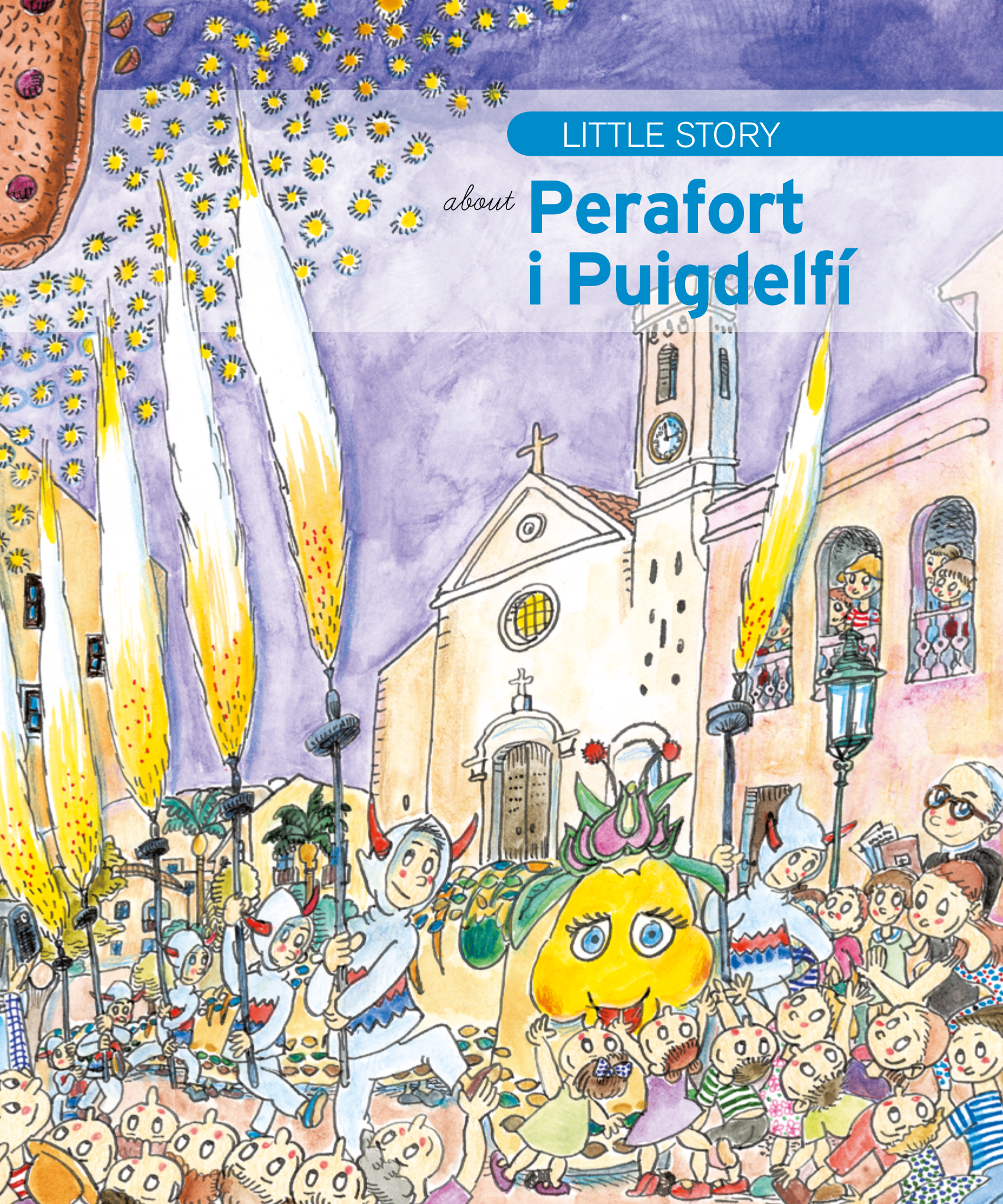


LITTLE STORY

*about*

# Perafort i Puigdelfí





LITTLE STORY

*about* **Perafort  
i Puigdelfí**

**Text:** Anna-Priscila Magriñà

**Illustrations:** Pilarín Bayés

**Translation:** Queralt Oliver

The little story of Perafort and Puigdelfí, illustrated by Pilarín Bayés, invites young and old to take a trip back in time with one of the festive elements of our town, the Llumeneta.

On this trip we will discover how our ancestors lived, and how the passage of different cultures and historical events have ended up defining what the town is like today.

I hope you enjoy, page by page, this small story that is that of a great town.

**Sandra Martínez Fernández**  
Culture Councilor



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© Text: Anna-Priscila Magriñà

© Illustrations: Pilarín Bayés

@ Translation: Queralt Oliver

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Laureà Miró, 375 (Nau 2)

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editorial@editorialmediterrania.com

