

# Otto's Tales



*Let's Meet*

a **VOLUNTEER:**  
HONORING HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS

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# “Ruff Ruff!”

Otto the bulldog barked. “Dennis, why are you all dressed up?” The bulldog’s best friend wore a sleek blue jacket and tie.



“Are you going to a party?” Smidge, the fluffy kitten, bounced into the room. “I want to go!”

Dennis chuckled. “No, I have a choir performance for my school. We’re going to sing at the local **nursing home**. My teacher says it really brightens their day.”





“Oh.” Smidge was disappointed. “I was hoping for something more exciting.”

Dennis continued, “I’m looking forward to it. We get to join the local **volunteers** after our performance to sit and talk with the residents.”



“Is that part of your class assignment, too?” Otto asked.

“No,” Dennis replied. “It’s optional to stay after, but I want to. I love talking to people. You two should come with me.”



Otto and Smidge were uncertain.

“Won’t it be boring there?” Smidge questioned.

“And what would we talk about with them?” Otto blurted. “I don’t think we’ll have anything in common.”

Dennis opened the front door. “Come on. You might like it. They serve snacks after the performance.”

Smidge perked up. “Okay, I’m in.”

“Me too,” Otto agreed.



Out the door they went.

At the nursing home, a young man with a name tag approached them.

“Hi, I’m Jeremy. I’m a volunteer here,” he said with a bright smile. “You’re here for the choir concert, right?”



“Yes!” Dennis exclaimed.

“Great.” Jeremy handed them visitor badges.

“Please put these on and follow me.”



In the event room, Dennis's classmates were lining up along the wall.

"See you guys after!" Dennis hurried over to the line.



"Please, take a seat." Jeremy pointed to the chairs.

"Are you going to watch too?" Otto asked.

"I can't." Jeremy shook his head. "After I help the residents sit down, I need to prepare meals for them. Everything's on a schedule."

“Can’t you take a break?” Smidge wondered.

“Sure, but I’m here to serve as a volunteer today. It’s important that I pay attention, be **proactive**, and help out wherever I’m needed. Right now, that’s in the kitchen... enjoy the show!”



Smidge’s eyes lit up. “Did you hear that? They have a kitchen here.”

Otto laughed. “We’re here for Dennis, remember?”



“Just a quick snack first.” Smidge was already bounding towards the door. “We don’t want my stomach growling during the concert, do we?”

Otto sighed. “We’d better hurry and catch up to Jeremy then.”

The friends rounded the corner into an empty hallway. “Where did Jeremy go?” Smidge wondered aloud.

Otto shook his head. “I don’t know. Maybe we followed the wrong volunteer. They all wear the same shirts.”





“Do you think the kitchen is in here?” Smidge peeked through one of the open doors.

“We should get back.” Otto started to worry. “We don’t want to get in trouble.”

The kitten’s nose twitched. “Mmm, it smells sweet, like apples and cinnamon. Maybe we can find a tasty treat here.”



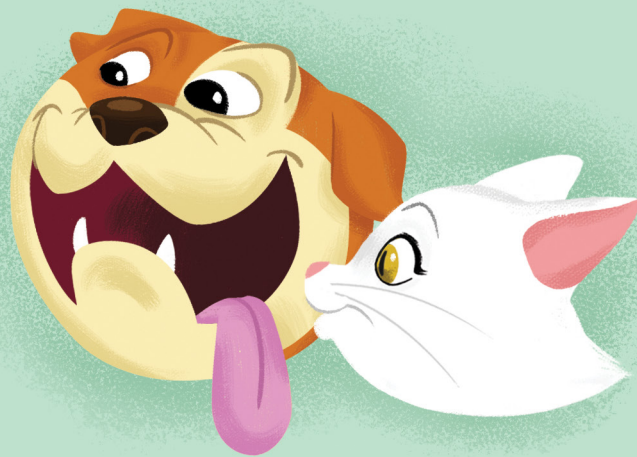
The two friends quietly wandered into a small room with a bed, couch, TV, and a petite, elderly woman with white hair and big, round glasses, sitting at a table. She spotted them and smiled.



“Hello,” she said. “I wasn’t expecting any visitors today.”



“I’m Otto, and this is Smidge,” the bulldog explained. “Sorry to bother you, but we got lost.”



“It’s easy to get lost around here,” the woman giggled.  
“I’m Sarah. It’s nice to meet you.”

