



# THE ASHUG'S BALLAD

Story of an inexhaustible friendship between Emilia-Romagna and Armenia

Fable by Valeria De Domenico

Edited by Annalena Valenti and [mammaoca.com](http://mammaoca.com)

Illustrations by Giovanni Cavicchi

Translation by Emily Sfriso

- preface by Antonia Arslan -

# THE ASHUG'S BALLAD

Story of an inexhaustible friendship between Emilia-Romagna and Armenia

Fable by Valeria De Domenico

Edited by Annalena Valenti and mammaoca.com

Illustrations by Giovanni Cavicchi

Translation by Emily Sfriso



UN'AMICIZIA INESAURIBILE

ASSOCIAZIONE ITALO-ARMENA PER LA CULTURA E LA COOPERAZIONE

# Index

Preface _____	pag. 4
Friends' houses _____	pag. 6
The Ashug's Ballad _____	pag. 8
The steps towards Peace _____	pag. 27
<b>An inexhaustible friendship</b>	
“Antonia Arslan” Armenian-Italian school_	pag. 35
About the authors _____	pag. 37
Afterword _____	pag. 39

# Preface

## An enchanted Song from Armenia

With the levity of a fable and the development of a sapiential novella, *The Ashug's Ballad* offers us an original and lively story, from which many will learn something about very rich heritage of Armenia folklore, while many others will remember with nostalgia the high mountains, the fertile plateaus and the hospitable inhabitants of the small country called Armenia: what remains- today- of the great, wonderful kingdom which had in its center the holy mountain of Ararat, surrounded by the three big freshwater lakes called "The eyes of God".

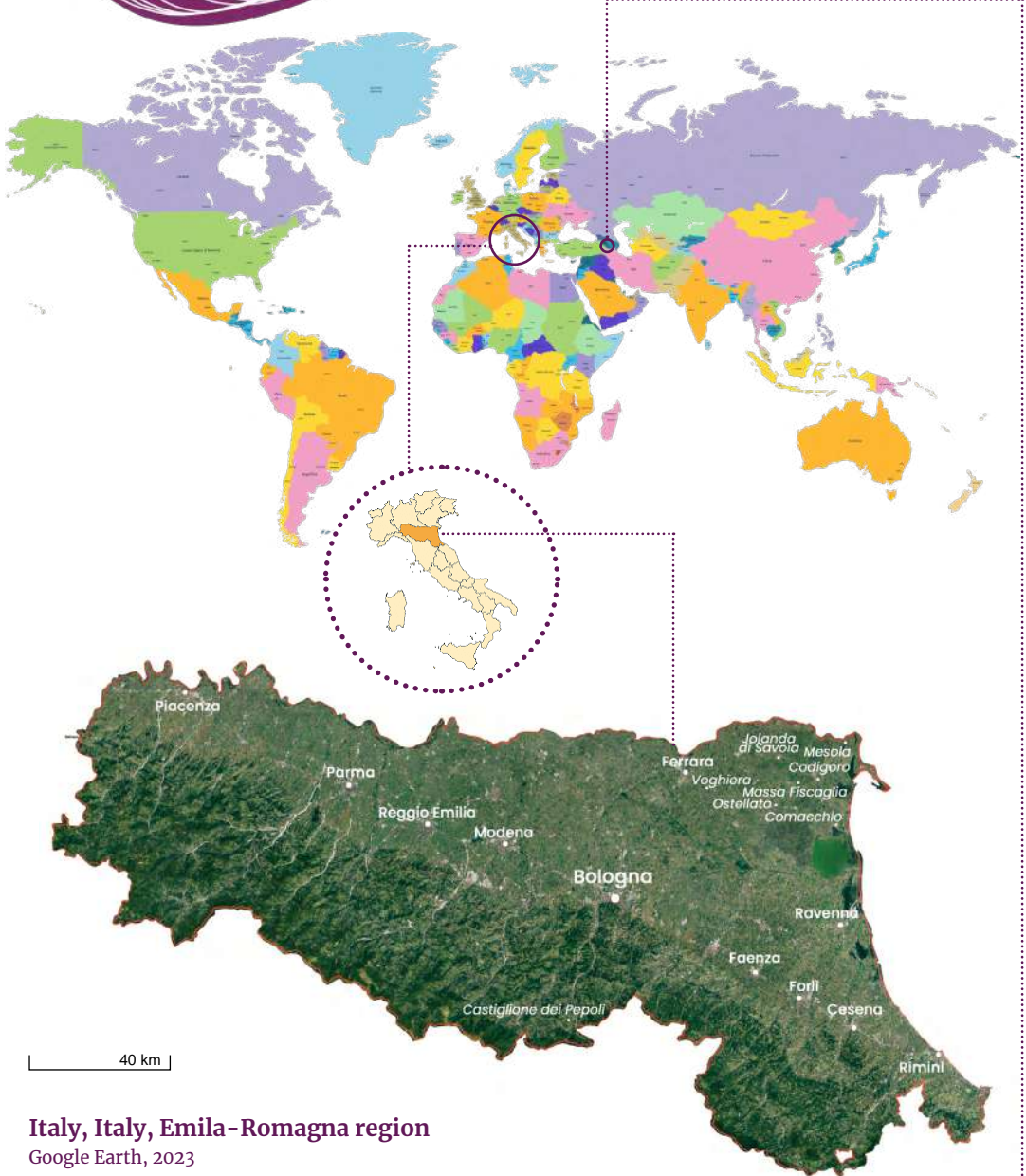
Seven brothers, a wicked witch, a king and a princess are the fundamental- and necessary- ingredients, that form the basis of the fable. But they are joined with elegant naturalness by the real protagonists who make it authentic and really fascinating: the Ashug, namely the aedo, the wandering storyteller who walks around the world with his apricot wood flute, the mythical duduk, from one house to another, from a court to a slum; and Kachen, the youngest son of a really poor family, the bravest. The Ashug gives the beginning to the story: he is the one who can enchant with his singing, and knows how to reward the good, and he will give the seven children of the family, with whom he has been taken in, the gift of the magic song and miraculous seeds, capable of giving birth to splendid orchards.

