
VALENELYA
The Christmas That Unites the Worlds
M.N. Popa

Come in. There’s room for you, too.

For those whose homes are full of voices.
For those with an empty chair this year.
For those who weren’t expecting a gift.

There’s always room for one more at our table.

It doesn’t matter how old you are, where you come from or whether you’ve heard of VALENELYA. You don’t need to know its worlds to step inside.

This journey is a gift: a family, a curious little dog and a Christmas that finds a home in the most unexpected places.

Come on in. Titti has already taken the first step.

Enjoy the journey!
M.N. Popa

The Journey

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Evening was falling over Rome on Christmas Eve. Behind a glowing window, a family was getting ready to celebrate.


M.N. Popa: At last, an evening with everyone together!
Tatiana: And for once, the world can wait.
Arianna: Meanwhile, the tree won’t decorate itself!


Arianna: Titti, give that ribbon back!
M.N. Popa: Someone’s already chosen her present.
Gabriele: Come here, you little rascal!


Gabriele: Dad, do you really think up all these creatures?
M.N. Popa: Sometimes I think I've met a few of them.
Arianna: I want to see the dragons. Up close.


M.N. Popa: I've written so many books. But I still haven't found the right one.
Tatiana: The right one for whom, darling?
M.N. Popa: Maybe for someone who needs a smile.


Arianna: Did you see that? The pages are moving!
Tatiana: Darling… is that normal?
M.N. Popa: In my books, yes. On our table, not usually.


M.N. Popa: Stay close! Hold hands!
Tatiana: What about Titti?
Arianna: She’s right here with us!


M.N. Popa: Wait… I didn’t write this page!


Tatiana: But… where are we?
M.N. Popa: Amarylion.
Arianna: The city from your books?
It was evening in Rome. On the other side of the Threshold, a city was waking up.


Tatiana: What about our Christmas, darling?
M.N. Popa: Let's see how they celebrate here first.
Irena: Start with a taste of this!


M.N. Popa: Aldren! Kaelor!
Aldren: Do we know each other?
Gabriele: He’s M.N. Popa, the author. But we still need a guide today!


Tessa: Darian, watch the cart!
Darian: Catch those ribbons!
Arianna: I’ve got one!


Aldren: Tessa, how do we get down there?
Tessa: Take the side steps. Come on!
Gabriele: Look at Titti! She’s found the last one!


Tessa: Work can wait. Come and eat!
M.N. Popa: Is there room for us, too?
Darian: Of course. Aldren, bring some more chairs!


M.N. Popa: I didn’t write this day.
Darian: We live between the pages, too.
Arianna: Then let’s write today together!


Tessa: Come on! The music's this way!
Gabriele: Shall we give it a go, Arianna?
Arianna: Just follow me!


M.N. Popa: May I have this dance?
Tatiana: Do you know the steps, darling?
M.N. Popa: In theory!


Arianna: There’s our ribbon!
Gabriele: It’s still a bit crooked.
Tatiana: That makes it easy to spot.


Arianna: There’s the market down there!
Gabriele: And that bridge… we collected the ribbons right underneath it!


Tessa: Move up a little. More friends are coming!
M.N. Popa: I thought we were guests.
Darian: Guests can carry a tray!


Tatiana: You've made us feel at home.
Darian: Come back and see us.
Arianna: I wonder how they celebrate in the other worlds…


Arianna: Dad… are those wings?
M.N. Popa: Looks like the journey’s not over yet.
They had arrived without knowing where to go. Now they knew who they could come back to.


Arianna: Dad, look! A city in the mountain!
M.N. Popa: Carpatica. I wonder how they celebrate here…
Tatiana: Let's find out, darling.
After their journey through Draconia, M.N. Popa and his family reached Carpatica.


Tatiana: What a lovely smell! It already feels like a celebration.
Nerina: It will be! But who's going to help me with the deliveries?
Arianna: We are. Aren't we, Dad?


M.N. Popa: Look at all this! Will it fit in the cart?
Nerina: Every neighbourhood brings something. It’s everyone’s dinner!
The Bottomless Stone stood in the centre of the square, amid the bustle of everyday life.


Gabriele: Dad… I think the wheel has other plans!
M.N. Popa: I'll hold the cart. You save dinner!
Nerina: I know someone who can fix it!


Branik: I'll fix it. Can you help me with those parcels?
Gabriele: Deal! I'll pass you the hammer.
Tatiana: And afterwards, you're coming to dinner with us.
In the Cineriti courtyard, the wheel went back into place. And no one was left without a helping hand.


Vesna: These are for the shared table. Merry Christmas!
Tatiana: Thank you! We'll see you all there.
Gabriele: Now that wheel really has to hold!


Ordan: Finished your deliveries? Then there’s time for a chat.
Arianna: Come to the celebration with us, Ordan!
Ordan: I’d love to. But first, would you like to see Carpatica from above?


Roxana: Welcome! I’m Roxana. This is my sister, Larissa.
Larissa: And this is Rex! Are we in time for the celebration?
M.N. Popa: Of course! We’re all meeting for dinner.


Tatiana: Is everyone settled? Titti, too?
Gabriele: Yes, Mum. She's got the best seat!
Ordan: Then… off we go!

