

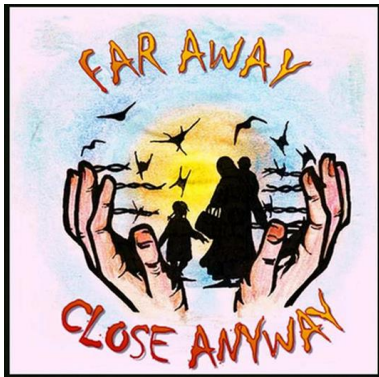


**COLEGIUL ENERGETIC  
RAMNICU VALCEA  
ROMANIA**

**HOME IS WHERE  
THE HEART IS**

**LITERATURE AND ART MAGAZINE**

**2018**



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"In A Far Away Land: Refugee Children"

# HOME IS WHERE THE HEART IS

## LITERATURE AND ART

## MAGAZINE

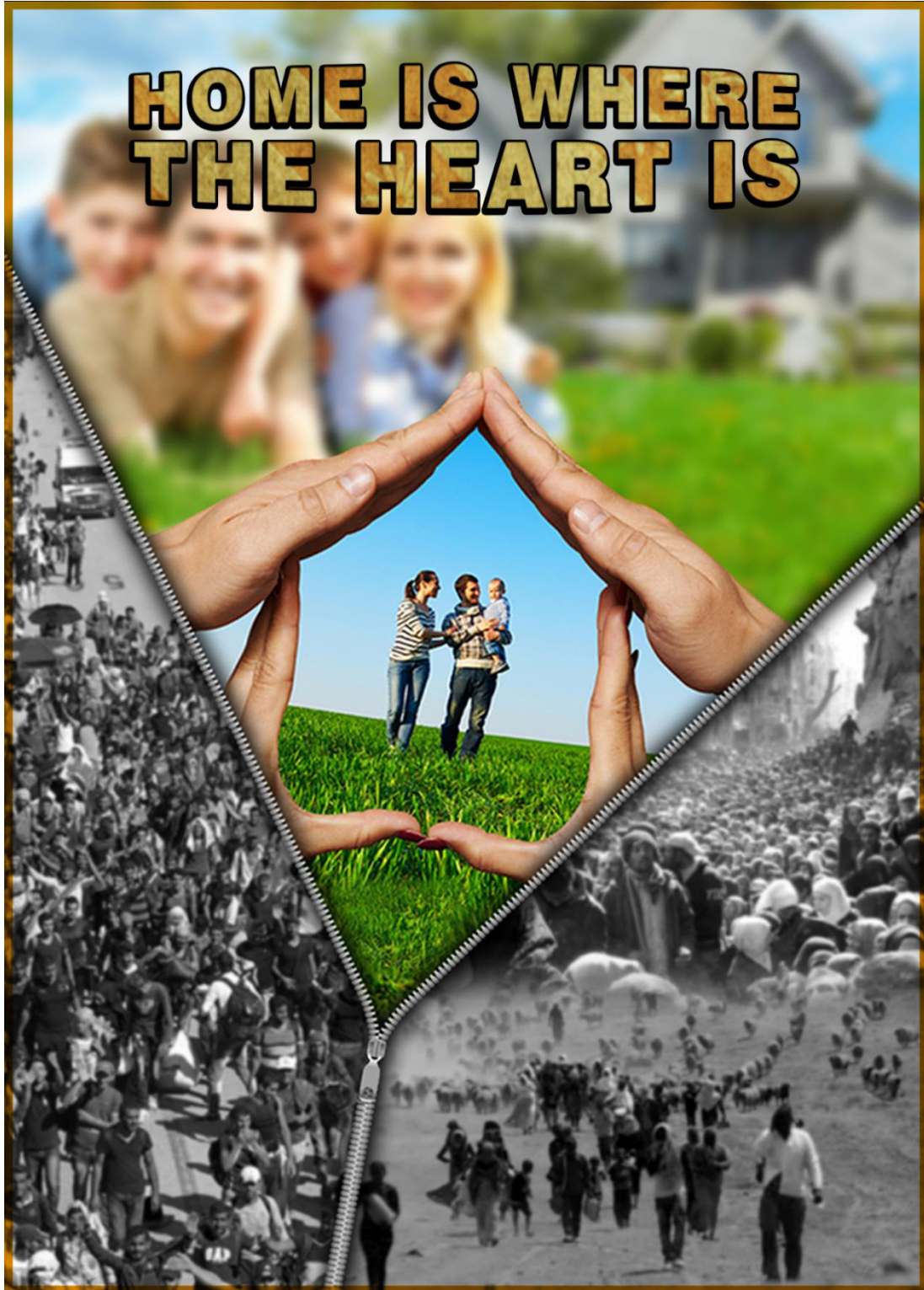
Colegiul Energetic, Aleea Sergiu Purece, Nr.10

Râmnicu Vâlcea, ROMANIA



# POSTERS

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POSTER 1- HOME IS WHERE THE HEART IS  
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ERASMUS+ KA2

