

Dislocated States

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K. constantly had the feeling that he was losing his way or that he had wandered farther than anyone had ever wandered before, to a place where even the air had nothing in common with his native air, where all this strangeness might choke one . . .

—Franz Kafka, *The Castle*

ON OUR WAY

We're sitting in the airport waiting for the flight to the States. My daughter Kore's energy is bizarre; she hasn't slept all night. I've slept erratically. She just said goodbye to her dad who she'll see again at Christmas, her cell phone doesn't stop – friends messaging their goodbyes and quick notes. It's the freshman going-to-college trip and while Kore's wanted this, and worked hard for it, the reality is beginning to become just that. She hardly says much but when she does it's short and sharp as in "Why do you always want to talk to me when I start to read something." We sit down and even though she murmurs "Better" when the flight attendant tells us we won't be sitting together because the flight is overbooked, I get up to see if the seating can be rearranged. I come back and she's somewhat chattier – "You know those tutorials I had to do for school?" I nod. "Some of those questions about alcohol and sexual harassment were really odd." I nod again, notice a couple sitting next to us, and feel their attentiveness to our conversation. Meanwhile Kore's voice seems to have become louder and more emphatic. I think it's the lack of sleep and general giddiness of facing a new unknown. She continues, "I mean they were asking questions like 'Have you ever had a drink with your family?'" I nod again and answer, "you just say 'yes'." "But why do they even want to know?" I shrug. "It's the conservative side of American culture." "Yeah, but it's weird too," she insists, and goes on to describe the sexual harassment section. She did the tutorials with Sandy who is also on her way to college, but in Boston. Sandy kept clicking 'Next.' There were pages and pages of small print. "We didn't read any of it in the end," Kore says. The woman next to us shifts in her seat. Kore's energy is affecting me too. I haven't been

sleeping well either and wish we could somehow fast-forward through the next week and a half so we'll know what her new life is going to be like: have the roommates met and friendly, the computer and cell phone bought and working, the banking account opened. "There was this one question," she goes on, "about what you would do if someone in class was making remarks you considered inappropriate." "Like what?" I am noticing the woman is trying not to look our way, though she's stopped her conversation with the man she is with. "Like if someone is making sick jokes," she says. "I guess you would ask him to stop making them," I say. "Yes," she agrees, "but you can't forbid him from speaking." I agree. "Well, I failed that question because I didn't say he had to stop." "People are a little uptight," I continue, and want to add, 'especially after 9/11' but don't want to bring any more attention to our conversation. I answer her next questions in Greek when, strangely enough, she continues in English. "Even Miss Popi, Sandy's mom, who's conservative, thought Sandy was being extreme when she kept clicking 'No' to all the alcohol questions. "You shouldn't lie," I say in Greek, "You just explain you're from another culture where people drink wine with their meals." "But there were these other questions too about not getting too close to your teachers," Kore goes on in English, "because it might be considered intimate." I roll my eyes. "Isn't there something wrong with people who expect the worse when you haven't even thought of the things they're talking about?" I blurt something about paranoia and how it is making everyone a little crazy. I'm also feeling tired and want to stop talking. It is depressing me and I am desperate for coffee. But Kore wants to go on despite the fact that the conversation is getting burdened. "They're *creating* fear!"

she says. “Just look at their President,” I now say in English. “I hate being asked to imagine something I haven’t even thought of,” she goes on, when I notice the woman next to me glance her way. “Maybe that’s why there are so many perverts,” I finally say, trying to end the conversation. The woman now looks at me briefly, and I detect a slight intake of breath. I switch back to Greek telling Kore every culture has their blind spots and irrationalities. A young woman says “Excuse me” in English, and steps past some seated passengers as she takes a seat. The young woman’s mother laughs, “I guess we’ll be hearing more people saying ‘Excuse me’ and ‘Thank you’ once we get home.’”

