

THE BOX

MARINA APOSTOLOU



Marina Apostolou was born in Athens in 1981. She is a teacher. She has published two collections of poems “We will walk together” (2010) and “Notias” (April 2011) and a theatrical play with one act (February 2012) by publications “Oselotos”. The box is her second theatrical venture and it was released by Saita publications.

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The box

Theatrical play

Translation from Greek:
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THE BOX

Theatrical play in 3 acts

The theme of this theatrical play is transplantations in Greece and the general irresolution and lack of action on this specific matter.

A four-member family lives happily in the suburbs of Athens. The parents are educated and employed, their older son is a first-year student at the university and a driver of a motorbike and their daughter is junior high school student. Their carefree life is about to change, when the son has a fatal accident with his motorbike.

THE NAMES OF THE CHARACTERS ARE RANDOMLY SELECTED
AND THEY BEAR NO RESEMBLANCE TO REALITY

6 CHARACTERS

1. **Alexandros:** father of the family, 52 years old, director in a bank
2. **Mary:** mother of the family, 49 years old, teacher
3. **Petros:** son of the family, 19 years old, first year student
4. **Ann:** daughter of the family, 14 years old, junior high school student
5. **Eleni Patrikiou:** anesthesiologist, transplant coordinator
6. **Nephrologist**

FIRST ACT

It is Peter's 19th birthday. Early October. We are in the family's living room.

M- Good morning! Mmm! My dear, are you awake that early?

P- Yes, and I'm in a hurry. I'm leaving

M- That early?

P- Yes! I'm having an early class at the university. It starts at 8.

M- Come here, come my baby, let mom give you a kiss. Come here... Happy birthday to you, my prince!

P- Thank you... Don't kiss me mom, as if I am a little boy! (He pulls himself away)

M- You will always be my baby!

P- Not again. That's what all nerve racking mothers say, especially here in Greece!

M- Well, that's the way it is. When you have your own baby, you will see what love and tenderness mean. Nothing can be more important than that! When you become a father, you will understand...

P- Fine! We have a long time until then! A decade, at least...

M- Are you ready already? Have you eaten anything?

P- I only had a cup of coffee. I will buy a sandwich on my way to university.

M- Wearing your helmet already. You can't wait for your first ride with your new motorbike. Alexandros come here. Come and take pride in your son. He's like a wild rider.

P- Yes. We had an agreement with dad! My present for my 19th birthday and my success to be admitted to the university would be a quick motorbike! She's a doll.

M- Yes, you have exhausted yourself by sitting the university exams twice! You are a fighter, committed to your cause! We love to spoil you. You have given us so much pleasure! Only be very careful on the streets. It's very dangerous. Do not ever, ever take your helmet off!

P- Not again! Don't jinx it!

M- Don't think badly of me. I'm just scared. So many people are killed every day on the streets. Athens is like a jungle. There's always heavy traffic, and people drive insane. Always wear your helmet, ok?

P- You're getting annoying again, mom! Haven't you got work to do? Go to your work in primary school. Take Ann to her school. Prepare her breakfast and leave me alone!

M- I know, I know. You are all grown up now. You got your driver's license and you have been admitted to the university. You are going to meet new people and broaden your horizons. An independent young man like you will be spending even less time with us, from now on.

P- OK... I'm out of here.

Alexandros enters the living room.

Al- Good morning everyone.

P- Good morning and goodbye.

Al- Happy birthday my son. May all your wishes and dreams come true.

P- Thank you dad.

M- Will you be back for dinner tonight? I have bought your favorite cake.

P- I have plans for tonight... Forget it!

M- Aren't we going to celebrate birthday like a family? Have I done all the preparations to no avail?

P- Most probably mommy. I don't believe we will dine together tonight.

Al- Come on boy. Come only for an hour and after that you are free to go anywhere you want. After all, you have your own vehicle now.

P- I told you, I have made my arrangements for tonight. No way!

M- Oh, I understand! Is there a woman involved? Already? Who is she? Is she from the university?

Al- Mary, don't be indiscreet. We don't want to get involved into his personal life. It's none of our business after all. We just want to spend some time with him, on his birthday and have some time as a family. That's all.

P- OK, we'll see. I'm going now otherwise I'll be late!

M- It's all my fault because I care for you, I'm doing everything for you, I love you and I work like a slave for you.

P- Because you are being tender to us, and you are even willing to give your life for us (Teasing attitude)

M- Stop teasing me. You're lucky you have your birthday. Take care! I will call you.

Petros leaves. Ann enters the stage with her school bag.

Al- You won't even say hello?

A- Leave me alone dad. Good morning!

M- You should talk to your father with more respect! Come here... Drink your milk and eat something.

A- I don't want to eat anything. I've got a stomach ache.

Al- What happened?

A- I am sitting a science test and I am very nervous. I stayed up until late to study, and I am so dizzy, I could even forget the theory.

M- Drink some milk, for the dizziness. We don't want you to collapse!

A- Leave me alone mom, as if I am some kind of infant who needs to drink milk. I go to the senior class of Junior High School.

M- Alexandros listen! Our children have grown up for good! The one is already a student at the university, with a chick and a motorbike, and the other one goes to Junior High School and she doesn't want to drink milk anymore. As if she is fully grown up yet.

Al- That's the way it is, my dear Mary. Our children have grown up, even if we don't want to accept it! Come my dear Ann, come my sweet girl, drink some milk and go to school with your mum. Just a sip. (He ties his tie while talking)

A- Don't talk to me as if I was some kind of infant. "Just a sip."

