



Sophrosyne (Department of Narrative Studies)

Marianne Apostolides

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Because fear can transform into confidence, recklessness, the kind of power you can't imagine until you're inside it. And then, once you've felt it, you can't feel alive when it's gone. Sophrosyne. You understood this feeling. I know you did, though you never said it. I saw it, instead, on your face when you danced.

Sophrosyne is one of only four virtues identified by Socrates – four traits which, if lived deeply, define who we are as human beings. But sophrosyne is a concept our culture has long forgotten. 'Self-restraint,' 'self-control,' 'modesty,' 'temperance' – none of these terms expresses the essence of the word.

In this provocative new novel about desire and restraint in a digital age by acclaimed author Marianne Apostolides, 21-year-old Alex is consumed by the elusive problem of sophrosyne for reasons he cannot share with others. While Alex's philosophy professor believes studying it will help shed light on the malaise of our era, Alex hopes it will release him from his darkly disturbing relationship with his mother. As he attempts to uncover his mother's truth, Alex is drawn inside an amorphous, indefinable undercurrent of love and violation. Only through his lover, Meiko, does Alex open into a new understanding of sophrosyne, with all its implications.

Reminiscent of Anne Carson's *Autobiography of Red*, Sophrosyne asks readers to surrender themselves to the book's logic and language. Infused with a sensuality balanced by its intellect, Sophrosyne reads like "the music's rhythm... soft like wax and supple, warm," pulsing through your veins.

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