

S E N S A T I O N S   A N D   I M P R E S S I O N S

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1920 to 1937

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**Stella Cacoyanni Soulioti**

**Limassol, Cyprus, December 1997**

To my family

In memory of our parents

## CONTENTS

<u>CHAPTER</u>		<u>PAGE</u>
I	BIRTH	1
II	EARLIEST RECOLLECTION	3
III	BIRTH OF MICHAEL	5
IV	BIRTH OF YANNOULA AND GEORGE	9
V	PLATRES AND THE PASTIDES	16
VI	CALLIOPE DE CASTAN	25
VII	THINKING SESSIONS	28
VIII	READING	30
IX	PLAYING GOD	33
X	THE CINEMA	36
XI	THE SEA	39
XII	EXOTIC FIGURES OF LIMASSOL	43
XIII	MEMORABLE PERSONALITIES OF LIMASSOL	49
XIV	SPECIAL VISITORS	54
XV	EVA CASTAN	57
XVI	THE EARTHQUAKES	60
XVII	TACHYCARDIA	64
XVIII	FEARS	67
XIX	FEAR OF THE DEAD	78
XX	THE CONVENT SCHOOL	82
XXI	FATHER'S BROKEN LEG	96
XXII	NEFELI AND FAMILY AND DRYAS	98
XXIII	FAMAGUSTA AND STAVRAKIS	102
XXIV	YANNOULLA AND GEORGE	104
XXV	MICHAEL	110
XXVI	LESLIE FLEMING	118
XXVII	THE FACTS OF LIFE	120
XXVIII	GRANDMOTHER ZOE	124

<u>CHAPTER</u>		<u>PAGE</u>
XXIX	MY MOTHER	130
XXX	MY FATHER	134
XXXI	THE 25TH OF MARCH	150
XXXII	END OF CHILDHOOD	158
	EPILOGUE	164

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APPENDIX

## CHAPTER I

### BIRTH

My father's ring snapped and fell into the sea. He was leaning over the rail of a ship bound for Athens, talking to a friend. "Something terrible has happened to my family", he said. He could not have known that it was the hour of my sister Ellie's death. It had occurred suddenly of diphtheria diagnosed after my father had left Cyprus on urgent business. She was almost two years old and the second loss to my parents, whose first-born, a son, had died at the age of three months.

Fourteen days later, at three-forty in the morning, on Friday the thirteenth of February, 1920, I came into the world. An unusually heavy storm was raging. As my father was still away, my mother had moved to my grandmother's house. The place was a seaside town called Limassol.

The omens surrounding my birth were anything but auspicious; yet I had a clear duty to survive. To help the fates, my parents had decided to name me "Stella", after St. Stylianos the patron saint of infants. Still, my immediate prospects were frail. My mother was haemorrhaging heavily and needed all the care that could be given her. I was therefore abandoned by doctor, midwife and family to make my acquaintance with the world loudly and alone.

Wrapped in a blanket and thrown on a bed in the next room, I became an object of curiosity for my mother's youngest sisters, the twelve-year old twins. They had never seen a new-born before and could not resist the temptation of uncovering me and having a live lesson in anatomy. When the adults at last found time for me, I had stopped screaming and become resigned to my new environment. I was not even any the worse for the twins' interest.

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The doctor who attended my mother, on the other hand, did not fare as well. On his way to his surgery to fetch an instrument he needed urgently, he was arrested by an eager constable on no less a charge than murder. A killing had just occurred in a nearby village, and who could be more suspect than a man in a hurry covered in blood. It was some time before he could be identified by higher authority and extricate himself from the clutches of the disappointed constable.

For days my mother did not want to see me. Her grief for Ellie was so raw and her memory of Louis so fresh that she was afraid to let herself love another child in case she lost it again.

Although Louis had died of staphylococcus and Ellie of diphtheria, the old wives of Limassol gave it as their considered view that my mother's milk was to blame, and that she must on no account breastfeed me. A wet nurse was engaged for the first crucial weeks. Later, ass's milk was pronounced to be the nearest to a woman's. So a fortunate ass was bought and installed, regally, in the garden. I remember my "mother ass" well. For years we rode her on a cane-seat specially imported from England.

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CHAPTER II

EARLIEST RECOLLECTION

My earliest recollection, which is really more of a sensation, is that of speeding down a slope in a chair-pram. This was in the summer of 1922, when we were staying at the Pafsilipon Hotel at Platres, a summer resort in the hills. Two young boys had been allowed to entertain me, and this was their idea of a special treat. They free-wheeled the pram down the hill running after it, then pushed it slowly up again and repeated the performance to the accompaniment of cries of joy from me. I do not know how many times we went up and down that slope before our parents found us and spoilt the fun.

Although we went to Platres every summer of my childhood and our stay there was always memorable, that first summer stands out from all the rest. Perhaps it is because I was still the centre of the family, my brother being too young to command much attention, or it may be because it was during that same summer that I first discovered the terrors of the night and the fear of death.

I can still relive the panic that seized me when I woke suddenly to solid blackness with a hollow cough that tore at my insides, each breath catching in my throat as if it were my last. It was croup, and I was to experience it several times in later years and know that it was not fatal. But I did not know it then, nor did my parents.

In two minutes the hotel was in an uproar. There was no telephone in Cyprus in those days and there was no doctor at Platres. He had to be fetched from another village by a messenger on horseback. In the meantime, all the guests

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were prescribing remedies: compresses, hot and cold baths, honey. It is a wonder I survived at all.

I clearly remember the doctor coming into my room. He was the first man I had ever seen in breeches. He was slight, had silver hair and was quite unperturbed. He prescribed a hot bath and warmed-up butter, and in a little while I was breathing again.

Children now seldom suffer from croup, but in my young days it was not unusual. It only attacked in the middle of the night, and one or other of us children used to wake with it many times a year. My mother soon became an expert at treating us and there was no need to call a doctor. A small oil lamp and some butter by her bed was all that was necessary. A few spoonfuls of the warm liquid soothed the cough away and much to our disappointment we were even well enough to go to school the next day.

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C H A P T E R   I I I

B I R T H   O F   M I C H A E L

On the 11th June 1921 my mother was in labour again. True to the fashion of the day, she was screaming with each pain. To distract me, the twin aunts walked me up and down the street outside our house. Every time my mother let out a scream, I echoed it from below.

The result of this joint effort was my brother Michael. He was, by all accounts, very ugly; my mother, teased mercilessly by her friends, even secretly wept over him. She could not then have known that her young monster was to be the most talented of her children and that his looks would be anything but a cause for tears.

We were living on the top floor of a two-storey house. I mention the house because all my memories are linked with our various houses, each period of my childhood being distinguished from the rest by the house in which we lived. I think of these houses as I think of the people in my early life, as of something living. I can bring to mind every room of every house, every detail of its construction, every tree in the garden. Each played its part in shaping our childhood.

Children whose childhood is spent in the same house must miss a great deal of the variety and excitement that marked our own. My mother loved moving. It freshened up our lives, she said.

Even the houses in which my parents lived before we were born, and which were pointed out to us on our walks, are bound up with my early memories. There was the isolated house on the edge of town where they lived when they were first married. It looked cold and sinister - it was in this house that my father nearly killed my mother.

At three in the morning, my mother woke my father with the urgent whisper "Panayoti, there's somebody in the house". My father jumped out of bed and seized his rifle from the wardrobe where it was kept and bravely crept down the stairs, while my mother waited trembling behind the bedroom door not daring to follow him but still wanting to reassure herself that he was alright. My father returned a few minutes later to report that there was no burglar downstairs. He then proceeded to unload the gun and go back to bed. The gun went off. My mother shouted "You have killed me" as something hit her. My father had a moment of panic before he realised that she had only been hit by the empty cartridge, the pellets lodging themselves in the wall.

When my father related this story to us in full dramatic detail, we of course asked: "And what would you have done if you had killed her?" "I would immediately have shot myself". And Limassol would still be wondering why a young and healthy couple who had married out of love had killed themselves in the middle of the night. The bards, then a customary feature of Cyprus life who travelled from city to city singing their epic poems lamenting tragic happenings, would have had a heyday.

My memories of our first house are mixed with fantasy. The clearest pictures it evokes are of my dead brother and sister. As soon as the lights were out, my sister - a white angel of course - took up her position at the foot of my bed, while another smaller angel stood at the head. There was nothing frightening about them, for Ellie and Louis were no less real to me than Michael in his cot. If anything, they were a comfort in the dark. I knew them well, for most of the stories related to me in those early days were about them, especially about Ellie. She was, I was told, a most intelligent and exceptional child.

One incident was particularly fascinating. It was a rainy day and Ellie was sitting on the window-sill looking out into the street, when she saw a small boy jumping barefoot from puddle to puddle. She signalled to the girl who was holding her to open the window - she was too young to talk properly - while she unfastened her shoes preparing to throw them to the child in the street. When the girl protested, Ellie led her to the nursery and pointed to the rows of shoes in her cupboard. Since she died before her second birthday, she could not have been older than that.

It was in this house that my young mother suffered a great shock. She was alone with her children, Yannoulla an infant, Michael aged two and myself aged three, when a heavy mist enveloped Limassol. Looking out of the window all she could see was a white shroud penetrated here and there by a light. The end of the world had come. The universe had turned upside down; the stars had descended to the earth. She knelt down and prayed: "Please, God, save my children". The "stars" were the street lamps shining through the fog.

It was while we were living in this house that my father, then twenty-eight, decided to go to England to complete his law studies. His father had wanted him to become a doctor and he had even spent a year at Montpellier Univeristy before he and my mother were married. At the end of that year, however, my grandfather died and my father, as the only living son, had to interrupt his studies to look after the family business.

A case before the Courts changed his life. It was a claim for insurance on the cargo of a ship that had been wrecked. My father, though not himself an interested party, became so engrossed in the legal aspect of the case, that he delved into every law book and authority he could find, arguing passionately with the advocates of the litigants. It was obvious that this was where his talents lay. Undeterred by the responsibilities of marriage and children, he threw himself with enthusiasm into the study of law by correspondence.

At the end of the course it was necessary for him to spend a year in England to obtain his degree. Preparations were made for us all to go with him. Even passport photographs were taken but in the end he went alone because my mother suspected, wrongly as it turned out, that she was pregnant again.

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CHAPTER IV

BIRTH OF YANNOULLA AND GEORGE

The greatest ordeal of my early childhood was the need to eat. I never had any appetite and had to be cajoled, coaxed or bullied into eating. My mother swears that I would have died of starvation if left to my own devices. She resorted to all manner of invention to force food on me: a new plate with a picture in the centre, a pretty cup, story-telling, walks in the garden and, in desperation, an occasional slap. Often a combination of them all.

I remember a brightly coloured cockerel at the bottom of a plate of porridge being slowly uncovered with each spoonful. There was also the large cup, striped white and blue, out of which I drank my morning milk. This cup was kept downstairs, in our landlady's house. Herself a widow, she lived with her mother, her unmarried sister and two single daughters. Her only son was studying music in Athens. They made such a fuss of me that I naturally loved going downstairs. My mother was quick to turn this to feeding advantage.

I sat on Mrs. Zoero's dining table every morning, swinging my legs and drinking out of the lovely blue and white cup, with all the kind ladies cooing round me. It was on one of these mornings that I solemnly announced that my mother was weeping because my father had beaten her with a stick. Had my father not been in England at the time he would probably have acquired the reputation of wife-beater on the strength of the Greek saying that "a child and a fool never lie". Yet I was not given to weaving tales. Perhaps this was one of the vivid dreams of which I always had plenty.

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No sooner was my father back from England than my mother became pregnant again. I was three, and we were still living in the same house, when my sister was born. The joyful anticipation of her birth is one of my earliest memories. A few days before the birth my mother took me to see a friend who had just had a baby. I remember being given the newborn to hold and my elation at the thought that soon I would be holding my own. In default of a real infant, a baby doll, beloved above all other toys, was a tolerable substitute.

Also fixed in my memory at that time is a heated argument with my mother as we were walking past the new Nuns' School. I had been told that my sister's name was to be "Yannoulla", yet the priest had christened her "Ioanna". It took all my mother's powers of persuasion to convince me that Yannoulla was the diminutive of Ioanna and that I had not been deceived.

I was to spend many years as a pupil of the Convent School, but I can still see it as it was on that day: with gaping holes where the doors and windows were to be, with the stones newly cut and gleaming white, and with the figures "1923" carved and freshly painted in black over the entrance.

Our family became complete with the birth of another brother sixteen months later. As I was then four, I was taken into the secret from the start and participated in all the preparations.

A few weeks before George's birth we moved to a larger house. It had a big garden with a round reservoir in the middle and a Turkish bath at the bottom. George was to come in a basket lined with blue satin and lace and be deposited on the top of the reservoir by an angel.

On the day of the birth we were all sent to lunch with my father's mother who lived down the street. We were promised a baby brother - there was never any doubt about the sex - after our siesta, if we were good.

We were rather in awe of this grandmother's house. The walls of the hall were covered with fearsome pictures. There was one with a large all-seeing eye in the centre:

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it was the eye of God watching our every naughtiness. There was another, of the fires of hell with little devils holding prongs and pushing suppliant, desperate men and women into the flames. Yet another showed God holding huge scales, weighing men and women against their deeds, good and bad. The pictures both frightened and fascinated me.

George arrived as promised in the early afternoon, and we were allowed to watch his first bath. The midwife presided over the ceremony. She put salt in the water, "so that he would not be insipid", she explained. While washing him she showered precepts on him: to be courteous and obedient, to drink his milk and eat his egg in the morning, to do his homework. I was intrigued by the navel which looked like a piece of string to which the midwife, I was convinced, did something magic with a lighted candle.

George's first months of life were precarious. He contracted an infection of the intestine which, in the days when antibiotics had not even been conceived, was most serious. There was the dramatic day when the doctors decided that the only hope for him was a new drastic injection. It had one drawback: it might, instead, precipitate his death. The risk had to be taken. The injection was given, George turned purple, my mother screamed and threw him on the bed. George survived and complains of intestine trouble to this day.

Our life then settled down to one long illness. As soon as George recovered, I contracted whooping-cough. George immediately caught it and nearly died of that too. The pattern which was to persist throughout our childhood was then set. Michael and Yannoulla always escaped with the mildest editions of all ailments, while George and I suffered the strangest complications.

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Those whooping-cough days were very pleasant. Part of the cure was long rides in a horse-drawn "gharry". Every afternoon we set out, my mother, a maid, the four children and sometimes the twin aunts, and rode to the Yermasoyia River, about four miles out of town by the sea. There, we were allowed to walk about to breathe the good air and pick pebbles and shells, a joy I can still not resist.

Before I recovered from the whooping-cough I managed to catch broncho-pneumonia. Our doctor, the same one who had brought me into the world, believed in strong remedies. As my luck would have it, his house was opposite ours and he was very conscientious. He was in and out of my bedroom the whole time, prodding, listening, prescribing.

One day he decided that the best cure for my chest was a round of cups or "ventouses", an old-fashioned French cure. The "cups" looked like wine glasses without a stem and they were applied as if the object was to burn down the house. The back of the patient was first rubbed vigorously with alcohol. A piece of cotton wool was wrapped round the top of a metal rod about six inches long which was then dipped in spirit and lit. The flame was inserted in the cup which, so heated, was applied to the victim's back.

The number of cups applied depended on the severity of the illness and the size of the patient, but the usual number was between eight and twelve. The cups were left on for a few minutes and then removed. The skin inside the cup swelled into a large red blister which later turned blue. As each cup was lifted there was a big "plop", accompanied by exclamations from the torturer varying with the appearance of the blister: the sorer it looked the greater the enthusiasm.

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To "cups" we were subjected many times during our childhood, but on this occasion my doctor prescribed "slit cups". As each cup was removed, each blister was slit with a sharp razor blade and the cup applied again to collect the blood. Still not satisfied, he decided to outdo even himself by placing a mustard poultice over the open blisters. It is no wonder that I called him every name in my five-year old vocabulary.

It must in all fairness be recorded that I soon recovered: whether as a result of the treatment or from fear that it might be repeated, I shall never know.

My first outing was to a birthday party. I wore a new dress, made of Cyprus silk with stripes and beautiful colours. The twin aunts went with me. Small tables and chairs were arranged in the patio for the children. At the end of the party, as I pushed my chair back to get up, one of the legs caught in a crack between the stone flags and I fell sideways. I broke my elbow.

My aunts were too frightened to take me home, so they took me to a lady bone-setter. She beat the whites of several eggs into a stiff mixture, shaped a piece of carton into a mould to fit my arm, filled it with the mixture, fitted it on, bandaged it and covered it with a sling. After that, she "took the fear out" of me by putting me on the pot to relieve myself and then placing a coin at the bottom of a basin full of water and uttering some words. I was at last ready to be taken to my poor mother who still had George in bed in a bad state.

Inevitably, the doctor was called. He unwrapped the bandages, removed the mould, examined the fracture / and

and proceeded, in cold blood and with obvious delight, to pull my arm so as to get the bones in place before applying the plaster. Again I screamed and called him names but to no avail.

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C H A P T E R    V.

PLATRES AND THE PASTIDES

Soon after my accident we went to Platres for the summer. There is nothing I liked better than to be swathed in bandages. A sling was the height of happiness. This time we did not go to a hotel but rented a house. My grandmother Zoe, my mother's older unmarried sister, Dryas, and the twins came with us.

Moving to Platres for three months, end of June to end of September, was a big operation. The houses for rent were unfurnished, so the furniture and all the trimmings - curtains, carpets, linen, kitchen and table ware - had to be transported from Limassol. From an early age, each of us children was taught to pack our own suitcase. The ritual that developed over the years was that the Platres equipment, kept in the garage in winter, was loaded on to a huge lorry which left at crack of dawn with the maids on board. We, my mother and the four children, followed at 8 in the 1920-model Ford saloon owned and driven by the friend of the family George Pastides.

The drive to Platres on the Troodos mountain range was on a narrow road full of hairpin bends and deep precipices. From time to time my terrified mother would let out a big scream and shout "stop, stop". At Alassa, the most dangerous part, she once put her feet over the top of the car door, ready to jump out. She never lived this down, as Michael relished in re-enacting the scene for family and friends.

Michael and I, but particularly Michael, were desperately car-sick. So we travelled equipped with bowls in which to be sick and cans of water for washing them out. When Michael almost lost consciousness we would stop for a few minutes. At Lania we collapsed under "The Royal Oak", a huge oak reputed to be a thousand years old, while those of us who were ambulant would climb up to the platform specially built in the branches of the tree for the children. The Perapedhi bends, a few miles past Lania, were the last straw. Fortunately, the Pastideses often spent the summer at Perapedhi so we stopped there for a meal and for Michael to recover. After lunch we drove the few miles to Platres, to find that the house had already been put into some sort of shape, ready to receive us.

Platres is about three thousand feet high, on the Troodos range. Though in the heart of a pine forest, it has an open view right down to the sea. Fresh streams run through it and picturesque paths wind up and down it. For me it was the nearest place to heaven, not only because of its beauty but also because of its physical proximity to the gods.

It was a fashionable resort favoured by Cypriots as well as visitors from neighbouring countries, particularly Egypt. The presence of the King of the Hedjaz and his family or of princes from Persia added to the mysteries and excitements of Platres life. Some families had their own villas, others stayed in hotels or in houses rented for the season. As the same families went to Platres every year, there was continuity, one summer merging smoothly into the next. The games begun one year were taken up the year after.

At Platres we were truly free. The whole mountain was ours. There was no traffic and no crime, and our parents did not worry about us. We set off in the morning for the prearranged meeting place and returned for lunch, only to leave again after a short compulsory siesta.

It was during that summer of 1925 that the games which were to become the pattern and delight of Platres life

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began. The theme was war. The whole child population of Platres belonged to one of two "regiments" - one was commanded by a boy from Egypt, George Tanos, the other by a boy from Nicosia, Athos Patikis. The girls were the nursing corps. Each regiment had its own headquarters, a secret hideout which could only be approached by the few élite who knew the password. All had proper identification papers and insignia made of leaves strung together with pine needles. The officers carried knives or guns. The medical and nursing corps were well organized, with tents for field hospitals, campbeds and stretchers.

The battlefield was the whole mountain and war raged in real earnest. There was strong animosity between the warring factions and among the members of the opposing regiments. At one time, when Athos Patikis was reputed to have taken a watch from a pile of toy watches exposed for sale on a pavement, the whole Tanos regiment marched through Platres chanting rhythmically: "Athos Patikis is a thief, Athos Patikis is a thief". But there was also the occasion when the other ranks of both regiments joined forces in a mutiny against the autocracy of the leaders who were getting above even their own exalted station. The chant then was: "Athos Patikis and George Tanos are only privates".

As we grew older we came to appreciate more the tranquillity of Platres, the hours spent reading under a tree, carving canoes out of pine cork, the boat races in the stream, the hammock swaying between two trunks, the swing hung from a strong branch, the thrill of soaring higher and higher, of letting go of the ropes, and the ultimate joy of jumping into the abyss of the fern-covered slope.

At Platres we sometimes shared a large house, not only with my grandmother and aunts, but also with my parents' / friends

friends, the Pastides. The Pastides were unique. There was the elderly Mrs. Iphigenia Pastides, George the half-brother from the father's previous marriage known affectionately as "the brother", another brother Solon who lived in Alexandria, two unmarried sisters, Athena and Paula, and the youngest, Socrates, a doctor recently returned from Paris.

The whole family was far in advance of its times. They had none of the artificial prudery that was typical of their age. They were tolerant of moral lapses and they never preached. They were intelligent, they read and they loved beautiful things, attributes rare in Cyprus in those days. Athena was also a tolerable painter and counted bee-keeping among her achievements. The men were sportsmen and the whole family was fond of animals. Above all, they had a highly developed sense of humour and a fine sense of the ridiculous. Athena and Paula were tall, angular and ugly. To me they were graceful and even handsome.

The Pastides often egged us on to mischief but they were equally ready to come to our rescue if we were in danger of being punished. They were our allies in our conflicts with the narrow-minded world. The only advice I received from the Pastides was from Paula when I was twelve. It did not matter, she said, what I did with boys. I could even go as far as kissing them, but on no account must I ever write letters. This, in 1932 in Cyprus, was progressive indeed.

Socrates was a doctor after any child's heart. Our previous doctor prescribed castor oil for every illness from a fever to a boil to be given early the next morning. His visit was followed by tears and a sleepless night and exhortations to my mother to



administer the dreaded dose at dawn to cut the misery short. Socrates on the other hand prescribed at most sweet tasting syrups which, to my mother's disgust, he accompanied with the words "you'll get better whether you take it or not. I am only giving it to you to please your mother".

Socrates' teasing had no bounds. His favourite game with Yannoulla was to pick her up by the hair and lift her off the ground and only let her down after a lot of yelling. He also infuriated her by threatening to marry her when she grew up. With me his tactics were more subtle. One end-of-school-year when I was about ten Socrates found out that I was top of the class; so when he visited my parents in the evening he sought me out and solemnly declared "you know you'll be in all the newspapers to-morrow". Naturally I believed him. For some reason which still escapes me since I continue to suffer the same torment over publicity, I agonized through the night dreading my father's homecoming at lunch with the papers. As if this was not enough Socrates followed up the joke by saying that when I went for a walk on the seashore the next day he would come out of the club which was opposite the promenade and shout in a loud voice: "Do you see that girl over there, she was top of her class". This of course kept me away from the usual daily outing for weeks.

Despite his torturing, we all adored Socrates and came to recognize his peculiar sense of humour for what it was.

The evenings in our house at Platres were gay, particularly at the weekends when the men "came up" from Limassol. The grown-ups lingered over the dinner-table long after we were in bed, then they moved to the terrace under the stars and we could hear them talking and laughing late into the night.

There were the exciting days, one or two each summer, when Mrs. Pastides was at her nagging worst in the kitchen and words were exchanged. These ripples never lasted through the day but we children were thrilled at the revelation that adults also had their arguments.

