

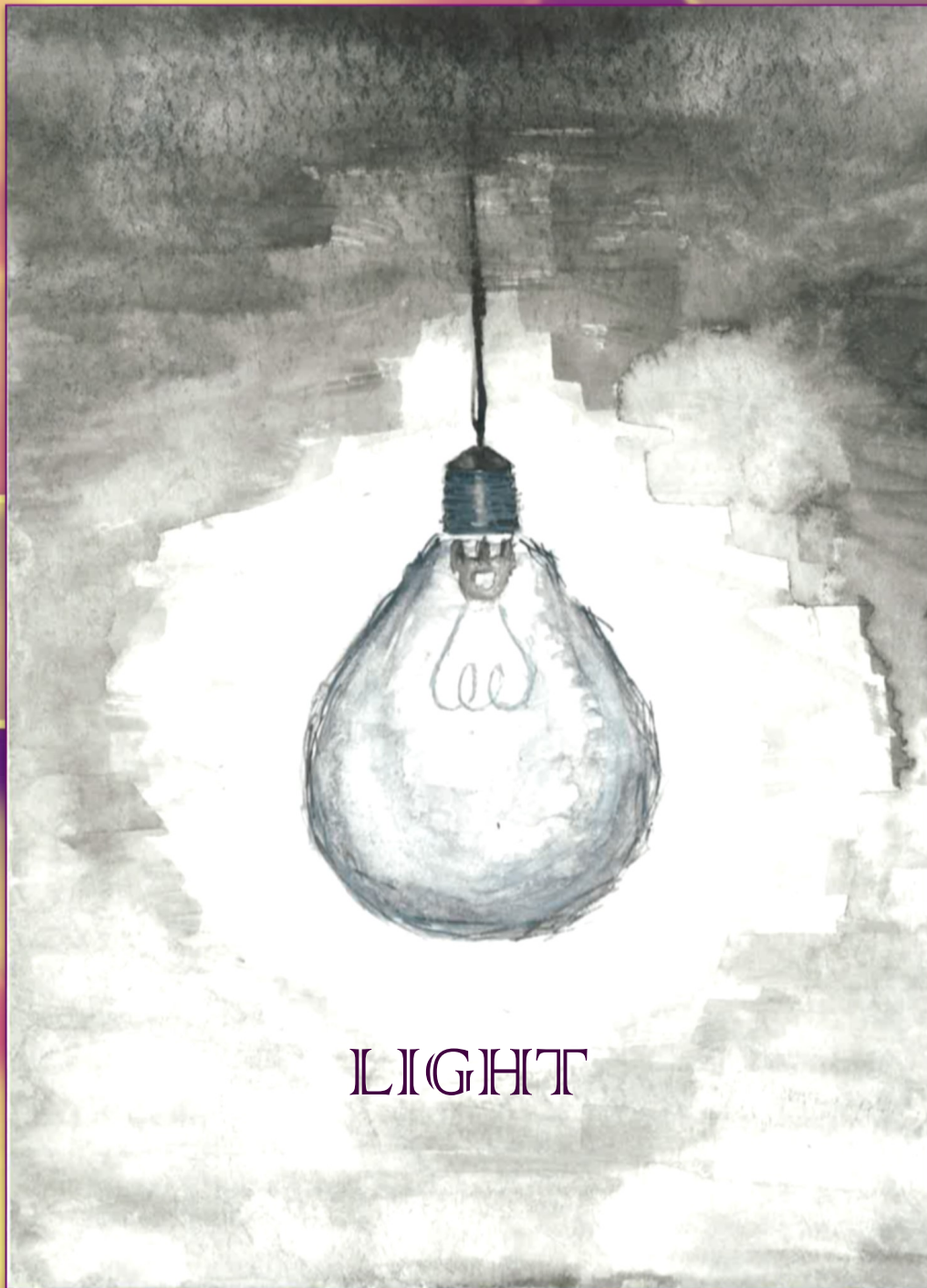


HELLENIC AMERICAN EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION

ATHENS COLLEGE—PSYCHICO COLLEGE

ATHENS COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL

As You Like It



LIGHT

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A special thank you to the English department!

From the Editor

As defined by physics, light is the electromagnetic radiation of any wavelength that can be detected by the human eye. However, even before science was able to construct a clear definition, humanity had always had its own interpretation of light: the rays of the rising sun, the first spark of fire, the awe of lightning, the isolated stars of the vast universe, the one leader in darkness, the inspiration of ideas. Each historical epoch, each individual, each pair of eyes sees light from a different perspective.

The fact that people's perception of light has changed over the centuries may be because it holds many inconsistencies. Light is both a particle and wave, light can be enduring as well as instant, light can be perceived as an idea, and ideas are infinite. Light offers many liberties and yet many restraints.

For this reason, this year's theme of the Athens College High School English Magazine, *As You Like It*, is Light. As you read on, you will see that each contributor of this edition sheds his or her own unique perception on light—on each page and in each sentence. From the Northern Lights to the Enlightenment, from poems on lightening to darkness, from the Olympic flame to the excitement of interstellar travel, students took on the task of exploring this multifaceted theme. Hence, let each of us share our own color of the rainbow and enlighten you on how we see the light of the world.

Please Enjoy!

Alexandros Mavroidis

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Part I:

Articles

Society



Light as Enlightenment

By

Alexandra Stavrianou



When you go outside, you see the sun shining light. When you open the window, light embraces everything. But *what* is light? By definition, light is the natural agent that stimulates sight and makes everything visible. However, in the metaphorical sense of the word, light is equated with enlightenment—the bright idea that might suddenly come to someone or the instruction of others, helping them broaden their horizons.

In the metaphorical sense of the word, light can be equated with enlightenment.

More particularly, enlightening means providing knowledge, understanding, or insight, helping people, and freeing them from prejudice and superstition. This can be better explained through the teachings of the ancient Greek philosopher Plato. He believed that it is the duty of a phi-

losopher to search for the truth. Then, when he acquires new knowledge, it is his responsibility to share and spread this information to the common people, thus enlightening them and guiding them to the truth.

It is true that people sometimes may insist on their beliefs and reject any other opinion, thus becoming opposed to broadening their minds and opening new horizons with more progressive ideas. This is vividly demonstrated by Plato in his book *Πολιτεία* through his allegory of the cave. According to this allegory, some people live permanently chained to a cave and are only able to see the wall in front of them. On that wall, shadows of various objects are cast by a fire which is located behind them; thus, their perception of the real world is limited and distorted. If one manages to free himself from the cave, he will observe the real world and realize that his perception of the world was just a warped view of reality.

According to Plato, the chained men are the common people who have never seen anything but the illusions portrayed by the shadows. Unknowingly, they live a lie. The liberated man sym-

bolizes the philosopher who, having unchained himself, can see the truth and the good. The freed man—the philosopher—has a duty to instruct the common people, but in returning to the dark cave after being exposed to the sun, the strong light may impair his vision in the darkness for a short time. Therefore, he will become a mockery or the object of hatred by his companions in the cave because he will be talking to them about the incredible truths he discovered in the outside world.

They, however, will only be able to see in him a partially blinded man, making them identify the act of exiting the cave with the possibility of their becoming impaired. In essence, those who choose to believe him will learn the truth, whereas those who choose to reject him will remain ignorant and continue to be deceived by false beliefs. If we are to translate the above into how people function in society today, it is evident that anyone who is receptive to new ideas and willing to broaden his perception of various aspects of life can be enlightened and allow his stagnant ideas to transform into new perceptions more suitable to modern times.

Furthermore, apart from its philosophical meaning, enlightenment can have a more superficial meaning, applied to everyday life. In this sense, it may simply mean discovering a new idea or understanding a concept, which could materialize over a short or long period of time.

An example of the former is Archimedes' idea about buoyancy. Archimedes was asked by the King to establish whether his crown was made of true gold or not. An important idea dawned on Archimedes while he was having a bath. He realized that the overflow of water when he got into the bath meant that the amount of water that was displaced must have been equal to the volume of his body. He then applied this idea

to accurately identify whether the King's crown was made of true gold or not. Archimedes' 'enlightenment' in this case was succinctly summarized by him in the word 'eureka' as he found the solution to his problem through a random idea which suddenly occurred to him.

An example of the latter is how the world's perception of the position of women has gradually changed over time. Long ago, women were perceived as inferior beings, not equal to men and, therefore, not entitled by nature to the same rights as men. With the passage of time, however, the teachings of enlightened people have gradually managed to change this idea to give all people equal rights, providing balance in society. Of course, as mentioned above, people may reject enlightenment due to their narrow-mindedness. Unfortunately, in relation to the above scenario, there still exist societies today that do not believe in gender equality and have not accepted the idea that men and women have equal rights. Thus, they have not been enlightened, in this sense.

In conclusion, light is as essential in the philosophical sense as it is in its more superficial sense. Enlightenment helps us view the world through our minds so that we can face challenges even if they appear impossible to solve.

The teachings of enlightened people have gradually managed to change this idea to give all people equal rights, providing balance in society.

Light Across Cultures

By
Nick Vernardakis

The theme of light is prevalent in traditions and festivities linking it to ‘good’ since people tend to associate it with high moral values and ideals.



Light has always had a positive connotation in people’s minds. It symbolizes good as it is immediately associated with God, who said, “Let there be light,” while He was creating the cosmos. Light is also associated with knowledge because it helps us see the truth. Moreover, when we are faced with a difficult situation but hope to unveil its cause or come up with a solution, we say, “*We will see light at the end of the tunnel.*” It is evident that light is a symbol of multiple, mostly positive, notions. What is perhaps not widely known, however, is that light represents different things across different cultures, and that can be clearly seen through celebrations linked to it.

Firstly, in Sweden, on St. Lucia’s Day, which is the 13th of December, the oldest daughter in the family is supposed to wear a white robe and

a wreath of candles. She is said to represent Lucia, an ancient, mythical character, whose role is to bring ‘light’ into the cold Swedish winters. The boys of the family are dressed as ‘Star Boys’ in white gowns. The celebrations are a clear indication of life in old-time farming communities.

Another popular festivity where light is more than prominent is Christmas, especially in France. The French light the four Advent Candles every Sunday before Christmas Day. Indeed, the period leading to Christmas is called “*L’Avent*” and symbolizes the hope of Christmas, when light prevails over darkness.

Then there is, of course, Hanukkah, a popular tradition closely connected to light. Hanukkah is known the world over as ‘the Jewish Festival of Lights.’ According to Judaism, the Jews defeated the Maccabees and the Syrians in a battle



in 165 B.C. After the battle, the Jews found out that the Syrians had let their sacred light go out. What was more, they only had oil for one more day. However, the oil actually lasted for eight days until a messenger procured more. This was the

miracle of Hanukkah, and the celebration carries on until this day as a reminder of this miracle.

Being so colorful and exotic, Indian culture would be sure to have its own light tradition. Their celebration is called Diwali, which means ‘array of lights.’ It represents the triumph of light over darkness, and it is one of India’s most significant celebrations. Specifically, Diwali is a Hindu celebration honoring the defeat of evil by good. It is celebrated in October and November and lasts for five days. Indians consider Diwali a period of meditation during which they aim to shed the darkness of ignorance.

It is clear that people around the globe celebrate light in numerous ways across different cultures. The theme of light is prevalent in traditions and festivities, linking it to ‘good’ since people tend to associate it with high moral values and ideals that humans have based their civilizations on. Hence, light is the cornerstone of humanity; it lies in the heart of humans and will always be celebrated as a source of life.

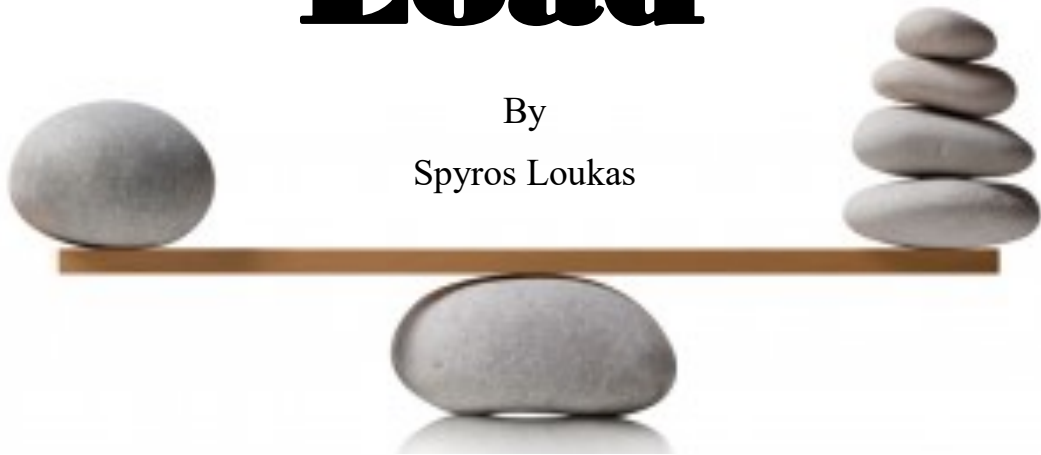
Photo top left: St. Lucia celebration in Sweden

Photo below: Diwali celebration in India



Lighten Your Load

By
Spyros Loukas



“Correspondingly, the ideal to pursue is the balance between responsibility and free time.”

Time is one of life’s most valuable resources due to its inexorable march forward. However, most of us students feel overwhelmed by the sheer mass of things we have on our to-do list. This causes stress, which in turn causes our load to get heavier. There is, however, a way for us to lighten that load and achieve a calmer and more balanced life through time management. Sounds easier said than done—yet by keeping a few things in mind, we can all succeed in managing our time correctly.

First and foremost, clarifying your priorities and simplifying life is a matter of great significance. You must spend time to get to know yourself better, so you can get a clear picture of your values and your goals. In this way, you will be able to assess each matter that comes up and evaluate its importance in your life. Figuring out what it is you seek to accomplish in your future is

a process that allows you to focus on what is most essential and figure out the avenues through which you can attain your goals.

Thus, spending time on setting goals is a crucial task, and it is not only important to set long-term goals but also those in the short- and mid-term. For each time frame, we need to write down the following three categories: things we want to be, things we wish to have, and things we plan to do. Finally, it is very important to be specific and realistic during the planning of your goals and to allocate a reasonable time span for each.

Furthermore, being able to eliminate the time you waste is of vital importance. Indeed, you must employ an effective time-management system to plan your life from the most trivial everyday matters to your term goals. To little surprise, the one major obstacle in this effort is

technology—and more specifically, social media. Over the last few years in which these means of communication have dominated the worldwide community in diverse ways, we have received an incredible amount of information that is likely to confuse and disorientate us rather than steer us in the right direction. As a matter of fact, we are liable to lose the awareness of what is important in our lives, and we end up managing our time inefficiently. Consequently, dealing with this information overload efficiently will prevent it from being a barrier on the road to success.

According to Parkinson's Law, "work expands to fill the time available," so sometimes people spend unnecessary time on each task just because they have it to spare. If we have time to spend on social media, we will fill up valuable time with this unenlightening activity. This culture of busi-ness is one of the biggest snares to fall into as it reduces our effectiveness, morale, and motivation. In light of this information, it is of great importance to avoid keeping busy out of a sense of habit, duty, or guilt.

According to one of the seven Sages of Greece, Cleobulus, "μέτρον ἄριστον," or moderation is the best choice. Correspondingly,

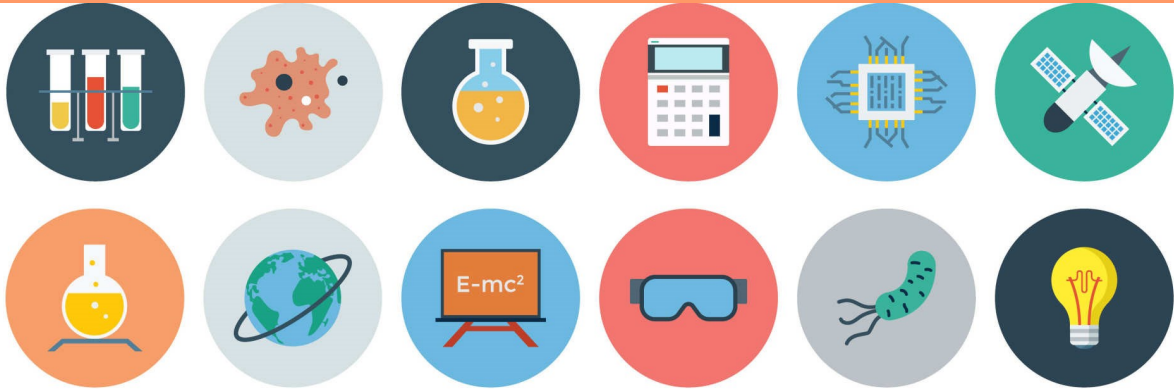
You must employ an effective time-management system to plan your life from the most trivial everyday matters to your long-lasting goals.

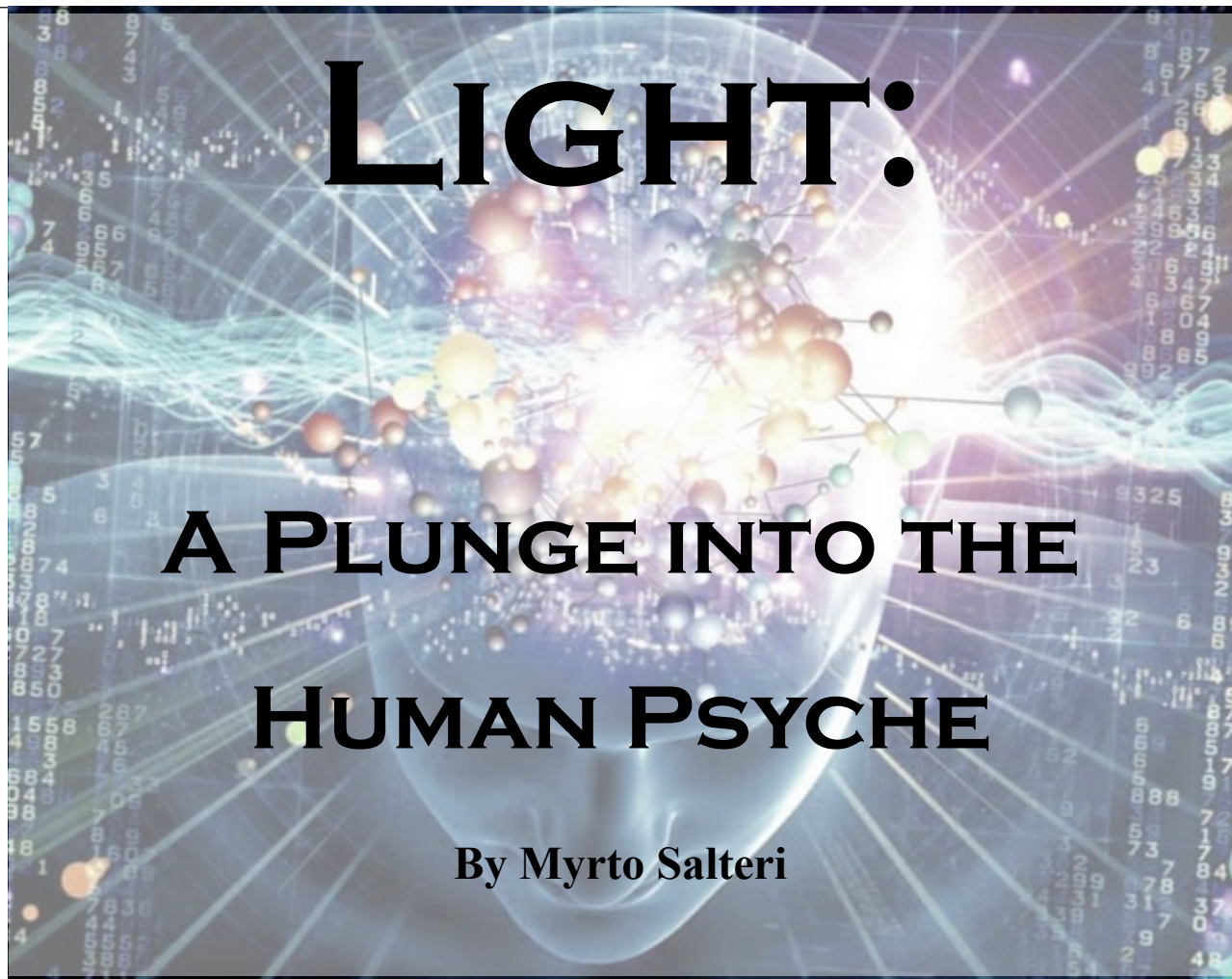
the ideal to pursue is the balance between responsibility and free time. Certainly, you need to distribute your time with prudence so you can be productive in your work, pleased with your personal life, and healthy—both mentally and physically. Moreover, a common trap which most workaholics fall into is the belief that free time is a waste of time because it does not yield any tangible fruit of labor. However, the truth is that the value of relaxation and entertainment is priceless and vital both for the mind and the body.

Thus, the efficient management of time is a skill of great significance to be acquired because our time on earth is limited. Therefore, you should always exploit every moment and keep your priorities straight. If, however, you ever feel the weight of life is too much to bear, take a step back and try to reflect on the ways in which you can lighten your load.



