

# NADIA DREAMS WITH A BETTER WORLD



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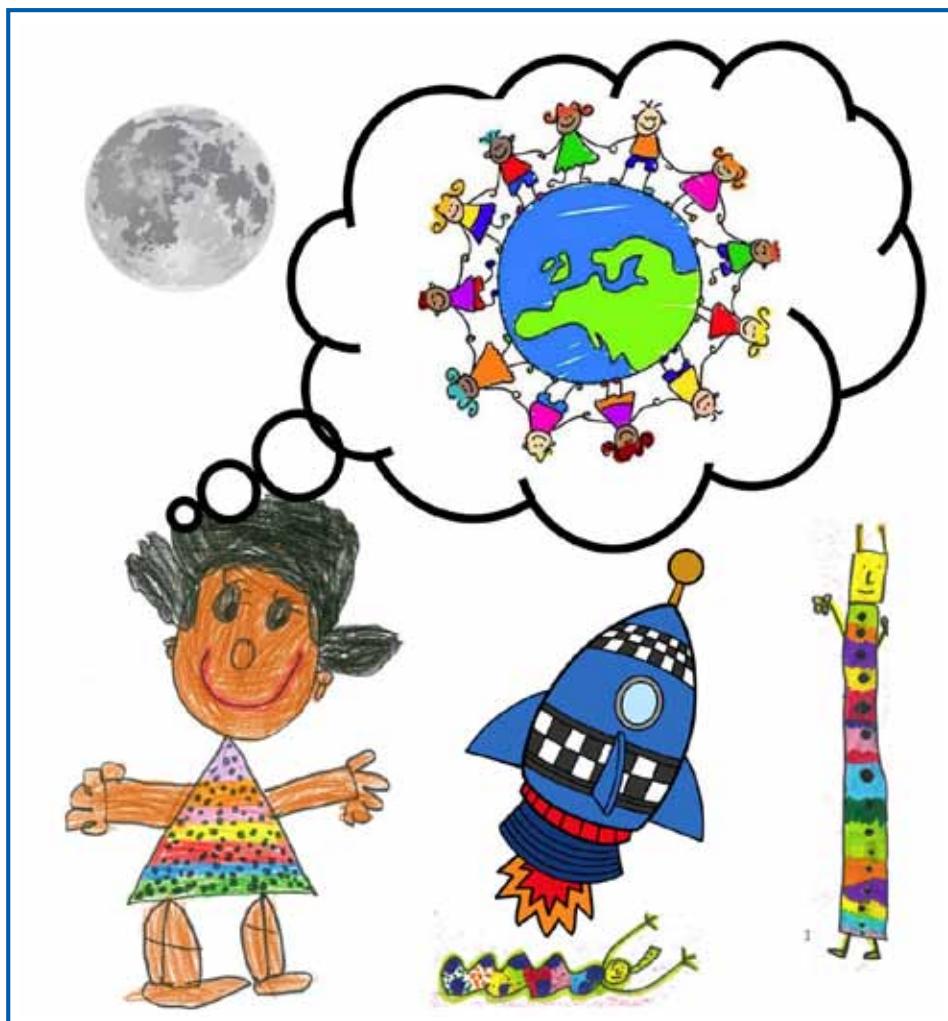
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# NADIA DREAMS WITH A BETTER WORLD



## NADIA DREAMS WITH A BETTER WORLD

The story that I'm going to tell you happened a long, long time ago, maybe too long; although to some it may seem familiar.

My name is Nadia, Nadia the astronaut. Everything happened in Blanconia, a country where everyone is happy, friendly, and most of all determined to live the best life in the world. They were all white, white as milk.

It's a good life there, most of the people had good jobs, good wages, everyone smiled like problems didn't exist for them, they had nice houses, luxurious cars, and some of them even had a grand garden where their kids ran and played hide and seek.

I arrived in Blanconia when I was five years old, accompanied by my mother, my father, and my two older brothers, Nordin who was seven, and Isaac who was ten.

I was born in Marronia, a country where there are not

as many opportunities as in Blanconia, but my parents were able to find jobs and a better future for them and us kids. There in Marronia, despite having only the bare essentials, it was really happy. And this was so because there was what was really important, I had a family that loved me, and friends

with whom I appreciated the little things in life: a game, some laughs, a hug... I remember one time with my friends Fatima and Amina and me, we spent the days playing with something similar to a doll. That doll was

the present that my family gave on my fourth birthday. It was made with a sock, something made of wool that made the strands of hair, two buttons for eyes, a piece of cloth as a dress. That doll was named Samira, and in my humble opinion, she was the most beautiful doll in the world.

My family and I lived in a humble cottage constructed with mud, sticks and sugar canes. It wasn't very big, but that's what I liked about it, that's what made me feel so much closer to and protected by my family. Also, we had very little space; we all shared one big room.

In one corner, next to the fire, mother prepared the food. Very close

to that, we had a special table that was very short, made with stone by my father. On it, we ate and drank tea, seated on cushions, cushions of every colour.

On the opposite side of the room, we had two mattresses.

On one, my mother and father slept, and on the other, covered with our precious blanket, together slept my brothers and I. That's what I liked. Sleeping with my brothers was something that was hilarious.

Isaac, my older brother, was a great storyteller. I loved to hear those stories that he told Nordin and I night after night. It was as though for a moment we left Marronia and travelled to the sunniest places one can imagine. The jungle, countries where extra terrestrials lived, space, and of course... the moon. That last one, it was without a doubt my favourite place. Each night, leaning



Nadia tenía 5 años. Era bajita y morena. Con el pelo moreno corto y rizado. Sus ojos eran enormes y negros.



EN MARRONIA EN MI FAMILIA

on the tiny window of my house, I silently contemplated, imagined that one day, the stories I heard from my brother would become reality.

Putting happiness aside, the economic situation in my country wasn't good at all. My father worked all day, and on top of that, what he earned hardly sustained the family. That was why we decided to come to Blanconia. Blanconia was a marvellous place, full of light, sun and colour. The towns were big and with lots of fun things for the boys and girls could play and learn.

My family and I visited several towns, some larger, some smaller until we decided to stay in the largest. My father said that in the capital (also named Blanconia), there would be more opportunities to have a good job.

Right away I noticed that there were different customs of the country where he was born.



BLANCONIA ERA  
MUY BONITA



said.

Their cooking was also different because they used other ingredients and other forms of cooking. To me it seemed especially rich, most of all the ham, tortilla chips and the candies.

I also noticed that some days they prepared and deco-

rated streets and parks and everyone came out to celebrate the important things. Everyone seemed happy... they called this a feast, or a festival or a pilgrimage. These were fun times especially because the boys and girls didn't have to go to school and we did different things ... however we had to ask mother or father what the subject/theme of the party was because I didn't understand it.

One time here in Blanconia, mother and father started working in the countryside, sometimes they would pick strawberries, I remember that there was a long time on the farm when the hard winter hit and we had to collect the winter harvest of olives, and on one occasion, we had to leave for a long period of time only to leave to collect the grapes. They worked hard, so hard, much more than they would have liked; even so, with all the work they did, they didn't earn very much money.

I didn't understand it, I didn't understand why my parents had to be away so long, or why they didn't have time to play with me, laugh together, or hug each other. I didn't understand why they always seemed sad, tired and mostly concerned about the food.

I can still remember how tired they were when they got home, as his hands were rough and his cheeks were rosy from the cold. They worked day after day, working towards their only goal of their lives: to give their children a better life.

I will always be grateful.

When we arrived at Blanconia there weren't more people than in Marronia, but gradually more and more families began arriving in search of a new life and opportunities that would allow them to be happy and smile like the people of Blanconia do. Everyone had a dream, they all dreamed of a better life.

Things went well at first but little by little, people starting coming, more and more people from foreign places, the people of Blanconia started to get angry, to yell about the fear of the unknown:

- They have no right to work our jobs!
- Go back to your country!

- They're taking away everything!
  - Our kids shouldn't be friends with your kids!
- The sounds still echo in my ears, all the conversations and nonsense that echoed through the streets, on television, in supermarkets... The truth is that at the time



I was a girl that didn't look like other girls. My physique was very different than that of other girls from Blanconia.

I was a five year old girl, shorter than other girls my age. Furthermore, I wasn't slender, but rather plump, and this made my classmates laugh and tease me. In addition to that, the colour of my skin was another thing people didn't like. I was not as white as milk, I was brown, brown like chocolate. I loved it, but it seemed as though the other kids didn't like it very much.

My mom said I was a lovely girl, but I could not see myself as beautiful as she described me to be.

I had a round face; it highlighted my two huge black eyes, black as coal, and my long eyelashes.

My hair was also black, short and very frizzy.

I must admit that I remembered my village fondly, there in Marronia, my cottage, my friends, and the happy times we had. But that was not all, the story does not end there, it's only the beginning of a small part of my life, the life of Nadia the astronaut.

One thing that I liked was that I was always cheerful and always laughing. And when I smile, on my cheeks, dimples appear that give me the look of a sweet and nice girl.

