

FOTIS DOUSOS

chimera

Short Stories & Tall Tales



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The Trail

I followed my teacher's trail. I walked through forests and desert lands, until all trail disappeared. I forgot who my teacher is, what he taught me, the reason why I underwent this apprenticeship.

However, I know that when my teacher was in his thirties he got lost too. As they say: *Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita...*

Knights of the Rueful Countenance

Don Quixote died and was hardly mourned by anyone. His grave became overgrown until it disappeared over the years. Nowadays, his very few followers keep spreading his Word. They are dispersed amid the various classes of the social pyramid (although, to be more exact, they usually belong to the lower stratifications), and can be found in every corner of the world.

I once met one of them very far away from my homeland. He saw in me signs of audacity, genuineness and pure intentions, which is why he imprudently asked me to become his squire.

What was I thinking when I said 'yes'? We both got into a vicious circle of perpetual quests. Besides, the abundant illusions and prejudice of our times favour misconception.

So, while we believed to be devoting ourselves to bravery and eradicating all evil of humanity, we ended up wearing ourselves out by vague circular motions, vain strikes, vacillating steps and inarticulate cries.

The only good thing this adventure brought us was that each delirium made the children gather around and stare at us in awe, as if they were watching a nice theatrical play.

The Labyrinth

I heard that the old man living by the sea had once entered the Labyrinth managing to come out of it unharmed. So, since I was about to go in, I decided to ask him how he did it.

He was in his office studying the structure of seashells and taking notes. I wondered in which way I could pose my question, even though all ways seemed ridiculous. I assumed that he was going to belittle the importance of the luck factor – which we all know is decisive in attempting to exit the Labyrinth – in order to extol his own action.

To my surprise, the old man took a top from his pocket and started spinning it in front of me. Again, I tried to read his mind; he would definitely open the conversation with his theories on angular momentum or the law of probabilities. Yet, I was proven wrong once again. His next move was just as enigmatic: he burst into a sarcastic laughter.

I left thinking about what the old man had offered me.

My way into the Labyrinth was about to happen while equipped with three things: studies on seashells, a top play, and laughter exercises. My chances to survive did not seem particularly great...

Apocalypse

All the Gates opened. And air poured into reality. A lot of scholars have spoken about this phenomenon but were treated by the scientific community as quaint folks before being gradually marginalised.

The phenomenon of winds is not due to barometrical fluctuations but to invisible dimensional gates, that open up erratically across any geographical longitude and latitude on earth, releasing winds that rush out through their nozzles.

During the most recent European congress of “Meteorology, Clouds and Winds”, unable to put up with this plot against truth anymore, I dedicated my speech to the analysis of the aforementioned allegation. Needless to say, the audience showered me with derision.

Not that the laughter and mockeries of my colleagues cause me any trouble whatsoever; I just fear that one day, instead of air, the numerous scattered gates could release dirt, fire, or water into the world. Certain prophets ignoring a rational way of thinking have called this possibility “Apocalypse”.

The Snowman

... When the snow melted away the Snowman with its carrot nose, the funny hat and the button eyes, revealed underneath itself a statue. It had been covered with snow so tenderly that it resembled a snowman for a little while, until some children accidentally passing by added the eyes, the nose and the mouth.

Perhaps, after thousands of years, when the rocks will have melted away, they might reveal that the statue as well is something different than what we think it is. Tenderly covered by matter, it may have assumed a random form which does not correspond to its deep and latent essence.

Three Doors Leading Outside the Dark Room

The exit was closed. But there were three options: three other doors allowing me to leave the room. I assumed that one door would take me to my childhood; how much I yearned to go there to fix some of the numerous mistakes of my past...

The second one would lead me to the present. However, that door ought to be avoided since, as I alluded to, my present imposed to remain trapped in one room while having to choose among three escape doors. If I chose the door of the present I would fall into a vicious circle, into the snare of an endless circular now.

Of course, the last door belonged to the future. How many times did I dream of going through it, of skipping with a leap the current troubles to find myself at once at the bright threshold of tomorrow...?

So, I had to pick either the gate of the past or that of the future. I stood there pondering, not knowing what to do. And then, I realised that unconsciously I had already passed through the door of the present...

Antimatter

I always gave my son the same advice: *“If you ever meet your anti-self, meaning a creature made of antimatter carrying exactly the opposite electric charge from you, resist shaking hands with him as you will both cease to exist as matter at once”*.

My son’s anti-self, however, was a woman... And not only did he fail to resist touching her hand, but he kissed her nonetheless. As a result, happened exactly what modern physics describes so vividly...

“This is how true love looks like”, commented my wife sorrowfully. Indeed, at the time an epidemic of true love seemed to have hit the entire world leading everyone to seek their anti-selves and then dissolve.

Chronicle of Prohibition of Extreme Emotions

The princess suffered from a rare illness: she should never laugh or she would die from an instant cardiac arrest. For this reason, the King ordered to slay all jesters in the kingdom. In my opinion, though, he should have executed the medics who came up with this inexplicable diagnosis... He only kept alive one: the court's fool. Nevertheless, he had him locked into a dungeon to prevent any random encounter with his daughter. Needless to say, during that period any jokes, jester songs, or pranks were banned in the kingdom without discretion. Laughter had become almost illegal, whereas whoever was funny ran the risk of being arrested. In those times even the writers of chronicles, like us – with an inclination towards a light and spicy style – minded not to let anything funny creep into our prose. As a result, not only our texts did resemble essays – they were cold, heavy, undigested – they also made us lose our very few readers.

One day, despite the security measures, while the jester was heading to the master reception hall where the King was having a silent, quiet feast with important foreign guests, in one of the many rambling arcades of the palace he crossed paths with the princess. As it usually happens in similar circumstances, the two young people fell madly in love. From that moment on they did not miss a chance to see each other, although always in a secretive and prudent way. And the feeling of love inside them would grow under the weight of prohibition that shadowed their relationship.

To cut a long story short, at some point the jester confessed to the young lady that he had composed a comic sonnet about

love; in her turn, not wishing to arrest the creative inspiration of her beloved, she insisted that he recite it. In spite of his firm refusal due to the princess' health condition, after quite some begging and nagging, he was convinced to interpret the sonnet before her. The first verses revealed the cheerful style of the sonnet and the princess, who was not accustomed to any fun, got really excited. Soon, she started laughing hysterically and, before hearing the end of the poem, she expired.

When the jester realised what he had done he burst into sobbing. As he had never cried before, in his devastation, he thought that crying too reserves a hedonistic aspect. However, before being able to complete his consideration, he passed away. He suffered from a rare illness too: he should not cry because he had a weak heart. That is why his mother, who intended him to be a jester, had raised him amongst jokes and funny faces.

