Manolis Papagiannakis

Manolis (thoughtfully):

When I had journeyed half of our life's way,
I found myself within a shadowed forest,
For I had lost the path that does not stray…

Well, indeed, I am at a very important point of my life today…
Crowd: Yeah… Right… Blah blah blah!…
Manolis (*lifts his hand, quiets down the croud and firmly continues*): I am at a very important point of my life today. You see, I am Greek. And that probably explains why I don't like anything here: it's so much worse than back home… The food sucks, girls are ugly, the sea is dirty, people are unfriendly, (*gets angry*) the watermelons are not ripe, olive oil tastes like used car oil…
Crowd guy 1: I think he he's lying. He must be Dutch, only the Dutch can complain so efficiently.
Crowd girl 1: Yes, besides he looks suspiciously like the owner of the Turkish shop in my neighborhood. Only younger.
Crowd girl 2: And probably cuter.. (*both start giggling*)
Crowd girl 3: Yeah, he's quite a dish… Hey Turk, got some baklava? (*joins the giggling*)
Manolis: Silence! (the crowd goes quiet) Yes, I am Greek. You, people, probably know that we Greeks have gods all over the place. What you may not know, is that the word 'God' in Greek is 'Theos'. Which basically means – a theoretician. But – alas! – I am only mortal, human. And my whole life, in the middle of which I am standing today was not theoretical, it was purely EX-PE-RI-MEN-TAL…
(*Manolis sits down*)

Scene 1: Coffee-room. Manolis is sitting trying to read a book on quantum mechanics.

Manolis (*to himself*): So if H acts on psi, it pulls out an E and the psi remains. Why the hell, can the psi's not be cancelled? And why does it pull out an E, and not, for example, F? I like it more: $H\varphi=F\varphi$. And if it was up to me, I would make all the letters Greek. Who cares about the stupid latin letters?
Bas (*comes in*): Oh, new student? Hi, my name is Bas, Bas Gobets. Welcome to our group!
Manolis: Hi, I am Emmanouil Papagiannakis.
Bas: Ema… what?
Manolis: Emanouil Papagiannakis. You can call me Manolis.
Bas: Ah, that's easier, sounds almost Lithuanian. Manolis. Well, nice to meet you. What are you reading?
Manolis: Ehh… Trying to catch up with quantum mechanics which I will most probably need for my work here. You see, it's been a time since I studied it. Do you know what is the difference between a singlet and a triplet?
Bas (*to himself*): Jesus, another freak! Who cares about this mysterious quantum mechanics? What is it anyway? But I can't show that I have no idea (*to Manolis*): Well,

as it is clear from the name, a singlet is when someone is single (like me) and a triplet, also called a threesome is when three …you know… But I have always preferred a classical doublet (*winks*).
Manolis: Strange, there's nothing about the doublets in the book.
Bas: Nevermind the book, I'll bring you my magazines, there are lot's of doublets in there. (*trying to change the subject*) So, what have you been doing anyway, if you say it's been a while since you studied?
Manolis: I was in the army.
Bas: Oh, you too? I was in the army too! It's great, isn't it? You come there at 10 o'clock, you hang out with your mates, play some cards with the lieutenant, get a free dinner, do some light exercise and at four you go home! And I even got a driver's license there! And we used to go hiking! And when I was hiking in Finland, I used to sleep in a tent at minus 20 degrees…
Crowd: Bas, shut up! Stick to the lines!!!!!!
Bas gets a grip on himself
Manolis: Well, my friend, I don't know what kind of army you were in, but I served in the Greek navy. I had to scrub the deck with the toothbrush, be on duty all night, march, report. Two years of my life down the drain. The only useful thing I learned there was to sleep standing on my night watch.
Bas: Wow, sounds bad… But you can use your skill here, at the group meetings, conferences or if you take the quantum mechanics course with Gert van der Zwan…
Rienk (*comes in*): Gentlemen! What's new? Did you do something useful?
Bas: Oh, shit, that reminds me I have to go and write my thesis. Bye now! (*leaves*)
Manolis: I… I am trying to figure some things out. Can you explain me what a triplet is?
Rienk: (*to himself*) Jesus Christ, this guy knows nothing! I should probably stick to Romanians and Lithuanians from now on, when selecting new students. (*To Manolis*): A triplet is a state when two electrons have their spins parallel. As opposed to a singlet, when the spins are anti-parallel.
Manolis: Ah, okay, now it is clear! That is, it would be, if I only knew what the spin was… I think, in Dutch it means 'spider', which does not sound so nice. I am a vegetarian, you know.
Rienk: A vegetarian Greek? But that's a mathematical impossibility! Do you at least smoke?
Manolis: No.
Rienk: Another mathematical impossibility! And if the speed limit is 110 km/h, how fast do you drive when you are drunk?
Manolis: I don't drive when drunk. And if the speed limit is 110 km/h, and I am sober, I drive 110 km/h.
Rienk: That's a strange guy. A vegetarian non-smoking Greek, who does not drive drunk and sticks to the speed limit. Amazing… What shall I say? Maybe we should keep you after all… since you are a vegetarian, perhaps you can do some research on carotenoids. Here, this is some sample for you (*gives Manolis a carrot*). Use the BMI setup.
Manolis. Okay, but first I have to learn all the theory…
Rienk (*irritated*): Forget about the theory! We do EXPERIMENTS here! I told you – use the BMI!
Manolis (*salutes in army fashion*): Yes sir!