# 'HOME IS WHERE THE HEART IS'

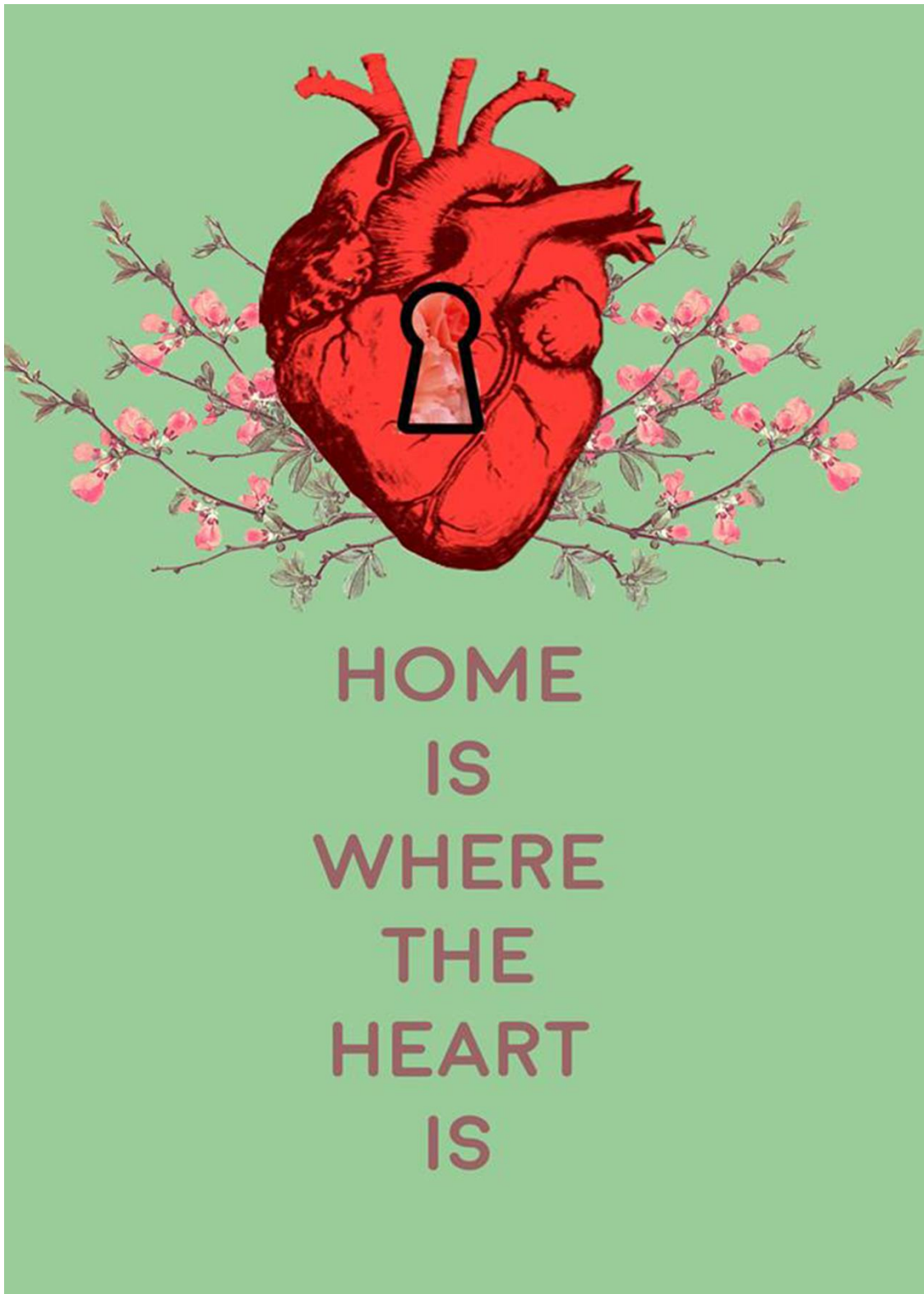


'IN A FAR AWAY LAND: REFUGEE CHILDREN'

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# POEMS

## Surrounded by dreams

I'm here on an unknown land  
Surrounded by unfriendly faces  
On the run, always scared.

Looking for a warm place  
Hopeless, miserable, rejected,  
Pushed against the wall  
Never understanding  
Or understood.

I feel like an alien  
In a strange cold world  
No home, no friends, no future  
Alone in the universe.

Guilty without guilt,  
Dreaming of my home...  
Where is my family?

They are in my dream,  
Holding me tight

Kidnapped by their love.

A lot of memories,

Of a happy childhood

Make me smile and keep me warm.

But, this is a just a dream

The cold wind of reality,

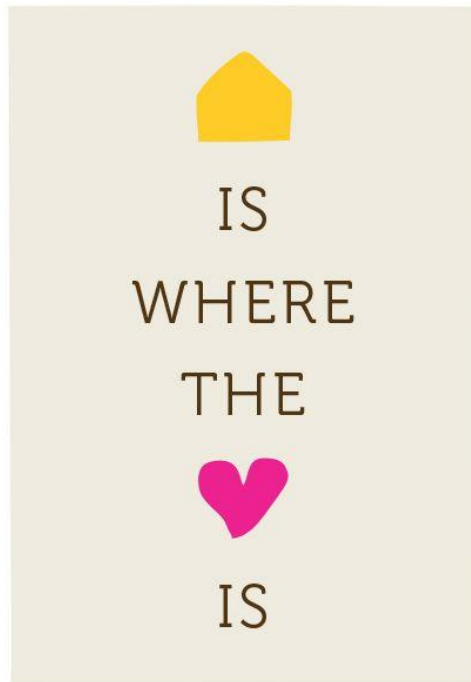
Blowing me off my feet.

**Eduard Pătru**

**XI<sup>th</sup> form, Colegiul Energetic, Râmnicu Vâlcea, România**

**17 years old,**

**[edy.2000.g@gmail.com](mailto:edy.2000.g@gmail.com)**



## **Stop the war...**

Please stop the war!

We must look for

The silence and peace;

Now, my world is broken into pieces...

I'm just a child

And I'm mild.

I'm scared of those things;

I don't know what these kings think.

Why do they disagree?

They don't know what happened to me?

Or they don't care...

Everything is blown to the air.

I just want water wings,

I want to know what the next day brings.

**Țanu Margareta Daniela**

**X<sup>th</sup> form, Colegiul Energetic, Râmnicu Vâlcea, România**

**16 years old**

**[danuta.tanu@gmail.com](mailto:danuta.tanu@gmail.com)**

## **Far away...**

Far from the comfort  
Of my finest places,  
Far from the swarm  
Of my thoughts and restless,  
Bound to the unknown  
Disillusioned, breathless.

**Alboiu Vlad**

**XII<sup>th</sup> form, Colegiul Energetic, Râmnicu Vâlcea, România**

**18 years old**

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## **It doesn't matter**

It doesn't matter where you are

It doesn't matter what you do

If there's someone you can count on

Bet your soulmate you have found

If there's someone you may love

You can live right in a cove

If they're everything you have

You will never be apart.

**Emilia Stingaciu**

**XII<sup>th</sup> form Colegiul Energetic, Râmnicu Vâlcea, România, 18 years old**

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## **Sea...sick**

The sea is so blue  
The waves are so strong against boat  
And I....miss my home!

## **Old House**

Old house  
A child runs  
The sound of sirens...

**Emilia Stingaciu**

**XII<sup>th</sup> form, Colegiul Energetic, Râmnicu Vâlcea, România, 18 years old**

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## **Bleak House**

Smoke in my lungs  
Confused  
Childhood's test.

**Vlad Alboiu**

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## **Heart...rise**

Dawn

My heart

Rise up!

**Olteanu Adelina**

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**18 years old**

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## **Integration**

Lots of new students

In the courtyard of my dreams

Nothing is to miss.