Also, something that distinguished myself from the other girls from Blanconia, were my hobbies and my games. While most girls in this country entertained themselves by dressing their beautiful dolls, taking them out for walks in their carts and feeding them, I imagined that Samira, my rag doll, and I would travel to the moon. The same moon that I would think about, night after night, from the window of my house in Marronia.

Gradually, this desire to travel to the moon became stronger. I made my imaginary adventures up all by myself. Samira would no longer accompany me. I imagined building a large spacecraft for her and she would visit the corners of space.

When I started school in the new country, I had big problems adapting, especially since I didn't know the language and it was very hard to communicate. Also, on occasion I would come home very sad because I felt alone, I seemed to have started a war between two countries and we should distance ourselves. My classmates looked at me weird, some played with me and I felt the happiest



in the world, but suddenly something happened and I felt as though nobody was on my side, then I returned to play alone.

This is why I started imagining that I was an astronaut, who had their own spaceship, and who flew and flew, I felt free.

One day I began to imagine that if I was an astronaut, I could observe the whole world, from the highest point, without anybody seeing me. I could see how people behaved, what other countries were like: their clothes, customs, and typical food, language and how they interacted...

I thought that if I was an astronaut I could create a bet-



ter world, I could watch people, learn of their culture, I could enrich myself from everything that I learned and I could come down and out of my spaceship and tell everyone what the other people were like, and not be afraid of the unknown countries.

One night when I was sound asleep (I even slept through a storm), bundled up to my head, I began to dream of travelling into space in my spaceship.

At the beginning, the dream was strange; it was a surprise to discover that there is really life outside of Earth. Yes, life there was not how I imagined, or at least not like the movies and shows that I can watch on television.

There, the people didn't have green skin, or eyes on the tops of their heads like an alien. Neither their hands nor feet were webbed like a frog, they didn't have slimy skin either. No, they weren't like that.

Inhabitants of the area were of many, many colours. Some were pink, others yellow, red, blue, green. Others' bodies had stripes or circles. I even saw some with their bodies full of drawings, very happy drawings.

So when it comes to space, I felt like an outsider. Outsider, not only by appearance, but because they all sang, jumped, hugged and ran from one side to the other, and the smallest seemed the happiest. They played with each other, sat together, no one yelled, and no one had a frown on their face.

That is the reason why I felt most like an outsider. As you know, in the country in which I live, things are not that way. The people are angry, angry because of the colour of their skin, kids don't play together, nobody smiles, their faces are constantly angry, and you only hear people blaming each other. In my country, the colours cannot be together, people are separated by the colour of their skin and their culture.

Such was my surprise that I could not help but stop one of those people. I needed to know how it was possible to have a life like the one it seemed they lived. So I didn't think and just stopped one of them.

"Excuse me! Good evening, my name is Nadia".

After I introduced myself, a strange but cheerful resi-

dent looked at me thoughtfully for a moment, and replied in astonishment:

"I think you need a little colour, the colour of happiness in life".

In that moment I did not understand what that person meant, but later, during the conversation I understood what that wise inhabitant told me when they saw me. I decided to tell them my story, the story of the country where I lived, to tell them why we fought and why I couldn't play with all the other children.

I needed to know how they managed to live and be happy without caring that everyone was different. After a while they answered.

"You're crazy! How can you be judge people only by having different coloured skin? In my country everyone is equal. Colours just cheer us up, and make us smile. We have learned that each of us can help each other, we can teach each other new things, as well as learn something ourselves. Our eyes are not programmed to see differences in people from their colour or way of thinking. Our eyes are programmed not to fall down, but to jump, to do things in everyday life. In our country our eyes only see the good in people, wherever they come from, they always bring something positive, teach us unfamiliar things, tell us stories, try new flavours and learn new ways of communicating. This is how we've become so happy, we are happy for the simple fact that we are people and have other people with us to teach us to grow to be better".

That's when I understood what that strange inhabitant told me when we met. I realized that colours brighten life; the colours can mean very positive things and that people, thanks to the different colours, can become better people and learn more about life. And most of all I learned that colour doesn't matter, that different cultures and skin colours do not have to make people sad, we can all live together, and be happy.

This dream made me think, and think even more. For many days I was mulling over how I could help the people in Blanconia and Marronia to become happier. I was very lucky to even understand the things the people did not know and that I could help them become better, more understanding and blissful.

One night, I imagined that thanks to me, a law was created, the best law that had ever been created, a universal law that was obeyed by all. People around the world smiled, hugged, and were happy.

I can still remember that law in my dream, commandments of coexistence that everyone held as their values. I remember that in my dreams I believed in a better world, a world in which...

- Children from all places played together without discrimination.



- All children went to school, learned to read and write. All were treated the same way, and they had equal opportunities.
- Everyone was free and felt safe.
- There was no distinction based on race, colour, culture, or language. Everyone was equal.
- Everyone had the right to speak and be heard.
- Swear words did not exist: no one got insulted, or yelled at.
- In this new world, everyone acted with respect and tolerance. No one was less than anyone else.
- All children had a right to be protected, to grow up happy.
- To have a nice home, food, and medical care for when we get sick.
- For all adults to give us understanding and love.
- To enjoy games, along with games that we are taught and are fun.
- To be the first to be rescued and cared for in case something does not go well.
- That we are surrounded by love, understanding, friendship and justice.
- That if a child is born with a disability that prevents them from doing some things, that they are helped and understood by all.
- To accept us as we are and help us to grow up happy. This is why ever since I was little I wanted to be an astronaut. At first, my companions criticized me, because I liked spaceships more than dolls. I wanted to be an astronaut so bad that one day I climbed to the top of the swings in the park to touch the moon and the stars. When I grew older, I saw my peers leaving and for-



getting about their dolls and cars to start doing new things, like they started going out, playing sports, but to me, not much else mattered, I kept wanting to be an astronaut, I wanted to achieve my dream and I was determined to do so.

The years passed and I arrived at the high school. My situation started to change more and more, each time I was rejected and the kids made fun of me when they heard that I wanted to be an astronaut. There were some very hard years, sometimes I wanted to throw in the towel.

Each time I heard that being an astronaut was a man's job, that I should study to have a different profession that I could practice and was destined for me. Day after day, and year after year I heard the same story.

Tired of the situation, I decided to go study at a Specialized Space Investigation Centre.

That centre was on the outskirts of town.

I was impressed by how big the buildings were; they were next to and surrounding gardens. It didn't look like anything at the elementary or high school where I had previously studied.

Without anybody noticing me, I wandered into the buildings and

snuck into classrooms...I saw some students and quickly realized that they were all boys.

I already envisioned myself seated at one of the many desks, using one of the computers, reading books about space in that beautiful, enormous library, training at the gym, talking about my dreams and aspirations with my new classmates.

To me, this was the road to happiness.

The first step, and maybe the last step also, was to ask

for an application from the receptionists seated next to the entrance, the ones that when I walked in looked at me with a strange face.

When I got the courage, they looked at me in astonishment, they showed me where I could find the director of the centre. When I entered their office and told them about my dream, they had a big laugh while neglecting my future when I was describing my dreams and aspirations. I refused her request. I explained and argued that I had an IQ higher than many of the employees that already worked there, that I could do a good job, that I was fully able. But it didn't help or matter, he maintained his composure, because of the mere fact that I was a female.

In that moment all my dreams were crushed. I understood that the problem in this world wasn't only to solve people's problems in certain countries, their disputes, confrontations, but also, as a woman to strive for a better world in which everyone had room and nobody would be despised by the issue of gender, that everyone would have dreams and that they would come true.



I didn't understand that type of discrimination. In my mind I had lots of ideas at once: "I am able"... "I would like to be..." ... "if I study and prepared enough I'll get it"... but on the other side there was "they won't let me"... "I'm a woman and this is

for men"... "some men aren't able to but they let them because they are men"

What I was sure about was one thing: that the ability to do something doesn't reside in what gender you are, or the colour, or where you are from...

it's in the person you are and your likes and interests. I think I still have a ways to go on my journey, but if I go on it, lots of other little girls can follow my example. So, I will arm myself with value, for me and for the other girls.  
I thought, What can I do to make a world in which we all be equal whatever the origin, sex, culture,...?

I think it is necessary a thing for me, to have the strength to realize my wish to become an astronaut. I need to preserve the stories I dreamed when I was a child, and which gave me the same great strength I need now, to carry on my dream... in the name of the reciprocal respect between all the people and in the name of the right of each one to be free to express himself. And I want to tell you something about my trips towards my "parallel realities"...

When I was a child, every time I woke up I was always in front of the window in the moonlight, the moon that made me dream, it made me become a tireless traveller



of the space with many coloured stars and many planets. Samira smiled happily with me. She always shared my adventures of misunderstood astronaut.

I had built my spaceship with cards and cardboard, but for me it was made in stainless and my big eyes saw it big, huge. I imagined to sit down inside and to drive in the boundless sky.

One evening, some of my playmates told me: "Look at you, you're so strange, you're too brown! Are you sick?". I was ashamed and I felt different... I felt increasingly alone sad, so much that I gave a long look at my spaceship ... and I went away!