The Stranger

The stranger, staring and smiling at me from a distance, came closer and gave me an emotional hug. He told me that he was my best friend who thought to have passed away and everyone had forgotten about him...

The Telescope

I accidentally broke my telescope. Instead of repairing it, though, I immediately bought a magnifying lens. *“I will use it to find the answers to the questions that torment me”,* I thought. *“I will reverse the line of thinking of my experiments and observations. Therefore, instead of studying the celestial phenomena I am going to examine the terrestrial ones very closely. I will pay attention to the pores of my skin, the cracks on the floor, the little crevices on the walls, the grains of sand”...*

Unfortunately, the only thing that I achieved was to burn ants - all day long - by redirecting the sun beams towards them as they were moving in lines.

Then, a conclusion stroke me like lightning: just as I used the refractive property of my lens as a weapon to exterminate innocent creatures, another being superior to me was hitting me with an invisible radiation causing my cells to deteriorate rapidly. It was Death using its own magnifying lens, time.

So, I rushed to repair my telescope; it is so much better for our soul to look at the stars...

The Metronome

The violinist died. He suffered a heart attack while studying alone in his room. The neighbours only found out days later. Besides, he was a loner and quite unsociable. When, disgusted by the smell, they broke the door and discovered the body it was already in decomposition. His hand was tightly grasped to the violin and by his side - like a metallic tree sprouting out of his death - stood a music stand.

Above the stand, just before the illegible scores, a metronome went on with its infallible ticking - but more slowly and less loudly after so many hours of unceasing work - like a dog wagging its tail in front of its dead master.

Fishing

The golden fish are floating lifeless in the lake. A child pretends to be fishing. Whatever the catch is, it is thrown back into the water.

Grown up

I may have grown up but the imaginary friend I had as a child remained as such. For years, we moved on side by side until one day he broke away and entered a cave full of giant spider webs. He got stuck in there and so did his age.

However, this is not what saddens me. Besides, I will eventually enter that cave too causing my age to stop.

Will the stranger who picked me as his imaginary friend feel any emotional fluctuation with regard to this pause? I probably felt something since I am writing about it.

The “self” consists of an army of blind ants each and every one of which, despite the fact it cannot see the others, can sense not only their presence but also their beneficial influence.

Losing my Shadow

A few bizarre events got me thinking lately.

First of all, I have lost my shadow which can mean two things: either that light is showering me from every angle equally, or that my body is transparent thus allowing the sun beams to pass through it. I tend towards the second explanation. After all, the first one is practically impossible and looks more like a paradox, while the second one despite its hyperbolic nature does have a basis. As a poet once said, 'intense grief dematerialises the body'. There is no reason not to believe it. Nevertheless, there is something strange in all this: I was not sad when the indescribable event occurred, not the least. As a matter of fact, I was immensely happy to have recently married the woman I love and to be getting a promotion soon. So, why feel sad?

As if that was not enough, one day I woke up, went to the bathroom to wash up, and a look into the mirror made me realise in absolute fright that my reflection was gone! I saw nothing but the empty room in my mirror image. Despite the fact this commonly happens to Vampires, I can assure you I have nothing to do with those nocturnal and blood-thirsty creatures.

My wife, who is a chemist, reassured me by promising that nothing of all this would ever affect our relationship. According to her, my body had become a natural light reflector under the influence of some unexplainable disorder. She asked me when was the last time I had been exposed to radioactivity. I told her that as far as I recalled, never. She

instantly changed the subject and asked me where I wished to go on vacation that year.

After all this, it comes as no surprise that one day I woke up and was invisible. My wife reacted to the event with an unfathomable enthusiasm and I soon realised why. The fact I was invisible served her fantasies well during our sexual encounters, since not seeing me before her eyes made it possible to imagine that I was anybody.

“Isn’t it high time I visited a doctor?” I kept asking her. *“No! I prefer you this way!”* she replied half in jest, half in earnest. And when my deafening silence made her feel my suffering and fright, she said: *“Don’t worry! It will soon wear away and you will be visible again! See the funny side of it. Try to enjoy it. Think about all the things you can do by taking advantage of your invisibility. For instance, why don’t you rob a bank?”*

This is why I married this girl! She had always had great ideas but I was good at improvising too. Being invisible could be of help in other activities. For instance, it could serve as the perfect cover-up to go in for any kind of lasciviousness and sexual liberty. Voyeurism, pawing and raping could integrate well into my daily repertoire. And since we are talking about fantasies... so be it! Why should I not fulfill mine?

Therefore, full of expectations and with no sense of guilt whatsoever, I began to apply my plan. Nevertheless, at that point my personal calamity culminated. As I reached for the door to open it, my hand failed to stop at any material obstacle and slipped outside through the wooden surface like fog. I did the same with my head and the rest of my body. I went out without opening the door. So, my body was lacking any materiality. It was impossible to grasp objects, to touch, to stroke. On the other hand, I could pass through the walls like a

ghost. When I ran to tell my wife in agitation, there it was the second shock for the day. My wife would not hear me when I talked which indicated that, along with my materiality, I had lost my voice too! No matter how hard I desperately tried to scream into her ear, nothing occurred...

Now, I lay in my own house like a disarmed ghost. I can hear, see, think. These are the only functions I have left. This is my existence. It is impossible to communicate with my wife who, not being able to understand what happened to me that made me vanish like that, has already found emotional and sexual comfort in the arms of a common friend. I cannot bear to watch them but I am afraid to venture out; besides, where to go? I shudder at the thought that even a light breeze can disperse what is left of me...

The Chest

The small staircase led to a low attic. However, there stood a chest that was deep like a well.

The Siege

After eight years of strenuous siege, we feel our strengths abandon us. The troop does not have any more emotional endurance. Getting supplies has become impossible. Therefore, we feed on stray cats and dogs. We quench our thirst by drinking muddy water. We are being decimated by starvation, plague, and infections. A lot of companions talk to themselves during the very few hours of rest. Others have already deserted. Yet, almost everyone is affected by a state of madness that has filled our minds with mists: we are no longer aware whether we are the besiegers or the besieged.

Interlocutors

The interlocutors did not pay any attention to the people around. Wrapped up in their own talk, they failed to even notice that the world was changing. They kept talking for years about mutating things whereas their language remained the same. Hence, the word “love” that carried a positive meaning, with the years passing by and the concepts shifting on, ended up acquiring a negative connotation. Now, “love” meant “act of God” and on hearing that word people ran to hide. So, as the interlocutors pronounced this word aloud – just like other similar ones – chaos fell upon the city.

