The Multilingual Library for Children in Europe

Armenian Modern Story

English language version

Co-funded by the
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“Fairy tales are more than true:
not because they tell us that dragons exist,
but because they tell us that dragons can be beaten.”

Neil Gaiman

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The Most Useful Work

Armenian Modern Story

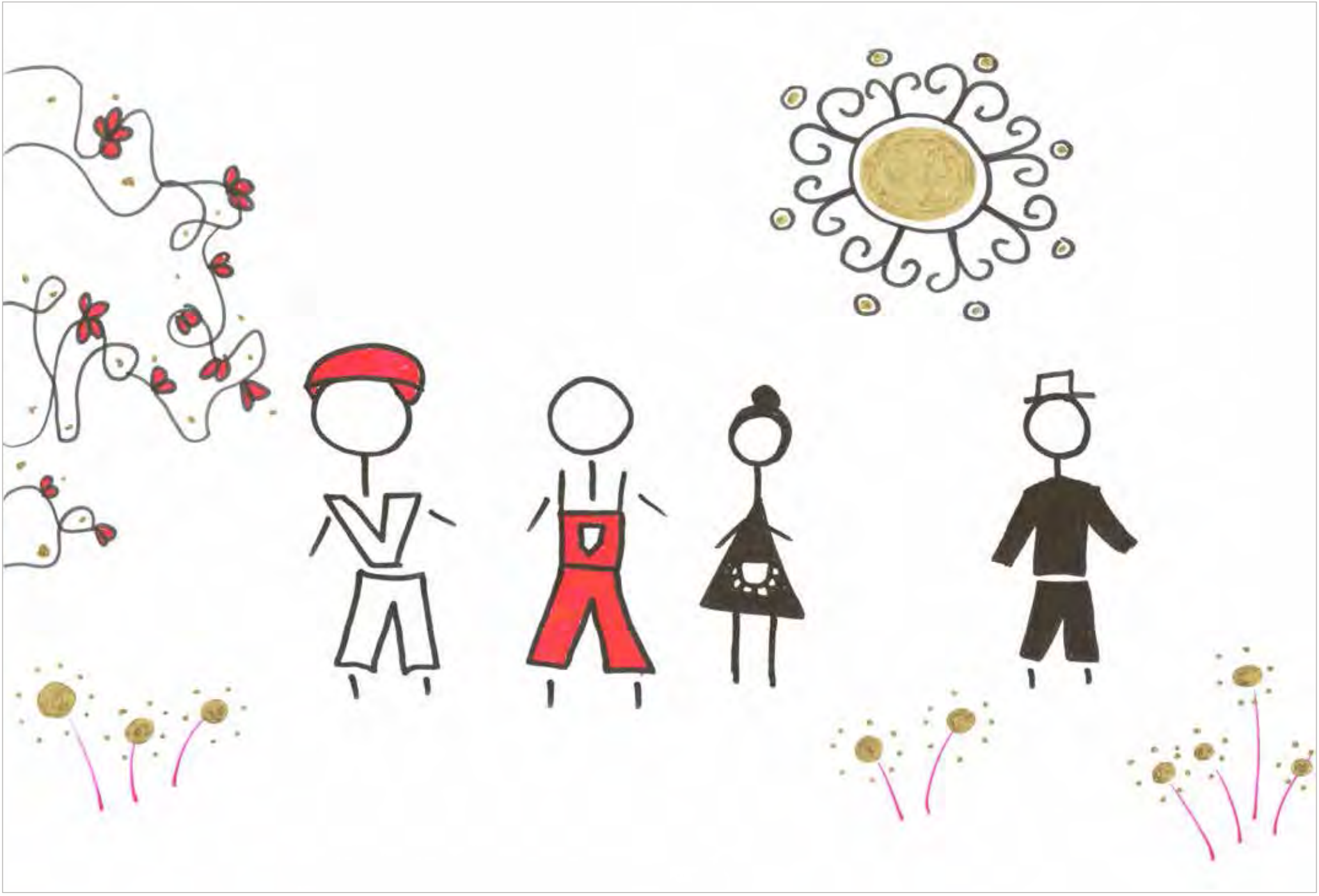
English language version

Author: Mary Baritaki

Illustrator: Maria Xanthaki

Once upon a time there was a beautiful stone house built on the edge of a village. Anyone passing by the house would look at it and praise its beauty.
The builder, the gardener and the cleaner had worked hard every day to make the house so glamorous and admirable.

One day, however, the three of them started to quarrel over whose work concerning the house would be the most precious.
“Without me, there would be no house! My own work is more important!” said the builder.
“Without me the house you built would be like any ordinary house! My own work is more important!” said the gardener.
“Without me, the house would be dirty and pathetic. My own work is more important!” said the cleaner.
They went to the master of the house to ask him whose work was most useful to the house.
The house master listened to them and said, “We will make an agreement: one month you will all become builders, the second month you will all become gardeners and the third month you will all become cleaners. In the end you will be able to find the answer by yourselves.”



So it happened. During the first month they corrected the damages, maintained the walls and the roof and made the flower beds in the yards. But the gardens were mournful and lifeless and the house was filled with dust. No one liked the house anymore and all those who passed by were saying, “What a pity, a house like this so neglected and abandoned!”

In the second month they took care of the garden. They watered the flowers and scraped the plants in the orchard. But the house remained dirty, the colours on the walls faded, the roof and the flower beds in the yards needed to be repaired. Anyone passing by was saying, “What a pity, a house like this so neglected and abandoned!”

In the third month they all cleaned the house, scrubbed, washed and wiped the rooms and courtyards. But no maintenance was done, the walls were peeling, the expensive marbles cracked, the fence fell into disrepair and in the courtyard everything was dry and naked. Anyone passing by was saying, “What a pity, a house like this so neglected and abandoned!”

The builder, the gardener and the cleaner were considering the situation and they were all very upset.
When the three months passed, the master of the house called them, “Well, do you have an answer to your question about the most useful job?”
The builder spoke first, “We worked hard. We were working more than before, because no one knew the other’s work, but the result was insignificant.”
The gardener continued, “Nobody stood to admire the house as before and we did not feel proud neither by seeing that our work did not have an impact.”
Finally, the cleaner concluded, “All we managed to do was confusing each other’s duties!”
The master, smiling behind his beard, told them, “Now I’m sure you agree on which work is most useful for the house!”
Ever since, all of them have been working more passionately, because they knew that each own work was equally as useful and necessary as the others’.
This story suggested everyone to stop quarrelling across the country over who would be doing the most important job.
As for the house, it became the most famous house of the whole country. Visitors came from the ends of the earth to view it and acknowledge that when people collaborate as a group, joy and prosperity prevail.

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