



1 CHALK, ICE AND BONES

Dmytryk saw his friends from afar — they'd gathered by the secret cliff. There was Aliye's black hair, Sashko's tuft of red hair, and Yasia's chestnut braids with purple strands. His three friends peered at something in the grass.

"You're late," Sashko grumbled.

Dmytryk whipped out his phone:

"Mama called."

His mother fought in the 57th motorized infantry brigade in the east of Ukraine, and you never knew when she would get another chance to call her loved ones.



His friends nodded at once. Mama was a good enough reason to be late.

"Look what we have found on the lake shore," Yasia said, gesturing towards the grass. "Do you know what that might be?"

Dmytryk looked at two rocks.

"My grandpa called them **devil's fingers**," he said, pointing at the longer one.

"And my grandma said they were **lightning arrow heads**. But I guess they are neither this nor that."

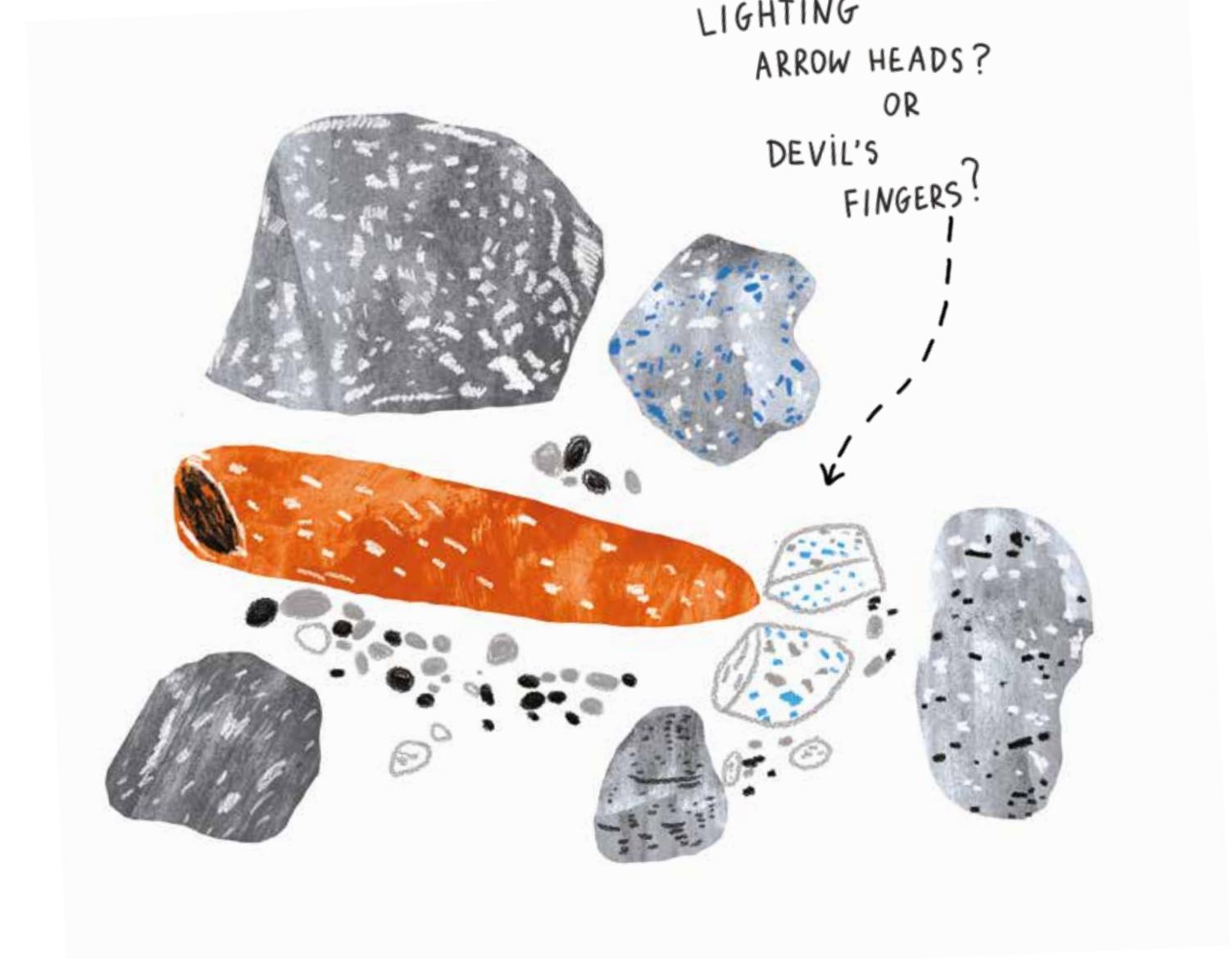
Aliye ran her fingers along their find thoughtfully.

"I think I know who can tell us about them," she said.

Back at the tourist camp, Aliye shouted:

"Da-a-a-dy!"

"What happened, *kizim*?" a man with glasses said, looking out of a pavilion in the park.



"Do you know what's that?" Aliye dashed to the pavilion like an arrow. Her friends tagged along.

"I do," her father nodded. "These are **mollusk fossils**."

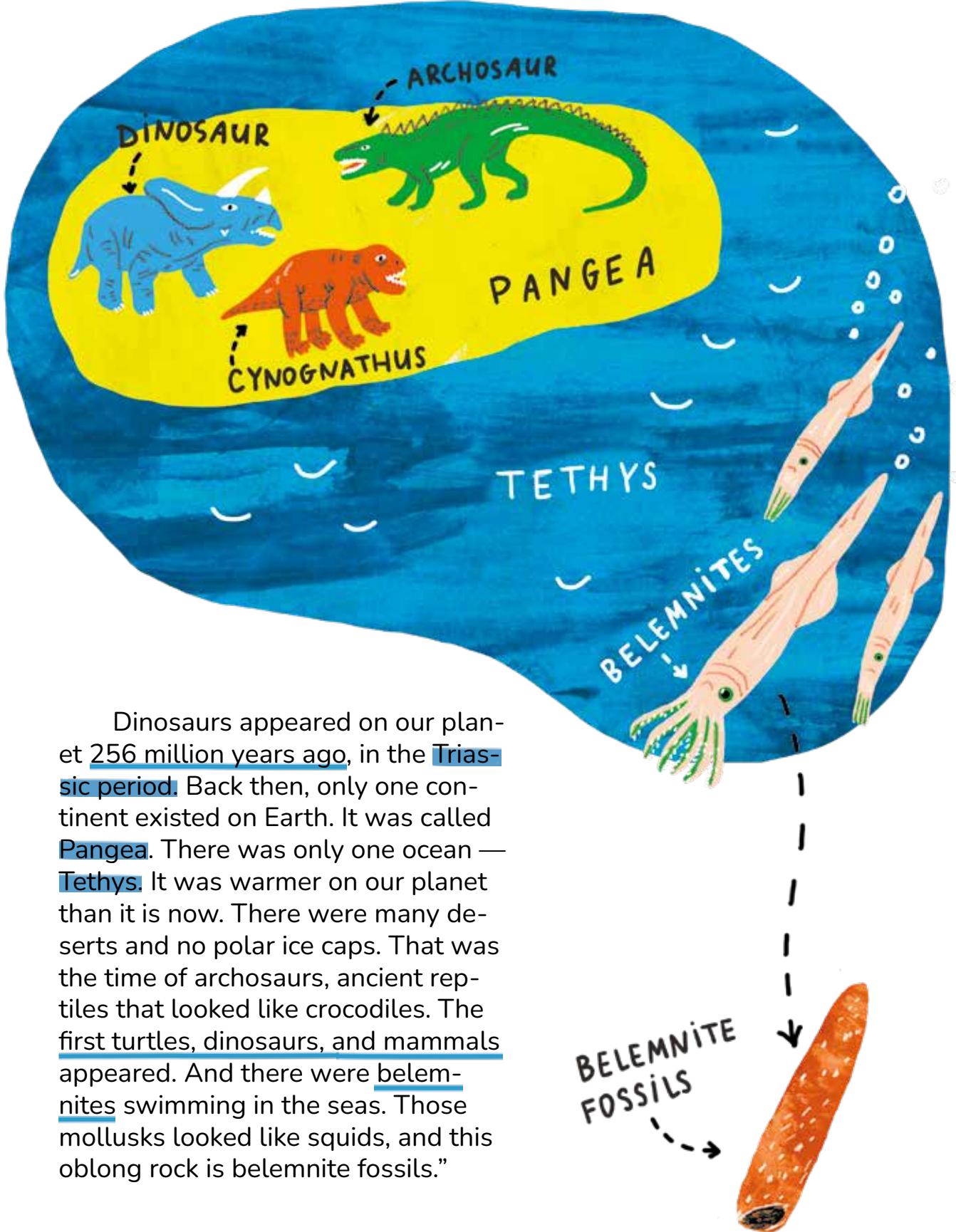
"Fossils?" Sashko said, perking up. "From the dinosaur era? Perhaps, these are fossils of dinosaurs, not mollusks? Mister Rustem..."