The interlocutors turned around and realised that, while the world had changed, their language had remained the same. With a keen sense of responsibility and in a state of deep concentration, they stopped their purposeless conversation and started shouting incomprehensible words in an effort to reestablish order. Now, words like “horror”, “help”, and “despair” were able to pacify the crowd...

Chimera

Everyone at the café noticed my torn, dusty clothes, the visible blood stains and the signs of thirst and hardship engraved on my face. What they did not see was the carcass of Chimera that I was carrying along with me. Yes, I am a Chimera hunter and this is the outcome of my hunting. What a pity no one can see it...

The Tattoos

My great-grandfather was a renowned santur player. He would not only play at weddings and feasts, but would also be invited at childbirths and diseases. So mellow and enchanting was his santur playing that women delivered painlessly and sickness abandoned at once the crippled bodies of the dying. He was so efficient that he had significantly outweighed the midwives and wizards who, of course, envied him and often used spells and sorceries to plot against his life or wish him bad. But no curse could ever affect my great-grandfather as if at the time of his playing angels with long swords would join forces around him for protection.

Of course, most people in the surrounding villages loved him and competed to have him first at their house for a treat or to offer him hospitality. They dragged him here and there and the poor man – who almost never stayed at home – hardly ever saw his family. My great-grandmother cursed the day the two had gotten married. She would loathe the santur and feel bitter that her husband paid more attention to it than to her and their children. However, she knew that thanks to the instrument their home was well supplied and they could live generously and at ease without her having to work with livestock or in the fields.

This is how the years rolled by. My great-grandfather's reputation would spread to more and more lands. The wizards and the cunning, toothless midwives would secretly meet to find a way to get rid of him, but in vain. My great-grandfather played unstoppably wherever he was invited. Therefore, the

children were born healthy, the crops were abundant and the sick found a cure.

Until one day, an ugly gypsy woman, illegitimate child of the archimandrite from whom she had inherited the skillfulness in sorcery and who – some sources claim – was her lover, found the solution while in the midst of the dark meeting. And, since her revelation was met by the others with a weak, if not suspicious, reaction, she decided to put the plan in place by herself. However, she requested the council to slaughter lambs in her name and to give her their blessing while she washed in blood. This is exactly what happened that same day at midnight, by the propitious full moon on Libra. After the ceremony, she was handed holy talismans for good luck and she soon directed towards my great-grandfather's village, Mulberryshire.

The dark messenger arrived at dawn and quickly found the house of my great-grandfather who, of course, was not there. She knocked at the door pretending to be a peddler selling magic potions and love elixirs. Gullible and insecure as she was, my great-grandmother naturally let her in and displayed great interest in the merchandise that the gypsy woman was showcasing eloquently, like a television anchorwoman. What is more, she also offered to read her palm. The cunning gypsy woman frowned and began to mumble: *"Oh my lady, you are going through hardships and even harder times are about to come"*. *"Ah!"* sighed my great-grandmother, naïve. *"I wish this was untrue!"*. The bitter gypsy woman went on: *"Your husband is far away, although he is no merchant or seaman"*.

"Yes! He is a musician!" shouted my great-grandmother enthusiastically. *"I can see that"*, said the witch, *"he travels through towns and villages but he does not come home. He makes*

miracles happen and people love him. However, this man will soon be the bearer of a great misfortune... He will bring here a new woman and will throw his wife and children out of the house!" "What are you saying, crazy woman?" my great-grandmother screamed in pain and anger. "Your palm is saying so, not me my lady!". My great-grandmother withdrew her hand and started crying while repeating to herself: "..." *I knew it, I knew it*". She shrank only to become a bundle of black clothes. Then, while trying to conceal her satisfaction, the gypsy woman put in place the final stage of her plan. She told my great-grandmother that the only way to keep her husband was the following: to have two tattoos drawn onto the skin using a special blue ink. "What kind of drawings?" asked concerned my great-grandmother who was a narcissist. "Two thorny bushes, one on each arm", hissed the gypsy woman, "as soon as your husband shall come near you he shall never leave your side again". My great-grandmother did not have to think twice to accept, so the witch used her tools to create the two tattoos.

Who really knows the ingredients of that blue ink? Some say that the azure hue was the result of an unholy mix of squashed serpent scales and crow eggs. However, such squalid recipes are made using many more ingredients which one cannot even imagine, if not a master in the art of magic.

Anyway, the tattoos were completed and the witch left my great-grandmother longing for her husband to come, although before his return home from the faraway lands more days were to pass by. When he got home, his wife prepared his meal, bathed him and lured him into their bedroom to make love. Under the candlelight, as he undressed her, my great-grandfather noticed the two drawings on her shoulders. "What

are these drawings, Anna?" he asked bewildered. *"Embrace me and you shall see"*, she replied lavishly.

Not suspecting a thing, when the man reached to hug her, the two drawings on her shoulders turned into real blue thorns and pierced his hands. My great-grandfather suddenly screamed in pain and pulled away. The thorns regained their two-dimensional form. *"What did you do, crazy woman?"* the old santur player yelled outraged. Then, fearful as she was, his wife revealed all the details about the appearance of the gypsy woman and their pact. My great-grandfather brought the candle near his wife's shoulders to observe the drawings: they looked like fractals. Dark thoughts stormed into his mind while he fell asleep. His wife, however, remained sleepless crying all night long.

Evil manifested itself the following morning when my great-grandfather took the santur out of its case to practice a little. Horrified, he realised that the music he played was nothing but a cacophonous noise stripped of sense or melody; a strident dissonance with no rhythm that purposelessly confused the musical scales, diesis and flats, and all this hodgepodge of sounds produced a terrible discord that made you want to cover your ears. He let the drumsticks in shock while sweat ran down his forehead. *"This is impossible"* he thought. He took back the drumsticks and began to play once again; the outcome was the same, if not worse. So, he kept trying all morning. How terrible it was to see that in spite of having the melodies so clearly in his mind, his hands seemed to act autonomously and to refuse to take any brain orders. Scared, he observed the small circular wounds that his wife's magical drawings had left him the night before. For days, and even weeks, he went on hoping that when his wounds would

be healed he would regain his touch, but in vain. He even turned to the wizards – his very enemies – paying them in gold for a cure, although, of course, those black dogs not only did they refuse to help him but also spitefully laughed up their sleeve.

