

Doina's Journey

Learn English with Short Stories

By Nicoleta Dvornicov

Volume II: The USA

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To my nieces and nephews.

Preface

Doina's Journey is an independent book project designed for people who are learning English. The purpose of this book is to support the transition from learning separate words to using them in sentences. It allows the reader to learn new vocabulary contextually, and to read texts that deal with everyday life.

Each volume consists of 10 short stories, and each story is followed by a vocabulary section (which gives the contextual meaning of the words), five reading comprehension questions, and a writing activity.

Do you want to improve your English level? Are you willing to learn new vocabulary? Do you want to explore other cultures?

If you answered “yes” to any of these questions, then I invite you to join Doina, a girl from Moldova, on her journey to discover the world, while developing your English skills!

Acknowledgements

I want to thank my Professor, Dr. Graetzer, and my friends, Huda Al-Sammarraie and Megi Papiashvili, for their contribution to this book.

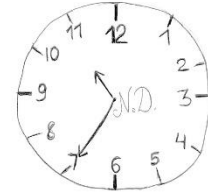
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1. One Week

You probably remember the acceptance letter that I received in April, right? Well, after carefully analyzing the offer with my parents, by comparing the advantages and disadvantages of studying abroad, I have decided to take this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and embark on a fascinating journey.

After the decision was made, I kept thinking about my life-changing adventure that would start once I would board an airplane to travel to the USA. Each day, I could not stop thinking about how my life would be there...until I realized that the clock was ticking and that my time in Moldova was limited.



Sadly, now I have only one week left before my plane departs on August 17th. In such a short period of time I plan to visit all my relatives and friends, to prepare my luggage and to spend quality time with my family and my two best friends. Diana and Michael will leave in September because both of them have been accepted to universities in other countries. Diana will study in Bucharest and Michael in Vienna.

The three of us did not have much time to hang out during the past three months because we had the Baccalaureate exams in June and the high school graduation celebration in July. As a consequence, this summer was somewhat different because we could not do most of our favorite summer activities. However, at the end of July we had a surprise vacation.

Our parents planned a graduation gift for us, a week by the Black Sea! This was the first time Diana, Michael and I saw the sea! It was a unique experience and we were beyond excited to swim, not in a lake, but in the sea. One morning, we woke up at 4 a.m. to see the sunrise. The air was so fresh, and all we could hear was the sound of the waves. We walked along the beach and we noticed how nature was waking up slowly. Our attention was suddenly captured by two dolphins that were swimming close to the shore as the sun was

rising. That was the moment when I realized that very soon our lives would change completely. I felt happy because I was having a wonderful time with my dear friends, and I also felt a bit sad, at the same time, because I knew that on the 17th of August everything would change. It was a special summer vacation by the sea!

– *Doinița! Let's go to the store and choose the types of chocolate that you want to take with you to the USA.* I hear my mother's voice coming from the kitchen and I quickly get up from my bed.

– *I'm coming!*

Have you ever moved to a different country? How was the transition for you?

Vocabulary

Carefully- attentively, with caution

Advantage- a favorable circumstance, a benefit

Disadvantages- an unfavorable circumstance, a drawback

Abroad- not in your own country, in a foreign country

Embark- in the text, it means to start, to begin

The clock is ticking- the time passes quickly

Luggage- baggage, suitcase(s)

To hang out- to spend time (informally)

Somewhat- a bit, fairly, to a certain degree

Beyond- more than

Sunrise- when the sun appears in the morning

Suddenly- unexpectedly

Questions

How much more time does Doina have in Moldova?

Why didn't Diana, Doina and Michael spend much time together this summer?

What was the surprise vacation and who organized it?

Why did the three friends wake up at 4 a.m.?

Why was Doina happy and sad at the same time?

Activity

Describe a situation when you felt happy and sad at the same time. What made you happy/sad? How old were you? Where were you? Include as many details as possible!

2. The Farewell Party

- Mom, all the guests will arrive at 6 p.m today!
- Sounds good, sweetheart! I will finish up cooking all the dishes by then.
- Great! I bought the decorations for my farewell party from the local store and I will set up the balloons soon. By the way, Diana and Michael will bring the cake.
- They are so nice! You have wonderful friends, Doinița!
- I know, and I will miss them like crazy. We have been friends since we were kids, and now we have to say goodbye.
- Distance is not an obstacle for a friendship that is meant to last. It is indeed more difficult to remain friends because people change, but it is not impossible.

