

The Price of the Puzzle



***Georgina
Antoinette***

GEORGINA ANTOINETTE

The Price of the Puzzle

The Shadows of Rhodes, Book 5

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- *Dedication* -



To Harry, for everything you are and have been in my life.

~g~

...!-...



Age Means Nothing



“**H**elena, we get up, huh?” My husband pulled my hair back and kissed my neck. “Let’s wake up, Helena.”

“Okay, if you say so,” I said into my pillow.

“Yes, do say so. Come.”

I sat up, my hair falling over my shoulders as I looked up at the clock on the tall dresser,

“It’s only 5:45 am.! Oh!” I flopped back down on the pillow and pulled the sheet up over me.

“Helena, what must I do to get you up?” I peeked over the top of the sheet at him.

He got this devilish twinkle in his eyes. He leaped at me, tickling me through the covers, and fully waking me up.

“Okay, there! We can get up now,” he said as he kissed me on the forehead and went into the bathroom.

“Oh, man, it’s not even light yet!”

“What is that, my Heart?”

“It’s still dark out.”

“Andreas will not wait. First tide will go without us if we linger.”

“Yeah, I know, but.... alright! I’m getting up,” I groaned in a monotone. He

looked out from the bathroom door, shaving foam on his face.

“Dimi think you are right on this. Aiden will be asleep most of day, so we see him in evening instead. What you think?”

“Well, I’m awake now! We might as well get going. It’ll take me fifteen minutes. Would you please get me a cup of coffee to help me out?” I asked.

“Yes, ‘WUF’ cup waits for you in kitchen,” he said. The WUF cup always brings a smile when I see “*I WUF U*” under the likeness of a goofy hound.

Once launched and on our way, Dimitris came down to the galley for some coffee for himself and Andreas.

“I’ll take Andreas’s coffee to him, Dimi,” Morgan volunteered. He handed her the cup, and she went to the bridge.

“My Heart, is it okay below deck? You no feel sick?” He asked.

“Not so far, if it doesn’t get rough, I should be okay.”

He scooted in next to me in the booth, put his arm around me, and tapped his cup to mine. We sipped our coffee, and he’d look at me, not saying anything, then glance at me again.

“You’re watching me.”

“No, no, just in wonder.”

“Wonder? What do you wonder, Dimi?”

“Wonder how Dimi be so lucky.”

“We make our own luck sometimes.”

“No, wonder on how Dimi be so lucky to find my Heart.”

“Ha!”

“What, you no believe?”

“Sure, I’ll believe anything you want me to believe. You look at me with those big brown eyes, and I’ll believe anything you say.” I didn’t smile. I was purposely sarcastic.

“Huh-oh.” He uttered and stood, holding my hand, he kissed it, took his coffee, and left the galley. That didn’t help my mood any. I was ready to throw something at him! The more I thought about it, the more irritated I got. It’s bad enough that I had been sweating it out since I went to the attorney’s office, worrying, but he never gave me a clue as to whether or not he knew.

If I had known in the very beginning that he was eleven years younger than I am, I never would have allowed myself to be so completely blindsided. I won't deny how totally in love with him I am, but if I knew at the time when we met that there was such a huge gap in our ages, I would have laughed at the thought of a mutual attraction.

"What did you do?" Morgan asked as she came into the galley.

"What did *I* do?"

"Dimi came up there and asked me to come down here."

"Is that all he said?" I asked.

"Well, he had a funny look on his face."

"The thing about our age came out."

"Oh." Morgan sat glued to every word.

"Last night he said it didn't matter to him, and all that. But this morning he kept looking at me, but never said anything! It was bugging me. Now, I've got a complex that he's looking at me as an old woman," I lamented.

"You're nuts."

"Well, how did *you* feel? You talked to Andreas, didn't you?" I asked. She looked at the table, and when she looked up, I knew that she didn't say anything.

"I will. I just haven't found the right time. But, what happened with Dimi just now? You two were alright this morning!"

"We were, but when I asked him what he was looking at, he said that he wondered how he got so lucky. Suddenly, I thought, *who are you trying to, kid?* Then I gave him a sarcastic comment. It just got to me that he could say anything, and I would probably believe him."

"So, you got pissed at him?"

"Yes."

"Oh, man, he can't win," she smiled.

"Well, thanks. I thought maybe you might see my side of the situation."

"Well, I do, but he didn't *do* anything," she said.

"No, that's just it. He didn't tell me he *knew* already about the difference in our ages. He didn't *ever* tell me *his* age. Then I went to the attorney. What a shock! I thought there had been a mistake in the translation of the documents.

I'd been worried about it since then. It has been eating away at me all this time. I was worried that when he found out our age difference, that he'd dump me, well, maybe not dump me, but look at me in a new light, and that's what's happening."

"He knew all the time? Wow! Well, then he's not looking at you any differently."

"No? I've got a new complex then."

"Yeah, well, don't we all," Morgan sighed.

"Then, he just walked out," I added.

"He probably figured you were in a mood."

"Yeah, well, I am now!" I agreed.

"Maybe you should get some more sleep?"

"Maybe I should," I said.

"Why don't you go ahead, take cabin #1, I just cleaned in there, so it's nice and fresh. Go ahead, get a nap in before we stop. I think Andreas wanted to stop in Karpathos, and you don't want to visit anyone like this, do you?"

"I guess I'd better try to get some rest," I agreed.

I went to cabin #1 and removed my jeans. I climbed in, and it felt so good. The movement of the boat and the splashing of the water against the hull lulled me to sleep.

I don't know how long I was asleep, but when I awoke, Dimitris was holding me closely, spooning me to him. I held his arm that was around me, and as I moved, he snuggled my hair against my neck. I could hear him speaking in Greek whispers. I stroked his hand then placed it to my Heart. He rolled me to face him, then kissed me.

"I'm sorry, Dimi. I guess I was pretty tired."

"Yes, I was tired, also." He kissed my forehead, and I could see that he didn't understand why I was upset. When he saw my birth date, it didn't make any difference to him, which I could hardly believe.

"Do you know why I was upset?"

"You say difference in age, but not matter to Dimi."

"The difference, eleven years, this doesn't bother you?"

“Why should bother? This not to change why this man love my Helena,” he said, trying to be of comfort, in his way.

“Why didn’t you ever say anything? I didn’t know your age until I was with the attorney. Don’t you think it was a shock to me? I didn’t know if *you* were aware of the fact or not. I was afraid you’d have a cardiac arrest when you found out.”

“Maybe Dimi afraid you leave, go back to Mark. This man do not chance it, only to give reason for you to go and not to stay in Rhodes. So, I say nothing.”

“Well, when did you know? When did you find out?” I asked.

“I see passport when I wait for my Heart to get well, on Athena, when so sick. I see then, but you so sick, Dimi fear to lose my love. Age do not matter, too unimportant to talk on.”

“Yes, but now you’d really have a reason to dump me for a ‘younger woman.’ I’m already a hell of a lot older than you,” I said. He laughed.

“Stop this. We will not talk of this. If Dimi ever want the younger woman, you should throw this man in the Aegean. I tell Andreas, he throw Dimi in with anchor on foot.”

“Sometimes, I don’t know what to make of you, Dimi.”

“I do not wish to fool my Angel. This man could not take chance my Helena would not stay, would go back to Mark at end of short holiday. Dimi would have to die if this happen. Then, after so ill, too ill to speak of such silliness, Dimi forget of it. Is too little to remember about.”

“How many years *would* make a difference to you?” I asked out of curiosity.

“Ah, Helena, sometimes you make Dimi think you look for trouble.” He laid back on his pillow as he let out a heavy sigh. He held my hand to his heart, then kissed it. Then he asked, “And for my Helena, you would not want to know Dimi if you know of eleven years?” He asked this question in a way that whatever my answer, to be truthful, would hurt him.

“You know what a crazy mixed-up time that was? I didn’t *want* to fall in love, and if I had known, I wouldn’t have let you in. If you would have said something about it to me after I recovered, then it would have been too late. It was hard enough to decide what to do, I couldn’t help falling in love with you, but if I had known all along, I honestly don’t think it would have ever

happened for us.” He stared at the ceiling as I spoke. “You don’t understand what I was going through. It would have played a big part in my decision. I only came for a vacation, you know? To get away. I had no intention of leaving Mark. As bad as it had gotten, I would normally have gone back and picked up where we left off, and hope that it would be better. If I knew before you took us to Karpathos, I would have had more strength, more resolve to resist you.” He looked so hurt, and I knew it would hurt no matter how I put it. “I knew that no matter which path I had taken, someone was going to be hurt. I didn’t want to hurt Mark. We were together too long to do that to him. I didn’t want to hurt you. You were so sweet, so kind, and you did so much for us. But we had no past, nothing to make me feel that this would last. If anything, I thought that if I were to let go, and let you in, *I would be the one hurting.*” I placed my head on his shoulder and kissed his chin. “I’m glad that you didn’t tell me right away, but you should have told me since then.”

“Sometimes, Dimi think you look for reason to find fault; that happiness is not for you, and find reason to make misery. Why you not let small thing go? Why make a thing out of nothing? If Dimi make you fall in love, why not accept and be glad? When I tell my Heart, ‘I love you,’ ‘S’agapo,’ do you think I do not mean?”

“I know, I’m cynical, and I’ve tried not to be. You know that I love you and I’m *so* happy I’ve found you. You wanted me to be honest about what was going on and how I felt? I’d like to believe that I would have made the same decision that I did, had I known then. But I honestly don’t know what I would have done at that time. It doesn’t mean I love you any less. I’m just trying to be honest in a hypothetical situation.”

“Yes, I know,” he muttered.

“The gods have blinded me to anyone else, Dimi. I made the right decision. There’s no question on that. Typically, when a woman marries, it’s to one who is either the same age or older than the bride, not always, of course, times are changing, but standards are hard to break. People talk behind your back when they smile to your face.”

“Dimi know this, but why you upset over all this? Would this change us *now?*”

“No, it doesn’t change anything, I love you as much as I ever did, it’s just that it was sprung on me, and I wasn’t prepared. It was a shock, and I was afraid that if *you* didn’t know, it would make a difference to *you*. Maybe you would wonder if you love me enough, or something like that. I didn’t know how you’d react.” He put his arms around me in a comfortable bear hug, and he kissed my brow.

“I think the only reason I didn’t think about your age before that is that I was so emotionally off-kilter. Even after getting all the certificates together for the civil wedding, I was so frazzled that I think I was just going on instinct.”

“Helena, Dimi, never know how sensitive you are on all things.”

“No, I’m not, I’m not all that sensitive.”

“Yes, like delicate flower, little breeze will bruise.” He leaned on his elbow as he stroked my cheek with the back of his hand. “My Heart, you must forgive Dimi, for such oaf. Always want to keep you safe and no harm, but things always come through to cause hurt. Not good to *not* tell you things, I know, but Dimi will tell you a thing now. If I know this eleven years would make difference, I still would not say if happened today. Dimi would rather see my Helena angry than to see deny of our love. The gods work too hard to find us, so, no, I would not tell age. Now, will you kiss this man?”

I understood what he was saying, and he made me understand that it wasn’t the big deal that I had made it out to be. My sensitivity seems to surround my lack of believing that this man actually loves me, and the age thing just added to my insecurities.

“Yes, kiss me, Dimi.” He was sweet and sensual and surrounding me in his warmth, but we had to continue to Athens.

“We must get dressed. Andreas will pound on door soon,” he said.

By the time we got underway again, we were looking at an all-night trip, which we usually don’t like to make. By leaving Karpathos so late in the afternoon, we may not make it to Athens until tomorrow around noon. The tide seemed rougher than what we had expected, and that would slow us down also.

It wasn’t an ideal situation, the rough waters, and being below deck. I was

awaiting the signs of seasickness to appear. Dimitris took his watch on the bridge while Andreas had his dinner. Morgan had gotten very efficient in the galley and was able to cook on the galley stove, even while the Athena rocked with the sea.

“My Morgana has gotten it down to a science, and never spills a thing,” Andreas bragged. “She could probably make a cake, and it would come out wonderful on this boat.”

Morgan turned a little pink and just smiled. I could see that she prided herself in being able to cope with this task, and to get high praises from Andreas was a bonus.

It seemed to be very slow going past the small islets from out of Karpathos. Once we had passed Crete, the seas seemed to turn to glass. It was a beautiful night on the water, the moon was bright, and the lights from other ships in the area glowed like stars across the open seas. When we approached the mainland, the city glowed in the radiance of the morning sun. The clouds that formed in the sky shown like white billowing pillows against a brilliant blue, as the first rays of morning shined on them.

I’ve never been a hospital type of person. They always leave me weak and drained of life. My sympathies go deep, and it’s hard to bring myself to enter as a visitor. Morgan and I were left at the door while the men went to a taverna down the street. I knew we should have flown in early yesterday morning, but now I look back on how that morning went, I’m glad we waited. As I asked the reception clerk where to go for our visit, Morgan had stepped toward the elevator. We had to go to the third floor.

It was 12:45 pm. and the lunch had already been served. The collection cart was blocking the aisles as the attendants retrieved the lunch trays from the patients. When we went into the room, Aiden looked like he was sleeping. In a soft voice, I said

“Hey, how are you doing?” I reached his hand, and he grasped hold of mine.

“Not so bad, the anesthetic made me sick. So far, that’s been the worst part. Hi Morgan.”

“Hi! How long are you going to be laid up?” She asked.

“I think I’ll get released tomorrow. They’re going to start chemo tomorrow, and I think Doc said I’d be doing that for six weeks.” He was still somewhat dazed and speaking very softly and slowly.

“Are you going to try to eat something?” Morgan asked.

“I can’t eat.”

“Has the doctor come to talk to you yet?” I asked.

“He’s supposed to be here around 5 pm. Morgan, could you excuse us for a few minutes? I want to talk to Helen,” he asked. I looked at Morgan as she stood there. I think she was unsure of whether or not she should leave me, but she turned and went out the door.

Aiden pulled my hand up to his heart and held it there. He had something to say, but his eyes looked unfocused, and I think he was still partially under the effects of the anesthetic.

“What is it, Aiden?” I asked as I stroked this forehead.

“I know that they said I’m going to be okay, but in case I’m not, I wanted to...”

“Aiden, you’re going to be fine. It’ll just take some time and patience. So don’t talk like this,” I said, trying to encourage him.

“Helen, I know, but there’s the possibility that it has spread, or will come back. Listen, I want you to do something for me. If I ever get to the point where I can’t care for myself, or I’m incapacitated, I’d want to contact my boys,” he said with his eyes closed.

“Of course, your family should be here anyway.”

“I haven’t told them yet. They probably could care less,” he said.

“You’re going to be fine, then maybe you can take some time to reacquaint yourself with the boys again. Re-establish a relationship.”

“Before it’s too late?”

“It’s never too late for that,” I said. “Would you like some water or juice?”

“Water.” I held the glass for him as he sipped through the straw. “Will you come tomorrow?”

I looked into his hazel eyes. He was so alone, scared, and vulnerable. I couldn’t say no, but how long will I be able to manage this? Rhodes is quite a distance from Athens, not a trip I could make every day.

“You need someone to take you home?” I asked.

“Yeah, I wish you could be here.”

“Sure, I’ll be here. I’ll stay a few days with Morgan,” I said.

“Thanks. It’s times like this that a man wonders why he’s still alone. Helen, I don’t know if I can wear my jeans home, you know? Could you go to my house, and find me something? I’ve got some gym pants there. I should have thought about it before I came.”

“I guess Andreas could take me over there.”

“My keys are here, in the drawer. If you would bring them with you tomorrow, maybe I can get out of here.”

“Sure, Aiden, I’ll do that.” I’m telling him that I’ll do these things and I want to do them, but I keep thinking about Dimitris. I don’t think he’ll be pleased, but I think he’ll be understanding of the situation.

The nurse came in, took his blood pressure, temperature, and checked the i.v.. She said that he would be going to the lab after the lunch trays were collected. The morning visiting hours were over, and if I wanted to come back later, the visiting would start at 6 pm.

Aiden gave me the keys, and I said I’d be back. I kissed his forehead then left to find Morgan in the lobby gift shop.

“Are we leaving?” She asked.

“Yeah, I’ll call Dimi when I get outside. He can tell us where we can meet them.”

Once I got off of the phone, Morgan asked about Aiden.

“He didn’t say too much, but he’s feeling very down like he thinks he might not make it with the cancer. He wants to be sure that if he’s very ill, that his kids are notified.”

“Geez...cancer is pretty scary,” she sympathized.

“The guys are coming to get us. We could have walked over there, I think.” We walked a block on the Athens streets. There was some traffic, not bad, however noisy.

“There they are now,” I said as they came into view.

“Why you out here walking alone? I say wait for us,” Dimitris said as they met us.

"It was only a block, and we were just standing there!" Morgan piped up.

"Mama mia! You never do as Dimi say!"

"Mama mia? You're so funny, Dimi," I said, and couldn't get the smile off of my face. He put his arm around my neck as he walked by my side and kissed my cheek.

"Next time, wait for us to come for you," he insisted.

"What difference does it make, we still have to walk the same distance," Morgan whined.

"Because Dimi will not have wife walk alone. Women should be accompanied with man, whenever possible." When I looked into his eyes, I saw what he was really saying. He's still afraid that we are in danger of those criminals, and being on the public street alone is taking a chance.

When we finally got seated in the taverna, I still had Aiden's keys in my hand.

"What keys are these?" Dimi asked.

"These are Aiden's." I looked at him and asked, "I might have to stay with Morgan a couple of days, is that alright?"

"You do not need to ask permission, my Heart."

"Aiden wants me to bring him some clothes from his house. He may go home tomorrow, but he won't be able to wear the jeans he was wearing. I told him that I'd help him home."

"He will need someone there. Is not good to come home to empty house after hospital."

"You've been very good about all this. Is it weird for me to want to help him? I mean, I feel like I'm going to get into trouble with *you* if I do this," I confessed.

"Helena, it is good thing you want to do. You want to do out of good heart, not to hurt Dimi. Do not feel guilt for having good heart. You will help Aiden when he feels better he will do for himself. For now, he has need for someone. You. Maybe, Morgana to help, also."

"Maybe Aiden will realize what it means to have someone in his life. Maybe he'll get serious about finding someone," Andreas said.

"But not my Helena."

“Not your Helena, Dimi,” I smiled and kissed his cheek.

“You two are like newlyweds, I swear,” Morgan said with a laugh.

“We are still the newlyweds,” Dimi agreed with a twinkle in his eyes.

“You’ve had the civil bond for over a year now, so technically, you’re not still newlyweds,” she persisted.

“My Helena and Dimi always will be the newlyweds.” I had to laugh as he nuzzled my neck.

“Geez. Excuse me!” Morgan said as she rose and left the booth.

“What just happened?” I asked. “Did I miss something?”

“I don’t know, I don’t think so,” Andreas watched Morgan enter the restroom. He had a puzzled expression and was confused about it as much as we were.

“I’ll go see what’s wrong,” I said and left the table.

I went into the restroom to talk to her, so I asked, and waited. “Morgan? What’s wrong?” She came to the sink, blowing her nose and wiping her eyes. “What’s wrong? Did we do something or say something that offended you?”

“No, it’s nothing,” she stepped to the sink to wash her hands.

“It must be something.”

“It just kinda got to me, how Dimi is always so loving and says things, it’s just, he’s so demonstrative about how much he loves you. It just bugs me that Andreas isn’t more, well, it’s stupid.”

“No, it’s not stupid. I think Andreas just wants to please you. He used to be pretty wild about his emotions. Remember his kefi?” I reminded her of his wild, unleashed exuberance of emotion.

“Yes! He’d embarrass me!”

“Maybe that’s why he’s been restraining himself. Remember when you told him you were going to leave, and he was beside himself with hurt and confusion? Trying everything to please you to convince you to stay?”

“Yeah.”

“I think he doesn’t want to embarrass you. I don’t think it would take that much to get him to let loose. A little extra attention in public might be all he needs.”

“Yeah, but I don’t want him to go crazy again!” She said adamantly.

“Just let him be himself. You’ll both be happier,” I suggested. “Are you okay now?”

“Yes, let’s go back, now that I’ve made a complete ass out of myself,” she cringed.

When we reached the table, the men were standing, waiting for us to sit. Morgan hugged Andreas and said that she was sorry.

I made arrangements with Morgan and Andreas to be able to stay a few days while Aiden was recuperating. Dimitris had to return to the house after his meeting in Athens. With the responsibility of the animals, it was difficult to leave the house completely unattended. We dropped him off at the university campus, where he’d have to walk to the administration building for their meeting.

“Okay, Helena, you will call this man, whatever to happen. Dimi will miss my Heart,” he said.

“Yes, I will. I wish you could stay, but I know you can’t. I shouldn’t have committed myself. At the time, I didn’t think about the distance involved.”

“But then, Helena wouldn’t be Helena. You do out of compassion. I know this. Now you must not worry on it. You will come home to Dimitris when you are done.”

He kissed me goodbye, and while he was holding me, he said his Greek whispers. I held on to him for just a few seconds more.

Morgan and Andreas were walking arm in arm like young love birds. It warmed my heart to see the spark of life return to their relationship. Andreas had a smile on his face the whole time. We went to a small little stand that served little Italian ice creams. We sat at an outdoor bench under a shade tree by the end of the square. The sun was fairly bright, filtering through the trees, and the breeze was beginning to pick up.

“Well, what do you want to do? Should we go back to the condo until visiting hours?” Morgan asked.

“I don’t know, you’ve been so great in all this, carting me around.”

“Aiden is a nice guy, if you can help him, that’s what matters. It’s nothing to be here for us. We live here,” Andreas said.

“I really do appreciate it. I’m getting tired, though. We’ve been going all day. What time is it?” I asked.

“It’s 4:08 pm.”

“Well, let’s go back to the hospital. Maybe we can visit a little early, then head back.”

When we got to Aiden’s room, he wasn’t there. We asked a little volunteer aid, where he might be. We were told to go to the outpatient area and ask the desk nurse for the chemo room. From there, we were directed to go to the end of the wing, the last door on the right. When we got to the open double doors, it was almost like seeing a mini theater. The overstuffed lounge chairs were lined in a semicircle. Several cancer patients were hooked to their i.v. bags, watching a movie on a big-screen TV.

“Oh, no, I can’t go in there! I feel faint,” Morgan held her hand over her mouth as Andreas supported her. “Go ahead, Helen, I’ll catch up with you later.”

“We’ll go to his room and wait,” Andreas said as they left me at the double doors.

I went into the room, Aiden was back against the wall with his eyes closed. When I came up to him, he didn’t look up. I sat next to him in a straight-backed chair. He had i.v.’s going into both arms.

“Aiden, are you awake?” I asked.

“I’m awake, what are you doing here?” He asked. He sounded very bad.

“I wanted to check on you. Are you in any pain?”

“A little, it’s hard to sit up for so long. I have to finish these two bags before I can go back to my room,” he said. I soothed my hand across his cheek.

“You’re so pale. I hate to see you like this. How much longer do you think it’ll be before they come to unplug you?”

“It shouldn’t be very long. The alarm will go off when it gets down far enough,” Aiden replied.

“Is it bad?” I asked.

“At first, it burned. It felt like a hot liquid pouring through my veins. I don’t feel it now.”

“I haven’t made it to your house yet. I’ll go over there tomorrow morning. Do you think they’ll release you tomorrow?”

“I don’t know. The doctor will be around after I get back to my room. They keep asking me if I’m getting queasy.”

“Are you?”

“The power of suggestion, I’m starting to feel it now.” He put his hand over mine and looked at me as he laid in the lounge. “Dimitris, does he know?”

“That I’m here? Yes, with his blessings. He wants you to know that we’re all praying for you. Rena wanted to come, but she couldn’t get away. Morgan and Andreas are waiting in your room. Morgan couldn’t take it, coming in here, with everyone hooked up. I think the smell got to her,” I said as I wiped the perspiration off his brow.

“Is there a smell? I can’t smell anything. As soon as they plugged me into this i.v., it seemed like I was tasting something bad, maybe that’s what she smelled,” he made a face like he ate something rotten.

“All I could smell was a strong odor of alcohol, and something else, I’m not sure of what. It’s not that bad, though.”

“It’s all these bald people, it’s depressing,” he said as he shifted to find a more comfortable angle to sit.

“Oh, Aiden, the beeper, it’s going off!”

“I hope they don’t bring in another bag.”

“Mr. Kairne, I think we can let your wife take you to your room. Doctor Nicolopitas will be in to see you in a few minutes,” she said as she removed the i.v.’s from the picks in each arm.

The nurse brought over a wheelchair and asked him if he would wait for a few minutes.

“Mrs. Kairne?” Aiden looked at me with a bit of a curl in the corner of his lips.

“No, a friend,” I said.

“In that case, you’ll need to wait in reception until 6:00 pm. The doctor will be monitoring his reactions then we’ll get him settled in his room. The first

treatment can be quite a shock to his system.”

“Aiden, I’d better go. Andreas and Morgan are waiting. I’ll be back in the morning. Is that alright? Will you be okay?”

He took my hand and held it to his cheek. “I guess I’ll be okay. I’m so tired. I’d probably sleep anyway. Thank you, Helen, for being here.” He kissed my hand, but his hands were cold and clammy. He looked pale and very sick. I could hardly recognize him with the change that came over him in such a short time. It was heartbreaking to see a strong, virile man brought down so quickly. I hugged his head close to my chest and kissed his forehead.

“I’ll see you tomorrow,” I said. Then I went to his room to get the others.

“Where’s Aiden? Aren’t they bringing him back?” Morgan asked.

“Not yet, they’re going to monitor him for a while. Let’s go. We’ll have to come back tomorrow.”

“Here, here’s some tissue, Helen,” Morgan offered.

“It’s so hard to watch this happening,” I sniffled, then blew my nose.

“It is hard. He’s always been so healthy,” Andreas said.

“Do you want some dinner? We can stop for something quick?” Morgan asked.

“No, I’m not hungry. If there’s fruit or something at the condo, I might have it later. I just want to go to bed. I’m exhausted.”

“It is tiring, visiting in the hospital. It’s so stressful. It drains the energies,” Andreas said.

I took a long hot shower, crawled into bed, and when I was just about to drop off, there was a tapping at the door.

“Helena, are you awake?”

“Dimi?” I thought I was dreaming. He opened the door then came to sit on the edge of the bed. “When did you get here? Didn’t you go home?” I asked. I was almost half asleep.

“No, I start to go, then I think that house too empty without my Helena. I must come back here. So I do. Is okay?”

“Come here and give me a hug,” I said.

“Dimi is so empty without Helena. See what you do?” He said as he kissed me.

“I’m glad you came back, Sweetie.”

“How is Aiden?” He asked as he undressed.

I told him how it went, how hard it has been on him, and the helpless feeling one gets when there is nothing to offer by way of relief of the suffering. I managed to convey the hard time that Aiden is going through without tearing up. I had to choose my words carefully, to keep the emotions in check.

“Does doctor say something?”

“I don’t know. We couldn’t stay to wait for him to come around. They had to monitor Aiden for a while before he could be brought back to his room. Poor Aiden, I felt so bad for leaving, but I’ll have to go in the morning again and bring some clothes for him. You’re staying, aren’t you?”

“I will stay, my Heart. We have good neighbor to feed animals, now that we give away property line.” He smiled as he looked back at me.

He got into bed, and I cuddled next to him. His warmth and his scent made me feel so secure.

“I have call from doctor’s office today.”

I had a sudden jolt of fear dart through me like I should expect bad news.

“What did he say?” I asked. With a sigh, he answered.

“He wishes to have my Helena come to talk.” I was holding my breath, waiting for the bad news. “To discuss the change of diet for Dimi.” He sounded disgusted. I was relieved.

“Oh, Dimi!” I smacked his shoulder. “Don’t do that! You scared the shit out of me! So, what did he say?”

“He say Dimi begin to have the high blood pressure. He ask if Dimi watch what to eat, and I say I am always to look on what to eat. Now, to cut down on the high cholesterol, but wants to discuss with wife of this man.”

“I see. I wondered about your diet,” I said.

“Why, you wonder, the fat? Dimi is fat?” He asked. I had to keep from laughing.

“No, but I worry about the rich foods, cheese, that kind of stuff.”

“But is all good, no chemical. He will put me to eat cardboard!”

I laughed. I think the diet that he enjoys has been good to him, just a small modification would get him back on track, but I'm afraid that he won't be happy about it.

"Sugar, there's plenty of things you can eat that you don't have to worry about, we'll see what the doctor says first. He'll probably say 'no fatty meats, limit pork, cheese, and fried foods.' When do we go in to talk to him?"

"After weekend, he still wait for other tests to come back."

"We'll see what he says," I said. We lay in silence for a long pause. Then I had to laugh.

"Why you laugh, my Heart?" He asked, then kissed my brow.

"He's going to put you to eat cardboard! You crack me up, Dimi."

Afternoon in Athens



“**H**ey, Dimi, when did you get here?” Morgan asked.

“He came in last night,” Andreas said.

“Where was I?” Morgan asked.

“You were snoring up a storm, so I didn’t wake you.”

“Andreas!” Morgan cried.

“Well, you were. Big old loud ones, too!” She threw the dish towel at him.

“I’m going to get you,” he said and ran towards her. She screamed for help as Dimitris, and I stood laughing. Andreas cornered her between the kitchen table and the corner of the room.

“I give up! I give up! Helen, help me!” Andreas was poking her and tickling her to the point of weakness.

“Okay, Morgana, you give up? I will stop, but you will not tease without paying the price,” Andreas said.

Dimitris looked at me as I couldn’t stop laughing.

“Thanks a lot, Helen!”

I couldn’t keep from smiling, and if I tried to talk, I’d start to laugh again.

“Morgana, my brother can be very harsh in his punishment, so you should take care when to tease him. He might let go of kefi in this house.” Dimi said to this small thing who’s torment was so funny.

“Now, you tell me!” She chirped. She had a hard time controlling her laughter as well, and as accusing as she tried to sound to Helena, it made it even funnier.

“Andreas, as much as I appreciate everything you and Morgan have done, it’s okay if we take a taxi. I have Dimi to keep me out of trouble, so if you’ve got other plans, it’s no problem for us to call a cab,” I said.

“If it’s alright, I do have some things I need to tend to,” Andreas admitted.

“That would help *me* out some. I’ve got to make some calls and see about some deliveries that haven’t come yet,” Morgan confessed.

“We will not put inconvenience to you, Andreas, we take taxi,” Dimi said.

We all sat down to breakfast together and discussed how Aiden’s health had matured him so suddenly. Seeing the possibility of the end of one’s life would make anyone re-think many segments of the past, and amend for the future. We called a taxi after we had eaten, and took it to Aiden’s house.

“I don’t feel good about going into his home. It almost seems like bad luck for him,” I said as we got into the cab. Dimitris put his arm around my shoulder and held my hand.

“Why you say this? We do favor for him, should feel good about this.”

“I know we should, but I can’t help how it makes me feel,” I said.

“What kind of bad luck, his health?” He asked.

“I hope not.” My theory of thinking or feeling a dark omen meant that whatever that feeling or thought was, was like a wish that would come true. My previous experiences with them were unlucky. This scared me.

“Helena, you are the worrier. Is okay to feel sad for this man, once there was feeling for him.” He bent toward me, trying to look into my eyes. I was looking at my rings on my right hand. “You have not cried on this? Why you try so hard to hold back tears?”

What he asked, gave me such heartache. I hadn’t thought about *not* crying. It’s an emotion that seems to be a frequent visitor, and yet, it had been dammed up in this situation. It’s as though I felt that I wasn’t allowed to cry for him. I would not let myself cry. I looked at Dimitris momentarily, as he could see the pain that I tried to keep hidden. I couldn’t speak about this, as I felt I was on the verge and could not let myself break.

As we approached our destination, I held Aiden's keys in my hand. I felt so helpless, looking at them and handling them, it was as if I was about to look for funeral wear. These thoughts and feelings were almost overwhelming as we stood on the porch. I had to hand the keys to Dimitris to open the door. I dreaded entering the dark, cold house.

"Will you come in?" Dimi asked.

As I entered, the first thing I had to do was to open the curtains. I had to let life back into the rooms. At least, while we were there, life again was present.

"Let's make this quick." I caught Dimitris more than once, watching me perform the job of selecting clothes to take to the hospital. I found it challenging to keep my emotions in check. As I folded a pair of slacks, I felt my heart sink. I pulled a shirt from the closet, and Dimi saw the tears as they silently rolled down my cheek. He put his hand on my shoulder and leaned forward to look at me. I could no longer hold back my tears. Dimitris wrapped me in his arms, and I silently wept.

"You cry, my Heart. Let go of it. You hold it for too long." He held me and rocked me and comforted his wife. I felt flattened as if I were to exhale forcefully, I would totally deflate. It wasn't so much that I had to cry; it was worry and exhaustion and a feeling of helplessness for another man's pain.

My thoughts were for Dimitris also. What is he thinking of me? How will this affect us in our relationship? How does he feel about his wife and this man?

Although my fears and empathy were for Aiden, I also feared that the tears might, in this case, cause my husband some pain. I couldn't let that happen even though I had let my sympathy overtake me.

"Oh, Dimi, I'm sorry, I'm so sorry," I said as I wiped my eyes.

"Not to be sorry, my Heart. It is better now?"

"Yes, much better. Sugar, would you look in the closet for a bag or duffel to put these in?"

He found a soft-sided weekender bag in the hall closet. When he put it on the bed, he touched my back. I turned and hugged him tightly and said,

"Dimi, I love you so much." He kissed me with a tenderness that said he understood. He put the sox and shaving gear in the bag as I finished folding

the garments.

“I think that is all,” he said. “I call taxi.”

“That should be everything.” We took one last look around and made sure everything was locked. As I closed the curtains and shades, Dimitris picked up the newspaper from the porch. He placed it on the coffee table with yesterday’s mail.

“Taxi is here,” he said.

“That was quick; I guess we’re ready then. Let’s go,” I said with a quick, last glance around, hoping we didn’t forget something.

For a weekday morning, the traffic was fairly sparse, for Athens, and we were able to get to the hospital in record time.

“Dimi, I shouldn’t be doing this, I should be home with you. Why am I always getting myself wrapped up in a situation that causes you hardship?”

“For this, you do with compassion of Aiden. For Dimi, is hardship when you not here, so I go to my Helena and no more hardship. Aiden have need for one to give comfort. That is you, my Heart. When he find his own *Heart*, he will have his turn to find what Dimi already have.”

The taxi dodged the slower cars and zipped passed the buses to get us to the destination we requested.

“Ahh, we are here.” Dimitris paid the cab driver; then we went up to see Aiden. When we went into his room, he was sleeping. We left the bag with his clothes in the table cupboard by the bed, then went to the cafeteria.

“He look very white, like sheet. This man is very ill,” Dimitris commented over our jello salad and coffee.

“He doesn’t seem to be taking it well. I hope they know what they’re doing with that chemo.” I said.

“This is excellent cancer hospital. They do what is best for him,” Dimitris said in a comforting way. He always is so reassuring and calming. With my emotions that tend to run amuck, this calming influence made a good balance. I realized that he brings me back from my emotional meltdowns, and I’ve come to appreciate him more for doing that.

I had forgotten to turn off my cell phone when we entered the hospital, but

when my phone rang, I noticed a nurse in surgical gown in the corner of this cafeteria was talking on her cell phone, so I answered mine.

“Hi, Rena,” I said

“I’ve been calling the house; I thought you were out with the chickens. What are you doing today?”

“We’re at the hospital, waiting for Aiden to wake up. We brought his clothes.”

“Oh, is he going home today?”

“I don’t know, we just got here, but I really don’t think so, he doesn’t look good at all.”

“Oh, poor Aiden, I want to try to get down there this afternoon, but could you call me when you know if he’ll be released?” She asked.

“Sure, I’ll let you know. How are you all doing?” I asked my sister-in-law.

“Tired! I’ve been helping Stefano move some of those old relics in the loft room so that he can catalog them for storage. I’m finally going to be able to clean in there!”

“Wow! What a job!” I said.

“Oh, I know, but it was long overdue. Well, give my love to Aiden, and tell him I’ll be there to see him if I don’t hear he’s going home.”

“Okay, bye, Rena.”

“Was Rena?” Dimi asked.

“Yeah, she’s worried, she wants to visit Aiden. How did it go today? Did you have a productive meeting?”

“There was no meeting. I waste time to go there.”

“Sweetie, you know these doctors, by reputation at least, do you think Aiden is getting good care, I mean, do they know what they’re doing?”

“My Heart, chemo very hard on healthiest of people. Then, after the weeks go by, health slowly return.”

“How can a patient keep a positive attitude when they’re made so sick by the Chemo?” I asked.

“It is a cruel blessing. Chemotherapy only will work if it will kill off bad cells faster than kill off good cells. It is gamble. But, with Aiden, he have best chance, though. When surgery remove cancer before spread out to system, then usually chemo only precaution.”

“It always seems so threatening,” I said. “The weakness, being susceptible to other illnesses, the balding.”

“Without fast diagnosis and treatment, cancer is fatal, so Aiden very lucky. You help him decide to take action. You make him save his own life.”

“Someone had to make him wake up! I’m afraid that I had to be cruel to him. Meaner than I had planned. I just got so upset with him.”

“Yes, my Heart,” he said sympathetically. “Sometimes, it will take the cruel words to wake up a man.” He held my hand across the table and looked at me with his expressive eyes.

When we went into Aiden’s room, he was awake and able to sit up. When he saw us come in, he seemed to light up. After so much nausea from the treatment, he wasn’t able to eat.

“I appreciate both of you coming to see me. Helen, thank you. I’m sorry I was such a baby about the surgery. I know you were right, I knew it all the time, but it’s hard to admit that my life is at stake when I still feel good. I guess I was pretty depressed, too.”

“It’s understandable, anyone would be devastated by this, so you don’t need to apologize,” I said.

We continued our visit for almost an hour. Aiden was confused about the chain of events from yesterday but seemed interested to hear about the egg-laying hens we have.

“I didn’t think that chickens were your cup of tea, Aiden. As I remember it, you were giving me the rib for wanting chickens.” I joked.

“When I was sitting in the exam room, after the Chemo, I felt so sick that I thought the cancer couldn’t be worse than how I was feeling, I thought about a lot of things. The day we were building the chicken coop, it made me laugh to think of those chickens. I mean they are an economical food source. I never knew chickens were so easy to keep.”

Dimitris sat quietly by my side until his cell phone rang.

“Dimi, you need to turn off your phone inside the hospital,” I said quietly.

“Yes, I forget to do. Is Andreas, I call him from outside. I will return, my Heart, in few minutes.” He kissed my hand and took his cell phone out of the

building. Aiden went silent until Dimitris had gone outside. He leaned back against his pillows and was trying to fix them. Still being in pain, I got up to help him.

“Here, Aiden, I’ll adjust the bed for you.” I raised the lift of the head of the bed, then got his pillows plumped up and placed under his head and shoulders.

“Thanks, that’s better.” He took my hand as I fixed his sheet. “Sit Helen. You know, when I was sitting in there, I had to laugh, thinking of you out there with the chickens that day. Quite a picture, I started feeling better, just remembering those hens swarming your feet. So, when I get this hurdle out of my way, I want to get some chickens, if you’ll show me what to do for them. And maybe a kitten or two, and a dog. I want to get a good dog, too.”

“Geez, Aiden! Take it easy. You know that having animals means that you can’t just take off whenever you please? Maybe you should take it a little at a time.” He kissed my hand and said in a soft voice,

“Helen, I’ve been living my life selfishly, most of my life. I see that. If I hadn’t thought only of myself, we could have had a great life together. I’m tired of fighting against myself. I’m going to change. I see how short life is, and wasting so much of it__. I’m going to change what’s left of the years I’m given. I have you to thank for so much in my life, and making me do this.”

“Aiden, please. I didn’t do anything,” I said as I tried to retrieve my hand.

“You’re going to see a big change in me. You wait and see a happier man.”

“Do you know what kind of dog you want to get?” I said, trying to divert the subject in a more upbeat note.

“Don’t go away from me, Helen, I want you to come closer to me. I won’t do anything, I mean, look at me! I just need to be close to you.” He seemed to hesitate in thought. “There’s a lot to say for a permanent relationship. I can see that, and with the mess that I’m in now, it would be a comfort to have a wife. I never realized how alone I am until now. You’re the only one who cared enough to come to see me. I haven’t even heard from my sons.”

“Do they know?” I asked.

“Yes, I sent word to both of them. They never return my calls. You know they give you counseling with the chemo? I’m going to need it, I think.”

“We all can use good counsel once in a while.”

“Not Dimitris! There’s one lucky man. If he’s ever got a problem, he has you to turn to.”

“Yes, well, sometimes I *am* the problem.”

“I don’t believe that. What kind of problem can *you* be?” He asked. I had to laugh at the absurd subject of conversation. When we knew each other, it was fun, happy, good times when we didn’t have a care in the world. All was laughter in those days.

“You don’t know, Aiden, believe me, I’m not the saint you think I am.”

“Well, maybe not a saint, but you aren’t the type to be a problem for a man.”

“You don’t even know me, Aiden. I’m emotional, sometimes beyond reason, just ask Dimi. He’s barely used to my emotional episodes,” I said, just as Dimitris came back into the room.

“What I miss? Dimi gone too long, Helena.” He said as he sat.

“We were just discussing my emotional outbursts. Aiden doesn’t think your wife has these insane, emotional frenzies,” I said as I brushed some dust from the knee of his trousers.

“What is this? My Helena is an angel. Dimi have gods smile on him, Aiden.”

“Yeah, yeah, now tell the truth. You were walking on eggs when I’d have an episode, and you never see them coming! You never dreamed what a jealous wife you have, now be truthful.” I wanted to hear what he said about this.

“Yes. Yes, Aiden. Yes, Helena. Dimi have little surprise to find my Helena so jealous. So Dimi has been very good not to upset my Heart. But with all truth, best thing ever to happen to Dimi, when I take little car in middle of night to find two beautiful ladies in need of ride. Dimi blessed every day since.” He smiled at me and kissed my hand.

“Tell Aiden how long it took to get used to my emotions getting out of hand. He seems to think I’m easy to get along with.”

“Most times, yes. Not so much other times. But this what make life interesting. A little fire to spice up life.”

“This is what I mean; my wife was beige. Everything bland. Even she was bland. So I’m changing my beige life, as soon as I get out of here.”

“My Helena, she is one with big emotion for all things. Compassion, love,

for hurt, Dimi call her my 'delicate flower.' So fragile, sometimes this man hurt and not know. But we find out the hurt and make better. Then sun shines again. This make life interesting."

I sat here listening to him, my face getting redder by the minute. I thought he might dive deeper into our intimate life.

"You two seem to get over the hurdles easy enough. I hope I have that luck."

"It's not luck, Aiden. Dimi has worked very hard to smooth over the rough spots. He has been patient and understanding and has bent over backward to make me happy. It hasn't been easy for him," I said. Dimi looked at me with a new expression that I hadn't seen before. His eyes were sparkling, but he somehow looked different.

"We will need to go to ferry, my Heart. You will say goodbye. I wait outside. You get well soon, Aiden." He left the room and went to the lobby.

"I'm sorry, Aiden, when you get the word that you'll be released, I'll get over here to take you home. I think you'll be able to leave tomorrow, don't you?"

"I hope so. I thought today would be the day they'd cut me loose, but it doesn't look like it's going to happen." Aiden reached out his hand, and I automatically took it. "Helen, will Dimitris let you help me home, I mean, I should be able to cope by myself."

"Dimitris lets me make my own decisions, so, if you need help, I'll be here." I kissed him on the cheek. "I'll be expecting you to call if they give you any news, *any* news," I said.

"Bye, Helen, thanks. I'll call," he said. As I walked out, I turned at the door, smiled, and gave him a little wave goodbye. I caught up with Dimitris in the lobby downstairs.

"Is my Heart ready to leave?"

"Yes. I'm hungry."

"Andreas say to come to dinner. We go there. You too tired to travel tonight. We stay at home of Andreas."

He hailed a taxi in the hospital pick-up area. We got in and told the driver where to go, then Dimitris wrapped me in his arms and gave me the sweetest kiss.

"S'agapo, Helena. Dimi love his wife. When my Helena say to Aiden about

Dimi, make this man so proud. Make heart swell with love for this woman, too hard to keep hands off.”

When he looked at me, I felt like I was in that ‘young love’ stage of our relationship — a time when everything was new and exciting. I just wanted to love this man, but he gazed at me with a new vision, and I wanted to know if it was this feeling of pride he reflected or if it might be something to do with Aiden.

Andreas was waiting for us at the door of the condo, and Morgan was in the kitchen.

“Hi, how is Aiden doing?” Andreas asked.

“Pretty good today, I think the Chemo was pretty bad earlier, but he’s feeling a lot better,” I said.

“We’ve wanted to go see him, but Andreas had an inspector giving him hell this week,” Morgan said.

“Whatever happened with the mother of that student? I was going to ask you about it before, but Morgana told me to let the subject drop,” Andreas asked Dimi. As I was talking to Morgan about Aiden, I could see Dimitris glance at me, before he answered Andreas. Stepping closer to his brother, who was standing by the breakfast table, Dimi passed his brother to go to the refrigerator, saying something in hushed tones. They were purposely speaking very softly.

“Morgan?” I said in a hushed tone. I curled my finger as I gestured to her to come into the living room. We sat by the fireplace.

“What is it?” She asked. “What’s happened?”

“What is this about Dimi and the mother of that student?” I asked. She looked like a deer that got caught in the headlights.

“What? I don’t know what you mean.”

“Yes, you do. Tell me,” I said.

“Geez, Helen, it’s not up to me to say anything. You need to ask Dimitris about it.”

“Just tell me what you know,” I said. She called Dimitris and left me there by the fireplace.

“Did you need Dimi, my Heart?” He asked so innocently.

“What is everyone so secretive about?”

“What do you say?”

“I heard what Andreas asked you. Now everyone acts like there’s a big secret. Will you tell me what it is?”

“It is nothing important, my Heart.” He smiled as he crouched in front of me and took my hand. “Was to present problem, but is not what seems. Student at university have mother to want to meet with Dimi. I tell student, no need to meet parent, but she come anyway. Dimi tell mother to not concern on student. Lab performance would be ongoing, not to rush with. She go away. Then come back to bother.”

“When did this happen?” I asked.

“End last month. No wish to upset Helena.”

“I didn’t think you dealt with the students; I thought you were in research.”

“Yes, research. University Regent ask to have student to work lab for ‘work experience’ credits.”

“Why didn’t you ever tell me about tutoring?”

“Not tutoring. I see student other day. Was pleasant, say ‘hello,’ but next minute mother come, is like she have antenna.”

“So what happened when she came back the other day?” I asked.

“Dimi was on way to go to my Helena. I see her and go other way,” he said and kissed my hand. He stood then pulled me up, putting my arm around his waist. “Dimi have no time for foolishness; I go to my Helena where Dimi should be, and this was end of it.” He kissed me and held me in his arms. “See? This too unimportant to discuss.”

“You found it important enough to tell Andreas and Morgan about it.”

“Only commented on stupidity of. Parents strange beyond belief when comes to child.” He pulled back to look at me, then said, “this not even child, grown adult child.”

“You could have told me about this. Trying to hide it makes it seem to be more than what it is,” I said.

“Not to hide, my Heart, just to avoid. It was wrong thing to tell others and not to tell my Helena. You are right to wonder on this. Is okay now?”

"I'm not upset, Dimi, I just don't like being the only one kept in the dark," I said. He kissed my forehead with a quick pop and smiled.

"We should eat, huh?" He turned to his brother. "Andreas, we go eat, and Morgana to get purse. We go to eat, Dimi will treat."

"Great! Let's go. I'm starved," Morgan said and had her purse ready to go.

"I thought I'd cook something," Andreas said.

"No, you will cook breakfast tomorrow. Now, we go to eat. Where to go, Morgana?"

"Oh! There's a new place that sounds good, but it's on the East end."

"Is okay, what place?" He asked.

"It's called 'I Claudius.' One of my clients just opened it last month."

"Come, we go, to 'I Claudius.'"

We had a wonderful meal at this new dinner house on the East end of Athens. Aiden was the topic of conversation most of the evening.

"He's fortunate to have caught it in time. So many men seem to let themselves go, as far as going to the doctor for anything." Morgan said. "I thought he wasn't going to go."

"Well, I got pissed off. He was in this cavern of self-pity. I blew it, I'm afraid. I was pretty mean to him. He was going to sit there and do nothing."

"She let him have it, my Helena," Dimi said with a grin.

"So, when is he going home?"

"Possibly tomorrow," I said.

"I'll bet he can't wait," Morgan commented.

We had some laughs, had a terrific meal, and it was good to see Andreas and Morgan laughing. We shared a cab with the happy couple to the condo. It was a tight squeeze with four of us in the back seat, but it added to the humor of the moment.

Dimi had his arm around my shoulder, helping me to keep from squeezing Morgan out of her seat. The cab was just too small, and we all laughed about the situation. Dimi kept pulling me tighter to him. He'd talk in my ear in low whispers whenever the conversation lapsed. I could hear Andreas speaking in low tones to Morgan; she'd occasionally laugh, breaking the silence.

When our cab slowed to a stop in downtown Athens, we noticed a lot of cars parked around the corners, in the streets, anywhere they would stop, they parked and left their vehicles in the lanes of traffic. We were at a dead standstill for over fifteen minutes. We could hear the driver cursing under his breath in Greek, at the traffic situation.

“What is this?” Dimitris asked the driver. The driver answered in Greek.

“Is celebration for city council. Is election time rally. Big carnival, food, speeches, whole thing for candidates,” was the translation.

“Wow. They go all out, don’t they?” Morgan asked.

“Sometimes, if the elections are a close run match, the bigger the celebration, the more likely they will win the vote,” Andreas said.

Dimitris suddenly opened his door. He stood, digging in his pocket. He paid the taxi driver, said something in Greek, then held his hand out to me.

“Come, we will see what is happening.” I got out of the cab.

“Are you two coming with us? It might be fun,” I asked.

“What the hell, we’re not going anywhere in this cab,” Morgan said. She and Andreas got out and stretched their legs. “I’m all cramped up.”

There was a warm breeze blowing, which made it feel like an Autumn night. We followed the crowd of people headed in the direction of the bright lights, which glowed beyond the wall of tall buildings.

“How far will we have to walk? I’m not wearing shoes for walking very far. These are already starting to rub,” Morgan complained.

“We can take a shortcut through the grounds of the hotel, up ahead. That will cut the walk by a couple of blocks,” Andreas said as he lead the way.

Dimitris had his arm around me as we walked. He leaned his head to mine to say something, and as he did, I stepped up on a curb, hitting my head against his.

“Ouch!” I said in surprise and rubbed my head.

“Oh, Helena, am sorry, my Heart.” He rubbed his chin, and when we got up on the sidewalk, he stopped me, held my face in his hands, and looked at my head.

“Did Dimi hurt my Heart?” He asked.

“No, it’s okay. I’ve got a pretty hard head,” I joked.

“Helena, you joke on pain, but Dimi have hard head too. We make good pair.” He kissed me as we lost sight of Morgan and Andreas.

“Where did they go?” I asked.

“We will find, you will see. This will be fun for us, Helena. We walk! We never do this.”

“It is a beautiful night for it. How’s your head?”

“Opft! Is nothing.” He put his lips to my fingertips. “I see Andreas. They are ahead,” Dimitris said.

“I can’t see them,” I said.

“Ah, Helena, you are too short to see,” he grinned.

“Short? I’ve never been called short in my life.”

“Yes, see how small?” He stood next to me, measuring the top of my head, to an even measure to his collarbone.

“Yeah, well, you’re a little taller wearing those high shoes, but I’m not short.”

“High shoes? Not high shoes.” I was joking, and he had this twinkle in his eyes as he reacted to my pun. I put my arm around his waist as we continued to stroll toward the square. We caught up with Andreas and Morgan at the corner of the block.

“What happened to you? We thought you might have gotten lost,” Morgan said.

“Not lost, got stuck,” Dimitris said.

As we approached the square, we could see Carnival rides, campaign banners, and signs and flags at a podium. The podium had a backdrop of three large Greek flags and metallic streamers in blue and white, the colors of the Greek flag.

On the other side of the square before the park exit was a barker stand. Here the locals could air their political views, complain about the weather, the fishing industry, or anything else. A man was having a Greek tirade, getting a small crowd of passers by to react, as he stood on his box. The comments seemed to have little importance to most of the curious as they paused for a moment, then moved on.

There was a small gathering of children in a grassy area where a puppet

show was taking place, and traditional Greek music played by a man playing the mandolin. We found a place to sit on a brick wall that separated the grass from the cement promenade. We could see most of the action from our perch on this low-rise wall as it rose on a little knoll.

“This is so nice, it reminds me of the old amusement parks at the beach, at home,” I said.

“It is like this? In park with barkers?” Dimi asked.

“Not exactly. I mean the atmosphere, the smell. There’s something about the smell. I don’t know how to explain it; I guess the mixture of hot dogs, popcorn, and the ocean. It’s something that you remember. It reminds me of something from the past.”

“And what do you remember, Helena?” Dimi asked.

“It reminds me of ‘making out’ in the tunnel of love ride, being with friends, and laughing with excitement.”

“Oh, my Helena like to ‘make out’ in tunnel of love!” He kidded.

“I’d like to have had one of those around here; it would make things very interesting,” Andreas said as he looked at Morgan.

“Yeah, I’ll bet! You don’t need a tunnel of love. You do alright without it.” Morgan was blushing. We got a chuckle out of that comment. Dimitris looked at me, eyes smiling and said,

“Dimi would not have let my Helena go off of tunnel of love, we stay on and go ‘round and ‘round.” Then he kissed me and caressed my hand, kissing my fingertips.

It was such a beautiful night, but the thing about the student’s mother and all hushed secrecy was still going through my mind. I had to try to let it go and not let it eat on me.

We were relaxed on our little brick wall and listening to whoever would get up to the soapbox to speak their piece. People were sitting on the lawn, and the park benches along the walkway. I saw a man sitting on a bench with a newspaper up in front of him, covering his face. He just held it there. It seemed odd and out of place. Who reads a newspaper under a tree at night? He once brought the top edge of the paper down enough to be able to see over it if he cranked his neck. He looked in our direction then hid behind the

paper again.

With everything that has happened, this made me uneasy and suspicious of the behavior. I was at a place where I didn't know if I should tell anyone. If I didn't, Dimitris, Morgan, and Andreas could be in danger. If I did tell, Dimitris and Andreas might take off after him, but they had to know.

"Honey, don't look at the person behind the paper. I think he's been watching us," I said.

"Man on bench?" He asked. I nodded in the affirmative. Suddenly, he tightened his grip on my hand and said,

"Stay here." Then he took off in the direction of the bench.

"What's going on? Where's he going?" Morgan asked.

"Someone has been watching us, he's going to....," then we heard,

"What you do here? You follow us?" Dimitris pounced on the man behind the newspaper, pulling him up by the collar and snapping the newspaper away from him. When the paper fell to the ground, three photographs went flying.

We all hurried over to the commotion. I picked up the photos that were scattered, and although it was under park lighting, I could see they were pictures of Morgan, myself, and the brothers: Dimitris, Andreas, and Stefano. I handed them to Dimitris as he was questioning the man behind the newspaper. I took out my cell phone and took a few pictures of this man so that we might compare the face to others in our files. He didn't like his having his picture taken and tried to lunge at me. Dimitris had a good grip on him, although he attempted to grab my phone, I moved back to a safer distance.

"So what do we do now? We can't tow him along with us the rest of the night!" Morgan said, and that was true, what do we do now?

I saw Dimitris search this man. When he found his phone, Dimitris opened the contacts file. There were so many unfamiliar names; it would be useless. The man's wallet had cards and little pieces of paper with notes on them, phone numbers, and names. We confiscated them. Dimi handed me the phone while this man was trying to get loose from the iron grip. I wasn't sure what he wanted me to do with it. The argument continued. I opened the

contacts file, selected “recent” calls, which came up with four contacts. Each name had the number of how many times he was in contact with that number. When I clicked on the first entry, there were eight calls, mostly within the last two hours. The second name had three contact points within one hour. The last two only had one contact each. I copied the first phone number. The name was Marko Yankov. The other number went to Nasir Hakim.

Dimitris saw me copy the numbers. He held out his hand to me, and I gave him the phone. Dimi was in the little man’s face, making sure that he was understood. Then he dropped the phone and stepped on it. He made sure it was unusable. Then he threw the man back to sit on the bench and was warned one more time.

Dimitris took my hand, and we all walked rapidly to the other side of the park and hailed a taxi going in our direction. We didn’t speak until we were at the door of Andreas’ condo.

“I think we can all use a glass of wine,” Andreas said.

“Pour me one too, Andreas,” Morgan said.

I could see how upset Dimitris was. He was muttering to himself and pacing the floor. I knew this was going to be trouble, but there was no way that I was going to ignore the threat that presented itself.

“Dimi, Dimi. Come here, Sweetie, and sit with me,” I asked.

“This man will be trouble,” he said.