The planets of all colours revolved around me in all the directions, then a planet hit my spaceship and I stopped.

The planet seemed to be enveloped in a strange magic... all around it was quiet, the cars proceeded without noise, people walked compound, everything seemed to have an order and all the people respected the rules. Cleaning, clear air... indeed, it looked like to be "another world".

Unexpectedly, a group of persons came out from a big door, holding hands, more and more people approached. I saw something particular in them: their skin was coloured. Many colours ... There were green, blue, fuchsia people...

Probably, my face expressed such wonder that those strange people looked at me and said: "Why are you so surprised? Are you afraid of us?". I said: "No, I'm not afraid, I'm just marvelled at your colour, I've never seen people like you". They answered: "But, for us, it is an advantage; it is easy to recognize us; on this planet, you have just to look at the colour of the skin and you can know who you're talking with: the green ones are those who are concerned with the environment, the blue ones are those which deal the administration of the planet, the fuchsia ones arrange for the wellbeing of everybody".

At that moment I was ashamed of myself, I was amazed of the colour of skin... just me, because of the brown

colour of my skin, I had felt offended by my friends, and this only because they had pointed out this to me! Maybe I was getting bad as them...

The strange people told me that I was not bad, I was not wont to live serenely the existence of the differences. I was not able to appreciate the value of the differences. One of them said: "It's nice to be different, don't you think?" and I said: "I was only thinking, and I didn't say my thoughts aloud. How can you know what I think?" They began to look each other and smiled; then, they looked me and said: "We read in your heart, we understand through the heart, we don't even need to talk. And the heart, as you know, has only one colour. Do you want to know what is its colour?

It is the colour of love, of friendship, of tolerance, of comprehension".



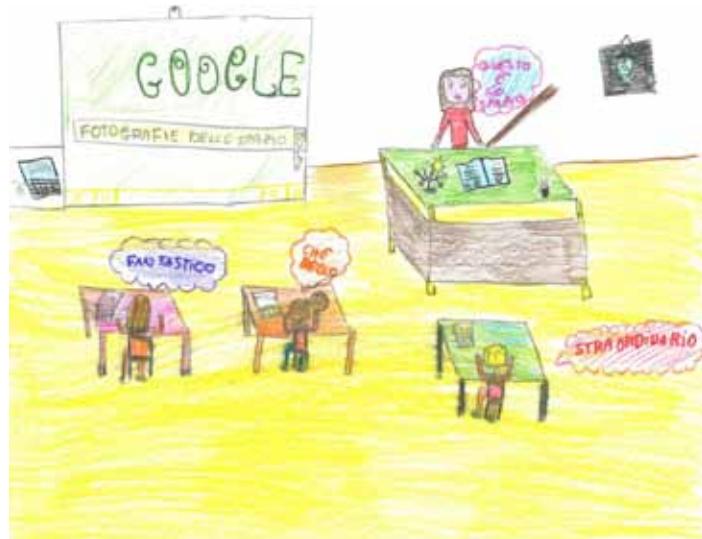
Suddenly, I started again to turn around... my spaceship seemed to be crazy! With my head down, I looked at my bare brown feet, then they became blue, then green, then pink...but what does it matter? The colour of my skin does not matter, because I felt to have a heart which can speak... yes, it can speak about love, about friendship, about many beautiful things which I could give to the others, because I was a good girl.

After each trip, I found again myself looking out the window of my room, when there was not the moon anymore in the sky, but the sun lit up the room and announced that another day was going to begin. Come back to the reality, I could not know what was waiting for me, but I knew that I could be able to face everything with more strength, with more serenity.

Samira, next to the spaceship, waited for the astronaut who, in the evening, brought her in such fantastic planets... I had to face another day, then I'd come back to Samira, and we would have been able to live together another adventure!

When the sun, very tired, greeted the sky and yielded its place to the moon, only in those moments I took again my spaceship to drive it among thousands of stars.

After breakfast, I went out with my brothers and my parents to go to school. While I was in my desk, I often thought about when I would become an astronaut.



One day, I had the opportunity to tell it in my notebook, because the teacher gave us a task: "When I will grow, I want to be...". At the end, she read all the works aloud, and when it was my turn, my friends laughed. I did not understand why. Maybe they thought that this was not a suitable job for me.

I felt hurt and I thought: "Will I ever have, indeed, the right to wish to become someone, to be able to do what I love, to do the work I want?"

But my friends were unable to read the heart, so they could not know my wishes, my thoughts. My wish to become an astronaut was already so great that I started to dream to travel in space also during the day. So, while my friends ate their snack, I drew on a sheet my spaceship. While I watched the snacks of my friends dripping with jam and chocolate, I departed with the spaceship for a new dream...

Once, I "stumbled" in a small planet while I looked the snacks of my friends dripping with jam and chocolate... The people of that planet was different: someone was beautiful, strong but evil; others were ugly, gelatinous but good. The bad persons ruled the planet without saying why they did bad things. The good persons had only to obey and to work for everybody.

When I went out of the spaceship, all the people, both good and bad, were scared and even the strong ones ran away. I was not so sorry to frighten someone. Until then, I was always scared and offended; finally, for the first time, someone was frightened by me.

Then, someone came close to me and I asked why everybody escaped. The gelatinous guy said that we were on the planet of the Fear, and also who seems to be strong, effectively he was only for defence, so everybody had escaped, good and bad ones.

"You should respect each other – I said – Everybody should work, have rest when you're tired, help each other, try to talk with the heart."

Slowly, all the people of the little planet, who were hidden not very far and had heard my words, came close. They hugged... finally, they were able to show each other their friendship, their affection. Thereafter, they were friends and I was rewarded with a heart-shaped stone...

My shoulder moved... my classmate tried to bring me back to reality. I raised my head and I looked him. He indicated the paper on which I drew the spaceship.

He liked it, so he asked if I could give it to him, then he said: "You're great in drawing, can you draw the aliens too?" So, I drew those gelatinous guys which I just met. He, James, was happy and he said that they seem to be like marmalade, the same marmalade of his own sandwich!

Thereafter, my classmate and I became friends; a little gift, a sheet, had showed him that I was there. I was a very creative girl, I loved to draw, to build objects, to paint. I liked to illustrate the space where I flew with my spaceship.

After the snack, the teacher continued to read our works, but I didn't follow, I was distracted in my dreams, but at a certain point I heard: "When I will grow, I will be an astronaut, I will study to become it, I will do many things..."

It was James' work, I already knew that there were many similarities between us. But no one laughed of him, like they did with me, because he was a man, not a woman as me, so it was possible to be an astronaut, for him.

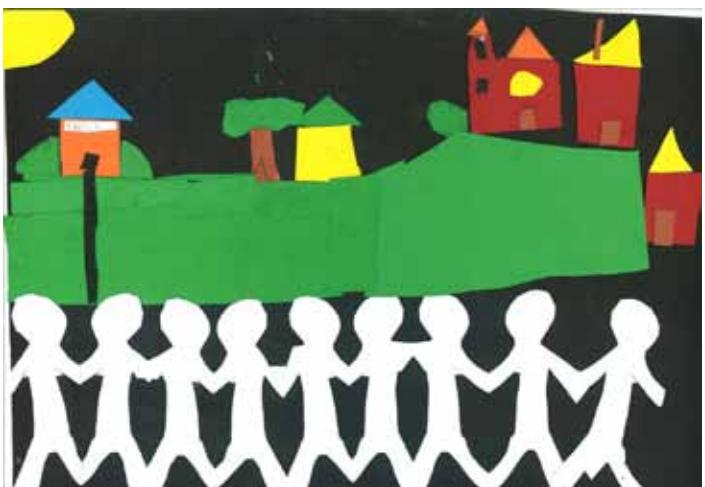
But I didn't accept, I wasn't resigned! However, thereafter, there have been always a beautiful friendship between me and James, so strangely, born from a paper... only a drawing, but very precious.

That evening, I was again on my spaceship, and close to me there was just him! My friend James, and obviously Samira, my beloved doll. The spaceship departed, I looked around me and I understood that it was the spaceship which I drew for James, the paper spaceship... and where could we land, better than a paper planet? Under our feet, the land creaked, the planet was different from the others; their people, with the houses and their sweet "waving", lulled by the wind, looked us with diffidence. "Strangers between us" they said, "they will destroy our image!". They kidded. A tissue paper girl said: "But look! You are so strange! Too hard! You will destroy us!"

We were embarrassed, and more and more sad, while the number of the little paper creatures grew more and more; however, they were so courageous...

"Don't be afraid" James said, "We don't want to destroy you, we love to play with the paper, so we can built all that you need!"

So, we discovered that they needed many tools and help for their children. They hadn't any schools, nursery schools, gardens to play, and they were everybody equal; they have been created all bonded, as they hold by hand. They needed paper, scissors and many colours,



always colours, because they colour the life.

We started to work and James and I, as two architects, projected, drew, cut and stood on that planet schools with all the necessary tools, desks, chairs, blackboards, and even books, and nursery schools for the youngest children, with gardens full of games, and then we helped the children to enter. We separated them with a cut between the hands, and immediately their cry of joy filled the schools, the nursery schools, the gardens.

