

Dimitrios Kamellopoulos

# Kanelis explores Athens



illustrations by  
Apollonia Paramythioti

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Having completed his research on fluid mechanics, he acquired his PhD in 1982. He has taught fluid mechanics and Alternative Forms of Energy at the Technological Educational Institute of Piraeus.

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In 2002, he became section head of the Strategy and Planning Department of PPC and coordinator of the Permanent Team for the Environment.

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Illustrations by  
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Translation from Greek by  
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To the children of this world with love



## 1. Kanelis' martaki and his wish

- Koraliiiia, I'm waiting.
- I'm coming, Mimis, I'm coming, I'm flying to you. I need a second to get the threads. Here you go, hold the one end, tightly please, in order to get it right.

In fact, Mr. Mimis waited, as he does every year at the end of February, for his wife to make a martaki for everyone. You don't know what a martaki is? Oh what an omission! Please, allow me to explain.

A martaki is a bracelet made of two threads, one red and one white, twisted around each other. People wear it in March and this protects them from the hot sun, which comes out after the winter break. Believe me, it works.

Mrs. Koralia braids a martaki for everyone in her family, but also for every friend of her children. Of course, her twin pains, oops pardon me, I mean twin sons, Vassilis and Yiannis, wear it proudly the whole month long. Not only the children enjoy it very much, but also Mr. Mimis is happy to wear it every year.

- God bless you, my dear Koralia. Bravo for carrying on the tradition, Mr. Mimis said and wore his martaki proudly.
- God bless you, too my dear Mimis and be happy, Mrs Koralia answered coyly.

March passed by soon and the custom reached its final phase. You must wonder what phase this is. Of course, of course, I will explain immediately, my dear friends.

According to tradition, people throw the martaki on the roof tops or in the gardens or on tree-branches and the swallows, which start building their nests, use the threads as building material. In return for this help offered by the people, and especially by the children, they leave a small gift in the place of the threads! Yes, yes, it is true. Last year, for example, the twins found a bag of colorful balloons, another time they found beautiful stickers with cars.

Of course Mr. Mimis doesn't expect anything, but every time he leaves his martaki, he makes one particular wish. **If only all living creatures on this planet were safe and well.** But this year, while he was walking to the balcony of his house in Holargos, he saw me, stuck into the flower- bed, enjoying the morning spring sun.

- Here, this year I give it to you, Kanelis, he told me and put the martaki around my neck. You should make your wish to the swallow.

Oh, my omission: I have been talking to you for so long now, but I haven't introduced myself, my dear friends. I am Kanelis, the bronze horse of Holargos and I am located in the big flower-bed of the balcony of a second-floor apartment.