“Your room smells great, Sarah!” Smidge exclaimed.

“Thank you,” Sarah said. “It’s my cinnamon tea...  
it always cheers me up.”

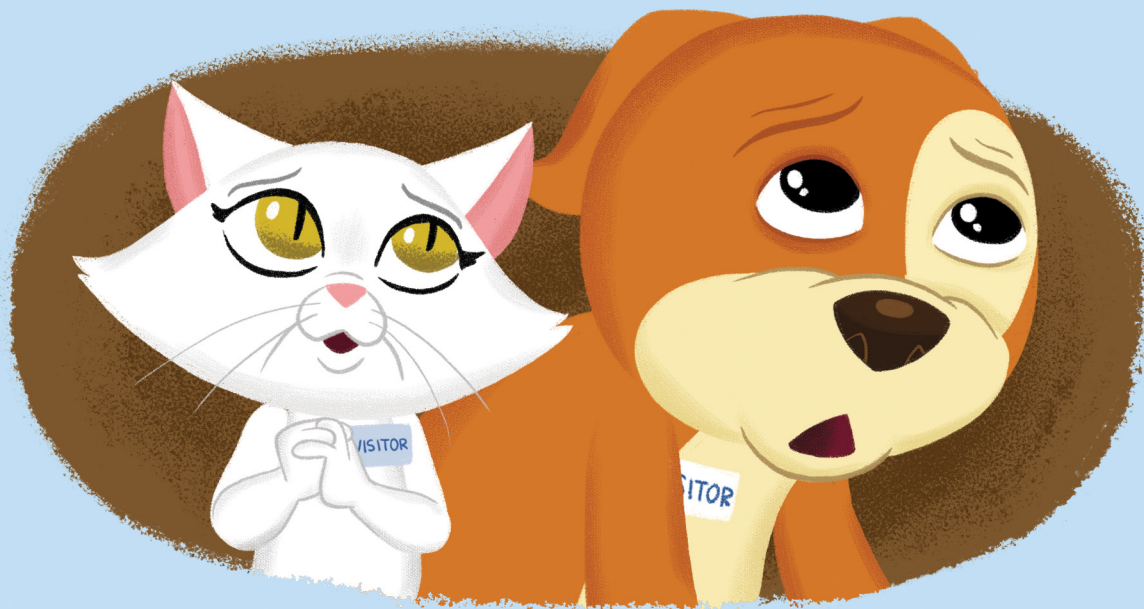
“Are you sad?”  
Otto’s tail dropped.



“Yes, a bit,” Sarah admitted. “I’ve been writing down memories from a very difficult time in my life. My family wants to understand what happened, but it is hard to put into words.” She paused, and then leaned in, “Have you ever heard of **the Holocaust**? I’m a **survivor**.”



The friends became very quiet. “I’ve heard about the Holocaust,” Otto replied. “I think my friend Dennis studied it in history class.” “What is it?” Smidge was curious to learn. “I can take notes.”

