



# Embracing European Values Through Tales



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***AUTHORS:***

***Elena-Cristina POPESCU, Georgeta-Gabriela UDREA, Cristina Blaga,  
Cătălina TARAN, Cătălina NENIȚĂ, Ludmila TOMAȘEVSKI***

***ILLUSTRATIONS:***

***Valeria GANIBANI, Alissia UDREA***

***TWINKLE, TWINKLE,***

***LITTLE STELA***

*Twinkle, twinkle, little star*

*Bravely wander near and far...*

Once upon a time, in a faraway country named Liberta, there ruled a rather oppressive emperor, who made his people live only by his rules. Keeping his kingdom closed and disconnected from the other realms, he did not allow that his subjects might have different opinions, expectations or behaviours. Not to pay with their life, people had no other choice but to live within the limits imposed by their ruler.



The emperor, whose wife had died a long time ago, was left with nothing but one daughter, the beautiful princess Stela. As he loved her very much, he kept her within the surroundings of the palace. Stela could never leave; as a matter of fact she never felt the urge to leave, as she completely trusted her father who repeatedly said their kingdom was the whole world and nothing ever existed beyond it. So, the sweet and innocent princess, in spite of growing up in such a limited space, kept her happy, joyful and compassionate nature. As a little girl, she would spend her time inventing and playing funny games with her servants or reading from her very few tale books.



Yet, her adolescence got somehow gloomy, as she kept having the same dream every night: it seemed that a gorgeous fairy, dressed in colourful dresses, completely different from the grey ones worn by the women of her country, appeared in her face from nowhere and whispered a strange song to her ear. It sounded like that (Lady Gaga and Bradley Cooper, *Shallow*):

*Tell me something, girl,*

*Are you happy in this prison world?*

*Or do you need more?*

*Is there something else you're searching for?*

*Don't stay here!*

*There are so many places that you need to see!*

*Go, be free!*

*Embrace this big world and love its diversity!*





At the beginning, she would wake up in fear right after that, remaining completely bewildered, without understanding anything from the message of the song, but as time went by, especially after she had accidentally heard the servants speaking about the immensity of the real world, she would hear herself singing back to the beautiful fay:

*Tell me something, fay,*

*Is it dangerous to go this way?*

*My father believes that*

*The big world's just a place of greed and theft,*

*Where I'd be*

*Mistreated, hurt and placed down on my knee*

*Cause you see*

*It's never a good thing to set yourself free!*

This part confused her even more because her father had always told her that there lied nothing beyond their land, there existed no other king nor other princess in this world but them. So, how could the world be bigger than that? How could people mistreat and hurt their only princess? There had to be a mistake... Yet, the fay would go on singing:

*Oh, you poor soul,*

*You have lived so far in a deep hole...*

*Step out of this jail!*

*You'd be surprised to know you're not that frail!*

*Freedom's your right*

*Your right to live, to love, to follow your own heart...*

*Be brave and smart*

*As long as you choose wisely you will be alright!*

Mystified by the obsessive dream, one day Stela asked her father about it. At that moment, she was surprised to find out that the dream was telling the truth, while her father had kept her in a lie for such a long time: the world was so much more than Liberta but it was populated by evil creatures who would take advantage of her kindness and innocence; they would either corrupt or break her down; she could only be safe and saved within the thick walls of Liberta. Though for the first time widely awake, Stela fought back in the singing voice of her dream (Pink Floyd, *Brick in the Wall*):

*I don't need no limitation*

*I don't need no strict control*

*No prison brick walls in my life now*

*Father, let me free my soul!*

*Hey, tyrant, let me free my soul!*

*I will strive to be more than a brick in your wall.*



So far it has remained unknown what weighed more: either the strength of her voice or the determination of her mind, alongside the unstoppable outburst of so many oppressed subjects. The fact is that the tyrant king was defeated: he opened the iron gates of his kingdom and watched helplessly his people leave. He only had the power to tell his daughter, the first to leave Liberta, a few sorrowed words:

``My dear, freedom is both a blessing and a curse! It tempts you with the sweetness of choice, but it empowers you with the weight of responsibility! I thought it was my duty to protect you from it! It is clear enough I have failed. Be careful when you embrace it not to let yourself controlled by it! Freedom is the most difficult lesson one can learn!``

But Stela was already too far in the voyage of her life to hear her father's feeble words. With her eyes wide opened, Stela was embracing everything that the big world had to offer: beautiful, unknown colours, diverse, magical sounds, different landscapes and mysterious people...

