

*It is puzzling to look across the desert and see how the sun plays tricks on one's eyes. It is said that people bring their fantasies and dreams to life when they are delirious with heat from the sun and the tremendous thirst that accompanies it. One looks out across the scorching sand and things start to appear. They call it a mirage when images are not what they seem, or seem out of place.*

*Sphinx and Trevi couldn't wait to see what fantasies of their own would come true when they finally looked across the desert at the Egyptian excavation site in Giza.*

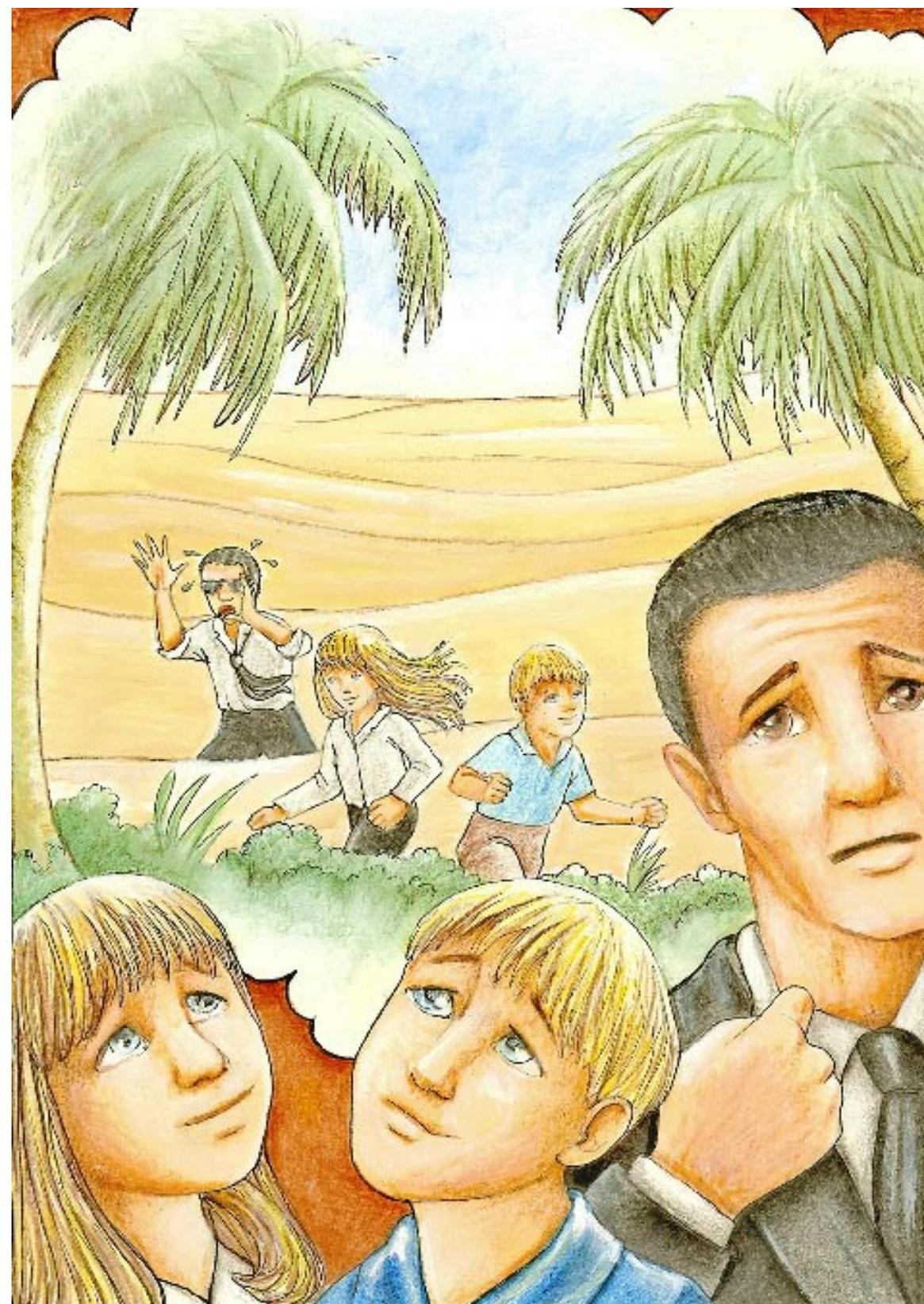
*The children were ecstatic about spending their whole summer vacation with Mama, Papa, and their bodyguard, Marseille. Papa had had many excavations in Egypt but this was the first time he felt that the children were old enough to appreciate the experience, so he decided to bring them along.*

