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Eymard Toledo **Bené,  
faster than the  
fastest chicken**

Für Antonio, Lucas und Clemens



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Baobab Books dankt terre des hommes schweiz und der Erklärung von Bern für die finanzielle Unterstützung.

Diese Publikation wurde gefördert durch die Basler Stiftung Bau & Kultur.

### **Bené, schneller als das schnellste Huhn**

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2. Auflage 2014

Text und Illustration: Eymard Toledo

Lektorat: Sonja Matheson

Satz: Bernet & Schönenberger, Zürich

Druck: Freiburger Graphische Betriebe, Freiburg i. Brsg.

ISBN 978-3-905804-51-5

Originalausgabe

Die Deutsche Bibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen Nationalbibliografie, detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet abrufbar unter <http://dnd.d-nb.de>.

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# Bené, faster than the fastest chicken

Eymard Toledo  
(Text and Illustration)

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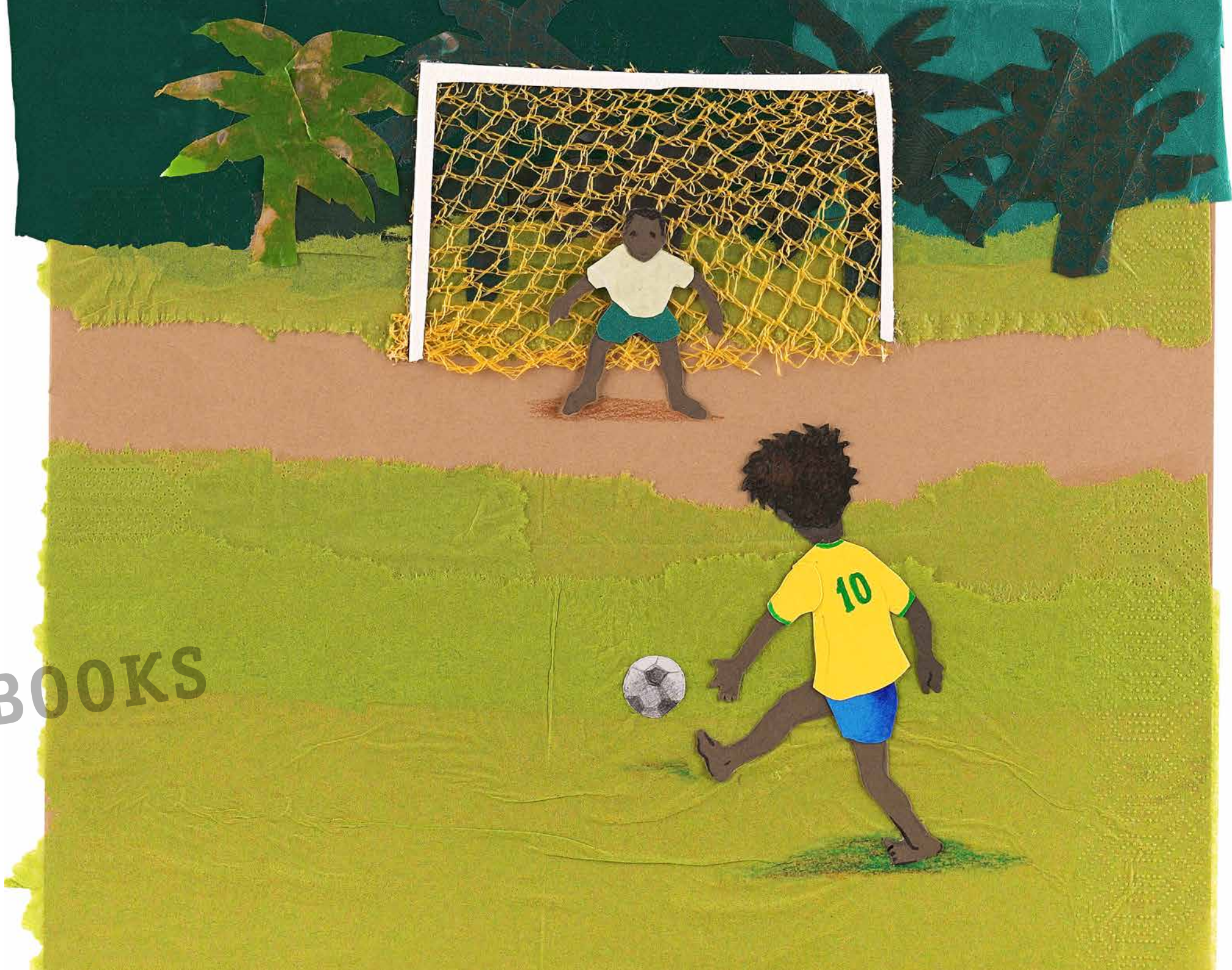
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**T**he boy in the yellow number 10 jersey, that's me:  
Benedito da Silva. But call me Bené, everybody else does.  
I love football more than anything in the world.  
Ok, sometimes on Sundays, my mother makes Feijoada\*.  
That's delicious, so I love that, too.

