

SOPHIA POLITOU-VERVERI

Myrsini

and the Blessed Pomegranate Tree

Illustrations by

VIVI MARKATOS



I am **Sophia Politou-Ververi**. My kids call me
mummy douce, that means sweet mum.
You can call me as you wish, but first let me
Introduce myself.

Inside me there are :

Many notes as I am a piano teacher.
Many letters as I have been writing fictional
stories

Since I was a child.

Many images as I read many books.
Many voices as I am talking to the fairytales'
heroes.

Many colors like the voices and the emotions.

A few numbers as I was never good at
maths

Although I can remember numbers easily.

Enough sugar as I am a sweets lover.

All the things in blue because I love the sea
And dolphins.

The sky's voices because I talk to a
Bird named Xeriola (he knows everything)

Come and fly with Xeriola's
wings,

Through the fairytales, we will travel
everywhere

So as to find the truth!

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Vivi Markatos

Translated from Greek by:
Eleni Pogka



Sophia Politou-Ververi, Myrsini and the Blessed Pomegranate Tree
ISBN: 978-618-5040-75-8
May 2014
Original Title: Η Μυρσίνη και η ποδιά η ευλογημένη

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website: www.saitapublications.gr

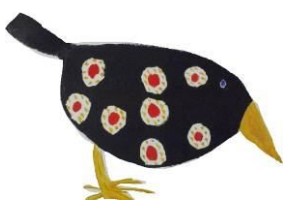
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To Panagiotis,
To my daughter Myrsini-Katerina,
To my son Dimitris,
To my nephews Marios, Katerina, Alexandros, Stergios,
To the nephews in the island,
To all the world's children
With love!



"The feathery Xeriola"

Hello!

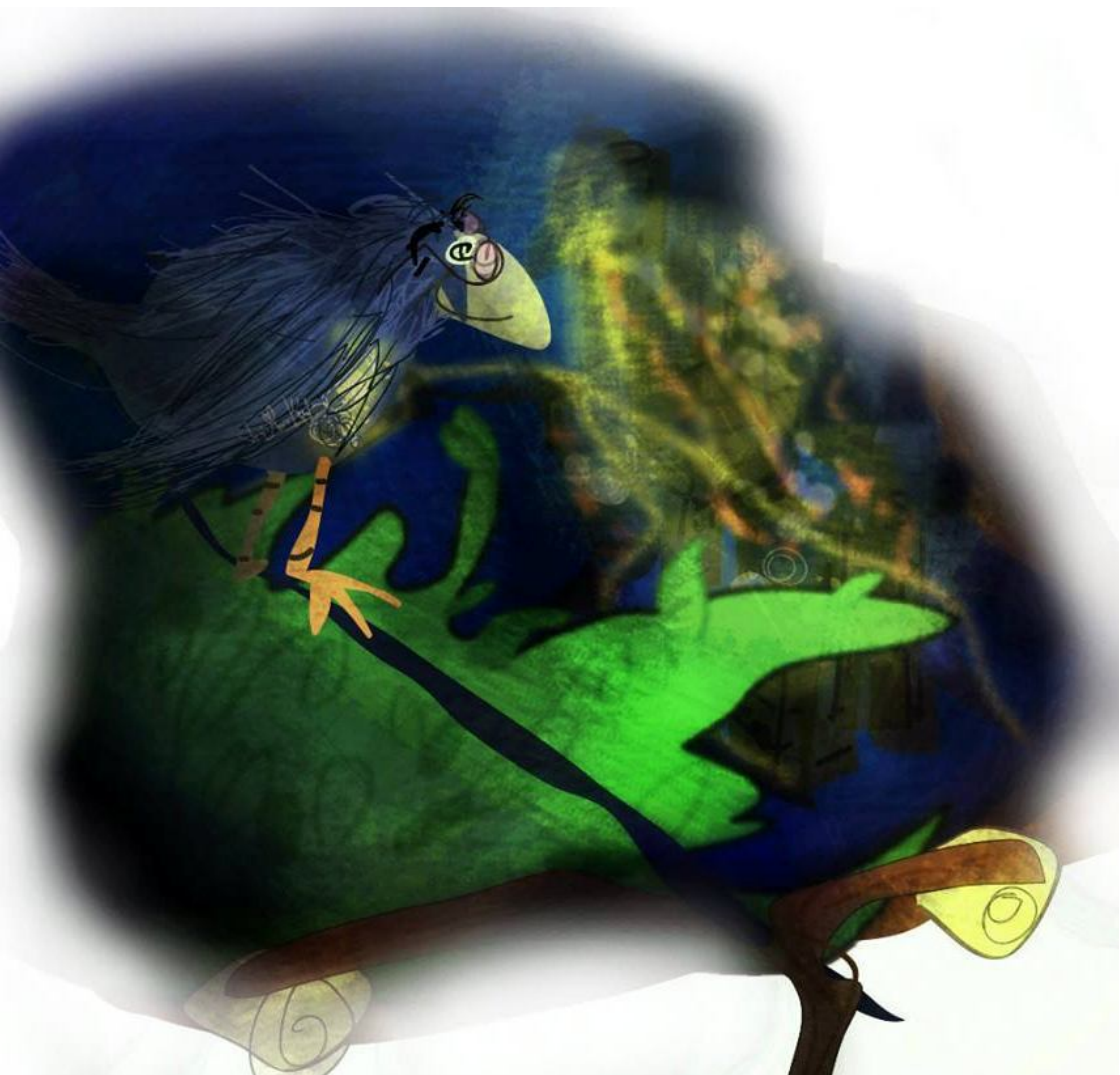
I am the feathery Xeriola,
I am the one who knows it all!

