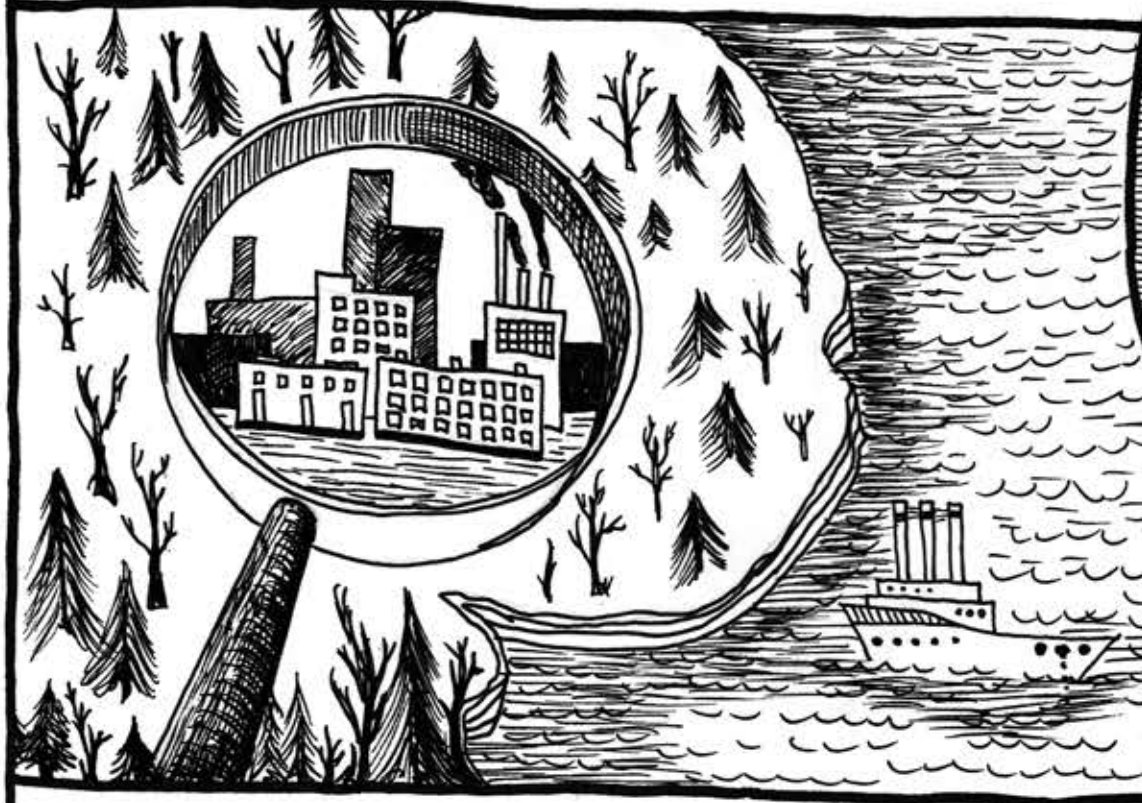


HI, MY NAME IS SHAZAM,
I AM 24 YEARS OLD I LIVE
IN SANKT PETERSBURG.

I WOULD LIKE TO TELL
YOU ABOUT ME,
OR MAYBE ABOUT
MY ADVENTURE...



I WAS BORN IN A SMALL TOWN IN THE FAR NORTH OF RUSSIA. I HAVE A FATHER,
A MOTHER, AN ELDER BROTHER AND A VERY KIND HUGE GINGER DOG. I THINK I
AM VERY LUCKY IN MY LIFE BECAUSE I AM SURROUNDED WITH MANY
WONDERFUL AND BRIGHT PEOPLE.



I HAVE SEVERAL HOBBIES WHICH GIVE ME A LOT OF EXCITEMENT, SUCH AS MUSIC, SOCIALIZING AND
TRAVELLING. SOCIALIZING IS LIKE TRAVELLING: YOU ALWAYS LEARN SOMETHING NEW, SHARE SOMETHING
AND RECEIVE SOMETHING IN RETURN AND THUS YOU GAIN EXPERIENCE. HOWEVER, THE MAGIC HAPPENS WHEN
DURING THE COMMUNICATION LOVE IS BORN. I LOVED TOO... AND I STILL LOVE... BUT IT'S NOT AS EASY
AS IT SEEMS AT FIRST SIGHT...



