

THE SHOE MUSEUM



THE SHOE



A girl with brown hair and a red bow is sitting and reading a green book. A long, flowing red ribbon extends from the book across the page.

MUSEUM



A pair of yellow shoes with orange and blue floral patterns.



Everybody knew each other in Defne's neighbourhood. They all did their shopping locally and did not go outside the neighbourhood often. So, not many strangers came to this neighbourhood and the residents somehow managed on their own.

Defne loved her neighbourhood. Playing games with her friends, their next-door neighbour Auntie Lale's fluffy pastries, the big oak trees on the way to school... she wouldn't change these for anything.

But, she also wanted to see different places and meet new people. She would look at different cities and countries in books and magazines and would think to herself, "I have to go see these places one day."

She would go to the grocery store with her mom and dad every day to buy the newspaper, attentively going over the pages to read about what was going on in the world. Months ago, she had read the news that a Shoe Museum would be coming to their neighbourhood. Back then, she had just started learning to read and write.



Her mother had told her about the shoes collected by the retired shoemaker who had travelled all around the world. The shoemaker was displaying his collection of shoes in an old bus, which he had transformed into a museum. This was a travelling museum. Ever since that day, Defne was waiting eagerly for the Shoe Museum to arrive. The shoemaker wanted all the children in the world to see these shoes collected from all over the world. This was the reason he was driving the bus from town to town, and he would be coming to Defne's neighbourhood in the first week of June.

Finally, the day had come. Defne was excited to see the Shoe Museum. She got up early in the morning and went to the neighbourhood square.

Her mother had told her that she should go early to get in line since the museum could be crowded.

There it was! The Shoe Museum she had excitedly been waiting for was standing right in front of her. This museum was a big old bus. Actually, it was much bigger than she had imagined.



She ran to the door. The children who had arrived before Defne were waiting eagerly. Ms. Vildan, the neighbourhood's librarian, was showing the way to the children.



While she was waiting in line, Defne was looking at the museum and thinking to herself, "What an old bus, I wonder where it came from?" Finally, when it was her turn, she excitedly climbed up the stairs of the bus. The shoemaker was waiting for her at the door.

"Welcome, little girl" he said and invited her inside.

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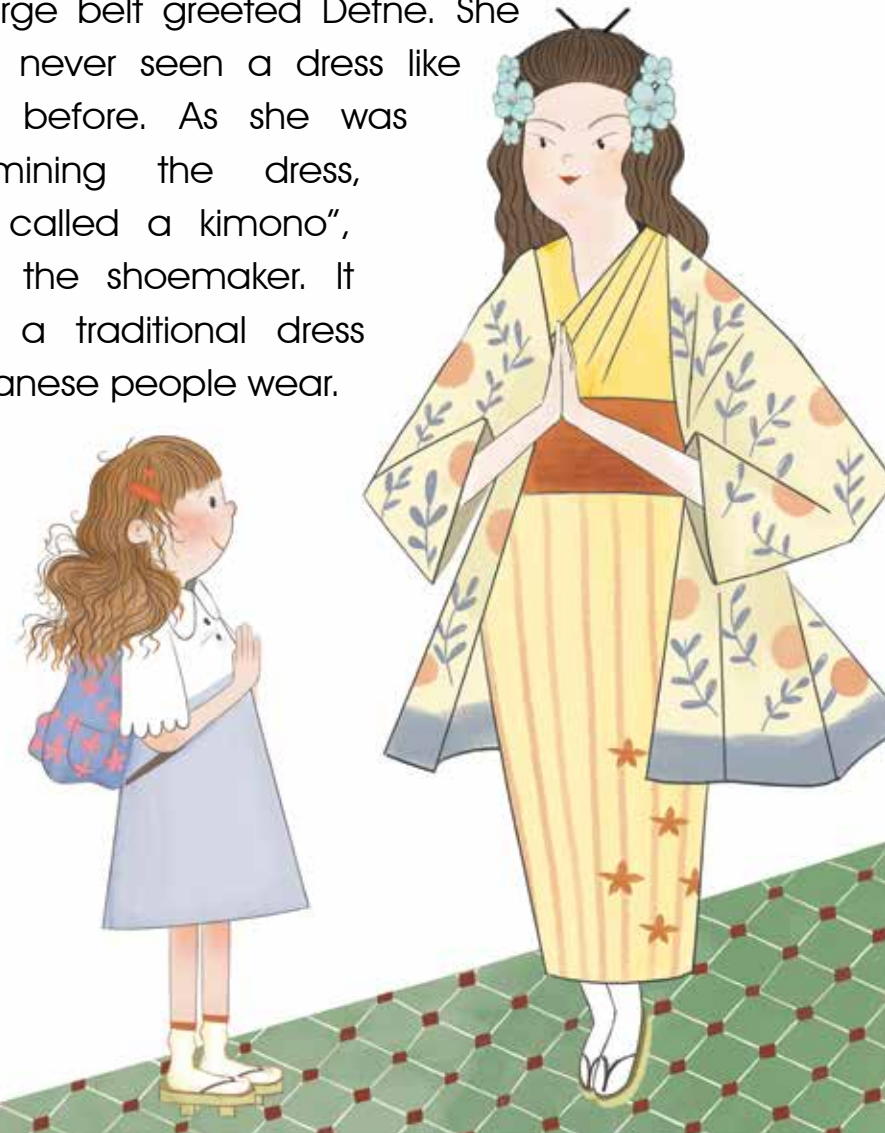
"These are called *geta*. I brought them from Japan", said the shoemaker.