And here the vision of the sacred fruits of the Armenians opens up before the reader: apricots, pomegranates, grapes whose marvellous scent seems to be smelt in this pages- and the joy... From the enchanted orchards, an aura of festive well-being spreads everywhere. Everybody benefits from the splendid gifts of the earth sprouted from the seven little seeds; everyone rejoices in the fruits, the whole country prospers.

But here is the witch, who is heartless, or rather who holds and warms in her heart only an evil snake. Unable to seize everything, she takes her revenge by spreading cloudbursts, floods and an early winter over on that happy, little world. And -as in any fable worthy of his name- it will be up to the young Kachen go to seek salvation from the King of the Mountainous Garden, whom she has poisoned, and from his daughter, the sad princess. He will face a most difficult trial, the challenge of true love: not fighting with orcs or dragon, but peering into a woman's heart, beyond the seductive beauty of the features. And the story ends as it must in all Armenian fable (it does in my *Book of Mush*), with the narrator's blessing: "*May three apples fall from the sky, one for those who narrated, one for those who listened and one for the whole world*".

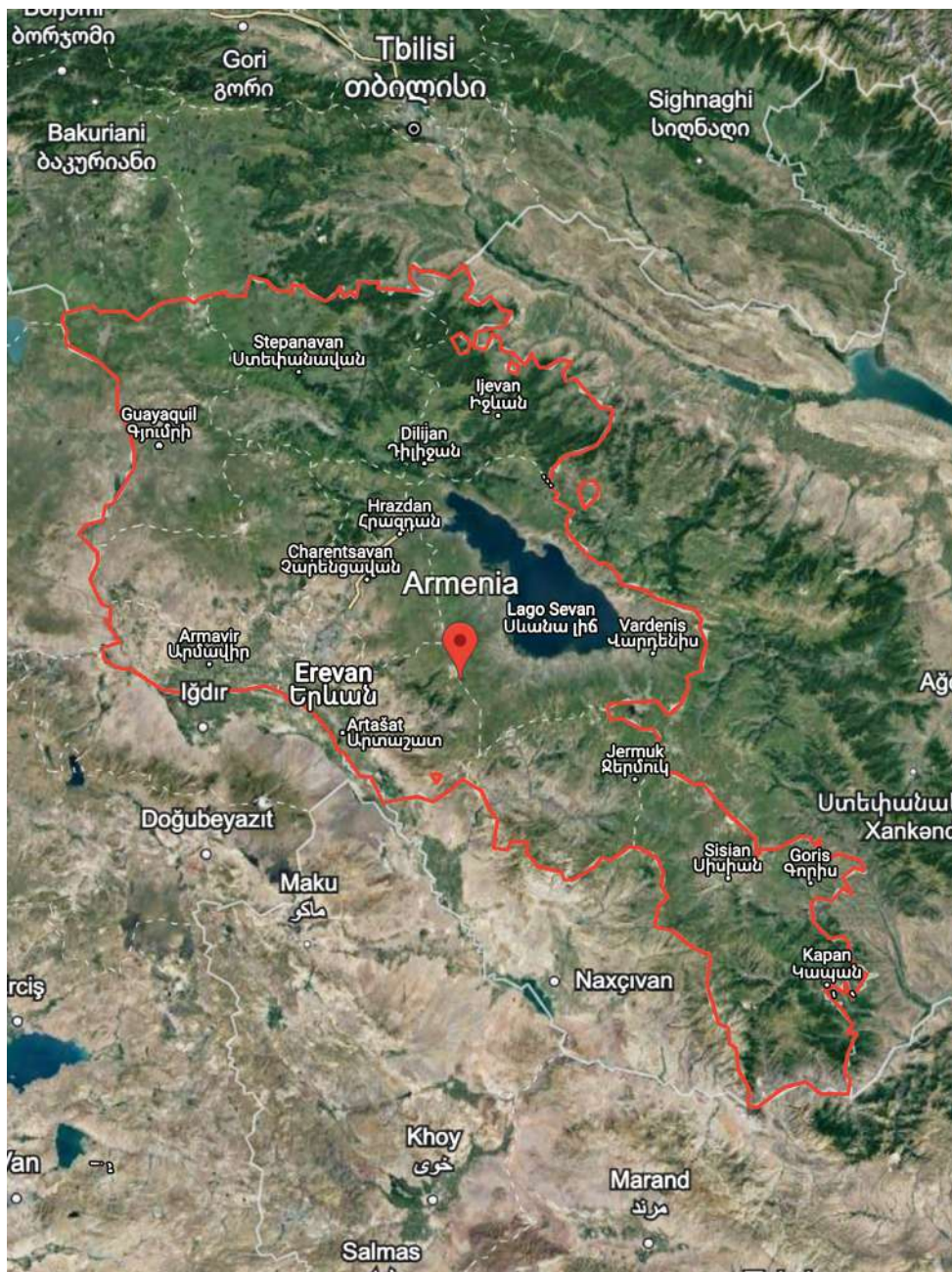
Antonia Arslan

# Friends' Houses



Italy, Italy, Emilia-Romagna region  
Google Earth, 2023





## Armenia

Google Earth, 2023

# THE ASHUG'S BALLAD

*Story of an inexhaustible friendship between Emilia-Romagna and Armenia*

Fable by Valeria De Domenico

Edited by Annalena Valenti and mammaoca.com

Illustrations by Giovanni Cavicchi

Translation by Emily Sfriso

Once upon a time there was and was not a man who lived with his wife and his seven children near a pond in the kingdom of Mountain Garden. The ground he cultivated was his own, but it barely yielded enough to feed his family. The food on the table was hardly ever lacking, but hardly ever was enough to satiate everyone.

