

PEGASUS MAGAZINE

2017-2018

Pegasus

A literary journal by the students of Anatolia College

Spring 2018 Edition

Chief Editor

Greg Stefaniuk

Layout, Art, Editing

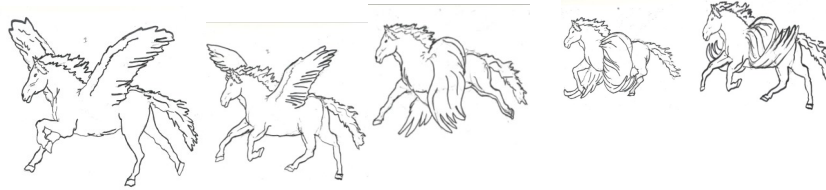
Michelle Stoukides

Editors

Jodi Hill, Stuart Asbridge, NiTosha Billman,
Keiran Miller, Kats Tamanaha

Table of Contents

Eleni Hamhougia	<i>Logic & Feeling</i>	1
Alexandra Bineva	<i>My Apap and Aye Captain</i>	3
Foivos Kyriakoudis	<i>Fayum</i>	6
Melvin Berkowitz	<i>I want</i>	7
Konstantina Cheiladaki	<i>Snow White</i>	11
Anna-Maria Bountziouka	<i>The Girl and the Stars</i>	13
Venice Billia	<i>Demons</i>	16
Anna Rachael Stergis	<i>Galaxies</i>	21
Evangelia Papadopoulou	<i>A billion miles</i>	22
Eirini Vryza	<i>Temporary Insanity</i>	23
Athina Basgiouraki	<i>I Am</i>	24
John Pistikos	<i>When the Blue Caterpillar Met Alice in Wonderland</i>	25
Michelle Stoukides	<i>The Dark Street</i>	26
Artemis Riga	<i>Walking Candy</i>	27
Eleni Hamhougia	<i>Dragon</i>	28
Niki Apsokardou	<i>During a rainy day in New York</i>	29
	<i>Hell is Alienation, Unmasking</i>	35
Scarlet Ibis	<i>Grey, Green</i>	37
Eugenia Strataki, Nicole Bakirtzi	<i>Pointless Reminiscing</i>	39
George Bougiouklis	<i>Nature 's Whisper</i>	40
Eleni Hamhougia	<i>She</i>	41
Kostis Spyroglou	<i>Chess, The Cake</i>	
	<i>Unhinged, Unfinished, Uncharted</i>	43
George Liapis	<i>Chibureki</i>	44
Zenia Koulidi	<i>Yours Look at Me, Illusions</i>	45
Zenia Koulidi, Roulina Ditsiou	<i>Fable for When</i>	
	<i>You Follow Your Heart</i>	47
Ioanna Deroukaki	<i>Bears and their Business</i>	49
Helen Mistakidi with the Pegasus Writing Club	<i>Poodle– Doodle</i>	52



ART

Front Cover

Petros Gioulekas

Back Cover

Moris Saltiel

Pegasus Flying

Dimitris Efthimiadis

Photography Contest Winners

Nikos Zervogiannis, B&W 2

Evgenia Georgia Neftetzidou, Symmetry 10

Chris Minos, Close up-Portrait 15

Evgenia Georgia Neftetzidou, Color 19

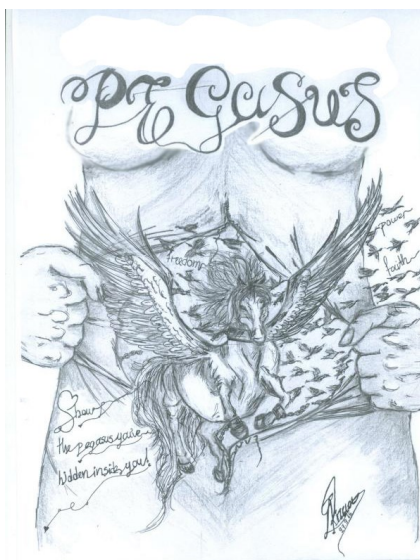
Works

Athina Basgiouraki, Michelle Stoukides 20

Elisavet Thomaidou 36

Modestos Anthimos 44

Roulina Ditsiou 48



Correction.

We apologize for neglecting to include the artists for last year's front and back cover.

On the front appeared Roulina Ditsiou's *Pegasus*.

On the back cover appeared Ioli Loukia Christoforidou's *Building*.

LOGIC & FEELING

Eleni Hamhougia

Somewhere between logic and feeling
I stand
Unable to choose which road I have to follow
To find myself
When all I want
Is to find you
Somewhere in between





Photo by Nick Zervogiannis
Photography Competition Winner
Black and white

Alexandra Bineva

My Apap

Based on a true story

A great while ago, when the world was full of wonders, there was a little boy who lived with his mother in a beautiful town, the Town of Roses. They lived a simple, happy life, without any misfortunes or suffering. As the days were passing, and the boy was growing up, he came to realize that although he could afford all fancy toys, there was something that his money couldn't buy.

Still don't understand what it was? A real friend!

Everyday a gang of schoolboys gathered in the streets of the young boy's neighborhood. Oh, by the way, his name is Sasho. So, one day, a Roma boy moved nearby. Nobody really cared about him, only Sasho wanted to get to know him better. After a while, Sasho found out that the dark-skinned boy, oh, by the way, his name is Mecho, lived in the dark basement next door. The poor, young fellow shared a room with his parents and his beautiful sister, Emma. Emma was such a beauty that, of course, everyone was in love with her.

The days passed and the boys from acquaintances became best friends. Such was their relationship that they would exchange cheat-sheets at school but at the same time, they would fight for an hour for the goalkeeper's position. Everyday was a new adventure for them. Literally! Simple things, you know, fishing in the river at 3 a.m., bike rides across the cemetery, or walking in the woods with howling wolves.

"One day we will live together in a huge house." This was their promise that would bind them and of course, it was not the only one. Life was running smoothly and everything seemed perfect. Nobody could imagine that a common rainfall could become a disaster...



It was a rainy afternoon and Sasho was restless for some reason, that only later would he interpret why. As the hours went by, the rain turned into a downpour and soon afterwards, their little street overflowed. It was almost dusk when the beautiful Emma ran into the street, crying for help. Their basement was deluged. Her mother couldn't do anything and her father was stricken in bed because of poor health. Mecho's bucket was not enough to bail all the water out of the window. No one came down to help, no one. The neighbors just turned a blind eye, pretending that nothing happened. It was only Sasho who realized the danger, with no second thoughts he grabbed his own bucket and rushed down to help his friend.

They had been fighting with the water until the sun came out. The rain had stopped and everything was calm. Mecho was so exhausted, he didn't know what to say and how to help his friend. He just hugged him, as tight as possible, and whispered, "My whiter brother."

Soon, the government decided to take Mechos's house. Mecho and his family had to move away. And that afternoon, was the last time Sasho and Mecho saw each other. That day, they made their last promise; "I will never forget you," a promise that they would keep until the end.

Oh, by the way, the little boy, Sasho, turned out to be my grandfather, and my hero. It has been fifty three years, but you know what? Today, if you ask my grandpa whether he wants a huge house or just to see his old friend for a while, without a second thought, he will say "Mecho." Because in the end, you always go back to the people that were there in the beginning.

