

Ανοιχτό Εικονογραφημένο Βιβλίο
από τη Ζάννα Μελά-Φλώρου



Open Illustrated Book
by Zanna Mela-Florou

Zanna Mela-Florou

Serie:
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A Knight
of the Legion
of Honour
is here



Μελά-
Φλώρου
Ζάννα



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Title: A Knight of the Legion of Honour is here

Subtitle: Open Illustrated Book

Series: © FLYING PAGES

Number in series: 1

Pages: 148

Author: Zanna Mela-Florou

Illustrations: Zanna Mela-Florou

Layout and editing: Zanna Mela-Florou

Digital content and internet presentation: Zanna Mela-Florou, 2013

Translation from Greek: kindly offered by Mr. Bruce Walter

Published by: Zanna Mela-Florou, 2013

Electronic edition:

site: <http://www.openillustratedbook-mela-florou.net>

blog: <http://www.openillustratedbook-mela-florou.blogspot.com>

e-mail: zanna.mf@gmail.com

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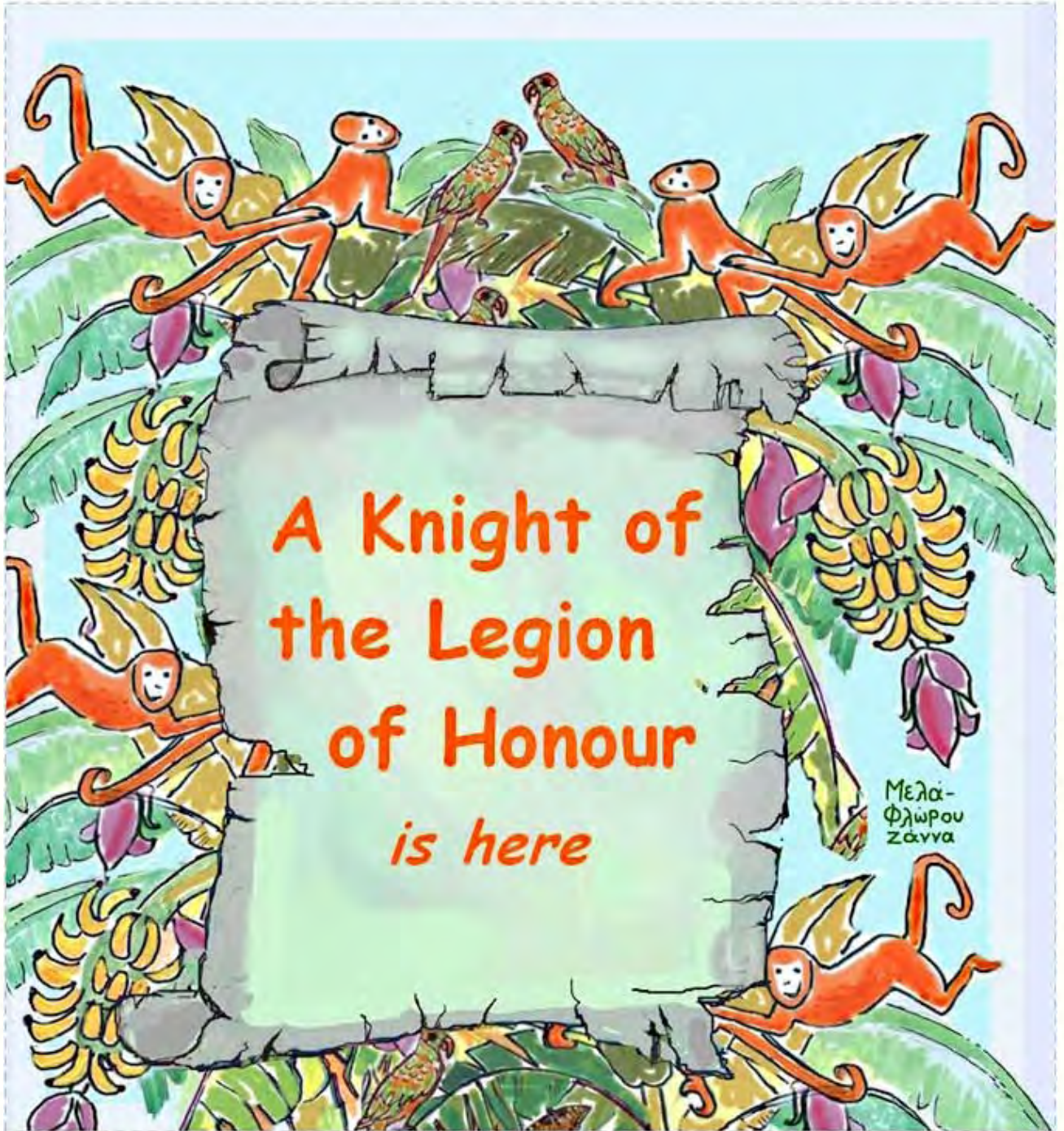


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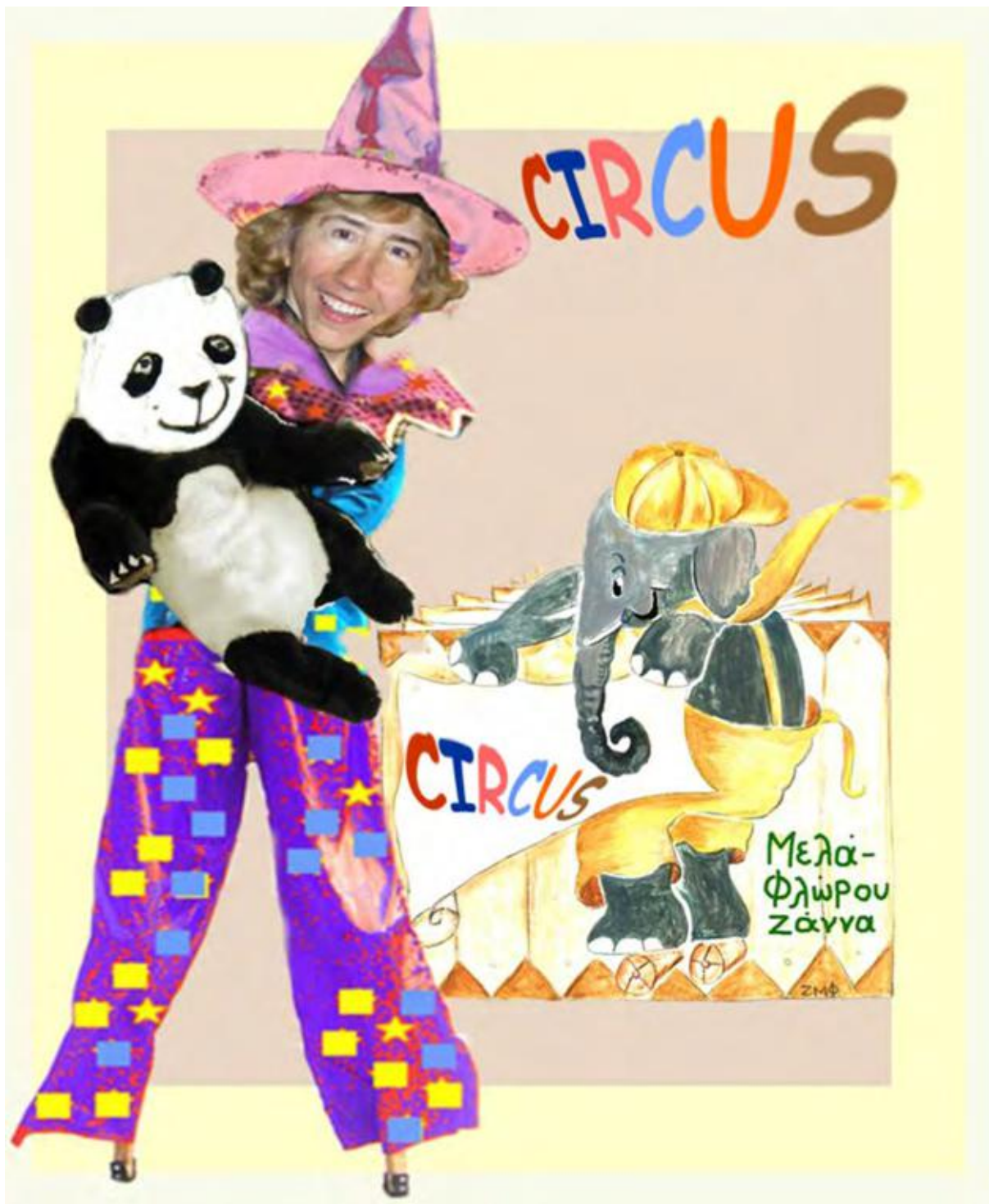
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Μελα-
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Part One

1. An incredible Dream

It is evening, my friends. Can you, too, see the shadow lurking outside that paradise, the Super Spectacle Circus? It is Switchblade, a thief who works by night, and he is laying an ambush. The figure of the would-be robber moves again the moment he sees a wild man - like a monkey - slipping out all alone into the dark, dressed up like a king, his pockets bulging with money. How easy it will be for Switchblade (also known as "Kamikazi", by the way) to raise the water pistol he is holding and say, "Hands up, monkey! Your money or your life!"

However, the sudden appearance of young Lee obliges the hooded figure to try - in vain - to hide behind a big dustbin, trembling with fright.

'Wake up, girl! Look what Lee has brought you!'



'Call me 'Little Wild One' like the boys and girls at school! I've got used to it by now.'

'That's great: a few of them stuck you with a nickname and you

accepted it? Anyway, come and see this gaudy bird with the funny big beak I've brought you. It's a toucan.'

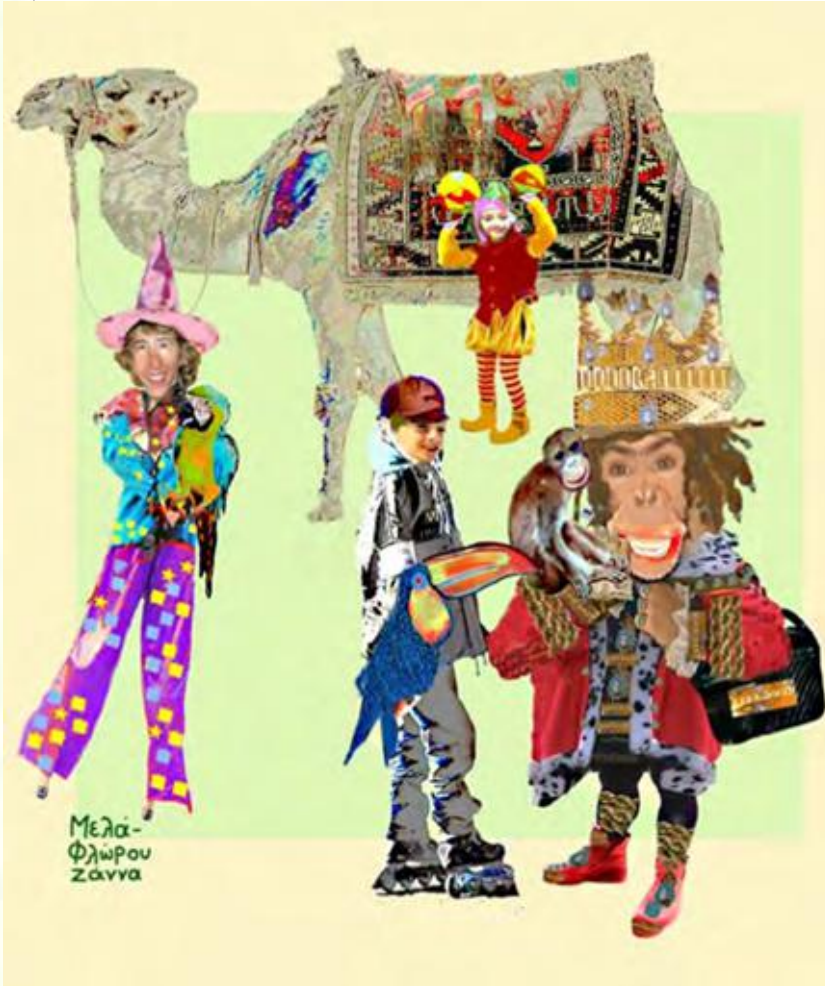
'Wow! Did you steal it, Lee?'

'Don't be silly! Don't be silly! It's my reward. Just now I helped the boss of the big top catch a hooded robber. We hauled him off to the local police

station. They took photos of him there with his head against the wall. They took fingerprints as well, pressing his fingertips one by one, first in black ink and then onto a white sheet of paper. They typed out all the names he goes by onto the list of robbers they keep on their computer. Then they threw him in the 'cooler' with handcuffs on his wrists - like a mouse caught in a trap!

And look at this little monkey sleeping on my shoulder! Its name is Tarsios and it's rare. He gave me that as well.'

'He's lovely, Lee. You'll sell them both, won't you?'



'Grrr! Ooorgh! Aaargh!'

'Do you hear that growling, Little Wild One? Lions, tigers, pandas, leopards, kangaroos - every animal you can imagine! The jungle has arrived here with the famous mega circus. They've pitched their tents right next to us. You should see the cages there - I tell you, there are more than I can count!'

'So that's where you disappeared to, brother!'

'Did you call me "brother"? Don't call me brother again, because I'm not! I know who I am, okay? But why are you so pale? Gosh, let me see! Aah, your temperature's not gone down! Oh, no! You're burning up with fever, Little Wild One. What a pity, and I wanted so much to take you to see the circus people rehearsing for tomorrow's opening performance! I'm sure that if you see the dwarves on stilts and the acrobats somersaulting through the air like birds, it will bring you back to life immediately! They've got good food there, too. If you eat, you'll soon get better.'

'Never mind. Now I just want to sleep a little and see what comes next in my dream.'

'Hang on a minute. You write and paint pictures of your dreams, you say? Ah, that's why you're not getting well, because you never stop working! But it's crazy!'



'Didn't I tell you, Lee? The weird visitors turned up again and started dancing all around me - and I'd only invited one of them to come! It's true, I tell you! Why, just now I was shooin' off a goblin. I was in the middle of telling him to get back underground where he belongs when the ghost of a pirate suddenly appeared. Listen, don't go, hear me out! "What, still here?" I scolded them.

"Disappear, the pair of you!" And then, and then, Lee, I called out to him for the thousandth time...'



'Who to?'

'And he answered me. He ANSWERED me!'



'Who? Ho, ho! And in the dark, eh, Little Wild One? Don't say it was the giant monster with the thousand faces who appeared before you! Did he have hooked talons and a long tail like a snake, perhaps? Aaargh, you can't imagine how I'd like to fight him!'

'You don't believe anything I say, you doubting Thomas!'





'I believe you. Yes, of course I do. So what did he answer you, this wizard with two thousand eyes?'

'I called out to him, "If you can really see things that are hidden, what's my name? Find it for me! Tell me if I am the daughter of some king. Or do I belong to some red Indian tribe? Am I descended from the eskimos of the frozen North or some blood-thirsty pirate? Answer the youngster they call "Little Wild One" - she who came to earth with neither name nor roots a few short years ago. How many years? Tell me!" And hear what he revealed to me in that whispering voice of his. Listen, listen, Lee!'



"Your name is Princess Painting, my pretty little lady. And today you celebrate your birthday. Many happy returns! I welcome you, little earthling, to the world of miracles and good fairies and my one ambition is to become your trusted guardian and true friend for ever."

'At last, Lee! I've finally discovered I'm a princess.'

'Hmm... And you believed him, your royal highness? And what if he's an evil spirit who drinks blood and turns you into stone, this "trusted guardian" of yours?

Eh? And what shape did he take on in the end? Do your paintings come to life while you're asleep, perhaps - or even while you are awake, my little dreamer? One thing's for sure, you're burning up with fever and it's starting to rain harder. Cover yourself with this plastic sheet. Our hut is leaking everywhere and your story will get wet. And by the way, I've decided I shall call you "Princess Nobody"! So, goodnight for now.'



2. Famous Monsters

'Wake up, Princess Painting. Last night you were sleepy and I



didn't tell you I sold your pictures, and I found a good home for them, too. I was thinking your next collection should be much more impressive. What do you say to starting with the fearsome Gorgon, Medusa? Order her to turn all evil creatures to stone, using just her magic eyes, and then destroy them with her sharp teeth, great broad tongue and snaky hair. Good, eh?'

'She's as good as on my drawing pad already!'

'Listen now, Little Wild One: Next draw the fearsome Lernaia Hydra so she really looks alive! Yes! And Hercules cutting off her nine necks and then burning them so she cannot grow two heads where there was one; and then burying the middle head deep beneath the earth because it is immortal. And then show the Lernaia Hydra tearing a wild beast into pieces, but one from our times: pollution, which is growing out of all control. Everyone's talking about it these days. That's how you should paint the Hydra - like an ecological waste disposal unit!'

'Yes, yes, Lee. You're so clever! That's a really good idea.'



'Oh, and we mustn't forget the pictures of Scylla and Charybdis, Princess. Give the wicked Scylla three lovely heads and another three hideous ones with mouths like traps bristling with pointed fangs. Give her twelve arms and legs and paint her lurking in a cave to gulp down - wait for it, this'll make you laugh - polythene bags!

Yes, and other rubbish, too, instead of snatching brave Odysseus' comrades from their ship as it sails past them.

And opposite her, paint the crafty whirlpool Charybdis hiding beneath the calm, unruffled surface of the sea. But instead of opening that great yawning mouth of hers to swallow ships whole then spew them out again in pieces, transform her, too, into a protector of the environment! Show her sucking in dirty water and filtering out the oil slicks and the filthy waste from all the hidden sewers of the world! Ecological pictures are all the rage these days, I tell you. And you can't leave out the Sirens, either. They, too, rained death on sailors who had the ill luck to encounter them. So paint two monsters, lovely women but with the legs and wings of birds, perched on dangerous half-sunken rocks, with all around them skeletons of shipwrecked sailors - but only fierce pirates, mind

you! Show them trying to charm someone with their lovely voices. And who? Why, cunning Odysseus, king of Ithaca, of course! But their evil reputation has reached his ears - and do you know how he avoids the trap they set him? He orders his crew to plug their ears with wax and row with all



their strength until they are safely past that haunted spot. But he prefers to listen to the Sirens' song, writhing in ecstasy but bound securely to the mast of his ship all the while the bewitching sound of their sweet music holds him in its spell. I'll pose as Odysseus for you. Ha, ha! And remember, I want a reward for my brilliant ideas.'

'All right. And I'll do that beast with lots of heads, a lion's legs and a snake for a tail - the famous one called Cerberus, who guards that mythical kingdom hidden deep beneath the earth where Hades, god of the Underworld, is king.





But instead of that, what shall I paint him guarding? Children? But how can I show him as a good and faithful friend of children? What do you say to a centaur as well? I can paint him as you from the waist upwards and as a horse from there on down. Oh, and there's another famous creature I've just thought

of: a giant with just one eye in the middle of his forehead! Yes, I'll paint a fearsome Cyclops, that's for sure. But when I put them down on paper, how will I be able to transform them all into kind creatures who wish us only well? How? How?'

'Let's have a think about it, little one; but anyway, your new collection won't be complete if you leave out the creature who brought victory to the Greeks:





The Wooden Horse! In my mind's eye I can see the shape of the great tall wooden horse standing out among black clouds, its huge belly specially made as a secret hiding place for valiant warriors. First paint a queen, the fair Helen, being carried off by young prince Paris and setting sail for his homeland far across the sea in Troy. And behind them, sketch in her angry husband, king Menelaus of Sparta, with Achilles, Agamemnon and his other allies and lots of Greek ships, trying to take back

his lovely wife but failing. Leave the wooden horse on the enemy shore and show the Greek warships pretending to sail off, with their prows pointing homewards. A well-laid plan, eh? Of course, the wooden horse only narrowly escapes being burned, but in the end the Trojans accept it as a gift to the gods, and that's the only reason why they open the great gates and drag it into their impregnable walled city, celebrating the end of the long war with joyful festivities. Hidden inside the horse's hollow body, the Greeks wait for the right moment to move into action. And yes, there they go! It's as if I see them slipping silently from the horse's belly, led by the crafty Odysseus, and catching all the Trojans in their sleep. In the corner of the picture, paint the Greek fleet sailing back when they see the signal fire and his soldiers capturing Troy. Wow, this will be some painting! It'll bring us in a fortune, don't you reckon?'

'Oooh, I'm sleepy.'

'Little Wild One, guess who bought all your pictures when I was trying to sell them at the traffic lights: that good customer of ours who's taken such a fancy to you. And she's an author, too.'

'And she lives in a castle, high up on a hill.'

'Yes, she's the one I sold them to. You should have seen how she was dressed: just like a witch out of a fairy tale! Her face was hidden beneath a great tall pointed hat with a wide brim, so at first I didn't recognize her. She may have been going to some demonstration in that glass coach of hers, for she had a crowd of circus people with her, carrying placards covered with

slogans about children's rights. Then I heard her calling out, "Lee, Lee!" and she was so enthusiastic about your paintings that before I knew what was happening I found myself holding a great wad of money and this present in my hands. It seems to be a book, but it's globe-shaped, like the Earth! I promised I would take you to her castle as soon as you have finished your next set of paintings.



