



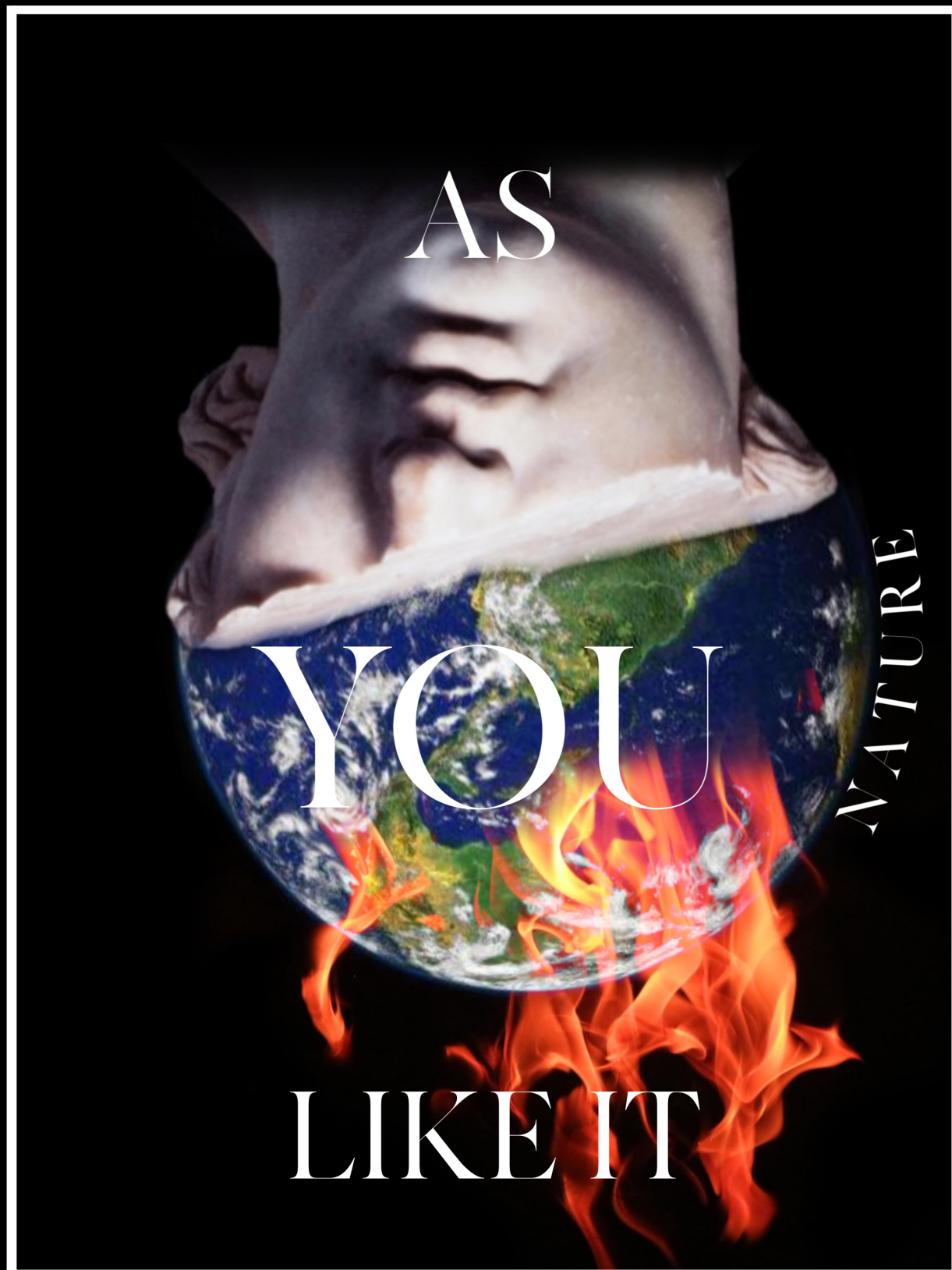
1925

**ATHENS COLLEGE**

Hellenic-American Educational Foundation

Kindergarten • Elementary • Junior High • High • I.B.

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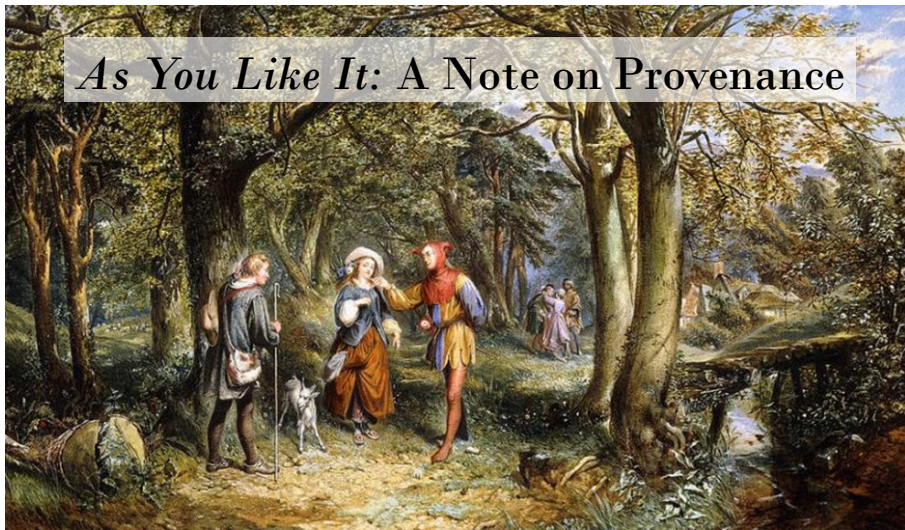
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A special thank you to Magda Badogiannaki and Daphne Makri for their assistance in the short story layout and to the English Department for their support.

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### *As You Like It: A Note on Provenance*



The English Department Magazine is named after one of William Shakespeare's most beloved plays: *As You Like It* (1599). In the play, the heroine Rosalind escapes the perils of her uncle's court by going into the Forest of Arden, where she breaks all the rules to discover herself, love, and true happiness with nature as the backdrop. This year's magazine is a real tribute to its namesake; it is "our Forest of Arden"!

# From the Editor

Nature is everywhere. Although it is one of the greatest blessings of human life—a gift from God, a key to the survival of humankind—sometimes we forget how fragile and indispensable it is. From the moment we sat down in room 208 and started discussing what nature truly means to us, we all realized that it is not just the mountains and seas we are talking about. As one can understand by flipping through the pages of our magazine, the term *nature* was interpreted by each writer in a different way—as everything that surrounds us, as a friend and enemy to mankind, and even as an inspiration for feelings and thoughts. The multifaceted theme of this year's *As You Like It* is what makes it so special. Now, being able to see the finished product, I have to admit that this year has been a truly unique journey—not just for us at *As You Like It*, but for the whole world. During these interesting and unsettling times, in which we spent much of our days at home, we had the opportunity to reflect on all aspects of nature, and for many, to come closer to it.

Through this year's *As You Like It*, we escaped into the mysteries of nature. We realized how nature has changed over time, how our behavior affects it, and how humans have established strong emotional connections to it. Feeling its extreme power, we were inspired to write articles, short stories, and poems, praising its glory and expressing our concerns for the future. Working as a team, we created a common ground to express our thoughts and exchange ideas. Most importantly, we all realized that our words have power. As Canadian novelist and artist Douglas Coupland once said, "I always thought of words as art supplies." We hope that through our words, you too will be able to see, hear, feel, taste, and smell the artwork we have created.

While reading this magazine, several questions will arise in your mind, but probably the one that will take precedence will be the following: What does nature mean to me? Read on and decide—*As You Like It*.

Enjoy!

*Magda Badogiannaki*

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# Part I: Articles



“The important thing is not to stop questioning.  
Curiosity has its own reason for existing.”  
—Albert Einstein



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# Our Environment: Athens College



“A child grows into a different man in a sunless, melancholic, stuffy environment. It is to the benefit of his development and education to go to school in a natural environment, breathe in fresh air and be inspired by the sights of the countryside: the mountain lines in the horizon, the surrounding green hills, the blue sky, and the quiet of the countryside. These elements create everlasting memories in a student, which pleasantly accompany him for the rest of his life.”

—Stefanos Delta, *Ergasia* magazine, 1934



# The College Legacy:

## An Educational Environment that Transcends Boundaries

By Efimia Apostolidou



School—the place students go to learn and grow as people and as citizens. Our school, Athens College, is a remarkable place. It has a beautiful, nature-filled campus with facilities beyond compare. However, it is a place most of us students take for granted as we enter it every day. Our campus and our buildings have a rich history that makes it an even more remarkable place than what we see, and knowing this history not only enriches our learning but also helps us understand that we are educated in a unique environment that is more than the campus itself.

### Founding a Unique Educational Environment

When Stefanos Delta and the founders of the College founded the school, they realized that nature would provide the best setting to help the students learn and grow:

*“A child grows into a different man in a sunless, melancholic, stuffy environment. It is to the benefit of his development and education to go to school in a natural environment, breathe in fresh air and be inspired by the sights of the countryside: the mountain lines in the horizon, the surrounding green hills, the blue sky, and the quiet of the countryside. These elements create everlasting memories in a student, which pleasantly accompany him for the rest of his life.”*

Stefanos Delta, *Ergasia* magazine, 1934

Therefore, Athens College was built on the top of a hill, overlooking the mountains and countryside, away from the city. Even though Athens has expanded to surround the school, the campus has transformed from the rather bare landscape pictured below, to one that is filled with trees and plants, forming an ideal environment for students, teachers, and staff.



Benakeio, shortly after the school started functioning from this location in 1929 and prior to the planting of hundreds of trees and plants around the campus.

As Athens College has evolved, it has maintained the founders’ desire to immerse its students in the natural environment of the campus, a small forest in the middle of the city. Today, Athens College also tries to instill in its students an awareness of environmental issues and a desire to do their part to protect the environment. As such, we have environmental clubs that engage in activities to help the environment, like tree plantings around Attica. The school buildings also

have many green features to reduce the amount of electricity used, and recycling bins are placed around the campus to reduce the amount of waste produced. This year, the school made a policy that there would be no more single-use plastic cups purchased, and so the faculty and staff adopted the sole use of reusable mugs and bottles. Also, Athens College Grade 11 student Elizabeth Machairas generously donated the prize that accompanied the Merit Award she received for the 2018-2019 school year to purchase an automated water refill station, installed on the ground floor of Benakeio on the 1st of June. This water fountain is specifically designed for filling water bottles and aims at encouraging students to bring their own reusable bottles to reduce plastic waste. Indeed, we are a school that understands the importance of living in and caring for the natural environment.

### **Benakeio: a Historic Building During World War II**

We are also an educational environment with a rich history, from the founding of the school in 1925. This history reveals that our school is far more than its physical environment because we have an educational environment that transcends the boundaries of any campus or the walls of any building.



In 1940, the building was transformed into a hospital.

The period between 1940 and 1945 was a historic one for our school. As the war between the Greeks and Italians began on the 28<sup>th</sup> of October, 1940, all schools in Greece shut down, and their buildings were used as recruitment centers or hospitals. The

College was like any other school in this respect. In November of 1940, Benakeio was seized by the Ministry of War for it to function as a military hospital. Only seven rooms of the building were given to the College to store any items which were not needed by hospital staff.

Benakeio continued to “do its part” in the war as it became the “11<sup>th</sup> Military Hospital,” caring for hundreds of injured people. Following the occupation of Athens by the German forces,

Benakeio took on a new role: it became a hospital that treated British captives. Nurses were supplied by the Greek Red Cross, and Penelope Delta’s daughter, Virginia Zanna, led many influential women who helped care for the fallen Brits. Later, however, the German Occupation authorities made the decision to turn Benakeio into a facility for German soldiers who suffered from infectious diseases while in the country.

From February of 1944 until the Germans departed in October of 1944, Benakeio changed roles again, serving as German infantry barracks. During this period of time, a series of caricatures depicting scenes from the Germans’ lives in Greece were painted on the walls of the ground floor. Today, these murals have been preserved and are still on display in the Sofita of Benakeio. The College did not destroy these images but rather kept them as a reminder of the history the school was a part of, a reminder of the fact that Greeks and the College survived and overcame the difficulties with the Germans. The school would go on to overcome every other difficulty that came its way to become the school we now know today.



Caricatures painted by the German soldiers who occupied Benakeio (1944) line a great portion of one side of the hallway in the Sofita.

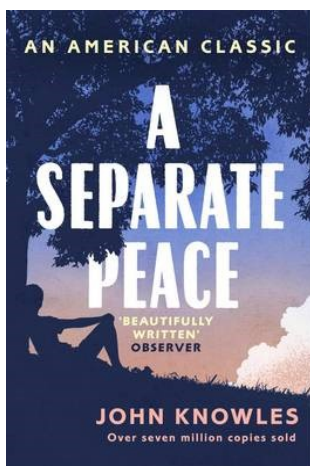




A close-up of some of the caricatures painted by the German soldiers who occupied Benakeio (1944).



Most of this history of the school, I learned this year. In English class, we read a novel called



Students have drawn many parallels between the novel and the school.

*A Separate Peace* by John Knowles, set in an American preparatory school called the Devon School during World War II. When we started the novel, we read about the changing role of Benakeio during the course of the war. As a class, we then toured the campus, immersing ourselves in this history and realizing how the environment we learn in can and does impact our education. We came to comprehend

that our school environment embodies the history of the school and of our nation.

### Athens College: Continuing to Educate

In *A Separate Peace*, the boys at the Devon School were being prepared for war, but the school endeavored to maintain its traditions, and as such, “Continuity was the keynote” (Knowles 88). The boys still went to chapel, learned Latin, and played sports as they were preparing for the dangers that lay ahead. The head of the school and the teachers knew that eventually the war would end, and the boys would go to college and onto life; they pushed the boys to maintain the excellent standards of the school. Over the past few months, I have thought of the way the Devon School dealt with the war because I have felt that our school has a similar ideal: no matter what Athens College has faced, it has remembered that “continuity is the keynote” in the education of its students, throughout its history.

At the beginning of World War II, the school did not shut down. In fact, school services were relocated to the President’s house and Darbishire, and despite the difficulties the faculty, staff, and students faced, the school continued to function and to offer education to its students in every way possible. As is the way with the College, the direction, the administrative staff, and the workers of the College assisted the hospital staff in their work, and a team of women, led by Marjorie

Davis, Homer Davis’s wife, organized events in Choremi to entertain the patients.

Following the German Occupation of the College in 1940, when Benakeio was used as a British hospital, the College was housed in a very old building, a former maternity home in the city center, called “Kentriko.” This was not easy: the building was like a barn, with no real floors, no glass in the windows, and no shutters. It was in the city center, and the sounds of cars and trams passing by could be heard. In addition, students had to bring their own chairs and balance books on their knees to write since there were no desks.



At the start of WWII when Benakeio was being used for the war effort, school services were moved to the President’s house (pictured above) as well as to the Darbishire building on campus.

However, despite the difficulties created during WWII, a high level of teaching as well as the core of the institutions and the special characteristics of the College were maintained, thanks to the efforts of the direction, teachers, and students. Throughout the Occupation, school publications, such as the *Thisavros* and the *Athinaios*, continued. Clubs and Student Council activities, such as collecting money to support classmates and teachers who had fallen on hard times, artistic events, the Scholarship Program, and

I have thought of the way the Devon School dealt with the war because I have felt that our school has a similar ideal: no matter what Athens College has faced, it has remembered that “continuity is the keynote” in the education of its students, throughout its history.



Fast forward to 2020: students and teachers did not miss a beat as classes and assignments went entirely online.

other organizations, were kept running through the determination of the College community. Further organizations were started and run by the College to help with the very many difficulties the community was facing, especially during the horrible winter of 1941-1942. Such efforts included running soup kitchens and food distribution services.

It is a great accomplishment for Athens College to have moved and then maintained an educational environment amidst the Occupation and the war, but it managed to provide the best it could for its students, and all strove to make the most of a bad situation.

### The College Philosophy on Education

This year, we have faced a new threat, one that we could not have imagined before: a major pandemic, COVID-19. The threat of this novel virus forced our school to close just days after the first case was reported in Greece and to remain closed for over two months. Citizens were ordered to stay home in order to stay safe, so there was no way for the school to function as usual.

However, Athens College faced this challenge as it always has, finding ways to ensure that the educational environment spread to all corners of Attica, so that every student would still be able to take part in lessons and to learn. The direction, teachers, and students became experts in

Microsoft Teams together, virtually overnight, and continued using ManageBac and the CMS as Athens College offered distance learning to the entire College community. This communication between students and teachers helped everyone in the community stay connected and continue to learn through the difficult time of the “Lockdown.” Once the school was allowed to reopen, solutions were found that allowed all members of our community to “return to a new normal.” Once again, Athens College has shown that the school itself is far more than a beautiful campus and impressive buildings. It has continued the history of providing education in whatever way it can as it has done throughout its history.

I am glad that I am a part of a community that understands that “continuity is the keynote,” an ideology that endures. Just as the boys in *A Separate Peace* continued to learn despite their impending enlistment in the war, just as the students in Athens College kept the school alive in substandard buildings during the Occupation and the war, so have we—today’s students of Athens College—kept on learning in so many ways.

Beyond the classroom, the direction, teachers, and students have maintained so many of our great traditions in novel ways as well. Speech competitions were still held, and because of the technology we have available, they were live-streamed to all students. *Athinaios* and *As You Like It* have still been published. The scholarship fund still offers support to the community, and the Student Council, in collaboration with the school direction, even initiated a fund for the treatment of



Many school initiatives have continued during this time, proving that a school is more than its buildings.



COVID-19, with donations supporting the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit of the Attikon General Hospital's Third Pediatric Clinic in the metropolitan area of Athens. With the support of the entire Athens College community, the school raised more than €26,000, reminding everyone of the importance of helping others.

### Into the Future

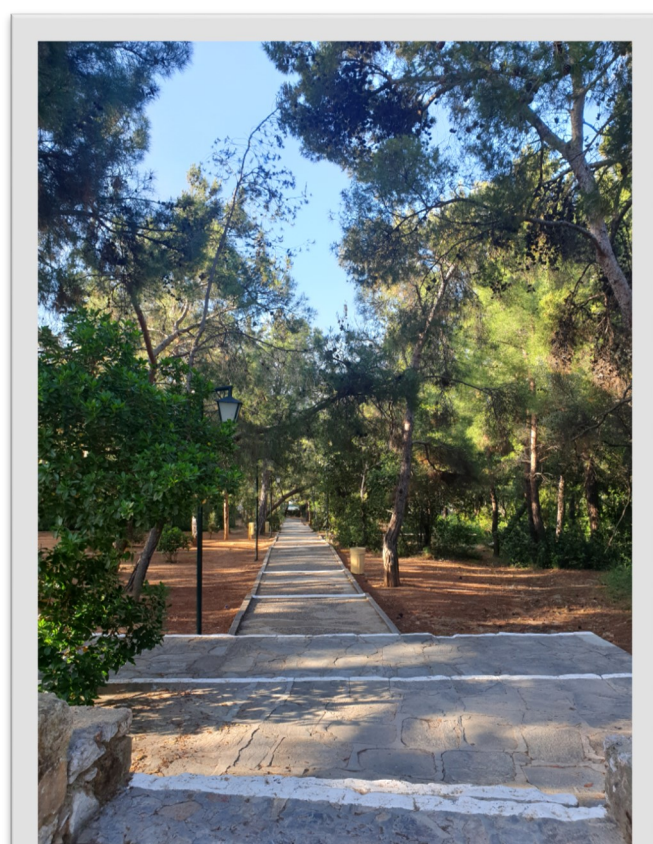
There is no telling what the future will bring. In September of 2019, none of us could have imagined finishing up the year with at least part of our time online, but we did it. In our classes, we covered material in new ways, and we progressed as students. Although we had to let some traditions go this year, we made sure that others endured, as the College always has. We even found ways to help those in need. It has never been clearer that here, too, "continuity is the keynote."

As the College has shown in war and in "lockdown," we continue to thrive. In September 2020, I hope we will all be on campus, enjoying the trees of the "dasos" envisioned by our founders

and cultivated by many generations of students and staff. I hope we will be wandering through the halls of the historic Benakeio, looking at the murals, and heading to our classes. I hope we will be preparing for athletic events, competitions, and celebrations. But if for whatever reason we find that we cannot all *physically* be together, then we, as the College, will "come together" to help all progress, grow, and learn because we are an educational environment and a community that transcends boundaries.



As the College has shown in war and in "lockdown," we continue to thrive, proving that "continuity is the keynote."



Stefanos Delta envisioned a school that would be enveloped in a natural environment to foster the cognitive and physical development of its students.





# Our Environment— 40 Years Ago

By Magda Badogiannaki

Someone once said that “the first day at school is when the countdown to the last day begins.” That day was far from my mind when I started at Athens College. Now, as I prepare to enter my final stretch of high school, I remember a quote from Aristotle read to me once: “The roots of education are bitter, but the fruit is sweet.” How true that is! I wonder to myself if others feel like this, not about school and education in general, but about school and education at Athens College. So, I thought, who better to ask than my dad?

As a graduate of the class of ‘84 who reaped the benefits of an Athens College education, he is an expert on what our school was like 40 years ago. When I asked him about his experiences here, he had lots of comparisons to make since the Athens College of his day is somewhat different to what it is now.

Back then, it was an all-boys’ school. There were about 150 boys in each year, separated into six classrooms. All the main classes, like mathematics, Modern Greek, history, and more, were held in Benakeio. When my father talked

about the school’s campus, he was very proud to see that Benakeio still dominates the skyline. He is pleased, however, to see how technology is helping the school run sustainably; the smart lighting and the energy-efficient windows are some examples of energy-saving measures our school has implemented. My father, seeing our ‘new’ and technologically-advanced way of working with Smartboards in every classroom and the high-tech computer labs, is amazed at the luxuries the new generation enjoys.

Some things, however, have not changed, my father says. There are still science labs with equipment from my father’s era. The school library, which has always been one of the largest school libraries in the region, and many of the surrounding buildings—like Davis, Lila, and Vasilia—are still holding strong. Back then, some classrooms were used as labs, just like the once well-known English lab that was housed in the attic of Benakeio, where the students listened to audio books and tested their listening skills. Also, the photography lab that was where the IB building is today gave students the opportunity to work in dark rooms and practice their art skills. Lastly, school ended at 4 o’clock every day, and therefore, all students had lunch at school. The dining hall and adjacent kitchen were on the ground floor of Benakeio, next to the main staircase. Students of all years sat alongside teachers to eat at long tables. This was a great opportunity to socialize with older and younger students while having relaxed conversations with teachers. My father remembers some life-long friendships originating there.

As my father grew, this school became his second home. Athens College didn’t only help him grow, but it also helped him develop his communication, leadership, and collaboration skills. Something else which remains unchanged is all the fun; students enjoyed making jokes and socializing with their friends. Though strict, just as he believed it should have been, the school was, for my father, the happiest days of his life. No doubt this is true for all of us who have had the honor of attending Athens College, and though we will all be graduates one day, we will all look back on this time and reflect on the memories made in this environment—our environment at the College.



# *A Letter to My Future Self*



This year, we read *A Separate Peace* by John Knowles. In the novel, the narrator comes back to visit his high school years after graduation and recalls the places that were tied to his memories of the school. Inspired by this novel, students wrote letters to their future selves in hopes of giving their older selves some insight on what is important to them now.





Dear future self,

As you walk along the empty corridors of Benakeio, ghosts from the past will accompany your every step: the math teacher drawing intricate shapes on the board, the lab assistant rushing from one student to another so that we won't blow anything up, and the English teacher trying to inspire us to write poetry. You will find yourself longing to be in the same classrooms listening to them once again. You will look at the rooms, the desks, the theater, and the vast grounds with love and nostalgia...

