

**THE TWELVE COMMANDS
OF THE...MENOPAUSAL WOMEN**

To my children
Spyros and Matilda

Dedicated to my dear friends,
to me and to all women.

In the public library everything is quiet, as it should be.
Ellen takes the book that interests her, crosses the room without making any noise, takes a seat next to a man and starts reading it. She has a lot of research to do.

She's always full of energy.

She's been married for many years and she's been writing for some years now, but she still hasn't found the key to her peace of mind.

After about a quarter, the young man- because it's obvious that he's much younger than her- that's sitting next to her, asks her for a pencil.

She opens her purse- in every purse she has two or three pens or pencils- and gives him one.

- Thank you very much. It's the first time I am not carrying a pencil with me, he whispers.
- You are welcome. You can keep it, if you like. I have another one with me, in my purse.

He stares at her and she notices his expressive deep blue eyes and....excitement, beauty, warmth, sweetness.

- Are you going to stay long?

He asks her with a smile.

-Yes, I'm going to stay for a while.

-Me too.

They stop talking and start reading, looking at each other stealthily, from time to time.

They talk again only when Ellen gets up to leave.

She doesn't leave without saying goodbye to him.

He gets up too, picks up his books and follows her to the door.

- Will you come tomorrow?
- Yes
- Me too...then I'll see you again?
- Yes...all right.

- Will you come in the morning?
- Yes, I'll be here in the morning. Goodbye.
- Goodbye

Next day Dimitris and Ellen are sitting in exactly the same seats. Today the atmosphere isn't so tense, they chatter with low voices. When time goes by and they realize that they haven't even opened their books, they both laugh.

- I've never thought that I'd meet a writer one-day. Imagine, only some time ago I read your book.
- Did you like it?
- Yes, I did. You write simply, honestly, deeply, from your heart. Have you written anything else?
- Only some poems.
- What do you prefer to write, Dimitris?
- Poems, he answers positively.
- I write too, but only novels.
- That's very interesting. Do you really have time to write?
- Well, I manage it. When one writes a few words or some sentences in pieces of paper while one's frying potatoes or fish, or is ironing clothes, the resulting stories are rather good. Believe me.
- I believe you. I bet these stories are also 'well done'.
- And well fried, too. Crunchy.

Fortunately they both have a nice sense of humor, so quickly the ice completely melts between them.

- I'll bring you some of my work tomorrow. I would like you to read it and tell me your opinion.
- I'd love to do it. I think it's a good idea.
- It's a pity I have to go now. I must be back to my house in time for my kids. Time really flies! So, I'll see you tomorrow.
- Good bye, see you tomorrow.

So, next day she brings her papers, hoping Dimitris' criticism is favorable. She's very impressed by the way he talks, his behavior and especially his eyes.

- I'll take them home. I'd prefer to take my time with them.

Next morning Ellen is sitting in her chair, waiting for Dimitris, wondering what will be his opinion about her work.

Dimitris appears, with her novel under his arm.

He takes a seat next to her, looks at her and whispers:

- I'm not crazy about your writing, but I'm crazy over you. And kisses her in the mouth.

Although what is happening to her is un hoped for, unthinkable, and even crazy, she doesn't react.

Besides, kissing is such a wonderful, impulsive expression.

She wakes up in pain. She's fallen asleep on the book, and it's been pressing her cheek.

She looks at her watch. It's past six o'clock in the afternoon.

It was just a....dream.

Then, her daughter comes in her room, falls on the bed, hugs and kisses her.

- I admire you very much mom, and I love you even more...I've felt like saying it to you now.

Ellen, touched, whispers.

“ Dreams are of no use for me. When a woman has the admiration and love of her daughter, then she has the admiration and love of the whole world”.

.....

The two friends are sitting in the comfortable couch in front of the television set.

They're having a conversation.

Maria's telling her friend one of her fantasies.

It's about her and a young actor, who's starring in a soap opera she's been watching.

She's fallen in love with him.

She confesses to her friend that that's a way to break the monotony of her life.

She's been divorced for years now, but she hasn't yet met any man worthy or suitable to marry.

So, she has invented various stories where she and young actors play the leading roles.

This one is her favorite.

Maria is in the kitchen, cooking his favorite food.

Their son is asleep.

Serge is quite a good actor, as they say, and an attractive man.

Around 9 o' clock in the evening her beloved husband returns home.

He's been at the studios all day, filming his new movie and so he's very tired.