She won't take no for an answer, little painter! She stressed that she's got something very important to tell you, and from what I understood she wants the two of you to do some serious work together. You should have seen the mysterious smile on her lips. She really is a witch, I tell you!



3. Dream Princess



'Then she revealed to me that she's going to submit all your work to an international children's painting competition! Can you imagine that? So get down to it, and, who knows, you might win the first prize, and be given fantastic presents from all the countries in the world when you go on a grand tour! What about that, eh? Do you think you'll win? You deserve to, little one, for you work with such en-

thusiasm all the time, burying yourself in museums and libraries, and all your efforts and outstanding talent will be rewarded soon. And now, my little dreamer, your new creations await you.'

'The work's as good as done. Look what I've just painted: the biggest ship in the world! It's a huge floating island, a dream city filled with children looking for their loved ones.'



It's waiting for us to set sail all together one day, like a universal family. Isn't it a wonderful painting, Lee?'

'Ah, that's you in the picture, dressed like a real princess. And next to you there's a knight - that's me. Wonderful! Something tells me that the new year's going to hold such success

for us that we'll be rubbing our eyes in disbelief. Come on, now, have a sleep. It will help you to get well, and you know how much it frightens me when I see you looking like this.'



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4. Weird Visitors to the Surface of the Earth

'Lee, dear, they've come again. They've come! Can't you hear them? Look, there he is: Mantrakoukos, the fearsome leader of the goblins - in our hut, and all the others, too!'

'Hush, Little Wild One, I beg you! There's no one else here, just the two of us. Really, I'm telling you the truth.'

'That's because they're hiding under the ground! We're living right on top of all the goblins. Their home is exactly underneath the place we're treading on. And that crack in the earthen floor of our hut is their front door. And there's their wooden staircase that leads to other fairy-tale worlds, far away from Earth's fiery core. The goblins were complaining to me - and do you know why? Because they are only allowed to come up to the world above for twelve days every year, from when the old year's nearly over till the new one's just beginning!'

'Come on, Princess, lie down. You're ill. If only you could see yourself!'

'The goblins say they like it up here on the surface. They love to sneak into our houses down the chimneys, steal tasty titbits and play a few mean little tricks on us. And do you know what I told them in reply? "Lord Mantrakoukos," I said,



"just become good, you and all your goblins, and then you won't have anything to fear. No one will chase you away and you'll be free to come and go on Earth for ever and enjoy the sun. Now off with you, wicked demons, and let me not set eyes on you again".

"You're asking us to become good, little princess?" they hissed. "What does good mean? Nobody ever taught us! All we know is bad. That's why we keep on sawing away at the great thick tree whose trunk holds up the Earth. Ha, Ha! Because we're bad - and that's the way we've been for ages now." But I silenced them by saying, "It's never too late for you goblins to change for the better and be rewarded with your freedom. Now get out of my sight, the lot of you!"

"As your majesty commands", they answered. But Lee, we have new visitors. Listen to who's come now:

'Fearless little one, we have come in answer to your call. Do you know your voice can be heard beyond the void? I am... Shall I introduce myself? I am a ghost, as you can see, the ghost of a sea captain and behind me are my ship-mates, all my crew. And, little lady, I have something else to reveal: we are the ghosts of pirates!'

'Do you hear them, Lee?'

'Ghosts of pirates? Huh! And what are you lot after in our hut?'



'We have come for a good reason: to reveal our greatest secret to you. The goblins were looking out for us, and as soon as they got the chance, they came to give us advice on how to end the awful dreams that haunt us. They persuaded us to confess we have a golden hideaway where all our treasure is piled. So we're going to tell you how to find that most important of our secret lairs, with all the loot we've been amassing down the centuries. Only if we return it, say the goblins, will we pirates be freed from the nightmares that pursue us and our souls find eternal rest. And by the time it's done, they will have become good goblins! Yes, good! They're sick of being malicious, and from now on all they want to



do is kindly acts. That way they'll be free to come up to the surface of the Earth whenever they wish. But in the meantime, we'd like your permission to conceal ourselves inside the dragon you've painted on that sheet of paper, to hide away from everyone who's in pursuit of us. It's becoming more than we can bear!'



'Ghosts, you're only getting into that dragon if you hand me over the map that shows exactly where your golden island is located.'

'Very well, little lady, here it is. In your hands you're now holding the key to fabulous treasures, hidden on an invisible island in the fog-wreathed sea they call the haunted triangle.'

'Little painter, can you hear me? Are you asleep or awake? Bah! Don't you know you're babbling nonsense and wandering around like a sleep-walker? Come on, lie down! Please!'

'All right, captain! All the pirate ghosts may now pass into my painted dragon.'

'We thank you, princess of the unjustly treated, princess of the goblins and now princess of all pirates. Only be careful not to let any pirate-ghost touch you, for then you might lose your powers and happy dreams and be transformed into a wooden puppet with no will of your own.'

'Lee, did you see where some of them have gone to hide? Inside the sphere the witch asked you to give me!'

'Princess, I'm off to find you some medicine. Please come and lie down. And take her book to hold in your arms.'





5. The Magic Planet with Six and a Half Billion Inhabitants

When she pressed it, the round sphere of the earth revealed to Little Wild One countless pages, with pictures so vivid they seemed to be alive. She paused at one of them, where she was welcomed by a strange little winged creature like an elf, who addressed her as "sixth billionth inhabitant of the planet".

'Little Sixth Billionth, I know you've lost your family and are trying to find out where you come from. But until you find your loved ones, would you like to be my child? Stay with me in my palace and you'll live in the lap of luxury and be treated like royalty. You will be served by courtiers eager to meet your every wish,

jesters will keep you constantly amused and distinguished professors will undertake your education. You will have chambers without number and wealth beyond all counting! Welcome to your new country, Sixth Billionth, my daughter.'

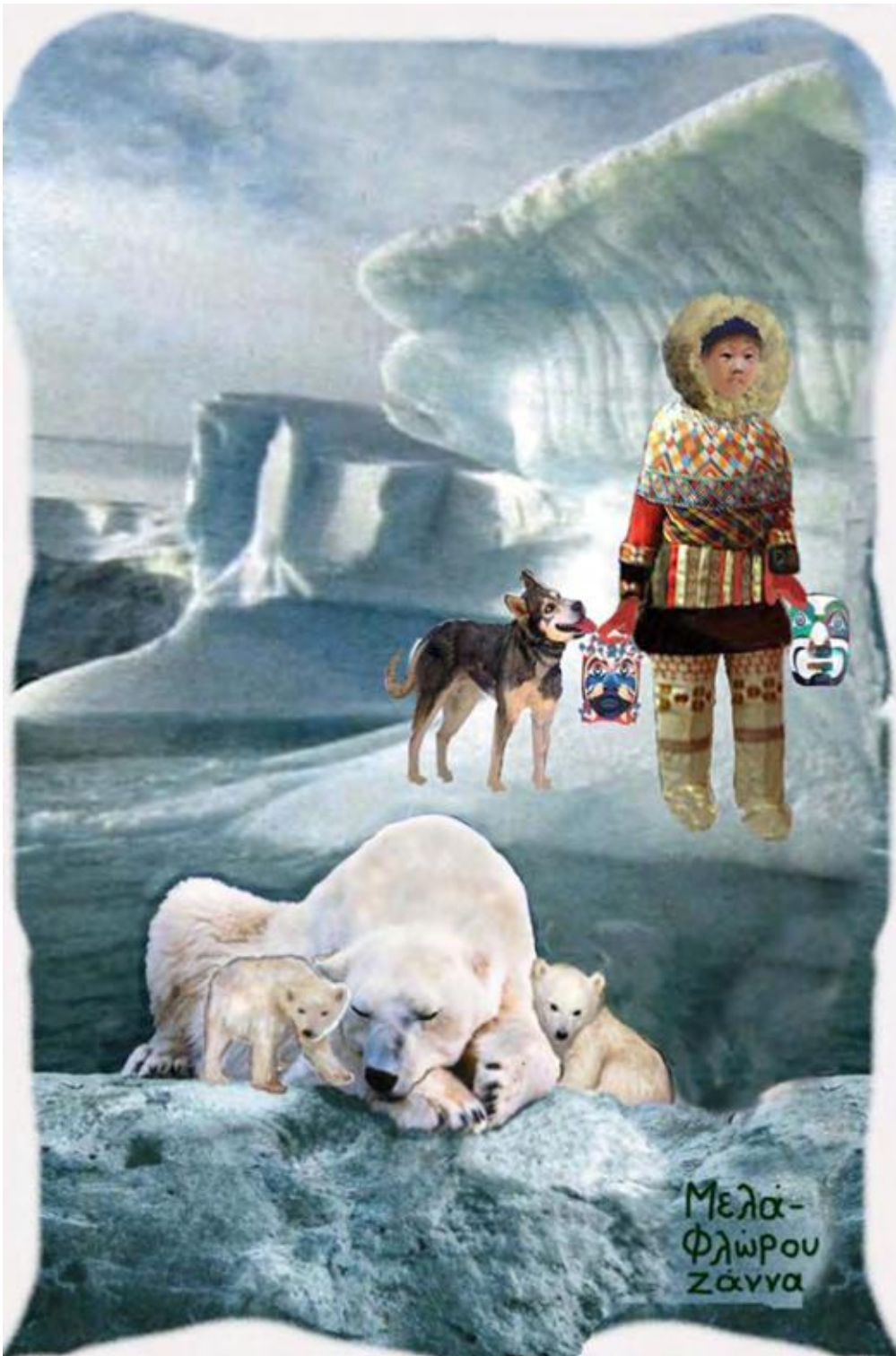


'King of the Elves, I thank you for your proposal and am honoured by it, but the red cloud that shrouds your palace is burning my throat and I can't stay here a moment longer!'

'So you're leaving, too. Alas, the monster has chased all my subjects off! When it first appeared out of the cloud of black smoke belching from the chimneys of one of my industrial cities, it was a very charming dragon and all of us had fun with it. But since then it has grown more savage by the day and it's spreading over my whole kingdom.'



6. In the Snowy Palaces of the Polar Bears



Μελα
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Bidding farewell to the elf, Princess Painting turned another flying page and all at once she felt the chill of the icy North grip her whole body as a flurry of thick snowflakes welcomed her to the pure white palaces of the polar bears. A sleigh appeared before her, harnessed to a dozen huskies resting on the snow, and a young man greeted her who introduced himself as "Lord of the Ice".

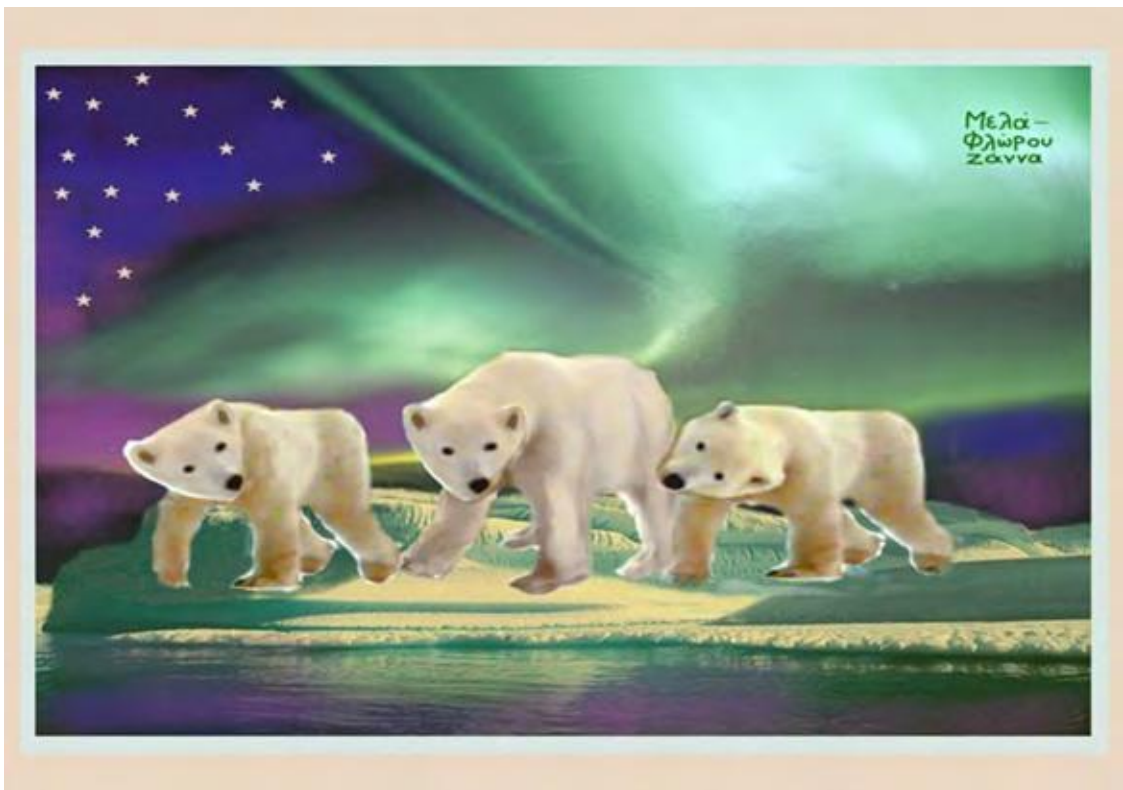
'Welcome to the people of the far North, little traveller!
What a coincidence! You have brought us the gift we value most:
the sacred sun and endless day which have been missing from our
parts for so long now.

Come into one of the Eskimo houses I am making for the children of our race to play in. I build them with blocks of frozen snow that I cut out with my knife. But in spite of their being made of ice, you'll discover that they're warm inside!

The girl crawled into one of these Inuit igloos through the short tunnel in its side that served as a door. Strangely, everything in the round, domed room in which she found herself seemed quite familiar: the glowing lamp, the fishing nets, the leather-covered kayak, the statuettes carved from ivory, the stores of food and thick, warm clothes. She even thought she knew the dog that lay stretched out on the frozen floor, just like a snow-white furry rug.



When the little girl came out again, her arms around the dog, which was licking her enthusiastically, the lord of the ice cried out in joyful recognition: 'You must be the princess of our far northern tribe, and heir to our icy throne! Your lineage is written in your pale cheeks and your jet-black hair; and in your little slanting eyes I can see not only all our fearless forebears Inuit but your father, too, the foreign captain who was once driven off course while hunting a whale and found himself in our remote, mysterious region. And then, to keep the stranger by our side, the sun became weak and pale and was lost below the horizon. The cold took on its task of freezing the surface of the sea. When your future father and his crew saw that their ship was in danger of being crushed in the ice, they had no choice but to follow our queen's boat. She guided them past dangerous half-sunken icebergs which gleamed in the weak glow of the Northern Lights to our safest harbour, where they moored their vessel.

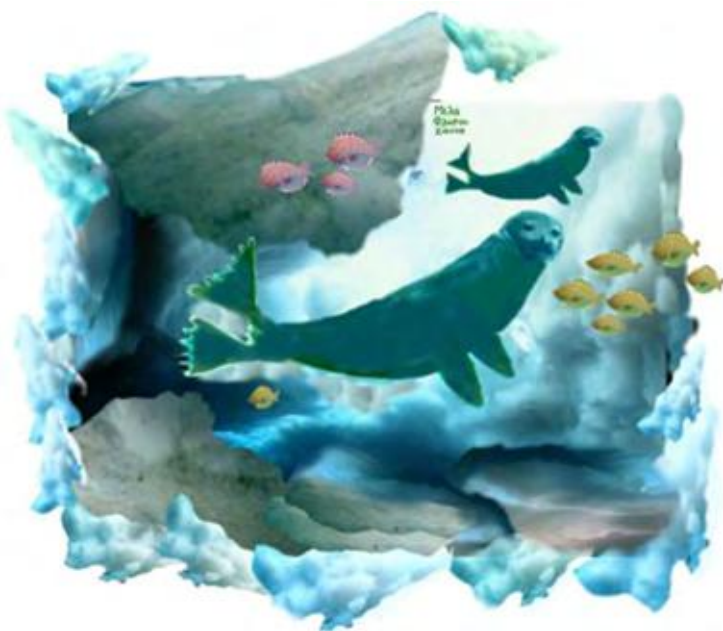


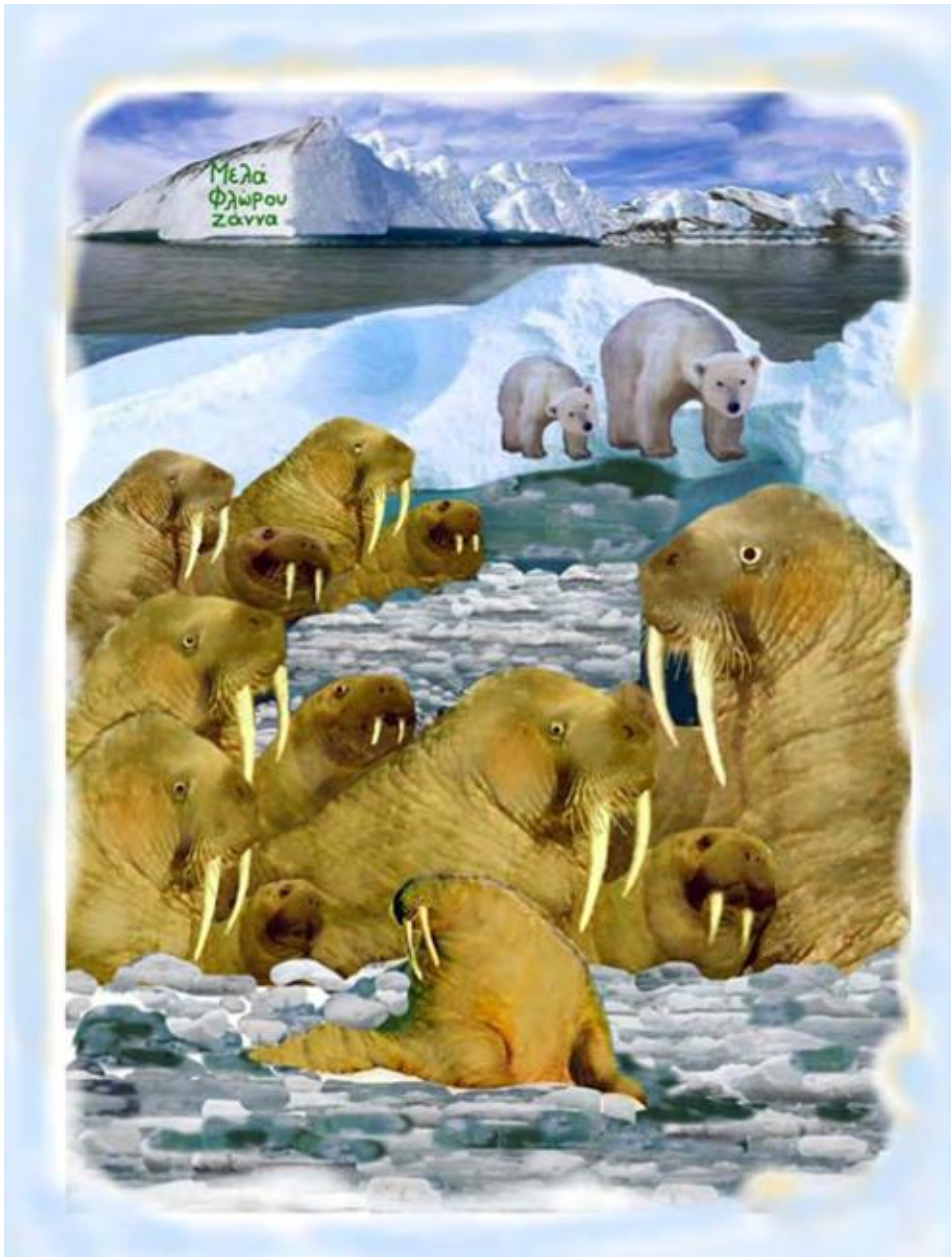
After this, your father got to know our charming queen and she made such an impression on him that he asked for her hand in marriage. Marry they did, and soon they were expecting their first child - you, my little princess. All our tribe rejoiced when you were born. But not long afterwards you left with both your parents. And now you are grown up and back with us. Do you see that seal,



sticking its muzzle in the air to breathe through one of the holes in the ice it has cut with its sharp teeth? She's the daughter of your favourite seal, the one you played with when you were a little girl. Now she has gone back to hide in her sea cave, a peaceful refuge formed by a hollow in the ice where she can catch fish undisturbed. And that many-headed

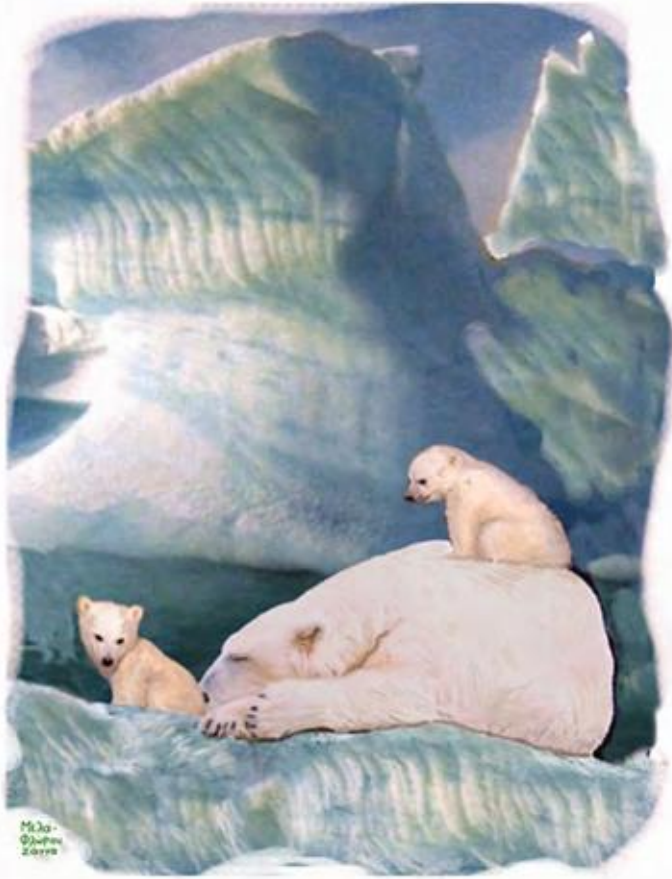
monster with long tusks that is watching you, half-hidden in the water? It's a group of walruses, huddling close together to make them strong against all enemies they may encounter. Stay with us, my princess and you'll be entranced by all the wonders you will see.





