



Sine Metu.

*Outlook on the wildered path of life, in bits and pieces, waiting to be unriddled.
Enter my world, wrapped in flares of tugging stormfall.
Where fairytales belong to children and swans fly.
But, are these children's narratives just a shadow performance?
A sugar-coated veil to cover up the tears for broken hearts and bitter bites that await
along the tracks of life?
Too late we realise that the pink cloud of untruth and comfort is drifting away and
darkness dooms behind our backs.
To vanish under the heavy trap door of youth, irreversibly gone.
Like an open book with a dark entrance to an undefined space of unhinged chronicles.
Where pages wait to be written until the ink dries up ...*

*This book was finalised on the 23th of December 2022, the night before Christmas
Eve, celebrating the mythical strength of the Duir or Dìar (Oak), my June birth tree,
according to the Celtic ancients.*

*Never escape life, it will lead nowhere
Rush into its flaming heart and sculpt your soul.*

*We are part of the elements
Universal starseeds
Spirits of Nature
Indestructible spokes on the wheel of life.*

*For my uncle Joh, in dear remembrance.
A different soul with a generous heart.
Courageous and independent.
One of a kind.*

After the Storm.

Lucia V. Celaeno

Tawny owl Niviane, sitting on the spine of this book, is a lightning rod of spiritual energy spreading awareness, wisdom and that mysterious spark of love and sacrifice. I chose her to be the bridge between 'The Other World' and present reality. Her imposing appearance reflects the ongoing adventure of life, prosperity and happiness but also the obscure riddle of death, insecurities and fear. Forever the myth of everything and all.

This edition is concluded in special collaboration with Jan Vooijs from the scenic Dutch village Hoorn, who exclusively designed all sketches to give this book a dreamful boost. Each and every image reflects his generous support. Wayward drawings with a capricious twist.

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As a former high-school mathematics and computer science teacher as well as a passionate sailor, perfection rules his mind which is in perfect balance with his art creations. Jan's drawing and sculpting skills are visibly fueled by the beat of his heart and the aesthetic flow in his soul.

Front cover photo courtesy: Jan Vooijs

Image: Walte 2 Location: Ijsselmeer, Netherlands, Summer Solstice 2022.

Back cover photo courtesy: Shahbaz Ali Khan based in Abbottabad, Pakistan.
Digital-Mid Journey-Artwork.

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Tales drifting between chaos and sweet delight.

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Quotes you come across are all night-shaped impulses, *my own dream-scribbles*.

Dedicated to Mother Earth and all the lost loved ones she holds in her embrace between death and dust.

Each flower a soul.

Each butterfly a silenced heartbeat.

Each bird a sparkle of life that once was.

Until we meet again.

My pen name is a reflection of my inner soul, my strength, my weakness and the losses innermost. I am made of simple things like love, care and unconditional trust, small features that yet brought damage and scars beyond.

Lucia is my birth name of bright and light.

V. stands for Vilanova, my beloved mom. In her name resides my dad, her one and only and my spiritual aura of positivity.

Celaeno is one of the seven daughters of the mighty titan Atlas who holds the globe on his shoulders. She is part of the Pleiades, an eternal cluster of stars lining the universal darkness. Nicknamed 'The Dark One', admirably courageous and compassionate, yet, also severe and rancorous, depicted as a spectral winged spirit with a feminine body and vulture-shaped claws. Loved by Poseidon, god of the planet's waters and the disasters of flooding and earthquakes. Blessed I am with her temper poisoning my bloodstream and inspiration.

'Relish in the secret ingredients of life before the merciless oblivion of time abducts them all. Yet, be cautious, loyal and protective, and always leave your mark.'

Seduced by ignorance and writer's delight.

'After the first crack, the fairy chess will soon begin.

When silent horns and chiming copper bells darken the bright moonlight, the call of the strapped pinetree soars across the forest grounds.

Promises of love and gold beguile the damned and tortured souls.

