

Kostas
Stoforos

Tale in red



Illustrations by
Stefany Veldemiry

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Translated from Greek by
JOHN ZERVAS



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To Aggebs,
to Iasonas,
to Ioli,
to Ionas and
to Katerina

It was night when the princess arrived in the palace, having lost her escort in the midst of the sudden storm. She asked for the palace's hospitality.

"I am a princess" she told them.

"A real Princess?" the queen asked.

"Yes!" she answered.

With little trust and to make sure, the queen called for her maids and told them:

"You will put our thickest mattresses on her bed and on top our softest duvets. On the bottom you shall put this pea" she said, pulling out of her chic purse a small, green pea and giving it to them. They did as they were told and prepared the room for the princess.

The princess had her bath and dined with the king, the queen and their beloved only son, the young and beautiful prince. Later, when she was tired, she slept with her doll in her arms which she never parted with. The doll was made from thread dipped in color from poppies and red anemones, and it was made by her queen-grandmother herself...

She slept with a smile on her lips and dreamt of raining peas.



In her dream she gathered the fallen peas and cooked them to make a deliciously scented pea soup. Just like the one the green princess liked, in her grandmother's stories.

There were always stories of princesses in different colors. And series of colored dolls her grandmother made from the toughest of threads and from colors she gathered from the trees, the sea, from meadows and mountains....



Grandma had the odd habit of visiting the princess in her dreams. Now, how she managed that was a mystery. Right now, in this strange night, she had come again to find her and tell her of her pea soup secret. What could that mean?

The sure thing is that the next morning the princess – whose name no one knew still – got up first and had the taste of pea soup in her mouth: dill weed, carrot, lemon, but also the scent of garden during a summer night. Our princess knew well her grandma's second small garden. She helped her grub and water the plants. They would cut the ripe vegetables and put them in their basket. Each season had its own treasures to give: Lettuces, cabbages red and green, onions, leeks, spinaches, fennels, parsleys, artichokes, fava beans, peas, lentils, tomatoes, cucumbers, eggplants, and squashes with their blossoms still on...

All remembered of the tale of the queen grandmother's first garden and laughed quite often. The queen grandmother -who was not your common queen - had demanded to have her own, private space. Courtiers and servants, gardeners and knights, hunters and jesters, nannies and cooks, all wanted to do the work for her, for her royal hands mustn't touch the dirt!

Nevertheless, the queen would not listen to anyone and cultivated totally on her own, her garden. And she had all the goods all year round and she shared them with joy.

"Just let me give! That's all I want."

Garden meeting

It was that garden the princess tasted, twirling her tongue in her mouth... And so, lost in her thoughts, she found herself in the palace garden. It was then that she discovered that the beautiful prince had woken up before her. And he was filling with his imagination the empty tree branches with pomegranates, on a big painting in front of him.



He was so absorbed by his work he did not notice her. And, the more cheerful were the things he drew, the more blue he seemed to be. It was as if the small crown was an unbearable weight on his head, a head that shined as if made by pure gold, under the sun's first sight... and then he saw her.

He tried desperately to discern any signs of insomnia on her face, but she was rosy and glowing and even more beautiful under the sun, unlike under the light of the candles. The prince's heart fluttered in its chains. Because for her he would draw all the world's pomegranates... But...



Did she sleep well? He wondered.

Perhaps she did not notice the pea his queen mother had placed under the mattresses and duvets?

Was she a real princess? He wondered.