Finally, they were happy... happy and free to play as real children. That planet had become wonderful, more beautiful than the Earth.

At a certain point, a voice reached my ears: "Nadia! Very good! Beautiful! You have made wonderful drawings; it looks like you are following James' drawings, as if you have made an agreement! You have drawn a wonderful country, full of light, green and spaces for children".

Then, my dream wasn't only a dream! I was in class and

my teacher appreciated my works. Finally, from some days, someone out of my family saw me.

I remember particularly a moment, some days later. While the paper spaceship was spinning, to the left and to the right, I looked at it from outside and saw James sitting in the spaceship... but suddenly, it was swallowed by a black hole!

I lost him from my sight! Where was he? What was there in that black hole?

Desperately, I turned my eyes around, but I could not see anything. A black smoke covered everything. The moon and the stars disappeared, too.

I heard some voices from faraway, which said: "Give it to me! It's mine! I've found it on the ground, then it's mine!"

That voice was so arrogant! Who was he? What did he want?

I looked for James, but I could not find him, until I did not hear him crying: "But in this way you break the she-



ep! That's my spaceship! Nadia drew it for me!"

The oldest classmate had taken the drawing of the spaceship which I gave to James; it had fallen to the ground and now the arrogant classmate owns it. That is how the black hole was born, because anyone who behaves in that way with others have no hope of having

friends, real friends, but only people who want to profit of you, of your properties, things which they don't possess, so they are attached to a sheet, too. Jealousy and envy bring us to the wish to possess more and more, to be absolute chief on everything.

"The war begins in this way", I thought close to my window that evening, in the darkness, while a great storm with wicked black clouds came close. So, I stretched on my bed and my spaceship, though the storm, I departed.

Between thunders, thunderbolts and rain, I saw a planet, and from the high the scenery was very strange: the planet seems to be divided in the half, with the sunlight in a part and the deep dark in the other part. It was clear that in the other part the sun didn't rise anymore. An habitant of the other part came close to me and described terrible images: the sea with terrible smells, yellow and brown rivers. I was very worried and I began to ask myself what had happened.

"Why don't you understand? You destroyed everything from the mountains to the sea with your buildings, your rubbish and above all your indifference for the Nature!". In this way a strange creature talked, appearing behind me suddenly.

"What can we do to put right it?" the habitant of the dark part asked. "We're worried because our children will not see the beauty of our planet".

What could I do for them? I could ask to the habitants of the sunny half to start again to live everybody in the same way.

So, I went in the sunny part, where everybody were busy in giving water to flourishing fields, in cultivating flowers and gain fruits from the trees.

When they saw me, everybody stopped, their faces became bad and one of them said: "What do you want?"

"We've come in peace, we need your help because in the other part of the world it's dark! We can't live anymore!"

"You wanted this, you couldn't appreciate the environment! You destroyed your part of the planet, it's your problem!"

But a strange creature came close and said: "Maybe we should give them another chance! Maybe they are not so bad! Why don't we unite our planet again? I am too sorry for the future of the children: in this way, they will not have a home, will be hungry, will not play anymore! Their role is to be children, not to live between the disasters provoked by adults".



"Who are you, so worried for everything?" I asked.

But suddenly a terrible thunder woke me up and I found myself in my bed, without an answer. I thought: "Who knows if one day someone will think about our planet too, and to the future of the children who will live here?"

The next morning, the sun shined again and lighted the city, rising in a clear day. I remember very well that day, because there was not school, it was Sunday and I hoped to spend it in family, with my parents. So, I went in the kitchen and I found my mom, busy close to the stove, in preparing the lunch.

I began to chat with her and to ask what could we do during the day. But she asked: "Nadia, I can't lose time, I'm in hurry, I have to finish to prepare the lunch, because today I have to work and I can't stay at home."

I said: "But, mom, today is Sunday, why can't we stay all together?"

And my mother said: "My dear, don't you know that we

need money to go on? This is the moment of the grape raising and I can gain some money more."

"So, can I stay with dad, can I show him all my drawings? Can he help me to do homework?"

But my mother answered: "I'm sorry, but you have to renounce to him, too, because he has to come with me. If we work together, we can do it in less time and we can gain more."

So, I came back in my bedroom, I took Samira in my arms and I told her everything with all my anger. It looked like the doll listened to me, while I said: "Every time I ask someone to give me attention, they answer "I can't, I'm in hurry", "I can't, I'm running to work", "I can't, I have to cook".

Bored, I gave a fast sight to my bedroom: all around there was a great disorder, some dresses were spread on the bed, shoes were thrown on the carpet, the bag was sadly abandoned in an angle... everything observed me, almost asking me to do homework, but if I looked outside the window, I saw a beautiful sun!

Then, I looked at my spaceship, and it was strongest than me! I couldn't concentrate on my homework, I was still too angry to spend another Sunday alone.

So, I put Samira on the spaceship and I departed.

From the high, I could see a strange place, with strange movements. I could see some objects which hurtled, but when I went down and closed there, I could see that they were people who ran.

I parked my spaceship and I went down, always trying to talk with someone to ask what was happening, why everybody ran away.

Only one of them was interested to answer my questions, and he said:

"Nothing is happened, we're going to work, we're in hurry, we have to move fast, we can't lose time!"

So, everybody told they had to hurry up, it was just the planet of the Hurry!

Without wanting it, I began to run, even if without a destination.

But, so strange, I could not see any child! Where were

them? There were not children who talked with me on that planet!

Suddenly, I saw them: closed in their houses, without a smile.

Between thousands of games, in luxurious houses, but alone, without talking with anyone, or telling their own fantasies, or listening to tales from someone adult. I came close to a house where a child played with a kite, and I asked him:



"Why you are so sad and alone? Where are your parents?"

"They're at work... they go out every day in great hurry and come back when we already sleep. They do this so we can have everything, to give us richness."

"But are you sure that you don't miss anything? Your faces are so sad! Don't you miss their love, their presence, their hugs?"

"What does love mean?" the child said. "I don't know it! Is it a game?"

"Love is the hug of a beloved person, of someone who doesn't think only to give you material things, but is closed to you, who spend time with you, who listen to you, who comforts you when you have problems..."

"Shut up! This doesn't exist here, we don't have this! We can't think to this, or we risk to lose our wellness!"

"My dear, these are feelings, and they rise up from the

heart... but maybe you can't understand! You have not heart!" I said to that child, and on his face a tear dropped. A great melancholy pervaded him.

While I tried to comfort him and to remember him how to start again to love and how to convince of this the others too, I heard someone who called me with insistence:

"Nadia! Nadia! ... We're come back!" The voice of my mother brought back me to the reality. They came back before; we could have lunch together, we could spend a bit of time around our table and we could talk about many things!



That afternoon, I showed all my drawings to my parents and my brothers. They did me many compliments and they asked me why I drew planets and spaceships. So, I told my dream to all of them: to become an astronaut. They were proud and told me that they could do everything possible to help me to realize my dream.

In the evening, after the beautiful afternoon with my family, I thought to my last fantastic travel: who knows if all the children can be listened and surrounded of love and affection as it had been for me in that day?

I was still a child and I needed pampering, and in the evening, in my bed, I loved to do many wonderful dreams.

That night, before to fall asleep, I felt a smell of cake, so I went in the kitchen, where my mother had just cooked a cake for me and my brothers!

So, we sat again at the table and we ate a great piece. I felt their affection...

Now yes, I was ready to sleep!

Samira looked at me, it looked like that she was happier, too. I said:

"Don't look me in that way!... I know, I had to do my homework, but today I've spent happy hours with my family! I don't care about homework!"

In my bed, soon I fell asleep and dreams arrived...

That night, my spaceship ran fast on hundreds of planets without stopping, it couldn't land, or maybe it didn't want...

My life continued peacefully.

I've always talked about my wish to my parents, who have always share my idea to prosecute the studies.

My brothers work with my parents, who have been able, with their sacrifices, to buy a field to cultivate and to build a farm with many animals and many products to sell to the traders of our town.

This has been the decisive year for my future: to help them to cultivate and produce or to "cultivate" my dream.

James was my best friend, not for the colour of the skin,



but because we loved each other... Now we are adults, each of us is gone for his own road... surely, not the space, but our own route of study.

I've attended the lyceum of my town; James, instead, moved out in another town, not far from here. However, we are in contact almost every day through messages by phone or e-mail.

Sometimes we meet because, especially on Saturday evening, we go out with our friends and he come with us.

When I meet James, I often invite him to home for lunch or for dinner, before to go out.

In my room, there are still my paper spaceship and Samira.

Each time, James takes them and smiles. He repeats always the same: "Do you remember those great adventures we faced with them?"

How could not I remember? In those adventures, there were all my drawings of a misunderstood child.

One day, he asked if I still thought to become an astronaut. "Sure!" I answered.

"Almost all the children have the dream of being an astronaut, but then, when they grow up, they change idea. Instead, you are stubborn and continue to dream!" I didn't dream... I really wanted to become an astronaut!