M- Are we going to beg you for a long time little lady? Hurry up, because I have to go to work as well.

A- Just a second mom. I'll do it for you...

M- Oh really? You are doing it for me, not for you? You need to be hydrated in order to study. You only drink colas and chocolate milk... But it's my fault after all, that I give you pocket money to buy them. OK, let's go. (She holds her car keys).

Al- You both are very funny, women of my life. (Smiles proudly)

Ann drinks a sip, takes her bag, Mary gives Alexandros a kiss, as he prepares to leave for his working place.

They wish each other good morning again. Scene closes.

Scene opens, we are in the family's house. It's dark. The couple is more formally dressed, Ann is nervous and bored. Mary has set the table and has already cooked the food and bought the

cake for her son's birthday. Both parents' mood is notably pleasant.

A- Why did you cook so much food mom?

M- I didn't do anything special Annie!

A- Don't call me Annie! I despise it! It's like we are some kind of peasants!

M- There's the Chef Salad, my Athenian!

A- Why are you doing all these preparations since Petros isn't probably coming? Can't you understand that he has got a chick? He has got better staff to do than join us for dinner.

Al- Ann, please! Watch your mouth... Don't use the word "chick"!

A- Mom used it this morning, remember? I'm not the only one saying the word!

Al- Did you hear that? (Looking at Mary)

A- Are we going to eat the cake alone?

Al- Your brother said he would come, even if it's only for an hour.

A- Yes... since mom begged him so much. I heard how she was talking to him on the phone before. We beg Sir Petros for his birthday party, when he doesn't want to have one. He doesn't care about us.

M- It isn't a "party"! We are going to propose a toast, sing "Happy Birthday " and then he is going to leave again. We are going to have a quick bite and that's all.

The phone rings. Mary picks it up. It's Petros.

M- Hello son. When are you coming? Yes, just for an hour, as we had agreed. Ok, son, ok... I have everything prepared... Which road are you going to take to come? From Patision? Forget it! Come through Acharnon. Yes, listen to me. Don't go

through Patision, because it's Tuesday and the shops are open. There will be a lot of traffic. Come through Acharnon. Ok? And don't drive between cars, so as to come home faster. Don't act childish with the motorbike. It can get dangerous. Are you coming now? Ok, so you'll be here in half an hour.... And if you're late, if you're stuck in traffic just give us a call, ok? Come, we are waiting for you. (Phone call ends)

Al- For God's sake, Mary. You are suffocating him. When are you coming? How much time do you need? Which route will you take? If you are late, give us a call... Even if he's ten minutes late, what's the problem? Must he give us a call? For God's sake... It may have a lot of traffic and he will be stuck... What will happen if he's a little bit late? Be careful and be careful (ironic voice). You have always been so overprotective. The children caught a cold, and you gave them antibiotics. They had minor injuries while playing and you acted as if they would remain cripples for the rest of their lives.

A- Tell her dad! She's unbearable!

M- Stop it, both of you, father and daughter. I want to know how long it will take him to be here, so as to light up his birthday cake candles. Be prepared. When he opens the door, we will sing "Happy Birthday" and he will blow out the candles.

Al- Ok, we can light the candles when we hear footsteps. We are going to lock the door as well, so that he can't enter right away. When we hear sounds from the door you can fetch the cake.

A- I don't believe you two. As if he was 5 years old!

M- Ms chatterbox, go to the kitchen and fetch some glasses and stop commenting on everything.

The three family members are moving on the stage bringing staff from the kitchen to the living room enthusiastically. Until the phone rings again.... Half an hour after the first phone call.

M- It must be the kid.... Probably there's a lot of traffic on Acharnon and he's giving us a call.

A- I don't think he would dismount from his motorbike just to call us.

M- What's that number? (Looks at the number written on the phone device). Hello... Son is that you?

Nosokomeio Evangelismos – We are calling you from Evangelismos hospital.

M- From Evangelismos hospital?

N.E.- That's correct. Are you Miss Stratou?

M- Yes that's me. What's going on?

N.E.- We have found your number from your son's mobile...

M- Is Petros ok?

N.E.- He had an accident with his motorbike, in the junction of Acharnon and Agiou Meletiou.

M- What are you talking about? Accident?

N.E.- That's correct.

M- How is he? Is he safe?

N.E.- His condition is very serious Miss Stratou. You must come here.

M- Seriously? Alexandros! Let's go! Our child!

Mary is about to faint. Alexandros and Ann hold her. The scene ends. We are transferred outside the intensive care unit.

M- What a terrible blow of fate! On his birthday! I can't believe it! He shouldn't have come home, he should go directly with his friends. It's my fault that I insisted to have a toast.

Al- Come on now, calm down...

M- How can I calm down? Our boy, our handsome boy is in coma, do you understand it?

Al- Calm down, sweetheart!

M- What we have created, our most beautiful creation is on the verge of being completely lost. Do you understand that?

Al- It's my fault for giving him the money to buy his motorbike. I was crazy with joy you see. He got into university, his first choice, I couldn't refuse him anything.

M- Bad timing... it's my fault for asking him to come through Acharnon.

Al- What are you talking about my beloved Mary? Your fault? Couldn't he have violated the red traffic light on Patision as well?

M- How do we know that it's Petros' fault? Was the traffic light indeed red? The other driver may have crossed the red traffic light. How can the color of the traffic light be proved?