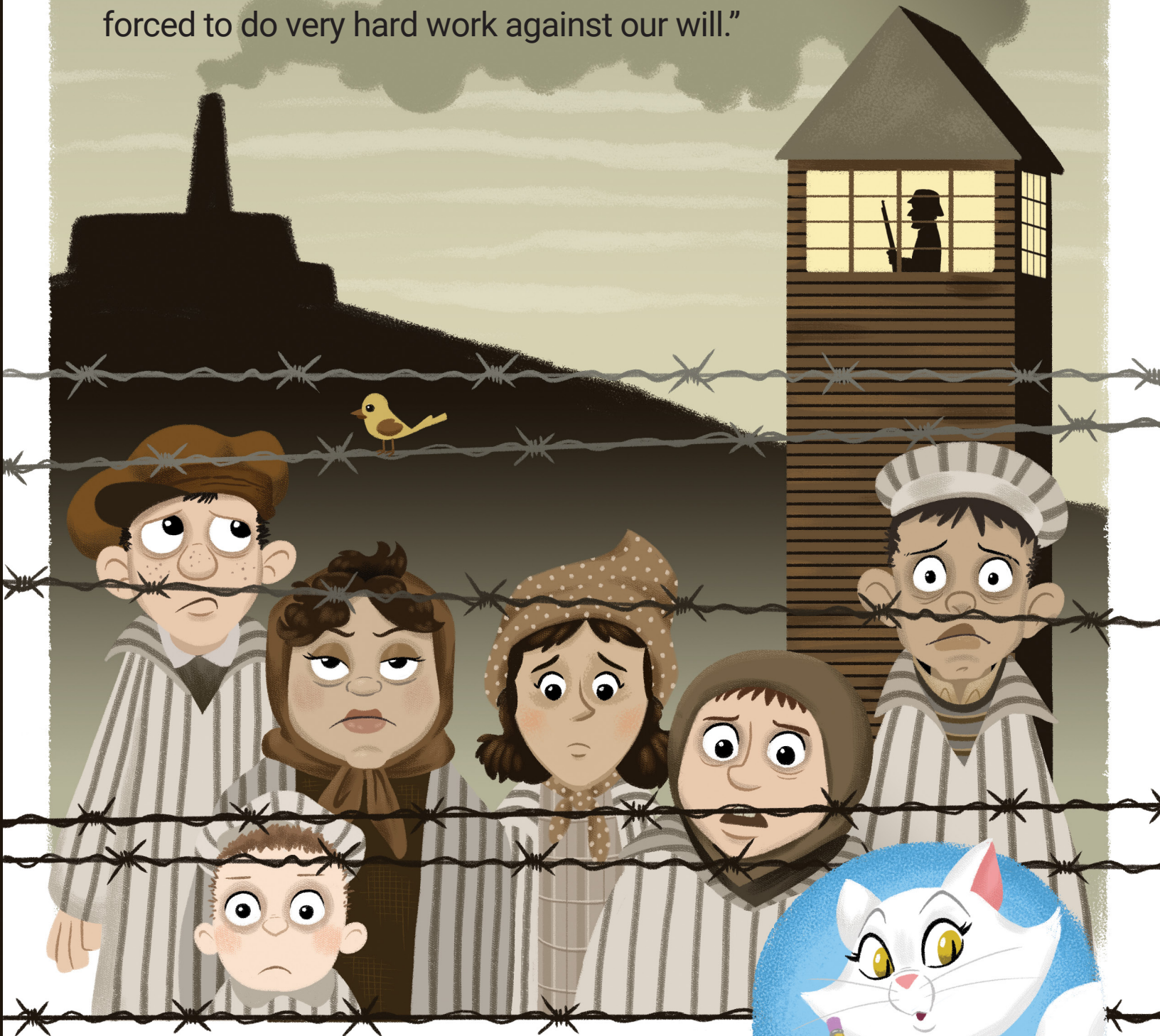


Sarah's gentle voice began to speak, "When **World War II** began in the year 1939, I was only about 11 years old. There was a powerful group in charge called the **Nazis**. They took control of Germany and wanted to get rid of people they didn't like, especially people who were **Jewish**."



"Are you Jewish?" Otto asked. He remembered that Dennis's family was also Jewish.

Sarah smiled, "Yes, I am. I grew up in Poland." She continued, "Back then, the Nazis took many Jewish people in my community away from our homes. They sent us to places called **concentration camps**, where we were forced to do very hard work against our will."



Smidge scribbled on her notepad. "What kind of work?"



“Well...” Sarah’s face wrinkled. “We had to move heavy rocks across the camp, and we were only given a small bit of bread to eat one time every day.”

The kitten stopped writing and gasped. “That’s it? You must have been so hungry!”

“I was,” Sarah remembered. “We didn’t have extra clothes or shoes. And, when it was time to sleep, we were crammed into bunk beds like sardines.”





Otto's eyes fell.  
"That's terrible. Why  
didn't you leave?"