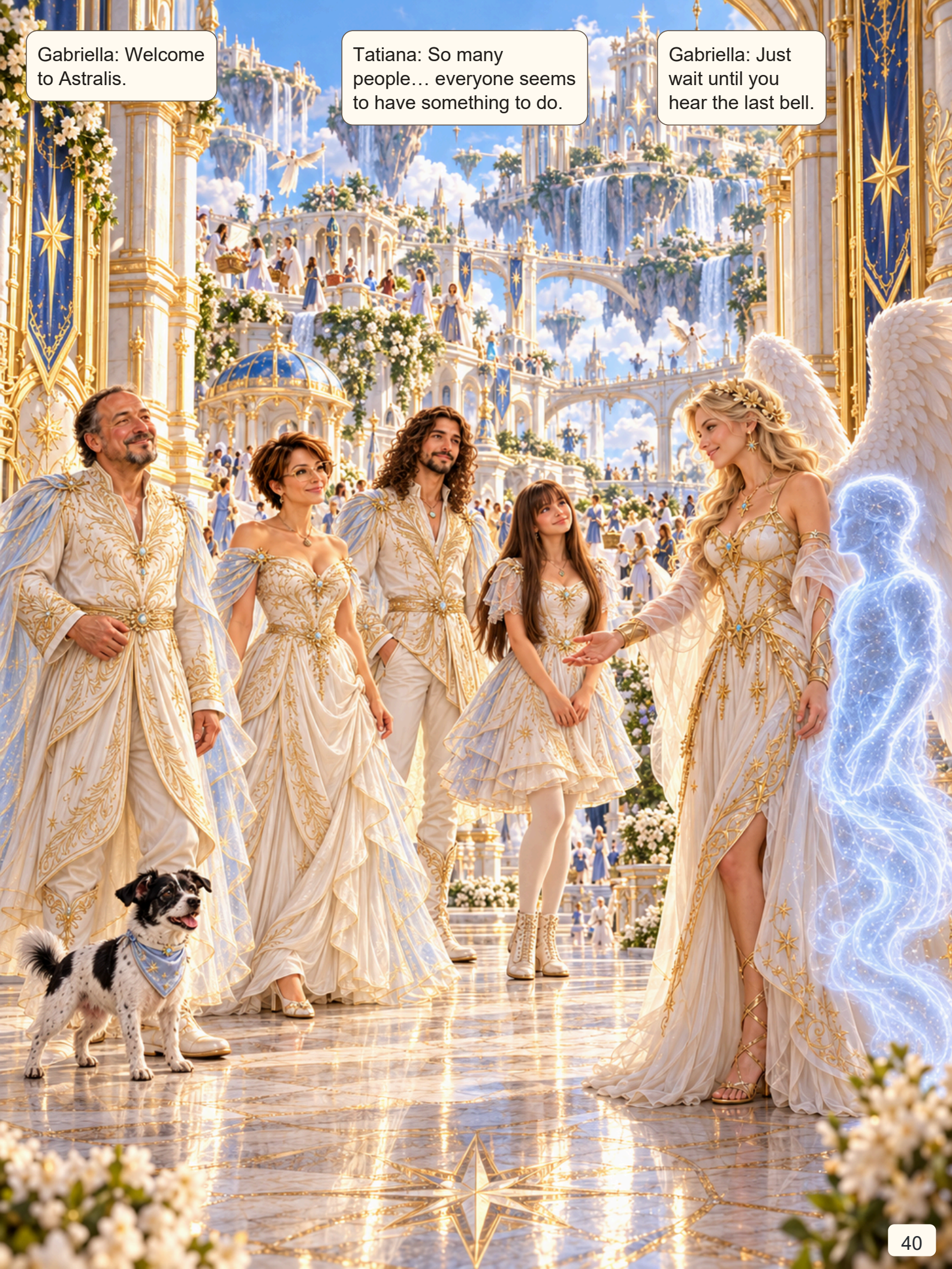

Arianna: Down there! The rock in the square!
M.N. Popa: To think we were still on the road this morning…
Below them, Carpatica’s terraces lit up for the celebration.


Ordan brought them back to the drakhen courtyard. The music welcomed them before they had even climbed down.
Gabriele: Back already? I'd go round again!
Tatiana: Maybe later. Hear that? They're calling us to dance!


Nerina: One step this way… and then turn!
Gabriele: Wait! I'm already on the other side!
Tatiana: Hold me, darling! I'm getting dizzy!


M.N. Popa: There you are! We've saved you a seat.
Branik: Is the wheel still turning?
Gabriele: Perfectly. It's my legs that need a rest!
Around the table, there was room for everyone who arrived.

