

## Vanja

### Young Love—Old Problems: Love in Icy Time



My name is Vanja. And I'm again writing my story about Neum. About 'Vacation From War'. And this year for me that was a real thing – a vacation from war!!!

Last time I was writing about my family, about the situation in my family which is mixed, mom's a Croatian, father a Serb. This time I would like to write about my current situation:

I have a boyfriend whose name is Toni ( everybody who was in Neum in our group knows us because we were together in camp) and his nationality is Croatian, mine is Serbian.

And we live in Vukovar, so that means that it is not easy for us. Everything here is based on nationality – which school you will go to, which coffee house, which crowd you will hang out with. And I think of all of that as a kind of war, war that never stops.

We don't mind it, for us that is not important, but many people don't realise that we don't care, that for us nationality is not a big deal, we just like to be together.

Although he speaks Croatian and I Serbian, and those languages are very similar but there are differences – we understand each other, that's what matters, not will I say 'hleb' or 'kruh' ( Serbian and Croatian words for bread).

We get along just fine, we care about each other. But people are talking. bad words, bad things. It's not easy to always have in mind that somebody is judging you for being who you are or what the person that you really care about is. It is very hard for us to deal with everyday problems in Vukovar for being a mixed couple.

I really think that is the only thing that can tear us apart. If one of us fails to always stand up to judgments and prejudices, we are history. That's what hurts the most. We will be separated by other people, not by each other.

Although we have been together before the camp in Neum, the Vacation from War really got us closer. It really helped us to realise that we are not alone. We were surrounded by hundreds of people who didn't care which nationality we are. We had their support and that is a great deal for two persons to feel, a bit of support not just judgments.

That is why I am grateful for being a part of Vacation from War. It is nice to know that you belong somewhere and I...

**I belong to Vacaton from War!**