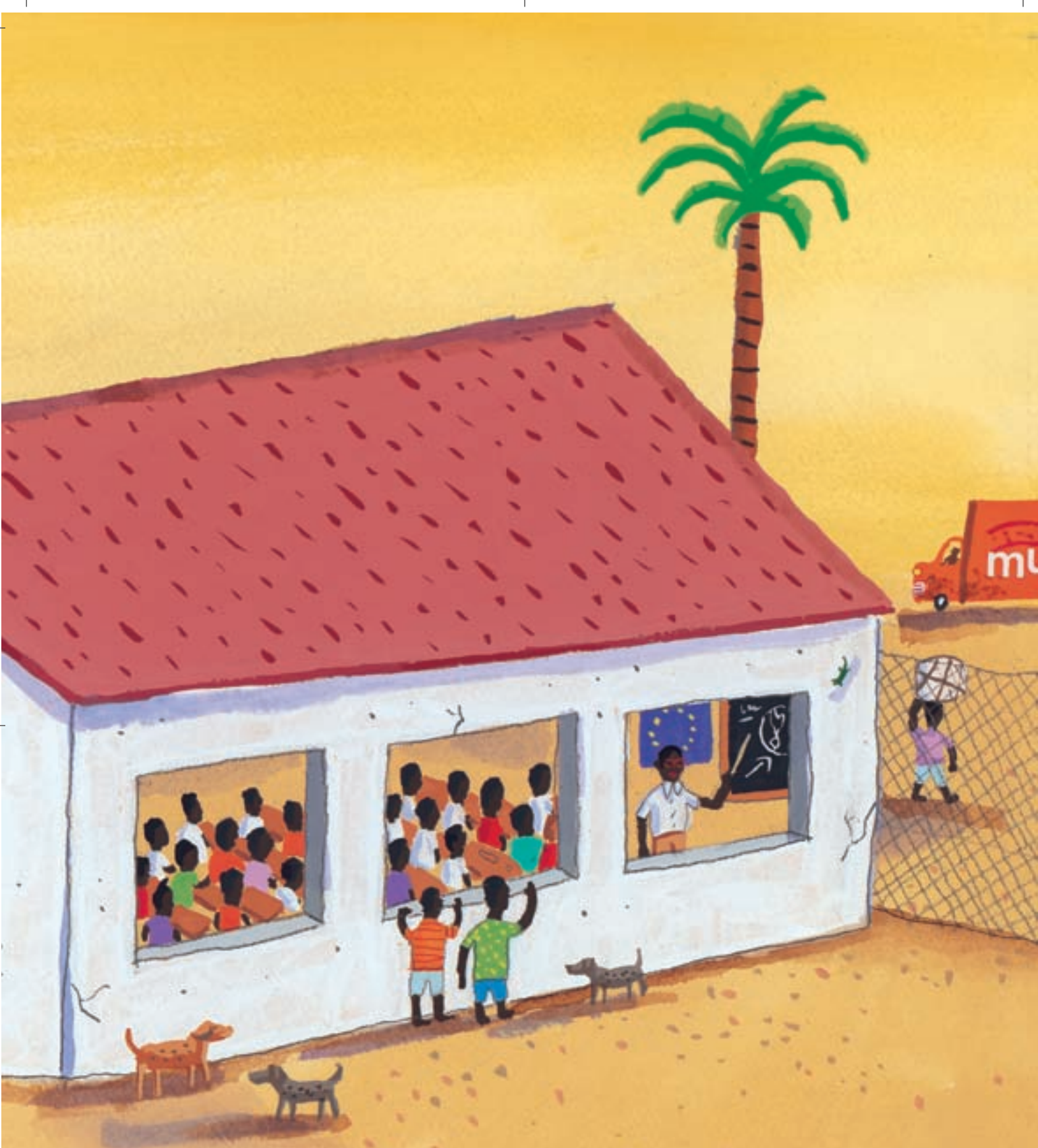
- You'll get used to it, you know....