“Life is hard for us, here” the man complained “Maybe we should do as our neighbours did and send the boys to the city. God won’t abandon them, they will find someone who take care of them and they will make fortune”.

They wife, however, would not hear of sending the children away.

“You say right, my husband, God won’t forsake us and if Fortune wants to seek us, she will seek us out here, on the shore of our lake”.



One evening, while a storm of wind and rain raged outside and the whole family was gathered around the table to eat wild herb soup, someone knocked the door.

The mum got up to see who on the earth could be crazy enough to walk around on a scary night like that. At the door, wrapped in an old, worn-out cloak and completely soaked, there was a man, all trembling because of the cold.

“Good evening” he greeted “Forgive the disturbance. My name is Berg and I am a storyteller by trade. I was on my way to the king’s palace, but the storm surprised me and I think I lost the way... Couldn’t you offer me a shelter only for tonight?”.

The man and his wife hesitated to answer, sized by the fear that the man might be a bandit or a devil. The children, however, have already moved closed in joy: they had never seen an Ashug, although they have heard about him, and the idea of being able to listen to his music and his stories, filled them with joy. The storyteller, after warming himself by the stove fire and accepting a piece of bread immersed in the wild herb soup, took out his Duduk flute, and began to play. He alternated music with storytelling. He told stories of kings who disguised themselves as dervishes and mingled with the people, of young men who decapitated twenty-four-headed devils with a single stroke of the sword, of foxes who turned millers into rich castellans with their trick. The children were enchanted. At the end of the evening Ashug taught them a song. A song about hope.

## The Ashug's Ballad

*They will tell you to forget  
there's nothing to protect  
but do not forget  
my stories and my music.*

*They will tell you you are nothing,  
because nothing is what you have,  
but do not forget  
you have everything: you have my music.*

*Safeguard in a good ground  
my seed and it will safeguard  
your heart, your step,  
my stories and my music.*

The next morning, the sun was shining on the lake. Before leaving, the Ashug wanted to leave the family, who had hosted him so affably, a gift. He asked the seven children to line up in a row and on the palm of the hand of each laid a seed. Seven seeds, different in shape and colour.

“Plant them” he told them “choose well the ground in which you will bury them and remember to do it by singing the song I taught you yesterday evening”.

That same day the boys each start looking for a suitable clod of ground to plant their seeds and when they had found it, they dug deep holes, which they carefully covered, and sang.



The chorus of voices filled the valley and had a magnificent effect on everything. Then they had to wait. Someone of the brothers were patient, some less, some confident, some not. The mother comforted everyone, telling that the seeds would surely bring something good: even seven rosemary seedlings had come out, they would have served as a reminder of a special evening.

What sprouted was astonishing to all. From the seven seeds donated by Ashug, seven amazing fruit trees grew with astonishing speed: Apples with a regal appearance, Apricots that seemed they had stolen the colour of the sunset, Figs with a belly full of sweetness, sugary Grapes, fleshy Plums and splendid Pomegranates. Wonderful plants which turned the man's ground in an orchard.

Besides being beautiful, the fruits were also very tasty and by eating them the children grew up strong and hench, like the family trees.

The man also began to sell his harvest in the valley markets with good profits and people got into the habit of visiting, to see with their own eyes the plants that had such delights, to listen and to learn from that family blessed by God how to take care of a seed. The seven boys soon became man. Every day they devoted themselves to tending the orchard and they became skilful: in the rest hours they told those who came the stories that the Ashug had told them during the stormy evening and often sang the old song they had learned in front of the stove, because it was good for the plants, for their friends and also for their own spirits... *do not forget my stories and my music... you have my music...*

The orchard became more and more luxuriant and it end up covering the entire southern valley of the Mountain Garden, so that the seven young man, by trading in fruits they obtain from it, were able to put aside enough money to be able to each build a house for themselves and their brides, when it was time to take a wife. In the years that followed, many children were born, and silvery laughs and cries and lullabies were heard in the orchard.

Only one of the seven brothers still lived with his old parents: Kachen, the youngest.

One day Kachen was in the fields, singing the Ashug's Ballad, when he saw a majestic carriage pass by and stop: a maiden dressed in silk and brocade got out, with long black hair loose on her shoulders. On her finger she wore a ring studded with precious gems, the kind only possessed by queens or witches.

"I'm very hungry, boy" told the maiden "Whose are the beautiful fruit trees I saw crossing the valley?"

"They are mine and my family's" replied Kachen without hesitation "But if you are hungry you can take all the fruits you want."

The maiden immediately helped herself and she found the apricot she tasted so delicious that she immediately wanted one another.

"I could eat these apricots all my life!" she finally exclaimed, "Tell me, boy, how can I have them?"

Kachen then told the maiden how his family had received as a gift the prodigious seeds that had given birth to their orchards.





He spoke of the Ashug and its enchanted ballad:

“If you wish I can teach it to you” he concluded “As you can cultivate plants similar to these in your kingdom.”

“But these are the trees I want” insisted the maiden.

“Then marry me!” told Kachen “You’ll become mistress of the seventh part of this orchard and we will be happy.”

The maiden seemed to think about it for a moment. And perhaps she really did it, because Kachen was a handsome young man and there is no one who does not want to be happy.

However she was not a queen, but a witch, and the idea of settling for the seventh part of what she desired, did not please the beast in her heart’s place.

Her face, which until then had appeared enchanting, suddenly darkened and became ugly. She got in the carriage and she hurried away, without adding a single word.

However that night the effect of his wrath fell upon the kingdom of Mountain Garden and on Kachen’s family.

Once back in her lair, the witch uncovered the cauldrons in which her evil had been fermenting for centuries: enormous masses of poisonous vapours quickly spread throughout the region, driven by the fury of the wind, and drained violent downpours into the valley, causing the lake and its tributaries to overflow. The storm raged for days and days, sweeping everything away. The fields were flooded, the harvest was lost, houses were taken the roof off, the orchard destroyed.