“Tell us what happened. You guys always go off in Greek, and we can’t understand what you say. What happened?” Morgan was shaken, and blunt.

Dimitris cleared his throat, finished his wine, and began to tell us what was said. He started by telling us that this man was instructed to follow us. He was only to follow and nothing else. He said the pictures were only to make sure that he followed the right people. He wouldn’t divulge who instructed him to do this. He would give no names. When he would not answer, that’s when Dimitris took the phone and handed it to me. Destroying the phone was to give us time to grab a taxi before he reported to his boss.

“So, who is his boss?” Morgan asked.

“Maybe we find on notes,” Dimitris took the notes and scraps of paper that were in the wallet and put them on the coffee table.

“Honey, I took down the phone numbers and names of the recent calls on his cell phone. Maybe it’s this guy...” I looked at the note I had made and then pronounced, “Marko Yankov.”

“Enough! Enough of this for tonight. We put all away and my Helena to call Sahj in morning. Then we see if this is anything. We forget for tonight.” Dimitris laid down the law, and we all agreed that this is what we’ll do.

Andreas and Dimitris went out to the side balcony, joking around and kidding each other, as brothers do, but I think that it was more to lighten the mood so that we wouldn’t worry, and relieve some of the tension.

As we were discussing Morgan’s plans in her latest commissioned job, Andreas popped his head in the bedroom door. “Be right back, going to the store.” Then the door closed and locked.

“You two have an anniversary coming up, don’t you?” Morgan asked me. “It’s hard to believe that it’s already been almost a year.”

“I know, it seems like I was fretting over all of the wedding hassles, now they’re a thing of the past. It’s hard to believe that we’ve been here over a year!”

“I know. I was talking to Rena last week about your wedding and all the headaches you had with it. Then it dawned on me that we’ve been here a year and four months! Where did the time go?” She was as surprised as I was to think about the amount of time that has passed.

“Time flies when you’re having fun!” I said with a twist of irony. “Time goes by faster when you’re happy. You and Andreas have been getting along pretty well these days, huh?”

“Yeah, he’s been a sweetheart.” She looked out the door to be sure the men weren’t back from the store. “But you know, he hasn’t mentioned getting married in at least a month.”

“You didn’t want him to bug you about it, did you? He’s probably just giving you space,” I said.

“I know, and that was fine, to a point, but now I wonder.”

“You sound like me! You know that whenever you decide to mention that he hasn’t said anything, you’ll never hear the end of it, and you’ll get hostile

again.”

“Hostile? Was I hostile before?” She asked.

“Well, yeah! Don’t you remember? You said you were being suffocated.”

“Oh, right. I guess I’d better think about this a little.”

“Yeah, think about setting a date,” I said. She looked at me, and we both laughed.

“Oh, that reminds me, Rena found another box of yours in the loft room. I brought it home. It’s over here.” She dragged a box out from the closet. I opened it; it was more clothes that I wondered where they went. They were missing for so long. I had almost forgotten about them.

“Hello, we are back, where is my Helenaaaa?” Dimi sang as they came in the front door.

“We’re in here,” I called. “I guess we should see what they’re up to, eh?”

“Definitely” Morgan agreed

“You didn’t have to hide, my sweet,” Andreas said to Morgan.

“Hide? We weren’t hiding. We were talking. I gave Helen her box. We were looking through it. Where did you go?” She asked.

“But, look at what we got.” Morgan and I walked over to the refrigerator, and Dimi opened the door. There was a big platter of Lasagna on the shelf.

“Ooo, where did you get that? You really shouldn’t tempt me with this kind of food. Also, Sweetie, it’s not on your diet either.”

“This woman is going to make Dimi eat the carrots and celery. No more good stuff for this poor man.”

“Ohh, Dimi, you can still have the good stuff.” I put my arms around him, and he surrendered to me, kissing my neck, and when it really started to get interesting. Andreas said,

“Hey, how about grabbing us a beer and closing the refrigerator?” I looked up to Dimi and said

“Would you like to grab me a beer?”

“Helena, Dimi would love to grab the beers.”

We were having a great time with Andreas and Morgan. The weather cooperated, and the carnival was a surprise. We were talking about some of

the funny things that happen in life, funny or embarrassing, and how these things that you think would only happen to you and that you'll never live down, actually are a common thread in one way or another. We have all had similar experiences and knowing that you can now laugh about it, and share in the laughter with those you love, gave us all an insight into the vulnerable days of each other's past.

It seemed that after the laughing, came the things that weren't so funny, but still stuck in our memories. After the mood seemed to become solemn, it was inevitable that what happened earlier would raise itself again in the discussion.

"Andreas and Dimi decide, we leave this place. Go to live on other island or the United States. Not safe here for our women," Dimitris announced.

"What?" Morgan was shocked that Andreas would go along with this.

"We're not leaving again, Dimi, we went through this before," I stated.

"I can't leave, I've got jobs to do, and I'm just getting my business going. I won't go!" Morgan insisted.

"How can we protect you here? It's not safe for you," Andreas tried to reason.

"Dimi, this isn't what we want, and what makes you think that moving is going to make any difference?"

"Before we decide, we tell Sahj, whatever he say, we do," Dimitris said.

"I'm sorry to break this up, but I've got to get to the hospital first thing tomorrow."

"Yes, we will go to bed," Dimi said.

"Well, good night, we'll see you in the morning," I said.

A Matter of Trust



“Hold out hand.” He opened the bottle of aspirin and poured the correct dose into my hand. “Tomorrow to see Aiden, you must feel good. Not to be hanging over.” I took offense to this.

“I haven’t had that much to drink. You’re coming too, aren’t you?” He filled my glass with juice on my bedside table, then placed his hand on my cheek and said,

“Dimi have to see lawyer at 10:45 am. I will stay as long as possible.” He looked in my eyes, and I must have shown my irritation, with the student scenario, the secrecy, and now this patronizing treatment. It must have been written on my face. “My Heart, we go to the hospital, stay to know when Aiden to be released. If ready in morning, we take Aiden to his home. If not ready, Dimi will meet with lawyer then be back to hospital. Yes?” He searched my eyes for an agreement.

“Are you coming to bed?” I asked, slightly frustrated. He kept looking at me with sympathetic eyes.

“Yes, I come to bed.” He took my hand as he looked at me with those deep, dark eyes, kissed my hand and went into the shower. I was asleep when he got out. I didn’t feel him get into bed. I barely remember that he kissed my shoulder and whispered “kaliniktha.”

I awoke early as Dimitris was lying close behind me, and when I moved, my

hair was pinned under him. As I lay awake, I thought about the day ahead. I wondered about leaving Aiden alone, once we got him home. I also wondered about the business with the lawyer and the incident in the park. The sudden need for seeing the attorney, Dimitris, never said. I just hoped that last night's episode isn't a factor in the attorney visit.

I glanced at Dimitris' arm around me. His light olive complexion had very few small freckles. Surprising, and very sexy, his hair on his arms was not massive and had no hair on his fingers. For a man with such a thick mane, it would be logical to expect him to have the dark follicles everywhere. I remember the first time I saw him shirtless. I was pleasantly surprised at his muscular back, free from decoration.

Dimitris was beginning to stir, and I had some questions on his legal meeting today.

"Kalimera, my Heart. How long you awake?" He asked.

"I don't know how long I've been awake. For a while, I guess."

"You no wake me? Why?"

"You were sleeping, and I wasn't ready to get up yet."

"We should dress, we will leave early for hospital, and we need breakfast."

"I know, but I was wondering why you are seeing the attorney today. Is it something I should know about?" I asked.

"We will consult on what to do with properties, family home, maybe sign over to Angelo, lease on Kefalonia house, what to do there. Is just consultation, get idea of how to dispose of these or should keep. You should be with your Dimi, but Aiden need you." He said.

"I worry about what's going to happen with Aiden after he's home. If he's weak and still sick from the chemo, how can I leave him alone?" I asked.

Dimitris turned onto his back, looking up to the ceiling. He was thinking. I could see that he didn't want to interfere with my promise to help. I had no doubt that he wanted to do the right thing for Aiden, but that meant that I might have to stay with Aiden for a day or two.

I waited for Dimitris to say something. I could see he was mulling it over, not wanting to come to the obvious conclusion.

"This man would have to be fool, to have wife stay alone in house with old

lover.” He paused, then kissed my palm. He got out of bed and began to dress. I waited for him to finish thinking about this. It was a hard realization for him to accept that he had no choice.

I began to get out of bed, putting on my jeans and shoes. Dimitris took my hand and crouched next to my chair.

“My Heart, if Aiden need you, you must stay. We will see, ask how well he feels, maybe no need to stay,” he said, then kissed my hand. I put my arm around his neck and said,

“If he is well enough, there’s no reason for me to stay. I wish I hadn’t committed to this without realizing its impact.”

“This you do with kind heart, no regrets for kindness. We will hope for Aiden to feel well enough.” He stood, and covering my hand with his, as he said to me, “We will call hospital for time of release. Come, now we make breakfast.”

“Good morning. How’d you sleep?” Morgan asked.

“Well, really well, considering. Why are you up so early?” I asked.

“I’ve got to meet with this lady who makes lamp shades. She’s supposed to be pretty good, and I need a good source for custom lampshades.”

“Wow! If she’s good, I have some lamps that need some help,” I said. As Dimitris poured my coffee, I said, “I’ve tried recovering lamp shades before. It’s no fun. There’s a trick to doing them right.”

“I know, I’ve tried before, and it never turns out right.”

“Where is Andreas?” Dimitris asked.

“He went down to check the mailbox. It hasn’t been checked since the day before yesterday.” Morgan explained.

“Have you heard anything from Amy?” I asked.

“That daughter of mine, she calls every time she fights with Richard. She’s been hinting around about coming out here to live when she leaves him.”

“Is she leaving him?” I asked.

“Well, she threatens to leave him all the time. He’s so used to her saying it, that it’ll be a shock when she finally does!” Morgan smiled. “It’s my luck to have such a wonderful daughter marry such a dud!”

“They say love is blind,” I said.

“Not that blind!” We both chuckled.

“My Morgana makes me forget to check the mail. There are a few letters for you, babe. The rest are bills, and business statements, I’ll get to those later,” he said. “What’s wrong?”

“What are these?” Morgan asked.

“Letters for you, open,” Andreas said.

“I don’t recognize the writing,” she said as she opened the first envelope. “Wow! Look at this!” She handed a check to Andreas and began to read the attached letter. “I can’t believe this.”

“What is it?” I asked.

“It’s a commission. It’s from the executor of the estate of the former Prince of Greece. It says that they want me to decorate the North wing of the Palace of Apollo.” She suddenly went pale and looked frightened. She sat at the table and trembled. I could see that she was shaken but excited.

“How much is the check?”

“The letter says: ‘This is a deposit on your fee. All expenses incurred in refurbishing the North wing will be fully paid upon receipt of billing. Please contact the estate solicitor at your earliest convenience.’ The check is for forty thousand Euros. Forty thousand! I think I’m going to faint!”

“Morgan, this is wonderful! Do you know what this means?” I asked.

“It means I’ve got to be out of my mind!” She said.

“No, it means that you can have a showroom, hire a full-time staff, cater to the rich and famous!” I tried to encourage her with a little humor without scaring her.

“I’m gonna need to do some thinking on this.”

“First, before you talk yourself out of it, arrange to view the area they want to have done. You have to do that anyway! You can bounce ideas off of me anytime if you want. I know you can do this, you have to psych yourself up and take it one step at a time.”

“I wish I had the confidence in me that others do. I think I can do it, but it’s overwhelming to think of it. I mean, it will be a huge job and an important one. I can’t afford to make any mistakes.”

"You need to keep calm. There is never a rush for perfection, my dear." I hoped she would see her potential and know that she could do the job. Dimitris came back into the room, pouring more coffee for us.

"Aiden will finish chemo at 1 pm so, Dimi will take Helena to lawyer, we finish then take Aiden home. He will have chemo at 9:30 am or 10:00 am; they say he won't release until Doctor finish, maybe not until 4 pm," he said.

"Okay. Did you see the commission Morgan got in the mail? It's from the former Prince's estate."

"Yes, she will do good job." He wouldn't take his eyes off of me, as I could see what he was thinking. My husband is an open book. I knew that he thought that I might have to stay with Aiden.

The whole situation just seemed to be a bad plot twist. Any other man would forbid his wife to have anything to do with a man in her past. Aiden had worked his way into the fabric of the Patakinis clan like he was of the same blood. It was as though a relative had become ill, and you don't turn your back on a relative. I had to be there for Aiden. He had no family but his sons, who were strangers to him. How could I say no?

"Dimi? I have to go to Pete's house. He borrowed some equipment and never brought it back. Do you want to go? I might need some help," Andreas asked.

"If we come back soon, we have lawyer appointment."

"We can leave now; we'll be back in about an hour."

"We will go, my Heart, and will be back soon." He gave me a quick peck on the cheek, then they left.

"That was sudden," I said to Morgan.

"He's been trying to catch that guy at home, but he kept missing him. Maybe if Dimi helps him load that stuff, he can get it back."

"Morgan, can I ask you something?" I asked.

"Sure, what?"

"If Aiden is still pretty sick, I might have to stay with him. I'm worried that Dimi is eventually going to flip out over it. Do you think Dimi can stay here tonight if I end up with Aiden?"

"Geez, Helen, how do you manage to get yourself in these situations? Does

Dimi know that you might have to stay?” She asked.

“Yes, he said I should stay if he’s still too sick to be alone. But I’ve noticed him looking at me, and I know what he’s thinking.”

“Well, if Aiden is too sick to be alone, then there’s no way Aiden would try anything.”

“I know, Dimi understands that too, but I think down deep he’s thinking that my sympathies will lead me astray. You know what I mean, don’t you?” I asked.

“He thinks that Aiden will work his way back to you through sympathy? He doesn’t believe that, does he?”

“The way he looks at me, yes, I believe he thinks there is that possibility,” I said.

“Too bad there’s no way to get out of it. I mean, if he’s really sick, it would be mean leaving him alone. I see where you’re at, but Dimi should understand. I don’t think he’d hold it over your head.”

“Oh, I know he wouldn’t either, but I feel like I’m taking advantage of his good nature. I don’t feel good about this whole thing. I’m afraid that Dimi might be hurt about it, and hold that inside, eating on him. I don’t want to hurt him over this, you know?”

“Well, you can’t feel good about anything when it comes to cancer, but you’ve already talked to Dimi, he should tell you what is on his mind, before you go.”

“I know he doesn’t like it at all. I heard him say that he’d have to be a fool to let his wife stay in the house of an ex-lover.”

“He said that to you? Why is he letting you do it then?” She asked.

“He was talking to himself, but even with the way he feels about it, he knows I have to go. I just don’t want to hurt Dimi by going, knowing how he feels.”

“If he feels that strongly about it, he shouldn’t let you go.” She was right, but I knew that he would never forbid me to do something once I’ve committed.

“He would never forbid me from helping Aiden; he knows how desperate Aiden was before he decided to have the surgery. I told Aiden I’d be there for him.”

“It’s too bad you can’t tell his sons the situation. Maybe he could stay with

one of them while he recuperates,” Morgan suggested.

“I guess he told them about his cancer. He never heard from either one of them. It’s such a shame,” I said. “Well, I’d better get ready to go, we’re going to the lawyer this morning.”

“Yeah, I’ve got to get going, too.”

Since we were to bring Aiden home, Andreas gave us the use of a car. We spent more than an hour with the lawyer. I was glad I came as I understood more thoroughly and was able to give my input to the discussion. Although nothing definite was decided on, I was now aware of what was going on with this part of Dimi’s estate. Even though Dimitris kept reminding me that the Kefalonia house was mine to decide what I want to do with it, I left it in his hands to make any decisions. I only added a comment or two but asked for many things to be explained to me. Dimi understood everything and directed the attorney in how things should be done and handled everything in an orderly and efficient manner. I was mostly in the dark and hoped I didn’t embarrass him in front of the attorney.

“What, my Heart?” He asked as I couldn’t help but watch him in awe. “Do you have question?”

“No, I can’t think of anything,” I said. He tapped my wrist as things wrapped up, and we finished the meeting.

When we left the office, Dimitris checked his watch. We had to drive almost ten miles to the hospital, and we weren’t going to be there until after 3:00 pm.

“I’d better call the hospital and make sure that he knows we’re on our way,” I said to Dimitris before we got to the car.

“How to get Aiden to his chemo later in week?” Dimi asked.

“Unless he’s very ill and can’t drive, I guess there’s the taxi.”

“How long will he be with chemo?”

“I don’t know. I think six weeks. If he is terribly weak, will you stay?” He didn’t take his eyes off the road but answered,

“We will see.”

“Isn’t his sofa a pull out double bed?”

“Don’t know. He may not want man around to see him so sick. Some feel

small in front of men if sick and weak. He may feel bad of this embarrassment.”

“Oh, I see,” I said. I sat for the ride to the hospital, thinking of what Dimitris said. I didn’t think of the male pride element. Men always seem to have to appear so “macho” in front of other men. I placed the call to the hospital switchboard, where the operator connected me to Aiden’s room. It rang and rang, but no answer. I was soon back to the switchboard. I asked if he had already been released. “Not yet” was the answer. It was suggested that he was still in the chemo lounge.

Dimitris was fairly quiet while he drove. I was starting to get very depressed about this. I know that what I’m doing is making him feel bad, which in turn, made me feel bad. I didn’t know what to say to him.

“We are here. Not too late,” Dimitris said.

“He was still in the chemo lounge.”

I had the reception clerk check his room to see if he was back. He was there, getting his belongings together. “You may go up to his room. There’s only the release that’s holding him here.”

Dimitris had his hands in his pockets. I took his arm as we walked to the elevator.

“Sugar? Are you okay?” I asked. He didn’t look at me; he just watched the elevator floor counter.

“I am fine.” He said in a distant voice of contemplation. When we got into the elevator, I turned and stood in front of him. I put my arms around him and tried to get him to look at me. He reached for the button to put us on our way to the third floor.

I didn’t say anything, I just held him. I put my head against his chest. He put his arms loosely around me, not very enthusiastic, but at least, he did respond.

When we got to Aiden’s room, he had his things in order, ready to go. He was sitting on a chair in the corner with his head resting on his hands. He didn’t see us come in.

“Hi, how are you feeling?” I asked as we approached.

“Hi. Hello Dimitris. I feel like shit. I wish they’d get the release ready so that I can get out of here.” He suddenly got up, ran to the bathroom, and

vomited. When he came out, he was white as a sheet. He looked weak and shaky.

“Still are feeling sick, Aiden?” Dimitris asked.

“It’s terrible. It goes away after several hours, but comes back with every treatment.”

“If you didn’t have to keep coming back for treatment, we’d take you to our house to recuperate,” I said.

“Yes, Aiden. How long to continue with chemo?” Dimitris asked.

“I don’t know how much more of this I’ll be able to take. I asked the Doc this morning. He said four weeks then off it for, I guess two weeks, then he’ll test me and adjust the next round of it. It depends on how I respond.”

“You’re so pale,” I said.

“Yeah, it’s kicking my butt.”

“Do they say all Cancer gone?”

“They’re pretty sure they got it all, but sometimes I wonder. This chemo seems excessive if the surgery was a success.”

“Just precaution, to be sure,” Dimi said.

“I know, I’m just not in the mood to go through much more of it.” He got up again and went to the bathroom.

The nurse came in to release him into my care. “Okay, Mr. Kairne, sign the release...here. Your doctor gave you a prescription for nausea if you need it, and you’ll need to come in daily for the rest of the week for your chemo. Your doctor also wants to see you next week, so you will need to make an appointment.” She handed him copies of his release and his doctor’s instructions on home care.

When we wheeled him outside to the car, he couldn’t keep his eyes open with the glare from the sun.

“I’m getting nauseous,” he said.

“Do you want to wait before we leave?” I asked.

“No, let’s go,” he struggled to keep from getting sick in the car.

“We will hurry, Aiden, hold on.” Dimitris drove as fast as possible, which wasn’t very fast with all the traffic. When we stopped at a signal, Aiden had to open the door, leaned out, and vomited.

“I’m so sorry, you guys,” he said.

“It’s okay, we’ll get you home soon,” I said. I reached my hand back between the bucket seats to touch his shoulder as he leaned forward with his head bent down over his knees. I could hear him panting. Dimitris had a worried look on his face. It was a pitiful sight.

As I patted his shoulder, he seemed to calm down a little and catch his breath. He took my hand from his shoulder and leaned against the curve of my fingers, placing them against his cheek.

“God, I wouldn’t wish this on anyone. It feels like the worst hangover ever,” he said with a quivering voice. I looked at Dimitris. He put his hand on my thigh, a gesture of comfort that reassured me of his consent, his reinforcement of my commitment.

“Aiden, you will not be alone. You do not worry on this. My Helena will take care of you. Then you feel better,” Dimi said. I wanted to hug him for his empathy and generosity in this situation, but with him behind the wheel and Aiden still holding my hand, I could only try to smile at him and mouth the words, “I love you.”

We got Aiden settled at home and in his bed. I noticed all the hair loss, which seemed much worse than the other day. He had a receding hairline anyway, but this made it much worse, and I know that he was self-conscious about it.

“Can you be alone for about a half-hour? I want to go to the market before it gets too late.” I asked.

“Sure, I’ll be okay, I’m going to nap for a while anyway. I’ve got some money on the bookcase.”

“You rest, and we’ll be right back. Is there anything, in particular, you’d like us to pick up?” I asked.

“Soda,” he said. “I haven’t had anything cold to drink since I went into the hospital.”

Dimitris and I left the house, and as we closed the front door, we both paused for a silent, deep breath. I put my arms around him, grateful for him being such a caring man.

“My Heart, are you alright?”

"I'm better with you here. You're going to stay, aren't you?" I asked.

"You must stay, for he is too sick. You do for him. Dimi will stay with Andreas," he said as he closed my door to the car. When he got in, I asked, "You don't want to stay? I could use your support."

"No, Helena, Dimi would be in the way. Is too awkward. He need care. You will see to his needs. Dimi will go, is best this man do not watch."

"I see." I was disappointed and angry with myself. I had to do what I had promised. He understood, and I was glad for that.

We went through the market like robots. Everything was chosen without discussion or comment. On the way back to the house, there were few words spoken. When he turned off the ignition, he sat behind the wheel for a heavy sigh. He reached for my hand and said

"You will call Dimi, tell me how it goes? This will not be for long, he will recover and all back to normal. Now, I only say, if my Helena can leave her home to care for sick man, then Dimi only sad to be apart from my wife. It is kind thing you do, so, Dimi will remember this." He kissed my hand, then came around to open my door.

We brought in the groceries, and I started a pot of soup. Aiden was still asleep, so Dimi and I had a little time together. We turned on the tv, and as the soup warmed, we sat in each other's arms, just being close.

"Helena, what you think if Dimi go back to drive taxi?" He asked. I was shocked. I thought he enjoyed his work and wanted to continue it.

"You don't like your work? What started you thinking about driving again?" I asked.

"Best thing ever happen to Dimi, when drive, and then to meet my Heart," he said. I waited for more.

"And?"

"Don't know," he shrugged. I looked into his eyes.

"Dimi, I want you to do whatever makes you happy. If you aren't happy with your work, you should change. I don't want you to feel you have to do one thing over another. Do what you love to do, or you won't be happy."

"Can not get paid for what Dimi like to do." He kissed my temple and

sighed.

“Sweetie, after this, let’s stay home and finish the garden. You can get back to your lab, finish whatever you’re in the middle of, and just relax. It won’t be long, and we might be called to go to Zurich. Then, if you want to drive taxi, you can,” I suggested.

“I no think to drive taxi could bring back so much happiness. We keep as memory.”

“You know what I love about you?” I asked.

“Tell me,” he said as he used the remote to turn down the tv.

“I love how you remember our meeting, the little taxi, and hold it dear. I love how kind and generous you’ve been about Aiden and my having to take care of him. You’ve been so good about the whole thing. I love how you put up with me. I know that I’ve caused you to wonder why you married someone so emotional sometimes.”

“No, my Heart, Dimi, never wonder on that.”

“Shh, I’m not done.”

“Go again.”

“I love how you surprise me. For no reason at all, you’ll find ways to surprise me. I love how you are so generous with my family. And they love you, too.”

Just then, we heard a moan from the bedroom. Aiden was getting sick again, and I had to do something to help him.

“I’d better get some soda; maybe it’ll help settle his stomach,” I said as I rose from the sofa.

“I will go; you will have your work.” Dimitris stood and was going to leave.

“Wait for me. I’ll be right back.” Dimitris went to the stove to turn down the soup and waited.

“Aiden, how are you feeling?” I could see he was pale and miserable. He had been sweating. His clothes and the bed sheets were soaked.

“I feel like shit,” he said.

I went to his dresser and found some pajamas. “Come on, get up, and change out of those wet clothes. Throw some water on your face, and I’ll change your bed. Then I’ll bring you a glass of cola. Come on, change your clothes.” I handed him the pajamas, and he made his way to the bathroom in

a hunched over walk.

I went into the hall closet and got all clean sheets. I saw Dimitris standing in the living room, waiting for me.

“Dimi? I’ve got my work cut out for me, but I wish you’d stay,” I said.

“No, my Heart, I will go. Will you call?”

“Yes, I’ll call.” As I kissed him, he put his arms around me. He held me in his arms, and we rocked in a sweet rotation. “I love you, Dimi.”

“S’agapo, my Heart.”

He left me there to strip the bed and remake it with fresh linens. Aiden came back into the room as I was changing the pillowcases.

“God, I wish this queasiness would go away,” he said weakly. He was almost out of breath, going from the bathroom back to the bedroom. I stepped aside and opened up the bed. He got in, and I placed the other pillow behind his head.

“Are you comfortable?” I asked, shifting the pillow.

“Better.” I started to go from the room. “Where are you going?”

“I’m going to check on the soup, and I’ll pour you a glass of cola. I’ll be right back.” When I handed him the cold drink, I said, “Maybe this will help soothe your stomach.” He took a sip.

“Ahh, that’s good. They wouldn’t bring me anything but that milky food drink at the hospital. I was dying for something like this.” He took a drink. “Please sit, I want to thank you and Dimi for putting up with me. I know how much you’ve gone out of your way, and I appreciate it.” He was running out of breath. It didn’t take much to exhaust him. He laid his head back on the pillow, his eyes were circled with dark rings, and his hazel eyes almost seemed to be a pale gray. He was weak but fought the tiredness he had, which made it worse.

“You really need to rest now,” I said.

“I guess I should,” he conceded.

“Do you want me to close the drapes so that you can sleep?”

“Yeah, thanks. Did Dimitris already leave?”

“Yes, he’s worried about you. We all had quite a jolt with this. I’m glad the worst of it is over with, now you have to concentrate on getting back your

strength.”

I turned to ask him something but noticed that he was asleep. I turned off the bedside lamp and quietly left the room.

It would be dark soon, and I was beginning to wonder what I would do with myself. I was left with either the TV or the phone to occupy my time.

I saw that Dimi had turned down the soup on the stove. I called him after I was sure that Aiden would sleep.

“Helena, Dimi missing you. How is Aiden?”

“He’s sleeping. He’s having a hard time of it, but if I can get him to eat some soup, he might feel better.”

“He no eat yet?”

“No, he’s been sleeping a lot,” I said.

“Do you talk to doctor for Aiden’s care?”

“No, I haven’t had time to think about it. I was going to serve Aiden some soup when I saw he fell asleep, so I called you.”

“Dimi will call, my Heart, find out about care, and then call you. We all wish Aiden to recover quickly.”

“I know, Sugar.”

“Dimi call old Petros, he feed dogs and chickens. I say he could take eggs for his trouble, so he is happy for that,” I chuckled. “Where you sleep tonight, Helena?”

“There’s another bedroom, but I think it’s better I sleep on the sofa. I’d be able to hear him if he’s having trouble.”

“You no have nightgown, what will you wear?”

“I might have to sleep in my clothes.”

“We did not think of comfort for my Helena. Maybe Dimi bring one if need tomorrow.”

“Maybe I won’t need to stay. I’m hoping he’ll feel better tomorrow. Sweetie?”

“Yes, my Heart.”

“I wish you were here.”

“I will tell you a thing, my Heart.”

“Okay.”

“Dimi, talk to Angelo today. Angelo will not understand us. He wonder why my Heart would go to other man in hospital bed and care for him while husband sit home.”

“What did you tell him?” I asked.

“I say to him that he never will have one like my Helena because he has a ‘macho’ fever. He do not trust his woman from his sight. Is sad.”

“Well, Dimi, you are very special. I keep telling you that you are not the average man.”

“My Heart, Dimi know what is in your heart. It would not be my Helena to turn back on Aiden. If you did not help, Dimi wonder why not, because is not you. You have the compassion for others, so you help. S’agapo, my love.”

“I love you, too, Dimi. So what is new with Angelo?”

“He ask about all friends of my Helena, from Christmas. He say he like all American women you bring. He say he have a ‘field-day’ on Christmas.”

“He did?”

“What is field day?” He asked.

“I think he meant it like he had a great time with all the women around.”

“Ah, Angelo love to have the women. He will never change. He like American woman better, I think.”

“Why better? Better than what, Greek women?”

“Yes, the Greek woman not so quiet, more demand.”

“Demand?”

“Um, know what to want and will get,” he said, but he was searching for words.

“Spoiled?” I asked.

“No, not spoiled, but, oh, want to be pleased.”

“I think they call that ‘high maintenance,’” I said. “Angelo doesn’t think we’re loud-mouthed, know-it-all tourists?”

“Not so much,” he laughed.

“Angelo needs to find someone older than him. He’s still a little.... Dimi, I have to go. I think Aiden is awake. Will you call me later?”

“Will wake Aiden?” He asked.

“I think if I partially close his door, you can call me on my cell,” I said.

“Yes, I will call. S’agapo.”

“S’agapo, Dimi.”

The rest of the day was agonizing. Aiden never complained about the surgery, although I could tell that it gave him pain as he would move about to find comfort. Then, he was either in the bathroom getting sick, or he was asleep. He would try to come into the living room, panting with each step, until I had to help him back to bed to get more rest. He looked ashen and weak. The dark circles under his eyes were deep and made them seem sunken. When he’d look at me, his hazel eyes were faded from the spark they used to hold. The whites of his eyes were grayed, and he seemed to have lost his will to fight. I warmed the soup and tried to get him to sip the broth. After a few sips, he would not take more and soon was back in the bathroom. I was afraid that if he couldn’t keep anything down, he would dehydrate. I called the hospital cancer clinic for advice.

“Is this Mrs. Kairne?” The medical technician asked.

“I’m taking care of Mr. Kairne. He hasn’t been able to keep anything down, not even water.” I was told that Aiden had a choice before he left the hospital, to have a prescription for nausea filled, or if he wanted to fill it at a location nearer to him. He took the written script, but it needed to be filled.

I retrieved the booklet and instructions for caregivers, and there, too, was the prescription.

“Aiden, I’ll have to use your truck to fill this prescription. Can I leave you alone for a half-hour?” I asked.

“Where are you going?”

“You need to get this prescription filled for nausea. I need your keys.”

“Oh,...don’t go. I’ll be alright.”

“You’ve got to have these. Where are the keys?” He finally pointed to the sideboard next to the doorway to the hall.

“I’ll be back as soon as possible. You have my cell number, so I’m not far away. Just try to rest. Okay? I’ll leave some soda next to the bed, try to sip it, just a little at a time. I’ll be right back.”

I hurried to the pharmacy and was lucky that there wasn't a line. It would be twenty minutes before it was going to be ready. It was already after 7 pm. I grabbed a couple of granola bars and paid for them at the pharmacy counter. While I waited, I called Dimitris.

"Helena? What is wrong?"

"Nothing, I just wanted to talk."

"You give Dimi fright, my Helena. This man so alone for wife. Morgana and Andreas say Dimi to drive them nuts. Not to come without Helena."

"What did you do?" I laughed.

"I do nothing! Dimi only say how much missing my Helena. Then, say 'my Helena such a soft heart to care for sick man'.....and say how this man 'so proud to have such a wife,' how Angelo no understand. Morgana go to fly off into rant, then Andreas say if Dimi will not stop, Dimi will have to only come to see them with Helena."

"Oh, Dimi, you are so funny," I chuckled.

"Not to be funny, my Heart! How was afternoon with Aiden?"

"It was rough. I felt so sorry for Aiden. I don't know how much more he can take. I hope this prescription helps him."

"He must be reminded of beauty of life. He will be inspired by my Helena. You will make him see."

"Sugar, I miss you. I miss your arms around me and the smell of your skin. I miss not having you next to me."

"Ahh, do not do this, my Heart. If you do this to this man, Dimi will have to come there and bring my Helena home."

"Well, you can't do that yet, Sweetheart."

"When will my bride come to me?"

"He had a terrible day today, and last night he didn't sleep. If this medication doesn't help, I don't know. I might have to put him back in the hospital. He hasn't eaten anything much to speak of, so I can't leave until he's eating."

"He will go tomorrow for chemo?" He asked.

"He doesn't want to, but, yes, he has to go again tomorrow."

"10 am?"

"Yes, are you going to take us?"

“I will be there early.”

“I hope he’ll go. He was giving up, and he’s so weak. I’ll need you there. Now, I’ve got to go, Aiden might be trying to call. I’ll see you tomorrow.”

“S’agapo.”

By 7 am, we were waiting for the coffee, dressed, and trying to be ready for his 10 am appointment.

“How are you this morning? Your color is a little better,” I said.

“My stomach is better. I thought I’d try some coffee, even though I can’t smell it,” he said.

“That’s a good sign.” We sat at the table with the coffee, and I noticed that Aiden wouldn’t look right at me. “What’s the matter? I must look like shit this morning.”

“No, no, I just, well, I didn’t mean to keep you awake all night, being sick.” He took my hand and said, “you have been so kind to me. I don’t know if I would have wanted to continue if it weren’t for you.” Seeing him so sad, with his hair coming out in clumps, I felt a tear go down my cheek.

“I’d better finish getting ready, Dimi will be here any time now.”

When Dimitris arrived at the house, Aiden opened the door. They greeted each other with a brotherly hug.

“Aiden, you are looking stronger today,” he said.

“I think I might make it after all.”

When I came out of the hallway, I saw Dimitris talking to Aiden. When he saw me, he came to me.

“There is my Helena,” he put his arms around me and kissed my cheek. “I miss you,” he said.

“You’re right on time. We haven’t eaten anything yet. Maybe we could get breakfast?”

“None for me, if I eat before I get the chemo, I’ll really get sick,” Aiden said.

“But you must eat,” encouraged Dimitris.

“Maybe he should wait, Dimi,” eating probably wouldn’t be a good idea for Aiden.

“You both should eat, maybe I’ll try a little toast.”

After a short breakfast and a little to eat, we went to the hospital. While Aiden was being hooked up to the chemotherapy bags, I ducked out to talk to the nurse.

“His dose is going to be smaller today, only one bag. He might not get the nausea as he did at the higher doses.” To hear this was such a relief.

When I returned, Aiden was seated in the recliner, and Dimitris was next to him. They were talking and laughing like they were best friends. I went over and stood by Dimitris’ chair, politely waiting for them to stop laughing. Dimitris reached my hand, kissed it, and asked if I wanted to share the lounge.

“No, thank you, I can sit over there. I asked the nurse about that nausea medicine. She said that you might not need it since you’re only getting one bag now.”

“Dimitris, you have an angel there.” He sat back and rested his eyes. Dimi had a sparkle in his eyes. He took my hand and led me across the room to another lounge chair, an overstuffed Barko lounge type chair, and made me sit. He pulled up a small metal rolling stool and sat next to me, then leaning over to speak quietly, he said,

“We will be able to go home today. Aiden will be well enough, yes?”

“I don’t know. If he’d only eat some real food, he’s got to be able to eat before I can come home.”

“But he is doing good now,” he said, looking at me with the look of ‘you’ve done enough.’ I didn’t say anything. I knew that if we got into a discussion over it, he might get upset. He had been so good and patient with this, that I couldn’t debate him on it now.

When Aiden was allowed to leave, we drove back to his house.

“Come in. We’ll have a beer or something. I can’t let you get away without me showing my gratitude.”

“Aiden, I don’t think you should have any alcohol with the chemo. It might make you sick again.”

“Right, I didn’t think about that. I feel so much better this time,” he smiled.

“Like Helena say, it does get easier, Aiden, but not to rush the beers,” Dimitris suggested.

“Hello, anybody home?” Rena announced her arrival.

“Reenie, what you do here?” Dimitris stood and gave his sister-in-law a hug.

“Aiden, how are you doing, boy? I tried to get here earlier, but couldn’t leave.”

“What a surprise. I’m doing better, much better,” he said.

“His color is better too, I think he’s improved a lot,” I said as I hugged Rena.

“Well, I’m free for the rest of the week. Stefano had to go to an Athens University Geological meeting or something like that, I didn’t pay much attention, but anyway, I brought some food, and I’m going to stay with Aiden so you can go home with Dimi. Andreas said to tell you, Dimi, that you are too pathetic to go back to their house alone. So, here I am.”

We were ready to leave after a half-hour of catching up with Rena, and we said our farewells to Aiden. He couldn’t thank us enough for helping him and vowed to repay us one day soon. We drove back to Andreas and Morgan’s home to return their car. Morgan had gone to Symi to look for some fabric she had seen there, so we thanked Andreas for letting Dimi drive him nuts and had him drop us off at the airport. We were hoping to catch a quick flight home.

We sat in the airport for two hours before we found a flight that would accommodate us. I was so exhausted. It was like the entire ordeal had hit me at once. I couldn’t concentrate on what was said, and I seemed to be in a daze.

“I’m sorry, Dimi, what did you say?”

“Did Aiden keep you awake last night?” He repeated.

“Yeah, he did. Every time I’d drop off, he’d wake me up. I didn’t get any rest until early in the morning when he finally settled down.” I nuzzled into Dimitris’ neck, so comfortable that I started to drop off to sleep. There weren’t many passengers on this flight, and since it’s an hour flight, there were no refreshments, like coffee, offered.

“My Heart, Andreas say that Camilla want to come to care for Aiden, but Rena say she was to care for him. Rena do not want Camilla to know that my Heart was at Aiden’s side.”

“That’s good, I’m surprised, after the way Camilla treated Aiden that she’d

even think of going near him. Well, maybe I'm not surprised. It figures."

"We have anniversary in one week, Helena. We have big celebration. Rena will want to hold party."

"Where did the time go? I haven't even thought about a celebration," I said.

"Did you forget anniversary?"

"It's not that I forgot about it, it's just that I've had other things on my mind. Half of the time, I don't know what day of the week it is." He had a blank look on his face. "I thought you wanted to spend our anniversary together, just us."

"This not what we discuss on this. Is always special celebration on anniversary of first year. When anniversary of civil bond, we say we celebrate the Orthodox." He turned in a manner that let me know he was upset, hurt over my apparent lack of enthusiasm for yet another event.

I was too tired and not in the best of moods to discuss it. I knew I wasn't up to a great discussion in my frame of mind, and if I tried to continue the conversation, I would have made things worse. I could see that Dimitris was perturbed with me, but he didn't come out with it. He wouldn't cause a scene in public, but with him holding back, and not communicating, I got aggravated with him again. Things were beginning to snowball out of proportion. The rest of the flight was pretty quiet. Thank goodness it wasn't a long flight. I was so tired that I didn't care that Dimitris wasn't talking. I didn't care that he was angry with me. I did care that he was hurt, but I wasn't capable at the moment to do anything about it.

"Helena, Helena." Dimitris brushed my cheek as he woke me. "We are here. Are you buckled?" He asked. I couldn't tell from his tone if he was still miffed at me. I brought my seat to an upright position and prepared for landing.

When we went into the airport, I excused myself and went into the lady's room, splashed some water on my face, and saw what a mess I was, which didn't help my mood any. Our little car was waiting for us at the car park. It was usually a mood lightening thing, to ride in the V.W., that held so many memories, but today, it was only a means of transportation. When we got home, it was dark and cold inside the house. I turned on the light in the kitchen, went to the bedroom, grabbed my kimono, and headed to the shower.

Even though it was only 6:30 pm, I got into bed and was asleep before I had a chance to turn off the light.

“Helena? Helena?” Dimitris called. When he entered the room and saw that I was asleep, he turned out the light and closed the door. When the phone rang, he picked it up quickly as it had an irritating tone to its ringer.

“Dimi, can I talk to Helen for a minute?”

“Aiden, are you well?” Dimitris asked.

“I don’t feel too bad, actually.”

“Helena, asleep.”

“Will you have her call me?” Aiden asked.

“I will tell her you call.”

I slept for almost three hours. The house was quiet and seemed deserted. I was feeling a lot better, and before I got up, I had a chance to think about Dimitris. I tried to put myself in his shoes in this situation with Aiden. Dimi has been wonderfully supportive. He has been patient with me and my need to help Aiden. I couldn’t have done what he has been doing regarding an ex-lover. I wouldn’t have stood for it no matter whose feelings were at stake. I know that Dimitris is feeling neglected. He also is hurt about our anniversary. Then, even with his patience and leniency in permitting me to care for Aiden, he has kept his emotions in check.

As I looked around the house, I saw that the coffee pot was on. I went to Dimi’s Lab, peeked inside, and saw him at his desk, writing something in the project log. Not wanting to disturb his thoughts, I just wanted to try to make amends. I entered the lab quietly, and I laid my arm across his shoulder and watched him write. He put his arm around my hip and with his mind on his work, he said distantly,

“You are up. I will finish in a minute.” He continued writing and working calculations. I stood there another five minutes. I knew he had work to do, so I gave him a peck on the temple and left the lab.

I went back to the bedroom and wrote in my journal, and waited for Dimitris for over an hour. I saw the clothes in the box, the fishnet outfit that I was going to hang up, and as I looked at it, I thought that I must have been out of my mind. What was I thinking when I made this? The upper part

made from jeans was as short as short-shorts, and the fishnet skirt attached to it left nothing to the imagination. I had been preparing, at the time, a contrast colored lining, but as I put it on, it wasn't so bad as-is, it still had possibilities. I slipped on a camisole, and it seemed to go together pretty well.

I had fallen asleep on top of the bed, waiting for him. I had the little light on from a vanity lamp that was very dim and cast shadows from the beaded fringe on the bottom of the shade. When Dimitris came to bed, it was 3:30 am.

"Helena, Helena?" He said softly. When I woke up, he was sitting on the edge of the bed, leaning over me. "Helena, you fall asleep." When I opened my eyes, I saw him looking into me, and I smiled. I sat up and put my arms around him and kissed him with a burning passion. We made love until dawn.

As we woke, my arm was across his chest as his hand rested on my thigh. I could feel him stir. I watched him, his sleep fighting to keep him from waking. When his eyes opened, he softly said,

"My Heart, S'agapo, Helena." He opened his arms to me, and I laid my head on his shoulder. He kissed my neck and shoulder, then said, "What you do to this man. I am sad to say that Dimi did not intend to be neglectful, but do. You must be angry with this man, he is such...selfish, and have foolish thoughts. I am sorry, Helena."

"No, Dimi, I'm sorry. You had every right to be angry and hurt." I cleared my voice. "Dimi, if the things I do upset you, you have to tell me. I knew that if I had to stay, that it would upset you, but I felt that I had to help Aiden, he had no one to rely on, and you were kind enough to let me do what I thought I should. You were right not to forbid me from helping him, though."

"Never would this man forbid my Helena. If a fool enough to forbid, then deserve to lose."

"It might have lead to disaster for us, yes, but you already know that you understand me more than you realize. I know that I can be erratic when I get upset, and as much as I'd like to believe that I can do the right thing, or, I should say, not do the wrong thing, sometimes I can't help what I do when I get upset. It makes sense at the time, though. That's another reason why I love you, not trying to force me to do or not do something. You trust me to

be able to make the right choices, doing the right thing, and let me make my own decisions. That is such a wonderful gift that not many women have in their marriage. Some men feel that they can make the rules, lay down the law in the relationship, and the 'little woman' is to obey."

"Not for Helena. Never to force my Helena, or she will bolt!" He said.

"What?" I heard what he said.

"Dimi know that my Helena may seem like fragile little flower, not to be ruffled, but my Angel have the fire. Cannot help but to frustrate."

"I think we're doing better at this, don't you?" I asked.

"And what is that?"

"This...talking about these things that used to get us into trouble."

"Yes, my Heart, we talk good together," he cooed. Then he whispered, "S'agapo, my Heart."

"Okay, now it's your turn. Tell me," I said.

"Yes. What can Dimi tell my wife?"

"Tell me how you felt about it, about Aiden, and me taking care of him." I turned on my side, facing him. I was waiting for him to give me an insight into his view of things.

"Dimi, feel sorry for Aiden. To see this man look like death, not easy to see. My Heart, you were right for this. He was alone. No one to put faith in to help. You care for Aiden, make him have courage. You do this, I know... here, in heart, all will be fine, and my Helena will come home to this man. But, when alone, at night and missing my Helena, not by this man's side, then I am thinking in jealousy. Dimi think like spoiled child who does not get his way and sulk. When sulk, this man act out like to teach lesson, to not leave Dimi. Then, my Helena wake up this man." He reached my cheek and brushed his thumb across my cheekbone. The sincere look in his eyes sent a spark through me.

"Helena, my Heart." He pulled me to him. "If this man had one wish, would be we meet a long time ago." He kissed me again. When I looked at him, his eyes were smiling at me. It gave me a good feeling to know that everything was fine now, and the tension of the previous days seems to be behind us.

Cloak and Dagger



As we laid in bed, we talked about little things and teased each other to bring out a smile. We were comfortable, and as it was relatively early in the evening, we weren't too sleepy.

"Aiden call for you when you sleep. Dimi forget, my Heart," he said as he reached to his bed table for the phone.

"How did he sound?"

"Good. Aiden say he is better. Wants my Helena to call." He gave me a peck on the brow and was stroking my arm. I dialed the number. As it rang, Dimitris was kissing my palm and stroking my hip and the side of my ribs.

"Sweetie, I'm on the phone," I said as he kissed my stomach and moving lower.

"Helen?" Aiden answered.

"Aiden, how are you feeling?" I asked, although my mind was being coaxed away from the conversation.

"Today, was better than yesterday. I think it's getting easier, a little every day, now," he said.

"That's...good, uh..." I couldn't think of a thing to say. Dimitris was causing a stir in me, and trying to carry an intelligent conversation wasn't easy.

"I have to admit that I was in a desperate place the other day. I didn't want you to think that I'm still that depressed," he said. I released a sound of sexual tension that was unmistakable, something that was involuntary and unexpected. Dimitris was doing his best to distract me from my conversation, and it was working.

"Oh, Helena," Dimitris whispered. I almost convulsed right then but fought the grips my body was trying to engage in, which might have reflected in my voice.

"Aiden," I purred, "you're okay? for tomorrow?" I barely got the words out. Dimitris' manipulations were driving me insane. Not to be rude, I had to cut off the conversation before I lost control.

"I think so. Are you alright?" He asked. "Helena, I..," he stopped and listened. I couldn't hold myself back any longer. I was beyond the point of self-control.

"I'll..call you...tomorrow," I said breathlessly. I clicked off the cell phone and flew into an ecstasy that engulfed me. I wanted this man, hungered for him, to take me and surround me in his passion. I motioned for him, pulling him to come up to me. When he did, it was as though all the gods were with us. The earth shattered as it had so many times before. It was a magic, fulfilling ritual that bound our souls to each other.

"S'agapo, Dimi, S'agapo," I whispered.

"My Helena, S'agapo, my Angel." He rested on top of me, my head cradled between his head and hands. He breathlessly whispered as we both waited to catch our breath. He lifted his weight to the side of me, turning me to face him as he pressed me to him. "This as should be, my Heart. We will always be."

My arms were around him as we laid there. His eyes, so dark and sparkling, his black hair, out of place. I stroked his hair, tracing the graying temples and seeing myself in my Adonis's eyes.

"You are so special to me. I'm so glad the gods sent you to me," I said softly. He kissed me passionately and looked into my eyes, then whispered,

"S'agapo." He stroked his thumb across my cheekbone as he held my face. "Come, I show you something." He kissed my lips and gave me a teasing slap on the hip. "Come."

We got up, put on our bathrobes then Dimitris led me to the kitchen.

“Okay, now sit. Close eyes.” I closed my eyes. “No peek, Helena.”

“Okay, I won’t peek.” I heard the refrigerator open, then close. He placed something in front of me.

“You may look, open eyes.”

“Oh, Dimi! Cream Puffs?”

“You tell Dimi, long time ago how you love, and no one makes. I find and buy for you.”

“Ooo, these look so good.” There were three different kinds, and all looked delicious. I wouldn’t indulge in such fattening goodies, but this was a loving gesture from him.

“Which one to eat first, my Heart?” He asked. “Oh, wait.” Dimitris got up then walked to the cabinet. “We must have Ouzo.” I watched as my Sweetie brought out the little glasses and the Ouzo and brought them to the table. “We will have toast.”

Handing me a glass, he poured the licorice liquid. With his arm around my shoulder, he tapped my glass and said in my ear, “Toast to one who change this man’s life. One who holds Dimi’s heart.” He tapped my glass again, then kissed me.

It was such a sweet toast that I couldn’t say anything. We ate the sweet treats with Ouzo, the two in a sinful blend of the senses, each a complement to the other.

As we got comfortable in bed and listened to the late evening news on the television, we saw a story which dealt with the cooperation between countries when dealing with international crime, or, it seemed to us at least, a lack of cooperation. How keeping vital information and hoarding evidence ran rampant, all for the pride of the catch. The prestige brought to the agency that makes the arrests and further prosecutes was the crowning glory to be attained. This made more sense to us in understanding the delays that we’ve endured in awaiting word of the trial. At this point, we were not sure if we would be called for testimony at all.

Those who are known to be involved in the theft of the icons are diverse

in nationality. Tracking down all of the individuals would need to be an international concerted effort. It was my opinion, and after seeing some of the islands and their proximity to bordering countries, it would be a monumental endeavor.

“It will be long time before called to trial, my Heart. Authorities too lax in finding all criminals. We forget about and do what we need. They come find us if they decide to have trial.”

“I guess we’ve done all we can do. We’ve done our part,” I said.

“Yes, we do more than our part, so we finish with trial now, we have other things to do,” he said as he drew me to him. As he put his arm around me, I laid my head on his shoulder, and we watched TV.

“Dimi, as much as I was hoping that everything would be finished and that we would be out of it, we’re still not out of it.” I put on the hand lotion that was next to my bed lamp and put my hair in a clip. “The men who follow us, they must believe that we know more than what we’re saying. I hate to say it, but we might have to find out who we still have to watch out for and maybe even follow the clues to wherever it leads. I don’t think they’ll let us forget about it. We’re in deeper than we thought.”

I knew that he heard my comment, he’d mutter “uh-huh” while kissing my fingers or sliding his hand along my forearm.

“When you call Aiden, what he say?”

I turned and looked up at him and could not get the grin off of my face.

“What, my Heart?” He sounded so innocent.

“I don’t know what he said. I wasn’t paying attention.”

“Did you not talk to him?” He asked in all seriousness.

“Are you kidding me?” He gave me a wide-eyed innocent look.

“What?”

“Uhhhh!” I moaned and pinched him in the side. “You’re killing me here, Dimi!” I hoped that I would hit a sensitive area to make him jump, and I did.

“What?” He laughed as he jerked away from my jabbing pinch in his ribs.

“What do you mean ‘what’? You know exactly what you were doing when I was on the phone.”

“I will tell you a thing, Helena,” he said in a soft voice. “Dimi love my Helena.

You believe this?"

"Yes."

"Dimi was blessed when my Helena come to Rodos. Every day, I look to my Heart, and Dimi think, why a man would let this woman go was too much of fool to deserve her. This man go long time, not to want to involve with woman, to break the heart. Then you come, to have to be rescued, and again when need taxi. Dimi get curious in daylight when my Helena do not have hotel. I see this woman, tired and still have to laugh over bad luck. Dimi think, 'this woman different. Not to panic when a thing go wrong.' When Dimi think I see in mirror, you looking to Dimi."

"I remember."

"So, this man drop off American beauties to get rental car on next day. Then, say, 'good-bye.' Dimi would not stop the thinking of Helena. Wonder of Helena to go home soon, so, try to do other thing, to be busy, go to Faliraki, but still think of my American beauties."

"Yes, and then we found that little shop with the photo. The little picture encrusted with dirt." I said. There was an ominous pause that hung in the air. A sad note interjected that stirred some bad memories.

"Dimi have sadness in Faliraki." He looked at me and was holding my hand, playing with the wedding rings on my finger.

"You did? Why?" I asked.

"My Helena, you do not know what happens? The gods make Dimi wake up, maybe. All looked different to this man, and could not be still. I look to all rental cars for my Heart, and had such sad feel, here." He laid his hand on his heart. "Do not like! When Dimi get call for picnic, the heart was singing like bird. Was happy day to get call. Then, Dimi have happy heart to show my American beauties other side of island."

"It was a great time for us. You made everything so wonderful for us, Dimi. Thanks to you, we had a beautiful bungalow that was so much better than if we got the hotel."

"Helena, Dimi would not believe at that time, this man would ever have such happiness. Was answer to prayer, Dimi do not know to be said, or need to say."

"I don't know what it is that you're saying, Sweetie."

"The gods look to Dimi and say 'this man alone too long, need woman in life to make happy' and then find Helena. I do not know enough to wish for Helena, so gods bring gift to this sleeping man."

"It was an electric charge like someone turned on a switch. I don't know what happened, it was all so sudden, I actually think it scared me," I said.

"Dimi scare my heart? When I do this?"

"No, Sweetie, when I looked in your eyes, that jolt of electricity went through my whole body. That's why I jumped when you handed the picture back to me. I knew then that it wouldn't take much to lose my heart to you."

"We do not question, is will of gods, so we only follow, not question. When we talk on picnic, and later in day, a seed to plant in this man's heart was left to grow for my Helena. Soon Dimi only think of how to get my Heart to stay."

"It wasn't that long after we met, and I was only going to stay for two weeks."

"Only wanted to be near Helena. Even to not see, make this man hurt. Dimi could smell perfume of hair, but my Helena only hide hair from Dimi. First time Dimi see long hair, this heartbreak."

I sat up a little to see his face. I didn't know what he was saying, or rather, it didn't register what he meant.

"You know what Dimi say. All-time with this man at picnic and on Athena, hair all cage up in clip thing. If this man see hair before, ah, Dimi do not know what he do then." He reached around to the back of my hair and pulled the clip out. He laid my hair out over the pillow and down my shoulder. "There!"

"You are crazy," I said. "You know that it's not practical to wear my hair down in the wind, and it was breezy most of the time when we got here. My hair would have been everywhere."

"Ah, but maybe is good to clip hair, or Dimi would not be only one to find Helena," he said.

"See? I knew you were crazy. It takes more than a woman's hair to arouse a man." He just looked at me, and then with that small, sly smile, he shook his head. "What did you mean by seeing my hair broke your heart?"

"My Helena, all that time, we sit, we talk, we go Karpathos, hair up in clip whole time. Dimi not think such treasure hide under plastic cage. When my

Helena get sick on Athena, soak to bone and freeze on deck, Dimi free hair to dry. This heart cry out for my Helena. Dimi already fall in love, but this would drive this man crazy." He picked up my hair and buried his face in it, inhaling and murmuring. "Ohh, Helena, this was sweet dream for Dimi, this whole year, sweet dream." Then he kissed me with a sweetness that melted me.

"Sugar? Have you talked to Stefano or Rena lately?" I asked.

"Rena call about Anniversary."

"When was this?"

"I think when you at Aiden's."

"Oh, how are they? We never seem to be able to get together much lately."

"But we see Rena at Aiden's," Dimi said.

"You know what I mean. It's been a while since we've all been together."

"Stefano say he have call from lab on map pieces. He will tell us later."

"Did Rena say what kind of gathering she is planning for our anniversary? I hope she's not going to have a hundred people come," I said.

"My Helena, I do not believe you enjoy the big party. Is great celebration for one year married. Is occasion to be happy, to allow others to be happy for us. Do you see?"

"I know, Sweetie, it's just that I need a bit of breathing room, with Aiden, and trying to get the house in order, I haven't had a chance to do too much for this house. Whenever we go to Karpathos, we have to spend at least one night, and usually two. It's very time-consuming, even though I do appreciate all the kind thoughts and the work that Rena wants to do for us, but it seems we're never home long enough, if at all."

"I know Helena, but the one year is special occasion for the newlyweds. Special blessing on anniversary."

I know that tradition is part of life here. It comes along with the vitality, the beauty, and the magic of the Greek isles. Where a lot of the old world is still evident in its landscapes, the old world is thriving in the hearts of the people as well. Somewhat of a contradiction, an area so dependent on the outside world by way of goods, and especially tourism, the modern electronic world blends with the old world, where the people keep the old traditions

and superstitions alive.

Dimi gave me a peck on the forehead and glided his hand up and down my arm. We sat in silence and watched the TV on mute. We were getting sleepy, and we would soon be looking for another windy day.