"But what kind of dinosaurs lived here?" Yasia cut him short.

"She's right! Textbooks don't mention it!" Dmytryk said, getting excited.

"Alright, I got it," Rustem said, interrupting them. "I see that I have to tell you the whole story. Come on over here, sit down."

*In Crimean Tatar: "my daughter."



Dinosaurs appeared on our planet 256 million years ago, in the Triassic period. Back then, only one continent existed on Earth. It was called Pangea. There was only one ocean — Tethys. It was warmer on our planet than it is now. There were many deserts and no polar ice caps. That was the time of archosaurs, ancient reptiles that looked like crocodiles. The first turtles, dinosaurs, and mammals appeared. And there were belemnites swimming in the seas. Those mollusks looked like squids, and this oblong rock is belemnite fossils."

"But we are in Cherkasy region," Sashko said, frowning. "How would marine creatures end up here?"

Rustem laughed.

"Of course, the sea is far away now. But it wasn't always like that. In the Triassic period, the Carpathian Mountains, Odesa region, and Crimea were the seabed. And in the Jurassic era, the next period that started 201 million years ago, Pangea split apart to form two continents: Laurasia and Gondwana. The ocean advanced on our lands, and then receded — many times. It was during the Jurassic period that the first birds and spiders appeared, and ammonites lived in the ocean and seas. It was a kind of squid mixed with snails."



The children giggled.

"The Jurassic period was followed by the Cretaceous period, roughly 145 million years ago. Back then, the entire Ukraine apart from Crimea, Donbas, and the Carpathians was the ocean floor."

"And what about dinosaurs?" Dmytryk asked. "The Jurassic period was the dinosaur era, for sure."

"In Ukraine, only two skeletons have been found. Both of them in Crimea. Only one of them was complete enough to say what species it belonged to. It was Ria-

bininohadros weberae."

"Never heard about it," Sashko declared in a skeptical tone of a dinosaur expert.

"It's a close relative of Iguanodon."

"Well, if you say so..." Sashko said thoughtfully and covertly pulled up a browser on his smartphone to check out those Iguanodons.

"And who lives in the water? I mean apart from those... belemnites and ammonites?" Aliye spoke up.

"Oh, many different creatures. First of all, huge rays and sharks. Also, plesiosaurs and mosasaurs—giant marine reptiles. Sea crocodiles."

"Why did they die out?" Yasia wondered.

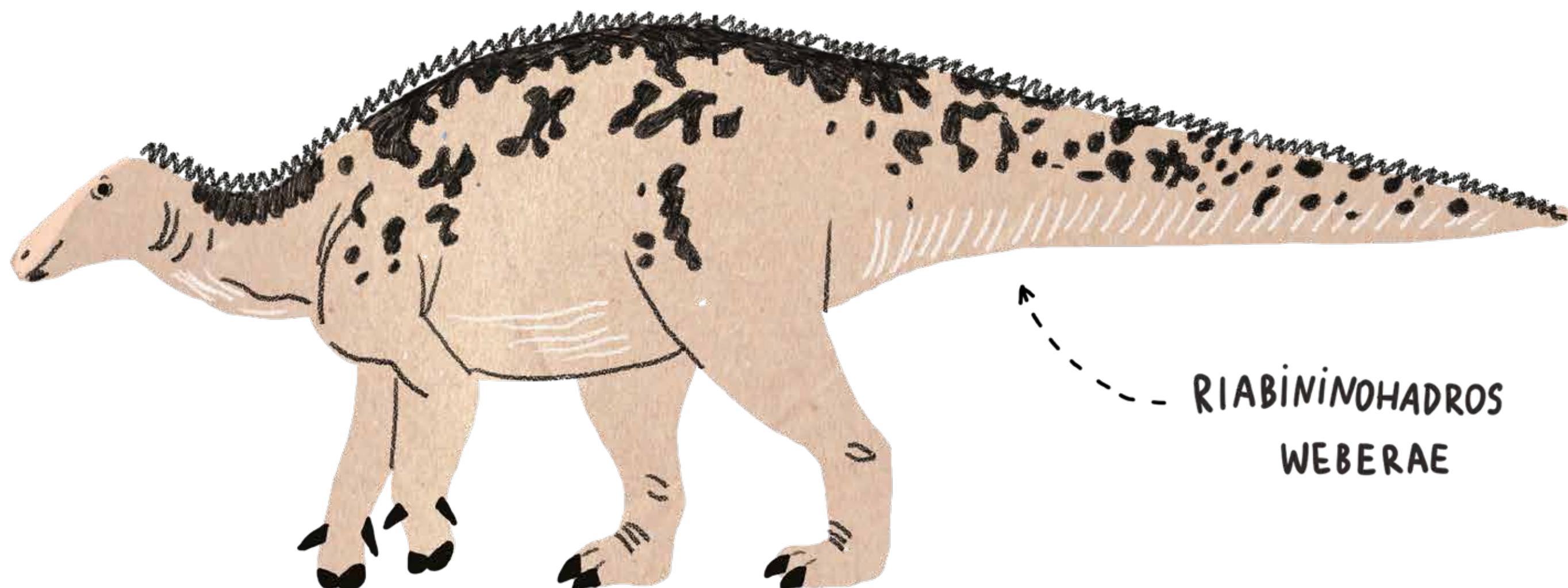
"Because a meteorite fell to Earth," Sashko explained.

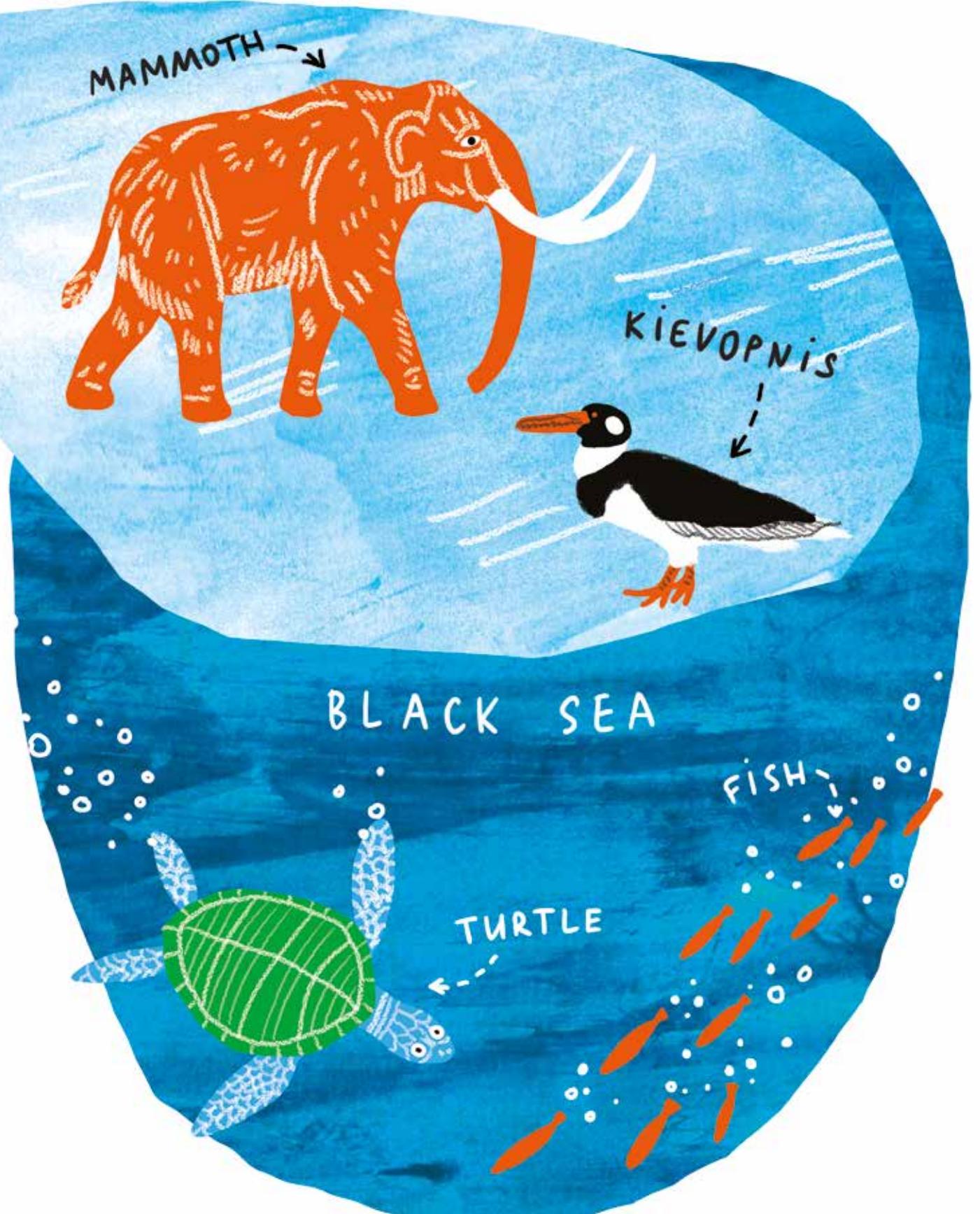
"It's just one of the hypotheses," Rustem said. "According to the another one, during the Cretaceous period, the species died out as a result of earthquakes and volcano eruptions. Yet another