Each of Kachen’s brothers had to escape to save their children and they did it in a hurry, with no thought of taking anything but the essential with them.





Kachen took care of the old parents. He managed to lead them far away, to safety, but they had to face long journey, through devastated land by cloudburst and overwhelmed by an unexpected winter. Once they arrived to the Land of their Ancestors, they found themselves condemned to utter misery. “What misfortune has befallen us all!” the old father complained “I shall never see my six elder sons, or my grandchildren. And what will we live on, now that the orchard has been taken from us and we have ended up there in a town where we know no one?”

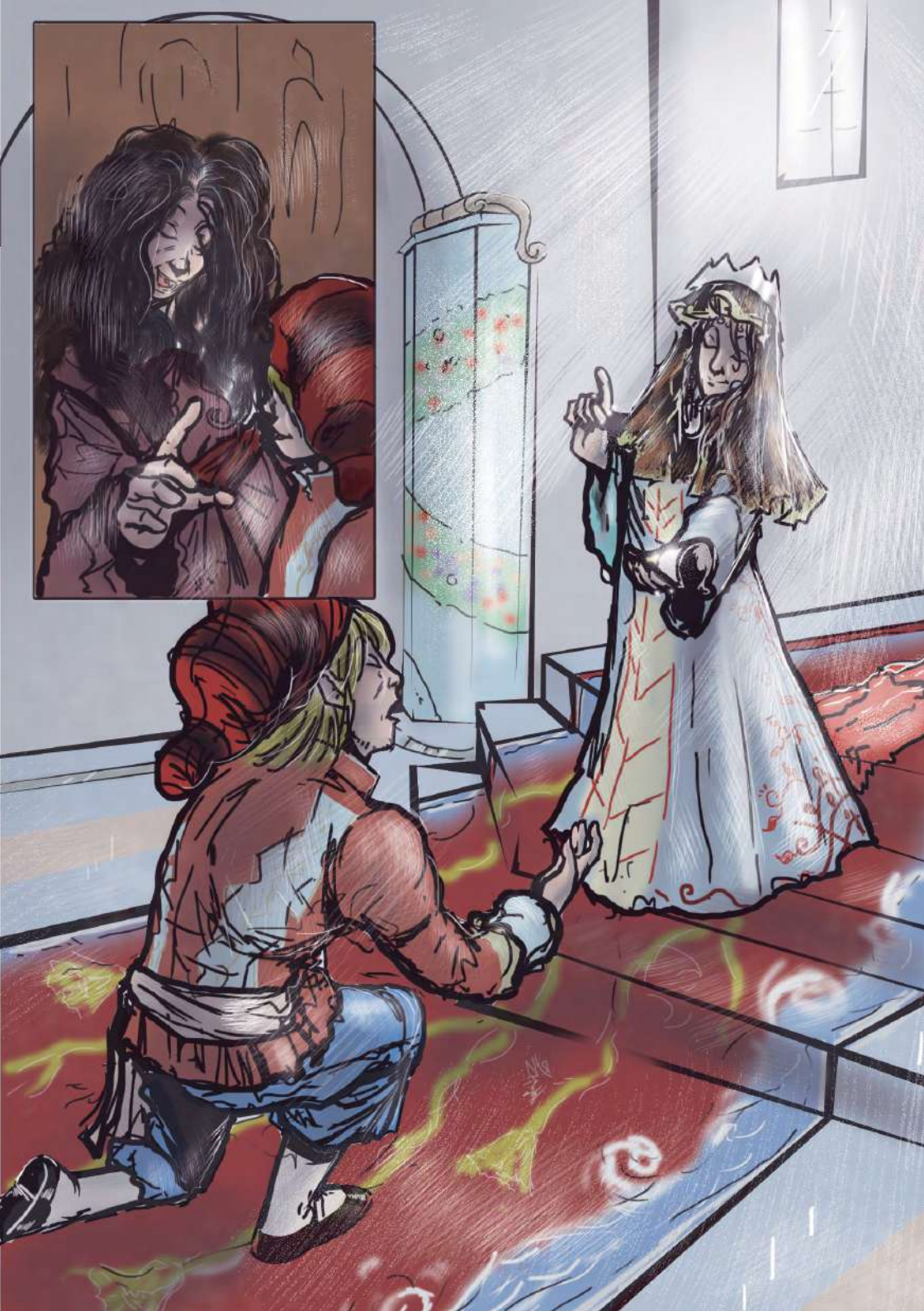
However the wife had no intention of letting herself down. She called Kachen and she told him:

“My son, you must go to the king and ask him for a horse and the Ivory Horn of the Ancestors. Then you will look for your brothers.”

The young man did as his mother had suggested him. However at the castle he didn’t find the welcome he had hoped for. The king was ill, a witchcraft they said, he couldn’t receive anyone and everyone thought he would die soon.

His daughter sat on the throne, who wore a veil over her face so she didn’t show her sadness. When Kachen stood before her he felt such pain that he almost forgot why he had asked to be received. But then he told his story.







The princess was moved: “You shall have what you wish” she told him “I’ll give you the quickest and the most faithful of my horses, but you shall have the Ivory Horn of the Ancestors only on one conditions: you must find the witch who has poisoned the king’s mind, you must tear out her heart and you must bring it to me, so I may free my father from the witchcraft that holds him captive. If you succeed, if you save my father’s life, he will reward you and your family and I will give you the Horn.” Kachen thought about it for a while.

“Princess” he finally replied “I will give you the witch’s heart, but you must give me the Horn now. The most difficult feats are sometimes achieved by unusual tools.”

The princess had to think over it, too, and she decided to trust that brave young man. She gave him the horse and the Precious Horn, then retired to pray.

Kachen wasted no more time. He jumped onto his horse and set off in search of his brothers. He spurred his steed day and night and crossed the entire kingdom, from the Black Sea to Ararat Mount. Always playing the Horn of Ancestors. Always calling. And the brothers, each in the corner of the kingdom which had welcomed him, heard and answered the call.