“If my Dimi thinks we should celebrate, then we shall celebrate,” I said. Dimitris gave me a big hug like he didn’t expect me to agree.

“You will be glad, my Heart, you will see. It will be special for us. I will tell Rena is okay.”

“Dimi, no surprises, and no gifts.” I thought that I should tell him ahead of time that I didn’t want him to buy me anything or make any surprise announcements.

“Dimi would never do that; what you thinking?” He made a joke of it.

“I’m serious, Dimi.” I made sure that he understood. “Sugar? What is Rena planning?” I asked again.

“One white candle lit for table; sometimes Priest come to give blessing, remind us of the blessing we receive in the Orthodox, we toast. Sometimes big party, sometimes no. With Rena, who could know what that little girl have in mind!”

“I’m getting pretty tired, Sweetie. Should we turn off the light, and say good night?”

“Yes, we turn off tv and go to sleep.” He popped a quick kiss on my cheek and said, “goodnight, my angel.”

In the morning, I was trying to think of what my game plan was for the day. First, I had to call Aiden and then call Sahj.

“How are you feeling today?” I asked.

“Pretty tired and dragged out, I didn’t sleep very well last night,” Aiden said.

“What time do you want to go to the clinic?”

“I have to see the doctor in his office at 11:00 am, and then I’ll head out to the clinic. Rena was going to come over around 9:30 am, depending on the ferry,” he said.

“Will she be with you for your chemo?”

“She said that she’d be able to stay to make dinner for me, so I guess that she will.”

“You won’t need me today, then?” I asked.

“I’d like to have you here, you know that, but Rena will probably baby me all day.”

“Okay, I’ll let you go, but call me if something happens, okay?” I asked.

“Helena?” Dimitris called to me. He came into the kitchen, kissed my cheek from over my shoulder. “Mmm, morning, my Heart.”

“Good morning, Sweetie, guess what?”

“What?” He was pouring his coffee and then started to wipe the countertop with a paper towel. I went to refill my cup, too. He covered my hand with his. “What, my Heart?”

“I’m yours for the whole day. I don’t have anything planned.” He pulled my hand from his waist and turned to face me.

“You do not go to take Aiden to the chemo?”

“Rena will be with him; she’s going to fix dinner for him tonight. He seems beyond the worst of it now, so I’m all yours.” He smiled as he held me, and I could see where his mind was going. Then, it was as if he woke up.

“No, my Heart.” He put me at arms distance. “Dimi will resist temptation. We think of what to do. You must not let this man spend day in bed.” I started to laugh.

“I didn’t mean that exactly. I thought there was something we could do together today.” Dimitris still had that twinkle in his eyes. When he put his forehead against mine, he said

“We will work in garden, dig in dirt, is good. But you must wear the boots.”

“Why? It’s not going to be cold today. I think it’s going to be a beautiful day.”

“Yes. That is why is good to have the boots. Must not let little creatures bite my Helena, is not good.”

“Little creatures? Like, what kind of little creatures are we talking about here?”

“Do not alarm, Helena, usually is too early in season, but maybe prepare. The Scorpions will sometimes come to see sun. Just that we are careful, that

is all," he said calmly.

"I've never seen a Scorpion here! How common are they?" I asked, not wanting to hear the bad news.

"Is more common around dry, rocky area, but they will come when is quiet, no dogs or chickens, but maybe now they do not come so much. These chickens may keep away these creatures."

"Do you think they will? Will they kill the chickens?" I asked.

"If chicken not wise, then, perhaps."

"Now, you tell me." I was reluctant to leave the house now. How could anything so vile spoil such a Paradise?

"Today, we will prepare soil, get rid of rocks, lots of rocks," he said. "We plant in week and three days."

"Why ten days? Why not next weekend?"

"We wait for new moon, then two, maybe three days then plant." He was very precise.

"New moon."

"Yes."

"Uh-huh."

"So, Dimi will dig the dirt, and Helena remove the weeds. We will have fun in our work."

"Okay, I'll get dressed and meet you out there."

"With boots."

"With boots."

As I dressed, I had the image of Scorpions crawling over my socks and into the leg of my jeans. I had never seen a sign of Scorpions here, not even smashed in the street.

I put on one of Dimi's flannel shirts that he never wears, then made my way out to the plot that we had marked off in the sun. Dimitris had already turned over some of the soil, but it was hard, rocky, and labor-intensive.

"You've done a lot already! Don't try to do it all at once, Sweetie, you'll hurt yourself."

"This is big job, not for the woman. Maybe my Helena will bring out the

water for the man?" He said, leaning on his shovel and wiping his brow.

I left to get him some water before I got myself covered with dirt. I found my garden gloves in the utility porch, then brought out the water.

"Thank you, my Heart, it is thirsty work."

I picked up the rake and attempted to break up the dirt clods, which seemed like cement. Even after the rain that we had a while back, the earth was parched and dense. I turned as I was pounding away at the soil, and saw Dimi coming towards me.

"Are you taking a break?" I asked as I still pounded the stubborn clods.

"Helena," he reached for my rake and held it still, "This not work for you, is too hard, and you will injure hands."

"I'm doing okay. Only, we should water a little so it will be easier if we get out here in the morning," I said. He took the rake away from me.

"The rocks, maybe you will pick out big rocks instead." He was insistent about the rake and let out a frustrated sigh. I knew it would be too much work for both of us if we didn't use some mechanical help.

"Sweetie, isn't there a place in New Rhodes that rents out equipment? Maybe we could rent a small tiller?" I asked. He gave me a peck on the cheek and was going back to digging when I saw Andreas and Morgan drive up in a taxi.

"What's going on?" I heard from Morgan as Andreas paid the taxi driver.

"What are you two doing out here?" I asked.

"Andreas, what would bring little brother to Rhodes?" Dimitris asked.

"Morgana wanted to get away for awhile; she also wants some 'girl talk.' I think my Morgana has design work on her mind. What are you doing, the garden? You should have said something. I would be glad to help."

Andreas took off his shirt and then took up the pickaxe that lay on the outside of the plot.

"Now, we'll get this turned over," Andreas said with an abundance of confidence.

Morgan was holding his shirt and looked as though she had been abandoned.

"Sweetie, Morgan and I will be inside. You don't mind if I leave this your

hands, do you?”

“The ‘girl talk’ come first, Helena.” He smiled, popped a kiss on my cheek, then went back to work with Andreas. The men also had to catch up on their “men’s talk.”

Morgan and I headed back to the house. I dropped one of my garden gloves, and as I turned to retrieve it, I could see the men, talking and laughing as they got into their work.

“Look at them, Morgan. Have you ever seen such a beautiful sight?” We watched them digging, muscles flexing, and the sound of muted laughing and conversation.

“Yeah, we’re pretty lucky.” She watched, as I did, the wonder of the male physique in action.

As we entered the kitchen, Morgan cleared her throat in preparation for whatever was on her mind. I grabbed two glasses and poured some iced tea. We sat at the dining room table, and then I had to ask,

“What’s the word, Morgan?”

“I was wondering, do you remember where you found that Gypsy shop? I want to go there the next time we’re at Rena’s, if you can remember where it is,” she said.

“Oh, yeah, I’d like to go back there again. We’re going to Rena’s for our anniversary party; maybe we can go to the gypsy place first.”

“I don’t want Andreas there; I’d rather have a reading without the men,” she said.

“We’ll have to go to Rena’s anyway to get a car, so the men can stay while we’re at the shop.”

“I hope they will be open for business that day.”

“I think they live right above the shop, so we might luck out.” I was sure we wouldn’t have a problem.

“I wanted to find out what would be the best date to get married. I figured I’d pretty much settled in this life, so I should set the date.”

“Good, I’m glad you’re making it official.”

“You know, every time we meet new people or go to any of Andreas’s business dinners, when people hear that we’re engaged but haven’t set the

date, they look at us like I've still got my bags packed. It's very judgmental. I'd expect that from some of the older folks around here, but these are supposed to be educated people from the real world. If it were fifty years earlier, I would be shunned." Morgan was beginning to flail her hands.

"Morgan, would you excuse me a minute, I've still got to call Sahj. All this hospital business and Aiden, I totally forgot," I said.

"Sure, go ahead, I'd like to know what he says."

I went into the buffet drawer and took out the notes and phone numbers that we obtained from the little man, grabbed a notepad, and called Sahj.

"What did he say?" Morgan asked.

"It went immediately to message, so I would have to call him again if he doesn't return my call."

"Great!"

"How's Amy? Have you talked to her lately?"

"She's been getting calls from Angelo, did you know that? He's trying to convince her to stay here."

"I hadn't heard about this. So is she thinking about it?"

"Not seriously. She was saying that Angelo is cute and that he's nice, she really likes him, but she doesn't want to move to a place where she can't work. If she can't find another position here, she won't move."

"What about Richard?" I asked.

"She didn't mention him; I don't think she's going to stick with him. She'd be here without Angelo's coaxing if she could get a transfer from her job. She hates where she's at now."

"It won't be long, and you could hire her to run the office portion of your work."

"That would be a good idea. It would solve some of the headaches she's putting up with now." Morgan was calming down, and I saw a spark of hope in her when speaking about her daughter.

"How would you like a creme puff?" I asked.

"Creme Puff?"

"Dear Dimi found this place that makes these delicious pastries and goodies. He brought some home, and I can't eat all these."

“Sure, I’ll try one.” We indulged in the sweet pastry, and I had to laugh at how hard it was to eat one, delicately. It wasn’t something that we could eat without somehow making a mess.

“Have you and Andreas talked about where you want to have the wedding?”

“Not yet. I was thinking Koz or maybe Crete, but I don’t know.” She looked nervous and uptight. “I was thinking of having Capt. Teddy bear perform the service at sea. Quick, no-fuss, just vows.”

“No, you don’t want to do that. You want it to be something to remember, something romantic.” I tried to persuade.

“Yeah, I know. I wouldn’t mind the church thing, but after what you had to go through, I’m not up for that. Especially the month of separation.”

“That was torture, but I look back on it, and it really was a blessing. It made us both realize what we were sacrificing for each other, and even though we felt like we wouldn’t survive it, it added to the excitement of finally being together.”

“What do you mean?” She asked.

“I don’t know how to explain it; it’s like a combination of knowing that you’ve both sacrificed something for the prize and that your lover did it for you. It brings a kind of comfort and total trust. Then, after all the yearning and pangs of not being with the one you love, the happiness and excitement of finally being together again, there are no words to express it. And you think you’ve got great sex and passion now? After a month’s separation, it’s more than fantastic. Words aren’t enough to explain the emotion of the reward. It’s very spiritual.”

“Wow! Maybe I should rethink it, but geez, a whole month!” She gasped.

“I know. It’s really a short time, but it feels like it will never end. During that month, there are a lot of things for the wedding, the preparations that should keep you busy, plus, you’ve got your work, too.”

“Yeah, how can I do any jobs when I can’t think of anything but Andreas?” She asked.

“Well, at least, you have other things to occupy your time. I had to go nuts with all of the spare time I had.”

“Is there any more iced tea?” She asked.

“What has Andreas got to say about the wedding?” I asked as I made more tea.

“Well, I haven’t exactly said anything yet.”

“Why not?” I exclaimed.

“He just gets so, oh, you know how he gets! He’ll have his kefi falling out all over the place. I’m going to see if I can make up my mind on where and when then I’ll let him in on it.”

I smiled and shook my head.

“What?” She asked.

“Nothing. Are you thinking about what I said, about the separation?”

“I hate to say it, but yeah. I think Andreas and I have a pretty stable relationship, but I think the whole premise of the separation makes sense.”

We sat huddled together at the dining room table as the conversation got more intimate.

“I know that Andreas has been trying to be good. I mean, he’s careful not to get so excited over little things, like he used to do, and then his kefi would take over. I guess he doesn’t want me to get embarrassed and leave or something, but I miss the old Andreas. He was so spontaneous and happy. He has even mellowed out in the bedroom. I was beginning to think that he was getting tired of me.”

“If you were thinking that, what made you decide to set the date?” I asked.

“I asked him. I was getting anxious, the more I thought about losing him. I had to ask him if he was tired of me and wanted me to leave.” She confessed.

“What? When? When did you ask him that?”

“The night before we got engaged. I was in such an emotional state that he knew something was wrong. I figured that he’d say that things aren’t going as well as before and, you know. He’d be polite and try to let me down easy, but he wrapped his arms around me and wouldn’t let me go until I said I’d marry him. So, I agreed. All of a sudden, he was yelping and back to his old self. It made me feel so much better. I mean, our sex life was getting to be robotic. He ____.”

“Where is my Heart?” They announced their presence.

“We’re in here, Sugar,” I answered.

“Don’t mention the wedding, okay?” Morgan asked in a quiet, hushed voice. I gave her the ‘my lips are sealed’ gesture, and that her secret was safe with me.

“Oh, do we intrude on the ‘girl talk’? We will get coffee and go to living room so you can talk,” Dimitris said.

I looked at Morgan as she stepped back from the table.

“Sweetie, I made Iced tea.”

“You no get coffee yet?” He asked.

“Where’s my sweet pea?” Andreas said as he wrapped his arms around to the front of Morgans’ waist. “What ‘girl talk’ have you two been up to?” He kissed her on the temple and waited for an answer.

“Secrets,” Morgan said.

“Secrets? My Helena keep no secrets from her Dimi,” he said as he handed me my ‘WUF’ cup of tea. He placed the cup in my hand, carefully making sure that I had the handle and would not drop it.

“What secrets? Can you give us a hint? I’m pretty good at guessing games,” Andreas laughed.

“No hints!” Morgan snapped.

“The ladies must have their talks, Andreas. There is no place for the men in this.” Dimitris snuggled my neck and said in a soft voice in my ear,

“We will leave to finish the garden. The ‘girl talk’ continues without the men.” He gave me a peck on the cheek then said, “We finish outside, Andreas, then we have lunch.”

The men drank their iced tea, and we took inspection of the abuse that their hands were reflecting from the manual labor.

“How much longer are you going to be?” I asked.

“Not long, my Heart, we will spread fertilizer, work in soil then water. It will rest until two days after new moon.”

“That’s pretty specific,” Morgan said.

“Yes, must be precise, for good result,” he said. He gave me a quick peck on the cheek and then dragged Andreas out the door by the ear.

“Those two can make me laugh when they’re together. What a couple of

clowns.” Morgan laughed.

“It’s so cute the way they try to get us to spill the beans. Like, we’d tell *them* what we’re talking about,” I laughed. “Well, getting back to it, has he gotten back to his old self since you got engaged?”

“Better, but I still feel like he’s being careful, not letting go, like he’s being so cautious.”

“Maybe he’s hoping that you’ll set the date and wants to be good so that you will.”

“I don’t know, but he has been happier, close to how he was when we met,” she said.

“At least, you know that you’re on the right track. Once you’ve got everything planned, everything else will work itself out.”

I could hear the water running and knew that the men would be back inside soon. I was beginning to feel hungry and getting restless to eat.

“Here, they come. I think we should go and eat at the little old café in town.”

“Eoo, you like that little place?” Morgan asked.

“It’s not bad, don’t you like it?”

“I’ve never eaten anything there but salads, but they make something that smells up the whole neighborhood, it smells like the pier, really fishy and smelly,” she said with a cringe.

“I’ve never smelled anything there like that. I’ve always enjoyed going there,” I said.

“It’s the one next to the estate agent, isn’t it?”

“Oh, no! It’s near the bridal shop, in that block. They make all their bread, and it always seems to have a booth whenever we go.”

“Where are my American beauties?” Dimitris called from the back door.

“We’re in here, Dimi,” I called back to him. When the men came in, they were visibly exhausted from their labors and were still dust-laden from the garden preparations. Andreas went right to the kitchen sink to wash up while Dimitris came up to me with his hand behind his back.

“Helena, look what I find for you.”

“What?” I asked. He had hidden behind his back a small bouquet.

“Oh, Dimi, where did you find these?” I asked.

“They grow on property line behind carriage house. They are only the weeds, but still, ...flower is nice. You like?” He had that shy smile. He reminded me of the child who presented his weed flowers as a gift of love.

“They are beautiful, Dimi, I love them. Thank you, Sweetie.” He beamed as he looked at me and handed me the little bouquet of weed flowers.

“Dimi will wash, then we will go to eat,” he said.

“I was wondering if maybe we could go to the Kafenia in town, what do you think?”

“Yes,” he said, gave me a peck on the cheek and left the room to wash his hands.

“I’ll put these in water.”

“You’re going to put weeds in water? Why? They’re weeds!” Morgan asked.

“Because they’re pretty, and Dimi picked them for me,” I said.

“But they’re weeds! They won’t last, just throw them out.”

“No, I can’t do that. He was thinking of me when he picked them, and he gave them to me as a symbol of his love, along with the flowers. It’s not so much the fact that they’re weeds, as it’s what they represent.” I filled a small wine glass with water and set the flowers in place.

“You see? I would never do that. I’d have a laugh, say ‘thanks’ and throw them away. The first thing I’d think of would be, ‘it’ll make me sneeze!’ Is that too insensitive?” She asked.

“I wouldn’t say insensitive, I’d say practical,” I answered.

“Potato, potahto,” she quipped. I just smiled and arranged the little weed heads in the wine glass, then placed them on the breakfast bar on a paper napkin.

We drove to the Kafenia and took our favorite booth. The old waiter, who was the uncle of the owner of the establishment, brought out the menus.

“Zenos, how are you doing this beautiful day?” Dimitris asked as we were handed our menus.

“Eh! My back she is breaking and pocket, he is empty,” he said in Greek as he shuffled back to the kitchen. After he was out of sight, Morgan and I got the translation and had to laugh.

“He is funny!” Morgan said with a smile and a whisper.

“He is what we call the ‘local color.’ He always has something to complain about,” Andreas said.

We had a great meal, and the laughter was almost non-stop. Andreas and Dimitris were almost continuously throwing insults to each other, a brother’s way of endearments, and the laughter was contagious. Morgan was surprised with her dinner of a Greek Eggplant dish, which came with a side dish of Oysters on the half shell.

“Eeoo, I can’t eat those! Here, Andreas, you can have them.”

“But, you will not even try the Oyster?” Andreas asked.

“No! You can have them!” She said and shoved the side plate to Andreas. He picked up the biggest one, then threw his head back and let the slimy mollusk slip down his throat. Suddenly, he grabbed his throat. His eyes got as big as saucers! His mouth opened as he put his hand up to his mouth. I thought he was going to choke.

“Andreas, are you alright? Andreas?” Morgan asked with the eyes of panic on her face. He was holding his breath, and his shoulders were beginning to bounce in flinching jerks.

“Don’t just sit there, Dimi, do something, he’s choking!” Morgan yelled. As she started to rise from her seat, Andreas put his finger in his mouth. Hunched over toward the end of the booth, he withdrew his finger. It had a large Silver Pearl and Diamond ring on it. He smiled as he presented it to Morgan.

“What?” She said as he showed the ring on his finger to her. The light reflected off the Pearl with an iridescent glow from the Diamonds that threw their sparkling light on it.

“S’agapo, Morgana. Are you surprised?” He asked.

“Ohhhh!” She groaned. “You scared the living crap out of me, Andreas! What the hell?!” She screeched, then a big smile came across her face, and she let go of a deep breath. “You scared me, that’s not funny.”

“Ohh, my little Morgana, I won’t do that again, I promise. I didn’t think you’d believe my acting. I was only joking. You should know that.” He said as he cuffed the back of her neck and forced a kiss on her lips. She tried to

turn from him, but she was too small and not really trying to avoid him, only attempting to reinforce her point.

“What a beautiful Pearl, Morgan!” I said as I tried to see the lustrous glow on the finger of this sweet man.

When Andreas put it on her small finger, the weight of it twirled the ring on her tiny finger.

“It’s too big, Andreas. It’ll have to be sized.” She looked at the sad look that came over his face, then reached over to plant a big kiss on his lips.

“Thank you, Andreas, it’s so beautiful, but I’d be afraid to wear it until it’s sized.”

“Then, we will have it sized for this tiny hand.” He kissed her hand. Then we managed to lighten the mood from tragic romance to Dimi ribbing his younger brother about the delicate art of the male-female relationship as if the younger of the Patakinis men could use a bit of advice from a more mature and experienced man.

We were having an after-dinner dish of Spumoni when Morgan stopped and said,

“Helen, look who’s here!” Morgan nodded toward the front of the kafenia. All conversation stopped as we looked in the same direction. We could hear a small roar of Greek male voices and activity rising in the front, outside the wide-open doors. The older men who gather here for neighborhood gossip and Backgammon were welcoming another member back to the group. “That man from the airport.”

“That’s the same little man from the street in Athens, too!” I exclaimed. I was surprised to see him here in Rhodes.

“When? When you meet this man?” Dimitris asked.

“He was the little man at the airport who led us to Captain Gregorio when we first arrived in Athens,” I said.

“This was man?” Dimitris suddenly left the table, then went to the sidewalk table where he started talking to the thin little man with the enormous sunken eyes.

“Andreas, what’s going on?” Morgan asked.

“I’m not sure,” he answered, trying to see the action from our booth.

We maneuvered ourselves to see what was going on. I had to squeeze in next to Morgan on the other side of the booth. From what we could observe, it looked like the little man was seated as Dimitris was standing over him. Since the wall of the doorway was blocking most of the action, we couldn't see Dimitris' expression. The new patrons coming into the kafenia obscured most of what we wanted to see, but we glimpsed Dimitris as he was talking. With his gestures, we could tell he was intent on whatever he was saying.

After a few minutes, Dimitris returned to the table. I returned to my seat. He slid in next to me, put his arm across the back of the booth, then rested his other hand on my thigh.

"Well?" Morgan prodded, waiting to hear the news.

"All is fine," Dimitris said. "Shall we ask for check?"

I tried to read his face, and I wasn't getting any definite emotion from him. At this point, I took it to mean that we should wait with the questions until later. We finished our desserts and paid the check. When we left, we didn't see this little man, who I had expected to be greeting us on our way out. He had disappeared.

We got into the car and waited.

"You must drive now, Andreas," Dimitris said.

"Oh, no! I don't drive until you tell our ladies what was going on at the sidewalk table. We will never hear the end of the questions otherwise," Andreas said.

Dimitris turned to me as he spoke to all of us about our strange little man that creeped me out at the airport.

"This man is known as 'Bolio.' It is 'gossip' in the English. Short name for 'Koutsombolio.'"

"Well, that figures, he's a curious little man," Morgan said.

"Yes," Dimitris agreed.

"Do you know him, Dimi?" Andreas asked.

"Dimi hear of this man. All gossip in Hellas this man will know."

"What did you say to him?"

"He start to leave when Dimi come to talk. He know he find trouble. Then he run off. Others say he talk, talk, talk, always on the ladies. They say 'Bolio'

tell them these American ladies come for the party. Find Greek man to take home. I say to these men they will tell him to stop the gossip of my wife or find his grave.”

“What?” Morgan exclaimed.

“He said we were looking for men?” I asked.

“He say like this, ‘the pretty ladies want to fling at single men on Fridays and take home the husband.’ Then laugh.”

“That little twerp!” Morgan fumed.

I didn’t say anything although I was annoyed. I knew that it bothered Morgan, but this type of comment didn’t make me want to have a meltdown over it. I considered the source and thought that others would too.

As the occupants of the car went silent. I was looking out of the side window in contemplation of what was said. Dimi reached my cheek and made me look into his eyes.

“I tell them that he will not say this again about American ladies, or Dimi will find and make him sorry,” I gave Dimi a little smile and said,

“That was sweet, Dimi, but don’t you think that would add more fuel to his stories? Some people feel important to have others hear their tales. The more they listen, the more the stories gather fuel. It’s sad.”

“He will not tell the stories of my Helena and Morgana. No!” He placed his hand over mine. “I am thinking he is here on accident, not to follow, so this man do not threaten this ‘Bolio,’ tonight. He would be fool to do the follow of Helena and Morgana.”

“He seemed nice enough before, a little creepy, but nice,” Morgan said. “He sure fooled me.”

“Yes, but the asking of questions. This he does, to talk when you no see. Gregorio speak of ‘Bolio,’ he say, ‘always with tall tales.’ Now to speak of my Helena, he will not do again.”

“You didn’t seem upset about this when you returned to the table,” Morgan said.

“He know Camilla. He spread the tales from mainland to islands with his tongue. It will spread like plague. Best to stop at beginning,” Dimitris explained.

“Bolio. Bolio. I’ve heard about him, his name is well known as a nuisance, but I wouldn’t think anyone would take him seriously,” Andreas said.

“Serious or no, we do not have him talk.”

When we got home, Andreas went to the fireplace while Morgan and I went to the kitchen. The early night sky was clear, and the stars should be very bright. We started the coffee then sat at the bar, waiting for it to finish dripping.

“Could you believe that little twerp? He keeps turning up. Do you think it was by accident?” Morgan asked.

“This time, maybe. It figures that he knows Camilla, huh? They’d make a good pair,” I said.

“That coffee smells good!” Morgan said. “Andreas? Andreas, are you ready for coffee?”

“Yes. Where is Dimi?”

“I thought he was right behind me when we came in,” he said.

“He might have gone to close the gate,” I said.

“Where is my Helena?” Dimitris closed the back door.

“Where were you?” I asked as he came into the kitchen. He rubbed his hands together in an attempt to warm them. His cheeks were blushed from the cold air that seemed to come off the ocean after dark.

“Is getting cold out there. Need coffee,” he said in a soft, whispery voice in my ear.

“Where were you? I thought you were right behind us,” Andreas asked.

“Close gate, check dogs. Dish was dry,” he said.

We went into the main living room to sit by the fire. We warmed ourselves with the welcomed heat from the fireplace. It was good to cuddle up on the sofa, as did Morgan and Andreas. It was like we were back at the family home when we all lived together, enjoying each other’s company. When the brothers teased each other, and the laughter filled the room, I really started to miss the arrangement we had before, when Morgan and I first decided to stay in Rhodes.

Morgan noticed the pile of mail sitting on the coffee table, unopened.

“Don’t you guys ever read your mail? How many days of mail is that?”

“This is from today. We read our mail every day, it’s just that we got tied up with Aiden and the garden and forgot about it,” I said.

“It will wait, never mail is urgent,” Dimitris commented.

“How would you know if you don’t open it?” Morgan was right, but Andreas interjected,

“Morgana, let them handle their business in their own time, we interrupted their routine, unannounced.”

“Sorry!” She said in a snit. She sounded aggravated that Andreas reprimanded her in such a way.

“She’s right, we should look it over at least, but I didn’t see any letters from home when we brought it in, so I let Dimi handle the rest of it.” I wanted to be supportive of Morgan’s position and smooth over any animosity that might be brewing.

“Okay, my Heart, Dimi will see to the mail. Then Morgana may rest.” He reached for the mail on the table.

“Don’t do it for me, for Pete’s sake,” she commented.

As Dimitris shuffled through the mail, I noticed his face change. There was something in the mail that made him try to hide his concern.

“What is it, Sweetie?” I asked.

“Not important for my Heart to worry. We read later.” He gave me a peck on the cheek and rubbed his hand up and down my back.

“Why do you do that?” I asked.

“What is that, Helena?” He said without looking up.

“This! You are upset about something in the mail, why don’t you tell me what it is? Get it over with and out in the open.”

“Do not excite, Helena is not to excite over,” he said. This bothered me.

“You do this on purpose. So if it’s not important, why are you looking so worried?” He cuffed the back of my neck and drew me to him. He put his lips to my forehead and said,

“I will visit police station tomorrow. They believe they find TV and stereo from Rhodes house. We will see.”

I looked at him and thought I saw more to this than what he was saying,

but I let it drop for now.

“So what’s the big deal? Did they find your stereo? What about the thieves?” Andreas asked.

“We will see.”

“What time are we supposed to be there?” I asked.

“Dimi will go there at nine in morning.”

“What about me? I’m not going?” I asked.

“Dimi will go alone.”

“Why?” I asked.

“This man will not have my Helena upset over this.”

I stood and went to the kitchen. I could hear Andreas and Dimitris talking in low tones from the living room. The more he told me not to get upset about it, the more upset I got. It wasn’t the fact that I seemed to be left out of this, as much as having him tell me he doesn’t want me upset. I wouldn’t get upset if he would just let me in on what the letter said. I guess I never liked being told what to do, or how to feel, or how to act, or what to wear. I appreciate his protection, but not being given the facts was making my blood pressure rise.

“Helena?” I heard my name called. I quickly grabbed some nuts and put them in a bowl.

“Why you stay in here, my Heart?”

“Thought I’d bring out a snack.” I didn’t want to vent my frustration, but the more I tried to hide it, the more it presented itself. If I bit my tongue, he would think I was sulking and upset. Even though I was getting angry, I didn’t want him to know. “We also have cheese and crackers.” I turned to the drawer for napkins.

“My Heart, why you no look to your Dimi?”

“I am,” I said as I turned toward him, counting out the paper napkins.

He stopped me by holding my shoulders and bending down to look into my eyes.

“You upset over this, do not worry,” he said.

“I’m not worried.”

“Then what?” He continued to hold my shoulders until I told him.

“You do this all the time, Dimi.”

“What I do?”

“Never mind,” I said, turned and went back into the living room. “We have some snacks if you’d like to munch a little.” I placed the bowl on the coffee table and stood in front of the fireplace to warm myself. When Dimitris came back into the room, he didn’t say anything.

“I’m surprised that the police would write you a letter, don’t they usually call you?” Morgan asked.

“This why is no important, or they do call.” He looked over to me, even though he was answering Morgan.

“Is that all they wanted? Just identify the goods, and that’s it?” I asked.

“There is no way to know until tomorrow. This will be waste of time for Dimi. Would my Helena waste good time to sit in Police room also?” He asked with a tone of impatience.

This was the first time I noticed him being impatient with me. He had a point about it being a waste of time, which it usually is, but I was beginning to see red. I was already “ticked off” that he tried to be so secretive about the matter, but hearing his tone of impatience nearly set me off. I was beginning to fume. I made an excuse to get Morgan into the kitchen.

“Morgan, will you help me with the wine glasses? I think we could use some wine.”

“Sure.” She agreed and came away with me to the kitchen and out the back door.

“Where are we going?” She asked as we stood by the back steps.

“Uhhh! I had to get out of the house for a minute. Sometimes I can get so angry.”

“I thought that’s what was happening. What’s with all the intrigue?” She asked.

“You noticed it too?”

“Yeah, and a bit of attitude,” she added.

“Then it’s not just me, overreacting? He’s acting strange, isn’t he? I was about to say something, but I thought I’d better just calm myself before I blow it,” I said.

“Well, maybe he’s got other things on his mind,” Morgan reasoned.

“Maybe, but I don’t appreciate the attitude.”

“Are you coming back in?”

“In a minute, I sure wish I smoked. I could use a cigarette about now. I’ve got to let my blood pressure calm first, so you go ahead.”

“This is nice. It reminds of Mama’s house,” Andreas commented. “It’s so cozy.” Morgan came into the room and sat next to Andreas.

“Yes, much happiness in Rhodes at that time. Our American beauties brought best happiness to old Patakinis house,” Dimi said as he placed the wine glass on the coffee table.

“The days of the commune. I miss those days when we were all together,” Morgan said.

“Yeah, we had some good times, didn’t we?” Andreas said.

“Where is Helena?” Dimitris asked. Morgan took a sip of her wine. She knows that she’s a terrible liar, so she hunched up her shoulders in an “I don’t know” attitude while she drank.

I was still steaming. I picked up a stick from the yard and walked down the path to the lower patio under the trees. The lights weren’t on, so even though there was a moon, it was fairly dark down there. The street lights afforded some reflected light, but not much.

Dimitris looked in the kitchen, then went out the back door. He didn’t see anyone, but he was very familiar with my ways of dealing with anger and frustration. He looked around the chicken coop, then went down the path, calling me.

“Helena? Helena, where are you?” He called.

“Oh no.” I thought to myself. I didn’t want to have this conversation yet. He should know better than to try to make me talk when I’ve got a bone to pick with him. “I’m down here,” I muttered.

“What you do down here is getting too cold to hide here.”

“Uhhhhhhh!” I groaned and started to go down the steps to the gate. He totally ticked me off with the usage of the word “hide.”

“Helena! Come back here, why you always run away from this man?”

He caught me by the shoulders as I was opening the small gate. I was beyond angry! His tone, his use of words that he knew would anger me, not to mention the secrecy in this letter. I was livid.

“Why you run from Dimi? Look to me, Helena! Do not upset on letter, is nothing to upset about!” He said as he turned me around and took my hand. He was pulling me back up the steps.

“Stop, Dimi, you’re hurting my hand. Let go of me!” He dropped my hand, and although I wouldn’t look at him, I could see that he was looking at me. Then he turned and walked back up the steps and back to the house.

This whole thing was getting worse by the minute. I tried to keep from getting angrier by going outside, getting some fresh air, but it never seems to work. In this area of our relationship, we seem to handle things differently. He’s more apt to want to talk out the problem, that’s if he’s dealing with me, and I have to isolate myself to think, calm down and try to be rational. If he’d just let me approach the situation rationally, we’d be okay and talk. As I sat on the brick ledge that surrounded the edge of the patio, I couldn’t think. I knew I had to go back, and we’d have to talk, but I wasn’t anxious to face him.

When I returned, I came in on the conversation about our first days at the Patakinis house and how much we enjoyed the communal arrangement. They were all agreed that it made the transition to the Greek life easier. Although there were some bumps in the road, none of the problems stemmed from our group living. The men understood how much Morgan and I depended on one another at the time.

When the fire in the hearth began to dwindle, we cleared the glasses and prepared to call it a night.

“I think we’re going to go to bed, that’s if I can wake Andreas up long enough to go upstairs.” Morgan kidded as Andreas yawned.

“Oh, I’m sorry, I can’t stop yawning. I think Morgana is right, so we will say ‘good night.’” They headed up the stairs to their room, leaving Dimi and me to finish in the kitchen.

“I will finish, you may go to bed. Dimi be in with just few more minutes,” he said, not even looking up from his kitchen chore. I wiped my hands and hung the dish towel in the pantry, then went to our room.

I didn't bring up the subject of the letter, or the fact that there was an "attitude" to his voice when he spoke to me, I was so tired that I got in bed. I was annoyed, but I knew that if I brought it up, it wouldn't take much to set me off. When Dimi came in the door of the bedroom, he said,

"Is dark! There is no light on, Helena," I didn't answer. He turned on his bedside lamp as I groaned and put my forearm over my eyes.

"Do you have headache?"

I heaved a heavy exhalation but did not say a word. When he went to the shower, I turned off his lamp and pulled the covers up to my ears. When he came from the bathroom, the light shone onto the bed, and he could see that my back was to him. He came around to the side of the bed and stood there for a moment.

"Helena? Helena?" I opened my eyes to see him hold out his hand. "Aspirin, you take." He put the aspirin into my hand and returned to the bathroom. I put the pills on the table by my lamp. When he came to bed, he kissed my shoulder, laid close behind me, and we went to sleep.

In the morning, I felt him stir. It was dark and gloomy, and I didn't feel like getting out of bed. I didn't sleep very well and felt like I was getting a headache. I knew that if I got up without more sleep, I'd be in a rotten mood most of the day. He kept moving about, hoping that I was awake. I didn't feel like confronting him on last night's issues, and if I did, it wouldn't be pleasant. After he left the room, I could smell coffee brewing, a temptation to get up, but not temptation enough. When Dimi came back into the room, he placed my 'WUF' cup on the table by my bed. I cracked my eyes enough to see that when he put the cup on the table, he found the aspirin tablets that he gave me last night.

"What____?" I heard him say in a soft tone, speaking to himself.

He caught me looking at him. I closed my eyes then he sat on the edge of the bed.

"Helena?" He said softly. "I know you awake, why you no take aspirin? Helena?"

I turned over, not opening my eyes nor answering. I wasn't furious at him, and he was being sweet, but from the turmoil of yesterday and my lack of

sleep, I was in no mood to have to discuss it, and he would want to discuss it if it still bothered me. And it did. I thought it better to avoid it than to get upset all over again.

“You still have anger for Dimi? Helena, this we discuss when Dimi come home. Why you upset on this when it is nothing? We talk when I am home.” He got up and left the room. I could see the clock. It was only 8 am, so he would be gone for a few hours before he’d return.

He left without a kiss, without a goodbye or anything. If he wanted to make me angrier, he was doing an excellent job of it. I wondered about him. Was it that there was more to it than just the stolen items, or was it the man? Was he getting fed up with my moods and occasional irrationality? He said we would discuss it when he returned, but it’ll only happen if I can put aside my own issues.

I brought my cup to the kitchen where Morgan was standing at the kitchen bar, talking on her cell phone. When she saw me, she gave me a sign that she would be off of the phone momentarily. I poured a cup of coffee then sat at the bar.

“I was wondering when you were getting up,” she said. “Geez, you look pale. Don’t you feel good?”

“It’s so gloomy today, I feel like going back to bed. It doesn’t seem like it’s past dawn yet.” I yawned as I spoke. “Oh, excuse me.”

“I was just talking to Andreas. He went with Dimi.”

“I don’t get it,” I said.

“What?”

“He didn’t want me to go with him, yet it’s okay for Andreas. Dimi is being so secretive about this,” I said.

“He was a little odd. I heard them talking for a minute as I was coming back from the kitchen. They were talking very low, in Greek, like they didn’t want to be overheard. Then they stopped talking when they saw me. I thought it was suspicious, myself.”

“You know, Morgan, I can’t handle the secrets or the cloak and dagger anymore. I’m tired of the police, the court case that will never happen, and all

the intrigue. I'm just tired of it all. If it's a big deal that he thinks I shouldn't be involved, then he can have it his way, I don't have the strength for it anymore. I should appreciate not having to go, and letting him handle whatever it is, but it's this secretive attitude. And he's been irritated with me, too. I don't like the way he's been acting, you know?"

"Pisses you off, huh?"

"Yeah. That part of it I could do without, traveling around, having to look over our shoulder with everything that we do, I don't know why I even care about this letter. Oh, I'm going back to bed, maybe I'll feel better with a little more sleep."

"Andreas is going to call me back in a while, is there anything you want to find out?" She asked.

"No, I'll be up later, okay?"

"Yeah, sure."

I headed back to bed but decided to run the tub first. It would help me relax. The tub was like slipping into a warm cocoon. It was a little paradise on a cold, miserable day. I closed my eyes as I put the rolled towel behind my head.

Out of Control



Where is my little Bumble Bee?” Andreas asked as he came in the door. “Morgana?”

“They must be out with chickens. I look,” Dimitris said as he went out to the coop. “Helena?” He called and looked around the garden area, but there had not been anyone around the hens this morning. He picked up the morning cache of fresh eggs, then went back to the house.

“Dimi, will you cook, or should I?” Andreas asked as Dimi placed the eggs in the refrigerator.

“I will cook, but where is my Helena?”

“Maybe in the bedroom, Morgana is sleeping, maybe Helena is too.”

Dimitris left the kitchen for the bedroom.

“Helena? You sleep?” He said as he opened the door. There was no one in the room. He went back to the kitchen and ran his hands under the faucet.

“Helena is sleeping?” Andreas asked.

“She is not there,” he answered.

“I’ll ask Morgana when she wakes,” Andreas volunteered. “She will want breakfast, so I’ll wake her in a few minutes.”

Dimitris washed his hands at the kitchen sink, his mind off in the distance, remembering the abrupt exit he made when he left. It bothered him to think that he may have added to the tense atmosphere that already carried over

from the day before.

“We will have fresh eggs and maybe French Toast, Helena would like the French Toast,” he said as he gazed in thought while whipping the eggs in a bowl. “Before we start, please to ask Morgana of Helena, Andreas.”

“I’ll go wake her. She’ll be hungry.”

When Morgan and Andreas entered the kitchen, Dimitris had begun the French Toast.

“How many for Morgana?”

“I think two is enough. It sure smells good,” she said.

“Morgana, where did Helena go? Little car still here.”

“Isn’t she sleeping? She went back to bed.”

“She is not there,” Dimitris answered, his eyebrows pinched.

“The last thing I know is that she went to her room. She wanted to get more sleep,” she said.

“Here you are, French Toast with fried egg. Is good.” He placed the dish in front of Morgan and one in front of Andreas. “Dimi will go find Helena.”

Even though Morgan said that Helen had wanted to get more sleep, Dimitris was afraid that perhaps she went to the cellar for some reason. It was a dark place on the sunniest of days, and without proper light, dangerous. He went out to the cellar door and called Helena again. The cellar was dark, and it seemed doubtful that anyone had descended to its depths.

When he rechecked the bedroom, he found clothing on the floor beside the bed. He glanced at the bathroom door; it was closed. He knocked lightly.

“Helena? Helena, may Dimi come in?” He heard no answer. He tried the doorknob. It was not locked, so he opened the door.

I looked up at him as he peeked in the door.

“You’re back,” I said. I leaned back on the rolled towel and closed my eyes.

“We have French Toast. You will come down?” He asked in a very generic tone.

“Give me a few minutes,” I said in the same tone. I was in no hurry to leave the tub, but after putting on my terrycloth robe and a towel around my head, I decided to sit in the sun while it was peeking through a cloudy sky on the

little balcony outside our bedroom. I got comfortable on the lounge and listened to the birds in the trees. There was a slight breeze that added to the peacefulness. It was so relaxing, and after the last few days of stress and tension, it felt good to lose myself to the tranquility.

“Helena! Breakfast waits for you. It will be cold if you do not come.”

I was going to tell him that I’d be right down when he slammed the balcony door. It jolted me. I wasn’t expecting it. I was ready to try to calm the roiling waters, but this sent me over the edge! In trying to avoid a confrontation, I had one loaded and ready to fire.

I got dressed. When I left the bedroom, I slammed the door purposely. I went to the table where everyone was finished eating. I ate the cold food, rinsed my plate, grabbed my purse, and walked out the front door. I didn’t see Andreas or Morgan, and Dimitris missed my performance also.

I was so angry. All I felt like doing was walking. I went down the front walk, and on to the small gate that opened out to the street. With gravity pushing me along, I was down to the major cross street in a matter of minutes. As I walked and fumed, I thought about this situation. The fact that Dimitris is being very mysterious was an aggravation, yes, but it wasn’t enough to escalate my anger. The way that I had been put off, not lied to, but more like left in the dark over the letter, and the way he treated me - his impatience, short, blunt attitude, and him trying to hide something from me is what got to me. When he slammed the balcony door, I hit the ceiling! It was a good thing that he wasn’t in the room waiting for me.

Down the street, there was a small neighborhood church, a kefenia, a small smoke shop, and a dress shop. I went into the kafenia, ordered a tall iced coffee, and went out to the little outdoor patio on the side of the building. I just wanted to sit and think without all the dramatics.

I must have been gone from the house a half an hour. I had finished my coffee drink and was trying to think of what to do next. I started to leave the table when Dimitris pulled out my chair and took my elbow.

“Come,” he said. He looked at me with a sad, worried expression. Suddenly I was feeling guilty, like this whole scenario was my fault, and just having that feeling made me hostile, as I wasn’t going to let him make me feel like I am

the guilty party in this.

I got in the car, but we didn't speak. I was so on edge that, by him not saying anything, it made me angrier. He was driving away from the house. I was determined not to ask where we were going. The question was exploding on the tip of my tongue.

We were on the outside of New Rhodes city. The view from the hill that looks over the Northeast tip of the island was spectacular. We could see the hotels on the end tip of the island and the shore, where it wraps around to the other side of the island. This is where we caught the "moon show" that night. I got out of the car, as I was too angry to confront him in a confined area. Being out in the open, out in the breeze, made it more difficult than I pictured, for what was ahead. I had to pace, just waiting for the inevitable. My heart was pounding, and I was dreading the conversation to come. Dimitris took my arm to stop me as I paced.

"Helena, Dimi have to say a thing, but you must listen. I will try to speak, so you understand," he leads me to the brick barrier that lined the curve of the sidewalk. There we sat.

My heart was suddenly in my throat as the fear began to overtake me. I felt a weakness drain my body. The dreaded words to be released were coming. As he began to speak, I could not look at him. I turned my face away as I knew the words that would come.

"In marriage, are stages, levels all go through, is expected that there are rifts, time when to meet, eye to eye on all things, not the case. Some do not survive marriage when small thing take over to be big thing, will swallow the marriage, and in end, marriage will fail."

"What?" The words didn't connect with what I expected.

"Helena," I couldn't wait for his words. It seemed obvious to me, in his tone, his attitude lately, his actions. And now this. He's fed up with me, and will probably make me want to leave. I'd rather he just say it. Just tell me that the ride is over! He's disgusted with me and the trouble that I had started. It's over, why prolong the agony? "I am sorry for this. I try to not involve my Heart in things but makes all worse. Dimi try to not bother with details of worry, but then you, you make this man..."

“What’s happening with us? Why don’t you just say what you mean and that you want me to leave? It’s not that hard to say. If you don’t want me anymore, I’ll go.” I was walking away. I couldn’t look in his eyes and wait for him to answer. His hand clamped onto my wrist.

“No, Helena, you do not run away,” he said. He looked down at me. Usually, his eyes would entrance me, but I wasn’t going to let his gaze enter my heart. I was determined to look into his eyes as he said his piece; I would be strong and stubborn and stare him down and block that electricity that makes me melt.

“You ask Dimi what is to happen to us as if something wrong. Why you think something wrong? Why you ask if Dimi to want you to leave? This man would never ask this of wife. Is because you do not go to police with Dimi? Tell me, Helena.”

“You’ve been acting differently. You seem annoyed with me. You’ve been very abrupt, almost as if you have to put up with me like I’m an irritation to you like I’m a nuisance to you. I can read the writing on the wall. You’re through! You’ve had enough of my emotional crisis, and you’re fed up with having to deal with my jealous tantrums, and now the trouble with the artifacts thing. I’ve brought you nothing but problems.”

“When do all this happen?”

“It started with the letter you said was from the police. Ever since then, you’ve been quite cold. Your attitude toward me has been snippy, cold, and blunt. And now you act like I do everything just to aggravate you.”

“And this makes my Helena want to leave?”

“I didn’t say I wanted to leave.”

“You must know that Dimi will never ask wife to leave.”

“No, you wouldn’t ask, but you’d aggravate me to the point that you’d make me want to leave,” I reasoned.

“What you say?”

“I hope you aren’t turning into one of those husbands who barely tolerates his wife, treats her as a liability and finds pleasure in making her miserable, because, as much as I love you, Orthodox and all, if that’s the case, I’d divorce you.”

His eyes got as big as saucers. I wasn't sure if I saw anger or surprise. I didn't know what he was thinking, after what was just said. He looked so hurt, which made me feel even worse. Instead of getting things out in the open and clearing the air, everything seemed to have snowballed out of control. I was afraid that if he weren't thinking of asking me to leave before, he most certainly would be now.

The drive back up the hill to the house was quiet and awkward. I was dying inside and wanted to put my arms around him and forget everything else, but I couldn't do that. Something inside of me wouldn't let me back down from the stance I took in this debate. I couldn't cry, I didn't want him to know how deeply this had affected me, so the numbness took over. I became oblivious to where I was and everything else, except what was going on in my head. My world was ending. I was losing the one thing in my life that meant anything to me.

I snapped out of the hellish daze I was in when I heard the car door slam. Dimitris was coming around to my side of the car to open the door. He held out his hand to me. He helped me out of the car, and when I stood, our eyes met. I found myself putting my arms around him, and he held me. He was unsure at first, then held me tighter, put his face down in my hair on my shoulder, and let out a deep sigh. I was still fighting to hold back the tears that would come, but we weren't okay yet.

He said nothing. I said nothing.

When I went into the house, I felt drained, physically, and mentally. I wanted to take a long soak but refrained from that. I didn't see anyone in the room as I entered the kitchen as I grabbed a cold beer and went to the bedroom. I would try the solitude of my little balcony. I locked the door.

It was about an hour later when I heard Morgan outside the door.

"Helen, are you in there? Can I come in?"

"Just a minute." I unlocked the door. "Come on in."

"What happened with you two?" Morgan asked.

"I confronted Dimi on his recent attitude."

“Geez! I wonder how long this will take to blow over?”

“I don’t know that it will,” I said.

“Well, Dimi left with Andreas. They might not be back for a couple of days,” Morgan said.

“So, you got left?” I asked.

“Dimi wasn’t going to leave you alone, but, geez! I thought you two were crazy about each other. What happened?”

“I told him that if he’s tired of me and all the problems I created, I’ll leave. He said he wouldn’t ‘ask’ his wife to leave. I guess I took it too far. I couldn’t think, I don’t know what he was trying to say, he just took too long to say it, and I guess I lost it.”

“What do you mean, took it too far?”

“The way he was acting, short and blunt, he’d just been so secretive and testy. Things just got worse and worse. I thought, with all the trouble we’ve had with that picture, all because of me, it must have gotten to him, and he was just keeping the wife around because of the Orthodox.” I said.

“Oh, Helen. You’re blowing it all out of proportion. I know he’s been a little weird lately, but you take everything personally. You know he loves you, get a grip on yourself before you make things worse,” Morgan advised.

“I told him that if that’s the case, he could count on me divorcing him, even with the Orthodox.”

“You said that? Oh, no. Geez, Helen.”

“What can I do, Morgan? He wouldn’t say what the police said in the letter, other than they found a few of the stolen items, but I know there’s more than that. It was written all over his face. I mean, geez, I’m involved with this thing too. By him not telling me everything, it’s tantamount to lying. I told him before that I wouldn’t put up with lying.”

“Did he tell you what happened with the police?” Morgan asked.

“No, he didn’t talk about it at all. Why are they going to be gone for a few days?”

“Andreas has some equipment to sign for in transit, and then they need to deliver it to the job site. He needed Dimi’s help.”

“So, what are we supposed to do while they’re gone?”

“If it doesn’t rain, would you feel like going to Rena’s? I thought about having my fortune read.”

“I don’t know, I would, but with all this going on with Dimi, I can’t leave the animals if he’s going to be gone forever. I want to stick closer to home. Maybe we could go to a movie later.”

I tried to call Dimitris on his cell phone several times. He was either out of range, or his cell phone was turned off. Every time I’d call and not connect, it hurt a little more each time. Other than being mean, I couldn’t imagine why he hadn’t called me.

“Morgan, have you heard from Andreas?”

“Yeah, about an hour ago, why?” She asked.

“I can’t seem to get a connection to Dimi. It just doesn’t ring. Has Andreas said anything about him?”

“Well, yeah. He said that his brother was no fun to be around and wished I was there. Sometimes he can be such a tease.”

“But did he say anything? Did Dimi ask for me or anything?” I asked.

“No, I don’t think Andreas wants to get in Dimi’s way. He said he has to ‘steer clear’ of his brother today. I guess that means that Dimi must be in a bad mood.”

“That’s probably why he hasn’t called. I hope he’s not blaming it all on me! If he had been upfront with everything and not so mysterious, all this wouldn’t have happened,” I said.

“Are you still mad at him?”

“Only for the way he acted toward me, I can forget the rest, but not his attitude.”

“Well, maybe his cell phone isn’t charged. When Andreas calls, I’ll ask about him.” Morgan volunteered. “Did you check the messages on the phone when we got home? I’ll bet he called, and we weren’t here.”

I had forgotten to check the phone, and there were messages. I was so excited to see the message counter blinking a big red “4”. When I listened to all of the messages, none were from Dimi. I felt a stab in my heart after finding nothing from him. After what seemed like a long evening, I told

Morgan that I was ready to head to bed. I wanted to take a pill and just sleep and not have to feel the hurt that was in my heart.

It was 11:30 pm. I was in bed and exhausted when I heard Morgan's phone ring. I knew it was Andreas. My sleeping pill was working, but I tried once more to call him. I didn't have any luck. I couldn't hear what Morgan's conversation was about, but I wondered if the subject of Dimi came up at all.

No more than an hour later, Morgan started tapping on my door.

"What? What is it?" I snapped.

"Can I come in?"

"Yes, come in. What's wrong? Did something happen?" I asked.

"I just talked to Rena. She said that the boys were there. Dimi told her about what happened when you two were missing, and what went on at the police station. She said he was so upset and worried for you that he said he would not rest until the trial. If these men are set free, he would have to deal with them himself. Apparently, they don't think that there is enough evidence to hold these men for trial on the burglary. Dimi insisted they turn the case over to Interpol. But he was so upset. She said he left the house, and she thought he had come home," Morgan related.

"How long ago did he leave Rena's?"

"She sounded like it was this afternoon."

"Then, where is he? Where on this earth is he? Morgan, I can't think straight," I yawned and asked, "Where's Andreas?"

"He's got to finish the assembly of this delivery, but will head for home when he's finished."

"Is he coming here?" I asked.

"I hope so, or I'll be stuck for a while."

"I can't stand sleeping alone; I wish Dimi would come home," I said.

It seemed like I'd never get any sleep. Although I was dead tired, my mind wouldn't relax. Any noise that I heard would jolt me awake, only to realize that Dimitris was not here. I eventually started to drop off, and something else would make me jump out of my skin. This happened over and over again.

"Helen? Are you up?" Morgan called.

"What? Are they back?"

Morgan peeked in. "Aren't you up yet? It's already 3 pm. Are you sick?" She asked as she entered the room.

"What? Sick?"

"Are you alright? You look pale. Have you been sleeping all this time?"

"Trying is more the case. Any word from Dimi? Or Andreas?"

"Andreas should be back any time now," she said.

"Would you wake me when they get here?" I asked.

"What's wrong?"

"I don't know. I couldn't get any sleep with all the noise last night. I kept waking up. I just need to get more sleep. Will you wake me?" I asked as I pulled up the sheet over the blanket binding.

"You should take something if you think you're getting sick. Amy was telling me that the flu is almost an epidemic in the States. They're rationing the flu vaccine to only those at risk."

"I'm okay, just have to have more rest," I said.

"You don't look good," she said as she closed the bedroom door.

"Gee, thanks!"

A few hours later, I went downstairs to ask the question of which I already knew the answer.

"Did Dimi come home?" I asked

"I don't know where he is. I thought he would have been here already," Andreas answered.

"Gee, Andreas, maybe you should go look for him. Do you have any idea where he might be?" Morgan asked.

"I'll have to make some calls," he said and took out his cell phone.

"I'll call Rena from the kitchen," Morgan said.

By 1:45 am. I still hadn't heard anything. I hadn't slept well in days, and my strength had totally drained my body from worry. Not only did I fear that something might have happened to Dimitris, but I also worried that I might have alienated him and ruined my marriage. I took another pill and was asleep within minutes.

The Kefi of Andreas



Woo - hoo! Yes!" Was yelled out, waking me with a jolt! I sat up after catching my heart from jumping out of my chest.

"Is only Andreas, my Heart," Dimitris said.

"Oh! You scared me! Dimi?" My heart was racing. I almost jumped out of bed.

"Is okay, my Heart, Andreas let go of kefi, now we sleep."

"Where have you been? I've been worried, sick!" He reached up and slid his hand down my arm.

"My Heart, Dimi tell all later. Now we sleep."

I held on to him tightly and had to let the tears flow.

"Do not cry, my Heart, Dimi is home. S'agapo, Helena."

I sat up and tried to see him.

"What in the world happened to you? I thought we'd find you dead in the gutter somewhere, and you don't bother to call? How could you do that to me?" I stopped when he put his hand on my cheek. "Do you, Dimi, do you love me?" I asked, my emotions getting the better of me.

“S’agapo, Helena, wife of this man, more than you know.” I was happier than I deserved to be. I was half asleep, crying, and it all felt like a dream.

“I missed you,” I said in almost a whisper. He stroked my hand that laid on his chest. It wasn’t quite light enough to begin our day, and I could tell that Dimi was going back to sleep. A smile came to my face as I thought about the kefi being loose in the far bedroom.

By daylight, we were beginning to stir. I could hear the rooster loud and clear. It was as if he had escaped the coop and found himself a perch somewhere under our window.

“This rooster want to make his early grave,” Dimi said in a quiet voice, as if talking himself. He turned toward me and settled into a spoon position. We slept for another hour, then Andreas pounded on our door.

“I’m not letting you sleep if we can’t. Come on now, get up, it is a beautiful day today.” Andreas said, then pounded again.

“We are up! We are up!” Dimi stretched his arms up with a big yawn, then kissed my cheek as he pulled me tightly to him. He whispered in my ear. “I will get up, Helena. The kefi of Andreas will not let this man rest. Maybe anger gone today, huh?”

“What anger is that, Dimi?”

“Time for Dimi to get out of bed.”

“Oh no, you don’t! Let Morgan take care of Andreas’s kefi. We can stay here a while longer.” I was still wanting to clear the air, and I knew that Dimi didn’t get enough sleep. “We still have to talk, don’t we?”

“My Heart, day is wasting, Andreas will have to leave soon. We talk later.” He said.

“You keep saying that, but we never do. Talk to me now, Dimi. Please.” I turned to face him, my hand on his chest.

“I will lock bedroom door, and we will talk.”

When he came back to my side, he slid under the blankets, and as he faced me, he held my hand.

