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Something Will Happen, You'll See



Synopsis

Ikonomou's stories convey the plight of those worst affected by the Greek economic crisis--laid-off workers, hungry children. In the urban sprawl between Athens and Piraeus, the narratives roam restlessly through the impoverished working-class quarters located off the tourist routes. Everyone is dreaming of escape: to the mountains, to an island or a palatial estate, into a Hans Christian Andersen story world. What are they fleeing? The old woes--gossip, watchful neighbors, the oppression and indifference of the rich--now made infinitely worse. In Ikonomou's concrete streets, the rain is always looming, the politicians' slogans are ignored, and the police remain a violent, threatening presence offstage. Yet even at the edge of destitution, his men and women act for themselves, trying to preserve what little solidarity remains in a deeply atomized society, and in one way or another finding their own voice. There is faith here, deep faith--though little or none in those who habitually ask for it.

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Customer Reviews

"In Ikonomou's timely novel, the human fallout of the Greek economic recession is writ large. . . . Concerned with the bottom rungs of the social ladder, [these] pieces . . . cover an astonishing range. . . . These stories add up to a panorama of the human spirit under siege and a searing indictment of the failures to reform the Greek infrastructure." --Publishers Weekly "[Ikonomou's] characters might feel like they are suffering private tragedies, but SOMETHING WILL HAPPEN repeatedly calls our attention to the subtle human connections that

remain. . . . Karen Emmerich deserves special praise for her translation of Ikonomou's charming, vernacular, and energetic prose." *Bookforum* "This collection is a kind of *Dubliners* for the postcrisis generation and a lament for the marginalized inhabitants of neighborhoods around the shipping district of Piraeus. Ikonomou succeeds at immersing the reader, through a panoramic stream-of-consciousness method of narration, into fifteen lives where "pain and fear come later, when the wound cools[...]" Ikonomou is an author of substance as much as style, and *Something Will Happen, You'll See* is a stunning, if somewhat bleak, sketch of a country in flux." *World Literature Today* "Ikonomou's *Something Will Happen, You'll See* depicts many lives, of all ages, that have been blighted by financial hardship. The book stands with Rafael Chirbes's *On the Edge* as one of the remarkable literary interpretations of the recent global downturn." *Barnes & Noble Review* "Stylistically and thematically reminiscent of Raymond Carver. . . . Set in contemporary Greece, these stories focus on characters struggling to maintain their dignity, relationships and self-worth in a failing society." *Shelf Awareness* "These stories are pitch-perfect, with sullen anger, wit, sharp humor, and tragicomedy captured in sharply crafted scenes that linger in the memory... Karen Emmerich is quickly establishing herself as one of our finest contemporary translators from Greek to English... If someone is interested in understanding the very human face of Greece's working class, and discovering a very talented and unsettling writer, I'd say buy this book." *Stephanos Papadopoulos in Los Angeles Review of Books* "Something Will Happen, You'll See" presents a vision that deftly combines economic and existential crisis, showing how the two are never far apart... Ikonomou's writing brilliantly and sensitively conveys hope, fear, and everything in between. He realizes that the mind plays games when faced with something it can't bear to see. Ikonomou forces it, and us, to look. These stories give back to the world what is lost in the TV rendition of a country's suffering. These fictions are the news, written atomically, or cellularly, character by character, progressing one gesture and emotional tick at a time. The loss of the individuals behind any news story is a crime. Ikonomou undoes the crime by bodying forth the tragedy." *Anne Germanacos in Los Angeles Review of Books* "In sixteen inter-connected short stories, Christos Ikonomou gives us a mural of the lives of people struggling in the working-class neighbourhoods on the outskirts of Athens, the fishing docks and boatyards near the port... Karen Emmerich's outstanding translation makes sure not only that the lyrical and the rough both survive in the English version, but that the austere and the jumbled, elements which form the Modern Greek language, are

