

# Forests for people

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# Infatuation

"Where shall I carve the name of my love?" the young man wondered as he inspected the tree bark. Many names had already been carved into the beech tree's bark, and the young man wanted to add the name of his love. A deep, calm voice stirred him from his thoughts. "Why are you doing that?" the voice asked.

"What?" said the surprised young man as he turned towards the direction from which the voice came. Before him stood an old man with bright eyes, leaning on a cane. The old man asked him again, "Why are you doing that?"

"I am in love," said the young man. "And I wish to leave a sign of my eternal love on this tree."

"So, it is because of love that you wish to damage this tree?" asked the old man.

"It's just a tree," said the young man indifferently. "Who cares about a tree?"

"I care," said the old man. "You should care as well, especially if you love your girlfriend."

"How is that relevant?" asked the young man angrily. "An ordinary tree and my girlfriend?"

"Let's take a walk," suggested the old man. "Once you understand what the forest provides, you too will be more considerate towards the trees. Perhaps you will think of a more noble way to signify your love."



# Forest Creations

The young man followed the old man to a clearing where a beautiful wooden cabin stood. All around it were various objects that were also made from wood. "Everything here is made of wood," the young man laughed.

"Now I understand why the forest is so important to you."

"You have understood well young man," said the old man. "But I am sure the forest plays a great role in your life as well."

"Dear Sir, I live in the city. The forest is not important there."

"You must have newspapers and books in your house, don't you?" asked the old man. "What about furniture, closets, tables, chairs?"

"Our table is made of wood," said the young man, "but our chairs are metal and..."

"Of course!" the old man interrupted. "Today, things are made from all kinds of materials, but you would be surprised to know just how many things come from the forest. Food, firewood, furniture, medications, paint, varnish, tires..."

The young man looked at the old man with surprise as the old man continued his list, "...parquet floors, corks, tea, spices, chemicals, telephone posts, toothpicks, even toilet paper. You do use toilet paper, don't you?"

The young man nodded in confirmation and blushed!

"There you go," smiled the old man. "Even in the city, you use things from the forest every day. Furthermore, the forests provide much more than even what I've told you."

"What is the main use of the forest then, apart from the products it's used to make?" the young man wondered.

"Take this wheelbarrow," said the old man. "I need some help!"





# Nature's umbrella

The young man and the old man came to the edge of the forest where a large tree lay on the ground.

"What happened here?" the young man asked curiously.

"Do you remember that storm a few days ago?"

"Of course I do!" The young man remembered with unease the strong winds that had destroyed everything in their path.

"This tree gave its life defending against the storm," said the old man.

The young man felt sorry for the fallen tree.

"Imagine the forest as a giant umbrella," said the old man, "that protects the surrounding area from rough weather, whether it is heavy rain, strong winds or other things. Tree tops and tree trunks are here to protect us."

"Poor tree," said the young man, looking at the fallen tree in front of him.

"What are we going to do now?"

"It is simple," said the old man. "We will plant a new tree. We will plant a new umbrella."

The young man took a sapling from the wheel barrow. He smiled as he thought how he had never heard of anyone planting an umbrella, and he was doing just that! After he had planted the sapling, they went to get water.





# Guardians of the water

The young man and the old man came to a forest spring. The water was clear and fresh, just like the surrounding air.

“Did you know that the best water comes from the forest?” the old man asked as he took a sip of water.

The young man did not know that.

“Forests purify the water. They prevent it from flowing away too fast and they ensure that it returns in the form of rain. The greater part of water we use for drinking is provided by the forest. Interesting, isn't it?” said the old man.

“I have never thought about it in that way. I've always just thought that water comes from the tap,” the young man admitted. He then noticed many animals around the creek. “The forest is full of life!” he shouted.

“Yes,” the old man smiled. “Animals come to the spring to find refreshment. Don't think, though, that there are not other animals here, besides those you can see. Some are difficult to notice, but believe me the forest is full of them.”

The young man quietly observed the animals.

“Have you filled the buckets with water?” asked the old man.

“I have,” answered the young man.

“Good. Let's return to the planted tree. It could use some water.”



# The Earth's air conditioner



The young man watered the planted tree and the soil quickly absorbed the precious liquid. The tree was refreshed.

"Excellent work," said the old man with pleasure. "We did a good thing." A delighted smile crossed the young man's face as well.

In that moment, two hikers came by. They were talking.

"There's no better way to relax than a walk in the fresh air," said one.

"That's true," said the other and took a deep breath of forest air. "Luckily, in front of the building where I live in the city, several trees have been planted. It's not a forest, but those few trees make the air around my home better. There is no better air conditioner than the forest!"

After the hikers had left, the young man turned to the old man and said, "I have noticed that myself. When it's very hot, the forest pleasantly cools the air, and when it's cold in winter, it provides warmth. The forest is a wonderful air conditioner and a wonderful place to rest and relax."

The old man said nothing. He just smiled with pleasure because the young man was beginning to understand the significant value of the forest.

"I don't remember the last time I took a walk in the forest," said the young man quietly. "But I'm sure that from now on I will do it very often."





## Friendship

That day, the young man and the old man continued to walk for a long time. They observed the wonders of nature and talked all the time. The old man talked about the great influence the forest had had upon the history of mankind. He named the trees and the characteristics by which they could be recognized. He talked about the animals, plants, soil and many other things. The young man listened keenly. He was happy that he had discovered a new world, the world of the forest. It was something that he had never thought of before. He asked the old man many questions. To some, he did

not receive any answers, but he decided to find out those answers by himself at home. The young man and the old man became great friends.

As they were parting, the young man asked the old man for advice.

“How can I help the forest?” he said.

The old man looked at him with kindness and said, “Respect it. Learn more about its worth. Remember everything that it provides for us on a daily basis. Help others to see that. Then act with respect. The forest deserves our respect because of all that it provides us.”





# Love

The young man and his love went to the forest. As a symbol of their love, they planted a tree. "It's beautiful," said the girl. "But isn't a tree a little ordinary as a symbol of our love?" "Ordinary?" the young man laughed. "Let's take a walk. Once you understand what the forest provides us, you will see trees in an entirely different way."

They went for a walk. After a few hours, the girl understood what the young man was talking about. She was so very pleased that they had planted a tree as a symbol of their love. "That means," she thought, "that our love is truly great."

# Did you know...

The forest is the ideal “green” factory. It only uses natural materials – carbon dioxide, water and energy from the sun – to produce substantial amounts of biomass (wood, leaves). The waste from its production process has a special name – oxygen!

Almost two thirds of the world was once covered by forests, but since then, more than half of its wealth has been destroyed by excessive deforestation. Forest areas the size of seven football pitches are cut down each minute all around the world!

More living organisms exist on a forest floor the size of two football pitches, than the number of people living on the entire Earth.

Each year, the world’s total forest area continues to decrease. In Croatia, however, the situation is different because forests there are being managed in a sustainable way. That means that every year the number of trees grown is greater than the number of trees cut down.

Based on an initiative by Croatia, the United Nations General Assembly declared 2011 as the International Year of the Forests. The aim of this International Year is to raise public awareness around the world, as to the importance of sustainable managing, and conserving all types of forests, as well as to their sustainable development. Only in doing so can we ensure forests exist for generations to come and for the benefit of us all.





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