



The Child from the Sea
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It is not easy to talk to children about refugees, to explain the differences with immigrants, to put forward messages on human rights. These themes appear difficult to grasp and may not be able to stimulate young readers' interest. An author needs to have the knowledge, the talent and the means to situate such themes within a story that will make possible young readers identify with the heroes, to love them and to really empathize with them.

Loty Petrovits-Andrutsopoulou, in her book *The Child from the Sea*, does not only manage to do that but goes beyond that, moving and inspiring whoever reads the story of Hasan from Afghanistan. She uses interesting and not at all simplistic language, honesty, and the art of climaxing her narration. The story appears ordinary at first, a child is lost in a big mall, but the writer goes on to talk to her readers about the pain and torture of being stripped of own country roots and to invite refugees to act by standing up for their right to a better future.

Fivo is bored of shopping. He leaves his dad for a while to look at an inflatable boat, loses him and his misfortunes begin. By the time he finds him again and returns home, he goes through a lot, the worst being when he finds himself alone in the police station. This is where he meets "the child from the sea" - a young refugee who has also lost his father- and so he learns many things he never happened to hear before. Being a refugee is not equal to being a foreigner. His great-grand father was also a refugee from Smyrna. Children have their rights wherever in the world. Asylum means that Hasan can stay in Greece and feel safe and protected. His bonds to the young refugee grow and so does their friendship which develops into brotherhood over years to come. This friendship signifies the deeper meaning of history, common roots and the common destination of humanity irrespective of culture.

The Child from the Sea is a contemporary book for children without being "childish". It successfully combines realism with sensitivity, made possible through the unique style of Loty Petrovits and her skill to deeply touch young and older alike. As soon as the story ends play begins, and this may be valuable for looking further into the educational and sociological dimensions of the story...

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Transl. by A. Andrutsopoulou