As soon as she hears his key on the door, she runs out of the kitchen.

She sees his handsome figure and she feels certain that she'll always be in love with him.

She hugs him, with her dirty hands.

He lifts her up in the air and he asks her, surprising her.

- Do you know what love is?
- What?

He answers in a playful manner.

- But of course your smile, my love.

They kiss.

- There's hot water in the bathroom. Go and take a bath, it'll help you relax.

Maria spends a lot of time cooking.

She likes it very much.

She has a lot of time to herself and she doesn't want to spend it here and there.

Besides, she can't do that, because of the child.

Occasionally, when she wants to do something to pass her time, she takes out of the refrigerator the food containers, empties the food from one to another and washes them.

Then, she puts them back in the fridge.

Every Christmas she tries to bake sugar buns, because they're his favorite, but she always fails.

The sweets become something like a sugar bun-pie, the way they spread in the baking pan.

One day, she remembers, as she was reading the recipe for sugar buns, trying not to forget the ingredients, he had come and whispered in her ear the sweetest "I love you".

She found it so funny and mistimed, that she burst into laughter.

He always comes and declares his love for her in the wrong time.

She likes to dance.

When she listens to the music, as she mops the floor for example, she always hops around, dancing with a bottle of chlorine in her hands.

Serge's place of work is unknown to her.

She doesn't like to be in his feet, even though she's well aware that there are many temptations there.

She never checks this place, nor does she visit it.

She's not the jealous kind of wife.

She loves him and he loves her and that's enough for her.

But one day she decides to go to the studios and surprise him.

As she enters the door, she stops and asks the doorman.

- Good morning. I'm Serge's wife, may I come in?
- Yes, of course, come in please.
- Where can I find him?
- First floor.
- Thank you.

She walks up the stairs feeling very happy.
“ He’ll be very glad to see me”, she’s thinking.

She opens the door that has his name written on it.
But the surprise is not for him, but for her. And it’s an unpleasant one.

She sees her loving husband embracing a woman, probably an actor as well.

She shuts the door and runs out, to the street.

Tears run down her eyes and she starts to sob.

She walks away and when she’s far enough from the studios, she sits on a bench.

Really, what has become of the love, the sugar bun-pie, and the smile that meant love for her?

She returns to their house.

She fills a suitcase, takes her son with her and leaves.

- That’s where I put an end to my fantasy, my friend. This way I never get the blues for not having an actor by my side.
Besides, I don’t really like ‘boys’, I prefer mature men.

.....

Despoina often goes to the church for a confession.

Today her confessor is a new priest, young, peaceful, sweet and shy.

It’s the first time she’s paid attention to another man since her marriage.

She’s a religious woman, and the beliefs about a righteous family are routed deeply inside her soul.

For her it’s unthinkable to become infatuated by another man, except for her husband, and, even worse, by a man of the church. She has two very good children that she brings up in a strict religious way.

It’s been some time now that Despoina has been trying hard not to think about him, but she often remembers a phrase she had once heard in a play.

It's a phrase that makes her get carried away.

“ There will always be invisible forces that bring together two people and thus they become one”.

In this way she becomes relieved by her guilt.

Every Sunday she sits in the front seats, so she can have a better view of father Ambrosios.

It's Sunday morning and during the ceremony she's ...fantasizing.

She's all dressed up and her expensive golden cross is hanging around her neck

She's walking towards the church for her confession before the communion.

A wonderful waltz is heard through a window as she passes by, and, alas, she feels like dancing in the middle of the street.

It's been three months now since her last confession that must have been, if she remembers correctly, before Christmas.

She arrives at the church, longing to see the priest. She finally meets him in front of the door. He's been sitting there as if he's been expecting her. Her heart is beating fast.

- Good morning, reverend, she mumbles.
- Good morning
- I've come for my confession. Tomorrow I'll take the holy communion
- Come in, madam Despoina.

Before they enter the confession room, she stops to light a candle near the entrance.

She realizes that the only coin she has on her is one Euro, and so she has to give it for the candle.

“ Oh no, a whole Euro”, she thinks to herself.

Anyway, it's not the right moment to think about it, she doesn't want the priest to realize that she's hesitating about the money.

The priest talks to her first. His voice is quiet and warm.

- Before we begin I would like to inform you about a program for the protection of the children we're organizing in our community and I would like to ask you for your help.
- I would love to help you father. Helping other people makes me feel good. Sometimes, when I'm not feeling so good, I go to a hospital. Seeing the misery of the others helps me get myself together and my depressive thoughts disappear.