I have yet to meet such a happy, open relationship between people as that which existed in that house at Platres. None of the Pastides is now alive. Athena was killed in her late seventies by the grocer's boy whom she discovered breaking into the cupboard where she kept her money.

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One of the many joys of Platres was the visits to other resorts: Troodos, to have tea with my mother's friends the Houris, or Pedhoulas. Our favourite was Pedhoulas where my mother's cousin, Michael, ran a hotel with his wife Zoe, a white Russian emigree, both of them warm and lovable. Auntie Zoe's cooking was beyond description. On the way there, my mother would admonish us "Remember, it is not polite to say that Platres is better than Pedhoulas or that the hotel where we are staying is better than theirs". Nothing would have been further from our minds. We loved joining in the games of Uncle Michael's three boys, Lonias, Demas and Shouric, roughly our ages, who were allowed to run wild on the mountain.

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Platres was only marred by the social life at the weekend. Every Sunday afternoon children and adults, dressed in their best, crowded the terraces and gardens of the many hotels, where they sat drinking juices and eating ice-creams and pastries. It was for this that dressmakers had spent several days during the spring discussing patterns, cutting, sewing.

Being unnaturally shy, I suffered agonies sitting on view in an organdie dress and a ribbon of matching colour tied in a large bow on my head to keep my straight self-willed hair in place. Even the thought of Monday was not enough to keep the tears of frustration from my eyes.

It was on one of these Sundays that we returned from the Hotel Monte Carlo to find that George, then nearly two, had almost burnt himself to death. Electricity had not yet been installed in the houses. When evening fell and a candle was lit in his room George held a celluloid comb over the flame. He was so fascinated that he watched it dissolve over his right arm. To escape the pain, he then started running and screaming, the terror-stricken maid trying to catch him. This was George's first attempt at self-arson.

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Platres continued to be a delight through adolescence and young adulthood, our pursuits undergoing a change according to our age: mornings reading, afternoons going for walks with our friends discussing who was the latest flirt of whom and speculating on their future. In the evenings we danced at one of the hotels. It was at Platres that "suitable" engagements took place every year. With families from all the towns of Cyprus coming together at Platres, circumstances were most auspicious. The matches were either pre-arranged by the couple's parents or were subtly encouraged so as to appear as the young people's own choice. Some were truly spontaneous.

I never shed my dislike of the Platres weekend which continued to be an ordeal for me. After the age of seventeen, it would have seemed odd if I did not appear at formal dances on Saturday evening wearing a long evening dress. So I went, to please my parents. I sat there awkwardly hoping nobody would want to dance with me. The young men who thought it their duty to do so and whom I had known all my life were suddenly strangers. They tried to make intelligent conversation instead of the natural nonsense of our childhood. By 11 o'clock I had had more than my fill, but my parents, who were enjoying themselves vastly, would not be torn away.

It was almost a relief when the war broke the social cycle of Platres when I was nineteen.

C H A P T E R VI

CALLIOPE DE CASTAN

The most memorable summer was that of 1933, when my mother's cousin, Calliope, came from Vienna and stayed with us at Platres. Calliope was a legend. She even managed to discover that her father, a Swiss, was entitled to a "de" before his name, and this she promptly adopted. Calliope was an opera singer, reputedly a good one, and she was generally described as a "modern woman". This we interpreted as meaning that she had lovers.

Calliope was beautiful. She was tall and of generous proportions; she had a creamy complexion, large brown eyes and long thick hair arranged simply so as to set off her Grecian features. Her clothes were of the latest fashion and her hats were Parisian models. An aura of mystery surrounded Calliope's life. She would disappear for years, communicating with no-one, and she would suddenly appear and behave as if she had never been away. On leaving, she would weep and vow that she would write often and return soon. Her presence filled the town. She sparkled with intelligence and humour. She was affectionate, warm and kind. She captivated old and young.

We had been brought up on Calliope's adventures. Our excitement at hearing them now at first hand, acted out with mimicry, could not be contained. Her best stories centred round my grandmother, Zoe. Zoe had a very pronounced English accent because her father, a Greek woolmerchant of Constantinople origin, had been born and brought up in Liverpool and had married an English girl. My grandmother only learnt Greek when she came to live in Cyprus at sixteen.

Calliope imitated Zoe's speech to perfection. Her most daring exploit was when, at fifteen, she decided to put  
/ her

her talent to the test. A highly venerated figure in Limassol at that time was an elderly gentleman known as "Teacher Andreas" who, as founder and headmaster of the only secondary school, had educated several generations of Limassolians. The Teacher was a widower and lived with his two young daughters, Calliope's schoolmates and friends. He was then totally blind.

Calliope gave a message to the Teacher's daughters that grandmother Zoe was to visit their father that afternoon. Promptly on time, Calliope appeared, greeted the old gentleman in my grandmother's voice and accent and sat down to have tea with him. The Teacher called his daughters to join them. On seeing who was there, the girls could not restrain themselves and giggled openly, but they did not give Calliope away. A man of impeccable manners, their father was mortified. Calliope kept up the conversation for over an hour, then said goodbye and left. Teacher Andreas severely reprimanded his daughters for their shameful conduct. The girls had to tell him the truth. He did not believe them. Calliope was fetched. Teacher Andreas would still not believe, until Calliope lapsed into her impersonation again. "I should have been angry", the old man said, "but your performance was so perfect that all I can do is congratulate you. You have great talent". Soon after that, Calliope left for Vienna to become a singer.

One night during that summer when Calliope was at Platres, we could not sleep for the noise in the sitting room. Michael and I crept out of bed and looked. Calliope was singing the Cavalleria Rusticana, dancing and shedding her clothes, until she finally stood utterly naked before her audience. It must here be admitted that it was a weekday and no men were there.

/ When

When in Cyprus, Calliope gave one or two recitals. On an earlier visit, when I was about four, she had sung at the Haggipavlu Theatre in Limassol. My only memory of that is the discussion of her performance by my mother and father in the middle of the night. The door between their room and ours was ajar and, as usual, I was awake waiting for them to come home. "She was good", my mother said, "but there were one or two small lapses". } That summer, Calliope gave a recital on Troodos which was attended by the Governor of Cyprus and was a great occasion. She had sung all her songs to Michael and me on walks in the woods of Platres, vividly relating the stories of the operas, explaining the techniques of breathing and teaching us how to bring out the various sounds. Michael showed exceptional aptitude. This was probably the origin of his attempt at a singing career when he was a law student in London.

Calliope married a Viennese Count and died of cancer at the end of the war.

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C H A P T E R V I I

THINKING SESSIONS

My sleep in childhood was filled with dreams, most of them an extension of the day. Some dreams repeated themselves night after night. There was one nightmare that sent me panting into my mother's room more than once: a desolate village street at dusk, me walking down it, a sensation of terror, an evil face peering over the wall of a dry cistern, a vain effort to run on leaden feet.

Yet I was not an imaginative child. Stories in which animals talked and acted like human beings did not appeal to me at that age, because I knew them to be unreal and I disliked anything unnatural. Tales of witches, ghosts and giants did not fall into the same category, I suppose because I had not proof of their non-existence.

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I thought in terms of pictures. Words took definite shapes in my mind: Thursday was a pink sunset, teacher a long staircase, God was thunder. So strong were these associations that, even now, the same words can evoke the same childhood forms.

The culmination of my "thinking" sessions was the effort to capture the universe. This I did sitting alone on the lowest step of the garden verandah, with my feet squarely on the ground. The process was always the same. I began by taking in the sky, slowly, from horizon to horizon. I then moved to the layer beyond what was visible, and to the layer above that, and yet beyond that, and beyond, until I could actually feel the top of my skull lifting and a numbness in my head, my whole body rising and merging into the universe. At this point I would become so frightened that I would shake myself back to earth, with the feeling that I had almost,

/ but



but not quite, touched the heavens. At Platres, the experience was easier and more complete.

I did not indulge in this game often: only when it became an irresistible impulse, three or four times a year. As I grew older, perhaps because my mind became cluttered with other things, or more likely because the process alarmed me, my sessions with the elements became rarer and then stopped.

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C H A P T E R   V I I I .

READING

I was seven and at Platres when I became a subscriber to a Greek weekly magazine for children called "Diaplasis ton Paedon" ("The Moulding of the Young"). The excitement of receiving the first instalment with my name printed on the label is one of my happiest early memories. I immediately sat my brothers and sister and as many other children as I could persuade on chairs arranged in rows on the verandah while I sat opposite them and read aloud. I had not yet begun to suffer from the inhibitions that dominated my later youth.

We all read avidly, anything on which we could lay our hands. In "The Moulding" we read an assortment of the world classics for children. As we grew older, our reading became more sophisticated. The various summers were identified with the books we read. There is the summer of "Les Miserables", that of Charles Dickens, another of Tolstoi. I was a very conscientious reader. No matter how boring the chapter, I read every word, going back if I suspected I might have missed a sentence. I still marvel at my self-discipline in not skipping a single paragraph of Hugo's interminable description of Waterloo.

This love of reading, which was rather uncommon in Cyprus in those days, we inherited from our grandmother Zoe and our mother who, at the age of twelve, almost let her young nephew drown because she was so engrossed in "The Three Musketeers". The house was by the sea and my mother was minding her sister's baby. When she looked up from her book the baby had disappeared. She ran down the steps to the shore, to catch him just as he was happily crawling into the waves.

There were no forbidden books. Our favourite uncle, Stavraki, the husband of Cleo one of the twin aunts, even made a point of lending us daring literature and of discussing it with us. My mother also read to us a great deal, particularly at mealtimes to prod our appetite and at siesta time to keep us quiet. She could read French and English books, translating straight into Greek as her eye travelled over the page.

Some books, like "Pauvre Blaise" by La Comtesse de Segur, were reserved for meals. It was a gift from Paris from our friend, Erakles, who lived in the house above ours and who, as an only child of a well-to-do family, had the luck to travel abroad. Erakles' visit to Paris is also memorable because of his account of the "Musee Grevin". He described in detail the figures and tableaux in wax, the Museum Catalogue helping to complete the picture. As I had just read "The Flower of the Temple", a heartrending story of Marie-Antoinette and the Dauphin in the Temple, Erakles' tales about the heroes and victims of the Revolution portrayed in the Museum fell on most receptive ears. I longed to go to Paris just to see the Musee Grevin.

The Larousse was another favourite book. As we leafed through it my mother told us stories relating to any picture that took our fancy. The most molested pages were those depicting the flags of the various countries.

As a change from reading, my mother played the piano for us. I would sit on a stool next to hers while she played excerpts from various operas and operettas, relating the stories as she

went along. So vivid were the images she created that I remember my disappointment when Tosca failed to step out of the piano as I had expected when my mother said "...and this is where Tosca comes in". In her small but true voice my mother also sang the various arias and songs for us. My own favourites were the songs from "The Merry Widow".

C H A P T E R   I X

PLAYING   GOD

When I was five and Michael four, I decided that we should experiment with immortality. It came to me as we were eating cherries on the verandah that if we swallowed the stones and did not die, it meant that we were gods. I enticed Michael to the railings, away from our mother's eye, and we stood there swallowing the cherries whole. I cannot say how many stones we swallowed but I do remember that as the afternoon wore on I became more and more frightened. By evening I was in a real panic, expecting death at any moment and watching Michael for early symptoms.

Finally, I confided in the young maid who immediately told my mother. The result was a strong dose of castor oil which was the panacea of the day. I did not try to emulate the gods again.

It was around this time that Michael began to show the first signs of artistic talent. Opposite our house there was a school of ballroom dancing. The dance master was a well-known figure, "Kyroudi" (little Cyrus) who had taught two generations of Limassolians to dance. My twin aunts were attending the classes and, naturally, we were taken along. Michael excelled himself, showing a rare sense of rhythm and an ear for music. Not content with the conventional steps he was prolific in inventing new ones.

While I was shy and withdrawn, Michael was outgoing and sociable. When he was barely three, a lady he had never seen before came to the house on one of those formal calls which were then the custom. She was shown into the drawing room while the maid went to fetch my mother.

/ Michael

Michael promptly went in and kept her company, vastly amusing her by enquiring after her "little children and her little cushions" - "ta paidakia sas ke ta maxilarakia sas" - which rhymes in Greek. I do not know why this was thought so clever but it was always quoted as one of Michael's early achievements.

Michael never missed an opportunity to be there when people called. It was not to show off, because he was careful to be as unobtrusive as possible to escape eviction. The reason was probably his passion for observing people. He would come away to describe in minute detail what each one was wearing, their mannerisms and peculiarities, mimicking them to perfection. He greatly surprised my mother's friend the beautiful Maroulla when he was about nine by saying to her: "You have changed your lipstick. Go back to the old one, the colour suited you better".

As he grew older, he made his observations in prose and poetry on the various characters of Limassol society some of whom later found their way into his films.

Michael was a very quiet boy. His favourite pastime was to hide behind a book, reading and sucking his left thumb while passing and repassing his forelock between the index and middle finger of his right hand. Though he occasionally played football in the back yard or in the street, he did not as a rule like rough games. The sport he enjoyed most was swimming and he later also took up tennis.

I cannot remember a time when Michael was not ardent about the cinema. He says that this is because the house in which he

was born had a verandah overlooking the only open-air cinema from which family and friends sometimes watched the latest film.

Actually, his passion for the cinema probably stirred when he first saw a film at the age of four in the old-fashioned Haggipavlu theatre. It had balconies all round and three tiers. It was down the street from the house to which we moved when I was six and from our windows we could watch the audiences going in and out.

C H A P T E R X

THE CINEMA.

One of the most traumatic experiences of my childhood was the day when my mother had promised to take Michael and me to a film in the evening. She went out soon after lunch saying she would be back in time. We dressed early and waited anxiously. The hours passed and she did not come. We crouched on the balcony, one on either side, watching both ends of the street, willing her to appear. When only a few minutes remained before it would be too late, we entertained the daring thought of going on our own, but how would we pay for our tickets. The cheapest seats were then three piastres. After much deliberation about possible sources of finance, we remembered our money boxes. They were clay jars without an opening but with a slit on the side for the money to be pushed in. We sat on the floor of our room and broke them. The coins rolled on to the carpet and we eagerly counted them. We were a quarter of a piastre short. I am not sure whether we were more relieved than disappointed.

Unbelievable though it seemed that anyone should forget a visit to the cinema, my mother confessed that her promise had just slipped her mind.

The cinema dominated our lives. It was by far our favourite entertainment. We saw films of all nationalities: French, American, English, German, Greek. We wept over "Sans Famille" and "En Famille", which we had also read, we held on to our seats with "Ben Hur", deplored the cruelty of the world in "The Sign of the Cross", and were puzzled by a Greek film "Lagiarni" - the Calf. It was the story of a young wife whose husband returned after several years of absence in the war to find her with a newborn baby. The general consternation that greeted the husband's appearance disturbed me. Why was he not happy at seeing his baby and why did his wife drown herself? The twin aunts were no help. They just said I would understand when I grew up. I turned to the maids  
/ for



for enlightenment. They gave me a garbled version of the facts of life which only increased my puzzlement, but I did not dare ask my mother.

There was general excitement when the first "echetiki ke adousa" - sound and song - film arrived in Limassol. It was "The Bohemians of Athens". Its advent had been announced by printed handouts distributed at the cinema and pushed under front doors. It had been advertised by the towncrier riding through the streets in a gharry. The whole of Limassol was at the cinema. The audience held its breath at every sound; then loud whispers filled the auditorium: "Did you hear the door close? did you hear the glass break?"

The first "talkie" was "L'Amour de Minuit". The acoustics were so bad that all we could hear were indistinguishable noises. When occasionally we did catch a word, there were delighted cries of: "He said 'bonjour', he said 'bonjour'!"

Going to the pictures in the summer was a double joy. It meant staying up late, since the cinema moved out of doors and there could be no performance till dark. It was the only day when we submitted to a siesta without argument. Sitting under the open sky and letting one's mind wander to the stars added a further dimension to the film. It is a misfortune that airconditioning has almost killed the open air cinema.

Two other thrills stand out in my memory at that age: the circus and cossacks. The "La Foreste" circus visited Cyprus once a year. I do not know how good it really was, but I remember it truly as the greatest show on earth.

It was also the only opportunity for children to see animals other than the ordinary domestic ones, for there was no zoo in Cyprus. When the circus was in town we spent our whole day there. The "Cossacks of Don" were a White Russian chorus. I can still hear the songs in my head and their beautiful voices. The tales surrounding them enhanced their performance: they were all princes just escaped from Russia. Michael immediately picked up the songs and organized us into a cossack chorus.

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C H A P T E R X I

THE SEA

The feel of the cold sea at dawn is one of the sharpest sensations of my childhood. In May every year, the Municipality put up a wooden hut at the eastern end of the shore of Limassol. The hut extended well over the water, resting on stilts. In the centre, there was a square hole with a ladder going into the water. On either side there were three cabins and a shower.

There was no mixed bathing in Cyprus then. Women and children (boys under twelve) could use the hut up to eight every morning. The rest of the day belonged to the men.

As far back as I can remember, we were taken for a bathe at sunrise, returning home at seven, for breakfast and school. This ritual was followed from May to June, when we left for Platres, and was resumed in September until the hut was demolished in October. We were virtually the only children who bathed in those months. Many parents did not allow their children to go into the sea at all, while others only allowed them to bathe in the warmest months, July and August.

The sea in Limassol at that hour was utterly still; it shone like an iced, blue pond and was as cold. It was easy to believe that Christ had walked on it. Its texture was velvety. Cutting into it was like knifing a smooth, supple mass.

The company at the hut was the same every day: my mother, the twins, aunt Dryas, Paula and six or seven of their friends. At first, their bathing suits were made of cotton with frills and rubber caps to match. The favourite colours were black and red. Soon, they graduated to woollen

costumes not very different in style from those worn to-day. My mother wore a red outfit and was the only one who was there by compunction: she hated the cold sea.

The girls went into the water first and we were lowered by my mother through the hole. They fought over the privilege of holding us and passed us from one to the other so that each would have her turn. We rode on their backs or were held at arm's length under the chin and taught to make the right movements. The water at the hole and beyond was too deep for us to stand. After a while with the girls, and if we were old enough, we were left to ourselves. By holding on to the cross-bars between the stilts we moved to the edge of the shore. There we played and tried to swim on our own. The water was a crystal magnifying glass, each pebble a jewel. Shoals of new fish surrounded us and the sand was studded with beautiful shells.

The young women were intrepid swimmers. Their loftiest goal was to swim to the ships lying in Limassol bay, over a mile out. There was then no harbour. Their vitality, gaiety and laughter became identified in my mind with the joy of living. Michael and I listened to the girls' exploits with admiration and envy. They took off their swimsuits, they said, as soon as they were a few yards from the hut so that they could swim more freely and put them on again before nearing the ships. Even reports of sharks did not deter them. The ships' crews welcomed the mermaids, but for them to accept an invitation to go on board was unthinkable.

I well remember the day when I first floated without support. I was about five and was "swimming" at the edge. I kicked with my legs outstretched, propelling myself by putting one hand down after the other, chasing my shadow at the bottom of the sea. Suddenly, I lost my handhold and the gentle wave pushed me beyond my depth. My panic was wiped out by my joy at realising that I could swim.

These early morning expeditions have marked me for life. A bathe for me means breaking the virgin sea at sunrise, before the rays of the sun have touched its surface, the waves ruffled it or man despoiled its purity. It is a place and a time for meditation, for planning the day, for thinking out problems, for composing beautiful prose.

By the time I was thirteen, "modernity" had overtaken Limassol. The ban on mixed bathing of men and women was lifted. New, permanent "Bains Mixtes" replaced the wooden hut, boasting of all conveniences and a sandy "plage". No longer were we restricted to early morning. But my selfish nostalgia for the pre-civilization days persisted. The sea was no longer my own. I could not enjoy it before it had been ravaged. The crowds destroyed my special communion with it. I still had my daily bathe, but the magic was lost.

In recent years, in old age, the enchantment has been recaptured. At Pissouri, from my brother Michael's house on a remote shore, at break and close of day, in the early spring and late fall, I can merge with the undefiled sea: the cord that binds me to it is whole again.

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There is one childhood memory that still fills me with a sense of boredom: the walks we had to endure as children. Almost every afternoon after school we would go with the maids either to the quay or to the Municipal Gardens. The Gardens were a green oasis in an otherwise arid town and they faced the sea. From time to time the municipality would acquire one or two monkeys or a couple of peacocks for our amusement.

The maids greatly enjoyed these walks as they provided an excellent meeting place with their sweethearts. To me, who longed to be doing my homework so that I could then relax in a cosy armchair with a book, they were hateful. They filled me with a sense of gloom which turned into deep melancholy when the sun started going down and the twilight covered everything with a mantle of grey.

To this day I have to force myself to go into the Garden and my stomach shrinks when I go past it. To this childhood experience I owe my aversion to walking. A walk for me is a most depressing activity.

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C H A P T E R X I I

EXOTIC FIGURES OF LIMASSOL

In the decade between 1925 and 1935, the life of Limassol was dominated by the figure of Theodora, the Empress. Theodora was the wife of Antonis, the younger son of a family of brandy manufacturers. They had a son and a daughter and lived in one of the few three-storey houses of Limassol, on top of the Haggipavlu Theatre, which they owned. Theodora's children were lucky enough to have a free entrance, and they even had private access direct from their house to the loggia reserved for them.

Theodora did everything differently and in excess. She had a car and a chauffeur when everyone else used a carriage. She owned a Cadillac when everyone else used a taxi. She dressed extravagantly and talked with affected simplicity. When she was not talking she was chewing her tongue, moving it from the right to the left corner of her mouth. She always arrived late, making a grand entrance. Her children did not go to school, their toys were imported specially and were larger and more abundant than those of other children. They were given pounds as pocket money instead of piastres. They did not have to take castor oil when they were ill, and they were certainly not afflicted with homework. If they did not like their teachers, they were dismissed.

A summons to go and play with the Haggipavlus was a royal command. Not that we minded an occasional visit, since it gave us the chance to explore the new toys and to observe Theodora's antics at first hand.

No maid stayed with Theodora longer than a few weeks. Full of charm to the outside world, she was a tyrant to her husband and staff. On one occasion, Antonis had the audacity

/ to



to give the maids some ham sandwiches left over from a party. To teach him a lesson for wasting good food on "the servants", she ordered three kilos of best Russian caviar, spread it on the terrace and washed it off with champagne.

Theodora seldom had a bath. She rubbed herself with eau de cologne.

Our hair was carefully examined <sup>for lice</sup> after a Theodora function.

The highlight of Theodora's career was the feud between Antonis and his elder brother, Christodoulos. Christodoulos was the head of the firm and its brains. He was married to a tall, impressive but dull woman called Hermione, and had no children. Theodora declared war and decided that the citizens of Limassol could belong to only one of the two Haggipavlu camps. Theodora had her spies everywhere. Anyone accepting an invitation at Christodoulos' was banned from Theodora's salon, unless she deliberately set out to woo them. If the "loukoumia" offered by Hermione on Christodoulos' nameday were three inches long, Theodora's on Antonis' nameday were double the size. If Hermione "received" in a cocktail dress, Theodora "received" in a long dress.

The conflict reached its climax when Christodoulos stood for Mayor. Theodora poured money into the opposition camp. When Christodoulos lost, she was overjoyed. She commissioned the tallest castor oil trees, the symbol of election failure, and ringed Christodoulos' house with them. That night she gave a lavish party in honour of the new Mayor. But Christodoulos won the next election and remained Mayor for years. Theodora's life assumed new meaning: to divert the limelight from Hermione, the Mayoress, to herself, the Empress.

/ Limassol

Limassol woke one morning to the news that there was a plot against Theodora. The evidence was pebbles on Theodora's verandah. The house was being stoned. Investigations were instituted but the perpetrators could not be found. The Chief of Police was called in. He was a tall, handsome man known as "Pinkerton" after the famous detective of the time. From then on, Pinkerton spent his whole day at Theodora's but the mystery remained unsolved. Each morning saw fresh pebbles on the verandah.