Beware not to surpass the veil of fungal threads hanging between the two oaks, frozen in their last eternal dance.

Bewise and note the fingerlike branches, gnarled and contorted, desperately holding on to each other while mosses and ferns are glued to their emaciated bodies.

Encircled by an infinite vow, a ring of three hundred and thirty-three pinecones, a magical circle never to break or demon forces will awake.'

By S. Crow, London, December 21, 1701

Verified and confirmed somewhere in the year 1953 by R.E. Turner. An English history teacher who disappeared mysteriously a few weeks after exploring the haunted forest of Dartmoor. His annotations were found in a letter, hidden in his desk of the university, marked by green stains. The letter was sealed and conserved for laboratory research but no further information was ever released

–The London Times–

A yellowish-grey photo in the newspaper of a middle-aged man with round spectacles gave Andorra a severe look. After reading the riddle-like warning several times she paced up and down her office, took a sip of her coffee while observing the hectic traffic down in the street below. The old journal was given to her by a colleague who had an unpleasant premonition about the requested research.

Andorra was a passionate columnist and very popular for her always surprising stories and simultaneously exposing the unknown. Determined to keep her status unspoiled she decided to explore this tale and press her luck as usual. She had survived the most ridiculous and dangerous situations, yet, a slight doubt about this venture was creeping through her veins, forging unmistakable, eerie goosebumps. A sensation that was completely new to her but she waved aside the menacing issue, thought of her payroll and her wish to travel around the world. She already felt the warm glow of sunset beaches enhanced by a green, cooling breeze of waving palm trees, the taste of ocean salt on her tongue and sand between her toes. The battered piece with mystifying information seared Andorra's fingertips but she couldn't let go of it.

The next morning she packed her small leather rucksack, her favourite partner in crime, with a torch, a bottle of water, a multitool and a few sandwiches. She slipped into her trainers, a pair of slender pants, and a warm hooded sweatshirt to assure a

smooth and comfortable field trip. To evade getting stuck in tree branches she braided her long blond hair down her back, picked up her car keys and left. The forest in the Dartmoor region was a four-hour drive from London and to overrule her reluctant feelings she listened to BBC 2, singing and humming loudly until she reached the small path, as described in the newspaper, the exact spot where strange deformed trees stood in a row. She parked her car near a bench, grabbed her rucksack to observe the surroundings that seemed peaceful and quiet under the dissolving hovering mist rags relishing in the warm early afternoon sunshine of late summer. Her nostrils were invaded by scented dry grasses, soil and crushed lemon-green mixed with wafts of wood. With a sigh of contentment she unwrapped a peanut butter sandwich and sat on the backrest of the bench for a change, resting her feet on the seat-planking.

Reminiscing on her childhood Andorra watched a few kids play hide and seek with melting chocolate bars in their hands, simultaneously blowing dandelion fluff apart, laughing and joking because the drifting seeds glued themselves to the chocolate patches on their faces.

From under the bench a soft sound of swishing movements approached, causing heaps of fallen leaves to stir in undulation. Two spiked horns erupted from the colourful carpet, revealing two yellow eyes scanning the forest floor for prey. Andorra stopped chewing and silently held her breath, watching a stunning gold scaled viper vanish in the undergrowth of the forest in front of her. A fabulous start of a well paid report she thought.

Perfectly calm and reassured she suddenly noticed the two trees as described in the newspaper article. Standing like a pair of flamenco dancers, their hands desperately cramped together forming the silhouette of a curved archway. A flock of birds soared past her head, whistling excitedly, tumbling over the three kids, landing on the bench to devour some stray bread crumbs to pursue a passing butterfly as a catch for dessert. Andorra watched the kids running after the birds, flapping their arms and jumping over long stretched branches singing the most gross song only kids can invent: *'Jump and win pancake treats of sugared slugs, snot crust flies and toe-nail sprinkles, stumble, break a leg and run, if I lie!'*

Trying to store these wondrous unruly lines, a snigger escaped her mouth, while chewing on a mouthful of bread, listening to their voices gradually dying away. Completely alone now, she looked at the sapphire-blue sky where large gravel-grey clouds started blotting out the slanted sunbeams of moments ago while a soft pitter-patter of mizzling raindrops moistened the air.