When the seven young man came together, they had a great party, the most beautiful they could organise, given the miserable conditions of the country, which had been in a freezing grip for months. That year the fields had refused to yield grain, the trees had not sprouted any leaves and the animals in the woods had remained sleeping in their dens. The people in the villages were frightened. Everyone was unhappy, except for

that unusual group of men, women and children, gathered at the city gates. Lighting a fire, each told their misadventures from the sad night when the witch had thrown the curse on their home, on their kingdom. When the two old parents also joined them, Kachen declared:

“Well brothers, it’s time to replant our orchard!”

From the saddlebags each extracted the one thing he had brought with him while escaping, because it was the most precious of treasures: a seed. The children were lined up in a row and one was given to each. Immediately they chose a place to plant them and did so while singing the song that Ashug had taught their fathers and grandfathers on that distant stormy night.

*They will tell you to forget  
there’s nothing to protect  
but do not forget  
my stories and my music.*

*They will tell you you are nothing,  
because nothing is what you have,  
but do not forget  
you have everything: you have my music.*

*Safeguard in a good ground  
my seed and it will safeguard  
your heart, your step,  
my stories and my music.*



Over the next few days the plants sprouted with such rapidity that one would not have known that it was winter in the kingdom and soon where a frozen field laid, a luxuriant orchard showed up: there were Apples with a regal appearance, Apricots that seemed they had stolen the colour of the sunset, Figs with a belly full of sweetness, sugary Grapes, fleshy Plums and splendid Pomegranates.

Children and parents looked after them with dedication, always singing the Ashug's song and always telling his stories, during the rest hours, in the shade of pomegranate trees. Soon people from neighbouring villages used to visit the orchard to buy the just picked fruits, to listen the stories and to learn from that blessed family how to take care of seeds.

After a while, the princess sent one of her messengers to the orchard to bring her news of the brave young man who had promised her the witch's heart.

"Come back to your lady and tell her to be quiet" Kachen told the man "she will soon have what she had asked for."

A few days later, a majestic carriage appeared on the road leading to the orchard, which stopped near an apricot tree, under which Kachen was resting after a work morning. The witch got off the carriage, but Kachen wasn't surprised.

"I have been waiting for you" he told "Perhaps would you like to taste some of my apricots?"

"I want to know why your trees grow up so luxuriant, even though the whole kingdom is under a witchcraft!" she told with a very irritated tone.

“Because the Ancient Chant we were taught is more powerful than your magic.” Kachen replied “And my family is tenacious. And even if you succeed in destroying this second orchard, we will plant a third and, if necessary, a fourth.”

The witch’s anger seemed about to explode, because this kind of creatures doesn’t like at all to being challenged. The young man in front of her was no longer the naive boy she had met at the edge of the first orchard. Time had not passed in vain for him.

“All right, boy” she finally told, convinced that she would succeed this time too “I accept the proposal you made me some time ago: I’ll marry you!”

“To do that: you will have to give me your heart!” Kachen immediately answered.

The witch burst out laughing, and hers was indeed a witch’s laugh:

“A heart? I don’t have a heart!”

“What’s beat in your chest then?” Kachen asked even if he knew the answer.

“Fool of a farmer: everyone knows that snakes settle in witches’ chest! And you would not like to find face to face with mine at all!”

“On the contrary! A snake is what I need to expel the mice out of the orchard!”



“I could lend it to you...” the witch told, convinced she now had Kachen’s fate in the palm of her hand “As long as you treat it carefully...”.

So saying she throw up on the grass a fat black viper, half numb from the cold: it has been for centuries nuzzled in the dark, in one of the world’s least hospitable places- a witch’s chest- and it looked really bad. However Kachen did not allow himself to be distracted: he took the Ivory Horn of the Ancestors from his belt, where he always kept it, and he stick it straight into the centre of the viper’s triangular head, killing it on the spot.

The witch’s scream broke the valley and it reached the castle where the king was laying near death. The princess interrupted her prayers and immediately sent another messenger to see what had happend to the orchard.

The witch jumped into her carriage and ran away. But this time she didn’t return to her cave to prepare new magical weapons to throw against Kachen’s family. In grief, she went insane and she began to wandering the kingdom and someone told she is still there, desperately searching for a new heart.

Kachen brought the snake’s skin to the princess. She drew from it a remedy to cure the king. And, when he was cured, she stopped being sad.

And think how happy the king was when he realised he has been freed from the witch's yoke! He wanted to meet Kachen and he asked him what prize he wanted as a sign of his gratitude. However everyone thought the choice- even if fearful- would fall on the young princess. She did not object, as the courage and the wisdom of the handsome young man had already won her over.

The royal wedding celebrations lasted seven days and seven nights and they took place in the orchard, among the trees.

All the inhabitants of the kingdom were invited. A thousand mutton roasts, a thousand flat breads stuffed with the thirty-five ancient herbs, a thousand honey cakes, a thousand barrels of distillate and all the most beautiful fruits ere served on the set table. They danced, they made a toast and, till the dead of night, bridegrooms and guests sang in chorus the song of Hope.