Aye Captain

Alexandra Bineva

August summer night.
Midnight.
Big pale moon above.
Small dirty rooftop beneath.
A drink or two beside.
Good music.
Very good music.
You had almost convinced yourself that everything was perfect.
You were happy.
For one second.
For that one second.
You knew that something was missing.
You knew that something had been missing for way too long.
A smile to fall in love with?
A hand to hold?
Or simply a shoulder to cry on?
And then everything starts spinning around;
Guilty thoughts, haunting memories, heartbreaking moments.
Spinning and running and falling in front of your eyes.
Just like the deadly storm tortures the captain.
Everything happens so fast.
And so fast tears come out.
And so fast that the one perfect second is gone.
And so fast you realize that indeed, you don't have a shoulder to cry on.
You realize that you are the captain of your own mind.
And the words of the captain must be obeyed.
But the captain is lost, too.
"Stop dwelling in the past," you scream.
"But no one can stop the waves," the captain shouts.
And then you realize the truth;
Everything comes in waves.
And no one can stop these waves.
And no one can go back in time.
And just before you realize it,
Everything is over.
Everything is gone.
But your captain remains undaunted right next to you.
It's you and your captain.
He is the one to dry your last tear.

Fayum

Foivos Kyriakoudis



The moon is bright tonight.
The shimmering children have already begun
Their celestial dances in the blue canvas
Their path foretold, their end foreseen.
And yet I will not see them.

The garden is feasting tonight.
Perfumed roses waltz dreamily in the
Silver mist of the milk white jasmine that
awakes the hibernating senses of this world.
And yet I will not smell it.

She appears at her window tonight.
The chestnut waterfall waving gracefully from above
The fire in her lips burning under a trickle of red
The silkiness of her skin forever present under the purple.
And yet I will not touch her again.

For I have found my eternal home at last.
Staring up from my watery grave
I smile and wave back at the ruins of the past.
As the car sinks and alcohol fills my nostrils,
I grip the leather handle, finally sure of it.

I can see it now clearly.
From the rotting corpses of bastards and whores,
Through their dusty, dry lips that whisper still
From their putrid, sunken, vacant sockets,
I see the fate of this lone body.

And them. I hear them now.
Of the beautiful hymns and chants of the
Black-haired boys with the blood-soaked robes,
Of the fanfares and the endless themes of the
Deaf soldiers, who march and march, on and forever on,
I catch the phrases that speak of this soul.

I want to fly across the skies,
and I want to stay in the sun,
till my skin is red and hurting.
I want to walk on the streets.
Hear music that I love.
And dance in the streets like no one is watching.

Except,
I want others watching,
I want others staring and saying I'm weird.
I don't know why.
Call me a narcissist
And egocentric.
Overconfident.
But when I walk into a room,
I want the eyes on me.
The comments, about me.
I want others to feel my power.

I want
By Melvin Berkowitz



I want to stand during the sunset
on the top of my building and dance
with the sun smiling while it sleeps.

I want to get on a plane,
and travel around the world.

I want to love someone,
and have children,
and tell the stories of my experiences.

And have grandchildren.

I want my stories to be eternal.

And everlasting.

Maybe I'm asking too much.

Maybe I want too many things.

Our world doesn't give us whatever we ask for.

I want to follow my dreams.

To be a doctor.

I want my work to be kept in people's minds.

But to get high you need to be high.

And I am not high.

And the world doesn't give everything you ask for.

If you ask from the world,

do not be sure you are going to get it.

So I want to stand in the sun.

I want to be a doctor.

I want to dance in the streets.

The world has screwed me up.

And I didn't get what I wanted.

So what is the point not to get what I want?

If I am asking too much,

World, at least answer this.

Give me only this answer.

And I will sleep...



Evgenia Georgia Neftetzidou
Symmetry

Snow White

"Are you sure you will be good?"

"Of course! Don'tcha worry, Tess. I'll be home in no time."

I put on my headphones and turned my playlist to shuffle as I left from the back door.

No matter where you go, I'll find you,

No matter where you go I'll find you,

I'll find you... Sam Tinnesz sang and I felt a shiver running down my spine.

I saw the shadow before I heard the steps.

A man.

I turned around frantically, blood pumping in my ears.

I saw him smiling.

And so I ran.

Hold on for your life,

Hold on for your life,

It can't be time,

I won't say goodbye...

But I knew I wasn't fast enough.



I felt my ankle twisting, and I fell down, the phone slipping from my hand and falling down in tatters.

It did not take long for the man to reach me.

He took out a gun and fired, and that very moment I knew I was dead.

The ambulance's tires screamed in the fog, trying to find grip on the slippery road.

A body was in there.

The one of a girl, her black hair spread on the bed, looking like raven's feathers.

"I am sorry, but she had departed long ago"

The CCTV camera caught the image of a man walking in the hospital, his face unclear, the image blurry around him.

He was wearing the uniform of a doctor, but his name was not the one of the label he had on his chest.

He walked inside the morgue undisturbed, showing a fake ID, and approached the girl, her face so calm as if she was sleeping.

He let a black energy flow out of his hands, letting it fall drop by drop on the girl, and soon her eyes flickered.

THE GIRL AND THE STARS
Anna-Maria Bountziouka

Once upon a time
In a magical world,
Beautiful and dreamy,
But this isn't my world.

“Look at the stars in the sky,”
My dad used to tell me.
“They create faces
And they give us dreams and hopes.”

And I sit and watch the endless sky
All alone.

The stars turn into faces
And they get into my mind.

The rain of the stars on my face
And my thought is in the sky
Travelling across the stars.



I will tell you my story
And nothing more
Because that's the only thing
I want to remember.
Once upon a time,
Far far away,
There was a girl who spent every single night
Looking at the stars.

She remembered doing that
With her dad too...

I close my eyes
And it's like my father comes in front of me
Telling me these words:
"The dark night is the evil, the sadness, the fear,
The mistakes, the pain.
And that's why the stars exist.
Small dots of light which shine in the sky



Photograph by Chris Minos
Photography Competition Winner
Close up- Portrait



Demons

Venice Billia

December the 2nd, 5:30 P.M.

I just lost another battle with my demons.

Another war with myself.

Another struggle inside my head.

I tried to fight them,

I tried to resist, I

honestly did.

I fought them with all my will, All my
strength,

I gave it all, until I had nothing left,

Until I was exhausted,

Until I had nothing left but bruises and scars and an aching soul.

Until all I could do is give up, surrender, let them win.

Even though I know that it kills me.

Ever since I can remember myself I've been living a
secret life.

Crying in the shower, so that no one hears me.

Going out in baggy clothes,
so that they don't show my awful body shape.

Long sleeves in summer,
sunglasses at night.

Don't look at my expressions,
Don't understand my emotions,
Don't feel, don't touch.

I have a hard time trusting others,
For anyone can act as if they are your friend,
But very few of them will be there for
your hard times.

Because people forget,
Because people don't care.



I'm standing in front of the mirror,

And all I see is a

disgraceful mess.

Small, uninteresting eyes. Thin, creepy lips, Discol-

ored teeth,

A stupid, forced smile,

Huge, fat cheeks,

And my body is also disgusting.

Absolutely zero collarbones visible,

Fat arms, a huge stomach

And thighs full of stretch marks

I'm just standing there,

With tears running hot from my eyes, quietly ask-

ing myself:

“Why do I have to look like this?

Why am I stuck in this atrocious body?

Just why?”



