

THE NATURE, STYLE, AND AESTHETICS OF
PAPADHIAMANDIAN PROSE

Dissertation for the Degree of Ph. D.

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DAVID ROBERT WEINBERG

1977



This is to certify that the

thesis entitled

THE NATURE, STYLE, AND AESTHETICS OF

PAPADHIAMANDIAN PROSE

presented by

DAVID ROBERT WEINBERG

has been accepted towards fulfillment
of the requirements for

Ph.D. degree in Comparative
literature

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ABSTRACT

THE NATURE, STYLE, AND AESTHETICS OF PAPADHIAMANDIAN PROSE

By

David Robert Weinberg

The purpose of this dissertation for a doctoral degree in Comparative Literature is to analyze and describe as precisely as possible the nature, style, and aesthetics of the Papadhiamandian michtē in order to attempt to settle some of the controversy found in the criticism as to whether Papadhiamandis is a writer of the katharevousa making concessions to the demotic or whether Papadhiamandis is fundamentally a demotacist. If it can be proved by statistical analysis and description that the character of Papadhiamandis' michtē is a result of random and haphazard selection of language (which I believe it is), and not the result of deliberate choice, then the articulation of a third possibility--that Papadhiamandis is a writer whose prose is best defined by its own characteristics --will perhaps provide an alternative for settling the issue in a meaningful manner.

The material analyzed is the language from a text of Papadhiamandis' most mature period, namely The Murderess (Ἡ Φόνισσα), a work written in 1902 and considered by most critics the author's finest achievement. This novel as it first appeared in the periodical "Panathenaia" ("Παναθηναῖα") in serialized form

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between January and June 1903 is used as the authority for both a complete translation into English (included in an Appendix) and the analysis of the michtē. (A photocopy of this first printing is also included in an Appendix and has been numbered in Stephanus fashion for verification of the data.)

The method of analysis is based upon critical distinctions between the katharevousa and the demotic as dictated by grammar and usage, especially distinctions of orthography, morphology, and lexical choice as they appear in the narrative and descriptive passages of The Murderess. Specifically, the elements separated out of the text into the katharevousa and the demotic are as follows:

Phonology and Orthography

- A. Neuter nouns in -- ι ; -- ιΟΥ
- B. Consonant combinations
- C. Orthographic variations

Forms

- A. Subjunctive aorist third person plurals
- B. Augment: temporal and syllabic
- C. Participles in -- μένους

Vocabulary

The analysis indicates that the character of Papadhiamandis' michtē is the result of random selection; not deliberate choice. While we find, for example, in some areas a proportionately greater number of demotic elements in the nominative and accusative cases; the proportions often reverse themselves in the genitive case. However, though the introduction of demotic elements is in some areas overwhelming, the michtē maintains a katharevousian character, for

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the demotic terms are many times formalized by the addition of archaic endings or other formalizing devices.

Thus Papadhiamandis' style, it appears, was unaffected by the controversies over the Greek "Language Question" which at the time tended to polarize styles into "pure" katharevousa and "pure" demotic; or, at the very least, depolarize them to the extent that a michtē was the result of careful compromise or tentative conciliation. But the Papadhiamandian michtē--the result of random selection--is no such compromise.

The aesthetics of such a michtē--Papadhiamandis' michtē--is also explored in this study. Appraising the aesthetics is based upon the relation of language to purpose. For example, an examination is made of the synthesis in the narration of the physical environment and the emotional state of the heroine.

Finally, one additional study (included in an Appendix) offers evidence of Stylistic Characterization in The Murderess. It is included to show Papadhiamandis as "pure" demoticist and dialogist. This study examines the "rhetorical question" as the chief characterizing device in the speech of the heroine of the novel; and the "exclamation" as a stylistic device for differentiating the speech of various personages in the novel.

The study catalogues the various words of exclamation assigned characters and surveys the idiosyncrasy of the heroine of answering questions by questions; of answering statements with questions; and of expressing ideas by questions.

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The results of this analysis point up the fact that while much of our knowledge of the characters in this novel may result from events and situations, our real feeling for the characters as individuals is a result of their individualized speech.

THE NATURE, STYLE, AND AESTHETICS OF
PAPADHIAMANDIAN PROSE

By

David Robert Weinberg

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
Michigan State University
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for the degree of

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1977

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1977

DEDICATION

To my wife.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this dissertation is to analyze and describe as precisely as possible the nature, style, and aesthetics of the Papadhiamandian michtē in order to attempt to settle some of the controversy found in the criticism as to whether Papadhiamandis is a writer of the katharevousa making concessions to the demotic or whether Papadhiamandis is fundamentally a demoticist. If it can be proved by statistical and descriptive analysis that the character of Papadhiamandis' michtē is a result of random and haphazard selection of language (which I believe it is), and not the result of deliberate choice, then the articulation of a third possibility--that Papadhiamandis is a writer whose prose is best defined by its own characteristics--will perhaps provide an alternative for settling the issue in a meaningful manner. The material analyzed will be the language from a text of Papadhiamandis' most mature period. The method of analysis will be based upon critical distinctions between the katharevousa and the demotic as dictated by grammar and usage, especially distinctions of orthography, morphology, and lexical choice. Finally, some assessment as to the aesthetics of the michtē itself will be made based upon the relation of language to purpose.

II. THE CRITICISM AND THE ARGUMENT

There is much rhetoric but little analysis on the style of Alexandros Papadhiamandis. G. Valeta, in his book, Papadhiamandis: His Life, Work, Era, summarizes the rhetoric as follows:

The bibliography concerning his life and work is enormous and surprises by its extent and variety. Yet, substantive it is not, only a pile of chaff. The greater part of the bibliography on Papadhiamandis consists of occasion articles, announcements, accounts, annals, scholia, opinions, poems, descriptions, anecdotes, information, recollections, obituaries. The serious critical articles are few. They can be counted on the fingers and the studies which offer something substantive are those based upon textual study of the work. In all the publications there is worship, praise, attempts at judgment, much subjectivism.¹

Much of the "worship," "judgment," and "subjectivism" Valeta mentions above is the work of partisans--demoticists (οἱ δημοτικιστές) and purists, (οἱ καθαρευουσιάνοι) --praising or damning, claiming and disclaiming Papadhiamandis in their struggle over the Greek "Language Question."² The rivalry between the camps was often comic. We are told, for example, that for Papadhiamandis' (μνημόσυνο) memorial

. . . the chief defenders of the katharevousa of Constantinople in order to counter and thwart the memorial of P. /sic/ by the demoticists (1911), claimed him one of their

¹G. Valeta, Παπαδιαμάντης: Ἡ Ζωή, τὸ Ἔργο, Ἡ Ἐποχή Του (Athens: Ἀθηναῖκαι Ἔκδοσις, 1955), p.372.

²For a summary of the Greek "Language Question," see Robert Browning, "The Development of the National Language," Medieval and Modern Greek (London: Hutchinson and Co., 1969), pp. 103-18.

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own hoping to save his "abused memory" declaring that "μαλλιαροί /extreme demoticists/ and Papadhiamandis are as soot and silk, two extremes diametrically opposed, that the celebrated memorial, from which surely the bones of the deceased writer would rattle, if it came to pass, would be nothing other than infringement upon the /right-ful/ duties of others. . . ."¹

Neither side, however, was particularly happy or comfortable with the μιχτή , or michtē, "mixed" character of Papadhiamandian prose. Though the demoticists claimed Papadhiamandis as their own, Psiharis, founder of the modern demotic movement, described Papadhiamandis' language as being "very much more katharevousa" (παρά πολύ περισσότερο καθαρεύουσα).² The purists, on the other hand, while praising Papadhiamandis' narrative talents, "didn't look upon his mixed language favorably."³ Purist K. Rankavis, while praising Papadhiamandis' short story, "Dream on the Wave," ("Όνειρο στο κύμα "), finds fault with the language.⁴ N. Hatzidhakis calls Papadhiamandis an "artist with the pen" but not one of those writers who "leads the spiritual life of the country."⁵

As for Papadhiamandis, he apparently took very little part in the rhetorical polemic himself. Vlahoyannis claims Papadhiamandis "could never stand psiharism . . . never read a book written in

¹Valeta, Παπαδιαμάντης , p. 63

²Psihari, " Ένωση θά πῃ δύναμη," Noumas III (January, 1905).

³Valeta, Παπαδιαμάντης , p. 384, citing periodical Nea Zoē IV (April 1908).

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

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demotic."¹ Valeta concludes that Papadhiamandis "Loved the demotic. Hated psiharism."² Papadhiamandis' argument with the psiharists was perhaps not as a purist but as a demoticist. But the fact is that, except for the essay "Language and Society" ("Γλῶσσα καὶ Κοινωνία"),³ which deals somewhat with his antipsiharism, he never really entered the katharevousa versus demotic arena either by word or deed. For the most part he kept silent and continued writing in michtē.

Though the rhetoric concerning Papadhiamandis' style may be prolific, analysis is limited, often superficial. Modern scholars usually describe his prose as katharevousa except for the dialogue. For example, P. Bien in his book, Kazantzakis and the Linguistic Revolution in Greek Literature (1972), writes: "Papadimantis, the most widely read of the naturalistic novelists who flourished circa 1880-1910, employed demotic for dialogue and puristic for narration."⁴ As we shall see from the analysis which follows, the characterization of Papadhiamandis' narration as "puristic" is imprecise.

Some scholars, those who approached the writings of Papadhiamandis objectively without trying to bend his prose into "pure" demotic or "pure" katharevousa, recognized that they were dealing with some sort of michtē the nature of which, however, they were never quite sure of. D. Balanos in his article, "Papadhiamandis: Legend

¹G. Vlahoyannis, "Πως γράφεται ἡ ἱστορία" Nea Hestia (December, 1938), p. 1634.

²Valeta, Παπαδιαμαντής, p. 461.

³A. Papadhiamandis, τὰ Ἀπαντα τοῦ Ἀλεξάνδρου Παπαδιαμαντή, ἐπιμέλεια Γ. Βαλετά Vol. 5 (Athens: Ἡρακλῆς Σακαλῆ, 1954), pp. 300-310.

⁴Peter Bien, Kazantzakis and the Linguistic Revolution in Greek Literature (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1972), p. 121.

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and Reality," which appeared in the Christmas, 1941 "Nea Hestia" dedicated to Papadhiamandis, summarizes the scholarship on Papadhiamandis' language and attempts a description of his own:

As for his language, there is disagreement: Most consider him a katharevousian, others however characterize him as a friend of the demotic or user of the demotic; most accurately of all, Palamas states that "he changes grammar, style, language in accordance with his circumstance, taste, disposition." I. Kambouroglous finds that his language "ποτέ δὲν κουράζει" (is never tiring); the more precise, less given to exaggeration, K. Hatzopoulos, of the opposite view, has the₁ opinion that his language "κουράζει" (is tiring) . . .

. . . From a language point of view, Papadhiamandis does not have any definite direction; as he says himself, he writes as it occurs to him; and he himself does not know if he is a katharevousian or a demoticist . . . Papadhiamandis' natural inconstancy is very evident also in the language which he uses; sometimes--more often--he writes in the katharevousa, sometimes in the demotic, more often, however, in a very unaesthetic, for me at least, manner, /for/ he mixes in the narrative, in the₂ same phrase, forms of extreme katharevousa and demotic . . .

Even Valeta in his exhaustive study, Papadhiamandis: His Life, Work, Era, only superficially analyzes the language. He traces a trend toward the demotic, but his examples are few and impressionistic:

. . . The syntax leans toward the demotic--it simplifies itself. Nevertheless in 1893 and 1894 he still hesitates over forms. He writes: "εἰς τῆς βουρλιαῖς" but also "εἰς τὰς ἀμμουδιάς..." He writes: "ἀνάμεσα εἰς τὰς..." and "ἀνάμεσα εἰς τῆς . . . " He writes: "μεταξύ των..." . . . " More correct would be to say how there comes a period when the language becomes demoticized . . . One step was necessary for him--the change of form and the uniformity of syntax--in order to arrive at the demotic. But he did not do it! . . . He turned back . . .³

¹D. Balanos, "Ὁ Παπαδιαμάντης: Θρύλος καὶ πραγματικότητα," 355 (Christmas, 1941), 24.

²Ibid., p. 25.

³Valeta, Παπαδιαμάντης , p. 461.

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¹ Ibid.

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Yet, Vlahoyannis, writer, critic and friend of Papadhiamandis as late as 1938 characterizes Papadhiamandis' writing as being anti-demotic.¹

How then can the question of Papadhiamandis' style be more accurately settled? While it is true that Papadhiamandis' early work, especially Ghyftopoula, is written in "pure" katharevousa; and two later works (Holeriasmenē and Thavma Tis Kaisarianēs) in "pure" demotic,² neither of these extremes represent the style of the more than two hundred stories in the Papadhiamandian corpus. They are written in what has been called a michtē. But while the more serious scholars, those who remained objective in the "language question" polemic as it concerned itself with the writings of Papadhiamandis, recognized a michtē, no one attempted a systematic analysis to determine its nature. Such an analysis is the subject of this thesis.

I believe the place to analyze the style of Papadhiamandis is in a work in the so-called michtē; a work written at the height of Papadhiamandis' powers during his most mature period; a work generally considered by critics a masterpiece. Such a work is The Murderess (Ἡ Φόνισσα). Written during the summer of 1902 and published as a series between January 15 and June 15, 1903 in the periodical "Panathenaia," The Murderess represents Papadhiamandis' style at its finest. Of this work G. Valeta, the foremost Papadhiamandian scholar, writes: "The Murderess is from all angles the masterpiece of Papadhiamandis, for written during the years of his advanced maturity

¹Ibid., p. 464, citing Kritikes Selidhes III (April, 1938).

²Valeta, Παπαδιάμαντης, p. 461.

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it contains the richest examples of his art. . . . "¹ And on this point there is general consensus throughout the criticism.²

The Murderess then has been chosen for analysis, the purpose of which is to describe as precisely as possible the nature of Papadhiamandis' prose. The results should refine the often crude description that he uses the katharevousa for narration and the demotic for dialogue; should indicate whether he is a writer of the katharevousa making concessions to the demotic or whether he is fundamentally a demoticist; should establish whether the michtē as generally defined applies to Papadhiamandian prose; and finally, should reveal some characteristics upon which a judgment as to the aesthetics of the style can be based.

The method of analysis is based upon critical distinctions between the katharevousa and the demotic as dictated by grammar and usage, especially distinctions of orthography, morphology, and lexical choice.³ The elements separated out of the text into the katharevousa and demotic fall into the following categories:⁴

¹Ibid., p. 606.

²For a summary of the criticism, see Valeta, Παπαδιαμάντης pp. 373-425.

³For derivation of this method, see Browning, Medieval and Modern Greek, pp. 118-19. A photocopy of the entire text of The Murderess as it appeared in its first printing in "H. Panathenaia" (serialized January - June, 1903) is included in Appendix C. This text has been numbered in Stephanus fashion for positive identification of examples and quotations. All page and line numbers in the studies which follow (i.e., 203/5) refer to this Appendix. In addition, I have translated the entire text into English (Appendix B).

⁴After Browning, Medieval and Modern Greek, p. 118.

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Phonology and Orthography

- A. Neuter nouns in - ι / ιον
- B. Consonant combinations
- C. Orthographic variation

Forms

- A. Subjunctive third person plurals
- B. Augment: Temporal and Syllabic
- C. Participles: passives in - μένος

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III. PHONOLOGY AND ORTHOGRAPHY

A, Neuter Nouns in -- ι ; -- ι ΟΥ

Modern Greek neuter nouns ending in - ι evolved from the diminutive forms of ancient masculine and feminine nouns which in time lost their diminutive meaning. They thus revert to the meaning of their prototype. In the katharevousa, these neuter nouns end in -- ι ΟΥ ; in the demotic, they end in - ι .

Below is a listing of all - ι /- ι ΟΥ which appear in the descriptive passages of The Murderess.

TABLE 1

<u>Katharevousa</u> : Neuter Nouns -- ι ΟΥ *		
Word	Translation	Location (page/line)
ἀμπάριον	store - room	372/44
ἀντίον	pole	266/34
ἐμμάριον	cupboard	373/89
καλάθιον	basket	235/29, 38; 405/9
καρφίον	nail	308/66
κατώφλιον	door-step	406/38
κηρίον	candle	307/56; 432/44
κλειδίον	key	372/48
ὀσπίτιον	house	233/17
παιδίον	child	198/51, 54; 472/71; 501/94
πανίον	cloth	266/35; 528/74; 529/4, 14
ποτάμιον	river	306/64
ποτήριον	glass	196/96; 408/9
ράβδιον	cane	405/9
τυρίον	cheese	408/9; 470/17
φωτίλιον	wick	304/11

*Excluding all words in quoted dialogue; words inside quotation marks in descriptive passages; and proper nouns.

TABLE 2

Demotic: Neuter Nouns ending in - ι *		
Word	Translation	Location (page/line)
ἄγόρι	boy	501/96; 502/10
ἀμπέλι	vineyard	197/91
ἀντί	pole (distaff)	266/42
βυζί	breast	472/72
γρόσι	piaster	234/33
διατί	reason	470/55
δουλάπι	closet	236/42
ζεμπέλι	satchel	196/57
ἱμβρίκι	coffee-pot	472/12
καλάδι	basket	307/56,68; 341/60; 432/44; 435/67,96; 436/56; 437/72,74; 471/61; 472/14; 499/4; 501/69; 528/27,68; 529/25; 530/27; 531/14; 532/62; 436/98; 533/86
καλαμάρι	ink-well	197/68
καλύβι	hut	470/52,58; 471/82; 498/30,67; 500/46; 501/55; 528/34; 529/60
καράβι	boat	235/62
κατῳγι	cellar	234/82; 237/86; 238/46
κιλίμι	mug	408/13
κλειδί	key	432/48
κοπάδι	flock	436/74
κρασί	wine	199/11
λειβάδι	meadow	235/101
λυχνάρι	lantern	498/69
μανδήλι	kerchief	306/55
μανδρί	fold, pen	500/46
μαντζοῦνι	remedy	500/16
μάτι	eye (glance)	237/82
μεσημέρι	noon	371/38
μοιρολόγι	dirge	470/22
μονοπάτι	path	406/82; 437/51; 438/27; 470/45; 471/68; 500/1; 530/39; 533/60
μποστάνι	melon patch	197/9
μπρίκι	coffee-pot	528/69
παιδί	child	271/81
περιβόλι	garden	434/59
πηγάδι	well	308/58; 372/1,22; 471/3
πλάγι	flank	272/50
ποδάρι	foot	431/28
πολυτρίχι	maidenhair	306/49
ποτήρι	glass	199/10
πρωμάδι	premature (baby)	197/56
ράβδι	cane	432/44; 435/56; 437/75; 471/61; 499/3

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TABLE 2--Continued

Word	Translation	Location (page/line)
ρακί	raki	196/71,77
ρπάφι	shelf	196/77; 236/41; 498/70
σαράκι	termite	196/34
σελάχι	belt	532/78
σινδόνι	sheet	408/14
σπίτι	stairs	266/54
σπίτι	house	197/8,90; 371/39,42; 406/78,86; 431/49; 434/44; 435/72
τηγάνι	fry pan	197/9
τραγοῦδι	song	470/21
τυρί	cheese	435/68
φέσι	fez	406/17; 431/25
φλασκί	flask	470/17
χαγιάτι	porch	268/2,29; 308/56
χέρι	hand	431/29,30
χράμι	shawl	303/35; 425/95; 531/15
χωράφι	field	195/72; 368/25; 434/44
ψωμί	bread	407/31; 435/67

*Excluding all words found in quoted dialogue; inside quotation marks in descriptive passages; and proper nouns.

On investigation, it at first appears, at least in the realm of the neuter -ι/-ιον noun, that Papadhiamandis was tending, as Baleta observes,¹ to demoticize the prose. Of 146 instances, 119 or 81-1/2 percent are demotic forms (see Table 3). But it is important

TABLE 3

Proportion of ι/ιον Neuter Nouns in the Descriptive Passages of <u>The Murderess</u>			
	Demotic	<u>Katharevousa</u>	Total
<u>Neuter Nouns</u>			
Frequency	119	12	146
%	81.5%	18.5%	100%

¹See page 5.

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to note that the proportion of multiple occurrence to single occurrence is virtually the same for both the katharevousa and the demotic (see Tables 4 and 5). Words which Papadhiamandis uses in the

TABLE 4

Distribution of <u>Katharevousa</u> Neuter Nouns in -ιον Frequency of Occurrence Exceeding One			
Word	Translation	Frequency	Percent
*παιδίον	child	4	14.8
πανίον	cloth	4	14.8
καλάθιον	basket	3	11.2
κηρίον	candle	2	7.4
τυρίον	cheese	2	7.4
ποτήριον	glass	2	7.4
Sub-total		17	63.0
All Others (Frequency of 1)		10	37.0
TOTAL		27	100.0

*Multiple occurrence in both the demotic and katharevousa form.

katharevousa are repeated proportionately as many times as are the demotic words. Moreover, of the 16 different words which appear in the katharevousa, almost half are used in the demotic form as well (see Table 6).

Thus, though Papadhiamandis' use of the demotic in this instance is numerically overwhelming, there appears to be no deliberate choice. We cannot say, as might have been hypothesized, that Papadhiamandis chooses one set of nouns in the demotic and another set in the katharevousa. We can only say that when confronted by the need to use one of the ancient diminutives in the nominative or accusative case, Papadhiamandis most of the time uses the modern demotic form.

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TABLE 5

Distribution of Demotic Neuter Nouns in - ι Frequency of Occurrence Exceeding One			
Word	Translation	Frequency	Percent
*καλάθι	basket	21	17.6
σπίτι	house	9	7.6
καλύβι	hut	9	7.6
μονοπάτι	path	8	6.7
ράβδι	cane	5	4.2
πηγάδι	well	4	3.4
κατῶγι	cellar	3	2.5
χωράφι	field	3	2.5
χαγιάτι	porch	3	2.5
χράμι	shawl	3	2.5
ράφι	shelf	3	2.5
αγόρι	boy	2	1.7
ψωμί	bread	2	1.7
φέσι	fez	2	1.7
χέρι	hand	2	1.7
ρακί	raki	2	1.7
Sub-total		81	68.1
All others (Frequency of One)		38	31.9
TOTAL		119	100.0

*Multiple occurrence in both the demotic and katharevousa form.

TABLE 6

Neuter Nouns in ι/ιον Occurring in Both the Demotic and <u>Katharevousa</u> Forms		
<u>Katharevousa</u>	Demotic	Translation
άντίον	άντί	pole
καλάθιον	καλάθι	basket
κλειδίον	κλειδί	key
ὀσπίτιον	σπίτι	house
παιδίον	παιδί	child
ποτηρίον	ποτήρι	glass
τυρίον	τυρί	cheese

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That there appears to be no deliberate choice can be further illustrated by examining passages in the text where the same word is used in both forms. The word "basket" is repeated 21 times in its demotic form and 3 times in its katharevousa form. Below is a quotation from the text for each:

Ἀφοῦ εἶχε γεμίσει τὸ καλάθι της, καὶ ὁ ἥλιος
ἐκλινε πολὺ χαμηλά,. . . 307/68-69

"Since she had filled her basket, and the sun slanted very low, . . .

-- τὰ ἔκοπτεν ἢ τὰ ἐηερρίζωνεν, ἐγέμιζε τὸ
καλάθιον της, κ' ἐπέστρεφε τὸ βράδι εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν. 235/37-39

--she cut them or uprooted them, filled her basket, and returned at night to the house."

"In both sentences, the grammatical setting for "basket" is identical--object of the verb "γεμίζω", "to fill." The forms, of course, of "basket" are interchangeable--both use identical phraseology--"her basket." It is this kind of random mixing of forms that is so characteristic of Papadhiamandis' style. And it was written at a time when most Greek authors were attempting to "purify" their language toward one or the other polarities or toward a rational and consistent michtē.¹

It is in the investigation of the genitive case for the - τοῦ and - ῑου neuter nouns that patterns of habit within inconsistent use begin to appear (see Tables 7 and 8). Here the figures reverse themselves (see Table 9). Of 26 occurrences, almost 80 percent are

¹ See Bien, Kazantzakis, pp. 13-34.

TABLE 7

<u>Katharevousa: Nouns - ίου</u> Genitive Singulars		
Word	Translation	Location (page/line)
φεσίου	of the fez	195/48
παιδίου	child	195/95; 196/44; 305/58
χαρτίου	paper	197/73
ταξιδίου	journey	301/65
κατωγείου	basement	266/14; 408/11
τυρίου	cheese	303/35
λυχναρίου	lantern	304/19
καλαθίου	basket	306/55
μεσοφορίου	petticoat	341/89
σχοινίου	string	371/83
σκαμνίου	stool	407/11
περιβολίου	garden	435/3
τροπαρίου	hymn	471/19
κανδηλίου	lamp	472/2; 528/79
καλυβίου	cabin	498/33
μοναστηρίου	monastery	502/104

TABLE 8

<u>Demotic: Nouns - ιοῦ</u> Genitive Singulars		
Word	Translation	Location (page/line)
καλαμαριοῦ	ink-well	197/70
φουστανιοῦ	dress	302/7
πηγαδιοῦ	well	371/78
πουλιοῦ	bird	434/101
καλυβιοῦ	cabin	472/50
μοναστηριοῦ	monastery	502/85

TABLE 9

<u>Proportion of Demotic/Katharevousa Words in the</u> <u>Descriptive Passages of The Murderess</u>			
Genitive Singular	Demotic	<u>Katharevousa</u>	Total
Frequency	6	20	26
%	23.1%	76.9%	100.0%

katharevousa. Here we must say that Papadhiamandis, when confronted by the need for a -ῖου /-ιού neuter noun in the genitive, usually uses the katharevousa. We shall see this reverse pattern repeat itself in the analysis of Consonant Combinations.

B. Consonant Combinations

Robert Browning in his book, Medieval and Modern Greek, traces the changes in pronunciation "of certain consonantal combinations involving plosive plus plosive, spirant plus spirant, and σ plus spirant"¹ from the later middle ages. These changes in most dialects are as follows:²

$$\left. \begin{array}{l} \kappa\tau \\ \chi\theta \end{array} \right\} > \chi\tau \qquad \left. \begin{array}{l} \pi\tau \\ \varphi\theta \end{array} \right\} > \varphi\tau \qquad \begin{array}{l} \sigma\theta > \sigma\tau \\ \sigma\chi > \sigma\kappa \end{array}$$

He is quick to point out that even today, the changes are "incomplete, insofar as loan words in the demotic from the purist language tend to preserve the traditional pronunciation." In other instances, the changes are "only partially carried out: σχολεῖο is as good demotic as σκολειό, ᾠσχημος as ᾠσημος."³

Browning's chart (in the same text mentioned above) of the "Diagnostic Features of K[atharevousa] and D[emotic]" lists πτ, κτ φθ, χθ for the katharevousa and φτ, χτ for the demotic as chief distinguishing consonant combination features between the languages.⁴

¹Browning, Medieval and Modern Greek, p. 79.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., p. 80. See also M. Triandaphyllides, Μικρὴ Νεο-ελληνικὴ Γραμματικὴ (Thessalonica, 1975), pp. 34-35, for partial list of loan words.

⁴Browning, Medieval and Modern Greek, pp. 116-17.

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Based on Browning's diagnostic chart is the survey of "Chapter One" of The Murderess for consonant combinations (Table 10). This survey quickly indicates that Papadhiamandis, at least in this most basic differentiation, prefers the "consonant combinations" (συμφωνικά συμπλέγματα) of the katharevousa. I even think a case can be made for the four exceptions in φτ on the chart: κρυφτόν "hide and seek" is of course a children's game and no doubt only a word of the demotic. (This illustrates the difficulty Greek writers had in writing novels about everyday mundane affairs in the formalized purist tongue which is poor in concrete vocabulary.) As for calling robbers "κλέφταις", it may be that even the learned used the demotic pronunciation for this word. The great body of songs of the guerrilla mountain chieftains which arose from popular ballads of the early Middle Ages and reached a climax in the eighteenth century is called the "brigand songs" (kléftika).¹ And in the narrative of "Chapter One," the repeated term " κλέφταις " refers to such mountain guerrilla bands pursuing the mother of Hadula Frangoyannou at a time prior to the liberation of Greece from Turkish occupation.

Yet the chart is somewhat misleading, for we find as we have in other categories that in specific instances there appears no deliberate choice. Below, for example, is a survey on the use of the word "stream" or "draft," a word which is repeated throughout the text.

In the nominative and accusative singulars, which account for one-half of the instances of occurrence (see Table 12), the demotic ρέμμα occurs almost as often as ρεῦμα in the katharevousa. Here

¹See Kimon Friar, "Introduction," Modern Greek Poetry (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973), p. 9.

TABLE 10

Consonant Combinations from Chapter One of The MurderessKatharevousa: πτ; κτ; φθ; χθDemotic: φτ; χτ

Word πτ	Translation	Location (page/line)	Word φτ	Translation	Location (page/line)
έρριπτε	threw	193/11	κλέφταις	robbers	194/22
έρριπτον	threw	193/16	κρυφτόν	hide and seek	194/93
βαπτίσουν	baptize	193/46	κλέφται	robbers	194/97
έβαπτίσθη	(was) baptized	193/49			
πτερούγισμα	wings	194/47			
πτέρνας	heel	194/61			
έκρύπτετο	hid	195/5	κλεφτών	(of) robbers	195/21
δεκαεπτά	seventeen	195/34			
λεπτόν	thin	196/43			
έρριπτεν	threw	196/57			
πτωχότερα	poorer	196/86			
πτ			χτ		
νύκτα	night	193/15			
στάκτην	ash	193/17			
χαρακτήρας	character	193/27			
χαρακτήρος	character	193/35			
άπέκτισε (αν)	made	193/37,38			
νύκτας	night	193/51			
νύκτας	night	194/13			
διωκτών	(of) pursuers	194/59			
κλήτορας	owner	194/67			
διώκτας	pursuers	195/15			
νύκτα	night	195/86			
δακτύλους	fingers	196/8			

TABLE 10 - Continued

Word	Translation	Location (page/line)	Word	Translation	Location (page/line)
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TABLE 10--Continued

Word	Translation	Location (page/line)	Word	Translation	Location (page/line)
<u>φθ</u>			<u>φτ</u>		
φθονερό	envious	194/20			
κρυφθῆ	hide	194/38,50			
ἄφθονον	plentiful	194/79			
ἐφθανον	arrived	194/97			
φθάσει	arrive	194/85			
φθορό	ruin	194/91			
<u>χθ</u>			<u>χτ</u>		
χθαμαλῆς	low	193/9			

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TABLE 11

Use, Form and Location of the Word "Stream" (or "Draft") in <u>The Murderess</u> *		
<u>KATHAREVOUSA</u>		
Nominative/Accusative (sing.)	ρεῦμα	272/95; 306/30,66,80; 435/33,44; 436/80,83, 96; 437/85
Nominative/Accusative (plural)	ρεύματα	235/34; 531/10
Genitive (sing.)	ρεύματος	306/11,50,58,63; 341/ 13; 501/11; 502/103
<u>DEMOTIC</u>		
Nominative/Accusative (sing.)	ρέμμα	305/44; 306/64; 307/ 2,72,80; 372/59; 437/59; 501/6
Nominative/Accusative (plural)	ρέμματα	501/72
Genitive (sing.)	ρέμματος	

*Excluding Dialogue.

is an almost even mixing of forms with no apparent deliberate choice. Papadhiamandis, on the other hand, switches to the katharevousa in other case and number forms, as we have seen already in the -ι/ιον nouns. In the -ι/ιον nouns, though over 80 percent occur in the demotic in the nominative and accusative, the genitive is almost the reverse. Similarly, with the word "stream," the number of occurrences in the katharevousa accusative plural are double those in the demotic; in the genitive singular, katharevousa accounts for 100 percent of the forms.

TABLE 12
 Proportion of the Word "straw" for "draft"
 In the Katharevousa and Demotic Forms

Katharevousa	Demotic	Total
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TABLE 12

Proportion of the Word "Stream" (or "Draft")
in the Katharevousa and Demotic Forms

<u>Katharevousa</u>		Demotic		Total
ρεύμα	Nominative/ Accusative <u>Sing.</u>	ρέμμα	Nominative/ Accusative <u>Sing.</u>	
	10 55.6%		8 44.4%	18 100.0%
ρεύματα	Nominative/ Accusative <u>Plural</u>	ρέμματα	Nominative/ Accusative <u>Plural</u>	
	2 66.7%		1 33.3%	3 100.0%
ρεύματος	Genitive <u>Sing.</u>	ρέμματος	Genitive <u>Sing.</u>	
	6 100.0%		0 0	6 100.0%
Total	18		9	27
Total	66.7%		33.3%	100.0%

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Contrary to Valeta's claim, this does not constitute a demoticization of the prose; nor does it appear that "only one step was necessary for him." The evidence here points to Papadhiamandis being habituated to writing in the "savant" language. As for elements of the demotic, "no deliberate choice" seems to define the peculiarities and characteristics of his own michtē.

C. Orthographic Variation

Mirambel in his essay, Les "Etats De Langue" Dans La Grece Actuelle (1937), discusses the problem of multiple forms in the orthography of Greek vocabulary and makes a comparison with French which has a stable and fixed orthography regardless of geographic variations in pronunciation:

La graphie de la langue demotique n'est pas unifiée, et presente souvent des incoherences: on écrit πέρνω "je prends" et παίρνω, ζέρω "je sais" et ξαίρω, κοιτάζω "je regarde" et κυττάζω, φωτίζει "meche" et φωτίζει, φωτάνω "je fabrique" et φτειανω, μυρολόγι "chant funebre" et μοιρολόγι, καλήτερος "meilleur" et καλλίτερος ou καλύτερος etc. L'orthographe du francais est pour le moins arbitraire, mais elle est fixée, et il est convenu que la graphie n'admettra pour un mot qu'une seule forme; la prononciation pourra d'ailleurs varier, et le meme mot sera lu differemment par un Francais du Nord et par un Francais du Midi, mais il sera identiquement orthographie; de meme, en francais, bien que l'on ecrive petit, on n'eprouvera, a une lecture rapide, aucune difficulte a prononcer p'ti, conformement a l'usage de la langue courante; en grec, au contraire, le prestige de la graphie est tel qu'on lira toujours ce qui est écrit, meme si cette graphie contredit les habitudes du langage courant, parce que seule la notation passe pour l'expression de la realite; nous continuons, en francais, de prononcer dom-ter, ch'iel, malgre les graphies dompter, cheptel (qui parfois exercent une action sur la prononciation); mais le grec qui, dans son langage courant, ne connait que φτάνω "j'arrive", έχτρός "ennemi", lira toujours φθάνω, έχθρός s'il voit ces formes ainsi ecrites; en grec prevaut le principe que tout ce qui est écrit se prononce.¹

¹ Andre Mirambel, Les "Etats De Langue" Dans La Grece Actuelle, Conferences de l'Institut de Linguistique de l'Universite de Paris 5 (Paris, 1937), pp. 38-39.

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Mirambel points out further that since Greek is particularly subject to inconsistencies in matters of orthography there have been efforts (especially by the malliarists), to resolve some of the problems. These attempts have failed because of lack of consensus and conflict with long established tradition:

La liaison étroite des questions de graphie et des questions de prononciation ou de langue, en grec, explique que, sur le plan de l'orthographe, se soient retrouvés les mêmes conflits que sur le plan de la langue elle-même ; la question de la graphie ne se pose qu'à partir du moment où la langue démotique s'écrit : il s'agit de lui donner une forme qui réponde à la réalité phonique ; mais on se heurte aux traditions graphiques de la langue savante et il y a difficulté à trouver une norme ; jamais les efforts n'ont été plus individuels, plus dispersés qu'en matière d'orthographe neohellénique : ils vont des tentatives timides qui se bornent à remplacer πτ par φτ, κτ par χτ aux tentatives plus hardies qui remplacent les graphies αυ, ευ par αφ, εφ ou αβ, εβ (selon la prononciation) et σμ, σν, αβ par ζμ, ζν, ζβ à celles, plus osées encore, qui suppriment les esprits sur les voyelles initiales, et n'admettent plus qu'une forme d'accent, l'oxyton, qui ne s'écrit que là où il se prononce, et jusqu'aux essais d'abandon de l'alphabet hellénique auquel aurait été substitué l'alphabet latin, avec quelques complétifs pour la notation de certains sons.¹

While most writers strive for orthographic consistency within their own styles, Papadhiemandis did not. One of the clearest examples of Papadhiemandis' "natural inconsistency"² or of the contention that he writes "as it occurs to him" can be seen in the orthographic variation of identical words which appear in The Murderess. A sampling from all parts of the text is shown in Table 13.

¹ Ibid., p. 39.

² See the Balanos quotation, p. 5 .

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TABLE 13

Orthographic Variation of Identical Words which Appear in <u>The Murderess</u>		
Word	Translation	Location (page/line)
κατῶγι	basement	238/46
κατωγείου	basement	408/11
σαῖτταν	shuttle	266/30
σαῖτα	shuttle	266/32
σαγίττα	shuttle	266/42
σκυλοδεμένο	dog-tied	234/73
σκυλλοδεμένα	dog-tied	234/83
νά ξυπνήση	to wake up	435/24
νά έξυπνήση	to wake up	270/19
ή λεχώνα	woman in childbed	498/6
ή λεχώ	woman in childbed	498/10
τῆς λεχώνας	woman in childbed	272/48
τῆς λεχοῦς	woman in childbed	472/7
μεροκάματα	daily wage	233/25
ήμεροκάματα	daily wage	195/55
έκυψεν	to bend	371/76
έσκυψεν	to bend	371/86
ρεῦμα	stream	271/95
ρέμμα	stream	305/44
μισογεμάτα	half-full	234/64
ήμιανοικτῆς	half-open	272/91

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IV. FORMS

A. Subjunctive Aorist Third Person Plurals

The morphology of the subjunctive aorist constitutes one of the basic divisions between ancient and modern Greek. For the purposes of this analysis, I have chosen the third person plurals. Table 14 gives a full tabulation from the descriptive passages of The Murderess.

TABLE 14

Subjunctive: Aorist, Third Person Plurals* <u>Katharevousa</u>				
No.	Chapter	Word	Translation (Inf.)	Location (page/line)
1	I	να: λάβωσιν	to: Supply	194/78
2	I	καθίσωσι	sit	194/88
3	II	δέχθωσιν	accept	194/88
4	II	ἀπαιτήσωσι	demand	197/90
5	VI	ἀπέλθωσιν	set off	301/75
6	VI	ἐνεργίσωσιν	take steps	301/76
7	VI	ἐπιστρέψωσιν	return	302/42
8	VI	πλεύσωσι	sail	302/48
9	VI	παραλάβωσι	take delivery	302/50
10	VIII	κρυβῶσιν	hide	306/76
11	X	χειραφετηθῶσιν	emancipate	371/57
12	XI	ἀνακρίνωσιν	interrogate	372/79-80
13	XI	προσωποκρατήσωσι	imprison	372/81-82
14	XII	πίωσιν	drink	436/79
15	XIII	ἀναρριχήθωσι	climb	437/78
16	XV	αἰσθανθῶσι	feel	501/82
17	XV	ἀναπληρῶσωσι	substitute	501/83-84
18	XVI	κλείσωσιν	close	532/86
19	XVII	διαβῶσι	traverse	533/82

*Excluding all instances of quoted dialogue; words inside quotation marks in descriptive passages.

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TABLE 15

Subjunctive: Aorist, Third Person Plurals*				
Demotic				
No.	Chapter	Word	Translation (Inf.)	Location (page/line)
		να:	to:	
1	I	βαπτίσουν	baptize	193/45-46
2	I	ἐκδικηθοῦν	revenge	194/25
3	I	ἀγκαλιάσουν	embrace	194/75
4	II	συζητήσουν	discuss	194/64
5	II	ἐπανέλθουν	return	198/34
6	III	δώσουν	give	234/77-78
7	III	γίνουν	become	236/1
8	III	ὑπανδρεύσουν	marry off	236/12
9	III	δώσουν	give	236/14
10	IV	πιάσουν	catch	238/3-4
11	IV	πάρουν	take	238/4
12	IV	ἐξέλθουν	come out	238/77-78
13	IV	φύγουν	leave	238/78
14	IV	ἐλθουν	come up	238/78-79
15	V	ἐξορκίσουν	drive away	271/92
16	X	ἴδοῦν	see	371/12
17	X	πέσουν	fall	371/14
18	X	εἰσέλθουν	enter	371/28
19	X	ἐξέλθουν	exit	371/28
20	X	γευματίσουν	line	371/44
21	X	λάβουν	take	371/57
22	XI	φιλακώσουν	imprison	373/68-69
23	XIII	φθάσουν	reach	437/83
24	XIII	χαμηλώσουν	descend	437/84
25	XIII	διέλθουν	cross	437/85
26	XIII	διανυκτερεύσουν	spend the night	470/39-40
27	XIV	στραβωθοῦν	become blind	499/10
28	XIV	ἴδοῦν	see	499/10-11
29	XIV	ἀργήσουν	delay	499/16
30	XIV	ἐννοήσουν	comprehend	499/16
31	XIV	βαλθοῦν	launch	499/17
32	XIV	κυνηγήσουν	hunt	499/17
33	XIV	προσκαλέσουν	summon	499/27
34	XIV	φέρουν	bring	499/29
35	XIV	φέρουν	bring	499/50
36	XIV	μιρίσθουν	trace	499/55
37	XIV	κατορθώσουν	succeed	499/56
38	XIV	ανακαλύψουν	find (discover)	499/56
39	XIV	ψάξουν	search	499/57
40	XIV	εξετάσουν	examine	499/58
41	XV	συνέλθουν	recover	499/90

No.	Chapter
1	IV
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4	IV
5	IV
6	IV
7	IV
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No.	Chapter	Word	Translation (Inf.)	Location (page/line)
42	XV	έννοήσουν	comprehend	499/92
43	XV	ζητήσουν	ask for	499/93
44	XV	πετάξουν	throw	499/98
45	XV	βάλουν	set out	499/99
46	XV	κυνιγήσουν	chase	499/100
47	XV	σκοτίσουν	be anxious	503/12
48	XVI	έλθουν	come	531/20-21
49	XVI	έπάρουν	take	531/21
50	XVI	κατέλθουν	descend	532/50
51	XVI	συκωθοῦν	rise up	532/52-53
52	XVI	ριφθοῦν	hurl	532/53
53	XVI	κυνηγήσουν	chore	532/54
54	XVI	περάσουν	cross	533/59
55	XVII	βάλουν	put	534/10
56	XVII	πτοήσουν	frighten	534/30

*Excluding all instances of words in quoted dialogue; words inside quotation marks in descriptive passages.

Upon examination, we find that in 88 instances of subjunctive aorist third person plurals in The Murderess, 66 or 75 percent are demotic forms (see Table 16). Clearly a michtē with a mix of two to one, Papadhiamandis here favors demotic forms. His preference can be further demonstrated by the frequency of recurrence. Of the 66 demotic occurrences, 33 or 50 percent appear more than once (see Table 17). In the katharevousa, 16 of the 22 occurrences are single occurrences and of the remaining 6, only 3 words constitute the repetition (see Table 18).

Here in this verb form, the pattern of "no deliberate choice" is similar to that which we saw in the previous section on Phonology and Orthography. Often Papadhiamandis mixes the katharevousa - ωσι (ν) form with the demotic -ουν form in the same paragraph. Below is an example of this from Chapter I:

. . .Τὸ χιλιετές δένδρον ἦτον σκαφιδιασμένον κοντὰ εἰς τὴν ῥίζαν, κάτω, εἰς τὸν γιγαντιαῖον κορμόν, τὸν ὁποῖον δέν ἤμποροῦσαν ν' ἀγκαλιάσουν πέντε ἄνδρες. Οἱ βοσκοὶ καὶ οἱ ἄλκιεῖς τὸν εἶχον σκαφιδιάσει, τοῦ εἶχαν σκάψει τὴν καρδίαν, τοῦ εἶχαν κοιλάνει τὰ ἔγκατα, διὰ νὰ λάβωσιν ἐκεῖθεν ἀφθονον δᾶδα.

194/72-79

*Italics mine

TABLE 16

Proportion of <u>Katharevousa</u> /Demotic Subjunctive Aorist Third Person Plurals			
	Demotic	<u>Katharevousa</u>	Total
Frequency	66	22	88
%	75%	25%	100.0%

TABLE 17

Distribution of Demotic Subjunctive: Aorist, Third Person Plurals
Frequency of Occurrence Exceeding One

Word	Translation	Frequency	Percent
To: φιλακώσουν	imprison	3	4.6
ἰδοῦν	see	3	4.6
πάρουν	take	3	4.6
βαπτίσουν	baptize	2	3.0
φέρουν	bring	2	3.0
πιάσουν	catch	2	3.0
ἔλθουν	come	2	3.0
ἐξέλθουν	come out	2	3.0
ἔλθουν	come up	2	3.0
ἐννοήσουν	comprehend	2	3.0
περάσουν	cross	2	3.0
χαμηλώσουν	descend	2	3.0
δώσουν	give	2	3.0
συκωθοῦν	rise up	2	3.0
διανυκτερεύσουν	spend the night	2	3.0
Sub-total		33	50.0
All Others (Frequency of 1)		33	50.0
Grand Total		66	100.0%

TABLE 18

Distribution of <u>Katharevousa</u> Subjunctive: Aorist, Third Person Plurals Frequency of Occurrence Exceeding One			
Word	Translation	Frequency	Percent
To: ἀνακρίνωσιν	interrogate	2	9.1
ἀναπληρῶσιν	substitute	2	9.1
προσωποκρατήσιν	imprison	2	9.1
Sub-total		6	27.3
All Others (Frequency of 1)		16	72.7
Grand Total		22	100.0%

B. Augment: Temporal and Syllabic

In modern Greek, temporal augment is generally dropped, the initial vowel therefore remains unchanged throughout the tenses, unaffected by the rules in ancient Greek for lengthening vowels.

Syllabic augment--the addition of " ε " to the theme for imperfect and aorist indicative verbs--is still retained in demotic Greek except that the augment disappears in forms not accented on the initial vowel.

Thus " 'ἔγραφα, ἔγραφες' ἀλλὰ (έ)γράψαμε, (έ)γράφτηκε " ¹

Browning traces these developments back to the early middle ages when "a phonological change took place, many of whose effects were masked by analogical influences. Pretonic initial vowels disappeared."

ὀσπᾶτιον	σπίτι	"house"
ἡμέρα	μέρα	"day"
οὐδέν	δέν	"not"

¹ For summary of demotic rules for augment, see Triandaphyllides Μικρὴ, 649-56.

ἔρωτῶ	ρωτῶ	"ask"
ὀλίγος	λίγος	"little"
εὕρισκω	βρίσκω	"find"
ὑψηλός	ψηλός	"high"
ὀψάριον	ψάρι	"fish"
ὥσαν	σαν	"as" ¹

Uncertainty in the use of syllabic augment developed, and the "aphaeresis of initial vowels" resulted in the disuse of temporal augment.²

Perhaps nowhere as much as in the augmentation of past tense verb forms does Papadhihamandis illustrate his preference for the katharevousa and his tendency toward random morphology. Not only does the text of The Murderess reveal an almost exclusive use of the katharevousa for both syllabic and temporal augment, but it reveals an array of archaisms including double augment; augment preceding prepositions in compounds; and omission of augment.³ Often these archaisms alternate morphology for identical vocabulary exhibiting an uncertainty or hesitation of choice.

Table 19 is a list of all simple verbs of syllabic augment appearing in the first one hundred lines of The Murderess:

¹Browning, Medieval and Modern Greek, p. 63.

²Ibid., pp. 63-69.

³For summary of ancient Greek augment, see H. W. Smyth, Greek Grammar (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965), Sections 428-59.

TABLE 19

Syllabic Augment of Simple Verbs First One Hundred Lines of <u>The Murderess</u>			
No.	Word	Translation (past tense of)	Location (page/line)
1	έκοιμᾶτο	sleep	193/5
2	έθυσίᾳζε	sacrifice	193/6
3	έτρεμόσβυνε	flicker	193/11
4	έρριπτε	throw	193/12
5	έφαίνοντο	appear	193/14
6	έρριπτον	throw	193/16
7	έβλεπεν	see	193/31
8	έγεινε	become	193/34,37,39
9	έπασχε	suffer	193/46
10	έβαπτίσθη	baptize	193/49
11	έφάνη	appear	193/49
12	έκόπασεν	stop	193/51
13	έφαντάζετο	imagine	194/3
14	έμμελε	be fated	194/5
15	ένανούριζε	lull to sleep	194/10
16	ήξευρε	know	194/21
17	έπραξαν	do	194/25
18	έπήγαιναν	go	194/26
19	έσχόλαζον	rest	194/27
20	ήμπόρεσαν	able	194/28
21	έδοκίμασε	try	194/36
22	έγελάσθησαν	deceive	194/39
23	ήκουσε	hear	194/42
24	έτρεξεν	run	194/46

Upon examination we can immediately see that there is no instance of dropping the syllabic augment when unaccented: Verbs number 1, 2, 3, 5, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 18, 19, 20, 21, and 22. In a michtē predominantly katharevousa we would, of course, expect this. It is even common in the demotic.¹ But where possible, Papadhiandis distinguishes his choice of the katharevousa through verb endings or other morphology. For example, #16, ήξευρε from the archaic ήξευρω instead of the more modern ξέρω or ξαίρω ; number 8

¹See Triandaphyllides, Μικρή , section 649.

1

ἐγείνε instead of ἔγινε ; " ο " ending for number 1, 5, 13; and the numerous final " ν"s establishing the katharevousa.

In considering the compound verbs '(σύνθετα ρήματα)' there are several examples, within the same one hundred lines, of augment preceding the preposition:

TABLE 20

Augment Preceding the Preposition		
Word	Translation (past tense of)	Location (page/line)
ἐπροξένει	cause	194/4
ἐπρόδωκεν	betray	194/42
ἐπροσπέρασαν	pass before	194/99

In other instances, Papadhiamandis uses internal augment (ἐσωτερικὴ αὐξηση) ;

TABLE 21

Internal Augment		
Word	Translation (Past tense of)	Location (page/line)
ὑπεψιθύριζε	whisper	193/22
ἀπέκτησε	make	193/31
ἀπέκτησαν	make	193/38
ἐπέζη	live	194/5
διετύπωνε	formulate	194/7
μετέδιδε	transmit	194/41

In temporal augment (χρονική αύξηση) Papadhiamandis demonstrates similar characteristics--a mixing of systems--as he does for syllabic augment. On the one hand, there are only rare instances of demotic terms, but where Papadhiamandis may neglect temporal augment, the morphology of the word or its ending is usually katharevousa as is the case in syllabic augment.

TABLE 22

Temporal Augment		
Word (with augment)	Translation (past tense of)	Location (page/line)
ἡσθάνθησαν	feel	194/83
ὠνόμασεν	name	195/50
εἰργάζετο	work	195/58
ἤρχισαν	start	198/59
ἡγρύπνει	to keep awake	198/88
ὠμιλοῦσε	talk	199/14

(without augment)		
εὑρίσκειτο	find	193/21
εὐρίσκειτο	find	195/69
εὑρεν	find	197/24

But there often appear inconsistencies in the morphology:		
(with augment)		
ἡνοιξε	open	234/95
ἤκουσε	hear	234/99
ἦρε	find	272/60

(without augment)		
ἄνοιξαν	open	234/53
ἄκουαν	hear	371/59
εἶρε	find	432/43

Papadhiamandis' use of the augment is not illustrative of a katharevousa/demotic michtē, but rather a michtē, so to speak of the katharevousa itself. Papadhiamandis' mixing and inconsistency of forms is open to criticism from both purist and demoticist alike. Octave Merlier, the French Papadhiamandis scholar and translator, may have been too uncritical in his praise concerning Papadhiamandis' use of the entire spectrum of the Greek language.¹ I believe it is as much the mixing of puristic forms as the introduction of demotic forms which caused Balanos and others to call Papadhiamandian prose "unaesthetic."²

C. Participles: Passives in -- μένος

Papadhiamandis' use of passive participles in --μένος are usually in accordance with modern syntax, there is as adjectives or predicate adjectives, with or without the particle.³ His morphology, however, is mixed which constitutes for our purposes the distinguishing features between purist morphology and that of the modern vernacular. The katharevousa retains reduplication (sometimes augment); the demotic does not. Table 23 is a full tabulation by chapter of the passive participles in -- μένος from the narrative passages of The Murderess.⁴

¹See Octave Merlier, "Alexandre Papadiamandis: Sa Vie et Son Oeuvre," Skiathos Ile Grecque (Paris: Societe D'Edition, "Les Belles-Lettres," 1934), p. 65.

²See Balanos quotation, p. 5.

³See Andre Mirambel, "Participe et gerondif en grec medieval et moderne," Bulletin de la Societe de Linguistique (Paris, 1961), Vol. 56. See also Triandaphyllides, Μικρή sections 734-740.

⁴Does not include participles in --όμενος, --ούμενος, --όμενος.

TABLE 23

Participles in -- μένω							
Chap- ter	Word	Translation	Location (page/line)	Chap- ter	Word	Translation	Location (page/line)
I	κοιμωμένη ἀνακειλιμένη	asleep lying down	193/44 195/95	I	μισοπλαγιασμένη καλοκατωμένη φοβισμένη καλλιεργημένος φημισμένος σκαφιδισσένον καρφωμένη σκοτισμένος γεννημένη ναρκωμένη κλεισμένα	half reclined beautiful afraid well- cultivated famous grottoed nailed perplexed born drowsy closed	193/1 193/27 194/46 194/65 194/71 194/73 194/98 194/104 195/32 196/6 196/32
II	ἀπηλπισμένα ἀπηγορευμένα κοιμωμένου	desperate forbidden asleep	197/94 197/103 199/27	II	δοσμένα ἀναγκασμένη	given obliged	197/30 197/95
III	ἐσφαλμένον προωρισμένος	mistaken premature	234/36 236/8	III	μισοζαλισμένος δεμένα κλεμμένα σκυλοδεμένα κολλημένου ποτισμένον	half-dizzy tied stolen dog-tied glued embittered	234/1 234/67 234/69 234/83 235/84 236/25
IV	ἐξωργισμένοι μακρυσμένον καταμωλωπισμένη ἐξηγοριωμένον ἡροσμέωου πεπνιγμένην αἵματωμένην	enraged distant bruised enraged joined drowned bloody	238/27 238/33 238/35 238/42 266/11 266/40 268/90, 102	IV	παγωμένους μεθυσμένους θεμελιωμένους ἀφρισμένους κλεισμένον τροχισμένην στρωμένον	ice cold drunk resting on foaming closed sharp layered	236/50 237/104 238/58 266/3 268/10 268/18 268/53

TABLE 23---Continued

Chap- ter	Word	Translation	Location (page/line)	Chap- ter	Word	Translation	Location (page/line)
IV	έσκωριασμένους έμβαλωμένον αίματωμένον κοιμωμένης	rusty patched bloody asleep	268/96 268/104 269/73 270/1	IV	διπλωμένων τυλιγμένη μαυρισμένην	folded wrapped blackened	268/100 269/16 270/11
V	πλανωμένους	itinerant	270/52		ζαρωμένη χαδευμένα	huddled up beloved	270/49 271/96
VI	αίματωμένη βεβιασμένου	bloodstained forced	272/99 273/24	VI	τυλιγμένην μαθημένος καλοδεμένος άγαπημένα φυλακισμένων χωμένην φυλακισμένου	wrapped accustomed firm amicable imprisoned buried imprisoned	272/60 272/87 273/9 301/47 301/47 302/8 302/9
VII				VII	πατημένον	crushed	305/22
VIII	έφθαρμένον ήμιφθαρμένην	ruined half- ruined	307/17 307/59	VIII	χρυσωμένον κλεισμένου ζωγραφισμένος	gilded closed painted	307/17 307/40 307/52
IX	κακονδυμένον έστραμμένα	ill-dressed turned	308/86 341/56	IX	καλλιεργημένον σπαρμένος σκυμμένος δεμένον τυλιγμένη πατημένας τρουπιμένας πνιγμένον φραγμένον ζαλισμένη παραλογισμένη πνιγμένης	well-cultivated seeded bent over tied wrapped crushed worn through drowned plugged dizzy irrational drowned	307/82 308/25 308/28 308/66 341/70 341/90 342/1 342/10 342/30 342/75 342/75 368/6

TABLE 23--Continued

Chap- ter	Word	Translation	Location (page/line)	Chap- ter	Word	Translation	Location (page/line)
X				X	φραγμένος φραγμένον φθαρμένη φαγωμένη σκουριασμένα πνιγμένη μισοπλυμένα	fenced fenced decayed rotted rusted drowned half-washed	370/91 371/79 371/82 371/83 371/84 371/92 372/43
XI	πεπειραμένη κειμένη έπικειμένος τεταραγμένη έληθημένοι κειμένη	experienced situated (lay) imminent agitated afore- mentioned lay	373/31 373/38 373/63 406/39 431/4 432/21	XI	πνιγμένον στριμένον τριμμένη φημισμένος συνειδισμένη έμπορευομένου κτιψευομένου κολασμένου	drowned twirled worn famous accustomed mercantile elegant glued	372/50 406/19 408/13 408/54 408/61 408/93 408/93 431/28
XII	αίματωμένος μεμυγμένος μεμακρυσμένου	bloody mixed far off	432/65 436/26 436/72	XII	χαϊδευμένον κτισμένον πολυκυνηγήμενη φραγμένον σχισμένον διπλωμένον σβυσμένα φενιασμένη	beloved built oft-hunted fenced torn folded obliterated frenzied	434/12 434/27 434/33 434/59 435/65 435/96 436/31 436/33
XIII	μεμακρυσμένα	far off	472/48	XIII	καταδιωκομένη φραγμένου πνιγμένο λησμονημένα περασμένων πνιγμένων	p ursued fenced drowned forgotten past drowned	438/13 471/3 471/14 471/19 471/26 471/40

TABLE 23--Continued

Chap- ter	Word	Translation	Location (page/line)	Chap- ter	Word	Translation	Location (page/line)
XIII				XIII	νεκτωσμένος ἀφπισμένος κρεμασμένος παραλογισμένη στοιχειωμένος μισοσβυσμένη	dead foaming hanging irrational haunted half- extinguished	471/55 471/56 471/58 471/60 471/65 472/9
XIV	κατακειμένην καθημένην τεταμένην είρημένοι συνεσταλμένον	lying down seated outstretched guardian uncommunica- tive	498/75 498/78 498/80 499/31	XIV	κτισμένον στρημένον διπλωμένη νοτισμένον	built twirled folded warped	498/34 498/64 498/65 498/85
XV	έξαπλωμένην άφρημένην	lying down absent- minded	499/67 499/73 499/87		κακοκλεισμένον έμπνευσμένος	poorly closed inspired	498/86 499/23
				XV	λαχανιασμένη ξεγλωσσαμένη συλλογισμένη καψαλισμένου βυθισμένη περασμένον λησμονημένον μισοκοιμισμένη κουβαριασμένη	breathless breathless reflective singled submerged past forgotten half-asleep huddled-up	499/80 499/80 500/36 500/48 501/15 502/63 528/26 528/38 529/9
XVI	πεποικιλμένη άπηλπισμένα προσηλωμένη προεγγραμμένη παράτεταμένους ηύξημένον εφωδιασμένους αίματωμένους	mottled hopeless fixed banished prolonged enlarged completed bloody	531/12 531/20 531/26 531/27 531/58 531/64 532/78 532/100	XVI	γελασμένη παραπονεμένον ξεγλωσσαμένη φθαρμένος	mocking discontented breathless ruined	531/53 531/71 532/64 532/67

TABLE 23--Continued

Chap- ter	Word	Translation	Location (page/line)	Chap- ter	Word	Translation	Location (page/line)
XVII	καθημένη	seated	533/85	XVII	ἀποκαμωμένη	weary	533/53

¹Terms have been assigned their respective category on the basis of entries found in D. Demetrakos, 'Η Νέον'Ορθογραφικόν'Ερμηνευτικόν Δέχικον (Athens : Χρ. Γιοβαννης, 1969) and N.P. Andriotis, 'Η 'Ετυμολογικό Λεξικό Της Κοινής Νεοελληνικής (Thessalonica: 'Αριστοτελείου Πανεπιστημίου Θεσσαλονίκης, 1967).

The analysis shows a text rich in the use of participles. In -- μένος there are over 160 instances (see Table 24), only one-third of

TABLE 24

Proportion of Demotic/ <u>Katharevousa</u> Participles in -- μένος			
	Demotic	<u>Katharevousa</u>	Total
Frequency	107	54	161
%	66.5%	33.5%	100.0%

which are repeated (see distribution Tables 25 and 26). The mix is similar to that found for the Subjunctive Aorists, favoring the demotic two to one: 66.5 percent demotic, 33.5 percent katharevousa. One-third of the terms with archaic reduplication or augment is considerable and substantiates a claim of "no deliberate choice." The listings by chapter provide a composite picture of how the michtē is distributed throughout the text--sometimes evenly woven, sometimes alternating by chapter.

It should be noted, however, that though many words fall into the demotic column for lack of reduplication or augmentation, Papadhiamandis formalizes many of them by the addition of final " " or other archaic ending. This tends to neutralize the effect on the prose of any statistical dominance of the demotic. What we see here, as elsewhere, is the maintenance of a puristic style despite the introduction of considerable demotic morphology.

TABLE 25

Distribution of <u>Katharevousa</u> Participles in -- μένος Frequency of Occurrence Exceeding One			
Word	Translation	Frequency	Percent
αίματωμένη	bloody	5	9.3
κοιμωμένης	asleep	4	7.4
μεμακρυσμένα	far off	2	3.7
έξωργισμένοι	enraged	2	3.7
καθημένην	seated	2	3.7
κειμένη	situated (lay)	2	3.7
Sub-total		17	31.5
All Others (Frequency of 1)		37	68.5
Grand Total		54	100.0%

TABLE 26

Distribution of Demotic Participles in -- μένος Frequency of Occurrence Exceeding One			
Word	Translation	Frequency	Percent
πνιγμένη	drowned	5	4.7
φραγμένος	fenced	3	2.7
κλεισμένον	closed	3	2.7
διπλωμένων	folded	3	2.7
τυλιγμένα	wrapped	3	2.7
χαδευμένα	beloved	2	1.9
ξεγλωσσαμένη	breathless	2	1.9
κτισμένον	built	2	1.9
πατημένον	crush	2	1.9
φημισμένος	famous	2	1.9
άφρισμένος	foaming	2	1.9
κολασμένου	glued	2	1.9
φυλακισμένου	imprisoned	2	1.9
παραλογισμένη	irrational	2	1.9
δεμένα	tied	2	1.9
στριμένον	twirled	2	1.9
καλλιεργημένος	well-cultivated	2	1.9
Sub-total		41	38.3
All Others (Frequency of 1)		66	61.7
Grand Total		107	100.0%

V. VOCABULARY

Among the diagnostic features of Browning's chart which separates elements of the katharevousa from the demotic is a list of vocabulary words "sufficient to identify the language of a sample text." Below is the complete listing from page 118 of Medieval and Modern Greek:

TABLE 27

K	D	
εἷς	ἕνας	
μέγας	μεγάλος	
ἰχθύς	ψάρι	
πτηνόν	πουλί	'bird'
κύων	σκύλος, σκυλί	'dog'
ὀστοῦν	κόκκαλο	'bone'
ὀφθαλμός	μάτι	'eye'
ῥίς	μύτη	'nose'
ἥπαρ	συκώτι	'liver'
ἵσταμαι	στέκομαι	'stand'
ὕδωρ	νερό	'water'
πῦρ	φωτιά	'fire'
ἐρυθρός	κόκκινος	'red'
θερμός	ζεστός	'hot'
ὄφεις	φίδι	'snake'
ἄνθος	λουλούδι	'flower'
παγνύω	παγώνω	'freeze'
κόπτω	κόβω	'cut'
πλησίον	κοντά	'near'
ώθω	σπρώχνω	'push'
ῥίπτω	ρίχνω	'throw'
ὀσφραίνομαι	μυρίζομαι	'smell'
ἔτος, ἐνιαυτός	χρόνος	'year'
διότι	γιατί	'because'

A similar list (in many instances comprising the same words) has been compiled (Table 28) from the narrative passages of The Murderess to illustrate the michtē quality of Papadhiamandis' vocabulary.

Examination of Table 28 indicates that (a) many words are used both in the katharevousa and demotic forms; (b) some vocabulary is used only in the katharevousa; and (c) some vocabulary is used only in the demotic.

In many instances, where words appear in both forms, Papadhiamandis alternates the katharevousa with the demotic apparently for lexical variety. For example, in paragraph one, Chapter I, κοντά and πλησίον "near" are used alternately which avoids repetition (see p. 193/1 and 6); in paragraph two of the same chapter, δαυλοί and κούτσουρον "log" are used in the same fashion (see lines 15 and 16). These choices seem to be based on an aesthetic principle, though the juxtaposition of the katharevousa with the demotic was itself considered "unaesthetic."

On the other hand, much of the usage appears without deliberate choice as we might expect from a text using all the options--(a), (b), and (c)--above. Upon examination of the text itself, we find much the same kind of random selection as we saw in previous studies. For example, in a situation where we might expect a pairing of forms, we find just the opposite:

Ὁ πατήρ της ἦτον οἰκονόμος καὶ ἐργατικὸς καὶ φρόνιμος. Ἡ μάνα της ἦτον κακὴ, βλάσφημος καὶ φθονερά.*

194/18-20

*Italics mine

TABLE 28

Vocabulary

K		D	
Location (page/line)*			Location (page/line)
193/6	πλησίον	κοντά	'near' 193/1
195/65	οἰκίαν;	σπίτι	'house' 197/8
235/58	εἷς	ξνας	'one' 235/14
199/36	μήτηρ	μητέρα	'mother'; 193/8
		μάνα	'mother' 237/66
334/37	ὔδωρ	νεροῦ	'water' 371/94
194/1	ὀφθαλμούς	μάτι	'eye' 237/82
193/41	νεογνόν	μωρό(ν)	'infant' 199/16
371/13	μέγα	μεγάλη	'large' 305/86
371/66	φρέαρ	πηγάδι	'well' 372/22
236/7	υἰόν	ἀγόρι	'boy' 501/84
408/7	ἄρτον	ψωμί	'bread' 407/31
	/πτηνόν/	πουλιῶ	'bird' 434/101
195/30	ῶτα	αὐτίδα	'ear' 197/41
195/15	δαυλοί	κούτσουρον	'log' 193/16
	/κύνων/	σκύλος	'dog' 435/20
472/16	πῦρ	/φῶτιδ/	'fire' 193/16
306/71	ὀφιοειδῶς	/φίδι/	'snake' 435/20
530/86	αλιεύς	/ψαράς/	'fisherman' 193/16
435/85	θερμή	/ζεστός/	'hot' 193/16
269/24	διότι	/γιατί/	'because' 193/16

*Only one instance cited for illustration.

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Location

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190 41

194 19

194 35

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Use of the word "mother" in Chapter I with its three forms -- μήτηρ , μητέρα , and μάνα -- illustrates the random pattern of appearance of this word throughout the text as well as the pattern for most words which appear in their dual forms (see Table 29), especially the more frequently used vocabulary-- εἷς / ἕνας "one"; οἰκίαν/σπίτι "house"; φρέαρ/πηγάδι "well":

TABLE 29

Phrases with Word "Mother" (Chapter I)		
Location (page/line)	No. of Lines Later	Phrase *(Italics mine)
193/8		τὴν <u>μητέρα</u> τοῦ πάσχοντος βρέφους. . .
193/41	33	Ἡ <u>μητέρα</u> τοῦ εἶχε κάμη βαρεῖα λεχυσία.. .
194/19	29	Ἡ <u>μάνα</u> τῆς ἦτον κακῇ, . . .
194/55	36	ἡ <u>μήτηρ</u> τῆς Φραγκογιαννοῦς. . .
194/90	35	ἡ <u>μήτηρ</u> τῆς σημερινῆς Φραγκογιαννοῦς . . .
195/33	43	τὰ ὅποια διηγεῖτο ἀγότερα ἢ <u>μάνα</u> τῆς . . .

The number of lines separating the repetitions of the word "mother" (see Table 29) average 35--a distance sufficient to preclude any **assumption** that alternate forms are used for variety's sake. Use of **the** three forms in the same text constitutes a kind of "double" nichtē. Μητέρα and μάνα are demotic words, the former a more **formal** term than the latter; μήτηρ is ancient Greek. If one were to **examine** the prose of The Murderess solely on the basis of Browning's **diagnostic** vocabulary list, it would indeed be difficult determining

the "identity of the language." Such is the nature of Papadhiamandis' michtē--perhaps a more important third possibility than Browning and others have allowed.

VI. SUMMARY

The foregoing analyses confirm the assertion that Papadhiamandis' prose is of a nature best defined by its own characteristics. That is, it is not a michtē in the sense of the purist language making concessions when necessary to the vernacular tongue. It is rather a michtē of random selection. On the one hand, the selection of the demotic elements are of a magnitude which render a description of the prose as "puristic" inaccurate. On the other hand, the prose maintains a purist cast and the introduction of the demotic, which in some areas is overwhelming statistically, never changes the character of the writing sufficiently as to be described as "demotic."

VII. CONCLUSION

A. The Nature, Style and Aesthetics of Papadhiamandian Prose

Definitions

André Mirambel, in his essay Les "États De Langue" Dans La Grèce Actuelle, distinguishes and defines five "états" of the language in use in Greece (1937) which refines into a workable spectrum the crude designations "katharevousa" and "demotic." These he lists as:¹

- 1° la langue savant ou καθαρεύουσα /katharevousa/
- 2° la langue mixte ou μικτή (μιχτή) /"mixed"/
- 3° la langue couramment parlée ou καθομιλουμένη
ὀμιλουμένη /kathomiloumeni/
- 4° la langue demotique ou δημοτική
- 5° la langue désignée familièrement par le terme μαλλιάρη
ou ultra-démotique. /malliari/

(1) The καθαρεύουσα katharevousa or "langue savante," notes Mirambel, avoids all forms, syntax, and vocabulary which in its eyes is not "pure Greek" and which is not consecrated by the tradition of ancient writing. It is rich in adjectives and abstract nouns; contains rigid formulae; lends itself to subordination; easily expresses foreign words and phrases through the formation of calques. The katharevousa functions as the official language of the State, the army, the school,

¹Mirambel, "Les États," p. 21.

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and the Church. Those who are versed in the katharevousa are considered cultured and "educated."

(2) The μικτή "mixte" or "mixed" language is in structure similar to the katharevousa but makes some concessions to the living language, even avoids extreme archaisms. Where there are no equivalents in the katharevousa, it accepts terms of the spoken language without change. Though it is a tentative conciliation between the two extremes, it introduces into an established structure, elements of a structure "évoluée." Thus it juxtaposes heterogeneous forms. It is both a spoken and written language: written by those who believe in making concessions to the demotic; spoken sometimes out of necessity.

(3) The καθομιλουμένη or "daily tongue," referred to as kathomiloumeni, unlike the first two is a language with a demotic structure, though it contains elements from the katharevousa. The major part of its vocabulary is demotic, but it rejects some neologisms and modern innovations. For example, it prefers the prepositional construction ὁ ὅποιος, "who" to the demotic ποῦ. In spoken forms it uses demotic endings, but for technical and abstract terms, it retains purist morphology. The kathomiloumeni easily adopts elements of the katharevousa into its structure in the belief that each thought must be expressed in its mode, homogeneity notwithstanding. It is the language of the middle class and of Athenian society.

(4) The δημοτική or "demotic" is the form of the Greek language today, the result of a natural evolution. This evolution has resulted in: the reduction of the number of cases, substituted by the use of prepositions; the elimination of certain moods accompanied by

the development of periphrastic verb forms; the unification of nominal flexion; the appearance of nominal and adjectival suffixes especially those of foreign origin-- -άτος, -άτικο, -ύτσα, -άδα, -άδικο, -τζής ; the ability to form compound subordinating conjunctions. It is a language capable of extension, enrichment and development. It is the monther tongue of all Greeks of all classes.

(5) μαλλιαρή . This term (literally "hairy") is a derisive name given by the purists to the attempt by grammarians to systematize the demotic language. Where several forms exist in the demotic where one might hesitate, the malliarists would search for a unifying system for choosing one form over another. There were attempts to render the demotic a service through the reform of orthography which still presents inconsistencies: one writes πέρνω "I take" but also παίρνω; ξέρω "I know" but also ξαίρω . One writes καλήτερος "better" and also καλύτερος , or καλλίτερος . The malliarists became the object of criticism even by the partisans of the demotic language, above all in matters of vocabulary. However, the principles to which they adhered had foundation: the necessity for the living language to have unity; a refusal to make concessions to the purist language; and finally, a systemization of the demotic language.

B. The Nature, Style, and Aesthetics of Papadhiamandis' Michtē

Papadhiamandis' early novels as we have pointed out, are written in what has been described as a "pure" katharevousa. With the introduction of demotic elements into the later short stories and novels, the writing becomes a michtē, the nature of which is not congruent with the

description of the michtē as a compromise. On the contrary, rather than moving toward a "tentative conciliation" between extremes, Papadhiamandis' prose seems to fit more Browning's description of medieval texts of chronicles and tales as being "mixtures of living speech and dead tradition."¹

Papadhiamandis not only does not avoid "extreme archaisms," he often uses Old Testament, Psalm or Troparia as integral language of the text. For example, the passage below is a narrative detail from Chapter One of The Murderess, which is language from Psalm 132, (133):

. . . δέῃ εἶχε δώσει ὕπνον εἰς τοὺς
ὀφθαλμοὺς της, οὐδέ εἰς τα βλεφαρά
της νυσταγμόν,. . .

193/52; 194/1

. . . she gave not sleep to her eyes nor slumber to her eyelids.

The instances of demotic, which are quite extensive, are, for the most part, not "concessions" to the demotic in the usual sense--used because katharevousa forms are not available. On the contrary, the demotic forms as we have seen in the analyses are rather unstable--soon replaced by corresponding puristic forms often as early as the same paragraph. Sometimes these replacements appear as a case change--nominative and accusative change to the genitive (see analysis of -ι / -ιον neuter nouns and comparison charts for ρεῦμα / ρέμμα). Often demotic vocabulary switches back to formal language. These changes constitute, in a sense, a kind of concession in reverse--a concession back to the demands of the katharevousa.

¹Browning, Medieval and Modern Greek, p. 14.

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In fact, there is an interesting stableness and consistency about Papadhiamandis' michtē which critics seem not to have noticed: the evenness as to the proportion of katharevousa to demotic throughout the text. No single paragraph or section of the narrative (excluding dialogue, of course) "degenerates" so to speak into the demotic. If there is a principle at work behind what appears to be a random introduction of demotic in the prose, it must be an overriding sense of never allowing the writing to become too demoticized. This is why I believe Valeta and others were wrong in believing that for Papadhiamandis "only one step was necessary for him . . . to arrive at the demotic."

There is another device, that of setting off demotic words, phrases, or expressions in quotation marks, which is an integral part of the Papadhiamandian michtē. It provides him with the easiest and perhaps most "rational" solution for making concessions to the demotic. Moreover, this device throws additional light on the fact that Papadhiamandis insists, even in his most mature work, on stating facts and details of narration first in the katharevousa. The first paragraph of The Murderess provides us with an example:

. . . τὴν κεφαλὴν ἀκουμβῶσα εἰς τὸ
κράσπεδον τῆς ἐστίας, τὸ λεγόμενον
"φουγοπόδαρο" . . .

193/2-4

. . . her head leaning against the border of the hearth,
called the "fougopodharo, . . . "

On the other hand, Papadhiamandis' use of this device is illustrative of his need to express matters as common folk "ὁ λαός" would express

them. In this way, he was "malliarist," one might say, in spirit--exhibiting the desire to preserve the native language.¹

Since Papadhiamandis' michtē is basically katharevousa, its style is largely determined by the characteristics of that structure. In "Remarques Sur Le Style Et L'Esthétique De La Langue," which is Chapter VII of Andre Mirambel's study La Langue Grecque Moderne,² Mirambel uses Papadhiamandis' prose to illustrate significant structural differences between the purist and demotic languages which necessarily cause divergences in style between the two. The quotation below is cited for its enumeration of these structural differences as well as for a comparison later of the early and late styles of Papadhiamandian prose:

1. Dans la mesure, en effet, où grec démotique et grec puriste offrent des structures divergentes, le style (ou les styles) de la langue écrite, si elle est savante, n'offre guère de points communs avec celui de la langue parlée. Voici, par exemple, sur un sujet analogue deux textes qui montrent comment deux écrivains dont l'un est vulgariste, l'autre puriste, sont amenés à des procédés d'expression différents étant donnés les états de langue qu'ils utilisent. Le premier texte appartient à un conte de Drosinis ('Η ἄσκημη κόρη p. 77) : "Ἡ κόρη της ἡ ἄσκημη εἶχε γίνεи ἡ ὁμορφότερη κόρη τοῦ κόσμου! Τὰ μαλλιά της ἔπεφταν στίς πλάτες της σάν ἀναλειωμένο χρυσάφι, ἡ ὄψη της ἦταν ὁλόδροση καὶ ροδοκόκινη, τὰ χεῖλη χωρίζονταν μὲ γλυκὸ χαμόγελο." Sa fille laide était devenue la plus belle fille du monde ! Ses cheveux tombaient sur ses épaules comme une poussière d'or, son visage était tout frais et tout rose, ses lèvres

¹The Malliarists, especially Nikos Kazantzakis, deliberately collected words from the villages and the islands and included them in their writings with the aim of preserving them. (See Bien, Kazantzakis and the Linguistic Revolution in Greek Literature, especially Part Two, "The Demoticism of Kazantzakis.")

²André Mirambel, La Langue Grecque Moderne: Description Et Analyse (Société Linguistique De Paris: Paris, 1959), pp. 426-27.

s'écartaient d'un doux sourire...". Voici maintenant le début d'un roman de Papadiamantis, *Οἱ ἔμποροι τῶν ἐθνῶν* (p. 7-8) : Ἐν ἔτει σωτηρίῳ 1199 οὐδεὶς καθ' ὅλον τὸ Αἰγαῖον πέλαγος εἶχεν ὠραιότεραν σύζυγον τῆς τοῦ Ἰωάννου Μούχρα, πλουσίου εὐπατρίδου κατοικοῦντος ἐν Νάξῳ... Ἡ σύζυγός του, ὠραία καὶ ἀθῶα ὥς περιστερὰ, ἦτο τὸ σέμνωμα τῆς οἰκίας. Ἀρχουσα δωδεκάδος θεραπαινίδων διεύθυνε φρονίμως τὰ τοῦ οἴκου

"En l'an de grâce 1199 personne dans toute la mer Egée n'avait d'épouse plus belle que Jean Moukhras, riche noble résidant à Naxos... Son épouse, belle et innocent comme une colombe, était l'orgueil de la demeure. Commandant à une douzaine de servantes, elle gérait sagement les affaires de la maison". Laissons de côté les divergences portant sur les formes et le lexique. Il reste que le texte savant contient des formules "officielles" du type ἐν ἔτει σωτηρίῳ "en l'an de grâce", que la langue démotique littéraire évite. De plus, le texte savant fait grand usage des participes présents (κατοικοῦντος "résidant", ἀρχουσα "commandant"), mais limite les adjectifs ; au lieu de la construction τὰ τοῦ οἴκου "les affaires de la maison", la langue démotique utiliserait un adjectif (τὰ σπιτικὰ). Le texte savant, le plus long, n'est composé que de trois propositions, ce que permet l'usage des participes tenant lieu de subordonnées. La langue démotique, au lieu de rechercher la subordination systématique, juxtapose les énoncés propositionnels (ἡ κόρη εἶχε γίνεαι..., τὰ μαλλιά της ἐπεφταν ..., ἡ ὄψη της ἦταν ..., τὰ χεῖλη χωρίζονταν ...). Pour exprimer la comparaison, le texte savant se borne à ὥς περιστερὰ "comme une colombe :", tandis que le texte démotique, au lieu de dire seulement σὰν χρυσάφι "comme de l'or", dit σὰν ἀναλειωμένο χρυσάφι "comme de l'or en poussière, fondu". Enfin, dans le choix des épithètes, si la langue savante n'utilise ici que les mots ὠραία ("belle"), ἀθῶα ("innocente"), πλουσίου ("riche"), qui n'ont pas d'expressivité particulière, la langue démotique se sert de ὁλόδροση ("toute fraîche") et ροδοκόκκινη ("rouge comme une rose"), adjectifs composés, dont le second, en particulier, fait image.

In summary, Mirambel points out the following: katharevousa

contains "official" formulaic expressions which the demotic avoids;
depends heavily upon present participles, not adjectives; uses other
constructions (especially the prepositional phrase) in place of
adjectives; tends toward series of subordinate participial phrases as
opposed to the demotic's simple or coordinate constructions; lacks the
particularly expressive ability of the demotic to compound adjectives.

Mirambel's choice of the opening of Papadhiamandis' novel, The Merchants of Nations (Οἱ Ἑμποροὶ τῶν Ἑθνῶν) is useful to us not **only** for the stylistics of the katharevousa but also as a means of **eva**luating the demotic elements in The Murderess.

The Merchants of Nations was published in installments in the **per**iodical, Me Hanesai ("Μὴ Χάνεσαι"), between November 5, 1882 and **Feb**ruary 8, 1883. It was written a year before The Little Gypsy¹ (Ἡ Γυφτοπούλα) in a "pure" katharevousa. Valeta states that The Merchants of Nations characterizes and delimits the first period of **Papadhiamandis'** writing.²

Below, for purposes of comparison, is the opening paragraph of The Murderess:

Μισοπλαγιασμένη κοντὰ εἰς τὴν ἐστίαν, με
σφαλιστὰ τὰ ὄμματα, τὴν κεφαλὴν ἀκουμβῶσα εἰς
τὸ κράσπεδον τῆς ἐστίας, τὸ λεγόμενον "φουγο-
πόδαρο", ἡ θειὰ Χαδοῦλα, ἡ κοινῶς καλουμένη
Γιαννοῦ ἡ Φράγκισσα, δὲν ἐκοιμᾶτο, ἀλλ' ἐθυσί-
αζε τὸν ὕπνον πλησίον εἰς τὸ λίκνον τῆς ἀσθεν-
οῦσης μικρᾶς ἐγγονῆς τῆς. Ὅσον διὰ τὴν λεχώ,
τὴν μητέρα τοῦ πάσχοντος βρέφους, αὕτη πρὸ
ὀλίγου εἶχεν ἀποκοιμηθῇ ἐπὶ τῆς χθαμαλῆς πενιχ-
ρᾶς κλίνης τῆς.

193/1-10

We can immediately see that the basic style and structure of the katharevousa twenty years later in the mature period of Papadhiamandis' writing is still very much intact. Note the "officielle" formula κοινῶς καλουμένη "commonly called"; the repetitive puristic "εἰς" for the prepositions "in," "at," and "upon":

¹See p. 6.

²Papadhiamandis, Τὰ Ἀπαντα, I, p.476.

εἰς τὴν ἑστίαν "at the hearth," εἰς τὸ κρᾶσπεδον "upon the border," εἰς τὸ λίκνον "at the crib." The long first sentence is a series of subordinate constructions with the predicate δέν ἐκοιμᾶτο (not sleeping) appearing near the end. Participles abound: μισοπλαγιασμένη ("curled up"); ἀκουμβῶσα ("leaning"); λεγόμενον ("called"); καλουμένη ("called"), etc. The adjectives which appear--μικρᾶς ("small"); χθαμαλῆς ("low"); and πενιχρᾶς ("poor")--are not the "particularly expressive" type found in the demotic.

As for the demotic in the prose, the structure remains unchanged. For the most part, the demotic elements are word substitutions or form substitutions--not the structural changes which transform a puristic text into a modern one. Below, for illustration, is a paragraph which ends Chapter XI:

Ἡ γραῖα ἐξύπνησεν ἐντρομος, ἀνετινάχθη ὅλη. Ἀνεσηκώθη καὶ ἡσθάνετο μέγαν σπαραγμόν, ἀλλὰ συνχρόνως καὶ καλλιτέραν σωματικὴν ἀνεσιν. Ὁ σύντομος ἐκεῖνος ὕπνος εἶχεν ἐξαλείψει παρ' αὐτῇ τὸ νευροπαθές καὶ τὸ ἀνήσυχον. Ἐψηλάφησεν, εὔρε τὰ σπύρτα, ἤναψε τὸ κηρίον, ἐπῆρε τὸ ραβδί της, τὸ καλάθι της, ἔβαλε μέσα εἰς αὐτὸ καὶ τὰς ἐμβάδας της, καὶ ἀνυπόδοτη, μὲ τῆς κάλτσες, ἐκίνησε νὰ φύγῃ.

432/38-47

The old woman woke up terrified, shuddering all over. She got up feeling great heartbreak, but at the same time, more physically rested. That short sleep had washed away from her the nervousness and anxiety. She groped, found the matches, and lit the candle, took her staff, her basket, put her shoes inside it, and unshod, in stocking feet, she started to leave.

For "old woman" γραῖα Papadhiamandis keeps the ancient morphology as opposed to the current γριά ; similarly for "candle" κηρίον instead of κερύ. But demotic ραβδί "staff" and καλάθι "basket" might just as easily have been ραβδίον and καλάθιον . Nouns of foreign origin here-- σπύρτα "matches" and κάλτσες "stockings" (words of Italian derivation)--are considered demotic; but for "shoes" instead of the commonly used Turkish word παπούτσια , Papadhiamandis returns to the ancient language with ἐμβάδας from ἐμβάδον "on foot."

While most writers of the time were seeking to "purify" their prose, and while this michtē does not perhaps represent the kind of aesthetic solution which became generally accepted and defined, it does represent one writer's experiment toward that solution however difficult it may be to reconcile it with preconceived notions of what constitutes an aesthetic style. That Papadhiamandis moved from juxtaposing strict katharevousa in the description with colloquial expression in the dialogue to a michtē in the description, indicates, I believe, that he sought somehow to soften the contrast. Admittedly, the haphazard manner, as illustrated above, would not satisfy the purists, especially at a time when the nature and future of the Greek language was such a burning issue.

Now, however, more than sixty-five years have passed since Papadhiamandis' death, and the passage of time permits a more objective appraisal regarding the aesthetics of his prose. It can now be judged on its own terms without the prejudice of "Language Question" allegiances.

Papadhiamandis' style must be evaluated as to the success of its purpose. It is insufficient to say, as does Balanos, that "he writes Papadhiamandis in the katharevousa, sometimes in the demotic, more often, however, in a very unaesthetic, for me at least, manner. . . . In examining the prose of The Murderess, I find not only a master story-teller, but a writer in command of his language, however "mixed." There is in the Papadhiamandian style that uniqueness and power of expression which only great writers impose on the structures within which they are confined. The fact that Papadhiamandis' choices between katharevousa and demotic forms appear statistically random says nothing about the power of the words themselves to evoke and express what is intended. Why is it that throughout the criticism there is nothing but great praise for The Murderess, for example, while the michtē receives such cool reception? It can only mean that the michtē does not destroy the "illusion" necessary to all great art. It means further that the style cannot be evaluated properly if forced to conform to arbitrary definitions.

In appraising the aesthetics of Papadhiamandis' prose, it may be well to remind ourselves that Papadhiamandis was also a poet whose collected poems number close to fifty, for his prose, it seems to me, contains many of the elements we associate with poetry: rhythmic line supported by alliteration; synthesis of the physical environment with the emotional state of someone; and philosophic comment. The Murderess, in particular, offers many examples of these.

First there is the characteristically long descriptive sentence with a sweep and rhythmic movement all its own which carries the reader along over beautiful terrain:

Τὴν ἡμέραν λοιπὸν ἐκείνην, τῆς ἐβδομάδος τῶν Βαΐων, ἔφθασεν ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ λίαν πρωΐ εἰς τὴν κορυφὴν τοῦ ὑψηλοῦ πετρώδους λόφου, τοῦ ἀντικιπύζοντος ἐκ δυσμῶν τὴν πολίχνην, καὶ ὁπόθεν μελαγχολικὸν πίπτει τὸ βλέμμα ἐπὶ τοῦ μικροῦ κοιμητηρίου, ἀπλουμένου κάτω, ἐπὶ ὑψηλῆς θαλασσοπλήκτου λωρίδος γῆς, μὲ τὰ λευκὰ μνήματα, καὶ εὐθὺς φεύγει ζητοῦν φαιδρότητα καὶ ζωὴν εἰς τὰ γαλανὰ κύματα, εἰς τὸν εὐρὺν τριπλοῦν λιμένα, καὶ εἰς χλοερά, χαρίεντα νησίδια, τὰ φράττοντα τοῦτον ἔξ ἀνοτολῶν καὶ μεσημβρίας.

305/96 - 306/6

Well, that morning, during Holy Week, Frangoyannou arrived very early at the peak of the high rocky hill, west of the town, and from there, melancholic falls the gaze on the small cemetery, spread out below, upon the high sea-battered strip of land, with white tombstones, and directly leaves, seeking cheerfulness and life in the blue waves, in the wide triple port, and in the verdant, charming islands fencing it from the east and south.

Papadhiamandis takes us up high--τὴν κορυφὴν τοῦ...λόφου

"the peak of the . . . hill," and from there directs our gaze κάτω

"down" which εὐθὺς φεύγει "directly leaves" for the islands in the

distance. Note how the momentum gathers speed by the repetitive strong

grade vowels ου and ᾱ :

τοῦ ὑψηλοῦ πετρώδους λόφου. . .

τοῦ μικροῦ κοιμητηρίου ἀπλουμένου . . . κλπ.

τὰ γαλανὰ κύματα . . . λιμένα . . .

τὰ χλοερά, χαρίεντα νησίδια, τὰ φράττοντα . . . κλπ.

Here is another long descriptive sentence from the same chapter with the movement in the opposite direction:

. . . Τὸ λάλον, ἀσίγητον κελάδημα τῶν κοσ-
σύφων ἀντήχει ἀρμονικὸν εἰς τὸ δάσος, τὸ
περιστέφον ὅλην τὴν δυτικὴν κλιτύν, καὶ ἀν-
έρπον εἰς τὴν κορυφὴν τοῦ Ἀναγύρου, ἕως τὴν
Ἀετοφωλιάν ἐπάνω --ὅπου ἐλέγετο ὅτι εἰς θα-
λασσαετός εἶχε κατοικήσει ἐπὶ τρεῖς γενεάς ἀν-
θρώπων ἐκεῖ, καὶ τέλος ἐξέλιπε χωρὶς ν' ἀφήσῃ
ἀετόπουλα.

306/81-88

The warbling, the incessant chirping of blackbirds
echoes harmoniously in the forest, surrounding all the
western slope, and glides up to the summit of Anargyros,
until the Eaglenest above--where is said one sea-eagle
had lived for three generations of men and at the end,
left without leaving eagle-fledgings.

Note the lovely alliterated liquid "λ"s : τὸ λάλον, ἀσίγητον

κελάδημα "the warbling, incessant chirping." Here also

Papadhiamandis uses the katharevousa final "ν" to great alliterative

advantage as he does through much of this prose: ὅλην τὴν δυτικὴν

κλιτύν, καὶ ἀνέρπον εἰς τὴν κορυφὴν . . . κλπ.

Note also repetitive sibilant "σ": ἀσίγητον . . . κοσσύφων

. . . εἰς τὸ δάσος, τὸ περιστέφον . . .

It has been said of Papadhiamandis (especially in The
Murderess), that he is a master of welding together--atmosphere,
landscape, and the psychological state of his characters.¹

¹Greek poet and Papadhiamandis critic, G. Vlahoyannis writes:
"As for . . . the aesthetics of the work The Murderess . . . the
topological accuracy is joined to the psychological by Papadhiamandis
. . . as if both conceptions were one inseparably fit together . . .
where the landscape becomes one with the psychic state of the heroine."
G. Vlahoyannis, "Ἐνας ἄγραφος γυναικεῖος νόμος καὶ ἡ φόνος
τοῦ Παπαδιαμάντη," Nea Hestia 17 (1938), 9-12.

Below is an example---again, a very long sentence comprising the entire **p**aragraph. In the story, Hadula Frangoyannou, now a fugitive from the **p**olice, exhausted after days and nights of wandering from place to **p**lace in the mountains where she has fled, comes to a deep, thickly-**f**oliaged water hole and crawls down to it for a bit of shelter and **r**est. Day is breaking, and Papadhiamandis describes the sunrise and **i**ts transformation of both her hiding place and her spirit:

Μία άκτίς θερμή, έρχομένη μακράν, από
τό φλεγόμενον πέλαγος, διέσχιζε τήν πυκνήν
φυλλάδα καί τόν κισσόν τόν περισκέποντα τό
άσυλον τής ταλαιπώρου γραίας, καί έκαμανε
νά στίλβη ώς πλήθος μαπαγαριτών ή δρόσος ή
πρωϊνή, ή βρέχουσα τόν πλούσιον σμαράγδινον
πέπλον, κ' έφυγάδευεν όλον τό ρίγος τής
ύγρασίας, καί όλον τό κρύος τοῦ φόβου τοῦ
πελιδνοῦ, φέρουσα πρόσκαιρον έλπίδα καί
θάλπος.

435/85-94

One warm ray, coming from afar, from the flaming sea, penetrated the thick foliage and ivy covering of the tormented woman's refuge, causing the morning dew, the drenching of rich emerald peplum, to glisten like lots of pearls, and all the shiver of dampness and all the cold of livid fear fled, bringing, for the time being, hope and encouragement.

In The Murderess, there are many such memorable passages--in the caves, on the cliffs, in the mountains, by the sea coves--where the panic, fright, despair and sometimes hope of Frangoyannou are all intensified by the physical surroundings. Here, as in so much of Papadhiamandis' fiction, the setting is the island of Skiathos, one of the Sporades of the northwest Aegean, where the author was born and raised.

Papadhiamandis' rearing on this island was both aristocratic and religious, which accounts for his strong tie to the katharevousa. His family belonged to one of the old established families of Skiathos which had lost its wealth but retained its dignity and traditions. Young Alexandros was influenced by his father, an educated man, who as cleric and psalmist led a religious life in the monasteries and chapels which he served. Alexandros often accompanied his father and soon learned the Psalms and troparia--short hymns of the fourth and fifth centuries--by heart. This no doubt accounts for the inclusion of Old Testament language and other sacred material in the michtē as mentioned earlier.

This background no doubt also accounts for those rare but very engaging moments of philosophical discourse almost exclusively in the katharevousa. Though we might expect, from the demands of realism, that characters express themselves in narrative reflective passages, if not in the demotic at least in the michtē--peasant characters usually articulate Papadhiamandis' innermost thoughts and beliefs in "pure" katharevousa. The quotation below is but one example. Hadula Frangoyannou, whose language in the dialogue is as colloquial and "unlearned" as we might expect from a poor peasant woman, speaks to us about the world and its miseries in a most learned tongue:

Καθὼς ἀνῆρχετο τὴν ράχιν ἀντικρύ, πέραν τῶν Κήπων, ἀνω τοῦ ρεύματος, ἤκουσε τὸν μικρὸν κώδωνα τοῦ μοναστηρίου νὰ ἤχῃ γλυκά, ταπεινὰ καὶ μονότονα, νὰ ἐξυπνᾷ τὰς ἡχοῦς τοῦ βουνοῦ, καὶ νὰ δονῇ τὴν μαλακὴν αὖραν. Ἦτο ἄρα μεσονύκτιον, ὥρα τοῦ Μεσονυκτικοῦ, ὥρα τοῦ Ὁρθροῦ! Πῶς ἦσαν εὐτυχεῖς οἱ ἄνθρωποι αὐτί, οἵτινες εὐθύς ἀμέσως, ἐκ νεαρᾶς ἡλικίας, ὥσαν ἀπὸ θείαν ἐμπνευσιν, εἶχον αἰσθανθῇ ποῖον ἦτο τὸ καλλίτερον, τὸ ὁποῖον ἠμποροῦσαν νὰ κάμουν -- τὸ νὰ μὴ φέρουν δηλαδὴ ἄλλους εἰς τὸν κόσμον δυστυχεῖς! ... καὶ μετὰ τοῦτο, ὅλα ἦσαν δεύτερα.

502/102 - 503/10

As she climbed the opposite ridge, beyond the Gardens, above the stream, she heard the small bell of the monastery toll sweetly, humbly, monotonously, awakening the echoes of the mountains, and stirring the gentle wind. It was therefore midnight, hour of the Midnight Office, hour of Matins! How happy they were, these men who, early in their youth by divine inspiration had the pre-science to do what was best--not to bring, that is, others into the world ill-fated! . . . after that, everything being secondary.

But the katharevousa among the modern Greek languages is **certainly** the most appropriate for philosophic thought--rich in **abstract** terms and directly related to the ancient tradition.

All these examples illustrate what Palamas, a poet himself, **understood** and expressed about the capriciousness of Papadhiamandis' michtē when he said that Papadhiamandis "changes grammar, style, **language** in accordance with his circumstance, taste, disposition. . . ." ¹ In choosing katharevousa for philosophic comment, demotic **for** colloquial expression in dialogue, and michtē for narration in-
between, Papadhiamandis demonstrates the poet's instinct for just that: **matching** grammar, style, and language to circumstance, taste, and dis-
position.

These are the subjective elements in literature which usually **defy** statistical analysis. Though he had no imitators and founded no

¹See quotation, p. 5.

sC hool, Papadhiamandis' writings remain one of the great contributions
to modern Greek letters. They remain so because his fictions pass one
of the most important aesthetic tests--they are memorable.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

APPENDIX A

Introduction to Stylistic Characterization

While the dialogue of The Murderess has been excluded from all analytical matter in this dissertation for purposes of studying the michtē in isolation, the study which follows--"Stylistic Characterization in The Murderess"--has been included here to give the reader a view of Papadhiamandis as "pure" demoticist and dialogist. The analysis, though designed to show Papadhiamandis as narrative technician, will perhaps more importantly shed additional light on the aesthetics of his style.

Stylistic Characterization in The Murderess

While Papadhiamandis' narrative prose in The Murderess reveals a "hesitancy" perhaps--"δισταζει τοὺς τύπους " in choosing between katharevousa and demotic forms, the dialogue shows a steadfastness and mastery. There is little evidence of hesitancy here. Most characteristics of the katharevousa are gone. Demotic contraction and elision replace ancient formula and formal forms. There is a profusion of idiom and proverb. There is dialect and imitation of dialect. Foreign derivatives--Serbian, Turkish, Albanian and others--words anathema to the purist, are often preferred to the Greek words of identical meaning.

Moreover, there is evidence that speech in The Murderess varies significantly from character to character in manner or style.

It appears, also, that a manner or style is particularly apt or characterizing and that the difference is of a magnitude which precludes chance. Perhaps such stylistic characterization in The Murderess is just further evidence of a long tradition in Greek literature extending back at least as far as Thucydides.¹

The two studies below which offer evidence of stylistic characterization in The Murderess examine: (1) the "rhetorical question" as the chief characterizing element in the speech of Hadula Frangoyannou; and (2) the "exclamation" as a stylistic characterizing device for differentiating the speech of various personages in the novel.

The Rhetorical Question in the Speech of Hadula Frangoyannou

The strong and determined nature of Hadula Frangoyannou's personality is established early in the story by description (page 193, lines 25-40) and narration (page 235, lines 9-23). Observation indicates as well that Papadhiamandis sustains this impression through idiosyncrasy in her speech--namely the habit of answering statements with questions; of answering questions by questions; and of expressing ideas by questions. This device not only individualizes her speech but also concretizes the imperious and commanding quality of her personality.

Table 30 (from the text of The Murderess) illustrates the frequency of her rhetorical questions.

The selected quotations below illustrate the nature and variety of her rhetorical questions:

¹See Daniel P. Tompkins, "Stylistic characterization in Thucydides: Nicias and Alcibiades," Yale Classical Studies, Vol. 22, pp. 181-214 for derivation of the studies which follow.

TABLE 30

Rhetorical Questions in the Dialogue of <u>The Murderess</u>	
Character	Location
Hadula Frangoyannou	196/11(s)*, 12(s), 12-13(s), 15(s), 38, 49(s), 61(s), 70(s), 83(s); 199/51(s), 63; 233/45-47; 236/80(s), 80-81(s); 237/1(s), 5, 14-15(s), 17-18, 18-19(s); 271/6, 8; 272/22(s), 72(s); 303/21-22; 304/20, 23, 25, 25(s), 46, 78(s), 80(s); 305/3, 34; 307/86, 100; 308/71, 73, 75(s); 341/34, 81(s); 342/50(s), 58, 79(s); 368/31; 370/11; 373/78; 405/14; 473/14, 23, 33; 500/58, 79; 501/99; 502/49(s), 50; 528/61(s), 61-62, 62-63.
Amersa	196/64(s), 90(s).
Dandis	196/93-4(s).
First Policeman	268/39.
Portaitaina	303/23.
Yannis	370/30.
Delharo	304/48, 57; 373/81.
Maroussa	407/48, 51.
Khambanakhmakis	437/37, 66; 500/64.
Father Jehosaphat	501/32.
Officer	533/25.

*(s) indicates "sarcastic" retort.

1. 'Αμέρσα: --Πώς πάει, μάνα;
 Χαδούλα: --Πώς νά πάη! ...Τί θα κάμη! ...δέν
 θα βήξη;
 Πώς τὸ βλέπεις, μάνα;
 Πώς νά τὸ ἰδῶ; 196/10-15
 Amersa: "How is it doing, Mother?"
 Hadula: "How can it be doing!... What will it do!...
 Won't she cough?"
 Amersa: "How do you see it, Mother?"
 Hadula: "How can I see it?..."
2. 'Αμέρσα: -- Καλημέρα!...πώς εἴστε;...Πώς περάσατε;
 Χαδούλα: --'Εσύ 'σαι, 'Αμέρσα; 196/35-38
 Amersa: "Good morning!... How are you?... How did you
 pass the night?"
 Hadula: "That you, Amersa?"
3. 'Αμέρσα: --Τ' εἶνε μάνα;
 Χαδούλα: --Τί νά εἶνε!...Ὁ Κωνσταντῆς... 196/60-61
 Amersa: "What's that, Mother?"
 Hadula: "What else could it be!... Constandis..."
4. Κων/τῆς: --Δέν ἔχει κανένα σῦκο;...
 Χαδούλα: --Ποῦ νά βρεθῇ τέτοιο πράμα!... 196/80-83
 Konst. "Isn't there any fig?..."
 Hadula: "Where can such a thing be found!..."

5. Αὐτὴ τοῦ ἔδιδε τὴν μόνην λογικὴν καὶ τὴν
 μόνην πρέπουσαν ἀπάντησιν: "Ἐσὺ μονάχα
 ἔχεις κορίτσια μάστορη; Ὁ ἄλλος κόσμος δὲν ἔχουν;"

233/45-47

She /Hadula/ gave him the only logical and the only appropriate
 answer: "Only you have girls, boss? The rest of the world
 doesn't have any?"