They are sitting on the wooden benches and talk about the lives of the saints.

Despoina learns about the martyrs, who sacrificed their lives for the glory of their Lord.

Then the confession starts, which, she wishes, would last for a long time. Suddenly....

- From the very first time I saw you I thought to myself- this is the woman of my dreams, this is the woman of my life. Will you marry me, my dear?
- Yes, she whispers, almost fainting by her surprise.

It's Sunday. She is a bride, and she's standing in front of the altar. One year later, a Sunday again, she's christening her baby.

When Despoina comes to her senses, the holy ceremony has just ended.

What on earth was she thinking? That she would become a bride in her age?

Everybody would be pointing at her with his or her fingers and they would say:

“ Here's a menopausal bride”.

And if she ever gave birth to a child, everyone would wonder when did she have it, before or after her cerebral accident.

Not to mention that she would eventually confuse her children with her grandchildren...

She crosses herself, asks God to forgive her, and leaves.

‘ I'd better grow old with dignity’.

.....

Very often Lillian looks out of her window.

Ever since she and her husband became rich, she's done many things in her life.

Everybody's talking about it.

She has a nice house in the city, three cars, she's built a cottage in the village, she's had two plastic surgeries, she's traveled to many countries, she has done many things, the only thing she hasn't done is a child.

She should be satisfied, thanking God for all the goods she has, but lately she often gets the blues.

A way to get over this sadness is to go out for a ride.

She takes her bicycle and she goes for long rides.

She's trying to feel better, feel the breeze on her face, enjoy the view of the sea.

Lately she often meets the stalwart man who's the owner of many acres, the 'land-owner' as they call him.

She likes him.

One melancholic afternoon- her depression is more intense during afternoons- she's in her veranda, looking at the sea and...fantasizing.

Manolis walks by her house every day.

She's standing behind the window, waiting to see his figure.

The moment he crosses the street, she opens up her window so that he sees her.

One day carried away by her impulse, she says good morning to him in a joyful and tender tone.

- Good morning
- Good morning, my beautiful lady.

Since then they have an everyday conversation under her window. It's something like Romeo and Juliet.

Their much-desired date is in Athens, at Intercontinental Hotel, where they've booked the best suite.

Lillian realizes that her 'Romeo' is a little tense in such a place, so she's trying to make him relax and feel comfortable.

His clothes are a bit kitsch, out of place, but she doesn't care, she's feeling great.

The moment they arrive at their room they order champagne and drink a few glasses to relieve their self-consciousness.

Then they go down to the luxurious restaurant for their dinner.

The food is delicious and with the help of the wine, they both feel euphoric. Both of them become dizzy.

The moment they enter into the elevator, he embraces her.

They don't care if people are looking.

In their room they lie on the waterbed and it's so funny, the way their bodies go up and down in that watery mattress.

They burst into laughter.

In the morning they both eat a hearty breakfast.

- Thank you for this beautiful night, I'll never forget it, he says, taking the initiative to express his satisfaction.
- I'll never forget it either
- Tell me, how many times have you fallen in love?
- Well, I don't have a collection of lovers
- Yes, ok, you haven't been with many men, but you haven't been with only one, am I right?
- Yes, but I don't want to talk about it
- What time shall I call you tomorrow?
- Whenever you want, you can call me to either one of my cell-phones. I have two, you know. Now you're going to ask me why two? Because I use one of them to send messages and the other to make my calls.

They Kiss and kiss and kiss.....

When she comes back to herself, she looks at the view outside her window.

She smiles to herself and whispers.

“With all these fantasies my menopause is less painful. It's not a bad medicine”.

.....

She's sitting at her desk, watching, as discreetly as possible, her manager, whose office is exactly opposite hers.

Vicky knows that he has a nice sense of humor and that he likes to send and receive messages in his cell-phone.

She also knows that he is really a child in his heart and that he often works-out at a gym- he has a well-built body- exactly the opposite to her husband, who is heavy, fat and flabby.

He's charmed her and she's trying to get to know him better but without her other colleagues noticing anything.

Today it's Wednesday and he hasn't arrive yet.
As she's waiting for him, she's fantasizing....

Last night she received a 'spicy' message in her cell-phone, which, naturally, she saved.

She likes to play with messages and so does he. He's now at his desk, carefully studying some papers.