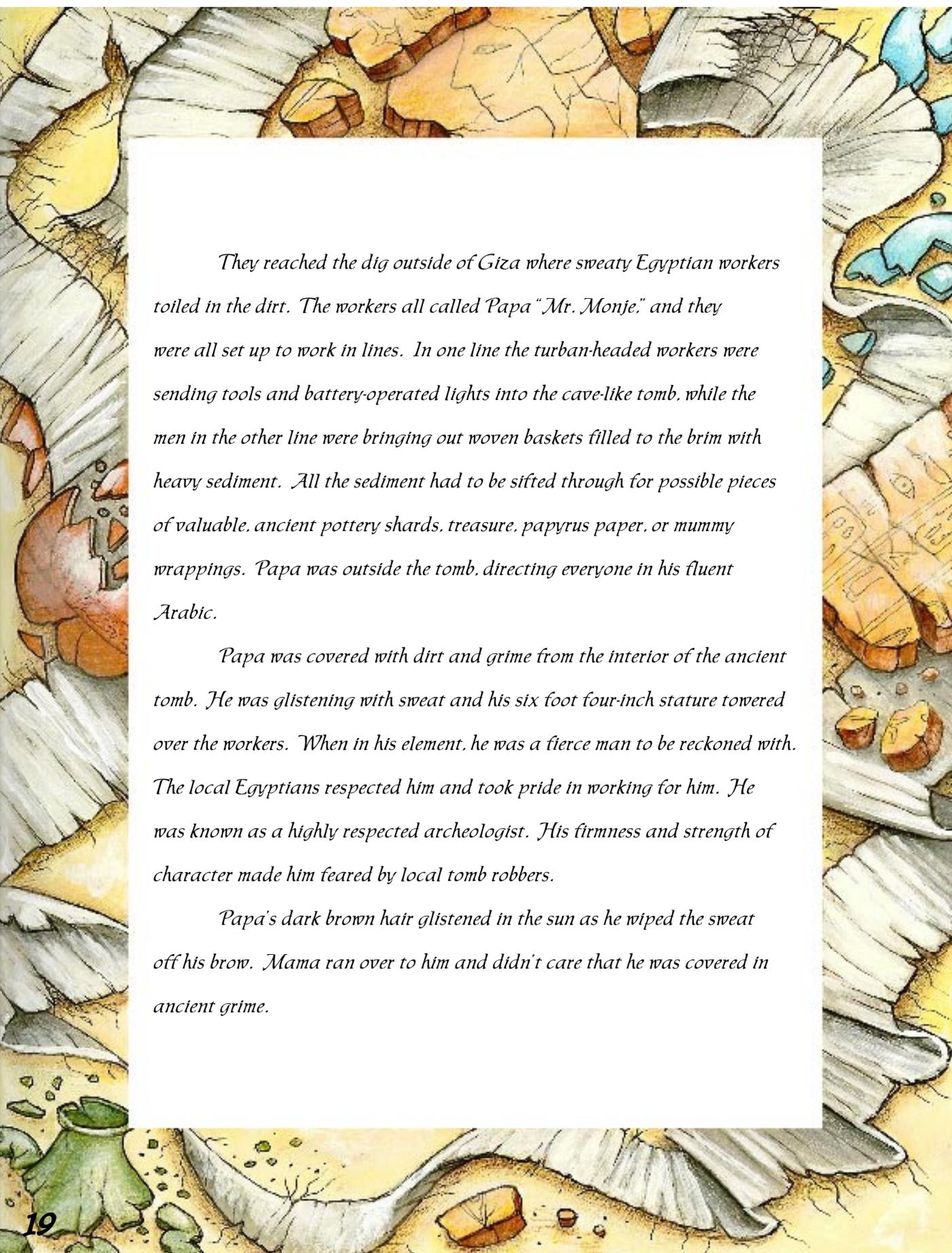
*Papa said they might see mirages in the desert and warned them not to go chasing after them like they would chase after a firefly. Papa said that Egypt had been his own dream world for many years now, and he hoped that the children would feel the same way.*