6. Ἀμέρσα: --Εἶδα στὸν ὕπνο μου πῶς πέθανε, εἶπε μὲ
 πάλλουσαν ἀκόμη φωνὴν ἢ ὑψηλὴ γεροντοκόρη.
 Χαδοῦλα: --Ἀμμ'ὅαν εἶχε πεθάνη; τάχα τί; εἶπε
 κυνικῶς ἢ γραῖα... Κ'έσηκώθη...κ' ἦρθες
 νὰ ἰδῇς;

236/77-82

Amersa: "I dreamt that she died," said the tall old maid
 in a still trembling voice.

Hadula: "And if she had died, so what?" the old woman
 said cynically. "So you got up... and came to see?"

7. Ἀμέρσα: --Εἶδα πῶς πέθανε τὸ κορίτσι, καὶ πῶς ἐσὺ
 εἶχες ἓνα μαῦρο σημάδι στὸ χέρι σου.

237/3-5

Amersa: "... I saw that the girl died, and that you had a
 black mark on your hand..."

Hadula: "Black mark?"

8. Χαδούλα: --...Τί θ' ἀπήλαυεν ἀπὸ τὰ βάσανα τοῦ
κόσμου; Καὶ οὐτ' ἐζήλευε κἄν! Τί νά
ζηλέψῃ; 271/6-8
- Hadula: "... What would she enjoy of the miseries of the
world? And neither was she jealous at all.
Jealous of what?"
9. Χωρο/ακος: --...Μᾶς λέει πῶς εἶνε ἄρρωστη.
Χαδούλα: --"Ἀρρωστη εἶνε! πῶς νά μὴν εἶνε!
272/70-72
- Policeman: "... She tells us she's sick."
Hadula: "Sick she is! How not to be!"
10. Δελχαρώ: --Τ' εἶνε, μάνα; εἶπε.
.
Χαδουλα; --Τ' εἶνε! εἶπε, τίποτα. Ξύπνησες;
--Μοῦ φάνηκε πῶς κἄτι εἶπες... πῶς μ'
ἐφώναξες, μέσ' τὸν ὕπνο μου.
--'Εγώ;...Ὄχι. Ταύτια σου κάμανε.
--Τί ὥρα νά εἶνε, μάνα;
--Τί ὥρα; Ξέρω' γώ;... 304/17-26
- Delharo: "What is it, Mother?" she said.
.
Hadula: "What is it!" she said. "Nothing. Did you wake up?"
Delharo: "It seemed to me you said something... that you
called me in my sleep."
Hadula: "Me?... no! You're hearing things."

"What time can it be, Mother?"

"What time? Don't know?... "

11. Χαδουλα: --"Ας πάω στὸν μπαχτσέ τοῦ Γιάννη, νά
τοῦ γυρέψω κανένα μάτσο κρομμύδια,...
Τί θά χάσω; 307/84-86

Hadula: "Might as well go to Yannis' garden, to beg him
for a bunch of onions... What can I lose?"

12. Χαδουλα: Εἴτα εὐθύς πάλιν καθ' ἑαυτήν.
--Τί δούλεψι νά κανεῖς στή φτώχεια!
307/99-100

Hadula: Then immediately again she said to herself:

"What service can one offer the poor!... "

13. Χαδουλα: --Τί λευθεριά θά τῆς ἔκαναν τῆς φτωχιάς,
τῆς Περιβολοῦς, ἀνίσως ἔπεφταν μέσ' τῇ
στερνα κ' ἐκολυμποῦσαν!... Νά ἴδοῦμε,
ἔχει νερό; 308/71-73

Hadula: "... What relief it would give the poor Perivolias
if they were to fall into the cistern and swim!...
Let's see, has it water?"

14. Χαδουλα: --Τί τ' ἀφήνει ἐδῶ, κεῖνος ὁ πατέρας τους
μικρά κορίτσια, εἶπε πάλιν ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ.
Τάχα δέν μποροῦν νά πέσουν καὶ μοναχά τους
μέσα;... 308/76-79

Hadula: "How could their father leave them here, little
girls," said Frangoyannou. "As if they couldn't

fall in by themselves?..."

15.

Χαδούλα: Ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ ἐσκέφθη:

"Θὰ φωνάξουν, τάχα;...θ' ἀκουστῇ; Ποῦ ν' ἀκουστῇ!..."
341/33-35

Hadula: Frangoyannou wondered: "Will they scream
perhaps? Will it be heard? Where can it be
heard!..."

16. Χαδούλα: ...Δέν ἔχετε τὸ νοῦ σας, χριστιανοί;...
Πῶς κάμανε;...Καὶ τάφινετε μοναχὰ τους,
κοντὰ στήν στέρνα, νερὸ φεμάτη!... 341/81-84

Hadula: "... Haven't you any sense, dear?... How could
you?... and you leave them alone, near a cistern,
full of water!..."

17. Λυρίγκος: --Ξέρεις τίποτα, θειὰ Γαρουφαλιά; ἐπανελάβεν
ὁ Λυρίγκος πλησιέστερον ἐρχόμενος.

Χαδούλα: Τί νὰ ξέρω, γυιέ μου; 437/12-14

Lyringos: "You know something, Aunt Garoufalia?" Lyringos
repeated coming closer.

Hadula: "What can I know, my son?..."

18. Γιώργη: --...θέλω, καὶ νᾶγε ζαρωμένη γρηά! Νᾶχη
καὶ πετμέζι!

Χαδούλα: --Ποῦ νὰ βρεθῇ τὸ πετμέζι, γυιέ μου; 501/97-98

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George: "I want a pancake, a folded pancake! With syrup!"

Hadula: "Where can syrup be found, my son?" said

Frangoyannou.

19. Καμπαναχμάκης: ...Σέ λυποῦμαι καϋμένη! Τί κρῖμα ἔκαμες;

Χαδούλα: --'Εγω; κρίματα πολλά... 502/48-49

Khambanakhmakis: "I pity you, poor thing. What crime have
you committed?"

Hadula: "Me? Many crimes... "

Examination of the quotations reveals that Hadula Frangoyannou
uses rhetorical questions for the most part either (1) to express
sarcasm (No. 1, 3, 4, and 6) or (2) to gain polemic advantage--to dis-
credit or "put down" the assertions of others (No. 5, 7, 9, 14, 16, 17,
18, and 19). Sometimes the expressions combine both.

We find further that the speech of Hadula itself is somewhat
formulaic; that she is habituated to a certain phraseology in the forma-
tion of the rhetorical question--namely, the use of the interrogative
followed by "νά": τί νά; πῶς νά; ποῦ νά; This formula is
as common in Greek as predicate following subject in English, but
Papadhiamandis' use of "νά" for Hadula is particularly "characterizing"
because in the "να" resides the power of her sarcasm or her verbal
"edge" over others. For example, Hadula's attitude toward her son-in-
law noisily collecting his tools in the morning is clearly expressed
(also by rhetorical question) five lines above quotation No. 3:

Χαδούλα: --'Ακοῦς, τί σαμαντᾶ κάνει! εἶπεν ἡ γραῖα...

Δέν μπορεῖ νά μαζώξη τὰ σιδερικά του,

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χωρίς ν' άκουστῆ. . . . 196/49-52 ("Hear, what a ruckus he is making?" said the old woman. "He can't collect his irons, without their being heard...") Then, when his wife wakes up from the noise and asks: Τ' εἶνε μάνα; ("What's that, Mother?"), all of Hadula's irritation is vested in the tiny "να" of her answer: Τί νά εἶναι! Ὁ Κων/τῆς ρίχνε τὰ συνεργά του μέσ τὸ ζεμπίλι! εἶπε ἡ γραῖα. ("What else is it!... Constandis is throwing his tools into the satchel!... said the old woman, sighing.)

The force of the formulaic "νά" in Hadula's speech can perhaps be even more dramatically illustrated by examining a situation in which the "νά" is conspicuously absent. It is the only instance when Hadula is at a loss for words. It is during tense moments of conversation with her daughter, Delharo, who has just woken up and is about to discover that her baby is dead. The baby was moments before suffocated by Hadula, its grandmother (the quotation is No. 10, repeated here for further illustration):

Δελχαρώ: --Τ' εἶνε, μάνα; εἶπε.

.

Χαδούλα: --Τ' εἶνε! εἶπε, τίποτα. Εύπνησες;

--Μοῦ φάνηκε πῶς κἀτι εἶπες...πῶς μ'

ἐφώναξες, μέσ' τὸν ὕπνο μου.

--'Εγώ;...ὄχι. Ταύτιά σου κάμαωε.

-- Τί ὦρα νά εἶνε, μάνα;

-- Τί ὦρα; ξέρω 'γώ;... Τόσες φορές λάλησε

καὶ ξαναλάλησε τ' ὀρνίθι.

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Delharo: "What is it, Mother?" she said.

Hadula: "What is it!" she said. "Nothing. Did you wake up?"

Delharo: "It seemed to me you said something... that you called me, in my sleep."

Hadula: "Me?... no! You're hearing things..."

Delharo: "What time can it be, Mother?"

Hadula: "What time? Don't know... The cock has crowed and crowed so many times over."

Here Hadula Frangoyannou is so stunned by the situation that the usual command and sarcasm in her voice is gone. And so are the sarcastic "να"s, the principal vehicle of her individual style. Under ordinary circumstances, Delharo would have asked: Τί ὦρα εἶναι; not Τί ὦρα νά εἶναι; and her mother would no doubt have sarcastically answered: Τί νά εἶναι; Πῶς νά ξέρω; Τόσος φορές λάλησε καὶ ξαναλάλησε τ'ὀρνίθι. ("What could it be? How can I know?... The cock has crowed and crowed so many times over.")

It is interesting to note here, that though this time Delharo enunciates "νά"--juxtaposed to the question, not the answer--her Τί ὦρα νά εἶναι is quite devoid of sarcasm or command. Quite the opposite. It serves rather to heighten the tension of the moment by voicing Delharo's anxious, confused, apprehensive state. The reason is that ὦρα has been placed between Τί and νά changing the implication of νά to ἄρα (I wonder). "Νά" is one of those chameleon-like words in modern Greek which so easily and so subtly

changes meaning by positioning or other slight alteration of the sentence.¹

There is even one instance (373/81) in which Delharo asks a rhetorical question in conversation with her mother. It is the moment the police arrive and suddenly her mother's connection with the death of her baby becomes clear to her: Τί νά πῶ κ' ἐγώ, ἡ καϋμένη! ("What can I say, poor thing?") But here again, there is no force to the "νά" It has been attenuated by the addition of "κ" . " Τί νά πῶ or Τί νά πῶ, ἐγώ is forceful speech; Τί νά πῶ κ' ἐγώ is submissive complaint.

Papadhiamandis reserves the clipped, sarcastic, forceful "νά" for Hadula Frangoyannou almost exclusively. It is, as we have seen, the device which defines her character and maintains her advantage and dominance in most situations throughout the narrative. It is perhaps no accident, but very much in character, that Papadhiamandis also assigned to Hadula Frangoyannou the exclamatory "νά" discussed below.

Exclamation as Stylistic Characterization

Below is a passage from Chapter VI in which Constandis learns of the death of his infant daughter (italics mine).

Κων/τῆς --Τί!...πέθανε τό παιδί;...

Βρέ!...ἔκαμεν ὁ Κωνσταντῆς, μείνας μέ ἀνοικτόν τό στόμα.

Εἶτα προσέθηκε:

¹For modern usage of "νά" see D. Demetrakos, Νέον Ὀρθογραφικόν Ἑλληνικόν Λεξικόν. (Athens, 1969), p. 948.

--Γιά ταῦτο ἔβλεπα κᾶτι ἀνάποδα ὄνειρα, ζάβαλε!
304/89-94

.

--Πάω. Ἀκοῦς, λέει!... ὦχ! κρίμα, ζάβαλε!...

Καλὰ ποῦ τὸ βαφτίσαμε κι' ὅλας.
305/13-14

.

--Ἄχ! κρίμα, ζάβαλε! εἶπε... Κ' ἔβλεπα κᾶτι
ὄνειρα!... Βρέ, παιδιά! 305/39-40

Constandis: "What... the child died?... Stupid!" cried

Constandis, standing with open mouth. Then he added:

"That's why I saw such mixed up dreams, devil!..."

.

"I'm going. Listen, to that! Och! pity, devil!

Good thing we baptised it at least."

.

"Ach! pity, devil!" he said... "And what dreams
I saw!... hey, kids!"

And below is part of the passage in Chapter IX in which Yannis
learns of the drowning of his two daughters:

Γιάννης: --ὦ!... τί ἁμαρτίες!... ἔχεις δίκηο, χριστιανή
μου! Ἄχ! 370/18-19

.

--ὦχ! δίκηο ἔχεις, ὅ,τι καὶ νὰ πῆς, χρισ-
τιανή μου. Ἄχ! ἄχ! τί ἁμαρτίες;

"Oh!... what sins!... you're right, good woman!

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"Och! you're right, whatever you say. Ach! ach!

What sins."

The circumstances of the above passages are identical: both men learn of the deaths of their children. The language of their reactions is not identical, however, especially their exclamations. Constandis uses ζάβαλε! (devil) and βρέ!(a word etymologically related to μωρός [stupid]); Yannis uses τι άμαρτίες! (what sins). Examination of the entire text of The Murderess reveals that only Constandis uses ζάβαλε! and βρέ! ; only Yannis uses τι άμαρτίες! (though on one occasion, Hadula says "Ω άμαρτίες! (500/79).

Constandis and Yannis, however, are not the only two characters expressing differentiated exclamations. Table 31 shows that in most cases, characters in The Murderess have been assigned their own expressions.

Though common, undifferentiated exclamations appear throughout The Murderess such as "Α, "Ω, "Ε, "Αχ, "Ωχ , as we might expect, there are those as Table 31 indicates which are used solely or at most by two characters. Those which appear once tend to be lost in the rhetoric of the narrative. But those which are repetitive, tend to become associated with the character. For example, Hadula's Θεέ μου! "My God!" or the "νά" already associated with her as a verb form, as we have seen, can appear as an exclamation at an unforgettable juncture: --Νά! ...μοῦ ἔδωκε τὸ σημεῖο ὁ "Αῖς-Γιάννης, εἶπε μέσα της, σχεδόν άκουσίως ἡ Φρανγκογιαννοῦ, ἅμα εἶδε τὰ θαύματα. (308/67-79). ("There!... you've given me the sign, St. John."

TABLE 31

Differentiated Character Exclamations in <u>The Murderess</u>			
Character	Exclamation	Location (page/line)	Translation
HADULA	Θε (έ) μου!	194/8; 235/100; 308/2; 371/70; 437/41	My God!
(Amersa)		236/21	
HADULA	Μπά!	237/10	Bah!
HADULA	Νά!	196/16,37; 308/68; 341/85; 368/55	There!
AMERSA	Πῶ, Πῶ!	236/21	Oh, oh!
YANNIS	Τί ἁμαρτίες!	370/18,30	What sins!
(Hadula)		500/79	
CONSTANDIS	Βρε!	304/78,90; 305/40	Stupid!;Hey!
CONSTANDIS	Ζάβαλε!	304/94; 305/14,39	Devil!

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Frangoyannou said almost involuntarily to herself when she saw the two daughters...) And who can forget poor Yannis' anguish, his ~~τὸ ἀποτέλεσμα!~~ ^{τὸ ἀποτέλεσμα!} for the two "daughters" which happened to be his.

Conclusion

Most readers of The Murderess would agree, I believe, that the characters are both distinctive and unforgettable. As in any story, the events and circumstances associated with characters contribute to our lasting impressions of them. But we have seen here that it is subtlety and flexibility in Papadhiamandis' demotic, especially as it is used for character delineation, which accounts for our real knowledge of his characters.

APPENDIX B

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APPENDIX B

THE MURDERESS

Curled up by the fireplace, eyes closed, head leaning against the border of the hearth, called the "fougopodharo," Aunt Hadula, commonly called Yannou the Frank, was not sleeping, but was sacrificing her sleep beside the crib of her sick infant grandchild. As for the woman in childbed, mother of the suffering infant, she had some moments ago fallen asleep on her low humble bed.

A small oil lamp, flickering, hung below the mantle of the fireplace. It cast shadow instead of light on the few pieces of shabby furniture which appeared cleaner and finer at night. The three half-burnt logs, and the large upright branch in the fireplace dropped much ash, some cinders, but seldom burst into flame, causing the old woman to remember in her drowsiness, her absent youngest daughter, Krinyo, who, had she been now in the room, would have murmured rhythmically, "If it's a friend, may it prosper, if it's an enemy, may it choke..."

Hadula, called the Frank, or Frangoyannou, was a woman almost sixty, comely, stout, mannish, with even a faint mustache at the corners of her upper lip. In her reverie, she gathered together the whole of her life, and realized that she had done nothing other than serve others. When she was a child, she served her parents. When she married, she became a slave to her husband--though, through her strength and his weakness, she was at the same time his guardian; when

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she had children, she became their maid; when her children had children, she became again the maidservant of her grandchildren.

The infant had been born two weeks earlier. Its mother had suffered since giving birth. It was she who was sleeping on the bed, the first daughter of Frangoyannou, Delharo the Trahilaina. They had rushed to baptize it on the tenth day because it was suffering terribly; it had a bad cough, whooping-cough, accompanied by signs of convulsions. As soon as it was baptized, the infant seemed a little better the first night, and the coughing stopped for a while. For many nights, Frangoyannou gave not sleep to her eyes, nor slumber to her eyelids, keeping awake beside the little creature who could not imagine the trouble it was causing others, nor the hardships awaiting it if it survived. And it was unable to sense at all the questions which alone the grandmother secretly formulated to herself--"My God, why has it too come into the world?"

The old woman lullabied it, and would have been able to tell "her sorrows in songs" above the cradle of the little one. During the past few nights, she indeed became "irrational," meditating upon all her suffering in detail. In images, in scenes, and in visions, her entire life passed through her mind: the futility, and fruitlessness and weariness.

Her father was frugal, hard-working and prudent. Her mother was wicked, cursing and envious. She was one of the witches of her time. She was versed in sorcery. Bandits had hunted her two or three times, palikars of Karatassos and of Gatsos and of the other chieftains

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of Macedonia. They did this for revenge, because she had hexed them, and their exploits were not going well. For three months, activity had ceased and they were unable to plunder anything from either the Turks or the Christians. Even the government of Corinth did not send them any aid.

They had chased her, downhill, from the top of St. Athanasios to the plateau of Prophet Elias with its enormous plane trees and generous spring, and from there to Merovili, on the side of the mountain, between the wild woods and the bushland. She tried to hide in a thick copse, except she did not fool them. The rustling of the leaves and of the boughs, her own terror, which transferred trembling movement to the branches and bushes, betrayed her. Then she heard angry voices.

"Ach! silly girl, we've caught you!..."

She jumped then from inside the bushes, and ran like a frightened turtle-dove beating its broad white wings. There was no more hope of her escape. Once, the first time, they hunted her, she managed to hide down by Pirghi because that place had many paths. Here in Merovili there were no little roads or labyrinths, only clusters of trees and untrammelled brush. The then young Delharo, Frangoyannou's mother, hopped like a hare from bush to bush, barefoot (because long before she had cast off her shoes from her feet, one of which had been picked up as a trophy by one of the pursuers), and the thorns punctured her heels, cut and bloodied her ankles and shins. Then, in her hopelessness, she had an idea.

There by the copse, on the mountain's flank, was the one and only well-cultivated olive grove, called the "Pine of Moraïtis."

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Old Moraftis, grandfather of the proprietor, had emigrated from Mistra to this place toward the end of the last century during the reign of Katherine and Orlof. The famous pine stood in the middle of the olive grove, like a giant among dwarfs. The thousand year old tree had been grottoed down near the roots of its colossal trunk, which five men could not embrace. Shepherds and fishermen had hollowed it, had dug deep into its heart, had scooped out its entrails in order to get from there bountiful kindling. Yet despite the terrible wounds and disembowelment, it stood another three quarters of a century until 1871, when in July of that year inhabitants for miles around and all the way down to the sea felt tremblings like a frightful earthquake. That night the giant fell.

Into that hollow, inside of which two people could sit comfortably, ran the then young Delharo, mother of today's Frangoyannou. This stratagem was hopeless, almost juvenile. There, no one would hide except in make-believe, like children playing hide-and-seek. Surely her pursuers would see her there. It was invisible in fact only from the back. If the three bandits had arrived from the opposite side, they would have seen her as if she were nailed there.

The three men ran passed it, and continued running. Two of them never looked back. They imagined the "silly girl" had run ahead. Only at the last moment, the third, somewhat puzzled, turned around and looked everywhere else but at the trunk of the pine. He saw the pine together with all the other things, never imagining

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that the trunk had a hollow and was hiding a human soul. And had he known of or recognized the hollow in the gigantic trunk, at that moment it would never have crossed his mind. He looked to find perhaps a void in the earth which had by all means swallowed her, for there was not a ripple to be seen to hide her. Nymphs, forest fairies, summoned perhaps by her magic were protecting her, had blinded her pursuers, casting clouds of greenish mist, verdant darkness into their eyes. They never noticed her.

The young woman was saved from their claws. And for a long period thereafter she continued to work her magic against the bandits, causing them so much "trouble" that booty could no longer be found. This continued until, by the grace of God, things quieted down and Sultan Mahmoud returned as they say, the "Islands of the Devil" to Greece. But ransom gave way to taxation, for exemption had come to an end, and from then on the chosen people continued to slave for the great central belly "which hath not ears."

Hadula the Frank, though very young, was born then and remembered her mother recounting all these stories later. Afterward, when she grew up and turned seventeen and things had somewhat quieted down with the years of stable government, her parents married her off to Yannis the Frank, whom his wife nicknamed "Tasselcap" and "Calculation."

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These two nicknames were not given without reason by his wife, Hadula. "Tasselcap" she named him even before she married him when she would mock him with innocent guile--without foreknowledge that he was to be her luck and husband--because he wore a long bright-red nightcap with a short tassel instead of a fez. "Calculation" came later, after she married him because she discovered he was incapable of figuring either the sum of a few drachmas or his pay for two days' labor, though he was in the habit of saying, "that's the calculation." If she were not there, they would cheat him daily, never giving him correct pay for labor at the drydocks or at the shipyard where he worked as carpenter or caulker.

For a long time he apprenticed and caulked for her father who followed the same trade. The old man, seeing how simple, frugal, and unpretentious he was, approved of him and decided to make him a son-in-law. For dowry, he gave him an abandoned house, ready to fall, in old Castro, where people at one time lived before the revolution. In addition, he gave a place called Bostani--"melon patch"--lying just outside deserted Castro on a coastal cliff three hours distant from the present town. Similarly he gave a wild field which the neighbor claimed to own; but others asserted that both fields in dispute were "church property" of a defunct Convent. Such was the dowry old Statharos bestowed upon his daughter. She was moreover his only daughter. For himself, his wife and his son, he retained two recently constructed houses in the new town, two adjacent vineyards, two olive groves, some lands--and whatever cash they had.

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Up to this point, Frangoyannou's reveries came that night. It was the eleventh evening since her daughter had given birth. The infant had fallen sick again and was suffering terribly. It had come into the world ill. From its mother's womb the deterioration had continued... At that moment, spasmodic coughing interrupted the day dreams, the reveries. She moved from the lowly mattress where she was lying, bent over the child and tried to give it a little aid. She drew near a small bottle in the light of the oil lamp. She tried placing on the baby's lips a teaspoonful. The baby swallowed but immediately coughed it up again.

The mother in childbed stirred on her low, narrow bed. She was apparently not sleeping well. She was only drowsy, and had closed her eyes. Opening her eyes, she raised her head slightly above the pillow and asked:

"How is she, Mana?"

"How is she?" the old woman said sternly... "Quiet down now! What will it do!... it's going to cough, isn't it?"

"How do you see it, Mana?"

"How should I see it?... It's a small baby,... there, had to come into this world too!..." the old woman added in a harsh, singular tone.

After a while the mother in childbed fell asleep more soundly. The old woman had just closed her eyes for a while at daybreak after the third crowing of the cock, when she awakened by the voice of her daughter, Amersa, who had come so early from the small house, next

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door, impatient to learn how her sister and the baby were and how her mother had passed the night.

Amersa, second of the children, was unmarried and an old-maid already. Swarthy, tall, rather masculine, she was very industrious and "accomplished," well-known for her weaving--her trousseau had been filled many years ago with dresses she made herself, but which were for some time now locked away in a homely chest to be eaten by the moths and termites.

"Good morning!...How are you?...How was your night?"

"That you, Amersa? There, this night is over too."

The old woman had just woken up and rubbed her eyes, stammering. Noise came from the small adjoining room. It was Dandis the Trahilis, husband of the mother in childbed who slept on the other side of a thin wooden partition beside another daughter and a very small son, and he had just woken up that moment. Collecting his tools--adzes, saws, planes--he was preparing for the shipyard and another day's work.

"Listen to that ruckus," said the old woman. "Can't collect his tools quietly. What will the neighbors think!..."

"That a gypsy's house is burning!" laughed Amersa ironically.

The noise of the tools from the other side of the partition which Dandis, without being visible, was throwing into his box--adzes, saws, drills, etc.--woke up his sick wife.

"What's that, Mana?"

"What else!... Constandis throwing tools into the satchel!" said the old woman, yawning.

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"And with respect for life?" added Amersa, finishing the proverb.

Then Constandis' voice was heard behind the small partition.

"Did you wake up, Mother-in-law?" he said, "how did you pass the night?"

"How should we pass it! 'Like the hen at the mill...' Come and drink your raki."

Dandis appeared at the door of the winter room. He was broad-chested but ungainly; "clumsy" his old mother-in-law said, and almost beardless. The old woman showed Amersa the small flask of raki on the narrow shelf above the hearth and nodded at her to pour a glass for Constandis to drink.

"Isn't there even a fig?" he asked, as he took the glass of raki from his sister-in-law's hand.

"Where can such a thing be found!..." said Hadula. "A million and one things missing around here," she added, meaning the splurging which usually takes place even in the poorest of homes on "happy occasions," like the birth of a baby daughter.

"You'd like a son-in-law with eyes," said Amersa, his sister-in-law, remembering another proverb.

"You'd be satisfied with a blind one, I suppose?" said Dandis... "Viva! To her forty days!"

And he shot down the liquor in one gulp.

"Good evening!..."

He picked up his satchel and set off for the shipyard.

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The fire died down in the fireplace, the oil lamp flickered on the narrow wainscoting, the mother in childbed lay half asleep on her bed, the infant coughed in its crib, and old Frangoyannou, as she had done the previous nights, lay awake upon her mattress.

It was toward the first crowing of the cock when her reveries came in the form of visions. After they "matched her up" and married her off, endowed her with the ramshackle house in old uninhabited Castro, with the uncultivated melon patch in the wilds of the island's northern confines, and the wild field disputed by the neighbor and the Monastery, the young bride with her husband and a few possessions set up housekeeping at the home of her widowed sister-in-law. Her marriage contract, such as it was, listed in detail, a number of dresses, so many blouses, so many pillowcases, a few pots, a frying pan, one andiron, etc. Even some knives, forks and spoons were mentioned in the contract.

On the Monday immediately following the marriage, the sister-in-law took inventory and found that two sheets, two pillows, one kitchen utensil and a complete dress--items listed in the catalogue--were missing. That very day she advised the mother-in-law to bring the rest of the things. The selfish woman answered that "all was well given and enough." Then the groom's sister had words with her brother; he complained to his young bride and she answered him: "Had he cared about his interests he would never have agreed to a house at Castro, where only ghosts live; and, what

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difference were the sheets and the blouses when he was unable to acquire a house, and vineyard and olive grove?"

During their engagement, Hadula had tried indeed to tell the groom much the same. Though she was very young, thanks to her natural tendencies and the lessons learned, consciously and unconsciously from her mother, she had become very cunning for her age. But her mana smelled the thing, and fearing lest the little Shrew (her usual name for Hadula), give the groom any ideas about asking for more dowry, began a tyrannical surveillance of the engaged couple, prohibiting the slightest private talk between the two. This she did on the pretext of propriety:

"I've no mind...for that little shrew...to put me one in the slips prematurely," she said.

See, the transfer of the verb she took from her husband's occupation. ("In the slips" same as "lay a keel") but her real motive was to avoid giving larger dowry.

One evening, on the eve of the engagement, at the time when the groom and his sister had come to the house to discuss the dowry, the old shipbuilder was dictating the marriage contract to Anagnostis Syvias, church precenter, who had taken a bronze ink pot from his belt, and a goose feather pen from its long case, much resembling a pistol and had placed on his knees the "Book of the Apostle" and on the book a leaf of heavy parchment. He had written according to the dictation of the old man, "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit... I marry my daughter, Hadula, with Ioannis

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Frangos, and I give her, first my benediction,..." Hadula stood opposite the hearth, beside the "templa"--the pile of mattresses, quilts and pillows covered with a silk sheet, and crowned by two enormous pillows--motionless and proud, it seemed as the templa itself... All the while, however, she was motioning, secretively, impatiently, indeed with great caution, motioning to her fiance, motioning to the sister-in-law, not to accept as dowry "house in Castro" and "field in Stivoto," but to demand a house in the new town and a vineyard and olive grove in the vicinity of the new town.

In vain. Neither the groom nor the sister-in-law noticed her desperate signs. Only the old woman, her mother, who, though she was obliged to turn her back to her daughter in order to politely face the mother-in-law and the groom, sat in such a way as to have one shoulder turned toward the young girl. Suddenly, as if informed by an invisible spirit that something was going on, she swiftly turned toward her daughter and saw her forbidden "antics."

She stared at her threateningly.

"Eh! stupid shrew!" she murmured to herself. "Beware!... I'll fix you!"

Directly afterward, however, she realized it would not be in her interests to make an issue of it. She feared it might prompt a complaint to the father. And surely that could make matters worse. The old man might give into his only daughter's pleadings and give her additional dowry. So she said nothing.

Hadula wondered how, though her mother clearly caught her in the act of making those dangerous signs, for the first time in her

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life, when they were next alone, she did not scratch, nor pinch, nor bite her, things which otherwise, she often did. Note that dowry of a house in the old uninhabited village had these advantages, that a number of houses were still intact in Castro, that certain families used to spend the summer there, and that in the minds of the people there was a bias in favor of the "Old village, which the elders pined for, for they were not yet accustomed to the new order of things or to peaceful life free from incursions by robbers, pirates or the Turkish armada, and the conditions in the new town were still uncertain and there was an expectation that the people would again be forced to return to their "old haunts." But while everyone remembered Castro and Castro was being missed and mused upon, and spoken of, the construction of homes in the new town did not cease--demonstrating once again that men commonly think one thing but do another, imitating one another mechanically.

In any case, two weeks after the engagement the marriage took place. This was the wish of the mother-in-law. It was not to her liking, she said, to have an unmarried groom visit the house, especially one formerly given free access as a co-worker and apprentice to her husband. And the sister-in-law, widowed, elderly, with a teen age child, also working at the shipyard, and another dependent boy and girl, took the newlyweds in. Then, about a year later, the first child, Stathis, was born. Then came Delharo, followed by Yalis, afterward Mihalis, followed by Amersa, after her Mitrakis, and finally Krinyo. During the first years, peace seemed to reign in the house.

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Later, war commenced in the house when the first two grew old enough to play with the youngest two of the sister-in-law. Then Frangoyannou, now aged and experienced, as she herself would modestly admit, managed to build a small house of her own through frugalities and resourcefulness. The first year she was able to build only the four adobe walls, small and low, and roof them. The second year she succeeded in boarding over three quarters of the house, that is to say, she laid a small floor of old and new planks of unequal lengths and thicknesses. Then, without losing time, impatient to free herself from the tyranny of her sister-in-law who with age had grown eccentric, she moved to her own "quarters," her own "nest," her own "corner" together with her husband and children. That day, she would often say, was the most joyful of her entire life.

All these things Frangoyannou remembered, relived, so to speak, during those long, sleepless January nights while the north wind, sighing outside, intermittently beat against the roof tiles and shook the windows as she kept vigil beside the crib of her infant grand-daughter. It was already three o'clock in the morning, and the cock crowed again. Having just quieted down, the infant began coughing distressingly. It had come sick into the world and in addition, caught cold it seems on the third day, in the baptismal font when it had been immersed. After that the coughing began. For days, Frangoyannou eagerly watched for signs of convulsions in the sick creature--knowing that if they appeared the child would not survive--though fortunately she did not see any. "It is destined to suffer and cause us suffering," she murmured to herself, beyond ear-shot of anyone.

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At that moment, Frangoyannou opened her closed sleepless eyes and rocked the cradle. At the same time she wanted to give the suffering baby its usual medicine.

"Who's coughing?" called a voice from behind the partition.

The old woman did not answer. It was Saturday evening and her son-in-law had drunk one glass of raki too many before supper and a large glass of vinegary wine afterward in order to relax from the week's labor. Well, Dandis, from drinking too much, was talking in his sleep, or perhaps babbling.

The infant did not retain the drop of liquid in its mouth, but spit it out in a fit of the coughing which had increased rather distressingly.

"Shut up!..."said Constandis, father of the infant, in his sleep.

"And choke!..." added Frangoyannou ironically.

In her sleep, the mother in childbed took fright, hearing perhaps the coughing of the little one mixed with the brief bizarre dialogue across the partition between the sleeping man and the wakeful woman.

"What is it, Mana?" said Delharo, sitting up. "The baby is not well?"

The old woman smiled bitterly in the trembling light of the oil lamp.

"I hear you daughter!..."

That "I hear you daughter" was said in a very singular tone. and it was not, by the way, the first time the young mother heard

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something similar from her mother. She remembered other occasions when the old woman, with neighborhood mothers and grandmothers, would discuss at length the great surplus of young girls, the conditions of poverty and want, the emigrations, the demands of suitors, Christian suffering to establish the "weaker sex," that is to say, provide for daughters--all concerns of one's neighbors, but especially when her mother would learn of young girls fallen ill, she would shake her head and say:

"I hear you neighbor... There is no Charon? There are no rocks?" because she had the habit of repeating proverbs very expressively. On other occasions she heard her philosophizing about how it was not in one's interest to have many daughters or even marry. And her usual wish for little girls was "may they not survive!..." "may they not grow up!"

Once she even went so far as to say:

"What can I tell you?... Sometimes people feel like choking them the moment they're born!..."

Yes, she said that, but surely she could never do such a thing... She did not even believe it herself.

III

In this way the nights passed since Delharo Trahilaina's confinement. After the child was baptized, and named "Hadula," same as its grandmother--who shook her head, murmuring "What a blessing to have my name!"--the old woman still continued her vigil even though the child seemed a little better. Besides, it was natural for

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Frangoyannou to stay awake, for a thousand things crowded her mind and she usually found sleep difficult. Thoughts and events, somber pictures of the past, flooded her mind in waves one after the other, passed before her eyes and filtered through her heart.

Well, Hadula had had many children and built a small house in which to live. As her family increased, so did her troubles. Yes, her own frugalities and not her husband's savings had built the house. Master Yanni, the Tasselcap, or "Calculation" could not even calculate his daily wage for four, five or six days at 1.75 or 1.80 a day (that is how much third class carpenters were paid). On occasion, when he caulked for 2.35 or 2.40 a day, he still could not figure his pay.

He only knew how to drink most of it away, almost all of it, on Sunday. Fortunately his wife took measures against this and took the money from him Saturday night. Or she collected it directly from the foreman, though not without argument. His boss preferred paying Master Yannis himself because he could withhold money, same as he did from everyone else--10 or 15 cents extra saying, "I have girls, dear friend, I have girls!" But cheating Frangoyannou was difficult. She gave him the only logical and only deserved answer: "Only you have girls, I suppose! What about the rest of the world, they don't have any?"

Or, if she did not succeed in getting the money herself from the shipbuilder, Yannou took it half jokingly, half seriously, from her husband's hands after making sure first she had cajoled and

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maneuvered him into a good mood. Or, in the end, late Saturday night, she left him to doze off and stole it from his shirt. Then on Sunday morning, she would give him 40 or 50 cents "spending money."

Well, she managed to build a house by being frugal, but as for the original little capital, where had it come from? Now, during this night's vigil, Hadula confronted herself with it for the first time. She never even confessed it to her priest though at confession she admitted the usual small sins which he knew even before she said them--blasphemes, arguments, woman's curses and the like. She never confessed it to her now deceased mother--though she was the only one who suspected all along, but never said anything to her. Yes, it is true that she considered and had decided to tell her mother just before her death, but unfortunately the old woman's last moments were semi-conscious. She became deaf and mute, "like a vegetable" her daughter described it, and thus the chance to confess her mistake was lost.

She never told her father either, or her husband. Well, this was her secret:

Before her marriage, Hadula began stealing little by little from her father's meagre savings--half a piastre at a time. So little he hardly noticed, though twice he sensed something, but thought he himself had made a mistake counting his small treasure. This treasure he kept in a hidden place which was soon discovered by his wife and only much later by his daughter. Then for a time, Hadula stopped stealing so as not to alarm her father. Later, however, she began stealing again, though Hadula could not hold a candle to the thefts of her mother.

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She had stolen a lot, artfully and methodically. Most of it from other sources to which she had easier access such as produce of the family farm, profits from olive oil and wines; and some, about as much as their daughter, from the old man's daily wages. After a time, when trade increased and old Stathis became a small shipbuilder--(he built boats and caiques himself with his son and an apprentice in the front yard of the house)--it then became possible for the old woman to steal considerable profits from the art of shipbuilding as well.

Finally, a few months before her marriage, Hadula managed to find her mother's hidden money sack. Down a hole in the cellar, between half-filled jars and empty barrels, lay a long, wide strip of black kerchief in which the old woman had "dog-tied" over a hundred and seventy silver pieces--colonial coins, crowns, Turkish money--all stolen from the old man's profits and farm. Astonished, overjoyed, terrified, the daughter counted the coins, the dog-tied bundle, before placing them back in the hole, not daring to take a single one.

But on the eve of her marriage, at dusk--seeing how persistent her parents were about a meagre dowry, and the callousness of her mother--she carefully watched for the time the old woman would leave the house on a short errand. Then, with heart pounding, she crept into the cellar, searched and found the dog-tied money sack, and untied it. This time there seemed less of it, but she had not counted the money for some time. Perhaps the old woman had taken some coins and spent them for some unknown purpose. At first she decided to take the whole thing, all of it, together with the piece of her mother's old kerchief.

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But she was too afraid. So she took only eight or nine silver pieces--that much she imagined would not make a perceptible difference in the size of the sack, or be noticed quickly. Then she began re-tying it only to open the sack once again, taking another five or six pieces--fifteen in all. Tying it again she made a new movement to open it intending to take two or three more coins. Suddenly, she heard her mother's footsteps outside. Hurriedly she tied the sack and put it back in its place.

A few days after the wedding, the old woman discovered the theft but said nothing to her daughter. She was relieved the whole thing had not been taken. "Must have been blind!" she said through her teeth.

The amount, which Hadula had stolen from her parents from time to time, amounted to about four hundred piastres, the coinage of that period. This she kept carefully hidden for many years. But, in order to build a house she added to the sum through other means which she was always able to do. Hadula was indeed energetic and resourceful. Whenever time permitted between caring for so many of her own children, who came one after the other, she worked for strangers. Moreover, in those small villages there were no specialists but jacks-of-all-trades. Just as the town grocer was at the same time dry-goods merchant, druggist, even a pawnbroker, so a good weaver like Frangoyannou practiced midwiving, doctoring and other jobs so long as she felt capable. And Frangoyannou was one of the most capable of all among the women.

She prescribed herbs, prepared unguents, administered massage, and exorcized the "possessed," prepared medicines for the sick, for

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chlorotic and anemic girls, and for female ailments, especially those accompanying pregnancy and immediately thereafter. With a basket under her left arm, the two youngest children in tow, Dimitrakis, eight, and Krinyo, six, she would wander about the fields, climb the mountains, traverse the glens, the valleys and the streams, searching for familiar herbs--wild onion, snakeweed, clover and others. She would cut or uproot them, fill her basket, and return at night to her house.

With these herbs she prepared various salves which she recommended as infallible against chronic pains of the chest, of the stomach, of the intestines, etc. Though these means really brought her very little, by economizing she managed, in time, to build her small nest. Yet it was not long before her young ones grew up and began leaving for foreign lands!

During that period her first boy, Statharos, already twenty, left for America and after two letters was never heard from again. Three years later her second boy, Yalis, by then a grown young man, also embarked.

Both boys had tried their father's trade during their early years but neither the one nor the other progressed very much or took to it very well. Yalis, an affectionate son and brother, wrote his mother from Marseilles where he had sailed on a navy ship, that he was headed for America in search of his older brother in hopes of finding him somewhere. But months passed, years. Neither the one nor the other was ever heard from again.

By this their mother was reminded of a folk tale, one of the funnier ones, concerning a honey mattress. An Old Woman sent her oldest

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son for some honey. He became stuck in the mattress and so she sent her second son to dislodge the first, and the third, who she sent to free the other two; then the Old Man who went to see what happened to the sons. Finally, the Old Woman decided to go herself to see, from a distance--for being an old woman, she was cunning--what happened to her husband and her boys who did not return from the "errand" she sent them on. She escaped and did not get stuck. Then, turning on the four of them glued to the mattress she said: "Ah! You found a bed of honey, what about me, honeys!"

Meanwhile, while Statharos and Yalis had estranged themselves in America, eaten of the lotus or drunk of Lethe, Delharo, the eldest daughter though younger than her two lost brothers, was growing older and older. And Amersa, almost four years younger than her sister, also "shot up," like Delharo. Mannish, swarthy and mischievous, the neighbors called her "Tomboy." The youngest one, little Krinyo, alas did not have a lily complexion though she was naturally slim; she too showed signs of growing up.

"How fast they grow, my God!" thought Frangoyannou. What garden, what meadow, what spring season produces this plant! How it buds, blossoms, flourishes, prospers! And all these sprouts, all these tender shoots, will they become arbors, groves and gardens one day? And what then? Every family in the neighborhood, in the community, and in the town has two to three girls. Some have four, others five. One mother had six daughters and no son. Another seven and one son, who from the start seemed worthless.

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Now all these parents, all these couples, all these widows, each obliged at all costs to marry off their girls--the five, the six, the seven! Giving each a dowry. All poor families, all widows--living on one-half acre in wretched dwellings; hapless creatures, working for others--either picking figs and mulberries in the fields of well-to-do families--collecting leaves, producing silk; or caring for two or three goats or lambs and becoming hateful to all the neighbors, paying penalties for trivial losses; taxed unmercifully, surviving on barley-bread embittered by the salt of their sweat; duty-bound without fail "to establish" all these females, to give five, six, seven dowries! Oh my God!

And dowries according to island custom. "A house in Kotronia, a vineyard in Ammoudia, olive orchard in Lehouni, a field in Strophlia." And toward the middle of the century, another pest appeared. The "sum," which in Constantinople they call "trachoma"; a custom, if I am not mistaken, prohibited by the Orthodox Church. The obligation to give each one a cash dowry also. Two thousand, one thousand, five hundred, whatever. Otherwise, one's daughters become old maids. Remain on the shelf. Closed in the closet. Sent to the museum.

IV

At this point the old woman's memories and meditations came to an end. The cock crowed for a second time. It was about two in the morning. January, the month. The time, night. The north wind was blowing. The fire in the hearth had gone out. Frangoyannou felt a

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chill in her back and her feet were ice cold. She thought about getting a little wood from the hall outside to throw into the fireplace to re-kindle the fire. But she felt a little drowsy, the first symptom perhaps of falling asleep. She put it off.

At that moment, so early, while her eyes were closed, a strange rapping was heard on the door outside. The old woman was startled. Not wishing to shout "Who is it?" for fear of waking the mother in childbed, she shook off her drowsiness, which had already been rudely interrupted by the knocking, got up slowly and left the room. Even before she reached the exterior door, she distinctly heard a whispering voice:

"Mana!"

She recognized the voice of Amersa. It was her second daughter.

"What happened?... Why so early?"

She opened the door.

"Mana," repeated Amersa in a feeble voice, "How is the little girl? She isn't dead is she?"

"No--she fell asleep, just now," said the old woman. "What is the matter?"

"I dreamt that she died," said the tall old maid in a trembling voice.

"And if she died, so what?" the old woman said cynically. "And so you got up... and came to see?"

The Yannou house, where the old woman usually lived with her two unmarried daughters--though for the present she was staying nightly by

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the mother in childbed--was only a few dozen steps to the north. This house of Delharo's had been given her in dowry. It was the original one Hadula had built by economizing and that first nucleus from the money sack of her never-to-be-forgotten parents. Later, a few years after Delharo's marriage, Hadula was able to build a second nest, smaller, more wretched than the original, in this same neighborhood. Two or three houses separated the first from the second.

Well, it was from this new house that Amersa had come so early--unafraid of ghosts and the like at night, daring and determined as she was.

"And so you got up?... and came to see?"

"Suddenly in the middle of my sleep, Mana. I saw that the girl died, and that you had a black mark on your hand...."

"Black mark?"

"You wanted to wrap her in a shroud immediately. And the moment you wrapped her in the shroud, your hand turned black... and then you quickly put your hand in the fire to get the black off."

"Bah! Clairvoyant!" said old Hadula. "And so you stupidly came here at such an hour..."

"I couldn't calm down, Mana."

"Krinyo doesn't know you left?"

"No, she's sleeping."

"And if she wakes up and doesn't find you next to her, what will she think?... won't she start crying?... she'll be frightened!"

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The two sisters, indeed, stayed by themselves in the small house. Amersa was unafraid and sure of herself like a man. Their father had passed away some time ago and their surviving brothers continued living abroad.

"I'm going back, Mana," Amersa said... "Truly I didn't think about Krinyo waking up so early and not finding me... she'd be terrified."

"Maybe you could stay here," said the mother, "only if Krinyo doesn't suddenly wake up and become frightened."

Amersa thought for a moment.

"Mana," she said, "Would you like me to stay here so you can go home... so you can rest, calm yourself?"

"No," she said after a moment's reflection. "Now the night's almost over anyway. Tomorrow night I'll go home and you'll stay here. Only go now. Happy sunrise!"

All this conversation took place in the small narrow hall just outside the room where Constandis' loud, nasal snoring could be heard. Amersa, who had come in barefoot, left silently on tiptoe. Her mother closed the door and turned the key.

Amersa dashed away. She had no more fear of ghosts than she had of her brother, Mitros, who the townspeople called "Moron," "Menace" or "Maniac"--that bully, third son of her mother who the old woman usually called "the dog of Agarino!" Three years her senior, he once stabbed her, and though she saved him from the police, he would have surely stabbed her again had he remained free. Fortunately, he

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practised his murderous inclinations elsewhere and in the meantime, was conveniently closed in the Venetian dungeon of the old fortress in Halcis.

Here is how this came to pass. Moron, or Menace, was ungovernable and violent by nature though he was very capable, inventive and as his mother would say, "too clever." Even as a child he was able to make many small beautiful things by himself: little boats, masks, statuettes, dolls and the like. He became the neighborhood bully and leader of a juvenile gang and under his command he gathered all the innocent boys, all the barefoot street urchins. Soon he began drinking and carousing. With his small friends he organized noisy games, demonstrations and street fights; hurled stones at old men and women, at the poor and weak. Hardly a person was left unmolested.

He learned the art of knifemaking at a glance from a passing dealer and began, however imperfectly, to manufacture knives. He had a large grinding wheel in the yard, hiding it under the balcony, and almost turned the basement into a factory. There he sharpened knives and razors for the neighborhood angels and when he had none of theirs to do he sharpened his own. Ambitiously he set about turning single-edged blades into double. Then he tried making revolvers, pistols, small cannons and other lethal weapons. All his money, everything earned from dolls, statuettes and masks--except the money he drank--went for gunpowder. This he tried to manufacture as well. During Easter, indeed two weeks before, one passed at one's own risk through the neighborhood where Maniac ruled. The fusilade went on uninterrupted.

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One Sunday, drunk, Menace caused a great disturbance in the street. After listening to numerous complaints, two policemen went after him in the hope of getting him "jugged" or thrown in the "Kazarma," the barracks. But Moron, very agile, outdistanced them, turned and mocked them from afar before resuming his escape by hiding in an inaccessible dry-dock at his cousin's, a shipwright. Later, when the two men abandoned their chase, he took courage and returned to the street.

That same day, not yet sober, Moron shamelessly chased his own mother in the street, threatening to kill her. He complained that the old woman had stolen money from his pocket. He reached her in their yard where she ran to hide, and seizing her by the hair, dragged her fifty feet along the road.

Her screams brought out the neighbors. It was early evening, just before sunset. Into the commotion of the neighbors walked two policemen, the same two who had been searching for Menace and who only appeared to have given up the chase. By this time they were extremely irritated at the agitator. Seeing them, Menace let go of his mother and took flight. Finding himself in narrow straits with no safer or more distant place, he ran into the house.

The old woman, badly bruised and covered with dust, got up and began to plead with the policemen.

"Leave him alone! He's foolish, that's all. Don't kill him with your sticks!"

She said this because she saw one of the policemen was boiling, holding a terrible billy club in his hand. The two men paid no

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attention to her pleas and continued running after Moron. They forced their way into his hideout, the cellar of the house where Moron had his factory. He ran in there to hide and managed to bar the door just in time. But the bolt was rotten and badly fitted for Moron never liked peaceful labor enough to take the time to fix it. They broke the small bolt and entered.

Quick as a wild cat, Menace climbed through a trap-door to the first floor. The trap was located near the north wall, and the north wall rested in part on rock and the rock, jutting out as it did, provided footholds for Moron's agile feet, footings which in the past he had dug out for himself alone. It seems he was used to this kind of exercise.

The wood plank of the trap-door was closed. Moron opened it with a butt of the head and a push from his left arm. Then, like a swimmer surfacing, he jumped out onto the floor, closed the trap-door with a bang and apparently placed a heavy weight, perhaps a small trunk, over the wooden cover.

Fuming, the two policemen began searching the area, swearing. They confiscated all knives and pistols found there as well as the grinding wheel and two other small sharpeners, and were preparing to leave or go up into the house.

Up on the first floor, Menace or Maniac was in a rage, still drunk and foaming at the mouth. He was raving like a maniac. Up there alone at the time was his then seventeen-year-old sister, Amersa, who grew frightened seeing her brother emerge from the trap-door

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in such a strange way. She had heard the steps and curses of the two policemen below. Peering through a small crack between two badly jointed beams or a hollow knot in the floorboard, she saw the two officers below in the light which penetrated the open door of the cellar.

"Stupid! I'll kill you... now I'll drink your blood!" cried Maniac, having nowhere else to spend his rage but on his blameless sister.

"Hush!... Hush!..." whispered Amersa. "Oh, oh, my God! Two cops! down in the basement... searching... searching... what do they want?"

She watched as the two policemen carried away the small, crude weapons, the handiwork of her brother, as well as the grinding wheel and sharpeners. Then suddenly she saw them stoop in the corner where her mother's loom stood and watched one of the policemen pick up the wooden shuttle, the dart, which he no doubt suspected was a weapon--since indeed it's called a dart. The other tried to pull out the pole from the loom, the large cylindrical spindle around which the newly woven material is wound; perhaps he never saw such a thing in his life before and thought it also could be good for a weapon.

Amersa, seeing this, let out a muffled cry. She wanted to tell them to leave the distaff and shuttle alone, but the words died on her lips.

"Shut up, stupid!" cried Maniac. "What're you planning? What're you looking and laughing at?"

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Maniac in his drunkenness mistook his sister's inarticulate cry for a laugh.

A few moments later, the two policemen, throwing one last glance at the trap-door which they saw close the moment they walked onto the ground floor, left. Amersa stood up. She thought she heard creaking below on the exterior wooden stairs, underneath the roof of the broad porch, the hiyati. She ran towards the door.

Amersa assumed the two "regulars," as they were called, were coming up the stairs perhaps to force in the door of the house. Bending down to the keyhole she tried peeping through to get an idea of what was happening. The only window facing there was closed, so she had no other choice.

Maniac, seeing Amersa run toward the door, imagined, in his irrational drunkenness, that his sister wanted to open the door and deliver him up to the authorities. Then, blind with rage, he drew a sharp knife from his hip, lunged and stabbed her in the back, just below the right armpit.

Pierced by the cold steel, Amersa let out an agonized scream.

The two policemen who had not yet gone were standing just outside the front door thinking what to do next. Hearing the fearful scream, they looked up and started running.

Clattering up the stairs they reached the hiyati. They banged violently on the door.

"Open in the name of the Law!"

At that moment, one of the men guessed that the culprit might escape through the trap-door to the ground floor. Turning to the other he said:

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"Hey, watch out! Don't let him get out the hatch, the trap!... How'll we get him then?"

"What did you say?" said the second, not catching on right away.

"Do as I say" insisted the first... "Do what you're told!"

The other policeman, a little dull-witted, ran down as fast as he could to close the ground floor door or intercept him. But it was too late already. Maniac in the meantime pushed aside the trunk which he had placed over the hatch, opened it and jumped through. It was more than two meters high, but Maniac was light, agile and the ground was covered with wood chips and shavings. He landed on his feet, safe and sound.

Running like the wind, he knocked over the policeman who fell heavily in the exterior stairway. Maniac fled like lightning. He ran up toward Kotronia, a place known for its owls. It was a high rocky hill south of the house and Maniac knew its every nook and cranny. Neither the police nor anyone else was able to arrest him.

The moment Maniac jumped through the trap-door, he recalled strangely enough--perhaps because the events had shaken and "sobered him up" as he himself would have said--he recalled, I say, that after stabbing his sister, the knife fell from his hand and lay on the floor. This happened perhaps because guilt and fear overcame him that moment--for his attack on his sister was really unpremeditated.

When the idea came to him to flee, and he had run to open the trap, having realized by then that the police were mounting the stairs, he had no more time to return to that place by the door, bend down and retrieve his knife. Just before he jumped, he shouted to his sister:

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"The 'shade,' stupid!... Make sure you hide that 'shade!'"

He did not want the police to hear the word "blade." At that terrible instant, criminal and guilty, he appealed to his sister's loving instincts, sure she would save him. The knife would be covered with blood and his pursuers would see it. By urging her to hide it, he hoped to conceal his crime.

Indeed, though blood was already running from her wound, Amersa, realizing they would by all means force in the old light door with its rusted bolt and latch, near faint, she bent over and picked up the knife. Then she dragged herself to a corner by a small pile of pillows, bedding and folded sheets.

She hid the bloodstained knife under that pile of linen, wrapped herself in an old but clean patched quilt and sat on the low heap which sank even lower. Bringing her right hand under her armpit, she tried to stop the bleeding. Somehow she was unafraid when she saw the blood, though it was the first time such a thing had happened to her. Everything seemed as in a dream. She just gritted her teeth and wondered about not feeling pain. A few seconds later, however, sharp pains came.

At that moment the door was forced in. One of the policemen noisily burst into the room.

Amersa did not raise her head, just remained stooped over, wrapped in the quilt up to her ears.

"Where is that bully?" cried the officer menacingly.

Amersa did not answer.

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The officer, who had no idea of Menace's escape or that his comrade had tumbled and fallen, perhaps because it occurred the moment he was banging in the door and the noise had deafened him to the other, searched the place where Amersa was, than ran into the winter room, then into the small adjoining one. He found no one. Only the open hatch.

A moment later his subordinate appeared.

"Did he get away?"

"Through the trap-door, below..."

"And you let him get away?..." You didn't catch him?"

"I was knocked for a ghou!... Ah! What speed... Seven miles an hour!..."

"Ach!" said the first policeman, curving the forefinger of his right hand and bringing it to his mouth as if to bite it after angrily shaking his head. "They ought to demote us!"

The second policeman, wishing to appear tough, addressed the young girl:

"Where'd your brother head for, miss?" he said.

Amersa didn't answer. But deep down she would probably murmur ironically to herself through her frightful pain, "You know."

"Why are you sitting there like that, sister?" said the first more kindly. "Did he hurt you in any way?"

Amersa shook her head.

"What did he want with you?... Did he try to stab you?"

"Why did you scream?" added the second.

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Amersa answered the first policeman's question.

"No!"

"Tell the truth, did he knife you?" the man insisted.

Amersa, in a natural voice, said:

"My brother, stab me!"

"Why are you sitting like that, what's the matter? Are you sick?"

"I've got fever!"

It never dawned on Amersa that the floor and the pile of straw might be bloodstained. But the sun had already set and shadow had filled the house. Besides the place where the stained knife had fallen, blood spots were in the shadows behind the door which was two-thirds open to the wall. So the two men never noticed them.

"Why did you scream?" insisted the first policeman.

"I felt pain and dizziness," said Amersa.

And at that moment, as if giving proof to her words, a real faint came over her. She gasped, "Ohh!," gritted her teeth and bent over. The two officers were touched, looked at her and the first said:

"Where could her mother be?"

As if obeying a command, Frangoyannou arrived on the run.

"There, she's the old woman whose son dragged her into the street by the hair!" said the second policeman.

Then he added:

"Say, my good woman, where's that son of yours?"

Without responding, Frangoyannou rushed to Amersa's side. She was a capable doctor and able to care for her daughter.

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All these memories often came to Amersa, especially during the long hours of the night or twilight or dawn, whenever sleep eluded her in the house, next to her sleeping sister, little Krinyo, while their mother was away those hours keeping vigil many a night now in the room of the mother in childbed at the house of the older daughter. And when she returned home after the night's adventure which she had undertaken, "clairvoyant" as she was, following that dream, she saw in the dim light of the candle which flickered before the small, old, blackened icon of the Virgin, that her little sister, Krinyo, was fast asleep and had not stirred from her place. Only as Amersa entered did Krinyo, perhaps hearing a faint noise in her sleep, move peacefully, sigh, turn over, but otherwise not awake.

"Clairvoyant!" Really. The word her mother had so recently used came back to her indeed the moment when, with the third crowing of the cock, she entered the house near her little sleeping sister. But was she truly "clairvoyant"? She whose dreams, visions and hallucinations often came to mean or prophesy something or leave a strange impression. And those falsehoods of hers, all she told, involuntarily came true for her. Like the time after being stabbed by her brother when she answered the policeman's question saying: "I feel pain and dizziness." And with these words was immediately overcome by a real faint, as if some higher deity wished to cover her lie.

Amersa lay down again beside her sister but did not sleep. Memories continued to flood her mind though less tyrannically and less somberly than those of her mother. And during those long hours she

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never ceased reflecting on the destiny of her brother, Menace, who was now in the Halcis prison.

V

After Amersa left, Frangoyannou, huddled up in a corner between the fireplace and the cradle, having lost her sleep once again, little by little picked up the thread of her bitter, distant, wandering meditations. Well when the two older boys emigrated to America and Delharo grew up, it became the mother's responsibility to provide for the marriage of her daughters since the old man, "Calculation," was not particularly distinguished for his industriousness. Well, all the world knows what it means to be both mother and father to daughters without even being a widow. She herself must marry them off and provide dowry, arrange the match and negotiate the terms. Like a man, she must provide a house, vineyard, field and olive grove; borrow money, run to the notary, settle the mortgage. Like a woman, she must create or provide dowry, that is to say, supply the sheets, embroidered blouses, and silk dresses with gold-brocade hems. As a matchmaker she must search for a groom, pursue, net and capture him. And what sort of groom!

One like Constandis who is snoring now in the next room on the other side of the wall--beardless, useless, worthless. Also capricious, demanding, stubborn; today demanding this, tomorrow that; one day asking so much, the next more. Then others "get to him" through rumor, gossip, slander--out of self-interest or envy--so he changes his mind. But

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after the engagement he moves in with his in-laws to "put one in the slips" prematurely; afterwards acts like nothing happened.

Only after so much trouble, so many headaches, barely, after so long a time, was this groom finally persuaded to marry her. Then the bride puts on airs, decks herself out in finery--the fruit of so much sacrifice and economizing--trying desperately to show the trim waistline of her former self.

And three months after the wedding she gives birth to a daughter--three years later a son--two years later another daughter--the new-born for whom the old grandmother was keeping vigil so many nights now.

And for all these daughters their mother had worked and suffered so much--so much more--so much more than her mother had endured for her.

Poor Amersa, the tomboy, remained unmarried (God bless her!). She knew better. Indeed, she was sensible. Why would she want so many burdens? Neither was she jealous! Jealous of what? She saw her older sister and pitied her--wept for her.

As for little Krinyo, if only God will enlighten her as well! Whatever she does, her mother has no intention--her strength and stamina exhausted--of marrying her off and suffering even a fraction of what she suffered for her older sister. But I ask you, is it really necessary for so many girls to be born? And if they come, is it worth raising them? "There is no," said Frangoyannou, "There is no Charon, there are no rocks? It's better if they don't live to grow up. I hear you, neighbor!"

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It was for this much-suffering woman a great and sacred comfort, to follow when it chanced, a small funeral procession of priests preceding the Cross. To hold in her arms herself, compassionate and merciful as she was, the small cradle-like casket and bear the daughter of a neighbor or distant relative to the grave. She had difficulty catching the murmurings of the priest chewing his words between his teeth. "Naught is more pitiable than a father, naught more wretched than a mother..." Oft do they beat their breasts before the grave and say: "O my son, and sweetest child, hearest thou not what thy mother criest unto thee? Behold, also, the womb that bare thee. Why speakest thou not with us. Alleluia!" And again: "Who would not wail, my child, beholding thy rosy face so early faded, which before was beautiful as the crimson lily of the field?"

But what great delight when the small funeral procession, after ten minutes' march arrived at the Cemetery. Beautiful countryside, perpetual spring, sea of green, wildflowers, fragrant garden. Behold the park of the dead! Oh! Paradise even of this world, opening its gates to receive the small innocent creature whose good fortune was to liberate its parents from so much torment. Rejoice small angels who flutter round and round with white-gold wings, and you, souls of Saints, Welcome it!

When Hadula would return for the evening "consolation" at the house of mourning--not a word of sympathy could she find to say for she was joyful at the good fortune of the innocent child and its parents. The sorrow was joy, death was life, all was otherwise.

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Ah! Behold... Nothing is exactly as it appears; everything is otherwise, even opposite.

If sorrow is joy, and death is life and resurrection, then misfortune is good fortune and sickness is health. These plagues which seem so dreadful, that prematurely mow down infants--smallpox, scarlet fever, diphtheria and others--are they not blessings, strokes of small angels' wings who glory in heaven as they receive the souls of the young? And we, in our blindness, interpret these as misfortunes, as plagues, as evils.

And distraught parents lose their wits, and pay dearly for charlatans and quack medicines to save their children. They do not suspect that "save" really means "lose" the child. For Christ said, as Frangoyannou understood her confessor explain, "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it! But whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it."

Must we not then, if men were not so blind, try to aid the beating wings of angels than seek to drive them away? But behold, the angels are impartial, grant no pardon, take both sons and daughters to Paradise without distinction. Especially sons--how many beloved and only sons!--die before their time. The daughters have seven lives, the old woman mused. They do not sicken easily and rarely die. As good Christians then, should we not aid in the work of angels? Oh, how many boys and genteel girls are seized prematurely. Then again, little rich girls die more easily--though rarely more than boys--than the countless daughters of the poor.

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The girls of this class have the seven lives! Seems as though they multiply on purpose to torment their parents here on earth. Ah! the more one ponders! the more one "loses one's reason."

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At that moment, the daughter began coughing and whimpering. The old woman, enervated by all these thoughts, and innundated by waves of memory, suddenly felt dizzy, overcome by the turmoil and tempest of her existence. She slowly sank into a drowsy, uncontrollable desire for sleep.

The infant coughed, cried and constantly fussed "like a grownup." Her grandmother stirred, turned, and lost her sleep again.

Its mother slept soundly, unaware of any coughing or crying.

The old woman opened stern eyes and gestured impatiently, threateningly.

"Eh! Will you shut up?" she said.

Frangoyannou's mind, indeed, began to "lose its reason." It finally became irrational. It was expected, after laboring on such profound questions. She leaned over the crib. Forced two long, rough fingers into the infant's mouth to "shut it up."

She knew very small infants do not usually suffocate. But she was by now irrational--had no real notion what she was doing nor why.

She continued the choking for some time; then took her fingers out of the small mouth which had stopped breathing, seized the baby's neck and squeezed it for a few seconds.

That was all.

Frangoyannou at that moment did not recall Amersa's dream which her daughter had told to her only an hour before, between the second and third crowing of the cock!

She had "lost her reason!"

VI

Unable to fall asleep again after returning from her sister's house, Amersa, wide awake beside her little sister, began again and for a long while to dwell upon her brother, that poor unhappy criminal. Since the time he jumped through the trap-door and fled, she never saw him again. The police searched many days but he had vanished.

Immediately following Amersa's questioning by the police, Frangoyannou arrived at the house and discovered her daughter wrapped in the quilt, head down, pale after fainting from loss of blood.

To the question posed by the first officer whom Menace had tripped, "Old lady, where is that son of yours?," Frangoyannou did not respond. But the other one who appeared more humane, said in a calm voice:

"Look, Madame. What's the matter with your daughter? She says she's sick."

"She is sick! How not to be!" said Frangoyannou with the ready answer. "She's in shock over the antics of that clever son of mine... Look my dears!... if you catch up with him, don't harm him..."

"Did you see him run off? Which way?"

"I saw him from a distance!... Along by the Wells... past the Threshing Floor."

Frangoyannou told a double lie. She had not seen Menace but was sure he had fled in the opposite direction from what she said toward Kotronia, eastward above the house where as a child he used to chase owls.

The two men took off on the run. One of them threw a last suspicious glance back at the half-open door.

Hadula shut the door. Then she opened the window.

"He stabbed me, Mana!" sighed Amersa in pain as the current of air flowing through the open window revived her from her faint.

Throwing off the quilt, blood appeared on the blouse she was wearing over her undershirt.

"Oh! Ach! The murderer!..." "Heaven and Earth punish him!" cursed the mother, seeing the blood.

Then she began to examine her daughter, to try to stop the bleeding and bind the wound. Pulling on the sleeve, Frangoyannou removed the blouse. Amersa's right arm was firm and taut though lean and pale.

The wound was only superficial, but the bleeding was difficult to control. Hadula employed whatever techniques she knew and would have used a tourniquet had she had one. She bandaged the wound and soon the bleeding stopped.

Amersa had been somewhat weakened, but she was basically strong and unafraid. Indeed, after a few days of her mother's care, the injury healed.

Frangoyannou would never have called the doctor. She did not want it known that her son had stabbed his sister. To all the inquisitive neighbors whoever asked, she denied--sometimes feigning indignation, sometimes forcing a laugh--that Menace had injured her daughter. What interested her above all was to learn if Mihalis had escaped from the hands of the police, and, if so, may he go with God's grace.

Indeed, a few days later it was learned that her son had secretly embarked at night on a ship, as a sailor and fled the island. The secretary of the Port Authority was a kind and obliging man and signed him on as a seaman without hesitation. At that time, Menace was almost twenty; Amersa was just seventeen.

Time passed before the family had any news of the fugitive. Finally, more than a year later, rumor circulated that Moron had committed murder on board his ship. When asked, his sisters told everyone they knew nothing about it, and deep in their hearts prayed that the rumors were false. But the mother inwardly believed the news was true.

A few days later, a letter arrived postmarked "Halcis." Mihalis was writing from the prison of that town. Reversing the order of events, he first related in tragic terms his pains and miseries in the dungeon of the Venetian fortress. Then, contrite of heart, but in ambiguous terms, making it necessary to read between the lines, he confessed that perhaps he really had murdered the man, old Portaitis, the ship's boatswain, but without realizing it or

meaning to. (Truly, he had no intention of killing him.) His adversary incited it, he himself was not at fault, the killing was the result of an argument. He had "lost his head." It had even been proven that the knife belonged to the "victim." Perhaps he had drawn the knife (he couldn't remember exactly) from his opponent's belt, but he believed he had wrangled it out of his hand.

Then he again returned to his miseries and all he had suffered these two months in prison. Following, he appealed to his mother's affection and begged her to--"go without fail--and find Madame Portaitina," the murdered man's widow, and his daughter, and plead in terms, "persuade them no matter what" to sue for his acquittal.

"Go, Mana, take the boat over to Platana, beg Portaitina as well as her daughter, Karikleia, bring them around to beg for my acquittal and I'll become one of the family, and marry Karikleia without dowry, and we'll all be happy and love each other... And they'll see how much I'll love Karikleia, and how good I'll take care of my mother-in-law, I'll work like a slave to support them, make them comfortable, because I'm capable and can make money..." Ending, the murderer returned for the third time to his miseries and promised, if he should get out of prison, to bring many beautiful jewels and things for his two sisters' dowries, as well as dolls and toys for Delharo's little girls.

Well, it is not surprising that Frangoyannou did not hesitate. She made a small loan, pawned all her silver, took the boat over to the

opposite island, to the village of Platana in search of Portaitina. But what is surprising was her pathetic eloquence, her feminine wiles, the thousand falsehoods--Frangoyannou was then fifty-five, but a robust woman and energetic--with which she was able to persuade the old woman, widow of the murdered man. (Note that mother and daughter even gave hospitality to the mother of the murderer) to persuade her, I say, to pay travel expenses and leave together for Halcis, in order to obtain through prosecutor, judge and jury the liberty or the acquittal of the accused. As for the daughter, "Karikleia," she declared she would not seek vengeance since "father will never return," but would not wish his murderer for a husband: remaining unwed forever was preferable.

The two old women set out together and stayed three months in Halcis in a dingy Turkish house--near the Jewish quarter beside the High Portal of the fortress. Daily, Hadula walked to the prison during those early hours when the prisoners were let out, accompanied usually by Portaitina, who sat waiting opposite the prison, not wishing to see the murderer face to face. Passing before the large, inelegant, old church of St. Paraskevi, they would cross themselves, and then the mother would carry biscuits, figs, sardines and tobacco for his pipe to the accused. And well-hidden inside the deep pockets of her skirt was a small flask of rum or raki, additional solace for the prisoner.

But two or three times a week they exited through the High Portal of the fortress and saw suspended there, by the dark gate, the leg of the "Greek Giant" and his "tsarouhi"--boot-slipper with a pom-pom--

monstrous in size, which after returning home--God willing--they would describe for their grandchildren. Then they would walk through the Souvala quarter or by St. Demetrios Church and visit the public prosecutor, who would dismiss them through his secretary; or they called on the judges, who occasionally admitted them for amusement.

Finally, when the day of the trial was set, they sought ways of approaching the jurors some of whom had come from mountain villages wearing foustanelles, or from the islands or sea shores wearing knickers. Frangoyannou promised each all sorts of gifts and would have given them had she had them: sweet wines, quality oil--pure gold--lobster tails, mullet paste, botargo, dried octopus, choice figs and anything else her island could produce.

To one of the jurors, a jaundiced, bronchial-looking man, who seemed to be suffering, she promised a cure through a preparation she knew. But none of this proved useful, and the murderer was condemned to twenty years in prison. All the projects came to grief, including the matrimonial alliance between the mother of the murderer and the widow of the victim.

Now it became necessary for them to return home, but the little money they had was gone as well as all which Amersa had sent from domestic work and weaving. Frangoyannou inquired of every ship she saw readying to sail for the Gulf of Maliakos or Istiaia, to take Portaitina, at least, who was older and less able. For herself, she had her plans. When she realized the agents required in addition to the fare, that passengers bring their own food and that, even if taken

aboard, she would have had to disembark at Stylida or Orei and find another ship there--so she explained her plan to Portaítina.

"I," she said, "can make it overland on foot from here to St. Anna--they say it's a two-day journey. There we'll find the mail-boat and Captain Petserelos, the postman, who will recognize us and take us on. I'll make expenses on the way collecting herbs, dandelions and wild vegetables, and any poor soul who comes along with a sick child or husband, I'll make cures to obligate them... Can you make it? Have you the strength?"

"What can I do? I can, I can't... It's better to stay together as we came."

So they started out. Hadula did as she had said, but the going was slowed by heavy-footed Portaítina. But she was more successful than she had hoped. When, a week later she arrived in her village, she had things left over from her enterprises. For services rendered, she brought home a sack of wheat, nearly an oke of cheese, two hens, a woolen blanket someone had given her as a gift, and some drachmas cash. Besides these, she comfortably paid Portaítina's passage all the way to her own door.

All these things Amersa remembered well, for her mother retold the story of her journey often. Now, twelve years had passed. Her brother was still in prison, her father had died some time ago; Statharos and Yalis never returned from America, little Yorghakis had also left for distant shores, Krinyo had grown up, Delharo had given birth to another daughter, and she, Amersa, remained an old maid.

VII

Extreme stillness and silence enveloped the dark room after the last cough and cry of the daughter was so suddenly interrupted. Frangoyannou had lowered her head, held her forehead in her hands, and had ceased to think. She felt she no longer existed. Not even her breathing was audible. Every sound had ceased. No flame trembled in the hearth, no murmur could be heard, and the half-burnt wick of the oil lamp glimmered sadly. The small candle before the icons had long since gone out and the features of the saints could no longer be distinguished.

Suddenly the woman in childbed roused herself with a start, breaking the deep silence.

"What is it, Mana?" she said.

Her mother, grim, trance-like, stared at the flickering lamp.

"What is it!" Nothing. You woke up?"

"It seemed to me you said something... that you called me, in my sleep."

"Me?... No. You're imagining things."

"What time can it be Mana?"

"What time?... Don't know?... The cock has crowed over and over again."

"You didn't sleep, Mother?"

"I've had my fill of sleep... like a log," said Frangoyannou, who had not shut an eye. "It'll soon be light."

The mother in childbed yawned and made the sign of the cross over her mouth. At the same time she looked up at the small icon stand opposite.

"The candle has gone out, Mana, please light it."

"Didn't notice, daughter," said the old woman, "I was sound asleep."

"And the child is sleeping soundly, I see. How did that happen?"

"She's quiet now too," said the old woman.

"My breasts hurt," said the mother. "She's really started to suck lately. I wish she were awake to nurse."

"Eh!, never mind... We'll find another baby," said the old woman.

"What did you say, Mana?"

The old woman did not answer. She wanted to say something. Did not know what to say.

"Would you go to the trouble to light the candle, Mana."

"If you wish, get up yourself and light it, I don't have hands..."

"What!"

"My hand feels numb."

"Come now, Mana, you know I'm not supposed to light the candle until I've been blessed."

Just as she was saying "my hand feels numb" the old woman recalled Amersa's dream.

Unable to hold herself, she stifled a deep sob under her breath.

"What is the matter, Mother?"

The mother in childbed jumped off her low bed.

"The baby's not well?"

Screams and sobs and crying followed. The mother found her daughter dead in its crib.

Sound asleep on the other side of the partition, Constandis, who had slept well, woke up from the noise.

"What's going on?" he shouted, rubbing his eyes.

He yawned, stretched, jumped up and ran to the door of the room.

"Hey! What are you people doing?... You'll wake up the neighbors... Can't anybody get a little sleep, at least, around here without all this commotion?"

No one paid any attention to Constandis' protests. His wife was bent over the cradle, sobbing. His mother-in-law remained seated with folded hands, face enigmatic, jaw set, and expressionless. After her first involuntary sob, she uttered not a sound.

"What!... the child died?..."

"Hey!..." cried Constandis, his mouth gaping.

Then he added:

"That's why I had such a crazy dream, devil!..."

Delharo, lifting her head a moment from the cradle, continuing to sob, said:

"Mana, would you get me her little things, to change her...

Where is Amersa?"

Frangoyannou did not answer.

"Where is Amersa, Mana?" Delharo repeated, shaking her mother's arm.

Suddenly emerging from her stupor, Frangoyannou shuddered as if pricked by a thorn.

"Amersa?... Where is she?... At home!" she answered.

"Wasn't she here? I thought I heard her in my sleep," said the mother.

"Let him go over and call her," said the old woman, eyeing her son-in-law.

"Constandis, will you go and call Amersa," Delharo said to her husband.

"I'll go. Imagine that!... Oh! What a pity! Devil: good thing we baptised her at least."

Dandis crawled around on the floor of the narrow hallway in the dark groping to find his old shoes. Old pairs jostled noisily against the wood floor.

"Where's my old shoes," he said.

Finally he put on a worn pair of woman's shoes he found, which only covered his toes and part of his foot, leaving his heels exposed. More noise he made trying to open the door, finding neither latch nor bolt in the darkness. Once having opened the door, he suddenly came back inside.

"Hey, Delharo," he said, "Should I only tell Amersa to come, or bring Krinyo as well? What do you think, mother-in-law?"

"Go ahead now, stop your banter," she said. "Whoever comes, comes!"

Delharo, sobbing softly leaned over the crib. Dandis before leaving, threw a last glance at the cradle and his wife.

"Oh! What a pity, devil! he said... What dreams I saw!...

And he left on the run.

VIII

One morning during Holy Week, Frangoyannou set out all alone in the country toward the stream of Mamou. She wanted to visit the small olive grove which as a gift was left to her by a somewhat wealthy man she had worked for who died leaving no inheritors. Half the grove she had given to Delharo as dowry, and the other half she retained herself.

Some weeks had passed since the events we have recounted. Nothing out of the ordinary had been said concerning the death of Delharo Trachilaina's baby daughter who had been buried that same day. If the mother of the infant noticed small black marks on the baby's neck, she would never have uttered a word, or otherwise believed it was her mother's crime. It was thought the child died of whooping cough.

The only doctor, who was for years in the village, kind Vavaros V., chanced to be away. Cholera had apparently broken out

again in Egypt and the Ministry of the Interior usually chose him to direct the quarantine station on Delos.

In his place the government had sent a temporary health officer, Mr. M., who had not yet arrived. In the meantime there was a former medical student residing on the island. Called by the local police to verify the death, he superficially examined the face of the infant, complaining about not having been called while it was still alive. He issued a "burial certificate," writing "death by spasmodic coughing."

From that day, old Hadula lived a guilt-ridden, anxious life, and outwardly it seemed she had ashes on her silver-grey hair, that she carried her head slightly bent and stiff, and that she wore her long black shawl like a cowl of repentance. With the coming of Lent she often went to church, made numerous and deep genuflections, planned confession, but always postponed it. Giving up olive oil for Lent, she ate dry food five days of the week and fasted three during the first and middle weeks. Ashamed before Delharo, she avoided her eyes.

Well, the morning of that day during Holy Week, Frangoyannou arrived very early at the peak of the high rocky hill west of the village and from there, melancholic falls the gaze on the small cemetery spread out below, upon the high, sea-battered strip of land, with white tombstones, and directly leaves, seeking cheerfulness and life in the blue waves, in the wide triple port and in the verdant charming, islands fencing it from the south and east. On this peak, standing solitary, distant, like a beacon glittering in the sunlight

is the chapel of Saint Anthony. Frangoyannou passed before it making the sign of the Cross, and though she intended to enter, she hesitated at the last moment and continued on her way. "I'm unworthy," she thought to herself, "to enter a chapel where so often masses are held. I'd better go to the chapel of St. John the Hidden."

Soon she arrived at the olive grove and inspected each tree one by one. Already the middle of April, Easter had come late and she was anxious to see if they had borne fruit. Silently she prayed to Christ "to provide the olive oil which would ease the poverty." For two years, they had not borne olives, indeed, an insidious disease had ruined the crop and blackened the branches of the trees.

After she remained for a time in the olive grove, she started on her way, often looking back as if bidding the trees goodbye, and continued on. She reached the stream below, and began the upward climb as was her custom. With a basket under her left arm, a small knife in her right hand, she bent down everywhere, in all the familiar places, searching for dandelion, thistle, cicely and anise. On the Saturday of St. Lazarus she would bake a cake, the pētta, for herself and her daughters, sharing it with neighbors as well, having nothing to lose by it.

Besides these wild plants which she knew so well and collected, Hadula recognized other herbs also, useful remedies for the sick: clover, the snakeweed, and the wild onion among the arbutus and ferns and beside the roots of wild trees, and mushrooms, thorns and nettles, as well as maidenhair in small ravine cascades--said to remedy the fevers following childbirth.

Having collected enough herbs, she tied the medicinal kinds in a separate kerchief and placed them inside her basket. Sunset was approaching and the sun dipped behind the mountain top. Deep shadow filled the ravine and the sound of her every step resonated ominously deep within her soul.

The old woman climbed higher, toward the stream's steep ridge. Below lay the deep gorge of the river, the Aheila current, etching its way through the deep valley, murmuring peacefully, appearing still and stagnant yet eternally moving under the long flowing arms of the platane trees, among the moss, the brush and fern, babbling mysteriously, embracing tree trunks, meandering snakelike the length of the valley, greenish in the reflection of the foliage, caressing and eroding rocks and roots, murmuring, limpid, teeming with tiny crabs which race for cover in the turbid sand whenever a young shepherd, leaving his few lambs to pasture on fresh grasses, comes leaning into the stream, overturning rocks to ensnare them. The warblings, the incessant chirping of blackbirds echoes harmoniously in the forest surrounding all the western slope, and glides up to the summit of Anargyros until the Eaglenest above--where it is said one sea-eagle nested for three generations of men and at the end left without leaving eagle-fledgings. In its abandoned nest could be found an entire museum of gigantic bones of sea serpents, seals, sharks and other ocean beasts upon which this great and powerful sea bird of bluish-curved beak and magnificent grey plumage banqueted.

High above the river on a ridge formed by two mountains between the fields of Konomos and Minor-Anargyros, the solitary

monastery of St. John the Hidden stands in ancient ruins. Truly hidden, it lies behind a small col, concealed by the two mountains and thick, overgrown brush. Approached from the north, from the Aheila current as Frangoyannou now did, or from the south, from the place called the fields of Konomos; or even if one were to walk close to the sacred place, it was impossible to suspect its presence if one did not know it well, as did Frangoyannou.

The surrounding wall and the few monk cells had fallen in ruins long ago. The small chapel, deserted and no longer used, was still standing. The nave remained covered but in the sanctuary, the roof had caved in on the north side, strewing the altar with tile and debris. The wooden iconostase, once sculptured and gilded, now lay shattered and unrecognizable, the icons gone. The few frescoes had been corroded by the humidity and the faces of the saints could no longer be distinguished.

Only to the right of the chorus, a fresco of John the Baptist witnessing the coming of Christ was still intact: "Behold, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." The face and hand of the Baptist, outstretched and pointing, could be distinguished well enough. The face of the Savior showed very faint on the damp wall.

Saint John the Hidden was the name invoked since time immemorial by those who carried a "secret torment," or a private sin. Old Hadula was familiar with this belief or custom, and that is why she thought about coming now to the old abandoned sanctuary to offer

up her prayers. She preferred the deserted chapel because in the parish church where she attended during Lent, she only dared enter the narthex, behind the bolted door of the woman's entrance--just in case it became necessary to flee before they ejected her! She was not so much afraid of being chased by Papanicholas, the severe and ascetic curate, or by Mr. Demetros, the churchwarden, who always grumbled, and was harsh on the women because instead of the woman's loge they continually sought the small enclosed stalls at the north-west corner of the church; she feared the menacing aspect of the Archangel looking down from the great painting on the northern portal, wielding a flaming sword.

She entered the small deserted chapel, lit a candle which she carried in her basket with some matches, kneeled and prostrated herself three times on the ground before the half-destroyed fresco. Then, the nagging thought returned from which she could not free her mind. In a low voice, though a witness to this scene could have heard, she said: "If I've done right, St. John, give me a sign today... that I might do a good deed, a charitable act, so as to calm my poor heart and soul!..."

IX

Since she had filled her basket and the sun hung low on the horizon, old Hadula began the return to her village after leaving the deserted church. Descending back again along the ravine, she

turned right and began climbing St. Anthony's hill, the way she had come. Just before reaching its crest where the chapel stands, at the point where one has a magnificent view of the harbor and town, she looked down into the small valley on her right, the ravine of Mamou, which cuts the other great valley of Aheila at an obtuse angle and saw the vast, well-cultivated fields of Yannis Perivola.

"Might as well head for Yannis' place, to beg him for a string of onions or a head of lettuce... What can I lose?"

At the same time, she recalled that moment that two days before she heard Yannis Perivola's wife was ill. She did not know if the woman was staying at the cabin located inside the garden or whether she was recuperating in the town. But since the gardener himself was sure to be there (she could see the garden gate was open in the distance), Hadula figured on selling him some herbs from her basket, promising the "preparations" would cure his wife. Then she thought to herself:

"What can you offer the poor!... It would be best to give them a 'sterility-herb'--(God forgive me!). Or at least 'male-herb.' Because the poor have nothing but daughters!... He's had five or six now, I think. Perhaps others who may have died of those nine-lived creatures..."

She had, in fact, searched the mountains and glens many years for "male-herb," especially for her daughter. But what she had given proved unsuccessful; on the contrary, it had the effect of "female herb." Yet it worked for herself, when her sister-in-law had

given her some, having had four sons and only three daughters. As for "sterility-herb," the priest advised her years ago that its use was a great sin.

Before entering the gate, as she was descending the footpath of the slope, she noticed that Yannis Perivola was not inside his garden, but was at that moment in the adjoining field he had apparently rented from his neighbor. Sown with barley, the field was already grassy with spikes and it lay well below the garden, knee length. Yannis, bent over at the far end, was, no doubt gardening, that is uprooting weeds and darnel from between the stalks, thinking it was still early, though the sun had already set. Situated over at the other end of the garden, hidden by distance and thick hedge, Yannou was unable to see him, or call a "good evening" to him as she neared the gate of the enclosure. Bent over, he was intent on his work and did not notice her.

Old Hadula entered. Next to the gate was the cabin, not very prosperous or clean-looking. It looked as if it had not been white-washed for some time, testifying to the illness of its housekeeper. Tools, hay, and bundles lay in disorder about the front yard. The door was shut. The window shutters were closed. Only the attic window had glass toward the top. But to reach it, to see if anyone was inside, Frangoyannou would have to climb the two or three steps to the small railless wooden landing called hiyati and stretch to full height.

As she hesitated, wondering if she should do that or simply go up the hiyati and knock--she heard the voices of small girls. A

short distance away was the well and its hoisting winch, and beside it the cistern--low, deep, its mouth just above the level of the ground. On top of its masonry wall, next to the cistern's mouth, two little girls were sitting--one about five years old, the other, three--playing at fishing with a bamboo stick and line to which a nail was tied.

"THERE!... you've given me the sign, St. John." Frangoyannou whispered involuntarily to herself seeing the two daughters... "What relief for these poor Perivolas if they were to fall into that cistern and swim there!... I wonder... it's got water?"

She approached, leaned over and saw that the well was almost full--about two or three fathoms.

"Imagine their father leaving them here like this, little girls," said Frangoyannou. "As if they couldn't fall in by themselves?..."

She cast an anxious glance at the cabin. But she had the feeling no one was inside.

She looked at the children curiously. The older one, a pretty blonde though a bit dirty, looked nice. The younger one, pale, poorly dressed, seemed to be suffering from scurvy.

"Children," said Frangoyannou, "What are you doing here?... Where's your mana?"

The older girl answered: "'ome."

"At home?" the old woman questioned. "Which one? Here or in the village?"

"Mommy's no 'ere," said the little girl again.

No doubt the little girl was obeying her father by discouraging passers-by from annoying their mother who was, indeed, inside the cabin. The shutters were closed to protect her perhaps from the evening breeze coming off the river. Her husband had probably just gone down to the neighboring field for a time and either forgot or did not bother to close the garden gate again.

Old Hadula asked again:

"Say, is mana in the village? How is it you're here by yourselves?"

"Pappaz 'ere," said the small one.

"Where?"

"Down 'ere," pointing.

"What's he doing?"

The little one shrugged her shoulders, not knowing what to say. Finally she said:

"Work."

"What's your name, sweetheart?"

"Me, M'souda." (Myrsouda).

"And your sister?"

"Toula." (Aretoula).

Frangoyannou wondered:

"Will they scream?... Will it be heard? Who could hear it? Better do it fast," she thought to herself... "Wherever he is, in a little while he'll be here, because it's getting too dark for any

more gardening... And I better get away fast, without being seen, just as I came."

She hesitated a moment, struggling with herself. Then she said, almost out loud: "Courage!... On with it."

And seizing the two girls with both hands, she pushed them violently.

A loud splash followed.

The two small creatures bobbed about in the water inside the well.

The older one pierced the evening air with a sharp scream.

"Ma...!"

Instinctively, Frangoyannou turned toward the white cabin to which until now her back was turned.

Simultaneously preparing to flee, she quickly glanced at the cistern, to see if the agony had ended.

Picking up her basket from the ground, she started to leave.

The two small creatures floundered in the water. The smaller had already drowned. The older was still struggling.

A few seconds later, the old woman heard a door creaking open behind her, and a feeble voice.

She turned. The cabin door was open. The sick woman, mother of the two girls, wan, wrapped in a wool sheet, ghost-like, stood in the void.

"What is it!" the sick woman said, terrified.

Then with great presence of mind, Frangoyannou, still only a few steps from the cistern, threw down the basket she had just picked up and started to run, leap and holler.

"The girls!... The girls!... fell in!... Look!... Haven't you any sense, dear?... How can you?... Leave them alone near a cistern full of water!...

"Good think I came!... Just now I was passing by... God sent me!"

The next instant she was bending over, pulling off her skirt (leaving her in pantaloons called "wollens" from the waist down), kicking off her tattered shoes (exposing holes in her socks at the heels), she clumsily but with great flourish jumped into the cistern.

Letting out a hoarse cry, the sick woman hurriedly hurried down the two or three stone steps of the porch, her feebleness so great she could scarcely walk. Before she could get to the cistern, Yannou had seized the smaller girl, who already appeared drowned to her, and began pulling her out slowly, with her head upside down in the water. Then lifting up the small body and, having laid it on the stone footing, she bent over and seized the other daughter, the older one. Grasping the hem of her dress and one leg, she pulled her up, keeping the head as long as possible under water.

When the mother finally arrived, Frangoyannou pulled on the body energetically, placing it next to the other one.

Both looked lifeless.

Frangoyannou groping about awhile with her feet under the water found on the south side of the cistern the flat plank, the drain hole plug, with its long pole handle. Setting one foot on a wall

niche, she managed after some difficulty to climb out onto the stone apron. She was dripping wet.

"See! Hadn't thought of it!" she cried, making a fuss. "I should've pulled up the drain plug right away before the poor things drowned."

It was true enough that she had not thought of it. But there is sometimes hypocrisy even in honesty.

Frangoyannou wrung out the edges of her dripping clothes as she cast a glance at the two lifeless bodies, and speaking with authority:

"They need to be tied upside down... Beaten with a bamboo so they'll vomit, see!... Good thing it was fresh water... Where's your husband, dear? That's no way to leave little girls, to play all alone with the water of a cistern!... Good thing I came by, God sent me... From Anargyros I'm coming, from the olive grove... Good thing the gate was open!..."

"Where's your husband? Where? As I entered the gate, I hear a 'splash'! I run!... What do I see! Couldn't get to them in time!... Didn't even know you were here. Thought you were in the village... Learned how you were sick and all... What a shock!... Now they need turning upside down and fast... Don't believe they've drowned yet... Where is he... your husband? Where is he?"

And forcefully pulling the body of the younger one whom she was quite sure was dead already, she moved it to a nearby tree to hang it upside down, just as she said.

"Where's a bit of cord?... There, I see a string on the bamboo pole!"

"Good, we'll need it!"

She nodded impatiently for the sick woman to fetch the bamboo pole which a short while ago two little daughters had been playing with.

Dazed, shocked, wringing her hands in bewilderment, in terror, in agony, the woman said in a feeble voice:

"But where is their father?"

"You're asking me?" said Yannou.

"Please call him... I can't holler, I'm too frightened, dear. Perhaps he's down in the field?"

Lowering the small body to the ground for a moment, Frangoyannou ran the few steps to detach the string, trying to untie or cut it, in order to bind the ankles of the small drowned child to a cherry tree branch and hang the body upside down.

At the same time she yelled for the woman in a wild, strange voice:

"Yanni!... Yanni!..."

The shriek echoed through the valley. But Yannis did not appear. Yannou tied the feet of the child and attempted to string her up, repeating the calls.

"Yanni!... Where are you?... Come!... The children fell into the cistern!..."

"The later he comes the better," she said to herself.

"He doesn't answer, Heaven knows why? So glued to his work! It's dark already... Yanni! Yanni!"

Just then she realized she was almost betraying herself, for the woman had not said that Yannis was working in the field, only she herself had seen him, and if anyone had told her, it was the little drowned child. So she added:

"But where is he?... in the field, you say? What's he doing?... Who can run, my dear, down there?... You're a sick woman... Yanni!... Where are you, Yanni?"

Finally a voice was heard coming across from the far end of the fence.

"What is it?... Who's calling?"

"Run, Yanni!... The girls have drowned!" the sick woman cried with all her strength.

A moment later, Yannis arrived on the run.

Frangoyannou meanwhile had strung up the small body and was lifting the body of the older child, feeling her with both hands to know for sure if she was dead. At the same time, she cast a cunning, side-long glance at the hapless mother, pale and shivering under her white wool sheet. Hadula, shaking her head, pitied the woman in spite of herself.

As the father, the gardener, approached them, Hadula turned her back, lowered her head and remained so for a time, irresolute and terror-stricken.

"What is it?... What's the matter?" Yannis cried, utterly bewildered.

"There! Good thing I came by!" Frangoyannou began telling him... "I was coming from Anagyro, with my basket. Thought to give

you some herbs I'd gathered today by the river, medicinals for your wife!... because I learned she was sick... Good thing the gate was open!... I entered... I hear splash! What a fright I had! The two girls, as they were playing with the bamboo, fell into the cistern... Best I can figure, they got to wrangling who's going to hold the pole, and do the fishing... The little one tried to grab it away from the big one.. As the big one pushed the little one, she threw her into the water, but the little one held on, it seems, pulling the big one in too. (Frangoyannou improvised this explanation on the spur of the moment.) Ach! what a shock! I hear a splash! Good thing I came by! God sent me... Eh, is that the way, my dear, to leave small girls to play by themselves near a cistern full of water!..."

Yannis, seeing the two lifeless bodies in the pale rays of twilight, began pulling his hair, biting the joints of his fingers, saying:

"Oh!... What sins!... You're right, good woman. Ach!... What has happened and I was down in the field, pulling weeds... and I couldn't relax, unfortunately!... Something kept nagging at me!... But I never thought about the cistern being full. But I was nervous, had a funny feeling... said to myself, I better quit gardening, come back to the house... Something's out to get me, something's cooking. But I didn't have the heart to quit, unfortunately! Ach! You're right, whatever you say, good woman. Ach! Ach! What sins?"

And in his great anguish, the gardener helped with the improvisations against drowning which the very experienced Frangoyannou recommended.

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Old Hadula out of necessity remained all that night in the cabin, where she experienced all the rare and indescribable feelings of the murderess suddenly the doctor of her own victims. But despite all her stringing up and massaging, the two girls died. In the morning Yannis ran to the town to inform the authorities while Frangoyannou stayed behind comforting the sick, sorrowing, grieving mother, simultaneously practicing the arts of consolation and medicine.

The justice of the peace and his deputy, the police detective, arrived. Frangoyannou under questioning related her previous day's excursion and how she happened to be passing by the vegetable garden. Then she repeated almost verbatim whatever she had told the father of the two girls. "The smaller one wanted to grab the pole from the bigger one. Pushing her away, she threw the little one into the water, and holding on the little one, it seems, pulled the bigger one in too." This she explained was her own conjecture because just as she stepped through the gate, she said, she heard a "splash!" but was unable to prevent the disaster, just experienced "great shock."

The visiting doctor, Dr. M., arrived, examined the corpses, and in his report, declared that the two girls drowned due to a fall into the water.

No charges or suspicions were raised against Frangoyannou. The two small bodies were removed to the St. Anthony chapel where a priest came to say prayers over them. They were buried close by among the gorse and bushes on the north side of the church.

X

The Easter holiday passed. During the week of St. Thomas, old Hadula assisted by her youngest daughter, Krinyo, took on washing in the open courtyard of Mr. Alexandros of Rosmai, an old notable who had baptized almost all her children. Under the roofed part of the yard in the oil-shed, called the ladharyo, next to an immense wooden trough much resembling Noah's Ark, as it is usually pictured, near the well where an enormous mulberry tree in full blossom, criss-crossed its giant dark green branches, as if blessing both the worthy and the unworthy; the small garden, bordered by a picket fence, blossomed forth its multicolored, intoxicating, flowers in a freshness sweet and delightful to the eyes for all God's creatures; next to a small kiln with a masonry wine-press trough, Frangoyannou had her large, deep tub beside which was another basin for Krinyo and for two days both women washed, bleached, rinsed, dried, collected, but still had not completed most of their work.

On the second day, Frangoyannou became terribly annoyed by the running, shouting, and antics of a swarm of boys and girls who had

slipped into the yard. Almost all the neighborhood children--ten or fifteen the number--were running here and there, jumping, chasing one another round and round the trough, playing hide and seek, bending over the well--young Narcisses watching their own reflections in the water, though not without the danger of falling in, making loud, inarticulate cries like Echoes, girls hiding behind the wine-press in the dark, narrow spaces--delighting in childish fear--all this great childish needlessness and tediousness did not permit the industrious old woman and her daughter to do their work in peace.

The wide court had two gates, one large, one small. Both of them Yannou had repeatedly bolted and latched, hoping to find peace; but soon each would be left open again, for besides the children, the residents would often come and go, or relatives and friends would come from outside. She protested to the elderly landlady who repeatedly scolded the children, but without result. She complained to two neighbors, mothers of the more rambunctious children, who told her to "mind her own business and stop bossing others."

Toward noon, Yannou sent Krinyo home to fetch the bread and beans being boiled by Amersa--who was always at her loom in the house, unaccustomed to laundering or other outside employment--so they could lunch.

Frangoyannou remained alone for the time being, continuing to wash. At that time only two or three little girls were in the yard, making as much noise as the group. Indeed, ever since a girl's school had been established in the village, girls seemed to have woken

up a great deal. The teacher spent little time on the three "R's," even less on homemaking; instead she emphasized their "rights" and discouraged "unladylike" or "demeaning" behavior, proclaiming it was time henceforth for "emancipation."

Frangoyannou scolded them repeatedly, but they paid no attention. One of the girls, just seven, Propandia's daughter, Xenoula, began jeering the old woman with mimicking movements of the hand and mouth.

Moments before, the other two girls had run out of the yard leaving Xenoula bending over the well, attempting to stir the water with a stick. Stretching down, she kept at it, but the stick was too short and didn't reach it.

"Eh! my God, should you fall in, Xenoula!" said Frangoyannou laughing strangely, "Your mother would be saved!"

"Eh, my Zod, should you fall in!" mimicked Xenoula, parodying her voice! "Yer muzer would be zaved!"

She raised herself up a little higher and bent over again, deeper than before.

The square mouth of the well was protected by some broad, uneven planks with edges of various widths. The small wobbly board with rusted nails upon which Xenoula was leaning, was lower than the other three--decayed, slippery, rotted--eaten away by the rope of the water bucket. As the child leaned full weight on that board, balancing herself by her left arm, it suddenly slipped, gave way, detached itself at one end, and Xenoula fell head first into the yawning mouth of the well.

A muffled scream was heard, a splash, and then great lashing about in the water.

The surface of the water was one and one-half fathoms below the mouth of the well; the water depth at least another fathom.

Instinctively, Frangoyannou started to cry out and run to her aid. But her scream she herself choked back in her throat and before it escaped her body froze. A strange thought came to her. Behold, she had scarcely, jokingly wished for the child to fall into the well and see it happened! God (dare she think it?) answered her prayer, and it was no longer necessary to use her hands, merely wishing was enough and her wish would be granted.

Moments later, she decided to go to the mouth of the well, bend over and peer down inside. She saw the agony of the little girl, beating about in the water and realized that it was impossible to save her even if she wanted to. But surely if the child drowns... they will accuse her! To yell for help now was late. Late perhaps to save the child, but probably not too late to prove her innocence. But still she hesitated. It should have been done immediately. Either way was bad! How the crime beset her! If only Krinyo were here! She could surely have gone barefoot down into the water, for the well, like most, had steps in the masonry of the interior wall. Though terribly dangerous and slippery, Krinyo probably could have saved the little girl. But now it was hopeless and death inevitable!

For the moment, Frangoyannou had forgotten her first idea-- that God, by granting her prayer, would have wanted the child to drown. But then it came back to her--and she involuntarily laughed bitterly.

In a flash, she decided what she must do.

"I'd best go home," she said to herself. "I'll pretend that since Krinyo was late returning--perhaps the food wasn't ready--I got very hungry, and preferred to eat all together at home, to save Krinyo the trouble of carrying it back."

Hurriedly, she placed the tub with whatever half-washed clothes it still contained behind the wine-press in the large wooden storeroom which she locked, put the key into her pocket, slipped out of the yard through the small gate, latched it from outside, and was gone.

XI

After they retrieved the body of Xenoula from the well, drowned and dead, old Hadula lost her tranquility--cold fear began to torment her... Though not at fault this time, she realized she could no longer escape.

Indeed, the authorities had begun to grow suspicious. The coincidence that the old woman was found a minor actor in the drowning of the two Perivola girls at the ravine of Mamou where the whole affair, though there was no element of guilt or suspicion, had something of the incredible and strange, and now this same old woman was again in the Rosmai yard about the time Propandis' daughter, little Xenoula, drowned in the well was enough of a connection to arouse the suspicions of the justice of the peace who called it to the attention

of his Deputy "in charge of police investigations." Then the deputy, whose oral arguments as a public prosecutor during the criminal hearings were limited to: "according to the testimony of witnesses, it seems that the defendant had or had not committed the crime," and whose abilities or rhetoric he little improved with time, simply responded that "since the justice of the peace says so, it must be so, and so it seems to me." Afterward, the two decided to more intensively interrogate Hadula, widow of Yannis Frangos, and if necessary arrest her.

In the course of the initial inquest which took place routinely at the scene--the justice of the peace and the policeman had not yet formulated any firm suspicions, or at least had not communicated them to each other (in which case the deductions of one usually intensifies the convictions of the other ten times over),--Frangoyannou, self-composed, testified to the facts already known, without psychological interpretation: that she was doing the wash there, and "as noon passed she got hungry, and her daughter Krinyo had left for the house to bring lunch, but got delayed so she became very hungry indeed--as well as very dizzy from the crowd of boys and girls who were raising Cain with their games and misbehavior in the yard, and round and round the olive press, and round and round the trough and near the well; her admonishments went mocked by the unruly children which provoked her all out of patience--all of which her daughter Krinyo confirmed--and by that time, very giddy and no longer able to stand on her feet from hunger, she decided to go home and eat

all together, both to save Krinyo the trouble of carrying the food back and to rest a bit and collect herself. So she left the yard, and latched the gate. After lunch, about an hour later, returning to the yard together with Krinyo, unaware of anything, they took up their work again. The noise of the children had stopped by that time. When, however, later, they needed to draw water from the well, it was then the bucket which Krinyo was using struck something solid in the water. Surprised and terrified, she shouted for her mother and together they discovered the body of the little girl floating, rather submerged, already in the water."