Doinița started to think about the uncertainty of the future. She hoped in her heart that her friendship with Diana and Michael would stay the same, yet she knew that each of them would make new friends and she feared that this could change their friendship.

- Mom, to be honest, I am a little scared. Well, I know that I am leaving tomorrow, but when will I return? Moldova is so far away from the USA and the flight tickets are so expensive!
 - I have been thinking about it a lot. Dad and I will do everything we can to buy you a ticket to come home next summer. You will see that everything will turn out in the best possible way.
- She kissed and hugged her daughter.

– I love you! Doinița kisses her mother's hands. Thank you for being the best mother in the whole universe. Meanwhile, her father shouts from outside:

- Where are my two favorite girls? Look what I have for you! Where are you? He enters into the kitchen with two big bouquets of red and yellow roses. *This one is for you, my beautiful*



of her farewell party.

daughter! Never forget how special and loved you are! He hands the bouquet of yellow roses to Doinița, hugs her and kisses her on the forehead. This bouquet of red roses is for you, Anastasia! Your love makes me a better person. I hope you know how much I love you and how proud I am proud of the family we created together. Doinița realized that this special moment was the start

Doinița decided to wear her favorite green dress with yellow dots for the party, and at 6 p.m. all the relatives and friends were already present. Everyone danced till 9 p.m. and enjoyed the delicious dishes prepared by Doinița's mother. There were games, gifts, hugs, and goodbyes.

– Goodbye, Doinița! said Diana. *I will miss you very much! I hope you have a safe trip tomorrow.*

– Goodbye, Diana! Thank you for being such a great friend! Good luck in Bucharest and let's stay in touch! The two friends hugged each other and waved goodbye. Michael was the last person to leave the party. He looked into Doinița's eyes and said:

– We have been friends for so long, and I cannot let you go without confessing something... I love you.

Vocabulary

Dish- in the text, it refers to a prepared food item

Farewell party- a goodbye party

By the way- it is used to introduce a new idea/topic

To miss someone like crazy- to miss someone very much

To be meant- to be intended

Indeed- it is used to emphasize a previous mentioned statement; truly, certainly

Uncertainty- something that it is unknown

Turn out- happen, to be the case

Meanwhile- at the same time, in the intervening time

To shout- to scream

To confess- to admit, to say, to acknowledge

Questions

Why does Doina have a farewell party?

Do you agree that “Distance is not an obstacle for a friendship that is meant to last”? Why?

Why did Doina’s father give flowers to her and her mother?

Why was Michael the last person to leave?

In your opinion, why did Michael decide to confess his love to Doina?

Activity

Have you ever organized a farewell party? In your opinion, what are the main elements of such an event? Describe an ideal farewell party by including as many details as possible.

3. Airports

The big day has come, and I am already at the airport in Chişinău, the capital city of Moldova. I am alone here because I begged my parents not to come with me since the goodbye at the airport would be more painful than at home. I took a taxi, and I reached the capital city in less than two hours.



It is 9 a.m. and I am standing in line at the check-in desk, having my backpack, a carry-on bag and a checked baggage.

– *May I see your passport, please?*

– *Yes, of course!*

– *Let's weigh your checked baggage. Can you put it on the counter?* I look at the scale, hoping that my bag would be under 23 kilograms to avoid extra charges.

– *Good. It has 21 kilograms, and here are your tickets. You need to pass through the security, and then you must go to gate 6. Look at the ticket, here you can see your seat number. Have a safe flight!*

– *Thank you!* I look at the tickets and see that my first flight departs at 11 a.m. I have two layovers, one in

Frankfurt and another in Madrid, before I arrive to the USA. I need to go to my gate now because it is already 10 a.m.



Doina passed through the security and boarded the plane without any problems. She texted her parents that she was safe and that the plane was about to take off. She enjoyed flying for first time and was grateful for the window seat. She said to herself that Moldova looked like a quilt from above, and hoped to see her village from the airplane. Yet, the clouds did not allow her.

Vocabulary

To beg- to implore, to ask deeply

Check-in desk- a place at the airport where you show your passport and receive your ticket and/or check your luggage

Carry-on bag- the piece of luggage that the passenger can take on the plane

Checked baggage- the piece of luggage, which usually has to be less than 23 kilograms, and it is not taken by the passenger on the plane, but it is given at the check-in desk

Gate- the place where the passengers wait to board the flight

Layover- a stop in an airport, which is not the final destination

To take off- (the airplane) to depart

Quilt- a bed cover made of small different pieces woven together

Charge- an amount of money to be paid for goods or services

Questions

Why did Doina take a taxi to go to the airport?