One morning, after a long time he was fed up with the realisation that there was no escape, he took the santur and threw it down the well in the yard. Then, he left without saying ‘goodbye’ to anyone and never returned. Some say that he traveled to Bulgaria and founded a new religion. My great-grandmother, shocked by the events that her imprudence had caused, ordered her children to descend the well to recover the santur using ropes, to repair it and to learn how to play it. Her wish and curse to them was to never let it go from their hands and that every male descendant shall learn this art from his predecessor, forever and ever until the end of time; until the moment there would be no more santurs, witches, women, or men.

What is more, because she did not stand to look at the two pitiful drawings branded for life upon her, she decided to self-mutilate by cutting her arms right at the shoulders’ line. However, since she could not do it by herself and no family member would ever accept to undertake such an abominable task, she referred to the community executioner. But even he refused claiming that he first had to receive orders by the Court of Justice, meaning a sequence of events should take place: indictable offense, arrest, trial, condemn, sentence.

Anna, my great-grandmother, had never broken the law except that now a gruesome idea was stuck in her mind. After all, she felt defeated, betrayed, desperate, and ready for anything. She ran back to the village of the gypsy woman, the

very one who had brought her so much misery. The gypsy lived in a cave, on the outskirts of the village. My great-grandmother unexpectedly and silently burst into the dirty cave while the witch was cooking her meal. “*Do you remember me Charybdis?*” screamed my great-grandfather’s heartbroken spouse: “*Look at me closely! Because I shall be the last image you have of this world!*”. And, charging like a hyena upon her, she carved out her eyes before the pitiable witch was able to react. She took them in her palm and departed, leaving the poor gypsy screaming in excruciating pain and horror.

After many hours of walking, my great-grandmother - covered in sweat, dust and dirt - reached the Judge’s door. She knocked and when the wise attendant of Themis opened the door she threw at his feet the juicy, carved eyeballs. “*Look what I did!* ” she said. “*I came to turn myself in!*” she said and then collapsed. Usually, for a crime like hers the law reserved a punishment equal to the mutilation of the upper limbs along with blinding. Nevertheless, due to the many extenuating circumstances that were presented by her legal representatives, the sentence was limited to the first part. So, my great-grandmother’s wish was ultimately fulfilled.

Qsim

I am not dancing slowly and mystically. Neither am I walking on the bottom of the sea. I am not moving into a world ruled by anti-gravity. I am simply suffering from a condition according to which I count the time in qsim units (= a 5-second time unit, the smallest subdivision of time that is used in Tangier. The problem is I have never been to Morocco).

Anti-library

The project started approximately thirty years ago, inspired and put in place by a ragpicker.

Every time the beggar in question searched for food into the trash bins outside a publishing house, he bumped into discarded manuscripts of rejected novels which he collected thinking they could be used as a fire kindling for the cold winter nights. Before burning them, however, he decided to read a few to pass his free time. To his great surprise, he realised that many rejected manuscripts were quite interesting. This is how he came up with the idea of an “Anti-library”: an exposition area for all the books he had already collected and those he would pick up in the future.

Suddenly, his life acquired a vision. He recruited more beggars to his cause persuading them with promises and lies. Soon enough, a legion of homeless people was raiding the trash bins of every publishing house looking – beyond partly deteriorated cans and food leftovers – for the spiritual work of unknown writers.

The outcome was astonishing: in a few months’ time the Anti-library was ready for its opening. The books were exposed in an abandoned paper pulp mill, since such alternative venues succeed in attracting public attention. Indeed, the people’s response was so intense that within a few more months more “Anti-libraries” opened all around the world.

Nowadays, the ‘regular’ libraries are withering. No one visits them. The traditional bookstores have closed down while the majority of publishing houses have turned into super markets. This is why, people are now seeking the joy of reading within

Anti-libraries. However, this trend is destined to wear away too. How will Anti-libraries be able to feed on without publishers throwing away manuscripts?

The plan inspirer, a former ragpicker and current president of the world anti-librarian union, says that every writer should anyway throw in the garbage their work once it is completed. The finding process is going to be harder, but this is the only way to carry on the system.

Prophets

We, who stand in this nice enclosure, are considered by the medical community and the rest of society to be crazy. Hence, we are receiving the same treatment as all the other inmates: pharmaceutical treatment, drama therapy, kinesiotherapy, etc.

The other residents, though, call us “prophets” and render us tribute. I should make clear that some patients became residents merely because they listened to us talking, while others for the exact same reason were “cured”. Some of them built their life on the basis of our predicaments, whereas a few others killed themselves. Some became rich while others distributed their belongings among the poor.

Let me straighten another thing up: those who are referred to as “prophets” are (we are) in fact time-travellers. This is the explanation behind their deep knowledge of past or future events, or the hard-to-interpret forces they are (we are) supposed to possess. Nevertheless, the prophets belong to three categories: travellers from the past that become truly insane the second they enter the present, travellers from the future that are distinguished thanks to their reputable wisdom and, finally, travellers of the infinite present (this is where I belong) who bounce from moment to moment without being able to approach neither the present nor the future.

I am well aware of the amount of bizarreness that characterises this last category. However, there is something even stranger. It is said that a traveller from the past is the same person as one from the present and one from the future. In other words, it is about three identical individuals

differentiated only by age and the point of view through which they see things. Should this theory apply, it would mean that we are trapped in a three-mirrored world in which we are forced to face past – but also future! – events as if they were accomplished facts we have no involvement in, nor will we ever have. So, here is the relentless question: Who are we? And what do we do?

This is the greatest enemy of time-travellers: seeking or questioning identity. Had we gotten over it, we would work miracles in every society we went astray.

Percorso

... I ran on the sand and walked back. Then, I realised that amid my footprints there were scattered tracks of bear paws and horse hooves. If I was not certain to be running alone I would say that this is where a bizarre and fierce chase took place. After excluding every other possibility, I was quickly convinced that this is exactly what happened. Only that the hunter, the prey and the observer were one person: me.

Midas Glass Touch

Biting a glass caused it to shatter into my mouth like a rusk. Following that, whatever I touched that was made of glass got smashed into smithereens. So, I am like Midas with a glass touch. Lamps, glasses, dishes, window panes, everything would break in my hands.

I asked a psychic what was happening and I was told that all this was the presage of a new state of consciousness towards which I was destined to transition. This new state made me break everything hollow and jeopardise immaterial things as well; friendships, love stories, family bonds, ideas, and convictions would be at risk. I began to seriously worry about the deconstruction my fingertips were about to provoke.

I thought it was wise to keep my distance from everything. Now I only touch something after thorough consideration.

