

Nicholas Grapsias

PORTOFOLIA

In the yellow evening lamp light,
over a second-hand table, she sits hunched,
holding a wooden handled skewer,
she slowly runs it along a sheet of *glomesh*,
counting — “*ena, dio, tria ...*”

The Jewish boss with the branded arm
has been kind to her, boxes of extra work
in the dark hallway —

her granite-stern face, tear carved,

she whispers — “tesera, pende, exi ...”

She too, branded with numbers.

Her rub scented, Band-Aid fingers,
her green-swollen varicose calves,
her gauzed wrists — she runs a candle stick
along the sheet, wearing her thimble,
she skewers it apart, claw by claw.

My mother, she makes “purses,”
the one who knits us winter jumpers
when we cannot afford to buy clothes.
Who endlessly cooks and cleans,
nursing our sick moaning father,
saying nothing when he curses all,

I stare at her

“See how your mother works Niko!”

She suddenly says, not looking up —

“That’s why you must study hard,

so you don’t ‘happen’ like father and I.

So you one day, may become

something better.”