In your opinion, is it more painful to say goodbye at the airport or at home? Why?

Why did she hope for the checked baggage to be less than 23 kg?

How many bags will Doina take with her on the plane?

In your opinion, why does Doina think that Moldova looks like a quilt from above?

Activity

What was your most exciting trip? What made it so memorable? Make sure to include details of the trip.

4. University Life

Doina has been in the USA for more than a week, living on the university campus with about thirty other international students. The past week she participated in the international orientation, but yesterday the domestic students also moved in. She walked through campus, noticing how sophomores, juniors and seniors were greeting each other and talking enthusiastically about their summer break experiences. They seemed genuinely happy, hugging each other, taking pictures, and laughing.

Yesterday, Doina met with her academic adviser and discussed her first semester schedule. Doina needed to register for four classes: an English writing class, and three electives. She chose philosophy, Spanish, and swimming. Doina was excited to improve her swimming skills, especially when thinking about her summer vacation by the Black Sea.

After the meeting, Doina got together with her labor supervisor and talked about her future responsibilities as a team assistant in the Center for International Education. She was positively surprised to discover that she was assigned to work in an international team. She thought that her dream of learning firsthand about different cultures and traditions could come true via this job. Doina was told that she had to work ten hours a week, like all the other students on campus, and her supervisor assisted her in organizing her working hours around her class schedule. Doina was eager to share the excellent news with her parents. She decided that she would skype with them on the weekend because she would have more stories to tell about her classes too.



After the meeting, Doina went to check her mailbox before going to eat with her roommate and other friends in the cafeteria. She found two letters, an unimportant one and a very special one from Michael. She looked at his letter and smiled. She often thought of him and their last discussion. After he confessed his love the night before she left, Doina also mentioned that she had feelings for him.

Vocabulary

Domestic students- students who are from the country where the university is located

Sophomore- second-year university (or high school) student

Junior- third-year university (or high school) student

Senior- fourth-year university (or high school) student

Genuinely- truly, sincerely, honestly

Academic adviser- a designated faculty member to assist a student in academic matters

Elective- an optional (not mandatory) course of study

Labor supervisor- a person who manages and oversees the work of others

To be assigned- to be given a particularly responsibility, e.g. a job

Firsthand- direct, personal, from the original source

Via- through, by means of

Eager- strongly wanting something; enthusiastic, excited

To have feelings for someone- to feel affection or love for someone

Questions

What do you think of Doina's schedule?

Why is Doina excited about her job?

Is it a good idea to work and study at the same time?

Why does Doina want to skype with her parents on the weekend?

Why did Doina smile when she received a letter from Michael?

Activity

Have you ever lived on campus? Would you like to? For how long? What are the benefits and drawbacks of such an experience?

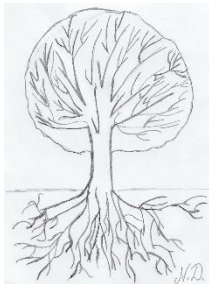
5. My Mother Tongue

I miss being in Moldova, but I enjoy studying here in the USA. I am lucky to have wonderful friends who come from different countries, such as Latin American countries and post-Soviet countries. It is fun to meet people who speak many languages and come from various cultures. Most of my closest friends speak Spanish and/or Russian, which helps me improve my language skills.

Last weekend we made an international potluck dinner and every person brought a traditional dish from his or her country. I was amazed by the delicacies prepared by my friends. We ate, talked, danced and just had a fun time together. I was surprised that when the Moldovan song “Dragostea din tei” by O-ZONE was played, everyone started to sing along. I was not aware of how popular it was worldwide!

Although my friends and I usually have some fun on the weekends, the weekdays are quite challenging because of classes, projects, work, and homework. The classes are thought-provoking and the professors create a critical thinking environment. For instance, the students are encouraged to speak freely in class and share their ideas on the discussed topics. I particularly enjoy the discussions in my philosophy class because most of the issues that we analyze do not have a simple solution, which motivates us to participate actively.

Today is the first day of the fall break. I am so glad that I finally have time to relax and think about my experience in the USA. I have been here for almost three months, and I cannot



believe how fast time flies. Well, honestly, I am happy that time passes quickly because I miss my roots, my family, my friends, the delicious home-made food, the traditions, and being able to speak my mother tongue on a daily basis.

Yet, I know that I will not travel to Moldova earlier than next July.