Science





Have you ever wondered how something as abstract as light can influence your mood, your reactions, or even your way of thinking? What about the way you make some decisions? Is it possible that your decisions change depending on the quality of light? You have probably not even considered the power this ‘electromagnetic wave’ has over your everyday feelings, thoughts, and actions. In fact, research has shown that not only can the use of light control one’s emotions and inner reactions, but it also has a great impact on the human psyche.

As far as human psychology is concerned, analysing the power of light is like examining the human mind. According to studies, light is not only a perception of an electromagnetic wave of photons but also has an impact on the behavioral

and emotional side of the perceiver. In other words, a source of light might trigger the receiver to feel a variety of emotions: inspiration, calmness, healing, irritation, or anxiety.

Colors are a prominent example of this ‘emotional and cognitive’ power light exerts on the human psyche. Different uses of lighting create different colors, which in turn cause varied responses in each person; as a result, divergent

Different uses of lighting create different colors which cause varied responses in each person; as a result, divergent emotions and thoughts are elicited.

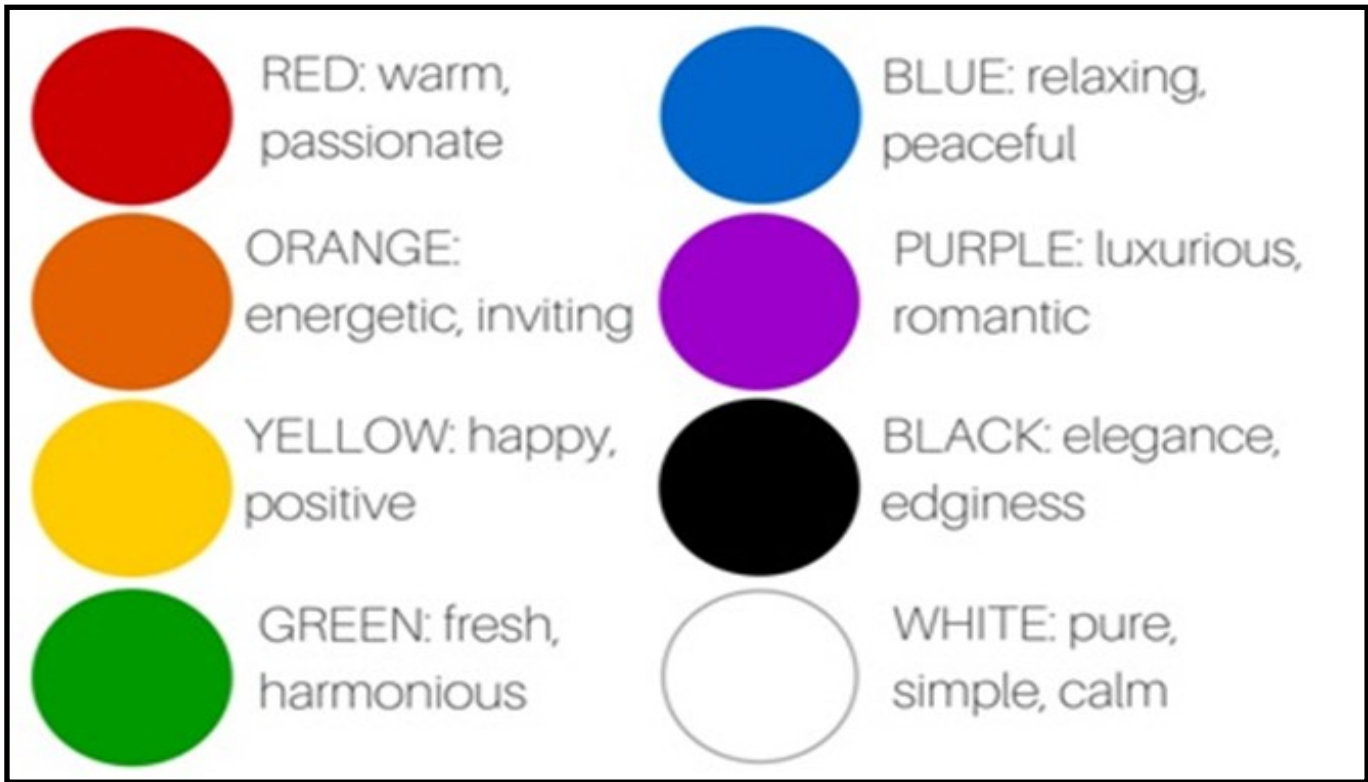


emotions and thoughts are elicited. For instance, red is characterized as a powerful ‘physical’ light which causes feelings of physical courage, warmth, strength, energy, aggression, excitement, and incite the instinct of 'fight or flight' in the perceiver. It makes the human heart beat faster, thus making the perceiver believe that time is moving faster than it really is. Red is also a color that is attention-grabbing, which probably explains why this color is used in warning symbols or in stop lights. On the other hand, green causes the opposite emotional reaction. It is a cool color with a clear effect on the senses, having a balancing and harmonizing effect. That is why green is often used in commercial of-

fices since it is believed to create feelings of wealth, stability, and renewal.

Furthermore, light may influence man’s behavior, inner thoughts, and feelings on a daily basis even if he does not use it as a light source intentionally. One of the most important light sources humans thrive on without realizing it is the sun. However irrational it may seem, the sun can change a person’s mood and behaviour, too. How many times have you caught yourself feeling miserable or depressed on a rainy day when there is no light to brighten the sky? Research has shown that people who live in countries where the climate favours ‘dark’ days tend to suffer from more psychological conditions, such as depression. This is because sunlight creates a feeling of relief and happiness in people, making them feel free, optimistic, and full of hope.

To sum up, light has a significant impact on man’s everyday life, not only on his activities but also on his inner psyche. After all, it is light that determines the way humans think, react, and feel.



IN THE DARK: OUR Virtual Reality

By: Panayotis Nikolopoulos

We humans are unable to experience the true nature of the universe as our brains can only process a fraction of reality.

We use technological means to enhance our knowledge about the cosmos. However, this has unraveled unsettling possibilities—one of those being the possibility that we are the creations of a simulation. But if this were possible, how would we know whether this has already happened? What if we are creations of other civilizations and don't even know it? Have we in fact been left in the dark?

Based on our scientific capabilities, it is impossible to render the whole universe. Hypothetically speaking, however, you only need enough space to fool the consciousness of the inhabitants into believing that they are real. Nick Bostrom has created the *Simulation Hypothesis*, which states some facts that need to be met for a projection to become reality. It is based on five assumptions, and if any of these are true, then we are, in fact, living inside a virtual reality simulation.

One of these assumptions is that a computer could generate not only one human con-

sciousness but *billions* of them. In this way, you could simulate our entire human history. The brain is very complex to simulate as it operates uncountable operations per second. In equations that involve the time and the number of humans that someone would want to simulate, a computer like this might be impossible to create.

The second assumption is that the technological evolution will not stop progressing. If technology progresses likewise, then there could be civilizations so advanced that computer power would no longer be an obstacle to creating simulations. Simple computers will never be able to create simulations, but there are concepts for PCs that could achieve it. One of them is the *Matrioshka Brain*, a theoretical structure that would orbit around a star and, by absorbing its radiation, would simultaneously create on its own millions of simulations at the same time. There are also other ideas about high-end quantum computers that are of a smaller scale, maybe even only the size of a city, which could do the same job as the megastructure.

The third assumption is that civilizations have managed to avoid elimination. The *Filmi Paradox* states how societies advance and what



difficulties they might face. The barriers that are created against civilizations are called *The Great Filters*, which could lead to their complete destruction. Such examples include asteroids, climate change, black holes, and even large-scale wars. If life is self-destructive, then we are not living inside a simulation.

The fourth assumption questions whether other civilizations would want to waste energy running simulations. We need to understand that it is impossible to understand the true intentions of beings that are all-powerful and are thus able to control universes. Their intentions might be based on science—like studying a species, learning how it evolves, and if it can reach its true potential—or they may be solely based on entertainment, sort of like playing video games as a pastime.

The last assumption is that if a simulation were ever created, then there is a high chance you are inside one. This is common sense as a post-human being with practically unlimited computing power would not stop at just creating only one simulation. Rather, it would be much more convenient and worthwhile to run millions, even billions of them. Creating billions of universes means that there are probably trillions of simulated conscious

beings. Therefore, for every being that is made of flesh, a billion simulated ones exist. In addition, we must take into consideration that an advanced simulated civilization could reach the point where it could create its own simulations, consequently increasing our chances of being in a simulation at this very moment.

All in all, simulations are vastly based on assumptions and cannot be proven at this moment in time and are, therefore, a controversial subject in the discipline of science. There is no way of knowing if we are merely part of a simulation or not. However, if hypothetically speaking it can be done, then it is highly possible that you are inside a simulation at this very moment and have, therefore, been left in the dark—ultimately leading to the realization that your perception of reality, might not be real at all.

What if we are creations of other civilizations and don't even know it? Have we been left in the dark?

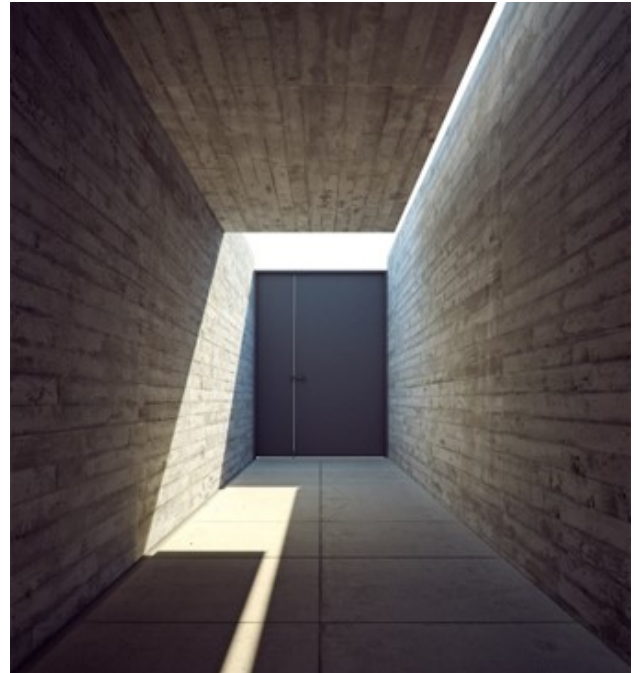
When Light Is the Color and Architecture the Brush

By: Nafsia Philippou

Light is everywhere. Even in the dark, even when the sun is no longer in the sky, there is still light, and that light is essential to everything. Without the light of the sun, the Earth would be a frozen ball of ice instead of a habitable planet. Without it, living beings would not be able to see. Light is the reason humans can see color. In other words, it is an indivisible part of human life, and it has the power to affect humans both physically and mentally. That is why, throughout the years, humans have tried to control light in the best way possible, and they have achieved this through architecture.

Studies have shown that light affects one's mood. Natural light can make someone feel calm and peaceful and can contribute to one's positive outlook. On the other hand, a lack of light or even poor artificial light can be the cause of depression. Through research, scientists have come to the conclusion that the reason behind these psychological behaviours is the brain. Functions of the brain, such as the regulation of one's thoughts and feelings, can be altered by the amount of light and the wavelength of that light the human body receives. When there is enough light, the quantity of the soothing brain chemical serotonin increases, causing emotions of happiness. On the contrary, during dark or gloomy days, this chemical is reduced, thus having a negative impact on one's mood.

As a lack of light can have great effect on one's life, humans have tried to tame light instead



of being tamed themselves. Many times, this has been achieved by using architecture as the guide that controls the way light falls on a surface. There are many countries where the weather is constantly cloudy. In places like these, the light that passes through the clouds is dim and lifeless. However, even such faint light, when manipulated in the right way, can be appreciated. The first step in achieving this goal is to understand the properties that light can have through its interaction with the aesthetic environment. Firstly, light can alter one's perception of shapes on space. Secondly, it can direct or distract one's attention from a certain object or area, and lastly, it can create contrast by making that area brighter than its surroundings. Therefore, through these three qualities, light can

“Humans have tried to control light in the best way possible, and they have achieved this through architecture.”

define zones and boundaries, and it can expand, link, or delineate one area from another.

The next step is to give light form. In architecture, light can be given many shapes that surpass the ordinary and please the eye, and this is achieved through the shape of the building itself. The way that light falls into a room depends on where the windows are placed, how the walls are cut, and whether they have holes, sharp edges, or curvy lines. Also, there need not be a lot of light in a room to create a pleasant effect. Sometimes less is more. For example, a single ray of light can create a feeling of simplicity and calmness, and, at the same time, a notion of contentment. Thus, even when the sun is covered by clouds, its dim light can give a pleasant touch.

A famous architect whose designs focus on light and shadow is the late Louis Kahn. Kahn believed that dark shadow is a natural part of light. In one of his theories, he talks about light in Greek architecture. More specifically, he discusses his belief that the “column is where the light is not, and the space between is where the light is.” It is clear that, even in ancient Greece, people tried to shape light in an aesthetically pleasing way, which in this case is the existence of a symmetrical pattern between light and shadow. Furthermore, Kahn believed that light amplifies the level of darkness of an area—that a dark area is dark, but a dark area harmonized with a hint of light is even darker. Hence, what he basically did was manipulate the light that comes through the walls of his buildings to create a sense of mysteriousness, evoking silence and awe, two states that matched his creations.

There are many ways one can manipulate light. These techniques can vary depending on the purpose and the mood that needs to be attributed to each space. If the combination of light and shadow is successful, there is a positive impact on the viewer’s psychology. Ultimately, all that is needed to improve one’s mood is the will to create, a bit of wild imagination, and the most basic element of all: light.



Northern Lights



Magic or Science?

By Vassilia Skayanni-Lampraki

The Northern Lights are an extraordinary physical phenomenon that consists of ‘light waves’ in the sky above the North Pole. Its scientific name, ‘Aurora Borealis,’ is said to have been coined either by Galileo Galilei in 1616 or by French mathematician Gassend in 1649. It is derived from the name of the Greek goddess of dawn, ‘Ios’ (Ἥως)—known as ‘Aurora’ in Roman mythology—and the Greek god of the north wind, ‘Boreas’ (Βορέας). Theories about the lights were developed by Aristotle, Galileo, Goethe, Halley, and Descartes, as well as in the Old Testament. However, only during the last centuries has the evolution of science managed to explain this phenomenon through the laws of physics and chemistry, revealing the conditions in which the Aurora Borealis can occur. But until a scientific approach to the lights’ creation

was possible, a mythological explanation could not have been avoided.

During the early days of humankind, when cultures started developing, the Northern Lights were viewed in different ways. They were associated with the gods and other superficial beings, and myths were created to satisfy people’s need for explaining the inexplicable. According to ancient Norse mythology, the Northern Lights were the reflection of the Valkyries’ shields racing across the sky. Based on Greek and Roman perception,

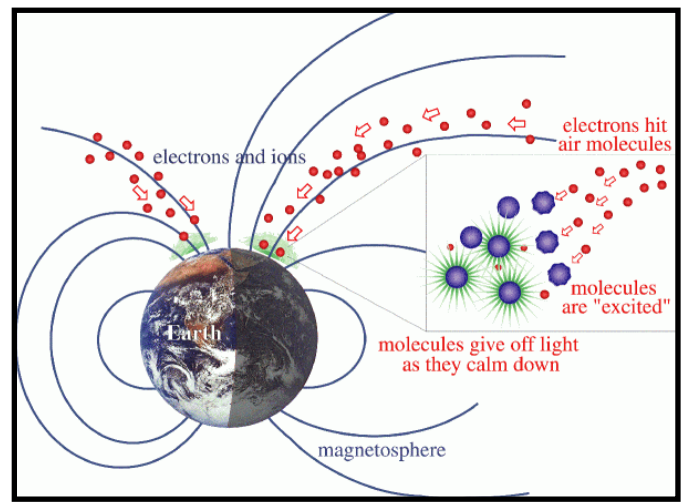
Besides the scientific approach to the lights’ creation, a mythological explanation could not be avoided.

the lights were the goddess Ios and Aurora, respectively, who announced the arrival of her brother, Helios—meaning the sun—and therefore the new day. Ancient Chinese and Japanese culture viewed the lights as dragons dancing in the sky. Moreover, babies who were conceived under the lights were thought to be fortunate.

Icelanders also associated the lights with babies as they believed that the lights could ease the pain when a mother looked at them during childbirth. However, Icelanders thought that pregnant women who looked at the lights would give birth to cross-eyed children. Sámi people, living in the Arctic part of Sweden, Norway, Finland, and Russia, believed that the lights were the souls of the departed and, if disrespected, would bring bad fortune. Thus, the Sámi thought that they should hide from the rays and make no sound, or the spirits would take them away. Additionally, Estonians used to think that the lights were the reflections of sleighs and horses engaged in a celestial war or celebrating a wedding.

In what is now the United States, indigenous tribes, such as the Indians of Wisconsin and the Makah Indians, had different beliefs. The former considered the lights bad luck, while the latter as dwarfs lighting fires in the sky. However, the most macabre myths about the Aurora Borealis can be found in Canada, where they were regarded as torches lit by the dead who were playing soccer with a walrus skull. Similarly, they were seen as the souls of babies lost at birth in Greenland. In central Europe, where the lights usually appeared to be red, they were associated with blood and conflict. Coincidentally, a few weeks before the French Revolution, the lights appeared in the sky, making people think that they foreshadowed a war.

However, science changes the interpretation of any extraordinary physical phenomenon. In most



cases, the scientific explanation prevails over the mythological perception of the phenomenon as stable and undeniable arguments have emerged through the use of the laws of science. The case of the Aurora Borealis is no exception to that rule since the scientific explanation of these lights has been adopted by the majority of the world's population.

Science has proven that the Northern Lights are produced by the electrically charged solar particles that the sun emits during massive explosions of electromagnetic matter, called Coronal Mass Ejection (CME). These electrons and ions are left in space and form Solar Wind, which means that the electrons and ions move as a whole. When Solar Wind approaches the Earth, which usually happens within 40 hours of its formation, it distorts the Earth's magnetic field. As a result, most of the particles are deflected from our planet, but some manage to enter the atmosphere near the poles, where the magnetic field is weaker. The collision which occurs between these particles and the atoms that form the atmosphere provides the former with more energy than usual, making them enter the 'excited' state. When an atom is in the 'excited' state, it has more energy than it has in the 'ground' state as the electrons inside it move to higher-energy orbits away from the nucleus. In the process of returning to their ground state, which is

the state in which the particles have their normal amount of energy, the particles emit photons. Photons are the smallest units (quantum) of light energy. As such, they create light and are the cause of the Northern Lights.

The most fascinating aspect of the Aurora Borealis is the different colors it emits, depending on the altitude at which the solar particles react with the atmosphere's atoms. The collisions between the solar particles and oxygen or nitrogen result in a variety of colors. These two different atoms with which the particles react can separate the collisions into two different types.

The first type consists of the solar particles' collisions with oxygen which produce a range of green hues at a height of 100 to 240 km above the Earth's surface. The reason for the appearance of the color green is the fact that, at this height, there is a high concentration of 'excited' oxygen atoms. However, when the collisions take place at an altitude greater than 240 km when solar activity is intense, the lights become red. At this height, there is a lower concentration of oxygen, making it more difficult for it to reach the 'excited state.' Therefore, the green color does not appear, but the red color, which is rare, prevails. When the collisions occur at a height of 100 to 240 km, during intense solar activity, the lights turn yellow or pink because of the combination of the green and red colors which appear in the aforementioned cases.

The second type of collisions that can happen is one in which the solar particles react with the nitrogen in the atmosphere. These collisions take place approximately 100 km above the Earth's surface and only when solar activity is intense, resulting in the appearance of blue and purple hues.

People have always looked at the sky. It has always been a part of our existence that people cannot know its entirety, and thus, it interests and



puzzles them. This is the reason that the Northern lights have not lost their mystical quality even though science has offered an explanation for them. In the same way, the concept of love has not lost its romantic feeling despite the fact that it has been scientifically proven that certain chemical reactions, which occur in the brain, are the cause of its well-known euphoric feeling.

In conclusion, the Northern Lights never cease to amaze anyone who has the opportunity to experience them digitally or in reality. As there are many interpretations and views of this physical phenomenon, everyone can decide how he or she wants to interpret it. Undoubtedly, the Aurora Borealis is one of the magnificent wonders of our incredible world, which is full of mysteries we have yet to discover.

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COLOR BLINDNESS

By: Anastasia Aleiferi

Color blindness is a disorder in which people cannot perceive the difference between colors. In fact, colorblind people will usually have the same response to the main three colors of light: red, blue, and green. This disorder can be caused by a genetic defect or by damage to the eye or to parts of the brain that process color information. An interesting fact is that men are more susceptible to this disorder than women.

Scientists have determined that there are three main types of color blindness: red-green color blindness, blue-yellow color blindness, and total color blindness, all of which can be diagnosed using a variety of tests. Those who suffer from color blindness may face some difficulties, but there are ways that colorblind people can cope with the world.

