

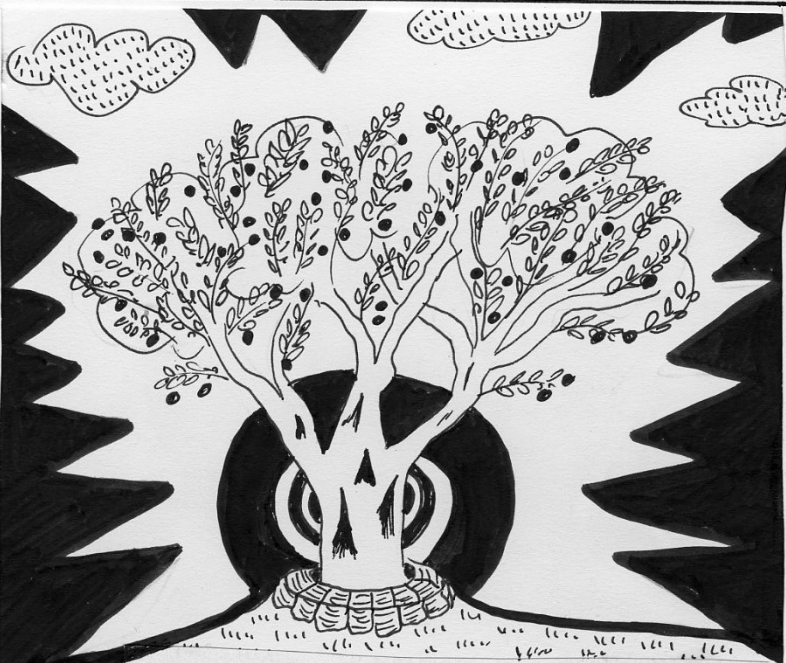


# The olive tree and the old woman

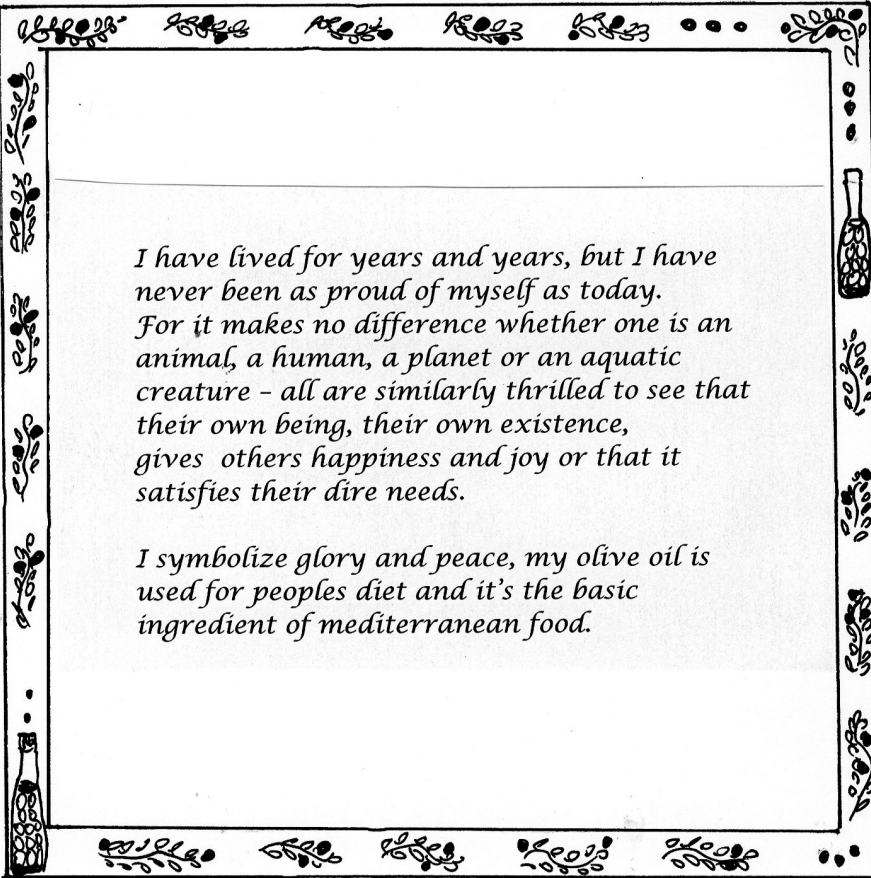
Parwana Amiri

A conversation in the olive grove of Moria  
hotspot.

WZEU

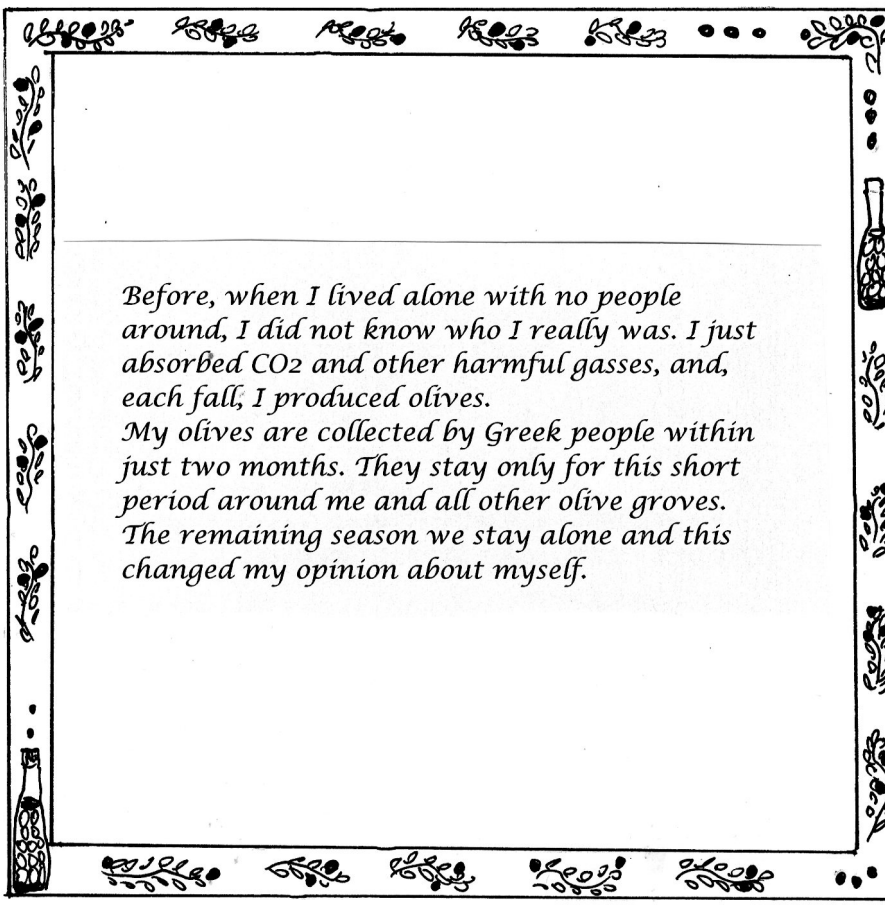


Written by Parwana Amiri, living in a  
tent with her family in the olive grove  
next to the hotspot Moria. 2019.



*I have lived for years and years, but I have never been as proud of myself as today. For it makes no difference whether one is an animal, a human, a planet or an aquatic creature - all are similarly thrilled to see that their own being, their own existence, gives others happiness and joy or that it satisfies their dire needs.*


*I symbolize glory and peace, my olive oil is used for peoples diet and it's the basic ingredient of mediterranean food.*



*Before, when I lived alone with no people around, I did not know who I really was. I just absorbed CO<sub>2</sub> and other harmful gasses, and, each fall, I produced olives.*

*My olives are collected by Greek people within just two months. They stay only for this short period around me and all other olive groves. The remaining season we stay alone and this changed my opinion about myself.*

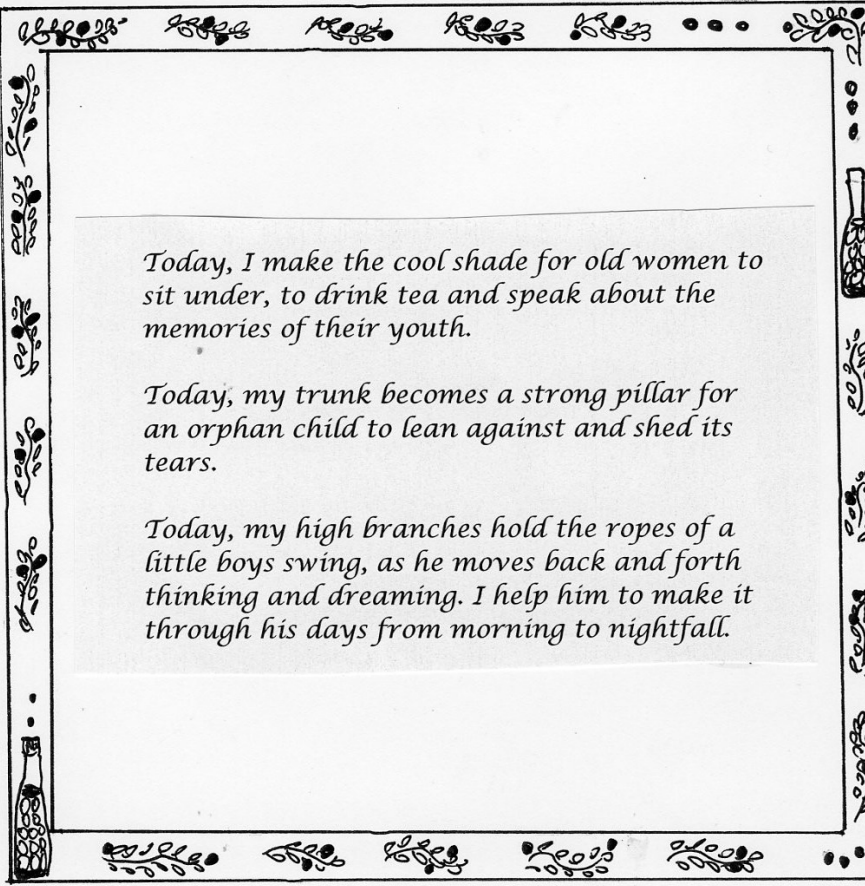




There are people around me now, that are  
always with me, People whose lives  
become brighter because of me. The life of  
the olive grove, too, has become brighter,  
because of the people and their tents that  
sprung among the trees

We are no more  
just the native trees in the pictures of this  
island, the island of Lesbos.

