



# Achilles' fiancée

*Alki Zei*

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**Achilles' fiancée** Alki Zei

**The book has received the 2002 Premio Acerbi in Italy.**

Set in Paris sometime after the 1967 military coup in Greece. Eleni, together with a group of friends and fellow political exiles, finds herself working as an extra in a French film: "The Horror Train". It is not the first time she has been caught up in a deadly drama, nor is it her first ride on a horror train. As the director waves his arms, shouting directions and re-shooting the sequence, Eleni's mind wanders to her first train ride: "Athens-Piraeus. My first long journey by train." "You're Eleni? I'm Achilles." "They don't ask which Achilles. One name is enough..."

For the rest of her life, Eleni will be "Achilles' fiancée"; fiancée of the guerrilla leader, the brave, handsome *kapetanios* whose code name is Achilles. In the demonstrations against the German occupiers of Greece during World War II, in prison where she risks a death sentence during the civil war that followed, in Tashkent where Greek communists fled as political refugees and eventually, in Paris. But throughout, Eleni acquires her own personality with self-determination and independent thinking. As she begins to question the slogans she used to fight for when she blindly followed the leaders of the Party like her fiancé, Eleni involves us in her own private world of self-awareness. It is a woman's world, where human warmth and friendships count for more than abstract ideals.

The Greek word for a novel is *mythistorama*, a word that combines myth and history. In her story of a young woman's struggle to survive through a hard period of Greek history, Alki Zei has woven the threads of her own quasi-mythical life into the stuff of history.

The novel *Achilles' Fiancée* has been a top-selling book since it was first published in Greece in 1987. It has also been translated into French, Italian, German, Spanish, Danish and Turkish.

*"Alki Zei has written history like masters do, gingerly and discreetly." ."*

***Sofia Castellanos, A Cubierta Libros, 2014***

*"Achilles' Fiancée is a superb book that has marked Greece's modern literature."*

***Demosthene Kourtovic, Scholiastis magazine, 2012***

*"Good books do not become outdated with time. They are read by new generations of readers, as if they are new every time."*

***Yannis Papatheodorou, Diavazo Magazine, 2012***

*"Between the lines of the narrative, important issues regarding human dignity and substance, self-determination and freedom, faith and ideology, are touched."*

***George Theocharis, Book Press, 2012***

*"The narrative becomes immediately compelling because the author manages to convert a biographical story into a collective issue."*

*Anna Painsi, Libreria delle Donne di Milano, 1998*

Achilles' Fiancée, With a Faber Number Two Pencil and Wildcat under Glass form a sort of trilogy in which 50 years of Greek history is covered by Alki Zei's exquisite and distinguished narrative.

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