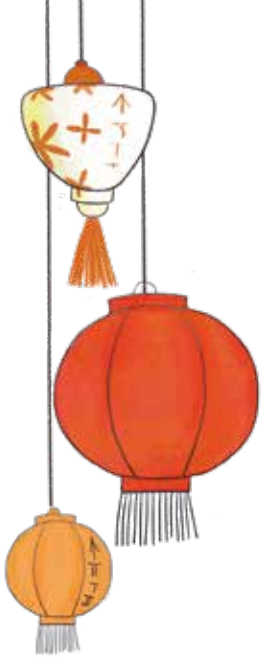
As soon as Defne put on the sandals, she felt as if she had travelled into another world. She began to hear the sound of a flute that made her feel peaceful. This music was accompanied by the sound of a gently flowing river. Red houses with wide roofs lined the river.



Defne had never seen anything like this. She walked towards one of the houses. "The Japanese live in these houses", said the shoemaker. He reminded her that she must take off her shoes before she entered.

A woman wearing a long dress with a large belt greeted Defne. She had never seen a dress like that before. As she was examining the dress, "It's called a kimono", said the shoemaker. It was a traditional dress Japanese people wear.





The Japanese host kindly welcomed Defne. The house was so clean and tidy that Defne looked around with admiration. This house and the furniture represented a simple life, far from extravagance.

While taking off the Japanese sandals, Defne found herself back in the museum. She thought about how hospitable Japanese people were.

As she continued looking around in the museum, a pair of boots with colourful stitches caught her eye.

"These must be worn in a cold country", she said.

"Well, not exactly, the Native Americans make these boots long because they have so much they want to say", started explaining the shoemaker. But, Defne had already put the boots on and gone to visit a Native American tribe in North America.



It was a small village full of colourful tents. The weather wasn't as cold as she had imagined. There were children running around. The grownups were working together, some of them were cooking and some were cleaning the tents. "How nice that they're helping each other out" thought Defne to herself as she watched them.

A little further away, she saw children painting the sand with the help of a grown up. They were using natural materials such as pollen, grass juice, crushed flower petals and corn flour to paint. This was an old Native American tradition that the grown-ups wanted the children to learn.



"Look, there are people here wearing boots just like yours", said the shoemaker.

"Did they buy those shoes from the same place?" asked Defne.

The shoemaker smiled and explained, "They make the drawings on the shoes themselves. It's a sign that they come from the same family. Native Americans embroider the symbols of the family and tribe they belong to on their shoes."

Defne had taken off the Native American boots and continued to look through the shoes in the museum. "How interesting, I thought we wore shoes just to protect our feet, it turns out they have so much more to tell" she said to herself.

Just then, she caught a glimpse of the wooden shoes next to a bicycle wheel further ahead. "These are from Holland", said the shoemaker. "Would you like to put them on?" he asked.

A new adventure was beginning for Defne. She put on the wooden shoes with excitement and this time she found herself in a Dutch village in the middle of a green landscape. Cows were grazing around, while small children were milking cows. "They consume a lot of milk and dairy products here, Dutch people love cheese", said the shoemaker.

The wooden shoes on her feet were making a clacking sound as she walked.

"In the past, workers made these shoes from wood in order to protect their feet", explained the shoemaker.



He also added that nowadays they keep these wooden shoes as souvenirs in memory of their old traditions. These shoes were like a symbol of hard work.