## **Echo**

Home...less

Child...less

Speech...less

Hope...less

**Țanu Margareta Daniela**

**X<sup>th</sup> form, Colegiul Energetic, Râmnicu Vâlcea, România**

**16 years old**

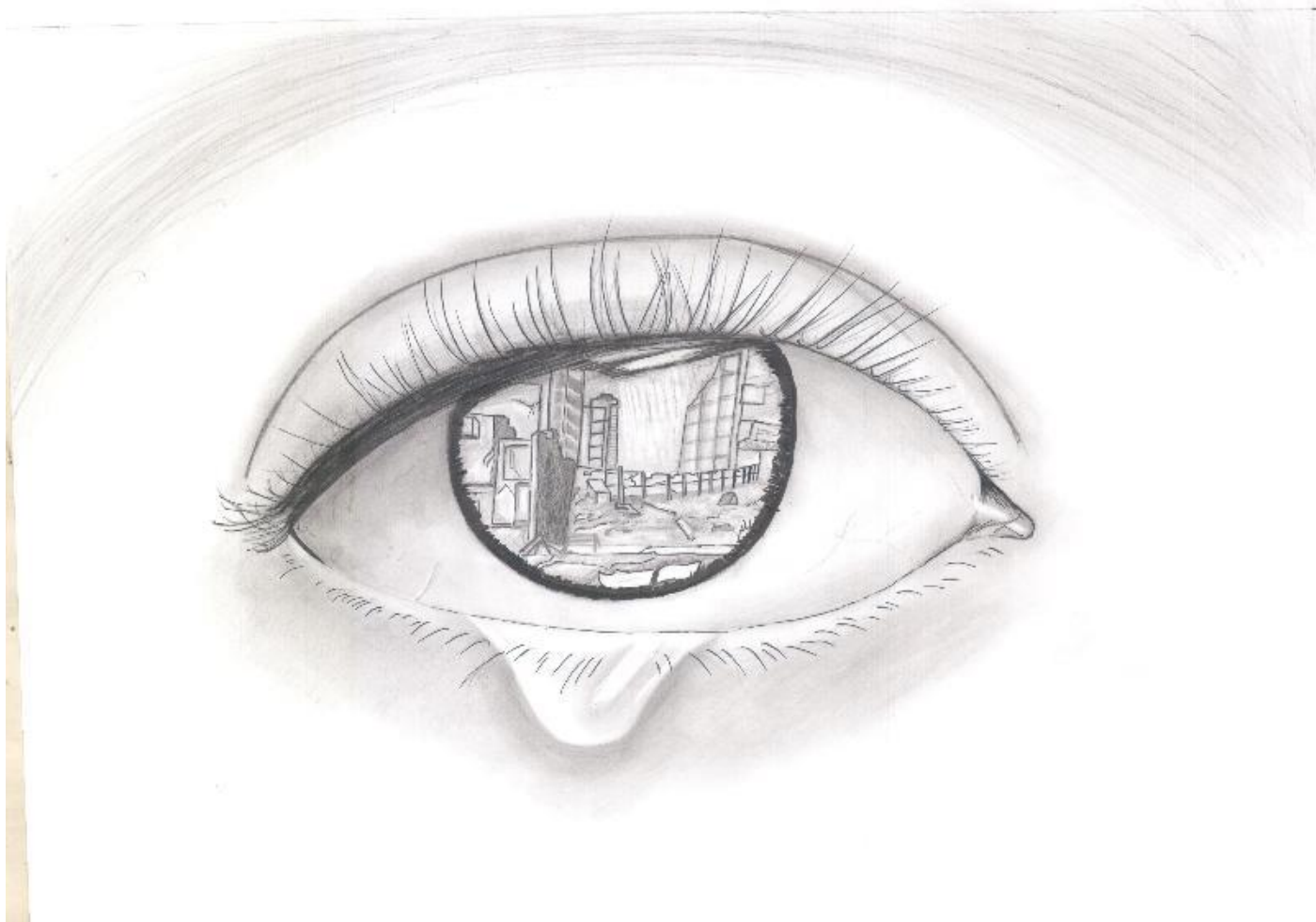
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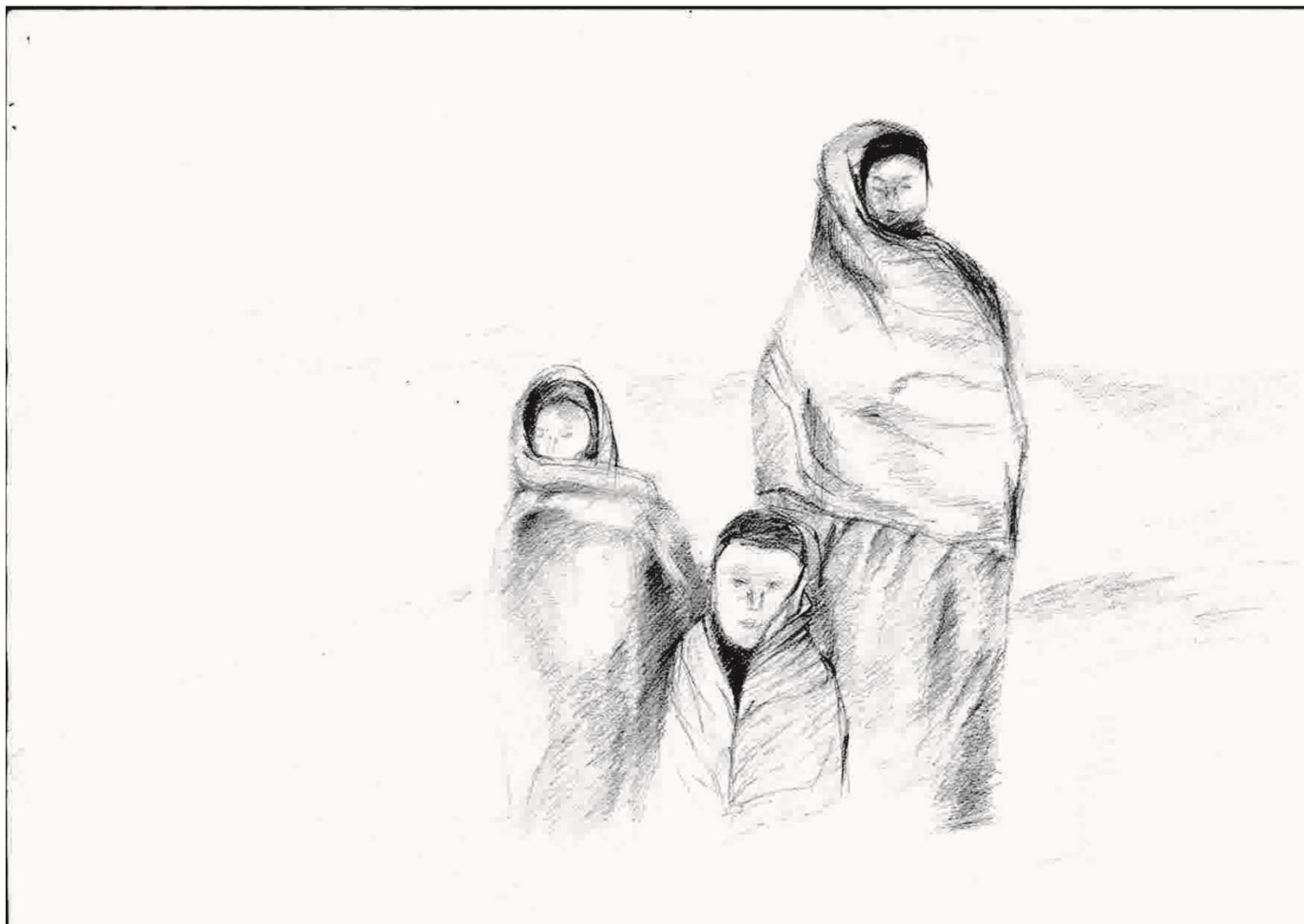
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# SHORT STORIES

## KATHERINA – A true story

By

OLTEANU ADELINA

18 years old

12<sup>th</sup> form

adeol92@yahoo.com

The heart is the first which sometimes dictates to people, to make major decisions for their lives.