In Red-Green Color Blindness, the color red appears greener or in shades of yellow, and in some cases, patients will not perceive red at all. On the other hand, in Blue-Yellow Color Blindness, blue is perceived as green or yellow, and sometimes, it is difficult to distinguish yellow or red from pink or violet.

Complete color blindness is divided into two categories. People with Cone Monochromacy have trouble distinguishing colors because the brain needs to compare the signals from different

types of cones to see color. When only one type of cone is functioning, this comparison is not possible. People with Blue-Cone Monochromacy may also have reduced visual acuity, near-sightedness, and exhibit uncontrollable eye movements, a condition known as Nystagmus.

The second type of complete color blindness is Rod Monochromacy, or Achromatopsia. This type of monochromacy is rare and is the most severe form of color blindness, presenting itself at birth. Lacking all cone vision, people with Rod Monochromacy see the world in black, white, and gray. Furthermore, people with this condition tend to be photophobic since rods respond to dim light.

Numerous tests are used to diagnose color blindness and its type promptly. The Ishihara Color Test is the most common test for Red-Green Color Blindness. The test consists of a series of colored circles each containing a collection of dots in different colors and sizes. The HRR Pseudoisochromatic Color Test also uses color plates while the Cambridge Color Test is similar to the Ishihara

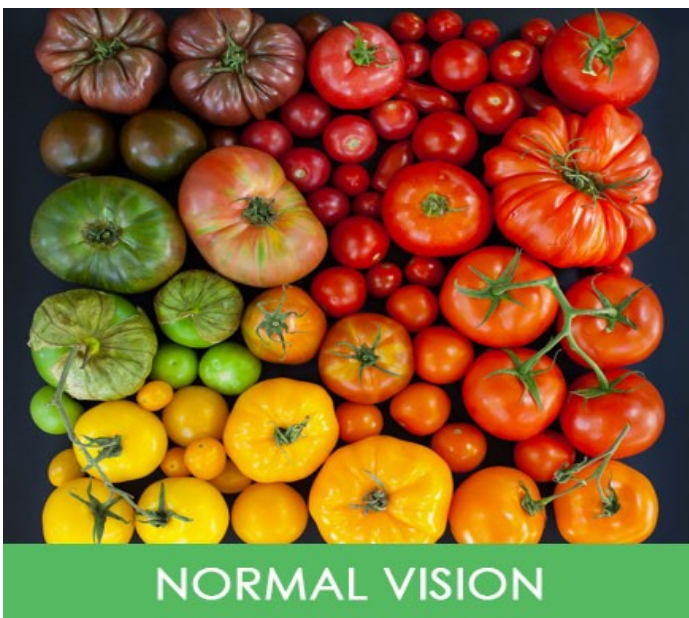
An interesting fact is
that men are more
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disorder than women.

Test but is conducted on a computer.

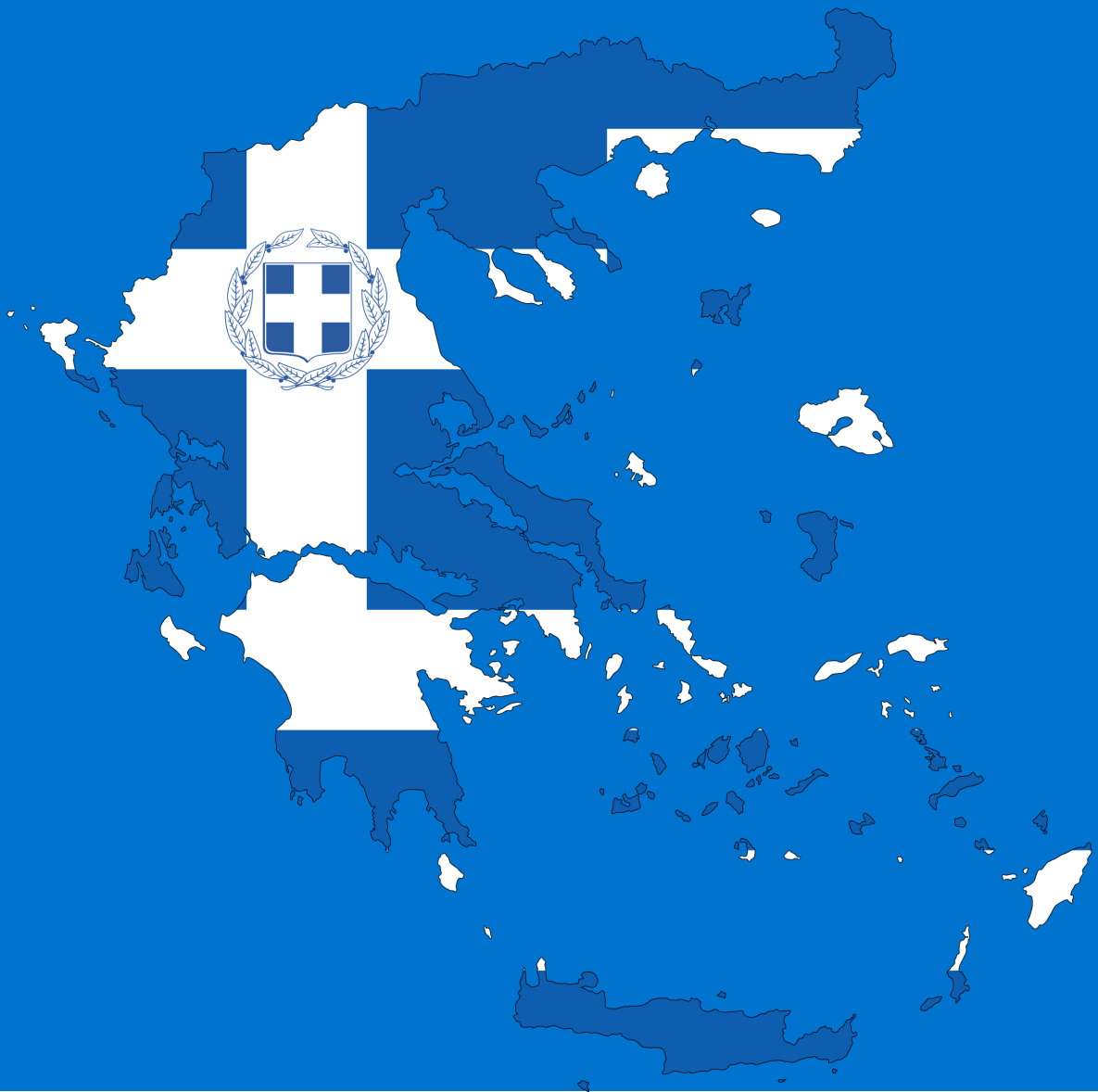
There is no cure for color blindness, but patients with Red-Green Color Blindness may use special sets of lenses which aid them in perceiving colors more accurately. These lenses are used outdoors under bright lighting conditions. Visual aids have also been developed to help people cope with color blindness. There are apps that help people with color blindness discriminate between colors and distinguish their shades. These kinds of apps can be helpful in selecting fruits or finding complementary colors when picking out clothing.

Unfortunately, color blindness is a disorder that affects everyday life. For example, it is difficult to use color-coded information, and color blind children have difficulty reading color-coded educational material. Everyday tasks like cooking can be difficult; following traffic lights and reading maps can be challenging.

Although it is difficult, people who are color blind gradually learn to adapt while scientists continue trying to find a cure. There have been some breakthroughs with monkey experimentation, however, and many experts hope that they will be able to remedy genetic color blindness and other



Greece



Greece:

A PLACE OF ILLUMINATION



By: Ileana Politi

Beyond its breathtaking landscape is the unique light of Greece: a light which undoubtedly cannot be found anywhere else in the world. Many authors, photographers, and artists have been enchanted by its beauty. Numerous works of art, literature, and prose are testament to this miracle of light, a light which does not blind or burn but attracts and inspires. As early as ancient times, Greek philosophers were drawn to light and studied it extensively.

It cannot be contradicted that the most amazing and inspiring element for many artists is the diversity of the marvelous landscapes of Greece. These landscapes, which cannot be forgot-

ten by anyone who is lucky enough to admire them, are the ones which give Greece its uniqueness, forming its identity and making it distinctive and immediately recognizable among all the other countries in the world. Undeniably, light plays a very important role in these landscapes and endows them with a beauty and brilliance that they would otherwise not boast.

One of the most amazing islands of Greece is Santorini. Not only is its geographical location spectacular, but the sunset on this Cycladic island is a masterpiece in its own right. When viewed from Oia, in particular, it is invariably characterized as breathtaking. Thousands of tourists visit the island every year simply to admire the sunset.

...the exquisite sun glowing on a piece of marble, the quaint, white, little houses dotting the islands of the Aegean Sea, the grassy plains filled with olive trees. In essence, the light of Greece is a show-stopper.

Back in the Athenian capital, the Parthenon is equally breathtaking. A must for anyone visiting Greece for the first time, the Acropolis becomes even more beautiful at night as it is lit from below. This light surrounding the Acropolis symbolizes Greece's democracy and brings to mind the numerous great figures who lived there, such as Pericles.

The light of Greece, however, cannot only be observed in its landscapes. This light has served as an incentive for many artists, authors, and, especially, photographers. Such is the brilliance and elegance of this light that innumerable photographs are taken by professionals every day as they try to capture its beauty—the exquisite sun glowing on a piece of marble, the quaint, little white houses dotting the islands of the Aegean Sea, the grassy plains filled with olive trees. In essence, the light of Greece is a show-stopper.

However, these photographs of Greek light are not as powerful on a computer screen or travel agency poster; one must actually *see* the light to believe it. Numerous amazing works of literature have been created as almost every author who has written about Greece makes one or several references to its unique light. For instance, in his novel *The Colossus of Maroussi*, American writer Henry Miller points out, “Everything here speaks now as it did centuries ago, of illumination...Here the light penetrates directly to the soul, opens the door and windows of the heart, makes one naked, exposed, isolated in a metaphysical bliss, which makes everything clear without being known.”

The birthplace of this light is Ancient Greece. The ancient Greeks worshiped the twelve

Gods, one of whom was Apollo—the God of light— whose task was to move the Sun across the sky every day. Furthermore, the spiritual light of Greece can be found in the unsurpassed works of poets, such as Homer, who composed the timeless *Odyssey*, and Isiodus, who wrote *Theogony*. The invincible light within these works is what Greece offered to other European countries; it's what made Greece well-known and unique, and what gave it value.

This magical phenomenon of light continues to significantly impact the lives of Greek people today. Light makes life meaningful; it inspires feelings of vigor, optimism, and hope while also calming any unrest and anxiety. Today, the Greek people are facing a difficult challenge in view of the country's political and financial state. Nevertheless, the light of Greece is omnipresent, ready to offer people the inspiration, confidence, and strength needed to successfully cope with all the problems of everyday life.

At the same time, Greece's light captures the heart of every foreigner the moment he or she sets foot in Greece, and—through word of mouth—more and more visitors come to Greece to enjoy the benefits of this Greek light. After he visited Greece himself, author Walter F. Howe wrote in his novel, *The Homeric Gods*, “Whoever has seen Greece will carry forever in his heart the remembrance of a miracle of light. No blinding glare, no blazing colors, but an all-pervading, luminous brightness which bathes the foreground in a delicate glow, yet makes the furthest distances clearly visible.”

One may conclude that Greece's extraordinary light not only amazes and attracts but also inspires. Greece's light gives life here meaning and never fails to open new horizons in art, literature, and philosophy. It opens people's eyes and minds, excites their senses, and leads them to personal fulfillment. Whoever has experienced this has unquestionably become a better person and has come to appreciate the true essence of light.

OLYMPIC FLAME

By: Aggeliki Michalopoulou



An institution that was inspired by Ancient Greece, the world's foremost sports competition, an international event in which thousands of athletes participate from all around the world: the Olympic Games. This great athletic and cultural event cannot have its opening ceremony without the lighting of the Olympic flame in Olympia, Greece.

The Olympic flame, along with the five rings, is a symbol of the Olympics that connects

the modern Games with their ancient origins. Its story comes from Ancient Greece, where a fire was kept lit during the Ancient Olympic celebration. Its first appearance in the modern era, however, was in Amsterdam in 1928. According to the ancient myth, Prometheus took the power of fire from Zeus. This fire went on to symbolize life, rationality, and liberty. Nowadays, the Olympic flame is of great historical and cultural importance, representing the unity among the people across the five continents under the Olympic spirit.

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The flame-lighting ceremony this year took place on October 24th in Ancient Olympia and marked the beginning of the celebrations for the Olympic Winter Games PyeongChang 2018. This ceremony brought the world together. The President of the International Olympic Committee, Thomas Bach, National Olympic Committee leaders, the Greek President, as well as a great number of athletes and public figures attended the ceremony to show their support for the Games and for Ancient Olympia.

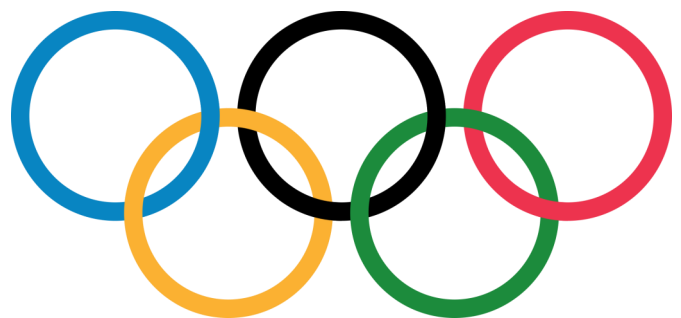
The ceremony consisted of several important stages that were reminiscent of a theatrical play. To begin with, the flame was lit by the Greek actress Katerina Lehou in front of the Temple of Hera. Then, Lehou gave the flame to the Greek skier Apostolos Angelis. Subsequently, Angelis handed the flame to Park Ji-sung, who is from the former Republic of Korea and a Manchester United footballer. This passing of the flame represented its journey from Greece, the home of the Ancient Games, to South Korea, this year's host country for the Winter Games.

Before leaving the country the following week, however, the flame travelled around Greece and arrived at the Acropolis on October 30th. The ceremony to hand over the flame to the PyeongChang 2018 Organising Committee was held at the Panathenaic Stadium on October 31st. A group of students from Athens College had the opportunity to attend this experience of a lifetime.

After this ceremony, the flame finally arrived in South Korea on November 1st to start the 100-day countdown until the beginning of the Olympic Winter Games PyeongChang 2018.

The Olympic torch that carried the fire from Greece to South Korea has great significance. Firstly, the five pillars on the upper part resemble a burning flame, while the pentagon shape at the top and bottom symbolize the five major continents of the world. Secondly, the star sign stands for the first consonant of the second syllable of the Korean alphabet, and it symbolizes the Games' vision for opening new horizons. Finally, the gold layer of the torch looks like a flame that reflects the gentle light between the five pillars.

In conclusion, there are many ways someone can find 'light' in his or her life. However, the Olympic fire is undeniably one of the greatest lights of the world as it represents an institution of the utmost significance that serves not only traditional purposes, but also transfers important values from generation to generation. It marks the final countdown to one of the greatest athletic and cultural events of the world. Over the years, the flame has travelled from Greece to all ends of the earth, with every possible form of transportation, and it will continue to light the way to the Olympics for many years to come.



Part II:

Short Stories



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

– F. Scott Fitzgerald

Follow the Light and Your Heart

By Viktor Abakoumkin

Darkness was something little Samuel was accustomed to all his life. In his ten years, little Samuel had learned to function in complete darkness. He always waited impatiently for his sign of hope, the ‘Northern Lights.’ Some believed these lights were spirits dancing in the sky; others thought they were a celestial battle between good and evil dragons who breathed fire across the firmament, but the small Sami boy believed it was something magical. He thought it was the coming of good fortune. When the fires blazed in the skies, people behaved solemnly, and children were respectful.

He had been told many stories about the Northern Lights and spirits. It was wise not to be disrespectful when they appeared. Little Samuel had had to grow up quickly. His mother passed away at childbirth; his only comfort was his father, the chief of the Sami tribe, and his grandmother. He loved the moments he spent in his grandmother’s arms listening to stories about the Northern Lights and spirits. He found himself asking quite frequently, “Do spirits actually exist?” He always thought about his mother, craving any image of her.

Little Samuel had many responsibilities for his age, and he was expected to carry out chores every day. As usual, the small Sami carried wood for his father to the nearby village.

That afternoon was especially cold; therefore, it was no surprise that he was shivering. However, little Samuel had an eerie feeling, and he realized that the trembling he felt was not only from the cold. As he piled up the freshly chopped wood on his sledge, he was thinking about going back home and having a steaming hot drink. As he was going down the hill, a burst of light illuminated the

“You will become a great man someday if you follow the light and your heart. Choose wisely.”

sky, and an image of an angelic female spirit appeared before him. Terrified, young Samuel fell off his sledge into the snow. The spirit told him not to be afraid and that it wanted to share some advice with him.

“When things get tough or overwhelming, do not give up, but move forward,” the spirit advised him and then added, “You will become a great man someday if you follow the light and your heart. Choose wisely.” The image of the spirit didn’t frighten Samuel any more. There was something familiar about this spirit. As he glanced at his dogs, the spirit vanished.

Samuel lifted his head. He found himself



lying in his bed. Was it a dream? Did he actually see that spirit? He couldn't stop thinking about it. As he was sitting drinking his cocoa, his grandmother asked him why he was troubled. She had some kind of ancient magic powers; Samuel always thought that she understood him in some way that nobody else could. Her grandson tried to explain what he had seen.

"The spirit looked like a modest woman with long black hair and an angelic smile. She looked familiar..." he uttered.

"I know who that was! The spirit you saw while looking at Aurora was your mother! She wanted to communicate with you and to give you some advice. She knows and sees what you do every day and is surely very proud of you, her only son!"

His worried face and anxiousness suddenly faded away. He seemed happy, satisfied, and

relieved; his face had blossomed like a flower.

Years later, he became chief of his tribe. Small Samuel, who was no longer small, was now helping his fellow men. He had become a great man like his father, just as he was told he would become by the spirit of his mother, by the Northern Lights. When they revealed themselves, he walked up the hill to meet the magical colors and lights of Aurora above the forest in an ink-black sky, knowing that his mother was watching him somewhere up there. Despite that, he never saw the spirit of his mother again.

He had become a great man, like his father, just as he was told he would become by the spirit of his mother, by the Northern Lights.



The Smith Affair

By John Tamviskos

It was a warm and sunny day in Paris even though the calendar on Roxanne's cellphone indicated it was December 31, 2017. Schools and universities had been closed for the last week, and the young woman had the time to take a break from her intense university program. A normal college girl would like to spend her free time on movies, friends, and walks along the beautiful Parisian streets.

But not her. Not Roxanne Smith. A tall, red-haired and beautiful girl with green eyes, she was half-Irish and half-French and had managed—at 23 years old—to terminate her law degree at the prestigious Paris II University and had already begun a post-graduate degree in the history of art.

Her father, Ian Smith—a retired Irish colonel—was specialized in martial arts. By chance, he had decided to invest in a new online currency and suddenly became very rich due to the 1,000% rise in its value six months prior. His face had been on the cover of some Irish economics magazine, and he had, therefore, become somewhat of an overnight celebrity.

However, he was a very simple man. Ian had planned a family trip to Saint-Barth for the Christmas holidays. He had wanted to avoid the Christmas airport rush and take his daughter and wife on his company's private plane. Being a businessman now, however, he was forced to cancel the trip due to his obligations at the company that he now owned.

This sudden change of plans made him feel guilty for letting his daughter down. Therefore, with the consensus of his wife, former model Magalie Smith, he decided to surprise his only daughter and spend a couple of days with the two most precious women of his life in Paris...

The apartment keys jingled as the key was inserted into the door.

"Surprise!" shouted the couple as they entered their daughter's apartment.

"Mum! Dad! What a surprise!" said the girl who had been reading the most recent article on her father.

Although she was a little disappointed at the thought of the cancelled family trip to St. Barth's, she still shined like the bright sun which still glowed over the beautiful city.

After a great day of shopping downtown, Roxanne and her parents got dressed for the New Year's Eve celebration they would attend at the hotel Meurice, the most luxurious hotel in Paris.

Hours later, everyone was waiting to let go of 2017 and welcome 2018 into their lives. Suddenly, as people were dancing, all the lights went out. Darkness surrounded all the guests and someone began to shout, "10,9,8..." All voices united to finish the count, "4,3,2,1...Happy New Year!!"

The phrase was repeated for several seconds as the sky was filled with fireworks. The lights were turned on again, but Roxanne's parents were no longer next to her. The young woman looked around her, but they were nowhere in sight. They had disappeared into the darkness.

"Mum? Dad?" Roxanne tried to yell over the happy partygoers. She looked everywhere in the restaurant and then searched downstairs in the lobby. But they were nowhere to be found. She called both several times on their cell phones, but she could not reach them. She went home to see if there was any trace of them, but still nothing. Then, desperate and crying, she went to the central police station of Paris. There, the chief of the sta-

A tall man with a scar on the left side of his face stepped

tion tried to calm her, telling her that the police would do everything they could to save her parents. Until then, she would have to go back home and wait for their phone call.