Al- There will be a trial, and eyewitnesses will be called to testify. Justice will be served. There will be punishment for the guilty.

M- I don't care about the trial! I don't give a penny for punishment and compensation and insurance. I only want to see Petros walking out of the hospital... I want to see him well, safe and sound... I want to talk to him again.

Al- If only he wore his helmet... He wouldn't be so badly injured.

M- Maybe he underestimated the distance... Maybe his head was too warmed... It's October and it's still hot. Who knows? And we have specifically pointed out that he should wear his helmet all the time. Jesus Christ! Where's Ann?

Al- My sister came and took her home, a while ago. You were in the bathroom at that moment. It's no use for her to stay

here, to see us crashed, like that... Do you want a cup of coffee, a glass of water, anything else?

M- I don't want anything at all... I only want our child to get better...

Twenty six hours later, the parents are clearly overwhelmed.

M- What kind of test is that? What a punishment? Whom have we harmed and we are getting tortured like this?

Al- Mary you are frozen my dear...

M- And you are pale.

Al- Shall I get you an orange juice? You're on the verge of collapsing!

M- I don't want anything. The time that we spend in the waiting room is driving me crazy. It crushes me. I don't know how it's going to end up or what to expect. I can only hope, and I am not completely sure that I can do it at the moment.

Al- We won't stop hoping my love.

M- I can't imagine it, if...

Al- Stop it! Don't even think of it. We won't give up on our son.

M- I'm scared. For the first time in my life I'm so scared. (They hug)

The transplant coordinator Eleni Patrikiou asks from the couple to follow her to her office in order to talk.

E.P.- Sit down, please. (She sits with them)

M- Tell us... What's going on with our child. We feel smashed not knowing what is going on...

E.P.- I would like to talk to you about...

Al- How is our boy?

M- How is Petros? When is he going to recover?

E.P.- Unfortunately (she holds the mother's hand), your child Mr and Mrs Stratou....

M- Our child...?

E.P.- Your child is.... clinically dead. (she still holds the mother's hand, while looking to Alexandros)

M- De...

E.P.- Mrs Stratou, brain death has been diagnosed.

Al- WHAT?!

M- What was that? It is impossible! What is "brain death" supposed to mean? How many (ironic attitude combined with confusion) types of death are there in the human race? Is the body alive and the brain dead?

E.P.- Your child is dead. (Her voice becomes sweet, loving and compassionate)

M- Dead?? (Her voice trembles. She chokes)

E.P. The injury on his head.... We keep him alive in the intensive care unit due to machine support. That's why you're under the impression that he's alive. He is just a warm dead. We are dealing with irreversible brain damage, permanent loss of all brain functions. This is brain death...

Mary starts crying.

Al- Are you sure?? Is this final? Do you understand what you just told us?

E.P. There have been two repeated tests, Mr Stratou... Unfortunately...

M- What are you talking about? I don't accept it!! My Child is going to live!!! I won't accept it so light heartedly. He is still in there... How is this possible??

E.P.- Calm down, Mrs Stratou... (She holds her hand)

M- How can I calm down? You are telling me, that you are going to take the plug off and my son will die.

E.P.- I'm just trying to explain to you what "brain death" means.

Al- You invited us in your office to inform us that our boy is dead? So simply, in a mere moment? That there is nothing else to be done and that you did all you could do? And now what? We shall say goodbye and go home?

M. Oh I'm sorry. We are taking advantage of the space you have. We should probably remove our dying son to free the bed in the ER. And sorry for wasting your time too. (irony)

E.P.- It happens always with relatives, especially parents... Common people don't know what "brain death" means and parents especially can neither understand or accept it, even if you explain it to them... It's normal to feel and act like this...

M- My child is dead.... (She bends over)

E.P.- Mrs Stratou?? You are cold Mrs Stratou... Shall I get you some water or some juice... (She caressed her back and gets her pulse)

Al.- She should lie down... She is very pale!

E.P.- Of course. Come over here... (She helps her lie on the bed in the office. She holds her hand and gives her courage. One minute of silence follows. The coordinator gives courage to the nearly passed out mother, while talking with Alexandros. There is music to cover the tension of the moment).

An hour later Mary has come around. The anesthesiologist wants to talk to the couple.

E.P. -Mr. Stratou I would like to talk to you about a very subtle issue. Of course I need to talk to both of you.

M. A subtle issue? If my boy doesn't survive, there's nothing I care about! Everything else is meaningless and unimportant to me. Subtle issue and bullshit. I don't give a damn about anything. Do you understand?

Al. Let's at listen at least to what she has to say, Mary darling.

E.P- As you know in this hospital I work as a critical care physician and transplant coordinator, Mrs Stratou.

M. Trans...plants? (Alexandros and Mary are looking at each other worried)

E.P- The issue I would like to talk to you about is of major importance. Your son's organs are perfectly healthy. As you know...

M. Know what?

E.P. As you know, organ donors in Greece are very few...Their number is a lot smaller compared to the number of those needing transplantations.

M. You called us here, while our child is dying to talk to us about other people's pain? You must be kidding!!!

E.P. Your son is dead, Mrs Stratou. Isn't it a pity to let your son's organs be buried into the ground with him, when they could save so many people's lives, who suffer?

M. Who said I care about other people? Who cares about me and my 19 year-old dying son??

Al. Mary calm down... he doctor is right...

M. What are you talking about? How can she be right? Aren't you listening to what she is telling us?|

Al. Maybe if you thought about it soberly...