both present "This is one of those rare renditions where nothing is lost." • The Times Literary Supplement "This poignant collection of short stories masterfully explores the soul of the Greek people amidst economic crisis. The stories are unique and raw and delve deep into the emotional landscape of unemployment, hunger and despair but include fragments of dark humor and attempts at preserving dignity. From a laid off worker who cannot provide food for his son to a woman whose boyfriend steals her nest egg to a group of sick old men awaiting the opening of a clinic, we are privy to the innermost thoughts and mundane acts of everyday people who are grappling with difficult circumstances beyond their control. Ikonomou's brilliant imagery and insightful writing is simply beautiful to read and ponder." • Wellesley Books newsletter "[Ikonomou's stories] are heart-wrenching and moving yet devoid of any sentimentality. They are deeply illuminating, not only about working-class Greeks in the face of the crisis, but, more importantly, about the human condition." -Publishing Perspectives "A gripping collection of short stories... Christos Ikonomou has already been hailed in the Italian press as a 'Greek Faulkner,' a description that conveys the emotional power but not the restraint or precision of his prose." -Mark Mazower, The Nation "The Greek Faulkner... one of the most touching chronicles of the economic crisis to have come out of Greece." -La Repubblica "Ikonomou redefines the value and the archetypal importance of the Greek epic ... in a few words he depicts the difficulty of living in the here and now." -Panorama "There's no arrogance in this book. This sensitive chronicler allows the reader to feel his characters' existential anxiety from the very first line." • Spiegel Online "The Decameron of the crisis." • Left Magazine "Ikonomou enters the homes of popular neighborhoods of Piraeus and Nikea, Koridallou, Kokkinia and gazes people hoping to find a trace, to locate a clue which allows him to dispel the economic tsunami or to appease the protests. It's an intimate eye he has: he sees faces, events and thoughts from behind the glass of a window, hidden by a corner. Sincere and unmerciful." • ANSA News Agency "Christos Ikonomou gives the crisis a face, many faces." - Neue Zürcher Zeitung "In 16 intense, touching snapshots he senses the atmosphere in the country and the pain of each individual." -Zuhause Wohnen "The 43-year-old author of Piraeus writes without frills and laconically about the lives of the so-called little people around him." -Simon Hadler/Alexander Musik "Finally, there's a book that drags the Greek reader out of the satiate petty bourgeois frame or the lifestyle craze and throws him deep into the working class slums." -Ta Nea Newspaper "Spectacular, bright fiction delivered from an author who has already accomplished much and promises a lot more." -Kathimerini Newspaper "[Ikonomou] has brought to the surface the struggles and

unfulfilled dreams of Piraeus – the working classes, highlighting their beauty and the dignity. One of the most powerful books of the year: a novel that – has been widely read and admired." -Eleftherotypia Newspaper "Ikonomou – his gaze never becomes melodramatic or pitiful; nor does it fall into the ease of depicting the extreme. There are absolutely no clichés and the usual stereotypes that accompany the depiction of the poor in literature – with this short-story collection (Ikonomou) rewrites the almost forgotten urban social realism into the fabric of Greece – his contemporary literature – (the author) enters contemporary Greek literature very dynamically." -Nea Hestia Literary Magazine " [Ikonomou – his] dialogue sparkles with authenticity whereas his narrative bridges a simple and often rough language with moments of pure lyricism giving out a spark that fuels emotion." -Container Magazine

Christos Ikonomou was born in Athens in 1970. He has published two collections of short stories, *The Woman on the Rails* (2003), and *Something will Happen, You'll See* (2010). *Something Will Happen, You'll See* won the prestigious Best Short-Story Collection State Award and became the most reviewed Greek book of 2011. About the Translator: Karen Emmerich's translations from the Greek include books by Margarita Karapanou, Amanda Michalopoulou, Ersi Sotiropoulos, and Vassilis Vassilikos. Her translation of Milos Sachtouris for Archipelago was nominated for a National Book Critics Circle Award in Poetry, and her translation of Yannis Ritsos's *Diaries of Exile* with Edmund Keeley won the 2014 PEN Literary Award. She has received translation grants and awards from PEN, the NEH, and the Modern Greek Studies Association. She teaches at the University of Oregon.

Good Lord, this is one depressing book. Page after page, story after story of the most awful things people have to bear. It is dark and heavy, with most characters living lives that are hopeless, chaotic, and unstable. I echo the other reviewers who have praised author Ikonomou for so powerfully capturing the poverty, despair, and destitution people are experiencing in Greece's garbage economy. But what struck me most about this book is how negatively women are portrayed--always helpless, sad, borderline crazy. They are abandoned and oblivious and, even though they are the ones keeping their families together, they still somehow come off as weak. They are raped and whored out A LOT. Even in the stories where they are the main (and sometimes the only) characters, they always play second fiddle to the men. Is this a cultural thing? Is this simply an accurate portrayal of how women are treated in Greece? And is Ikonomou okay with it? Or is he trying to make a point against it? I'm not sure. But, yikes, it's bleak. Reading this book was

depressing and eye-opening. If you read all the stories in one sitting, like I did, prepare to be overwhelmed with the sadness of it all. I wish I had chosen to digest them bit by bit. Instead, I zipped through it...and then had to have a good cry afterward. The book is powerful, but, wow, it's a lot to absorb.