Scene 2:

Manolis (*still with a carrot in his hand. Addresses the audience*): But here I encountered another key question: just what is this BMI? Well, there's only one way to find out: the experimental way.

Manolis is walking along the street. Meets Danielis.

Manolis: Hi, I was wondering if you could tell me where the BMI is?

Danielis (*mumbles*): m .. m. m.

Manolis: What?

Danielis (*mumbles again*): m .. m. m.

Manolis (a bit embarrassed): Excuse me, what did you say?

Danielis (*yells*): I DON'T KNOW!!!!!!!

Manolis (*jumps aside*): ouch! okay, okay, I was just asking… (*goes on, but is so scared that gets hick-ups*): hik!.. Damn, not the hik!-ups again… hik! I always get them – hik! – when someone scares me…

(Meets Kinga and Sofia, who immediately start giggling)

Manolis: Hi, …hik!.. - I just wanted – …hik!..- if you could – …hik! Hik!… BMI …hik?

Kinga (*to Sofia*): What did he say?

Sofia: I'm not sure… I think he asked 'could you be mine?'

Kinga: Bastard! How dare, you?! (*Gives Manolis a slap in the face and walks away together with Sofia).*

Manolis: No luck today… At least she cured me from the hick-ups… (*walks on, meets Raoul)*: Hi, I am looking for BMI.

Raoul (looks a bit drunk**)**: BMI? Eee… You sure it's not IBM?

Manolis: Positive. The Boss said BMI.

Raoul (*to himself and the audience*): Boss? What boss? He probably means Rienk… What does Rienk know about it? He probably meant 'BIM-house'. It also sounds better: BIM!.. BIM!… BIM!

(*to Manolis*): Well, my friend, you are at the right address! I will now take you the dodgiest place in Amsterdam. This is the place for the real experimental stuff. It's called the BIM-house!

Manolis (*cheered up*): All right! I have to do some experiments with this carrot (*shows the carrot*).

Raoul: Now, now, you are my friend of course, but I really don't want to know what kind of experiments a Greek does with a carrot. Don't tell me you are also using olive oil for your… eee…. Experiments.

Manolis: As a matter of fact, I have some… (*Pulls out a bottle*) It's from my aunt, the best olive oil you can get!

Raoul: Okay, that was just a joke!.. Let's go to the BIM-house. The place for alternative stuff! I think I was the one who first discovered it, by the way… Of course, nowadays their experiments look a little outdated, but for someone working for Rienk it will be more than adequate…

They come into a BIM-house. A bunch of people are playing weird instruments, making funny noises. Someone tries to sing. Manolis and Roul walk in, take a bottle of beer each.

