

I *dreamed* about
a HIPPOPOTAMUS in a
lipstick factory



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TO my beautiful daughter, Nicole, whose most unusual dream became the inspiration for this story.

TO my amazing illustrator, Sandy Vazan, whose beautiful illustrations have lovingly brought the characters to life on the page.

TO my wonderful family and friends, who encouraged me to “literally” follow a dream.

And...

TO children everywhere, remember, you don't have to be like everyone else to be special. Celebrate your own uniqueness, gifts, and talents on a daily basis!

I applaud you all!

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CHAPTER 1

My Story

My name is Nicoletta, and I'm eight years old. I had the most amazing dream! I dreamed about a hippopotamus in a lipstick factory. You may be thinking, "What a strange dream," and I did too at first. It all happened on the day I received some distressing news at home. If I look back on it now, the dream came to me just in time and was what I had needed to help me deal with the news. Let me tell you the whole story, and maybe one day you will have a dream like mine, just when you need it most.



CHAPTER 2

The News

I was in grade three, and there were two and a half months left to go in the school year. I never really fit in at school, and it was not always a happy place for me. In fact, I could hardly wait for summer break so that I could spend time in my hammock.

Most young kids have something special like a blanket or a toy to comfort them when they are worried. Not me. I grew up with my hammocks. With one in the backyard and one in my room, I've always had a special place to hang out if something was on my mind. No matter the time of day, inside or outside, if I needed to feel better, a hammock would be waiting for me.

One day after school, Dad had come home early and was in the kitchen talking with Mom. It looked like a pretty serious discussion. Mom was crying, and Dad was hugging her. I thought it was something bad, so I waited until they saw me before I spoke.

“Is everything OK?” I asked. “Mom, why are you crying?”

Her tears changed to a smile as she pulled me into her arms and hugged me tight. “They are happy tears, Nicoletta. Dad received some great news today! He was asked to take on a new job in his company. It’s an important job and one he has always dreamed of doing. We have discussed it, and Dad is going to say yes!”

“That’s great, Dad.” It didn’t seem like such a big deal to me—until Mom filled in the rest.

“It will mean a big change for all of us.”

Now a little worried, I asked, “What kind of change?” Mom continued, “Dad’s new job is in another country. He needs to start as soon as possible, which will mean we are going to have to move before the end of this school year.”



Even though I was happy for my dad, all of this news was a lot to take in. I was used to the way things were, and now my whole life was about to change! Homework would have to wait. I needed a hammock now!

I put my backpack away and headed to the backyard to my special place, where I could think about everything that had just happened.

CHAPTER 3

Hammock Time!

I was surprised to see that Dad was heading in the same direction. He got into the hammock first and helped me up. I lay down beside him, resting my head on his chest. He rubbed my back as we talked, sharing more details of his new job and the country that would become our new home. I remembered learning about the country in geography class and how far away it was. We talked about other things, but Dad could see that something was bothering me. We couldn’t avoid talking about it any longer. Dad started first.

“Nicoletta, you look troubled. Mom and I are worried about you and how you are feeling about all the changes. Do you want to talk about it?”

I thought it would be hard to talk about it, but once I started, I felt so much better. “I’m feeling sad that we have to leave our home,” I began. Dad continued to rub my back as he listened to everything I had to say. “It scares me when I think about moving to a new city and a new country at the same time. Will I have to leave my hammocks behind? And what about school? I don’t fit in at my school here. How am I going to fit in there?”

What I hadn’t told Dad was that I have never really enjoyed any grade in school. I learn and see the world differently than other kids do, and have always had trouble making real friends. I certainly don’t belong in the cool crowd, and sports were never my thing. My imagination has been my constant companion and friend. Even though it can be lonely sometimes, no one can judge me in my own world.



I think Dad must have sensed there was more. He hugged me tighter and said, “Don’t worry, Nicoletta. Everything is going to be all right. You won’t be alone. Mom and I will be with you every step of the way.”

It felt good to share my feelings with Dad even though I knew it wouldn’t change anything. As we talked and rocked some more, my eyelids started to get heavy. With Dad’s loving arms around me, I fell into a very deep sleep. For a little while, I wouldn’t have to worry about missing my hammocks or thinking about Dad’s news or school or any of the other fears I carried around with me every day. For a little while, I could just dream...and dream I did!

CHAPTER 4

The Dream Begins at Lipstickland

In my dream, I was on my way to school. I followed the same route every day, but this time something was very different. I stopped to look around. The neighbourhood was familiar, but the big pink building in front of me was not! I checked for my backpack, and I was wearing it as usual. How could I have missed seeing a pink building all this time?! More importantly, why did I notice it today?

I looked at the building more closely. If you took away the windows and doors, it looked like four giant tubes of lipstick were stuck together. My eyes continued to move upward and stopped at the sign on top of the building. I rubbed my eyes to make sure they weren’t playing tricks on me. I looked at the sign again, and sure enough, it read “Lipstickland Inc.” Now, this is a place I would like to explore! I decided to check it out.

A large fence surrounded the property. I walked beside it looking for an entrance. I finally came to a tall front gate supported by two columns. The gate was locked, so I looked around for a doorbell of some kind. That’s when I saw it. Off to the side was a very colourful sign with pictures of lipsticks in every colour you could imagine. It made me think of my collection of lipsticks at home. I was beginning to feel a real connection with this place.

There was a large lipstick-shaped button next to a sign, which read, “Turn the Lipstick for Service.” I turned the lipstick as instructed and waited just a few seconds before a very friendly voice answered. “Welcome to Lipstickland!