Written by  
**PARWANA**  
**AMIRI** nov 2019

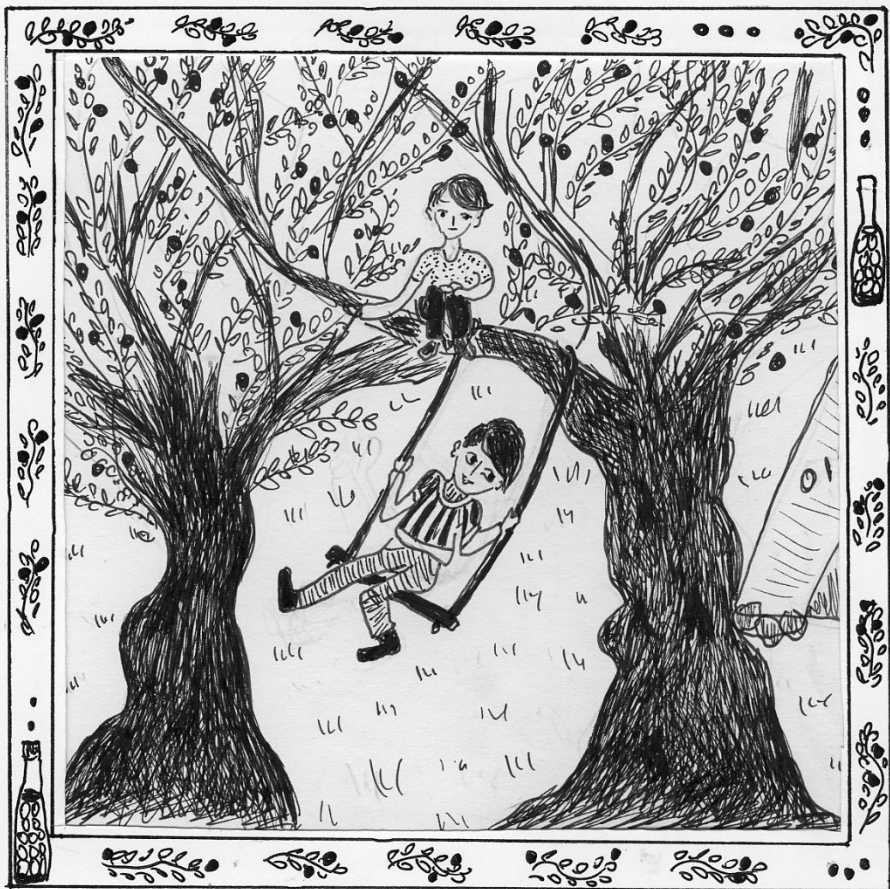


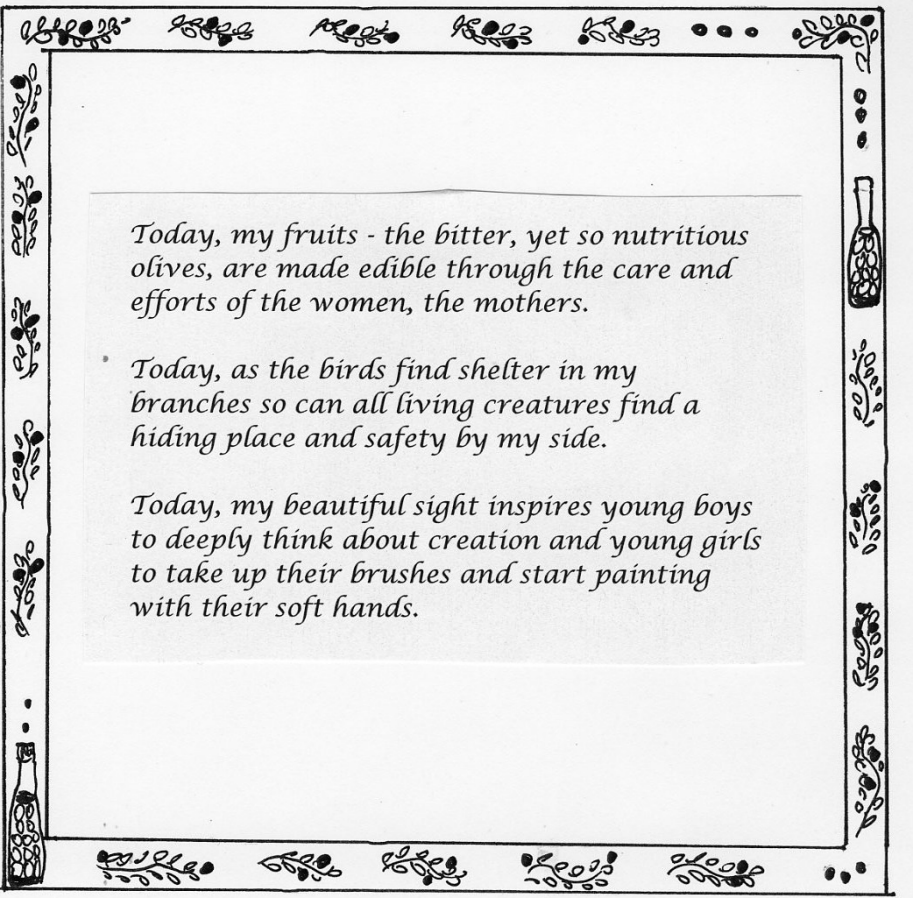
*Today, I make the cool shade for old women to sit under, to drink tea and speak about the memories of their youth.*

*Today, my trunk becomes a strong pillar for an orphan child to lean against and shed its tears.*

*Today, my high branches hold the ropes of a little boys swing, as he moves back and forth thinking and dreaming. I help him to make it through his days from morning to nightfall.*



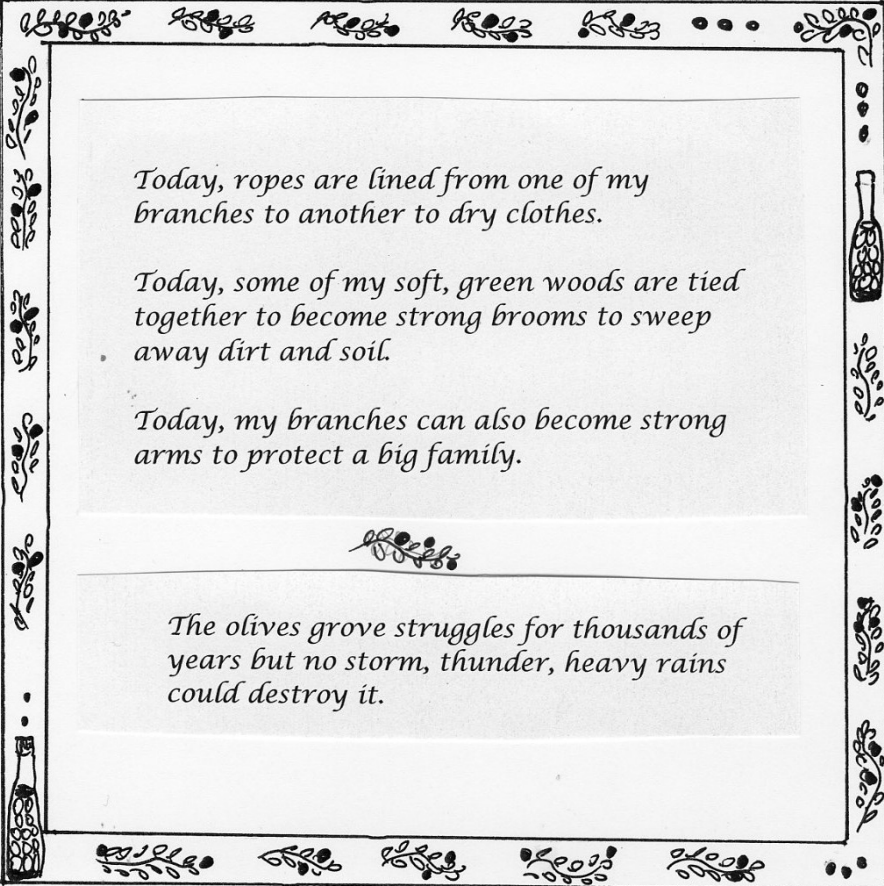




*Today, my fruits - the bitter, yet so nutritious  
olives, are made edible through the care and  
efforts of the women, the mothers.*

*• Today, as the birds find shelter in my  
branches so can all living creatures find a  
hiding place and safety by my side.*

*Today, my beautiful sight inspires young boys  
to deeply think about creation and young girls  
to take up their brushes and start painting  
with their soft hands.*