M. Soberly? What does soberly mean? From now on we are never going to be sober again.

E.P. Mrs Stratou...I empathize with you. It's natural to react like this at such a difficult moment.

M. You empathize with me? I don't think so. You wouldn't talk like this, with that tone of voice, if your child was in there...

E.P. Mrs Stratou, just think for a minute...

M. I am not going to let you slaughter my child. Enough already! And I don't know how I am holding myself and talking

to you so calmly. If it was someone else here and not me, you would probably be getting beaten up now!

E.P. You have no idea, how many people you would help and relieve with that decision, Mrs Stratou.

M. And what about me? Who will help me relieve now that I am sunk in grief?

Who is going to help me escape my pain, doctor?

E.P. It is not slaughtering...You won't see your child in pieces as you may think...!

I promise you, we are going to respect your son's body.

M. No...no... I won't give my consent for something like this...And I don't want to discuss it again.

Al. Mary calm down...Consider all the relief we will feel, if we manage to save even one life...We'll know that our son's organs are still alive and help other people live...It is really important...It will be as if he is alive.

M. I don't care for anybody's life! I care only about Petros' life! My angel's life!

Al. Mary listen to me dear, try to free your mind from that box you have it in and you don't let it breathe! You don't let it see the light!

M. Box? What box? They are trying to take advantage of us! Don't you see it? Our son's death is their life. She might be getting money from all this!

E.P.I won't get offended, although you are clearly accusing me of sabotage. On the contrary, I totally understand you... But think... In Spain, where people are more sensitized, organ donation is widely spread.

M. And why should I care about Spanish people? I don't care!!

E.P. It was just an example of different mentality, Mrs Stratou. Think about all the endless waiting lists of patients who suffer and all that keeps them alive is hope...

M. I have no hope any more...

Al. You are starting your sentences with “I” Mary... Everything would be better if we all started with “We”. If Petros was here right now, I’m sure that he would give his consent for the donation! And that’s because he has principles and is well-informed about such issues.

M. Stop blabbering! How can you be in the mood for talking so much right now..

E.P. It requires strength and not mood...

M. Stop it both of you! Shut up! Enough with that...My child is not some sort of meat to slaughter it...Stay away from him you crows!

E.P. You think they’re crows, all those people who are trying to find a transplant in order to survive?

M. If it has to do with my child yes! They are CROWS, VULTURES BIRDS OF PREY!

E.P. You could give happiness to many people suffering. Just the phone call from the hospital...

M. Yes, like the phone call I got last night.. But it didn’t make me happy...

Al. Mary let’s go home to rest and we’ll decide there.

E.P. Take your time to decide and let me know...Think about it Mrs Stratou. Think about all the parents suffering like you do...

Al. Listen to the doctor Mary. Think that if we are late then it will be pointless...

M. What kind of father are you? You want to leave our child to those vultures?

Al. And it's better to let worms eat his organs? One day we'll open his grave and his organs, these organs that you now refuse to donate, are going to become one with the ground. SOIL! What's the point? How can you be so narrow-minded?

M. I am telling you, I don't care! It hurts so much that I don't care for the others! I can't see anything else. I don't care about what they feel, what they are going through! Having my son's flesh cut won't console me! Leave me alone then! I won't change my mind! And let my mind stay in that box, as you call it...

Al. Our child is going to die. And because of you and your stubbornness other people are going to die as well...Don't be silly...

M. Let them die! They shall die! (heartbreak). They shall feel how I feel now... I don't care for anyone! I DON'T CARE! And call me brutal, as what I am going through now is...Call me unfair, as what I am facing now is...The greatest pain of all...To lose your child! My child... my child...(Mary is crying, Alexandros is holding her and the scene closes)

SECOND ACT

THREE YEARS LATER at the couple's home.

It's Sunday morning... Mary is by the table in the kitchen with a pen and a piece of paper and she is writing. She is standing and looking outside the window, while she is holding a cup of coffee. She seems concerned. In the scene enters Alexandros.

Al. Goodmorning.

M. Goodmorning.

He kisses her.

Al. How are you?

M. Fine...

Al. Is Anne up?

M. Yes, she woke up very early and she is studying in her room.

Al. Wanna go for a walk?

M. Nah.. It 's cloudy. I don't think it's a good idea.

Al. But since...It is always cloudy on Sundays Mary.

M. Yes, it's always cloudy.

Al. Come here, let me hug you...

M. I am not in the mood. Maybe I'll lie down and watch TV.

Al. As you wish, I don't want to pressure you. I will go to the bank. Tomorrow I'm having a very important meeting with a client. He wants to buy some bonds.

M. Ok. You should go...

Al. OK then! I won't be late... Ok? A couple of hours. I will be back for lunch.

M. Ok, take care.

Alexandros leaves. Mary takes Petros' photo and looks at it sullenly. She looks again outside the window...

A poem is heard by the speaker, it's her voice but we see her silent on stage.

It's been already three years.
My soul experienced the greatest
pain of all.
And the pain of my soul's flesh
made me crawl.
Oblivion...you left me... you betrayed me
you were so cruel,
and you left me hopeless and let the memory rule.
It's been already three years since my angel is gone...
He opened his wings and flew beyond...
His picture shall I always remember,
eternally I will love you tender.

After a couple of hours Alexandros is coming back from work. Mary lays the table. After a few minutes Anna enters the stage. She is now a student on the last class of high school. This year she is going to sit the final exams.