The verdict of the town was that this was another of Theodora's devices to concentrate attention on herself, while at the same time having a comfortably concealed affair with Pinkerton.

There were the days when the news spread that Theodora was dying, that the doctors had spent the whole night trying to save her but that hope had to be abandoned. Two days later Theodora would be giving a ball. It is a fact that at some point Theodora became a morphine addict. But she outlived them all, Antonis, Christodoulos and Hermione, acting her part to the last. Her final role was that of disconsolate widow. Some months after the death of Antonis at the age of 80, Theodora asked a friend to come quickly because she had something terrible to disclose. The friend hastened to her. Theodora confided, in distress: "I have not been able to rest since Antonis died. I am sure he was buried alive".

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Limassol could boast of yet another extraordinary figure: Johnnie's Alexandra. Alexandra's birth was a mystery. Some said her mother had pretended pregnancy to persuade an Egyptian Pacha to marry her, when in fact she had taken the child, Alexandra, from a Cypriot peasant family and passed it off as her own. The mother had instead married a Limassol doctor and brought up Alexandra like a princess, in tulle and organdie, surrounded by governesses. Alexandra even owned a grey pony.

Having fallen passionately in love with the black sheep of a well-known family, Alexandra married him. They lived beyond their means in Paris where he gambled liberally. They had one son. When they could no longer be maintained in France in the style to which they were used, Alexandra and her family moved to Limassol. Alexandra fell in love with a handsome neighbour, Johnnie, divorced her husband and married him. It is said that no sooner did she marry Johnnie than she realised she was still in love with her first husband and that she pined for him to her death.

Alexandra's house in Limassol was the centre of Cyprus society. Her beauty and social graces had no parallel. She had almond shaped blue-grey eyes and a fair complexion, she was tall and elegant and her dresses and hats came from Paris. Her parties are still remembered for their gaiety and originality.

Alexandra loved children. Michael and I were taken to see her when my mother visited her. Michael was her favourite. What I remember most about her are her flowing negligées of exquisite colours, her eyes and the chocolates she offered us.

/ By

By the time I was twelve, Alexandra had become an obscure figure. She was rarely seen out, she received very few people, and it was rumoured that she had fallen into a depression. The cause was the death of her first husband. Like Theodora, Alexandra became a morphine addict and then a complete recluse. Only Michael saw her occasionally. From morphia Alexandra moved to drink and died miserably in 1946. Michael happened to be in Cyprus shortly before her death and was one of the few people to see her at the last.

It is not a coincidence that in a small city there were two wealthy women addicted to morphia. The drug was then used freely to kill the pain of those who could afford to pay for it.

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Two other special characters of Limassol must here be mentioned. They were the sisters Marika and Panayota, known as "the arsenikothyliki", "the hermaphrodites". They were tall and big and thickset with deep voices but their skin was smooth. Their dress never varied: a black skirt and a black coat exactly like a man's. Their stockings were black and they wore men's shoes. We could not make out whether they had bosoms. They were capable and respected business women with a considerable fortune. Their business was the wholesale trade in Cyprus products and they also ran a "khani", a kind of boarding house for farmers and others from surrounding villages.

Marika and Panayota sat in the cafes in the Central Market square and drank coffee with the men. Though they were different, we were neither afraid of them nor did we shun them. We accepted them as a special species, a mixture of man and woman. We sometimes wondered which part was man and which woman, top or bottom, but we were not particularly preoccupied with their sexual status.

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## CHAPTER XIII

### MEMORABLE PERSONALITIES OF LIMASSOL

Certain other members of Limassol society stand out in my memory.

There was the "Saint", Mary Robinson, known to us as "Auntie Mary". She had come to Cyprus from Corfu after losing her husband, and she spoke English and Greek with equal fluency. She was related to Emily's mother, Auntie Amy, and was therefore considered family. Mrs. Robinson was the Matron of the Idiotiki School, the only boarding school for girls other than the Convent. She was a religious woman who did not preach but practised Christianity.

Auntie Mary suffered from severe arthritis which on some days was so bad that she could not walk. When she could no longer carry on as Matron of the School, she lived on her own in a small cottage and was looked after by a middle-aged woman who came in daily. I always marvelled at the cleanliness and neatness of Auntie Mary herself, her bed and her room. Although she spent most days in bed or in a wheelchair, she never stopped working for others: she made the most beautiful patchwork quilts, pullovers and clothes for children and adults, prepared special food for the sick, and taught English, sewing and cooking to all who wanted to learn. Her cottage became the centre to which all the unfortunate people of Limassol gravitated. Though living on a small stipend, Auntie Mary always had something to give: the poor never left empty-handed, she arranged for the sick to be cared for, she comforted the unhappy, she counselled all who needed advice.

Every Thursday Auntie Mary presided over a bible class which Emily and I attended. Though we grumbled at giving up our free afternoon, I was later thankful that we were urged to go. It was in these classes, simple and lucid, that the literary beauty of the New Testament and the teaching of Christ untarnished by dogma were revealed.

Auntie Mary's tea-parties, held regularly in her small garden, were joyful. The delicious scones and cakes were in the best English tradition and we invariably came away with a piece of special cheese, sent to her from Corfu, for my father.

Sister Claudia, a friend and devotee of Auntie Mary, often said that it was a mark of God's special love for Limassol that he had blessed it by sending in its midst such a true Christian.

The one mystery surrounding Auntie Mary was her son. He lived in Egypt but never visited her. When she knew she was dying of cancer at the age of eighty she sent word to him to come. When in the last hours before her death, between consciousness and unconsciousness, she was agitatedly calling her son's name, the young man of the family which was looking after her responded by holding her in his arms and calling her "mother".

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A family that held a strong fascination for me was the Houris. The Houris were a special breed: they were neither Greek nor English. They were Syrian by origin and Nejim Houri was one of the first people to run a hotel in Cyprus. His wife, Adele Houri, was a warm kind lady who spoke broken Greek and little English. She conversed with her family in Arabic but her children would speak nothing but English to one another. There were two daughters, Eva and Lily, and three boys, George, Farid and Anis. They all desperately and pathetically wanted to pass off as English. The sons eventually married Englishwomen and became happily anglicised. Eva and Lily were unmarried when I first knew them and would obviously seek none but an English husband. The Houris and my mother's family, the Efthyvoulos, had always been friends.

Eva was tall, big and ugly. Lily was goodlooking and graceful, with a talent for music and dancing. Despite their English aspirations they had many friends among the Limassolians who ignored their English kinkiness and loved them.

The Houris spent their summers on Troodos and we visited them from Platres for tea two or three times each summer. Eva would take Michael and me for a walk. She dressed as nearly as the Cyprus climate would allow like an English country woman: good, solid walking shoes, a skirt and blouse. She walked determinedly with long strides. Troodos being the summer resort for the British forces in the Mediterranean area, it was full of English people. Before we started, Eva gave us a lesson: "As soon as you see any English people, keep your mouths shut". We would be walking



along happily chatting in Greek when Eva would suddenly switch to English and in a loud voice and an exaggerated Oxford accent declaim: "Oh, children, look at that beautiful bird. Isn't it wonderful?" And Michael would whisper to me behind her back: "Next time she does that, I am going to shout back in Greek".

Eva later married not only one but two Englishmen. Having married her first husband, acquired a son and been very happy living in Palestine where he was practising law, she fell in love with another Englishman, a friend of her husband's, during the war. She decided to divorce her husband and marry his friend. Eva came to Cyprus to break the news to her family. My mother received an agonized call: "Angeliki, please come quickly. There's a crisis here". My mother hurried to the Houris' house to find a distracted Eva who took her into a room, locked the door and told her the story. Mrs. Houris, who was very fond of her son-in-law, was disconsolate. "Please persuade my mother that there is nothing to be upset about. My husband and my future husband are great friends and the whole thing will be done very amicably. In fact, my former husband will give me away at the wedding". And he did, and they all remained friends.

I was then serving in the Royal Airforce in Cairo, when one of the airmen brought me the newspaper he had received from home. It had two full pages of photographs of the wedding of the local squire to a "Cyprus beauty" whose noble provenance and many qualities were extolled with total disregard of the truth. The airman was anxious to have confirmation that his squire had not married beneath him. Of course I reassured him.

I saw Eva and her second husband in England some years after the war. They were living in a castle near Chester with her son by her first husband and two daughters by her second, a very happy likeable family, dispensing gracious hospitality. It was obvious that the incorrigible Eva was amiably lording it over the squire's vassals.

Lily never married. She used her talents to teach music and dancing and produced near-professional shows which were greatly admired in Limassol. She died painfully after a stroke which first paralysed her, then deprived her of speech and in the end made her a vegetable lingering on for many years.

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The community of Limassol, like that of Larnaca, was in my childhood more cosmopolitan than that of Nicosia. A Nicosia businessman, entertained at tea in Limassol, returned to Nicosia full of admiration for the ladies of Limassol who, unlike those of Nicosia, spoke such beautiful English. The "ladies of Limassol" were none other than Auntie Amy, Auntie Mary, my grandmother Zoe and their friend Mrs. Williamson, an English lady from Smyrna whose Greek was as good as her English.

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C H A P T E R . . . X . I . V

SPECIAL VISITORS

"Do you think I should take it down?" my mother asked.

"No, let the poor man have some fun", my father replied.

My parents had just come in and had not noticed that the door between their bedroom and ours was ajar. I craned to hear the rest of the conversation. Eventually I understood. The Bishop was coming to lunch the next day and the question was whether a picture on the dining room wall should be removed. It was a painting of a naked girl among reeds. The Bishop was the Bishop of Kitium, Nikodemos Mylonas, who was to acquire fame as a hero in the uprising against the British in October 1931. He was a close friend of my father and a frequent visitor. He was then in his thirties.

I was very fond of the Bishop because he loved children. I remember my joy when I came up the stairs at lunch time and saw the Bishop's cassock and veil on the hanger in the hall. When I was about five the Bishop sat me on his lap and asked about my lessons at school. "Do you learn about religion?" he asked. "Yes", I said. "Is there anything you don't understand?" "Yes", I promptly replied, "How can Jesus be the son of God when Mary was the wife of Joseph?" The Bishop put me down quickly. "I shall explain that to you when you are older", he said.

There was another occasional visitor that I loved. It was Persephone, the mother of Vedat and Jale. Her husband was a magistrate in Paphos but he sometimes sat on the Bench in Limassol. On those days, they had lunch with us, Persephone spending the day with my mother. Persephone was carsick, so when she arrived she lay on the sofa in the sitting room for a little while to recover. The first time I saw her, I sat at her feet

on a low stool. "What is your other name?" I asked. "Dervish", she said. "I don't believe it. How can you be called Dervish with a Greek name like Persephone". She was one of the few Greek women married to a Turk. Persephone was expansive and warm. She wore extravagant clothes with colourful shawls. Her account of the exploits of her children, a few years older than me and away at boarding school, fascinated me. When I finally met Vedat he was already a judge and I was a lawyer but it was as if we had known each other all our lives.

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When I was about eight, the word flashed through Limassol: an angel has descended on our town. The angel was Cecile, the 19-year old niece of Auntie Amy, Emily's mother, who had arrived from Egypt to stay with her aunt. Cecile's almond shaped clear blue eyes looked out of a beautiful face with delicate features and a complexion that was both milky and transparent, framed by silky blond hair. The head was linked by a slender neck to a slim well-proportioned body which moved with grace. Her charm was enhanced by the sadness in her eyes, her severe black dress and the black veil she wore when she walked out. Her simplicity and warm sweet nature completed the picture. To me she became the epitome of beauty.

Cecile had just lost her mother, her father having died earlier. She had no other immediate family. On her deathbed, Cecile's mother had made her give a solemn promise not to marry the young man she had been in love with since childhood. The reason was that Cecile's mother had been told in great confidence by her closest friend that he was suffering from tuberculosis and did not have long to live. She did not want her daughter to become a young widow. Marriage to another man was unthinkable. Cecile had decided that the only future for her lay in a convent. Her aunt had persuaded her to come to Cyprus before taking the irrevocable step.

All the young men of Limassol fell in love with Cecile but she had neither eyes nor heart for any of them. Eventually she returned to Alexandria. Her young man married the daughter of Cecile mother's closest friend. He never developed T.B.. Knowing that Cecile's beauty and charm could not compete with her daughter's, the friend had resorted to the ruse of eliminating competition by lying to Cecile's dying mother.

A few years later Cecile married a kind and generous man and was very happy. I saw her again when I was at school in Alexandria and she was as elegant and beautiful as I remembered.

Many years later I met the man Cecile had been in love with and his wife. I did not think he was worthy of Cecile. His wife was a better match for him.

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C H A P T E R . . . X . V .

EVA CASTAN

Cleo's wedding in 1928 was made memorable by an incident involving Eva Castan, the wife of Calliope's brother, and yet another of the colourful figures of Limassol.

My mother's account of her first encounter with Eva was one of the episodes of our childhood that greatly amused us. Early one morning in August of 1922, my mother received an urgent message from her aunt Andromache. She was the Castan children's grandmother who had brought them up as their mother Erato had died young. "Come quickly", the message said, "I need you".

My mother hastened to her aunt's house, to be greeted by a distracted Andromache. "Please help me", said the aunt. My mother waited to hear what she could do. "Tantin (short for Constantin, pronounced the French way since the father was Swiss) has brought home a young girl from the Karpass". "As a maid?" asked my mother. "No". "As what, then?" "That's what distresses me" replied her poor aunt.

Tantin had apparently promised Calliope to take her to St. Andreas Monastery at the tip of the Cyprus panhandle, the north-eastern cape of the Island, before she left for her studies in Vienna. At the Monastery he saw a young girl kneading dough in a trough. He was transfixed. He approached her; she was even more beautiful than he had first thought. Her golden hair reached down to her knees, her almond blue-green eyes looked at him innocently through thick lashes, her fair skin was smooth. She was about sixteen, tall and well proportioned. She came from a nearby village. Tantin wasted no time; he asked to see her father and brothers. He negotiated for her and brought her home. "I don't know what to do with her", Andromache said.

Eva was fetched. She was as Andromache had described her. But she was in dirty rags and her beautiful hair was a tangled mass. "The first thing we must do is burn her clothes and give her a bath", my mother suggested. Unlike Elisa, Eva submitted without demur. My mother brushed out her hair and plaited it. For weeks she visited her aunt's house every day to help Andromache with Eva.

Months passed and Tantin's intentions remained obscure. His grandmother's worry grew as she realised that Eva was pregnant. She begged my mother to persuade him to marry her. At last the day was fixed, barely in time for Eva's first daughter, Andromache, to be born in wedlock.

Eva was intelligent and observant. She soon learnt how to behave and how to talk. Teachers were engaged for her education. However, her emancipation was only consummated when John Eliades took on the role of Pygmalion. John was a lawyer, a bachelor, the only son of one of the best families of Limassol. He prided himself as an intellectual. He was tall, though not goodlooking, and his manners verged on exaggeration.

John taught Eva how to dress, how to hold herself, how to eat, how to converse. He taught her to say little. He even taught her English and French. Above all, he taught her how to dance. He became an adjunct of the couple. I do not remember ever seeing Tantin and Eva without John - John always carrying Eva's coat. At the hotels at Platres, or at Maxim's in Limassol, the three dined together every night, but it was John who danced every dance with Eva while Tantin watched. Their tango had no equal.

Years later, when I met Eva in Alexandria after Tantin's death, she swore to me that her relation with John had always been platonic: he was her spiritual mentor and friend, nothing more. And I believed her.

The contacts between Tantin and Eva and my parents were polite and formal, confined to exchanging visits on namedays. Limassol society appeared tolerant of the triangle; yet, without openly condemning, it passively ostracised Eva. I felt she was being unjustly punished for something for which, on the contrary, she should have been admired. I had the impression that Eva retaliated by ignoring the society of Limassol and pretending not to notice its contempt. She glided through it, statuesque, poised, proud and immune.

Only once did Eva resort to defiance. It was on the day of Cleo's wedding. Gharries had been engaged to carry the family to the Church. Eva decided to stake her claim as a close relative, the wife of the bride's first cousin, by sitting in the first carriage. The family was enraged. Eva was unperturbed.

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C H A P T E R   X V I

THE   E A R T H Q U A K E S

The earthquakes of Limassol in 1928 were a source of great excitement. We were then living on the upper storey of a house with a flat roof which my mother decided was not as safe as a tiled roof. At the slightest tremor we were picked up and carried down to the street.

There was the Thurber night when my mother imagined there had been an earthquake. All four of us were in bed with measles. Undeterred, my mother roused my father and the maids. Each picked up one child wrapped in a blanket and a procession set out for my grandmother's house which was built of mud bricks and was safe.

By Limassol distances my grandmother's house was quite far. In the silence of those days of no traffic, four people walking in the street at two in the morning sounded like a regiment. All along the route, shutters were opened and people wondered what was the matter. "Didn't you feel the earthquake?" my parents asked. "At what time?" people countered. They were duly informed. Nobody doubted my parents' word. By the time we arrived at my grandmother's, half the town was convinced there had been an earthquake. By morning there was not a single Limassolian who had not felt the tremor. Only my down-to-earth grandmother, on being woken up and asked to give us asylum, reacted with: "Come in quickly. It's not an earthquake that will kill these children, it's pneumonia".

But there was also the night when there were 120 tremors between midnight and eight in the morning. Again we moved to my grandmother's house, this time with good reason. The earthquakes continued for weeks. The schools closed.

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For greater safety we spent our nights in a wooden hut in the Pastides' garden. It was like a ward in a field hospital, with two lines of beds facing each other. There were about twenty of us, of both sexes and all ages. The tremors were not strong enough to cause any damage or casualties. They were really only a nuisance. When there was a tremor and I was frightened I crept into Paula's bed for comfort. I can still smell her clean but musty smell.

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Around this time I felt the first conscious grief. My aunt Dryas, my mother's older sister, was leaving for Southern Rhodesia to join her brother and sisters there. Dryas had a weakness for me and spoilt me so much that my mother swore that after a day with my aunt I came home with a crooked mouth. It had to be slapped back into place.

Dryas was then about 34 and an old maid. This was to be her second visit to Southern Rhodesia in the hope of finding a husband. I knew that she was homesick when away from Cyprus and that she did not fit into Salisbury society which at that time was mostly new immigrants from the villages of Greece. Although I knew that Salisbury was a much larger and more advanced city than Limassol, to me it was still part of the jungle.

I spent as much time as possible with my aunt wondering whether I would ever see her again. Salisbury was six weeks away from Cyprus, at the other end of the world. I anxiously watched the ornaments on my aunt's dressing table dreading the time when they would disappear. They were an assurance of her presence and a hope that plans might still change. Her departure would become a reality when

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they were packed away. The only tangible reminder of her would then be her bicycle, a beautiful new Raleigh which I was too young to ride. I comforted myself with the thought that she would not have left it behind if she did not mean to return. The days dragged on and the sadness grew, until I prayed for the time to go quickly so that I would be put out of my misery.

Even the joy of opening the huge crate containing the presents my aunt sent from Egypt did not outweigh my longing for her. For me there was a lifesize baby doll and a blue pram which I cherished throughout my childhood. I loved dolls that were real babies and that I could cuddle, bath, dress and feed. I could have no human relationship with young lady dolls older than myself.

These presents from Egypt assumed in later years another significance. They became the gauge of my aunt's affection for us: maximum for the eldest, and a gradé less down the line. Michael's present was a wheelbarrow with tools, Yannoulla's a chair pram with a doll and George's a small horse on wheels. Each of us was photographed with our present and the "snaps" were sent to Salisbury.

There is another doll that I will not forget. More than anything else, it confirmed my suspicion that Santa Claus was no other than my mother. The Christmas before my seventh birthday I discovered that our presents were hidden in the sideboard in my grandmother's dining-room. I went there every afternoon and took out the chocolate coloured baby doll that I knew was for me and secretly played with it, putting it back before I could be found out. Yet even when I saw it on my bed on New Year's Day I was not sure whether Santa had

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not actually put it there. Every year I resolved to remain awake, to catch Santa in the act, but I never succeeded.

No New Year's morning ever matched that of 1925. I had been longing for a tricycle that I had seen in Kyriakides' shop. I knew that my parents were not rich, and I did not even dare let myself dream that it could be mine. At one pound, it was the most expensive toy in the shop. Yet there it was at the foot of my bed on New Year's Day. For months I woke up with a feeling of joy and for years I comforted myself when things went wrong with the thought of a ride in the garden alone on my tricycle.

Eventually, the tricycle was put to other uses: acrobatics with Michael, cheating at meals. My lack of appetite persisted throughout my childhood. The methods of feeding varied and became more sophisticated. In the tricycle era I persuaded my mother to allow me to take a mouthful and chew it while riding in the garden. It never entered her head that I spat out the food the minute I was out of sight and cheerfully returned for more. The day of reckoning came when we moved to a first-floor house that had no garden. I had to tax my ingenuity, but I soon found a way. There were large pots of plants at the end of the hall. In one of them grew "umbrellas" - reeds with umbrella-shaped tops. It was many weeks before my mother found my mouthfuls and put two and two together.

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CHAPTER XVII

TACHYCARDIA

It happened for the first time while I was being put to bed after one of my outings on the pier. It was the daily promenade of the young people of Limassol. Up and down they walked, mostly in separate pairs of two girls and two boys. Their nearest approach to courting was a smile as they passed. Michael and I were towed by the twin aunts, Athena and Cleo, as chaperones, especially when their girl friends could not accompany them. We observed and knew all the secrets of young Limassol. Sometimes we were amused but more often we were bored.

One windy day in October, Athena had a rendez-vous on the pier with Stavros, her future husband. From the window we saw her approach the house and guessed she was coming for at least one of us. Her determined look told us she would not easily be put off with excuses of homework. We decided that the best strategy was avoiding action. We hid in the depths of the garden. Athena hunted the house. She then came out on the back verandah and called. We did not move. Her calls turned to agonised cries as she thought of Stavros walking up and down the pier, his patience ebbing. She became desperate. I could not bear it. I came out and offered myself.

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My mother came to tuck me in. I could not lie down but jumped straight up like a celluloid doll with a weighted base. My mother thought it was a game, but she soon realised that when I lay flat I could not breathe. I then began to shake so violently that it was almost like convulsions. My father was brought. A doctor was obviously needed urgently, but there was a complication. My father insisted that on no account could our own doctor be called because a man had just died of meningitis in his arms. It was decided to summon  
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another doctor, a Greek from Constantinople who had recently settled in Limassol.

He immediately diagnosed paroxysmal tachycardia for which there was no remedy and no cure but there was also no real danger. "Her heart", he said in his refined accent, "is like a horse that has taken the bit between its teeth and bolted. It's no use whipping it. When it exhausts itself it will slow down". So he prescribed nothing. This was the first time that a doctor had not forced castor oil down my throat or given me a painful quinine injection. The only medicine was Turkish coffee which, at six, was a great treat.

It is to Dr. Gabrielides' calm approach that this experience, which might otherwise have had a lasting traumatic effect, never caused me a moment of concern or fear about my heart or my health. His smile, his first words and the absence of drugs or instruments immediately convinced me that there was truly no cause for alarm. I even evolved the theory that palpitations were good exercise for the heart muscles and made them stronger. This conviction was so deep that when nine years later I found myself in hospital in Alexandria without family or friends, with measles complicated by palpitations, I was not at all frightened. I persuaded the doctor, who thought I would die if I made a sudden movement, that there was nothing wrong with my heart and that the best cure was to let me out of bed and send me back to school.

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I spent the month after the first attack in bed propped up on pillows day and night, with the household revolving round me. Inevitably, the rumour spread that I was a cardiac case and wasn't it bad luck on my poor parents. My patron saint could not plead that his duty ended with infancy; he had to lend a helping hand.

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His intercession was successful. But for years I was not allowed to exert myself in any way. I could not run or dance or jump or do any of the normal activities. For months I was even carried up the stairs. My aunt Dryas gladly took on the labour. While all my friends looked on me with pity, I could not admit that I was secretly happy at not having to do any of the forbidden things.