“Helena, my Heart know her Dimi too well. There was more to letter, yes,

but this man do not want wife to worry on this, so this stupid man try to hide concern over police. Should know by now that my Angel see through.” He said and then cleared his throat. “Letter say to come to view stolen goods, identify. Then Dimi see little note on bottom of official paper, written in hand. It say that Interpol will also view any further items of interest that are in possession and not been submitted, and so to bring. This seem not right to Dimi. This not as Interpol would do, so I worry that police have letter with tamper. You see, my Heart, Dimi do not want to put his Angel at risk. Dimi go alone to see police, but Andreas watch outside to be safe. I do not do good job of the lying. I am sorry.”

“What did the police do?”

“When Dimi come in, they say, ‘where wife?’ then I say, ‘is Patakinis family, Dimi will take care of this.’ They do not question, and Dimi do not see the Interpol there. Only thing at police, a broken tv and disc player. Disc player, ours, not sure on TV, too damage to tell.”

“What happens now?” I asked.

“I was look around while at police. Many men stand around, do nothing but to look, then look away. Was not easy feel to the visit there. Feel like all watch this man. I think maybe they would follow. Maybe bring trouble if Dimi come home, so I leave Andreas to go home alone. This man go elsewhere, and they were follow this man.”

“What? They did follow you? That could have been a mistake being alone, especially when you know you are being followed! What were you thinking?”

“I think I no want to bring danger to family. When Dimi leave police, I would go out other door, not to Andreas, where he wait. Dimi call on his cell phone to say to go home, then Dimi is home soon.”

“Why didn’t you call me? I tried calling you several times, but it wouldn’t connect. What happened? Did you turn off your cell?”

“You marry such oaf, my Heart. Dimi think to put cell in pocket, but fall on cement, open and out goes battery to sit in puddle. Card get wet, would not work until dry out. I think of maybe to buy another cell phone, but would take time and have trouble with salesman,” he said with a shy, almost childlike

way about him.

“But it’s been days since you left, I was so worried, Dimi.” I laid my head on his chest and hugged him.

“Dimi careful not to use public phone. Men follow, so who can know what they do? Won’t chance have number trace. These men not from here. They do not play, so Dimi stay far ahead of them.”

“Do you think the police are in on it?” I asked.

“Could be, not all, but possible some.” Suddenly there was another pounding on our door.

“Are you awake? I’m going to have fried rooster for dinner if you don’t get up, Dimi.” Andreas said.

We knew that he was only kidding, but the rooster was becoming a nuisance.

“I get up, Andreas! I must get up, my Heart, but you stay. Dimi will bring coffee, and if you wish, we talk more.” He kissed me on the cheek and then got dressed. “This brother will be strange today. Morgana has big job with Andreas’ kefi!”

It was so warm and cozy, but without Dimi, I’d rather be up and around. It was hard to make myself leave the warmth of the blankets, though. I fished around with my feet, looking for something to put on them when Dimi came back with the coffee.

“Get under covers. Too cold up for you. Here, drink is hot.” He handed me a cup of coffee.

“Ohh, that’s what I need.”

“Your legs are cold, cover them, Helena.” He made sure that the blanket covered my legs.

“Come here, Dimi.” I held out my arm as I sat on the edge of the bed. When he came to sit by me, I put my arm around his back and stroked him between his shoulder blades. “I’m sorry, Dimi, for the other day. I was a little sensitive. I didn’t understand what was going on, and the stress you were dealing with, so I don’t blame you for getting irritated at me. I’m surprised you lasted this long without blowing up. Do you forgive your stupid wife?” He had his arm across my lap, resting on my covered leg. He looked at me and said,

“Don’t ever say that, my Heart. You don’t be stupid to show emotion. Dimi

would worry if my Helena stop showing the emotion. Dimi must remember. This man do things in way of man alone sometimes, from habit of alone, for long time. Sometimes this man do not always do what is best and try to take all worries inside with me. Shouldn't keep all inside. If I tell all to you, we avoid big problem. Hard to know of this precious gift of gods to this man, who want to share in troubles, for love for her Dimi. I," he hesitated, "only want to keep hurt and worry from my Heart, nothing else."

His dark eyes seemed to look into my Heart. It filled with love for him. I didn't know what to say. I kissed him.

"Dimi will get heat going, so you have warm house to greet you, my Heart." He kissed me and murmured in my ear as he pulled my hair off my neck.

"I sure missed you, Husband!" He gave me a kiss that my heart was yearning for, for so long. I held on to him, and couldn't get enough of his kisses and his breath on my neck.

"Dimi must go before Andreas make rooster for dinner."

He hesitated, popped a couple of quick kisses on my lips, and then left the room.

It was a relief to have things back on the road to normalcy, but I worried about him being followed. It seemed that more of these men showed up at every turn. It was getting to where I was leery of leaving the house. How would we know who was who and if we were being watched? And what about this "Bolio" character? I made a promise to myself to start digging into the Internet more diligently to find more information on these thefts and what has been done about it since. I had found some sketchy information that was surely outdated and was reprinted from an old archeological journal. There had to be something more up to date online somewhere. Hopefully, there would be photographs of these men, Vanderbur's associates. While I was thinking about it, I remembered Sahj. Maybe he had access to some information that may answer some questions, and perhaps help us avoid more trouble. I had his cell number keyed into my phone. I called him.

"Ahmed? This is Helena."

"Ah, Helena, how are you? I haven't seen you travel our ferry lately," he said. He sounded cheerful and yet distant.

“I am well, and how is your pain? Are you still walking with a cane?” I asked.

“Some days more than others, but it is a slow recovery.”

“I’m glad to hear it is getting better. Ahmed, I was wondering if you could help me?” I asked.

“What is it you need?”

“It seems that there are more men around who are following us. We just had another episode in Athens, and Dimitris had some strange events around the area of the police building here in Rhodes. I was hoping that you might have some information on what is happening, and maybe you could show us some pictures of Mister Kingpin and some of the cronies that attach themselves to him? Anything that would help us know who we should watch out for.”

“This puts me in an awkward position, Helena. I do have access to information and pictures, but you must understand that it’s a possibility that anything you would see may be counterproductive to the case. If any of this information or photographs should influence your testimony, it could compromise the case,” he said.

“Ahmed, it’s doubtful that any of this will ever come to trial, we know that the chances of anyone being tried are remote. It’s doubtful that we’ll ever be called to testify anyway. My only concern at the moment is to know who we are dealing with here. There was an indication that someone in our local police may be connected to this thing. They wanted us to bring to the station any evidence that we may have, and other items that have not been scrutinized before, like we’re holding out on them. That’s when Dimi noticed he was being followed. I’m afraid, Ahmed. I fear that something could happen to one of us. So, I really need any information that you feel comfortable getting for me.” The silence was deafening as I waited for his reply.

“We must be extremely cautious. We must meet. I will set up a time and place, and tell you when I see you on the ferry: Tuesday, 1:15 pm, Rhodes to Crete. We will talk further. Until then, be careful.”

“I hope Dimi can catch that Rooster!” I said to Morgan.

“Oh, you missed it! Dimi and Andreas both tried to corner it, and it got away. When Andreas tried to shoo him away from the house, that Rooster took out after him! The dang thing hit Andreas on the back of the leg,” she laughed. “He yelped and ran, but the Rooster kept after him. It was so funny! It really made me laugh! Even Andreas thought it was funny. What a sight! Here’s this little Rooster chasing this big man into the house! What a picture! I thought I’d die laughing,” she laughed.

“Why didn’t you go to Andreas’s rescue?”

“Are you kidding? That’s a mean little sucker!” She exclaimed.

“Well, sure, if you antagonize him. He’s King of the hill here, you know?”

“Yeah, but I think he’ll live longer if he’s kept in the coop!” Morgan chuckled.

“Where’s Dimi?” I asked.

“They’re both out there. I think they are trying to figure out how he gets out of the pen.”

“I’m going to take Dimi a cup of coffee. You want to come?”

“I’m not going out there until they catch that Rooster!”

I poured myself and Dimi some coffee and went to the back door. I looked all around to see if I could find the Rooster around anywhere.

When I was sure it was safe, I went looking for Dimitris.

“Dimi? Sugar, are you out here?” I called. I didn’t hear an answer, but I headed to the chicken coop, where I heard voices from the coop. “Dimi, are you in there?”

“We are here, my Heart. Look at this, Andreas. My bride has brought this man coffee. Thank you, my Heart.”

“Did you figure out how this rooster got out?” I asked. The men were sitting on the nesting boxes, which were attached to the walls, and had 2”x4” wood legs for support. Both men held a hammer and looked very frustrated. “What were you going to do, hammer the poor Rooster?”

“What you think, Helena?” Dimi asked.

“We looked, but didn’t find any holes in the chicken wire, and the gate was closed, so? Do you think he could fly over the fencing?” Andreas asked.

“It’s most likely he did, but he might have gotten up on that old wood hen

box that's sitting next to the water bowl, and jumped over the fence there."

"We were thinking of putting a chicken wire top over the scratch yard, but we can't get any wire until Monday. They close early on Saturday so that Rooster will be at it again tomorrow," Andreas said.

"So this is what you two have been trying to figure out? How to keep him inside the scratch yard? Why not clip his wings?" I asked.

"I'm not getting near him!" Andreas winced.

"This Rooster run away too quick, Helena. How to do this if he run?" Dimi asked.

"If you help me, I'll show you how we can catch him and do the job," I said.

"You will do?"

"I've got to see this," Andreas commented.

"It'll have to wait until tonight." Dimi and Andreas looked at each other. "What? You don't think I can do it?"

"If anyone can do, my Helena will be the one."

"Hey! Where is everybody? Is it safe?"

We all looked at each other, and a sudden outburst of laughter could be heard. We gathered ourselves and walked back to the house with Morgan.

"My Helena, she knows the chickens," Dimi said as we walked together.

"What did you all do, die out there?" Morgan asked.

"We decide what to do with Rooster," Dimi said.

"Oh, okay," Morgan said agreeably.

"Ah, my sweet pea, I missed you." Andreas rolled Morgan up in his arms and kissed her forehead.

"Hey, Andreas! What was all that yelping at five in the morning?" I asked.

"He didn't tell you?" Morgan was shocked. "Geez! How quickly you forget, Andreas!"

"I didn't forget. I wait for the perfect time." He answered with a big grin.

"Well? We're waiting." Andreas had a big grin and sparkled at Morgan.

"My sweet dove has consented to marry on June 17th in Santorini. We can make plans now, and it will be wonderful!" Andreas took a dishtowel from the kitchen and started singing and doing his dance. We couldn't hold back our smiles as Andreas let his kefi go, in a mild way.

Dimi made his special brew of coffee so that whenever Andreas settled, we could all talk about the wedding.

"That's great news!" I said as Dimi came up behind me in a bear hug. He gently rocked me in his arms as he spoke.

"It is wonderful thing. You will have the Orthodox?" He asked. I was afraid that this question was still in discussion and that it might be a touchy subject at the moment, and maybe a little early to mention it.

"We're talking about it, but I don't know yet," Morgan said.

"We will talk more, to make sure that we both know what it means and if we want to bother with it. We haven't had a chance to really discuss it yet," Andreas said apologetically. "All I know is that my Morgana makes me a happy man." He put his arm around her shoulder and kissed her on the head. They were both glowing with happiness.

"Orthodox, best thing to do for the marriage. Nothing will hold light in comparison." Dimi said to the couple as he looked at me.

"I know, we've been talking about it a little, but I'm not sure, they may have too many restrictions or requirements, but we still have to get the civil ceremony done first, and then we'll see," she said.

"Have you thought about a gown? Big wedding or small and intimate? What am I saying! You know Rena, she doesn't do things small!" I said, and we all laughed. "It's about time we had something happy and exciting to look forward to, finally."

"We will have special food to celebrate! Andreas and Dimi will go get groceries; we return to fix special meal," Dimi said.

"Okay, let's go." Andreas was ready to head out the door and then hurried back to kiss the top of Morgans' head.

"We'll be right back, my bumblebee."

"We will hurry, my Heart. S'agapo," Dimi said.

After the men had left, Morgan joined me for the "girl-talk".

"You know, Morgan, I think Andreas is getting back to his old self again. He's been so happy," I said as I pulled up the dining room chair.

"I guess it's normal for couples to go through a few rough spots along the way, but he had me worried there for awhile," she said.

“Have you told Amy yet, the good news?” I asked.

“Yes, she said it’s about time. She’s really excited about it. I think she fell in love with the whole family when she was here. She said that Angelo still calls her, but I think that now Andreas and I are actually going to ‘tie the knot,’ it would feel weird for her to get serious about Angelo,” Morgan confided.

“The only thing weird would be, would Angelo consider you to be a sister-in-law or a mother-in-law?” I asked.

“Yeah, and would Andreas be her brother-in-law or her stepfather?” We laughed at the confusing possibilities.

“I know that she’d love to move here, but I think she’d look for someone outside the family. I’d hope so anyway.”

“If she could shake that mustard plaster of a husband, a whole new world would open for her.”

“Oh, I know. She’d have no trouble getting a decent job in Athens. She’s pretty versatile in her work experience, so, I don’t think she’d have a problem.” Morgan said.

“Are you going to the Gypsy’s shop anytime soon?” I asked.

“Oh, I forgot to tell you. I talked to them a couple of days ago, and they gave me a short birth chart reading over the phone, of course, I had to give them my credit card number. But that’s how I decided on the date. The old lady Gypsy told the young girl that I was abundant in ‘4’s’ and that I shouldn’t rock the boat by going on any other day to get married. She said it added a consistency and permanence to the event. Also, before we go much further in the planning, she wants me to come in to do a full reading. I might even buy some clothes there, which is what I’ve wanted to do for a long time!” Morgan said.

“You’d better be careful with that; Andreas won’t be able to keep his hands off you.” I joked.

“I’d sure like to find a nice dress. I doubt if there’s anything that would suit me on the island. I’ve been shopping in Athens and can’t afford most of their clothes. I might have to go to Italy to find something I can afford, that doesn’t make me look shorter.”

“Ooo! That sounds like fun.”

“Fun? It’ll be a nightmare. You how Andreas gets, he’ll start getting excited and will want to see the dress before the wedding. I’d better start looking for some ideas for this kind of thing, ‘cause I wouldn’t know where to begin to look for a dress,” she lamented.

“You have to look at it in a more positive way, or you’ll sabotage it before you start. I’ll give you one little thing to think about during all this...”

“What, that it’ll be over before I know it?”

“Not exactly. But I’ll say this, savor the whole experience, take your time, take it in and find the special things in everything you have to do to make this something special to remember. If you let yourself get flustered and bemoan everything that goes with the event, you’ll miss out on a lot. Think about how much Andreas loves you and what a special man he is, and if nothing else, think of making this special for him. Look at where we are! This is a dream for anyone you ever knew.”

“Yeah, I know, if I could just not get so anxious about things. I used to meditate, a long time ago, and it helped to calm me, maybe I should practice again.” She said.

“If I had thought about everything that we had to do before the wedding, especially during the separation, the one thing that would have brought me pleasure and maybe some satisfaction would have been the thought of those kids in high school that used to give me grief. I would have thought, ‘Yeah. How many of you have done this?’ Not to mention the man in my life, I’d really like to dangle him in front of their faces! Really, there were only a couple of kids that were pretty mean. The rest were okay, but they made it a real hell. And I grew up with most of them.” I made her laugh with this image.

“That is something that would calm me, the thought of dangling Andreas under the noses of some of those people. Geez, it makes me angry just to think of them!”

“And does the pleasure come when you think those cows would drool over Andreas and your life now?”

“Thank you, Helen, I think I can put my mind in a place where this isn’t going to be bad at all. Andreas kept telling me to ‘think pleasant thoughts.’

Maybe I'm weird, but thinking vengeance over those 'cows' in high school is 'pleasant thoughts' for me. I'm terrible, aren't I?"

"No, it's what you could call 'divine justice.' They would all be so jealous of what we've done. Especially for the real 'b's.' They'd be seething." I said.

"You mean like Kathy and Sharon?" She asked.

"Exactly. I've also known women that I've worked with that I'd really like to stick it to, but, I think I'm beyond all that now. It would have brought me comfort at the time, I was in so much agony with the separation, though."

"I hadn't thought of that in so long. After all these years, the thought of the torture of those school years, still gets under my skin," she said.

"Isn't it strange how just a few rotten eggs made the whole thing a misery?" I was thinking back on some of my own personal tortures, so many, many years ago. The faces, they never seem to age. Time smooths the bumps in the road, the hurts seem not so painful, and many memories and names that go with the faces have faded. All but the people who caused the most misery of your life, those remain.

"Yeah. I think I'm going to make myself some notes and try to keep them in mind when things start to get me jangled. I think they'll help," she said.

"Where are our American beauties hiding?" We heard from Andreas, coming in the back door.

"That didn't take long," Morgan said.

"Dimi knew exactly what to get, so we were quick." Andreas snuggled up to Morgan, who was sitting at the table.

"Well, I guess I'll get moving. Why don't we all eat in front of the fire?" I said.

"And my bumblebee, did you miss your Andreas?"

"More than you know," she said, and he kissed her. "But I wish you wouldn't keep calling me a 'bumblebee.' It makes me see myself as round."

Andreas laughed and took her hand. He kissed her small fingers, then said: "You can wait until it's ready, I'll call you, okay?"

"Okay," she said quietly.

"You know, Rena will be hurt if you don't let her have the wedding reception. Have you thought about what you're going to tell her? Santorini is a long way

from Karpathos, but that wouldn't stop Rena from wanting to throw a big reception."

"I didn't think of that. I suppose we'll have to work around it. I'm not going to stress over it, Rena will figure something out, I guess."

"Were you thinking of a honeymoon on Santorini?"

"We didn't talk about it, I only thought of how beautiful it is and set a date. It seemed like the perfect place. It could present some problems, though. I didn't think about the family or guests or any of that. We've got time to discuss it, but I'll have to make some notes on things that need to be ironed out before we commit ourselves. I know that Rena would want to have the reception, and it's the least we can do. I wouldn't want to hurt her."

"Well, maybe you can have your honeymoon there, on Santorini," I suggested.

We talked about the pro's and con's of having a wedding in Rhodes or Karpathos, but Santorini seemed to stand out in Morgan's mind as the place to wed. I had brought up the fact that June was at the height of tourist season, and that it may be a bit crowded on Santorini, especially with all the June brides invading the island for the same purpose. Although Santorini is ideal for weddings and honeymoons, I wondered if it would be so ideal when the reality of the crowds hits home. Then the problem that would be put to the relatives, all of whom would be insulted if not invited, and still, the distance to the island from Rhodes or even Athens, would be hard for some of the elders. It was hard enough for some of them to make it to our wedding, and we had it in Karpathos. Morgan had some more thinking to do, especially to placate the elders. Tradition is nothing to be trifled with, especially if you'd expect to live amongst those that felt slighted. I didn't want to ruin Morgan's dream. I only wanted to warn her of the 'what if's' that might become an issue sometime in the future.

"Sweet Pea, come and eat, it's ready." Andreas escorted his lady to the fireside banquet.

"Helena, you are hungry?" Dimi asked as he laid the food on the coffee table.

"Good grief! What did you make?" I said as I went to the table.

“My Angel will have the feast. There is the Fettuccine Alfredo, toasted french bread with Feta and basil, a nice fruit salad and deep-fried Octopus on side, with garlic butter sauce.” He delighted over the beautiful meal he carefully prepared for us.

“Dimi, it’s too beautiful to eat. It looks like the cover of a magazine,” I said.

“Yes, but is to eat! Try fruit first, is lite. Then Feta toast, before cold.”

Once again, we were all together for a meal to die for, and with a wedding coming up in June, the engaged couple was especially happy.

“You know, you’ve been pretty good not eating certain foods, but this isn’t too far off your diet, Dimi.”

“I know, my Heart, but I think of you when I make, so, Dimi suffer with the bad food,” He said with a slight smile that he tried to hide. I put my arm around his shoulder and in a very sympathetic tone, I said,

“Ohh, you poor man. To have to suffer with such food. It is such a tragedy.” Then I kissed his cheek.

“My Heart plays with Dimi. She is feeling better with the jokes.”

“Yes, and I’m more better since you’re home, so now we’ll see about getting you back on the cardboard diet.” We laughed together. Then he kissed me under the ear.

“You must hurry to feel better, my Heart, because this man hasn’t had the scent of Helena in too long of time. Hard to say what this man will do,” he said in my ear.

“You’re being so bad, Dimi, I don’t know what to do with you,” I said. He smiled as he shook his head and tried to hide a laugh.

“I will bring coffee,” he volunteered.

Cuddling with Dimi next to the fire was so satisfying. It was something that nourished my soul. We could have our secrets and play the little game, and have the communal relationship renewed with Morgan and Andreas.

It was an amazing thing. This meshing of personalities and personal interests seemed to weave itself into a natural bond that we all felt, but went unsaid. We each knew and appreciated how rare a thing we had in this. We missed the old family homestead, but the essence of the memories was still

with us, here, at this time.

“We will have to leave tomorrow,” Andreas quietly said, not intruding on the silence.

“I must return to my work also, by end of week maybe have to go to Athens. Not looking forward, but must do,” Dimitris said.

“This has been nice, though. Even the Rooster has co-operated to add to the pleasantness,” I said.

“Yes, and we didn’t have to make dinner of him!” Andreas joked.

“I’ll let you know when I plan the Gypsy thing, Helen so that we can go together.”

“Yeah, that would be fun. I also could check the tide schedule; those ferries seem to be running late a lot lately. It’s frustrating.”

“Well, the weather at sea is still so unsettled, that’s why it’s called GMT - time...Greek Maybe Time!” Morgan said, and although we laughed, we knew the grain of truth in it. The ferries are usually, during summer months, kept on a regular schedule, but in the Winter and Spring, you take your chances, and it may not show up at all.

“I’ve got to say, Dimi, if I ever thought of anyone raising chickens, it wouldn’t have been you,” Andreas said,

“It is a pleasant surprise to Dimi, also,” he said.

“Yeah, I’m surprised that they aren’t a lot of trouble. You know, taking a lot of care.” Morgan added.

“They really take care of themselves, if you’re prepared for them. Once you have the coop and the nesting boxes, you’ve got it made,” I said.

“My Helena, she makes surprises for Dimi.”

“What do you do with all the eggs?” Morgan asked.

“We only have six laying hens, so we don’t have too many eggs. The neighbors have asked for some, so it’s not as though any go to waste,” I said.

“But you have more than six chickens, don’t the others lay?”

“There are a couple of wild hens. I’m not sure what they’re called, they’re the beige with brown spots and thin looking. They remind me of a Road Runner. They seem to be seasonal layers. They like to brood and hatch their eggs. So, right now, they don’t seem to be laying.”

"I've never heard of seasonal laying," Morgan said.

"Me either, I'm only guessing."

"But will they really hatch their eggs?" Andreas asked.

"Theirs and everyone else's if they get laid nearby. It's so cute to watch the little chicks follow the mama hen around. There's always one chick that ends up in trouble," I said.

"What are you going to do with all the chicks?"

"The trick is to grab the eggs daily before they have a chance to sit on them. But, by chance, they do hatch out, I'm sure we could give them away."

"Maybe we could....." Andreas began to say, then looked over to Morgan. "...No, I guess not. Aiden was talking about having chickens, but I'm not sure his neighbors would appreciate it," Andreas said.

"Have you seen Aiden lately? How's he doing?" I asked.

"He's holding his own, he's bald, thin, but he says the doctor told him not to worry," Andreas said.

"I've really got to call him. I've haven't spoken to him in quite a while," I said.

After dinner, we relaxed by the fireplace, and it was a nice respite from the worry and stress.

"We have an early morning to face, so I guess we'll say good night," Andreas said.

We headed in opposite directions to our rooms. Dimi made sure the fire was low, and everything turned off in the kitchen when he came to bed.

"I will tell you a thing, my Heart," Dimi said as he cuddled in next to me.

"What."

"First time my Heart mention to want chickens, Dimi think 'what to do with this woman?' Not many women want this in these days. In old days, when food get scarce, this would be common thing, or in back hills or Rhodes back hills, yes. Why she would want them? She is modern American, this surprise this man. Dimi was shock!"

"You were? You didn't act like it was a big thing."

"No, Dimi want to give his Helena what make her happy. But now, now

Dimi see. Is very interesting to sit and watch chickens. Relax for Dimi, I like.”

I smiled at his sweetness.

“Helena? Why do we have gate to chickens open in day time?”

“Well, if we didn’t let them run around and scratch and eat bugs, we’d have to mix in sand in the feed and chicken yard. This way, they get enough of what they need without the added hassle and expense.” I explained.

“Chickens must have the scratch? Huh.”

“Sometimes, you are so cute,” I said.

“Dimi, not cute.”

“Yes, you are.”

“Dimi too old to be cute.”

“Well, you’re cute to me.”

“Dimi supposed to be ‘he-man,’ big hairy oaf, good only for the work.” He paused, and in a cooing voice, said, “and the making of love to his Helena.” He kissed me and sighed a contented sound.

“Sweetie, I have to tell you something, and I don’t want you to get upset.” He reached for the lamp next to the bed. He turned to me and listened.

“I was worried about those men following you.”

“Not to worry, Helena.”

“I have to worry because it kept you away from me for several days. I tried to find more information on the Internet about the whole thing from the beginning. There wasn’t anything there that we didn’t already know, so I called Sahj.”

“Why?”

“I thought maybe he could tell us something new, maybe tell us who these people are, what we’re dealing with, so we can be prepared. Maybe he could show us pictures so that we can keep an eye out for them.”

“This won’t stop them from the harassment, would it?” He asked.

“Probably not, but we would, at least, see what they look like, in case we see one of them, we’ll know to avoid them.”

“What Sahj say? You say about Bolio?”

“No, I didn’t mention him specifically, I thought if we could meet with him, it would be better. He said he would set up a meeting, and he’ll let me know

where to meet on the 1:15 ferry from Rhodes to Crete on Tuesday.”

“That is tomorrow, and you only tell Dimi now? Why you not say before?” He looked into my eyes, and before I could say anything, he said, “Dimi not home, I see. Will you be alone? No like you travel alone, my Heart.”

“I was going to see if Morgan would go with me.”

“Dimi will go.”

“Sweetie, the main reason I’m doing this, and Sahj is taking this chance, is to keep you two from being seen together. I only want to find out where and when to meet Sahj, and then maybe we both can get some answers. Do you understand what I’m trying to do?” I held his hand that seemed nervously playing with the blanket binding.

“Yes, I know, but Dimi will worry, especially if Sahj being watched. This nothing to play with Helena, so don’t stir the nest of the wasp. Maybe you take camera, look to be tourist. Big hat, sunglasses, take lots of pictures. Maybe you not be recognized.”

“That’s not a bad idea! If anyone is watching Sahj, I might capture some faces on the sly. I think that might work.”

Going Incognito



The plan was set. Morgan and I had decked ourselves out in our most 'touristy' duds. The only thing we both lacked was the oversized sunglasses that hid most of the face.

Morgan had her sun visor hat, Hawaiian print oversized blouse, flip-flops and cropped pants, and I had a t-shirt with the Eiffel Tower on it, tennis shoes sans socks, and Bermuda shorts. The men were having fun putting big floppy hats, little straw hats, and other monstrosities on our heads. They'd laugh at us with every new chapeau, but the chalky-white zinc on our noses and the sunglasses made our look. I was feeling better, and the sun was shining, which made for a fresh start to our day.

When our ferry came, we said our farewells to our men, who weren't so sure that we were doing the right thing. Suddenly things got serious.

"My Heart, you will keep cell phone on. You make Dimi worry. This should be job for the men."

"We'll do fine. It'll be short and direct. No lengthy conversations. We don't want to draw attention to ourselves."

Dimi looked at me with my two cameras hanging off my shoulder, the Eiffel Tower on my chest and my huge white sunglasses with hot pink and lime green dots, and he chuckled, shook his head as he looked down and said

“My Heart, no one would think you anything but tourist, all needed is accent, so not so American.”

“All I can do is a Southern accent, and not consistently,” I said.

“You will do good, my Heart, but if trouble, call on cell. I wait to hear. S’agapo, my Helena. I will not stop the worry until you are home,” he said. He put the cameras on my shoulder, wrapped his arms around me then kissed me good-bye.

Morgan and Andreas were deep into their good-bye as the boarding whistle sounded. We left our men as we sprinted to board the ferry. We couldn’t see our men as our ferry left the docks. The boarding area was obscured by cargo that was to be delivered. This will be a busy day at sea.

“Dimi says I should use an accent. What d’ y’all thank of muh’ suthun accent?” I drawled.

“Not bad, only how long do think you can keep it up?” Morgan laughed.

“I don’t know, not long. If I can keep it going until we get back, I might not ever lose it, so maybe it’s not such a hot idea.”

“When should we start taking pictures?” Morgan asked.

“I think we should act all excited and giddy, then pose each other with some of the people and get pictures that way. We should ask, though. They’ll think we’re pretty rude anyway, when we’re loud and obnoxious. Do you think you’re up to it?” I asked.

“Not exactly my cup of tea, but we can see what works best,” Morgan said.

“We need to place ourselves where most of the people are, then ask them if they wouldn’t mind posing with us. Then get some of the crowd in the pictures too.”

“How do you do that?” She asked. “People don’t like to have their pictures taken by strangers.” Morgan had a point.

“We’ll have to use our imaginations. Go up to a man and say, ‘hey, you look like so and so, could you be related? Of course, he’ll say ‘no,’ then say something like “my sister won’t believe me if I told her how much you look like my cousin! Could I take a picture with you? Then get someone standing close by to snap it, or invite his friends to join in and take a picture of all of them. It strokes the ego a little, and I think we’ll get many to cooperate.” I

suggested.

“Well, I’ll try, but I feel funny. I’m not a good liar.”

“No, just be a good actress!”

It was funny how cooperative the men were. They were very friendly, and it opened them up to more talk. Before we hit the port of Karpathos, we had a slew of pictures. I tried to keep a list of their names with the number of the shot on the camera, but I got lost and soon was finding it was a mess. I had names, but which face went with it was lost after thirty to forty snapshots.

At the Karpathos landing, Morgan and I were talking and laughing and pointing out interesting sites from the ferry, a typical tourist thing to do, when I saw Sahj board. We continued our shots with the camera for quite a while. Then Sahj gave me a nod from across the passenger lounge.

“I am so thirsty, Mitzi, let’s get a drink,” I said to Morgan.

“Okay, LaVonne, I hope they have iced tea,” she added.

We walked into the bar and got our drinks. We sat in a booth waiting for the next move. Sahj was reading a newspaper at his booth. Soon he walked by us, dropping parts of his paper.

“I am so sorry ladies,” he said loudly, then we all bent down to retrieve the pages. Sahj slipped a note under one of my hands that was retrieving the newspaper.

“Please accept my apology, so very clumsy of me,” he said as we gave him his paper.

“It’s okay, happens all of the time,” Morgan cheerfully stated.

We went along, taking pictures of anyone in close to Sahj. The ferry wasn’t too crowded, so we were able to pose and laugh and act like excited ladies on Holiday. We even climbed the next level and shot pictures from above of the passengers below. We had a good time and had no feelings of threat or danger.

We investigated every deck, the curious tourists that we were. Taking pictures of everything, and when we thought we had done the routine to death, new people came aboard, and we were at it again.

We were out on the upper deck exposed to the wind and were amongst

many other tourists who boarded for the journey to Crete. A man came up to Morgan, asking the typical questions, where she's from, how long on Holiday. He didn't seem to be anything more than curious, but I stood back to allow them some space and took more pictures. When my cell phone rang, I answered. I found a nook where I was out of the wind, and could hear more easily.

"Hi, Sweetie," I said secretively.

"Ooo, my Heart is to make this man smolder," he cooed. "I am missing my Heart, with big hat and glasses too."

"You're trying to be funny, aren't you?"

"Oh no, not funny. Missing my Heart," he said.

"Dimi, you're going to make me want to be bad, and you're not here. That's not good."

"What you mean, my Heart?"

"You wouldn't want me to be bad without you, would you?"

"Now who is being bad? This man, can he be missing his Heart more? If I think of you to be bad without Dimi, I go insane."

"I wish I was home," I said.

"What would you do to this man if you were home?" He coyly asked.

"Whatever you wish," I whispered.

"Oh Helena, you do this to make me crazy, I think!"

"We'll see..."

"Yes."

"Oh, what is this?" I cooed quietly.

"What?" He asked in a strange tone.

"I think it's what you would call 'my scent.'"

"Uhhh, Helena, what you do to me?"

"I'd better get back to Morgan, Sweetie, she's looking lost. Will you meet me at the docks?"

"I will be there."

It was a sweet departure from our set plan of action on the voyage, and I only wished that I was home. I think I may have shocked Dimi, as I had never made a phone conversation such as that before.

Morgan and I had our hot cups of Cappuccino and complained about how tired we were. When the ferry reached Crete, we descended with a crowd of travelers, made our way to a taverna at the docks. It would be an hour and a half before the ferry boarded again, so we were happy to take some time on solid ground. After our rest at the taverna, we sat on the benches that lined the port marina and enjoyed the sunshine, which was hidden during the previous week.

“Do you see that man over there? The one with the knit cap pulled down to his eyes, and the plaid jacket?” I asked.

“Him? I’ve seen him skulking around. Why do you ask?” Morgan asked.

“I know it sounds weird, but, do you remember him from somewhere?”

“You mean before today? No, I don’t think so.” She looked again, and he turned away. “He reminds me a little of Gregorio, only, I don’t know, he looks dirty.” She went back to her freeze dried Cranberries and Yogurt bits.

“We’ve only got twenty minutes left; we should go and get our ferry back to Rhodes. Don’t you think?” I asked.

“Sure,” she agreed. “Don’t forget your hat.” I put the huge hat back on but tied it down with a pink scarf, to keep the wind from blowing it away. We were both so exhausted that we rested in the luxury lounge. There weren’t a lot of passengers, but we kept up the disguise.

“I’m going to the ladies room. I’ll be right back,” Morgan said.

“Keep your pepper spray handy,” I told her. She went down to the lower deck. While I waited for her return, I closed my eyes for a few minutes to rest. There was a draft blowing in from the deck that carried a foul odor, definitely fishy. This was unusual on this ferry line. I looked around to see if I could tell where the smell came from, but couldn’t. I decided to move to the lower deck, and I would catch Morgan on her way back up. I sat on a small bench in a hallway between the passenger seating and the restrooms. It was quiet for the most part, but there was still a slight draft. I leaned back against the wall and took off my hat. I closed my eyes and relaxed, waiting for Morgan. The smell that had been on the upper deck was permeating the air, or I got the smell stuck in my senses because it wouldn’t go away. I looked up and could see that dirty man with the knit cap, standing at the end of the

hallway, with the breeze carrying his odor my way. I had to move or become ill. He reminded me of when I did state service and had a customer who was most likely homeless. The poor man was very sweet, a little timid, but reeked something awful with odors I could barely stand. He got the fastest service!

I went toward the stairs to the upper deck and sat at the bottom and waited for Morgan. She would be coming back any minute now. I put my hat back on and tied it down. I started to review some of the pictures I had taken on my digital camera. I had over one hundred fifty shots, just on my one camera.

I waited ten more minutes for Morgan; then she called me. "Hello Morgan, where are you?"

"I'm up on the 2nd deck, where are you?"

"I'm below, waiting for you, I had to move from where I was, I must have missed you."

"I met a very nice tourist from Holland, he's getting us a coffee, come on up and you can meet him."

I agreed to meet her friend, but the thought of climbing more stairs seemed to be more than I could take. Maybe I am still tired, but I couldn't muster the courage to tackle them. I sat in a corner where the wind wasn't bad, leaned back and closed my eyes.

I could smell the fishy odor in the air and thought that it must be stuck in my nose because no one was around. I closed my eyes again, and it seemed to get stronger, when I felt someone sit next to me. I opened my eyes to see this man with the knit cap down to his eyelashes leaning in toward my face. He was so close, I couldn't focus on him. I was shocked, my heart pounding and a rush of fearful adrenaline went through me. I pulled away as much as I could, but he was so close, and I was against the wall. The smell of fish and diesel fuel was so revolting I almost fainted. I could only try to push him far enough away that I would be able to stand. When he pulled back a little, he pulled his knit cap off. It was Dimi! When I recognized him, he smiled and dove into my neck, murmuring his Greek words to me.

"Dimi!" I tried to untangle myself from him. "Dimi, stop," I whispered.

"I am sorry, my Heart, I frighten my angel," he said.

“Oh, Dimi, the smell! What are you doing?” I asked in a hushed tone. He backed off enough to say

“To keep angel safe.”

“Oh, Dimi, the smell. I can’t stand it; you’ll have to move,” I said.

“But Dimi smolder for his Heart.”

“Eeeooo, not now, no, oh!” I pinched my nose and made a face.

“You no like this disguise?”

“Is that what this is about?”

“Please, Helena, not to be angry.”

“I’m not angry, but would you please sit over there?” I pointed to a bench across the aisle.

“Let me see hands,” he said. I gave him my hands. He kissed the palms of both hands, breathing them in.

“No scent,” he said.

“No.”

“My Heart just tease this man! Do Sahj leave from ferry?”

“I’m not sure. When did you come up with this idea? No, don’t tell me. Dimi, you’ll have to move down wind.” He laughed at what I said and moved away from me.

When Morgan started to wonder where I was, she came looking for me, followed by a blond, not so camouflaged Andreas. A little hard to disguise a tall Greek god into a very northern European.

“Where the hell have you been? I thought you were coming up to meet my new friend Sven.”

“I got a little distracted. Hey, Sven, what’s up?” I said to Andreas.

“Not much, now,” he said.

“He didn’t fool you? You knew it was Andreas?”

“The way he looks, it wasn’t much of a disguise. Now, Dimi, he’s got a disguise!” I said. Morgan looked at Andreas and just smiled.

“Where is he? Did we see him?”

“Yes, we definitely saw him.” Just as we were talking, Dimitris came up from behind.

“Ooo, there’s that man that smells. Hold your breath ‘till he passes.” Morgan

said under her breath. I turned as Dimi came up to me. He had lost the smelly jacket and the odor with it. He put his arms around me and gave me a most sensuous kiss.

“Dimi? That’s Dimi?” Morgan exclaimed.

“Shhh, we’re still incognito!” I said.

“You do not know this man?” He asked, as he pulled off the knit cap that came down to his eyelashes.

“You sure fooled me,” she said.

We made a pact that the men would stay away from us until we reach Rhodes. If anyone suspicious was on board, we didn’t want to give ourselves away, this late in the game.

There were very few passengers remaining on board when we found our destination back on Rhodes. Besides the four of us, there were only a half dozen others who left the ferry. As agreed, the men walked to the far side of the square where the little car was parked, and Morgan and I got in a taxi. We met at the house, being sure that we were not followed.

“This too much work, the disguise. We do not do again,” Dimi said as he peeled off a bristled beard and mustache.

“It was a very tiring, long day. I wasn’t expecting to see you two show up!” I said.

“That reminds me, what did Sahj give you? Instructions?” Morgan asked.

“I didn’t dare look at it on board, let me get my glasses,” I said as everyone gathered at the table.

“I will pour some wine. Help to get off chill,” Dimi said.

“Retsina, Dimi. Make mine Retsina,” Andreas called out.

As everyone got settled, I unfolded the paper that Sahj slipped to me.

“Athens - Darios Turkish Carpets & Drapery

Thursday 2 pm See Marcos,” I read.

When I unfolded the bottom fold, I saw a small scribbled note saying “The key to the puzzle for you to hold, of tin or iron but not of gold.” It was in English. I did not read this aloud.

“That’s all?” Morgan sounded surprised.

“There’s some other scribbling on it, but yes, that’s all it says. Well, it’s a

meeting, at least, that's what we wanted," I said.

"He could have emailed that!" She said. Andreas took her hand and calmed her; he knew how tired she had gotten.

"This man, Sahj, he is careful, this is good," Dimitris said.

"What is that, a poem?" Morgan asked. "Can't even read it."

"Yeah, it looks like he was just doodling." I didn't want to let on that I thought that this was more than a poem. There is a deeper meaning to it than just what the words say.

"I just want some answers, and if he didn't have something for us, he wouldn't be so careful," I said. "Dimi, do you know where this place is - 'Darios Turkish Carpets'?"

"I do." Andreas popped up.

"We will find," Dimi said.

Those few days passed slowly in anticipation of our meeting with Sahj. Andreas and Morgan had left for home the day after our clandestine ferry trip as tourists. Although they would not be at the meeting with Sahj, we would stay with them in Athens on that day.

I had been fairly introspective in the days leading up to our meeting. Dimitris was always careful of not questioning me or trying to divert my thoughts. As I watched him in the garden, I could see this man, whom I fell in love with, laboring at a job that he was doing for me. He never really thought about a garden or raising chickens before now. It seemed to him to be something that the elders of the island did, not him. Now, people watching and following him, the danger that stays hidden but always seems to be present, I felt I had to do something to end this. If anything were to happen to him, it would be my fault. I started this mess and I couldn't let more harm come from it.

I wasn't sure if Dimi should be at my meeting with Sahj, but he wouldn't let me go alone. We entered the furniture store at 2 pm and asked for Marcos. We were led to a business office at the back of a small warehouse, behind the storefront. Sahj greeted us as we entered.

"Good, good, everything has gone well? So good to see you both, please sit," he said. "Let us begin."

Dimitris took my hand and held it on his thigh as Sahj began to speak in whispered tones.

“From our conversation earlier, I know the concern you have for your safety and that of your family. The Police, as in most of the islands, have limited resources and are forced to deal with local crime and refer major, international crime like this to other judicial departments. Having said that, you must know that larger international investigative groups get involved in these crimes. Again, we are dealing with bureaucracy and agencies that officially ‘do not exist.’

“There are many far reaching tentacles associated with what we are dealing with in the antiquities, the thefts and all who are known to be involved. This is where we must be careful in what we say, who we say it to and what we do. Information, such as your map, which can innocently go into the wrong hands, we must guard against.

“You have been very lucky thus far in not losing more than you’d care to risk. This is why I want to help you. The information I give you is for you to be able to protect yourselves. Do not think for an instant that this information is license for you to try to solve any crimes or do any independent investigation. Do you understand?”

“Yes,” I said.

“The theft and sale of antiquities started before the Turks invaded Northern Cyprus. It began with other areas being pillaged, such as the tombs of the Pharaohs in Egypt. The tombs were stripped of their riches and artifacts, and it has continued to this day, and the sale of these rare items to private collectors. This has gone on for centuries. It is only in recent years that many of the major thefts that were investigated have met up with other crimes. Facts have been cataloged and compared. There are similarities in some cases that lead us to believe that some of these crimes have been committed by the same individuals. High profile art dealers have been suspected to be involved and has led to some arrests. Some of the more infamous cases, I am sure you have heard of, but with what we have established in this case, major crime bosses surely have a hand in it.”

“So you say that my Helena in danger, even if criminals go to jail?” Dimitris asked.

“It is not known how many are actually involved, but capturing the small criminal may lead to others. It is a start, and any information we obtain, names, places will help. But it is like the Woodpecker on a tree. He picks away, a little at a time, and who can say that it will not lead to the downfall of the tree?”

“So what can you give us to help? I don’t want to be afraid to travel the islands; we’re on the ferry almost every week. Now, I’m going to suspect everyone I see.” I said.

“I think best, maybe we leave Hellas. We make home in the USA.”

“No, Dimi, no. We aren’t leaving again.” I said to reassure him. “Sahj, Ahmed, what can we do?”

“I have made a disk for you. On it, you will see faces, copies of arrest sheets and other information. Look at it well. Study the faces and read whatever you may find on these individuals. They may be in Rhodes, or Athens, or not, but if you recognize any of them, you must call Interpol and do not go near. Let agents take care of them.”

“But why do they persist, why do they continue to pursue my Helena?” Dimi was agitated, he clasped and rubbed my hand as he asked his question.

“From interrogating detainees, it is believed that more information, maps or photos, are in your possession. Due to the lack of evidence in your case with the break-in, I’m afraid they have released Hakim.”

“But there isn’t any other information that we have.” I looked at Dimitris at the mention of the name Hakim.

“This is what they believe, that you have other information, perhaps names that can implicate others. If they believe you have this type of information, then that means that somewhere this information exists. If you don’t have it, then who does? If you found the first part of the puzzle, the other parts are not far behind. So be careful in whatever you do, where ever you go, put disc in safe place or destroy it, and keep eyes open. Now, I must go. I will leave from the loading area; you must exit through the front. Wait ten minutes before you leave.” Sahj took my hand and kissed it and said “You will

be careful? Both of you!” He left us to find our way back to the front of the store.

“Helena,” Sahj called me back in a muted voice. I turned and walked back to Sahj. He stood close enough to me that he spoke in nearly a whisper “Helena,” he had something he was handing me on the sly. “Keep this until you need it. Do not speak of it.”

He turned and left through a back door. I put the small brown envelope in my pocket and walked back to Dimitris. He held my arm tightly as we left the store, and we walked a little more briskly than we usually do, back towards the Bug. We noticed a small man loitering near the car; it was that “Bolio” character with the bulging eyes. Dimitris pulled me into the first doorway on the boulevard.

“We will wait, see if he goes,” Dimitris said.

“This guy keeps showing up,” I said. Dimi looked down at me.

“He will not harm my Helena,” he said.

“We need to sit somewhere out of the way; I’ve got to tell you something.”

He looked around, and although we were standing in the doorway of a store, it was not open. Trying to slip past this man, would be hard to do without being seen. When the little man turned to stroll in the opposite direction, we scooted back to the next doorway and into the stairwell of an upper floor apartment. It was a dark closet of a stairwell, but we would be unseen for the short time we would be there. Hidden behind a small wall partition, we stood, waiting. When Dimitris saw that I was getting tired of standing, he knelt down so that I could rest on his knee. Not an ideal situation, but it helped.

“What it is you would tell this man, Helena?”

“I was going to say something about this when we found out that this guy is called ‘Bolio’, but we were in public, and you got a little upset with the man spreading gossip. I didn’t want to add to the situation.”

“Tell Dimi.”

“When we were in Athens and we had to meet you for the banquet, we had to get out and walk the last block to where you met us. Anyway, I was stuck behind a bunch of people blocking the sidewalk, so when I went around them

onto the street, I was going back to the curb and ran right into that little man! I didn't pay much attention, but I did notice a strange thing he did. It seemed odd to me at least."

"What was that, Helena?" He asked, looking into my eyes.

"He looked right at me and then pulled down his lower eyelid, like this. Does that mean anything?" I asked as I demonstrated the gesture. I saw Dimitris' eyes get enlarged.

"We must call Stefano; I will see if Bolio has gone." He stood and went to the glass paneled door, but didn't see the little man.

Once we were sure that the path was clear, we hurried to the little car and made our way up to the hills and home.

"I know that I should have told you before, but I didn't think it was anything at the time, I mean, he's such an odd little man anyway, so I just forgot about it. What does it mean, Dimi?"

"That man always to show up. It means you are being watched. We must know who this is." He took out his phone after he opened the house, and called Stefano to bring him up to date. The message counter on the home phone flashed red, lighting the kitchen with flashes like neon. Our arrival home was like we had been gone for weeks, instead of overnight. The dogs were excited to see us; the chickens swarmed us as we removed our small luggage from the car. It was apparent that the chicken coop door had come ajar while we were gone.

While Dimi saw to the chickens and dogs, I listened to the messages on the phone while I put on the water to heat. Three were from Stefano, two from Morgan and one from my sister. Stefano's voice became more urgent by the third call.

"All is good. chickens to bed." He said as he came in the back door.

I went into the bedroom. I took the little coin envelope out of my pocket. It felt like there was a key inside. It was the key that I had given back to Sahj. I put it in the drawer of my bedside table. It felt good to get home, to take off my shoes and to shower. It was so relaxing to have the shower of pulsating water beat across my back. I thought about what Sahj said and knew that if

we delved into the disc that he gave us now, I'd be awake and on the computer all night looking for more information.

"Helena?" I heard Dimi call as he approached the bedroom. "Do you want coffee?" He asked.

I was sitting on the edge of the bed, and weighing my options. If I didn't have coffee now, I'd be asleep by 6:30 pm. If I do have a cup, I might not be able to sleep. As he came to sit next to me, he asked

"Are you too tired, my Heart?"

"I guess I could use a cup of tea." He patted my thigh and smiled.

"We will have Lemon-Hibiscus, we talk and maybe turn on tv, what you think?" He asked as he walked me to the living room.

I sat on the sofa as he went to get the tea. It looked like he had a small fire started in the fireplace that didn't quite take hold. Just as I rose to go to the hearth, I heard,

"Dimi will fix fire, my Heart, leave for this man to do." I returned to the sofa as he brought in cups.

"Thank you, honey," I said innocently. He gave me that all-knowing look, like I didn't fool anyone by acting so innocent. I had to smile as I sipped my tea.

"This fire will be stubborn. The wood a little damp," he said.

"That's okay, Dimi, come and sit, we don't need a fire tonight."

"Not to need, but to like." He tried more wood and had a little more luck, but it seemed to be smoky, and the flames didn't dance.

"It seems it wants to smolder instead of burn," I said. Dimi put his arm around my shoulder as he kissed me under the ear and said

"Yes, it will smolder like my Helena do for Dimi. This man smolder all day, but promise to be good or my Helena would not want this man at meeting." I looked at him and had to laugh. He was right! If I knew, I wouldn't have wanted him distracting me, at least until the meeting was over.

"I think you might know me a little too well, my love," I said as I cuddled up to him on the sofa.

"Is my Heart comfortable?" He asked. We were together with nothing pressing for the moment, so I was content.

“Mmm, yes, I’m good,” I said.

“Rena say hello. Stefano say to have my Helena call Rena,” he said in a soft voice.

“I’ll give her a call tomorrow.” I wondered what was Stefano’s urgency.

“Will we look on Sahj’s disc tonight?”

“It can wait until tomorrow, I think,” I said.

I slept later than usual and found that Dimi was already up. I couldn’t believe that he let me sleep so long. The morning was nearly gone already. I dressed in a hurry and wondered where he was. I went to the back porch but didn’t see him. When I looked in the lab, there he was at his desk. I poured us both a cup of coffee and brought one to him.

“Kalimera, my Heart. You sleep long time. Dimi would wake his Heart if not up by 11am.” He said as he took his cup from my hand.

“What time did you get up?” I asked.

“Too early. Have big idea and have to come to lab. Can’t go back to sleep after mind awake.”

“Yeah, so, how’s it coming?” I asked.

“Do not have all equipment for it to work, so Dimi will go to work today. Do you want to come also?”

“To Athens? Not today, we just got back, and I have a lot to do. Do you have to go, you can’t work it out here, in your lab?” I asked.

“To do job right, I must go. It will not be long, but Morgana would want you to visit.” He suggested.

“I know, but I can’t leave so soon, Sweetie, I have too much to do around here,” I said.

“I must go off to airport. I will take little car, so you have big car to use if you need. You will take dog if you go somewhere?” He asked.

“Yes, if I go out, I’ll take the dog with me. Will you call me, and let me know how it’s going?”

“Yes, my Heart.” He kissed my cheek and turned off his desk light. He gathered his paperwork and removed his glasses. “I must hurry to catch next flight.”

Before I knew it, I was alone in this big quiet house. I let the elderly dog in to keep me company, and turned on the tv, mostly to quell the silence. As the hours went by, I was able to do most of the chores that I had put off. Laundry, changing the linens, etc.

I spent twenty minutes in the garden, then had to come back to the house. I love the garden, but stooping and bending is now done in small increments. It was a pleasant day to be out in the garden, but I had done enough for the day and hadn't bothered to eat anything. I had been so busy I had forgotten.

By late afternoon, I hadn't heard from Dimi, but I couldn't disturb him with my calls. When he's inspired, I have to let him work. I called Rena, as I said I would, and it was such a joy to hear her voice.

"Helena, where have you been, girl? I haven't seen you since Buddha!"

"I know! It's been a while. How is everyone?" I asked.

"Everyone's fine. I have to tell you, Aiden had a relapse. He was doing so well, then suddenly, not so good."

"What happened? Did the Cancer spread? Don't tell me that, Rena!"

"No, his doctor said that his system was reacting to all the chemo, I guess he hasn't been keeping up his strength. The boy won't eat when he's by himself."

"Oh, Rena. You really scared me. For a minute there I thought he was dying."

"Well, I guess the word "relapse" was a bit strong, but he's been so miserable. I think that being bald has gotten him down."

"I'll have to call him." I let the airwaves cool a minute then asked, "Do you know what Stefano talked to Dimi about the other day?"

"What?" She asked as though she was in the dark on this.

"Stefano left several messages for Dimi to call him the other day. I was wondering if you knew what it was about?" I asked.

"Oh, I don't know, that man, everything is urgent with him lately. Suddenly he's been very testy."

"Really, Stefano?"

"Yes, he's been snippy and impatient, I've had to ignore him, or I'd blow a gasket," she said. "Didn't Dimi tell you about what was said?"

“We haven’t talked about it yet.”

“Maybe Dimi can get to the bottom of what’s going on with Stefano. He gets either very quiet or he barks at me when I ask him something,” Rena related.

“Maybe they need a men’s night out,” I suggested.

“There you go, we’ll send them to the strip club this evening,” she said.

“Are you nuts?” I laughed.

“What? You don’t think they should go there?” She asked.

“Are you serious? You’re kidding me, right?” I asked.

“Okay, okay. No strip club, maybe a comedy club, something to make them laugh,” she said.

Stefano stepped in and Rena handed over the phone.

“Helena, this is Stefano. I found something that you might want to put with your investigation. It doesn’t make sense, but since it’s the second one, maybe it’ll mean something.”

“What? What do you mean? What is it?”

“It was a brass tag plate found at the Labyrinth. It didn’t mean anything to the antiquities and artifacts search, so it got put aside. You might want to write this down. It’s written in Turkish. It says: ‘To guard the key, the cat does sit, in wet surround, within the pit.’ It looks like it might go with the other poem you have.” Then he handed it back to Rena.

“Maybe that’s why Stefano was calling. It is weird, though.”

“Everything with him is weird lately, my sainted Chinese grandmother, he just grabbed the phone and didn’t even say anything to me. I’m going to have to worm him!”

“Oh, Rena, you’re funny. He’s probably got things on his mind; gotta love him though.”

I made myself a small dinner at 6:30 pm, and figured that if Dimi were going to be home tonight, he’d have to have taken the last flight. I waited for his call. Finally, the phone rang.

“My Heart, it get late before I know. I am sorry,” he said.

"I thought maybe you might catch the last flight. So, when will you be home?"

"I will be on 10 am flight. Do you keep one of my boys with you today?"

"Yes, he's still in the house. Are you still working?"

"Yes, my Heart, and I must finish tonight. I must go, but I will be missing my Helena."

Since it was nine o'clock, I decided I might as well have a look at the disc that Sahj gave us. Dimi and I were going to look at it together, but I had to keep myself occupied. First, I had to call Aiden before I forgot.

"Helena?" Aiden sounded really depressed.

"Hey, Aiden, how are you doing?" I asked.

"Pretty good, how about you? Dimi keeping you out of trouble?" He said.

"I don't know about that, but things have been about the same around here. I haven't heard from you in a while, how's the chemo going?" I asked.

"It's a piece of cake. Still wipes me out, but I haven't been getting sick with it lately. When do you think you'll be coming into Athens?"

"I'm not sure, maybe next week, do you need anything?" I asked.

"Oh, no, I'm getting around pretty well now, but I want to thank you again for everything you did, I was really pathetic, I'm sorry."

"No, Aiden, it's understandable, the news and urgency of Cancer is devastating, anyone would react the same in that situation. I was glad I was able to do what I could," I said.

"Well, I just want you to know how much I appreciate it. Dimitris didn't give you hell, did he? No, I guess he wouldn't."

"You know, we all were pulling for you," I said. "We still are."

"I know," he said with a sullen tone.

"Are you alright?"

"Yeah, just tired I guess."

"Well, I'll let you get some rest, I'll talk to you soon, eh?" I said.

"Yes, real soon."

I settled in front of the computer and put in Sahj's disc. As I scanned over some of the documents, most of it was very boring and "fill in the blanks"

type of forms. There was a file that had nothing but mug shots. These were arrest mug shots, and the last name of the individual was right on the photo. This was an amazing find, and although the dates that the shots were taken weren't on every photo, but it was easy to tell which pictures were older. The faces in the pictures were familiar, but after staring at the screen for so long, the faces didn't seem to have features anymore. Before I quit for the night, I downloaded the picture of "Bolio" from my cell phone. I wanted to print it and put it in with the rest of the pictures. As my eyes were hurting, I put the disc away for the night.

Just as I was going to bed and turning off the light, the phone rang.

"My Heart, were you sleep?"

"Not yet."

"This man call to say "kalinikta," he said.

"I wish you were here," I said.

"Dimi is fool, he should be home with beautiful wife. The work always loses Dimi in time, but this man only think of to come home to his angel."

"Yes, well, we'll have to work on a plan for when you get your moments of genius," I said.

"My Heart, I will tell you a thing, when Dimi have flash of big idea, all else go from the mind. I am like motor with switch on "go" position."

"I see," I said a bit dejected.