Vocabulary

Various- many, a number of

Potluck dinner- a dinner to which each person brings a dish

Delicacy- food that is rare/expensive

To be aware of- to be informed of, to be familiar with

Worldwide- global, around the world

Thought-provoking- thinking intensively about a topic, stimulating deep thinking

Time flies- an expression which means that time passes quickly

Mother tongue- someone's first language, the language someone spoke at home growing up

Questions

What does Doina miss about Moldova?

Do you agree or disagree with this statement, “It is fun to meet people who speak many languages and come from various cultures.”? Why?

What did Doina and her friends do at the potluck dinner?

Why does Doina like her Philosophy class?

Why is Doina happy that time flies by quickly?

Activity

Imagine that you are organizing a potluck dinner. Whom would you invite? What activities would you plan? What music would you choose? Write a detailed description of your plan and try to include, if possible, words from the new vocabulary.

6. Summer Job

Doina is sitting on a couch, reading a magazine about young entrepreneurs, while



waiting for it to be 14:00. She has an appointment with her advisor, and she is nervous about it. It is that time of the academic year when the high achievers are searching and applying for summer jobs. The best positions are given to the early birds, so she decided to meet with her advisor before the Christmas break, which starts next week. If the meeting is productive, then she can start creating small deadlines for

herself in order to have enough time to prepare a strong job application.

– *Good afternoon, Doina. How are you?*

– *Good afternoon, Dr. Peterson. I am doing excellent, thank you. And you?*

– *I am doing well, although there is so much work to do before the holiday season begins.*

How may I help you today? You mentioned in your e-mail that you need guidance with finding a summer job.

– *Yes, I have my curriculum vitae (CV) in the European format, but I need to make sure that I write it based on the USA standards since I am looking for a job here.*

– *Let me look at it. Hmm... I can give you some general tips from the start: here we do not indicate the date of birth, country of origin/nationality, or gender and we do not include a picture, either. You can already make some changes based on this, but I advise you to make an appointment with the Career Center, which is located in this building, and they will help you step by step.*

– *Wow! The European and USA formats greatly differ!*

– *Yes! So, I recommend that you rewrite your CV together with the Career Office. They will give you many examples of successful CVs. Then, you can search for jobs. I would advise you*

to start the search during the winter break because this will give you enough time to check what's available on the market and prepare a strong cover letter.

–This is a great idea! After our meeting, I will go to the Career Center and make an appointment. I will ask for examples of strong cover letters as well. Having a guidance always helps!

– Sounds great, Doina! I wish you the best of luck and let me know what I can do for you.

– Thank you, Dr. Paterson. I appreciate your time and guidance. Have a wonderful Christmas break!

– Enjoy your winter vacation, Doina! I will see you again in January!

Vocabulary

Couch- sofa

Entrepreneur- a person who starts a business, a business person

Appointment- a set time to meet with someone

High achiever- a person successful in his/her study because of his/her efforts

Early bird- someone who acts before others or before the deadline

Deadline- the day by which something needs to be finished, a limit day

Tip- an advice, a suggestion, a recommendation

Step by step- to progress gradually from one part to the next

Curriculum vitae (CV) – a document with information about a person's education, work experience, qualification, and skills; it is generally needed when applying for a job

Cover letter- a document in which a person explains his/her motivation to apply for the job, and how his/her qualifications meet the requirements of the position

Questions

Why did Doina meet with her advisor?

How would you describe a high achiever?

Why does Doina need to change her current CV?

Why Doina's advisor recommends her to start the job search during the winter break?

What does Doina need to do after the meeting with her advisor?

Activity

Have you ever written a CV? Why is it important to have a strong CV? What are the most important parts of a CV, in your opinion? Why?

7. The Season of Exams

It is 10 a.m. on a sunny Saturday, and Doina is skyping with her family.

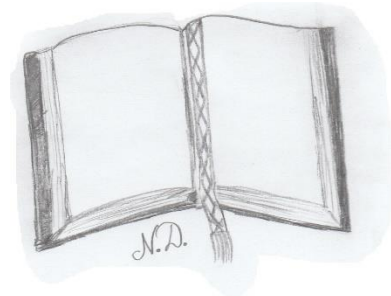
– *The campus looks as if it has been hacked by a studying virus. I went on a short walk today and I saw people who were studying in the dorm, in the library, outside on a bench or on a blanket, and in the cafeteria.*

– *Do you also have many exams during the finals week? Doina's mother asks.*

– *Yes, I have five exams, one per day, which is not that difficult. Can you imagine that some of my friends have two exams in a row?*

– *How do they cope with such an exam schedule? I guess, the positive part is that you and your friends will be done within a week! Doina's mother tries to cheer her up, thinking of the amount of work it takes to pass through the finals week.*

– *Most students just study, hoping that they can resist the stress. Others try to work out or spend time in nature in order to relax. I, personally, try to sleep at least seven hours a night.*



It is already 10 p.m and Doina is still intensively studying in her room. She did not get to enjoy today's warm weather, to listen to the song of the birds nor to breathe in the sweet scent of the blooming flowers. Yet, she has a big

bouquet of red roses in her room, which was sent by Michael with the following note:

“Dear Doina,

I am sure you will successfully pass all the exams.