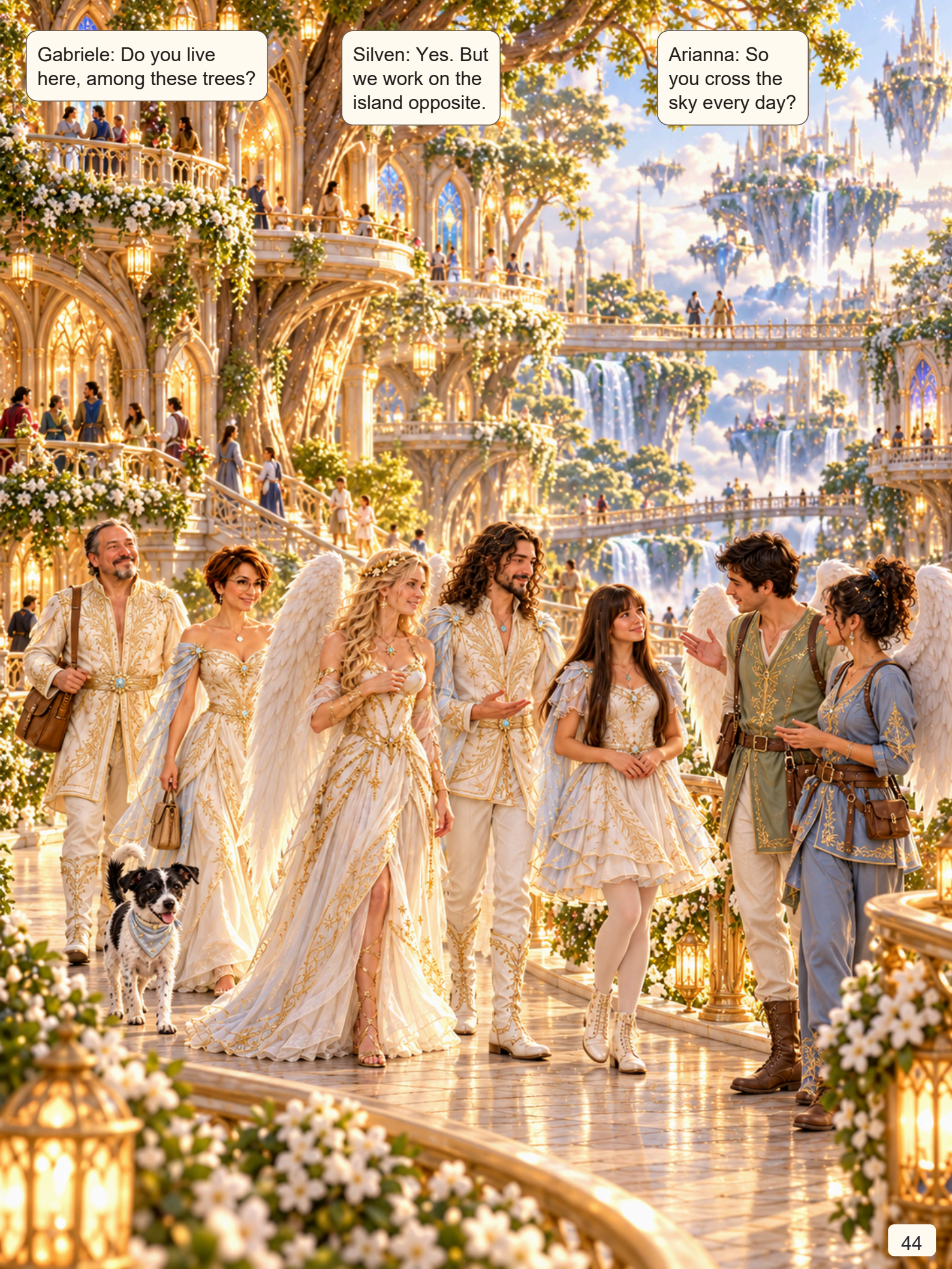

Arianna: Dad, will we come back and see them?
M.N. Popa: We've promised Ordan the rest of our story.
After saying goodbye to Ordan and their new friends, M.N. Popa and his family set off again.