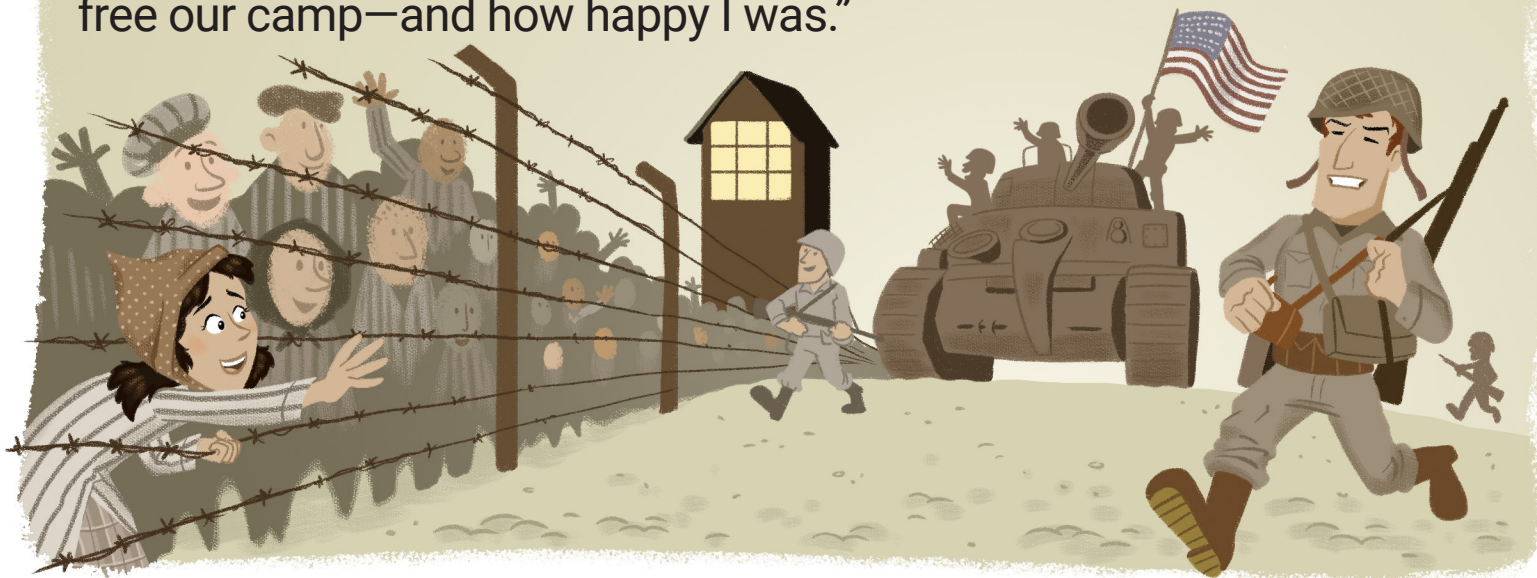
Sarah's eyes  
were now tearful.  
"No one was  
allowed to leave.  
And even if I could, I  
did not know where  
any of my family  
was anymore."

Smidge put her paw on Sarah's hand. "So, how did you survive  
that horrible place?"

Sarah took a deep breath and sat up straight. "I was small, so I  
was able to hide and stay away from people who wanted to hurt me.



“I knew that there were good people fighting against the evil that was happening. I remember when American soldiers showed up to free our camp—and how happy I was.”



“What makes you happy now?” Otto asked.

“Oh, everything!” Sarah’s watery eyes slowly turned to a soft smile. “All sorts of simple things make me happy—my own bed to sleep in, a piece of pie... I’m grateful for all the little things in life I get to enjoy.”



Smidge licked her lips. “Pie makes me happy, too.”



“Going through hard things can be difficult and scary,” Sarah replied. “But, many times, those hard things teach us to be even more grateful for the blessings in our lives.”



Suddenly, the sound of music began echoing from the hallway. Sarah’s face lit up. “Isn’t that lovely? It reminds me of when I first came to the United States. One of the first things I saw when I got off the boat in New York was a musician playing and singing on the dock.”



“I’m so grateful to live here in America now, where people can be happy and free.”

“You’re right,” Otto nodded.  
Smidge agreed. “We  
should never take it for  
granted.”

The music then stopped,  
and the friends realized...  
“We missed the concert!”  
Otto and Smidge jumped up.

“We need to find Dennis  
before he starts to worry! Thank you for sharing your story with us.”  
They waved goodbye to Sarah and dashed out the door.



“Thank you for  
listening.” Sarah’s  
eyes twinkled.

The friends leaped down the hallway, and...

**CLANG!  
CLASH!**

They collided with a volunteer... and a serving tray loaded with desserts! Pieces of cake and pie launched into the air and splattered onto Jeremy, Otto, and Smidge.

Jeremy shook his head and wiped cherry filling from his forehead. "Are you two okay?" he asked. Smidge tasted the chocolate frosting from her nose.



Dennis's voice called from down the hallway. "Where have you two been? You missed the entire performance."



Otto scrambled to clean up the plates and mess.

Smidge apologized. "I'm sorry. I just wanted to look for a snack. But then, we got lost and found a nice lady named Sarah who told us about her life, surviving the Holocaust, and how she's so grateful to be here. We were learning so much we forgot about the time."