At first my pulse was so quick that it could not be counted. When it became stable at around 120, I was allowed to go to school. I remember my mother announcing to Paula triumphantly one day: "centvingt", in the hope that the nuns had not taught me to count in French as far as that. When I said "so my pulse is 120 to-day", my mother promptly reparteed: "I was telling Paula that we had no wine - 'sans vin'". I did not for a moment believe her but I marvelled at her quickness of mind.

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CHAPTER XVIII

F E A R S

In two of the seaside towns of Cyprus, Limassol and Larnaca, the feast of "Cataclysmos" is celebrated with a Fair on the seafront. "Cataclysmos" means "the Deluge" and commemorates the biblical deluge. The villagers come down from the hills to see "the blessed shore", there are stalls with all manner of delights and boat trips for the intrepid. We always went to the Fair, for the amusement both of ourselves and of the maids. We were all given generous pocket money to spend as we liked.

I must have been about four, and we were starting for the Fair. "You are not to leave our side", the maids said, "because there are jewesses here from Palestine who have come specially to steal Christian children and take them back to their country. They drain their blood into wine to use for the unleavened bread they make at Easter. They put them in barrels lined with nails and grind them. They particularly like children with fair skins and blue eyes like yours".

I do not know whether the "jewesses" were described to me or whether the picture I have carried in my memory was of my own making, but I can still see them: tall, large, with green eyes, dressed in bright long skirts and wearing golden pirate earrings like gypsies.

The joy of Cataclysmos was extinguished. Fear suffused me. Instead of the stalls and their wonders I had eyes only for the jewesses. I imagined them everywhere. I clung to the maids and tried to look even smaller than I was. At every turn I saw coloured skirts. I stopped breathing,

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there was ringing in my ears and beating in my temples.

Suddenly I was alone in the crowd. I had lost the maids. Panic has wiped out memory. I found myself in tears in the main Police Station, on the seafont, where I was retrieved and unjustly scolded.

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Many were the fears struck in our hearts by the maids.

One spring day I was collecting "oxinoudia", a yellow flower that grows wild in the fields and has a delicious lemony taste. I was happy. I picked up some with dog refuse on them. I ran to the maid and asked her to help me clean my fingers. "You know what happens when you get this on your hands", she said. "Your fingers melt away". The sky collapsed. I spent the next weeks watching the fingers of my right hand, expecting them to disappear at any moment. Fearing the answer, I did not ask the girl if the process would be immediate or gradual. Every day I woke up not daring to look at my hand and every night I went to sleep praying that it would still be there in the morning.

I also made vows, "taximo", to several saints to save my fingers. It is a custom in the Greek Orthodox Church to make pledges to particular saints, in return for the grant of a wish. This is probably the successor to the ancient Greek sacrifice to the gods, "thysia". Some saints are identified with miracle producing icons. In Cyprus, the most famous is the Virgin of Kykko Monastery in the hills, an icon reputed to have been painted by St. Luke. There is also St. Andreas at the tip of the easternmost cape, St. Barbara near Limassol, who specialises in eye cures, and a host of  
/ chapels,

chapels, "ekklisakia", dedicated to various saints. There was a small shrine of St. Marina near our house, at which we always made a vow before our school examinations. Years later, when I was at boarding school or at University abroad, my mother never failed to mention in her letters that the candle of St. Marina would be lit for me on the eve of my exams.

The pledges could be anything: one or two piastres, a candle, a bottle of olive oil for lighting the "kandyli". The pragmatic Greeks ordained that the vow would hold for years. It did not have to be honoured immediately.

I had a friend who, being frightened of flying, promised several pounds at takeoff. As his fear lessened, so did the pledge. By the time the wheels of the plane touched the ground it had dwindled to a few shillings, to be donated some day in the uncertain future.

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At five, I happened to confide in one of the girls that I liked a boy of glamorous background one year older than myself. As his father was an Athenian, he had an Athenian accent and wore Athenian clothes. His camel hair coat was the last word in men's fashions. If I did anything to annoy the maid, or when she wanted to secure my silence about a meeting with her boyfriend, she would say: "I'll tell your mother about that boy". I did not even understand where my naughtiness lay, but the maid's warning convinced me it was wrong to like the boy. Because of its unknown nature, the fear grew to such proportions that I truly envied the lucky children who were held at ransom with such ridiculous threats as "I'll call the policeman".

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/ Fears

Fears tormented my childhood. There was the recurring nightly fear between being put to bed and going to sleep. I begged my mother to leave the light on. The fear turned to agony if I knew my parents would be out for the evening, as they often were. I would lie stretched out stiff on my back so that I could watch every corner of the room without having to move, hardly daring to breathe, with all my senses taut. I counted the hours, then the minutes, until I heard their key in the lock.

At Platres there was the added fear of snakes. I stripped my bed every night before climbing into it to make sure there was no reptile coiled between the sheets. As an extra precaution, I lay curled up in the top half of the bed with the cover folded under my feet so that a snake crawling up the bottom of the bed would not reach me.

Fear lurked everywhere. The slightest sound inside or outside the house made me immediately alert. Above all, I was frightened of the supernatural: visions of saints and apparitions of the dead. There is one day of the year which is known in Cyprus as "the Day of the Souls". When I was four, a maid told me that on the eve of that Day if you look into a mirror at midnight you will see a procession of coaches and a hearse drawn by white horses bearing a beautiful girl. For years I did not sleep that night, keeping my head under the blankets for fear my eyes would stray to the mirror over the dressing table.

I shared a room with Yannoulla while Michael shared one with George. Yannoulla and George, comforted by our nearness, fell asleep immediately. Michael and I stayed awake. Michael's fears were magnified by the presence in their room of the "iconostasion", a small cupboard with a glass door in which

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the household icons were kept. A shelf below the iconostasion held the "kandyli", a glass filled with water and olive oil on top of which floated a small wick burning constantly with a soft unsteady flame. The flame played on the images of the saints lending them movement and changes of expression. Michael's imagination did the rest.

As soon as my parents left the house and the maids went to bed, Michael ran from his room pursued by the saints and crept into my bed. Sometimes we slept a little but more often we just lay listening for any unusual movement, waiting for the first sound of our parents' return. We did not talk; our own voices frightened us. As the room faced the street on the ground floor, our parents' footsteps and voices heralded their approach. It was important that we should be alerted well in advance because Michael had to run to his bedroom through theirs. The only other way was through the hall, in full view of the front door. We were never found out. My mother invariably reported to my father that the children were fast asleep.

The kandyli was abolished when George stood on a chair and bent over the flame, his shirt catching fire. As he had done at Platres some years earlier, he started running and screaming. It was many weeks before the severe burn healed.

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Fear might strike out of nowhere. A sinister face was enough to conjure up terrors of torture. There was the young man on a motorcycle with the evil expression. He tried to speak to me when I was playing behind a boat on the shore. I ran to the maids and stuck to them. I suppose he was after one of them, but I was convinced he was a kidnapper. This became a certainty

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when I saw him riding around our house a few days later. It was many weeks before I would venture out alone. I now realise that my subconscious was then saturated with the Lindbergh kidnapping.

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There was the special fear of Charithea's Evil Eye. Charithea was a Limassol lady with big protruding blue eyes and dyed blond hair. We were kept out of sight when she visited my mother and were told to avoid her at all costs, run away or turn a corner when we saw her and never talk to her. This was not always easy since Charithea lived opposite the Convent School and spent a lot of her time looking out on to the street through the slats of her shuttered window, emerging when she saw something of interest.

Charithea's Evil Eye was an undisputed fact. What greater evidence could there be than this incident. My mother and her friend Maria Pastides were wheeling their two-month old babies in their prams in the Municipal Gardens when they met Charithea who had recently lost her own baby. Charithea looked at the babies and said: "Your babies are alive, only mine is dead". Within a few weeks both babies were dead. Charithea never had any other children.

On the one occasion when Charithea managed to corner us in the street, she expressed great admiration for Yannoulla who was then about three. That evening while having a game with her one of the maids sat her on the table in the playroom. Yannoulla fell off and bruised herself. The power of Charithea's Evil Eye was once again confirmed.

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Worst of all were the secret fears, those that I did not dare admit even to myself. I knew from the film "Lagiarni" that to have a baby without a husband was the ultimate shame. But what if one became pregnant accidentally. I prayed that such a fate would pass me by, while at the same time keeping a close watch on my figure in case it should start to grow.

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No fear compares with the agony of one summer at Platres, when I was eight.

As usual in the afternoon, we went for a walk on the "top road". That day, we strayed far. We were dusty, tired and thirsty. Challenging us from the unfenced vineyards at the edge of the road were thousands of bunches of juicy blue grapes. We stepped off the road and picked some. The grapes never reached our watering mouths.

"I've caught you!" screamed a witch from behind a bush, catching one of us by the hair. We were paralysed. "You shameless thieves, I'll report you to the police and you'll be put in jail". Our excuses and entreaties were in vain. "Either you pay me for one oke of grapes right now, or you go to prison". The price of an oke of grapes was a mere two piastres, to us a whole fortune.

At last she compromised. "I'll be here to-morrow at the same time. Be sure to bring the two piastres, or else....."

We ran to our rendez-vous with the maids on the slope of the hill called "the Eggyolk". We did not dare tell them. They produced sandwiches and drinks. Nothing would slide down our constricted throats. We began to sing unconcernedly, swinging our legs, our eyes alert. As the minutes passed and no policeman appeared we gained confidence.

Suddenly, our voices failed, our breathing stopped. Rounding the hill was the unmistakable figure of the rural constable. He was an unusually large man, with a red face. He wore a khaki uniform, like a policeman. The insignia of his office in bronze shone on his left arm. In his right hand he held a heavy staff like a Bishop's. He was the fairy tale giant who swallowed children in a single gulp.

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We sat frozen, waiting for the handcuffs. We could hardly believe our luck when the sound of the constable's heavy tread receded as he walked on without as much as a look in our direction.

The relief was shortlived. How could we ask for two piastres without telling our mother why we wanted it. It was not the custom in Cyprus then to allow children regular pocket money. We were only given money for a particular purpose, returning any change. To tell our mother was unthinkable. To lie was equally impossible. Arrest and prison were the only course. Our punishment, we thought, would be doubly severe. Being the children of a lawyer, we could not plead ignorance of the law. The shame and ignominy on our family were the most painful part of the vision.

I flushed and then I shivered as the magnitude of our crime hit me. Being the eldest, I was solely responsible and the only one who deserved to be punished. I prayed that the end of the world would come that night, that the long awaited Halley's Comet would collide with the earth, and even that I would die in my sleep.

Finally, we were put to bed and the lights were turned off. I stared into the darkness, thinking of those happy children, like the Empress's, whose fortunes could be counted in pound notes. I was awake all night. At dawn, I left my bed in despair. I contemplated escape and disappearance. But there was nowhere to go. I decided there was no alternative but to confess. I would present myself at the Police Station as soon as it opened and make a clean breast of the crime. I was almost calm.

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And then, a flicker in my heart exploded into a flame in my head. Long ago, my father had given me some coins, fresh from the mint. Almost blinded, I stumbled to my bedroom. My heart thumping, my ears buzzing, my eyes dim, my hands shaking, I groped for the shoebox under my bed. What if the coins did not add up to two piastres. For several minutes I did not dare find out. I shut my eyes, said one last "Hail Mary", promised her several candles, and looked. Sparkling among the doll's clothes was one whole golden piastre. My fingers explored the box. Perspiration ran down my face. I touched another coin and then another. From their shape I knew they were half piastres. I was saved.

There was now only one more problem: to entice the maids back to the locality of the vineyard and to pay the old woman without being seen. The afternoon came at last. After an initial argument, we retraced our steps, leaving the maids on the "Eggyolk". We ran in triumph to the vineyard, the two piastres tied in a knot in my handkerchief held tightly in my right hand. We stood on the edge of the road calling the witch, in the traditional way of addressing an elderly village woman: "Auntie, Auntie.....". There was no reply. Perhaps it was too early. We continued our walk and stopped on the way back. Our voices bounced off the opposite hill and refolded on themselves.

We tried again the next day, and the next. We never found the old woman. Age turned my two piastres from gold to copper.

CHAPTER XIX  
FEAR OF THE DEAD

As we grew older, fear of the dead became the paramount source of terror. If anyone I knew had died, I could not close my eyes without seeing his disembodied face like a mask of ancient tragedy floating towards me. Yet my first memory of death is not tainted by fear. It was the death of my kindergarten teacher, Magda, a beautiful girl of 19 who died of T.B. when I was three. Then there was Lygia, five years my elder, who died of thalassaemia when she was fourteen. Magda is just a hearsay memory filled in later by imagination but Lygia I remember well. I did not grieve for her. Whether because grief for the dead comes later in life or because guilt at not liking her overshadowed all other feeling, I cannot say. Nor was I frightened. I was fascinated by the descriptions of the white bridal dress and the white coffin gilded with gold in which she was buried. The effect on her mother, who did not leave the house for years, thrilled me.

My strangest reaction to death was when the sister of the schoolmaster who taught me Greek died. He sent a message on his expected day that he would not be coming for the usual lesson because his sister had died of pneumonia. In the heartless manner of children, my first feeling was one of relief at missing a lesson. But as the time approached for my next lesson two days later I worked myself up into a state of panic. I felt I could not face my teacher. I did not know what to say to him. When he walked in with a wide black armband I was completely undone.

I sat at the dining table where we had our lessons with my teeth chattering. All I could think of was the armband and how to avoid looking at it. After a while Mr. Carlettides

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delivered me to my mother with the recommendation that I be put to bed as I was obviously unwell. My mother's expert hand went to my brow and she knew I had no fever. I am not sure whether she realised what had disturbed me, but she sent us all out for a walk by the sea. It took all my willpower to divert my thoughts from the black armband to the pebbles on the beach.

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A few years later my piano teacher died. He was thirty-three, the only son of Zoiro, the landlady of the house in which Michael was born. It was summer and we were at Platres. For days we followed with mounting anxiety the course of Kokos' illness, typhoid. One day there was hope, the next there was none. Snow was dug out of the pits of Mount Olympus, the highest peak of Cyprus, where it had been packed in the winter for just such an emergency. All the doctors of the island were called for consultation, but Kokos' heart gave way.

There was general mourning. Kokos was his family's only support, the centre of their existence. The family had been reduced to poverty by the early death of the father. Because of his talent for music, Kokos had been sent to Greece to become a pianist, at great sacrifice.

Kokos was the music teacher at the Limassol Gymnasium, the state secondary school, and he also gave private piano lessons. His pupils loved him and tortured him. Because of his mildness, he was unable to keep discipline, and he was often driven out of the class, suffering agonies of humiliation and frustration.

I grieved for Kokos and also for his mother, his sisters, aunts and grandmother. I felt remorse at having been such a careless piano pupil. I was glad that my mother had

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not yielded to my pleas to discontinue my piano lessons. Mixed with these feelings was a kind of thrill at having been so near the dead hero. I had been his first pupil, I had grown up on his mother's lap.

I dreaded the approach of night. I was sure that Kokos would visit me. His ghost was everywhere. Sometimes it was his severed head that hovered over my bed, at other times he walked through the door in a shroud. His two magnified eyes watched me from the four corners of the room. The electric light was no remedy. Relief came only with dawn.

I did not share these fears with Michael. Neither he nor I could bring ourselves to talk about them, but I sensed he was suffering the same agonies. We could not even find comfort by creeping into each other's bed as in our early childhood.

The thought that I would have to visit Kokos' family on our return to Limassol paralysed me. This would be my first confrontation with the reality of death. As the day drew near, terror grew. I lost my appetite, I could not read, I jumped at every sound, I trembled. I wished I could put an end to my misery by leaving Platres immediately to face the inevitable.

At last we were in Limassol. Our first call was to Kokos' mother. Michael and I went together. We arrived at the house with our faces reflecting our sorrow. The family were now living in the upper floor, the floor where Michael was born. The street door was ajar, and we went in. Calamity struck. We began shaking with laughter. We hid under the stairs and tried to compose ourselves. The more we tried the more we laughed. Several times we went half way up the stairs, only to turn back convulsed. When we made it at last, we sat tense and unnatural, feeling nothing, looking at our feet and not saying a word.

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There is one death that I remember with amusement. We were leaving the Municipal Garden late one afternoon when we saw a lorry standing outside a surgeon's clinic. There was a big commotion inside. It sounded as if a heavy piece of furniture were being carried down the stairs by several men, who were shouting the usual directions that porters call out to each other: easy there, more to the left, keep it straight.

We went to the entrance and looked up. The piece of furniture was a dead bishop. He was being manoeuvred down the narrow staircase, seated in all his regalia, brocade robes, cassock and black veil, on an upright wooden armchair to which he was tied with rope. The lorry would carry him to Nicosia. It is the custom in the Greek Orthodox Church to bury Bishops and Archbishops in a sitting position, a custom broken in 1977 by Archbishop Makarios who had asked to be buried in an ordinary coffin.

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/ C H A P T E R

C H A P T E R . . . X . X . .

T H E   C O N V E N T   S C H O O L

My earliest memories of school are of the Nuns' School, "Terra Santa". I first went to the convent for a year when I was three, but I changed to another, "Idiotiki" (the "Private School"), when I was four because we moved to a house at the other end of town. My only memory of my first year at the convent is of a crucifixion: a girl placed by the nun against the classroom door which was inlaid with a white wooden cross on a blue-grey background, her feet together, her hands spread out above her head. I cannot be sure whether this picture is real or imagined. One thing is certain: it could not have frightened me because when my parents decided a year later to send me back to the convent I was overjoyed.

The "Idiotiki" was the kind of school where pupils were given marks according to their parents' social standing. My parents were unhappy about this, but what finally made up their minds to remove me was when I innocently related that the teachers had asked me whether my mother and father had wept when Haggipavlou, of whom my father was a known supporter, lost the municipal election.

I spent a summer of blissful anticipation at the thought that I would be returning to the convent. I woke every morning and lay in bed savouring the joy. I longed for the day when we would leave Platres so that I could have my black uniform fitted in time and the white collars embroidered with one daisy on either side, starched stiff and shining.

I stayed at the convent for seven years. I loved the school and the nuns. I defended them with passion against all criticism from rival schools. Yet my years at the convent were not easy. The curriculum was overburdened. The week was divided into two English days, two French and two Italian, when we had to speak the language of the day. Each day was divided into two hours of English, two of French and two of Italian. In

each we were taught not only the language but also history, geography and mathematics. Each teacher forgot that hers was not the only lesson and each plied us with homework that would have been too much on its own. Our target was the public examinations: "Ordinary" and "Distinction" in English set by the Cyprus Education Department, "Certificat d'Etudes" in French and "Certificato Italiano" in Italian set by the French and Italian Governments and conducted by examining boards which visited Cyprus at the end of the school year.

In addition, I had private lessons in Greek every other afternoon and piano lessons twice a week. Paroxysmal tachycardia was a natural consequence and a welcome relief. I would have had no time to play anyway.

My favourite relaxation in the evenings was Maria, filed in my memory as "the intellectual maid". Maria had finished the fourth form of her village elementary school. I still remember her neat symmetrical handwriting. She often wrote letters to her family and she copied from our schoolbooks her favourite poems and stories. She joined in our homework.

It is to Maria that I owe my introduction to Cypriot poetry. She knew by heart all the works of Vassilis Michaelides, the epic poet of Cyprus, and she recited them with simplicity and feeling. I sat at her feet on a stool while she ironed, the tears running down my cheeks at the tragic tales of the Ottoman occupation of Cyprus. I am thankful to Maria that my first contact with the history of that period came through Vassilis Michaelides and not through some bigoted writing of which there are so many. Michaelides describes with sympathy and understanding the conflict between the humane feelings of individual Turks in positions of authority and the orders they were obliged to carry out. It was not long before I could recite the poems with Maria in a duet.



The nuns were of various nationalities and all walks of life. They were divided by sharp class distinctions. The elite were the teachers. At the other end of the scale were the menial workers while in the middle were those who kept the records and stores, who answered the front door and showed visitors into the parlour. Though all the nuns were dressed alike and never spoke about their families, the children soon classified them according to background.

Sister Claudia, the only English nun, was in a class apart. She dominated the school and the Mother Superior. Her strong, lively personality and the fact that she was English in a British colony gave her a special standing. Sister Claudia was obviously a social cut above the other nuns and a snob. She loved being asked to tea in the "high society" homes of Limassol, where her charm, breeding and open-mindedness made her a favourite.

There was nothing she did not know about the two English princesses, Elizabeth and Margaret Rose, who were about our age. Sister Claudia's excitement reached its climax when two sisters, Theo and Zoe, bearing the good family name of Codrington-Smith, of Navarino fame, came to the school. Zoe had suffered a mild attack of poliomyelitis and possessed exactly the same tricycle as the Royal princesses. Sister Claudia could not contain herself.

Sister Claudia was highly intelligent, she had an exquisite sense of humour, a talent for mimicry, charisma and instinct. Unlike some of the nuns, she smelt of soap. Her white cuffs and wimple sparkled. Cleanliness was one of her favourite topics. Her expressive hands were well cared for with nails finely manicured.

Sister Claudia believed that not a day should pass without a good laugh. This, she said, was essential to health, because it exploded the small blisters on the liver releasing their beneficial liquid into the bloodstream. She made a point of amusing us. Her account of the flea that plagued her during mass one day is unforgettable. It had started tickling her between the toes of the left foot as soon as she had knelt down. There then followed a live reconstruction of its passage through the various parts of her body to her neck. Her contortions to dislodge and expel it certainly broke the blisters on our livers. Yet there was not a nun we feared more than an angry Sister Claudia.

Sister Claudia was a born teacher. Never have I known anyone who so delighted in imparting knowledge. Her method of teaching English grammar was unique. Only a moron could fail to understand. Her illustrations were so imaginative that the dullest rule became a living story. Her beautiful black eyes would flash and sparkle, her hands, her whole body, would become part of the lesson.

We suspected that Sister Claudia's reading extended well beyond the works approved by the Roman Catholic Church. She managed to put together a sizeable library of English literature and she encouraged us to read by lending us the books, whetting our appetites by an animated preview of their contents: she would read us a chapter or two; we had to borrow the book if we wanted to know what happened next. When I saw Sister Claudia a few months before her death in an Old Nuns' Rest Home near New York she told me how much she was enjoying rereading the classics. And for the first time she spoke about her family in England and how happy she was at re-establishing contact with her brothers after many years of separation.

She was then eighty-seven and as lively and alert as ever. She confessed that she had not slept the night before in anticipation of our spending the day together. Nor had I. She was thrilled when I told her that all the higher institutions I had attended after leaving the convent were amazed at my exceptional knowledge of English grammar.

At one stage Sister Claudia's liberal ideas almost caused a mutiny. Ellie, who had left school the year before, eloped with the boy she loved. Her parents had refused to let her marry him for no other reason than his poverty. They were pressing her instead to marry a much older, well established doctor of outstanding physical repulsiveness. Ellie gathered flowers from the garden and told her mother she was taking them to Sister Claudia for her birthday. She joined Takis instead and they both disappeared.

The whole of Limassol was on the side of the young couple who were very likeable and exceptionally handsome. The Mother Superior was appalled. She called Ellie's younger sister into the parlour and gave her a lecture about her sister's shameful behaviour which was a reflection on the school. Sister Claudia, on the other hand, came into the class that morning rubbing her hands in delight, a sure sign of good humour, and with a conspiratorial smile on her face. She then treated us to a lesson on love. Love, she said, was natural and beautiful and nothing to be ashamed of. If Ellie and Takis really loved each other they had done the right thing even if it provoked displeasure in some quarters. "After all", she continued, "I knew of a girl who stepped over her fainting mother's prostrate body to join the convent, driven by her love of Christ". The arguments raged until Ellie and Takis reappeared two days later duly married.