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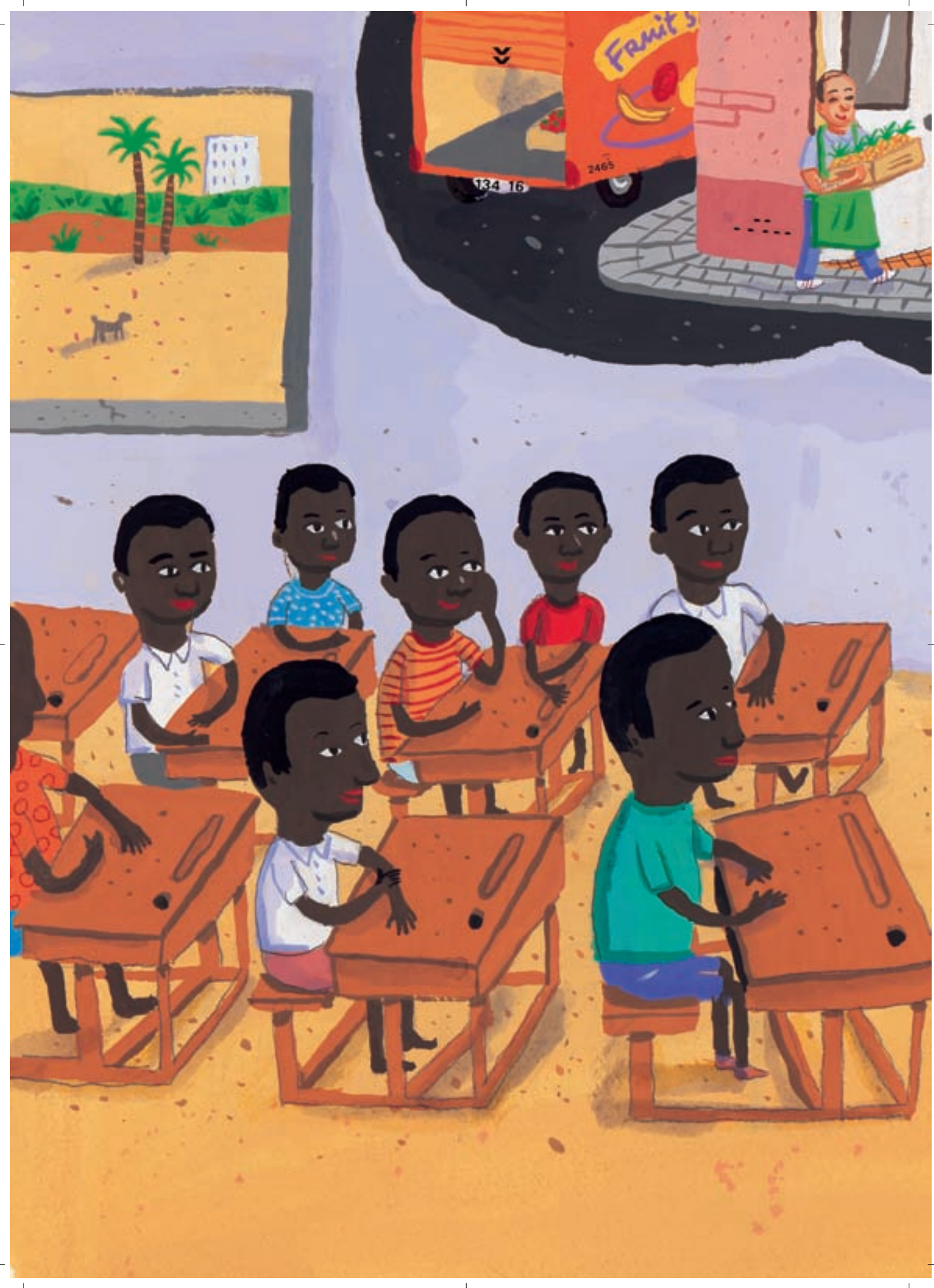
The building Amadou's school was in was almost brand new. It was built at the same time as the village dispensary, with money from the European Union and the countries that belong to it. In the classroom, the teacher was pointing out all of the members of the European Union on an old map. Mathias knew them well, and he kept wanting to put his hand up:  
– Sir, Sir! I know!