The Compass

The compass had gone crazy; it was spinning and pointing towards all directions as if it was possessed. I stood there, inconsolable, without knowing where to go. Suddenly, I was enlightened. The object I was using as an orientation device was not a compass but a top. And I was not a passer-by that had lost his way, but a child with all possible paths unraveling before him among which he can choose the desired one.

The Crossword

Should you succeed in solving the crossword, you would have already written a short story.

A Rock around the Neck

That man hung a rock around his neck and stood at the pier's edge, ready to put an end to his life. If only he knew that particular spot was ruled by anti-gravity phenomena... So, instead of pulling him to the bottom, the rock he held in his hands sprang to the sky. As a result, the man did not die by drowning but by hanging.

Meteorite

A star fell and you made a wish. I do not know if your wish will come true. In any case, this particular star – which by the way is a meteorite – is about to crash upon a village razing it to the ground.

Crimes against Oneself

They accused me of attempted suicide and had me imprisoned. My attorney was unable to validate my alibi since at the time of the crime I was asleep and all the evidence was gone.

I was sentenced for life with no right of judicial appeal.

My inmates have been convicted for similar crimes even though there are offenders serving lighter sentences, mainly for self-injuring.

Now, I apply myself to hard labour, isolation and occasional tortures upon my inmates.

There is no escape plan for the time being.

Theory of Motion and Parable of the Triplets

My son asked me to explain him the reason we are moving. Alright, friction and inertia play a role, as do the gravitational forces amid the celestial bodies, or the nuclear ones within the atomic microcosm. But, what is motion? Why are we moving? What sets us in motion? In order to provide an explanation I had to resort to the following parable.

“We are triplets. One travelled at the speed of light a long time ago. Now, I am 30 years older than him. The third one exceeded that limit as well and travelled even faster; he is now a baby”.

What shifts is the universe, not us. What we do is deposit within the thousandths of minutes transparent shells, the infinite sequences of our moments.

Cough

The cloud coughed and from its mouth sprang out a flock of birds.

A Judge and a Philosopher Played Chess

A Judge and a Philosopher were playing chess. Following a long vacillation, the first one seemed to be ahead of the game. However, before making his last move – a checkmate – the Judge thought it would be unfair to humiliate his adversary by winning over. The one seeking truth must not be defeated by the one who is certain about truth. At least, not within the transcendental boundaries of such an intellectual game.

Within the few seconds of wait, the Philosopher sensed the doubts storming in the mind of his opponent. At first he was flattered but eventually got mad when, during the merciless combat, he was able to foresee his oncoming defeat. In fact, he tried to gain some time by making futile manoeuvres that ultimately failed to put a halt to the victorious advance of the Judge. It would be humiliating to win out of concession. However, losing would indicate as well a spiritual inferiority.

The bet they had made before the match complicated things as the winner could ask the loser whatever he wished for.

The Judge was wealthy, the Philosopher poor. So, it would be a good opportunity for the destitute thinker to improve his finances in the event of a win. Nevertheless, the Philosopher despised money. The servant of Themis also had a beautiful daughter, but the Philosopher scorned women as well. Which means in case he offered the match to his opponent the Judge had nothing to lose, neither had he anything to win if he defeated him. The very nature of this bet, however, indicated that the Philosopher did not wish to win.

Then, out of nowhere, appeared the Poet - whom many consider a mad man - and flipped over the chess board.

The Four Winds

...The four winds annoyed me: the Vardarac, the Tramontane, the Gregale, and the Mistral, were pulling my clothes, hitting me on the face, and biting my hands. So, in order to get rid of them I travelled to the desert. The instant I crossed its border I felt the winds floating behind me like ghosts. They did not dare to pass through because to them it represented a dangerous field.

Relieved, I took a few steps to realise soon that something was wrong. They say that our body is made of 70% water; nonetheless, in some of us this percentage hosts another element: wind, which is exactly my case. A few metres away from the desert's frontier I started evaporating. Once again, I turned pleadingly towards the winds, this time seeking their help to take me away from there...

Heliotropes

... Lifting my head made me realise that all the heliotropes in the field were turned towards me. I shifted, took some steps and changed position. With an imperceptible rustle, the majestic plants slowly bent once more their flowers towards me. I had just killed a man and the heliotropes stood there as eye witnesses to the murder.

Migratory Birds

The migratory birds that left our skies did not venture to other countries; they travelled to a parallel universe. Upon their return, they no longer flew in flocks but erratically and chaotically in barmy orbits.

They crashed onto the window panes of houses, drowned by diving in lakes or rivers, and built their nests before mirrors.

The worst part was that their songs no longer diffused into space but only vibrated into our heads.

The Keys

At my waking I noticed these keys in my hand. It felt baffling, of course, and I wondered what they could possibly open. Certainly not my house doors since they do not have any locks. I went outside and spent the entire day searching and trying the keys in every door I found, but in vain. At night, I went to bed disappointed.

A dream of a tower with many chambers came to me, in which my keys worked just fine, where I was able to move from one chamber to another full of joy.

The keys of reality open up the doors of dreams, while the keys of dreams unlock reality.

The Desert Symbol

I lost the desert symbol that used to hang from my neck like a talisman. However, I made no effort to retrieve it. Once outside the confines of the desert such lucky charms are no longer needed.

The Clockmaker

The clockmaker died. As he was being positioned in the coffin, a spring bounced out of his forehead leaving all the mourners in shock. For quite some days after the burial, an imperceptible ticking could be heard underneath the tombstone of the marble grave. It is said that during that period time stopped for a few seconds within some kilometres radius. This explains why we, dwellers of this area, are a few minutes younger than all our peers.

Solar Eclipse

I was twelve years old when I looked at the solar eclipse with the naked eye. Despite the explicit prohibition of our teacher and the warnings of our parents, I turned my face and looked. It was then that I lost 80% of my eyesight on the right eye. Nevertheless, I have no regrets about it. With my burnt iris I was able - while growing up - to see all the things that make people's eyes burn and turn away: the God eclipse, the love eclipse, the sense eclipse...

The Mine

The more we dug without finding anything, the stronger our conviction grew that the precious minerals were close by. Although earthquake presages aroused worries, we never stopped working frantically ignoring the consequences of a potential catastrophe. The dogs that trace vibrations and warn us about imminent quakes have run off. The parrots that locate the leak of dangerous gases have already croaked. Some among us are wondering why we keep on instead of running away. Even the foremen fled. Now, we are all equal among equals.