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\* Words marked with an asterisk are explained at the end of the book.

B BOOKS





**N**o matter where I go or what I do, I always take a football with me. It's almost as if balls follow me around, they do, even in my dreams. My family makes a living out of making footballs.

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B BOOKS



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CERVEJA  
BOTTLED AT THE BREWERY  
EST. 1954

CERVEJA  
BOTTLED AT THE BREWERY  
EST. 1954

CERVEJA  
BOTTLED AT THE BREWERY  
EST. 1954



They actually help manufacturing footballs. Four or five of them every day. I am good at sewing. My seams are always flat, you can hardly feel them.

My mother presses the patches of leather, and then hangs them up to dry. 'They have to be as solid as the back of a tortoise', Mama says.

My father sells our footballs. All good players in the area use them. One day, there was a foreigner, who bought 50 balls at once.

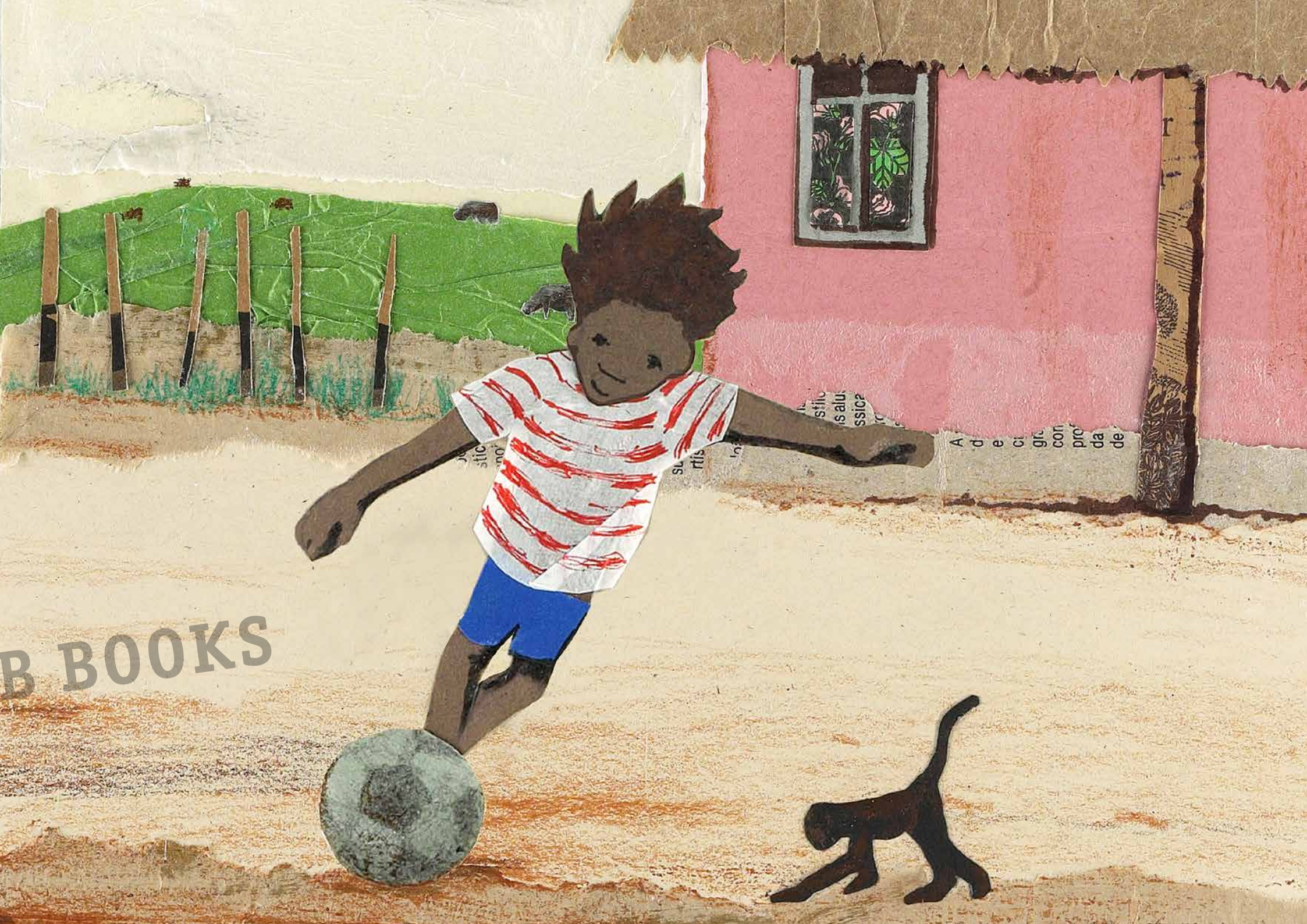
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I test each football with my bare feet. Only the good ones will sell. Whenever I go out with a new ball, Gibi will come along! He jumps from tree to tree, catching the ball whenever he gets a chance. Gibi is my soulmate when it comes to football.