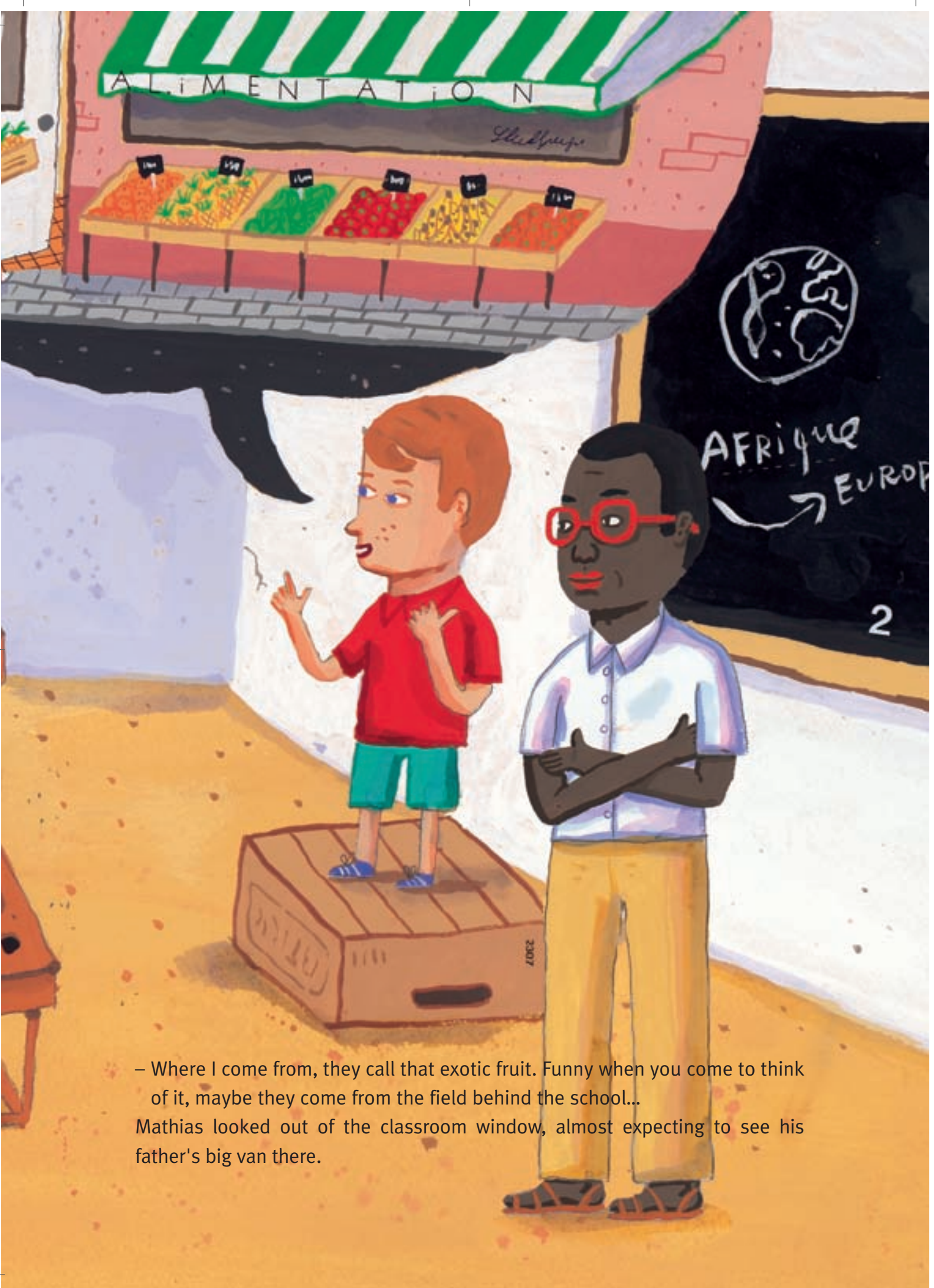






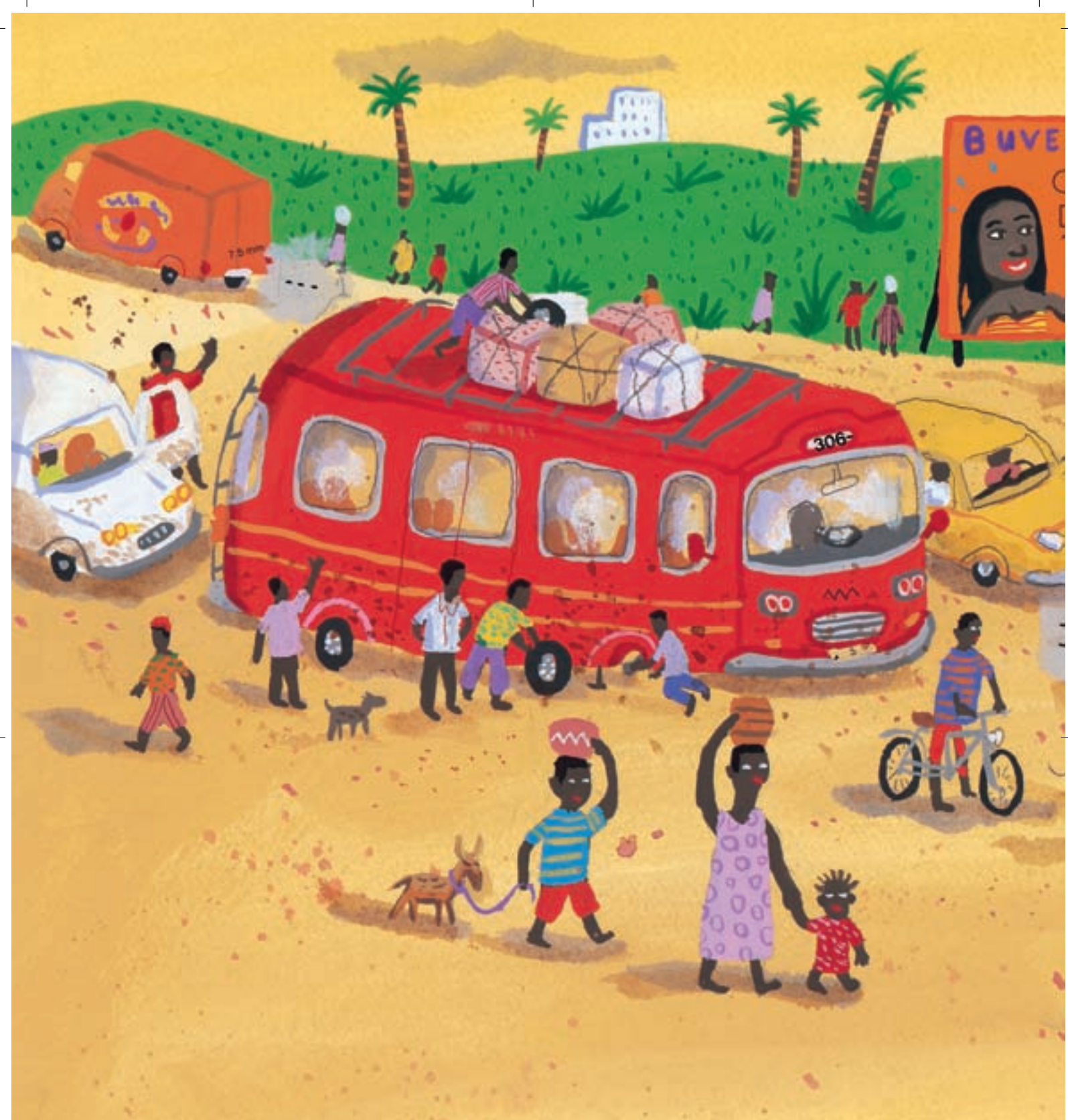
- Here, this will cool you down...
- Amadou handed him a piece of mango. The fruit was delicious and sweet. Mathias smiled:
- We've got the same ones at home, in my father's shop.
- It's nice to know that people where you live like the products from my village.