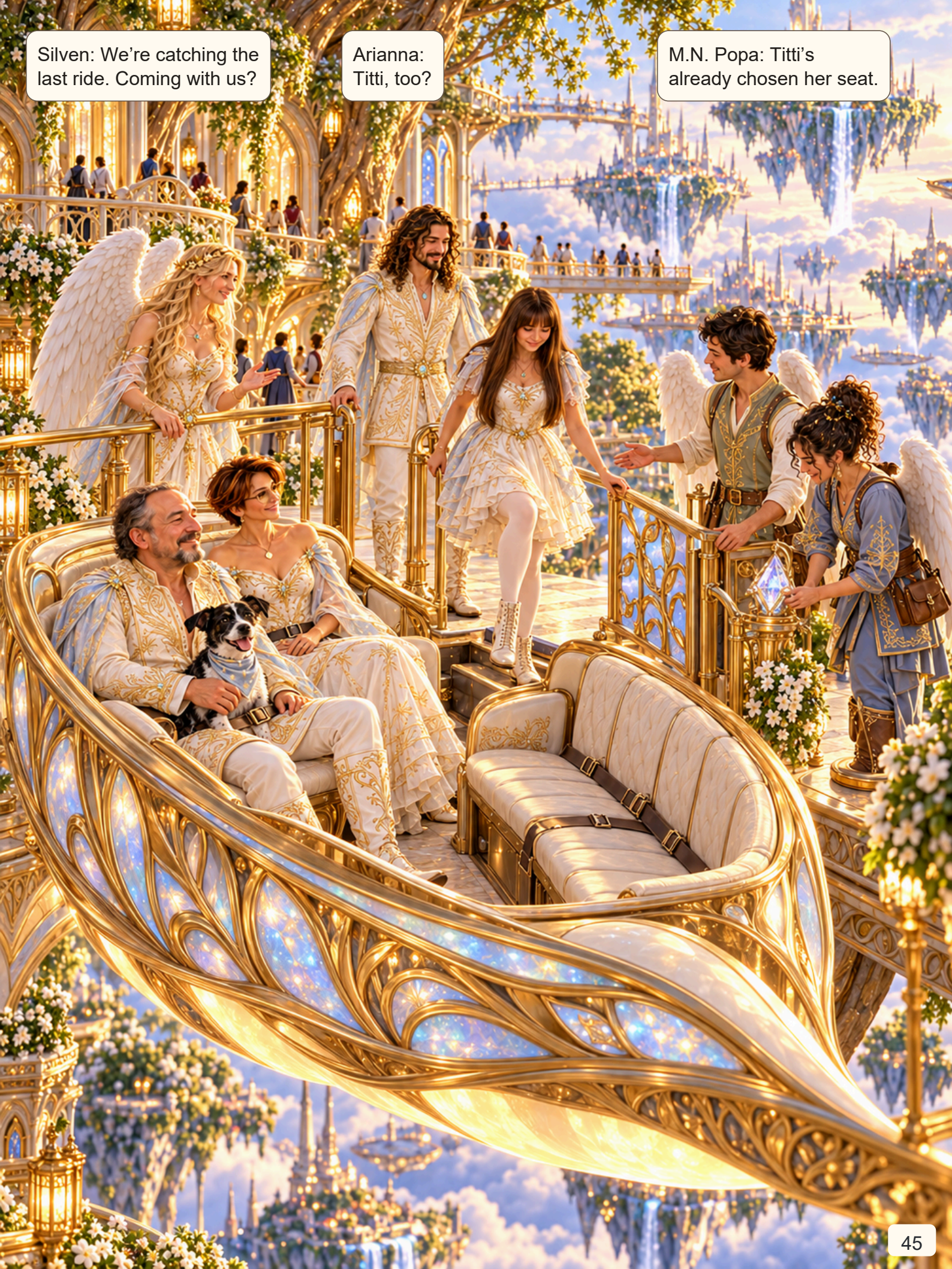

Gabriella: Welcome to Astralis.
Tatiana: So many people… everyone seems to have something to do.
Gabriella: Just wait until you hear the last bell.


Tatiana: When does the celebration begin?
Gabriella: When the last bell rings, we all gather at the table.


Elaria: Darling, you said this was the last one.
Teren: It is. I’m just finishing it.
Tatiana: Remind you of anyone?


M.N. Popa: I only had one last page to finish.
Tatiana: Of course. Three hours later, you were still there.
Elaria: Come to the terrace tonight. We'll bring something to share!


Gabriele: Do you live here, among these trees?
Silven: Yes. But we work on the island opposite.
Arianna: So you cross the sky every day?


Silven: We're catching the last ride. Coming with us?
Arianna: Titti, too?
M.N. Popa: Titti's already chosen her seat.


Arianna: Dad, look at all those islands!
Gabriele: And this is your journey to work?
Silven: When it's not too windy.


Tatiana: The bells…
Gabriella: The last one will ring soon.
M.N. Popa: Look down there. They're closing the shops.


Elaria: There you are! We've saved you some seats.
Tatiana: So you managed to close up after all!
Teren: For real this time.


M.N. Popa: M.N. Popa. Nice to meet you.
Arianna: Dad's a writer.
Aurel: Then tonight, you can listen. We have plenty of stories here.


Silven: How do you spend Christmas back home?
Gabriele: We gather round the table. And nobody wants to be the first to leave.
Tatiana: Especially when dessert arrives.


Tatiana: Come on, darling.
M.N. Popa: Slowly! I don’t know this step!
Tatiana: Follow my lead.


Gabriella: Shall we take something to Pax, too?
Tatiana: Wait, I'll add these.
M.N. Popa: Let's go. We have a journey to tell him about.


Pax: Did you dance as well?
Tatiana: We have witnesses.
Before them, Astralis was still celebrating.


Arianna: Dad… that little bit of forest is looking at us.
M.N. Popa: As long as the whole forest isn't looking at us.
Gabriele: I wouldn't bet on it.


Tatiana: Easy, Titti. Let him come to you.
Gabriele: Have you seen those ears?
Arianna: They look like two fans!
M.N. Popa: Titti, we've only just arrived and you've already found a playmate.


Nadia: Welcome to Magoria! Did you stop to get to know the forest?
Arianna: It got to know us first. M.N. Popa: And Titti's already made a friend.


Tatiana: How are we going to see everything?
Nadia: We'll start at the roots. Then I'll take you up there.
Gabriele: That's quite a climb.
Nadia: Luckily, we won't have to take all the stairs.


Gabriele: Does it carry water up?
Brom: That too. Today it’s carrying the shopping.
M.N. Popa: We could do with one of these at home.


Arianna: Are the little ones for the fairies?
Milo: Yes. And the big ones are going to the square for the celebration.
M.N. Popa: Good thing we came by the roots, then.
Tatiana: You just followed your nose.


Lilia: This way! I'll show you my home.
Arianna: The one between those two leaves?
Lilia: Yes. Wait, I'll close the window. Otherwise a squirrel will get in.


Tatiana: From below, I had no idea it was this big.
Gabriele: Look at the square! They're already putting up the lights.
Nadia: That's our next stop.
M.N. Popa: Are those broomsticks parked?


M.N. Popa: So those broomsticks really do fly.
Nadia: Yes. But let's start with something we can do on the ground.
Gabriele: I think that's enough now.
M.N. Popa: At least we can all shelter under it if it rains.
Arianna: Nadia… can I have a go, too?
Tatiana: I'd put these on the Christmas table.


Arianna: I’d like to try blonde hair. And a princess dress.
Nadia: Let’s try together. First, be sure about what you want.
M.N. Popa: Is this little jar emp—
M.N. Popa: I was asking if the jar was empty.
Gabriele: Now you have something in common.


Arianna: I’m sorry! I didn’t mean to…
Nadia: I can undo it. But you’d both go back to how you were. It’s the same spell.
Arianna: All right. Put everything back the way it was.
M.N. Popa: Did you like your hair?
Arianna: Yes, but…
M.N. Popa: This isn’t bad, though.
M.N. Popa: You keep the hair. I’ll keep the goatee.
Tatiana: There. At least someone’s happy already.


Nadia: Let’s try lighting it. M.N. Popa: My turn this time.