Evgenia Georgia Neftezidou

Overall Winner of Photography Competition



Athina Basgiouraki



Michelle Stoukides

Galaxies

Anna Rachael Stergis

Don't let them tell you, you cannot, because
You are so much more than "just a person"
You are a universe, your mind a galaxy, your eyes stars:
Your hands paintbrushes, creating, making the world more colourful
Your voice a song that can let you be heard
That can let you express yourself and be understood
Your ideas are comets, flying through your galaxy (nebulae?) of thought
Perhaps landing on a planet, growing roots and changing it
In ways that only an idea can
And you, you stand alone on that planet
Building bridges to other planets (worlds?), in other galaxies
Across the world, across oceans and mountains and fields
You build your bridges, and halfway you find
That you have met the end of another bridge
Yet another unfinished one, building its way to you
You join, and galaxies collide, and cause
Beautiful explosions of colour and light
Forming exquisite, iridescent jewels
Diamonds that will shape the world they reside in
And all it takes to build these bridges and make galaxies collide
Is a whisper of an idea, that with time, will grow
The bridge builders are all different, their galaxies unique
Yet, when they collide, they are one
A single entity, its parts working together
To create, and shape, and change
Every day, these galaxies expand, constantly rebuilding themselves
You travel across your bridges, visiting other galaxies
Watching them expand, watching them shape, watching them create
You're constantly building new bridges, and every so often, you'll smile

Because looking at all this, you yourself realise
That you are so much more than "just a person"



Evangelia Papadopoulou

A Billion Miles

A billion miles away from us a baby will be born, a baby like you and like me. It will open its eyes, it will learn how to walk and talk, it will learn how to be Human, although we won't call it Human. And, when one day it will look upon the stars and its all liveliness glowing eyes glance the Earth, it will see Dinosaurs and not humans. Because time can't traverse such a big distance. Because time is idle and inactive. Because time doesn't matter. So, when the child will look to us, it will see the first years of Earth, the birth of life on our planet. And, billion years after, but at the same moment simultaneously, a child will be born on the Earth and as it grows it will look at the one and only moon, it will see the birth, the inception of a new life. While its peer, light years away, will be lying on its bed, peaceful. And, when the child from the Earth, as a teenager, one day seeks the stars and wishes upon to the shooting stars, it will, actually, bear witness the death of shining suns, which once gave warmth and life for many years before the fall to eternal sleep. And, when this child will grow up and gives life to its own children, new and shining rockets will fly to the moon. But they will have been too early and the moon will be still preparing its ground for the breath of life, while on faraway planets children will discover the death of the old trees and the birth of new ones on the moon. And, when the children of the Earth will grow old enough with eyes unable to focus, it will be dying and be birth at the same time and the child, a billion miles away from us, as well, because time doesn't matter. Because time is an enigma. A minimal enigma in front of the enigma of life and death, a perpetual conflict that no one can avoid, but all can!

Because Life is Death and Death is Life.

tEMPORARY iNSANITY

Eirini Vryza

She was already awake at the crack of dawn. She opened the rusty door hesitatingly and felt the piercing breeze assault her entire body; however, it didn't stop her. The smell of gardenias and freesias wafted invitingly from the fragrant garden. She stepped barefoot into the yard, lay on the moist grass and whirled. While spinning and spinning around, she felt the uttermost joy and jubilation flooding in, the soft, silky grass stroking her pallid skin, her hair becoming more and more damp and tangled as it intertwined with the dew. Sweet, subtle laughter came out of her thin lips. It grew louder and louder until it was a reckless cry. All at once she rose to her feet, staggering a little bit, and gazed at the sky. It looked like a colorful, abstract canvas painting, combining blue, light pink and some flecks of orange; they say that nature is the most talented artist. She stretched her hands in a vain attempt to reach the sky. She rose to her tips, shut her eyes and waved her hands softly, as if stroking the sky. She imagined that it had a smooth texture, like cotton. As she was moving her hands serenely and enjoying the illusion that she was actually touching the sky, the wind grew stronger and pierced right through her, causing her heart to beat faster and her eyes to open wide and startled. The penetrating cold made her slim, weak body tremble, but she didn't want to go back inside just yet. The atmosphere was crystal clear and as she breathed in deeply, she felt a unique clarity of thought. Was it though? Or was it another moment of temporary insanity?



I AM

Athina Basgiouraki

I am like an untamed tiger
running wild and free,
chasing wildly my prey.
Boldness sits in my eyes,
I hide patiently in the deep verdant,
ready to burst out.

I am like a windy day
that takes the worries away,
wildly cools and refreshes.
I am also like a summer evening,
friendly and warm.

I am like deep, verdant jungle
mysterious and alive,
waiting for others to explore me.

I am like the Cuban drums
playing samba rhythms,
dressed in dancing colors.

I am like a classic Volkswagen van,
with bright Hawaiian prints,
traveling the world, spreading *aloha vibes*.

WHEN THE BLUE CATERPILLAR MET ALICE IN WONDERLAND

(Caterpillar's monologue in Ted Talk)

A blue Caterpillar is resting on top of a giant mushroom and smoking a hookah pipe:

“Sooooo, it aaaall started when a strange little creature invaded my place and rudely interrupted my harmonic singing! She was tiny and full of uncertainty about her identity and she kept asking for my advice. And I'd like to ask you all a very simple question: Do you think that any kind of help should be offered when you encounter someone who is facing a problem? Should we intervene? Yes, undoubtedly, but in a way that you won't provide the solution in advance but you will give him or her guidelines, hints and tips about how to reach the desirable outcome.

But let's go back to the example I gave you earlier with AI....AI.....(the caterpillar's hands hold the hookah, so he cannot form letters and phrases and) (the audience laughs)...Alice, I constantly asked her, **“Who are you?”** As I was able to read her thoughts, answering her unspoken question “just as if she had asked it aloud.” So, I thought her identity was now so confused that her thoughts seemed no longer to be hers. And even though she deeply insulted me when she referred that being three inches tall was a wretched height, I offered her the solution to her shrinking and growing problem, but Wonderland had already affected her brain and she wasn't able to efficiently analyze this information – what a silly girl!

Eventually she found out, by herself, the correct proportion of the mushroom she had to swallow. And, correct me if I am wrong, but isn't maturity just like this mushroom which makes you grow up and **become responsible for your actions?** What I mean is that if you constantly remind people of who they are and of their potentials, somehow they will eventually sort it out (the caterpillar vanishes in smoke and suddenly a newborn butterfly rises from the puffs). “Remember, adjust in every environment and don't be afraid of any kind of size change and any kind of change of perspective! **You can be whoever you want to be!**” is heard as the butterfly strays.

End

John Peistikos



The Dark Street

3. The bus

“The more I leave the more I feel you closer. Can you please sit somewhere else?” The humidity in the bus and the rain pouring down the windows was so beautiful but thoughts are only there where they ache, they don’t travel with the body but stay on the gravel.

8.

“Leave the light on, it makes me feel safe. Make some noise so I know that you’re here.”

9.

She cooks in the kitchen like she knows he will leave if he’s hungry. Care and effort in advance and a single kiss response.

12.

The cold night we arrived. How nice! You turned to Badger road and I could hear the greetings from there. The ice was rough and I couldn’t run for a hug.

Michelle Stoukides

WALKING CANDY

Artemis Riga

Her life passing in front of her eyes,
witnessing.