*Nicholas Stefanakis*

Dear future me,

Do you remember the trees, lining way up to your favorite building ever—Benakeio? The famous marble stairs, leading to a door that was always closed except for special days—like the day you graduated and walked down them for one final time. Remember taking the annual school picture, laughing at how you couldn't open your eyes because of the sunshine? Look down. Is there still gravel? Do you hear each crunching noise, soothing you as you walk? It is the same sound you used to hear every morning when you got off the bus.

Go up the stairs on your right, the stairs you used to walk up and down twenty times each day, whining about how much you wished you could take the elevator. I bet now you are thinking how terribly mistaken you were, and how beautiful these stairs really are. Appreciate the smooth feeling of the marble under your shoes, and go all the way up to the 2nd floor, to A9, your first classroom in this incredible building. Do they still have those yellow curtains hanging? Remember how you used to sit in the second desk in the first row, taking notes, sometimes resting your head against the wall. Remember how great it all was. You spent your childhood impatiently waiting to be an adult and be independent, to finish school. Now that you are just a visitor here, do you yearn for those days?

*Katerina Fildisakou*

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Dear future self,

I hope that when you are reading this, you are in a place of happiness and satisfaction with yourself. I also hope that when you look in the mirror, you see how much you have grown and flourished in the past decade. I do, however, hope you can recognize bits of me, the person I am now, writing this.

When you visit Athens College, those bits of you will be put together again, and right in front of you, you'll see a fifteen-year-old girl that is still clueless about life. That's why I want you to visit places that are important to me. I want you to stand in front of Benakeio and let that sight—the beautiful building, the tall trees—and the air that fills your lungs take you back to my present. I want you to go inside and walk up the stairs that I used every day and touch the handrail marked by scars that confess the secrets of time. When you get to the third floor, open your heart. See the hallway and feel all the emotions that overwhelmed the students rushing through it. Lastly, I want you to go to my old classroom. You will remember everything you were taught in there. The things you learned for life.

One's identity, in the past and present, is the essence of a person. I hope that through this visit you can reconnect with your old self, completing your new one.

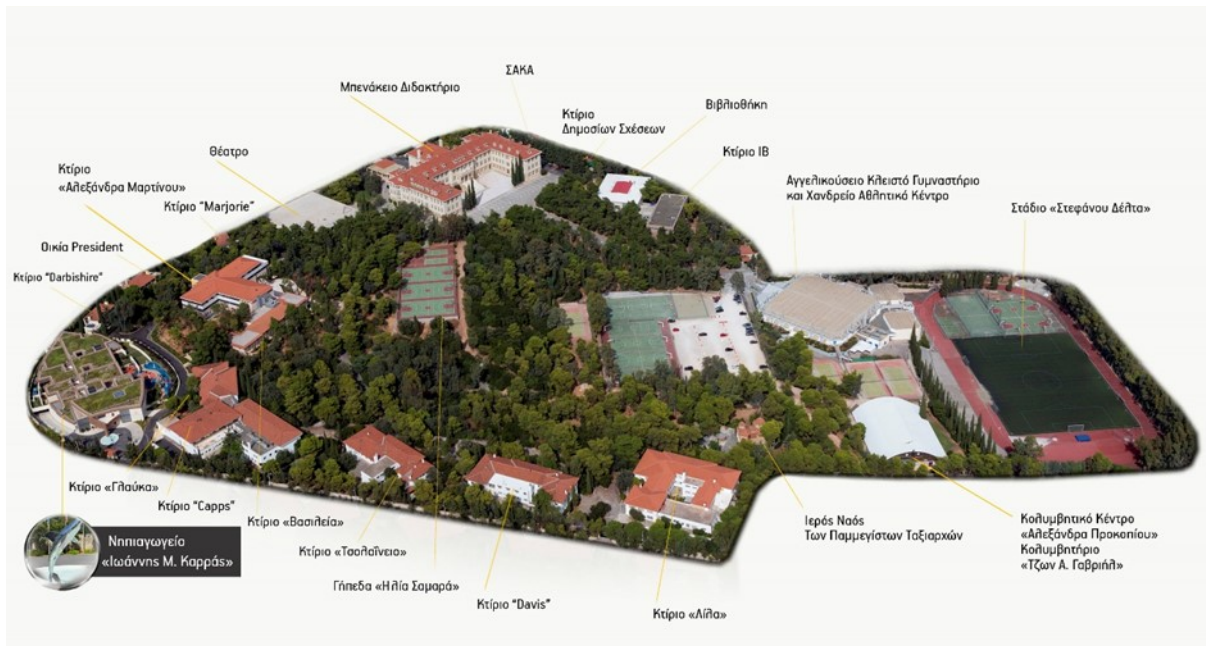
*Ellie Polydorou*

Dear future me,

I would like to tell you to stop. Stop, and have a look around you; appreciate what you have. Right now, I'm at school and even I forget to stop and observe. Our lives are very busy, I know. But I'm asking you to try and come back, see how every student has left his or her unique mark on this immortal building. I don't want myself to forget that I'm a part of a community with its own history. This history flows and lives between those walls. The staircases that have been worn down by time can tell so many stories of the students whose footsteps have been left behind. I want you to go to the main entrance and admire the front doorstep, where the marble under the right door has "sagged" with the weight of all those lives who have gone through it. What I am trying to say is that you may have forgotten that there is a mark left behind with each person's passing. Wherever you may be right now, stop. Look at what life has given you, and if circumstances allow it, come back, and see the mark you have left on this ever-lasting building.

*Evanthia Gisiमतou*

# From Students to Visitors



*Years have passed since you graduated from Athens College.  
What would you want to see on your return visit and why?*

The library would be my first stop. It was like a huge brain that could give answers to all of my questions if you searched for the right book or source. The people there are so helpful with everything.

—Nick Stefanis

I would want to see the Athens College swimming pool—a place I loved from the start. Under an arched wooden ceiling, lies the long, modern pool, which can accommodate many swimmers. On each side of the pool are wooden benches for the public to watch the swimming tournaments. To me, the campus swimming pool looks like a small Olympic swimming center.

—Michael Lyras

The first place I would think of going would be my first classroom in Tsolaineio because I would want to see how the building in which I started my school life has changed since the last time I was there. I would be very happy if I saw some of my classmates visiting our school, too.

—Alexander Tzitzikostas

The school theater is the first place I would want to see because it is a place where I've attended so many fun events and learned new things. I hope one day to see my own children on the stage speaking or acting, making me proud of them.

—Jenny Vatzedaki

When I return to Athens College, years from now, I will go to “Tsolaineio,” the building in which I encountered my first middle school experiences, both good and bad. There, I felt as safe as I did at home. I felt loved and encouraged by my teachers to keep trying until I achieved my goals

—Vasiliki Serepa

I would like to visit the main entrance of Benakeio, which is the oldest building on Campus. It has an impressive entrance with a large, old marble staircase and a huge, metal door. Three tall cypress trees decorate each side of the door, which makes the entrance look even grander than it is.

—Foivos Pisimisis

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# The Natural World



“There is a deep interconnectedness of all life on earth, from the tiniest organism, to the largest ecosystems, and absolutely between each person.”

—Bryant McGill





# Irrational or Natural?

By Maria Alexandra  
Vlachogianni

Through the years, Mathematics has been considered a field largely based on theory but with thousands of applications in real life, such as statistics, finance, and much more. Most of us think, however, that Mathematics has nothing to do with nature because it seems far away from human nature. In fact, Mathematics is associated with nature in ways we could never imagine. For example, why do sunflowers often have precisely 55, 89, or 144 petals, numbers that figure in the famous Fibonacci\* sequence? Nature, it seems, has certain mathematical underpinnings.

While at school, we have become familiar with two numbers of significant importance, the simultaneously irrational and transcendental  $\pi$  (Pi) and  $e$ . Irrational numbers are real numbers which are not rational numbers, the latter being the numbers constructed from ratios or fractions of integers. Transcendental numbers are complex numbers that are not algebraic. Pi is the number that gives us the relation between the perimeter of a circle and its diameter: the perimeter of a circle is  $\pi$  times its diameter. On the other hand,  $e$  is defined as the limit of the sequence  $(1+1/n)^n$ , as  $n$  tends to infinity.

Despite the fact that these numbers seem to be far from reality and nature, they actually appear in numerous examples of natural patterns. First of all, we can locate Pi in a number of equations in physics that describe the behavior of natural phenomena, such as light or sound. Pi is very common in phenomena associated with waves. In addition, Pi helps us understand the movement of fluids. For example, as water flows, its form constantly changes, creating all kinds of curves and

swirls. Pi helps us visualize similar phenomena and analyze them through mathematics. Of course, Pi is the key for calculating perimeters and areas that have a connection with circular shapes. It is essential for research that has to do with circles and spheres, such as examining the pupil of the eye or studying planets.

In addition,  $e$  is very much present in nature. It plays an important role in the field of probability, which analyzes natural occurrences in our daily lives. However, the most important use of  $e$  for understanding nature is the Natural Exponential Function: the  $e^x$ . There are various examples of growth in life that can be described through this function. For instance, if one wants to describe the decay of a radioactive element as a function of time,  $e^x$  always provides the answer. The same is true of population growth and a significant number of other quantities that grow rapidly.

After looking at these two examples out of the many possibilities that exist, it becomes clear that Mathematics and Nature are interdependent. Nature was the inspiration for the creation of the science of Mathematics, making it easier for us to understand various phenomena and providing us with solutions that significantly improve our daily lives. Most impressive of all, however, is the fact that not only do natural numbers have a clear connection with the natural environment but also irrational numbers like  $e$  and  $\pi$ , the digits of which are infinite.

*\*Fibonacci was an Italian mathematician from Pisa, who is believed to have been considered "the most talented Western mathematician of the Middle Ages."*

# *A Sky of Hope*

By Stella Anastasiadis



Most people take whatever is around them for granted, and that includes everything that makes their lives meaningful. Nature has been here since the beginning of time; it is what makes our lives meaningful, but unfortunately, most people fail to see that. However, if you stop for a minute to think about the world in depth, you will gain another perspective about everything around you—especially about nature.

Appreciating nature is a matter of perspective—even if it is a common, natural phenomenon that occurs on a daily basis, like sunsets. If we consider it from a scientific perspective, a sunset is merely the period of the day when the sun disappears and daylight fades as night approaches. During a sunset, light enters the atmosphere at a certain angle, and beams of light collide with oxygen and nitrogen particles, which scatter light in different directions. Technically, a sunset occurs one minute after the sun has disappeared when light bends around the horizon. What we see is a part of the electromagnetic radiation in which air bends the image of the sun upwards, so we can still see the sun even when it is physically below the horizon. However, is that all there is to a sunset?

Most people who watch a sunset do not take a moment to consider the colorful sky that surrounds them. They believe that it is just something natural that happens every single day. However, is a sunset that simple, that common? Viewed from the right perspective, sunsets are beautiful and enchanting moments of life. They represent one of the few aspects of life in which humans can truly experience beauty. Sunsets make humans aware of the fact that they are part of something bigger, something infinite, called the universe.

Scientifically, there is no such thing as a sunset as the sun never actually disappears—it just

moves towards a different direction around earth. Therefore, when someone loses sight of the sun, someone else on the other side of the planet gains sight of its light. However, for humans, a sunset can take a more profound dimension as it can ensure serenity and tranquility for any individual experiencing it. During this natural phenomenon, some people stop to perceive different qualities of light and colors, while escaping their harsh reality and walking into a world full of emotion and imagination.

You are part of an incredible world; in fact, life is a series of miracles found in nature. You just have to notice them to appreciate them. Therefore, see the good in nature, and be optimistic because even the sunset promises you that, no matter what, endings can be beautiful, too.



World-famous sunset in Oia, Santorini (above). The sunset as seen from the International Space Station (top of page).





# Trees of Green

By Paul Samloglou

“I see trees of green” is the first line Louis Armstrong sings in his 1967 hit, aptly named “What a Wonderful World.” Trees truly are wonderful. One does not have to be a scientist or even read a book or an article on anything remotely connected to nature to appreciate trees. Trees are, quite literally, natural to our humanity, but we often seem to forget that.

I find it difficult to believe that there is a significant part of the population who is not aware of the importance of plant life, also known as flora. Sure, many of us, especially students at Athens College, know that plants which have chlorophyll absorb carbon dioxide from the environment and, with the help of water, dissolve it into oxygen, which they emit back into the atmosphere. In terms of textbook information, there is not much more to know. The state curriculum provides us with the fundamental facts of “cellular respiration” and “photosynthesis,” but most students need more explicit instruction on environmental issues: the melting of the polar ice caps, ozone depletion, and the danger trees are in because of deforestation.

Imperialism and industrialization have led people to conclude that nature is merely a resource. To an extent, this is true. At the root of this perspective, there is the belief that mankind and nature are two separate forces, and our goal as

humans should be to dominate nature. However, not only are mankind and nature inseparable, but they are also far from equal. Humans are only a part of the natural world; therefore, we can thrive as a species only within the confines this greater system allows. In essence, harming plant life is like digging our own graves.

Let’s take a more human-centered approach here. What personal benefits can we gain from having as many trees around as possible? First of all, they provide a great proportion of the oxygen in the air that all animals—including us humans—need to survive. In fact, each person on earth needs the amount of oxygen that about seven or eight trees can provide. This is why the Amazon Rainforest, the largest forest in the world, is often referred to as the “lungs of earth.” By harming those “lungs,” it is as if we were poisoning our planet and ourselves, and most of the time, just for some profit. In addition, trees act as a filter, both for the air and for the soil they grow in and also absorb and store carbon dioxide and other pollutants, helping to mitigate global warming. Finally, they can also clean sewage and polluted water to a large degree. Underground and above, trees clean our world.

Trees are also effective in reducing noise pollution, whether that is in the city or the



Trees are essential to the existence of all life on the planet, so we have to work to ensure that our forests thrive.

countryside. They can even be as functional as walls in keeping noise out as their leaves absorb sounds. Furthermore, trees can protect us from the weather. I am sure that you have all enjoyed the coolness of a tree's shade in the summer. In fact, air conditioning costs in the summer months can be reduced if buildings are surrounded by trees. Conversely, in the winter, they act as insulation as they protect buildings from the wind and cold, helping to lower heating costs.

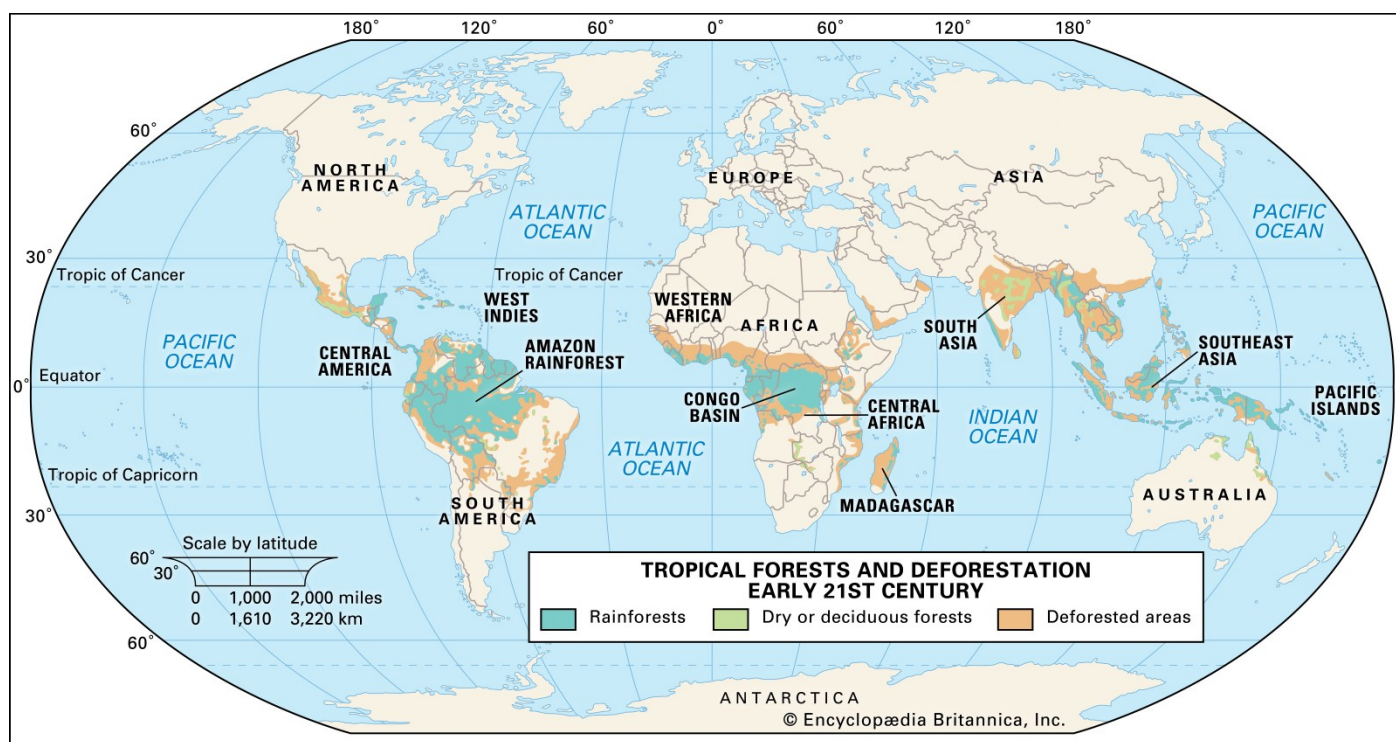
Beyond the functional, trees are also beautiful. There are more than 20,000 different kinds of trees in the world. We humans need trees for our mental wellbeing—and that does not mean just knowing they exist; we need to see them, smell them, and feel them. Humans were not made to be surrounded by concrete and brick walls. Rather,

we were meant to be connected to nature because trees can provide us with even the simplest pleasures, such as plucking a peach from its branch and enjoying the fruit beneath the shade that same tree provides, or experiencing spring through the beautiful sight of blossoming almond trees.

However, if we only consider what we can gain by slashing and burning our forests for farmland, grazing land, or the expansion of settlements, we will lose this precious resource. Even though we are aware of this, it is estimated that more than one million square kilometers of forest is destroyed each decade. And although the rate of deforestation has slowed in recent years, and there have been greater attempts made at reforestation, more needs to be done as the global consequences are unfathomable.

We need to remember that trees are vital to life on earth. So today, when you take a deep breath or enjoy the shade of a tree, remember that we exist because of them and, therefore, need to safeguard this resource for both our physical and mental well-being before it is too late for us to enjoy “the trees of green.”

Rather, we were meant to be connected to nature because trees can provide us with even the simplest pleasures...



Tropical Forests and Deforestation in the Early 21st Century: The Areas Hardest Hit.



# Should Exotic Animals Be Kept as Pets?

By Anastasia Giannoulatou

Throughout the centuries, people have been fascinated by animals. From prehistoric times to the modern 21st century, animals have become man's companions, and some have even been domesticated. Nowadays, it is quite common for people to have a dog or a cat as a pet, but what about exotic animals? Should they be domesticated?

The truth is that owning an exotic animal as a pet is still a controversial issue. However, there are some compelling arguments in favor of owning such creatures. Many argue that having an exotic animal as a pet is a healthier option. For instance, people who are allergic to fur can have a pet such as a reptile or an amphibian, which has no fur. Moreover, these people argue that based on the biodiversity of our planet and the various species of animals that exist, one can pick from a wide range of wild animals to "adopt" and keep as a pet. Another argument is that many of these exotic animals do not need a large space to live in. In comparison to dogs or cats, reptiles and spiders do not need much space, do not require daily walks, and do not demand affection from their owners. Their final and strongest argument is that adopting a wild animal is a way of protecting and preserving endangered species. A particular species might have struggled to survive on its own in the wild

since our effect on nature has been—to say the least—destructive.

Nevertheless, some animal-lovers say that exotic and wild animals should not be kept as pets since these animals are difficult if not impossible to tame. While dogs and cats were domesticated thousands of years ago, undomesticated animals, even if tamed from birth, would suffer in captivity. In addition, because of their natural needs and instincts, they might even harm their owners. Furthermore, these animals cannot only prove to be dangerous and violent, but they may also carry diseases. There have been many times in our planet's history where epidemics were caused by diseases crossing the species barrier. Another



Wild animals such as alligators cannot be tamed.





American actress Phyllis Gordon, a silent film star of the early 1900s, walking her pet Cheetah in London.

reason activists posit is that professional veterinarians might not be able to treat wild animals as the average vet might not have specialized in wild animals. However, the most important reason against owning an exotic animal, according to animal-lovers and activists, is that a significant illegal market is created by the desire to own wild creatures and intriguing pets. Some criminal associations even hunt these animals and destroy the delicate balance in their ecosystems to serve the interests of those desiring these extravagant pets. This poses a greater problem for those endangered species that are especially threatened.

Owning an exotic animal is still a controversial issue. In countries such as Greece, the public has not given it a great deal of thought or engaged in much discussion. However, there are laws that forbid the ownership of exotic animals, just like in other countries. Article 1 of the Greek Constitution, based on the International Convention for the preservation of wildlife migratory species, states that countries must be the protectors of wild animals and that “wild fauna, in its various forms, is an irreplaceable element of the earth's natural systems, which must be preserved for the benefit of mankind.”

Generally speaking, I believe that owning exotic animals is not as exciting as it sounds. Not only can these animals harm their owners, but the animals can also be harmed. As for the laws passed, I think they are for the common good since laws are necessary for the protection and well-being of all creatures because some of these exotic animals are endangered.

It is clear that there are many who argue that wild animals should be kept as pets and others who are opposed. Both sides have strong arguments, but this is still a controversial subject that has yet to be resolved. Animals, both wild and domesticated, are part of our natural world, and we should treat them with respect.



Supporters of PETA (People for Ethical Treatment of Animals) call for an end to the captivity of wild animals in Ohio.



# Humans:

## What Humans and Ants Have in Common

By Manolis Tolia

There are many types of behavior that get categorized as only human; however, that label is usually wrongly applied to some forms of behavior which, while they may superficially seem to be present only in humans, are actually phenomena that can be observed in nature. One such comparison can be made between humans and ants; though we may seem very different from ants at first glance, when we actually dig deeper, we see that we have more similarities than we initially thought.

One such similarity may be the idea of farming. We learn from a young age that farming was essential for human advancement. That may lead us to the presumption that only our species knows how to farm, but that could not be further from the truth. The Attine Ant, for instance, discovered agriculture thousands of years before humans did and have consistently used it throughout the millennia. What this species does is collect leaves from plants and then put them in a sanitary environment inside their colonies. There, a fungus slowly grows on the leaves, and when it has accumulated enough, the ants consume it. This fungus is so important that every time a queen ant begins a new colony, she takes part of it with her. This codependence has actually made this fungus unique, meaning they cannot be found elsewhere in the environment naturally anymore. It is similar to the selective breeding of plants and animals that humans have used for centuries.

Another comparison can be drawn between the way humans protect livestock and the behavior

of the Argentine Ant. In fact, this species has been observed safeguarding insects, such as aphids, mealy bugs, and scales, which are parasitic to plants. The reason for this is that the ants eat the honeydew substance that these insects produce. Thus, they protect them just as people protect their farm animals, and they may also even move them around to more fertile parts of a plant or even to other plants to increase honeydew production.

The expansion of territory through war is another trait that is not unique to humans. Though the Argentine Ants originate from South America, through the movement of people and human trade, they have expanded to other continents, from North America and Europe to Asia. They have built super colonies that span hundreds of kilometers, and one in the Mediterranean region that expands over 6,000 km and contains billions of ants. The ants in



The Argentine Ant protects parasitic insects in order to feed off the honeydew-like substance they produce.

all these different colonies throughout the globe consider each other as their own. The main reasons ants expand are for food and territory, which would be considered economic reasons by human standards. They do not act in consideration of the flora and wildlife in the territories they invade; as a result, various organisms and even other species of ants have been pushed to extinction or forced out of their natural habitats by the aggressive Argentine Ant.