I come from the forest in the North
Where the woods are dense
And the smell comes heavy
From the wet brown soil.
It is where my nest is.

I am a poor feathered traveller
I fly all over the world.
My wings are big
And my heart is always wide open...
To fairytales, stories and myths.
I am a travelful tales' collector.

When the soft wind gets cold,
The right time comes.
It is then
When I close my eyes,
Open up my wings
And fly away
Following the path of the wind.

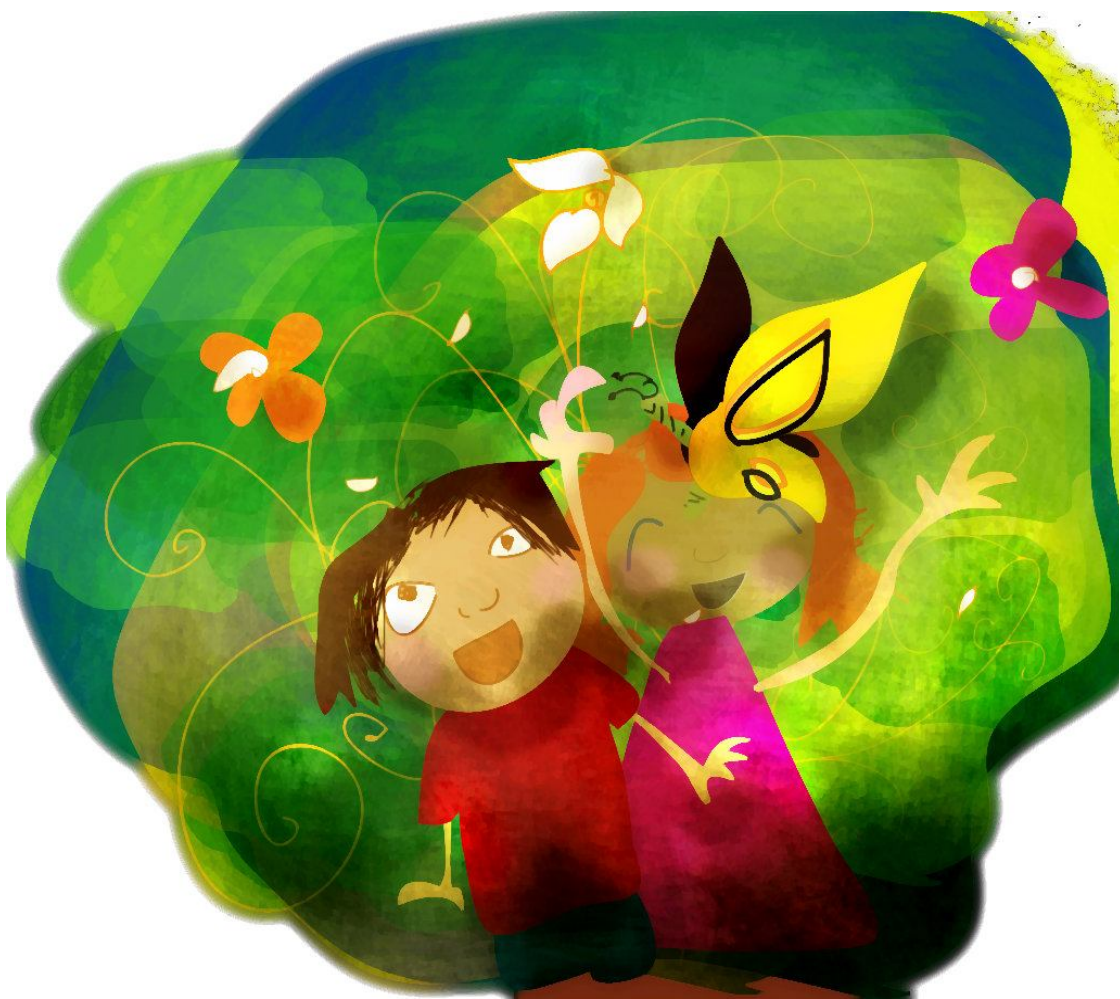
Every time, the wind takes me to another place,
I discover different colors and smells,
Unique flavors, magical tales
And the world's stories are a lot,
Like the children who are waiting to hear them.