Listening to what was once her
talking in a foreign tongue.

Sitting in the corner
reading about a life
rolling and rolling and rolling
lower than the dignity of the ground.

“Oh, myself!” she jumped up.
“Here it comes again!”
But before she could gather her strength
she saw herself falling apart again.

Another winter coming--
replacing that almost summer.
“Almost,” she said to herself.
“Almost inside me, but gone far away--”

An almost sun, but
covered in cloud.
That’s what life looks like
from there.

Before picking from the ground
the very last piece of her
society’d kill her.
Once again, blowing her away.

Life passing in front of her eyes.
witnessing.
Listening to what was once her.
Who is she now?

Blown away.
Staring at the ground.
Transforming from person to
walking candy.



DRAGON

Eleni Hamhougia

A dragon
Became part of my thoughts
His fire as strong and steady as my insomnia
Until I'm completely burned
My dragon ;
I really did love you
But I'm leaving that castle of Yours
I don't need you anymore,
Dragon

During a rainy day in New York

Niki Apsokardou

White long dress
with your delicate pink rising flowers
blooming next to dark green leaves,
You touched and felt the surface
of famous roads.

You beheld huge buildings
with many silver glass windows.
In each window
you could see the reflection
of another colossal edifice.

A shiver ran through your fabric
when you thought
how many people live there,
work there and
breathe there.

You felt like a tittle in the universe
and stood
in awe of human creation.

White long dress
have you ever imagined, thought or dreamt
that you will get dirty in these roads,
that your fabric
will become soaked and filled with silt?

White long dress
have you ever imagined, thought or dreamt
that you will lose your whiteness and your refinement
during a rainy day in New York?



Hell is Alienation

Niki Apsokardou

I am in a city. Probably. Many huge buildings surround me. I feel hemmed in because of their enormous height. I think they're factories. But I am unable to see if there are people working in them. The sun is blinding me. It is extremely hot. I would say unbearably hot.

I can't remember how I got here. It's like there is a hole in my memory, a part that's been erased. This endless road doesn't look like any road I have ever passed. I have been living here since I was a child, and know my city well, but this area doesn't look familiar at all.

I start sweating. The heat is suffocating me. It's difficult for me to concentrate and organize my thoughts. The only thing I know is that it can't be February. I should be on another continent.

I feel afraid. I have been standing on this giant road and am unable to find a sign of life. Time has never treated me well. It always runs faster than it should. I need more. I am used to having anxiety problems. Now, I suppose, some minutes have passed but I might be wrong. Not a car has passed. I can't understand what is happening. It is impossible that this uninteresting, industrial city is desolate. The lit rooms inside the buildings and the clean windows don't make it look abandoned at all.

A couple approaches me on the road. They remind me of me and Kennedy when we were a fresh young couple. Two young dreamers awfully in love believing that they can change the world together and that nothing will destroy the bond between them. I decide to tell them that I am lost and ask them if they can help me. I ask them for directions but they don't stop and pass me by. I have to find a reasonable explanation for their reaction. I am in a foreign country and these people don't speak English so they ignore me impolitely. I convince myself that they don't stop because they can't see me, each totally possessed by the idea of a whole life together. I will stop the next person walking on the road. I hope to be luckier that the next will respond.

An older, upset woman with short red hair and a cigarette in her mouth speaking on her phone with her ex-husband about their divorce proceedings is passing by. He may have cheated on her. She looks so angry. But beyond her superficial expression, her eyes are ready to mist. Bitterness over lost years has conquered her. I repeat the same question. I can clearly hear her agitated voice and her aggressive speech but it looks like she can't hear me. I am trying to stop her. I am touching her. She continues walking.

I follow a young boy focused on his smartphone. I approach him hoping that he can give me an answer, just an answer. Nothing. He is fully absorbed by the small screen he is holding in his hands.

I feel like they don't even see me. But I can't be invisible. I start yelling to test how these strange people will react. Nothing. I stomp my feet on the ground. My fists, my whole body is full of power, of energy that grows out of my anger, my confusion. Is it an asinine game? Is someone playing a trick on me?

While watching the young boy fading from my sight, I think of my children, my two angels. The two most important, maybe the sole important, achievements in my life. My little sensitive Alena, likely nervous now about what has happened to her mother. And my collected husband, the man with whom I have passed the last nine years of my life, Kennedy, probably trying to calm her down. Salem would be afraid, waiting for his mum to drive him home from school. Maybe Kennedy took him from school.

Thank God, someone is approaching me. She is looking at me, right into my eyes. She is a strange woman. Uncommonly beautiful. There is something in the way she comes near me that scares me a little. It's like she knows me well, but I can't recall her face. If I had met her, I would definitely remember it. She has deep blue eyes. While looking at them, I can see the sky. But clouds start appearing and the calming, sunny day of her eyes is transformed into a rainy, foggy one. She is strangely beautiful. Her long, straw blonde hair falls to her shoulder. She is thin and tall. Her skin is pale. She is smiling, but her eyes are fearful, glassy. Only her lips convey expression on her face, her smile of white square teeth. She is wearing an unadorned, long white dress. I can see only the soles of her feet. Her light sandals make her look like an ancient goddess. Or an angel. A beautiful angel. But her eyes... She is coming closer.

"Hello, Alexandra," she says to me in a peaceful way that doesn't make me feel calm at all.

"How do you know my name? Have we met? Why have you approached me?" I ask her while trying to take control of my inner confusion.

"Why are you ungrateful, Alexandra? You were wondering why no one was speaking to you, but I am speaking to you right now. I can see you. You should be glad for this!"

"What do you mean, you can see me? Are you all playing a game on me? Who organized this artless prank?" I ask the omniscient woman. I turn my face to everyone passing by and I repeat the same question, "Who organized this artless



“It’s not a prank. Don’t you remember? Don’t you remember the car, Alexandra?”

Which car? Why does this sound familiar to me?

“Do you understand now?” the nameless woman is asking me. It is like she has seen my thoughts on a screen playing the scenes of my life. I imagine it like a small, high tech TV screen placed in my brow.

I should be beside myself.

“Who are you?” I ask, absolutely sure that I’ve gone mad.

“I am the emissary. I am here to help you escape from hopeful useless thoughts and waste of soul power which you will need soon. I am sent to make it clear to you that there is no return now. Don’t waste gray matter trying to find a way to escape. The sooner you accept it, the better. As I’ve told you, you should be grateful that you spoke to me. Not everyone did. You are among our best ones.”

What does she mean? “I am among their best ones?” The best ones between whom? Am I unable to escape? Why?

I start remembering some things now. The car she was talking about. An image of me running. The weather getting worse. It’s raining and I am anxiously dashing to arrive on time at Salem’s school. I don’t check the traffic signal. I am crossing the busy road. The car’s blinding light approaching me. The last thing I remember. A car accident. I can’t summon up the sound of any ambulance. Neither the feeling of any pain.

The woman has disappeared. Left while I was absorbed in my memories, most like.

I look around me again. But this time it’s different. This place doesn’t look like heaven at all! I am able to understand now. I remember someone has told me that hell is alienation. He was right. I am in the middle of nowhere unable to communicate with anyone, anyone that lives a real life, anyone that lives, anyone alive. Like these people I was trying to communicate with. These people that love, hate or just waste their own precious time.