M.N. Popa: Is that meant to happen? Nadia: You made a light. M.N. Popa: Yes. At the wrong end.


M.N. Popa: Here. You light it. Arianna: You still trust me? M.N. Popa: Wait till I’ve moved.


Lilia: Did you make these?
Tatiana: I did. With a little help.
Gabriele: Dad took care of the fireworks instead.
M.N. Popa: And that's the end of tonight's show.


Nadia: Are you sure you want to leave like this?
Arianna: I am.
M.N. Popa: Me too. I've grown rather fond of the goatee.
Tatiana: Say goodbye, Titti. We have to go.
Everyone: Merry Christmas!


Arianna: It looks like water… but I’m not getting wet!
Tatiana: Look at your sleeves.
M.N. Popa: Even Titti’s changing colour.
Gabriele: She’s checking whether she can sniff it.


Lumen: Welcome to Oneiria. I’m Lumen, and this is Ombra.
Arianna: He was on the other side a moment ago!
Lumen: Come on. We have time to look around before the celebration.


Tatiana: That house looks all crooked from here.
Gabriele: Take a step towards me.
Tatiana: Oh. Now it’s straight!
Lumen: The house hasn’t moved.
The light is reaching you differently.


Arianna: Titti, it’s here!
Gabriele: She saw another one.
M.N. Popa: Two for her eyes. Just one for her nose.


Arianna: Mum, look! The folds have turned lilac.
Tatiana: Move them again. Now I can see gold, too.
M.N. Popa: A dress like that makes choosing a colour in the morning easy.


Sirel: I’m making decorations for presents. Would you like to try?
Gabriele: Do we just imagine them?
Sirel: Pick one and try to hold it clearly in your mind.


Gabriele: I was thinking of a little snowflake for a present.
Arianna: A snowflake, yes. Little? Not so much!
M.N. Popa: I'd like to see you fit that on a parcel.
Sirel: Bring it to the celebration. We'll find a place for it.


Sirel: Going to the square? Let’s walk together.
Tatiana: I’ll carry this one.
M.N. Popa: And I’ll take the tray.
Gabriele: You spotted that one first.


Arianna: The people making decorations are here, too!
Lumen: Tonight, we all gather here.
Tatiana: I'm glad we lent a hand, then.

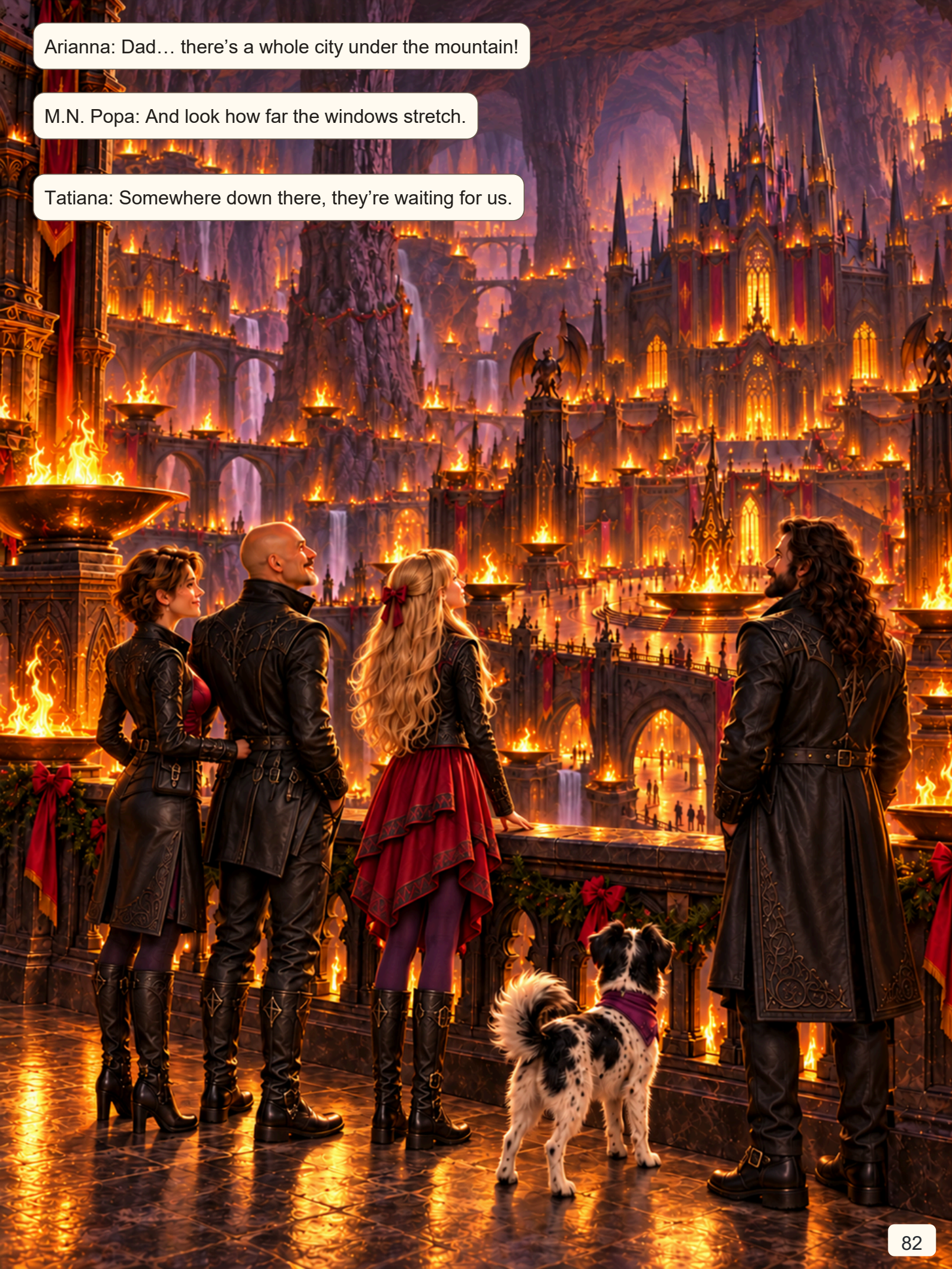

Lumen: The table is ready. Will you help us with the colours?
Tatiana: For Christmas, I'd choose red.
M.N. Popa: And gold.
Lumen: Let's try imagining them together.