For the first time in her life, her curiosity was pleased and her craving for new things was nourished. And she kept on going for endless days, smiling like a child when he sees for the first time the mother's face, until, one night, she stopped to rest in a green valley. After a peaceful sleep, she found herself lying next to a little, blonde girl, who, curiously, was not looking at her at all. On the contrary, she seemed to admire her own strangely yellow appearance in a rather big mirror for her to carry outside the house. To Stela's surprise, the girl, who kept ignoring her, started talking:

``Hello, Stela from Liberta! Do you like what you have seen so far from this big world you want to discover?``





Without waiting for any answer, which could not come promptly anyway, as Stela was mutely confused, she continued in a rather bossy voice: ``Come with me! I'll show you more!`` and friendly grabbed her hand.

Though she found herself walking without realising, Stela dazzled and asked:

``Wait? Who are you? How come you know my name and where I come from?!``

Looking for the first time into our princess's eyes, the little girl answered:

``You'll be surprised to find out how many things I know about you... Yet, you needn't worry; this is all to your benefit, not to your harm! Come along!``

Soon they arrived in a small, strange village. It seemed strange because it had houses in all possible shapes and colours. Some of them were round, others were triangular or square. Some even looked like pyramids. As for the colours, it was overwhelming for Stela, who had been living in a constantly grey world, to see such a chromatic diversity: red, yellow, pale blue, dark blue, pink, purple, orange... these inhabitants had no limits in painting their homes. The little girl guessed her confusion: ``Do you like our village? Its name is Empatia (= empatie, in Macedonian). I know it looks curious to you, but we are very proud of its diversity. As a matter of fact, this is what defines us. We find happiness in variety.``



Stela could not take her eyes off the stunning surroundings. Apart from the polychromatic buildings, she couldn't help noticing that the colour distinctions applied to humans also: her recent companion had blonde hair and yellow complexion, but as soon as she arrived in the village, red, blue, green, white or black people started to appear. And I don't mean only their clothes, or their hair; their whole being, from head to toe, was colourful. Moreover, they all had different sizes: for the first time in her life, she saw extremely tall people walking next to curiously short ones. Except for herself, no one seemed surprised of these constant variations; on the contrary, the inhabitants, who all appeared to know one another, behaved in a very civilized way. Stela couldn't help staring:

``I reckon you are shocked to see so many other colours exist besides grey. Aren't they beautiful?``

“Yes, they are amazing... but tell me, isn’t it difficult for you to live together since you are all so different? My father used to say that, in order to get along and coexist peacefully, people should be the same. Differences always lead to conflicts.”

“This would only be true if we didn’t make any effort to understand one another’s uniqueness. Happily, this is not our case! See, our village is blessed. We are not rich, nor famous, but we have a very special gift!”, said the little girl pointing to her mirror. In fact, Stela instantly realised that those completely different people she saw had something identical: they all carried mirrors, either in their hands or in their pockets. Then she looked in the mirror that her friend had offered her.

Well, if you expect, as she also expected, to see her own beautiful princess face in the mirror, you are all wrong: although she projected the bizarre object toward her face, Stela saw the little girl's reflection in the mirror. And, to make it even more weird, she felt, at the same time, a wave of understanding illuminating her inside: it became clear, out of nowhere, what was in the little girl's head and mind. It felt like Stela was not Stela anymore; her body was filled with her friend's being and she could experience her most intimate thoughts and feelings. She knew now that Camo (pr. Samo=unica, in Macedonian) was a nice twelve year old, whose main wish for that day was to satisfy Stela's need to see the big world. Camo completed:



``This mirror helps us know each other. And knowing means understanding and accepting the other, no matter how different he is from you. See, Stela, you, with your gloomy appearance, your pale clothes and your staring eyes, might have seemed quite strange to me, unless I had not looked at you through my mirror. The minute I glanced your reflection I realised your longing for knowledge, for discovering the world is nothing else but the normal consequence of your former imprisoned life. Knowing that, I wanted to help you. You can see now why our differences don't alienate us; It's quite the opposite: it's fascinating to be able to embrace so many perspectives on life. It's also self-fulfilling to make the others' wishes come true.``



Stela was ecstatic: she spent a lot of time wandering in Empatia, trying to know and please as many people as possible. She gladly built a space ship for a little purple boy, she drew pink giraffes for his burgundy sister, she told the story of Adam and Eve to an old lady who worshipped mankind and she wove a nice, warm sweater for a grandfather who, being too white, was always cold and could not play outside with his ten grandchildren.