one blames flower plants: they spread across the planet, displacing conifers and ferns. The herbivorous dinosaurs couldn't eat them and died out. And then the predators that hunted those herbivores died out, too."

"Oh, I see... And what happened after the dinosaurs died out?"

"The Cenozoic era began. The continents started to look similar to the ones we have now. The entire south of Ukraine was a large shallow Paratethys Sea,





home to fish, turtles, and salamanders. Ancient sea birds nested on its shores. Their fossils are often found in the Luhansk region. The Paratethys Sea dried up and then filled with water again several times until it vanished five million years ago, leaving behind the Aral and Caspian lakes, as well as Black Sea Lake that later became the Black Sea.

The planet became considerably colder. Ice ages occurred from time to time, bringing freezing temperatures. Huge glaciers on the poles spread much further than now—up to the territory of Ukraine. There were seven ice ages in total.”

“So, that’s when mammoths lived in Ukraine?” Aliye asked.

“Exactly. And not only them. Cave bears, lions and hyenas, woolly rhinos, as well as ham-



sters, hares, and various birds lived here, too.”

“Why did they all die out? Because it grew warmer?”

“There are many hypotheses. Some say that people killed them, others blame the warming. I prefer a newer version: the entire ecosystem was built around the mammoths, so when they vanished, everyone else disappeared, too. It was an epidemic that wiped out the mammoths.”

“And what happened after that?”

“Then the world became quite similar to the one we know. It’s only that saiga antelopes lived in the Ukrainian steppes, and wild goats—in the forests.”

“I’m wondering when humans appeared here,” Yasia said, turn-

*Two of the many extinct species.

ing the ammonite over and over in her hands. “It’s millions of years that we’re talking about. The continents changed shape. The seas dried up or formed. Did it all happen without humans?”

“I don’t study humans,” Rustem said and shrugged. “But we are a very young species, indeed. As far as I remember, the earliest members of the genus *Homo* originated in Africa 2.4 mil-

lion years ago. Researchers call them *Homo habilis*. And *Homo sapiens*, to which all modern humans belong, appeared around 200 thousand years ago. They reached the Ukrainian lands even later... Well, I’m sure that history teachers will tell you all about it.”

The children looked at one another. Aliye and Dmytryk who had just finished the fifth grade mumbled:

“Oh yeah. Teachers will tell us, for sure.”

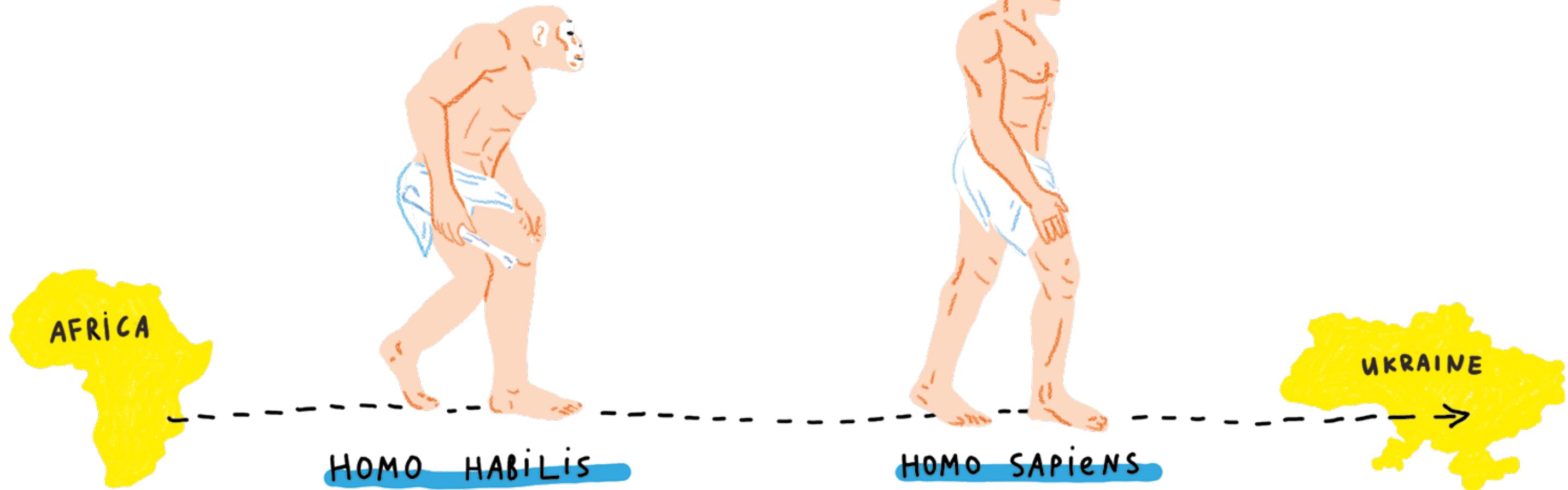
“I got an idea!” Yasia exclaimed. “Let’s do some research and write our own history book. A fascinating one, not another textbook.”

“Let’s create a social media website instead!” Dmytryk said, picking up on her idea. “It’s easier, and its followers would be able to add info. We can make a game even. A quest! “Cool History of Ukraine”!”

“Sounds interesting, guys, but in a week we will all go back to our hometowns,” Sashko said, sceptical as always. “You won’t travel that often even from Zaporizhzhia to Kropyvnytskyi, let alone to Ivano-Frankivsk or Chernihiv.”

“Why would you need Internet for?” Aliye snorted. “We can meet online. Parents will help us. Won’t you?” She turned to Rustem.

“Of course,” Rustem said, hugging his daughter.



(4)

4 THE NATION AT THE CROSSROADS OF THE WORLD

Coming home from school, Dmytryk saw that Viktor, his father's old friend, had come for a visit.

"But why can't you come, Serhiy?" Viktor grumbled. "It's been so long since we all got together."

"Olesia is down with a cold. How can I leave her alone?" his father said. "And then I have to go shopping on weekend — Dmytryk needs a new jacket and sneakers."

"Your wife who should be doing all that," Viktor said. "It's not a man's job."

"Really?" father laughed and turned to Dmytryk. "Would you like some buckwheat kasha with a cutlet? Or, maybe, soup? There's still some in the fridge. Look, Viktor, these kids are mine, just as Katrusia's. We share our responsibilities."

"So, you "share"? Okay, where's their mother then?" his friend quipped.