And you can get to know your homeland with all the benefits of modern civilization: do you want motor sleighs? televisions? mobile phones? Why, our tribe is even connected to the internet! Look, look! There's my neighbour Snow White the bear.'

'Yes, I can just make out her pure white fur against the ice. She's lying in the sun and yawning.'

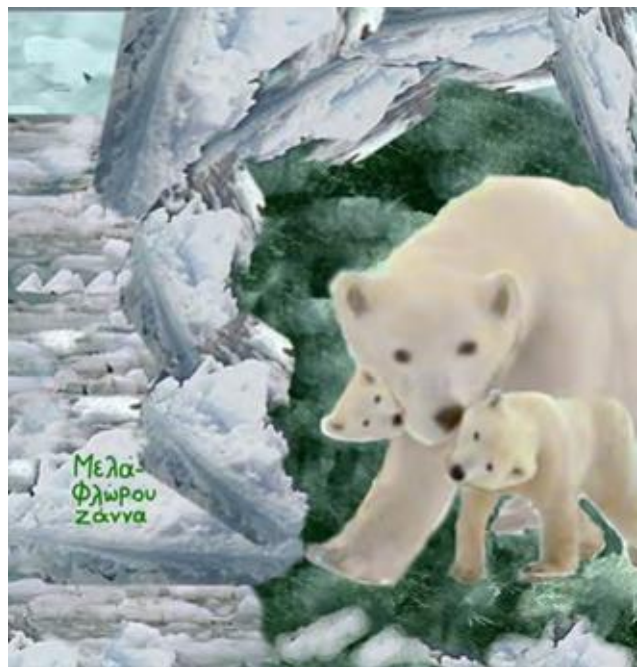


'Little one, the warm rays of the sun have woken her from hibernation, but she won't move far from where she is, because she has a hidden treasure back at home. Guess what it is.'

'Treasure?'

'Yes! Although she doesn't get cold in the thick snow, she withdrew into her den to spend the winter months; alone yet not alone, for she had her

twin cubs hidden in her belly. She gave birth to them while she was sleeping and now she is a proud mother who has her little ones for company. She licks them, keeps them clean and warm and feeds them with her rich, abundant milk, even though she herself eats nothing. See how thin she is with nothing but the fat stored in her body to sustain her. She'll be hungry now, for sure, but she won't risk going off alone. There they are! She's taking the cubs on their first walk together. A little further on she'll fish, then



feed them once more in her warm embrace. And if she wants a den, she'll dig deep into the snow. Another wonder of nature: how each species multiplies itself by giving birth. But in the sky a cloud is laughing secretly, extending its borders like a king who, meeting no resistance, grows every day more powerful.'

'Look, my lord! Look high up in the sky.'

'I know, I know. It's the pollution dragon, my princess. It spouts fire from its nostrils and melts the snowy dens of all our animals with its hot breath - and that includes Snow White! Only if all the tribes unite will they be able to defeat it and save the younger generation from its destructive fury. You can be sure, Your Majesty, that we shall not let it spread without a fight.'



7. In the Snowy Palaces of the Penguins



Before Six Billionth could bid farewell to the Lord of the Ice, a great puff of the dragon's breath made all the countless pages of the round book she was holding flutter so wildly that she might have been anywhere on the magic planet - even standing right beside the black and white penguins of the frozen South Pole, who were celebrating the coming of the polar day and the hatching of their new brood of chicks by making slides across the ice and playing endless games in the sea.

The first chick chirped as it struggled from the broken shell of its egg, but immediately its father covered it with the furry feathers round its feet, stroked the youngster with its beak and murmured, 'Welcome, my precious one. Your mother



laid an egg one endless night long ago, when polar cold, thick snow and cruel winter reigned. She gave it to me to incubate in the warm hollow between my feet and my belly, knowing I would walk with care upon the slippery ice and not be separated from you even for a moment.

Sure she could trust me, she immediately set off across the bitterly cold sea on a long fishing trip with all the other female penguins. We future fathers huddled all together to protect ourselves against the dark and freezing cold down



here where it is winter, while at the North Pole summer reigns and in some places it can get so hot that people faint. My first thought every time I woke was to make sure that my egg was nice and warm, and I would look up and admire the flickering southern lights in our dark sky. Then, aaah! One day the sun appeared at last! Everything went well and so you were hatched, my sweetiepie, along with the thousands of other chicks in our colony! The scene was indescribable. All around us were broken eggshells, newborn chicks chirping and their fathers' warm embrace waiting there to welcome them: the miracle of nature in all its glory. If you're hungry, then up comes your first meal, stored away in

daddy's stomach for his little baby. And I can still succeed in feeding you, even if I haven't eaten for days. Nature has foreseen everything! Ah, there she is, there she is! It's your mummy, back with all the other mother penguins.'



'Mummy, mummy! We're over here!'

'Ah, there you are! I'm so happy to have found you! How I've missed you, darling. And you, my tiny chick, welcome! Come on, little one, make yourself snug between my legs so I can feed you - and quickly, too, before the ice can lay its frozen fingers on you.'

Little Wild One was so fascinated watching the penguin families being reunited that she had completely forgotten who and where she was.

7a. A Hidden City



How could she guess that right beneath the flippers of the sea elephant basking in the sun along with his mates and babies there lies a hidden city, carved out from the ice by scientists to protect themselves against the polar cold? They have given it the name of two famous explorers of Antarctica: Amundsen and Scott. But then the girl notices the transmitters fixed to some of the penguins. Someone is obviously following all their movements! And those stones piled on a sledge, how strange they are with their fossilized impressions of leaves and little branches.





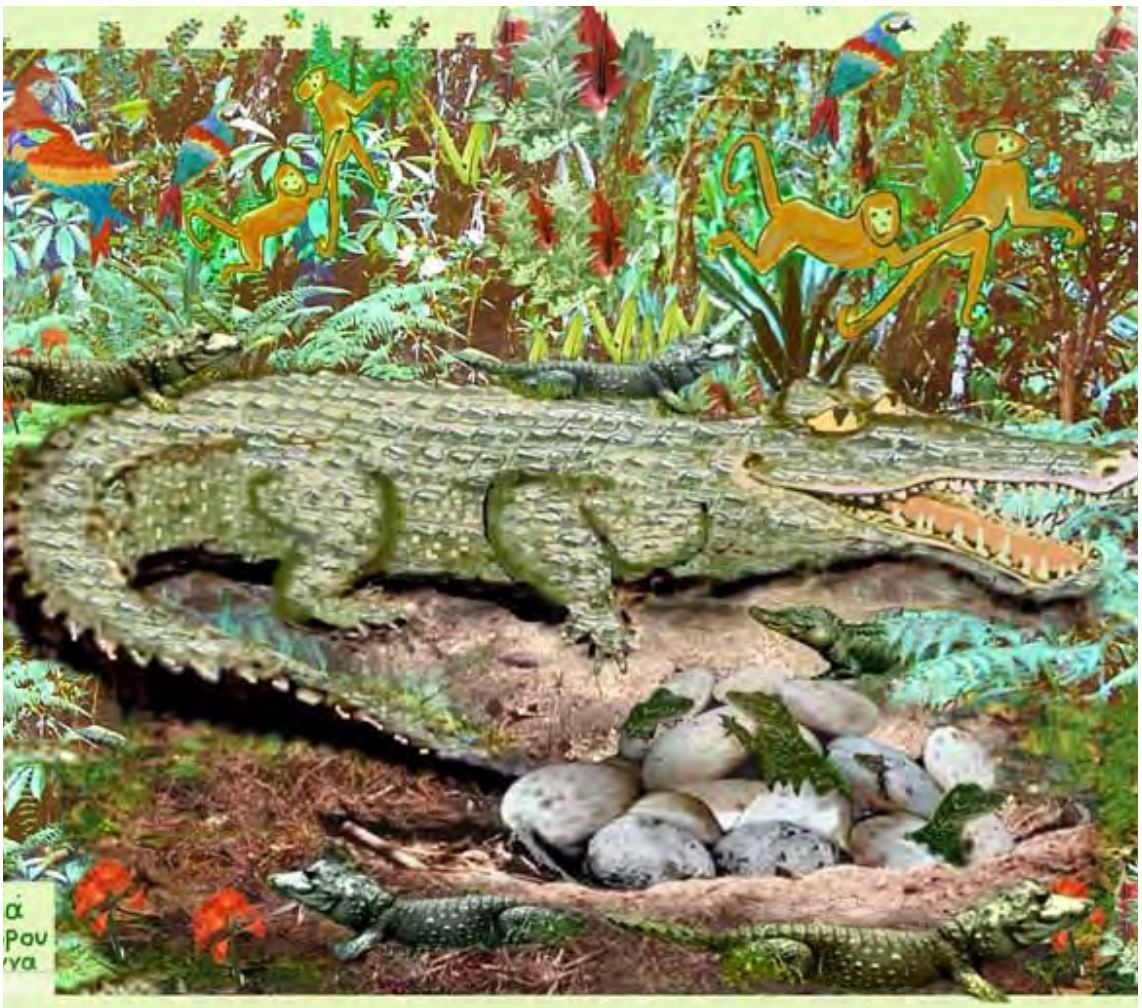
It is clear from these finds which scientists have uncovered, though buried deep within the ice, that in the very distant past there was a forest here.



8. In Bright Green Jungle Palaces

Turning a page in this strange book where pictures came to life, Little Wild One found herself flying over thundering cataracts and tropical forests which grew denser by the moment, while in their branches birds twittered as they wove their nests.

'Princess,' came a whisper from the jungle, 'be warned that soon, when you dive into a lake to cool yourself, you will put your arms around a "tree-trunk", but one that has two great jaws bristling with pointed teeth - a crocodile! But do not be afraid, because the fearsome reptile will be under the spell of her maternal instinct and only use that awful gaping mouth as a cradle to carry her newborn children for their first swim in the waters that will be their home. But the time has not yet come for them to hatch out of their shells. See how patiently their mother keeps watch as she



waits for her good friend the sun to work his miracle by warming up the sand in which they lie.

And now she hears her precious little ones calling out to her and she replies. The lively babies split the skins of their leathery eggs and wriggle from their hidden nest.



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φλώρου
ζάννα



Μελά-
φλώρου
ζάννα



8a. [A Primitive Family](#)

'... After that, you'll discover a hidden pathway through the bushes that leads to a beautiful, cool cave. The light is dim, but on its walls you will make out painted animals. Walk very carefully, Princess, in case you damage the wonderful stone forest of stalactites and stalagmites, all of them creations of water dripping slowly, drop by drop. In that cave live a primitive family from a vanished race.'

A cry was heard from deep within the cave and a light flickered and flared up. It was the fire the primitive being had lit by striking two flints together against dry leaves and twigs. Sniffing the air, it realised at once it had an unseen visitor; and holding out hands filled with shellfish, showed that it wanted them to eat together. Half woman and half ape, the creature stroked the little girl's hair and cried, 'It's our princess! Welcome! When you were little, I cradled you in my arms and fed you at my breast along with my own babies. Ah, if only your mother were here, there would be no words to express her joy.



But the queen of the jungle has gone to save our mother elephant's tusks from the poachers who mean to turn them into necklaces and carved statuettes for tourists. And she's got to save her baby elephant as well.



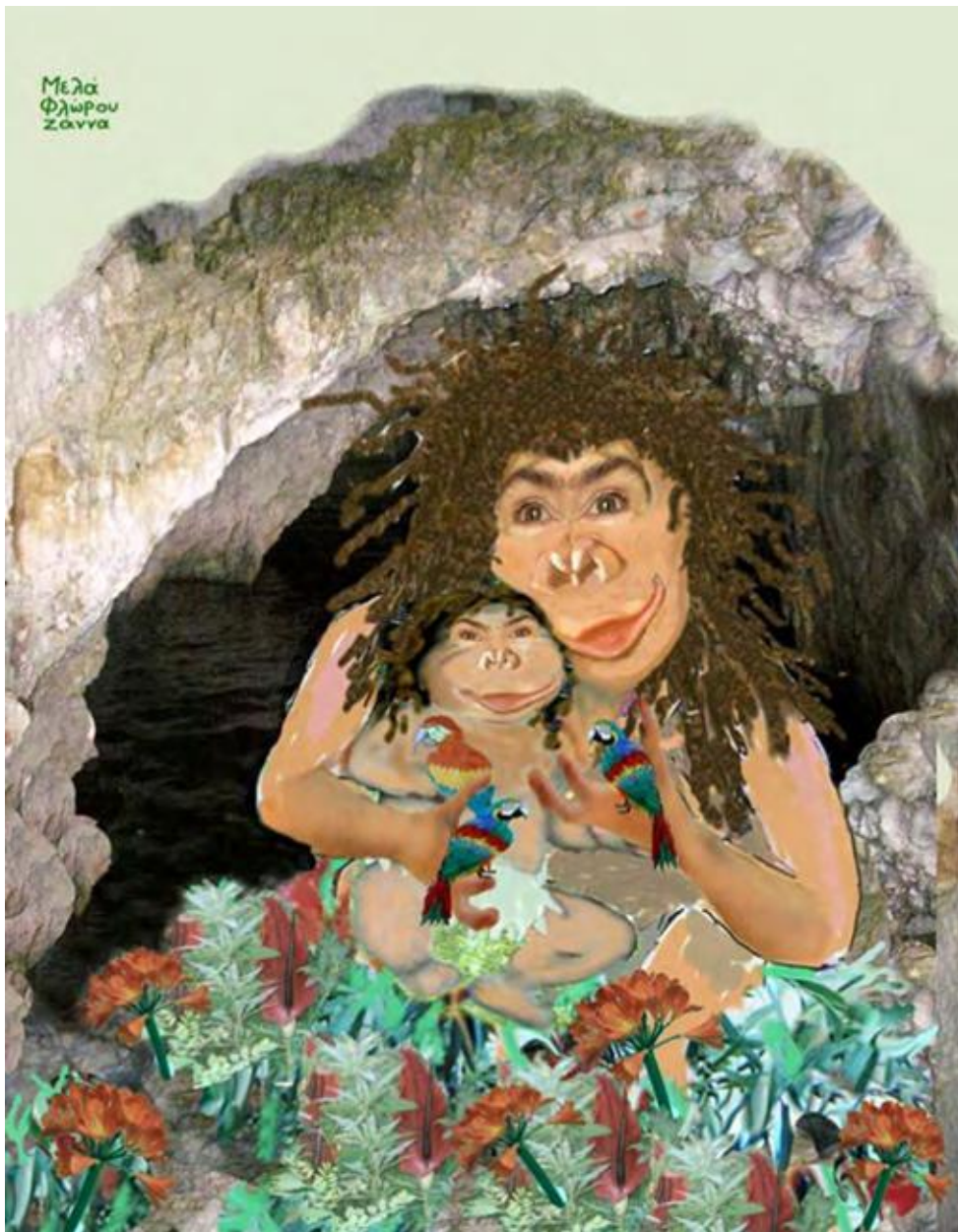
He's been kidnapped by a circus and the tamers there are making him learn acrobatic tricks that are much too hard for him. And after that she'll go to rescue a crocodile and his wife who have been trapped by foreign hunters who want to take their skins back to their far-off land to make handbags and expensive shoes. My princess, I was once a prisoner, too, in a big circus called the "Super Spectacle", along with my first child. People came in crowds to see the "talking ape-woman" in the flesh - to see me, that is - because my kind were thought to have become extinct long ages past. The old gentleman who ran the circus grew very fond of my baby and took him into his house. I hope my darling is well and happy.

But as I was saying, a representative of every race upon the planet must have paraded past me back in those days. They stared



at me and I stared back at them. But the more the flash bulbs kept going off around me, the more I worried that my child and I would never get our freedom back, so I pretended I was just an ape with no intelligence. The tricks I played on those visitors! I stuck my tongue out at them, I snatched their hats, unwound the turbans from their heads and pulled away the robes that

swathed the eastern ladies head to toe, to uncover whoever was hidden away inside. Of course, they all left furious at having paid so much just to see a naughty monkey! At last, one night, your mother managed to set me free, helped by her husband, a famous explorer. I've been grateful to them ever since, so even if you're not our long-lost little princess, stay and make us happy with your presence and you'll find a warm welcome with our family here in the Garden of Eden.'



9. The Mask of Chief Fortunate

Little Wild One said goodbye to her primitive wet-nurse, promising she would be back again to see her. Turning the pages of her magic planet-book, she soared over jagged mountain ranges and great rivers and found herself in the heart of a region that had never been explored. But how could she imagine that many eyes were watching her, hidden behind the dense foliage of the forest? Before long she came to the first huts of a village. Passing through the wooden statues that stood guard, she was welcomed by the local



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witch-doctor, dressed in his ceremonial garb, at the door of the great house built of logs and grass where the kindly spirits dwelt. Around him stood warriors armed with bows and arrows, all decked out in war paint.



'Welcome, daughter of Chief Fortunate. According to our custom, our tribe's throne now belongs to you. Into your hands we

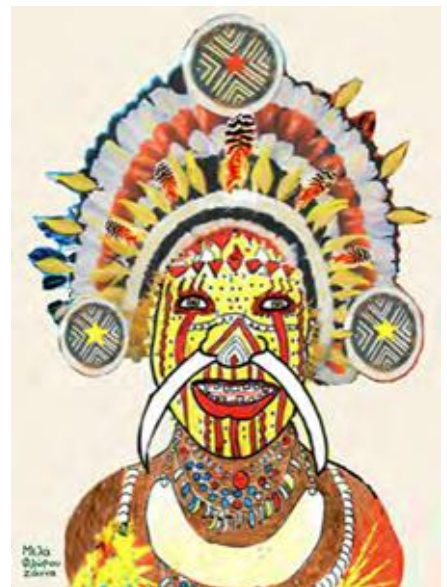


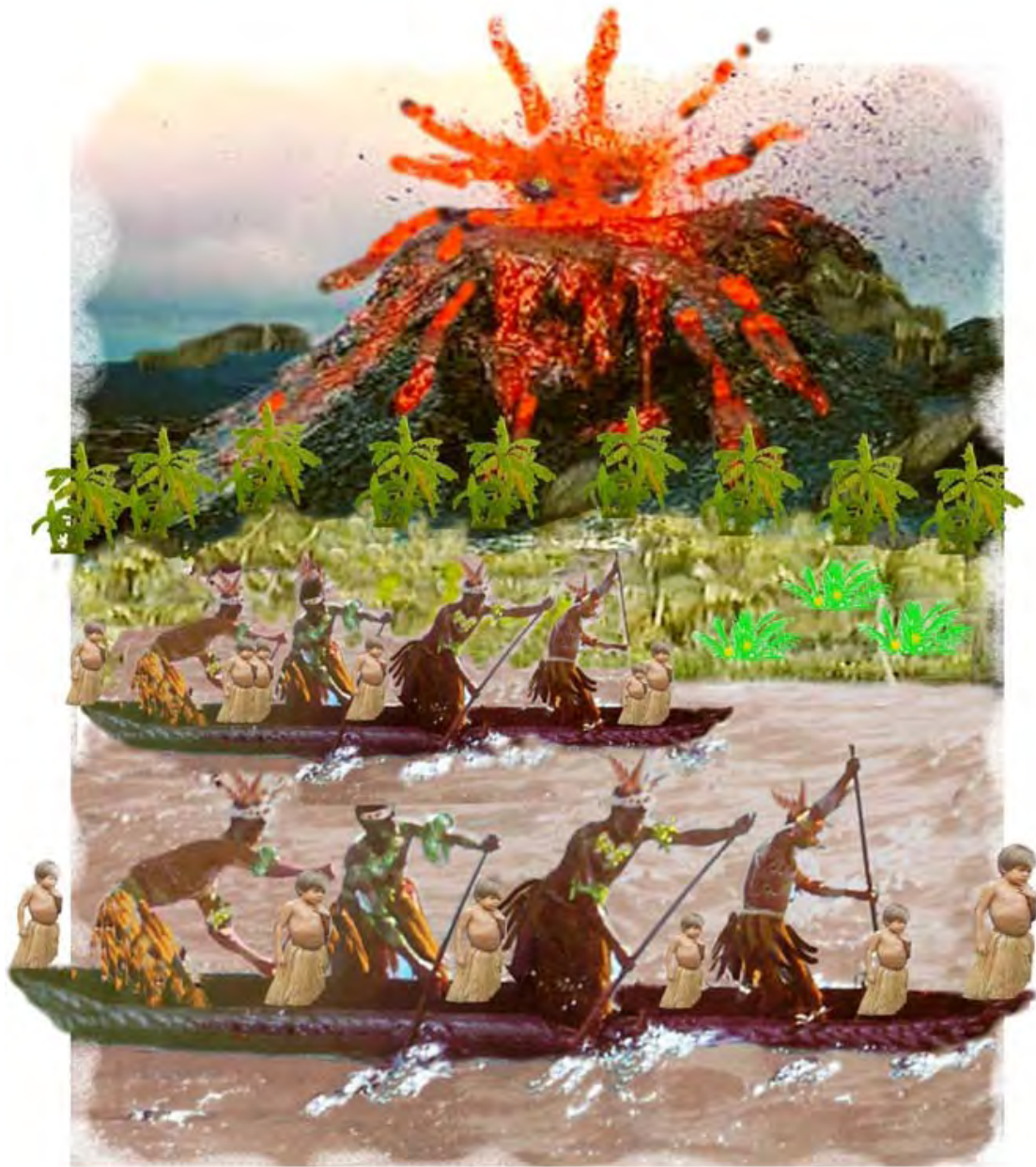
pass the royal mask worn by your father, our great chief. Since the day of your disappearance in the forest of the birds of paradise, your father has been searching for you, leaving his tribe defenceless against the volcano-monster that spews fire and lava on our village. There it goes again, my princess; the monster has awakened! What must your tribe do now?'