One evening, James told me that he wanted to go to university to begin the studies of architecture, and then he said:

"Do you remember the paper planet? I had already decided to become an architect."

So, he had his own dream, and he already had done his choice.

Who knows how many children are able to become what they dream when they were children?

However, both of us have finished our secondary school and we have been brilliant.

But, to continue my studies, I have to move to the capital and begin the study of engineering, and then, in particular, aerospace engineering.

Do I dream or am I still on the Earth??

I can't believe yet, while the speaker in the station announces the arrival of my train.

Out of the train, I begin to walk toward my future. I am on my feet, not on a spaceship. It's my new adventure which is going to begin, the real adventure, which will define all my life.

In the street of the university, many boys and girls, like



me, go towards their own future, towards the person which will become. Someone will have success, someone will stop. But I am sure, I will become an astronaut. I tell to myself: "Nadia, you're arrived until here... don't stop, you can do it!"

I enter in that room which I saw so many times in my dreams, when I was a child. It was not a dream anymore. There are really many computers, many boys and some girls like me. So, something is really changing in my life...

I begin to chat a bit with my colleagues. Surely, we are not everybody similar... But in this place, it looked like no one is interested to the colour of my skin and to my imperfect pronounce... they understand me.

Then, I've gone to visit the house where I will live. I have known my roommates!

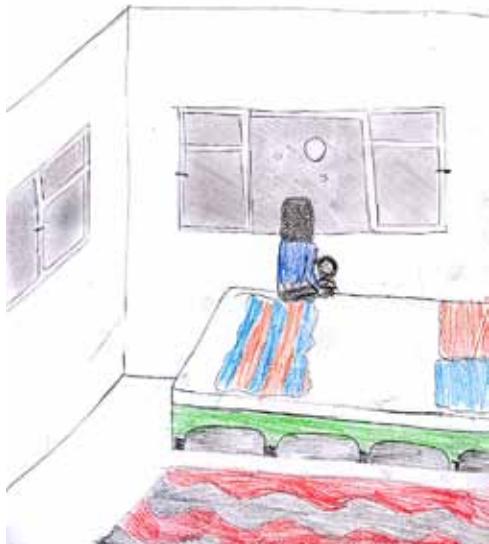
But my first action in my new home has been to find a

place for Samira. Yes, my beloved doll. Testimony of my sufferings and of my route. Yes, it is a bit ruined, consumed for all the time spent to "travel" together.



Other travels waits for us... and other time must pass, for the realization of my dream... She has to be witness of my adventures which continue...

I like my new house very much. It is near the university and this is a great advantage for me. It is small, but a very restful place. The most important things for me are my flatmates, Fatima and Amina. They were my childhood friends many years ago. We were together and playing all day when we were four in Marronia. They were my playmates. How quickly the time has passed? It is a great chance to be at the same university with them although we are at the different branches. I love them very much. I remember my old, happy life whenever I see them. Fatima studies physics engineering and Amina studies genetic engineering. We live in a house with three rooms. Each of us has her own room. While tidying up my room, I took my bedroom in front of the window. Surely, I put Samira on it in order to continue our adventures together. My room's view is a crowded street. While watching out, sometimes I dream. I dream with Samira. She is always with me. She is my doll who has



My most valuable thing was falling and I couldn't catch her. I jumped to catch her. I was also falling and this was a different feeling for me. I got cold, I felt the wind. I thought that I couldn't take breath after a while because one of our teacher had said:

- There is no air in space. Because of this reason, astronauts have special clothes. They have a special helmet. There is air in it.

But I could take breath and still live. I was falling, falling, but couldn't arrive at anywhere I thought that I would fall forever and ever. I remembered my teacher again, she had said:

- The space is infinite if you fall anything in space, you can't find it. Because it stays in air and goes on falling. I couldn't see Samira. Was she going on falling? I thought falling was enjoyable. I was in space. Where I wanted to be. Infinite space... If Samira was with me, it would be more enjoyable. "Flying with my friend through infinite space." It would be great. This friendship was the most important thing during my life. I couldn't live without her.

Suddenly I felt a cold place. I felt down, but no pain. I

been my friends for years. She has been the witness of my dreams for years.

We were in my spaceship. Samira also loved these travels like me. While passing different planets, I heard a scream.

"No! Samira..." Samira was falling quickly.

I stood up and there was no problem. I looked around me. I was in a planet I was sure because I had read a lot of books and magazines about the planets. I knew this planet. There were craters and hillocks on its surface. I tried to see Samira. Was she also here? I saw something, but I wasn't sure. I tried to run, but I couldn't. I was flying again. Oh! I found her. I hugged her. I missed her very much. Anyway, how could we go back? I saw our spaceship, but it was far away. I looked around and saw someone who was coming towards us.

However, they were strange, different from us. They had antennas on their heads. They had one eye, one mouth but no nose. They had two arms and legs, but no hands or feet. They were green. I wasn't afraid of them. There were 10 aliens. They were coming near us. They looked at us and made some signs. One of them tried to take Samira. I didn't give her.

He asked:

- Who are you? How could you come here?

- Oh my God! They knew our mother tongue, I said:

- We fell down. At first, Samira fell and I crossed over for her.

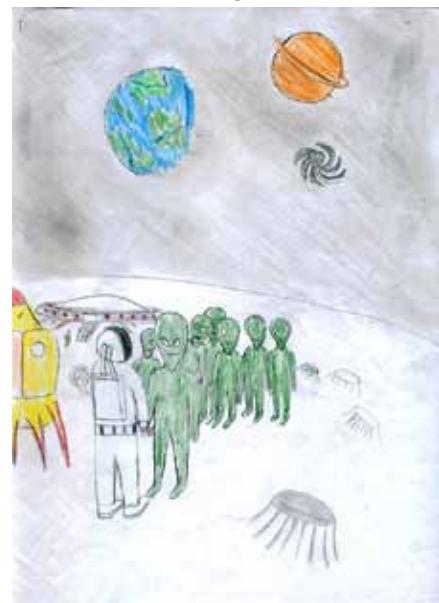
- For her? She can't talk, walk or see and you crossed over for her.

- Yes, of course. She is my best friend.

- Friend? What does it mean?

- Friend is someone who is always close to you, shares your pain, sadness, loves you and you love most.

- But she is not alive.



- However I know that she can understand me. How can you speak our language?
  - We often go to the earth.
  - Where is here?
  - This was the Begonia Planet.
  - Begonia is a name of a flower, but there aren't any flowers here. Why do you call Begonia here?
  - As I said, we often go to the earth. Once, we fell into a Begonia garden. It was very beautiful. We learned these beautiful flowers' name and changed our planet's name.
  - Really? I always read and search about the space. But I don't know how to go back to the earth.
  - Why do you want to return to the World? If you want, you can stay here with your friend.
  - People can't live without eating, drinking or breathing. We can't stay or live here. Please, help us!
  - Ok! Wait here, said one of them. Two of the aliens went. After a while, we saw UFO. Its door was opened. While entering, I said:
  - We live in Blanconia. If you want to come, one day we can pick up begonias. I waved and the door was closed. I got excited while travelling with this big spaceship. We came near to our spaceship, thanked them and went to the spaceship. We started to go to the earth.
- When I woke up, I noticed that I got hungry. I went to the kitchen. I got some cheese and a tomato. I started to eat them with a piece of bread.
- I started to think that I wanted to go to the space. I was so eager for that. I switched on the TV.
- Oh. What is this news about?
- Announcer: A couple will go to Mars in 2018. They will live in a capsule during 501 days.
- I would be graduated till 2018. But I have to find the way to get a job at NASA. I can achieve my dreams and wish by this way. Do you agree, Samira? Can I achieve them?
- Fatima and Amina came back from the school. I got happy when I saw them. I could not wait to tell them the news and my new ideas. But the announcer said "a

couple will go". I might find someone who would share the same ideas and dreams with me, and who is crazy like me. I wanted to tell my secrets and dreams to Fatima, Amina and James. I couldn't tell to someone except them.

Fatima and Amina understood that I would tell something to them when they saw that I was so eager. Whenever I opened the door, they knew that I had a dream. We were so close friends. They knew all my dreams. I loved them very much. I found two girl friends, two sisters and they were always with me. They were very important for me. I couldn't bear to lose them. They never discriminated, about racial, gender, religious. We could share our ideas freely. I wanted them to sit on the sofa

Fatima: What's the matter, Nadia? Let us to change our clothes.

Amina: I want to drink coffee before you start to speak because I know, when you start to speak, you will talk during an hour. Coffee, please!

Nadia: Ok! Please, sit down. I'll come in a minute with three cups of coffee.

I ran to the kitchen and prepared the coffee. Coffee with milk for Fatima, coffee without sugar for Amina and coffee with sugar for me. I came to the living room and put the cups on the brown coffee table. Fatima asked:

- Where is my chocolate?

She never drank coffee without chocolate. But I didn't reply her.

Nadia: Ok. Now, listen to me, please.