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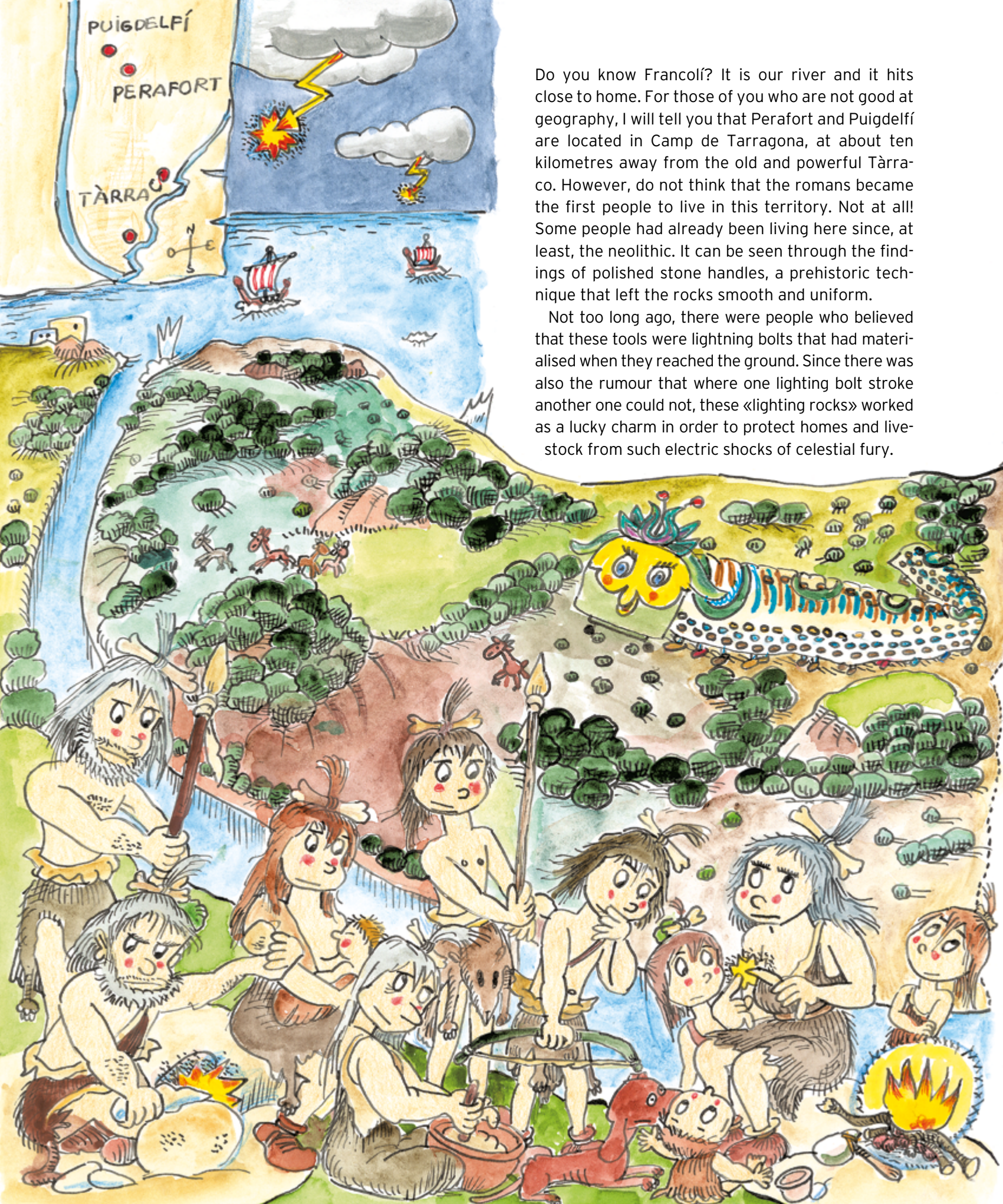




If I tell you I am a beetle, I might not win you over. But if I specify that I am a beetle that lightens up at night, perhaps you will change your mind. I am a firefly and, some years ago, the creatures of Perafort and Puigdelfí, when it was already dark, would have fun looking out for insects from my family group in between vines, carobs and hazel trees. We are becoming fewer and fewer due to the overflow of pesticides and light pollution, however... in here I will never disappear, because thanks to the Youth Centre of Perafort's initiative I have become the star of the town's popular livestock.

My name is Lluçeneta and, in spite of the diminutive, I take up a lot of space: I weight forty kilos and I am fifteen meters long and two meters high! Oh, and if it is hot, I throw water at you to freshen you up! Today's mission, though, is not about cooling you down, but telling you about the story of Perafort and Puigdelfí. Do you know where we come from?





Do you know Francolí? It is our river and it hits close to home. For those of you who are not good at geography, I will tell you that Perafort and Puigdelí are located in Camp de Tarragona, at about ten kilometres away from the old and powerful Tàrraco. However, do not think that the romans became the first people to live in this territory. Not at all! Some people had already been living here since, at least, the neolithic. It can be seen through the findings of polished stone handles, a prehistoric technique that left the rocks smooth and uniform.

Not too long ago, there were people who believed that these tools were lightning bolts that had materialised when they reached the ground. Since there was also the rumour that where one lighting bolt stroke another one could not, these «lighting rocks» worked as a lucky charm in order to protect homes and livestock from such electric shocks of celestial fury.