Defne had very much enjoyed travelling around the world in other people's shoes. People everywhere around the world wore shoes, but they all had different meanings. She wanted to try on more shoes, to daydream more and see more places.

As she wondered what the next destination would be, she saw a pair of shoes lying right in the middle of the museum. Actually, they didn't really look like shoes. They were old plastic bottles with strings tied on top to turn them into slippers. One of them was made from leaves, while the other one looked like a worn-out plastic bag. They looked old and dirty. "What is that? Where did you bring these from?" she asked the shoemaker.

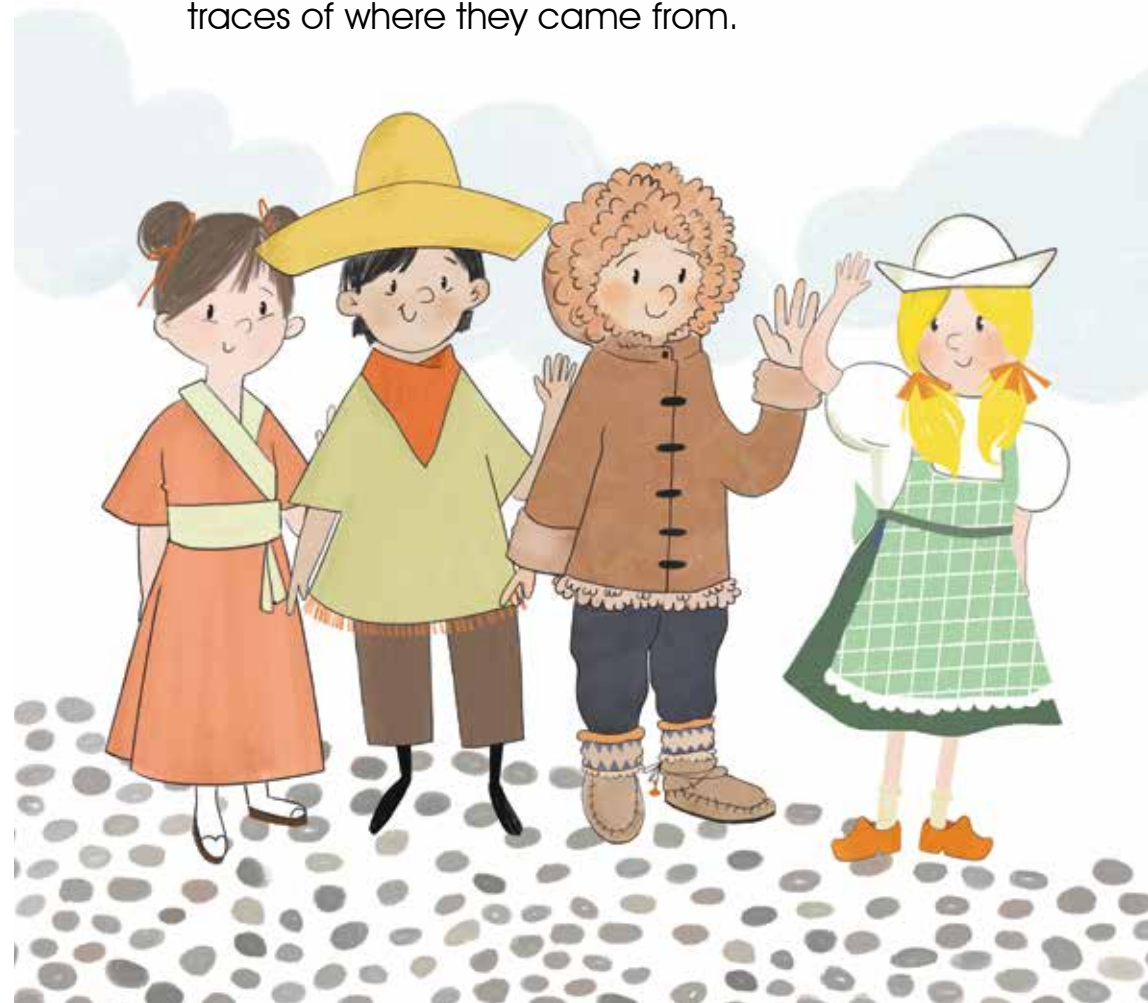
"I have seen these all over the world, my little one" the shoemaker started explaining. "Children who could not afford to buy shoes made these to play more comfortably in the streets. Some are made from old plastic bottles and some from large leaves, while some could only find plastic bags", explained the shoemaker.

