

*Agrupamento de Escolas da Boa Água*

e U R O P e

LAND OF NO  
BOUNDARIES



A Portuguese Modern Tale



# EUROPE, LAND OF NO BOUNDARIES

A Portuguese modern tale

What once was considered an ordinary happy family from Vaguizol, seemed today, gathered round the dining table, indifferent to the meal in front of them. All you could hear was a loud silence. Usually, they would be talking about their day, how it went, what had happened, what had changed... but today something catastrophic had happened in Vaguizol. FAO's boat, Zeus, that carried food and other first necessity goods for Vaguizols had unfortunately sunk.

(Figure 1)



Figure 1

This was shocking news to all the families because their survival depended on FAO's support.

Despite the hunger, Zuleika played with her food, paying no attention, and avoiding her parents' gaze. The peas slowly and patiently fell from her fork but without the joy of a girl that used to build mashed potato castles. Her mother cooked that dish three times a week and for the rest of

the days, a broth that used to have meat was served. No one knew the right thing to say. It was clear the situation had worsened.

Then Zuleika decided to eat quickly. After that, she locked herself in her room crying because of recent events. (figure 2)

Her parents Abdul and Saphira remained in the kitchen, both staring at the longtime empty shelves:

- Saphira, I am tired of trying to make ends meet. I can't provide for us for more than a week. I've sold the camels and hid the money. We must get from here as soon as possible. One of the camel traders that I do business with has privileged information. He told me they are preparing a coup d'état.

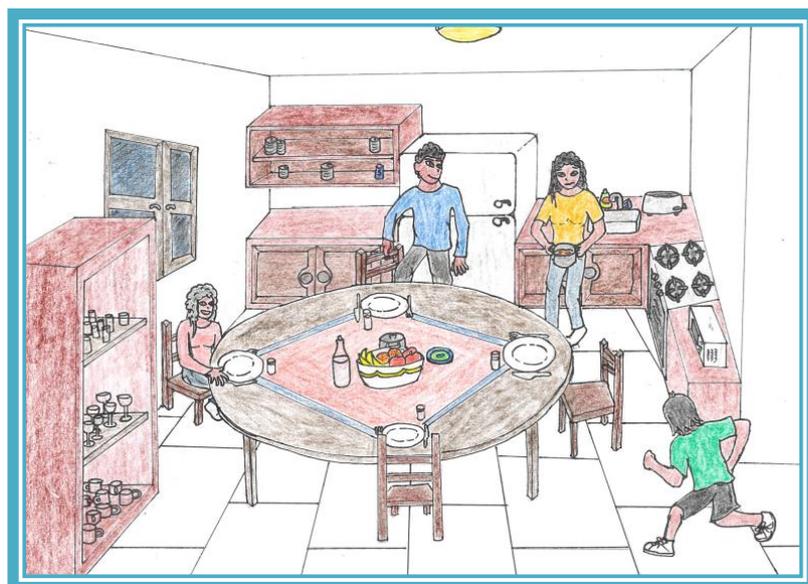


Figure 2

- We don't have money to invest and keep growing a plantation. Also, the soil is dry and nothing will grow out of it. - Saphira whispered. - We totally depend on what the ships bring.

Global warming, the ongoing droughts and the lack of food had completely affected their lives.

They were startled by the sound of another shocking news. Vaguizols were starting to protest in the streets, against the president. Some speculated that the head of state was involved in corruption scams, selling goods delivered by the FAO. The president had already explained that it was only a conspiracy theory made by the opposition. However, where there is smoke there is a fire.

At Nuperia city port, boats from different places docked. Abdul knew the dockers' chief since childhood and that he could trust him with the plan he had just devised.

That evening, Abdul told Saphira about his plan of hiding in the ship basement of one of the boats, Poseidon. He told her that the dockers' chief would help them. He had been paid using part of the money from the camels' sale. They wouldn't tell their children any of the details. This was the best option for the sake of everyone's safety.