Roxanne returned to her apartment, alone and frightened. She sat in the chair at her desk and saw the cover of the magazine she had been looking at. Her father's face stared back at her. She was consumed with worry, and fear, and confusion. They had vanished without a trace.

Suddenly, her cell phone beeped. An unknown number had sent her a message.

She ran to the phone and picked it up. The message opened and revealed itself to the girl's eyes.

Do you still miss your parents? It wrote.

The girl gasped. She hesitated to answer. What if it were a trap?

She stared at her phone, expecting to receive another message, but none arrived. Suddenly she jumped back in shock as the phone began to ring.

She accepted the call and lifted the phone to her ear.

A man with a sharp voice spoke first: "If you want to see your parents again, meet me tomorrow at 11:30 p.m. at the Pont d'Alma with your daddy's 10 million. And of course, don't tell the police."

For a moment, Roxanne froze. Then, she found the courage to speak.

"I don't know who you are, but I'll search for you, and I *will* find you, and you *will* pay."

The man laughed a villainous laugh and suddenly hung up.

Little did Roxanne know that the man's name was Blanco von Black—a Harvard business school graduate, who had gotten tired of being a businessman and therefore decided to become one of the most notorious villains of all time.

The girl's fear subsided, but she was now consumed with worry—would she be able to save her loved ones?

Roxanne couldn't sleep. All night she tossed and turned. When morning finally came, she got ready and grabbed the protection her father had given her after he had retired from the army. Then, she went to five different banks in Paris and collected all the money from her parent's bank accounts.

The day dragged on until night finally came. She sat nervously in her apartment until 11 p.m. and then set out with the bag of cash to the meeting spot.

Ding. 11:15 p.m. It was pitch black in the alley, but Roxanne continued towards the moment of truth—the moment she would save her parents.

Ding. 11:30. She was already under the bridge and waiting for the mysterious caller.

Suddenly, a dark car pulled up under the bridge from the opposite side. Roxanne gripped the object in her coat pocket. The car stopped in front of her, and the door opened. A tall man with a scar on the left side of his face stepped out.

"Where are my parents?" Roxanne shouted.

"My money first, honey," said the man. The beautiful Irish girl threw the bag at the man and said loudly, "That scar makes you look even more horrible than you are." He smiled and moved towards the car. He opened the door, but no one was inside.

To Roxanne's horror, her parents were not there. "You lied!" she yelled.

Blanco von Black got into the car quickly and started the engine. Roxanne ran towards her car and started chasing the speeding car.

You have one new message, it read.

In a matter of minutes, five police cars were chasing them as they drove along the river. In an attempt to swerve suddenly, von Black didn't manage the turn, and his car went flying over the bank and directly into the River Seine.

Roxanne's car shrieked to a stop as did the police cars behind her. Shocked, she exited her car, and narrated her drama to the police officers who ran to her side. They took her away from the scene and to her house. They would inform her, they said.

The next morning, Roxanne's doorbell woke her up. She opened it to find two police officers escorting her parents.

"Mum! Dad! Thank god you're safe!" She hugged them with all her strength.

"Ms. Smith, we found them bound up in an abandoned warehouse," said one of the officers.

"They were both unconscious—but thankfully alive."

"But officer, what about the crook who drowned in the river?" Roxanne inquired.

"Well, we searched the river and found his car. But..." he looked at the other officer uneasily.

"We found neither the money nor his remains."

A shiver went down Roxanne's spine as the officers walked down the hallway. She closed the door behind him. She tried to smile as she turned to look at her tired parents.

"It's another beautiful day in Paris. Why don't we—" Ding.

Roxanne walked towards the table and lifted her cell phone. *You have one new message, it read.*

* * *



Pretty Faces and Ugly Voices

By Philippa Samella

My favourite time is right before dawn. When the shadows still lurk in this haze of light that rests heavily on the ground. When the crickets are silent, and the birds sleep. When the sea is resting, and the trees still tired. When the wind surrenders to stillness.

I trust this gloomy twilight. I find comfort; I relax. There is no obligation nor need for effort, no shame nor need for control, for all floats gently above reality while the breeze roams free and cold. It's before the sun appears, shyly at first, but stretching its golden tentacles to reach every corner. And long before the alarms go off, the traffic begins, and school and bells and voices.

Voices. I am tired of voices. At home, voices are stern and absolute. They shout, they argue, they reprimand. Or dripping with honey, they caress, they care, they ring with joy. Or they empty you of it.

At school, voices are incessant, pointless. They chatter and gossip and whine and giggle. There are nice voices too. These voices have names. They are Alex, who knows everything and is very ticklish. She is green tea and old books and glasses and sarcasm. They are Nate, who always has an opinion and loves chocolate. He is music and brown hair and high-fives. They are Tom, who is very quiet and fails every test. He is mint and grey eyes. They are friendly voices that I have grown up with, built sand castles and snowmen with, watched movies and eaten pizza with. I think

they're what others call friends. Recently, though, something has shifted. They turn ugly, poisonous. They whisper; they murmur. They plot and scheme. And I can't switch them back.

Today, Alex was very happy. I like it when she smiles. She does it with her eyes; they become tender and sparkly.

"Morning handsome," she chirped when I opened the door. "Hurry up! You'll make us late!"

Handsome? She never calls me handsome. Does she find me handsome? I called on sarcasm to hide my blush.

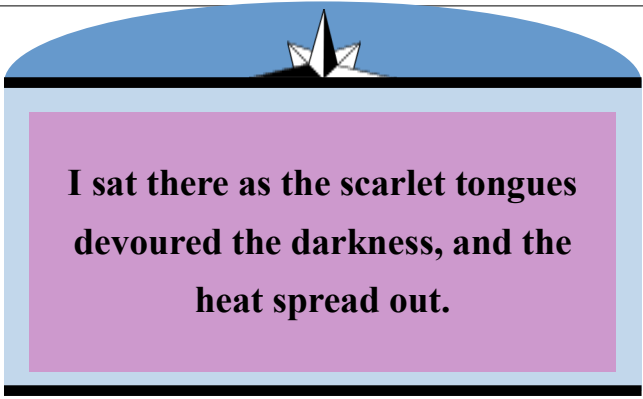
"As if you never shower a bit too long, or brush your hair, or paint your nails—or whatever it is you girls do."

She laughed out loud, threw her head back, and nudged me while giving me that offended pout. And she held my gaze a second too long. She hummed the rest of the way to school, almost hopping around.

"Why are you so happy today?"

"No reason," she said, but her grin showed otherwise.

**I never knew he
was such a good liar.
Liar. Liar...**



**I sat there as the scarlet tongues
devoured the darkness, and the
heat spread out.**

"Come on, Alex. You have joy painted across your face. Spill."

"I just happen to be in a good mood. Why are you being so annoying?"

Her voice slapped me unexpectedly. The sweetness had drained from it; her laughter no longer rang in the school yard. And her eyes—that outshine the sun and put shame in the stars—turned ugly. Her voice—cold and distant and irritated. I looked at my feet until I reached the classroom.

"Yo man, wassup?" The unmistakable butchering of vocabulary, grammar, and syntax was Nate. It lifted my mood. Only slightly. Tom was sitting next to him, but his mind was elsewhere, travelling to a land far, far away. Alex was nowhere to be seen.

"Have you guys noticed anything off about Alex today? She was extra happy this morning, and then, all of a sudden..."

"Alex? No, I haven't seen her today." That was Nate; Tom was still in his wonderland.

But it was a lie. I saw them walk into a classroom after gym. An empty classroom. Why an empty classroom? I remembered they looked happy. His hair was dishevelled. I didn't understand. I checked his eyes. No, they were still warm. And his voice flowed gently, naturally. I never knew he was such a good liar. Liar. Liar...

"Earth to Tom, earth to Tom, earth to—"

"Yo, you can stop that! Nate, I'm here, I'm here."

"Do you know where Alex is?"

"Nah, I haven't seen her today." Grey eyes are never warm. They pierce you without trying, and they know that you know the truth. He was lying, too. They

had French together. And you can't miss someone in a class. Especially not Alex. Alex is loud and funny. She disagrees with teachers because—as we all know—she is always right. And when she can't win with logic, she conscripts sarcasm to outsmart them.

But he was with her in French. He was lying too. Liar. Liar...

When the bell rang, I got up quickly and stormed to the bathroom. It was pleasantly silent, until voices—unknown, faceless voices—barged in and filled it. And in all that hubbub, two of them stood out. They belonged to chestnut hair and cloudy eyes. And they whispered.

"I'm telling you, he's not going to find out."

"But if he goes on asking around..."

"Come on, he's not that smart. Alex needs to be more careful though."

"We are terrible liars. He might be gullible, but he isn't blind."

"We'll be more careful, and we'll see. There's no need to freak out."

And the hubbub returned and the walls closed in, and the floor started to sink. But one word rang louder than others. Liars. Liars...

I couldn't concentrate at home. Every time I tried to study, my thoughts trailed off. They plunged into swirling waters and twisted and twirled until they fell with a heavy thump to the bottom of the abyss, and everything was dark. And there, where blackness ruled, I crafted explanations and excuses. Based on facts and logic, I made a spark. But it is opinions and hopes that build up these facts when you need assurance. And hope feeds the spark and builds a fire. I sat there as the scarlet tongues devoured the darkness, and the heat spread out. And only when they licked my skin did my mind shut down. My eyelids grew heavy, and I tumbled into a soft, uneasy sleep.

Next morning, Alex didn't come by before school. I didn't really mind. Thought left me tired and nauseous, and the sun hurt me. When I entered the school yard, I saw a very familiar car. There was a brown head and dark curls in the front seat. As if impulsively, I walked closer and the radio died down.

“What about him?” said the curls.

“Tom thinks we should act normal and wait.”

Each syllable pierced my heart. And with pain, logic disappeared and made way for anger.

“Ugh, sometimes it is so hard to pretend.”

“I know, I know,” he said, shaking his head.

And she held his gaze a second too long.

After school, I was waiting for the bus, headphones plugged in, staring into nothingness. She came out of nowhere and sat by me. She smelled of jasmine; the cold had turned her cheeks crimson. There was a long, tortured pause as if she were looking for the right words to use. When she couldn’t find them, she gave up and stared ahead. Dead ahead. A bus arrived. She got up, looked at me, smiled a smile I couldn’t decipher, and got on the bus. There was no voice.

The next morning, I got up before the sun had licked the horizon. I left the house when the streets were still cold, and the sky still sombre. My pulse was



quick, my steps short, and my mind on a loop. Liars. Liars. Liars...

When I got to her door, the crickets had fallen silent. I dialed her number and waited till she picked up. One ring. Two rings. Three rings. Four rin—

“Hello?” Her voice was coarse from sleep. She was dragging her vowels.

“Hi. It’s me. Come down a second.” My hands were fidgeting. The wind had died.

“What? Now? Are you crazy? It’s five in the morning!” But I needed her to come down.

“Please. Only for a minute.” My voice was shaking. My hands trembled. I couldn’t stop them.

“Fine, give me a sec.” And the line fell silent.

When the door opened, I took a step back. Her curls were tangled. Her skin smooth and light. She looked at me, eyebrows raised, and I relaxed at the kindness in her eyes.

“What’s wrong? Did something happen?” She sounded worried. I hesitated.

“I—I—” I stumbled. And then her voice turned ugly. Her lips, brighter than usual, formed a hypocritical grin. Liars. Liars.

“You can tell me,” said the grin. I laughed at how stupid I was, fooled by her tender eyes. And as the grin sat there, and her voice rang mocking and jeering, I shot up the volume to keep her voice out. My head was buzzing, but I didn’t mind. As long as I kept her voice out. For a while, her lips moved inaudibly. Until she paused and tucked a stray strand of hair behind her ear. She smiled. The grin looked at me, frozen before it vaporized. And all the voices—Nate and Tom and Alex—were gone.

Until day broke, and light filled the sky. Until the birds began their song, and the wind rushed through the trees. Then, voices that didn’t belong to a face—with no eyes to help me translate, no body to accompany them—they whispered on the streets, murmured in the hallways.

“Why does he keep looking at us like that?”

* * *

Wanderlust's Mission



By Annita Papanikolaou

He unfolded the creased paper from his left pocket. Turkey, gravy, pudding. Despite the shopping list being quite concise, it did, in fact, successfully cover all the essential earmarks of a traditional, festive British dinner. Greg put his fingers through his neatly combed, winter-white hair as he carefully eyed the items he needed. Greeting anyone who crossed his path in a genial manner, he hurried to the checkout, yearning to get back to the comfort of his home. He thought of the absorbing book he would pick back up by the warmth of the fireplace.

As queueing became intolerable, he turned and glanced at the rest of the people who were accompanying him on his last-minute grocery shop for the Christmas holiday. His piercing, baby-blue eyes quickly scanned the expressions of these mostly familiar faces. They made out a rather austere atmosphere—an array of grumpy faces that did not quite match the joyful spirit that Christmas Eve ought to radiate. Greg paid the cashier, gave her a friendly nod, and left a tip in the charity box before he went for the exit.

Perhaps it was the dull weather which made everyone appear so melancholic, he thought to himself. The heavy, dark grey clouds which stubbornly spread themselves out on the surface of the sky threatened rainfall. They did not reflect the old man's good humor and charm that emitted a thousand rays of sun. Residents of the English countryside were accustomed to such dreary conditions.

Although the region of Cheshire was considered highly picturesque—with its freshly cut fields of endless green carpet—any local would agree with the fact that nothing really ever happened here. And that's exactly why old Greg's much younger self awaited high school to end with pleasure, so that he could finally escape from the weariness of the village and the unreasonable boundaries his parents had set for him to pursue his dream of becoming a pilot.

He had been infected by the incurable bite of a travel bug at quite an early age. After school, when the rest of the kids would go play football in alleys, he preferred to go home and pour over his

atlas of the world. He found no leisure hobby more amusing than exploring every existing corner of the world, inch-by-inch over the surface of the international map. The craving for adventure and consuming desire to visit exotic countries—names of which he couldn't even pronounce—gradually grew into a lifelong passion.

Nonetheless, the desire to travel—which seemed to be the one thing that fueled his desire to exist—was fiercely wrecked as soon as he graduated from school at the age of eighteen, and his strict parents forced him to undertake the family business instead of following his heart and allowing him to spread his wings. He felt his jaw tense, his eyes water up, and quickly pushed the thought away. The fresh gaze of those baby-blue eyes was deep, like the infinite ocean he had yet to cross.

The minute Greg got home, he threw the shopping bags onto the kitchen table carelessly and rushed over to the couch in order to grab his book—like a small child on Christmas morning. His current exciting read was *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini. Apart from being his exclusive companion ever since his much loved Emily passed away few years ago, stories made his mind travel away to magical destinations and took his troubles away whenever he needed it.

Whenever he wasn't found immersed in some new book, he'd be wandering the streets of a hidden city through Google Maps. However, as a grown adult, he didn't believe that he should be restricting himself solely to virtual travels. But then again, there was his son, Jason.

His only child's most complementary por-

trait lay framed beside the fireplace. A military-cut hairstyle, a peevish expression on his face, and a pair of cold, blue eyes. How odd it was to see that half-familiar feature—the sparkle of which had faded in the transition to adulthood. The forty-six-year-old bachelor only lived a few blocks away, yet hardly ever did he pay a visit to his aging father.

Acting like the conventional, grumpy man he grew up to be, Jason had forbidden his father from going on the trips abroad he so strongly desired to go on. He exhorted his father, Greg, to pull himself together, take attentive care of his health, and finally act his own age and let go of those boyish dreams.

Exasperated by the complete lack of control over his own decisions, Greg went on to ring the only person who would be willing to deal with his concerns at any

time it was requested—his good old

friend, Christian. After managing to calm Greg's nerves, Christian suggested the two of them pull a prank on Gregory's son. Besides still being the prankster he had been fifty years prior, Christian also happened to be the local general practitioner. He told his friend to leave it up to him, that he would talk some sense into his son.

Taking full advantage of his profession, Christian devised his secret plan. He would call Jason, adopting the most serious tone possible, and tell him the awful news: *Jason, I know it is Christmas Eve, my boy, but your father is gravely ill. We aren't sure if he really has a great deal of time left with us.*

The following morning pulled the sun up from its hiding place, and at about noon, Jason ar-

When the rest of the kids would go play football in alleys, he preferred to go home and pour over his atlas of the world.

rived at his childhood home with an armful of wrapped presents in hand to celebrate Christmas with his only remaining close relative. Today, he was wearing a bright, orange shirt matched with a pair of casual jeans instead of that hideous, monotone suit and tie he never seemed to take off.

After father and son baked the turkey bought at the last-minute and enjoyed a delightful three-course meal, Jason revealed his great surprise: he would take his father abroad to a destination they would randomly select. Greg could not believe his ears. What could his friend Christian possibly have said to Jason to change his mind? He laughed to himself thinking that underneath the grey hair, the old doctor was still the same clever boy.

Both father and son covered their eyes using a rag, and together, they dropped a pin on a global map lying on the floor. The pin landed on a massive island somewhere in East Africa. Jason

turned to his father and gave him a warm hug. For a split second, Greg wondered whether his boy had always been hiding this wild streak beneath that flat character of his.

Two days later, an enormous mass of white, puffy clouds engulfed them. They were flying to Madagascar. The safari trip they went on during the following couple of days was a life-changing one. Real life zebras, lemurs, iguanas, and lions. Between hiking Maromokotro—the island's highest mountain—and photographing the wildlife, old Greg came to realize two things of great significance: his greatest dream had finally become reality, and his beloved son was happier than he had ever seen him. It was true; Jason hadn't hugged his dad or smiled and laughed this much since he was a little child. He was going to have to get his good friend Christian a nice souvenir, he thought.

* * *



Photo by Dimtris Kolitsis



Photo by Dimtris Kolitsis



Photo by Dimtris Kolitsis

PORTRAITS

By Timos Michalakis



"The night is dark and full of terrors."

George R.R. Martin, A Game of Thrones

*S*teady now. Don't move a single inch. There, there, the hunter told himself. He was aiming at a deer. He suddenly stepped on a branch. The deer burst into a run. The hunter pulled the trigger. One shot—nothing. Second shot—nothing. The deer had escaped. He looked around him and realized it had grown dark.

The hunter, named Bill, was a rather short man, with a long brown beard, and even longer brown hair. Some grey hair had started to grow in his beard, revealing his age. Bill was dressed in hunting clothes: heavy boots, waterproof pants, and a brown coat. He hunted for a living. His small, pitch-black eyes were the first thing one noticed about him. His nose had been broken multiple times, and now it was a crooked thing on his face.

The forest was thick. He had never—or at least he thought he had never—gone so deep into the forest. He looked up into the sky again. It was getting darker by the minute. He had heard from the other hunters in his village about a cabin. It was said that there was a cabin in these woods to offer shelter to hunters who had roamed too far into the forest to make it back home before dusk. He decided to try to locate that cabin.

After a while, he reached a clearing in the forest, and at the center of it, was a cabin. When he saw it, he realized how exhausted he was. He wanted sleep—actually, he desperately needed it. He forced the door of the cabin open though a part of him didn't want to enter it, remembering the stories he had heard about all the people who had gone missing there in the forest. But his exhaustion got the better of him, and he walked into the creaky shelter.

Inside, there was nothing of great value. The cabin consisted of two small rooms—a space that looked like it was once used as a kitchen and a bedroom with a single bed. There was something strange about the cabin, he thought. In contrast with its simple rooms, the walls were filled with paintings. Paintings from all eras—from the Renaissance to his own day. He saw no signatures on them. They were lovely and realistic beyond imagination—strange that the painters hadn't signed them, thought Bill.

He walked into the bedroom and lay down on the bed, hoping that no one would disturb his sleep. He looked up and observed the paintings. There was one of a man, fancying a beard and wearing a military suit, with a sword on the left



side of his hips. Another was of a simple woman from around the late 18th century, posing outside of a factory. He also noticed that there were some blank canvasses in the corner of the room, yet to be painted and mounted onto the walls. Just before sleep was about to consume him, he noticed something utterly strange: all the eyes of the portraits, without exception, were on him.

“I must be imagining things,” Bill whispered to himself. He closed his eyes for a moment, and when he opened them again, he thought he noticed a portrait blink.

He inspected the portrait more carefully from his position on the bed, not daring to come any closer. The man in the portrait—probably the oldest in the room—was staring at him. His face was expressionless, just like the other paintings. But there was something off about this one. This portrait looked more...lifelike than the rest. It seemed as though the portrait was moving. Just barely moving. He noticed that man’s chest was inflating and deflating as he breathed. And just then, the man in the painting opened his mouth, and a terrible shriek came out and filled the room.

Bill screamed and bolted out of the bedroom—his weapon in one hand, an axe he had found in the other. Now, all the portraits were blinking. Some had even started to shout as well.

The piercing sound was not of this world—shrieks from what sounded like a horde of men, women, and children. They were shouting something in a language Bill couldn’t understand. He ran out of the cabin, and as he looked over his shoulder, he saw many people—in fact, shadows of people—chasing after him. He began cursing to himself.