"Sarah is really sweet," Jeremy added. "I'm glad you could keep her company. Talking with residents is a big part of what volunteers do here every day. Seems like you two are already naturals."





Otto was encouraged. “Before I came here, I was worried I wouldn’t have anything in common with the people here. I was wrong. Sarah reminded us that we share a lot of things as Americans, no matter what our age. We all enjoy freedom and should treat others with kindness and respect. We should also be grateful for what we have, even the little things.”

“Those are good lessons.” Dennis was impressed. “I hope you also remember to not wander off next time.”

Smidge’s ears perked up. “Hey Jeremy, is there any more pie? I have an idea!”



Sitting together around the small table in Sarah's room, the new friends laughed and shared stories over fresh pieces of pie.



"This has been my favorite adventure yet!" Otto howled.

"You say that every time, Otto." Smidge licked the rest of the filling from her plate.

Jeremy leaned in. "If you enjoyed your time here today, you should come back for our bingo party on Saturday." He pulled a colorful flyer from his pocket.

Smidge's ears twitched. "You guys throw parties here?"





“Of course!” Sarah interjected. “Jeremy keeps me involved with all the activities. My children and grandchildren will be here too. They’d love to meet all of you.”

The kitten grinned. “I’d like that. Volunteering here seems fun!”



Jeremy nodded. “I’ve learned that serving others brings a special kind of joy. It doesn’t matter if the tasks are big or small; using our gifts and talents to help people in a meaningful way is important.”



Sarah pointed to Dennis. "Speaking of talent, how about one last song before you go?"



Dennis stood up and cleared his throat. Smidge and Otto tapped their silverware like drumsticks. "And a-one, two, three..."



**"Ruff Ruff!"**





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**a VOLUNTEER:**  
**HONORING HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS**



# We Love Our Community

**Nursing Home:** A place where elderly people can receive special care for things they need help with, such as eating, getting dressed, or taking their medicine. There are usually skilled staff, such as nurses, who work there and keep the people safe and comfortable.

**Volunteer:** A person who helps others or does a job without getting paid. Volunteers offer their time, skills, and talents because they want to serve others and make a difference.

**Proactive:** Thinking ahead or trying to act before something happens. A proactive person gets things done and anticipates problems before they happen.

**The Holocaust:** A terrible tragedy that occurred during World War II, where Nazis tried to get rid of Jewish people and other minority groups they didn't like.

**Survivor:** Someone who lives through a difficult hardship or a dangerous situation.

**World War II:** A war that involved many of the world's countries from 1939 to 1945. During the war, the Allied powers, led by the United States, the United Kingdom, and the Soviet Union, defeated the Axis powers, led by Nazi Germany, Italy, and Japan. It is considered the most devastating war in history.

**Nazis:** Members of the German political party known as the National Socialist German Workers' Party. Adolf Hitler became the leader of the party in the 1920s and took control of Germany in 1933. The party collapsed when the Allies defeated Germany at the end of World War II in 1945. The Nazi government ruled as a very oppressive dictatorship, conquered much of Europe, and killed millions of people—including six million Jews in a tragic event called the Holocaust.

**Jewish:** Referring to the group of people descended from the ancient Israelite people. Jewish people follow the religion of Judaism, and they have often been persecuted throughout history.

**Concentration Camps:** During World War II, concentration camps were places where the Nazis sent many people against their will, including Jews, minority groups, and people who opposed Hitler. Many people who went to these camps died due to severe mistreatment, poor living conditions, and illness.



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**See you in  
our *next* adventure!**

- Dennis, Otto,  
*and* Smidge

**ABOUT**

# Otto's Tales

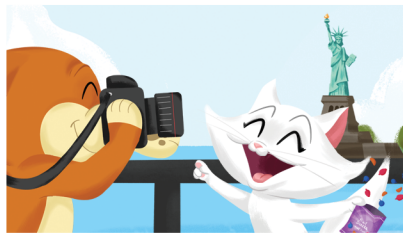
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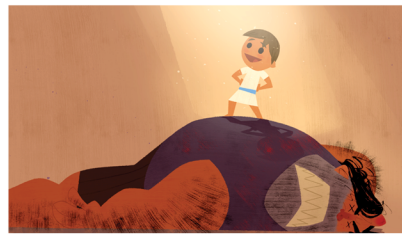
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