*Let the devil stand aside and let the good come in.*

*Three apples fell from the sky, one for those who narrated,  
one for those who listened and one for the whole world.*



# THE STEPS TOWARDS PEACE

## 1

## Welcoming the other

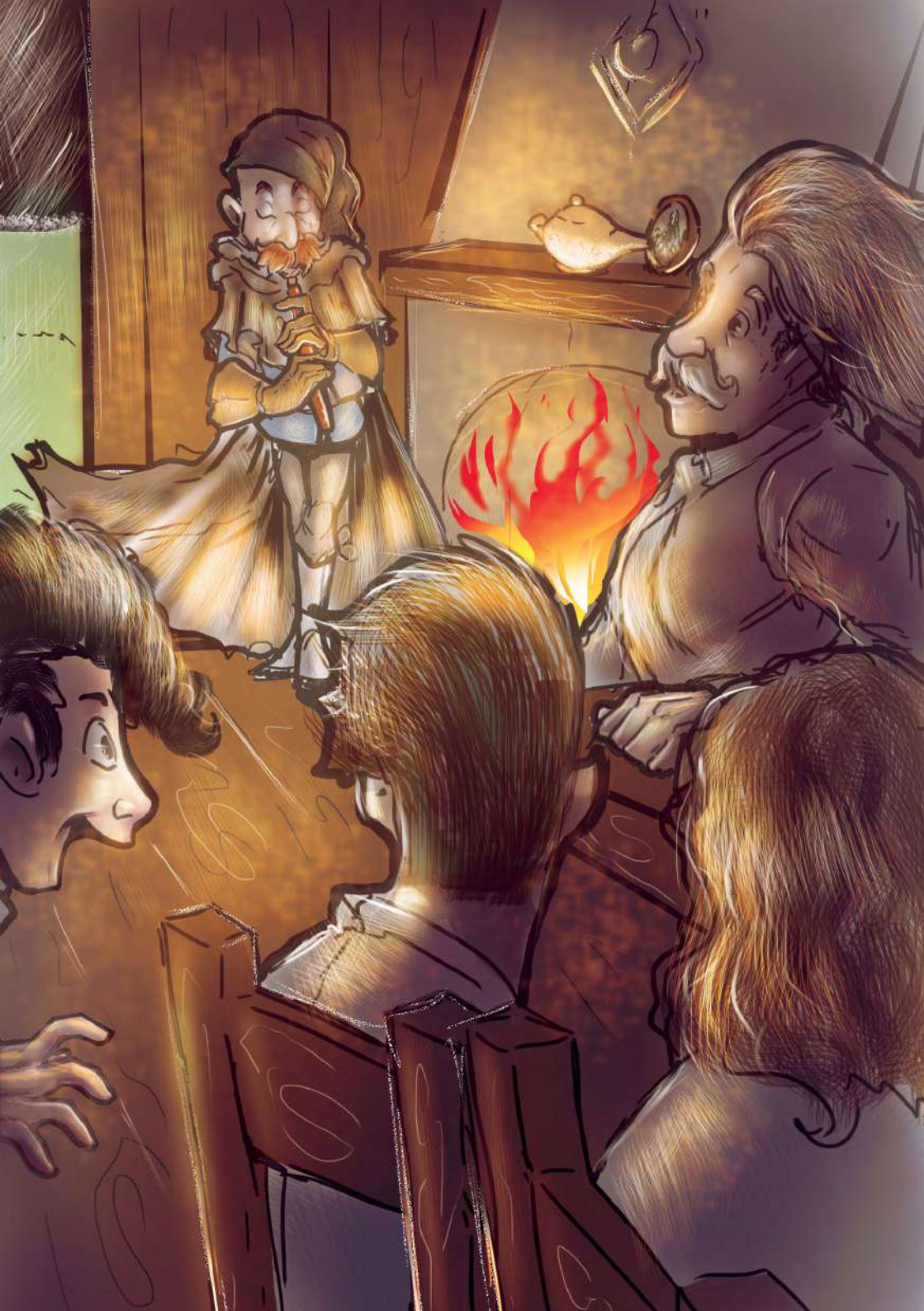
“One evening, while a storm of wind and rain raged outside and the whole family was gathered around the table to eat wild herb soup, someone knocked the door.

The mum got up to see who on the earth could be crazy enough to walk around on a scary night like that. At the door, wrapped in an old, worn-out cloak and completely soaked, there was a man, all trembling because of the cold.

“Good evening” he greeted “Forgive the disturbance. My name is Berg and I am a storyteller by trade. I was on my way to the king’s palace, but the storm surprised me and I think I lost the way... Couldn’t you offer me a shelter only for tonight?”.

The man and his wife hesitated to answer, seized by the fear that the man might be a bandit or a devil. The children, however, have already moved closer in joy: they had never seen an Ashug, although they have heard about him, and the idea of being able to listen to his music and his stories, filled them with joy.”







## 2

# RECEIVING AND CARING FOR A GIFT

“Before leaving, the Ashug wanted to leave the family, who had hosted him so affably, a gift. He asked the seven children to line up in a row and on the palm of the hand of each laid a seed. Seven seeds, different in shape and colour.

“Plant them” he told them “choose well the ground in which you will bury them and remember to do it by singing the song I taught you yesterday evening”.

That same day the boys each start looking for a suitable clod of ground to plant their seeds and when they had found it, they dug deep holes, which they carefully covered, and sang. The chorus of voices filled the valley and had a magnificent effect on everything. Then they had to wait. [...]

From the seven seeds donated by Ashug, seven amazing fruit trees grew with astonishing speed: Apples with a regal appearance, Apricots that seemed they had stolen the colour of the sunset, Figs with a belly full of sweetness, sugary Grapes, fleshy Plums and splendid Pomegranates. Wonderful plants which turned the man’s ground in an orchard.”





### 3

## Starting AGAIN from EDUCATION. ALWAYS.

“Kachen wasted no more time. He jumped onto his horse and set off in search of his brothers. He spurred his steed day and night and crossed the entire kingdom, from the Black Sea to Ararat Mount. Always playing the Horn of Ancestors. Always calling. And the brothers, each in the corn of the kingdom which had welcomed him, heard and answered the call.

[...] When the two old parents also joined them, Kachen declared: “Well brothers, it’s time to replant our orchard!”

[...] “I want to know why your trees grow up so luxuriant, even though the whole kingdom is under a witchcraft!” she told with a very irritated tone.

“Because the Ancient Chant we were taught is more powerful than your magic.” Kachen replied “And my family is tenacious. And even if you succeed in destroying this second orchard, we will plant a third and, if necessary, a fourth.”