It was dark outside. Dark and cold. Fog had gathered, making it difficult to see. He ran, and ran, and ran until he was out of breath. He had bumped into more trees and bushes than he could count, but he continued running. And he continued cursing, though now not so much. He had lost them. He stopped to catch his breath. He sat down, trying to figure out what had happened. Before he had a chance to put his mind in order, something moved in the dark. He shot once, he shot twice, he shot thrice, and then, he realized he was out of ammunition.

He ran towards the east, towards the little town he lived in. The figures were after him, chasing him in the thick, dark forest. The stars and the moon above him showed him the way. Finally, he reached the end of the horrid, thick forest, only to find some of the figures in front of him. He stopped running. More figures appeared around him. He was now surrounded. A noise came from one of the shadows, and it ran towards him. He cut it in half with the axe. Before looking up again, at the circle of shadows, he heard shrieking as the darkness consumed him.

“Mom, where’s Dad?” Jimmy asked his mother. “Dunno, sweetie. You know that when he goes hunting, he sometimes stays out all night. Now, go to bed, and he will be here tomorrow.”

**Before looking up again at the
circle of shadows, he heard
shrieking as the
darkness consumed him.**

But Bill didn't come back the following day. Nor the day after that. "Mom, where's Daddy?" Jimmy would ask, but the answer was always the same. "I don't know, sweetie. Unfortunately, I just don't know," his mother would sob.

Time and time again, his mother asked people to go looking for Bill. Most of the times, she would go as well. But they never did find him. The deeper in the forest they went, the more desperate Bill's wife became. When people got tired of looking for him, she would venture into the forest alone—though always during the day. But she never succeeded in locating her missing husband.

The years passed by, and Jimmy became a man. Continuing his family's tradition, he hunted for a living—hunting mostly deer. Their meat was sought after; their skin made wonderful rugs, and their bones valuable knives. But the most sought-after prize was their antlers. Collectors, too lazy to



He sometimes stayed out all night when the frenzy of the hunt was greater than the voice of logic.

hunt themselves, would pay a great sum for a deer's antlers.

He was a good hunter. Probably the best in the small town he lived in. Like his father, he didn't always return. He sometimes stayed out all night when the frenzy of the hunt was greater than the voice of logic.

One night, too tired to go back to his house, he decided to sleep in the woods. Realizing that he wasn't too far away from a clearing in the forest, he ventured there, only to discover a cabin at the center. The cabin was a modest thing. Built exclusively out of wood. Jimmy assumed that it didn't have more than two average-sized rooms.

"Hello?!" he shouted from the outside. No reply. "Is anyone here?" No one but the wind responded.

He slowly opened the door. The cabin was as modest on the inside as it looked on the outside. In front of him were two rooms—a room which suggested that it had been used as a kitchen once long ago. In spite of the modesty of the rooms, the walls were filled with portraits. Not one had been signed by its creator. *Strange*, Jimmy thought to himself.

He had heard rumors about a cabin in the forest. A cabin that if you entered, you never came out of alive. Jimmy considered sleeping outside, but he would risk being eaten by wild animals and meet the same fate as his poor father—or so he thought.

He walked straight into the bedroom, took off his wet brown boots and lay them on the floor next to the bed. He lay down on the bed, thinking that he would explain himself to the owner in the morning.



"I don't want to. They frighten me. They are so...lifelike. As if they are people bound in frames," Jimmy said, his voice shaking.

"Yes, you are a very smart young lad indeed. I want you to remember that I love you," he said with a sad smile.

"Dad? What's going on?"

And as if a spell had been cast, all the portraits started screaming. Dark figures came out of the portraits, silhouettes of people. George bolted out of the room and out of the cabin, running for his life. The shrieks from the portraits were innumerable; it sounded as if the cabin itself were now shouting. They chased after him. Men, women, children—all chasing after him. He was faster than they were, though, and they struggled to reach him.

The first rays of the morning had appeared as the sun came into view. Jimmy had reached the end of the forest by now. He stepped into the light. He turned back, only to observe that the shadows dared not step into the warm light. The darkness of the forest protected them from the rays of the sun. One by one, the shadows made for the cabin before the sun had fully risen. Only one shadow remained.

"Why, dad? Why can't you just come home?"

"You will understand in the future when you join us, my son." With that, Bill disappeared himself.

Jimmy returned home exhausted and decided not to share the truth with his mother. She would go running into the forest and go mad herself. After a long while, he fell asleep, seeing his father in his nightmares.

It was two hours before dawn when he woke up, unaware of his surroundings. It had started raining. Jimmy looked out of the window and towards the forest. He leaned down and put his brown boots on. He took his coat off the hook, but left his rifle by his bed. In the pouring rain, Jimmy walked into the woods and never stopped until he reached a clearing where a little cabin sat in the center.

* * *

"Hello, Jimmy," said a voice, not too far away.

"Who's here?" he shouted in a cry of agony.

Not sure whether he was dreaming or not, he sat up on the bed so as to inspect the room. There, just three feet from the bed was his father, in the dirty clothes he had been wearing the day he disappeared. He looked as if not one single day had passed.

"Dad? Is that you?" he said in a shaky voice.

"Oh, my child. I am glad that I found you. How are you? How are you doing? How is your mother? Is she alright?"

"Oh, Dad! Where have you been?" Jimmy started crying like a baby that had lost his parent. He stood up to hug Bill, but he dashed away from his son's arms and into a corner.

"Better not, son," he said meekly. They're watching.

Jimmy took a look around him, at the portraits. They were lovely, portraying men, women and children. There were some canvasses on the floor which were blank.

"Dad?"

"Look at the portraits. Look at them!" Bill shouted.

So Long Lives This

By Eleni Exarchou

This story begins in the 26th century at Bellevue Medical Center, in New York City. It was the heart of winter and the weather was inclement. The arctic wind howled its mighty objection. Those gusts of wind seemed to tear open the sky that night. Despite the unpredictably cold weather, there was a blizzard of people in the emergency unit below. Above them, lay Jack. He looked paler than usual, with dark circles under his eyes. His pointy teeth were a sign of his peculiar illness.

Jack suffered from Hypohidrotic Ectodermal Dysplasia, also known as Vampire Syndrome. Now, don't think, not even for one minute, that I am making this up. This syndrome really does exist.

Having this peculiar condition, Jack had no hair. He couldn't go into the sun because of a severe sensitivity to sunlight—due to a lack of melanin and Vitamin D. He had lived for over a century. His real age was 154; however, he did not look

a day older than 55. This might be attributed to the fact that he had never worked a day in his life but rather spent his days reading literature, transporting himself to other times and places.

He was a wise person, had recognized the criticalness of his current condition. Rather than consume himself with despair, he turned over and grabbed the book he had carried with him to the hospital. Reading enchanted him as it teleported him to a care-free world—a world where he would be normal and happy. Reading had the power to stop time, allowed him to fly to other worlds at the speed of light, and granted him incredible strength.

He believed that he was damned for all eternity. He would not be able to face the sun, feel its warm rays on his face. He would never be able to have children and feel the love and pride that only a father can feel.

It was true that he had been married once, but his wife abandoned him because he couldn't give her any children. She could live with the

darkness and his eternal youth, but she could not live with the fact that his condition did not allow him to procreate. For Jack, the love of his wife, was a dead, bleeding red rose.

The only person left in his current life cycle, was his doctor, Shawn Murphy. A handsome, intelligent, and athletic man—quite frankly, every woman’s dream. He was devoted to Jack’s condition and had made it his sole purpose to cure his debilitating disease. A Harvard Medical School graduate, he had a PhD in rare diseases and came from a wealthy family willing to fund his research.

One day, as Jack was reading his favorite book called *False Impression* by Jeffrey Archer, he saw his former wife standing on the terrace. He mustered up the courage to stand on his own two feet in order to approach her, without realizing that he was chasing a chimaera, a vision. But she seemed so vivid. He could see her dark curls and warm eyes. Maybe he wasn’t imagining this. Just then, he slowly stepped into the sunlight as he extended his arms out to her.

Moments later, a nurse came by to take his vitals and found Jack lying on the floor. Nurses swarmed in and rushed him back into the emergency unit as he lay on a gurney.

Doctors, masked and ready, surrounded his unconscious body. He was undergoing cardiac arrest, and they were trying to revive him. Dr. Murphy had been experimenting with different drugs, but so far, he had found nothing that could save his patient. He had no choice but to administer the standard list of drugs.

“Validity,” Dr. Murphy ordered. It was injected into Jack’s IV, but nothing happened. “Reliability,” Dr. Murphy prescribed. The nurse tried to grab for the right tube, but mixed it up. Instead, he grabbed Penicillin. Being a first-year resident, he was so nervous he was shaking.

What would have been a deadly combination—Validity and Penicillin—didn’t kill Jack. In fact, he miraculously gained consciousness and opened his eyes. At once, he was bombarded with vital questions—*Do you remember your name? Do you know what year it is? Can you squeeze my hand? Please follow the light with your eyes.*

He ignored all questions but just stared towards the window with his mouth and eyes opened wide. Slowly, he tried to get off the gurney as nurses and doctors looked on in shock. They too could see the figure of the woman with curly brown hair and warm eyes outside the window.

Step by step, Jack walked towards the vision. His feet touch the cold tiles, but he could no longer feel them. As he inched closer to his wife, a sudden ball of light filled the room. When Dr. Murphy adjusted his eyes, there was nothing left where Jack stood. Only an open book on the floor.

He bent down and picked it up and began to read:

*“So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,
so long lives this, and this gives life to thee.”¹*

* * *

¹Shakespeare, William. “Sonnet 18.” Shakespeare Online, Amanda Mabillard, 2018, www.shakespeare-online.com/sonnets/18.html.



SPEED OF LIGHT

By Konstantine Gkiokas

The day had come. Michael and John were ready for their huge journey. The two scientists had been working for almost ten years to create the first ever spaceship that could travel at the speed of light. Now, they were assigned a mission to an unknown planet called G-80.

As they entered the spaceship, the men said goodbye to their families.

“Goodbye sweetheart,” said Michael to his wife Eliza as he kissed Albert, his 2-year-old son.

Eliza was a beautiful woman with blue eyes. The only negative thought inside Michael’s head was the fact that he had to leave her behind, but this mission would change his life forever.

It was his love for science that made him leave. Everything was ready and set to go.

The countdown began. “Three...two...one...”

The spaceship launched. A cloud of smoke started to appear. As the spaceship got higher in the sky, the two men looked out of the window to see the huge grey NASA station getting smaller and smaller until it was lost in the clouds.

The spaceship travelled with such great speed that the two men couldn’t believe it. Looking outside, the only thing they saw was pure darkness.

Unfortunately, they had no communication with Earth, which made them feel a bit lonely. The two men were mostly occupied with tasks inside the spaceship, like when there was an oxygen loss, and they had to fix it before they were left without breathable air. They usually read books,

had conversations, listened to music, and slept. The days went by and the routine continued.

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After almost six months of travel, Michael wakes up, and, for the first time, he is able to see something that resembles the planet G-80.

“John, wake up, we’re here!”

Both men look out of the window and say nothing. They are enchanted by what they see. They start laughing out of happiness and hug each other. From a distance, the planet looks just like Earth, but they need to go down there to do some further exploration.

Without a second thought, they enter a capsule and go to the planet. They land in something that looks like a forest. The trees are extremely tall, reaching up to sixty meters high. By the time John walks out of the spaceship, his indicator shows him that the air contains normal level of oxygen. He removes his helmet. He takes a single breath, and a smile creeps across his face.

“I think this is what we were looking for,” John says to Michael.

Michael exits the capsule, as well, and they start to explore. They recognize the familiar smell of rain, and they are able to hear birds singing in the trees, but they also hear the sound of flowing water. They notice something that looks like a lake. As they go near it, the two men face the most beautiful sight they’ve ever seen. It is a huge lake surrounded by tall trees and, over-head, the blue-colored sky. John puts his hand into the cold lake and drinks some water. With no surprise,

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the water is drinkable.

Now, they know that the planet is fully habitable and decide to go back to Earth to tell everyone the news.

They return to the spaceship, start the engines, and leave, knowing that the way back is long. Michael takes out a picture of Eliza that he had kept in his back pocket throughout his journey. Looking at the picture makes him want to see her even more. Her and his son, Albert. A tear of happiness falls from his eye, but he tries to contain himself and kisses the picture before putting it back in his pocket.