"This not what Helena think for marriage with this man. Day end with Helena alone."

I started to speak, when he continued, "This cannot be the easy thing for the bride of this poor fool of man."

"Oh, Sweetie, we just need a better way to work with your brainstorm, that's all. I miss you not being home, but I understand."

"Helena, I do not deserve such a wife."

"You just come home as soon as you can, Dimi, and everything will be fine. It's just for tonight, isn't it?"

"I am thinking of home already, my Heart."

"Okay, well, call me in the morning when you leave, okay?" I asked.

"S'agapo, Helena."

“S’agapo, Dimi, kalinikta.”

“Goodnight.”

Running my hand over the cold sheets on the other side of the bed, I found it harder to sleep than I thought. My mind went back to thinking of the day of the picnic, the thrill that shot through my body and into my Heart when our eyes met. At this time in my life, I never would have dreamed that I would experience this feeling again, and fall in love with someone so deeply that I felt a hole in my heart, that a part of me is missing when not in his presence. I thought I was beyond all this. All the feelings of young love, the passion and giddiness of a monumental love that sent my heart singing. When I was younger, even though I did love Mark and it was passionate, it wasn’t the same as this. This is loving someone to the point of no return. I was dying a slow death with Mark, even though I still had deep feelings for him, it’s just something that one expects as a relationship matures along with you. Now that I’m counting grays hairs, I never thought that someone so sweet and wonderful would come into my life and totally take my heart. No matter how hard I tried to not let myself fall in love, trying to convince myself that it’s just my imagination that this Adonis would actually be pursuing me! He crept into my heart, and I couldn’t deny that he did something to me. The more I tried to be good, and remembering that I had someone at home waiting for me, I still found it hard to do the right thing. The thought of Dimitris made my heart race, and that first day on Karpathos, the kiss under the trees, I thought I’d die! I finally figured out that this is the secret to the fountain of youth, this is what men and women have been looking for in all the wrong places.

With a love as strong as what I had found, I had been given a gift that owned my heart. I had to learn all over again what it was and how to live with it. I was a person that I didn’t know. It changed me from within. I found that my emotions were intense in every sense, I was becoming a sensual being, sex, jealousy, heartbreak, a passion for life, it all was wrapped up in this new experience, in this ancient place. I found an energy that I forgot was within this body, a new strength, and new focus. I was not the same person, not the

tourist who came to Rhodes.

I was content in the imagery of my recollections and was falling asleep with thoughts of Dimitris, when I heard a noise from outside that jarred me back to the present. I sat up, listening for another sound that was unfamiliar. The night sounds of the breeze hitting the wind chimes, the rustling of leaves on the old branches of the Olive tree next to the house and the usual creaking of the house settling on its old foundations revived the faces to mind, that were seen on the disc that Sahj gave us. The copies of news clippings, reports, notes on surveillance and other data, most of which we hadn't translated yet, but it was the faces that I saw when I closed my eyes.

I finally got up, made my way to the computer and put in the disc. Although there were several folders on the disc, there were a lot of pages in each folder that were printable, and I printed as much as I could. It was too late at night to sit and look at the computer screen for any length of time, so the printed page was more useful, and I was able to take them back to bed with me for a closer look. The photos that were taken while Morgan and I were "undercover" were also printed, whether they seemed useful or not, we could always refer to them if in question.

It was obvious to me that what I was looking at was very old news, mostly, and not in the best shape for copying. Try as I may to enhance what I could, it was the pictures that I wanted to take a closer look at, and in a better light. I figured those who were still alive would have aged somewhat since most of these were taken; the copies were good enough to imagine the faces with twenty years added to them.

There were pictures that our printer didn't reproduce very well, but were clear enough to notice things that needed to be scrutinized more thoroughly. As I made these observations and notes for further study, I knew that Dimi would not want me to have deeper involvement in this, as in the "foot work." The idea of knowing who is involved and what to look out for was all we were to do with this material. How could I overlook things that needed to be questioned? Had all evidence that was collected at the time of the arrests been fully identified and cataloged? Where is the accountability on the secured evidence? From what we had on our disc, there were too many gaps in the

sequencing of the documentation.

I was ready to call it a night when I noticed a strange thing. There were several views of pieces of what looked like frescoes, or perhaps sculptures that were broken but pieced together in a somewhat careless manner for the purpose of photographing them. The photos were poor quality, grainy copies made worse by our printer, but the curious thing was that the subject was very familiar. I had seen it in other historical places, but I had to see the photo from the computer monitor so that I wasn't imagining that this was something that it was not. As I turned off the lamp and settled into my lonely bed, I had these pieces of imagery going through my mind. I had an excited and hopeful feeling, a "gut" feeling that if I could confirm what I hoped that I saw on these pictures, a whole new meaning could turn this investigation in a different direction.

As I drifted off to sleep, my mind was alive with frescoes and mosaics being ripped from their walls. Men tearing through villages, destroying paintings, Icons and everything within reach. Then there were piles of riches, golden chalices, crosses and jeweled altar pieces piled and crated for transport. Flames jumping off torches to ignite ransacked churches and homes and the people running in terror from the invaders. I felt my heart racing as a hand reached out and grabbed my shoulder in the glow of the inferno, and I screamed.

I emerged from my dream with a jolt, Dimitris holding my hand and trying to sooth my fears.

"Dimi? Is that you?" My heart was beating so hard as my eyes became accustomed to light that shown into the room from the hallway. "Oh, Dimi, I had the worst dream," I said as I held him. He reached the lamp and turned it on. He engulfed me in the safety of his arms.

"Bad dreams, my Heart," he said gently.

"Oh, Dimi! I felt like I was there, in my dream. It was so real!" I said, holding him tightly, and catching my breath.

"Is better now, yes? Dimi is home now, my Heart. No more bad dreams."

"I never have dreams like that! I'm so glad you're home."

"I am home now. So we sleep and only sweet dreams to come."

He got into bed and held me.

My mind wasn't ready to go back to sleep, when thoughts of "Bolio," Sahj, and the key were popping into my mind like they were teasing me. It seemed strange that Sahj would leave such a short, cryptic message. So many details of the day kept flashing into my dream vision, like a ball of string, one image wrapped around another. Even though we were making progress with our attempts at organizing all this disconnected information, there still wasn't a clear path to follow.

There were loose ends that needed to be connected, along with all the names and faces that had to be sorted out. With the warning that Sahj gave us, I was beginning to wonder if I should again get my hands on the little picture. If the map was still there, it needed to be secured in a safe place.

The Paper Trail



With the first light of dawn, I awoke. Dimi was asleep, facing me with his arm across my waist. I watched him, his slow even breathing, his thick black hair was slightly tousled. As I took in his sweetness, I thought about the disc and the questions that have presented themselves to me, and I thought, 'He will be upset with me that I have more to question on this.' He has been patient with my undying curiosity, but for how long would he indulge my fascination?

I instinctively sighed as I thought of it. Dimi peeked open his eyes, and when he saw that I was awake, his eyes opened again.

"Already 'wake?" He asked, sweetly.

"Yeah," I sighed.

"How long?"

"I don't know, just a little while," I said.

"You no wake this man?"

"No, you need your rest. You came in very late," I said.

"Yes, but my Helena should wake this man, so I get up," he said.

"You don't need to get up just because I'm awake. We can sleep in if you

want,” I whispered in a soft voice, not to break the tranquility of the quiet room. He reached his hand up to my cheek and said

“You have bad dream last night.”

“I know. It was pretty vivid.”

“What you dream on, my Helena?”

I don’t usually have such vivid dreams, but this one stayed in my mind like a bad experience. I couldn’t be telling him every detail or the disc would soon be the main topic, and it was too early to start that conversation.

“Oh, I think I read far too late into the night, and I ended up pretty restless. Did you get your big brainstorm to work out like you hoped, Sweetie?”

He sighed deeply, “Is not ready to fly yet. I will think on it more. Come back to bed, my Heart, this man miss his Helena.”

I was glad to go to his arms and hold him once more. From the time I had been alone last night, I thought a lot about our first meeting, the little car, and the swinging rearview mirror that always makes me smile. At this moment, I just wanted to hold on to him, take in his essence, and love him.

After another hour in bed and hearing his Greek whispers, he suddenly jolted me out of my heaven, and playfully slapped my hip and said,

“Time to make the breakfast. You eat dinner last night?”

“I had something to eat, are you getting up?” I asked.

Before I got it out of my mouth, he was getting into the shower. I went to the dining room and gathered all the papers that I printed last night and put them on the coffee table.

After breakfast, when we finished in the kitchen, Dimitris took the towel from my hand and led me out of the kitchen.

“What are you doing?” I asked.

“We look on disc, see what Sahj give to us,” he said.

He sat in the desk chair as the computer booted up. He took my hand, kissed my fingers, and placed my hand on his shoulder. When the system was ready, he asked,

“Where is disc, my Heart?” I handed it to him, and we looked at the first folder together. It wasn’t anything that I recognized. This folder was mostly

copies of arrest warrants and bookings. The next folder had the pictures that I had seen. I noticed how carefully Dimi scrutinized them.

“Do you see this, my Heart?” He asked and pointed to one of the pictures of antiquities.

“Knights Templar,” we both said simultaneously. We looked at each other, then Dimi rose, told me to sit to scrutinize more pictures, then left the room. I knew that he went to call Stefano.

Stefano, being in archaeology, had a fascination with the Templars and their possible hidden treasures being somewhere in the Greek islands. His theory is that there are known outposts of the Templars on many of the islands, and the Knights of St. John, who came later, were very prominent on Rhodes, in particular. Any time a new site is uncovered or a new possibility of Templar discovery, Stefano is on it, acquiring as many facts and information as possible.

When Dimi returned, he announced that we would take the disc to Stefano and let him see what we found, which wasn't a surprise.

“Dimi, I don't see where us spending any time on the Templars is going to help us with what we have to do. We have enough work here without adding more and then confusing things.”

“You are right, my Heart, but Stefano want to see disc, so we go.”

“Sweetie, I have a lot of work to do around here. You go, and hurry back, okay? Be sure that Stefano prints out some of the pictures that you guys find interesting, our printer leaves a lot to be desired.”

“I make copy of disc. You will keep both dogs with you. Helena? Do you hear this man?” He took me by the shoulders and looked into my eyes. “You no be alone, so keep both of my good boys with you.”

“Okay, I'm not going anywhere, I'm going to be busy around here today. Maybe I'll go to the market, but only if I have time.”

“I must go,” he said, kissed my forehead, then took the disc out to the land barge, and he was gone. I figured that if there were no diversions to his time, he should be back by late afternoon or early evening.

When I thought about the symbols in the pictures, I thought, “This is only a coincidence. These types of crude art were probably very common

throughout the Medieval world.”

After doing the light cleaning, I unpacked some boxes that were stored in my sewing room. Boxes of fabrics that had been bagged, I arranged in a large dresser that had six big drawers. When I was digging down in the bottom of one of the boxes, I found my old pistol. Mark bought it for me ages ago. I took it out and wondered about it. It had been a long time since I'd done any target shooting. I still have the ammunition for it, somewhere in another box. I had forgotten about this. Surprising that it wasn't found in customs, and even the thought of that scenario scared me. I never liked the idea of having a gun in the house. After repacking the fabric that overflowed the dresser, I grabbed the gun and took it downstairs to our bedroom.

When the phone rang, I figured it was Dimi.

“Hi, Sweetie.”

“Hi, Sweetie yourself! What are you doing home alone?” Rena asked.

“Housework, mostly. What's up?”

“The guys have locked themselves in Stefano's den for hours. What's going on?” She asked.

“Oh, you know, more mysterious photos. These are of sculptures and broken frescos. Dimi wanted Stefano's opinion.”

“My sainted Chinese Grandmother! I thought there was something important they were doing,” she joked.

“Rena, will you have Dimi call me when they come out of the den?”

“Okie Dokie, you should have come with Dimi, I haven't seen you in a while.”

“Well, if Stefano comes back with Dimi, you must come too,” I said. “Why don't you? We'll make a weekend of it.”

After catching up on household chores, I picked up the copies that I had printed out and tried to make out some of the finer details that I didn't see before. Reading some of the subscripts at the bottoms of the file pictures was not making any sense to me. Perhaps they refer to other files. Those that were written in Greek or German, I had to put aside. I went to the computer to

search for more information on the whole antiquities theft and after-market crime scenario. I was pleasantly surprised to find that Dimi had made a copy of the disc and left me a note:

My Dearest Heart,

This man will miss my Helena today. This is copy for you to have the fun, and maybe making discovery.

Missing you until this man return.

S'agapo

D

After the most recent events, I decided that I have to get serious about these photos and get organized about it. I mentally whipped myself for not buckling down and doing this before.

The first thing I did was to break the disc into folders that made sense to me. I put all the documents that were in English into one folder, photos into another. What was left were the documents that need translation. Once that was done, I set the folder to print all of the pictures. As bad as they were, at least, I had them to reference. With all of the photos that Morgan and I took already printed, this is where I was to begin.

As I sorted through the pictures, I tried to scrutinize each one, and comparing one to another, circling important faces and making notations. After going over them several times, I was beginning to see familiar faces. The ferry had the most faces that were familiar, and although I've seen many of these people on the ferry before, only a couple of them were what I would categorize as suspicious. They were put aside to go over again.

The English documents didn't have any new revelations, but they did mention several names that I listed, and that were familiar. The names of Alain Deischant and Vanderbur, have come up before. They were mentioned in several of the German documents also. It didn't take a translation to recognize the names.

In the photographs, there was a man who seemed to be around Sahj when we were on the ferry. In the pictures that we took, this man appeared in

the vicinity of Sahj in at least four of the pictures, in different areas of the ferry. He seemed to be *trying* to be inconspicuous but leaving the opposite impression. His face was clear, and it would be easy to spot him again.

A few hours later, before sunset, Dimi, Stefano, and Rena drove up in the land barge. Suddenly, the place came alive. Dimi took Stefano to show him the garden and chicken coop while Rena went into the house.

“Helena, I don’t know what those boys were up to, but Stefano is starting to act like his old self again. He’s like a kid in a candy store.”

“They’ve got those pictures, a new adventure,” I said.

“That must be what’s been bothering that man.”

“What do you mean?” I asked.

“He’s been on this dig here for ten years now. There’s no adventure, no excitement. This must be what’s missing from his work.”

“I thought this dig was Stefano’s baby?”

“Well, it is. I mean, there’s the occasional surprise, the scientific discoveries and all, but it lacks the adventure, the thrill of the find! You never lose that feeling when you’ve discovered something. I think he misses it.”

“Maybe he could take a leave of absence for a while. He shouldn’t stay on one project until he burns out,” I said.

“Did you ever meet Mrs. Van Walthsham? I just call her Gert.” Rena asked.

“No, never met her.”

“Morgana is doing some decorating for her. The woman calls me every day, and I hate to keep calling Morgana all of the time for her.”

“What’s her problem?”

“Oh, she’s just excited to get someone on her formal dining and entry. Poor Morgana,” Rena sympathized.

“Well, Morgan has to set the rules in the beginning. Otherwise, they’ll bug her to the end,” I said.

“Helena, where is my bride?” Dimitris announced his presence with a bear hug and a kiss on the cheek. “I miss my best girl today. Stefano find good news in photos, my Heart.”

“Great, you’ll have to show me, but first, Sweetie, you’ll need to change

your shoes. There's chicken coop poop on the bottom of them," I said.

Suddenly there was laughter at the "poop" comment.

"Yes, we do that, and Stefano will take a hose to his shoes," Dimitris pointed out.

"Please, Stefano, take them off! They reek." Rena held her nose and waved him away.

"Sweetie, maybe since the shade cloth is over the yard, the ground hasn't dried out enough. We might have to rake all that mess out," I suggested.

When the men came back in, Dimi took my hand, and we went to the dining room table under a good light. Stefano brought out the prints that he made from Sahj's disc.

"You're not going to believe these, Helena," Stefano said as he made himself comfortable. "Everyone sit." We all made ourselves comfortable around the table. Then Stefano began,

"It's a known fact that back when the Knights Templar fell out of favor with King Philip IV of France, those who escaped and were lucky enough to avoid getting themselves boiled in oil, fled to various places, the Greek Islands suspected amongst others, and then they established small outposts. It's debatable whether or not they smuggled out their enormous riches also, but as far as anyone knows, their wealth had never been found. We assume that it was hidden; the question is, where? Some say that it is still in safekeeping by a secret society of either Templars or Free Masons, or perhaps Illuminati, but nobody knows for sure. Now, here is where it gets interesting. The Templars later built their place of worship and meeting places, all decorated with hidden secret symbols."

"Oh Stefano, speak English. How can they decorate and hide symbols at the same time, it's an oxymoron!" Rena said in her little sarcastic voice.

"Here, let me show you. Look at this, see this picture of the archway? Look at the pattern. What do you see?" Stefano asked.

"It's a leafy vine with berries. What's it called, Acanthus or something?"

"Yes, well, what else do you see?" He asked.

"A cherub face with wings, and the vines," Rena said.

"Look here, in this area." Stefano used his pencil as a pointer to trace the

area on the picture.

“I don’t see what you’re getting at, Stefano.” Rena snapped.

“Here, look, between the vines, a shape of a Pyramid, and this, it’s an eye within the Pyramid.”

“Oh, wow, Stefano.” Rena laughed and slapped Stefano’s shoulder. “How did you see that?”

“Helena, look at this, tell me what you see.”

“Basically, it looks like two men on a horse with some kind of helmets on. The horse doesn’t look like there’s a saddle per se, but the face almost looks like it’s wearing armor. It’s hard to make out like it’s deteriorated terra cotta or limestone, but the tree branch kind of looks like a carpenter’s ‘L’ angle measure, what do they call that a ‘square’? And there’s a little squiggle like an asp under the horse’s back foot, but maybe it’s standing on grass or water. It’s hard to tell,” I said.

“Very good. You see, if we could look at the original photos, they may show us more. These were cropped to fit a catalog. The Templars, as well as the Free Masons, use many of the same symbolism that is used today and is so commonly seen, that’s why we don’t really see them and don’t associate them with anything in particular. Like the Pyramid and eye with the sun’s rays on the back of a dollar bill, or a checkerboard pattern, a star over a crescent moon, unless these things are purposely noticed, we go along seeing them without thought, just as decoration.”

“This is amazing, Stefano,” I said

“We need the rest of the files. These are all fragmented, there are reference numbers to pages that aren’t here, and each photo is numbered, like 1 of 9 or RE4-7. They refer to more information or descriptions. We’ve got to get more of the missing documentation.”

“Sahj gave us what he could, but I doubt he can take another chance. It’s too dangerous,” I said.

“Is there a way to contact him?” Stefano said, ignoring what I said about the danger. I looked at Dimi. All I could think of was the danger in trying to get more of the information that we shouldn’t have in the first place.

“Stefano, I’m going to need that photo of the child. I think the Professor

still has it. I know I said I never wanted to see it again, but we still need it, I think." I didn't go into more detail.

"I'll ask him for it. We should keep all the information together," he agreed.

"I think I'm going to be paying more attention to these patterns. I've lived here for close to twelve years, and I'm just now hearing about this stuff. It makes you realize how much you miss when you aren't paying attention," Rena said.

"I wish Morgan could take a look at the pictures. The faces are so much clearer from your printer. They don't get all grainy and distorted when you enlarge them." Then I heard the telephone ring; it's always an interruption in the middle of the most interesting things. "Honey, would you grab the phone for me, parakalo?" Dimi and Stefano both stopped what they were doing to look at me in a surprised look. "What'd I do?"

"My Heart, the Greek look good on you!" He handed me the phone kissing me and saying,

"Is Morgana."

"Hi Morgan, what are you up to?"

Morgan began on a tirade about Rena. I excused myself from the table, and I went into the kitchen. She was so aggravated that she begged Andreas to bring her to Rhodes. I was at a loss as to how to tell her that Rena was here.

"Morgan, Rena told me about Gert. I guess Gert is calling Rena every day, bugging her to call you. She's been trying to placate her, but Rena is kind of in the middle."

"Yeah, I know, but it just makes me so nervous I can't think. How can I work when I'm bugged every five minutes? I don't want to blow it and take it out on Rena, geez!" Morgan said.

"You'll have to lay out the rules from the beginning, maybe even put it in your contract with your clients. NO INTERFERENCE," I said.

"I know, but it's hard for me."

"Better than going nuts later," I said.

"I guess."

"Where are you now?"

"Andreas is tying us up, so we'll be there in a couple of minutes," she said.

“Uh,.....Stefano and Rena are here, will it be alright? I know you want to avoid a confrontation, but I'd really like you to see these photos from Sahj.”

“As long as she doesn't start with me about the project, I can manage.”

“I'll tell her. She's been trying not to call you. I mean, she *is* trying!”

“I know, we'll be there in a few.”

Then, I remembered that we had the little car here at the house, and they would have to take a taxi from the docks.

“Dimi, Morgan, and Andreas are at the docks; I'm going to pick them up.”

“Dimi will do, my Heart. We go in big car.” He and Stefano both rose to leave.

“Oh, okay, don't take any side trips, okay?” I said. He took a minute to understand what I meant, then he smiled, kissed my cheek with a quick peck, and said, “Be right back.”

“Morgana is here? That's great!” Rena said with a spark.

“Rena, she's pretty stressed, so don't even bring up the subject of decorating, or Gert, in particular, she'd probably flip out.”

“You know, I never realized that being creative was so nerve-wracking. I know she gets in a state every time. I thought the artistic flow was a natural thing. No wonder they say 'he suffers for his art.' I understand, I won't say anything.”

“I wanted to call you last week, but the time has gone by so fast. I wanted to ask you about the anniversary party.” I was embarrassed to bring it up since I didn't call her earlier.

“Didn't Stefano tell you? It's all set for next weekend. I thought he already told Dimi about it, maybe he forgot, he's been so sulky and weird lately,” She said.

“I hope you're not going to have anything big. I mean, you know hundreds of people. I really do appreciate everything you do, and you know that, it's just that it would be nice to celebrate with our loved ones, something more intimate,” I said.

She took my wrist and said, “You know that the first anniversary is very special. So many couples don't even make it that far, and people want to celebrate a good marriage. I'm afraid it will be something like Andreas Day.

People will drop by to congratulate you; they'll stay awhile then leave. But also, you will have the church blessing. That's a must."

"How do we dress?"

"Oh, it's casual, well, dressy – casual. You'll want to look put together, but nothing outlandish."

Within a half-hour, they were back, and the house was filled once again with the laughter of brothers.

When everyone settled down, we all enjoyed a beer in the living room. The brothers were always a joy when they got together. The men would ultimately end up in one area of the living room and the women usually at the dining room table. That is when the differences in their personalities were especially noticeable. I noticed in watching the men converse, Stefano was usually the quiet, subdued authority figure with the occasional fire when speaking of his passion, "the magic of the find." Andreas, always the light of joy and eagerness that enlivened the atmosphere with his energy. Then Dimitris, always patient, never the one to leap before looking, a tease to his brothers and always giving one the benefit of the doubt.

Although each man was distinct in personality, there was the strength of their bond to each other that was unmistakable. On the rare occasions when we saw the other two brothers, Mattaios, and Angelo, the bond of family, was strong, and their mutual regard and respect for each other made one envious if that element was missing from one's own family.

"Helen? You seem to be somewhere else," Morgan said.

"Oh, watching the guys," I said.

"Yeah, but you seemed to be in a daze."

"I was mentally noting the differences in the men. You know, their personalities and that." It was fun to watch the guys when they get together.

"Well, what did I miss?" Rena asked as she sat again at the table.

"Not a whole heck of a lot. Did Stefano have a chance to see the disc that Sahj gave us?" I asked Rena.

"You know, them guys were cooped up in that den of Stefano's for hours, and they didn't even mention the disc or Sahj. I'm beginning to feel left out!" Rena complained.

“Oh, Reenie, don’t feel left out, you know we were talking about you the whole time, and you don’t want to hear that!” Stefano said as he surrounded her in a big bear hug that just about lifted her off her feet. She started giggling and hitting him on the shoulder to let her go.

“Unhand me, you big brute!” She laughed. He let her down, and she laughed her high, pitched giggle.

We all had a good laugh at Stefano and Rena, she is so petite and small, yet the big lug is putty in her hands.

“Where is Morgana?” Rena asked.

“I’m here, had to get some cold water. So what are we looking at?” She asked.

“I was going over these papers. I only printed the ones that were in English, so that eliminated most of them. Some things don’t seem to add up.” I put the papers on the table. “Take a look, see what I mean? We need to get most of these translated.”

“I see what you mean, but the guys should know what all this Greek stuff is,” Morgan said.

“But that doesn’t help me any when I’m here by myself. They should go over this and give basic notes. The German is going to be difficult unless you can remember your high school German?”

“No, what I do remember wouldn’t be enough to help any,” she answered.

“Well, I’m no help here, I can barely speak English, so you know my German isn’t great either! Get someone from Stefano’s crew at the dig. I’m sure one of those brainiacs will be able to help!” Rena suggested.

“We can’t bring anyone in on this, Rena, we’re taking too many chances as it is,” I said even though I knew that she was trying to be helpful.

“Gather ‘round children! We have some photos to go over!” Stefano announced as he laid a stack of enlarged, almost poster-sized photos on the dining room table.

“When I was looking at the photos on the computer, there were a couple of familiar faces, but I can’t quite place them. Morgana, have you seen these yet?” I asked.

“I don’t know, that one looks familiar, he reminds me of the concession

owner by the docks on Symi. I mean, he's younger here, but it could be him," she said.

"I saw a face on the same page as where I saw Sahj. Where is that picture, Dimi, the one that said 'Saiset Ben Abijah,' do we have an enlargement of that one?"

"Here, this one, my Heart." Dimitris pulled out another print from the stack.

"Yes, this one." As I looked at this picture, I could see the profile of a man half-hidden behind a newspaper in the background behind Sahj; obviously, it was to hide his face. The nose was very distinct. "This man. I've seen him before. Morgan, isn't this the cook, or owner of the restaurant where that waitress started wiping her hands after seeing the picture?" I pointed at the pictures.

"I think it is, he's a lot heavier now, but it is him," Morgan said.

"We make list, later to find out who he is," Dimi said.

We added this picture to the list to be scrutinized with a number so that we could see at a glance what was referenced. We were finally starting to get organized, and could see what needed to be done.

There were pictures of businessmen, a couple of fancy ladies, and, at least, two pictures of a group of five men sitting in a living room on furniture that was of the 40's era. The wall was an expensive wallpaper, and the rug was one of those floral swirl patterns. It was black and white like the rest, but the room still had an elegant, decorator look to it. It reminded me of a meeting of the Mafia bosses. Then there were some pictures of what looked like a box seat at the horse races. A well-dressed woman from the 1940s wearing a stylish hat and dress with shoulder pads. She reminded me of a movie star.

The telephone started ringing in the kitchen.

"Honey, can you get that for me, please, Babe?" I asked.

"Hello!...Hello!...Yassou! No one answer!" Dimitris said as he put the phone down.

"Dimi, was anyone on the line?" Rena asked.

"Did not hear anyone. Maybe wrong number."

"Where is Andreas?" I wondered.

"Oh, he's still out there with those chickens. I think he's teasing the rooster.

A little bit of payback for waking us up so early last time we were here,” Morgan said.

“This telephone to drive Dimi crazy! Who calls and hang up?” Dimi grabbed the ringing phone again. “Who calls and not say anything? HELLO!”

“Please tell Helena that a package will be delivered. It’s very important.”

“Who this is?”

“Ahmed.” The phone clicked off.

“Helena! Helena!” Dimitris called.

“Yes, I’m right here, did you find something?”

“Telephone, for you. Look for package to come, from Sahj.”

“Who called, Sweetie?” I asked.

“Sahj, he say watch for package to come,” Dimitris said.

“What else did he say?” I asked.

“Nothing, he say to tell Helena of package, he say Ahmed. That is all. Then hang up.”

“He must have been in a hurry. I wonder what he sent?” I said.

“Maybe he sent more information?” Morgan suggested.

“I guess all we can do is wait for the delivery. Oh, Stefano, I can’t read a lot of these reports, they’re in other languages, like Greek and German. If you guys could make some footnotes to help me understand the gist of it, it would help.”

“Does anyone want coffee?” Rena asked.

“No, thanks, Rena. None for me,” I said.

“These pictures, some of these are so bad, I can’t make out the faces. Look at this one. It’s supposed to be that Vanderbur character, but his face is in shadow, so this doesn’t help,” Morgan was getting frustrated.

“Look! Helena, look at this!” Dimitris sounded excited.

“What is it, Sweetie?” He was pointing at an arrest of someone in handcuffs.

“I don’t recognize him,” I said.

“No, here.” Dimi was pointing to an area behind the man being arrested.

“Oh. Oh! It’s that house, I think. The front of the yard, I see the fencing. It’s that house!” I was so surprised to see it, even in this dark, grainy picture I could see the front of the house. “There’s the connection, but this had to

have happened long before the lady and child lived there.”

“Now to find out who they arrested. Maybe we can find it by the numbers on the bottom. If we could see the originals, there would probably be a file or case number on the back, but what is here might be enough to find something,” Stefano said.

“Yes, but where do you start? Some of this stuff - we shouldn’t even have, so how can you ask questions, and who would you ask?” Morgan reasoned.

“Maybe ask Sahj to seek further, or Stefano, you may have colleague who can help, yes?” Dimitris asked.

“Well, not a colleague, first we should try Sahj, but I could see if there is anything to find in the legal library at the university. Might get lucky!” Stefano said.

“Sweetie, do you remember those photographs we were looking at before, the ones that had Sahj in them? Are they on the disc too?” I asked.

“Have to look again,” Dimi asked.

“I’m not sure at the moment, where I put them.”

Having the men there, we were able to go over many of the documents that were in Greek. We made sense out of some of it. At least, we were able to note some of the photographs to match up with their paperwork. This was a big job, and it was an enormous help in eliminating some of the waste. My eyes kept going back to the arrest of the man at that house. Somehow I knew, that particular piece of the puzzle was vital to getting to the bottom of the threats and the danger of our quest. In the back of my mind, I still had questions about the importance of the kingpin of the underground stolen arts, as it would pertain to our problem. Was he directing these thugs that threatened us on this island? I can imagine this big mountain of international theft and distribution on one end and our little photo and our problems that have arisen from it on the other. It would be no small matter if this is the case; it would mean that there is more information to be found. The problem is, they think that we are in possession of that information already.

Suddenly we heard a scream! Rena!

“Is that Rena? Where is she?” I asked as I stood from the computer. We could hear the dogs barking and carrying on. The men went to the back door

and window to see what happened. It scared me, and I thought that someone grabbed her!

Stefano went out the back door with the brothers close behind him. I couldn't see anything unusual. No strange cars were around, nothing!

"Oh, my God! Oh, oh, Stefano!" I heard Rena's shaken voice.

"You're alright now, Reenie," I heard Stefano say. He was carrying her into the living room and put her down on the sofa. Andreas had a big smile on his face, and Dimitris was trying not to laugh.

"What happened?" I asked.

"Is she alright?" Morgan asked.

She was wailing, Stefano trying to comfort her as she rubbed her legs.

"My sainted Chinese Grandmother!" Rena winced.

"Will someone tell us what's going on? Did you fall out there, Rena?"

"No! I thought I'd collect the eggs. I got in there and got the eggs, but when I went to leave that damned rooster jumped on my back! I tried to run, but he kept running after me hitting me in the backs of my legs! I almost fell on my face! I'm afraid I broke the eggs!"

"I didn't think he'd be able to jump on you, let's see your back." We pulled up the back of her t-shirt, and just above the waistline was a scratch almost two inches long. It wasn't deep, but it did scrape the skin a little.

"It's not bad, but we'd better put something on it. Does it hurt anywhere else?" I asked.

"Yeah, it still hurts here, just below the calf muscle." She pointed to the target spot above the Hamstring. When she pulled up the pant leg of her jeans, there were some pink marks, but nothing bad enough to worry about.

Dimitris came in with the first aid kit and cleaned the wound on her back, and wiped her leg with alcohol. A little Iodine on the back, and after the screaming, she was given a beer for being such a good patient.

"I swear to Buddha, Helena, I don't know how you put up with that mean old rooster! I'd keep an ax handy and then make soup!" Rena complained.

"This rooster is a lot more protective than some, but I think it's because he's so small, I guess he's got to prove something!" I said.

We all took a beer break and discussed the future of our feathered alarm

clock. After Rena had two beers, she was back to her jovial self, making jokes and teasing Stefano.

“Did I ever tell you about the time that Stefano was on a dig in Kastanea? They found another outcrop of an old village. Anyway, part of the discovery was in the river, what was the name of the river, Honey?” She asked.

“Meric or Merica, depending on which end you’re on!” Stefano said.

“Meric River, so it just happens that the river separates Greece from Turkey. Well, they weren’t finding anything much, pottery shards, and I guess someone found some kind of sandstone idol, but Turkey got all in an uproar over the fact that they said it was found in their water; on the side of the river by the town of Edirne. Oh, it was a mess, Stefano had to meet with their antiquities administrator to try to smooth things over. Well, he ended up getting arrested! I had a heck of a time trying to find him. Apparently, someone said they were stealing the stuff off Turkish land. I thought I’d never see him again! I was shopping, and Katie was about sixteen. We just moved up here, so I had to drop what I was doing and then try to track down Stefano. The university thought he was in Orestias, so I was looking in the wrong place. Anyway, to make a long story short, they kept him for two weeks, then let him go. I guess the two antiquities administrations from Turkey and Greece had to make their deals, and then they said to Stefano to *hit the road*. He never went back to that site. I didn’t even recognize him when he came home! He had a beard down to his knees, I swear!”

Everyone looked at Stefano. “It was a terrible dig. I was glad I didn’t have to go back. It was cold and being wet most of the time; didn’t find much anyway.”

“Where is this? I’ve never heard of these cities,” I asked.

“It’s at the far Eastern end of Greece. There’s Bulgaria, Turkey, and Greece. They all come together there. Heck, another hundred miles, and you’re in the Black Sea!” Rena chirped. “But, I finally got the big lug back!”

“The Turks didn’t like it that I didn’t have my passport with me. I was in Greece, a citizen doesn’t need to carry around a passport in one’s own country, but they said that I was on Turk land; well, in Turk water actually, so they almost made it an international incident,” Stefano explained.

“Isn’t Greece and Turkey on good terms, I mean you share a border,” Morgan asked.

“Not when it comes to antiquities,” Stefano said.

As the evening quickly approached, it was soon that time to put away the prints and pictures and prepare for dinner. Everyone was tired of searching documents and not finding much for our efforts. Sometimes a break from the black and white page helps.

Everyone was pretty tired by the time dinner clean up was done, so we called it an early night. After so many hours of reading and trying to decipher everything, my eyes were bugging out of my head.

“Dimi, I’m sorry I can’t stay up and be the good hostess, my vision is bothering me, and I don’t want to wake up with a headache from it.”

“All are tired, my Heart, so do not feel bad for end of evening. This was long day. All are tired.”

Tomorrow We Diet



I was laughing under my breath. I could have grabbed him right then. Sometimes I really should do some deep breathing! I could see him from the sofa. I watched him put away the groceries. He'd look up at me and have that shy smile as he turned to the sink.

"Andreas!" Dimitris called him as he came in the back door. "What will Morgana want for dinner? A hot meal for 'wife to be' of Andreas?" Andreas beamed as he relayed the message to Morgan.

"I can eat anything but meat, so, use your imagination. I'd be happy with just a salad."

"Dinner should be a hot meal, so we make special for you," he said.

"Whatever, I'm not particular," she said. Andreas looked at Dimitris, and they both started laughing.

"What? I'm not a picky eater!" She insisted.

"No, you are right, Morgana, I am sorry. Tonight you will eat the hot rabbit food, not the cold." The men chuckled, but Morgan didn't think it was particularly funny.

"Yeah, go ahead and laugh. I'm used to it," she sighed.

"Ohh, Morgana, we only tease to make funny. Do not take serious."

"I don't."

“My Morgana will stay healthy with the pure food, Dimi.”

“Yes, if this man were strong enough to live on the salad, I would do. Alas, I have not the will power,” Dimi admitted.

“What are you making, Dimi?” Andreas asked.

“I make the Eggplant Parmigiano, a Rocket salad with tomato, basil and Feta, and the hot sausage. Morgana can have all but sausage, is okay?” He asked.

“That sounds good,” she said. “Where did Rena and Stefano go?”

“I think they went for a walk,” I said. Everyone turned and saw me sitting on the sofa in the living room where Dimi dumped me.

“Oh, I didn’t see you in there, why are you hiding in here?” Morgan asked.

“This is where Dimi wants me, out of his hair,” I said. Dimitris smiled as he continued his meal preparations.

This is one of those days where the weather was clear, warm, and breezy with a bit of static in the air. The kind of day that when rubbing your feet on the carpet will give you a shock when you touch someone. It also seems to be a day where emotions could be volatile under the circumstances. I’ve felt it, when I see Dimitris’ eyes, he’s like a magnet to me, but I can get touchy in this electric atmosphere, and it wouldn’t take much to set me off.

“Oh man, it’s getting warm out there, I thought it would get cooler in the late afternoon, but the breeze disappeared. Now it’s getting hot!” Rena said as she came in from their walk.

“Well, Rena, we’re inland more than we were, and it’s an incline, too, so that would be one reason you’re so warm. Where’s Stefano?” I asked.

“I think he’s waiting at the bottom of the hill for me to get a car and go pick him up!” She joked.

“You want to take little car?” Dimitris asked.

“Reenie, you walk too fast. She sprints uphill, did you know that?” Stefano said as he came in, trying to catch his breath.

“You’d think that with all the heavy lifting you do at the dig site that you’d be able to walk up a little hill! I’m going to have to make you eat Spinach!” Rita quipped.

“Do we have time to shower before dinner?” Stefano asked.

"Yes, plenty time," Dimi answered.

"I think I'm going to change for dinner," I said.

"I think I will too, these pants are getting dirty," Morgan said.

"Morgan," I said in a low voice, "what are you going to change into?"

"Well, the only thing I brought was another pair of pants and a fancy blouse. I wasn't sure if these guys wanted to go out or not."

"I know. I might see if I can find a skirt. I get tired of looking like a farmhand."

I knew that dinner wouldn't be until around 6:30 pm, so I wasn't so sure why dinner was started so early. I figured that with everyone taking it easy tonight, no documents, or pictures to look over, I'd get dressed and go down to the canopied veranda, out the front, and down the walk to the sitting area under the trees. The lights work out there, and it might be a beautiful evening to sit and relax and get a little quiet time.

I started curling my hair. I re-applied my make-up, put on my best perfume, and then studied the closet. I stared and stared and got more irritable the longer I looked. I couldn't find anything that made me feel good. I was ready to get in bed and pull the covers over me and forget about dressing. That static electrical atmosphere was beginning to work its mood changing Voodoo.

I heard Dimi coming from the stairway, and I didn't want him to see me like this. I wasn't ready for dinner, him or anyone else. I wrapped a towel around my head and put on my robe. When he came in, I was filing my nails.

"I was look for you. Why you hide up here?" He asked.

"You were busy, and I just wanted to change my clothes. What time do you think we'll eat?"

"Whenever all are hungry, sauce almost cook then just pop in mushrooms, only take ten minutes," he said, watching me file my nails. I wasn't looking at him, but I was aware of him watching what I was doing.

"Helena, come sit with Dimi," he motioned to sit on the bed by his side. I got up and sat next to him.

"Put down file. Are you well?"

"I am just wonderful," I said.

“Yes, you are,” he said as he put his arm around me and was going to slip his hand into my robe.

“Uh, uh, uh,” I removed his hand from my robe.

“What?” He uttered.

“Tsk, ts, ts,” I said and was about to stand.

“Are you angry with this man?”

“No,” I said. He turned my face to look at him; I had to keep my cool, as I couldn’t look at the eyes that make me melt.

He leaned forward, trying to catch my eyes in his line of vision. I couldn’t help but crack a smile. He started to laugh and poke my ribs to tickle me. I fell back on the bed, then the towel on my head came undone. Dimitris unwrapped my hair, and the curls and waves flew out onto the bed.

Dimitris uttered a low sensual tone, feeling my hair and burying his face in my neck.

“My Heart, this man will be bad. Why you do this to this man when he’s cooking?”

“Me? I didn’t do anything! I only came up here to change!”

“Uhhhhh, this man still has food to prepare. Sauce for Linguini has to cook.” He kissed me on the cheek.

“Oh, you can do better than that,” I said.

He planted a long deep kiss on my lips, and I felt that lightening strike my heart.

“Uhhhhhhh.” He moaned and forced himself to stand. “Come down when finish, my Heart,” Then he left the room.

I went to my closet and picked a long skirt and top and let it go at that. With my blond hair combed out in waves and ringlets, it had that “blown away” look. Add a little more red to the cheeks and lips, and I think I might be done.

I heard Rena and Stefano going downstairs, and I thought I should go down too before I changed my mind. I put on the necklace that Dimi gave me at Christmas, and I was ready to go down and join the others.

I joined the girls in the living room, as the guys were in the kitchen. I didn’t see Dimitris when I greeted Rena and Morgan.

“Oh Rena, that must be new! It’s so beautiful and elegant!” I said as I sat in the old Morris chair against the wall.

“Thank you, I got it in Italy,” she turned around in the elegant models pose. “You girls have to go with me next time!”

“Morgan, I love that blouse, the color is beautiful on you,” I commented.

“Oh, thanks. I didn’t think I’d ever wear it, but I’m glad I brought it.”

“It’s good to wear something a little more, uh, feminine, I guess. I get tired of t-shirts and jeans,” I said.

“Are those strappy sandals? They look expensive!” Morgan said.

“Well, they are very comfortable,” I said. “I wonder if we can get a drink? The service here is terrible!” I said in jest.

“Stefano, come here, please. Could you bring us girls, some drinks? You know what I want,” Rena said.

“What would you like, Helena?” He asked.

“Tequila Sunrise, thank you, Stefano,” I said.

“I guess I’ll have a Blush wine,” Morgan said.

“Coming right up.” Stefano left to go to the kitchen; the drinks were made, but all three of the men came in bringing in their lady’s drink.

I was watching Morgan and Andreas on the sofa, their little secret toast, and the whispers in her ear, how she reacted to him. It was refreshing to see them getting along so well.

Then Dimitris came around the corner and spotted me sitting there. I didn’t acknowledge him right away until he stood in front of me, handing my drink to me.

“Thank you, Dimi,” I said and gave him a small smile. He stood there until I reached up to tap our glasses together. He didn’t say anything, and I was beginning to think that I should have followed my first plan of going down to the little canopied oasis down the front path.

Dimitris came around and sat on the arm of the big Morris chair, listening to the conversations, but I could feel him touching my hair. I continued to sip my drink. When the timer went off in the kitchen, he left my side. I was beginning to have second thoughts about my attitude toward Dimi. I thought about all the trouble he went through to single-handedly prepare this dinner.

I went to the kitchen to get more ice.

“You did a good job on the dinner table. Do we have more ice?” I looked into those dark, dark eyes and felt my heart skip a beat.

“Yes, I get for you.” I put some ice in my glass, as he stood behind me, he held my wrist with one hand, moved my hair aside with the other and kissed my neck, whispering his Greek in my ear.

“Do you think we should have dinner?” I asked. He stopped and said

“Yes, we must serve the dinner,”

“What I can do to help?” I asked

“You will sit, Dimi will serve, my Heart.”

The dinner was simple yet elegant. Dimitris served, and each had special attention. We were surprised and delighted that we had a Black Spice Tea. It seemed to go well with dinner.

Dimitris seemed very attentive; we felt the special treatment, almost like Royalty, each need anticipated and fulfilled. After dinner, the men cleared the table and did all the kitchen duties while we girls talked in the living room.

“...it’s been so quiet these days that my wind chimes have stopped! It’s like the silence before the storm.” Rena went on, “It’s the dead silence, like, before an earthquake, you can feel something is going to happen.”

“I haven’t noticed anything different. Maybe you should be careful, Rena,” Morgan suggested.

“Are you sensitive to changes, like earthquakes and storms?” I asked.

“You mean, does she sense them coming?” Morgan asked.

“No, not usually and never earthquakes. It’s just a scary feeling I have,” she said.

I looked at Rena’s demeanor as she was speaking and could tell that she was anxious and on edge.

“I told her to see a doctor, but she refuses,” Stefano added. Rena rolled her eyes, not wanting to hear it again.

“See what I mean, I could be whispering in another room, and Stefano would hear every word. He’s got radar ears!” Rena chided.

“It might be that you’re feeling these things for a reason. You should keep a

diary for a while, see how it develops,” I suggested.

“That’s a good idea. I think I will,” Rena said.

Dimitris had the table cleared, then set up the laptop, the prints, and the disc so that we could get started on our mission.

“My Heart, would you want water?”

“Thank you, Sweetie,” I said, and we all filed into the adjacent room to begin our quest again. Dimitris pulled out a chair for me to sit next to him.

“Are we ready? Let us see what Stefano find,” Dimitris said. Andreas sat anxiously, waiting for Stefano to get settled and begin the unveiling of his discoveries.

The Ultimate Price



“Ladies and Gentlemen, we have touchdown!” Stefano said, laying down piles of printed matter and Sahj’s disc. “Holy cow! You’ve been holding out on us, Stefano,” I said with a laugh.

“I put these in a type of chronological order to help us better understand the information here. Some events overlap, so I didn’t want to get everyone confused.” He removed the rubber band from the first folder.

There were several clipped segments in the folder. He separated the first unit into three piles.

“These are the photos you wanted to be printed from the second file on the disc. And these are the news clippings and arrest warrants, we’ve seen most of these before, and most of it comes in later as things developed, so we’ll lay them aside for now,” he said.

I was getting anxious, and everyone sat quietly in anticipation of what was next. Stefano opened one of the manila envelopes, and he began to explain what was there.

“First, it looks like we’ve got two, maybe more seemingly unrelated events that are suspiciously similar, and in my opinion, are related. From what I see, I can almost be certain, but I want you all to see what we have, and maybe you’ll come to the same conclusion on your own.

“You will remember the last time we looked at the disc; there was the evidence of Templar symbolization in the frescoes and decoration on some of the ancient relics in the photographs?” Everyone nodded in acknowledgment. He spread out some of the prints on the table for us to view as he spoke.

“If you look where I’ve circled on the pages, these are all symbols that were used by the Templars,” he pointed with a pencil to several circled images. “We know that the Templars were active within a historical niche, and then were banished. These photos of the frescoes and re-assembled relics seem to date to different eras. These were not all crafted during the period that we recognize as the Templar era. We take it as fact that the designs have been copied in later years as a matter of course, but there is evidence that some of these are dated earlier than that. That opens other possibilities. Either the particular relics we question were imported, possibly by the Templars when they settled here, which is a scenario that I doubt. Still, then the possibility arises also that they were created by earlier cultures such as the Romans, at their point of origin.”

“Is there any way to tell, from these copies, if they are Templar? If they are, what would that mean? How does that impact the problems we’re trying to solve? Where would the maps and the little picture come into this scenario?” I asked.

“We’re getting ahead of ourselves here. We’ll get to that part of it, but you have to remember that at this point, it’s all conjecture until we can fill in the gaps and find the missing pieces. We might have all the pieces right here, but we won’t know until we get the rest of it translated,” Stefano explained.

“I thought the Templars were a secret society. Weren’t they always?” Andreas asked.

“As far as we know, they were not ‘secret’ in the sense that they operated openly, they were like Crusaders for Christianity. But you have a point that they were a brotherhood of sorts. They took the vows of a religious

order, poverty, chastity or celibacy in the name of God, but somewhere along the timeline, it changed. They became powerful because of the riches they collected during the reign of the king, collecting taxes and liens. The Templars became richer than the kingdom. I don't think that the need for secrecy was such that they employed "hidden" messages in their art at that time. But, the riches were never accounted for after the banishment of the Templars. Now, the Knights of St. John established a stronghold here on Rhodes. It is said that they were actually Templars; you can see the Templars Cross of Lorraine on the shields and crests that are a part of the walls of Old Rhodes. There is a rich and turbulent history to this old city. We have to be grateful that our old town is still standing."

Stefano brought out another folder. The pictures, reports, and the old newspaper clippings were now legible, and the stack of photos that showed the icons and relics that were stolen are now detailed and enhanced.

The longer I looked at the photocopies, the more I saw that some had no religious significance at all, and would have been out of place in Cypriot churches. These could have been from private collections.

Without realizing, I was analyzing these historical and controversial pieces of art, instead of keeping an open, unbiased mind.

"Stefano, what are we seeing here? Are these stolen Cyprian artifacts connected with these thugs that wanted the little picture and map? If that's the case, then where do the Templars treasure fit in?" I asked.

"Helena, Helena?" Rena caught my attention. "Should we bring out the dessert?"

"Gee, I didn't know there was one, I guess you'll have to ask Dimi."

"Dimi will serve dessert, Rena, you no worry," he said.

"I wasn't worried, it's just that it looks so good. You can't let someone see a dessert like that and hold off serving it. What? You want me to die of thinking about it?" Her little Chinese voice was getting higher, and we knew that the cake tempted her. Dimitris lowered his head and shook it in an attempt not to laugh.

"Reenie, how do you eat so much and still stay slim?" Andreas asked.

"My sainted Chinese Grandmother used to tell me I have a hollow leg. I

eat but never gain weight,” she answered in her defense.

“What? Hollow leg?” Dimitris asked.

“I always eat, but not overly, and am careful, but I do not diet.”

“What is ‘hollow leg’?” Dimi asked me.

“Ohh, Sweetie.” I got up and went to his side as he sat at the table. I put my arms around his neck and whispered in his ear the meaning of a “hollow leg!” He laughed.

“Now. We have dessert.” Dimi rose from the table, and when he returned, he brought in a platter of chocolate cake with Banana and whipped cream between the layers and a creamy white frosting with Chocolate shavings on top. We were all in sugar heaven with this delight.

After a brilliant dessert and table conversation, we were ready to return to our work on the photos.

Stefano brought out his laptop computer. Although we had plenty of printed matter to evaluate, there were still some things that were on the computer that was sent to him recently from his colleagues.

It was 9:30 pm when there was a heavy knocking at the front door.

“Who on earth could that be? No one comes to the front door,” I said. It startled me. Dimi looked out the window next to the door and could see the blue and white flashing lights, down the slope from the house, at the front gate.

“Look to be Police lights,” Dimi said as he partially opened the door. I could hear his voice, but could not understand the Greek being exchanged. Dimi stepped outside and closed the door behind him. I was beginning to stand when Stefano reached my hand. I looked at him; he shook his head, meaning that I should not go out there. He slowly rose and switched off the lights in the dining room. We waited in the darkened room.

After a few minutes, Dimitris slowly opened the door, stepped inside, and watched the Police get back into their cars and pull away from the gate.

“What did they want?” Rena asked as Dimi closed the door. The lights were turned back on. As he approached us, coming from the darkness into the light of the dining room, the look on his face told me that it was bad news.

“What is it, Dimi?” I asked. He came to my side and took my hand.

“Your friend, Sahj, he is dead. I am sorry, my Heart.”

“What? How?” I gasped. I couldn’t believe what I heard.

“They say they find him. He was murdered. They kill him, Helena.”

I was stunned. I could not believe this had happened. I know that it took quite a while to comprehend fully what this meant.

“Did they tell you how it happened? Do they know who did it?” Morgan asked.

“No, they do not give answers yet,” he said.

“But how...why did they come here? How did they know to tell us?” I asked.

Suddenly Dimitris’ eyes widened, and the fear of the answer was apparent. He had been discovered. Sahj, by giving us information, must have been discovered.

I seemed to find myself in deep thought, walking around, more or less in a daze. It didn’t hit me right away, the loss of this man, Sahj. I didn’t know him very well, but we had a connection. He had helped us, protected us, and put his life at risk to provide us with information. We had met under odd circumstances, and our relationship always seemed to involve strange events.

Dimitris was shocked as was everyone else after we heard the news. Dimi would hold me and be a comfort to me, although I don’t think I was emotionally struck with this death, until later. Dimi was by my side, and he would look to see that I was alright. I could see his concern in his eyes. When we were talking, after dinner the next night, I had not realized that I was referring to Sahj in the present tense. When Dimi came to me and held me by the shoulders, he looked into my eyes and said gently,

“My Heart, Sahj, he is not with us.” With a short gasp, I suddenly realized the loss. Dimi wrapped me in his arms and soothed my hurt. He was gentle with me and did not condemn me for crying for this man. He understood my attachment to Sahj, an odd one I had to admit.

“Sahj would not want my Heart to be sad for him. He will know you have hurt over this,” Dimi said. I just needed to take a deep breath and gain my composure. “Okay? You are okay now?” Dimi asked.

“Yes, I’m okay, Sweetheart.”

The mood of the gathering became sullen and a quiet change from the day before. Our guests left for home early in the morning, but Stefano left all the research for us. When we read the morning newspaper, there wasn’t a word in it about Sahj. I figured it was too soon, and I would keep checking in subsequent days.

We tried to call the Police to find any information available about Sahj. I only heard that his body was to be shipped to Athens.

“Dimi, we have to go to the Police station before they ship the body. I need to ask some questions.” I was getting ready to go when Dimitris came to me and said,

“What to ask Police? They do not talk on the murder.”

“Maybe we can find out why they came to tell us. We’re not his family, so I’m confused about why we were notified like that,” I said.

“We will take little car, is more fast for town. This man will feed my boys and wait in V.W. for you, my Heart.” He kissed my temple, and I finished getting ready.

We zipped along at a good pace, and although the parking was tight, the little car managed to find a space. Everything seemed very businesslike, cool, and reserved. I was expecting hostility and being treated like suspects.

Dimitris went to a window and asked the clerk who we would talk to about Mr. Sahj. We sat and waited until a police person called out our name. We walked with the young man to a detective’s office.

“Patakinis, Patakinis,” he said.

“Please, to speak English,” Dimitris said as they shook hands.

“Yes, forgive me, Mr. and Mrs. Patakinis, I am Detective Nikolas Olivos. I am sorry for your loss. Please, sit. May I get you a coffee?”

“No, thank you. Can you tell us what happened?” I asked.

“Are you a relative?” He asked.

“Yes, he was my husband’s cousin,” I said, interrupting Dimitris to answer. I stood my ground as both men looked at me.

“Mr. Ahmed Sahj, I understand that you were contacted by our department,

with notification of Mr. Sahj's death. We do not have the body. The body is with the Crete Police, and they are handling any further actions. The body was found at Knossos. He had been shot and left to be found in an ancient cistern by a tour group."

"My God, poor Ahmed," I said. Dimi put his arm around my shoulder and held my hand.

"It will be very difficult to find the murder weapon if it was not registered," Olivos said.

"Does this mean that they're not looking for anything at Knossos?" I asked.

"They found that his apartment had also been ransacked, so they are proceeding from there," he said.

"Detective Olivos, why do we get call from Police?" Dimitris asked.

"I'm not sure why. I believe that your number was the only number written as "personal" in his personal documents. The rest were business associates."

"I see, thank you," I said.

"Mrs. Patakinis, are you alright? Mrs. Patakinis?"

"Yes...I see." I couldn't speak. My mind was racing in several directions. I wondered if the information that he provided to us led to his death, and if I was to blame, how could I live with that? I felt the blood drain from my head and suddenly felt very weak. Then another thought came to me. What was it that they were looking for in his apartment? What is the package that he sent us days ago?

"May I have the key to his residence? I'd like to pack his belongings."

"You must understand that it is still a crime scene, but, yes, you will have the key when the investigation is finished," he said.

"When will we be able to get the key?" I asked.

"The investigation should be finished by tomorrow afternoon. You may have it mailed, or you may pick it up at the Iraklion Police Center," he said.

"I think we should pick it up, don't you, Dimi?" I asked.

"Yes, we go to Iraklion to pick up," he said.

"Very well, I will need to prepare a release for you. You will need to take it with you. Present it to the Homicide department in Iraklion," he said.

We picked up the release document, and then Detective Olivos gave us one

more reminder.

“We must be sure that you understand that it is a crime scene, but if you wait until tomorrow afternoon, it should be permissible to proceed with the key.”

“I must take my wife home; she has had big shock,” Dimitris said.

“Yes, I will be in contact. Once again, Mr. And Mrs. Patakinis, my sympathies.”

As we drove, I leaned back in the seat and watched the landscape as we passed. We were both lost in a muddle of thoughts.

“My Heart, why do we go to Sahj’s home? What could we want there?” Dimi asked.

“Well, I don’t know, I thought maybe there might be something there that he wanted us to have, information, pictures, something. Thank you, Sweetheart, for being so supportive with this, I do appreciate you backing me up. We wouldn’t have been able to get any information if I didn’t lie,” I said.

“You do for good reason, my Heart.”

“We’ve gotten nowhere with our photocopies and papers, and even the disc has gotten us nowhere so far. We’re missing something; somewhere, there are pieces of the puzzle that we should have to make sense of all the documents. I mean, the arrest records are pretty much clear, but these arrests have nothing to do with our little picture or the thefts, as far as I can see. That’s why we’ve got to go to Sahj’s place and see if there is anything there. I hope that no one else gets there ahead of us.”

