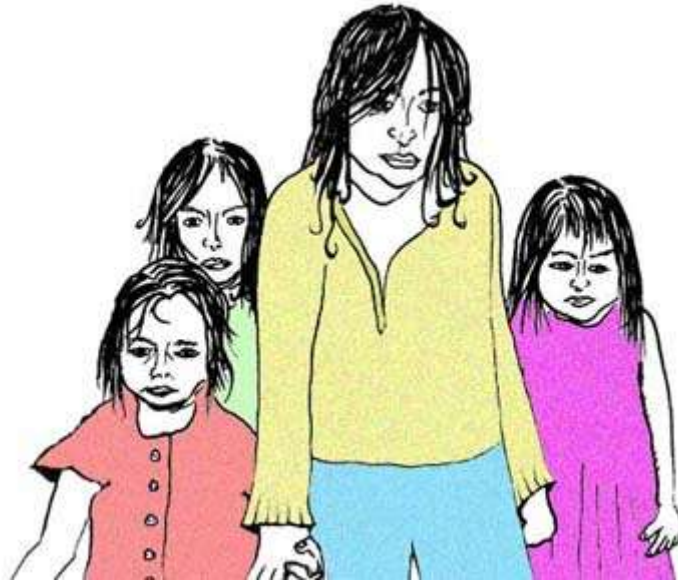
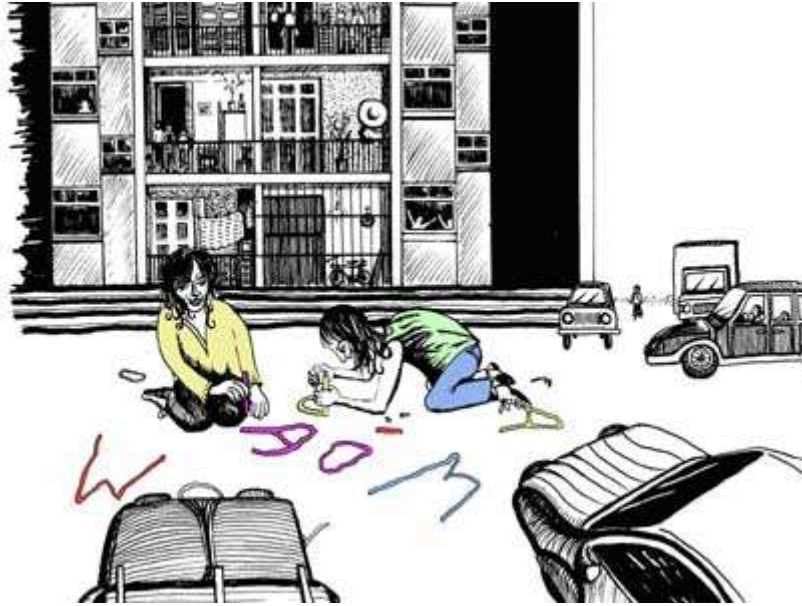


# Diana



The true story of a girl from France (Europe).

Diana and her little sister Zina are playing in the parking lot in front of their place. They write on the ground with chalk. They line up big letters, but it's not easy. There are A's, O's, and M's, but they don't make any words.



They see Chantal coming around the corner of their building. Diana holds out a piece of chalk to her.

- Can you write my name?
- What's your name?
- Diana!



So Chantal draws a line then writes the letters. Diana copies her name, above, below, to the right, and to the left. She fills the ground with her name. She smiles, the parking lot is a giant blackboard.

- Can you give me a book?

Chantal doesn't know Diana and Diana doesn't know Chantal. She just knows that she has a backpack full of children's books.

- I saw you from my balcony!