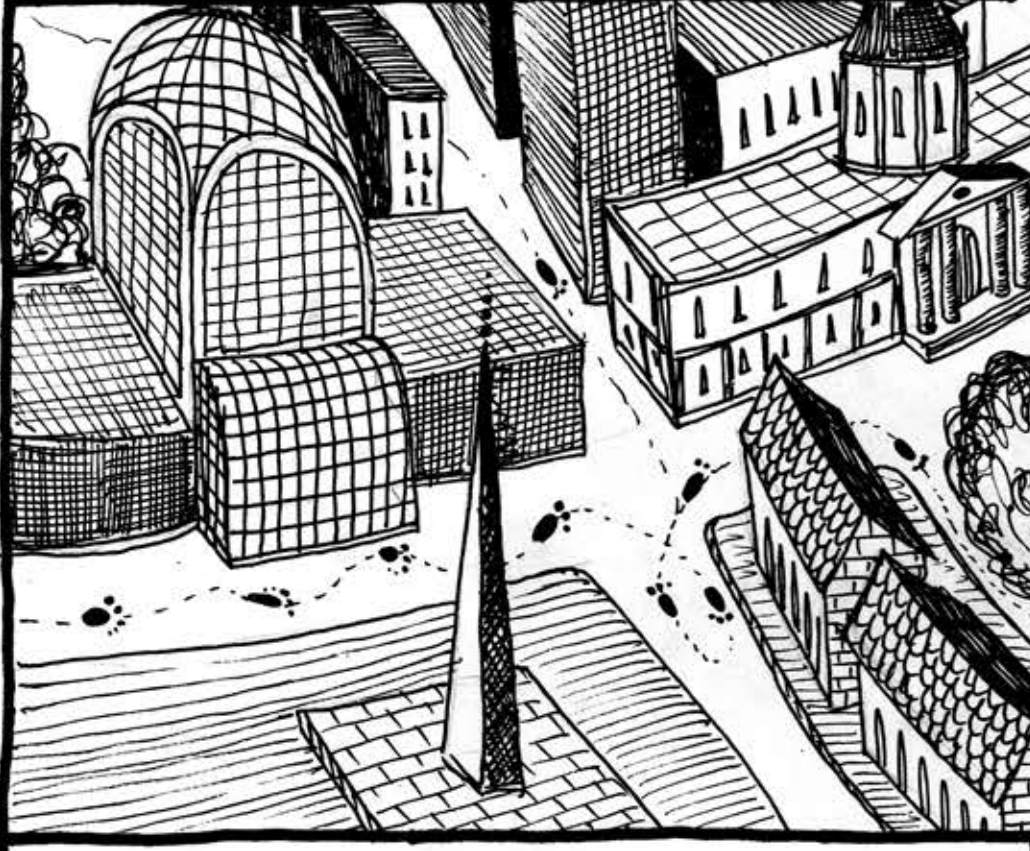
Don't forget!!!
Shazam!!!
HORA!!!

I LOVE him
I'm left-
-handed. I'm
against the
war. I LIKE

MY MAJOR JOURNEY BEGAN WHEN I STARTED TALKING ABOUT ME AND HIM WITH THE ... OTHERS. I WANTED TO SHARE A VERY IMPORTANT PART OF ME WITH THE WORLD. AND OF COURSE I HOPED TO BE UNDERSTOOD.