'Why, get away as fast as we can, witch doctor! Into the canoes, all of you, into the canoes!'

'Why,

get away as



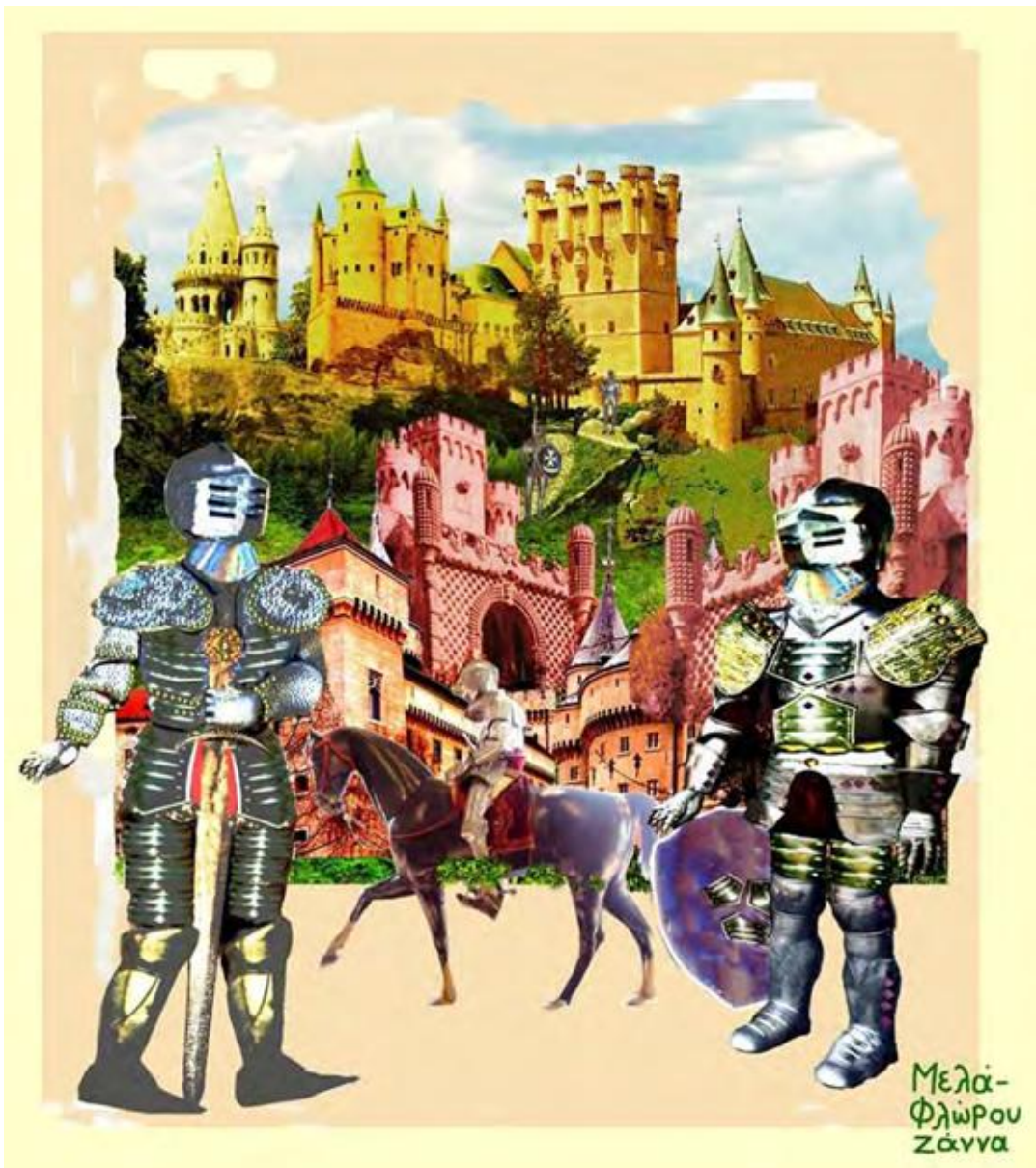


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And putting her finger on another flying page, Princess Painting, too, escaped from the anger of the fearsome volcano that was belching smoke.

10. Dream Castles

... **N**ow she found herself being drawn across a mysterious infinity by some powerful attraction, and travelling at lightning speed through tunnels in the clouds, she arrived at a strange city of dream castles, their magnificent towers gleaming in the sun. Nowhere before had she seen anything like this.





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Φλώρου
Ζάννα

Creatures from a fairy tale surrounded her - animals with the power of speech who greeted her with joy, singing, 'Welcome to our country, little Princess Painting!'

She walked past all the noble palaces until she came to a castle at the edge of this mythical place.



There she was received by a robot with, 'Greetings, our Princess. What does your Majesty desire?'

'Why, my lost identity card, robot! For years now I've been searching for it.'

'Certainly, your Highness. Here you are.'



10a. The Lost Identity Card

'**A**t last! At last I will find out who I am, robot! And who will I turn out to be? One of noble blood, perhaps, some famous princess who has disappeared, with parents who live in a palace? Or are my family as poor as poor can be and living in a gipsy tent? Is the name I am going to inherit one I can be proud of, or are my parents criminals locked up in jail? Ah, do they even love me? Have they been searching for me all these years I have been lost and wandering the world? How I have longed for this moment, yet now it has come I hesitate to learn the truth that will change all my future life.'



10b. The Little American Indian Girl

All the wind needed was a single puff to snatch the paper from her hands. He looked at it and burst out laughing. Then he grew more serious and spoke kindly to the girl:

'Let us suppose, little one, that this identity card says you are an American Indian, and your name is ' Fleet-footed Hind'. A charming wigwam filled with ornaments and paintings awaits you in an Indian village to become your home; and you will be of one blood with the redskins. You too will wear a robe with beads

and fringes; you will be raised according to their customs and when you have grown up you will become a brave warrior, skilled hunter and wise leader. Do you accept, Little Wild One?'



Μελα-
Φλωρου
Zanna



Μελα-
Φλωρου
Zanna



10c. [The Little Greek Girl](#)

...**O**r again, let us suppose your identity card describes you as a Greek girl, Athena by name. Perhaps you are descended from some ancient Greek philosopher and were born in a small two-storey house beneath the rock of the Acropolis of Athens. You grew up in a quaint little street named after the mythical god of shepherds, goat-footed Pan, and you were woken every morning

by the sweet notes of his pipes.

What do you say, Little Wild One or Princess Painting or Sixth Billionth or Fleet-footed Hind or Athena? Do you accept? Eh?'

'Wind, stop making fun of me! Tell me, did I really live in Pan Street when I was young? Please tell me!'

'But of course I will tell you, little painter. When you were small you played hide and seek up on the Acropolis with other children, and you used to hide behind the statues of the famous row of maidens called the Caryatids who support the roof of the temple of Athena, the Erectheion. Every day, from the window of your room, you could look out on that other famous temple, the great Parthenon. That makes you happy, doesn't it?'



'Won't you tell me which of all these I am, at last? An Eskimo, a Red Indian, a Chinese girl, a Greek girl? Which? Which!'

10d. The Little Amazon

In my dreams there comes to me a strange land ruled by fearless women who are galloping their horses all around me. Could I, after all, be descended from the lost race of the Amazons? I love to fight for a good cause, to defend the rights of others and overcome all obstacles. I like to set goals and achieve



them relying only on my own resources. Who am I? I must find out!

Thunder and lightning, wind and another downpour woke Little Wild One but she sank back into her torpor and, clutching the witch's strange round book, she found herself in a future filled with prizes and a pile of marvelous presents in her arms.





11. The Travelling Island

There it is! The travelling island! Looming up towards her comes the ship that she has painted, with its row on row of port-holes, even more immense than Noah's Ark! It is crowded with children from all the races of the world. And on board her floating city Little Wild One can also make out lots of grown-ups who have volunteered to care for them. There's the Lord of the Ice and the queen of the animals, the ape-woman, the king of the goblins and others, too, such as Japanese Samurai warriors. And there's the lady author who lives in a hilltop castle, dressed as a witch, distributing tall, pointed hats to the children and painting masks of witches, water-nymphs and goblins with them. They are all crowding round her, now touching her hat and now sitting on her magic broomstick to see if they can fly.



12. The Pirates' Golden Hideaway

'**S**ir Lee, we can just make out an island shrouded in thick fog - but now it's disappeared again.'

'Yes, children, we're getting close to the haunted triangle and strange things are starting to happen. Don't you see? Our compass has gone crazy. Its magnetized needle should always be drawn towards the north, but look at it now! And there's the reef again! Sometimes it disappears beneath the sea and doesn't exist, according to all the maps, and at other times it reappears. Children, I'm sure this is the place - the sea raiders' golden hideaway where they keep their treasures hidden. Just imagine: centuries of booty seized by murderous pirates who robbed and looted everywhere they sailed, those terrible black skull and cross-bone flags fluttering at their masts, spreading panic both on land and sea, a portent of catastrophe to come.'



'Look, Princess Painting, the ghost of a pirate is showing us what course to steer! And there's another! See how many ghosts are flying all around us! Shades wearing bloodstained clothes and waving cutlasses are looming out of the thick mist to welcome us, with smiles upon their savage faces. They cannot wait to shed the unbearable burden of their crimes, so their souls may find the rest that they have longed for.'



waving cutlasses are looming out of the thick mist to welcome us, with smiles upon their savage faces. They cannot wait to shed the unbearable burden of their crimes, so their souls may find the rest that they have longed for.'

The grown-ups land the ship's boats on the reef, now risen to the surface, mooring in strange dark caves carved out by the waves.

And what do they find there,



buried in sealed chests,
among the looted silver, gold and diamonds?
They even find children's laughter
hidden away in bags,
along with their stolen tears of joy.



While the heavily-laden boats are returning to the ship, the children bake pies and hide gold sovereigns in them to share out to the descendants of the pirates' victims, the inhabitants of all the places on earth that have ever been robbed and looted. The ghosts are beginning to find peace now, floating at rest among the seagulls that follow the huge ship-island as it sails away and the haunted triangle finds peace. The reef sinks slowly beneath the sea and octopuses and fish soon find their way into its caves and make their homes there.

'Happy travels, children! We wish you all the best - and come back to visit us!' the ghosts cry out, breaking into a mad dance on the waves and jumping up as high as the heavy, leaden clouds in their enthusiasm.



12a. The Children's Party

As the ship sails off on a voyage round the world, balloons, helicopters and magic carpets fly through the sky towards it.

Guests are coming. They are holding magic wands and scattering flying pages filled with fairy tales.

They are authors and illustrators - real magicians!



Princess Painting, Sir Lee and the Robot run to welcome them.



Though many of the guests have not arrived yet, they still communicate with all the children as if they were already here, there and everywhere, while their leading characters pour out of their books and run to join the children, who run and run as if they had grown wings, completely absorbed in their games, their goodies and their music.



Part Two



13. The King of the Big Top

'**W**ake up, Little Wild One, I've brought you your medicine.'

'Lee, Lee! I've been dreaming I'm the winner of the children's painting competition. Do you hear? I'll be going on a world tour and setting up S.O.S. villages for orphans. They're going to make me a Goodwill Ambassador and a Knight of the Legion of Honour,

because I'm going to dedicate my life to orphaned youngsters the world over.'



'Aaah, that's fantastic news! Well done, my Princess. With your determination, your talents and your studies, you'll be able to make your wildest dreams come true. Come now, swallow this. Yes, all of it! Then your fever will go down and you'll get well. All of it! Soon you'll be as right as rain. There's a good girl.'

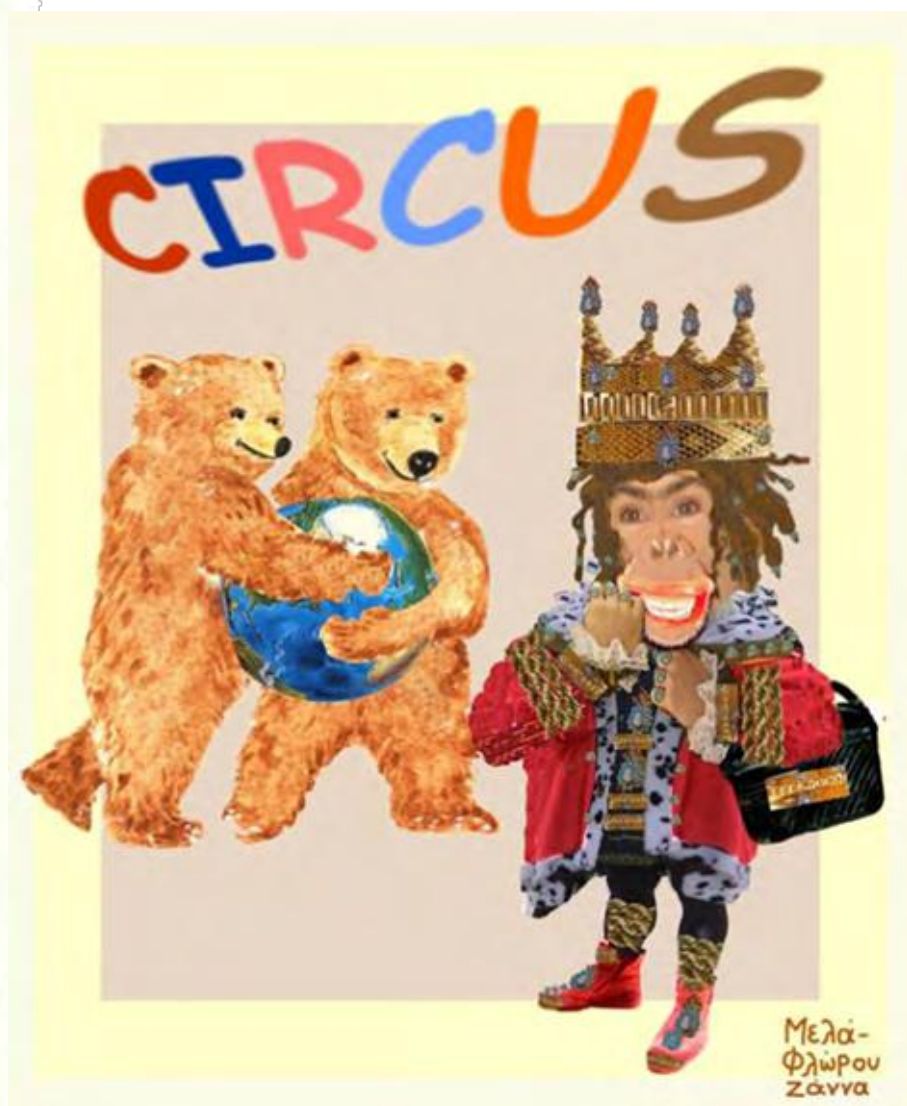
Now guess who I'm just off to see, my little fortune teller. Come on, tell me!

'Tonight you're meeting the king of the big top, Flinty King, the one you helped to arrest the fearsome hooded robber who was threatening him with a pistol.'

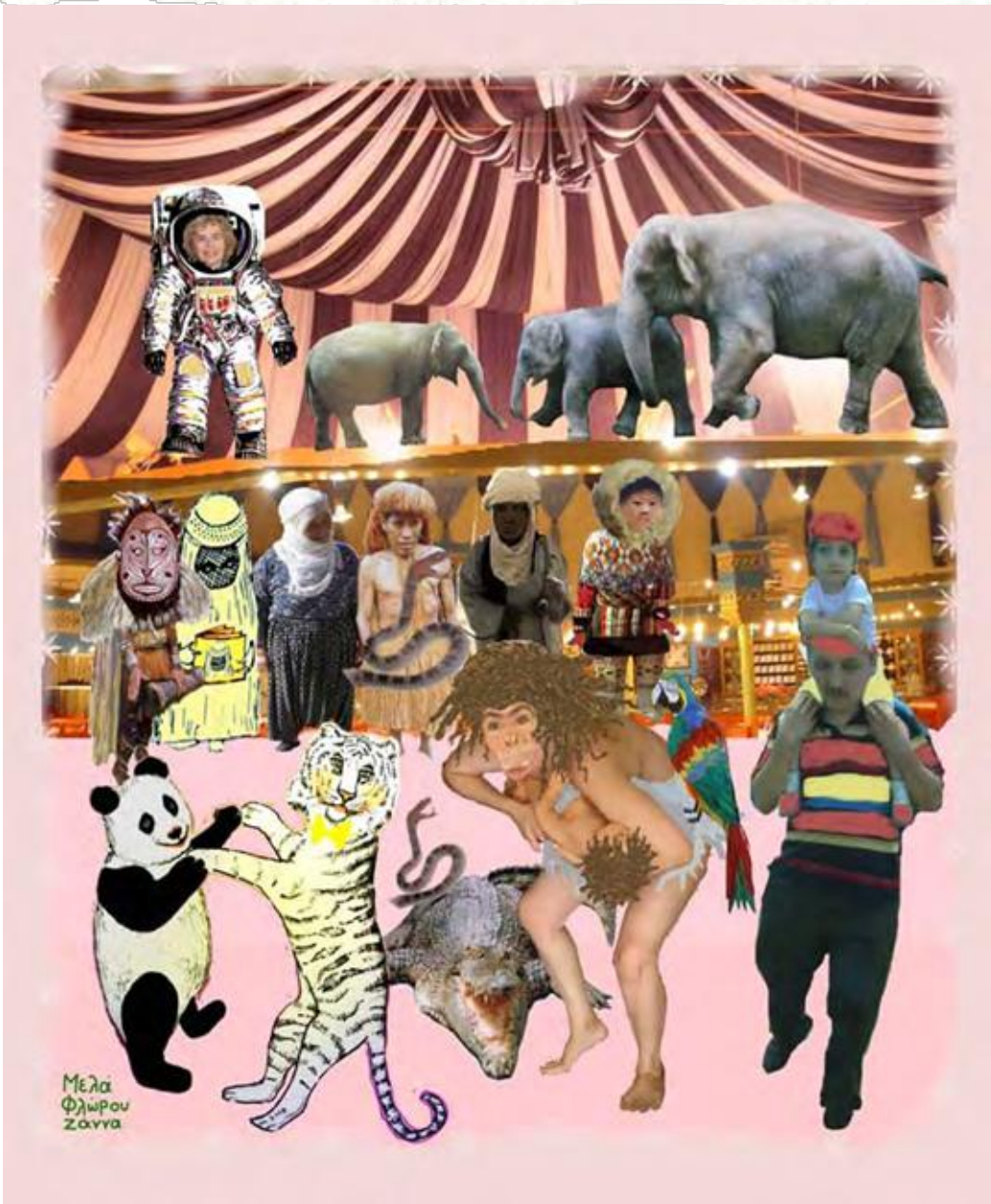
'That's right, little one. It's him I'm going to see.'

'Do you know, this Mr King is the clever little apeman whom

hunters once trapped in the jungle, where he was living with his mother. Both of them were carried off to a circus along with other rare animals from all over the world. The circus's old owner thought the little one was very cute and took him into his home. But when his mother saw the cameras flashing round her



cage she immediately stopped behaving like a human. She began to walk on all fours and imitate the howls of wild apes.