“There is no return now. Don’t waste gray matter trying to find a way to escape.” These words are repeated again and again with my mind’s voice. I close my eyes and try to erase my thoughts, to escape this situation. But that doesn’t work. I desperately place my hands on my brow. I will lose my sanity. I feel it. My life can’t be over. Not so easily. So many efforts and sacrifices. Where is this insane woman that pretends to know everything? I want to ask her. And now what? What’s after? I shudder at the thought that I won’t see my children again. “The sooner you accept it, the better.”

A thought is ailing me. What have I done wrong? Do I deserve this end? I must have done something to end up here. I committed a sin. Maybe more than one. I am trying to figure out my faults in my former life.

A young girl, aged four, is walking on the pavement. She tightly holds her father’s hand. The touch of skin between their two hands is a touch of their souls. She is looking at him with admiration. Her eyes are so clear and innocent. She has a heap of time.

As a child, I was a responsible and mature girl. I treated my parents well. I really loved them, especially my calm and reliable mother. I was willing to help others when in need. I wasn't the most sociable girl, I was like the "older sister" to my few good friends who would always run to me for advice. I was accepted to the university of my choice to study the only thing that made me feel lively and myself. Acting. I was certain by then that I was born to become an actress.

A pregnant woman touching her abdomen passes. I can see the serenity of her soul through her eyes. In some months, a human will come into the world.

When I got pregnant, I had to stop my acting lessons. I am not certain if I regret the fact that I quit the only thing I enjoyed. What I know for sure is that if I could combine acting and having children, I would definitely have done that. Two years later, I gave birth to my Alena. By then I had absolutely devoted myself to my children.

An old couple passes by. How many times have they relented? How many times have they lost their courage? Their bond was stronger. A whole life together.

My husband played an important role in my life. Kennedy is not the perfect husband. Not at all. Far from it. Most of the times he is apathetic. Like he lives in a world he has created only for himself. A world into which neither I nor our children exist. But I can justify him. He wanted, his whole life, to become a successful writer and nobody appreciated his hard work. I think his books were really good. Or maybe not. I don't know if I am the right person to judge him. Sometimes he was just unable to endure his "failure" and his inner self exploded. And then I had to survive and adapt to the "land after the explosion." It wasn't always easy to do that, but I never gave up, because... Probably because I was used to living with him, to be afraid of his next "explosion," to endure his depression. I never left him because of my fear of change, my fear of starting a new life. Alone. With my children.

I pass another building. How many people work there? How many living people pass so much precious time there? Trade their lives for money while they watch their lives pass them by?

I had to work to earn the family's living. Kennedy would write all day, but each time he finished a book, the publisher would never find it good enough. I was consistent and reliable as a worker and I never misbehaved. I worked in a small supermarket. I was one of the cashiers. I had to wear a smile at work, and pretend that I was interested in how all the people of my neighborhood were doing. I treated my employer well. I worked more than I had to, and more than I was paid for.

This is why, during the last day, I was running so as not to be late at Salem's school and make him wait for me. And then there was a car approaching me and I couldn't move... Fear had conquered my whole body. I wanted to run but my legs wouldn't obey. I could feel the blood flowing through my veins for the last time. I was unable to react. I saw images in my head, the faces of my children.

And now I am here. I discover a small park. It looks like water in the middle of a desert. There are tall, tiered green trees and old colorless benches. How many alive people have sat there? I let my body collapse onto one of them. I am exhausted from trying to understand what I have done wrong.



For my whole life, I was decent. It wasn't always an easy route to follow. I sacrificed some friends and peer acceptance while I was young and I really needed it. I don't know why it was so important for me not to err. Probably because I believed in some kind of afterlife and I was thinking that I should follow God's will so as to go to heaven. How ironic! I have treated everyone that surrounded me really well. My parents, my husband, my friends, my children, my employer. Did I forget someone?

As a child, I believed that the "bad" guys are the ones that go to hell. I couldn't imagine that... I am not sure any more. Maybe you can also go to hell for lying. My biggest lie. What was my biggest lie? I think it was when I told to myself that I would never give up acting. But that's a lie to myself and I don't know if it can be considered a lie. This way, bad behavior towards oneself can be deemed as a sin. But that wouldn't be logical.

I couldn't imagine that things were not straightforward. I mean, nobody ever told me and I never read in any kind of religious books during my school life that treating yourself badly can lock you out of heaven. If this is true, I have committed a lot of sins.

The most important one, I think, was when I gave up my drama lessons. And each time I made a concession because I put my own needs second. No. I don't regret giving birth to my babies. How could I? Do I?

There were only some moments. Some dark moments at night when I gave them a goodnight-kiss. I was used to observing them. Their small eyes closed and their calm bodies lying in their beds. Sometimes, at these moments, I would think what if I had never met Kennedy, if I had never gotten pregnant.. These moments I dreamt. I dreamt with my eyes open. I heard the audience's continuous applause, their admiration.

But they were only moments. Then I sobered up. I know that my children gave another meaning to my life. I know that it was only my fault. I could have done more things for myself as well as being a "perfect" mum. I chose not to give my dreams a try.

And now I'm here. Here in this unbearable place. Awfully hot and noisy. Cars, people, couples, mothers with their children, families, best friends. From now on I will only be able to listen and watch them laughing, having fun, flirting, kissing each other, showing all kinds of affection while I will be unable to communicate. I will just ambulate. For how long? Maybe for an eternity. And I mean the literal eternity. Not the one that we usually speak about when we express our romantic feelings towards someone in the most cliché way.

If only I had a second chance, I would never neglect myself again.

I close my exhausted eyes for a moment. I hear the sound of an ambulance. I feel the warm breath of many people very close to me. I open my eyes and I see men wearing some kind of uniform trying to lift me on a white, uncomfortable bed, a gurney. I recognize the car that approached me during my last moments. I feel an acute pain in many parts of my body. I feel alive. I am alive.

Unmasking

Niki Apsokardou

An old garden door, a green swing with colorful pillows, a glass table and two chairs, orange trees everywhere around us. The day was hot and the night's breeze was so redemptive and desired. The full moon lights the stage; my home garden. There wasn't an audience, but we had no problem with this.

My cousin and I were ready to perform, show off our outstanding acting skills. She had attended an acting class the previous year and I had an inherent talent. We created two heroines.

16-year-old sisters (some years older than us) are fighting. Laura, the bad-girl (I don't know how we thought of this name) is revealing her real self. Her eternal jealousy towards her innocent sister, Jenny.

The scenario was cliché. We hadn't let our childhood imagination flourish. We limited ourselves to something easy. But our performance would breathe new life into this rusty script and stereotypical characters. We had faith in ourselves. Melanie would take on Laura and I would play Jenny. As always, I wanted to be the quiet and unimportant girl. To tell the truth, I loved being the victim. We blocked the scene and thought of some last minute directing details. We were ready for the performance.

Laura began speaking aggressively and loudly. Jenny was afraid and deferred. The bones in Laura's neck were stretching so much that her cousin was afraid she would paralyze herself. Jenny couldn't understand what had happened to Laura. She felt that her sister could devour her.

Laura forcefully placed her hands around Jenny's neck. All the resentment that had been gathering over the years. Her screaming lips, her black eyes full of de-
testation. Jenny explored, for the first time in her life, all the anger and the hate her sister had been feeling towards her. The best daughter, the best student, the best athlete...