Apparently, there is something behind those moist rocks, something much more appealing than a precious metal. The employers told us we are looking for diamonds. Now, we are finally convinced they were lying. The more we approach the deposits of the unknown mineral, the more we lose our will, our look becomes void, we don't eat, only drink a little water, but despite the fact we are emaciated we continue to keep our strength in the extreme.

Some conjecture that an extraterrestrial spaceship is buried in the proximities. Others claim that our pickaxes will reveal an ancient, mythical city. Nothing but rumours, voiced through whispers and murmurs, of which nothing is true. I do know, however, because I dug deeper than the others: what we are looking for is ourselves.

On the other side of the rocks dirty miners are opening tunnels in our direction. Not only can I hear them, I can also dimly discern them through holes. They are striving as much as we do in order to meet us and their state is as pitiful as our

crew's. Who knows what shall happen once our sharp pickaxes will have removed the last rock between us... Are we going to face ourselves, approaching from the other side, like a lost brother, or like a despised enemy?

Gravel

Never. Nowhere. Nothing. Three pieces of gravel into my mouth. This is how I learned to speak – like Demosthenes.

The Tlon Disease

Very often, when I cross the threshold of a door (at home, in a public building, in a store, etc.), I find myself in another city, or village, or even an uninhabited land. Despite the fact the situation made me at first feel quite surprised and in awe, I would probably say it has become rather unpleasant.

Imagine that you are about to cross the threshold of your home to carelessly go out for an evening walk, when you suddenly and inexplicably find yourself into a mud pond, on the top of a mountain, or in the middle of a sunflower field. There are even worse scenarios: you might open your room door to the hallway and the next second you may realise you are in the bathroom of a stranger's house, or the cesspit of a building, or on the edge of a cliff. Astonished people I have never met look at me in terror with big, bulging eyes. They are asking for an explanation: how did I get there, what do I want, am I perhaps a burglar? But I don't know what to say, I just feel embarrassed and sorry about it. So, I get out trying to orientate myself and looking for a way to quickly return back home.

No matter, though, how easy and sudden is the first tele-transportation, it becomes harder to return home because it is not me who determines the location. I have no will over it, nor do I control it the least. Instead, it controls me. Otherwise, since I love travelling anyway, I would destine all the spent money to tickets. An unknown power is messing with me while I am entangled within its tentacles.

After the first times I experienced the "journey" or the transportation, as I call it, I visited a doctor. Given that I am an

innate pragmatist who firmly believes in reason, I thought I had lost my mind. Hence, I referred to the specialist to whom I described in detail my experience - free of inhibition or hesitation - while I secretly enjoyed his expected burst of astonishment.

However, the doctor listened to me calmly and carefully and when I finished he said: *“The symptoms you are describing correspond to a very rare condition, none other than the renowned Tlon disease whose consequences vary among patients (or should I better say among personalities?). Some fall asleep and at their waking they find themselves in a faraway place, whilst others tele-transport at the contact with water. Last but not least, there are people to which the disease triggers when they kiss a beloved one. Of course, your case represents one of the most frequent scenarios. Unfortunately, science has not been able to find yet a cure for this condition. So, you have to learn to live with the fact that at any given moment you might open a door and be transported elsewhere”*.

That is how I am striving to get used to this while experiencing my very own Calvary. My only defense against this unreal condition is to stop moving, constantly stay put in one place, avoid going through doors, and stay still. This is why I have a bathroom, a toilet, a kitchen, and a bedroom all in one room. When I am forced - in fright - to leave my home, I am equipped with tools and objects that could turn useful in a possible instant “journey”. So, I take with me a torch, dry food, water, a whistle (one time I ended up under the ruins of a house that had collapsed by an earthquake), a pocket knife, warm clothes (I might find myself on a snowy mountain top), a life vest (yes, I have been to the bottom of the sea), and enough money for the return ticket.

In other words, I do not venture outside my house. Neighbours and friends think that I simply suffer from agoraphobia and depression, and that I made up this story to justify my condition. If only they knew depression does not allow you to create stories...

The Jester

Quite unexpectedly the king's jester fell into disfavour.

Nobody knows to what is due this sudden change of the sovereign, given that neither a war is about to burst nor a financial catastrophe has occurred. In the meantime, all the new jokes, the funny faces and the salacious pranks go unnoticed. The King is always sullen and nothing can make him laugh. He stands still constantly staring at the void.

This entire situation has emotionally affected the jester who for the first time in his life is facing an existential problem. What is the point in being a jester if he cannot make people laugh anymore?

So, the funny little man decided to deliver one last performance at the finale of which he would commit suicide before the very eyes of his master.

The performance was delivered without hearing the slightest laugh. At the end, just like he had planned, the jester took a gun, put it into his mouth and blew his head off. The king did not react, not even then.

Some claim that he had been dead and embalmed for a long time now.

The Well

For the last months I have been living in a well. I fell right into it when I leaned over to see – out of curiosity – its bottom. I lost my balance and fell down. Luckily, I “landed” on the water, so I did not break anything. The first days passed by screaming for help; unfortunately, no one seemed to hear me. I was completely desperate those days. I had plenty of water but I was starving. At night, I stared at the constellations that were visible through the well’s opening and fell asleep inside a relatively dry recess of the wall.

Soon, I realised that I was not alone in the well. My prison served as a habitat for a number of little creatures: frogs, toads, spiders, little flies, even small fish and tiny lizards. What a remarkable interaction going on among those little animals! I noticed that the frogs fed on spiders, the spiders on little flies, the lizards on fly eggs and tiny frogs. No one suffered death by starvation. My lightless enclosure was providing like a kind womb for the sustainability of its fauna! So, the only thing to do was find a place at some level of this food pyramid. This is how I solved my starvation issue. However, I ought to be careful not to disturb the natural equilibrium: I ate a little of every species, minding not to make any discrimination between male and female.

After a while, in spite of getting accustomed and even starting to take some sort of pleasure in living there, something un hoped for occurred. While I was sitting there daydreaming and looking at the dark waters, I heard human voices coming from outside the well’s opening and getting closer. It was a young girl and a boy, probably in love, seeing a well in the

middle of nowhere and coming to make a wish and throw in a coin, as people usually do. An old atavistic habit made me curl up and wait for a few minutes without giving any sign of life. Besides, in case of people approaching one must always assume a defensive attitude, even if they are in a dire situation like mine. Eventually, my forethought did not betray me. In the fieriness of love, infatuated by euphoria and forlorn hopes for the future, the couple threw a lot of coins into the well while they competed in making wishes for the sake of their relationship. That made me curl up even deeper in my hideout. I am a man who has never worked or made any fortune. Suddenly, before me appeared an unprecedented business opportunity. How many gulls were out there, ruled by superstition and prejudice, ready to throw away their money wherever their metaphysical vice gets fulfilled... So the only thing I had to do was lure them to my hole...