A sample of every race upon the planet paraded past her, hoping to gawp at the strange spectacle of the ape-woman who had human powers of understanding. But she made fools of them all! She pulled off the bird of paradise feathers that decorated their hats, she unwound the turbans they wore upon their heads; and, arranging for her cage to be left unguarded one night, she succeeded in escaping with the help of friends and regaining her precious freedom.'

'Exactly. And you should see that little apeman now! After being tamed and adopted by the old owner of the Funland Circus, after spending years at school and after his latest plastic surgery, he wears a permanent smile on his face. Flinty King smiles even when he's angry! That's who I'm meeting tonight. And now I must be off!'

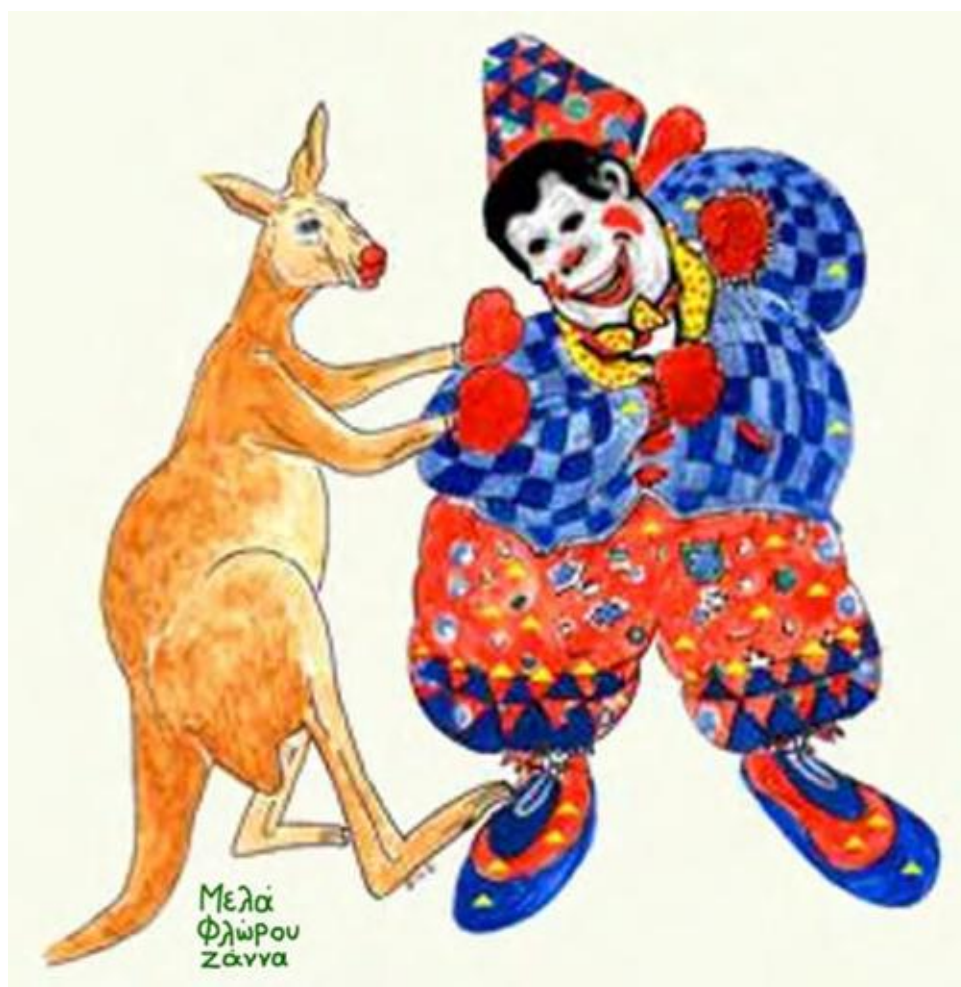


13a. Walking into the Pirate's Trap

It is night, my friends. Lee feels neither the cold nor the rain, which has begun to come down hard again, since he is carefully preparing every word he's going to say as he walks along the deserted road, keeping an eye on the monkey king, who is hopping along ahead of him, lost in thought. He catches up with him in two strides.

'Boss, boss! Listen to a good new act I've thought of ...'

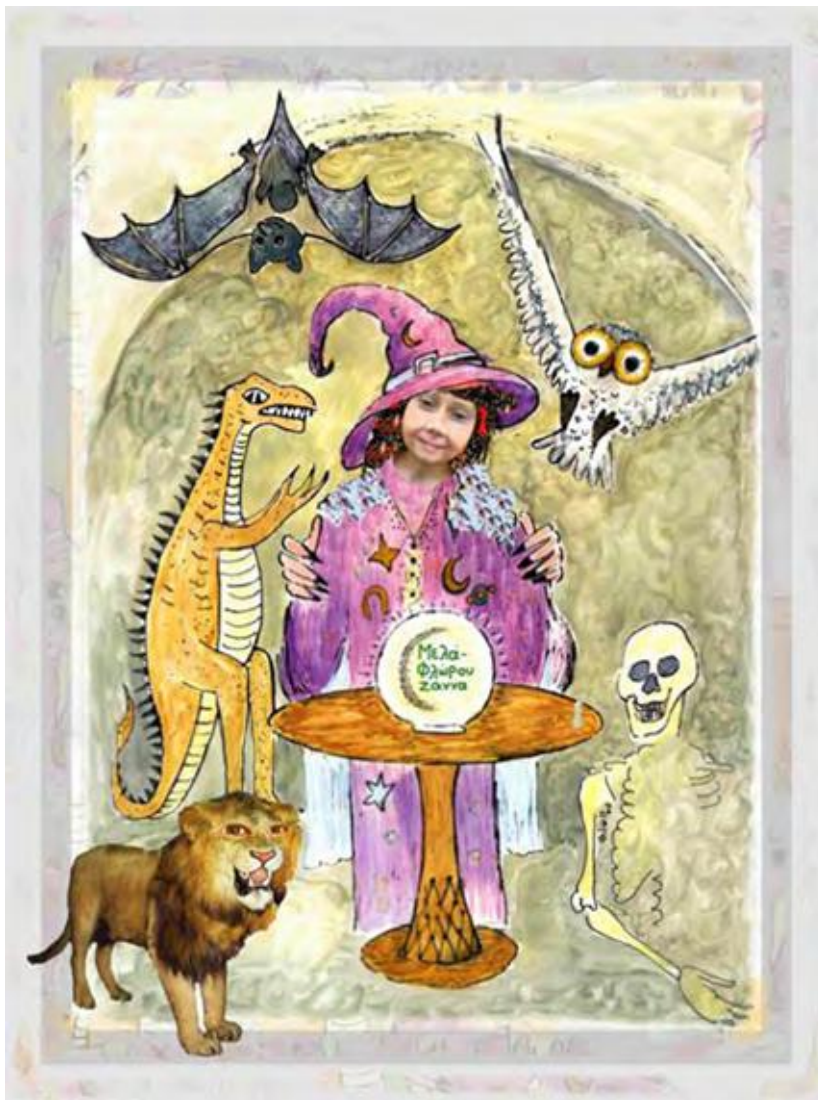
'... And a kangaroo would play the boxer's part, eh? Well done, Lee! That's a clever idea.'



'Your majesty, the animal will box against a great fat clown who runs away but finds that whatever he tries to squeeze through, his bulging gut keeps getting stuck; and when he tries to run through doors, they all come crashing down. But at the end of the act, there is a big surprise: the tubby clown suddenly turns thin and beats the boxing kangaroo with a single punch.'

' And how can we make the fat clown thin?'

'Simply by taking off all his layers of clothing, one by one, sir. And listen to this: another act your circus lacks is a really talented fortune teller. Yes, someone who can tell the customer when he's



going to get rich. Because people are impatient, your majesty, and very curious about their unknown future. Find the right person, and all you'll have to do is drop in at the ticket office and fill your pockets with the banknotes the audience have handed over!

'Well done! It sounds like a great number. It'll be a tremendous success. But what my super spectacle really needs is something terrifying that will leave the most demanding members of the audience breathless. However, my work's over for tonight, young man. It's New Year's Eve and so it's time to have some fun. Bye-bye, my little friend!'





13b. [A Pirate Ship on Land](#)

Lee suddenly loses sight of the smiling apeman. It's as if the earth has opened up and swallowed him! But of course, he's slipped in here, into this pirate ship that's moored on land. It's a gaming club, a casino with dice and cards and one-armed bandits. Lee wants to go in, too, for the place is warm and brightly lit, but the doorman turns him away with a fierce scowl and an abrupt gesture. But when a well-known customer arrives he greets him with a smile and bows so low he touches the floor, so he can pocket a nice fat tip. Gentlemen in top hats and evening dress brush hurriedly past the soaking boy to go into the club and have some fun.

Lee stares in at the rows of slot machines through one of the ship's portholes. He sees King, who is welcomed like the club's most valued customer, hand over money at the cash desk and collect some chips to play with. He waits so many hours for him out there that he gets tired and curls up in a sheltered corner of the deck. And then, at last, there he is: Flinty King, smiling as always. The boy runs after him.

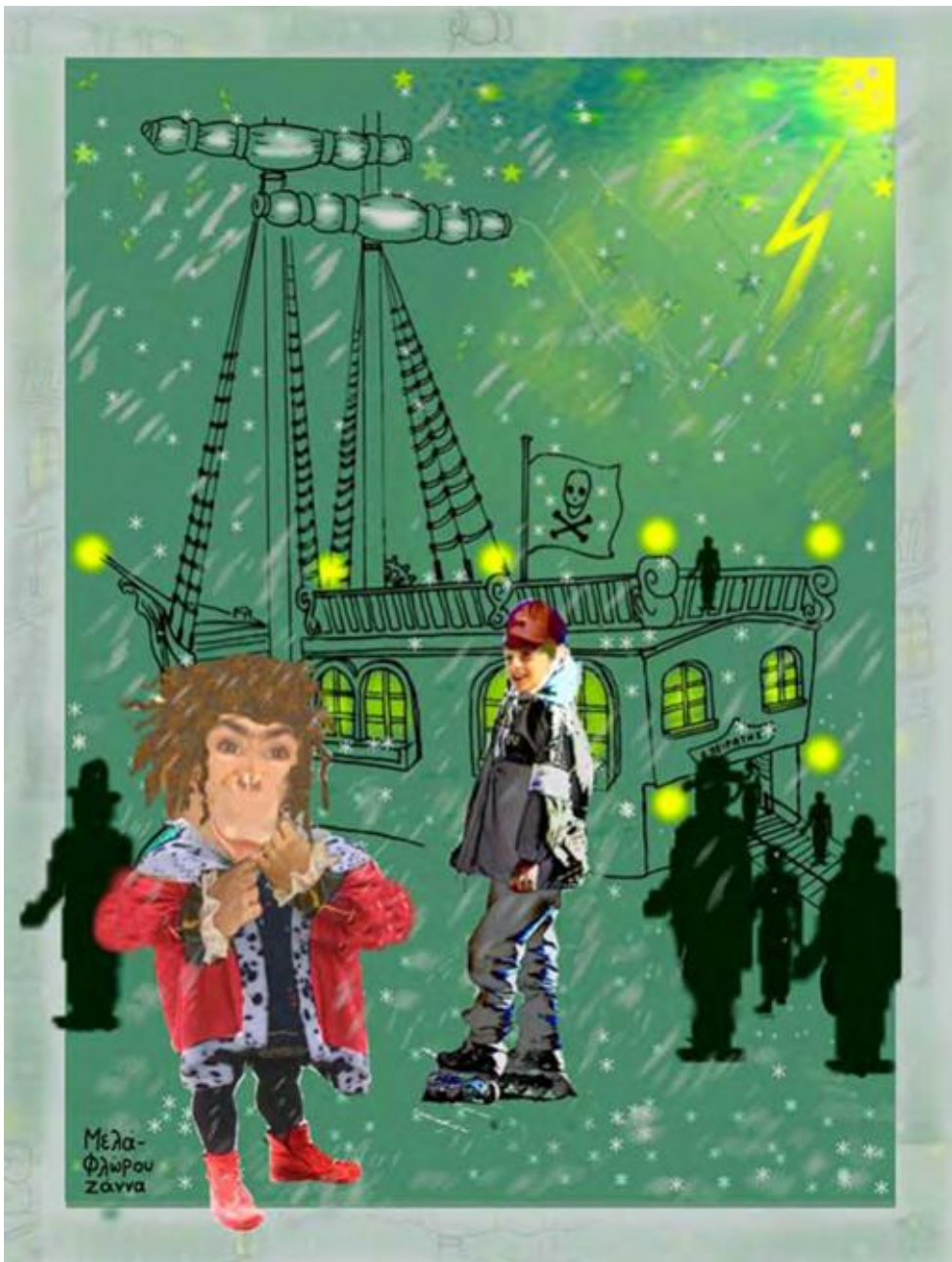


'Good morning, your highness, and a happy new year to you. I've thought of some other great acts for your show. And I could play a role as well - let's say a brave Samurai warrior in the service of his people. Or I could play an undersea knight, riding a gi-



ant seahorse and surrounded by octopuses, eels and cuttlefish. And I could feed, er, newborn sharks perhaps, boss. You'll see: I'm brave and honest and I can hardly wait to wear a diver's suit. And I've got other great ideas as well. Won't you take me on, king of the big top? Please!'

But smiling Flinty King neither sees nor hears young Lee. And this rain shows no sign of stopping. It seems intent on getting stronger still. Flash after flash of lightning, thunder and strong wind force them to hurry off their separate ways and King mysteriously vanishes in the warren of dark lanes.



14. The Author Enters our Story

It's me, children, Little Wild One or Princess Painting or Sixth Billionth or Princess Nobody who's speaking to you. What do names and titles matter? If I, too, want to get into the story that I'm writing and play a minor role, I follow the secret path my pen creates. There, now I'm in, just as I left home, with uncombed hair and wearing a grubby old t-shirt, and I shyly approach the big top with my suitcase in my hand. Soon I find myself squeezed in among a motley crowd of circus folk. I am standing amidst clowns and fakirs hoping to get work; acrobats tower over me on wooden legs and outside the manager's office I join the queue of witches who are patiently waiting their turn to be auditioned. The touch of a bony hand arouses me from my reverie. I turn and see, now come to life, a strange being that I'd created on paper with my colours. She has big staring eyes, just like an owl's, a long curved nose like a hawk's, hair as hard and bristly as a hedgehog's and cheeks that are lemon yellow. Her skin is as wrinkled as a dried-up fig. Yet she wears a lovely robe that glows with moons and other shapes that shine then fade, and a tall hat that changes shape as well! She opens her toothless mouth: 'Listen, my little beauty, I'm the most frightful horror in the whole wide world! I can see in my crystal ball that it is I who'll win the role of the prophetess Pythia they're



looking for at the big top!

Didn't you read the small ad in the paper? Here's what it says:

"Performer wanted for witch's role in circus act. Attractive salary, meals and caravan included. Necessary qualifications: successful candidate must be old and ugly, with sufficient acting ability to convince the audience she can foretell their future." Huh! You're not cut out for a witch's role, little schoolgirl! Look at me!



I'm the one they want! And they've found me! You're wasting your time here. Go back to your classroom. Go on, out with you! Off you go! Didn't you hear me? I'm the only one they're going to hire.'

But that just made me obstinate, and I didn't move an inch from where I stood. I simply said:

'You ugly hag, it's me who's going to get the part! And do you know why? Because I'm the one who wrote this tale, it's as simple as that. Little Wild One they call me, or Princess Painting or Sixth Billionth. I'm the only one who has the power to foretell what

turns my characters' lives will take and change their future whenever the mood takes me. Why, I can even change my own! So getting hired will be no problem whatsoever. And I'll prove it to you right away!

But at that moment, a little boy opened the door of the managers' office, then closed it right in my face before I had time to protest. My witch creation gave me a mocking look as I walked away in disappointment. Who was it in there that had taken just one glance at me and turned me down? Who? You see, I had underrated the great importance of appearance. If only I had brushed my hair and put a dress on, I might have had a second chance. But that dirty old t-shirt of mine had obviously offended him. Yet I did possess the magic powers of persuasion they were asking for! It was up to me and my own abilities to earn the part of the witch Pythia. So why was I so worried?

Again I found my way blocked by the little boy. He looked as light as a feather - and how beautifully he was dressed!

'What's your name, darling?' I took him in my arms and hugged him, kissing him tenderly on the cheek. And there in the dim light I noticed the little fellow's face: in my arms I was holding a man hidden in a child's body!

'My name is Nak and I'm the manager of Funland,' the midget introduced himself.

An 'Oh!' escaped me and I put him down without another word. So he was the one who had rejected me at first sight! I wrote down on my note pad exactly what I wanted him to tell me



next, in the hope I could rewrite my mistake and be accepted after all.

'You're Little Wild One, aren't you?' he asked, smiling at me with his arms spread wide. 'Why, yes, of course you are! The brightest pupil in our school! Don't you remember me? I was in the last class when you came.'

'Nak! Yes, of course I remember you! We played

together in the breaks.'

With tears in our eyes, we hugged and kissed in front of all the circus folk, who watched us muttering comments, with the horrible old fortune teller foremost: 'The contest's over, ladies. Time for us to go our ways. Why wait in the queue? Don't you see a little girl has been given Pythia's role? And with no audition either, if you please! Just because she knows the right people. Of course, if you have a little luck and a few strings you can pull... After all, we're in a circus here, so what can you expect?'

'Little Wild One, here's the wire sphere of terror where I whizz round on my motor bike! And here are the twin baby elephants and

here's the sea lion who whirls a ball round on her nose in the middle of the ring.

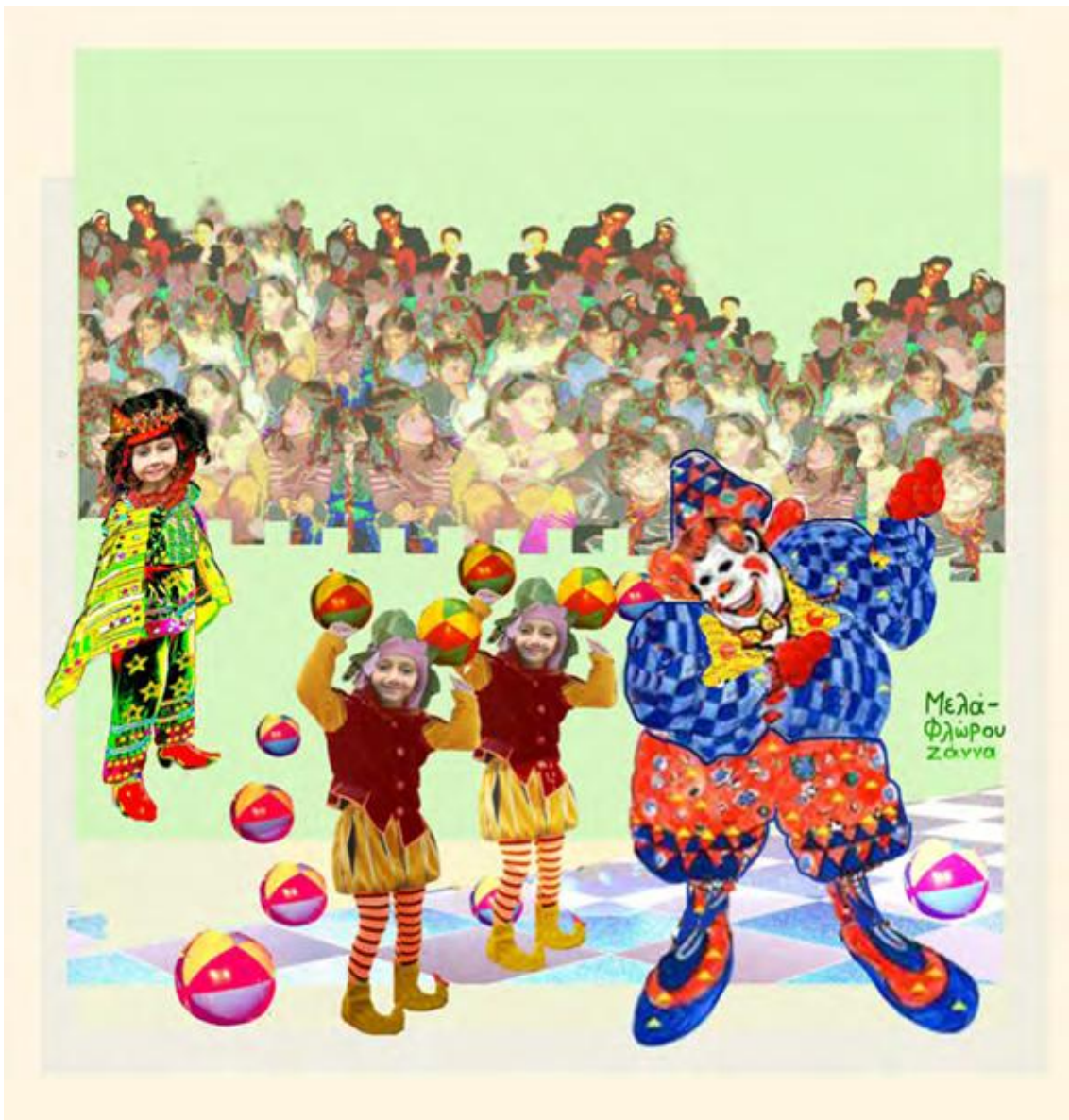
The animals don't know that if they give their cage doors a good push they can free themselves! And here are the albino tiger and the panda, the black and white couple who dance the waltz together, going back into their cages.'