“Yes, Police may want to take, or thugs, maybe,” Dimi said.

“Dimi, I think it might be a good idea to have the mail held until we get back. If they deliver the package from Sahj, we don’t want to have it ripped off before we get it. Honey, let’s go by that old house, the child’s old house. Maybe we can look and see if it gives us any ideas on where someone might hide the rest of the map information. I mean, if they put only part of the information on the back of a photograph, there might be something there that no one thought to look at before,” I said.

“But Helena, this where all trouble start. The danger there___.”

“There’s no one there that’s going to hurt us; they would have been found

out a long time ago and arrested. We can look like we're interested in buying the property. Who's going to question that?" I said.

We pulled up in front of the old crumbling house. Since it was almost dusk, the house had an ominous look, with its broken windows and torn curtains hanging out of it. The overgrown vines and weeds in the yard added to its lonely and haunting appearance.

"We must not trespass. Gate locked, we do not go beyond gate," Dimi advised. I understood what Dimitris was trying to do, and I appreciated his concern for what the possibilities of danger were, especially since we couldn't see much in the dark, I didn't argue.

"Okay, Sweetie, let's go home," I said.

I was lost in a world of thought. We only wanted to find out about the little photo. Then there were the two men who accosted Morgan and I. Then the kidnapping, the burglary, and now the murder of Sahj; it didn't make sense, and now that we've got all the photos and files, it has snowballed into monumental proportions. Not only did we not solve a single thing, but now there was a death. I felt so bad for Sahj. The more I thought about him, the worse the trauma of his death. How could I not feel that I was to blame? How can I forget that he sacrificed himself to help us? I was feeling desperately guilty, and all the crying in the world wasn't going to ease that feeling that gnaws at one's insides. I hadn't even realized that we were home until Dimitris opened my door.

"Come, my Helena, we are home," he said as he held out his hand for me to take. "Come, Helena, we will have wine, you will relax and feel better."

"What have I done, Dimi?"

"You have done nothing, Helena, nothing. Sahj was brave man. He do this to help us and solve crime. He would not have done if he think it wrong thing to do." He spoke gently to me, and I knew that he was also in shock over the suddenness of it all. I looked into his eyes, and I found the warmth and concern he held there. I kissed his cheek, and then I went to run the bath.

After only ten minutes, I heard Dimi tap at the door.

"I bring wine, you want?"

“That sounds good, thank you, Sweetheart.” My hand fought its way free of the bubbles, and I took the glass of wine. Then Dimitris said,

“To memory of Sahj, a good man.” We tapped our glasses to toast our friend.

“Ahh, this is good,” I said, tasting the wine.

“One day soon, we go to winemakers and taste. Lots of good wines made in Hellas.”

“That would be nice,” I said.

“Are you okay, my Heart?”

“I’m feeling better, yes,” I said.

“This man do not like to see his bride so sad. I feel,....here” (placing his hand over his heart).

I took another sip of wine and smiled at him. He reached over, placing his hand to my cheek and wiped the steam dripping down.

“I will heat something warm. We will have soup or broth, and we watch tv. What you think?” He asked.

“That sounds good.”

“Will you be long?” He asked. I finished my wine and said,

“I’m getting out now; I’ll only be a couple of minutes.”

It was early evening and still too early for bed. We watched the television for a while. Dimitris sat on the end of the sofa, and I laid across his lap.

“Dimi? How is the “big idea” coming? I haven’t heard you mention it lately.”

“*Big idea* need to rest. It will work it’s way out if let to rest, then “boom” it will hit this man with the answer.”

“Well, maybe if you tell me about it, I could....”

“No, no, I will not pull jinx on it with the talking. Best to leave it to rest.” He stroked my hair, then squirmed a bit beneath me.

“Should I move?” I asked.

“No, my Heart.”

It didn’t matter what we were watching because I couldn’t concentrate on it. My mind was on Sahj, the risk he took, and his bravery in doing so. I couldn’t let the files he gave us sit idle. I felt I had to put them out where I could see them, and start again. The copies of the files that Stefano made were

very clear, considering the age of the original photos, and as I looked over them again, my mind seemed to be clearer and sharper than it had previously been. I was able to sort a few pictures to pair up with others of the same persons. There were several arrests of these individuals over a period of decades. These had to be major suspects, and at least, I hoped, easier to find current information on them.

It seemed obvious that once we were armed with a handful of repeated offenders, it would be easier to trace them through criminal records or even newspaper articles of the time. Dating these should be easier since we had so many different fashion styles that change over the years. Wide tie, narrow tie, wide lapel, narrow lapel, or none at all, dates should be easy to establish.

Sahj was on our minds as we shuffled through the copies and files that were printed. I could see that we wouldn't accomplish anything on this, darker than usual night. Morning would be upon us soon enough. We went to bed to try to sleep.

A Dreaded Job



We rose early in the morning and made our way to the ferry. We took the cargo ferry with our land barge so that we would have transportation once we reached our destination. We rose early in the morning and made our way to the ferry. We took the cargo ferry with our land barge so that we would have transportation once we reached our destination, Crete.

It was sad to think that this beautiful place is where Sahj's life ended. Knossos, the biggest tourist destination for historical sites on the island, was not a likely place to find a body. The only thing that I could think of on this is that it was meant to send a message. Finding out more about Sahj might help us sort out other questions on what the information on the disc would tell us.

We arrived early to enable us to obtain the key to Sahj's residence as early as possible. The Police building, although open, did not have the personnel to help us until later in the morning. We had a few hours to kill, so we headed over to the Knossos archeological site. I had never been there before, so it was quite educational. Mostly, we wanted to see if it was possible to view where they found our friend. It had been four days since his body had been discovered. The lack of any news coverage or even an obituary seemed suspicious. I would have thought that murder would grab a headline, but perhaps it's because they rely on the tourist trade that it was not mentioned.

We completed the tour, but the cistern area of the walk was closed off to all tours. We were disappointed, but it was not unusual that a section would be roped off for restoration. I think that we were the only ones aware of the real reason it was roped off.

“We spent the usual amount of time taking the rest of the tour, but we had to hurry back to the Police Center to present our request. While we were waiting I was making mental notes on what we should be looking for, where to look for something hidden, and somewhere that might be otherwise overlooked at the apartment.

“Patakinis.” The desk sergeant called out our name. We had to sign a release and a document of waiver of liability, and another document, I’m not sure what it was. We got the key and copies of the documents we signed, and we were on our way.

“I thought we’d never get out of there. Sweetie, I’m getting hungry, can we find a kafenia somewhere?”

“Yes, my Heart,” Dimitris said.

After we ordered, we had a great lunch. I pulled out one of the sheets with the address of the residence.

“Sweetie, do you know where this street is? It’s 23-5545 Tesera, Thebes?”

“We must go North. With traffic, we get to Thebes in maybe ninety minutes, but look to be more like two and a half hours.” Dimitris said with a hint of a sigh.

When we found the address of the residence, we found that it was a high-rise building amongst many. Upon entering, it looked as if the police had gone through and not very carefully. It was a mess.

“How to find anything in this? All was taken, anything important will be gone.” Dimitris said.

“We have to look. We’ll have to get some boxes, Sweetie, could you find some, I’ll start trying to make sense of all this,” I said.

“Lock door after I leave, do not open for *anyone*.”

It was very hard to go through the clothes and pack them up. The drawers had been emptied on the floor along with anything that might have been

on the dresser tops. After picking up the clothes, I began picking up all the broken glass. Picture frames, glasses, and other breakables all smashed on the floor. I was able to box the broken picture frames and plaques that were on the wall and other small items that would fit in the box. I removed what pictures there were in the small frames. There weren't any pictures of his family or much of anything of a personal nature. It looked like there wasn't anything of interest, or if there was, it might have already been confiscated.

I had to take a minute to think. If I were to hide something, where would I hide it? It was obvious that all of the lamps were turned upside down, drawers pulled out and thrown across the room, nothing in or on the bottoms. We cleared out as much of the debris and trash that we could without tossing anything vital. It was just a small flat, a kitchen, a small living room, bedroom, and bath, so there wasn't a large amount of space.

When Dimitris returned, he and I together scrutinized the few photos, front and back. Nothing unusual there. I looked under the sink in the bath and kitchen, nothing. Dimitris dumped the trash. We would give the clothes to a charitable organization. The pile of coats and jackets that would also be given away were stacked on the sofa, waiting for a box. I sat on the couch with the pile of coats. I wanted to be sure that nothing was in the pockets. I went through the pockets of six coats. I felt a slight thickness in the collar of one dress jacket.

"Dimi, have you found a knife or razor blade around here? I need to check this jacket." I asked.

He drew out a small pocket knife and handed it to me.

I slit the underside of the collar by two inches and was able to pick out a piece of cellophane-wrapped paper. The paper unfolded was only two inches by 4 inches. I could tell that the paper was new, it hadn't been put there too long ago. My heart was in my throat, thinking that we had in our hands the clue to solving all our problems. It was not. I was disappointed, but it gave me a little incentive to search further. I picked up a shirt and shoes to add to the donation box and spotted a pair of Sahj's glasses that Dimi must have put there. Suddenly I felt so deflated, and the grip of the situation overtook me. I had to sit.

“Helena, what? What has happened?” He came over to me, sat next to me with his arm around my shoulders. He spotted the glasses in my hand. “It is a very sad thing we do. Remember, this man, he know you to do right thing. Now, we must finish, so we complete our search. Maybe, also find who did this. Huh?” He held me and let the sorrow pass.

“My Heart, we have not found anything unusual, all seems to be just a man’s apartment in mess. We should clean up then go to Morgana’s and Andreas’s home.”

I was busy searching pockets, collars, and cuffs for anything else that might be hidden there. Shoes were explored under insoles, down in the toes, under rugs, and anything else that caught my eye.

“I need a screwdriver, Sweetie,” I said.

“Why?” He asked.

“I know it’s probably a waste of time, but I’m going to check the electrical outlets.” He looked at me like I had been drinking, but he found a small set of tools at the bottom of the pantry closet.

One by one, I removed the switch plates from the outlets. It was an obvious place to hide something, but I had to eliminate the possibility. I was having no luck. The computer was on the floor with a big dent in it, but there could be the possibility of memory cards or flash drives. We had to keep looking. I noticed that the overhead light in the living room did not work. I asked Dimitris to take the glass shade down. When he got it off of the bracket, a small memory card, such as what a camera would use, was taped to the fixture spindle. That was more like it. We were beginning to make progress.

After looking everywhere we could, we finished packing the clothes, and I cleaned out the bathroom of toiletries. While in the bathroom, I looked under the bathroom sink, and even felt around behind the toilet. Nothing. Papers, notebooks and scraps of paper with scribbling on them we took with us. Anything that looked as though there might be more than what meets the eye, we took with us, including the damaged computer.

“We have rescued much for Church of St. Anne, will give to poor,” Dimitris said.

“Yes, I’m sure that Sahj would approve,” I said. We didn’t do a lot of talking afterward, we both were deep in thought.

“Maybe we should spend the night and leave in the morning. I want to look at some of this tonight. Wait! Stop, Dimi. There’s one more place where I didn’t look. If we don’t look there, I’ll never sleep tonight.”

We turned the car around and went back to the apartment.

“Where do we not look? We look everywhere,” he said.

I went back to the bathroom. I opened the small linen cupboard, which was next to the tub and shower. I felt along the facing wall in each shelf space. In the bottom shelf, there was a panel that lined the wall. This wall was at least two inches shallower than all the others.

“We must hurry, Helena.”

“I need a knife,” I said. Dimitris took out his pocket knife and handed it to me. I poked and prodded until I had separated the panel from the wall.

“I wish I had a flashlight. I’m going to have to feel around in here,” I said.

“Let Dimi. You no need to get dirty. Maybe spiders in there.” That’s all I needed to hear. I moved out of the way.

We were successful in this last-ditch effort. We found a large manilla envelope folded inside a plastic bag, hidden beside the tub’s clean out trap. Now we knew that we had to be very careful and not take any chances.

When we left the apartment, we made sure that no one was waiting for us or suspiciously watching. We were getting paranoid about safety, checking every doorway and side aisle down to the car. I couldn’t wait to get out of there.

We found a cheap Inn that was clean and comfortable on the main road to Athens. It gave us a chance to rest. Every noise made us jump, and Dimitris was constantly peeking out the curtains to be sure we weren’t having ‘unexpected’ guests.

We took a box that had the papers in it and started to look for anything strange, or coded, or photos, anything that had a discernible face.

There was his agenda notebook that looked like many pages were torn out of it. Still, some notes were in Greek. Some were little notations in English. I

noticed in the agenda notebook that different types of paper were still holding on to the notebook. They almost looked like they had gotten wet.

The paper that was wrapped in cellophane that I took out of the collar of a coat needed to be looked at more closely. There were a couple of names and the word DANTI. I set this aside to be scrutinized later.

“My Heart, look. Can be something?” Dimitris showed me a picture. It was Sahj, many years younger with an older stocky built balding man in a suit. It reminded me of Al Capone. On the back of the photo in pencil was 93/ 411 Kri Danti. It reminded me of the photo developer’s numbers that they used to put on pictures that were sent out for developing. I wasn’t sure if it meant anything, but we put it on the pile we’d go over again later.

We spent four hours going over every scrap of paper, searching in hidden crevices inside notebooks, and although the occasional piece would pop out, it didn’t add up to much.

My eye kept going back to the paper with DANTI written on it. It seemed strange that this would be wrapped in cellophane and hidden. There had to be more to it. The paper itself just looked like a piece of printer paper torn with notes in Greek jotted on it. It looked like a phone number was written, but in Greek, it was hard for me to be sure.

“Sweetheart, what does this say? Is it a phone number?” I asked.

“It say, ‘Kalliste’ and give phone number.”

“We need to put this in a safe place until we can figure all this out.”

Amongst the other items that Dimitris picked up were a few CDs. I hadn’t looked at those. The idea that anything that belonged to Sahj could have something that will help us gave us a little hope, so we tried to be very thorough. In the rubble, was the postal receipt from the package that was sent to us! Finally! Information that had concrete meaning to us, but all the other things, the kitchen wares, and linens, would go to a charity also.

It was very frustrating to see that apartment in such a state. What little that was there was sparse at best. This couldn’t have been his primary residence. He must have had another place that he called “home.”

“My Heart, you are tired, we rest. Tomorrow another day to look at this.”

“Yeah, my eyes are beginning to cross! I don’t see anything here. Maybe when we get home, we can eliminate some of it. I wish I would have found something from his family. I don’t even know if they were notified,” I worried.

“Yes, well, we worry on this tomorrow.”

We settled back at the Inn, relaxing and watching the television. The plan was to put everything away until tomorrow, then look over what we have with fresh eyes.

“What you fidget on, Helena?” Dimitris asked.

“What do you mean?”

“You no watch the TV, and you look at fingers, you pick at the nail polish, you sigh like bored.” I sat up and had to admit my restlessness. “Is too late now to put out all papers, we go to sleep soon.”

“I know, and I am tired, but my mind is in overdrive,” I said.

“You will not sleep, not like this.”

“I don’t want to take any pills to sleep. I’ll be too tired to get up in the morning. Maybe I should just read until I get sleepy,” I said.

“It will wait until tomorrow, Helena.”

When Dimi’s phone rang, I figured it was Andreas. He was saying that Morgan wanted to talk, but it seemed this conversation had a more solemn tone. The joy of the beginning of the call took flight, and I was expecting bad news.

“What’s wrong, Dimi?” I asked. As the conversation ended he turned to me and said,

“We will go Karpathos tomorrow. Andreas say his Morgana is not well.”

“Maybe I should call her. I know she wanted to tell me something, I just never got around to...”

“Andreas say they no longer want involvement in Sahj.” His brow pinched as he spoke.

“What?” I wasn’t sure I heard right, but after thinking about it, I could understand. It is getting too dangerous.

“Andreas only want to protect Morgana, she is in stress,” he explained.

“She’s been under enough stress with the jobs she has coming up, so I understand. I don’t want to put anyone else in jeopardy. It’s bad enough that

I've gotten *you* involved after you warned me over and over again."

"Now we have obligation to Sahj, so, we see it through, we do together." He laid a comforting hand over mine, and even with the worry that was so obvious, he will be by my side.

"Thank you, Sweetheart." I laid back, and although the comfort of Dimitris' arms was calming, I couldn't shake my restlessness. I reached down into my purse and pulled out a lined paper notebook. At least I would catch up on my writing if nothing else. He kissed my temple as I began to write. I didn't mean to ignore him, but the day seemed to revolve around Sahj. Dimi laid there, watching me write, and although I continued with my impressions of the situation, he was very content to watch. When I finished, I put down my journal and took off my glasses.

"My Heart?" I heard next to my ear.

"Huh?" Was my automatic response.

"Helena?"

"What, what is it, Sugar?" I opened my eyes. "Dimi, you're dressed? What time is it?"

"I have call from university. I must go there today. You must stay with Morgana."

"They wanted you to go in today?"

"Yes, my Heart."

"You must go then. I'll be fine." I said.

"This man cannot leave you alone here. Too many strange things to go on now."

"Are you sure I should go to Morgan's? I'm not sure she wants to see me."

"It will be fine. Andreas want to keep her safe. That is all." He reassured.

"Okay, I'll get ready. How long will you be there?" I asked.

As I was getting our things together and getting ready to leave, I could hear Dimitris on the phone.

"Sweetie, do you think you'll make it back to Andreas and Morgan's to sleep tonight? Or do you think this will be another all-nighter?" I asked.

"To not sleep with my Helena? No, I come to you. This man have too many nights alone." He smiled as he took the suitcase.

“How are you, Helena, are you okay?” Andreas asked as he hugged me.

“I’m good, thanks.”

“Helena, come in! How are you doing? You’ll have to tell me about Sahj,” Morgan said.

“Yeah, I don’t know much more than what we started with, but I guess we’ll have to deal with it after we get home,” I said, and I’m sure my voice gave away my disappointment.

“Yeah, about that. Hi Dimi, Andreas thinks I’m taking too much on, with the decorating jobs and the dealing with police, and now *this*, he thinks it’s better that we back away from it. I guess I’ve been a real bitch lately,” she said. “Do you want something to drink, coffee pot’s on.”

“Yes, coffee is what I need. It’s been a restless night. Hard to get going today.”

“Helena.” Dimi held out his hand as he approached. “Dimi will leave soon, I will call. I will want to hear Helena’s voice.”

“What’s wrong? What’s going on, Dimi?” I’d never heard him say those words to me, and it struck me as a strange thing to say under the circumstances.

“Everything okay, just, Dimi will worry on you today, so, Dimi will call, yes?” His eyes looked deep into mine. He was worried and needed assurance that I was safe.

“I’m okay, Sugar, don’t worry. And no, I won’t go anywhere.” I said.

“University chairman of board will meet with faculty, and who can know for how long it take. But I will call,” he reassured.

“I know.”

“Now, Dimi must go.” He kissed my cheek, and we walked to the door. “I will be home to my Helena soon.” He put his arms around me and kissed me a long goodbye kiss.

“Come on in the kitchen, and we’ll have a cup of coffee. Andreas will be leaving soon, too, and then we can talk,” Morgan said.

“Sometimes I think you don’t want me around, my Sweet Pea,” Andreas teased.

“Who, me?” She joked back at him.

“Alright, alright. I know when I’m not wanted. I’ll let you have your “girl talk,” only be ready to go out for dinner. Dimi and Helena won’t be here for long, and they don’t get over here that often now.”

“I don’t know what time Dimi will be finished, but I’ll be talking to him later,” I said.

Andreas kissed Morgan goodbye, “if I hurry, I can catch up with Dimi.” He patted her head and bid me farewell. We had the place to ourselves now.

“What was it you were saying about the pictures from your camera? You’ve got my curiosity up now,” I said. I followed her to the bedroom where Dimi had placed my bags, just inside the door.

“You’re not going to believe this,” she said.

“What?”

“I was looking through this box for lace samples and found these...” She pulled out a picture that she had taken when we were at the Socratus Gardens Restaurant in Old Rhodes Town.

“Oh, that was such a beautiful place to eat.”

“But look toward the background, by the fountain.” She pointed to the picture I held. “Does he look familiar?” She asked.

“I can’t quite make out who...there is a resemblance, but I can’t be sure.”

“Come into the dining room. The light is better in there. Let’s take these.” She picked up all the photos, and I followed her to the dining room.

“Look at all these again. I’ll make another pot of coffee.”

“Let’s have that nice herb tea you got. I’ve had my fill of coffee.”

I looked at each photo carefully. The pictures were taken as we had newly arrived. Our “vacation,” as it were. I could see the excitement in our faces as we discovered Rhodes. As the photos became a progression of our days, I noticed some faces that were candidly shot that looked familiar. I could tell by the locations that it was in those first days, the days we tried to trace down some information on the little photo.

“My God, they didn’t waste any time tailing us, did they?” I exclaimed. “That would have been right before the picnic.” I came across several photos with the same men in the distance. Some had their backs to the camera, but

they were still conspicuous.

“Oh, gee!” I laughed. “You are sneaky! I want a copy of this one!” Morgan looked to see the picture I held in my hand. It was the day of the picnic when Dimi was stretched out on the blanket, just before he poured the wine. He was smiling at the camera. I was digging in the picnic basket for the napkins. It was a cute picture of him.

“I thought it was a good shot,” Morgan said.

Then came another photo that I had wished I had seen a long time ago. She snapped her camera at the exact moment when I was handing my little photo to Dimitris. The moment when he held onto my fingers as I first was looking into his eyes and felt that exciting jolt that went through my heart. I couldn't believe that she caught that special moment. I felt that quickening in my heart as I viewed this precious piece of paper in my hand. At the angle by which it was taken, I could see Dimitris's eyes, the way he was looking at me, holding onto my fingers. There was a mesmerizing look in his eyes that thrilled me as I looked at the photo.

“Geez, this is...” I stopped speaking, the eyes that were so hypnotizing were taking my breath away.

“Look at the other photos, Helen.”

“Okay, but I want that picture!” I went back to the photos. The scenery, so beautiful, and our first impressions were so touristy. It's hard not to be “touristy. There is so much to snap the shutter at in Rhodes.

The following pictures were quite a surprise, but not in a pleasant way. I saw the same faces, in restaurants, in tourist spots, and even at the hot nightspot where the live music was played in the open-air eatery at the docks, outside the wall. My joy soon faded at the danger we were unaware of at the time. Even when we felt safe, we were being watched, and it made me afraid all over again.

“Did you show these to Andreas?” Just as I asked the question, my cell phone rang. “Hi, Sweetie.”

“Helena, you are still at Andreas' with Morgana?”

“Yes, where are you?”

“Meeting will start soon. I sit in conference hall, thinking on my bride.”

“Morgan was just showing me some photos...”

“Yes. We will discuss photos, but you will be careful today? No, go to town, study papers, this man will try to come home early.”

“Andreas wants to take us out for dinner, so...”

“Yes, Andreas, tell me.”

“You talked to him?” I asked, a little surprised.

“We talk, Helena.”

“I see,” I said. I knew that Andreas must have mentioned Morgan’s photos.

“Yes, so you will stay in? No, go out there today?” He asked.

“Dimi, I hadn’t planned on going anywhere.”

“Conference to start now.”

“Why don’t you call me when you get a break, I don’t want to interrupt the conference,” I said.

“Yes, my Heart. S’agapo.”

We had all seen or heard about what the photos contained and what they meant. I could hear in his voice that the pictures worried him. It set me back a little also, to know of the attention we were naively unaware of, but it was a little late to be afraid of the past. It’s the future that we need to protect.

Morgan must have had close to five hundred photos. I hadn’t realized how many snaps she took. It was unbelievable that the memory card was found undamaged after we were mugged and her camera stolen, along with everything else.

“Helen, I have to go to the bank and then make another stop. Do you want to come?” She asked.

“I’d rather stay here if it’s okay.”

“It won’t take me long. I’ll be right back.” She grabbed her hat and left. I locked the door behind her.

I sat at the kitchen table looking over the newspaper, and still, not a word about Sahj. I got out a few of the photos in my bag and went back into the kitchen to go over them. I was on a mission now to find those known to us or those who were following us in Morgan’s pictures to see if any of them were a possible match. I also thought about the pictures that we took on our “masquerade” cruise when we met Sahj that day on board. It was with sadness

I looked at these last pictures of our friend.

I came across a photo from the Athens Digest, where a picture of an arrest showed the police leading the suspect into the police car. The one suspect was obscured by the detective who proceeded him. The other suspect was dark-haired, thin, and looked to be in his mid-thirties in age. The photo was taken at night in profile of his face and was still too difficult to make a definite determination if this person was the same as in other images. Somehow, there was a familiarity about him.

The article went on to say that the arrests were the result of the police receiving a “tip” on criminal activities at so-and-so address. Well, this was so vague that it was not helpful. I set it aside to go to the next copy.

I made a list of facts that I felt were important, dates of events, who were involved, and location, if possible. I thought that perhaps there might be names repeated or other information that would correlate with previous facts that we already knew.

Two names seemed to be constant and were beginning to adhere to my brain. Although I had yet to put the faces with the names, Yorgo Visilov and Grevin Biehjorn seemed to be mentioned frequently.

As I made my handwritten notes, I began to notice that these names would come up time and again around the same time that thefts of works of arts from private collections were reported. Even though there was no indication in the articles that these men were involved, it seemed that they were present in the area.

“I’m back,” Morgan announced.

“Hi.” I was not distracted and continued my research. “Morgan? Do these names sound familiar?” I told her the names.

“Kinda, but Russian names all sound the same to me, so I’m not sure.”

“You know, I don’t want to sound ungrateful, because I do appreciate all that you’ve done, but I don’t want to involve you any deeper in this, especially if Andreas doesn’t want you to be involved.”

“Yeah, well, it does scare me a little, especially since Sahj’s death. I guess I’ve been a witch since it happened. Andreas thinks I’d better concentrate on the decorating for a while.”

“Wow. I didn’t expect this,” I said.

“I’m surprised that Andreas would want to back off because this stuff really excites him. ‘The antiquities must flow through the Patakinis veins!’ That’s what Andreas said,” she commented.

It seemed like only a few minutes since we placed our lunch order when it was delivered. We had been steady in our work for several hours, only stopping to eat, and clarifying questions that had been put on hold. Once we finished eating, we delved back into the papers before us. We were so engrossed in the path we were headed down that when Dimitris called, it woke me from my compulsion.

“I am sorry to call late. Time gone before this man know. All is okay?” He asked.

“Everything is fine. What time is it?”

“Time to say I am missing my Heart.”

“I think we’ve made some progress, Dimi.”

“You will tell Dimi all when I am there.”

“What time will you be here?” I asked.

“Not too much more, I finish up.” He didn’t sound too sure when he would be free. I could tell that he was pretty tired.

“Did Andreas say anything about going out to dinner?” I asked.

“He mention.”

“Sugar, if you’re too tired...”

“No, we must eat is okay. I go now to finish. I will call.”

I no sooner put the phone down when it rang again.

“Hi, it’s Rena. I wanted to say how sorry we are about Sahj. He was such a humble man. He thought a lot of you both.”

“Oh, I forgot that you had met him. Yes, he was quite humble. It’s such a waste. He was a very kind man.”

“Did the police say anything about who did it?” She asked.

“No, it’s another mystery that they doubt will be solved anytime soon.”

She sighed deeply, “Is there anything we can do?”

“Thanks, Rena, but there’s not much any of us can do.”

“Stefano still wants to get together whenever you’re free.”

“Well, I’m not sure how long we’ll be here. We wanted to see you before we head home, I’ll have Dimi call when he knows for sure.”

Morgan came out wearing a long muslin type caftan with the most beautiful embroidered neckline and open sleeves.

“That is beautiful, Morgan! I hope we’re not going to dinner anywhere fancy. I don’t have any clothes with me,” I said.

“I’m not sure where we’re going, I just wanted to be prepared,” she said.

I let the investigation go for a while, and tried to get ready for dinner. The break did me a lot of good and lifted my mood considerably. Soon we were laughing over everything.

We heard the cars and trucks passing, and the noise of the music emanating from another flat. The different smells of dinners cooking was an international smorgasbord for the senses.

“Things get a little lively around here, don’t they?” I commented as the sound of Rock music came in the windows.

“Yeah, there’s some young guys who live below us. They rock out a couple of times a month. They usually leave to go clubbing, around 10 pm so that we can sleep.

“That’s considerate.”

“It is, considering what the party animals do around here. If there’s a holiday, it’s non-stop.”

“I guess I’m ready to go whenever they get home,” I said.

“What’s that?” Morgan went to the table where the files were and picked up a couple of papers that had slipped off the table and onto a dining room chair.

“I must have missed them. They belong in the folder, Morgan.”

“Did you look at all of these? There’s some historical stuff here. These old pictures, I can see Andreas’ face when he gets anywhere near this, he’s a changed man. Is it okay if I ask you to put all this in a box and put it away? If he sees this before we go to dinner, we might not ever get out of here.”

“Sure, that’s a good idea,” I said and put the files into a box and hauled it

into the bedroom. As I was finding a place to put it, I heard Morgan answer her phone. When I came out of the room, she had just hung up.

“That was Andreas. They’re on the way and should be here in ten minutes..”

While we waited, we talked about Morgan’s Prince’s Palace job. She was in full creative throttle. Her mind was forever scrutinizing patterns and color play. She hadn’t made her design sketches yet, but the imagination was going, and it wouldn’t be long before the hiring of help and getting the “okay” on the designs. She showed me rolls and rolls of yardage and accessories that she would incorporate into the design scheme.

“I don’t know how you do it. I mean, I see fantastic fabric but can never come up with something to do with it,” I said.

“It’s hard sometimes to get the inspiration. I mean, I have some really neat ideas using a William Morris theme, but I can’t do it in the Prince’s Palace. The style of the woodwork and all the masonry isn’t conducive to what I’d like to do. I have to do more research and figure out what would be compatible. Not always easy to do without doing the same thing that’s been done over and over again.”

“Frustrating?”

“Oh, you don’t know! I want to get it done, but it will be a while.” She sighed in frustration.

After the men showered and dressed, we went to this huge hotel and had a wonderful dinner. Everyone seemed a little more quiet than usual. I knew that Dimitris was pretty tired, but I wasn’t sure what was wrong with Andreas.

“You’re sure quiet, what’s going on?” Morgan asked Andreas.

Andreas looked at Dimitris. “Well,” Andreas looked at me, then Morgan. He reached into his pocket and brought out a few folded pieces of paper. He began to unfold them, then hesitated.

“I found this...” He unfolded the papers and handed them to me. There were several pictures of the people “believed” to be involved in the trading of the missing artifacts.”

“Where did you find this?” I asked as my eyes got bigger at what I was seeing.

“It was in an old issue of the ‘Twentieth Century Archaeological Journal,’ I wasn’t sure if these were already in the stuff you already have.”

As I looked at the pictures, the wheels in my brain started turning. I must have had my mouth open as Dimitris placed his hand on my wrist and said, “It will wait, Helena, for now, we have nice dinner.”

“I know....yes, ...I’m sorry, you’re right, thank you for finding this Andreas, it might be very useful. Thanks.”

My eyes must have been falling out of my head! When we asked for the check after we finished our dinner, the waiter who brought the check looked to be identical to one of the photos in our file. He must have been in his late forties, but he looked younger, still looking like the photo.

“What is it, my Heart?” Dimitris placed my jacket over my shoulders. I leaned closer to him and said in a quiet voice

“Look carefully at that waiter.”

When we got to the car, I felt it was safe enough to talk. I was positive this was one of the faces on our list.

“Why didn’t you tell me, I would have looked at him?” Morgan asked.

“I was afraid to say anything inside, who knows who listens to things in there? For all we know, they might have it bugged at that booth we were in.” I said hypothetically.

“Did he have a name tag? I didn’t notice.” Andreas asked.

“I don’t remember seeing one,” I said.

“Did they give you a receipt, sometimes it will tell you who your server was,” Morgan said.

“I will call maybe ask for restaurant manager,” Dimitris said.

Dimitris called the restaurant manager and praised our waiter and told him what excellent service we got. It was a masterpiece of ego-stroking. Then he asked the name of the waiter.

“Efharisto, Mr. Zammos, thank you!” He clicked off his phone.

“What did he say, Dimi?” I asked.

“His name is Marko Yankov,” he said.

“What is that, Russian?” Morgan asked.

“I’m pretty sure it’s Bulgarian. I had a Yankov working for me last year. He was Bulgarian,” Andreas said.

“Now we need to tie him to the file, you know, if I was *thinking* instead of going into shock, we could have gotten a picture of him with our cell phones,” I said.

“I will do.” Dimitris turned the car around, and we headed back to the hotel. He went into the restaurant area and asked to use the restroom. He stood outside the restroom door with his cell phone, acting like he was talking on it. When he saw the waiter, he carefully took several snapshots.

“I wish he wouldn’t just impulsively do something like this. It could be dangerous,” I said as we waited in the car.

“Yeah, he’s getting more like you every day,” Morgan commented.

“Hey! That’s not nice,” I joked. After fifteen minutes, which seemed like an hour had passed, Dimitris returned to the car.

“Okay, we go.” Everyone waited. He turned and looked at everyone, with a small smile he said,

“Success!”

Everyone gave a sigh of relief. Then we were on our way home.

It seemed like we reached the house in record time. Andreas was the first in and the first one to get to the box and photos. While we took off our coats and got ourselves organized, Dimitris poured us each a glass of Blush. We all had our place around the table, and Andreas brought out his laptop.

“If we need to plug it in, I’ll have to go get an extension cord,” he said.

“Well, Honey, go get it now, before we get started.” Morgan insisted.

Dimitris didn’t bring his download cord for his phone, so with a little instruction he was able to send the photos of Yankov to my email. Andreas ran a print of the picture of the waiter, Mr. Marko Yankov. Two of the pictures were good enough to put with our file of likely suspects.

When Dimitris collected the wine glasses and took them to the kitchen, I followed. I put my arms around his waist as he stood at the sink.

“Everything okay?” He asked, putting his hand over mine.

“Dimi, I was thinking, maybe we shouldn’t mention the flash drive or cd’s we found,” I said. He turned and held me and spoke into my ear.

“Dimi and Helena think same. See? Was meant to be.” He had that sparkle in his eyes, and I thought how lucky I was to have someone like him.

When we all settled in for our meeting of the minds, I brought up Yankov as our topic of conversation.

“You know, I think it must be fate that we had Yankov as our waiter. We’ve got him on the list here, somewhere. Oh, here it is, he is one of the guys that was on Bolio’s phone.” I said.

“Yes, we must keep all information on him, also should make journal on findings. Remind of us where to look for file.” Dimitris added.

“I think when we get home, we should set things up where we can see them. It’s easier to think and correlate when there is a visual aid. Maybe use that wall in the dining room. There’s nothing much there anyway.” I suggested.

“Andreas, where you find this Archeology journal?” Dimitris asked.

“It’s so weird, I was cleaning out all my old engineering papers from school, and there it was, at the bottom of the box. I guess I used it to line the bottom of it.”

“What a stroke of luck! Look, this article has the names under the photo. Grevin Biehjorn, he’s distinguished looking, and this other guy, he looks like the man in the other picture that we have, with Sahj, the one that looks like Al Capone. His name is, this is Deischant! This is the one who was in custody. He was one of the art dealers that smuggled the artifacts out of the country.” Finally! A face to go with the name.

We were making progress in identifying some of the men who may be involved with our kidnapping, the burglary and perhaps the murder of Sahj. I wanted to see the flash drive and the memory card, but until we get home, it would have to wait. Even with the few names and faces that have become clear, there was still so much to sort out.

Of Good Heart



In the morning, we packed up the boxes of papers and photos and bid our farewell to Morgan and Andreas, then took the ferry to Karpathos. It was strange knowing that I'd never see Sahj in the ferry bar, where I'd usually see him.

"What do you think on, Helena?" Dimitris asked as he set our drinks on the table.

"Sahj, how I always seemed to find him here."

"To Sahj, a good man," Dimitris raised his glass in a toast.

After our drink, I was about ready to fall asleep. It had been a few days since I'd had any real sleep.

"Rest, Helena," Dimitris said, humming his Greek lullaby against my temple. As I listened, my mind drifted to a place where all the smiles and gaiety of past times lived. I remembered Sahj during the Christmas celebration at Rena's, and I wished I had taken the time to know him better.

"Helena, Sweetheart, we are here," Dimitris gently woke me.

"Oh, I guess I was tired. We got here fast."

"Yes, only take four hours today. We go down to get car, come." We had to descend into the cargo bay where we got our car ready to disembark. Another fifteen minutes and we were at Stefano and Rena's.

“Welcome back, you two. Come on in. I just put on a pot of coffee. Stefano is locked in his dungeon, who knows what he’s up to in there?” Rena said.

“Reenie!” Dimitris said as he gave her a big hug.

“What have you been up to, boy?” Rena said with a big grin.

“We have been very busy.”

“Well, you’re welcome to go and try to pry Stefano out of his chair. Tell him the coffee’s on.”

“What’s new, Rena?” I asked.

“Well, not much compared to you, but I guess Katie is going to leave Arthur. She says she’s just tired. Tired of everything, Arthur included. So, we’ll see. How have you been? Stefano said that you had to go to Mr. Sahj’s apartment. That must have been sad,” she said as she stroked her small hand down my back.

“No, it wasn’t fun. We gave his clothes and kitchen stuff to St. Anne’s mission. So sad,” I said.

“Did he have any family?”

“None that I know of,” I said.

When Stefano and Dimitris came into the kitchen, everything got brighter. Dimitris gave me a bear hug and a kiss. “Coffee?” He asked.

“I sure could use one, thank you, Honey,” I said.

“Oh, I’ll get it, Dimi, go sit down. Stefano, you want coffee?”

“Yes, I do, Sugarplum,” he answered while choosing himself a small orange.

“Dimi, you never told me about your meeting, how did it go?” I asked.

“Always same old thing. Budget problem, want to cut corners. I say ‘take my salary, see if it help.’ They look like I should be quiet. They do not want *that* idea to spread.”

“What?” I almost fell off my chair.

“Did you quit, Dimi?” Rena asked.

“Almost, come too close. Next time, Dimi gone, will quit.”

“Sweetie, you don’t have to stay there if it’s going to get annoying.”

“Cannot yet, still have work to do.”

“I was thinking. Maybe we should park the car inside the fence tonight. Sahj’s things are in there, and I don’t want anyone getting into them,” I said.

“Yes, my Heart, I do that now.” He left the room to move the car into the back of the property.

“Aren’t they even going to try to find out what happened to Mr. Sahj?” Rena asked.

“They probably won’t bother, they haven’t even announced his death, they might want to hush the whole thing,” Stefano commented.

“Were you ever able to ask Professor Kanakaras about the little photo?” I asked.

“Oh, yes, Helena, he wasn’t too happy about it but did get all the information from it that he was able. I’ll get it for you,” Stefano said.

“That’s okay, Stefano, I’ll get it later, have your coffee,” I said.

“I translated a few of the reports from the Greek, I don’t think they will have any real revelations, but I’m not sure of what to do with the German documents.” Stefano was perplexed. “Also, I have blow-ups of the tracings, some are a child’s drawings, but they did recover them from the backing on the frame, so you might as well take them too.”

“Thank you, Stefano, I appreciate everything that everyone has done concerning this project. We want to wrap it up as soon as we can. It’s not a good idea to bring anyone else into this, but what do you think of maybe we go to the source of the German documents? Maybe the agency or whoever issued the papers will give us a translation,” I suggested.

“It might work, after all, they originated there, and unless they don’t know English, which I doubt, I think it would be safe,” Stefano agreed with my input.

“I didn’t think of it at the time, but while we were in Athens, we could have checked the legal Library, or gone to the Ministry of Justice,” I said. My head was beginning to split, as I had ignored the throbbing in my head since we took the ferry.

“To take German documents to originator will take time, and where to go with this, German Embassy maybe?” Dimitris wasn’t sure of who would be the person to contact. If it came from the German justice system, we weren’t going to go to Germany for a translation.

“Sweetheart, I think the embassy would be able to help us if they will. I

hope you'll excuse me. I'm going to lay down. My head is killing me." I started to walk down the hall when Dimi caught up with me.

"We will be eating soon, will you sleep?"

"I'm going to take some aspirin, and if I fall asleep, just let me sleep." I couldn't think about anything at that moment in time.

I went to our room, wet a cloth from the bath, and put it over my eyes as I laid down. It was a relief to have the cold dampness across my temples. I hadn't realized the stress. I was tired from the travel, the apartment packing, the stress of Sahj's death, and lack of sleep. It was bound to get to me. A few minutes later, I heard Dimi knock quietly on the door.

"Helena?"

"Come in, Sweetie," I said. He sat next to me on the bed, holding my hand.

"We go home soon. In morning, we take ferry, but not to hurry, tomorrow no hurry, no stress." He said in a hushed tone, sliding his hand lightly over my arm.

"Honey, I'm sorry. I'm not much company right now, am I?"

"It has been long day." He removed the cloth from my eyes. I laid my head on his chest as he laid on top of the bed with me. "My Helena, you are such a wonder to this man every day. Still, make this man wonder." Then he kissed me gently.

"What makes you wonder, Dimi? I thought you knew me well enough not to wonder."

"How can I say? You do not understand still, my Helena, how it is with the man and the woman. Is more than this man know how to say."

"I understand that men and women are different, honey, that's obvious. I guess maybe because you grew up with only brothers that women confuse you, maybe."

"No, not confuse. With all things you do for Sahj, do, only out of good heart." He kissed me and tapped my hand that he held to his chest. "When you ask this man to get boxes, make my heart feel... excite, uh, warm happiness. You need Dimi get for you. I see you write in journal, so intent, but so gentle. Did you know you put finger to lips when thinking? I like."

"I never thought about it."

“You have the mind of logic. You will sort out problem and not ask for help. But you stubborn about it too. You need to ask Dimi to do, some things you should not have to do.”

I comfortably rested on his chest, listening to the mellow tones resonate.

“That’s why I get myself in trouble!” I could feel him smiling though he said nothing.

“Can’t explain in the English, is a word in Greek, not English.”

“What’s that, Honey?”

“The wonder and trust, uh, sincere duty, oh, in Greek, is philotimo,” he explained.

“Well, Honey, maybe you’re just tired, you could use a nap.”

“Oh, what I would do for you, this husband of yours.” He was looking at the ceiling, tapping my hand. I thought there was something he was going to say, but he didn’t.

“Sugar? Are you okay?”

“You rest, my Heart.” He kissed my hand and left the room.

When we got home and waded through the welcoming committee of chickens and dogs, we put the boxes in the dining room and had a lite lunch to help us re-charge. It felt so good to be home.

“Helena? Helena, must go to market and see about post.”

“Why don’t you go ahead, I’ve got to unpack. You won’t be long, will you?” I asked.

“Dimi will be back before you know he is gone!” He said as he kissed my cheek.

He was gone before I had a chance to think. After taking a minute to sort through which issues were more pressing than others, I took out the envelope that we found at Sahj’s apartment. It had a flash drive in it, along with the key and a note. The note looked like a list in Greek, so Dimitris would have to look at it.

I tried to open the flash drive, but I had a hard time getting our computer to recognize it. I was hoping that the dampness of where it was hidden didn’t ruin it. But, before I ruined it myself, I removed the drive and will try again after I can install a recovery program.

The other thing that interested me was this note. It had been rolled before it was placed in the envelope, so it had a definite curl to its posture. If I could read Greek, I might be able to decipher it, but it also had some doodling and scribbling on the margins and at the bottom.

Since Dimitris wasn't back yet, I started to put the pictures of suspects on the wall. Anything that had to do with the photos would be numbered to correspond with the photo. We were getting quite a collection of faces. If, or when we can verify the death of a person, we'll connect to them anyone linked to them with black yarn. Whatever deeds they once were involved in would go into a "limbo" file.

In the things that Stefano gave us, besides the photo, was a map that Professor Kanakaras had made when he was testing the little photo. The map showed the location of some of the relics and icons that they had found. It was interesting to look at the markings and the way the topography was noted on the map. Unfortunately, Professor Kanakaras was only interested in recovering the lost relics. He had little interest in suspects and thugs.

After all of the searching for information, trying to trace leads, and trying to identify people from old photographs, I can understand why this whole thing would be hard to solve. It would take an army to follow up on the information that we had acquired, and *our* data was incomplete. We started out only wanting information on the little photograph of a child, and with those innocent questions, it has snowballed into international crime and murder.

"Tin or iron but not of gold"



When Dimitris came in, he brought a pile of mail and the package that Sahj sent.

"It's bigger than I thought it would be," I stated.

"Not heavy though, still have to bring in groceries from car." He gave me a peck on the cheek and went out to the car.

While Dimi put the groceries away, I opened the package. Wrapped in brown paper was an old dark wood box the size of an artist's paintbox. Clad with iron hinges and an old padlock, I looked at the lock and was sure that the key for it was the one we found in the tub clean-out cubbyhole, along with the flash drive.

"Helena, do you try to open flash?"

"No luck, Dimi. It might have a password, or maybe it got damp, I don't know."

"Well, maybe we have enough. More we find, more trouble we find." He closed the refrigerator and then handed me a couple of grapes.

"Did you see what I did to the wall? I think it will help us get organized."

"Yes, it will help, good!" I noticed that Dimi seemed like he was preoccupied, going through the motions but not quite all there. I knew it wouldn't take

long, and his big brainstorm will strike, and he'll be off to Athens once again. I was beginning to see his predictability. All I could do is let it happen, and I hope that I don't have to go back to Athens with him.

"Sweetheart, I have some things from Sahj that I need a translation on, whenever you're not busy," I said.

"Yes, we do that," he said as his thoughts were somewhere else.

"Honey, I want you to take me out target shooting." This was a test.

"Yes, my Heart, we do that."

"Well, I guess all this can wait, maybe we should get a little more rest. I can think more clearly in the morning than I can after 3 pm."

"That is fine, Helena."

I went up to my husband, who was putting away some cans and dry goods in the pantry. I put my arms around him and stopped him from his duty. I made him look at me. I stood in front of him and held him until he said something.

"My bride." He gave me a peck on the lips. "What?"

"Honey, we've been pretty busy the last few days, I think we can take the time for a little nap." Now that I had his attention, he understood what I was saying.

"Helena, there are things to do, we should eat soon." I took him by the hand and pulled him along. "Where we go?"

"You are going to take a nap. You are zoning out, so I know that you're tired. So, come on, off with the shoes." I pushed him down on the bed.

"But I ..."

"No 'buts,' Mr. Patakinis." He reached me by the hips and pulled me until I fell on top of him. "Dimi, you're making me laugh, now stop it!" I said as I batted at his hands. We were both laughing.

"Oh, Helena, why you know I need nap?"

"Well, when you act like a zombie, I know that you're tired."

"Zombie? Dimi is zombie?"

"Yes. So let's get the comforter over us, and we can take a nap. Okay?" I said.

"I can not fight my best girl, so yes, we will nap, but you have to keep hands off, or this man will not sleep."

"Darn!" I joked. He had a smile, but I'm not sure he knew what I said.

"Helena, you must teach this man to understand American." We cuddled and were able to fall asleep.

"Helena, my Heart," I heard softly in my ear. "We must get up, is 6 pm, we must eat."

"Uhhh, the gods of sleep must be working overtime."

"Yes, we waste day, and now we get up." He playfully slapped my hip, and then he went to the kitchen.

When I got to the kitchen, he had all of the salad fixings laid out and contemplating the main course.

"What did you bring from the market?" I asked.

"Found chicken, but don't feel like chicken. What you say this man take his bride for early Anniversary dinner?" He hugged me and had such a sweet smile, I agreed.

We had a nice quiet dinner in a small "Mom & Pop" bistro. Although I appreciated the gesture, Dimi seemed reserved, his eyes betrayed that he was far off in thought, even though he tried to hide it.

"How is the 'brainstorm' coming?" I asked.

"Is almost there. Still, have to think."

"You've done a lot of that lately, when do you think I'll get my husband back, any time soon?"

"What is this you say?" He seemed bewildered.

"Sweetie, I know that you've been trying to work it out, I just was wondering about it. You've been so far out in space lately." He covered my hand with his and said,

"This man has been neglectful of wife. We will make beautiful love when we get home."

"Only if I can make love to my *husband*," I said.

When we left the restaurant, we didn't have much conversation on the way home. Dimitris came around to open my door, his hand reaching out to me. When I stood, I hugged him.

"Sweetheart, I know you have a lot on your mind. I don't want you to think about me or any of the mess we're dealing with, just concentrate on your work. Once you reach a conclusion, whether it's going to work out or not, you'll be free to be doing other things."

"I don't deserve to have such understanding, Helena. This project make Dimi dizzy. Is more complex than first began." We walked to the back door, and the dogs were clamoring to be fed.

"I'll open the house. Maybe you can spend a few minutes with the pups," I said.

As I entered the dining room, I looked at our wall of suspects. I decided to rearrange the layout. I put the known suspects, those who were known to be major players, in a horizontal line across the wall. I put the other names below, and if we had pictures and no names, they went in a row beneath the others, until we could be sure whether they were involved or not.

With the information at hand, I could see that several names were involved, but we couldn't find a link to the main suspects. We were able to connect some of the men on the second row to each other, but how they are linked to the top row still had to be worked out. I sat and stared at the layout and could see how it can be confusing. My mind works on a color palette, and being able to see the connections is what would help. After getting the layout in order, I realized that over a half-hour has passed, and Dimitris hadn't come in.

"Dimi? Dimi, are you out here?" I called. I didn't hear an answer, and although the dogs were quiet, in my heart, I was afraid of finding something wrong. "Dimi, where are you?" I called louder, making my way to the chicken coop.

When I went in, I could see him writing in his notepad that he always has with him, using the nesting box to steady his hand. He was working his calculations.

"Dimi, I've been looking for you, Sweetie," I said as I put my arm around him.

"Just one minute....one minute." He was in the midst of his brainstorm. "Had to put down before this man forget." He turned to me with that twinkle

in his eyes.

“Tomorrow, my bride and Dimi go to Karpathos. Rena has celebration, but first, Dimi go to Athens.”

“Let me see if I’ve got this right. You’ll drop me off at Rena’s. Then you go on to Athens, then come back to Rena’s for the celebration. Is that right?”

“Yes, it will be wonderful celebration, and maybe even celebrate end of project.” He was excited, and I could see that he believed that his theory would work out. I couldn’t be as enthusiastic about it as I knew that things don’t always go as expected.

“As long as you’re at the celebration, I’ll be happy. I don’t want to celebrate without you.”

“That would not be celebration. No. Dimi will be there, and we celebrate together.”

“Are you ready to come into the house?” I asked.

“Yes, and we will have wine,” he said as we walked back to the house.

He poured the wine and toasted to his project.

“Is there any chance that you’ll tell me about your project?” I asked, knowing the answer.

“Not yet, Helena, don’t want to jinx.”

I had a basket in the closet that had various colors of yarn from years of small projects. I dragged it out and enlisted Dimitris’s help in connecting the links on our wall. We didn’t have too many to begin with, but we had lots of colored yarn. Bolio connected to Marco Yankov and Nasir Hakim, but then, Bolio probably hooked up with every thug in Greece and beyond. The reliability in our mapping Bolio was questionable. We still had to find out the identity of the little man.

“My Heart! We have no Sahj or Ben Abijah up here. He must be here too.”

“That’s right! I didn’t even think of him.” I added the picture of Sahj to the group, but which group?

“Honey, I think for the sake of our sanity, I’ll put Sahj on top, but we’ll call him Abijah.”

“Yes, that make less confusion.”

"Tin or iron but not of gold"

With the padlock key in hand, we opened the wood box. Facing us was a stack of profiles with mug shots attached. As a good source of reference, finding this short cut in our journey may be a godsend. There were 10,000 in Swiss Francs, two discs and a couple of letters.

"Helena, what we do with this? We cannot keep money".

"It does seem to be a lot of money to keep in an old box," I said.

"What does letter say?" He asked as I opened the envelope. "Wait! Something fall out." He bent to pick it up. We looked at the little note written in an elegant hand script.

*I. "The key to the puzzle
for you to hold
of tin, or iron
but not of gold."*

"Do you think this means anything?" I asked

"Must mean something, he put in envelope."

"It does seem like it's saying more than just words."

"Read letter, my Heart."

"There's no date on it, so we don't know when he wrote it.

"Helena,

"It is with great sorrow that I must put this in your hands. As you know, I have no family, and I must entrust you above all others to do what you must with the books I have lent you. They belong to the Kritis library -Danti. Should you discover anything of interest in the library, you may consider it for your collection. I must caution you, but you have come this far and by now know of my concerns.

"By your reading of this, Helena, I have come to the end of my journey. I am preparing this for you to find peace in your quest of life. I am sorry that this has come to you and that I can not be there to see you succeed.

"I wanted to thank you once again for your kind hospitality and that of your

family during the Holidays. It meant more to me than you know. Please tread lightly and take care of yourself.

*With warm affection,
Ahmed”*

P.S. You will notice a few loose pieces that haven't found a home. Maybe they will fit in somewhere. a.s./s.b.a.

“Honey, ‘the books,’ look at how it’s written, the word ‘books’ is on a more slanted script, and so is ‘Dante.’ ‘The books’ he’s talking about, it must be the information that we got from him, but ‘Kritis Library on Danti’, I don’t quite understand that.

“Loose pieces, yes.” Dimi put his comforting hand on my shoulder. “He want to help Helena even after...”

“It’s all so very sad,” I said. “Tin or Iron but not of Gold.”

“What it means?”

“Dimi, Sahj gave me a key when I went to see him in the hospital. I gave it back to him later. But he told me that if anything happened to him to go to the Piraeus Bank in Nicosia.”

“But, you give it back.”

“He gave it to me again, ‘to keep it safe.’ I couldn’t tell you about it. I made a promise.”

“And you keep promise. So, now this woman want Dimi to go to Nicosia. You do this for Sahj, but do not tell husband of key, or conversation of key with Sahj,” he said in a controlled tone.

“I never dreamed it would come to anything. I didn’t think about anything happening to *Sahj!*” I said as I followed Dimitris out of the room. “Dimi?”

If I didn’t know better, I’d say that my husband was acting as though he was jealous of Sahj. He’s been under a lot of stress trying to wind up his project, plus the fact that we’ve been gone more than we’ve been home. I let him go to calm down and think about why I did what I did. I was sure it would blow

over.

I poured myself a glass of wine and started sorting out the profiles, checking for familiar faces or names. I found a file on Deischant, Vanderbur, Yankov, and Papaligouras. This Yiannis Papaligouras is the name of the man I recognized as the tall thin thug that assaulted Morgan and me at the Paradiso.

Reading through his profile, he had a long history of criminal dealings and police action.

There were assaults, robbery, and many parole type violations. It was definite that this person was not afraid of the criminal justice system. I added him to the bottom row of people of interest. I poured myself another glass of wine and wondered if Dimitris was going to come back into the dining room and help me sort through the profiles. I went to the computer and checked the download, which was successful. The flash drive would have to wait until after the anniversary party at Rena's, as it will be very time-consuming.

I got ready to go to bed, it was late, and we had a long day ahead. Dimitris was already in bed writing in a spiral notebook.

"I didn't know you went to bed. You could have told me," I said as I got undressed.

When I got into bed, I leaned up on my elbow and pushed up to him. He was in the zone, so I kissed his shoulder and said, "good night."

When morning broke, I could hear the shower running. It seemed so early. I got up and got dressed, went to the closet to grab some clothes to pack. I wasn't putting much thought into it.

The coffee was made, and it was just what I needed. When Dimitris came into the kitchen, he already had his coat on and was ready to leave.

"You're in a hurry this morning," I said.

"Ferry run early this morning," he said. I could tell he was still in that solemn mood, either thinking on his project or still angry with me. It was hard to tell. He doesn't talk much when he's concentrating on a project, but he has never shut me out completely.

"Did you already pack a bag?" I asked.

"Yes, is in car," he muttered. He picked up my bag and waited for me in the

car.

“What’s wrong, Dimi?” I asked as I got into the car. He didn’t look at me. He just drove out the gate, then got out to close the gate behind us.

“Aren’t you speaking to me?” I asked. I couldn’t stand the silent treatment. He drove the little car onto the ferry in silence. When he turned the engine off, I got out of the car. I went up to the second level and to the cafe/bar. I ordered two tall coffees, took a booth, and tried to calm myself if we were to talk. I thought that Dimitris would catch up to me, but he didn’t. I was able to see the port fade away as we made our way to Karpathos. So many things were going through my mind, thinking of Dimitris and our beautiful life.

I finished my coffee and went out to the passenger section to see where my husband was. I went all over the second level deck and didn’t find him. I was beginning to think that something happened to him. I checked the small third level, but there was no sign of him. I raced down to the cargo area and back to the car. There he was, just sitting. I got back into the car. He could tell that I had been running downstairs from my quick breathing. He still had nothing to say.

I was going to ask him if he wanted to talk about it, but I didn’t say anything either.