He's absorbed by his work and rather bored by it.

She knows his phone number and so she makes the first move.

She sends him last night's message, which she knows will be refreshing for him.

His phone goes 'beep- beep'.

He smiles and there's a twinkle in his eyes as he looks at her.

How on earth did she dare take such an initiative?

"Your message is like a breeze of fresh air. Your slave from the opposite office". Don't stop.

It's a relief. Thank God he didn't misunderstand it.

"Today you have messages from tall women, tomorrow from short...women! Ha-ha-ha"

"More, more" He begs her.

"Greetings from the club of the 'Happy people". President: Woody Allen, Vice-president: Pedro Almodovar, Members: Vicky 1, Vicky 2, Vicky 3".

Next morning the first message comes from Giannis.
The big children play while they're working, and enjoying it.
The much-wanted message finally comes.

“ Would you like us to have a few glasses of ouzo after work?”
“Yes”.

Ouzo goes down like water.

- To our health
- To our health
- Tell me more about your club, I'd love to become a member of the ' Club of the happy people'. How much is the contribution?”
- For you, it's free. On the condition that you're going to send us messages to enrich our collection”
- Fine. What else shall we eat except...messages?
- Nothing else for me thanks. I am on a diet. To be honest, it's a funny kind of diet. Every week I put on my refrigerator's door pieces of paper with diets written on them. I stick them their with small magnets, they look like clothes hanging to dry. So every morning I start one diet, I break it at noon and next day I start another one. At the end of the week instead of losing weight, I've gained 5 kilos.
- Oh, you women with your diets. And you know I've noticed that the ones who are on a diet don't really need it.
- If you refer to me, thank you for your compliment, I will keep it in mind, because I need it, she sighs. In this age it seems like the fat never leaves, it's like it has to go somewhere. It never goes away no matter how strict your diet is. It goes from your hips to your belly, from your belly to your waist, from your waist to your legs, from your legs to your ankles, and so on.

Giannis laughs. He notices her hand.

- Your ring goes well with the salad.

Vicky bursts into laughter.

- To our health
- To our health

- I like you very much, because you're smiling. You're going to live to become 107 years old. The 7 years is the interest, Giannis says.

At that moment her cell-phone rings. The ring tone is 'happy birthday, happy birthday to you'.

- Don't tell me it's your birthday today? He asks her, surprised.
- No, my cell-phone's ring tone is 'happy birthday' because I am born again every day.

And indeed her cell phone rings and brings her back to reality. It's her mother asking what would she prefer for lunch. She looks towards her imaginary lover. He's still at his desk, behind mountains of papers.....

.....

It is Tuesday.

Kate, instead of teaching history, according to the syllabus, asks from her pupils to write an essay.

Their theme will be 'Spring- time'.

The presence of a man has made spring come into her life.

The little heads of the young pupils bend over their papers and the teacher moons away.

The young newcomer is very cute.

When he came into the teacher's office for the first time, she stared at him so intensely that she felt ashamed of herself.

A 'click' had happened.

He infatuated her.

Since then, Konstantinos many times has tried to get close to her, to have a conversation with her, but without any success.

They've only exchanged a shy 'good morning' or 'good evening', until now.

One day, quite unexpectedly, at the end of a teacher's meeting, he proposes her to go to the theater with him.

He has an invitation for two from an actor friend.

- Have you seen this play? He asks her and his nervousness is obvious.
- No, I've been very few times to the theater this year.
- Me too
- Would you like to come with me?
- Yes, she replies hesitatingly.
- Shall we meet here, at the school's entrance, around 7 o' clock?
- Ok

In the theater, during the show, he's holding her hand tenderly.

Kate doesn't pull it away, she lets herself enjoy his caresses.

She not really watching the show, she's too upset by his presence beside her.

During the break they go to the foyer.

Konstantinos smokes a lot, almost two packets per day.

She notices how smartly dressed he is, contrary to her. She never pays much attention to her clothes.

She doesn't like labeled-clothes.

They have a quick warm drink and they talk about the problems of the educational system.

She discerns spirituality in him. She likes him even more because of that.

On their way back Konstantinos proposes a ride through the streets of Athens.

- What a great idea, I love riding in a car at night.

They drive slowly through the center of the city.

The air that comes in though the car's window waves Kate's hair.

