CHAPTER 1

For years now an old tree had been standing in the middle of a huge forest. The tree’s name was Greece and though being one of the smallest trees, it boasted of being green, sunny and full of life. And it surely was since a bunch of tiny creatures, a whole community of bugs, insects, animals and birds lived in the heart of it. There was a nest on every branch of this tree but also schools, streets, shops, everything that a small town like this could have.

Every morning adults went to their jobs and children were preparing for school. Miss Spider’s school, the best school in the area with excellent reviews from all specialists, opened to welcome its students early in the morning. Wormy, Buggy and Butterfly, all three inseparable friends headed for school, laughing and playing.

- “What’s the first lesson?” Wormy asked in a sleepily way.

- “Ancient Greek,” Butterfly answered, who was obviously the best student of all three.

- “Oh, no! Really? I've forgotten to do my homework in Ancient Greek and Miss Spider will be very very angry,”Buggy exclaimed!

- “It doesn’t matter! Try to copy my homework but hurry up! The lesson starts in five minutes!”

- “No, I don’t think so! It has already started! Let’s run to class before we are too late!” Wormy shouted and they ran immediately in the classroom, a minute before Miss Spider entered the class too..!

- “Good morning kids!,”the teacher said happily. “I know that today we had Ancient Greek but there was a little change in the school program and we are going to have a Geography lesson!”

Most of the students were relieved and put their empty notebooks back in their school bags.

- “Well, today’s lesson is quite important as I ‘m going to give you your notes for next week’s Geography exam!”

Everyone in the classroom was frustrated except for the nerd of the class who was happy to prove he knew everything.!

- “So, we can begin with the first unit! Start writing everything I say”: “According to scientists, Greece is the only tree in our forest. It is divided in many branches and..blah...blah..blah..

- “What if there were many other trees except for ours”, Buggy whispered as he was such a dreamer.!

- “Yes, it would be amazing”, Butterfly agreed, “we could travel out of our tree and have fun!”

- “When I grow up, I will get out of here and explore all the forest. I am sure I will find something interesting..ahh..!” Buggy added.

Suddenly, Miss Spider interrupted him strictly!

- “Children, I see that your classmate, Buggy, is very talkative today! Buggy, you must know that there are a lot of dangers out there that can harm you. Please return to the lesson and don’t think about things that are out of your age”, she said angrily.

- “Yes Miss, but…”, Buggy tried to explain.

- “ There is nothing to talk about Buggy, let’s go to the second unit”, Miss Spider stopped him abruptly. “ The only thing that we have discovered about the other trees on the forest is that none of them is settled , except the one WE live in and she continued until the bell rang .

As the three friends were walking back home, Buggy was trying to persuade his friends about his thoughts. Wormy and Butterfly weren’t sure about that but they wanted to support their friend, so they agreed and promised Buggy to help him explore the forest in the future.

However, Buggy was so determined to find more creatures and lands, that he finally persuaded his friends to follow him in a trip to the unknown in just a couple of days! So, they met in Butterfly’s house when her parents were missing to prepare all the stuff.

- “Why do we always have to meet in my house?”, Butterfly complained.

- “Because your parents are absent and your grandma is deaf! She can’t hear our plans!”, Wormy explained, as Buggy was filling a sack with sweets, candies, chocolates and fruit jellies to take with them. After a few days they started their trip in spite of the bad weather…

As they were walking they suddenly heard a strange noise. They wondered what it could be. They saw the police and Butterfly asked one policeman what had happened. He told them that an aircraft from another planet had landed in Greece and the problem was that no one knew the language of the passengers on this aircraft. Buggy was so happy and excited because his thoughts had finally come true!

Inside the aircraft there was a grasshopper.The grasshopper realized that the Greeks didn’t understand her language, and that’s why she used a sign language. She tried to tell them that she came from another tree to find out if there were any other trees in the forest just like Buggy was determined to do.. The Greek insects were thrilled just to learn that there was another civilised tree in the woods… And they were right!..

Within a few days Buggy, the Greeks and the grasshopper became friends.They were so happy to know that they were not the only insects in the woods. They were also very curious to know about each other , so they narrated stories about their trees ,their habits, their history and culture. Soon they realized that they had so many things in common and that there are no borders in the woods.