Melanie forcefully placed her hands around my neck. All the resentment that had been gathering over the years. Her screaming lips, I explored her black eyes for the first time in my life. All the anger and the hate my cousin had been feeling towards me. I had the perfect family, the perfect parents. I was the ideal daughter. The peerless student, the thoughtful girl. The girl that everyone was speaking about. And Melanie feeling smothered by my black, heavy shadow. Always behind me.

Jenny begged her sister to stop. Laura lightened her grip, slightly. She was inexpressive. It was like she had just woken up from a lasting sleep. Laura realized what she was doing. She could have suffocated her sister.

I inhaled and exhaled feeling relieved. Melanie was unable to look me in the eyes. She was afraid of herself and of almosts, and might have beens. She was afraid of what the moonlight had revealed.



Elisavet Thomaidou

It was a windy day in Mistingfalls. The kind of day where everyone just wanted to stay home, close to the fire, cuddled up in warm blankets. There was little sunlight on that day. It seemed as if the sun was held captive by the dark grey clouds and only a few, weak rays managed to fight themselves through the darkness. *You either fight or give up*, Lisl said to herself, looking up into the faded sky, breathing frosty December air.

Alone, Lisl walked on the small moody path, ignoring the drunken soldiers leaning against the wooden wall outside the local pub. One soldier was tall and thin like a stick, the other one small and paunchy. At first sight you'd say the two men were the complete opposite of each other. But their matching uniforms betrayed what you couldn't see – their belief. The soldiers - two men who supported and believed every single motion and word he said. Yes, he was their inspiration, their leader. The Führer was the one they would follow.

As Lisl passed the soldiers, the tall thin one pushed his skinny back from the wooden wall, forcing his trembling feet to carry his weight. While seeking balance he looked at Lisl, scanning her from bottom to top. The little girl wore brown shoes, brown tights and a long grey coat to stave off the biting cold. Lisl's mother, Susanna, always said: "If you don't dress up well you will get cold. If you get cold you will get sick. If you get sick you will die. Now Lisl, you wouldn't want to die, would you?"

The heavy hue of Lisl's clothes mirrored the atmosphere and the mental state of many people during this dreadful long lasting war. Lisl's clothes were grey and dirty and had holes in them. Looking at them you could get lost in the filth they were covered in, thinking there was no way out, and finally giving up.

The grey coat Lisl wore was half covered in her long, shiny blond hair. The hair was filthy too but its colour expressed some kind of hope, compared to the colour of Lisl's clothes. It's as if in all the misery that weighs on girls, boys, young and old, a sparkle of light encourages them not to give up and to keep fighting. All the shooting, all the bombs falling at night, all the people screaming in pain and fear, the death of so many courageous young men who thought that by running into the battle they would conquer their enemy and bring pride to their families, but, truth to be told, they were only running into death's arms... This is what war brings.

Lisl ignored the look on the soldier's face and the degrading laughter she heard as she hurried past. *War doesn't make people smarter or richer. It only kills them - either physically or mentally. Why is that so difficult to understand? How could one person bear to take the innocent life of another? How can we dare to smile when we say, 'We won this war?'* Lisl thought to herself in disgust and continued walking on the moody path, without looking back at the drunken soldiers.

Scarlet Ibis



The path was muddy and stoney.
No matter where you looked, left or right,
Everywhere brown tents were being put together.
Small children were crying,
girls and boys were running,
Women were hanging wet clothes on a thin string to dry
and men were sitting on benches under the shadow of dark green trees,
smoking cigars.

A small girl walked out of one of the brown tents.
Whilst she walked, walked in rhythm,
Small pebbles crawled into her plastic shoes and
their pointy noses poked themselves into her skin
She ignored the pain;
She ignored the dirty brown tents, the children that were crying and the
dogs that were barking.

She was happy.
She laughed, she sang, she danced;
No one could tear her out of her playful world.

An old man watched the little girl dance and play and sing.
Seeing her being so cheerful and innocent, he remembered his childhood.

The little girl noticed she was being watched and looked up at the old
man with her dark green eyes.
At first she didn't know what to do.
She looked at him for a while; from the bottom to the top.
She looked at him, into the eyes.
She smiled, her eyes lit up.
And that's when heavy tears ran down the old man's wrinkly cheeks.

Pointless Reminiscing

Eugenia Strataki feat. Nicole Bakirtzi

He called me sweetheart.
He called me darling.
He carried me around
and called me princess.
He died for me once
--or maybe twice.
He killed me too
a coup' of times.
And he laughed,
deeply, lively, strongly.
He laughed again once more
before his lips
shut.
She was small, delicate
a sweetheart, a darling, a princess.
She was a blond,
or maybe a brunette.
She was short and tall,
slim and fat.
I didn't see her.
I didn't talk to her.
I didn't like her.
He stopped waking me up at six in the morning
and covering oranges in cocoa.
He stopped running near the swings
and biting his nails.
One night he ran away.
He left behind a broken box
and a pile of dust.
I would see through its cracks sometimes,
or play with the dust.
Watch it slip through my hands
and between the boards of the wooden floor.
In darkness, in silence, in emptiness
sometimes I'd hear his voice,
through the bed
through the closet.
From the kitchen,
through the oven.



George Bougiouklis



Nature 's Whisper

Walking around some trees
And hearing a voice.
I say to myself, "What 's this?"
A little tree's making noise.

I ask, "What's happened."
It answers back with cries.
Its life has ended
Over human ties.

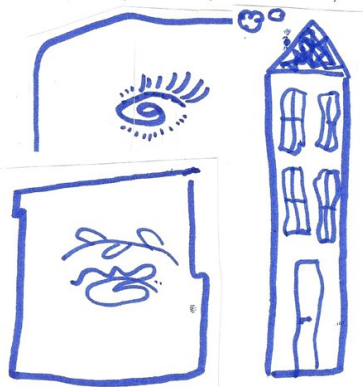
Standing in the middle,
Like starring in a film,
Lifeless and diddled,
On a Christmas Eve.

Nature's whispers
Falling on deaf ears.
Bring the young trees
Back using spears.

But, nature is stronger
Than any of us here.
Respect her longer
Or destruction is near.

She

Eleni Hamhougia



She's been acting weird lately.

Her attitude changes from moment to moment. She can sit quietly enjoying herself the one moment, and the next she's shouting, crying and moving trembling, in a nervous way. But I expected that to happen. She was expressing herself from time to time, but still, never so often. I'm scared that she's going to continue being like that, that she's going to change me into

her. I'm not sure if I want every part of her to be me.

When we were little, she was tiny. She was adorable. She had beautiful sparkling eyes, she could even smile widely and communicate with others, but still, she was very shy. She was so innocent. Now? She grew to become a lot bigger than expected. Her eyes sparkle after she's finished crying. She's not innocent- that's a fact. She knows many things that she shouldn't. Her thoughts change from normal to dark. Sometimes depressing. There are times that she wished she had a "turn off" button so that she could sleep without revising her thoughts.

What does crying mean to her? Other people cry to express their problems in the form of tears; she cries and automatically makes her feelings confusing, mixed with other thoughts, ending up on forming her mind into a black pile of questions without answer. She's vulnerable; a song can make her eyes sweaty only because its rhythm is sad. Crying isn't a solution; she knows that. Crying is a sign; it shows everyone else to leave her alone- even if no one understands that. When she cries it feels like everyone else is either disappearing or attacking her. It's just me and her, but I can't help her because I don't know what to do. Sometimes, she's the one crying and I'm the one trying to handle the situation. When I try to drive her thoughts to other places I find a cul-de-sac to her sadness.