The writing of these stories is terrific. The book is truly "literature". It picks you up sweeps you along. Kudos to the translator. It is impossible to tell this was not written in English. All the stories are about down and out Greeks suffering in the horrible economic times. Most have been knocked down by the depression, others by circumstance. Either way, there are no winners in this book. There is also no hope, no light, no resolute human heart. The stories are of the down and out with no sugar coating. There is particularly "Greek" about the characters. Except for the settings (and the liquor drunk) these stories could be of monetarily and psychologically depressed people anywhere. The writing is definitely superb. The dark nature of all the stories is fitting. I have two criticisms of the book. It is difficult to sit and read it all at once. The pacing is all the same and the stories all have the same theme. Sit and read one story and you will sit back and marvel at the talent and the feelings elicited. Read more than a few at a time and they the stories get repetitious and run-on. It's like a very rich and sweet treat. A little at a time is nirvana. Too much at once results in stomach upset.

If there is any doubt in the reader's mind that the author isn't addressing this very issue[Banker Occupied Territory] - just read a few of these heart wrenching stories. Stories realistically portraying good people enduring unimaginable suffering, so that the few cannot only have more than their share, but indeed, have it all! The first chapter/Come on Ellie, Feed the Pig, where the author is referring to an acronym PIGS: Portugal, Italy Greece Spain. All targets of financial capital whose endgame is to break public services worldwide by financializing them to bankruptcy, and at the point of failure to replace them entirely with privately-owned profit-making services. If the poor people do things like that to other poor people[steal their last dollars] what on earth are the rich people supposed to do to us, asked Ellie; little realizing the reason she is so destitute and enduring so much suffering, is precisely because the rich are stealing from her and populations worldwide - without remorse. Therein is the irony we see as the characters are being stripped of their remaining humanity by an inhuman class of ruling elites. Another character, Niki, in another chapter says/You have to stay strong, Something will happen, you'll see. Banks don't just take people's homes away. This isn't America. We'll manage somehow. You'll see. [Later in the chapter] Compromise. All of life is one big compromise. We're all born of compromise Niki thinks, out of that great silent yes that our

parents say when they choose to bring us into this world. Which means we all carry a kind of compromise inside us, in our blood. That's why all revolutions are destined to fall. Another character, in yet another chapter/They sold us down the river, the others said. Don't you get it you fool? Our co-workers. Our comrades-in-arms. They sold us out. Still another chapter, another character/That's what real democracy is. When poor people don't wait for the rich to come and save them but take back the situation into their own hands. Because that's how the trouble starts: with us thinking that the rich will ever help the poor. It just doesn't happen. We live in two separate worlds. They're over there and we're over here. We have to take the situation in our own hands. What do you think our greatest enemy is? Death? Money? Not at all. It's fear. That's our worst enemy. Fear. Fear. The author is well-grounded in the territory he brings the reader to/Five men had lit a fire outside the Social Security offices in Nikaia in the middle of the January night. They were retirees, former office workers or manual labor, unshaven and down at the heels. They had started gathering at three in the morning so they'd be the first to see the doctors before the crowds came and the line stretched all the way to the sidewalk. They didn't know one another and didn't bother to introduce themselves - they had other things on their minds. Besides, their names didn't matter. What mattered was the order, that the order of the line be strictly maintained. Which is why each man thought of himself and the others as numbers on a list that would keep growing as the night advanced. So reader, come stand in line with those in banker occupied territories, and live awhile with various good people who find themselves inside a landscape of betrayal; and be prepared to join them, as the banking territories come expanding into your neck of the woods. For, as the old saying goes... And Then They Come For You.

This is a collection of fifteen short stories about down-and-out middle class people in Greece during the recent economic crash. The stories are thoughtful and provocative if a bit dark at times. The writing is quite good and alleviates some of the dismal mood of the stories themselves. As a whole these stories are a bleak reminder of the spiritual impoverishment of western society. But the stories clip along, I was never bored, and the insights made the read worthwhile.

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