*Mama agreed, and said that Sphinx and Trevi's imaginations would soar in Egypt—the location of the ancient Egyptian pharaohs.*

*When they arrived in the city of Cairo they knew they were not dreaming or seeing a mirage. Marseille, however, looked out on the city and was actually hoping it was a mirage. Being the children's bodyguard had its perks but having to come to Egypt to the excavation sites was not his idea of a job perk. Marseille hated sand and hot climates and was never happy to visit archaeological sites.*

*Marseille had once been a famous kick boxer but was now settled into a gentler way of life with the Monje family. He was rough and tough but had a refined and sophisticated side as well.*



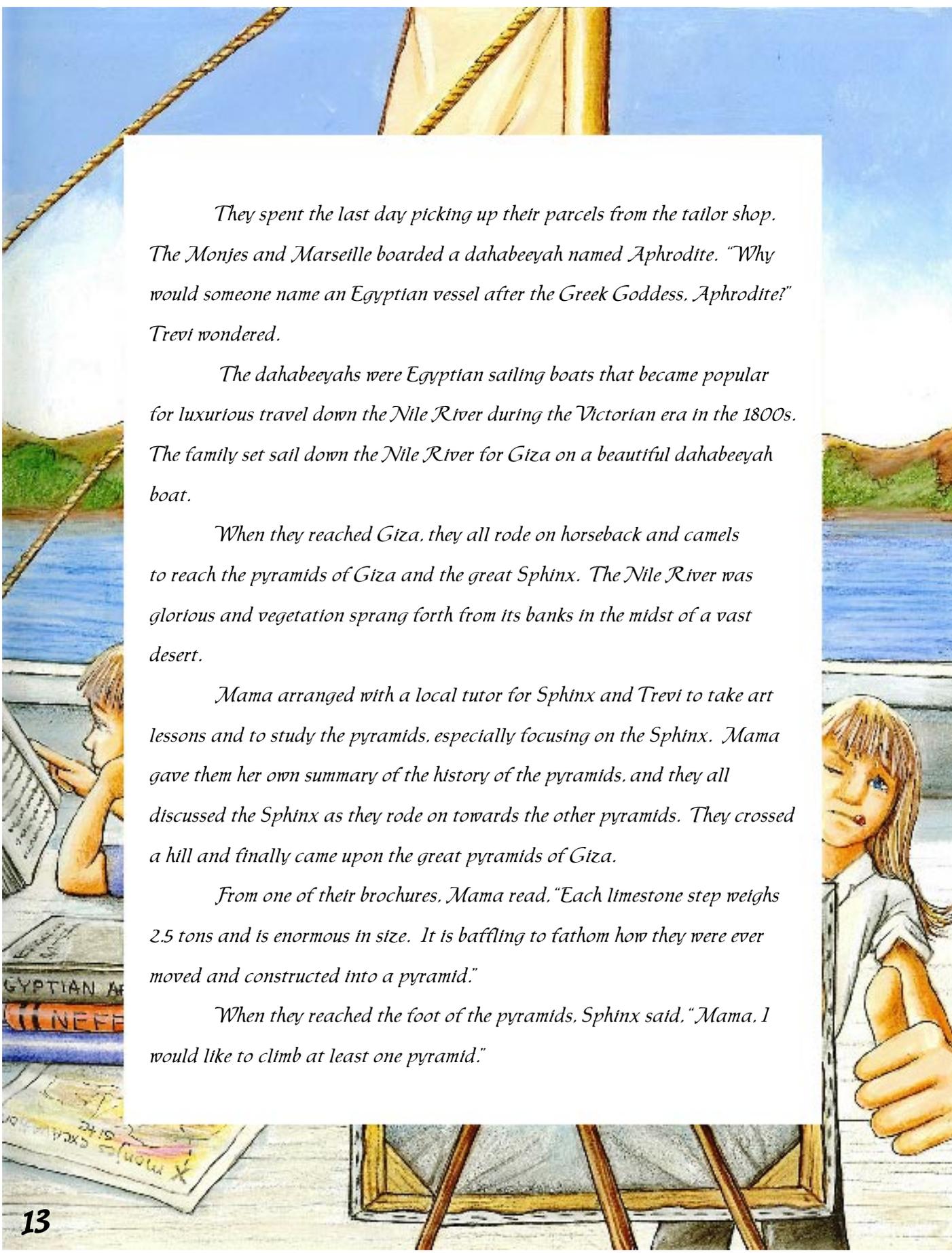


*They reached the dig outside of Giza where sweaty Egyptian workers toiled in the dirt. The workers all called Papa "Mr. Monje," and they were all set up to work in lines. In one line the turban-headed workers were sending tools and battery-operated lights into the cave-like tomb, while the men in the other line were bringing out woven baskets filled to the brim with heavy sediment. All the sediment had to be sifted through for possible pieces of valuable, ancient pottery shards, treasure, papyrus paper, or mummy wrappings. Papa was outside the tomb, directing everyone in his fluent Arabic.*

*Papa was covered with dirt and grime from the interior of the ancient tomb. He was glistening with sweat and his six foot four-inch stature towered over the workers. When in his element, he was a fierce man to be reckoned with. The local Egyptians respected him and took pride in working for him. He was known as a highly respected archeologist. His firmness and strength of character made him feared by local tomb robbers.*