I usually stick on a roof or in the branch of a dogwood tree.
Then I walk in the backyard where I hang about outside a school.
I strain my ear and I hear all the thoughts and stories
And I put them in my traveller's bundle.

It is my favourite stories,
Which stick like glittering dots,
On my spotless black.
So, I became spotted and that's the truth.





Round and round
The pomegranate tree,
Myrsini is dancing free
And is putting in her
pinafore dress
Pomegranate fruit fresh!





Deep inside the green mountains, where the water flows in a singsong voice, satisfying the thirst of animals, trees and nymphs of the wood... It's up there, a bit far away from the fresh valley, where landmen have built a small village.

Nothing was missing from this little village, which was worth your jealousy. The life-giving sun was shining, taking care of their animals and growing their plants. The water was flowing, watering old and young people along with children, and washing houses and gardens. The children's smiles, the grandmothers' spindles, the millers' watermills, the dames' breads, and the teacher's blackboard were full of joy and liveliness. As for the weekends, the Sunday clothes full of rejoicing were ready for the church, and the coffee along with its Turkish delight was waiting happily at the little cafes of the main square.



Everything seemed to flow smoothly, easily and peacefully like a fairytale until ... one hot summer noon a nightmare, that scared everyone, came up out of a sudden and changed everyone's life. At first, the wolves in the forest and the dogs from sheep folds sniffed the nightmare in the air and began to mourn with a long howl.



Then, the deer and foxes saw it coming closer and left their nests in haste. The lambs also saw it from their pens, too, and wanted to knock down the fences. The snakes felt its warmth, and after coming out of their holes, they got lost in haste into their secret paths. The birds frightened flew away from the nests, leaving their little eggs behind.

But the grey smoke of the nightmare in the sky did not let them find their way.

The dogs kept barking when the church bell of St. Demetrios rang so hastily, so frighteningly and so loud that nobody could go on sleeping any more. 'Run far away villagers!' yelled the priest in the extremely hot air. 'FIRE!', 'THE FOREST IS ON FIRE!', 'We are getting burned; Run to save yourselves!'



The villagers had not experienced such a fear and panic before. Their village, lying proud above the hill for months, years and centuries, was offering delight deep down at the bottom of men's heart. Grandparents, who came from far away, built it with a strong desire and tenderness, and thanks to them, the children were growing up in the village with rosy cheeks and sparkling bright little eyes. Their breath also smelled like fresh milk and cinnamon and their sweat had the sweet smell of flower honey. Now, all these succumbed to the sweltering smoke of flames and their threatening warmth, which was taking away these scents and games, the tree climbing, the butterfly and frog hunting, the cicada song, the chase games in the forest, the hide-and-seek behind the bushes. Everything was gone...