I don't remember exactly when, while looking at Stela through her mirror, Camo reminded that her big wish was still seeing the whole world and, after having offered her a magic mirror, said good-bye to our princess. Stela went on, sad to leave a good friend and a magical place, but eager to embrace whatever life kept in store for her.



She walked for many days and nights, she slept under the blue sky, she faced heavy rain and burning sun, she bathed in free waters and she ate what she could find along the way. Yet, tired of walking and of being on her own, Stela stopped at the first settlement that she came across. This one seemed to be bigger than Empatia and, definitely, much bigger than her Liberta. She entered cautiously, not knowing what kind of people she might find, still fearing that her father could be right about the mean big world. At the same time, her curious eyes didn't leave anything unnoticed; there were different kinds of houses: tall, fancy ones, or modest but neat ones. However, she could not, by far, observe the same overwhelming diversity that had stunned her in Empatia.

People also seemed nice; so nice that one middle-aged woman, holding a toddler, who appeared to be heading somewhere in a hurry, stopped and abandoned her own doings to look after Stela:

“Hello, dear! Are you alright? You seem tired and quite downcast. Come with me to my house! I’ll raise your spirit a little bit.”

“Thank you, but you needn’t worry about me. Anyway, you look like you’re going somewhere...”

“Yes, I am, but my business can wait. I can’t say the same thing about you... Come along!”

Soon, our princess, who – by the way – didn’t look like a princess anymore, as tired and shabby as she was, arrived in front of a nice house, neither too big, nor too small, but very inviting at sight. Her unexpected host opened the door and asked her to come inside.



But Stela couldn't take any step forward; she froze as she saw the marvellous carpet, woven in golden thread, lying on the floor in front of her.

“I cannot come in. I am dusty and unworthy to step on such a wonderful golden carpet. I cannot possibly dirty it. Could you, please, remove it?”, said Stela politely.

“Do not worry about the carpet. It lies there especially for you. Do come inside and I'll tell its story!”

Stela had no other choice, so she entered. Still, she tried to touch as seldom as possible the magnificent carpet with her dirty feet. Once inside, the nice lady invited her to sit and rest while she was laying the table. Once again, the shy princess felt sorry for her father's misbeliefs. If only he could see how beautiful and friendly this big world was!... If only he had the courage to discover and embrace it!... Her flowing thoughts were suddenly interrupted by the women who had just finished preparing the meal.



“Please, eat and while you do so I will tell the story of the golden carpet, which is in fact our national story. Our kingdom is called Sevasmos and my name is Filoxenia. We live in peace and harmony, we love and respect one another and we are blessed with a very wise and kind king. But, as far as I heard from the elders, it wasn’t always like this. There were times when people wouldn’t value respect and dignity, deceiving and mistreating one another. This happened before our king inherited his father’s crown. But it all changed in the day of his coronation; on that very day, after the imperial crown had been placed on his head, he announced his first law: every citizen in Sevasmos would receive a marvellous, golden thread woven carpet, which had to be put under the feet of any guest crossing the threshold of one’s house.



From that day on all people had to be treated with respect, hospitality and dignity. Lie, deception and theft were also forbidden. These are the rules by which we have been living ever since.

He also explained us why we should live like this telling us a true story from his childhood: one day, when he was playing in the throne hall, he heard a strong knock on the palace's door. Faster than most of the servants, he reached the door first and merrily opened it, inviting his grandfather, for he had been the one knocking, inside. But, innocent and careless, he did not realise that the floor was embellished with his father's most precious golden carpet, who had just received the visit of a very famous neighbour king. His father took great care of that carpet and would let no one but important statesmen step on it. Suddenly appearing from another room, he got really angry both with his son, with the servants and with his own father who had already taken his first steps on the precious carpet.



The old man was ordered to draw back and the servants were commended to replace the golden carpet with a normal, less valuable one. At the same time, the good child started crying, as he saw the sorrow in his grandfather's eyes. The latter could not help remembering that the golden carpet had been his generous gift for his son, offered together with the crown and the hope of placing a worthy successor on the throne. Yet, hurt by the son, the former king was honoured and proud of his grandson, who uttered through tears:

“Father, when I grow up old enough to wear the crown I don't want you to give me the golden carpet. I want this ugly one!”

The king couldn't believe his ears:

“What stupid things are you saying, child? What great king will you be if you want to inherit a worthless carpet instead of a golden one?!”