Love,

Michael”

Vocabulary

To hack- to gain unauthorized access

Dorm- residence hall, a place on campus where students live

Finals week- the week of the final exams

In a row- one after another, consecutively

To cheer up- to make someone happier

To cope- to manage, to resist, to deal

To work out- to do physical exercise

Questions

What kind of virus hacked the campus?

What are some strategies to cope with stress?

Why does Doina's mother try to cheer her daughter up?

How did Doina spend her entire day?

Why did Michael send a bouquet of flowers to Doina?

Activity

What strategies do you use to cope with stressful situations? Do you have a specific routine that helps you relax? Please include at least two examples.

8. Internship

Did you know that I am already in Pittsburgh? Yesterday was my first day of work at an NGO that focuses on providing quality international education. My responsibilities focus on writing articles on different educational practices in the USA and around the world, organizing educational workshops at local schools, developing fundraising strategies and assisting the director with her duties. There are six more interns who are from Seattle, Louisville, New York City, and Pittsburgh. We will work together for eight weeks on specific projects assigned by our director.

I arrived in Pittsburgh a week ago in order to find a place where I could live for two months. For the first three days I have lived in an Airbnb room, but now I am renting a shared apartment with two more girls who study at the University of Pittsburgh. One girl, Kate, is from France and the other one, Aika, is from Japan. They both came to the USA as exchange students.

Aika, Kate and I became friends very quickly. We like to travel, we enjoy cooking traditional meals, and we go out every day in the city. My favorite place is the Point State Park Fountain because the sound of the running water makes me think of the sea, and the sea reminds of Michael. Oh, how much I wish he were here!

– *Doina, let's go grocery shopping!* Kate shouts from the kitchen.

– *There is no more food in the fridge!* Adds Aika.

– *Let's go in 10 minutes. I just need to put a dress on.* Although it is still May, Doina decided to wear a yellow dress that reminds her of the summer in Moldova. As she is getting ready to leave the apartment, she receives a text from Michael:



*“I have a **BIG** surprise! I am coming with my university choir on a tour to New York City! We will be there from July 1st to July 14th. We have to meet! Call me when you can!”*

Vocabulary

NGO- a non-profit organization that is independent from the government

Workshop- a meeting in which people discuss topics/ideas and/or develop specific skills

Fundraising- finding financial support

Duty- responsibility, obligation

Intern- a student who works, sometimes without being payed, to gain experience or meet academic/work requirements

Airbnb- an online platform that allows people to rent/book rooms, apartments and houses

Shared apartment- an apartment in which someone lives with other people (who are generally not related)

Exchange student- a student who goes to a different country to study for a limited period of time (generally as part of an exchange program)

To grocery shop- to buy food items

Questions

In your opinion, will Doina enjoy her internship position? Why?

In your opinion, is it difficult to find an apartment in a new city? Why?

Does Doina like to live in Pittsburg? Why?

In your opinion, is it easy to share an apartment with other people? Why?

Do you think Donia and Michael will be able to meet in July?

Activity

Have you ever lived in a shared apartment? If yes, how was your experience? Make sure to add specific examples. If not, what are the advantages and disadvantages of living with other people?

9. Exploring New York City

– *I am so nervous!* Doina tells to herself as the flight attendant announces that the plane is about to land at the JFK airport in New York City. She has not seen Michael in eleven months, and the thought that they will finally be together in about thirty minutes makes her feel butterflies in her stomach.

Doina successfully finished her internship on July 8th, and decided to visit Michael for three days, and then to fly to Moldova from NYC since the flights are much cheaper from there. She is proud because she has saved enough money during the academic year to buy her own ticket to Moldova. She believes that being financially independent from an earlier age is beneficial, since it makes a person more responsible. Moreover, her brothers and their families will also come to Moldova in July, which means that the entire Popa family will reunite.