M. Welcome!

Al. What delicious meal have you cooked for us today?

M. Your favorite. Beef with pasta and sauce.

Al. Hmmm... It smells great!

A. Daddy you're home! (She gives him a kiss).

Al. Yes... Will you join us for lunch?

A. Hmm... Although I am not very hungry, I will join you!

M. Eat, before it gets cold. Have some salad too.

Al. You won't eat, Mary?

M. I am not hungry.

A. Again mum? You are flesh and bones!

M. That is not important.

Al. Eat something honey...

M. You two eat. Especially you Anne, you look pale lately.

Al. She spends many hours studying, especially now that the exam period is close.

M. That's true. She gets tired.

A. I feel tired. Indeed...But it's fine, After the exams I will rest.

M. You will sleep and rest dear.

Al. You should make her orange juice every day. She seems pale to me too.

A. Ok relax, it's not like I'm dying or something.

Al. Don't even mention that my angel. (Mary and Alexandros look each other)

A. Well, I m full, I can't eat a lot, my stomach can't stand it. I've lost my appetite and my stomach aches sometimes.

Al. Well, you drink too much coffee! And you barely eat.

A. Oh daddy, enough already with the food.

M. Right, you don't want to ruin your figure ... for the boys.

A. I am going back to my studying... I have got a splitting headache and I am feeling a little dizzy.

M. Shall I give you a painkiller?

A. Yes mum please. I feel horrible. Lately I've been taking aspirins for those headaches, but they don't seem to work. I guess I will lie down for half an hour.

M. How long have you been having these aches? You haven't told us anything about it until today. Anyway, go lie down and I will be right with you. I will bring you some juice.

Anne is going to her room.

Al. She seems tired.

M. Be patient... She suffers from stress.

Al. And you from melancholy... You never smile anymore. Since...

M. Since...

Al. Since we lost our child.

M. Since I saw him in the box..! In that damned box. So pale and still. And then the lid was closed and the box sank into the ground. This was the last time I saw him... In that coffin! I can't take that picture off my head. I just can't.!!

Al. Calm down... Don't be upset again... Would you like to lie down a little? (He is holding her). I will clean the table.

M. You are such a great partner. What would I do without you? I don't think I could handle this all by myself. Not that I am handling it very well, anyway...

Al. Don't forget that we have our little girl. She keeps us both alive. Optimistic.

M. You're right. What would we do, if it wasn't for her?

Al. Come now, let's lie down now and in the afternoon we can go to the movies If you want...

M. Alright. (Small smile)

The scene ends.

Two months later.

It's night. We see Anne getting up from her bed and going to the bathroom. (Scene without words.)

It's morning. The parents are ready to go to their work. Anne hasn't got up from her bed yet, though. Her parents are worried.

Al. Goodmorning! (He gived Mary a kiss)

M. Goodmorning.

Al. Anne is not up yet?

M. No... I entered her room. She told me she wasn't feeling that well... I don't know, she couldn't get up.

Al. Does she have fever?

M. No, I checked her temperature a few minutes ago. It was normal. I don't know what's going on.

Al. Did she go to bed late last night again?

M. Maybe. You know she is often late especially lately due to her studying. I don't know exactly what time it was but it was definitely late. I heard her going to the bathroom several times.

Al. You think she caught a cold and caused her frequent urination?

M. Or she could be expecting her period. Before we get our period, we women have frequent urination issues.

Al. Anyway. She shall stay in today to rest and study in the comfort of her home and we'll see how it goes.

M. Yes that's the best for her. I will call her later during the break at school.

Al. I will call her as soon as I have some free time. So, See you. Have a good day.

M. Have a good day.

(They kiss and go to work. End of scene.)

A week later. Alexandros is working in his office, when his phone rings. It's from Anne's school. He is informed that Anne fainted during the lesson.

Al. What? What did you say? She fainted? But what happened? During the lesson? Ok... Was my wife informed? Did you call

her at work. Yes, at the primary school, where she works. I'll be right there!

He grabs his jacket and leaves his office stressed. The scene closes and opens again with the parents at home. Anne is lying on her bed. Both of her parents are by her side.

A. I am sorry I made you worry.

M. What are you talking about? You are more important than anything else.

Al. How are you feeling right now?

A. I am tired but I'm feeling better.

M. I think you should take a blood test...You might have low iron or low ferritin levels, since you barely eat and you're thin.

A. Come on mum.. Don't start again, I'm begging you.

Al. She's right. We shall let her rest now and we'll see how it goes. Come sweetheart.. Come.. Sleep now and we'll talk tomorrow.

They leave Anne alone in her room and they talk. Just the two of them.

M. Alexandros I am really worried!

Al. Me too.

M. We should take her to a doctor, she might need medicine, we should find out what causes that. She is a young girl, she shouldn't be fainting all of a sudden.

Al. She might need vitamins... She is also tired... Of course these are the final exams. She studies really hard, she goes to school and she is stressed...It is natural that she is exhausted!

M. You're right. I am afraid though. Ok, she is tired...But other students of her age are going through the same. They study, they are stressed and they run around every day. Nonetheless, they don't pass out like this!

Al. Ok we will take her to the doctor, but please don't worry and don't be negative.

They are hugging. The scene closes. We are moving hypothetically to the microbiology laboratory.

Al. Honey, you are going to do these blood and urine tests and we'll see ok? Although I think you are perfectly healthy...

A. Ok dad. Let's go now, because I'll be late for school.

Two days later, at home.