He was gripping the steering wheel, and I knew that he was running the scenario over in his head, not wanting to say the wrong thing, choosing his words carefully. I couldn’t take the silence.

“Dimi, can you talk to me?” My anxiety was going through the roof, my emotions, which I had some control over up to this point, were imploding and I was at a point where I didn’t know whether I was going to go off on a tirade or collapse in tears. I tried to read his body language. He got out of the car and came around to open my door. I started to get out, but he squatted in front of me, sighed a deep breath, and took my hand. He stroked my hand with his other hand while he was searching for words. The look in his eyes made me wonder how critical the situation was at this point. It won’t be a celebration if the guests of honor aren’t speaking, or worse.

“This man can not speak. It is hard to know what you do. Is for good reason you do for Sahj, but make this man go amuck. Dimi feel....oh, what is word?”

To never ask my Helena to break promise, so that is okay, but make me... angry that you make promise without this man."

"Ohh, Dimi, I tried not to take the key from him again, but he pleaded, and I felt obligated. Sweetie, you're not feeling jealous, are you?" I hated to use that word, but I couldn't think of another word to replace it.

"Jealous? Dimi not jealous. Why be jealous of dead man?"

"He wasn't dead at the time. But you don't have to be jealous of anyone." I put my free hand around the back of his neck. "Sweetie, shall we go up and get a coffee?"

"Yes, we do that." He stood and helped me out of the little car.

Someone was occupying the booth that I had before, and all of the booths now were taken. We took our coffee out to the passenger area and sat next to a window. The spray from the water would blow up to the deck and coat the windows with its salty residue.

"If you get to Athens by noon, you won't have that much time to work, will you?" I asked.

"Maybe enough time to do last test," he said.

"But what if it fails, you'll want to run more tests. This isn't such a good time to try to celebrate." I was seeing what looked to be a tiring visit with lots of commotion.

"Helena," Dimitris took my hand again. "We have anniversary of first year. Is to be happy celebration. I am sorry if Dimi take away happiness for you. We do not think on Sahj or papers or project. We will be happy for the occasion."

"I wish you wouldn't go to Athens, at least until after the party."

"Then this man would have his mind in project, not in celebration, so I go and come back. It will be fine." He tried to reassure me. I had to try to be optimistic.

Rena had the house, and back yard all decked out with fancy party lights and intimate tables scattered around. When we arrived, Stefano was alone on the patio, trying to set up a speaker system.

"Stefano! Where is big brother?" Dimitris announced our arrival.

“Out back! You’re early, Dimi, hello Helena.”

“Hi, you look like you both have been busy!” I said.

“I’m a little behind schedule, and Rena will bite my head when she sees that I haven’t finished my chores,” Stefano admitted.

“Anything I can help with?” I asked.

“You can ask Reenie when she gets back, she only went to the market,” he said.

“What you do, Stefano?” Dimitris asked.

“For some reason, this little stereo unit won’t work right. It turns on, but has such a loud hum it’s annoying,” he said in frustration.

“How long have you been at it?” I asked.

“Seems like all day.”

“Did you try grounding it?” I asked.

“What?” He asked.

“This old cord, it isn’t grounded. Maybe you should put it up where you’re going to set-up for the party, get it off the cement, and run a grounding wire from it. It may cure the problem, if that’s where the problem is,” I suggested. Dimi just looked at me. I thought I’d go inside, let the men figure it out. I wasn’t sure if Stefano wanted my help and, I didn’t want to tell him what to do, the male thing.

I took my bag to the room we always use, and sat on the bed, just to let go of the tension that we just left. I don’t even remember what I packed, Dimi had me going in circles there for a while. Being our first anniversary, I was hoping that everything would go smoothly for Dimitris. He’s been battling this project for some time, and the stress of it was taking its toll.

“My Heart, time for this man to catch flight to Athens. I will call.” He gave me a warm, loving kiss on the lips, kissed my fingers, and was gone.

I went to the kitchen to get some water and could see how busy Rena must have been. She had so many dishes of food already prepared. She loves to entertain, and she’s good at it. Then the thought of Camilla entered my thoughts. I hoped she wouldn’t show up on top of everything else.

“Stefano, I’ve got groceries!” Rena sang as she came in the door.

"Hi Rena, how have you been?" I said.

"Helena! When did you get here? Is Dimi here too?" She asked.

"He had to go to Athens. He'll be back in time for the party."

"How have you been, kiddo? Can you believe that it's been a year already? I talked to the Orthodox priest, and he'll be here tomorrow around 7 pm. So the guests should be arriving around that time too. Did you bring something to wear?" Rena's energy was in high gear.

"I think I did, but I'll have to look."

"What's wrong?" She asked.

"Nothing now, things seem to be alright."

"Seem to be?" She asked.

"If Dimi gets his project finished, it'll be wonderful," I said.

"He'll be letting his kefi go everywhere if he completes the project. He's been working on it for over a year, I think." Rena commented.

"Did he tell you about it?" I asked.

"No, he didn't tell me anything, but you can always tell when he's got a project. He thinks on it for a long time before he gets to the testing."

"I hope that he nails it, he's been out in the ozone for a week," I said. "Have you heard from Morgan?"

"I haven't talked to her in a week or so, but Stefano talks to Andreas. I guess she's been busy with that Prince's Palace job," she said. "Stefano! Stefano? Where is that man?"

"Right here, Reenie," he said, coming into the kitchen.

"Honey, I've got all those groceries in the car, would you bring them in, please?"

"Is there anything I can help you with? I know we're early, but the way things were going, it's a wonder I'm here at all. We've finally made some progress on the information that we got from Sahj. I'm hoping we can find our way out of this mess," I confided.

"That is so sad about Mr. Sahj. Such a dignified, sweet man. When he was here, I talked to him for quite a while. So sad," Rena said. "Now, sit down and relax. It's all taken care of, so all you have to worry about is being calm and keeping your head."

“Is Camilla coming? I definitely don’t want to see her,” I moaned.

“My Sainted Chinese Grandmother, I hope she doesn’t come, but you know that whenever something is going on, she usually shows up,” she said.

I heard my phone ringing in the bedroom and excused myself to answer it.

“Kalispera, my Heart.”

“Hi Sweetheart, are you finished yet?” I asked although I knew that he probably just got to the lab.

“Ahhh, this man will never finish, just will not work.”

“Maybe it would help if you read it out loud to someone, maybe the problem will hit you. Sometimes just verbalizing something helps,” I suggested.

“No one to say it to, cannot allow it out.”

“Honey, come back to Karpathos. You can read it to me, or I can read it to you. Maybe that’s all you need,” I said. I could hear him thinking on the other end of the line. “I’m not going to tell anyone, I promise.”

“I must go back to lab and try again. I will call later,” he sounded so depressed. I just wanted to bundle him up and take him home.

“Relax, Dimi. It will come to you.”

It was very hard to see a happy celebration ahead of us. Not only was Dimitris trying to get through this slump with his project, then the Sahj dilemma, and the fact that things could be better between the two of us, it was looking like it would have been better to postpone the celebration.

“Rena, would you mind if I borrowed your Fiat?” I asked.

“Sure, the key is hanging on the inside of the broom closet. It’s got an ‘R’ on the key ring.”

“Thanks, I’ll be back soon.”

I just had to get out, go for a drive. Get some fresh air and think. I drove out to the beach where the bluff overlooks the bungalows on the West facing shore. It was so quiet. The clear blue water was turning to purple with the dusky sky. If I could only find a way to bring my husband back to me, I think my somber mood would be better. It would be nice to have happy memories to look back on for our first anniversary.

The puzzle of the box that Sahj sent stayed with me. The letter, the library, *Dante*, it was all so vague, and seemingly disconnected. I tried to see where it would all end. If we were going to go forward with our quest, we would have to see who would be the one to trust. When we had Sahj, we knew we could turn to him for advice, for help. Now, it's like we're strictly on our own. Maybe our next priority would be finding that person who's above reproach.

Even though Dimitris didn't get to the celebration until four in the afternoon, most guests didn't arrive until early evening. It reminded me of Andreas's Name Day, where people come and go the whole evening long. There was lots of food, and the men did the line dance on the patio. It wasn't until after the blessing from the Orthodox priest that things finally came to a slow end around ten pm. Early for Greek parties. We counted our blessings that Camilla did not show up, a miracle in itself, for which we were grateful. We called it an early night to prepare for the early ferry to Rhodes.

"Thank you so much, Rena, for the party, the food, and everything. I know how much work it was for you," I said as we were bidding our farewells.

"You're welcome. I loved doing it. Next time you come over, maybe we can plan something, maybe a girl's weekend. We haven't made it to Italy yet, and the tourist season is starting soon."

"Yes, we'll have to see what we can do about that, and thank you, Stefano."

Dimitris said his farewells, and we were off to the ferry.

We took our favorite booth in the on-board bar. The hot chocolate that this barkeeper made was the best I ever had. It was tall, creamy with a touch of liqueur and whipped cream on top. It was a surprise to me that he took so much care in making hot chocolate. If I had known about it before, it would have been my regular order.

"Helena, we did not have time to talk at Rena's."

"I know. It got a little hectic, but I'm all yours now. What do you want to talk about?" He had his arm around my shoulder and traced his finger along my forearm to my wrist.

"When all this over with Sahj and little picture, I think Dimi want to take

his bride somewhere special.” He looked at me with those dark eyes.

“Sweetie, I love the idea. We’ll have to make a plan.” I tried to read his face, was it his project? Or something else, I couldn’t tell, he seemed so somber. “Is there something on your mind?”

“This project, make this man see that I go to Athens more than think, leave wife so Dimi make tests, is not what my Helena see for marriage with this man.”

“Sweetie, I’m fine with anything you want to do. If you love your work, we’ll manage the travel,” I said.

“Should not have to ‘manage.’ Life no need to be complicated. Too much travel to Athens, and worry on my bride to be alone. Dimi make promise to have done project by end of coming week. If not done by then, it will be end of it anyway.” His face was so serious, and I knew that he loved the work he was doing, it was all of the complications of time-consuming travel and the expense of it.

“Sugar, may I say something? I want you to understand that I don’t like the separations when you have to go to work, but if you love your work and have to be in Athens to complete it, maybe we can move to Athens and not have to travel so far. The worst part is being away from you. As long as you come home to *me*, I’ll be happy if you are happy,” I said. He put his arm around me and kissed my temple.

“As long as Dimi have this wife, he is happy. There are many jobs for this man, so no have to go to ferry so much. Maybe better to be home with my Heart.” He rested his lips against my temple. “This man will have job to keep wife safe, raise the chickens, and make love to my Helena. If money is problem, Andreas always have work for Dimi.”

When we got home, it was like entering Paradise. The sun was shining through the trees, and a gentle breeze made the leaves dance. The dogs were excited as usual, and the house was a welcomed sight. Dimitris brought in all the boxes and bags that we had been carrying. Stefano loaded us down with more printouts and historical data than we’ll probably ever need, but they may prove to be an asset.

Over the next couple of days, Dimi was more amiable and had a lighter attitude, but I could tell that the project wasn't going to die away peacefully. He purposely tried to be more attentive, but this wasn't my true Dimitris. I missed him, and in my heart, I knew that he had to go to Athens, but he wouldn't even admit it to himself.

After struggling with the notes and faces on the dining room wall, I went out to the garden, bringing Dimitris a cold bottle of water.

"Thank you, is hot work today!" He wiped the sweat from his brow and drank the water.

"Dimi, I want to make you a proposition." His eyes got bigger, and he stopped drinking.

"What do you say?"

"I want you to go back to your work. You can spend however long it takes in Athens and finish up the project," I suggested. "Then we'll go to Cyprus, have a nice relaxing week, and go to the bank there. Once we have everything, we can finish up this investigation."

"You cannot be here alone."

"Dimi, I can't get to the bottom of this if I've got constant interruptions. I'll be fine here. I've got the dogs and a gun, so if anyone comes around, well, they'll be warned!"

"Helena, do not take out gun, you leave alone. Dimi will not leave," he insisted.

"Look." I was getting tired of this husband and wanted my old husband back. "I want you to go back to Athens and get the project done! Don't come back until it's finished!" I turned and walked back into the house. I wasn't really angry, but I hoped that I got my point across that I can be alone temporarily.

I went into the bedroom and laid out some fresh clothes for him. I started to pack a bag so that all he'd have to do is shower and go. I didn't want him thinking that I was just blowing off steam. If he can finish with the project, we can concentrate on the bank in Cypress. After ten minutes he came in calling me.

"Where is my Angel?" He called.

"I'm in the bedroom."

When he entered the room, he was wiping his hands. He stood there for a moment, apparently surprised.

“What is this?”

“I laid out some clean clothes for after your shower,” I said. I continued folding shirts and putting socks in the bag.

“Why you packing bag?” He sounded hurt and sullen. I turned to him and put my arms around him.

“Dimi, you know what you have to do. I love you, and I want to make love to my *other* husband.” I kissed him. “So, go take your shower and get ready to go.”

“I say I don’t leave you alone. You call Morgan for company.”

“I say go take your shower. It’s getting late.”

After a bit of a struggle of wills, I believe that he figured I was too stubborn to fight over this. He knew he had to finish the project. It wasn’t as though he had a choice. His mind won’t let him rest until he finds the answer. He knew this. Now he knows that I do too. He couldn’t fool me, so he relented.

I drove him to the airport. He still plead his case while on the way, but he knew I was right about this, and if he can spend the time, uninterrupted, the solution will come to him. I made him a promise that I would use good judgment in whatever I do, and keep an eye out for anything unusual. I left him with hugs and a sensual kiss of promise.

Cyprus



“Hi, Helen, what the hell have you been up to these days? We haven’t talked in ages.”

“Hi, not too much. Just had the anniversary at Rena’s. Wish you could have been there, it was weird not having you there,” I said.

“I wanted to go, but Andreas is still in Patras. He’s trying to get permits, and they keep changing things on him. I’m kinda stuck in this Prince’s Palace job, so it’s hard to get away. How was the celebration?”

“It was pretty quiet as far as celebrations go. People came and went, and we had the blessing, Camilla didn’t come to stir things up plus you two weren’t there, so it ended fairly early, around ten pm.” I said.

“Wow! You’ll have to give Andreas hell when you see him, even though it wasn’t his fault, I like to give it to him sometimes to keep him on his toes.”

“Morgan, you’re getting to be like Rena! The sweetest guys get hell for being so sweet, I swear!” I laughed.

“Welllll, I can’t ever get mad at him, so he lets me have my fun,” she joked.

We had a good talk, and it was good to catch up. I didn’t mention anything about the investigation or that Dimi was gone. She had so much on her mind with her work that I didn’t want to add to it.

Getting down to business, I sat where I could see the wall of suspects. Armed with the stack of profiles, I could link a couple of the faces in the pile to our people on the board, namely Nasir. His name came up quite frequently in the profile interviews. So far, there have been five names that link directly to Nasir Hakim. On the surface, it appears to be petty thefts and complaints that were lodged against them, at a local level, but at this point, we weren't sure who Nasir Hakim is, besides knowing questionable people. Who is Nasir Hakim?

We first came across him when he and Yiannis Papaligouras followed us from the pharmacy to the Paradiso and then threatened us. These two were also two of the men who mugged us and kidnapped Morgan. Now that we can put a name to both of these men, maybe there's a chance of an arrest. Of course, it seems a little late, and there still wasn't anything besides our accusations. The way the judicial system has handled these men in the past, doesn't lend any encouragement in turning over more evidence, at least to local authorities. Now that we don't have Sahj, we'll have to find someone we can trust, possibly in Interpol.

The flash drive was ready to be tested, and with crossed fingers, I inserted it into the port. The computer recognized it but would not open it. I was praying that it didn't require a password. One last attempt, using the recovery program that I installed, and *voilà*, the list of files opened. I got a sinking feeling when I saw that the names on the files were foreign. Instead of proceeding, I closed the index and removed the drive. I didn't want to take a chance of ruining the drive further.

I reached for one of the CD's that came from Sahj's apartment. It had several text documents on it. It was easy to see what kind of documents most of them were, but they also were in a foreign language, possibly Egyptian.

It seemed that I was not getting anywhere with what I've seen so far. The next CD had personal records, copies of receipts, and correspondence with a surgeon referencing the surgery on his spine. I put these discs away with other documents of Sahj's. I thought Dimi might want to look at them and see what I've missed.

Since I had some time to explore, I searched the internet for maps of Cyprus.

I knew that we would go there, so finding the Piraeus Bank would be next on the list.

It was 6:30 pm when Dimitris called.

"I am missing my Heart. This man should be home."

"I miss you too, Sweetheart. Have you made any progress?" I asked.

"It do not want to cooperate, Helena. Maybe Dimi come home and think some more on it."

"You have to be where you can do the testing, that's the whole point of going to Athens."

"You are being mean to this man. Thinking easier at home."

"How about you come home, and I'll go do the testing in Athens?" I said in jest.

"Oph! Helena, you play with your Dimi."

He sounded so sad, and it almost made me tell him to come home, but I had to hold my ground since he's only been there a couple of hours.

"Can you tell me about it? Just tell me what you're expecting from the tests."

"Is too hard to explain." He sounded so down and dejected.

"You're probably tired from the trip, and you haven't eaten, have you?" I asked

"No."

"Maybe you should try something different."

"What you mean, Helena?"

"Well, maybe you need to go to some quiet restaurant, get a nice dinner with wine, then take out your pad and start writing."

"Already write all ideas, but no help."

"No, I mean write anything. Write a diary entry or write me a letter. Put down how we met and how you felt. Recall all those memories and emotions," I suggested.

"How will this help?"

"You'll free your mind, and be open to something that might come to you. You've tried pacing, concentrating, and everything else. Why not try this?" I said.

"Helena, what to do with you? If this man have you here, you would do

tests with Dimi.”

“Ahh, but I might not keep my hands off of you, and you wouldn’t be able to work,” I said.

“Yes, you must keep hands off this man, my Heart.”

“Dimi, will you try this, it might work? It works for me when I’m stuck. And please eat something.”

“I will do,” he sighed heavily. “S’agapo, my bride.”

“S’agapo, Dimi.”

This house seemed so big and empty. I brought one of the dogs in, then settled with a small wine cooler and turned on the television. I grabbed my journal and relaxed.

I thumbed through the pages, which I had started during my “Greek Vacation.” So much happened from the time we got here, that we never expected on vacation. As I read, I laughed at my thoughts during our early days here. Most of my entries were about Dimitris. How his cologne drove me crazy and how his eyes made me feel. I felt like I was falling in love all over again.

It was a long lonely night. I woke up a couple of times thinking I heard Dimitris come in, but it was just wishful thinking.

“Kalimera, my wife, your Dimi is missing his bride.”

“Kalimera, Dimi. I miss you too. Sweetheart, any luck with the tests?”

“This man tries until giving up. Anger, too hard to work with, so Dimi will give up, then as you say, Dimi writes in notebook and write of such sweet memories of my Helena.”

“I guess it’s not helping, huh?” I asked.

“Dimi too tired to think on it. Make this man miss Helena. So many memories.”

“Well, be sure you eat and get plenty of rest. It will come to you.”

We talked for twenty minutes. Then he was ready to go back and try again. I had the whole day to fill, and try not to think of Dimi being away. It was

a beautiful day, too lovely to waste staying in the house and laboring over the dining room wall. Dogs and chickens fed, I took the little car to Faliraki. Just the relaxing drive, wind in my hair, and no commitments to hinder me, I drove until a second-hand store caught my eye.

I wandered around for an hour, just looking at the collections of oddities and used items — all to stir the imagination for decorating possibilities. I lingered in the clothing section, for the variety and quality of items was fascinating. I found some great '40's and '50's dresses and hats. I loved the stylish wide-brimmed hat that had the scarf attached. I was having fun, and since I had no one at home waiting for me to arrive, I stopped in at the real estate agent on the corner.

I talked to a very helpful lady who was very familiar with the area of the old pink house. I happened to mention an interest in the grounds. Posing as a buyer, I requested more information on the property and made an appointment to have a viewing of the house and grounds in two days. I came home with a new interest in our quest and hopeful for answers.

I know that I have to tell Dimitris about this, but I'm hoping that he won't be that upset, and go along with my ruse. Bringing up the subject of what I'm doing made me nervous. I know he won't be happy about it, but it also would be easier if he were home. In light of possibly angering my husband, I'll have to ask for his blessing on this later.

The late afternoons on this little hill of ours are so glorious, with the breeze that shook the limbs and the sunlight filtering through the trees made it a perfect day to be outside. I enjoy the clean air and quietness, being far enough from city traffic and noise. It made me think of taking out my paints and starting my art "en plein air." I was accomplishing nothing when the mountain of mystery was staring me in the face. My beautiful afternoon spoiled when I knew that I had to go back inside and wade through all that stuff.

It was like a reprieve from my prison of mystery when Dimitris called.

"Helena! You were right, this man writes of beautiful memories and idea hit like truck! Run the test, and this will be right solution to problem. First test was not failure, but not quite good enough results, so with little fix will run again."

“That’s wonderful, Sweetie!”

“Yes, and then Dimi is home with his beautiful bride,” he said enthusiastically.

“You’ll be home tonight?”

“If all go well, Dimi will be home tonight.”

“I missed you. It’s not the same around here when you’re gone. Will you call me before you leave?”

“Is something wrong, my Heart?”

“Why do you ask that?”

“I am thinking you want to tell Dimi something.”

“It can wait until you’re finished testing. I don’t want anything to distract you. It’s not an emergency or anything that can’t wait.” I said.

“Ah, Helena, you will make this man worry,” he said.

“Don’t worry, I do have something I’d like to tell you, but I don’t want you to get distracted from your work, so it can wait.”

“My bride will stay out of trouble? Keep dogs with you?”

“I don’t think you trust me, Sweetie, I’m not getting into trouble,” I kidded.

“Well, Dimi will be home soon. One more test, write report, and Dimi is home.”

I was relieved to know that it wouldn’t be that much longer. He sounded so much more enthusiastic and in a much less intense mood.

“Sugar, I’ve been going over the pictures and the information we have, and I’ve been able to identify the other thug that mugged Morgan and me. When you get home, we’ll have to get together with Andreas and Morgan.”

“Yes, my Heart, we do that, but wait for your Dimi to get home.”

“I will, S’agapo, Dimi.”

“S’agapo, Helena.”

I went back to the pictures that we took that day on the ferry. We had made some notes on the backs of some of the more promising ones. I took them out to see if we have since found faces that would identify these passengers. On top of the pile was a picture of Sahj in the Bar lounge. He was holding a

newspaper while talking on his cell phone. Behind him was a man leaning against the wall in an obvious (to me) stance, and was intent on eavesdropping on Sahj. I remember him because of the awkward way he was standing. He also was looking one way then the other as though watching for someone and looking at Sahj as well. It was just strange behavior. This man was caught in two pictures. Another odd man was in four other photos in the vicinity of Sahj. The face seemed familiar like I had seen him somewhere before if I could only remember where besides on the ferry.

As darkness was beginning to settle in, the chickens put themselves to bed, I only had to be sure none of them were injured, or we had any unwanted “guests” in the coop. I closed the coop gate and brought the dogs inside to feed. They are always appreciative of being able to eat their dinner inside. I had my small dinner, and as I was cleaning up, the telephone rang.

“Your Dimi will be home soon. Test was success. I will arrive at Diagoras airport by 8:25 pm.”

“Great, I’ll be there to pick you up. Will you be able to tell me about the project? I’ve been curious.”

“Ah, Helena, the curious one. We will talk.”

As the time approached to leave for the airport, I seemed to be getting nervous, excited to be with Dimitris. I felt anxious and happy. It seemed like a long time since Dimitris, and I had been together. He had only been gone to Athens for four days, but he wasn’t *here*. Even when he *was* here, he wasn’t entirely. I would be glad to have my real husband back.

I arrived at the small terminal and checked for the expected time of arrival. His flight would arrive within minutes. Anxiety was building at the thought of him. As the plane taxied to a stop, my heart was beating as if I hadn’t seen him in months.

His smile was a sign of the success of the testing.

“This man so glad to see his wife,” he said as we embraced and kissed.

“I’m so glad you’re home.”

“We go.” We walked to the car, his arm around my shoulder. “You bring my good boy!” He said, moving the dog over to put his bag in the back seat.

“I wasn’t thinking about your luggage, or I wouldn’t have brought the dog.”

“Is good you keep dog with you,” he said and gave me a peck on the cheek.

We zipped around the Demosia Rodou, a short-cut home. The house was a welcomed sight as a contented sigh escaped his lips. We pulled in beyond the gate, and we were officially home. As I unlocked the back door, Dimitris was swarmed by both dogs as he attempted to close the gate.

“Have you had any dinner, Sweetie?”

“Yes, but vending machine food is not food.” He took some cheese from the refrigerator bin. “Just need something lite.” He then sat at the breakfast bar and picked at the cheese and olives laid before him.

“Oh, Honey, you’re so tired, was it hard to get your positive result on the tests?”

“I tell you of this later. Now this man want to hold my Helena.” He reached out for me. We stood in the kitchen in an embrace. He rested his forehead against mine. We rocked in a circular motion, “This man would still be there if you no tell me to write.”

“I’m glad it helped, now, why don’t you wash up and we can have our wine in the living room?”

“No wine for Dimi, I will go shower.”

I finished the kitchen chores and made sure the dogs and chickens were fed and locked in. It was so good to have Dimi back home.

I stepped into the shower after Dimitris finished. I expected him to be asleep when I finished.

“There is my bride, come to bed.”

“I thought you’d be asleep.”

He removed the towel from my hair and put his arm around me.

“Hair is dry, except at neck,” he said, feeling the nape of my neck.

“It’s too late to wash it. There’s always tomorrow.” I cuddled up and waited for the story of the brainstorm that solved the project problem. I heard him sigh with a deep, slow hum of contentment.

“This man would be still on the tests if my Helena do not say to write. I write, and think, then write and write, thinking of the Valley of Butterflies, and little car, good memories. Nothing come. I think eating of some dinner

and it was like truck hit this man! I go back to test with slight adjustment, and have the success.” He kissed my forehead. “We will take week to go somewhere, someplace new, different, to rest and make crazy love for whole week. My wife has been neglected for too long. Where to go, Helena?”

“I’d like to go to Cyprus. We can get the bank out of our hair and have a nice rest too.” He looked at me.

“We should not put off any longer, but Cyprus has the hotter weather, we make a quick trip of it.”

“When should we go?”

“We go tomorrow. This man will want to be alone with my Helena. Missed being home, and sleep with wife.”

“I’m so glad you’re finished with the project. You *are* finished, aren’t you?”

“Report finished, it is submitted. Take week or two for University to review, but my part finished.”

“What happens next with it?” I asked.

“Then, patent to file, maybe submit to more testing in trials, we will see.”

I looked into his eyes and could see how drawn and tired he was, so I didn’t want to force myself on him. I kissed him lovingly but not so much to be sending any urgent message. He knew I understood.

“I guess we’ve got a long day ahead of us tomorrow,” I said with a yawn.

“So good to be home, my wife, S’agapo.” He kissed me goodnight, I cuddled up to him, and we fell asleep.

A noise in the night jarred me awake. I could feel a comforting arm lying across my waist and warm breath on my shoulder. It was such a relief to have him home.

I was gently awakened in the morning, hearing Greek whispers in my ear and an arm pulling me closer.

“S’agapo,” he whispered and turned me toward him. It had been so long since we made love, and as I looked into his eyes, my heart skipped a beat. I had so much love for him that I had held back, but not now, not this time. His breath on my neck as he kissed me, the scent of him enveloped me. It was excruciatingly satisfying. It left me breathless.

“We must pack.” He told me, but I wasn’t ready to release him from our bed.

“No, not yet. Why so early?”

“We must catch 8 am flight.” He tore himself from my arms as I wasn’t ready to begin the routine. I just wanted to stay where we were and forget everything else. “If we do not take this flight, no other will take us.”

“I guess we’d better get going then.”

We threw some clothes hastily into a bag, fed the critters, and hurried on our way. Dimi put in a call to old Petros to watch things for us, which he was glad to do.

Running late, we picked up our tickets just in time to make this flight. This was the smallest plane that Aegean had. I can’t remember ever being on one this small. It’s only three hundred miles, and a direct flight wouldn’t take long, but first, we had to stop in Athens then on to Cyprus. It’s not a flight that’s in demand, so we were lucky to be able to fly there at all.

For three hours, I had the pleasure of romantic utterances of Greek words, my fingers being gently manipulated and kissed. I’d see that spark in his eyes and that slight smile. I knew he was teasing me.

When we finally were in approach to Larnaca Airport, the land below was so brown and barren. Not at all like Rhodes. I’m sure that there are places in Cyprus that are green, but on first impressions, I was very disappointed. We still had to drive into Nicosia to our hotel. The bank was located right in the middle of all the tall buildings that comprise the business district. We grabbed a taxi, went to our hotel, and were glad to get out of the heat and sun.

“This doesn’t look like a very nice hotel, Dimi. It’s a little tacky.”

“Yes, but we will look at room. Maybe not so bad.” He picked up our bag, and we found our room on the second floor. It was down a dark corridor about midway from the elevator. When we opened the door, the room was dark. We had to turn on a light to find the bed! I pulled the curtain to see the room. It didn’t impress me as a place I would recommend, but it seemed clean on first look, and with the heat outside, the dark curtains and air conditioning made it comfortable.

“What you think, Helena?” He asked with a disappointed look.

“Well, maybe tonight, but I think we should do the business and go somewhere else. I want to get the bank business done, and then we can decide what to do.” I took off my shoes and took a closer look at the bed. It seemed clean, but the style of everything was dated. I opened the bed and looked it over carefully, pulling the sheets up to look at the mattress. I didn’t see anything of note, so we were okay for one night.

Dimitris came to me, gently holding my face and kissed me. He looked deep into my eyes and said, “I am sorry to bring you to this place. This man should find out where to stay first.” Then he kissed me deeply, sending his static energy through me. I was on fire. He had been preparing me for this since we got on the plane. I wanted him so much that I helped him to disrobe quickly. We made love in this place, this hot, sweltering place that was so distasteful before. Now, I didn’t care. It was the farthest thing from my mind. I wanted him to bring me to the heights that I knew he could. We exploded in ecstasy that came too soon, but was magnificently fulfilling. It was the bonding that we needed after all the stress.

The afternoon was slipping by us. We had to decide if we should leave this room, venture out into the sweltering heat, and do what we thought we were here to do. I lay facing my love, his eyes smiling at me as he kissed my fingers.

“Honey, let’s get out of here, I’m starting to itch. Let’s go to the bank and see what we find.”

“Okay, we do.” He popped another couple of kisses on my hand, and we prepared to leave.

“Helena, do we want to leave baggage?”

“Probably better that way. We’ll get whatever is at the bank and come back for the bag. Maybe there’s a better hotel near the airport.”

We obtained the contents of the safe deposit box and then kept our eyes open for a hotel. Everything seemed to be booked. We took everything to our seedy hotel and laid it out on the bed.

It didn’t look like much. I’m still wondering why Sahj would lay this responsibility on us. I was hoping that this would be the culmination of

our efforts. Looking it over, there were some pictures. I assume they were family, very old with no indication of names or dates. There was a bundle of Euros and Egyptian Pounds in an envelope. Three passports, one for Ahmed Sahj, Jarha Salatis, and Fez Rajad. There was a driver's license from Greece, issued in Athens under the name of Sahj and also an Interpol identification card.

Also in the envelope with the money was a drawing. Probably a child drew it, another poorly drawn cat in crayons, a key card, and a small bundle of letters.

Everything looked moderately upfront with no surprises, but we hadn't gone over the letters, and we still have to find out where the key card belongs.

I packed it all up and got ready to leave.

"We want to go somewhere to eat dinner, don't we? There was a cute place out closer to the airport. What do you think?"

"You no like Cyprus?" He asked out of the blue.

"Why do you ask that?"

"You want to leave and have no excitement to want to explore."

"Oh, you mean the island. I thought you meant the hotel. I have to be honest and say that it is somewhat of a disappointment."

"Cyprus have many troubles in past. Wars come, people not happy. They catch up with restore of the buildings one day."

"It's a lot more arid than I expected, I thought it would be more like Rhodes, I guess."

"Many islands in these waters have no freshwater, have to get imported."

"Who can live where there's no drinking water?"

"Maybe Cyprus not place to celebrate, we go somewhere else to celebrate." I had forgotten about the celebrating of the end of the project. I had been so wrapped up in this bank business. I forgot that this was Dimitris's special time. I sat on the bed next to my husband,

"Tell me about the project, Sweetie, you haven't told me about it yet."

"To put in easy language, a different way to alter one's DNA to return to donor for specific purpose."

"They've done a lot of that in recent years."

“Yes, but this different, save of much time. Benefit in time saved, will not take weeks.”

“It must be a radical departure from what was done before.”

“Yes, and should have high rate of cure for specific diseases. I say no more.” I put my arms around him and told him how proud I am of him.

“Where should we go to celebrate, Sweetie? What do you feel like?”

“We go home, lots of things to do, Sahj’s bank things need to sort.” He now seemed less than enthusiastic about celebrating.

“We can go if we’ve got everything, but we should call the airline,” I said. He took out his phone and called. He wasn’t the happy, jovial man I expected to return to me. He was still bothered by something. Whether it is this impromptu trip to Cyprus or his project that was plaguing him, he didn’t say.

The flight home was a direct flight and only took an hour. We got back to the wall of mystery in our dining room and laid out Sahj’s belongings. Dimitris was fairly quiet since we left Cyprus, the small plane being quite loud, making it difficult to talk. I think all it did was make us more tired from the droning. I thought about how my husband was so introspective, which isn’t what I expected on the completion of his work. I wanted to keep an eye on him to see if I could determine what was on his mind without having to drill him on it.

When the phone rang, he answered it. I couldn’t tell who he was talking to or to what he was referring. He spoke in low even tones and then hung up. If I didn’t know better, I’d think he was sleepwalking.

“I must go to old Petro’s and bring him eggs. I return in little time,” he said, giving me a peck on the temple, and he was gone. I began sorting through the items acquired through Sahj, the bank, and the apartment. There was still the memory card that was found in the apartment to look at, plus we still had to listen to the discs. My eyelids were getting heavy. After putting the passports in a pile, the letters, and anything else that looked important, in another pile, I was reluctant to toss any of the other scraps of paper we had. It had been forty-five minutes, and Dimitris still wasn’t home. I laid on the bed to rest until he got here.

It was eleven pm when I got up, and still, Dimitris was not home. It was

obvious that he wasn't going to call, or he would have already. I was beginning to worry about him. He had been under so much stress with the project, and perhaps the outcome wasn't all he expected? The celebration or lack thereof wouldn't bother him unless it were me, did I do something to anger or disappoint him? Or is he ill and doesn't want to let on about it? The week or more before I sent him off to finish the project, he had been quiet and introspective, his mind off in concentration. It was as though something was missing, our lives seem to be changing, and it didn't feel like it was for the better.

I sat at the computer and stared at the screen, expecting it to shine a light that would solve all our problems miraculously, but I knew that would never happen. I keyed in the search "death records, Greece, 2000 to 2014." Just as a fluke, I thought maybe something would come up. I was lucky in my hazy inquiry. Luckily I was able to search alphabetically. I was able to eliminate three names tentatively. I'd still need to verify that these are the same names that are amongst our inquiries, but it was encouraging. One obituary was posted under the police section of death notices. The picture of the man was that of Greven Biehjorn, the man mentioned in the old Archeology magazine that Andreas found. He was pictured with Alain Deischant.

So, I eliminated one definite suspect. Biehjorn was suspected in the shifting of private collections, at least there was no indication that he was involved in our little picture scenario. I took down his name and his connection of blue yarn to Deischant.

I heard the gate open at the end of the driveway. The lights from the Bug swung around and flashed against the bay window. I was a little nervous and worried about Dimitris. I didn't want to be angry at him for going off without calling, but it's so unlike him to disappear like this.

"Sweetheart, is everything okay? Where have you been? Dimi?" He walked up to me and put his arm around me, kissed my cheek and said,

"All is fine, not to worry, Helena." He grabbed a banana and went to our room to prepare for a shower.

I still had the computer on and the paperwork laid out all over the table. I felt a little hurt that he didn't feel the need to talk to me, or even make any

excuses for coming in late. I was confused about what was going on. I turned off the computer, the lights, and went into the bedroom. When Dimi got out of the shower, I was in bed. I thought he would say something. He got into bed, kissed me on the cheek, and said good night.

I didn't know what to say, or if I should even try. I was hurt, afraid of what this all means, and I was getting angry. The only thing that I could rationalize in my mind is that he is still thinking about the project.

The Pink House



Sleep did not come easily for either one of us. I felt as though my heart was going to explode. The anxiety of not knowing what the problem is or how serious it might be was eating on me. I wanted to get the confrontation over. Not knowing if I did something wrong or if we have a severe fault in our marriage was making me a nervous wreck. Dimitris would toss and turn. I could hear him sigh and then turn over again.

I couldn't take this. I was so afraid of what was happening to our marriage. I turned toward him and curled in as close as I could. I forced my arm under his and held my hand to his chest. He pressed his hand on mine and tapped it twice. My heart just suddenly broke. I kept as silent as I could, but the tears came, and the involuntary movements of trying to subdue the crying spasms gave me away.

He turned toward me, putting his arm around me and kissing my forehead. "Shh, shh. Is okay. Is okay. Don't cry."

I held on to Dimi and let my heart pour out all the anxiety and hurt that has built up. I wasn't going to question him. I had to let things work themselves out as they will.

I woke up early, still having that feeling of dread. Not knowing has given me a very insecure, helpless feeling. Not being unable to help in a solution, if one exists, is making me depressed.

I quietly got out of bed. Dimitris hadn't slept much in a week. I tried not to wake him as I picked up the towels in the bath. I started the laundry, made the coffee, and went to the items of Sahj' that were on the table. I counted the Euros and Pounds that were in the envelope. 4,800.00 in Egyptian Pounds, and 8,475.00 in Euros. The envelope had the letters and the drawing enclosed. I decided to start reading the letters. I wanted to wait for Dimitris before I did this, but it seemed that he was never available.

The first letter was a statement from his bank. Nothing that will help us, so it was set aside.

The next letter seemed to be referring to the lease on a residence. It was dated late last year, so it might be worth setting aside until we know what other items we have. There was a purchase order for a car and a license registration for it. The next letter looked like official business. The envelope was brown paper with security threads all through it. When I pulled the paper out of the envelope, it had a seal on the letterhead. It was an official government letter. It was in Greek. I wouldn't be able to get it translated until Dimi can see it. Another envelope revealed a legal paper with a seal impressed on it. It also was in Greek. The envelopes were mostly posted in Greece, and two or three of them had a mailing address.

"You hang laundry outside? Is dryer broken?" Dimi asked as he came out and stood behind me.

"Hi, Sweetheart, no, it's such a beautiful day..." He took the clothespins from my hand and dropped them into the basket. He took my hands to turn me toward him and enveloped me in his arms. He held me tightly.

"Helena, you marry poor excuse for husband. This man do not expect wife to understand."

I pulled back to look in his eyes. I could see that he was in some pain, some conflict.

"Call was University. They say problem with project. Dimi must speak

with Regents for more funding. They say Dimi may have to travel major Medical Universities, give symposium on project, to find more funding.”

“But you did your part, it’s supposed to be already funded, isn’t it?” I could see the frustration and disappointment in his face. “Why are they laying this on you?”

“Funding run out. To finish, must have more.”

“Well, it’s just a small setback, it shouldn’t take that much more to complete it, should it?”

“Is hard to say, but Dimi must go. Helena, they say many Corporate visits also. Tomorrow evening meeting in Boston, then Montreal. Go to one then another.” He was so depressed and ready to wash his hands of it.

“Let’s go back inside, have you had your coffee?” I asked.

“Yes, we sit and have coffee.” He had his arm around my shoulder as we walked back into the house.

“How much capital are they talking about?”

“Is more than money. They look for long term partner corporation to develop and market.”

“That shouldn’t be your responsibility. Heck, why even have the university involved at all? You might as well cut them out of it completely.”

“Not that easy. Is involved.”

“How long do you think you’ll be gone?”

“Maybe month, maybe more.”

I had to sit down. I couldn’t believe it. After everything he did on this project, they want him to do all the leg work too?

“You must see the project through. You’ve put too much time into it to let it go, so we’ll close up the house and see if Petros will watch over things. We’d better pack.” Dimitris took both of my hands and put them around his waist and looked in my eyes.

“Dimi must go alone, my Heart. They do not allow for spouse to go, too expensive. It would be nothing but meetings then run to other meeting. Very busy schedule, too busy, but you stay with Rena.”

“That’s not necessary.”

“Yes, Helena,” he leaned over to speak to me, eye to eye, planting his will in

my head.

While Dimitris packed his bag and got ready to go, I called Morgan.

“Hey, Morgan, have you got anything going on this week?” I asked.

“Not yet, I’m waiting for a phone call, but nothing is definite. What’s up?”

“Dimi has to go to Athens pretty quick, and he doesn’t want me to be alone here.”

“Well, I might be able to get over there tomorrow. There’s no way I’d get out of here today.”

“Tomorrow is fine. We’ll see what kind of trouble we can get into,” I joked.

“Don’t say that! We don’t have to go looking for it, just stand still for five minutes, and it’ll find us!”

“Well, I think Dimi will let me stay here tonight. I really don’t want to go to Athens then come back here. I spend enough time doing that.”

“We should be able to find trouble around 2 pm tomorrow, but you’ll have to pick me up at the ferry.” She said with a chuckle. “I’ll call you to let you know for sure.”

I couldn’t believe that I was saying farewell to my husband again. With all of the other stresses we have at this time, I wasn’t sure that I could take one more separation.

“You must go to Rena’s, you not pack?”

“Honey, I have to do the work of Sahj. I *have* to finish it. Morgan is coming tomorrow for a week. I can go to Rena’s later.”

“You will give me promise you will,” his eyes were so serious.

“Yes, I promise, and you’ll promise to call me.”

“This man promise with all of heart. Will call every day,” he said, kissed me with a kiss that made things stir within me. It isn’t fair to him; to us.

The house and me, alone, together again. I couldn’t understand the facts as Dimi related them. It bothered me that they would allow a project to continue in the face of no funds to complete it — poor planning or maybe hoping that more money would come in from out of the blue?

I finally got around to hanging the rest of the laundry. When I came back into the house, the phone was ringing.

“Dimi?”

“This man so angry, Helena! This will not be pleasant trip, and from talk with other colleagues, is not as all is presented to Dimi.”

“I’m not sure of what you’re saying, Sweetheart.”

“Is only hearsay, should not speak on it.”

“You tell me, Dimi, what is it?”

“Other colleagues say plenty funds to go around. They say, this they do to have Dimi away from other activities that go on with project. That they have buyers for product by time Dimi to return!”

“You’re saying that while you’re trying to get backers for the project, the university already has corporations that want to buy it?” I wasn’t sure what they were trying to pull on Dimi, or if this was jealous colleagues throwing rotten tomatoes.

“Yes. This, they do, to take away from Dimitris, may even change patent application.”

“They can’t do that! You filled out all the patent forms and copied them before you submitted the project for review?”

“Was filed, not sure of it to go through. Sometimes takes months before we hear on patent.”

“If you’re lucky. Is it possible that whoever told you this, might be a jealous co-worker and just wants to give you a hard time? I mean, the university has a stellar reputation, would they do something this despicable?” I asked.

“Maybe not. I am thinking of my Helena and home,” he sighed. “I must go, Boston flight boarding.” He sounded so defeated. I was angry at this whole situation. I might have to go to Athens and find out what is *really* going on.

As I cleared the dining room table, I moved the pile of documents that still needed translation. We had some in German and also the Greek that Dimitris never got around to translating. Since I would have the time to do some leg work, these might fill my time.

When my cell phone rang, it jolted me out of a daze.

“Hello?”

“Mrs. Patakinis?”

“Who’s calling, please?” I didn’t recognize the voice.

“This is Zola Marcus, at Vanesia Estate Brokers in Falariki, we spoke last week.”

“Oh, I’m so sorry I missed our appointment. Something unexpectedly came up, and I got distracted. I’m so sorry if I disrupted your day.”

“That’s quite alright. I was wondering if you’re still interested in the property that we discussed?”

“I would really like to view the property with my husband, but...”

“I could show it today at 3 pm if you could meet me?” She asked. Without thinking, I jumped at the opportunity.

“I can be at your office in one hour,” I said.

“Wonderful, I’ll see you then.”

The excitement of finally going to see this place was almost overwhelming. I was going to put my plan into action. I headed for the bedroom to dress.

I called a taxi to take me to the real estate office. It was all part of the illusion. I wore a cobalt blue Shantung dress suit with off-black nylons and black heels. My hair was up, and a black wide-brimmed hat was pinned on to it. Big rimmed sunglasses finished me in high style.

When we entered the yard of the property, I had to step around tall weeds and debris. The front door wasn’t in too bad of shape, considering the condition of the rest of the house. While the realtor went on and on, I would say, “yes, uh-huh,” although I didn’t pay much attention. My excuse for taking pictures was to be able to show my husband the size and condition of the place. As we went along, I mentally noted things in the rooms, lifting debris with my foot while making notes in my head...the odd little picture hanging crookedly on the wall, the torn pages of a coloring book, strewn around the whole house. There were still the remnants of clothes heaped in piles on the floor while torn curtains blew in through broken windows. Part of the house was unsafe to enter and would be dangerous to try. The kitchen had trash and broken chairs, and the sink was black with soot and dirt. Some of the cupboards had the doors torn off, but I managed to get to the end of the room to open a drawer and cabinet. In the far corner near the kitchen

exit door, there was a cupboard door that was ajar. I opened it to look at the shelves. As I was closing it, I noticed a child's drawing of a cat glued to the inside of the cabinet door. It was very similar to the one in Sahj's box of papers. When the agent noticed I was looking at it, she started telling me about a young child that lived here. This was her drawing. We stumbled out of the house to try to navigate the yard. It was so overgrown with rose bushes and bougainvillea that we didn't get too far. I noticed the curtains of the house next door twitching back and forth erratically. When we made our way back out to the curb, the neighbors across the street were standing in their front yard watching our exit. It made me feel strange, so I was happy that I disguised myself somewhat. I didn't want to take a chance of having any neighborly "reports" of the tour, leading back to us. The only truthful information that the realtor had was my name, which I regret giving her, and my cell phone number.

After we left the house, the realtor told me stories about the house and neighborhood that I hadn't heard before. She told me some background history that made sense in light of the things we have found on our own. She confirmed our theory that this was a house that gangsters would frequent, possibly because, during the war, it was a Brothel. When I asked why it was never rebuilt or even demolished, she said that the neighbors all believe that it is haunted, and if it were to be demolished, the souls that are not at rest there would roam the neighborhood.

I thanked her for her time, took several fliers and brochures then called a taxi. I didn't ask about the people that last lived there, nor did I bring up the child. I was just a tourist investor that wanted to clear the lot and build resort apartments.

The taxi took me to our gate, where he dropped me off. Our two guard dogs were looking more like lap dogs as I opened the gate. Their tails were wagging like I hadn't been home in months.

I was so glad that I went to the pink house. It was as though a wave of calm came over me like I had finally satisfied a craving. I sat at the dining room table and couldn't help but smile. I had to write down my impressions of

the house before something interrupts and distracts me. I poured myself a tall cold wine cooler and pulled out my cell phone. I took a few pictures, although I should have taken more. I didn't find anything so unusual that it would warrant a picture. I didn't want to seem "over the top" to the agent, either, but now I wish I had taken more.

I was expecting Dimitris to call at any time, especially since his schedule seemed to be in flux. He wasn't sure whether he'd be going to Montreal or where he would be next. As I checked the time, his presentation was probably just beginning. I wasn't sure about anything with this new development in his work. I only knew that I missed him.

I looked through the many items that we added to our inventory of "clues." I could see more things that might be related to each other. The two things that stood out in my mind were the name Kalliste, and the word *Danti*. Danti could be the city or even a street name. Being that it's Greece, it could be any one of a hundred different locations. I couldn't help but wonder if "Kalliste" is a relative? Until we are more knowledgeable, we have to wait to see who this might be. With Sahj, this could even be a code word or another alias.

At last, the phone rang, and it was Dimi.

"I thought you'd never call. How is it going, Sweetie?"

"Is not going too well, they do not see benefit of to save time. This man do not want to call too late. Are you well tonight? This man is missing the scent of Helena. The heart aches to think on it."

"Why Mr. Patakinis, I do believe you want to be bad. You be careful over there." I joked.

"Ohh, too tired to be anything but to be good. What did Morgana say? She is coming to stay with you?"

"She'll be here in the afternoon. I'll have to pick her up at the ferry."

"That is good. This man will still worry."

"I know, but everything is okay here. I just wish you'd come home soon."

He was so tired we didn't talk for long. I put the papers and photos in stacks to straighten up the table and headed for the bath. It was a long day in Rhodes, too.

The bath felt so good. I nearly fell asleep in it. It was too early to go to bed, but with a full day ahead tomorrow, I pulled up the comforter and fell asleep. When the phone rang, I answered it quickly out of habit.

“Dimi?”

“It’s Aiden, did I wake you?”

“What time is it?”

“I woke you, I’m sorry. I thought I’d catch you before...., well...”

“What is it, Aiden? Is everything okay?” I asked, looking at the time on my cell phone. It was 11:30 pm.

“No, I’m okay. I just thought maybe we could talk. Andreas told me about what the university is trying to do to Dimitris. That doesn’t sound right.”

“It’s hard on him. He shouldn’t have to do all the promoting. I’m sorry I haven’t called, I wanted to ask how you’re doing.”

“Things are going pretty good. I’m still trying to build up my strength, but I’m feeling good, and I think my hair is coming back.”

“That’s great. I’m glad to hear it. Now, Aiden, I’ve got to go.”

“I know, I’m sorry I woke you.”

I was visiting someone in the hospital. It was a dark and dingy place. I opened the cupboard, and there it was, the drawing of the cat. It gave me a jolt, and I woke up.

The longer I laid there and thought about it, I had felt it wasn’t a coincidence, the drawing in Sahj’s things, and this one.

With coffee in hand, I took out the drawing of the cat that came out of the safe deposit box in Cyprus. This crude crayon-colored drawing, only about six inches by eight, it had a kind of freehand sweep about it, rather abstract but nothing special. I tried to remember the drawing at the pink house, but after looking at this one, I couldn’t remember any details of the other one, only that it was a crayon drawing or perhaps ink. With the short glance I had of it, I now find it hard to recall.

I held this primitive piece up to the light. There was nothing unusual; a couple of areas where the crayon didn’t quite hit the paper and light that showed through, where the paper bugs made holes. I turned it over, and there

was another poem. The pencil on brown paper was difficult to read. At first glance, I thought it was written in German, but it was English.

There was a large number 'IV' circled above it, then it read:

In darkness far
within the maze
of distant hills
a trail to blaze

"Hmm." Strange, I thought. I pinned the picture up on our wall. It might not be anything more than doodling, but the image itself may have more to it than I've seen so far. I kept thinking about the other one, at the pink house. If I had only taken a picture of it. Thinking on it, it dawned on me that we had another sketch somewhere. I shifted papers for an hour and couldn't find another drawing. It was so frustrating.

"Helena. S'agapo," Dimi said.

"How's it going, Honey?"

"Taking flight to Denmark in twenty minutes."

"Denmark? I thought you'd be going to Montreal."

"Yes, well, I talk to Montreal to confirm. They say they do not fund foreign investment."

"Why, because of it being from Greece?"

"I think, maybe yes."

"Denmark and Switzerland may be more open to your proposal, so maybe that's good. You must be exhausted, Sweetie, I hope you're eating and taking care of yourself."

"Not to worry, Helena."

I could only be supportive and encourage him. I wanted to tell him about the pink house, but he was so discouraged that I didn't want to add to his worries. Morgan will be arriving on the 3 pm ferry. I had hopes that she wouldn't be averse to my continued quest of the little picture. She didn't want any more involvement, but I know that I'm getting close to connecting some

of the pieces.

The Red Eyed Cat



Morgan arrived on the 3:00 pm ferry. I was there with the Bug to pick her up. “Hey, Morgan, you’re looking good, I guess Athens agrees with you,” I said.

“Yeah, well, I’m glad I’ve got a little break and could get away for a few days. I’ve missed Rhodes. So how have you two been doing?”

“Okay, Dimi has been pretty much out of it with this project, but other than that, we’re good. I have to stop at the market before we get home, do you mind?” I asked.

“I need to get some things too. Did Rena tell you about Camilla?”

“Oh, geez, now what?”

“She’s trying to get friendly again and get on Rena’s good side. She’s always bringing her food, and of course, she brings up you and Dimi. I don’t know why Rena doesn’t tell her off,” Morgan said.

“Rena wouldn’t do that. She’d take whatever Camilla hands out with a grain of salt. You know, Camilla knows how to creep into people’s lives. You don’t realize it until she’s totally encamped.”

“I know, I keep telling Rena to give her the boot, but she’s too nice. Camilla

will end up walking all over her.”

When we got to the little market, it was closed — no cars in the parking lot, no one around at all.

“Where is everyone?” Morgan asked. “It’s not a Holiday today, is it?”

“Not that I know of, would you go look at the sign on the door?” I asked.

Morgan got out to read the handwritten note that was taped to the glass door.

“It says they are closed due to a death in the family.”

“Wow. I wonder what happened? Well, I guess we’ll have to go to the other one in town.” I said as I pulled out of the parking lot.

As we drove, there was the usual traffic and the usual attempt at bypassing it. We were headed toward the old pink house that we’d have to pass to get to our other supermarket. As we approached it, we both couldn’t help notice that there were mounds of weeds and debris on the side of the road along the fence line of the pink house. As we passed it, we saw that someone had chopped down the jungle of weeds that grew on the shoulder of the road — pile after pile, all along the property fence. The gate was also open, but we couldn’t see anyone around.

I slowly drove past the house as we both stretched our necks to see what was going on.

“I wonder what they’re doing? Do you think maybe it was sold?” I asked Morgan.

“I don’t think that’s it, they didn’t cut any of the weeds inside the fence, just on the street. Maybe the city made them clean it up,” Morgan said.

“Yeah, I wonder.... I’m going to stop.”

“Why? What are you doing, Helen? There’s no one around.”

I parked the car up the street and walked back. When I got to the gate, I had to sidestep the piles of weeds. “Wait. Wait for me, Helen,” I heard as Morgan hurried to catch up.

“Do you see anyone around?” I asked as we both surveyed the yard.

“No, but they must be coming back, they left a hoe and wheelbarrow,” she said.

We stepped over more weeds to enter the gate. It was hard to tell if anyone had been clearing the yard, it was an overgrown mess.

“Hello?” I called. I didn’t see or hear anyone near the house, but as I turned to say something to Morgan, I saw the lace curtains in the house across the field next door, moving, then suddenly close.

“There’s no one here.”

“I saw the neighbor looking over here. I’m going to ask them,” I said. As I tried to wade back to the gate, from the jungle of a yard. I heard Morgan say, “Helen, don’t go over there, Helen!”

I knocked at the neighbor’s door several times, louder and heavier with each turn. “Hello?” I called. Finally, the door swung open with a gust of air, pulling my hair like a vacuum.

“Hello! I’m sorry to disturb you. Do you speak English?” I asked.

“No!” was the curt answer I got from a tall thin, old woman with dyed hair of pitch black with white roots.

“House?” I said, pointing across to the pink house. She looked at me with darted eyes and then closed the door.

Morgan was still in the yard by the gate, picking prickly seed pods from her jeans and shoes. “What did she say?” Morgan asked.

“Nothing. But she keeps looking through the curtain at us. Strange.”

“Let’s go, okay?” Morgan urged. I knew we should leave, my instincts were in agreement with Morgan, but my curiosity and underlying feelings about this place overshadowed my reasoning.

“I want to take a quick peek around the side of the house. Are you coming?”

“Oh, alright. Geez! I’m going to start sneezing!” She complained.

We found a tiny winding path through the weeds that must have been a wildlife trail, from what I could see — small prints in the dirt from dogs and small rodents.

“Look over here, Morgan.”

I came across a type of large stoop, three steps up to a platform, large enough to accommodate a lounge and bistro table, behind which were broken out french doors that were boarded from the inside. There was a massive column on each side of the porch, reaching to the second floor, holding on to an

ancient balcony.

One french door had the top hinge broken, and it made the door stand agape. There was a padlock and chain wrapped around the door levers to prevent entry and held the broken door in place. We both went up the stairs to see if we could peek inside through the warped boards that were held by rusted nails.

We could see a lot of debris on the floor from the beams of sunlight that slipped in through the gaps of the warped boards. The shafts of light glowed against the dust in the air.

“Morgan, there’s a drawing on the inside of the cupboard door. I wish I could somehow get in and get it.”

“How do you know that?” She questioned.

“I wish we could go inside,” I said.

We were busy trying to see inside the house, but we didn’t know that someone came up behind us.

“What you do here?” He barked.

“Oh, hello, do you work here? I want to talk to the owner about ____.”

“You leave, ...now!” He yelled.

