

LOST IN TRANSLATION

NARRATOR

Modern Greek is not nearly so difficult as it looks.

ALPHIE & BETTE

(looking at a sign written in Greek)

Ooooooeu!

NARRATOR

So many thousands of tourists visiting Greece
take one look at our alphabet

ALPHIE

Alpha,

BETTE

Beta,

ALPHIE

A funny hangman's scaffold.

BETTE

Gamma, dear..

ALPHIE & BETTE

Euuughh!

NARRATOR

So many look at our alphabet and say...

ALPHIE & BETTE

Not for me!

NARRATOR

This is a great pity.
True, it is possible to see the sights
and lay on the beach
in the bright Greek sun,
never knowing a word of Greek.

ALPHIE & BETTE

Aaah!

NARRATOR

But!
One may order more drinks
and meet more men
and navigate the difficult cultural divides
with merely a modicum of Greek.
And should you need to find the Police,
What then?

Let us begin with some common words.

ALPHIE

How?

BETTE

Slowly. Gently. Often.

ALPHIE

When?

BETTE

Later. Never.
Before it is too late.

ALPHIE

Who?

BETTE

Everybody.

ALPHIE

Only you.

BETTE

Almost. How many others?

ALPHIE

Too many. Too often.

BETTE

Never

ALPHIE

Except

BETTE

Here. Who has been here?

ALPHIE

I was. He is. And you may yet be.

BETTE

How far?

ALPHIE

Outside far through and towards until.

NARRATOR

Try learning the words by heart.
These simple expression will carry you far:

ALPHIE

Please don't.

BETTE

Please do it again.

ALPHIE

Is he a good man?

BETTE

She is a good woman.

ALPHIE

Is this a good child?

BETTE

This is the house of the good man.

ALPHIE

How so?

BETTE

Slowly! Gently! Carefully!

ALPHIE

How much does it cost?

BETTE

Very much, a great deal, a lot, too much.

ALPHIE

How may I help you?

BETTE

May you live many years.
We must leave. Please, thank you, please.
I shall meet you tonight.
Thank you for your hospitality.

ALPHIE

What on earth is going on here?

NARRATOR

Act One. Scene One: Polite Expressions.

ALPHIE

Good morning

BETTE

Good Evening

ALPHIE

How are you?

BETTE

How do you do?

ALPHIE

Am I disturbing you?

BETTE
It doesn't matter to me.

ALPHIE
Thank you for your hospitality

BETTE
We had a very good time

ALPHIE
Enjoy yourself.

BETTE
Speak for yourself.

ALPHIE
After you.

BETTE
What's wrong?

ALPHIE
Too much. Too dear.

BETTE
Very cheap.

ALPHIE
This way. That way.

BETTE
I am an Englishman.

ALPHIE
She is an English woman.

ALPHIE & BETTE
What on earth is going on?

ALPHIE
I am right.

BETTE
She is wrong.

ALPHIE & BETTE
This doesn't work.

ALPHIE
Listen.

BETTE
Look

ALPHIE
What do you feel?

BETTE

Nothing else.

ALPHIE

Anything else!
Whose turn is it?

BETTE

It's not my fault. I do my best.

ALPHIE

I don't understand you. I don't know Greek.

BETTE

Does anyone here know English?

ALPHIE

Perhaps you will find it here.

BETTE

Wait! I am looking for the phrase in this book.
Please read this.

ALPHIE

Where are you going? What are we doing?
That man has been following me everywhere.

BETTE

May he live many years.

ALPHIE

I shall call a policeman.

BETTE

I shall stay here.

ALPHIE

Will you help me?

BETTE

Help! Fire! Thief! Beware!

ALPHIE

I don't know you.
I don't want to speak to you.
Leave me alone. Go away.

BETTE

That will do! You are mistaken.
I didn't do it.

ALPHIE

I will give you nothing.

BETTE

This is very annoying.

ALPHIE

It has nothing to do with me.

BETTE

What does that mean?

ALPHIE & BETTE

What must I do?

Where can I find?

What have I done?

ALPHIE

I have done nothing.

BETTE

Where is my ring?

ALPHIE

That man has stolen my purse!

ALPHIE & BETTE

Let me pass! Let me pass!

Where is the British Consulate!?

NARRATOR

Act One. Scene Two: At the restaurant.

BETTE

What time is it?

ALPHIE

It is early. It is late.

BETTE

It is five past one.

ALPHIE

It is half past four.

BETTE

It is exactly seven.

ALPHIE

My watch is slow.

BETTE

My watch is fast.

Take your time.

We have plenty of time.

ALPHIE

I have no time!

I haven't done this for a long time.

BETTE

It's time we left.

ALPHIE

(arioso of time)

During the day. At night. This evening.
 Last night, yesterday morning, the day after tomorrow.
 Every day. All day. Daily.
 Day and night.

BETTE

A holiday?

ALPHIE & BETTE

A holiday!

ALPHIE

Do you serve lunch? There are two of us.

BETTE

We are together.

ALPHIE

We want something light.

BETTE

We only want a snack.

ALPHIE

We are in a hurry. Can you serve us at once?
 Waiter, bring us some bread, please.

BETTE

I would like an ice cream, please.

ALPHIE & BETTE

We do not want retsina!