Buggy came up with an idea. He asked the grasshopper if she knew the way back to her tree.The grasshopper gave them instructions how to reach her tree.The three friends Buggy,Wormy and Butterfly asked the grasshopper if she wanted to join them to their adventure.They took the things they wanted,they packed a bag for the grasshopper and they started their trip.They managed to reach the bottom of the tree by jumping from branch to branch.

When they finally reached down they noticed that everything was too big,according to them. Indeed, powered by courage and bravery they started walking in the forest .It was still morning when they reached a place where many small insects were working.They were gathering food that they were placing it on a big sand building.Buggy was so happy that they found another culture,that he started yelling.They went silently towards the new insects and they tried to talk to them hoping that they would understand their language. Fortunately,the insects they had discovered knew their language and the language of the grasshopper and many other languages.Their tribe was called “ants” and the four friends realised that their culture as their language was a mix of many languages and cultures together. So it was easy for the friends to realise that there were many more tribes to discover. Buggy was the first explorer that had found a new tribe. Because the night had come,they asked the president of the ants if they could stay there for two days to relax, because they were tired. The president let them and they would stay one morning and one night.The period they stayed there they made a new friend,an ant, that wanted to join their team.The night passed and the morning came. So the 5 friends from now on,started their trip again.

As they were travelling on their bikes, feeling sweaty and tired because that winter day was unexpectedly warm, they stopped and lay under an aged tree just to take a breath and to cool down under its beautiful shade. There was complete silence when they suddenly heard the rustling of leaves and a melodious sound.They turned their gaze towards the branches of the tree and saw a flock of unusual birds.

“What could the name of that tribe be?” the grasshopper asked.

“Why don’t we ask them?” Buggy said. “ Oh no, at least not now please” Butterfly replied “ We’d better be quiet to enjoy the lovely melody of their song” she added and she started slowly dancing to the rhythm of the melody.The five friends and the new tribe started dancing all together in a circle while laughing and singing.

They forgot about their fatigue for a while. They had found a common language of communication, music and dancing.

What could be awaiting this newfound group of friends on the rest of their journey?

CHAPTER 2

“Do you like our song?” – one bird asked. It was a lovely bird with black feathers and a cute yellow beak. It seemed to be the leader of the flock of birds, because all the others stopped singing when he began talking.

“Oh, yes!” –Wormy answered, in his sleepy voice. “Your song is divine!”

“We have much more. Do you want to hear them?”

“Certainly. We are on a journey, but it would be wonderful to join you, listen to music and have a rest.”

So, the five friends sat again quietly in a circle and they listened to the birds for hours.

“Now tell us, where do you come from and where are you going?”-a small yellow and green bird asked

“I don’t know”-said the tinny ant. ”I’m going with them.”

At that moment, Buggy stood up and began explaining in a deep voice:

“Butterfly, Wormy and I come from Greece. Everyone told us at school that Greece is the only tree in the forest, but I don’t believe it. In my own opinion there must be other trees in such a huge forest like this, don’t you think? I’ve persuaded my two schoolmates to travel with me. On our way we’ve met the grasshopper and the ant. We are all determined to discover different places and different species.”

“You are quite right!. We, the birds, fly above this forest all the time. We know other trees and their inhabitants.” – declared solemnly the black bird. “ My mates are going to stay here, it’s time to start building the nests, but I can go with you, if you want. I’ve a very special tree to show you. I can led all of you there.”

“Great idea! What’s the name of that tree?”

“Portugal. It’s an amazing tree. Come along.”

Portugal was in the extreme part of the forest. The six friends had to travel days and nights to get there.

Finally their journey came to an end.

“Which place is this?” – they asked. – “It’s beautiful!”

“We are in Lisbon.” – Blacky, the bird replied. “It’s the biggest and the most important branch in this tree.”

Suddenly, a grey seagull appeared coming from the riverside. She was eating a small fish.

“I can see you are foreigners. Is it your first time in Lisbon? I’m the best guide you could ever met around here. I know every square, every corner and lots of stories.”