Sister Claudia had a good contralto voice and was a creditable piano player. Her aptitude for designing costumes and choosing fabrics and colours was almost professional. Her finest hour was the annual School Day when her talents combined in the production of plays, tableaux and dances which soon became the highlight of Limassol summer events. It was during one of these displays that I was mortified nearly out of existence. I was dancing the sword dance with the rest of my class in my Scottish outfit conceived by Sister Claudia when my father's voice came up from the audience in a loud enthusiastic "bravo, Stella!"

I must here relate another incident that had a profound effect on me. It happened when I was barely five and still at the Idiotiki School. I had been cast as an angel in the Nativity Tableau of the Christmas Show at the Haggipavlou Theatre.

I was standing in the auditorium waiting for the rehearsal to begin. Lilly Houry, the producer, came on the stage holding up a dress for all to admire. It belonged to Gabie, another angel. It was of white organdie, the skirt consisting of two frills, the bodice ending in two bows on either shoulder. The whole dress was not longer than twelve inches. It was a dress for an angel.

I flushed. I knew that my party dress was yellow, and there was no time to make me a white one. How could I appear as an angel. Then I comforted myself: my mother is sure to think of something.

The day came. I stood in the wings wearing my cousin Emily's school "dress uniform". Emily was one year older and five sizes larger than myself in all directions. Admittedly, the uniform was made of pure silk but that did not save me from ridicule. I cringed in the shadows backstage, hoping to escape attention. Adults and children went past me and laughed aloud.

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Despite the heavy curriculum, the convent had a gay atmosphere. A perennial source of amusement and exasperation was Soeur Jeanne, an Italian nun who acted as doorman-usher and ringer of bells. She also kept the stationery store. Soeur Jeanne could not bear untidiness and would go round picking up bits of paper and fluff from the floor. She did this by bending her knees as if to kneel, her body remaining erect. Soeur Jeanne was also a kleptomaniac. She scoured the classrooms during break collecting anything left on our desks. A few months later we would see it exhibited for sale in her stationery cupboard. The memory of my beloved new penholder at the back of a shelf in Soeur Jeanne's cupboard still hurts. She would sell it after I left school at the end of the year. It was silver mauve with a matching rubber ring to ensure a good grip, the only one of its kind in the shops, bought with my savings. I had left it on my desk in the French class before break and though I went back for it almost immediately Soeur Jeanne had been there before me.

The best day of the week was Thursday. Only the older girls went to school on that day, for a single lesson: "Politesse". This was taught in French, out of a thick book. On the cover was the picture of a lady in a Pompadour dress and a gentleman of the same period bowing before her. Some of the "politesse" lessons were unique. When a lady drops her handkerchief, we were taught, we must not pick it up for her lest we embarrass her if it is not quite clean. We should just point it out and

let her pick it up herself. One never carries a handkerchief in one's pocket or handbag folded. It should be shaken out beforehand. The only time one does not say thank you is when the host or hostess indicates the guest's place at the table. The logic of this was never made clear, but I always find myself inhibited from saying thank you when shown my place at the table. The well known rule that a gentleman or a younger person walks on the outside of the pavement was explained. The person on the inside is better protected from "bousculement" and other hazards. A gentleman enters a coach last after helping the ladies up but he jumps out first to help them alight.

It was in the politesse lesson that we were taught how to write letters and address envelopes. And it was in the politesse lesson that we learnt the origin of a "pataques", a wrong liaison of words in French. A gentleman had picked up a lady's handkerchief and was trying to find its owner. "Pat a moi", said one lady, "pah a moi", said another, "pac a moi", said a third. "Je ne sais pas-t-a qu'est ce", said the exasperated gentleman.

Religion was not taught at the school except to the few Roman Catholic girls. Yet we were all influenced by Roman Catholic teaching. We learnt to say our rosary and the more impressionable among us even imagined they had a vocation. We all became equally excited when a Cardinal visited the school and we were allowed to kiss the ring on his finger after singing for his benefit.

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On arriving at the school in the morning we left our books in our classroom and went out into the yard at the back. The yard was square, strewn with pebbles, enclosed on three sides by the school building. On the fourth there was a wall painted green, inset with a Madonna and Child and a fountain with drinking water. A creeping rosetree formed a bower with a bench underneath. At the top end of the yard adjoining the central part of the building there was a wide cement stage for gymnastics, dancing, school plays and other functions.

At the first ring of the bell, we froze in our tracks and stopped talking. The sudden stillness of four hundred feet moving about on the pebbles and the silencing of two hundred young voices was dramatic. At the second ring, we ran to the place allotted to our class in front of the cement stage. Each class formed, vertically to the stage, a line of one abreast, one girl standing behind the other in strict order of height. The top class formed the first line, the other classes forming consecutive lines, ending with the kindergarten.

At the third ring of the bell and the simultaneous first chord of a march on the piano, the first line marched into the big hall, followed by the second line and so on to the last, each class arranging itself in rows as if for a photograph, the oldest at the back, the youngest at the front. We then sang a song, a different one each day: French on Monday and Tuesday, English on Wednesday and Thursday, Italian on Friday and Saturday. Because the school was Roman Catholic in a non-Catholic country, there was no prayer. At the end of the song, we turned about to face the classroom area and each form marched to its classroom, the top class again leading the procession.

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On the day which is engraved in my memory as the day of shame for the school, the third bell failed to follow on the second. There was instead an ominous introduction on the piano, the herald of a grave announcement. At the same time the Mother Elizabeth, the Mother Superior, appeared on the stage, followed by another nun holding a white cloth. The Mother Superior was a stupid, semi-literate elderly American with rimless glasses whose only distinction was that she called us "goerls" and smelt of stale sweat in the summer.

The Mother Superior called Rosu, a girl in my class and one of the few boarders, to join her on the stage. Rosu, who was standing immediately before me, did so, visibly alarmed.

The Mother Superior then announced to the school that Rosu, who was about ten, still wet her bed at night. Rosu, she said, had been repeatedly punished and warned to abandon this shameful habit. Since she persisted, there was no alternative but to denounce her to the whole school. Mother Elizabeth then took the white cloth from the other nun which was revealed as the sheet from Rosu's bed. After exhibiting the yellow stain, she draped Rosu with the sheet and made her turn around several times so that all would see.

Rosu, sobbing, was then ordered back to her place in the line. The third bell and the march on the piano took us into the hall to sing our song. Our instinct withheld us from adding to Rosu's mortification by trying to comfort her. It was weeks before I could banish the image of Rosu wrapped in the sheet and go to sleep without praying that she would not wet her bed that night. The injustice and brutality of the treatment were magnified in my heart by the conviction that Rosu would have been spared the corrective punishment if she had been the daughter of an influential wealthy family instead of an unknown Catholic one.

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As other exciting events ebbed or flowed, so did the pitch of the mystery of Liza's Loullou wax or wane. Loullou was a year older than myself. Her "mother", Liza - we never knew her surname - was Rumanian. She was rather more made up than the average Cypriot, wore earrings and a fox fur and had a painted mole below the left eye. We could not quite place her. She was neither a lady nor a prostitute.

Loullou's home life was shrouded in fog. She talked about a well known businessman as her father, yet we knew him to be a bachelor; nor did she bear his surname. We never went to her home and she never came to ours. It was an unwritten code that no social visits were exchanged with Loullou. She had the best of everything: pens, pencils, uniforms. She boasted that a mansion opposite the school belonged to her father and was therefore hers. It was true that the mansion belonged to the man she said was her father. It was a miniature of the Petit Palais in Paris, of carved stone, begun before I could remember and still under construction.

Loullou stayed at the school even during the holidays. My feelings for her were mixed. I was sorry for her because I sensed she lacked something I had, but she exasperated me with her boasting and the stories she told about her home, which I knew to be untrue. I could not then understand that she was desperately trying to be like everyone else.

The blow struck when we were about thirteen. From Monte Carlo came the news that Anthony, who spent his summers at the Casino there, had met and married an Irish lady. He would soon be introducing his bride to Limassol. The whole school except Loullou knew. We discussed little else.

When would Loullou be told, what would she be told, who would tell her, what would be her reaction. Sister Claudia was in her element again. Inevitably, she would have a leading part to play.

The dramatic day came. The bride, Eileen, was installed in the hastily completed Palace. The eager ladies of Limassol fell over each other to pay her their courtesy calls, as was the custom. They came away enchanted. Eileen was ugly but charming, outgoing, sociable. She took an interest in their families and was brimming with good advice. She eased herself into Limassol society like a greased finger into a glove. She immediately set about learning Greek. She made a point of finding out the dates of birth of all adults and children of her acquaintance. At eight on the morning of any birthday, a bouquet would arrive with good wishes from Eileen.

The first few days after Eileen's arrival, Loullou went about with red eyes, hardly talking. Sister Claudia could not resist dropping hints about the "difficult situation" and her delicate role as mediator. We never knew what ingenuous explanation Sister Claudia invented for Eileen's sudden appearance. But soon Loullou was invited to tea at the mansion and regained her self-confidence, boasting about the interior of her father's Palace. Sister Claudia was full of praise for Eileen's kindness and understanding.

After leaving the convent, I lost track of Loullou. Her mother had wisely decided that it was better for them to live abroad. For many years I wondered what had happened to her. It was not until the summer of 1955 that I heard of her again. My parents came across her in Monte Carlo. As it turned out, there was no mystery about Loullou. She was the youngest of

a multi-member village family, given to Liza as a foster child. Liza had come to Cyprus as an "artiste" at one of the cabarets but had withdrawn before "adopting" Loullou. I have always admired her, not only for bringing up Loullou, but for accepting for herself a life of self-effacement. So discreet and dignified was she that there was never the slightest gossip about her in a society avid for any tit-bit that could be turned into a scandal.

In Monte Carlo Loullou had found her two brothers who worked for a Greek shipowner there, had married an Athenian doctor and had two children. Liza was living with her.

I saw Loullou when she visited Cyprus a few years ago. I was happy that we liked each other better as adults than we had as children.

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Apart from Emily, who was more like a sister and with whom we are still very close, my other special friends at the Convent were Phoebe who suffered from choria, Irene Freiman, a white Russian whose father was the Doctor of the asbestos mine at Amiandos, and Theo Codrington-Smith, an English girl. Despite her disability, Phoebe was extremely intelligent and kept up with us in everything. She managed to learn to write and then to use a typewriter. In later life she wrote poetry. She became very attached to the nuns eventually converting to catholicism. She died before the age of fifty. Irene married a Dane and we still correspond from time to time. Of Theo I have lost track.

It is strange that, with the exception of my few special friends at the Convent, the early friendships I made outside the Convent, mostly with children of my parents' friends, were closer and more lasting.

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CHAPTER XXI  
FATHER'S BROKEN LEG

I knew even before I came to the house that something was wrong. The atmosphere reached out to me in the street. I ran the last few yards filled with foreboding.

The hall was full of strangers. I could not see my mother anywhere. I did not dare ask what had happened. The strangers pretended not to see me or looked quickly away when my eyes met theirs. They said nothing.

At last a man I recognized as a lawyer came forward: "Your father", he said.... my head swelled, my eyes pushed forward..... "has broken his leg". I burst into a smile. Nobody died of a broken leg.

I waited in a corner until my mother came out of the bedroom. She told me the story. As my father was hurrying to the Courthouse he slipped on the pavement and fell. He realised immediately that his right femur was broken and wisely refused to be helped up until the doctor arrived. His leg was put in splints on the spot and he was carried home. He would now stay in bed for a few weeks. There was nothing to worry about.

Relief merged into happiness. I thought of the nights ahead, secure and free of terror, when my parents would be unable to leave the house.

Eventually we were allowed to see our father. He looked the same. There was a wooden cage over his right leg to keep the covers from touching it. I lifted the bedclothes to reassure myself that his leg was still there. I kissed him. He put on a tragic face and said: "You nearly lost your father to-day". It was his idea of a joke.

Over the next two months we followed the mechanics of his treatment. Pulleys and sandbags were fixed to his leg to reduce shortening. We learned how to massage the muscles. Every evening before we went to bed he said solemnly: "Come and kiss your father for he may not be here in the morning". In vain did my mother protest at the stupid jest which "made the children unhappy". We recognized it for what it was: a provocation for a show of affection from his undemonstrative family.

My father emerged with a slight limp and one regret, that, through his inability to defend him, an innocent man was hanged for murder. My father was a short man and it seemed to me that the limp enhanced his strong personality.

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A few months later we suffered another shock.

I came home from school to find my mother and my aunts in a huddle, whispering. They had been crying. A letter with Southern Rhodesian stamps lay on the table. Before they noticed me, I heard the words: "Her death warrant has been signed". I feared for my beloved aunt Dryas.

Michael and I soon found out. My mother's eldest sister, Calliope, had been operated for cancer of the breast. We had never seen her. Cancer was but a remote threat; it only attacked people over forty. The news excited us. We watched the reactions of the family. We managed to be around when our grandmother Zoe was told. She received the news calmly with no hysterics. The lack of drama was disappointing.

I was then eight years old.

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C H A P T E R    X X I I

NEFELI    AND    FAMILY    AND    DRYAS

When I was about nine a significant family event occurred: one to which I looked forward with the greatest joy. My darling auntie Dryas was coming back from Southern Rhodesia. And not only that, but with her would be coming auntie Nefeli, another of my mother's sisters whom I had never met, with her two little boys, Dinos aged five and George aged three. Dinos was reputed to be extremely intelligent, speaking English and Greek with equal ease. The fact that the circumstances of their coming were sad did not mar my joy.

Dinos' father, Gerasimos, a Cephalonian Greek whose family had emigrated to Southern Rhodesia, had died at the age of thirty, and it was thought best that his young widow and the children should come to live in Cyprus. Dryas, who hated Southern Rhodesia and looked down on the Greek community there, was only too delighted to accompany them.

Gerasimos' death is the greatest proof that thirteen must never sit together at table. For my mother and Yannoulla, great observers of all superstitions, it became a cult. Apparently, Gerasimos and Nefeli were guests at a dinner party when someone noticed that there were thirteen around the table. "We must all get up together, because whoever gets up first will have a mishap". "What nonsense", said Gerasimos, "I will get up first to show you". He did. Within a week he suffered a heart attack and died.

Dinos was indeed intelligent and had a great aptitude for things mechanical. At the age of six, left alone in a car in the market square, he started and drove it without mishap. But he was also the most spoiled and obnoxious child. He twisted his mother around his little finger and when he did not instantly have his way he lay on the floor screaming and

kicking. Auntie Nefeli would immediately succumb. A few years later they went back to Southern Rhodesia. Dinos was sent to a boarding school. He did not like it. It was not long before he started writing to his mother that he would kill himself by jumping out of the window unless he was removed. And of course he was. When he left school he decided he was more interested in making money than going to University. He joined the family business and never fulfilled the expectations warranted by his intellect.

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With the return to Cyprus of auntie Dryas hopes were revived that a suitable husband would be found for her so that she would not have to seek her fortune elsewhere. We kept our ears and eyes open. None of the possibilities came to fruition. And then there appeared someone whom Dryas set her heart on. He was a young man from Larnaca with a bright future, a lawyer who had begun to make a name for himself in politics. Dryas met him when my father invited him to lunch.

Dryas' hopes rose and fell as his interest in her waxed or waned. The months dragged on and Dryas began to feel desperate - so desperate that she even contemplated suicide. I knew because I accidentally discovered what looked like "Last Wishes" in the pocket of her dressing gown. I do not remember how I found out, but I also knew that the method would be an overdose of aspirins. I lived in agony for weeks.

The years passed and Dryas continued to be an old maid despite her many accomplishments: an excellent cook, a wonderful housekeeper, a maker of beautiful embroideries and other handiwork. She was also reputed to be the best waltzing partner in Cyprus. The more disappointed she became the more she nagged her poor mother for losing money at cards. Zoe enjoyed a game of rummy with her friends in the afternoon, the stakes being infinitesimal. And the more she plagued my brother George who could do nothing right.

When eventually a widower with a daughter of about my age, fourteen, asked for her hand and she consented to marry him, the engagement was broken off because he made it a condition that his daughter should share their bedroom as she had never slept alone.

Dryas finally married at the age of forty-five a kind and gentle man of very average intellect whom she could boss to her heart's content. As luck would have it she was doomed to live in her hated Africa, this time the Belgian Congo, where Yannis had his business.

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CHAPTER . . . X X I . I I  
FAMAGUSTA AND STAVRAKIS

One of my happiest memories is spending part of my holidays with Auntie Cleo, one of the twins, and her husband Stavraki in Famagusta. Stavraki, a young man of great charm and culture, a lover of books which he supplied to us on the basis of quality and in disregard of our age, whose hobby was writing, would spend hours discussing with us any and every subject. Our walks at night, with Stavraki pointing out the various constellations and explaining the cosmos to us were a special delight.

Stavraki was an employee of "Cable and Wireless", in charge of the Company's Office in Famagusta. I was then about twelve and Cleo and Stavraki had not yet had any children. It was the time when Stavros was courting the other twin, Athena. Cleo and Stavraki were dying to know the latest. But they thought I was too young to know what was going on so they beat about the bush. Who were Athena's girl friends, was Mary (Stavros' sister) one of them? Feeling that I was being treated as a moron, I burst out "Why don't you ask me straight out? I think Athena and Stavros are on the verge of getting engaged".

Famagusta was like a city in a foreign land. The Limassolians boasted of their progressiveness and liberal outlook as compared with the people of Nicosia. But Famagusta left Limassol far behind. The ladies of Famagusta were generally more sophisticated, more elegantly, more daringly, dressed than the ladies of Limassol. They smoked and they gambled. Some of them had lovers. I remember my amazement when Cleo took me to visit a friend one morning. It was eleven o'clock but the friend was still in bed - which did not deter her from receiving us. There she was, languishing in a four-poster with a lace canopy, wearing a gossamer nightgown and negligee, smoking cigarette after cigarette. This would have been unheard of in Limassol but the Famagustans took it in their stride.

In the evenings there were gambling parties in the various houses which went on through the night. Admittedly it was the Christmas/New Year season, but the stakes for which they played were astronomical and it seemed to me that fortunes were changing hands. Stavraki was an addicted gambler and I secretly trembled at what might happen, for his only income was his salary.

I thought of Famagusta as the City of Iniquity but I loved it.

Famagusta eventually proved to be Stavraki's downfall. One summer when Cleo, who was five months pregnant and spending a few days with us at Platres, was not there to restrain him, he gambled and lost heavily. He borrowed money from the till intending to replace it from his savings when the banks opened in the morning. Somebody informed the General Manager who arrived to inspect the accounts before Stavraki had had time to return the money. He was dismissed on the spot. He emigrated to Southern Rhodesia where uncle Olympus, my mother's brother, gave him a job. His wife and baby joined him later. Stavraki never fitted into Rhodesian life though he put a brave face on things. He did not return to Cyprus, being tormented to the last by a sense of shame.

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CHAPTER . . X . X . I . V  
YANNOULLA AND GEORGE

At some stage Yannoulla and George emerged as personalities.

Yannoulla was always crying. "Don't whimper", my mother pleaded, "it brings bad luck on the house". Yannoulla cried at mealtimes because she never wanted to eat and every session became a battle of wills between her and my mother. "Why did you cook lamb", she would complain, "you know I hate it. I want rissoles". The next day rissoles were put before her. "Who said I liked rissoles. I want rice", and so on day after day. Yannoulla cried because we teased her. She was darker than we were so we called her "the black one" and sometimes "a smudge on the wall". She felt that she was not as loved as we were. "Stella is loved because she is the eldest", she reasoned, "Michael because he is the first son and George because he is the youngest". In moments of great despair she even suspected she was a foundling.

My mother often said the rod was invented in heaven; so she used it quite regularly. The rod was her bare hand. Eventually, "beating" became a game. To avoid it we ran round the room with our mother running after us, the chase ending in hysterics. Because I was not a nimble runner, I developed the technique of lying on my bed and kicking so that my mother could not get near enough to beat me. There was the day when, in beating Yannoulla on the buttocks, my mother damaged a tendon. She visited the doctor, our dear friend and ally Socrates Pastides, who immediately sent us secret word that we could be as naughty as we liked for the next week because our mother would not be able to touch us.

Yannoulla was the most attractive of us all. She had beautiful hair with just the right amount of curl. It was so black and shiny that it had blue overtones. Her dark eyes flashed when she became angry. She was the most affectionate and the most demonstrative. She was also the most wealthy. Her godfather, a rich bachelor, gave her presents not only at

Christmas but also whenever he saw her. We sometimes met him on the seafront. He would then open Yannoulla's hand and press a five-shilling coin, then a fortune, into her palm. As soon as his back was turned we confiscated it. Whether Yannoulla liked it or not, we hailed the nearest gharry and ordered the driver to take us to Yermasoyia River, a few kilometres out of town.

Later, Michael discovered an easy way of extorting from Yannoulla her most prized possessions. Being superstitious, Yannoulla believed in the power of evil spells. If Michael knew that Yannoulla had been given a box of chocolates, all he needed to say was "I wish....." for Yannoulla to rush to give up the chocolates before he could finish the sentence "that you fail your French exam". The permutations were infinite. Yannoulla had no chance. I was equally adept at torturing her by provoking her with a few quiet words.

Yannoulla needed more sleep than the rest of us but she refused to go to bed no matter how sleepy she was, insisting on her right to stay up as long as we did. To avoid argument, my mother evolved a ritual which was strictly observed. George, being the youngest, went to bed at eight. The rest of us followed at intervals of five minutes for each year that separated us from the next in line. By the time her turn came, Yannoulla was fast asleep, curled up in an armchair with her knees bent and her face down like an imam in prayer. It was impossible to wake her. At best, she would be carried to her bed in that position, spending the whole night without moving. When we were made to lie down in the afternoon, Yannoulla was the only one who slept but she was grossly insulted if we dared hint that she had as much as closed her eyes.

Yannoulla's business acumen showed at an early age. When she was about six my mother suggested opening a bank account for her. Yannoulla asked several questions: would she be able to take her money out whenever

she wanted it, would she receive the very same notes she had put in. The answer to the first question satisfied her; not so the reply to the second. When my mother tried to tip the balance by saying that the money would grow because the bank would also add to it, Yannoulla no longer had any doubts about the conspiracy to dispossess her. "You must take me for a complete fool", she exploded, "Not only will the bank be doing me a favour by looking after my money, it will also be paying me on top?"

Yannoulla always claimed her rights and stood forcefully by her convictions. In this she very much resembled my father with whom she had monumental arguments. The most famous instance was when Yannoulla was over 20 and already married. A strong difference of opinion in my parents' sitting room ended by my father saying: "While you are under my roof, my view prevails." When Yannoulla went home, my parents' phone rang and my father answered: "Now that I am no longer under your roof", said Yannoulla, "I was right". My father burst out laughing. "for this", he conceded, "you deserve to win".

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After his initial sickly entrance, George came in with aplomb.

"Catch him!" the cry echoed through the house. Everyone dropped everything and ran. Usually it was already too late. By the time he was caught, George had thrown his trophy overboard. As soon as he could walk, George's greatest thrill was to grab any article within reach and run to the nearest window. Invariably, it was something valuable or dangerous. Jewelry, watches and clocks were his favourites, but nothing escaped: a vase, a plate, a frying pan would do as well. The Pierrakis, who lived on the groundfloor, hardly dared step out into their garden. Depending on his luck, a passer-by might have a diamond cross thrown at his feet or be stunned by a bottle on the head.

When George tired of the throwing game he caused equal commotion by other means. At noon one day my mother noticed that George's nose was swollen and that his breathing was difficult. He did not have a cold or a fever. Before calling the doctor, she looked up his nose. There was something blue in one of his nostrils. It was the glass stopper of an iodine bottle. He had pushed it so high that any attempt to remove it fixed it more firmly. Dr. Pierrakis, a dentist, was called from the house below. He arrived with his pincers.

A few days later George disappeared. My frantic mother rushed to the terrace on the roof. No corpse was visible on the pavement. Search parties were sent out into the street. We were on the point of sending for my father and the police, when my mother noticed a trickle coming out of the entrance of the house next door. George had found the door open, had closed it and hidden under the staircase. His fright had caused the tell-tale trickle.