15. Piranha-Pirate's Treasure

It's the time when all of us performers are getting ready for the show. There's a big audience in the tent as it's New Year's Day. A fat clown comes into the ring.

'Who can it be, Lee? What's his name? His face is hidden behind a funny painted mask. He's wearing a red nose, an orange wig, a little hat, huge shoes and a big bow tie with spots on.'



'It's Flinty, Little Wild One!'

'Wow! How's that happened? It must be something serious if it's made our Mr King decide to work! He sleeps by day and spends the whole night having fun.'

'He's doing it to please himself,' we whisper as the clown starts speaking, putting up our hands to hide our smiles. We don't believe a word "His Majesty" says. He's acting! The audience applauds. The smiling apeman throws balloons into the air and goes on:

'You kids up there in the audience, I'm going to tell you a true story. It happened to me last year - well, last night actually, December 31st. While I was wandering around your town, I saw lights, carriages and people going into a pirate ship that was standing on dry land. It was a casino, the home of gambling, card games and one-armed bandits. Ah! Just what I need to while away an hour or two, I told myself, and not go back till all the lights have gone out in my performers' caravans. They're forever inviting me to see the New Year in with them and I always find excuses not to sit down at table with my employees. That way I can avoid giving them a pay rise.

Well, the moment I stepped aboard that pirate ship, a one-armed bandit beckoned to me from a distance. Lifting its single hand it said, "Come and feed me, monkey!"

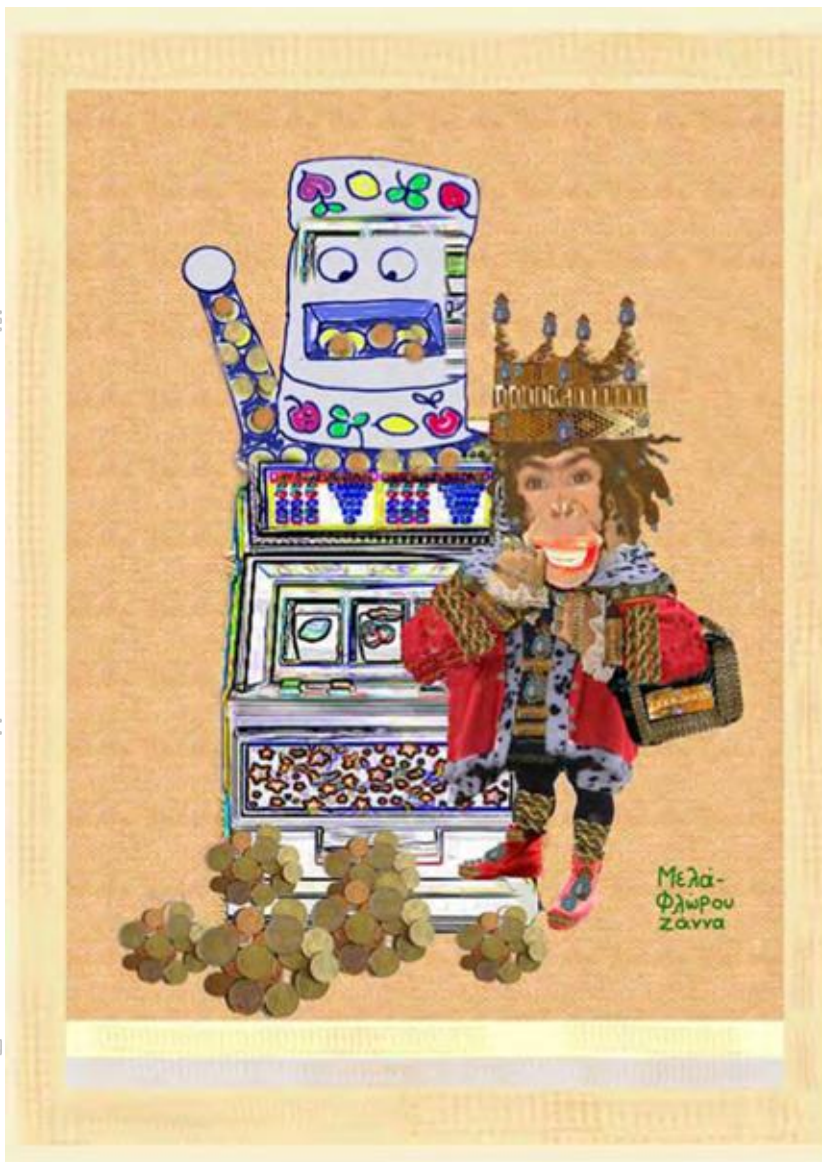
"How can I feed you?" I asked.

"Feed me! Feed me! Feed me!" the robot ordered me once more, opening wide its mouth and waiting. What sort of game is this, I wondered. I threw it a coin, which it swallowed without a

word of thanks. "What are you waiting for, monkey? Feed me!" the metal creature demanded once again. I was bored, kids, but I didn't want to be going off into the night, on New Year's Eve and all. Besides, the rain was coming down in bucketfuls and it was nice and warm in there. Good company, too, the kind I like to mix with, smartly dressed in evening clothes, with top hats and white gloves. And remember, I needed an excuse to avoid my employees, so I forced myself to sit down by the greedy thief and reluctantly began to feed it with my money, keeping an eye on the clock. My pockets were empty in no time. I'd known that's what would happen and

got up to leave, although it was still much too early and, of course, there was that rain!

"Are you leaving now, when you're just about to win? Stay on a while, Your Majesty." I turned to see Pirate, the owner of the club. He gave me a friendly pat on the shoulder and favouring me with his sweetest smile asked if I'd like a drink. Then, in a

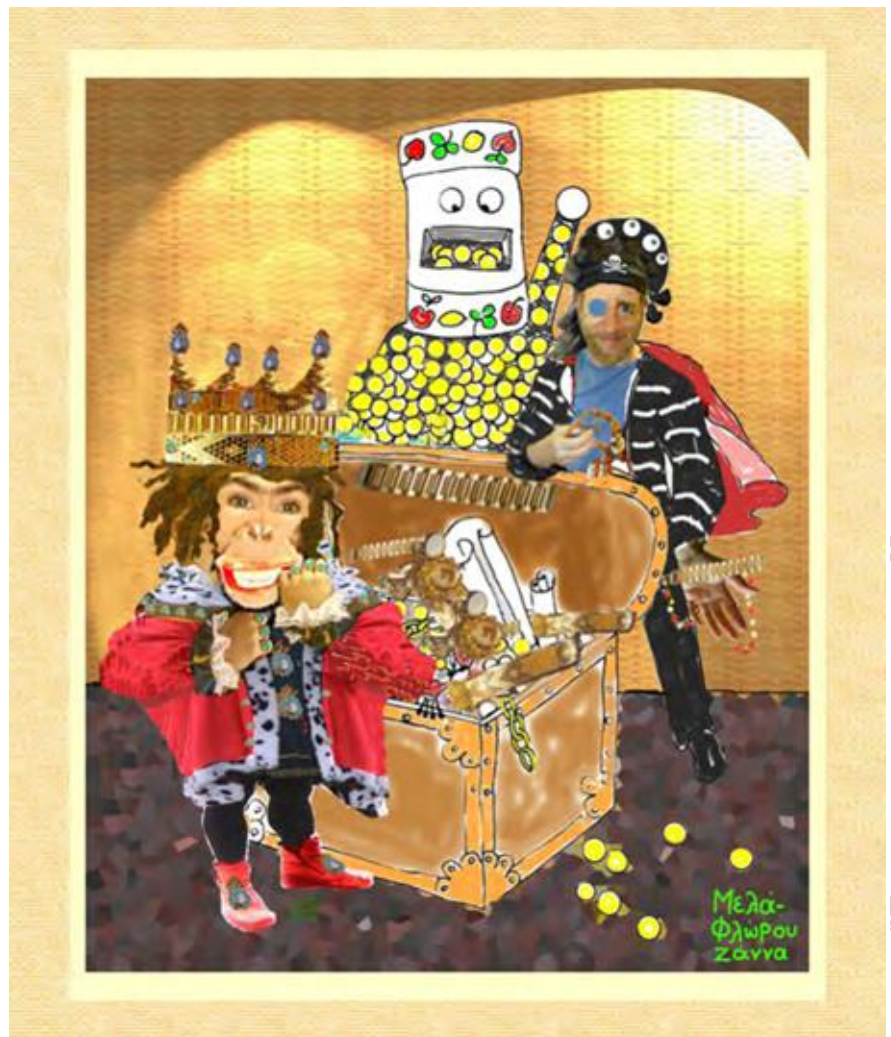


whisper none of the other players were meant to hear, he revealed:

"My dear Flinty, since you are king of the entertainment world, I'll let you into my great secret. Any moment now my robot will start throwing up. And all he spews is money, ha, ha!" Then, in a voice that dripped with honey, he whispered: "It's been gobbling coins since morning, and now it's time for it to spit them out. And you're leaving? Where will you find a better place than this? Everything's closed! But tell me, aren't you the clever creature an explorer discovered in the jungle, eh? Didn't you and your mother used to walk on all fours? What a transformation! It's incredible what school can do. It's made you

unrecognizable, my friend! Well done! You've achieved great things with the money you inherited from your stepfather. You deserve to be congratulated!" I was flattered by the pirate's words, children. What was I saying? Ah, yes. So anyway, he

offered me another drink and lent me money so that I could go on playing. In return, he wanted me to hand him all the gold things I



was wearing. Just as a guarantee, he said; I'd get them back as soon as I returned what I had borrowed. Then this Pirate- Piranha, as I'm going to call him from here on, opened the chest with the valuables his customers hadn't yet redeemed. It was filled with sparkling treasures. Whew! There were watches that had cost a fortune, thick gold chains, diamonds, beautifully crafted necklaces and bracelets - real works of art. I was reluctant to hand over my gold jewellery, children, but I remembered the prophetic words of Pythia, the little girl who works for me as a fortune teller. She got the job without even being auditioned, the cheat, just because she knows the man who manages this show.

But what does that matter any more? What was I saying? Ah, yes! Yes! There she is, the fake Pythia! Do you see her hiding behind



the acrobats? That girl there looked at my palm and told me, "Boss, I foresee that this is going to be your lucky day! Today, the last day of the year, your winning streak begins." And I believed her. But after all, what am I? Just an ape who's far away from his home back in the jungle. How was I to know what lies are? So I took off the costly rings and chains I was wearing, like someone who'd been hypnotized, and laid them in the pirate's outstretched



palms. In exchange, I got a little bag containing a few coins. I'd been sure that I was going to win, but still I kept on losing. The moment he saw that I was once more on the point of leaving, Pirate- Piranha came up to me again. "What? Leaving now, king of the circus? But my dear fellow, now's the time when the one- armed bandit coughs up money! And you're leaving? Ah, don't you see? My little robot's full to bursting. It's going to spew out everything it's swallowed, and the whole lot will be yours! You'll get back all your valuables and every last penny the bandit's robbed you of till now," Pirate-

Piranha whispered in my ear.



The new drink he offered me was dynamite. "All I want from you is one little signature," he said in a coaxing voice, holding out a pen. Now he was calling the shots! I took the pen with a trembling hand, without even reading what I was putting my signature to, I was so dizzy! I was a puppet in his hands. Only when I'd signed did he walk away from me.

The rest I don't remember very clearly.

I staggered back to my kingdom, but my caravan was nowhere to be seen and the only costume I could find was a clown's! Then to my horrified surprise I saw a paper with my signature. It was the contract stating that I had signed away all the rights to Funland to Pirate- Piranha the loan shark, for debts I owed him. Hardly able to believe my eyes, I read that I'd lost my whole business playing games of chance - and I couldn't remember a thing! There was something suspicious in that last drink! Yesterday I was rich, today I'm poor.'



15a. [Funland's New Proprietor](#)

The audience applauds the next performer who comes into the ring. They all think it's another number; but no, it's Pirate-Piranha, the circus's new proprietor!

'Good health and happiness, my fellow performers - and good evening, all you young folk in the audience. Let me introduce myself. I'm Pirate-Piranha, new owner of the whole of Funland. They call me that because I've got a casino in a corsair's ship with all the games of chance: cards, dice and rows of one-armed bandits. Malicious tongues say that I rob my victims and my chest is filling up with stolen treasures. They even say that I'm into other dirty business, that I'm a loan shark and extortionist. The truth is that I



oblige my customers by giving them loans and accepting their valuables as securities. They come of their own accord and hand me over everything they've got! Do I look like a vulture who plucks his victims bare?' the corsair cries, breaking into song and tossing chocolates to the audience.

'Noo!' the children cry enthusiastically.

'Do look like a thieving pirate or a dangerous piranha? What do you say, my friends?' the pirate warbles.

'Nooo!' the little spectators roar in answer.

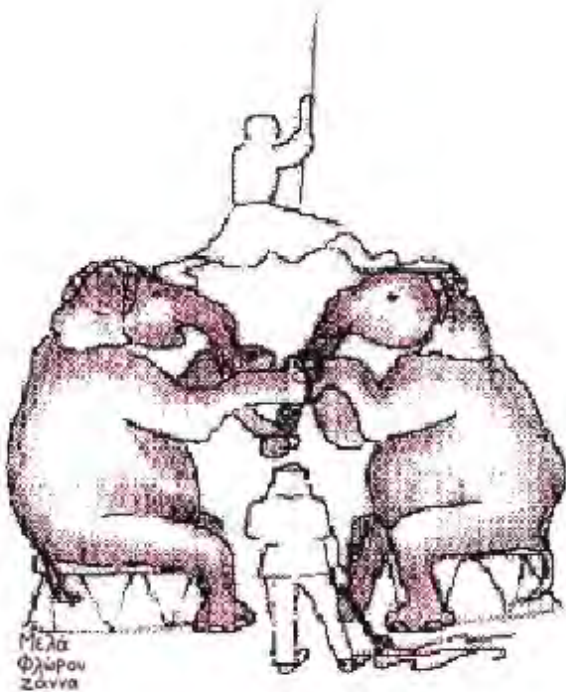
'Dear children, there are spiteful tongues that say I'm a pirate of the modern age. As for Flinty King, his mania for games of chance has ruined him. He lost his business in a single evening, and now all of it is mine! Anyone who frequents a pirate's den is sure to leave the poorer. Between you and me, my friends, quite a few gamblers leave with empty pockets, yet find themselves returning.

Their legs won't listen to their common sense and just walk them back to my casino. Imagine, dear children, they beg me to throw them out of my club because they haven't got the strength of will to keep away from the gambling tables! How I pity them! And that, dear audience, is the end of our performance. I wish you all a good afternoon and hope to see you here again. Here you'll find the super spectacle you've all been looking for: not only the biggest collection of rare animals in the world but the weirdest creatures on our planet, too. The stars of the circus world are here, with acts that will make you split your sides with laughing - and all performed especially for you. Here in my Funland shop you'll

find t-shirts, caps, mugs and a host of other attractive items decorated with full-colour pictures of your favourite animals. And the food there is superb! My friends, the whole of Funland's out there waiting for you!

Little by little, the benches in the big top empty. Pirate- Piranha walks over to the performers, so each can get to know their new boss personally.





The Animal Tamer:

'I'm the animal tamer, Mr Piranha, sir. I've got a few backstage secrets up my sleeve that would have that unsuspecting audience throwing pillows, eggs and rotten tomatoes at me if they discovered what I do! But no one's ever going to learn from me how I trans-

form that pair of couldn't-care-less baby elephants, that idle sea-lion and the reluctant kangaroo into obedient, "happy" and hard-working animals. And I always manage it right on time for the morning and afternoon performances, so the audience get good value for their expensive tickets. I want a new contract with a higher salary.'



'Congratulations, animal tamer! Drop by the office to pick up a present and anything else you want.'

The Sea Lion:



'Pirate-Piranha, I'm due to have a baby soon. I'd rather have him in the open sea than in that dirty little pool of yours. I don't want him turned into an acrobat like me.

Please let us go, boss!'

'You're right, sea lion - it's the dangerous acts the audiences applaud, and yours just makes them yawn. What else do you know apart from balancing balls on your nose?'

'Nothing! I tell you, I don't belong here, boss!'

'Sea lion, I would set you and your cub free, since animal acts are going out of fashion, but it's the audience who must decide one way or the other. If they don't want to see you, be sure I'll let you go the very next day! Till, then just have a little patience. Ha, ha!



The Midget:

'Mr Piranha, sir, I'm Nak, the circus manager. I may be small but I'm a great performer. When I get on my motorbike and start spinning round inside the wire sphere of terror, it'll take your breath away! My act gets the loudest applause of all. I can see the suspense that's written on the

audience's faces! I'd like a pay rise, a new contract for this year and young Lee as my assistant.'

'Congratulations, Nak! I'll give you what you've asked for. Pass by the office to get paid and pick your present up.'



The Apeman:

'Pirate Piranha, all I want is work. Give me any act you like, so I can earn a daily wage.'

'Flinty, you'll be a great success as Greedyguts the clown, the jellybelly who stuffs himself with food! But if you want your act to be a

success you must put on some more weight. You'll have to eat and eat until you're fit to burst. There'll be an electric fork to feed you until you reach five hundred kilos. Yes, you heard: five hundred kilos! That's how fat I want you. When you come into the ring I want the stage doors to collapse as you squeeze through and bathroom scales to explode because your weight's too much for them to bear. I want you to make a game of eating and be the funniest number in my show, ha,ha,ha! And remember, apeman: quan-ti-ty! That's what makes one fat. I want you to think of food and nothing else. Get started now! I'll put you next to a one-armed bandit. You can sit there eating meals while he eats coins.'

'For pity's sake, boss, give me any job but that! I could clean the stables, dress up the baby elephants or throw balls to the sea lion. I could even play one of those people who charm bees to land on them in thousands without a single sting! But I can't grow any fatter. Please, not that! The very thought of eating a pile of food when I'm not hungry is enough to make me tremble. I'll swell and swell like a balloon and I won't be able to walk any more. No, don't go! Please stay and listen to me for a moment.'

Pythia:

'Mr Piranha, sir, I've decided to go back to school and only work in the afternoons.'

'So you're Little Wild One, eh? They call you Princess Painting, too, and Sixth Billionth, I'm told. But you'd look better as a water nymph or circus princess than a fortune teller!

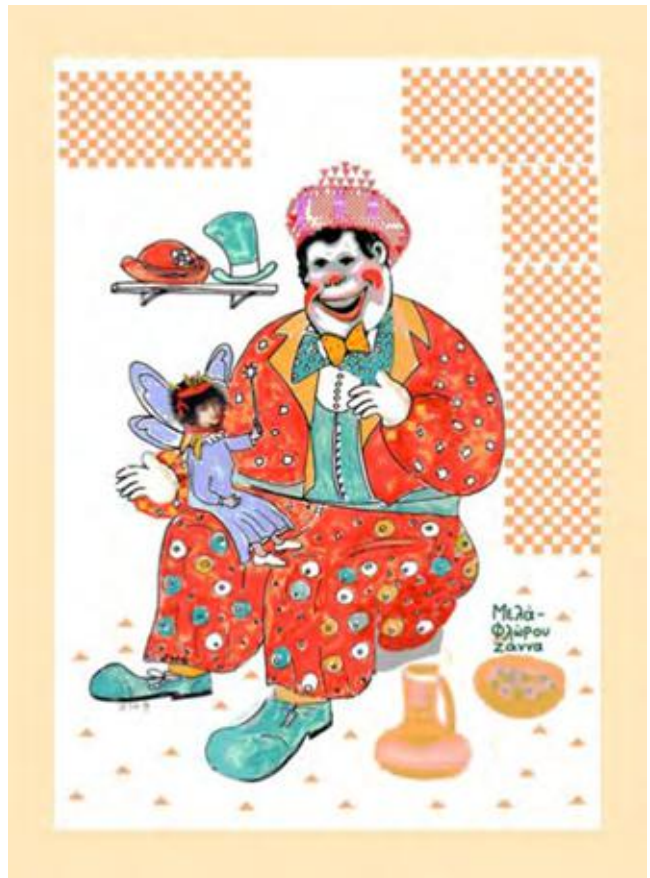


You, a fortune teller! Let me laugh! Ha, ha, ha ! He, he, he! And I hear you got in through the back door, too, you cunning minx. Because you knew Nak the manager from before, eh? Hmm. And in the end you got the job without even being auditioned! It's unforgivable! Anyway, this is the last we'll see of you, you little cheat. Your camera stays with me! And don't let me catch you back stage, spying on our brilliant animal tamer doing his work. Get lost! Out of my sight - and I don't ever want to hear you're up to any of your tricks again. What? Still here?'