“Father, I think I will be great enough to make my own golden carpets. Instead, I want this cheap carpet to have something worthy of you when you come to visit me!”



Our king didn't mention how the story ended. Neither did he keep his word: whenever his retired father came to visit, he was greeted with a golden carpet. And so were all the other guests that happened to arrive to Sevasmos since that day...`

At the end of the story, Stela was full and filled with joy; she felt she had received food for both body and soul. She could expect nothing more. She only had to go on in this beautiful world, which was revealing with unbelievable generosity all its wonders and values. Naturally, she carried along the way a golden precious carpet to always remember the lesson of respect and hospitality.



After who knows how many days of walking through complete wilderness, she finally got to a human settlement. She stopped as that was her fate: discovering the world and its different people. But hardly had she calmed her curious eyes searching around, when a local man, with a white scarf around his neck, took her by the hand and said in a peaceful voice:

``They also sent a girl... The other two have just arrived. You are not too late. I reckon they didn't get to deliver the whole message to our king. Come, I'll take you to them!``

Stela tried to protest, but she realised she would waste an unbelievable opportunity. How else could she meet the king?... In no more than ten minutes, they got to the palace. It was not astonishing by size! As a matter of fact, even her palace from Liberta might be larger.





However, it looked peaceful and curiously opened; no high fences, no iron gates, just a normal, inoffensive door at the entrance. Without being stopped or questioned by any guard, they got to the throne room, where two people, who didn't seem to be local, were standing in front of the king. On the sides, lots of other people, all with white scarves, were watching.

``Beloved King, I found another courier. As she is a girl, she couldn't keep up with them.``

Stela realised it was high time to spell out the truth:

``I don't know who these men are. I am Stela from Liberta and I want to discover the big world. I mean no harm! Just let me assist! I want to understand the rules and values that you live by so that I can learn from you!``



“Very well!”, said the king and addressed to the other two men: “Proceed!”

The taller one started talking:

“Your brother is dead and the whole Guerralia is left without a ruler. We want you to take over our kingdom. Our great wish is to become citizens of Paz.”

“I was sure that my brother would die in war. Ever since our father divided his kingdom and gave each of us one half, my brother wanted nothing else but to conquer other realms and enlarge his territory. In vain had I told him it was better to live in peace than to lead your subjects to death...”

“We are here to tell you the truth: your brother did not die in war. He died at home, killed by his own people.

As a matter of fact, he was killed exactly by his own people, as there were no more living sons of Guerralia. They all perished because of your brother's ambition, fighting his senseless wars. The country is now inhabited only by local women and war prisoners: foreigners deprived of their mothers and wives who hated your brother more than anything else in the world. It was predictable they would start a mutiny and they would kill the tyrant as soon as they got the chance. There was no one to defend and protect him...`

Stela could see the grief taking possession of the king's whole being. She understood that his kind, peaceful nature was deeply troubled by such cruel news...

`And what do you want from me, king slayers? We live our lives minding our own business, hurting no one and taking nothing from no one. We are peace and modesty lovers. That is why we all wear these white scarves, so that everyone knows what we value and cherish!`

“This is exactly the reason why we also want to be your loyal subjects. We want to reunite Guerralia with Paz under your fair, peaceful ruling. We want to live next to our mothers, wives and children, and not fight wars we don’t understand. We don’t need large territories and foreign riches as war prays. We need peace and modesty. We need a white scarf!”, concluded the shorter messenger.

And they all got one, as Stela could happily witness. She also received a white scarf to wear around her neck and she left to put an end to her own mission, leaving all people of Paz, the old ones and the new ones, to live peacefully ever after.



After so much wandering about, Stela got to another kingdom, where all people seem to hurry somewhere. Curious, as we all know she is, the princess followed the mob and soon got to a public square. In the middle of it, a throne; on the throne, an imposing man. Just to be sure, she asked the lady next to her:

``Is this your king?``

``Yes, this is the witty, righteous and wise king of Prawo (=justice, in Polish). As today is Friday, he conducts his judgement in the public square so that every citizen may benefit from his wisdom. The trial is beginning!``

Indeed, the king addressed the two people standing in front of him:

“Who is the defendant here?”

“He is, Your Highness!”, said one of the men, who seemed to be a boyar, by clothing and appearance. He was pointing toward a poor, skinny peasant who didn’t dare to look up to the noble gathering.

“What are accusing this man of?”

“He is a thief, Your Grace! He stole this hen from my courtyard and now he shamelessly pretends it is his!” added the boyar.