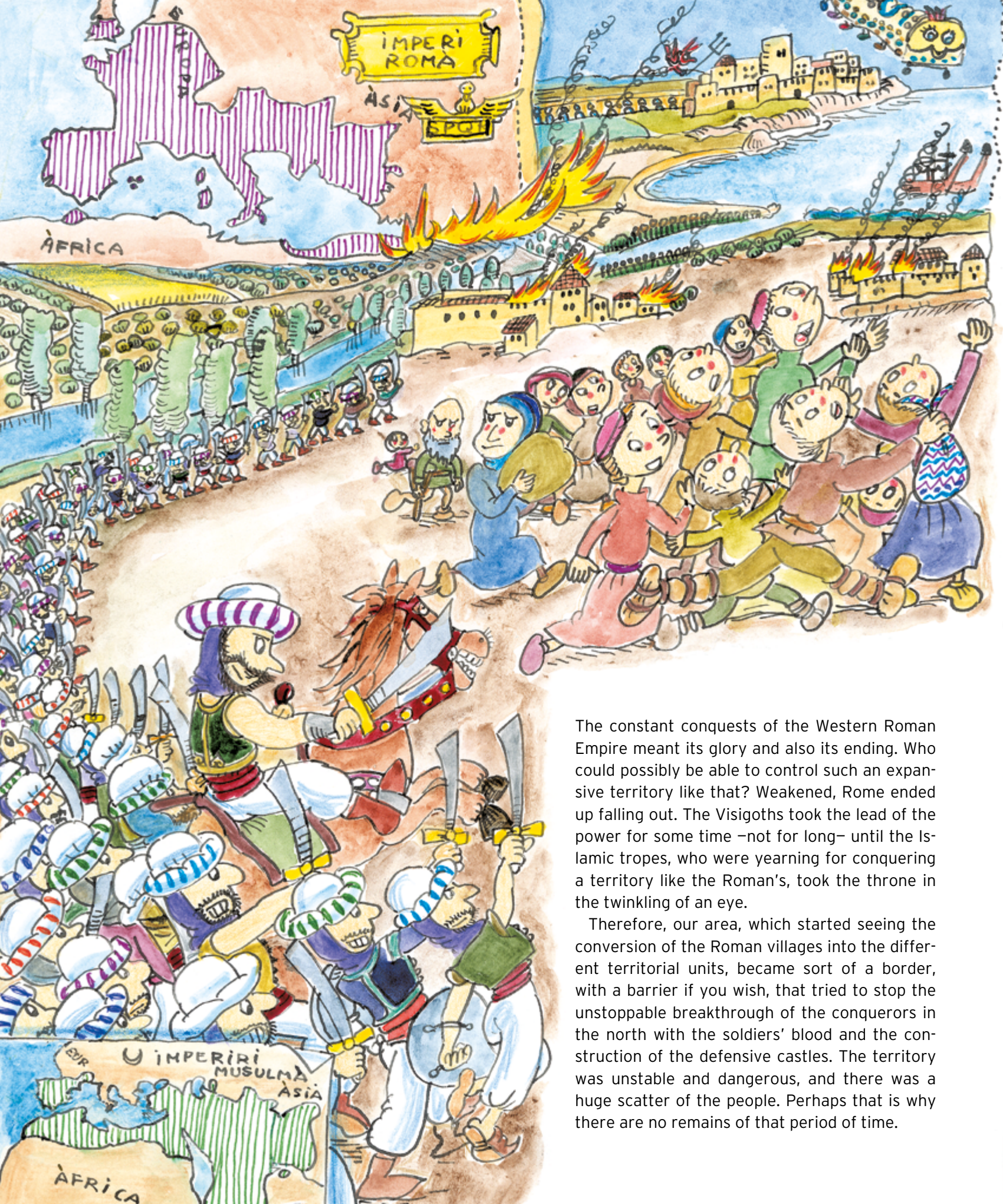


When the romans decided to conquer the area, they found themselves face to face with the Iberian tribe of the cossetans, who did not show resistance towards that new culture, which appeared to be much more advanced and refined than theirs. From the old roman village of Balquera, we preserve one of the most highlighted roman relics from Perafort: two magnificent tombs from the low-imperial period. If you walk around the town, specifically through the avenue of Catalonia, you will be able to see them live.

Their big dimensions make you think that they probably belonged to important people with a lot of money. Oh! And you can also find another roman footprint nearby the cemetery of Puigdelfí. It is a section of the first aqueduct built in Tàrraco, which sent water from Francolí through the town to the capital on an eighteen kilometres journey...when the famous Bridge of the Devil was still non-existent!







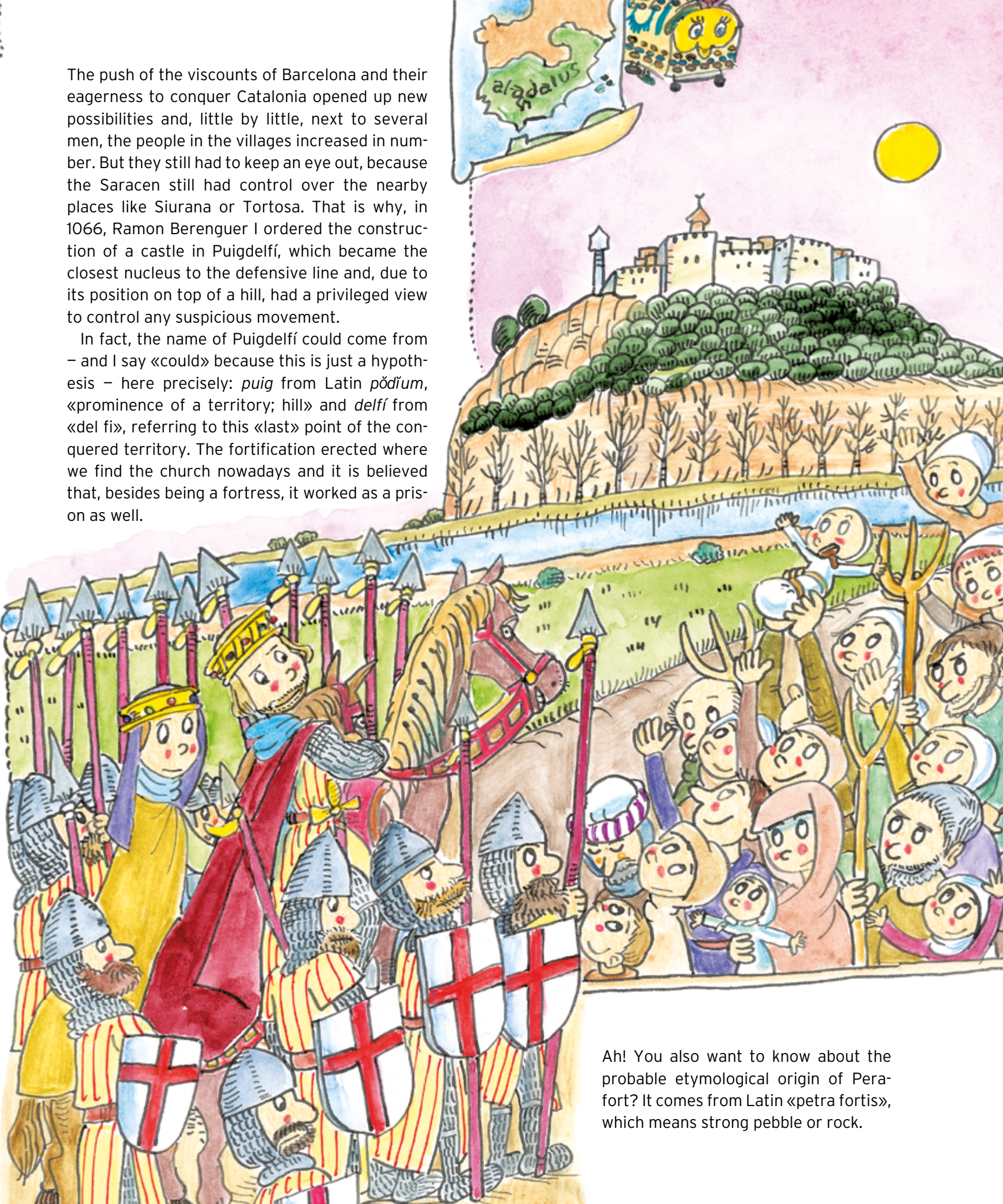
The constant conquests of the Western Roman Empire meant its glory and also its ending. Who could possibly be able to control such an expansive territory like that? Weakened, Rome ended up falling out. The Visigoths took the lead of the power for some time –not for long– until the Islamic tropes, who were yearning for conquering a territory like the Roman's, took the throne in the twinkling of an eye.