– Where I come from, they call that exotic fruit. Funny when you come to think of it, maybe they come from the field behind the school...

Mathias looked out of the classroom window, almost expecting to see his father's big van there.



On the way back, the bus suddenly stopped by the side of the road. A tyre had burst, but nobody seemed surprised or upset about this unforeseen delay. Amadou looked at his new friend:

– Could take a while, you know... If you like, we can get out and walk...

Mathias started laughing:

– OK. It's just a matter of getting used to it, I suppose...

VEZ MAINTENANT!  
COOL DRINK  
c'est bon!





Amadou's village wasn't very far away. The two children walked along a clearing through the palm trees. At the end of the path, there was a lovely stone well and several women were filling up enormous earthenware jugs with water.

– Hello Mathias! I'm Myriam, Amadou's mother.

She put the jug on her head, just like the other women. Mathias looked at her a little frightened. Just how far was she going to be able to walk with that thing on her head?

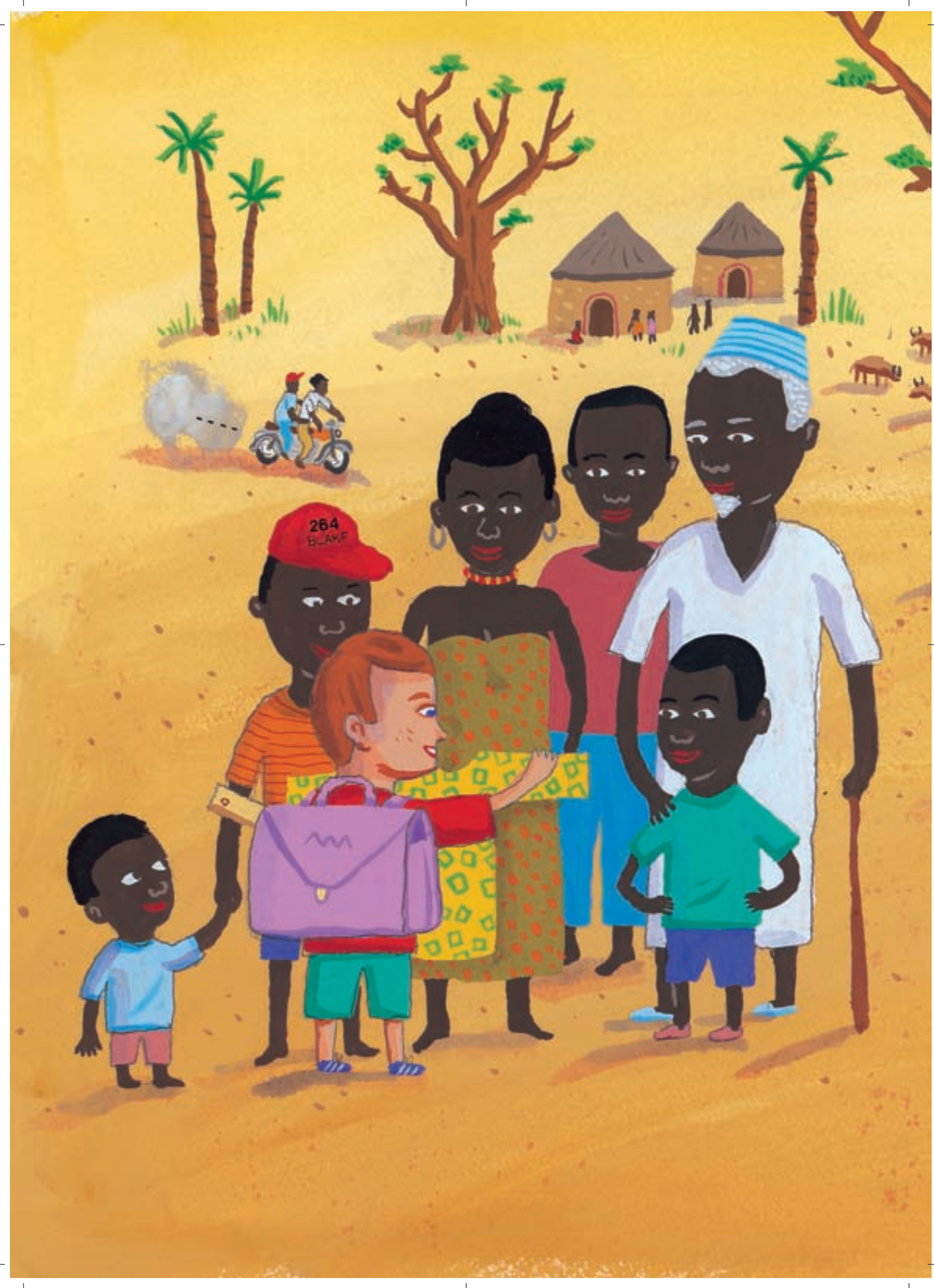






The women were singing as they walked along, and the jugs seemed to be screwed onto their heads... Mathias and Amadou ran ahead of them, in the middle of the fields of flowers that would no doubt soon be shipped off to the big towns in the north.







Mathias was proud and very happy. He was holding out the shirt that the village chief had just given him. It was wonderful, full of bright warm colours.

– You like it?

– It's brilliant...

He could barely whisper. He didn't know what to say he was so overawed. He'd never been greeted by a village chief like this before. It was as if it were a king, or a president or something. He needed some time to get over it....





The women were preparing the meal while Mathias walked around the village with the chief. When he pointed to the dispensary, the chief explained:

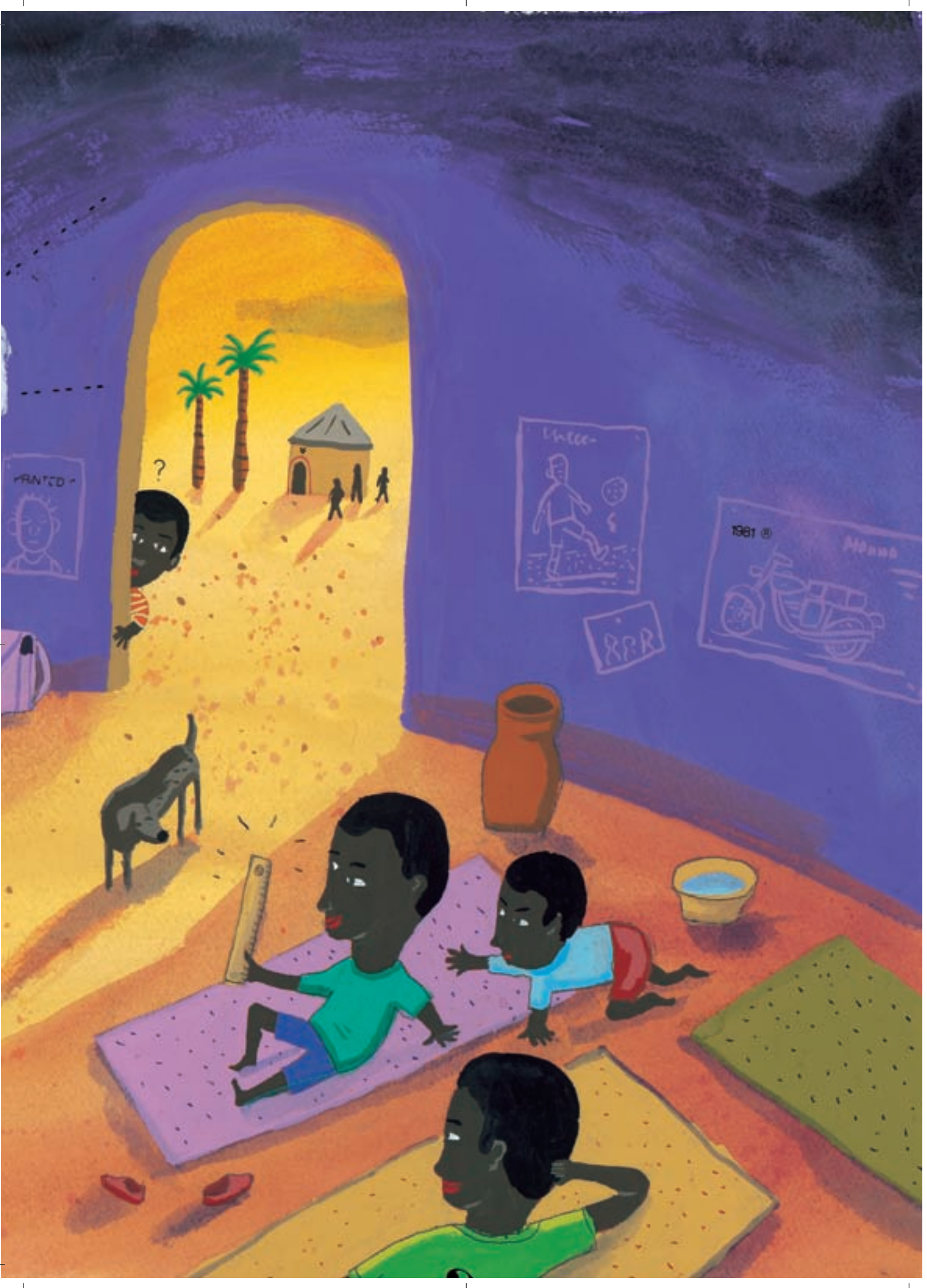
– There are a lot of accidents around here, you know, the roads are very bad...