**Looking outside, the only  
thing they saw was pure  
darkness.**

~~~~~

Finally, after almost one year, the spaceship approaches Earth, and Michael and John enter the atmosphere. They land somewhere near the Atlantic Ocean, and a helicopter comes to take them to the station. As the helicopter approaches, the men don't see the huge grey NASA building that they remembered. In its place are three skyscrapers made out of glass. The two men can't believe that in one year they were able to construct such a great and futuristic station.

As they enter the station, they hear a huge round of applause. There is a huge crowd waiting for them. But something is wrong. Why don't they recognize anyone? How did they build skyscrapers in just one year?

Slowly, but all at once, Michael realizes what has happened. His smile leaves his face.

He rushes to his house to meet Eliza. He is extremely nervous. His palms are cold and starting to sweat as he enters the house to see an old man inside.

The man has brown hair like Michael's and

blue eyes just like Eliza's.

"Excuse me, sir, who are you?" the man asks.

"My name is Michael Johnson...who are you?"

The once suspicious expression of the man now turns to one of disbelief.

"Dad... is that you?"

Michael can't believe his eyes. It's his son, the tiny boy who could barely say a word, now older than he is. He kneels on the ground, and tears flood his eyes. Neither man knows if he is happy to see the other again or sad that this meeting seems to be coming too late.

Suddenly, Michael remembers why he has come here.

"Wh...Wh..Where is Eliza?" he asks with a trembling voice even though a part of him already knows the answer.

Before John and Michael left Earth, they forgot the most important thing: the theory of relativity. While they were travelling at the speed of light, time on Earth passed much faster. One light year was equal to 60 Earth years. The year is not 2018 but 2068.

Albert looks at Michael with tears in his eyes, and Michael understands. He can't believe what has happened to him. His love for science had cost him everything.

* * *





Worthy of Preservation

By Hector Georgoulis

A Futuristic Dystopian Story

Just another day at the office, out scavenging. Perhaps a bit more exciting and a bit more dangerous. But something came to mind.

“What’s the date?” I asked.

“Come on McFort, no one keeps count at this point. I think its September though,” Connor replied.

“That’s right! It’s September 26, 2033... its...it’s been exactly 50 years!”

“Since what?”

“Well...you know...since the End Times.”

“Hmph...whatever...who even cares anymore? Why do they even call ‘em the ‘End Times’? World didn’t end; here we are now.”

“In a way, it did.”

“Yes, of course, you would know. The sophisticated type. Never could get you out the basements with the Old Time Writings back in the Outskirts Hub... and them books... always studying you were.”

“I’ve learned useful things you know. About the stuff we find out here. What’s of use and what is not, about radiation and things like that.”

Of course, that wasn’t the reason I was outright obsessed, not the only reason, anyway. The things I read... about the world before... the civilization, the people, the technology they had, their society, their... our history, even *Beyond Earth*, a book written, though I still do not know

what that means... maybe the Further Lands, where the huge booms came from long ago. And then the most fascinating of all... the Questions. Why do we exist? How were we created? How long have we been here? They even talked about a ‘Higher Power, a ‘Maker.’ What were they talking about? Mysterious people.

“Stop living in heaven, Mason. The Other World is gone now. Live in the present,” said Connor.

So we moved on, taking whatever we could carry. A regular haul up to now, nothing special, maybe an interesting gadget here and there as we were in one of the richer and more dangerous Zones. What was special today was the destination.

“Why did you insist on getting Zone 22 this week?” asked Connor. “You know, I would follow you anywhere, but did we have to get the second-best place to go if you wanted to perish? Full of radiation and Creatures of the Wastelands...”

“It has the best stuff, Connor. And there is that old tech company building I saw in the Writings. It’s full of goodies, I am certain. And don’t worry. We can avoid the creatures if we play it smart. Besides, half of them are mythical...and we have our gas masks for the rads.”

In truth, even though I didn’t believe the myths, I was terrified, too, but I just had to go into

that building. It was full of tech, and maybe it had—*goosebumps*—'computers.' I also picked up an outbound signal on my makeshift radio. I am dying to know. Couldn't tell Connor, of course; he wouldn't understand.

"Yeah, yeah, but I mean did you hear what happened to Waters?" he continued.

"I did. He had it coming, honestly, going into Downtown Hattan with a half-broken mask. And with that huge crater over there. That reminds me, wear your mask we are deep in the Northlands now."

"We shouldn't be going past the Zone Borders. If the Outskirts Elder learns of it, she'll—"

"That's why we should make it quick."

And so we went, quick as we could, as the cloudy sky was turning dark. The landscape was barren and dead as if it were being drawn into oblivion. Ruin after ruin, shelf after shelf, skeleton after skeleton, we searched on.

"I heard Solitude is around here with her crew."

"Right, see? There are others around, no need to worry."

"But Solitude is a Hike-Ranger! Their commander, too! She could beat the living daylights out of a creature! What would we do?! I wonder what she sees in you, mate. I know you've been close since you were thumb-swallowers—since your mother...and then your father...you know...



but she is a warrior, and you cannot get your nose out of the books. Bet she likes the scar though. Oh, and all the girls like your eyes. How the one above the scar is near-white and the other near-black. Maybe she would like you better if you had my wonderful beard."

"Ha, ha, always the comedian."

"I aim to please."

"You should settle down, too. 32 is getting old, friend."

"Hmph...perhaps it's about time."

It had been a while, but we were almost there. I had high hopes for this place but this...I hadn't expected. Connor turned his flashlight and saw it, too.

**"Stop living in heaven,
Mason. The Other World is
gone now. Live in the pre-
sent," said Connor.**

"Mason! Is that a creature?!" he said as he was retreating.

I saw it. I was right shocked but not in terror.

"It can't be," I said.

"Keep calm, Connor; it's no danger! What does the Geiger Counter read?"

"Um...um...agh...it's going crazy! What is that thing?!"

"I've seen it in the Writings...ICBM...it contains...oh, nuclear warheads. It's one of the booms, Connor! From the Further Lands! It seems that it never exploded."

Before we could take it in, we heard it. A deafening sound, as if the booms were falling again. It then became clear what it was. Another

Relic of the Past. *Helicopter*, the Previous Ones called it. People came out of it, like us, only nothing like us. They were dressed how the Previous Ones used to when they fought each other, and they had weapons, too—like the ones the Hike-Rangers had but more than I had ever seen. We kept silent, but soon a loud voice was heard.

“Sir, we found it! What should we do about the savages?”

“Gath... the... other,” was the only thing I could make out.

Then it all went black.

Next thing I knew, I was in a warrior camp, like the ones of old, right next to our original destination, the tech building, along with Solitude’s Hike-Ranger party, only she was not there, and I was worried. There must have been around twenty of the soldiers.

One of the other warriors shouted, “They are all irradiated, sir. They are all Impure.”

“Then you know what to do,” another voice commanded.

I understood what he *had to do* too, and it shook me to the bone.

“With all due respect, sir, I’ve seen worse. We could spare them.”

“What did you just say?”

This one must have been their leader since he was ordering everyone around.

“Sir, we just spotted these two prospectors straying far from their home, leading us to the undetonated nukes. They aren’t hurting anyone, let alone ‘infesting’ the planet. Besides, the nuke is secure. The mission is complete, sir.”

Some of the soldiers moved their heads in agreement. Some others opposed him.

“Are you defying orders, McClain? Are you defying our cause?! How can we restore humankind if we do not exterminate the weak to make way for the strong? All the savages are a lost cause! Mutated beyond saving! They are hardly humans! But why am I telling you this? There is

a reason you are here. You were always the best, never a second thought and now a change of heart?”

Then, he turned to the rest of the warriors, “I am not just talking about this traitor but to all of you! You have been graced with carrying a sacred mission!”

“Hurrah!” most shouted. Some of them stayed silent.

“You are the Chosen Paladins! Humanity’s last hope!”

“Hurrah!”

“Don’t give me a reason to do something unpleasant, McClain.”

“Yes, sir,” the saddened soldier replied.

I felt both lucky and cursed that I was the only one among my people that understood what they meant. The rads had twisted our DNA. The stuff that determines what we look like and what our body does or something like that. They must have been somehow protected from that. After all this, I was angry because I knew but also because this was all my fault. I had convinced Connor to go past the Zone Borders, and they spotted us. It had been impulsive.

I could hardly control it, so I exclaimed, “And you think the mutations make us inferior? You consider yourself better? We are just as human as all of you! We and everyone else! The technology of the Previous Ones does not make

In the end, humanity with all its flaws, was deemed worthy of preservation.

you somehow superior. All your weapons and helicopters! Look what you have done!”

He seemed aghast as did many of them.

“A savage knows of the times before the exchange? I’m impressed. But if you somehow think you are right, you are delusional! You have no right to exist!”

“If I know something of humanity, it is that we are stubborn. We do not give up. If we are ‘sub-human’ as you say, then how did we organize, cooperate, and make a society similar to the ones of old? It is slow progress, yes, but it is greed and ambition of power that made the world as it is today. Or do you not know your own history?”

Many conversations rumbled in the background. The warriors were torn.

He was shocked, beaten at his own game, outwitted by a ‘savage.’

“How...how dare you? How dare you lecture me? You cannot!”

And as all seemed lost, I heard a voice.

“Yes, he can.”

It was Solitude, the love of my life. I had never been happier to hear her voice. I had not heard her approach either. The Hike-Rangers were trained to be silent, but my mind was so clouded that I wouldn’t have heard a horn blow either. I was truly stupefied; however, when I noticed she had brought hundreds of Hike-Rangers with her. Mostly with spears but some had firearms. Quickly, they surrounded the camp and the warriors. The warriors turned on each other, too.

“Drop your arms!” Solitude exclaimed.

I looked at their leader with a smirk on my face. He had been defeated by the ones he believed to be beneath him, right under his nose, too.

“Agh!” he shouted and dropped his hand-cannon to the ground.

“Are you okay?” said Solitude hugging me.

“Yes, I’m fine.”

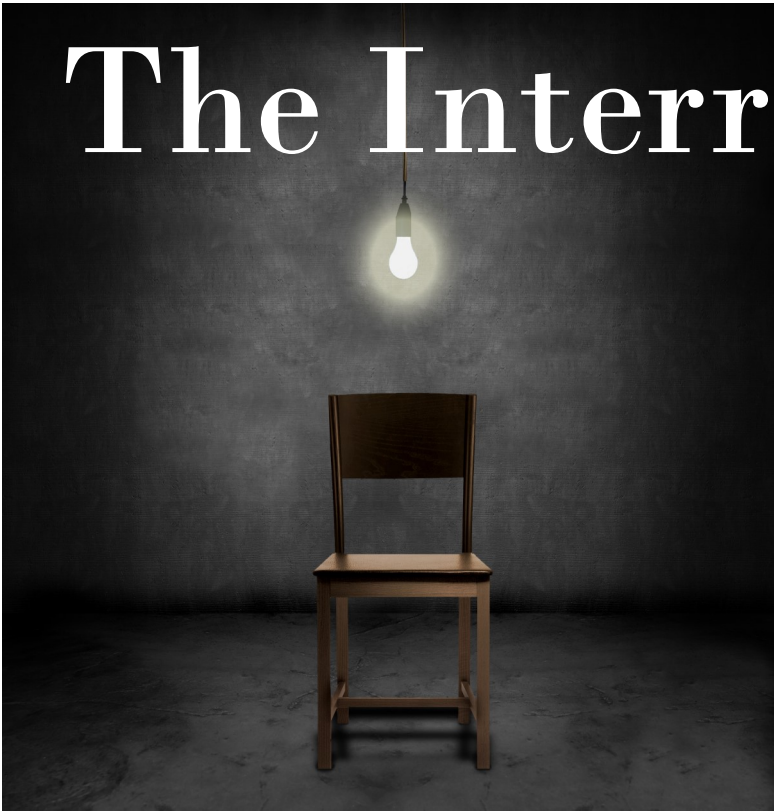
In the end, humanity with all its flaws, was deemed worthy of preservation. * * *



The Interrogation

By

Aliki Varelzidi



The door flew open, and a harsh artificial ray of light fell right into my eyes, blinding me. I could hear footsteps from behind, slowly closing in. Judging by the heaviness and lag of each step, I would say that my adversary was a well-built man in his early 40s. I tried turning towards him, but the cuffs were too tight. He leaned over until his mouth was just inches away from my right ear. I could feel his icy breath running down my spine, cooling my whole body as he said, “We could do this the easy way or the hard way.” He paused.

**I could hear footsteps
from behind, slowly
closing in.**

With a swift motion, he dragged a chair in front of me. The sound of the metal scraping the floor made my hair stand on end. My foe sat in

front of the light, so I could only see the outline of his face and his broad shoulders. He was wearing a suit and spoke with a strong Southern accent.

“So here’s what’s going to happen: you’ll either tell us everything you saw and heard on your little trip to El Salvador, or we’ll find another way to make you talk. You got that?”

I sat upright and said in a calm, steady voice, “I’d rather face your ‘other way’ than tell you anything.” The man stood up, slapped me so hard that I could feel my cheek redden from the immense force of the impact.

That’s when the door opened again. This time, it was a woman. She walked up to the man and whispered something in his ear. He nodded. She closed the door behind her as she left the room. The man sat down.

“You know, your friend is in the next room, and he’s ready to talk. This is your last chance to come clean. Who knows, you might

even make it out of here in one piece.” With that said, he stood and left the room. The bright light was still blinding me. It gave off a cold and eerie vibe, turning the room itself into the perfect interrogator.

“We are going to have a lot of fun, you and I,” he snarled.

After what seemed like ages, the man came back, sat down, and said, “So which is it going to be?” I sat there silently, without a trace of an expression on my face. The man tapped the chair twice with something metallic—probably a ring. That’s when two men entered. They picked me up by both arms. They dragged me out of the room into a small but very long corridor.

My eyes, still trying to adjust to the sudden change of lighting, could only make out a few shapes and colors in the several rooms we passed. We made a left and then a right. My eyes had adjusted by now, and I could see a green door in front of us. One of the men opened the door, and the other pushed me inside. I stumbled a few feet but managed to regain my balance.

This room was larger than the previous one. The two men tied me to a metal chair in the middle of the room. There was a small rectangular window on the ceiling right above me, spilling light over the better part of the room. Yet still, the corners were dark. A few feet to my right was a metal table on which lay a leather bag. Out of one of the shadows came a tall man, slowly approaching the table.

His stride was steady, heavy, and careful, like a lion’s crouched crawl before it attacks its prey. And I, like the young calf, sat there, helpless. He opened the leather bag and laid all of his tools on the table.

“We are going to have a lot of fun, you and I,” he snarled.

He bent down to look me in the eyes. His eyes were as blue and as mystical as the ocean, his hair as dark as the night sky, just like mine. He began to caress the instruments on the table as he smiled at me. I could tell that he was a pro, but so was I.

“What do you want?” I grunted as I adjusted myself on the chair.

“I don’t want anything. From you, at least,” he said as he slid his fingers around the handle of his weapon of choice.

“I’m never going to talk!”

“Good,” he whispered as he leaned in close to my face.

“And cut—that’s a wrap! We will shoot the next scene tomorrow morning at 07.00! Good job, people!” * * *



EXIT LIGHTS

By Nephela Aesopou

It was Valentine's day. To be more specific, it was my thirty-eighth Valentine's day. But that day was different. I wasn't at home dining alone, nor was I at my office in one of London's most prestigious companies. I wasn't working, nor was I making calculations for important deals. Instead, I was at the airport. Heathrow airport. Why the airport? Well, I was asking myself the very same question. Why embark on that adventure? Why *then*, after all those years? Because of his message, that's why. Because of the memories that came swarming into my head once I read his words. *Christie*, he started. No one else called me that, only Aaron.

My actual name is Christine, given to me by my parents in memory of my grandmother, whom I never got the chance to meet. I know nothing else about my ancestors or my grandparents, and I've never met any of my cousins. My parents never had time to visit them. They were always so consumed with work and rarely had time for anything else. Maybe I got that from them, too. Until I lost them. It was early, much too early. The world was a scary place for me back then, and I wasn't ready to face it alone. But I had no other choice. I studied a great deal; I went to well-known universities and started my own company from scratch. I worked very hard. Nothing stood in my way: no family obligations, no vacations, no romance.

It was Aaron who changed it all. He was a rebel, and he taught me what it meant to live without obligations. He loved me, and I loved him. But after a while, the fairytale ended. I had to choose. Love or work. Family or fame. Aaron or success. I

chose the latter, and I never heard from him again. Until now. Until his message dragged me to the airport and made me question all my past decisions.

Meet me in Paris, his message beckoned. *Under the Eiffel Tower on the 14th of February, 2:00 p.m.* That's what I always loved about him: his surprises. He always threw me off guard with unexpected dates and made me laugh at his crazy ideas. He continually told me to get up from my office chair, put aside my laptop, lock my phone and watch in my desk, and follow him.

And that's exactly what I was doing at that moment, standing at the airport. I decided that it was time—time to take a break from work and money, a break from the adult world, and finally give a him chance. He hadn't forgotten me. Just the thought gave me goosebumps.

Leave it all behind, he wrote, *and if you come, then we can start again. Be happy together.* Sadly, he knew me too well because he continued,





If I don't see you though, I get it. I'll leave you to your work. Never contact you again. So there I was—at Heathrow airport, following one of his crazy surprises, nearly 18 years later.

“I’m sorry madam, it is your turn,” the old man behind me urged me on, nearly pushing me to check in. I moved forward. The airport was buzzing with life. There were so many people traveling; it felt like the Christmas holidays. I loved the feeling airports gave me; the mixture of flight calls, laughter, shouting, and the movement of baggage. You felt alive. The only gloomy part was the typical London weather. Droplets of rain were racing down the massive grey windows, making it seem like it was late in the afternoon when it was actually early in the morning. I took my passport, thanked the airline employee, and walked towards security.

To tell the truth, I was anxious. Under my leather gloves, my manicured hands were shaking. Under my cashmere cardigan my heart was beating rapidly. Too fast for my age. What if it was all just a game? A prank? What if I wasn’t like he remembered? What if my appearance disappointed him?

I was starting to sweat. I decided to visit the ladies’ room and freshen up. Walking up the marble corridor, I could hear my high boots hitting the floor, and the rhythm calmed me down. There was a long queue stretching outside the restrooms, but I couldn’t waste any time. I decided to just throw some water on my face and fix the light make-up I had on. I wasn’t very concerned with fashion, but I was always elegantly dressed, and I did care about my appearance.