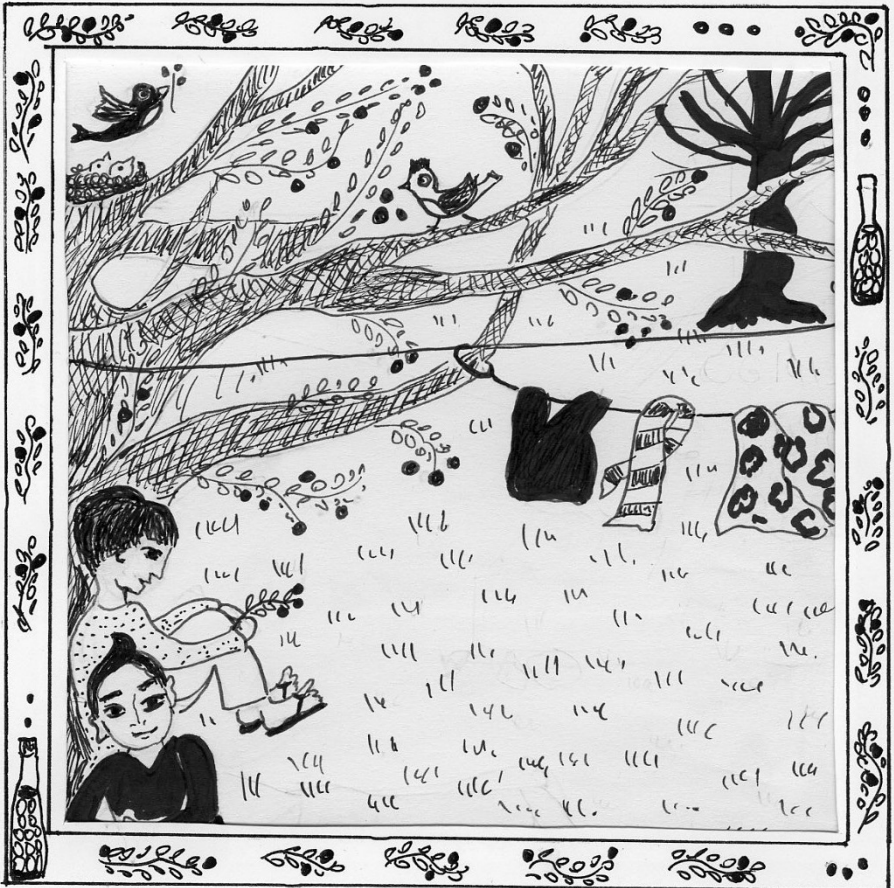
*Today, ropes are lined from one of my  
branches to another to dry clothes.*

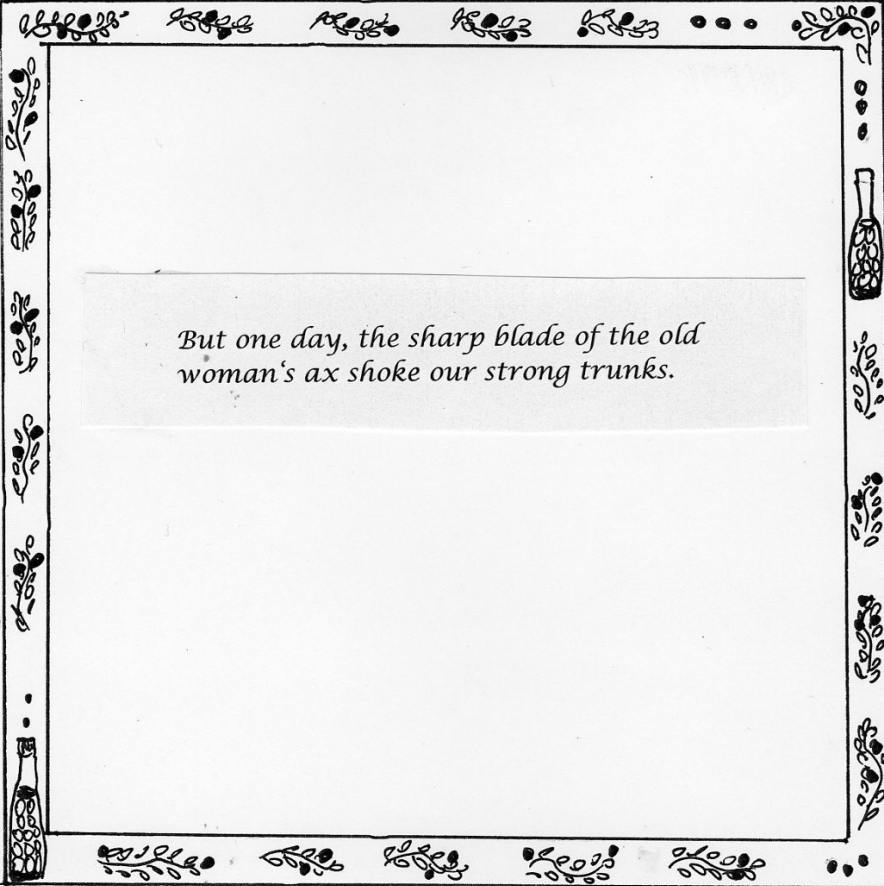
*Today, some of my soft, green woods are tied  
together to become strong brooms to sweep  
away dirt and soil.*

*Today, my branches can also become strong  
arms to protect a big family.*



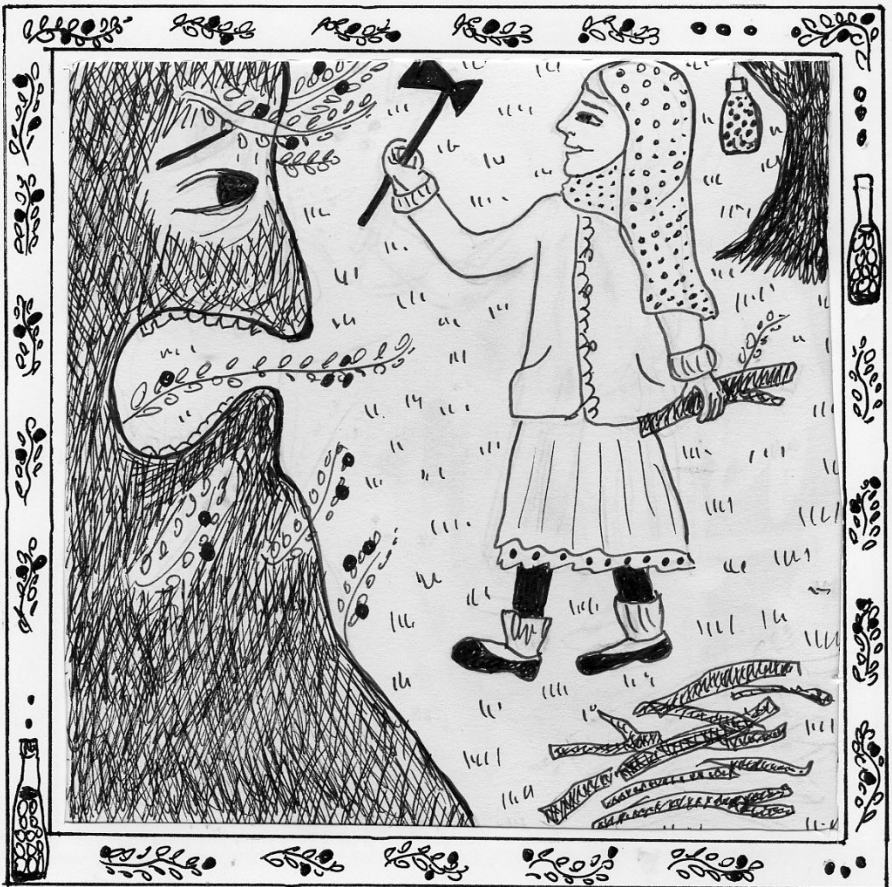
*The olives grove struggles for thousands of  
years but no storm, thunder, heavy rains  
could destroy it.*





*But one day, the sharp blade of the old  
woman's ax shoke our strong trunks.*



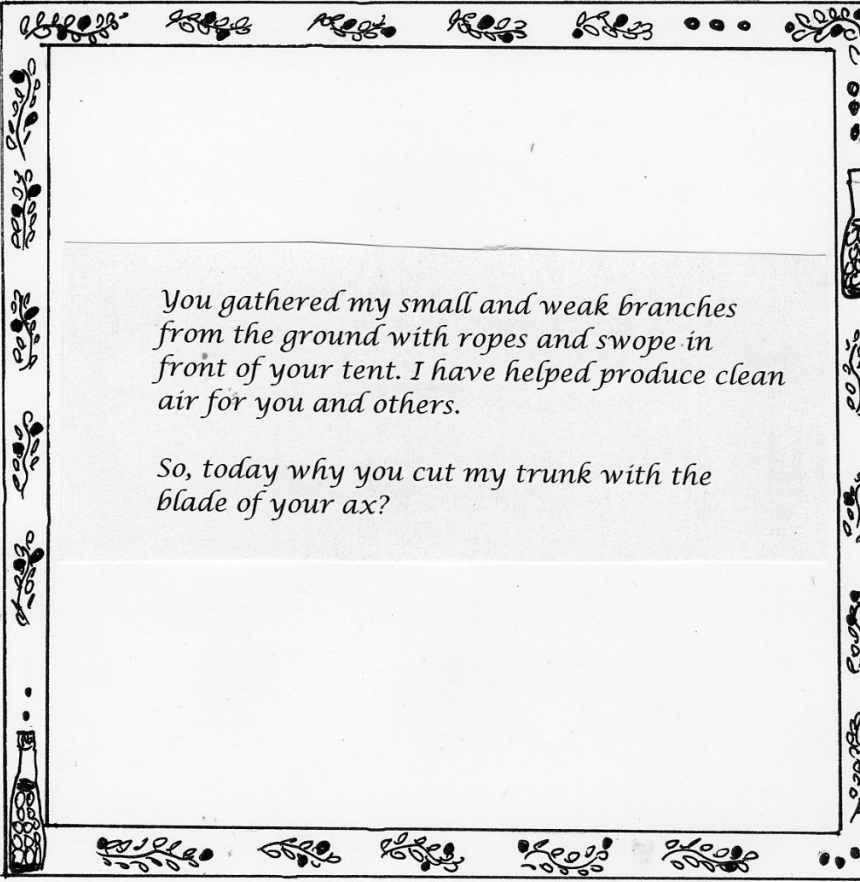




*Hello, old woman!*

*You sat with me, you have memories with me,  
you drank tea under my shade and trees like  
me, and spoke about memories of your youth  
to my high branches, you held the ropes of  
your grandchild's swing, you harvested my  
bitter olives one by one and worked for weeks  
on them and after many days effort you ate  
my olives with your children, you used my oil  
for your everyday pains and massaged it on  
your body to become healthy again.*