Andorra smirked at the translucent noise of nature thinking about her planned vacation under the sun, sipping on cocktails.

She approached the gaping forest arch while she secured one of her hands on the warped bark. For a moment she sat on the trunk before throwing both her legs over the

stretched flattened root to the other side but she forgot to keep an eye on the circle of pinecones and accidentally crushed one.

The sound of the crack was ricocheting like fireworks unleashing the sensation of a thousand eyes awakening from a slumber of ages. “Damn!” she hissed, angry about her own carelessness. Andorra took the leftovers of the pinecone and put it in her rucksack, murmuring a promise under her breath to replace it on the way back, remembering that there was only one pinetree in the forest, the place of the mysterious entrance. The secret spot that she would expose to the world in her next article. “Fairy chess and the call of an old demented tree”, she whispered sarcastically. The suppressed giggle she uttered was absorbed by a tar-black veil, a devouring shivering gloom, replacing the last sparkles of sunlight with a cold, starless blanket.

A groaning sound, creaking twigs imposed awareness of some presence, meanwhile a rasping rancid breath of an unknown source wafted towards her, watering her eyes, squeezing her stomach muscles, and shuddering shivers down her spine. She could make out the features of a swamp, dark green water covered in rotten dead fall. Tiny burps of air were trying to break the slimy slough while skeleton tree branches were dripping soundlessly. In the distance she heard roaring, tumbling falls crashing into the echo of deep foaming pools.

Her steady composure now disturbed, she searched for her torch and felt a chunk of her ankle being ripped off. Scurrying feet and high pitched giggles ran off but the flash of stinging pain worried her more. Hurriedly and furiously shaking, she clicked on the light beam and almost fainted. Apart from a steady flow of blood on the ground, she looked right into the hollow sloughing face of a malicious entity with a brutal force, more frightening than a zombie or even the devil himself. A shapeless mouth with rows of rotten teeth emitting foul of a thousand decaying corpses, drooling acid from high above her, burning holes in her sweatshirt. Wrapped in a cloak of ice-cold fever and sweat, her limbs felt heavy and numb.

Unable to move, her skin shrivelled away as if forty years were sucked out of her instantly. Staggering by the sudden age drop she lost her balance and crashed on the knuckled roots of a huge tree. Large layers of fog were drifting in swirls around gnarled and intertwining, spiralling tendrils. In a flash, she saw the fairy strap and the gaping dark entrance leading to who knows where that she had read about in the old newspaper yesterday. There was no time to reflect and without thinking, she crawled into the hole and slid down into a silent space where the cold grasp of mist could not reach. Smelling the wet mire, her fingers fumbled over the ground beneath her. The unexpected softness of bald, curved stones and stalks tranquilised her pounding breath temporarily until her eyes got used to the gloomy, dank cavity. She had landed on a path made of skeleton remains. Sensing the approach of her own death, she focused on all or nothing, scraping a few leftovers from her usual courageous attitude and started moving back to the entrance. Stumbling across heaps of pinecones she started running,

her heartbeat racing to explode, ignoring the throbbing pain in her ankle, her teeth clenched, and strands of windswept discoloured grey hair glued to her face, blurring the trees and surroundings. Out of nowhere, tentacles with warted, ravenous talons grabbed her, nailing her body to the forest floor while another wave of giggles echoed on her eardrums.

Her screams choked in her throat, and unable to breath or move she fainted.