16. The Author Transformed

And so, children, the smiling apeman paints a clown's mouth on his face and every afternoon, at exactly the same time, pretends to laugh as if his sides will split. He boxes with the kangaroo, throws coloured balls to the sea lion, eats till he's fit to burst and smokes like a chimney. His comic act, which is called "The King of Fat Clowns", is a huge success, especially when the kangaroo starts throwing knockout punches at him and he runs away. Doors break into pieces as he squeezes through them, he gets stuck in narrow corridors and there seems to be nowhere he can either get in or get out of. Someone will have to help him - this act is putting Flinty's health at risk!

I usually write this tale at night, keeping it a closely-guarded secret, and always in my caravan. I put everything on disc and never leave any trace of it on the computer I bought with my first wages. I say not a word to anyone and am very careful now because the new boss, Pirate- Piranha, follows my every move. He has eyes everywhere, so I decide it's safer for me to change shape and become





impossible to recognize. I press the magic keys on my computer, move the mouse and write: "from being the fortune teller Pythia all those at the circus know me as, I transform myself into a little winged water nymph".

A great guffawing laugh guides my steps to a dressing room where I see the King of Fat Clowns sitting all alone in his motley costume and making up his face. He sees me in the mirror, bends and takes me in his arms.

'Hi there! Do you know how to laugh, little water nymph? Laugh so I can hear you!'

'Er.. ha, ha, ha!'

'Hmm, that's not a very cheerful laugh. You need some practice! Sit and watch the show, it'll be starting any minute now. How I'd love to have a little girl like you! I'd teach her all the tricks of the trade. And from time to time she'd advise me against doing stupid things! Ah, in a single evening this whole circus flew out of my hands and into the pirate's pocket.'

'It's only a story, Flinty!' There, I'd let the truth slip out!

The apeman turned and looked at me with a puzzled expression on his face.

'Who are you, little one? Nak's sister, or one of those fortune-telling witches, maybe? Ah! They ruined me with their false predictions, the lying...'



'Flinty, only we authors have the magic power to foresee and change the future of their characters. Nobody else! All the others are just... They'd have won the national lottery if they could really see into the future, though between us, that's impossible! The worst thing of all is to be taken in by a false prediction and stray from the path that common sense tells you is the right one,' I told him, my little chest swelling

with pride.

'In other words, little water nymph, you're telling me you have the power to change my luck? That I could get my business back? Those one-armed bandits ruined me, little one. I'm so miserable I no longer stop to watch a glorious sunset or rise to see the dawn. Look!'

He showed me his new friends: a bottle of wine and a freshly-lit cigarette.



On the floor an ashtray overflowed with butts. Then the clown gulped down some food and wiped his lips on his dirty, stained bow tie.

'I was so miserable, but now you've come and given me hope. Pirate-Piranha has ordered me to eat non-stop. Do something to end this nightmare that I'm living through, and let me wake up ... thin! Can you do that? I'm waiting!

My presence was restoring the apeman's courage and good spirits. 'Go on, then, make me thin if you can,' he commanded, and then burst out laughing.

I touched him. Immediately, the fat clown felt so hot that he started to peel off his clothes. He unbuttoned one shirt after another, hardly believing what he was doing. Off they came without a pause, and clothes piled up around him. The swollen sausage kept shedding layer after layer until he was hardly more than skin and bones. Freed from his unbearable weight, he soared like a bird onto the high wire stretched above the ring. 'Incredible, it's incredible!' he cried. 'I'm happy! I'm deliriously happy, even if I haven't got a penny and I've lost my circus! How is this possible? It's perfect bliss! I'm alive, truly alive, just as I was back in the jungle.' And with an ape's astonishing ease, the new acrobat swung and hopped lightly on the wire, so overwhelmed with joy you'd think he'd been reborn.



17. The Author is Trapped



I slip behind the scenes, trying to uncover the well-hidden secrets of training circus animals, when a door opens and a hand drags me violently inside. I find myself face to face with Pirate-Piranha!

'Ah, the fake fortune teller! I know who you really are! You're the author of this story, the girl with many names: Little Wild One, Six Billionth, Princess Painting. And now I see you've turned yourself into a water nymph.'

I was speechless. The new boss had learned everything and was waiting for me well prepared!



'I've been informed that you continue to take photos of the rare animals in their cages, and that you intend to launch a protest against their ill treatment. I've already warned you to stop. Your secret evidence is confiscated! I also have a dog tied up on a strong chain. Are you planning to set him free as well? And I've got a few chickens who give us fresh eggs every day. They're cooped up in tiny cages. They can't hop or chirp or even turn around, they're crammed so close together.'

Are you going to let them out to go pecking free range for their food?'

'Pirate- Piranha...'

'Call me "Mr Dove"! Do you like my new name? My Successful Business Adviser suggested that I change what I am called immediately: from "Pirate" and "Piranha" to "Dove", which has a better image, ha, ha, ha! Well, Miss Author, you may have succeeded in bypassing all our safety measures without the alarm going off , but whatever powers you possess, you won't be able to get inside this bottle! It's impossible! Out of the question! Simply can't be done! Well, Miss Knowall? If you have the ability, then prove it! Now! Get in! Ah, afraid, eh? You haven't got the guts.'

He continued to egg me on with such persistence, this "Mr Dove", that in the end I got into the bottle without giving it much thought. And do you know what happened next, children? He corked me in!



'A bird in the bottle's worth two in the bush, eh?' he said, putting emphasis on every word. And then he started laughing, delighted at my silly mistake and his own silly joke.

'He who laughs last laughs loudest,' I replied, wedged so tightly in the bottle I could hardly get the words out. But then, 'It's only a story,' I told myself. 'Let's submit to my fate and see where it leads me.' I was like a genie trapped in some old lamp, and if

it wasn't for Nak coming in secret to release me, I would still be there. He simply couldn't understand how, if I was the author, I could let myself sit transformed into a water nymph and imprisoned in a bottle, waiting to see how the story would develop! Why didn't I press the magic keys on my computer, he said, and free myself by breaking the bottle? Or something else, like persuading Dove to set me free by offering him a fortune? Yet I didn't feel like explaining any of his questions, quite simply because from time to time it is the tale itself that leads you on.

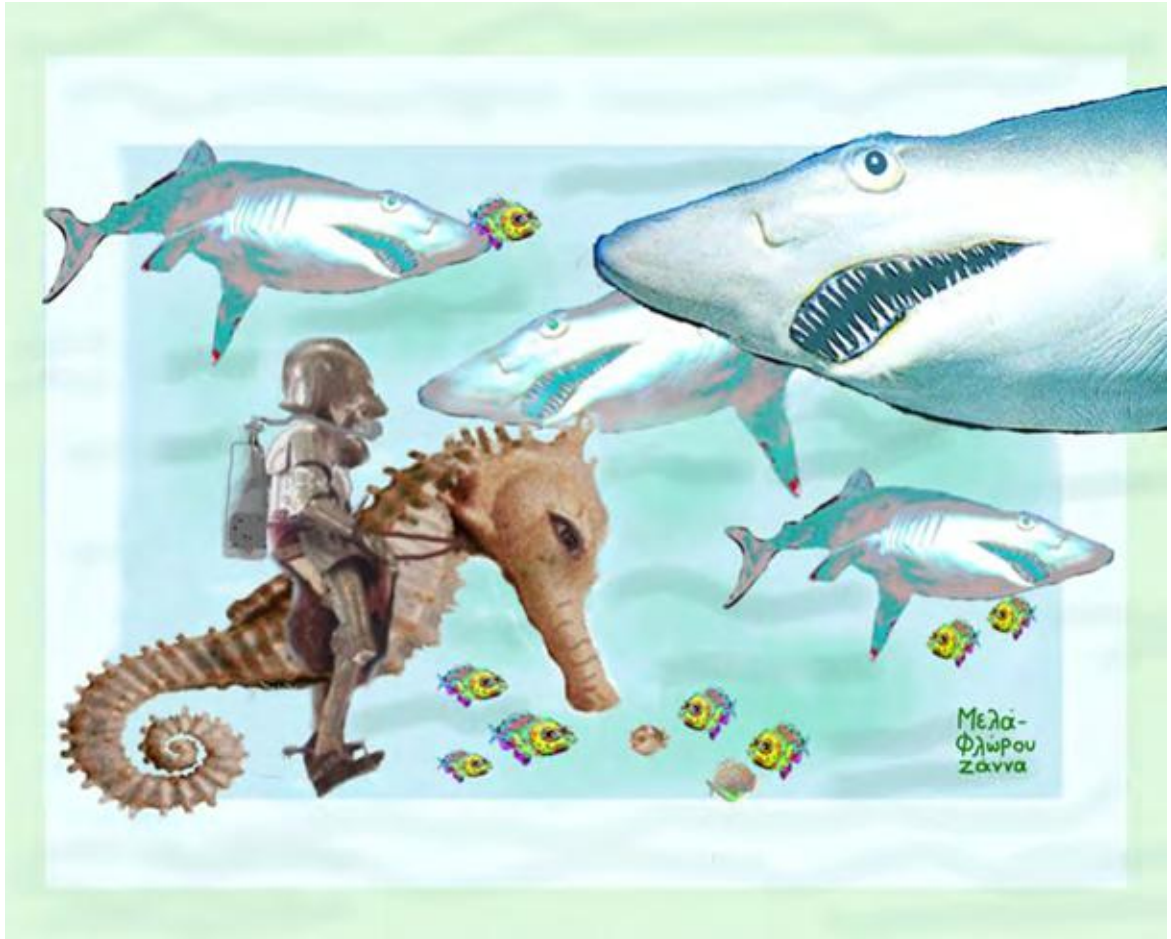


18. Our Story Ends



Lee finally got his performer's job from Mr Dove. He's got his very own caravan and is happy. But he was in a hurry to find out how his life would continue in the book that I'd just written. He seized it impatiently and turning over some pages read: "Lee now goes to school without playing truant. In his free time he goes diving and feeds new-born sharks.

He dresses up as a samurai warrior and is learning martial arts.
He's enthusiastic about his new life."



Lee threw the book down without learning how our tale goes on: he's going to be a captain and sail all round the world on a ship as big as an island, filled with children of every race.

Here's what it says on the last page: "The circus's new owner, Pirate-Piranha, otherwise known as Mr Dove, is now in prison for loan sharking, fraud and other offences. His chests containing stolen valuables have been opened and their precious contents listed. They now await their owners. The rare animals have been released into their natural environment. Those of them that were sick have been taken to the home for distressed animals, a refuge for animals whipped and otherwise ill-treated by their tamers. The Funland Super Spectacle is temporarily being run by the performers.





Flinty is retired now but he enjoys training the new generation of acrobats. He teaches them how to avoid nets spread out on the ground - traps set by modern pirates. He spends the summers in his beloved cave in the jungle and goes off to find his relatives, climbing up and down tall trees and mixing in with other apes like him. He has fun playing the role of their teacher, places only the value it deserves on money and is just as happy when he is without it. He has discovered the secret path to happiness and enjoys every moment of his life. The court case is soon coming up where

he is hoping to recover the fortune that he lost when he swallowed the strange drink Pirate- Piranha offered him aboard the pirate ship that was a gaming club.



The leading character of our tale, Little Wild One, will finally be awarded first prize in the international children's painting competition by the committee's unanimous decision.



She will go on a tour that takes her all around the world and achieve universal recognition thanks to the S.O.S. villages she will set up on the floating island, with orphaned children from all the races on the planet and a host of volunteers. Yes, the biggest ship in the world will become a reality, just as Little Wild One imagined and painted it! For her ser-



vices to society, our little heroine will be awarded the well-earned titles of Goodwill Ambassador and Knight of the Legion of Honour.



Just as she had always wished, she will dedicate her life to upholding the rights of children the world over. And by her side she will always have a

tireless, patient volunteer, the brave knight Lee."

THE END



Μελά-
Φλώρου
Ζάννα



I, the author, tread firmly on the earth and lightly on the clouds. I fly and dream. As I dream and fly I create a new story.



Title: [A Knight of the Legion of Honour is here](#)

Written and illustrated by Zanna Mela-Florou

Translation from Greek: kindly offered by Mr. Bruce Walter

Pages: 148

ISBN: 978-960-92058-7-0

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Electronic Edition:

site: <http://www.openillustratedbook-mela-florou.net>

blog: <http://www.openillustratedbook-mela-florou.blogspot.com>

Reviews of the book

“A Knight of the Legion of Honour is here” by:

[Vasilis Anagnostopoulos](#), Professor Emeritus,
University of Thessaly

[Zoe Kanava](#), author

[Lena Merika](#), author

[Katerina Mouriki](#), author

[Athina Biniou](#), author

[Ero Papamoschou](#), author

[Thanasis Papathanasopoulos](#), author

[Yolanda Pateraki](#), author

[Eleftheria Tzialla-Mantziou](#), author, painter ,
School Consultant



Vasilis Anagnostopoulos:

I read the 'Open Illustrated Book' entitled 'A Knight of the Legion of Honour is here' with great interest and found it original in many respects: illustration, structure, content and psychology. The style is tender, light and playful, pitched between the world of dreams and reality, with a strong element of animism, and gives even greater life to the illustrations. I liked the story's underlying historical and mythological foundations and the dreamlike way it travels the whole world, as well as its symbolic search for a 'lost identity', and the animals and children that feature in it. This is a book written with both imagination and enthusiasm. I hope it gets into young people's hands, to wash their eyes clean of rubbish and give them a real appreciation of the beautiful world of nature. Congratulations - and keep up the good work!

V.D. Anagnostopoulos

Professor Emeritus, University of Thessaly

24/5/2010

Zoe Kanava:

With its witches, dragons and other fabulous elements, this book can justifiably be described as a fairy tale set in our times. Its structure, too, comes fairly close to that of the traditional fairy tale,



though not concerning itself with the perennial themes dealt with in such tales. It concentrates rather on matters we find deplorable in our modern age, such as pollution, violence, war and loss of parental presence and protection. Even the main character's desire to discover who she is does not constitute an existentialist search for an answer to the eternal question 'what is man?', to which in any case there is no answer, since human beings do not exist unchanged but continuously develop. Her curiosity focuses on very specific matters: who her parents were, what country she is from, when she was born and what her name is - questions that concern no one but herself.

The main characters in the story are two children: a boy called Lee and a girl who knows neither her name, her parents nor her homeland.

Though not related in any way, they live together in a hut simply because circumstances that we are not told of have brought them together. She asks her friend to call her 'Little Wild One' like her classmates do at school, possibly because of her inability to mix in with them, or perhaps owing to her speaking a different language or belonging to another culture. The girl is sick and burning with fever, but in the hours when she is not asleep she paints her dreams. Every painting tells a tale which, complete in itself but also contributing towards the development of the main story which, as already mentioned, can be summed up as a search for an answer to the girl's longing to discover her identity and the purpose of her existence.



Her previous experiences, clearly particularly harsh and pushed into her subconscious by who knows what defensive mechanisms, revisit her in her sleep as nightmares, sometimes in the shape of a terrifying robber and sometimes in the form of a frightful monster, creatures she longs to change, if only it were possible, from wanting to do evil to doing only good.

In another dream, her desire to learn who she is takes the form of a good fairy who can see into the future and the past, and who reveals not only the day when she was born but that her name is Princess Painting. Welcoming her to the world of good spirits, the fairy promises he will endeavour to be her true friend and protector.

Lee laughs when the girl describes this dream to him, and to bring her down to earth he teasingly announces that from now on he will call her 'Princess Nobody', although, of course, he never does. Instead, he calls her simply 'Princess', sometimes adding other affectionate titles in place of 'Nobody', to show how fond of her he is. He greatly admires her talent and encourages her to go on painting, giving her hope that one day her work will achieve worldwide recognition. Since they both share a longing for a world that is lovelier and more peaceful he gives her ideas for new paintings, chiefly characters and monsters from Greek mythology, but in new roles.

Thus the Lernaia Hydra will become an ecological waste disposal unit and Scylla and Charybdis will be painted performing the same task. Instead of stretching their throats to the limits swallowing ships and all their crews along with them, they will do something



easier and more important: filtering clean the sea of all the filth that ends up in its embrace. And if that does not suffice them, there are always plastic bags! Each bag is a tasty morsel and there is no fear it will get stuck in their throats. Besides, plastic bags are a species found in abundance in seas and oceans, since they have the privilege of never growing old. They drink the elixir of eternal youth from the cradle, and consequently they will never be in short supply. As for the Sirens, let them sing to none but unsuspecting pirates before they can spread grief and suffering with their onslaughts! And why not paint Cerberus in a new role, he suggests to her. He has spent enough time idling in the underworld, guarding the gate of Hades. Now he can become the gentle friend and guardian of children, only showing his sharp fangs to anyone who has a mind to harm them.

Lee comes up with an endless stream of ideas and his friend finds all of them extremely interesting. But she is almost certain that some of them will prove impossible for her to paint. How will she be able to render evil faces that have been transformed to good ones? She fears the transformation will not be genuine but only a veneer of goodness just sufficient to deceive whoever sees the paintings.

Lee does not underestimate this difficulty but he has confidence in her talent and believes that with a little effort the girl will be able to overcome it. To encourage her, and perhaps to help her forget how weak and tired she is, which he understands completely, he tries to persuade her that with these paintings they will make good money, and that he has already found a buyer. She is an authoress



who knows and admires the girl's work and has expressed a desire to meet her in person and even work together. As a token of this wish she sends her a gift through Lee: a strange round book shaped like the Earth, together with a promise that she will submit her works to an international painting competition for children.

Lee not only passes on her promise but decides to give his friend a picture of the prospects that will open if her work achieves the recognition it deserves. Her dreams will no longer be imprisoned within the limits of a picture. They will take on the colour of joy – and both of them know what joy's colour is. All the while her friend is describing this in words, the girl tries to render it in the only way she knows so far: she captures it inside a painting with the colours of her own soul, depicting an ideal city filled with children who are searching for their loved ones. Among them are Lee, dressed as a knight, with herself standing happily at his side, her face lit up with joy as they both gaze optimistically into the future.

But this joy does not last long, for meanwhile the fever has again gripped Princess Painting, and as her temperature rises she once more begins to suffer from hallucinations.

With her eyes wide open she sees goblins, with their leader, Mandrakoukos, all around her. They tell her how unfair it is that they are only allowed to come to the surface of the Earth for twelve days every year and must spend the remainder in its depths, chipping away at the pillar that supports it. She does not seem to be afraid of these goblins but instead gets into conversation with them. As if knowing the reason for their unhappy state, she advises the wicked creatures to stop playing nasty tricks on people during the



few days they are allowed among them, and instead become more friendly. In this way, they will regain their liberty, for only those who love are free. In her delirium our heroine sees all the goblins transformed and playing new roles.

Hearing her ramblings, Lee advises the girl to lie down and leaves their tent to buy some medicine to bring her fever down.

While he is away, and hovering between sleep and wakefulness,

Princess Painting leafs through the strange book the authoress has sent her. The pictures on its pages take her on a journey to various corners of the planet in different periods of history, thus moving the story on by introducing new themes which, while they may not point to the way the plot is likely to develop, add interest and variety. At the same time they reveal to the reader, and to the story's heroine for that matter, a new world which, by her reaction to the challenges it presents, finds its own attitudes being questioned. Wherever Princess Painting goes, animals, people and imaginary creatures recognize her as a unique personality and beg her not to leave. They promise her that by staying with them she will not only discover her identity but the meaning of life.

In a way, these invitations are also challenges, offering possible answers to the original question about the meaning of life, without necessarily committing our heroine to any one of them. Her freedom of will is simply being put to the test and hence her sense of responsibility, and by extension those of the book's readers, to the extent to which the problems raised concern them.



And the first part of the tale ends with a festive gathering of all God's creatures, together with those created by man's imagination out of his primeval fears and hopes: creatures the girl has met on her dream voyages. It is at this moment that Lee returns to the tent holding the precious medicine which will bring down his young friend's fever.

The second part begins with Princess Painting telling her friend about her latest dream, which has been a vision of what both long for in their waking hours. But ever the realist, Lee makes sure he brings her down to earth, though he does not refuse to take part in her joy. On the contrary; and thus, when they have shared the pleasure of the vision which the girl has lived through in her dream, he gives her the medicine and is eager to tell her about the prospects that are currently opening up: about his job with the circus camped out near their hut, which the author has taken care to inform the reader of on the opening page, thus preparing for an ending to the book placed in the same setting as its beginning.

Once she is well again, Princess Painting also applies for a job at the circus, acting the role of the fortune teller Pythia. She believes that in her capacity as an author she will be able to play the part better than anyone else. It is a capacity no one can doubt she has, since in effect she is the creator of the ongoing story. In this respect her power is undeniable, since in any case the author has complete control over the fate of his or her characters. In spite of this, all the others who are auditioning for the part accuse her of being hired thanks to her acquaintance with the circus manager, a midget



whom she went to school with, and not because of her qualifications.