*You gathered my small and weak branches  
from the ground with ropes and swope in  
front of your tent. I have helped produce clean  
air for you and others.*

*So, today why you cut my trunk with the  
blade of your ax?*



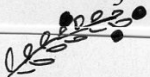


*Hello, dear and holy olive tree!*

*I swear that if I would choose a planet to  
worship, it would be you.*

*Yeah!*

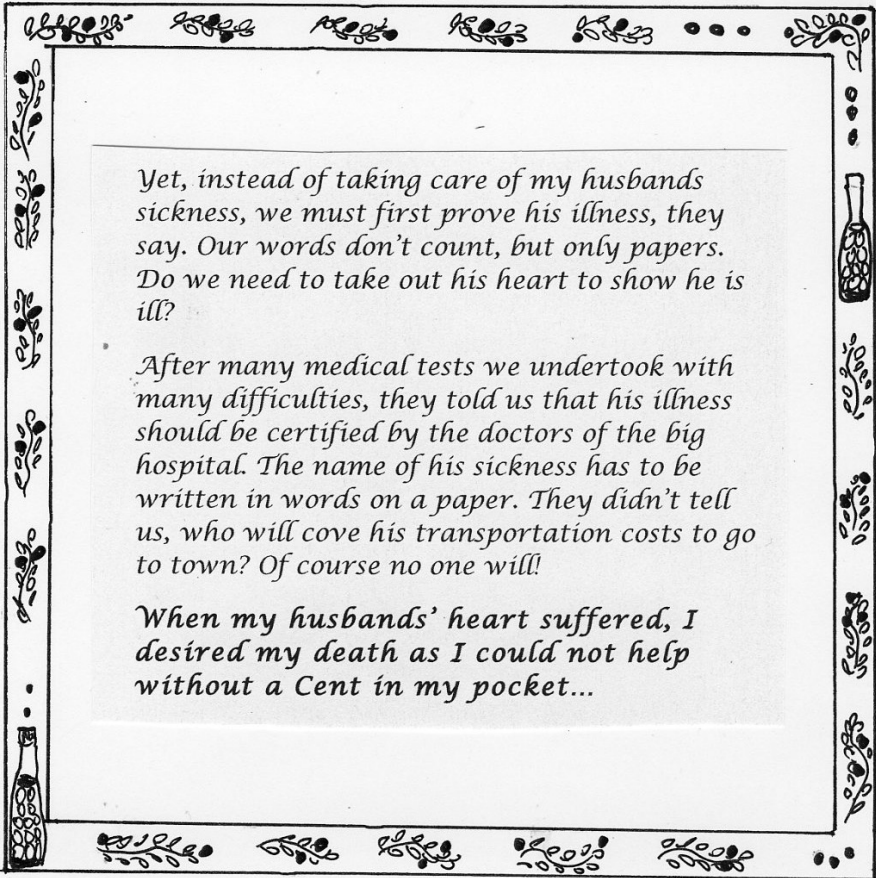
*I accept you, and I respect you even more.*



*Listen to me, to hear what disorders I got from  
this world!*

*Life has normally ups and downs, but my life  
has always been flat. I have been trapped in a  
deep valley.*

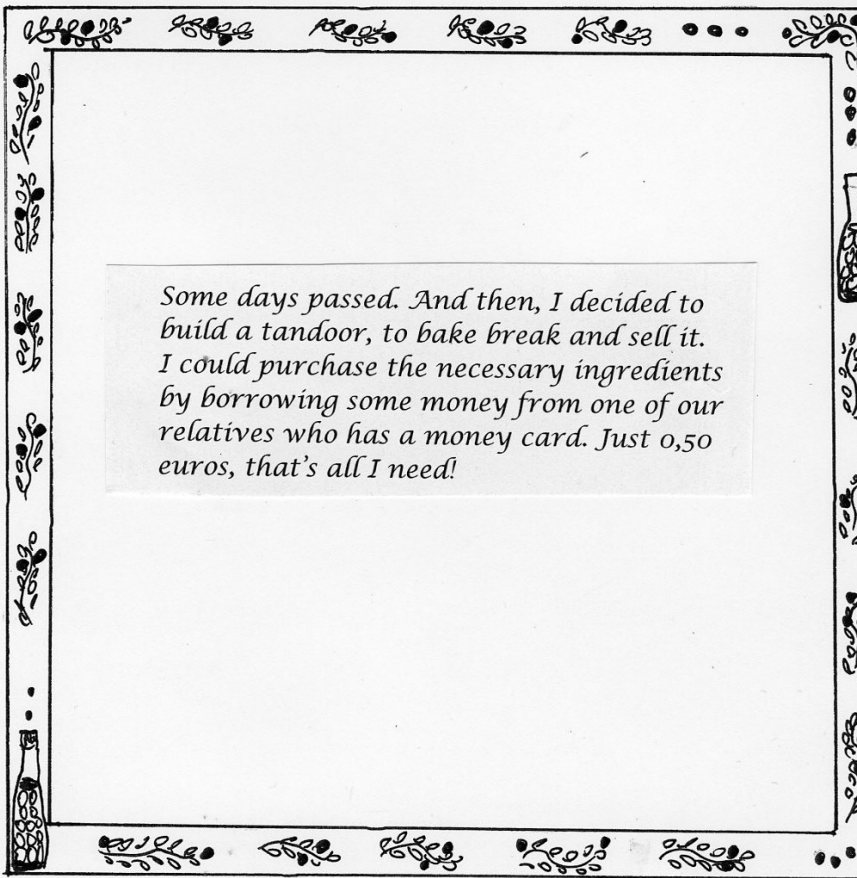
*I am getting close to my lives' end. At an age  
when every old woman needs to rest, I push  
my heart to work and earn money for my  
husband who suffers from heart problems and  
for our son.*



*Yet, instead of taking care of my husbands sickness, we must first prove his illness, they say. Our words don't count, but only papers. Do we need to take out his heart to show he is ill?*

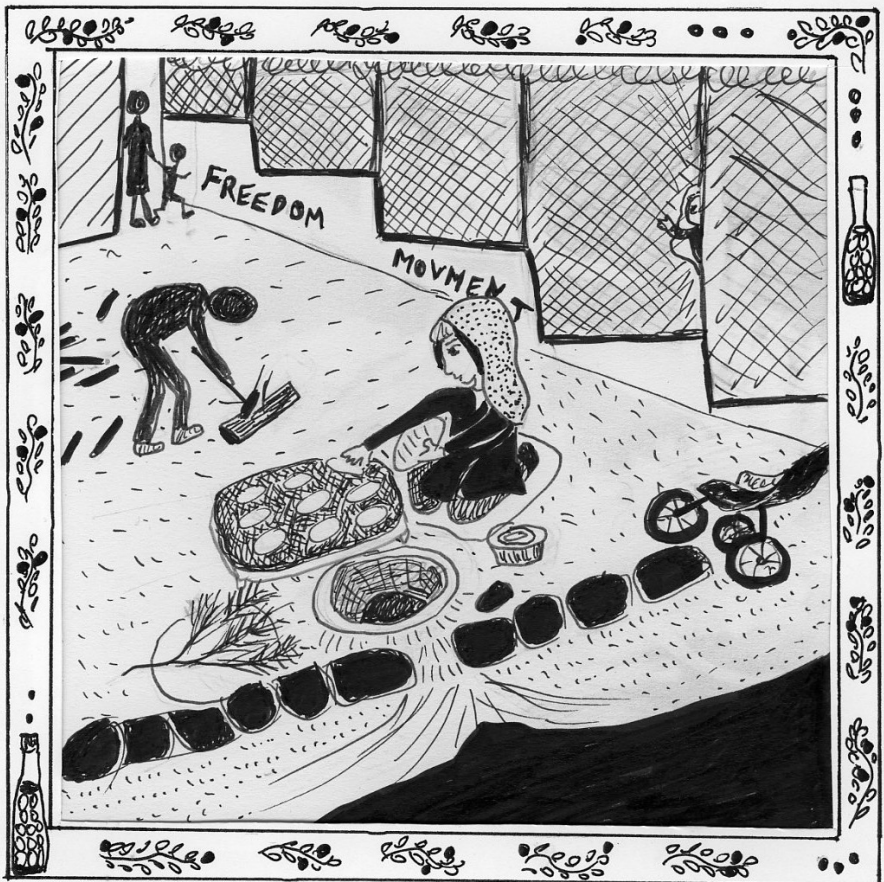
*After many medical tests we undertook with many difficulties, they told us that his illness should be certified by the doctors of the big hospital. The name of his sickness has to be written in words on a paper. They didn't tell us, who will cove his transportation costs to go to town? Of course no one will!*