## 4

## Preserving AND narrating The CULTURE of A Community

“From the saddlebags each extracted the one thing he had brought with him while escaping, because it was the most precious of treasures: a seed. The children were lined up in a row and one was given to each. Immediately they chose a place to plant them and did so while singing the song that Ashug had taught their fathers and grandfathers on that distant stormy night.

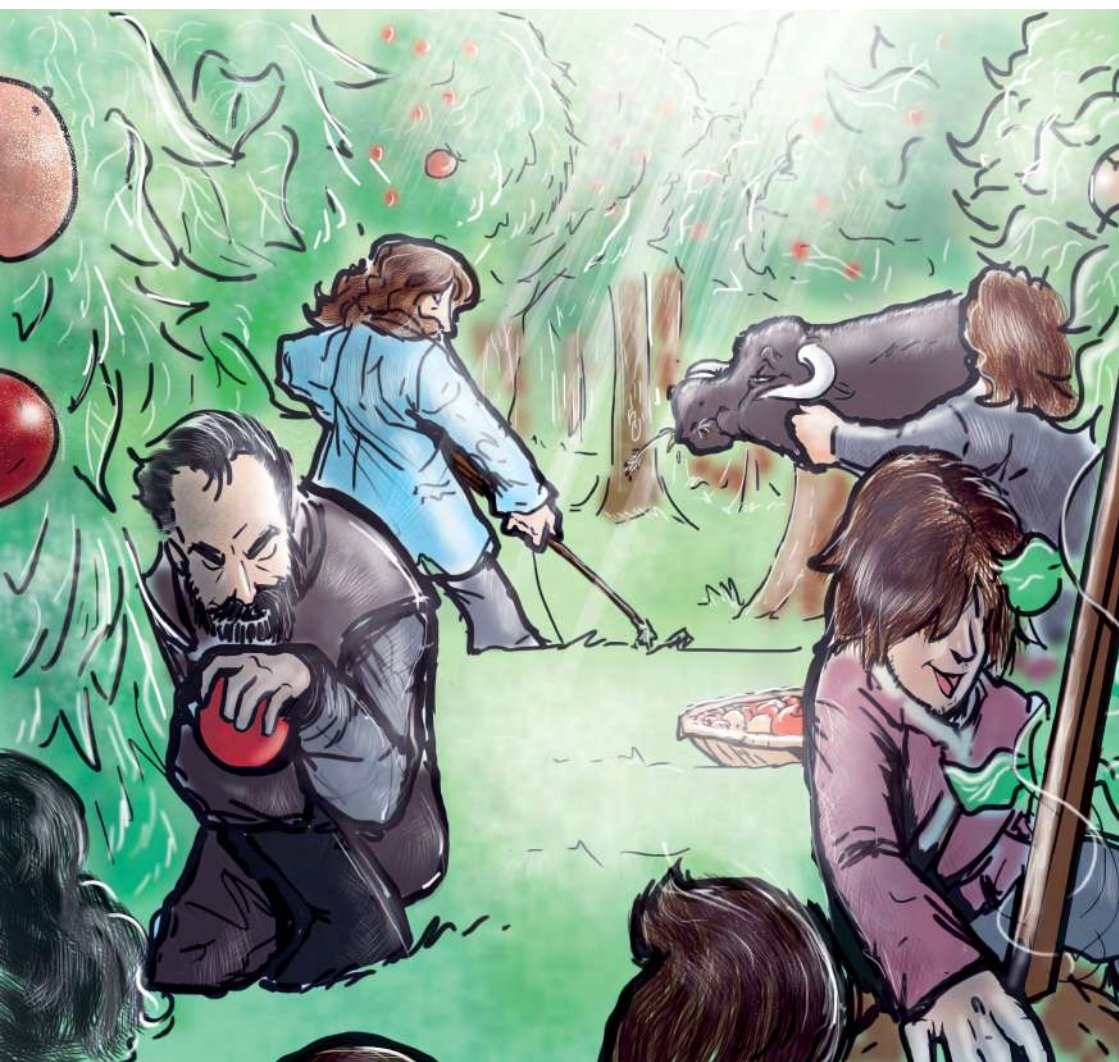
### The Ashug's Ballad

*They will tell you to forget  
there's nothing to protect  
but do not forget  
my stories and my music.*

*They will tell you you are nothing,  
because nothing is what you have,  
but do not forget  
you have everything: you have my music.*

*Safeguard in a good ground  
my seed and it will safeguard  
your heart, your step,  
my stories and my music.*

[...] Children and parents looked after them with dedication, always singing the Ashug's song and always telling his stories, during the rest hours, in the shade of pomegranate trees. Soon people from neighbouring villages used to visit the orchard to buy the just picked fruits, to listen the stories and to learn from that blessed family how to take care of seeds."





# An InHexAUSTIBLE friendship

## "Antonia Arslan" ARMENIAN-ITALIAN SCHOOL

The friendship between Emilia-Romagna and Armenia was born from an interweaving of international relationships which made us discover a unique story, originating from a reality -a presence- and an action -an appeal-.

In 2020, at the instigation of the CINF\* Foundation, the professional institute "Antonia Arslan" was born in Step'anakert, a place of education aimed at creating job opportunities for young people from Artsakh (Nagorno Karabakh) by offering them a free complete and specialised educational training in the technical fields of cooking, sewing and carpentry. The school has always enjoyed close collaboration with Italy, through a network of no-profit institutions -including *Santa Caterina da Siena ETS and its associates*- and which make possible the presence on site of Italian craftsmen and professionals who contribute to the transmission of Made-in-Italy skills to young Armenians.

In the same year, following the 44-days war between Azerbaijan and Armenian population, the school expanded to become a place of formation, accompaniment and reference not only for youths but also for many children who were come here from war-affected territories, the school has thus opened primary and secondary classes, welcoming

---

\*Christians In Need Foundation (CINF) is a New York-based no-profit organisation founded in 2014 and headquartered in Step'anakert since 2019

entire generations of young people and arriving in 2023 to accommodate a total of 612 pupils.