Argentine ants are not the only species with super colonies. Red Fire Ants, also originating from South America, have expanded to other continents; this has put the two species in a perpetual war. For example, in North America, where some of the largest colonies exist, these two species of ants constantly fight for territory, and thousands of ants die each day in their constant battles.

Even the way in which ants fight shows their similarity to humans. One species of ants has even been observed pushing pebbles at intruders from above, which can be considered a basic use of weapons. Furthermore, there are 15 known species of ants that explode when intruders get near, sacrificing themselves in the process so as to spray the enemies with a toxic, gluey substance and thus help defend the future of their colony. Lastly, just like medieval knights, a species of Army Ants in Malaysia keep the strongest ants of the colony in

the back during a battle so that the enemy is worn down before these more powerful ants charge in.

Interestingly, Army Ants do not actually have permanent colonies. Rather, they live nomadic lives, constantly moving and searching for food, creating large columns of ants reaching up to a hundred feet long and consisting of multiple species. They usually attack other colonies, but if they happen to encounter another group of Army Ants, they are most likely to pass them by because they know that a battle would mean mutual destruction.

It is clear that though ants may seem very different from us at first sight, they are actually much more similar than we think. They act as farmers, ranchers, colonizers, and nomads. They wage war for resources and territory, but they can be smart enough to prevent their mutual destruction. They have also created huge civilizations, sprawling multiple continents, and, ironically enough, they, too, do not hold the preservation of the local flora and wildlife in regard but are rather ready to destroy other organisms for their own benefit.

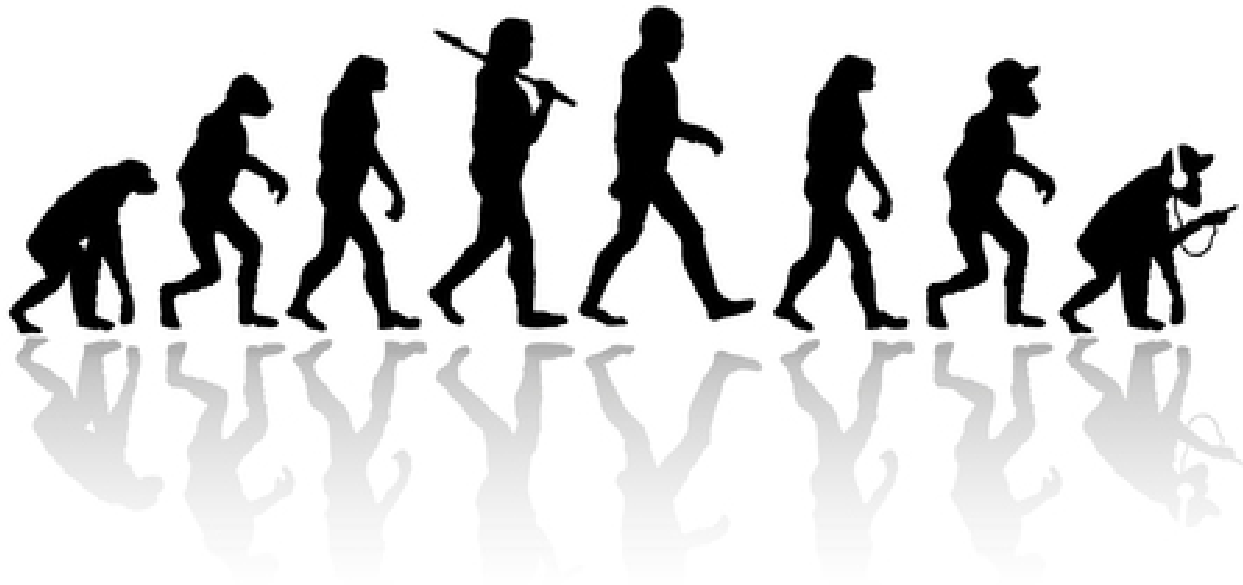
Ants act as farmers, ranchers,  
colonizers, and nomads.



Like humans, various species of ants have expanded their populations and can now be found all over the world. This has caused them to fight over territory.



# Getting Human Evolution Back on Track



By Charis Mitrelia

## Technologically in the smartphone era; emotionally still in the Stone Age.

Although our pre-historic ancestors progressed from a near-animal state of existence to the smart humans of modern times, the core of our human nature—expressions, feelings, and actions—has remained the same throughout time. Humans may have adapted intellectually to the pace of progress of the modern world, but our instincts have changed very little in the past 20,000 years. Social media, offering a platform for everybody to express himself, have revolutionized humanity. Initially, it was an accomplishment that brought everybody together. Nowadays, however, it has become a medium through which our aggression is poured out of our screens with cyber bullies and ‘trolls’ of all sorts lurking to unleash hate.

### What happened?

Children have access to technology from an increasingly younger age, and so they are exposed to violence, aggression, and bullying. Being nice is not “cool” anymore, and beautiful ideas are losing ground. Social media companies have two choices: on the one hand, if they choose to defend freedom of expression, many hateful voices will ruin social media; on the other hand, if they choose to be more precautions, they will have to set rules and regulations rendering fewer people willing to

interact via their media. Unless we behave like civilized human beings rather than like boasting apes in an attempt to find some means of restoring values and ideals, social media is going to be a recipe for disaster.

In the recent past, magazines and TV programs presented the ‘perfect lives’ of celebrities. Now, instead of watching celebrities, we expose ourselves. Having said this, we never show the less-than-perfect aspects of our everyday lives; we portray a glossier version of our lifestyle instead. This is a problem. We, ourselves, distort our public image, creating a constant comparison to unrealistic role models. This leads to feelings of



We are the selfie generation—everyday experiences become photo ops in our never-ending search for likes.

inferiority and gives emotionally unstable people a window to express themselves through hateful speech.

### **How do we restore goodness in all of us?**

There are some innate human traits that have helped us survive through time: mimicking positive behaviors, acting appropriately even if we do not desire to do so, obeying social rules, socializing, being part of communities, and more. However, these traits are thwarted by narcissistic, aggressive, and violent posts or photographs on social media. Nowadays, people have been constantly trying to find a reason to brag about themselves and their accomplishments in a conceited attempt to appear powerful and influential.

We must dig deep into the incredible qualities of human nature for guidance. One way to do this is to turn to acting. Yes, we are all born actors—we all pretend to care or not to care, to like or not to like, to feel or not to feel. Humans have the capacity to actually see the way social media change the way we express ourselves and perceive reality, and, thus, restore goodness. Social media are full of fake, Photoshopped images because we all—more or less—pretend online. Younger kids are not capable of seeing that yet, so they try to copy provocative behaviors and become a person they are not. We need to reconsider our behavior before it becomes the norm for even younger children.

Our generation is fully immersed in social media, but older generations still hold on to their lives before social media came into being despite having online profiles. This is because they are in a unique position to draw on their experiences from the pre-social media era and apply them to the post-social media reality.

We need to get back in touch with who we are. Classical writers and poets can inspire us and help us bring back the traits that made people overcome all obstacles and rebuild mankind throughout history. Bringing back the classical repertoire of ideals to the contemporary world can bond us beyond the unpleasantness of social media. This will change social media for the better: reverting it back to its original purpose, which is to connect us, not divide us.

Social media can become invaluable tools as long as we keep to a few simple rules: we should not compare ourselves with others, we should not criticize others for the sake of being negative, and we should not scrutinize the details of others' lives and risk feeling that we are inadequate. We have to rise above this to connect with our finer innate human traits. We owe to humanity a change in human interaction so as to fine-tune our evolving human nature. In this way, we can get our evolution back on track by enriching our lives, growing as individuals, and making the world a better place.



Younger kids are not often able to distinguish between what is real and what has been doctored on social media.



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# Climate Change and Environmental Issues



“Adults keep saying we owe it to the young people, to give them hope, but I don’t want your hope. I don’t want you to be hopeful. I want you to panic. I want you to feel the fear I feel every day. I want you to act. I want you to act as you would in a crisis. I want you to act as if the house is on fire, because it is.”

—Greta Thunberg



By Daphne Makri

# Cloud of Smoke

“Record-breaking temperatures and months of severe drought have fueled a series of massive bushfires across Australia,” we heard from the BBC World News in the summer of 2019. “Last summer, fires devastated two coastal towns in Greece, leaving 103 dead,” announced The Guardian in reference to the 2018 tragedy here in Greece. “Wildfires destroyed nearly 178,000 hectares of forests and land in the E.U.,” reported the European Commission in 2018.

Have humans been destroying the earth? This has been a matter of debate over the past couple of decades in particular. Though a small proportion of society refuses to put the blame on the human race, most people agree that it is our doing. If you haven’t noticed the effects of this, you are lucky one of the lucky ones. But you should know that our daily choices affect millions of people all over the world. However, we seem to choose our lifestyles without thinking about the consequences. Those consequences have never been clearer for people living in danger zones as wildfires ravage the earth.

People have the tendency to take measures to combat an issue and to prevent it from happening in the future only after a tragedy occurs. Climate change, a long-term shift in global or regional climate patterns, is the main cause of the natural disasters that people face at this moment. Climate change is also the reason why many lose their loved ones, as well as why NASA could see last year’s wildfires in Australia from space. But

mankind is responsible for climate change. Wildfires are only one prominent example of the impact people’s choices have on their own lives as they affect the natural world.

Research shows that climate change creates a warmer and drier environment on earth, partly due to a hole in the ozone layer of the atmosphere that lets the hazardous rays of the sun hit the surface and then traps them. This results in an increase in wildfire risk as these conditions favor the creation and spread of fires. Trapped inside the stratosphere, these rays rapidly raise the temperature of the soil and therefore, jeopardize our natural resources. Human action in cities and factories also contributes to this phenomenon. Chemical waste from power plants and perilous gases emitted by engines are only some of the most common contributors to the current deterioration of our environmental state.

Last summer, Australia reached 45°C, which led to catastrophic and uncontrollable fires all over the continent. With the global temperature rising swiftly over the last decade, climate change lengthens the wildfire period all the while making fires more frequent and severe. The results were devastating. Houses burned to the ground, rare species almost became extinct, and human lives were lost. At the end of the day, we are responsible for eliminating a vital oxygen source from the map, a means for our survival. It’s high time we make a change before the world as we know it goes up in a cloud of smoke.



# SOS: Save Our Seas!



By Georgia Papadopoulou

In the last 60 years, the amount of waste floating around in the oceans has almost tripled. Most of it is plastic dumped by people at the beach or chemicals from factories or pesticides from farms that have washed into the sea. Our oceans, which once seemed endless, inexhaustible, and indestructible, have now become vast, blue wastelands, filled with the neglect and recklessness of the same people that swim in them. Tragically, marine pollution is an increasing global problem which has a severe impact on marine and coastal life and ecosystems around the globe. Understanding the types of pollution and how each affects the oceans can help us save our seas before it is too late.

## The four main types of marine pollution you should know about:

Marine pollution is created when chemicals and trash are washed or blown into the ocean, mostly from land. This pollution damages marine ecosystems and the health of many organisms living in them. Many people do not know that there are four main types of marine pollution: chemical, light, noise, and plastic pollution. Each of these endangers sea life.

**Chemical pollution** is caused by chemical substances—like oil, pesticides, fertilizers, industrial chemicals, and sewage—which

contaminate the water and make it dangerous for the organisms living in it. Chemical pollution is almost solely caused by humans and their reckless use of chemicals.



When pollutants and chemicals are dumped into ocean waters, there is a great impact on all marine life.

**Light pollution** happens when artificial light enters the water, causing changes in the environment for organisms and disrupting natural processes like feeding, reproduction, and migration. Particularly at night, light allows predators to catch smaller prey they would otherwise not be able to see in the darkness. This results in the death of many more fish. It also harms delicate ecosystems, like corals. Light pollution is more common near urban areas, but it

can also be caused by the lights of fishing boats and other ships.

**Noise pollution** is the increase in loud or repeated sounds from ships, sonar devices, and oil rigs in the sea. This additional noise disrupts the natural sounds in the ocean and confuses organisms in a similar way to light pollution. Most affected by these unnatural sounds are mammals like dolphins and whales, which use echolocation—the emitting of sound waves that reflect off objects and come back—to communicate and navigate around the ocean. This interruption in communication can sabotage migration, hunting, and reproduction patterns.



Noise pollution sabotages the migration, hunting, and reproduction patterns of dolphins and whales.

**Plastic pollution** is caused by plastic run-off or even purposeful dumping. A great portion of plastic pollution is single-use plastic that is often consumed by animals or even traps them. Also, as it may take plastic items up to 400 years to decompose, they release potentially toxic substances, such as bisphenol A, poisoning the water. Scientists estimate that by 2050, the plastics found in the oceans will outweigh the fish. However, the biggest threat to our oceans is not plastic but rather microplastics, which are extremely small pieces of plastic, cut-off due to sun exposure and wave action. Microplastics may be consumed by fish, which are then caught by fishermen and brought to our tables, a process that introduces these small plastic pieces into the food chain. Alternatively, they may sink to the bottom of the ocean—70% of the ocean's trash sits at the bottom—and cannot be collected without the help of trained divers who carry out underwater cleanups of the seabed.

### Some shocking facts about ocean pollution that you may not know:

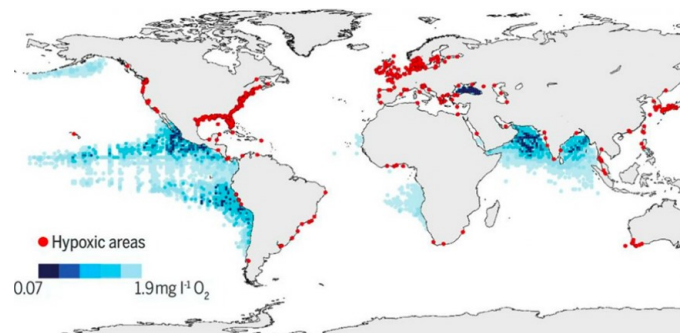
⇒ There are five garbage patches—very large areas of the sea where natural currents cause trash to collect—the largest being the Great Pacific Ocean Garbage Patch. It has an area of 1,000,000 km<sup>2</sup>, which is 13 times the size of Greece.



Scientists estimate that 1.15 to 2.41 million tons of plastic end up in the ocean annually. Natural currents force such trash to collect in *garbage patches*.

⇒ Eight billion kilograms of plastics are dumped into the oceans annually—almost the weight of 57,000 blue whales!

⇒ Our oceans today are covered in dead zones—areas where hypoxia, a term referring to the reduced oxygen levels in the water, causes animals and plants to suffocate and die. This may be the result of natural causes or may be the consequence of human activity, such as the dumping of chemicals that cause nutrient pollution. There were 146 dead zones in 2004, but that number had quadrupled by 2008, reaching a total of 405. The largest one is a dead zone the size of the Peloponnese in the Gulf of Mexico.



The number of Dead Zones in the world's oceans are increasing every year.



### Three easy ways that you can protect the seas:

The ocean, a fragile and valuable shared resource, needs to be protected. *But from what?* you may ask. Or better yet, *from whom?* The answer is from *us*. We are responsible for everything that harms our seas. We dump our chemicals into them and contaminate the water. Our boats make noise and emit light, disrupting the natural processes of marine organisms. We dump our trash into the ocean, endangering creatures that may eat it or get trapped by it. Ocean pollution is our fault. It is our duty to do everything in our power to protect the seas and be more responsible and sensitive to the issues relating to the marine ecosystem.

**1. Get informed.** The most important thing is to know what you are fighting for and how you can fight for it. Many organizations, like National Geographic, the WWF, and Oceana have information concerning ocean pollution available on their websites.

**2. Take action.** You can attend a beach cleanup near you. In Athens, for instance, there are

organizations like Ethelon and Let's do it GREECE that have many activities you can volunteer for, including beach cleanups. You can reduce your own use of plastics by replacing plastic bottles and straws with reusable ones.

**3. Stay updated.** Sign up for the newsletters of organizations that fight the ocean crisis, and be regularly informed about what is happening. Examples of these organizations are iSea, AllForBlue, HELEMPA in Greece, the Surfrider Foundation, the 5 Gyres Institute, Green Peace, Ocean Conservancy, Project AWARE, and several aquariums internationally.

Every single one of us can do one small thing every day to help the environment. It all starts with you, with me—with each individual. You can change the world by first changing your understanding of your attitude towards climate change and ocean pollution. The Earth is the only planet we have, and if we do not protect it, who will? Be the change you want to see, and save our seas!



From plastic to light, different forms of pollution affect the creatures of the seas in negative ways.



# An Interview with Energy Specialist



**Vasilis Nicoletopoulos**

**By Magda Badogiannaki**

*I recently had the opportunity to interview Mr. Vasilis Nicoletopoulos, the founder and main shareholder of Natural Resources, PC, a business consultancy and brokerage company on industrial and commercial development affairs, which specializes in basic industry sectors, such as mining, metallurgy, and renewable energy. As a member of the Energy and Climate Committee of Euromines, the European Association of Mining and many other industries, he shared his knowledge of matters related to climate change with me.*

**In your opinion, what are the most important dangers when it comes to climate change?**

We need to start with a question: does climate change really exist? Recently, it looks like it does. The problem here is that we have scientific measurements for just the last 150 years and even though for us, humans, 150 years is a long period of time, for climate change, it is a really short one. Similar phenomena existed before statistics. For example, glaciers melted hundreds of thousands of years ago, way before the Industrial Revolution, while cultures in Mesopotamia became extinct due to climate change. That leads us to the question of whether climate change is human induced or a phenomenon of great importance. At first, scientists called it “Global Warming,” but later on, we realized that it wasn’t always warming, but it had to do with severe temperature changes, massive hurricanes, and deadly colds, and so a more general name was given: “climate change.”

Dangers from climate change, if this phenomenon continues, are the following: 1) some countries are going to become deserts, 2) some others are going to “drown” because of the rising sea level, and 3) the consequence of these first two will be large movements of populations as their countries will not be viable. In my view, these three are the most important dangers.

**Climate change, as you have already mentioned, is a widely discussed subject in the 21st century, and there are many interpretations concerning its severity and threat to the world. Do you believe that climate change is absolute or that different interpretations can also be taken into consideration?**

It’s true that there are many interpretations of this phenomenon, and that is because it is not absolute. The interpretations fall into two categories: firstly, if it really exists and to what degree, and secondly, if it is human induced and what can humans do about it.

Everyone has accepted the fact that climate change is here, especially over the last few decades, but I’m not really sure if it is more severe than before we started recording scientific measurements.



Mr. Vasilis Nicoletopoulos speaking at the European Business Mining Forum.



**It is an incontestable fact that human activity has had a great impact on climate change. Are there other factors that contribute to climate change, as well?**

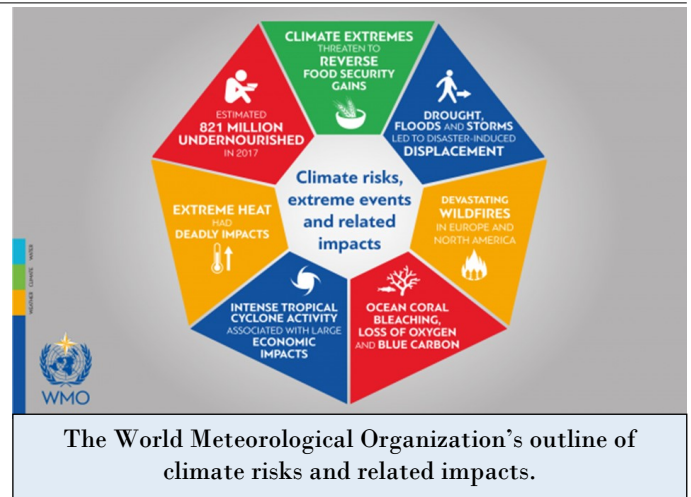
Certainly, there are two great ones. The first is the sun's thermal activity. The sun, as you know, is the most important source of energy for life on Earth, and it is responsible for the temperature regulation of our whole galaxy. However, our North Magnetic Pole moves by tens of kilometers every year, and this affects the sun's activity on our planet. Since the sun controls the Earth's climate, it impacts climate change. The second one is the eruptions of volcanoes. The gases and dust particles ejected into the atmosphere during volcanic eruptions greatly impact the climate and can cause global warming.

**It seems that climate change is a complex situation. How can humans cope with climate change?**

Now, we reach another question: to what degree is climate change human induced? As an engineer and economist, I tend to quantify things. Mr. Zerefos, Nobel Prize holder and expert on the physics of the atmosphere and climate, has given many interviews in which he talks about human activity and climate change. In some, he mentions that humans are responsible for 20%, whereas in others, 50%. Let's say that the human impact on climate change is 30%, and the rest is the result of the factors previously mentioned plus animal activity. Animals play an important role as they emit methane which is many times more dangerous than carbon dioxide. My "educated guess" would be that human impact is less than 50%.

What can we do to stop it? The first thing that an individual can do is nothing! The famous do-nothing alternative! An individual can sleep and think that climate change is a problem concerning the distant future, and so future generations should deal with it.

The second alternative is a more gracious one. As a friend of mine used to say, "Even if human activity doesn't impact climate change, what are we going to tell our children? That we didn't do anything because we thought that it wasn't true or because we doubted it?" Even if we have doubts, we need to do something about it.



So, what can an individual do to stop this phenomenon even though he has doubts or is responsible for less than 50% of the problem? Two kinds of actions can be applied: The first is technocratic measures, like the limitation of emissions in industries, obliging them to pay fines for each ton of heat-trapping greenhouse gases that they emit. This is also called mitigation. The European Union has taken many measures that are entrepreneurial. China, as well as many states in the U.S., is also following these regulations, believe it or not. That is a technocratic measure that has been applied to many countries.

On the other hand, another alternative is that humans change their way of living. That means that they will not move around, or they will move around less using environmentally-friendly means of transport. They will stop eating red meat as in its production process, significant gas emissions happen. They will recycle much more than they do today. They will reuse things, such as wearing the same clothes. So, there are many things that people can do, from industrial work to individual activity.

“As a friend of mine used to say, ‘Even if human activity doesn’t impact climate change, what are we going to tell our children? That we didn’t do anything because we thought that it wasn’t true or because we doubted it?’ Even if we have doubts, we need to do something about it.”

**Do you believe that using more technologically-advanced units, machines, and industrial installations that are more ecofriendly could help eliminate climate change?**

Yes. A great part of the European's Union and the UN's deal concerning climate change has to do with the reduction of emissions, the increase in energy efficiency, and the use of renewable sources of energy. In order to achieve these three goals, which are strongly connected, new technology, software, and hardware are required. Companies are working towards "doing more with less."

**Greece is one of the countries that signed the Paris Agreement on the 22nd of April, 2016. Do you believe that our country has taken the appropriate steps to eliminate climate change?**

The government has taken drastic measures to stop climate change, especially by announcing the closing of the lignite power plants in Macedonia and in the Peloponnese in the next 4-5 years, even before Germany plans to do so. However, this will cause many technical, economic, and social problems that need to be solved. Also, the government has given significant emphasis to the importance of green transportation means like electric cars and electric buses. If these measures are actually realized, the answer to your question is yes. At the same time, let's not forget that agriculture and stockbreeding are two sectors that contribute a lot to gas emissions but because of

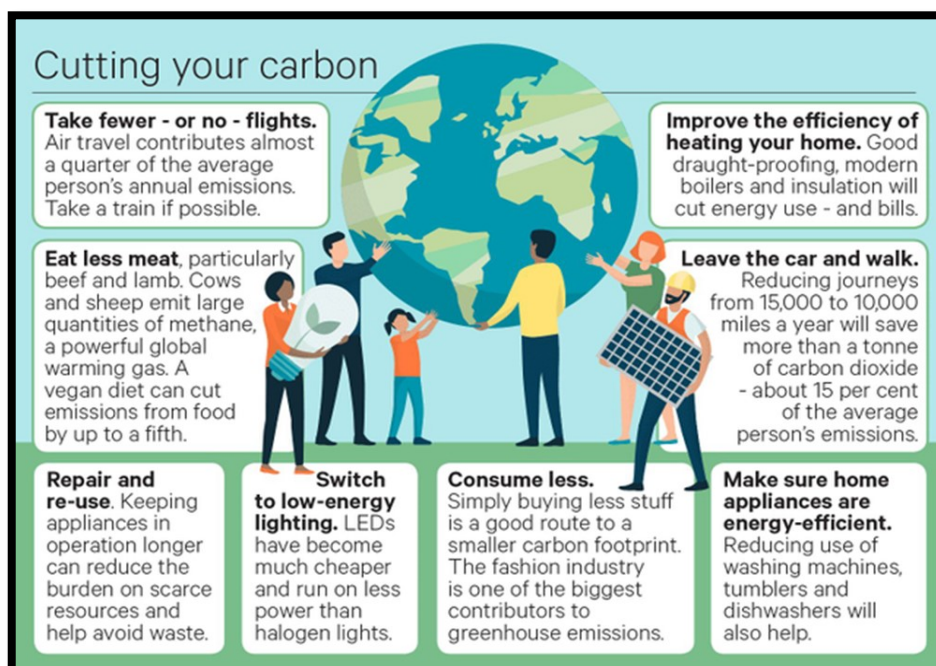
social preconceptions, it is almost impossible to deal with.