*Papa's dark brown hair glistened in the sun as he wiped the sweat off his brow. Mama ran over to him and didn't care that he was covered in ancient grime.*



An illustration of a boat deck. A young boy with brown hair is sitting on the left, reading a book. The book has 'EGYPTIAN AR' and 'NEFE' visible on its cover. A girl with long brown hair is on the right, looking towards the boy. The deck is made of light-colored wood. In the background, there's a blue river and green hills under a blue sky. A yellow sail is visible at the top.

*They spent the last day picking up their parcels from the tailor shop. The Monjes and Marseille boarded a dahabeeyah named Aphrodite. "Why would someone name an Egyptian vessel after the Greek Goddess, Aphrodite?" Trevi wondered.*

*The dahabeeyahs were Egyptian sailing boats that became popular for luxurious travel down the Nile River during the Victorian era in the 1800s. The family set sail down the Nile River for Giza on a beautiful dahabeeyah boat.*

*When they reached Giza, they all rode on horseback and camels to reach the pyramids of Giza and the great Sphinx. The Nile River was glorious and vegetation sprang forth from its banks in the midst of a vast desert.*

*Mama arranged with a local tutor for Sphinx and Trevi to take art lessons and to study the pyramids, especially focusing on the Sphinx. Mama gave them her own summary of the history of the pyramids, and they all discussed the Sphinx as they rode on towards the other pyramids. They crossed a hill and finally came upon the great pyramids of Giza.*

*From one of their brochures, Mama read, "Each limestone step weighs 2.5 tons and is enormous in size. It is baffling to fathom how they were ever moved and constructed into a pyramid."*

*When they reached the foot of the pyramids, Sphinx said, "Mama, I would like to climb at least one pyramid."*