I looked at myself in the mirror. I wasn’t that tall—almost 5’6”—but I was very thin. “Don’t let the wind blow you away!” Aaron used to say. I looked at my brown hair. I never did like it. That’s why there were also strands of faded red at the ends, from a couple of years ago when I was going through a phase and seeking change. It was braided into a crown on my head, its color matching my eyes. For some reason, people said they liked my eyes, said they were large and full of energy whenever I smiled—like small moons turned upside down. Aaron had also said that my teeth could be mistaken for newly found pearls. I smiled at the thought for a moment but then looked in the mir-

Follow the exit lights.
Exit lights.
Lights.

ror. My smile had faded, and small wrinkles were evident on my face. Coffee, concentration, and my career had altered my face. I straightened up. I fixed my cream-colored scarf and positioned the loose strands of hair behind my ear. *Confidence is the key*, I thought. *Confidence.*

Pushing my way through the door, I walked towards the central building. Mere seconds later, a loud noise pierced my ears. Sirens. Then, the lights went out. Darkness. I heard screams. Scared, high-pitched screams. Just like the ones that wake you up from a nightmare. Sheer panic.

A large speaker behind me woke me up from my state of frenzy. “Attention!” it barked. It wasn’t the professional, steady voice you were accustomed to hearing at the airport. Instead, it was the voice of someone terrified—of someone who was being chased, who was now talking into the microphone in a hurry. “Everyone needs to evacuate the building. Immediately.” I stood still, afraid to even breathe.

“There is a massive fire on the second floor. Please, use the emergency exits, and do not use the elevators.” My blood froze. I couldn’t think. My head spun. “All flights are cancelled. I repeat: all flights are canceled. Evacuate the building.” My knees shook. *Bang*, I let my handbag drop to the marble floor. I steadied myself on the nearest wall. I was scared. No, I was terrified. I heard the microphone turn on again. “Follow the exit lights to safety. Please, evacuate the building!”

Follow the exit lights. Exit lights. Lights. I tried to focus. That’s when I took in my surroundings. People were running everywhere, bags of different sizes and colors lay deserted by their owners,

mothers were desperately holding their children, men were pushing their way through, families were hugging, food fell from hands onto the floor, everyone was running, crying, screaming. I had to focus. Concentrate. *Lights. Exit lights. Follow the exit lights. There! Next to the coffee shop, on the right. A bright, fluorescent, green light.* Crazy how your eyes are usually indifferent to those signs, passing right by them, until you actually need them. At that moment, it was the only thing I was searching for: a light that would save me.

I ran. I ran past crying children, past elderly people trying to stand up from their wheelchairs, and past businessmen clutching their most important papers. I ran past mothers trying to soothe their terrified babies. I made it to an exit sign and entered a corridor in search of the next light. Behind me came tourists, boys, lost children, young women, mothers, air stewardesses, construction workers, salesmen, the man working at the coffee shop, cleaners, pilots. Everyone was in pursuit of the green light. It was the only thing that could save us. There! On the wall at the end of the corridor, was the second green exit light. I ran. *Left turn, right, right, and then left again.* My head spun, and my heart was ready to burst out of my ribcage—partly because I was sprinting and pushing, like the hundreds other people around me, but mainly because I was petrified. Scared of the danger, scared of being left behind, scared of death.



And then it hit me. *All flights are cancelled.* My brain suddenly made the connections. *Paris. Eiffel Tower. Aaron. My only chance.*

I imagined his face; his features would have aged—he was two years my senior—but I was sure he would have kept his dark hair cut short, and his hazel eyes would have shone as always. I loved everything about his face: his high cheekbones, his crooked nose—he had fallen from his treehouse when he was fourteen—his thick eyebrows, and his firm jaw. He was a lot taller than I was—his posture and stride always reflected his confidence.

Would he be dressed casually? Would he call me Christine or Christie? Would he be anxious? It would be perfect, *too perfect*. I was ready for it—to have a break from work, to give Aaron all of my time and all of my heart. After his message had arrived, I couldn't stop thinking of how stubborn I had acted, how willing I was now to say sorry and live all over again. How ideal my life would have become if I could have been in Paris in one hour. I felt my eyes dampen. I kept on running.

Green light after green light. I don't know

for how long I kept chasing them. The lights. I felt just like an insect, dependent on the light. Like a cat, chasing a laser beam. I thought of ships, dependent on a lighthouse, following its light into the safety of a port.

Suddenly, I felt it. The cold, moist, London air. Then, I saw the door, the pavement, the authorities. *Safety.*

* * *

*“Leave it all
behind...and if you
come, then we can
start again. Be
happy together.”*



THE LIGHT BETWEEN TWO WORLDS

By Eleni Dimou

Chapter 1

I got up early today. It happens every Christmas. I get up early because I'm very excited about the presents waiting for me under the tree. Mom came into the living room almost immediately after I had entered.

"Jackson, get in here. Shay is opening the present!"

"Coming!" dad yelled from the kitchen, where he was cooking a classic Christmas breakfast.

"You can start opening it, honey!"

Underneath the tree was a big box. Surprisingly big compared to last year's. I grabbed it and shook it a bit. The content was heavy and solid. I was quite afraid to open it.

These past three years, things have been tough on my family since dad lost his job in the restaurant where he worked as a chef; he has been forced to help in mom's furniture store. He is always cheerful because he doesn't want to show

that he is disappointed. He wants our family to continue living like we used to. But such a thing is not possible, and we all know it. The least I can do is play my part and appreciate my present. Last year, I got a pair of socks. Don't get me wrong; it was a nice pair of socks. But it made me sad seeing my parents' faces, knowing that that present couldn't be compared to the ones from previous years.

"Open it, already!" said mom suddenly with unusual excitement.

I tore the wrapping paper off and opened the lid. Inside, I found a...lamp. *A lamp?*

"It's vintage. I found it in a thrift store while I was looking for some stuff for the shop. So? Do you like it?"

It was surprisingly nice. Different. It was made out of a dark of wood. I could tell that it had been used before from the scars covering it. Each one with its own story to tell. I found that fascinating. It was true that the bedside lamp I owned had gotten old, so this new one would come in handy. I was actually really satisfied with my present.

"It's perfect!" I said. "Umm...exactly what I needed, really! Thanks, mom. Thanks, dad."

I hugged them both. It felt like the old days. My parents were very happy to see my satisfaction, and I was happy to see them happy. I could see their eyes sparkling with the thought that they had made me feel like the old days. It all worked like a circle. We were happy when we saw each other happy. After all, financial difficulties might have made our life harder, but our family





was still very tight and loving.

The day went by as usual. We had breakfast all together in the dining room by the fireplace. Dad's banana pancakes have always been my favorite. Then we sat and texted all our relatives and friends, wishing them Merry Christmas. At about five, we went for a walk with Sissi to the park and came back to watch a Christmas movie before going to bed. Oh, Sissi? She is my ten-year-old dog. We found her in a carton box by a trashcan when I was five and kept her. She keeps me company when my parents aren't around. Once we were done with the movie and dinner, we were all exhausted. So, I hugged and kissed my parents good night and went upstairs with Sissi. I brushed my teeth, took a shower, put on my pjs, and snuggled up in my warm blanket. I moved my hand to turn on my bedside light and saw that it had already been replaced with my gift.

I turned the switch. Nothing. What? Why wasn't it working? So, I tried again. Suddenly an extremely bright light scattered through my entire room, like the sun had broken in. I could almost feel the rays penetrating my skin and filling my entire body. I was terrified as a feeling of rising heat in my stomach made me think I was going crazy. I turned the switch anxiously—with what energy I had left—again and again, but the light wouldn't shut off. Approximately thirty seconds later, however, my room turned pitch black. I

turned the switch again.

Chapter 2

My room looked different. *Very* different. New bed, new carpet, new desk, new curtains, new shelf. Everything was new and pretty. Was I dreaming? Had my parents done all this to surprise me? But when? With what money? But suddenly, I started to recognize all the furniture. It was from a magazine in mom's shop. I had circled everything I liked, but I had never imagined that I would actually get it. Slowly, I got out of bed. Strange. Sissi's bed wasn't next to mine. I walked towards the closet to get changed before going down for breakfast. When I opened it, I couldn't believe what I saw. Where were all of my clothes? The shelves where stuffed with beautiful garments from my favorite stores. The hangers were packed, too. New shoes. New accessories and new jewelry. Something was wrong. These were not mine. My parents couldn't have afforded these. I ran to my parents' room down the hall. But there wasn't a hall. This wasn't my house.

I looked around nervously. A lady approached me. She was dressed like a maid and had a name tag on the left side of her chest that said Susan.

"Good morning, Shay, my dear. You look upset. Had a rough night? Are you nervous about Christmas again?"

I looked at her. How did she know my name? Christmas? That was yesterday. Susan took a light hold of my arm and guided me through this strange place. We passed a library, a study that had my dad's name written on the door, two guest bathrooms, and a guest room. This was definitely not my house. I looked around and felt lost. Finally, we reached an elevator, and Susan pressed the 0 button. Apparently, we were on the second floor. She let go of me and smiled.

"So, your dad is at the gym but said he will be down in fifteen minutes, and your mom is out with her girlfriends for some coffee and some *Christmas shopping therapy*—as she called it. She

also told me that you shouldn't wait for her this year."

Ding. Ground floor.

The doors opened onto a large luxurious space. It was the main entrance. Marble floor. Velvet curtains. I kept staring with my eyes and mouth wide open, my entire body shaking with nervousness and excitement since I couldn't believe what I was seeing before me. It was beautiful.

"Go on, S. Breakfast is waiting in the main dining room."

Susan made a right down a corridor in a swift manner that made me realize that I wasn't supposed to be following her, so I went straight on to explore the house. There was a living room, a TV room, and the kitchen. On the other side of the house, there was another living room—decorated differently—a play room, with a big pool table in the middle, and a huge dining hall with a table which seated twenty. At the end of the table, there was a plate and three sets of knives and forks, just like in expensive restaurants. Behind the table was a buffet with a wide range of goods. It felt as if I were having breakfast at Tiffany's. The whole place was like a five-star hotel.

I was so confused. Half an hour before, I was in my room trying to turn on my new lamp to read some of my book. Now I was here, wherever here was. What had happened? How did I get here? Where was I?

Then I thought again. The lamp. The explosion of light. That must have something to do with this whole situation. If it got me here, it could also get me back to the real world. Forgetting breakfast and Susan, I quickly ran towards the elevator up to the second floor; trying not to get lost, I finally found my room. It was there. The lamp was still there, by the bed.

"I have to switch it on and off like I did last night!" But then I reconsidered; what if I just wait for one day? What if I relive Christmas? That couldn't be bad considering it would probably be the most lavish Christmas ever, right? I took a step back and went to *my* closet. I could pick anything I

wanted. After all, it was *mine*.

I got changed and put on some make up, and once I was ready, I went back to the main dining hall. Now, there was a man sitting in one of the chairs. I couldn't see his face, but he must have been working out because he was soaked in sweat. Working out? Wasn't dad supposed to be at the gym according to Susan? Then it hit me. It was *dad*. His light curls and brown hair, his ears sticking out. But since when did dad work out?

"S? Where were you? You were supposed

**The lamp. The explosion of
light. That must have
something to do with this
whole situation.**

to have started breakfast by the time I was done working out. We have a lot of stuff to do today! It's Christmas!" said the man while slowly turning around, without removing the phone from his ear. He looked me straight in the eyes and smiled. I could see my dad, but at the same time, he was nowhere to be seen because I knew that my real dad was not actually here. He got up and came in for a big, sweaty hug.

"We can't be late this year, sweetie. Your grandparents will be really mad at us if we are late for lunch again. You know what a big deal it is for Granny Sheila. You have to go find mom at the mall and then get back and get ready to leave. Now, eat your breakfast quickly. The weather isn't that good today, and it's going to take us at least two hours to get to Zermatt. I have to take a shower. DON'T BE LATE!" shouted my dad's fading voice as he left the room.

From what he said, I was going to meet mom at the mall, which seemed strange since I thought the mall was closed on Christmas, and then get back home to get ready for Zermatt, where my grandparents lived. Zermatt? Grandparents?

My grandparents had died before I was even born. I was so confused.

I helped myself to a chocolate croissant, a slice of bread with some sort of cheese, and a ‘detox pineapple and grapefruit juice.’ Everything was delicious. The amazing food made me forget about this whole confusion. I took a long sip from my juice and tried to think. I had heard something about Zermatt before. It was a small ski village where my mom used to go with her parents—my grandparents—every Christmas as a child. She had told me many stories about that wonderful little village, but we had never actually been there. I had never even met my grandparents. I was officially intrigued.

Chapter 3

Three croissants later, I decided to get up and take my plate back to the kitchen. Susan was there, and she gave me a very surprised look. I gave her my plate and thanked her. For some reason, she was speechless. After a moment, which seemed like an hour, she spoke, “Your driver is waiting for you to take you to the mall. Whenever you’re ready, you can go.”

I didn’t bother to get changed again and went straight outside, where a Porsche was waiting. At first, I wasn’t sure if this was the car Susan was talking about. Maybe it was there for a commercial or something. But then a man got out and said, “Come on, Shay. Your mom is waiting at the mall. She told me to take you there as soon as possible.” I tried to put my anxiety aside, got into the car, and went to the mall.

Everything was happening so fast that I had no time to process anything, but I think I was actually having fun. I had never lived such a lifestyle. I had only seen it in movies. And yes, it was really nice.

I didn’t speak the entire ride. The driver left me outside the mall. I didn’t even say goodbye but rather started walking towards the mall entrance. Suddenly, a phone started ringing, and I noticed that it was coming from my purse. A purse I didn’t even know I had. So, I reached for the phone and saw I had an incoming call from Mommy. Hesitantly, I answered it.

“Hello?”

“Where are you, S? I’m outside the Prada store. I just bought your grandad’s Christmas gift.



Please, come up so we can go get granny Sheila a present, too.”

“Okay, okay. I’m coming...stay there.”

I hung up the phone and went inside. I had been to this mall countless times. I had only gone to the top floor where all the expensive shops were a few times. I tried to keep a straight face and ignore my nervousness; I kept walking until I was outside a store with a big bright PRADA logo. There was a woman standing there. She was wearing a midi black dress with heels and a fancy coat. She was on her phone, too. Again, I saw a woman who looked exactly like my mother, but I knew it wasn’t her. From the way she was dressed to the way she was standing, she had a different aura around her—very different from the safety and feeling of comfort my real mother used to give me. She turned and looked at me a bit annoyed. It scared me. I didn’t know how to deal with that or what to say to her.

I tried to act normal.

“Hey, sorry if I am late. I had a hard time getting out of bed this morning.”

“It’s okay. We have to get moving though. Oh, and honey, I didn’t have time to get you a gift this year, but take this check and do whatever you want with it. Come on now.”

I took the check. It was made out for a thousand dollars, hastily written and signed in a handwriting that looked just like my mother’s. Despite the amount, I felt as if it was the worst gift anyone had ever given me. I’d much rather get a pair of socks that my parents carefully selected according to my preferences and bought with love than this meaningless piece of paper.

My first impression of ‘mom’ wasn’t a good one. During our time at the mall, I didn’t speak much. I just nodded every time my so-called mom asked me if I liked what she was showing me. Most of the time, I was thinking I wanted to get back home, back to my real parents. I understood what I had once heard my dad say, “Money is a means of temporary satisfaction. It cannot replace human relationships or fill you with emotion. Money does not last forever. Love does. Family, too. You

should be thankful that you have what really matters.” I kept this thought to myself and waited until it was time to go home and get ready for Zermatt.

Chapter 4

Once we got home, mom started murmuring, “There was so much traffic. I am so relieved we are taking our helicopter to Zermatt. Chanel stopped producing this cologne. How is that possible? I’m going to complain to Burberry if I see a lack of staff again. I had to wait ten minutes until someone helped me...” It was unbearable.

I could see dad getting frustrated, too. He mouthed, “Go and get ready.” I immediately pressed the mute button on the world, unable to stand mom’s whining any longer, and ran as fast as I could to my room.