As a ray of sunlight poked in her eye, she almost got strangled by her satin bed sheets. She woke up with her hair entangled in the long plastic wire of her phone charger, still in her favourite ash-blond shade. The relief of a nightmare made her smile and happily whistling she rushed to the shower, dressed up and left for the office. She would never even have to go to this goddamned, forsaken forest after all, she thought. Nobody would even dare go there to check on her words for the next two or three-hundred years. Tonight she would book a flight to some tropical paradise to celebrate her success.

She had created her own prowess of style through the years and was even nominated as journalist of the year. While she checked her lipstick in the mirror of the car's sunscreen, she cursed one of the traffic lights and spotted her rucksack on the seat beside her. One of the leather straps seemed to be torn apart and covered in dirt. She picked up her beloved bag to examine the damage as a crushed pine cone rolled into her lap. Andorra never noticed that the traffic light turned green.

That evening the body of a sixty-year-old woman was found, drowned in the river Thames, identified as the twenty-four-year-old Andorra S. Delaney. The famous journalist that had vanished under utmost peculiar circumstances. Her car was found near the bench of the forest. All windows were missing, the seats were overgrown with mosses and ferns as if nature had taken over the passage of time. On the dashboard a phone charger was lying with a few long ash-blond hairs attached.

Police officers found the left-overs of a wood-apple, lying guileless on the dinner table of her apartment next to a piece of creased, partly torn paper-note reading: *Please, replace to resto ...* The unfinished sentence in nervous, jittery handwriting also bore green stains, equal to the letter written by professor Turner in 1953. The smudged paper and hurried scribbles suggest that Andorra was dragged away on the spot. Her bed was determined to be unslept for days.

The discovery was added to unsolved disappearances. Case closed.

Still, gossip tongues feast on this mystery of confusion and queerness.

From fairy ink I wrote this tale driven by an inspirit image of the mysterious haunted forest Hoia-Baciu, located in Romania.

'When dusk takes away all light and fog descends, portals, ghosts and beings from the other side awake.'

Dedicated to the arrogance and contempt of some ...

Remember that pine-cones are sacred symbols of eternal life, unity, rebirth and enlightenment, never to be squashed.

The dark shadow of pretence ...

Zennor, October 2011.

“AAAAARGH!”

“Which wazzock halfwit dunce left the entrance to the laundry room stained ... Who?”

The terrifying bawl of Mrs Penny Farrowmor echoed through the dark hallway, booming on the walls like thunder, followed by enraged footsteps, squeaking hinges and slamming doors. The slash of a whip could be heard and two muffled cries of pain ricocheted on the walls of some secret empty space.

“Prepare the broth, bunch of dullards, I clean up the mess myself!”

Her usual summer rain voice had changed into a raw deranged slash and her seductive blue eyes had become a shade of purple-black menace. Trembling with anger but accurate and swift, she cleaned the pearl-white door and removed the thick red remains on the floor and two hand imprints on the entrance door, still marking mortal despair. She licked her lips and saliva drooled down her chin as the smell of the blood tickled her nostrils.

Her last victim had been slightly obstinate when she skinned him alive and a second of inadvertence had almost exposed her dark side. With a dripping carcass he had tried to reach the top of the stairs leading to the trapdoor of the cellar but Mrs Farrowmor had caught him in time, dragging him away from a normal death. Prints of dripping blood in the shape of an elongated hand on the white entrance door marked the unfortunate, unchancy escape.

She shouted to her assistants to leave the kitchen spotless and prepare a table for two before she would chain the idiots up for the night so nobody could spoil her plans. Mrs Farrowmor was a lady of astounding beauty, suntanned skin and long black hair that coiled around her waist. Most men of the village secretly called her ‘Spanish passion’ because she always looked perfectly cured from head to toe, wearing long-lace fanning skirts, silver stiletto heels and golden hoops in her ears, floating like a flamenco dancer in a mist of amber-fruit scents.

She was widely respected and praised for her spotless, bright laundry work. Nobody would ever know about her hunger for human flesh, preferably from young males. She had invited a handsome guy tonight and she planned to make it a memorable one. Covering the bedroom floor with a thousand scented candles to create a romantic atmosphere plus adding pink rose petals on the satin bedspread never disappointed.

