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Web content

evangelia tsati **the brain as a sink**



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To my parents, George and Renée

*To all the people who fight MS
and still don't know that there might be help out there*

*To Carol, Maren, Flo, Margreet, Joan, Jeff, Sharon, Helena,
Matt, Janet, Sandra, Marc, Mary, Dexter, Anna, Kerri, Bill,
Karen, Lori and many more CCSVI MSketeers who won't
stop until everyone has a chance all over the world*

legal disclaimer

This book is not intended as a substitute for the medical advice of physicians. The reader should regularly consult a physician in matters relating to his/her health, and particularly with respect to any symptoms that may require diagnosis or medical attention.

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This book describes a procedure (balloon angioplasty) done to a patient suffering from multiple sclerosis. Although recent studies have demonstrated the safety of the procedure, published results are contradictory about the possible benefits or efficacy of angioplasty for patients with multiple sclerosis or other neurological diseases. Larger studies are needed. Adverse events related to anti-coagulation therapy associated with the procedure have been reported to the FDA. This included one death and one stroke after

CCSVI angioplasty according to the May 10, 2012 Safety Communication issued by the FDA. It warned patients of these risks, and cautioned physicians to obtain informed consent prior to any treatment. It also warned investigators to obtain IDE exemption before conducting clinical trials. Specifically, FDA recommends conversations with one's physician about the symptoms of possible complications so they may be treated in a timely manner. Informed consent is recommended so patients understand any possible risks, the likelihood of benefits, and what the signs are of any complications that might present following any treatment.

The FDA statement is archived online: <http://wayback.archive-it.org/7993/20161022180034/http://www.fda.gov/MedicalDevices/Safety/AlertsandNotices/ucm303318.htm>.

Some names and identifying details have been changed to protect the privacy of individuals.

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preface

Many hundreds of years ago it was common for patients to describe in their own personal diary, as coldly as possible, the symptoms of undiagnosed or unknown diseases. An emblematic case is that of Augusto d'Este, who, through his symptoms, described the natural history of multiple sclerosis decades before the formal discovery of the pathology on behalf of the great Charcot. The book by Dr. Evangelia Tsati is a modern autopathography that has the great value of being written by a doctor who faithfully tells what happens to Nia. Nia is really in the life her best friend, also a doctor, specialist in cardiology. She is suffering from multiple sclerosis. Nia underwent an angioplasty treatment of the extracranial veins due to the simultaneous presence of chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency (CCSVI). The latter is a medical condition where the presence of abnormal jugular valves, intraluminal obstacles, external compression of the vein, or their combination, significantly affect the venous flow from the brain. Now medical science has solid data regarding the association between CCSVI and multiple sclerosis. To the contrary, the data matching the treatment of CCSVI by balloon angioplasty with the clinical progress of multiple sclerosis are still of weak evidence. Despite this, Evangelia Tsati's diary remains an important and balanced educational contribution for patients suffering

from abnormal flow of the extracranial veins, as a condition that increases the inflammatory potential at the level of the brain. CCSVI may affect the transmural pressure of the parenchymal veins so reducing the efficiency of the G-lymphatic drainage of macromolecules and fluids. In addition, the impairment of venous outflow finally impacts also the perfusion of the brain. Many studies and research are still needed to understand more deeply the relationship between extracranial veins and multiple sclerosis. However, the multiplicity of anecdotal cases with medical interpretation indicating some advantages from the restoration of extracranial drainage must serve as a further stimulus. We are aware of the need to deepen a field where medical knowledge is very poor, but can, on the other hand, allow a significant progress in medical science.

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chapter one | the book

«The book», her mother told her. «Always remember the book», she said.

«The book». She had been repeating this to Nia ever since she was a little kid. She didn't care if there were people around, friends or relatives, if they were in the middle of Christmas dinner or if it was Nia's birthday party.

At least, nobody else could understand what «the book» was about.

It was their secret code, a kind of religious chant, an eternal mantra meaning I don't approve of the way you stand, of the way you walk. «Stand up straight! Sit up straight!», That's what she was saying. And she was right: Nia was always slouching, she walked like a boy. Her shoulders drooped; she took wide, ungainly steps. Not at all ladylike.