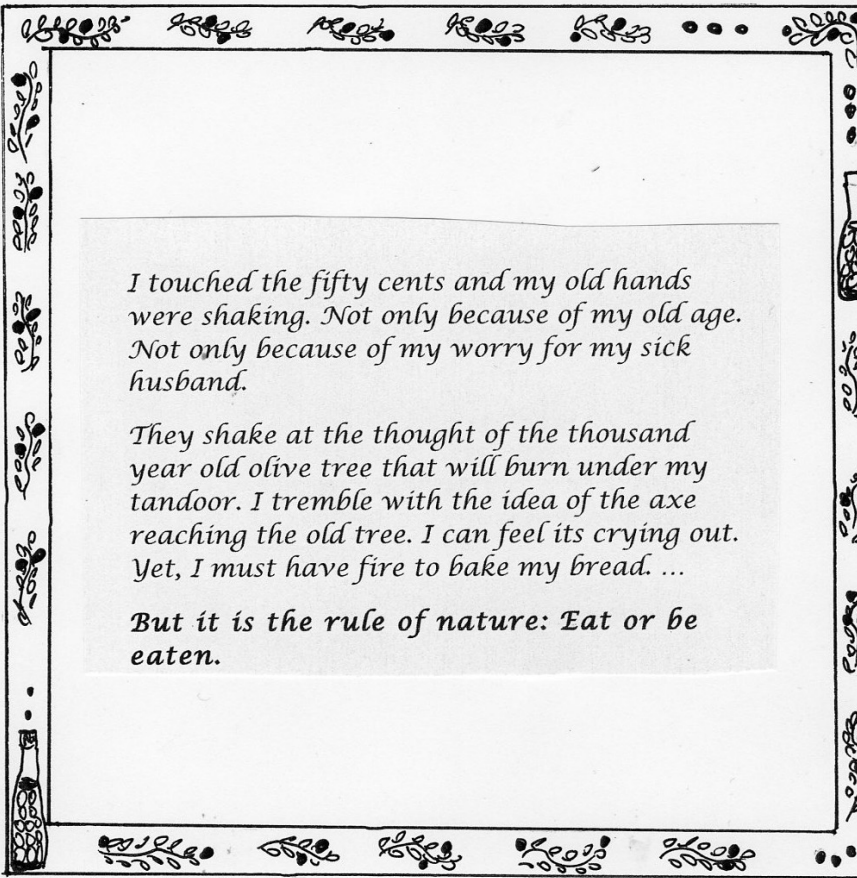
*When my husbands' heart suffered, I desired my death as I could not help without a Cent in my pocket...*



*Some days passed. And then, I decided to build a tandoor, to bake break and sell it. I could purchase the necessary ingredients by borrowing some money from one of our relatives who has a money card. Just 0,50 euros, that's all I need!*



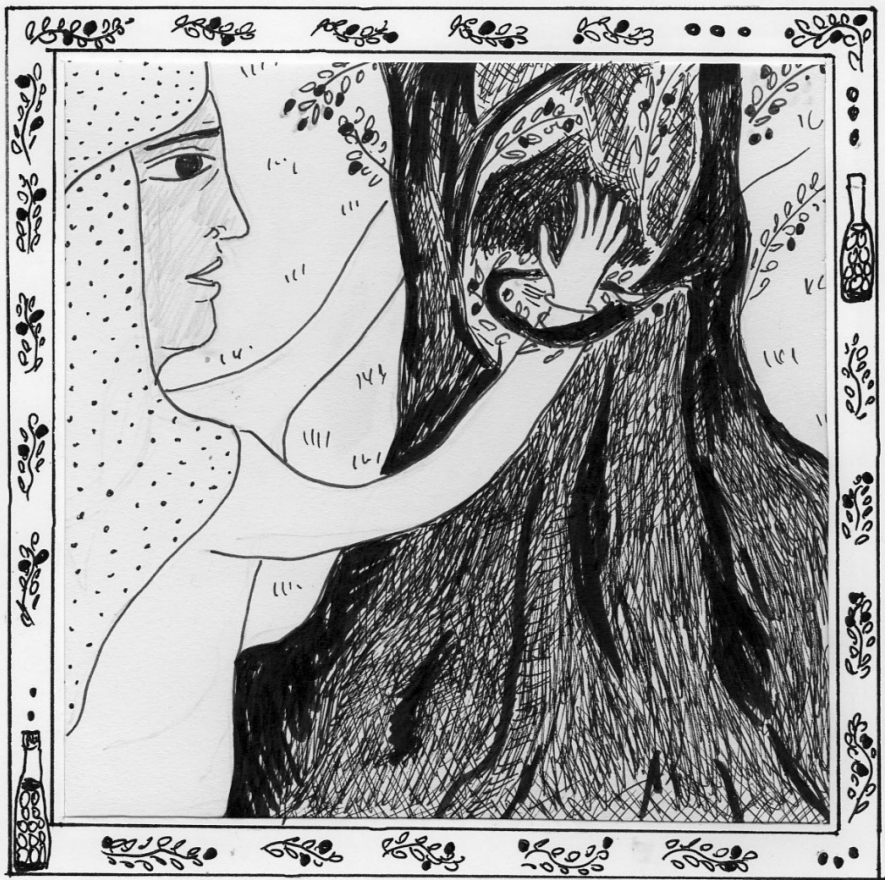


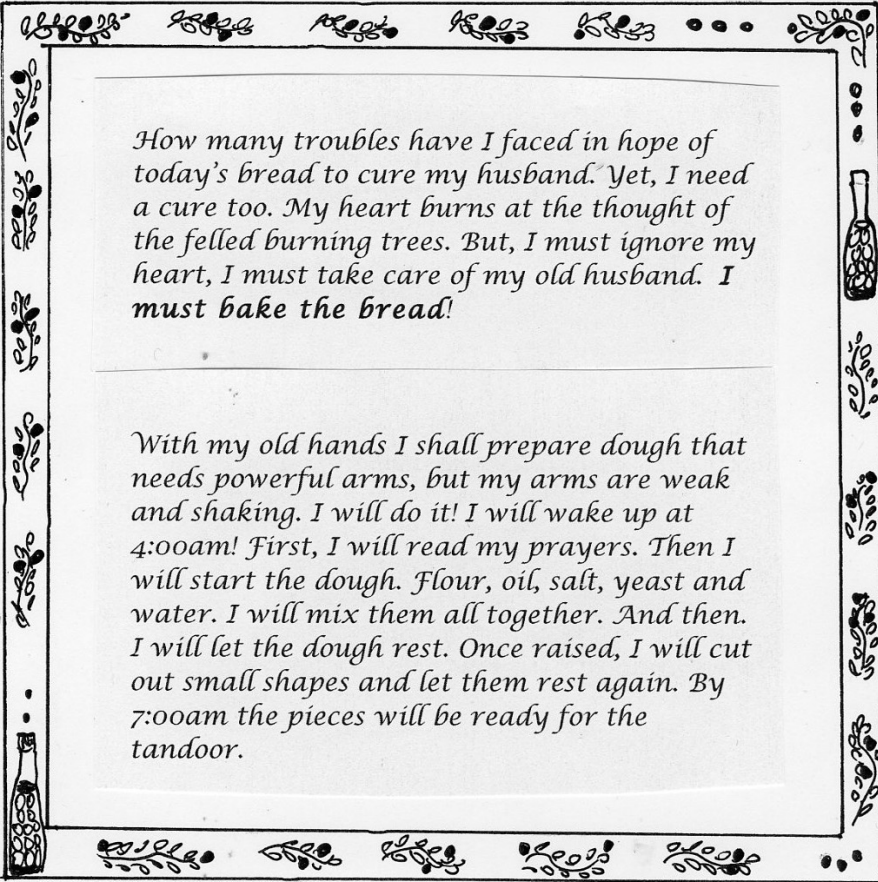


*I touched the fifty cents and my old hands  
were shaking. Not only because of my old age.  
Not only because of my worry for my sick  
husband.*

*They shake at the thought of the thousand  
year old olive tree that will burn under my  
tandoor. I tremble with the idea of the axe  
reaching the old tree. I can feel its crying out.  
Yet, I must have fire to bake my bread. ...*