- While drinking the coffee, I started to tell. When I finished, Fatima started to speak.

Fatima: You have planned all your life about these dreams. And you are very lucky because we can help you. You know I'm a student at Physics Engineering and Amina is a student at Genetic engineering. We only need an architect.

- Both of them looked at each other and smiled. I blushed and said:

- No! I don't need an architect.

They laughed.

Amina: We talked with Fatima about this subject. We saw an announcement about "the scientists who carry out a project." at the university. We were registered your name and James without asking you. We want you to achieve your dreams and this is a great chance for you. We want to help you.

- You are very kind. But James may not want to join. I wish you didn't register his name without asking.

Amina: Don't worry. He accepted. He came to the canteen and told us the project. He persuaded us. We went to near Amanda and told that we wanted to be in this project. She accepted and wrote our names.

Fatima: James said your name while she was writing.

I couldn't believe my thoughts had taken into consideration by James and girls. I hugged them. This was a serious job. We had to work all together. The girls went to their rooms. I stayed in the living room. There were so many CDs and magazines about science on our coffee-table. We had three alien toys on it. The green

one is mine, the red one is Fatima's, and the blue one is Amina's.

They represented the colours we liked most. Samira didn't have an alien toy, because we didn't know which colour she liked most. I loved this house very much. We hung the puzzles on the wall. We made them on the weekends. I had also a panel on the wall. There were some news about Greenpeace, some news about discrimination and science. Whenever I saw these news, I thought that I should work hard. Sometimes we watched a science-fiction film or a documentary about animals or nature. I wished everyone could be sensitive to animals and nature like us. I always thought what

could I do about overfishing, hunting, environment pollution while watching documentaries. Most of the people weren't aware of these. They didn't care about the news, activities. If they continued to hurt the animals and the environment, after a while everyone would be affected.

I went to the girls' room. I knocked the door and entered in. I told them to meet at the canteen at 12:00 tomorrow. They said me to call James and I said "Ok". I went to the kitchen and called James. He answered:

- Hi, Nadia!

- Hi, James. How are you?

- Fine, thanks. And you?

- Thanks. The girls talked me about the project.

- Yes.

- I think we should meet at the school canteen at 12:00 tomorrow to speak about it. Is it ok for you?

- Sure.

- Ok! See you at noon.

- Ok! Good evening.

- Good evening.

I told the girls that I called James. We prepared dinner. We cooked chicken and drank cola.

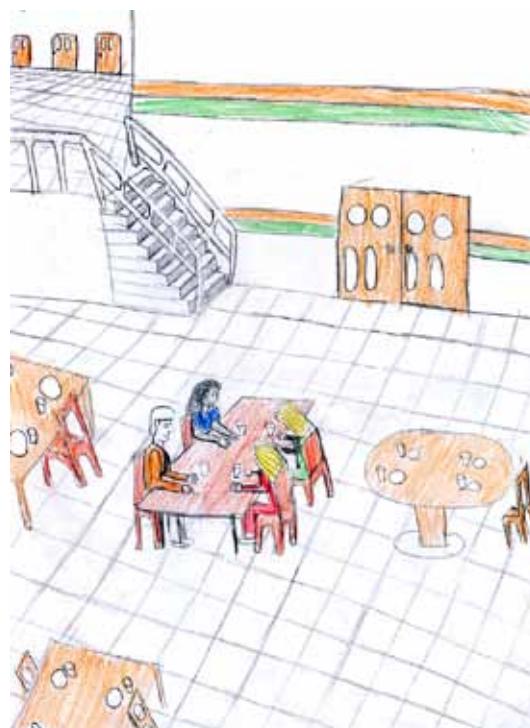
When the class finished, it was 12:00. I went to the canteen. I saw Fatima and Amina there. The canteen was very crowded. The students were having lunch. James was sitting at the table next to window. He was waiting for us.

- Hello James.

- Hi.

We were also hungry. Amina ordered four pizzas and four cans of coke. After the lunch, we cleaned the table in order to work here.

- Dear friends, I think we should do a different project I thought something last night. I know it is



difficult, but I believe that we can achieve. We will make a space shuttle.

Fatima: What?

Amina: What do you mean?

James: It is impossible.

Nadia: I don't think it is impossible. We will use the scholarship of the project. And all of us study in proper branches for this. We always search something about science and space. We always read magazines about them. We have enough information. We are hardworking students. We can search more things and achieve this.

James: Ok! But how can I help you?

Nadia: You will do the most difficult thing James. You will design a space shuttle. It should be available for space. We will need so many things.

James was seemed to lose his confidence. I tried to encourage him.

- James, some of your friends can help you. Such as Ali or some of your classmates. Ali is a Maths engineer-students. He can help you. We are still in 2013 and we have

time till June 2014.

A m i n a : Would you like to drink coffee while thinking?

J a m e s : Thanks, without sugar, please.

"Friends, I think that this excitement is enough for you today. If you want, we can produce some

alternative ideas about the topic for a couple of days. We can make researches. Let's also extensively search about the old spacecrafts and how the inside livings can survive the life and so many things like that. We can make reports about the researches and complete the topic for now till we gather around for more appropriate time." I said.

The girls and James said "okay". I think that they have been accustomed to the idea. They are no longer as surprised as before.

James: What do you think about Ali? Shall we add him to the team?

Amina: I think that you should talk to Ali. I am sure that it works, I have heard that he is also interested in the space and planets.

I have confirmed and decided to tell the idea to Ali. Ali came from Turkey to continue education and he was very intelligent and talented. If he had not been that intelligent, he would not have been able to win the maths engineering department. He was receiving scholarship.



His participation in the group was to contribute much. There would be new horizons, new ideas and in addition to that, James would be no longer alone. Neither James nor us could make any discrimination but, somebody with the same gender would relieve him much.

After the conversation in the school canteen, everybody returned to the lessons. After the lessons, we met with the other girls at the school door. We returned home and cooked something for dinner.

I mentioned Samira about what we had lived today the girls also got used to her. She had a chair with her table.



other and ourselves.

I took my laptop onto my legs and sat on my bed.

I placed Samira in my lap so that she could see it. I downloaded the previously made spacecrafts and searched the details one by one. I looked through the engine part, cabin part and the ignition part. Afterwards, I scanned each of them and copied the papers. Together with Samina, we also made some researches on paper. I left the note taking process for tomorrow. I had already signed with red pen on paper. The easiest part of the work was left for tomorrow. I looked at the time, it was

22.00. It was not late, I opened the curtains, outside stood the night with stars. I turned off the lights.

There was James near me and Samira in my laps. We were in a vehicle but this vehicle was not a car, train, plane or a ship. It was circle and made of glass. We could see the surroundings, it was the garden of the school. There was only clock in the vehicle that we were in. The clock trembled suddenly and we also did. We felt as if the vehicle had been revolving but we were not. The vehicle suddenly landed and when we looked at the time, we noticed that it was 8 o'clock but the year, oh my God; it was 3000 BC. I looked through the outside and saw that it was not the school garden. The upper part of the vehicle opened and there stood the stairs. We stepped onto the ground by means of these stairs. James was really surprised like me. Everywhere was all green. I could smell the nature deeply which I had never done before, all the flowers and trees. The scene was wonderful; the colourful flowers, green trees, a river and the waterfall that was flowing splashing downwards. There was small water pool near the waterfall and the cool clean air. The

most interesting one was the sky itself, it was lively blue and the sun was brighter. I was thinking about what was the reason of all the things around us and suddenly I felt James near me.  
-Nadia, do you think that we are in the year of 3000 BC. ?



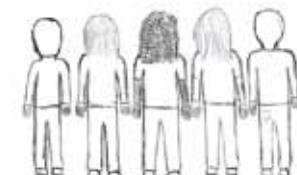
He was right and I could stay in the same year with James till the end of my life.

-What about wandering around Nadia? Is your cell phone working?

I was looking for the phone but neither James nor I could find them.

-Nadia, we are in the place where the cell phones are not available.

We walked with James through the inside of the vehicle. All around, there were animals that we never saw in the year 2000. But they gave no harm to us. The dinosaurs in the National Geographic, the primitive creatures, enormous crocodiles, everything was primitive. But the world was different. When we went towards the end of the trees, we saw a cave. In front of the cave, there were the first people that we got used to see in the history books. And they had founded the fire. They could not see us. One of them was gathering some sticks for the fire. They did not touch the branches of the trees because, there was not even the concept of harming the nature. The people around the fire was making noises



unclearly and we continued walking. We came to the spot where the river was. We would not be able to cross the river and we washed our face and hands in the clear water. There were all types of animals bounding inside the water. What a wonderful world... If the

technology did not exist, we could live the primitive but poor and clean life. I could only wish that.

We looked at each other. I noticed that we had never been so close and I said to him:

-There isn't anything, mobile phone, TV, computer, cars, trains, plains, no traffic, towers, schools. But there is a beautiful nature, the sky and the shining sun. I wonder if these people are primitive or are primitive? The World of 2013 is a world that tries to save the Greenpeace but can't achieve it.