"Taking refuge" is a phenomenon which we are born with ... We take refuge in ourselves when we experience sadness and we have no one to share it with. We feel a great joy ... we live it within our hearts sometimes ... we think that if we tell someone about it, it will fade away...

The heart wants to be safe, we all look for safety, and when we look for it, we may find it in other places, far away from where we belong and then we can hardly turn back "home".

This is a true story...

"I was young, enthusiastic and on a beautiful autumn day I decided that I wanted to know my ancestors better.

I had heard of my great-grandmother Katherina Gassner who had been born in 1876 at Wesskirchen. Since she had passed away for a long time, I sometimes liked to evoke her. Her religion was Roman Catholic. Her parents, Georg Gassner and Elisabeth Labschied, were happy to have brought her into the world, although times were not easy.

The place where Katy (as we used to call her) had seen the day light is about 32 km from Oravița. It is a multiethnic settlement with more than 20000 inhabitants - Russian, Romanian and Serbian. They call it Bela Crkva (White Church) today.

When she was twenty years old, Katherina, like any other girl, married Valentin Stable, and decided to go to other realms to thrive ... at least this was what they thought. Valentin was a skilled craftsman, working in carpentry.



Katherina and Valentin

They took their belongings and left their native places. They arrived near Vâlcea, in Muereasca, and then they settled in Râmnicu Vâlcea.

Neither Katherina, nor Valentin knew how to speak Romanian. They had to learn it quickly in order to get by. Some good people offered them a shelter. Katherina gave birth to six children. Her life was too stressful and busy to let her think of the places she would have never conceived leaving. The Romanians were welcoming and she no longer felt like a refugee. Where her house was, there her heart was.

She was a perfect housewife and she used to bake the most delicious cakes, her house was very clean and neat.

They began to raise hens, sell goods and helped the wealthy people in the area with the household chores. For her, work was an honorable way to get what she needed for her family. She was not ashamed to wash, to iron clothes for the rich families. Her children grew nicely, among Romanians, they spoke Romanian too. She told them Romanian was their language because they were born here.

They had a small house, but lived a happy simple life.

In 1914, when the children were about 13-15 years old, the trouble was soon to come.

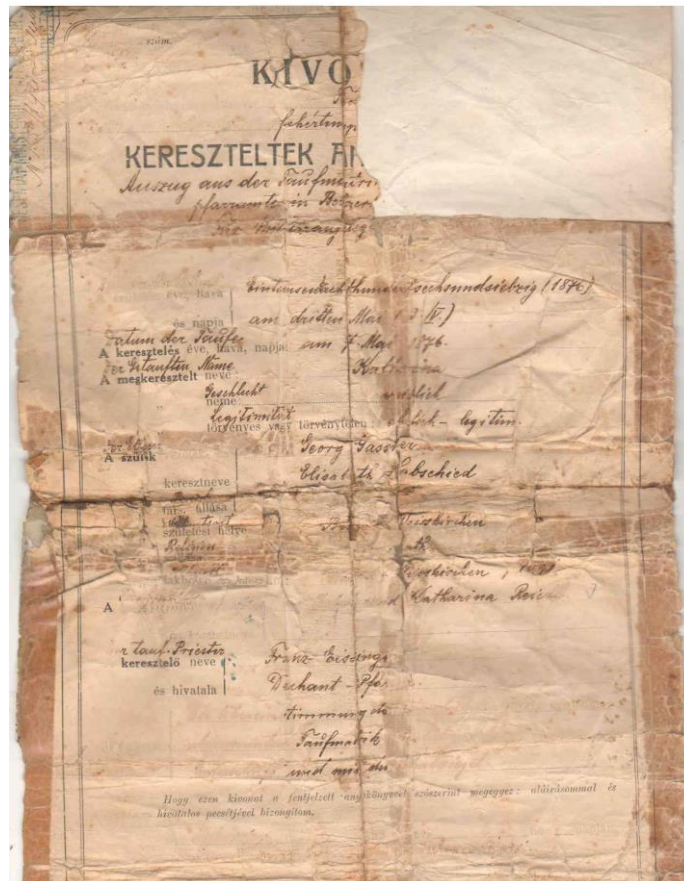
The war started.

Valentin Stable, went on the front. Katherina remained with the children. The two older boys were her support. And the girls had no other way but grow up fast and become more mature.

Katherina managed to get everyone learn a craft.

Years passed. The war was over. She was expecting news from the front, but they did not come ... One day, her brother wrote a few lines to her from Wesskirchen...

Impatiently, she opened the letter ... It had been written for a few months. She got news about all her dear ones. Her parents had died in the war, a sister had been abducted by lack and hunger ... but that was not all ... Valentin Stable had died on the front...



Katherina's Birth Certificate

John and Stephen Stable were grown up people - their childhood was long over, they knew they had to support the family ... and they did it with much dignity. They became blacksmiths, luxury

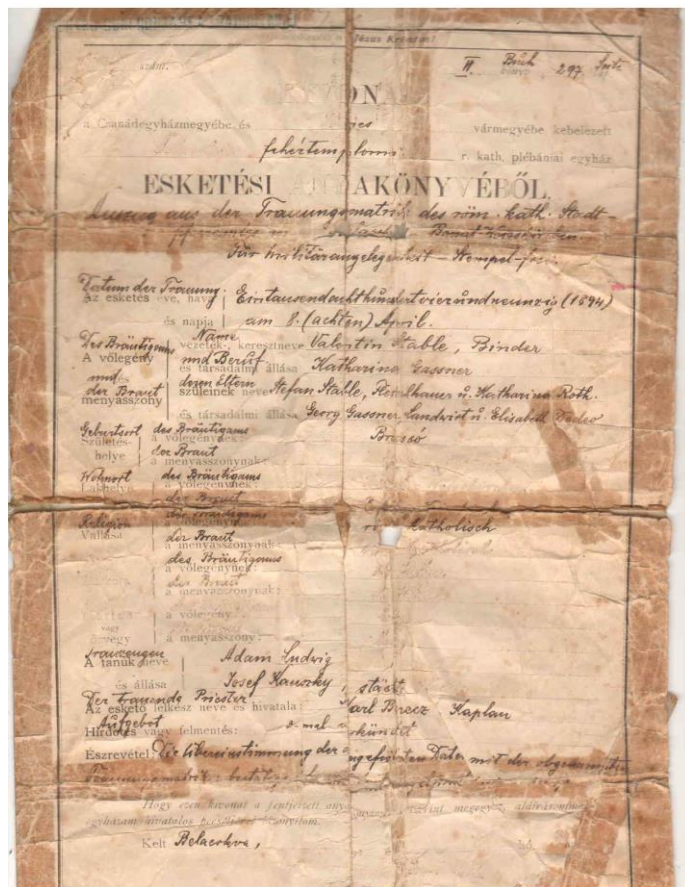
carpenters in the city of Râmnicu Vâlcea. The girls went to tailoring and housekeeping schools. Katherina had always been around. Her heart felt that she had always been home to her. Years passed and I understood what my grandmother had gone through when I was about ten years old.