«You know, Nia, if you practice walking with a book on your head, one day you'll be able to walk on high heels like a real girl».

Nia's mother was holding a thick volume of Britannica. This was the perfect book. Britannica is possibly the shortest route to graceful walking.

And it did help her. She walks more gracefully now; she stands with her shoulders back.

Recently even her mother had to admit it: «Now your posture is great!».

But, it wasn't because she walked with a book on her head.

Nia had put some books *inside* her head instead.

chapter two | how to become a doctor

Nia's childhood was simple, although she was not an ordinary child. Her unusual behavior was a constant source of worry for her mother. She often didn't want to go to the beach and have fun with other kids. She didn't want to play out in the yard when the weather was good and school was out for the summer. Sometimes she didn't want to play at all. She preferred to stay at home and read her beloved Greek mythology books, do jigsaw puzzles or watch her favorite kid series.

It wasn't that she was a loner, though she always looked unhappy and aloof. Indeed she looked sad most of the time, but there seemed to be no particular reason for her sadness.

She often invited her friends to her house, so that she could show them the magic tricks she had learned from her new magician's book or so, that they could help her with some scientific experiments.

Both activities usually ended up in disaster.

«Why can't you go out and play hide-and-seek or ride your bicycle like all your friends do?», her mother complained, especially when a magic trick or a chemical acid had just ruined their couch or a carpet.

«Will I be punished now, mom?», Nia always asked. She felt guilty because she didn't intend to do any harm; she was just a bit clumsy.

Her mother didn't reply. The problem was: how can you punish a child who doesn't like to go out? Normally you punish children by making them stay inside. Her mom just looked at her with disapproval, shaking her head, without speaking. This was worse than any punishment for the little girl.

Deep down, Nia longed to be like all the other children, but she was different somehow. She was very stubborn, she always wanted to do everything her way and so she would fly off the handle, if they didn't let her or if things didn't turn out exactly the way they were supposed to. She was hotheaded. In fact her head had at least two distinctive conditions: she was hotheaded, but also, very often, lightheaded.

It was all about her head.

It was July and they were at the seashore. Kids, parents, cousins, friends, aunts and uncles, one happy crowd.

Nia had gone swimming and now she was sitting in the sun, making sandcastles. And then, suddenly, she was not well. She became dizzy, disoriented, she felt faint.

Her parents took her to a pediatrician. He examined her, ordered some tests and made some notes. Then he looked at her through his thick glasses that made his small eyes look even smaller.

«I think you stayed in the sun too long, little girl, and now you are suffering from sun sickness and heat exhaustion».

Does this doctor expect to be paid for this extremely stupid diagnosis? Nia thought.

His words made her mad: she *had* been playing in the sun, so what else could it be? All he had done was put the words sun and sick together! Not such a big deal, child's play, really. She could have diagnosed herself with sun sickness, she didn't need his help.

«It isn't the first time this has happened, doctor», her mother said, «My daughter had the same symptoms last summer».

The doctor made no reply to this comment. He didn't even seem to hear it.

I will never become a doctor, Nia thought. Doctors are pathetic, imbecile creatures.

She was 6 years old.

But people change.

Quite unexpectedly, Nia decided to become a medical doctor. She had chosen to study Classics at the university, but, during a memorable day in her early twenties, something happened that caused her to take a sharp turn towards Medicine. And she did it in response to something her father had said, which she considered a challenge...

Dad was very fond of her; she was his super special girl. He kissed her only a couple of times a year, but he had this comforting and gentle expression of approval, whenever he looked at her. Sometimes, even now that he's gone, Nia still gets the feeling that he is looking at her like that, when she accomplishes something he would have been proud of.

This is how everything changed: somebody committed suicide in her hometown. He shot himself a little further down the street from her house. Nia and her mother heard the sudden gunshot and saw people running to the scene. Then the ambulance arrived, along with the police cars. «He shot himself!», people were saying.

«I'm going down», her mother said.

No one could remember the last time someone had taken their own life in this peaceful, happy town, Thiva. Nia's mother was overwhelmed but ready to be of assistance in any way she could.

Nia begged her mom not to leave; she was too shocked to be by herself right now. So her mom stayed but went out on the balcony, so she could watch what was going on.