James: We must accept the idea that whatever we do the World won't be the same as in the past. I will never live the real colours of the sun, the sky and the sea. Let's turn back.

We went back hand in hand. I was unhappy to leave these beauties. We took our car and the last time looked at the beauties we would never see again. James held my hand tightly in the sense of not to worry and I was holding Samira. The vehicle closed, it shacked again. When it stopped, we were in the school garden, again the buildings.

I woke up, looked Samira. She understood my feelings. But there was a new thing. I was thinking of James in these days. But I wonder if he thought of himself with a negro girl in his private life. Maybe she could be his friend but what about a girlfriend. Would he like me? Until now I had never looked at mirror whether I am beautiful or not and I wasn't Sofia who was the most popular girl in the school. Was the only beauty important for James?

There was a knock at the door. The girls went in. I told them about my dream. I asked them whether I'm beautiful or not. They were surprised. Because for them I was the candidate of science who reads a lot of books, studied on the computer about researches. They said that I was beautiful but I should have been careful about my hair and my clothes. I was a fat and short girl in the past. But now I am a middle weight and middle height girl. My back and legs are thin. I have long, wavy hair. I gather my hair all the time. Because it disturbs me while



Because my wardrobe was full of jeans and shirts. At last they found a suitable clothes for me. Then they left my room saying "Good bye".

The next day at the lunch break, I went to the table which James sat with his friends.

I felt that he was surprised or it seemed to me. I sat, I began to talk about my researches. He seemed not to listen. He was looking at my eyes. I thought he was influenced. Of course I was excited. I showed him my studies. He told about space shuttle and told that he talked to Ali and Ali would be happy to be with them in their group.

I decided to tell James about the Project "the travel of Mars in 2018". And I said;

"The American millionaire Dennis Pito who was the first space tourist, visited the national space station in 2001, had preparation of "Mars travelling". In fact NASA plans to send astronauts to Mars in 2030. But Tito's plan is in 2018. It plans to send a couple to Mars. This trip will begin on 5th January 2018 with the space shuttle's

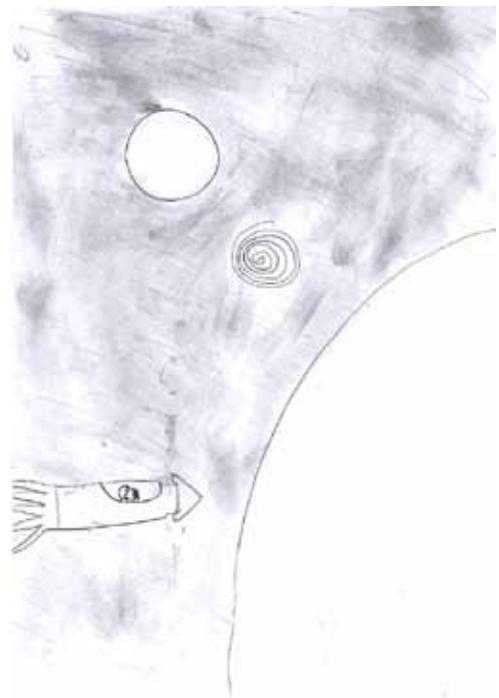
I'm studying. My friends understood my interest of James and this time they began to compliment on me. They looked at my wardrobe and tried to decide what I would wear the next day. They had difficulty in finding a good dress for me. launching into space and it will finish on 21st May 2019 with the space shuttle's turning back to the earth. On 20 August 2018, it will go about 160 km by Mars. It's a close distance. It may be great to see Mars closely." I took a break to my speech. I noticed the improving interest of James. James asked if I would you like coffee and I said "Yes". James went and turned back with two cups of coffee. He asked how long the trip would take and I went on my speech:  
"It will take about 501 days!" I said.  
He was shocked to hear, and he went on;  
"It is too long. A vehicle in the space, a couple and 501 days. A capsule without food, drinks, air, sun. It is hard to decide." My speech hadn't finished yet and I went on;  
"Tita Paragon is the owner of Space development Company and According to the Speech of manager a woman and a man will represent the humanity in the Space. If something goes wrong, they won't go back, if the journey of 2018 missed, the journey would be possible in 2031"

James: How much the journey will cost?

"1 or 2 million dollars."

James: Big money for the dreams coming true.

" Yes, James. You know I'm a lover of Space and my big dream is to be an Astronaut of NASA. The Project of "Scientists" is



an opportunity for me. If my Project of " space shuttle" is accepted, there will be a big luck for me, and if I am accepted by NASA, my dream of going the Journey of Mars in 2018 will come true. And there is someone in my mind." ???

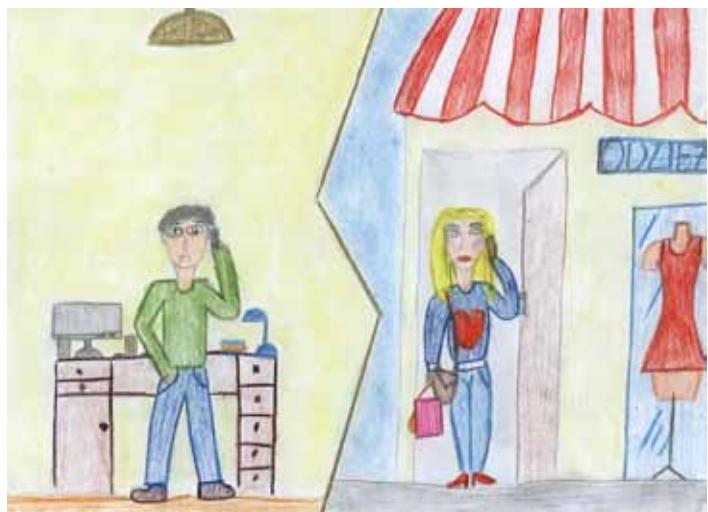
James: !!!

James was doing everything, except for his new project. His behaviour indicated that he was afraid of taking up a new challenge. Did he really feel that the new project went beyond his abilities? Maybe he made the decision rashly and now he wanted to think it over once more. Meanwhile, Nadia insisted on having an organizational project meeting. James knew how important it was to her, but even knowing it, he avoided the meeting. Nadia devoted all her free time to working on the project,



and James's attitude annoyed her. Her mind was haunted by a thought, that as a woman, her chances of making her dreams come true were very little.

James started his interest in partying and meeting friends, and because of that his relation with Nadia was getting worse. The girl spent all her savings on the project, and James wasted his money on alcohol and other stimulants. He started to lower marks at the university, and his achievements were also much worse



than before. At the end of the month he was obligated to pay the bill for the Internet, but he was short of money. Nadia learnt about it from the teacher, not even from James.

She phoned her friend immediately and started a serious conversation:

- James, I have just learnt that you are short of money and you cannot pay the rent.

James got angry:

- What's your point? It is not your business and your pro-



blems! Mind your life and leave me alone!

- The girl did not give up:

- You know, I have good intentions. Don't forget that we both take part in the project. We have to meet as soon as possible- she insisted.

- Nadia, there is no hurry- he said. We have a lot of time. Soon we will meet and discuss the details of the project.

- OK, I'll be waiting for a message from you, but please try to be quick because time flies!

After the talk with James Nadia had a dream about an unknown planet.

She was dreaming that she had just landed on Mars, which looked like the Earth. He heard the sound of the sea, she went in that direction, and she could feel the sand under her feet. Suddenly she saw the open arms of the ocean, it stretched as far as she could see. She could smell it, and in the distance the familiar voice could be heard, that sound she had heard many times in her dreams. The voice tempted her and encourage her to dip in the depths of the sea. She was walking as if she was hypnotized, and she felt that her heart was full of the joy. While she was just about to touch the blue depth of the sea, the voice stopped.

After waking up she felt that her blissful dream could become a reality. But Nadia also knew that she needed a lot of determination and a really strong belief, which would make her keep going.



Finally the time of the meeting with a friend came. After a long discussion, Nadia finally managed to convince James to borrow some money to pay for his education, he wasn't sure if he would be successful, but he promised to do his best.

All in all, Nadia and James were partners in the project and that required loyalty and honesty. He trusted her. They started working on the project again and designing the device which could move on the surface of Mars. It was necessary to have some knowledge on the structure of the planet. There were serious doubts as for the cost estimate calculation, which was an important and integral part of the project. Otherwise their project wouldn't be taken into consideration at the project selection stage.

Nadia was wondering if it was possible that in the deep geological past there was any evidence for the existence of liquid water on Mars. It is a key issue, which could help answer the question: Has there ever been any form of life on the Red Planet, or it was just in Nadia's dreams. She's read a lot about it in the scientific magazines, so she knew that a lot the knowledge about the life on Mars was submitted by a space probe mission, which took a photo of "Mc Laughlin" crater of the diameter of 92 kilometres and the depth of 2.2 kilometres. It turned out that on the bottom of the crater there are some

rock formations, which can only be created on the bottom of big tanks of water. There was a theory saying that this crater used to be a bottom of the lake where the rivers flowed into. She couldn't stop thinking about it. What could have possibly happened to that planet? Will it happen to our planet as well? What was the real cause which put the life on Mars to an end? The Red Planet is very similar to the Earth because of the Martian solar day which is only just a little bit longer. Nadia studied all the available materials and literature, which helped her to widen the knowledge about Mars. She knew that there are some clouds, volcanoes, ravines, mountains and deserts on that planet.