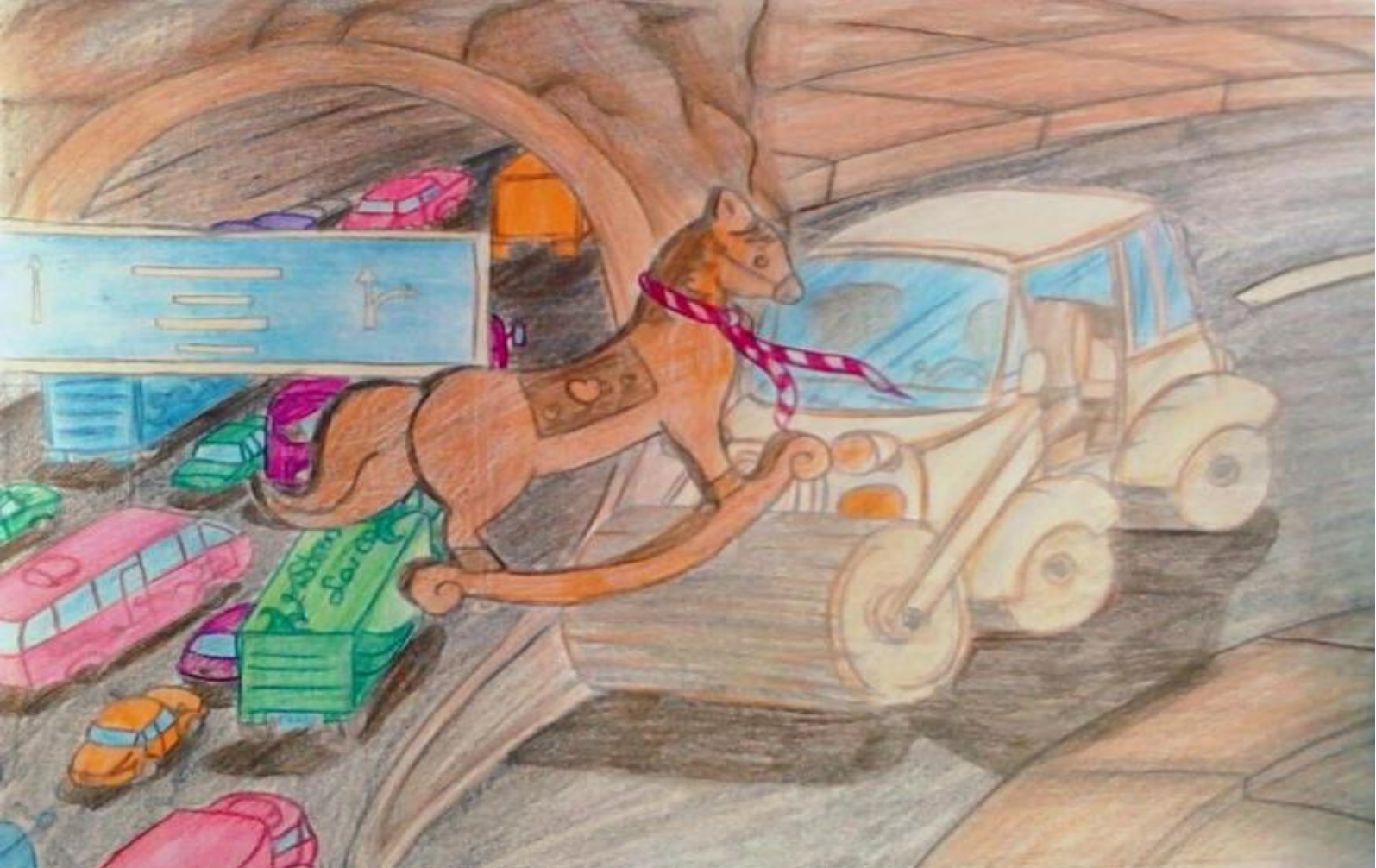
My godfather was Mr. Mimis, who while sprinkling his rice pudding with cinnamon (kanela in greek), came up with a flashing idea for my name. Anyway, that's what happens when you live with people who like naming things. But, let's ignore this, please, in order to continue with our interesting story.

I didn't sleep the whole night long, my dear children. I was thinking what I could ask the swallow in return for the martaki offered to me so generously by Mr. Mimis.

Mrs. Koralia is a very kind hostess and often, in the summer, she invites friends at the balcony to have dinner and chat. Not that I eavesdrop, but willingly or not, I participate in the conversations. It's a fact that I'm impressed by the descriptions of the public works happening in Athens due to the Olympic Games. They talk about the stadiums, the renovations of the museums, the new pedestrian alleys, which link

the archaeological sites, and many other things. Oh, how I wish I could see them even for one day.







## 2. The joy of the first flight and the encounter with Flat, the road roller

- Wake up, Kanelis, wake up.

I opened my eyes and saw a young swallow which had my martaki in its beak.

- Are you ready, Kanelis? I'm waiting for your wish.

- Hey, just a moment, give me a moment please to wake up. Yes, yes, if it is possible, I would like to fly over the city and see it. If...if this is possible, of course.

I don't know why, but I was a little embarrassed for asking so much from the little swallow. I looked down and waited.

It touched me with its wing and flew away.

That's it, I said, it must have found my wish exaggerated and left me, what a pity...

How? What? But is it possible? I feel so light, as if I 'm not in the flower-bed of my dear Mrs. Koralia. And yet, my dear friends, I can fly...

Hurray, what a great feeling is this! What an unimaginable joy! I'm already over the fifth floor of the building where I live and I can see the whole street with the

wonderful olive trees. I fly higher and see the parks of Holargos and, of course, Hymettus Mountain, rising high and imposing at the edge of the municipality.

The modern motorway caught my eye immediately and, as I can remember, Mr. Mimis uses it often when travelling away from Athens; it is called Hymettus Ring Road and it is part of Attiki Motorway. I'm heading there at great speed, wow; many cars big and small go in and out of the tunnels.

Come on, Kanelis, I shout to myself, let's explore this motorway and see where it leads. Well, what is this white thing that looks like a white elephant? I want to go closer and see it. I go nearer and land on its roof. The white elephant I imagined was nothing but a great road roller painted white and installed at the side of the road as a symbol of the effort for the construction of this wonderful motorway.