Sometimes she took me by the hand and visited the neighboring German families with whom she often spoke in her own language. They wrote letters and sent them to Wesskirchen, hoping that someone would answer them.

Letters did not arrive and one summer day, in July, Katherina Gassner went to a world that she hoped would be less tumultuous.

I learned a lot from my grandmother ... to live in honor, with dignity, to love each other, to think that we are all human, even though some of us live in different corners of this world.

Let us never forget our foreparents!



Marriage Certificate- Katherina

# HOME IS WHERE YOUR HEART IS

By

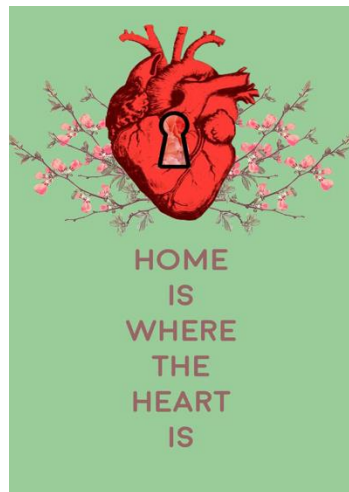
Stîngaciu Emilia

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18 years old

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A soft ray of light creeps through the hole of our tent. I hear my mother singing to my baby brother who can't take his eyes off her. The words echo into my mind as she used to sing them to me back home, in Syria, sobbing and wiping tears down the cheeks.



Our loved ones have left home  
Gone away without saying goodbye  
When I went by their place one morning  
No one was there to invite me in  
All I found was a crying bird.  
Regret stopped me short and pinned my feet to the thorny ground  
I sought in vain to learn what had become of them  
From the houses in which they once lived  
Alas my tears stained the walls of their buildings.



Oh, cavalier of the caravan, if you come across them  
Let them know that I still cry for them  
Tell them my loving eyes haven't yet closed in sleep  
The good nights are gone that should have lasted forever  
Do tell our loved one who've moved away  
That for anyone, hardship never lasts forever  
Hardship never lasts forever  
Hardship never lasts forever.

(Tawfiq Zayyard)

At least she can sing it without pausing as there aren't any bombs or shootings here to make us startle or our hands cringe.

I am carried away on the waves of her voice to the place I once lived and enjoy the flashes of my memory. My body lies heavy on the bed as I indulge the comfort of my happiest days in my homeland.

”Adnan, come out! Let's play!”

My morning reverie is interrupted. I put up together the pieces of my broken heart and I rush out: ” Hardship never lasts forever!”

# *Home Is Where The Heart Is*



## **The adventure of some little friends**

By TANU DANIELA

16 YEARS OLD

10<sup>TH</sup> FORM, COLEGIUL ENERGETIC

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It's autumn. The wind is mild. Three hedgehogs are playing in the middle of a valley, on a colourful flower carpet, in the pale rays of the sun. The parents are looking carefully at the joy of the little ones. Suddenly, there are some powerful sounds. All the joy has stopped, it feels cold. It is so quiet. The sound is getting closer and closer, louder and louder. A cool and strong wind is felt all over the valley. The dark birds begin to sing and fly over the little ones followed by a grizzled blanket that slowly covers the pale circle of life. Sounds of war are heard from the inside. Strong burning rays threaten everything around.

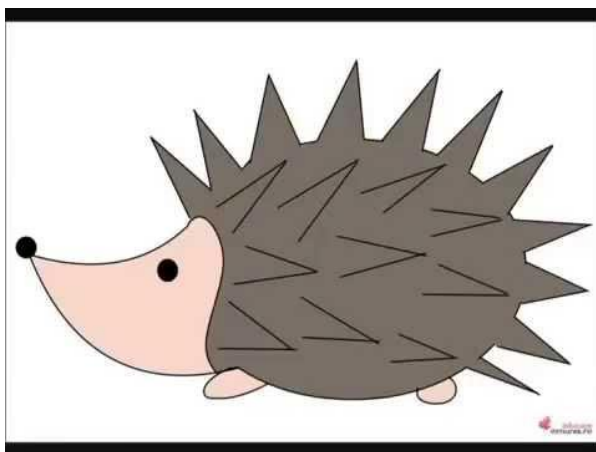
The two hedgehogs hurry to their children. The little ones do not know what is going on, it is the first time they see something scary. It suddenly gets dark in the middle of the day. They look frightened and puzzled at the war between the lights from the sky. Parents guide their children to leave that place and find shelter, somewhere far away from the darkness of the day. The three hedgehogs run behind their father down the valley for a safer place. At that time, a loud bang is heard... Tears start to fall out of the sky. There are thousands, tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands. They hurry down, hurry to the lower ones. They are cold. The earth begins to soften the pain. The tears begin to catch around the hedgehogs.

They suddenly stop running to analyse the situation. Father hedgehog sees a trunk of a tree falling with a hoot in it. It could be a perfect shelter for his family to hide there from danger. The only problem is that he has to cross a river, on a sloping bridge made up of a twig to reach the much-desired shelter. It could be a big risk to the safety of this family, but it is their only way of undermining this devastating situation. He looks at his family. Mrs Hedgehog decently approves with fear in her eyes of this decision. All five move to the chosen place. Arriving at the footbridge, the first to cross the bridge is the dad hedgehog to see if it is safe for his family, followed by his children one by one, their mother remaining on the other side to make sure all the kids manage to pass. When the second hedgehog steps on the rotten twig a soft wind begins to blow. The bridge swings to and fro, and the little hedgehog cannot move anywhere. He is terrified. He cannot go back, but he does not go ahead, he is blocked. With a stronger impulse of the wind, even for a moment, it is enough to make the little hedgehog fall from the branch into the river that flows indefinitely. He tries to reach one of the banks, to get to the place where his family

grew up, but in vain. The flow is too strong. He is too small. Suddenly everything becomes darker in front of his eyes ...

The next day they see the disaster. The valley has no more life. All the other hedgehogs have somehow managed to get down to that shattered tree. Still, they feel the same as the outside landscape, devastated. Their family is not whole anymore, they had lost a member in a tragic and pathetic way. Still, they cannot stay that way; the weather does not show any signs of improvement. They must continue their journey, they still have two children to care for, they cannot neglect them.

