

Libris

Silvia Kerim

Respect pentru oameni și cărți

Fluffy

Illustrations: **Anca Giura**
English translation: **Florin Bican**



 **CARMINIS**
Publishing House

To my mother



Granny didn't live far – just a couple of streets away. Long streets they were, with beautiful houses on each side. The Little Girl had to walk down the streets, then cross a tiny park where a few benches painted green nestled into bright-leaved shrubs.

The Little Girl loved it at Granny's. Granny told her stories. The one she liked best was *Little Red Riding Hood*. The wolf sort of scared her, though – what if he managed to get out of the story somehow and, tempted by her kerchief dotted with little red mushrooms, came to the idea of nibbling on her? Granny baked apple pie for her and, out of soft wool, knitted her skirts strung with pointed little fir trees powdered with what appeared to be snow.

Mother would often send her along to Granny's. She'd take her the odd little something, a small basket of apples at times, or some balls of yarn... Yet each time the Little Girl was in two minds about going there. Much as she missed Granny, she'd keep putting off the trip because, she said, the way there bored her stiff.

She got away with it time and again all throughout winter.





Then one bright spring morning, having prepared a basketful of goodies for Granny, Mother took the Little Girl in her arms – she had just turned six – and told her, as she swept her fringe away from her face:

“You keep saying the way there bores you stiff. But the way is full of wonderful things and beings that would talk to you if only you knew how to watch them and listen to what they have to say. Just look around! Look at the houses, the trees, the animals and the flowers. Stop for a moment next to them and try to make out what they’re telling you.”

*
* *

The Little Girl set out. She carried her head proudly, trod carefully and, for the first time, tried to pay mind to everything around her. She suddenly found herself saying out loud:

“There! I keep looking around and there aren’t any wonderful things or beings in sight.”

“Wonderful? That’s me!”

“Yes? Hey, you’re nothing but a tree,” the Little Girl marvelled as she looked up at the baby mulberry tree.

“Oh well... I’m nothing but a tree. A baby mulberry tree I am. Well, not a baby any more, come to think of it... It was only yesterday that I turned five years old.”

“I’m six,” the Little Girl bragged.

“You might be older than me, but I’m taller,” the baby mulberry tree bragged in his turn. “And I’m wonderful because I’m alive, because I, too, am a being on the face of the earth.”

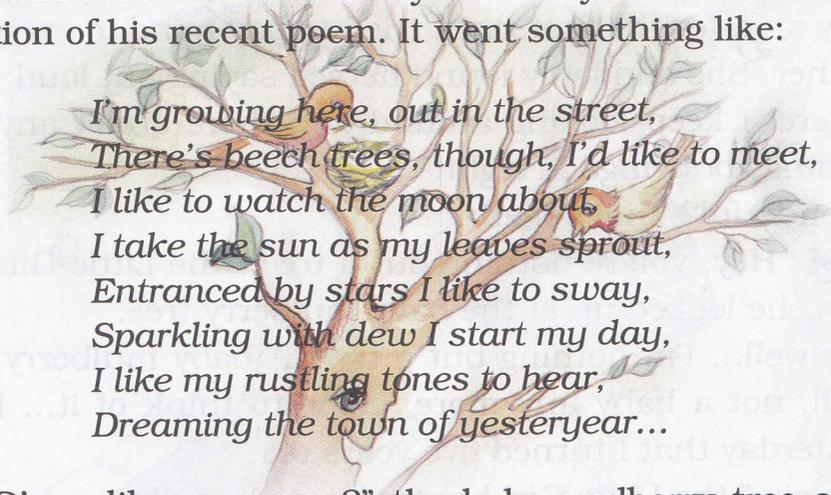
“You’re a being? How come?”

“I... I know what it’s like to suffer. I know, for instance, how much it hurts when children tear off my branches and my



leaves, or when boys carve their names in my tender bark with their penknives... And, oh, I know what joy is... I know what it's like to feel happy when, in early spring, birds fly my way from overseas and ask me how I spent the winter months, if I caught a cold, if my brothers and sisters are fine... You know, that sort of things... And they tell me how they've been thinking of me all the time, how they've been missing this street of ours. Oh, and I believe them. Believing them feels good. And anyway, birds are no liars. They're not at all like snakes. And there's one more thing... I can tell poems, too. Make them up, even. Just the other day I made one up. D'you want to hear it?"

Without waiting for her answer – the Little Girl was watching him in a state of mild shock having discovered what a great talker he was – the baby mulberry tree launched into a rendition of his recent poem. It went something like:

A watercolor illustration of a tree with several birds perched on its branches. The tree has a thick, textured trunk and sparse green leaves. Two birds are visible on the left side, and one is on the right. The background is a light, textured wash of colors.

*I'm growing here, out in the street,
There's beech trees, though, I'd like to meet,
I like to watch the moon about,
I take the sun as my leaves sprout,
Entranced by stars I like to sway,
Sparkling with dew I start my day,
I like my rustling tones to hear,
Dreaming the town of yesteryear...*

"D'you like my poem?" the baby mulberry tree asked as soon as he went through the poem. He appeared to be fishing for compliments.

"You bet," the Little Girl replied. "Still, I can't figure out what that *town of yesteryear* is supposed to mean. D'you know any town of yesteryear? I remember you saying you've just turned five... I'm bigger than you," she added with a touch of vanity, "and know of no town of yesteryear save this here town of ours."