- Good morning, mister white road roller, you know I am...
- Good morning, good morning, Kanelis, I'm glad I'm the first one to meet you today.
- Huh, how do you know my name?

- Your wish has made you famous all over the world, you know. Everyone is talking about you today and especially the little swallows that sat on my windshield a little while ago and talked to me about a horse which can fly.
- Oh, yes, I'm very happy that my wish came true. I want to explore Athens as long as I can. Where do you suggest I should go?
- Hmm, there are many interesting places, I think, but first and foremost is the Acropolis citadel. If I were you, first I would visit Lycabettus and the little church at the top, which has the best view of the city, and there I would begin my acquaintance with the city. There you can choose which places you want to visit.
- This sounds like a very good idea, my dearest road roller. I must leave, in order to make it on time. But, I'm so rude; we have been talking for so long and I don't know your name.
- Ha,ha,ha, the road roller laughed kindly, my name is Flat!
- Goodbye my friend Flat, Kamelis shouted loudly and rose up in the air.



### 3. Clytaemnestra of the Megaron, the Athens Concert Hall

Kanelis was really lucky today, it was a sunny day with a few fluffy clouds in the sky like small strokes painted by children, in their own unique way, when they really want to.

The city unravels quickly under Kanelis' feet.

- It is densely populated, he thought. What a pity that they didn't cater for more parks while designing it, what a pity...

He flew over Papagou and Zografou and headed towards Lycabettus Hill. But when he approached, he noticed the simple white building on Vassilissis Sofias Avenue. With a vertical dive, which looked like the descent of an acrobatic airplane, he landed on the huge sculpture that adorns the forecourt of this magnificent building.

- Welcome to the Athens Concert Hall, Kanelis. I am Clytaemnestra, daughter of the sculptor and painter Chrysa.

- Thank you very much, Kamelis answered, Consert Hall, huh? It sounds like a very significant place. And what kinds of events take place here, please?

- Well, as you can tell from the name, my little Kamelis, music events mostly, concerts by symphony orchestras directed by world renowned conductors, operas that compete with each other in stage props and singers, theme nights with music from the whole wide world, speeches, painting and sculpture exhibitions and many - many more.

- Well, I would say that this is a unique place, a true jewel in the city and you are very lucky to be here every day to admire all these creative performances.

- Yes, I can't complain, but most of all I enjoy the musical performances, because I can hear them. How lucky you are, Kamelis, that even for one day you can fly! I envy you, but I'm also happy for your luck.

- Thank you, Clytaemnestra, it is a godly gift that I enjoy every time I'm in the air today! You can't imagine how nice I feel, when the wind touches my skin. Excuse me but I have to go to Lycabettus Hill, goodbye...

#### 4. Lycabettus Hill Thunder

The flight to the little church of Saint-George on the top of Lycabettus Hill, lasted only a few minutes for the excited Kanelis, who chose this time to sit on the bell tower.

- It's wonderful up here, he exclaimed, and the sea sparkles in the distance. I love its sky-blue color.
- Maybe you should become a captain and travel, my friend Kanelis.
- But who is it, where are you?
- Here, you silly, next to you. My name is Thunder, the big bell of Saint-George.
- Wow! Good afternoon, Thunder, you've got the nicest view of the city.
- Well, I can't complain, I enjoy the sunrise and the sunset every day and I also like seeing so many people in my small courtyard, people who speak foreign languages. Even though I don't understand what they say to each other, I can feel their admiration for the hill. And the lights of the cameras shine bright and, with their cell

phones, they send those beautiful moments to their friends and relatives around the world.

- I see, Kanelis said. Things seem peaceful from high up, as if there are no problems or as if there is a solution for everything.

- Hmm, in some way, that's how it is, when you look from above. You know it isn't bad to try and look at your problems from a distance; many times this helps us find a solution and act!

- Yes, this is what Mr. Mimis and Mrs. Korallia often say; with a small dose of optimism, you can manage to do anything!

- So tell me, Thunder said, how do you like our city?

- I don't know what to say, I didn't expect that it would be so big and, from what I can tell, it tends to expand towards those mountains that I see around.

- This is my grievance too, Kanelis; in place of the wonderful forests in Parnetha, Penteli and Hymettus, today you see tall buildings. And the fires, I see them every summer and my soul is burning. I want to shout and rouse the conscience of every citizen, but I can't. Who pays attention to a small bell?



