

20.05.2012

Dear diary,

it was a very strange day. Maybe I haven't seen a unicorn or a flying cow, but I've got a story and I must tell it to someone.

But let's start at the beginning.

It was a rainy day, so I have to take an umbrella. I have a yellow one, with red dots on it; such a horrible thing! My sister sometimes takes it for a long walk with her friends and their parents, but wait, she's five! Mother told me that she would never buy a new one, for example a black one, because we don't need another umbrella. Urgh. Of course, it didn't match my daily outfit. It sounds like I was going to have a date today, but not this time! Last Friday the principal of my school announced that we're having a meeting with one of the greatest writers from our region and we should look... neat and tidy. And behave properly. And ask many questions. During this assembly, I took a look at my classmates and saw some other staring.

We're not so proactive; usually, we don't behave as little angels from many paintings. In the fact, some of us are like these urchins or rascals and, in my opinion, we're the best example of that group of people who don't have to be polite and pleasant to be friends. I don't mean that we don't respect each other – simply, there's no day without any “hullabaloo”. For example, last week the laziest people I've ever known, Mike and Tom, wanted to play truant. They went to an empty classroom and trapped themselves inside. They couldn't leave it, so they had to wait few hours, when a cleaner heard them!

But getting back on track, a few days ago we decided to compromise with our headteacher and, as we can't be very polite and active, we can still look very good at least.

So today I wore a pleated skirt (my favourite, in leaden colour), pleasant white shirt and a dark coat. I looked like a very good girl and very good student and I still think it's a nice outfit.

Our school isn't so big; has only two floors - toilets and a cloakroom on the first floor, a couple of classrooms on both of them, including a computer lab, and a canteen and auditorium on the second floor. When we have a PE, we have to visit a nearby high school, because we don't have a sports hall. It's troublesome, especially when it's rainy outside. During sunny days, we usually run in the park conterminous with our school.

We came to auditorium with a crowd of other students. I saw some familiar faces, but in that squeeze and noise I didn't even started to talk to them. As far as I know, three classes were involved in this meeting – others had a chance to meet the writer later. So, to sum up – there were about one hundred of schoolkids, four teachers and one head teachers – and our guest. I couldn't imagine how they wanted to control us all during this appointment. But soon we have been able to see that my doubts weren't substantiated.

First, we saw a graceful, slim woman in red dress. Her sincere smile caused that she looked friendly, but some of my mean teachers also appeared to be favourable in our first lessons – but then they said “Take the sheets out” and all of that good impression disappeared with impossibly hard questions about a differential equation.

The writer wasn't disgusted like the teachers, when our noisy crowd came into the auditorium. I think she looked quizzical – yeah, we behaved like kids from first classes of primary school – but when educators were shouting at us, the writer was cool-headed and she calmly took a microphone.

'Can you be quiet, kids?' Her voice was strong and sonorous. 'Cause you teachers think that you can't. It will be much better if you stop behaving as heavy like a group of heavy whales.'

I don't know why everybody listened to her – maybe because she called us the *school of whales* – I saw that some students from younger classes laughed hearing this.

'Take yours seats, dear students', said the writer, when there was a deep silence in the auditorium. 'My name is Dora McLean. You shouldn't be surprised of my appointment – your headmaster announced my coming. I came for you today to tell you about my work and what's the most important to me, about my inspiration in my job, in my life. It's not going to be a meeting similar to meetings that you were taking part in the past.'

You know, life is not a bed of roses, for me, for you and for other people. But whatever you feel, whatever is happening in your life, so many people from all over the world have to deal with problems you can't imagine. You can say you are safe here; they are far from here and they cannot say that about themselves. You may think you are lucky. But what about them? I saw people of your age, who can only dream about being at school like this, taking part in the meeting like this, living life like yours. And as soon as I met them first time, I decided to help them in every way I can.'

Then, she said something about one of the charity organizations which helps people after disasters and encouraged us to join it. I mean, she's not only a writer. She's a volunteer and she helps our age-mates to deal with difficult situations happening in their lives.

She's got an unusual locution which attracted student's attention. And, not only students were interested! Also the strictest person I've ever known, *madame* Gauthier, our French teacher, was listening to her with a pleasant facial expression. I remembered lessons I had had with her – her pout, her squawking voice when she warned me that I should pay more attention in her class. But now, during this lecture, she looked pretty amiable. I placed her as a very strict and authoritarian person but maybe I was wrong? (later, after meeting, we had a French class. And she told us about her sister who is a volunteer in a similar foundation and helps people who survive disasters; then she added some sentences in French and ordered us to join the discussion. That was the first time, when all of us obeyed her orders without protests.)

'Hey, Mary,' said the girl who was sitting on my left. 'What do you think about this?'

That, the writer was switching on the projector. I heard some murmurs in the hall.

I looked at my classmate, Maura. I remembered that before the meeting she had been the only person from my class, who had known the writer. She had told us something about her books, that they weren't so bad.

'Very... inspiring' I respond. 'And not only students are looking like they like what she's telling us'.

She also looked at our French teacher and nodded. 'Yeah, I understand. It seems that they are more interested in the history of children from Nepal than trying to teach us anything.'

'It's not bad! For the first time they seem humane. But I thought that the meeting would be different... more boring.'

'I know what you are talking about,' she smiled. 'You didn't read her books, did you?'

'I didn't.'

'They are full of her memories. Meetings are usually about the charity. She organizes them to tell about her literary output, but not only – she's got an unusual task, she should tell something about that...'

Dora finally turned on the projector and showed us a short film. First, we heard simple melody played on glockenspiel. All the whispers stopped. We saw a young girl sitting on the floor and the woman crouching down next to her. The child was playing the instrument and her compeer were watching, listening to her carefully and helping her to play. The girl was using only one hand – the other one was put in the sling. People were sitting in a twilight and I couldn't see many details. But after few seconds, I saw a nurse's emblem on her clothes.

'You can do more that you think you can,' Dora said. Her voice was very serious. 'They need our help. And no matter how far from them you are. You can try to give them hope. Reassurance. Calm. Make them feel far away from the war, from disasters.'

Another scene. We saw the same young girl, alone in the room. She was sitting on the floor, but I couldn't see a glockenspiel. In lieu, the room was full of posters, sheets of paper and short, handwritten books.

'You can give them stories. And send them to us, so we can give them to people that really need a solace.'

When the meeting ended, in the auditorium there still was silence. Dora said goodbye and left the room, but we were still quiet. Teachers looked surprised. Near the door, we can take a leaflet with the information about the charity and writer's autograph. I took one. And lots of people, too.

Nothing more important happened today. Oh, I remember. I've lost my umbrella in a bus when I was returning home and we have to buy another one. Maybe this time it will be black?

I decided to write to my age-mates who survived from war or disasters. Or to a younger children. I haven't known yet.

But, getting to the heart of matter – I'm going to become a storyteller. And first – for training, in my diary – I'm going to write some stories from my life.