



The Magical Land of Sunny

Written by Elisavet Arkolaki © 2012
Translated from Greek by Millie Slavidou
Illustration by Rifat Al Hasan

Long, long ago and far, far away, there lived a little girl called Sonya. From what I've heard, that little girl was always bright, cheerful and smiling, so they called her Sunny for short. Not a day seemed to touch for her; time did not leave its mark on her,

nor did life's everyday sorrows. Some say that she is still there today, sharing her smiles.

Sunny had a secret. A well-hidden secret that somehow, little by little, leaked out and reached my own ears so that I can tell you this story. Sunny, a thin, short red-haired little girl with almond-shaped eyes the colour of honey, always wore a plastic yellow headband on her head, one with a little bow on the left. It was a present from her mommy, because, she said, it made her look sweet. After that, Sunny became so attached to her headband that she even wore it to bed. But why? Magic. Such special magic that I have to ask you to be absolutely quiet and listen carefully to what I have to say.

On the day that she wore her plastic headband for the first time and looked at herself in the mirror, she noticed something strange. Something very strange indeed. Like a little house growing out of the top of the headband. Eek! Then, another one, a little further along. And a pond. And there was a park! A whole little town full of tiny houses, parks, rivers, ponds, and all kinds of flowers seemed to be up there.

"How lovely!" thought the little girl. "A whole world on top of my head, all for me, mine alone!" she cried. But that little world seemed to be empty, uninhabited.

"Mommy, Mommy!"

"What is it, darling?"

"The headband you bought me is magic! Look!"

"What am I supposed to see?"

"Can't you see the houses, the parks, the ponds? The rivers and the flowers?"

"Where, honey?"

"Up on my head, of course, Mommy! Up on the headband!"

"There's nothing there, darling. Your imagination is running away with you. Now run along and play."

Sunny did not let it get her down. "Let Mommy say what she likes," she thought. "Grown-ups don't understand these things anyway. Their sight must be limited. It gets worse as they get older, and the glasses that doctors give them can't be very well made."

Sunny usually spent hours and hours playing by herself at home, apart from the odd weekend when they would pay a visit to family, or have a little outing to the local playground. Of course, there were also the weekends spent with her grandparents. These were her favourites.

But most of the time, she was by herself in her room, playing with her dolls, doing jigsaw puzzles, reading books. From time to time she would stand in front of the mirror enjoying the sight of the little town that she had discovered on her headband, which was so beautiful, but so empty, so terribly empty of life. And so, gradually, she got fed up with that discovery, and as time went on she almost forgot completely about it.

Almost. But not entirely. Until one day something strange happened. Something incomprehensible. Her mommy announced to her that "Grandad has passed away." What did that mean? She said some other things that Sunny couldn't understand. The words reached Sunny's ears and went in like a bee buzzing, an indefinable humming. "The worst disease," she said, "it was quick" and "it didn't hurt"; "he's looking down at us from above"; "he loves us, but he won't be coming back"; "don't cry"; "don't be upset"; "it will pass... everything passes over time."

The little girl didn't understand anything. All she felt was that her name, connected to the word "sun", which should have been bright, happy and joyful, no longer suited her so well. She didn't feel happy anymore. Not at all. But this feeling did not last too long. Soon, something ... amazing happened! Magic, if you will. And that has been her great secret for years.

On the day of the farewell ceremony, the "funeral", as they told her it was called, she noticed something. During the burial service, Sunny kissed her beloved grandad. But where everyone else had felt a cold, remote and eerie sensation on the edge of their lips, seeing from what her tiny little ears caught from among the whispers of the grownups, she felt something sweet and warm. And believe it or not, but it seems that with that little kiss, Sunny gave life!

At the moment of the kiss, completely unexpected and to Sunny's great surprise, a tiny little person popped out of his powdered forehead, an exact copy of her grandad, smiling, in the pink of health, timeless and full of life. He greeted her with a deep bow from the waist and jumped up into her hair. The little girl looked around. Everyone was crying. No one seemed to have noticed anything! "Grown-ups can't see," she murmured

to herself. The tiny little person asked for her permission to live in one of the little empty houses in her town, as otherwise he couldn't stay close to her.

“Choose whichever one you like.”

“The one with the garden, with a lot of flowers! Granny will like it too when she comes to join me here.”

“Is Granny coming there too? But how...?”

“Just like me, silly-billy! Don't forget to give her a kiss just like you did me when she 'passes away', and she will come and join us here.”

He had let her in on the secret. You see, he loved her very much and didn't want to see her cry, nor did he want to leave her behind. And so indeed, from that day on, Sunny was never unhappy again. Whenever someone or something she loved 'passed away' be it a flower, a little animal, a little bug, a bird, a person she would give it a kiss. In this way, she gave that beloved person or thing life again, and over the years, her little town brimmed with life.

In the great journey of her life, because, as we said before, she is still there today, Sunny made a unique world full of colours, happy voices and smiles. She built a town untouched by any illness, sadness or anything mean. A bright, beautiful place, full of life, joy and love. A place where nobody cries, nobody suffers, nobody hurts.

I met Sunny one day. And I told her I knew her secret. She didn't get angry. But as we were talking, I couldn't but express my doubts about the existence of her little town. And you know what she replied?

“Don't you believe me when I tell you that there is such a place? Look at me properly. Look at this old head carefully, with this beautiful headband decorating it. Try and see what you have only heard about until now.

“Can't you see all those people waving at you from the balconies? Don't you see their banners proclaiming that whoever is loved never dies? Look at their beautiful gardens, their animals, their trees, their flowers. Their sky and their sun. The cool and clean feeling of their rain. Their rainbow, straight out of a dream.

“You know, there they want for nothing. They are not hungry, they are not cold, they have no needs and survival instincts. They hurt no one and they are bothered by no one. They just love and are loved. And they give their smiles generously to anyone who sees them and is aware of their existence.

“I have been carefree for years now. I have no stress or worry eating away at me. I know that I do not lose anyone that I love. They will live forever here. In this little magical town that I have kept like a charm since my childhood.

“Now, you might say to me, when I 'pass away' in my turn, what will happen? Anyone who has loved me will give me a kiss, and I will travel forever with them, and with all those that I have loved, in other unique and wonderful little towns. My little town will be their heritage. If I hadn't wanted it to, do you really believe that such a secret could have been leaked out?”

And she gave me a pointed wink...



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