- You are right, Kanelis said sorrowfully, there is nothing more beautiful than a forest and, when it is destroyed, it's like they deprive us of the oxygen we breathe, what a shame...
- I only hope that people will soon realize the collective effort necessary for the protection of the environment and that they won't be consumed in interminable accusations. But enough with this discussion, today it's your own special day and there are so many things to see.
- So what would you suggest?
- Undoubtedly, the Acropolis, Monastiraki and Thissio.
- It seems that you agree with my friend, Flat!
- Oh yes, the white road roller who constructed Attiki Motorway. I know him; he was great and very hard working. But I have another stop to suggest, before you go to the Acropolis.
- Please tell me.
- On Panepistimiou Avenue, there are three magnificent buildings; the Academy of Athens, the central building of the University of Athens and the impressive National

Library. They are known as the architectural trilogy. I think that their magnificence will impress you.

- I'm leaving right now, goodbye Thunder, it was nice to meet you and talk to you.
- Goodbye, my dear flying friend, Thunder said cheerfully with a loud chime, deeeen....

## 5. Ionia at the University of Athens

Moments later, Kanelis was flying over the three buildings. He wandered above them for a while and absorbed with his eyes the wonderful architectural lines and the decoration of the buildings.

The Vallianeio Building, which accommodates the Library, was designed by Theophil Hansen and opened for the first time in 1903. Kanelis was especially impressed by the spiral staircase which leads to the entrance, behind which the national cultural written treasure of our country is preserved. It is a repository of knowledge, Kanelis thought, a real treasure for the city.

Situated directly next to that is the building of the University of Athens with this magnificent decoration, which breathes life into a bygone age. Kanelis landed next to one of the rectangular columns and sat there to rest. He had already seen so many things, that the images were spinning inside his head to the rhythm of a funfair.

- How beautiful is this place, he thought out loud, what a wonderful place!

- Hey, Kanelis, how are you? Don't you want to learn something about this historical building?
- Oh, yes please, I would love to. But, who am I speaking with?
- I am Ionia and, as you can imagine from my name, I am an Ionic column, ha ha!
- You are quite humorous for a column as tall as you, Kanelis said looking at her from her base to her capital on top.
- The building was designed by the Danish architect Christian Hansen and opened for the first time in 1841. Hansen's brilliant design makes the building not only a monument of exceptional beauty, but also very functional. During its first years, there were classrooms, the library, the university's services, administrative and professors' offices, amphitheatres, the Great Ceremony Hall, while on the top floor, there was the Museum of Natural History.
- All these sound really great.
- Yes, they are, dear Kanelis and, also look at the magnificent statues that adorn the area of Propylaea. They all impersonate significant personalities of Greek history, you know. Look at the statue of Ioannis Kapodistrias, the first governor of

Greece, and at the statue of Adamantios Korais, philologue and one of the most important representatives of the Neohellenic Enlightenment.

- And what about these two imposing figures prevailing on the right and left of the entrance?

-Hmm, these are two great personalities of Greek history and specifically of the Greek Revolution. The one on the right is the statue of Patriarch Gregory the Fifth and the other one on the left is the statue of Rigas Feraios. There is also the monument of Gladstone, in gratitude to the great philhellene prime minister of England for his support during the Greek effort to unite the islands of the Ionian Sea with the rest of Greece.

- Wow! You are just like an encyclopedia, Ionia, you know so many things!

- Kanelis, I've been here for so many years, that I learn constantly and, above all, I don't forget the history of this country. I am also proud for the knowledge that has been created all these years.

- I am especially impressed by the imagery here at the front.

- You mean the frieze of the façade.

- Yes, this magnificent frieze which, as I have realised all this time, is a tourist attraction and not only that.
- Ha, ha, Ionia laughed cheerfully, you mean the citizens of Athens! You know, Kanelis, it's not its beauty that is exciting, but the history that it narrates.
- So, tell me, there are so many faces.
- All these were painted by the Viennese painter Karl Rahl. Rahl wanted to depict at the frieze of the University the rebirth of the arts and letters during King Otto's reign. This is the reason why, as you can see, the king is seated with the sciences on his right and left sides. This method of depiction is typical of that time and combined characteristics of neo-baroque, that is emotional gestures and theatrical expressions.
- Anyway, I am impressed and I warmly thank you for the information.
- It was nice to meet you, Kanelis, but what's nicer is the fact that you are interested in the history of this place. Where are you going now?
- I'm going to take a look at the adjacent building and then set out for the Acropolis. Goodbye, Ionia, bye.
- Farewell, Kanelis, and take care.