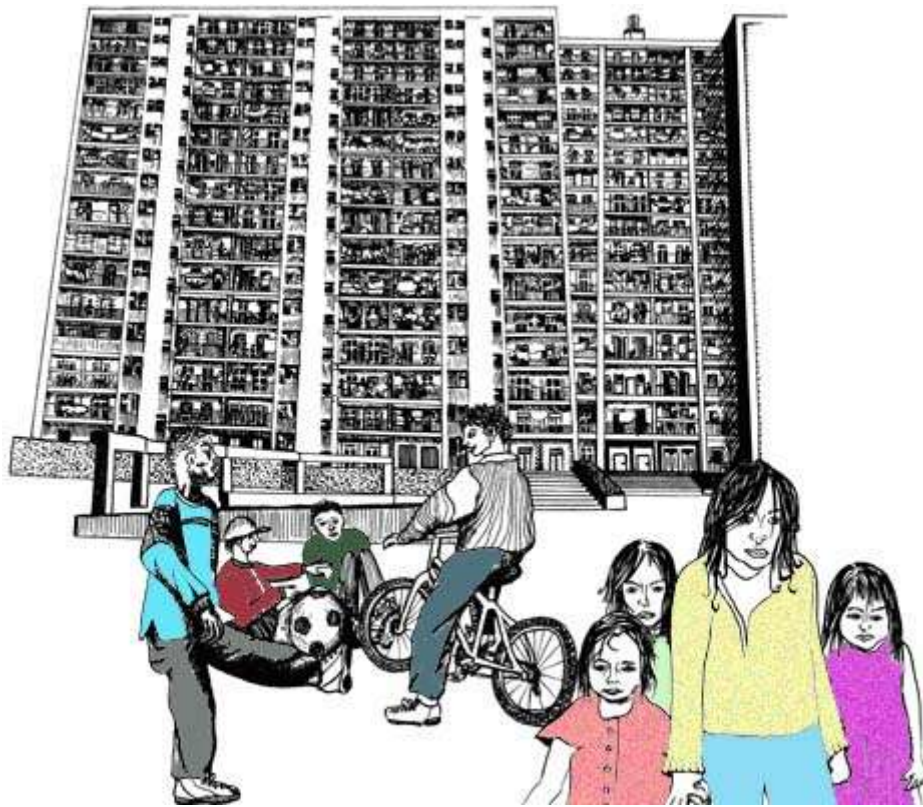


Every Wednesday and Saturday Chantal, Brigitte, and some other adults come to read with kids in front of their apartment building. Sometimes they come in the evening after school too.

Diana, Zina, and Chantal read the book together. Diana points to the letters of her first name. She really wants to learn.

Other children come up to Chantal so she'll read for them too. But Diana doesn't want to share. She rips the books out of another child's hands and throws it on the ground. Then she walks away.





Diana is 9 years old. She doesn't go to school. She does a lot of chores for her age. She takes care of her three little sisters when her mom isn't there.



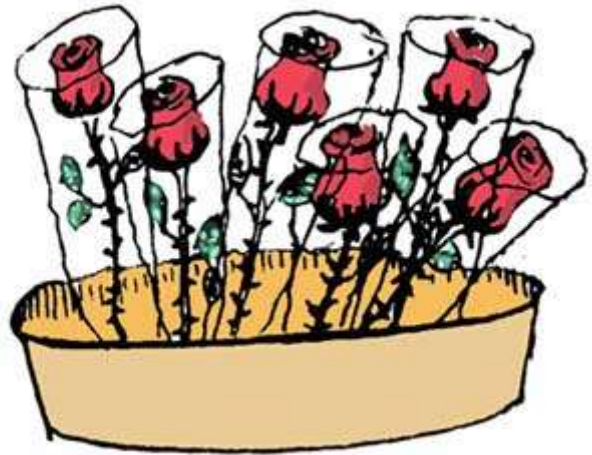
Very early in the morning, her parents go to the market to buy bouquets of roses.

During the day, Mama gets the flowers ready with Diana: they put them one by one in clear wrapping paper.



In the evening, the girls go to the port to sell the roses in outdoor restaurants.

Diana helps her family. She says, "I sell roses to help my little sisters live well."



Diana didn't dare to come to the street library. She was ashamed to show that she didn't know how to read. She didn't want to mix with the other children either. She always hides behind her big black bangs.



But little by little Diana starts to participate. Her desire to read books is stronger than her fear. She loves to hear good stories, especially the ones that make people cry. But she doesn't cry though!

What she likes best is to draw, and even better, to write.

Diana writes the letters she knows on a piece of paper. She's proud to show off that now she knows how to write her first name in capital letters. She also does cool drawings full of color.



"Beggar! We saw you begging downtown!" yells Medhi.

Diana lets out all her anger and rips up her piece of paper. She hits Medhi, who made fun of her. Chantal tries to separate them, but it's impossible to calm down Diana.

Her mother calls her from her balcony. She's afraid that the fighting will spread.

Diana goes up to her apartment, pulling along her little sisters, who complain, "We want to stay!"

"Way to go! We won't see her anymore!"

The children from the neighborhood are a little bit afraid of Diana because she doesn't hesitate to fight, even with boys who are bigger than she is. They don't talk with her. They don't even know her name.

For a few weeks now, Brigitte has been helping children to tape record songs: the ones they like, the ones they sing at home.

Brigitte writes all the songs in a notebook so everyone can practice them. There are songs in a lot of different languages. The children learn from each other.



One day during the street library Agnès and Jean-Pierre come to share their talent with the children. They're opera singers and also friends of Brigitte.

They set up their sheet music on the music stands and start to sing. The opera echoes up to the top of the apartment buildings.

Diana watches them from afar and then comes closer. She stops in front of them and says, "It's like magic!"



The week after, Brigitte gets ready for her singing workshop. Diana watches shyly from far away. Then, encouraged by Brigitte, she starts singing.

All of a sudden her shy voice is transformed. She sings a magnificent song in her native language. All the other children's jaws drop and there's a long silence.

When her mother hears the song, tears spring to her eyes. She didn't know that Diana had a voice like that. She explains,

- "It's a wedding song."



- Brigitte, can we listen to Diana's song one more time?

For a few weeks, kids from the street library ask to listen to Diana's song again on the tape recorder. That way, they get to know her name and don't call her a beggar anymore.





Over the next months, Diana starts to have more and more self-confidence. One day she asks if she can go to school. She even goes to talk with the principal of the school herself to ask to sign up.

Her parents agree, even if they know that it will be difficult.

She goes to school for the first time at the age of twelve and passes straight into fifth grade. She wants to learn so much that she doesn't lose her courage or listen to the other children's teasing.

Sometimes, she misses school a few days in a row to help her parents, but she always comes back.

Some girls from her neighborhood walk to school together. She makes friends with Nourfati and Anita.

And Diana is happy to come and sing in the street library when she has the time.