Two more valleys after, at the edge of a forest, the danger is not there. Everything is fine. The birds are whining, the ants are working, all the squirrels are playing through the trees; except one ... It is a rather old red-haired squirrel, she caught four cold seasons. She is looking for winter supplies near the shore of the blue string because it is quiet and not many creatures have approached that place, before, as it is rather slippery and steep there, but there are a lot of castles and nuts untouched there.



The red squirrel is on a tree, gathering her supplies, watching a small creature on the other bank of running water. With the help of the tree branches, she manages to cross over it, reaching the other side of the tree to investigate the situation. She carefully approaches that small creature. That creature is still breathing, but cannot get too close because it has a sharp protective armour on it. That little creature is the hedgehog. The squirrel does not know what to do, she cannot get too close, but she does not want to leave him like that, she wants to help him. She looks around looking for a solution. She sees something! There is a tree bark. She picks up that tree bark, a few dropped leaves, and returns to that baby. She covers him with the beautiful bricks and lays him lightly on the tree bark, gently removing it from the steep bank.

Over a period of time, the redhead reaches her friend's house, the rabbit. They have been friends of only three seasons, since the rabbit was just a baby. The squirrel helped him after his family died in a tragic incident; the wolves of the forest had killed his family in the cold season. He somehow managed to escape. She had found the rabbit while hiding frightened in a falling tree trunk. It was raining. The squirrel got close to him, but she eventually managed to calm him down and make him fall asleep, the rabbit was exhausted. The rain stopped and she warmed the baby with her bushy tail. When the rabbit

woke up, she was gone, the little one thought she was alone again, but the squirrel had come back with some food for her. So this is how began the friendship of the two mammals.

The squirrel comes into the rabbit's lair. The rabbit is not there. She is gone looking for food just like the other creatures of the forest. Her lair is very warm, everywhere is just dry grass and a few leaves of the season. In one corner there are some roots and shells of fruit trees, and two or three carrots. She easily takes the lost little hedgehog and places him lightly on a grassy pile and covers him with some dried leaves to heat him, and then she puts herself in a place to wait for her friend.

A grey fluff comes in through the entrance door of the lair... It approaches the old squirrel. She politely greets her friend. The squirrel shows her the situation: she found a small hedgehog near the lake, wants to help her, but she cannot run her on the other side of a small tree, a part she was living, so she came to ask for help to take care for third hedgehog. She immediately accepted this task, with the greatest joy. The squirrel thanks the rabbit then she leaves saying she will bend the next morning and bring something for her and the new tenant. The evening comes and she has to take the hazelnuts gathered on the bank, where she has left them before, to get home.

That night, the rabbit carefully watches the little hedgehog as her own child. She is worried about him even if she does not know him, even if he is of another species; she knows what it is like to stay alone. Before the rabbit falls asleep, she has brought some leaves to put over the little tenant. She makes sure it is hot because the night will get colder and longer.

Meanwhile, in the valley there is the hedgehog family, all the creatures of that valley are all in fear, lost and unconscious. The danger has passed, but a terrible disaster and a great deal of pain is left behind.. Many innocent living creatures have been stranded, many destroyed. Only because of a 'war' that was not theirs. Too many lost for nothing, for nothing. Sadness has swept the valley. Falling trees, water on the ground ... melancholic view. All his life and joy disappeared only in one day. The darkness has crept into their souls. After searching for nothing the hedgehog's family returns to their shelter. As expected, they find it destroyed. There is almost nothing left from it. That night, they fell asleep one next to another under the free and starry sky. The next day, losing any hope of finding their lost child, they left that valley full of suffering and melancholic memories hoping to find a safer and safer place for the two remaining children. They rushed out because they hurried to find another home as soon as possible before the cold season would come and to put the white blanket on the memory.

In the hare of the rabbit, in the morning, the hedgehog wakes up easily by opening his eyes. Little, dizzy and weak, stood up slowly, the first thing he sees is a fluffy thing of fine grey fur coat with brown. He starts to tremble. He is scared. He does not know where he is or why he is in that place. All he remembers is his worried look and his mother's fear when he fell into that river. He starts to sigh. The rabbit, with his fine ears, hears his terrible sighs. The hedgehog hides in a corner of the room under the foliage. The grey fluff is

easily propped up by the frightened little one. She starts to comfort him, to lighten him. She knows how horrible that feeling might be, those depressing thoughts. She knows what it is like not to understand anything of what happens to you.

After she has managed to get him out of that foliage, she looks at him with his blissful eyes of love and rubs his head lightly, telling him everything will be fine, just like a mother. Intense feelings and kind words calm him down. She sits next to him and tells him how the old squirrel found him and brought him to her house. So he also entered his story, telling him how he fell from that subdued bridge in the river because of a gust of sell. The rabbit's eyes filled with tears and her heart with sadness hearing this story.

The hedgehog is happy because he is still alive, yet sad because he lost his family. It was a miracle that he managed to survive this situation. The little man desperately wants to return to his family, but he does not even know where he is, how far he is from the place where he grew up, he does not know how to return home ... And he does not even have the necessary force to make his way, he is still weak because of that unexpected journey. Perhaps the family has died in the storm... Only black thoughts are passing through his mind and his heart is filled with sadness.

Home  
is where  
the heart is



A haze of peanuts is poured over the two creatures while a subtler silhouette with a more bulky tail than its own body enters the house. The little hedgehog looks puzzled at the newcomer, he has never seen a similar animal. She has such a beautiful and colourful fur! The wild-tailed animal approaches the two. That is not a newcomer that is the squirrel. The hedgehog is hiding behind the rabbit as if asking for protection, while she greets her friend and tells to the hedgehog that the squirrel is his saviour. He approaches easily and thanks them with joy in his eyes because she has a good heart and has saved him. So is that a squirrel, the creature that his mother has told him about, one of the creatures who, with hard work, gathers his supplies for the winter, the one who easily climbs the trees. 'Master of the trees,' as his mother called a squirrel. The hedgehog approaches his saviour to look at her closely. Her fur is shining as the fire in the sunlight; through her emerald green eyes you can read her experience, strictness but also her kindness. She smiles at him, a fierce and aging smile. One could read on her face the joy that the little boy was alive. She takes a hazel and gives it to the little boy, urging him to take it and try it. He accepts it boldly and tries to bite straight from the

protective bark. There is a discreet click, his teeth. The two ladies are laughing at the naiveté of the little one. The rabbit takes the hazelnut and dismounts it using her two front teeth and gives it to the hedgehog. He takes it and tastes it. He looks at the squirrel then at the rabbit, and puts the whole nut in his mouth. It looks exactly like a squirrel with small, swollen jaws. There is a lot of joy and excitement in the entire home due to the innocence of the little one.

One morning, the red one comes and makes a surprise to his new friend. Because the hedgehog feels better she wants to make him have some fun.. She has brought some young squirrels with her, with whom the hedgehog can play. He is excited, but at the same time a little scared, he is a stranger here, will he integrate himself?