Therefore, our area, which started seeing the conversion of the Roman villages into the different territorial units, became sort of a border, with a barrier if you wish, that tried to stop the unstoppable breakthrough of the conquerors in the north with the soldiers' blood and the construction of the defensive castles. The territory was unstable and dangerous, and there was a huge scatter of the people. Perhaps that is why there are no remains of that period of time.



The push of the viscounts of Barcelona and their eagerness to conquer Catalonia opened up new possibilities and, little by little, next to several men, the people in the villages increased in number. But they still had to keep an eye out, because the Saracen still had control over the nearby places like Siurana or Tortosa. That is why, in 1066, Ramon Berenguer I ordered the construction of a castle in Puigdelí, which became the closest nucleus to the defensive line and, due to its position on top of a hill, had a privileged view to control any suspicious movement.

In fact, the name of Puigdelí could come from – and I say «could» because this is just a hypothesis – here precisely: *puig* from Latin *pōdium*, «prominence of a territory; hill» and *delfí* from «del fi», referring to this «last» point of the conquered territory. The fortification erected where we find the church nowadays and it is believed that, besides being a fortress, it worked as a prison as well.



Ah! You also want to know about the probable etymological origin of Perafort? It comes from Latin «petra fortis», which means strong pebble or rock.





You must know that Perafort and Puigdelí have not always been a binomial. As a matter of fact, if we go back to the very beginning, we will have to mention up to four nuclei of people. It is possible that the remaining nuclei, Codony and Franqueses of Codony, do not ring a bell. Do you know why? Because they have not existed for years!

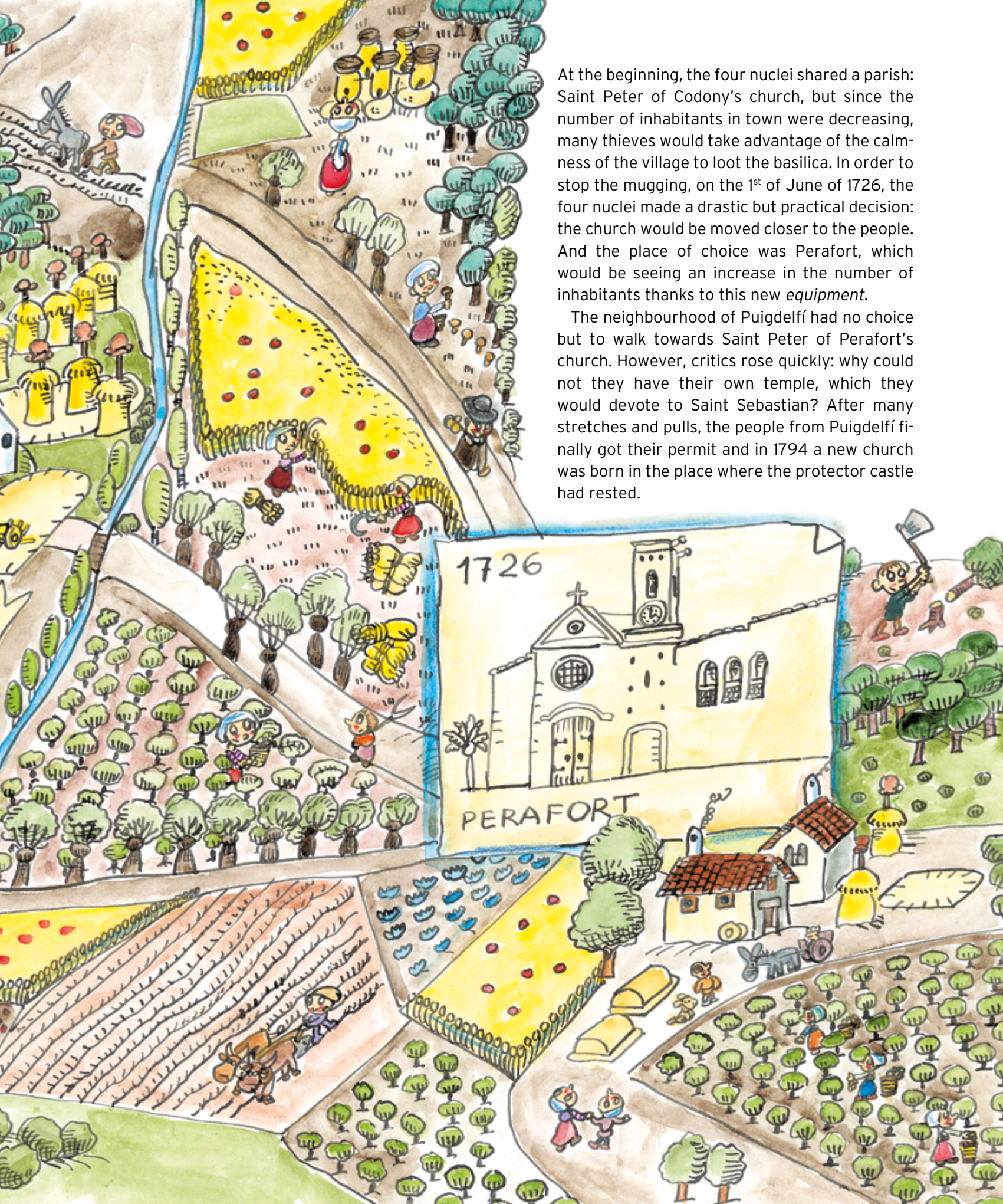


Thorough the centuries, Codony had been –comparably– the most inhabited nucleus out of the four. As a sample, a button: the 1515 had sixteen stoves (meaning, homes or families), while in Puigdelí there were nine and only two in Perafort. What caused its gradual disappearance? One of the reasons could be its proximity to Francolí.