I find it exhausting when she's angry. She gets tired, too. Her anger is always limited by rules; common social rules. *You must be kind towards teachers. You must be kind towards strangers. You must be kind towards friends and family.* She's wondering, is there a person out there where I can act myself? That's what makes her tired; following rules. The situation gets worse when she is frustrated in a more *violent* way. In that case I grab her hands and hold them tight, shutting her mouth immediately.

And then I smile. No one has to know what *she* is doing.

I remember that time in the last course of the day. I was sitting in my desk and looking at my teacher. The information wasn't getting to my brain; I only understood that I was in class. I was driven away by my thoughts. Then, she came. A sudden anxiety climbed up my throat, made my temples hurt. Inhaling and exhaling didn't have a rhythm, they became two different actions. I had to go to the washroom, where she followed me without missing a step. I washed my face and glanced at myself in the mirror. I washed my face again. She didn't seem like leaving. I had to treat her with more *drastic* techniques. Entering in the room, *I smiled.*

No one had to know what *she* was doing.

I get the feeling that I look like I don't care for her. The truth is that she matters a lot to me. I am more mature after her change, I can also handle other people better than I could – the irony is that I can't handle *her*. I am trying to cherish her. The best thing that can ever happen is to make both of us happy. By *happy* I mean proud, excited, wanting to live. Smile without any special reason. Feel like everything in the world is beautiful, even if it isn't. And that thing cannot just "*happen,*" I have to "*make it happen.*" Who is *Me* anyway? I would be no one without *Her*. I would only be the person that everybody sees. Because looks don't always keep up with personality. She gives me the salt that every person needs to be different. I'd be normal and without knowing, I'd be suffocating. In a world where everyone seems to be the same, we mustn't think that we're different while being a part of the crowd. Sometimes, I believe that She's more *Me* than me, that I only move the body- but She's probably taking over my body too. When there's darkness, She's a black-light. We need each other.

She's no other person than *Me*.

**Like a game of chess with wild caress,
a game of care beyond compare, for
you not to share.**

Kostis Spyroglou

Full of games this life, feelings, emotions,
devotions. You'll think that isn't true until you
find yourself entrapped,
enhanced with just one glance. And then you
lose, the screen will spell, Game Over, farewell.
"Maybe I'll try again" you say, why not, it's a
fine day. I might get lucky and be good, why not
it's the perfect mood. It's the circle so of course
you'll try again. Until you're trapped and don't
know where to go.

That's what happens in the circle though.

The Cake
Kostis Spyroglou

She didn't like to bake, she did it for us.
Out of all her sweetest treats, the best one
was a cake, a cake called **Gus**.
One day had no butter, the other had no
cream, the same day she forgot her life-long
dream.
Memories swept away, day by day. Then
there was a scream,
a high-pitched sound. Screams for the cake
called **Gus**, it was for us. Then it went
black,
no fear,
no shedding of a tear.
But inside you knew, she had cried, cried for
us. Knew we would too.
It wasn't for us, little did we know, it was
for **Gus**.

**Unhinged,
Unfinished
and Uncharted.**
Kostis Spyroglou

Slowly my mind departed.
Should I sit and just watch? A spectator of the crash,
of the final words I said. A philosophy or lie, would
you really want to die? I saw the trauma to your
head, I lingered there and heard: "Thinking I was
dead, wishing I was dead." Are you uncomfortable
now? Now that your prayer's heard.



It was a little over a year ago when I started delving deep into the world of culinary art, and specifically the type that hails from the northern lands of Russia. I wanted to whip up a Russian meal including such masterpieces as a Chibureki (something akin to a meat pie) and their Borscht soup. After an hour long battle with the cuisine, I finally succeeded. The dust had settled and amongst the pile of failed attempts, a lone Chibureki soldier emerged. It was like reaching the end of a long and winding tunnel, and being bathed in glorious, holy sunlight. I was too tired to even consider attempting to create the soup. But alas, I am no Genghis (Khan???) Swan . . . my victory became bittersweet, or actually “salty” would be a better way to describe it. Long story short, the lone Chibureki was too salty to enjoy. A mere touch to the tongue would dehydrate even the Mount Everest of tongues. Depressed and defeated, I fell to my knees, and then I lay down, my eyes looking at the seemingly endless white ceiling. At that moment I thought to myself: one day, I WILL create the apotheosis of Chiburekis, the zenith of Cheburek-making, as foretold in the legends of yore written in the holy scrolls. I will create the Chibureki that can please God himself! It’s as inevitable as belching after drinking a soda, it’s fated to happen. I will beat the Russians at their own game, dammit!

George Liapis

Modestos Anthimos



Yours
Zenja Kouliidi

You smirk at me more wickedly than any devil could,
because you know that I will always be utterly yours.

The harm you've done is too much,
the imprint you've left in me too deep.

My eyes betray me,
stealing glimpses of you,
when all I should be doing is giving you cold glares.

My backstabbing arms,
itch to hold you,
when all they should be doing is pushing you away.

My traitorous lips,
long for yours on them,
when all they should be doing is growling your name with hate.

My idiotic brain,
chooses to remember the glimmers of happiness,
when all I should be doing is focusing on the abundance of pain.

My useless heart,
still beats for you every day,
wounded and broken,
but yours.

I hate you for breaking me,
I hate you for using me,
I hate you for not loving me.
And I hate myself for not hating you enough.

I hate myself for wanting you,
so badly I can barely breathe.

Zenia Koulidi



look at me.

look at me in my eyes, without the shame your manipulating me is causing you.
without the fear that I will find out the truth.

see me.

see me for who I really am, as the broken mess that needs mending.
as a person that exists beyond the parts you use for your selfish reasons.

touch me.

touch me and for once enjoy it as much as I do.
for once do it without seeing it as a necessary evil.

love me.

love me as deeply as I do.
or just love me with half my passion.
love me in any way that isn't fake.

Illusions

Zenia Koulidi

Your touches used to feel like heaven,
now it is as if they leave a dirty print.
You use them as a weapon,
a way to pull at my strings.
But now I have armor.
I've cut off all the strings.
I can finally see you for who you are, for who you always were.
I tell you this with no doubt.
It was never you I loved.
I loved the illusion you so perfectly created to manipulate me,
to use me when you wished and then throw me away.
I adored that imaginary person,
I did everything, gave away everything,
in a foolish attempt to save a love that was never there.
To stop you from hurting me more,
I had to kill that illusion.
And then, I mourned for my lost love,
until I could look at you
and only see a stranger.

Fable for When You Follow Your Heart

Zenia Koulidi, Roulina Ditsiou

Always the one who didn't follow the rules,
the one who didn't follow the flow.

It was hard to be like that

-different and alone-

It wasn't its fault, though.

Nature is to blame.

The water runs fast,

its pace unforgiving and harsh.

The others didn't want to fight,

and followed the flow of the stream.

But it stood out from the crowd

because it didn't want the easy way out.

It was a struggle

and with each stroke it choked.

It was the only way.

It was born a fighter

-its fate was predetermined-

So, it swam and swam and swam...

Its movements took it further away from the crowd,
and at the same time brought it closer to its destination.

Maybe it was its fate,

or maybe it was because it was a fighter,

but it succeeded at last.

Popular belief isn't always right,

what your heart tells you is.



