

An Easter Story

This is a literary adaptation of the original short story. In this story, the main character, Mr. Dionysakis, wins a little lamb in a lottery, meant to be roasted on the spit for Easter Sunday. His friend, the barber, assures him that he will come to slaughter it on Good Friday since, as Mr. Dionysakis himself puts it, "In my life, I've never raised a knife against a living creature."

The next day was Good Friday, with church bells ringing mournfully.

But the barber never showed. Mr. Dionysakis was certain his wife, Maria, would soon say:

"We can't wait for your friend. We have to slaughter it ourselves." [...]

The evening of Good Friday came peacefully, with no breeze to blow out the little candles everyone held as they followed the procession of the Epitaph. The family returned home. They were fasting. Tomorrow night, after the Resurrection, they would return home with white candles and then they would eat. Mageiritsa, the Easter soup, made with finely chopped liver and egg-lemon sauce, would be ready. Then they would crack the red eggs, dyed on Holy Thursday. On Easter Day, the children would be allowed to help turn the spit, just a little, as the lamb roasted.

On Holy Saturday morning, everything was silent. No one spoke. The children sensed something very serious was about to happen. They didn't play. They sat cross-legged on the grass, beneath the plum tree, near the lamb, watching it with frightened eyes. [...]

At last, Mr. Dionysakis appeared at the doorway. He looked a little pale. In his left hand, he held a large knife. He sternly commanded his wife:

— Take the children inside.

Maria, frightened, did as she was told. But one of the little children had already understood, for days now:

— What's he going to do, Mama?

— Silence... hush!

From the dining room window came the sound of a child's cry. At once, Mr. Dionysakis felt his knees weaken. He forced himself forward, toward the plum tree. His ears were filled with the sounds of the sunny day. He saw the chickens. He saw the dog lying happily. And there was the cat rubbing happily against the iron gate. And as for the little lamb, near the well, it grazed peacefully, without a care.

Life is so beautiful!

He turned around and entered the house with determination. Maria and the children, frightened and huddled at her feet, looked up at him as though a murderer had walked in.

— Listen to me, woman, he said. We'll find something to eat. But I must tell you one thing: In my whole life, I've never raised a knife against a living creature! That's who I am. Like it or not! And with that, the two little ones rushed toward him with joyful voices. He felt the weight in his chest begin to lift.

Maria disappeared into the cellar, and there, laughter overtook her.