Mathias nodded his head. With the village chief he felt he had to look serious, act like he knew about these things. But then in a way he did, because he remembered the old bus with the flat tyre, leaning over on the roadside...

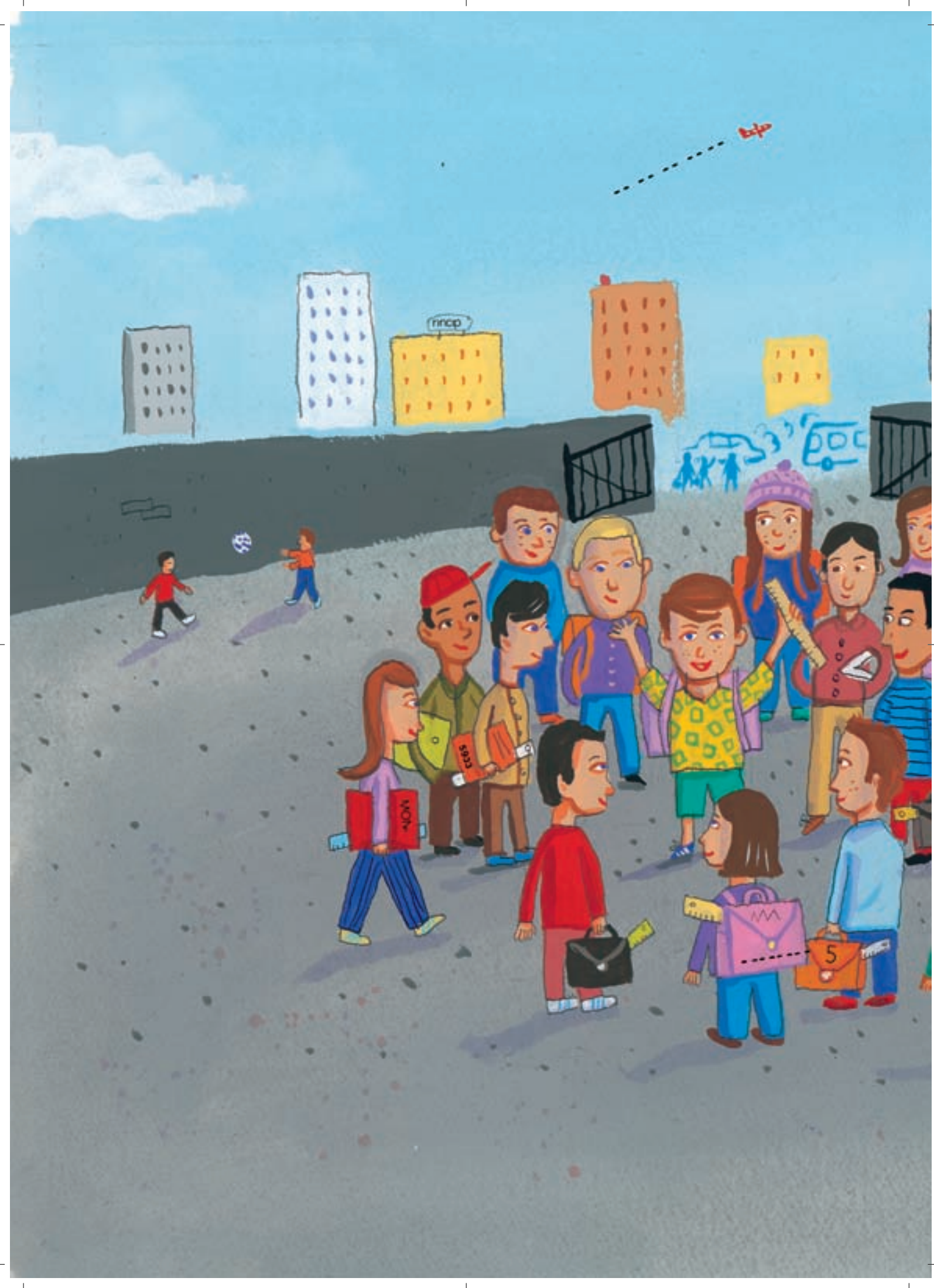


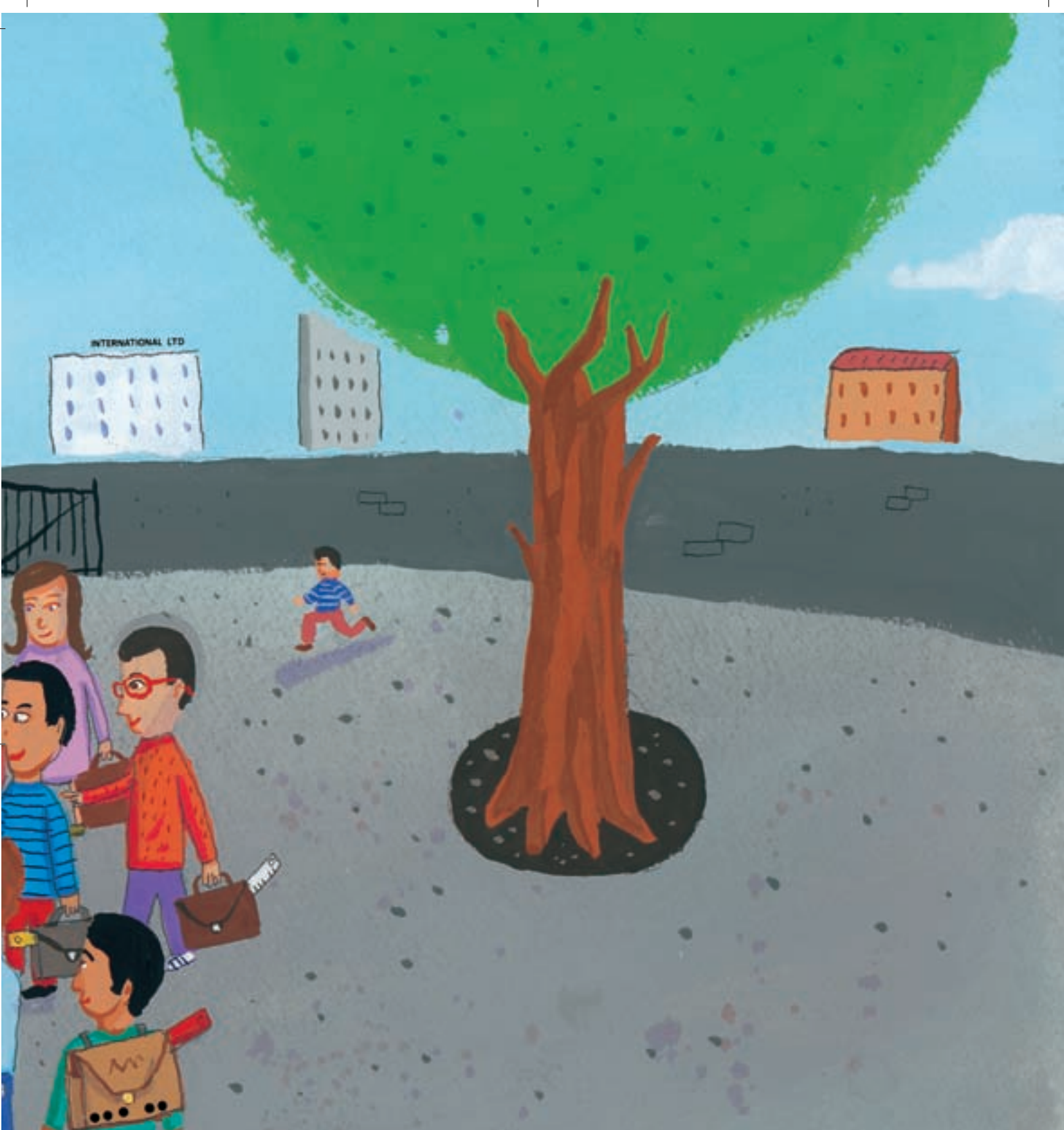
It was the best time of the day, when you could at last really relax and have a good chat. Mathias and Amadou felt inseparable.

– You know, when I go back to my school, I'm going to collect up lots of school stuff. We've got lots of things that maybe you could use too.