“How do you defend yourself, poor man? Is poverty an excuse for theft?” asked the king in an angry voice.

“No, Your Highness, of course it isn’t. But I haven’t stolen anything. This hen is truly mine.”



“He’s lying, Your Grace! Look at him: he’s a pauper! He can’t feed himself, much less this chubby hen! Think for yourself: how could he have found enough food for it?” interrupted the accuser.

For the first time, Stela paid attention to the hen: indeed, it was a beautiful, yellowish, plump hen as she had never seen before.

“Let the man speak!” ordered the king.

“It is true! I am poor, I barely find something to quench my hunger. But this hen is all I have left: my children died and then my wife passed away, too. I don’t know whether it was poverty or broken heart. But at the end of her life, she found comfort in caring for this hen. Before dying, she made me swear I would take care of it. See, I am old and misfortunate; I don’t have many more days to live. But I would happily die of hunger rather than mistreat this hen.”

“Your Highness, he is lying. You cannot possibly believe this mendicant instead of me. I am a noble man!”

“Indeed you are. I know for sure you are telling the truth, for nobility does not match with lies. So, here’s my judgement: the peasant will give the hen back and will apologize to you for the offense. He will receive no other punishment for he is overdone enough. Apart from this, I would like to take a closer look at this special hen, if I may!”

“Of course, Your Rightness!” said the boyar and immediately delivered the hen to the king. This one studied it closely, turning it upside down, then called for his most loyal servant and whispered something to his ear. After he nodded, the king continued:



``It seems we have another legal problem. I had a mere suspicion that was confirmed by the chief of the royal poultry. Some time ago, a golden egg from the royal golden hen was stolen and could never be found. After a righteous research I realise that this beautiful, fat and yellowish chicken can only come from that stolen egg. As it has just been established, the hen is yours, which means you are the thief. You all know that stealing from the imperial assets is no ordinary theft; therefore the thief is sentenced to death. Dear boyar, I sentence you to death, certainly, not before the peasant apologises to you for his shameless offense! the king concluded to the boyar's horror.

``Almighty king, I confess: the hen is not mine; it belongs to the peasant. It's just that it didn't seem fair to me that a churl should possess such a beautiful hen. I know I am wrong and I'm ready to apologise to this boor, but he must die, because he is the real thief!``



``See, citizens of Prawo? Wealth is not necessarily honesty and the real nobility is not provided by birth, but by one's deeds! This boyar, although he has much more than he needs in order to live, wanted to deprive this poor man of his only possession he still has in his troubled life. There is no golden hen; there are no golden eggs in Prawo. There are only decent people and greedy, evil people. And we want to get rid of the latter, don't we?``

As the mob strongly approved, the king continued:

``I sentence to death you, miser, not because you stole an imaginary egg, but because you have no decency and humanity left in you! And, as I want you all to remember that we value golden hearts rather than real gold, my poultry chief you offer to each of you a yellow egg: it's not made of gold; it's not even a real egg. But it's a symbol of our genuine values: fairness and compassion for the ones less fortunate than us!``



Feeling more than fortunate to have been present at such a significant moment, Stela carefully put her yellow egg next to the other precious gifts she had collected during her journey and felt it was time to go back home. Her mission was over: she had discovered the big, fascinating world; she could prove her father wrong; she would share with her people all the knowledge she had gathered; she would bring them, as gifts, all the values she had adopted. To make the journey merrier, she thought she could sing to herself. She remembered a lullaby her mother used to sing to her when she had been a baby. She could remember some parts of it, anyway. So what? She could improvise... After all, she learned that life was so much better if you didn't know it by heart...



*Twinkle, twinkle, little star  
Bravely wander near and far  
Not above the world so high  
Like a diamond in the sky*

*But down here, inside it  
To feel its own heartbeat  
Shine in many different places  
And discover all world's faces*

*Be a traveller in the dark  
Light the world with your bright spark  
Gather knowledge and true values  
Fill us all with real virtues.*

Stela thought that, in order to get home, she would have to follow the same way, backwards. Yet, enthusiastic and light spirited as she was, she didn't realise she got lost. All of a sudden, she found herself staring at a very strange gate to a city, a city she hadn't visited before. In spite of her urge to get home, she gave in her curiosity. She could see it was not a proper gate, but some kind of a door, nearly two meter high, carved in the trunk of a huge tree, standing in the middle of the surrounding fence. Trying to peep inside to see what kind of city that one was, Stela noticed an interesting inscription, also carved in the tree bark:

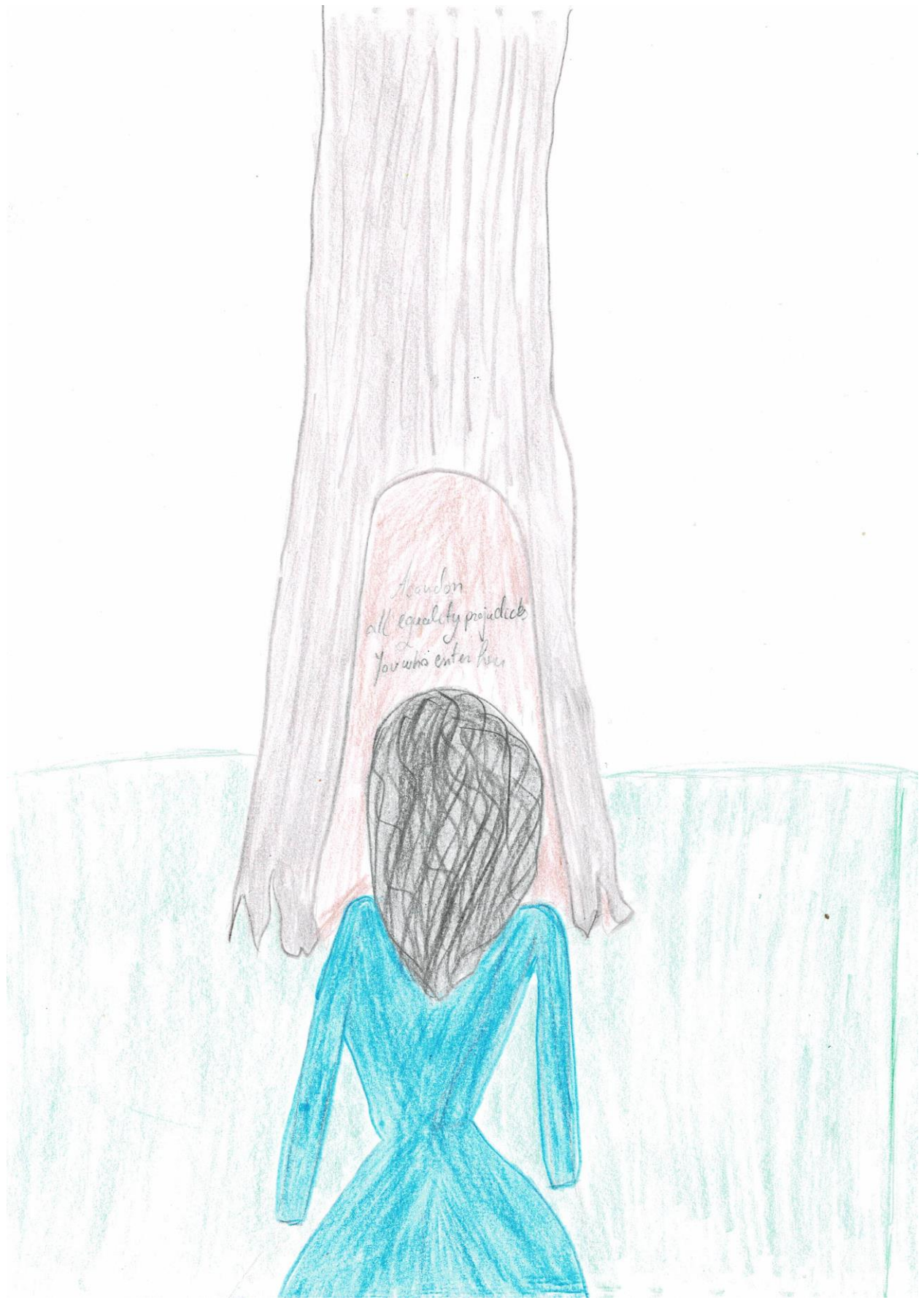
*Through me is the way to the city of wow*

*Through me is the way to the eternal bliss*

*Through me is the way to a great people*

*Abandon all equality prejudices*

*Ye who enter here!*



She kept reading those lines, because she couldn't escape the feeling that she had read them, or something similar, before. She thought of the few story books she had as a child, but she couldn't remember any name or any character. As she was tormenting her memory, the strange door opened and a robust male silhouette appeared:

``Oh, you are so short! If we were fifty years ago, you couldn't step inside. Thank God we live by different rules now! Come in!``