Krinyo was altogether sincere in confirming all of the above. The justice of the peace listened to her testimony sympathetically. But he frowned at the mother. And that frown--that "scowl" by the justice of the peace--did not please Frangoyannou who was very perceptive, and great anxiety overwhelmed her.

At the Trahilaina house, her daughter's where she was a little before sunset, Hadula kept continuous, anxious watch at the window. She directed her gaze toward her own small house which though situated on the same side was still visible since it projected out toward the street two or three meters more than the few houses in-between. Though she watched carefully, she saw nothing.

Noticing her mother's anxiety, Delharo began keeping watch also. At sunset, trying to hide her own terror, she suddenly shouted:

"Mana! Mana!"

"What is it?"

"Come here to see!"

"What!"

"Two officers are standing in your yard looking at your house..."

The old woman got up and saw what she had feared. Two officers--just like those when Menace, more than fifteen years ago, dragged his mother by the hair into the street and stabbed his sister--were staked out looking intensely at the house.

Frangoyannou seeing this was now convinced that great and imminent danger threatened her.

"I must take to the mountains, daughter!" she said suddenly.
"If time allows."

"Why, Mana?" said Delharo alarmed.

"Because... they've come to put me in prison."

"Really?... You, Mana, threw the child into the well!"

"No, God be my witness!... I didn't do that," said
Frangoyannou.

"But?..."

"Hush!"

"The sin is haunting you, Mana," said Delharo timidly.

"Quiet! Have you gone mad?" her mother said sternly,
detecting insinuations in her daughter's tone.

"What can I say, poor thing!" Delharo said, wringing her
hands in confusion.

"Ah! don't say that! no! You mustn't say that!"



Terrified, she started down the stairs to flee.

"Where're you going, Mana?"

"Into the mountains, I said!... Give me some dry bread."

Delharo ran to open the cupboard and took out a few biscuits.

"Give me my basket... and a small knife," repeated Frangoyannou hurriedly... "Put a wool shawl in also... and my kerchief... my old shoes... Give me my staff... find it!"

Patiently, silently, Delharo took care of all these preparations.

"Where will you go, Mana," she repeated sobbing. "Oh! my heart is breaking!"

"Don't cry!... I'll hide somewhere, in some hole... Be calm, behave! Just until God's anger passes!"

And she picked up her basket and her staff and started down slowly, crossing herself.

Suddenly she stopped a third of the way down the stairs and turned toward Delharo and said to her:

"You know what you can do?... I'll leave by the upper road to avoid their dogs... You run right now to the house... pretend that you don't see them, the police... call up to Amersa from the street: 'Amersa, is Mana up there?'... No, don't say 'is Mana up there,' say, 'Amersa: how is Mana, is she better? did she get up?... Is she still in bed?' That way they'll think I'm up in the house, sick... So they won't suspect anything and put the dogs after me! Run, quickly!"

Then she added:

"Goodbye... till we meet again!..."

Directly afterward, Delharo ran like a deer toward her mother's house to carry out her mission.

Frangoyannou took the upper road toward Kotronia on the run. To the last echo of "till we meet again" which she wished her daughter, she involuntarily added to herself bitterly--"either I'll meet you again here--or I'll go and meet your brother in prison--or meet your father in the other world... yes, of the three, that's surest!"

As she breathlessly climbed the rocky hill, "Save me, Holy Virgin," she said to herself, "though I've sinned." Then she added with great fervor: "I meant no evil."

Having gained a little distance near the last few scattered houses of the village up on the rocks, just before the descent to the seashore, she sees Kyriakos, the bailiff for the police, with his short-tasselled fez, the "galipe," as they call it, and brown twirled moustache, carrying his short spiralled mace around which is engraved "Force of the Law." He, accompanied by an old disabled veteran in uniform, was coming from a small side road, walking toward the coast just behind Frangoyannou and would surely soon catch up to her, or would at least be close upon her heels.

Perhaps the appearance of Kyriakos there, together with the veteran was only coincidence. But the guilty woman panicked when she saw them and quickened her steps. It seemed to her they did likewise.

Then, just as she reached the coast, quite unexpectedly, Yannou suddenly saw before her the open door of a familiar house and

without hesitating a moment, she hurried through the doorway. Once inside, frightened, she threw the bolt and latch.

"Maroussa, are you upstairs?" she called in a soft, but wheezing voice, as she climbed the stairs.

A short, rose-complexioned woman came through a bedroom doorway, smiling but wary.

"Where in the world, Aunt Hadula?" she exclaimed.

"Don't ask, my dear... an awful thing happened," Yannou began.

Then she asked anxiously:

"Mr. Anagnostis isn't here, is he?"

"No, he doesn't come here so early, he's at the coffee house... Ach! Aunt Hadula, and I was just thinking about coming over to the house to tell you the news..."

"You learned something?"

"They were talking about it just this afternoon, my master and our coumbaros, Aimeritis, who came to smoke and chew the fat as usual."

"What were they saying?"

"That the justice of the peace together with the police want to arrest you... Said they'll send the village police. On account of that little girl who drowned yesterday in the well."

"Oh, my heavens!..."

"So I thought I'd better come, tell you to hide, if possible... But how is it you're here?"

Frangoyannou related how, after yesterday's inquest, she understood the justice of the peace had her "in his gun sight" and her fear of being unjustly arrested, and that at her daughter's house where she happened to be today at sunset, she saw village police surveilling her own house; how she decided to leave for the mountains; how, as she was running down here to the seashore, planning to take the hidden path of the mountain behind Kotronia, she saw Kyriakos, the bailiff, together with an old veteran coming behind her, but that by God's grace, she found herself near the Marousso house which she knew well from the "miseries" of times past, and in trying to reach it saw the door wide open and slipped inside to find refuge.

"I locked the door behind me, dear... in my confusion! It was fated to happen, and it did."

"Maroussa dear, bless you... Won't you look secretively, through that shutter... to see if Kyriakos is below or if he continued on?"

Maroussa crossed to that window and looked down at the road. Then turning she said:

"He's down there... Standing in the street with the old veteran... They're talking with Frangoulis, one of our neighborhood fishermen."

"Are they looking this way?"

"They're looking over toward the beach."

Frightened, the old woman raised her arms as if to pull her hair or tear her cheeks.

Maroussa pitied her.

"Stay a while, Aunt Hadula... Don't be afraid... Whatever it is, it'll pass... Sit down, I'll make you a coffee to drink."

Yannou hesitated, then sank down on a low stool by the entrance to the kitchen where they were conversing.

The house appeared to belong to a comfortable family, and had numerous rooms and fine furniture.

"Don't you remember my trouble, Aunt Hadula?..." Maroussa said allusively, her face turning redder than usual... "Remember what 'frights,' what 'torments' I had then! And bless you, how you helped me! That's how yours will pass."

"That's why I said you understand my miseries!" Frangoyannou repeated modestly.

"Those were my miseries," corrected Maroussa candidly.

She poured the coffee.

"My master will be here any time now... Drink your coffee. Dunk your bread also" she added, cutting another large slice.

The woman began dipping her bread and chewing without appetite.

"Bless you, dear," she said. "It doesn't go down... I'm too distressed!"

"My mouth is bitter."

Then she added:

"Wouldn't you like to look out the window, outside... Is Kyriakos still down below?"

Maroussa obeyed.

"Still there, Aunt Hadula. They're in a big discussion with Frangoulis."

"Now, where can I go?... What if your father comes?... The sun has set,... it's getting dark... it'll soon be night."

Maroussa thought a minute, then said:

"I'm very obliged to you, Aunt Hadula. I'll never forget that!"

"Do you remember?" the old woman said, smiling unintentionally.

"Could I forget?... Whatever I can do for you, I will."

"Bless you."

"I think you should hide here for the night, now, before my master comes."

"Where?"

"Down, in the little cellar, on the sofa... remember?"

"Ah!" said Frangoyannou, as if recalling something.

"And at midnight, when the cock crows..."

"Eh?"

"Just before dawn, whatever time you think best..."

"Good!"

"If you wish, get up, and with God's blessing, wherever He leads you."

"So be it!" said the old woman, sighing.

"Tomorrow night again, if you don't find a more hidden, safer, refuge--come back. Throw a little stone at this window or at the small balcony which faces the sea. I'll come down to open for you, and hide you in the cellar again."

"Good!... But, look again. Did Kyriakos leave?"

Maroussa went to the other side of the partition, to the window on the road, but delayed coming back; perhaps because it was dark already and difficult to see outside. Returning she said:

"They haven't left... all three are there."

"Now, one thing puzzles me," Frangoyannou said questioningly. "I don't know if Kyriakos saw me enter the house or not... If he didn't see me and isn't going to ambush, I'd better go and take this weight off you now."

She was sincere, nervous, and longed for the mountain air, sensed there she would find peace, and she hoped to find security as well.

"Whatever happens, you shouldn't leave tonight," said Maroussa, growing eager to awaken her memories. "Stay in the little cellar tonight, Aunt Hadula, and help me remember those miseries of my past. Will they come back as dreams do in sleep?"

"That's how one recalls them, dear," the old woman answered meaningfully. "Ach! Every sin has its sweetness also."

"True!... but how bitter in the end," added Maroussa sadly.

The house was double. Besides the original building it had a small addition facing north, with a kitchen and a small cellar underneath where household furnishings were stored. To it, through a trap-door and a small stairway, Maroussa led her guest before the arrival of Mr. Anagnostis, the master of the house. She brought her bread, a slice of cold boiled beef left over from dinner, cheese,

water, a glass of wine, and settled her on the sofa. She spread on it a worn woolen rug, a blanket with holes, a small sheet, gave her a hard flax-filled pillow and wished her a goodnight and a "peaceful sleep."

But peaceful or no, sleep for Frangoyannou was not easy or restful in the midst of so much turmoil and upset. Nevertheless the environment made her for the moment almost forget the present with its dreadful situation, and recall the past. That which Yannou had humbly called "her miseries," but which Maroussa had honestly recognized as her own, "miseries" and "torments" had taken place eight or ten years ago.

Mr. Anagnostis Benidis, childless, had taken Maroussa in as an adopted daughter, and had raised her as strictly as his wife who had died fifteen years earlier would have. In his time, Mr. Benidis was the most important personage in the community. He served as municipal elder before the Revolution; deputy in the first Assemblies of Troezen, Pronias, Argos, etc.; mayor before the Constitution. After the Constitution, he was sent as an emissary to numerous places. He acquired Maroussa in her infancy, a little Jewess (according to others, a little Turkess), and baptized her.

Then, when he retired some years ago and returned to his community, he married her off to one of his nephews and gave her as dowry the small addition to his house--in the basement of which now was Frangoyannou--sizeable arable land, and a little cash, promising that she would inherit the main house and the other appurtenances found after his death.

The son-in-law, after fathering a child, was continually away. He travelled as a boatswain on the ships. He was a famous sailor, but thriftless and irresponsible. It was now three years since he had been back. In the meantime, the aged Mr. Anagnostis had become a widower and the adopted daughter, during the absence of her husband, continuously served her foster father in the house, as she was used to from a child. Her husband wrote letters from time to time, promising to return, but he never arrived. Maroussa's daughter was already four years old, and thus the father had never seen his child, nor the child her father.

During this period, together with increased commerce and communication, morals began to relax even in the small, distant villages. Visitors coming from all parts of Greece, "cosmopolitans"--either civil servants of the government or merchants--brought new and liberal ideas on all matters. Prudery and propriety they called idiotic; chastity and sobriety, silly. Vice and sex they considered "natural." Hapless Maroussa, not native to the area, and who from the beginning was neither strict nor puritanical, had a small dose of wantonness as well.

Residing on the island at this time was a clerk of the court--single, dressing in the fustanella. A secretary of the Harbor Authority--wearing knickers, an officer at command N., old bachelor; a corporal--well-dressed with slim waist and handlebar moustache; a customs officer making triple his salary through two or three agents of foreign business concerns and other resident aliens. These men were continually in the company of two or three

elegant young businessmen with many ready phrases "a la Grec" on their tongues, and many a "compliment." Many women of the town, even intelligent women, often came in contact with these men through their inevitable and endless shopping--chores from which women are never free.

From the myriad snares thrown in her path, from the siege which these aforementioned enterprisers waged round her walls, Maroussa was unable to escape; and soon, in the absence of her husband, she found herself pregnant. Two months passed before she realized her condition. But prior to her own discovery, all the neighborhood knew, as usual--even perhaps before it happened. Only Mr. Anagnostis remained ignorant of the fact. "His house was burning but he couldn't see the smoke," a neighbor, sly Kokkitsa, put it.

Vicious rumor circulated without the slightest evidence, as usual, that Mr. Anagnostis had applied the old method of David, and that through young breath and warm blood he was searching for "rejuvenation." But the said Kokkitsa and two or three other neighborhood women, gossipping among themselves derisively, contended that "many took part in making the child": that the head must be the clerk's who wore the foustanella and the enormous, long-tasseled fez; the waist by all means was the amorous corporal's; one foot by the old goat in knickers; one hand (a very long one!) by the customs officer; and the other hand (with a greasy palm) by the haberdasher with the ready Grecisms.

First, it was the aforementioned Kokkitsa whom Maroussa surreptitiously sent for (note that though seemingly naive, Maroussa

sensed that Kokkitsa had suspected her for some time which necessitated pretension of esteem and confidence; hoping that flattery might persuade her and gifts might hold her tongue). Maroussa fell on her neck pleading for compassion: "Sister, I'm in God's hands and yours." Did she know some medicinal formula which would abort the baby? God afterwards would be merciful! Otherwise, how could she go on living?-- she would surely throw herself into the sea, which was close by, just below the house. Kokkitsa calmed her with reassuring words, and began applying on her various unguents and plasters, which brought absolutely no results.

Second, the poor widow Stamato was called in and Kondylo, her sister, who both spoke in Albanian dialect and were from an island off the Saronic Gulf. These women massaged the body of the unfortunate woman. Maroussa recompensed all three with whatever she could purloin from Mr. Anagnostis' household budget and they prolonged the applications and drew out the massages, though always without result.

At dusk, the three women would gather to gossip in the courtyard of Madame Thomai some houses away, and be joined by old Heyono and Aunt Kyranno, all immigrants from Macedonia after 1821. Every evening the first three came with reports for Madame Thomai and the two others, and all together they would laugh hysterically.

Indeed, the broken Greek of Stamato describing the situation of the pregnant girl ("Short she is; and her legs, short she has 'em!... she won't never throw it, betcha!...") elicited their laughter. And to the report of Stamato, old Kyranno added her commentary in Macedonian dialect.

"Them are dirty bitches, pros'tutes!... Now doin' th't in the village! Why ain't but soon be the talk of the flea market."

Last, Frangoyannou was chosen to take part who was wiser and more experienced than all of them. Maroussa had begun to grow desperate with the three charlatans and turned to Yannou as a last hope. Indeed, old Hadula's remedies, unguents, hot and cold drinks which she gave to the patient, the massage, which she administered with greater skill than the others, brought about the abortion within a few days. Mr. Anagnostis never learned of it.

This was the old service, and this the gratitude which today both had alluded to. These were the "miseries" of Frangoyannou and the "torments" of Maroussa.

As Frangoyannou lay there on the sofe in the darkness--for her host had only furnished a small candle and a few matchsticks instead of an oil lamp--her mind filled with these memories. As she imagined it all again she found it impossible to sleep. Examining her conscience, she realized one thing, that whatever she had done then or now had been with good intention. As she lay curled up on her right side under the woolen cover, head bent on her chest, she tried to grow weary and sleep. Then, after so many years, she recalled a short prayer which an old priest had once long ago enjoined upon her; the "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me."

The frequent repetition of the prayer took effect and Hadula grew drowsy and after a while fell asleep. Shortly thereafter, in her sleep or in her wakefulness (she was not sure) she thought she heard in the depths of her soul, the voice of an infant, crying like

the plaint of a threnody. It resembled the voice of her little grandchild which a few months ago by her own hands... ended.

The old woman woke up terror-stricken, shuddering all over. She got up feeling great heartbreak, but at the same time more physically rested. That short sleep had washed away from her the nervousness and anxiety. She groped, found the matches, and lit the candle, took her staff, her basket, put her shoes inside it, and in un-shod, stocking feet, she started to leave.

XII

Maroussa had given her the key to the small cellar, told her to leave by the door toward the street, lock it from outside and take the key with her in case it became necessary to return the following night if she desired. As for herself, if need arose she could get into the cellar through the interior stairway and door of the partitioned wall, the same way she had conducted her guest.

Indeed, Frangoyannou there in the small, narrow cellar felt suffocated and the damp air oppressed her. It was time now to breathe mountain air before her pursuers closed her, perhaps for life, in the humid, sunless cellars of human justice.

She stepped out with the plaint of the innocent baby, of the wronged little daughter still murmuring deep within her soul. Standing in the void of the doorway, she looked carefully up and down the street. It was deserted, she saw neither soul nor shadow. She gave wings to her feet.

It was not the first time she heard, inside her soul, where there was dark cavernous echo, that funereal lament of the child. Believing to flee the danger and the calamity; the calamity and wound she carried with her. Imagining flight from cellar and prison; prison and hell were inside her.

It was two in the morning, a moonless, starlit night. The beginning of May, second week after a late Easter. Perfumes swirled about the countryside; breeze scented the air. A few wakeful birds warbled in tree tops. Frangoyannou took the path she knew so well, narrow and winding, behind the gardens and below the rocks. Barely visible in the starlight, the path was covered in places by vines of boxthorn and bushes hanging down from garden fences. Like a young mountain shepherdess the agile old woman stepped lightly upon the grasses, chamomile and thorns as she climbed the slope.

To her right the long row of garden enclosures trailed off; on her left still lay the small, rocky hill, Kotronia, with its three picturesque peaks one after another surrounded by windmills, and small white cottages and little houses, creeping around them. She now attained the place where vineyards began, fields with orchards, and further along the incline were olive groves, or fields of tall grasses swaying in the night air. Here the way grew sharp and steep. Frangoyannou, slightly out of breath, ran and ran, her face lashed by the offshore wind, a crosswind, the beloved morning-child of Boreas.

She hurried as fast as possible to reach the places she knew best before daybreak. There were, along the north coast of the island,

many robber dens, inaccessible places, caves and rocks, where wild herbs, caper and saltwort flourished; places where existing paths were ravaged daily by flocks of sheep and goat. There she would find refuge--in the very same places of childhood memory. Along the north shores, near the rough blue open sea, in the old Castro built on gigantic sea-dashed rocks--for there Hadula was born and there she spent young girlhood until the age of ten.

And it was there, after things had quieted down and the new village had been built on the harbor of the island's south side, where her mother--the sorceress, the fugitive who was often chased by robber bands and pirates--frequently took her back to see. She had shown her all the thieves' hideaways, the inaccessible rocks and caverns, and for each had recounted a true or imaginary story. It was in those places, when they "married her off," blessed her with "last rites" (her mother's customary phrase) that she was also given dowry--the house in abandoned Castro and the field in Bostani, on the inaccessible cliff. Later, when she became mistress of her own house, and had learned much and acquired experience in the ways of womanhood, she often returned there and accustomed herself to searching the mountains and scrub country for simples, clover and serpent herb.

Well, there she now hoped to arrive safely, if it was God's will, but, oh, the terrible circumstances! And what would be her fate afterward? God only knew.

On the way, at the point where the road suddenly inclines, as she was passing outside an enclosed orchard, fenced partly by thick brush and tall bush, partly by a wall, inside of which were many kinds of fruit trees, Frangoyannou by chance stumbled, making a little noise and letting an audible sigh escape, she tumbled lightly into a thicket.

Instantly loud barking went up very near her, but on the other side of the fence. Gathering herself up, with faster steps, she quickly continued down the road.

"Who could it be?..." she said to herself.

Then someone in a rough, sleepy but determined voice shouted...

"Eh! Get out of the garden! Get out... Get out!"

She recognized the voice of Tambouras, the vineyard guard. Then she understood and realized what happened. The garden, outside which she had fallen, belonged to the then Mayor. Inside, near other trees, were some cherry trees with fruit already ripe, glistening blackish in the starlight, among the black-green leaves. Tambouras, with little else to guard--for fruits were yet unripe and the gathering had not begun--slept on the mayor's property in a small shed with his dog, protecting the cherries against thefts by the magistrate's subjects.

While the dog continued barking, she fled, at the same time "cupping" her ear, for she imagined footsteps behind her. But she was mistaken. Perhaps it was just the echoing thump of her own footsteps. Only half asleep, the guard as if sleepwalking, had only shouted mechanically, as was his habit. Straightaway he went back to sleep.

Hadula disappeared at the top of the hill behind the trees. There she stood a moment, cupping her ear. Nothing could be heard except the warbling of a bird, buzzings of a nocturnal insect and the whistling of the wind. Then she remembered the cherries, which she had seen faintly glistening from a low branch hanging a little over the mayor's garden fence, near where she had tripped.

"Ach! and I didn't pick one cherry to cool my parched mouth. I forgot to drink a little water before I left... May I arrive at the spring, at least!"

Only then did Yannou remember that she had had no water since before leaving the cellar, where she had passed few but very long worrisome hours. Hadula mused bitterly that everything, even the smallest thing, came to her backwards and upside down in this world. Had she planned on stealing a few cherries from the mayor's orchard, she would have stepped carefully, approached cautiously and probably not have woken the guard nor roused the dog. But inattentive and careless as to where she was going, she stumbled, making noise enough to awake both dog and man. It always happened to her this way!

Meanwhile, her thirst became aggravated by the uphill climb. She cut some olive leaves and she put them in her mouth.

She walked on for another hour. It was already dawn. Reaching the crest of the hill, she descended again to the stream, to the foot of the mountain with its many clefts and fissures, called

Thieves' Dens. Who knows what robbers of old, lying in wait, kept vigilant guard there, whence its name. She came to the small spring, at the base of the mountain. It was already light. She drank some water, refreshed herself and left immediately. Yannou wishes to remain unseen if possible and in that place many people, shepherds, villagers and others often frequented. Descending further, she came to the deepest part of the stream which leads out to the sea, a place called Lehouni.

She arrived there just before sunrise. There were two or three watermills, rather old and useless, though one still worked, but that rarely. Everything spoke of desertion, there was no trace of anyone. Frangoyannou, exceedingly cautious, did not wish to approach. Shunning that place, she passed behind a copse and came upon a deep pool of limpid water, known but to few. It was a secret, inaccessible place. Grotto-like, it was surrounded by greenery, tree trunks and ivy. A nymph's grotto, where perhaps in ancient times Dryad or Naiad found refuge.

To descend into this small depression in the earth for the pool, one would have to have the luck of being chased and the feet of Frangoyannou, bare feet, torn and bleeding from spines and thorns. Inside she settled herself to rest. Having had no food since that coffee in the kitchen, Yannou took bread and cheese out of her basket and a small piece of meat Maroussa had given her, saving only the biscuits taken from the house of her daughter, Delharo. She ate, drank cool water and revived a little.

At that moment, the sun came up. The disc emerged out of the waves opposite, out of the distant ocean and from her shelter Hadula could see a long strand. Birds of the echoing rocky mountain crags, circling high above her, shrieked long caws, while in the valley's groves and small woods birds sang joyous melodies.

One warm ray, coming from afar, from the flaming sea, penetrated the thick foliage and ivy covering of the tormented woman's refuge, causing the morning dew, the drenching of rich emerald peplum, to glisten like lots of pearls, and all shiver of dampness and all the cold of livid fear fled, bringing, for the time being, hope and encouragement.

Yannou drew a multi-folded woolen blanket from her basket, unfolded it, wrapped herself up in it and leaned her head against the root of an old platane tree. She fell asleep.

It came to her sleep that she was still young, that her father and mother marry her off, as indeed they had, and had given her the "last rites" at that time, bestowing the dowry--the paternal garden, where she cultivated and watered the beans and cabbages as a child; and with a kiss, her father rewarded her for her labors, giving "four cabbage heads." Hadula joyfully took the four plants, but when she looked at them, she saw, oh horrors! that they were four small lifeless heads...

She shook, shuddered, said "Lord, Jesus Christ!..." Again she fell asleep. She dreamed that her mother caught her in the act,

searching to find the money sack, down in the cellar, among the barrels, and the jars and the stacks of firewood; upon seeing her, she smiled bitterly, her usual smile, and as if to save Hadula the trouble, she retrieves the money sack herself, takes and gives her from the many coins, three German coins, three crowns of those with the picture of the Virgin, and "Patrona Bavarix" engraved upon them. Frangoyannou, with a joy mixed with shame, takes the three coins from her mother's hands, examines them, and sees that the faces of the three coins are small faces, small, livid, with obliterated little eyes... Oh! Horrors! small faces of little girls!

She awoke terrified, wretched, frantic. It was already mid-day. The sun blazed high above her head over the top of the cool platane tree. But in spite of its warmth and the cheerfulness of the May day, the impression of the dream remained in her mind for a long time. It seemed especially strange how, during the day, she saw that dream for she never remembered having dreamt during the day.

She soaked two biscuits in the pool, set them on a flat stone by the edge of the pit and left them for a long while until they softened. After a time, she scooped up a handful of crumbs and ate them.

When the sun hid behind the rocky mountain top and filled the valley with shadow as evening approached, Frangoyannou grew anxious and poked her head out of the hiding place. She peered high and low through the dense valley of olive trees, but not a soul was visible. Then she considered taking basket and staff, leaving her

small shell to climb up the tree-lined copse, continue slowly along the ravine, and begin again her old art of searching for herbs. Who would be served she had no idea since there was no other refuge in the world for her except prison, only prison.

She nourished the vague hope, nevertheless, that she would find lodging in some sheepfold or shepherd's cabin, and offer the wife of her host some herbs in exchange for hospitality. But mostly, the labor itself would help relieve the heavy weariness which oppressed her soul.

At that moment, she heard the far off tinkling of bells, and looking up saw a flock descending in the distance. She realized that if she did not leave the gully immediately, her hiding place would by all means be discovered. Because, if the sheep and goats were to scatter for water at the broad stream, which flowed to the reservoir and mill below, some would certainly come down to the small ravine neighboring the pool. Then the animals would frighten suddenly, would run and caper about, and the shepherd, whoever he be, would discover her, be astonished, and in his surprise would perhaps become suspicious.

It would be better to go out and face him with feints and ready lies on the lips. Besides, a villager here in the fields would most probably not have had news from the town for several days, nor any knowledge of the chase from which Frangoyannou was suffering.

XIII

Indeed, shortly after Yannou left her hiding place and moved along the stream, bending here and there for herbs, the flock of sheep with goats moved in close by and the shepherd appeared. Yannou recognized him immediately. It was Yannis Lyringos.

Noticing the old woman, he began calling from afar:

"And where in the world, Aunt Garoufalia?" (Lyringos recognized the face, but apparently did not remember the name.)

"Good thing I found you!... God sent you!"

What's he want? said Frangoyannou to herself. Something's on his mind. Surely the man hasn't heard of my troubles.

"You know something, Aunt Garoufalia?" he repeated, coming closer.

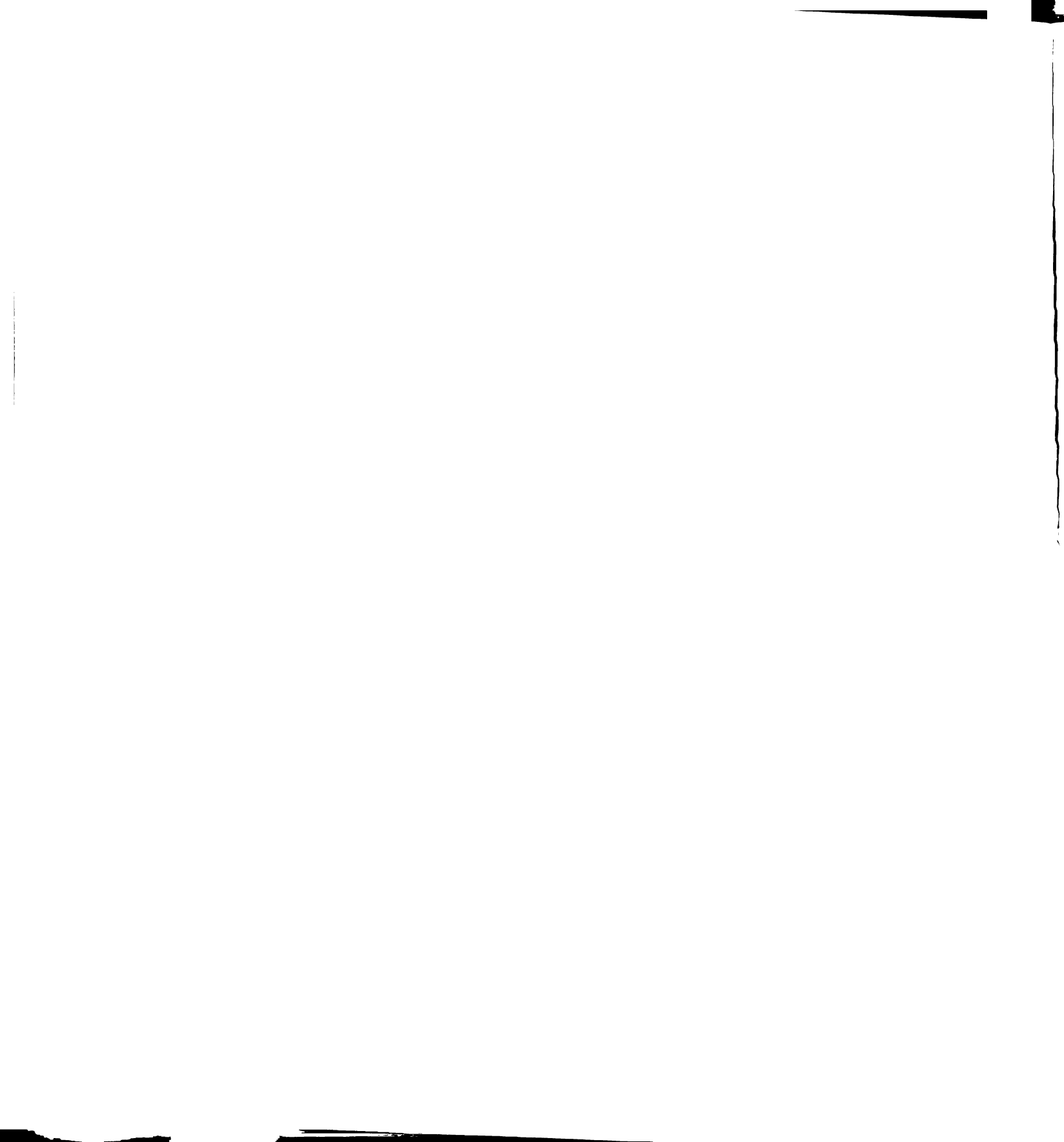
"What can I know, my friend?" Frangoyannou said hypocritically, avoiding any correction of her name. "I've been out of the village since yesterday. Came to collect herbs by the streams."

"Listen, Aunt Garoufalia," he repeated ingenuously, "Last night we had a birth in our shack."

"Gave birth?"

"We had a swaddling!... Our third girl in five years.. all girls, unfortunately!"

"Congratulations!" said the old woman. "May the forty days pass well for the family!"



"But the child came sick into the world, nothing but crying and doesn't take the breast. And the mother's not well either, poor woman... all fevers and weak, unfortunately!"

"Really?"

"Come by the shack if you would, and fix us a remedy, Aunt Garoufalia... My mother-in-law, you see, doesn't know what's to be done."

"But it's almost dark,..." said Frangoyannou hypocritically. But to herself she said, "Heavens, here's my chance! Oh, my God!"

"Let it get dark... If you like, sleep in the cabin."

Frangoyannou stood a moment as if hesitating. But she was ready to agree.

At that moment, as the last ray of the sun gilded the summit of the eastern hill, irradiating the thick foliage of the olive trees, two men could be seen running down a trail between two olive groves.

Frangoyannou saw them first and shuddered. The sun glistening on the leaves, reflected off the tarnished buttons of their uniforms. They were village police.

So Frangoyannou immediately turned her back on Yannis Lyringos and ran toward the base of the rocky mountain, due west.

The shepherd called after her, stupefied:

"Where are you going, Aunt Garoufalia?"

"Quiet! my child, for the love of God!" whispered the terrified woman. "The police are coming!... Don't tell them you saw me!"

"Police?"

"Don't give me away, my child, or I'm lost! Be calm!... If I escape now, I'll come tonight to your cabin..."

Pulling off her tattered shoes which she had just put on again at the water hole, and flinging them into the basket on her left elbow, staff in her right hand, she began to climb, stepping lightly, barefoot, up the steep cliff which only the goats among the sheep of Lyringos could have climbed.

Seconds later, several meters up, she hid behind the first protruding rock and disappeared from sight.

Directly afterwards the two policemen, who to get to the shepherd had been forced to descend through thick brush and cross the ravine, giving Frangoyannou her chance to escape--came up to Lyringos. The shepherd meanwhile strove among his sheep crying "Tivi! Tivi!... oi!oi!" He was attempting to gather his flock and drive it toward the hill, the southern ridge, where his sheepfold lay.

The two men greeted Lyringos. Then they asked him if he had seen "that bad woman, what's her name, Frangoyannou."

Lyringos said no.

One of the policemen swore at the shepherd.

"You're lying! I saw her!..."

Lyringos insisted he must have seen a shadow, the "illusion" or the "apparition" (such he was telling them) of the old woman climbing cat-like to the top of the cliff. The other who had not seen her confirmed nothing.

The first with his tsarouchs tried climbing up on the rock. But tumbled after three steps, he fell slightly injuring his knee.

Frangoyannou had climbed Kouroupi--northern, rocky, inaccessible, the sea dashing and beating about its feet, its view stretching toward the coast of Macedonia, Chalcidice, and magnificent Athos.

The hunted woman came to the spot called Kohele, a place seldom trod by the human foot. Only for a stray "perching" shegoat, might a herdsman dare scale this precipitous cliff. Frangoyannou discovered a small cave, the principal cavern of Kohele, with a view of the open sea and was able to stay comfortably in its shell. She was reasonably sure her pursuers would not come there. If by chance one of them was "palikar" enough to decide and manage to mount the rock, she had a retreat ready. She knew another path inside the rocky mountain's twin peaks which cuts the massif in two and is only known by goatherders of that region, for it leads directly to their folds and cabins.

She settled herself in the rock's shell and below her feet came the roar and music of the waves and above her head she heard the shrill cries of eagles and cawing hawks. As the night took on proportion, stars illuminated the firmament, and the perfumed air, like balm, was able to soothe the suffering woman's "misereries." Though only three man heights above the waves, the cavernous shell was made of rock so sheer no mortal could mount or descend there. It was only suitable for throwing oneself into the sea, if one decided thus to drown.

The old woman took the few biscuits remaining in her basket, some olives and cheese and ate. Fortunately, her flask was full of water because in the afternoon she had filled it before leaving the water hole.

Closing her eyes, she began to lullaby herself, humming a dirge-like song, but sleep eluded her. Fears and hallucinations came and besieged her again. She heard the infant whimperings often, deep in her being. In vain she tried to assuage those mysterious sobs with a song, sad and dreamy:

Oh! Mother mine, I must depart,
For the shadowy Kingdom of Fate to embark,
From the distant portal, my destiny espy,
And to the Fates my question cry...

It occurred to her that perhaps the "regulars" were even searching at night. What if they should climb up to the sheepfolds and remain there for the night?... Would not the shepherds have fresh goat cheese--myzithra--milk and cheesedrums, even chickens ready to slaughter and roast on improvised wood spits? What if one of the shepherds by chance were to talk of and point out the interior trail to them, would not her retreat then be cut off? And it was infinitely more difficult to climb down than climb up, unless she grew wings to flee...

She was terribly curious to learn what the "regulars" told Lyringos and what he said to them. She knew his cabin lay on a ridge behind the mountain about twenty minutes away. By now, surely he would know why they were chasing and trying to arrest her. How could she appear at the cabin? Chances were he did not sleep at the cabin,

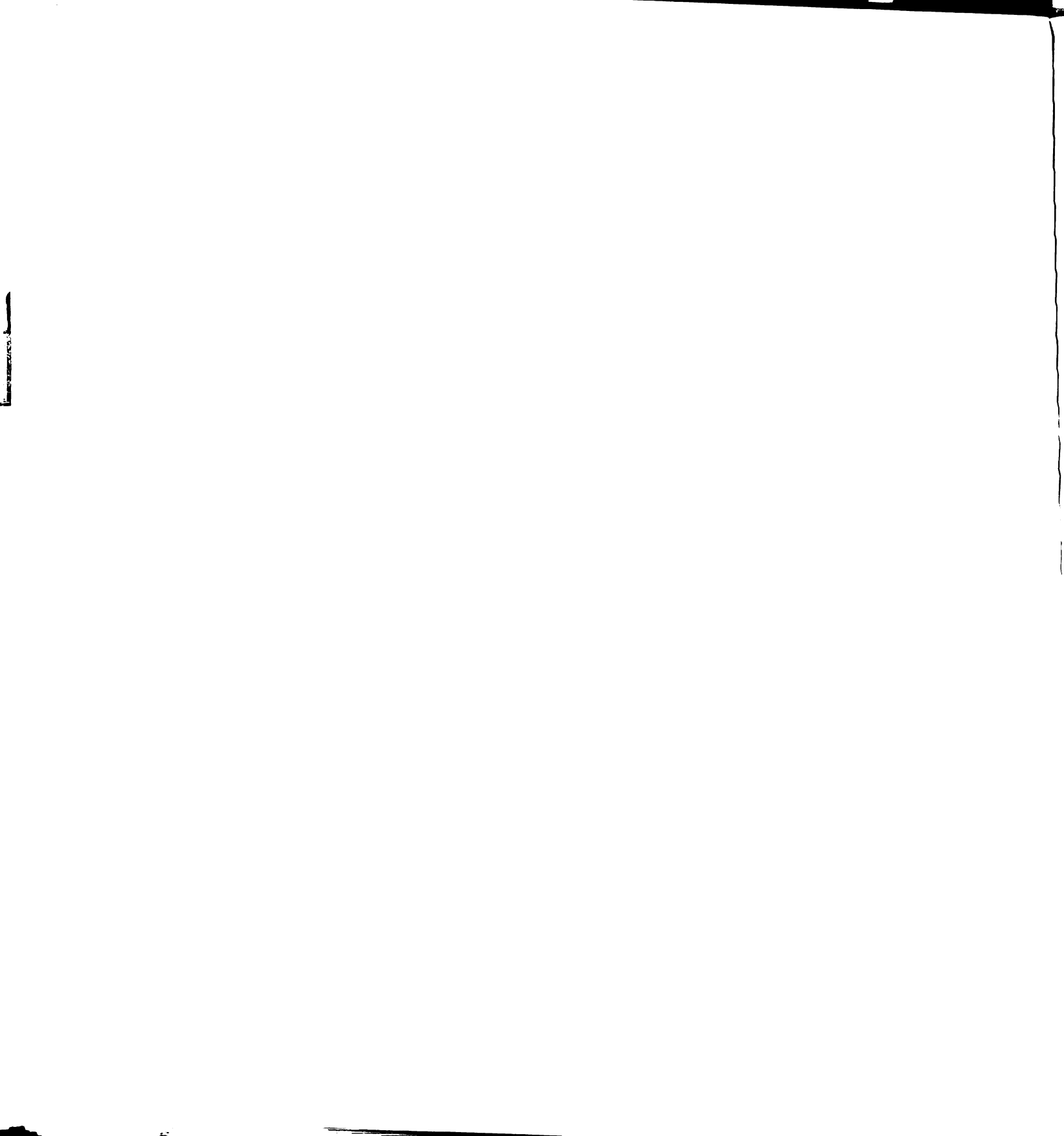
but in the pen with his flock somewhere not very distant. In that case the two women were alone, the mother in childbed and her mother. She might surprise them. Should she risk it or not?

The old woman grew drowsy but without falling completely asleep, she had a dream. She imagined she was elsewhere, in another place. Near St. John the Hidden, healer of secret torments, that Saint who listens to the confessions of hidden sins; there she suddenly found herself. She saw the garden of Perivola, with its sick woman closed inside the cabin. She saw the gate of the fenced garden, the well, the cistern, the winch. She heard a distinct clamor coming from the cistern, deep, very deep and singular. The waters of the cistern began to swirl like the gushings of a tempest, uttering almost human cries. Emanating from the gurgling water she distinctly heard the words: "Murderess!... Murderess!..."

Startled, trembling, she awoke and formulated to herself in her feverish delirium, a bizarre question: "Could the blood shed, be the crying blood of the drowned one?"

Coming immediately to herself, she tried again to utter the soothing words of the prayer: "Lord Jesus..." At the same instant she recollected the forgotten words of a hymn which she had heard many times as a child, chanted by an old priest: "Jesus, Sweetest Christ,... Jesus forbearing!"

Sleep came soon again, deep and lengthy. Now she dreamt, as it were that she was living her whole life over. And, curiously, she saw the continuation of the dream of the previous day. Now she is



married and had received her dowry, but that she gives birth to all three daughters simultaneously, Delharo, Amersa and Krinyo, small, almost identical, as if they were triplets. That all three, holding hands, stand before her seeking caresses, kisses, and gifts. Suddenly, their faces alter, no longer resemble her own three daughters, but the three drowned girls who suddenly, like a string of beads, hang about her neck.

"Me, I'm Matoula," said the one.-- "And I Lil' Milsouda," lisped the other.-- "An' I'm Xenoula," said the third. "Kiss us!-- Take us!-- Your own little girls!-- You gave us birth, you gave us life!-- You gave us birth... in the other world," added Xenoula sarcastically. "Dance with us!-- Give us sweets! Lullaby us! Sing to us!-- Take pride in us!"

Oh! how real it all seemed to her! Those three small daughters were her own offspring! A living, human necklace!... Dead, waterlogged, froth covered!... How was old Hadula to carry those freakish beads about her neck forever!

She woke up confused, quivering; got up, took her staff, her basket and decided to leave from there. Evil spirits lived in the hollow rock, in the roarings of the desolate seashore. The place was haunted. "I'm getting out of here!"

Then other more sober thoughts came to her. If by chance the two policemen had discovered the secret path, it would be better to run toward the danger, and if she saw them coming, perhaps find escape behind the rocks. Surrounded by the dead end of Kohele would be worse.

She ran the uphill trail by the light of the stars, between the rocks and half-an-hour later, out of breath, arrived at Lyringos' cabin. She stood a moment catching her breath, then knocked on the door.

She was sure of one thing, that the two "regulars" would be anywhere but in this cabin where there was a woman in childbed, accompanied by her mother. If they had stayed the night in the mountains, they would be in one of the sheepfolds.

The old woman, Lyringos' mother-in-law, who had not slept (as Frangoyannou had not slept some days ago keeping her own daughter in childbed company) got up and asked:

"Who is it?"

"Yannis sent me," Hadula replied through the locked door without revealing her name, "to doctor the mother in childbed."

"Such an hour?"

"Couldn't make it earlier."

"Where'd you find him?"

"Down at Lehouni, by the stream."

The old woman drew the bolt and opened the door.

"They know nothing," Frangoyannou thought to herself, with them "I'm still O.K."

Once inside, she took charge like the mistress of the house. In the light of the oil lamp flickering before an old icon--a tryptich bearing the figure of Christ in the center, diverse saints on the other two panels--she went straight to the hearth near the low mattress on the floor with the mother in childbed, stocked the fire which she saw

was almost out. Taking wood and kindling from the corner, she threw some into the fireplace, blew and rekindled the flames. She filled the small briki which was on the hearth with water; searched in her basket for two or three small herb twigs; dropped them into the water and set the pot on the fire.

Then, nodding toward the woman in childbed, she said to the old woman in a low voice:

"Don't wake her up... Later, when she wakes up, give her this to drink."

The woman nodded her reply. Frangoyannou continued to stoke the fire. Perplexed, the old woman wanted to ask her again about being so early, but did not dare. Her daughter had suffered after childbirth and the mother feared, lest she awaken suddenly and be discomfitted.

The daughter, a poor little thing two days old, having also come into this world of sin and suffering, was asleep in its crib, but its breathing was labored and audible in the silence. From time to time, when it began breathing easier and seemed on the point of waking or crying, the grandmother rocked the cradle, repeating "sss, sss, sss," first syllable of "sleep" or be "still," the repetition of which, I say, appeared to exercise a strange and mysterious suggestion.

Time passed. The cock had crowed twice already. The Pleiades had long since crossed the middle of the sky. From the crest of the opposite peak around which lay the cabins of other shepherd families, distant cock crowings came to which the roosters in the Lyringos coops immediately answered.

The woman in childbed woke up. She took the medicinal drink from her mother which Frangoyannou had prepared.

"You'll be all right, my dear," said Frangoyannou softly.

"How is it you're here?" said the mother in childbed.

She looked surprised and puzzled, trying to recognize the face.

"God sent me," said Yannou persuasively.

"I'm glad you're here," the old woman declared at last.

Indeed, though at first finding it peculiar, she recognized and acknowledged that the presence of Yannou was comforting in their solitude.

XIV

At the first glimmerings of sunrise, the infant awoke and began crying. Frangoyannou took charge again. She counselled the mother to put the child to breast, to encourage the flow of milk. Just then a noise was heard outside followed by a voice:

"Old woman!... Old woman!... are you sleeping?"

It was Lyringos calling his mother-in-law.

Recognizing the voice, the old woman got up and hurried to the door.

"Come give me a hand," shouted Lyringos. "My helper's gone and I'm all alone."

Yannis, it seems, didn't think to ask about how the woman in childbed, his wife, and the child were. He felt only pressing need and

called his mother-in-law to help him with the morning shepherding chores, that is perhaps opening the pens, milking, etc.

"Can't do it alone, unfortunately!... Need four hands!" he added apologetically.

The old woman left hurriedly. Frangoyannou remained alone with the mother in childbed and the infant.

The young woman had dozed off again without really realizing her mother had gone. When she woke up a few minutes later she said:

"Where'd mother go, by the way?"

Frangoyannou did not answer, thinking it better for the mother in childbed to sleep, having learned that replying to persons in fevers or delirium as with sleepwalkers is harmful. The mother in childbed fell asleep again immediately.

The daughter began crying again in a continuous soft whine. Forgetting the remorse she had so painfully felt under the black wings of her dreams, Frangoyannou, gripped again by harsh reality, began thinking to herself...

"Ach! poor Lyringos, he's right... 'All girls, unfortunately, nothing but girls!' What a relief it would be for him now and his hapless wife, if the All Powerful were to take it now!... too small to leave great sorrow behind!"

At that moment she remembered Lyringos had other older girls, and wondered where they could be. Then she recalled having passed a smaller cabin on the way in, just outside the door, one built low to the ground next to this cabin and attached to it. It was the small hut of the old woman, mother-in-law of Lyringos, and

she had heard heavy breathing and snoring coming from inside. That must be where Lyringos' other daughters slept together with their young unmarried aunt.

As in the frenzy and bewilderment of a dream, she extended her hand toward the crib where the infant was crying... Her fingers took on the shape of talons ready to seize and strangle... She felt at that moment a wild desire to choke it... Then it occurred to her that the child had not been baptized and if she choked it it would be a double sin... The thought restrained her for a moment, but she decided to overcome that obstacle... Her hand moved to within one finger of the little creature's neck.

At that moment a voice was heard, steps, creaking outside on the hiyati. The door which the old woman, mother-in-law of Lyringos, had left unbolted had only pulled shut, suddenly opened wide--pushed in from the outside.

"Is this," asked a man at the entrance, "the house of Lyringos the shepherd?"

It was a policeman with his shirt half-buttoned, ruffled upon his chest, with cap askew, with moustache twirled and with a cape slung over his left shoulder.

Inside the cabin, the oil lamp flickered before the icons. The fire was covered over again by ash. The lantern hanging from the mantle was out. It was dark. Outside, it had dawned and two seconds later the sun would have risen.

The man could see nothing inside but vague shadows. The mother in childbed on her mattress as a black mass on the floor, the

infant fidgeting and stirring in its wash-trough crib... and Frangoyannou seated as a phantom with her arm extended toward the crib.

Frangoyannou froze with her arm outstretched, horror-stricken, terrified, shocked. Coming instantly to herself, she realized the terrible danger.

Just behind her was a small window facing north, rotted, warped and poorly closed. As if propelled by an explosion, she turned, mechanically opened the window and jumped out. She fell upon straw and hay which muffled the impact of her fall and was not heard. The window itself was only a half meter off the ground.

Only she had forgotten to take along her staff and basket which had been beside her on the floor. Small wonder in all the confusion. As she started off, she wondered if there was some way to go back and retrieve them without being seen by her pursuers.

But she kept running, running... entered a forest whose numerous paths were familiar to her. She never turned to look back... The two "regulars" would probably lose time figuring out what had happened before renewing their hunt.

Indeed, the two men in the public service did not realize at first what had happened. The justice of the peace had sent them back "full speed" in common agreement with the police sergeant who, whenever he expressed himself, this inspired minister of the law, always said "yes" to whatever the sergeant said who never said "no." They sent them to enter the John Lyringos' farmhouse with a summons for him to appear before the authorities, and, if necessary, bring him in by force. From whatever the two policemen had related in the village

the previous evening, the so-called luminaries deduced that Mr. Lyringos was implicated in the matter of the escape of the Hadula woman, widow of John Frangos, Christian, and household domestic, whom the two soldiers said they saw climb up the cliff of the rocky mountain.

Immediately before sunrise, therefore, having slept for two or three hours fully dressed in the basement of the town hall with cockroaches, centipedes and lizards (the Kazarma served to terrify juveniles--all in the name of public service), the two policemen got up to a blast of the sergeant's whistle, took their capes and set out on the road for the mountain.

Their mission was to bring in Lyringos--(and any and all shepherds for interrogation, the justice of the peace took care to add, whose story was peculiar)--but above all to scent out Frangoyannou and succeed in finding her. For this they had full powers to search sheepfolds and pens and interrogate all herdsmen on the mountains. Thus, for every eventuality they took their capes with them.

When the first officer pushed in the door of the cabin, he saw darkness and shadow inside, heard the creaking of the north window opening, as rays of light began peentrating the room but were suddenly obstructed by a black mass--curved, uncommunicative, shapeless--and heard the faint thump of its fall. Then in the double stream of light now crisscrossing through the door and the open window, he could distinctly see the woman in childbed lying on her cot.

"What's going on here?" shouted the man, surprised.

The mother in childbed woke up and said in a weak voice:

"Mana, is that you?... You came?"

XV

When Frangoyannou arrived breathless and panting high up on the elevated plateau of Kambia, she stopped, turned toward the downward slope from which she had come and looked for the shadow or hare-like tread of the police. Nothing appeared, but she did not feel safe.

As if lost in thought she stood reflecting. She was making a mathematical calculation, figuring the longest to the shortest time it would take the two "regulars" (she hadn't seen the second but guessed there were two) to understand what happened, perhaps ask some questions (the mother in childbed would be unnecessarily frightened, but know nothing to tell them; so they would probably run to the sheepfold where Lyringos and his mother-in-law were; but so much the more it would delay them), then they would throw down their capes and pick up the scent to hunt her.

But by chance had they actually seen, or guessed, or even known the path she had taken? Had she stuck to only one trail the whole time? In the beginning she turned right as if wishing to descend, then she turned left, and ran up the hill--despite the disadvantage of being pursued uphill. But if she found the climb exhausting, young as they were, would they not also experience the same difficulty? Quite by chance, Hadula knew that one of two young men suffered from asthma...

It was not very long ago that he had approached her son-in-law to ask the old woman to make a remedy for the illness.

But in spite of the favor, Yannou knew better than to expect compassion from the policeman. The man was doing his duty. Anything she might have done would not help if she fell into their hands, or if they wanted to call her "cursed woman!!" She had observed before, during the adventures and troubles which she endured with her son, Menace, that these kind of people grow vindictive when their prey resists or acts insolent, especially if it becomes necessary to chase them until their tongues hang out... Oh! of course, becoming hardened like wild beasts is justified. By fleeing, obliging them to run, Frangoyannou did not expect their pity.

There where she was standing lost in thought, she hears footsteps behind her, coming from the opposite direction. Turning, she sees a man, a shepherd. She recognized him. It was Kambanakhmakis. He was shuffling along obliquely, followed by his dog which started growling at seeing the woman. But his master scolded him.

Noticing Frangoyannou, he stopped. He had come from his cabin and was on the way to his sheepfold. Tall, dark, gaunt; broad-chested; hair and beard the color of singed straw; a curved staff equal to his height in hand, he stopped in front of Frangoyannou. The man seemed to be in great distress and anguish.

"Ah! Whence this good fortune!" he said in an indistinguishable, gruff voice, clenching his teeth as he spoke. "Soon I saw, just soon I knew, kyra Yiannou... Lord Gherambis sends you!"

"What's that you say, my good man?" said Hadula in her hypocritical manner.

"Good that we've crossed! I said, she there be a worthy woman of the village, who knows the herbs and shoos the evils far. Soon I saw, one glance I knew!... Heard what's happened, kyra Yiannou'm!"

"Meaning what, my dear?"

"Great bedevilment befell me, your sympathies, Aunt Yiannou! Terrible misfortune! My woman, Gherambis forbid, went out the night to pee, out from the hut, kyra Yiannou'm, come back undone and slack... Strong she left, weak she returned... tongue all out--sick, slack, struck... Great bedevilment, Gherambis protect you... Tongue all out below her chin, no voice, bad fever, chills and spasms!... Half dead she's on her bed."

"Really?... Oh, sins!... and when did this happen?"

"Day before yesterday at night, midnight, Aunt Yiannou! Gherambis preserve you, your sympathies... Strong she left the hut, struck, mad she returned... Trouble yourself to the cabin, at least, now that we've crossed, kyra Yiannou'm! Only to look, see how bad it is... Come, good you will do her... The devils one by one will flee your medicines."

"How did it come about?" said Frangoyannou.

"Who knows the devils ways, kyra Yiannou'm. Gherambis knows."

Hadula thought for a moment. Then she said:

"Good, I'll come by, in a little while."

"A long and blessed life to you, Aunt Yiannou!" said Khambanakhmakis, "Lord Gherambis sent you."

When Khambanakhmakis left, Frangoyannou mused that at least she would have a refuge for the coming night, and that during the day it would be best to hide in some copse or cave where it would be impossible for the police to find her.

She took the road leading down into the gully of Agalliano. She stopped by a spring to drink some water. There she met an old monk, Father Josaphat, gardener of the Monastery of the Annunciation, which in majestic profile could be seen above on the mountain overlooking the valley.

Frangoyannou sat down beside the cool spring to regain her strength. Head resting in her hands, she seemed deep in thought but was "all ears," imagining the sounds of approaching policemen with every passing moment.

Approaching to fill a water jug, Father Josaphat saw Frangoyannou and bid her a good morning.

"What brings you here, my good woman? Something troubles you I see..."

"Ach! Father!..." said Frangoyannou. "I have torments and misfortunes."

"Misfortunes are part of this world, good woman... Whatever men do they cannot avoid them..."

"Ach! Father Josaphat, lamented Frangoyannou effusively. "If only I were a bird with wings!"

"O that I had wings as those of a dove," said Father Josaphat, remembering the chants.

"I wish to leave this world, Father... I can't suffer any longer."

"I have fled afar off and lodged in the wilderness," said the old monk again.

"A great storm has found me, Father, and I'm greatly distressed."

"May God deliver you, my daughter, 'from distress of spirit and tempest,'" added the monk continuing the chant.

"One can't escape malicious talk, slander or envy."

"Destroy, O Lord, and divide their tongues: for I have seen iniquity and gainsaying in the city," concluded Father Josaphat.

Then, after filling his water jug, he said:

"If you pass by our gardens, good woman, call on me so as I may offer you a lettuce and some beans."

And he left.

That evening, Frangoyannou went to the cabin of Khambanakhmakis at Far-Ridge. The shepherd's wife, over thirty, mother of five, was lying on a straw mattress. Her condition was pitiful. Nervous shock had twisted her face, her tongue hung out the mouth and she was making inarticulate sounds.

"What happened?" asked Frangoyannou, gesturing. But the suffering woman only grunted inarticulately.

Frangoyannou sat down by the fireplace and began boiling some herbs for the patient. Without her basket anymore, she had filled her

bosom with a variety of tiny grasses which she had collected during the day by the streams from the valleys below.

The two little girls of the sick woman sat down by Frangoyannou's knees like little kittens waiting to be petted. Yannou stroked their chins and necks, so hard that they felt pain, and one of them shouted:

"Mana!"

But their mother made no response and the poor things were too young either to understand or fend for themselves. The little boy, who appeared to be the same age as one of the little girls, perhaps her twin, cried for his mother to "get up and make a pancake in the frying pan."

"Now, my son, I'll make you a pancake," said Frangoyannou mechanically.

"We don't have flour, Aunt," said the older of the two girls.

"Well, when father comes, he'll bring some," said Frangoyannou, to the child, "and I'll make 'griddles.' Be quiet now."

But the boy continued.

"I want griddles, fried! With syrup!"

"Where shall I find syrup, my son," said Frangoyannou. "Soon the grapes will ripen in the vineyard; we'll gather them in, cut the fruit from the vine, and make much, much syrup for the good boy to eat. What's your name?"

"His name is Yorghos, Auntie," replied the older girl.

"You?"

"Daphne."

"And you?" Yannou asked the youngest daughter.

"Anthi."

"God bless you!"

"But when can we cut the grapes, Auntie?" shouted the boy.

"Can't we go now to the vineyard and cut them?"

"Not now, my son, tomorrow."

"Tomorrow early?" Yorghos asked.

"Yes, my little son." Tonight the grapes will ripen, sweeten, darken and early tomorrow morning we'll take vintagers, hurry to the vineyard, gather them in, cut bunch by bunch, tread on them, crush them, make molasses, syrup and a thousand other good things... and then I'll make you a pancake large as the pan itself!"

"I want it to be very, very big" said the little boy.

"A big one, big as I am," said Frangoyannou.

In the meantime, the smaller of the two girls, Daphne, whose gaze wandered stupor-like between the oil lamp and Frangoyannou, grew drowsy, as if hypnotized by the old woman's eyes and she leaned her head toward the hearth and fell asleep. Yannou stroked her under the chin continuously, her hand sometimes slipping to the throat as if perhaps to squeeze harder the little girl's neck. But at that moment running was heard outside, the door opened and Khambanakhmakis entered.

"You're here, kyra Yannou!" he said very agitated. "Get up! Run! Hide!"

"What's wrong?" said the old woman, trying to appear calm.

"Are police looking for you? What've you done, poor Christian? The police are looking high and low. Get up, run! Hide somewhere at least! I pity you, poor thing! What've you done?"

"Me? Lots of things... but why would the police want me, as you say?"

"Run, they're coming here now. How'd they know you were here, they're coming to catch you now. Any second! Listen, down by Dark Grotto, by bad creek, somewhere there, take yourself! At Path of the Vine near Bird Spring there, and even if they're on your heels, they can't catch you! From there you can go down to the old Priest, to the Hermitage, confess your sins, poor thing. Run!..."

The poor soul ran, but no longer felt very able. The loss of many nights sleep, the hardships and the frights had taken their toll. The places Khambanakhmakis named were very far away and impossible to travel to on a moonless night.

As she was running, all ears to every sound, terrified, imagining footsteps everywhere--on the path, among the trees and bushes--she heard real steps coming up the main trail about two hundred feet away. Hiding behind the bushes, she saw what appeared to be policemen. They were heading for Khamanakhmakis' cabin whence she had come. If so, her situation for the present was a little better because she no longer feared meeting them again that night.

Yannou continued on toward the place she had visited in the morning. She came upon the small chapel, Source of Life, the Monks Cemetery, and the Threshing-floor of the Monastery. She passed the Flogging Shed opposite the iron gates of the Community House which

was completely boarded up. Otherwise women never entered the sacred walls. She stepped down into the gardens where she had met the friar, the gardener, in the morning who had recited passages from the Psalter, little of which she understood though vaguely suspected they applied more or less to her situation. Indeed, his words continued to buzz in her ears: "'O that I had wings as those of a dove;... Lo! I have fled afar off, and lodged in the wilderness. I waited for him that should deliver me from distress of spirit and tempest...'"

As she climbed the opposite ridge, beyond the Gardens, above the stream, she heard the small bell of the monastery toll, sweetly, humbly, monotonously, awakening the echoes of the mountains, and stirring the gentle wind. It was therefore midnight, hour of the Midnight Office, hour of Matins! How happy they were, these men, who, early in their youth by divine inspiration had the prescience to do what was best--not to bring, that is, others, into the world ill fated!... after that, everything being secondary. This philosophy they took as an inheritance, without troubling their minds "in search of truth" which can never be found.

She made her way higher up the ridge without purpose or clear idea where she was going. And out from the road a short distance away, she saw a sheepfold which she recognized as belonging to Yannis Lyringos. The dog sensed her presence from the distance and began barking.

Without realizing it she had come to her lodging of the previous night! Now she began thinking again. Until this moment instinct had been her guide. But now ideas suggested themselves

clearly. "Where could I be safer for the present than here? The police would never expect me to return to the same place they found me yesterday and gave chase. Yannis is sleeping in his fold. The old woman and the woman in childbed must be in the cabin. Last night, in my confusion and haste, I forgot my basket there. Why not go and knock on the door, offer a remedy or service again, retrieve my little basket and when it gets light, go down to Bad Creek where Khambanakhmakis suggested and hide?..."

Surely the old woman, Lyringos' mother-in-law, must have heard something bad about her from the village police or a third party, but what do I care?

She wouldn't have the meanness or the courage to betray her. In any case, as a pretext to enter she would pretend she had come to ask for her forgotten basket.

The cold mountain wind had chilled her considerably and she needed shelter somewhere for awhile. She hesitated no longer. Crossing the plateau which joins the two peaks--on the south side of which lay the pens; on the north, the Lyringos abode--Hadula arrived at the cabin.

She knocked on the door. The old woman was sleeping but got up without delay and came to open the door, this time without asking who was there, either because she was half asleep or because she was sure it was none other than her son-in-law. Frangoyannou hurried inside.

"My basket, forgot it in my haste yesterday," she said. "Did you see it? Is it somewhere? Where is it?"

The peasant woman stood and gazed at her. Only now she appeared to have woke up and recognized her.

"How is it you're here?" she said.

"Don't ask," Yannou replied. "I stayed the night in another cabin, but couldn't sleep. Remembering my basket, I came. How is the mother in childbed?

"What can she do? She is the same... But tell me," said the old woman after some moments hesitation, "those police, why were they looking for you?"

"Jealousy!" answered Frangoyannou quickly. "A little girl drowned in a well..."

"Eh?"

"And one of my enemies, don't know who, said it was my fault... Why, God save our souls, can anyone believe such a thing? As if the little girl couldn't have drowned by herself? Did I have to use my hand?"

"My word!" sighed the old woman.

Frangoyannou installed herself, as she had the night before, by the corner of the fireplace where she found her basket. She stoked the fire, poured water into the briki and prepared to boil some herbs which she drew from her bosom.

The woman in childbed was sleeping, and the breathing of the baby could be heard inside the wash-trough being used as a crib, under a high canopy of barrel-rings covered with cheesecloth. From time to time it cried. "Sss, sss, sss," murmured the old woman, the grandmother,

who had closed one eye but with the other kept a sharp watch on Frangoyannou in the feeble light of the oil lamp and the intermittent glimmerings from the fireplace. Finally, although she had decided not to sleep, about an hour later sleep, the traitor, came--for that very reason, because she was watching the suspicious woman so intensely. By the third crowing of the cock she was asleep.

The infant continued crying. The old woman was no longer keeping vigil to recite the monotone "sss, sss!"

"All girls, unfortunately!" Yannis Lyringos' complaint buzzed in Frangoyannou's ears.

The mother in childbed was still sleeping. Old Hadula moved a little, stretching down on her knees to the trough. Drawing back the white cloth from the head of the cradle, she extended her hand to caress the little one, while it continued crying. She covered the small mouth with her hand so it would not scream, looking first toward where its mother lay, then toward the mattress on which the old woman was curled up.

The voice of the infant died away. Only one more motion was still necessary. With her other hand Frangoyannou forcefully squeezed its neck... Then she collected up the light cloth to throw it over the canopy again. Her hand knocked against the wood, making a slight noise. The old woman who was not deeply asleep, awoke. She shuddered with fright. She saw Frangoyannou pull out her hand, draw herself up on her knees again and return to her place.

"What are you doing?" cried the old woman, alarmed.

The mother in childbed shot up, jumped.

"What is it, Mana?"

Frangoyannou stood up, took her basket.

"Nothing. Just wanted to stop the crying," she answered.

The old grandmother bent over the crib.

"I'm leaving now, it's light," said Frangoyannou... "Give the mother the medicine I boiled!"

With that she left. She ran away as fast as possible, taking the upper road along the forest so as to avoid passing the opposite ridge where the sheepfold lay.

It was a sweet May dawn. Blue and rose glimmerings in the sky tinged the brush and vegetation a honey-gold. In the forest, nightingales could be heard and countless small birds were passionately, endlessly singing their indescribable songs.

Frangoyannou was already some distance when she heard raucous screaming behind her. It was the old woman, the grandmother, frantic, pulling her hair. She had run out of the house and was screaming.

"Stop her!... Stop her! Murderer!"

Frangoyannou continued running. She hoped to conceal herself as fast as possible in the woods where if they were to chase after her, her tracks would soon be lost.

But by chance, some moments later, she found herself face to face with Yannis Lyringos who was walking toward his house. Having got up at the usual hour, he was on his way to the cabin no doubt to

call out his mother-in-law for a helping hand, just as he had done the other morning. But when he saw his mother-in-law screaming and gesticulating in the distance, too far for him to hear what she was saying, guided only by the direction of her gestures, saw Frangoyannou heading for the edge of the forest--then he ran that way, shouting in a loud voice at Frangoyannou:

"What is it?... What's going on?"

Then Hadula stopped and shouted back toward Yannis Lyringos.

"I'm leaving!... Going to..."

Yannis Lyringos, still running, had run some distance more and came closer to Frangoyannou. Then, she, decisively, took two or three steps closer to him.

Frangoyannou called all her instincts to her aid and her presence of mind. She improvised.

"Yannis! Your wife's in labor! She's real bad."

"In labor!..." the man cried stupefied. "What are you saying, Christian?"

"There's another baby in her belly!" she asserted audaciously.

"Another baby in her belly!"

"Yes. Just like I said. Now run to the village, call the midwife!... Tell the doctor to come also!"

Lyringos stood still. In the distance, on the small knoll, before the house, his mother-in-law was still shouting wild screams which the wind carried away, and Yannis was unable to hear what she was saying. Frangoyannou spoke with assurance and it appeared she knew what she was talking about.

"How could that ever happen?" cried Yannis. "Have you lost your head, Christian?"

"It happens," insisted Frangoyannou. "Whenever twins don't come down together from the belly. One of them, the weaker of the two, takes longer, hours, sometimes days to fall."

"That's true! I've heard that," said Yannis.

"It seems to me," concluded Frangoyannou very seriously, "this time one was conceived after the other."

"Was that it?" Lyringos lamented.

"Run as fast as you can! Go and bring the doctor!..."

"Where are you going?" asked Lyringos.

"I'm going to Saint-Haralambo... to beg papa Makario to come and say a prayer for the woman!"

"Good! Run!"

And Frangoyannou ran.

XVI

Down in Bad Creek, down at its depth, near the dark Grotto, the stones danced a daemonic dance at night. Rising, like animate spirits, they chased Frangoyannou, slinging stones at her, as if from invisible, vengeful hands.

Three days had passed since her last flight from the Lyringos cabin. The guilty woman had hidden there, hoping to escape the claws of her pursuers, at least for a time. She survived on the

few biscuits remaining in her basket, on wild greens, anise and sweet cicely--however much she could collect--and on the brackish water of Dark Grotto. The place was almost inaccessible.

Impassable rock on the north and a cliff sheer and treacherous on the east, shaped Bad Creek. Below, at its depth, gushed Brine Spring. Two caverns, with narrow mouths, yawned on both sides. Here she slept at night, descending into Dark Grotto during the day. To go up or down, neither road nor path existed. She walked along the stony bed at the base of the cliff. Then the stone bed trembled as if angered. The stones which loosened underfoot were the base and foundation of an immense accumulation of stones extending up the incline of the cliff. As the first stones slipped away, others came to take their place, and others after them. Thus the cliff's stone tide came down upon her, battering her shins and legs, arms and chest. Cascading down, they would sometimes strike her face with such force and viciousness that it seemed indeed as if an invisible hand armed with a sling was shooting at her head.

When she finally arrived at Dark Grotto the first day after so much pelting, she sat down and gazed out to sea. The wave battered Grotto with its double entrance could be approached by land or by sea. From the sea, the mouth, low and narrow, just wide enough for a small fishing boat. Invisible from the land, Frangoyannou listened to the muffled, persistent breaking of waves against the cavern's mouth. Swelling, the waves leapt, hit its upper lip, fell, leapt upward again, hurling the sea-howling fury of the north, or

sometimes the dolorous complaint of swollen oceans. Down in its depth, impenetrable, lurked the mysterious and the dark. Once, it is said, a boat sailed in in search of hermit crab and crayfish. One of the sailors had scaled the treacherous rock for herbs, when the boat sailed upon a live seal blocking the entire mouth of the entrance. The dark animal shook, struggled, the small boat battled, rocked, but was unable to move backward or forward. Beating the seal with an axe, the sailor on deck bloodied it and the sea ran red. The seal writhed in agony. The young fisherman, managing to slip a noose around its neck, called back his partner and together, at the risk of capsizing, they pulled the seal aboard.

Old Hadula gazed and gazed upon the sea. If only a boat would now appear, sail by!... Frangoyannou would beg the young sailors, her compatriots, to take her with them on board... Where would she go?... Oh, surely to the opposite shore, to the places over there on the great mainland!... And what could she do there? Oh, God would provide, she would begin life anew!

She looked out, looked out to the open sea at the many sails, white like seagull wings. Brigs, schooners, small caiques she saw sailing by, plowing the waves like paired oxen. Some navigating north, others south, still others sailing eastward and westward, criss-crossing wakes, the deep visible streams others had left behind. Then the many currents traced themselves upon the ocean's surface, embroidering and mottling the sea. She gazed out until her eyes "turned to glass."

Frangoyannou drew out from her basket an old yellowed shawl, the woolen one used to wrap around herself when sleep eluded her. She stood up, shook the woolen sheet out to the air and began waving it vigorously. She made signals, desperate signals to those sailors to come and take her. The sailors, did they see, didn't they see her banner? Not one responded to her yearning, to her numerous attempts. The white masts sailed on with the wind into the waves and she remained fixed to the rock of Dark Grotto--banished, abandoned, blind to the golden sunrise of the morrow...

The white and yellowed cloth escaped her hands in the wind and threw itself about her head and shoulders.

"This will be my shroud!" Frangoyannou murmured with a bitter smile.

Finally, sitting there upon the rock, she noticed a boat approaching along the coast--a short-masted felucca with two oars listlessly beating the waves as it glided out of the east toward her desolate sanctuary. Frangoyannou suddenly began to hope. Retreating behind the rock's peak she watched to see if she could recognize those on board. As the felucca drew near, she noticed that one of its three, the one pulling on the drag at the stern, was wearing a soldier's uniform. A retiree no doubt from the army who loved fishing, had come out for the hunt with two seasoned fishermen. Frangoyannou, seeing he was a "regular," smiled and crouched deeper behind the rock.

That night she fell asleep in her hideaway, in the damp, saline atmosphere of the Grotto. Roaring bombarded her ears. Waves

below her feet raged in prolonged howlings. Deep within her bosom she heard the plaintive whimperings of innocent infants. The muffled whistling of the distant wind reached her ears. Round and round about her skipped the dance macabre of the daughters, the horrible chain enlarged. "We are your children!--You gave us birth!--Kiss us!-- Treat us!--Buy us trinkets, beautiful trinkets!-- Caress us!-- Love us!"

Lyringos' old mother-in-law, frenzied, wringing her hands, threatened her menacingly while her son-in-law reproached her mournfully... Below her feet at the Grotto's depth, the waves thundered... Boiling up, boiling up, the Grotto transformed itself into a cistern and the waters of the cistern bellowed in an inarticulate voice! "Murderess!-- Murderess!"

The tormented woman woke up horrified, bathed in brine and sweat. If such were to be her dreams, she prayed, moreover decided never to sleep again. If she were to see nightmares, death was preferable! Who knows!... On this thought she dozed off again. This time Khambanakhmakis appeared to her, that wild man of the mountain, standing before her with his curved shepherd's staff, vulgar looking and uncouth, speaking to her in a scratchy voice: "To Bad Creek! To the Path, to Bird Spring! To Hermitage of the Monk!"

Then he disappeared from sight still repeating, "To the Hermitage! To Hermitage of the Monk!"

Frangoyannou awoke at dawn with a glimmer of serenity in her soul as the azure sky crimsoning at the horizon mingled with the

blue-black expanse of sea; and breeze, cool mist, rippling wavelets and bird warblings soothed her being.

She had not stopped thinking about the Hermitage since Khambanakhmakis mentioned it to her three days previous. She had heard much pious talk from women about the old Monk, papa Akakios, who only a short time ago had come to the island. He lived at St. Savior, a solitary retreat near an old abandoned chapel, lying on a small sea-battered rock which formed a reef or islet jutting out toward the escarpment to the northwest. At low tide the islet became a small peninsula. Old papa Akakios was, they said, a strict ascetic having the rare talent of discerning thoughts almost foreseeingly. Women asserted that he was master of hidden knowledge and could tell whatever was inside you. Often times the penitent confessed much more than he intended.

For Frangoyannou confession would be a blessing if she sincerely decided upon it. The holy father would spare her the painful anguish of the hesitation, saying, "You have done thus and so!" If only to relieve her desperation, but he could also help save her--for this world at least, if possible! Besides, was there not among the Saints one who had hidden and saved the murderer of his own brother, refusing to give him up to the authorities? How much easier it would be then for papa Akakios to save her, and hide her, since she had not personally injured the reverent monk? Boats passed St. Savior daily, close by the shore or out at sea, and if he wished, couldn't he arrange her escape?

Hadula grew weary of the monotony in Dark Grotto and had begun to weaken seriously from lack of food. She decided, as soon as it grew light, to take up her small basket, leave her refuge and set out for St. Savior. There she would confess all her "torments." Hour of repentance had come...

They arrived, they arrived, the police! Either through betrayal or by following her tracks, they discovered her... They had successfully descended into Bad Creek without being stopped by the cliffs or bombarded by stones shaking loose and rolling down upon them!

It was at the very crack of dawn as Frangoyannou was preparing to leave by the shortest route for St. Savior, the Hermitage. The sun had not yet risen sufficiently to light the treeless seashore of Kouroupi or glance its golden rays off the sheer escarpment of Stivoto. Frangoyannou saw them, was seized with terror, took her basket, and breathless, panting, she mounted the hill, making her way up the impenetrable rock to Klima, toward the vine country to the west. Kicking off her old tattered shoes, she climbed barefoot up above to the top of the cliff. The two "law men" threw off their tsarouchs as well and chased after her, up the inaccessible rock, into the region of despair, wherever she wandered.

For one instant only, the woman turned around to glance back. It was then she noticed that there were two pursuers, but only one was wearing a soldier's uniform. The other was dressed in village

attire with a waist-band, the selaki, with pistols and sword. Probably one of the field guards.

This puzzled and alarmed her. The absence of the other policeman aroused her suspicions. Was an ambush awaiting her on the other side of the cliff beyond inhospitable rock and steep escarpment, so her cruel pursuers could close her between two fires?

On the other hand, she took consolation from this and a little hope. For if one of the two "law men" was a fellow villager, a peasant man in the service of the town hall, it might mean he would only half-heartedly chase her; even affect the enthusiasm of the other policeman. Perhaps he even secretly felt sympathy for the fugitive, chasing her barefoot and bleeding over the rocks, poor woman--unsure of her guilt.

XVII

Sometime into the hour of pursuit, Frangoyannou came to the place Khambanakhmakis had called "Path of the Vine." It was a rock suddenly running inward, forming a narrow ledge below which yawned an abyss, the sea. This ledge was but half-a-hand in width, only three or four steps across. But to walk across, it was necessary to hold on to the rock above, face the sea, and advance on one's heels edging sidewise, right to left. One's life hung on a hair.

Making the sign of the cross, Frangoyannou did not hesitate. She had no choice. No other pass through the rock existed. Gripping

her basket in her teeth, she jumped decisively and safely across the terrible pass.

Later the two men reached it, out of breath. The policeman saw the ledge and stopped.

"Have you got the guts?" said his companion with disguised mockery.

"Isn't there another way?"

"There isn't."

"You must have crossed often," said the soldier.

"Me, No!" denied the rural guard.

"Weren't you a shepherd?"

"I herded sheep on the plains."

The policeman still hesitated.

"And a 'put-down' by a woman!" he said.

"We arrived too late to see her the moment she crossed," said the peasant guard ironically. "If you had seen her, it would have given you courage."

"Really?"

"You don't know how many times women set the example!" said the field guard. "In some things, they show great courage."

"Well, I'll cross it too!" said the policeman.

"Go ahead!"

The policeman took off his jacket, handed it to his companion, leaving only his shirt. He crossed himself.

"If I make it, throw it over," he said.

He tried stepping on the ledge, holding on to the rock. After one step he jumped back.

"I got dizzy," he said.

In the meantime, having ascended the hill on the run, Frangoyannou arrived higher up on the palisade. Exhausted, breathless, her chest heaved. From time to time she stopped for a second, cupping her ear, trying to determine if her two pursuers had crossed the ledge. She heard nothing. Their tardiness indicated that the two "law men" hesitated a lot to cross the path.

Finally, she arrived at Bird Spring, as Khambanakhmakis had called it. It was a spring located on high rock of a small slippery plateau of earth overgrown with moss and other water plants, which appeared to be floating on water. Frangoyannou walked cautiously so as not to slip and fall. Only birds could really come to drink at the spring. Hadula bent down and drank.

"Ach! As I drink at your little spring, my sweet birds," she said, "give me also your gift of flight!..."

She laughed to herself wondering where she found the levity in such a moment. But the birds, seeing her, took to the skies, startled and frightened...

She sat, beside the spring, to catch her breath. She was almost certain now that the two "law men" had not succeeded crossing Path of the Vine.

Yet the wretched woman did not feel safe sitting there. Whence, after a few minutes, she stood up, took her basket and ran

down the incline. Now she went fully resolved to make her way to St. Savior, to the Hermitage. It was time, if she escaped, to confess her sins to the old man, the ascetic.

A few minutes later she came down the palisade and arrived on the pebbly shore, on the sand. Before her stretched the sea-battered rock upon which appeared the old chapel of St. Savior. The neck of sand, joining the small rock with the mainland, was but a mere finger above the waves. The tide had just begun coming in. Frangoyannou stood a moment, hesitating. "Won't it... become shallow again in a while?" she said. "Why hurry now and get all wet?"

But just then she heard a loud commotion up on the cliff. Two men, one soldier and one civilian, with rifles on their shoulders, were descending the hill on the run. The civilian was not the field guard she had left behind with the policeman, it was someone else in foreign dress. Was this the ambush she had suspected in which they wished to corner her? Now it had come to pass.

Frangoyannou ran, crossed herself, and stepped on the sand causeway. The sand was slippery. The waves rose, billowed. The woman did not turn back. It was her last shred of hope. Indeed, of hope, of actual hope, she had none.

The waves rolled in, rolled in. Frangoyannou walked on. The sand gave way. Her feet lost footing.

The rock of St. Savior was about twelve meters from the beach. The neck of sand, the causeway, was a full fifty steps across.

The waters rose to her knees, then to her waist. The sand continued to slip. It became morass, quagmire. The waters rose to her chest.

The two men, giving chase, let fire a volley to dishearten her. Then their voices could be heard, cries of triumph and certain victory.

Frangoyannou was still ten steps away from St. Savior.

The earth disappeared under her feet. She fell to her knees. Salt water filled her mouth.

The waves swelled wildly as if enraged. They covered her nostrils and her ears. At that instant, Frangoyannou's glance fell upon the Bostani, the deserted northwestern palisade where for dowry she had received a field, when, as a young girl, she had been given, matched and married away by her parents.

"Oh! My dowry!" she said.

These were her last words. Old Hadula found death in the passage to St. Savior, on the neck of sand joining the rock of the hermitage to the land, half-way in the road between the justice of God and the justice of man.

APPENDIX C



ΠΑΝΔΘΗΝΔΙΑ

ΕΤΟΣ Γ'

15 ΙΑΝΟΥΑΡΙΟΥ 1903

Η ΦΟΝΙΣΣΑ

Κοινωνικὸν μυθιστόρημα

Α'

ΜΙΣΟΠΛΑΓΙΣΜΕΝΗ κοντὰ εἰς τὴν ἐστίαν, με-
σφαλιστὰ τὰ δμῖατα, τὴν κεφαλὴν ἀκουμ-
βῶσα εἰς τὸ κράσπεδον τῆς ἐστίας, τὸ λεγόμενον
«φουγοπόδαρο», ἡ θεῖα Χαδοῦλα, ἡ κοινῶς κα-
λουμένη Γιαννοῦ ἢ Φράγκισσα, δὲν ἐκοιμᾶτο,
ἀλλ' ἐθυσίαζε τὸν ὕπνον πλησίον εἰς τὸ λίκνον
τῆς ἀσθενούσης μικρᾶς ἐγγονῆς της. Ὅσον διὰ
τὴν λεγῶ, τὴν μητέρα τοῦ πάσχοντος βρέφους,
αὕτη πρὸ ὀλίγου εἶχεν ἀποκοιμηθῇ ἐπὶ τῆς χλια-
μαλῆς, πενιχρᾶς κλίνης της.

Ὁ μικρὸς λίκνος, κρεμαστὸς ἐτρεμόσβυνε
κάτω τοῦ φανώματος τῆς ἐστίας. Ἐρριπτε-
σκιὰν ἀγτὶ φωτὸς εἰς τὰ ὀλίγα πενιχρὰ ἐπιπλα,
τὰ ὁποῖα ἐφαίνοντο καθαριώτερα καὶ κοσμιώ-
τερα τὴν νύκτα. Οἱ τρεῖς μισοκαυμένοι δαυλοί,
καὶ τὸ μέγα ὀρθὸν κούτσουρον τῆς ἐστίας, ἔρ-
ριπτον πολλὴν σιάντην, ὀλίγην ἀνθρακίαν καὶ
σπανίως βρέμονσαν φλόγα, κάμνουσαν τὴν
γραῖαν νὰ ἐνθυμῆται μέσα εἰς τὴν νύσταν της
τὴν ἀποῦσαν μικροτέραν κόρη της τὴν Κρι-
νιώ, ἣτις ἂν εὗρίσκετο τῶρα ἐντὸς τοῦ δωμα-
τίου θὰ ὑπεψιθύριζε μετ' ὀνόν λογαιοδικόν·
«Ἄν εἶνε φίλος, νὰ χαρῇ, ἂν εἶν' ἐχθρός, νὰ
σκίσῃ...».

Ἡ Χαδοῦλα, ἡ λεγομένη Φράγκισσα, ἡ ἄλ-
λως Φραγκογιαννοῦ, ἦτο γυνὴ σχεδὸν ἑξηκον-

τοῦτις, καλοκαμωμένη, μετ' ἀδρὺς χαρακτῆρας,
μετ' ἥθος ἀνδρικόν, καὶ μετ' ὀλίγας μικρὰς ἀκρας
μύστακος ἄνω τῶν χειλέων της. Εἰς τοὺς λο-
γισμούς της, συγκεφαλαιούσα ὅλην τὴν ζωὴν
της, ἔβλεπεν ὅτι ποτὲ δὲν εἶχε κάμῃ ἄλλο τί-
ποτε εἰμὴ νὰ ὑπηρετῇ τοὺς ἄλλους. Ὅταν ἦτο
παιδίσκη, ὑπηρετεῖ τοὺς γονεῖς της. Ὅταν ὕπ-
ανδρεύθη, ἔγεινε σκλάβα τοῦ συζύγου της—
καὶ ὅμως, ὥς ἐκ τοῦ χαρακτῆρος της καὶ τῆς
ἀδυναμίας ἐκείνου, ἦτο συγχρόνως καὶ κηδε-
μὼν αὐτοῦ· ὅταν ἀπέκτησε τέκνα, ἔγεινε δούλα
τῶν τέκνων της· ὅταν τὰ τέκνα της ἀπέκτησαν
τέκνα, ἔγεινε πάλιν δουλεύτρια τῶν ἐγγόνων
της.

Τὸ νεογνὸν εἶχε γεννηθῇ πρὸ δύο ἐβδομά-
δων. Ἡ μητέρα του εἶχε κάμῃ βαρεῖα λεχω-
σιά. Ἦτο αὕτη ἡ κοιμωμένη ἐπὶ τῆς κλίνης,
ἡ πρωτότοκος κόρη τῆς Φραγκογιαννοῦς, ἡ
Δελχρῶ ἢ Τραχήλαινα. Εἶχαν βιασθῇ νὰ τὸ
βαπτίσουν τὴν δεκάτην ἡμέραν ἐπειδὴ ἔπασχε
δεινῶς· εἶχε κακὸν βῆχα, κοκκίτην, συνοδευό-
μενον μετ' σπασμωδικὰ σχεδὸν συμπτώματα.
Καθὼς ἐβαπτίσθη, τὸ νήπιον ἐφάνη νὰ καλ-
λιτερεύῃ ὀλίγον, τὴν πρώτην βραδεῖαν, καὶ ὁ
βήχας ἐκόπασεν ἐπ' ὀλίγον. Ἐπὶ πολλὰς νύκτας,
ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ δὲν εἶχε δώσει ὕπνον εἰς

5 τοὺς ὀφθαλμούς της, οὐδὲ εἰς τὰ βλέφαρά της
νυσταγμόν, ἀγρυπνοῦσα πλησίον τοῦ μικροῦ
πλάσματος τὸ ὁποῖον οὐδ' ἐφαντάζετο ποίους
κόπους ἐπροξένει εἰς τοὺς ἄλλους, οὐδὲ πόσα
βάσανα ἔμελλε νὰ ὑποφέρῃ, ἐὰν ἐπέζη, καὶ
αὐτό. Καὶ δὲν ἦτο ἱκανὸν νὰ αἰσθανθῇ καὶ
τὴν ἀπορίαν, τὴν ὁποίαν μόνῃ ἡ μάμμη διευ-
πῶνε κρυφίως μέσα της «Θέ μου, γιατί νὰ
ἔλθῃ στὸν κόσμον κι' αὐτό;».

10 Ἡ γραῖα τὸ ἐνανούριζε, καὶ θὰ ἦτον ἱκανὴ
νὰ εἴπῃ «τὰ πάθη της τραγούδια» ἀποπάνω
ἀπὸ τὴν κούνιαν τοῦ μικροῦ. Κατὰ τὰς προλα-
βούσας νύκτας, πράγματι, εἶχε «παραλογίσει»
ἀναπολοῦσα ὅλ' αὐτὰ τὰ πάθη της εἰς τὸ πεζόν.
15 Εἰς εἰκόνας, εἰς σκηνάς καὶ εἰς ὁράματα, τῆς
εἶχεν ἐπανέλθῃ εἰς τὸν νοῦν ὅλος ὁ βίος της, ὁ
ἀνωφελὴς καὶ μάταιος καὶ βαρὺς.

Ὁ πατὴρ της ἦτον οἰκονόμος καὶ ἐργατι-
κὸς καὶ φρόνιμος. Ἡ μάνα της ἦτον κακὴ,
20 βλάσφημος καὶ φθονερά. Ἦτον μία ἀπὸ τὰς
στρίγλας τῆς ἐποχῆς της. Ἦξευρε μάγια. Τὴν
εἶχαν κυνηγήσει δύο—τρεῖς φορὰς οἱ κλέφταις,
τὰ παλληκάρια τοῦ Καρατάσου καὶ τοῦ Γάτσου
καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ὀπλαρχηγῶν τῆς Μακεδονίας.
25 Ἐπαραῖξαν τοῦτο διὰ νὰ τὴν ἐκδικηθοῦν, ἐπειδὴ
τοὺς εἶχε κάμῃ μίγρια, καὶ δὲν ἐπήγαιναν καλὰ
ἢ δουλειές των. Ἐπὶ τρεῖς μῆνας ἐσχόλαζον ἐν
ἀργίᾳ, καὶ δὲν ἠμπόρεσαν νὰ κάμουν τίποτε
πλιάτσικο, οὔτε ἀπὸ Τούρκους, οὔτε ἀπὸ χρι-
30 στιανούς. Οὔτε ἡ Κυβέρνησις τῆς Κορίνθου
τοὺς εἶχε στείλῃ κανὲν βοήθημα.

Τὴν εἶχαν κυνηγήσει τὸν κατήφορον, ἀπὸ
τὴν κορυφὴν τ' Αἰ-Θανασοῦ, εἰς τὸ ὁροπέδιον
τοῦ Προφήτου Ἡλίας, μὲ τὰς πελωρίας πλατά-
35 νους καὶ τὴν πλουσίαν βρύσιν, κ' ἐκείθεν εἰς
τὸ Μεροβίλι, στὸ πλάγι τοῦ βουνοῦ, ἀνάμεσα
εἰς τὰ ὄρη καὶ τοὺς λόγγους. Αὐτὴ ἐδοκί-
μασε νὰ κρυφθῇ εἰς μίαν λόχμην βαθεῖαν,
πλὴν ἐκεῖνοι δὲν ἐγελάσθησαν. Ὁ θρόυς τῶν
40 φύλλων καὶ τῶν κλάδων, ὁ ἴδιος τρόμος της
δοτὶς μετέδιδε τρομώδη κίνησιν εἰς κλώνας καὶ
θάμνους, τὴν ἐπρόδωκεν. Ἦκουσε τότε ἀγρίαν
φωνήν·

— Ἀχ! μωρὴ τσούπα, καὶ σ' ἐπιάσαμε!
45 Αὐτὴ ἀνεπύδησε τότε μέσ' ἀπὸ τοὺς θά-
μνους, κ' ἔτρεξεν ὡς φοβισμένη τρυγῶν μὲ τὸ
πετυγίσμα τῶν λευκῶν πλατειῶν χειρῶν της.
Δὲν ἦτο πλέον ἐλπίς νὰ γλυτώσῃ. Ἄλλοτε, τὴν
πρώτην φορὰν ὅτε τὴν εἶχον κυνηγήσει εἶχε
50 κατορθώσει νὰ κρυφθῇ, κάτω εἰς τὸ Πυργί,
ἐπειδὴ τὸ μέρος ἐκεῖνο εἶχε πολλὰ μονοπάτια.
Ἐδῶ, στὸ Μεροβίλι, δὲν ὑπῆρχον ὁρομίσκοι

καὶ λαβύρινθοι, ἀλλὰ μόνον συστάδες δένδρων
καὶ λόχμαι ἀπάτητοι. Ἡ τότε νεαρὰ Δελχάρω,
ἡ μήτηρ τῆς Φραγκογιαννοῦς, ἐπῆδα ὡς δορ- 55
κὰς ἀπὸ θάμνου εἰς θάμνον, ἀνυπόδητος, ἐπει-
δὴ πρὸ πολλοῦ εἶχε πετάξει τὰς ἐμβάδας της ἀπὸ
τοὺς πόδας, ὀπισθέν της,—τὴν μίαν τῶν ὁποίων
εἶχεν ἀναλάβῃ ὡς λάφυρον ὁ εἰς ἐκ τῶν διω-
κτῶν—καὶ τ' ἀγκάθια ἐχώνοντο εἰς τὰς πτέρ- 60
νας της, τῆς ἐσχίζον κ' αἱμάτων τοὺς ἀστρα-
γάλους καὶ ταρσοὺς. Τότε, ἐν τῇ ἀπελπισίᾳ, τῆς
ἤλθε μία ἔμπνευσις.

Ἐκείθεν τοῦ λόγγου, εἰς τὸ πλάγι τοῦ βου-
νοῦ, ἦτον εἰς καὶ μόνος καλλιεργημένος ἐλαιῶν, 65
καλούμενος ὁ Πεῦκος τοῦ Μωραΐτη. Ὁ γέρο-
Μωραΐτης, ὁ πάππος τοῦ κτήτορος, εἶχε μετα-
ναστεύσει ἀπὸ τὸν Μιστράν εἰς τὸν τόπον αὐ-
τόν, περὶ τὰ τέλη τοῦ ἄλλου αἰῶνος—κατὰ τὴν
ἐποχὴν τῆς Αἰκατερίνης καὶ τοῦ Ὁρλώφ. Ὁ 70
φημισμένος πεῦκος ἴστατο εἰς τὸ μέσον τῶν
ἐλαιῶν, ὡς γίγας μεταξὺ νάνων. Τὸ χιλιετὲς
δένδρον ἦτον σκαφιδιασμένον κοντὰ εἰς τὴν
ῥίζαν, κάτω, εἰς τὸν γιγαντιαῖον κορμόν, τὸν
ὁποῖον δὲν ἠμποροῦσαν ν' ἀγκαλιάσουν πέντε 75
ἄνδρες. Οἱ βοσκοὶ καὶ οἱ ἄλεις τὸν εἶχον σκα-
φιδιάσει, τοῦ εἶχαν σκάσει τὴν καρδίαν, τοῦ
εἶχαν κοιλάνει τὰ ἔγκατα, διὰ νὰ λάβωσιν ἐκεῖ-
θεν ἄφθονον δάδα. Καὶ μὲ τὴν φοβερὰν πλη-
γὴν εἰς τὰς ἴνας, εἰς τὰ σπλάγχνα του, ὁ πεῦκος 80
ἐπέζησεν ἄλλα τρία τέταρτα αἰῶνος, μέχρι τοῦ
1871. Κατὰ Ἰούλιον τοῦ ἔτους ἐκείνου, μέγαν
τοπικὸν σεισμόν ἠσθάνθησαν οἱ κατοικοῦντες,
εἰς ἀπόστασιν μιλίων, κάτω εἰς τὴν παραθα-
λασσίαν. Τὴν νύκτα ἐκείνην κατέρρευσε ὁ 85
γίγας.

Εἰς τὸ κοῖλωμα ἐκεῖνο, ἐντὸς τοῦ ὁποίου ἡ-
δύναντο νὰ καθίσωσιν ἀνέτως δύο ἄνθρωποι,
ἔτρεξε νὰ κρυβῇ ἡ τότε νεόνυμφος Δελχάρω, ἡ 90
μήτηρ τῆς σημερινῆς Φραγκογιαννοῦς. Τὸ μέ-
σον ἦτο ἀπελπί, καὶ σχεδὸν παιδαριῶδες. Ἐκεῖ
δὲν ἐκρύπτετο ἄλλως, εἰμὴ κατὰ φαντασίαν, μὲ
παιδικὸν τρόπον, ὅπως παίζουν τὸν κρυφτόν.
Οἱ διώκται βεβαίως θὰ τὴν ἐβλεπον, θ' ἀνεκάλυ-
πτον τὸ καταφύγιόν της. Μόνον ἐκ τῶν νώ- 95
των ἦτο ἀόρατος, ἀλλ' ὄχι κατὰ πρόσωπον.
Ἀμα οἱ τρεῖς κλέφται ἐφθάνον πέραν τοῦ πεύ-
κου, θὰ τὴν ἐβλεπον ὡς καρφωμένην ἐκεῖ.

Οἱ τρεῖς ἄνδρες ἔτρεξαν, τὸ ἐπροσπέρασαν,
κ' ἐξηκολούθησαν νὰ τρέχουν. Οἱ δύο ἐξ αὐτῶν 100
οὐδ' ἐστράφησαν ὀπίσω νὰ ἰδοῦν. Ἐφαντά-
ζοντο ὅτι ἡ «τσούπα» ἔτρεχεν ἔμπρῳς. Μόνον
τὴν τελευταίαν στιγμὴν, ὁ τρίτος ἐστράφη, ὁπω-
σοῦν σκοτισμένος, πρὸς τὰ ὀπίσω, καὶ ἐκύτ-

ταξε παντου ἄλλου, ὄχι ὁμως εἰς τὸν κορμὸν τοῦ πεῦκου. Ἐβλεπε καὶ τὸν πεῦκον συλλήβδην, μὲ τ' ἄλλ' ἀντικείμενα, χωρὶς νὰ φαντάζεται ὅτι ὁ κορμὸς του εἶχε κοιλίαν, καὶ ὅτι

5 ἔντος τῆς κοιλίας ἐκρύπτετο ἄνθρωπος. Καὶ ἂν ἐγνώριζε, καὶ ἂν ἠγνόει τὸ κοῖλωμα τοῦ γιγαντιαίου κορμοῦ, ἐκείνην τὴν στιγμήν δὲν ἐπέρασεν ἀπὸ τὸν νοῦν του. Ἐκύτταζε νὰ ἰδῇ μὴ ἀνακαλύψῃ πού τὸ χάσμα τῆς γῆς, τὸ ὁποῖον θὰ τὴν εἶχε καταπῆξ ἔξ ἅπαντος — διότι

10 καμμία πτυχή γῆς ὁρατὴ δὲν ὑπῆρχεν ὅπου νὰ κρυβῇ τις. Αἱ Δρυάδες, αἱ νύμφαι τῶν δασῶν, τὰς ὁποίας αὐτὴ ἴσως ἐπεκαλεῖτο εἰς τὰς μαγείας τῆς, τὴν ἐπροσάτευσαν, ἐτύφλωσαν τοὺς διώκτας τῆς, ἔρριψαν πρασινωπὴν ἀχλύν, χλοερὸν σκότος, εἰς τοὺς ὀφθαλμούς των — καὶ δὲν τὴν εἶδον.

Ἡ νεαρὰ γυνὴ ἐσώθη ἀπὸ τοὺς ὄνυχάς των. Καὶ ὅλον τὸν καιρὸν ὕστερον ἐξηκολούθησε νὰ κάμνῃ μάγια, μάγια ἐναντίον τῶν κλεφτῶν, καὶ νὰ φέρνῃ εἰς αὐτοὺς πολλὰ «κεσσάτια», ὥστε πουθενὰ πλέον δὲν ὑπῆρχε πλιάτσικο — ἐωσότου, ἔδωκεν ὁ Θεὸς καὶ ἡσύχασαν τὰ πράγματα, καὶ ὁ Σουλτάνος Μαχμούτ ἐχάρισε, καθὼς λέγουν τὰ «Διαβολονήσια» εἰς τὴν

25 Ἑλλάδα, κ' ἔκτοτε ἔπαυσαν νὰ εἶνε ἀσύδοτα. Τὴν πλιατσικολογίαν διεδέχθη ἡ φορολογία, καὶ ἔκτοτε ὅλος ὁ περιούσιος λαὸς ἐξακολουθεῖ νὰ δουλεύῃ διὰ τὴν μεγάλην κεντρικὴν γαστέρα, τὴν «ῶτα οὐκ ἔχουσιν».

..

Ἡ Χαδούλα ἡ Φράγκισσα, ἂν καὶ πολὺ μικρά, ἦτον γεννημένη τότε, καὶ τὰ ἐνεθυμεῖτο ὅλ' αὐτά, τὰ ὁποῖα διηγεῖτο ἀργότερα ἢ μάνα τῆς. Ὑστερον, ὅταν ἐμεγάλωσε, κ' ἔγεινε δεκαεπτὰ χρόνων, καὶ εἰρήνευσαν ὅπως οὖν τὰ

35 πράγματα, κατὰ τοὺς χρόνους τοῦ Κυβερνήτου, τὴν ὑπάνδρευσαν οἱ γονεῖς τῆς, καὶ τῆς ἔδωκαν ἄνδρα τὸν Γιάννην τὸν Φράγκον, ἐκείνον τὸν ὁποῖον ἡ σύζυγός του ἐπώνομασεν ἀργότερον «τὸν Σκούφον» καὶ «τὸν Λογαριασμόν».

Τὰ δύο ταῦτα παραγκώμια δὲν τοῦ τὰ εἶχε δώσει ἄνευ λόγου ἢ σύζυγός του, ἡ Χαδούλα Σκούφον τὸν εἶχεν ὀνομάσει, ἀκόμη πρὶν τὸν

45 ὑπάνδρευσθῇ, ὅταν τὸν εἰρωνεύετο συνήθως, μὲ τὴν παριενικὴν πονηρίαν τῆς — χωρὶς νὰ προγνώριζῃ ὅτι αὐτὸς θὰ ἦτον ἡ τύχη τῆς καὶ ὁ καλὸς τῆς — ἐπειδὴ, ἀντὶ φρεσίου, ἐφόρει εἶδος μακροῦ σκούφου, τεφροκοκκίνου, μὲ κοντὴν

φούνταν. «Λογαριασμόν» τὸν ὀνόμασεν ἀργότερα, ἀφοῦ τὸν ὑπάνδρευσθῇ, ἐπειδὴ συνείδηζε

50 πολλάκις τὴν φράσιν, «αὐτὸς εἶν' ὁ λογαριασμός», καὶ διότι, ἄλλως, δὲν ἠδύνατο ὁριῶς νὰ λογαριάσῃ οὔτε ποσὸν δι' ὀλίγους παραδες, οὔτε δύο ἡμεροκάματα. Ἄν ἔλειπεν αὐτὴ, θὰ

55 τὸν ἐγελοῦσαν καθημερινῶς ποτὲ δὲν θὰ τοῦ ἔδιδαν σωστὸν τὸν κόπον του εἰς τὰ πλοῖα, εἰς τὸ καρινάγιο ἢ εἰς τὸν ἀρσανᾶν, ὅπου εἰργάζετο ὡς μαραγκὸς ἢ ὡς καλαφάτης.

Εἶχεν ὑπάρξει ἐπὶ μακρὸν χρόνον μαθητῆς καὶ κάλφας τοῦ πατρός τῆς, ἐξασκούντος τὴν ἰδίαν τέχνην. Ὅταν τὸν εἶδεν ὁ γέρον τόσον ἀπλοϊκόν, ὀλιγαρκῆ καὶ μετριώφρονα, τὸν ἐξετίμησε, καὶ ἀπεφάσισε νὰ τὸν κάμῃ γαμβρόν. Ὡς προῖκα τοῦ ἔδωκε μίαν οἰκίαν ἔρημον,

60 ἐτοιμόροπον, εἰς τὸ παλαιὸν Κάστρον, ὅπου ἐκατοικοῦσαν ἓνα καιρὸν οἱ ἄνθρωποι, πρὸ τοῦ 21. Τοῦ ἔδωκε κ' ἓνα ὀνόματι Μποστάνι, τὸ ὁποῖον εὐρίσκετο ἀκριβῶς ἔξω τοῦ ἐρήμου Κάστρου, ἐπὶ τινος κρημνώδους ἀκτῆς, καὶ ἡπείχε

70 ἄλλως κ' «ἓνα πινάκι χωράφι», ἐν ἀγριοχώρῳ, τὸ ὁποῖον ἀμφεσβῆται ὁ γείτονας ὡς ἰδικόν του· οἱ δὲ ἄλλοι γεῖτονες ἔλεγον ὅτι καὶ τὰ δύο χωράφια διὰ τὰ ὁποῖα ἐμάλωναν οἱ

75 δύο ἦσαν καταπατημένα, καὶ ἦσαν «καλογερικά», ἀνήκοντα εἰς μίαν διαλυθεῖσαν Μονήν. Τοιαύτην προῖκα ἔδωκεν ὁ γέρον-Σταθαρός εἰς τὴν θυγατέρα του. Ἄλλως αὕτη ἦτο μοναχοκόρη. Διὰ τὸν ἑαυτὸν του, τὴν συμβίαν καὶ

80 τὸν υἱόν του, εἶχε κρατήσῃ τὰς δύο νεοδημιτοῦς οἰκίας εἰς τὴν νέαν πόλιν, τὰ δύο ἀμπέλια πλησίον ταύτης, δύο ἐλαιῶνας, καὶ ὀλίγα χωράφια — καὶ ὅσα μετρητὰ εἶχεν.