The hedgehog is led by the rabbit near the bank of the river where he will meet his potential new friends. There the old squirrel is waiting for him. He walks briskly toward her and the other squirrels. The redhead shows up, but the reactions of the young squirrels are not exactly placid ... They are staring at him as if he were a weird thing, just because he has a different look. They have begun to analyse, to criticize his appearance, as it is the first time they meet him. One of them goes out and tells to the old lady that they do not want to play with such a creature, it looks dangerous and can hurt them easily, then the young one looks suspiciously at the little hedgehog and leaves followed by her other friends. Happiness and confidence have disappeared in a single moment. It is not his fault that he was born with those spikes on his back. It is not his fault that he was different. He keeps his head off, letting the dangers run. Sadness embraced once again his disappointment. He would not talk to anyone that day.

The days are passing slowly, the winter is almost here. The hedgehog grows. He becomes prettier, and his spines have grown with self-confidence. From that incident on, he has not been talking to anybody than the redhead and the rabbit. He has closed himself inside him, hiding all the tears of the soul with a smile. The two friends are worried about him; they know that all the suffering caused by the inaction of others is hidden. The only hope is the support of the two friends.

To their amazement, the little hedgehog has begun to eat a lot and gain weight. He has begun to be very tired, he has been always asleep. None of them knows why. What's going on with the little one? The rabbit is quite worried, but the squirrel calms him down and tells him she is going to check, she is going to the owl, the wisest of the forest; and the one she could easily reach because the owl lives in the tree next to the red one's house.

The next evening, the hedgehog cannot be found anywhere. The rabbit has not seen him since morning. Is it something wrong? He has fallen into the river? Or could he have been caught by a predator ... - It is known that many foxes are living in those parts - The grey one does not know what to do, only black thoughts passing through her head. She has been looking for him everywhere; she has cried him out, but ... no answer. Even the old squirrel has not gone through the river, today she is picking up the nuts and

hazelnuts. Having nothing to do in this situation the rabbit starts his search again. Disappointment and sadness can constantly be heard in the forest. Suddenly a scream of pain is heard. She hurries where the deafening sound comes from. It is a woodpecker. Apparently, the woodpecker is on a pile of leaves and it looks as if she has been stabbed by something. The pile of leaves begins to move right in front of them. The frightened bird has taken his flight right to the sky. The rabbit has remained stuck on the spot, wishing to see what is going to happen next. She has a guess. With a slight shudder, coming out of that warm heap of rust leaves, he slowly opens his eyes. The grey one is breathing lightly. She hurries to the hedgehog. A little puzzled, the hedgehog says he is sorry, he does not know when he has fallen asleep or when time has passed so fast. After this incident, the two friends go home.

The next morning seems to bring more trouble. When the squirrel comes to the lair of the rabbit, she starts crying. The hedgehog has not got up yet and started to breathe very hard, his heart is slowly beating. The previous day the squirrel learned from the owl that everything that had happened to the hedgehog is absolutely natural. Hedgehogs get into hibernation. Now he has fallen asleep and would only wake up in spring.

The winter has come by surprise. The flakes are falling smoothly on the ground, covering it with a thin layer. In a few hours, a white glossy blanket covers the entire forest. There is complete silence, as if the nature had been sleeping all her life waiting for the alarm clock sound to wake her up. Everything is like a fairy tale. The squirrel looks around, from his hallow. The rabbit takes the head out to see the wonderful landscape, then goes back and sits next to her little friend. She has been watching her little friend all winter. She wants him to wake up as fast as he can, he is too quiet, she feels alone again. Because of the bad weather, the squirrel cannot really visit her friend. All the winter seems an eternity to her.

The first sign of the spring, the snowdrop, emerges from the ground. The snow melts into water to moisture the soil and prepare it for what is to come. It seems that everything starts to catch life again. Even the hedgehog shows signs to "thaw", so the rabbit wants to surprise him, by offering him some snowdrops. The rabbit gets out of the shelter. Right then, the little one, who is not that little anymore, wakes up. Outside, on the remaining snow, he sees the footsteps of his friend. They are still fresh, so he goes after them to find her.

During this time, the rabbit picks up some snowballs, as she has planned. Behind her there are a few steps and a broken twig. She feels the danger, a danger he had felt before in his childhood. He turns suddenly to avoid the attack. A fox is trying to catch her. The fox bumps into a tree. The grey one starts chasing the fox. On his way, the hedgehog sees his friend in danger. On the spur of the moment, he goes to his frightened friend to save him from the predator. Tacking the fox's way he creeps in front of him, the spines on his back forming defence armour. The predator gets stung into his spines, falling to the ground in pain. The fox leaves and does not come back. Our hedgehog returns to his frightened friend. The rabbit is

very happy because the little hedgehog has saved him, but especially because he could see his best friend again.

Several birds have seen everything from above, from the trees and all the forest will hear the story of the hedgehog. They will soon acclaim him, suddenly he will no longer seem a freak, he is a hero now. Even the squirrels who did not want to play with him came to apologize. He forgives them. The hedgehog feels good enough because he is finally accepted, but he still does not feel complete he has a hole in his heart. He is not quite happy.

Out of the blue, an owl accompanied by the old squirrel approach him and tell him that someone wants to see him. Someone in the nearby forest heard his story. Driven by the owl, he gets into a glade where he has a great surprise ... His family... He runs happily towards them, with tears of joy in his eyes. He is very happy. The family is reunited. From the distance, they are looking at their two good friends. He is waving at them, calling their names, as they are part of his family now. Not only had he reunited with his family, but he also got a larger family than ever before. He is finally really happy...





# HOME IS WHERE HEART IS... HERE IN ROMANIA

By OLTEANU ADELINA

18 YEARS OLD

12<sup>TH</sup> FORM, COLEGIUL ENERGETIC

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My name is Ana. Once upon a time I was a happy little girl. I am almost 18, almost a grown up, but sometimes I feel just the little girl I was... with no worries or sadness, always friendly, always serene... I knew so little about life... everything was a fairy tale... I was the princess and my parents were the king and the queen.

I was born in Ramnicu Valcea. It has been my town forever, the place I will probably have to leave again, but I will always return at, as I did 4 years ago.

Ramnicu Valcea is a historical town, inhabited since Dacian and Roman times. It was the site of a castrum. It was first attested during the rule of Prince Mircea cel Batran as "the princely town of Ramnic", around 1388.

During the rules of Matei Basarab and Constantin Brancoveanu, it became an important cultural center. It was here where the first paper mill and printing press in Romania were built. Deșteaptă-te, române! (the national anthem of Romania), with lyrics written by Andrei Mureșanu and music composed by Anton Pann (whose memorial house lies in the center of the town), was sung for the first time in Râmnicu Vâlcea.