*But it is the rule of nature: Eat or be  
eaten.*

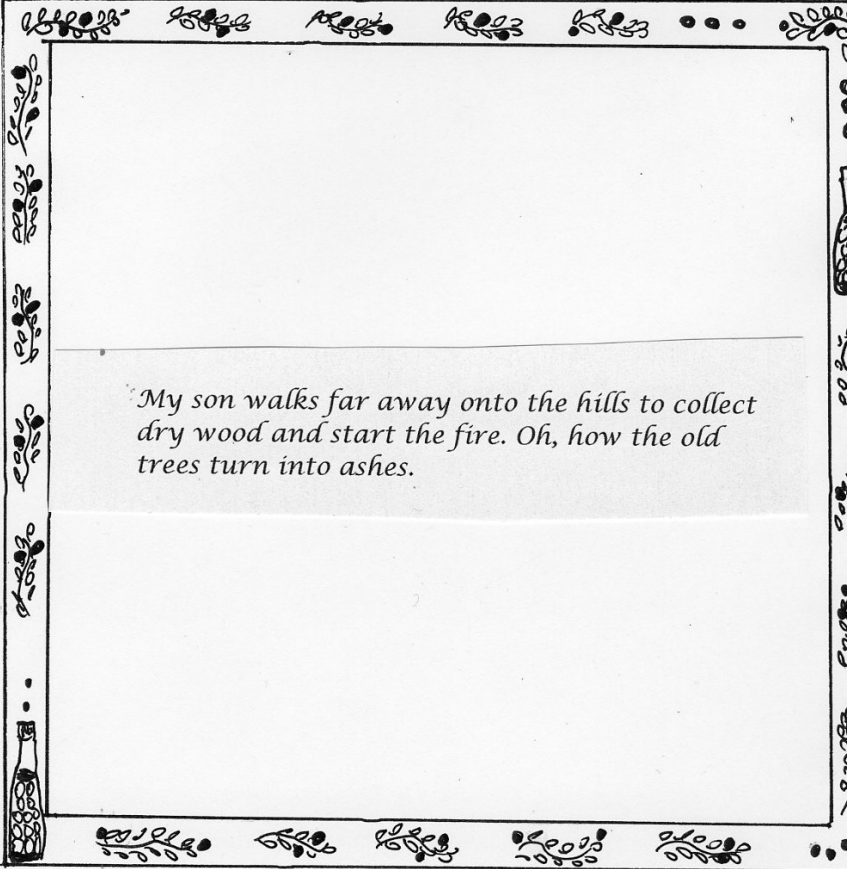




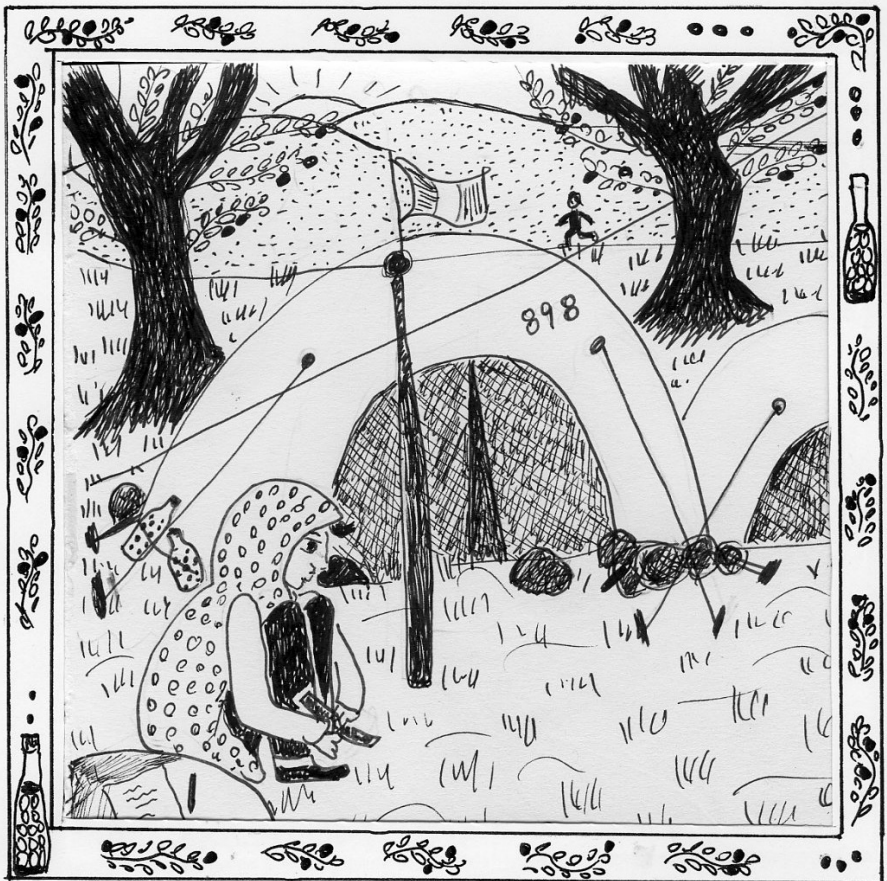
*How many troubles have I faced in hope of today's bread to cure my husband. Yet, I need a cure too. My heart burns at the thought of the felled burning trees. But, I must ignore my heart, I must take care of my old husband. I must bake the bread!*

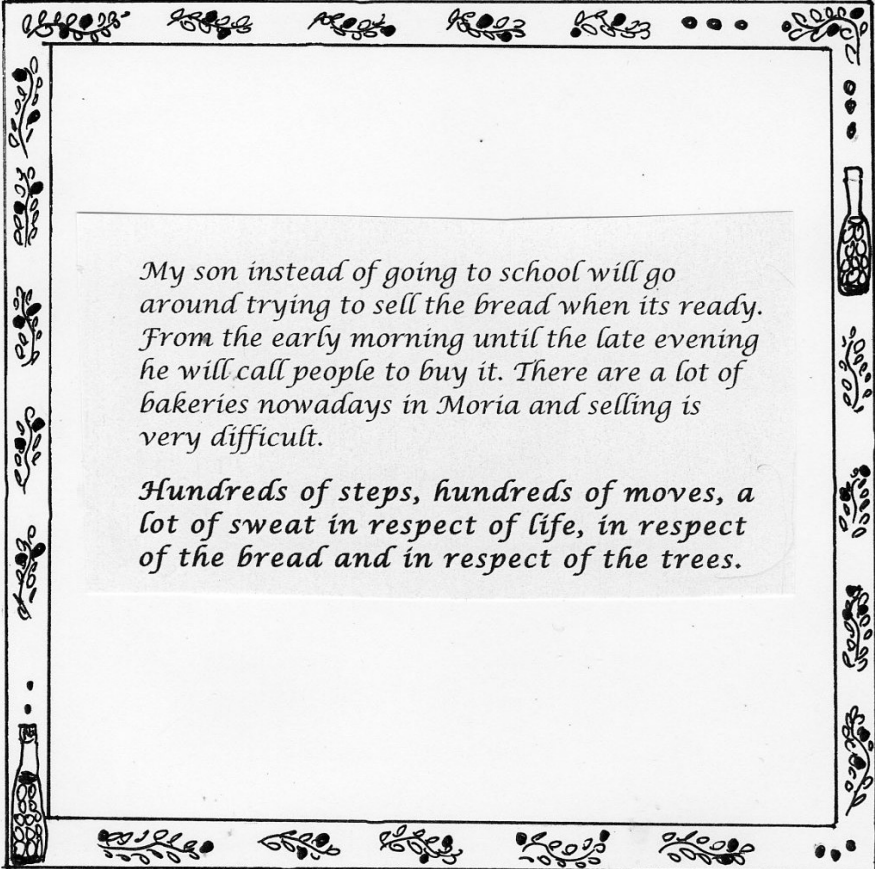
*With my old hands I shall prepare dough that needs powerful arms, but my arms are weak and shaking. I will do it! I will wake up at 4:00am! First, I will read my prayers. Then I will start the dough. Flour, oil, salt, yeast and water. I will mix them all together. And then. I will let the dough rest. Once raised, I will cut out small shapes and let them rest again. By 7:00am the pieces will be ready for the tandoor.*





*My son walks far away onto the hills to collect  
dry wood and start the fire. Oh, how the old  
trees turn into ashes.*





*My son instead of going to school will go around trying to sell the bread when its ready. From the early morning until the late evening he will call people to buy it. There are a lot of bakeries nowadays in Moria and selling is very difficult.*

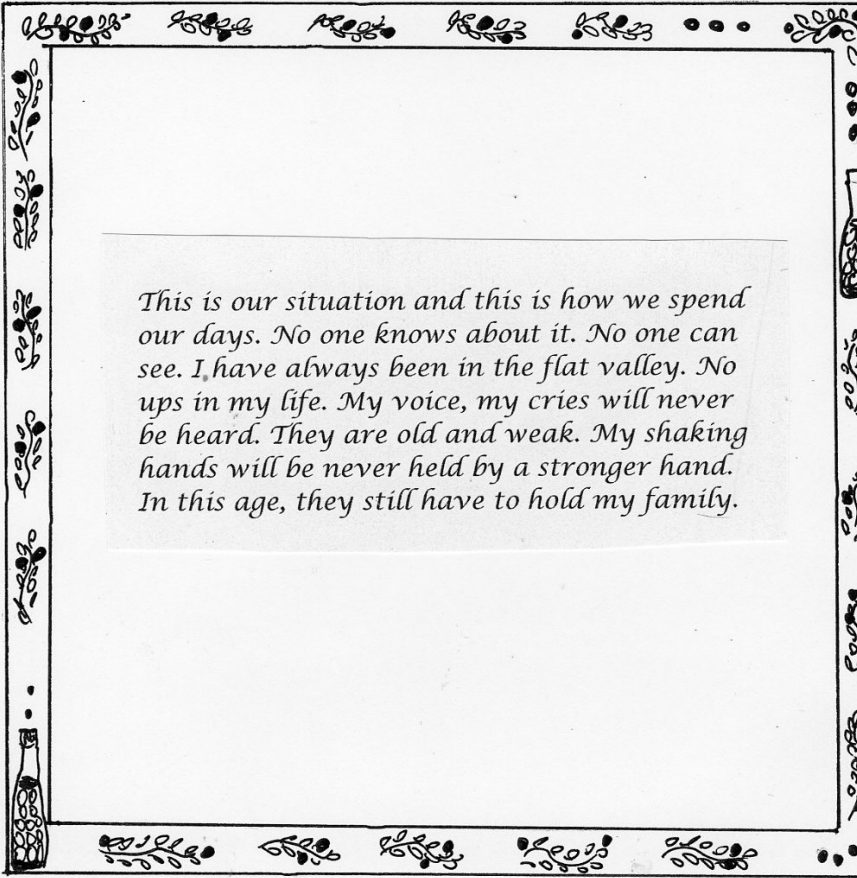
*Hundreds of steps, hundreds of moves, a lot of sweat in respect of life, in respect of the bread and in respect of the trees.*