“There are always flowers for those
who want to see them.”
-Henri Matisse-



Roulina Ditsiou

1 Bears and their Business

Ioanna Deroukaki

Everybody can change! "Well, not everybody," someone may argue. And when asked to give an example, they will most likely say "A government minister! They are all the same. Liars, with absolutely no sense of humor, who think they are the benefactors of the world." Here, however, comes my objection. Even ministers can change, if they want it very much, and like that they can finally make a difference. Nevertheless, there hasn't been anyone who has succeeded in changing their character. No, actually there was someone, a long time ago who managed to do the impossible. He had a complete change of character and guess what? He was a prime minister. His name was Charles Stephens....

It was a snowy evening. He had just arrived home and was surprised to find out that there was no one in the house. "As a prime minister," he thought, "I should put some rules in my house as well! I mean, where do they think they are, to disappear whenever they just feel like without telling me, the pillar of the house, where have they gone?" Even the maids were gone, and that made him feel anxious.



His wife and daughter should have already come back, she from work and he from school. But as it turned out, they had not entered the house at all. Every room was exceptionally tidy – something very uncommon – and there didn't seem to be any signs of forced entry into the house. The living room was the first room that someone entered upon arrival. It was a huge place, with four silky sofas and a satin clothed armchair tastefully arranged around a *Casa Padrino* polished coffee table. The television was almost one hundred inches and never failed to be remarked upon by guests of the Prime Minister. The carpet, littered under the table, was so expensive only a very few could afford. He glanced about the living room and left without feeling not even a bit disappointed. His wife and son rarely spent their time in the living room and the house was so big they were most likely elsewhere.

He then went to the kitchen to search for any clue at all. It was a large room colored in red, as his wife had wanted, and there was a wide crystal table for which they had paid a king's ransom. A gold sink was between a red refrigerator – see, the wife really liked red – and the impeccable black and white Italian granite countertop running to the matching oven. The chairs surrounding the table made a marvelous impression on anyone lucky enough to enter the room – even to the family who lived there – as they were made of pure black, shining marble. The shelves too glistened in reflected sunshine, but his family remained nowhere to be found.

After the kitchen, the Prime Minister climbed the stairs to the upper floor. There were three rooms, big dining room, an office, and bathroom. He first entered the dining room where sat a large dining table made of glass with a tablecloth made of silk. Modern paintings decorated the walls and gave the room a refined air. Unfortunately, he didn't find them in the dining room either, and for the first time he actually started feeling anxious. He rushed to the bathroom whose walls were a fine light blue with a sink of marble. A big jacuzzi in the middle was made of the same expensive marble, this time in red.

He anxiously went to the office, although he already knew that this was a waste of time and they wouldn't be there because he doesn't allow anyone in but himself. Still, he went in wishing for them to be there. It was one of the biggest rooms in the house. There was a small desk on which lay a laptop. There was a library as well, the home of wisdom he liked to call it, and an armchair, one of those old ones like Roman kings used to sit on. Obviously, they weren't in the office.

He climbed the stairs to the next floor, with sweat rolling down his face. The third and last floor included six bedrooms: one for he and his wife; one for his daughter; one for the house maid; one for their private chef, who at the time was on a trip to New York; one for his daughter's friends; and one for the consuls of other countries who visited them quite frequently. (I won't now explain how they looked like because I'm bored.) He quickly checked all of the bedrooms but was again left unsatisfied.

“What am I to do now?” he thought and remembered, silly him, that he hadn’t tried calling them yet. The Prime Minister ran to the phone and called his wife – Lily Stephens – and when she didn’t answer he called his daughter – Jennifer – who didn’t answer either. “Where could they be?” he thought, sweat running down his cheeks. “What if something happened to them? Who will check my speech and correct all the grammar and spelling mistakes?” And that was the first time he started thinking of how important Lilly and Jennifer were to him. So, after careful thought, he decided that nothing could have happened to them, and that he should wait for some time before letting his feelings get out of control. To occupy his time, he called his best friend, George Gush, who, at the time, was the only man he could trust.

“Charles, good to hear from you.”

“George, I’ve got absolutely no idea where J and Lily are. Have you heard anything?”

“No...” said George, and Charles let out a swear.

“God man, how many times do I have to tell you to get over it? I mean come on, if I had a dollar for every time you called me and told me that they were “lost” I would be the richest man alive – well, after you. I think you should just give it a rest. Nothing has happened to them and.... Just think about it, ok? What could have happened? Car accident? No, Lilly doesn’t drive and if anything like that happened it would be all over the news. Kidnap? Get serious man, these things don’t happen to us...”

“Well...”

“.... no, no, no. I don’t want to hear a word. Stop acting paranoid. And don’t bother calling again until you have a more serious argument about this than just... *Charles, they’re not answering the phone. What should I do now? I am afraid I’ll never see them again...*”

“Damn, you are right. But I swear that if something has happened to them I’ll shoot you down to Earth. I love them so much that I wouldn’t be able to stand having something happen to them.”

“That’s nice, Charles. If only you could say the same when a protester gets beaten to death by your police.”

“Ha, good one, Gush. Funniest thing I’ve heard today!” (knock, knock) “Someone is at the door! It must be them! Oh, thank God!”

“And one more time, Gush is right! Give my love to Lilly.”

..... *

Poodle-Doodle



Drained autumn leaves, muddy red, brown and washed yellow blurred through the side window. Hugging her knees, wide eyes watch as she twirls her hair with stubby bitten nails.

"Oh I am so excited! She's such a big girl! I love her new shoes... I love your new shoes dear! Oh, you're gonna love it."

Mom's friends, I wish they wouldn't talk about me like I wasn't even there.

Daddy's car, bubblegum blue. Hidden in back, between grubby seats and sticky floors lie long lost plastic gold rings and paper tattoos. They wound through dizzying backstreets, behind Mr. Moustakidis mini market. Rocks and gravel snap crackle popped under the tires when they pulled into the parking lot.

"Here we are sweetheart! First day of school. Are you excited?"

The parking lot teemed with hair-sprayed hair, foggy perfumes, black shoes and sunglasses. Backpacks with Barbies and Pokemon rollies, sharp new shirts and the frilliest dresses she'd ever seen. Moms and dads taking pictures, buzzing like flies. Hundreds, millions, billions, zillions of pictures.

"Grab your bag, let's go!"

She wanted to run. Run all the way home. But her feet were sticky. It was as if the monster under her bed had stalked her to school and now held her feet stuck tight to the ground; wouldn't let her go. Dad scooped up her hand and the snakes in her chest wriggled away.

A big bell rang and she followed the trail of ants through the huge double-doors. She walked behind a girl carrying a yellow Dora across the wax shiny floors, up to a pair of black ballerinas on the feet of a tall lady smiling so much it looked like it hurt.

"Hello, and who have we here?" the teacher said.

"Say your name dear! Oh, this is Elena," her dad said after a silence.

"Oh, hi Elena! She can come right in and put her bag into the cubby."

"Bye-bye, Poodle-Doodle. Have a good day!" Dad slipped his hand from hers, turned and disappeared around the corner.

The room was full of zillions of toys, books and cars, dolls and a giant princess house. Boys were bouncing and chasing. Girls were giggling, laughing. Against the wall, outside the tornado, stood a girl with curly hair, wide eyes watching.

Elena walked up, scooped up her hand and the snakes in her chest wriggled away.