"We grown-ups should fulfil children's needs and provide them with a good environment. But sometimes children have to make their own shoes, just like these" he said, showing the shoes.



"They look very dirty", said Defne.

"Yes, they really are dirty because the children who wore these shoes played in the streets for so long that their shoes were all covered in dust", said the shoemaker. He explained that he didn't clean them when he brought them to the museum so that he could display them with the traces of where they came from.





Defne was impressed by the fact that children had found something to be happy about with such limited resources. "How well thought", she figured.

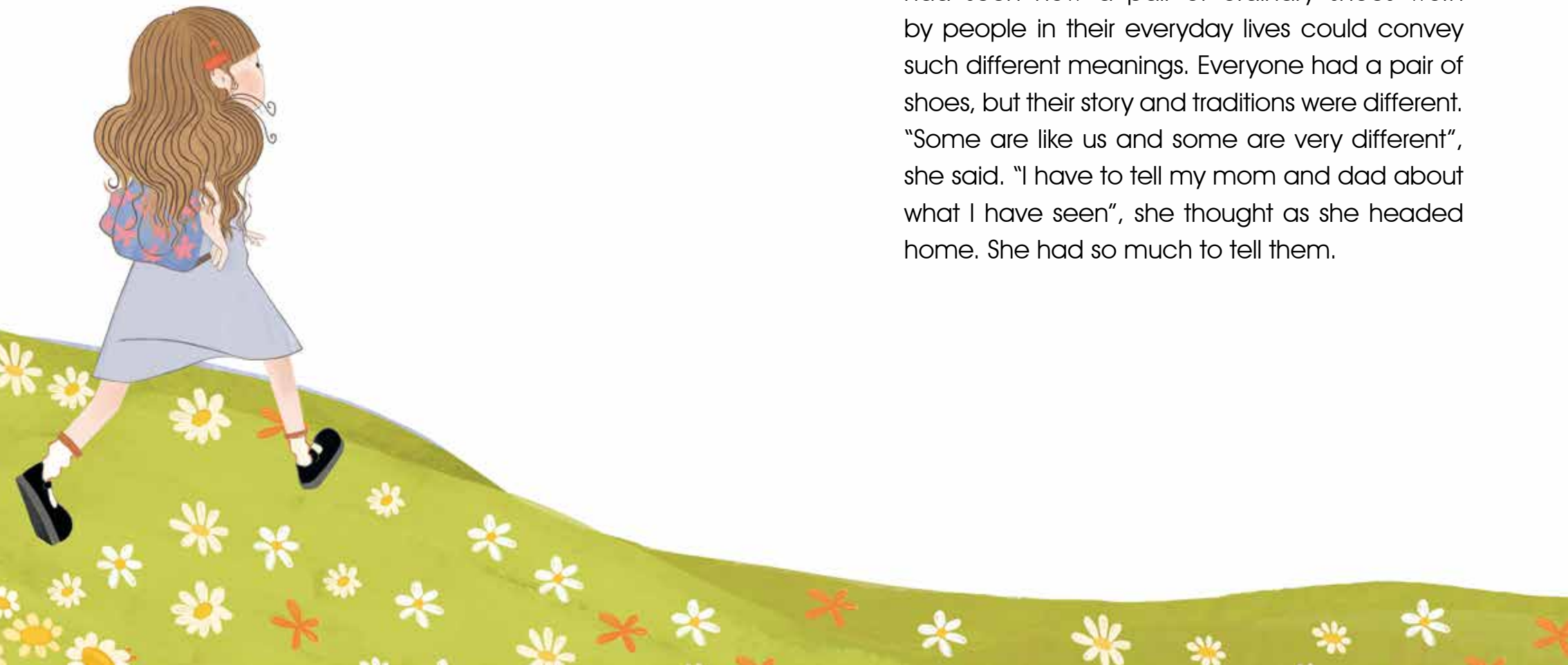
"Do you also like to play games?"

"I love to."

"Well then, run along and enjoy your time with your friends. Playing games is your business."

"Will you come to our neighbourhood again?"

"I will return with new shoes, so don't give up playing games and imagining" said the shoemaker as he showed Defne the way out from the museum.



Even if for a short time, Defne had visited different lives wearing other people's shoes. She had seen how a pair of ordinary shoes worn by people in their everyday lives could convey such different meanings. Everyone had a pair of shoes, but their story and traditions were different. "Some are like us and some are very different", she said. "I have to tell my mom and dad about what I have seen", she thought as she headed home. She had so much to tell them.