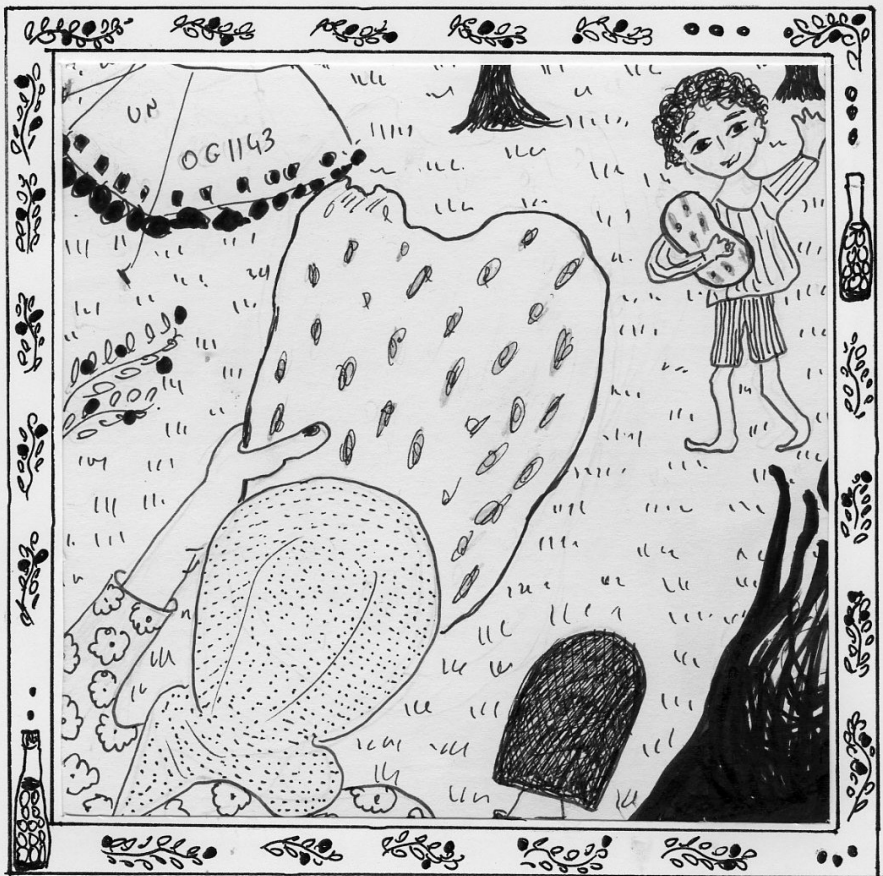


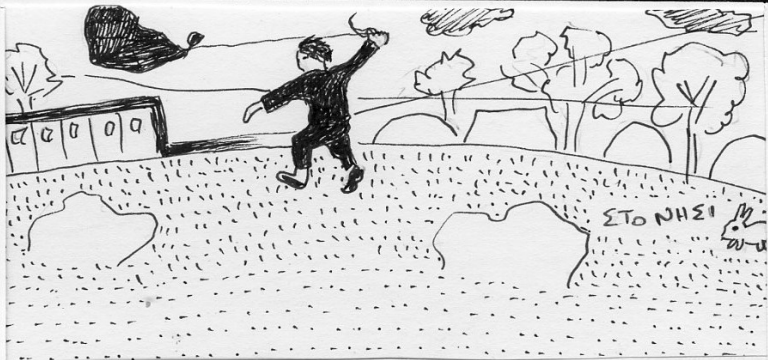
Βασιλόπουλος  
-ΚΑΙ ΤΟΥ ΠΟΥΛΙΟΥ ΤΟ ΓΑΛΑ!





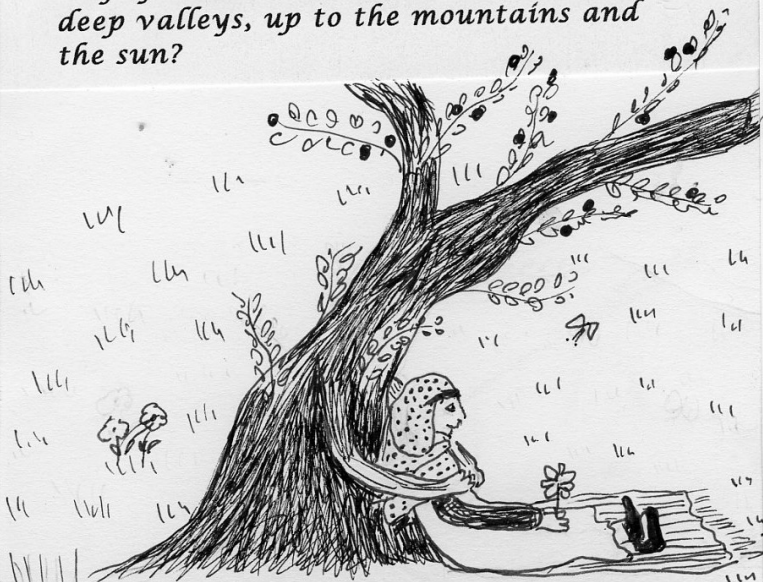
*This is our situation and this is how we spend our days. No one knows about it. No one can see. I have always been in the flat valley. No ups in my life. My voice, my cries will never be heard. They are old and weak. My shaking hands will be never held by a stronger hand. In this age, they still have to hold my family.*





*I want to be a friend of nature, not its enemy.  
I want to pass my last days with my family in  
rest, to have some comfort, to sit for days in  
the shadow of the trees, not to burn them. But  
life is very ruthless. Sometimes we people are  
obliged to do things we don't want to do it. See  
what life forces us to do...*

What if someone in this world would  
hold my hands, so I could become an  
ally of nature walking away from the  
deep valleys, up to the mountains and  
the sun?





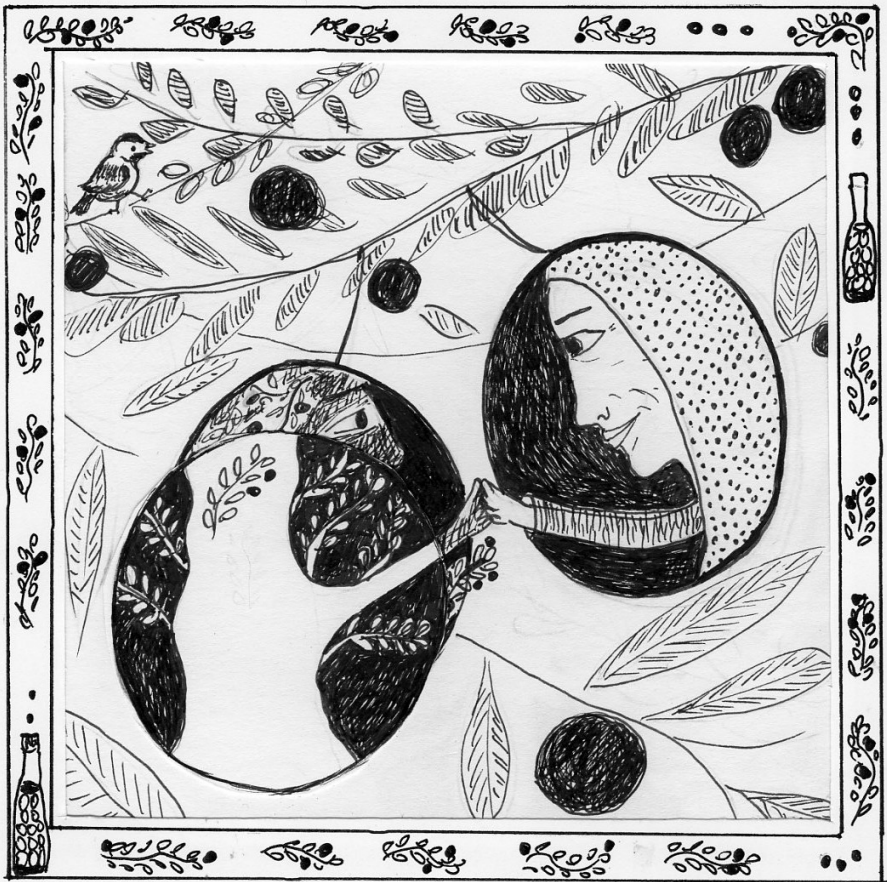
*Hey, old woman,*

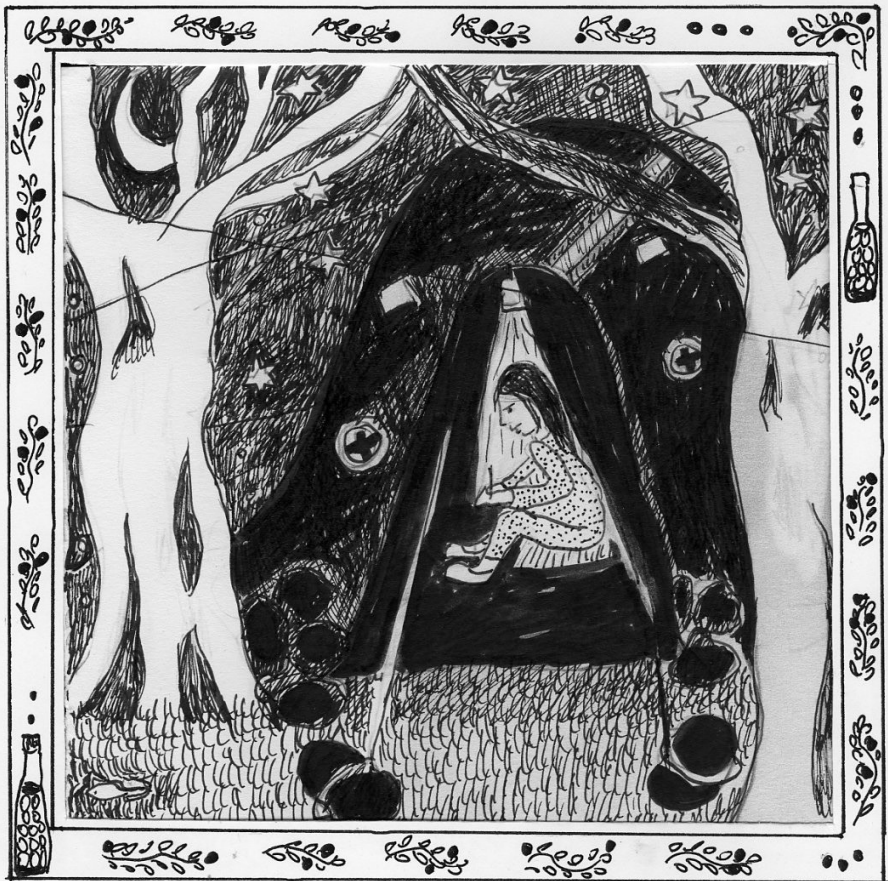
*I am not sad anymore, as I see you would not  
do what you are doing now, if you would have  
of those papers, that are the changed shape of  
my wood - called money.*