In the summer, the stuck river waters were a mosquito net, and we already know that besides the incommmodity of their bites, they can pass on diseases. Perhaps tired of suffering from infectious sprouts, many people from Codony would have preferred to leave their home behind and start anew in the next closest town, which happened to be Perafort. Health before anything, always! Oh, and do not tell anyone... Bad languages say that it is also necessary to add another prosaic motif to the rinse: the discomfort between neighbours!







At the beginning, the four nuclei shared a parish: Saint Peter of Codony's church, but since the number of inhabitants in town were decreasing, many thieves would take advantage of the calmness of the village to loot the basilica. In order to stop the mugging, on the 1<sup>st</sup> of June of 1726, the four nuclei made a drastic but practical decision: the church would be moved closer to the people. And the place of choice was Perafort, which would be seeing an increase in the number of inhabitants thanks to this new *equipment*.

The neighbourhood of Puigdelví had no choice but to walk towards Saint Peter of Perafort's church. However, critics rose quickly: why could not they have their own temple, which they would devote to Saint Sebastian? After many stretches and pulls, the people from Puigdelví finally got their permit and in 1794 a new church was born in the place where the protector castle had rested.





After going through the hands of powerful men and women, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the shire lordships in Catalonia were removed. Our towns became independent from each other for a while, but during the forties of that century they decided to unite forces. There were just a few of them and had many tax burdens, and, if union makes force, in that case, it also produced savings. What else could they want? First, Perafort and Codony merged, then Franqueses came, and, finally, in 1846, Puigdelí was added into the mix.

Pay attention to the community's emblem. What do you see? One town in front of the other, like Perafort and Puigdelí, and two hands that are linked as a symbol of brotherhood. And what about the four stars, you may ask? They symbolise the four foundational nuclei. Here everything has meaning!







During that time, to go on a straight walk of about one kilometre between Perafort and Puigdelfí was not inconvenient at all. Before the expansion of the car, everyone would walk to places, ride a horse or a donkey, maybe cycle, go on a carriage or, if the distance between places was considerably longer, with diligence. But new technologies were coming to Europe and people had to go up the carriage. I am talking about the train, which was launched in 1848 in Catalonia with the Mataró-Barcelona line. We would have to wait a bit longer in order to enjoy this innovative method of transportation, specifically until 1884, when we proudly launched the train station La Secuita-Perafort, which took part in the Roda de Berà-Reus train line.

Puigdelfí was drilled up beneath the ground, where the train would pass on through a tunnel. The elderly people say that every time the train would cross the village, some shelves in the houses would move, making the objects they held produce a sharp sound. And whenever the train got off the tunnel, the smoke that the steaming machine spitted out with violence would spread around the place.

With a hundred and eight years of age, and after being abandoned by the institutions, in 1992, the line was closed. From then on, different projects have been presented to recover the space. One of them has the idea of creating a green line between Perafort and Roda de Berà. I am sure it would be a nice journey!





Similar to a great family, Perafort and Puigdelfí have never agreed on everything. One reason behind the tension were the schools. They opened in 1880 in Perafort and the children from Puigdelfí had to walk, every day back and forth, one kilometre between the two nuclei. In Puigdelfí people were soon fighting over having their own schools. And they did it...in 1922!

The schools in both towns had different locations and in 1957, they were black tie to launch two new educational centres with similar designs. Unfortunately, the one in Puigdelfí had to shut down in 1995 due to a lack of students. Some of its last students have been immortalised on a painted mural on the centre's facade. Would you be able to recognise them?



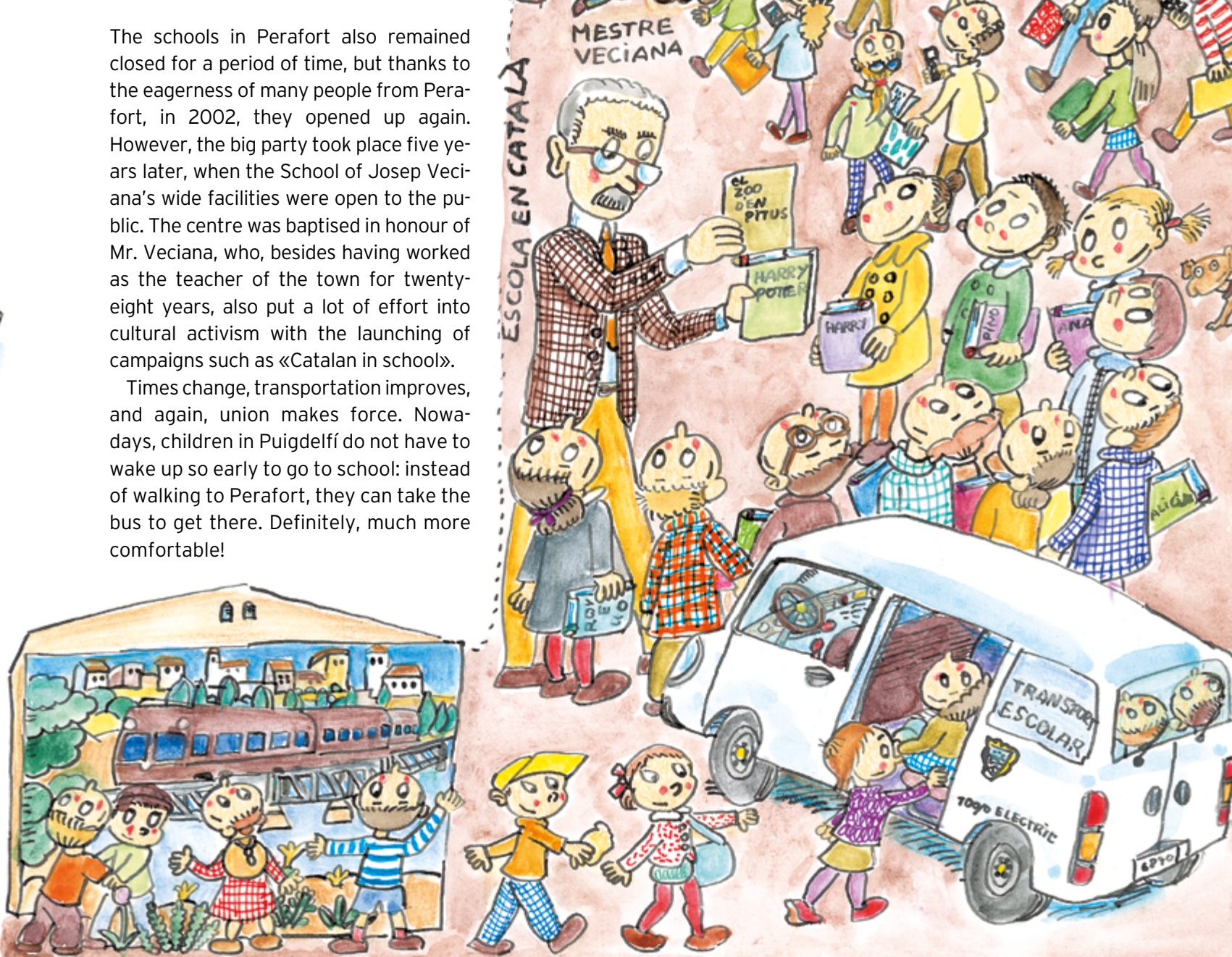
You would like to know that, if you go to the old schools in both Perafort and Puigdelfí, you will see that there is not even a bit of dust. In the first town, they organise courses and, in the second town, you can find the Attendance of Citizenship Office. They never stop doing things!