**Do you believe that there are any optimistic messages you can give us on climate change?**

The first optimistic message is to keep calm. The second is that climate change has been around before the statistics of the last few decades. The third is that, for the most part, it's not our fault. The fires in Australia are causing tremendous climate change. To the degree that humans are responsible, they must take certain measures. The European Union, the leader in this effort, has taken drastic measures, but Europe constitutes only 15% of Earth. If the remaining 85% ignores climate change, then this phenomenon will never be stopped. Overpopulation, which mainly exists in underdeveloped countries, is certainly an increasing environmental burden and should be controlled by cultural means. An optimistic message about climate change would be that we need a change in our way of thinking.

**Closing this very interesting interview, I would like to ask what you would suggest my generation do differently from previous generations.**

First, learn and be objective; don't get carried away by unfounded views. Second, be optimistic. Third, try to change your way of living—you cannot drive an SUV in town and preach about climate change. Fourth, educate the underdeveloped world about the issues of climate change.



**"An optimistic message about climate change would be that we need a change in our way of thinking."**





# Beyond Greta...

By Anastasia Giannoulatou

This last year, almost everyone has heard of the young activist and environmentalist Greta Thunberg, whose words have touched people's hearts and made them rethink the planet's fate. However, she is not the only young activist trying to create a brighter future for the generations to come; there are more young 'heroes' beyond Greta, who, like her, want to make a change in the world.

In recent decades, more and more people have grown concerned and puzzled about our planet's future. The over-consumption of our natural resources, the use of carbon-dioxide-releasing fossil fuels, and the deforestation of enormous tracts of land are only a few of the factors that have led to the greenhouse effect and to the phenomenon of climate change. Nevertheless, some teenagers, having felt the danger that our home, the Earth, is facing, have decided to take matters into their own hands.



Activist Alexandria Villasenor outside of the United Nations building in New York City.

One of these young heroes is 13-year-old Alexandria Villasenor. Although not as well-known as Greta, Alexandria has done a great deal to help the environment. Born in California, Alexandria Villasenor first grew mindful of the staggering effects of environmental change in 2013, when a drought caused the lake in Folsom, California to evaporate completely. A few years later, when huge wildfires broke out across the

state, she realized how serious the greenhouse effect and climate change was. She realized "these events aren't normal, and that they are linked to climate change." Every Friday since, Villasenor has stood in protest against worldwide atmosphere inaction outside the United Nations central command.

In all conditions, she feels that she needs to get her message out: "I'm upset with how world leaders are treating the climate crisis. The youth need to make sure that people in power start taking action because we don't have time to wait until we can!"

Alexandria Villasenor is not the only teenager trying to save the world. Another bright example of teenagers striving to save the Earth are Balinese sisters Melati and Isabel Wijzen. In 2013, having discovered that only 5% of plastic bags used in Bali were recycled while the remaining 95% was left to pollute the island's beautiful flora, they started a campaign and an organization called "Bye Bye Plastic Bags" to elicit change. By 2018, the teenage sisters successfully managed to help convince the Balinese government to ban plastic bags.



Balinese twin sisters Melati and Isabel Wijzen are the founders of Bye Bye Plastic Bags.

Another remarkable example is 17-year-old Toby Thorpe from Huon Valley, Tasmania. Having realized the grave danger the Earth is facing, Toby helped in the organization of a strike in Tasmania as he wants future generations to be able to enjoy Tasmania's natural beauty. The island has suffered greatly from floods, tropical storms, and wildfires; these environmental upheavals have made Toby eager to protect the environment.



From Tasmania, Toby Thorpe encourages youth around the world to protest climate inaction.

In particular, Thorpe wants to close down the Carmichael Coal Mine, a mine in Central Queensland, Australia, the operation rights of which were given to an Indian company. Thorpe advocates against the fossil fuel industry and believes that the Australian government has not done as much as it can to prevent climate change or to institute the use of renewable energy sources efficiently. In fact, only 6.7% of Australia's energy comes from renewable energy sources, shocking for a country with so much sun and wind, something that Toby Thorpe is committed to change.

In Asia, 17-year-old Seo-gyung Kim, who lives in South Korea, is trying to prevent climate change to alter our planet's fate. Having learnt from a young age how nuclear power plants work from her mother, a science teacher, Kim became concerned when she discovered that the water utilized to cool atomic plants was returned to the



Seo-gyung Kim, the aspiring teen fighting against climate change from South Korea.

sea; the youthful extremist began her battle against marine contamination and in favor of more renewable energy sources.

Kim pointed out, "I don't understand why my government is not investing more in the renewable energy sector but is still investing in coal-powered plants." Even though there is still a lot to be done, Kim is pleased that her home-city of Seoul is equipping one million households with solar panels and that last year, a floating solar farm was established. Nevertheless, Kim still believes that for the most part, the people in South Korea are ignoring the problem of climate change.

On the other side of the world, another young activist by the name Scarlett Possnett is battling climate change. The 15-year-old, who lives in the United Kingdom, has expressed her fears over climate change. When the U.K. experienced its hottest February in 2019, Scarlett knew she had to act—immediately. She was already a member of the U.K. Student Climate Network (UKSCN), but she felt more needed to be done, so she began organizing strikes across the U.K. With other UKCSN activists, Possnett composed an open letter to the British government, declaring a national atmosphere crisis and requesting that environmental change be incorporated into the national educational plan.



Scarlett Possnett has organized climate strikes across the United Kingdom.

Greta might be one of the leading young activists against climate change, but she is not alone; there are thousands of young teenagers determined to change the world for the better with campaigns and leadership skills that will hopefully help shape a sustainable future. The youth of today will inherit this world, so it is important for them, for all of us, to contribute to making sure that it will be a world we can live in. To achieve this, though, we all need to do our part to protect the Earth, the home of our ancestors, the home of the living, and the home of those yet to come.



# The Silver Lining in the COVID Cloud

By Achilleas Frangos

Today, people are feeling powerless all over the world because of the unprecedented situation we are experiencing due to COVID-19. Undoubtedly, living in the world of social distancing and isolation for two or more months has affected most, if not all, of us. We all feel strange, emerging from our homes for the first time in weeks, the warmth of the sun caressing our pale skin and the slight breeze blowing through our long, uncut hair, and most importantly socializing “fact-to-face” with other human beings after an inordinately long time.

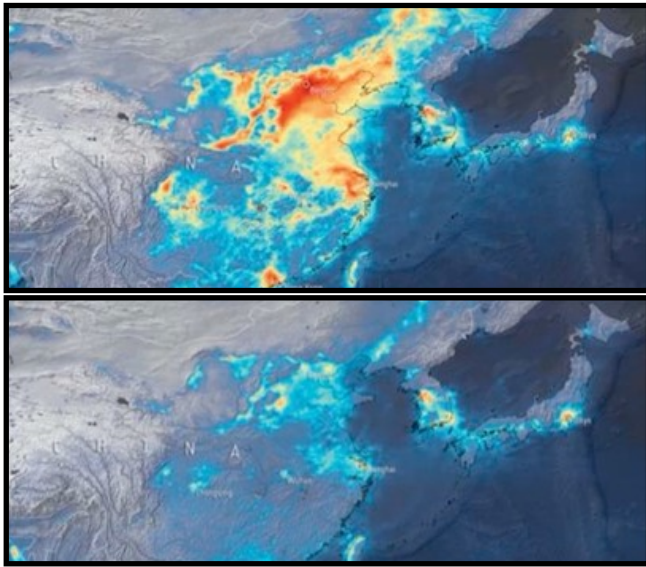
Three months ago, the prospect of having a global lockdown because of a deadly pandemic seemed unrealistic and comedic, but this changed quite abruptly in Greece in early March. There is no doubt about it; this year is one which will not soon be forgotten, for it is the hallmark of a different world, one in which we will have to alter our very perception of what everyday life is. However, in every dark cloud there is always a silver lining. In this case, it is the positive impact that our lockdowns and quarantines have had on the very air we breathe.

One advantage of being enclosed in our homes is the fact that we have not been out, polluting the environment. Of course, this is something most people have not considered in the torrent of problems that the pandemic has created. However, I believe it must be broadcast so that there can truly be an impact on and a change in our mindset as we move forward in our new reality.

Over the past three months, the quality of the air we breathe has markedly improved because, when people stay home, they do not drive, use public transport, or fly to the far corners of the earth. When people stay home, many industries do not burn coal and emit harmful gasses into the air. When we stay home, we do not use fossil fuels at an alarming rate. The result is that there has been a drastic reduction of greenhouse gasses being emitted into the atmosphere, which otherwise cause air pollution and climate change. In some parts of the world, nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) levels have been reduced by as much as 40%, and global carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions have gone down approximately 18%. In some countries, such as the UK, CO<sub>2</sub> emissions have been reduced by as much as 75% and NO<sub>2</sub> emissions by over 60%. As for China, satellite images show a staggering difference between NO<sub>2</sub> levels before and during



As travel slowed to a near halt during the peak of the pandemic, air quality improved.



China's level of nitrogen dioxide in the atmosphere in December (top) as compared to February (bottom) as a result of their lockdown.

their lockdown. Needless to say, this is a large improvement over the unsustainable lifestyle we had before lockdown, one that brings us closer to the Paris Agreement of 2016, which, in cooperation with the UN, aimed at mitigating global carbon dioxide emissions.

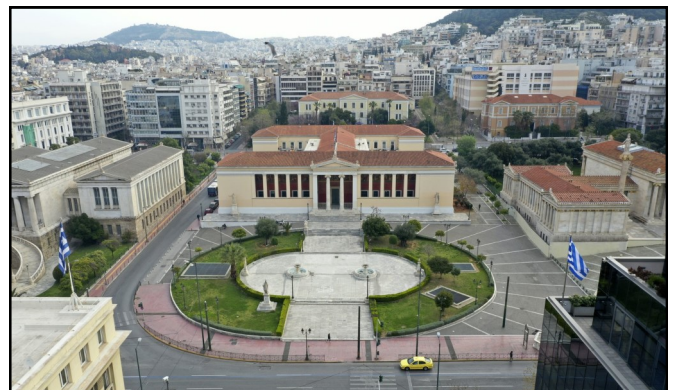
Many scientists predict that when countries revoke their lockdowns, the carbon and nitrogen emissions will quickly rise, and the annual reduction will settle at approximately 7%, a much lower number. This is deeply problematic for several reasons. Firstly, the good that was done will be largely undone because ultimately nothing will have changed—people and companies will continue polluting as they did before. The future is, as of now, difficult to predict, but many of us, including myself, believe that there is still hope for our fragile earth.

Although “staying at home” will end—as it has in many countries—it was enough to reveal to people how easily we can save the environment. In essence, we are at the edge of the cliff, but we can back away before we fall over it. To do this, we must educate all citizens, young and old—the people who lead us, the people who vote and take part in shaping their communities, and the people who live in these communities.

As we reengage with society, regulations can be adopted to ensure a cleaner, more environmentally-friendly world. We have learned

in the COVID crisis that there are different ways to work; for example, encouraging businesses—when possible—to have a third of their employees work from home could have a major impact. This would be an effective strategy in combatting the issue of emissions. It would take some adjustments, and it is not a perfect system, but the one we had before was not perfect either. This change would mean less travelling even over short distances, helping to keep the greenhouse gas emissions down. It is just a start, but what we have learned is that we can adapt. The pandemic has proven this possible, so we should use this “novel” knowledge to our advantage.

Before the lockdown, before COVID, there were many who expressed concern about the environment. There were policies, agreements, and treaties, but nothing seemed to make the impact, the change that we all knew was needed. However, when the pandemic struck, we did the unthinkable, the impossible. We saved lives by staying inside to stop the spread of the virus, but we also learned a valuable lesson which proved to be the silver lining in the COVID cloud: it might not be too late for



While we have been isolated to our homes, our cities have become ghost towns. Nature has had time to take a break from human activity, but how do we make it last?





# Nuclear Energy: What Went Wrong?

By Alice Dimitropoulou

Nuclear energy is by far the safest and cleanest way to generate enough energy to cover the needs of the entire planet while also protecting it. However, our fear of its potential danger keeps us from realizing nuclear energy's benefits.

We do not want to admit it, but we should: our instinctive perception of the danger of nuclear power plants has reached a point where all we can think of is a careless worker who trips, drops some uranium, and sets off a nuclear explosion. Therefore, before we start, we should demystify a technology that seems a little alien at first sight. A typical nuclear plant consists of three basic parts: a turbine that spins with the help of steam, the nucleus that creates the steam by boiling water, and the cooling system that leads the steam throughout the system, cooling down all its parts.

The main difference between a typical fossil fuel power generator and a nuclear one is that, instead of coal being burned to heat up the water and create steam, hot bars of uranium are inserted directly into the water. That is the reason nuclear energy does not contribute to the greenhouse effect: since we do not burn fossil fuels, there is no carbon dioxide waste released into the atmosphere. Therefore, in this way, we protect our planet and reduce global warming.

According to NASA: Global Climate Change, the burning of fossil fuels has increased the levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere by at least one third since the Industrial Revolution began, and this increase is “the most important long-lived ‘forcing’ of climate change,” leading our planet to its current unfortunate state. This is the exact reason we should incorporate nuclear energy into our main methods of energy production.

But we should not fool ourselves. We all know the elephant in the room, and the reason nuclear generators are rare, despite all their advantages. On April 26, 1986, in Chernobyl, Ukraine, a nuclear generator exploded and caused more than 100 instant deaths and about 4,000 deaths over time. However, did Chernobyl blow up because it utilized a dangerous way of producing energy? No. Chernobyl exploded because the technology of the generator was out-of-date and because the safety policy was seriously lacking.

Today, even if we wanted another Chernobyl-like explosion to happen, it would just be impossible. To give you an example, a nuclear generator in Fukushima, Japan was hit by a tsunami in 2013. There were no explosions, and not even one person died. That is because the current safety measures in nuclear plants are so



When people think of nuclear energy, they often think of the 1986 Chernobyl disaster.

strict that even if we tried, we would not be able to cause a problem on the scale of Chernobyl.

You may ask, Is nuclear energy 100% safe? Of course not. However, cars are not 100% safe either, and we still use them every day. Every time you ride in a car, you risk your life and physical health, yet you choose to ‘trade’ this small risk for the convenience of moving faster and more easily. Every single one of our actions has this ratio of risk-to-benefit. The problem is that we humans are very bad at objectively measuring the risk that results from every action. Another simple example is an airplane. We are all afraid of them, but numbers do not lie: for the same distance covered in an airplane, a train is two times deadlier, a car is one hundred times deadlier, and a motorbike is three hundred times deadlier.

But what is the risk-to-benefit ratio for energy production? In other words, how many people have to lose their lives so that every one of us can have power in our homes? Nuclear energy causes far fewer deaths because there are far fewer generators. To calculate it properly, we must take the number of deaths occurring from each method of energy production and divide it by the amount of energy each produces. The greater the number, the more dangerous it is to produce that kind of energy.

This is the interesting part: natural gas kills 38 times more people than nuclear energy, biomass 63 times more people, oil 243 times more people, and coal kills a whopping 387 times more people than nuclear energy per year! In other words, coal kills almost one million people per year whereas nuclear energy kills less than one!

The question is, then, why are we so bad at judging death? The truth is that a shocking, tragic death will stick in our minds more so than one that occurs in a common manner. If we found out tomorrow that an electricity plant caught fire, we would be sad, but at least we would know what fire was, what electricity was, and what a factory was. However, if we were told that in the middle of the Cold War, a nucleus of Soviet uranium had been exposed and had exploded, that would not just be news—it would be a movie script, a Netflix series, and the main storyline of hundreds of books.

Now, consider how many coal mines have collapsed, killing millions, or how many people have lost their lives in oil-well explosions. There are very few books and even fewer movies about these accidents.

The typical methods of energy production are far more dangerous than nuclear power-plants, yet because of our irrational fears, we choose to ignore this fact. We need to understand that fear is very different from danger. We need to set our fears aside and judge nuclear energy with logic and not with our hearts because—with global warming threatening our planet—we do not have the luxury of judging with our hearts any longer.

## KEY POINTS



1

**NUCLEAR ENERGY HAS THE SMALLEST IMPACT ON LAND USE AND BIODIVERSITY LOSS OF THE MAJOR CLEAN ENERGY SOURCES.**



2

**NUCLEAR ENERGY HAS THE LEAST RESOURCE EXPLOITATION AND, THEREFORE, THE LEAST ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT FROM MINING.**



3

**NUCLEAR IS THE ONLY ENERGY SOURCE TO SUCCESSFULLY AND SAFELY CONTAIN ITS OWN WASTE.**

Positive attributes of nuclear energy from the University of Melbourne.



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# Part II:

# Short Stories



“Find the key emotion; this may be all you  
need to know to find your short story.”

– F. Scott Fitzgerald

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# Dystopia



“Live every day as if you've come back in time  
from a dystopian future to try and  
prevent everything from breaking.”

—Charlie Jane Anders



# The Dandelions



By Irene Pachiyanni

**I**t was a windy November afternoon outside of Rick the scientist's house when he got a call from his lab partner saying that their theory would soon be proven true. With shivers running down his spine, Rick continued his call in the backyard. Nash and Arthur, two dandelions leaned towards him to listen.

"Well... I guess we only have twenty-three hours left; we should spend them wisely," dandelion Arthur said out loud. The pouring rain and the strong breeze were mostly what kept on scaring the dandelions. They all wanted to die from somebody wishing and blowing on them, not because of bad weather—or something worse.

20 hours left...

Soon enough, the whisper of the breeze became the roaring of the wind. All the media were talking about "The End of the World." Everyone was trying to do everything they could to prevent this from happening, but it was too late. All those years of man against nature, not caring about harming it...the time had come for all to pay.

16 hours left...

Rick's daughter braved the wind and plucked a lucky dandelion from the garden. "I wish this would stop," she said as she blew the dandelion seeds away. Nash and Arthur and every dandelion wished to have died in such a way, but sadly, they all knew that in less than sixteen hours, a strong wind and not a gentle puffing-wish would take them.

10 hours left...

The tornado, sucking up rivers and plains, burst over the hills and took away houses, trees, and people.

6 hours left...

"At this point, there's nothing more we can do...everything we could have done, we did, and all that we accomplished was just harming our world," Rick said despairingly into the phone. Nash and Arthur overheard. Time was short. It was their last chance to tell each other how they felt.

Arthur's seeds shuddered as he began to cry. "What's wrong?" Nash asked him. He leaned

towards her, and in his flowery whisper, Arthur told her he loved her.

The winds were getting stronger, the rain was getting heavier, and the love between them was like a burning flame. There was no signal, all media stopped working, and everyone's last hope was fading.

Everyone had their final talks, kisses, hugs, and moments with their loved ones...

6 minutes left...

Those last minutes were probably the most important ones.

The six minutes you wait for a lesson to end, or for a day or for a year, worrying about what's next, instead of enjoying every moment you live, spending it in the best way possible, and being thankful it even exists.

"I wonder why we had to reach this point to live, to live like we should?" asked Nash, her seeds sagging under the weight of her tears, falling like a river escaping a dam.

Soon enough, the strongest wind in all the years of humanity crashed down on them. Nash and Arthur leaned together, happy to have lived and loved even for so short a time, and then every dandelion in the world released its seeds, blown



A tornado ripping through the Midwest in the U.S.

into the wind. And all the unwished-wishes, unfulfilled spread to the far corners of the earth. And the dandelion seeds whispered, "Life is short, delicate, and you never know where the winds might take you. Don't waste a second to make your dreams and wishes come true."



Of all plants in the world, dandelions are unique in the way they spread their seeds.



“Life is short,  
delicate, and you  
never know where  
the winds might  
take you.



Don't waste a second  
to make your dreams  
and wishes come  
true.”



By Alice Allagianni



There was a burning sensation in my lungs. I could barely breathe. Half asleep, I reached for my electronic inhaler—my e-nhaler—on my nightstand. I put it in my mouth and pressed down.

*It doesn't work!* I was fully awake now. *Why isn't my stupid e-nhaler working? Has the battery run out? Why did they have to discontinue those old-school manual inhalers from the 2000s?*

I tried to breathe again, but barely any air came out of the inhaler. I tried to remember what my mom used to tell me when I was little, and my asthma got really bad: *Just keep breathing, bunny...just keep breathing...* I tried to take another breath.

I attempted to stand up from my bed, e-nhaler still in my mouth. But I fell to the floor instead. My hearing was distorted. It sounded like I was under water. My vision started to blur. *I can't breathe...*

I woke up on the floor, the taste of plastic was in my mouth. *My e-nhaler! The backup batteries must've kicked in! Thank God for backup batteries!*

I put my e-nhaler back on my nightstand and went the bathroom and looked in the mirror. I looked really awful. My skin was so pale. I looked

sick. I wanted to cry, which is exactly what I did.

*Why me? Why do I have to have stupid asthma! It's not fair! It's not fair that climate change destroyed the world!* I sobbed. *It is not fair that most plants died and that the oxygen supply was depleted! It's not fair that I can't breathe in a world with barely any oxygen left! It's not fair!* I yelled in frustration. Tears rolled down my cheeks. I fell to the floor. I cried for a bit.

*I don't get it.* I sniffed. *Why would humanity want to continue? We live in a world where the sun can literally kill you because that stupid ozone layer broke! Who wants to—I sniffed again—who wants to live in that kinda world?* I said through my tears.

After crying on the bathroom floor and contemplating my existence for a solid ten minutes, I realized that I needed to pull myself together. *Just keep breathing.* I needed to go to the store and buy a new battery for my e-nhaler, too. There was no way the backup battery would last me until mom got back from her business trip.

I put on some clothes, applied my government issued sunscreen, prayed that I wouldn't run into anyone from school, and headed out.



The sun gives us life on earth. But human activity will cause it to change from a friend to a foe.

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*It's so hot out here! It's too hot. And too dangerous—even with the sunscreen on.* But so was having severe asthma and no e-nhaler.

I was walking down the street when I saw him. He was just a little boy, no more than nine years old, playing all by himself with a red ball. *This kid must be nuts! Not only is he out in the sun on a summer day—when standing too long in the sun can send you to the hospital—he's also wearing a red backpack and yellow Crocs!* I didn't even know which was worse! (Spoiler alert: I decided it was the Crocs.)

He approached me. From that distance, I could see his features clearly. His blue eyes with dark circles under them stood out. There was also a long, clear tube filled with some liquid going from his backpack to his left arm.

"Wanna play?" he asked me like there was nothing unusual about this situation.

I hesitated. *I shouldn't. I don't have my e-nhaler with me. What if I collapse? And with the heat? What if I can't breathe? It's too dangerous!* He recognized my hesitation.

He gave me those sad, puppy-dog eyes, "Please..."

Judging from his appearance, the kid had probably gone through a lot. I looked up and saw a mass of clouds approaching the sun.