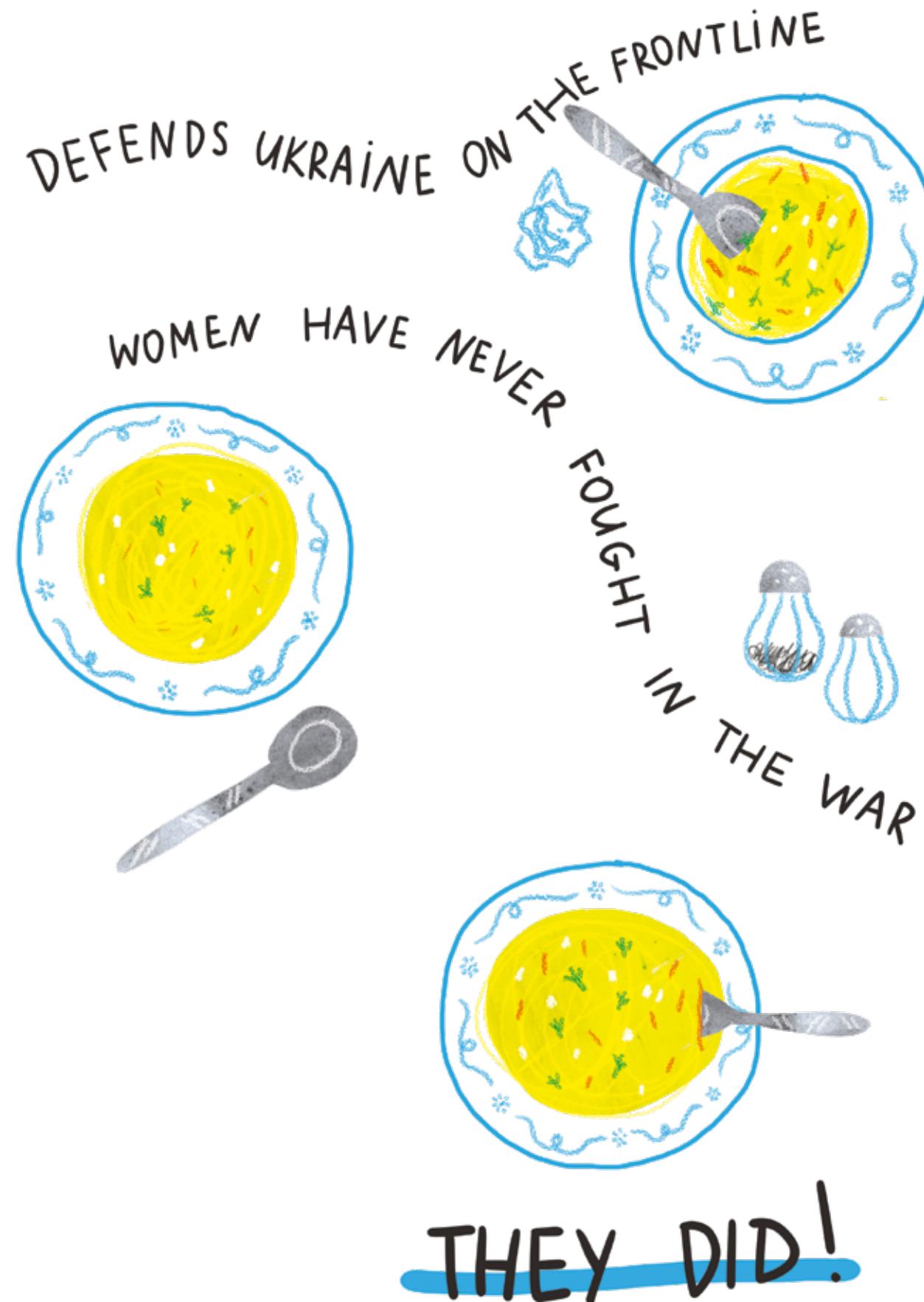
"She defends Ukraine on the frontline. So that our children

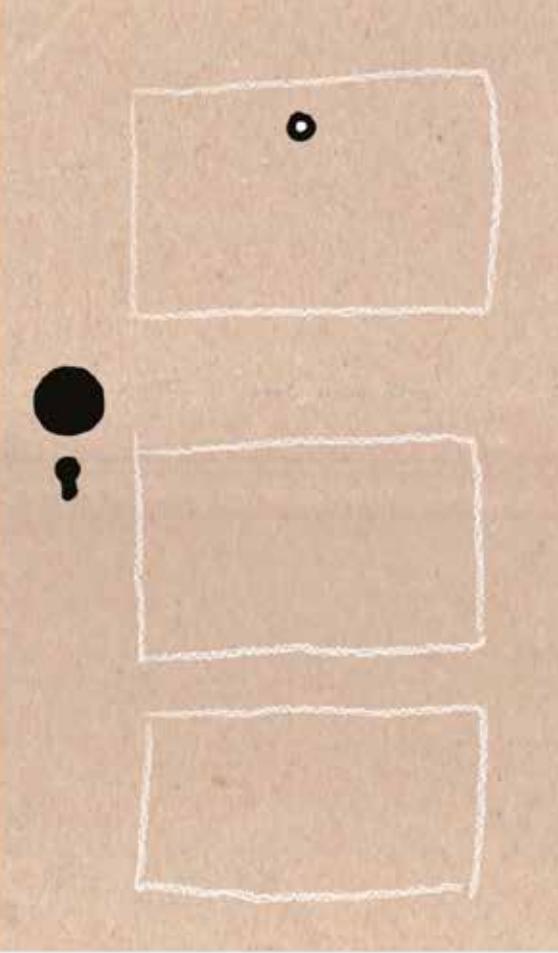
would grow up in an independent and democratic country. Would you like some soup, too?" father said. It was hard to throw him off balance.

"It's no job for a woman." Viktor wasn't going to give up. "Women have never fought in the war. Their job is to take care of kids at home."

"It's not true! They did!" Dmytryk protested. He'd already set his backpack down, washed his hands, and got ready to eat his soup. But now he put his spoon aside and started raving about Scythian and Sarmatian female warriors, about Princess Olga and the girls of the Polovtsi tribe. He was planning to tell his friends all about them that night.

"Stupid fairy-tales," Viktor said, cutting him short. "I just don't understand how come you didn't divorce her right after she joined the army. What kind of woman





YOU ARE LUCKIER WITH FRIENDS THAN ME

wants to kill others in the war?
Only a crazy one.”

A dead silence fell. Dmytryk looked from his father to his father's friend. Serhiy put a ladle aside and took off his apron.

“What about men, Viktor? Are you saying that only crazy men want to murder other people in the war? Do you mean that everyone who's now defending their homeland is crazy?”

“No, you got me wrong.”

“Then be careful what you say to me. That's an insult for me and my family.”

“What did I say that was so terrible?” Viktor seethed with anger. Serhiy sighed.

“You'd better leave, Viktor. And don't come here again. Ever.”

My father shut the door after

his friend left, enraged, and sighed a heavy sigh again.

“Things happen, son. Even with old friends... What about your buddies? Do they tease you because your mother is fighting?”

“Of course, not!” Dmytryk said, with his eyes wide open. “They asked me to say hello to mama and thank her.”

His father smiled.

“You are luckier with friends than me.”

Yasia sized her friends up with a long hard stare.

“So, what happened after the Goths?”

“The Great Migration,” Aliye announced happily. “And then the Western Roman Empire broke up, the period called **Antiquity** ended, and the **Middle Ages** began.”

“Are you kidding?” Yasia groaned. “What migration? How many people moved where?”

“Lots of them. But those that matter to us were living here, anyway. The Slavs. Your ancestors.”