Arianna: It’s reaching all the way over here!
Gabriele: Look at the windows.
Tatiana: It’s as if the whole square is dressing up.


M.N. Popa: There’s the gold!
Arianna: Gabriele, your snowflake!
Gabriele: See? It found its place.


Sirel: Come on. We've saved you seats.
Tatiana: What a lovely table.
Lumen: Merry Christmas, friends.
Everyone: Merry Christmas!


Arianna: Is the snowflake staying here?
Lumen: Of course. You brought it.
M.N. Popa: Then we're leaving a little bit of Christmas behind, too.
Tatiana: Come on, Titti. Let's say goodbye.
Gabriele: Next stop: Noxarium.


Arianna: Dad… there’s a whole city under the mountain!
M.N. Popa: And look how far the windows stretch.
Tatiana: Somewhere down there, they’re waiting for us.


Lucien: Welcome to Noxarium. We'll show you around.
Bony: I've planned a route.
Lucien: Does it go past every kitchen?
Bony: Almost every kitchen.


Veshra: Careful. The bread’s still hot.
Gabriele: We’ll take one to share.
M.N. Popa: To start with.

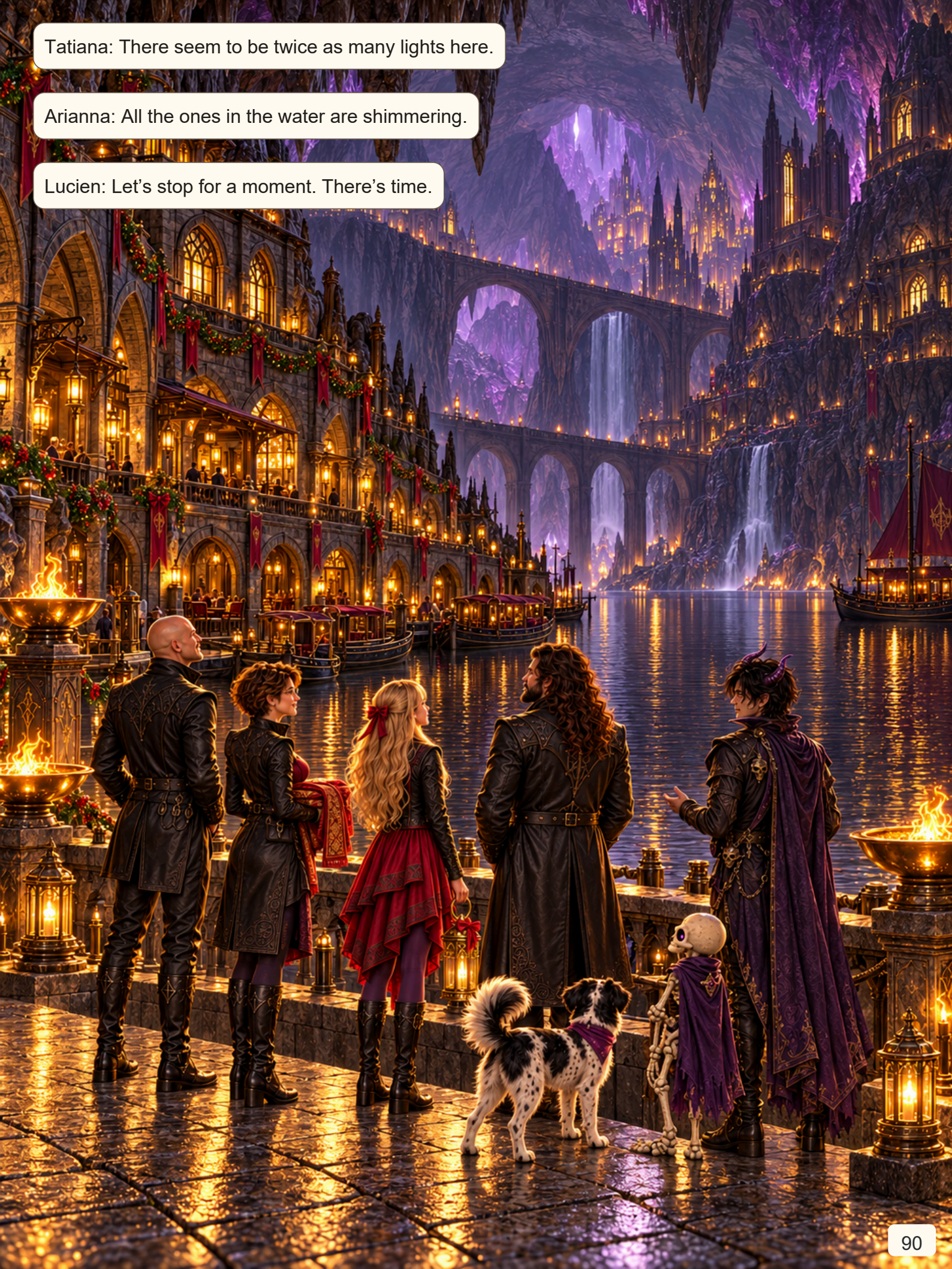

Grimmo: Could you hold this steady for me?
M.N. Popa: Like this?
Arianna: Shall we add the red ribbon, too?
Grimmo: Then you can take it to the celebration.