- I really like your hair. You're always carefully and in the same time carelessly coiffeured.
- It's true that I take good care of it, it's my weak spot.
- And I like a woman who is nicely coiffeured and doesn't follow cliches.
- I dye it and my visits to the hairdresser are quite often, to be honest.
- Doesn't it make you bored?
- I've no alternatives. You see it's becoming grey with the age.

She emphasizes 'age' because she doesn't want to give away her real age.

Nevertheless he probably knows it or he must've guessed it.

Kate has this obsession with her age.

She's always hiding it, not many years, only two or three.

- I do this now but I don't know what I'm going to do when I get really old. In the hairdresser's there's an old lady who's always insisting that only the best hairdresser of the parlor should dye her hair. And, you know, there's very little hair left on her head. Each time she's so anxious about the result! It makes me crazy! She's so energetic for her age and for a 'scalp' like hers! I really admire her. I believe that I would have quitted my efforts by the time I reach her age. My only care would be my great-grand children.
- Don't be so sure about that. You probably don't know women so well, despite the fact that you're a woman yourself. Women never stop trying, only disease or death can stop them.
- Do you mean that we are coquettish? She asks pretending to be insulted.
- Yes, he answers, smiling.

He caresses her hair.

She loves that. She wishes the car would go faster.

The school-bell brings her back to reality.

It's break- time.

It's about the twentieth time she's done that.

She must stop daydreaming.

She should start living, trying to make her plans come true. It's not good to become lost in these fantasies.

.....

Each time Lola listens to his voice on the radio, something is happening in her soul.

Every day she tries to finish all her chores in time, so she can listen to his radio-show.

She's waiting, for some time now, to start a job as a singer in a nightclub.

In the meantime she does whatever job she can find.

One night she falls asleep with her little radio in her lap.

She's dreaming.....

It's Saturday noon.

She's listening to music and is being bombarded by the various radio-contests, as it's the trend by the radio stations, unfortunately.

'That should be called 'Euros-radio' and not 'radio', they are giving away so much Euros", she's thinking.

Radio is like an addiction to her - anyway it's better than TV.

Without music, and especially without his radio-show, she does nothing.

One night she decides to pick up the phone and dial the telephone number of the show.

- Good evening, you've asked us to answer to your quiz and so win a CD, but I've a quiz for you too. If you know where I've put the wooden disk I've been looking for the last 20 minutes to cut a salad on it, I'm going to send you a salad.

The radio d.j. bursts into laughter.

- I'd love to come and help you find it. In the meantime do you know the answer to our quiz?
- No, unfortunately I don't know it
- Never mind. I'm going to send you the CD anyway. You can come at our station's party on Thursday and take it. Don't forget to bring me the salad.

And so it happened.

They met at the party, she introduced herself and they got to know each other. A month later they are flying to Paris. They're going to a concert of modern music, which is going to take place at the center of the city of light and love.

After take off, they sit comfortably in their first class seats.
They are kissing, fondling, singing in low voices.

- With a song all the pain goes away scared, an old man told me once, Lola says.
- Wise words, he replies and seals her lips with one more kiss.

They are flying to the clouds, both literally and metaphorically.
Their happiness is immense.
They continue their fondling, necking and singing.

- We're not making too much noise, are we Mario?
- Don't worry, we're not disturbing anyone, he reassures her. Let's enjoy our flight.
- I'll tell you one of my dreams. One day I would like to have a club where I would play my guitar and invite famous people from all over the world to perform.
- And I would like to write a song that would be a mixture of Beethoven, Tchaikofski, Prisley, Beatles and whatever else comes to my mind.

“ Fasten your seatbelts, please, in a few moments we are landing at Paris” announces a voice from the speakers.
How quickly time has passed. They hadn't noticed that they had arrived.

She wakes up and she's back to reality.
The radio is under her head, on her pillow.
There's no music, only some people talking.
It's the radio producer and a woman.

- I would like to introduce to you the woman of my life, dear listeners.

She gets up in a very bad mood, goes to the kitchen and prepares the salad.
In her age she mustn't eat fat.

.....

The racket from the children's voices is heard throughout the schoolyard, but Ariadne doesn't listen to it.

She's lost in her thoughts.

She's watching the fast moves of the young man who's working at the canteen, she's admiring his firm body anddreaming.

The hotel is built at the most picturesque site of the mountain, with a fantastic view.

When they arrive, they are welcomed with a glass of cold water, right from the spring, and with toasts spread with homemade marmalade.