BORDERS OF THE SELF

The body defines our first contours, how they expand, hurt, disappear; I try to claim what I want beyond this sense, like a story lived through. Like a story it is a challenge to separate from the contours that shape a meaning, to write it, and as I write, to be strangely consumed, and loose the borders. I want to discover balance and foundation. Money provides it quickly, extending the boundary of what can be owned, the boundary between the haves and have nots, for example. In this new state where balance and foundation elude me, I become interested in uncertainty, the psychology of the refugee who carries the border within, the land left that continues to contour perspective, physical as famine withing the self, physical as the craving for specific tastes like rice. The interiority of the land carried within challenges the new external one, a freshly inhabited place that changes tastes, the body no longer craving rice but steak. Some things are specific in their concreteness: the seven hour difference in time zones between Athens and New York. When I call my daughter in my late afternoon she is waking up to her early morning. I can imagine her there, in a city so far from where I am calling home. Yet when a loved one is missing the place inhabited ceases to feel entire—the absence begins a contour of imagined presence: what I have called mine is gradually becoming another person. In tribal cultures this is fought and ritualized. Borders are fiercely defended, and when given up, done so with ceremony. Geographic and psychic identity in primitive cultures is too easily threatened to allow for confusion; maps are named and marked, then named and marked again. I assign a text in my Critical Thinking class called “Should My Tribal Past Shape Delia’s Future” by Dympna

Ugwu-Oju who describes the dilemma of watching her daughter Delia go off to Princeton. She questions if she, an African mother, has done right by her own mother and foremothers, since Delia is independent, educated, and reluctant to cook: none of the things her African mother and foremothers would have valued. The roles Dympna was raised to identify with, first and foremost as a wife and mother, Delia does not identify with. Yet Delia, by the standards of the culture she is born into, is a success, and by those of her mother’s native Africa, not. So how to judge asks Dympna? By whose standards does she judge when she is caught between perspectives and understands both? Dympna’s conflict is profound in that she asks how to measure what she understands as a loss of one value for another, to which culture does she give the more invested importance? This is one of the dilemmas in so much discussion of the global: we speak, our politicians, CEOs, educators, all speak of the global citizen’s necessary resilience, yet it is the globally dominant perspective that demands priority, the perspective of those who speak of democracy, equal opportunity, freedom of speech, who don’t always understand the freedom in tribal unities, in communities where freedom is not singular. We too, democratically speaking, are a community of singularities, equally defensive if someone questions one of our singular points of view, gay marriages for example. Someone says, “In our world this is unnatural,” someone who understands natural to mean essential, as in natural rainfall and natural earthquakes. It is natural to reproduce, to ensure the race’s survival, natural to combat nature’s natural threats. Gay marriages are therefore so many generations and social leaps ahead of the nature of this nature. Gay marriages and trans-sexuality are the choices of the privilege of not being bound to nature. There is something of the controversy over genetically modified foods in this debate; GM foods being another intervention. Like the hormone-pumped bodies of athletes, vegetables and fruits can be monstrous, their contours suddenly unfamiliar.

Kore has informed me that bananas are essentially extinct, that we are all eating genetically modified versions of the natural fruit, which I find hard to believe since I’ve seen the small ‘monkey bananas’ sold in organic food stores, but maybe they are the last of nature’s original, coming to us from the depths of African and Asian jungles, their tastes still pungent and sweet. I ask where she’s

heard this information, and she simply insists “it’s a fact,” that it is happening all the time, this gradual extinction of the originals which reminds me of the corn incident in Holland. Apparently the Dutch government, and the European Union, had made the point that they would not import any genetically modified seeds, and so refused a corn shipment coming from Canada, or was it from North America? According to the story a shipment of seed was sent to Holland and immediately planted when the Dutch were informed that the shipment had mistakenly been one of mixed seed; it was too late, the corn was seeded and there would be no conceivable way to keep European soil free of GM corn, the boundary between pure corn seed and the genetically modified version no longer distinct. As in rape, there was no way to undo the fact of the act, but unlike rape the seed could not be aborted.

Two years ago a dispute took place over a 6th grade Greek history textbook that glossed the 1922 burning of Smyrna, one of the more memorable catastrophes under the Ottoman Turks. Thanos Veremis, a respected Greek historian defended the understated representation hoping to heal age-old hatreds. “Have we forgotten our own excesses in Anatolia” he said, noting atrocities suffered by the Turks during the Greek invasion of Tripoli. Maria Repousi, a historian and part of the Greek National Educational council who supported this understated version of the 1922 catastrophe, noted: “Negative and biased connotations of the Turkish people give way to historical representation which are based on sources and therefore are more objective and nuanced.” Nevertheless, these sources were not considered legitimate enough to stop the Greek government, after much public outcry, from removing the textbook. The boundary between historical trauma and redemptive possibility is a hard one to negotiate; the question is always about who will be the more generous when the nature of trauma makes generosity almost impossible; is this analogous to forgiving the rapist? Thanos Veremis hopes we will be nourished by the lessons of history, eat the mutated corn.