..

Ἔως ἐδῶ εἶχαν φθάσει αἱ ἀναμνήσεις τῆς Φραγκογιαννοῦς, τὴν νύκτα ἐκείνην. Ἦτον ἡ ἐνδεκάτη ἐσπέρα ἀπὸ τοῦ τοκετοῦ τῆς κόρης τῆς. Τὸ θυγάτριον εἶχεν ὑποτροπιάσει πάλιν, κ' ἔπασχε δεινῶς. Εἶχεν ἔλθῃ ἄρρωστον εἰς τὸν κόσμον. Ἀπὸ τὴν κοιλίαν τῆς μητρός του, ἡ φθορὰ τὸ εἶχε παρακολουθήσει... Τὴν στιγμήν ἐκείνην, σπασμωδικὸς βήχας ἠκούσθη, καὶ τὰ ξυπνητὰ ὄνειρα, αἱ ἀναμνήσεις, διεκόπησαν. Ἐκινήθη ἐπὶ τῆς πενιχρᾶς στρωμνῆς, ὅπου ἦτο ἀνακεκλιμένη, ἐκυψεν ἐπὶ τοῦ παιδίου, κ' ἐπροσπάθησε νὰ δώσῃ εἰς αὐτὸ πρόχειρον βοήθειαν. Ἐπλησίασεν εἰς τὸ φῶς τοῦ λύχνου μικρὰν φιάλην. Ἐδοκίμασε νὰ δώσῃ

μῖαν κουταλιάν, εἰς τὰ χεῖλη τοῦ μωροῦ. Τὸ μικρὸν ἐγεύθη τὸ ρευστόν, καὶ μετὰ μίαν στιγμὴν πάλιν τὸ ἐξέρασε.

Ἡ λεχὼνα ἐκινήθη ἐπὶ τῆς χαμηλῆς καὶ στενῆς κλίνης. Φαίνεται ὅτι δὲν ἐκοιμᾶτο καλὰ.

Ἦτο μόνον ναρκωμένη, καὶ εἶχε κλειστὰ τὰ βλέφαρα. Ἦνοιξε τὰ ὄμματα, ἀνεσηκώθη δύο ἢ τρεῖς δακτύλους ἄνω τοῦ προσκεφάλου, καὶ ἠρώτησε

— Πῶς πάει, μάνα;

— Πῶς νὰ πάη! . . . εἶπεν αὐστηρῶς ἡ γραῖα ἡσύχασε τόρα, καὶ σύ! . . . Τί θὰ κάμῃ! . . . δὲν θὰ βῆξῃ;

— Πῶς τὸ βλέπεις, μάνα;

— Πῶς νὰ τὸ ἰδῶ; . . . Μωρὸ παιδί εἶνε . . . νά, ποῦ ἦρθε στὸν κόσμον κι' αὐτό! . . . ἐπρόσθεσε μὲ στρυφνὸν καὶ ἀλλόκοτον ἦθος ἡ γραῖα.

Καὶ μετ' ὀλίγον ἡ λεχὼνα ἀπεκοιμήθη ἡσυχώτερα. Ἡ γραῖα μόλις ἔκλεισεν ὀλίγον τὰ ὄμματα τὴν ὥραν τοῦ ὄρθρου, μετὰ τὸ τρίτον λάλημα τοῦ πετεινοῦ. Ἐξύπνησεν ἀπὸ τὴν φωνὴν τῆς κόρης τῆς, τῆς Ἀμέρσας, ἣτις ἦλθε λίαν πρωτὶ ἀπὸ τὸν μικρὸν οἰκίσκον, τὸν γειτονικόν, ἀνυπομονοῦσα νὰ μάθῃ πῶς εἶνε ἡ λεχὼνα καὶ τὸ μωρόν, καὶ πῶς εἶχε περάσει τὴν νύκτα ἡ μάνα τῆς.

Ἡ Ἀμέρσα, ἡ δευτερότοκος, ἦτον ἀνύπανδρη, γεροντοκόρη ἤδη, ἀλλὰ προκομμένη πολὺ «μορφοδοῦλα», ὀνομαστή δὲ ὑφάντρια ἦτον μελαψή, ὑψηλή, ἀνδρώδης, — καὶ τὰ προικιά τῆς καὶ τὰ στολίδια τὰ κεντητά, τὰ ὅποια μόνῃ τῆς εἶχε κατασκευάσει, εὐρίσκοντο κλεισμένα ἀπὸ χρόνων πολλῶν εἰς μεγάλην ἄκομφον κασσέλαν, καὶ τὰ ἔτρωγεν ὁ σκόρος καὶ τὸ σαράκι.

— Καλημέρα! . . . πῶς εἴστε; . . . Πῶς περάσατε;

— Ἐσύ 'σαι, Ἀμέρσα; . . . Νά, πέρασε κι' αὐτὴ ἡ νύχτα.

Ἡ γραῖα μόλις εἶχεν ἐξυπνήσει, κ' ἔτριβε τὰ ὄμματα τραυλίζουσα. Ἠκούσθη θόρυβος εἰς τὸ πλαγινὸν μικρὸν χώρισμα. Ἦτον ὁ Νταντῆς ὁ Τραχήλης, ὁ σύζυγος τῆς λεχώνας, ὅστις ἐκοιμᾶτο ἐκεῖθεν τοῦ λεπτοῦ ξυλοτοίχου, παραπλεύρως ἐνὸς ἄλλου κορασίου κ' ἐνὸς παιδίου μικρᾶς ἡλικίας, καὶ εἶχεν ἐξυπνήσει τὴν στιγμὴν ἐκείνην. Ἐμάζευε τὰ ἐργαλεῖα του — σκεπάρνια, πριόνια, ροκάνια, καὶ ἡτοιμάζετο νὰ ὑπάγῃ στὸν ταρσανᾶν, ν' ἀρχίσῃ τὸ μεροκάματον.

— Ἀκούς, τί σαμαντὰ κάνει! εἶπεν ἡ γραῖα.

Δὲν μπορεῖ νὰ μαζώξῃ τὰ σιδερικά του, χωρὶς ν' ἀκουστῇ. Ὅποιος τὸν ἀκούει, θυρεῖ τί γίνεται! . . .

— «Γύφτικο σπῖτι καίεται», εἶπεν εἰρωνικῶς γελῶσα ἡ Ἀμέρσα.

Ὁ θόρυβος τῶν ἐργαλείων, τὰ ὅποια ὁ Νταντῆς, χωρὶς νὰ ἦνε ὁρατός, ὅπισθεν τοῦ ξυλοτοίχου, ἔρριπτεν ἀνὰ ἐν μέσα στὸ ζεμπίλι του — σκεπάρνια, πριόνια, τριβέλια, κτλ. — ἐξύπνησε καὶ τὴν λεχώ, τὴν γυναῖκα του.

— Τ' εἶνε μάνα;

— Τί νὰ εἶνε! . . . Ὁ Κωνσταντῆς ρίχνει τὰ σύνεργά του μέσ' τὸ ζεμπίλι! . . . εἶπε μετὰ στεναγμοῦ ἡ γραῖα.

— «Καὶ βιδὸ λογαριᾶζεις; . . . συνεπλήρωσε τὴν παροιμίαν ἡ Ἀμέρσα.

Ἠκούσθη τότε ἡ φωνὴ τοῦ Κωνσταντῆ ὀπισθεν τοῦ μικροῦ διαφράγματος.

— Ξυπνήσατε, πεθερά; . . . ἔλεγε, πῶς περάσατε;

— Πῶς νὰ περάσωμε! . . . «Σὰν τὴν κόττα στὸ μύλο . . . » ἔλεγε νὰ πῆς τὸ ρακί σου.

Ὁ Νταντῆς ἐφάνη εἰς τὴν θύραν τοῦ χειμερινοῦ θαλάμου. Ἦτο εὐρύτερος, μὲ ἄχαριν τὸν κορμόν, «ἀτίσκιωτος», ὅπως ἔλεγεν ἡ γραῖα πενθερά του, καὶ σχεδὸν σπανός. Ἡ γραῖα ἐδειξεν εἰς τὴν Ἀμέρσαν τὴν μικρὰν φιάλην μὲ τὸ ρακί, εἰς τὸ μικρὸν ράφι ἄνωθεν τῆς ἐστίας, καὶ τῆς ἔνευσε νὰ βάλῃ στὸ ποτηράκι, διὰ νὰ πῇ ὁ Κωνσταντῆς.

— Δὲν ἔχει κανένα σῦκδ; . . . ἠρώτησεν οὗτος, ἅμα ἔλαβε τὸ ρακοπότηρον ἀπὸ τὴν χεῖρα τῆς γυναικαδέλφης του.

— Ποῦ νὰ βρεθῇ τέτοιο πράμα! . . . εἶπεν ἡ γραῖα Χαδοῦλα. «Σαράντα σταχτοκούλουρα» μᾶς χρειάζοντ' ἐδῶ, ἐπρόσθεσεν, ἐννοοῦσα τὴν σπατάλην ἣτις συνήθως γίνεται κ' εἰς τὰ πτωχότερα σπῖτια, ἐν καιρῷ ἐνσκήψεως τοιοῦτου «αἰσίου γεγονότος», ὁποῖον εἶνε καὶ ἡ γέννησις κόρης.

— Θέλεις ἐσύ γαμπρὸ μὲ μάτια; εἶπεν ἐνθυμηθεῖσα ἄλλην παροιμίαν ἡ γυναικαδέλφη του, ἡ Ἀμέρσα.

— Τουλόου σ' μὴν τὸν θέλῃς τὸν σαστικό σου νᾶνε στραβός; εἶπε χωρὶς νὰ πειραχθῇ, ὁ Νταντῆς. . . Ἐβίβα! Καλὴ σαράντισι!

Κ' ἔπιεν ἀπνευστὶ τὸ μικρὸν ποτήριον.

— Καλὸ σας βράδυ!

Ἐφορτώθη τὴν ζεμπίλαν, κ' ἐπῆγε διὰ τὸν ταρσανᾶν.

B

Τὸ πῦρ ἐφθινεν εἰς τὴν ἐστίαν, ὁ λύχνος ἐτρεμόφεγγεν εἰς τὸ μικρὸν φάνωμα, ἡ λεχὼνα ἔλαγοκοιμᾶτο ἐπὶ τῆς κλίνης τὸ βρέφος ἔβη-

χεν εἰς τὸ λίκνον, καὶ ἡ γραῖα Φραγκογιαννοῦ, ἔπως καὶ τὰς προλαβούσας νύκτας, ἡγρύπνει ἐπὶ τῆς στρωμνῆς της.

Ἦτον περὶ τὸ πρῶτον λάλημα τοῦ πετεινοῦ, ὁπότε αἱ ἀναμνήσεις ἔρχονται ἐν εἵδει φαντασμάτων. Ἀφοῦ τὴν ὑπάνδρευσαν, καὶ τὴν «ἐκουκούλωσαν», καὶ τὴν ἐπροίκισαν μὲ τὸ σπίτι τὸ ἐτοιμόρροπον εἰς τὸ παλαιὸν ἀκατοίκητον Κάστρον, καὶ μὲ τὸ μποστάνι τὸ χέρσον εἰς τὴν ἀγρίαν βορεινὴν ἐσχατιάν, καὶ μὲ τὸ ἀγριοχώραφον τὸ διαφυλονεικούμενον ἀπὸ τὸν γείτονα καὶ ἀπὸ τὸ Μοναστήρι, ἡ νεόνυμφος μετὰ τοῦ συζύγου της ἐκατοίκησεν εἰς τὸ σπίτι τῆς ἀνδραδέλφης της τῆς χήρας, καὶ ἄνοιξε νοικοκυριὸ μὲ μικρὰ πράγματα. Τὸ προικοσύμφωνόν της, ὡς τόσον, ἔγραφε λεπτομερῶς ὅτι τῆς εἶχαν δώσει τόσες φορεσιᾶς ροῦχα, τόσα ὑποκάμισα, τόσες προσκεφαλάδες, ὅπως καὶ δύο χαλκώματα, ἓνα τηγάνι, μίαν πυροστιάν, κτλ. Ἀκόμη καὶ μαχαιροπέρουννα καὶ κοντάλια ἀνέγραφε τὸ προικοσύμφωνον.

Ἡ ἀνδραδέλφη, ἀμέσως τὴν Δευτέραν, τὴν ἐπιούσαν τοῦ γάμου, τὰ ἐξήλεγξεν ὅλα, καὶ εὗρεν ὅτι ἔλειπον ἐκ τῶν ἐν τῷ καταλόγῳ δύο σινδόνια, δύο μαξιλάρια, ἓν χάλκωμα, καθὼς καὶ μία πλήρης φορεσιά. Αὐθημερὸν δὲ παρήγγειλε τῆς πενθερᾶς νὰ φέρῃ τὰ ἐλλείποντα. Ἡ ἰδιοτελὴς γραῖα ἀπήντησεν ὅτι «τὰ ὅσα ἔδωσε, εἶνε καλῶς δοσμένα, καὶ εἶνε ἀρκετά». Τότε ἡ ἀνδραδέλφη ἔβαλε στὰ λόγια τὸν ἀδελφόν της οὗτος παρεπονέθη εἰς τὴν νεόνυμφον, ἐκεῖνη δὲ τοῦ ἀπήντησεν· «Ἄν ἀγριοκοῦσε τὸ συμφέρον του, δὲν θὰ ἐδέχετο νὰ τοῦ γράψουν σπῖτι στὸ Κάστρο, ὅπου μόνον τὰ Στοιχειὰ κατοικοῦν καὶ τί τὸν ὠφελοῦν τὰ σινδόνια καὶ τὰ ὑποκάμισα, ἀφοῦ δὲν ἦτον ἱκανὸς νὰ πάρῃ σπῖτι καὶ ἀμπέλι καὶ ἔλῃ ὡνα;»

Κατὰ τὴν ἐποχὴν τοῦ ἀρραβῶνος, ἡ Χαδούλα εἶχε δοκιμάσει τῷ ὄντι νὰ σπρωγῇ κατὰ τοιοῦτον σπῖτι τοῦ γαμβροῦ. Ἄν καὶ νέα πολὺ ἦτον, ἀλλὰ, χάρις εἰς τὴν φύσιν καὶ εἰς τὰ μαθήματα τῆς μητρὸς της, τὰ ἐκούσια καὶ τὰ ἀκούσια, εἶχε γείνη πολὺ πονηρή, ἀναλόγως τῆς ἡλικίας της. Ἀλλ' ἡ μάνα της, μυρισθεῖσα τὸ πρᾶγμα, καὶ φοβουμένη μήπως αὐτὴ, ἡ μικρὴ Στριγλίτσα, καθὼς ὠνόμαζε συνήθως τὴν κόρην της, τοῦ σηκώσῃ τὰ μυαλὰ τοῦ γαμβροῦ, ὥστε νὰ πονηρέψῃ οὗτος νὰ ζητῇ προικὰ περισσότερα, ἐξήσκησε τυραννικὴν ἐπιτήρησιν ἐπὶ τῆς κόρης καὶ τοῦ ἀρραβωνιαστικοῦ, μὴ ἐπιτρέπουσα τὴν ἐλαχίστην ἰδιαιτέραν

συνομιλίαν μεταξὺ τῶν δύο. Τοῦτο ἔκαμνε, προσχήματι μὲν διὰ τὴν σεμνότητα:

— Δὲν ἔχω... νὰ μοῦ σκαρώσῃ κανένα πρωμάδι... αὐτὴ ἡ Στριγλίτσα! εἶχεν εἰπεῖ 55

Βλέπετε, τὴν μεταφορὰν τοῦ ρήματος τὴν ἐλάμβανεν ἀπὸ τὸ ἐπίγγελμα τῆς συντεχνίας («Σκαρώνω καράβι» ἰσοδυναμεῖ μὲ τὸ «ναυπηγῶ ναῦν»)· ἀλλὰ πράγματι τὸ ἔκαμνε, διὰ νὰ μὴ ἀναγκασθῇ νὰ δώσῃ μεγαλειτέραν προῖκα. 60

Μίαν ἐσπέραν, τὴν παραμονὴν τοῦ ἀρραβῶνος, ὅτε ὁ γαμβρὸς μετὰ τῆς ἀδελφῆς του εἶχον ἔλθῃ εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν νὰ συζητήσουν τὰ περὶ προικός, ἐνῷ ὁ γέρον νηυπηγὸς ὑπηγόρευε τὸ προικοσύμφωνον εἰς τὸν Ἀναγνώστην τὸν Συβίαν, ψάλλειν τῆς ἐκκλησίας, ὅστις εἶχε βγάλῃ 65

τὸ ὁρειχιλίκιον καλαμάρι του ἀπὸ τὴν ζώνην, τὴν ἐκ πτεροῦ χηνὸς πένναν ἀπὸ τὴν μακρὰν θήκην τοῦ καλαμαριοῦ, τοῦ ὁμοιάζοντος πολὺ μὲ πιστόλαν, καὶ θέσας ἐπὶ τῶν γονάτων τὸ βιβλίον τοῦ Ἀποστόλου, καὶ ἐπάνω εἰς τὸ βιβλίον τεμάχιον χονδροῦ χαρτίου, εἶχε 70

γράφει καθ' ὑπαγόρευσιν τοῦ γέροντος «Εἰς τ' ὄνομα τοῦ Πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ Υἱοῦ καὶ τοῦ Ἁγίου Πνεύματος... ὑπάνδρεύω τὴν κόρην μου Χαδούλαν μὲ τὸν Ἰωάννην Φράγκου, καὶ τῆς δίνω, πρῶτον τὴν εὐχὴν μου...», ἡ Χαδούλα ἴστατο ἀντικρὺ τῆς ἐστίας, δίπλα εἰς τὴν τέμπλαν — τὴν στήλην τουτέστι τῶν στρωμάτων, παπλωμάτων καὶ προσκεφαλαίων τὴν 75

σκεπαστὴν μὲ μεταξωτὴν σινδόνα, καὶ ἐπιστεφομένην μὲ δύο τεραστίας προσκεφαλάδες — ἀκίνητος καὶ καμυρώνουσα, κατὰ τὸ φαινόμενον, ὅπως ἡ τέμπλα... ἀλλ' ὁμοίως ἔνευε κρυφά, ἀνυπομόνως, καίτοι μὲ μεγάλην προφύλαξιν, 80

ἔνευεν εἰς τὸν ἀρραβωνιαστικόν, ἔνευεν εἰς τὴν ἀνδραδέλφην, νὰ μὴ δεχθῶσιν ὡς προῖκα «σπίτι στὸ Κάστρο» καὶ «χωράφι στὸ Στοιχωτό», ἀλλὰ ν' ἀπαιτήσωσι σπῖτι εἰς τὴν νέαν πόλιν, καὶ ἀμπέλι καὶ ἐλαιῶνα εἰς τὴν περιοχὴν τῆς 85

νέας πόλεως. Εἰς μάτην. Οὔτε ὁ γαμβρὸς, οὔτε ἡ ἀνδραδέλφη εἶδαν τ' ἀπηλπισμένα νεύματα. Μόνον ἡ γραῖα, ἡ μήτηρ της, ἦτις, ἂν καὶ ἀναγκασμένη ἦτο νὰ στρέφῃ τὰ νῶτα πρὸν τὴν κόρην, διὰ ν' ἀντιμετωπίζῃ φιλοφρόνως τὴν συμπεθέραν καὶ τὸν γαμβρόν, εἶχε καθίσει ὁμως μὲ τοιοῦτον τρόπον, ὥστε νὰ ἔχῃ μόνον τὴν μίαν πλάτην γυρισμένην πρὸς τὴν νέαν — αἴφνης, ὡς 90

νὰ τὴν ἐπληροφόρησεν ἄδρατον πνεῦμα ὅτι κατὰ ἔτρεχεν, ἐστράφη ἀποτόμως πρὸς τὴν θυγατέρα της, καὶ εἶδε τ' ἀπηγορευμένα «καμώματα» της. 100

Πάραντα ἐτόξευσε βλέμμα φοβεράς ἀπειλῆς πρὸς αὐτήν.

— Ἐ! μῶρὴ στριγλίτσα! ὑπεριθύρισε μέσα της. Ἐννοία σου!... κ' ἐγὼ σὲ σιάζω.

5 Εὐθύς ὁμως κατόπιν, ἐσκέφθη ὅτι δὲν θὰ ἐσύμφερε νὰ κάμῃ λόγον δι' αὐτὸ τὸ πρᾶγμα εἰς τὴν κόρην της. Διότι ἐφοβήθη μὴν της δώσῃ ἀφορμὴν νὰ παραπονεθῇ εἰς τὸν πατέρα της. Καὶ τότε τὰ πράγματα θὰ ἐγίνοντο
10 χειρότερα βεβαίως. Ὁ γέρον πιδανῶς θὰ ἐκάμπτετο εἰς τὰς ἱεσίας καὶ τὰ κλαίματα τῆς μοναχοκόρης, καὶ θὰ ἔδιδε περισσοτέραν προίκα. Ὅθεν ἐσιώπησεν.

Ἡ Χαδοῦλα ἐθαύμασε πῶς, ἐνῶ ἡ μήτηρ
15 τῆς ὀλοφάνερα τὴν εἶχεν ἰδεῖ νὰ κάμνῃ τὰ ριψοκίνδυνα ἐκεῖνα νεύματα, διὰ πρώτην φοράν εἰς τὴν ζωὴν της, ὅταν εὐρέθησαν μόναι, δὲν της ἔδωκεν οὔτε νυχιές, οὔτε τσιμπιές, οὔτε δαγκωματιές, πρᾶγμα τὸ ὁποῖον, ἄλλως, συ-
20 χνὰ συνείθιζε. Σημειωτέον ὅτι ἡ προικοδοσία τῆς οἰκίας εἰς τὸ παλαιὸν ἀκατοίκητον χωρίον εἶχε τοῦτο τὸ εὐλογοφανές, ὅτι πολλαὶ οἰκίαι ἐσώζοντο ἀκόμα εἰς τὸ Κάστρον, ὅτι οἰκογένειαι τινες συνείθιζον νὰ διατρίβωσι τὸ θέρος
25 ἐκεῖ, καὶ ὅτι εἰς τὴν φαντασίαν τῶν ἀνθρώπων ὑπῆρχε προκατάληψις ὑπὲρ τοῦ «Παλαιοῦ χωριοῦ», τὸ ὁποῖον ἐπονοῦσαν οἱ γεροντότεροι, καὶ δὲν εἶχαν συνείθισαι ἀκόμα οὔτε εἰς τὴν νέαν τάξιν τῶν πραγμάτων, οὔτε εἰς βίον εἰ-
30 ρηνικόν, χωρὶς ἐπιδρομὰς κλεφτῶν καὶ πειρατῶν καὶ τῆς Τουρκικῆς ἁρμάδας, καὶ ἡ ἐγκατάστασις εἰς τὴν νέαν πόλιν δὲν ἐνομιζέτο ὀριστική, ἀλλ' ὑπῆρχε προσδοκία ὅτι οἱ ἄνθρωποι θὰ ἐβιάζοντο καὶ πάλιν νὰ ἐπανέλθουν εἰς τὰ
35 παλαιά, τὰ «μαθημένα» των. Κ' ἐνῶ ὅλο τὸ Κάστρον ἀνεπόλουν, καὶ τὸ Κάστρον ἐλυποῦντο καὶ τὸ ἐρρέμβαζον, καὶ τὸ εἶχον εἰς τὸ στόμα, δὲν ἔπαυον ὁμως νὰ κτιῶσιν οἰκοδομὰς εἰς τὸν νέον συνοικισμόν—ὅπως ἀποδειχθῇ διὰ
40 μυριοστὴν φοράν ὅτι οἱ ἄνθρωποι συνήθως ἄλλα σκέπτονται καὶ ἄλλα κάμνουν, καὶ ὅτι μιμοῦνται ἀλλήλους μηχανικῶς.

Οὕτω λοιπόν, μετὰ δύο ἐβδομάδας ἀπὸ τοῦ ἀρραβῶνος ἐτελέσθη ὁ γάμος. Οὕτως ἠθέλησεν ἡ πενθερά. Δέν της ἤρεσκεν, ὥς ἔλεγε, νὰ ἔξη γαμβρὸν ἀστεφάνωτον νὰ συ-
45 χνάξῃ στὸ σπίτι, ἀφοῦ εἶχε θάρρος ἀπὸ πρὶν, ὥς συντεχνίτης καὶ παραγιῶς τοῦ ἀνδρός της. Καὶ ἡ ἀνδραδέλφη, χήρα, ἡλικιωμένη, μὲ ἓνα κοῦρὸν ἐφηβόν, ἐργαζόμενον ἐπίσης εἰς τὸ ναυπηγεῖον, καὶ ἐν ἄλλο παιδίον κ' ἐν κοράσιον ἀνήλικα, ἐδέχθη κατ' οἶκον τὸ νέον ἀνδρόγυ-
50 νον.

Εἶτα, μετὰ ἐν ἔτος, ἐγεννήθη τὸ πρῶτον
55 παιδίον, ὁ Στιάθης, καὶ δευτέρα ἡ Δελαγρῶ, ἀκολουθῶς ὁ Γιαλῆς, κατόπιν ὁ Μιχάλης, ἀκολουθῶς ἡ Ἀμέρσα, μετ' αὐτὴν ὁ Μητρά-
60 κης, καὶ ἡ τελευταία ἡ Κρινιώ. Κατὰ τοὺς πρῶτους χρόνους ἐφαίνετο νὰ βασιλεύῃ εὐρήνη ἐντὸς τῆς οἰκίας. Εἶτα, ὅταν ἤρχισαν νὰ μεγαλώνουν τὰ δύο πρῶτα παιδιά τῆς νύμφης, εἶχον δὲ μεγαλώσει ἀρχετὰ καὶ τὰ δύο
65 τελευταῖα τῆς ἀνδραδέλφης, ἤρχισε πόλεμος ἐντὸς τοῦ οἴκου. Τότε ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ, ἥτις μὲ τὴν ἡλικίαν καὶ τὴν πεῖραν τοῦ κόσμου ἐγένετο πολὺ σοφωτέρα, εἶχεν ἀξιωθῇ. ὥς ἔλεγε
70 μετριοφρόνως, ν' ἀποκτήσῃ κ' αὐτὴ ἓνα σπιτάκι δικό της, χάρις εἰς τὴν ἐπιδεξιότητά της καὶ τὴν οἰκονομίαν της. Τὴν μίαν χρονίαν ἡμύρεσε μόνον νὰ κτίσῃ τέσσαρας τοίχους λα-
75 σποκτίστους, μικροὺς καὶ χαμηλοὺς καὶ νὰ τοὺς στεγάσῃ τὴν δευτέραν χρονίαν κατῳρθώσῃ νὰ πετσώσῃ κατὰ τὰ τρία τέταρτα τὸ σπίτι, δηλ. νὰ κατασκευάσῃ μικρὸν πάτωμα, μὲ διάφορα
80 σανίδια, ἀνόμοια, παλαιὰ καὶ νέα. καί, χωρὶς νὰ χάσῃ καιρὸν, ἀνυπομονοῦσα, πότε νὰ «ξελευθερωθῇ» ἀπὸ τὴν τριαννίαν τῆς ἀνδραδέλφης, ἡ ὁποία ἐγήραζε κ' ἐγένετο παραῖση, ἐ-
85 κοιβαλήθη, κ' ἐπῆγε νὰ ἐγκατασταθῇ, μαζὶ μὲ τὸν σύζυγον καὶ τὰ τέκνα, εἰς τὴν «γωνιάν» της, εἰς τὴν «φωλιάν» της, εἰς τὴν «ἄκρην» της. Τὴν ἡμέραν ἐκείνην, ὅπως ἔλεγεν ἡ ἰδία, ἡσθάνθη τὴν μεγαλειτέραν χαρὰν εἰς τὴν «ζῆσιν» της.

Ὅλ' αὐτὰ τὰ ἐνθυμεῖτο, καὶ οἶονεῖ τὰ ἀνέζη
90 ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ, κατὰ τὰς μακρὰς ἐκείνας ἀύπνους νύκτας τοῦ Ἰανουαρίου, ἐνῶ ὁ βορρᾶς ἠκούετο ἐκ διαλειμμάτων νὰ συρῖξῃ ἔξω, πλήττων τὰς κεράμους, καὶ κάμνων νὰ ἰχθῶσι
95 τὰ παράθυρα, ὁπότε ἠγρύπνει παρὰ τὸ λίκνον τῆς μικρᾶς ἐγγόνης της. Ἦτο ἤδη τρίτη ὥρα μετὰ τὰ μεσάνυχτα, καὶ ὁ πετεινὸς ἐλάλησε καὶ
100 πάλιν. Τὸ θυγάτριον, τὸ ὁποῖον μόλις εἶχεν ἡσυχάσει πρὸ μικροῦ, ἄρχισε νὰ βήχῃ ἐκ νέου ὀδυνηρῶς. Εἶχεν ἔλθῃ ἀσθενικὸν εἰς τὸν κόσμον, καὶ προσέτι, φαίνεται ὅτι εἶχε κρυάσει
95 τὴν τρίτην ἡμέραν, εἰς τὰ «κολυμπίδια», ὅταν τὸ εἶχαν λούσει ἐντὸς τῆς σκάφης, καὶ κακὸς βήχας τὸ εἶχε κολλήσει. Ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ ἀπλήστως ἀπὸ ἡμερῶν παρεμόνευε νὰ ἴδῃ συμ-
100 πτώματα σπασμῶν εἰς τὸ μικρὸν ἀσθενὲς πλάσμα—ἐπειδὴ τότε εἴξενεν ὅτι αὐτὸ δὲν θὰ ἐσώζετο—πλὴν εὐτυχῶς τοιοῦτον πρᾶγμα δὲν ἔβλεπε. «Εἶνε γὰρ νὰ βασανίζεται καὶ νὰ μᾶς βασανίζῃ», εἶχεν ὑποψιθυρίσει, χωρὶς κανεὶς νὰ τὴν ἀκούσῃ μέσα της.

Τὴν στιγμήν ταύτην, ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ ἀνοίξε τὰ κλειστά ἀγρυπνοῦντα ὄμματα, κ' ἐκούνησε τὸ λίκνον. Συγχρόνως ἠθέλησε νὰ δώσῃ τὸ σύνθημα ρευστὸν εἰς τὸ πάσχον μωρόν.

5 — Ποιὸς βίχει; ἠκούσθη μία φωνὴ ὀπισθεν τοῦ μεσοτοιχοῦ.

Ἡ γραῖα δὲν ἀπήντησεν. Ἦτον Σάββατον ἑσπέρας, καὶ ὁ γαμβρός της εἶχε πῆν ἓνα ρακὶ παραπάνω, πρὶν δειπνήσῃ· ὁμοίως εἶχε πῆν, 10 μετὰ τὸ δεῖπνον κ' ἓνα μεγάλο ποτήρι ἀπὸ λάκυρον κρασί, διὰ νὰ ξεκουρασθῇ ἀπὸ τὰ μεροκάματα ὅλης τῆς ἐβδομάδος. Λοιπὸν, ὁ Νταντῆς, ἐπειδὴ εἶχε πῆν ἀρκετά, ἀναλόγως, ὠμιλοῦσε μέσα στὸν ὕπνον του, ἢ μᾶλλον παραμιλοῦσε.

Τὸ μωρόν δὲν ἐδέχθη τὴν ρανίδα τοῦ ρευστοῦ εἰς τὸ στόμα, ἀλλὰ τὴν ἐλάττισε μὲ τὴν γλωσσίσσαν του, ἐν τῇ ὁρμῇ τοῦ βηχός, ὅστις εἶχεν αὐξήσει λίαν ἀλγεινῶς.

20 — Σκασμός!... εἶπε πάλιν ὁ Κωνσταντῆς, ὁ πατὴρ τοῦ βρέφους, μέσα στὸν ὕπνον του.

— Καὶ πλαντασμός!... προσέθηκε μετ' εἰρωνίας ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ.

Ἡ λεχώνα ἐξαφνίσθη μέσα στὸν ὕπνον της, 25 ἀκούσασα ἴσως τὸν βῆχα τοῦ μικροῦ, καὶ ἅμα τὸν ἀλλόκοτον βραχὺν διάλογον, ὅστις διημεΐφθη μέσον τοῦ ξυλοτοιχοῦ μεταξὺ τοῦ κοιμωμένου καὶ τῆς ἀγρυπνούσης.

— Τ' εἶνε, μάνα, εἶπεν ἀνασηκωθείσα ἡ 30 Δελγαρώ. Δὲν εἶνε καλὰ τὸ παιδί;

Ἡ γραῖα ἐμειδίασε στρυφνῶς εἰς τὸ τρομῶδες φῶς τοῦ μικροῦ λύχνου,

— Σὰ σ' ἀκούω, δυχατέρα!...

Αὐτὸ τὸ «σὰ σ' ἀκούω, δυχατέρα» ἐλέχθη

μὲ τόνον πολὺ ἀλλόκοτον. Ἄλλως δὲν ἦτο ἡ 35 πρώτη φορά, καθ' ἣν ἡ νεαρά μήτηρ ἤκουε τοιοῦτόν τι ἐκ μέρους τῆς μητρός της. Ἐνθυμεῖτο ὅτι καὶ ἄλλοτε συνέβη, ἡ γραῖα, μεταξὺ γυναικῶν καὶ γραϊδίων τῆς γειτονιάς, νὰ ἐκφράσῃ, μετὰ σείσματος ἐκφραστικοῦ τῆς κεφαλῆς, εἰς ὥρας καθ' ὧς ἐγένετο λόγος περὶ τῆς μεγάλης πληθώρας τῶν νεαρῶν κορασίων, περὶ τῆς σπάνεως, περὶ τοῦ ξενιτευμοῦ καὶ τῶν ὑπερμέτρων ἀπαιτήσεων τῶν γαμβρῶν, 40 περὶ τῶν βασάνων ὅσα ὑπέφερε μία χριστιανὴ διὰ νὰ ἀποκαταστήσῃ «τ' ἀδύνατα μέρη», τουτέστι τὰ θήλεα, νὰ ἐκφράσῃ, λέγων, παραπλήσια αἰσθήματα. Ὅταν μάλιστα ἡ μήτηρ της ἤκουε περὶ ἀρρωστίας μικρῶν κορασίδων εἶχεν ἀκουσθῇ, σείουσα τὴν κεφαλὴν, νὰ λέγῃ·

— Σὰ σ' ἀκούω, γειτόνισσα!... «Δὲν εἶνε 45 χάρος, δὲν εἶνε βράχος;» ἐπειδὴ συνείθιζε πολὺ συχνὰ νὰ ἐκφράζεται μὲ παροιμίας λίαν ἐκφραστικὰς. Καὶ ἄλλοτε πάλιν τὴν ἤκουσαν νὰ δογματίζῃ ὅτι ὁ ἄνθρωπος δὲν συμφέρει νὰ κάμνῃ πολλὰ κορίτσια, καὶ ὅτι τὸ καλλίτερον εἶνε νὰ μὴ 'πανδρεύεται κανεὶς. Ἡ δὲ συνήθης εὐχή της πρὸς τὰ μικρὰ κοράτσια ἦτο «νὰ μὴ σώσουν!... 50 Νὰ μὴν πᾶνε παραπάνω!»

Καὶ ἄλλοτε προέβη ἐπὶ τοσοῦτον ὥστε νὰ εἴπῃ·

— Τί νὰ σᾶς 'πῶ!... Ἔτσι τοῦρχεται τὰν 55 θρώπου, τὴν ὥρα ποῦ γεννιῶνται, νὰ τὰ καρυδοπνίγῃ!...

Ναὶ μὲν τὸ εἶπεν, ἀλλὰ βεβαίως δὲν θὰ ἦτον ἱκανὴ νὰ τὸ κάμῃ ποτέ... Καὶ ἡ ἰδία δὲν τὸ ἐπίστευε.

Λ. ΠΑΠΑΔΙΑΜΑΝΤΗΣ

Ἔπεται συνέχεια.



τὸν περὶ ὧρα τοῦ διαδόχου τοῦ κόσμου· καὶ στὸ τέλος εἶπε γελαστή.

— Ἀληθινὰ μὲ τὸ πρῶτο μου χάρισμα εἴσαι εὐχαριστημένος;

— Ἀ, ὅχι· δὲν τὸ θέλω πειὰ τὸ χάρισμά σου. Ἄν ἦμουν ἐκδικητικός, μεγάλη δύναμι εἶδιδε στὰ χέρια μου. Πάρε το, φοβοῦμαι τὸν ἑαυτό μου μὴν ἀλλάξω καὶ τὸ μεταχειρισθῶ. Ὅσο γιὰ τὸ καλὸ ποῦ σκόρπισα δὲν ἔχει ἀξία, ἀδικα ὁ λαὸς μ' εὐγνωμονεῖ· εἶμαι τυφλὸ ὄργανό σου, ὅλα μὲ τῇ δικῇ σου δύναμι τὰ ἔκαμα.

Ἡ μοῖρα γελαστή πάλι εἶπε.

— Πίστευες, πῶς σοῦ ἔδωκα χαρίσματα; Ὅ,τι ἔκαμες τὸ ἔκαμες μὲ τῇ δικῇ σου θέλῃσι καὶ δύναμι. Ποτὲ δὲν πρόσεξες πόσο κοπιάζεις γιὰ νὰ κάμῃς τὸ καλὸ, πόσο πολεμοῦσες

μὲ τὸν ἑαυτό σου γιὰ νὰ μὴν κάμῃς τὸ κακὸ, ποῦ θαρροῦσες πῶς τὸ ἔχεις στὰ χέρια σου.

Ἡ ἑλῆα χολόσκανε πῶς δὲν ἀνθίζει; δὲν ἀνθίζει μὲ μιὰ πρᾶξι ποῦ μπορεῖ νὰ ἦναι βρασμός τῆς στιγμῆς· ἀνθισε γι' αὐτὴν τὴν ἀδιάκοπη πάλη, γι' αὐτὴν τὴ νίκη, ποῦ νίκησες πάντα τὸν ἑαυτό σου, τῇ μεγαλείτερῃ νίκῃ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου.

Μὰ ὁ λαὸς ἄς μὴ μάθῃ πῶς τὰ χαρίσματα τὰ ἔχεις δικὰ σου μέσα στὸ χαρακτήρα σου. Δὲν μπορεῖ ἀκόμα νὰ καταλάβῃ τί θαύματα μπορεῖ νὰ κάμῃ ὁ ἀνθρώπος καὶ ἔχει ἐμπιστοσύνη μόνο στὰ ὑπεράνθρωπα.

Ζήσανε αὐτοὶ καλὰ κ' ἐμεῖς καλλίτερα.

ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΑ ΠΑΠΑΔΟΠΟΥΛΟΥ

Η ΦΟΝΙΣΣΑ

Γ'.

Οὕτω εἶχον διαρρεῦσει πολλαὶ νύκτες ἀπὸ τοῦ τοκετοῦ τῆς Δελαφῶς, τῆς Τραχήλαινας. Ἀφοῦ τὸ μικρὸν ἐβαπτίσθη, καὶ ὠνομάσθη Χαδούλα, μὲ τ' ὄνομα τῆς μάμμης του — τὸ 5 ὁποῖον ἔκαμεν ἐκείνην νὰ μορφάξῃ σείουσα τὴν κεφαλὴν, καὶ νὰ ψιθυρίζῃ «μὴν τύχη καὶ χαθῇ τ' ὄνομα!» — πάλιν ἡ γραία ἠγρύπνει, ἂν καὶ τὸ μωρὸν ἐφαίνετο νὰ εἶνε ὁπωσοῦν καλλίτερα. Ἄλλως ἡ ἀγρυπνία ἦτο ἐν τῇ φύσει καὶ τῇ ἰδιοσυγκρασίᾳ τῆς Φραγκογιαννοῦς, 10 ἣτις ἐσκέπτετο χίλια πράγματα, καὶ εἶχε τὸν ὕπνον δύσκολον. Οἱ λογισμοὶ καὶ αἱ ἀναμνήσεις τῆς, ἀμυρταὶ εἰκόνες τοῦ παρελθόντος, ἤρχοντο ἀλλεπάλληλοι ὡς κύματα μέσα εἰς τὸν 15 νοῦν τῆς, πρὸ τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν τῆς ψυχῆς τῆς.

Εἶχε καρπογονήσῃ, λοιπόν, ἡ Χαδούλα τόσα τέκνα, καὶ εἶχε κτίσει μικρὸν ὁσπίτιον διὰ νὰ κατοικήσῃ. Ὅσον ηὔξανεν ἡ οἰκογένεια, τόσον ηὔξανον καὶ τὰ «φαρμάκια». Ναί, ἀπὸ τὰς 20 δίας οἰκονομίας τῆς εἶχεν ἀποκτήσῃ τὴν μικρὰν οἰκίαν ἢ Γιαννοῦ, καὶ ὅχι ἀπὸ τὰ περισσεύματα τοῦ συζύγου τῆς. Ὁ μάστορ - Γιάννης ὁ Σκοῦφος, ἢ ὁ «Λογαριασμός», δὲν εἴ- 25 ξευρε, πράγματι, νὰ λογαριάσῃ καλὰ οὔτε πόσα μεροκάματα εἶχε δουλέψῃ, οὔτε πόσα κάνουν τέσσαρα ἢ πέντε ἢ ἕξ μεροκάματα τῆς ἑβδο-

• Ἴδε σελ. 199.

μάδος πρὸς μίαν καὶ 75 ἢ μίαν καὶ 80 — διότι 30 τόσα ἐπαιρνε ὡς τρίτης τάξεως μαραγκός. Ὅταν ἐνίστε, ὡς καλαφάτης, ἐπληρώνετο πρὸς 2.35 ἢ 2.40, πάλιν δὲν εἴξευρε νὰ τὰ λογαριάσῃ.

Μόνον τοῦ ἤρεσκε νὰ τὰ πίνῃ, σχεδὸν ὅλα, τὴν Κυριακὴν. Πλὴν εὐτυχῶς ἡ σύζυγός του εἶχε λάβῃ τὰ μέτρα τῆς, κ' ἐπαιρνε αὐτὴ τὰ 35 λεπτὰ στὰ χέρια τῆς τὸ Σάββατον τὸ βράδυ.

Ἡ τὰ εἰσέπραττε κατ' εὐθείαν ἀπὸ τὸν πρωτομάστοριν, ὅχι ἄνευ ἐριδος καὶ δυσκολίας — 40 ἐπειδὴ ὁ πρωτομάστορης δὲν ἤθελε νὰ τῆς τὰ δώσῃ. προτιμῶν νὰ τὰ ἐγχειρίσῃ εἰς τὸν μάστορ - Γιάννην τὸν ἴδιον, ἀπὸ τὸν ὁποῖον μάλιστα ἐκράτει, καθὼς καὶ ἀπ' ὅλους τοὺς ἄλλους, 45 δέκα ἢ δακαπέντε λεπτὰ ὡς ἕκτακτα ποσοστά, λέγων «ἔχω κορίτσια, βρὲ ἀδερφέ, ἔχω κορίτσια!» Ἀλλ' ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ ποῦ νὰ γελασθῇ! Αὐτὴ τοῦ εἶδιδε τὴν μόνην λογικὴν καὶ τὴν 50 μόνην πρέπουσαν ἀπάντησιν· «Ἐσὺ μονάχα ἔχεις κορίτσια μάστορη; Ὁ ἄλλος κόσμος δὲν ἔχουν;»

Ἡ, ἂν δὲν κατώρθωνε νὰ τὰ λάβῃ ἡ ἰδία ἀπὸ τὸν ἀρχιναυπηγόν, ἢ Γιαννοῦ τὰ ἤρπαζε, «σὰ χωρατά, σὰν ἀλήθεια», ἀπὸ τὰς χεῖρας 50 τοῦ συζύγου τῆς, ἀφοῦ ἐφρόντιζε πρῶτον νὰ τὸν «καλοκαρδίσῃ» καὶ νὰ τὸν φέρῃ εἰς τὴν κατάλληλον ψυχολογικὴν θέσιν. Ἡ, τέλος, τὸν

ἄφινε νὰ κοιμηθῇ μισοζαλισμένος, καὶ τὰ ἔκλεπτεν ἀπὸ τὰ φορέματά του, τὴν νύκτα τοῦ Σαββάτου. Μόνον, τὴν Κυριακὴν πρωΐ, τοῦ ἔδιδε διὰ «χαρτζιλῆκι» 40 ἢ πενήντα λεπτά.

5 Λοιπὸν εἶχε κτίσει τὸν οἰκίσκον ἀπὸ τὰς οἰκονομίας της, ἀλλὰ ποία ἦτο ἡ πρώτη βάσις τοῦ μικροῦ ἐκείνου κεφαλαίου; Τὴν ὥραν ταύτην, κατὰ τὴν νύκτα τῆς ἀγρυπνίας, διὰ πρώτην φορὰν τὸ ἐξωμολογεῖτο καθ' ἑαυτήν. Ποτὲ
10 δὲν τὸ εἶχεν εἰπῇ οὔτε εἰς τὸν πνευματικόν της, εἰς τὸν ὁποῖον ἄλλως πολὺ μικρὰ πράγματα ἔλεγεν· ἀκριβῶς ἐκεῖνα μόνον τὰ συνήθη ἁμαρτήματα, ὅσα ἐκεῖνος ἤξευρε προτοῦ νὰ τὰ εἴπῃ αὐτῇ δηλαδὴ κακολογίαν, θυμούς, γυναικειάς κατάρας καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα. Ποτὲ δὲν τὸ
15 εἶχεν ὁμολογήσει εἰς τὴν μητέρα της, ἐρ' ὅσον ἔζη ἐκεῖνη—ἥτις ἄλλως ἦτο ἡ μόνη ποῦ τὸ ὑπώπτευσεν καὶ τὸ ἤξευρε χωρὶς νὰ τῆς τὸ εἴπῃ αὐτῇ. Naί, εἶπε ἀληθῆς, ὅτι ἐμελέτα καὶ εἶχεν
20 ἀπόφασιν νὰ τῆς τὰ εἴπῃ κατὰ τὰς τελευταίας στιγμὰς της. Πλὴν δυστυχῶς ἡ γραῖα, πρὶν ἀποθάνῃ, συνέβη νὰ βωβαθῇ καὶ νὰ κωφαιθῇ καὶ νὰ μείνῃ ἀναίσθητη «σὺν πρᾶμμα», ὅπως περιέγραφε τὴν κατάστασιν ταύτην ἡ κόρη
25 της. κ' ἔτσι δὲν ἐδόθη εὐκαιρία νὰ τῆς ὁμολογήσῃ τὸ πταῖσμα της.

Ἀκόμη ὀλιγώτερον δὲν τὸ εἶπε ποτὲ εἰς τὸν πατέρα της, οὔτε εἰς τὸν σύζυγόν της. Ἴδού ποῖον ἦτο τὸ μυστικὸν τοῦτο.

30 Πρὸ τοῦ γάμου της ἡ Χαδοῦλα εἶχεν ἀρχίσει νὰ κλέπτῃ ἀπ' ὀλίγα ὀλίγα ἐκ τῶν χρημάτων τοῦ πατρὸς της ἀπ' ὀλίγους παράδες, ἀπὸ μισὸν γρόσι. Τόσον ὀλίγα, ὥστε σχεδὸν δὲν τὸ ἡσθάνθη, οὔτε τὸ ὑπώπτευσεν ἐκεῖνος.
35 Μόνον δύο φορὰς εἶχεν ἐννοήσει ὁ ἴδιος ὅτι εἶχε κάμῃ, ἐσφαλμένον τὸν λογαριασμὸν τοῦ μικροῦ θησαυροῦ του. Τὸν θησαυρὸν τοῦτον ἀπέθετεν εἰς μίαν κρύπτῃν, τὴν ὁποίαν πρὸ πολλοῦ εἶχεν ἀνακαλύψει ἡ γραῖα, μετὰ χρό-
40 νον δὲ ἀνεκάλυψε καὶ ἡ κόρη. Τότε πρὸς καιρὸν, ἡ Χαδοῦλα διέκοψε τὰς κλοπὰς, διὰ νὰ μὴ δώσῃ λαβὴν μεγαλειτέρας ὑπονοίας εἰς τὸν πατέρα της. Ἀργότερα, πάλιν ἐξανάρχισε νὰ κλέπτῃ περισσότερα, ἀλλὰ δὲν «ἐπιανε χαρτω-
45 σιά» ἐμπρὸς εἰς τὰς κλοπὰς τῆς μητρὸς της.

Αὕτη εἶχε κλέψει πολλὰ, ἀλλὰ μὲ τέχνην καὶ μέθοδον. Ἐκλεπτε τὰ περισσότερα ἀπὸ τὰς ἄλλας ἐπιχειρήσεις, εἰς τὰς ὁποίας εἶχε κατὰ μέγα μέρος τὴν διαχειρίσιν, καθὼς ἀπὸ πώ-
50 λησιν ἐλαίου καὶ οἴνου, προϊόντων τῶν κτημάτων τῆς οἰκογενείας, καὶ ὀλίγα, σχεδὸν ὅσα καὶ ἡ κόρη τους, ἀπὸ τὰ μεροκάματα τοῦ γέ-
ρου. Μετὰ χρόνους, ὅταν ἀνοιζαν ἡ δουλειές, κ' ὁ γέρο-Στάθης ἔγινε μικρο-αρχιναυπη-
γὸς—ἐσκάρωνε βάρκες καὶ καΐκια μοναχὸς
του, βοηθούμενος ἀπὸ τὸν υἱὸν καὶ ἀπὸ τὸν
55 παραγυιὸν του, εἰς τὸ προαύλιον τῆς οἰκίας—
τότε ἡ γραῖα ἠμπόρεσε νὰ κλέψῃ ἀρκετὰ καὶ
ἀπὸ τὰ κέρδη τῆς ναυπηγικῆς τέχνης.

Τελευταῖον, ὀλίγους μῆνας πρὸ τοῦ γάμου
60 της, ἡ Χαδοῦλα εἶχε κατορθώσει ν' ἀνακαλύψῃ
τὴν κρύπτῃν ὅπου εἶχε τὸ κομπόδεμα ἡ μη-
τέρα της. Εἰς μίαν ὁπὴν τοῦ κατωγείου, ἀνά-
μεσα εἰς τὰ πιθάρια τὰ μισογεμάτα καὶ τὰ βα-
θέλια τ' ἀδειανὰ, εὗρίσκετο μία πλατεῖα καὶ
65 μακρὰ λωρὶς μαύρης μυνδῆλας, ὅπου ἡ γραῖα
εἶχε δεμένα «σὺν σαλιά» ἑκατὸν ἐβδομήντα
τόσα ἀργυρὰ τάλληρα, ἄλλα κολωνάτα, ἄλλα
ρηγίνες, καὶ ἄλλα τουρκικά, ὅλα κλεμμένα ἀπὸ
70 τὰ κέρδη τοῦ γέρου καὶ τὰ προϊόντα τῶν κτη-
μάτων. Ἡ κόρη μὲ φαιδρὰν ἐκπλήξιν, καὶ μὲ
συγκίνησιν τρομώδη, ἐμέτρησε τὰ τάλληρα, τὰ
σκυλοδεμένα, καὶ εἶτα τὰ ἔβαλε πάλιν εἰς τὴν
ὁπὴν των, χωρὶς νὰ τολμήσῃ νὰ τὰ πειράξῃ.

Ἀλλὰ τὴν παραμονὴν τοῦ γάμου, τὸ βρά-
75 δν, τὴν ὥραν ποῦ ἐνύχτωνεν—ὅταν εἶδε τὴν
ἐπιμονὴν τῶν γονέων της, νὰ μὴ θέλουν νὰ
τῆς δώσουν ἀρκετὴν προῖκα, καὶ εἶδε τὴν ἀ-
πονιὰν τῆς μητρὸς της—παραφυλάξασα τὴν
ὥραν ὁπότε ἡ γραῖα ἐξῆλθε πρὸς στιγμὴν ἀπὸ
80 τὴν οἰκίαν δι' ἐν θέλημα, κατέβη μὲ παλμὸν
καρδίας κρυφὰ στὸ κατώγι· ἔψαξε καὶ ἀνεῦρε
τὸ κομπόδεμα, τὸ σκυλοδεμένο, καὶ τὸ ἔλυσεν.
Αὐτὴν τὴν φορὰν τῆς ἐφάνησαν ὡσὺν ὀλίγα.
85 Καιρὸν δὲν εἶχε νὰ τὰ μετρήσῃ. Ἴσως ἡ γραῖα
νὰ εἶχεν ἀφαιρέσει μερικὰ ἐκ τῶν ταλλήρων,
καὶ εἶχε κάμῃ χρῆσιν δι' ἀγνώστους σκοπούς.
Τῆς ἦλθεν ἡ ἰδέα νὰ πάρῃ τὸ κομπόδεμα ὅ-
λον, αὐτοῦσιν μαζὺ μὲ τὴν λωρίδα τῆς πα-
λαιᾶς μανδῆλας τῆς μητρὸς της, ἀλλ' ἐφοβήθη·
90 ἔλαβε μόνον ὀκτὼ ἢ ἐννέα τάλληρα, καταρχὰς
—τύσα, ὅσα ἐφραντάζετο ὅτι ἡ ἀπουσία των
δὲν θὰ ἐπέφερε μεγάλην διαφορὰν εἰς τὸν
ὄγκον καὶ δὲν θὰ ἦτο ἀμέσως ἐπαισθητή, εἶτα
ἔκαμε νὰ τὸ δέσῃ· ἀκολουθῶς πάλιν τὸ ἥνοιξε,
95 ἔλαβεν ἄλλα πέντε ἢ ἑξ, τὸ ὅλον δεκαπέντε.
Κατόπιν πάλιν, ἐνῶ τὸ ἔδενε, ἐκ νέου ἔκαμε
κίνημα νὰ τὸ λύσῃ, μὲ σκοπὸν νὰ πάρῃ ἄλλα
δύο ἢ τρία ἀκόμη. Αὔφνης τότε ἤκουσε τὸ
βῆμα τῆς μητρὸς της ἔξω. Βιαστικὰ ἔδεσε τὸ
100 κομπόδεμα, καὶ τὸ ἔβαλεν εἰς τὴν θέσιν του.

Ὀλίγας ἡμέρας μετὰ τὸν γάμον, ἡ γραῖα
ἀνεκάλυψε τὴν κλοπὴν. Ἀλλὰ δὲν ἠθέλησε νὰ
εἴπῃ τίποτε εἰς τὴν κόρην της. Ἐμεινεν εὐ-

χαριστημένη διότι εκείνη δὲν τὰ ἐπῆρεν δλα. «Στραβομάρα εἶχεν!» εἶπε μεταξύ τῶν ὁδόντων της.

Τὸ ποσὸν ἐκεῖνο, τὸ ὁποῖον ἡ Χαδοῦλα εἶχε κλέψει κατὰ καιροὺς ἀπὸ τοὺς γονεῖς της, ἀνερχόμενον περίπου εἰς τετρακόσια γρόσια, τὸ νόμισμα τῆς ἐποχῆς ἐκείνης, ἔκρυπτεν ἐπὶ τόσα ἔτη ἐπιμελῶς. Ἀλλὰ διὰ τὰ κτίσῃ τὴν οἰκίαν, τὸ ἠῤῥησε μὲ τὴν ἱκανότητά της. Ἦτον βεβαίως ἐργατικὴ καὶ ἐπιδεξία. Ὅσον τῆς ἐπέτρεπον αἱ μέριμναι τῆς ἀνατροφῆς; τόσων ἀλλεπαλλήλων τέκνων, ἐξενοδοῦλεν. Πλήν, εἰς τοὺς μικροὺς τόπους «δὲν ὑπάρχουσιν εἰδικοί, ἀλλὰ πολυτεχνῖται» καὶ ὅπως ἕνας μπακάλης κωμποδόλεως εἶνε συγχρόνως καὶ ἔμπορος ψιλικῶν, καὶ φαρμακοπώλης, ἀλλὰ καὶ τοκογλύφος, οὕτω καὶ μία καλὴ ὑφάντρια, ὅποια ἦτο ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ, οὐδὲν ἐκώλυε τὰ κάμνῃ συγχρόνως καὶ τὴν μαμήν ἢ τὴν ψευτογιάτρισσαν, καὶ ἄλλα ἐπαγγέλματα ἀκόμη τὰ ἐξασκῇ, ἵσκει τὰ εἶνε ἐπιτηδεῖα. Καὶ ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ ἦτο ἐπιτηδειοτάτη μεταξύ ὧν τῶν γυναικῶν.

Ἔδιδε βότανα, ἔκαμνε κηραλοιφάς, ἐξετέλει ἐντριβάς, ἐθεράπευε τὴν βασκανίαν, παρεσκεύαζε φάρμακα διὰ τὰς πασχούσας, διὰ τὰς χλωρωτικὰς καὶ ἀναιμικὰς κόρας, διὰ τὰς ἐγκύους καὶ τὰς λεχούς, καὶ τὰς ἐκ μητρικῶν ἀλγηδόνων πασχούσας. Μὲ τὸ καλὰθιον ὑπὸ τὸν ἀγκῶνα τῆς ἀριστερᾶς χειρός, ἀκολουθομένη ἀπὸ τὰ δύο τελευταῖα τέκνα της, τὸν Δημητράκη, ὀκτὼ ἐτῶν, καὶ τὴν Κρινιώ, ἑξαέτιδα, ἐξήρχετο εἰς τοὺς ἀγρούς, ἀνέβαινε εἰς τὰ ὄρη, διέτρεχε φάραγγας, κοιλάδας καὶ ρεῦματα, ἔψαχνε τὰ εὔρη τὰ βότανα, ὅσα αὐτὴ ἐγνώριζε — τὴν ἀγριοκρομμύδα, τὴν δροκοντιά, τὸ τρίμερο καὶ ἄλλ' ἀκόμη — τὰ ἔκοπτεν ἢ τὰ ἐξερρίζωνεν, ἐγέμιζε τὸ καλὰθιόν της, καὶ ἐπέστρεφε τὸ βράδυ εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν.

Μὲ αὐτὰ τὰ βότανα κατεσκεύαζε διάφορα μαντζούνια, τὰ ὁποῖα ἐσύσταινεν ὡς ἀλάνθαστα ἱατρικὰ κατὰ τῶν χρονίων πόνων, τοῦ στήθους, τῆς κοιλίας, τῶν ἐντέρων κτλ. Τῇ βοηθείᾳ ὧν αὐτῶν τῶν μέσων, ὀλίγα κερδιζουσα, ἀλλ' οἰκονόμος, κατῶρθωσε, μὲ τὸν καιρὸν, τὰ κτίσῃ τὴν μικρὰν φωλεάν της. Ἀλλ' οἱ νεοσσοὶ εἶχαν ἀρχίσει τὰ ξεπετοῦν ἤδη, τὰ φεύγουν εἰς τὰ ξένα!

Κατὰ τὴν ἐποχὴν ἐκείνην, ὁ πρῶτος υἱὸς της, εἰκοσάτης ἡδὴ, ὁ Σταθαρός, εἶχε ξενιτευθῇ εἰς τὴν Ἀμερικὴν, ἀφοῦ δὲ ἔστειλεν ἐν ἡ δύο γράμματα, ἐσιώπησε, καὶ ἔκτοτε δὲν εἶχε δώ-

σει σημεῖον ζωῆς. Μετὰ τρία ἔτη, ὁ δεῦτερος υἱὸς της, ὁ Γιαλῆς, εἶχε μεγαλώσει καὶ αὐτός, καὶ ἐμβαρκαρίσθη.

Καὶ οἱ δύο, εἰς τὰ μικρὰ τῶν χρόνια, εἶχον δοκιμάσει τὴν τέχνην τοῦ πατρὸς τῶν, ἀλλ' οὔτε ὁ εἰς οὔτε ὁ ἄλλος ἐπρόκοψαν πολὺ, οὐδὲ ἠρκέσθησαν εἰς αὐτήν. Ὁ Γιαλῆς, ὡς φιλόστοργος υἱὸς καὶ ἀδελφός, ἔγραψε πρὸς τὴν μητέρα του ἐκ Μασσαλίας, ὅπου εἶχεν ὑπάγει μ' ἕνα πατριώτικον καράβι, ὅτι ἀπεφάσισε καὶ αὐτὸς τὰ ὑπάγῃ στὴν Ἀμερικὴν, τὰ ἰδῇ τί γίνεται ὁ μεγάλος ἀδελφός του ἴσως τὸν ἀνακαλύψῃ κάπου. Ἀλλὰ παρήλθον καιροὶ καὶ χρόνοι ἔκτοτε καὶ οὔτε ὁ εἰς οὔτε ὁ ἄλλος ἠκούσθησαν πλέον.

Τότε ἔλαβεν ἀφορμὴν ἡ μητέρα τῶν τὰ ἐνθυμηθῇ ἕνα παραμῦθι τοῦ λαοῦ ἐκ τῶν ἀστειοτέρων, ἐν ᾧ γίνεται λόγος περὶ στρώματος ἀπὸ μέλι, εἰς τὸ ὁποῖον ἐκόλλησαν διαδοχικῶς καὶ ὁ πρῶτος ἀποσταλεὶς υἱὸς τῆς Γρηᾶς, διὰ τὰ συλλέξῃ καὶ φέρῃ ἐκεῖθεν τὸ μέλι, καὶ ὁ δεῦτερος υἱός, ὅστις εἶχε σταλῇ διὰ τὰ ξεκολλήσῃ τὸν πρῶτον, καὶ ὁ τρίτος, ὅστις ἐστάλῃ διὰ τὰ φέρῃ ὀπίσω καὶ τοὺς δύο, καὶ ὁ Γέρος, ὅστις ἐπῆγεν αὐτὸν ἰδῇ τί γίνονται οἱ υἱοὶ του τέλος, αὐτὴ ἡ Γρηᾶ, ἡ ὁποία εἰς τὸ ὕστερον ἀπεφάσισε τὰ ὑπάγῃ τὰ ἰδῇ, μακρόθεν ὁμως — διότι, ὡς γρηᾶ, εἶχε τόσῃ πονηρίαν — τί ἔγειναν ὁ Γέρος καὶ τὰ παιδιὰ καὶ δὲν ἐγύρισαν ὀπίσω ἀπὸ τὸ «θέλημα», εἰς τὸ ὁποῖον τοὺς εἶχε στείλῃ, μόλις αὐτὴ ἐγλύτωσε καὶ δὲν ἐκόλλησε. Τότε στραφεῖσα πρὸς τοὺς τέσσαρας κολλημένους τοὺς εἶπεν: Ἀ! αὐτὸ σὰς μέλλει; ἐμένα δὲν με μέλλει!

Ἐν τῷ μεταξύ, ἐνῷ ὁ Σταθαρός καὶ ὁ Γιαλῆς εἶχαν ξενιτευθῇ εἰς τὴν Ἀμερικὴν, καὶ εἶχαν φάγῃ λωτόν, ἢ εἶχαν πῖν τὴν Λήθην, ἢ Δελχαρῶ, ἢ πρώτη κόρη, πρωτότοκος μετὰ τοὺς ξενιτευομένους ἀδελφούς της, ἐμεγάλωνεν, ὅλονεν ἐμεγάλωνε. Κ' ἡ Ἀμέρσα, σχεδὸν τέσσαρα ἔτη μικροτέρα τῆς ἀδελφῆς της, ἐμεγάλωνε καὶ αὐτὴ ἐναμίλλως μὲ τὴν Δελχαρῶ, καὶ «ἔρριχνε μπόι» ἐγίνετο ἀνδρώδης, μελαψὴ καὶ ζωηρά, καὶ ἡ γειτόνισσες τὴν ὠνόμαζον «τὸ σερνικοθίλνκο». Κ' ἐκείνη ἡ μικρά, τὸ Κρινάκι, ἥτις δὲν εἶχε φεῦ! τοῦ κρίνου τὸ χρῶμα, ἀν καὶ φυσικὰ ἰσχνή, ἐδείκνυνεν ἤδη συμπτώματα ἀναπτύξεως.

Πῶς μεγαλώνουν, Θεέ μου! ἐσκέπτετο ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ. Ποῖος κήπος, ποῖον λειβάδι, ποῖα ἀνοιξὶς παράγει αὐτὸ τὸ φυτόν! Καὶ πῶς βλαστάνει καὶ θάλλει καὶ φυλλομανεῖ καὶ φουντώνει! Καὶ ὅλοι αὐτοὶ οἱ βλαστοί, ὅλα

τὰ νεόφυτα, θὰ γείνουν μίαν ἡμέραν πρασιαί, λόχμαι, κῆποι; Καὶ οὕτω θὰ ἐξακολουθῇ: Καὶ πᾶσα οἰκογένεια εἰς τὴν γειτονίαν, καὶ εἰς τὴν συνοικίαν καὶ εἰς τὴν πόλιν εἶχαν ἀπὸ δύο ἕως 5 τρία κορίτσια. Μερικαὶ εἶχον τέσσαρα, ἄλλαι πέντε. Μία μητέρα εἶχεν ἑξ θυγατέρας χωρὶς κανένα υἱόν, ἄλλη μία εἶχεν ἑπτὰ κ' ἓνα υἱόν, ὃ ὁποῖος ἐφαίνετο προωρισμένος νὰ φανῇ ἀ- 10 χρηστος.

Λοιπὸν ὅλοι αὐτοὶ οἱ γονεῖς, ὅλα τὰ ἀνδρόγυνα, ὅλαι αἱ χῆραι, ἀνάγκη πᾶσα καὶ 15 χρέος ἀπαραίτητον, νὰ ὑπανδρεύσουν ὅλας αὐτὰς τὰς κόρας - καὶ τὰς πέντε, καὶ τὰς ἑξ, καὶ τὰς ἑπτὰ! Καὶ νὰ δώσουν εἰς ὅλας προῖκα. Πᾶσα πτωχὴ οἰκογένεια, πᾶσα μήτηρ χήρα, 20 μὲ δύο στρέμματα ἀγρούς, μ' ἓνα πενιχρὸν οἰκίσκον, ταλαιπωρουμένη, ξενοδουλεύουσα—εἴτε κολλήγισα ἄλλων εὐπορωτέρων οἰκογενειῶν εἰς τὰ κτήματα, εἰς τὰς συκάς καὶ τὰς μορέας— 25 συλλέγουσα φύλλα, παράγουσα ὀλίγην μέταξαν—ἢ τρέφουσα δύο ἢ τρεῖς αἴγας ἢ ἀμνάδας— γινομένη κακὴ μὲ ὅλους τοὺς γείτονας, πληρώνουσα πρόστιμα διὰ μικρὰς ζημίας— φορολογουμένη ἀσπλάγχχνως, τρώγουσα κριθι- 30 νον ἄρτον ποτισμένον μὲ ἰδρώτα ἄλμυρον— ὠφείλει ἐξ ἁπαντος «ν' ἀποκαταστήσῃ» ὅλα τὰ θήλα ταῦτα, καὶ νὰ δώσῃ πέντε, ἑξ, ἢ ἑπτὰ προῖκας! Ὡ Θεέ μου!

Καὶ ὁποῖας προῖκας, κατὰ τὰ νησιωτικὰ ἔθιμα. «Σπίτι στὰ Κοτρώνια, ἀμπέλι στὴν Ἀμμουδιά, ἑλκῶνα στὸ Λεχοῦνι, χωράφι στὸ 35 Στροφιλιὰ». Ἀλλὰ κατὰ τοὺς τελευταίους χρόνους, περὶ τὰ μέσα τοῦ αἰῶνος, εἶχε κολλήσει καὶ ἄλλη ψώρα. Τὸ «μέτρημα», ἐκεῖνο τὸ ὁποῖον εἰς Κωνσταντινούπολιν ὠνομάζετο «τράχωμα», συνήθειαν τὴν ὁποίαν, ἂν δὲν 40 ἀπατῶμαι, εἶχεν ἀφορίσει ἡ Μεγάλῃ Ἐκκλησία. Ὡφείλειν ἕκαστος νὰ δώσῃ καὶ μετρητὴν προῖκα. Δισχιλίας, χιλίας, πεντακοσίας, ἀδιάφορον. Ἀλλως, ὥς εἶχε τὰς κόρας του νὰ τὰς 45 καμαρώνῃ. Ἀς τὰς ἔβαζε στὸ ῥάφι. Ἀς τὰς ἔκλειε στὸ δουλάπι. Ἀς τὰς ἔστελνε στὸ Μουσεῖον.

Δ'.

Ἔως ἐδῶ εἶχον φθάσει αἱ ἀναμνήσεις καὶ 45 οἱ λογισμοὶ τῆς ἀγρυπνουμένης γυναικός. Ἐλάλησε τὸ δεύτερον ὃ πετεινός. Θὰ εἶχαν περάσει δύο μετὰ τὰ μεσάνυχτα. Ἰανουάριος ὁ μῆν. Χρόνος ἡ νύκτα. Βορρᾶς ἐφύσα. Ἡ φωτιὰ εἰς τὴν ἐστίαν ἔσβυνε. Ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ ἡσιθάνθη 50 ῥίγος εἰς τὴν ῥάχιν, καὶ παγωμένους τοὺς πό-

δας τῆς. Ἦθελε νὰ σηκωθῇ νὰ φέρῃ ὀλίγα 55 ξύλα ἔξω ἀπὸ τὸν πρόδομον, διὰ νὰ τὰ ρίψῃ εἰς τὴν ἐστίαν, νὰ ξανάψῃ τὸ πῦρ. Ἀλλ' ἡγοπόρει καὶ ἡσιθάνετο μικρὰν νάρκην, ἴσως τὸ πρῶτον σύμπτωμα τοῦ εἰσβάλλοντος ὕπνου.

Τὴν στιγμὴν ἐκείνην, τόσον παράωρα, ἐνῶ 60 εἶχε κλειστὰ τὰ ὄμματα, ἐκρούσθη παραδόξως ἔξωθεν ἡ θύρα. Ἡ γυνὴ ἐξαφνίσθη. Δὲν ἤθελε νὰ φωνάξῃ «ποιὸς εἶνε,» διὰ νὰ μὴν ἐσυπνήσῃ τὴν λεγῶ, ἀλλ' ἀπετίναξε τὴν νάρκην τῆς, διακοπεῖσαν ἤδη ἀποτόμως διὰ τοῦ κρότου 65 τῆς θύρας τὸν ὁποῖον εἶχεν ἀκούσει, ἐσηκώθη σιγὰ, ἐξῆλθε τοῦ θαλάμου. Πρὶν φθάσῃ εἰς τὴν ἔξω θύραν, ἤκουσε διακριτικὴν, ψίθυρον φωνήν·

— Μάνα!

Ἀνεγνώρισε τὴν φωνὴν τῆς Ἀμέρσας. Ἦτο 70 ἡ δευτερότοκος κόρη τῆς.

— Τί ἐπαθες, ἀρή;... Τί σοῦ ἤρθε, τέτοια 75 ὦρα;

Καὶ ἤνοιξε τὴν θύραν.

— Μάνα, ἐπανέλαβε μετ' ἀσθμαινούσης φωνῆς ἡ Ἀμέρσα. Τί κάνει τὸ κορίτσι;... μὴν 80 πέθανε;

— Ὅχι... κοιμάται· τώρα ἡσύχασε, εἶπεν 85 ἡ γυνὴ. Πῶς σοῦ ἤρθε;

— Εἶδα στὸν ὕπνο μου πῶς πέθανε, εἶπε 90 μὲ πάλλουσαν ἀκόμη φωνὴν ἡ ὑψηλὴ γεροντοκόρη.

— Ἀμμ' σὰν εἶχε πεθάνῃ; τάχα τί; εἶπε 95 κυνικῶς ἡ γυνὴ... Κ' ἐσηκώθη... κ' ἤρθε νὰ ἰδῇ;

Ἡ οἰκία τῆς Γιαννοῦς, ὅπου αὕτη συνήθως 85 ἔκατοίκει μετὰ τῶν δύο ἀγάμων θυγατέρων τῆς— καθότι προσωρινῶς τώρα διενυκτέρευε πλησίον τῆς λεχοῦς— ἔκειτο ὀλίγας δεκάδας βηγμάτων βορεινότερα, παρέκει. Αὕτῃ ἡ οἰκία τῆς Δελχαρῶς εἶχε δοθῇ προικῶς εἰς ταύτην, ἦτο 90 δὲ αὕτῃ ἡ παλαιὰ οἰκία, ἡ κτισθεῖσα ἀπὸ τὰς οἰκονομίας τῆς Χαδοῦλας, καὶ ἀπὸ τὸν πρῶτον πυρῆνα τὸν ὁποῖον εἶχε σχηματίσει ἀπὸ τὸ κομπόδεμα τῶν δεινῶν γονέων τῆς. Ὑστερον, ὀλίγα ἔτη μετὰ τὸν γάμον τῆς Δελχαρῶς, εἶχε κατορθώσει ἡ μήτηρ τῆς ν' ἀποκτήσῃ καὶ δευτέραν φωλεάν, μικροτέραν καὶ ἀ- 95 θλιεστέραν τῆς πρώτης, εἰς τὴν αὐτὴν συνοικίαν. Δύο ἢ τρεῖς οἰκαὶ ἐχώριζον τὴν δευτέραν ἀπὸ τῆς πρώτης.

Ἀπὸ ἐκείνην λοιπὸν τὴν νεόκτιστον οἰκίαν 100 εἶχεν ἔλθῃ τόσον παράωρα ἡ Ἀμέρσα, ἥτις δὲν ἐφοβεῖτο τὰ στοιχεῖα τὴν νύκτα, ἦτο δὲ τολμηρὰ καὶ ἀποφασιστικὴ κόρη.

- Κ' ἐσηκώθης;... κ' ἦρθες νὰ ἰδῇς;
 — Ξαφνίστηκα μέσ' τὸν ὕπνο μου, μανούλα.
 Εἶδα πῶς πέθανε τὸ κορίτσι, καὶ πῶς ἐσὺ εἶ-
 χες ἓνα μαῦρο σημάδι στὸ χέρι σου.
 5 — Μαῦρο σημάδι;.
 — Ἦθελες, τάχα, νὰ σαβανώσης τὸ κορίτσι.
 Καὶ τὴν ὥρα ποῦ τὸ σαβάνωνες, μαύρισε τὸ
 χέρι σου... καὶ πῶς ἔβαλες, τάχα, τὸ χέρι σου
 στὴ φωτιά, γιὰ νὰ ξεμαυρίση.
 10 — Μπα! ἀλαφροίσκιωτη! εἶπεν ἡ γραῖα Χα-
 δούλα:.. Κ' ἔκαμες κούτουράδα, κ' ἦρθες, τέ-
 τοιαν ὥρα...
 — Δὲν μποροῦσα νὰ ἡσυχάσω, μάνα.
 — Καὶ δὲ σ' ἐννοιωσε τὸ Κρινιώ, ποῦ ἔ-
 15 φυγες;
 — Ὅχι· κοιμᾶται.
 — Κι' ἄν' ξυπνήσῃ, κ' ἰδῇ νὰ λείπῃς ἀπὸ
 κοντά της, πῶς θὰ τῆς φανῇ; .. Δὲ θὰ βάλῃ
 τῆς φωνές; .. Θὰ τρελλαθῇ, τὸ κορίτσι!
 20 Αἱ δύο ἀδελφαὶ ἐκοιμῶντο τῷ ὄντι μόναι
 εἰς τὴν μικρὰν οἰκίαν. Ἡ Ἀμέρσα ἦτο ἀφο-
 βοσ, κ' ἐνέπνεε πεποϊθήσιν, ὡς νὰ ἦτο ἀνῆρ.
 Ὁ πατὴρ των εἶχεν ἀποθάνῃ πρὸ πολλοῦ, οἱ
 δὲ ἐπιζῶντες υἱοὶ διαρκῶς ἔλειπον εἰς τὰ ξένα.
 25 — Πᾶν ἴσιω, μάνα, εἶπεν ἡ Ἀμέρσα...
 Ἀλήθεια, δὲν ἐσυλλογίστηκα πῶς μπορεῖ νὰ
 ξυπνήσῃ τὸ Κρινιώ, αὐτὴν τὴν ὥρα, νὰ τρο-
 μάξῃ, ποῦ θὰ λείτω.
 — Μποροῦσες νὰ μείνης κ' ἐδῶ, εἶπεν ἡ
 30 μητέρα· μόνο, μὴ ξυπνήσῃ ἀξαφνα τὸ Κρινιώ,
 καὶ πάρῃ φόβο.
 Ἡ Ἀμέρσα ἐκοντοστάθη πρὸς στιγμὴν.
 — Μάνα, εἶπε, θέλεις νὰ καθίσω ἐγὼ ἐδῶ,
 νὰ πᾶς ἐσὺ στὸ σπíti;... γιὰ νὰ ξεκουραστῇς,
 35 νὰ ἡσυχάσῃς.
 — Ὅχι, εἶπεν, ἀφοῦ ἐσκέφθῃ πρὸς στιγμὴν
 ἡ γραῖα. Τώρα, κ' ἡ νύχτα αὐτὴ πέρασε. Αὖ-
 ριο βράδυ, πηγαίνω ἐγὼ στὸ σπíti, καὶ κάθε-
 σαι σὺ ἐδῶ. Μόνο, τώρα πῆγαινε. Καλὸ ξημέ-
 40 ρωμα!
 Ὁλος ὁ διάλογος ἐγένετο εἰς μικρὸν, στενὸν
 πρόδομον, κατέμπροσθιν τοῦ θαλαμίσκου, ὅπου
 ἠκούοντο ἡχηροὶ καὶ πολύχορδοι οἱ ῥογχαλι-
 σμοὶ τοῦ Κωνσταντῆ. Ἡ Ἀμέρσα, ἥτις εἶχεν
 45 ἔλθῃ ξυπόλυτη, μ' ἐλαφρότατον, ἀσποφον βῆμα,
 ἐξῆλθε, καὶ ἡ μήτηρ της ἐκλείδωσεν ἔσωθιν
 τὴν θύραν.
 Ἡ Ἀμέρσα ἔφυγε τρέχουσα. Αὐτὴ νὰ φο-
 βηθῇ τὰ στοιχεῖα, ἥτις δὲν εἶχε φοβηθῇ τὸν
 50 ἀδελφόν της τὸν Μῆτρον, τὸν κινῶς καλού-
 μενον Μῶρον ἢ Μοῦρον ἢ Μοῦτρον — τὸν
 σκιᾶν ἐκείνον, τὸν τρίτον υἱὸν τῆς μητρός της,

τὸν ὁποῖον ἡ τεκοῦσα ὠνόμαζε συνήθως «τὸ
 σκυλὶ τ' Ἀγαρηνό!» — τὸν κατὰ τρία ἔτη με-
 γαλειότερον ἀδελφόν της, ὅστις τὴν εἶχε μαχαι- 55
 ρώσει ἤδη ἀπαξ — ἀλλ' αὐτὴ τὸν εἶχε σώσει,
 μὴ θέλουσα νὰ τὸν παραδόσῃ εἰς τὴν ἐξου-
 σίαν — καὶ θὰ τὴν ἐμαχαίρωνε βεβαίως καὶ
 δευτέραν φορὰν, ἐὰν ἔμεινεν ἐκτότε ἐλεύθερος.
 Εὐτυχῶς, εἶχεν ἄλλου ἐξασκήσει τὰς φονικὰς 60
 ὁρμάς του, ἐν τῷ μεταξὺ, καὶ εἶχε κλεισθῇ ἐγ-
 καίρως εἰς τὰς Βενετικὰς εἰρκτὰς τοῦ παλαιοῦ
 φρουρίου, εἰς τὴν Χαλκίδα.

Ἴδου πῶς συνέβη τὸ πρᾶγμα. Ὁ Μῶρος ἢ
 Μοῦρος ἦτο φύσει ὁρμητικὸς καὶ παράφορος, 65
 ἂν καὶ εἶχε πολὺ δεξιόν, θηλυκὸν νοῦν, ὅπως
 ἔλεγεν ἡ μάνα του — νοῦν ὁ ὁποῖος ἐγέννα.
 Παιδιόθεν ἦτο ἱκανὸς μόνος του, νὰ πλάττῃ,
 αὐτοδίδακτος, πολλὰ ὥραϊα μικρὰ πράγματα·
 καραβάκια, προσωπίδας, ἀγαλμάτια, κούκλες 70
 καὶ ἄλλα ἀκόμη. Ἦτο σκιᾶς τῆς γειτονίας, ὁ
 σημαυφόρος ὅλων τῶν μαγκῶν, καὶ εἶχεν εἰς
 τοὺς ὁρισμούς του ὅλους τοὺς ἀγυιόπαιδας,
 ὅλα τὰ ξυπόλητα τοῦ δρόμου. Εἶχε συνειθίσει
 75 ἐνωρίς τὴν μέθην καὶ τὴν ἀσωτίαν, ἐξετέλει θο-
 ρυβάδεις παιδιὰς, διαδηλώσεις, παιδικὰς ὀχλα-
 γωγίας, μαζὺ μὲ τοὺς μικροὺς φίλους του ἐπρο-
 κάλει καυγάδες εἰς τὸν δρόμον, ἐπετροβόλει
 ὅσους συνήντα γέροντας καὶ γραῖας, ὅσους πτω-
 80 χοὺς καὶ ἀδυνάτους. Δὲν ἀφίγηε σχεδὸν κανένα
 ἀνθρώπον ἀτείσκτον.

Εἶχε κλέψει μὲ τὸ μάτι, ἀπὸ ἓνα διαβατι-
 κὸν μαχαιροποιὸν, τὴν τέχνην του. Ἐπροσπάθει
 ἀτελῶς νὰ κατασκευάζῃ μαχαίρια. Εἶχε μέγαν 85
 τροχὸν εἰς τὴν αὐλήν, τὴν σκεπαστὴν ἀπὸ τὸ
 μέγα χαγιάτι, καὶ τὸ κατώγι τῆς οἰκίας σχεδὸν
 τὸ εἶχε μεταβάλλῃ εἰς ἐργοστάσιον — κ' ἐτρόχι-
 ζεν ὅλα τὰ μαχαίρια καὶ τοὺς ξυραφάδες τῶν
 ἀγυιόπαιδων, καὶ ὅταν δὲν εἶχεν ἄλλα νὰ τρο-
 χίσῃ, ἐτρόχιζε τὸ ἰδικόν του. Ἐφιλοτιμεῖτο νὰ 90
 τὸ κάμῃ δίκυπον, ἂν καὶ ἐξ ἀρχῆς δὲν ἦτον
 οὕτω σχεδιασμένον. Προσέτι ἐδοκίμαζε νὰ κατα-
 σκευάζῃ κουμποῦρες, πιστόλια, μικρὰ κανονά-
 κια, καὶ ἄλλα φονικὰ ὄργανα. Ὅλα τὰ λεπτά, 95
 ὅσα ἐκέρδιζεν ἀπὸ τῆς κούκλες, τ' ἀγαλμάτια
 καὶ τὰς προσωπίδας, καὶ δὲν τὰ ἔπινε, τὰ ἠγό-
 ραζε πυρίτιδα. Καὶ ὁ ἴδιος εἶχε δοκιμάσει νὰ
 κατασκευάζῃ ἐν τοιοῦτον προῖόν. Τὰς ἡμέρας
 τοῦ Πάσχα, καὶ δύο ἐβδομάδας ἀκόμη ὀψιμώ-
 100 τερα, ἦτο φόβος καὶ τρόμος νὰ τολμήσῃ τις
 νὰ περάσῃ ἀπὸ τὴν γειτονίαν, εἰς τὴν ὁποίαν
 ἐβασίλευε διὰ τοῦ τρόμου ὁ Μοῦτρος. Οἱ πι-
 στολισμοὶ ἔπιπτον ἀδιάλειπτοι.

Μίαν Κυριακὴν, ὁ Μοῦρος μεθυμένος εἶχε

κάμη παραπολλὰς ἀταξίας εἰς τὸν δρόμον. Δύο
χωροφύλακες, ἀκούσαντες τὰ παράπονα πολλῶν
ἀνθρώπων, τὸν ἐκυνήγησαν διὰ νὰ τὸν πιά-
σουν, καὶ τὸν πάρουν «μέσα» ἢ «στὴν Κα-
ζάρμα». Ἄλλ' ὁ Μῶρος, λίαν εὐκίνητος, τοὺς
ἔφυγεν, ἐγύρισε καὶ τοὺς ἐμυκτήρισε μακρόθεν,
καὶ πάλιν τραπείς εἰς φυγὴν, ἐκρύβη εἰς μέρος
ἀπρόσιτον — εἰς τὸ μέσα μέρος τοῦ ὑποστέγου
ταρσανᾶ ἐνὸς ναυπηγοῦ, ἐξαδέλφου του. Εἶτα,
ἐπειδὴ οἱ δύο ἄνδρες παρήτησαν τὴν καταδίω-
ξιν, ἀνέλαβε θάρρος κ' ἐξῆλθεν εἰς τὸν δρό-
μον.

Τὴν ἡμέραν ἐκείνην, ὁ Μῶρος, ἐπειδὴ δὲν
εἶχε ξεμεθύσει ἀκόμα, κατήντησε νὰ κυνηγήσῃ
εἰς τὸν δρόμον καὶ τὴν ἰδίαν μητέρα του, ἀπει-
λῶν νὰ τὴν σφάξῃ. Παρεπονείτο ὅτι ἡ γραῖα
τοῦ εἶχε κλέψει λεπτὰ ἀπὸ τὴν τσέπην. Τὴν
ἔφθασεν εἰς τὴν αὐλὴν τῆς οἰκίας, ὅπου ἔτρε-
χεν αὐτὴ διὰ νὰ κρυφθῇ, τὴν ἄρπαξεν ἀπὸ τὰ
μαλλιά, καὶ τὴν ἔσυρεν ἐπὶ τοῦ ἐδάφους τῆς
ὁδοῦ, εἰς διάστημα πενήντα βημάτων.

Αὕτῃ εἶχε βάλῃ τὰς φωνάς, κ' ἐξῆλθον οἱ
γειτονες. Ἦτον ὥρα ἐσπερινοῦ, μικρὸν πρὸ τῆς
δύσεως τοῦ ἡλίου. Εἰς τὰς φωνάς τῶν γειτό-
νων, ἔφθασαν οἱ δύο χωροφύλακες, οἵτινες ἀπὸ
πρὶν κατεζήτουν τὸν Μοῦρον, καὶ μόνον κατὰ
τὸ φαινόμενον εἶχον παραιτήσει τὸ κυνήγημα —
ἐξ ἐναντίας μάλιστα ἦσαν λίαν ἐξωργισμένοι ἐ-
ναντίον τοῦ ταρσίου. Ὁ Μοῦρος, ἅμα τοὺς εἶ-
δεν, ἄφησε τὴν μητέρα του κ' ἐτράπη εἰς φυ-
γὴν. Ἐτρεξε νὰ κρυφθῇ εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν, ἐξ ἀνάγ-
κης, ἐπειδὴ εὐρέθη «στὰ στενὰ», καὶ δὲν ἔβλε-
πεν ἄλλο ἄσυλον πλεον μακρυσμένον ἄλλ' ἀσφα-
λέστερον.

Ἡ γραῖα, ἅμα ἐσηκώθη, καταμωλωπισμένη,
πλήρης κονιορτοῦ, εἶδε τοὺς χωροφύλακας, κί-
ᾳρχισε νὰ τοὺς ἱκετεύῃ.

— Ἀφήστε τον, παιδιά! Παλαβὸς εἶνε, δὲν
εἶνε τίποτε. Μὴν τονε σκοτώνετε, παιδιά, μὲ
τὸ καμτοί!

Τοῦτο εἶπε διότι εἶδε τὸν ἕνα χωροφύλακα
ἐξηγριωμένον, κρατοῦντα εἰς τὴν χεῖρα φοβε-
ρὸν μαστίγιον. Οἱ δύο ἄνδρες δὲν ἔδωκαν
προσοχὴν εἰς τὰς ἱκεσίας τῆς, ἀλλ' ἐξηκολού-
θησαν νὰ τρέχουν πρὸς καταδίωξιν τοῦ Μῶ-
ρου. Παρεβίασαν τὸ ἄσυλον, τὸ κατῶγι τῆς
οἰκίας, ὅπου εἶχε τὸ ἐργοστάσιόν του ὁ Μῶ-
ρος. Ἐκεῖ εἶχε τρέξει διὰ νὰ κρυφθῇ, καὶ μό-
λις ἐπρόφθασε νὰ μανδαλώσῃ τὴν θύραν. Ἄλλ'
ἢ σάνις ἦτο ὑπόσαθρος, κακῶς προσαρμοζο-
μένη, καὶ ὁ Μῶρος δὲν εἶχεν ἀγαπήσει τὰς
εἰρηνικὰς τέχνας διὰ νὰ φροντίσῃ νὰ τὴν δι-
ορθώσῃ. Ἐκεῖνοι ἔσπασαν τὸν μικρὸν σύρτην
καὶ εἰσῆλθον.

Ὁ Μοῦρος ταχὺς ὡς αἴλουρος ἀνερριχήθη
εἰς τὴν κλαβανὴν, εἰς τὸ πάτωμα. Ἡ κλαβανὴ
ἦτο σιμὰ εἰς τὸν βόρειον τοῖχον, ὁ δὲ βόρειος
τοῖχος ἦτο ἐν μέρει θεμελιωμένος εἰς τὸν βρά-
χον, ὁ βράχος ἐξεῖχε, καὶ παρείχε πάτημα εἰς
τοὺς πόδας τοῦ Μῶρου τοὺς γοργοὺς, καὶ ἄλ-
λας ἐσοχὰς ἐπὶ τοῦ τοίχου εἶχε σκάψει ὁ ἴδιος
κατὰ καιρούς, διὰ μόνων τῶν ποδῶν του.
Ἐπειδὴ φαίνεται ὅτι συνείθιζε πολὺ συχνὰ τὸ
εἶδος τοῦτο τῆς γυμναστικῆς.

Ἡ σάνις τῆς καταρρακτῆς ἦτο κλειστή. Ὁ
Μῶρος τὴν ἤνοιξε μὲ ἕνα κτύπον τῆς κεφα-
λῆς του καὶ μὲ μίαν προσπάθειαν τοῦ ἀριστε-
ροῦ του βραχίονος. Εἶτα ὡς ὁ κολυμβητής,
ὁ ἀναδυόμενος ἐκ τοῦ κύματος, ἐπήδησεν
ἐπάνω εἰς τὸ πάτωμα, ἔκλεισε μετὰ κρότου τὴν
κλαβανὴν, κ' ἐφάνη ὅτι ἔθεσεν ἐν βάρους, ἴσως
μικρὰν τινα κασσέλαν, ἐπὶ τῆς σανίδος.

Οἱ δύο χωροφύλακες, ἐν ὁργῇ καὶ μὲ πολ-
λὰς βλασφημίας, ἤρχισαν νὰ ψάχνουν εἰς τὸ
ισόγειον. Κατέσχον ὅσα μαχαίρια καὶ κουμ-
πούρια εὗρον ἐκεῖ, ὅπως καὶ τὸν τροχόν, καὶ
δύο ἄλλας μικρὰς ἀκόντας καὶ ἠτοιμάζοντο νὰ
ἐξέλθουν ἴσως διὰ νὰ φύγουν, ἴσως καὶ διὰ
ν' ἀνέλθουν ἐπάνω εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν.

Ἔπεται συνέχεια

Α. ΠΑΠΑΔΙΑΜΑΝΤΗΣ



- γλυκόγελο ἀπὸ τέτοιον ἐραστή ἐφιλήθη,
 τοῦτος, ὁποῦ ἀπ' ἐμὲ ποτὲ δὲ θὰ χωρίσῃ,
 136 ὅλος τρεμάμενος μοῦ φίλησε τὸ στόμα.
 Γαλεότος τὸ βιβλίον καὶ ὅπου τῷ χειρὶ γράψῃ.
 Τῇ μέρᾳ ἐκείνῃ πλὴν δὲν ἐδιαβάσαμ' ἄλλο.»
 139 Στὸ μεταξὺ ποῦ τὸ 'να πνεῦμα ἔλεγε τοῦτο,
 τὸ ἄλλο ἔκανε τόσο κλάμα ποῦ ἀπὸ σπλάχνος
 λιγοθύμησα ἐγὼ σὰ νάχα νὰ πεθάνω,
 142 κ' ἔπεσα ὡς πέφτει χάμου πεθαμένο σῶμα.

ΓΕΩΡΓΙΟΣ ΚΑΛΟΣΓΟΥΡΟΣ

Η Φ Ο Ν Ι Σ Σ Α *

- Ὁ Μοῦτρος ἢ Μοῦρτος, ἐπάνω στὸ πάτωμα, ἦτον πλήρης ὀργῆς, μεθύων ἀκόμη, καὶ ἀφρισμένος. Ἐφύσα ἀπὸ μανίαν καὶ λύσσαν. Ἐκεῖ ἐπάνω εὐρέθη μόνη ἡ ἀδελφή του ἢ Ἀμέρσα, παιδίσκη δεκαεπτὰ ἐτῶν τότε, ἥτις ἐτρόμαξεν ἅμα τὸν εἶδε ν' ἀναρριχᾶται εἰς τὴν κλαβανὴν μὲ τοιοῦτον ἀλλόκοτον τρόπον. Εἶχεν ἀκούσει κάτω τὰ βήματα καὶ τὰς βλασφημίας τῶν δύο χωροφυλάκων. Ἐκυψεν εἰς μικρὰν σχισμάδα, μεταξὺ δύο σανίδων τοῦ κακῶς ἡρμοσμένου πατώματος, ἢ εἰς ἓνα ῥῶζον μιᾶς σανίδος, χάσκοντα, κενόν, καὶ εἶδε κάτω τοὺς δύο ἀνθρώπους τῆς ἐξουσίας, εἰς τὸ φῶς τὸ εἰσδύον διὰ τῆς θύρας τοῦ κατωγείου τὴν ὁποίαν εἶχον ἀνοίξει ἐκεῖνοι.
- Μωρή! σ' ἔφαγα... τῶρα θὰ πῶ τὸ αἱμά σου! ἔκραζεν ὁ Μοῦτρος, μὴ ἔχων ποῦ ἄλλοῦ νὰ ξεθυμάνῃ, καὶ ἀπειλῶν ἄνευ αἰτίας τὴν ἀδελφήν του.
- Σιώπα!... σιώπα! ἐπιθύρῃσεν ἡ Ἀμέρσα. Πῶ πῶ, Θεέ μου! Δύο «ταχτικοί»! κάτω στὸ κατῶ... ψάχνουν... ψάχνουν... Τί γυρεύουν;
- Ἐβλεπε τοὺς δύο χωροφύλακας ν' ἀποκομίζουν τὰ μικρά, ἄξεστα ὄπλα, τὰ ἔργα τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ τῆς, ὡς καὶ τὸν τροχὸν καὶ τὰς ἀκόνας. Εἶτα αἶφνης τοὺς εἶδε νὰ κύπτουν πρὸς τὴν γωνίαν, ὅπου ἴστατο ὁ ὑφαντικὸς ἱστός τῆς μητρὸς τῆς, καὶ εἶδε τὸν ἓνα χωροφύλακα νὰ λαμβάνῃ εἰς τὰς χεῖράς του τὴν σαίτταν ἢ κερκίδα, ἥτις θὰ τοῦ ἐφάνῃ ἴσως καὶ αὐτὴ ὡς ὄπλον — ἀφοῦ μάλιστα καλεῖται καὶ σαίττα. Ὁ ἄλλος ἐδοκίμασε ν' ἀποσπάσῃ ἀπὸ τὸν ἐργαλεῖον τὸ ἀντίον, τὸ μέγα κυλινδροειδὲς ξύλον, περὶ τὸ ὁποῖον τυλίγεται τὸ νεοῦφαντον πανίον. Ἰσως δὲν εἶχεν ἰδεῖ παρόμοιον πρᾶγμα εἰς τὴν ζωὴν του, κ' ἐφαντάζετο ὅτι καὶ αὐτὸ ἴσως θὰ ἦτο καλὸν διὰ νὰ χρησιμεύσῃ ὡς ὄπλον.
- Ἡ Ἀμέρσα, ἰδοῦσα, ἀφῆκε κραυγὴν πεπνιγμένην. Ἡθέλησε νὰ φωνάξῃ ν' ἀφήσουν τὸ ἀντὶ καὶ τὴν σαίττα, ἀλλ' ὁ ἥχος ἐξέπνευσεν εἰς τὸ στόμα τῆς.
- Σκάσε, μωρή! ἔγρυξεν ὁ Μοῦρτος. Τί λογιάζεις; Τί γλέπεις καὶ γελᾷς;
- Ὁ Μοῦρτος, ἐν τῇ μέθῃ του, εἶχεν ἐκλάβῃ ὡς γέλωτα τὴν ἀναρτορὸν ἐκείνην κραυγὴν τῆς ἀδελφῆς του.
- Μετ' ὀλίγα λεπτά, οἱ δύο χωροφύλακες, ἀφοῦ ἔρριψαν τελευταῖον βλέμμα πρὸς τὴν κλαβανὴν — τὴν ὁποίαν εἶχον ἰδεῖ νὰ κλείεται ἀκριβῶς καθ' ἣν στιγμὴν εἰσῆρχοντο εἰς τὸ ἱσόγειον — ἐξῆλθον. Ἡ Ἀμέρσα ἀνεσηκώθη. Τῆς ἐφάνη ὅτι ἤκουσε τριγμὸν εἰς τὸ κάτω σκα-

137. Στὸ μυθιστόρημα ποῦ ἐδιάβαζαν, Γαλεότος (Gallehaull) ἦταν τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ μοσιτῆ στὸν ἔρωτα τοῦ Λατοῦότου καὶ τῆς Γινέβρας. Ὁ ποιητὴς θέλει νὰ πῇ· Τὸ βιβλίον κ' ἐκεῖνος ποῦ τὸ γράφει ἐστάθησαν γιὰ μᾶς ὁ Γαλεότος (= ὁ μοσιτῆς) τῆς ἀγάπης μας

* Ἴδε σελ. 238.

λοπάτι τῆς ἐξωτερικῆς σκάλας, ἥτις ἦτο ξυ-
λίνη, σκεπαστή ὑπὸ τὸ εὐρύχωρον χαγιάτι, τὸ
ὑπόστεγον. Ἐτρεξε πρὸς τὴν θύραν.

Ἐφαντάσθη ὅτι οἱ δύο «ταχτικοί», ὅπως
τοὺς ὠνόμαζεν, ἀνέβαινον τὴν σκάλαν, καὶ
ἴσως θὰ παρεβίαζον καὶ τὴν θύραν τῆς οἰ-
κίας. Ἐκυψεν εἰς τὴν κλειδότηρυν, κ' ἐπροσ-
ποιήθη νὰ ἴδῃ κ' ἐννοήσῃ τὰ συμβαίνοντα
διὰ τῆς μικρᾶς ὀπῆς. Ἐπειδὴ τὸ μόνον παρά-
θυρον τῆς προσόψεως ἦτο κλεισμένον, καὶ δὲν
εἶχεν ἄλλο μέσον διὰ νὰ ἴδῃ.

Ὁ Μοῦρος βλέπων τὴν Ἀμέρσαν νὰ τρέχῃ
πρὸς τὴν θύραν, ἐφαντάσθη, ἐν τῷ παραλογι-
σμῷ τῆς μέθης του, ὅτι ἡ ἀδελφή του ἤθελε
ν' ἀνοίξῃ τὴν θύραν καὶ τὸν παραδώσῃ εἰς
τοὺς χωροφύλακας. Τότε, τυφλὸς ἐκ μανίας,
ἔσυρεν ὀπισθεν, ἀπὸ τὰ νῶτα τῆς ὀσφύος του,
τροχισμένην μάχαιραν, τὴν ὁποίαν εἶχε, καὶ ὀρ-
μήσας ἐκτύπησε τὴν ἀδελφήν του εἰς τὸ πλεν-
ρὸν ὀπισθεν, κατὰ τὴν δεξιὰν μασχάλην.

Ἀισθανθεῖσα τὸν ψυχρὸν σίδηρον, ἡ Ἀμέρσα
ἀφῆκε σπαρακτικὴν κραυγὴν.

Οἱ δύο χωροφύλακες δὲν εἶχον ἀκόμη ἀπο-
μακρυνθῆ, ἀλλ' εἶχαν κοντοσταθῆ ἔξω τῆς θύ-
ρας τοῦ ἰσογείου, ὡς νὰ ἐσυμβουλευόντο τί
νὰ κάμουν. Ἦκουσαν τὴν κραυγὴν ἐκείνην τοῦ
τρόμου, ἐκύτταξαν ἐπάνω, κ' ἔτρεξαν.

Τότε ἀνέβησαν μετὰ κρότου τὴν σκάλαν κ'
ἔφθασαν εἰς τὸ χαγιάτι. Ἔσεισαν βιαίως τὴν
θύραν.

— Ἐν ὀνόματι τοῦ Νόμου! Ἀνοίξατε!

Τὴν στιγμὴν ἐκείνην ἦλθεν εἰς τὸν ἕνα τῶν
χωροφυλάκων ἡ ὑπόνοια ὅτι ὁ ἐνοχος θὰ ἡδύ-
νατο ἴσως νὰ δρατετεύσῃ διὰ τῆς καταρρα-
κτῆς καὶ τοῦ ἰσογείου. Στραφεὶς εἰς τὸν δεύ-
τερον χωροφύλακα τοῦ λέγει.

— Ἐχε τὸν νοῦ σου, σὺ! Μὴ μας τὸ στρήψῃ
ἀπὸ κάτ' ἀπ' τὸ καταχυτό, ἀπ' τὴν καταρρή-
χωσι!... Κ' ὕστερις ποῦ νὰ τὸν χαλεύουμε;

— Τί κρένεις; εἶπεν ὁ δεύτερος, μὴ ἐννοή-
σας ἀμέσως.

— Αὐτὸ ποῦ σοῦ κρένω! ἐπέμενεν ὁ πρῶ-
τος... Κάμε κεῖνο ποῦ σὲ χουϊάζουνε!