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B BOOKS



**G**ibi is the smartest Mico\*. I try to dribble around him, but he always manages to steal the ball from me. And once he's got it, he will take off with it, climbing swiftly up the nearest tree. I know that I will only get my football back, once Gibi is done with it. Sometimes, he plays for hours!

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Av. Feliciano  
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**U**sually, I play barefoot, but I can also play in my flip-flops. ‘How do you manage to keep them on your feet?’, my friends keep asking me. Sometimes though, the flip-flop stunt does not work at all. When I play in the in the rain, for example, they will slip from my feet. Then, Gibi is never sure whether to catch my shoe or the ball . . . Most of the times, however, Gibi cannot not be tricked, he is a very good goalkeeper.



B BOOKS

I myself am a good striker. Even the chicken could tell you about that. If my mother wants to make soup, I will catch a chicken for her. I am fleetier than the fastest chicken!



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B BOOKS



**A**fter work, Magrelo, Biba, Dadá and I meet for a Pelada\* in the street. I am the only one with a real football. Our goal has no net, and we are mostly coached by monkeys and chicken. Unfortunately, monkeys and chicken go to bed as soon as the sun sets . . . But me and my friends, we usually continue to practice until we can't see the ball in the dark anymore.

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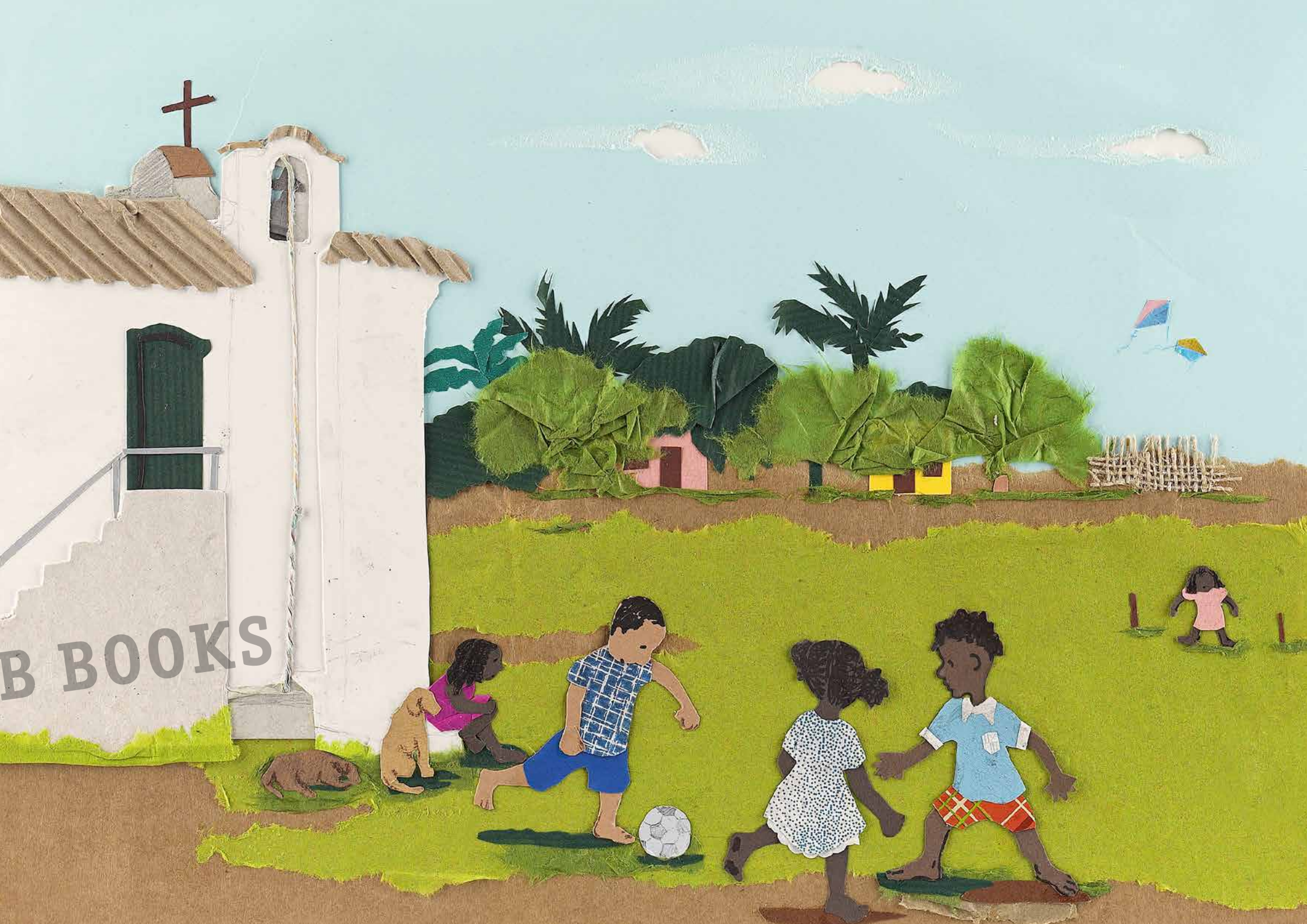
B BOOKS