*Never forget: What would happen if there  
wouldn't be any olive tree in olive groves?*

*Parwana Amiri*

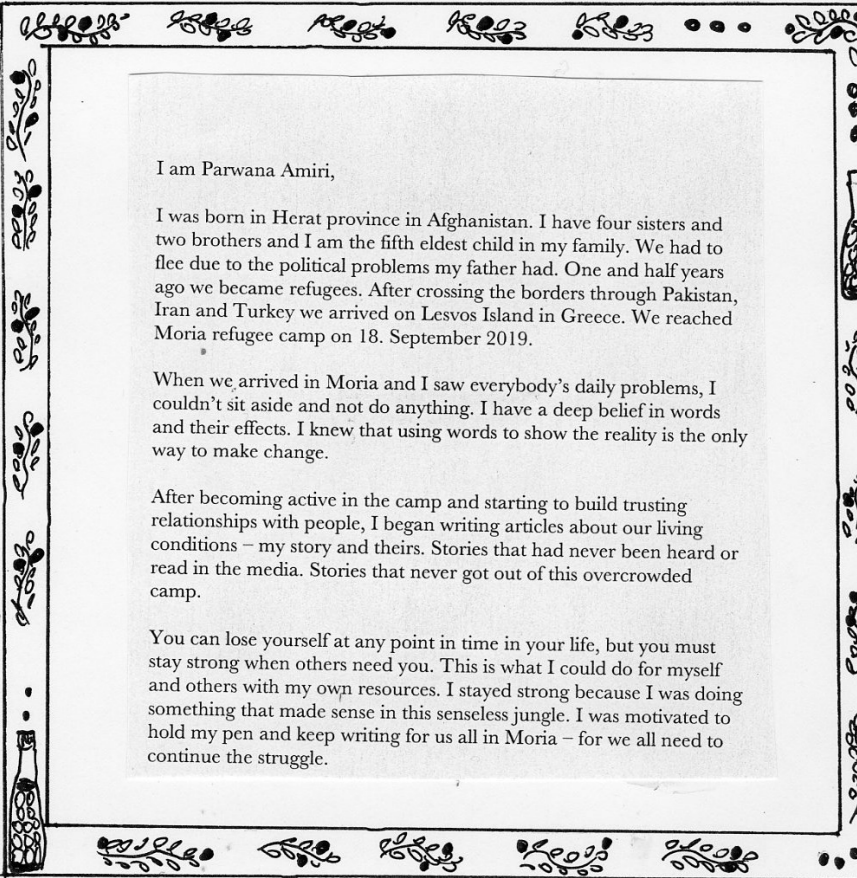
*17/11/2019*











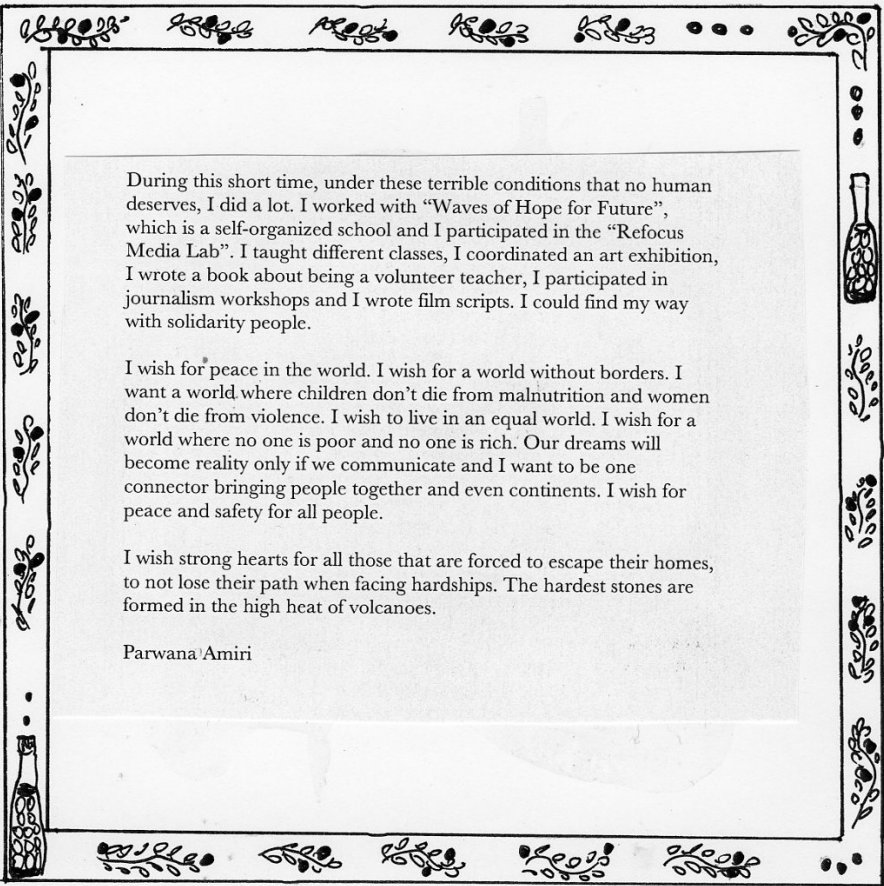
I am Parwana Amiri,

I was born in Herat province in Afghanistan. I have four sisters and two brothers and I am the fifth eldest child in my family. We had to flee due to the political problems my father had. One and half years ago we became refugees. After crossing the borders through Pakistan, Iran and Turkey we arrived on Lesvos Island in Greece. We reached Moria refugee camp on 18. September 2019.

When we arrived in Moria and I saw everybody's daily problems, I couldn't sit aside and not do anything. I have a deep belief in words and their effects. I knew that using words to show the reality is the only way to make change.

After becoming active in the camp and starting to build trusting relationships with people, I began writing articles about our living conditions – my story and theirs. Stories that had never been heard or read in the media. Stories that never got out of this overcrowded camp.

You can lose yourself at any point in time in your life, but you must stay strong when others need you. This is what I could do for myself and others with my own resources. I stayed strong because I was doing something that made sense in this senseless jungle. I was motivated to hold my pen and keep writing for us all in Moria – for we all need to continue the struggle.

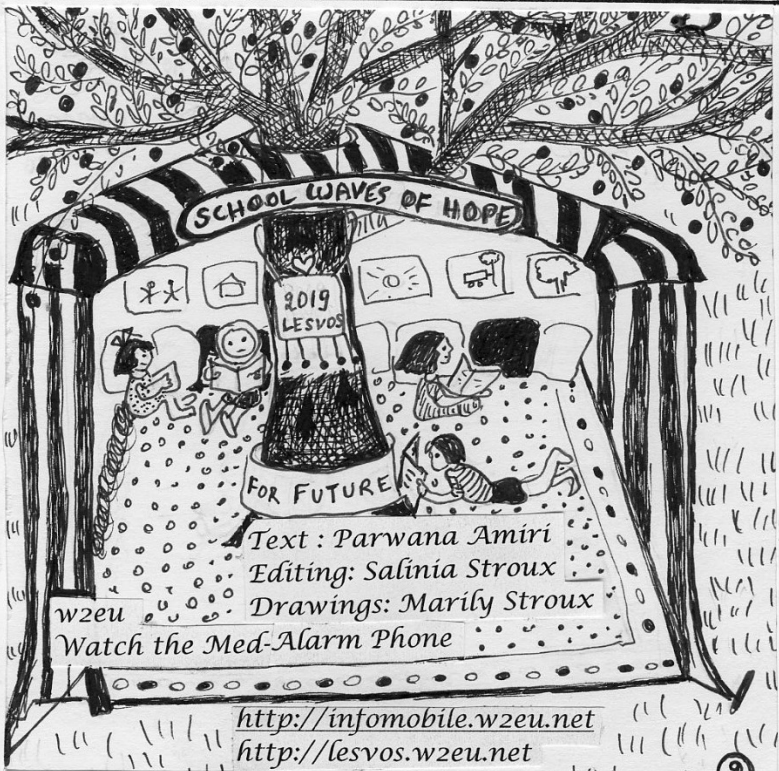


During this short time, under these terrible conditions that no human deserves, I did a lot. I worked with "Waves of Hope for Future", which is a self-organized school and I participated in the "Refocus Media Lab". I taught different classes, I coordinated an art exhibition, I wrote a book about being a volunteer teacher, I participated in journalism workshops and I wrote film scripts. I could find my way with solidarity people.

I wish for peace in the world. I wish for a world without borders. I want a world where children don't die from malnutrition and women don't die from violence. I wish to live in an equal world. I wish for a world where no one is poor and no one is rich. Our dreams will become reality only if we communicate and I want to be one connector bringing people together and even continents. I wish for peace and safety for all people.

I wish strong hearts for all those that are forced to escape their homes, to not lose their path when facing hardships. The hardest stones are formed in the high heat of volcanoes.

Parwana Amiri



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Watch the Med-Alarm Phone

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Drawings: Marily Stroux

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