The following night when they were ready to execute their plan, something unexpected

happened: The government had forbidden all Nuperians to leave their homes. Martial law was declared. (Figure 3)

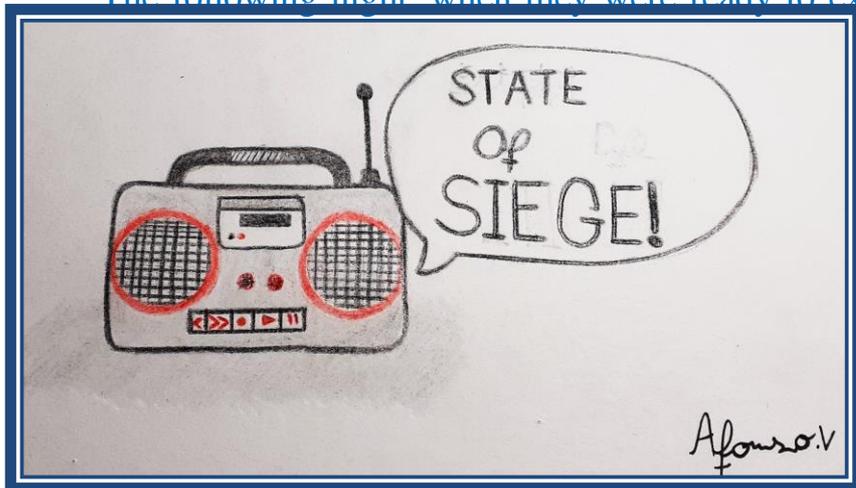


Figure 3

On the third day of curfew, Saphira woke up around two in the morning with a bad omen. In her chest was the feeling of fear and the notion that, at any time, armed soldiers would barge in and take her husband. Abdul woke up startled, and after listening to his

wife he set the plan in motion. He knew of his wife's gift of premonition. He knew she had the ability to foresee dangerous situations.

They woke their children that looked back at them with a mix of fright and confusion in their eyes.

While they were walking along the narrow and tortuous streets on their way to the port, they could hear their old friends screaming, doors banging, windows being shattered, and the sound of police sirens, as well as deep loud frightening voices. Suddenly, all hell broke loose. Abdul felt a tightness in his heart, looking at his terrified children. They couldn't understand what was happening nor the danger they were in. Saphira just stifled her cry. When they got to the port, Abdul noticed that the dockers were inland, busy with the supplies. Taking advantage of the situation, they sneaked into the boat. (Figure 4)

They noticed a small door and guessed it led to the ship's basement. Saphira grabbed the children and took them inside, hiding in a corner. Abdul put his arms around his family and all