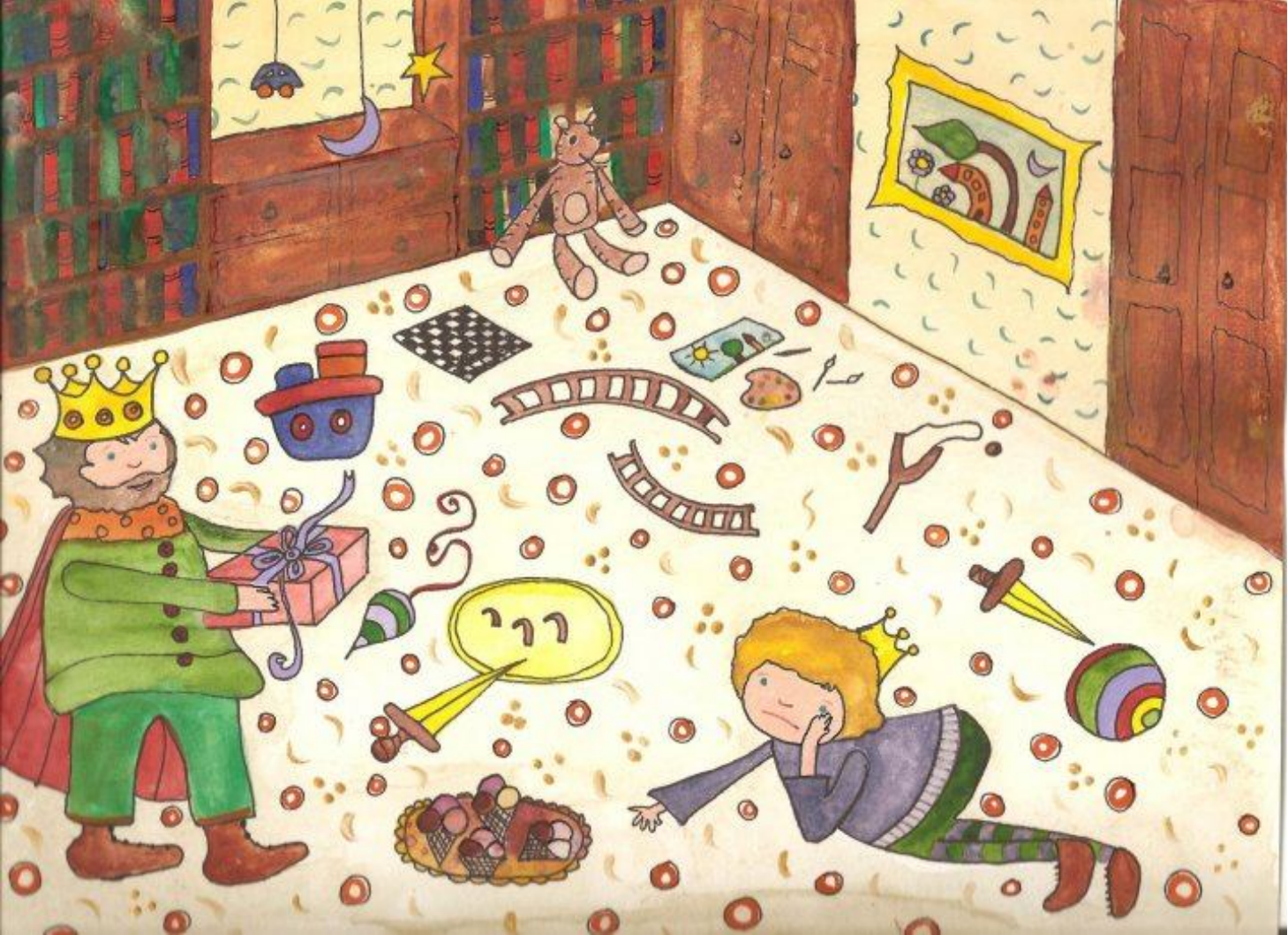


They would never let him marry someone of not a royal birth, no matter how beautiful or kind she was and this, not because they were arrogant. After all, the prince was also a child of love. His father was a poor tailor, who, contrary to the prince of our story, did not have to do any brave deeds to win the heart of his beautiful princess. A mere look was all it took!

But, as you know, many are those who envy the happiness of others. An evil wizard who wanted the princess for himself became so mad when he learned of her marriage that he cursed the couple. His curse was that their first child would transform into a swallow should he ever married out of love...

The good fairy godmother (thankfully there is always a fairy godmother, ever vigilant on our side) managed to make a small change in the curse, and so, the prince would be able to marry one he loved but only if she was a real princess.

