

Story accepted for the 2013 Children Story competition “Inclusive works” (theme: New man/woman roles in the multicultural society; age: 4-6 years old).

## **Butwhy’s visit**

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### ***Description of the context:***

*If we want our children to better adapt to the new gender roles in the multicultural society they need to start questioning, at early ages, things around them. They need Butwhy!*

One morning, from nowhere, somebody not small not tall, not young not old, not handsome not ugly, and smelling of far off, came into my life (into my room exactly), and start questioning everything around me. I am bombarded since then with bizarre questions. I am just a five years old girl from Romania and I can’t explain to my unexpected guest the life on Earth properly. Maybe you can help me.

- Who are you?
- Laura.
- But why?
- Why what?
- Why Laura?
- Because I am a girl.
- You decided to be a girl?
- What a stupid question. You do not choose who you are. By the way, who are you?
- But why?
- Because it is nice to introduce yourself when you come to somebody’s house.
- Butwhy?
- What do you mean-but why?
- This is my name-Butwhy.
- And are you a boy, a girl or what?
- I am whoever I decide to be. I can choose.

This is how my discussion with Butwhy started and continued....

- And how do you know you are a girl?
- I simply know. I have pierced ears, I wear mainly dresses, I take ballet lessons, I am helping my mother in the kitchen and, when I grow up, I will be a teacher or a doctor.
- And why is your room full with dolls?
- Because I am a girl and that is what girls play with around here.
- But why are they all blonde and skinny?
- Because they have to be beautiful.
- So blonde and skinny means beautiful. You are redhead and not so skinny-so you are ugly.
- It is rude to visit someone and call them ugly.

- But why don't you play with something else?
- To be honest, nobody brings me something else. I have dolls that pee in their pans and I have to change them, or get sick and I have to inject them. I have to take care of them, what can I do.
- Do whatever you want. Be whoever you want. Be Alex and THEY will never know precisely if you are a girl or a boy....and maybe THEY will let you play Lego, not sting your years and curl your hair, learn karate and dream becoming an engineer.

Who are THEY? Do you have any idea? But why is good at questions not at answers.

- Are you alone on this Planet?
- No I have parents. Two natural parents, not like Claudia, my friend, who has foster parents, or like Maria who stays only with her mother. Look, my mother is there, in the kitchen.
- But why? She likes dishes, pans and the smell of food?
- Probably. Kitchen is the place where mothers are staying a lot when they come from work.
- But why?
- Because people need to eat and mothers and grandmothers are excellent cooks.
- And where is your father?
- My daddy is watching TV in the leaving room because it is an important football match.
- I see...fathers are excellent at watching TV!
- Noo, they work too.
- But why parents do not stay together?
- But they do-they stay in the same house.
- But one is in the kitchen and the other one in the leaving room.
- They split activities to cover everything that needs to be done at home.
- But why they don't SHARE everything?
- I do not know why But why. What exactly do you want to find out with my help anyway?
- Whatever you want to find out.
- Is life so different where are you from?
- I am where you are from.

You see my problem now? I am a five years old girl drowning in a sea of weird questions and answers.

- Your world is small or big?
- No idea. You tell me But why.
- Do you eat lasagna, gulas, sushi, chakula, baklava...or mainly fast food?
- Mainly sandwiches.
- Do you have gypsy friends?
- No.
- But why? You have plenty of gypsy children in your country to play with.
- They are dirty, steal and don't like school.
- Who told you so?
- Everybody.
- So, nobody...
- Do you play with boys?
- No, only with my girlfriends. We like same games.

- Your world is too small Laura ...Get out!
- You mean I should run away from home to make other friends and eat other stuff?
- Of course not. But your mind could travel more. You could Google more, dare more, ask more- your parents, your teachers, me... yourself!

I am more and more confused and the next questions are not helping me.

- Do you intend to grow up?
- Again a dull question. Of course I will grow up. Everybody does. I was just telling you that I will be a teacher or a doctor.
- And not a mother?
- And mother.
- In that case, you will stay a lot in the kitchen, do laundering and cooking...Better be a father when you grow up and watch TV.
- I will be both.
- A mother and a father? Wonderful!
- You really don't get it. A teacher and a mother.
- But why you don't plan to be a mother and an astronaut or the president of the country? And why do fathers never change diapers and mothers don't lead big companies? And why are not the princesses the ones saving princes in children's stories? And who said girls must prick their ears, prefer pink and boys should not cry and be better at math? And why do we live in such small worlds where everybody is mostly alike? And why....why...why...

Butwhy continues to question me in this bewildering way. He is not planning to leave. It seems that this is what happens when you start really growing up- Butwhy is visiting you forever. Be prepared.