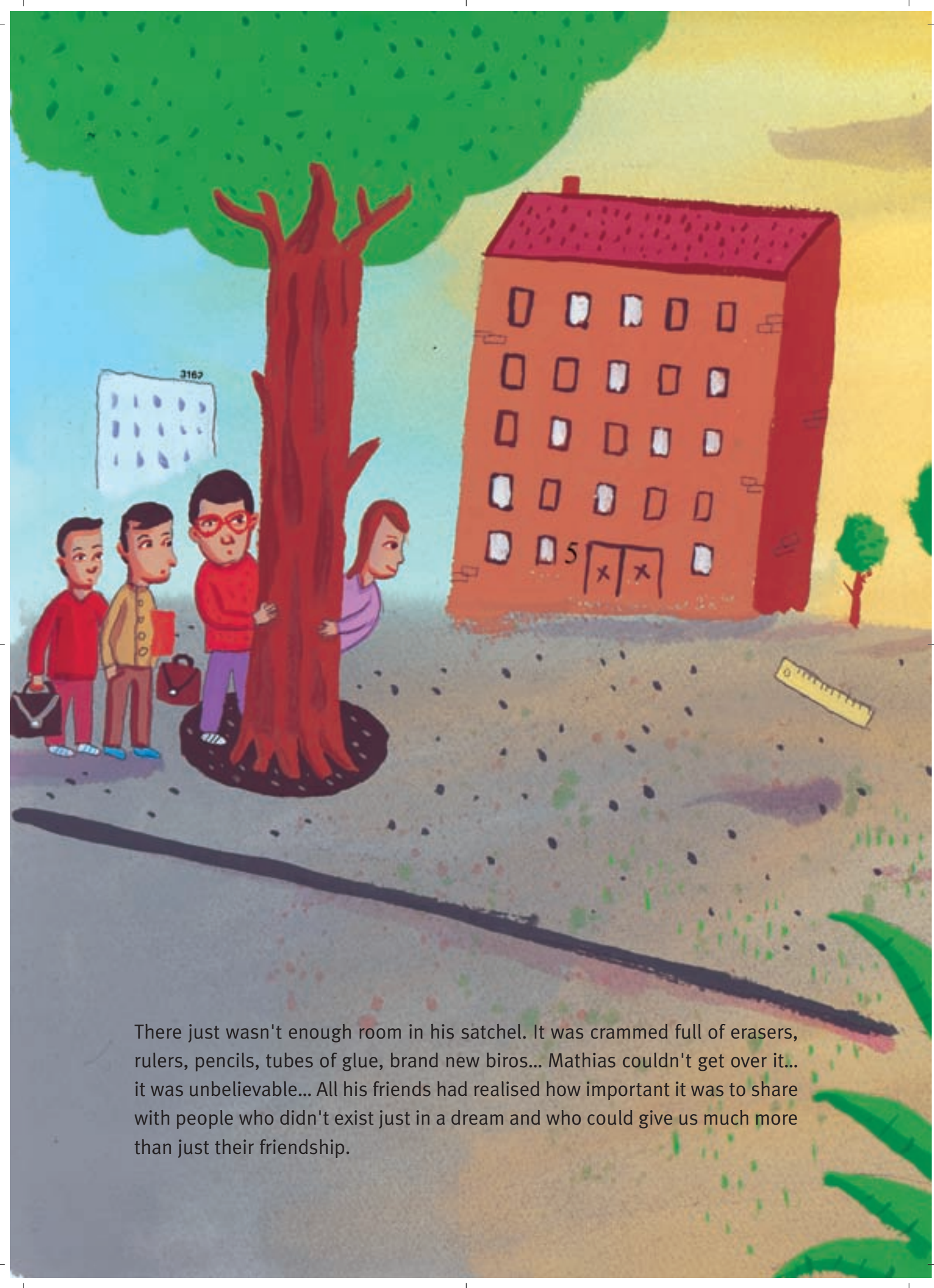






It's strange... Everything's the same and everything's different... The dream felt so real, even the brightly-coloured shirt that Mathias wore so proudly, in the school yard, with his friends all around him wondering what had changed.

– Hey, Mathias..., where were you all night? Hey, dig that shirt...!



There just wasn't enough room in his satchel. It was crammed full of erasers, rulers, pencils, tubes of glue, brand new biros... Mathias couldn't get over it... it was unbelievable... All his friends had realised how important it was to share with people who didn't exist just in a dream and who could give us much more than just their friendship.



To help your parents, your teacher, or those who have read this little story with you, to tell you a little bit more about **development co-operation** and what we can all do to try to ease poverty in the world, the Information and Communication Unit of the Directorate-General for Development (European Commission) has published a more detailed teaching manual.

Ask them to find out more on the Internet :

**[http://europa.eu.int/comm/development/index\\_en.cfm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/development/index_en.cfm)**

or from the Official Publications Office of the European Communities.



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