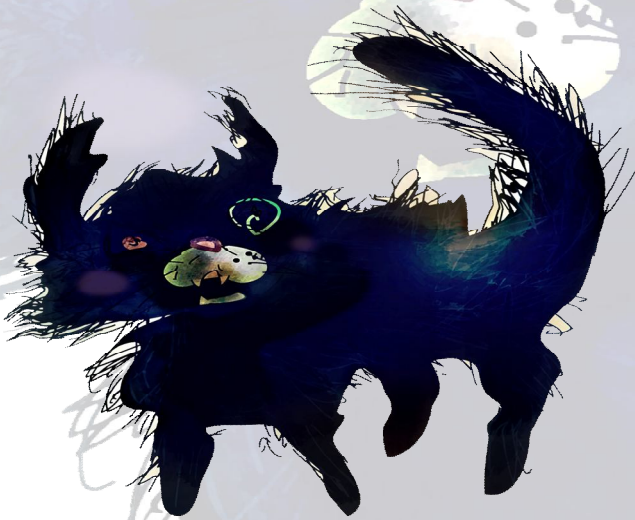


Right away, the men of the village went to the water tower so as to battle the blaze with all their strength. However, the fire due to the strong wind was moving rapidly but rhythmically towards every direction, like an army of thousands of fiery soldiers, burning and destroying any accomplishments by gods and men, and leaving a deserted land. Very soon, the fire had spread and surrounded the village by putting human lives in great danger. Unfortunately, the village could not be helped. The wind had won.



About this time, all the villagers began to run towards the river - the only thing which could beat the fire. Without having time to get dressed, the Community President ran first in pyjamas, and then followed his wife with their three frightened children.

Then, followed the cafe owner with his cat called Rachatis, the greengrocer with his wife and their robust and brave son, who with his friends were trying to help the old ladies of the village evacuate their homes.