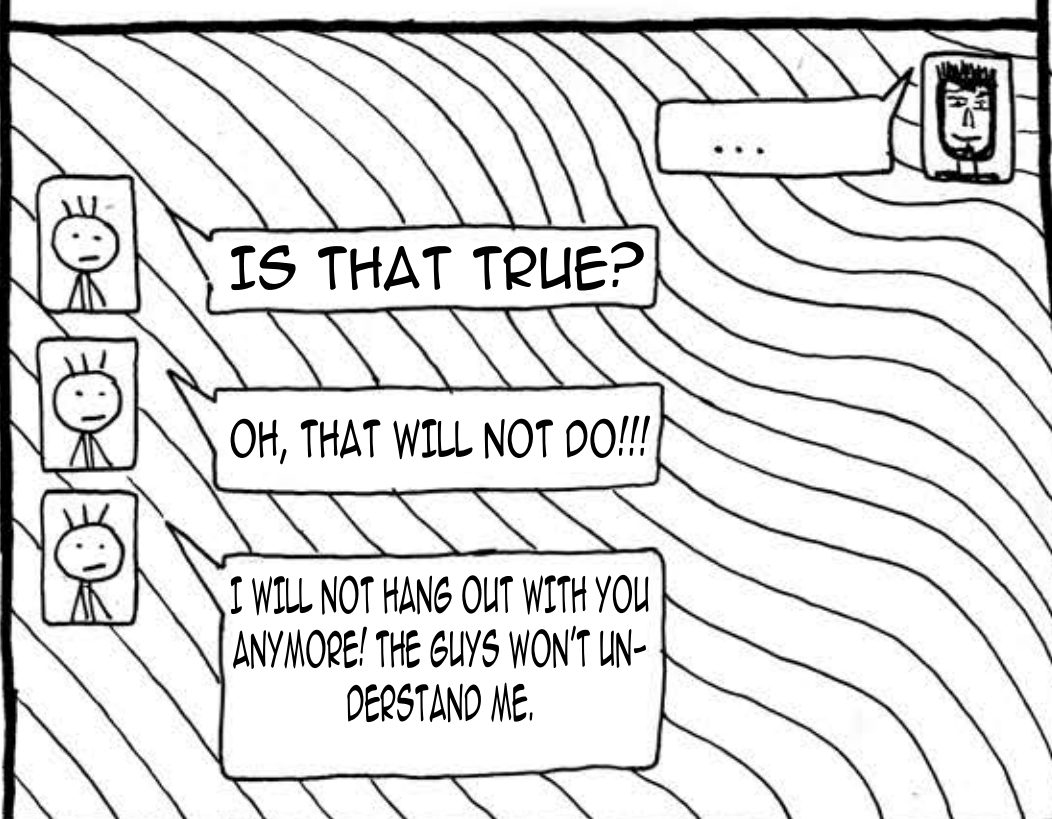


I FELT LIKE FLYING BECAUSE I DID NOT KNOW YET WHAT WOULD BE THE REACTION OF PEOPLE...



THE CONVERSATION WITH MY FRIENDS WAS SHORT AND PLAIN

I FELT AS IF SOMETHING JUST BROKE INSIDE ME.



I FELT UNCOMFORTABLE... AS IF I WAS GUILTY OF SOMETHING. BUT I DECIDED NOT TO JUMP TO CONCLUSIONS AND SEE WHAT WILL HAPPEN NEXT. I WENT TO A PLACE WHERE I WAS VALUED FOR MY SKILLS AND ABILITIES, WHERE I COULD FEEL COMFORTABLE IN THE SENSE OF CREATIVITY. THAT PLACE WAS THE SCHOOL... WHERE I WAS WORKING AS A TEACHER.



SHAZAM, WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU?

YOU CAN'T WORK LOOKING LIKE THIS!

WHAT WILL THE PARENTS SAY? HAVE YOU THOUGHT ABOUT IT? YOU ARE NOT IN EUROPE WHERE EVERYTHING IS ACCEPTABLE.

BE YOU A TEENAGER PERHAPS IT WOULD HAVE BEEN UNDERSTANDABLE.

BUT YOU ARE A GROWN UP MAN. PAY ATTENTION A "MAN"!

AND YOU CAN BY NO MEANS BE WITH ANOTHER MAN! IT IS INNATURAL AND ILLEGAL. GET OUT!!!!

AGAIN I FELT AS IF SOMETHING BROKE INSIDE ME. I BELIEVED AND TRUSTED PEOPLE BUT I WAS FACING BARRIERS ALL THE TIME BECAUSE I WASN'T FITTING TO THE OTHERS' PERCEPTIONS AND EXPECTATIONS OF A REAL PERSON, A CITIZEN, A TEACHER AND A FAMILY MAN... I WAS LOST AND CONFUSED.



IN THE MOMENTS WHEN YOU THINK THERE IS NO WAY OUT USUALLY EXTRAORDINARY THINGS START HAPPENING... A HOPE IS BORN... THEN THE STRENGTH... TO ACT, TO LIVE, TO CHANGE SOMETHING, TO BE COURAGEOUS... WELL, HOW ELSE CAN IT BE? THE TRUST IS ONE OF THE KEYS THAT CAN OPEN PRACTICALLY ANY DOOR. I REMEMBERED A QUOTE FROM ONE OF MY FAVORITE AUTHORS:

"IF YOU SUCCEED IN JUDGING YOURSELF RIGHTLY, THEN YOU ARE INDEED A MAN OF TRUE WISDOM."

Then you shall judge yourself, that is the "most difficult thing of all. It is much more difficult to judge oneself than to judge others. If you succeed in judging yourself rightly, then you are indeed a man of true wisdom."



DIFFERENT STORIES HAPPEN WITH EVERY SINGLE PERSON ON OUR PLANET: SAD AND HAPPY, POWERFUL AND UNFORGETTABLE. EVERYONE DREAMS TO BE HAPPY, TO LOVE AND BE LOVED, HAVE A FAMILY, SOCIALIZE, CREATE SOMETHING AND ADMIRE THE WORLD. IT IS IMPORTANT FOR EVERYONE TO BE ACCEPTED BY THE SOCIETY AND IN LIFE. HOWEVER, SOMETIMES IT IS DIFFICULT TO ACHIEVE AN ACCEPTANCE OF THE OTHERS BECAUSE THE SOCIETY CLENCHES US AND PUTS PRESSURE ON US. WHAT TO DO? I DON'T KNOW. ONE THING I CAN SAY FOR SURE IS THAT THERE ARE MANY PEOPLE WHO ASK THE SAME QUESTION. PERHAPS, IF ONE OF THESE PEOPLE STARTS SPEAKING OPENLY WHAT HE/SHE LACKS, OR DREAMS ABOUT, WHAT HE/SHE FEELS OR IS SCARED OF, MAYBE THEN WHAT IS INSIDE US AND AROUND US WILL BECOME CLEAR AND SUSCEPTIBLE FOR CHANGE.



NIKITA AFANASE
 PEACE AND
 ARENA: ART SCHOOL
 GEORGIA 2016



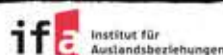
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