TODAY’S NEWS

TKVIAMI, Georgia – The men who came to Gulnava Militaura’s house seemed to know what they were looking for. They entered her kitchen and shot her husband and his brother in the head.

For the next five days, as attacks and looting raged outside, she cowered at home, sprinkling vinegar on the bodies to try and keep them from rotting...”

“Survivors Tell of Ethnic Killings in the Wake of Fighting in Georgia,” Sabrina Tavernise, *New York Times*, August 20, 2008

In the middle of the night I think the refugee doesn’t, or can’t, indulge in the sensual presence of the moment as she or he is always overcoming the past’s threat and that threat, psychic or physical, is part of his present; Gulnava Militaura’s terror does not prevent her from doing what she can to bury her loved ones. Her grief does not overwhelm her ability to think practically and pour vinegar to preserve the bodies of her dead. It is important that she manage this, burying them where they belong, as the town and people are being destroyed. The *New York Times* article goes on:

...the victims seemed marked by their ethnicity in a vicious, if short, war – itself fought over competing claims to the same patches of ground by different groups. Villages had been burned and houses broken into; unburied bodies lay rotting; fresh graves were dug in gardens and basements.

Those who belong to cultures which feel secure take their identity for granted. The immigrant and refugee take nothing for granted: for Greek immigrants in the early century, and after the Second World War, the Aegean Sea and Greek mountain villages of their homeland receded in memory, or shrank to portraits on a wall. The immediate landscape becomes as much unknown as known. We are patient with the unknown, like Gulnava Militaura we try to think of solutions. Perhaps this has its beginnings in our primitive respect for what we have no control over, such as weather and war, though we are being told we can stop climate change, and even war. In a city like New York where the unknown is everywhere and hybridity the rule, people make an effort to be polite. A busy waiter almost pushes into me as he swipes up trays of dirty plates and half eaten meals; I say “Excuse me” and mean it. He nods a quick “Sorry.” In Athens I would have been irritated. I’m crossing 6th Avenue in a hurry and almost run into a woman holding a Starbucks coffee. I don’t see her, but manage to avoid running into her. She is annoyed, says, ‘eXcussse me!’ cutting the air with her X. I step back

abruptly, almost say “I’m not from here” but have walked away too fast. In Athens I would not have bothered to explain at all, taking her irritation for granted.

More of polite gestures, the ‘Have a great one,’ ‘Have a good one,’ ‘You take care,’ spoken with earnestness. We deal with estrangement diplomatically, like pagans respectful of what the unpredictable might have in store for us; we take precautions. You notice people who have gone mad despite the precautions. A man stands at the entranceway of a Citi ATM holding the door open continuously as he nods to people going in and out, repeating: “Have a good day.”

On the NJ Transit, a large black woman comes on and sits opposite me catching the eye of a young child who has just boarded with her father. She grimaces like a tiger to catch the child’s attention. The little girl laughs. The older woman appreciates the attention. The conductor comes by, asking for tickets. The black woman doesn’t have one; she’s told by the conductor she can get off at the next stop, take a bus to the town she’s headed towards. She tells him what they have “isn’t a ‘schedule,” the ticket collector smiles, admits “maybe not,” then asks, “Where are you heading?” She tells him, he repeats the name, says “I know folks up there.” A young woman sitting next to me nods and smiles; the black woman and the young woman next to me start a conversation about the train’s schedule and its different stops. The conductor repeats she can get off at the next stop and get a bus from there. The black woman says it’s going to take her forever with the bus. The conductor smiles again, tells her the buses run pretty regularly. The woman sitting next to me agrees. There’s a couple opposite me who look uncomfortable with the black woman’s loud pronouncements; the man keeps nervously shaking his leg. His wife, or partner, looks humorless. Their discomfort makes them seem like out-of-towners. Meanwhile we approach the next stop and the black woman is debating what to do next, telling the young woman next to me that she’s tired of so much traveling just to get back and forth from work, the young woman is sympathetic and shows it, but encourages her to go ahead and take the bus (no one mentions that she doesn’t have much choice since she hasn’t paid the ticket). The black woman finally agrees as the train pulls into the stop and thanks the young woman who wishes her ‘a good one.’

Kore’s amazed by what she sees during her first days

in the city: a man crosses the street with a cat perfectly balanced on the top of his head, a woman dressed as a computer icon, covered in a black cube of cardboard with a round ball for a head strolls along 7th Avenue; she has no visible face openings. “That was scary,” Kore says as we pass her. I laugh. “I don’t really care how people dress, or about what they want to be. Some people kill themselves and others just go crazy. Maybe being crazy’s okay if they’re okay.” I nod, following her thought.