He was groomed so, even if unwillingly, for the future before him. They forbid him any contact with the simple folk, in fear, should he ever meet a girl not of a royal birth and fell for her and they lose him like one would eventually lose a migratory bird...



The little prince would get blue, no matter how hard his parents tried to cheer him up. They would buy him the best presents. He had a room with anything a child could ever wish for: teddy bears, slingshots, model trains and boats and golden swords. Ice creams of every flavor in the world: mint, wild strawberry, peach, blackberry, lemon, chocolate, true vanilla... Nothing could make him smile.

Until one day...

The joy of painting and the Princess in red

...The young prince was five years old when, one spring morning, his queen mother called for him in the garden. She was so beautiful with her red dress and her long braided hair. She gave him gifts, a paintbrush and a pallet with colors as well as something she called "easel".



"I will show you how to fill the white of the canvas with colors. I will show you how to keep your favorite images forever with you."

With the sundown the garden had become magically a painting and, for the first time, a smile had found its way to the little prince's face...

... The years were going by and the prince continued to grow up and become more and more handsome. Painting was his only consolidation. However, now he did not only draw what he saw but all else that was invisible to others. All the things that could exist should the world was different. Had he ever stopped, it would be only to dream. For example, if one would take a closer look at the sky, one would clearly see that inside a cloud heavy with raindrops a fairytale castle was hiding, an entire city full of life. A city in red.



The princess with no name also loved the color red. Of all the princesses in the stories of colors her grandmother told her, the one with the **Red Princess** was her favorite. Was it because it was the first one she ever told her?

These stories came from some forgotten paintings her grandmother found one day in her enchanted trunk. They were all about a girl in different ages. A beautiful little girl with long, dark hair that she made into braids that formed halos or crowns as she grew up.

"Who is she?" the princess had asked her grandmother

"The Princess in Red!"

And the story began. The Princess in Red slept in a red bed with red sheets. She used red notebooks and red pencils. In the mornings she would eat strawberry marmalade and drank cherry juice.

She liked watermelons, tomatoes, the morning sun and the sundown, poppies, red anemones and red roses. She was crazy for red cherries and red grapes. She always wanted a taste of the sweet red wine kept in the palace.

Her carriage's seats were all red and she was friends with a robin bird that had a human's voice.

..."What is the reddest of them all?" her grandmother asked her one day while reading her a story from a book that was about a red house. The princess without a name never found the answer.

Until that day: when she saw the pomegranates the prince had painted. Yes, if one would juice them, their juice would be the reddest of them all.

With that thought she approached him without hesitation and they talked. It was just that a lump in the throat was stopping the little prince from asking her what was tormenting him:

"Did she sleep well? She didn't have any problems with the bean? Is she a real princess?"