``I don't have time to come in. I must get back home. Yet, you made very curious. How come I couldn't step inside? What am I too short for?``

``I guess I could spare some time to answer your questions. I am the door keeper and my job is to invite everyone inside, to show them around and to make them feel welcome in Eşitlik. But we don't get that many visitors in this time of the year, so I'm not very busy. What's your name, short girl?``

``My name is Stela and I'm heading to Liberta, my native country, after I have seen beautiful parts of this big world and I have learnt many valuable lessons. Your city seems very interesting. Did you say its name was Eşitlik?``



``Yes. Come, let's enjoy the shadow of our sacred tree and I'll tell you all about it. The city behind this tree gate is indeed Eşitlik. But we haven't been living here from the beginning of the world. Our forefather used to live in the other part of earth, in Arkadaşia, if you've heard of it. They all lived in peace and friendship, until the day of the great famine came. When the food supplies severely diminished, the ruler decided that all married men older than 30 years old should take their family, leave Arkadaşia and find another place to live. Otherwise they would all die of hunger. In vain did they protest. In vain did they claim they were all equal. The decision was final and half of the population of the country was banished. They walked for long days and nights until they arrived at this city, which was, as incredible as it might seem, completely deserted. They never found out who had been living there before or why they had fled. The place looked almost like it does today: the big tree, the fences all around, the 1,80 meter door, carved in the trunk of the tree, they all existed back then. Only the inscription was a little bit different .``

“I’ve seen the inscription and it caught my eye. I think I had read something similar in my childhood, but I cannot remember exactly.”

“I don’t know about that. I only know that it was changed to this version after the Black Night, when our nation almost perished.”

“What Black Night, what other version? I don’t understand...”

“You will if you pay attention to what I’m going to say: as I told you, the exiled half of our people arrived in the front of this city. Thinking that God finally sheltered them, they wanted to come in. But the high priest read the inscription, which back then sounded like this:

*Through me is the way to the city of woe*

*Through me is the way to the eternal pain*

*Through me is the way to a lost people*

*Abandon all hope to enter here*

*Ye who don’t fit my demand!*

He was terrified and so were all the other compatriots who kept asking for a proper interpretation of the scripture. He studied it, he read it both in a loud and a mute voice, he sang it, he analysed the door, the tree and the fence and he concluded:

“My brothers, I think that God brought us here to be saved, but he wants to test our obedience and our honest love for one another. I think there is a great city waiting for us behind this gate and this fence.”

“But it speaks about woe and pain and the lost city” said one of voice from the crowd.

“Yes, it does, but only if the ones entering don’t fit the demand...”