What a delicious plate, what a fine coolness, with a 'hunk' by her side.

The room is huge, warm and beautifully decorated.

Nikos is very pleasant, he makes her feel good and she finds him more and more attractive.

He is an oasis of liveliness after so many years she's spent with a sullen, long faced and pessimistic husband.

In the room, Ariadne empties her suitcase and arranges her things in the closet.

A book and a black bra fall on the floor.

Nikos picks them up.

He reads the title of the book "The twelve commands of the...menopausal women".

- What a funny title. Do you like reading? He asks her with a smile
- Yes, I do. Especially at night, I always read a few pages before I go to sleep. I buy cheap, small books, so I can hold them easily in my hands as I lie in bed. I want to be able to crumble them, throw them on floor, and turn their pages without being very careful.
- I'm going to read this, he interrupts her.

He's pointing at her bra.

Ariadne blushes.

- That's difficult to read she answers trying to hide her embarrassment.
- We'll see about that, he insists slyly.

She grabs the bra away from him and puts it in the closet. What a time to become shy!!

- I'm going downstairs, come join me when you're ready. We'll have our coffee outside and enjoy the coolness of the garden.
- OK

The walk along the mountain paths towards the village is very pleasant.

They walk hand-in-hand and enjoy the beauty of the nature while the singing of the birds follows them. It's like a sweet music that accompanies their walk and conversation.

At night, they admire the moon and the stars from the small balcony of their room.

A child, as it runs, falls on them accidentally.

It's a strong shock.

Unfortunately it was the fall neither of the moon nor of a star, but nevertheless it brought her back to reality, fortunately.

She realizes, bitterly, that her fantasies are nothing more but wild, unattainable thoughts, when she sees Nikos flirting with the young janitor.

After all, she's just a conservative woman at her fifties, with two kids.

.....

She bought the most impressive furniture for her veranda.

A fabulous body like hers must lie in comfortable deck chairs, which would make it look even more beautiful.

Maybe then the man who rent the opposite apartment -she thinks that he's renting it- will pay attention to her.

Each time she sees him at his balcony, she has the impulse to wink at him, but she always hesitates.

So, instead of winking, she closes her eyes and falls asleep.

Daisy wears a baby-doll and walks around her kitchen, eating a carrot.

She's waiting for Peter to come out of the bathroom so they can have their dinner.

She's cooked his favorite food.

- Hurry up Peter, you'll be late for your club.
- I'm almost done Daisy- duck.

He's been calling her like that for some time now.

Daisy- 'duck' turns on the radio.

She dances to the frenetic music.

The music is very loud, so she doesn't notice Peter who's come out of the bathroom and he's standing there, watching her dance.

She wears the sexy baby-doll and has the carrot in her mouth.

When she sees him, in his white bathrobe, she's ecstatic.

He is so attractive!!!

She's crazy over that man.

She's shared her house with two or three other men in the past, but he's something else.

- You're the one and only, you're the most handsome baby-man in the world.

She caresses his cheek and they sit at the table.

She serves him the best portion.

Never before has she taken such good care of a man.

- Your food is delicious, he rewards her with his mouth full.
- Well, what did you expect, my mother comes from Smyrna.
- You're from Smyrna all over.
- When is the next party, Peter?
- Friday night, at a very chic club.
- You should organize a party for the elders, so that my friends can come, my dear. And outside, at the entrance of the club, you should give away pills for the cholesterol or the uric acid and walking sticks, as well.

They both start to laugh.

- I'm going to make such a party, and it'll be in your honor, he teases her.
- No, not in my honor, I'm young. She pretends to be hurt by his words.
- Ok, then I'm going to dedicate it to the most beautiful woman of the world.
- You're always flattering me, my dear, and I don't like flatterers at all.
- That's how I see you
- Shall I peel an apple for you? Daisy quickly changes the subject.
- No, thank you, I'm full
- The truth is that this time the apples are too big and not so good, I couldn't find smaller ones.

She wakes up by the few drops of rain that fall on her face.
She looks stealthily at the opposite balcony, but he's not there.
She goes inside, closes the windows and the shutters.
There's a storm coming.
How on earth had she jumped to the conclusion that he would stand there for hours, admiring a crazy spinster?
She's so naïve sometimes.

.....

The idea to have the movie presented at the dance hall was great. They've all liked the famous dancer, Romanof, whereas Magda was so impressed by it, that when she went to her trapeze to exercise, after the movie, she fantasizes.....