With his blue eyes and soft blond curls George looked deceptively angelic. I cuddled and kissed him and invented stories for him. I called him nonsense names in rhyme which stuck to him through childhood: koullo le mane, dellarto pitsire, kullo le manakucho. When he became bored with me I resorted to bribing. It was a traumatic experience when my paternal grandmother, without asking my mother, had George's curls cut off one day when he went there for lunch. He was then about three. I could no longer do what I liked with him.



Unlike Michael and me, George and Yannoulla liked rough and dangerous games. Yannoulla played football with the notorious Piponias boys, typical Borstal candidates, while George parachuted from heights with my mother's umbrella or freewheeled his bicycle down vertical hillsides. Yannoulla escaped with minor injuries but George ended up in plaster or bandages. His wounds festered and took weeks to heal. The worst of George's illnesses was the cramp. With the onset of the slightest fever, George's legs shot upwards and became rigid, his toes contorted. He could not bear the lightest cover and nothing would relieve the pain. He cried constantly at a high pitch.

George had a talent for catching the strangest infections. At one time he had psora. The cure was simple. His whole body was painted every morning with a liquid which, as the day wore on, smelt of garbage. Every afternoon he came home in tears; he could not join in any game because his friends, unaware of the source of the stink, wondered where it came from. George had to retreat before they could find out.

Yet it was Michael and I who developed trachoma, the eye disease that was the scourge of the Middle East. If left untreated, trachoma resulted in a squint, or even blindness. There was the summer of torture when our lids were cauterised daily with what looked like an innocent blue pencil. As I did not show the expected improvement, a more radical method had to be applied. One morning I was told to lie flat on the couch. The ophthalmologist then took a scalpel, turned each lid over and scraped it. It was done without any kind of anaesthesia. His wife, also a doctor, held my head firm, while the blood ran down my cheeks. I did not utter a word but the sensation of the scraping still rips me in half. The physical agony was nothing compared to the humiliation of being treated as untouchables. The irony of it was that I did not even have to wear

glasses, which was my strongest secret desire. In vain did I pray and make vows to my favourite saints. The doctor did not prescribe them. I had to content myself with the lightest shade of sunglasses.

Despite the primitive and painful treatment, we were so completely cured of trachoma that the most thorough examination in later years failed to reveal any trace of it. Needlessly did I tremble before the medical board when I joined the Women's Auxiliary Airforce during the war, for fear my eyelids would cause my rejection. It was the tachycardia that nearly disqualified me instead.

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C H A P T E R . . . X . X . V . . .

MICHAEL

As soon as Michael was old enough he organised us into a theatre company. He wrote the plays, the shows and the songs, he arranged the choreography, designed and made the costumes and sets, acted the leading roles and directed. The stage was the verandah outside the dining room. Only the family took part in our productions. The one exception was a distant cousin who was tested and pronounced by Michael to be worthy of us. The audience were the children of the neighbourhood to whom we issued numbered tickets.

To immortalise our artistic achievements we published a weekly magazine containing Michael's plays, short stories, poems, cartoons and puzzles of our own invention. My handwriting being the most legible, I was assigned the task of writing out the magazine, a chore I loved. The anticipation of writing on a clean sheet of paper has remained a recurring joy.

I cannot remember a time when Michael did not have a passion for the cinema. He knew the name of every actor and every film, he could describe every detail and sing every song in any language. He collected photographs and postcards of filmstars and arranged them in albums. He also read everything he could find about the cinema and the theatre. When Michael arrived in London to study law at the age of seventeen and I met him at Victoria Station, his first words were, "Let's go to the theatre to-night. There's a very good new play on at the Wyndham's called 'Robert's Wife'".

Going to the cinema except on fixed days and to selected films was forbidden under school regulations, but Michael discovered that by climbing on a table and a chair in one of the rooms of a friend's house opposite the Yiordamlis Cinema he could, across the street, see a small section of the screen through the fanlight of the room and the projection room of the cinema.

When a full-page portrait of Marlene Dietrich appeared in the English journal "The London Illustrated News" Michael ordered Yannoulla to hold it upright so that he could photograph it with his Kodak box camera. The photograph was a great success. Michael wrote across it "To Michael, with love, Marlene", swore us to secrecy and exhibited it to all his friends who never doubted that it was a personal gift from the actress. When Michael related the story to Marlene Dietrich twenty years later she was not at all flattered at the thought that she was a famous star when Michael was only a boy.

With the exception of a rare theatre troupe from Greece, the only live performances at that time in Cyprus were the cabaret shows. The cabaret was a family institution. On Saturdays and Sundays there were even matinee programmes for the children. Most of the "artistes", as they were euphemistically called, were Hungarian. Singers from Greece were another great event. It was the era of the great diseuses, like Sophia Vembo and Kakia Mendri.

Even as children we knew that the main function of the artistes was the "consommation". We also knew that some of them were steadily "engagee" with the bachelors of the town who spent every evening at the cabaret, while others were "engagee" with married men. It was a feature of summer life that while the wives and children enjoyed the coolness of Platres the men relieved their loneliness with the artistes.

The arrival of a new group of artistes was advertised widely and the whole town rushed to see it. The cabarets were restaurants which were frequented by all the *comme-il-faut* families, including their young daughters. The show was followed by dancing, and it was not improper for single men to dance with the artistes on the same floor as the people of

the town. It was all done with decorum. Even so, in a society where young men and women were not allowed to mix unchaperoned, the cabaret was a permissive metachronism which is difficult to understand.

Occasionally there was an artiste who arrived accompanied by her mother, an indication that she was an inaccessible virgin. This provoked heavy competition among the young men for her conquest.

Two artistes stand out in my memory: one was a blue-eyed young girl called Irene, a tolerable dancer. The other was Argentino, a man who danced Spanish dances dressed as a woman, ending the show by taking off his wig to reveal his short hair. Irene became the girl-friend of the British Commissioner, the highest Colonial official in the district, whose wife had not followed him to Cyprus. When the Commissioner asked Irene to join his guests after dinner he created a stir and a new progressive precedent which, however, remained unique. At about the same time, there was a male Greek singer with a guitar who sang a pathetic song, "The bells are tolling sadly again, conjuring up your sweet face".

We naturally reproduced all three in our shows.

The cabaret moved to the open air in the summer. We were lucky enough to live almost next door, and Michael could watch the show whenever he chose.

Michael came into his own at Carnival time. Limassol was the Nice of Cyprus - the only town where Carnival was celebrated with parades, dances, music. It was Michael who decided each year what the four of us would represent as a group, designed the costumes and oversaw their making. We

would then appear at children's dances taking part in the parades, Michael becoming furious if we did not win a prize. Carnival began on a Thursday and ended on the second Sunday after that. The climax was a big parade consisting of large vehicles satyrizing recent political events or containing groups of singers or of children depicting fairy tales, smaller vehicles containing smaller groups followed by groups or individuals on foot. We were among the smaller vehicles, first in a horse-drawn carriage and later in a car. Michael arranged us to best advantage and gave us instructions as we neared the dais where the judges sat.

The zenith of Michael's achievement was the year when he designed beautiful Czarda costumes with colourful headgear for himself, Yannoulla and George and had also choreographed Czarda dances for the three. Everything was described with pride and in great detail in their letters to me then at school in Alexandria. They had every expectation of winning a good prize when disaster struck. They had taken their positions in the car that was to take them to the parade when along came our friend Zena dressed as Napoleon, whom my soft-hearted mother allowed to join the Czardas in the car. Zena has never been forgiven.

I hated Carnival and always experienced a sense of relief when I was away from Cyprus and was spared the ordeal of participating.

Our favourite game in the evenings when our parents were out was again directed by Michael. Without leaving our places around the table after supper each of us had to make the others laugh. Michael raised the right part of his upper lip without moving his mouth or changing his grave expression. Yannoulla spat on the table. I ruffled my prolific hair.

George puckered his face and held it together with thumbs and forefingers. After the first round, we solemnly promised that we would do something different at the next round. But we repeated our performances without any variation, round after round, until we were too hysterical to continue.

From an early age, Michael's sense of timing and ability to create situations were highly developed. In the middle of lunch when important guests were present, Michael would make a hardly perceptible gesture. It might be just showing his little finger over the edge of the table between courses, or lifting his eyebrows. My mother's severe looks were quite ineffectual in disciplining our uncontrollable giggles. My father hardly noticed.

Occasionally, while I was having my Greek private lesson, Michael would creep on all fours out of the adjoining room through a door facing me but behind the teacher and lodge himself under the table. When he thought I had been tormented enough, and while I was about to answer a particularly difficult question, he would slowly crawl out. The performance would be repeated during my piano lessons. As I never knew when Michael would appear, I would spend whole lessons in agony watching the door. When a number of lessons had passed uneventfully and I was beginning to relax and concentrate, Michael would make another entrance.

In the evening when we were sitting quietly reading, Michael would slip out unnoticed. Suddenly there would be a shriek of pain from somewhere inside or outside the house. We would then discover Michael in fits of laughter or carrying on an act, having covered his shirt with red paint or writhing on the floor.

The one time when we decided we would not be taken in he nearly died.

Yannoulla and I were sitting on the front verandah. We saw Michael ride his bicycle through the gate leading to the kitchen. A few seconds later there were agonized screams and calls for help. We decided not to move. An incoherent maid rushed out to us repeating "Michael, Michael". We followed her but not without a lingering suspicion that her act was part of Michael's production. Michael was still on his bicycle leaning against the kitchen verandah with blood gushing out of his left hand. His bicycle had slid off the paved driveway, he had lost his balance and had put out his hand to steady himself. He had grasped the top of a rusty petrol tin in which a geranium grew. His palm was cut down the middle to the bone.

I cannot remember how we brought him into the house. Yannoulla says I told her to hold Michael's arm while I disappeared into my parents' bedroom and returned with a stack of my father's handkerchiefs. While we tied Michael's hand to keep the two pieces together, I comforted Yannoulla: "Don't worry. The most that can happen is that they'll cut off his hand".

As both our parents were out, we had to decide quickly what to do. We decided to ask the neighbours for help. We called our friend Johnny who lived opposite and asked him to fetch his mother, the beautiful and distant Mrs. Maroulla, a friend of our mother's. Our misfortune was that Johnny stammered. Eventually, Mrs. Maroulla appeared. She in turn called another neighbour, Mr. Aftonomos. There were still no telephones in Cyprus and only a few people owned cars. Yannoulla and George were sent to find a gharry. Mr. Aftonomos took Michael to the hospital. Mrs Maroulla stayed with us to break the news to my mother.



The next scene is one which Michael would have relished. Maroulla decided that it was best for her to break the news to my mother alone. She stayed in the sitting room while we sat in the bedroom not talking, praying for my mother's quick return and yet dreading it. At last she came. One look told her something was wrong. With Maroulla's first words, she became hysterical. "My child, my child....." she screamed and would not be convinced that Michael was alive. I cringed at the show of emotion. Although my mother's entry had released my own feelings and I was sobbing, my paramount sensation was one of embarrassment. I tried to quieten my mother more because I could not bear her reaction than for her own sake.

My mother left for the hospital in another gharry. We spent the next hours pretending that we were not worrying, trying to concentrate on our homework. In truth, we were praying to all the saints in the Orthodox calendar, even promising we would go to church more often and that if only Michael and his hand were saved we would give him all he wanted and never quarrel with him again.

About three hours later, we heard the hooves of horses. The carriage stopped outside the house. We did not rush out. We lacked the courage to face our parents. At last they came in. They were smiling. They related how the clever young English surgeon, Dr. Cheverton, had immediately given Michael an anti-tetanus serum injection in the tummy and had then operated on his hand, keeping him in the theatre for two hours. They explained that the operation was delicate because there was a danger of paralysis if the nerves were not stitched together carefully. There was still a risk that the movement of Michael's fingers might be impaired but the doctor was hopeful.

An unbearable Michael came home three days later with his hand in plaster and made us his slaves.

The only permanent damage was a scar across his left hand which was more than offset by the end of his thumb-sucking. He was then twelve years old.

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CHAPTER .,X.X.V.I

LESLIE FLEMING

Our early childhood bound us together so exclusively that it was impossible for an outsider to penetrate the circle, as poor Leslie Fleming found to his cost.

My excitement at the thought of Leslie coming to stay with us kept me awake at night. In the morning, consciousness came with the joy of anticipation: we were one day nearer the great event. On the actual day, I could hardly see or hear the nun delivering the lesson. Images of the unknown Leslie intruded. I was twelve, and it was the first time that a foreign child was to be our house guest.

I ran all the way from school and arrived as a carriage was drawing up before our door. A boy of about my own age came out, followed by a policeman holding a suitcase. I stopped fifty yards away and watched, too shy to approach and introduce myself.

Leslie exceeded all my expectations. He was tall, fair and goodlooking. He was to spend two weeks with us, while his father, an English customs official, and his mother, a striking Turkish lady with long earrings, spent their holidays in Turkey. I had prepared a complete programme for Leslie: what games we would play, what books we would read, what sights I would show him. He was to be the fifth member of our team.

After the introductions and lunch, we invited Leslie to a game of Snakes and Ladders. The clash was immediate. Leslie was an only child. He had never learnt to share or to lose. After the first argument, he ran

to my mother and said we were treating him unfairly. My mother, who would have angrily dismissed any of us bearing tales, told us gently to be polite to our guest. We tried chess, with the same result. Soon, our life became a misery. Our slightest misdeed was reported to my mother. In exasperation she punished us. The last straw was a game of football. Angered at not scoring a point, Leslie took the ball, one of Michael's favourite possessions, and pierced it on a spike of the garden railings.

It was now open war. The perfect opportunity for revenge soon came. Our parents were giving a dinner party. A table was laid for us in one of our bedrooms and we were told to keep out of sight and not to make a sound. Leslie loved his food. The smells floating in from the kitchen were full of promise. Just before dinner, we enticed Leslie into the adjoining bedroom and locked him in. As each dish was served, we described and extolled it loudly, making suggestive savouring noises. We then pushed a morsel under the door for Leslie.

Yet when the time came for Leslie to return to his boarding school, he asked my mother if he could stay a few days longer. Despite his obnoxiousness, Leslie has remained a family symbol of guilt.

I saw Leslie again six years later in Alexandria when our schools met in a debate. He told me that he often thought of his stay with us. I did not ask with what feelings.

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CHAPTER . . X . X . V . I . I  
THE FACTS OF LIFE

The facts of life were never explained to us. We found them out coincidentally and by accident - first from garbled versions from the maids. The magnitude of my ignorance is evidenced by the fact that when I was fifteen and one of my twin aunts had a baby I was sure it had emerged from the navel.

Even talk of menstruation was taboo. It was fortunate for me that my friends were more advanced than I was, so at least I was not taken by surprise. Nobody, however, thought it necessary to explain the physiology of the process. We knew it had something to do with having babies, and each of us created her own fantasy which we discussed at length. As our main source of knowledge was the cinema we believed that the first symptom of pregnancy was fainting. Since sex was a forbidden topic, only to be mentioned in whispers, it was natural that we should think of it as something shameful. From the age of about ten, I lived with the secret fear that my parents might have another child - indisputable evidence that they indulged in the shameful act.

From an early age we could recognize a professional prostitute. When Michael and I were about six, Pola Pastides overheard us describing a woman walking down the street as a prostitute. Pola asked "How do you know she is a prostitute? How do you know I am not one, for that matter!". Our reply was prompt and clear, "Because you do not wear short tight dresses, flashy colours, high heels, long earrings, nor do you have a painted face, dyed hair or gold teeth. And you do not swing your behind when you walk".

Heroes Square in Limassol was the prostitutes' domain. As the best cinema of the town was in that square we often passed their houses, whose front doors were always open, the beds, admittedly clean and tidy, being in evidence. The women stood on the doorstep or sat on the pavement. They talked and joked with the passing men in loud vulgar voices. We were particularly intrigued by an official looking house in Heroes Square marked by a placard bearing a red cross and the words "Prophylactic Station". Only men seemed to go in and out, and we never received satisfactory answers to our questions about its functions. It was of course an annex to the V.D. clinic of the Government Hospital.

A modest house in our neighbourhood excited our interest. Two young women lived in it and took in ironing. Somehow, we knew that their hobby was prostitution. They had a sister of about our own age, whom we called "the sister of the prostitutes" and vaguely pitied. This description persisted long after she married a well-to-do businessman and was a lady of impeccable conduct fully accepted and well liked by Limassol society. When I met her accidentally in Athens years later and introduced her to Michael, I could not help whispering "the sister of the prostitutes", the only way to identify her to him.

Our sex education was swiftly advanced by an event in our own house, when I was about ten.

We woke one morning to find the atmosphere laden with mystery. Our breakfast was not ready and the newly acquired cook was walking about red-eyed and sniffing. My mother looked as if she had spent a sleepless night. We were mystified but did not ask any questions. In the next few days, the adults' conversations ended abruptly as soon as we appeared. There were long sessions between my mother and her sisters and also with

Athena and Pola Pastides. From the snatches we caught we soon pieced the story together. Our cook, an ugly woman in her thirties with a crooked nose, had been discovered by my mother in the middle of the night douching with boiling water and bayleaves. The worst of it was that she was using the cooking pots. The significance eluded us until we realised that the poor woman was trying to induce an abortion. None of the details escaped us. Her previous post had been with an elderly lady whose son owned a shop. The shop assistant, a young man of eighteen, also lived in the house. As he was cold sleeping alone, he crept into Chrystalla's bed.

Chrystalla fell at my mother's feet and begged her not to send her away but to help her. Some solution had to be found. Marriage with the father of the child was out of the question. A deus ex machina must be sought. He appeared in the form of a pedlar who was a half-wit and suffered from some unmentionable disease - syphilis we supposed. Every anomaly was put down to syphilis in those days. The lower half of his face was permanently bandaged. His mother was looking for someone who would take care of him after her death. Who could be better than a good woman like Chrystalla complete with family.

The Chrystalla affair was charged with excitement and suspense. We rushed home after school, agog for the latest developments. They were gleaned from a cryptic word here and there. Michael and I then pooled our knowledge and filled in the jigsaw. The pretence that we were totally unaware of what was happening added to the thrill.

Yet it was not until I was seventeen and a boarder in Alexandria, that the full "facts" were revealed to me. An Egyptian girl, two years older than I was, who shared my bedroom and was already betrothed, realised

my ignorance and decided to enlighten me. She described the sexual act crudely without prudery or circumspection. I refused to believe it. "Well, that is how it's done in Egypt", said the exasperated Hindi. "Surely people at home do it differently", I consoled myself. She then completed my education by telling me how babies are born, which I found even more incredible.

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CHAPTER . X . X . V . I . I . I  
GRANDMOTHER ZOE

The house of my maternal grandmother, Zoe, was a treasure trove. It was furnished in the traditional Victorian manner. Every surface was covered by a vase, a box, a trinket, an ornament. The walls were hidden behind paintings, photographs, musical instruments, embroideries, mirrors.

The sitting room was dominated by two life-size paintings of my great grandmother Anna in a beautiful gown and of my great grandfather Michael in evening dress, painted by a well-known painter, Xydias, in the 1860's. My grandmother said she remembered her parents posing for them. The portraits and their subjects fascinated me. I would sit and watch them for hours. I plied my grandmother with questions until they became as real as if I had known them. Anna was reputedly an English beauty from Derby. Michael was the son of a Greek woolmerchant from Constantinople who had settled in Liverpool. They came to Cyprus after its annexation by Britain in 1878, following a crash in the wool market, when their eldest son, Constantine, took up a post as a member of Kitchener's staff and later became the Manager of the Ottoman Bank in Cyprus which also acted as the Government Bank. Because of my affinity with the portraits, when my grandmother finally dismantled her home, she ordained that I should have them. They now hang in my living room and still enthral me.

Zoe was one of five children. She was sixteen when the family left England and could then only speak English. They lived in Larnaca which was at that time the business and consular centre of the Island. My grandfather, George, the eldest son of a Limassol family, was a young man

of many talents. He played several musical instruments, was well read and spoke English, as well as French and Italian, which he had taught to himself. So great was his love of learning that when he came across something worth reading in any magazine or paper he would cut it out and stick it on a board on the wall of the lavatory so that all the members of the family would be sure to read it.

George fell in love with my grandmother the moment he set eyes on her and courted her in the true fashion of the time as his writings reveal:

"Brightly break your Birthday,  
And may each Birthday be  
Richer yet in blessing,  
Than the last, for thee

To Z.C. from G.E.

Limassol, October 21st, 1883"

"I love thee, Zoe, I love thee dear!  
'Tis all I need to say  
And all that thou wilt care to hear  
Upon this fair winter day.

G.E.

Limassol, 23rd December 1883  
(old calendar)".

Grandfather George combined romanticism with order and method, as these extracts from his diaries show:

On 6/18 October, 1884 (to denote Julian/Gregorian Calendar), Sunday afternoon, we were married in the house of my father.

Zoe and George M. Efthyvoulou.

Zoe G. Efthyvoulou gave birth to a daughter, our first born, on 8/20 July, 1885, Monday, at 10.15 a.m. in the house of my father, christened Elpiniki, in the same house, by Eleni Th. Argyrou, and died on 3/15 January, 1886, Friday, at 8 p.m. after a three-day illness.

G.E.

On Sunday, at 1.30 p.m., 13/25 October, 1887, my third child Anna was born in the house of Sozos Loizou, christened by Eleni I. Haggipavlou in the same house and died at Kato Platres on 16/28 September, 1888, Friday, at 7.30 p.m., of dysentery.

G.E.

On Wednesday, 3/15 August, 1896, all our five children, Kalliopi, Michael, Dryas, Nefeli and John, were vaccinated by Dr. Thomaidis, with vaccine from Greece.

G.E.

On Sunday 28 March/9 April, 1899, an eighth child, sixth daughter, was born in my house, christened on Thursday 6/18 January, Epiphany, 1900, by Aristides N. Loizou, named Angeliki.

G.E.

On 29 July/11 August 1907, twin daughters (seventh and eighth), tenth and eleventh children, were born at 6.15 p.m., first Athena, godfather A. Loizides, and five minutes later, Cleo, godmother Cleo N. P. Lanitis, christened on Thursday, 8/21 September, 1907.

G.E.

The wedding took place of Angeliki with Panayotis L. Cacoyannis in the house of Polydoros at 4 p.m., on Sunday, 8th November, 1915.

G.E.

It so happened that when my grandfather was engaged to my grandmother, my grandfather's sister Eriphyle was also engaged to an Englishman. It was natural that the conversation at the dinner table should slip into English. One day, George's father hinted that he would prefer to have Greek spoken at his table. From that day on, Zoe spoke nothing but Greek within the family, to her children's great regret at missing the chance to become bilingual. She became fluent but never shed her pronounced English accent which remained a source of general amusement. When at a loss for a Greek word, Zoe grecocised an English one. It was only when her children went to school that they discovered that the words "safety pin", "blanket", "serviette", "pail", "kettle", "screen" were not Greek words.

Zoe was a remarkable woman. At a time when every home had several servants she preferred to do her own housework. She bore eleven children of whom eight survived. Her home had a warm welcoming personality. Her cuisine was imaginative and the dishes she invented are relished by the family to this day. She had green fingers and her garden was full of rare and exquisite plants. She even had prescriptions for various ailments and was consulted in cases of accident or illness. During her hours of leisure she made the finest lace, embroidery and crochet. She also read a great deal. She was thorough and methodical. Each member of her family had a set task. So that they would not tire of the same chores day in day out, she rotated their duties every week. I well remember her youngest children, the twins, arguing whether it was Cleo's week to do the washing up and Athena's to do the sweeping and dusting.

Zoe managed to keep all the customs, both Greek and English. She made plum pudding, mince pies and Christmas cakes at Christmas, vassilopittes at New Year and flaounes at Easter. Each member of the family had to stir the pudding as many times as was his age, making a wish. This practical way of sharing out the arduous task of stirring the pudding has remained a family tradition.