I smiled. "Sure, kid."

We played with that ball for so long. Probably *too* long, but the clouds were there to help us—to help us have fun when fun was not easy to come by.

I said goodbye to my new little friend and went to the store, where I bought a bunch of batteries. *There's no way I'll run out now.* I felt reassured.

Things were good. Things were good for a while—every day, in fact. For months, I would go by his house and play with him. We did so much together. We became unlikely best friends. He even made me sign my name on his red ball. He said I

was the coolest person he had ever known. And then, just like that, it all ended.

His mother called me that terrible day and said that his lung disease had gotten much worse. I had a panic attack afterwards, which quickly transformed itself into an asthma attack. Mom had to take me to the hospital. I didn't mind, though. He was there, too, still wearing those very hideous yellow Crocs. They had been a gift from his dad, he told me once. He had also been very sick for a time. Sadly, lung disease ran in his family. That was why he wore those yellow Crocs everywhere. He missed his father. *I get it.*

And that's when things got a little, tiny bit better for a while. And then, they got worse. Way worse.

One day, before he passed, he gave me the red ball. He said it was his most prized possession, even more important to him than his yellow Crocs. I cried when he gave it to me. I rubbed my hand over my name he had written on the red rubber. He cried, too. We sobbed together on that hospital bed for a while.

*I miss him. I miss him so much.*

*This morning was the funeral. I couldn't bring myself to go. I could barely even get myself out of bed.*

*It's not fair! He was so young! And so smart! He showed me how to live! He showed me that I am not my disease. He wasn't either. He had gone through so much trouble with his health, gone through so many surgeries and yet—he didn't let that bring him down.*

*I am so proud to have been the "coolest person" in his life. To have mattered to him. I am so glad I had the chance to be his friend.*

*My best friend is gone, but I am not going give up. He wouldn't have wanted me to, however cliché that might sound.*

*I just have to keep breathing and continue on.*

*"Just keep breathing, bunny; just keep breathing."*



# Lotus



By Joanna Andritsogianni

There she was, 52 years after the apocalypse, a sad world with neither plants nor animals. It was her 16<sup>th</sup> birthday. When Cadyn woke up and entered the kitchen, her parents surprised her with a cake and sang happy birthday to her. But this was no ordinary birthday. Her parents had given her a special locket, the only object the family had left from the pre-apocalyptic earth. It was a tradition in her family to pass it on from one generation to the next, and now it was her turn to wear it. Cadyn smiled and put it around her neck before heading towards school, the place she dreaded the most.

As she walked her daily route, Cadyn looked around at her grey city and felt as if its darkness were consuming her, as if it were whispering the stories of the unforgivable things her ancestors did. People were heading towards their jobs and starting their ever-lasting routines; it was another normal day in the post-apocalyptic world.

Cadyn entered school and immediately saw her best friend, Amber.

“Cadyn! Happy birthday!” Amber shouted from across the corridor.

“Thanks! But, please, don’t scream that loudly.”

And that’s when she turned around and saw her bully, the girl who had been tormenting her since the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. The most popular girl in school—Ivy Finn.

“Oh look, it’s Oakley’s birthday! What did

you wish for? More friends?” she said with a sarcastic grin.

“Don’t pay attention to her,” Amber whispered to Cadyn.

This happened too often in school. It was the only reason she hated this place, all because of the perfect, pretty, and popular Ivy. She always tried to be strong and ignore her comments, but she could never keep them from getting to her. She was always in her shadow.

“I love your necklace. Is it new? Let me see it,” Ivy said.

“Yeah, it’s new,” she said under her breath.

“It’s nice. Give it to me,” she demanded.

“Oh, I’m sorry. I...uh...I can’t give it to you. It’s...it’s really special to me,” Cadyn stuttered in fear.

Everyone in the hallway was now looking at them.

“Do I really have to repeat myself?” she snapped. “I said, I want it.”

At that moment, Cadyn grabbed the locket, pulled it with force, and dropped it onto the floor. It was utterly shattered.

“Oops! I’m so sorry!” she said, pretending to care. She had a satisfied smile on her face as she turned around and left.

Cadyn was in shock. What would she tell her parents? Her family’s sole surviving heirloom

from the earth before it was destroyed was now broken. And what about her grandma? She would have been so disappointed in her.

After the show was over, everyone started to leave the corridors and go to their classes as if what had just happened was completely normal. However, for Cadyn, it was not just another rude and embarrassing moment created by Ivy. This time she had taken it too far.

“Are...are you ok?” Amber hesitantly asked her.

“Yeah. I’m fine,” Cadyn lied.

“I don’t believe you. Here, let me just help you,” she said as she kneeled down and tried to pick up the pieces.

“Just, please, leave me alone, ok?” she raised her voice, and her eyes started to water.

Amber looked concerned; nonetheless, she listened to Cadyn and headed to class. Cadyn kneeled down and picked up what was left of the locket when she noticed a tiny object. She realized it must have fallen out of it when it dropped and smashed onto the ground. Cadyn had never seen anything else like it. It was circular, light brown, and very small. She picked it up and felt its weird, harsh texture. It was nothing like she had ever encountered before. Everything in her world was smooth and mostly made out of metal or concrete, but this was very light, strangely complex, and didn’t look like it fit in with its surrounding environment. She quickly put it in her pocket, not wanting anyone else to see it, stood up, and headed to her classroom.

The rest of the day went on as usual. Once the last class had ended, she rushed out of school and went straight back home. She was determined to find out what the strange object was.

“Mom?”

“What is it, Cadyn?” her mom replied.

“Can you talk to me about grandma?”

“Sure, honey. She was a wonderful person. Oh, and she loved nature. She didn’t stop fighting for the planet, even until the very last moment,” she said with pride in her voice.

“And...did she say anything about her

locket?”

“Well, she always used to wear it around her neck, and one time, I remember asking her about it. She told me that it was really special to her—and to everyone else on earth. *You will see someday. I can’t explain it now, but you will see someday*, she said. I never truly understood what she had meant that day. Anyway, why do you ask, Cadyn?”

“Just curious. Thanks, mom,” she said as she ran to her room.

In the quiet of her room, Cadyn pulled the object out of her pocket and carefully set it on top of her desk. She opened the search engine on her phone and took a picture of it. It took much longer to pull up results than it normally did. She waited anxiously. *Ding*. She had got a hit. The object had been traced to an educational website. Cadyn started to read the first few lines of the article: “Before the apocalypse, as many of you know, the world was covered with nature. All nature was ultimately destroyed after human interference. People used to get their primary resources from it, like oxygen and food. What our machines do now, organisms called “plants” did naturally. For example, below is a picture recovered from 600 before the apocalypse [BA].”



We often take for granted the fact that we live in a world where trees and plants can grow.

Cadyn looked at the weird, green form and read the caption underneath the picture. It read, *Tree*.

She scrolled down a bit and saw another picture. She picked up the object from her desk and instantly knew what it was. In her hand, she was holding a seed. The world’s only seed.

Her heart was beating and her mind was





Lotuses are sacred water lilies native to Asia.

racing. *How is this possible? Why me? Why now? Did my grandma plan this? What am I supposed to do with this...thing?* she wondered. She went on reading the article and realized that to make a plant “work,” you need to make the seed grow. In other words, she would have to “plant” the seed in “dirt,” and water it, the article said.

*Dirt, dirt, dirt. Where can I get some dirt?*

She was back on her phone, searching for words like *seeds* and *plants*. It was now night, but she couldn’t stop researching and reading about this so-called “nature.” What she had discovered was too great. This tiny object had so much power in it. It could change the whole world, bring back nature, and in a sense, revive it! All she needed was dirt—or at least something that could substitute for it. *Yes! That was it!* All she had to do was, well, to create it. Machines made water, food, and all things useful to humans, but of course, plants didn’t have any use after machines took their place. It was a good thing that her parents worked at the Factory because she might be able to convince them to help her. They had access to materials and machines; they could help her create dirt! All she had to do now was to talk to them, but it would have to wait until the morning.

The next morning, she decided to go to school first and then talk to them. That day in school was no different from any of the others, except for the fact that Cadyn’s mind was filled with scenarios based on how her parents would react. She chose not to tell anyone about the seed, not even Amber. She didn’t want to risk anyone else finding out. A feeling of motherly protection and responsibility had taken over her body ever

since she had learned about the power and importance that tiny little object held. Nevertheless, classes finally ended, and she went back home, once again crossing the dull city, this time imagining what it could have looked like before the apocalypse, with its tall trees and bright colors.

“Hey, mom and dad?”

“Yes?” her dad said.

“I need to talk to you about something *really* important, but you have to promise me you won’t tell anyone else about it,” Cadyn said with a serious tone in her voice.

She went on explaining everything that had happened, and her parents were shocked.

“We need dirt, and I’ve come to the conclusion that there’s only one way to get it, and that is by creating it. This is where you guys come in. I need you to use machines from work and create dirt.”

“What if they catch us? This could cost us our jobs,” her mother said concernedly.

“No, mom. What we’re doing is for the good of humanity. We simply must do it. I think that grandma would’ve wanted this.”

After about two weeks, Cadyn’s parents came back home with a jar filled with a dark-brown substance. Once Cadyn realized what it was, she hugged her parents and ran to her room. She came back with the seed and another jar. She went to the kitchen, put the dirt in the jar, placed the precious seed in it, and poured some water on top. This was it. She had just planted the seed. All she had to do now was wait.

With careful care and anticipation, it wasn’t long before the plant started to grow. Cadyn was mesmerized. It was truly beautiful. It had some lilac and pink petals coming out of the bright green stem. Without hesitation, she looked up what the plant was: *Lotus—an exotic flower representing the universe, symbolizing rebirth, revival, and resurrection.*

“The seed can withstand thousands of years without water. In a way, it has the ‘will to live.’ It’s the flower of rebirth!” Cadyn said enthusiastically to her parents.

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# Man vs. Nature



“We have made our mark on the world, but we have really done nothing that the trees and creeping plants, ice and erosion, cannot remove in a fairly short time.”

—John Steinbeck





A firefighter battling the flames of a wildfire.

# A Guardian Angel

By Zoi Mathiopoulos

Day 1. There was a catastrophic fire in Australia. Firefighters from all over the continent were fighting to save the green land of Australia—the forests, the animals, and the people living there. Smoke had already covered most of the continent, and it was hard to breathe.

Mark was a firefighter there. Before he went to fight against the ferocious fire, he kissed his family goodbye and promised them that he would come back. A promise he didn't keep, but he couldn't have known that then.

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Day 12. The fires were growing and growing, eating everything in their path. They consumed trees, animals, and people, like they meant nothing, like it was easy. Firefighters were running into the flames when everyone else was running from them.

Mark was always exceptional. He stood out because of the will to give and protect that made him fearless and sometimes reckless when it came to danger. He was running, spraying the fire with water, and saving people and koala bears from them. At some point, he ran out of breath. He crouched down and panted heavily. He felt smoke filling up his lungs, making it hard to breathe, making him dizzy. He knew he couldn't keep up with this situation for much longer.

And it was at that moment that he heard a scream. An eerie and piercing scream, making his ears ring and cutting his heart like a knife. Perhaps it was the agony in the scream. Maybe it was the pain behind it. No, it was not only that. The scream was so high-pitched that anyone could understand it was a little girl's. He looked to his right and saw his colleagues, his mates, people who had been through hell together and back. He looked at his best friend, Chad. Chad knew this look much too well. This look made him scared because it revealed a man who feared nothing, a dangerous man.

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“No, Mark, don’t go back into the flames,” Chad warned.

“I have to go, Chad, and you know it. I can’t leave this poor little girl to die in the fire. You know that if I do that, I’ll never forgive myself,” Mark answered.

“It’s reckless, Mark! The flames are too big. Even if you find the girl, there’s a very slim chance that either you or the girl will make it. Think about the odds! If you stay, we’ll have one person alive and one dead. If you go, we’ll have two people dead...but it’s your call,” Chad stated hesitantly. He was not ready to lose his best friend.

“I’m sorry, Chad. I have to do this. Thank you for always being by my side,” Mark said, not daring to look his best friend in the eyes. Before Mark ran off into the wild flames, Chad caught a glimpse of something unknown to him, something strange and unsettling. It was fear that he had seen in Mark’s eyes.

Blazing branches fell to the ground. He tried to avoid them and did it very skillfully—until he started getting dizzy, dizzier than before. He did not see the flaming branch falling directly towards him. At the last moment, he caught sight of it. Because of his quick reflexes, he managed to move to his right just in time. However, the end of the branch had grazed his shoulder, cutting his flesh open and burning his skin. He screamed—a scream full of pain—but he continued searching for the little girl. When he finally found her, she was in poor condition; she was coughing, covered in ashes near a fallen tree. He approached her.

“Are you okay?” Mark tried to ask through coughs.

“I’m scared, I want to get out of here!” she screamed.

Mark tried to lift her up, but he couldn’t. Then, he realized why: the girl was stuck there. A huge branch had fallen onto her right foot, trapping her in that exact place. He tried to lift it, but it was no use. At that moment, he realized what he had to do. He lifted the branch a little bit, just enough for him to get under it, pressing his back against the

burnt wood. With all of his strength, he lifted it up high enough for the girl to crawl under and away from it. She stood up and looked at him. He knew that he couldn’t hold the branch up much more, nor could he also get out from under it. He didn’t want the girl to see him fall.

“Run, get out of here! I’m right behind you!” he screamed to the girl.

She looked at him, sadness filling her eyes. She knew better than that. She mumbled a *thank you* and started running, away from the fire, away from the man who had saved her life.

Finally, Mark could let go. He had done a good job. He fell. His breathing became slower, and his heartbeat fell. A hand touched him, caressing his forearm, making him feel safe. He fell into a peaceful sleep.

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Mark opened his eyes slowly, adjusting to the bright light surrounding him. *Where am I?* he thought to himself. He walked ahead slowly; he felt like he was walking on air. I was waiting for him at the golden gates and saw him approaching. Honestly, I felt sad for him. I had been watching him from day one and didn’t want things to end for him in this way. At least he had had a heroic death. I smiled at him.

“Hello, Mark,” I said.

“Where am I?” he asked, looking around. He was puzzled, and then he looked at me. His eyes widened. “Why do you have wings?” he stammered.

I laughed. “I am your guardian angel. You are in heaven, Mark. Let’s go inside.”

He was confused and scared. I smiled. I extended my hand forward for him to take.

“Come on. We don’t bite. And don’t worry, the food is nice here,” I said with a laugh.

He looked at me and took my hand as I guided him through the gates.



# Born in Water

*By Nikos Makridis*

**H**e had imagined this moment countless times, but he had never envisaged the sheer majesty of what he saw before him. He had been fascinated by whales for years and had been saving for this costly trip to Greenland to witness the annual migration of whales. This dream seemed to be the only focus he had had in life. It had taken him several years of working in positions that offered nothing except a good paycheck, drifting from one dead-end job to another.

He had watched all his friends leave him behind as they progressed in life, but he was still a ship without a compass. He used to think it was just due to circumstance; however, lately, he had come to the realization that it was something lacking in him. He was the problem, but how was he to solve it? This trip was his last-ditch effort to find meaning in this labyrinth of life.

At last he stood on the deck of the tour boat, surrounded by excited tourists with cameras constantly flashing as the giants of the ocean hurled their bulk into the sky. They came crashing down, creating an eruption of water. Each time it happened, the waves created rocked the boat from

side to side. John was prone to seasickness; however, this time, he did not feel anything. He became oblivious to it all; his mind was somewhere else, somewhere beautiful. As time went on, the whales hurled themselves into the water even closer to the boat, so close that passengers had to clutch the items they were holding, or otherwise, they would be washed overboard.

Every time the boat rocked, John would hear squeals behind him as if they were coming from a far off place. His mind was detached from his body, racing through the cold blue waters while his body clutched the rail. The rocking reached a dangerous point; it was no longer safe to be on the deck or quite frankly, on the boat at all. Waves crashed onto the deck quickly covering every surface and rushed down into the lower level. Shoes could be seen floating in the hallways, running with the current like sticks in a strong river.

Passengers on the boat were helplessly trying to reach a safe spot but quickly realized there was no such place. People ricocheted like ping-pong balls from wall to wall, screaming with terror.

Without conscious thought, John released his hold on the rail and felt himself falling. Deeper and deeper he plunged into the depths of blue. The water wrapped him in its icy embrace.

Suddenly, the reality of his situation hit him. For the first time that day, he felt fear rushing through his blood. His chest felt as if it would explode, and he instinctively opened his mouth to gasp for air. Water rushed into his lungs but did not put out the fire in his chest. There was a moment of total panic followed by an acceptance of his fate as he began to drift into unconsciousness.

He was mildly aware of reaching what he thought was the ocean bottom. Then, a slippery surface started floating upwards, and to his amazement, his head broke the surface of the water. He gasped for air and vomited seawater. The sun had never felt so good. He realized he was moving at an alarming speed.

For a moment, his perplexed mind questioned whether he was dying, whether his mind was hallucinating in the throes of death. Moments before, he was drowning deep in the ocean. Now, he was breathing clean air. He was surprised at how warm and soft the surface beneath him felt. He realized he was lying on the back of a huge whale. As he rested his head, he could hear the whale's heart beating, and it seemed to keep time with his own.

Lifting his head, he saw the boat still in one piece, and it seemed as if the whale were heading towards it. Meanwhile, some of the shaken passengers had noticed John's strange reappearance and were gesticulating wildly to the crew. Then, the giant body rolled, and he slipped once again, falling unprotected into the water.

The massive creature turned and slowly approached him. It stared into John's eyes as if it were staring into his soul. It felt like all of his pain and suffering had led up to this moment. Within its stare, he saw compassion and infinite understanding. Then, the whale sank into the water, not to be seen again. For a minute, he felt a dreadful sense of abandonment, almost resembling



Whale-watching is a common tourist activity in coastal areas where whale populations reside.



Whales have long been considered mysterious creatures of the deep.



the feeling he had had when his friends moved on with their lives. This emotional roller coaster of the last few minutes left John exhausted. Having lost the whale's warmth, he was freezing and began to lose feeling in his limbs; he was barely floating in the Arctic current.

Strong hands pulled John into a dinghy, wrapping him in a blanket. He remembered nothing else until he woke up in a hospital emergency room.

"Welcome back to the land of the living," he heard. John opened his eyes and saw the smiling face of a nurse. She was right. He had rejoined the living. As he lay there, he realized that he had at last found meaning in his life. The whale had saved him in more ways than one because now he knew

what direction he wanted his life to take. He would devote his life to reciprocating the gift that the whale had given him. His apathy had fallen away from him; he felt invigorated and more alive than he had in years. His mind teemed with ideas. He felt renewed—reborn in water.

The whale had saved him in more ways than one because now he knew what direction he wanted his life to take.



As whales are mammals, they need oxygen from the air to survive. The blowhole pictured on top of the whale's head functions as a nostril.

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# Fantasy



“Fantasy is a necessary ingredient in living,  
it's a way of looking at life through the  
wrong end of a telescope.”

—Dr. Seuss



# A Trip to the Depths of Nature

By Christina Armoni

**T**he cold breeze was seeping through Noah's body. He loved nature, exploring, taking only the absolute necessary things with him, the things he needed to survive, fish, and hunt. As he was travelling through Spain, hiking in the foothills of Monte de Gozo, he approached a clearing, where he found a concealed lake.

"It's the perfect opportunity to fish," he thought to himself, not wanting to disturb the silence of the moment. The only sounds he heard were birds singing and the tall trees breathing, making him want to savor every breath.

Suddenly, he noticed a young woman swimming in the lake. He knew she had seen him, but she didn't say anything. Her dark hair created a perfect contrast falling against her pale skin. A word was struggling to escape from his mouth, but his teeth were blocking it like guards, so as not to destroy such an idyllic moment.

After a time, the woman broke the silence, "I understand you are not from Italy. Are you lost?"

But the only thing he knew for sure was that he was far from lost; on the contrary, he was right where he should be even though he was hundreds of miles away from home.

He finally found the courage to say, "I'm not lost. I'm travelling." Then he continued, "My name is Noah. Noah Newman. I'm from Belfast."

She then quickly replied, "Well, nice to meet you, Noah. I'm Aurora. I live in Rome. So, what is your story?"

Noah took some time to organize his thoughts. "I carry only what this green backpack can hold, and my mission is to find beautiful places and hunt animals that my homeland doesn't have. I got confused when I saw you. I am not used to meeting people in such secluded places. Do you come here often?" he said, making an effort get to know her. He had always chosen solitude, and this moment made him question why.

**He was right where he should be even though he was hundreds of miles away from home.**

The woman frowned and reluctantly said, "You seemed like a good man." She emerged from the lake, wrapping herself in a towel. She was thoughtful. After wiping her body and putting her long hair up in a bun, she said mysteriously, "Yes, I do come here a lot."

She turned to go, just like that, with no explanation. He felt a real connection to her, giving him the strength to say, "I have only known you for twenty minutes, but I feel like I have known you forever. Please, don't go."

Aurora looked him deep in the eyes. Time froze.

"Hunting shows disrespect towards animals," she said. "They too have hearts. They should have



Man cannot help but feel in awe when walking through a dense forest.  
But we have to remember that nature feels our presence.

the chance to live their lives and rest in peace when their time comes. You shouldn't determine their future. It is unnecessary."

Noah couldn't believe his ears. How could she say hunting was immoral? It was a tradition in his family, something that his deceased father had taught him. He angrily replied, "We hunters do not disrespect wildlife. This is the circle of life. We hunters do have the right to determine their future. We have that power."

Aurora's face turned even paler. Her blue eyes were as clear as the ocean, but, in that moment, they became jet black.

"Noah, I warn you—nature is different here. It doesn't tolerate such behavior. I have to leave now. You should, too. Before it's too late. Before Nature fights back and shows you who truly holds the power." Then, in a challenging tone, she added, "If you don't believe me, there is only one way to find out. Go hunting."

He didn't reply, and she kept walking.

Slowly, her figure faded into the forest and disappeared.


Noah was speechless. Without further ado, he went into the forest. He always did research before visiting a place. For now, his game was the Bonelli's eagle, a special species of eagle found only in countries like Italy and Spain. Monte de Gozo was full of them. Taking the gun in his hands, without any second thoughts, he began to do what he had come here to do: hunt.

He felt his anger grow as he replayed her words in his mind. She had seemed so special, so amazing, until she had threatened him. He had felt a real spark.

"Focus," he said to himself. His father could

**Taking the gun in his hands,  
without any second thoughts, he  
began to do what he had come  
here to do: hunt.**





be looking down on him from heaven, so he could not show his weakness. He shouldn't. Weakness was not in the vocabulary of a British Aristocrat.

Noah wandered carefully through the forest. The wind was gusting through his curly brown hair. From a distance, he saw a Bonelli's eagle perched on a branch.

"The moment of truth," he muttered to himself. Adrenaline rushed through his veins. Raising his gun, with a steady hand, Noah took aim and fired.

The bird fell. Noah smiled and set off to retrieve his prey. Suddenly, the wind grew angry, turning from a gentle breeze to a gale; the clouds poured out their tears. The ground trembled with rage, throwing Noah down like a rag doll.

"Help!" he shouted in desperation. "Please, someone, help me!"

Then Aurora appeared. "I warned you. Mother Nature does not take kindly to man's arrogance."

Deaf to his cries, Aurora advanced to the fallen eagle, which she lifted lightly before disappearing like an angel, leaving Noah to the power of Nature.

His cries were lost in the wind and rain forever.

**"I warned you.  
Mother Nature  
does not take  
kindly to man's  
arrogance."**

# Don't Spread Your Wings

By Eric Struecker

**“I** just want to go home, where I can be myself and not have to hide,” I thought as I navigated the dangerous halls of my high school.

My back started to itch as my bag rubbed against it.

“Not again!” I thought, dashing to the bathroom and throwing my bag on the ground before locking the door.

I felt the pain getting stronger. I let out a small groan and threw my shirt off.