The ancient Odeon of Herod Atticus is filled with people. They're all waiting to admire the most famous, most talented couple of the modern dance.

While Magda is getting ready in her dressing room, she remembers the day he had proposed her to work with him, and how exulted she was because the famous dancer had chosen her among so many other candidates.

She's almost ready.

She's always nervous before the show.

Despite all these years of experience, she hasn't got over her stage fright.

Her beloved Romanof enters.

- Are you ready to break a leg tonight?
- Yes, I'm ready.

The lights turn off and the curtain opens.

The two stars are doing the best they can to satisfy their audience. And for the next two hours they perform the most graceful dance-recital.

During their performance they look at each other, and there's love in their eyes.

They're still very much in love. They're the most successful artistic couple on stage and in life.

The audience applauds and cheers them when they finish.

Afterwards there's a small reception at the theater's foyer in their honor.

The distinguished dancers drink champagne with the other guests. The atmosphere is euphoric.

- It's the first time in my life that I become dizzy and I don't feel like dancing zeibekiko but ballet, Magda says.
- What are you talking about?
- Honestly, I feel like dancing again, right here and now. Don't look so startled, it's because of my happiness for our success and, also, because of the alcohol.
- You know, I've been thinking that next time we should use a new choreography by a young German up-and-coming choreographer.
- Why not my dear, lets experiment.
- Well, I think we must do it, Magda. After all, I believe that without experiment or request every art or science dies.
- Do you know what I've realized? That we are either ahead or behind our era. We're never somewhere in the middle.

Magda and Romanof move around the room, talking with their admirers.

They receive their admiration and compliments.
They are happy.

She becomes dizzy and she falls off the trapeze.
Oh, this dizziness is not because of the champagne, but because of
the exercise. What a pity....

She continues her exercises, waiting for her students.
Despite the fact that she's over fifty, she's still teaching, because
dance is her greatest love.

.....

Claire's been working for sometime now to create a bouquet of
flowers.

It's going to be placed in the middle of the table during a dinner
that a factory owner will offer to his foreign guests.

She must do her best to present something different.

While she's working, she keeps thinking of an architecture she
met at the house of a wealthy client of hers.

She was truly dazzled by him.

She doesn't usually play around with men.

Despite her modern looks, she's always been very conservative
in her manners.

As she's preparing the bouquet, she's fantasizing....

His proposal one afternoon to go out for dinner, the two of them,
is sudden.

She's delighted by his proposal.

Next day she goes shopping, hoping to find something new to
wear, although her wardrobe is full.

She goes from one shop to another and becoming anxious.

She doesn't like anything because the truth is that she doesn't
really like her body.

If she didn't have to try the new clothes, she would never stand
in front of a mirror with her eyes open.

Finally she chooses the simplest dress a woman can possibly
wear.

She's never been to this restaurant before.
Actually, she hasn't been out on a date for at least twenty years.
She's been to dinners with various colleagues of hers, but these were only working dinners, nothing more.

She's so nervous that she arrives first at the restaurant.
Very rarely she's so punctual on a date.
The headwaiter escorts her to the table that Christoforos has booked.
After a while Christoforos arrives.
He's charming but his face is rather ugly.
He's smartly dressed, despite his few extra kilos.

- I don't believe it. Am I late or has my watch stopped? I'm always very punctual, you know.

He looks at his watch.

-You're not late, I came early.

He sits down.

- Have you ever been here before?
- No, it's the first time
- Do you like it?
- Yes, it's very nice, she answers excited.
- The food is very good, you'll see.

The waiter brings them the menu.

Claire is in a dilemma.

Should she take out of her purse her presbyopia glasses and put them on, or not?

But if she doesn't wear them, how is she going to read the menu?

She decides to put them on, and she makes a joke out of it, as she usually does when she feels uncomfortable.

- Thank God I've made special multi-focal glasses, so I can look up, down, right, left, in front and behind.

- So you can see me from all the sides. How do I look? He asks her pretending to be coquettish.
- You're very handsome.
- Thank you, but I think it's time to call the waiter.

Christoforos calls the waiter and they give their orders.

- Don't you think that we've ordered too much?
- Food in this restaurant is very light and tasty.
- Tell me, how is your business going?
- Ok. I like my work. I've always dreamed of becoming an architect.
- And I've always dreamed of becoming a decorator, but lately my work isn't going so well.
- Yes, we have the same problem, too. Well, there's nothing I can do about it. I continue to do my job, as creatively as possible, but the money I make is less.
- It's the same with me.
- Here's our dinner.