Just one year before I was born, the town was the center point of the path of total darkness of the Solar eclipse, in August 1999. My parents told me that friends from all over the country visited them to see the eclipse from Capela Hill.

I know many stories... my parents, my grandparents and my great-grand parents all lived in Ramnicu Valcea. I was happy to spend afternoons and week-ends with them.

We had our rituals... hand in hand with my grandfather I used to go walking in Zavoi Park, then to a furniture shop to admire house staff. My grandfather was a carpenter, he had a small local business, then we went to church and to the bakery to buy something sweet for the whole family. I will never forget the smell of spring, our walks in the park, the taste of sweets...

On week-ends, my grandmother prepared “Sunday lunches”. I have never eaten a tastier food. We used to have wonderful family meals and the people I love made everything perfect. My parents were in Romania at that time and we were a big happy family.

My mom is a doctor and my father is a history teacher. As my grandparents say, they were serious kids, studied a lot to fulfil their dreams. They became friends during high school... my grandparents told me a lot of funny stories about them (funny for me, at least). They were writing letters to each other. My grandmother even showed me some letters and told me their beautiful story. They were lucky to find each other and live in the same beautiful town. After graduating from university in Bucharest, they decided to move back in Ramnicu Valcea. My grandparents were happy to know us all here in Ramnicu Valcea.

One day my mom read an announcement about doctors being hired in France. I was almost 10. I imagined we could travel to Paris, see Disneyland, stay a while and come back. I was too naïve or I pretended to be, I couldn't accept we had to move to another country. I couldn't imagine leaving my friends, my school, my grandparents and starting a new life.



My parents told me about the benefits, the great opportunities, the wonderful changes waiting for us. It was a dream for my mom especially, to be an appreciated doctor and to work in a modern hospital. I was old enough to understand that adjusting to a new country and culture is not a quick process. Secretly I started to dream it would be a long way to become reality or that my mom would ever find a job in France.

One day, she decided to take French classes. She studied French, bought books, dictionaries, searched the Internet in order to improve her language skills. My father was also making plans. He wrote some letter to friends he had in Paris.

After almost a year of plans, my mom applied for being a doctor in France. She had to live for a week to sit for an interview. My father insisted to accompany her. I was happy to stay with my grandparents, hoping she wouldn't be accepted and we could continue our lives... but nothing was the same... and soon I realized that my dream was impossible.

My grandma told me that it was not about money, but about being appreciated and respected...

I begged my parents to let me stay with my grandparents and they agreed ... saying it was just for a short period.

It was not the same without my family: our “Sunday lunches”, the walks with my grandparents were not as interesting as they used to be... I missed my family... they missed me... we spent a lot of time communicating on the internet, especially in the evening. It was difficult for my father, because he couldn't find a job, but at least my mom was happy in the French hospital. She missed me a lot... My heart was with my family...

Day after day, night after night... I prayed everything could be as it was. I wanted to be the happy little girl again. I wanted to turn back time. I wanted our games, our fun moments.

One day, my father called me and told me he got a job to a library, near Paris. I was in the 7th grade. Changing school, changing friends, the house and everything was a nightmare for me. I was happy to be with my parents again, but terrified to change everything.

That year it was a lovely summer in Romania. ... We were all to the seaside... I, my parents and my grandparents... We had a great time in Mamaia, our most famous seaside resort. I will never forget this holiday and wherever I will live as an adult I am sure I will always return to Mamaia for the summer. I have been to many places for a holiday, but no place can match those where I spent my childhood.

After the holiday, I had to pack “my life” and travel to France. I had been there before to visit my parents, but this time was different. I felt happy to be reunited with my family, even if my grandparents were at home, but I was also very scared. My French was not good.

My first day at school was awful...I could hardly understand... I loved attending Maths classes, as Mathematics is a universal language. My new colleagues were distant, no one talked to me. I went “home” very disappointed, but decided not to give up.

Days were passing by and I was confident and happier as the teachers and some of the students started to appreciate me.

I was far from being integrated... language was still a problem. My parents were very busy during the day... many times I felt alone and sad. I missed my grandparents.

One day, a girl from another class asked about me. Her name was Corina and she had heard that I came from Romania. She moved to France when she was 3 years old... she spoke French better than Romanian... we were so happy to know each other, discover our common roots and speak a mixed language. Some links connected us... She became my best friend.

And so passed my first year in France, a difficult one. I was secretly planning to return home. Corina experienced a different situation. She arrived in France when she was very small, her grandparents lived in the countryside, in Romania, so she didn't have too many memories related to them or to the country she was born in. My story was different. My story was mine... unique...

The scholar year ended ... I got bad marks at French and other subjects. My only salvation was Maths. I started thinking about the possibility of completing the 8th grade in Romania and also going to high school in Romania. I made a lot of secret plans. I read a lot of articles about children who couldn't get used to living in a foreign country. My mother insisted on seeing a psychologist. I was ready to do anything, only to be back home. My parents were right, I did not make any effort to have new friends – Corina was my only friend... They were right, I missed home and the thought of going back to Romania was haunting me, preventing me from being integrated or interested in what was going on around me ... My parents were busy all the time and I – a teenager, not finding my place...



My grandparents didn't want to upset my parents, but they wanted me to stay with them... this is what happens when families are apart...

This is the reality of Romania... a lot of families don't know where their home is... where their heart is.

I was split between home, parents and grandparents, dreams and plans, uncertainties... My parents wanted the best for me and my future.

The tragedy of Romanian families continues – children living with grandparents because parents work abroad, children living with just one parent and the other working abroad, children living in foreign countries being apart from their friends, parents being overqualified for some jobs, but enduring the humiliations of everyday life. I hope this drama will stop. I hope people will be valued for what they are, not for where they come from.

My grandfather died. My world was ruined again. Millions of feelings, millions of thoughts... the saddest one was not saying Good-bye. It was a shock. We returned home... not for happy days, but for grief and sorrow.

It was another lesson for me in the process of understanding life... everything felt so unfair to me... all the changes I had to endure ...

It was a moment of reunion for the family... and I realized I had to be brave. I discussed with my parents, I decided that I wanted to stay in Romania, help my grandma and finish high school. I felt that it was the best choice, I felt the call of my heart.

I have great plans now. I want to go to university in Cluj. I am going to be a doctor as my mom. A lot of foreign students come to study Medicine in Cluj. I miss my parents all the time and I know they miss me, but I love my life here. I have many friends. I like living with my grandma, I am lucky to travel abroad when I want... and come back home.

My parents hope I will go and work in France. Who knows... my story is not yet written... I have so many to do...

My family taught me so many beautiful and valuable things and one of them is to love my country...

My home is everywhere... my home is with my parents, my home is with my grandparents, my home is Romania and my home is France... my home is in all I love...

I know my story will have a happy ending. If we are confident and optimistic, good things happen.



**Art Exhibition – COLEGIUL ENERGETIC in partnership  
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