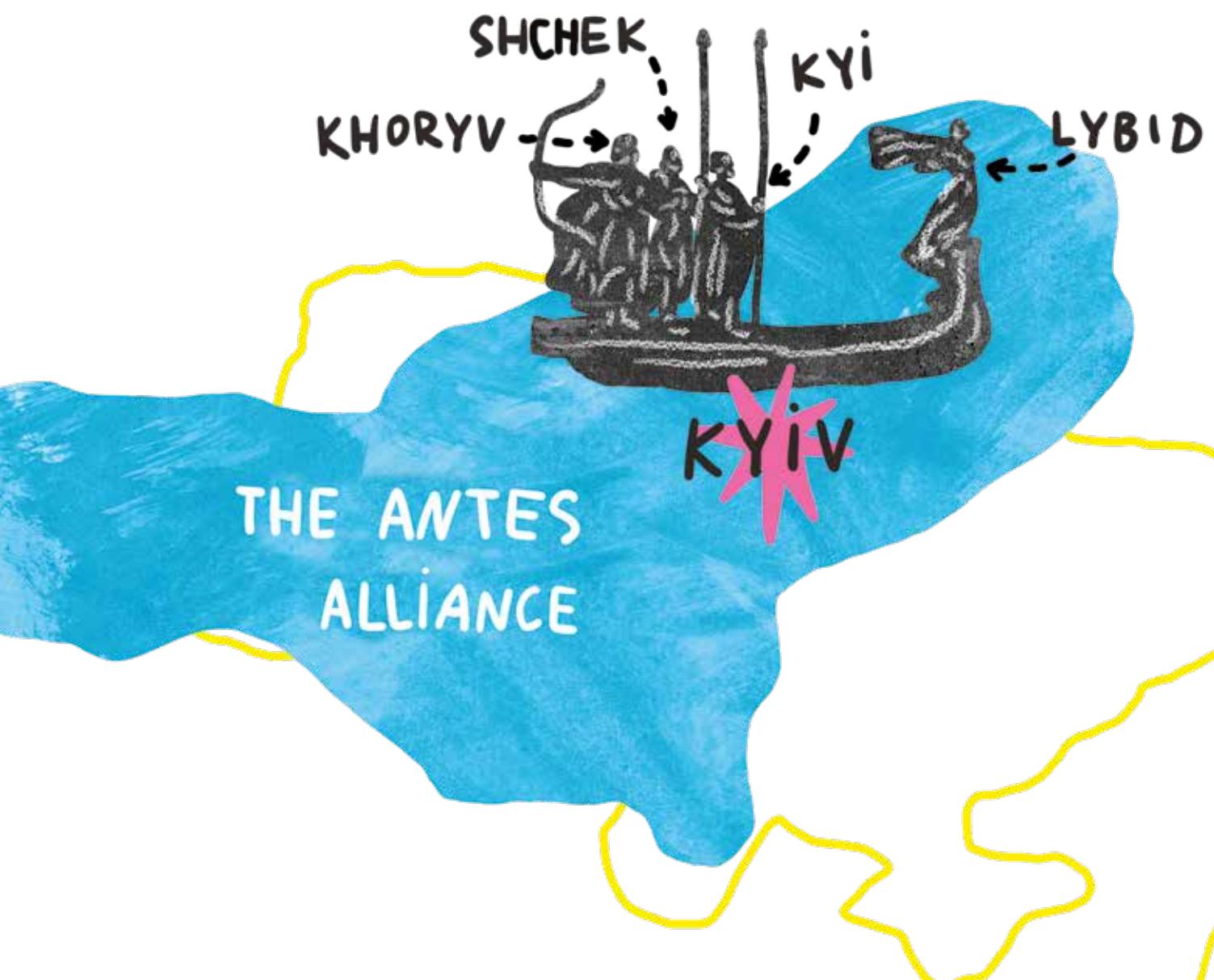
“What about yours?” Sashko wondered.

“I am a *kirimli*,” Aliye said. “My ancestors are different. But let's talk about yours for now.”

So, the **Great Migration** happened between the 4th and 7th centuries. Over that period, lots of peoples moved from Asia to Europe, and from the Eastern Europe to the Western Europe. Most of them passed through today's Ukrainian lands. The Goths were driven out by the Huns followed by the Avars and later the Khazars.

Finally, the Slavic tribes got

*The self-designated name of the Crimean Tatars.



tired of their travels and started to settle down across Europe. They established tribal alliances — not yet states, but close to that. The Slavs were skillful warriors, but then the moment came when they had to build their own state to protect themselves and their families.

The Antes alliance was the first of its kind on our lands but it

collapsed after the long war with the Avars. It was roughly at that time, around the 5th century, that Kyiv was founded by the legendary brothers Kyi, Shchek, and Khoryv and their sister Lybid.

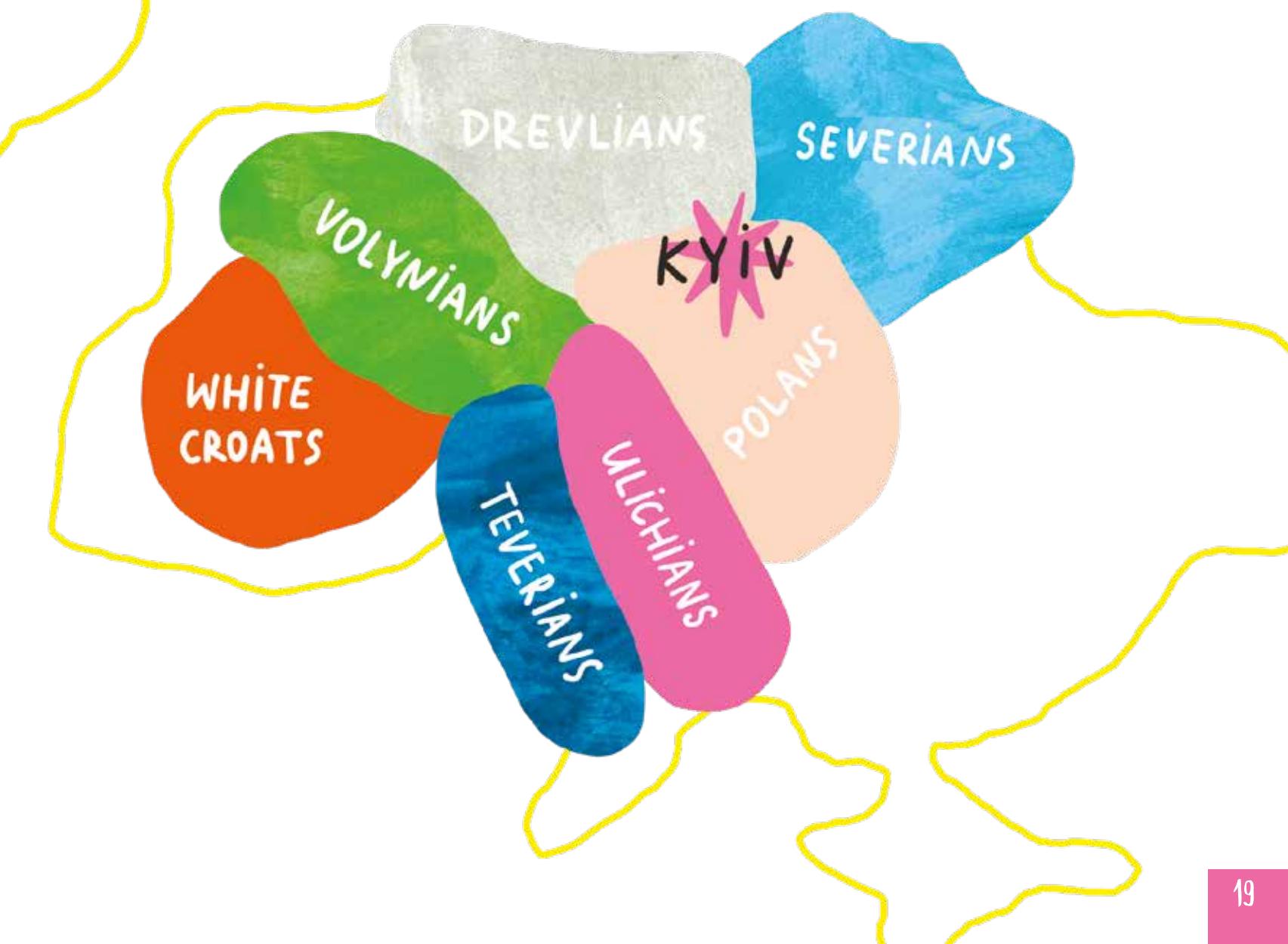
After the Antes alliance collapsed, many other, smaller, alliances popped up.

At the time, quite a few trade

routes in Europe declined because the North Africa was conquered by the Arabs, and the Central Asia by the Khazar khaganate. New trade routes emerged, in particular, the Route from the Varangians to the Greeks down the Dnieper. The Varangians were the warriors from what is today Sweden, Norway, and Denmark, while the Greeks

were the Byzantine Empire — the eastern provinces of the collapsing Roman Empire, the largest and the richest country in Europe.

Kyiv became an important trade center and a destination for many merchants and travelers. They traveled not only down the Dnieper but also from the East and the West, along the Volga trade.



route. Some of the Varangian military leaders decided to conquer Kyiv.