The schools in Perafort also remained closed for a period of time, but thanks to the eagerness of many people from Perafort, in 2002, they opened up again. However, the big party took place five years later, when the School of Josep Veciana's wide facilities were open to the public. The centre was baptised in honour of Mr. Veciana, who, besides having worked as the teacher of the town for twenty-eight years, also put a lot of effort into cultural activism with the launching of campaigns such as «Catalan in school».

Times change, transportation improves, and again, union makes force. Nowadays, children in Puigdelví do not have to wake up so early to go to school: instead of walking to Perafort, they can take the bus to get there. Definitely, much more comfortable!



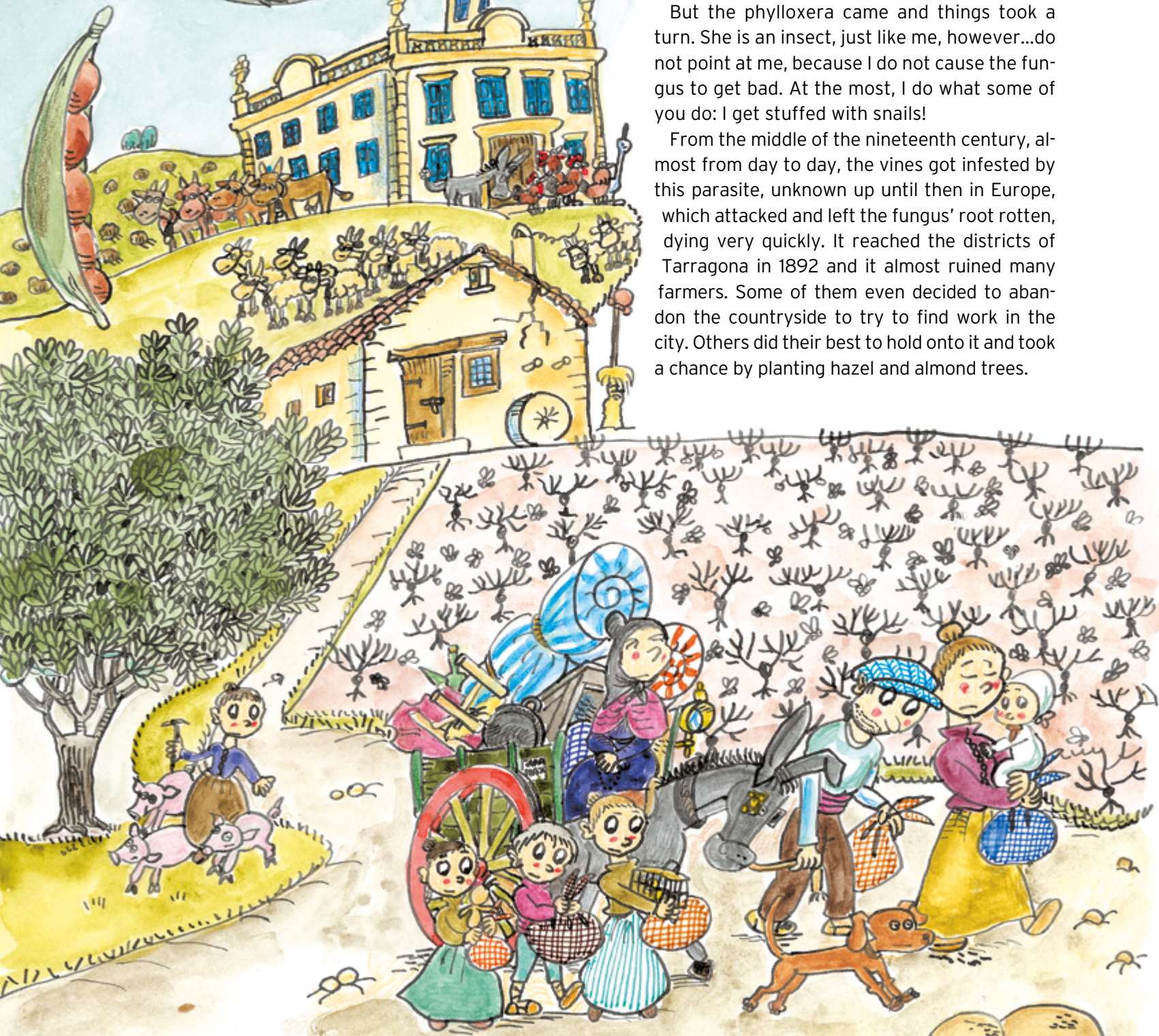




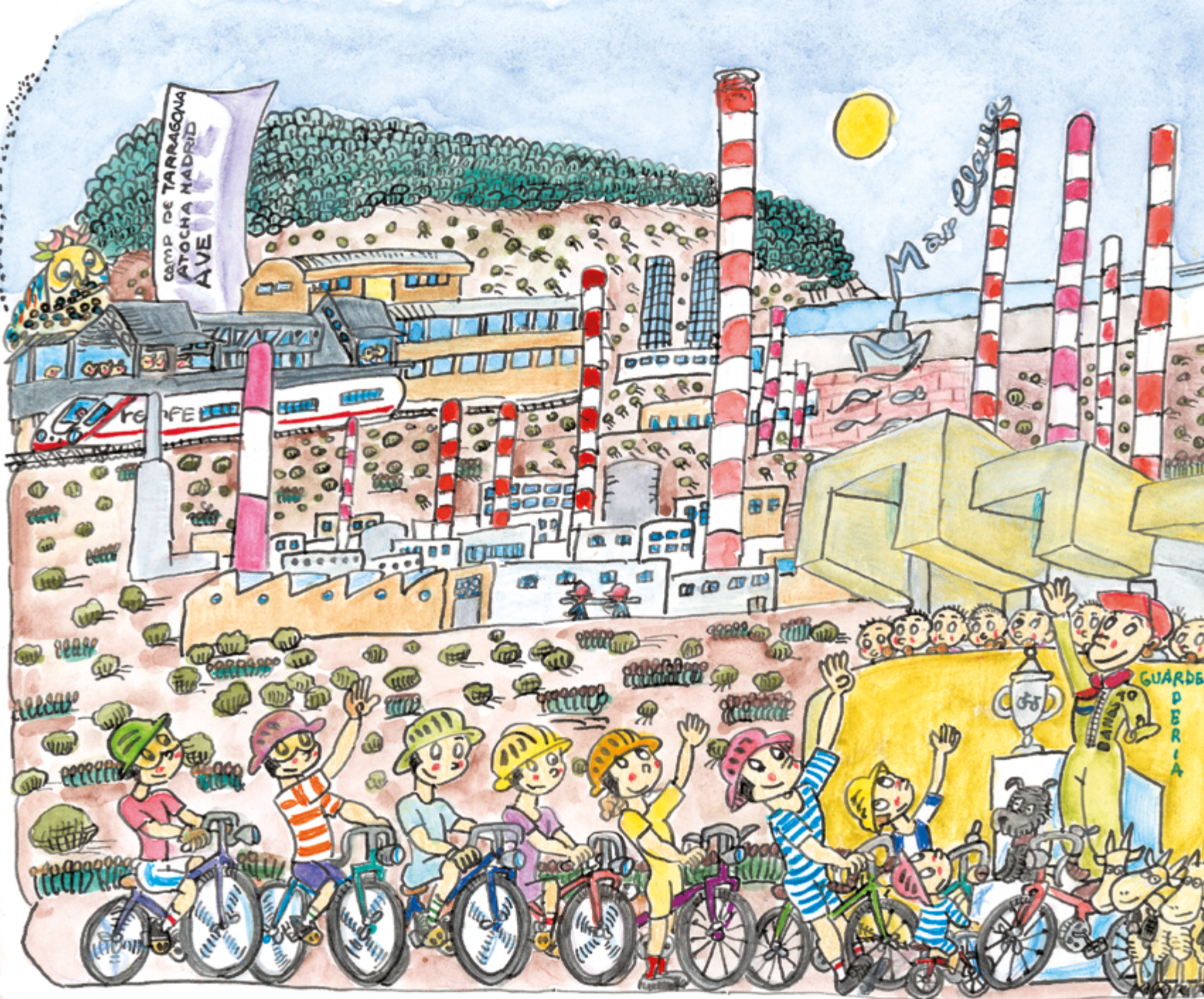
For many years, the biggest source of income for the population of Perafort and Puigdelí was farming. The star product was wine, and that is why there were vines everywhere. They even started replacing the animals' food in order to have more space for the fungus: instead of straw and oats, now they would give them carobs. A carob takes up less space than a field of cereals! Moreover, the carob is more resistant during dry season.

But the phylloxera came and things took a turn. She is an insect, just like me, however...do not point at me, because I do not cause the fungus to get bad. At the most, I do what some of you do: I get stuffed with snails!

From the middle of the nineteenth century, almost from day to day, the vines got infested by this parasite, unknown up until then in Europe, which attacked and left the fungus' root rotten, dying very quickly. It reached the districts of Tarragona in 1892 and it almost ruined many farmers. Some of them even decided to abandon the countryside to try to find work in the city. Others did their best to hold onto it and took a chance by planting hazel and almond trees.