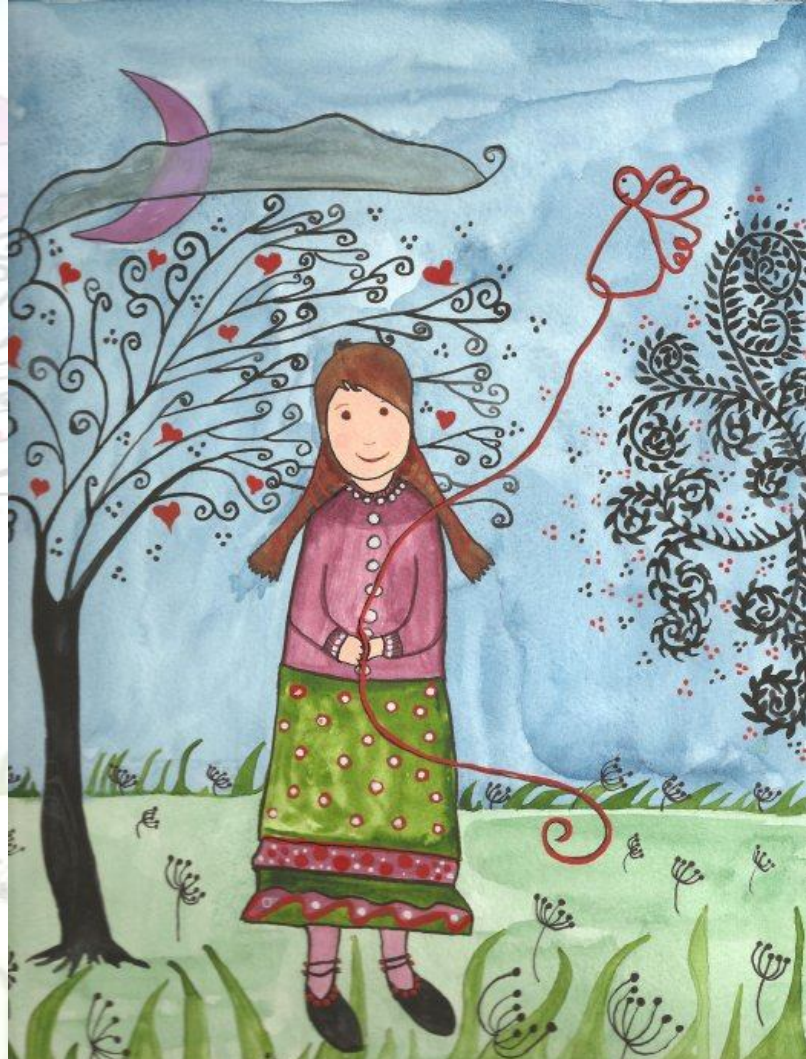
But yet again he asked nothing as the princess without a name started telling him about her enchanted balloons. He was so charmed by her story that he found himself abstracted while listening. A smile appeared on his face again.

The princesses' grandmother had taught her how to make a balloon out of red string and make it fly. The princess without a name must have been 7-8 years old by then. She went out to the garden full of flowers and took in her hands, for the first time, one of her grandmother's enchanted balloons. After that she started making her own...



She made a balloon and another one in heart shape and made them fly. A pigeon came and stood next to her on a tee. Since then it kept her company during her play hours. After they came to know one another it revealed to her that it could talk. And so, she also had a bird friend just like the Princess in Red had her robin bird.

They both grew up, bird and girl and took their separate ways. Now the princess without a name was friends with the clouds, the trees that blossomed for her, the moon... She would make little balloons shaped like angels and would send them to the skies...



Any other time she would go to the sea looking for redfish, but once she would catch some she would feel sorry for them and toss them back into the water. She however gathered some pretty seashells which her grandmother called "crimsos" and with those her grandma painted other red threads that would not fade in the water and one could make from them small boats that would reach the depths of the sea. Her grandmother said that she even had once met a fairytale mermaid and she had the reddest hair, just like her threads!



...A magical sense had filled the air above them, a cloud that smelled like strawberry and cinnamon.

And then the little prince dared to ask her about the thing that tormented him:

"Was she a real princess?"

...I am afraid I will have to disappoint you!

For the answer was **NOT** what
the little princess expected:

"I am a real princess on our little house in the woods!"

"And your queen grandmother?"

"My grandmother was the queen of the house."

"And the palace?"

"Oh, that was before. My grandmother was a queen there as well. But she could not become cruel-hearted so she left. She took my mother and they left, away in the woods where we live now. Her king father wanted to marry her to a prince but she wanted the gardener's son. My dad!

The king said that he would never allow such a thing and that she and her gardener would spend the rest of their days in the palace's deepest dungeon. Separate from one another!

My grandmother who was then not a grandmother but a beautiful queen read to my mother a book: -How to escape from the palace with your gardener- and before she was finished reading, my mother made a suitcase, threw her crown away and waited for the right moment...



A moonless night, both mother and daughter, gardener and son, fled and went away, far away, to the far side of the deepest woods. The king could never find them. He became more and more cruel-hearted. Anyone who had the means would leave his kingdom, until one, who was even crueller than he was, took him for everything, using armies and cannons. And since then, no one ever heard from him again.

On the other hand, in the small house in the woods, joy and happiness blossomed.

However now, the little prince felt misery itself.

Nevertheless, he did not wish to hide anything from her so he opened his heart. He told her of the evil wizard's curse...