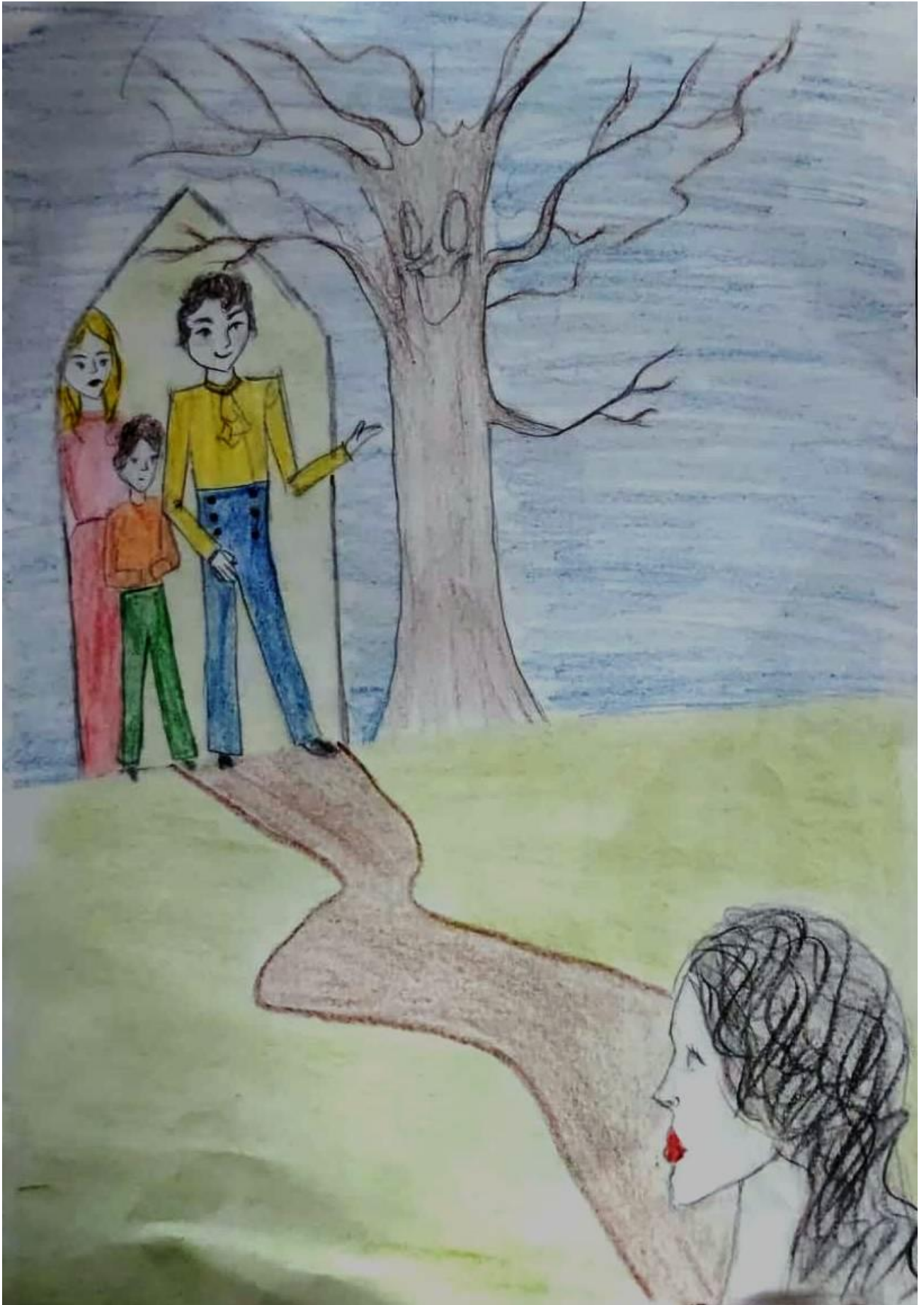
“But what is the demand? Have you figured it out, high priest?”

“Yes, I have: it says *Abandon all hope to enter here/ Ye who don’t fit my demand!*, doesn’t it? It refers to the ones that don’t fit the exact size of the gate.”



Stela was bewildered.

“I understand your confusion, but this is what really happened: they started measuring each person; the ones unequal to the gate, either shorter or taller, were not allowed to enter. No exception at all; not even for children and women who were unlikely to have the necessary height...”



“Oh, my God! Do you realise they committed the same wrong doing they had endured themselves in Arkadaşia?”

“Unfortunately, they didn’t learn anything from that tragedy. And you know how history works: it keeps hitting you until you learn your lesson. Only very few people got to be equal to the gate and entered the paradise, as they thought it to be. The others, including many women and children, were left outside. But they couldn’t stay unsheltered, in the open field, so they retreated for the night into a small forest nearby. As they were crying their misfortune, trying to set up a plan for the next day, they heard terrible screams coming from the city. It happened that, during that Black Night, as it has been referred to ever since, the few people worthy to cross the gate were attacked by a savage warrior tribe. None of them would have survived, if it hadn’t been for their unfit but brave and forgiving compatriots who came to rescue.”

“Have they learnt something from the experience this time?” asked Stela.

“Yes, they have: the very next day, the high priest invited everyone inside, changed the words of the inscription into those you saw today and named the city Eşitlik, because he gained a completely different perspective on equality. Then, they started together to reconstruct the settlement until they turned it into the paradise it has remained till nowadays.”

And it looked indeed, like a real paradise, as Stela could see for herself after having agreed to a quick tour. Yet, Stela felt an irresistible desire to return to her home paradise, to her own people, to her father. That is why, the kind door keeper showed the shortest way to Liberta, not before offering her a little twig from the sacred tree, to always remember that equality is much more than age or height.

Once upon a time, on the twisted roads of this big world, there was a beautiful princess bouncing and singing:

*Twinkle, twinkle, little star  
Bravely wander near and far  
Not above the world so high  
Like a diamond in the sky*

*But down here, inside it  
To feel its own heartbeat  
Shine in many different places  
And discover all world's faces*

*Be a traveller in the dark  
Light the world with your bright spark  
Gather knowledge and true values  
Fill us all with real virtues.*

*Twinkle, twinkle, little Stela,  
Lead your folk to a new era  
Light their way into the world  
Spread around them Europe's word...*



**THE END**