Then I got a divine inspiration. I spoke with a deep, imposing voice and thanks to the contribution of the natural depth of the well I pretended to be the fountain's spectre. I also made my best to add some affectation to my words, just like ghosts and psychics usually do. And with an austere - but not too abrupt - tone of voice in order not to scare them off, I asked them what they were doing in my waters and why they were disturbing my eternal sleep. Of course, the two young lovers got frightened and pulled back. To prove to his girlfriend he was not a coward, the unconsidered young man began to throw large rocks and big logs into my well. When he stopped, after a little while, I was able to explain them I am a friendly and favourable spirit fulfilling wishes and predicting the future.

Having coped with the first shock, they started posing all kinds of questions to which I responded accordingly. The girl even asked me the whereabouts of her lost diamond pocket mirror for which I suggested the first place that came to my mind: behind her night table in the bedroom. They threw in some more coins – following my instructions – and returned home excited.

The next day, upset human voices gathering around my well woke me up. Needless to say, I was quite convinced something like that would eventually happen which actually reinforced my confidence as a psychic. That morning the coins came down abundantly together with queries about love, work, health... And like a greedy newly-enlightened person who is led by wild intuition, I impeccably replied to every single one of them.

It went on like this, only that the crowd became larger by the day. In order to avoid any hubbub, tension or panic, I ordered my “clients” to make a priority list. I nominated the first couple that had benefited from my divination as my assistants and spokespeople for the outside world, and from that day on they never ceased to visit the well and seek my advice, always with compensation.

My affairs proceeded greatly and within a few weeks the well was filled up with coins and sovereigns. My goal was to earn a little more money and then, with the help of my partners (which, of course, had yet no idea about my plans – it is always best to keep your subordinates in the dark), leave. Of course, in stories like mine something gets in the way all the time forcing you to readjust your plans.

It was dawn when the frightened voice of my “employee” woke me up. “*Spirit of the well!*” she screamed, “*today the Bishop*

and his men are coming to cement your well. But, why am I even telling you this? You would probably already know!..". I jolted as if struck by lightning. "What? Why would they ever do that?" I inquired in terror. "The Bishop claims that the well is haunted and that you are a demon! Are you, really?". "Of course not! What is this all about?". "I don't know. I just came to warn you! Although I am quite certain you are aware of their plans. I must go now! Should they find me here I shall be in great trouble!". "Wait!" I yelled but she was already gone. That was it then, my end was near. Not only would months of work disappear into thin air, but I was about to be buried alive in here. I had to do something, but what? No matter how I succeeded in deceiving those gulls, fooling the Bishop would be impossible because he was ingenious. Besides, more or less he did the same thing and must have certainly feared the competition, which is why he wanted to destroy me. Suddenly, I heard a horse stampede. They were here. I could tell they dismounted and started preparing the cement. I had no choice but to admit my defeat and simply make an effort to limit the repercussions. I started screaming that I was a human being actually trapped here for months and that I had nothing to do with spirits or demons. They stopped to listen to me and I discerned the Bishop's voice screeching ruthlessly: "Do not stop. He is lying". So, they continued their work...

Then, more unexpected noises could be perceived: arrows piercing the air, hollow steps, knives being squeezed into human bodies, screaming and cursing. Fighting sounds. And after a while, an unearthly calm. The voice I heard now was the familiar and soft voice of my assistant: "Spirit, are you alright?". Under normal circumstances, I would never risk asking her what had happened out there (since I was supposed to know already), but due to the commotion I overcame my

inhibitions and requested to be informed in detail. She answered that all the benefited town people found out what was about to happen to me, rushed in my aide and upon the clash fury they killed the Metropolitan along with his men. “*I knew it*” I said when she finished, causing shivers– as I would like to imagine - down the spines of my faithful followers.

“*What will it be from now on?*” asked my good employee. I closed my eyes and began to meditate. I saw town homes burned down, dwellers crucified, women raped, fortunes pillaged, all by the forces of the Archbishop and the State that would have soon arrived to reestablish order. Their fury would fall like an iron fist upon the powerless and naïve peasants. “*Everything is going to be fine*” I said.

Genitor

...Three years ago I moved out of my previous home: the black house. I call it black in mockery, because in fact it was not black at all. It was nothing but a wooden shack. I do not even recall its colour; I never paid any attention, really. However, it is like when we refer to the “White Tower of Thessaloniki” or the “Black Sea”; they are not defined by their chromatic property but by something else. Something deeper.

Anyway, I was accustomed to living there. It did not feel alright but I got used to it. What do I mean by ‘did not feel alright’? There was nobody to take care of me, which means I did not feel ok. And I cannot feel alright if there is no one taking care of me. Not because I am spoiled or insecure, I have just been incapable of taking care of myself. Utterly incapable. In the event someone left me with no food or water there was no way I would provide for those goods by myself... I would rather die than take action. So, you must be wondering how I lived. This is one of my secrets: given that my habitat was by the sea, believe it or not, the seagulls brought me food and water. To be exact, they did not bring them as much to me as to their newborns waiting in the nests outside my house. Therefore, I would lie down next to the nests, open up my mouth and wait. The seagulls carried with their beaks tin cans, pieces of meat, cheese and various other dainties which, unfortunately, most of the time had a rancid flavour because they had been picked up at dumpsters and had gone bad, although still nutritious. This is how I survived by myself, on the leftovers that fell off the nests directly into my mouth. If

this may be called survival. Nonetheless, I covered my basic needs and stayed alive. I was thrifty and self-sufficient.

My basic occupation was to gaze at the sea, the most beautiful view in the world after the starry night sky! Another occupation – today I feel awkward to talk about that! – was composing verses. I would write them on the wet sand while pondering: “If I write at least one worthy verse able to capture in the rhyme the beauty of the world, which touches somehow the secret essence of the universe, then the sea will respect it and behold its waves so as not to erase it. Needless to say, this never happened. The laws of the tide and sea currents not once did they break for my art’s sake; this either means that I did not write the appropriate verse, or that the sea does not answer to a poet’s request. As I said, talking about these topics embarrasses me... I do not mean to sound cliché but... we know how people treat verse-makers... Most of the times they consider them half-crazy... and they are probably right.