**O**n Saturdays, I am allowed to watch TV with my father. We will sit on the couch, he will put an arm around my shoulder, and tousle my hair. 'Feels like football turf', he will say, laughing. If the referee misses a foul, my father will shout at him: 'Oooh Meleca\*!' But then my mother will come in from the kitchen, telling him off: 'Do not teach the child such ugly words!' 'Dad, can I have shoes like those?', I will ask every time.

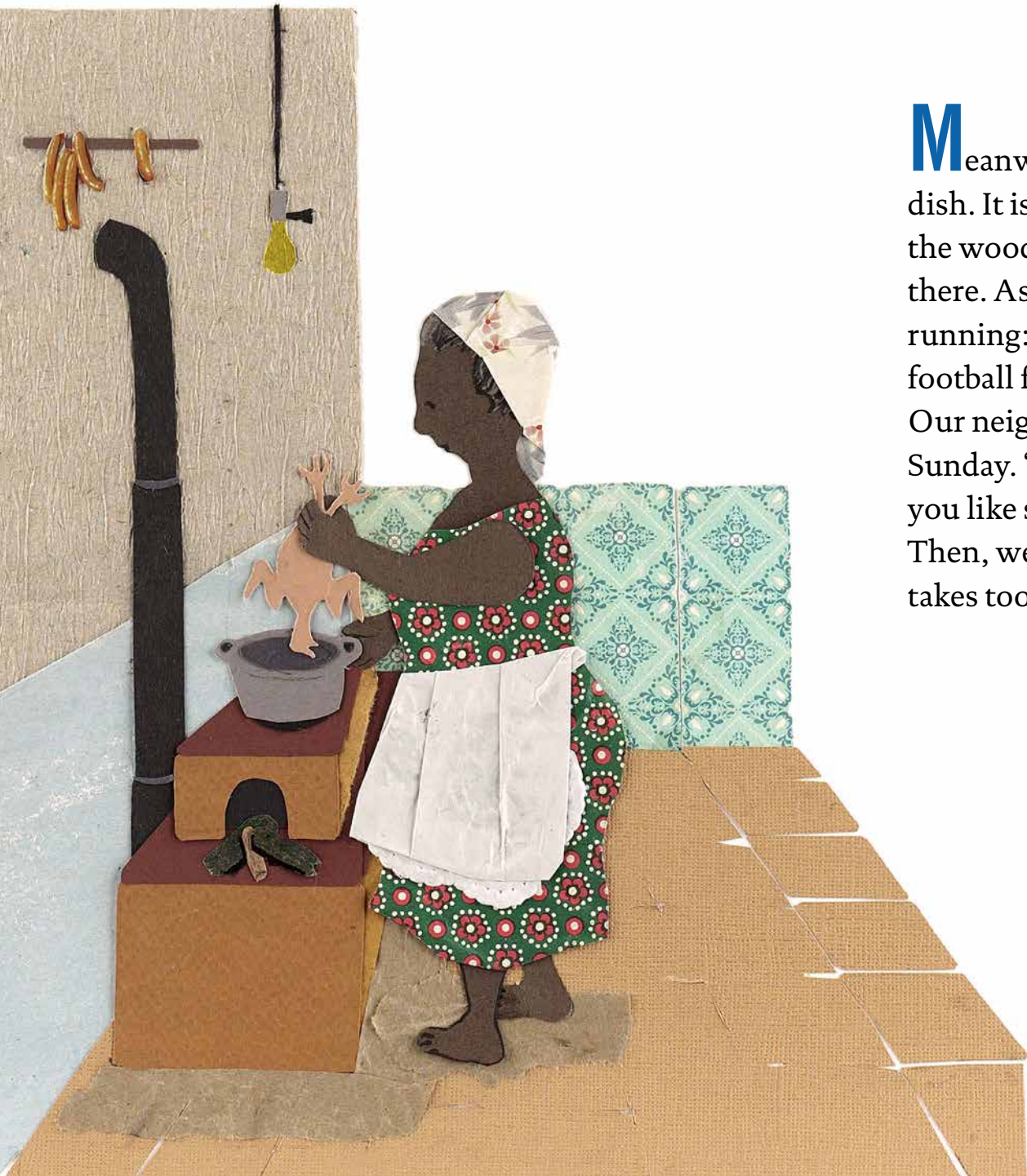
B BOO



**S**unday is football day. After church, we usually play on the field right behind the church building. The girls join us sometimes. But it's never the real thing. They are too busy trying not to ruin their Sunday dresses. Zinha, my cousin, does not want to play. Probably because of her neat plaid skirt. That is a pity, she is a good defender, she really is.



B BOOKS



**M**eanwhile, Mama makes Feijoada or a chicken dish. It is always hot in our kitchen, because of the wooden stove. Only mom can stand the heat in there. As soon as the food is on the table, I come running: ‘I could smell the yummy food from our football field.’

Our neighbour, Mr. Zé, visits us for lunch every Sunday. ‘Mr. Zé, here is the Pimenta Malagueta\* you like so much’, my mother tells him.

Then, we lough at Mr. Zec’s red face. He always takes too much of the spicy pepper.



B BOOKS



**A**fter lunch, me and dad go fishing at the river sometimes. You only catch a fish if you are lucky, and if you sit very, very still. But that is difficult, because of all the mosquitos trying to bite us. In the late afternoon, many animals come out of their daily hiding onto the warm soil. They are hungry. Snakes for example. We have to be careful not to step on them by accident, or they will bite.