Penny Farrowmore was still in the bathroom when her date arrived. With dripping hair and a translucent outfit she welcomed her suitor and offered him a glass of blood-red wine while she could finish dressing. Returning after a few moments in a long robe she stood in front of him with a blindfold. Without him questioning or protesting, she put a velvet belt around his head to cover his eyes after which her long fingers vanished under his shirt to take it off. Her soft hands took his and escorted him to the bedroom. “Sit”, she demanded as her lips followed the linings of his naked torso with some sensual stops descending to his navel. Groaning in delight he fell backwards in the heap of pillows to relish and drown in more magical lyrics and relics he was offered so generously. Taking off his eye cover, she turned around and kneeled, bending over to caress his feet, her soft white-peach behind swaying invitingly in front of his face, clenching his thighs with her silver stiletto heels. His hands started to massage her flesh, biting her buttocks one by one, kissing and sucking on her intimate parts. To underline her playful mood and specific intentions she wore a metal chain around her waist and one around her forehead. She reached for two ankle bands and gently fastened them around his feet and clicked the chain from her waist between them. As she turned to face her victim, she tossed her long hair backwards to reveal her breasts. The chain from her forehead fell next to her. She picked it up and secured the hands of the guy.

Imprisoned and vulnerable he was begging and grinding his teeth, waiting for more. She watched him squirm and twist for a moment before taking him. The moment his warm hardened flesh entered her body, his breath accelerated to heavy ecstatic sighs by the rhythmic, wild and out of this world movements. On the spur of the moment, he did not notice that the beauty of his sensual partner had broken like a spell.

The high heeled shoes were dangling from two deformed, gnarled horny feet while he was looking at two shrivelled breasts and a hairy, rugged snakelike skin. Realising the trap he had fallen into, he pulled and tugged on his chains, fighting his tethered status, screaming hysterically until his voice remained soundless. Extremely distraught he observed the monstrous, spiteful appearance of his host, bathing in sweat, his ankles and wrists blood-scratched and swollen.

“Jake, my honeyheart, you are a bit off, try to relax ...” The voice of Penny Farrowmore transformed in a variety of tonations, from hoarse violence to clattering pee, comforting him with a few cherries ... to sweeten the burning ... His eyes started to pop and water from fear, beseeching and stuttering. He offered her money and whatever necessary to let him go freely but she just smiled and continued the preparations for his appalling end.

Poor Jake was hovering in a magically padded, soundproof bubble where cries of agony and torture could not escape.

Woefully for Jake, it is not always true what they say: *‘What happens in the dark, always comes to light.’*

Penny Farrowmore seduced, bewitched and paralysed her suitors to hang them upside down, stuffed with salt, garlic and chillies, to smoke-dry above smouldering embers. And finally, with uncouth coughs, she started grinding bones from previous victims, happily baking bread from this genuine flour to scoop up her carnal soup while the washing machines upstairs finished their final bleaching program. No remains were ever traceable but sometimes people wondered why the smoke from the chimney always scented the area with garlic after another handsome youngster from the village had literally vanished in smoke. Her reputation remained unblemished like her snow-white laundry.

Each day at dawn, on the rooftop of her house, she could be seen hanging sparkling sheets, pillowcases, towels and various shirts from the villagers to dry in the gold dust sunlight, singing softly, swaying her hips in her flirtatious way, a poetic text-flow escaped spontaneously from her cherry-red lips:

*‘Mi amor, give me your eternal life,
without you, I can’t survive.
Let it shine, to be bright ...
Show me the path to cherries and wine,
burning love and forever be mine.
Let it shine, to be bright ...
You’ll never feel the same.
When you need me, just whisper my name.’*

A twisted tale inspired by the sarcastic, underhand, and sinister attitude of my neighbour, triggering the worst expectations and behaviour in any human being.