Animal farming was also very important. Goods and goats, pigs and bulls, mules and donkeys, and roosters and chickens. Ramon Falcó was a well-known farmer, a neighbour of Puigdelí who during his free time would always be seen with a bicycle. And he had merit for doing it since he was missing one arm! In 1955, Falcó promoted the creation of the first cycling race called Grand Prize Saint Peter of Perafort. In order to pay tribute to him, many years ago the race was given a subtitle: Memorial Ramon Falcó. Such an honour!

For a long time now, the economic activities of the region have diversified and the agriculture is no longer the drive force of employment. At the beginning of the seventies, a lot of credit went into the construction of an oil refinery very close to Francolí. Many families applauded that opening: job offers were coming. The landscape, though, radically changed and it was filled with fireplaces and lights. Since then, the renowned petrochemical complex of Tarragona has grown considerably and many people are working there.





We have talked a great deal about our story and about work, but...what about the party? Where is the party? Do not worry, because in Perafort and Puigdelví we always know how to have fun! In Puigdelví we are early birds and we start the new year with excitement, since the festivities of the town, in honour of Saint Sebastian, are celebrated the 20th of January. In Perafort we party hard during Saint Peter's, on the 29th of June. The festivities program of the two villages is long and full of activities for everyone and every taste: popular breakfasts, sports tournaments, inflammables, aquatic parks, shows for children, exhibitions, culinary contests, black tie dinners, live music until you drop...and fireworks!