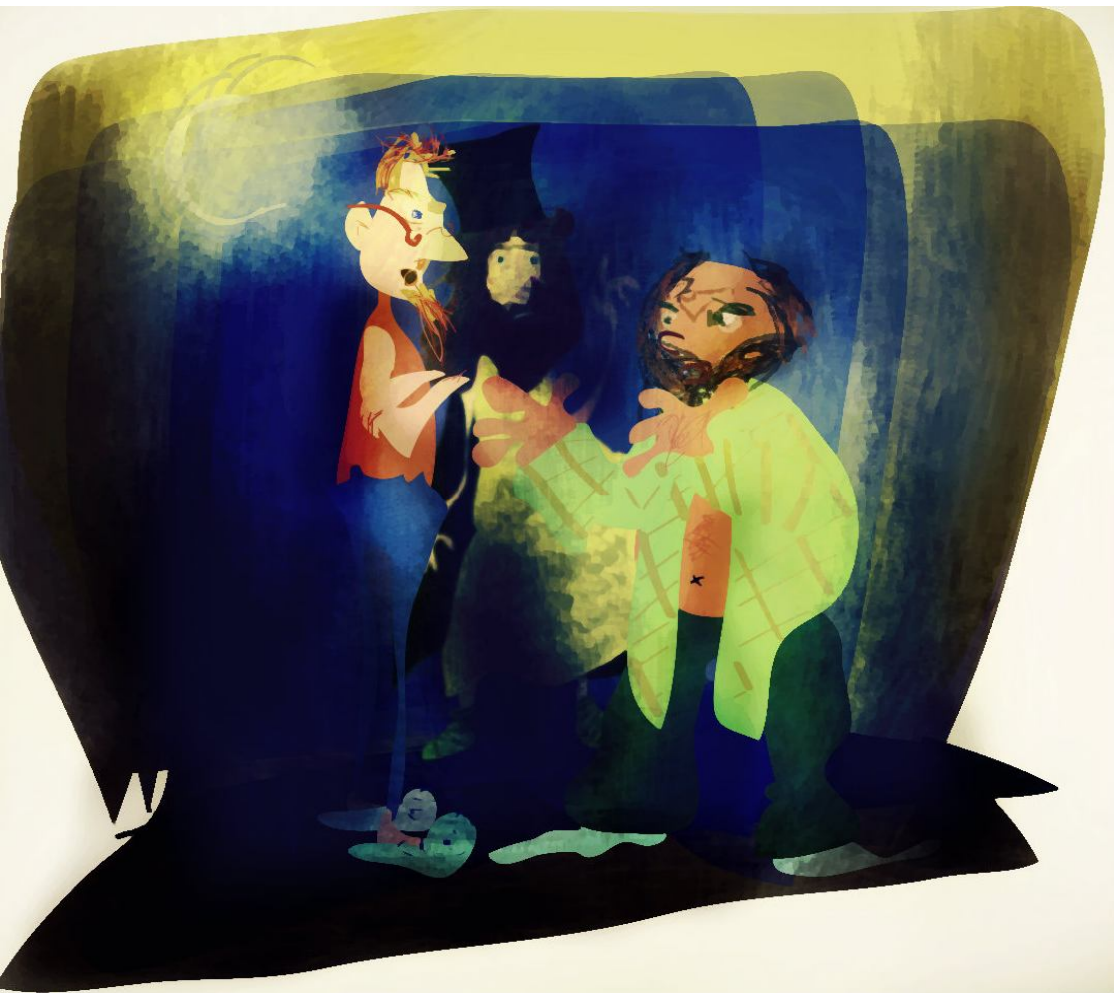


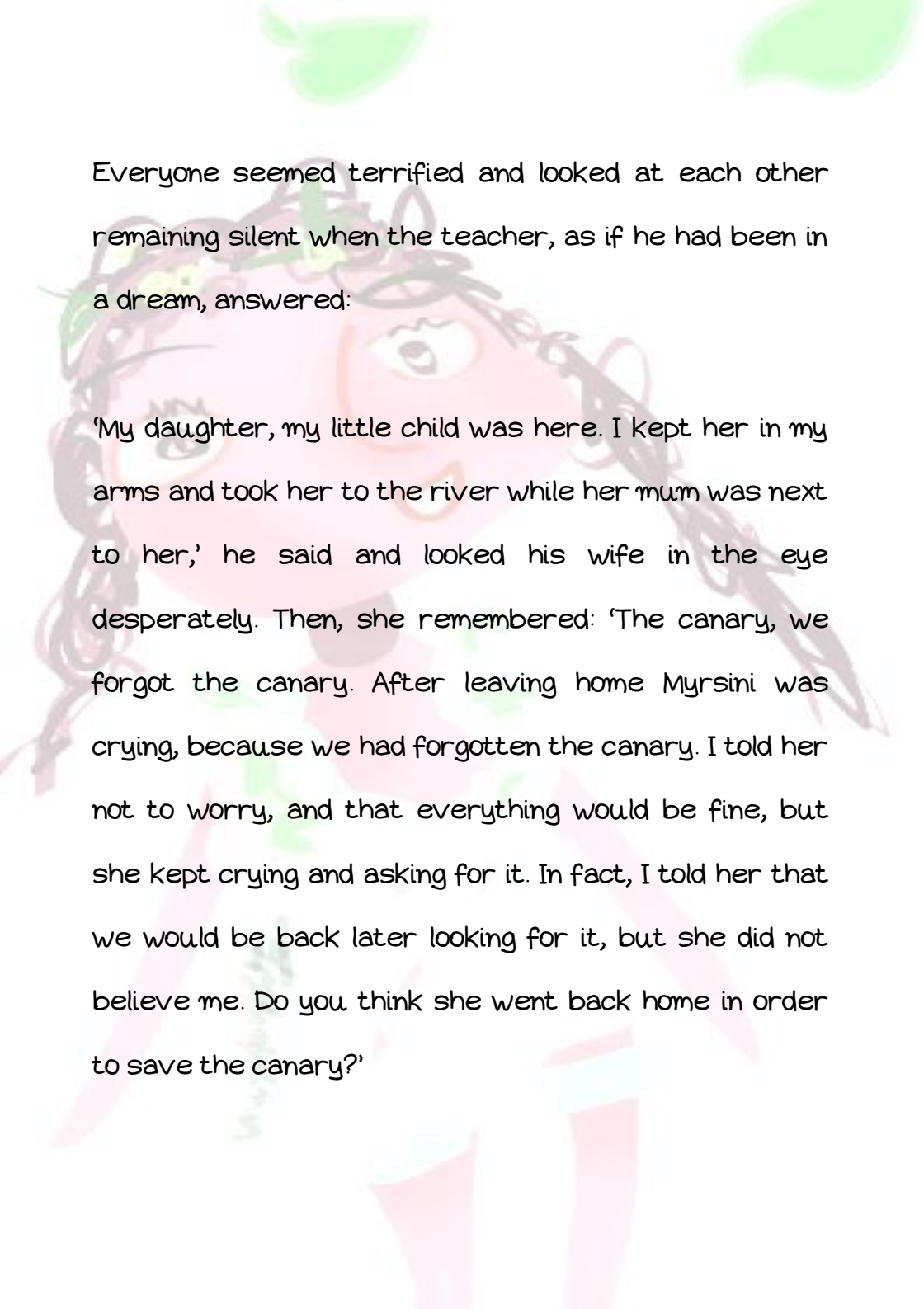
The priest with his wife and their six children followed, then the blacksmith, the cheesemaker, the teacher, and everyone else along with their families.