Back in New Jersey, after leaving Kore in her freshman dorm room, I find myself imagining Gulliver’s body flat on the ground. Even if the Lilliputians have strung his limbs and torso in different directions to pin him down, his shape has integrity. When that integrity is missing or psychically threatened there is no center to direct the moment forward and give priority to events; the moment has overwhelmed the man at the Citi ATM continually opening and closing the door, wishing people a good day, the moment has trapped him like a spinning wheel that can’t move beyond its stationary spinning.

I become engrossed with details, lists; what else does Kore need before I leave the States? I will buy her extra ink cartridges for her printer, large tubes of toothpaste. I read an epigram to a poem about pain disciplining confusion. I can’t find the quote though I keep looking for it; the idea stays with me, the idea that extreme circumstance can shape, make whole, what threatens to become smithereens. I don’t know how but this focus on getting my daughter the extra ink and toothpaste, the Advil cold tablets, helps organize my confusion.

Since there is no overwhelming circumstance, no central pain, to define the moment as in the case of Gulnava Militaura, my realities converge and compete for priority. I visit friends and am fleetingly privy to their interiors, homes with scattered books and typed pages lying on tables and chairs in different rooms, pets, a canary that eats from the same bowl as the cat. The ceiling fans in one house, the colored pillows and throws in another, the warm wood floorboards. These impressions converge in an album of impressions, like the New York I am no longer part of, the one memory brings back, converging with this one.

The bookstore is gone from St. Marks’ though the street is there, the one that I walked as a graduate student. These images mix with what I see and hear around me;

hybrid fragments of conversation heard out of context, chips of mosaic. I listen to a man at the train station on his cell phone. "I need to speak to Jon Richardson" he says, explaining he will be at the office for the ID photo verification. Someone on the other end must be trying to connect him but doesn't find Mr. Richardson so the man says, "I need to tell him I will make the meeting at two." I am impressed with his use of the verb 'need'. Necessity has a different urgency when nothing is taken for granted, not even the prearranged meeting at two. We migrate with our stories, our pasts becoming gradually embedded in the ongoing present. Kore calls me later to say she saw "the saddest thing" two evenings ago. "I was walking with Mateo toward the river and we saw this woman who was about sixty. She was dressed in a skirt and ironed shirt and she was wearing some jewelry and her hair was nicely combed. Mom, she was sitting in a chair on the sidewalk with her packed suitcases next to her, asleep." I suddenly see this vividly and smell the fresh talc of her skin. "She must have been newly homeless." I tell her the homeless are part of the tragedy of cities. "It's not fair mom that someone like that is being punished at that age!" I am without words. When a friend calls to ask Kore what her impressions of New York are, she describes the city as "intense and fragile". I am left with the image of the well dressed woman asleep in a fold-up chair so she doesn't have to sleep on the pavement; her past, like the man holding open the door at the Citi ATM, having conquered her, left her with no future.

"May I ask you the direction to Liberty airport?" an Indian man asks me at Penn Station. His accent is so thick I don't immediately understand what he is saying. I am also concentrating on what I hear over the loudspeaker, the announcement for the NJ Transit schedule to Dover. I ask him to wait a second as I listen to the announcement. He politely waits, and once the announcement is over I ask him to repeat his question. "Liberty airport," he says, "What direction must I go in?" I nod, smile, tell him to take the Dover train and get off at Newark. An announcement comes on for the Trenton train, and someone pulls at his sleeve, speaking in Indian. He nods, smiles at me, and follows his friend.

"ZERO AND WHAT'S NEXT TO IT"

I am a reluctant traveler. Though I have been to exotic and beautiful places, I rarely go without a purpose

that undermines the pleasure of the trip. The trip to New York for example is suffused with Kore's new college beginning away from home, and my eventual return without her. Other trips are often work related, the new city's presence just the backdrop. As a result I am like the immigrant, always conscious of where I have come from, carrying parts of it with me, unable to fully relax in the new moment. Kore on the other hand seems completely focused on her present as she tells me of all she plans to do; all that the city will offer her. She is one of the many who see the city and her time in it, as opportunity. She is not migrating since she is only temporarily leaving home. Even if her time away amounts to years, home is still tied to place, even if she does not return permanently; she has the choice. She was born in Athens and her city has never been taken from her as in the case of refugees, Palestinians for example, or those in the swath of villages in central Georgia warring over their plots of earth. I am impressed when people who belong to an ethnic or racial group communicate beyond the language of protocol and law; the way the black ticket collector on the NJ Transit spoke to the black woman he said had to get off at the next stop, and also asked where she was from.