Ὁ δεύτερος χωροφύλαξ, καίτοι νωθρὸς ὀλί-
γον, ἔτρεξε κάτω ὅσον ταχύτερα ἠμπόρεσε,
διὰ νὰ κλείσῃ τὴν θύραν τοῦ ἰσογείου, ἢ διὰ
νὰ παραμονεύσῃ. Ἀλλ' ἦτον ἤδη ἀργά. Ὁ Μοῦ-
ρος ἐν τῷ μεταξὺ εἶχεν ἀνοίξει τὴν κλαβανὴν,
ἀποσύρας τὴν μικρὰν κασσέλαν τὴν ὁποίαν εἶχε
βάλλῃ ἐπάνω της, καὶ εἶχε πηδήσει κάτω. Ἦ-
τον ὑπὲρ τὸ δύο μέτρα τὸ ὕψος, ἀλλ' ὁ Μοῦ-
ρος ἦτον ἐλαφρὸς, εὐκίνητος, κάτω δὲ τὸ ἔδα-

φος ἦτο στρωμένον μὲ πελεκούδια καὶ πρι-
νίδια, κ' ἔφθασε κάτω ὀρθίος καὶ ἀβλαβής.

Τρέχων ὡς ἄνεμος, ἀνέτρεψε τὸν χωροφύ-
λακα, ὅστις ἔπεσε βαρὺς ἔμπροσθεν τῆς ἐξ-
ωτερικῆς σκάλας, κ' ἔφυγεν, ὁ Μοῦρος, ὡς
ἀστραπή. Ἐτρεξεν ἐπάνω εἰς τὰ Κοτρώνια, εἰς
τὴν κατοικίαν τῶν γλανκῶν. Ἦτο βραχῶδης
λόφος ὑψούμενος ὑπεράνω, ἐκ τῶν νῶτων τῆς
οἰκίας, ὅπου εἴξευρεν ὅλα τὰ «κατατόπια» ὁ
Μοῦρος. Οὔτε κατῶρθωσέ τις ποτέ, χωροφύλαξ
ἢ ἄλλος νὰ τὸν συλλάβῃ.

Τὴν ὥραν ποῦ εἶχε πηδήσει ὁ Μοῦρος ἀπὸ
τὴν καταρρακτὴν, παραδόξως εἶχεν ἐνθυμηθῇ
— ἴσως διότι εἶχε ξεμεθύσει ἤδη ἀπὸ τὰ συμ-
βάντα, ἢ εἶχε «ξεμουστώσει» ὅπως θὰ ἔλεγεν
ὁ ἴδιος — εἶχεν ἐνθυμηθῇ, λέγω, ὅτι, ἀφοῦ ἐμα-
χαίρωσε τὴν ἀδελφήν του, ἡ μάχαιρα τοῦ ἔπε-
σεν ἀπὸ τὴν χεῖρα, καὶ ἔκειτο εἰς τὸ πάτωμα.
Τοῦτο συνέβη ἴσως διότι τοῦ εἶχον ἔλθει τύ-
ψις καὶ φόβος, τὴν στιγμὴν ἐκείνην — διὸ καὶ
ἐπιπολῆς μόνον εἶχε θίξει μὲ τὴν λεπίδα τὴν
σάρκα τῆς ἀδελφῆς του.

Καθὼς τοῦ ἦλθεν ἡ ἰδέα νὰ φύγῃ, κ' ἔτρεξε
ν' ἀνοίξῃ τὴν κλαβανὴν, ἐπειδὴ ἐνόησε πλέον
ὅτι οἱ χωροφύλακες ἀνέβαινον εἰς τὸ πάτωμα,
μὴ ἔχων καιρὸν νὰ ἐπανέλθῃ πρὸς τὸ μέρος
τῆς θύρας, διὰ νὰ κύψῃ καὶ ἀναλάβῃ τὴν μά-
χαιραν, ἔτοιμος νὰ πηδήσῃ κάτω, ἐφώναξε πρὸς
τὴν ἀδελφήν του.

— Τὸ «χαμπέρ», μωρή!... Κύτταξε νὰ
κρύψῃς κεῖνο τὸ «χαμπέρι»!

Τὴν ἔκφρασιν ταύνην ἐπροτίμησε, διὰ νὰ μὴ
ἀκούσουν οἱ χωροφύλακες τὸ ὁμοιοτέλεστον
«μαχαίρι». Κατὰ τὴν φοβερὰν στιγμὴν, παί-
σσης καὶ ἐνόχος, ἐπεκαλεῖτο τὴν φιλοσοφίαν
τῆς ἀδελφῆς του διὰ νὰ τὸν σώσῃ, καθότι
εἶχε πεποιθήσιν εἰς αὐτήν. Ἡ μάχαιρα θὰ ἦτο
αἱματωμένη, καὶ θὰ ἔβλεπον τὸ αἷμα οἱ διώ-
κται. Καὶ συνιστῶν τὴν ἀπόκρυψιν τοῦ ὀρ-
γάνου, ἤλπιζε τὴν ἀπόκρυψιν τοῦ ἐγκλήματος.

Τῷ ὄντι ἡ Ἀμέρσα, ἐνῷ τὸ αἷμα ἔρρεεν
ἤδη ἐκ τῆς πληγῆς της, βλέπουσα ὅτι ἐξ ἀπαν-
τος θὰ παρεβιάζετο ἡ θύρα, ἐκ παλαιᾶς λε-
πτῆς σανίδος, μ' ἐσκωριασμένους σύρτας καὶ
μάνδαλα, σχεδὸν λιποθυμοῦσα ἤδη, ἔκυψε καὶ
ἀνέλαβε τὴν μάχαιραν. Εἶτα ἐσύρθη μέχρι τῆς
γωνίας ὅπου ἦτο μικρὰ τέμπλα, ἥτοι σωρὸς
ἐκ διπλωμένων σινδόνων, προσκεφάλων καὶ
στρωμνῶν.

Ἐκρυψε τὴν αἱματωμένην μάχαιραν κάτω-
θεν ὄλου αὐτοῦ τοῦ σωροῦ τῶν ὀθονίων, ἐτυ-
λίχθη αὐτὴ μὲ παλαιόν, ἐμβλωμένον, ἀλλὰ

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καθαρόν πάπλωμα, κ' ἐκάθισεν ἀπάνω εἰς τὸν
χαμηλὸν σωρόν, ὅστις ἐβυθίσθη ἀκόμη χαμη-
λότερα. Ἐφερε τὴν ἀριστερὴν χεῖρα εἰς τὴν μα-
σχάλην της, κ' ἐπροσπάθει νὰ σταματήσῃ τὸ
5 αἷμα. Παραδόξως δὲν εἶχε δειλιάσει ὅταν εἶ-
χεν ἰδεῖ τὸ αἷμα, ἂν καὶ πρώτῃν φορὰν τῆς
συνέβαινε τὸ πάθημα. Τὸ ὅλον τῆς ἐφαίνετο
ὡς δνειρον. Μόνον ἔσφιγγε τοὺς ὀδόντας καὶ
ἠπόρει πῶς δὲν ἡσθιάνετο ἀκόμη πόνον. Ἀλλὰ
10 μετ' ὀλίγα δευτερόλεπτα, ἡσθιάνθη ὀξείαν ἀλ-
γηδὸνα.

Τὴν ἰδίαν στιγμὴν, ἡ θύρα ἐβυθίσθη πρὸς
τὰ ἔσω. Ὁ εἰς χωροφύλαξ εἰσεπήδησε μετὰ
κρότου εἰς τὸ πάτωμα.

15 Ἡ Ἀμέρσα δὲν ἀνεσήκωσε τὴν κεφαλὴν,
ἔκυπτε, καὶ ἦτο τυλιγμένη ἕως τὴν μύτην εἰς
τὸ πάπλωμα.

— Ποῦ εἶν' αὐτός, ὁ σκιᾶς; ἔκραξεν ἀπει-
λητικῶς ὁ χωροφύλαξ.

20 Ἡ Ἀμέρσα δὲν ἀπήντησεν.

Ὁ στρατιωτικὸς, ὅστις δὲν εἶχεν ἀντιληφθῇ
οὔτε τὴν φυγὴν τοῦ Μούρου, οὔτε τὴν ἀνα-
τροπὴν καὶ πτώσιν τοῦ ἰδίου συστρατιώτου του,
ἴσως διότι ἡ στιγμὴ ἐκείνη συνέπεσεν ἀκριβῶς
25 μὲ τὴν παραβίασιν τῆς θύρας, καὶ ὁ εἰς κρό-
τος ἔπνιγε καὶ ἐβῶβαινε τὸν ἄλλον, ἐξήτασεν
ὅλον τὸν πρόδρομον ὅπου εὗρίσκετο ἡ Ἀμέρσα,
εἶτα μετέβη δρομαίως εἰς τὸν χειμερινὸν θά-
λαμον, εἶτα εἰς τὸν θαλαμίσκον. Κανένα δὲν
30 εὔρε. Μόνον ἡ κλαβανὴ ἦτον ἀνοικτή.

Μετὰ μίαν στιγμὴν, ἀνήρχετο καὶ ὁ δεύτε-
ρος ὁμόσκηρός του.

— Τῶσπριψε;

— Τῶδωκε ἀπ' τὴν καταρρήχῳσι, χάμου...

35 — Καὶ τὸν ἐχοῦιάξες;... Δὲν τὸν ἐπρόκα-
μες;

— Ἐφαγα κατραπακιά!... Ἀ! μὰ φευ-
γάλα... Ἐφτὰ μῖλια τὴν ὥρα!...

40 — Ἀχ! ἔκαμεν ὁ πρῶτος χωροφύλαξ, κάμ-
πτων τὸν λιχανὸν τῆς δεξιᾶς χειρὸς, καὶ φέ-
ρων αὐτὸν εἰς τὸ στόμα, ὡς διὰ νὰ τὸν δαγ-
κάσῃ, μετὰ πείσματος βιαίου τῆς κεφαλῆς. Μᾶς
πρέπει γιὰ νὰ μᾶς τὰ ξηλώσουνε!

45 Ὁ δεύτερος χωροφύλαξ, θέλων νὰ κάμῃ τὸν
αὐστηρόν, ἀπέτεινε τὸν λόγον πρὸς τὴν κόρην.

— Γιὰ ποῦ τῶβαλε ὁ ἀδερφός σου, μωρή;
τῆς εἶπεν.

50 Ἡ Ἀμέρσα δὲν ἀπήντησε. Πλὴν μέσα της
μὲ ἀκουσίαν εἰρωνείαν ἴσως θὰ ἐψιδύρισε μὲ
ὅλον τὸν δεινὸν πόνον καὶ τὴν ἀγωνίαν ἣν
ἡσθιάνετο. «Ἐσὺ ξέρεις».

— Τί κάθесαι αὐτοῦ, κορίτσι μου; εἶπεν

ἡμερώτερος ὁ πρῶτος χωροφύλαξ. Μὴ σ' ἐχτύ-
πησε, τίποτα;

Ἡ Ἀμέρσα ἀνένευσε.

— Τ' εἶχε καὶ σ' ἐχάλευε;... Γύρευε νὰ
σὲ μαχαιρώσῃ;

— Γιατί φώναξες; προσέθηκεν ὁ δεύτερος.

60 Ἡ Ἀμέρσα ἀπήντησεν εἰς τὴν ἐρώτησιν
τοῦ πρώτου χωροφύλακος.

— Ὅχι!

— Ἀλήθεια, μὴ σ' ἐμαχαίρωσε; ἐπέμενεν ὁ
ἄνθρωπος.

Ἡ Ἀμέρσα, μὲ φυσικὴν ἐπιφώνησιν, εἶπεν.

— Ὁ ἀδελφός μου, θελὰ μὲ μαχαιρώσῃ!

65 — Γιατί κάθес' αὐτοῦ, τί ἔχεις; Εἴσαι ἄρ-
ρωστη;

— Ἐχῶ θέρμη!

70 Ἡ Ἀμέρσα δὲν εἶχε συλλογισθῇ ὅτι τὸ
πάτωμα, ἢ καὶ ἡ ψάθα, θὰ εἶχαν ἴσως κηλι-
δωθῇ μὲ αἷμα. Ἦδη εἶχε δύσει ὁ ἥλιος, καὶ
ἦτο ἀμφιλύκη ἐντὸς τῆς οἰκίας. Ἐκτὸς τούτου
τὸ μέρος ὅπου εἶχε πέσει ἡ αἱματωμένη μά-
χαιρα, εὗρίσκετο τὴν στιγμὴν ταύτην εἰς τὴν
σκιάν, ὅπισθεν τῆς μονοφύλλου θύρας, ἀνοι-
75 κτῆς κατὰ τὰ δύο τρίτα, καὶ φθανούσης μέχρι
τοῦ τοίχου, ὥστε οἱ δύο ἄνδρες δὲν εἶδον τὰς
κηλίδας τὰς ἐρυθράς.

— Γιατί εἶχες βάλει μιὰ φωνή; ἐπέμενεν ὁ
πρῶτος χωροφύλαξ.

— Εἶχα πόνον καὶ ζάλη, εἶπεν ἡ Ἀμέρσα.

Καὶ τὴν ἰδίαν στιγμὴν, ὡς διὰ νὰ ἐπικυ-
ρωθῇ ὁ λόγος της, τῆς ἦλθε πράγματι λιπο-
θυμία. Ἐκαμεν ὦχ! σφίγγουσα τοὺς ὀδόντας
κ' ἔκυψε κάτω. Οἱ δύο ἄνθρωποι τῆς ἐξουσίας,
85 συγκινηθέντες, ἐκνιτάχθησαν, καὶ ὁ πρῶτος
εἶπε.

— Μὰ, ποῦ εἶν' ἡ μάνα της;

90 Ὡς ὑπακούουσα εἰς τὴν πρόσκλησιν ταύ-
την, ἐφθασε τρέχουσα ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ.

— Νὰ ἐκεῖν' ἡ γρηά, ποῦ τὴν τράβηξ' ἀπ'
τὰ μαλλιά ὁ γυιὸς της, μέσ' τὸ σοκάκι! εἶπεν
ὁ δεύτερος χωροφύλαξ.

Εἶτα προσέθηκε:

95 — Δὲ μ' κρένεις, γερόντισσα, ποῦ εἶν' ὁ
γυιόκας σου;

Ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ δὲν ἀπήντησε κ' ἔτρεξε
πλησίον τῆς Ἀμέρσας. Ἦτο ἐπιτηδεῖα ἰατρίσσα,
καὶ ἦτο ἱκανὴ νὰ περιποιηθῇ τὴν κόρην της.

100 Ὅλα ταῦτα ἤρχοντο συχνὰ εἰς τὴν μνήμην
τῆς Ἀμέρσας, κ' ἐπανῆλθον ἀκόμη καὶ κατὰ
τὰς μακρὰς ὥρας, τῆς νυκτός, τὰς ἐσπερινὰς
καὶ ὀρθορίας, ὁπότε αὕτη ἔχανε τὸν ὕπνον της

εἰς τὸν οἰκίσκον, πλησίον τῆς κοιμωμένης Κρι-
νιῶς, τῆς μικρᾶς ἀδελφῆς, ἐνῶ ἡ μήτηρ των
ἀπυῦσα κατὰ τὰς αὐτὰς ὥρας ἡγρύπνει ἐπὶ
5 τὴν οἰκίαν τῆς ἄλλης, τῆς μεγάλης κόρης της,
καὶ ὅταν ἐπέστρεψεν εἰς τὸν οἰκίσκον μετὰ
τὴν νυκτερινὴν ἔξοδον, τὴν ὁποίαν εἶχεν ἐπι-
χειρήσει, ὡς «ἀλαφροῖσκιωτη» ποῦ ἦτον, κατ'
ἀκολουθίαν τοῦ ὀνείρου ἐκείνου, εἶδεν εἰς τὸ
10 ἀμυδρὸν φῶς τῆς κανδήλας, τῆς καιούσης ἐμπρὸς
εἰς τὴν μικρὰν παλαιὰν καὶ μαυρισμένην εἰ-
κόνα τῆς Παναγίας, εἶδεν ὅτι ἡ μικρὰ ἀδελφή
της, τὸ Κρινιώ, ἐκοιμᾶτο ἄκόμη, καὶ δὲν ἐφαί-
νετο νὰ εἶχε σεισθῇ ἀπὸ τὴν θέσιν της. Μό-
15 νον, ἅμα εἰσῆλθεν ἡ Ἀμέρσα, ἡ Κρινιώ, ὡς
νὰ ἤκουσε τὸν μικρὸν θροῦν ἀμυδρῶς μέσα
εἰς τὸν ὕπνον της, ἐκινήθη ἡρέμα, ἐστέναξε,
κ' ἐγύρισεν ἀπὸ τὸ ἄλλο πλευρόν, χωρὶς ἄλλως
νὰ ἐξυπνήσῃ.

20 Ἀλαφροῖσκιωτη! τῷ ὄντι. Ἡ λέξις τὴν
ὁποίαν εἶχε προφέρει ἀρτίως ἡ μήτηρ της,
τῆς ἐπανῆλθε πράγματι εἰς τὸν νοῦν, τὴν ᾤσαν
καθ' ἣν, μὲ τὸ τρίτον λάλημα τοῦ πετεινοῦ,
ἐπέστρεψεν εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν, πλησίον τῆς κοιμω-
25 μένης μικρᾶς ἀδελφῆς της. Ἀλλ' ἦτο ἄρα αὐτὴ
πράγματι «ἀλαφροῖσκιωτη»; Αὐτὴ τῆς ὁποίας
τὰ ὄνειρα, αἱ πλάναι, καὶ αἱ παρακρούσεις
πολλάκις συνέβη νὰ σημαίνωσιν, ἢ νὰ δηλῶσι
τι, ἢ ν' ἀφῆνωσι παράδοξον ἐντύπωσιν. Καὶ αὐτὰ
30 τὰ ψεύματά της, ὅσα ἔλεγε, ἐγίνοντο ἀκούσiai
ἀλήθειαι δι' αὐτήν. Ὅπως, φέρ' εἰπεῖν, ὅταν, μετὰ
τὸ μαχαίρωμα τὸ ὁποῖον εἶχεν ὑποστῇ ἀπὸ τὸν
ἀδελφόν της, ἀπαντῶσα εἰς τὰς ἐταστικὰς ἐρω-
ρήσεις τοῦ χωροφύλακος, ἔλεγεν: «Εἶχα πόνο
35 καὶ ζάλη!» Καὶ συγχρόνως ἅμα τῷ λόγῳ αὐτῷ,
τῆς ἤρχετο ἀληθινῆς λιποθυμίας, ὥσει ἄνωτέρα
τις, δαιμονία θέλησις νὰ ἤθελε νὰ καλύψῃ τὸ
ψεῦδός της.

40 Ἡ Ἀμέρσα, κατεκλίθη ἐν νέου πλησίον τῆς
ἀδελφῆς της καὶ δὲν ἐκοιμήθη. Αἱ ἀναμνήσεις
ἐξηκολούθουν νὰ τῆς ἔρχωνται, ραγδαῖαι, καί-
τοι ὀλιγώτερον τυραννικαὶ καὶ μελανόπτεροι
ἢ ὅσον εἰς τὴν μητέρα της. Καὶ κατὰ τὰς μα-
κρὰς ἐκείνας ὥρας δὲν ἔπαυσε ν' ἀναλογίζεται
45 καθ' ἑαυτήν τὴν τύχην τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ της, τοῦ
Μούρου, ὅστις εὗρισκετο τώρα εἰς τὸ δεσμω-
τήριον τῆς Χαλκίδος.

Ε'.

Ἄμα ἀπῆλθεν ἡ Ἀμέρσα, ἡ Φραγκογιαν-
νοῦ, ζαρωμένη πλησίον τῆς γωνίας, μεταξὺ τῆς

50 ἐστίας καὶ τοῦ λίκνου, ἔχασεν ἐκ νέου τὸν
ὕπνον της, καὶ ἤρχισε νὰ συνεχίσῃ τοὺς πι-
κροὺς καὶ πόρρω πλανωμένους διαλογισμοὺς
της. Ὅταν λοιπὸν ἐξενιτεύθησαν εἰς πῶν Ἀμε-
55 ρικὴν οἱ δύο μεγαλείτεροι υἱοί, καὶ ἡ Δελ-
λαρῶ ἐμεγάλωσεν, ἀνάγκη ἦτο αὐτῇ ἡ μήτηρ
νὰ φροντίσῃ διὰ τὴν ἀποκατάστασιν τῆς κό-
ρης, καθότι ὁ γέρον, ὁ «Λογαριασμὸς» δὲν
διέπρεπεν ἐπὶ δραστηριότητι. Λοιπὸν εἰς-
60 ὅλος ὁ κόσμος τί σημαίνει μία μήτηρ νὰ εἶ-
ναι συγχρόνως καὶ πατήρ διὰ τὰς κόρας της,
καὶ νὰ μὴν εἶνε τοῦλάχιστον μήτε χήρα. Ὅφει-
λει ἡ ἰδία καὶ νὰ ὑπανδρεύσῃ καὶ νὰ προι-
κίσῃ καὶ προξενήτρια καὶ πανδρολόγισσα νὰ
γίνῃ. Ὡς ἀνὴρ ὀφείλει νὰ δώσῃ οἰκίαν, ἅμπε-
65 λον, ἀγρόν, ἐλαιῶνα, νὰ δανεισθῇ μετρητὰ, νὰ
τρέξῃ εἰς τοῦ συμβολαιογράφου, νὰ ὑποθη-
κεύσῃ. Ὡς γυνή, πρέπει νὰ κακασκευάσῃ ἢ νὰ
προμηθευθῇ «προῖκα», τουτέστι παράφερνα,
ἦτοι σινδόνας, χιτῶνια κεντητὰ, μεταξωτὰς ἐ-
70 σθῆτας μὲ χρυσοῦφानτα ποδογύρια. Ὡς προ-
ξενήτρια πρέπει ν' ἀνιχνεύσῃ γαμβρόν, νὰ τὸν
κυνηγίῃ, νὰ τὸν ἀλείψῃ, νὰ τὸν ζωγρήσῃ.
Καὶ ὁποῖον γαμβρόν!

75 Ἐνα ὥσάν τὸν Κωνσταντῖν, ὅστις ἐρρογχα-
λιζε τώρα, πέραν τοῦ μεποτοίχου, εἰς τὸν πλα-
γινὸν θαλαμίσκον, ἄνθρωπον σπανόν, «ἄσκιω-
τον» ἄγαρμπον. Καὶ ὁ τοιοῦτος νὰ ἔχῃ «κα-
πρίτσια», ἀπαιτήσεις, πείσματα· σήμερον νὰ
ζητῇ τοῦτο καὶ αὔριον ἐκείνο· τὴν μίαν ἡμέ-
80 ραν νὰ ζητῇ τύσα, τὴν ἄλλην περισσότερα·
καὶ συγὰ «νὰ τὸν βάζουν στὰ λόγια». Ἄλλοι
ἰδιοτελεῖς ἢ φθονεροί, ν' ἀκούῃ ἐντεῦθεν κ'
ἐκεῖθεν διαβολὰς, ραδιουργίας, «μαναφούκια»
καὶ νὰ μὴ θέλῃ «νὰ ταιριασθῇ». Καὶ νὰ ἐγ-
85 καθίσταται μετὰ τὸν ἀρραβῶνα στῆς πεν-
θερᾶς τὸ σπίτι, καὶ νὰ «σκαρώνῃ» ἔξαφνα
πρωῖμάδι. Κι' ὅλον τὸν καιρὸν «κόττα-πήττα».

— Κι' αὐτὸν τὸν γαμβρόν, μὲ μυρίους κό-
πους, μὲ ἀνεκδιήγητα βάσανα, μόλις, μετὰ πο-
λὺν καιρὸν, νὰ τὸν πείθῃ τις νὰ στεφανωθῇ
90 ἐπὶ τέλους. Κ' ἡ νύφη νὰ καμαρώνῃ, φέρουσα
στολισμὸν πολυτελεῖ, καρπὸν πολλῆς νηστείας
καὶ οἰκονομίας κ' ἡ νύφη νὰ μὴ ἔχῃ πλεόν
μέσῃν, διὰ ν' ἀναδεικνύεται τὸ πάλαι λιγυρὸν
ἀνάστημά της.

Καὶ τρεῖς μῆνας μετὰ τὸν γάμον νὰ γεννᾷ
κόρην — μετὰ τρία ἄκόμη ἔτη ἓνα υἱὸν — μετὰ
100 δύο ἔτη πάλιν κόρην — αὐτὴν τὴν νεογέννη-
τον, χάριν τῆς ὁποίας ἡγρύπνει τώρα τόσας
νύκτας ἡ γηραιὰ μάμη.

Καὶ δι' ὅλ' αὐτὰ τὰ θυγάτρια νὰ μέλλῃ νὰ

ὑποφέρει ἡ μήτηρ των τόσα — κι' ἄλλα τόσα —
κι' ἄλλα τόσα, ἀπὸ ὅσα ἔχει ὑποφέρει ἡ μάνα
της δι' αὐτήν.

Ἔμεινεν ἡ καυμένη, ἡ ἀνδροκόρη, ἡ Ἀμέρσα,
ἀνύπανδρη (ὡς ἔχη τὴν εὐχὴν της). Εἶδε τὴν
γλύκα. Τῷ ὄντι, φρόνιμη νέα Τί θ' ἀπῆλauen
ἀπὸ τὰ βάσανα τοῦ κόσμου; Καὶ οὐτ' ἐξή-
λευε κἄν! Τί νὰ ζηλέψη; Ἔβλεπε τὴν μεγάλην
ἀδελφήν της καὶ τὴν ἐλυπεῖτο — τὴν ἔκαίετο.

Ὅσον διὰ τὴν μικράν, τὴν Κρινιώ, ἄμποτε
κι' αὐτὴν ὁ Θεὸς νὰ τὴν φωτίσῃ! Ὅπως καὶ
ἂν ἔχη, ἡ μάνα της δὲν ἔχει σκοπὸν — δὲν
βαστᾷ πλέον, δὲν ἀντέχει — νὰ ὑποφέρει διὰ
νὰ τὴν ὑπανδρεύσῃ καὶ τὸ πολλοστημόριον
ὅσων διὰ τὴν μεγάλην ἀδελφήν της ὑπέφερε.
Ἀλλὰ σᾶς ἐρωτῶ, ἔπρεπε πράγματι νὰ γεν-
νῶνται τόσα κοράσια; Καὶ ἂν γεννῶνται, ἀξί-
ζει τὸν κόπον ν' ἀνατρέφωνται; Δὲν εἶνε ἔλε-
γεν ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ, «Δὲν εἶνε χάρος, δὲν
εἶνε βράχος»; Καλλίτερα «νὰ μὴ σώνουν νὰ
πᾶνε παραπάνω». «Σὰ σ' ἀκούω γειτόνισσα!»

Μεγάλην καὶ ἱερὰν ἀνακούφισιν ἡσθάνετο ἡ
πολυπαθὴς γυνή, ὅταν συνέβαινε, μετὰ τῆς
μικρᾶς πομπῆς τοῦ ἱερέως, προπορευομένου
τοῦ Σταυροῦ, ν' ἀκολουθῇ βαστάζουσα εἰς τὰς
χεῖράς της ἡ ἰδία, ὡς φιλεῦσπλαγχτος καὶ
συμπονετικῇ ὁποῦ ἦτον, τὸ ἐν εἶδει λίχνου μι-
κρὸν φέρετρον. Προέπεμπε τὸ θυγάτριον μιᾶς
γειτόνισσας, ἡ μακρυνῆς συγγενοῦς, μέχρι τοῦ
τάφου. Δὲν ἤμποροῦσε νὰ καταλαμβάνῃ τί
ἐμορμύριζεν ὁ ἱερεὺς μασσῶν τὰς λέξεις με-
τὸς ὁδόντας του. «Οὐδὲν ἔστι πατρός συμ-
παθέστερον, οὐδὲν ἔστι μητρὸς ἀθλιώτερον...
Πολλάκις γὰρ τοῦ μνήματος ἐμπροσθεν τοὺς
μασθοὺς συγκροτοῦσι καὶ λέγουσιν. Ὡ νιέ
μου καὶ τέκνον γλυκάτατον, οὐκ ἀκούεις μη-
τρός σου τί φθέγγεται; Ἴδου καὶ ἡ γαστήρ ἡ
βαστάσασά σε. Ἴνα τί οὐ λαλεῖ; ὡς ἐλάλεις ἡμῖν.
Ἀλληλούϊα!». Καὶ πάλιν «Ὡ τέκνον, τίς ποτε
μὴ θρηνήσει βλέπων σου τὸ ἐμφανές, πρό-
σωπον εὐμάραντον, τὸ πρὶν ὡς ὁδὸν τερ-
πνόν!»

Ἀλλὰ μεγάλως εὐφραίνετο ὅταν ἡ μικρὰ
πομπή, μετὰ δέκα λεπτῶν τῆς ὥρας δρύμον
ἐφθάνεν εἰς τὰ «Μνημόρια». Ὡραία ἐξοχή,
παντοτινὴ ἀναιξίς, θάλλουσα βλάστη, ἀγριολου-
λουδα, ἐμύριζε κηπος. Ἴδου ὁ περίβολος τῶν
νεκρῶν! Ὡ! ὁ Παράδεισος, ἀπ' αὐτὸν τὸν κό-
σμον ἤδη, ἦνοιγε τὰς πύλας διὰ νὰ δεχθῇ τὸ
μικρὸν ἄκακον πλάσμα, τὸ ὁποῖον ἠτύχησε
νὰ λυτρώσῃ τοὺς γονεῖς του ἀπὸ τόσα βάσανα.
Χαρῆτε, ἀγγελουδία ποῦ πετᾶτε γύρω-τριγύρω

μετὰ τὰ πτερὰ σας τὰ χρυσόλευκα, καὶ σεῖς, ψυ-
χαὶ τῶν Ἀγίων, ὑποδεχθῆτέ το!

Ὅταν ἐπέστρεφεν εἰς τὴν νεκρώσιμον οἰ-
κίαν ἡ γραῖα Χαδοῦλα, διὰ νὰ παρενρεθῇ τὴν
ἐσπέραν εἰς τὴν παρηγορίαν, — παρηγορίαν καμ-
μίαν δὲν εὗρισκε νὰ εἴπῃ, μόνον ἦτο χαρωπὴ
ὄλη κ' ἐμακάριζε τὸ ἀδῶον βρέφος καὶ τοὺς
γονεῖς του. Κεῖ ἡ λύπη ἦτο χαρά, καὶ ἡ θανὴ
ἦτο ζωὴ, καὶ ὅλα ἦσαν ἄλλα ἐξ ἄλλων.

Ἄ! ἰδοῦ... Κανὲν πρᾶγμα δὲν εἶνε ἀκρι-
βῶς ὅτι φαίνεται, ἀλλὰ πᾶν ἄλλο — μᾶλλον τὸ
ἐναντίον.

Ἀφοῦ ἡ λύπη εἶνε χαρά, καὶ ὁ θάνατος
εἶνε ζωὴ καὶ ἀνάστασις, τότε καὶ ἡ συμφορὰ
εὐτυχία εἶνε καὶ ἡ νόσος ὑγίεια. Ἄρα ὅλαι αἱ
μάστιγες ἐκεῖναι, αἱ κατὰ τὸ φαινόμενον τό-
σον ἄσχημοι, ὅσαι θερίζουν τὰ ἄωρα βρέφη,
ἡ εὐλογία κ' ἡ ὀστρακιά κ' ἡ διφθερίτις, καὶ
ἄλλαι νόσοι, δὲν εἶναι μᾶλλον εὐτυχήματα, δὲν
εἶναι. θωπεύματα καὶ πλήγματα τῶν πτερῶν
τῶν μικρῶν Ἀγγέλων, οἵτινες χαίρουν εἰς τοὺς
οὐρανούς ὅταν ὑποδέχονται τὰς ψυχὰς τῶν
νηπίων; Καὶ ἡμεῖς οἱ ἄνθρωποι, ἐν τῇ τυ-
φλώσει μας, νομιζομεν ταῦτα ὡς δυστυχήματα,
ὡς πληγὰς, ὡς κακὸν πρᾶγμα.

Καὶ χάνουν τὸν νοῦν των οἱ ταλαίτωροι
γονεῖς, καὶ πληρώνουν τόσον ἀκριβὰ τοὺς ἡμι-
αγύρτας ἱατροὺς καὶ τὰ τριωβολιμαῖα φάρ-
μακα, διὰ νὰ σώσουν τὸ παιδί τους. Δὲν ὑπο-
πεύονται ὅτι, ὅταν νομίζουν ὅτι «σώζουν»,
τότε πράγματι «χάνουν» τὸ τεκνίον. Καὶ ὁ
Χριστὸς εἶπεν, ὅπως εἶχεν ἀκούσει ἡ Φραγκο-
γιαννοῦ νὰ τῆς ἐξηγῇ ὁ πνευματικὸς της, ὅτι
ὅποιος ἀγαπᾷ τὴν ψυχὴν του, θὰ τὴν χάσῃ,
κι' ὅποιος μισεῖ τὴν ψυχὴν του, εἰς ζωὴν αἰ-
ώνιον θὰ τὴν φυλάξῃ.

Δὲν ἔπρεπε τῷ ὄντι, ἂν δὲν ἦσαν τυφλοὶ
οἱ ἄνθρωποι, νὰ βοηθοῦν τὴν μάστιγα, τὴν
διὰ πτερῶν Ἀγγέλων πλήττουσαν, ἀντὶ νὰ ζη-
τοῦν νὰ τὴν ἐξορκίσουν; Ἀλλ' ἰδοῦ, τ' Ἀγγε-
λούδια δὲν μεροληπτοῦν οὔτε χαρίζονται, καὶ
παίρνουν ἀδιακρίτως εἰς τὸν Παράδεισον ἀγύ-
ρια καὶ κοράσια. Περισσότερα μάλιστα ἀγύ-
ρια — πόσα χαδευμένα καὶ μοναχογέννητα! —
ἀποθνήσκουν ἄωρα. Τὰ κορίτσια εἰν' ἐφτά-
ψυχα, ἐφρόνει ἡ γραῖα. Δυσκόλως ἀρρωστοῦν,
καὶ σπανίως ἀποθνήσκουν. Δὲν ἔπρεπε ἡμεῖς
ὡς καλοὶ χριστιανοί, νὰ βοηθῶμεν τὸ ἔργον
τῶν Ἀγγέλων; Ὡ, πόσα ἀγόρια, καὶ ἀρχον-
τόπουλα μάλιστα, ἀρπαύζονται ἄωρα. Ἀκόμη
καὶ τ' ἀρχοντοκόριτσα εὐκολώτερον ἀποθνή-
σκουν — ἂν καὶ τόσον σπάνια μεταξὺ τοῦ φύ-

λου—παρ' ὅσον τὰ ἀπειράριθμα θηλυκὰ τῆς φτωχολογίας. Τὰ κορίτσια τῆς τάξεως ταύτης εἶναι τὰ μόνα ἐφτάψυχα! Φαίνονται ὡς νὰ πληθύνωνται ἐπίτιδες, διὰ νὰ κολάζουν τοὺς γονεῖς των, ἀπ' αὐτὸν τὸν κέρμον ἥδη. Ἄ! ὅσον τὸ συλλογίζεται κανεὶς! «ψηλώνει ὁ νοῦς του».

Τὴν στιγμὴν ἐκείνην, ἄρχισε τὸ θυγάτριον νὰ βήχη καὶ νὰ κλαυθμηρίζῃ. Ἡ γραῖα ἀφοῦ εἶχε συλλογισθῇ ὅλα τ' ἀνωτέρω, ὅσον καὶ ἂν εἶχεν ἐξαφθῇ ἀπὸ τὰ κύματα τῶν ἀναμνήσεων, ἡσθάνθη αἰφνης ζάλην, ἀπὸ τὸν σάλον οἶονε καὶ τὴν ναυτίαν τῆς ζωῆς της, καὶ ἄρχισε νὰ ναρκώνεται, κ' ἐνύσταζεν ἀκρατήτως.

Τὸ μικρὸν κοράσιον ἔβηχε κ' ἔκλαιε κ' ἐθορύβει «ὡς νὰ ἦτον μέγας ἀνθρώπος». Ἡ μάμμη τοῦ ἐσκόρτησεν, ἐστράφη, κ' ἔχανε πάλιν τὸν ὕπνον της.

Ἡ λεχώνα ἐκοιμάτο βαθέως, καὶ οὔτε ἤκουσε τὸν βῆχα καὶ τὰ κλαύματα.

Ἡ γραῖα ἤνοιξε βλοσυρὰ ὄμματα, κ' ἔκαμε χειρονομίαν ἀνυπομονησίας καὶ ἀπειλῆς.

— Ἐ! θὰ σκάσης; εἶπε.

Τῆς Φραγκογιαννοῦς ἄρχισε πράγματι «νὰ ψηλῶνῃ ὁ νοῦς της». Εἶχε «παραλογίσει» ἐπὶ τέλους. Ἐπόμενον ἦτο, διότι εἶχεν ἐξαρθῇ εἰς ἀνώτερα ζητήματα. Ἐκλινεν ἐπὶ τοῦ λίκνου. Ἐχωσε τοὺς δύο μακροὺς, σκληροὺς δακτύλους μέσα εἰς τὸ στόμα τοῦ μικροῦ, διὰ νὰ «τὸ σκάσῃ».

Εἰς τὴν στιγμὴν ἐκείνην, ὅτε δὲν ἦτο τόσον συνήθεια «νὰ σκάζουν» τὰ πολὺ μικρὰ παιδία. Ἄλλ' εἶχε «παραλογίσει» πλέον. Δὲν ἐνόει καλὰ τί ἔκαμνε, καὶ δὲν ὠμολόγει εἰς ἑαυτὴν τί ἤθελε νὰ κάμῃ.

Καὶ παρέτεινε τὸ σκάσιμον ἐπὶ μακρόν· εἶτα ἐξάγουσα τοὺς δακτύλους της ἀπὸ τὸ μικρὸν στόμα τοῦ ὁποίου εἶχε κοπῇ ἡ ἀναπνοή, ἔδραξεν ἔξωθεν τὸν λαιμὸν τοῦ βρέφους, καὶ τὸν ἐσφιγξεν ἐπ' ὀλίγα δευτερόλεπτα.

Αὐτὸ ἦτο ὅλον.

Ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ δὲν εἶχεν ἐνθυμηθῇ τὴν στιγμὴν ἐκείνην τὸ ὄνειρον τῆς Ἀμέρσας, τὸ ὁποῖον αὐτὴ ἐλθοῦσα πρὸ μιᾶς ὥρας, μεταξὺ τοῦ δευτέρου καὶ τοῦ τρίτου λαλήματος τοῦ πετεινοῦ, εἶχε διηγηθῇ εἰς τὴν μητέρα της!

Εἶχε «ψηλώσει» ὁ νοῦς της!

ΣΤ'.

Ἀφοῦ ἡ Ἀμέρσα εἶχε χάσει τὸν ὕπνον της, μετὰ τὴν ἐπάνοδον ἐκ τῆς οἰκίας τῆς λεχώνας

καὶ εἶχε πλαγιάσει πάλιν, χωρὶς νὰ κοιμηθῇ, εἰς τὸ πλάγι τῆς μικρᾶς ἀδελφῆς της, ἐπὶ μακρόν ἐξηκολούθησε νὰ σκέπτεται καὶ πάλιν τὸν ἀδελφόν της, τὸν δυστυχῇ καὶ ἐνοχον ἐκεῖνον. Ἐκτοτε, μετὰ τὸ πῆδημα ἀπὸ τῆς κλαβανῆς καὶ τὴν ἀπόδρασίν του, δὲν τὸν εἶχεν ἰδεῖ πλέον. Οἱ χωροφύλακες τὸν κατεζήτουν ἐπὶ ἡμέρας, ἀλλ' οὐδαμοῦ τὸν εὑρον.

Εὐθὺς τότε μετὰ τὰς ἐρωτήσεις τῶν χωροφυλάκων, εἰς τὰς ὁποίας ἀπήντησεν ὅπως ἀπήντησεν ἡ Ἀμέρσα, ἅμα ἐφθασεν ἡ μήτηρ εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν, ἤρρε τὴν κόρην τυλιγμένην εἰς τὸ πάπλωμα, κάτω νεύουσαν, καὶ πολὺ χλωμὴν ἐκ τῆς λιποθυμίας τὴν ὁποίαν εἶχε φέρει ἡ ροὴ τοῦ αἵματος.

Εἰς τὴν ἐρώτησιν τοῦ ἐνὸς χωροφύλακος, ἐκεῖνου τὸν ὁποῖον εἶχεν ἀνατρέψει φεύγων ὁ Μοῦρος «γερόντισσα ποῦ εἶν' ὁ γυιόκας σου», δὲν εἶχεν ἀπαντήσῃ ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ. Ἄλλ' ὁ ἄλλος, ὅστις ἐφαίνετο ἀνθρωπινώτερος, μὲ ἡρεμον τόνον εἶπε·

— Κύτταξε κυρά, τί ἔχ' ἡ κόρη σου. Μᾶς λέει πῶς εἶνε ἄρρωστη.

— Ἀρρωστη εἶνε! πῶς νὰ μὴν εἶνε! ἀπήντησε μεθ' ἐτοιμότητος ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ. Ἐπῆρε φριξὶ ἀπ' τὰ καμώματα ἐκεῖνοῦ τοῦ προκομμένου, τοῦ γυιοῦ μου... Κυττάξτε, παιδιά!.. ἀνίσως τὸν πιάσετε, νὰ μὴν τὸν τυραγνήσετε πολὺ...

— Τὸν εἶδες πούθεν νὰ τρέχῃ; Κατὰ ποῦ ἔκαμε;

— Τὸν εἶδ' ἀπ' ἀλάργα!.. Ἐκαμε κατὰ τὰ Πηγάδια, πέρα στ' Ἀλώνια.

Ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ ἐψεύδετο διπλᾶ. Δὲν εἶχεν ἰδεῖ τὸν Μοῦρον, ἀλλ' ἦτο βεβαία ὅτι αὐτὸς θὰ ἐτράπη κατὰ τὴν διεύθυνσιν τὴν ἀντίθετον ἣς αὐτὴ ἔλεγε, κατὰ τὰ Κοτρώνια, ἀνωθεν τῆς οἰκίας, πρὸς ἀνατολὰς, ἐκεῖ ὅπου ἦτον μαθημένος ἀπ' τὰ μικρὰ του χρόνια νὰ κυνηγᾷ τῆς κουκουβάγας.

Οἱ δύο ἄνδρες ἀπῆλθον δρομαῖοι. Ὁ εἰς, φεύγων ἐρριψε τελευταῖον φιλόποπτον βλέμμα ὀπίσω διὰ τῆς ἡμιανοικτῆς θύρας.

Ἡ Χαδοῦλα ἐκλείσε τὴν θύραν. Συγχρόνως δὲ ἤνοιξε τὸ παράθυρον.

— Μ' ἐμαχαίρωσε, μάνα! ἐστέναξε μετὰ πόνων ἡ Ἀμέρσα, αἰσθανθεῖσα τὸ ρεῦμα τοῦ ἀέρος τὸ εἰσρεῦσαν διὰ τοῦ ἀνοιχθέντος παραθύρου πλησίον της, καὶ συνελθοῦσα ἐκ τῆς λιποθυμίας.

Συγχρόνως δὲ ἀπέρριψε τὸ πάπλωμα, κ' ἐφάνη αἱματωμένη· ἡ φανέλλα τὴν ὁποίαν ἐφόρει, ἔξωθεν τοῦ ὑποκαμίσου.

— "Ω! ἄχ! ὁ φονιάς!... ὁ Θεὸς κ' ἡ γῆς
νὰ τὸν εὖρη! κατηράσθη ἰδοῦσα τὸ αἷμα ἢ
μᾶνα της.

5 Καὶ ἄρχισε νὰ ψαύῃ τὴν κόρην, καὶ νὰ ζητῇ
νὰ σταματήσῃ τὸ αἷμα, καὶ νὰ ἐπιδέσῃ τὴν
πληγὴν. Ἀφήρεσε τὴν φανέλλαν, ἐξέσυρε τὴν
χειρίδα τοῦ ὑποκαμίσου, κ' ἐφάνη ὁ δεξιὸς
βραχίον τῆς Ἀμέρσας, ἰσχνὸς καὶ ὑπαχρος
ἀλλὰ καλοδεμένος καὶ νευρώδης.

10 Τὸ τραῦμα ἦτο μᾶλλον ἐπιτόλαιον, ἀλλ'
οὐχ ἦττον τὸ αἷμα ἔρρεε. Ἡ Χαδούλα μετε-
χειρίσθη ὅτι ἰσχυρὸν ἐγνώριζεν, ἴσως τὸν
«αἵματοστάτην» ἂν εἶχε, κ' ἐπέδεσε τὴν πλη-
γὴν. Μετ' ὀλίγον ἔπαυσε τὸ αἷμα.

15 Ἡ Ἀμέρσα εἶχεν ἀδυνατίσει ὀπωσοῦν, ἀλλ'
ἦτο ἰσχυρὰ, θαρραλέα, καὶ δὲν ἐφοβεῖτο. Πράγ-
ματι μετ' ὀλίγας ἡμέρας, χάρις εἰς τὰς φρον-
τίδας τῆς μητρός της, ἐπουλώθη τὸ τραῦμα.

Ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ ποτὲ δὲν θὰ ἐκάλει τὸν
ἱατρόν. Δὲν ἤθελε νὰ γνωσθῇ ὅτι ὁ υἱὸς της 20
εἶχε μαχαιρώσει τὴν ἀδελφὴν του. Εἰς ὅλας τὰς
καλοθελητρίας μεταξὺ τῶν γειτονισσῶν, ὅσαι τὴν
ἠρώτων, πότε μετὰ προσποιητῆς ἀγανακτήσεως,
πότε μετὰ γέλωτος βεβιασμένου, διέψευσεν ὅτι 25
ὁ Μοῦρος εἶχε τραυματίσει τὴν κόρην της. Ἐν-
διεφέρετο πρὸ πάντων νὰ μάθῃ ἂν ὁ Μιχάλης
θὰ ἐγλύτωνεν ἀπὸ τὰς χεῖρας τῶν χωροφυλά-
κων, καὶ ἅς ἐπήγαιεν εἰς τὸ ἔλεος τοῦ Θεοῦ!

Τῷ ὄντι, μετ' ὀλίγας ἡμέρας ἐβεβαιώθη ὅτι 30
ὁ υἱὸς της ἐμβαρκάρησε κρυφὰ τὴν νύκτα, μὲ
ἐν πλοῖον, ὡς ναύτης, κ' ἐφυγεν ἀπὸ τὴν νῆ-
σον. Ὁ γραμματεὺς τοῦ Λιμεναρχείου ἦτον βο-
λικὸς καὶ καλοπροαίρετος ἀνὴρ, καὶ δὲν
ἐδίστασε νὰ τὸν ναυτολογήσῃ. Ἦτο δὲ τότε 35
ὁ Μοῦρος σχεδὸν εἰκοσαέτης, ἡ δὲ Ἀμέρσα ἦτο
μόλις δεκαεπτὰ ἐτῶν.

Ἔπεται συνέχεια

Α. ΠΑΠΑΔΙΑΜΑΝΤΗΣ

ΣΗΜΕΙΩΜΑΤΑ

Ο ΠΡΩΤΟΣ ΕΟΡΤΑΣΜΟΣ ΤΟΥ ΣΥΝΤΑΓΜΑΤΟΣ

Ἐξημέρωνεν ἡ 3η Σεπτεμβρίου τοῦ 1844,
δηλαδή ἡ πρώτη ἐπέτειος τοῦ Συνταγματικοῦ
πολιτεύματος. «Εἰς τὸν πρῶτον κρότον—γρά-
φουν αἱ τότε ἐφημερίδες—τῶν κανονίων καὶ
τὴν φωνὴν τῆς ἐωθινῆς μουσικῆς ἐγερούντες
οἱ πολῖται συνεπυκνώθησαν ἀσπαζόμενοι ἀλ-
λήλους κατὰ τὴν λεωφόρον Αἰόλου». Κατόπιν
περιγράφεται ἡ στρατιωτικὴ παρατάξις καὶ ἡ
δοξολογία, αἱ ἐπίσημοι ἐπισκέψεις καὶ ὁ ἐν-
θουσιασμός τῶν ἀναπνεόντων πλήρη τὴν αὐ-
ραν τῆς ἐλευθερίας ἀθῶων πολιτῶν.

Τὸ χαρακτηριστικώτερον ὅμως τῆς ἐορτῆς
σημεῖον εἶναι τὸ παρατεθὲν τὴν νύκτα ἐπίση-
μον γεῦμα διὰ λαϊκοῦ ἐράνου.

Τοὺς ἐράνους συνέλεξεν ἐπιτροπὴ ἀποτελου-
μένη ἀπὸ τοὺς Δ. Καλλιφρονᾶν, Σ. Βλάχον,
Κ. Τσερτίδην, Ν. Κορφιωτάκη, Ἰ. Φιλήμονα,
Κ. Ράμφον, Ἰ. Σοῦτζον, Α. Μαλανδρινόν, Δ.
Μητσόπουλον, Π. Κακλαμάνον. Αἰθούσα ἐξε-
λέγη ἡ τῆς οἰκίας Κ. Βρυζάκη κειμένης εἰς τὴν
διασταύρωσιν τῶν ὁδῶν Ἑρμοῦ καὶ Αἰόλου.
Εἰς τὸ γεῦμα παρεκάθησαν οἱ ὑπουργοί, πολ-
λοὶ βουλευταί, ἀνώτεροι στρατιωτικοὶ καὶ πο-
λιτικοὶ ὑπάλληλοι καὶ διαπρεπεῖς πολῖται ἐκ

τοῦ πανισχύρου τότε Συνταγματικοῦ κόμματος

Πρῶτος ὁ Μεταξᾶς ὑψωσε πρόποσιν ὑπὲρ
τοῦ Βασιλέως, τῶν εὐεργετῶν Δυνάμεων καὶ
τοῦ Συντάγματος. Κατόπιν προέπιον ὑπὲρ τοῦ
πρωθυπουργοῦ Κωλέττη, ὅστις ἀπήντησε προπί-
νων ὑπὲρ τοῦ στρατοῦ. Πλήθος ἄλλο προπόσων
ἠγέρθησαν· ἡ εὐθυμία καὶ ἡ ζωνρότης εἶχε
φθάσῃ εἰς τὸ κατακόρυφον, ἐφαίνετο δὲ τρόπον
τινὰ ἡ οἰκία διηρημένη εἰς δύο, διότι εἰς τοὺς
ἐπευφημισμοὺς τῶν συνευωχουμένων ἀπῆντα
τὸ ἔξωθεν ἀσφυκτικῶς συγκεντρωμένον πλήθος.

Ταῦτα ὅμως ἐγράψαμεν χωρὶς τὸν ξενοδόχον.

Ἴδου καὶ ὁ χαρακτηριστικώτατος λογαρια-
σμός του, ὅστις εὐρίσκεται μεταξὺ τῶν ἐγγρά-
φων τοῦ Ἱστορικοῦ Ἀρχείου τῆς Ἑθνικῆς Βι-
βλιοθήκης :

«Ἀπόδειξις»

«Ὁ ὑποφαινόμενος ἔλαβον παρὰ τοῦ κυ-
ρίου Ἰωάννου Φιλήμονος δραχμὰς διακοσίας
ἐξήκοντα μίαν καὶ λεπτὰ τριάκοντα ἀρ. 261.30
διὰ τὰ φαγητὰ καὶ ζήμιας τοῦ γεύματος τῆς
Τρίτης Σεπτεμβρίου ὡς ἐφεξῆς:

Η ΦΟΝΙΣΣΑ

Παρήλθε χρόνος εωσότου ἡ οἰκογένεια λάβῃ εἰδήσεις περὶ τοῦ φυγάδος. Τέλος, μετὰ ἔτος καὶ πλεόν, ἠκούσθη μία ἀόριστος φήμη. ὅτι ὁ Μῶρος διέπραξε φόνον ἐντὸς τοῦ πλοίου, μὲ τὸ ὅποιον ἀρμένιζε. Αἱ ἀδελφαὶ του, ὅταν τὸ ἤκουσαν, εἰς τὸν κόσμον εἶπαν ὅτι δὲν εἰξεύρουν τίποτε, καὶ ὀλοφύχως ἠύχοντο νὰ ἦτο ψευδὴς ἡ φήμη. Ἄλλ' ἡ μήτηρ ἐνδομύχως ἐπίστευεν εἰς τὸ ἀληθὲς τῆς εἰδήσεως.

Ὀλίγας ἡμέρας ὕστερον, ἔλαβον ἐπιστολὴν φέρουσαν τὴν ταχυδρομικὴν σφραγίδα Χαλκίδος. Ὁ Μιχάλης ἔγραφεν ἀπὸ τῶν εἰρκτῶν τῆς πόλεως ἐκείνης. Κατὰ σχῆμα πρωθύστερον, ἐξετραγῶδει ἐν πρώτοις τὰ βάσανά του καὶ τὰ πάθη του εἰς τὰ βουδρουμία τοῦ Βενετικοῦ ωρουρίου. Εἶτα, μετὰ συντριβῆς καρδίας, ἀλλὰ μὲ διαφορουμένας φράσεις καὶ οἰονεὶ μεταξὺ τῶν γραμμῶν, ἐξωμολογεῖτο ὅτι ἴσως νὰ ἐφόνευσεν πράγματι τὸν ἄνθρωπον, τὸν γέρο-Πορταίτην, τὸν λοστρόμον τοῦ πλοίου, ἀλλὰ χωρὶς καλὰ νὰ τὸ ἐννοήτῃ, καὶ χωρὶς νὰ θέλῃ. (Πράγματι, δὲν θὰ ἤθελε νὰ τὸν εἶχε φονεύσει). Ὁ ἐχθρὸς τὸν ἔβαλεν, αὐτὸς δὲν ἔπαιε τίποτε, τὸ φονικὸ ἔγεινε στὸν καυγᾶν ἐπάνω. Αὐτὸς εἶχεν εὐρεθῇ «εἰς βρασμὸν ψυχῆς». Ἀπεδείχθη μάλιστα ὅτι ἡ μάχαιρα ἦτον «τοῦ παθόν». Ἰσως νὰ εἶχεν ἀποσπάσει ἀλλὰ δὲν ἐνθυμεῖτο πῶς, τὴν μάχαιραν ἀπὸ τὴν μέσσην τοῦ θύματος. Αὐτὸς ἐπίστευεν ὅτι τοῦ τὴν εἶχεν ἀρπάσει μᾶλλον ἀπὸ τὴν χεῖρα.

Εἶτα καὶ πάλιν ἐπανήρχετο εἰς τὰ βάσανά του, ὅσα ὑπέφερε δύο μῆνας τώρα, εἰς τὰς φυλακάς. Ἀκολούθως ἐπεκαλεῖτο τὴν φιλοστοργίαν τῆς μητρός του, καὶ τὴν ἐξώρκιζε «νὰ σηκωθῇ, — τὸ δίχως ἄλλο — νὰ πάῃ νὰ βρῇ τὴν Πορταίτηνα», τὴν χήραν τοῦ φονευθέντος καὶ τὴν θυγατέρα του, καὶ νὰ τὰς παρακαλέσῃ μετὰ δακρύων, «νὰ κάμῃ νόμο-τρόπο», νὰ τὰς καταφέρῃ ὅπως αἱ ἴδιαι ζητήσουν τὴν ἀθώωσιν τοῦ φονέως!

«Νὰ σηκωθῇς, μάνα, νὰ μπαρκάρῃς, νὰ πᾶς πέρα, στὴν Πλατάνα, νὰ τὴν περικαλέσῃς, τὴν Πορταίτηνα, ὡς καὶ ὡς καὶ τὴν κόρη της, τὴν Καρίκλεια, νὰ τῆς καταφέρῃς νὰ ζητήσουν νὰ βγῶ ἀθῶος, κ' ἐγὼ νὰ γείνω παιδί τους, νὰ πάρω καὶ τὴν Καρίκλεια γυναῖκά μου, χωρὶς

* Ἴδε σελ. 206.

προῖκα, καὶ νὰ ζήσουμε καλὰ κ' ἀγαπημένα ὅλοι μας. . . Καὶ νὰ ἴδουν πῶς ἐγὼ θὰ τὴν ἀγαπῶ, τὴν Καρίκλεια, καὶ πῶς θὰ τὴν ἔχω τὴν πεθερά μου, νὰ δουλεύω σὰ σκλάβος νὰ τῆς ζωοθρέφω, μὲ πολλὰ καλὰ, γιατί ἐγὼ εἰμαι ἄξιος καὶ μπορῶ νὰ βγάλω λεπτὰ. . . » Περαινῶν ὁ φονεὺς, ἐπανήρχετο ἐκ τρίτου εἰς τὰ βάσανά του, καὶ ὑπέσχετο ὅτι, ἅμα ἐξέλθῃ τῶν φυλακῶν, θὰ φέρῃ πολλὰ ὠραῖα πράγματα καὶ στολίδια, διὰ νὰ προικίσῃ τὰς δύο ἀδελφάς του, ἀκόμη καὶ κοῦκλες καὶ παιγνίδια διὰ τὰ μικρὰ κοράσια τῆς μεγάλης ἀδελφῆς του, τῆς Δελχαρῶς.

Λοιπὸν δὲν εἶνε παράδοξον ἂν ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ δὲν ἐδίστασεν. Ἐχρεώθη ὀλίγα χρήματα, δοῦσα ἐλέγχρον ὅτι ἀσημικὸν εἶχε, κ' ἐμβαρκάρισε, κ' ἐπέρασε πέρα εἰς τὴν ἀντικρυνὴν νῆσον, εἰς τὸ χωρίον Πλατάναν, κ' ἐπῆγε νὰ εὕρῃ τὴν Πορταίτηναν. Ἀλλὰ παράδοξον εἶνε ὅτι, μὲ τὴν εὐγλωττίαν τῆς τὴν περιπαθῇ, μὲ τὴν στωμυλίαν τῆς τὴν γυναικίαν, μὲ τὰ χίλια ψεύματα ὅσα ἤξευρεν — ἦτο δὲ τότε ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ 55 ἐτῶν, ἀλλ' ἀκμαία γυνὴ καὶ μὲ ζωηροὺς χαρακτῆρας — κατῴρθησε νὰ πείσῃ τὴν γραῖαν, τὴν χήραν τοῦ φονευθέντος (σημειώσατε ὅτι ἡ μήτηρ καὶ ἡ κόρη ἔδωκαν καὶ ξενίαν ἀκόμη εἰς τὴν μητέρα τοῦ φονέως) νὰ τὴν πείσῃ, λέγω, καταβάλλουσα τὰ ἔξοδα τοῦ ταξιδίου αὐτῇ, ν' ἀπέλθωσιν ὁμοῦ εἰς τὴν Χαλκίδα, μὲ σκοπὸν νὰ ἐνεργήσωσιν ἀπὸ κοινοῦ πλησίον τῆς Εἰσαγγελίας, τοῦ Δικαστηρίου καὶ τῶν Ἐνόρκων ὑπὲρ τῆς ἀπαλλαγῆς ἢ τῆς ἀθώωσεως τοῦ ὑποδίκου. Ὅσον ἀφορᾷ τὴν κόρην, «τὴν Καρίκλειαν», αὕτη ἐδήλωσεν ὅτι ἐκδίκησιν δὲν ἐπιζητεῖ, ἐπειδὴ «ὁ πατέρας της δὲν ἔρχεται πίσω», μόνον ποτὲ δὲν θὰ θελήσῃ τὸν φονέα ὡς ἄνδρα της προτιμᾷ νὰ μένῃ ἀνύπανδρος εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα.

Ἐπῆγαν ὁμοῦ, αἱ δύο γραῖαι, κ' ἔμειναν εἰς Χαλκίδα τρεῖς μῆνας, κατοικοῦσαι εἰς τρώγλην, εἰς ἓνα τουρκόσπιτον — κοντὰ εἰς τὰ Ἐβραϊκά, παρὰ τὴν Ἄνω Πύλιν τοῦ φρουρίου. Καὶ καθημερινῶς ἡ Χαδούλα ἐπήγαιεν εἰς τὰς εἰρκτάς, τὰς πρωϊνάς ὥρας, κατὰ τὴν ἔξοδον τῶν φυλακισμένων, συνοδευομένη συνήθως ἀπὸ τὴν Πορταίτηναν, ἥτις ὅμως ἐκάθητο ἀντικρὺ τῆς εἰρκτῆς κ' ἐπερίμενε, μὴ θέλουσα

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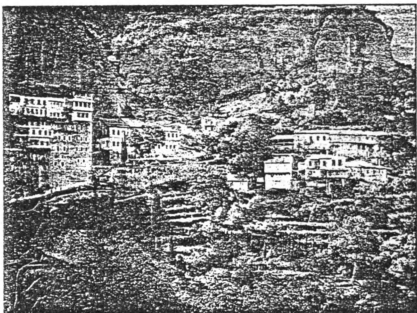
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ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΑ ΤΑΞΙΔΙΑ — ΜΟΝΗ ΜΕΓΑΛΟΥ

ΣΠΗΛΑΙΟΥ — ΦΩΤΟΓΡΑΦΙΑ Μ. ΒΕΛΟΥΔΙΟΥ

νά τῷ κατὰ πρόσωπον τὸν φονέα. Διερχόμε-
 ναι ἔξω ἀπὸ τὸν μέγαν καὶ ἀκομψὸν παλαιὸν
 ναὸν τῆς Ἁγίας Παρασκευῆς, ἔκαμναν τὸν
 5 σασυρόν των, καὶ ἡ μήτηρ ἔφερεν εἰς τὸν ὑπό-
 δικον σιμίδα καὶ σῦκα καὶ σαρδέλλες, καὶ κα-
 πνὸν διὰ τὴν πύαν του. Καὶ μέσα εἰς τὴν
 βαθεῖαν τσέπην τοῦ φουστάνου της, κρυφά,
 εἶχε χωμένην μικρὰν φυαλίδα μὲ ῥῶμι ἢ ρακί,
 10 πρὸς παρηγορίαν τοῦ φυλακισμένου.

Ἄλλὰ δις ἢ τρις τῆς ἑβδομάδος διὰ τῆς
 15 "Ανῶ Πύλης τοῦ φρουρίου ἐξήρχοντο, κ' ἔβλε-
 παν κρεμάμενα ἐκεῖ, εἰς τὸν σκοτεινὸν πυλῶνα,
 τὴν κνήμην τοῦ «Ἑλληνος γίγαντος», καὶ τὸ
 «τσαροῦγι του», τεραστίου μεγέθους, ἐπιφυ-
 λαττόμεναι, ὅταν θῶ ἐπανέκαμπτον μὲ τὸ κα-
 20 λὸν εἰς τὴν πατρίδα, νὰ διηγῶνται κ' αἱ δύο
 τὸ πρᾶγμα εἰς τὰ ἐγγόνια των. Εἶτα διηγού-
 νοντο κατὰ τὴν σνονοικίαν Σουβάλαν, ἡ κατὰ
 τὸν Ἅγιον Δημήτριον, κ' ἐπεσκέπτοντο τὸν
 25 Εἰσαγγελέα, ὅστις διὰ τοῦ γραφέως του τὰς
 ἀπεδίωκε, καὶ τοὺς δικαστάς, οἵτινες ἐνίοτε
 κατεδέχοντο νὰ γελῶσι μαζὺ των.

Τέλος ὅταν ὠρίσθη ἡ δίκη, ἐξήγησαν νὰ
 30 πλησιάσουν τοὺς ἐνόρκους, οἵτινες εἶχον ἔλθει,
 ἄλλοι φουστανελλιάδες, ἀπὸ τὰ ὀρεῖα χωρία,

ἄλλοι βροακάδες, ἀπὸ τὰς νήσους καὶ τὰ παρα-
 θαλάσσια. Ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ ὑπέσχετο χιλίων
 35 λογιῶν δῶρα εἰς ὅλους, καὶ θὰ ἦτον ἱκανὴ νὰ
 τὰ δώσῃ. ἂν εἶχε μοσχάτα κρασιά, ὠραία λά-
 δια «κεχριμπάρι», ἀστακοουρές, παστά κεφα-
 λόπουλα, αὐγοτάραχα, ξεροχτάποδα, ἐκλεκτά
 σῦκα, καὶ πᾶν ὅ,τι ἠδύνατο νὰ παράγῃ ἡ νῆ-
 σός της.

Εἰς ἕνα τῶν ἐνόρκων, ἀνδρῶπον κίτρινον καὶ
 40 βίχοντα, ὅστις ἔφαινεγο νὰ πάσχη, ὑπεσχέθη
 αὐτῇ νὰ τὸν ἱατρύσῃ, μ' ἕνα μαντζούνι ποῦ
 εἴχευρεν. "Οἱ αὐτὰ δὲν ἴσυσαν, καὶ ὁ φονεὺς
 κατεδικάσθη εἰς εἰκοσαετὴ δεσμὰ. Ἐνανάγη-
 45 σαν ὅλα τὰ σχέδια, ὥς καὶ αὐτὴ ἡ συμπεθε-
 ριά μεταξὺ τῆς μητρός τοῦ φονέως καὶ τῆς
 χήρας τοῦ θύματος.

Τώρα ἀνάγκη ἦτο νὰ ἐπιστρέψωσιν εἰς τὴν
 πατρίδα, ἀλλὰ τὰ ὀλίγα χρήματά των εἶχον
 50 ἔξαντληθῇ, καὶ ὅσα εἶχον κομίσει μεθ' ἑαυτῶν
 καὶ ὅσα εἶχε στείλει ἐν τῷ μεταξὺ ἡ Ἀμέρσα
 ξενοδουλεύουσα καὶ ὑφαινούσα εἰς τὴν πατρίδα.
 Ἀφοῦ ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ μάλιστα παρεκάλεσεν
 ὅσα πλοῖα ἔβλεπεν ἐτοιμαζόμενα νὰ πλεύσωσι
 πρὸς τὸν Μαλιακὸν κόλπον ἢ πρὸς τὴν Ἰστι-
 55 αίαν, νὰ παραλάβωσι τοὺλάχιστον τὴν Πορτα-



ΕΛΛ. ΤΑΞΙΔΙΑ - ΣΚΟΝΤΟΛΟΣ - ΤΟΠΟΘΕΣΙΑ ΜΕΤΑΞΥ

ΓΡΑΒΙΑΣ ΚΑΙ ΑΜΦΙΣΣΗΣ - ΦΩΤΟΓΡ. Μ. ΒΕΛΟΥΔΙΟΥ

ίταιναν, ὥς γεροντοτέραν καὶ ἀσθενεστέραν — αὐτὴ διὰ τὸν ἑαυτὸν της εἶχε τὸ σχέδιόν της — ὅταν εἶδεν ὅτι οἱ διάφοροι κυβερνηταὶ ἀπῆλθον ὄχι μόνον τὸν ναῦλον, ἀλλὰ νὰ ἔξῃ καὶ τρόφιμα ἢ ἐπιβάτης, καὶ ἂν τὴν ἀφηναν εἰς τὴν Στυλίδᾳ ἢ τοὺς Ὁρεοῦς, ὥς κάμῃ καλὰ νὰ εἶρῃ πλοῖον διὰ τὴν πατρίδα της — ἐξεμυστυρεύθῃ τὸ σχέδιόν της εἰς τὴν Πορταΐταιναν.

— Ἐγώ, εἶπεν, εἶμαι ἱκανὴ νὰ πάω στεριά, μὲ τὰ ποδάρια μου, ἀποδῶ ὥς τὴν Ἁγίαν Ἄννα — λένε πῶς εἶνε δυὸ μέρες δρόμος — κ' ἐκεῖ θὰ βροῦμε τὸ ταχύπλο, τὸ δικό μας ποῦ θὰ μᾶς γνωρίσῃ ὁ καπετὰν Πετσερέλος, ὁ ταχυδρόμος, καὶ θὰ μᾶς ἀρῇ. Τὰ ἔξοδά μου σὺ δρόμο θὰ τὰ οἰκονομίσῃς μαζεύοντας βότانا, χορτάρια, κ' ἀγριολάχανα, κ' ὅποια χρυσιανὴ βρῶ κ' ἔξῃ τὸ παιδί της ἄρρωστο, ἢ τὸν ἄνδρα της, θὰ τῆς κάμω ψευτογιατρικὰ νὰ βοηθήσω τὸν ἄνθρωπό της, νὰ τὴν ὑποχρεώσω... Μπορεῖς ἐσύ; Βαστοῦν τὰ κότσια σου;

— Τί θὰ κάμω; μπορῶ, δὲν μπορῶ, ἀπῆντησεν ἡ Πορταΐταινα. Καλλίτερα νὰ πᾶμε συντροφιά, ὅπως ἤθελαμε.

Κ' ἐξεκίνησαν. Ἡ Χαδοῦλα ἔκαμεν ὅπως εἶπε, μόνον πῶς ἀργοπόρησαν περισσότερον εἰς τὸν δρόμον, ἔνεκα τῆς βραδυποδίας τῆς Πορταΐταινας. Κ' ἐπέτυχε μάλιστα ὑπὲρ τὰς ἐλπίδας της. Ὄταν, μετὰ μίαν ἑβδομάδα, ἐφθασεν εἰς τὴν πατρίδα, εἶχε καὶ περισσεύματα ἀπὸ τὴν ἐπιχείρησιν. Ἐφερεν εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν της, ἔξ ὅσων τῆς ἔδιδον δι' ἀμοιβὴν τῶν ἐκδουλεύσεών της, ἓνα σάκκον μὲ σῖτον, ὥς μίαν ὀκτὼν τυρίου, δύο θρενιδας, ἓνα μάλινο χρᾶμι, τὸ ὁποῖον τῆς ἔχαρισαν, καὶ ὀλίγας δραχμάς μετρητά. Ἐκ τούτων ἐπλήρωσε γενναιοφρόνως καὶ τὸν ναῦλον τῆς Πορταΐταινας, διὰ νὰ ὑπάγῃ κ' αὐτὴ εἰς τὴν ἐστίαν της.

Ὅλα ταῦτα τὰ ἐνθυμεῖτο καλῶς ἡ Ἀμέρσα, ἐπειδὴ ἡ μάνα της δὲν εἶχε παύσει νὰ τὰ διηγῇται ἔκτοτε. Τώρα, εἶχον παρῆλθαι δώδεκα ἔτη, ὁ ἀδελφός της εὐρίσκειτο ἀκόμη εἰς τὰς φυλακάς, ὁ πατήρ της πρὸ πολλοῦ εἶχεν ἀποθάνει, ὁ Σταθάρος κ' ὁ Γιαλῆς δὲν ἐπανήλθον ποτὲ ἀπὸ τὴν Ἀμερικὴν, ὁ μικρὸς ὁ Γιωργάκης κ' ἐκεῖνος εἶχε πάρει μεγάλη πέλαγα, ἡ Κρινιώ κ' αὐτὴ εἶχε μεγαλώσει, ἡ Δελχαρῶ εἶχε γεννήσει καὶ πάλιν κόρην, κ' αὐτὴ, ἡ Ἀμέρσα, εἶχε μείνει γεροντοκόρη.

Ζ'.

Ἄκρα σιγή καὶ ἡσυχία ἐπεκράτησεν ἐντὸς τοῦ σκοτεινοῦ θαλάμου, μετὰ τὸν τελευταῖον βῆχα καὶ τὸν κλαυθμηρισμὸν τοῦ θυγατρίου, τὰ ὁποῖα τόσον ἀποτόμως διεκόπησαν. Ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ εἶχε κύψει τὸ πρόσωπόν της, καὶ εἶχε στηριξεί με τὰς δύο χεῖρας τὸ μέτωπον, καὶ εἶχε παύσει νὰ σκέπτεται. Τῆς ἐφαίνετο ὅτι δὲν ἔζη πλέον. Οὔτε ἡ πνοή της ἠκούετο. Πᾶς θόρυβος εἶχε παύσει. Οὔτε φλόξ ἔβρεμεν εἰς τὴν ἐστίαν, οὔτε βόμβος ἠκούετο, καὶ τὸ ἡμίκανστον φυτόλιον τοῦ λύχνου ἐφεγγε θλιβερώς. Ἡ μικρὰ κανδήλα πρὸ πολλοῦ εἶχε σβύσει εἰς τὸ εἰκονοστάσιον, καὶ αἱ μορφαὶ τῶν ἀγίων δὲν ἐφαίνοντο πλέον.

15 Αἰφνης ἡ λεχώνα ἐξύπνησε μετὰ τιναγμοῦ, ἐν μέσῳ τῆς ἄκρας ἡρεμίας.

— Τ' εἶνε, μάνα; εἶπε.

Ἡ μήτηρ της βλοσυρά, καὶ ὡς ἐν φρεναπάτῃ τὴν ἐκύτταξεν εἰς τὸ φῶς τοῦ λυχναρίου.

20 — Τ' εἶνε! εἶπε. τίποτα. Ἐύπνησες;

— Μοῦ φάνηκε πῶς κάτι εἶπες... πῶς μ' ἐφώναξες, μέσ' τὸν ὕπνο μου.

— Ἐγώ;... ὅχι. Ταῦτιά σου κάμανε.

— Τί ὥρα νὰ εἶνε, μάνα;

25 — Τί ὥρα; ἔξρω 'γώ;... Τόσες φορὲς λάλησε καὶ ξαναλάλησε τ' ὄρνιθι.

— Καὶ σὺ δὲν ἐκοιμήθης, μάνα;

— Ἐχόρτασα τὸν ὕπνο καλὰ... Τρύπησε τὸ πλευρό μου, εἶπεν ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ, ἥτις δὲν εἶχε κλείσει ὄμμα. Ὅπου εἶνε θὰ φέξῃ.

30 Ἡ λεχώνα ἐχασμήθη, κ' ἔκαμε τὸ σημεῖον τοῦ σταυροῦ ἐπὶ τοῦ στόματος. Συγχρόνως δὲ ὕψωσε τὸ βλέμμα πρὸς τὸ μικρὸν εἰκονοστάσιον, τὸ ὁποῖον ἀντίκρυζεν.

35 — Ἐχει σβύσει τὸ κανδήλι, μάνα; δέν το ἀναβες;

— Δέν το ἀγροίκησα, θυγατέρα, εἶπεν ἡ γραῖα ἐκοιμώμουν βαθειά.

— Καὶ τὸ παιδί κοιμᾶται, βλέπω, ἡσυχά. Πῶς τῷπαθε;

40 — Ἡσύχασε κι' αὐτὸ τώρα πλειά, εἶπεν ἡ γραῖα.

— Κ' ἐμένα μοῦ πονεῖ τὸ βυζί μου, εἶπεν ἡ λεχώ. ἄρχισε νὰ κατεβάζῃ πολὺ τώρα. Ἡ-θέλα νὰ ἦτον ξυπνητὸ νὰ τὸ βύζαινα.

45 — Ἐ! τί νὰ γείνη... Θὰ βροῦμε κανένα παιδί, εἶπεν ἡ γραῖα.

— Τί λές, μάνα;

Ἡ γραῖα δὲν ἀπήντησεν. Ἡθέλε κάτι νὰ εἴπῃ. Δέν ἤξευρε τί νὰ εἴπῃ.

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— Δέν κάνεις τὸν κόπο νανάψης τὸ καντήλι, μάνα.

— Ἄν θέλῃς, σηκώσου σὺ κι' ἀναψέ το δέν ἔχω χέρια...

— Πῶς!

— Πιάστηκε πλειά τὸ χεράκι μου.

— Τί λές; Ὅσον καλὸ σου, μάνα; ἐγώ, ποῦ δέν ἔχω πάρη εὐχή, κάνει ν' ἀνάψω τὸ κανδήλι;

Τὴν στιγμὴν ἐκείνην, καθὼς εἶπε «πιάστηκε τὸ χεράκι μου», ἐπανήλθε πρώτην φορὴν εἰς τὸν νοῦν τῆς γραίας τὸ ὄνειρον τῆς Ἀμέρσας. Δέν ἠδυνήθη νὰ κρατηθῇ, καὶ ἐπνίξεν εἰς τὰ στήθη της βαθὺν λυγμόν.

— Τί ἔχεις, μάνα;

Καὶ ἡ λεχώ ἐπήδησε κάτω ἀπὸ τὴν χαμηλὴν κλίνην.

— Δέν εἶνε καλὰ, τὸ παιδί;

Φωναὶ καὶ σπαραγμοὶ καὶ κλαύματα ἤκούσθησαν. Ἡ μήτηρ εὗρισκε τὸ θυγάτριόν της νεκρὸν ἐντὸς τοῦ λίκνου.

Ἀπὸ τὸν θόρυβον, ἐξύπνησεν εἰς τὸ διπλανὸν χώρισμα ὁ Κωσταντῆς, ὅστις εἶχε χορτάσει καλὰ τὸν ὕπνον.

— Τί εἶνε; ἔκραξε τρίβων τοὺς ὀφθαλμούς. Ἐχασμήθη, ἐτανύσθη, ἐτινάχθη, κ' ἔτρεξεν εἰς τὴν θύραν τοῦ θαλάμου.

— Βρέ! τί κάνετε σεῖς;... Θὰ σηκώσετε τὸν κόσμον στὸ ποδάρι... Μήγαρις μᾶς ἀφήνετε, μπάρεμ, νὰ πάrouμ' ἓνα ὕπνο ἀπ' τῆς φωνῆς σας;

Κανεὶς δὲν ἀπήντησεν εἰς τὰς διαμαρτυρίας τοῦ Κωσταντῆ. Ἡ σύζυγός του ἔκυπτε, πνίγουσα τοὺς λυγμούς της, ἐπὶ τοῦ λίκνου. Ἡ πενθερά του ἐκάθητο, συνάπτουσα τὰς χεῖρας, αἰνιγματώδης, σφίγγουσα τοὺς ὀδόντας, με ἀπλανὲς τὸ βλέμμα. Μετὰ τὸν πρῶτον ἀκούσιον λυγμόν της, δέν εἶχεν ἐκβάλῃ πλέον ἄλλην φωνήν.

— Τί!... πέθανε τὸ παιδί;...

Βρέ!... ἔκαμεν ὁ Κωσταντῆς, μείνας με ἀνοικτὸν τὸ στόμα.

Εἶτα προσέθηκε

— Γιὰ ταῦτο ἔβλεπα κάτι ἀνάποδα ὄνειρα, ζάβαλε!...

Ἡ Δελχαρώ, ἀνακύψασα πρὸς στιγμὴν ἀπὸ τοῦ λίκνου, συνέχουσα τοὺς λυγμούς της, εἶπε

— Μάνα, δέν θὰ φέρῃς τὰ ρουχάκια του, νὰ τὰλλάξουμε;... Ποῦ εἶν' ἡ Ἀμέρσα;

Ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ δὲν ἀπήντησε:

— Ποῦ εἶνε ἡ Ἀμέρσα, μάνα; ἐπανελάβε, ψαύσασα τὸν ἀγκῶνα τῆς μητρὸς της ἡ Δελχαρώ.

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Ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ ἀνετινάχθη ὥς νὰ τὴν
ἐθίξεν ἀκανθὰ ἢ κέντρον νάρκης.

— Ἡ Ἀμέρσα, ποῦ εἶνε; στὸ σπίτι μας. ...
ἀπὴντησε.

5 — Δὲν εἶχεν ἔρθῃ ὁῶ ἢ Ἀμέρσα; Μοῦ
φάνηκε πῶς ἄκουσα τὴ φωνή της μέσ' τὸν
ἔπνο μου, εἶπεν ἡ λεχῶνα.

— Ἄς πάῃ νὰ τὴν φωνάξῃ, εἶπεν ἡ γραῖα,
νεύουσα μὲ τὸν κανθὸν τοῦ διμματος πρὸς τὸν
10 γαμβρόν της.

— Κωστάντη, πᾶς νὰ φωνάξῃς τὴν Ἀμέρσα;
εἶπεν ἡ λεχῶ πρὸς τὸν σύζυγόν της.

— Πάω. Ἀκοῦς, λέει! ... Ὡχ! κρίμα, ζά-
βαλε! Καλὰ ποῦ τὸ βαπτίσαμε κι' ὅλας.

15 Ὁ Νταντῆς ἔκυψεν εἰς τὸ πάτωμα τοῦ μι-
κροῦ προδόμου· εἰς τὸ σκότος, ψηλαφῶν νὰ
εὔρῃ τὰ παληοπάπουτσά του νὰ τὰ φορέσῃ.

Ἐκαμνε μικρὸν θόρυβον, κρούων διάφορα
ζεύγη παλαιῶν τσοκάρων πρὸς ἄλληλα καὶ ἐπὶ
20 τῶν σανίδων τοῦ πατώματος.

— Ποῦ εἶνε τὰ παληοκατσάρια μου; εἶπε.

Τέλος ἐφόρεσεν ἓν ζεύγος πατημένον γυναι-
κεῖον ἐμβάδων, τὰς ὁποίας εὔρε, καὶ αἰτίνες
ἐκάλυπτον μόνον τοὺς δακτύλους τῶν ποδῶν
25 καὶ μέρος τοῦ ταρσοῦ, ἀφήνουσαι ἔξω ὅλην
τὴν πτέρναν. Ἄλλον θόρυβον ἔκαμε διὰ ν'
ἀνοίξῃ τὴν θύραν, μὴ εὐρίσκων εἰς τὸ σκότος
τὸν σύρτην οὔτε τὸ μάνδαλον. Ἀφοῦ ἤνοιξε
τὴν θύραν, ἐπανήλθεν αἰφνης ὀπίσω.

30 — Ἀκοῦς, Δελχαρῶ, εἶπε, τῆς Ἀμέρσας μο-
νάχα νὰ πῶ νὰ ῥθῇ, ἢ νὰ ῥθῇ καὶ τὸ Κρι-
νιὼ μαζύ; Τί λὲς ἐσύ, πεθερά;

Καὶ ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ ἀνυπόμονος·

— Πήγαινε τώρα, τί φέρνεις γῦρο; εἶπε.
35 Ἄς ἔρθῃ ὅποιος ἔρθῃ!

Ἡ Δελχαρῶ ἐθρήνηι ἡρέμα κύπτουσα ἐπὶ
τοῦ λίκνου. Ὁ Νταντῆς πρὶν ἐξέλθῃ, ἔρριψε
βλέμμα εἰς τὸ λίκνον καὶ εἰς τὴν σύζυγόν του.

— Ἄχ! κρίμα, ζάβαλε! εἶπε. ... Κ' ἔβλεπα
40 κατὶ ὄνειρα! ... βρέ, παιδιά!

Κ' ἐξῆλθε δρομαῖος.

Η'.

Τὴν ἐβδομάδα τῶν Βαῖων, μίαν πρωίαν,
ἀπῆλθεν ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ ὀλομόναχη εἰς τὴν
ἐξοχήν, πρὸς τῆς Μαμοῦς τὸ ρέμμα. Ἦθελε
45 νὰ ἐπισκεφθῇ τὸν μικρὸν ἐλαιῶνα, τὸν ὁποῖον
ὡς «ψυχομοῖρι» εἶχε λάβῃ ἀπὸ μίαν εὐπορον
ὀπωσοῦν κουμπάραν της ἀποθανοῦσαν ἀκλη-
ρον, καὶ εἰς τὴν ὁποίαν εἶχε προσφέρει ἐκ-
δουλεύσεις. Τὸ ἥμισυ τοῦ ἐλαιῶνος τούτου

εἶχε δώσει ὡς προῖκα εἰς τὴν Δελχαρῶ, τὸ
50 ἄλλο ἥμισυ κατεῖχεν ἀκόμη ἡ γραῖα.

Ὀλίγαι ἐβδομάδες εἶχον παρέλθῃ ἀπὸ τὰ
γεγονότα τὰ ὁποῖα διηγήθημεν. Οὐδεὶς δυσανά-
λογος θόρυβος εἶχε γίνῃ διὰ τὸ μικρὸν θυ-
γάτριον τῆς Δελχαρῶς τῆς Τραχήλαινας, τὸ
55 ὁποῖον ἔθαψαν τὴν αὐτὴν ἡμέραν. Ἡ μήτηρ
τοῦ βρέφους, ἂν καὶ εἶδε μέλανά τινα σημεῖα
περὶ τὸν λαιμόν τοῦ μικροῦ παιδίου, δὲν θὰ
ἐτόλμα ποτὲ νὰ κάμῃ λόγον, οὔτε ἄλλος θὰ ἐ-
πίστευε τὸ ἔγκλημα τῆς μητρὸς της. Προφανῶς
τὸ παιδίον εἶχεν ἀποθάνῃ ἀπὸ τὸν κοκκίτην.

Ὁ μόνος ἱατρός, ὅστις ὑπῆρχεν ἀπὸ χρό-
νων εἰς τὸ χωρίον, ὁ φιλόανθρωπος Βαυαρὸς
B. ἔπνυχεν ἀπὼν. Εἶχεν ἀκουσθῇ καὶ πάλιν χο-
λέρα εἰς τὴν Αἴγυπτον, καὶ τὸ ὑπουργεῖον
65 τῶν Ἑσωτερικῶν συνείδιζε ν' ἀποστέλλῃ κατ'
ἐκλογὴν τὸν ἱατρὸν τούτον εἰς τὴν διεύθυνσιν
τοῦ ἐν Δήλῳ λοιμοκαρθατηρίου.

Ἀντ' αὐτοῦ ἡ κυβέρνησις εἶχε στείλῃ προσω-
ρινῶς ὡς ὑγειονόμον γηραιὸν τινα ἱατρόν, τὸν
70 κ. M., ὅστις δὲν εἶχε φθάσει ἀκόμη. Ἐν τῷ
μεταξὺ ὑπῆρχεν εἰς ἀπόφοιτος τῆς ἱατρικῆς,
διατρίβων ἐν τῇ νήσῳ. Οὗτος κληθεὶς ὑπὸ τῆς
δημοτικῆς ἀστυνομίας ὅπως βεβαιώσῃ τὸν θά-
νατον, ἐκύτταξεν ἐπιπολαίως τὸ πρόσωπον τοῦ
75 νεκροῦ βρέφους, παρεπονέθη διατὶ νὰ μὴν τὸν
φωνάξουν ἐνόσω τοῦτο ἔξῃ κ' ἔδωκε τὸ «ἐν-
ταφιαστήριον», γράψας «ἐκ σπασμῶδους βη-
χός».

Ἡ γραῖα Χαδοῦλα ἀπὸ τῆς ἡμέρας ἐκείνης
ἔζησε ζωὴν τύψεων, ἀνησυχίας, καὶ μ' ἐξωτε-
ρικὸν σχῆμα ὡς νὰ εἶχε τέφραν ἐπὶ τῆς κό-
μης τῆς ψαρᾶς, τόσον ἐλαφρῶς κυττῇ καὶ
ἀκίνητον. ἐτήρει τὴν κεφαλὴν της, καὶ ὡς νὰ
ἐφόρει τὴν μακρὰν μαύρην μανδύην της ὡς
85 σάκκον μετανοίας. Ὅταν ἐμβῆκεν· ἡ μεγάλῃ
σαρακοστή, ἄρχισε νὰ συχνάζῃ εἰς τὴν ἐκκλη-
σίαν, ἔκαμνε πολλὰς καὶ βαθείας γονυκλισίας,
ἐμελέτα νὰ ἐξομολογηθῇ, καὶ ἀνέβαλλεν. Ἐ-
νήστευεν ἄνευ ἐλαίου ξηροφαγεῦσα τὰς πέντε
90 ἡμέρας ἐκάστης ἐβδομάδος, καὶ εἶχε βαστάξει
«τρίμερο» τὴν πρώτην ἐβδομάδα καὶ τὸ μι-
σοσαράκοστον. Ἐντρέπετο νὰ βλέπῃ τὴν κόρην
της, τὴν Δελχαρῶ, καὶ ἀπέφευγε ν' ἀντικρύσῃ
τὸ βλέμμα της.

Τὴν ἡμέραν λοιπὸν ἐκείνην, τῆς ἐβδομάδος
τῶν Βαῖων, ἐφθασεν ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ λίαν
πρωτὶ εἰς τὴν κορυφὴν τοῦ ὑψηλοῦ πετρώδους
λόφου, τοῦ ἀντικρύζοντος ἐκ δυσμῶν τὴν πο-
λίχνην, καὶ ὁπόθεν μελαγχολικὸν πίπτει τὸ
100 βλέμμα ἐπὶ τοῦ μικροῦ κοιμητηρίου, ἀπλουμέ-

νου κάτω, ἐπὶ ὑψηλῆς θαλασσοπλήκτου λωρί-
δος γῆς, μὲ τὰ λευκὰ μνήματα, καὶ εὐθὺς φεύ-
γει ζητοῦν παιδρότητα καὶ ζῶν ἐῖς τὰ γα-
5 λανὰ κύματα, εἰς τὸν εὐρὺν τριπλοῦν λιμένα,
καὶ εἰς τὰ χλοερά, χαρίεντα νησιῖδια, τὰ φράτ-
τοντα τοῦτον ἐξ ἀνατολῶν καὶ μεσημβρίας.
Ἐπάνω τῆς κορυφῆς ἐκείνης ἴστατὸ ἐρημικόν,
ἄποπτον, ὡς φανὸς τὴν ἡμέραν λάμπων, τὸ
10 ἐξωκλήσιον τοῦ Ἀγίου Ἀντωνίου. Ἡ Φραγ-
κογιαννοῦ διῆλθεν ἔξωθεν, ποιοῦσα τὸ ση-
μεῖον τοῦ Σταυροῦ, κ' ἐνῶ εἶχε σκοπὸν νὰ
εἰσέλθῃ, τὴν τελευταίαν στιγμὴν ἐδίστασε, κ'
ἐξηκολούθησε τὸν δρόμον τῆς. «Δὲν εἶμαι
15 ἄξια», εἶπε μέσα τῆς, «νὰ μῶ ᾿ς ἓνα ξωκ-
κλήσι ποῦ τόσο συχνὰ λειτουργιέται... Ἄς
πάω καλλίτερα στὸν Ἀἰ Γιάννη τὸν Κρυφόν».

Μετὰ τοῦτο ἔφθασεν εἰς τὸν ἑλαιῶνα, ἔπε-
θεώρησεν ἐν πρὸς ἐν ὅλα τὰ ἑλαιόδενδρα διὰ
20 νὰ ἰδῇ ἂν ἦσαν φουσκωμένα ἤδη. Ἦτο ἤδη
περὶ τὰ μέσα Ἀπριλίου, τὸ δὲ Πάσχα ἤρχετο
δύσμιμον. Παρεκάλει μέσα τῆς τὸν Χριστὸν «νὰ
δώσῃ λαδάκι, γιὰ ν' ἀναπλέψ' ἡ φτώχεια».
Ἀπὸ δύο ἑτῶν, τῷ ὄντι, δὲν εἶχαν καρπίσει
ἡ ἑλῆξ, εἶχε δὲ ἀναφανῇ καὶ μία ὑπουλος ἀ-
25 σθένεια, φθείρουσα τὸν καρπὸν, καὶ μαυρί-
ζουσα τοὺς κλῶνας τῶν δένδρων.

Ἀφοῦ ἔμεινεν ἐπ' ὀλίγον εἰς τὸν ἑλαιῶνα,
ἐσηκώθη, στρέφουσα πολλάκις τὴν κεφαλὴν
ὀπίσω, ὡς διὰ ν' ἀποχαιρετίσῃ τὰ ἑλαιόδενδρα
30 καὶ ἀπεμακρύνῃ. Ἐφθασε κάτω εἰς τὸ ρεῦμα
καὶ ἤρχισε νὰ τὸ ἀνέρχεται, καθὼς πολλάκις
συνεΐθιζε. Φέρουσα τὸ καλάθιον τῆς ὑπὸ τὸν
ἀριστερόν ἀγκῶνα, κρατοῦσα τὸ μαχαίράκι
τῆς μὲ τὴν χεῖρα τὴν δεξιάν, ἔκυπτε παν-
35 τοῦ, εἰς ὅσα μέρη αὐτὴ ἐγνώριζε, κ' ἔφαχνε
νὰ εὖρῃ καυκαλήθρες, καὶ ζοχάρια καὶ μυρῶ-
νια, καὶ ἀνηθον διὰ νὰ γεμίσῃ τὸ καλάθια
τῆς, νὰ κάμῃ πῆτταν, τὸ Σάββατον τοῦ Λα-
ζάρου, νὰ φάγῃ αὐτὴ κ' αἱ θυγατέρες τῆς,
40 ἀλλὰ νὰ προσφέρῃ κ' εἰς τῆς γειτόνισσες, ἀπὸ
τὰς ὁποίας χάσιμον δὲν εἶχεν.

Ἐκτὸς τῶν ἀγριολαχάνων τούτων, τὰ ὁποῖα
ὅλοι ἐγνώριζον νὰ συλλέγουν, ἡ Χαδοῦλα εἴ-
45 ξευρεν ἄλλα βότανα, χρήσιμα ὡς φάρμακα διὰ
τοὺς ἀσθενεῖς, τὸ τρίμερο, καὶ τὴν δρακοντιά
καὶ τὴν ἀγριοκρομμύδα, ἀνάμεσα εἰς τὰς κο-
μάρους καὶ τὰς πτέριδας, καὶ παρὰ τὰς ρίζας
τῶν ἀγρίων δένδρων, καὶ τοὺς μύκητας καὶ
τὰς ἀκάνθιας καὶ τὰς κνίδας, καθὼς καὶ τὸ πο-
50 λυτρίχι εἰς τοὺς μικροὺς καταρράκτας τοῦ ρεῦ-
ματος—τὸ ὁποῖον λέγουν ὅτι εἶνε φάρμακον
διὰ τὰς λεγούσας πυρεσσοῦσας.

Ἀφοῦ συνέλεξεν ἱκανὰ βότανα καὶ ἐκ τοῦ
εἶδους τῶν ἱαματικῶν τούτων, τὰ ὁποῖα ἐτύ-
55 λιξεν εἰς χωριστὸν μανδῆλι ἐντὸς τοῦ καλα-
θίου, καὶ ἡ ὥρα ἔκλινεν ἤδη πρὸς τὸ δειλι-
νόν, καὶ ὁ ἥλιος ἐπλησίαζεν εἰς τὴν κορυφὴν
τοῦ βουνοῦ ἐντὸς τοῦ ρεύματος βαθεῖα ἦτο
ἡ σκιά, καὶ ὁ θρόνος τῶν βημάτων τῆς ἀντή-
χει ὡς δοῦπος σκληρὸς εἰς τὸ βῆδος τῆς ψυ-
60 χῆς τῆς.

Ἡ γραῖα ἀνήρχετο ἤδη ὑψηλότερα, πρὸς τὴν
ἀπότομον κορυφὴν τοῦ ρεύματος. Κάτω ἔχα-
ράττετο βαθὺ τὸ ποτάμιον, τ' Ἀχειλᾶ τὸ ρέμμα
καὶ ὅλην τὴν βαθεῖαν κοιλάδα μετὰ ἡρέμου
65 μορμυρισμοῦ διέτρεχε τὸ ρεῦμα, κατὰ τὸ φαι-
νόμενον ἀκίνητοῦν, λιμναῖον, ἀλλὰ πράγματι
ἀεννάως κινούμενον ὑπὸ τὰς μακρὰς βαθυκά-
μους πλατάνους ἀνάμεσα εἰς βρύα καὶ θά-
μνους καὶ πτέριδας, ἐφλοίσβιζε μυστικά, ἐφί-
70 λει τοὺς κορμούς τῶν δένδρων, ἔρπον ὀφιο-
ειδῶς κατὰ μῆκος τῆς κοιλάδος, πρασινωπὸν
ἀπὸ τὰς ἀνταυγείας τὰς χλοεράς, φιλοῦν καὶ
ἅμα δάκνον τοὺς βράχους καὶ τὰς ρίζας, νᾶμα
μορμύρον, ἀθόλωτον, βροῖθον ἀπὸ μικρὰ κα-
75 βουράκια, τὰ ὁποῖα ἔτρεχον νὰ κρυβῶσιν εἰς
τὸ θόλωμα τῆς ἅμμον, ἅμα κανὲν βοσκοπόου-
λον, ἀφήνον τὰς ὀλίγας ἀμνάδας νὰ βόσκουν
εἰς τὴν δροσερὰν γλῶν, ἤρχετο νὰ κύψῃ εἰς
τὸ ρεῦμα, καὶ ἀνεσῆκωνε πέτραν τινα διὰ νὰ
80 τὰ κυνηγήσῃ. Τὸ ἄλalon, ἀσίγητον κελάδημα
τῶν κοσσύφων ἀντήχει ἀρμονικὸν εἰς τὸ δά-
σος, τὸ περιστέφον ὅλην τὴν δυτικὴν κλιτύν,
καὶ ἀνέρπον εἰς τὴν κορυφὴν τοῦ Ἀναγύρου,
ἕως τὴν Ἀετοφωλιὰν ἐπάνω—ὅπου ἔλεγετο
85 ὅτι εἰς θαλασσετὸς εἶχε κατοικήσει ἐπὶ τρεῖ
γενεάς ἀνθρώπων ἐκεῖ, καὶ τέλος ἐξέλιπε χω-
ρὶς ν' ἀφήσῃ ἀετόπουλα. Εἰς τὴν ἐρημωθεῖ-
σαν φωλεὰν τοῦ εὐρέθῃ ὀλόκληρον μουσεῖον
ἀπὸ τεράστια κόκκαλα θαλασσίων ὄψεων, φω-
90 κῶν, καρχαριῶν καὶ ἄλλων ἐναλίων θηρίων,
τὰ ὁποῖα εἶχε ξεφαντώσει κατὰ καιροὺς ὁ μέ-
γας καὶ κραταῖος ὄρνις τῶν θαλασσῶν, μὲ τὸ
γρυπὸν ράμφος του τὸ κυανωπὸν, καὶ μὲ τὸ
τεφρὸν μεγαλοπρεπὲς πτέρωμα.

Ἐπάνω, εἰς τὴν κορυφὴν τοῦ ρεύματος, εἰς
ἓνα ζυγὸν σχηματιζόμενον μεταξὺ δύο βουνῶν,
ἀνάμεσα εἰς τοῦ Κενόμου -ᾧ ῥόγγια καὶ εἰς
τὸν Μικρὸν Ἀνάγυρον, ἐκεῖ εὕρισκετο ἀπὸ
παλαιὸν καιρὸν τὸ ἀρχαῖον, ἔρημον μονύδριον,
100 ὁ Ἀἰς Γάννης ὁ Κρυφός. Ἦτο πράγματι κρυ-
φός, κείμενος ὀπισθεν τοῦ μικροῦ αὐχένος, κα-
λυπτόμενος ἀπὸ τὰ δύο βουνά, καὶ ἀπὸ πυ-
κτὴν λόχμην. Εἴτε ἐκ τοῦ βορείου μέρους ἤρ-

χετό τις, ὅπως τώρα ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ ἀπὸ τ' Ἀχειλᾶ τὸ ρέμμα, εἶτε ἐκ τοῦ μεσημβρινοῦ. ἐκ τῆς τοποθεσίας τῆς καλουμένης τοῦ Κονόμου τὰ ῥόγγια, καὶ ἂν ἐγγύτατα διήρχετο πλησίον τοῦ παλαιοῦ σεβύσματος, ἦτο ἀδύνατον νὰ ὑποπτεύσῃ τὴν ὑπαρξίν του, ἂν δὲν ἐγνώριζε καλῶς τὰ μέρη, ὅπως τὰ ἐγνώριζεν ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ.

10 Ὁ περίβολος καὶ τὰ ὀλίγα κελλία ἦσαν ἐρείπιον ἀπὸ πολλοῦ. Ὁ ναῖσκος ὠρθοῦτο ἀκόμη, ἀλλ' ἦτον ἔρημος καὶ ἀλειτούργητος. Τὸ καθολικὸν ἐστεγαζέτο ἀκόμη, ἀλλ' εἰς τὸ ἅγιον βῆμα ἡ στέγη εἶχε καταρρεύσει πρὸς τὸ βόρειον, αἱ δὲ πλάκες τῆς σκεπῆς καὶ τὰ συντρίμματα εἶχον καλύψει τὸ θυσιαστήριον· ὑπῆρχε ξύλινον τέμπλον, πάλαι ποτὲ γλυπτὸν καὶ χρυσωμένον, ἐφθαρμένον καὶ δυσγνώριστον, ἀλλ' αἱ εἰκόνες ἔλειπον. Αἱ ὀλίγαι τοιχογραφίαι εἶχον φθαρῇ ἀπὸ τὴν ὑγρασίαν, καὶ τὰ πρόσωπα τῶν Ἀγίων δὲν διεκρίνοντο πλέον.

Μόνον δεξιόθεν τοῦ χοροῦ ὑπῆρχε μία τοιχογραφία παριστῶσα τὸν Ἅγιον Ἰωάννην τὸν Προδρόμον μαρτυροῦντα τὸν Χριστόν· « Ἴδε ὁ Ἀμνὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ, ὁ αἴρων τὴν ἁμαρτίαν τοῦ κόσμου. » Τὸ πρόσωπον καὶ ἡ χεὶρ τοῦ Βαπτιστοῦ, τεινομένη καὶ δεικνύουσα, διεκρίνοντο ὀπωσοῦν καλῶς. Τὸ πρόσωπον τοῦ Σωτῆρος λίαν ἀμυδρῶς ἐφαίνετο ἐπὶ τοῦ ὑγροῦ τοίχου.

30 Τὸν Αἰ-Γιάννην τὸν Κρυφὸν ἐπεκαλοῦντο τὸν παλαιὸν καιρὸν ὅλοι ὅσοι εἶχον « κρυφὸν πόνον » ἢ κρυφὴν ἁμαρτίαν. Ἡ γραῖα Χαδοῦλα ἐγνώριζε τὴν δοξασίαν ἢ τὸ ἔθιμον τοῦτο, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο ἐνθυμήθη νὰ ἔλθῃ σήμερον εἰς τὸν παλαιόν, ἔρημον ναῖσκον, ὅπως προσφέρῃ τὰς ἱκεσίας τῆς. Προέκρινε τὸν ναὸν τὸν ἀλειτούργητον, ἀφοῦ καὶ εἰς τὴν ἐνοριακὴν ἐκκλησίαν, ὅπου ἐσύχναζεν ὅλην τὴν σαρακοστήν, ἐτόλμα μόνον νὰ εἰσέρχεται μᾶλλον εἰς τὸν νάρθηκα, ὅπισθεν τοῦ ἐνὸς φύλλου τῆς

35 γυναικείας πύλης, τοῦ κλεισμένου μὲ τὸν σύρτην — ὥς νὰ ἡσθάνετο τὴν ἀνάγκην νὰ εἶν' ἐτοίμη πρὸς φυγὴν, ἅμα τὴν ἐδίωκέ τις! Καὶ δὲν ἐφοβεῖτο τόσον μὴ τὴν διώξῃ ὁ Παπανικόλας, ὁ αὐστηρὸς καὶ ἀσκητικὸς ἐφημέριος, ἢ ὁ κύρ Δημητρός ὁ ἐπίτροπος, ὅστις πάντοτε ἐγόγγυζε καὶ ἦτο τραχὺς πρὸς τὰς γράϊας, αἵτινες ἐπέμενον μὴ θέλουσαι ν' ἀνέρχωνται εἰς τὸν γυναικωνίτην, καὶ ἀπῆτουν νὰ ἔχουν διαρκῶς μικρὸν, περίφρακτον μὲ σειρὰς στασιδίων διαμέρισμα, εἰς τὴν βορειοδυτικὴν γωνίαν τοῦ

40 ναοῦ· ἀλλ' ἐφοβεῖτο τὸν Ἀρχάγγελον, τὸν ἀγριωπὸν, ὅστις ἦτο ζωγραφισμένος μεγαλῶσι

ἐπὶ τῆς βορείας πύλης τοῦ ναοῦ, μὲ τὴν ρομφαίαν του τὴν φλογίνην εἰς τὴν χεῖρα.