When all the villagers gathered by the river, everyone was relieved. They made sure that everything went fine by counting each other. Then, suddenly, a voice was heard asking anxiously:

'Dear teacher, where is your child?

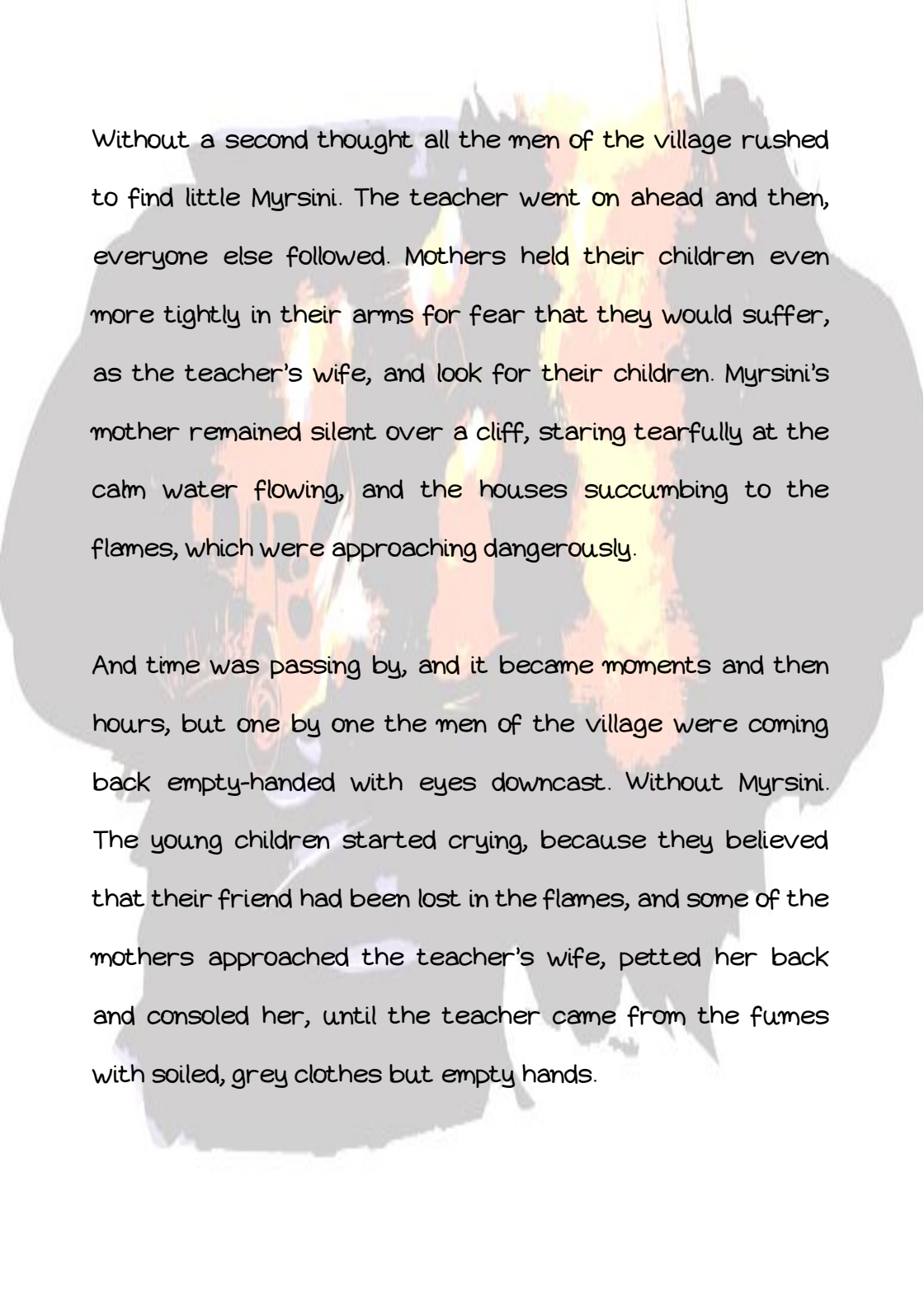
Where is your little girl, Myrsini?'