Gabriele: You can see the whole market from up here.
Mordek: And smell when the bread comes out of the oven.
M.N. Popa: We found that without coming up here.


Velka: These need to go to the banquet hall.
Tatiana: We'll take them.
Bony: Our route is turning into a delivery round.
Lucien: A delivery round in good company.


Arianna: Look at those ears…
Tatiana: Wait. Let them come to you.
M.N. Popa: Titti’s already worked that out.


Arianna: That one wants to play!
Gabriele: Titti, we’re guests. You can’t move in.
M.N. Popa: Don’t give her ideas.


Tatiana: There seem to be twice as many lights here.
Arianna: All the ones in the water are shimmering.
Lucien: Let’s stop for a moment. There’s time.


Bony: There were only a few of us when we set off.
Gabriele: Now we’re arriving with half the market.
Lucien: All we need is someone to open the door.


Rudrak: Shall we put this bench here?
M.N. Popa: If we move up a little, there's room for two more.
Tatiana: Then let's bring two more plates.


Gabriele: You told me to leave room for dinner.
M.N. Popa: I did. I didn’t know I’d need this much.
Tatiana: Pass me the bread before you two start again.


Lucien: To those who’ve travelled so far to be here.
M.N. Popa: And to those who saved us a place.
Tatiana: Merry Christmas.

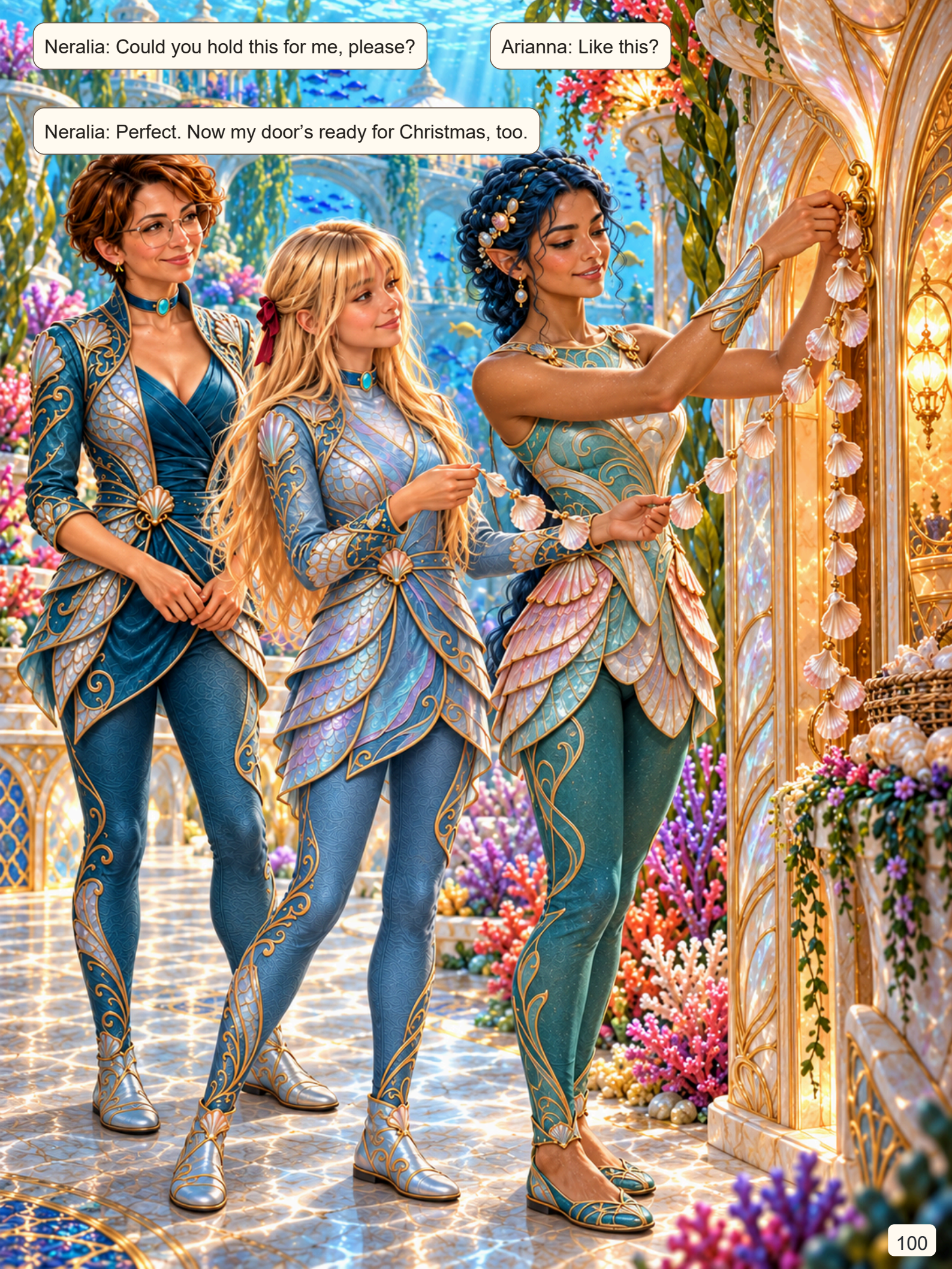

Arianna: Shall we leave the lantern lit?
Lucien: Of course. It looks good there.
Bony: Have a good journey. And say hello to Atlantis for us!
M.N. Popa: We will. Merry Christmas, friends.