Fork, knife, tasty bite, fork, knife, tasty bite. The movements of savory delight.

- Christoforos, I've come to the conclusion that lately finesse is missing from every aspect of our lives. What do you think about it?
- Mmm, unfortunately you're right. Of course, we Greeks have become more Europeans, but there's a lot of work to be done about it, and I wish we would adopt only the positive aspects of the European civilization.
- Yes, that would be nice, she agrees and she bites a canapé with salmon.
- How many children have you got?
- I've got three very good children and that's very important for my work and for me. If I had problems with them, I wouldn't be able to be creative in my work. With a bad husband the problem isn't so big, one can always get a divorce, but with children the problem is immense, because one can't possibly get a divorce from his or her children. How come you're not married? Not that you're old, on the contrary, you're very young...
- It's my choice. One day I'll get married.

- Yes, of course.

While they're having their dessert, Christoforos has another kind a dessert, under the table.

He caresses her thigh, but not in a gross manner.

At least, that's what she likes to think, because she doesn't want to admit to herself that he's making a pass at her.

She comes back to reality with the sound of a male voice.

- Good morning

She sees Christoforos holding hands with a blonde 'Goddess'.

' Art loves luck and luck loves art', she thinks to herself, quoting Agathon. His words describe perfectly the situation.

What was she expecting? That the young up-and-coming architect would hold the hand of a fifty years old woman?

Still, she's not so bad, for her age.

.....

The hospital is far from Vasiliki's house, but she doesn't mind. She enjoys the ride.

She likes to drive at all hours, morning, noon, afternoon and night.

Today she's early because traffic, strangely enough, was light.

She parks her car and goes straightly, almost running, to the canteen, because she hasn't yet drank her coffee.

At the end of the corridor, she falls on him and suddenly she becomes.... hot, exhilarated and turned on.

But he's in a hurry, as always.

He's the new nurse, Sotiris.

Oh, she likes him so much!!

Lust ...lust, that's all she feels each time their eyes meet.

Sex isn't missing from her life, that's why she really can't explain why he makes her feel this way.

There are three things that she really loves in life: tenderness, humor and charm.

These are the three 'tops', as she calls them, so she wonders why now she gets carried away by flashes, heat, rousing, excitement, etc.

She's alone in the canteen, her colleagues haven't made their appearance yet, so she sips her coffee and enjoys her chocolate croissant.

It's all very quiet, so she starts to daydream...

It's three o'clock in the morning.

She's just finished an operation and she's exhausted.

The rest of her colleagues have already left.

She takes off her surgery uniform and gets ready to leave, when Sotiris' face appears outside the huge window, watching her intensely and indiscreetly.

She's aroused.

The nurse opens the door without thinking, gets inside without asking, comes near without hesitating, grabs her by her waist and kisses her passionately without any shame.

Vasiliki, although she's lost in her thoughts, doesn't react.

He kisses her again and again, with the same passion.

Her legs tremble, she can barely stand.

He undoes her blouse and kisses her breasts.

She enjoys his kisses and caresses.

He drives her crazy.

Sotiris helps her lie down, in a stretcher of the surgery, lifts her skirt and turns her facedown.

Still, at that moment she thinks of her ass.

It had always bothered her whether it's upright enough, especially during the summer when she sees all these 'fucking advertisements' about diets and beauty parlors.

Each time she sunbathes at a beach, she worries that her ass doesn't look as good as it should.

Now she worries again, not because she's at some beach and people are watching her, but because she's in bed with him.

She doesn't care about her loins, let them be, she doesn't give a damn.

She doesn't even care that someone might come in unexpectedly. The stretcher is cracking under them and she's fainting away. She's never felt such a pleasure before, or she doesn't remember the last time she's felt something like it.

When she comes round, she sees the barman looking at her worryingly, ready to offer her first aids.

She blushes.

Her coffee is cold now, so she orders another one.

She wants Irish coffee with plenty of alcohol in it, so that she can get herself together and telephone her children.

Its time to wake them up so they can go to their lesson at the University.

.....

All together exclaim their ' hoorays' .

Hooray for the life we've lived, hooray for our children, hooray for our white hair, hooray for our experiences, hooray for our cellulitis, hooray for our bags under our eyes, hooray for the loves of our lives, hooray for our hoorays.