Raoul (*yelling through the noise*): Here! This is the BIM house, a place for experimental music and stuff! Do you like it?
Manolis (*trying to move to the beat*): Yeah, it's great! Always liked this sort of music. I even once tried to learn playing a flute myself, but my teacher said, I had no talent. But I sounded just like these guys! Maybe even better. More experimental!
Raoul: You see! I showed you the way! You are in the right place now!
Manolis: But what can I do with my carrot here?
Raoul: Eee… I don't know. Suit yourself. Be alternative! Be experimental! Experiment! *(takes a large sip of beer and leaves).*
Daniel (*walking in*): Yo bro! (*famous gesture*) What are you doing here?
Manolis: Well, Rienk told me to do some experiments on this carrot. He told me to use the BMI, which, according to Raoul, is the same as BIM, so I came here, to the BIM-house. I haven't figured out the carrot part yet, but I really like it here.
Daniel (*looking disgusted*): I think it really sucks! They have Dutch beer, when everyone knows the best beer is German and comes from Hamburg. There is no space to park my jaguar, it's dirty and listen to this music! It's horrible! They don't even have business class seats!
Manolis: I don't care what you say, I like it! I just have to figure the carrot part out. Carrot-BMI, BIM-Carrot, BIM-Carrot … what could it be?..
Daniel (*starts laughing*): So, Rienk gave you the carrot and told you to use the BMI on it?
Manolis: Yes, and then Raoul took me here…
Daniel (*stops laughing, starts looking important*): Well, listen to an experienced post-doc: when Rienk says to you: BMI, he does not mean BIM-house. For you BMI means – the laser lab! (*looks around and spots Rienk in the audience*) Quick! Go to the laser lab. Rienk is here, listening to this awful music! See? (*shows Rienk in the crowd*) Go, before he saw you! *(Pushes Manolis away. To himself)*: Maybe I should also go. This music *(shows quotation marks)* gives me a headache!

(Daniel leaves, so does the experimental band)

Scene 4. The lab. Manolis and Danielis are working on three boxes. Manolis puts a carot in one of the boxes.

Both *(while lifting different boxes)*: Pump! Dump! Probe!

They pull out the carrot, it is unchanged.

Manolis: Damn it, this is not working. The carrot shows no signal that it is being changed by the laser light. What are we doing wrong?
Danielis: I don't know. The paper says 'pump-dump-probe'. That's pump (*shows first box*), that's dump (*shows the second one*), and that's the probe (*shows the third one*). What can go wrong here?

Sofia (*walks in*): Hi guys! What?s up? What are you trying to do?

Danielis: We are doing a pump-dump-probe experiment. See, this is the pump, this is the dump and this is the probe.
Sofia: Pump-dump-probe experiment? That doesn?t sound right!! Manoli-Manoli, you're apparently very confused, you have to probe BEFORE you dump!!! Once you've already dumped, what kind of probing can you do?? (*winks*) There's nothing there to probe anymore!!! You've dumped it already!! Get it??? Better try it my way, trust me, I know what I'm talking about!! (*walks away talking to herself*) Pump-dump-probe? no wander the poor guy had no luck all the time he was single?
Manolis: You know, she might be right. I just got dumped by my girlfriend and I am telling you, probing was much better before than it is now. Let?s try it! (*swaps the dump and the probe boxes*).
Danielis: Okay, here we go! (Puts the carrot in one box quickly shakes all the boxes)
Both: Pump! Probe! Dump!
Manolis: Let's see what we have… Opens a box and pulls out a water mellon. Wow! That's a cool carrot transformation! An alternative experimental carrot. So, the first chapter of my thesis will be 'Unusual pathway of carrot-to-watermelon transformation using a pump-probe-dump technique'. Special thanks to Sofia!
Danielis: Let's try it again!
Manolis: Okay, but the carrot is gone. What are we going to use as a sample?
Danielis: Does not matter. Who cares about sample? Let's do without it, like the theoreticians do.
Manolis: okay, then… Pump! Probe! Dump!
Danielis opens the box and pulls out the dead cat.
Manolis: Oh no!.. We killed the cat. Poor animal, what did we do to it? It looks so nice, almost alive…
Danielis: No, that's not it, I know the interpretation. We did it without a sample, like the theoreticians do, and what did we get? A theoretical concept: Shrödinger's cat. It's always dead when you look at it.
Manolis: Aaaa, okay. (*to himself*) I should have read that book on quantum mechanics more carefully. Turns out, there are cats in there! (*to Danielis*) Allright, let's do it again. But this time let's use some sample. But what?
Danielis: Let's use the cat!
Manolis: Okay, this will the beautiful mixture of theory and experiment. Dead Schrödinger's cat as a sample in pump-probe-dump experiment. I am going to write a paper in Science!
Danielis: And if they don't accept it, you can always send it to PNAS. It means - Paper Not Accepted in Science… Okay, let's do it! (Puts the cat in the box)
Both: Pump-probe-dump!
They open the box and pull out an 'S' shape with a little star attached to it.
Danielis: What the hell?… What's this?
Manolis: I don't know, but I think it's beautiful. I will call it S-star. Gee, it feels good. I discovered a new star – an S-star! Everything with one carrot… Amazing. Well, this was fun, but it's time for me to march on… New experiments are waiting ahead!
Marching music starts playing and Manolis and Danielis leave…