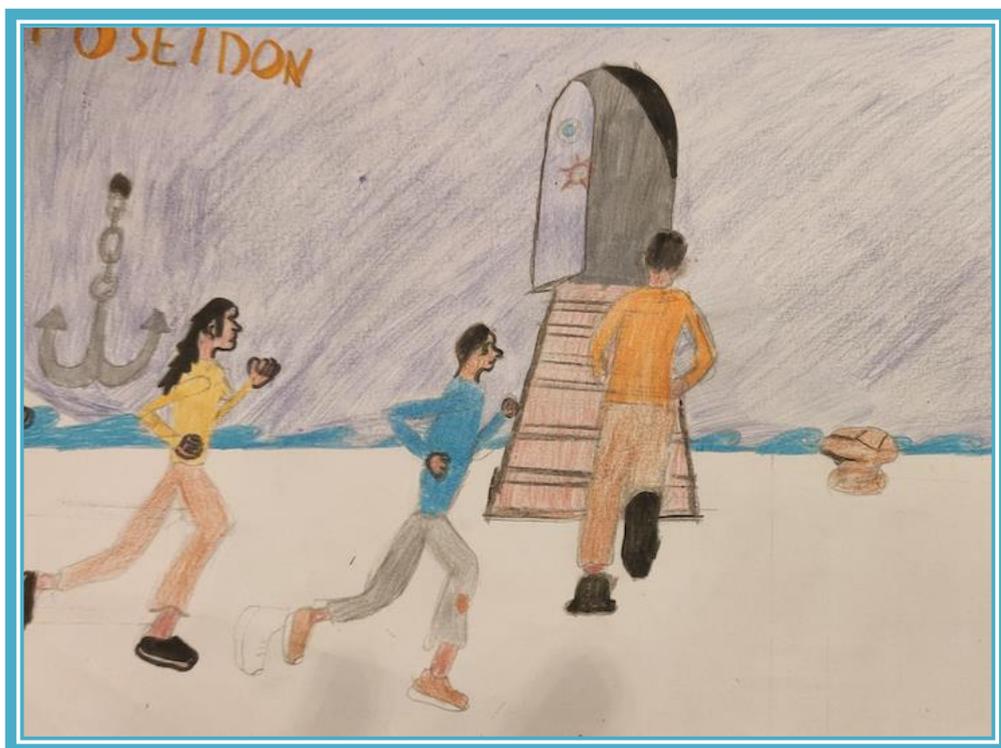


Figure 4

you could hear were the young ones' muffled cries. Meanwhile, the Poseidon's commander Nikita was talking to Stefan about vegetables:

- Come on Stefan, I've told you this a thousand times. Tomatoes are vegetables! - Nikita sighed.

- And for the last time, Nikita, tomato is a fruit! - Stefan repeated, with absolute conviction.

At that moment, a docker got to the bow and

alerted them saying the boat was ready to set off. Nikita went to the control bridge and Stefan went back to his medical post. The Ship's commander began to steer it to the Suez Canal and then to the Mediterranean Sea. The journey had begun.

Jamil was feeling bored and had no idea what was happening, the only thing he wanted was to play. As the ship crossed the Suez Canal, Abdul felt sicker and sicker due to dehydration and lack of food. (Figure 5)

Saphira watched her family very closely. She could feel danger was nearby but she didn't know what to do. It seemed as if all the solutions for their problems were rapidly erased and forgotten when she

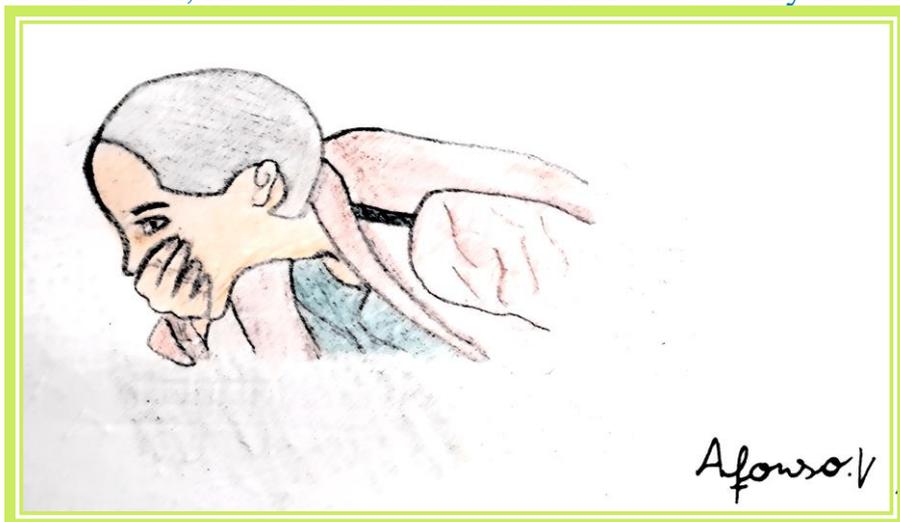


Figure 5

looked at her sad family. Her emotions took a hold of her.

A few moments later, they were startled by the ship's rocking movement. Jamil tucked closer to his mother, wanting to feel the love and comfort he so desperately needed.