All the same, her being hired might cause the reader to wonder, too, since in the course of the story he or she will have become acquainted with its heroine's ideas and beliefs and gained the impression that in this circus, acts with animals are usually a cruel violation of nature offered as entertainment with a profit motive, and that this is something its audiences are unable to understand - not only because they are pleased by what they see but also because their attention is bought off by offers unconnected with the specific spectacle. However, the reader, who does not see all this from the audience's viewpoint, and has to a certain extent sensed what its heroine considers to be right and fair as the story unfolds, is expecting developments that will overturn the situation. And they are not long in coming. Thanks to Princess Painting in her role as Pythia, there comes a point when the cruelty and exploitation end, as in all such tales - in this case in an ingenious manner - with everyone living happily ever after and the reader, of course, more happily still.

Were we to attempt a general assessment of this particular book, the first thing we would speak about would be the way the brilliant ideas spawned by an imagination which the careful and experienced reader could write volumes on have been rendered in pictorial form. And we are not merely speaking about the wealth of knowledge he will gain by looking at them, whether concerning the natural world or history. As for the riot of colour and variety of techniques the author/illustrator has employed, we declare ourselves unqualified to say anything other than that we rejoice in the result.



However, we can talk about the beautiful quality of the writing, about its structure, naturally, which, as has already been said, distantly resembles that of the traditional fairy tale, and about the vivid images the author conjures in the reader's mind. It is an exciting and satisfying reading experience for those who prefer e-books - for we forgot to say that 'A Knight of the Legion of Honour is here' can only be found on the internet, where it can be downloaded without conditions and completely free of charge.

[Zoe Kanava](#), author

3/2/2011

[Lena Merika](#), author:

My dear Zanna,

What wonders are these? And so many of them! Well done! I am reading through them little by little and admiring your fantastic pictures. I hope you will go on impressing us with your explosive talent for many years to come!...

...And now I have finished reading, I must say I have enjoyed the 'Knight' immensely. You are truly multi-talented: not only do you write, illustrate and edit but you can handle e-publishing on the internet as well! Bravo!

You have a riotous imagination and show great skill in blending myth and reality along with facts about history and anthropology, as



well as messages about the environment and how we can protect it! And all of these along with imaginative and very well-chosen illustrations!

With kisses and congratulations,

Your admirer

[Lena Merika](#)

23/1/2011

[Katerina Mouriki:](#)

I have read your books and particularly enjoyed them. Your sensitive character and concern about the environment shine through all your lovely stories. May you always be granted a wealth of inspiration so you can go on giving us these beautiful tales.

I am taking this opportunity to thank you now for your kind gift of 'A Knight of the Legion of Honour' and to tell you that it truly impressed me.

It is about the imaginary journeys a talented young painter they call 'Little Wild One' makes while she is dreaming. She lives in a hut and at the time the story unfolds is suffering from a high fever that makes her have hallucinations. But the little girl feels as if she is living in a fairytale that is all her own, and lets herself be carried on a journey through time and space with the help of her young friend, Lee.



Lee brings a monkey and a toucan from the circus that has come to town. A would-be robber is lurking, ready to swoop. But the giant with a thousand faces, friend and faithful guardian of the little girl, reveals that she is not a poor waif but a princess who has vowed to help the world through her paintings.

Lee urges her to paint scenes from Greek mythology, but from a novel viewpoint which will offer a solution to the pressing ecological problems of our era. With the help of the thousand-eyed giant, these paintings will be able to come to life and save the planet from the dangers threatening it. Medusa the gorgon, for example, turns to stone those who are wicked and a danger to society, while the Lernaia Hydra and Charybdis swallow pollution, petrol slicks and trash, instead of men.

And so the imaginative little painter continues mining familiar Greek myths and using their various monsters as heroes recruited to the service of mankind. The paintings - and thus the myths themselves - unfold before the eyes of the reader, who enjoys a gourmet selection of mythological recreation where the Sirens and Odysseus meet with Cerberus, the Centaur and Polyphemus.

Through your heroine, Zanna, you give us a pictorial overview of Greek mythology and popular beliefs, assembling within your 112 illustrated pages almost all the mythological and folk-tale references that fascinate a child. Thus the Trojan horse, crafty Odysseus and others such as Mandrakoukos, chief of the goblins, become models for Little Wild One's new pictures, which will be presented along with all her other works at an international children's painting competition.



The book attracts the reader's attention instantaneously, thanks to the particularly original way its pictures are composed, using a collage technique of a type rare in this country's children's books. The way they are worked on bears your own inimitable stamp. The text is in perfect keeping with your illustrations. It has an air that is absolutely your own and at times even subversive, refusing to be subjected to the usual principles and forms that govern children's books. Using language that is immediate and fast-flowing, you let your characters converse in a completely natural way, with long stretches of dialogue that reveal their thinking as vividly as if it were being painted. Through her feverish dream fantasies, your heroine succeeded in taking me along with her on travels both forward and back in time.

She gave me the pleasure of a dreamlike journey that often assumes an allegorical form yet is always unambiguous and clearly described; a reading voyage making calls at ports that are sometimes mythical and peopled by figures from ancient Greek mythology and at other times rich in the wares of this country's more recent popular traditions. Yet the next moment the landscape changes to bring one face to face with problems of our times, ranging from environmental degradation and climate change, with whole regions shrouded in a twilight smog, through keeping animals in captivity or driving whole species to extinction, to casinos, gambling away whole fortunes in an instant and modern man's mania for excessive consumption. Such perennial problems, some thinly veiled in myth and others revealed in their naked truth, pass in a dreamlike fantasy parade before the reader's eyes.



The story rolls on unimpeded, like a rushing river carrying flotsam of various kinds along on its swift current - flotsam that may not at first sight seem precious but which, if suitably approached and worked upon, reveals its lustre and true worth. In the hands of an enlightened teacher or parent the book will provide material that can be exploited both in the classroom and at home. The subjects it touches on are so many and varied that if developed they could provide children with a whole school-years' worth of new ideas.

I wish your book good luck, and may your fertile inspiration long continue.

[Katerina Mouriki](#), author.

31/1/2011

[Athina Biniou:](#)

In 2009, Zanna Mela-Florou presented us with a new work: 'A Knight of the Legion of Honour is here'. It is an admirably well-executed book containing highly original travel adventures.

Its heroine is called 'Little Wild One' to start with, but later 'Princess Painting'. Even though she has no name, does not know where she comes from and has no family able to support her, these difficulties do not prevent her from bettering herself. On the contrary, she faces up to the challenges of life, seeks knowledge in books



and cultivates herself by visiting museums, doing everything she can to develop into a person with noble ideals.

The book's little heroine possesses outstanding talents, such as excelling as a painter. In her mind, she creates a floating island, a dream ship filled with children who live together in an environment where they are loved and cared for even though they have no natural parents. Her patience and determination help her to achieve her aim of dedicating her life to social work and earn her international recognition. She thus proves that one's values are not influenced by one's birth but by whether one works conscientiously, with love and respect for one's fellow man.

A person of many talents, Zanna Mela-Florou has written a book that overflows with tenderness for young and old alike. The author gives us beautiful moments, beautiful images. She awakens peaceful feelings. This new book, like her previous ones, makes an important contribution to children's mental and spiritual development.

The illustrations are by the author herself, who is also a respected artist. Carefully executed and matching the text to perfection, they employ a combination of collage and computer-generated images.

[Athina Biniou](#), author.

'Diavazo' magazine, issue 506, April 2010



Ero Papamoschou:

This book is unusual in that it is entirely written and illustrated in electronic form, so calling the series it inaugurates 'Flying Pages' is an apt choice on the author/illustrator's part.

Using the heroes and monsters of mythology and the creations of Greek folk tradition as her sources, while keeping a balance between reality and fantasy, the author fashions little tales, each a showcase for some moral value.

The book resembles a journey, and in its course young readers learn about the features of various parts of the world, as the North Pole with its bears and the South with its penguins is succeeded by the lush green of the jungle with its wild animals and primitive tribes and their customs.

The richly-illustrated fairytale journey continues; and while its readers follow the author-heroine, Little Wild One, step by step they learn that as in fairytales she, too, is able to transform herself. They are whirled aloft into a world with corsairs on their pirate ships, wonderful circuses, dream castles and all-powerful kings; and through this heady atmosphere run currents of concern about protecting nature and caring for its creatures, especially the most innocent of them all: children.

In the end, Little Wild One receives the reward she so deserves: the title of Knight of the Legion of Honour, awarded for her hard work and contributions to society. So much regarding the book's text in general. And of course there is no doubt, too, that in writing,



illustrating, laying out and editing a book from A to Z in electronic form, and all by her own hand alone, the author has achieved a feat that merits particular admiration.

[Ero Papamoschou](#), author.

June 2010

[Thanasis Papathanasopoulos](#), in his prologue to the book:

I rambled through Zanna Mela-Florou's book in the happy mood the dreamlike world of the work itself had put me in. For from its very first page until its end it can be clearly seen that here is an author well versed in children's dreams and the innocent mythical visions which inspire and mould souls that are young and still unformed and seek support in the fantasies and tales which feed youthful lyrical wisdom with the bread of life. This fine book is imaginatively entitled 'A Knight of the Legion of Honour is here' and can fairly be considered on a par with the works of the most outstanding writers of folk tales for its intelligence and inventiveness. And that is because the reality of life as we actually live it is convincingly interwoven with the other reality of dreams, myth and the ever-shifting rainbow world of the creative imagination.

The example of the classic fairy tale is grafted with admirable skill onto the world of its modern technological counterpart, giving us a whole new body of imaginary life which, with but a little effort



of will, can actually materialize. The author takes real events and situations as her starting point to soar into the new realities her fertile imagination has created; and yet this, too, is grounded in our own reality.

Thus we see the magic planet with its six and a half billion inhabitants now also peopled by other creatures of the animal and plant world and all these creatures together advancing by land and sea towards their lyrical fate along with Piranha the pirate, Nak the midget, the tamer of wild beasts, Flinty the apeman and the Knight. And while I, too, am living the joy and optimism of this imaginary-real world, I must not forget another of Zanna Mela-Florou's achievements: the marvellous way she has rendered the contents of her fairy tale in the illustrations.

But whichever element we put first (the narrative or the artistic), one thing is certain: that Zanna Mela-Florou is the author of stories for young people that shape their still unformed spiritual world, reinforce its innocent disposition and lead it to confront its fate with realism and good judgement. The author deserves much praise and it is my hope that she will continue this noble educational mission in her accessible, very native and very charming style.

[Thanasis Papathanasopoulos](#), author

'Diavazo' magazine, issue 508, June 2010



Yolanda Pateraki:

A very imaginatively-written book, richly decorated with coloured pictures, including not only paintings and photographs but ones made ('constructed', one might say) by their author/illustrator herself, with enthusiasm - and a great deal of enthusiasm at that! Tiny piece by tiny piece she assembles her pictures, cutting and fitting dresses, shoes, wings, eyes, mouths, wild animals, shields and whatever else comes into her story, all the product of the love with which Zanna clothes her imagination and presents it to the eyes of those who are able and willing to appreciate it.

The story itself, with its wide range of topics, 'prods' the reader to start asking questions on a variety of subjects and to search for further details about those he finds of interest.

If one were to try to place this book in any particular category, I think it would come under the heading 'Little Mythical Encyclopedia' since it uses simple language, accessible to children, to take them on a journey to magical planets, the snowy abodes of bears and penguins, bright green jungle palaces, dreamlike castles and pirates' lairs where adventures, traps and clever solutions abound, all made more attractive by the author's humour and artistic sensibility.

The content of the story owes its being to the heroine of the book, whose nationality and origins we never learn, and is the product of her vivid imagination. She succeeds in rendering it in the brightest colours by means of her wonderful pictures and thus in



winning an international painting competition. This enables her to realise her dream of becoming a 'Goodwill Ambassador' and of being awarded the title 'Knight of the Legion of Honour' for consistently upholding children's rights.

[Yoland Pateraki](#), author

'Diavazo' magazine, issue 506, April 2010

[Eleftheria Tzialla-Mantziou](#)

My dear Zanna

I read your book “A Knight of the Legion of Honour is Here” with great interest and was highly impressed by the quality of your writing and your imagination.

In your tales you capture both the notion of universality and the value of the wealth of human feelings.

I congratulate you and wish you all health and happiness.

[Eleftheria Tzialla-Mantziou](#)

Author – Painter – School Consultant.

Ioannina -December 2011



From Zanna's Mela-Florou artwork





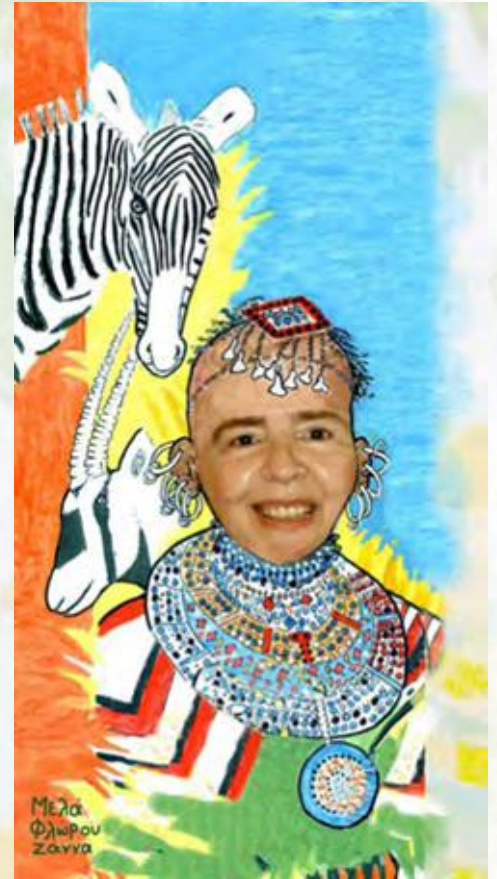


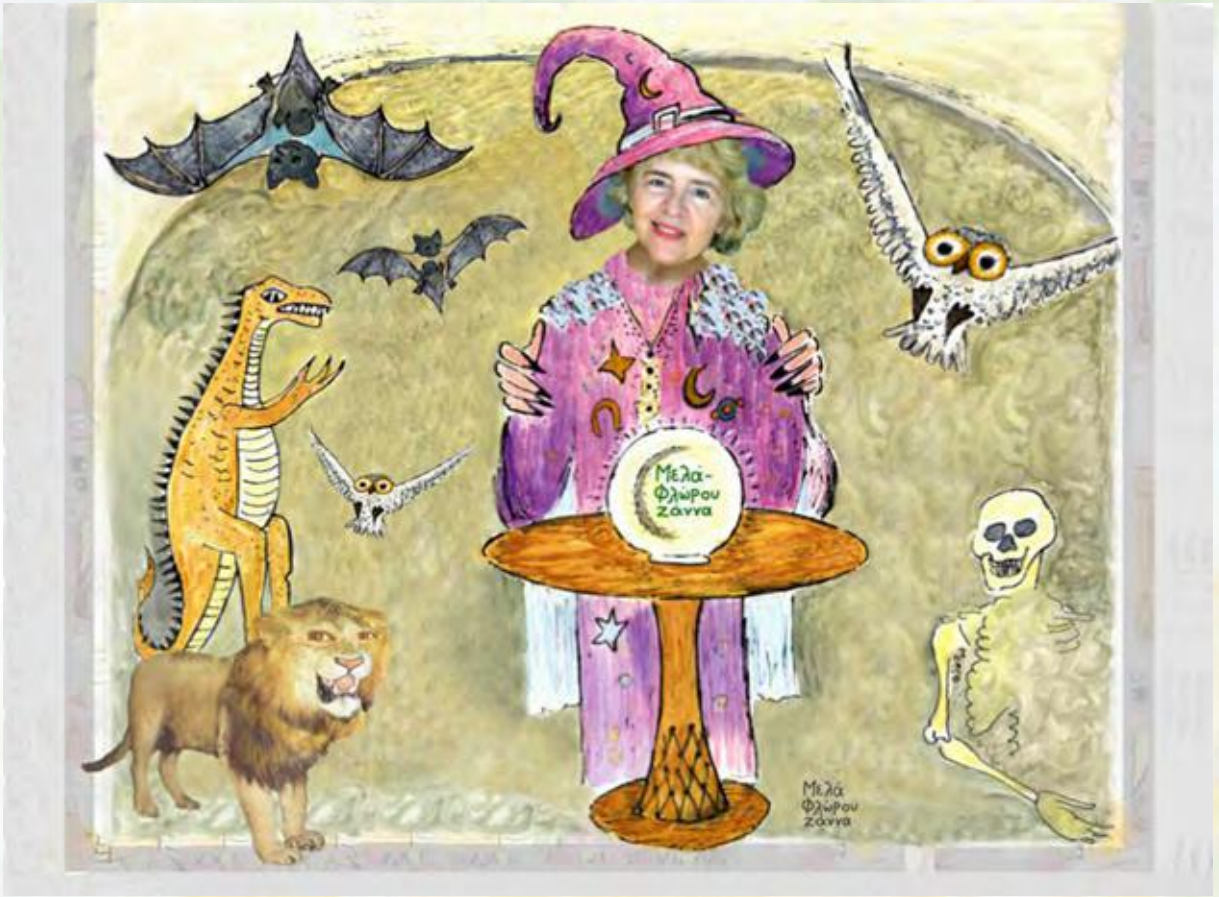








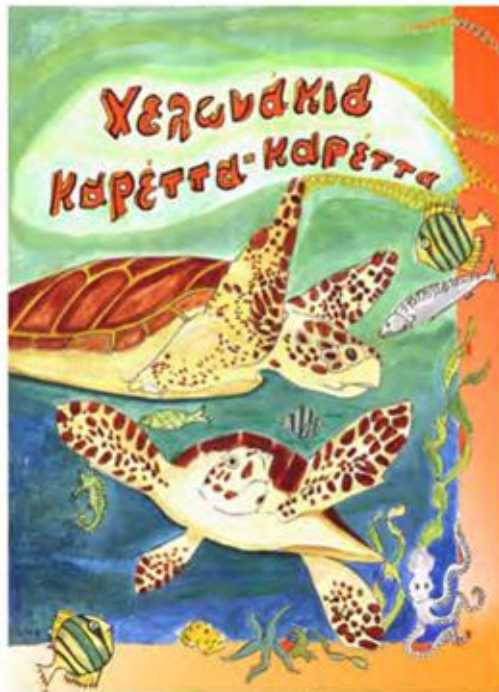








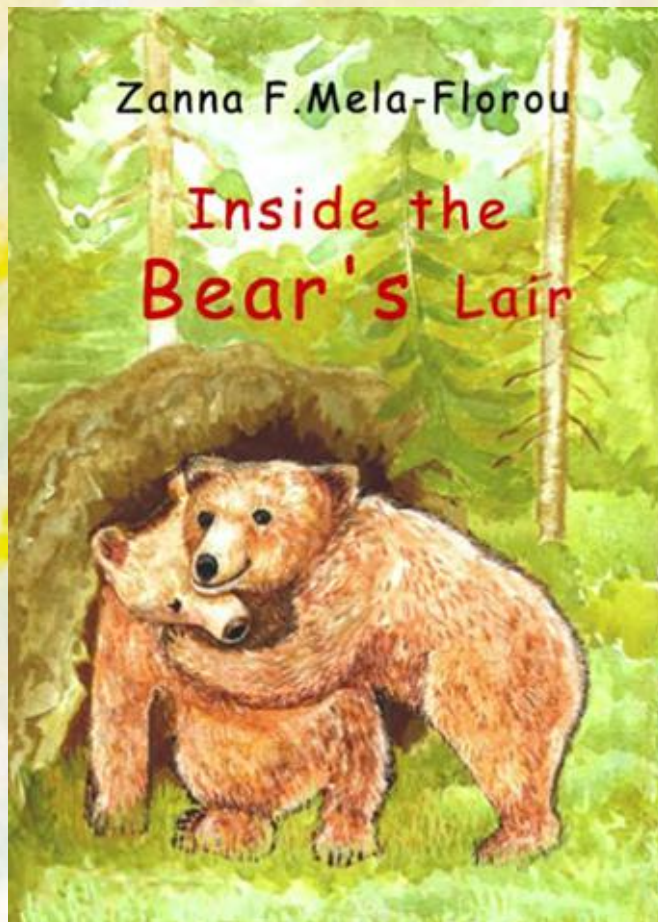
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Zanna F. Mela-Florou

Inside the Bear's Lair





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από τη Ζάννα Μελά-Φλώρου



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Open Illustrated Book
from Zanna Mele-Flourou

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"Στη φωλιά της Αρκούδας"



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Zanna Mela-Florou
serie: © Flying Pages 1

**A Knight of the Legion of Honour
is here**

Could she be the daughter of some king, this young person with neither name nor family; or does she belong to an American Indian tribe? Is she perhaps descended from the Inuits of the frozen North, or is she the descendant of some bloodthirsty pirate?

Whoever our little heroine may be, she is wonderfully talented in many ways, such as writing down and painting her crazy dreams and her conversations with ghosts and supernatural beings. She creates a vivid, lively tale of her imagined life, plays roles in it herself, in some of which she is transformed, and changes the fortunes of her characters.

Will the knight help this lovable little girl to realize her dreams and enjoy the recognition that her work deserves?



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ISBN: 978-960-92058-7-0