

# CHAPTER ONE

in which my stuffed toys  
decide to become geographers



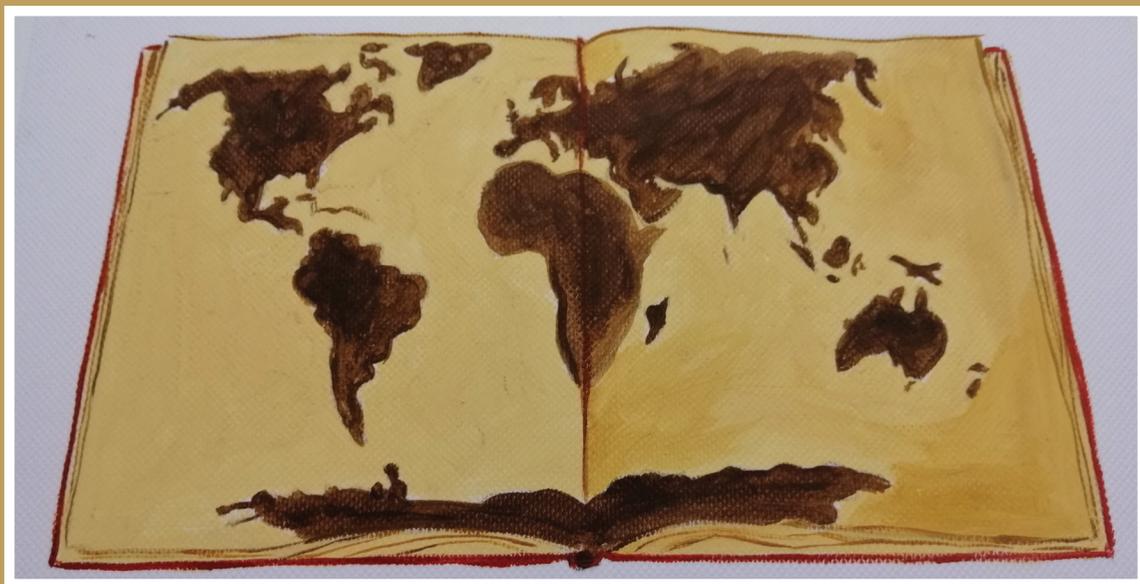
**D**o you have stuffed toys? I have so many of them: some of them are old and shabby, others are completely new; some are big, almost as tall as I am, and some are tiny, smaller than my hand; some are clever, and some are rather clueless; but all of them are the kindest in the world, and they love me very much - and I love them back, of course. So, get your own toys out, seat them in a row in front of you, and we'll tell them a story of what happened in my apartment. Are you ready? So here's how it goes.



A few days ago some sort of a commotion woke me up. I opened my eyes and could see my toys who'd gathered on my desk and were now discussing something, pointing and arguing, almost ready to start fighting. I sneaked up on them and could see that they were studying my favourite book. It's full of maps of far away lands and countries, and it's called *World Atlas*. I'd been reading it the night before and forgot to put it away on the shelf - so they found it. When they saw me, they quieted down a bit, but soon they were all loud again, shouting questions at me.

The Rhino asked, "Is Africa far? Look how beautiful it is - right in the centre of the map! And there are rhinos living there! Can we go there for a walk today?"

The Penguin interrupted, "No, we aren't going to Africa today. It's very hot there, and it's too warm and stuffy for me even when I sleep at home. I wish I could sleep in the



fridge! Instead we'll go to Antarctica. Look how beautiful it is, right at the bottom, all white! It's always cool there."

"You're being silly!" exclaimed Kangaroo, grabbing his head.

"How can we go to Africa or Antarctica for a walk? Look at the map, they're so far! It's only if we ask Dad to drive us on the weekend, then we can go! And besides, if we're going to ask for a trip, we should go to Australia. It's not as hot as Africa, and not as cold as Antarctica, so everybody will be comfortable."

That was when Sharkie rushed to defend his friends and said,

"Stop being prickly like a hedgehog, Kangaroo! That might seem like a good idea, but it's as clear as day that you're only asking to go to Australia because that's where your relatives live. But since you're so clever, tell me, how are we going to get there if there's sea around it? We should just ask Dad to drive us to the seaside, and then everybody can swim wherever they want."

Here everybody started shouting even more: some said they couldn't swim; others said if the sea was shallow, maybe they could drive across it; and some wanted to go where no one had been before. Meanwhile, the Little Hedgehog got so upset that he was called 'prickly' that he started crying very loudly - so that everyone noticed and started comforting him.

"Quiet please!" I ordered.

Everyone grew silent, except for the Little Hedgehog who





was still sniffing for a while afterwards, because everyone needed to see how upset he was!