## 6. The fellowship of the philosophers at the Academy

Kanelis landed on the shoulder of a statue. Having realized that he can speak with anyone and anything, he asked immediately.

- Good evening sir, my name is Kanelis, the horse of Holargos. You seem very preoccupied. What are you doing?
- I am thinking, dear Kanelis, I am thinking. I am Socrates, the philosopher.
- Ohh, that sounds very important. Is it a profession?
- Ha, ha, Socrates laughed cheerfully, I would say that philosophy is mostly an attitude towards life. It comes from within your soul; it is the desire to learn in depth about the world and the human-beings. Especially the human-beings, I would dare say, as their actions affect nature very much.
- Looking at the building behind us, Kanelis said, I see that some people have written slogans on the walls; it's so ugly. But why didn't those people respect the place? Why did they cause all this damage?

- I disagree with you about that, my little Kanelis. I believe that nobody does harm voluntarily and I mean that someone who knows what is bad does not do it. On the contrary, when people do something, they believe that it is something good.
- All these sound strange, mister philosopher; I can see here the damage on a cultural treasure, this magnificent building! So tell me, please, how can someone stop doing harm? What does help us choose to do the right thing?
- What I claim is this: when someone knows what is really bad and what is really good, then someone can refrain from doing harm.
- Therefore, we could say that this knowledge is human virtue.
- Well done, Kanelis, I would really like to have you as my student, when I was teaching in Athens. Yes, like Plato, over here, who has been looking at us silently all this time. Kanelis turned his eyes and saw the imposing figure who was watching their discussion keenly for some time.
- What a broad forehead you have, Kanelis said, spontaneously.

- You are observant, Kanelis, you know that when I was born, they named me Aristocles, but later, because I had a big chest and a broad forehead, they changed it to Plato!

- And you didn't mind?

- But of course not, there are much more important things in life than names and titles. I was interested in teaching and that's why I established a school of philosophy in Athens and it was named after me, Plato's Academy, Plato said with emotion.

- It is true, Kanelis, Socrates said. I am really proud of my student. He stood by me till my last moment, as a student and a true friend. I am glad that today we are here side by side, in front of the Academy.

- Who could have told me that I, a little metal horse, would discuss today with two of the most eminent figures of the Greek and international culture! I could stay here for hours and talk, but you know my wish lasts only for a day and, while the sun is going down, I want to hurry and visit the Acropolis.

- Yes, of course, our little friend, and if you ever find time again, come and visit us, we will be here philosophizing. You are always welcome.



## 7. The grandiose Parthenon and the Blue-white

Kanelis sprang high up in the air. The few clouds had started embracing the wonderful colors of the sunset. The atmosphere was so clear that the grandiose temple of goddess Athena, the Parthenon, sparkled in the horizon. Kanelis flew around it and he didn't want to land. He was trying to record every single detail of this grandiose monument. He was speechless in front of this sight. The sacred rock of the Acropolis was breathtaking. He couldn't bear all these emotions caused by the monument, so he landed, in order to rest on the part of the wall, where the pole with the Greek flag is situated.

- How beautiful this neighborhood is, with the small houses leaning on the rock, he exclaimed.
- The neighborhood you admire so much is called Plaka, a sweet voice said from above. Kanelis looked up and saw a big white and blue flag.
- Hey, hello, what's your name?

- My name is Blue-white and I am the flag of the Greek nation, she said flapping gracefully and proudly.
- Everyone I have met today, speak very highly of the Acropolis. I wonder if you could tell me a few words about the history, the significance of this monument.
- I'd be glad, Kanelis. Hmm, let's start from the beginning; the Acropolis was inhabited during the Neolithic Age which is between 4000 and 3000 B.C.
- Wow, so long ago?
- Of course! What followed was the construction of the Cyclopean Wall in the 13th century B.C., while in the 8th century the worship of Athena Polias was established and the Acropolis acquires for the first time a religious dimension. In the 6th century B.C. the Panathenaea is established, the most important festival for the citizens of Athens. The believers dedicated to the sanctuary many and luxuriant votives, presents to the goddess, like marble korai and cavalry men, vessels, different kinds of statues made of clay or copper and many more.
- And I imagine they did it to honor goddess Athena.