On 19<sup>th</sup> September 2023 the region suffered an additional attack by Azerbaijan which resulted in the unconditional surrender of the Armenian population of Artsakh. Today, with the abandonment of Nagorno Karabakh by Armenians, the region has remained deserted, the Antonia Arslan school abandoned, the workshops lost, and the young people and teachers spread out and dispersed in the neighbouring territories, finding hospitality with relatives and friends but losing everything, not only objects but also their own community of reference.

In a context of total disgregation of the community that populated the territory, the problems are many, social and economic ones, but a first step to restart wants to be - as in the past - to recreate a point of presence, a place of reference from which to regenerate the community.

Today a new challenge opens up: the attempt to rebuild a new “Antonia Arslan” school. A positive point of presence and restart, which from education intends to regenerate a people. That is why the appeal is the crucial point. The appeal is a call that, just like at school, sets off the beginning of a new day calling everyone by name, one by one. The attempt is the same as the Kachen’s call: an appeal to recall the community and put to good use the seeds received as a gift from *Ashug* to replant an orchard to the sound of an *Ancient Chant*, more powerful than any witch’s magic.

# AnnALena & Co.

## MAMMAOCA.COM

Annalena Valenti, journalist, for 15 years I wrote the “Mammaoca” column on *Tempi*, author, reading promoter and storyteller, I organise courses and lessons on fables and books. For 30 years I have been *MammaOca*, a name born from a compromise between *C. Perrault’s* collection of fables, *MammaOca’s stories* and the battle name that RAF pilots had written on their aeroplanes during World War II, *Mother Goose*. Today *MammaOca.com* is a blog of fables, children’s books, reading suggestions and astonished research at the hidden meaning of beautiful literature. The MammaOca team® promotes storytelling, organises read aloud marathons, publishes books and produces podcasts. With me are Valeria De Domenico, who edits the tests, she’s a journalist and a writer and she’s the author of *The Ashug’s Ballad*, Raffaella Carnovale, our concept creative, who attends graphics and social media, Mariarosa Greco, the Voice: she animates the readings, interprets and edits the podcasts. We are four mothers with 19 children.

To write this fable, inspired by Armenian tradition, we read dozens of stories, met witnesses and saw photos that captured our imagination. We discovered a world full of humanity, depository of a fascinating culture and custodian of a living faith, rooted on hard ground, but cultivated with tenacity. We wanted to recount in this way, to the rhythm of an ancient song, this care, this courage and this tenacity. As was once done to educate. To educate, always.

# Giovanni CAVICCHI

## CARTOONIST AND ILLUSTRATOR

The images accompanying the story are the work of Giovanni Cavicchi, a young cartoonist from Ferrara who likes to put his talent at the service of educational and cultural activities.

While at primary school, Giovanni was fascinated by the drawings of a friend and decided to set to work, initially self-taught, then studying advertising graphics and finally attending the International School of Comics in Padua.

A skillful character designer, he has produced several illustrations for the *Gruppo del Tasso*, illustrated Silvana Minia's book '*Su e giù per la Storia*', collaborated with several school institutes in Ferrara and is also carrying out personal projects in parallel, from the script to the finished project.

Since 2021, he has been working with *Santa Caterina da Siena ETS* and its associates, giving contours and colours to educational proposals for minors, literary exhibitions and small publications to be donated to those we meet. Giovanni observes reality with a keen eye, speaks little with words but knows how to sing with his drawings.

## Afterword

# LIBRETTI DA VISITA: SO THAT FRIENDSHIP HAS NO END

The series of illustrated short stories 'An Inexhaustible Friendship - The Forces that change history are the same as those that change the Heart of a Man' stems from the living relationships that St Catherine of Siena ETS and its associates have forged and nurtured over the years. In these pages, writers and illustrators have portrayed the testimonies of six communities from complex and/or conflicting contexts to tell what allows them to live positively even where it would not seem possible, and to discover that the forces that change the Heart of a Man are the same ones that also change history...

We like to call these publications 'libretti da visita', images and fictional stories freely drawn from real friendships, stories of friends of friends, friends not to be missed.

But what is the small contribution each of us can make to build Peace? We have discovered that preserving relationships and relations is a real business: friendships met 'by chance' but which determine our history, friendships that do not leave us alone, friendships that force us to come to terms with our human stature, in a work that becomes an adventure and a responsibility to commit to ourselves every day, because the one who tells us 'Be with me' is the Only One capable of this inexhaustible fidelity.

---

<sup>1</sup> In Italian, intended as booklets used in a way that a meeting becomes an opportunity, an opportunity to see each other again and forge a long-lasting relationship.



# UN'AMICIZIA INESAURIBILE

LE FORZE CHE CAMBIANO LA STORIA SONO LE STESSA CHE CAMBIANO IL CORSO DELLE LORO

is an initiative of



with the participation of



Comune di Comacchio



Comune di Mesola



Comune di Voghiera



Comune di Forlì



Parco Delta del Po



in collaboration with





The Ashug's Ballad

*Story of an inexhaustible friendship between Emilia-Romagna and Armenia*

Fable by Valeria De Domenico

edited by Annalena Valenti and mammaoca.com

illustrations by Giovanni Cavicchi

translation by Emily Sfriso

*original title:*

La Ballata dell'Ashug

*Storia di un'amicizia inesauribile tra Emilia-Romagna e Armenia*



Discover the entire series available  
for free in Italian and other languages,  
listen to the audiobooks and don't miss the stories  
of an inexhaustible friendship...



UN'AMICIZIA INESAURIBILE

LIBRO DEL PRIMO CICLO CON IL SUO AUDIOBOOK IN ITALIANO

in collaboration with

 **Regione Emilia-Romagna**

*The contents of this publication are the exclusive responsibility of Santa Caterina da Siena ETS  
and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of Emilia-Romagna Region.*

*Publication for educational and informative purposes, it is prohibited to sell and/or use it for different purposes.*