After 9/11 police and guards are noticeable everywhere. I ask where I can get the downtown subway when I get into Penn Station and an NYP officer nods toward the escalators. I dislike the fact that I instinctively invest the uniformed with authority. They represent convention's law, but not necessarily empathy. When the empathy is missing, there's unease and distrust, something that warns of the nicely dressed woman asleep in her fold-out chair because she has nowhere to go and no one to care for her. Immigrants or once-immigrants share a familiarity and language I notice when I am in *Perfect Nails*, and when I leave from the Newark airport.

Two Korean women approach me in *Perfect Nails* and ask what I'd like. When I tell them a pedicure they discuss this in Korean, then one of the women asks me to sit and starts to give me the pedicure as a group in the back begin to speak loudly. There are two middle-aged men, three younger men and five women laughing and arguing; the woman doing my pedicure suddenly starts to laugh too and turns to shout something to the group in Korean. She becomes engrossed in the conversation going on behind her without pausing in her attention to my

feet. I wonder if I should suggest she might want to leave the pedicure for a minute to talk to them, but I realize it doesn't matter since I am simply her job, and the people she's talking to, her world. At the end of the pedicure she smiles, "Everything ok?" nods to where I can sit at the nail fans, and walks over to the ongoing conversation in Korean before I answer her.

At the airport things are tense; there are police patrolling with dogs. I line up at the check-in with my passport and e-ticket; there aren't a lot of people because it's still early. I get to the counter with my bags and wait as the woman behind it speaks in Spanish to someone I assume is a colleague. A woman on the floor asks if I need help. I tell her I'm waiting to check-in; she nods to a machine in front of the counter and says I need to punch in my confirmation number. I look at the woman who is talking in Spanish. She eyes me indifferently, asks in English if my destination is Athens and if I've packed the bags myself. I say yes to both questions, she nods and turns back to the conversation she's having in Spanish. "I'm done?"

The woman nods; I leave with my e-ticket, proceed to passport control. Another woman asks for my boarding pass. I hand her the ticket. "That's not your boarding pass," she says. "No one gave me one," I say.

"Didn't you get one out of the machine?" she asks. I shake my head. "I'm sure it's still in the machine."

The woman at the counter chatting in Spanish is surprised to see me again. I cut to the front of the line. "I don't have a boarding pass," I say firmly. "It's here," she says, "this man just pulled it out when he punched in his ticket number."

"I didn't know I had to get it from the machine," I say, obviously irritated. "Weren't you supposed to tell me?" For the first time the woman looks focused and apologetic. I take the ticket and leave without thanking her and feel I am treading a line, it wouldn't take much to be labeled 'provocative' or 'uncooperative', or the favorite post-9/11 adjective, 'suspicious'. I go through passport control, prepare to go through the metal detector, take off my shoes, put my cell phone and lap top in the plastic bin, and know the bell's going to sound because I'm wearing a necklace with metal beads, and a metal belt buckle but don't take either of them off feeling like, yes, I will be provocative, uncooperative, and suspicious as the detector bell gives off its shriek and the security person steps forward with

sudden purpose, "Your Watch!" he yells. I look him straight in the eye, "Its plastic."

"Then take off whatever metal you have on!" he announces loudly. I take off the necklace and belt and go quietly through the metal detector a second time. The language of order and officiousness is more apparent to me since the last time I visited the States; only when I watch and hear people speaking in another language, Spanish, Korean, Greek, is that offset, and there is familiarity and engagement to undermine the formality of protocol. I share some of this with the gentleman sitting next to me on the plane back to Athens, he nods, "Give me a little more than just telling me the world is round," he says, explaining that after 9/11 "Everything is a security issue" whose terms people are expected to follow without questioning. The gentleman and I are seated in the front of the Economy Class seats; we can put our legs up against the partition between the section divider and the wall of the toilet. We use the toilet once or twice during the trip, but as we cross the Atlantic I notice with the cabin's dimmed lights, the curtain has been pulled and the cord put up to section off Economy from Business class. During the night I use the toilet, replace the cord and pull the curtain when I come out. A stewardess coming down the aisle smiles, "You'll have to use the bathroom at the other end." "This one's right here," I say quietly since people are sleeping. "It's a security issue," she says.