Not even a day had gone by, but I knew that I couldn’t stay any longer. I didn’t want this. I wanted *my* family. *My* loving parents. Humble mom and energetic dad. Morning kisses. Dad serving freshly cooked meals with a smile of pride on his face each every time I took a bite. Small things my parents did to make me feel better when I was tired, sad, or stressed, such as leaving sticky notes with encouraging quotations hidden all over the house. All those things that made me feel safe, comfortable, and at home. Only with them did I feel loved. I felt part of something important. Part of an actual family—with responsibilities, difficulties, but happiness, as well. That was the kind of family that I valued. One in which we cared for each other, worried for each other, and felt truly thankful for having each other. I wanted to get back to that.

I took a deep breath, took off my designer clothes and chose a sporty outfit instead, and untied my perfectly done ponytail. I went to my bed and turned the switch on of the only thing I loved in this fake and miserable world I was trapped in.

The lamp’s light was blinding.

* * *

Part III:

Poetry



Photo by Dimtris Kolitsis

“Poetry is when an emotion has found its thought and
the thought has found its words.”

Robert Frost

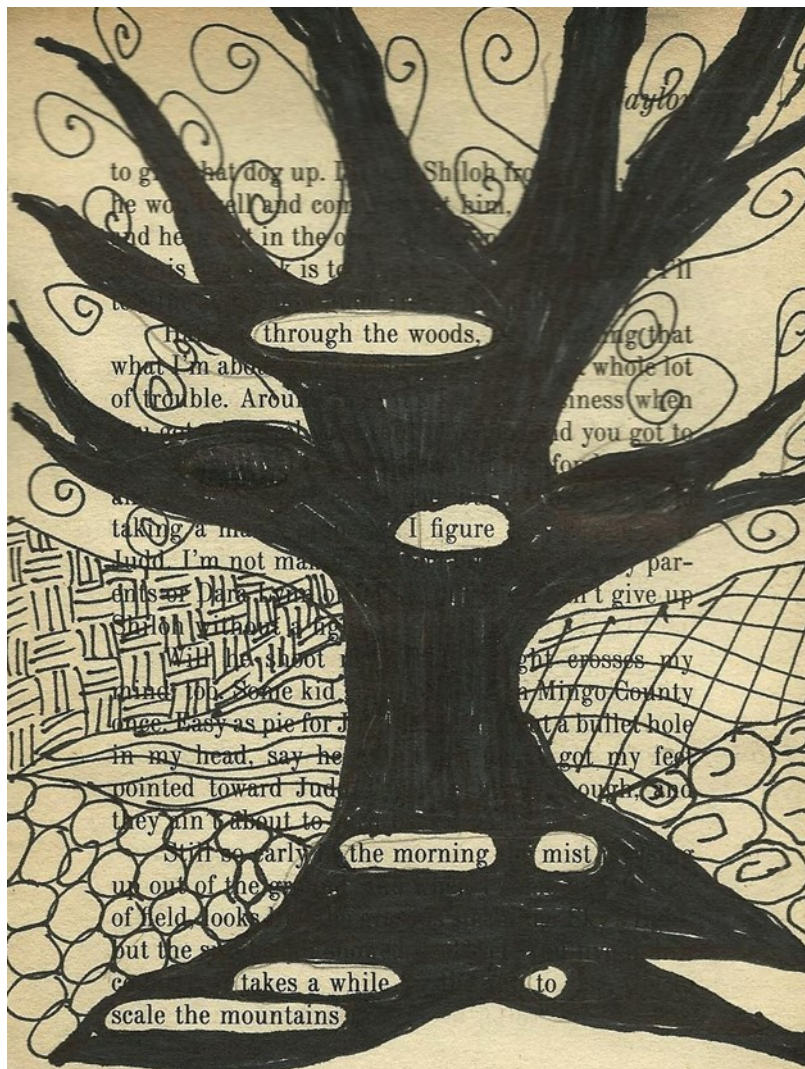
Found Poetry

They say that one man's trash is another man's treasure. Students set out to discover what poetry was hidden inside day-to-day news articles, turning one man's prose into their own poetry.



HOW TO CREATE A 'FOUND' POEM

1. Select a text.
2. Choose a page.
3. read your text well.
4. Highlight or circle words or ideas that jump out at you.
5. Look at all the words that you have chosen, and start to select the ones that create your poem. You won't use everything that you originally note.
6. Circle the words you have chosen to make your found poem. (see below – you can also write them on a piece of paper)
7. Make it visually interesting!



Source:

MsLynnEnglish10. "How to Create a Found Poem." *YouTube*, YouTube, 12 Nov. 2015, www.youtube.com/watch?v=B3wjLsEfFo.



Chiaroscuro

By Emmanouela Kappou and Ioanna Maniaki

Some days, I open my eyes
And all I see is darkness
The stars collapse
I'm drowning in the void of the universe
There is no escape
My soul is filled with pain
That's where my demons hide

And then comes the day
When I see the light
My stars align
Like the infinite sounds that they are
Illuminating my being
Maybe there's hope
In my disjointed life

This poem is based on an article on Caravaggio, which explains how his disjointed life is connected to his playing with light and dark—characteristically called chiaroscuro.



S.W.A.V.

Students Working and Volunteering Club

Warmth and Light

The pure love of humanity,
Of freedom and democracy
The human potential, improved by optimism
The power of warmth and light,
Created by humanity's loving character
This is philanthropy

By Helen Bampagiaouri, Athina Michalopoulou,
Aphrodite Moissis, Margarita Papaioannou

Prometheus

In the vast darkness
of the human soul,
when you feel that every hope is lost
The love for humankind is forgotten

Where's the love that used to empower
The human heart?
The fire that once shone brightly
Has now become a flickering flame
ready to burn out

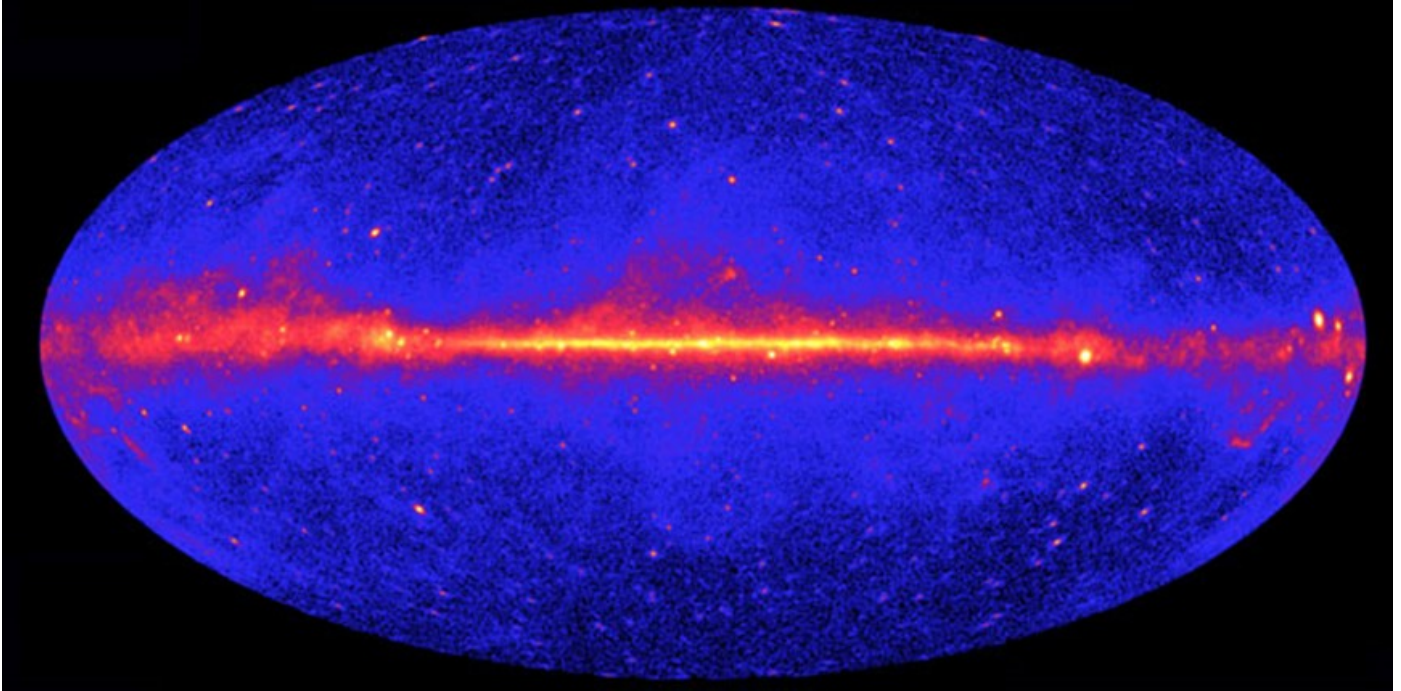
But Prometheus will bring the power
of warmth and light
To the dark and desolate earth

By Electra Nikolopoulou, Anastasia Panteli, Markela Papandreou Ifigenia Tsakiri

These poems are based on an article that discusses the history of volunteerism, tracing it back to Ancient Greece.

The Night Sky

By Maral Charoutounian and Melina Stefanou



This is the night sky
Where high-speed particles collide
Where stars show up as bright dots
Where galaxies look like red spots
This is the violent cosmos
Where gas and dust are scattered between the stars
Where gas slings around close to the speed of light
This is the night sky
Where light begins.

This poem is based on a science article about a map which was produced by NASA's Fermi Gamma-Ray Space Telescope researchers. This map shows the hotspots of energetic activity in our galaxy and beyond, painting a picture of light—of the universe with its stars and galaxies.



The Golden-Fingered Dawn

By Christina Spentza and Liana Syrmagia

On the perception of color:
The blueness of twilight makes us
Calm

The yellowness of dawn
WAKES US UP

The color you see
Is a trick of your brain
Not a physical property
Just wavelengths of light
But do we all see them in the same way?

We simply don't know
Why Homer's dawn was rosy

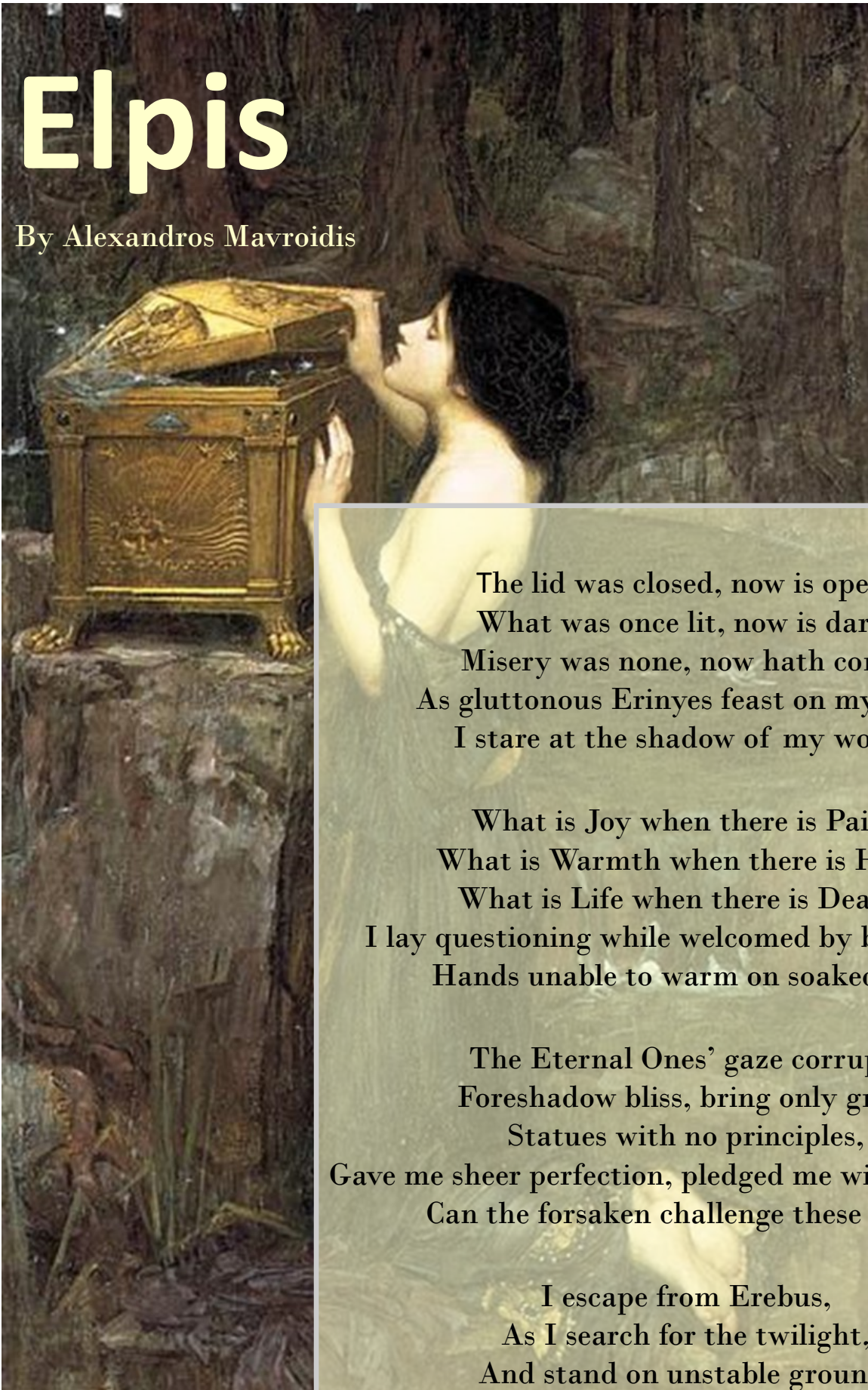
This poem is based on Veronique Greenwood's article in which it is argued that blue light actually makes us tired, not the reduction in the intensity of light. In the contrast, the yellow light in the morning wakes us up rather than the increased intensity of light.



Poetry

Elpis

By Alexandros Mavroidis



The lid was closed, now is open.
What was once lit, now is dark.
Misery was none, now hath come.
As gluttonous Erinyes feast on my guilt,
I stare at the shadow of my world.

What is Joy when there is Pain?
What is Warmth when there is Hate?
What is Life when there is Death?
I lay questioning while welcomed by bitter rain.
Hands unable to warm on soaked fire.

The Eternal Ones' gaze corrupt,
Foreshadow bliss, bring only grief.
Statues with no principles,
Gave me sheer perfection, pledged me with weakness.
Can the forsaken challenge these odds?

I escape from Erebus,
As I search for the twilight,
And stand on unstable ground.
Eyes roll from the illusion to reality.
I stare at the lantern that is Hope.



You are My Light

By Antigone Triantafyllidi

You are my light
The light that reflects my reality
The light that I don't want to face
Your smile, so bright and so powerful
It can make me feel free
It can make me see my demons

Give me your light,
Like you want to inspire me
Like you want me to dream
Like you want me to live
For an eternity.



YOU AND I

By Emily Kechagias

I saw the blinding light, the crack of dawn
My soulmate under myriads of stars
I think I love you and can't let you go
Small molecules of life, combined at once
And the lust for life and passion and love
Made me think just how much I tend to ask
Our souls together build my lonely heart
Feels like we're constantly wearing a mask
For seconds, moments we drifted apart
I suddenly stopped and started to run
But then I returned, too sad and aghast
Only afraid to lose you, my bright sun
How afraid am I to fall from the sky?
Oh, you'll see, in the end, it's you and I.

Cardboard Sign

Eleni Kyriazi



That woman sitting on the corner
All curled up, moving back and forth
Whispering to herself
Tearing up

I will remember her.

Giving her bread
Seeing her crumbling it all up
And feeding the birds with it
Her eyes glistening

Holding a cardboard sign
“I am a war veteran”
Help is appreciated.

Walking around the streets at night
Searching for the birds
To feed them
And keep them company

What if the birds did not come?

The tension was apparent
Locked muscles, repetitive movements

What has this soul been through?
What crimes have her eyes witnessed?

LIGHTNING



By Alexandros Mavroidis

Light rain on the grey horizon,
Sea of tranquility; drops trickle on the boat sides.
Seagulls search for opportunity.
I wait. I wait. I wait.

Cool breeze welcomes me,
The boat undulates.
Pilgrimage of the whales on the starboard side.
Wet, cold, and restless
I wait. I wait. I wait.

Boat begins to rock.
Seagulls fly, whales submerge.
From a breeze to a gust,
From drops to needles,
From Tranquility to Violence,
I wait. I wait. I wait.

Oil lamp burns as rain strikes hard,
I grasp onto the sail.
Staring in awe at the divine.
The ocean trembles.
The Waves high, The Wind roars,
The Fulmination Begins.

ELITE PHANTOM SQUAD

BY GEORGE ANASTASIOU

PROLOGUE

In a futuristic world where humans live side by side with phantoms and believe in goddesses, like Rage and Freedom, a corrupted empire has to be taken down by an elite troop: the Elite Phantom Squad. The South is the rich region called The Venui Empire, which takes advantage of the North, which is poorer and weaker. However, at this stage, the North has effectively created a weapon, the Gauntlets; currently, only the leader and a select few soldiers know this, so the soldiers perceive this metaphorically, even though it actually exists, which is what they will use for their counter attack. This is the leader's words to his troops before the battle begins.



May the stars not collide,
May Ceres¹ give us light,
As we blindly sleep,
Under a shield of thoughts in the night.

Move like a nightmare,
Dance like the wind,²

The seeker's Guardian Angel,³
A man who never sinned.

Every time you venture
Into a quest
You find yourself in a different landscape⁴
Your heart's crest.

Freedom is a must,
An invincible desire,
Don't let your dreams rust,
Our hearts' full of fire.

Fight for our empire,
So it won't fall,
Any opponent naïve enough,
Shall pay their toll,

Flourish from the divine,
The sisters' powers,
When the planets align,⁵
Strike with a million flowers,⁶

We can scold them to dust,
Our strength is like comets,
Nothing lasts forever,
But our thorns in Gauntlets.

Engage and ignite,
We are a powerful vibe,
We are Goliath sprites,⁷
And have gods on our side.

Gods, ghosts, spirits,
All we can't see,
Embedded in our souls,⁸
Until we are free.

They see through our fiery eyes,
And fight through our thoughts,
Like thorns in Gauntlets,
Punches are now gunshots.

And there are ideas,
Time has forgotten,
In the abyss of our minds,
The horizon has them rotten.

Freedom and Rage,
Are the sisters' names,
Some divine powers,
Now engulfed in flames.⁹

The future chimes mentioned,¹⁰
That we should not be deceived,
Let them pay the price,
For the Rage we received.

Exploit the shadows,¹¹
They are our friends,
Secretly waiting,
For the battle to commence.

As the Elite Phantom Squad,
Our duties are sacred,
To revive this place,
From a peak that once faded.

Now is our chance,
To show them our worth,
Our names to enhance,
As the Tribes of the North...



Elite Phantom Squad

Notes

1. Ceres was believed to be a goddess from ancient mythology; even though it is a planet in their solar system, the Northern Tribes are illiterate and still believe it to be a goddess.
2. The Northern ancient martial arts involve fighting secretly and quietly, like an assassin.
3. Myths mentioned that when you die, if you were someone that deserved to go to paradise, you were given a choice: To live on earth as a Guardian Angel, a mythical fairy assigned a specific person to protect from fate or bad luck until he/she dies, or to fight evil phantoms to restore peace in the spiritual world. Obviously, as stated by the legend, Guardian Angels could not be seen or felt as they were phantoms or spirits.
4. "Every time... landscape": This is taken from a game called "Eternium."
5. It was believed that when the planets aligned, which would be in a few minutes after the point at which the leader is addressing his troops, phantoms gain extra power, and since phantoms were on the Northerners' side, the North would be stronger.
6. In that universe, flowers actually had the ability to hurt someone because they were mostly carnivorous (!), but they did not hurt humans. A few incidents involving flowers had occurred previously, but these were mere exceptions to the rule.
7. Sprites were little fairies that actually existed and could barely be seen by humans; they appeared as glitter.
8. To make his warriors feel stronger, the leader told them that the phantoms had joined them and that they would fight as one.
9. Rage's power was connected to flames. She was the one creating all the destruction. Specifically, on that planet, the crust was dry and thinner and, thus, sometimes would break down and release lava.
10. Future chimes also existed, but they were believed to be magical.
11. Connected to (2), the martial arts everyone learned instead of reading and writing; they were connected to the shadows, as well. There were only a few people who could 'manipulate' shadows, however, and these were the masters.

Piercing Sparkle of Light

By George Dimitratos and Thanos Haroupas

After hours of waiting, five lights appeared
Suddenly—they spawned
Started running towards the pits
They were hiding in bushes
They didn't know their enemy was rushing in
Against them
They met each other
And started laughing
They couldn't control themselves
It was the three potions they took
So they started dancing
Out of nowhere he came,
Hit them
With a beam of light
They got snared by the piercing sparkle of light
After one, two, three...it was Game Over
But they knew they were all champions



GAME
OVER

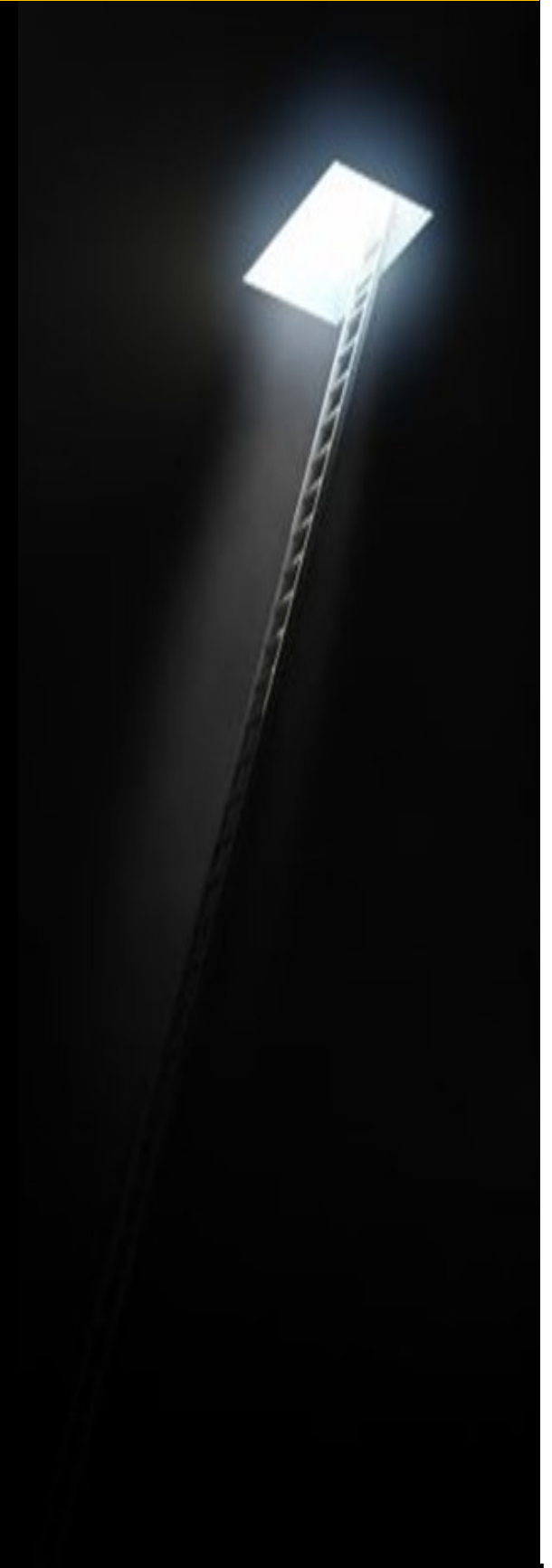
MORE.

By George Aravossis

Lost in this cave
But used to all the darkness
My eyes adjusted,
My soul now adjusted,
My expectations: adjusted.
Greys are enough colors for me

Drawing the curtains
the sunlight dancing with my open blinds
that blinded me all along
I peek outside, the blooming spring garden
Bright yellows, Red, Pink
My face is glowing just like my bedroom
wall
I finally can see.

the dimmer keeps turning round and round
the room is getting brighter
and like a boiling frog
Suddenly it's too bright
"Good Lord, it burns to look around"
I whisper while crying
"Dark was ok"
I cry while suffering.



My Tartarus

By Julia Limneos

The waves were rough
It was too hard for me to follow them
I was trying to breathe
My heart was leaping
The sunset filled the void
My body sank, wet with water
With sweat


The waves were rough
I wanted to rest
But had to fight
To accomplish my heart's desire
I don't know what
I made my eyes blurry
I turned obediently to my heart
Small yet powerful
It makes everything have meaning
Purpose

The waves crashed
The sharpness touches my hand
My body concurs
I am broken
I am full of poison
It tricked my heart
Made it flush blood in the ocean

The waves were rough
I didn't want to feel
I just need smooth seas
No waves
I had riots, storms
Friends
Failures of the system,
Made to obey every single lie

The waves were rough
I took my surfboard and rode those waves
I wanted to control them
Who could do so
Only someone full of darkness
That's my light
I see the rough waves we feed
Till our last day
This light claimed optimistic
Is not

The sea is vast
I had everything
No scars visible
The darkness encroaches my true desire



The waves were rough
Hurting others with reason
Listening to voices
Screaming harder and harder
Louder and louder

The waves were pounding
The ocean failed to calm my heart
The salt bled from me
Happiness
The waves were calm
The wind blows

The ocean swirls
I touch a paper
My soul writes, not me
My dreams darken
In the depths of my sadness,
My pain,
My reality

The waves were rough
My light fades
Cruel and cold
It conquers my soul
My heart
My brain
My all

The waves were rough
Conjuring the depths of my Tartarus.

Photo by Julia Limeneos

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.

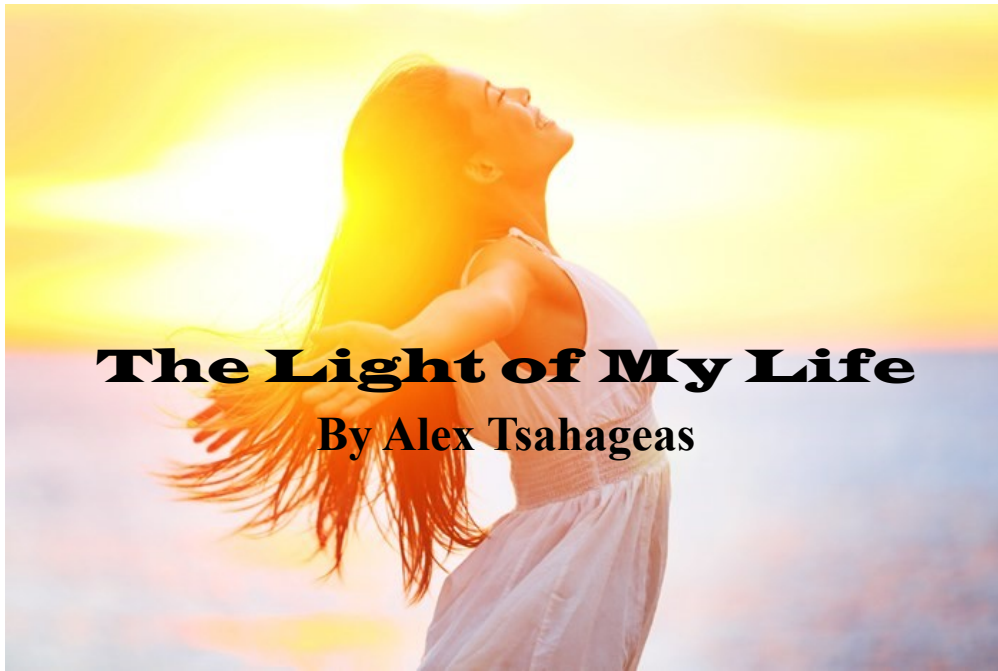
The Structure of a Shakespearean Sonnet—also known as an English Sonnet:

3 Quatrains

Ending with a rhyming couplet

Written in Iambic Pentameter

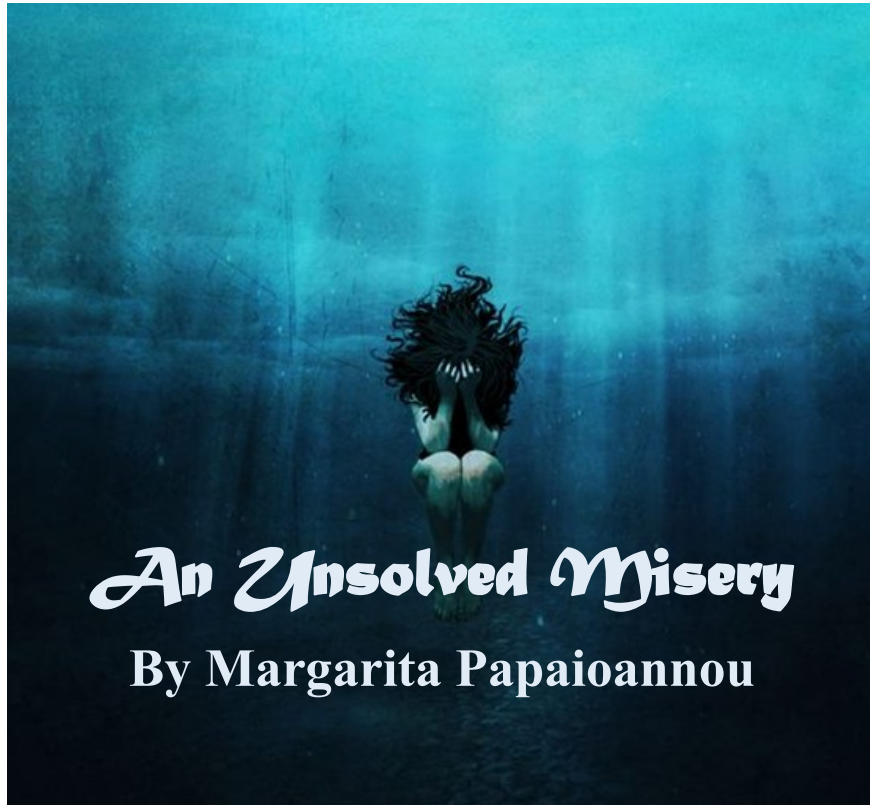
Rhyme Scheme: abab cdcd efef gg.



The Light of My Life

By Alex Tsahageas

My love's pretty eyes are not like the rest
Fire is less red than her lips be red
In personality she is the best
Not one bad word about her has been said
I have never seen more light in my life
And though she may be as strong as stone
She has ended-up being my delight
For her heart is pure, right down to the bone
And though it may have been over two years
Since Death drew us apart, took her away
Not once have I stopped shedding all those tears
But somewhere in Light I know; rest she may
And all this time, I think my love as rare
No one else as beautiful can compare.



And as I was standing there by the tree
I could not even stand the sudden pain;
It dawned on me that I was now love-free.
My bleeding heart felt like it had been slain.

I was now to him a nonentity;
My life was pure and simple misery.
Losing love meant losing identity
Whilst this love was an unsolved mystery.

Filling my ill, broken heart with dark light,
He disappeared in crowds of haunted eyes.
Leaving me high and dry that empty night,
I was drowning in a sea of his lies.

A lonely soul I was left in sorrow,
Feeling as empty as the tree's hollow.



I carry a book, a bow, and a mask.
The first, to revive my hollow dead mind.
The second, to aid me on my one task,
The third, to save me from morals' crosswind.
A shadow of the murk treads an old path.
Unaltered branches and unaltered tracks,
Of the all-changing forest of the strath,
I venture to find Beauty which now lacks.
I see it far, through the brush, in the glade.
Revealed by the Moon's shaft of light, it stands.
It turns its head, staring; it does not wade.
Boots firm upon the ground of these cold lands.
Bow is raised high, book is set aside,
Mask is worn. Hand, Eyes, and I will abide.



Burning Soul

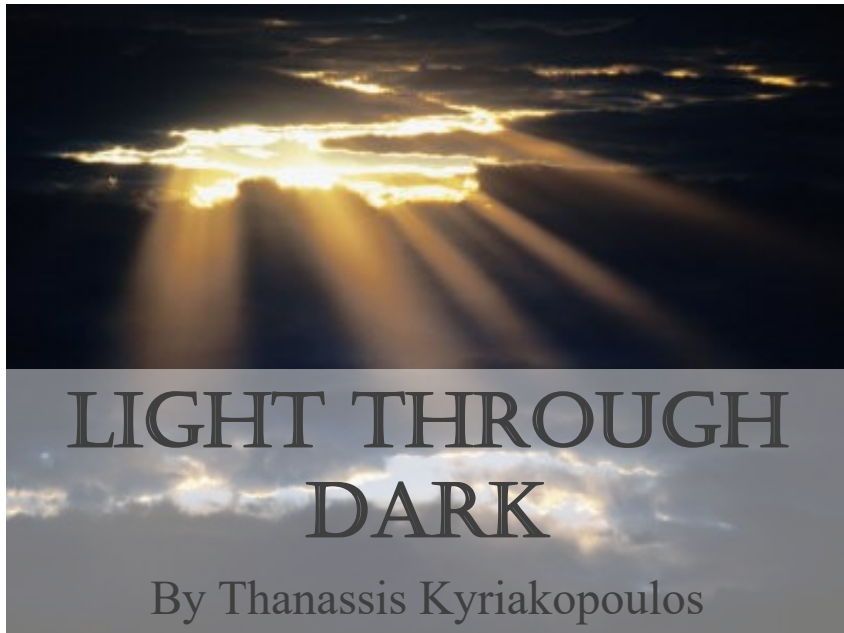
By John Apokis

Dear friend, who vanquished all our foes now burn,
Bright soul of hope surpass them all over,
By blazing into hell from darkness, churn,
Like Hades' flames come to burn forever.

I call upon you now to stand by me,
For you to blow all enemies away,
Like the eternal light you are for thee,
Obstructions blown away, like human prey.

But now our bond about to break in shame,
Despite the fact that we are blessed by God,
Have forever eternal light and fame,
From when we toppled, an obstruction awed.

As long as our bond burns it will survive,
Together friend, ever we stay alive.



When darkness tries to devour a soul
Like a ferocious beast which hunts its prey
When it only wants to destroy us all
The least we can do is willingly pray

There is nothing worse than hosting the dark
When this occurs there is critical need
It is a painful and long-lasting mark
Through the poor and the weak it craves to feed

But deep and strong hope is what will fall last
The one who needs help must be shown the way
And action must be taken soon and fast
If savior is what we are meant to say

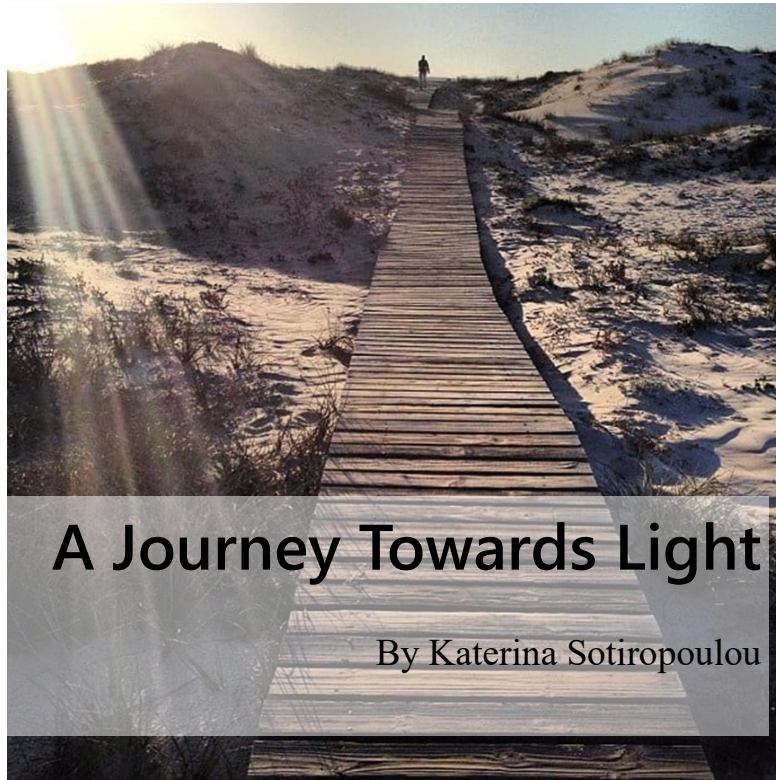
And at that moment our efforts just might
Indeed lead many to the holy light.



The Best Transition

By Leo Lazanakis

There is nothing more utterly pleasing
At the very end of a long, warm day
Than the gold disk of the sun receding
Across the wide and dimly lit blue bay
The gentle sound of the calm waves below
Sooth my thoughts from the previous long day
When the light drops the fireflies' dim glow
Remake the recession of the last ray
As the critters prepare for a cool night
The silent song of the crickets begins
And the silver reflection of moonlight
Outlines the soft waves made by dolphin fins
There is nothing more utterly pleasing
Than the change of colours in the ev'ning.



A Journey Towards Light

By Katerina Sotiropoulou

It all seemed dark inside my heart as I
Was searching desperately my way to light;
I closed the door on what caused me to cry,
And let my mind fly far to what is bright.

It was hard to ignore what people said,
Their cruel jokes, their secrets, and their dark thoughts;
These words just jumped and echoed in my head,
As if by swords I was tortured by taunts.

Believing in myself I tried to speak,
One day I threw those nightmares all away,
I was happy—no more tired, sad, weak;
The past was gone; what remained was today.

This endless journey towards my own freedom,
Finally ended inside my kingdom.

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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!