"Why?" Dmytryk asked, frowning. Sashko scratched his nose.

"A rich town paid lots of taxes to its ruler. Not in cash, though. Mostly in expensive furs, beeswax, honey, and grain. The merchants who shipped amber from the Baltic Sea coast or silver from the Khazar khaganate paid their dues, too. The princes loaded those "taxes" onto their ships and headed to the Byzantine Empire. If you conquered two large trade towns, let's say Novgorod in the north and Kyiv in the south, you'd collect twice as much taxes. That was how Kyivan Rus originated — a state along the Route from the Varangians to the Greeks.

But the local tribes were not going to comply with that quietly. They rebelled and wanted the state to be of some use to them, not just collect taxes. And the state began to change. At first, the Varangians became less of Varangians but more of Slavs..."

"How's that?"

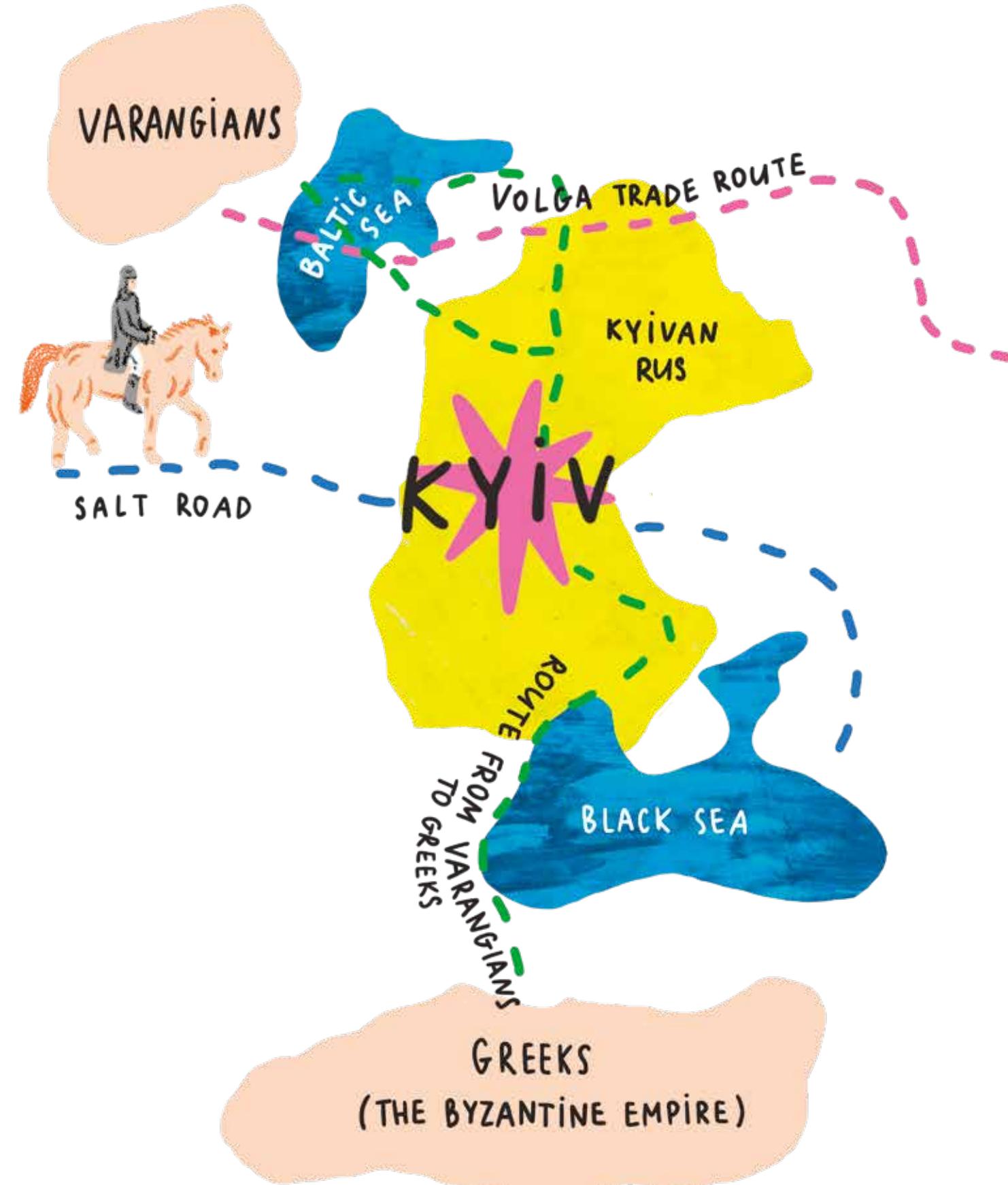
"That's how," Aliye said. She dropped her pen and crawled under the table to look for it.

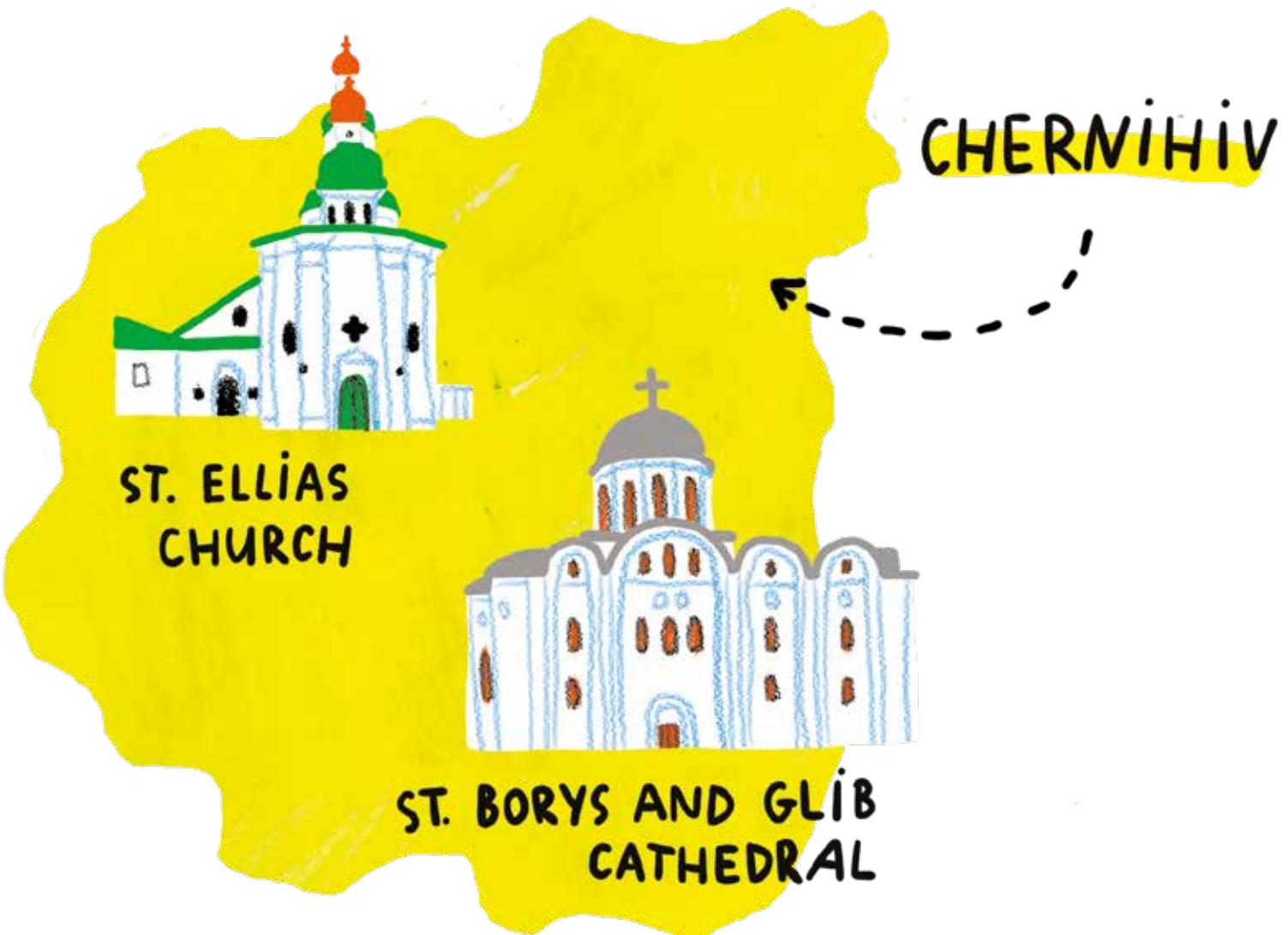
"Princess Helga and prince Ingvar named their son Svyatoslav. They adopted local customs and language. Then the state grew into something bigger than collecting dues once a year. The princes started to mint coins, build roads, and care about justice. And when Volodymyr, Svyatoslav's son, took the throne, Kyivan Rus became a real state."