Εἰσῆλθεν εἰς τὸν ἔρημον ναῖσκον, ἀναψεν 55 ἐν κηρίον, τὸ ὁποῖον εἶχεν εἰς τὸ καλάθι τῆς μαζῦ μὲ ὀλίγα πυρεῖα, κ' ἔκαμε τρεῖς στρωτὰς γονυκλισίας ἐμπρὸς εἰς τὴν τοιχογραφίαν τὴν ἡμιφθαρμένην. Εἶτα, ἀνακυκλοῦσα εἰς τὸν νοῦν τὴν ἔμμονον ἰδέαν, ἣτις τῆς εἶχε κολλήσει, χωρὶς νὰ τὴν ἐκφράξῃ μεγαλοφώνως, εἶπε μὲ φωνήν, τὴν ὁποίαν θὰ ἠδύνατο ν' ἀκούσῃ τις, ἂν παρίστατο μάρτυς τῆς σκηνῆς ἐκείνης: « Ἄν ἔκαμα καλὰ, Αἰ-Γιάννη μου, νὰ μοῦ δώσῃς σημεῖο σήμερα . . νὰ κάμω μία καλὴ 65 πρᾶξι, ἓνα ψυχικόν, γιὰ νὰ γαληνιάσ' ἡ ψυχὴ μου κ' ἡ καρδούλα μου! . . »

Θ'.

Ἀφοῦ εἶχε γεμίσει τὸ καλάθι τῆς, καὶ ὁ ἥλιος ἔκλινε πολὺ χαμηλὰ, καθὼς ἐξῆλθε τοῦ ἐρήμου ναῖσκου, ἡ γραῖα Χαδοῦλα ἐκίνησε νὰ ἐπιστρέψῃ εἰς τὴν πολίχνην. Κατῆλθε πάλιν τὸ ρέμμα-ρέμμα εἰς τὰ ὀπίσω, ἐστράφη δεξιά, ἄρχισε ν' ἀνηφορίζῃ πρὸς τὸν λόφον τοῦ Ἀγ. Ἀντωνίου, ὁπόθεν εἶχεν ἔλθῃ. Μόνον πρὶν φθάσῃ ἀκόμη εἰς τὴν κορυφὴν τοῦ λόφου, ἐφ' οὗ ἴσταται τὸ παρεκκλήσιον, καὶ ὁπόθεν ἀνοίγεται μεγάλη θέα πρὸς τὸν λιμένα καὶ τὴν πόλιν, εἶδεν ἐκεῖ δεξιὰ τῆς χαμηλὰ εἰς τὸ βάθος μικρὰς κοιλάδος, ἣτις καλεῖται τῆς Μαρμῶς τὸ 70 ρέμμα, καὶ τέμνει κατ' ἀμβλείαν γωνίαν τὴν ἄλλην βαθεῖαν κοιλάδα τοῦ Ἀχειλᾶ, τὸν εὐρὺν καὶ καλῶς καλλιεργημένον κῆπον τοῦ Γιάννη τοῦ Περιβολᾶ, καὶ εἶπε μέσα τῆς:

« Ἄς πάω στὸν μπαχτσὲ τοῦ Γιάννη, νὰ τοῦ γυρέψω κανένα μάτσο κρομμύδια, ἢ κανένα μαρουῖλι, νὰ μὲ φιλέψῃ . . . Τί θὰ χάσω; » 85

Συγχρόνως, ἀνεπόλησε τὴν στιγμὴν ἐκείνην, ὅτι πρὸ ἡμερῶν εἶχεν ἀκούσει, ὅτι ἡ γυναῖκα τοῦ Γιάννη τοῦ Περιβολᾶ ἦτον ἄρρωστη. Ἡ γυνὴ ἂν αὕτη εὐρίσκετο τώρα εἰς τὴν καλύβην τὴν ἐντὸς τοῦ κήπου, παρὰ τὴν εἴσοδον, ἢ ἂν ἐνοσηλεύετο εἰς τὴν πόλιν. Ἀλλ' ἐπειδὴ ὁ κηπουρὸς ὁ ἴδιος θὰ εὐρίσκετο ἐξ ἁπαντος ἐδῶ, (συνεπέρανε, ἐπειδὴ ἔβλεπε μακρόθεν ἀνοικτὴν τὴν θύραν τοῦ περιβόλου) ἐσυλλογίσθη νὰ τοῦ πουλήσῃ δούλευσιν, μὲ τὰ βότανα 90 ποῦ εἶχε στὸ καλάθιακι τῆς, ὑποσχομένη αὐτῷ «μαντζούνια» πρὸς ἱασιν τῆς γυναικὸς του. Εἶτα εὐθὺς πάλιν εἶπε καθ' ἑαυτήν.

« Τί δούλεψι νὰ κάμῃ κανεὶς στὴ φτώχεια! 100 . . Ἡ μεγαλείτερη καλὴ σὺννη ποῦ μπορούσε

νὰ τοὺς κάμη θὰ ἦτον νὰ εἶχε κανεὶς στεροφο-
 βότανο νὰ τοὺς δώσῃ. (Θέ μ', σχώρεσέ με!)
 "Ἄς ἦτον καὶ παλληκαροβότανο! ἐπέφερε. Γιατὶ
 5 κάνει ὅλο κοριτσάκια, κι' αὐτὴ ἡ φτωχιά! . . .
 Ὁ θάρῳ πῶς ἔχει πέντ' ἔξη ὡς τώρα. Δὲν ξέρω
 ἂν τῆς ἔχη πεθάνῃ κανένα . . . ἀπ' αὐτὰ τὰ
 ἐφτάτηνχα!»

Εἶχεν ἐρευνήσει, τῷ ὄντι, ἐπὶ χρόνους πολ-
 10 λούς, εἰς τὰ βουνὰ καὶ τὰς φάραγγας, ὅπως
 εὗρη «παλληκαροβότανο» διὰ τὴν κόρην της,
 ἀλλ' ἐκεῖνο τὸ ὅποιον τῆς εἶχε δώσει δὲν ἐπέ-
 τυχεν· ἐξ ἐναντίας, ἐνήργησε μᾶλλον ὡς «κο-
 ριτσοβότανο». Καὶ ὅμως εἰς αὐτὴν ἄλλοτε, ὅ-
 15 ταν τῆς τὸ ἔδωκεν ἡ ἀνδραδέλφη της, εἶχε τε-
 λεσφορήσει, διότι ἔκαμε τέσσαρας υἱούς, καὶ
 μόνον τρεῖς θυγατέρας. "Ὅσον ἀφορᾷ τὸ στερο-
 φοβότανο, ὁ πνευματικὸς τῆς εἶχεν εἰπεῖ πρὸ
 χρόνων ὅτι εἶνε μεγάλη ἁμαρτία.

Πρὶν φθάσῃ εἰς τὴν θύραν τοῦ κήπου, κα-
 20 θὼς κατήρχετο τὸνδρομίσκον τῆς κλιτύος, εἶ-
 δεν ὅτι ὁ Γιάννης ὁ Περιβολᾶς δὲν εὐρίσκετο
 ἐντὸς τοῦ κήπου, ἀλλ' ἦτο τὴν στιγμὴν ἐκεί-
 νην εἰς τὸν γειτονικὸν ἀγρὸν, τὸν ὅποιον εἶχε
 25 φαίνεται ἐνοικιάσει ὡς κολλήγας ἀπὸ τὸν γεί-
 τονα. Ὁ ἀγρὸς ἦτον σπαρμένος κριθὴν λίαν
 χλοᾶζουσαν καὶ σπιθαμιαίαν ἤδη, ἔκειτο δὲ
 ἐπὶ χαμηλοτέρου ἀπὸ τὸν κήπον ἐπιπέδου, ὡς
 ὕψος γόνατος. Ὁ Γιάννης, σκυμμένος εἰς μίαν
 30 ἄκρην τοῦ ἀγροῦ, ὡς φαίνεται, ἐβοτάνιζεν, ἦτοι
 ἐξερρίζωνε τ' ἄσχημα χόρτα καὶ τὰ ζιζάνια ἀνά-
 μεσα εἰς τὸ σπαρτόν, ἐνόσῳ ἦτο ἀκόμη ἐνω-
 ρίς, καὶ ὁ ἥλιος ἔδυεν ἤδη. Εὐρίσκετο πέραν
 35 τῆς ἄλλης ἄκρας τοῦ κήπου, καὶ ὅταν ἡ Γιαν-
 νοῦ ἐπλησίασεν εἰς τὴν θύραν τοῦ περιβόλου,
 δὲν τὸν ἔβλεπε πλέον, κρυπτόμενον ὀπισθεν
 τοῦ πυκνοῦ φράκτου, εἰς ἱκανὴν ἀπόστασιν,
 ὥστε δὲν ἠμπούρεσε νὰ τοῦ φωνάξῃ μακρόθεν
 τὴν καλησπέραν. Ἐκεῖνος, κύπτων, ὅλος ἐκδο-
 40 τος εἰς τὴν ἐργασίαν του, οὔτε τὴν εἶδεν.

Ἡ γραῖα Χαδούλα εἰσῆλθε. Πλησίον τῆς
 40 θύρας ἦτον ἡ καλύβη, ἱκανῶς λευκάζουσα, μὲ
 ἑξωτερικὸν ὄχι πολὺ ἀκμαῖον οὔτε καθάριον.
 Ἐφαίνετο ὅτι πρὸ πολλοῦ χρόνου δὲν εἶχεν
 ἀσβεστωθῇ, κ' ἐμαρτύρει περὶ τῆς ἀρρωστίας

τῆς οἰκοκυρᾶς. Ἀταξία ἐργαλείων, χόρτων καὶ 45
 δεμάτων ὑπῆρχεν ἐμπροσθεν ταύτης. Ἡ θύρα
 ἦτο κλειστή: Τὰ δύο παράθυρα κλειστά. Μό-
 νον εἰς φεγγίτης μὲ ὕalon ὑπῆρχε πρὸς τὰ
 ἄνω, ἀλλὰ διὰ νὰ φθάσῃ ὡς ἐκεῖ ἐπάνω ἡ 50
 Φραγκογιαννοῦ, διὰ νὰ στηλώσῃ τὸ ἀνάστημά
 της καὶ ἴδῃ ἂν ἦτον ἄνθρωπος μέσα, ἔπρεπε
 ν' ἀνέλθῃ τὰς δύο ἡ τρεῖς βαθμίδας, καὶ νὰ
 φθάσῃ εἰς τὸ μικρὸν, ἀφρακτον σανίδωμα, τὸ
 καλούμενον «χαγιάτι».

Ἐνῶ ἐδίσταζον, ἂν ἔπρεπεν οὕτω νὰ κάμῃ, 55
 ἡ μᾶλλον ν' ἀνέλθῃ ἀπλῶς εἰς τὸ χαγιάτι καὶ
 νὰ κρούσῃ τὴν θύραν, ἤκουσε φωνὰς μικρῶν
 κορασιῶν. Ὀλίγον παρέκει ἦτον τὸ πηγᾶδι μὲ
 τὸν μάγγανον, καὶ δίπλα, ἡ στέρνα, χαμηλή,
 βαθεῖα, μὲ τὰς ὀχθίας μόλις ἀνεχούσας ὑπε- 60
 ράνω τῆς ἐπιφανείας τῆς γῆς. Ἐπάνω εἰς αὐ-
 τὴν τὴν κτιστὴν ὀχθὴν, παρὰ τὸ χεῖλος τῆς
 στέρνας, ἐκάθηντο δύο μικρὰ κοράσια, τὸ ἐν
 ὡς πέντε ἐτῶν, τὸ ἄλλο ὡς τριῶν ἐτῶν, καὶ
 65 ἔπαιζαν μὲ μίαν καλαμιὰν καὶ μὲ σπάγγον καὶ
 ἐν καρφίον δεμένον εἰς τὴν ἄκρην, ὡς νὰ ἐ-
 ψάρευαν τάχα ἐντὸς τῆς στέρνας.

— Νά! . . . μοῦ ἔδωκε τὸ σημεῖο ὁ "Αἰς- 70
 Γιάννης, εἶπε μέσα της, σχεδὸν ἀκουσίως ἡ
 Φραγκογιαννοῦ, ἅμα εἶδε τὰ δύο θυγάτρια . . .
 Τί λευθεριά θὰ τῆς ἔκαναν τῆς φτωχίας, τῆς
 Περιβολοῦς, ἀνίσως ἔπεφταν μέσ' τὴ στέρνα κ'
 ἐκολυμποῦσαν! . . . Νὰ ἰδοῦμε, ἔχει νερό;

Πλησιάσασα, ἔκνυψε, καὶ εἶδεν ὅτι ἡ στέρνα ἦτον 75
 σχεδὸν γεμάτη· ὡς δύο τρίτα ὀργυιᾶς νεροῦ.

— Τί ε' ἀφήνει ἐδῶ, κείνος ὁ πατέρας τους,
 μικρὰ κορίτσια, εἶπε πάλιν ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ.
 Τάχα δὲν μποροῦν νὰ πέσουν καὶ μοναχὰ τους
 μέσα; . . .

"Εστρεψεν ἀνήσυχον βλέμμα πρὸς τὴν κα- 80
 λύβην. Ἄλλ' αὐτὴ εἶχε τὴν ὄψιν ὅτι δὲν ὑπῆρ-
 χεν ἄνθρωπος μέσα.

Ἐκύτταξε μετὰ περιεργείας τὰ δύο κοράσια. 85
 Τὸ μεγαλείτερον τούτων ὠραῖον, ξανθόν, ἂν
 καὶ σχεδὸν ἀνιπτον, ἔκαμινεν ὠραίαν ἐντύπω-
 σιν. Τὸ μικρότερον, γλωμόν, κάκονδυμένον, ἐ-
 φαίνετο μᾶλλον νὰ πάσχη ἀπὸ «ζούραν», ἦτοι
 παιδικὸν μαρασμόν.

Ἔπεται συνέχεια

Α. ΠΑΠΑΔΙΑΜΑΝΤΗΣ

Η ΦΟΝΙΣΣΑ

— Κοριτσάκια, εἶπεν ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ, τί
ἐκάνετ' δῶ;... Ποῦ εἶν' ἡ μάνα σας;

Τὸ μεγαλείτερον κοράσιον ἀπήντησε

— Πίτι.

5 — Στὸ σπίτι, ἡρμήνευσεν ἡ γραῖα. Μὰ ποῦ
στοῦ σπίτι; Ἐδῶ ἢ στοῦ χωριό;

— Ζὲν εἶνε ζῶ, εἶπε πάλιν τὸ μικρόν.

Φαίνεται ὅτι ἐξετέλει ἐντολὴν τοῦ πατρός
της, μὴ θέλοντος νὰ ἐνοχλῶσιν οἱ διαβάται τὴν
10 ἄρρωστην. Αὕτη, ἄλλως, εὗρίσκετο πράγματι
ἐντὸς τῆς καλύβης, καίτοι τὰ παραθύρα ἦσαν
κλειστά, ἴσως διὰ νὰ μὴ τὴν βλάβῃ ὁ ἐσπε-
ρινὸς ἀήρ τοῦ ρεύματος. Φαίνεται ὅτι ὁ σύ-
15 ζυγὸς τῆς πρὸ ὀλίγου μόνον εἶχε κατέλθῃ εἰς
τὸν γειτονικὸν ἀγρόν, πρὸς μικρὰν συμπληρω-
τικὴν ἐργασίαν, καὶ εἶχεν ὀκνήσει ἡ νομίσαι
περιττὸν νὰ κλείσῃ καὶ τὴν θύραν τοῦ περι-
βόλου τοῦ λαχανοκήπου.

Ἡ γραῖα Χαδούλα ἠρώτησε καὶ πάλιν

20 Κ' εἶνε στοῦ χωριό, ἡ μάνα σας; Καὶ σεῖς
πῶς εἰστε δῶ μοναχά σας;

— Εἶνε πατέλας ζῶ, εἶπεν ἡ μικρά.

— Ποῦ;

— Ἐκεῖ κάτω, ἔδειξεν ἡ μικρά.

25 — Καὶ τί κάνει;

Ἡ παιδίσκη ἔσειε τοὺς ὦμους. Δὲν ἤξευρε
τί νὰ εἴπῃ. Τέλος ἐπρόφερεν

— Ἐχει ζ'λειά (ἔχει δουλειά.)

— Πῶς σὲ λένε, κορίτσι μου;

30 — Μένα; Μ'σούδα (Μυρσούδα).

— Καὶ τὴν ἀδερφή σου;

— Τούλα (Ἀρετούλα).

Ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ ἐσκέφθη

35 «Θὰ φωνάξουν, τάχα;... Θ' ἀκουστῇ; Ποῦ
ν' ἀκουστῇ!... Πρέπει νὰ κάμω γλήγορα, προσ-
έθηκε μέσα της. Αὐτός, ὅπου εἶνε, τώρα σὲ
λίγο, θ' ἄρθῃ δῶ, γιατί θὰ σουρουπώσῃ, καὶ
δὲ θὰ βλέπῃ νὰ κάνῃ δουλειά ἐκεῖ κάτω...
Καὶ πρέπει νὰ φεύγω τὸ γλιγορώτερο, χωρὶς
40 νὰ μὲ ἰδῇ, ὅπως δὲν με εἶδε ὡς τώρα».

Ἐδίστασε πρὸς στιγμὴν. Ἡσθάνθη μέσα
της φοβερὰν πάλιν. Εἶτα εἶπε, σχεδὸν μεγα-
λοφώνως «Καρδιά!... αὐτὸ εἶνε μιὰ ἀπό-
φασις».

Καὶ δρᾷσα με τὰς δύο χεῖρας τὰ δύο κο- 45
ράσια, τὰ ὥθησε μετὰ μεγάλῃν βίαν.

Ἡκούσθη μέγας πλαταγισμός.

Τὰ δύο πλάσματα ἔπλεαν εἰς τὸ νερὸν τῆς
στερνάς.

Ἡ μεγαλητέρα κορασὶς ἔρρηξεν ὀξεῖαν κραυ- 50
γὴν, ἣτις ἀντήχησεν εἰς τὴν μοναζίαν τῆς ἐσπέ-
ρας.

— Μᾶ...!

Ἐξ ἐμφύτου ὁρμῆς, ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ ἔστρεψε
τὸ προσωποῦν πρὸς τὴν λευκὴν καλύβην, ὅπου 55
μέχρι τοῦδε εἶχεν ἐστραμμένα τὰ νῶτα.

Καὶ συγχρόνως ἠτοιμάζετο νὰ φύγῃ, καὶ
συνάμα ἔστρεψε τὸν κανθὸν τοῦ ὄμματός πρὸς
τὴν στέρναν, διὰ νὰ ἰδῇ ἂν διήρκει ἡ ἀγωνία.

Ἀνέλαβε τὸ καλάθι τῆς, τὸ ὁποῖον εἶχεν ἀπο- 60
θέσῃ καταγῆς, καὶ ἀπεμακρύνθη δύο βήματα.

Τὰ δύο μικρὰ πλάσματα ἤσπαιρον μέσα εἰς
τὸ νερὸν. Ἡ μικρὰ εἶχε βυθισθῇ ἤδη. Ἡ με-
γαλητέρα ἐπάλαιε.

Μετ' ὀλίγα δευτερόλεπτα, ἡ γραῖα ἤκουσεν 65
ὀπισθεν τῆς κρότον θύρας ἀνοιγομένης, καὶ
ἀσθενῇ φωνῇ.

Ἐστράφη. Ἡ θύρα τῆς καλύβης εἶχεν ἀνοι-
χθῇ. Ἡ ἄρρωστη γυνή, ἡ μήτηρ τῶν δύο κο- 70
ρασίων, ὠχρά, καὶ τυλιγμένη μετὰ μαλλίνην σιν-
δόνα, ὁμοία μετὰ φάντασμα, ἴστατο εἰς τὸ χά-
σμα τῆς θύρας.

— Τί εἶνε; εἶπε μετὰ τρόμου ἡ πάσχουσα
γυνή.

Τότε ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ, μετὰ μεγάλῃν ἐτοιμό- 75
τητα, καθὼς ἴστατο ὀρθία, δύο βήματα πρὸς
τὴν στέρναν, ἔρριψε τὸ καλάθι τῆς κάτω, τὸ
ὁποῖον εἶχεν ἀναλάβῃ ἀρτίως, καὶ ἄρχισε νὰ
τρέχῃ, νὰ πηδᾷ, καὶ νὰ φωνάζῃ.

— Τὰ κορίτσια!... Τὰ κορίτσια!... πέ- 80
σανε μέσα!... Κύτταξε!... Δὲν ἔχετε τὸ νοῦ
σας, χριστιανοί;... Πῶς κάμανε;... Καὶ τὰ-
φίνετε μοναχὰ τους, κοντὰ στὴν στέρνα, νερὸ
γεμάτῃ!...

Καλὰ ποῦ βρέθηκα!... Νά, τώρα πέρασα 85
κ' ἐγώ... Ὁ Θεὸς μ' ἔστειλε!

Κ' ἐν τῷ ᾧμα κύψασα, καὶ ἀφαιρέσασα ἐν
ἀκαρεῖ τὴν φουστάναν τῆς, μέινασα μετὰ τὴν
λεγομένην «μαλλίναν», τὴν ἐν εἶδει μεσοφο- 90
ρίου, ἀπορρίπτουσα τὰς πατημένας χονδράς

ἐμβάδας, μείνασα μὲ τὰς κάλτσας τὰς τρυπη-
 μένας εἰς τὴν πτέρναν, ἐρρίφθη βαρεῖα, μετὰ
 πατάγου μέσα εἰς τὸ νερόν τῆς στέρας.

5 Ἡ γυνὴ ἡ ἄρρωστη εἶχεν ἀφήσει βραχνὴν
 κραυγὴν, κ' ἔτρεξε νὰ κατέλθῃ τὰ δύο ἢ τρία
 λίθινα σκαλοπάτια τῆς εἰσόδου, παραπατοῦσα
 καὶ μόλις δυναμένη νὰ βαδίζῃ ἐκ τῆς ἀδυνα-
 10 μίας. Πρὶν αὕτη φθάσῃ πλησίον τῆς στέ-
 ρας, ἡ Γιαννοῦ εἶχε πιάσει τὸ μικρότερον κο-
 ράσιον, τὸ ὁποῖον τῆς ἐφαίνετο μᾶλλον πνιγ-
 μένον ἤδη, καὶ τὸ ἔσυρε βραδέως πρὸς τὰ
 ἔξω, μὲ τὴν κεφαλὴν πάντοτε ἐπίστομα εἰς
 τὸ νερόν. Εἶτα σηκώσασα τὸ μικρὸν σῶμα,
 15 ἔκνιψε κ' ἐπίασε τὴν ἄλλην κορασίδα, τὴν με-
 γαλειτέραν. Τὴν ἔδραξεν ἀπὸ τὸ κράσπεδον
 τοῦ φορέματός της, καὶ ἀπὸ τὸν ἕνα πόδα,
 κ' ἐνῶ ἔτράβα πρὸς τὰ ἄνω τὸ σῶμα, ἡ κε-
 20 φαλὴ ἔμενε κάτω, ὅσον τὸ δυνατόν μακροτέ-
 ραν ὦραν ἐντὸς τοῦ νεροῦ.

Τέλος ἡ μήτηρ εἶχε φθάσει πλησίον τῆς
 σκηνῆς, καὶ ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ ἔσυρεν ἀποφα-
 σιστικῶς τὸ σῶμα πρὸς τὰ ἔξω. Ἀπέθηκε
 τοῦτο πλησίον τοῦ ἄλλου σώματος.

25 Τὰ δύο μικρὰ πλάσματα ἐφαίνοντο ἀναί-
 σθητα.

Ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ μετὰ προσπαθείας, ψά-
 ξασα μὲ τοὺς πόδας εἰς τὸ νερόν, ἀνεῦρεν ἐπὶ
 τῆς μεσημβρινῆς πλευρᾶς τὸ στόμιον τῆς στέρ-
 30 ρας, τὸ φραγμένον διὰ πλατείας σανίδος μὲ
 ὑψηλὴν ὥς κοντάριον λαβὴν, καὶ πατήσασα
 τὸν ἕνα πόδα ἐπὶ τῆς ἐσοχῆς ἐκείνης τοῦ τοί-
 χου ἀνῆλθε μετὰ κόπου εἰς τὴν κρηπίδα ὅλη
 σταζουσα.

35 — Εἶδες! Δὲν τὸ ἐσυλλογίστηκα! ἀνέκρα-
 ξεν ἐπιδεικτικῶς ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ. Τάχα δὲν
 ἔπρεπε νὰ τραβήξω τὸν κόπανο ἐπάνω, νὰ
 ξεφράξω τὴ μποῦκα, γιὰ ν' ἀδειάσῃ μονομιᾶς
 ἡ στέρνα, πρὶν πνιγοῦν τὰ κοριτσάκια, τὰ
 40 καῦμένα!

Ἦτο ἀληθές, ἄλλως, ὅτι δὲν τὸ εἶχε σκεφθῇ.

Πλὴν ὑπάρχει ὑποκρισία καὶ ἐν τῇ εὐκρινείᾳ.

Ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ εἰτάζε τὰ κράσπεδα τῶν
 ἐνδυμάτων της, τὰ διάβροχα, καὶ ῥίπτουσα
 βλέμμα ἐπὶ τὰ δύο ἀναίσθητα σώματα, ἤρχισεν
 45 ἐν βίᾳ καὶ σπουδῇ νὰ λέγῃ.

— Κρέμασμα ἀνάποδα θέλουνε... Χτύπημα
 μὲ τὸ καλάμι, γιὰ νὰ ξεράσουν μαθές!... Καλὰ
 50 ποῦ εἶνε γλυκὸ τὸ νερό... Ποῦ εἶνε ὁ ἄν-
 δρας σου, χριστιανή μου;... Ἔτσι τάφήνουν,
 μικρὰ κορίτσα, μοναχὰ τους, νὰ παίζουν μὲ τὸ
 νερό τῆς στέρας;... Καλὰ ποῦ ἤρθα! Ὁ Θεὸς
 μ' ἔστειλε... Ἀπὸ τὸν Ἀνάγκυρο ἔρχομαι, ἀπ'
 τὸν ἐληῶνα... Καλὰ ποῦ ἦτον ἡ πόρτα τοῦ
 55 μπαχτσέ ἀνοικτὴ!...

Ποῦνε ὁ ἄνδρας σου; Ποῦν' τος; Ὅτι μπῆκα
 ἀπ' τὴν πόρτα, ἀκούω μπλούμ! Τρέχω...
 Τί νὰ ἰδῶ! Δὲν πρόφθασα... Οὔτε ἤξευρα
 πῶς εἰσ' ἐδῶ. Σὲ εἶχμ στο χωριὸ πῶς βρῖσκε-
 60 ται... Εἶχα μάθῃ πῶς ἦσουν ἄρρωστη...
 Τὴν τρομάρα ποῦ πῆρα!... Τώρα, κρέμασμα
 ἀνάποδα, καὶ γλήγορα... Δὲν πιστεύω νὰ εἶνε
 καλὰ πνιγμένα... Ποῦνέ... τος ὁ ἄνδρας σου;
 Ποῦν' τος;

Καὶ δραῖσασα μετὰ βίας τὸ ἐν σῶμα τὸ μι-
 65 κρότερον, περὶ τοῦ ὁποίου ἦτο σχεδὸν βεβαία
 ὅτι ἦτο νεκρὸν ἤδη, τὸ μετέφερε πλησίον ἑνὸς
 δένδρου, διὰ νὰ τὸ κρεμάσῃ ἀνάποδα, ὡς ἔλεγε.

— Ποῦ εἶν' ἕνα σκοινάκι;... Νά, βλέπω
 70 ἕνα σπάγγον μὲ καλαμιὰ!

Καλὰ, θὰ χρειαστῇ.

Ἐνευεν ἀνυπομόνως εἰς τὴν ἄρρωστην γυ-
 ναῖκα, νὰ τῆς φέρῃ πλησίον τὴν καλαμιὰ, μὲ τὴν
 ὁποῖαν ἐπαίζαν πρὸ μικροῦ αἱ δύο κορασιδες.

Ἡ γυνή, ζαλισμένη, παραλογισμένη, συμ-
 75 πλέκουσα τὺς χεῖρας ἐν ἀπορίᾳ, ἐν τρόμῳ, ἐν
 ἀγωνίᾳ, μὲ ἀσθενὴ φωνὴν εἶπε.

— Μὰ ποῦνε ὁ πατέρας τους;

— Ἐμένα ῥωτᾷς; εἶπεν ἡ Γιαννοῦ.

— Δὲν φωνάζεις;... Δὲν μπορῶ νὰ σκούξω,
 80 δὲν ἔχω καρδίτσα, χριστιανή μου... Ἵσως νὰ
 εἶνε ἀποκάτω, στο χωράφι;

Ἔπεται συνέχεια

Α. ΠΑΠΑΔΙΑΜΑΝΤΗΣ



προθυμία, με λαχτάρα, ύστερα, τὰ γύμωναν
καὶ τὰ 'πλεναν καλὰ-καλὰ, τὰ 'σφούγγιζαν μ'
ἄσπρη χρυσοκεντημένη μπόλια καὶ τὰ μύρω-
ναν . . Ἄλλα φιλήματα, καὶ πάλιν ἄλλα ἀγ-
καλιάσματα με βιά καὶ προθυμία καὶ λαχτά-
ρα! . . . Μὲ τὸ νερὸ ἐκεῖνο ὕστερα ξεράντιζαν
τὸ σπῆτι ὡς με ἀγίασμα, ἔνιβαν τὰ χέρια καὶ τὰ
πρόσωπα, καὶ με τὴν ἴδια μπόλια ἀναβαν στὰ
χέρια καὶ στὰ πρόσωπα μιὰ δροσερότητα παρθε-

νική καὶ ξάνθιζαν μιὰ χροῖα τριανταφυλλένια . . .

Καὶ σ' ὅλη τὴν ἐποποιία αὐτὴ τῆς Πί-
στεως, παντοῦ μπροστὰ σὰν Μυροφόραις ἢ
γυναῖκες, σὰν τόσαις λευκαῖς Μαρίαῖς τοῦ
Εὐαγγελίου, μπροστὰ καὶ πρώταις παντοῦ, εἰς
ὅλα, στὴν περιποίησι, στὸν πόθο, στὴν ἀγάπη,
σὲ κάθε ἀρμονία καρδιάς λαχταρισμένης ποῦ
περίμενε . . . Ὡ! τί σκηνὴ κατανύξεως γλυκειᾶς
ἦτον ἡ σκηνὴ ἐκείνη τοῦ πλουσίματος!

ΔΗΜΗΤΡΙΟΣ ΑΝΑΣΤΑΣΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ
Ο ΑΘΗΝΑΙΟΣ

Η ΦΟΝΙΣΣΑ

Η Φραγκογιαννοῦ, ἀποθέσασα πρὸς ὦραν
τὸ μικρὸν σῶμα καταγῆς, εἶχε τρέξει δύο
βήματα, καὶ λύση τὴν καλαμιὰν με τὸν σπάγ-
γον, κ' ἐπροσπάθει νὰ τὸν λύση ἢ τὸν κόψη,
5 ὅπως δέση δι' αὐτοῦ τοὺς πόδας τῆς μικρᾶς
πνιγμένης εἰς τὸν κλῶνα τῆς κερασέας, καὶ κρε-
μάσει τὸ σῶμα κατὰ κεφαλῆς.

Συγχρόνως, ἀπαντῶσα εἰς τὴν ἐπίκλησιν
τῆς γυναικὸς, ἐφώναζε με ἀγρίαν, ἀλλόκοτον
10 φωνήν·

Γιάννη! . . Γιάννη!

Ἡ κραυγὴ ἀντήχησεν ἀνὰ τὴν κοιλάδα. Ἄλλ'
ὁ Γιάννης δὲν ἐφαίνετο. Ἡ Γιαννοῦ ἔδεσε
τοῖς πόδας τῆς μικρᾶς, κ' ἐπροσπάθει νὰ τὴν
15 κρεμάσει. συγχρόνως δὲ ἐπανέλαβε τὴν κραυ-
γὴν τῆς·

— Γιάννη! . . . Ποῦ εἶσαι; . . ἔλα! . . . Τὰ
κορίτσια πέσανε μέσ' τὴν στέρνα! . . .

«Καλλίτερα ποῦ ἀργεῖ», ἔλεγε μέσα τῆς.

20 — Δὲν ἀκούει, θὰ 'πῶ αὐτὸς ὁ χριστιανός;
Τόσο ταμάχι, στὴ δουλειά! Τώρα νύκτωσε
πλειά! . . . Γιάννη! Γιάννη! . . .

Συγχρόνως συνησθάνη ὅτι σχεδὸν ἐπροδίδετο,
καθότι ἡ γυνὴ ρητῶς δὲν τῆς εἶχεν εἰπεῖ ὅτι
25 ὁ Γιάννης εἰργάζετο στὸ χωράφι, ἀλλὰ μόνον
ἡ ἴδια τὸν εἶχεν ἰδεῖ, καὶ ἂν τῆς τὸ εἶπέ τις,
ἢ πνιγεῖσα παιδίσκη τῆς τὸ εἶπεν. Ὅθεν ἐπέ-
φερε·

30 — Μὰ ποῦ εἶνε; . . . Στὸ χωράφι, εἶπες;
Καὶ τί κάνει; . . . Ποιὸς νὰ τρέξη, χριστιανή
μου, ὡς ἐκεῖ; . . . Σὺ εἶσαι ἄρρωστη γυναῖκα . . .
Γιάννη! . . . Ποῦ εἶσαι, Γιάννη;

Τέλος ἠκούσθη φωνή, πέραν τοῦ ἀκρικοῦ
φράκτου, ἀπὸ τὴν ἐσχατιὰν ἐρχομένη.

— Τί εἶνε; . . . Ποιὸς φωνάζει;

35 — Τρέξε, Γιάννη! . . . Τὰ κορίτσια πνιγῆκανε!
ἔκραξε με μέγαν κόπον ἢ ἄρρωστη γυνή.

Μετὰ ἐν λεπτόν, ἐφθασε τρέχων ὁ Γιάννης.

Ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ ἐν τῷ μεταξὺ εἶχε κρε-
μάσει τὸ μικρὸν σῶμα, εἶτα ἐσήκωσε καὶ τὸ
40 σῶμα τὸ ἄλλο, τῆς μεγαλειτέρας παιδίσκης,
καὶ τὸ ἐψηλάφει με τὰς δύο χεῖρας, ζητοῦσα
νὰ βεβαιωθῇ ἂν ἦτο νεκρὸν ἤδη. Καὶ συγχρό-
νως ἔρριπτε λοξὸν ὕπουλον βλέμμα πρὸς τὴν
45 δύστηνον μητέρα, τὴν ὠχρὰν καὶ ριγνύσαν
ὑπὸ τὴν λευκὴν, μαλλίνην συνδόνα τῆς, κ'
ἔσεισε τὴν κεφαλὴν, ἀκουσίως οἰκτείρουσα τὴν
γυναῖκα ἐκείνην.

50 Ὅταν εἶδε μακρόθεν τὸν πατέρα, τὸν κη-
πουρόν, νὰ τρέχῃ πρὸς τὰ ἐδῶ, ἐγύρισε τὸ
σῶμα με τὴν κεφαλὴν κάτω, καὶ τὸ ἐκράτει
προσωρινῶς οὕτω διστάζουσα καὶ ἔντρομος.

— Τί εἶνε; . . . Τί τρέχει; ἔκραξεν ἐν ἄκρα
ἀπορίᾳ ὁ Γιάννης.

55 — Νά! καλὰ ποῦ βρέθηκα! ἐφώναζε πρὸς
τοῦτον ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ . . . Ἡρόμουν ἀπὸ
τὸν Ἀνάγυρο, με τὸ κοφίνι μου. Ἐλεγα νὰ σοῦ
δώσω κινένα βότανο, ἀπ' αὐτὰ ποῦ μᾶζωξα
σήμερα στὸ ῥέμμα, γιὰ νὰ κάμετε ματσοῦνι
60 γιὰ τὴν γυναῖκά σου! . . . ἐπειδὴ εἶχα μάθη
πὼς ἦτον ἄρρωστη . . . Καλὰ ποῦ βρέθηκε ἡ
πόρτα ἀνοιχτή! . . . Μπαίνω μέσα . . . Ἀκούω,
μπλούμ! τὴν τρομάρα ποῦ πῆρα! Τὰ δυὸ
κορίτσια, καθὼς ἔπαιζαν με τὴν καλαμιὰ, ἔπε-
σαν στὴ στέρνα . . . Κατὰ πῶς φαίνεται, ὅσο
65 μπόρεσα νὰ καταλάβω, εἶχαν πιάσει κανγα

ποιά νὰ κρατῇ τὴν καλαμιὰ, γιὰ νὰ βγάλῃ
τάχα τὰ ψάρια... Ἡ μικρὴ ἤθελε ν' ἀρπάξῃ
τὴν καλαμιὰ ἀπ' τὴ μεγάλη... Σπρώχνοντας
ἡ μεγάλη τὴ μικρὴ, τὴν ἔρριξε μέσ' τὸ νερό, καὶ
5 πιάνοντας ἡ μικρὴ τὴν μεγάλη, κατὰ πῶς φαί-
νεται, τὴν ἐτράβηξε μαζί της μέσ' τὴ στέρνα.
(Ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ εἶχε αὐτοσχεδιάσει τὴν ἐρ-
μηνείαν ταύτην ἐκ τοῦ προχείρου, καὶ ἐξ ἐμ-
πνεύσεως.) Ἀχ! τὴν τρομάρα ποῦ πῆρα!
10 Ἀκούω ἓνα μπλούμ! Καλὰ ποῦ βρέθηκα! Ὁ
Θεὸς μ' ἔστειλε... Ἀμμή, ἔτσι ἀφήνουνε,
χριστιανοὶ μου, μικρὰ κορίτσια, νὰ παίζουν μο-
ναχὰ τους κοντὰ στὴ στέρνα, γεμάτη νερό!...

Ὁ Γιάννης, ἰδὼν τὰ δύο ἀναίσθητα σώ-
ματα, εἰς τὰς ὥχρας ἀκτῖνας τῆς ἀμφιλύκης,
15 τραβῶν τὰ μαλλιά του, δάκνων τοὺς ἄρμους
τῶν δακτύλων του, ἀπήντησεν·

— ὦ!... τί ἁμαρτίες!... ἔχεις δίκιο, χρι-
στιανή μου! Ἀχ!... καὶ τί ἦτον αὐτό!...
20 Κ' ἐγὼ ἤμουν κάτω στὸ χωράφι, κ' ἐβγαζα
τὰ χορτάρια... καὶ δὲν μπορούσα νὰ ἡσυχάσω,
τὸ ἔρμολ!... Ἐνα σαράκι μ' ἔτρωγε!... Καὶ
δὲν ἐσυλλογίστηκα πῶς ἡ στέρνα ἦτον γεμάτη.
Κ' εἶχα ἓνα φόβο, μιὰν ὑποψία... ἔλεγα νά-
25 φήσω τὸ βοτάνισμα, νάρθω, νὰ τρέξω, στὸν
μπαχτσὲ πίσω... Κ' ἔλεγα, ὁ ἔξαποδὼ κἄτι
μοῦ σκαρώνει, κἄτι μοῦ μαγειρεύει... Καὶ δὲ
μοῦκανε καρδιά, νάφήσω τὴ δουλειά, τὸ ἔρμολ!
ὦχ! δίκιο ἔχεις, ὅτι καὶ νὰ πῆς, χριστιανή
30 μου. Ἀχ! ἄχ! τί ἁμαρτίες;

Καὶ ἐν πολλῇ ἀγωνίᾳ, ὁ κηπουρὸς συνειρ-
γᾶσθαι εἰς τὰ πρόχειρα ἐναντίον τοῦ πνιγμοῦ
μέσα, τὰ ὅποια συνίστα ἡ πολύπειρος Φραγ-
κογιαννοῦ.

.....

35 Ἡ γραῖα Χαδοῦλα ἐξ ἀνάγκης ἔμεινε καὶ
ὅλην ἐκείνην τὴν νύκτα εἰς τὴν καλύβην, ὅπου
ἐδοκίμασεν ὅλα τὰ σπάνια καὶ ἀπερίγραπτα
συναισθήματα τῆς φόνισσας μεταβαλλομένης
αἰφνης εἰς ἰάτρισσαν τῶν ἰδίων θυμάτων της.
40 Μὲ ὅλα τὰ χρεμάσματα καὶ τὰς ἐντριβάς, τὰ
ὅποια ἐφήρμοσεν αὐτῇ, τὰ δύο κοράσια ἀπέ-
θαναν. Τὸ πρῶνι ἔτρεξεν ὁ Γιάννης εἰς τὴν
πολίχνην διὰ νὰ δώσῃ εἰδῆσιν εἰς τὰς ἀρχάς,
ἐνῶ ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ μέινασα ὀπίσω ἐσυν-
45 τρόφευε τὴν ἄρρωστην μητέρα, κλαίουσαν καὶ
ὀδυρομένην, ἐξασκοῦσα καὶ τὸ ἔργον τῆς πα-
ρηγορητρίας, σιμὰ εἰς τὸ ἐπάγγελμα τῆς ἰά-
τρισσας.

Ὁ εἰρηνοδίκης καὶ ὁ «ἐκκληρῶν τ' ἀστυ-
νομικά» πάρεδρος ἦλθον ἐπὶ τόπου. Ἡ Φραγ-

κογιαννοῦ ἀνακρινομένη διηγήθη τὴν χθεσι-
νὴν ἐκδρομὴν της, καὶ τὴν τυχαίαν διέλευσίν
της ἀπὸ τὸν λαχανόκηπον. Εἶτα ἐπανέλαβε
σχεδὸν κατὰ λέξιν ὅσα εἶχεν εἰπεῖ εἰς τὸν πα-
τέρα τῶν δύο κορασίων. «Ἡ μικρότερη ἤθελε
5 ν' ἀρπάξῃ τὴν καλαμιὰ ἀπ' τὴν μεγαλειέτερη.
Σπρώχνοντας ἡ μεγάλη τὴν μικρὴ τὴν ἔρριξε
μέσα στὸ νερό, καὶ πιάνοντας ἡ μικρὴ τὴν
μεγάλη, κατὰ πῶς φαίνεται, τὴν ἐτράβηξε μαζί
της μέσ' τὴ στέρνα». Ταῦτα ἐξέφερε μᾶλλον
60 ὥς συμπερασμούς ἢ ἀνακρινομένη διότι μό-
λις ἐπάτησε τὸ κατώφλιον τῆς θύρας. ἔλεγε,
κι' ἄκουσε ἓνα μπλούμ! καὶ δὲν ἐπρόφθασε
νὰ προλάβῃ τὴν καταστροφὴν, μόνον ἐπῆρε
«μεγάλῃ τρομάρα».

Ὁ παρεπιδημῶν ἱατρός, κ. Μ., ἦλθεν, εἶδε
τὰ πτώματα καὶ συνέταξε τὴν ἐκθεσὶν τοῦ ἀ-
πεφάνθη ὅτι τὰ δύο κοράσια ἐπνίγησαν ἐκ
πτώσεως εἰς τὸ ὕδωρ.

Ὀυδμία ἐνδειξίς οὔτε ὑποψία ὑπῆρχε κατὰ
70 τῆς Φραγκογιαννοῦς. Τὰ δύο μικρὰ πλάσματα,
τὰ ἐδιάβασεν εἰς ἱερεὺς ἐλθόν, εἰς τὸν ναῖσκον
τοῦ Ἀγ. Ἀντωνίου, καὶ τὰ ἐθαψαν ἐκεῖ ἔξω,
μεταξὺ σχοίνων καὶ θάμνων, πλησίον εἰς τὴν
βορείαν πλευρὰν τοῦ ναΐσκου.

I'.

Παρεῖλθον αἱ ἑορταὶ τοῦ Πάσχα. Τὴν ἑβδο-
μάδα τοῦ Θωμᾶ, ἡ γραῖα Χαδοῦλα, βοηθου-
μένη ἀπὸ τὴν μικρὰν κόρην της, τὴν Κρινιώ,
ἐπλυνεν ἐντὸς τῆς εὐρείας αἰλῆς τοῦ κυρ Ἀ-
λεξάνδρου τοῦ Ροσμαῆ, γέροντος προκοίτου,
80 ὅστις ἦτο σύντεκνός της, καὶ τῆς εἶχε βαπτί-
σει σχεδὸν ὅλα τὰ τέκνα. Εἰς τὸ ὑπόστεγον
μέρος τῆς αἰλῆς τὸ καλούμενον Λαδαρειό, δί-
πλα εἰς τὴν πελωρίαν ξυλίνην καρούταν, ὁ-
μοιάζουσαν πολὺ μὲ τὴν Κιβωτὸν τοῦ Νῶε,
85 ὅπως τὴν ζωγραφίζουν, πλησίον εἰς τὸ φρέαρ,
καὶ ὅπου ἡ ἀναθάλλουσα τεραστία μορέα ἔξε-
τεινε τοὺς μεγάλους καταπρασίνους κλώνας
της. ὡς χιαστὴν εὐλογίαν διδομένην σταυροει-
δῶς εἰς ἀξίους καὶ ἀναξίους, ὁ μικρὸς κη-
90 πος φραγμένος μὲ δρύφακτα ἐξεδίπλωνε πο-
λύχρωμα μεθυστικὰ ἄνθη εἰς δρόσον γλυκα-
σμοῦ καὶ τρυφῆν ὁμμάτων δι' ὅλα τοῦ Θεοῦ
τὰ πλάσματα· δίπλα εἰς τὴν μικρὰν κάμινον
μὲ τὴν κτιστὴν στέρναν τῶν στεμφύλων, εἶχεν
95 ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ τὴν μεγάλην, βαθεῖαν σκά-
φην της, παρατλεύρως ταύτης ἄλλην σκάφην
ἡ Κρινιώ, καὶ ἀκούραστοι αἱ δύο ἀπὸ δύο ἡ-
μερῶν ἐπλυνον, ἐμπουγάδιαζαν, ἐξέβγαιναν, ἀ-

πλωναν, ἐστέγγωναν, ἐμάζευαν, καὶ ἀκόμα δὲν εἶχον τελειώσει τὴν καλὴν τῶν ἐργασίαν.

Τὴν δευτέραν ἡμέραν ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ εἶ-
 5 χεν ἐνοχληθῆ μεγάλης ἀπὸ τὰ τρεξίματα, τοὺς
 10 θορούβους, καὶ τὰ καμώματα ἐνὸς σμήνους μι-
 κρῶν παιδίων καὶ κορασίων, τὰ ὅποια εἰσή-
 λαυνον ἐντὸς τῆς αὐλῆς καὶ ἐθορύβουν. Σχεδὸν
 15 ὅλα τὰ παιδιὰ τῆς γειτονίας, δέκα ἢ δεκαπέντε
 τὸν ἀριθμὸν, εἰσέβαλλον εἰς τὴν αὐλὴν, ἔτρεχαν
 20 ἐδῶ-ἐκεῖ, ἔχοροπιδούσαν, ἐκυνηγοῦντο γύρω-
 γύρω εἰς τὴν καρούταν, ἔπαιζον τὸ κρυφτάκι,
 ἔσκυπταν εἰς τὸ φρέαρ, Νάρκισσοι διὰ νὰ ἰδοῦν
 τὴν σκιάν τῶν εἰς τὸ ὕδωρ, με κίνδυνον νὰ
 25 πέσουν μέσα, ἐξέβαλλον μεγάλας, ἀνάρθρους
 15 φωνάς, ὡς Ἡχοί, θυγάτρια κρυπτόμενα ὀπισθεν
 τῆς καρούτας, εἰς τὰ σκοτεινὰ στενώματα, ὅπου
 τὰ ἐθέλγειν ὁ παιγνιώδης φόβος — καὶ ὅλα ταῦτα
 20 με μεγάλην παιδικὴν ἀδιακρισίαν καὶ φορτικώ-
 τητα μὴ ἀφίνοντα τὴν φύεργον γραῖαν καὶ
 τὴν κόσῃν τῆς νὰ κάμουν ἡσυχαι τὴν ἐργασίαν
 τῶν.

Δύο πύλας εἶχεν ἡ εὐρεῖα αὐλή, τὴν μεγάλην
 καὶ τὴν μικράν. Καὶ τὰς δύο τὰς εἶχε κλείσει
 25 ἐπανειλημμένως ἡ Γιαννοῦ με τὸν μοχλόν, ἢ
 με τὸν μάνδαλον, ἐλπίζουσα νὰ εὖρῃ ἡσυχίαν
 καὶ αἱ δύο εὐρίσκοντο μετ' ὀλίγον ἀνοικταὶ ἐκά-
 στοτε τοῦτο διότι καὶ οἱ ἐνοικοὶ ἐλάμβανον
 30 σιχνὰ ἀνάγκην νὰ εἰσέλθουν ἢ νὰ ἐξέλθουν,
 καὶ ἄλλοι ἐκτὸς τῶν παιδίων ἔξωθεν ἤρχοντο,
 συγγενεῖς ἢ φίλοι τῆς οἰκίας. Ἐκαμε παραστά-
 σεις εἰς τὴν σεβασμίαν γερόντισσαν, τὴν οἰ-
 κοκυράν, ἣτις ἐπανειλημμένως ἐμάλωσε τὰ παι-
 35 διὰ, ὀλως ἀλυσιτελῶς. Παρεπονέθη εἰς δύο γει-
 τόνισσες, μιτέρας τινῶν ἐκ τῶν θορυβούντων
 παιδίων. Αὐταὶ τῆς ἀπήντησαν ὅτι νὰ «κυτ-
 τᾶς τὴ δουλειά της, καὶ νὰ μὴν κἀνῃ κουμ-
 μάντο 'σὲ ξένο βιό.»

Κοντὰ τὸ μεσημέρι, ἡ Γιαννοῦ ἔστειλε τὴν
 40 Κρινιώ στὸ σπίτι, διὰ νὰ φέρῃ ψωμί καὶ
 φάβα, τὴν ὁποίαν εἶχεν εἰπεῖ ὅτι θὰ ἔβραζεν
 ἡ Ἀμέρσα — ἣτις εἶχε πάντοτε τὸν ἐργαλειόν
 τῆς εἰς τὸ σπίτι, καὶ δὲν συνείδιζε νὰ λαμβάνῃ
 μέρος εἰς τὴν πλύσιν καὶ ἄλλας ἐξωτερικὰς ἐρ-
 45 γασίας — διὰ νὰ γευματίσουν.

Ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ ἔμεινε πρὸς ὦραν μόνῃ,
 50 ἐξακολουθοῦσα νὰ πλύνῃ. Τὴν ὦραν ἐκείνην
 ὑπῆρχον ἐντὸς τῆς αὐλῆς μόνον δύο ἢ τρία
 κοράσια, τὰ ὅποια δὲν ἐθορύβουν καὶ αὐτὰ ὀ-
 λιγώτερον ἀπὸ τὰ παιδιά. Ἀφότου μάλιστα εἶ-
 χεν ἰδρυνθῆ εἰς τὸ χωρίον σχολεῖον τῶν θη-
 λέων, τὰ κοράσια εἶχον μεγάλως ξυπνήσει. Ἡ
 κυρὰ δασκάλα πολλὰ γράμματα δὲν τὰ ἐδίδα-

σκεν, ἀκόμη ὀλιγώτερα χειροτεχνήματα, ἀλλὰ
 μόνον τὰ ἐμάνθανε «νὰ λάβουν θάρρος» καὶ
 νὰ μὴν κάνουν «σὰν σκιασμένα» καὶ σὰν
 55 «βουνίσια», καὶ ἐκήρυττεν ὅτι ἦτο καιρὸς
 πλέον νὰ «χειραφετηθῶσιν».

Ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ τὰ ἐμάλωσεν ἐπανειλημ-
 μένως, ἀλλ' αὐτὰ δὲν ἄκουαν. Τὸ ἐν μάλιστα
 60 θυγάτριον, μόλις ἑπτὰ ἐτῶν, τῆς γειτόνισσας
 τῆς Προπαντίνας, ἡ Ξενοῦλα, ἄρχισε νὰ περι-
 γελᾷ τὴν γραῖαν με μιμικὰς κινήσεις τῶν χει-
 ρῶν καὶ τοῦ στόματος.

Στιγμὴν τινα, τὰ δύο ἄλλα κοράσια ἔτρεξαν
 65 ἔξω τῆς αὐλῆς, ἡ δὲ Ξενοῦλα, μείνασα, ἔκυ-
 πτεν εἰς τὸ φρέαρ, καὶ ἔζητοῦσε, με μίαν βέρ-
 γαν, νὰ φθάσῃ καὶ ταράξῃ τὸ νερὸν. Ἐκυ-
 πτεν ἐπιμόνως, ἀλλ' ἡ βέργα ἦτο πολὺ κοντὴ
 καὶ δὲν ἔφθανε.

— Ἐ! Θέ μου, καὶ νᾶπεφτες μέσα, Ξε-
 70 νοῦλα! εἶπε με ἀλλόκοτον γέλωτα ἡ Φραγκο-
 γιαννοῦ. Τί λευθεριά θᾶκανες τῆς μάνας σου!

— Ἐ! Σέ μου, τσαὶ νᾶμπεμπες μπέσα! ἐ-
 75 μιμήθη παρωδοῦσα τὴν φωνὴν ἡ Ξενοῦλα!
 Τοὶ λευγιὰ τσάκαλες τῆς μπάμιας σου!

Εἶχεν ἀνασηκωθῆ ὀλίγον, καὶ πάλιν ἔκυψε
 βαθυτέρον ἢ πρὶν.

Τὸ στόμιον τοῦ πηγαδιοῦ τετραγώνον ἦτο
 φραγμένον με σανίδας ἀνίσου πλάτους ὥστε
 80 αἱ πλευραὶ δὲν εἶχον τὸ αὐτὸ ὕψος. Ἡ μικρὰ
 σανὶς, ἐφ' ἣς ἔκυπτεν ἡ Ξενοῦλα, ἦτο χαμηλο-
 τέρα τῶν ἄλλων τριῶν, φθαρμένη, ὀλισθηρά,
 φαγωμένη ἀπὸ τὴν προστριβὴν τοῦ σχοινοῦ
 τοῦ κουβᾶ, δι' οὗ ἦντλουν ὕδωρ, με σκουρ-
 85 γιασμένα καρφία, σαπρὰ καὶ κινουμένη. Κα-
 θὼς ἔσκυπεν ἡ παιδίσκη, ἐστηρίχθη ὅλη, με
 τὸ βάρος τοῦ σώματος ἐπὶ τῆς ἀριστερᾶς χει-
 ρός, ἐπάνω εἰς αὐτὴν τὴν σανίδα, ἐγλίστη-
 σεν, ἡ σανὶς ἐνέδωκεν, ἐξεκόλλησεν ἀπὸ τὴν
 90 μίαν ἄκρην, καὶ ἡ Ξενοῦλα ἔπεσε κατακέφαλα
 μέσα εἰς τὸ χάσκον στόμα τοῦ φρέατος. Ἡ-
 κοῦσθη πνιγμένη κραυγὴ, κτύπος, καὶ εἶτα μέ-
 γας πλαταγισμὸς εἰς τὸ ὕδωρ.

Ἡ ἐπιφάνεια τοῦ νεροῦ ἦτο μίαν καὶ ἡ-
 95 μίσειαν ὀργυιὰν κάτω τοῦ στομίου, τὸ δὲ βά-
 θος τοῦ νεροῦ πρέπει νὰ ἦτο μιᾶς ὀργυιᾶς.

Ἐξ ἐμφύτου ὁρμῆς, ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ ἡ-
 θέλησε νὰ φωνάξῃ καὶ νὰ τρέξῃ εἰς βοήθειαν.
 Ἀλλὰ τὴν μὲν κραυγὴν τῆς, ἡ ἰδία ἐπνίξεν
 100 εἰς τὸν λάρυγγα, πρὶν τὴν ἐκβάλλῃ, αἱ δὲ κι-
 νήσεις παρέλυσαν καὶ τὸ σῶμά της ἐπάγωσεν.
 Ἀλλόκοτος στοχασμὸς τῆς ἐπῆλθεν εἰς τὸν
 νοῦν. Ἰδοὺ ὅτι μόλις σχεδὸν ὡς ἀστεῖσμον εἶ-
 χεν ἐκφέρει τὴν εὐχὴν, νὰ ἐπιπτεν ἡ παιδίσκη

μέσα στὸ πηγάδι, καὶ ἰδοὺ ἐγείνεν! Ἄρα ὁ
Θεὸς (ἐτόλμα νὰ τὸ σκεφθῇ;) εἰσήκουσε τὴν
εὐχὴν της, καὶ δὲν ἦτο ἀνάγκη νὰ ἐπιβάλλῃ
πλέον χεῖρας, ἀλλὰ μόνον ἤρκει νὰ ἡŷχετο,
καὶ ἡ εὐχὴ της εἰσηκούετο.

Μετὰ μίαν στιγμὴν, ἔλαβεν ἀπόφασιν νὰ
ἔλθῃ μέχρι τοῦ στομίου τοῦ φρέατος, νὰ κύψῃ
καὶ νὰ ἰδῇ εἰς τὸ βάθος. Εἶδε τὴν ἀγωνίαν
τῆς μικρᾶς κόρης, ἀσπαιρούσης μέσα εἰς τὸ
νερόν, εἶπε καθ' ἑαυτὴν ὅτι, καὶ ἂν ἤθελε,
δὲν θὰ ἠδύνατο νὰ τὴν σώσῃ. Ἀλλὰ βεβαίως,
ἂν ἐπνίγετο... αὐτὴν θὰ κατηγόρουν! Νὰ
κράξῃ τώρα βοήθειαν, ἦτο ἀργά. Ἀργὰ ἴσως
θὰ ἦτο διὰ νὰ σωθῇ ἡ μικρά, ἀλλὰ πιθανῶς
δὲν θὰ ἦτο ἀργά διὰ νὰ δεῖξῃ αὐτὴ τὴν ἀ-
θωότητά της. Καὶ ὅμως δὲν ἀπεφάσισε νὰ
κράξῃ. Καλλίτερον θὰ ἦτο, ἂν ἀμέσως τὸ εἶχε
κάμῃ. Ἀλλ' ὁποία κακὴ τύχη! Πῶς τὴν ἐπαί-
δευεν ἡ ἁμαρτία! Ἄν ἦτον τώρα ἡ Κρινιώ ἐδῶ,
πόσον εὐκταῖον θὰ ἦτο! Ἐκεῖνη βεβαίως θὰ ἦτον
ἐκανὴ νὰ κατέλθῃ ξυπόλητη εἰς τὸ νερόν — διότι
τὸ πηγάδι, ὅπως συνήθως συμβαίνει, εἶχε πατή-
ματα εἰς τοὺς ἐσωτερικοὺς τοίχους, ἐσοχὰς ἐντὸς
τοῦ κυρίου τῶν λίθων, ἂν καὶ ἴσως πολὺ ἐπικιν-
δύνους καὶ ὀλισθηράς — καὶ πιθανὸν ἦτο νὰ κα-
τάρθωνεν ἡ Κρινιώ νὰ σώσῃ τὴν μικρὰν κο-
ρασίδα. Τώρα ὅμως ἦτο ἀπελπισία καὶ θάνατος!

Εἰς αὐτὰς τὰς στιγμὰς, ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ
εἶχε λησιμονήσῃ τὴν πρώτην ἰδέαν της — ὅτι
ὁ Θεὸς ἠθέλησέ νὰ εἰσακουσθῇ ἡ εὐχὴ της καὶ
νὰ πνιγῇ ἡ παιδίσκη. Εἶτα εὐθύς πάλιν ὁ λο-
γισμὸς οὗτος τῆς ἐπανῆλθεν εἰς τὸν νοῦν —
καὶ ἀκουσίως ἐγέλασε πικρὸν γέλωτα.

Ἐν ῥιπῇ ὀφθαλμοῦ ἀπεφάσισε τί ἔπρεπε
νὰ κάμῃ.

« Ἄς πάω στὸ σπίτι, εἶπε μέσα της. Θὰ
προφασισθῶ, ἐπειδὴ τὸ Κρινιώ ἀργεῖ νὰ ἔλ-
θῃ — ἴσως νὰ μὴν εἶν' ἔτοιμο τὸ φαί — πῶς
πείνασα τάχα πολὺ, κ' ἐπροτίμησα νὰ φᾶμε
ὅλοι στὸ σπίτι, γιὰ νὰ βγάλω ἀπ' τὸν κόπο
καὶ τὸ Κρινιώ, νὰ κουβαλᾷ ».

Καὶ ἐν ἀκαρεῖ, ἀφοῦ ἐτυποθέτησε τὴν σκά-
φην μὲ ὅσα δοῦχα εἶχε μισοπλυμένα ἀκόμη
ὀπισθεν τῆς καρούτας, εἰς μέγα ξύλινον ἀμ-
πάριον, τὸ ὁποῖον ἐκλείδωσε, κ' ἔβαλε τὸ κλει-
δίον στὴν τσέπην της, ἐξῆλθε τρέχουσα ἀπὸ
τὴν αὐλὴν, διὰ τῆς μικρᾶς πύλης, τὴν ἐκλει-
σεν ἔξωθεν εἰς τὸ μάνδαλον, καὶ ἀπῆλθεν.

ΙΑ'.

Ἀφοῦ τὸ σῶμα τῆς Ξενούλας ἀνεσύρθη

ἀπὸ τὸ φρέαρ, πνιγμένον καὶ νεκρόν, ἡ γραῖα
Χαδούλα δὲν ἦτο πλέον ἡσυχῇ, κρουερός φό-
βος ἤρχισε νὰ τὴν κατατρύχῃ... Ἐλεγεν ὅτι
τώρα, ἂν καὶ δὲν ἔπταιε, δὲν θὰ ἐγλύτωνε
πλέον.

Τῷ ὄντι, ἡ ἐξουσία εἶχεν ἀρχίσῃ νὰ συλ-
λαμβάνῃ ὑποψίας. Ἡ σύμπτωσης ὅτι ἡ γραῖα
ἐκεῖνη εἶχεν εὐρεθῇ δευτεραγωνιστοῦσα εἰς τὸν
πνιγμὸν τῶν δύο κορασιῶν τοῦ Γιάννη τοῦ
Περιβολᾶ, εἰς τῆς Μαίμους τὸ ρέμμα ὅπου
ὅλη ἡ ὑπόθεσις, καίτοι δὲν προέκυψαν στοι-
χεῖα ἐνοχῆς ἢ καὶ νύξεις πρὸς ὑποψίαν, εἶχε
τὸ παράδοξον καὶ τὸ ἀλλόκοτον, καὶ ὅτι αὐτὴ
πάλιν ἡ γραῖα εὐρίσκετο εἰς τὴν αὐλὴν τοῦ
γέροντος Ροσμαῆ, κατὰ τὰς ὥρας περίπου ὅτε
ἐπνίγετο εἰς τὸ φρέαρ ἡ μικρὰ Ξενούλα, ἡ
θυγάτηρ τοῦ Προπαντῆ, παρείχε νύξεις τινὰς
ὑποψίας εἰς τὸν εἰρηνοδίκην, ὅστις ἐπέσειρε τὴν
προσοχὴν τοῦ Παρέδρου, τοῦ « ἐκπληροῦντος
τ' ἀστυνομικά » Καὶ τότε ὁ παρέδρος, ὅστις
ὡς δημόσιος κατήγορος περὶωρίζετο μόνον ν'
ἀγορεύῃ κατὰ τὰς συνεδριάσεις τῶν ποινικῶν,
λέγων « Κατὰ τσ' μαρτυρίες ποῦ εἶπαν οἱ μαρ-
τύροι, φαίνεται νὰ ἔκαμε, ἢ φαίνεται νὰ μὴν
ἔκαμε τὴν πρᾶξιν », ὅλον δὲ τὸν ἄλλον καιρὸν
δὲν ἐλάμβανεν ἀφορμὴν ν' ἀναπτύξῃ τὴν δρα-
στηριότητά του ἢ νὰ τροχίσῃ τὴν γλῶσσάν του,
ἀπλῶς ἀπήντησεν ὅτι « ἀφοῦ ἔτσι τὸ λέει ὁ
εἰρηνοδίκης, ἔτσι θὰ εἶνε, κ' ἔτσι μοῦ φαίνε-
ται ». Καὶ τότε οἱ δύο ἀπεφάσισαν ν' ἀνακρί-
νωσιν αὐστηρότερον τὴν Χαδούλαν, χήραν Ἰω-
άννου Φράγκου, κ' ἐν ἀνάγκῃ νὰ τὴν προσω-
ποκρατήσωσι.

Κατὰ τὴν πρώτην ἀνάκρισιν, ἥτις εἶχε γείνη
ἐπὶ ποδὸς κ' ἐπιτοπίως — τότε ὁ εἰρηνοδίκης καὶ
ὁ ἀστυνόμος δὲν εἶχον συλλάβῃ ἀκόμη ρητὰς
ὑποψίας, ἢ δὲν τὰς εἶχον ἀνακοινώσῃ πρὸς
ἀλλήλους (ὁπότε διὰ τῆς συνεπινεύσεως τοῦ
ἐνὸς ἢ πεποίθησις τοῦ ἄλλου, ὡς πάντοτε συμ-
βαίνει, ἐδεκαπλασιαζέτο) — ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ ἐν
ἀταραξίᾳ εἶχε καταθέσει τὰ γνωστὰ ἤδη γεγο-
νότα, ἄνευ τῆς ἐσωτερικῆς ψυχολογίας των ὅτι
δηλ. αὐτῇ, ἐκεῖ ποῦ ἔπλυνε, « σὰν ἀπέρασε τὸ
μεσημέρι, κ' ἐπείνασε, κ' ἡ κόρη της ἡ Κρινιώ
εἶχεν ὑπάγει στὸ σπίτι νὰ φέρῃ τὸ φαί, καὶ
σὰν ἀργοῦσε, κ' αὐτὴ εἶχε παραπεινάσει — καὶ
τὴν εἶχαν καταζαλίσει τὸ πλῆθος ἐκεῖνο τὰ
παιδιά καὶ τὰ κορίτσια, ποῦ ἐχαλνοῦσαν τὸν
κόσμον μὲ τὰ παιγνίδια καὶ τῆς ἀταξίας τους
μέσ' τὴν αὐλὴν, καὶ γύρω-γύρω στὸ λαδαρεῖο,
καὶ γύρω-τριγύρω στὴν καρούτα, καὶ στὸ πη-
γάδι σιμά εἰς τὰς φρονίμους νουθεσίας της

αὐτά, κακομαθημένα τὴν ἐπεριγελοῦσαν καὶ τὴν ἠρέθιζαν, καὶ τὴν ἔκαμνον νὰ χάσῃ τὴν ὑπομονὴν — ὅλα τ' ἀνωτέρω ἐπεβεβαίωσε κ' ἡ Κρινιώ, ἡ κόρη τῆς — τότε αὐτὴ, καταζαλισμένη καὶ μὴ δυναμένη νὰ σταθῇ στὰ πόδια τῆς ἀπ' τὴν πείνα, ἀπεφάσισε νὰ ὑπάγῃ στὸ σπίτι, διὰ νὰ φάγουν ὅλοι μαζὺ ἐκεῖ, ν' ἀπαλλάξῃ καὶ τὴν Κρινιώ ἀπὸ τὸν περισσὸν κόπον τῆς μεταφορᾶς τοῦ φαγητοῦ, κ' αὐτὴ νὰ ἡσυχάσῃ πρὸς ὥραν, νὰ ξαποστάσῃ. Ἐξῆλθε λοιπὸν τῆς αὐλῆς, καὶ ἔκλεισε τὴν θύραν μὲ τὸ μάνδαλον. Ὅταν, μετὰ τὸ γεῦμα, ὡς μίαν ὥραν ἀργότερα, ἐπέστρεψαν εἰς τὴν αὐλήν, μαζὺ μὲ τὴν Κρινιώ, κατ' ἀρχὰς δὲν ὑπώπτευσαν τίποτε, κ' ἐπανέλαβον τὴν ἐργασίαν των. Ὁ θόρυβος τῶν παιδιῶν εἶχε κοπάσει πρὸς ὥραν τότε. Ὅταν ὁμως μετ' ὀλίγον ἐχρειάσθη ν' ἀντλήσουν νερὸν ἀπὸ τὸ φρέαρ, τότε τὸ «γιουρδέλι», ἥτοι τὸ ἀντλημα τῆς Κρινιώ, προσέκρουσεν εἰς στερεὸν σῶμα ἐντὸς τοῦ ὕδατος, κ' αὐτὴ ἐν ἐκπλήξει καὶ φόβῳ ἔκραξε τὴν μητέρα τῆς. Τότε αἱ δύο ὁμοῦ ἀνεκάλυψαν τὸ σῶμα τῆς μικρᾶς κόρης ἐπιπλέον, ἢ μᾶλλον βυθισμένον ἤδη ἐντὸς τοῦ ὕδατος.»

Ἡ Κρινιώ ἦτον ἐντελῶς εἰλικρινῆς βεβαιούσα τ' ἀνωτέρω. Ὁ εἰρηνοδίκης ἤκουσεν εὐμενῶς τὴν κατάθεσιν ταύτης. Ἀλλ' ὁμως ἔκαμε μορφασμὸν εἰς τὴν μητέρα τῆς. Ἐκεῖνος ὁ μορφασμὸς — ἐκεῖνα τὰ «μουτρα» τοῦ εἰρηνοδίκου — δὲν τῆς ἤρεσαν, τῆς Φραγκογιαννοῦς, ἥτις ἦτο λίαν πεπειραμένη, καὶ τότε μεγάλη ἀγωνία τὴν ἐκυρίευσεν.

Εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν τῆς Τραγγήλαινας τῆς κόρης τῆς, ὅπου εὐρίσκετο μικρὸν πρὸ τῆς δύσεως τοῦ ἡλίου, δὲν ἔπαυε νὰ κυττάζῃ ἀνήσυχος ἀπὸ τὸ παράθυρον. Διεύθυνε τὸ βλέμμα πρὸς τὴν ἰδίαν τῆς μικρᾶς οἰκίας, ἥτις καίτοι μὴ ἀντικρύζουσα, ἀλλὰ πλαγίως κειμένη, ἦτο ὁρατὴ, ἐπειδὴ ἔξείχε πέραν τῶν ὀλίγων μεσολαβουσῶν οἰκιῶν, δύο ἢ τρεῖς πῆχες πρὸς τὸν δρόμον. Ἡ Γιαννοῦ, ἂν καὶ συχνὰ ἐκύτταζε, δὲν ἔβλεπε τίποτε.

Ἡ κόρη τῆς ἡ Δελχαρῶ, εἶδε τὴν ἀνησυχίαν τῆς, κ' ἄρχισε νὰ κυττάζῃ, ὅπως ἡ μήτηρ τῆς, καὶ αὐτὴ. Τὴν ὥραν τῆς δύσεως τοῦ ἡλίου, αἴφνης μετὰ κρυφίου φόβου τὴν ἔκραξε.

— Μάνα! Μάνα!

— Τί εἶνε;

— Ἐλα νὰ ἰδῆς!

— Τί;

— Δυὸ ταχτικοὶ στέκονται καὶ κυττάζουν ἔξω ἀπ' τὴν αὐλήν, στὸ σπίτι σας . .

Ἡ γραῖα Χαδοῦλα ἐσηκώθη, καὶ εἶδεν ἐκεῖνο τὸ ὅποιον ἐφοβεῖτο. Δύο «ταχτικοί», ἥτοι χωροφύλακες, ὅπως εἰς τοὺς χρόνους τοῦ υἱοῦ τῆς, τοῦ Μώρου — ὅποτε οὗτος, πρὸ δεκαπέντε ἐτῶν περίπου εἶχε σύρει ἐκ τῆς κόμης ἐπὶ τοῦ λιθοστρώτου τῆς ὁδοῦ τὴν μητέρα του, καὶ εἶχε μαχαιρώσει τὴν ἀδελφὴν του — ἴσταντο παραμονεύοντες, κυττάζοντες ἀπλήστως πρὸς τὴν οἰκίαν.

Ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ εἶδε καὶ ἐπείσθη ὅτι μέγας καὶ ἐπικείμενος κίνδυνος τὴν ἠπειλεῖ.

— Πρέπει νὰ πάρῳ τὰ βουνά, δυχατέρα! εἶπεν αἴφνης. Ἄν προφτάσω!

— Γιατί, μάνα; εἶπεν ἐν ἀγωνίᾳ ἡ Δελχαρῶ.

— Γιατί . . . με γυρεύουν γιὰ νὰ με φυλακώσουν.

— Ἀλήθεια; . . . Ἐσὺ τὸ ἔρριξες, μάνα, τὸ κορίτσι στὸ πηγάδι;!

— Ὅχι, μάρτυς μου ὁ Θεός! . . . Αὐτὸ δὲν τὸ ἔκαμα, εἶπεν ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ.

— Τότε; . .

— Σιώπα!

— Ἡ ἀμαρτία σὲ κυνηγᾷ, μάνα, εἶπε δειλῶς ἡ Δελχαρῶ.

— Σιώπα! Μουρλάθηκες; εἶπε βλοσυρὰ ἡ μάνα τῆς, ὑποπτεύσασα ὑπαινιγμὸν τινα εἰς τὸν τόνον μεθ' οὗ ὠμίλει ἡ κόρη τῆς.

— Τί νὰ πῶ κ' ἐγώ, ἡ καϋμένη! εἶπε συμπλέκουσα τὰς χεῖρας ἐν ἀμηχανίᾳ, ἡ Δελχαρῶ.

— Ἀ! αὐτὸ μὴν τὸ λές! ὄχι! Δὲν κάνει νὰ τὸ λές!

Καὶ τρομερὰ, κατῆλθε τὴν σκάλαν νὰ φύγῃ.

— Ποῦ πᾶς, μάνα;

— Στὰ βουνά, σοῦ εἶπα! . . Δώσέ μου λίγο παξιμάδι.

Ἡ Δελχαρῶ ἔτρεξε ν' ἀνοίξῃ τὸ ἐρμάριον, κ' ἔλαβεν ἐκεῖθεν ὀλίγα παξιμάδια.

— Δώσέ μου καὶ τὸ καλάθι μου . . . κ' ἕνα μαχαιράκι, ἐπανέλαβεν ἐν ἄκρῳ βίᾳ ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ . . . Βάλε μου κ' ἕνα χράμι μάλλινο μέσα . . . καὶ τὴ μανδήλα μου . . . τὰ παληοτσόκαρά μου . . . Δώσέ μου καὶ τὸ ραβδί μου . . . ψάξε νὰ τὸ βρῆς!

Ἔπεται συνέχεια

Α. ΠΑΠΑΔΙΑΜΑΝΤΗΣ

μῶν «ἐξ ἐκποιήσεως ἀχρήστου (!) ὕλικου,» θὰ συμπεράνῃ ὅτι οὔτε λόγος πρέπει νὰ γίνεται περὶ συστάσεως Ἐθνικοῦ Ἀρχείου, ἐξαρτωμένου ὑπὸ τοῦ Κράτους.

Ὑπῆρχον ἄλλοτε πλείσται ἐχθρικαὶ σημαῖαι, ἐνδοξα τοῦ Ἀγῶνος λάφυρα, τηρούμεναι ἐν τῇ ὀπλοθήκῃ τοῦ ἐν Ναυπλίῳ ὀπλοστασίου. Αἱ πλείσται τούτων κατεστράφησαν, ἐλάχισται δὲ περιεσώθησαν τηρούμεναι ἐν τοῖς Ἀνακτόροις.

Ὑπῆρχον τηλεβόλα πολύτιμα, ἐνεπίγραφα τηλεβόλα τῆς Ἑνετικῆς καὶ τῆς Τουρκικῆς κατακτήσεως, μάρτυρες καὶ αὐτουργοὶ μαρτυρίων καὶ θριάμβων, τὰ ὅποια τὸ κράτος, ἀφοῦ ἐθρυμμάτισε διὰ δυναμίτιδος, ἐπώλησεν ἐπὶ δημοπρασίας διὰ νὰ κερδίσῃ τὴν ἀξίαν τοῦ ὀρειχάλκου. Μόλις δὲ ἐσώθησαν συνεπείᾳ ἐκθέσεως ἀξιωματικοῦ ἀντιλαμβανομένου τῆς ἱερότητος τοιούτων κειμηλίων ἱστορικά τινα τηλεβόλα τῶν φρουρίων τοῦ Ναυαρίνου.

Δὲν ἐξηρέθησαν δὲ τῆς πωλήσεως ἡ τῆς καταστροφῆς, διότι ἀγνοεῖται ὁ τρόπος τῆς ἐξαφανισέως των, οὐδὲ τὰ πολύτιμα ὀρειχάλκινα πυροβόλα τὰ δωρηθέντα ὑπὸ τῆς Φιλελληνικῆς Βρετανικῆς Ἑταιρίας ἐν ἔτει 1822, τὰ

φέροντα ἔκτυπον, τὸν ἐκ τῆς τέφρας ἀναγεννώμενον Φοῖνικα, ὃν κατόπιν ὁ Κυβερνήτης τῆς Ἑλλάδος, καθιέρωσεν ὡς ἐθνικὸν σύμβολον τῆς ἀναγεννηθείσης Ἑλλάδος, κάτωθι δὲ ἑλληνιστὶ τὴν ἀφιέρωσιν «Ἡ φιλελληνικὴ τῶν Ἀγγλῶν Ἑταιρία τῇ ἀγωνιζομένῃ Ἑλλάδι.» πυροβόλα πολυτιμώτερα, ἢ ἂν εἶχον χυθῇ ἐκ συμπαγοῦς χρυσοῦ, καὶ ἅτινα μέχρι πρὸ τινων ἐτῶν ὑπῆρχον ἀκόμῃ ἐν τῷ ὀπλοστασίῳ τοῦ Ναυπλίου.

Ταῦτα καὶ πολλὰ ἄλλα εἶναι τὰ αἷτια διὰ τὰ ὅποια νομίζω ὅτι εἶναι πολὺ ἐπικίνδυνον νὰ ἐμπιστευθῇ τὸ Κράτος εἰς ἑαυτὸ τὴν συντήρησιν καὶ διαχείρισιν τῶν ἐγγράφων τῶν περισωθέντων καὶ δυναμένων νὰ ἀποτελέσουν τὸ Ἐθνικὸν Ἀρχεῖον. Εἶναι ἐθνικὸν καὶ φιλόπατρι νὰ ἀναγνωρίσῃ τὸ Κράτος, ὅτι ὑπῆρξε πάντοτε ὁ ἐλεεινότερος τῶν ἐθνικῶν κειμηλίων θεματοφύλαξ, παραδίδον δὲ ὅτι κατέχει εἰς τὴν Ἐθνολογικὴν Ἑταιρίαν, νὰ δώσῃ μετὰ πολὺ δικαιολογημένης μετριοφροσύνης τὸ καλὸν παράδειγμα, ὅπως πράξουν τὸ αὐτὸ ὅῃμοι, κοινότητες, σωματεῖα, ἰδιῶται.

ΕΜΜΑΝΟΥΗΛ Σ. ΛΥΚΟΥΔΗΣ

Η ΦΟΝΙΣΣΑ.

Η Δελχαρῶ, ἐν ἄκρᾳ σιγῇ καὶ ὑπομονῇ, ἐπροσπάθει νὰ ἐκτελέσῃ ὅλας τὰς ἐτοιμασίας ταύτας.

— Ποῦ θὰ πᾶς, μάνα, ἐπανελάβε κλαίουσα.

5 Ὡ! καίετ' ἡ καρδιά μου!

— Μὴν κλαῖς!... Κἄπου θὰ κρυφθῶ, σὲ καυμιὰ τρύπα... Ἦσυχία, ἐσεῖς, φρόνιμα! ὡς ποῦ νὰ περάσῃ ἡ ὀργὴ τοῦ Κυρίου!

10 Καὶ λαβοῦσα τὸ καλάθιον καὶ τὸ θραβδίον τῆς, κατῆλθε σιγά. Ἔκαμε τὸν σταυρόν της.

Αἶφνης ἐκοντοστάθη εἰς τὴν τρίτην βαθμίδα τῆς σκάλας, καὶ στραφεῖσα πρὸς τὴν Δελχαρῶ, τῆς εἶπε

15 — Ξέρεις τί νὰ κάμῃς;... Θὰ πάω ἀπ' τὸν ἀπάνω δρόμο, γιὰ νὰ γλυτώσω, νὰ μὴ μὲ ἴδουν, τὰ σκυλιά... Καὶ σύ, αὐτὴν τὴ στιγμὴ, νὰ τρέξῃς στὸ σπίτι... νὰ καμωθῇς πῶς δὲν τοὺς βλέπεις, τοὺς ταχτικούς... καὶ

νὰ φωνάξῃς τῆς Ἀμέρσας ἀποκάτ' ἀπ' τὸ δρόμο. «Ἀμέρσα, εἶνε ἀπάνω ἡ μάνα;»...

20

... Ὅχι, μὴ λὲς «εἶν' ἀπάνω ἡ μάνα»... μόνο νὰ πῇς «Ἀμέρσα, πῶς εἶνε ἡ μάνα, εἶνε καλλίτερα; ἔχει σηκωθῇ;... Στὸ στρῶμα εἶν' ἀκόμα;» Γιὰ νὰ πιστέψουν πῶς βρισκομαὶ ἀπάνω στὸ σπίτι, καὶ πῶς εἰμαι ἄρρωστη... Γιὰ νὰ μὴν ὑποπτευθοῦν τίποτα, καὶ μὲ κυνηγήσουν τὰ σκυλιά!... Τρέξε, γλήγορα!

25

Εἶτα προσέθηκε

— Ἐχετε γειά... καὶ καλὴ ἀντάμωσι!...

30

Εὐθὺς ὕστερον ἐξῆλθε κ' ἡ Δελχαρῶ, τρέχουσα, μ' ἐλαφρὸν βῆμα, καὶ διευθύνθη πρὸς τὴν μητρικὴν τῆς οἰκίαν, νὰ ἐκτελέσῃ τὴν ἐντολήν.

Ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ ἐπῆρε τὸν ἀπάνω δρόμον, κατὰ τὰ κοιτρώνια, μὲ δρομαῖον βῆμα. Εἰς τὴν τελευταίαν ἀπήχησιν τοῦ «καλὴ ἀντάμωσι», τὸ ὅποιον εὐχρήθη εἰς τὴν κόρη

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της, ἀκουσίως προσέθηκε καθ' ἑαυτὴν μετὰ πικρᾶς εἰρωνείας « Ἡ ἐσᾶς θ' ἀνταμώσω ἐδῶ — ἦ, τὸν ἀδελφό σας στὴν φυλακὴ θὰ πάω ν' ἀνταμώσω — ἦ, στὸν ἄλλο κόσμον θ' ἀνταμώσω τὸν πατέρα σας... κι' αὐτὸ εἶνε ἀπ' τὰ τρία τὸ σιγουρότερο! »

Καθὼς ἀνέβαιναν ἀσθμαίνουσα τὸν πετρώδη λόφον, « Ἐλα, Παναγία μου, ἔλεγε μέσα της, ὡς εἶμαι κι' ἀμαρτωλή ». Εἶτα εἰς τὰ ἐνδόμυχα τῆς ψυχῆς της εἶπε: « Δὲν τὸ ἔκαμα γιὰ κακὸ ».

Μόλις ἐπροχώρησεν ὀλίγα βήματα, καὶ εἰς τοὺς τελευταίους σποραδικοὺς οἰκίσκους τῆς πολίχνης, ἐπάνω στοὺς βράχους, καθὼς ἑκατηφόριζε νὰ φθάσῃ στὸν αἰγιαλόν, βλέπει τὸν Κυριάκον, τὸν κλήτορα τῆς ἀστυνομίας, μὲ τὸ φέσι του μὲ τὴν κοντὴν φούνταν, ἣ « γαλίπαν », ὅπως τὴν ἔλεγαν, μὲ τὸν καστανόν του στορημένον μύστακα, καὶ κρατοῦντα εἰς τὴν χεῖρα τὸ κοντὸν ρόπαλόν του, περὶ τοῦ ὁποίου ἐφαίνετο σκυταλοειδῶς ἡ ἐπιγραφή « Ἰσχύς τοῦ Νόμου ». Οὗτος, συνοδευόμενος ἀπὸ ἓνα γέροντα ἀπόμαχον, μὲ στρατιωτικὴν στολήν, ἤρχετο ἀπὸ ἓνα πλάγιον δρομίσκον, διευθυνόμενος εἰς τὸν αἰγιαλόν, ὅπου κατήρχετο καὶ ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ, καὶ μετὰ μικρὸν ἔξ ἅπαντος θὰ τὴν ἐφθάνον, ἦ θὰ τῆς ἐπαιρνον τὰ νῶτα.

Ἰσως ἡ παρουσία τοῦ Κυριάκου ἐκεῖ, μαζί μὲ τὸν ἀπόμαχον, νὰ ἦτο τυχαία. Ἀλλ' ἡ ἔνοχος γυνή, ὡς τοὺς εἶδεν, ἐταράχθη, κ' ἐτάχυνε τὸ βῆμα. Τῆς ἐφάνη δέ' ὅτι κ' ἐκεῖνοι τὸ αὐτὸ ἔκαμαν.

Τότε ἡ Γιαννοῦ, καθὼς ἐφθασεν, εἰς τὸν αἰγιαλόν, κατ' ἀγαθὴν συγκυρίαν, αἰφνης εἶδεν ἐνώπιόν της ἀνοικτὴν τὴν θύραν μιᾶς οἰκίας, λίαν γνωρίμου εἰς αὐτήν, καὶ οὐδὲ στιγμὴν ἐδίστασε νὰ ὑπερβῇ τὸ κατώφλιον. Ἄμα εἰσῆλθε, τεταραγμένη, ἔβαλε τὸ μάνδαλον καὶ τὸν σύρτην.

— Μαρουσῶ, εἰς' ἐπάνω; ἔκραξε μὲ σιγανήν, ἀλλὰ συριστικὴν φωνήν, ἀνερχομένη τὴν σκάλαν.

Μία γυνὴ κοντούλα, ῥοδοκόκκινη, ἐξηλθεν ἀπὸ τὴν θύραν ἐνὸς θαλάμου, κ' ἐπαρουσιάσθη μειδιῶσα, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀνήσυχος τὸ βλέμμα.

— Ποῦ 'ς αὐτὸν τὸν κόσμον, θεῖά Χαδοῦλα; ἠρώτησε.

— Μὴν τὰ ρωτᾷς, παιδί μου... Μεγάλῃ συφορᾷ μοῦ ἐπενέβηκε, ἤρχισε νὰ λέγῃ ἡ Γιαννοῦ.

Εἶτα ἀνήσυχος ἠρώτησε:

— Μὴν εἶν' ἐδῶ ὁ κύριος Ἀναγνώστης;

— Ὁχι, δὲν εἶν' ἐδῶ τόσο νωρὶς δὲν ἔρχεται, εἶνε στὸν καφενέ... Ἀχ! θεῖά Χαδοῦλα, κ' ἐγὼ ἔλεγα πῶς νὰ κάμω νὰ ῥθῶ στὸ σπίτι, νὰ σοῦ πῶ τὰ τρέχοντα...

-- Ἐμαῖδες τίποτα;

— Τὰ ἔλεγαν τώρα τὸ ἀπόγευμα, ὁ ἀφέντης μου, μαζί μὲ τὸν κουμπάρο μας τὸν Ἀϊμερίτη, ποῦ ἦρθε γιὰ νὰ φουμάρῃ ἓνα τσιμποῦκι, καὶ νὰ κουβεντιάσουν, ὅπως συνειθίζουν.

— Καὶ τί λέγανε;

— Ὁ ρηνοδίκης μαζί μὲ τὸν ἀστυνόμο, θέλουν νὰ σὲ συλλάβουν... Ἐλεγαν νὰ στείλουν τοὺς χωροφύλακες... Σ' ἔχουν ὑποπτη γιὰ τὸ κοριτσάκι ποῦ πνίγηκε χθὲς μέσ' τὸ πηγάδι.

— ὦ! τρομάρα μου...

— Κ' ἔλεγα νᾶρθω νὰ σοῦ πῶ, γιὰ νὰ κρυφθῇς, ἂν μπορέσης... Μὰ πῶς βρέθηκες ἐδῶ;

Ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ διηγήθη ὅτι, ἀφοῦ, μετὰ τὴν χθεσινὴν ἀνάκρισίν της, ἐκατάλαβεν ὅτι ὁ εἰρηνοδίκης ἄρχισε νὰ τὴν ἔξη « στὴν μπούκα τοῦ τουφεκιοῦ », ἡσθάνθη κ' αὐτὴ φόβον μὴ κακοπέσῃ ἄδικα, καὶ ὅτι ἀπὸ τὸ σπίτι τῆς κόρης της, τῆς Δελχαρῶς, ὅπου ἔτυχε νὰ εὕρεται σήμερον τὸ δειλινόν, εἶχεν ἰδεῖ τοὺς χωροφύλακας νὰ κατασκοπεύουν τὸ δικό της τὸ σπίτι: ὅτι ἀπεφάσισε νὰ φύγῃ στὰ βουνά: ὅτι, καθὼς ἔτρεχεν ἐδῶ κάτω, κατὰ τὸν αἰγιαλόν, σκοπεύουσα νὰ πάρῃ τὸ κρυφὸν μονοπάτι τοῦ βουνοῦ, ὁπίσω ἀπὸ τὰ Κοιτρώνια, εἶδε τὸν Κυριάκον τὸν κλήτορα μαζί μ' ἓνα γέρο-τα-

χτικόν, νὰ ἔρχωνται κατόπιν' της, ἀλλ' ὅτι, κατὰ θεῖαν νεῦσιν, εὐρέθη κοντὰ στὸ σπίτι τῆς Μαρουσῶς, ἡ ὁποία ξεύρει καλὰ ἀπὸ παλαιὸν καιρὸν « τὰ πάθια της », ἐφρόντισε νὰ προσθέσῃ, καὶ ἰδοῦσα τὴν θύραν ἀνοικτὴν, ἔσπευσε νὰ εἰσέλθῃ, ὅπως εὖρη ἄσυλον.

— Ἐχω κλειδώσει τὴν πόρτα ἀπὸ μέσα παιδάκι μου... ἀπ' τὸ σαστισμό μου, τί νὰ κάμω! Μοῦ ἦτανε γραφτὸ νὰ πᾶθω, τὰ παθὰ.

Ἔτσι νᾶχῃς πολὺ καλὸ, Μαρουσῶ μου... Δὲν κυττάξεις κρυφά, κρυφὰ ἀπ' τὸ παντζούρι ἐκεῖνο;... νὰ ἰδῇς ἂν εἶνε ὁ Κυριάκος κάτω ἢ ἔχει τραβήξῃ;

Ἡ Μαρουσῶ ἤλθε πρὸς τὸ ὑποδειχθέν παράθυρον, κ' ἐκύτταξε κατὰ τὸν δρόμον. Εἶτα ἐπιστραφεῖσα εἶπεν:

— Εἶνε παραπέρα, ἐκεῖ... Στέκονται στὸ δρόμο μαζί μ' ἓνα γέρο ἀπόμαχον... Ἐχουν πιάσει κουβέντα μὲ τὸν γείτονά μας τὸν ψαρᾶ, τὸν Φραγκοῦλη.

— Καὶ κυττάζουν κατὰ ὄω;

— Κυττάζουν στὴν ἀμμουδιά, πέρα.

Ἡ γραῖα ἦτο ἔμφοβος, κ' ἔφερε τὰς χεῖρας περὶ τὸ πρόσωπον, ὡς διὰ νὰ τραβήξῃ τὰ τσουλούφια τῆς, ἢ νὰ σχίσῃ τὰ μάγουλά τῆς.

Ἡ Μαρούσα τὴν ὥκτειρε.

— Δὲν κάθесαι, θειὰ Χαδούλα; . . . Μὴ φοβᾶσαι. . . Ὅ,τι εἶνε, θὰ περάσῃ. . . Κάθισε, νὰ σοῦ κάμω καφεδάκι νὰ πιῇς.

Ἡ Γιαννοῦ μετὰ δισταγμοῦ ἐρρίφθη ἐπὶ τινος χαμηλοῦ σκαμνίου, εἰς τὰ πρόθυρα τοῦ μαγειρείου, ὅπου ἐγένετο ὁ διάλογος.

Ἡ οἰκία ἐφαίνετο εὐπορούσης οἰκογενείας, καὶ εἶχε πολλὰ χωρίσματα, κ' ἐπίπλωσιν εὐπρεπῇ.

— Δὲ θυμᾶσαι τὰ δικά μου, θειὰ Χαδούλα; . . . εἶπε μυστηριωδῶς ἡ Μαρούσα, καὶ τὸ πρόσωπόν τῆς ἀφ' ὅ,τι ἦτο ἐγείνεν ἀκόμη ἐρυθρότερον. . . Θυμήσου τί τρομάρες, τί βάσανα πέρασα τότε κ' ἐγώ! Κι' ἄς εἶσαι καλά, πόσο μ' ἐβοήθησες! Ἐτσι θὰ περάσουν καὶ τὰ δικά σου.

— Γιατί εἶπα ἐγὼ πῶς ἐοὺ ξέρεις τὰ πάθια μου! ἐπανέλαβεν ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ μετριόφρων.

— Ἐκεῖνα ποῦ λές, ἦταν πάθια δικά μου, διώρθωσε φιλαλήθης ἡ Μαρουσώ.

Ἐψῆσε τὸν καφὲν καὶ τὸν ἐκένωσε

— Ὁ ἀφέντης μου, ὅπου εἶνε, θάρρη. . . Πιὲ τὸν καφέ σου. Βούτηξε καὶ τὸ ψωμάκι, προσέθηκε κόπτουσα μεγάλην φέταν ψωμίου.

Ἡ γραῖα ἄρχισε νὰ βουτᾷ τὸ ψωμί καὶ νὰ τὸ μασᾷ χωρὶς ὀρεξίν.

— Πολὺ καλὸ νᾶχης, ἔλεγε. Δὲν πάει κάτω, παιδί μου. . . Ἀπ' τὸ χολοσκασμὸ ποῦ ἔχω. . .

Φαρμάκι βγαῖ; ὁ οὐρανίσκος μου.

Εἶτα ἐπέφερε

— Δὲν κάνεις τὸν κόπο νὰ κυττάξῃς πάλι ἀπ' τὸ παραθυράκι, ἔξω; . . . Εἶνε ἀκόμη ὁ Κυριάκος κάτω;

Ἡ Μαρούσα ὑπήκουσεν.

— Ἐκεῖ εἶνε, θειὰ Χαδούλα. . . Ἐπιασαν μεγάλην κουβέντα μὲ τὸν Φραγκούλη.

— Καὶ τώρα, ποῦ νὰ πάω; . . . Σὰν ἔρθ' ὁ πατέρας σου; . . . Βασίλειψ' ὁ ἥλιος. . . σουρούπωσε. . . θὰ νυχτώσῃ.

Ἡ Μαρούσα ἐσκέφθη ἐπὶ στιγμὴν, εἶτα εἶπεν

— Ἐγὼ ἔχω μεγάλην ὑποχρέωσι σὲ λόγου σου, θειὰ Χαδούλα. . . Πῶς νὰ τὸ ξεχάσω!

— Θυμᾶσαι; εἶπεν ἀκουσίως μειδιῶσα ἡ γραῖα.

— Καὶ μπορῶ νὰ τὰστοχήσω; . . . Ὅ,τι μπορέσω νὰ κάμω, θὰ κάμω γιὰ σένα.

— Ἄς εἶσαι καλά.

Μοῦ φαίνεται πῶς τὸ καλλίτερον εἶνε νὰ σὲ κρύψω ἐδῶ τὴν νύχτα, τώρα, πρὶν ἔλθῃ ὁ ἀφέντης μου.

— Ποῦ;

— Κάτω, στὸ μικρὸ κατωγάκι, στὸ σοφᾶ. . . ξέρεις;

— Ἀ! εἶπεν ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ, ὡς νὰ τῆς ἦλθε μία ἀνάμνησις.

— Καὶ τὰ μεσάνυχτα, σὰν λαλήσῃ τὰρ-νίθι. . .

— Ἐ; . . .

— Κοντὰ νὰ φέξῃ, ὅ,τι ὦρα νοιώσῃς. . .

— Καλά!

— Ἀν θέλῃς, σηκώνεσαι, καὶ πᾶς στὸ καλὸ, ὅπου σὲ φωτίσῃ ὁ Θεός.

Ἄς εἶνε! εἶπε μετὰ στεναγμῷ ἡ γραῖα.

— Τὴν ἄλλῃ νύχτα πάλι, ἀνίσως καὶ δὲν εὔρης ἄλλο καταφύγιο εἰς μέρος πλεῖο κρυφόν, καὶ πλεῖο σίγουρο, ἔρχεσαι, καὶ μοῦ ρίχνεις ἓνα πετραδάκι ἔς αὐτὸ τὸ παράθυρο, ἢ στὸ μικρὸ μπαλκονάκι κατὰ τὸ γιालό, κατεβαίνω, σοῦ ἀνοίγω, καὶ σὲ κρύφτω πάλι στὸ κατωγάκι.

— Καλά! . . . Μά, γιὰ κύτταξε, ἔφυγε ὁ Κυριάκος;

Ἡ Μαρούσα ἐπῆγε πέραν τοῦ μεσοτοιχοῦ, εἰς τὸ παράθυρον πρὸς τὸν δρόμον, ἀργοπόρησεν ὀλίγον, ἴσως διότι εἶχε σκοτεινιάσει πλέον καὶ δὲν διέκρινε καλῶς ἔξω, καὶ ἐπανῆλθε.

— Δὲν ἔφυγαν. . . ἐκεῖ εἶνε κ' οἱ τρεῖς.

— Τώρα ἓνα πρᾶμμα δὲν ξέρω, εἶπε σύν-νους ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ. Δὲν ξέρω ἂν μὲ εἶδε ὁ Κυριάκος νὰ μβαίνω ἐδῶ, ἢ ὄχι. . . Ἀν δὲν μ' ἔχει ἰδεῖ, καὶ δὲν μοῦ κάνει καρτέρι, καλλίτερα ἔχω νὰ φύγω, νὰ σᾶς σηκώσω τὸ βάρος ἀπὸ τώρα.

Ἐλεγε τοῦτο εὐλικρινῶς. Ἐστενοχωρεῖτο, ἐπό-θει τὸν ἀέρα τοῦ βουνοῦ. Ἐκεῖ ἠσθάνετο ὅτι θὰ εὑρίσκειν ἄνεσιν, ἤλπιζε δὲ καὶ ἀσφάλειαν.

— Ὅ,τι κι' ἂν εἶνε, δὲν πρέπει νὰ φύγῃς ἀπόψε, εἶπε προθυμοτέρα γινομένη ἡ Μαρούσα, καθ' ὅσον ἐθερμαίνετο ἐκ τῆς ἀναμνήσεως. Κάθισε, θειὰ Χαδούλα, ἀπόψε, στὸ κατωγάκι, γιὰ νὰ μὲ κάμῃς νὰ θυμηθῶ τὰ παλῆά μου βάσανα. Θὰ μοῦ ἐρθοῦν, τάχα, σὰν ὄνειρο στὸν ὕπνο μου;

— Ἐτσι τὰ θυμᾶται, πλεῖο, κανεῖς, παιδάκι μου, εἶπε μὲ πονηρὰν ἀφέλειαν ἡ γραῖα. Ἀχ! κάθε ἁμαρτία ἔχει καὶ τὴ γλύκα τῆς.

— Ἀλήθεια! . . . καὶ πόση πίκρα φέρνει στὸ τέλος! συνεπλήρωσε μελαγχολικῶς ἡ Μαρουσώ.

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Ἡ οἰκία ἦτο διπλῇ. Ἐκτὸς τοῦ κυρίως κτιρίου, εἶχε μικρὸν παράρτημα πρὸς βορρᾶν, ὅπου ἦτο τὸ μαγειρεῖον, καὶ ὑπὸ τὸ μαγειρεῖον εὗρίσκετο «τὸ μικρὸ κατωγάκι». Ἐκεῖ διὰ τῆς καταπακτῆς καὶ μικρᾶς σκάλας ὠδήγησεν ἡ Μαρούσα τὴν ξένην τῆς, πρὶν ἔλθῃ ὁ κύρ Ἀναγνώστης, ὁ οἰκοδεσπότης. Τῆς ἔφερεν ἄρτον, τεμάχιον κρούου βραστοῦ, ὑπόλοιπον τοῦ γεύματος, τυρίον, νερόν, ποτήριον οἴνου, καὶ τὴν ἐγκατέστησεν ἐπάνω εἰς τὸν σοφᾶν τοῦ μικροῦ κατωγείου, τοῦ χρησιμεύοντος ὡς ἀποθήκη διαφόρων οἰκιακῶν σκευῶν. Τῆς ἔστρωσεν ἓνα παλαιὸν κλίμα, μίαν τριμμένην τσέγγαν, ἓνα μικρὸν σινδόνι, τῆς ἔβαλε μίαν προσκεφαλάδα σκληράν, μὲ γέμισμα ἀπὸ λινόξυλα, καὶ τῆς εὐχέθη καλὴν νύκτα καὶ «ὑπνον ἐλαφρόν».

Ἐλαφρὸς ἦ βαρὺς, ὁ ὕπνος τῆς Φραγκογιαννοῦς δὲν ἦτο δυνατόν νὰ ἦτο εὐκόλος οὔτε εὐάρεστος, εὐρίσκομένης εἰς τοιαύτην ταραχὴν καὶ τοιοῦτον τρόπον. Ἀλλὰ τὸ περιβάλλον τὴν ἔκαμε πρὸς ὥραν νὰ λησμονῇ σχεδὸν τὰ ἐνεστώτα καὶ τὴν ἰδίαν τρομερὰν θέσιν τῆς, καὶ ν' ἀναπολῇ τὰ παρελθόντα. Ἐκεῖνο τὸ ὁποῖον μετριοφρόνως ἡ Γιαννοῦ εἶχεν ὀνομάσει δις «τὰ πάθια τῆς», ἡ δὲ Μαρούσα εἰλικρινῶς εἶχεν ἀναγνωρίσει μᾶλλον ὡς «πάθια» καὶ «βάσανα» ἰδικά τῆς, εἶχε συμβῇ πρὸ ὀκτὼ ἢ δέκα ἐτῶν.