The group of friends was listening very attentively, so the seagull went on talking.

“Lisbon has seven hills where have already lived Phenicians, Romans, Barbarians and Muslims. It is crossed by river *Tejo* and it has a natural light as you can’t find anywhere else in the all forest.”

“The Portuguese have always loved the sea and some centuries ago they built ships and discovered unknown lands. From these lands they brought cinnamon, pepper and many other treasures.”

“They also built these magnificent monuments – *Mosteiro dos Jerónimos*, *Padrão dos Descobrimentos*, *Torre de Belém*…”

“But if you want to have an unforgettable view come with me, let’s climb up to Saint Jorge Castle.”

“Yes, Lisbon is really a jewel!” – Butterfly stated.

“I want to show you something else.” – said the seagull.

So, the group of friends followed the seagull and stopped at a neighbourhood with small, old houses with flowers on the windows and clothes hanged out in ropes. On the streets there were busy women sweeping the entrance doors or carrying shopping bags with vegetables and fish. The few men that could be seen at that period of the day were standing at the front door of a tavern drinking a glass of red wine.

“We are in *Alfama*. It is one of the oldest neighbourhoods in Lisbon. Here used to live sailors, craftsmen, tradesmen and *fado* singers.”- the seagull explained.

“What is *fado*?” – they all asked at the same time.

“*Fado* is the most typical, traditional and well known kind of music in Lisbon. It tries to express the Portuguese soul. The songs are usually about love and *saudade*.”

“And what does *saudade* mean?” – Butterfly wanted to know.

“It’s a word that only exists in the Portuguese language. It means that you miss someone or something so strongly that hurts your heart. That’s why people often say that *fado* is a sad song. Listen, that woman is singing!”

“It’s quite sad indeed, but full of meaning. And she has an amazing voice. Did you notice that she was all dressed in black with a hand embroidered shawl over her shoulders?” – the grasshopper said.

“Yes, it’s their traditional costume.”

“ And now, what shall we do?” – Wormy asked impatiently. He didn’t appreciate to be at the same place for a long time.

CHAPTER 3

The seagull broke in on the conversation immediately:

„My dear, as I see you thirsty for knowledge I could be helpful to you. My uncle, a great wise once told me about a magical land where the mountain is a friend of the sea , where the sun caresses the flowers and trees, and the songs embrace everything.

- ”Is there such a magical land?” the little cricket asked suspiciously.”

„Be sure of it, my friend. I trust what my uncle told me”.

- „Then we really must go there, the little explorers shouted with one voice.”

- „But how do we get there safely?” the little ant was getting worried .

- „A friend in need is a friend indeed, the seagull replied. As a saying goes in a country full of stories. You will travel safely on my wings.”

- „ Let's go, let's go, the impatient friends cried impatiently.”

When the sun hit the road, at the same time the fearless explorers began their journey to the new tree.

They walked and walked and they crossed over the seas, until they spotted a towering tree , with multicolor flowers that, from the top looked like a huge bunch of flowers , placed carefully into a pot with clear water.

The Seagull led his friends to the stem of the old tree. A blue water with smooth shores was kissing the golden sand.

- „God, what a huge river!” the little butterfly whispered hesitantly.

- „No, my friends, it’s not a river, it’s the old Danube, a river that springs from the Black Forest Mountains for centuries and in its way, flows through these lands too”.

- Oh, it's wonderful! But you haven’t told us what is called the tree that feeds its leaves from here, from the blue water! said the little worm.

- It's called Romania, my dear.

- I want to climb and discover this world, said the little butterfly.

- Agreed, cannot wait meeting new friends and seeing unprecedented places.

Together they climbed the tree trunk and met the old Romanian fortress. Its ruins were reminiscent of an ancestral culture, of brave and strong people. The Seagull spotted an old comrade on a wall covered with moss:

-„ Hello, dear friend! What a small world! I didn’t expect to meet you here!”

- „Kindest regards to you, my dear!” the nightingale replied. No need to wonder. We met once, away from these places, but this is my home.

- „Well I’d like you to meet my friends” the seagull replied. „Please come along and lead us to the most beautiful places from your home.”

