

The Hidden Water

Drought prompts a mission that will take imagination, a lot of effort, a little magic and help from others

Lili Lamprelli studied law and works as a translator for the European Union but her heart is in storytelling. She writes her own and narrates classics from the oral tradition, elements of which are evident in her latest book, "To krimeno nero" (The Hidden Water).

A fierce drought has ravaged the land: "The air, as hot as dragon's breath, was no consolation."

One night, a boy sets out from his straw hut to venture across the parched earth. Under a stand of trees, he is about to quench his thirst with a few drops of moisture he has gathered on a leaf when a snake startles him.

Fear turns to pity as the snake begs the boy to kill him before he dies of thirst. In an act of kindness that will forge a decisive friendship, the boy shares his water with the suffering creature.

An owl tells them how the land was once green and the nymphs who played in its rivers and springs were friends with the inhabitants. But the forces of fire envied their friendship and made volcanoes rain down lava, frightening away the fairies, who hid underground, while the water disappeared.

Inspired by the story, the boy and the snake set out in search of the hidden water, a mission that will take imagination, a lot of effort, a little magic and help from others.

Fotini Stefanidi's illustrations match the mood and the underlying message of this fable for a dry planet. She depicts a world that hovers somewhere between the dream-spun landscape of myth and the gritty reality of the here and now.

Images extend in irregular bands across two-page spreads, hovering above the text.

The palette shifts from a sandy ochre punctuated by gray, parched trees in scenes of drought, to a forest of dusky olive and brown, fresh green fields threatened by sulfurous volcanic clouds, and finally, pink flecks of blossom, light green buds and a pale blue wash of water.

"The Hidden Water" is published by **Patalki**.



The water nymphs fled from the lava that spewed from volcanoes set off by the forces of fire, which envied their happy coexistence with humans.