Then, a few minutes later, her dad came home. He was on his way back from work; he had had to walk past the scene of the accident in order to reach their house. He was definitely not the sort of person that could help, in such circumstances. Not because he wasn't kind – on the contrary he was a very caring person. However, he was well known for his extreme fear of blood, diseases and hospitals and now he almost fainted as he tried to talk.

Her mom asked all sorts of questions, she wanted details: how old was the victim, why had he done it, was somebody else involved, had he been drinking – he used to drink wine at the tavern in the corner –, and if so, how many glasses had he had, was his wife cheating on him?

Dad tried to reply but for a few seconds he couldn't utter a single word. Then everything came out of his mouth all at once:

«He shot himself; there was blood all over the road... There were tiny fragments of bone and bits of flesh splashed on the pavement! I think I saw a piece of his brains! Two police cars arrived and the paramedics too. The police were questioning everyone in the building. His wife was in a state of shock, she couldn't speak and she could barely stand on her feet and then...».

He was trying to fight his own fear by talking nonstop.

Nia just stared at him, horrified. «Please, dad, stop! Stop! I don't want to hear all this!».

And then suddenly she fainted. It was inevitable; she just couldn't stand the sight of blood or even hears anything about it.

The medical term is blood phobia.

Her mother, the family nurse, came to the rescue: some slaps on the cheeks did the job. It's a kind of first aid and resuscitation technique known to all the mothers in this world.

When it was all over, Nia's father stood beside her, appalled. He held her hand and told her calmly: «You know what; I don't think you could *ever* become a doctor».

That's all he said.

And that was the moment when she decided to become a doctor.

She was 22 years old.

chapter three | thebes, a place of tragedy and punishment

Thebes, a kingdom, a city state in Ancient Greece. Today's Thiva. Nia's hometown.

The city was founded by Cadmus, who was also its first King. He created the Thebans by sowing the teeth of a serpent in the ground. Of course he had slaughtered this giant serpent first; he was not that good a dentist. He was also the one who introduced the alphabet to the Greeks.

Nia's family house is built on the highest hill of Thebes. This place was almost certainly the center of the ancient citadel. It's possible that her house is sitting on top of King Cadmus' chambers.

Her parents named her Harmonia, a wonderful name indeed, which means harmony in Greek, after the first Olympian goddess who married a mortal. This mortal was King Cadmus of Thebes himself. The other gods attended the wedding but decided to punish her for this misalliance. So the goddess Athena gave her a fatal necklace as a wedding present and because of it all her descendants were cursed.

Because Nia was named after her, she often had the feeling that in some mysterious way, she was a part of this ill-fated chain of disasters that had befallen her hometown. This chain was long and dreadful.

Let's have a look:

Her brother Heracles was also named after an ancient hero, born in Thebes, but this name was well known and admired by the Greeks, although some say that it was unlucky, since the superhero came to such a horrible end.

Heracles (or Hercules) was the strongest man in Greek mythology. He was the son of the god Zeus and a mortal, Alcmena, and as a result the goddess Hera, the wife of Zeus, hated him. He completed twelve harsh labors, he fought in the Trojan War, he became very famous, he was (and still is) considered as some kind of prehistoric superman. Heracles must have been really busy. Unfortunately, he killed a centaur called Nessus with a poisoned arrow when he saw him trying to rape his wife, Dianeira. As he lay dying, Nessus gave Dianeira his tunic, smeared with his blood, which had been poisoned by Heracles' arrow, and told her, that if she persuaded her husband to wear it, he would never be unfaithful to her. Silly Dianeira believed the centaur and so presented Heracles with the tunic.

As soon as he put it on, Heracles suffered such unbearable pain that, helped by his friends he set up a pyre, lay upon it and died in the flames. Never trust a half horse half human creature. Especially one with a tunic.

So Hercules was punished because of Hera's jealousy.

Punishment befell yet another Theban: Oedipus. This one became famous because of the complex named after him, though the word complex was not invented until long after his death. What we know is that it all began when he fell in love with an older woman.

As fate would have it, this woman proved to be his mother.

Nia often ponders over Oedipus' story and the Theban Cycle.