



## A castaway's holiday tips

**In his fictional debut**, the young hero of "Ο Isidoros ke o navagos" (Isidoros and the Castaway) summoned up his imagination and enlisted the help of an imaginary friend to help fill the long hours at home while his busy parents worked. Now he marshals the same forces to tackle a new setback in "Diakopes sto spiti me ton Isidoro" (Holidays at Home with Isidoros), by Amanda Michalopoulou, just out from **Patakis**.

This year, his parents tell Isidoros, money is short. His father is an architect whose business has been hit by a downturn in the construction business, so the family won't be able to afford their usual summer vacation on the island of Serifos.

What kind of holidays can a boy of 9 have at home on the fourth floor of an Athenian apartment? Isidoros turns to his old friend the castaway in search of answers. The castaway is an imaginary character who sends real answers to the letters Isidoros sends him by bottle. In fact, as he discovered the last time he was in a fix, the castaway is his father, but it's become a game in which the two of them keep up the pretence. "In this game," explains the boy, "we're both free to play different parts, like actors. Basically, we always tell the truth."

A letter sent by bottle to the castaway to confide his woes prompts a suggestion: Why not turn your home into an island? Starting with tips from the castaway and adding his own ideas, Isidoros creates his own downtown riviera. With an acute sense of the issues that trouble children, Michalopoulou once again demonstrates how mobilizing a child's imagination can help them tackle obstacles.

Sofia Touliatou, whose illustrations for the first book in the series won an award from the Greek Children's Book Circle, deftly conveys the boy's initial disappointment and the fun of being creative.