- „With all my heart!

Setting out on their way, they reached a bright place, with many historical buildings, where history seemed to tell its own story.

- „This is the city of Bucharest,” the nightingale explained. „In the old times, the shepherd Bucur would walk his rich flock and enchant everyone with his charmed whistle. „

- „But what is called that huge building?” the ant asked. - The Parliament Palace, built by Romanians with hard work. It is unique in Europe and ,through its grandeur ranks on the second place in the world

-„Impressive! Well, I noticed a large garden with many houses as the stories of grandparents”, said little worm.

-„I know what you mean, answered the nightingale. That beautiful garden courtyard is Romanian Peasant Museum which is hiding some priceless treasures”. Roman village houses are made in all areas and keep traditional objects

- „I want to get closer to see the wonders you are talking about”, said the butterfly.

-All right, folks! Let’s enjoy together, answered the nightingale.

At the entrance, a little girl welcomed them with bread and salt

-Welcome! told her.

--Well I have found! I want to know better how you work, live or enjoy

. –Always, we are glad to be host, smiled kindly host. Then they showed, bread oven browned, the loom where the most beautiful flourishes Romanian costumes come to life.

Look, folks! shouted excitedly cricket

distaff resembles that one of grandmother. How many stories have been enveloped in the sweet sound of the spindle of my grandmother

-Everything is great! Continued seagull, I want to know more

-My dears, if you want to see something very special will lead you to the most beautiful castles in Romania.

- What is a castle? Asked wormy.

- It is a place full of history, a fantastic area where high an imposing building in which people live out of these lands, said the nightingale. Is worths to see even one of them, because you feels that you have traveled in a time of fairy tales with Prince Charming and Ileana Cosanzeana

-Who are they? I've never heard of them, called naive flyer.

- Hei! They are fantastic characters that today are found in Romanian folk tales. They remember the beauty, diligence, kindness and courage of the Romanian people.

- We want to dive into that world of stories, friends said.

-I will be your led, answered the nightingale.

After a while, they arrived in the tower of the courtyard of Peles Castle. Nowhere, they had never seen anything like this. The roof of the castle has plenty of towers that seem to pierce the sky. High windows watched the statues in the courtyard. Timidly they entered in the castle. Imposing paintings greeting down the stairs seemed endless. Imposing paintings greeting them down the stairs seemed endless. Red velvet, gold mirror frames, carved furniture craftsmanship have charmed everyone.

- You were right, good friend, said seagull. I've never seen anything like it. Everything seems cut out of a fairy tale.

-Friends, this is just one of the unique places in Romania. If you have patience I will show anothers. Sure, we are very curious!

-Have you ever heard of Count Dracula? Asked Nightingale

- Then, let's find out more about Bran Castle, where he lived this count whose name is actually Vlad Tepes.

In their flight they crossed the river line, they saw dark forests and mountains with snow covered peaks.

Winged friends descended in a mountain town and the nightingale led them to the castle. Each room of the castle reminded the Queen Mary or the King Ferdinand, or Vlad Dracul. Old stories one by one block remained small curious questions.

After the wonders of Bran Castle followed others: Sfinxul and Babele, Olt Valley and Jiu Valley, Brancusi's Endless Column, Delta of Danube.

Once on the Danube, in a boat, they floated towards Macronia where they discovered the imposing rock carving of Decebal, one of the founders of the Romanian state. Boat man, took the flute and sang an old Romanian Doina. Touched by the sweet sounds Butterfly asked:

- What is the name of this song?

- It’s Doina a song that tells the story of a fisherman with no luck, responded Boat man.

-'' Doina'' has sounds line and tells you the story even, if you don’t know all the words. worm occurs.

Love for the person you love and freedom is a feeling which finds an echo in every language of the earth, Boat man replied..

I do not know the word'' miss you'', but the song reminds me of the Portuguese song continued cricket.

-Yes, I think you know that word because... there is only in Romanian, but it expresses the sadness, the melancholia caused by the absence of a person loved, for example, explained Boat man.

- As'' saudade'' from Portuguese! noticed the butterfly.

-Exactly, said Segule.