...But, I do not want to keep you on the edge of your seats□

The little prince and the princess, who now had a name, since she said it for the first time in the prince's garden, being lost in the aroma of strawberry and cinnamon and with her own hear fluttering, both made the choice to become swallows.

A big red balloon from the grandmother's thread united the palace with the little house in the woods forevermore.



They made their nest in the palace, on the king and queens' balcony.

Each autumn they would leave to return every spring, giving them countless grandchildren who were, as you can imagine, swallow princes.

The families of the two love stricken swallows would spend many, many hours in the fragrant palace garden. The father gardener of the bride had it filled with pomegranate trees and all the flowers in red one could imagine.



...No matter how much it pained them both in the beginning, the two families could not help but feel happy as never before every spring when they would listen to the swallows' chirps.

They would hold in their hands, gently, small eggs and then newborn swallows.

Such happiness is beyond anyone's dreams.

The years went by. Despite their happiness, the king and the queen yearned to see their child's face. The same was true for the parents of the princess with a name.

And then, in an April's night, in the strangest heat, the miracle happened...

As they would learn later on, the evil wizard fell victim to his own arrogance, transforming himself into a mouse, just so he could prove that no feat was out of his reach and became the dinner of a puss in boots!

The puss in boots became most famous. His story became known to the entire world and even today is told by parents to their children...



Thus suddenly the two swallows became human. Their young, two girls and three boys found themselves crawling on the greenest grass.

A big celebration took place that night. It lasted days and days as princes from all the country's corners came to celebrate, transformed into boys and girls again. The palace and the woods were filled forevermore with their cheerful voices...

As for the princess with a name, I shall that name a secret. For you see, no one must find out, for then evil spells will fall upon the kingdom. And that is something none of us wants.

But I will tell you the grandmother's secret. She was the Princess in Red!

I will also tell you her words of wisdom so can think about them carefully:

*"Someone who is **wise** enough to soil his hands
with **dirt** sees very often the endless sky's blue as
all the colors that cover it during sundown.
For the best time to soil yourself with dirt is during **sundown**".*

Kostas Stoforos studied economics and cinema, worked for twenty years on television, making his way through all the big channels out there, until his tolerance/stamina run out.

He worked for three years in the Institute of Adult Continuing Education and now he cooperates with the Center for European Constitutional Law (Tsatsou Institution).

He has filmed a documentary series (?) of travels around Greece and still continues to write on magazines and newspapers.

However, during these years, he had three children!

He has written a handful of books, all very different from one another. A novel, two story collections, a history book, an albumen, a fairytale, four books for the parents.

Having a hard time to believe it himself, he put to paper (or rather put to the pc) four fairytales in Colors (Red, Yellow, Orange and White) inspired by **Stephania Beldemiri's** paintings. Thousands of people have read during these past two years the fairytales in question since they have been posted on the Internet.

In 2011, autumn, they created together the "**Fairytale Kitchen**" and since they have traveled all around Greece, cooking stories along with the children. Whatever the case, they would cook their fairytales each Saturday noon at the special space called "Τέχνης Γράμματα" (Letters of Art)

On December (same year) they created the "**Magic Card Deck**" that helped them create even better stories.

As the grownups began to envy them, they created for them, with the cooperation of "Exostis" magazine, a **Calendar** of 15 months and 15 short tales.

Kostas has often talked about and engaged in dialogue with parents about matters concerning raising and providing nutrition for children.

Since this year's autumn, by combining ... "work" and entertainment (!) Kostas teaches creative writing to children and adults, but also creates fairytales as well by performing in the stage, as well as doing puppet shows while cooking along with the children.



Personal blog: <http://stoforos.blogspot.gr>

Stephany Veldemiri is an Archaeological Findings and Works of Art preserver and cooperates with Greek museums (Archaeological Museum of Thessaloniki, Byzantine Museum of Thessaloniki, Institute of Archaeology, Museum of Natural history of Iraklion, The Lesvos Petrified Forest European and Global Geopark) and institutions abroad (University of Missouri St. Louis, Smithsonian Institution, American Museum of National History), concerning the preservation of archaeological findings and works of art, as well as making casts and copies of fossils along with art objects for display.