I should mention that I was born a bit different...the thing is that I was born with a set of golden-brown wings. I have to keep them a secret due to the fact that I don't know how people will react. And, to be honest, I am scared of what they would do to me if they found out.

I stared at myself in the mirror as, slowly and steadily, my wings stretched themselves out. I let out a small moan as I felt the pain go away.

*My name is Levi, and I am afraid to be myself.*

I heard the bell ring and panicked. I put my shirt and jacket on after I folded my wings, and the discomfort returned. And if that wasn't enough, I put even more pressure on them as I swung my bag onto my back.

With a great deal of will power, I unlocked the door and ran to my class.

Once I got there, I made my way to the back of the room. I sat and watched all the kids slowly making their way in. Shouting and laughing came in with the students. I closed my eyes and let the noise fill my head but was knocked out of my trance when I felt a bump against my desk.

“Oh! I am sorry!” I heard a voice say.

I opened my eyes and met those of a sweet-looking girl. She had blonde, shoulder-length hair and deep blue eyes.

“Hi! I'm Amber,” she added.

I smiled at her. “I...I'm Levi.”

She smiled and sat down, surprisingly, at the desk next to mine. I gulped and took out a brand-new notebook for probably the only class I would enjoy today: *Mythology of the World*.

After some time, the teacher walked through the door.

“Ok, class! Settle down so we can start,” he said and left his books on the desk. He fidgeted with a remote, and when he saw that the class had indeed settled down, he turned on the screen behind him and started to speak.

“So, for our first class, I decided to start with



a being, a creature, that really fascinates me,” he started to say.

I tried to pay attention, but I could swear I felt a pair of eyes on me. I tried to shake this feeling and focused my attention on our teacher.

“They are called Wing Folk.”

My eyes shot up to the screen where they were met with a drawing of two humans, both with wings growing from their backs.

“Now, legend says that these creatures used to roam the earth but went into hiding after being hunted down by humans. They say that humans used to go to extreme lengths to steal their wings off their backs.”

I started to breathe heavily and could feel my wings twitching.

Once again, I felt a pair of eyes stuck on me. The teacher continued to explain that, according to stories, “Wing Folk” were born with these wings.

*Check...* I thought.

The wings seemed to react to the person’s feelings.

*Check.*

I gulped and fidgeted with my pencil as I was starting to feel anxious. I shyly raised my hand, trying to get the teacher’s attention.

He continued to talk for a bit but finally noticed me.

“Yes...um...Levi?”

“Um...” I started to say and felt the whole class gazing at me. “Can I step out of the classroom, please?” I finally managed to say.

He nodded, and I bolted out of the class and into the hallway. Fortunately, no one was out there. I started to pace around.

I felt like I couldn’t breathe. I was sure that my heart was a second from jumping out of my chest. My wings were ready to burst out from under my shirt. I tried to take deep breaths, but I kept feeling like I was about to pass out.

*I was right! I WAS RIGHT! If anyone finds out...I am done,* I thought.

**“Now, legend says that these creatures used to roam the earth but went into hiding after being hunted down by humans. They say that humans used to go to extreme lengths to steal their wings off their backs.”**

At that moment, my wings ripped through my shirt and stretched out, and my mind went blank.

Without thinking, I sat down on the floor with my back pressed against the wall in a desperate attempt to hide my wings, trying not to have the mental breakdown that I was pretty sure I was about to have.

And when I thought things couldn’t get any worse, I saw three kids coming my way.

My vision was getting blurry as tears slowly filled my eyes. The kids saw me and walked up to me. Based on their reaction, I was sure they hadn’t seen my wings.

“Hey, dude...you okay?” one of them said when he saw I was ready to cry. He looked nervously at his friends.

“Do you want to go to the nurse?” the girl said, taking a hold of my shoulder and trying to pull me up off the ground.

*That’s it...I’m doomed...I’m going to end up like rest of the “Wing Folk.”*

“Dude...please say something,” the boy said again.

“Please...don’t bother yourselves...I am okay,” I whimpered, getting desperate.

The girl was worried and took ahold of both my shoulders now.

“Hey!” I heard a voice call out from afar.

I turned around, hoping those kids would let me be and hoping no one else was going to get involved.

*Please...not anyone else,* I thought.

My eyes widened as I saw Amber running



Winged, man-like creatures have long been part of mythology around the world.

towards me.

“It’s okay, guys...I will take him to the nurse,” she said after finally reaching us.

The group nodded and walked off.

“Hope you feel better,” the girl from the group added.

I felt myself relax and finally let my shoulders drop.

“Are you okay?” Amber said when the group was far enough so they couldn’t hear us.

“Y-yeah,” I said, still not moving from my position.

Amber took off her jacket and handed it to me, smiling. I took it and swiftly put it on. She offered me a tissue.

“How did you know I was in trouble?” I asked her once I felt calmer.

She stayed silent for a while but finally took ahold of my hand and dragged me to an empty classroom, closing the door behind us.

“You probably don’t know me...like at all. But for the last year, I have been keeping an eye on you,” she started to say.

I looked at her confusedly, trying to comprehend what she was saying.

I guess she noticed I was getting worried about where she was going with this, so she tried to cover it up.

“Oh! No, it’s not what it sounds like—I wasn’t stalking you,” she said, panicked.

I nodded.

“From time to time I noticed a strange pattern on your back, like there was something under your shirt,” she said and looked up at the ceiling, like she was trying to remember the pattern.

I gulped and felt myself tense up.

“W-what do you mean?” I said, trying to sound normal.

She snapped out of her trance and said, “Well, one time I saw a feather stuck to your shirt, or...” she paused in thought. “One other time, I was a hundred percent sure I saw the outline of wings,” she said and smiled.

My eyes widened, and, once again, I felt tears creeping into my eyes.

“And today...you run out of the class when our teacher started to talk about the “Wing Folk,” so I think I figured out your deal,” she finally said and turned around until I was facing her back.

I watched her as she lifted the back of her shirt up. Slowly but steadily, a pair of golden wings stretched out from her back.

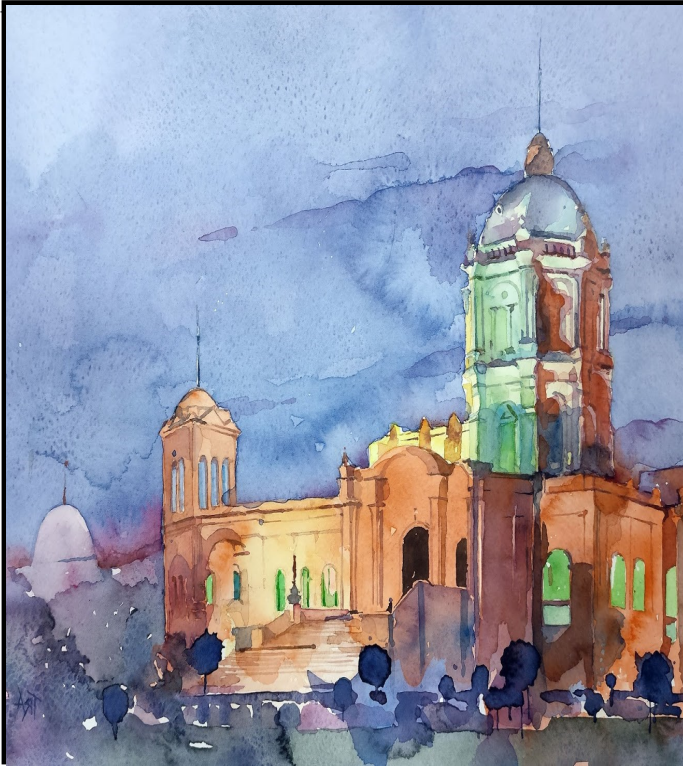
Without giving it a second thought, I let the jacket she had given me fall to the floor as my wings stretched out.

“Yes! I knew it!” Amber exclaimed in happiness.

I smiled, finally feeling a sense of belonging.

She looked at my wings in awe but then smirked. “You know there are more of us, right?”





# Gold Never Bought Love

By Angelina Samiou

Many years ago, in a land that is no longer spoken of, there was a kingdom called Springhollow. In the royal palace lived a princess named Victoria. Victoria was a unique eighteen-year-old girl as beautiful as a single line of poetry. Her oval face and fair complexion were complimented by her rosy cheeks. Her large, almond-colored eyes gleamed, and her full brows slightly arched, expressing all that she did not say, mesmerizing anyone she encountered. Her nose was small and dainty, leading to her full pink lips, which broke easily into a smile, revealing perfect, pearly-white teeth. Her long chestnut-brown locks cascaded to her waist in wavy curls. She was slim and always wore elegant gowns in vibrant colors to mirror her bubbly personality. Victoria was well-educated and loved to sing; she also loved painting her bedroom walls with images inspired by nature, which was her passion—she loved to be outside, enjoying the beauty of the world.

One ordinary morning, shortly after her eighteenth birthday, she was enjoying the palace garden, soaking up the sun. She was sitting on the dewy green grass under a fragrant Magnolia that illuminated the palace garden, picking tiny pink lilies growing next to a thicket close to her. Lively birds sang to her from their perches in the trees, surrounding her while the gentle breeze caressed her hair. She enjoyed nature and the feeling it gave her more than anything. Her concentration was shattered by her maid, Maria, calling her from

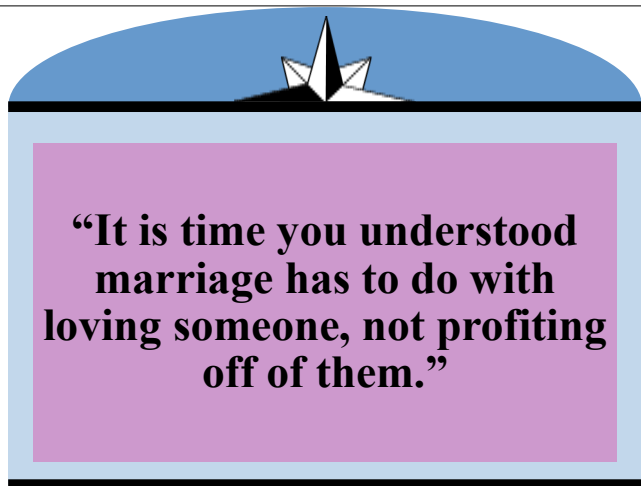
a distance. Maria was short and chubby and always wore her smart uniform with her short black hair tied in a severe bun. Maria loved Victoria like her very own daughter. Victoria rose and was met by Maria, who sweetly said, “Miss, your father would like you to come to the throne room, please.” Victoria smiled and obediently walked towards the door leading her inside.

“Good morning, my dear Victoria!” her father, the king, exclaimed.

King Theodore was old and as cunning as a fox. He was strict and believed in the morals that had lived on in his family for hundreds of years. His gentle dark eyes stood out from his wrinkled skin and firm expression. Victoria’s mother had passed away when Victoria was very young; she and her mother had been very close, and her parents had been deeply in love. They both missed her dearly. Victoria loved her father to death but knew she would face difficulties because of his aspirations for her. She had only Maria to listen confide in, but Victoria knew she was the only person who could change her father’s mind.

“I believe the time has come, my daughter, for me to introduce you to the fine man who will be lucky enough to have your hand in marriage.”

“Dad, I’m not going to get married to someone if I don’t love him. It is time you realized that marriage is about loving someone, not profiting off of them.”



“My child, this is not a negotiation. It is your duty as the heir of this throne to ensure an advantageous marriage to someone worthy. We must merge our kingdoms and thrive!” he said proudly.

Victoria had had this conversation with her father many times before, but she never believed he would go through with his plan. She knew him too well to continue this conversation, and she had gotten tired of his stubbornness. This time, she had had enough. She stormed up the palace stairs and into her room, slamming the door behind her. She wept on her pillow as she thought about how much she dreaded marrying someone she didn’t even know. Maria had heard her and slowly entered. She hugged Victoria as the young girl cried on Maria’s shoulder.

“Maria, I can’t do this—you know I can’t!” she sobbed.

“I know, but what else can you do, my dear?” Maria answered sweetly.

“Remember that farm you grew up on? The one in the countryside you always tell me about? Can I go live there?” Victoria was serious.

“What in the world would you tell your father?”

“He doesn’t have to know.”

Finally, Maria agreed to arrange for Victoria to go live in the countryside and to pretend to know nothing about her disappearance. And so it happened. Victoria packed her belongings and snuck out of the palace by night. By dawn, she was approaching her destination. Through the windows of her carriage, she could see the beautiful pinks, reds, and oranges of the sky. The sun pierced the

clouds as it peeked over the sea, and rays of light filled the sky. It felt magical.

Victoria finally felt free, like she could enjoy nature even more than ever before. When she arrived at the farm and met everyone, as usual, they all loved her from the very start, and she them. From all the people working there, though, one seemed more special to her from the first moment she met him. His name was Nile. He had warm brown, almond-shaped eyes that reminded her of the earth in which new life would grow. Below them, his slightly pointed nose sloped down to his full lips, which revealed even teeth with small gaps between them when he spoke or smiled. His curly brown hair was long and unruly. He was well built and tall.

As Victoria got to know him better, she realized that he was polite, sweet, and very smart. Although she had never worked a day in her life, Victoria joined in on the life of the farm; she found herself often working alongside him in the fields and enjoyed every second of it. In the afternoons, they went for long walks in the woods, where they heard the soothing sound of waterfalls and saw strange plants. She loved picking all the blue, yellow, purple, and red pansies that grew all around the countryside.

They spent their days together for about a year. She hadn’t heard from her father—how could she when he had no idea where she was—but Maria came to visit her monthly. From these visits, Victoria had learned that her father was devastated and had fallen into depression after she had left. She was torn. She had never intended to hurt him—she loved him, but she really wanted to live her life, and she was doing that free from her father’s rules. But most importantly, she was falling in love. Almost everything seemed perfect.

Then, one day, some strange men appeared and took Nile into the barn for several hours. No one was allowed to enter; it was strange. Finally, he came to find Victoria. She caressed his arm, looked into his eyes, and asked him what was going on.

“I haven’t been completely honest with you,” he revealed. Victoria looked at him confusedly.

“What is that supposed to mean?”



“I haven’t completely introduced myself to you. I am a prince of Eastlake. A marriage was arranged between me and a princess. I could not imagine anything worse than being forced to marry someone I did not even know, had never even met, so I ran away. My eight brothers have been fighting over who will marry this princess, and my father has been unable to make a decision because of his sorrow over my leaving. The men you saw are messengers, who told me my father is very ill; he has asked that I return to the kingdom and take my place on the throne as I am the eldest. If I do so, I will have to marry the princess.”

“I am sorry about your father, but it is wonderful that you will be king, isn’t it?” She was astonished. She had heard of Eastlake before. It was a huge, wealthy country with a very good reputation. Her father frequently spoke of it. She also tried to hide the knot in her stomach because she knew that Nile would be going away.

“I have always wanted to rule my kingdom, so, yes, that is great, but may I ask you for a favor?” Nile said.

“Anything,” she replied.

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Well, children, can you guess the rest? I asked her to marry me. Victoria was thrilled. It was then that Victoria revealed her secret to me. She had run away from her kingdom because she didn’t want to marry some prince she had never met.

That night, she and I packed our things and set out for her father’s kingdom. I wanted to ask him for her hand in marriage. When we appeared before your grandfather, he looked puzzled, but he smiled that knowing smile of his. It turned out that I was the prince he had arranged for his daughter, your mother, to marry. He sincerely apologized for being controlling, and he revealed some wonderful news: he and Maria had fallen in love and were also going to get married. Messengers were sent to my parents at once, and, of course, they came immediately! The wedding happened in less than a month. It was the most beautiful wedding in history.

On the day of the wedding, I don’t know who was happiest, me, your mother, your grandparents, or Grandma Maria! Some say it was fated that we should marry. I am not sure what I think, but I know that I am the luckiest, happiest man alive.

Now, children, it is time for bed. Sweet dreams!



Matrix Pansies coloring up a field.



# *A Complete Guide to Exploring the Merthyr Mawr Forest*

**By Melita Monemvasioti**

Tightening his tie, Adam sighed deeply. Leaning back, he stretched and took a quick glance at the nameplate nailed to the door: *Adam Cormoran: Financial Advisor*. Oh, how he hated that nameplate in moments like this, moments of absolute dullness and boredom. Oh, how he wished to tear it off with his bare hands and throw it—and the responsibilities it brought along—out the window and into the frantic, buzzing traffic.

He vaguely recalled the voice of his therapist as she suggested that he take a break from work and go out some more while he squirmed uncomfortably in his chair and tried to avoid looking at her. Once again, it took only one look at the pile of paperwork he had to fill out to dismiss that ridiculous idea. *He didn't have time to spend outside.*

His eyes blurred as he stared at the hands of his watch, moving slowly and torturously. He shook his head and picked up the phone. God knows, he needed a distraction, and his mother would probably be waiting to hear from him.

Dialing the number, he held the receiver to his ear, drumming his fingers on the table, waiting for his mother to pick up. The drawn out ring almost made him close his eyes, but they jerked open again when he realized that he had been holding the handset for at least a minute without an answer. Changing his mind about the call, he put the phone down, feeling a twinge of guilt that he quickly tried to push aside.

When the time finally came for him to leave,

he snapped out of his daze, and, almost forgetting his briefcase, he dashed to his second-hand DeLorean in the parking lot.

The drive to his childhood home was a familiar one, but one he hadn't expected to make in a long time. Seeing it again was like seeing an old teacher—inciting nostalgia but also awkward and unpleasant feelings for everyone involved.

Oddly enough, the view of his old apartment building brought back memories of a different house, in a different place—a house he thought he'd left behind long ago.

He stood outside the door. Suddenly, he was a child again, sitting on his grandfather's lap as he laughed heartily, recounting tales of fantastical adventures—stories, books about smaragdine meadows and glistening ponds. In his young mind, time was frozen at their little cottage.

***Suddenly, he was a child again,  
sitting on his grandfather's lap  
as he laughed heartily  
recounting tales of fantastical  
adventures.***

He was ten years old when the clock finally started ticking. Memories of his mother waking him up with sobs closing up her throat. "*Grandpa. He's gone.*" Packing up all their belongings, stuffing a lifetime of memories into the back of a truck. Since they moved to the cold, colorless



apartment, he often wondered if he had dreamed their previous life. Often, he found himself curled up in a corner of his room, with his eyes closed, repeating his grandfather's stories in his head. Sometimes, he was the narrator, the enthusiastic spectator. Other times, he was the shining hero in them.

He promptly forgot all of that when he saw his mother's face. He didn't remember her being so *old*. Seeing her, thin and washed out, with a shaky smile and shaky hands, he realized with revulsion that he, too, was growing up. A part of him wished to tear off his tie, kick off his shoes, roll around in the dew-sprinkled grass, and breathe in the crisp air of the forest.

Lost in his thoughts, he didn't say much as he moved cardboard boxes mechanically, his mother's watery eyes following him. *A nursing home*. It didn't feel like a real place, and certainly not like a place where his mother belonged. Yet, after they had finished packing up, she would once again load up her life into a truck and move away. This time it was for real. The pang of guilt hit him again. When he was a child, his mom was always overshadowed by his grandfather. Her love, he realized, had been taken for granted. And when he grew up, he simply *did not have enough time*. Real adults didn't think of stories and forests, of mothers and meadows. They thought of ties and taxes, of offices and briefcases.

Dusting his hands on his pants, he grabbed the last box only to let it drop immediately. His name was scrawled on top of it in permanent marker, in the thick loopy scrawl that could only be his grandfather's. Kneeling down, he opened the box, expecting a photo album or a heartfelt letter, or something of that sort. He was surprised to find that the box was empty, save for a leather-bound pocket journal.

He toyed with it for a while, feeling the old, cracked leather, and tracing the gold engraving of a feather quill wrapped around a compass that adorned the book cover. Deciding to postpone his investigation, he carefully slipped the journal into his pocket and hastily made his way downwards.



There's nothing more sentimental than a handwritten journal from the past.

Later that evening, wearing his robe, Adam got cozy in his armchair and pulled out the little leather notebook. He pushed a pile of tax documents aside. His work could wait.

He opened the front cover slowly to a page filled with the same handwriting he recognized on the box. The ink was runny, and the page was crowded with letters, but seeing it, he felt like he was seeing an old friend. What caught him by surprise was the title, written in cursive on top of the page.

### *"A Complete Guide to Exploring the Merthyr Mawr Forest"*

Merthyr Mawr. Had it really been thirty years since he had last heard that name? Memories of the Tylwyth Teg, the mythical forest elves, sea spirits, and brave heroes came to mind. The name of Merthyr Mawr was often chewed and spat from the mouths of the locals, but he had only heard his grandfather pronounce so lovingly the name of the place that so often accompanied his stories.

Under the title, in an equally elegant script, was a long list, taking up the entirety of the page. Upon closer inspection, Adam could make out what seemed to be *advice* for a forest expedition as well as an underlined warning.

*It is highly suggested that the kind reader follow the guidelines detailed on this page, for he does not wish to find himself in harm's way while exploring the Merthyr Mawr Forest.*

- ◆ *It is recommended that the aspiring adventurer visit during the evening. It is only proper to pay respects when the forest itself is awake.*
- ◆ *The reader must announce his presence before entering, for he does not wish to anger the residents.*
- ◆ *The Forest itself has a heart. The reader must keep this in mind so as not to be alarmed by any vibrations he might experience.*
- ◆ *The reader will surely come across one or more residents on his journey. He should be able to easily differentiate them from regular humans and animals since they make no sound and have a*

*faint flickering light around them at all times.*

- ◆ *It is not advisable that the reader make eye contact or acknowledge the presence of any residents he might run into.*
- ◆ *In the unfortunate event that the reader comes across a resident that takes the form of a white stag, he should keep the previous guidelines in mind and try to find his way out of the forest. A guaranteed method of success in dealing with this situation has not yet been found.*
- ◆ *It is advised that the reader not have any electronic devices, such as a radio, on their person. All light sources should be natural.*
- ◆ *Be careful not to litter in the Forest. After all, it is someone's home.*

*May your journey be successful and fulfilling,  
fellow adventurer.*

Adam shook his head in disbelief and couldn't help letting out a small chuckle. This whole thing seemed ridiculous, but a strange pang of yearning was slowly but surely growing inside him. The forest with its residents, the cursive script, even the gold engraving on the journal, all seemed straight out of one of his grandfather's stories. But this was not a story, he reminded himself. This was really happening. And unless this was just an elaborate practical joke played by an old man, all these were *real*, too.

For a while, he contemplated in silence; the little kid inside him fighting against the rational adult. Once again, the voice of his therapist echoed in his ears, and the longer he stared at the notebook in his hands, the idea of following through the instructions it provided seemed more and more tempting. After what seemed like ages, he got up, and, with determination in his step, he headed to pack a bag. After all, he had a forest to visit.

A day had passed since he had read his grandfather's journal, and Adam was now standing on the edge of the forest. With his thin-framed

glasses and backpack, he hardly looked like a rugged adventurer. But this was the bravest he had ever felt. Kneeling down in front of the first tree in the forest, the journal gripped tightly in his hand, he announced in a shaky but determined voice, "My name is Adam Cormoran, and I wish to enter the Forest."

No answer came as he had expected, but the warm gust of wind that passed over him was all he needed to continue. Making his way inside the forest was easier than he had thought. It took around an hour of walking for the beating of the ground to become more prominent as he synchronized his steps with the earthly pulse. He had never felt more alive. Holding a lit candle in front of him, he walked with his eyes fixed on the flame. Often he saw what looked like little sparks of light dancing between the trees, but he kept his gaze still, not wishing to anger anything he might come across.

It was when the air started getting colder, and the flame of his candle had started to flicker that doubts started to crawl into his mind. Along with



them, the ever-growing presence of malice crept slowly behind his back. Not being able to resist the urge to look, he turned around.