- Of course, Kamelis, she was the protector of the city of Athens. Her presents symbolize- or I should say affirm- the importance of Athena's worship during the archaic period.
- When was it built- this large magnificent temple standing on the hill?
- You mean the Parthenon, the jewel of the hill. There is no visitor, you know, who didn't take a picture of it. It is the most important monument of Ancient Athens, but he doesn't show it, he's very humble!
- Obviously! But go on with your narration, please.
- Well, yes, where were we? Yes, in the 5th century B.C. Athens accumulates power and wealth, it is a time of heyday. The century takes its name from a significant citizen and it's known as the Golden Age of Pericles. The city was then the most important center of the intellectual world.
- And what does Pericles have to do with the Acropolis?
- It was his initiative, Kamelis, to put into practice a grandiose constructional project that lasted almost 50 years. The most skillful artists of the time, architects and sculptors created the most important monuments you see around you, like the

Parthenon, the Erechtheon, the temple of Athena Nike and of course the imposing Propylaea.

- Yes, everything is so impressive and I imagine that, before the damages, this place must have been breathtaking.

- You are right, Kanelis. Unfortunately, over the centuries the monuments of the Acropolis have been seriously damaged due to natural causes or human intervention. The temples changed function and the Acropolis was transformed into a fortress.

The first serious damage, Kanelis, was during a war in 1687, when a bomb explodes the magnificent Parthenon, which was then used for storing gunpowder. This was the first major blow for the monument.

- What a pity that people didn't respect the cultural heritage or, I should say they didn't understand the value of its preservation, what a pity, Kanelis said sorrowfully.

I agree with you, my friend, but the destruction went on when lord Elgin took away the sculptures of the Parthenon and removed the sculptures from the



Erechtheon and the temple of Athena Nike between 1801 and 1802. That was a significant loss.

- I imagine how it is to be uprooted from your birthplace and transferred violently to another area. So what happened in the end?

- The monument, Kanelis, found peace in 1822 and came under governmental care. Excavations started later and at the beginning of the 20th century, the first extensive restoration work took place. Today, under the supervision of the Ministry of Culture and a multitude of archaeologists, architects, engineers and specialised technicians, large-scale consolidation and restoration work is attempted, worthy of this universal cultural treasure.

- I'm very happy to hear this, but, tell me, where are all these votives that have been found, the presents to goddess Athena.

- All these, Kanelis, adorn a super-modern museum today, a newly designed museum, which is located just across the monument, the new Acropolis Museum. Every visitor who comes up here speaks admiringly about it.

- Ah, if only I had more time, my dear Blue-white, if only I had more time! It's already dark and I have to return to my flower- bed. I warmly thank you for the tour; you have been a great narrator. Goodbye!

## 8. Kamelis returns

The flight over the illuminated buildings and streets added now another dimension to the big city. The colorful lights of the buildings and the cars looked as if they were playing with each other or as if they wanted to paint on a canvas. Kamelis was flooded with mixed feelings. Sorrow because the day was over, but also joy because of the city he explored and the kind friends he had made during this journey. He was a very lucky horse.

He leaned gently on the ground of the flower-bed and lost himself in his thoughts. He had seen so many things, that they would accompany him for many-many years.

- Mimis, can you please water the flowers in my flower-bed? My poor flowers are thirsty.

Mr. Mimis took the watering can and started watering them. Very strange, he thought, I'm sure that Kamelis was half a meter to the left.

- Koralia, did you move Kamelis?

- But of course not, I didn't have any reason to do this, my dear. Do you think he went there by himself, she said and started laughing.
- By himself, huh? Do you think so? Naaah, it is impossible!







Apollonia Paramythioti was born in 1994, in Corfu. Her passion for painting started in a very early age; she was only four years old when she first demonstrated her talent. She is a self-taught painter, whose aim is to further develop her skills. In 2009, she won the European contest "Research and innovation". She graduated from high school in 2012 and she would like to enter the School of Fine Arts. Her dream is to be taught by a great painter.








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**,  
the zephyr of **innovation**,  
the sirocco of **imagination**,  
the levanter of **persistence**,  
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Our little story takes place in Athens. It starts with the realisation of a wish and takes off with the reader for a daytrip, flying over the important sights of the city of Athens, with the Parthenon being the highlight.

Kamelis is a symbol of freedom, small in size but with great wishes. He flies joyfully, ponders and makes us ponder, moves us and enjoys the gift given to him by his good fortune.

The little horse of Holargos has the chance -through conversations with various sculptures, a bell, a column and a flag- to learn wonderful things for the city and its history.