She also works as a preserver in situ during excavation periods but also in research periods by attending the "Iklaina project" program, at the prehistoric dig in Iklaina.

Since she became a mom, meaning since 2002, she wanted to find a simple and playful way to infuse her love for works of art and commonly used items of every age to children. Thus she started working as an artist teacher to full time grade schools and teaching Art History to children through interactive activities, games, experiential exercises, audiovisual stimuli and more importantly through smiling and a cheerful but disciplined atmosphere.

During recent years she is occupied with illustrating children books and drawing and 5 individual art displays which the paintings were accompanied by Kostas Stoforos's fairytales are credited to her, while the children had an active part in the action and the development of the story.

She often receives young children to her studio where, depending on their mood they play, learning through art.

Stephania loves to be in touch with the world of children and feels happy when she is allowed in that realm. That is how she feels as an arts teacher after class: Happy.

Personal blog: <http://stefaniaveldemiri.blogspot.gr>

Writings of Costas Stoforos

2013

"Dead Brother's book - 41 Letters from the Civil War Front",
Series of colourful fairy-tales that illustrated by Stefany Veldemiri ("Tale in Red", "Tale in Yellow", "Tale in Orange", "Tale in White")

2012

Participation in the collective volume of the 21st Century Parent-Dilemmas and prospects,
"Calendar to remember or forget". Fifteen small tales for adults accompanying tables
Stephany Veldemiri

2011

The Magic Cards Game, based on the function of the fairy tales of Vladimir Propp and "The Grammar of Fantasy" of Gianni Rodari (Illustrated by Stefania Veldemiri),
"Green Fairy tale", part of a project for teaching proper nutrition in children

2010

Book for children's nutrition titled "20 chef , 11 moms and I - 111 recipes and food ideas for kids"

2009

"A father's diary" - part 3: "Daddy what is sex? ... And other stories of family madness"

2008

"A father's diary" - part 1: "Parents for the first time",

"A father's diary" - part 2: "From the first steps up the school"

1998

"Imbros"

1997

"Fifi, Pipis or how the city turned green" (Ministry of Environment)

1989

"Once upon a time there was an island" (novel)

1986

"Hunting Area" (short stories)

1984

"A fragile Time" (short stories)

Documentaries

2003: "Amfikaia a sustainable farm"

2001: Research, script and presentation of the documentaries: Chania, Rethymnon, Corfu, Arta, Preveza, Thesprotia, Evros, Rodopi, Xanthi, Thrace (all for Alter TV Channel).

Research, script and narration for the documentaries:

1999: Imbros

1997-1998: Kefalonia-Ithaca

1997: Monasteries of Boeotia (Prefecture of Boeotia), Greek Horses, Thrace

1996: Land of Boeotia and Economic Development of Boeotia (Prefecture of Boeotia)

Associations-Clubs

- Member of the Board of Directors of the Periodical and Electronic Press Union (ESPIT)
- President of the Parents' Association 13th Kindergarten Agia Paraskevi and representative of the Union of Associations of Parents of the City
- Special Secretary of the Scientific Company for Dorian & Dryope Studies
- Former President of the Contractors Association Institute of Continuing Adult Education
- Vice President of the Progressive Association "Kastellia"
- Board Member of the Union for the development of local newspapers in Athens-Piraeus-Athens (1981-1983)
- Member of the Institute of Nutrition Studies and Research



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**,
the deep power of **vision**,
guide the **saita** of our publications.

We invite you to let books fly free!

A fairytale created though facebook,
inspired by **Stepania Veldemiri's** drawings.

Kostas Stoforos saw the first drawing of the girl sleeping, hugging her doll.

He imagined a rain of peas and the tale... began.

Text by text, story following another story, all led the princess without a name to meet the gloomy prince-painter. Their love will turn them to swallows but in the ending...

A tale about Spring.
The first of a series:

Yellow for Summer

Orange for Autumn

White for Winter