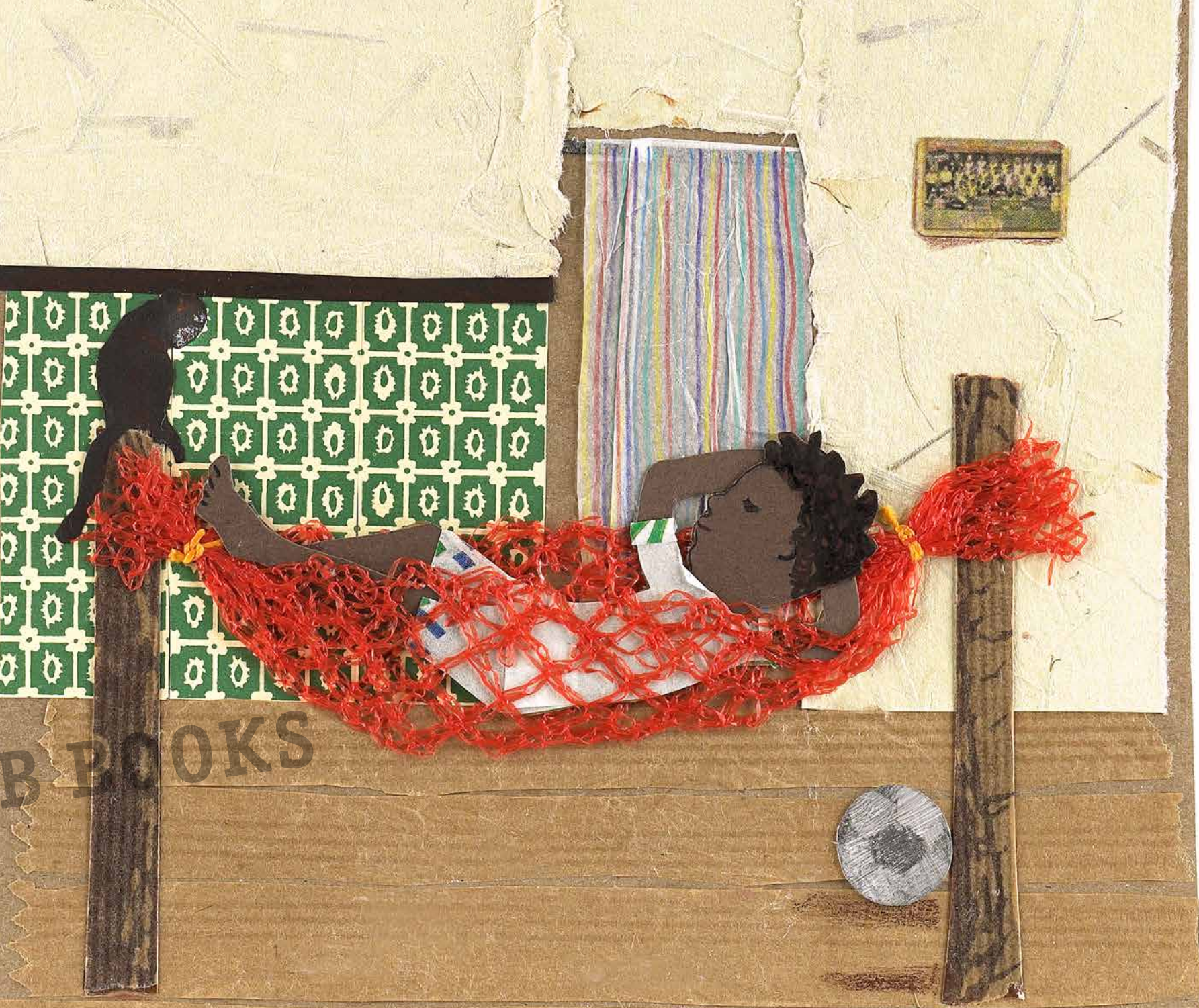
If we see Gibi jumping from branch to branch above us, we know it is time to go home: There will either be a thunderstorm, or a snake is approaching. Gibi is really smart.



B BOOKS

**A**t the end of the day, I go to sleep in my Rede\*. I often dream of playing football in an official jersey and football boots like a real footballer. But then, I think I am lucky: I always have a good ball and my friends to play with, what more could I want? Just before closing my eyes, I can see Gibi coming in through the open window. He will sit on the post of my Rede, watching me.

‘Sleep well, Gibi. Tomorrow will be another busy day, and in the evening, we will play again’, I tell him. And then I am off to the land of dreams.



B BOOKS



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## Portuguese words

**Feijoada** is a famous and often favourite dish in Brazil. It is a stew with black beans and meat.

**Mico** means little monkey. Micos are cheeky, they climb into houses and will often leave a big mess behind.

**Pelada** in Brazilian Portuguese means to play football.

**Meleca** is a rascal.

**Pimenta Malagueta** is the spiciest pepper in Brazil.

**Rede** means net, it is pronounced with an h at the beginning and a *ji* at the end: *hedji*. The same word is used for a football goal and a hammock. Many people in Brazil prefer to sleep in a hammock than in a bed.

## The Author

The story of Bené is set in Brazil. In Ubá, in the Southeast of the country to be precise. When Eymard Toledo, who was born in Belo Horizonte, was a child, she spent all her holidays in the house of her grandmother in Ubá, a small village at the time.

At the age of 25, after finishing her arts studies, she travelled Europe on her own. It was Berlin where she decided to stay, and where she completed her education, earning a master's degree in industrial design. She has been living in Germany for more than twenty years now. She is married and has two sons, and lives in the city of Mainz. Once a year, they are all off to Brazil for a holiday. And of course, they never fail to visit Ubá.

Her two sons, as many boys in the world, love football. In Ubá, Eymard Toledo watches them play with the local kids. Seeing their joy and their skill inspired her to write the story about Bené, a boy who – despite living a life that may not be easy – is a very happy child.

His full name is Benedito da Silva, but everybody calls the boy in the number 10 jersey just Bené. He loves football with all his heart. Bené does not only love playing and juggling with footballs, he and his family actually make a living out of manufacturing them. Each day, they make four or five balls, and it is Bené who sews them – and who puts their quality to the test. Only the good ones will sell.



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