He found himself looking straight into the eyes of a magnificent white stag, larger than any he had ever seen. Its snowy coat shone like moonlight, and its antlers sparkled like gold. But inside its pitch-black eyes, he could see the burning intensity of something evil and ancient. He snapped out of his daze when the stag had started getting closer. It walked slowly and regally, and Adam felt himself frozen in his place. Turning around, he closed his eyes and started running.

He ran for what seemed like hours. The only sound in his ears was the monotonous pounding of his feet and the throbbing of blood in his temples. When he felt that the air had started to clear and that he could hear the quiet hooting of owls once again, he opened his eyes. His eyesight was blurry, and as he reached to push his glasses up, he realized he had dropped them at some point while running through the forest. "*Don't litter,*" he recalled. And as the thought passed, the light of his candle went out, leaving him in pitch-black darkness.

Somewhere in the darkness, he could feel hundreds of hands grabbing at him. Some small and others large. Some dainty and others rough.

They closed his mouth shut, covered his eyes and ears, took hold of his arms and legs. The last thing he felt before passing out was the feeling of utter helplessness.

When he woke up again, he was tied to the trunk of a tree with a thick rope of what seemed like ivy. Noticing that the forest around him was bathed in morning light, he realized that he must've stayed unconscious throughout the night. He noticed a rustling in the bushes and tried to focus his eyes there.

Suddenly, his grandfather came out, casually pushing some leaves aside and laughing jovially with what seemed to be an illustration of a book of myths, come alive. His grandfather. *His grandfather.* Looking not a day over sixty, thirty whole years after his disappearance. Before he had the time to think about it much, Adam passed out again.

This time, it was his grandpa's hearty laughter that woke him up. After the initial shock, he was irritated to find him casually laughing, as if he hadn't disappeared years ago, ruining his and his mother's life forever. He was surprised to find that feeling of resentment since, as a child, he had often found himself fantasizing about one day hearing the doorbell ring and finding his grandfather casually walking through the door, just as he had



Child and grandfather bonding through their experiences in nature.

done a few minutes prior.

“What. Is. The. Meaning. Of. This,” he intoned every word harshly.

“Oh, Adam, my dear boy,” his grandfather chuckled. “Now, let me tell you, you were so lucky we found you, so lucky indeed.”

“If we hadn’t been watching over him now, he’d be as good as dead,” the stranger added in a serious and nasally voice. He had skin the colour of moss, and as his eyes adjusted to the light, Adam could make out a scale pattern covering the sides of his face.

“*Watching over me?* What do you mean *watching over me?* I don’t even know you,” he responded in exasperation.

“Yes, but I know you.” His grandfather stepped forward. “And you’d probably have to thank the trees for that, Adam Cormoran, *Junior*. When you announced your presence to the forest with the name of someone who was already inside, we were alerted immediately. You see, the trees don’t really understand the concept of family names.”

“Grandpa,” he took a deep breath. “All this is nice, but I demand an explanation.”

“But I’m surprised you haven’t figured it out already,” he threw his hands open. “Think, my boy, think. I didn’t waste all these years on you, did I? Look around you, boy, the Tylwyth Teg, the forest elves. The stories I told you. All real, my boy. All real.”

He continued, “The forest is ancient. And lonely, too. Whoever stays in it remains just as he was when he entered. Frozen in time. The forest doesn’t want to lose its new friends. And I must say, I’m terribly sorry for leaving with no warning, but you must understand. I found my place. I *must* be here. Now, on why, I’d say you’ll have to look at the journal in your hands to find that out.”

It was only then that Adam realized he had been clutching the journal in his hand all this time. Looking down, he saw the golden engraving shining brighter than ever.

“The mark of the Adventurer,” his grandfather exclaimed proudly, and Adam remembered seeing this symbol on the cover of the books he had often read to him as a kid.

“The world is a far more magical and mystical place than we know it to be, my boy. It is the job of the Adventurer to explore and document it. We don’t know how they came to be, or for how long they’ve existed. But we know how to become one of them.”

“Are you—are you one of these *Adventurers* as you said?”

“Oh, but I thought it was obvious! Of course I am. And living right next to the forest of Merthyr Mawr, I really had the opportunity for adventure. Merthyr Mawr. This place is filled to the brim with magic, and unfortunately, or rather, fortunately, it drew me in. Living with the Tylwyth Teg, with this forest air, has done wonders for my productivity. You cannot even imagine how many journals I’ve written,” he joked.

“But, why me? I mean, why leave the journal for me to find it?” Adam inquired.

His grandfather got closer. “Adam, from a young age, you’ve shown yourself to be an inquisitive and imaginative young man. Exactly what an Adventurer needs to be.”

“You mean?”

“Yes, I do.”

“You want me to join you?”

“It’d be my honor, my boy.”

The day before, Adam would’ve pondered over this for hours on end, weighing and judging the possibilities and outcomes of the situation. He’d have been reluctant to give an answer and would most probably have shaken his head and left. But he was not that Adam anymore.

His answer was quick. “Yes, I accept. I want to be an Adventurer.”

And as he enjoyed the calm forest breeze on his face for the first time in years, he thought that maybe life wasn’t so bad after all.



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# Mystery



“The world, even the smallest parts of it,  
is filled with things you don't know.”

—Sherman Alexie

# A Perilous Invitation

By Jason Roussos Papadatos

It was a dark, rainy night in London. Ernest Taylor was sitting in his car, looking at his watch. He had arrived right on time. The letter he had received said “9:30 pm,” and, right now, it was 9:27 pm. He looked out the window but couldn’t see clearly. The trees obscured the view. He always loved nature and its beauty, but this forest was just creepy. He reached for his umbrella and got out; it would protect his suit from the rain. He was still puzzled about the reason he had been invited. Alfred Poker was an eccentric millionaire who lived in a remote mansion and never invited people over. He walked up the front steps and rang the bell. The door was opened by a tall man in a tuxedo.



A rainy night, a mysterious invitation, an opulent manor—doesn’t sound like a normal dinner party.

“You are the last to arrive, Sir. We printed the incorrect time on your invitation, and we are terribly sorry. The other guests are waiting for you,” he said coldly.

Ernest was guided to a room with four other people already in it. There were two men and two women. He greeted them, but none of them acknowledged him. He leaned against the wall and waited. One of the men wore overalls and had a scruffy face. The other man wore a fancy suit and had a long white beard; he was sitting in a chair. One of the women had long brown hair and a deceptively kind face, thought Ernest. She was looking at something on her phone. The other woman was older with dark hair and a cold stare. She had a pompous stance and was reading a book. They were all people he had seen before, except one.

The seated man was Judge William Cromwell, famous for his firm belief in law and justice, known for always handing down fair verdicts. The young woman was Mary Allerton, a well-known businesswoman, who was also a gambler. The older woman was the famous prosecutor, Clarice Darlington. She hadn’t lost more than five cases in her 30-year-long career. However, he didn’t know the other man.

Ernest was puzzled at the selection of people. What did he, a detective, have to do with them? There seemed to be no connection between



**There was something that incriminated every person in the room except him. Then he saw a picture of his deceased father. It hit him.**

them at all. He shifted his attention toward his surroundings. It was a small waiting room with a few chairs. The walls were decorated with paintings of beautiful landscapes, and there was a potted plant in each corner of the room. He noticed that there was dirt on the floor next to the plant pot in the northeast corner. From the ceiling hung a gold chandelier. The floor was marble, and the tapestry of the chairs was velvet. He was pondering how wealthy the owner was to have such a luxurious house when he was shaken from his thoughts by a bell. The butler who had greeted him earlier told them to proceed into the living room.

They entered a room with a marvelous silk carpet and gold, velvet curtains. There were two armchairs placed before the lit fireplace. There was a large window on the right side that overlooked the beautiful gardens surrounding the mansion. Ernest had been in other mansions to investigate crime scenes, but this was an exaggeration of luxury, in his opinion. A man was sitting in one of the armchairs reading a book. He stood up and turned around. He was a balding old man with sparse white hair. Ernest realized that the man was Alfred Poker, a famous gambler who had once been accused of cheating but was able to refute the claim. He was still a prominent figure in the gambling world.

“Welcome to my humble estate!” he said triumphantly. “I hope you didn’t have to wait long. I believe you know who I am.” He looked at each one of us and continued, “I have invited you here because of a certain incident ten years ago—a court case to be specific.”

Suddenly, the lights went out. Ernest felt someone crash into him, and then he heard a woman’s scream. He got to his feet and reached for the wall where he had noticed a switch before. After some struggle, he flipped it, and the lights turned on. Judge Cromwell was helping Mrs. Darlington off the floor, and Mary was sitting in a

chair in shock. However, as he looked around the room, he saw the body of the host lying on the floor. Ernest ran towards him and checked for a pulse. Nothing. He was stone-cold dead.

The detective stood and looked at the body. There was no sharp wound or other trace of violence. The only strange thing was some dirt in and around his mouth. He then realized that the victim was probably allergic to an element in the soil—probably mold—and someone had forced him to consume some of it. It had come out of one of the pots in the room. That must have caused a reaction that killed him.

He informed the others. They wanted to leave, but he was able to convince them to stay in the room. He asked if anyone had seen anything while the lights were out.

“Someone bumped into me, and I fell down,” said Clarice angrily.

“I think I saw someone fall on top of Mr. Poker,” said William.

“I will take a look around the room,” said Ernest, in a commanding manner. “Wait here.”



A night of mystery. The 1985 film *Clue*, which was based on the classic board game.

He looked around the room. The only things he found, however, were a newspaper and a folder. The newspaper was turned to the first page. There was an article about a forest fire that had killed two people. He then looked at the folder. There was a picture of a man burning a small forested area. There was a name below. It said John Smith. Ernest realized that this man was the same person he had not recognized earlier. He looked at the rest of the folder. There was something that incriminated every person in the room except him. Then he saw a picture of his deceased father. It hit him.



When there is too much water present in the soil, saprophytic fungus flourishes, as it lives off of decaying matter.

He called the others to reveal the whole story.

“Alfred Poker invited us here to blackmail us. He had collected information on every one of us. First, Mrs. Allerton you have cheated while gambling several times, including the fateful day when Mr. Poker was accused of your double-dealings. Then, you, Mrs. Darlington, you have repeatedly doctored evidence to prove your clients guilty.”

“That is absurd,” Mrs. Darlington exclaimed, but her voice was trembling.

“Here is the evidence that proves it. Next we have Mr. Cromwell, who tampered with the evidence to get his son acquitted after an accidental hit-and-run. Then, there is me. My father doctored evidence to convict a murderer. And, lastly, Mr. Smith burned a small forest area only to sell it to make a great profit. We all had motives to kill Alfred Poker. If the information he possessed got out, it would destroy our lives. He called us here to take revenge. Do you remember that he was tried ten years ago? Each one of us was involved in that

trial. We were the attorneys, the judge, the police, and the witnesses. He finally had enough information to destroy each of our reputations.”

“What he has on me isn’t so incriminating that I would want to murder him. No one cares about a small piece of wooded area,” said John.

“That is not true, Mr. Smith. When you burned down the forest, two people were lost in that fire. Granted it was an accident, but nobody knew you had started the blaze, except for Mr. Poker. You realized that he was going to reveal it, so you killed him by forcing him to consume soil. You were his defense attorney at that trial, before you lost your license to practice, so you knew everything there was to know about him, including his allergy to mold. When there is too much water present in the soil, saprophytic fungus flourishes, as it lives off of decaying matter. You were aware of this, and thus, you found a way to commit this simple crime in front of everyone. However, you falsely believed that nobody would conceive of your plan. That is how everything happened.”

At that instant, John attacked Ernest, but the detective quickly defused the situation by moving to the side and hitting the arsonist over the head. He immediately called the police, and John Smith was arrested for the murder of Mr. Poker.

“Another successful day,” Ernest thought as he walked to his car. The rain had stopped, and it was just before sunrise. He sat there in his car and



Nothing like a beautiful sunrise after a rainy night.



# The Room

By Stefanos Zaimis

Alex rushed through the streets, mindlessly tossing his coffee cup into a patch of flowers before entering the office building.

“Hey, Alex, wait up!” yelled Sam, one of his co-workers. “The big guy told me that you have to collect his files from the new room.”

“Ugh, does it have to be me? There is a lot of work that needs to be done today,” groaned Alex.

“Well, that’s what the boss said.”

“I don’t even know where the room is...I’ve only heard rumors.”

“Lemme show you. Follow me.”

They both took off walking towards the boss’s office. It was a beautiful morning, and the sunlight was pouring in from the two big windows next to the secretary. She looked up at them.

“Going to the new room, eh?” she asked playfully. “It’s so fun in there, but don’t get lost!” They all chuckled but did not stop to chat.

“So, how is your whole ‘volunteering-to-plant-trees’ thing going?” asked Alex somewhat sarcastically.

Not noticing his derision, she replied, “Well, it can be hard, but I do what I can to help combat the harm we sometimes cause.” Alex shook his head but said nothing. He just could not

understand some people’s obsession with the environment.

They kept on walking, catching a glimpse of the boss eating as they passed by his office. Sam turned right into the narrow corridor leading to the restroom, and Alex followed. There were no windows, and the air was damp. As they approached, the worn-out lights flickered.

“Well, here we are,” said Sam.

“But...this is the restroom.”

“Dude! Just look to your right!”

Alex did so, and there it was—the new room everyone had been talking about.

“Huh. I see. Thanks, man.”

“Anytime. Good luck. I think you might just need it,” said Sam mysteriously.

“You’re very funny. I’ve told you that before, haven’t I?”

“Maybe you have, I don’t know. I lost track of the compliments I’ve gotten long ago.”

“Right...well, see you later, I guess.”

Sam smiled and walked away. Alex was now alone, staring at the door. It just seemed... well, off. It was painted a cheap white, and the doorknob seemed ancient, but this was supposedly a new room. Hesitantly, he turned the creaking knob and opened the door.

The atmosphere instantly changed as he walked through it. It was breezy, and everything was dark, just as if a cloak of nothingness had covered all the contents of the room. The chilling sounds filled his ears, and the door creaked shut with a resolute click. He was truly all alone now.

He reached for the light but couldn't find a switch, so he stood, waiting for his eyes to adjust to the darkness. He felt very strange. After a while, he could make out some weird shapes. They looked like pillars or something. There were also odd noises that sounded like hooting and the breeze blowing—which he had initially thought was coming from the AC. However, it was getting stronger and stronger; it now felt like the wind. It also smelled as if he were outside in nature, reminding him of the long walks he used to take in Central Park. But he didn't go for walks that often anymore; he was too busy for that, and, anyway, Central Park seemed a world away from this room. He had no idea what was going on.

"I'm just imagining things," he mumbled to himself, but he felt like he was being watched.

He started walking towards one of the pillars, and, as he got closer, he was able to make out weird shapes and a rough surface. The closer he got, the sicker he felt. It was...a tree, not a pillar or any normal office fixture. A tree. What was a tree of that size doing in this room? How on earth did it get here?

"What is going on? Did they plant trees in here?" he muttered to himself.

He had that strange feeling again.

"Enough of this," he said, turning to run back to the door to get out, but the door was gone. It had vanished.

"What's happening? Is this real? Am I dreaming?"

He started sweating profusely and couldn't clear his head or calm down.

"I have to get out of here. This must be some kind of sick joke!" He remembered his coworkers' conspiratorial glances and laughs. "Yeah," he consoled himself, "a joke." But it didn't feel funny. It felt creepy and ominous.

He started walking aimlessly, trying to get somewhere, anywhere, tripping constantly on what felt like roots. He was getting very tired when he suddenly crashed head-first into something, knocking himself down.

"What was that?"

He looked around but found he was still in the weird forest. Slowly rising, Alex reached out to touch whatever he had hit. He could see nothing there...but he still could feel...something. It felt like cement.

Suddenly, a wall appeared in front of him. He spun around wildly and found himself in a chaotic room with furniture everywhere. The weirdest part about it was that there was no exit—no possible way for him to get out. He was very tired, so he just decided to go sit on the couch in front of him and take a nap. Maybe he would wake up to find that it had all been in his mind.

When he reached the couch and attempted to sit down, he just fell right through it and onto the floor. The couch just...disappeared. As he lay there in disbelief, for the briefest of moments, everything just disappeared, and he found himself once again in a dimly lit room with archives and files everywhere. And right in front of him, the door he had entered through.

"The exit!" he exclaimed in shock.

He ran towards the door, but it vanished once again before his eyes.

"It must be here. I...someone is messing with me. What is..."



You don't appreciate your freedom until you're trapped.



**Had he imagined it all? In a daze, he walked back to his desk and sat down, still baffled at what had just happened.**

Suddenly, the door reappeared. He let out a cry of relief and had never felt happier in his entire life. As he reached to open it, flames started crawling up the door.

“This can’t be real...it must be a joke!” exclaimed Alex.

His heart was racing, and sweat was pouring down his face.

“I must open it...I can’t just stay in here...I have to take the risk,” he thought, as the flames grew greater and greater by the second. They came closer and closer, almost licking his hand.

He took a deep breath and opened the door.

There he was, standing in the office again, and behind him was the odd door to the new room. He hesitated. Had he imagined it all? In a daze, he walked back to his desk and sat down, still baffled at what had just happened.

“So, did you get those files?” He looked up and saw Sam standing above him, smiling.

“What happened to you? It was the right room, right?”

“Dude, what is that room?”

“Well, no one is quite sure. Who knows what they built it out of...it just sort of...shapeshifts and does weird stuff that...I don’t know. It is a strange room,” replied Sam with an enigmatic smile on his face.

“I thought I was lost. I couldn’t get out and...I felt like it was attacking me. I think I need to go home...”

“Yeah, I understand. I can tell Mr. Walker if you want me to.”

“Thanks a lot, man. I don’t know, it just...just doesn’t make sense. Why did they make this thing? It’s like...made to torment and scare people.

Why would they put it here? I don’t even know if I can keep working here after what happened. I just—”

“Wait, it...it scared you? No one has ever said that before! When I went in, it just sort of...became cool stuff. A beach, beautiful scenery...are you sure it was based on malintent?” Sam’s eyes widened slowly as he spoke.

“Yes. That room definitely didn’t like me...what do you think it means? I need to go home and think about it. I’ll just take the rest of the day off.”

“Yeah...good luck, Alex. If you need anything, you can always call me.”

Alex walked away, still terrified, his mind rushing.

“That is so weird—why would the room treat Alex differently?” Sam muttered to himself while walking towards the boss’s office to let him know that Alex was leaving for the day.

As Alex pushed open the front door of the building, he felt the breeze on his face, he smelled the fresh air, which carried the scent of the nearby flowers. Then, he remembered the morning, how he had thrown his coffee cup into that very patch of flowers. Guiltily, he looked around. Then, he bent down and picked up the litter he had so carelessly and thoughtlessly thrown there.

From the window above, the boss watched, pleased that Alex had learned his lesson. Maybe he wouldn’t have to fire him now.



Often, a person’s code of ethics is just as important as his education and training.

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# Part III:

# Poetry



“I would define, in brief, the poetry of words as the  
rhythmical creation of Beauty.”

—Edgar Allen Poe





# Haikus

A Haiku is a traditional form of Japanese poetry. Haiku poems consist of 3 lines. The first and last lines of a Haiku have 5 syllables, and the middle line has 7 syllables.

The lines rarely rhyme.





# NATURE'S FIGHT

By Konstantinos Tzitzikostas

Animals extinct,  
Habitats are burnt and lost—  
The world goes wild.

## SURVIVAL

By Maria Staikopoulou

Nature can fight back,  
Through past, present, and future  
It always survives.





# The Environment

By Fanis Michalakis

Many.  
Humanity's  
ways to destroy it all,  
and infinite are the ways to  
save it.

---

## Cinquain

A Cinquain is a short, usually unrhymed poem consisting of twenty-two syllables distributed as 2, 4, 6, 8, 2, in five lines.



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# Sonnets

Inspired by Petrarch's sonnets, Shakespeare adapted this poetic form to his own liking, creating a total of 154 sonnets in the late 16th to early 17th century. The theme of these poems? Yup, you guessed it: ♡ LOVE. The structure of a Shakespearean Sonnet—also known as an English Sonnet—is as follows: three quatrains written in iambic pentameter with a rhyme scheme of *abab cdcd efef gg*, ending in a rhyming couplet. Read on to see our own adaptations of this poetic form!





# *The Night's Cape*

*By Magda Badogiannaki*

**As the sky is covered by the night's cape,  
The darkness leaves me standing there alone.  
The deep silence makes my worries take shape,  
Makes me feel like a king without a throne.  
The hands of the clock quickly ticking by,  
Dark hours passing, I fear endlessly.  
Voices in my head keep on screaming, why?  
Dizziness chokes me, I cry breathlessly.  
Yet from the bleakness I try to see through,  
Just counting the bright stars that do us part,  
Thinking 'bout the happiness I pursue.  
Thence from the silver lining I take heart.  
The dawn comes breaking through; the morning light  
Creeping up, shedding hope with all its might.**



# Lepidoptera Lust and the Intruding Beam

By Nikos Makridis



Four wings, wide and grey, sitting on the ramp  
The two well nourished by each other's love;  
One distracted by a glamorous lamp,  
And the other seeking his love above  
Rain pouring, the lamp's embrace seems tempting.  
Shutters shut swiftly in the female's mind;  
The male's urgency driving the mating.  
Slowly he approaches ready to bind,

*Moth to the Flame by Jack Zulli*

But the powerful light foils the male's scheme.  
Brightly lit paradise becomes her home.  
Sadly, wide wings folded, gone is his gleam;  
She hears him, but clings to the glowing dome.  
Fear not, this is not his final demise;  
For others come, light attracts all grey flies.





# The Earth that Burnt

By Anastasia Giannoulatou

As I gaze across the faraway land,  
watching the majestic forest fair  
Dancing in the wind to an unseen band,  
Branches that are swaying like silken hair.  
The rhythm of nature is always there,  
The music of leaves dancing in the heat.  
The many animals that all live there,  
All swaying to nature's musical beat.  
But the crimson flames surround all the land.  
Various animals all run wild,  
Escaping burning hell, the devil's hand.  
A deer runs fast, panicking like a child..  
I look across the distant hillside bare,  
But our joy and life are no longer there.

# My Cracking Sound

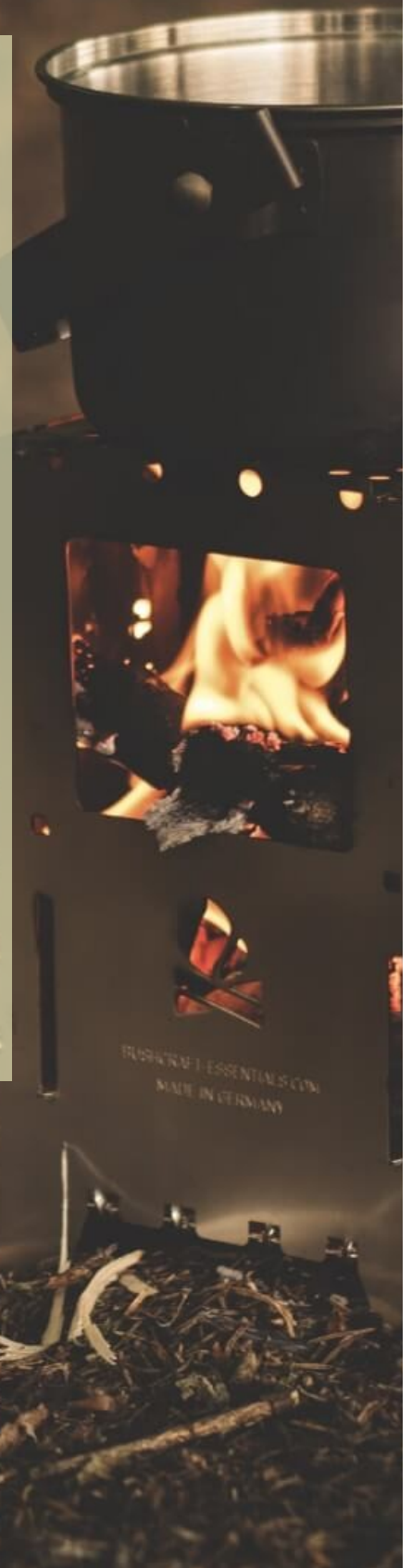
By Eleni Thomopoulou

Like autumn leaves that just began to fall  
And lay forgotten on a misty bed  
My mouth refrains from any word at all  
To keep the secret never to be said.