M. I am worried for her, Alexandros. Today she didn't go to school. What is wrong with her? She should have taken a fatigue test!

Al. Calm down... I will take the results and we'll see what the problem is.

M. I make her juice every day and I cook soups with meat, with fish for her, but she gets pastier every day. I want to come with you to the microbiology lab!

Al. You should stay here and take good care of her! I won't be late... Come on, don't be sad. She is a young girl, what could be wrong with her? So, I'll be right back. (He kisses her on the lips).

After some time Alexandros comes back bowed.

M. Where have you been? Why did you switch off your mobile phone? I'm getting crazy around here!

Al. Where is Anne?

M. She is sleeping, where are the test results?

Al. (He sits). I have bad news. Her test results are not good. She needs to see a nephrologist immediately. Tomorrow!

M. What are you talking about? Oh good Lord, what is wrong now?

Al. Stay calm... The microbiologist recommended a very good friend of his, who is a nephrologist. He even set us an

appointment. He is very good, he is surgeon at a very good public hospital, he performs... (his voice breaks) transplants.

M. Transplants? And what does it have to do with us? Tell me... how does it affect us? Answer me! Where have you been? Why didn't you come here after the microbiology lab? Why did you switch you phone off?

Al. I was just driving around. I forgot to charge my phone's battery...

M. Bullshit. Are you kidding me? You wanted to be alone. You didn't want to talk to anyone, right? He told you more things... Things you are not telling me now.

Al. Calm down. He said nothing more than that.

M. Alexandros, I am scared. I won't stand it again. I have paid for the mistakes I may have done in my life. I have already lost my son. And he was only 19. I can't go through this again! I can't!!

Al. Don't be scared. Our daughter is going to be fine. We will go to the nephrologist tomorrow and he will tell us what to do. He is very experienced. Everything's gonna be fine. You'll see.

They are hugging. We move to the nephrologist's office, where the three-member family is about to learn the shocking news.

Nephrologist. Your child suffers from ischaemic form of acute renal insufficiency. We found high creatinine levels in her blood.

M. What? Acute renal insufficiency? But she is only 17! She is neither an old woman with diabetes nor obese.

Nephrologist. Indeed... But even young and strong people may suffer from that disease.

Al. But how is it possible? Anne had never had such problems in the past.

Nephrologist. Probably this was caused due to drug intake as for example aminoglycosides or maybe by rhabdomyolysis, which is caused by intense exercise or even by heat exhaustion. I don't know what Anne's lifestyle was, but there has to be a reason. There is always a reason.

M. And now what?

Nephrologist. Now she must begin with dialysis treatment as soon as possible and go to the hospital every two days. Or you can do peritoneal dialysis at home every 6 hours, after you get a 15-day training and you should go to hospital once a month, to make sure that the treatment goes well.

M. Oh my God... (she touches her head).

Al. For how long will that be doctor?

Nephrologist. Until we find a compatible donor for transplantation. This could be a relative from within the family that is more possible to be compatible or some stranger on the waiting list of the National Transplant Organisation.

M. Waiting list...

On stage freeze all four faces for a few seconds (the suitable music theme is heard).

The next day at home.

M. I am going to give Anne my kidney! I will do it!! I could give my life for her!

All I want is my daughter to live! I don't care for the money. I will sell all I have inherited from my father and I will give all my savings that I have in the bank so that we can take her to a very good private clinic, in a single room, where everything is clean, neat and tidy. I don't care about anything else. I don't care if we starve or if we become beggars. All that matters is that she is healthy again!

Al. Don't speak that loudly! She could hear you and wake up! She is tired enough with all that. What we have to do is to make her feel good and not sick. And of course we will give her everything she needs. As for example a quiet and clean room. We must avoid infections at all costs. What's the point if the surgery is successful and then Anne is infected by the other patients in the room? What 's the point of having the best surgeon but in a hospital with no infrastructure?

M. But transplants are not performed in private hospital, not yet. Of course the way is almost open for that to happen, but for the time being the transplant is going to be performed in a public hospital and then we will bring her to a single room in a private clinic. If this is allowed of course and only if this is for her own good.

Al. Everything is going to be fine! Don't worry my darling.

M. I am not afraid, I am not afraid of anything anymore. Especially now that I know that I am a compatible donor! I am her mother...And apart from that I am perfectly healthy and I am not under medication- so there is nothing that I care about... Just that I am going to give her life, hope... I don't care for me... I don't care if I die!

Al. Calm down! Nobody is going to die! None of you... I wish I were a compatible donor... I wish I were too, so that I could give life to our little Anne, and you my love wouldn't lose anything, nothing would happen to you.

M. I don't feel that I am losing, Alexandros. I feel that I am winning. I am winning the prize of life for our little girl. I feel that I can resist to evil, defeat it and that's what makes me optimistic and strong. I can reach the limits for my Anne to be healthy.

Al. I am very proud of both of you...

He kisses her and the scene closes. A week later the transplant has been performed. Mary donated her kidney to her daughter.

Al. How are you my dear Anne?

A. Fine dad... I am feeling sleepy... My mouth is dry.

Al. it's because of the surgery.

A. How's mum?

Al. Your mum is perfectly fine. She is sleeping. Do you know that everything went great? The surgery was successful! Soon everything will get back to normal! You will be healthy, strong and you'll be able to go out with your friends again.