- Mom...dad... I'm scared! - Zuleika whispered, terrified.

- Don't be afraid, honey. Everything is going to be just fine. – But Abdul didn't know if he believed his own words.

Once again, silence settled over the family, but it was quickly interrupted by a raging cough from dad. Everyone looked and wondered what could be wrong with him as the ship began to shake again.

- Well, this commander doesn't know what he's doing...- whispered Saphira, trying to clear the air.

The days went by slower and slower. Saphira woke up and saw her pale husband, covered in sweat and breathing fast. She placed her hand on his forehead and realized he had an unusual temperature. Without thinking, she opened the basement door and jumped towards the stairs in search of help. She tripped on someone lying on the floor, who seemed to be looking at the stars. (Figure 6)



Figure 6

His name was Yan, a war journalist that had escaped Vaguizol and its government's claws. They both stared at each other in shock. Yan decided to break the silence:

- What's your name? Are you Nikita's friend?

- Nnn..no. I need your help right now! My family and I have escaped from Vaguizol and my husband is getting sicker! I need your help! – Said Saphira in a panic.

Yan was surprised. How could an entire family escape from Vaguizol? He had been able to get out, but that was only possible because he was acquainted with and helped by Nikita and Stefan. Suddenly he felt the strange, cold woman's hand pulling him into the ship's basement.

The sight of the whole family on the floor was heartbreaking for Yan. He had worked in similar stories, but this one had touched his heart.

- I know exactly who can help you! What an odd coincidence! - the journalist said.

- Who? Tell me, please, we're desperate! Who?- Saphira insisted.

- Ozan, Savora, the two of you, come here! - Yan shouted.

You could hear both men's heavy steps on the ship. Two blue helmets came into the ship's hold. When they realized what was going on, they immediately went into action. Many years of experience with this kind of cases prompted a swift intervention. They began to treat the weak and tired family, first Abdul and then everyone else.

Meanwhile, Yan contacted his longtime Portuguese friend, who worked in the Foreign Office and could facilitate the family to go through the BCS (Border Control Service). Portugal was known for making foreigners, refugees in particular, feel extremely welcome. So, with the blue helmets' help, the family was convinced that this was their best destination.

The family's arrival in Portugal wasn't an easy process. They weren't really successful at fitting in. And it wasn't just the fact that they couldn't speak Portuguese; their ways and habits were also very different. It was difficult but they had already gotten so far, they couldn't give up now. Slowly, they began to fit in. Both parents found new jobs. Abdul used his skills as a salesman and opened a small shop.

Saphira did a lot of research and came up with a solution to the problem of droughts in Portugal. (Figure 7)

Her idea was quite simple; however, it needed much work. She designed a machine that could alter the chemical components in water, turning non-drinking water into potable water. This idea was well received by the Portuguese, as their country was facing serious long-term and devastating drought consequences, and this would be a big help, not just for the Portuguese people but also for the people of Vaguizol..



Saphira was still worried. Although she had a job, her kids, especially Zuleika, wasn't fitting in well at school.

She pretended to be happy, but her mother could see the sadness in her face and knew Zuleika missed her country very much, and this was breaking her mother's heart.

At school, she set herself apart from her peers and she was filled with grief. Saphira was called by the principal several times because her daughter's behavior worried her teachers. In Zuleika's mind, her life was in Vaguizol. She used to watch her peers and thought about how nice it would be if she could have her friends with her.



Figure 8

One day, when she least expected, she was invited to a school talent show. Encouraged by her mother and reminded that she had an amazing voice, she not only went but she also enrolled in the singing competition. She went up on stage, closed her eyes and started to sing a Vaguizolan nursing rhyme. (Figure 9)

Silence took over the room and, in the end, it almost came down with the applause and the whistling of a pleased crowd. They had discovered a talented girl with a wonderful voice. Zuleika smiled and tears of happiness rolled down her cheeks. She had found her way.

THE END



Figure 9

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**Fig. 7** - <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/11/1078592>

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