Ὁ κύρ Ἀναγνώστης Μπενίδης, ἄτεκνος, εἶχε λάβει ὡς ψυχοκόρη τὴν Μαρούσαν, καὶ τὴν εἶχεν ἀνατρέψει ὅσον αὐστηρὰ ἡδυνήθη ἡ σύζυγός του, ἥτις ἦτον ἀποθαμιμένη πρὸ δέκα πέντε ἐτῶν. Ὁ κ. Μπενίδης ἦτον εἰς τὸν καιρὸν τοῦ τὸ σημαντικώτερον πρόσωπον τοῦ τόπου του. Εἶχε διατελέσει δημογέρον πρὸ τοῦ Ἀγῶνος, πληρεξούσιος εἰς τὰς πρώτας Συνελεύσεις Τροικίης, Προνοίας, Ἀργους, κτλ. δήμαρχος πρὸ τοῦ Συντάγματος. Εἶτα μετὰ τὸ Σύνταγμα διετέλεσεν ὡς ἀνώτερος ὑπάλληλος εἰς πολλὰ μέρη. Τὴν Μαρούσαν Ἐβραιοπούλαν, ἡ κατ' ἄλλους Τουρκοπούλαν, εἶχε προσλάβῃ εἰς ἡλικίαν σχεδὸν βρεφικὴν, καὶ τὴν εἶχε βαπτίσει.

Εἶτα, ὅταν κατὰ τὰ τελευταῖα ἔτη, ὡς συνταξιούχος ἀπεσύρθη εἰς τὸν τόπον του, τὴν ὑπάνδρευσε μ' ἓνα ἀνειρόν του, καὶ τῆς ἔδωκεν ὡς προῖκα τὸ μικρὸν αὐτὸ κολλητὸν σπιτάκι, εἰς τὸ ἰσόγειον τοῦ ὁποῖου εὗρίσκετο τὴν ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ, ἱκανὰ ἀγροτικὰ κτήματα, καὶ ὀλίγα μετρητά, ὑποσχεθεὶς νὰ τῆς ἀφήσῃ ὡς κληρονομίαν καὶ τὴν κυρίως οἰκίαν, καὶ

ὅτι ἄλλο ἤθελεν εὐρεθῇ παρ' αὐτῷ μετὰ θάνατον.

Ὁ γαμβρός, ἀφοῦ ἀπέκτησεν ἓν τέκνον, ἔλειπεν ὅλον τὸν καιρὸν. Ἐταξίδευσεν λοστρόμος μὲ τὰ καράβια. Ἦτον ρημισμένος ναυτικός, ἀλλὰ σπάταλος καὶ ἄξενοιαστος. Τώρα τελευταῖα, εἶχεν ἀργήσει τρία ἔτη νὰ ἔλθῃ εἰς τὸν τόπον. Ἐν τῷ μεταξὺ ὁ γηραιὸς κύρ Ἀναγνώστης εἶχε χρεύσει, καὶ ἡ ψυχοκόρη, κατὰ τὴν ἀπουσίαν τοῦ συζύγου ὑπηρετεῖ διαρκῶς εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν τὸν θετὸν πατέρα τῆς, ὅπως καὶ παιδιόθεν ἦτο συνειθισμένη. Ὁ σύζυγος ἔγραφεν ἀπὸ καιροῦ εἰς καιρὸν ἐπιστολάς, ὑποσχόμενος ὅτι θὰ ἔλθῃ, ἀλλὰ δὲν ἤρχετο. Τὸ θυγάτριον τῆς Μαρούσας ἦτο ἤδη τεσσάρων ἐτῶν, καὶ οὔτε ὁ πατὴρ εἶχεν ἰδεῖ ποτὲ τὸ τέκνον, οὔτε αὐτὸ ἐγνώριζε τὴν ὄψιν τοῦ πατρὸς.

Κατ' ἐκεῖνον τὸν καιρὸν, μαζὺ μὲ τὴν ἀνάπτυξιν τοῦ ἐμπορίου καὶ τῆς συγκοινωνίας, εἶχαν ἀρχίσει νὰ ξανοίγουν κάπως καὶ τὰ ἥθη εἰς τὸν μικρὸν, ἀπόκεντρον τόπον. Ξένοι ἐρχόμενοι ἀπὸ τὰ ἄλλα μέρη τῆς Ἑλλάδος, τὰ «πλέον πολιτισμένα», εἴτε ὑπάλληλοι τῆς κυβερνήσεως, εἴτε ἔμποροι, ἐκόμιζον νέας, ἐλευθερίας θεωρίας περὶ ὅλων τῶν πραγμάτων. Οὐτοὶ τὴν αἰδῶ καὶ τὴν συστολὴν ὠνόμαζον βλακείαν, τὴν ἐγκράτειαν καὶ τὴν σωφροσύνην εὐήθειαν. Τὴν διαφθορὰν καὶ τὴν λαγνείαν ὠνόμαζον «φυσικὰ πράγματα». Ἡ δύστηνος Μαρούσα, ἥτις δὲν εἶχε γεννηθῇ εἰς τὸν τόπον, ἀρχήθεν δὲν ἦτο πολὺ αὐστηρὰ οὔτε σεμνοπρεπής, εἶχε δὲ μικρὰν δόσιν ἐλαφρότητας.

Τὸν καιρὸν ἐκεῖνον εὗρίσκοντο εἰς τὴν νῆσον ἓνας γραμματεὺς τοῦ εἰρηνοδικείου, ἄγαμος, φουστανελλᾶς. Ἐνας γραμματεὺς τοῦ Λιμεναρχείου, βρακάς, ἀξιοματικὸς τοῦ οἰκονομικοῦ Ν. κλάδου, γεροντοπαλλήκαρος ἓνας ἐνωμοτάρχης κομψευτής, μὲ λιγνὴν μέσην καὶ ἀγκιστροειδῆ μύστακα ἓνας τελωνοφύλαξ ἔχων τριπλάσιον εἰσόδημα ἀπὸ τὸν μισθὸν του, καὶ δύο ἢ τρεῖς πράκτορες ξένων ἐμπορικῶν οἰκων ἢ ἄλλοι μέτοικοι. Ὅλοι οὗτοι εἶχον παντοτινὴν συντροφίαν μὲ δύο ἢ τρεῖς ἄλλους νεαροὺς ἐμπορευομένους, κομψευομένους, μ' «ἐλληνικοῦρες» πολλὰς εἰς τὴν γλῶσσαν καὶ μετὰ πολλὰς «προσρήσεις». Μὲ τοὺς τελευταίους τούτους ἠναγκάζοντο νὰ ἔρχονται συχνὰ εἰς ἐπαφὴν πολλὰι γυναῖκες, καὶ σώφρονες ἄλλως τοῦ τόπου, χάριν τῶν ἀφεύκτων καὶ ἀτελειῶν ὁψωνισμάτων, ἀπὸ τὰ ὁποῖα ἀδύνατον ν' ἀπαλλαγῇ ποτὲ ὁ γυναικεῖος κόσμος. 100

Ἐπεται συνέχεια

Α. ΠΑΠΑΔΙΑΜΑΝΤΗΣ

Η Φ Ο Ν Ι Σ Σ Α ·

Α πὸ τὰ τόσα βρόχια, τὰ ὁποῖα τῆς εἶχαν ρί-
 πει εἰς τὸν δρόμον της, ἀπὸ τὰς τόσας ἐλε-
 πόλεις, τὰς ὁποίας τῆς εἶχον στήσει περὶ τοὺς
 5 τοίχους της ὅλοι οἱ εἰρημένοι ἐπιχειρηματίαι,
 δὲν ἠδυνήθη νὰ γλυτώσῃ ἡ Μαροῦσα· καὶ μετ'
 ὀλίγον καιρὸν αὕτη, ἐν ἀπουσίᾳ τοῦ συζύγου,
 εὐρέθη ἔγκυος. Καὶ τὸ ἐνόησεν ὅτε ἦτο ἡδη
 10 δύο μηνῶν. Ἀλλὰ πρὶν τὸ ἀνακαλύψῃ αὕτη,
 ὅλη ἡ γειτονιά, ὡς εἰκός, τὸ εἴξεν ἴσως
 καὶ προτοῦ νὰ συμβῇ τὸ πρᾶγμα. Μόνον ὁ
 κύρ Ἀναγνώστης εὐρίσκετο ἐν ἀγνοίᾳ. «Ὁ
 κόσμος», ὅπως εἶπε τότε ἡ πονηρὴ Κοκκίτσα,
 μία γειτόνισσα «τῶγε τοῦμλανο, κι' αὐτὸς
 15 ὕπῃρξαν κ' αἱ κακαὶ γλῶσσαι, αἵτινες εἶπον
 ἄνευ τῆς ἐλαχίστης πιθανότητος, ὡς εἰκός, ὅτι
 ὁ κύρ Ἀναγνώστης ἐφήρμοξε τὴν παλαιὰν
 μέθοδον τοῦ Δαβίδ, καὶ ὅτι διὰ νεαρᾶς πνοῆς
 καὶ θερμοῦ αἵματος ἐζήτει νὰ «ξανανειώσῃ».
 20 Ἀλλ' ἡ εἰρημένη Κοκκίτσα καὶ δύο ἢ τρεῖς ἄλ-
 και γειτόνισσαι, αἵτινες τὰ ἔλεγον σιγανὰ, κ'
 ἐγέλων συριστικὰ μεταξύ των, ἰσχυρίζοντο ὅτι,
 δηθὴν «ἀπ' τὸ παιδί ἔχουν πολλοὶ μερδικό»·
 25 ὅτι τὸ κεφάλι πρέπει νὰ εἴνε τοῦ γαστριμαρ-
 κικοῦ τοῦ φουστανελλᾶ μὲ τὸ τεράστιον φέσι
 καὶ τὴν μακροτάτην φούντα, ἡ μέση, θὰ εἴνε
 βέβαια τοῦ νωματάρχου, τοῦ σεβταλῆ, τὸ ἓνα τὸ
 ποδάρι (στοῦ λάκκο!) τοῦ γέρον-κολασμένου,
 30 τοῦ βρουκᾶ, τὸ ἓνα χέρι (μακρὸν χέρι!) τοῦ τε-
 λωνοφύλακα, καὶ τὸ ἄλλο χέρι (παστρικὸ χέρι!)
 τοῦ ψιλικατζῆ, μὲ τῆς ἑλληνικοῦρες.
 Πρώτη ἡ ρηθεῖσα Κοκκίτσα εἶχε προσκληθῇ
 μυστηριωδῶς ἀπὸ τὴν Μαροῦσαν (σημειωτέον
 35 ὅτι αὕτη, ὅσον καὶ ἂν ἐφαίνετο ἀπονήρευτη,
 εἶχεν ἐννοήσῃ ὅτι ἡ Κοκκίτσα τὴν ὑπωπτεύετο
 πρὸ πολλοῦ, ὅθεν ἐπροσποιήθη κι' αὕτη εὐ-
 θηνήν, ἀναγκαστικὴν ἐμπιστοσύνην διὰ νὰ τὴν
 40 κολακεύσῃ, ἐλπίζουσα ὅτι θὰ τὴν ἔπειθε, καὶ
 διὰ δώρων, νὰ σιωπήσῃ) εἶχε προσκληθῇ,
 λέγων, νὰ λαβῇ γινῶσιν τοῦ μυστηρίου. Ἡ Μα-
 ροῦσα, «ἀδερφή νὰ τὴν κάμῃ, ἀπ' τὸ Θεὸ καὶ
 45 στὰ χέρια της», ἔπεσε στὸν τράχηλόν της καὶ
 τὴν ἰκέτευε νὰ κάμῃ ἔλεος ὅν εἴξεν ἴποτε
 ψευτογιατρικά, διὰ νὰ ἐξαφανισθῇ, εἰ δυνα-
 τόν, ὁ καρπὸς τῆς ἁμαρτίας, κι' ὁ Θεὸς πλέον

ἂς ἐγίνετο ἴλεως! Διότι ἄλλως αὕτη βέβαια
 —τί τὴν ἠθέλε τέτοια ζωή;— θὰ ἔπεφτε βέ-
 βαια, στὸν γιᾶλὸ νὰ πνιγῇ, καθὼς ἦτον μά-
 λιστα καὶ σιμά, ἀπὸ κάτω ἀπ' τὸ σπίτι, ἡ θά-
 50 λασσα. Ἡ Κοκκίτσα τὴν καθυσύχασε μὲ λόγια
 παρηγορίας, καὶ ἄρχισε νὰ ἐφαρμόζῃ ἐπ' αὐ-
 τῆς διαφόρους ἀλοιφὰς καὶ ἐμπλαστρα, τὰ ὁ-
 ποῖα οὐδόλως ἐτελεσφόρουν.

Δευτέρα προσεκλήθη ἡ Σταμάτω, πτωχὴ
 55 γήρα, κ' ἡ Κονδύλω ἡ ἀδελφὴ της, ἀλβανό-
 γλωσσοι αἱ δύο, καταγόμεναι ἀπὸ μίαν τῶν
 νήσων τοῦ Σαρωνικοῦ. Αὗται ἐξήσκουν ἐντρι-
 βάς ἐπὶ τοῦ σώματος τῆς ἀνυχτοῦς γυναικός.
 Καὶ τὰς τρεῖς μὲ ὅτι ἐκλεπτεν ἀπὸ τὰς οἰκο-
 νομίας τοῦ κύρ Ἀναγνώστη, τὰς ἀντήμειβε. 60
 Κ' ἐκεῖναι ἐμάκρυνον τὰς ἀλοιφὰς, καὶ παρέ-
 τεινον τὰς ἐντριβάς, ἀλυσιτελῶς πάντοτε.

Τὴν ἐσπέραν, ἀνερχόμεναι αἱ τρεῖς εἰς τὴν
 αὐλὴν τῆς κυρᾶ-Θωμαῆς, ὀλίγα σπῖτια παρα-
 μέσα, ὅπου ἤρχοντο κ' ἡ γρηὰ Χιόνω, κ' ἡ 65
 θειὰ Κυράννω, ὅλαι μετανάστιδες ἐκ Μακεδο-
 νίας τοῦ 1821, τὰ ἔλεγον μεταξύ των. Αἱ
 τρεῖς πρῶται ἔδιδον καθ' ἐσπέραν τακτικὴν
 ἀναφορὰν εἰς τὴν κυρᾶ-Θωμαὴν καὶ εἰς τὰς
 70 δύο ἄλλας γραίας καὶ ὅλαι μαζὺ ἐχασκογε-
 λοῦσαν.

Μάλιστα τὰ ὄψιμα ἑλληνικὰ τῆς Σταμάτως,
 καθὼς περιέγραφε τὴν κατάστασιν τῆς ἐγκύου
 («αὕτη ὅλη κοντὸ εἶνε καὶ τὰ πόδια της κοντὴ
 75 τὸ ἔχει!... θὰ μὴν τὸ ρίχνῃ, τάχατες!...») ἐπέτεινον
 τοὺς γέλωτάς των. Καὶ εἰς τὰς ἐκ-
 θέσεις τῆς Σταμάτως, ἡ γρηὰ Κυράννω ἐ-
 πρόσθετε τὰ σχόλιά της, μὲ τὴν Μακεδονικὴν
 τῆς διάλεκτον.

— Αὐτηνιές, σὴν λιέου, εἶνη παληοφουρά- 80
 δες!... Ἀχιλῶνης, μαρή... Ποῦ στὰ χουρ-
 γιά, τὰ θ' κάμας! νὰ τοῦ φτιαξ' καμμιά αὐτ'νό,
 θὲ τ' βγάλ'νῃ, σὴν λιέου, στοῦ γουμαρουπά-
 ζαρου!...

Τελευταία ἀπ' ὅλας ἐκλήθη νὰ λάβῃ μέρος 85
 ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ. ὡς σοφωτέρα ὄλων τῶν
 ἄλλων. Ἡ Μαροῦσα εἶχεν ἀρχίσῃ ν' ἀπελπί-
 ζεται ἀπὸ τὰς τρεῖς πρώτας «ψευτομαμμές»,
 καὶ κατέφυγεν εἰς ταύτην ὡς εἰς τελευταίαν
 90 ἐλπίδα. Τῷ ὄντι ἡ γρηὰ Χαδούλα μὲ τὰ φάρ-
 μακά της, μὲ τὰ μαντζούνια της καὶ μὲ τὰ ζε-
 στὰ ἢ κρύα ὕσα ἔδιδε νὰ πῇ εἰς τὴν πά-

5 σχουσαν, τῇ βοηθείᾳ καὶ τῶν ἐντριβῶν τὰς
ὁποίας ἐξετέλει μ' ἐπιδεξιότητα πολὺ ὑπερτέ-
ραν ἀπὸ τὰς ἄλλας, κατώρθωσεν ἐντὸς ὀλίγων
ἡμερῶν νὰ ἐπιφέρει τὴν ἔκτρωσιν. Ὁ κύριος Ἀ-
ναγνώστης οὐδέποτε ἔμαθε τίποτε.

10 Αὐτὴ ἦτον ἡ παλαιὰ ἐκδούλευσις, καὶ αὐτὴ
ἡ εὐγνωμοσύνη τὴν ὁποίαν εἶχον ὑπαινιχθῇ
σήμερον αἱ δύο. Αὐτὰ ἦσαν τῆς Φραγκογιαν-
νοῦς «τὰ παλῆὰ τὰ πάθια τῆς», καὶ αὐτὰ ἦ-
σαν τῆς Μαρουῦσας «τὰ βάσανά τῆς».

15 Ἡ ἀνάμνησις κατεῖχε τὸν νοῦν τῆς Φραγ-
κογιαννοῦς ὅλην τὴν ὥραν, ἐνῶ ἔκειτο ἐπὶ τοῦ
σοφᾶ, εἰς τὸ σκότος· διότι λύχνον δὲν τῆς εἶχε
φέρει ἡ φιλοξενούσα, μόνον ἓνα κηράκι καὶ
20 ὀλίγα σπέρτα τῆς εἶχεν ἀφήσει. Ὅλην αὐτὴν
τὴν παλαιὰν ἱστορίαν ἀνελογίζετο, καὶ ὁ ὕπνος
ποτὲ δὲν τῆς ἤρχετο. Ἐρευνῶσα τὴν συνειδη-
σίν τῆς, ἐν πράγματι εὑρισκεν ὅ,τι εἶχε κάμη
καὶ τότε καὶ τώρα τὸ εἶχε κάμη διὰ καλόν.
25 Ἐκουλουριάζετο ὑποκάτω εἰς τὸ μᾶλλον σκέ-
πασμα, ἐπὶ τοῦ δεξιοῦ πλευροῦ κειμένη, καὶ ἔκυ-
πτε τὴν κεφαλὴν εἰς τὸ στέρονον, καὶ ἐπροσπάθει
νὰ ζαλισθῇ, νὰ ναρκωθῇ, νὰ τῆς ἔλθῃ λήθαργος.
Τότε, μετὰ χρόνους, ἐνθυμήθη καὶ τὴν σύντομον
προσευχὴν, τὴν ὁποίαν τῆς εἶχεν ἐπιβάλῃ ἄλ-
30 λοτε νὰ λέγῃ συχνὰ ἓνας γέρον πνευματικὸς
τὸ «Κύριε Ἰησοῦ Χριστέ, Υἱὲ τοῦ Θεοῦ, ἐλέη-
σόν με».

30 Ἡ συχνὴ ἐπανάληψις τῆς εὐχῆς ἐνήργησε,
καὶ ἡ Χαδοῦλα ἐναρκώθη ἐπ' ὀλίγα λεπτά καὶ
ἀπεκοιμήθη. Πλὴν πάραυτα εἰς τὸν ὕπνον τῆς,
ἡ εἰς τὰ ξύπνα τῆς, (δὲν εἴξευρε καλῶ), τῆς
ἐφάνη ὅτι μέσα, εἰς τὸ βάθος τῆς ψυχῆς τῆς,
ἤκουε φωνὴν βρέφους, κλαῦμα, μινυρισμὸν
35 θρηνώδη τοῦτο ὁμοίαζε μὲ τὴν φωνὴν τῆς
μικρᾶς ἐγγονῆς τῆς, τῆς πρὸ ὀλίγων μηνῶν,
διὰ χειρὸς αὐτῆς. . . τελειωθείσης.

40 Ἡ γραῖα ἐξύπνησεν ἐντρομος, ἀνετινάχθη
ὅλη. Ἀνεσηκώθη καὶ ἡσθάνετο μέγαν σπαραγ-
μόν, ἀλλὰ συγχρόνως καὶ καλλιτέραν σωματι-
κὴν ἄνεσιν. Ὁ σύντομος ἐκεῖνος ὕπνος εἶχεν
ῥυπαρὴν παρ' αὐτῇ τὸ νευροπαθὲς καὶ τὸ
ἀνήσυχον. Ἐπιηλάρησεν, εὔρε τὰ σπέρτα, ἡ-
45 ναψε τὸ κηρίον, ἐπῆρε τὸ ραβδί τῆς, τὸ κα-
λάθι τῆς, ἔβαλε μέσα εἰς αὐτὸ καὶ τὰς ἐμβά-
δας τῆς, καὶ ἀνυπόδοτη, μὲ τῆς κάλτσες, ἐκί-
νησε νὰ φύγῃ.

IB'.

Ἡ Μαρουῦσα τῆς εἶχε δώσει τὸ κλειδί τοῦ
μικροῦ κατωγείου, τῆς εἶπε νὰ ἐξέλθῃ διὰ τῆς

50 ἰδιαιτέρας θύρας τούτου πρὸς τὴν ὁδόν, νὰ
κλειδῶσῃ ἔξωθεν, καὶ νὰ πάρῃ τὸ κλειδί μαζί
τῆς, διὰ νὰ τὸ μεταχειρισθῇ πάλιν τὴν ἄλλην
νύκτα, ἂν ἐμελλε νὰ ἐπανέλθῃ. Ὅσον δι' αὐ-
τὴν, ἂν ἐλάμβανεν ἀνάγκην νὰ κατέλθῃ εἰς τὸ
κατωγάκι, θὰ κατήρχετο διὰ τῆς ὁδοῦ, δι' ἧς
55 εἶχεν ὁδηγήσει ἐκεῖ τὴν ξένην τῆς, τῆς ἐσωτε-
ρικῆς σκάλας καὶ τῆς θύρας τοῦ μεσοτοιχοῦ.

Τῷ ὄντι, ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ ἡσθάνετο πλέον
μεγάλην σφλομονήν, καὶ τὸ στενὸν κατωγάκι
μὲ τὸν ὑγρὸν ἀέρα τοῦ πλῆν ἐστενοχώρει. Και-
60 ρὸς ἦτο ν' ἀναπνεύσῃ πλέον τὸν ἀέρα τοῦ
βουνοῦ, πρὶν οἱ διώκται χωροφύλακες τὴν
κλείσωσιν, ἴσως διὰ βίου, εἰς τὰ ὑγρά καὶ ἀνή-
λια ὑπόγεια τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης θέμιδος.

Ἐξῆλθε, καὶ κάτω εἰς τὰ βάθη τῆς ψυχῆς
65 τῆς, ἐμινύριζεν ἀκόμα ἡ θρηνώδης φωνὴ τοῦ
βρέφους, τοῦ μικροῦ κορασίου τοῦ ἀδικοθανα-
τίσαντος. Ἐστάθη εἰς τὸ χάσμα τῆς θύρας,
ἐκύτταξε μετὰ προσυλάξεως ἔξω, δεξιὰ, ἀρι-
στερά, ἄνω, κάτω τοῦ δρόμου· δὲν εἶδε ψυχὴν
70 οὔτε σκιάν. Ἐβαλε πτερά εἰς τοὺς πόδας τῆς.

Δὲν ἦτο ἡ πρώτη φορὰ καθ' ἣν ἤκουε μέσα
εἰς τὴν ψυχὴν τῆς, ὅπου ὑπῆρχε σκοτεινὴ, σπη-
λαιώδης ἡχώ, τὸ πένθιμον ἐκεῖνο κλαῦμα τοῦ
βρέφους. Καὶ ἐνόμιζεν ὅτι ἔφευγε τὸν κίνδυνον
75 καὶ τὴν συμφορὰν, καὶ τὴν συμφορὰν καὶ τὴν
πληγὴν τὴν ἔφερε μαζί τῆς. Καὶ ἐφαντάζετο ὅτι
ἔφευγε τὸ ὑπόγειον καὶ τὴν εἰρκτὴν, καὶ ἡ εἰρ-
κτὴ καὶ ἡ Κόλασις ἦτο μέσα τῆς.

80 Ὡρα ἦτον ὡς δύο μετὰ τὰ μεσάνυχτα, νῦξ
ἀσέληνος, ἀστροφεγγής. Ἀρχὰς Μαΐου, δευτέ-
ραν ἐβδομάδα μετὰ ὄψιμον Πάσχα. Ἡ ἐξοχὴ
εὐωδίαζεν, ἡ αὔρα ἐμυροβόλει. Ὅλίγα ἄγρυ-
πνα πουλάκια ἐμελτον τὸ ὄρθριον ἐπάνω εἰς
τὰ κλαδιά. Ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ ἐπῆρε τὸν δρο-
85 μίσκον, τὸν λίαν γνωστὸν εἰς αὐτὴν, στενὸν καὶ
ἔρποντα, ὅπισθεν τῶν κήπων καὶ κάτωθεν τῶν
βράχων. Ὁ δρομίσκος μόλις ἦτον ὁρατὸς εἰς
τὴν ἀπροφεγγίαν, καλυπτόμενος ἐν μέρει ἀπὸ
90 τοὺς προεξέχοντας ῥάμνους τῶν θάμνων καὶ
τῶν βάτων, οἵτινες προέκυπτον ἀπὸ τοὺς φρά-
κτας τῶν κήπων. Ἡ εὐκίνητος γραῖα ἐπάτει
ἐπὶ χόρτων καὶ χαμαιμήλων, καὶ ἐπὶ γλωφῶν ἀ-
κανθίων, ἀνήρχετο δὲ μὲ βῆμα κόρης, νεαρᾶς
95 βοσκοπούλας τοῦ βουνοῦ, τὸν ἀνηφορικὸν δρο-
μίσκον.

Εἶχε τελειώσει ἡ μακρὰ σειρὰ τῶν κήπων
καὶ τῶν περιβολίων πρὸς τὰ δεξιὰ τῆς, ἐνῶ
ἀριστερά τῆς παρετείνετο ἀκόμη ὁ μικρὸς βρα-
100 χώδης λόφος, τὰ Κοτρώνια, μὲ τὰς τρεῖς γρα-
φικὰς κορυφὰς τῶν τῶν μίαν κατόπιν τῆς ἄλ-

λης, τὰς ἐπιστεφομένας ἀπὸ ἀνεμομύλους καὶ
μικρὰ λευκὰ καλύβια καὶ σπιτάκια, ἔρποντα
γύρω των. Τώρα πλέον ἔφθασεν εἰς μέρος ὅ-
που ἄρχιζαν ἀμπέλια, ἀγροὶ μὲ ὀπωροφόρα
5 δένδρα, ὅσον ἦτον ἀκόμη πλαγινὸς ὁ ἀνήφο-
ρος, καὶ ἔλαιῶνες, ἧ ἀγροὶ μὲ ὑψηλοὺς στά-
χους, σειομένους ἀπὸ τὴν νυκτρινὴν αὔραν,
ἔκειθεν ὅπου ὁ ἀνήφορος καθίστατο ἀποτο-
μώτερος καὶ ἄνω. Ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ, μὲ ἐ-
λαφρὸν ἄσθμα, ἔτρεχεν, ἔτρεχε, μαστιζομένη τὸ
10 πρὸσωπον ἀπὸ τὸ ἀπόγειον τὸ πρῶνόν, τὸ
ἀντίπνοον, τοῦ Βορρᾶ τὸ χαϊδευμένον ἐωθινὸν
τέκνον.

Ἔσπευδε νὰ φθάσῃ τὸ ταχύτερον, πρὶν ἀνα-
15 τεῖλῃ ἡ ἡμέρα, εἰς τὰ μέρη τὰ ὁποῖα αὐτὴ ἐ-
γνώριζε. Ὑπῆρχον, κατὰ τοὺς βορείους αἰγια-
λοὺς τῆς νήσου, πολλοὶ κλεφτότοποι, μέρη ἀ-
πάτητα, σπήλαια καὶ βράχοι ὅπου ἐφύτρωνε
τὸ ἀγριοβότανον καὶ ἡ κάπαρις, καὶ τὰ κρί-
20 ταμα καὶ ἡ ἀρμυρήθρα, καὶ ὅπου τοὺς ὑπάρ-
χοντας ὀλίγους δρόμους κατέστρεφον καθιμε-
ρινῶς τὰ κοπάδια τῶν ἐρίφων καὶ τῶν αἰγῶν.
Ἐκεῖ θὰ ἦτο τὸ ἄσπλόν της, ἐκεῖ ὅπου ἦσαν
αἱ ἀναμνήσεις τῆς παιδικῆς ἡλικίας της. Εἰς
25 ἐκείνους τοὺς βορείους αἰγιαλοὺς, σιμὰ εἰς τὸ
ἄγριον καὶ γαλανὸν πέλαγος, εἰς τὸ παλαιὸν
Κάστρον, τὸ κτισμένον ἐπὶ γιγαντιαίου θαλασ-
σοπλήκτου βράχου, ἐκεῖ εἶχε γεννηθῇ ἡ Χα-
δούλα, κ' ἐκεῖ εἶχεν ἀνατραφῇ ὡς δέκα ἐτῶν
30 κόρη.

Εἶτα, ὅταν εἰρήνευσαν τὰ πράγματα, καὶ ἡ
νέα πολίχνη ἐκτίσθη εἰς τὸν λιμένα τὸν μεσημ-
βρινόν, ἡ μάνα της, ἡ μάγισσα, ἡ πολυκνηγη-
μένη ἀπὸ τοὺς κλέφτες καὶ τοὺς λιάπηδες, συχνά
35 τὴν εἶχεν ἐπαναφέρει εἰς τὰ μέρη ἐκεῖνα, τῆς
εἶχε δεῖξει ὅλους τοὺς κλεφτότοπους, τοὺς ἀ-
βάτους βράχους καὶ τὰ ἄντρα, καὶ τῆς εἶχε διη-
γηθῇ δι' ἓνα ἕκαστον τῶν τόπων ἐκείνων ἀνὰ
μίαν ἱστορίαν, φανταστικὴν ἢ ἀληθινῇ. Εἰς ἐ-
40 κεῖνα τὰ μέρη, ὅταν τὴν ὑπνίδρευσαν καὶ τὴν
«ἐκουκούλωσαν», καὶ τὴν «ἐνεκροβλόγησαν»
κατὰ τὴν συνήθη φρασεολογίαν τῆς μητρός της,
τῆς εἶχαν δώσει ἀκόμη καὶ τὴν προῖκά της.
Τὸ σπῖτι, στὸ Κάστρο τὸ ἔρημο, καὶ τὸ χω-
45 ράφι στὸ Μποστάνι, στὸν ἀπάτητον κρημινόν.
Ὑστερον, ὅταν αὐτὴ ἐνοικοκυρεύθῃ, κ' ἔμαθε
πολλά, κ' ἐπρόκοψεν εἰς γυναικεῖαν σοφίαν,
κ' ἐσυνεῖθισε νὰ διηρεύῃ τὰ βότανα καὶ τὰ τρί-
φυλλα καὶ τὰς δρακοντιάς εἰς τοὺς λόγγους
50 καὶ τὰ βουνά, πολὺ συχνὰ εἶχεν ἐπισκερθεῖ τὰ
μέρη ἐκεῖνα, χάριν τῶν ἐρευνῶν της.

Ἐκεῖ λοιπὸν ἐπῆγαινε καὶ τώρα, ἂν ἔδιδεν

ὁ Θεὸς νὰ φθάσῃ ἀσφαλῶς, ἀλλ' εἰς ποίαν
δεινοτάτην περίστασιν. Καὶ ποία ἄρα θὰ ἦτον
ἡ τύχη της ἀπὸ τοῦδε; Μόνος ὁ Θεὸς τὸ εἴ- 55
ξευρε.

Πρὶν φθάσῃ εἰς τὸ μέρος, ὅπου ὁ δρόμος
ἀποτόμως ἀνηφόριζε, καθὼς διήρχετο ἔξω ἀπὸ
ἓνα περιβόλι, φραγμένον μὲ πυκνοὺς βάτους
καὶ θάμνους ὑψηλοὺς καὶ ἐν μέρει μὲ τοιχο- 60
γύρισμα, ἐντὸς τοῦ ὁποῖου ὑπῆρχον πολλῶν εἰ-
δῶν ὀπωροφόρα δένδρα, ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ
κατὰ τύχην ἐσκόνταψεν εἰς τὸν δρόμον, ἔκαμε
δὲ μικρὸν θροῦν, πεσοῦσα ἐλαφρῶς ἐπάνω εἰς
ἓνα θάμνον. Ἀφῆκε μικρὰν φωνὴν ὁμοίαν μὲ 65
στεναγμόν.

Τὴν ἰδίαν στιγμὴν ἤκουσε πολὺ πλησίον
της, ἀλλ' ἔσωθεν τοῦ φράκτου, δυνατόν γαύ-
γυσμα σκύλου. Ἀνωρθώθη, καὶ μὲ ταχύτερον
βῆμα ἐξηκολούθησε τὸν δρόμον της. 70

— «Ποιὸς νὰ εἶνε;» εἶπε μέσα της.

Ἦκούσθη τότε μία φωνὴ βραχνὴ καὶ νυ-
στιλέα, ἀλλ' ἐπτόμος.

— «Ε! βάρδ' ἀπ' τὰ περιβόλια! Ἀνοιχτά!.. 75
Ἀνοιχτά!

Ἀνεγνώρισε τὴν φωνὴν τοῦ Ταμπούρα, τοῦ
δραγάτη. Ἐνόησε τότε τί συνέβαινε. Τὸ περι-
βόλι, ἔξωθεν τοῦ ὁποῖου εἶχε σκοντάψει, ἀνῆ-
κεν εἰς τὸν τότε Δήμαρχον τοῦ τόπου. Ἐντὸς
αὐτοῦ, σιμὰ εἰς τ' ἄλλα δένδρα, ὑπῆρχον καὶ 80
ὀλίγαι κερασέαι, μὲ καρποὺς σχεδὸν ὠρίμους
ἤδη καὶ περκαζοντας, μελανωποὺς εἰς τὴν ἀ-
στροφεγγιάν, ἀνάμεσα εἰς τὰ μαυροπράσινα
φύλλα. Ὁ Ταμπούρας, μὴ ἔχων τί ἄλλο νὰ
φυλάξῃ, ἐπειδὴ δὲν ἦτο ἀκόμη ἡ ὥρα τῶν ὀ- 85
πωρῶν οὔτε τῶν καρπῶν, ἐκοιμᾶτο εἰς τὸ πε-
ριβόλι τοῦ Δημάρχου, ἐντὸς μικρῆς καλύβης
μὲ τὸν σκύλον του, κ' ἐφύλαγε τὰ κεράσια,
μὴν τὰ κλέψουν οἱ δημόται τοῦ ἄρχοντος.

Φεύγουσα, ἤκουεν ἀκόμα τὸ γαύγισμα τοῦ 90
σκύλου, συγχρόνως δὲ «αὐτιάσθη», καὶ τῆς ἐ-
φάνη ὅτι ἤκουεν ἀνθρώπινα βήματα. Ἀλλ' ἡ-
πατήθη. Ἴσως ἦτο μᾶλλον ἀντίκτυπος καὶ ἡχώ
τῶν ἰδίων βημάτων της. Φαίνεται ὅτι ὁ ἀγρο-
φύλαξ μόλις εἶχε μισοξυπνήσει, κ' ἔβαλεν, ὡς 95
ἐν ὑπνοβασίᾳ, μηχανικῶς, τὴν συνήθη φωνὴν
του. Εἶτα εὐθὺς πάλιν ἀπεκοιμήθη.

Ἡ Χαδούλα ἔγινε ἄφαντη εἰς τὸ ὕψος
τοῦ λόφου, ὅπισθεν τῶν δένδρων. Ἐκεῖ ἐστάθη
μίαν στιγμὴν κ' ἔτεινε τὸ οὖς. Τίποτε δὲν ἤ- 100
κουεν εἰμὴ τὸ λάλημα ἑνὸς πουλιοῦ, τὸ σύ-
ριγμα ἑνὸς νυκτερινοῦ ἐντόμιου, καὶ τὸ φύ-
σημα τῆς αὔρας. Τότε τῆς ἦλθαν εἰς τὸν νοῦν

τὰ κεράσια, τὰ ὅποια εἶχε διακρίνει ἀμυδρῶς
στύβοντα εἰς ἓνα κρεμάμενον κλῶνα, ἐξέχοντα
ὀλίγον ἔξω τοῦ φράκτου τοῦ δημαρχικοῦ περι-
βολίου, σιμὰ ἐκεῖ ὅπου εἶχε σκοντάψει, καὶ
εἶπεν

— "Αχ! καὶ δὲν ἔκαμα νὰ φτάσω ἓνα κε-
ράσι, νὰ δροσίσω τὸ στόμα μου, ποῦ εἶνε φαρ-
μάκι. Ἐξάσα νὰ πιῶ μιὰ σταξιά νερὸ πρὶν
φύγω . . " Ἀς φτάσω στὴ βρύσι, μιά!

Τότε μόνον ἐνθυμήθη ὅτι δὲν εἶχε πῆν νε-
ρὸν πρὶν ἐξέλθῃ ἀπὸ τὸ κατωγάκι, ὅπου εἶχε
διέλθει ὀλίγας ἀλλὰ τόσον μακρὰς ἐναγωνίους
ὥρας. Ἡ Χαδούλα ἀνελογίσθη μετὰ πικρίας
ὅτι ὅλα, καὶ τὰ μικρότερα πράγματα, πρῶτῃ-
στερα καὶ ἀνάποδα τῆς ἤρχοντο εἰς αὐτὸν τὸν
κόσμον. Ἐὰν εἶχε προμελετήσῃ νὰ κλέψῃ ὀλίγα
κεράσια ἀπὸ τὴν κερασιά τοῦ Δημάρχου, θὰ
ἐπάτει μετὰ προσοχῆς, θὰ ἐπλησίαζε μετὰ προ-
φυλάξεως, καὶ τότε πιθανῶς οὔτε ὁ δραγάτης
ἦθελεν ἐξυπνήσει, οὔτε ὁ σκύλος ἴσως θὰ ἐ-
γαύγυζε. Ἀλλὰ διὰ νὰ εὐρεθῇ ἀπρόσεκτη καὶ
ἄλλοφρονόυσα, διὰ νὰ μὴν κυττάξῃ καλὰ ποῦ
πλησίον εὐρίσκετο, ἐπαρπάτησεν, ἔκαμε μι-
κρὸν θύρυνον, ἀρκοῦντα διὰ νὰ ξυπνήσῃ τὸν
σκύλον καὶ τὸν ἀνθρώπον. "Ὅλα ἔτσι τῆς ἤρ-
χοντο!

"Ἀλλως, ἡ δίψα τῆς τώρα εἶχεν ἐρεθισθῇ
μὲ τὸν δρόμον τὸν ἀνωφερῆ. Ἐκοψε φύλλα
ἐλαοδένδρων καὶ τὰ ἔβαλε μέσ' τὸ στόμα τῆς.

Ἐβάδισεν ἐπὶ μίαν ὥραν ἀκόμη. Ἦτον
ἤδη χαρανγῆ. Ἀφοῦ ἔφθασεν εἰς τὴν κορυφὴν
τοῦ λόφου, κατήλθε πάλιν εἰς τὸ ρεῦμα, εἰς
τὴν ὑπώρειαν τοῦ βουνοῦ μὲ τὰς πολυσιχι-
δεῖς πλευράς, τὸ ὁποῖον ἔκαλεῖτο ἡ Βίγλες.
Τί οἶδε ποῖοι παλαιοὶ κλέφταις ἐφύλαγαν ἄ-
γρυπνοι καρπούλια ἐκεῖ, καὶ ἐντεῦθεν εἶχε λάβῃ
τὸ ὄνομα. Ἐφθασεν εἰς τὴν μικρὰν βρύσιν,
εἰς τὴν ρίζαν τοῦ βουνοῦ. Ἐφραγγεν ἤδη. Ἐ-
πὶ νερόν, ἐδροσίσθη, κ' εὐθὺς ἔφρυγεν. Εἰς τὸ
μέρος ἐκεῖνο ἐσύχναζον πολλοὶ ἀνθρώποι, βο-
σκοὶ καὶ ἔωμερῖται κι' ἄλλοι. Ἡ Γιαννοῦ ἦ-
θελεν ὅσον τὸ δυνατόν νὰ μείνῃ ἄφοτος. Ἐ-
κατηφόρισεν ἀκόμη, εἰσῆλθεν εἰς τὸ κάτω
ρεῦμα τὸ βαθύ, τὸ βαῖνον πρὸς τὴν θάλασ-
σαν, τὸ καλούμενον Λεχοῦνι.

Ἐκεῖ ἔφθασε μικρὸν πρὸ τῆς ἀνατολῆς τοῦ
ἡλίου. Ὑπῆρχον ἐκεῖ δύο ἢ τρεῖς νερόμυλοι,
μᾶλλον παλαιοὶ καὶ ἄχρηστοι, ἐκ τῶν ὁποίων
ὁ εἰς μόνον ἐδούλευε, καὶ τοῦτο σπανίως. Ὅλα
ἐδείκνυν τὴν ἐρημίαν, δὲν ἐφαίνετο ἕχνος ἀν-
θρώπου ἐκεῖ. Ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ, ἀπὸ περι-

σὴν προφύλαξιν, δὲν ἠθέλησε νὰ πλησιάσῃ
Ἀπέφυγε τὸ μέρος ἐκεῖνο, ἐβάδισεν ὀπισθεν
λόχμης, κ' ἔφθασεν εἰς γούρναν βαθεῖαν, μὲ
διαυγὲς νερόν, γνωστὴν εἰς ὀλίγους. Ἦτο μέ-
ρος κρυφὸν καὶ ἀπάτητον. Ἐσχηματίζετο ἐκεῖ
οἶονεῖ ἄντρον, ἀποτελούμενον ἐκ γλῶης, ἐκ
κορμῶν καὶ κισσοῦ. Ἄντρον νύμφης, Δρυάδος
τῶν παλαιῶν χρόνων ἡ Ναϊάδος, εὐρούσης
ἴσως καταφύγιον ἐκεῖ.

Διὰ νὰ κατέλθῃ τις εἰς τὴν μικρὰν πτυχὴν
τῆς γῆς, ὅπου ἦτο ἡ γούρνα τοῦ νεροῦ, ἔ-
πρεπε νὰ ἔχῃ τὴν τύχην διώκτριας καὶ τοὺς
πόδας τῆς Φραγκογιαννοῦς, τοὺς ἀνυποδήτους,
τοὺς σχισμένους κ' αἱματωμένους ἀπὸ τὰς κνί-
δας καὶ τὰς ἀκάνθας. Ἐκεῖ ἐκάθισε ν' ἀνα-
παυθῇ. Ἐβγαλεν ἀπὸ τὸ καλάθι τῆς τὸ ψωμί
καὶ τὸ τυρὶ καὶ ὀλίγον κρέας, τὰ ὅποια τὴν
εἶχε φιλεύσει ἡ Μαροῦσα, ἐπειδὴ τὴν ἐσπέραν
δὲν εἶχε δυνηθῇ νὰ φάγῃ τίποτε, μετὰ τὸν κα-
φὲν ὅπου εἶχε πῆν εἰς τὸ μαγειρεῖον. Ἐφύλαξε
μόνον τὰ δίπτυρα, τὰ ὅποια εἶχε λάβῃ ἀπὸ τὸ
σπίτι τῆς κόρης τῆς, τῆς Δελχαρώς. Ἐφαγεν,
ἔπιε δροσερόν νερόν, κ' ἔλαβε μικρὰν ἀνα-
ψυχὴν.

Ἐκείνην τὴν στιγμὴν, ἀνέτελλεν ὁ ἥλιος.
Ὁ δίσκος τοῦ ἑφάνη ν' ἀναδύεται ἀπὸ τὰ κύ-
ματα, ἀντικρὺ, εἰς τὸ μακρινὸν πέλαγος, τοῦ
ὁποῖου μίαν λωρίδα ἔβλεπεν ἀπὸ τὴν κρύπτην
τῆς ἡ Χαδούλα. Τὰ ὄρνεα τοῦ βουνοῦ, τοῦ
πετρῶδους καὶ ἡχώδους, τὸ ὁποῖον ἠγείρετο
ὀπισθεν τῆς, ἔρρηξαν μακροὺς κρωγμούς, καὶ
τὰ πουλάκια τῆς κοιλάδος, τῆς λόχμης, τοῦ
μικροῦ δάσους, ἀφῆκαν φαιδρὰς μελωδίας.

Μία ἀκτὶς θερμῆ, ἐρχομένη μακράν, ἀπὸ
τὸ φλεγόμενον πέλαγος, διέσχισε τὴν πυκνὴν
φυλλάδα καὶ τὸν κισσὸν τὸν περισκέποντα τὸ
ἄσυλον τῆς ταιλαιώρου γραίας, καὶ ἔκαμνε νὰ
στίλβῃ ὡς πληθὸς μαργαριτῶν ἡ δρόσος ἡ
πρωϊνὴ, ἡ βρέχουσα τὸν πλούσιον σμαράγδι-
νον πέπλον, κ' ἐφυγάδευεν ὅλον τὸ ρῖγος τῆς
ὕγρασίας, καὶ ὅλον τὸ κρύος τοῦ φόβου τοῦ
πελιδνοῦ, φέρουσα πρὸςκαίρον ἐλπίδα καὶ
θάλπος.

Ἡ Γιαννοῦ ἔβγαλε τὸ χρᾶμι τὸ μῆλινον,
τὸ διπλωμένον εἰς πολλὰς πτυχάς, ἀπὸ τὸ κα-
λάθι τῆς, τὸ ἐξεδίπλωσεν, ἐτυλίχθη μ' αὐτό,
κ' ἔκλινε τὴν κεφαλὴν πρὸς τὴν ρίζαν τοῦ γη-
ραιοῦ πλατάνου. Ἀπεκοιμήθη.

Τῆς ἑφάνη εἰς τὸν ὕπνον τῆς ὅτι ἦτον
νέα ἀκόμα ὅτι ὁ πατὴρ τῆς καὶ ἡ μάνα τῆς
τὴν ὑπάνδρευνον, ὅπως τὴν εἶχαν ὑπάνδρευσαι

καὶ τὴν εἶχαν «νεκροβλοήσει» τὸν καιρὸν ἐ-
 κείνον, καὶ τὴν ἐπροίκιζαν, δίδοντες αὐτῇ καὶ
 τὸν κῆπον τὸν πατρῶον, ὅπου αὐτὴ ἐσκάλιζε
 5 κ' ἐπότιζε τὰ κουριά καὶ τὰ λάχανα, ὅταν ἦ-
 τον μικρὴ καὶ ὁ πατὴρ της τὴν ἐφύλευε τάχα,
 διὰ τὸν κόπον της καὶ τῆς ἔδιδε «τέσσερα κε-
 φάλια» κεφάλια ἀπὸ λαχανίδες. Ἡ Χαδοῦλα μετὰ
 χαρᾶς ἔλαβε τὰ τέσσαρα φυτὰ εἰς τὰς χεῖρας,
 10 ἀλλ' ὅταν τὰ ἐκύτταξε, εἶδεν, ὦ φρίκη! ὅτι
 ἦσαν τέσσερα μικρὰ κεφάλια ἀνθρώπινα νε-
 κρικά..

Ἀνεταράχθη, ἐσκίρτησεν, εἶπε «Κύριε Ἰη-
 σοῦ Χριστέ!...» Πάλιν ἀπεκοιμήθη. Ὁνει-
 15 ρεύθη ὅτι ἡ μητέρα της τὴν συνελάμβανεν
 ἐπ' αὐτοφώρῳ ἐρευνῶσαν νὰ εὑρῇ τὸ κομπό-
 δεμα, κάτω εἰς τὸ ἰσόγειον, ἀνάμεσα εἰς τὰ
 βαρέλια καὶ τὰ πιθάκια καὶ τὸν σωρὸν τῶν
 καυσοξύλων· ὡς τὴν εἶδεν, ἐμειδίασε πικρῶς,
 20 τὸ σύνηδες μειδιάμα της, καὶ διὰ νὰ τὴν ἐβ-
 γάλῃ τάχα ἀπὸ τὸν κόπον, ἐπῆρε μοναχὴ της
 τὸ κομπόδεμα, ἔβγαλε καὶ τῆς ἐχώρισεν ἀπὸ
 τὰ τόσα τάλληρα, τὰ σκυλοδεμένα, τρία γεμα-
 νικά τάλληρα, τρεῖς ρηγίνες, ἀπ' ἐκείνας ποῦ
 25 εἶχαν καὶ τὴν εἰκόνα τῆς Παναγίας ἐπάνω, με-
 τὴν ἐπιγραφὴν «Patrona Bavariae». Ἡ
 Φραγκογιαννοῦ, μετὰ χαρᾶς μεμιγμένης μ' ἐν-
 τροπὴν, ἐπῆρε τὰ τρία νομίσματα, ἀπὸ τὰ χέ-
 ρια τῆς μητρὸς της. πλὴν ὅταν τὰ ἐκύτταξε,
 30 εἶδεν ὅτι τὰ τρία ἐκεῖνα νομίσματα, μετὰ τὰ πρό-
 σωπα ποῦ ἔφερον ἐπάνω, ἦσαν τρία προσω-
 πάκια, μικρά, πελιδνά, μετὰ στυμένα ματάκια, ...
 ὦ! τρόμος! προσωπάκια μικρῶν κορασίδων!
 Ἐξύπνησε περίτρομος, ὑστυχής, φρενια-
 35 σμένη. Ἦτον ἡδὴ μεσημβρία. Ὁ ἥλιος ἔκαιεν
 ὑπεράνω τῆς κεφαλῆς της ἄνωθεν τῆς κορυφῆς
 τοῦ δροσεροῦ πλατάνου. Μὲ ὅλον τὸ θάλλος
 τοῦ ἡλίου, καὶ τὴν φαιδρότητα τῆς ἡμέρας τῆς
 40 μαγιάτικης ἢ ἐντύπωσις τοῦ ὄνειρου ἔμεινεν
 ἐπὶ μακρὸν εἰς τὸν νοῦν της. Τῆς ἐφαίνετο
 παρᾶξενον μάλιστα πῶς, ἐν ἡμέρᾳ, εἶδε τὰ
 ὄνειρα αὐτά. Ὅσακις εἶχε κοιμηθῇ ἐν καιρῷ
 ἡμέρας, εἰς τὴν ζωὴν της. δὲν ἐνθυμεῖτο ποτὲ
 νὰ εἶδεν ὄνειρον.

Ἐβρεῖεν εἰς τὴν γούρναν δύο δίπυρα, τὰ
 45 ἀπέθηκεν ἐπὶ τῆς πέτρας τῆς πλακαρῆς παρὰ
 τὸ χεῖλος τοῦ λάκκου, καὶ τὰ ἐλησμόνησεν ἐ-
 κεῖ ἐπὶ μακρόν, ἑωσότου ἔλυσαν ἀπὸ τὸ βρέ-
 ξιμον κ' ἐσάπισαν. Μετὰ ὥραν, ἐγέμισε τὴν
 50 φούγταν της μετὰ τὰ ψυχία, καὶ τὰ ἔφαγε.

Ὅταν ὁ ἥλιος ἐκρύβη εἰς τὴν κορυφὴν τοῦ
 βραχίονος βουνοῦ, κ' ἐσκίασεν ἡ κοιλὰς, καὶ
 ἦτο δειλινὸν πλέον, ἐστενοχωρήθη καὶ προέ-

κυψε τὴν κεφαλὴν ἔξω τῆς κορυφῆς. Ἐκύττα-
 55 ξεν ἄνω καὶ κάτω, εἰς τὴν κοιλάδα τὴν κατὰ
 φυτον ἀπὸ ἔλαιωνας, ἀλλὰ ψυχὴ δὲν ἐφαίνετο.
 Τότε ἐσκέφθη νὰ πάσῃ τὸ καλάδι της καὶ τὸ
 ραβδί της, νὰ ἐξέλθῃ ἀπὸ τὴν μικρὰν κόγχην,
 ν' ἀναβῇ ἐπάνω εἰς τὴν λόχμην τὴν σῦδεν-
 60 δρον, καὶ νὰ πάσῃ σιγὰ τὸ ρέμμα-ρέμμα, καὶ
 ν' ἀρχίσῃ πάλιν, τὴν παλαιὰν της τέχνην, νὰ
 ψάχνῃ πρὸς ἀνείρεσιν βοτάνων — τὰ ὅποια
 δὲν εἴξευρε πλέον εἰς τί θὰ τῆς ἐγχοσίμευον,
 ἀφοῦ δὲν εἶχε πλέον εἰς τὸν κόσμον ἄλλο ἄ-
 65 συλον, εἰμὴ τὴν εἰρκτὴν καὶ μόνην.

Ἄλλ' ὅμως ἔτρεφεν ἀόριστον ἐλπίδα, ὅτι θὰ
 70 εὑρισκεν ἴσως ξενίαν εἰς καμμίαν μάνδραν ἢ
 καλύβην βοσκοῦ, καὶ τότε τὰ βότανα θὰ τὰ
 ἐπρόσφερεν εἰς τὴν σύζυγον τοῦ φιλοξενούντος
 ὡς μικρὸν ἀντιλλάγμα. Τὸ περισσότερον ὅμως,
 θὰ τὸ ἔκαμνε διὰ νὰ περάσῃ ἡ βαρεῖα ἀνία,
 ἣτις ἐβασάνιζε τὴν ψυχὴν της.

Τὴν ὥραν ἐκείνην ἤκουσε μεμακρυσμένους
 κωδωνίσκους νὰ ἤχουν, καὶ συγχρόνως εἶδε
 μακρόθεν νὰ κατέρχεται ἓνα κοπάδι. Πάραυτα
 75 ἐσκέφθη ὅτι, ἂν δὲν προλάβῃ εὐθὺς νὰ ἐξέλθῃ
 ἀπὸ τὴν μικρὰν χαράδραν, μετ' ὀλίγον ἢ κοῦ-
 πτη της θ' ἀνακαλυφθῇ ἐξ ἁπαντος. Διότι, καὶ
 ἂν τὰ πολλὰ τῶν ἀρνίων ἢ τῶν ἐριφίων ἐ-
 σκορπίζοντο. κ' ἐπῆγαινον νὰ πῶσιν εἰς τὸ
 80 μέγα ρεῦμα, τὸ ὁποῖον ἔρρεεν ἐπάνω μέχρι
 τῆς στέρας, καὶ ὕστερον κάτω ἀπὸ τὸν νερό-
 μυλον, μερικὰ ἐξ αὐτῶν βεβαίως θὰ κατήρχοντο
 εἰς τὸ μικρὸν ρεῦμα, τὸ γείτον τῆς γούρνας.
 Εἶτα τὰ ζῶα θὰ ἐσκαίοντο, θὰ ἐξαφνίζοντο,
 85 θὰ ὀπισθοχώρουν πηδῶντα, καὶ ὁ βοσκός, ὅστις
 καὶ ἂν ἦτο, θὰ τὴν ἀνεκάλυπτε, θὰ ἐπαραξε-
 νεύετο, καὶ ἴσως θὰ συνελάμβανεν ὑποψίας.

Τὸ καλλίτερον ἄρα θὰ ἦτο ν' ἀντιμετωπίσῃ,
 90 μετὰ τὴν ἀφρευκτον προσποίησιν, μετὰ τὸ ψεῦδος
 εἰς τὰ χεῖλη, τὴν παρουσίαν τοῦ βοσκοῦ. Ἄλ-
 λως ἦτο πολὺ πιθανόν, ὁ ἀγροδίαιτος ἐκεῖνος
 νὰ μὴν εἶχε πρὸ ἡμερῶν εἰδήσεις ἀπὸ τὴν πό-
 λιν, καὶ νὰ μὴν ἐγνώριζε τίποτε περὶ τοῦ διωγ-
 95 μοῦ, τὸν ὁποῖον ὑπέφερεν ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ.

ΙΓ'.

Μετ' ὀλίγον τῷ ὄντι, ἀφοῦ ἡ Γιαννοῦ ἐξ-
 95 ἦλθε τῆς κορυφῆς, καὶ βαίνουσα παρὰ τὸ ρεῦμα
 ἔνευεν ἐδῶ κ' ἐκεῖ ἀναζητοῦσα βότανα, ἐπλη-
 σίασε τὸ κοπάδι τῶν προβάτων μικτὸν μετὰ
 100 τινων αἰγῶν καὶ ὁ βοσκὸς ἐνεφανίσθη. Ἡ
 Γιαννοῦ τὸν ἀνεγνώρισεν ἀμέσως. Ἦτον ὁ κα-
 λούμενος Γιάννης Λυγίγκος.

Ἄμα εἶδε τὴν γραῖαν, ἄρχισε νὰ φωνάζῃ μακρόθεν·

— Καὶ ποῦ ἔς αὐτὸν τὸν κόσμον, θεῖα Γαρουφαλιά; (Ὁ Λυρίγκος ἀνεγνώρισε τὸ πρόσωπον, ἀλλὰ, φαίνεται, δὲν ἐνθυμεῖτο καλῶς τὸ ὄνομα). Καλὰ ποῦ σ' ἡῦρά!... Ὁ Θεὸς σ' ἔστειλε!

— Τί νὰ τρέγῃ; εἶπε μέσα της ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ. Κάτι θέλει νὰ μοῦ πῇ. Βέβηα, ὁ ἄνθρωπος δὲν θὰ ἔγῃ ἀκούσει τίποτα γιὰ τὰ πάθια τὰ δικά μου.

— Ξέρεις τίποτα; θεῖα Γαρουφαλιά; ἐπανελάβεν ὁ Λυρίγκος πλησιέστερον ἐρχόμενος.

Τί νὰ ξέρω, γυνίε μου; εἶπεν ὑποκριτικῶς ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ, ἀπέχουσα νὰ ἐξαγάγῃ τὸν ἄνθρωπον ἐκ τῆς πλάνης ὅσον ἀφορᾷ τὸ βαπτιστικὸν της ὄνομα, εἶτα ἐπέφερεν.— Ἀπὸ τὰ ψὲς λείπω ἀπ' τὸ χωριό. Ἦρθα νὰ μαζώξω βότανα στὰ ρέμματα.

— Ἀκουσε, θεῖα Γαρουφαλιά, ἐπανελάβε με ἀπλότητα ὁ ἄνθρωπος. Ἀπόψε γεννήσαμε, στὸ καλύβι.

— Γεννήσατε;

— Σπαργανίσαμε! Εἶνε τὸ τρίτο κοριτσάκι ποῦ μᾶς ἦρθε στὰ πέντε χρόνια... ὅλο κοριτσούδια, τὸ ἔρμο!

— Νὰ σᾶς ζήσῃ! εἶπεν ἡ γραῖα. Καλὴ σαράντισι τῆς φαμιλιάς σου!

— Ὡς τόσο, τὸ κοριτσάκι ἦρθε στὸν κόσμο ἄρρωστο, κι' ὅλο κλαίει, καὶ στὸ βυζὶ δὲν κολλάει. Κ' ἡ μίνα του ἡ καφερί, τόσο καλὰ δὲ, εἶνε... Ὅλο κάψι καὶ σεκλέτι, τὸ ἔρμο!

— Ἀλήθεια;

— Νὰ ἦθελες νὰ μᾶς ἔκανες τὴ χάρι, νὰ περνοῦσες ἀπ' τὸ καλύβι, νὰ ἔκανες κανένα ψευτογιατρικό, θεῖα Γαρουφαλιά;... Ἐκεῖνη ἡ πεθερά μου δὲ φελάει τίποτα, τί σου κάμῃ;

— Μὰ τώρα κοντεύει νὰ νυχτώσῃ... εἶπε με ὑποκρισίαν ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ.

Καὶ μέσα της ἔλεγε· «Τὸ ροιζικό μου εἶνε πλειό! Ὡχ Θεέ μου»!

— Ἄς νυχτώσῃ... Ἄν θέλῃς, κοιμᾶσαι στὸ καλύβι.

Ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ ἐστάθη ὥς νὰ ἐδίσταζεν. Ἀλλ' ἦτον ἐτοιμὴ νὰ συναινέσῃ.

Τὴν ἰδίαν στιγμὴν, μετὰ τὴν τελευταίαν ἀκτῖνα τοῦ ἡλίου ἣτις ἐχρύσωνε τὴν κορυφὴν τοῦ ἀνατολικοῦ λόφου μετὰ τοὺς ἐλαιῶνας τοὺς πολλούς, κ' ἔκαμνε νὰ στίλβῃ τὸ φύλλωμα τῶν ἐλαιῶν, ἐφάνησαν δύο ἄνθρωποι κατερχόμενοι δρομαῖοι ἀπὸ ἓνα μονοπάτι μετὰ δύο ἐλαιῶνων.

Ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ τοὺς εἶδε πρώτη κ' ἐτρόμαξεν. Ὁ ἥλιος, ὅστις κατέλαμπε τὰ φύλλα, ἔκαμνε νὰ γυαλίζουν καὶ τὰ κομβία τῆς στολῆς των τὰ πρὸ μακροῦ χρόνου ἀγυάλιστα. Ἦσαν οἱ χωροφύλακες.

Πάραντα ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ ἔστρεψε τὰ νῶτα πρὸς τὸν Γιάννην τὸν Λυρίγκον, κ' ἔτρεξε πρὸς τὴν ρίζαν τοῦ πετρώδους βουνοῦ, πρὸς δυσμίας.

Ὁ βοσκὸς ἐφώναξεν ἐκκληκτός·

— Ποῦ πᾶς, θεῖα Γαρουφαλιά;

— Σιώπα! παιδί μου τοῦ ἐσύριξεν ἔντρομος ἡ γυνή, ἂν ἀγαπᾷς τὸν Χριστό! Ἐρχονται ταχτικοί!... Νὰ μὴν πῆς πῶς με εἶδες!

— Ταχτικοί;

— Νὰ μὴ με μαρτυρήσῃς παιδί μου, χάνομαι! Ἡσύχασε!... Ἄν γλυτώσω τώρα, τὴν νύχτα θὰ ῥθῶ στὸ καλύβι σας...

Καὶ ἀφοῦ ἔβγαλε τὰ πασουμάκια της, τὰ ὅποια ἐξερχομένη ἀπὸ τὴν γούρναν εἶχε φορέσει, καὶ τὰ ἔρριψε μέσα στὸ καλάθι, ἄρχισε ν' ἀναρριχᾶται ἐλαφρὰ πατοῦσα, ἀνυπόδητη, μετὰ τὸ καλάθι της περὶ τὸν ἀριστερόν ἀγκῶνα, μετὰ τὸ ραβδί της εἰς τὴν χεῖρα τὴν δεξιάν, τὸν κρημνὸν τὸν ἀνωφερῆ, ὅπου μόνον τὰ ὀλίγα ἔριφια, ὅσα ἦσαν μετὰ τῶν προβάτων τοῦ Λυρίγκου, θὰ ἠδύναντο ν' ἀναρριχηθῶσι.

Μετ' ὀλίγα δευτερόλεπτα, ἀφοῦ ἀνῆλθεν εἰς ὕψος ὀλίγων ὀργυῶν, ἐκρύπτετο ὀπισθεν τοῦ πρώτου προσέχοντος βράχου, κ' ἐγίνετο ἄφαντη.

Εὐθὺς κατόπιν οἱ δύο χωροφύλακες, οἵτινες διὰ νὰ φθάσουν ἕως τὸ μέρος ὅπου εὗρισκετο ὁ βοσκός, ἦτο ἀνάγκη νὰ χαμηλώσουν καὶ διέλθουν τὸ ρεῦμα, μετὰ τῆς πυκνῆς λόχμης—καὶ τὴν περίστασιν ταύτην εἶχεν ἐπωφεληθῇ ὅπως φύγῃ ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ—ἐφθασαν πλησίον τοῦ Λυρίγκου. Ὁ βοσκός ἐν τῷ μετὰ ἐκύτταζε τὰ αἰγοπρόβατά του, τὰ ἐφώναζε «Τίβι! τίβι!... ὄι! ὄι!» Ἐπροσπάθει νὰ τὰ συμμαζέψῃ καὶ τὰ φέρῃ πρὸς τὸν ἀνήφορον, διὰ νὰ τὰ ὀδηγήσῃ πρὸς τὴν ράχιν τὴν μεσημβρινήν, ὅπου εὗρισκετο ἡ στάνη του.

Οἱ δύο ἄνδρες ἐχαιρέτισαν τὸν Λυρίγκον. Εἶτα τὸν ἠρώτησαν ἂν εἶδε «κεῖνη τὴν παληογυναῖκα, πῶς τὴν λέν, τὴν Φραγκογιαννοῦ».

Ὁ Λυρίγκος εἶπεν ὄχι.

Ὁ εἰς τῶν χωροφυλάκων ὕβρισε τὸν βοσκόν.

— Ψέμματα λές! ἐγὼ τὴν εἶδα!...

Οὗτος ἐπέμενεν ὅτι εἶχεν ἰδεῖ τὸν ἥσκιον, τὸν «διακαμὸν» ἢ τὸ «διάνεμα», καθὼς ἔλεγε, τῆς γραίας, ν' ἀναρριχᾶται ὥς γάττα εἰς τὸ ὕψος

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τοῦ κρημνοῦ. Ὁ ἄλλος δὲν εἶχεν ἰδεῖ οὕτε ἰσχυρίζετο τίποτε.

5 Ὁ πρῶτος, μὲ τὰ τσαροῦζια του ἔδοξίμασε ν' ἀναρριχηθῇ εἰς τὸν βράχον. Ἀλλὰ μετὰ τρία βήματα κατεκρημνίσθη καὶ ἔπεσε, κυπήσας ἐλαφρῶς εἰς τὸ γόνυ.

10 Ἐκεῖ ὅπου εἶχεν ἀναβῇ ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ, ἦτο τὸ βουνὸν τοῦ Κουρούπη, βορεινόν, βραχῶδες, ἀπάτητον, καὶ τοὺς πόδας του ἐφίλει καὶ ἔπληττε τὸ κύμα τοῦ πελάγους. Ἡ θεὰ ἡ-
νοίγετο πρὸς τὴν ἀκτὴν τῆς Μακεδονίας, τὴν
Χαλκιδικήν, καὶ τὸν μέγαν Ἀθῶνα.

15 Ἡ θέσις ὅπου ἐφθασεν ἡ καταδιωκομένη γυνὴ ἔκαλεῖτο τὸ Κοχύλι. Ἀνδρῶπιнос ποῦς σπανίως ἐπάτει ἐκεῖ. Μόνον διὰν ἀπεπλανᾶτο ἡ «ἐβραχάνετο» καμμία γίδα, τότε κανεῖς βο-

σὸς ἐρριψοκινδύνευε ν' ἀνέλθῃ πρὸς τὴν ἄβα-
τον ἐκείνην σκοπιάν. Ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ ἀνε-
κάλυψε μικρὸν σπήλαιον, ὅλον ἀνοικτὸν εἰς τὴν
θεῖαν τοῦ πελάγους, τὸ ὁποῖον ἦτο τὸ κυρίως
Κοχύλι, καὶ ἐκάθισεν ἀνέτως εἰς τὴν χιβύδα
ἐκείνην. Ἦτο σχεδὸν βεβαία δεῖ οἱ διωκταὶ
20 τῆς δὲν θὰ τὴν ἐφθάνον ἐκεῖ. Ἐάν τυχὸν κα-
νεῖς ἀπ' αὐτοὺς ἦτο τόσον «μάνας γυνὴς»,
ὥστε ν' ἀποφασίσῃ καὶ νὰ κατορθώσῃ ν' ἀναρ-
ριχηθῇ εἰς τὸν βράχον, αὐτὴ εἶχεν ἐτοιμίην καὶ
τὴν «ὑποχώρησιν». Ἐγνώριζεν ἐν ἄλλο μο-
νοπάτι, ἔσθιδεν τῆς διπλῆς κορυφῆς τοῦ πε-
τρῶδους βουνοῦ, σχῆζον εἰς δύο τὰς συστάδας
τῶν βράχων, τὸ ὁποῖον, γνωστὸν εἰς μόνους τοὺς
αἰγοβοσκούς τῶν μερῶν τούτων, ἔφερε κατ' εὐ-
θεΐαν εἰς τὰς μάνδρας καὶ τὰς κατοικίας των.

*Ἔπεται συνέχεια

A. ΠΑΠΑΔΙΑΜΑΝΤΗΣ



ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΑ ΤΑΞΙΔΙΑ — ΦΑΡΟΣ ΘΩΩΝΩΝ

ΒΔ ΤΗΣ ΚΕΡΚΥΡΑΣ — ΦΩΤΟΓΡΑΦ. Σ. ΚΟΚΟΛΗ

περιπτύξεως, ἐπὶ τοῦ σκανδιναβικοῦ βράχου, τοῦ δικαιοκρίτου Θεοῦ καὶ τῆς κολαζομένης θεαίνης.

Ἄς ἐξακολουθήσωμεν νὰ θαυμάζωμεν τὸν Μάγνερβερ, καὶ εἰ δυνατόν ἄς διατηρήσωμεν ἢ ἄς ἀναμνησθῶμεν ἐν τῇ ἰδιοφυΐᾳ ἡμῶν

καὶ τι ἐκ τῆς ἰδιοφυΐας ἐκείνου· καὶ τι τὸ συγκεκριμένον καὶ τὸ στερεόν, καὶ τι τὸ καθησυχάζον καὶ τονόνον ἡμᾶς, καὶ τι τὸ σῶζον ἀπὸ τῶν ἀπειλητικωτάτων ἀφηρημένων ἐννοιῶν, οὐχὶ διὰ τῆς πραγματοκρατικῆς σχολῆς (réalisme) ἀλλὰ διὰ τῆς πραγματικότητος.

CAMILLE BELLAIGUE

Μετάφρ. Χρ. Θεμ. Δαφνιέζη

Η Φ Ο Ν Ι Σ Σ Α *

Εκάθισεν εἰς τὴν κόγχην τοῦ βράχου, κάτω ἀπὸ τοὺς πόδας τῆς ἔχουσα τὴν βοήν καὶ τὴν μελωδίαν τῶν κυμάτων, καὶ ἄνω τῆς κεφαλῆς τῆς ἤκουε τὴν κλαγγὴν τῶν ἀετῶν καὶ τοὺς κρωγμοὺς τοῦ ἱέρακος. Καθὼς ἀπλώθη ἡ νύκτα, ἐφεγγοβόλησεν ἀπὸ ἄστρα τὸ ἀχανὲς στερέωμα, καὶ ὁ ἀῆρ ὁ εὐώδης θὰ ἦτον ἱκανὸς νὰ βαλσαμώσῃ καὶ αὐτὰ τῆς γυναικὸς ταύτης τὰ «πάθια». Τὸ κογχυλοειδὲς ἄντρον ἦτο μόνον ὡς τρία μπόδια ἄνω ἀπὸ τὸ κύμα, ἀλλ' ὁ βράχος ἔως κάτω ἦτο τόσον κάθετος, ὥστε ἀδύνατον ἦτο «βορτὸς ἀνὴρ» ν' ἀνέλθῃ ἢ νὰ κατέλθῃ. Ἦτο θέσις καλὴ μόνον διὰ νὰ πέσῃ τις εἰς τὴν θάλασσαν νὰ πνιγῇ, ἐὰν τὸ εἶχεν ἀποφασίσῃ.

Ἡ γραῖα ἔβγαλεν ἀπὸ τὸ καλάθι τῆς τὰ ὀλίγα παξιμάδια ὅσα τῆς εἶχον μείνῃ, ἐλαίᾱς καὶ τυρίον, κ' ἐδείπνησεν. Εὐτυχῶς τὸ φλασκί τῆς ἦτο γεμῆτο νερόν, ἐπειδὴ τὸ δειλινὸν τὸ εἶχε γεμίσει ἀπὸ τὴν γούρναν.

Ἐκλείσε τὰ ὄμματα, καὶ ἤρχισε νὰ ναναρίζεται μόνῃ τῆς, ὑποψιθυρίζουσα ἓνα τραγοῦδι ὡσὰν μοιρολόγι, ἀλλὰ δὲν εἶχεν ὕπνον. Ἐπανήλθον πάλιν καὶ τῆς ἔστησαν πολιορκίαν οἱ φόβοι καὶ τὰ φαντάσματα. Τὸν κλανυμυρισμὸν ἐκείνον τοῦ νηπίου τὸν ἤκουε συχνὰ μέσα τῆς, βαθειὰ στὰ σωθικά τῆς. Τὸ μυστηριῶδες τοῦτο κλαῦμα ματαίως ἐδοκίμαζε νὰ κατασιγάσῃ μὲ τὸ ἄσμα τὸ παραπονετικὸν καὶ ρεμβῶδες, τὸ ὁποῖον ὑπεψιθύριζε.

Μανούλα μου, ἤθελα νὰ πάω, νὰ φύγω, νὰ μυσέψω, τοῦ ροιζικοῦ μου ἀπὸ μακριὰ τὴν πόρτα ν' ἀγναντέψω.
 στὸ σκοτεινὸ βασίλειο τῆς Μοίρας νὰ πατήσω, κ' ἐκεῖ νὰ βρῶ τὴ Μοῖρά μου, καὶ νὰ τὴν ἐρω-
 [τήσω....

Τῆς ἦλθεν εἰς τὸν νοῦν ὅτι, ἴσως οἱ «ταχτικοί» νὰ τὴν ἐκυνήγουν καὶ τὴν νύκτα ἀκόμη. Ἐὰν αὐτοὶ ἀνῆρχοντο ἐπάνω, εἰς τὰ μανδριὰ τῶν βοσκῶν, κ' ἔμεναν ἐκεῖ νὰ διανυκτερεύσουν; Μήπως δὲν εἶχαν γλῶρην μυζήθραν οἱ βοσκοί, ἢ μήπως δὲν εἶχαν γάλα καὶ στοργυλιᾶτα, ἢ ἀκόμα καὶ κόττες διὰ στοργαλισμα καὶ ψήσιμον, εἰς πρόχειρον ξυλίνην σοῦβλαν; Ἐὰν τυχὸν κανεῖς ἀπὸ τοὺς βοσκούς ἐγγεῖται, κ' ἐδείκνυνε εἰς τοὺς χωροφύλακας τὸ μέσα μονοπάτι, τότε ἡ ἀποχώρησίς τῆς δὲν θὰ ἐκόπτετο; Καὶ ἦτο ἀπείρως δυσκολώτερον νὰ καταβῇ, ὁπόθεν ἀνέβῃ, ἐκτὸς ἂν ἐγίνετο πτερόπους κ' ἔφευγε...

Εἶχε μέγα ἐνδιαφέρον νὰ ἐμάνθανε τί τοῦ εἶπαν τοῦ Λυρίγκου οἱ δύο «ταχτικοί», καὶ τί αὐτὸς εἶπε. Τὸ καλύβι τοῦ Λυρίγκου, τὸ ἐγνώριζε, ἦτον ἐπάνω στὴν ῥάχην, ὀπισθεν τοῦ βουνοῦ, καὶ ἀπείχεν ὡς εἴκοσι λεπτά τῆς ὥρας. Τώρα, βέβαια, ὁ Λυρίγκος θὰ εἶχε μάθῃ τὸ διατὶ αὐτὴ κατεδιώκετο νὰ συλληφθῇ, καὶ διὰ ποίαν πράξιν κατηγορεῖτο. Καὶ μὲ τί μοῦτρα νὰ παρουσιασθῇ, τότε, στὸ καλύβι, αὐτῇ; Ἀλλὰ πιθανὸν ὁ ἴδιος νὰ μὴν ἐκοιμᾶτο στὸ καλύβι, ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον εἰς τὴν μάνδραν τῆς ἀγέλης του, ἥτις θὰ εὐρίσκετο ἐκεῖ κάπου. Ὅχι πολὺ μακράν. Καὶ τότε αὐτὴ θὰ εὐρίσκε τὰς δύο γυναῖκας, τὴν λεχὼ καὶ τὴν μητέρα τῆς, θὰ τὸς ἐξάφνιζε... Τί νὰ κάμῃ; Ποίαν ἀπόφασιν νὰ λάβῃ;

Ἀπεναρκώθη, καὶ χωρὶς νὰ κοιμᾶται ἐντελῶς, ὠνειρεύετο. Τῆς ἐφάνη ὅτι εὐρίσκετο ἄλλου, εἰς ἄλλον τόπον. Σιμὰ εἰς τὸν Ἀϊ-Γιάννην τὸν Κρυφόν, ἐκείνον τὸν Ἅγιον ὅστις ἐγιάτρευε τοὺς κρυφοὺς πόνους, κ' ἐδέχετο τὴν ἐξαγόρευσιν τῶν κρυφῶν ἁμαρτιῶν· ἐκεῖ ἐξαφνα εὐρέθη. Ἀντίκρυζε τὸν κῆπον τοῦ Περιβολᾶ,

* Ἰδε σελ. 438.

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Κ
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Τ

μέ την γυναῖκα τὴν κατάκλειστον εἰς τὴν καλύβαν, τὴν ἄρρωστην. Ἐβλεπε τὴν θύραν τοῦ φραγμένου κήπου, τὸ πηγᾶδι, τὴν στέρναν, τὸ μᾶγγανον. Ἀκουσεν εὐκρινῶς νὰ ἐξέρχεται ἀπὸ τὴν στέρναν μία βαθεῖα, πολὺ βαθεῖα, ἀλλόκοτος βοή. Ἐταράσσετο τὸ νερὸν τῆς στέρνας, μὲ παφλασμὸν τρικυμίας, ἐφώναζε, καὶ σχεδὸν ὠμίλει ὡς ἄνθρωπος. Αὕτῃ διέκρινεν ἐναργῶς τὴν λέξιν τὴν ὁποῖαν ἐπρόφερε τὸ λαλοῦν ἐκεῖνο νερόν· «Φόνισσα!... Φόνισσα!...»

Ἀνετινάθη φρίσσουσα, ἔξυπνησε, καὶ διέτύπωσε πρὸς ἑαυτήν, ὡς εἰς παραμίλημα πυρετοῦ, μίαν ἀλλόκοτον ἐρώτησιν. «Τάχα τὸ αἷμα τὸ πνιγμένο φωνάζει, ὅπως καὶ τὸ αἷμα ποὺ χύθηκε;»

Εἶτα εὐθὺς συνῆλθεν εἰς ἑαυτήν, ἐδοκίμασε πάλιν νὰ προσφέρῃ τῆς προσευχῆς τὰ καταπραῦντικά λόγια. «Κύριε Ἰησοῦ...» Τὴν ἰδίαν στιγμὴν ἀνεπόλησε τὰ λησμονημένα λόγια ἐνὸς τροπαρίου, τὸ ὁποῖον εἶχεν ἀκούσει πολλὰς φορὰς εἰς τὴν νεότητά της νὰ ψάλλῃ ἕνας γέρων ἱερεὺς· «Ἰησοῦ γλυκύτατε Χριστέ... Ἰησοῦ μακρόθυμε!»

Τότε εὐθὺς τῆς ἦλθε πάλιν ὁ ὕπνος, βαθὺς καὶ διαρκέστερος. Καὶ τότε ὠνειρεύθη οἰονεῖ ὅτι ἐξανέζη ὅλην τὴν περασμένην ζωὴν της. Καὶ παραδόξως, μέσα εἰς τὸν ὕπνον της, ἔβλεπε τὰ ἐπίλοιπα ἐκ τῶν ὀνείρων τῆς παρελθούσης ἡμέρας. Ἐβλεπεν ὅχι πλέον ὅτι ὑπανδρεύετο ἢ ἐπροικίζετο, ἀλλὰ ὅτι ἐγέννα. καὶ τῆς ἐφάνη ὅτι εἶχε καὶ τὰς τρεῖς κόρας της συγχρόνως, τὴν Δελχαρῶ, τὴν Ἀμέρσαν καὶ τὴν Κρινιώ, μικράς, σχεδὸν ὀμήλικας, ὡς νὰ ἦσαν τριῖδυμοι. Ὅτι αἱ τρεῖς, κρατούμεναι ἐκ τῶν χειρῶν, ἴσαντο ἔμπροσθέν της, καὶ τῆς ἐζήτουν θωπείας, ἀσπασμοὺς καὶ φιλεῖματα. Αἰφνης, τὰ πρόσωπά των, ἀλλοιωθέντα, δὲν ὁμοιάζον πλέον ὡς τῶν τριῶν θυγατέρων της, ἀλλὰ προσέλαβον ὅλους τοὺς χαρακτῆρας τῶν τριῶν ἐκείνων κορασιῶν, τῶν πνιγμένων, καὶ ὡς κομβολόγιον ἐκρημασθήσαν αἰφνης ἀπὸ τὸν λαιμόν της.

— Ἐγὼ εἶμαι ἡ Ματούλα, ἔλεγεν ἡ μία.—
Κ' ἐγὼ ἡ Μυλσουδά, ἡ μικρή, ἐμῆλλιζεν ἡ ἄλλη.—
Κ' ἐγὼ εἶμαι ἡ Ξενούλα, ἔλεγεν ἡ τρίτη.—
Φίλησέ μας!—Πάρε μας!—Ἡμεῖς τὰ κορίτσια σου!—Ἐσὺ μᾶς γέννησες, μᾶς ἔκαμες!—Μᾶς γέννησε... σὸν ἄλλο κόσμος, ἐπρόσθεσε σαρκαστικῶς ἡ Ξενούλα.—
Χόρεψέ μας!—Δώσέ μας μᾶμ!—Κάμε μας νάνι!—
Τραγουῦδα μας!—Καμάρωσέ μας!

Ὡ! ἀλήθεια, τῆς ἐφαίνετο τόσον φυσικὸν

τὸ πρᾶγμα! Αὐταὶ αἱ τρεῖς μικραὶ κορασίδες ἦσαν τὰ τέκνα της! ὁποῖος ὀρμαθὸς ἔμψυχος, ἀνθρώπινος!... Νεκρωμένος, βαρὺς ἀπὸ τὸ ὕδωρ, ἀφρισμένος!... Πῶς θ' ἀντεῖχεν ἡ γραῖα Χαδούλα νὰ φέρῃ, εἰς ὅλον τὸν καιρὸν, ὅλον τὸν φρικῶδη τοῦτον ὀρμαθὸν κρεμασμένον ἀπὸ τὸν τράχηλόν της!

Ἐξύπνησε παραλογισμένη, φρίσσουσα· ἐσηκώθη, ἐπῆρε τὸ ραβδί της, τὸ καλὰδι της, καὶ ἀπεφάσισε νὰ φύγῃ ἐκεῖθεν. Ἐδῶ εἰς τὴν κοίλῃν χιβάδα τοῦ βράχου, εἰς τὴν βοήν τοῦ ἐρήμου αἰγιαλοῦ, ὑπῆρχον πολλὰ φαντάσματα. Ὁ τόπος ἦτον στοιχειωμένος. «Ἄς φύγω κι' ἀποδῶ!»

Πάραυτα ἐπανῆλθον εἰς τὸν νοῦν της οἱ λογισμοὶ της οἱ ἄλλοι, οἱ θετικώτεροι. Ἐὰν τυχὸν οἱ δύο χωροφύλακες εἶχον ἀνακαλύψει τὸ κρυφὸ μονοπάτι, τὸ καλλίτερον ἦτο νὰ τρέξῃ πρὸ τοῦ κινδύνου, καὶ ἂν τοὺς συνήντα καθ' ὁδόν, πιθανὸν νὰ εὗρισκε διέξοδον ὀπισθεν τῆς συστάδος τῶν βράχων, χειρότερον δὲ θὰ ἦτο ἂν τὴν ἀπέκλειαν ἐδῶ εἰς αὐτὴν τὴν στενούραν, εἰς τὸ Κοχύλι.

Ἐτρεξε τὸν δρομίσκον τὸν ἀνωφερῆ, εἰς τὴν ἀστροφεγγιάν, ἀνάμεσα εἰς τοὺς βράχους, καὶ μετὰ ἡμίσειαν ὥραν ἔφθασεν ἀσθμαίνουσα εἰς τὸν οἰκίσκον τοῦ Λυρίγκου. Ἐστάθη διὰ νὰ λάβῃ ἀναπνοὴν εἶτα ἔκρουσε τὴν θύραν.

Περὶ ἐνὸς μόνου ἦτο βεβαία, ὅτι οἱ δύο «ταχτικοὶ» εὗρισκοντο παντοῦ ἄλλου, ἀλλ' ὅχι εἰς αὐτὸ τὸ καλύβι, ὅπου ὑπῆρχε γυνὴ λεγὼ μὲ τὴν συντροφίαν τῆς μητρὸς της. Ἐὰν ἔμειναν τὴν νύκτα εἰς τὸ βουνόν, θὰ εὗρισκοντο εἰς ἓν ἀπὸ τὰ μανδριά τῶν ποιμνίων.

Ἡ γραῖα, ἡ πενθερὰ τοῦ Λυρίγκου, ἦτις δὲν εἶχεν ὕπνον νὰ κοιμηθῇ, ὅπως δὲν ἐκοιμάτο καὶ ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ πρὸ ἡμερῶν, ὅταν ἐσυντρόφειε τὴν λεγὼ, τὴν κόρην της, ἐσηκώθη καὶ ἠρώτησε·

— Ποιὸς εἶνε;

— Μ' ἔστειλε ὁ Γιάννης, ἀπῆντησεν ἔξωθεν τῆς κλειστῆς θύρας ἡ Χαδούλα, χωρὶς νὰ εἴπῃ τ' ὄνομά της, γιὰ νὰ κάμω γιαντρικὰ τῆς λεγώνας.

— Τέτοιαν ὥρα;

— Δὲν ἔμπορεσα ν' ὠρίτερα νὰ ῥυθῶ.

— Ποῦ τὸν ἤνρες;

— Κάτω στὸ Λεχοῦνι, στὸ ρέμμα.

Ἡ γραῖα ἀπέσυρε τὸν μοχλὸν καὶ ἤνοιξε τὴν θύραν.

— Αὐτοὶ δὲν ξέρουν τίποτε, ἐσκέφθη καθ' ἑαυτὴν ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ· ἔς αὐτὲς «περνάει ἡ μογογία μου» ἀκόμα.

Ἄμα ἐπάτησε τὸν πόδα μέσα, καὶ ἄρχισε νὰ φέρεται ὡς οἰκοκυρά. Εἰς τὸ φῶς τοῦ καιν-
 δηλίου, τοῦ καιόντος ἔμπρὸς εἰς ἓν παλαιὸν
 5 εἰκόνισμα, τρίπτυχον, φέρον τὸν Χριστὸν ἐν
 τῷ μέσῳ, καὶ διαφόρους ἁγίους εἰς τὰς δύο
 πτέρυγας, ἐπῆγε κατ' εὐθείαν εἰς τὴν ἐστίαν,
 σιμὰ εἰς τὴν στρωμνὴν τῆς λεχοῦς, ἐπὶ τοῦ
 10 δαπέδου, ἐδοκίμασε τὴν φωτιάν, καὶ εἶδεν ὅτι
 ἦτον μισοσβυσμένη. Ἐπῆρε ξυλάρια καὶ ξηρό-
 κλαδα, ἀπὸ ἑνα σωρὸν παρὰ τὴν γωνίαν, ἔρ-
 ρησεν ὀλίγα εἰς τὴν ἐστίαν, ἐφύσησε κ' ἐξά-
 ναψε τὴν φλόγα. Ἐλαβεν ἓνα ἱμβρίκι, τὸ ὁ-
 ποῖον εὗρίσκετο ἐπὶ τῆς ἐστίας, τὸ ἐγέμισε νε-
 15 ρόν, ἔψαξεν εἰς τὸ καλάθι τῆς, ἐπῆρε δύο ἢ
 τρία κλωναράκια βοτάνων, τὰ ἔρριψε μέσα, κ'
 ἔβαλε τὸ ἀγγεῖον εἰς τὸ πῦρ.

Εἶτα, νεύουσα πρὸς τὸ μέρος τῆς λεχῶνας,
 εἶπε σιγὰ εἰς τὴν γραῖαν·

— Μὴν τὴν ἐξυπνῆς... Σὰν ξυπνήσῃ, ὕ-
 20 στερα, νὰ τὸ πιῇ αὐτό.

Ἡ γυνὴ ἀπήντησε διὰ νεύματος. Ἡ Φραγ-
 κογιαννοῦ ἐξηκολούθει νὰ φυσᾷ τὸ πῦρ. Ἡ
 γραῖα, ἐν ἀμηχανίᾳ, ἐπεθύμει νὰ τὴν ἐρωτήσῃ
 καὶ πάλιν πῶς εὗρέθη ἐκεῖ τοιαύτην ὥραν,
 25 ἀλλὰ δὲν ἐτόλμα. Ἡ κόρη τῆς ἔκαμνε κακὴ
 λεγωσιὰ, κ' ἐφοβεῖτο μὴν ἐξυπνήσῃ ἔξαφνα καὶ
 θορυβηθῇ.

Τὸ θυγάτριον, μικρὸν ράκος δύο ἡμερῶν
 ζωῆς, τὸ ὁποῖον εἶχεν ἔλθῃ κι' αὐτὸ εἰς τὸν
 30 κόσμον δι' ἁμαρτίας καὶ βάσανα, ἐκοιμᾶτο εἰς
 τὴν κοιτίδα του, ἀλλ' ἡ ἀναπνοή του ἦτο δύ-
 σκολος καὶ ἠκούετο ἐν μέσῳ τῆς σιωπῆς. Ἀπὸ
 καιροῦ εἰς καιρὸν, ὅταν τὸ φύσημά του ἐγί-
 νετο ὀπωσοῦν σφοδρότερον, καὶ τὸ βρέφος
 35 ἐφαίνετο ἑτοιμον νὰ ξυπνήσῃ καὶ νὰ φωνάξῃ,
 ἡ μάμμη τὸ ἐνανούριζε δι' ἐνὸς μονοσυλλάβου,
 «Κοί, κοί, κοί, κοί!» ἐφαίνετο δὲ τῷ ὄντι ἡ
 συλλαβὴ αὕτη (ἥτις φαίνεται νὰ εἶνε ἡ πρώτη
 40 συλλαβὴ τοῦ «κοιμήσου!», ἡ αὕτη ἡ ρίζα τοῦ
 «κεῖμαι» ἐφαίνετο, λέγω, πολλάκις ἐπαναλαμ-
 βανομένη, νὰ ἐξασκῇ παραδόξον ὑποβολὴν καὶ
 γοητείαν.

Ἡ ὥρα παρήρχετο. Εἶχον λαλήσει ἤδη δύο
 φορὰς τὰ θοινίδια. Ἡ Πούλια εἶχεν ὑπερβῇ
 45 πρὸ πολλοῦ τὸ μεσουράνημα. Ἀπὸ τὴν ἀντι-
 κρυνὴν κορυφὴν τῆς ράχης, ὅπου ἦσαν ἄλλα
 καλύβια κατοικούμενα ἀπὸ τὰς οἰκογενεῖας βο-
 σκῶν, ἠκούσθησαν μεμακρυσμένα λαλήματα.

Εἰς ταῦτα ἀπήντησεν εὐθὺς τὸ λάλημα τῶν
 πετεινῶν ἀπὸ τὸν ὀρνιθῶνα τοῦ καλυβιοῦ τοῦ
 50 Λυρίγκου.

Ἡ λεχῶνα ἐξύπνησε. Ἡ μάνα τῆς τῆς ἔ-
 δωκε νὰ πῇ τὸ φάρμακον, τὸ ὁποῖον εἶχε
 παρασκευάσει ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ.

— Κουράγιο, κοπέλλα μ', εἶπεν αὕτη μὲ
 55 πραεῖαν φωνήν.

— Ποῦ βορέθηκες ἐδῶ; εἶπεν ἡ λεχῶνα.

Τὴν ἐκύταζε μὲ ἀπορίαν, κ' ἐδυσκολεύετο
 νὰ τὴν ἀναγνωρίσῃ.

— Ὁ Θεὸς μ' ἔστειλε, εἶπε μετὰ πεποιθή-
 60 σεως ἡ Γιαννοῦ.

— Καλὰ ποῦ ἤρθες, ἐδίλωσε τότε καὶ ἡ
 γραῖα.

Τῷ ὄντι, αὕτη, ἂν καὶ εἶχε παραξενευθῇ
 καταρχάς, ἐσκέφθη καὶ ἀνεγνώρισεν ὅτι ἡ πα-
 65 ρουσία τῆς Γιαννοῦς ἦτο μία παρηγορία εἰς
 τὴν μοναξίαν τῶν.

ΙΔ'.

Περὶ τὰ πρῶτα γλυκοχαράγματα, τὸ βρέφος
 εἶχεν ἐξυπνήσει, κι' ἄρχισε νὰ κλαυθμυρίζῃ. Ἡ
 Φραγκογιαννοῦ ἔκαμε καὶ πάλιν «κουμμάντο».
 70 Ἐσυμβούλευσε τὴν λεχῶ νὰ βάλῃ τὸ παιδίον
 εἰς τὸ βυζί, διὰ νὰ δοκιμάσῃ ἂν κατέβῃ τὸ
 γάλα. Συγχρόνως ἠκούσθη κρότος ἔξωθεν, κ'
 εὐθὺς κατόπιν μία φωνή.

— Γρηά!... Γρηά! κοιμᾶστε; 75

Ἦτον ὁ Λυρίγκος, κ' ἐκάλει τὴν πενθεράν του.

Ἡ γραῖα ἐγνώρισε τὴν φωνήν, ἐσηκώθη
 κ' ἔτρεξεν εἰς τὴν θύραν.

— Ἐλα νὰ μοῦ δώσης ἓνα χέρι, ἐφώναξεν
 80 ὁ Λυρίγκος. Ὁ παραγιὸς λείπει κ' εἶμαι μο-
 νάχος.

Ὁ Γιάννης φαίνεται ὅτι δὲν ἐσκέφθη κἂν
 νὰ ἐρωτήσῃ διὰ τὴν λεχῶ, τὴν γυναῖκά του,
 καὶ διὰ τὸ τέκνον του, πῶς εἶχον. Ἡσθάνετο
 85 μόνον ἐπείγουσαν ἀνάγκην, κ' ἔκραζε τὴν πεν-
 θεράν του νὰ τὸν βοηθήσῃ εἰς τὰς ποιμενικὰς
 ἐργασίας τῆς πρωίας, δηλαδὴ ἴσως εἰς τὸ ξε-
 μανδριάσμα, τὸ ἄρμεγμα, καὶ τὰ λοιπὰ.

— Δὲν μπορεῖ κανεὶς μοναχός του, τὸ ἔρμιο!
 ... Πρέπει νά'χῃ τέσσερα χέρια! ἐπρόσθεσεν
 90 ὡς αὐτοδικαιολογούμενος.

Ἡ γραῖα ἐξῆλθε τρέχουσα. Ἡ Φραγκογιαν-
 νοῦ ἔμεινε μόνη, μὲ τὴν λεχῶ καὶ τὸ βρέφος.

Ἔπεται συνέχεια

Α. ΠΑΠΑΔΙΑΜΑΝΤΗΣ

Η Φ Ο Ν Ι Σ Σ Α *

Η νεαρά γυνή είχε λαγοκοιμηθῇ πάλιν, καὶ δὲν
εἶχεν ἀντιληφθῇ καλῶς τὴν ἀπουσίαν τῆς μη-
τρός της. Μετ' ὀλίγας στιγμὰς ἐξύπνησε καὶ εἶπε·
— Ποῦ πάει ἡ μάνα, θὰ 'πῶ;

5 Ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ, φρονοῦσα ὅτι τὸ καλ-
λίτερον ἦτον ἡ λεχώνα νὰ κοιμᾶται διὰ νὰ ἴσου-
χάξῃ, καὶ γνωρίζουσα ὅτι ἡ ἀπόκρισις ἡ διδο-
μένη εἰς τοὺς πυρέσσοντας καὶ εἰς τοὺς ὡς ἐν
10 ὑπνοβασία παραμιλοῦντας βλάπτει μᾶλλον ἢ
ὠφελεῖ, δὲν ἀπήντησε τίποτε. Ἡ λεχὼ εὐθύς
καὶ πάλιν ἀπεκοιμήθη.

Τὸ θυγάτριον ἐκ νέου ἄρχισε νὰ κλαυθμη-
ρῷ πολὺ τρυφερὰ καὶ παραπονετικά, μέχρις
15 ὀχληρότητος. Ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ, ἣτις εἶχε λη-
σμονήσῃ ὅλας τὰς τύψεις, τὰς ὁποίας εἶχεν αἰ-
σθανθῇ ἀλγεινῶς ὑπὸ τὰς μελανὰς πτέρυγας
τῶν ὄνείρων της, καὶ ἐσπαράσσετο καὶ πάλιν
ἀπὸ τοὺς ὄνυχας τῆς πραγματικότητος, ἄρχισε
νὰ σκέπτεται μέσα της.

20 — Ἀχ! δίκιο ἔχει, ὁ καυμένος, ὁ Λυρίγκος
... «Ὅλο κοριτσούδια, τὸ ἔρμο, ὅλο κοριτσού-
δια!»... Καὶ τί ξαλάφρωμα θὰ ἦτον τώρα γι'
αὐτόν, γιὰ τὴν ἄμοιρον τὴ γυναικὰ του, νὰ τοῦ
25 τῷπαιρνε τώρα, ὁ Μεγαλοδύναμος!... αὐτὸ
καὶν ποῦνε μικρό, καὶ δὲν ἔχει ν' ἀφήσῃ μεγά-
λον καῦμό 'πίσω του!

Τὴν στιγμὴν ἐκείνην τῆς ἦλθεν εἰς τὸν νοῦν
μία μικρὰ ἀπορία· ποῦ εὕρισκοντο ἄλλα κορά-
σια τοῦ Λυρίγκου, τὰ μεγαλείτερα. Τότε ἐνθυ-
30 μῆθη ὅτι πρὶν ν' ἀναβῇ εἰς τὸ καλύβι, ὅπου
εὕρισκετο τώρα, τὸ ὁποῖον ἦτο χαμηλὸν ἀνώ-
γειον, ἐπέρασεν ἔξω ἀπὸ τὴν θύραν ἐνὸς ἄλ-
λου μικροτέρου καλυβίου, τὸ ὁποῖον ἦτο χαμό-
γειον, καὶ ἦτο κτισμένον δίπλα, κολλητὰ μὲ τὸ
35 πρῶτον. Ἦτο τὸ μικρὸν καλυβάκι τῆς γραΐας,
τῆς πενθερᾶς τοῦ Λυρίγκου, καὶ ἐκεῖ μέσα τῆς
εἶχε φανῇ ὅτι ἤκουεν ἀναπνοὰς κοιμωμένων,
ροχαλίσματα. Ἐκεῖ βέβαια θὰ ἐκοιμῶντο,
μαζὺ μὲ τὴν μικρὰν θεῖαν τους τὴν ἄγαμον,
40 τὰ ἄλλα κοράσια τοῦ Λυρίγκου.

Ὡς ἐν ἀλλοφροσύνῃ καὶ ἐν πλάνῃ ὄνείρου,
ἔτεινε τὴν χεῖρα πρὸς τὸ λίκνον, ἐντὸς τοῦ ὁ-
ποίου ὠλόλυξε τὸ μικρόν... Ἐκαμε χειρονο-
μίαν ὡς διὰ νὰ σχηματίσῃ τοὺς δακτύλους της

εἰς διλαβίδα, εἰς ἀρπάγην καὶ στραγγαλίαν. . . 45
Ἦσθάνετο τὴν στιγμὴν ἐκείνην ἀγρίαν χαρὰν
νὰ πνίξῃ τὸ μικρὸν θυγάτριον... Τῆς ἦλθεν
εἰς τὸν νοῦν ὅτι ἦτο ἀβάπτιστον, καὶ ἂν τὸ
ἔπνιγε, θὰ εἶχε διπλὴν ἁμαρτίαν... Ἡ σκέψις
αὕτη ἐπὶ μίαν στιγμὴν τὴν ἀνεχαίτισεν, ἀλλ' 50
ὁμως ἀπεφάσισε νὰ ὑπερπηδήσῃ τὸν φραγμὸν
τοῦτον... Παρὰ ἓνα δάκτυλον, ἡ χεὶρ της ἔψανε
τὸν λαιμὸν τοῦ μικροῦ πλάσματος...

Τὴν στιγμὴν ἐκείνην ἠκούσθη φωνή, βῆμα,
κρότος, εἰς τὸ μικρὸν χαγιάτι ἔξω, καὶ ἡ θύρα. 55
τὴν ὁποίαν ἡ γραΐα, ἡ πενθερὰ τοῦ Λυρίγκου,
ἀναχωρήσασα δὲν εἶχε κλείσει εἰς τὸ μάνδαλον,
ἀλλὰ μόνον τὴν εἶχε γείρη, ἠνοιχθῇ πέραν
καὶ πέραν. ἐνδίδουσα εἰς ὥθησιν ἔξωθεν.

— Ἐδῶ εἶνε, ἠρώτησεν ὁ ἐμφανισθεὶς ἄνθρω- 60
πος, ἐδῶ εἶνε τὸ σπῖτι τοῦ Λυρίγκου, τοῦ τσοπάνη;

Ἦτον χωροφύλαξ, μὲ τὸ χιτῶνιον μισο-
κουμβωμένον, φουσκωτὸν ἐπὶ τοῦ στήθους, μὲ
τὸ κασκέττον στραβά, μὲ στρημμένον τὸν μύ-
στακα, καὶ μὲ τὴν κάπαν διπλωμένην μακρυ- 65
νύρι ἐπὶ τοῦ ἀριστεροῦ ὤμου.

Μέσα στὸ καλύβι, ἡ κανδήλα ἐτρεμόσβυνεν
ἐμπρὸς εἰς τὰ εἰκονίσματα. Ἡ φωτιὰ εἶχε κα-
λυφθῇ καὶ πάλιν ἀπὸ τὴν τέφραν. Τὸ λυχνάρι
σβυστὸν ἐκρέματο ἀπὸ τὸ μικρὸν ράφι τῆς 70
ἐστίας. Ἦτο σκότος. Ἐξω, εἶχεν ἐξημερώσει,
καὶ παρὰ δύο λεπτὰ ὁ ἥλιος θ' ἀνέτελλεν.