A. My friends must be sitting the exams these days. And that's something I can't do...

Al. But what are you talking about? You will do it next year sweetie! So what? You are still very young! Don't forget that you went sooner to school. You are only 17,5 and your friends are already 18! So, don't worry about that dear. Your healthy is what matters now.

A. How long am I going to stay in here dad?

Al. Round about twenty more days honey...

A. Twenty days....

Al. We are going to be constantly by your side and then we are going to get back home and you'll have your room again and you'll relax. You'll see... (he caresses her head and the scene closes)

One month later at home.

Al. Good morning...

M. Good morning...

Al. You spent the night here?

M. I was watching a movie...and I fell asleep on the couch...

Al. Did you have breakfast?

M. Nah... I am sitting here on the soft couch and I'm snuggling...

Al. Mary darling, you should eat better...You are still vulnerable, you know that...

M. You are exaggerating...After all, you know that little do I care for me. All I care about is that Anne's body accepts the transplant and she is happy again. She is a little girl...

Al. I totally agree with you! But I also want you to be fine! You are my partner, my wife and I don't want anything to happen to you... I want you to be fine! (he caresses her gently)

M. I am fine, I am not sick, Alexandros. Thank God!.. I may have given my kidney, but I am fine. Don't care for me. We should pay all our attention to Anne. Tomorrow she should take the tests. We need to know how the transplant goes.

Al. You think I would forget that? I am in suspense too. I wish her body assimilates the transplant.

M. Hopefully it will. I shall die! I shall not live...provided my daughter is healthy again.

The next day in the hospital

Nephrologist. I am really sorry. (He is holding Anne's test results). It was not successful. Her body rejected the transplant.

M. But why??? How?? (Mary hugs Anne).

Nephrologist. We knew from the beginning that there was a chance that her body wouldn't accept the transplant. We are facing an acute rejection because of the antibodies created. This kind of rejection is usually visible during the first trimester after the surgery.

Al. But she's her mother! She took the kidney of her living mother, who is healthy and her test results were perfect... If

this kidney was rejected, then how can some stranger's be accepted?

Neph. It is possible... Your body may not accept your parent's kidney, but I could accept the kidney of some stranger, who is also compatible. And that kidney could give you life for up to 25 years. Apart from that, I've already told you, that it was caused because of the antibodies. You wife's kidney was not the problem.

A. And now doctor?

Neph. Now you are on the waiting list my little Anne.

M. Until when?

Al. My family is falling apart and there is no solution, no responsibly answer, no hope...

Neph. The game is not over yet, Mr Stratou.

Al. It's not? Then what are we waiting for?

Neph. We are waiting for the donor.

Al. But we can't wound my child and stitch it back as if she was lifeless.

Neph. We have no other choice.. I know how you feel, but there's nothing else to do.

M. How much is the average waiting time?

Neph. That's not something fixed. Transplant demand is very high. A little less than twenty percent of those suffering from acute renal insufficiency manage to get a transplant. Average waiting time is 7 years... But there are also recipients, who found a transplant within 2 or 3 years...

A. Oh my God. And then you telling me that the game is not over!

Neph. Don't lose your hope...I will call you on the phone as soon as a compatible donor is found. Keep your mobile phone on day and night. Until then Anne you should keep

implementing peritoneal dialysis at home carefully, as shown to you, if you make that choice, take your pills normally and be optimistic, all of you. Nothing is over yet.

THIRD ACT

Two days later at family's home

M. We can't just sit here and watch our child suffer with that catheter constantly inside of her.

Al. What else can we do? Waiting time is long... You heard what the doctor said. Oh dear God, why don't you take pity on us? Bad luck has been following us!

M. Let luck alone, Alexandros! Don't blame God or fate for our situation! It is easy to believe that it's not your fault ... To believe that you are mistreated or the victim...Convenient it is! And how difficult and brave it is to judge yourself and admit that you're wrong... Perhaps it's not totally your fault, perhaps not everything depends on you but to some extent at least, we make our own destiny.

Al. What are you talking about?

M. I know.... Philosophy is less important at this moment that we are trying to figure out a way to save our child... But there is nothing else we've got left. That's why...Because there is nothing else we've got left, because things are not as they used to be. That's why I am not going to blame neither God nor the devil for all the problems we are facing. I will blame only us... To some point at least. Why are you looking at me like this? Don't you get it?

We are being punished.

Al. What are you talking about? What do you mean we are being punished?

M. Yes we are Alexandros. Don't tell me you don't remember... And I....I deserve it! I deserve all this torture that I am going

through now. But our little girl? You? Why you? You tried to convince me... You insisted but I...

Al. What are you talking about darling?

M. "The waiting list is long"...That's the way it is. I am personally made it longer... It was then that I strongly refused to donate Petros' organs. Remember now? It's all my fault! I am responsible for this situation now!

Al. Come on. Relax and don't think about it.

M. How can I not think about it? That's the truth. When I look back, that's what I see.

Al. Relax, It's not time for looking back.

M. Yes, the past affects the present. It is taking its revenge! The parents of all those children who needed our son's organs and they didn't get them are taking their revenge now. And at the moment these children are either in need of life support or dead. It's all getting back to us. Don't you see it?

Al. You didn't know back then...

M. Our life was so well-planned. Everything was going great. It was just the four of us and our happiness that mattered. We couldn't see any further than that. We were never troubled by something really serious. And transplantations seemed to be so far away from us, like all these things you see in movies, on TV and they are never going to happen to you. Until everything changed. We changed. The facts and the situation changed us. We are mortals and we need each other in this life. I know it's not the right time for conclusions. But I can't avoid explaining why we are going through all this now! I once refused to become donor and now we have come to be waiting for a transplant.