"Have you noticed the language of war in everything?" The gentleman next to me asks. He introduces himself as Dimitris, born in New Jersey to first generation Greek immigrants; he is going to visit his mother in Greece where she returned in old age once her husband died. I admit I haven't noticed, but did notice the constant references to Afghanistan and Iraq in the news. I'm trying to piece together my thoughts about systems whose enemy remains an excuse for something nebulous, another blur. I quote Cavafy's closing lines in "Waiting for the Barbarians" for Dimitris: "What in the world will we do without barbarians?/Those people would have been a solution, of sorts." (*C.P. Cavafy The Canon*, trans. Stratis Haviaras). Dimitris likes this, and tells me he is going to read more Cavafy poems.

"Have you ever wondered why they've never caught Bin Laden?" Dimitris asks. I tell him he's probably holed up in a cave somewhere protected by his people.

He laughs, "They don't want to catch Bin Laden. It's too convenient to have him out there being a potential threat." I start to wonder about the way the conversation is going. Dimitris seems to read my mind because he says, "I know this all sounds like more conspiracy theories..." I smile. "You should check out the *Zeitgeist* movie." Dimitris also mentions Jeff Boss, a senator he respects, someone I have not heard of. I ask, "Do you know the expression in Greek, 'Zero and what's next to it?'" Dimitris laughs, "It's a gambling expression they use in casinos." I nod, "It's a good way to describe all that's happened since 9/11."

In the end what is gradually terrifying me is the way we can allow ourselves to trust powers that undermine our right to question situations; whether it's the NY Police or officials administering the rules of protocol, we're seduced into believing these people share our common interests. A psychiatrist once told me, "The language of power is never the language of truth." Socrates was sentenced to death for speaking the truth to those defending the language of power. In Camus's *The Stranger* Meursault is punished for speaking his truth, for answering "the sun" when asked by the jury why he killed the Arab; that it was the sun that blinded and made him think the Arab was approaching with a drawn knife whose blade glinted in its rays only provokes laughter from the jury, and Meursault too is sentenced to death. The language of truth is the language of experience, and when it does not recognize or reflect the language of power, it becomes the language of the refugee, the immigrant, the Korean in *Perfect Nails*, the Spanish at the airport check-in, the rage I expressed when I returned to Athens and found newly installed security doors at the Greek National Bank.

It's early Monday morning but there are already people lined up outside the bank. Since I've been away I don't realize it's because people can only enter the bank one at a time through this new entranceway. One middle aged man keeps going into the glass booth and coming out again, shaking his head. "It doesn't open," he says. Someone comes to the front to stare through the thick pane, there's a button inside. The man goes back in and presses the button; there's a recorded voice that says something. He comes out again, and lets the person behind him try. The person behind him goes in and somehow manages to get through. I see the taped notice on the door: NO GLASSES, HELMETS, HATS. ENTER ONE AT A TIME'. An older

woman shakes her head, "48 years," she says, and half laughs with another woman who like her is dressed in a plain smock dress. A woman with a Russian accent cuts in front and glues her face to the glass to see what the man who keeps coming out is doing. "You have to wait before you press the button" she tells him when he has another failed attempt. I am impressed that no one gets impatient with the man who is holding up the line by going in and out without managing to get through. I realize there is no other way to enter the bank, no visible door if someone is in a wheelchair for example. I am livid.

The man finally manages to get inside the bank after five or six attempts. When it's my turn, I press the green button, the glass door slides open, once inside the enclosed cell, an automated voice tells me to stand in the middle of it. I press the button on the glass door to enter the bank, the voice tells me to go back out and try again. I don't understand, but go back out. Someone in line tells me I'm wearing glasses. I say I can't see well without them. "It says no glasses," someone else says. I nod, go in without my glasses; hear the voice that tells me to stand in the middle of the cell again. It tells me to look into a red light in the corner I assume is a camera; a green light goes on and the automated voice tells me to push the door into the bank. I finally make it in, go straight to one of the people working on the floor, and blurt: "Who's responsible for this system?"

"The Bank of Greece," the employee says with satisfaction.

"Someone has to go outside and show people how to use the system. There are aged people in line who have no idea what to do."

He shrugs, "We're a handful of people in here. Do you expect me to send a teller outside?"

"That's your job, isn't it?"

He laughs at me. "It's not our fault if people don't know how to follow instructions."