Zoe did not rule her household with a rod of iron. She was automatically obeyed out of love and respect. When we felt that our mother had been unduly harsh, we walked out of the house in mass protest without revealing our destination. My mother well knew that we would go to her mother. Zoe made us welcome but did not spoil us.

Zoe was courteous and dignified and never lost her temper. She was proud and independent, refusing to the last my parents' invitation to live with us, for fear she would be a burden. "Your grandmother is the greatest lady in the world" was my father's tribute to her.

When I knew Zoe she had already been a widow for several years. Three of her daughters were still unmarried: Dryas and the twins. She was broadminded and liberal, relying on the upbringing she had given her children rather than on locked doors and lectures on morality. The girls were free to come and go as they pleased, my grandmother only accompanying them to formal functions and dances when a chaperone was essential.

One of the marvels of my childhood was Zoe's hair arrangement. It did not vary to the day she died. Her hair came down from the crown of her head smoothly, forming a neat mushroom. No pins or other accessories showed and not a hair was ever out of place. Magic held it together.

Among the treasures of my grandmother's house were several bibles in Greek and English and all kinds of boxes: boxes inlaid with mother of pearl, boxes made of pieces of wood in different colours and shapes, boxes made of glass beads and boxes made of seashells. It still hurts me to remember that we tore these apart to take the seashells to play the games that were the craze of the time: loukoudi and tikkis, tokkos, shalis. Each shell had a value which varied according to its rarity and availability. Current prices were quoted daily on the shell stock market.

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It was in the peaceful atmosphere of grandmother Zoe's house that I suffered one of the earliest shocks of my childhood. It was there that I saw Dona for the first and last time of my life. Dona was the daughter of my grandfather's brother and a beauty. She lived in Nicosia. She was then twenty-six and I was four. She was spending the day with my grandmother. She asked to see me because she had heard that I had the same eyes as her son. I was fetched from the garden. A glance at her face set me trembling. I felt sick. Dona had no eyebrows; to me she was an unnatural being, a monster. I was quickly whisked off and sat on the "potty" to pass water - for some unknown reason the usual remedy in those days for children after a shock.

Dona's loss of hair was the first symptom of a rare disease, syringomyelitis, similar to leprosy though not infectious. Dona gradually lost her limbs and her eyesight and in later life her body was covered with ulcers. She was not placed in an institution but nobody outside her immediate family saw her again. Her husband cared for her until his death, eating out of the same spoon to show he felt no aversion and sharing her bed. She retained to the last all her intellectual faculties and her sense of humour and kept herself informed of what was happening in the world of which she had long ceased to be a part.

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C H A P T E R X X I X

MY MOTHER

It is difficult to describe my mother without seeming to idealise her, for I think she was the best human being I have ever known.

Highly intelligent, top of her class, a book lover, with an aptitude for music and a sweet disposition, goodlooking, she was a child after her father's own heart. He took pride in teaching her things: when she was only thirteen she was already helping him with his business books.

Unlike most young women of her age, my mother kept her mind alert. To the last day of her life at 83, she would not go to bed at night until she had solved the most difficult crossword puzzle, and in English at that. Not only was she active in various charities but she kept herself informed of what went on in the world around her. In this she had an advantage in being married to my father who from his youth was involved in public life. She was extremely efficient and utterly dependable. Whatever she undertook she did to perfection.

My mother took an interest in our homework not so much in order to help us but because she was keen on acquiring further knowledge. When we were in the higher classes, she would challenge us into competitions as to who could solve the most difficult mathematical problems more quickly - she or we.

Though beautifully organised and run, our home was pervaded by an atmosphere of humanity and warmth. Unlike the custom of the day, there were no closed rooms to be opened only on special days and there were no prohibitions on the children, "do not sit there, do not touch that". Every room was lived in and enjoyed.

Any visitor was made welcome at whatever hour of the day or night. The whole of Limassol knew that they could drop in for tea on Sunday; and it was not unusual for as many as twelve guests to congregate in the sitting room on a Sunday afternoon. This welcome of visitors was shared by my father whose great joy it was to dispense hospitality. My parents would entertain with equal graciousness the highest and the lowliest.

We children knew that we could invite any of our friends at any time and that our parents would greet them warmly. It was not until I was older that I realised that not every child was so blessed. When I was abroad at school, for studies or in the Airforce, I would invite my new friends to come and stay with us in Cyprus without thinking twice. I knew that my parents would receive them as members of the family. Even as adults, when we had our own homes, we always brought any new friend home to our parents, not only to give them pleasure, but also because we were proud of our home and our parents.



My mother was gentle and kind, modest and unassuming. Yet there was about her an aura of strength. All her friends came to her for advice, comfort and help which she gave unstintingly. To her children, though tender, she was at the same time firm, allowing no nonsense. Despite her composed personality, she would, when we drove her beyond endurance, not only raise her voice but would even, as already mentioned, resort to the "rod". When things went wrong, she would grumble to herself almost like a child, always a source of great amusement.

When we grew up our relationship with our mother was one of happy companionship. I always marvelled at my mother's tact and discretion even towards her children: she would never pry, never ask awkward questions. Even when she knew that something was troubling us she would bide her time until we were ready to confide in her. And she was always supportive, never criticising but giving her view as an equal. She accepted our choice of spouse without question, embracing the new member of the family with spontaneous warmth and affection.

Towards the end of my mother's life our roles were reversed and she relied on me for guidance. I shall always console myself with the words of my father: "Your mother thinks that nothing bad can happen when you are with her". But on the day she died I was not there to comfort her.

Perhaps my mother's most admirable trait was her sincerity and unaffected simplicity. She was utterly straightforward in all she said and did. There was not a trace of simulation or guile about her, not a single *arriere-pensee*.

She could not have been more aptly named - Angeliki.

C H A P T E R . . . X . X . X

MY FATHER

My father was so uninterested in us in the first months of our lives that my mother wondered if he had any feeling for us. Yet he might suddenly decide to show us off to his friends at the most inappropriate hour. Undeterred by my mother's protests that she had just managed to lull the baby to sleep, he would pick us out of the cot and carry us to the sitting room to extol our beauty.

If there was the slightest thing wrong with us, my father drove my mother crazy with his worry. If we had a low temperature he would be in and out of our bedroom, grumbling: "I don't like this incipient fever. It may be some latent infection, or diphtheria". If our temperature was high, he would fret: "Something drastic must be done to lower the fever before it kills the child".

The year he had spent at Montpellier as a medical student marked him for life. He insisted on discussing with the doctor in detail the symptoms and treatment of any illness afflicting a member of his family. Before any medicine prescribed for us could pass our lips my father had to assure himself from the small print that there was no risk of side effects. If the literature showed that there was even the slightest risk the poor doctor was subjected to rigorous cross-examination. The final word was of course with my father.

Throughout his career my father was the terror of doctors giving expert evidence before the Court. He studied the medical aspects of the case so thoroughly that his cross-examination immediately exposed any chink in the doctor's knowledge. By discrediting the medical evidence so often vital to the prosecution's case in a criminal trial he would win his case for the defence.

My father left nothing to chance. The remotest possibility was explored to the hilt. He was never taken by surprise. There was the murder case in which the prosecution relied almost exclusively on the pathologist's evidence. The crucial point was the time at which some scratches on the hands of the accused had been caused. The forensic pathologist was positive that the scratches had been made exactly three days before his examination of the accused - neither more nor less. This placed the making of the scratches on the day of the murder. After cross-examining the pathologist so as to make him re-assert most emphatically that the scratches could not have been either more or less than three days old, my father revealed that February had 29 days that year. If the scratches were exactly three days old they could not have been made on the day of the murder. His client was not committed to assizes.

On another occasion my father showed the doctor a straight chest X-Ray and asked him to estimate the depth of the bullet lodged in the lung. The doctor held the X-Ray up to the light, turned it to right and left and gave it as his firm opinion that the depth was two inches. Having consulted a specialist radiologist before the hearing, my father knew that it was not possible to tell the depth of an object in the lung from a straight X-Ray. Nothing the doctor said after that could be believed. The accused was acquitted.

When my father was appearing in a criminal case or an interesting civil one, the Court was always packed. In a small town like Limassol where entertainments were few, an exciting Court case provided the most popular form of diversion. Not only did my father have all the facts and all the law at his fingertips but his tactics and his line of attack or defence were also planned to perfection. He had a high sense of the dramatic, working up to the climax very much as a playwright develops his

plot. One of his pupils told me that before going into Court my father would give him a lesson about his whole demeanour: depending on the turn the case was taking, he must put on a sombre face, look angry, aggrieved or hurt. On no account and under no circumstances must he appear frivolous or inattentive; he must sit or stand straight and always be respectful to the Court.

Shortly after I started practising I appeared as my father's junior in a civil case. Our client's allegation was that his partner and the accountant had conspired to deceive our client by falsifying the books. The partner and the accountant strongly denied this or that there was any special relationship between them. When the books were produced in court, my father and I leafed through them, looking at the figures. Suddenly, there, on a page of the ledger, stood conclusive evidence of the conspiracy between the defendant and the accountant: an agreement in the writing of the accountant between himself and our client's partner that the accountant would receive a substantial sum if he acted in accordance with the defendant's instructions.

I could hardly restrain myself from jumping up and waving the ledger before the judge. Sensing this, my father gently put his hand on my arm and imperturbably turned the page. When he rose to cross-examine the accountant, he started in his mildest manner, leading him to a positive and indignant denial of any understanding between himself and the defendant. I was almost sorry for him. Just as everybody thought the cross-examination was over and that my father was about to sit down, he opened the book and thrust it at the accountant reading out the page in a thunderous voice, asking the witness to explain its meaning. Our case was won.

My father's handling of witnesses, whether his own or the other side's, invariably brought out exactly what he wanted, neither more nor less. He was exceptionally good with children, treating them gently and

kindly, never bullying or hurrying them, changing tack quickly to lead them to the path he had laid out for them. His addresses were a joy: clear and comprehensive, each point crystalline. Always respectful to the Bench, he stood firm on his ground and left no stone unturned in support of his case. He was a fighter in the true and best sense.

My father had a stupendous memory. To the end of his days he did not need to make a note to aid it. If you had promised to do something at nine in the morning he would ring you up at seven to remind you not to forget. He might not remember names but he never forgot situations, events or legal cases. A few weeks before his death he astonished an English professor of law by his lucid analysis of the latest decision of the House of Lords on nuisance, discussing it in detail and distinguishing it from other cases. He had studied it because he was counsel for the defence in a case of nuisance. It was his last and he won it. He died at his desk a few minutes later, having just returned to his Chambers from the Court.

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My father began to take real notice of us when we started going to school. Being the eldest, I was the first to suffer from his pride in our scholastic achievements. He would suddenly call me into a sitting-room full of guests and ask me, at the age of five or six, to read a passage out of my reader or to recite poetry in English or French. In vain did I hide or beg to be excused.

It was obvious from the beginning that I was my father's favourite child. I could do no wrong. The same misdeed which would bring the full weight of his wrath on the heads of the other children, would be brushed aside in my case with a plausible excuse which he would invent in my defence. Even when I admitted that I was guilty and deserved punishment he

still would not listen. When I was about twenty and started smoking one or two cigarettes a day, I lit a cigarette before my father who I knew disapproved, pointing it out to him. His answer was: "But I have not seen you smoke".

The strongest proof of my father's favouritism was that I was the only one allowed to share his salad. His only culinary skill was to prepare his salad dressing, using plenty of olive oil, vinegar and mint. To be given some of the salad was the ultimate show of grace.

My father was not the kind of parent who romped about with his children. When, however, he decided to play with us, two or three times a year, it was an occasion to be remembered. Usually, we played a game of cards. His idea of fun was to win every round. When we protested, he would shake with laughter and let his aces fall out of his sleeve. No matter how vigilant we were, we never caught him out.

Another of his achievements was his ability to sing chattismata, a kind of repartee in verse between two people made up on the spur of the moment and sung to a traditional tune. The songs had to be clever and to the point. My father's strong voice and quick wit made him a champion. At village weddings he would compete with the best chattiseur of the region and sing him to a standstill. On one occasion, his opponent, piqued at not having the last word and having drunk a lot of wine, lunged at my father with a knife. The quick action of the man's wife saved my father. Not losing his sang-froid, my father made up an apt verse which broke the tension and sobered the other man. On another occasion, he outsang the best chattiseur of Cyprus on a mule ride between Kalopanayotis and Platres, 25 kilometres on a winding mountain road and four hours apart.

At the age of 31 my father was elected a member of the Legislative Assembly of Cyprus and four years later became a member of the Executive Council, the Cabinet of Cyprus under British colonial rule. This office, which he held for seventeen years and which entailed a great deal of responsibility and hard work, was on an entirely voluntary, unpaid basis. He toiled over his Executive Council papers late into the night, after an arduous day at his Chambers or in court. At the same time he was a member of the Advisory Council of Cyprus and Chairman of the Limassol Town School Committee, as well as offering his voluntary services in other capacities.

The political history of those years was turbulent, the Cypriots' demand for Enosis, Union of Cyprus with Greece, culminating in riots against the colonial government and the burning down of Government House in October 1931. The move was strongly discouraged by Venizelos, the Prime Minister and great statesman of Greece. But it has always been a matter of controversy that my father, although he resigned at the time, later resumed office as a member of the Executive Council. In 1938, when I became an employee of the Cyprus Government and among my duties was acting as Secretary to the Clerk of the Executive Council, I realised with what courage and strength my father fought for his convictions in the interests of the Cypriot people and how often he was able to swing the majority of the Council to his view. Thorough and methodical as always, his arguments were irrefutable.

His sense of service and his anxiety for the common good was so strong that even after he ceased holding public office he would follow events closely and would not rest until he made his views known to those responsible. When the British deported Archbishop Makarios to the Seychelles in 1956 my father wrote to the then Governor of Cyprus, Sir Hugh



Foot, and told him what a grave mistake this was and that it was imperative that the Archbishop should be allowed to return to Cyprus immediately for only then could there be any hope for a solution to the Cyprus issue.

In January 1964 when Archbishop Makarios was seeking advisers to accompany the Greek Cypriot delegation to the Conference in London to discuss a settlement of the problems which had arisen, he asked all the leading advocates of Cyprus whether they were willing to offer their services. The situation was confused and delicate. Each one expressed his regret under one pretext or another. Only my father did not hesitate for one minute. "Although I disagree with many of your policies", he said to Makarios, "I am a soldier in the service of my country and I will do all I can". The Archbishop was greatly touched. At the age of 71, my father accompanied the delegation to London, working untiringly, abandoning his practice for nearly two months and refusing any remuneration.

My father's capacity for work and his ability to concentrate were incomparable. "Stop making such a noise", my mother would scold us in the evenings, "Can't you see your father is working?" In the last resort she would appeal to him to prevail on us. His answer invariably was: "Let the children play. I can't hear a thing".

My father could work hard, but he could also play hard. Among his favourite enjoyments was gambling, which he indulged in regularly in his youth. My mother sometimes told him that if any of his children had gambled half as hard as he had done at their age, he would have considered them a lost cause. As he grew older his work and responsibilities absorbed him so thoroughly that he only played over Christmas and New Year. In his later years, when he could afford to spend his holidays abroad, he chose to spend them in various places in Europe where there were casinos. I always found

it difficult to reconcile my father's love of gambling with his otherwise conservative and cautious character. I suspect that although he played for high stakes he never lost his self-discipline. He knew when to stop. As it happens none of his children has inherited a trace of this inclination to gamble. And what is even more strange is that my mother also had a minor strain of this bent for gambling, but it was only confined to playing cards with her friends.

Although short and not handsome, and in his latter years fat, my father had a rare presence. His personality dominated the room. He loved company and was an excellent mixer. He could be serious and forbidding but also full of fun. His laughter remained to the last the chuckle of a boy. He was at ease in any surroundings - with kings or with peasants, with young or with old. He would dance folk dances and sing with the villagers as if he was one of them. His hospitality was given with equal warmth and generosity to all. He thought nothing of inviting two or three people to lunch or dinner on the spur of the moment, knowing that my mother would receive them graciously, even though, in the days when there were no telephones, he would not give her even an hour's notice.

We particularly enjoyed having his "koumbaros" (people at whose wedding he had been best man or of whose children he was godfather) from the villages for lunch. Before unfolding our napkins, my father would raise his glass and greet the guest with the words "Kalos ilthete" ("welcome to our house"), to which the guest would reply "Kalos sas ivramen" ("we are well met").

Thinking back over our childhood, I realise how fortunate we were, growing up in such an atmosphere of security and stability. In spite, or perhaps because, of my father's strong personality and incontrovertible authority, there was no uncertainty over major issues. He would decide and

his word was law. The love and respect of my parents for each other was another strong element of security. My parents of course had their disagreements but these were usually about insignificant questions that did not affect the family or their personal relationship. Only once, when I was about eleven, do I remember an occasion when my mother avoided speaking to my father for a whole day. I can also relive my anxiety and agony until their relations were fully restored.

So conscious was I, even at the earliest age, of the importance of harmony in the home that one of the most painful memories of my childhood remains the divorce of my godmother. She had two sons, Totos four years older and Dinos one year younger than myself. I loved Totos. Their house was opposite ours and I was often taken by my mother to play with him. Totos, then about nine, had already started inventing and manufacturing things. He later became a mechanic and radio engineer. His playroom was full of wonders. Our favourite game was flying. Totos would put two chairs together on the floor so as to form two compartments. He sat in the front and I sat behind him. He would then go through all the motions of starting the plane, making the right noises and giving me instructions about what I had to do. When the time came for take-off, he strapped me in and told me to hang on. We would then fly over various parts of Cyprus, Totos pointing out the bays, the hills and even people in the streets. From time to time he would do a loop-in-the-loop, as daring pilots did in the cinema. When the trip was over, I was quite breathless and convinced that we really had seen all the marvels described by Totos.

When I knew that Totos' parents would separate and that he and Dinos would remain with their father, an unsmiling, forbidding man, I could not sleep at night. Who would look after them, feed them, buy their clothes, help them with their lessons and take them to school, put them to bed at night and kiss them goodnight, comfort them when they were afraid? I prayed that in the end their parents would make it up. They did not. My godmother, a beautiful young woman, outgoing and full of fun and laughter, remarried almost immediately. Finally, I was comforted; their father was not the tyrant I had feared, and they visited their mother often. They got on well with her new husband, a charming cultured man who loved children. They were quite happy.

It was thought by some that my father was a "tartar" and that it was only because of my mother's sweet nature that there was harmony in the home. This is not true. My father might appear unyielding and obstinate, but he was in fact very amenable to reasonable argument. I do not believe there was anything that my mother could not convince him to do in her own gentle way.

When our schools organised excursions to another town or to the hills, my father would forbid us to join, for fear of an accident. We begged my mother to persuade him to change his mind. Without committing herself, my mother would give us the money and tell us to put our names down on the list. She would then start working on my father, telling him that it was not fair to deprive us of the greatest joy of school life. My father would hold his own, and we would go to bed dejected. Then, just before my parents retired at midnight, my father would tentatively say to my mother, "I suppose it is too late for the children to join the picnic", at which my mother would reveal that our picnic baskets were ready and we just had to wake up on time.

My father's bluntness would sometimes embarrass my mother. He believed in calling a spade a spade and did not suffer fools easily, giving them a piece of his mind no matter how unpleasant. Because he did this to all without distinction it came to be recognized as one of his most admirable traits: "If you want to hear the truth and get honest advice go to Panayotis".

My father could be harsh and disagreeable and refuse to listen to excuses. He was particularly intolerant of dishonesty, inefficiency and laziness. He could put the fear of god into some members of his staff not distinguished by their intelligence. One of his favourite sayings was Schiller's aphorism: "With stupidity the gods themselves struggle in vain". He was no less harsh with his clients if he thought they were telling him half the truth. His voice would then boom through the Chambers. "Whose side are you on?" one of his clients asked him, stopping my father short and bringing a smile to his lips: "Unless I know all the weaknesses of your case, I cannot conduct it to your best advantage", was the reply.

His authoritarianism was not confined to his Chambers. He could be very severe with his children, particularly with Yannoulla and George. Yannoulla's argumentative nature matched his own, as indicated in an instance already related. With George he was inordinately strict. He feared that George was less strong-willed than the rest of us and might be susceptible to bad influences. In his anxiety to protect him, he drove him to the opposite extremes: my father was a die-hard conservative. When George joined the army during the war, and later at Oxford, he became a communist.

While it was obvious that Michael had an artistic talent, it would have been inconceivable for him even to whisper his wish to study dramatic art. Michael submissively studied law, passing all his examinations with

distinction at top speed and before he was old enough to be called to the Bar. By that time, the war was in full swing, Michael could not return to Cyprus and was saved from the doom of a legal career. He got a post as a producer for the Cyprus Section of the BBC and at the same time studied at the Central School of Dramatic Art and the Old Vic School of Production. He became a world famous film director, theatre and opera director, producer and writer.

It was not until Michael's fifth film, "Electra", many years after Michael had attained world renown, that my father conceded that "perhaps he had been right in not following a legal career..... though of course he would have made a brilliant lawyer - and what was wrong in that!"

It is extraordinary that my father, who had himself been ordained by his father to study medicine, when his talents so obviously lay in law, should have been so slow to accept that his son was equally entitled to follow the career of his choice.

Despite his conservative leanings, my father was extraordinarily liberal and progressive in some areas. At a time when girls were destined for marriage and home, being sent at most to a "finishing school" in Switzerland and then provided with a handsome dowry and a good husband chosen for them by their parents, my father declared that his daughters would be properly educated and equipped to earn their living, they would choose their own husbands and they would certainly not be given a dowry.

His friends thought he had taken leave of his senses when he put me on a boat for Alexandria, on my own, without even a chaperon, to go to an English boarding school there. I was then fourteen and so shy that I would

starve sooner than ask for a piece of bread. When I was seventeen, he broke all records by sending me on a cargo boat to London, again alone, for a secretarial course and to live in "digs". He countered criticism by saying that he had complete faith in his children's good sense. This confidence was also proved in another, practical, way, he did not limit me to a monthly allowance. He opened a bank account for me, to which he regularly transferred generous sums of money. His letters urged me not to stint but to eat well, going as far as to suggest steaks, buy good clothes and enjoy myself.

Michael arrived in London to begin his studies at the Bar just as I was finishing my secretarial course. Before returning to Cyprus, I transferred the balance of my bank account - 300 pounds, a fortune by 1938 standards - to Michael. I never lived this down. To his dying day my father teased me about my naivete in giving away my money.

My father had a mischievous sense of humour. A few months after he married my mother, who was only sixteen, he came home one day and asked her to sign a document. My mother promptly did so. He then solemnly informed her that she had just signed a petition for divorce. My bewildered mother started weeping and begging to know where she had failed as a wife. It was some time before my father could reassure her that he did not really want a divorce, that it was a joke intended to teach her never to sign anything without reading it, even if it came from him.

He always embarrassed my mother by relating, with trimmings, how he had been in love with her since she was three and had started going to kindergarten. He, being five years older, was already at primary school. He would hide, he said, behind a door and watch her approach, holding hands with one of her older sisters. Suddenly he would rush out and kiss her.

For such a down-to-earth man, my father was capable of showing the most amazing sensitivity. Realising on the eve of their wedding that my mother knew nothing about the facts of life, he gently and delicately explained them to her. Because she was so young when she got married, my mother continued her education for some years with tutors at home. It was when she was having an English lesson that she had her first miscarriage. Not daring to mention this to her teacher, she went through the lesson haemorrhaging and in agony. When the teacher rose to leave he wondered why she stayed in her chair and did not accompany him to the door as usual.

My father's paramount quality was his integrity. His straightforward character and honesty inspired total trust. There were persons in Limassol, well-established businessmen, who would do nothing without consulting him and who would trust him with all their worldly goods. He had absolute powers of attorney from clients living abroad to handle all their affairs in Cyprus, often considerable fortunes. Their gratitude at my father's conscientious management and meticulous accounting was always warmly expressed. He would tell his clients exactly how their cases lay and would not accept to embark on litigation that he was convinced was hopeless and would only result in unnecessary costs to his client.