I was living a dream life, though not everything was perfect. But in that desert beach, the calm and silence were so absolute that sometimes I felt almost happy. Despite the difficulties, I kept on hoping for better days and many times I would make dreams and fantasies about the future. An external observer of my life would think that I am profoundly unhappy, but the truth is a far cry from this. I was used to it! Whichever my life conditions were, I had become accustomed to them. Not to mention I had learned to take pleasure in things that others consider to be petty, like watching the clouds, plunging my hands into the foam of waves, or lying on the cold, wet sand. You might think all this is unworthy mentioning but... to me they were experiences of joy and delight.

Nevertheless, it was temporary. Just as I thought my life would continue on in harmony with no fuss, the pain began. It would come and go suddenly without a warning. My innards were ravaged by pain and my only possible reaction was to lie down and curl in a fetal position, hoping it will go away, while I clenched my teeth and closed tightly my eyes. So intense was the tightening that when the pain eventually retreated I felt all my muscles ache. There were times that because I could not stand it anymore, I would moan and hit my face with my very own hands in a desperate attempt to shift the centre of pain, located in the stomach and extended downwards to the bowels and genitals and upwards to the chest. The entire ordeal lasted a few hours – maybe even a day – and then, gradually, it simmered down and eventually disappeared.

At first, I thought I was ill; maybe it was cancer, which explained why it hurt so much. Hence, I quickly made peace with the idea that I was about to die in a horrible way. And since I was not willing to be hospitalised or follow any treatment those thoughts did nothing but aggravate my anyway melancholic nature. I was wrong, though. After quite some weeks of hardship and agony I noticed that my belly began to expand. Initially, I thought of it as the result of my peculiar disease and paid no attention. However, my abdomen continued to swell until one day everything became clear. In a recess from my excruciating pains I felt something shifting inside me. There was actually something in there that could move! And not only that: it could grow, change position and even kick! So I realised what you would probably have realised by now: I was pregnant.

At first, I was surprised myself with this conclusion but quickly dismissed it in a cynical, self-defeating mood. However, there

were still suspects in my mind. Day by day, I became more and more certain that the truth was that. Yes, I was carrying a baby! Obviously, it was some kind of anomaly, or, better said, a joke of nature! Nevertheless, it was a fact which I had to accept. Believe me, there was nothing else to do! Crazy as it might sound... I could not but embrace it. Once I made peace with it my gloomy mood changed immediately. There was a life inside me and I had no right to let it perish. It was my responsibility to keep it alive. In other words, a perverted maternal instinct was rising from the bottom of my soul.

Months after months passed by like this with me wavering amongst various thoughts and worries. I could not explain how this had happened and, in the meantime, my belly was growing even more... One day, I felt terrible pains much stronger than those I had been used to; labour pains, I thought, birth pangs. Cold sweat ran down my spine. I am in labour, I thought, I have to do something. If I do not go to the hospital both I and the baby will certainly die. So, I took the big decision: I left my home with a lot of effort and suffering and went out to the highway; I hitchhiked and asked the first stopping driver to take me to the nearest hospital. Imagine that I had never asked anyone for help and now I was adrift in pity, at the mercy of the first stranger. In case he refused to take me, I would implore him in tears. That dire was the situation. Later, I lost conscience and when I regained it I was in a wheeled bed, strapped down and covered in little tubes and intravenous infusions. The doctors who examined me could not overcome the shock. I was indeed pregnant, heading urgently to the operating room. Lack of a vagina made the delivery by cesarean section necessary. In the meantime, my belly had become so large that you would think it was going to

burst. Everyone told me to take deep breaths. What is more, the general anesthesia failed to kick in thus allowing me to observe what was going on around me - despite my lightheadedness due to drugs and pain. Incredible! I was about to give birth! No similar medical paradox was ever reported in the history of medicine! They had me lie down on the operating table and with a scalpel they opened up my abdomen. It was at that moment that a human being - a monstrous, bizarre baby - slightly older than me came out from my body! And while the nurses cleaned him from the mucus and blood, I realised that his facial features were identical to mine! Eyes, mouth, nose, and chin: he was my exact copy! He was my new me... The old one had died at birth...

When I came to the world, my mind was clouded following the painful labour. But eventually I understood what was going on: the doctors had decided to keep me hospitalised in order to study my case. To make of me a guinea pig. So, after battling with the nurses that strived to hold me against my will, I ran away. It was only later that I found out that as opposed to my older self I was stronger and capable of successfully defending my physical integrity. Blinded by rage against the one who brought me into the world, I burned down the black house, destroyed the seagull nests, and began to furiously strike the sea.

Now, I wander like a tramp here and there; I hide in big cities and feed on garbage. The government ignores my existence. No registry office can possibly accept the fact that I am the genitor of myself. Even today, in the era of clones, this is unheard of.

Police and Intelligence are helping the doctors to track me down in order to examine me. Apparently, my case has triggered a war within the scientific community. Spokespeople of feminist associations say that I am a mere fabrication of the chauvinist propaganda. They claim that no man could ever give birth to himself. I refute it; it is not about propaganda.

My fear now is that my physical and mental wellness will not last long. I am already starting to feel what the signs of pain inside me are, which means soon I will be ravaged by waves of pangs... My stomach is getting bigger day by day... A new creature is growing inside me but I feel that this time I will not survive the childbirth either. Who knows if the new life is going to be me again, only a little different? Perhaps the new person will have nothing in common with what I am now, just like I do not share any similarities with the previous one.

So, here I am, going through labour in anticipation, agony and fright.

And when the time to deliver arrives, I know that I cannot go to the hospital... I am going to rip my belly open with a knife and this is how I will bring you into the world, my new me. Be certain that I shall not survive the delivery, which is why I am writing these words to you. Once you will be out there make sure you know what to do.



The idea of **Saita publications** emerged in July 2012, having as a primary goal to create a web space where new authors can interact with the readers directly and free.

Saita publications' aim is to redefine the publisher-author-reader relationship, by cultivating a true dialogue and by establishing an effective communication channel for authors and readers alike. **Saita publications** stay far away from profit, exploitation and commercialization of literary property.

The strong wind of **passion** for reading,
the sweet breeze of **creativity**,
the zephyr of **motivation**,
the sirocco of **imagination**,
the levanter of **persistence**,
the deep power of **vision**
guide the saita (paper plane) of our publications.

We invite you to let books fly free!

The Chimera was an ancient monster. It was composed of three animals, a lion, a snake and a goat. Nowadays by the term "Chimera" we usually mean something unattainable and distant. This short story collection deals with this theme.

Anything that is unattainable becomes a matter of fantasy and a matter of desire. All the history of literature is a synecdoche of human craving for the invisible part of the world. But, as some philosophers claim, that invisible part may not even exist...