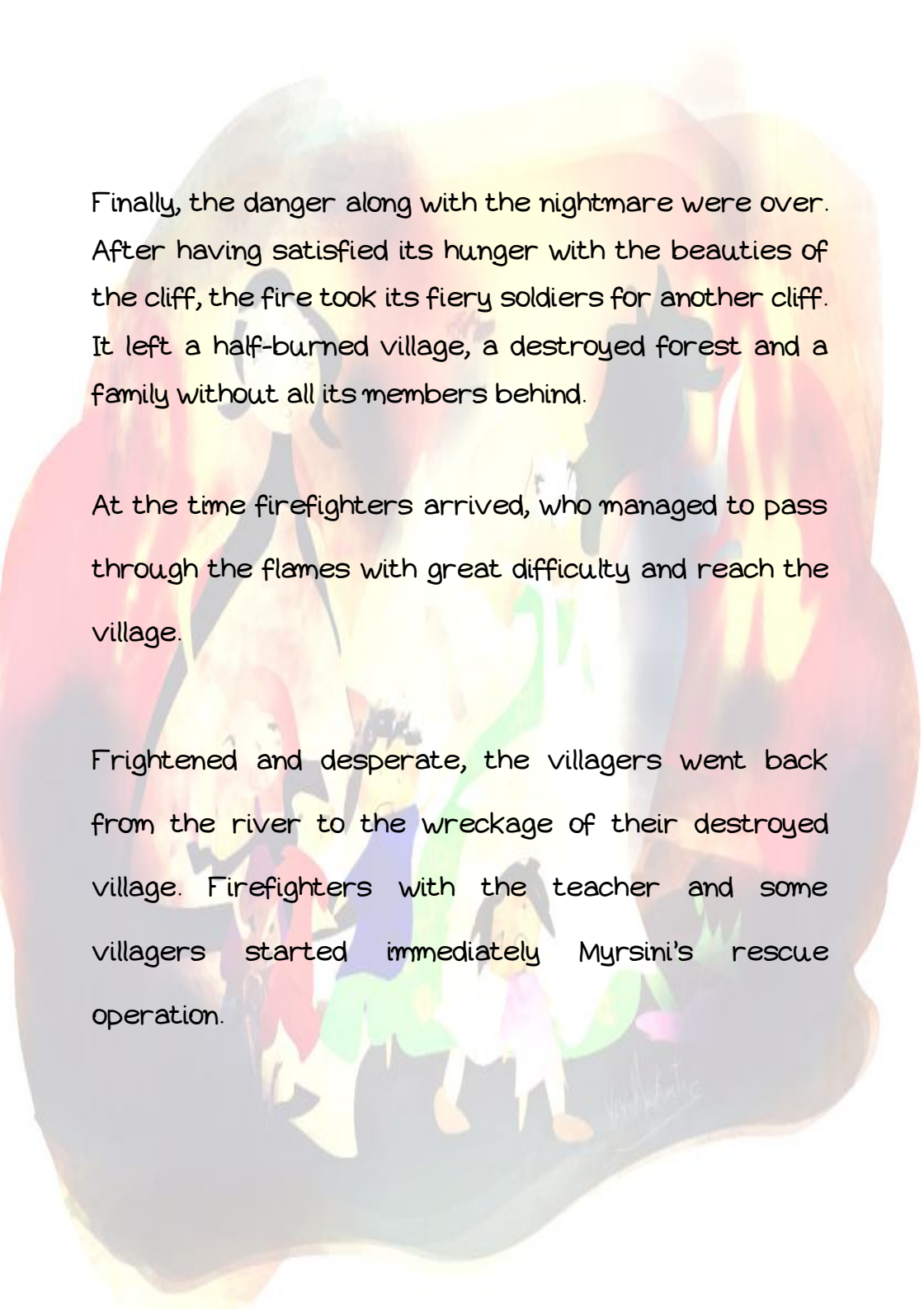
Everyone seemed terrified and looked at each other remaining silent when the teacher, as if he had been in a dream, answered:

‘My daughter, my little child was here. I kept her in my arms and took her to the river while her mum was next to her,’ he said and looked his wife in the eye desperately. Then, she remembered: ‘The canary, we forgot the canary. After leaving home Myrsini was crying, because we had forgotten the canary. I told her not to worry, and that everything would be fine, but she kept crying and asking for it. In fact, I told her that we would be back later looking for it, but she did not believe me. Do you think she went back home in order to save the canary?’



Without a second thought all the men of the village rushed to find little Myrsini. The teacher went on ahead and then, everyone else followed. Mothers held their children even more tightly in their arms for fear that they would suffer, as the teacher's wife, and look for their children. Myrsini's mother remained silent over a cliff, staring tearfully at the calm water flowing, and the houses succumbing to the flames, which were approaching dangerously.