The seasons change similarly as on the Earth, the temperature in the summertime can be +30°C, and in the winter, at dawn it can go down even to -100°C. Because of these facts there is some research being made over the years to prove or reject the theory of the existence of any form of life on the planet. The mission of two space probes "Viking", which in 1976 landed on the surface of Mars, didn't give any answer to the problem.

Finally, there came the day when the participants of the project would meet the scientists and the sponsors of this far-flung space project.

That was a great chance for the students to make their

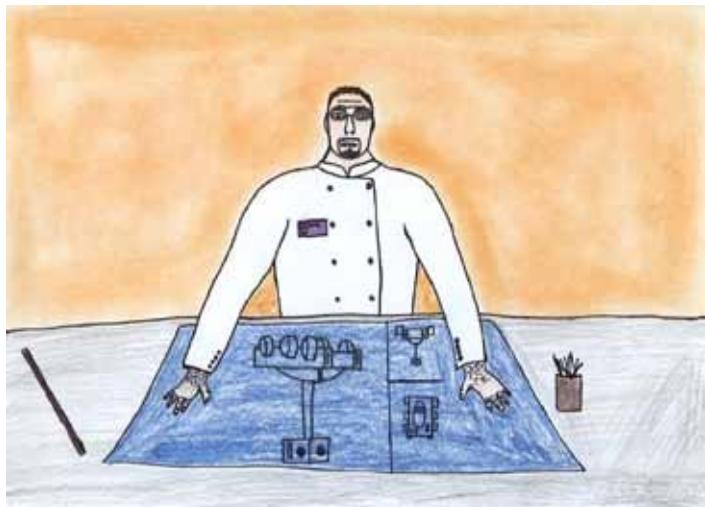
dreams of going to another planet come true, it gave them the possibilities of personal development, regardless if they were boys or girls. Nadia knew that, if their project turned out to be the best, the team would have to learn a lot about the cosmology and the planet itself. Nadia had spent many evenings and nights on studying hard and preparing for the meeting. She had searched the Internet for the latest news on the subject. Nadia knew that the first telescopic observations showed that Mars has ice-cap on both poles. They probably consist of solid water and carbon dioxide- dry ice. In 1960 the first Russian space probes tried to orbit on Mars. Unfortunately, each of the following five trials failed. And also the American mission of Mariner 3 faced some technical problems. In the classes Nadia learnt that only the mission of Mariner 4 gave first satisfactory results. On 14th July 1965, it approached Mars at the distance of 9920 km, and took 22 photos of the planet's cratered surface. The results of the mission also confirmed the existence of a thin layer of the atmosphere, consisting of carbon dioxide and pressure from 5 to 10 mbar. That was extremely interesting and absorbed Nadia's thoughts totally!

During one of the lectures, Nadia learnt that apart from the Americans also the Russians started their interest in the Red Planet. There were 7 Mars missions, which unfortunately not always ended up in failures. Mars 4 mission had an engine trouble. Even despite of this, the Russians managed to get the results concerning the atmosphere measurements data.

In 1997 the Mars Global Surveyor mission started. The space probe was meant to collect the data on the morphology of the surface, topography, structure, atmospheric dynamics, and magnetic field.

The NASA scientists, recognized worldwide professors and sponsors of the project appeared at the meeting. The invited guests made speeches and gave lectures, and Nadia was taking notes. She was listening to the lectures with great interest, and her mind was invaded by thousands of thoughts. When the open discussion

started, Nadia asked some questions. The scientists answered with pleasure and a really professional discussion was provoked. Nadia impressed James, who was watching her with great admiration. She was proud of herself: being a woman doesn't mean being incompetent. She wanted to prove herself and the whole world that a woman can be an astronaut. Her sleepless



nights weren't for nothing!

Judging on the money collected, it was probable that the possible expedition would take place at the turn of 2013 and 2014. It was meant to be a planetary mission with the use of precise landing techniques, which meant that, just as in the case of space shuttles, it controlled the entry into the outer layers of the atmosphere of the planet. Next by the use of the engines, the space probe will softly fall onto the surface, similarly as a helicopter does. This method would allow to place a laundress in the area of 20-40 km.

James's project assumed the construction of a six-wheeled twin vehicle equipped with cameras on the top. The vehicles were meant to conduct laser vaporization of a thin layer of the rocks on the surface and to do the analysis of the basic elemental composition of the material, as well as to take the samples of the rocks and soil and to carry out their chemical analysis. The vehi-

cles had some scientific systems able to identify the following organic compounds: protein, amino acids and alkaline substances which react with carbon, and are essential for life. The vehicle also had some functions of doing the analysis of atmospheric gases which may have some connection with biological functions.

With the help of those scientific instruments, there was a chance of examining the composition of rocks and soil in a more detailed way, as well as defining the geological processes and their role in forming the Martian atmosphere, as well as defining the water-circuit and carbon dioxide in all three physical states.

James was wondering what place to land would be good. He decided to make the decision based on good quality photos sent by Mars Reconnaissance Orbital. James's vehicle would also be equipped with a radio-isotope-powered system, which would produce the



electric energy from the heat input from the decay of the radioactive plutonium. This kind of power supply enables the systems to work on the surface of Mars all Martian year long, which lasts for 687 Earthly days. It should also have better mobility and operational flexibility than it had on the previous Martian missions. Nadia liked James's idea a lot, but to be honest, she was a little bit scared of how complicated it was.

It was the high time they started working. James focused on designing the vehicles, and Nadia calculated the costs.

All these required not only precision but also mathematical and logistical skills. The sponsors were very strict as far as the costs were concerned, and Nadia took the project really seriously. A small mistake could make the dreams be over...

There was one more problem to be solved. She needed a medical certificate stating that she is in a good health condition. She read a lot about health problems that affect the astronauts. Half of all the medicines taken by the astronauts are sleeping pills. And even though the astronauts take the pills, still they sleep two hours less than on Earth. Sleeplessness can not only cause depression, but also other health problems, and it can weaken the concentration.

Nadia read somewhere that special variable-colours lamps can be of great help. Testing of this kind of lamps would be carried out by NASA on Nadia's space shuttle, if the girl's project was successful, of course. The panels of the lamp would emit blue, white or red light. James informed Nadia about the research, according to which, the recovery of cells and the maintenance of important live functions of humans and animals, go in a 24 hours cycle. Keeping the rhythm of the cycle, is regulated by a group of cells in the brain, located in so-called hypothalamus. The cells react to light changes thanks to the information passed by the optic nerve. Hypothalamus regulates the hormones growth, body temperature and other functions, which decide if you feel sleepy or not. Nadia read that by changing the colours of the light emitted, the lamps may imitate the natural rhythm of the day to prevent sleep disorders. The girl knew that the blue light boosts activity, white light signals transfer time, and the red light makes the person feel sleepy. Nadia was used to reading till late at nights, so she wasn't scared of sleeplessness. She thought that her organism doesn't need much sleep, and it regenerates quickly.

But she was afraid of having some blood pressure problems. There was a danger of space adjustment syndrome, typical after a short stay in micro-gravity. The syndrome may include: changes to distribution of blood, senses disorders, movement disorders. Nadia was waiting for the test date with great anxiety. Her fears were justified. After the medical check it turned out that her



blood pressure needs to be regularly controlled. She has never smoked cigarettes, which drastically increases the pressure, she hasn't been overusing tea and coffee, so her chances to handle the problem were big. The doctor also made her up by saying that she could still fulfil the requirements of becoming an astronaut, there were chances of overcoming the blood pressure problems. Nadia was a self-disciplined and obedient patient. She checked her blood pressure many times a day exactly at the same hours, in the same conditions, after at least 5 minutes of rest.

She strictly followed all the doctor's advice. She would never forgive herself wasting such a chance, being so close to achieving the goal. After one month she had another blood pressure medical check. The result was satisfactory and Nadia's chances of participating in the project increased significantly.

The day of final acceptance of the young scientists'

projects came. The letter of acceptance was to be sent within 3 days from the day of the commission meeting. Nadia and James checked their letter box regularly and impatiently. They were waiting for the decision giving a way to dreams come true. The whole palette of emotions: from euphoria to empathy accompanied them. Their friends, who withdrew from the project so time ago, as it turned out to be too difficult, tried to keep Nadia and James up. They even made a surprise and booked two days stay at the seaside for Nadia and James. When the young scientists dipped their feet in the waters of the sea, Nadia realized that the view she was just watching is not unfamiliar! Actually this was exactly what she saw in her dreams. What would it suppose to mean?-she was wondering. She shared her thoughts with James, who jokingly said that it must be a good sign.

After coming back home, in their mail box there was a letter in a big, white envelope, with NASA official stamp. Nadia opened the envelope with shaking hands and read eagerly.



- James! We're flying!



## Annunziata Marciano

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