Arianna: Mum, look! The sea comes right up to the door.
M.N. Popa: I hope the door holds.
Aren: Soon you'll be the ones going through it.


Aren: These are for you. As long as you wear them, you'll be able to breathe and come down into the depths with us.
Tatiana: And talk?
Aren: Yes. They'll protect you from the cold and the pressure, too.


Arianna: I'm breathing… Dad, I really am breathing!
Gabriele: Titti's already off.
M.N. Popa: I was still holding my breath.


Tatiana: There are houses even up there.
Gabriele: Here you can visit the neighbours by going over the roof.
M.N. Popa: At last, a place with no stairs to climb.


Neralia: Could you hold this for me, please?
Arianna: Like this?
Neralia: Perfect. Now my door’s ready for Christmas, too.


Corven: Try turning it towards the light.
Tatiana: It was white a moment ago… now it’s pink and blue.
M.N. Popa: Let’s take this one to the square.


Arianna: Easy, Titti. You're making him hide.
M.N. Popa: He goes sideways, and she doesn't know where to look.
Gabriele: For once, someone's making her stay still.


Arianna: It looks as if it’s flying.
Talise: Wait here. It’ll pass right beside you.
Tatiana: Look at the shadow of its fins on the seabed.


Gabriele: You can barely see the sun from here.
Arianna: But look at all the lights below us.
Aren: Let’s stop. You can see them better from that terrace.


Orel: We were expecting you. Did you find anything at the market?
Orel: Come on. There's still room over here.
Gabriele: This. Where shall we put it?


M.N. Popa: Wait… I can’t see a thing.
Arianna: Dad, the bow’s chosen you.
Tatiana: Keep still. I’ll take it off.


Corven: Fasten it here. The pieces need to be able to turn.
M.N. Popa: And I was trying to keep them all still.
Arianna: Now they catch the light from every direction!


Aren: Merry Christmas, my friends.
Tatiana: Merry Christmas, Atlantis!
M.N. Popa: To everyone up there, too. And down below!
Arianna: Dad, they're all waving at you.


Arianna: Walking again is going to feel strange.
M.N. Popa: I'll miss going over the stairs.
Aren: Whenever you want to come back, we'll show you around again.
Tatiana: Goodbye, Aren. Goodbye, Dely.


Arianna: First under the sea… now above the clouds!
M.N. Popa: As long as we can walk here.
Kallia: Welcome to Olympus. Come on, I'll show you around.


M.N. Popa: I’d only just learnt to go over the stairs.
Tatiana: Here you can start counting them again.
Gabriele: Don’t tell him. He’ll stop at the first one.


Tatiana: What a wonderful smell of bread!
Kallia: They’re making dinner for everyone in the square.
M.N. Popa: Then we’ve arrived at just the right time.


Gabriele: Do you paint them all by hand?
Damon: One leaf at a time.
M.N. Popa: I'd have made a blot by the second one.


Arianna: Can I go closer?
Kallia: Yes, slowly. Let him come to you.
Tatiana: Look, he’s already sniffing you.


Tatiana: From here, you can’t even see where the mountain ends.
Gabriele: The garden looks as if it’s floating.
Kallia: Come on. There’s someone I’d like you to meet.


Arianna: It has a lion's body… and an eagle's beak.
M.N. Popa: And it's watching all of us.
Kallia: Stay here. Let's give it some space.


Arianna: Titti, look who’s here.
Tatiana: Easy. Get to know each other first.
M.N. Popa: At least this one doesn’t have to bend down to look at her.


Gabriele: It’s asking her to play.
Arianna: Titti’s already said yes.
M.N. Popa: No flying races, though.


Melia: Do you know this song?
Tatiana: No, but it makes me want to sing.
Melia: Then come tonight. We'll try it together.


Kallia: Could you help us with this bench?
M.N. Popa: How many guests are you expecting?
Damon: For now, let’s set a few extra places.


Gabriele: That's the bowl you showed us!
Damon: Yes. Now pass it along.
M.N. Popa: With all that bread? Gladly.


Gabriele: Come on, there’s room here!
Tatiana: Let’s move up a little.
Kallia: Merry Christmas, my friends.
Arianna: Merry Christmas, Olympus!


Arianna: We really have reached our last stop.
Tatiana: And they made room for us at every table.
M.N. Popa: Next time, though, we'll do the inviting.
Kallia: Then save us two seats.


Tatiana: We’re home.
M.N. Popa: Now we know who to save a place for.

The Gift Goes On

Thank you to my family, who give meaning to the celebrations and the stories I tell. And thank you for travelling with us.

I wish you a Christmas in which you feel welcome and find time for someone. And, if you can, leave a place for someone who isn’t expecting it, too.

If this book made you smile, share the link with a friend. Even a small gift can travel a long way.

You can find the available editions on the book’s page:
valenelya.com/en/christmas-that-unites-the-worlds
Download them for free and share the link.

Merry Christmas, wherever your next journey takes you.



Credits and Contact

The Christmas That Unites the Worlds
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Concept, fictional universe, characters, narrative choices and creative direction: M.N. Popa.

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M.N. Popa is the creator of the fictional universe of VALENELYA. Visit the website to discover more stories and free content.

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