– *Doinița! I missed you so much!* Michael hugs her and kisses her on the cheek!

– *I am so happy to finally see you!* Doina looks into his eyes, and they hug again.



Doina and Michael feel as if they have never been apart. They stopped at a Starbucks to drink coffee, to catch up, and to plan three wonderful days together. This is the itinerary that they agreed upon:

1. Tuesday: at 9 a.m., to take the ferry to the Staten Island to see the Statue of Liberty, at 8 p.m. to see the Broadway musical “Aladdin.”
2. Wednesday: at 9 a.m. visit the Brooklyn botanical garden, at 9 p.m. to walk the Brooklyn Bridge and see the sunset.
3. Thursday: at 11 a.m., to go up the Empire State Building, and then go shopping on Times Square.

Doina and Michael had the best three days of their lives, exploring the city and creating wonderful memories together.

Vocabulary

Flight attendant- a steward/ a stewardess on an aircraft, the person who assists the passenger and the pilot during a flight

Butterflies in the stomach- an expression which means to feel nervous about something

To be apart- to be separated, to not be together

To catch up- to talk about things that happened since the last time people spoke with each other

Itinerary- route, schedule

Questions

What is the purpose of Doina's trip to NYC?

Do you agree that being financially independent from an earlier age makes a person more responsible? Why?

Why is Doina flying to Moldova from NYC?

Who else will come to Moldova this summer?

What day of the itinerary do you find most exciting? Why?

Activity

Plan a three day trip to a city of your choice, and include as many details as possible in your itinerary.

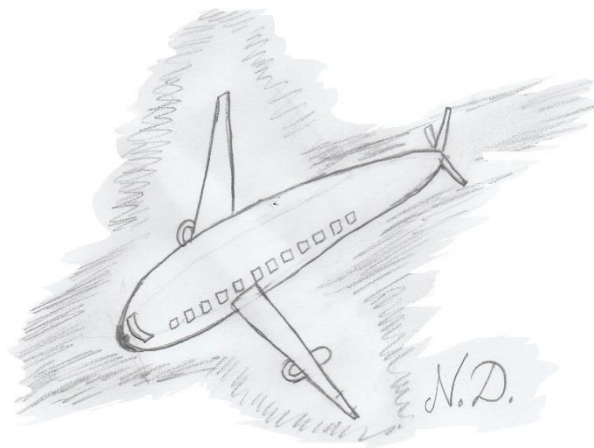
10. Summer Vacation

Doina likes to fly because it makes her feel as if time stops, which gives her the possibility to carefully analyze her dreams and future plans. She is on her plane from NYC to Moscow, and then she has one more flight from Moscow to Chişinău. She takes her diary and writes:

“Almost a year passed since I left my parents’ house and moved to a new country! I met new people, I learned a new language, Spanish, I got a campus job that I enjoyed, I did an internship in Pittsburgh, and I travelled to NYC with Michael.

All these experiences enriched me, yet I feel somewhat incomplete because I am not able to share them directly with my parents. The idea that they work hard but barely make the ends meet is devastating, keeping in mind that I work only 10 to 15 hours a week and I have a higher salary than my mother who works at least 40 hours a week. I agree that hard work pays off, but, unfortunately, it pays too little in some countries. I truly hope that via my education I can help my family, my community and other people in need. The more I learn, the more empowered I become.

I have prepared a surprise for my parents. They do not know yet, but in September, I will move to Mexico. I will study and live there for a semester, as a part of my study abroad program. Isn't it thrilling?



Vocabulary

Diary- journal

To enrich- to make better, to improve

Barely- hardly, only just, almost not

To make the ends meet- to have money to buy the buy the basic needs

Devastating- shocking, disturbing

Salary- wage, income, an amount of money paid monthly for your work

Hard work pays off- an expression which means that when you put effort in your work, you will have great results

Empowered- stronger and more confident

Thrilling- exciting, enthusing, inspiring

Questions

Why does Doina like to fly? Do you agree with her reason?

Is Doina happy with the experiences she had during her first year in college?

Do you agree that hard work pays off? Why?

Can Doina help her family through her education? Why?

Where is Doina travelling next?

Activity

Write a letter to your future self about the goals you want to achieve in the following five years. Make sure to be as specific as possible.

TO BE CONTINUED

Do you want to join Doina on her journey to Mexico? Would you like to learn, together with her, important lessons about language acquisition and living with a host family? Are you interested in accompanying her on this new adventure? If you answered “yes,” then you can follow Doina’s story in the upcoming volume!