The cracking sound like fire in a stove  
Would say to you if only you could hear  
When walking briskly through the College grove  
That soon my hope for you will disappear.

But oh, how quiet it could all have been  
If you had never put your step on me  
A fallen leaf can stay for long unseen  
And melt away to feed some other tree.

The College trees that watch us come and go  
Like fallen leaves the wind will surely blow.







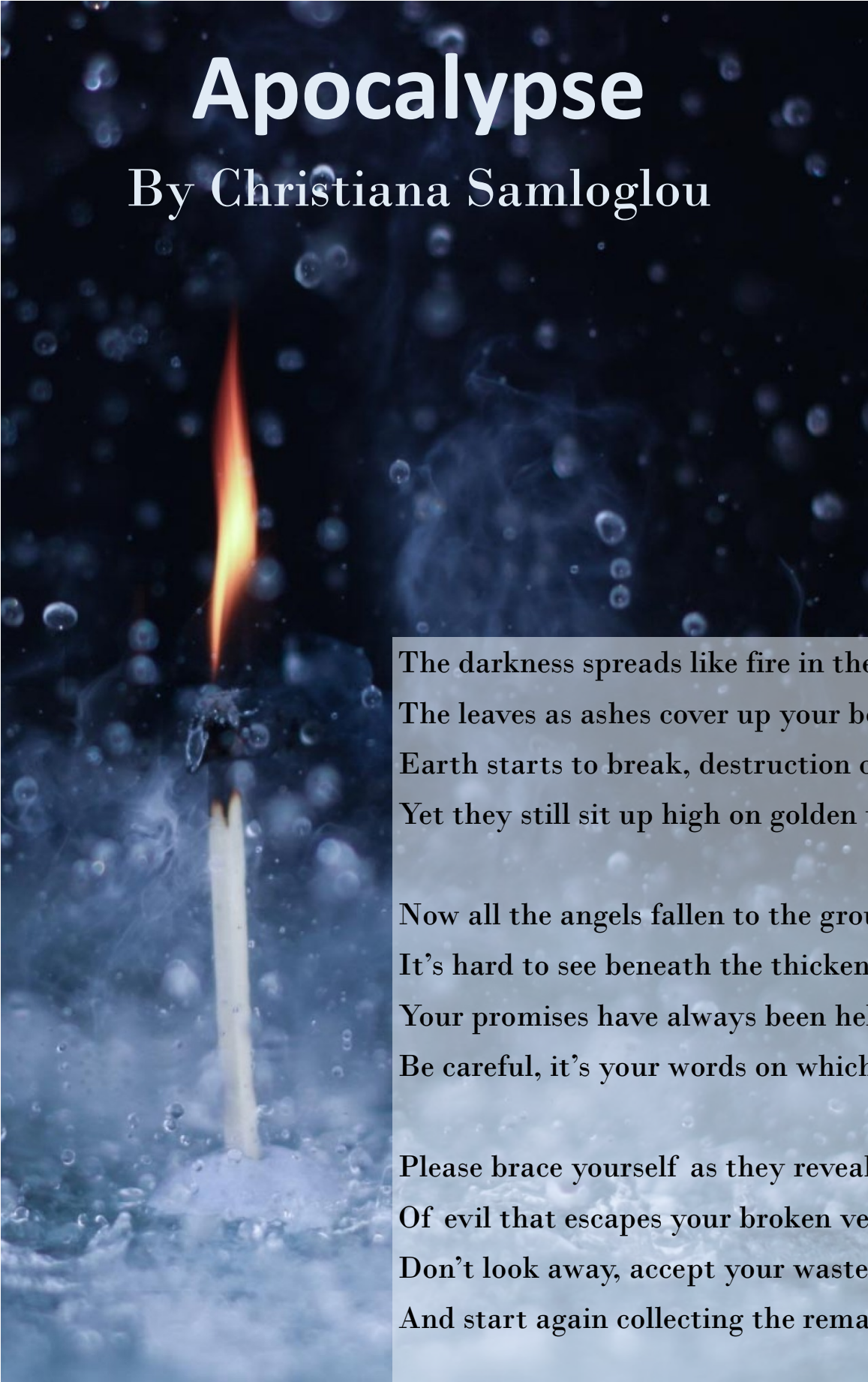
# PRISONER

By Alice Dimitropoulou

Is it so wrong to feel you don't belong?  
Trapped in a world where you are not wanted.  
Hiding your face with a mask for so long,  
Feeling like your mind is being haunted.  
I am walking around feeling ashamed,  
All I'm hearing are voices in my head,  
Telling me I am eternally stained.  
Look at where all those bad feelings have led.  
This is the point where we must say goodbye,  
The air is getting less, and I can't breathe.  
It is finally my turn to reach high  
Although I will be buried underneath.  
Your thoughts become monsters that aim to kill,  
When forced to be someone against your will.

# Apocalypse

By Christiana Samloglou



The darkness spreads like fire in the rain,  
The leaves as ashes cover up your bones,  
Earth starts to break, destruction can't contain,  
Yet they still sit up high on golden thrones.

Now all the angels fallen to the ground,  
It's hard to see beneath the thickened smoke,  
Your promises have always been hell-bound.  
Be careful, it's your words on which you choke.

Please brace yourself as they reveal the truth,  
Of evil that escapes your broken veins;  
Don't look away, accept your wasted youth,  
And start again collecting the remains.

A question risen on your skin engraved:  
Are we the ones who save or must be saved?



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# Free Verse

Free verse is an open form of poetry that does not follow a prescribed pattern of meter, rhythm, or rhyme.



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# An Indifferent World

By Athina Michalopoulou

Despite the fires and the catastrophes,  
Despite the changes and emergencies,  
Humans still stand,  
Not knowing how to react.

Despite the will to live so long,  
On a planet that's healthy and our own,  
Where's the battle for survival?  
Why must this indifference reign?

My eyes are bleeding,  
Witnessing this tragedy  
But I'll maintain my faith,  
Will Nature forgive our mistakes?







# The Divine Rain

By Vangelis Kollias

The rise of man,  
only temporary.  
Feelings and people  
all come and go.

The attempts to understand  
seem so pointless.

The efforts of trying  
cannot unbreak the broken.

The only thing to look for:  
the divine rain.

It will wash off the unnecessary  
and let nature bloom once more.

The background of the entire page is a photograph of several pink chrysanthemum flowers. The flowers are in various stages of bloom, with some fully open and others as buds. They are set against a solid black background, which makes the light pink petals stand out. The lighting is soft, highlighting the texture of the petals. The flowers are positioned on the right side of the page, with some extending towards the center.

# *Linked*

**By Thanos Manios**

Like a flower in the dark  
Like the crickets in the sun  
As the river flows apart  
For a creature that collapsed.

Is it true that we are linked?  
Do we really want to live?  
Will the ice all melt away?  
If we do something about it?

All the flowers withered  
Are the crickets still alive?  
Did the river run dry?  
Will the creature ever rise?

# Silence, Friend

By Andreas Tsolmektsoglou

Silence, friend.

A sound may be beautiful  
But silence may be delightful,  
When it allows nature to sing.

Silence, friend.

The essence of serenity  
Completely vanishes  
When man speaks.

Silence, friend.

Why do we prefer man's noise,  
Which breaks us down  
Instead of the charming song  
of a nightingale?

Silence, friend.

Remember this,  
When you want to listen to the  
beauty of nature.







# Ash and Coal

By Paul Samloglou

The grass is green,

and fire is red.

Soon it'll all be dead.

It's been going on for weeks.

Nothing will remain

but a bunch of burnt sticks.

Now it's all about the green

and the petrol you can buy.

Buzzing bees of hot lead,

very soon it'll all be dead.

All that will be left

will be an awful sound

accompanying the walls of Jericho,

which came tumbling down.

# QUICKSAND

By Heliana-Maria Sotiriou

Forever different, forever the same  
Like the moon that never ceases to change  
Born on the other side  
The wrong  
Or maybe the right  
Not like the rest  
Never like them  
Like the day's light that bleeds into the depth of night  
Able to see and hear and sense  
And touch and live and love and die  
Same as the rest  
And yet, with an everlasting ocean in between.





# A QUESTION ABOUT...NATURE?

By Angelos Georgakopoulos

**It's the contour of a snail's shell  
The shape of a falling snowflake,  
The way stars are placed in the night sky  
Wherever you look, you will find  
That nature is math.**



# *The Voice of Your Mother*

By Dora Samolada

When you look at the sea,

What do you see?

When you touch the thyme leaves,

What do you feel?

When the morning birds sing,

What do you hear?

I think you should get closer

To hear the voice of your mother scream,

“Why, my child, are you doing this to me?”

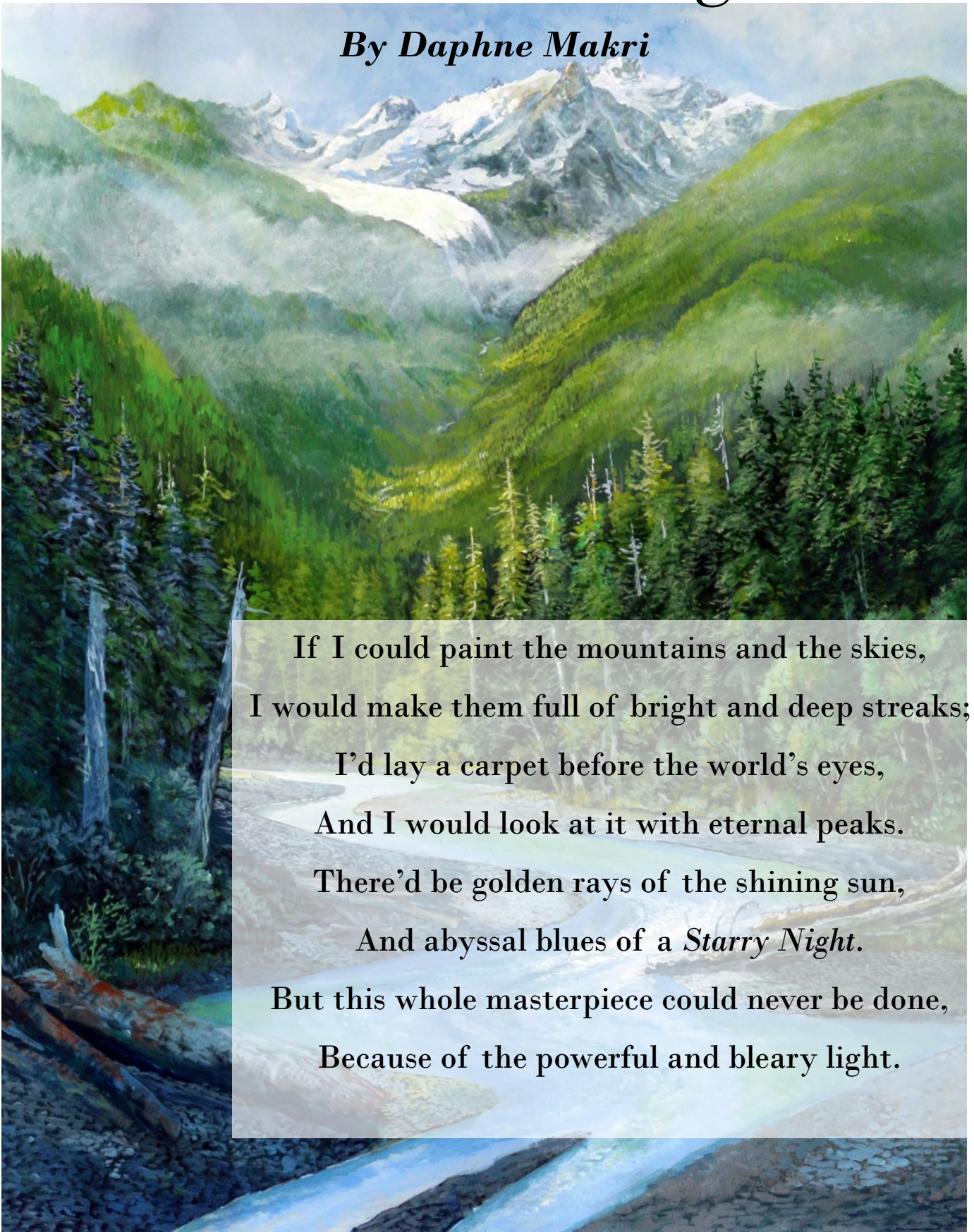




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# *The Painting*

*By Daphne Makri*



If I could paint the mountains and the skies,  
I would make them full of bright and deep streaks;  
I'd lay a carpet before the world's eyes,  
And I would look at it with eternal peaks.  
There'd be golden rays of the shining sun,  
And abyssal blues of a *Starry Night*.  
But this whole masterpiece could never be done,  
Because of the powerful and bleary light.

*Mount Olympus Painting* by Larry Eifert.





# Tragedy

By Celia Paliogianni & Alexia Papageorgiou

The world keeps turning while I stand still.  
Our Mother is dying, how should I feel?  
Daggered as she is by her own spawns,  
Writhing in pain she can't go on...  
Since birth she stands at our side,  
But it's too late, our Mother has died.

---

# The Colors of Nature

By Ellie Evangelopoulou &  
Marianna Karantoni

Yellow for life,  
Blue for infinity,  
Green for peace.

Red for blaze,  
Grey for breathlessness,  
Black for absence of all.





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# The Three Doors

By Ilena Gova-Frangou



Once upon a time there were three doors—

One hid behind the trees,

One was locked in the sky,

The last one unleashed the fire.

And then humans started searching

For the missing green and blue.

But the doors were gone forever,

Yet their aching loss remains.

---

# Lavender

By Alice Dimitropoulou

There was once a prince  
So in love with a princess from the east.  
His blood was blue and bright.  
And hers so red, so light.  
Their love was so strong,  
it was clear, together they belong.



One day the princess fell.  
The prince was so heartbroken,  
his sadness was unspoken.  
So he fell as well,  
And there, they both lay still.



A color before unknown  
it was purple that had shown  
Their blood was mixed together.  
And as it rained, as it poured,  
a flower grew and lit the world.  
Nature was surprised  
This flower dazzled her  
And that's how it was born,  
our well-known lavender.



# THE MONSTERS AND THE SUN

*By Danae Mavragani*

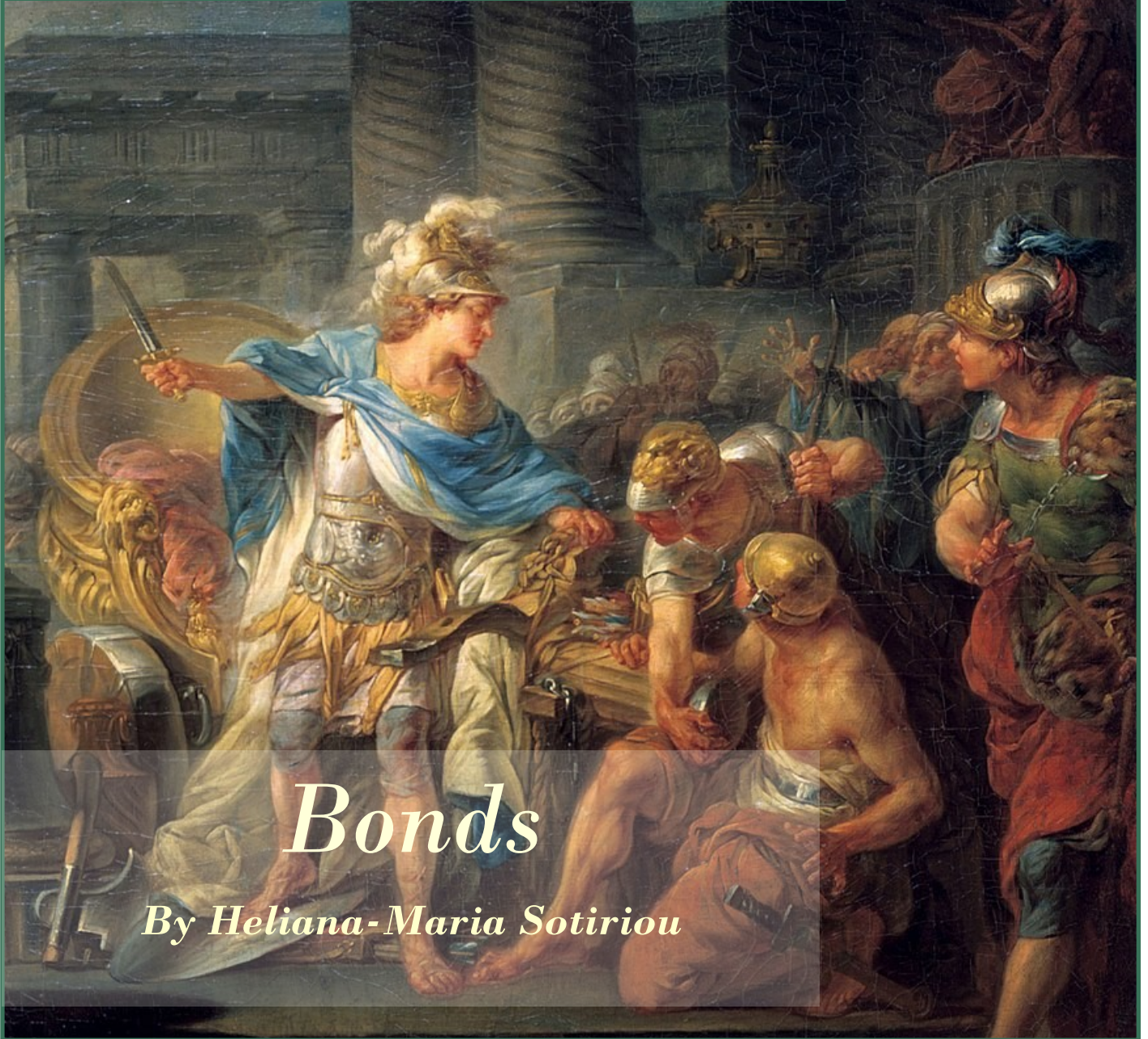
People warn you about the birds in the sky  
But no one warns you about those who dangerously fly  
People warn you about the beasts in the sea  
But no one warns you about those who confidently run but can't see  
People warn you about the monsters underneath your bed  
But no one warns you about the monsters inside your head.

A bloody battlefield  
A pained soldier sitting in the middle of it with tears in his eyes

"Is that it?" He asked himself  
Feeling nothing but broken and unwise.  
Suddenly a beautiful glow, coming from afar  
And then he remembered that this wasn't the end  
The real war had just begun.

Like a man he once knew said, "You can never stop a rising sun."





Bonds, an irreversible part of human nature  
Sacrifice, sometimes it takes too much  
Faith, it can clear the heart's and mind's complex paths  
Strength, our leader, it commands us to never give up  
Virtue, it moves us to the right path  
Love, it makes us what we are, human beings with a beating heart  
Wrong-doings, give us a purpose to continue to exist  
Bonds, it is the best feeling when you break free  
All are nothing but a means to an end  
So that eventually, the Gordian knot will be forever cut.





# Beautiful Stranger

By Emmanuel Protoperos

Beautiful stranger,  
Looking at me,  
Smiling gently,  
And happily.  
Where do you come from?  
Where will you go?  
What are you here for?  
I wanna know.  
So many faces,  
But you alone stand out.  
What are you hiding?  
I want to find out.  
Shall I dare ask you?  
Would that be bold?  
Should I just leave you,  
Just let you go?

# *The Cycle of the World*

*By Anastasia Galerou*



That's the cycle of the world  
I heard her crying  
*I started crying*  
He cut the cord  
She tried, she tried, she tried  
I wanted to get out  
Until there wasn't enough space  
Kicking and turning  
I started growing, liquid surrounded me  
They became one more  
Two cells joined together  
It all started from love  
That's the cycle of the world.



# *A Story's Story*

*By Heliana-Maria Sotiriou*

**Once upon a time,  
The story did begin.**

**Its first breath,  
A spark, gave birth.  
And a new star,  
A new life emerged,  
Just then.**

**And so the story went on,  
And on, and on.  
So once upon a future,  
The story will be gone.  
Its place has been given  
To truth's true form**



# Serendipity\*

By Artemis Philippou

Considered a fool for being taken  
Put down by the great and glorious  
The last change was unexpected  
Never supposed to happen  
A light slightly shimmers at the top of a mountain.  
A glimpse of joy, fresh water running from the fountain.  
We found something without searching for it.  
We look back only to regret the sins we didn't commit.




*\*the occurrence and development of events by chance in a happy or beneficial way.*

Artwork: *Comedians by a Fountain* by Philippe Mercier.



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A dramatic sky at sunset or sunrise, with a bird in flight. The sky is filled with clouds, and the sun is low on the horizon, creating a silhouette of the bird. The colors are a mix of orange, yellow, and blue.

# 13.03.2020

By Mina Grammata

**Suffocated by the walls  
Isolated from the world  
An echo is conquering  
Memories in my mind  
The enemy is observing  
Waiting for total collapse  
The unknown is lurking  
The invisible is smirking  
The horror is forever more reigning  
The inferior is kneeling  
Nature is exhaling  
The birds aren't bound by the burden**

---

# Found Poetry

They say that one man's trash is another man's treasure. Likewise, just by reexamining everyday texts, we can turn one man's prose into our own poetry.





# Infinity

By Ellie Deliyianni

He put on his glasses, waded away from Ralph, and crouched down among the tangled foliage. "I'll be out again in just a minute—" Ralph disentangled himself cautiously and stole away through the branches. In a few seconds the fat boy's grunts were behind him and he was hurrying toward the screen that still lay between him and the lagoon. He climbed over a broken trunk and was out of the jungle. The shore was fledged with palm trees. These stood or leaned or reclined against the light and their green feathers were a hundred feet up in the air. The ground beneath them was a bank covered with coarse grass, torn everywhere by the upheavals of fallen trees, scattered with decaying coconuts and palm saplings. Behind this was the darkness of the forest proper and the open space of the scar. Ralph stood, one hand against a grey trunk, and screwed up his eyes against the shimmering water. Out there, perhaps a mile away, the white surf flinked on a coral reef, and beyond that the open sea was dark blue. Within the irregular arc of coral the lagoon was still as a mountain lake—blue of all shades and shadowy green and purple. The beach between the palm terrace and the water was a thin stick, endless apparently, for to Ralph's left the perspectives of palm and beach and water drew to a point at infinity; and always, almost visible, was the heat.

He jumped down from the terrace. The sand was thick over his black shoes and the heat hit him. He became conscious of the weight of clothes, kicked his shoes off fiercely and ripped off each stocking with its elastic garter in a single movement. Then he leapt back on the terrace, pulled off his shirt, and stood there among the skull-like coconuts with green shadows from the palms and the forest sliding over his skin. He undid the snake-clasp of his belt, lugged off his shorts and pants, and stood there naked, looking at the dazzling beach and water.



This found poem by Ellie Deliyianni is from the novel *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding, a story about a group of English schoolboys stranded on a deserted island in the midst of WWII. This excerpt is from the first chapter of the novel, in which two of the surviving boys meet in this exotic environment after their plane crashes. As a graduating senior, Elli chose this memorable classic she read in Grade 10 English class.





This found poem by George Kanellopoulos is based on Kurt Vonnegut's short story "Harrison Bergeron," which is about a future world in which everyone is made equal by strict and unfair laws. Read in George's Grade 12 English Elective, this is the first page of that story, which describes this dystopian world. The words selected demonstrate how all people are equally the same, without any differentiation or individuality. People similar to each other act like well-set machines.



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# THE END

“Everything has to come to an end, sometime.”

—L. Frank Baum, *The Marvelous Land of Oz*

*Until next year!*