

Vagelis Iliopoulos

Children Ask *Why*

Illustrated by
Effie Lada



**PATAKIS
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translated by J K Mabin



Every word, poets tell us, has a life of its own; a unique, secret and strange life.

This is the life of the word *Why*, filled with much perplexity and pain.

Once upon a time in a great publishing house hundreds of lexicographers were putting a dictionary together. The first words to include in their dictionary were the words of everyday use. Obviously, the word *Why* was one of them. But the publisher took pride in including all the rare and difficult words, too, and the lexicographers had to work hard for many years to collect those, neglecting the more common words.

As a result, the word *Why* lay on its single sheet of paper, forlorn and forgotten, at the bottom of a pile of reference books and pages full of definitions. Until something very strange happened...



One full-moonlit night in August, a lexicographer was tidying up the papers on her desk, as she would be going on holiday the very next day. While she was sorting and reshuffling the piles, the single sheet with *Why* written on it came up on top, just for one fleeting second.

The sheet was old and yellow, but *Why* was young and playful. Not for a moment did it stop to think whether what it did next was the right thing to do. It did not even think of its friends and relatives, the parts of speech, the particles and the adverbs. It only saw the open window and the moonlit night and the possibility of freedom: it jumped up, and the breeze helped it to soar out of the window carried on its sheet of paper.