And time was passing by, and it became moments and then hours, but one by one the men of the village were coming back empty-handed with eyes downcast. Without Myrsini. The young children started crying, because they believed that their friend had been lost in the flames, and some of the mothers approached the teacher's wife, petted her back and consoled her, until the teacher came from the fumes with soiled, grey clothes but empty hands.



Finally, the danger along with the nightmare were over. After having satisfied its hunger with the beauties of the cliff, the fire took its fiery soldiers for another cliff. It left a half-burned village, a destroyed forest and a family without all its members behind.

At the time firefighters arrived, who managed to pass through the flames with great difficulty and reach the village.

Frightened and desperate, the villagers went back from the river to the wreckage of their destroyed village. Firefighters with the teacher and some villagers started immediately Myrsini's rescue operation.

Passing with difficulty through the smoldering embers, they arrived at the desolate and ruined main square of the village. Then, families in small groups began to ascent to their neighbourhoods. Everyone was searching according to the instructions of the fire service. Then, by reaching the teacher's house, something unexpected happened. Villagers and firefighters heard a childish voice singing. But they could not believe and they came even closer to the burned garden of teacher's house, and then, they heard again the childish little voice even louder and more clearly singing:



Round and round
The pomegranate tree,
Myrsini is dancing free
And is putting in her pinafore dress
Pomegranate fruit fresh!



The firefighters ran immediately to the burned garden with the teacher and Myrsini's mum, but what they saw? Little Myrsini being alive with the canary on her shoulders, and dancing barefoot around the pomegranate tree. This tree was planted in their garden by Myrsini's grandma many years ago, as a gift to the newborn granddaughter. That day, her grandma – with the same name as her granddaughter – kissed both the tree and little Myrsini's cheeks and told them:

‘You two are my fortune,
you will take care of each other.
Always be blessed.’

Now, little Myrsini's pinafore dress was full of blessed pomegranate fruit, which although totally out of season gave hope in the grey, burned landscape due to its rosy colour.



'How are you my little girl? Are you feeling all right?' Myrsini's parents gave her a big hug. She looked at them and she replied:

'Grandma came and gave the pomegranate tree a kiss, and it became alive and gave me a hug, and I felt asleep with my canary into its branches.' But what had happened actually?

During the wildfire, Myrsini had secretly left the river and went home to save the canary, which was in the cage, helpless and unable to escape, in case the flames reached their home. After leaving home, she could not come back and meet her parents despite her efforts. The road was blocked by big burned tree trunks due to the fire. It was just the time, when the blessed tree moved, as a big hug putting Myrsini and her canary into its branches, and protecting them at that fiery noon, until the grey nightmare was gone. In this way, the fire passed through without burning a single leaf of that blessed tree.

So, under that pomegranate tree little Myrsini was saved, and she brought life and hope back to the village by dancing around it. The pomegranate tree produced early fruit with which Myrsini filled her pinafore dress, while she began to distribute them in every single house of the village, sharing

in a way that hope was placed into people's hearts. And, with the power and love of the grandmother, the pomegranate tree and Myrsini, they rebuilt their burned houses, planted new trees, especially pomegranate trees, and new offsprings appeared again on the slope.



From then on the village was renamed 'New Pomegranate Tree' and its main square was also renamed 'Myrsini's Square'.





Vivi Markatos is an Award-winning playwright with many panhellenic distinctions in Painting and Comics and an award winning radio producer under the auspices of UNESCO for a cultural tribute done in 2009. She has participated in literary book presentations and has directed five performances for The University of Athens. In her spare time she likes painting, listening to music and going for a walk with her friends.

She works as a journalist in the cultural sector with an also distinct presence and with significant interviews in Galaxy Radio FM 92,1. She is also the first radio producer in Greece presented in a show the "anime", which now have a huge number of fans in the country.



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 publisher-author-reader-relationship, 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 commercialization of literary property.

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the zephyr of **motivation**,
the sirocco of **imagination**,
the levanter of **persistence**,
the deep power of **vision**
guide the **saita** (paper plane) of our publications.

We invite you to let books fly free!

The beautiful village, as a little centerpiece under the smile of the sun, offered life to the happiest people, until a formidable enemy in scarlet red spurted in anger and with envy to destroy all this beauty. But what exactly did it destroy after all? What happened to Myrsini, the pomegranate tree and the little canary? Why was the village renamed? After all, is there still any hope?