"Volodymyr? The one who baptized Kyivan Rus in 988 and adopted Christianity as the main religion?"

"Yeah. I should say, though, that many Christians had been there even before the mass baptism. And quite a few people remained pagans after that. It's just that from then on the chronicles were written by Christian monks."

"He also got married to Anna, a Byzantine princess," Yasia said, her face lighting up. "It was so cool, because her grandpa, Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, compiled a treatise about ruling the empire where he stressed that Byzantium rulers had never married their princesses off to the rulers of neighboring states and would never do that. They considered all their neighbors savages and barbarians. That's why."





"And Volodymyr's son, Yaroslav, compiled a legal code, Rus Justice. And his daughters became queens of different European states. Some buildings built in his time survived to this day."

"Right! We have many of them in Chernihiv. For example, St. Elias Church or St. Borys and Glib Cathedral," Yasia said. She quickly clicked on the mouse and pulled up the photos. "I can show you around

when you come for a visit."

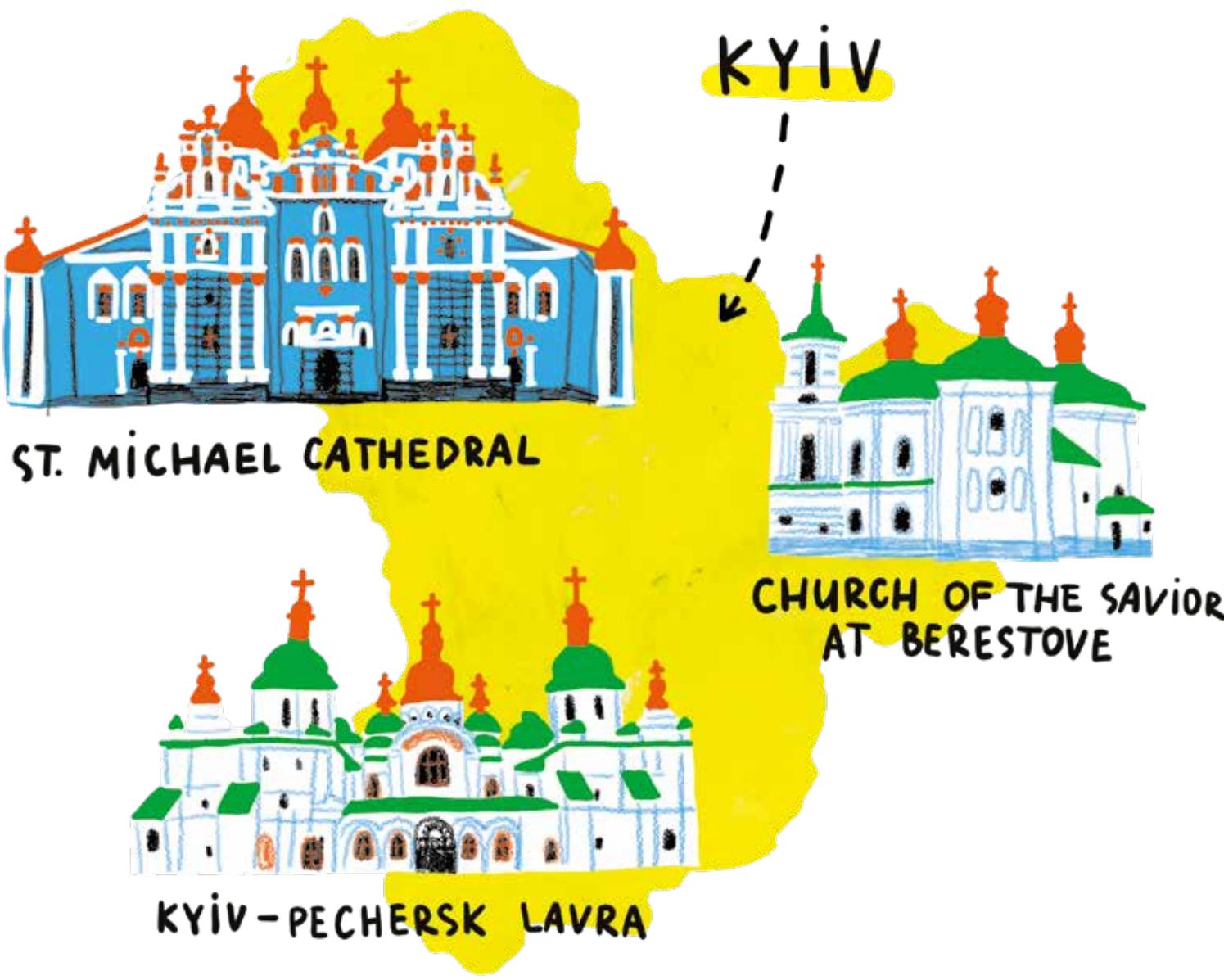
Sashko smiled and looked down at his phone screen.

"And then there's St. Sophia Cathedral in Kyiv, Church of the Savior at Berestove, and many others. I wrote down their names. But these are all large public buildings. I wish the houses where people lived survived, too. All we got now are reconstructions in the open-air museums."

CHERNIHIV

"I'd love to go there," Dmytryk said dreamily. Sashko shrugged.

"No problem. We'll go to those museums and to Chernihiv and Kyiv, too. And to many other places."



KYIV



12 UNDER THE BLUE-AND-YELLOW FLAG

"How can we find anybody here?" Yasia asked, looking at the Shevchenko Park in Kyiv, full of people and flags.

"We'll find her," Dmytryk said. "You found me, didn't you? Look! A Crimean Tatar flag with the tamga! Aliye might be there."

Aliye really was there together with her parents. But where was Sashko?

"It's for the first time in the whole year that we got a chance to meet. Only to get lost in the crowd!" Yasia whimpered.

"Just call him," Rustem said. "Tell him that you are waiting for him under the tamga by the monument to Taras Shevchenko."

"And while we are waiting... Mama!" Aliye said, tugging at her mother's sleeve.

"Yes, kızım?"

"We can't figure out when Russia invaded Ukraine for the first

time. After the independence was declared, I mean."

"Well, right then — after Ukraine became independent," Niyara, Aliye's mother, snorted. "They tried to occupy Crimea back in 1992. My family returned from Uzbekistan only in 1997, of course, but it was in 1990 that the first Crimean Tatars came back, and they told us what had been going on back then. They fought over the oath — Ukraine and Russia argued to whom the officers of the former Soviet Black Sea fleet shall swear their oath. Ukraine pulled part of the soldiers over to its side, while Russia, in its turn, pressurized the sailors. Then the team of one of the ships rebelled, and the ship willfully left Crimea for Odesa. They wanted to show that they chose Ukraine and were not going to change their minds."