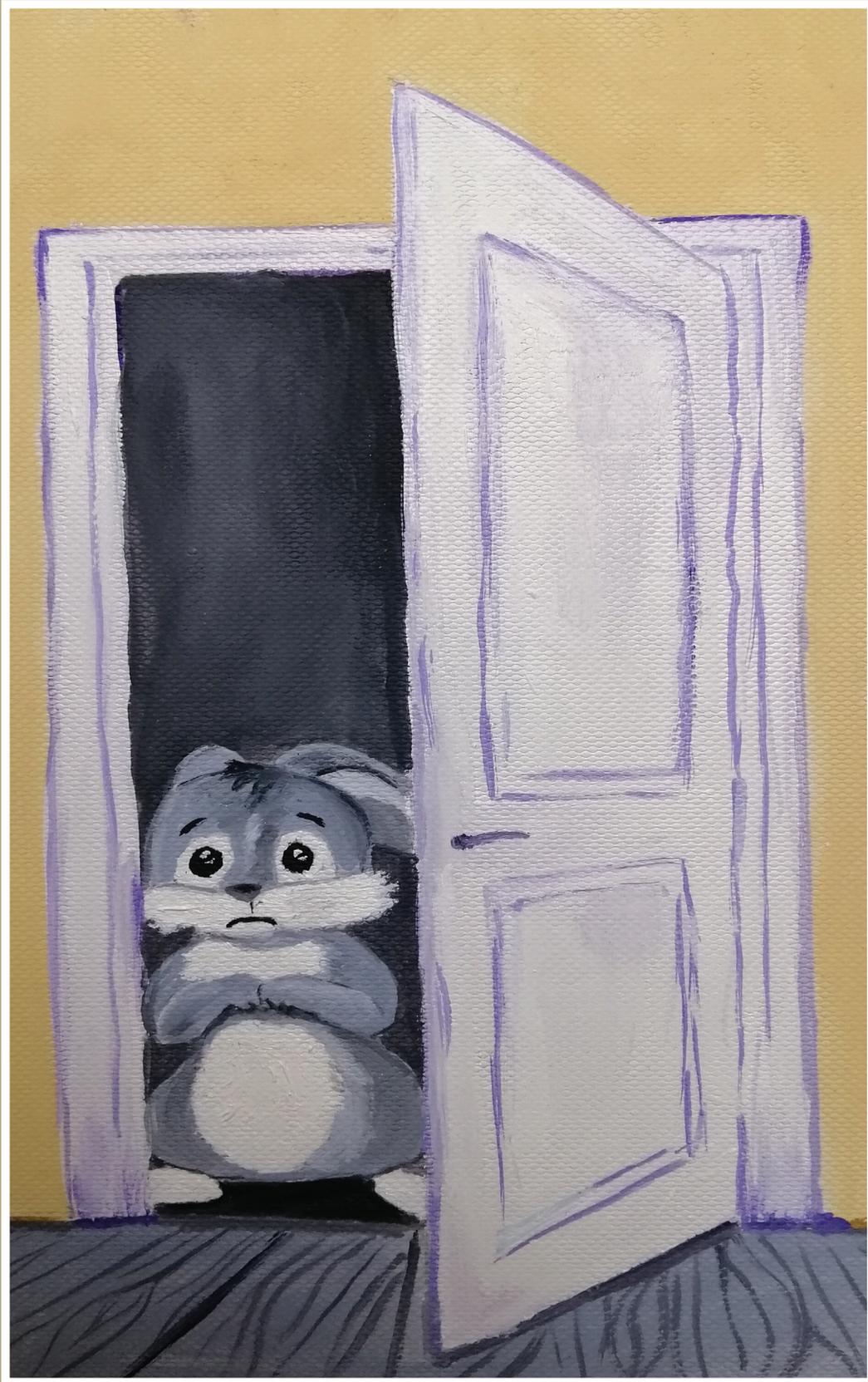
“You aren’t going anywhere,” I continued, “because to go anywhere you need to know where it is, which direction we should go to, what transport to use, what climate it is there, who lives there, and many other things.”

The Owl, who had read many more books than others, confidently stepped forward and announced, “We can learn all that, because there’s a science called geography, and it studies our planet and everything on it. So, we will travel the world with this geography book, and we’ll learn everything!”

“You’re right, Owl,” I said, “but to study geography you don’t need to travel far! Geography is a science about physical space, or to put it simply, about our home. It’s about our big home, Planet Earth, and the smaller home, our country, and the smallest one, our apartment. To understand how geography works, we can study the space of our small home: how everything is organized, why everything is where it is, how people and toys travel around, and how to understand distance and location and to prepare for long journeys.”

“Does it mean one can become a geographer staying home?” asked the Bunny, who was a bit scared of long journeys.

“Let’s all be geographers!” exclaimed the Gator, who’d been trying to choose a profession for a long time.





“Yes, and every person on Planet Earth should be a geographer - because how can one live on a planet that they don’t know?” I said. “It’s like being an alien in one’s own home.”

“Hooray!” all the animals cheered and ran to brush their teeth, so they could start learning geography right after breakfast.

And that’s how this story started.



*Do you have any maps, atlases, or geography books? Have you already travelled, and how did you prepare for those trips? Did you take your stuffed friends with you? Let’s study geography together!*