Al. We need to move on.

M. Right. And now what? Torture. And we will wait to see who is the last one standing?

Al. Be patient, we'll figure out a way.

Here interfere two scenes with no words:

The one shows Alexandros spent the night in front of the laptop, searching for information and the other shows him again, this time he is stressed and troubled and he discusses with the nephrologist . The latter seems to be analyzing something and he looks worried, negative and doubtful. A proper music theme is heard.

The next day, the parents sit in their living room.

Al. I want to talk to you. I want us to discuss something and if you agree I will talk to Anne too.

M. What is it? I'm listening.

Al. I did some research yesterday on the internet...I searched it thoroughly.... And I talked with the nephrologist this morning. It's about transplants from other countries.

M. And? Can we be added to waiting of another country?

Al. I don't know, perhaps. But I suppose we will have to wait, I don't know how long, I didn't do my research on that.

M. And what was your research on?

Al. I suggest that we take Anne to Philippines.

M. Where?

Al. Before you say anything just listen. We have to contact the hospital first. Then they will take care of the rest. There are many kidney donors. It costs 80.000 dollars. In total, including the hospital and the donor's payment.

M. What are you talking about? You want us to take our child to a third world country?

Al. No, it's not like other countries such as India, where there is no hygiene in hospitals and people are desperate and sell their kidney for a very small amount of money. Many Greeks have been in Philippines for the same reason. I read their interviews in newspapers. It is better there. They take good care of you, they give you a single room, they look after you. There is poverty there and people sell their organs... Hospitals have lists with donors.

M. Oh good Lord, how terrible. I feel ashamed even when I think of it.

What did the doctor say? Is he positive?

Al. He wasn't very positive.

M. And you will travel to Philippines, although the doctor, who treats Anne, disagrees with it? And apart from that, it is disgusting and just the think of it makes me shudder.

Al. I know it's not exactly moral. But we are desperate... Mary, listen to me. We'll sell the apartment that I've inherited from my father in Thessaloniki and with that money I will take Anne to Philippines. I f I don't find a buyer soon, I will get a loan from the bank, as much money as I can, after all I've been working there for years and many colleagues of mine have got loans and even more money. If I have to I will use the money I've been saving, I don't care. We have no time for sentimentalism. You think I am not ashamed? But I can't watch Anne suffer like this for years!

M. I am afraid...What if something goes wrong there? Where can we address? I am scared to death when I think that we might be exposed at such a country.

Al. You shouldn't be afraid! This is our last card. You must be by her side. Remember what you said? That you would do anything to save her... This is how it shall be done Mary. You'll

stay here, I don't want you to suffer any more, I will get the money and as soon as I get it, we'll go to Manila. And you'll see... Everything will be fine. We suffered enough. This time we are going to win.

M. And what about my kidney? It is still inside of her. Are they going to remove it?

Al. No, I talked with the doctor. That is not necessary. She can receive a second one, without having the first removed. Unless there is rot of kidney, thrombosis or bleeding.

They are silent, they look each other.

Call Anne now...

Three months later. Anne went to Philippines with her father. She accepted the transplant, everything went great. And they came back to Greece. We are now in the nephrologist's office. The doctor has supposedly just tested her.

Neph. So, Annie How are you feeling? I think you're fine.

A. I'm ok. Tired but ok.

Neph. What you did was a big risk. I, as you know, was against that decision. I know it was a choice of need, but still a risky one. Are you happy now?

A. I am not ungrateful after all that we've been through. But I don't know what to feel: happiness or shame. Relief or guilt.

Neph. What can I say? I am nobody's judge. I wish the transplant lasts as much as possible. Take care and remember: Healthy nutrition, physical exercise and unfailing medicine intake.

A. I'll do my best. I know that it won't last for life but I will take good care of it. I am going to be its "box", doctor.

Neph. Take care Anne, we'll be in touch.

A. Bye for now.

The scene ends.

THE END

It's winter. It's cold outside and I am at home. It's raining. The island is small and so are the choices you have...The TV of the small apartment is old. It won't show all channels, just a few. I am bored, there is nothing to watch. I'll use the web tv. I am searching for something interesting at the informing section. There is a variety of topics, shows that I've missed. I choose the "the tough truth about transplantations", which was the topic of a show called "Protagonistes" with Stavros Theodorakis. I am ignorant. I am watching it stressed. This is where it all began...

Marina Apostolou



The idea of **Saita publications** emerged in July 2012, having as a primary goal to create a web space where new authors can interact with the readers directly and free.

Saita publications' aim is to redefine the relationship between publisher-author-reader, by cultivating a true dialogue, and by establishing an effective communication channel for authors and readers alike. **Saita publications** stay far away from profit, exploitation and commercialisation of literary property.

The strong wind of **passion** for reading,
the sweet breeze of **creativity**,
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what a cliché phrase,
mentioned thousands of
times but inapplicable. Are
we really informed about
transplantations in
Greece? How tragic is the
truth on that specific issue
in our country?
Demonization, taboo,
hesitation till the "evil"
knocks on our door and
then we realize how much
ignorance and absence of
mutual understanding hurt.
Greece, year 2012. Endless
waiting lists for a
transplant. A mentality
that doesn't change. But
what happens in the end
and what is the price we
must pay for our narrow
minds?