-Oh, friends, I miss my home! A melancholic sigh cricket.

- Me too, but I still want to know other miraculous trees! said wormy.

-Me too! It said the butterfly. Continue the journey of knowledge of new worlds.

- Agree! They said together the explorers.

CHAPTER 4

And they set off on their journey again. After a while they met such a miraculous tree that the place they were in was fairly paradisiacal. While they were gazing out on the tree with great admiration, they came to their senses with the sound of “welcome” that is uttered by a white dove floating down from the sky.

“Welcome, fellows” said the dove “ Welcome to Turkey”. “ Thank you” said the group all together. The dove went on “ Here is Turkey. This country is surrounded by seas on three sides and you can enjoy the beauties of all four seasons here. I can’t wait to show you around. Follow me” He took them to a branch. “Here is Istanbul, the most crowded branch in Turkey. Look! Here is the strait, Bosphorus, which connects Asian and European branches to each other. And look at here! Here is the Maiden’s Tower. It has a really interesting story. Let me tell it to you! Once upon a time, there was a king and his beloved daughter. According to an oracle, she would be killed by a venomous snake on her 18th birthday. The king had a tower built in the middle of the Bosphorus so as to keep her away from any snakes. The princess was placed in the tower, where she was visited only by her father. On the 18th birthday of the princess, her father brought a basket that is filled with grapes but there was a snake in it, of which he was unaware. Upon reaching into the basket, the snake that had been hiding among the grapes bit the young princess and she died in the king’s arms just as the oracle had predicted. Since then, here is called as the Maiden’s Tower.” They felt very sorry to hear this story.

The dove continued his speech: “ Here is Topkapı and there … Sultan Ahmet, Pierre Loti, Basilica cistern …” While the dove was showing them around in an excited way, he noticed that his guests were really tired and he took them to a branch where they could rest. “ Look! This branch is Tokat. It is my home. Let me take you to my home right now.” said the dove. When they got home, the mother dove welcomed her son and his friends cheerfully. She invited them in and prepared some food for them. After they were full, Wormy and Butterfly fell asleep. The seagull was obsessed with the taste of zeytinyağlı yaprak sarması (stuffed grape leaves with olive oils) for a long while and he tried to learn how to do it. At that moment the grasshopper sang a nice song with his beautiful voice and everybody sang along with him. Then they all fell asleep. When they got up, they saw that there were olives, butter, honey, jam, börek (pastry), eggs and even more on the breakfast table. All of them were so delicious that when they finished the breakfast, there was nothing left on the table.  
  
Then they went on their trip. “ Here are vineyards. Grape leaves that we use while making sarma come from here”. Everybody looked around admiringly. Then they headed to Ballıca cave. Although it seemed dreadful, they liked it alot. They adored the beauty of the stalactites and stalagmites that stands in front of them. They expressed that it was the first time they had ever seen such a beauty. The dove wanted to take them to another branch. That branch was Ankara; the heart of Turkey.There was the building of parliament. After they spent some time in Ankara, they went to Çanakkale. “ Look! This is the place where people both cry and smile .Here you can find people from the other trees, as well...” said the dove and told the tearjerker of Çanakkale. They both cried and prayed for everybody there. Then they went to a huge branch that had a blue and a green side. That branch was called Black Sea. They picked some hazel nuts and ate. The seagull liked the Black Sea because there were lots of fishes. It got dark and they became tired. The seagull disclosed that he felt sleepy and they went back home

The following morning they had their breakfast and started sightseeing again. They visited the other branches in turn. İzmir “Clock tower”, Şanlıurfa “Balıklı göl” , Denizli “Pamukkale travertines”… And they finished sighseeing tour of Turkey. They met many friendly and helpful people. They liked the places where they visited and felt glad to see them but it was high time they had gone back. Of course, there were many other trees to be seen but they were both tired and homesick. Hence, they said good bye to each other and this time everybody headed for their own home. They had become accustomed to each other that is why they started to cry while they were leaving. They named the day when they would meet again. That time the dove would take part in the group. They promised to each other and started their journey. That was a unique experience. New places, new people, new tastes and so on. The most important one was they made lots of friends.

Where will be the next destination?