MONUMENT TO SHEVCHENKO



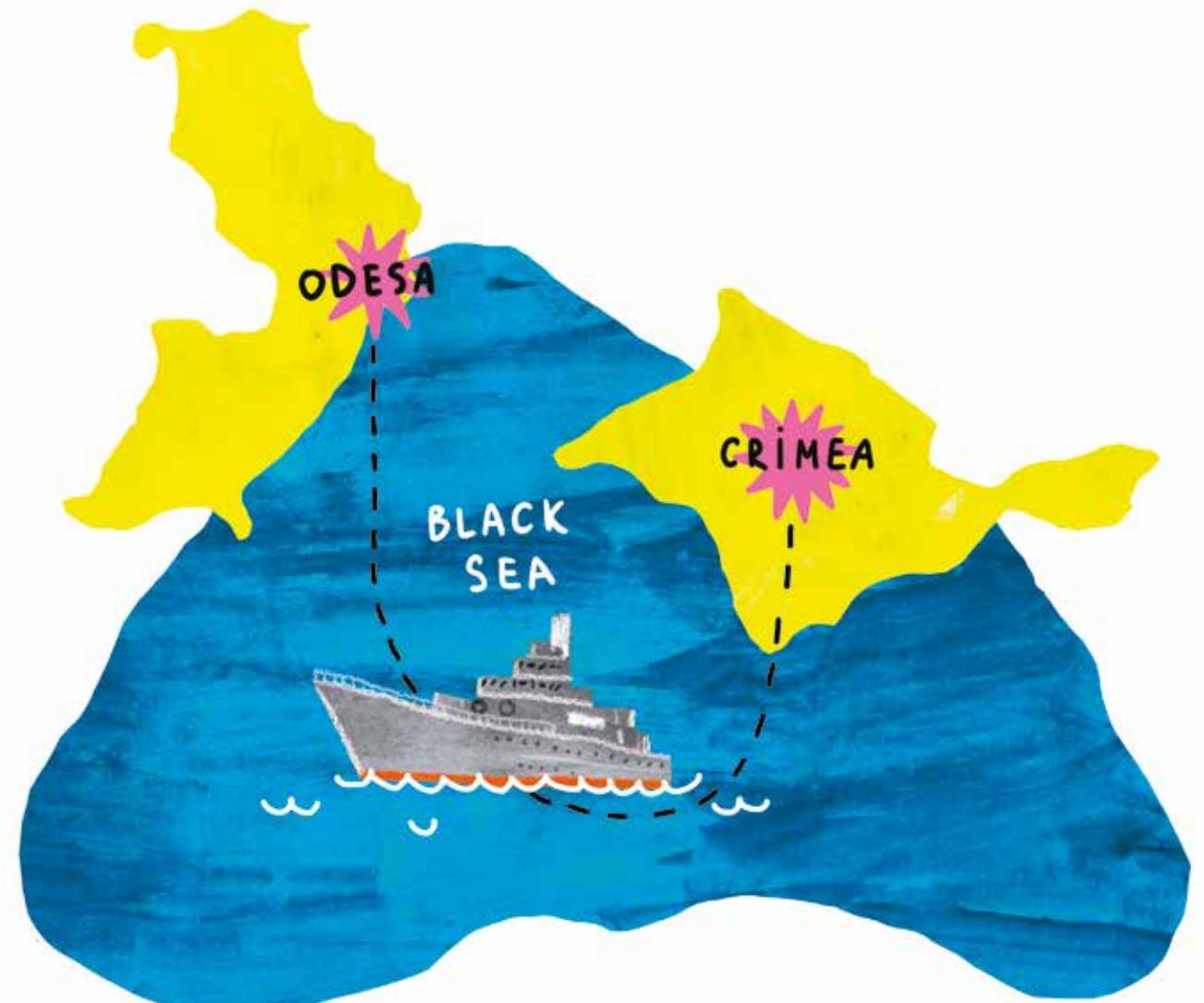
“Sashko!” Aliye cried, seeing her friend coming. She hugged him. “Go on, mama.”

“Then the election of the Crimea’s president was held. A candidate from the party called “Russia” won. And Russia — this time, I mean the country — trained criminal gangs on the peninsula. They wanted to occupy Crimea with their help. But Ukrainian secret services pitted those gangsters

against each other and thwarted their plan.”

“Wow! And what happened next?” Dmytryk asked.

“The Orange Revolution, of course. Ukraine had a hard time dealing with the problems inherited from the Soviet Union, but we were doing a good job until 2004. And then, in 2004, two candidates ran for president—Viktor Yanukovych and Viktor Yushchenko. The



first one was Russia’s protégé. The second one proved himself a savvy prime minister and head of the National Bank. He also believed that Ukraine should move away from Moscow, protect the Ukrainian language, and develop the Ukrainian culture, not be ashamed of it. You weren’t born yet, but I can tell you that when I was young, it was embarrassing to speak Ukrainian in Kyiv. People laughed at you if you did. Our leader, Mustafa Cemilev, was then a deputy from “Nasha Ukraina,” Viktor Yushchenko’s political party.

It was Yushchenko who won the election, but it was rigged in favor of Yanukovych. So, the Ukrainians protested in the Independence Square in Kyiv, demanding a re-election. After that, Yushchenko was elected president.”

“Why is that an “orange” revolution?”

“It was the color of “Nasha Ukraina” party. During the protests, the Independence Square was full of it.”

“Like it’s now full of colors blue and yellow?”

“No, not that much,” Niyara laughed. “That was merely the party’s color, and colors blue and yellow are our national colors, and

today it’s the Independence Day of Ukraine.”

People kept lining up on Khreshchatyk. There were so many participants! But the March of the Defenders was about to start only in two hours. The children were sitting on a bench in the park, drinking lemonade.

“My mama will be marching together with other officers from Kropyvnytskyi!” Dmytryk said proudly.

“We’ll be marching in the Crimean section. It’s not military,” Aliye said, chewing on her drinking straw. “Would you like to join us?”

“I’ll ask my parents for permission,” Yasia said. She was trying to get an ice cube out of her paper cup with a straw. “Why do you think people elected Yanukovych after Yushchenko? Even if Yushchenko was a bad president... It was weird to elect the one you’d earlier protested against.”

“Mama says that people lost confidence,” Dmytryk sighed. “Hostile relations with Russia brought many problems to Ukraine, so people thought, ‘Perhaps, we made a mistake? What if we elect a president that Russia likes and live in peace with our neighbor?’”

ORANGE REVOLUTION

"But Yanukovych decided that if Ukrainians were so much willing to live in peace with Russia, they didn't really need to be independent," Yasia said, making a face. "So, he promised to sign an agreement with Russia that would, in fact, have taken away Ukraine's independence. That was when Ukrainians realized that independence is dearer to them than friendship with Russia."

"But if the Orange Revolution was more or less peaceful, than the Revolution of Dignity in the winter of 2013 was nothing like that," Sashko said. He drank his lemonade up and threw the cup away in a waste bin. "The first section in the March of the Defenders will be the relatives of the Heavenly Hundred, people killed on the Independence Square — on the Maidan"

"Why is it called 'Heavenly Hundred'?"

"There were self-defense units on the Maidan, a hundred of people each, protecting protesters from the riot police that was told to crack down on them," Sashko explained. "In the last few battles, so many people were killed that a whole unit could be formed out of them. That's why that newly created unit

was called "Heavenly Hundred." And coming back to Yanukovych — he knew that people would never forgive him for killing so many people, so he fled to ask his master — the Russian dictator — for help."

Hearing that, Aliye bit her lip.

"And that dictator decided to start from Crimea."

"How did that happen?" Yasia asked quietly. "Do you remember anything?"

"I don't! On February 26, 2014, the Russian army invaded Crimea. They occupied the towns and sieged the Ukrainian military. The Crimean Tatars brought food to the Ukrainian officers and tried to help them. Because we are citizens of Ukraine! And Ukraine is our country, too! My parents helped Ukrainian servicemen, as well. But the Russians occupied Crimea, anyway, and started to persecute the locals who supported Ukraine. One of mama's friends was captured. After that my parents and I left."

"But I... I was only two years old! I don't remember anything! I don't remember Crimea..." Aliye burst into tears. "Only tulips blooming in the steppe. My parents returned from exile to Crimea only to lose their home again. And I don't even remember it!"





REVOLUTION

OF DIGNITY

"Don't cry, Aliye," Sashko said, squeezing her hand. "I'm from Makiivka, but all I remember is also tulips in the steppe. But we will come back! And you will return home, too, you'll see! I will invite you over when the tulips bloom! I'll invite all of you! And then we will visit you in Crimea!"

"Sure," Aliye sniffed. "But I'm so scared that it will never happen."

"Of course, it will," Dmytryk said, trying to reassure her. "My mama will defeat them!"

"I will also join the military when I grow up," Yasia declared all of a sudden. "So, if your mother doesn't manage to beat them all up, I'll help her. Oh, look, the march is starting! Let's come closer!"

"You know what I've been thinking..." Sashko said. "Our quest continues all the way to the present day, but we have to finish it somewhere, right? Somewhere nice."

"Do you have any ideas?" Yasia asked.

"I do," Sashko said, waving his hand towards the square full of people and flags. "Right here. At the March of Defenders on the Independence Day of Ukraine."