He would not accept even the smallest gift from anyone to whom he had done a favour. A basket of fruit would be returned to the bewildered grateful villager with such vehemence that the poor man would leave almost in tears wondering what he had done wrong. When my father met me on my arrival from abroad, he would cross-examine me much more strictly than the customs officer. "Are you sure you have declared everything? You haven't forgotten anything - toys for your cousins?"



My mother came home puzzled one day. "I don't know what's come over Panayoti", she said to my grandmother. "I went to his Chambers to get some money from the Chief Clerk, as I always do, to go and buy cotton to make some sheets. When Panayoti heard me, he rushed out of his office and told me that we did not need any new sheets. Since when does Panayoti interfere in things like that?" The mystery was cleared a few days later when a Law was passed increasing the import duty on cotton. As a member of the Executive Council my father knew that the Bill was pending. That was why he had stopped my mother from buying cotton before the increase in price. She could of course buy as much as she liked at the higher price. He always considered it a great piece of luck that he happened to overhear my mother's conversation with the Clerk. Many years later, when I was a Cabinet Minister he always told me if he intended to buy something like a case of whisky so as to give me the chance of stopping him if an increase in import duty was being considered. He would wait and buy it after the increase.

I will end this portrait of my father with his four precepts to me when I began practising law as his junior partner:

FIRST: You never undertake a case if you feel that your client is out to cheat his opponent. Nor should you ever accept to draw up a contract which is unjust or if you feel that either party is not in good faith and intends to go back on his word.

SECOND: Every case is equally important, whether it be for thousands of pounds or for a few hundred. Your client is entitled to the same attention and thoroughness. To each case you will devote your maximum ability and care.

THIRD: Always give your client your candid opinion. It is your duty to tell him exactly how his case lies and not to allow him to embark on costly and fruitless litigation. If by reducing your fees you can help him settle the case to his advantage, do not hesitate to do so.

FOURTH: You will undertake a number of cases "for the good of your soul", without payment, and you will not turn away a client who has a deserving case, particularly a "human" one, because he cannot pay the fees. Nor did my father accept fees, even from rich clients, in cases like adoption, which he considered to be an act of humanity.

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C H A P T E R . . . X X X . I

THE 25TH OF MARCH

The 25th of March was the most special day of the year. It is an important religious feast - the day on which Archangel Gabriel presented the Virgin Mary with the lily. It is also the National Day of Greece - the day on which, in 1821, Bishop Germanos of Palaeae Patrae defied the Turks by hoisting the Greek Flag, thus marking the official beginning of the struggle to free Greece from Ottoman rule. It was the nameday of my father, Panayotis, named after "Panayia", the Virgin, and of my mother, Angeliki, named after the Archangel.

But for our family, the Day had a particular significance. It was the day on which my father, in 1909, rose from the dead. He was sixteen and had meningitis. The doctors fought for his life with all the means available to them. Nothing would lower the fever. He became delirious and then unconscious. When he fell into a coma the doctors abandoned him. They stopped visiting him, telling his parents there was nothing more they could do. It was usual in those days for doctors to do this, to avoid being identified with the death of a patient, which would not only harm their reputation but would also keep other patients away for fear that the doctor might be the carrier of the disease. It was a question of hours, they said, before Panayotis died.

My grandmother laid out his best suit at the foot of the bed, in which to dress him immediately after death, knelt and prayed. It was the 24th of March. At the moment when the bells of the nearby church started ringing for the service on the eve of the big feast, my father opened his eyes. "Why is my suit on the bed?" he asked. "To-morrow is the 25th of March and you are going to church", my grandmother replied.

When a few days later my father was well enough to go out, one of his masters coming upon him unexpectedly in the street all but suffered a heart attack on seeing the young ghost.

That the recovery was a miracle has never been disputed and the Day has since been observed as a family feast. I heard my father relate this story a few days before his death at the age of 87 with all the conviction of true belief. It is surprising that this event did not turn him into a superstitious religious zealot. On the contrary, he was far less religious than the average Cypriot. Although he adhered to the Greek Orthodox faith and would not tolerate disrespect of Christianity, he hardly ever attended a church service nor did he insist that we do.

Let me now describe how namedays were celebrated in Cyprus when I was a child.

The house, scrubbed and polished until everything glistened, was arranged to best advantage: silver scintillating, vases full of flowers, the most beautiful plants brought in from the garden and spread about. On the eve of a nameday gifts would begin to arrive at the house: all kinds of delicacies - homemade cakes, special sweets, chocolates, select wines. There were no florists in Cyprus when I was a child, but bouquets of choice freshly cut flowers were sent by friends with gardens. The beautiful carnations of Mrs. Chrysostomou were given pride of place in the drawing room.

From about nine in the morning the front door was kept ajar. The lady of the house put on her best dress, usually made for the occasion, and stood in the drawing room, which in most other houses at that time was kept closed during the year and only opened on feastdays. The maids, in black dresses, embroidered white organdie aprons starched stiff, cuffs and headgear to match, stood at the ready. As an important Saint's Day is a school holiday, the children of the house were also dressed in their best and moved in and out to be admired.

Soon after nine, the show, officially called "receiving", began. In my early childhood the visitors came in horse-drawn carriages; in later years they came in taxis. They were all ladies, wearing models of the latest fashion, as for a dinner-party. They would come in, be shown into the drawing room, greet my mother with the customary good wishes, sit down and make small talk. The maids would then go round offering the traditional "trattarisma" - a loukoumi and sugar-coated almonds. The loukoumi is a kind of shortbread in the shape of an inverted boat about four inches long and two inches across the bows, stuffed with almonds and covered in icing sugar. The "trattarisma" was offered with a paper napkin so that it could be wrapped and taken away. The visitor was not expected to eat it on the spot. Almost immediately afterwards, the visitor said goodbye and left, to go to the next "receiving lady" on her list.

On important Saints' Days, a Limassol lady might have no less than thirty calls to make. Carriages were hired by the day, at the cost of five shillings. Each visit lasted about ten minutes. During the busy hours - around eleven in the morning and four in the afternoon - there would be about twenty-five callers at a time in the drawing room, spilling over into the study.

When there was a lull in the visits, my mother would go to her desk, where she kept her "books", bring out her big alphabetical register and make a minus mark (-) against the name of each visitor. This meant that my mother now owed that lady a visit. The minus mark would be crossed and become a plus (+) when the debt was paid by a visit from my mother on the lady's next "Receiving Day". As many as 150 visitors would call on the 25th of March.

After dinner in the evening, the house would fill with the special friends of the family. This time the men came also. They were offered drinks, a buffet dinner with a great variety of foods, cakes and sweets, fruit and coffee.

On the morrow of a Receiving Day, the door continued to be kept ajar in case there was a spillover of visitors who had been unable to come on the Day. The house then gradually went back to normal, the extra cakes and sweets being shared with my grandmother and aunts, the maids' families and the orphans' home.

My mother "received" three times a year - on the 25th of March, on my nameday the 26th of November, and on Archangel Michael's Day, the 8th of November. The namedays of Yannoulla and George were ignored - a sore point quoted by Yannoulla in support of her complaint of discrimination against the two younger children.

If for any reason such as mourning a lady was unable to "receive" on her usual Day, this would be announced in the press well in advance:

"Mrs..... regrets that she will neither celebrate her husband's nameday nor receive on ....."

The 25th of March was preceded by many weeks of preparation. It began with the making of our clothes. Yannoulla and I had our best party dresses made - usually identical except perhaps for the colour - to wear on the Day. Michael and George wore Little Lord Fauntleroy outfits: black velvet trousers and silk shirts with small pleats and frills down the front, cuffs and collars to match. The dressmaker, engaged months ahead, came and worked in the house for days on end. Her name was Donna and she was hardly four foot tall. She had a distinct laugh and a fine sense of humour, and we loved her. She made a joke of her height and allowed us to measure ourselves against her. Even the smallest of us topped her before we were ten.

Among Donna's accomplishments was fortune telling from the grounds of Turkish coffee. So, on the Donna days those of my aunts who were still single and all my mother's unmarried friends congregated in the room where Donna did the cutting and sewing, helping her with tacking and hemming, and drinking innumerable cups of coffee. These sessions are among my happiest memories. I would hurry home from school with a warm feeling of anticipation. I loved the chatter and the laughter, the knowing shakes of heads as each one's secrets were revealed by Donna, then the piecing together of the seer's cryptic words by Michael and me.

Strangely enough, though I hated children's parties, an aversion which persisted through to adult life, I enjoyed Receiving Days - perhaps because on those days I usually wore new shoes, which was one of the passions of my childhood. On the morning when I was to wear a new pair of shoes I would wake with joy, jump out of bed and dress as quickly as possible. I would then spend the day walking about furtively looking at my

feet. The elation did not evaporate after the first time but continued for a number of wears. To this day I can go past a jeweller's shop without so much as a glance at the window, but I cannot walk past a shoe shop without an irresistible pull to look inside.

My mother was particularly careful with our shoes. They were always of the best quality and quickly discarded if there was a suspicion we had grown out of them. Some of our shoes were bought ready-made, imported from England or Bata's in Czechoslovakia, and some were made to measure by Romanos, the shoemaker of Limassol. I remember how eagerly I stood on a white sheet of paper while Romanos' pencil went round my feet. The most exciting shoes were the boots made for us each winter. They were brown, with buttons down the side and they fitted so exactly that they had to be done up with a hook. The happiness of wearing boots lasted through the winter. My only disappointment was that I was not allowed to wear long cotton stockings or even knee-length woollen socks; my mother thought this would make us soft. By constant nagging I managed to acquire woollen knee-length socks in my final year at the Convent when I was thirteen. They were grey, imported from Scotland, ribbed two plain two purl, with a colourful fair-isle top.

Of all the 25th of March Receiving Days, there is only one that I remember with anything but pleasure. I was twelve. I had put on my new shoes, black patent leather made by Bata, and my Chillpruf socks so white that they glistened. I was in the front garden watching the carriages arrive. Each visitor had a kind word for me and good wishes for my father.



At about eleven, one of my father's sisters arrived. From early childhood we had thought of her and her elder sister as of the wicked sisters in Cinderella. They were rather fat and ugly, they hardly had a good word to say about anyone and always managed to hurt. Their god was money and their philosophy was summarised in the rubric:

Eshis pparan eshis haran	If you have money you give joy
En eshis pparan	If you have none
Exo maskara	Stay out clown

As my mother had no dowry she obviously fell into the latter category.

As my aunt alighted from the carriage I went to greet her. She looked me up and down, sniffed and said: "Couldn't they have found better shoes for you to wear on your father's nameday?" She might as well have given me a slap in the face. I spent the rest of the day sobbing. When my father came home for lunch he had one look at my swollen face and red eyes and asked my mother what was the matter. She had to tell him. I have seldom seen him so angry. It took all my mother's powers of persuasion to stop him from leaving the table and going to tell his sister what he thought of her.

From their early marriage my father had told my mother to keep away from these two sisters; but my mother, whose sweet and forgiving nature was unsurpassed, did not heed him. Her ties with her own family being so strong, she felt it her duty towards my father and us to establish happy relations with all the members of his family no matter at what cost to herself. Fortunately my grandmother and my father's younger sisters were different; one had been at school with my mother and they had always been good friends. My mother's lovable disposition and her ability to disregard the peculiarities of her two sisters-in-law so completely won them over that she became their most trusted confidante; they died in her arms.

The pattern of celebrating namedays has changed over the years, though people of my mother's generation and even some of my own went on "receiving" in the old tradition until some years ago. As more and more women have careers, the "receiving" tends to be done after seven in the evening and is confined to relatives and close friends who drop in for a drink, a "meze" and cakes. The gifts continue to be numerous though different - there are now more flowers and plants and personal presents - and good wishes are expressed by telegram, telephone or fax.

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CHAPTER .X.X.X.I I

END OF CHILDHOOD

My childhood ended when in September 1935 at the age of fifteen I was put on a boat, "The Fouadieh", to travel on my own from Limassol to Alexandria in Egypt where I was to be a boarder at the English Girls' College, a new school due to open in October that year. It was a sister school of the famous Victoria College, a boys' school run on English Public School lines.

The choice of school could not have been happier. It was housed in a magnificent building, The Villa Zervudaki, more like a small castle or manor house than a villa. It was situated in the elite Ramleh area of Alexandria and was surrounded by extensive, beautifully kept gardens and sports grounds. The boarders' quarters were the bedrooms of the Villa, creating a sense of home. There were no dormitories. Two girls shared a spacious room, elegantly furnished in bright colours - a different colour for each room - with carpets and curtains to match. Each girl had her own wardrobe with a long mirror, chest of drawers, dressing table, bedside table and comfortable chair. I would lie in bed at night admiring the ceiling which was decorated by a superbly carved frieze with cherubs and other small figures in the tradition of English country houses.

One of the bathrooms, the one next to my bedroom known as the Allenby Bath, almost defies description. It was so named because reputedly it had been specially devised for Viscount Allenby, High Commissioner in Egypt after the First World War, who stayed in the Villa. Around the top part of the bath there was a deep alcove like a large hood which rose from the floor to a height of about six feet. On the right-hand side there was an

array of taps one under the other. Each tap corresponded to a different kind of spray from various outlets in the inside concave part of the alcove. Apart from the ordinary taps for the bath and the shower, there was a tap that sent a strong torrent of water like a waterfall through an opening at waist-height, another that activated a shower sprouting upward, a tap that sprayed water through ordinary-sized holes all around and all over the body from head to foot, and yet another that blasted water from minute holes creating a pin-prick effect. Each had its own permutations: to cover the whole body, or only such part of the body as one preferred, to increase or lessen the flow. To this day and in no hotel, however luxurious, have I encountered anything as blissful as the Allenby Bath.

Our uniform in the winter was a grey suit, with blouses of nine colours from which to choose. In the summer we wore cotton dresses of the same nine colours and several patterns. Our party dresses, of pure silk, were again of the same nine colours and various patterns. The cumulative effect - red, orange, yellow, blue, duck-egg blue, peach, pink, green, cream - was of a bouquet of flowers.

The school classes were named after poets and men of letters from Milne for the lowest to Shakespeare for the highest. The teachers were below twenty-five, most of them graduates of Oxford or Cambridge, and chosen by the Headmistress, Miss Milvain, not only for scholastic achievement but also with an eye to elegance and beauty. It was Miss Milvain's conviction that children absorbed better a lesson delivered by a handsome young person. The excellence of the teaching was unsurpassed, since each class consisted of not more than ten pupils.

The most unique feature of the School was the Headmistress, Miss Gladys Milvain, then aged about thirty-five. Tall and slim, with the bluest and most sparkingly smiling eyes I have ever seen, and an abundance of hair framing her face, she was an imposing figure. Of all the people in my life outside my family Miss Milvain has perhaps had the deepest and most lasting influence on me.

I was the first boarder - actually the first pupil - to set foot in the new school. Miss Milvain was in the hall to meet me when I arrived, asking about the journey, showing me to my room, putting me immediately at ease, telling me that lunch would soon be served and that I should join her in the dining room as soon as I was ready. There was none of the anticipated trepidation of meeting the Headmistress in the dreaded sanctuary of her study. Miss Milvain always seemed to be laughing, to be seeing the positive side of life. On the rare occasions when she became angry, the effect was that of a thunderbolt.

Miss Milvain believed not only in education but in culture. She taught us English and German. If during a lesson there happened to be a good concert on the radio, she would interrupt the lesson and invite us to her study to listen to the music and share a cup of tea and cakes with her. Sports were an essential ingredient of culture and therefore of great importance. Games were compulsory every day. Lacrosse, cricket, tennis, swimming were part of the curriculum in addition to daily gymnastics and classical Greek dancing three times a week. Miss Milvain herself often joined us on the gamesfield as a member of a team.

Elegant manners were also important. That is why great attention was paid to school meals, particularly lunch at which most day-girls also participated. We sat at round tables of about six, covered with the best linen, china and cutlery, and headed by a mistress. We were served in the manner of a luxury hotel by Sudanese waiters in beautiful gellabiahs and white gloves. The meals were sumptuous. Each meal consisted of three courses and we could eat what we liked. Miss Milvain considered that no child should be forced to eat food it really disliked on the basis of the old maxim that one should learn to eat everything to become accustomed to any circumstance. She argued that if ever we found ourselves in the unlikely situation of having to eat what was put before us or else starve we would soon learn. One of the Egyptian girls would eat nothing but bananas and cheese, and that was what was served to her. At breakfast we boarders had a choice of the most exotic fruit and juices, cheeses, cereals, eggs, hams, sausages, kippers, hot drinks, thick cream. The older girls were expected to have read the daily newspaper and be able to discuss intelligently the current events.

Alexandria was at that time one of the cultural centres of the world. When Miss Milvain realised that I was fond of the theatre she saw to it that she and I had tickets for every performance of every theatre company that visited Alexandria, from the Old Vic to the Comedie Francaise. When the Habima Theatre arrived, which performed only in Hebrew, we still attended all the performances.

She instilled in me a love of classical music not only by turning on the radio or playing records on her ancient gramophone but by making sure that when Toscanini, Rubinstein, Paderewski, Hubermann and the best orchestras and singers in the world performed in Alexandria she and I had the finest seats in the house. It did not matter that I was kept up late: culture was more important than school rules and "lights out" time. Nor were we absent from important sports events: the Wimbledon champions always visited Alexandria immediately after Wimbledon. We were there to watch Von Kramm and Perry at the Sports Club.

As my home was a two-days' sea journey away, I was the only girl to spend all the holidays at the school. Miss Milvain saw to it that I did not lack entertainment. On one holiday she took me to Cairo and personally guided me through the museums, monuments and places of interest. Her concern for me continued after I left school. When I went to study in London she introduced me to many of her friends so that I would not be lonely and took me out herself when in England. I saw Miss Milvain for the last time in London in 1951 when she came to see my infant daughter. She was as full of life and energy as ever.

One of Miss Milvain's eccentricities quickly rubbed off on me. She believed that sickness was all in the mind, that it was a weakness to be unwell and therefore something to be ashamed of. I had the misfortune of becoming very ill with measles a few days after school opened. When I asked Miss Milvain who visited me in the sickroom whether she thought the rash was my imagination, she just smiled. The fact remains that to this day illness is a humiliation to which I do not readily admit. The strange thing is that when Miss Milvain was diagnosed of cancer of the intestine at the age of about fifty-eight she apparently did not put up any fight but turned over and died.

I consider myself lucky to have had such an enlightened Headmistress whose horizons were unlimited, whose concern was that her pupils should not be hedged in by conventionality and who strongly believed that development of other interests was as important as schoolwork.

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I returned from my second year at school in Egypt in 1937 to find that a revolution had taken place in Limassol. Telephones had been installed. Michael had already announced the event in a letter to me. When it rang, he said, everyone rushed to the study in a race to pick it up. It was a wonder that no legs had yet been broken. There was then a chorus of "Who is it? What are they saying?" The person who had managed to grab the receiver first did not talk but shouted at the top of his or her voice.

Communication was through the exchange, which was called by turning a handle attached to the side of the instrument. Every conversation was listened into by the operator who became the towncrier for all gossip. My cousin Marlen at the age of two would pick up the phone and ask for "my auntie", to which the operator would respond by putting her through or by informing her that her auntie had gone out shopping.

Thus was Limassol emancipated into the modern era at the beginning of my adult life.

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E P I L O G U E

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I have written this Memoir for my enjoyment. In writing it I have realised how lucky I was in having the parents I had and in growing up in the family I had, surrounded by love, safe and secure, with laughter always lurking below the surface, and how blessed I was in the other people who helped to shape my childhood and therefore my life.

T H E E N D

A P P E N D I X

EXTRACTS FROM THE EPIC POEM

BY

VASSILIS MICHAELIDES

"The Ninth of July 1821 in Nicosia, Cyprus"

or

"The Song of Kyprianos"



Musselim Agha has received an order  
from the Porte  
And yesterday he called an urgent Council.  
Your fate is black,  
He holds your death in his palm,  
your destiny is sealed.  
Do not tarry, Kyprianos, do not waste time.  
For your own sake, vanish.  
If you do not, you are lost;  
If daylight finds you here, you will die  
On the gallows or on the spit.  
Come, let us go quickly. The carriage is  
waiting."

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Kyprianos bowed his head and thought awhile.  
"I will not leave the city,  
Kioroglou,  
If I leave, greater ills will follow.  
I want to stay, Kioroglou, and let them  
kill me,  
Let my death save others.  
I cannot go, Kioroglou;  
It would mean death to the Greeks of this land.  
I cannot put the noose around my people's  
neck.  
Better the blood of the Bishop than the blood  
of the people."

---

"I grieve for you, Archbishop,"  
pleaded Kioroglou,

.../"Let not



His panting betrayed his fatigue;  
Under his arm he held a clean bundle.  
He approached Kyprianos and whispered:  
"My father sent me, and I came running.  
I have brought some clothes of his,  
for you to wear.  
Put them on and let us go, in secret,  
to our house;  
Come, dress quickly, and let us leave,  
make haste".

---

"My son, who is your father? Tell me,  
I want to know."

"My father is Kioroglou; he charged me  
To find you quickly to bring you the clothes  
And take you to our house at once, not to leave you.  
Dress, and let us go. God, I pray, is with us.  
My father is at home, waiting for us.  
We'll cross the garden,  
Then over the wall into the street.  
And if on our way we chance on a patrol,  
A word from them and I mow them all down and cut  
them to pieces."

---

"Go, my son, tell your father to look to his affairs.  
I am much better here;  
And tell him that even on the gallows  
I shall remember his kindness,  
his good heart.  
Greet him from my soul and tell him also  
That even from below the earth, I will thank him  
If he will do a greater kindness still than  
this:

Let him do what he can  
To save the Greeks of our poor land  
from greater ills.  
Tell him this and may God grant him years."

---

"To do what you say, I will try also.  
Your words I will keep locked in my breast;  
I swear on my faith not to forget them.  
But I am ashamed to go to my father without you."

A sound then came from the other door,  
And they saw the bolt move.  
The brave young man was seized by rage.  
His hand reached for the gun at his waist.  
Anger filled him, but he changed his mind.  
With one leap he fell into the garden.

---

The door then opened wide against the wall.  
A Turkish gentleman came in, richly dressed.  
"I have come to see you, to talk to you", he said.  
"Your fate grieves me deeply.  
I have brought you some food and drink.  
You will be taken away soon,  
For I have seen three hanging ropes:  
Two on the plane tree, the  
third on the murlberry:  
All three are sprung ready for Death.  
My heart is so heavy I cannot bear it.

---

I have come to comfort you,  
to tell you that I will try today to do  
all I can  
To bring the gallows down and save you.  
I will tear up the papers they

have prepared.

I will turn bitter to sweet

and make the savage tame.

To save you, the impossible will become possible.

What cannot be will be.

Is it not shameful and unjust that four heads,

Pillars like you, the leaders of this land,

should hang?

Nothing is sweeter than life;

One word from you is enough to save you."

---

The Archbishop rose and said:

"Turk, be silent, no more

words form you

Do not waste your breath, it is a pity.

Go about your business.

Death is sweeter than your words."

The Turk stood wrapped in thought

He saw and believed that his

words were in vain

He was filled with sorrow and shame.

He left with grief and anguish

in his heart.

---

During the last deliberations on the Bishops' fate,  
Kioroglou made a last effort to save them:

Kioroglou rose and said:

"You have a soul to yield up to God, Mehmet Agha,

He who forswears his oath damns his soul.

You made an oath not to kill the Archbishop.

You swore to him never to behead him."

---



When the Bishops were led to the gallows:

The Cypriot Turks were sorrowful.

They all stood silent and deep in thought.

---

And after the hanging:

The Turks grieved at the slaughter,

There was not one who did not feel in his heart:

"it is a shame."