

Summary

In a not so distant future, in an arid city flooded by adverts, lives a boy called Mimi who asks himself many questions but gets few answers.

The era of work has ended, schools and hospitals are free.

Everyone is happy, smiley, and nobody ever sweats.

Pollution doesn't exist, and the problem of traffic was solved, yet the sky can no longer be seen.

How can we- Mimi asks himself - live without stars?

And have teachers with names of snacks?

Not to be able to touch leaves or eat fruit?

What is rain?

Mimi wants to understand it.

Experience it on his skin, at the cost of solitude.

Hence begins a magnificent journey that leads him to the discovery of a different world.

And whilst he walks, civilisation remains behind.

Part 1

Chapter ONE

"How is my boy?" asked the worried mum. "He will recover, all he needs is a bit of rest", was the doctors response.

Hearing these words Maia relaxed. The little Mimi, instead, had never worried.

In that moment Francesco, the father arrived: "Mimi! how are you my little champion?"

"Fine Dad. Can I come back home" he asked.

"Yeah, yes..., lets go home."

Maia became tense because of the answer, but then, trusting her husband's judgement, relaxed.

During the return journey it was her indeed who spoke first: "Mimi... have you seen what happens when you go out without Ario? Be more careful in future!" -she was uncertain as whether to rebuke him or not.

Francesco added: "There is no need for you to tell him... I doubt he wants to return to hospital, isn't that so Mimi?"

"Yes, dad."

They knocked on the door and Licia, Mimi's sister, opened the door. She was wearing her Ario; Maia thought to herself that this was a good example for the sun and said: "See that? Licia uses hers even at home... it can't be all that irritating then!"

Mimi didn't say anything, and headed to his room to wait for dinner between one game and the other.

Meanwhile, in the living room, the adults were speaking about him. Besides his parents, also present that evening were grandpa Antonio, grandma Maria and uncle Andrea, respectively the father of Francesco, the mother and brother of Maia.

"What is wrong?" asked Antonio.

"I'm a bit worried for Mimi... it almost seems as though he doesn't want to grow up!"

Andrea intervened: "Forgive me for telling you, Maria, but you should be a bit more firm with him... he must understand that he can't just do what he wants! We always respected our parents, so it's only fair that our kids do the same."

"But why did he go out without Ario" asked Antonio, adding: "and at the height of summer, how stupid.",

"Well, he says he just left, just like thought, without giving it too much though..." was the hardly convincing answer of Maia.

"Oh, don't worry, it's normal at that age."

They heard the alarm, it was time for dinner.

Over dinner Mimi felt under examination, not really by looks but by thoughts; he could sense that many were thinking of him and in fact it was just the case. Dinner ended and shortly afterwards they all went to bed.

* * *

What is Ario?

In a now distant past, air conditioning became ever more common: there wasn't a house, room or means of transport that did without. About 200 experts of the field had proved that living at a constant temperature would have been ideal for the organism, no longer forced to adapt time and time again to meteorologic changes and would have solved the problem of perspiration, shivers and other physical inconveniences. Thanks to statistical studies it was proved that 22°C represented the ideal temperature, and in the year 350, the 22°C became obligatory practically in every place. Besides, the numbers spoke clearly: putting a thousand men and women, for two months, in rooms with varying temperatures, at 22°C the least number of illnesses occurred.

With time, however, the issue of fresh air had to be addressed: by leaving the house, to get to the car one would be exposed to variable and unpredictable temperatures; and even a few seconds of this could cause excessive perspiration, if not even fainting. For the famous rule of supply and demand the first clothing that remedied this were created: at the end, the market was monopolised by Ario, a company founded in 420, by now extremely powerful. For children, Ario turned out to be a cure, its usage forever increasing. To date, doctors recommend to never leave children go out without Ario until they are twelve, as to not expose them to the dangers of air. Initially, a ceremony would be carried out during which at twelve years the Ario was removed for several hours. However, since this shock tactic often brought about flu and other illnesses, slowly, with the intervention of the more overbearing mothers, from several hours it went to a couple of minutes. Mimi is only ten.