

Appointment with Yesterday

Christopher Stratakis

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Hardcover \$18.99 (333pp)

978-0-9977212-1-8

With a touch of nostalgia and a lot of good humor, this novel celebrates a Greek-culture search for the “sweetness of life.”

When his idyllic childhood on the rustic Greek island of Erytha is shattered by Nazi German forces, Yanni must find the strength to persevere in *Appointment with Yesterday*, an insightful coming-of-age narrative from Christopher Stratakis that chronicles one young man’s journey from the shores of the Aegean to the bustling sidewalks of New York City following WWII.

A successful lawyer specializing in maritime law, Yanni reminisces about the boy he used to be, from his early days as an aspiring altar boy shirking his homework, through the darkness of a cruel German occupation and the excitement and uncertainty of reuniting with his family as he starts anew in America. Through it all, Yanni’s devotion to his family, his culture, and values shines through as he transforms from a conflicted youth to a confident man.

Set equally in Greece and the East Coast of the United States, sharp contrasts between the rural island village of his childhood and the crowded American streets and tenements are clear. Each is brought into focus with colorful descriptions and clever observations from Yanni’s evolving point of view, which alters as he matures, capturing a multitude of sights, sounds, smells, and tastes. Especially poignant is Yanni’s voyage across the ocean as he samples his first Coca-Cola—“How American!”—and glimpses the Statue of Liberty for the first time, full of hope and wonder.

Yanni’s story unfolds in a riot of Greek culture regardless of geographic location, from chickens, goats, and figs to saints, icons, holy days, feasts, arranged marriages, and conventions. There is a distinct respect for family and traditional customs emphasized throughout, with pride of heritage and positive outlook even through rough times: “It was a good life, he thought. Often a hard life and a painful life, but still a good one.” Introspective but full of life and action, Yanni’s family epitomizes the immigrant experience so prevalent during the pre- and post war era in the United States.

Organized into four distinct parts, each marks a pivotal moment in Yanni’s life, steadily progressing through his teenage years, experiences with girls, professional aspirations, and even a bout with depression. The open, conversational tone and steady pace coupled with a memoir style of contemplation and reflection make Yanni, whose character and experiences were inspired by real life events, easy to relate to and cheer for through many often painful recollections.

With a touch of nostalgia and a lot of good humor, *Appointment with Yesterday* by Stratakis celebrates the passage of time as Yanni reflects back on his life and legacy, his heritage, and his choices and actions over the years. His story offers hope in the never-ending search for the “sweetness of life.”

PALLAS GATES MCCORQUODALE (February 1, 2017)

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