ALPHIE

Please boil some milk.

BETTE

She does not like fizzy drinks.

ALPHIE

I want something very simple.
 I do not want anything with garlic in it.

BETTE

I am on a diet.

ALPHIE

What do you serve with the roast?

BETTE

(arioso of food)
 Beer, brandy. Chocolate coffee.
 Apples, aubergine, cauliflower, cake.
 Cray fish and cream.
 Mutton sausage, mint and melon.
 Snail and shrimp and mineral water.

ALPHIE

Please bring some more boiled milk.

BETTE

Bring me some cigarettes, please.

ALPHIE

This does not smell very nice.

BETTE

This has too much fat.

Can I see what you have?

Where can I leave the car?

I have left my ring in the toilet.

ALPHIE

The bill, please.

BETTE

What is that for?

ALPHIE

We only had two beers.

BETTE

We didn't have any bread.

ALPHIE & BETTE

There is a mistake in the bill.

There is a mistake in the bill!

ALPHIE

I made a mistake

BETTE

I beg your pardon.

ALPHIE

Thank you. Good bye.

NARRATOR

Act Two. Scene One: At the Hotel

BETTE

Is there a house where we can stay?

ALPHIE

Can you recommend a good restaurant?

BETTE

I am expecting a gentleman.

Please send him up at once.

If anyone asks for me, please tell them to wait.

ALPHIE

I am going out. I shall be back at three.

BETTE

Someone telephoned you.

They asked you to ring this number.

ALPHIE

Will you get this number for me, please?
The chambermaid never comes when I ring.
Are you the chambermaid?

BETTE

I have lost my ring in my room.
Will you look for it, please?

ALPHIE

The sheets on this bed are damp

BETTE

This room is not clean.

ALPHIE

I should like an extra blanket.
It is very cold at night. Can you give me a quilt?
Have you made the bed?
I am going to bed at once.

BETTE

I am expecting a gentleman.

ALPHIE

I shall leave my clothes at the door.
Will you have them brushed?
How much does it cost to send a letter to England?
Is there a letter-box nearby?
Where is the post office?
I want to send a telegram.
I want to telephone.
I do not feel well. I shall stay in bed.

BETTE

I am expecting a gentleman.

ALPHIE

Can I have breakfast in my room?
Can we have an English breakfast
Can you put another bed in the room for the child?

BETTE

Have you seen my ring?

ALPHIE

I have to leave early tomorrow.
Order a taxi for nine-thirty, please.
Please make out the bill.
I have not enough Greek money.
Will you accept a traveler's check?
Will you accept pounds sterling?
Has the taxi come?

BETTE

I have left my ring in my room.

ALPHIE

Here is the key. Keep this for yourself.

That is all, I think.

ALPHIE & BETTE

We were very pleased indeed with the hotel.
We hope to come again.
Thank you. Good bye!

NARRATOR

You will find many of the words in Greek are familiar:
Catastrophe,
Cataclysm.
Tragedy.
Hubris and hysteria.
This is the culture of our land
which we are always happy to share.
These are the memories that will last
years after your holiday is past.
Act Three: Tragic Events

ALPHIE

Does this street go to the Acropolis?
Where can we bathe?
Is the water clean?
Is there a sandy beach near here?

BETTE

I want to hire a sailing boat.

ALPHIE

You will be out of your depth.

BETTE

I telephoned him.

ALPHIE

We are staying for only two or three days.

BETTE

I do not need a guide.
Is there a boy who can show me the way?

ALPHIE

Be careful. It is very dangerous.
Beware of the dog.

BETTE

Give me a bottle of wine.

ALPHIE

Call a policeman quickly.
There has been an accident.
She has lost consciousness.
She has fainted.
She needs artificial respiration.
She must not be moved. It is very dangerous.

BETTE

I am suffering.

ALPHIE

Do you feel a pain here?

BETTE

I have pain all over.

ALPHIE

How often do you feel it?
She is not sleeping well.

BETTE

I have no appetite.
My stomach is upset.
I feel giddy.
I have a temperature.

ALPHIE

You must have been bitten by a dog.
You must have been stung by a bee.
You must have trodden on a sea urchin.

BETTE

What must I do?
Should I stay in bed?
When will he come and see me again?

ALPHIE

What is the matter?
What is the cause?

BETTE

The sun. The moon. The stars.
The city of Athens.
The wines of Dafni.
The sun upon the walls of the city of Athens.
The moon upon the Aegean Sea.
He was to meet me here at eight.
Perhaps I was early.
Perhaps I was late.
Perhaps I am mistaken.

ALPHIE

She was a good woman.

BETTE

I am leaving by the nine o'clock train.

ALPHIE

The Island of Patmos. The city of Sparta.
The bright white walls in the dazzling sun.
And promises. And promises.
It is time to return.
It is time to go home.

BETTE

The sun. The moon. The stars.
The city of Athens. The wines of Dafni.
The sun upon the walls of the city of Athens.

The moon upon the Aegean Sea.

ALPHIE

During the day. At night.
This evening. Last night,
yesterday morning, the day after tomorrow.
Every day. All day. Daily.
Day and night.

ALPHIE & BETTE

Farewell. Farewell.

NARRATOR

Greece waits for you. Greece waits for you.

[END OF PLAY]