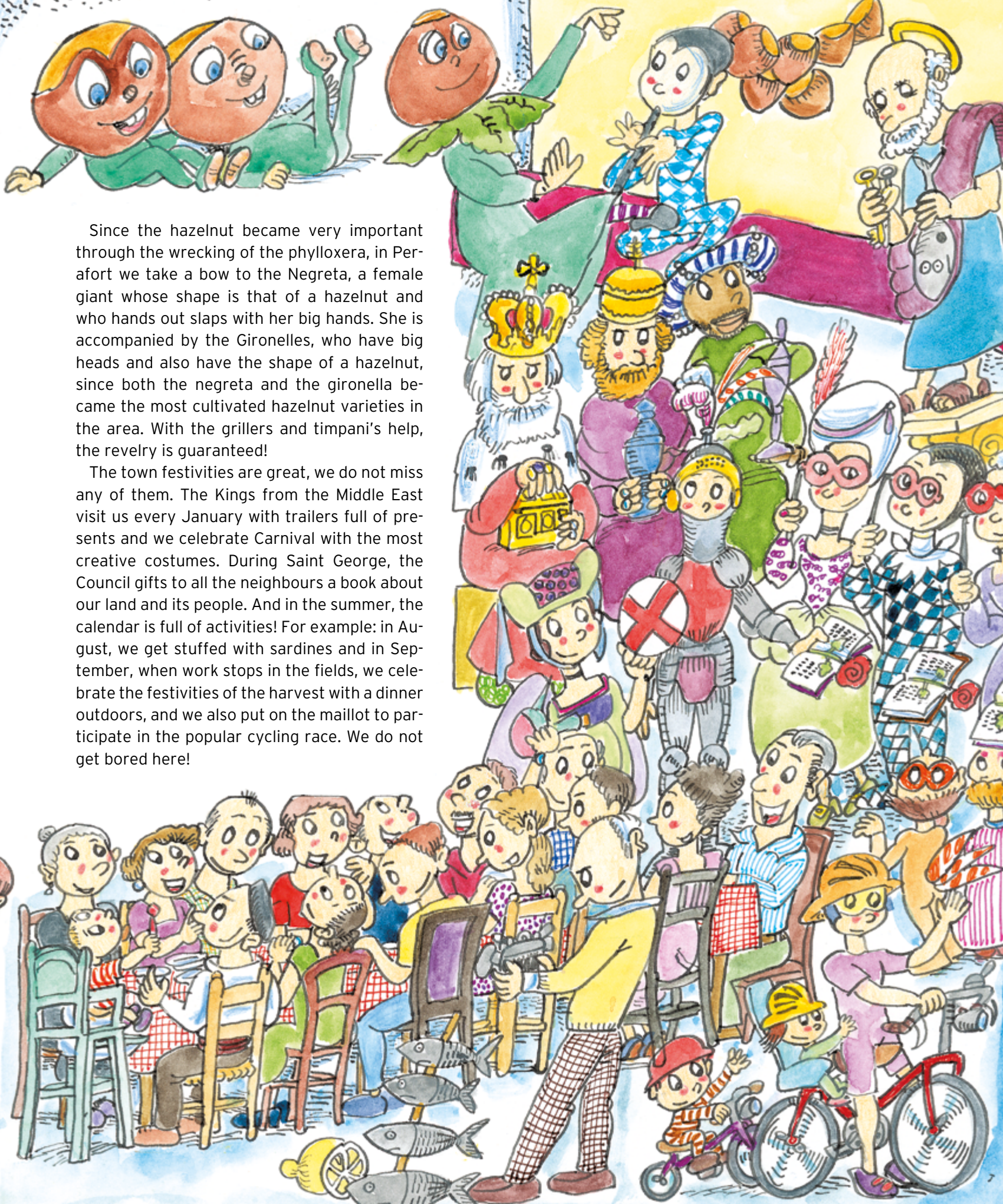
The festivity days are the best days of the year, because I walk through the streets and entertain the younger and the older in a parade where I dance to the rhythm of the Llueneta's Band. Oh, and since 2006, I have had a partner for patxanga: Lluenot, a male firefly who does not release water like me, no...he releases fire! That is why he is also close to our devils.





Since the hazelnut became very important through the wrecking of the phylloxera, in Perafort we take a bow to the Negreta, a female giant whose shape is that of a hazelnut and who hands out slaps with her big hands. She is accompanied by the Gironelles, who have big heads and also have the shape of a hazelnut, since both the negreta and the gironella became the most cultivated hazelnut varieties in the area. With the grillers and timpani's help, the revelry is guaranteed!

The town festivities are great, we do not miss any of them. The Kings from the Middle East visit us every January with trailers full of presents and we celebrate Carnival with the most creative costumes. During Saint George, the Council gifts to all the neighbours a book about our land and its people. And in the summer, the calendar is full of activities! For example: in August, we get stuffed with sardines and in September, when work stops in the fields, we celebrate the festivities of the harvest with a dinner outdoors, and we also put on the maillot to participate in the popular cycling race. We do not get bored here!







Perafort and Puigdelví, Puigdelví and Perafort. You see: since its humble origins, both towns have lived all sorts of adventures and they have been able to adapt to the passing of time. And we do not need anything else! Look at this list of equipment: the two community houses, the Park of 'la Salut', the nursery, the children's parks, the football fields and paddle courts, the swimming pools...A bit of everything!

If you do not know me yet, come say hi during the town's festival. Remember, my name is Llu-meneta, Perafort and Puigdelví's firefly. It has been a pleasure telling you a bit about our history. I hope you have enjoyed it as much as I have. See you next time!



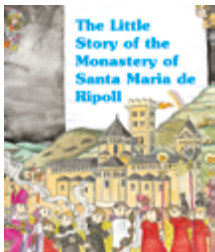
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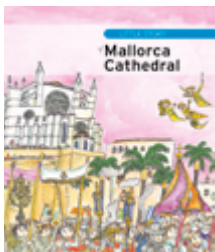
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