Ὁ ἄνθρωπος δὲν ἐβλεπεν εἰμὴ ἀμυδρὸς
σκιὰς μέσα. Τὴν λεχώναν εἰς τὴν στρωμνὴν
της, ὡς ἀμαυρὸν ὄγκον κατακειμένην, τὸ βρέ- 75
φος τὸ ὁποῖον ἐσάλεψε καὶ ἀνάσαιεν ἐντὸς
τῆς σκάφης, ἣτις ἐχρησίμευεν ὡς λίκνον... καὶ
τὴν Φραγκογιαννοῦ καθημένην ὡς τράντασμα,
καὶ τείνουσαν τὴν χεῖρα πρὸς τὸ λίκνον.

Ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ ἔμεινε μὲ τὴν χεῖρα τε- 80
ταμένην. Τὴν κατέλαβε φοβία, τρόμος, ζάλη.
Ἐντὸς δευτερολέπτου ἦλθεν εἰς ἑαυτήν, καὶ
εἶδε τὸν φοβερὸν κίνδυνον.

Ἀκριβῶς ὀπισθὲν της ἦτο ἐν μικρὸν πα- 85
ράθυρον βλέπον πρὸς βορρᾶν, ὑπόσαθρον, νο-
τισμένον καὶ κακοκλεισμένον. Ὡς νὰ εἶχε τι-
ναχθῇ ἀπὸ ἐκρηξιν, ἐστράφη μηχανικῶς ἀνοίξε
τὸ παράθυρον, καὶ ἐπήδησεν ἔξω. Ἐπεσεν ἐ-
πάνω εἰς χόρτα καὶ ἄχυρα, καὶ ὁ δοῦπος τῆς 90
πτώσεώς της οὔτε ἠκούσθη. Τὸ χαμηλὸν πα-

* Ἰδε σελ. 472.

ράθυρον μόλις ἀνείχε μισὴν ὀργυιὰν ἀπὸ τοῦ ἐδάφους.

Μόνον εἶχε ξεχάσει νὰ πάρῃ μαζί τὸ ραβδί της καὶ τὸ καλάθι της, τὰ ὁποῖα ὡς τόσον εὐρίσκοντο δίπλα της, εἰς τὸ πάτωμα. Ἦτον ἄξιον ἀπορίας, πῶς τόσον εἶχε σαστίσει. Τὰ ἐνθυμήθη ἀκριβῶς τὴν στιγμὴν καθ' ἣν ἄρχισε νὰ τρέχῃ μετὰ τὸ πῆδημά της, κ' ἔτσι τῆς ἤρχετο ἂν ἦτον τρόπος, νὰ γυρίσῃ πίσω νὰ τὰ πάρῃ, καὶ νὰ στραβωθοῦν, νὰ μὴν τὴν ἰδοῦν οἱ διώκταί της.

Ὡς τόσον ἔτρεχεν, ἔτρεχεν... εἶχεν εἰσέλθῃ μέσα εἰς τὸ δάσος, τοῦ ὁποίου τὰ διάφορα μονοπάτια τῆς ἦσαν πολὺ γνωστά. Δὲν ἐγύριζε νὰ ἰδῇ ὀπίσω της... Ἦτο βεβαία ὅτι οἱ δύο «ταχτικοί» θ' ἀργήσουν νὰ ἐννοήσουν τί συνέβη, καὶ νὰ βαλθοῦν νὰ τὴν κυνηγήσουν.

Τῷ ὄντι οἱ δύο ἐκεῖνοι ἄνδρες τῆς δημοσίας ἀνάγκης δὲν ἐνόησαν κατ' ἀρχὰς τί εἶχε συμβῇ. Τοὺς εἶχε στείλῃ «κατεπεῖγον» ὀπίσω ὁ εἰρηνοδίκης, ἀπὸ κοινοῦ μὲ τὸν πάρεδρον τὸν ἀστυνόμον, ὅστις, εἰς ὅσα ἀπεφαίνετο ὁ ἐμπνευσμένος ἐκεῖνος λειτουργὸς τῆς Θέμιδος, ἔλεγε πάντοτε ναί, καὶ μὲ τὸν ἐνωμοτάρχην, ὅστις δὲν ἔλεγε ποτὲ ὄχι, τοὺς εἶχε στείλῃ νὰ ὑπάγουν εἰς τὴν ἀγροτικὴν οἰκίαν τοῦ Ἰωάννου Λυρίγκου, διὰ νὰ τὸν προσκαλέσουν νὰ ἐμφανισθῇ ἐνώπιον τῶν ἀρχῶν, κ' ἐν ἀνάγκῃ νὰ τὸν φέρουν διὰ τῆς βίας ἐπειδὴ ἐξ ὅσων εἶχον διηγηθῇ τὴν ἐσπέραν τῆς προτεριάς, εἰς τὴν πολίγνην, οἱ δύο χωροφύλακες, οἱ εἰρημένοι φωστήρες συνέλαβον τὴν ὑπόνοιαν ὅτι ὁ Λυρίγκος ἐνείχετο εἰς τὴν ὑπόθεσιν τῆς φυγῆς τῆς γυναικὸς Χαδούλας, χήρας Ἰωάννου Φράγκου, χριστιανῆς, καὶ ἐκτελούσης οἰκιακὰ ἔργα, τὴν ὁποίαν ἔλεγον ὅτι εἶχον ἰδεῖ ν' ἀναρριχᾶται εἰς τὸν κρημνὸν τοῦ πετρῶδους βουνοῦ οἱ δύο στρατιωτικοὶ ἄνδρες.

Ὅθεν ἀμέσως, περὶ ὄρθρον βαθύν, ἀφοῦ ἐκοιμήθησαν ἐπὶ δύο ἢ τρεῖς ὥρας, φοροῦντες ὅλην τὴν στολήν των, οἱ δύο χωροφύλακες, εἰς τὰ ἱσόγεια τῆς δημαρχίας, τὰ γεμάτα ἀπὸ βλατυδὲς, σαρανταποδαροῦσες καὶ σαμαμίδια, τὰ ὁποῖα ἐχρησίμευον ὡς καζάρμα (ἢ καζάρμα οὕτῃ ἦτον ὁ τρόμος τῶν ἀγυιοπαίδων τῶν μοσχομαγκῶν, ὡς καὶ ὕλων τῶν ὀφειλετῶν τοῦ δημοσίου), εἰς ἓν σφύριγμα τοῦ ἐνωμοτάρχου ἐσηκώθησαν, ἐπῆραν τῆς κάπες των, καὶ τὸ ἔβαλαν δρόμον διὰ τὸ βουνόν.

Ἐστέλλοντο ἰδίως διὰ νὰ φέρουν τὸν Λυρίγκον (καθὼς καὶ πάντα ἄλλον βοσκόν, τὸν ὁποῖον θὰ ἐξήταζον οἱ ἴδιοι, καὶ ὅστις θὰ ἔ-

λεγε «μπερδεμμένα λόγια», ἐφρόντισε νὰ προσθέσῃ ὁ εἰρηνοδίκης), ἀλλὰ πρὸ πάντων διὰ νὰ μυρισθοῦν τὰ ἴχνη τῆς Φραγκογιαννοῦς καὶ κατορθώσουν νὰ τὴν ἀνακαλύψουν. Διὰ τοῦτο εἶχον πληρεξουσιότητα νὰ ψάξουν ὅλα τὰ μανδριά καὶ τῆς στάνες, καὶ νὰ ἐξετάσουν ὅλους τοὺς βοσκούς τοῦ βουνοῦ. Ὅθεν, διὰ καλὸν καὶ διὰ κακόν, ἐπῆραν μαζί καὶ τῆς κάπες των.

Ὅταν ὁ πρῶτος χωροφύλαξ ὤθησε τὴν θύραν τοῦ οἰκίσκου, καὶ εἶδε σκότος καὶ σκιὰν μέσα, ἤκουσε τὸν κρότον τοῦ βορεινοῦ παραθύρου ἀνοιγομένου, εἶδεν ἀκτῖνας φωτὸς ἐκείθεν νὰ εἰσδύωσι, κ' εὐθὺς ἐν μαῦρον σῶμα νὰ φράττῃ τὰς ἀκτῖνας ταύτας, κυρτόν, συνεσταλμένον, ἄμορφον, καὶ ἤκουσε τὸν ἀσθενῆ δοῦπον τῆς πτώσεως. Ἰότε τὸ παράθυρον ἐμεινεν ἀνοιχτόν, καὶ εἰς τὰς διπλὰς διασταυρουμένας ἀκτῖνας τὰς διὰ τῆς θύρας καὶ τοῦ παραθύρου, εἶδε καθαρά τὴν γυναῖκα τὴν λεχώ. ἔξαπλωμένην ἐπὶ τῆς κλίνης της.

— Τί τρέχει ἐδῶ; ἐφώναξεν ἑκπληκτος ὁ ἄνθρωπος.

Ἡ λεχὼνα ἐξύπνησε, κ' ἐπρόφερε μὲ ἀσθενῆ φωνήν.

— Μάνα, ἐσύ 'σαι;... Ἡρθες;

ΙΕ'.

Ἐπάνω, εἰς τὰ Καμπιά, εἰς τὸ ὑψηλὸν ὄροπέδιον, ὅταν ἐφθασε λαχανιασμένη, ξεγλωσσασμένη ἢ Φραγκογιαννοῦ, ἐστάθη, ἐγύρισε πρὸς τὸν κατήφορον, ὁπόθεν εἶχεν ἔλθῃ, κ' ἐκύτταζε μὴν ἰδῇ ἢ ἀκούσῃ σκιὰν ἢ βῆμα τρέχοντος λαγωνικοῦ, χωροφύλακος. Δὲν ἐφαίνετο τίποτε. Ἀλλ' ὅμως δὲν ἠσθάνετο ἑαυτὴν ἐν ἀσφαλείᾳ.

Ἐστάθη ὡς ἀφηρημένη κ' ἐσκέπτετο. Ἐκαμνε κατὶ ὡς μαθηματικὸν ὑπολογισμόν. Ἐλογάζετο τὸν χρόνον ὅσος θ' ἀπλητεῖτο ὡς ἔγγιστα, διὰ νὰ συνέλθουν ἀπὸ τὴν ἑκπληξίν των οἱ δύο ταχτικοί (τὸν δεύτερον δὲν τὸν εἶδεν, ἀλλὰ τὸν ἐμάντευε), διὰ νὰ ἐννοήσουν τί συνέβη, ἵσως νὰ ζητήσουν πληροφορίας (ἢ λεχὼνα θὰ ἐτρόμαζεν ἄδικα, καὶ δὲν θὰ εἴξευρε τίποτε νὰ τοὺς εἴπῃ· ἀλλὰ τότε, θὰ ἔτρεχον ἵσως πρὸς τὴν στάνην, ὅπου εὐρίσκετο ὁ Λυρίγκος κ' ἡ πενθερά του; τόσῳ περισσότερον θ' ἀργοποροῦσαν) εἶτα νὰ πετᾶσουν τῆς κάπες των κάτω, καὶ νὰ τὸ βάλουν στὰ πόδια νὰ τὴν κυνηγήσουν.

Ἀλλ' εἶδαν τάχα ἀκριβῶς, ἢ ἐνόησαν, ἢ

5 γνώριζαν τὸ μονοπάτι τὸ ὁποῖον εἶχε πάρη
 αὐτή; Καὶ μήπως εἶχε τρέξει ὅλην τὴν ὥ-
 ραν ἓνα καὶ τὸν αὐτὸν δρόμον; Καταρ-
 10 χὰς εἶχε στραφῇ δεξιὰ, ὥς νὰ ἤθελε νὰ πάρη
 τὸν κατήφορον, εἶτα ἐστράφη ἀριστερά, κ' ἔ-
 τρεξε τὸν ἀνήφορον — με ὅλον τὸ μειονέκτημα
 τὸ ὁποῖον εἶχεν ὁ ἀνηφορικὸς δρόμος διὰ νὰ
 λαχανιάσῃ τις, ὅταν καταδιωκόμενος βιάζεται
 15 νὰ τρέχῃ. Ἄλλ' ἐὰν αὐτὴ θὰ ἐλαχάνιαζε, μή-
 πως ἐκείνοι καίτοι νέοι, δὲν ὑπέκειντο εἰς τὸ
 πάθημα τοῦτο; Ἡ Χαδοῦλα εἴξεν μάλιστα,
 κατὰ σύμπτωσιν, ὅτι ὁ εἰς τῶν δύο ἐκείνων
 νέων ἔπασχεν ἀπὸ ἀσθμα... Δὲν ἦτο πολὺς
 20 καιρὸς ἀφ' οὗ αὐτὸς εἶχε παρακαλέσει τὸν γαμ-
 βρόν της νὰ εἰπῇ τῆς γρηῃς νὰ τοῦ κάμῃ ἓνα
 μαντζούνι διὰ τὸ νόσημα τοῦτο.

Ἄλλὰ με ὅλην τὴν ἐκδούλευσιν αὐτήν, ἡ
 Γιαννοῦ εἴξεν ὅτι δὲν ἔπρεπε νὰ περιμένη
 25 ἔλεος ἀπὸ τὸν χωροφύλακα. Ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἔ-
 καμνε τὸ καθήκόν του. Ἄς ἔλειπαν αἱ περι-
 ποιήσεις τὰς ὑποίας θὰ τῆς ἔκαμναν, ἂν αὐτὴ
 ἔπεφτε στὰ χέρια των, καὶ ἂν ἐμελλον νὰ τὴν
 30 ὀνομάζουν «σταυρομάνα»!! Εἶχε παρατηρήσει
 ἄλλοτε, εἰς τὰς περιπετείας καὶ τὰ βάσανα ὅσα
 εἶχεν ὑποφέρει ἐξ αἰτίας τοῦ νιού της, τοῦ
 Μούρτου, ὅτι τὸ εἶδος αὐτῶν τῶν ἀνθρώπων
 35 τότε μάλιστα θυμώνουν ὅταν ὁ καταζητούμενος
 ἀνθίσταται, ὅταν αὐθαδιάζῃ, πολὺ δὲ περισ-
 σότερον ὅταν φεύγῃ, καὶ ἀναγκάζονται αὐτοὶ
 νὰ τὸν κυνηγοῦν, ὥστε νὰ βγαίνῃ ἡ ψυχὴ
 40 τοὺς ἀνάποδα... Ὡ! βέβαια ἔχουν δίκαιον
 τότε νὰ σκληρύνωνται, καὶ νὰ γίνωνται θηρία
 ἀνήμερα ὅθεν καὶ ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ, φεύ-
 γουσα, καὶ βιάζουσα αὐτοὺς νὰ τρέχουν δὲν
 45 ἐπερίμενεν ἔλεος ἀπ' αὐτούς.

Ἐκεῖ ὅπου ἴστατο συλλογισμένη, ἀκούει βή-
 50 ματα ὀπισθὲν της, ἀπὸ τὸ μέρος τὸ ἀντίθετον
 πρὸς ἐκεῖνο ἐξ οὗ αὐτὴ ἦλθε. Στρέφεται καὶ
 βλέπει ἓνα ἄνθρωπον, ἓνα βοσκόν. Ἡ Φραγ-
 κογιαννοῦ τὸν ἀνεγνώρισεν. Ἦτο ὁ καλούμε-
 νος Καμπαναχμάκης. Ἦρχετο με πατήματα
 55 λοξά, ἀκολουθούμενος ἀπὸ τὸν σκύλον του, ὅ-
 σις ἐγρύλλισεν ἅμα εἶδε τὴν γυναῖκα. Ἄλλ' ὁ
 ἀφέντης του τὸν ἐμάλωσε.

60 Εἶδε τὴν Φραγκογιαννοῦ κ' ἐστάθη. Ἦρχετο
 ἀπὸ τὸ καλύβι κ' ἐπήγαιεν εἰς τὸ μανδρὶ του.
 Ὑψηλός, μελαψός, ἰσχνός, εὐρύτερον, τὴν κό-
 μην καὶ τὸ γένειον με χρῶμα ἀχύρου καψαλι-
 65 σμένου, κρατῶν τὴν ράβδον του τὴν κυρτήν,
 ὑψηλὴν ἴσα με τὸ μπόϊ του, ἐστάθη ἐνώπιον τῆς
 Φραγκογιαννοῦς. Ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἐφαίνετο νὰ εὐ-
 ρίσκεται εἰς μεγάλην θλίψιν καὶ ἀδημονίαν.

— Ἄ! ποῦθε αὐτὸ τὸ καλὸ! εἶπε με τὴν
 55 φωνήν του τὴν δυσδιάκριτον καὶ τραχεῖαν,
 σφίγγων τοὺς ὀδόντας ἐνῶ ὠμίλει. Τόμ' σ' ἀ-
 γροίκησα, ταμάμ σὲ προσήφερα, κυρὰ Γιαν-
 νοῦ... Ὁ Γεραμπῆς σὲ στέλνει!

— Τί λὲς γυνίε μου; εἶπε με τὸ ὑποκριτικὸν
 ἠθὸς της ἡ Χαδοῦλα.

— Καλὰ ποῦ σ' ἐταύρωσα! εἶπα, αὐτήν
 60 εἶνε κείν' ἡ καλὴ γυναῖκα κατ' ἀπ' τὴ χώρα,
 ποῦ γρουνίζει τὰ γιατρικὰ καὶ διώχνει κάθε
 γρουνουσλιὰ ἀλάργα! Τόμ' σ' ἀτείκασα μονο-
 κοπανιάς σ' ἐγρουνίσα!... Μὰ δὲ ξέρ'ς τίποτε,
 65 κυρὰ Γιαννοῦ μ';

— Τί τρέχει παιδί μου;

— Μεγάλον ζαράρι μ' εὐρῆκε, νᾶχω τὸ συμ-
 70 πάθειο, θειά Γιαννοῦ! Τρανό, ἄτχο ντέρτι!
 Ἡ φαμιλιά μ', ὅς' ἀπὸ λόου σου, βγήκε τὴν
 νύχτα πρὸς νεροῦ της, ὅς' ἀπ' τὸ καλύβι, κυρὰ
 Γιαννοῦ μ', κ' ἐγύρισε πίσω κακὰ κι' ἀδέ-
 75 ξια... Ντούρμα βγήκε, κ' ἐγύρισε μονοκοπα-
 νιά, χτυπημένη, ξεγλωσσασμένη, ἀγρουνίστη..
 Χτυπήθηκε, μακρὰ ἀπὸ λόγου σου... Ἡ
 γλῶσσά της κρεμασμένη, ὅς' ἀπ' τὸ σιαγόνι
 80 της, τὴ λαλιά της τὴν ἔχασε, τὴν ἤρε κακὴ θερ-
 μασιά καὶ κρυάδα κι' ἀσπασμοί... Κεῖται
 στὸ στῶμα μισοπεθαμμένη!

— Ἀλήθεια;... Ὡ, ἁμαρτίες!... καὶ πότε
 85 ἔγινε αὐτό;

— Προχτὲς τὸ βράδυ, τὴν νύχτα, τὰ μεσά-
 90 νυχτα, θειά Γιαννοῦ! Ὁξον ἀπὸ λόου σου,
 νᾶχω τὸ συμπάθειο... Ντούρμα βγήκε ὅς' ἀπ'
 τὸ καλύβι, κ' ἐγύρισε πίσω χτυπημένη, παλα-
 85 βιασμένη... Κοπιάζεις ὥς τὸ καλύβι μπάριμ,
 τώρα ἐδῶ ποῦ σ' ἐσταύρωσα, κυρὰ Γιαννοῦ μ'!
 Μονάχα νὰ τὴν θωρήσῃς, ν' ἀγροικήσῃς ὅς' ἐν
 90 χάλι βρίζεται... Ἐλμπέτ, καλὸ θὰ τῆς κάμῃς
 με τὰ γιατρικὰ σου, θὰ διώξῃς κάθε ἐνάντιο,
 ἓνα κ' ἓνα!

— Καὶ πῶς τῆς ἤρθε αὐτό; εἶπεν ἡ Φραγ-
 κογιαννοῦ.

— Ποιὸς ξέρει τί ἁμαρτίες, κυρὰ Γιαννοῦ
 95 μ'. Ὁ Γεραμπῆς τὸ ξέρει.

Ἡ Χαδοῦλα ἐσκέφθη ἐπὶ στιγμὴν. Εἶτα
 εἶπε·

— Καλὰ θὰ πάω ἀποκεῖ, τώρα-τώρα.

— Νᾶχῃς πολλὴ ζωὴ καὶ καλὴ ψυχὴ, θειά
 100 Γιαννοῦ! εἶπεν ὁ Καμπαναχμάκης. Ὁ Γε-
 ραμπῆς σ' ἔστευε.

Ἀφοῦ ἀπεμακρύνθη ὁ Καμπαναχμάκης, ἡ
 Φραγκογιαννοῦ ἐσκέφθη ὅτι θὰ εἶχε καταφύ-
 γιον, τοῦλάχιστον, διὰ τὴν ἐπομένην νύχτα καὶ

ὅτι τὸ καλλίτερον θὰ ἦτο νὰ κορυφῇ τὴν ἡμέραν εἰς καμμίαν λόχμην ἢ εἰς καμμίαν σπηλιάν, ὅπου οἱ χωροφύλακες ἀδύνατον θὰ ἦτο νὰ τὴν εὗρωσι.

Ἐπῆρε τὸν κατήφορον, κατήλθιν εἰς τῆς Ἀγαλλιανοῦς τὸ ρέμμα. Ἐστάθη νὰ πῇ νερόν εἰς μίαν βρύσιν. Ἐκεῖ συνήντησεν ἕνα γέροντα μοναχόν, τὸν πάτερ Ἰωάσαφ, κηπουρόν τοῦ μοναστηρίου τοῦ Εὐαγγελισμοῦ, τὸ ὁποῖον διέγραφε πρὸς τὰ ἄνω τὴν σεμνὴν κατατομὴν του, εἰς τὴν κορυφὴν τοῦ ρεύματος.

Ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ εἶχε καθίσει νὰ λάβῃ ἀναψυχὴν πλησίον τῆς δροσερᾶς πηγῆς, ἐστῆριξε τὴν κεφαλὴν εἰς τὴν χεῖρά της, ἐφαίνετο βυθισμένη εἰς λογισμούς, καὶ συγχρόνως «αὐτιάζετο», κ' ἔτεινε τὸ οὖς, φανταζομένη κατὰ πᾶσαν στιγμὴν ὅτι ἤκουε βήματα τῶν χωροφυλάκων.

Ὁ πάτερ Ἰωάσαφ ἤλθε νὰ γεμίσῃ ἕνα σταμνίον ὕδατος, καὶ ἰδὼν τὴν Φραγκογιαννοῦ τὴν ἐκαλημέρισε.

— Ποῦ βρέθηκες ἐδῶ, γερόντισσα; Κάτι συλλογισμένη σὲ βλέπω...

— Ἀχ! γυιέ μου!... εἶπεν ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ. Ἐχὼ βάσανα καὶ πάθια...

— Τὰ βάσανα δὲν λείπουν ἀπὸ τὸν κόσμο, γερόντισσα... Ὅσο καὶ νὰ κάμῃ ὁ ἄνθρωπος, δὲν μπορεῖ νὰ τὰποφύγῃ.

— Ἀχ! πάτερ-Γιάσαφε, εἶπεν ἐν θλιβερᾷ διαχύσει ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ. Νάμουν πουλὶ νὰ πέταγα!!!

— «Τίς δώσει μοι πτέρυγας ὥσεί περισσερᾶς;» εἶπεν ὁ Ἰωάσαφ, ἐνθυμηθεὶς τὸν ψαλμόν.

— Ἦθελα νὰ ἔφευγα ἀπ' τὸν κόσμον, γέροντά μου... Δὲν μπορῶ νὰ ὑποφέρω πλειά!

— «Ἐμάκρυνας φυγαδεύουσα καὶ ἠλίθισθης ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ». εἶπε πάλιν ὁ γέρον μοναχός.

— Μεγάλῃ φουρτούνᾳ μ' ἤρρε, γέροντά μου, καὶ μεγάλῃ λιγοψυχιά μ' ἐκόλλησε.

— Ὁ Θεὸς νὰ σὲ γλυτώσῃ, κόρη μου «ἀπὸ ὀλιγοψυχίας καὶ ἀπὸ καταιγίδος» ἐπέφερεν ὁ Ἰωάσαφ, συνεχίζων τὸν ψαλμόν.

— Ἀπ' τὴν κακία, ἀπ' τὴν κακογλωσσίᾳ, ἀπ' τὸ φθόνο, δὲν μπορεῖ νὰ γλυτώσῃ ἕνας ἄνθρωπος.

— «Καταπόντισον, Κύριε, καὶ καταδίελε τὰς γλώσσας αὐτῶν, ὅτι εἶδον ἀνομίαν καὶ ἀντιλογίαν ἐν τῇ πόλει», ἐπέρανεν ὁ πάτερ Ἰωάσαφ. Εἶτα ἀφοῦ ἐγέμισε τὸ σταμνί του εἶπε:

— Ἄν περάσῃς ἀπὸ τοὺς κήπους, γερόντισσα, φώναξέ με νὰ σὲ φιλέψω κανένα μαρούλι, κι' ὀλίγα κουκιά.

Καὶ ἀπεμακρύνθη.

Τὴν ἐσπέραν ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ εὐρίσκετο εἰς τὴν Πέρα-Ράχην, εἰς τὸ καλύβι τοῦ Καμπαναχμάκη. Ἡ σύζυγος τοῦ βοσκοῦ, γυνὴ πλέον ἢ τριάκοντα ἔτων καὶ μήτηρ πέντε τέκνων, ἔκειτο ἐπὶ τῆς κλίνης. Ἦτο εἰς ἀθλίαν κατάστασιν. Τὸ μοῦτρό της εἶχε στραβώσει ἀπὸ τὴν νευρικήν προσβολήν, ἡ γλῶσσά της ἐκρέματο ἔξω τοῦ στόματος, κ' ἐξέπεμπεν ἀνάρθρους φωνάς.

— Πῶς σοῦ ἤρθε αὐτό; τὴν ἠρώτησε διὰ νεύματος μᾶλλον ἢ διὰ τῆς φωνῆς ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ. Ἡ πάσχουσα ἀπήντησε διὰ γρουλισμοῦ οὐδὲν τὸ ἀνθρώπινον ἔχοντος.

Ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ ἐκάθισε παρὰ τὴν ἐστίαν, καὶ ἡσχολεῖτο νὰ βράσῃ βότανα διὰ τὴν πάσχουσαν. Δὲν εἶχε πλέον τὸ καλάθι της, ἀλλὰ εἶχε γεμίσει τοὺς κόλπους της ἀπὸ διάφορα μικροσκοπικὰ χόρτα, τὰ ὁποῖα εἶχε συλλέξει τὴν ἡμέραν κάτω εἰς τὰ ρέμματα τῶν κοιλάδων.

Τὰ δύο μικρὰ κοράσια τῆς ἀσθενοῦς ἐκάθισαν σιμὰ εἰς τὰ γόνατα τῆς Φραγκογιαννοῦς, γλυφίδικα, καὶ ζητοῦντα θωπείας. Ἡ Γιαννοῦ ἐθώπευσε τὰ σιαγόνια των καὶ τοὺς λαιμοὺς των, τόσον δυνατὰ, ὥστε ἡσθάνθησαν πόνον, καὶ τὸ ἐν ἐφώναξε.

— Μάνα!

Ἄλλ' ἡ μάνα ἦτον δι' αὐτὰ ὥς νὰ μὴν ὑπῆρχε, καὶ τὰ δυστυχῇ πλάσματα δὲν ἦσαν εἰς ἡλικίαν οὔτε νὰ αἰσθανθῶσι τὴν ἔλλειψιν, οὔτε νὰ δύνανται τοῦλάχιστον νὰ τὴν ἀναπληρώσωσι. Τὸ μικρὸν ἀγόρι, τὸ ὁποῖον ἐφαίνετο νὰ εἶνε διμήλικον μὲ τὸ κοράσιον τὸ ἐν, ὥς νὰ ἦσαν διδύμα, ἔκλαιε κι' ἐξήτει «νὰ σηκωθῇ ἡ μάνα του νὰ τοῦ κάμῃ γρηᾷ στὸ τηγάνι».

— Τώρα, γυιέ μου, ἐγὼ νὰ σοῦ κάμω γρηᾷ, εἶπε τυχαίως ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ.

— Δὲν ἔχουμε ἀλεῦρι, θειᾷ, εἶπε τὸ μεγαλύτερον ἐκ τῶν δύο κορασίων.

— Καλά! νὰ ἔλθῃ ὁ πατέρας, νὰ φέρῃ ἀλεῦρι, εἶπεν ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ πρὸς τὸ παιδίον, κ' ἐγὼ νὰ σοῦ κάμω «γρηᾷ»! Ἡσύχασε τώρα.

Ἀλλὰ τὸ ἀγόρι δὲν τὰ ἤκουεν αὐτά.

— Γρηᾷ θέλω, καὶ νᾶνε ζαρωμένη γρηᾷ! Νᾶξῃ καὶ πετμέξι!

— Ποῦ νὰ βρεθῇ τὸ πετμέξι, γυιέ μου; εἶπεν ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ. Μεθαύριο νὰ μαυρίσουν τὰ σταφύλια στ' ἀμπέλι, νὰ τὰ τρυγήσουμε, νὰ κόψουμε τὰ ξεκούδονα ἀπ' τὰ κλήματα, νὰ κάμουμε πολὺ-πολὺ πετμέξι, νὰ φράγῃ τὸ καλὸ παιδί. Πῶς σὲ λένε;

— Γιωργή τόνε λέμε, θειά, εἶπε τὸ μεγαλύτερον κοράσιον.

— Ἐσένα;

— Δαφνώ.

5 — Κ' ἔσένα; ἠρώτησεν ἡ Γιαννοῦ τὸ μικρότερον θυγάτριον.

— Ἀνθή.

— Νὰ ζήσετε!

10 — Καὶ πότε θὰ τὰ κόψουμε, θειά, τὰ σταφύλια; ἐφώναξε τὸ ἀγόρι. Δὲν πᾶμε τώρα στ' ἀμπέλι νὰ τὰ κόψουμε;

— Ὅχι τόρρα, γιέ μου, ταχιά.

— Ταχιά το — ταχύ; εἶπεν ὁ Γεώργης.

15 — Ναί, γιόκα μου. Ἀπόψε θὰ δέσουν ἡ δᾶγες, καὶ θὰ γλυκάνουν, καὶ θὰ μαυρίσουν, καὶ ταχιά το — ταχύ θὰ πάρουμε τοὺς τρυγολόγους νὰ τρέξουμε στ' ἀμπέλι, νὰ τρυγήσουμε, νὰ τὰ κάμουμε κότσι — κότσι, τὰ σταφύλια, τὰ ξεκούδυνα, νὰ τὰ πατήσουμε, νὰ
20 τὰ λυώσουμε, καὶ θὰ κάμουμε μουστόπητες καὶ πετμέζια καὶ χίλιων λογιῶν καλά... καὶ τότε, θὰ σοῦ κάμω ἐγὼ μιὰ γρηά, ζαρωμένη, ἴσα μὲ τὸ τηγάνι μεγάλη!

25 — Σέλω νᾶνε πουλύ, πουλὺ μεγάλη! εἶπεν ὁ μικρός.

— Μεγάλη γρηά, ἴσα μ' ἐμένα, εἶπεν ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ.

30 Ἐν τῷ μεταξύ, τὸ μικρότερον τῶν δύο κορασίων, τὸ Δαφνώ, καθὼς ἐκύτταζεν ἐναλλὰς τὸν λύχνον καὶ τὴν Φραγκογιαννοῦ μετῆλθ' ἐπὶ βλέμμα, ὥς νὰ ὑπνωτίσθῃ ἀπὸ τὸ ὄμμα τῆς γραίας, ἐνύσταξε, ἔγειρε τὸ κεφάλαιον τοῦ πρὸς τὴν ἐστίαν, καὶ ἀπεκοιμήθη. Ἡ Γιαννοῦ ἐπιμόνως τὸ ἐχάδευεν ὑπὸ τὸ κατωσάγονον, καὶ
35 πότε ἡ χεὶρ τῆς ἐγλίστρα πρὸς τὸν τράχηλον, καὶ ἴσως εἶχε κλίσιν νὰ θλίψῃ κᾶπως δυνατώτερα τὸν λαιμὸν τοῦ κορασίου. Ἀλλὰ τὴν ἰδίαν στιγμήν ἠκούσθη δρομαῖον βῆμα ἔξωθεν, ἡ θύρα ἠνοιχθῇ, καὶ εἰσῆλθεν ὁ Καμ-
40 παναχμάκης.

— Ἄω εἶσαι, κυρὰ Γιαννοῦ! εἶπεν ἐν ἄκρῃ ταραχῇ. Σήκου! Νὰ φύγῃς! νὰ κρυφθῇς!

— Τί τρέχει; εἶπεν γραία, προσπαθοῦσα νὰ φανῇ ἀτάραχος.

45 — Οἱ ταχτικοὶ σὲ χαλεύουν; Τί ζαρὰρ ἔκαμες, χριστιανή; Τρέχουν οἱ ταχτικοὶ γυρεύντάς σε. Σήκου, τρέχα! νὰ κρυφθῇς πουθενά, μπάριμ! Σὲ λυποῦμαι καὶ μένη! Τί κοῖμα ἔκαμες;

50 — Ἐγὼ; κοῖματα πολλά... Μὰ δὲν ξέρω γιατί νὰ μὲ γυρεύουν οἱ ταχτικοί, ποῦ μοῦ λές;

— Τρέχα, κατὰ δῶ ἔρχονται τόρρα. Δὲ γρου- νῖζω πῶς σ' ἀγροίκησαν πῶς τὰ προῖμους

κατὰ δῶ, θάρρουν τόρρα νὰ χαλεύουν. Ὅπου κι' ἂν εἶνε, πλάκωσαν! Ἀκούς! κάτου, στὴ Σκοτ'νὴ Σπ'λιά, στὸ κακόρρεμμα, κατακεῖ νὰ
55 πάρῃς τὸ φύσημά σου! Στὸ Κλίμα στὸ Μονοπάτι, στοῦ Π'λιοῦ τῇ Βρύση, ἐκεῖ, καὶ νὰ σὲ πάρουν στὸ κοντό, δὲν μποροῦν νὰ σὲ πιᾶσιν! Ἀποκεῖ μπορεῖς νὰ κατεβῇς στὸ Γέροντα, στὸ Ἐρημητήριο, νὰ ξαγορευθῇς τὰ
60 κοῖματά σ', καὶ μένη. Τρέχα!...

Ἐτρεξεν ἡ ἀθλία ἀλλὰ δὲν ἠσθάνετο πλέον δυνάμεις ἀκμαίας. Ἡ ἀϋπνία τῶν περασιμένων νυκτῶν, ἡ κακοπάθεια, αἱ συγκινήσεις τὴν εἶχον καταβάλλῃ. Τὰ μέρη, τὰ ὁποῖα εἶχεν ὀνομάσει ὁ
65 Καμπαναχμάκης, ἀπείχον πολὺ, δὲν ἠδύνατο δὲ νὰ ὁδοιπορήσῃ πρὸς τὰ ἐκεῖ εἰς τὴν ἀσέλῃ νύκτα.

Καθὼς ἔτρεχεν, αὐτιαζομένη κατὰ πᾶσαν στιγμήν, ἐξαφνίζομένη, καὶ νομίζουσα ὅτι ἀκούει
70 παντοῦ βήματα, εἰς τὸ μονοπάτι, ἀνάμεσα εἰς δένδρα καὶ θάμνους, ἤκουσε βήματα ἀληθῆ, ἐρχόμενα ἀπὸ διακοσίων βημάτων, ἀπὸ τὸν κύριον δρόμον. Ἐκρύβη ὀπίσθεν τῶν θάμνων, καὶ τῆς ἐφάνη ὅτι ἦσαν πράγματι οἱ χωρο-
75 φύλακες, βαδίζοντες πρὸς τὴν καλύβαν τοῦ Καμπαναχμάκη, πρὸς τὸ μέρος ὁπόθεν αὐτὴ ἤρχετο. Ἐὰν οὕτως εἶχεν, ἡ θέσις τῆς καθίστατο ἀσφαλεστέρα πρὸς τὸ παρόν, καθότι δὲν ἐφοβεῖτο πλέον νὰ τοὺς συναντήσῃ, διὰ
80 τὴν νύκτα ἐκεῖνην.

Ἐπροχώρησε πρὸς τὸ μέρος, ὁπόθεν εἶχεν ἔλθῃ τὴν πρωΐαν. Ἐφθασεν εἰς τὸν μικρὸν ναῖσκον τῆς Ζωοδόχου Πηγῆς, εἰς τὸ Κοιμη-
85 τήριον τῶν Καλογήρων, εἰς τ' Ἀλῶνι τοῦ Μοναστηριοῦ. Ἐπέρασεν ἔξω ἀπὸ τὸ Βουρδουναριό, ἀντικρὺ τῆς σιδηρᾶς πύλης τοῦ Κοινοβίου, ἧτις ἦτο κατάκλειστος. Ἄλλως, γυ-
90 ναῖκες ποτὲ δὲν ἐπήρχοντο εἰς τὸν ἱερὸν περίβολον. Κατῆλθεν εἰς τοὺς κήπους, ὅπου εἶχε συναντήσῃ τὴν πρωΐαν τὸν καλόγηρον, τὸν κηπουρόν, ὅστις τῆς εἶχεν εἰπεῖ διάφορα ρητὰ ἀπὸ τὸ Ψαλτήριον, τὰ ὁποῖα αὐτὴ δὲν ἐνόει,
95 ἀλλ' ἀορίστως ὑπώπτευσεν ὅτι προσηρομόζοντο κᾶπως εἰς τὴν θέσιν τῆς. Καὶ πράγματι τῆς εἶχον ἀφήσει ὥς ἓνα βόμβον περὶ τὰ ὦτα περὶ τὰ ὦτά τῆς «Τίς δώσει μοι πτέρυγας ὥσπερ
100 περιστερᾶς;... Ἴδου ἐμάκρυνα φυγαδεύων καὶ ἠδύσθη ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ. Προσδεχόμενη τὸν Θεόν, τὸν σῶζόντά με ἀπὸ ὀλιγοπυχίας καὶ ἀπὸ καταιγίδος....»

Καθὼς ἀνήρχετο τὴν δᾶχιν ἀντικρὺ, πέραν τῶν Κήπων, ἀνω τοῦ δρύματος, ἤκουσε τὸν μικρὸν κώδωνα τοῦ μοναστηρίου νὰ ἤχῃ γλυκά,

ταπεινά καὶ μονότονα, νὰ ἐξυπνᾷ τὰς ἡχοὺς τοῦ βουνοῦ, καὶ νὰ δονῇ τὴν μαλακὴν αὖραν.

Ἦτο ἄρα μεσονύκτιον, ὥρα τοῦ Μεσονυκτικοῦ, ὥρα τοῦ Ὁρθρου! Πῶς ἦσαν εὐτυχεῖς

5 οἱ ἄνθρωποι αὐτοί, οἵτινες εὐθὺς ἀμέσως, ἐκ νεαρᾶς ἡλικίας, ὥσάν ἀπὸ θείαν ἔμπνευσιν, εἶχον αἰσθανθῇ ποῖον ἦτο τὸ καλλίτερον τὸ ὁποῖον ἠμποροῦσαν νὰ κάμουν — τὸ νὰ μὴ φέρουν, δηλαδή, ἄλλους εἰς τὸν κόσμον δυ-

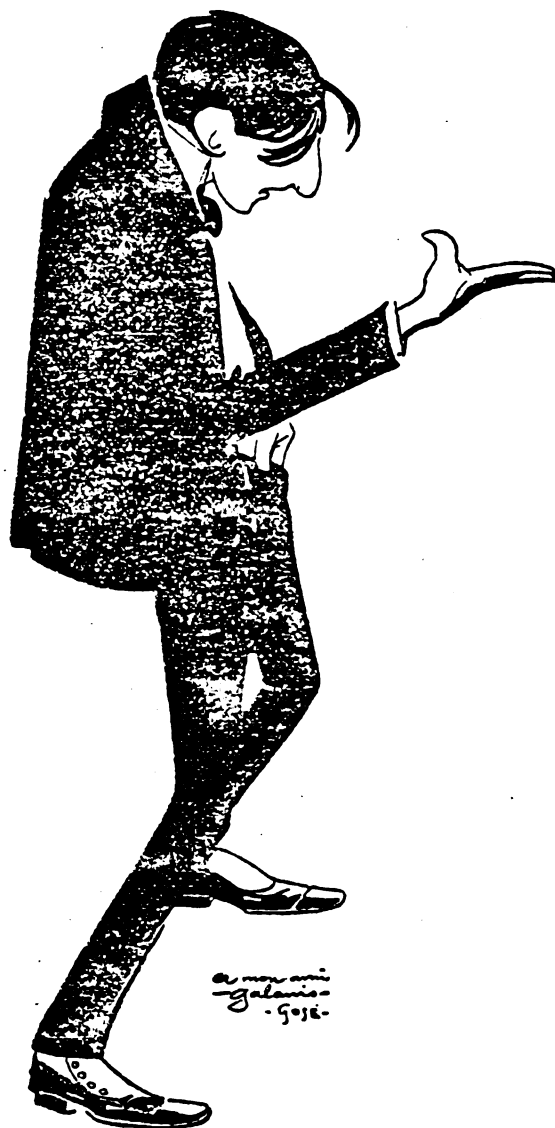
10 στυχεῖς!... καὶ μετὰ τοῦτο, ὅλα ἦσαν δεύτερα.

Τὴν φιλοσοφίαν, αὐτοί, τὴν εἶχον λάβῃ ὥς ἐκ κληρονομίας, χωρὶς σκοτίσουν τὸν νοῦν των εἰς τὴν «ζήτησιν τῆς ἀληθείας,» ὅπου ποτὲ δὲν εὐρίσκεται.

Ἀνέβη ὑψηλότερα τὸν ῥάχιν, χωρὶς νὰ ἔχη 15 σκοπὸν ἢ ἀπόφασιν ποῦ ἐπῆγαινε. Καὶ ἔξω ἀπὸ τὸν δρόμον, ὀλίγα βήματα μακράν, εἶδε μίαν στά- νην, τὴν ὁποίαν ἀνεγνώρισεν ὅτι ἦτον τοῦ Γιάννη τοῦ Λυρίγκου. Ὁ σκύλος αἰσθανθεὶς μακρόθεν τὴν παρουσίαν της, ἤρχισε νὰ γαυγύζη. 20

Τὸ τέλος εἰς τὸ προσεχές.

Α. ΠΑΠΑΔΙΑΜΑΝΤΗΣ



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Η Φ Ο Ν Ι Σ Σ Α *

Εἶχεν ἔλθῃ ἄρα, πλησίον εἰς τὸ κατάλυμα
τῆς παρελθούσης νυκτὸς χωρὶς νὰ τὸ σκεφθῇ!
Καὶ τώρα μόνον ἤρχισε νὰ τὸ σκέπτεται. Ἐως
τὴν στιγμὴν τὸ ἔνστικτον τὴν εἶχεν ὀδηγήσει. Ἀλλὰ
5 τώρα ὁ συλλογισμὸς τῆς διευποῦτο καθαρά.
«Ποῦ ἄλλοῦ θὰ εἶμαι πλέον ἀσφαλῆς, γιὰ τὴν
ώρα, παρὰ ἐδῶ; Οἱ ταχτικοὶ ποτὲ δὲν θὰ
πιστεύουν ὅτι ξαναῆλθα πάλιν πρὸς τὸ ἴδιο
μέρος, ποῦ μὲ εἶχαν εὐρῇ χιθές, καὶ μ' ἐκ-
10 νήγησαν. Ὁ Γιάννης κοιμᾶται στὸ μανδρὶ του.
Στὸ καλύβι θάνε ἡ λεχώνα, κ' ἡ γοργά. Τὴν
νύκτα χιθές, ἀπὸ τὸν σαστισμὸ κ' ἀπὸ τὴ βία
μου, ξέχασα ἐκεῖ τὸ καλαθάκι μου. Δὲν θὰ
εἶνε καλλίτερα νὰ πάω νὰ χτυπήσω τὴν πόρτα,
15 νὰ τοὺς πουλῶσαι πάλι δούλεψι μὲ κανένα ψευ-
τογιατρικόν, νὰ πάρω καὶ τὸ καλαθάκι μου,
καὶ σὰ φέξῃ νὰ πάω νὰ κρυφθῶ κάτω
στὸ Κακόρρεμμα, ἐκεῖ ποῦ λέει ὁ Καμπαναχ-
μάκης;....»

Βεβαίως ἡ γραῖα, ἡ πενθερά τοῦ Λυγίγκου,
καὶ θὰ εἶχεν ἀκούσει εἰς βάρος τῆς ἀπὸ χω-
ροφύλακας ἢ ἀπὸ τρίτους, ἀλλὰ τί μ' αὐτό;
Δὲν θὰ εἶχε τόσην κακίαν οὔτε τόσον θάρ-
ρος, ὥστε νὰ τὴν προδώσῃ. Ἀλλως, αὐτὴ ὡς
25 κυρίαν πρόφασιν διὰ νὰ εἰσέλθῃ θὰ προέτα-
τεν ὅτι ἤλθε νὰ ζητήσῃ τὸ λησμονημένον
καλάθι τῆς.

Ἐκρύωνε πολὺ ἀπὸ τὸν αἶρα τοῦ βουνοῦ,
καὶ εἶχεν ἀνάγκην νὰ στεγασθῇ πουθενά, πρὸς
30 ὥραν. Δὲν ἐδίστασε πλέον. Διέβη τὸν ζυγόν,
τὸν ἐνοῦντα τὰς δύο ῥάχεις, ἐπὶ τῆς μεσημ-
βρινότερας τῶν ὁποίων ἦτο ἡ μάνδρα, ἐπὶ δὲ
τῆς βορειότερας ἡ οἰκία τοῦ Λυγίγκου, κ'
ἔφθασεν εἰς τὸ καλύβι.

Ἐκρούσε τὴν θύραν. Ἡ γραῖα ἐκοιμᾶτο,
ἀλλὰ δὲν ἄργησε νὰ ἐξυπνήσῃ, κ' ἐλθοῦσα
ἤνοιξε τὴν θύραν, χωρὶς, αὐτὴν τὴν φορὰν,
νὰ ἐρωτήσῃ τίς εἶνε, ἴσως διότι ἦτο μισοκοι-
μισμένη κ' ἐνήργει ὡς ἐν ὕπνοβασίᾳ μηχανι-
45 κῶς. Ἡ εἶχε τὴν ἐντύπωσιν ὅτι οὐδεὶς ἄλλος
ἠδύνατο νὰ εἶνε εἰμὴ ὁ γαμβρὸς τῆς. Ἡ
Φραγκογιαννοῦ ἔσπευσε νὰ εἰσέλθῃ.

— Τὸ κοφίνι μ' πλειό, ξέχασα ἐπ' τὴ βία μου,
ἐφές, εἶπε. Τὸ εἶδες; Εἶνε πουθενά; Ποῦ τῶχεις;
50 Ἡ χωρικὴ γραῖα ἐστάθη καὶ τὴν ἐκύτταξε.

Τώρα μόνον ἐφάνη νὰ ἐξυπνήσεν ἐντελῶς, καὶ
ἀναγνωρίσασα αὐτήν.

— Ποῦ βρέθηκες ἐδῶ; εἶπε.

— Μὴν ἐρωτᾷς, εἶπεν ἡ Γιαννοῦ. Εἶχα
55 νυχτώσει 'ς ἐν ἄλλο καλύβι, μὰ δὲν εἶχα ὕπνο.
Σὰ θυμήθηκα τὸ κοφίνι μου, ἦρθα. Πῶς
εἴστε; Τί κάν' ἡ λεχώνα;

— Τί νὰ κάμῃ; Τὰ ἴδια... Μὰ δὲ μοῦ
λές, εἶπε μετὰ τινα δισταγμὸν ἡ γραῖα· γιατί
60 σ' ἐγύρευαν κεῖν' οἱ ταχτικοί;

— Φτόνος τοῦ κόσμου, ἀπήντησε μ' ἐτοι-
μότητα ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ. Ἐνα κορίτσ' εἶχε
πνιγῇ μέσ' τὸ πηγάδι...

— Ἐ;

— Καὶ δὲν ξέρω ποιὸς ἐχτρός εἶπε πῶς
65 ἔφταια ἐγώ... Μὰ ἔτσι νάχουμε καλὴ ψυχὴ.
μπορεῖς νὰ τὸ πιστέψῃς; Τάχα δὲν μπορούσε
νὰ πνιγῇ καὶ μοναχὸ του τὸ κορίτσι; Ἦταν
ἀνάγκη νὰ βάλω χέρι ἐγώ;

— Μαθές!... ἔκαμεν ἡ γραῖα.

Ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ ἐγκατεστάθη, ὅπως καὶ
τὴν προλαβοῦσαν νύκτα, σιμὰ εἰς τὴν γωνίαν
τῆς ἐστίας, ὅπου εὔρε καὶ τὸ καλάθι τῆς.
Ἐξάναψε τὴν φωτιάν, ἔβαλε νερὸ στὸ 'μπρίκι,
καὶ κατεγίνετο νὰ βράσῃ βότανα, τὰ ὁποῖα ἔβγα-
75 λεν ἀπὸ τὸν κόλπον τῆς.

Ἡ λεχώνα ἐκοιμᾶτο, τοῦ μικροῦ θυγατρίου
ἠκούετο ἡ ἀναπνοὴ μέσα εἰς τὴν σκάφην τὴν
χορησιμεύουσαν ὡς λίκνον, ὑπὸ τὸ στέφανον
τοῦ βαρελιοῦ τὸ ἀνέχον ὑψηλὰ ἐν λεπτὸν πα-
80 νίον. Ἐνίοτε ἐκλαυθιμύριζε. «Κοί, κοί, κοί!»
ἐπρόφερεν ἡ γραῖα, ἡ προμήτωρ, ἥτις εἶχε
κλείσει τὸ ἐν ὄμμα, καὶ μὲ τὸ ἄλλο, εἰς τὸ
ἀσθενὲς φῶς τοῦ κανδηλίου καὶ εἰς τὴν δια-
λείπουσαν τῆς ἐστίας ἀναλαμπήν, δὲν ἔπαυσε
85 νὰ κυττάξῃ τὴν Φραγκογιαννοῦ. Τέλος, μετὰ
ὥραν ἡ γραῖα καίτοι ἐφαίνετο ἀπόφασιν ἔχουσα
νὰ μὴ κοιμηθῇ, τῆς ἤλθεν ὁ προδότης ὁ ὕπνος
— ἴσως δι' αὐτὸ τοῦτο, ὅτι ἐκύτταξε λίαν
ἐπιμόνως τὴν ὑποπτον γυναῖκα καὶ ἀπεκοι-
90 μίθη ἐπάνω εἰς τὸ τρίτον λάλημα τοῦ πετεινοῦ.

Τὸ βρέφος ἐκλαυθιμύριζεν ἀκόμη. Ἡ μάμμη
δὲν ἠγρύπνει πλέον διὰ ν' ἀπαγγέλλῃ τὸ μο-
νότονον «Κοί κ' ἰ, κοί!»

— «Ὅλο κοριτσούδια, τὸ ἔρμιο!» Τὸ πα-
95 ράπονον τοῦ Γιάννη τοῦ Λυγίγκου ἐβόμβει
εἰς τὰ ὦτα τῆς Φραγκογιαννοῦς.

Ἡ λεχώνα δὲν εἶχεν ἐξυπνήσει. Ἡ γραῖα Χαδούλα ἐκινήθη ὀλίγον, ἐτανύσθη ἐπὶ τῶν γονάτων της, κ' ἔφθασε τὸ λίκνον. Παρεμέρισε τὸ λευκὸν πανίον ἀπὸ τὴν κεφαλὴν τῆς κούνιας, κ' ἔτεινε τὴν χεῖρα διὰ νὰ θωπεύσῃ τὸ μικρόν, ἐνῶ τοῦτο ἐκλαυθιμήριζεν. Ἐφράζε με τὴν χεῖρά της τὸ μικρὸν στόμα, διὰ νὰ μὴ φωνάζῃ, ἐκύτταζε πρὸς τὸ μέρος τῆς λεχώνας, εἶτα πρὸς τὴν στρωμνὴν ἐφ' ἧς ἔκειτο κουβαριασμένη ἡ γραῖα.

Ἡ φωνὴ τοῦ βρέφους ἐπνίγη. Μίαν χειρὶν ἀκόμη ἐχρειάζετο νὰ κάμῃ ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ. Μὲ τὴν ἄλλην χεῖρα, τοῦ ἔσφιξε δυνατὰ τὸν λαιμόν. . . Εἶτα ἐμάζωξε τὸ λεπτὸν πανίον διὰ νὰ τὸ ῥίψῃ πάλιν ἐπάνω τῆς στεφάνης. Ἡ χεὶρ της προσέκοψεν εἰς τὴν σανίδα, κ' ἔκαμε μικρὸν θόρυβον. Ἡ γραῖα, ἣτις δὲν ἔκοιμάτο βαρέως, ἐξύπνησεν. Ἀνετινάχθη, ἐσκήρτισεν. Εἶδε τὴν Φραγκογιαννοῦ ν' ἀποσύρῃ τὴν χεῖρά της καὶ ν' ἀποχωρῇ, ἀνεγειρομένη ἐπὶ τῶν γονάτων, ὀπίσω εἰς τὴν θέσιν της.

— Τί κάνεις; ἔκραξεν ἔντρομος ἡ γραῖα.

Ἡ λεχώνα ἐπετάχθη, ἀνεπήδησε.

— Τί εἶνε, μάνα;

Ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ ἐσηκώθη, ἐπῆρε τὸ κακάθι της.

— Τίποτα· θέλησα νὰ τὸ κάμω νὰ λουφάξῃ, νὰ μὴν κλαίῃ, ἀπήντησεν.

Ἡ γραῖα μάρμυρ ἐκυψε πρὸς τὴν κούνιαν.

— Πηγαίνω τώρα, ἔφραξε, εἶπεν ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ. . . Δῶσε τῆς λεχώνας τὸ γιατρικὸ ποῦ ἔβρασα νὰ τὸ πιῇ!

Καὶ πάραυτα ἐξηλθεν. Ἐτρεξε μὲ βῆμα δρομαῖον ν' ἀπομακρυνθῇ τάχιστα. Ἐπῆρε τὸν ἐπάνω δρόμον, κατὰ τὸ δάσος, διὰ νὰ μὴ περᾶσῃ ἀπὸ τὴν ἀντικρυνὴν ράχιν ὅπου ἦτον ἡ στάνη.

Ἦτο γλυκεῖα αὐγὴ τοῦ Μαΐου. Ἡ κυανωπὴ καὶ ροδίνη ἀνταύγεια τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἔχριε μὲ ἀπόχρωσιν μελιχρὰν τὰ χόρτα καὶ τοὺς θάμνους. Ἠκούετο ὁ μινυρισμὸς τῶν ἀηδόνων εἰς τὸ δάσος, καὶ τ' ἀναρίθμητα μικρὰ πουλιά ἐτέλουν ἐκθύμως, ἀπλήστως, τὴν συναυλίαν των τὴν ἄφατον.

Ἀφοῦ ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ ἀπεμακρύνθη πολλὰ βήματα, ἤκουσε βραχνὴν κραυγὴν ὀπισθεν της. Ἦτο ἡ γραῖα, ἡ μήτηρ τῆς λεχώνας· ἔξαλλος τραβοῦσα τὰ μαλλιά της, εἶχε τρέξει ἔξω τῆς καλύβης, κ' ἐφώναζε.

— Πιάστε την! . . . Πιάστε την! Μᾶς ἔκαμε φονικό!

Ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ ἔτρεχεν, ἔτρεγε. Ἦλπιζε

νὰ χωρῇ τὸ ταχύτερον εἰς τὸ δάσος, ὅπου, καὶ ἂν τυχὸν ἔτρεχον κατόπιν της, τὰ ἴχνη της τάχιστα θὰ ἔχάνοντο.

Ἀλλὰ παρ' ἐλπίδα, μετ' ὀλίγα λεπτά, εὐρέθη ἀντιμέτωπος τοῦ Γιάννη τοῦ Λυρίγκου, βαδίζοντος πρὸς τὴν οἰκίαν του. Οὗτος εἶχεν ἐξυπνήσει τὴν συνήθη ὥραν, κ' ἐπήγαινε πρὸς τὸ καλύβι, ἵσως διὰ νὰ κράξῃ πρὸς συνεργασίαν τὴν πενθεράν του, ὅπως καὶ τὴν προλαβοῦσαν πρῶταν. Ἀλλ' ὅταν εἶδε τὴν πενθεράν του νὰ φωνάζῃ καὶ νὰ χειρονομῇ τόσον μακράν, ὥστε δὲν ἠδύνατο ν' ἀκούῃ τί αὕτη ἔλεγεν, ὀδηγούμενος μόνον ἀπὸ τὴν διεύθυνσιν τῶν χειρονομιῶν της, εἶδε τὴν Φραγκογιαννοῦ νὰ φεύγῃ πρὸς τὸ μέρος τοῦ δάσους—τότε, ἔτρεξε πρὸς τὸ μέρος ἐκεῖνο, κ' ἐφώναζε μεγάλῃ τῇ φωνῇ πρὸς τὴν Φραγκογιαννοῦ.

— Τί εἶνε; . . . Τί τρέχει;

Τότε ἡ Χαδούλα ἐστάθη, κ' ἐφώναζε μακρόθεν πρὸς τὸν Γιάννην τὸν Λυρίγκον.

— Φεύγω! . . . Πάω νά. . .

Ὁ Γιάννης ὁ Λυρίγκος εἶχε τρέξει ἀκόμη ὀλίγα βήματα, κ' ἦλθε πλησιέστερα πρὸς τὴν Φραγκογιαννοῦ. Τότε καὶ αὕτη, ἀποφασιστικῶς, προσέβη δύο ἢ τρία βήματα πλησιέστερα πρὸς ἐκεῖνον.

Ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ ἐπεκαλέσθη εἰς βοήθειαν ὅλην τὴν ἐτοιμότητά της. Ἡὐτοσχεδίασε.

— Γιάννη! ἡ γυναῖκά σου ἔχει τοὺς πόνοους! Εἶνε ἄσκημα.

— Ἐχει τοὺς πόνοους! . . . ἀνέκραξεν ἐν ἄκρα ἀπορίᾳ ὁ ἄνθρωπος. Τί λές, χριστιανή μου;

— Ἐχει καὶ ἄλλο παιδί στὴν κοιλιά της! Ἰσχυρίσθη μὲ τόλμην ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ.

— Ἄλλο παιδί στὴν κοιλιά της!

— Ναί, αὐτὸ ποῦ σοῦ λέω. Μόνο τρέχα στὸ χωριό, νὰ φωνάξῃς τὴ μαμμή! . . . νὰ πῇς καὶ τοῦ γιατροῦ νάρθῃ!

Ὁ Λυρίγκος ἐστάθη. Πέραν, ἐπὶ τοῦ μικροῦ ὁροπεδίου, πρὸ τῆς οἰκίας, ἡ πενθερά του ἐφώναζεν ἀκόμη βραχνὰς κραυγὰς, τὰς ὁποίας ἔπαιρνε μακρὰν ὁ ἄνεμος, χωρὶς ὁ Γιάννης ν' ἀκούῃ τί ἔλεγεν ἐκεῖνη. Ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ ὠμίλει μὲ θάρρος, κ' ἐφαίνετο ὅτι ἤξευρε τί ἔλεγε.

— Πῶς γίνεται αὐτό, ποτέ, ἀνέκραξεν ὁ Γιάννης. Εἶσαι καλά, χριστιανή μου;

— Αὐτὸ γίνεται ἐπέμενεν ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ. Οὐλές της φορὲς τὰ διπλάρικα δὲν πέφτουν μαζύ, ἀπ' τὴν κοιλιά. Τὸ ἓνα, τὸ πλεῖον ἀδύνατο ἀπ' τὰ δύο, ἀργεῖ καὶ ὥρες καὶ μέρες νὰ πέσῃ.

— Ἀλήθεια! Ἐχω ἀκουστά μου, εἶπεν ὁ Γιάννης.

— Κατὰ πῶς φαίνεται, συνεπέρανε λίαν σοβαρὰ ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ, αὐτὴν τὴν φορὰ τοῦ ἑνα τοῦ παιδὶ θὰ πιάστηκε ὕστερ' ἀπ' τὸ ἄλλο.

— Αὐτὸ εἶνε τάχα; εἶπε μὲ ἥθος οἴκτου ὁ Λυγρίγκος.

— Τρέχα τὸ γληγορότερο! νὰ πᾶς νὰ φέρης-τὸ γιατρό!...

— Ἐσὺ ποῦ πᾶς; ἠρώτησεν ὁ Λυγρίγκος.

— Ἐγὼ πάω στὸν Ἀϊ-Χαράλαμπο... πάω νὰ φωνάξω τὸν παπᾶ-Μακάριο, νὰ ρωθῇ νὰ τῆς κάμῃ μιὰ παρακλήσι, τῆς γυναικάς!

— Καλά! τρέξε!

Καὶ ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ ἔτρεξε.

ΙΖ'.

Κάτω εἰς τὸ Κακόρρεμμα, χαμηλὰ εἰς τὸ βάθος, σιμὰ εἰς τὴν σκοτεινὴν Σπηλιάν, οἱ λίθοι ἐχόρευον δαιμονικὸν χορὸν τὴν νύκτα. Ἀνωρθοῦντο, ὡς ἔμψυχοι, καὶ κατεδίωκον τὴν Φραγκογιαννοῦ, καὶ τὴν ἐλιθοβόλουν, ὡς νὰ ἐσφενδονίζοντο ἀπὸ ἀοράτους τιμωροὺς χειρᾶς.

Εἶχον παρέλθει τρεῖς ἡμέραι ἀπὸ τὴν τελευταίαν φυγὴν τῆς, ἀπὸ τὴν καλύβην τοῦ Λυγρίγκου. Ἡ ἔνοχος γυνὴ εἶχε κρυφθῇ, ἐκεῖ, μὲ τὴν ἐλπίδα ὅτι θὰ διέφενγε πρὸς καιρὸν τοὺς ὄνυχας τῶν διωκτῶν τῆς. Μὲ τὰ ὀλίγα δίπτυρα τὰ ὁποῖα εὗρισκοντο ἀκόμη εἰς τὸ καλάθι τῆς, μὲ τὰς καυκαλήθρας, τὸν ἄνηθον, καὶ τὰ μυρόνια ὅσα συνέλεγε, καὶ μὲ τὸ γλυφὸ νερὸν τῆς Σκοτεινῆς Σπηλιᾶς, εἶχε διατηρηθῇ. Τὸ μέρος ἦτο σχεδὸν ἄβατον. Τὸ Κακόρρεμμα ἐσχηματίζετο ἀπὸ ἑνα βράχον ἀπάτητον πρὸς δυσμᾶς, καὶ ἀπὸ ἑνα κρημνόν, ἡ μίαν σάρραν ὀλισθηρὰν ἐξ ἀνατολῶν. Κάτω εἰς τὸ βάθος ἀνέβλυζε τὸ Γλυφονέρι. Δύο ἄντρα, μὲ τὸ στόμιον πολὺ στενόν, ἔχασκον ἔνθεν καὶ ἔνθεν. Ἐκεῖ ἐκοιμᾶτο τὴν νύκτα τὴν ἡμέραν κατήρχετο εἰς τὴν Σκοτεινὴν Σπηλιάν. Διὰ ν' ἀνέλθῃ καὶ διὰ νὰ κατέλθῃ, οὔτε δρομίσκος οὔτε μονοπάτι ὑπῆρχεν. Ἐπάτει ἐπὶ τῆς σάρρας, εἰς τὴν βᾶσιν τοῦ κρημνοῦ. Τότε ἡ σάρρα ἐταράσσεται, ἐφαίνεται ὡς νὰ ἐθύμωνε. Οἱ λίθοι τοὺς ὁποίους ἐξετόπιζε πατοῦσα, ἦσαν ὡς βᾶσις καὶ θεμέλιον εἰς ὅλον τὸν ἄπειρον σωρὸν τῶν λίθων, τὸν ἀπλούμενον ἐπὶ τοῦ προανοῦς τοῦ κρημνοῦ. Καθὼς ἔφευγον οἱ πρῶτοι λίθοι, ἄλλοι λίθοι ἤρχοντο νὰ λάβωσι τὴν θέσιν των, μετ' αὐτοὺς δὲ ἄλλοι. Καὶ οὕτω ἡ παλίρροια ὅλη τοῦ κρημνοῦ ἤρχετο κατ' ἐπάνω

τῆς, ἐπιπτεν εἰς τὰς κνήμας καὶ τὰ σκέλη τῆς, εἰς τὰς χειρᾶς καὶ τὸ στέρνον τῆς. Ἐνίοτε, λίθοι τινές, ἀπὸ ὕψος κατερχόμενοι, ἐπιπτον μὲ δρμὴν καὶ κακίαν κατὰ τοῦ προσώπου τῆς. Τοὺς τελευταίους τούτους ἐφαίνετο πράγματι ὡς νὰ τοὺς ἐσφενδόνιζεν ἀόρατος χεὶρ κατὰ τῆς κεφαλῆς τῆς.

Ἀφοῦ τέλος, μετὰ τόσον λιθοβόλημα, ἐφθάσεν εἰς τὴν Σκοτεινὴν Σπηλιάν, τὴν πρώτην ἡμέραν, ἐκάθισε κ' ἀγνάντευε τὸ πέλαγος. Ἡ Σπηλιά, ἡ θαλασσοπληκτος, ἔχει διπλὴν εἶσοδον, ἕκ τε τῆς ξηρᾶς καὶ τῆς θαλάσσης. Πρὸς τὴν θάλασσαν, τὸ στόμιόν τῆς χαμηλὸν καὶ στενόν, ὅσον διὰ νὰ διέλθῃ μικρὴ βάρκα ἀλιέως. Ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ, ἀόρατος ἀπὸ τὸ μέρος τῆς ξηρᾶς, ἤκουε τὸν ὑπόκωφον, ἐπίμονον παφλασμὸν τοῦ κύματος εἰς τὸ στόμιον τοῦ ἄντρου. Τὸ κύμα ἀνωρθοῦτο. ἐπήδα, ἐπληττε τὴν ἄνω φλιάν τοῦ στομίου, κατέπαιπτε, πάλιν ἀνεπήδα, ἐξέπεμπε μακροὺς ὠρυγμούς μανίας ἀπὸ τῆς ἀποθαλασσιᾶς τοῦ βορρᾶ, πότε στεναγμοὺς πόνου καὶ πάθους ἀπὸ τὴν φρουσκοθάλασσαν. Κάτω εἰς τὸ βάθος τὸ ἄπατον, μυστήριον καὶ σκότος σαλεῦον. Μία ποτὲ βάρκα, ὡς διηγοῦντο, εἰσπλεύσασα διὰ νὰ συλλέξῃ κυραβίδας καὶ παγούρια, ἐνῶ εἰς τῶν ναυβατῶν εἶχεν ἀναρριχηθῇ εἰς τὸ τρομερὸν ὕψος τοῦ βράχου διὰ νὰ συλλέξῃ κρίταμα, ἐκάθισεν ἐπάνω εἰς μίαν φώκην ζωντανήν φράττουσαν ἀκριβῶς τὸ πλάτος τοῦ στομίου. Τὸ σκοτεινὸν ζῶον ἀνεταράσσεται, ἥσπαιρεν, ἡ μικρὰ σκάφη ἐπάλλετο, ἔτρεμε, καὶ δὲν ἠμποροῦσε νὰ ὑπάγῃ οὔτε ἐμπρὸς οὔτε ὀπίσω. Ὁ ναυβάτης ὁ ἐντὸς τῆς βάρκας ἐκτίπησε τὴν φώκην μ' ἑνα πέλεκυν, τὴν αἱμάτωσε, τὸ κύμα ἐκοκκίνισεν ἐπ' ὀλίγον. Ἡ φώκη ἥσπαιρεν ἐν ἀγωνίᾳ. Ὁ νεαρὸς ἀλιεὺς κατῴρθωσε νὰ σφίξῃ τὸν λαιμὸν μὲ μίαν θηλειάν, καὶ καλέσας τὸν ἄλλον σύντροφόν του εἰς βοήθειαν κατῴρθωσε τῇ βοηθείᾳ αὐτοῦ, μὲ κίνδυνον νὰ βουλιάξῃ ἡ φελλούκα, ν' ἀνασύρῃ ἐπάνω τὴν φώκην.

Ἡ γραῖα Χαδοῦλα ἀγνάντευεν, ἀγνάντευεν εἰς τὸ πέλαγος. Ἄς ἦτον καὶ τώρα, νὰ φανῇ, νὰ πλησιάζῃ μία βάρκα!... Ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ θὰ παρεκάλει τοὺς νέους ἀλιεῖς, τοὺς πατριώτας τῆς, νὰ τὴν ἐπάρουν μαζί, μέσ' τὴν βάρκα... Καὶ ποῦ θὰ ἐπήγαινε;... Ὡ, βέβαια στὰ πέτρα χῶματα, στὰ μέρη τ' ἀντικρυνά, στὴν μεγάλη στεριά... Κ' ἐκεῖ τί θὰ ἔκαμνε; Ὡ εἶχεν ὁ Θεός, θ' ἄρχιζ' ἐκεῖ νέον βίον!

Ἐβλεπεν, ἔβλεπεν, ἀνοιχτὰ εἰς τὸ πέλαγος,

μακρὰν ἔξω, πολλὰ πανιά, λευκὰ ἱστία, σὰν τοῦ γλάρου τὰ ῥτερά. Βρατσέρες, γολέττες, μικρὰ καϊκια, τὰ ἔβλεπε ν' ἀρμενίζουν, νὰ δρῶνουν τὰ κύματα, ὡσὰν βοϊδάκια ζευγαρωτά.
 5 "Ἄλλα ἔπλεον πόρρω πρὸς βορρὰν, ἄλλα κατήρχοντο πρὸς νότον, ἄλλα ἀρμένιζαν πρὸς ἀνατολὰς ἢ πρὸς δυσμὰς, τέμνοντα σταυροειδῶς τὰς ὁλκούς, τὰς βαθείας δρατὰς αὐλακας, τὰς ὁποίας ἄφηναν ὀπισθεν τῶν τὰ πρῶτα. Εἶτα
 10 πολλὰ ρεύματα διαχαράσσοντα τὸ πέλαγος, ἀπὸ τὰ ὁποῖα ἐφαίνετο ἡ θάλασσα ὡσὰν κεντητή, πεποικιλμένη. Ἐβλεπεν, ἑωσότου τὰ μάτια τῆς «ἔκαμαν γυαλιὰ» νὰ βλέπη.

Ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ ἔβγαλεν ἀπὸ τὸ καλάθι
 15 τῆς τὸ παλαιὸν κιτρινωπὸν χράμι, τὸ μάλλινον, τὸ ὁποῖον εἶχε διὰ νὰ τυλίγεται ὅταν ἤθελε νὰ κοιμηθῇ καὶ δὲν εἶχεν ὕπνον, ἐσηκώθη ὀρθή, ἀνεπέτασε τὴν μαλλίνην σινδόνα, κι' ἄρχισεν ἐκθύμως νὰ τὴν σείη. Ἐκαμνε σήματα, ἀπηλπισμένα σήματα πρὸς τοὺς ναυτίλους, νὰ
 20 ἔλθουν νὰ τὴν ἐπάρουν μαζὺ τῶν. Ἐβλεπον. δὲν ἔβλεπον οἱ ναυβάται τὰ σημεῖα τῆς; Ἀπὸ κανὲν πλοῖον δὲν ἀπήντησαν εἰς τὸν πόθον τῆς, εἰς τὰς τόσας προσπαθείας τῆς. Τὰ λευκὰ ἱστία ἔφρευγον μὲ τὸν ἄνεμον εἰς τὸ κύμα, καὶ αὐτὴ ἔμεινε προσηλωμένη εἰς τὸν βράχον τῆς
 25 Σκοτεινῆς Σπηλιᾶς, προγεγραμμένη. ἔρημος, μὴ βλέπουσα διὰ τὴν αὐριον χουσιῆς αὐγῆς τὴν ἀνατολήν...

Τὸ λευκάζον καὶ κιτρινωπὸν ῥάκος τῆς ἔφρευγεν ἀπὸ τὴν χεῖρα· τὸ ἐπῆρεν ὁ ἄνεμος, καὶ τὸ ἔρριψεν ἐπὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς καὶ τῶν ὤμων τῆς γυναικὸς.

— Αὐτὸ θὰ εἶνε τὸ σάβανό μου! ἐψιθύρισε πικρῶς μειδιῶσα ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ.

Τέλος, καθὼς ἐκάθισε κάτω ἐπὶ τοῦ βράχου, βλέπει μίαν βάρκαν, μικρὰν φελλοῦκαν, νὰ ἔρχεται, παραπλέουσα τὴν ἀκτὴν. Εἶχε μικρὸν ἱστίον καὶ δύο κουπιὰ, τὰ ὁποῖα ἔτυπον ραθύμως τὸ κύμα. Ἐπλεεν ἔξ ἀνατολῶν κ' ἐπλησίαζε πρὸς τὸν ἔρημον βράχον, εἰς τὸ αὐλὸν
 40 τῆς. Ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ ἠσιάνθη σκίσημα ἐλπίδος μέσα τῆς. Ἐκρύβη ὀπισθεν τῆς κορυφῆς τοῦ βράχου, διὰ νὰ κατοπτεύσῃ καὶ ἴδῃ ἂν θὰ ἐγνώριζε τοὺς ἐπιβαίνοντας. Ὅταν ἡ φελλούκα ἐπλησίασεν, εἶδεν ὅτι ὁ εἰς ἑκ τῶν τριῶν ἐπιβατῶν τῆς, ὅστις ἔσυρε τὴν «συρτὴν» ἀπὸ τῆς πρύμνης, ἐρύρει στρατιωτικὴν στολὴν. Κάποιος παρεπιδημῶν ἀπόστρατος, ἀγαπῶν τ' ὀψάρευμα, εἶχεν ἐξέλθῃ πρὸς ἄγραν,
 50 ὁμοῦ μὲ δύο ἔξ ἐπαγγέλματος ὠλεῖς. Ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ, μόνον εἶδεν ὅτι ἦτο «ταχτικός»,

καὶ γαλασμένη ἐκρύβη βαθύτερα ὀπισθεν τοῦ βράχου.

Τὴν νύκτα ἀπεκοιμήθη εἰς τὴν κρύπτην
 55 τῆς, μέσα εἰς τὴν ὑγρὰν ἄλμην τῆς Σπηλιᾶς. Βόμβοι ἐθορύβουν εἰς τὰ ὠτά τῆς. Τὸ κύμα ὑπὸ τοὺς πόδας τῆς ἐρρόχθει, μὲ παρατεταμένους ὠρυγμοὺς λύσσης. Βαθειὰ, μέσα εἰς τὰ στέρνα τῆς ἤκουε τὰ κλαυθμηρίσματα τῶν ἀκάκων νηπίων. Ὑπόκωφοι συριγμοὶ τοῦ μακρινοῦ ἀνέμου ἤρχοντο εἰς τὰς ἀκοάς τῆς. Ὁ νεκρώσιμος χορὸς τῶν κορασίδων, μὲ ἠῦξημένον τὸν φρικώδη ὀρμαθόν, ἐχοροπήδα τριγύρω τῆς. «Εἴμαστε παιδιὰ σου! —
 60 Μὰς ἐγέννησες! — Φίλησέ μας! — Δῶσέ μας μαμμὰ! — Πάρε μας στολίδια, στολίδια ὠμορφα! — Χάιδεψέ μας! — Δὲν μὰς ἀγαπᾷς;»

Ἡ γραῖα πενθερὰ τοῦ Λυρίγκου, μανιώδης, συστρέφουσα τὰς χεῖρας, τὴν ἠπεύλει τρομερά,
 70 καὶ ὁ γαμβρὸς τῆς, μὲ ἡθος παραπονεμένον, τὴν ἐπέπληττε... Κάτω εἰς τοὺς πόδας, εἰς τὸ βῆθος τῆς Σπηλιᾶς, ἐρρόχθει τὸ κύμα... Ἐβραζεν, ἔβραζε, καὶ τὸ ἄντρον μετεβάλλετο εἰς στέρναν, καὶ τὸ νερὸν τῆς στέρνας ἐβρυχάτο μ' ἑναρθρον φωνήν — Φόνισσα! — Φόνισσα!

Ἡ δυστυχὴς ἐξύπνησεν ἔντρομος, περιρρεομένη ἀπὸ ἄλμην καὶ ἰδρώτα. Ἡῦχετο πλεόν, καὶ πάραντα τὸ ἀπεφάσισε, νὰ μὴν κοιμηθῇ ἄλλην φορὰν εἰς τὴν ζωὴν τῆς, ἂν ἦτον διὰ
 80 νὰ βλέπῃ τέτοια ὄνειρα. Ὁ θάνατος θὰ εἶνε ὁ καλύτερος τῶν ὕπνων — ἀρκεῖ νὰ μὴν ἔχῃ κακὰ ὄνειρα! Τίς οἶδε! — Μόλις τὸ ἐσκέφθη, καὶ μετ' ὀλίγον ἀπεναρρώθη πάλιν. Τότε τῆς ἐφάνη ὅτι ἔβλεπεν ἐμπρός τῆς τὸν Καμπαναχμαῖκην, τὸν ἄγροικον ἐκεῖνον τοῦ βουνοῦ· ἴστατο ἐνώπιόν τῆς μὲ τὴν στραβολέκαν του τὴν ποιμενικὴν, μὲ τὸ σκαλὸν ἡθὸς του, μὲ τὴν ὄψιν του τὴν τραχεῖαν καὶ μὲ λαρυγγώδη φωνὴν τῆς ἔλεγε· Στὸ Κακόρρεμμα! Στὸ Μονοπάτι, στὴ Βρύσι τοῦ Πουλιού! . Στοῦ Γέροντα τὸ Ἐρημητήριο!·

Καὶ καθὼς ἐγένετο ἄφαντος, ἀκόμη ἐπανελάβε· — «Στὸ Ἐρημητήριο! Στοῦ Γέροντα τὸ Ἐρημητήριο!»

Ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ ἐξύπνησε τὴν ὥραν τοῦ λυκανγοῦς μὲ μικρὰν γαλήνην εἰς τὴν ψυχὴν, ἐνῶ τὸ κυανοῦν καὶ πορφυρεῖον τοῦ στερεώματος καταντικρὺ τῆς συνεχέετο μὲ τὸ μαυρογάλανον τοῦ πόντου, καὶ αὖρα, δρόσος, φλοῖστος, κελάρυσμα ἀπετέλουν ἡδεῖαν συζυγίαν
 100 ἁρμονίας εἰς τὰς αἰσθήσεις τῆς.

Ἀπὸ τῆς προχθὲς δὲν εἶχε παύσει νὰ σκέ-

πτεται τὸ ἐρημητήριον ἐκεῖνο, περὶ οὗ τῆς
 εἶχεν ὁμιλήσει πρὸ τριῶν ἡμερῶν ὁ Καμπα-
 ναχμάκης. Εἶχεν ἀκούσει πολλά νὰ λέγουν
 5 γυναῖκες εὐλαβεῖς περὶ τῶν ἀρετῶν τοῦ Γέρον-
 τος ἐκείνου, τοῦ παπ' Ἀκακίου, ὅστις πρὸ ὀλί-
 γου καιροῦ μόνον εἶχεν ἔλθῃ εἰς τὴν νῆσον,
 καὶ εἶχε κατοικήσει εἰς τὸν Ἅγιον Σώστην,
 παλαιὸν ἀναχωρητήριον μετὰ ἐρήμου ναῖσκου,
 10 τὸ ὁποῖον ἔκειτο ἐπὶ μικροῦ θαλασσοπλήκτου
 βράχου, ὅστις ἀπετέλει σκόπελον ἢ μικρὸν νη-
 σίδιον παρὰ τὴν βορείαν, μικρὸν πρὸς δυσμὰς
 κλίνουσαν, κρημνώδη ἀκτὴν, καὶ μετὰ τὴν ἁμ-
 15 πωτιν τῶν ὑδάτων, τὸ νησίδιον ἐγένετο μικρὰ
 χερσόνησος. Ὁ γέρον παπ' Ἀκάκιος ἦτο, ἔλε-
 γαν, αὐστηρὸς πνευματικός, πλὴν εἶχε τὸ σπῆ-
 νιον χάρισμα τῆς διακρίσεως τῶν λογισμῶν,
 καὶ ἔφθινε μέχρι προορατικότητος. Αἱ γυναῖ-
 20 κες ἐβεβαίουν ὅτι ἦτο σωστὸς κρυφιογνώστης,
 καὶ σοῦ ἔλεγε τί εἶχες μέσα σου. Καὶ πολ-
 λάκις ἐξωμολόγει τὸν μετανουοῦντα πολὺ περισ-
 σότερον ἢ ὅσον αὐτὸς ἠθέλε νὰ ἐξομολογηθῇ.
 Διὰ τὴν Φραγκογιαννοῦ θὰ ἦτο εὐτύχημα,
 ἂν εἶχεν εἰλικρινῇ ἀπόφασιν νὰ ἐξομολογηθῇ,
 25 νὰ εὐρίσκετο εἰς πνευματικὸς ὅστις νὰ τὴν
 ἀπήλλαττεν ἀπὸ τὸν κόπον καὶ ἀπὸ τὸ φοβε-
 ρὸν βάσανον τοῦ δισταγμοῦ, λέγων «Αὐτὸ κι'
 αὐτὸ ἔκαμε!» Ἦρκει νὰ μὴ τὴν ἀπήλπιδεν,
 ἀλλὰ νὰ ἦτο ἱκανὸς νὰ τὴν βοηθήσῃ καὶ νὰ
 30 τὴν σώσῃ, — ἀκόμη καὶ εἰς τὸν πρόσκαιρον
 κόσμον, εἰ δυνατόν! Τάχα δὲν ὑπῆρξεν εἰς
 Ἅγιος ὅστις ἔκρυψε καὶ ἔσωσε μὴ θελήσας
 νὰ τὸν παραδώσῃ εἰς τὴν ἐξουσίαν, τὸν φονέα
 τοῦ ἰδίου ἀδελφοῦ του; Πόσω μᾶλλον ὁ παπ'
 35 Ἀκάκιος δὲν θὰ ἔσωζε καὶ θὰ ἔκρυπτεν αὐ-
 τὴν ἥτις δὲν εἶχε κάμῃ κακὸν ἀτομικῶς εἰς
 τὸν σεβάσμιον ἐρημίτην; Μήπως δὲν ἐπερ-
 νοῦσαν καθημερινῶς πλοῖα, γιὰ τὸ ἢ ἀνοιχτὰ
 ἀπὸ τὸν Ἀἰ - Σώστην, καὶ δὲν θὰ ἠδύνατο
 40 νὰ τὴν φυγαδεύσῃ ἂν ἠθέλε;
 Ἡ Χαδοῦλα εἶχε βαρυνθῇ τὴν μονοτονίαν
 τῆς Σκοτεινῆς Σπηλιᾶς, καὶ εἶχεν ἀρχίσει ν'
 ἀδυνατίζειν πολὺ ἀπὸ τὴν ἀνεπαρκῆ τροφήν.
 Ἐλαβεν ἀπόφασιν, ἅμα φέξῃ καλὰ, νὰ πάρῃ
 45 τὸ καλαθίκι της, καὶ νὰ ἐξέλθῃ ἀπὸ τὸ ἄσυ-
 λόν της, ὅπως διευθυνθῇ πρὸς τὸν Ἅγιον
 Σώστην. Ἐκεῖ θὰ ἐξωμολογεῖτο ὅλα τὰ «πά-
 θια της». Καιρὸς μετανοίας πλέον...

Ἐφθασαν, ἔφθασαν, οἱ χωροφύλακες! Εἴτε
 50 διὰ προδοσίας, εἴτε δι' ἰχνηλασίας, τὴν εἶχαν
 ἀνακαλύψει... Κατώρθωσαν νὰ κατέλθουν εἰς
 τὸ Κακόρρεμμα, χωρὶς νὰ ἐνοχληθοῦν ἀπὸ τὸν

κρημνόν, χωρὶς οἱ λίθοι τῆς σάφρας νὰ ση-
 κωθοῦν καὶ νὰ ριφθοῦν κατεπάνω τους, νὰ
 τοὺς κυνηγήσουν!

Ἦτο τὴν αὐγὴν ἅμα ἔφεξεν, ἐνῶ ἡ Φραγκο- 55
 γιαννοῦ ἠτοιμάζετο νὰ διευθυνθῇ διὰ τοῦ
 συντομωτέρου δρόμου, εἰς τὸν Ἀἰ - Σώστην,
 εἰς τὸ Ἐρημητήριον. Ὁ ἥλιος δὲν εἶχεν ἀνα-
 τεῖλῃ διὰ νὰ φωτίσῃ ἀκόμη τὴν φαλακρὴν
 60 ἀκτὴν, τὸ Κουρούπι, καὶ νὰ στεῖλῃ χρυσᾶς
 ἀκτῖνας εἰς τὴν ἀπότομον κλιτὴν τοῦ Στοιβα-
 τοῦ. Ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ τοὺς εἶδεν, ἐτρομάξεν,
 ἐπῆρε τὸ καλὰτι της, καὶ ἀσθμαίνουσα, ξε-
 γλωσσασμένη, ἔτρεξε τὸν ἀνήφορον, ἐπάνω εἰς
 65 τὸν βράχον τὸν ἄβατον, εἰς τὸ Κλῆμα, πρὸς
 τὸ δυτικὸν μέρος. Ἐπέταξε, μετὰ λάκτισμα τῶν
 ποδῶν πρὸς τὰ ὀπίσω, τὰς φθαρμένας ἐμβιά-
 δας, «τὰ παληοκατσάρια της», καὶ ξυπόλητη
 ἀνερχομένη ἐπάνω εἰς τὸν κρημνόν. Οἱ δύο
 70 «νομᾶτοι» ἔβγαλαν κι' αὐτοὶ τὰ τσαρούχια τους,
 καὶ ἔτρεξαν κατόπιν της, εἰς τὸν βράχον τὸν
 ἀπάτητον, εἰς τὸν χώρον τῆς ἀπελπισίας, ὅπου
 ἐβάδιζεν ἐκεῖνη.

Μίαν μόνην στιγμήν, ἡ δύστηνος ἔστρεψε
 τὴν κεφαλὴν ὀπίσω. Τότε εἶδεν ὅτι οἱ διώκται 75
 ἦσαν μὲν δύο, ἀλλὰ μόνον ὁ εἰς ἐφόρει τὴν
 στρατιωτικὴν στολήν. Ὁ ἄλλος ἔφερεν ἐγγώ-
 ριον ἔνδυμα, μετὰ σελάχι, ἐφωδιασμένον μετὰ
 πιστόλια καὶ χαρμπιά, περὶ τὴν μέσην. Ἐφραί-
 80 νετο νὰ εἶνε εἰς τῶν ἀγροφυλάκων.

Τοῦτο τὴν ἐπτόησε καὶ τὴν ἐφόβισεν. Ἡ
 ἀπουσία τοῦ ἐνὸς χωροφύλακος ἔδιδεν ἀφορ-
 μὴν εἰς ὑποψίας. Μήπως ἀπὸ τὴν ἄλλην πλευ-
 ράν τοῦ κρημνοῦ, πέραν τοῦ βράχου τοῦ ἁξέ-
 85 νου τῆς ἀποροῦγος ἀκτῆς τὴν ἐπερίμενε; ἐνέ-
 δρα τις, ὥστε νὰ τὴν κλείσωσιν οἱ σκληροὶ
 διώκται μετὰ δύο πυρῶν;

Καὶ πάλιν ἡ σύμπτωσις αὐτῇ τὴν ἐπαρη-
 γόρησε καὶ τῆς ἐνέπνευσε μικρὰν ἐλπίδα. Ἐάν
 90 ὁ ἓνας ἀπὸ τοὺς δύο «νομᾶτους» ἦτον πα-
 τριώτης, χωρικός ἄνθρωπος εἰς τὴν ὑπηρεσίαν
 τῆς δημοχίας, τοῦτο ἴσως ἐσήμαινεν ὅτι
 οὗτος θὰ ἐξετέλει μᾶλλον ὥς ἀγαγεῖαν τὸ κυ-
 νήγημα τὸ ὁποῖον τοῦ εἶχαν ἐπιβάλλῃ καὶ
 95 ἴσως μᾶλλον θὰ ἔκοπτε τὴν ὁρμὴν τοῦ ἄλλου,
 τοῦ χωροφύλακος. Δὲν ἦτο δὲ ἀπίθανον ὁ
 ἀγροφύλαξ ἐκεῖνος καὶ νὰ ἠσθάνετο μέσα του
 κρυφὴν συμπάθειαν πρὸς τὴν φεύγουσαν, τὴν
 διωκομένην, τὴν τρέχουσαν ἐπάνω εἰς τὰ κα-
 100 τασάβραχα, μ' αἱματωμένους τοὺς πόδας, δυ-
 στυγὴ γυναῖκα — περὶ τῆς ἐνοχλῆς τῆς ὁποίας
 δὲν ἦτο καὶν βέβαιος.

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ΙΗ'.

Ἵστερον ἀπ' ὀλίγων λεπτῶν τῆς ὥρας κυνηγητόν, ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ ἔφθασεν εἰς τὴν τοποθεσίαν, τὴν ὁποίαν ὁ Καμπαναχμάκης εἶχεν ὀνομάσει «τὸ Μονοπάτι στὸ Κλῆμα».

Ἦτον βράχος εἰσέχων ἀποτόμως πρὸς τὰ ἔσω, σχηματίζων μικρὸν ζύγωμα, κάτωθεν τοῦ ὁποίου ἔχασκεν ἡ ἄβυσσος, ἡ θάλασσα. Ἄνω τοῦ ζυγώματος τούτου ὑπῆρχε πᾶν ἡμισείας παλάμης τὸ πλάτος, ὅλον δὲ τὸ πέραμα ἦτο τριῶν ἢ τεσσάρων βημάτων. Ὅπως τὸ διέλθῃ τις, ἔπρεπε νὰ πιασθῇ ἀπὸ τὸν ἄνω βράχον, βλέπων πρὸς τὴν θάλασσαν, νὰ πατῇ μὲ τὴν πτέρναν, καὶ νὰ βαδίζῃ ἐκ δεξιῶν πρὸς τ' ἀριστερά.

Ἡ ζωὴ του ἐκρέματο εἰς μίαν τρίχα.

Ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ ἔκαμε τὸν στανρόν της καὶ δὲν ἐδίστασε. Οὔτε ὑπῆρχεν ἄλλη αἴρεσις ἢ προσφυγῇ. Δρόμος ἄλλος δὲν ὑπῆρχεν ἐπάνω τοῦ βράχου. Ἡ γυνὴ ἐπῆρε τὸ καλάθι της εἰς τοὺς ὀδόντας, ἐπήδησεν ἀποφασιστικῶς, καὶ διέβη αἰσίως τὸ φοβερόν πέραμα.

Ἐφθασαν κατόπιν ἀσθμαίνοντες οἱ δύο νομάτοι. Ὁ χωροφύλαξ εἶδε τὸ πέραμα κ' ἐστάθη.

— Σοῦ βασιτᾶ, ἡ καρδιά σου; εἶπε μὲ κρυφὴν χαιρεκακίαν ὁ σύντροφός του.

— Δὲν εἶνε ἄλλος δρόμος;

— Δὲν εἶνε.

— Ἐσὺ θὰ τῷχης περάσει πολλές φορές, εἶπεν ὁ στρατιώτης.

— Ἐγὼ, ὅχι! ἡρνήθη ὁ ἀγροφύλαξ.

— Δὲν ἦσουν τσομπάνης;

— Ἐγὼ ἔβοσκα πρόβατα στὸν κάμπο.

Ὁ χωροφύλαξ ἐδίστασεν ἀκόμη.

— Καὶ νὰ μᾶς ὀίξῃ κάτω μιὰ γυναῖκα! εἶπε.

— Δὲν προφτάσαμε νὰ τὴν ἰδοῦμε τὴ στιγμὴ ποῦ περνοῦσε, εἶπεν εἴρων ὁ δραγάτης. Ἄν τὴν ἔβλεπες, θὰ σοῦκανε καρδιά.

— Ἀληθινά;

— Δὲν ξέρεις πόσες φορές δίνουν τὸ παράδειγμα ἡ γυναῖκες! εἶπεν ὁ ἀγροφύλαξ. Σὲ καμπόσα πράγματα, δείχνουν πολὺ κουράγιο.

— Κ' ἐγὼ θὰ περάσω! εἶπεν ὁ χωροφύλαξ.

— Ἐμπρός!

Ὁ χωροφύλαξ ἔβγαλε τὸ ἀμπέχονόν του, καὶ τὸ ἔτεινεν εἰς τὸν σύντροφόν του, μείνας μὲ τὸ ὑποκάμισον. Ἐκαμε τὸ σημεῖον τοῦ Σταυροῦ.

— Ἄν περάσω πέρα, μοῦ τὸ δίνεις, εἶπε.

Ἐδοκίμασε νὰ πατήσῃ ἐπὶ τοῦ στενοῦ, ἐπιάσθη ἀπὸ τὸν βράχον Μετὰ ἓν βῆμα ὥπισθοδρόμησε.

— Μ' ἔπιασε ζαλάδα, εἶπεν.

Ἐν τῷ μεταξὺ ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ, τρέχουσα, εἶχεν ἀνηφορίσει, καὶ ἀνῆρχετο ὑψηλότερα εἰς τὴν ἀκτὴν. Ἀποκαμωμένη, ἡσθμαίνεν, ἐφύσα. Ἐπήγαινε, κ' ἐστέκετο ἐπὶ μίαν ἀνεπαίσθητον στιγμὴν, κ' ἔτεινε τὰ ὦτα ἀκροωμένη. Ἦθελε νὰ βεβαιωθῇ ἂν θὰ διέβαινον τὸ πέραμα οἱ δύο διώκταί της. Ἀλλὰ δὲν ἤκουε τίποτε. Ἀπὸ τὴν βραδύτητα αὐτὴν ἐσυμπέρανεν ὅτι οἱ δύο «νομάτοι» ἐδίσταζον πολὺ νὰ περάσουν τὸ μονοπάτι.

Τέλος ἔφθασεν εἰς τοῦ Πουλιῦ τὴν Βρύσι, ὅπως τὴν εἶχεν ὀνομάσει ὁ Καμπαναχμάκης. Ἦτο μία πηγὴ ἐπάνω εἰς ὑψηλὸν βράχον, ἐπὶ τοῦ ὁποίου ἐσχηματίζετο μικρὸν ὀλισθηρὸν ὁροπέδιον ἀπὸ χῶμα, γεμαῖτον ἀπὸ βρύα καὶ ἄλλα ὑγρά χόρτα, τὰ ὁποῖα ἐφαίνοντο ὥς νὰ ἔπλεον εἰς τὸ νερόν. Ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ ἐπάτει καλὰ διὰ νὰ μὴ γλυστρήσῃ καὶ πέσῃ. Ἀπὸ τὴν βρύσιν ἐκείνην, πράγματι, μόνον τὰ πετεινὰ τ' οὐρανοῦ ἠδύναντο νὰ πίνουν. Ἡ Χαδούλα ἔκυψε κ' ἔπιε...

— Ἀχ! καθὼς πίνω ἀπ' τὴ βουσουλά σας πουλάκια μου, εἶπε, δώστέ μου καὶ τὴ χάρι σας, νὰ πετάξω!...

Κ' ἐγέλασε μοναχῇ της, ἀποροῦσα ποῦ εὔρε τὸν ἀστείμον αὐτόν, εἰς τοιαύτην ὥραν. Ἀλλὰ τὰ πουλιά, ὅταν τὴν εἶδαν, εἶχαν ἀγριεύσει, κ' ἐπέταξαν ἔντρομα...

Ἐκάθησε, δίπλα εἰς τοῦ Πουλιῦ τὴν Βρύσι, διὰ νὰ ξαποστάσῃ καὶ πάρῃ τὸν ἀνασασμόν της. Σχεδὸν εἶχε βεβαιωθῇ πλέον ὅτι οἱ δύο «νομάτοι» δὲν εἶχαν κατορθώσει νὰ διαβῶσι τὸ Μονοπάτι στὸ Κλῆμα.

Ἀλλὰ δὲν ἡσθάνετο ἀσφάλειαν, ἡ δύστυνος καθημένη ἐκεῖ. Ὅθεν, μετ' ὀλίγα λεπτά ἐσηκώθη, ἐπῆρε τὸ καλάθι της, κ' ἔτρεξε τὸν κατήφορον. Τώρα πλέον ἐπήγαινε ἀποφασιστικῶς εἰς τὸν Ἀἰ - Σώστην, εἰς τὸ Ἐρημητήριον. Καιρὸς ἦτο, ἂν ἐγλύτωνε, νὰ ἐξαγορευθῇ τὰ κτίματά της εἰς τὸν γέροντα, τὸν ἀσκητήν.

Εἰς ὀλίγα λεπτά τῆς ὥρας κατῆλθε τὴν ἀκτὴν, κ' ἔφθασεν εἰς τὰ χαλίκια τοῦ αἰγιαλοῦ, εἰς τὴν ἄμμον. Ἀντίκρουσε τὸν ἀλίκτυπον βράχον, ἐπάνω εἰς τὸν ὁποῖον ἐφαίνετο ὁ παλαιὸς ναῖσκος τοῦ Ἀγίου Σώζοντος. Ὁ λαίμωρος τῆς ἄμμου, ὁ ἐνώνων τὸν μικρὸν βράχον μὲ τὴν στερεάν, μόλις ἀνείχεν ἓνα δάκτυλον ὑπεράνω τοῦ κύματος. Τώρα ἤρχιζε νὰ γίνεαι πλημμύρα. Ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ ἐστάθη κ' ἐδίστασε. «Τάχα δὲν θὰ... ξαναγείνῃ ριχὴ σὲ λίγη ὥρα, εἶπε. Γιατί νὰ βιασθῶ τώρα, νὰ γίνω μούσκεμα»;

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Ἄλλὰ τὴν ἰδίαν στιγμήν ἤκουσε θόρυβον ὃχι μικρὸν ἐπὶ τοῦ κρημνοῦ. Δύο ἄνδρες ὁ εἰς στρατιωτικός, ὁ ἄλλος πολίτης, μὲ δύο τουφέκια ἐπ' ὤμιον, κατήρχοντο τρέχοντες τὸν 5 κατήφορον. Ὁ πολίτης δὲν ἦτον ὁ δραγάτης τὸν ὁποῖον εἶχεν ἀφήσει ὀπίσω, μὲ τὸν ἓνα χωροφύλακα, ἦτον ἄλλος, κ' ἐφόρει φράγκικα. Αὕτῃ λοιπὸν ἦτο ἡ ἐνέδρα, τὴν ὁποίαν εἶχεν ὑποπτεύσει εὐλόγως αὕτῃ, μὲ τὴν ὁποίαν ἠθέ- 10 λησαν νὰ τὴν βάλουν εἰς τὰ στενά; Ἰδοὺ ὅτι τώρα τὴν ἔφθαναν.

Ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ ἔτρεξεν, ἔκαμε τὸν σταν- ρόν της, κ' ἐπάτησεν ἐπάνω εἰς τὸ πέραμα τῆς 15 ἄμμου. Ἡ ἄμμος ἦτον ὀλισθηρά. Τὸ κύμα ἀνῆρχετο, ἐφούσκωνε. Ἡ γυνὴ δὲν ὠπισθο- δρόμησε. Δὲν εἶχεν ἄλλην σανίδα σωτηρίας. Οὕτε αὐτήν, τὴν παροῦσαν, μάλιστα δὲν εἶχε.

Τὸ κύμα ἀνέβαινεν, ἀνέβαινε. Ἡ Φραγκο- 20 γιαννοῦ ἐπάτει. Ἡ ἄμμος ἐνέδιδε. Οἱ πόδες της ἐγλυστροῦσαν.

Ὁ βράχος τοῦ ἁγίου Σώζοντος ἀπεῖχε περὶ τὰς δώδεκα ὀργυιάς ἀπὸ τὴν ἀκτὴν. Ὁ λαιμὸς 25 τῆς ἄμμου, τὸ πέραμα, θὰ ἦτο πλέον ἢ πεντή- κοντα βημάτων τὸ μῆκος.

Τὸ κύμα τὴν ἔφθασεν ἕως τὸ γόνυ, εἴτα ὡς τὴν μέσην. Ἡ ἄμμος ἐγλυστροῦσε. Ἐγί-

νετο βάλτος, λάκκος. Τὸ κύμα ἀνῆλθεν ἕως τὸ στέρον της.

Οἱ δύο ἄνδρες, οἵτινες τὴν ἐκυνήγουν, ἔρ- 30 ρησαν μίαν τουφεκιὰν διὰ νὰ τὴν πτοήσουν. Εἴτα ἠκούσθησαν αἱ φωναὶ των, φωναὶ ἀλα- λαγμοῦ καὶ βεβαίας νίκης.

Ἡ Φραγκογιαννοῦ ἀπεῖχεν ἀκόμη ὡς δέκα βήματα ἀπὸ τὸν Ἀῖ-Σώστην.

Δὲν εἶχε πλέον ἔδαφος νὰ πατήσῃ· ἐγονά- 35 τισεν. Εἰς τὸ στόμα της εἰσῆρχετο τὸ ἀλμυ- ρὸν καὶ πικρὸν ὕδωρ.

Τὰ κύματα ἐφούσκωναν ἀγρίως, ὡς νὰ εἴ- χον πάθος. Ἐκάλυψαν τοὺς μυκτῆρας καὶ τὰ 40 ὠτά της. Τὴν στιγμήν ἐκείνην τὸ βλέμμα τῆς Φραγκογιαννοῦς ἀντίκρυσε τὸ Μποστάνι, τὴν ἔρημον βορειοδυτικὴν ἀκτὴν, ὅπου τῆς εἶχον δώσει ὡς προῖκα ἓνα ἀγρόν, ὅταν νεάνιδα τὴν ὑπάνδρευσαν καὶ τὴν ἐκουκούλωσαν, καὶ 45 τὴν ἔκαμαν νύφην οἱ γονεῖς της.

— ὦ! νὰ τὸ προικιό μου! εἶπε.

Αὗται ὑπῆρξαν αἱ τελευταῖαι λέξεις της. Ἡ 50 γραιὰ Χαδοῦλα εὗρε τὸν θάνατον εἰς τὸ πέ- ραμα τοῦ Ἁγίου Σώστη, εἰς τὸν λαιμὸν τὸν ἐνώνοντα τὸν βράχον τοῦ ἐρημητηρίου μὲ τὴν ξηράν, εἰς τὸ ἥμισυ τοῦ δρόμου, μεταξὺ τῆς θείας καὶ τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης δικαιοσύνης.

Α. ΠΑΠΑΔΙΑΜΑΝΤΗΣ

Τ Ε Λ Ο Σ



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