He was very angry looking, like we were breaking in and stealing the family jewels.

“We just wanted___.” Morgan tried to say.

The man came toward us in a threatening manner. He reached up from the bottom of the stoop for Morgan’s arm, but she was on the landing and stepped back quickly.

“Get away from me!” She exclaimed.

“You leave..now!”

There was no appeasing this man. We *were* trespassing, but we were not antagonizing the man.

“Alright, alright. We’re leaving.” I went to Morgan’s side so that we’d descend the steps together. When we reached the bottom, the man took me by the upper arm and was jabbing Morgan in the back with a gardener’s claw.

“Ouch! You’re stabbing me!” Morgan yipped.

We hurried as fast as we could, but the weeds and overgrown shrubbery

blocked our path. This man still pushed us along, and poor Morgan was being prodded harder with each obstacle that slowed her escape.

“Will you stop pushing me?” She cried.

I was afraid that he was really going to hurt us. He had a wild look in his eyes. I could hear Morgan moan and cuss under her breath. Every step was a hurdle and a feat of trying to keep one’s balance while being pushed, dragged and prodded through a jungle of overgrown shrubs and vines.

When we finally reached the gate, the man shoved us out with such force that I fell into the dirt and weed piles, and Morgan nearly fell on top of me.

“Stay away!” The man yelled, then turned and was cussing us out in Greek as he walked back behind the house.

“Oh, god, are you alright? That man is insane!” Morgan said as she regained her balance.

“I’m okay, I think. Geez! We’ve got scratches all over! I think you’ve got blood on your shirt, Morgan.”

“I don’t doubt it. Let’s get out of here,” She said as we both brushed off the dust and picked the thorns and weeds out of our skin and clothes. We got into the car and breathed a sigh of relief.

“Man! He scared the holy shit out of me,” I said. My heart was pounding out of my chest.

“Why would someone act that way? We weren’t hurting anything,” Morgan asked, wincing in her seat.

“I don’t know. He looked like he would have killed us if it weren’t illegal. Look at us! We look like we rolled down a hill. You’ve got stuff in your hair, Morgan.”

“Let’s just go, okay? My back is starting to throb. We’d better just go back to the house. We can’t go to the store looking like this.”

“I am sorry, Morgan. I am really sorry.” I felt so bad for her. She didn’t want to stop, but I had to go there, and now she had to pay for my stupidity.

“It’s weird how you don’t feel the pain so much when you’re terrified,” she said.

“Shit, we’d better not let Dimi and Andreas find out about this,” I said.

“I’m not going to tell Andreas, he’d want to come back here and confront

that old bastard,” Morgan said as she wiped the dust from her eyes.

“Dimi would explode, too, but I’m not too sure he’d like us coming to this house *at all!*” I could picture his face if I told him what happened.

“What were you saying about a drawing?” She asked.

“We still have to get something for dinner. We don’t have much to fix,” I said as we drove.

“Helen, how do you know about there being a drawing on the cupboard door?”

“Well, about ten days ago, I made arrangements with an estate agent to view the house. We went to Cyprus, so I didn’t think about it. She called me yesterday, and I jumped at the chance to see it.

“There was a strange drawing on the inside of the cupboard door. It looked a lot like the one we got from Sahj’s stuff.”

“I’m lost! I’ve been out of it for two weeks, and you’ve got all this new news.”

“I’ll tell you all about it if you want to know, I didn’t think you were interested since you wanted to quit it, or should I say Andreas wanted to shelter you from it.” I glanced at her to see if she reacted to what I said. “We can go over the papers and pictures later. There are a few things you’ll be interested in.”

“Don’t you have anything that we can make a meal from? Dimi usually has all kinds of stuff in the freezer,” Morgan uttered.

“I’ll have to stop at the little market, ‘Salvino’s.’ It will only take a minute.”

I pulled into the parking lot. I flew through the store, grabbing some necessities and some fresh vegetables. I got the odd looks from people around me, but I didn’t let it get to me, we had to get home.

“That swinging mirror is driving me nuts,” Morgan complained. I knew that she was in pain and needed some comfort, which this little car had lost, a long time ago.

We pulled up to the house and got inside as quickly as possible. Morgan helped with the bags of groceries. When we put down the bags, and Morgan turned to go to her room, my heart was stabbed with pain as I saw her shirt.

“Morgan, your shirt is torn, and there’s some blood. Let me see your back,”

I asked.

I helped her lift the back of her shirt. There were many red streaks like an animal had mauled her. The deeper scratches that had spotted blood were welting up and blazing red.

“Geez, Morgan. Maybe I can put something on those for you. You don’t want to get tetanus.”

“Let me shower first.” She went to her room. Then I heard the shower running.

I had to change too, as I was covered in dust and prickly weeds. I had minor scratches on my arms and legs from the bushes I was forced into, and found dried weeds hanging from my hair.

After we both refreshed ourselves, I put some ointment on Morgan’s back. She tried to sit against the hardbacks of the dining room chairs. It was too uncomfortable for her.

“I thought I’d spread out some of the papers and photos that we printed. There are a lot of things that still bother me about this stuff.”

“Yeah, that’s not a bad idea, laying out the stuff, but can we eat in the living room? It would be more comfortable for me.”

“Sure, we can do that, we’ll make it a buffet-style dinner.”

“What do we have to eat?” Morgan asked, “I’m off of the meat completely, now, no more cheating.”

“I thought I’d make a meatless spaghetti, sliced tomatoes with fresh Basil and Feta cheese, and maybe some deep-fried Zucchini.”

“I like the veggies, but meatless spaghetti doesn’t sound too good,” she said.

“If you like regular spaghetti, you’ll like this. Oh, also, I want to keep one of the frozen bread dough out. It will have to rise.”

“So, I guess we’re having Italian?” Morgan questioned.

“It’s quick and easy, as long as I can get the dough to rise,” I put the lump of dough into a greased bowl and covered it with a towel before setting it in the oven.

“Whatever, I’m going to get dressed,” Morgan went to her room.

“Morgana? Where is my little bumblebee?” Andreas made his entrance.

“We’re in here.” She called back.

“What? I don’t get a hello?” Andreas asked me.

“Hello, Andreas,” I smiled.

“What has my Sweet Pea been doing today?” Andreas smiled and took Morgan in his arms. Her eyes had the look of electricity going through them as he swung her around in joyful play.

“What have you been doing lately?” She retorted. I was going to interject to save Morgan the awkward moment when Dimi came in.

“Where’s my Helena? Ah! I miss my Heart,” he said, wrapping his arms around me, rocking me and burying his face in my hair. “Dimi go away too long, my heart.”

“Who are you again? I don’t quite remember,” I said. “When did you get here? I thought you were in___.”

“Ahk! I tell you later, right now, I hold my funny Helena. This man has been thinking of his wife and home. So good to be home, and all together with Morgana and Andreas, is perfect. You cook? What you cook? Dimi should do cooking, my Heart.”

“Don’t you like my cooking? What do you want to do, break my heart?” I asked in joking.

“Just is surprise to this man. Every day, this man must know how lucky. It smell good, Italiano?”

“It’ll be meatless,” I said, giving fair warning.

“Anything you make, Dimi will eat with gusto.” His eyes were penetrating my soul, and it once again gave me that feeling, that everything would be okay.

Once the dough had risen, I chased Dimi out of the kitchen so that I could prepare the Pizza. The men sat in the living room. They were looking at the pictures and papers that were waiting for them on the coffee table. They were in deep discussion when I interrupted

“Dimi, would you get the wine for me, please, and we should clear the coffee table.”

“My heart, you make Pizza, too? Andreas, we eat like the gods tonight,” he said as he brought out the pieces of Pizza on a huge platter. I came in behind him with the tomatoes and feta.

"We'll need to make room for the Linguini, so we'll have to move these pictures out of the way," I said.

"I will get," Dimi returned to the kitchen.

"We'll just serve ourselves. I think the coffee table is big enough, don't you?" I asked Dimi as I took the plates out of the cupboard.

"Gee, I'm surprised, Helen. I can actually eat tonight. I didn't think it would taste like much, but it's delicious." Morgan said.

As the evening went on, the conversation turned to our increasing pile of investigative information.

"Helena, while at University I pull from library on antiquities, old records on microfiche. Only print these sheets, but more information on library computer. I have in suitcase," Dimi said.

"You made copies from the library? When did you have the time?" I asked.

"Is reference only, but still have many pictures with numbers and what reference to, and footnotes."

After I brought up the questions on these pictures, I had more input and opinions on the answers. It's all conjecture, but until we can compare the information we have, with the library documents, we were only guessing at what the possibilities could be.

Stefano had copies of everything, from the photos we took, to the Sahj disk. We were hoping that he had found more historical data and would call us. Andreas couldn't stop asking questions. He was more or less thinking out loud than actually asking questions. His green eyes sparkled as his mind flew through the possibilities of the adventure ahead.

"We should hear from Stefano, I mean, he's got copies of everything, you'd think he'd let us know something!" Morgan said.

"My Morgana, he will come bursting at the seams when he discovers something. He will wait until he is hot on the trail," Andreas told Morgan as he calmed her.

"I was afraid that you both have gone cold on the whole Sahj investigation. I know it's been a long fruitless search, but what changed your mind?" I asked Andreas.

“It’s hard to get it out of your blood. Try as we may, conversations come up, things remind us of some of this stuff, and it seems like it won’t go away, so, as long as no one gets hurt, and we’re careful with what we do, I’m in if Morgana is.” He looked over to Morgan for approval.

“Sure,” was her reply.

I could tell that she was still in pain and that she was pretty touchy. Her anxiety over our last encounter was beginning to show, and I was afraid the truth of what happened would come pouring out.

The men were deep into the photos and comparing one against the other. I looked at Morgan, her eyes darting from me to Andreas, as she squirmed in her chair, becoming more anxious by the minute.

“Morgan, come on, let’s go get the other information,” I was trying to divert her from the inevitable confession. She followed me down the hall to my bedroom.

“What information did we forget?” She asked. I closed the door behind her.

“What’s wrong? You’re fidgeting like mad out there. I know your back hurts, but you look like you are ready to tell them what happened.”

“It’s getting to me. I’m a terrible liar. I just can’t lie to Andreas.”

“It’s not really lying, but it is hard to see them so excited about this. If we say anything, it’ll not only ruin the evening, but with the two of them together, we would have one explosion feeding off of the other, and we would really regret it,” I said.

“I know, I know. That’s why I’m so edgy. I know what would happen,” she said. I was able to control my anxiety on this, on my own, but with her in such a state, I was getting edgy too.

“You know, Morgan, maybe we should tell them tonight. Once they’re cozy in bed, bring it up *gently*. Make it sound simple. If we sound like it was nothing to be concerned about, maybe it won’t cause a problem. I know that it’s easier said than done, but we have to try. At least we’ll feel better about not holding back from them. I just hate to spoil the great mood they’re in.”

“Yeah, but when Andreas sees my back, he’ll freak out! How do I keep him from blowing up when he sees my back?”

“Let me see how it’s doing,” I helped her lift her shirt and was able to see

it's progress. "It doesn't look that bad at all. The redness has just about disappeared. It's just the scratch marks where it drew blood. It's not too noticeable, but we can put on some more salve."

"I don't want to get it on my clothes."

"I've got a powder that is antiseptic and might help heal it." We tried the powder, and it adhered to the small wounds.

"Now what? We'll go back out there without any papers to show. So what do we say?" Morgan asked.

"I don't think they'll even notice we were gone. If they ask, we couldn't find anything."

The evening progressed, and questions were raised on people pictured, but we were not questioned on *our* disappearance.

"There is one bit of news, I found the other man that assaulted us at the Paradiso," I said as I pointed to the name on the diagram wall. "Yiannis Papaligouras."

"You found him!" Morgan's eyes pinned the diagram on the wall.

"Are you sure it's him, where did you find this information?" Andreas asked.

"It was in the box that Sahj sent us, amongst the profiles."

We called it a night when the clock chimed midnight. I knew that Morgan and Andreas were going to have a discussion on what to do with this evidence. Would the local authorities do their duty and arrest him, would they charge both Papaligouras and Hakim in the assaults of Morgan and me? Would we want to stir things up again with bringing charges? This discussion would be on our agenda tomorrow.

We had a fun evening, but the totality of the day made us pretty tired.

"Helena? What you think of this?"

"What's that, Sweetheart?"

"All this mystery. Do we spend our time in adventure, to be disappointed? Or do we find reward in this?"

"I'm not sure what you mean," I said as I got into bed. I rested on his shoulder as he continued.

“We have to invest time. Time may be used to do better things. Do we waste time on this?” He seemed very introspective...

“There’s always something to learn from whatever we discover, even if there is no pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. If you are asking if we’re wasting our time in the search, I’d have to say ‘no.’ As long as we don’t end up dead, I think it’s a wonderful use of time. We’ve finally made some progress, and if we can put more of these guys behind bars, that would be quite an accomplishment. But you have your work, the University, and your ‘brainstorms.’ What happened with the funding? You haven’t said anything about it. I guess you did it. You were successful?”

“Dimi will take project and keep until finding solution. This give brain time to rest. University gets his wish, and Dimi get his, too.”

“What does that mean? You’re pulling the project?”

“Lawyer looking into patent, and this man will wait. University is taking ‘flying leap’ while they keep their money and problems.”

“You’re so funny, Dimi, I guess that means you’re all mine for a while?” He held me tighter and planted a kiss on my forehead.

“This head always full of the thoughts. It is possible to think on one while do the other.” He was kissing me in a way that I couldn’t resist him, and it seemed like so long ago that we had a really meaningful union.

“You’re sure?” I said with his lips on mine.

“Yes, Dimi, sure.” He laughed as he continued in ever-mounting urgency.

My heart was filling with waves of love and wanting, and his gentle progression was hungrily awaited. We opened to each other, ravenously searching to find the ultimate soul-bonding that made us one.

We went quiet for a while in blissful thought. In the back of my mind, I wanted to bring up the episode of the pink house, but Dimi was so serene, I hesitated. We heard a door slam, and I knew what it was about. Morgan had told Andreas.

“What they do over there? Andreas will wake the dead,” Dimi said as his finger glided from my shoulder.

I wasn’t sure how to bring it up, and the more I thought about it, the more nervous I got, so I just started talking.

“Morgan must have told Andreas what happened today,” I said. I could feel Dimi trying to look at me in the dark. He reached his lamp and turned it on.

“What happen today, Helena? You no say anything to Dimi about today.”

“Well, it’s nothing. We tried to go to the little market, but, did you know that there was a death in the family of the little market owners?”

“Yes, yes, continue.”

“Well, we had to go get something for dinner, and to avoid the traffic, we took a short cut...by the pink house.” He got a look on his face like he knew what was next. “Someone was cleaning up the weeds and debris in front of it. I think someone must have complained to the city.”

“Helena...”

“Well, we saw the gate was open, so I stopped, to see if someone was there, I only wanted to ask about the house. A man was doing the maintenance, but he was very disagreeable. We couldn’t find out anything from him. He forced us off the property.”

“This is all? What you no tell to Dimi? Helena? Helena, tell this man all.”

“You’ll get angry.”

“Dimi will promise no anger.”

I went on to confess the whole scenario from beginning to end, leaving out no detail of the encounter. I could tell that he was getting upset, he forcefully exhaled, and the stroking of my arm became more intense. When I glanced up to his eyes, he couldn’t hide his emotions. I could see him getting more upset. When I told him that we were pushed out of the gate and that I fell in the dirt, he forcefully removed himself from the bed and went into the bathroom. I heard the water running and the splash of water against his face. I held my breath.

“Dimi? Are you alright?” I got out of bed and went to the bathroom door. “Dimi? Sweetie?”

He opened the door, he looked at me, worried that I could have been seriously hurt, and he was not able to prevent it. He took me in his arms. He didn’t say anything, but I knew that he wanted to question my judgment.

When he got back into bed, I didn’t think that he wanted to talk about it anymore. I said, “I didn’t want to upset you. I’m sorry.”

“And what do you sorry about?”

This question surprised me, and the tone in which it was said was almost antagonistic. He turned off the light. I pulled up the covers and turned my back to him. He didn't say anything right away. I punched my pillow and figured that he wasn't talking. I laid back down.

“Dimi not angry, my Heart.” He reached my shoulder, then turned me to lay flat on my back. He placed his hand on my cheek. “Dimi will not have stranger to put hand on you. This man do not have anger for my Heart, only... is hard to know what to do. Dimi will not say ‘no’ if my Helena want to do a thing...”

“If we saw that man in the yard, we would have stayed outside the fence. We wouldn't have gone inside,” I interrupted.

“Yes, Helena, but why you want to see this wreck of house?” He asked as he brought his hand down my arm to my hand.

“I don't know. It's always drawn me like I can't resist going to it when I see it.” I told him about how I grabbed at the chance to see the house when the agent called back and the odd drawing that I found in the cupboard. I heard a deep rumble within his chest like he was thinking of the importance of the drawing.

“This we should do together, not by yourself, alone. What you think when you go back with Morgana?”

“I don't know, but I know that the drawing is almost identical to the one that Sahj had in the safe deposit box, and it might be important. We have to get that drawing from the pink house, Dimi.”

“Then, we shall go see. Dimi will fix.”

“What?”

“We will think on way to see....together, Helena, you no go alone there.”

We heard a glass break, and Andreas muttering. The door to their room opened and shut again. Then we could hear Andreas' voice in an unusual pattern.

“Dimi, better go see the problem.” He got his trousers on while we could hear the back and forth voices of Andreas and Morgan. The words were not clear, but the tone was unmistakable.

“_____, you’re not listening to me, Andreas,” Morgan said.

“You are not listening to me, Morgana.”

“What all excitement now?” Dimi asked as he entered the kitchen.

Andreas was pacing back and forth by the bar, while Morgan was on her knees, cleaning up the broken glass shards that spread out on the floor in front of the sink.

“I’m sorry, Dimi, I broke a glass,” Andreas said.

“He’s upset about something I said, Dimi. It’s nothing,” Morgan said.

“You call that nothing?” Andreas said.

I came into the kitchen just as Andreas was telling Dimi about the claw marks on Morgan’s back.

“That maniac could have killed them, and this is nothing?” Andreas spewed.

Morgan looked at me as I entered from the dining room.

“Andreas, it’s not as bad as it sounds. We were trespassing, and I guess he wanted us to know that he meant what he said,” I said.

“Dimi, what are we going to do about this? I’d like to stick that claw tool in his face, and see how he likes it,” Andres’s ire was beginning to wane in the presence of Dimi’s calming assurance.

“We will find way to go to pink house. We look, curiosity goes away. Then we go back to work on pictures and documents, or maybe Andreas will help with garden?” Dimi teased.

“Oh, no, you don’t. That’s your baby.”

“Then we study,” Dimi concluded.

“I’m going back to bed,” I said.

“So am I,” Morgan walked right passed Andreas, and in a mutual sigh, the men were resigned to the fact that the women in their lives are strong-willed, if not headstrong. They wondered why their women were independent to the point of being careless. If someone wanted to harm us, this could have been the perfect opportunity.

Very early in the morning, the rooster was being his usual self, alerting us to a new day.

“My Heart?” Dimi was turned towards me, his finger gliding along my arm.

“Yes, Sweetheart.” I was in far off dreamscapes.

“I must tell you a thing.”

“Uh-huh.”

“When you tell Dimi about yesterday, this man do not get anger at you. You know this?” He asked, his finger running a path on my arm.

“I know, Sweetie.”

“The danger there for you, and Morgana, too, is too much for this man to think on.”

“Just don’t think about it anymore; it wasn’t important.”

“Helena, important to *me*. In old days, men very old fashion with wife. Love her to point where she is happy, but sadly, some do not *cherish*, only use for own means. These men, usually not always kind, keep woman in house to do for man. They do not like foreigner or anything to remind old wife of modern times. They were very, what I say?__not to trust woman.”

“I see. I know there are old fashioned men, they’re everywhere. Even in the States, Dimi, some believe a woman is their slave and are under the thumbs of their husbands like a prisoner. It’s an old story.”

“Yes. These old islands, there are two worlds. The modern highlife with the parties and music, shorts, and skimpy clothing. Then on other side, strick, old of fashion, very much male dominant on most things. These two worlds do not mesh nicely, so one must be careful. Be respectful,” he explained.

“I know, Dimi. We were respectful. We asked if the house was for sale or if we could speak to the owner. We didn’t mean any disrespect. He was mean and obnoxious to us. Very threatening.”

“We will see this house, my Heart, but only to stop curiosity. Dimi will fix, but you no go there until then.”

We were agreed. I would wait for him to find out how we could view the house again. This was something that started back in the first couple of days that Morgan and I were first here. The curiosity never left me, and Dimi figured it’s time to give in and let me pursue my curiosity, under his watchful eye and protection.

With all the information that we had gone over, and with the prospects of obtaining more, my mind was alive with images. The pink house was an

excitement that mingled with the computer files and pictures of convicts and surveillance photos of criminals. When I dropped off to sleep again, my dreams were filled with these images.

The man with the claw tool turned into a type of evil “Edward Scissorhands,” as I was trying to escape the rooms of the pink house. He kept swiping his claw hand at me as I ran, catching my clothes and hearing them rip. I saw a room, dark and shabby but massive, with criminals and lowlifes sitting against the walls on the floor, as I ran through, in an effort to escape the ‘claw.’ I saw myself as about twenty years old.

From across this huge room, I saw Sahj standing in a doorway, and I somehow knew that if I could make it to him, I’d be safe. My dreams tend to switch gears and go off in an unrelated direction, but not this time. I had to run or hide, and if I found a place to hide, I’d have to control my fearful breathing, my panting from fear, and the chase. I would be found, and it paralyzed me with the fear of being discovered.

Deja Vu



When I got up, everyone was already up, and breakfast was about to be served.

“Good morning, sleepyhead!” Morgan announced at my arrival.

“What’s everyone doing up so early?”

“Early? It’s almost 9:30 am!”

“I was come to wake you, but let you sleep,” Dimi said with a kiss on the cheek.

“What’s the plan?” I asked.

“Dimi said something about seeing that old house in town,” Andreas said as he stirred his coffee.

“If we do it today, I can call the estate agent,” I said.

“Yes, you make arrangement, Helena, we get it done today.”

“Zola, you showed me a property that was falling down near old Rhodes town. Would it be possible to view it this afternoon with my contractor?” This was the perfect opportunity to bring Andreas and Morgan with us.

“It will be very simple. We go in, agent show us rooms, she will be distracted, and we get drawing. See? We do not make it be mountain.” Dimi’s approach to the situation was pure and simple. If everything goes as simply as it sounds, it would be an easy endeavor. However, if it turns out that she’s not so easily

distracted, then what?

“We need a backup plan, honey, just in case.” He took my hands and looked deep into my eyes and said,

“Helena, you worry too much on this. Agent will be honest person, so if we are honest and nice in our approach, everything okay. Do not worry.”

“If you give her the googly eyes, she’ll be putty in your hands, Dimi.” He laughed and hugged me.

“If she no get distracted, maybe *that* will distract her,” then he gave me a peck on the cheek.

“Hey, Andreas! I just wangled you an invitation to view our pink house! How about that?” I said.

“Really? *We’re* going?” Morgan asked, a little in shock.

“I asked her if I can bring my contractor. How perfect is that?”

“Then, I’d better get dressed,” Morgan muttered on her way to her room.

“Is this what you really want to do? I mean, things are only now just calming down.” Andreas asked Dimitris as they finished in the kitchen.

“Best to get it done. This has been coming for long time now. Best to do.”

Once we were there, the clouds seemed to come in, and the house looked ominous, dark, and foreboding. Behind the agent, Dimitris and Andreas followed and made small talk about the house’s condition, and that gave Morgan and I a chance to head to the kitchen.

“It’s so dark and dingy in here. I’m going to trip over something.” Morgan commented.

“I’ve got to get over to the cupboards, let me know if they’re coming this way.” I was hoping that I wouldn’t have a problem getting the drawing off of the cupboard door. The edges were curling off, but it was definitely stuck in the center. The paper was somewhat brittle, as I would try to pull on the corner of it, it would just crumble in my hand.

“Hurry up, Helen, their voices are closer,” Morgan warned.

“I can’t get it off without tearing it.” I didn’t want to ruin this. As I looked at it, it was almost the same as the other one, except there were a few doodles off to the side that looked like Greek. I took out my cell phone and tried to

get pictures of it before I ruined it.

“Is it going to show anything, I mean the detail and writing, your cell phone won’t capture that,” Morgan said.

“Yeah, it’s not working. I’ll never get this off unless we take the wood with it, and I doubt that will happen.”

“Just rip the door right off! There are so many missing already. It’s not like you’re vandalizing anything.” Morgan suggested.

When I yanked on the cupboard door, it made a squeaking sound, then I gave it a wrap on the top, hoping to dislodge the hinges. They stood tight, but the frame of the cupboard door, the tongue in groove construction of it gave way. I was able to take the inner panel that the picture was glued to, and successfully lay it in the rubble on the floor, along with all the other litter.

“As you can see, the cupboards and sink will need to be replaced, and the ceiling plaster would probably need replacing also.” Zola pointed to the cracks in the plaster.

“The whole kitchen would have to be gutted. I don’t know if it would be worth the expense of a new kitchen,” Andreas said.

“Are we about ready to wrap this up? We’ll need to confer on this, and we’ll have to get back to you, Zola,” I said.

“Oh, I understand. This would be quite a project, but it once was a beautiful home.” She said.

We started to turn toward the entry when I asked her about the cupboard.

“I found this in the rubble. I guess it fell apart since we were here last time,” I said as I picked up the cupboard panel.

“There are quite a few things that have fallen since we were last here,” She stated.

“Would it be okay if I took this? I collect cats.”

“I’m not at liberty, but I don’t think something like that will be missed,” she nodded.

“Oh, thank you, I’ll have it framed, it’s so unusual,” I said with my artist’s eye looking it over.

“Yes, anyone who wanted to fix up this place would have to tear out all the

cabinetry anyway,” Andreas offered his expert opinion.

We were soon on our way back home with the drawing in hand, even though we had to take the cupboard door apart to accomplish it. I wanted to squeal with delight over our acquisition!

When we got to the house, the first thing we did was lay the drawing on the table. Looking at it in good light revealed more lines drawn than what showed in the crayon drawing. On the lower right-hand corner were some lines written in Greek.

“Honey, look at this, can you translate this?” Dimitris came out of the kitchen, wiping his hands on a towel.

“Is not good Greek. Some words are fade, but read mostly about guard the living and sin.”

“What? Are you sure? Maybe you better put on your glasses,” I said.

“Let me see that.” Andreas took the panel and brought it up closer to the light, tilting it in different directions to try to find an impression of where the letters were before they faded so badly.

“It looks like a Roman numeral ‘V.’ then,” he slowly deciphered the best translation.

“And rescue that
that dwells within
from those whose fate
was sealed by sin.”

“This sounds like a puzzle, alright. It’s not a nursery rhyme.” Morgan sighed.

“And a warning. Is this what it says verbatim? I mean, since it’s written in Greek, can there be different translations?” I asked.

“Well, it is written in Greek, so I had to interpret what I thought was the closest words to what is there, like this word,” Andreas pointed to the picture, “Literally it would mean ‘*unopened*’ and this” he pointed again to the picture, “means ‘*deliver*.’ So if I were to read it as literally as I can, it would

say something like ‘And deliver it, it lives inside, of those with destiny, by transgression it was unopened.’ It lacks form in English.”

“It did sound better before. So it says rescue what lives there?” Morgan surmised.

“There must be something we’re missing. There are Roman numerals on this. I didn’t notice any other pieces to this. Did you?”

“I didn’t see any. It’s all strange,” Morgan surmised.

“Dimi, didn’t we have a sketch or something that Stefano gave us, from the little picture? I thought there was another one, but I can’t find it.”

“Yes, must be with prints Stefano made. I go look upstairs,” he went by the living room fireplace and up the stairs.

“How did you girls get the cupboard door out of its frame? That was genius!”

“It was falling apart anyway,” Morgan said.

Dimitris came down with a pile of poster-sized prints and a couple of rolled-up diagrams and pictures. Also in the box was the little picture — the instigator of the whole scenario.

“Here, this one, no...this is the map that the Professor used to find the relics. I know I saw another...here, this is it.” I pulled out a line drawing that was different than what I remembered it to be. It didn’t look so much like a cat, maybe a closeup of the eyes and ears, if that’s what its meant to be. “Was this supposed to be what was on the back of the little picture, on the lining? I thought that they found a child’s scribble and made a copy of it. It should be here too.” I wondered aloud.

“That would be other one, from picture backing. It’s not here,” Dimitris said.

“Did we ever have it?”

“I call Stefano.”

“I made a list of things that seem to be important. At least we should check them out. In Sahj’s things, there was mentioned the name ‘Kalliste.’ We haven’t been able to find anything more on this, whether it’s a person or place, we don’t know. The other thing is this key card,” I said.

“The key card has to go to a hotel or something like that, but it could be

from anywhere, how would you know what it goes to? It doesn't have any name or other information on it." Morgan said.

"I wonder,...this key card has the magnetic strip on the back. I wonder if anything can be read from that?"

"There might be something on it, but we'd have to have a reader," Andreas stated in passing.

"I wonder if a credit card reader would do it? I've got one at the apartment."

"Morgan, you might have something there! It's a long shot, but worth a try. Do you want to do that? I mean, it's getting yourself into this again," I asked.

"Hell, I might as well, everyone else is digging in. Maybe I can help a little with this."

"That's great, take it home with you." On that note, I had a good feeling about the outlook of the situation. "Sometimes, I think that we'll never put all of the pieces together, but not today, I think it might just work out for us."

"Stefano say that he make copy of the drawing and give to us. He will make another one if we need," Dimitris commented.

"I haven't been able to find it, but there's so much here! Maybe it's one of those big poster prints that Stefano brought. I didn't look much at any of the posters yet," I said.

"Helen? Have you read all the letters, the ones that were in the bank box?" Morgan asked.

"I only had time to glance at them. They're mostly in Greek."

"Look, this old one that is all yellowed, it's hard to make it out, but it does have a return address on it," Morgan pointed out.

"Oh, wow, let me see that," I carefully took the letter and unfolded it. It looked like it was in a females' hand. The script is very fine and florid. "Andreas, can you read this?"

"Uh, okay it starts,

My Dear Brother,

Much time has passed that I do not hear from you.

I am with hope that this letter finds you well. The children are all independent and no longer seek to spend time with their

mother. That is the way of things.

*I only want to tell you that your sister loves you dearly
and would not be opposed to a visit by yourself. Many times your
poor sister would remember our childhood and yearn to see you.*

Kalliste”

“It sounds so sad. Can you read the address on the envelope?” The tone of the letter saddened me.

“The writing is so fine, it’s hard to read, but it does say, Crete. I think it’s Chania....”

“Look her up online. Maybe she’s on some social network.” Morgan interrupted.

“It might not be a bad idea to split up the items we need to track down. I mean, you, Morgan, and Andreas could see what you can find on Kalliste, Dimi, and I can do some of the other items.”

“We’ll do the key card, too,” Morgan volunteered.

We had gotten so involved with the letter that I didn’t see Dimitris leave the room. When I caught up with him, he was looking over the poster-sized prints.

“Did you find anything, Sweetie?”

“Not sure, some are just men, men in car, men in street. This one has Sahj.” He pointed to the man in the dark overcoat and hat.

“That’s Sahj? Are you sure?”

“Dimi is sure.”

“Honey, what is this?” I slipped out a print from under the stack.

“Did not see.”

“The main characters in front, I don’t recognize, but look in the background. Isn’t that the little man, Bolio?” I was sure it was, except that he was younger, had a mustache and wearing a suit.

“No, is not he, is it?” Dimitris wasn’t sure.

“What does the notation say?”

“Says ‘Left to Right: Refugio Sepulveda, Torban Volker, Atanas Baumann, Khaled Hassam.”

“I think there was a newspaper clipping that goes with this picture. It should be here too. Haven’t we come across the name Khaled Hassam before somewhere?” I asked. “I remember now, we saw that name on the phone list, from the park.”

“Isn’t that where the name Yiannis something or other came up?” Morgan asked.

“Yes, but if the last man on the right in this photograph is Khaled Hassam, it might mean it’s Bolio’s real name.” It was a reasonable assumption. “I think we can safely say that we found Bolio’s true identity. We should check him out.”

“Stefano! What you here?” I heard from over my shoulder.

“I am here to get in trouble, what else?” He gave Dimitris and Andreas a brotherly hug.

“Where is Rena?” Morgan asked.

“She is busy with Katie. They went to the Turkish market.”

“What you have for us?” Stefano came to the table with his briefcase and a rolled poster.

“This is the drawing that you should have had in the other things I gave you.”

A Picture = 1000 words



Nothing surprised me when it came to “Bolio.” How deep his involvement goes may be only superficial, but we have to be sure. The next day Andreas and Morgan left, taking Stefano to Karpathos on the way home. If anything were found out about the key card, they would let us know. It most likely was just an old hotel key card that was never discarded.

Dimitris was reading the letter that was from Interpol to Sahj when I interrupted.

“Good morning, Sugar, have you already had your coffee?”

“No, I just make.” He kissed me on the temple as he went to pour our cups. “This letter from man at Interpol, he know Sahj. This was.....twelve years ago, maybe not there now.”

“We should try to contact him, but if he’s no longer there, maybe they can direct us to someone who will help. What was his name?”

“Stewart Byrnes, but he is in London,” Dimi added.

“I’ll try to call him.” I didn’t feel right talking about this on the phone. Certainly, it would be a lot to ask to have them send someone here, but it would be a difficult job either way.

Dimitris handed me the phone. After being put on hold for five minutes, a

woman came on the line.

“Mr. Byrnes’ office, how may I assist you?”

“My name is Helen Patakinis. I need to speak to Mr. Byrnes concerning the death of Ahmed Sahj.”

“What is your name?”

“Helen Patakinis.”

“Mr. Byrnes is in conference, if you’ll go to our web site and click on appointments, then complete the request online,” she robotically stated.

“There are extenuating circumstances with this. We need to talk to Mr. Byrnes immediately.”

“You will need an appointment.”

“Is there anyone else there who knew Mr. Sahj that I might speak with?”

“I cannot give out that information.”

“Thanks.”

That got us nowhere. I tried to think of who would be a person of trust that we could turn to under the circumstances. The phone rang, and Dimitris answered it.

“For you, Mr. Byrnes.”

I talked to Stewart Byrnes, Senior desk jockey, which surprised me that he called us back. He referred us to another agent whom we could meet with that was within our neck of the woods. The only thing that I came away with was that we were to be extremely careful and not talk to anyone, especially on the phone, if possible.

“What he say?”

“He said he would set up a meeting with an agent in our area, and he’ll call us. It might not be right away, but he said that this agent is trustworthy.” I handed the phone back to Dimi. “I think maybe we should try to finish whatever we can with all this and hand it all over to this agent. We didn’t ever get someone to translate the German documents, did we?”

“No, maybe we take to German Embassy. Maybe they help.”

“Sweetie, did you have a chance to look at the documents I asked about?”

“Interpol?”

“No, the other, with the imprint. It looks like a legal document.”

"This one? This is new. Date is from three months ago." He unfolded the paper down to the lengthy bottom. "Helena, look, is Power of Attorney. He give Power of Attorney to you. Why he do this?" He looked at me and wanted an answer.

"I don't know. He had no one else to sign after him, I guess. Why are you looking at me like that?"

"He have no one. Yes, is sad."

"We have to be grateful to Sahj, Dimi. He tried to protect us." Dimi had such an odd look on his face, sadness, yes, but it seemed to be more than that like maybe the impact of it all has hit him. I looked at my husband and thought, we haven't done anything together in a while. Perhaps today we should.

"Honey, come with me."

"What is it?"

"Just come with me." I grabbed my purse, keys, and a heavy blanket.

"Where we go?" he asked. He had a small smile but was a little bewildered.

"Don't ask any questions." We locked the house and jumped into the little car.

I drove up the hill and off the main road. A small dirt road going up another hill was harder for the Bug to navigate than before when I was by myself. We got up to where the deserted town began. It was lush with wild trees that covered the main street and old crumbling buildings.

We walked up to the shady cove that used to be the town square and spread out our blanket.

"How you find this, Helena?" I kissed him and began to unbutton his shirt. He looked at me with those dark eyes and just smiled.

"Do you think you could be very bad, Mr. Patakinis?"

He engulfed me in his arms and kissed my neck. He muttered something in Greek. I responded with a faint purr that enlivened him. We made love there in the deserted square with the sky peeking between branches and leaves.

"Ahh, my Heart, you have made surprise on this man. S'agapo. Dimi do not say this enough to my bride." He continued kissing my neck and breast, continuing to my stomach and along my pelvis bone. I was reawakened in him. He lit the fire that I tried so hard to control when we first met. I didn't

hold back and let the flame consume us both in insatiable pleasure.

We laughed and held each other in the afterglow. It had been a long time since we were able to get away and be together in agreeable circumstances. He pulled the blanket edge up to cover me as I laid my head on his chest. We were comfortable in this secluded cove.

“I love you, Dimi, more than anything... we’re okay, aren’t we?”

“What you say? Okay? We are always more than okay. You do not worry on this.” He looked down at me, waiting to see if I would add to my comment.

“I just worry about you. You’ve been so wrapped up in your work.”

“Yes, Dimi has neglected his wife. This man do not realize what I do. This problem with project, take time away from my Heart.” He kissed my forehead, “Project now in hands of attorney. Dimi finish with University. Now this man will keep wife happy and raise chickens.”

“You’re funny. You really are finished with the University?”

“We will find other thing to do, like make love to my Helena.”

“You can’t get paid to do that!”

“This man get his reward.”

“Yes, I think you do!” He growled into my neck, making me laugh.

“Come, we must dress.”

It had been three days since Andreas and Morgan left for home. I was curious to know whether there was any luck reading the key-card. With other things on my agenda, the time has slipped by me. I had found some arrest records on Khaled Hassam, but as far as finding anything to associate him with our main characters on the wall, I came up short. It looked to me like the authorities treated him as a joke, not to be taken seriously, possibly as a source of information. The criminal charges against him were minor, petty theft, resisting arrest on outstanding warrants, but he seemed to escape any prison time.

I started to straighten up the piles of documents to sort out what would be given to Interpol when we meet. I sorted papers and pictures and photocopied everything that I could. We kept the copies of the tests and the backing that the professor had tested in a safety drawer that Andreas built into the staircase

risers. It looked like all the other risers, so if one didn't know it was there, they would never see it. The copies of some of the men eliminated from our inquiries were put in a box and delegated to the pantry closet. Everything we would give to Interpol was put into a manila envelope and put in the file with all of our tax records. We were finally able to see our dining room wall again, and it seemed to lift the atmosphere of the room.

We needed to include the records of our assault, but I only had my papers, none of Morgan's. I wasn't sure of what to do with the large drawings. I rolled them up and put them with the little picture in the suitcase in the bedroom closet. It gave me a sense of relief to have the table cleared of all the files and mess.

"Morgan?"

"Hi! What's going on, anything new?"

"Not much really, I was wondering if you were able to read the key card? I know you haven't had much time, but..."

"No, it didn't work. I thought it was going to work, but it only had the company that made it, and two sets of numbers. The rest was just static."

"Yeah, I was afraid of that, but it was worth a try."

"It's made by Saf-lok in Michigan." She then gave me two series of four numbers.

"Thanks. I guess I can call the company, maybe the numbers mean something."

"Oh, and I found Kalliste. Her name is Kalliste Palamara. She's deceased. Her last known address was in Chania, Crete. I think it's the same one as on the envelope."

"I wasn't expecting this, thanks, Morgan. Oh, I almost forgot, I'm going to need any copies you have on your abduction from the police, as soon as possible. We don't know how soon Interpol will contact us."

When the call ended, I wasn't sure how Morgan was feeling about digging up the case again. It's probably just as well that I cut the call short.

"Professor Kanakaras did a lot of tests. It's no wonder the back of the little photo looks so bad! Lucky they didn't ruin the picture itself. Honey, look at this report."

“Yes, he do thorough job. What you say we go out to eat?” His hand on my shoulder, he leaned in to look into my eyes and removed my glasses.

“Don’t you want to look over this report?”

“Bring with us, we read at restaurant.”

“We don’t need this copy of the little picture of the child, why did they make one?” It seemed curious.

“They do in case original get damaged or sometimes to see if it will show different under other exposures.” He put the copy down on the kitchen bar. Then we went to get some dinner.

We went to Faliraki to a restaurant perched on a hill. Our window table had a perfect view. Even though the lighting wasn’t ideal for reading the reports on the tests, we were able to find several oddities.

“These tests are confusing. At least they’re in English, but on this one, it says ‘reverse: no markings legible,’ but on this one, it says “apparent stains to front and reverse of photo/evidence of residue: lead oxide, gum arabic, petroleum.’ Contradictory, isn’t it?”

“Hmm, it speak of debris. Years of neglect is common,” Dimitris explained.

“The diagrams are interesting. This one must be the one that Stefano made the enlargement from, but it shows little doodles like scribbling too, like when something is scribbled out.”

“Yes, also has compass point. This was not on copy we have at home.”

“Are you sure?”

“Yes. No compass point on our copies,” Dimi observed.

“This little one that the Professor stapled to that one, it’s just a bunch of lines, I don’t see what it would have to do with anything. Do you think this has anything to do with Interpol? Should we give this to them?”

“No, they will only need criminal evidence. This separate thing.”

We had a nice meal, gathered up our reports, and headed for home in the little car. With his hand on my thigh, he smiled as he glanced my way, his eyes sparkling.

“What?” I asked. His hand tightened a little on my thigh.

“What?” He repeated in jest.

“What makes you so happy this evening?”

He turned his gaze to me, and the sparkle in his eyes was a light to my heart. I couldn't help but laugh. "You are feeling good."

"This man is feel very good." His touch was that of gentle tenderness.

"I haven't seen you like this in quite a while."

"Oh, my Helena, we have wonderful life. Live in Paradise, have wonderful family, and home, and.....we look for end of this investigation."

"Wouldn't that be nice? Imagine having all this behind us."

When we got to the house, everything seemed so quiet. Usually, the dogs come to greet us. We could hear them barking, but they didn't come when Dimitris called them.

"Where are the dogs?"

"Listen! Hear barking."

He called the dogs, but they didn't come. We could hear them bark and whine, but couldn't tell from where the sounds were coming. We went to the back door to go inside, and there we heard whining and scratching.

The closer to the house we got, the more ruckus the dogs made. They got themselves shut into the cellar.

"What you boys do there, huh?"

"How did they get in there? That door is always closed."

"Who can know? Maybe chase squirrel or cat. They are hungry. Boys, come, we feed you."

"Honey, we locked the door when we left, didn't we?"

"Yes, door locked."

"Look, it's open."

Dimitris took my arm and pulled me in behind him as he cautiously entered the house.

"Bring in dogs, and wait here."

"Be careful, Dimi!" I was afraid that our worst fears had been realized and the criminals of our research have found us. We were so careful when we moved here, but I think that we have become lax and not as cautious as we should have been.

Dimitris went to every room and found no one in the house. Everything seemed normal and nothing out of place.

“Dimi, I’m sure that I locked the door when we left. I know I did!” He put his arms around me and kissed my forehead. He had that worried look.

“I will start fire.”

The fire was a comfort, although the silence was more than just quietness. It was a clue to our deep feeling of being violated. That uncertain, vulnerable feeling that sets your nerves on fire. We both felt that someone had been here and put the dogs in the cellar purposely. It went unsaid, but we knew.

Each noise, every time the wind would blow, or the house would creak, woke us. Our senses were alive and alert to every sound. The night passed slowly and typically uneventful.

The dogs and chickens were back to their usual behavior, and we seemed to relax somewhat over the next two days.

....not running away!



We finally received a call from the agent who would help us. We would meet with Loukianos Pantelides in the morning at 5:45 am. We were to go to the parking area behind St. Francis church, next to the back entrance to old Rhodes town. We knew the area well. It was dark and secluded, hidden from traffic. It's not a place where someone would stray at that time of the morning.

He asked us to do something that I soon realized was brilliant, and that's to rent a car instead of using our vehicles. The land barge was actually too big to go down the little narrow alley, and the bug was too conspicuous.

We entered the tree-lined parking area that ran parallel to the ancient wall. We got there early as we wanted to be sure we didn't miss our contact.

"We are early," Dimitris yawned.

"Can we cuddle? I'm still asleep."

"Yes, you come cuddle with your Dimitris, but must keep hands off." He put his arms around me, and we got comfortable for a few minutes.

A small car pulled in alongside us. The man got out of his car, tapped on my window, and went to the picnic table behind the church. We got out to join him.

...not running away!

“Mr. & Mrs. Patakinis - please sit. My name is Loukianos Pantelides. Mr. Byrnes has told me of your concerns and that you have been threatened by the art theft ring of the Cypriot artifacts. What can you tell me about this?”

We tried to be brief and to the point. The more we told him, the more questions he asked. We handed him copies of what we found and hoped that it would end our involvement. We told him that we just wanted to be finished with it and that they would have to follow up on anything that seemed incomplete.

He understood our concerns and said he would call if he had any further questions. We felt comfortable in handing over our files. When we were finished, Dimitris and I decided to stop for breakfast.

“We should be celebrating! What do you think of Mr. Pantelidas?” Reinforcement was what I was after.

“He seem honest, but don’t know if he take us serious. Maybe he not quite the man as Sahj.”

“Yes, I know what you mean, honey, but we’ve got to trust that we’ve done the right thing.”

“Right thing?”

“Giving him the research.”

“We do best to leave in his hands.”

We had a great breakfast, and the day was going to be clear and warm.

“What you say we go, Karpathos?” His eyes sparkling and anticipating an answer.

“Aren’t you tired?” I couldn’t stop yawning.

“You are too tire, so we go home. We take time to be home.”

“It’ll be like a vacation!” Cheerfully, I smiled, although my eyes weren’t getting used to the daylight and seemed to be blinded by the early sunlight.

“Vacation, yes. We will have long vacation in Paradise.”

“It’ll be Paradise if we could get away from the phone calls too. Sometimes it rings all day.”

“Yes, but we must not turn off phones,” he said.

“I know, just wishful thinking.”

We were both relieved to have given the investigation over to the new agent.

Our minds were occupied in our own thoughts as we drove home. It was as if a heavyweight had lifted off of us.

“Are you going to take the car back to the agency?”

“I do later. Right now, we rest.”

We snuggled in bed and didn't rise for another three hours. I awoke to the smell of onions cooking, which made me hungry. The clock was ringing three o'clock, and the sun was filtering in through the louver doors on the balcony. After dressing, I went to the kitchen and found Dimi at the stove.

“What are you cooking, Sugar?”

“I will make crock-pot stew. It will be ready when we come home.”

“Where are we going?”

“Is surprise.”

“Oh, no. No surprises. You always do this.”

“What? What I do?” His smile was trying to break out from behind his straight face. “Is okay, not big surprise.”

“What is it, I can't handle much today, I'm still trying to recuperate from everything. It's time to relax.”

He leaned over the counter and looked into my eyes. He took my hand and said,

“My Heart, this man do not want to put the stress on you. If you do not want to leave house today, we stay here, and surprise can wait.” Then he kissed my hand and turned back to stir the onions.

“You know that you're trying to make me feel bad.”

“No, Helena. Just want to make my Angel happy. We can go somewhere later. Is okay.”

“Okay.”

He continued with the ingredients for the crock-pot and would look back at me with that small smile.

“What?”

“You no curious?”

“Yes, are you going to give me a hint?”

He smiled and continued with the cooking. He has the ability to make me laugh over nothing.

...not running away!

“Is that the phone?” It sounded muffled, more distant.

“Oh, Helena, telephone on floor, will you get?”

“What’s the phone doing on the floor? Hello?”

When I got off the phone, I had to make an announcement.

“Dimi, I’ve got to go back to California. There’s a funeral I’d like to attend, in three days. I’ll have to leave as soon as possible.”

The announcement wasn’t a happy one, and the thought of more travel didn’t excite me. It’s always sad to leave Rhodes. Under the circumstances, this would be a short trip. Dimitris understood and reluctantly agreed to stay home.

He was very supportive and agreed that I should go, even though this old friend had made a hasty departure from this realm, Dimitris had never met him, and it was more important that someone be at the house at this time.

We talked every day, sometimes several times a day, while I was away. Although I had anticipated only being gone a week, it extended to another week when Mark saw me at the funeral. He was insulted that I came to the funeral without letting him know that I’d be in town.

He thought that I was still in Kefalonia, from the last he heard, and was not able to get in touch with me. He got audited by the IRS and expected me to come to explain about the tax returns.

Since the funeral was no place to have this discussion, I agreed to meet with him. There was no end to the accusations and innuendos. I did this on purpose. I *wanted* him to get audited, and on and on. Mark was threatening to sue me for breach of trust, tax evasion, and whatever else he could think of. He expected me to pay the back taxes and the fine that the IRS levied on him. I thought he was trying to get attention and didn’t take him seriously. After three days of arguing and not being able to agree on anything, I told him to set up a meeting with a neutral arbitrator that would referee another meeting, or I was leaving.

It took another three days to get a meeting scheduled. It was a harrowing few days, the more I would suggest a solution, Mark would go off on a tirade, and the blood pressure would rise. No compromise was good enough. All

during the last three days, I had been unable to contact Dimitris. I thought that the time difference was getting in the way, but then the phone went right to message instead of ringing.

By the fourth day of arbitration, I was tired, and not in the mood to put up with the behavior that Mark was demonstrating. We didn't seem to be any closer to an agreement. I had called Dimitris when I first got up at six o'clock in the morning. It would have been around four o'clock in the afternoon, Rhodes time. When it rang through, I was relieved. Then I heard Camilla. She said, "He has everything he needs; there's no reason to talk to you!" Then she hung up on me.

This seemed all very familiar. I was livid! My anger was beyond reasonable, and with Mark giving me a bad time, I was afraid that I would take it out him. I walked out of the meeting and called the airport for the next flight to Athens.

"Helen! Where are you going? We're not finished yet," Mark shouted. I was halfway across the parking lot.

"I have to go." He ran up to me and grabbed my arm.

"You can't leave now."

"I've got a flight to take, and besides, this arbitration is going nowhere. You'll have to manage the IRS, and I'll try to pay part of whatever it is. That's all I can do. I've got to go." I made my way to the car and heard Mark call after me.

"Helen, I'm sorry for this. I'll call you."

I picked up my suitcase and said my sorrowful goodbyes and left for the airport. I was very early for my flight. The Red-Eye wouldn't board for another six hours. I hoped that I would be able to bump up to an earlier flight. Airport food didn't appeal, and my nerves were so tense I wasn't hungry anyway. I tried calling Dimi several more times, and it finally just wouldn't even ring.

The plane boarded at 12:45 am, and we were in the air by 1:10 am. My heart pounded all the way to Greece. Changing planes in Athens was a breeze.

I rented a car at Diagoras and drove to the house. It was close to noon.

...not running away!

When I got to the house, everything seemed normal. The kitchen was clean, but I did see a pair of hoop earrings and Dimi's phone on the counter. It was dead, so I plugged it in.

When I got to the bedroom, the bed wasn't made, and my white lace nightgown was laid out on the bed.

"She wouldn't...." I thought to myself. I saw red, and my blood pressure must have gone through the roof. I waited for two hours, getting more angry as time passed. I went to our room, grabbed the large suitcase, and threw some clothes and shoes into it. I emptied my whole top drawer into the suitcase, just out of rage, I suspect.

I took the first flight out.

My flight was booked for the USA, but instead of changing planes, I stayed at the first leg of the trip, London. I didn't know where I was going, I jumped ship on a whim and hadn't even looked at hotel reservations. Something draws me to London, but I don't know why. Maybe because they speak English? The cabby was helpful, but the hotel I got was quite expensive. I knew I wouldn't be able to stay here very long.

I collapsed onto the bed and had myself a good cry. My mind was swimming in a dark lagoon of rage, jealousy, self-pity, and disgust. I was disgusted with the way things always seem to turn around, like a boomerang, good one day, bad the next. I was beginning to think it was me, my impatience, my distrust, and my expectations of Dimitris and myself. The worst part of this is that I let my emotions take over and lead me to a place I don't know. I thought about looking up a couple of people that I had met online. A distant cousin lived in the north, and a friend lived here in London. I nodded off to sleep, just thinking. My cell phone jolted me awake. It was Dimitris. I wasn't in any shape to take his call.

I sent a text to my friend, hoping to connect. In the meantime I walked, trying to get my bearings. I was in the hustle and bustle of the tourist capital. Tour buses passed me two or three at a time. I found myself in Trafalgar Square, taking in the beauty of the buildings and statuary.

Every step I took, I wished Dimitris was with me. I would have loved to share this with him. My Internet friend met me for lunch at a small restaurant. I can't say that we hit it off. She was very polite, but we really had nothing in common. I did get a reference from her so that I would be able to "let" a small apartment near the campus. It was across the Thames and out of the tourist district, which made the rate a lot more affordable.

Within days I took the student housing apartment that was available for the off-season. I called my friend to thank her for the reference. She invited me to have dinner with her and some friends. I didn't have any excuses not to go. It was a nice meal, and the crowd she knew was friendly.

Dimitris called me just before I was going to bed. I was still very upset, but I had to force myself to take the call.

"My Heart, when you come home?" He asked in his innocent, sweet voice.

"I'm not sure."

"Not sure? Is there problem?"

"I should ask you that question."

"What you say? Dimi miss his wife," he purred.

"I've got to go." I didn't wait for him to say anything more. I could barely keep my composure as it was. The phone rang again, but I didn't answer it. I turned off my phone and plugged it in, pulled up the covers, and tried to sleep. I wasn't used to the bed. The curtains didn't keep the light from the street out. I wasn't home with my husband, and the thought of Dimitris made me cry.

As I usually do, I started to rationalize what I saw in our bedroom, and chalk it up to another one of Camilla's pranks. But I couldn't let myself do that, not again. I had to give Dimi a chance to explain, but I couldn't let him off easily.

When I got up, I unplugged my phone and got ready to leave. I picked up a newspaper to see if there were any jobs in the area. There were many that I didn't qualify for, but I did see a few offered in the theater district, which gave me hope. I didn't know how to go about applying for a work visa, but I would need one in order to work.

...not running away!

That night Dimitris called again.

“Helena, why you no come home? Are you angry at this poor man?”

“Something like that.”

“You must tell this man, or Dimi can’t fix.”

“I don’t know if you can fix this. I’m going to need some time.”

“Tell Dimi what is wrong. Helena?”

“I tried to call you last Friday.”

“I do not get call, why you not call again?”

“Camilla answered your phone.”

He was searching for words. He hesitated just a little too long. I ended the call. My stomach ached with hurt over the hesitation. It was bad enough, then he waited. The hesitation was like a knife to my heart.

I hadn’t eaten anything all day and knew that I had to eat something before I could call it a night. I put on a sweater and headed to the little bistro down the street. It was closed. I grabbed a taxi and had it take me to a pub near Leicester Square.

It was a nice cozy pub with red and blue painted wood tables and chairs. The bar on the side had stools and a variety of imported beers. I took a table by the window. When I was waiting for my order, I saw the lady who was with my internet friend. She recognized me and came into the pub with her friends. They joined me at the table, and we had a round of beer.

Joy was with two men and another lady. I believe I was in shock as I tried to carry on a decent conversation. The one-man, Nick, looked so much like Dimitris, I was stammering. It reminded me of when Dimitris’ eyes sent that jolt of electricity through me. Nick, although very good looking was somewhat aloof, maybe even egotistical. I wasn’t paying attention to the conversation, but I noticed how his eyes would catch mine.

Eric was nice, a little young, and a bit of a clown. The other lady, Sarah, didn’t say much, she looked around a lot and acted like she was anxious to leave.

After we ate, we had another drink. Sarah and Eric left, and then Joy went a few minutes later to catch up with them. Nick stuck around to finish his drink and ask about where I’m from and why I came to London, etc. He said

he's an actor, mostly stage work. I had never heard of him, but I hadn't taken in any London theater. I believed him. There were a lot of stage theaters in the area. I had read a script with an actor on the square as he rehearsed. Getting caught in the rain, it was a fluke chance that I'd seek shelter where a young actor paced with script in hand, waiting for his audition. Nick offered me a "comp" that would get me into the show free. Free is always good.

It was a nice gesture, and I took the pass, although I wasn't sure if I'd use it. I tried not to arrange anything resembling appointments or commitments, but when he spoke of the theater, he had that spark in his eyes that I've seen before.

When I got to the apartment, I found my phone still plugged in. There were three calls from Dimitris. One text message:

"Helena, do not ignore Dimi. We must talk on this. Is not what you think. -S'agapo."

I looked at the message, and my heart began to ache in a strange way. It hurt but also felt happy that he left a message. As I laid on the bed, I wanted to call him and try to get to the bottom of this rift, but I was tired and not in the mood to be going through another emotional upheaval.

Just as I was dropping off to sleep, my phone rang again. It was from Morgan. I debated on whether or not I should tell her very many details. She would never be able to keep what I would say to herself.

"Hello."

"Helen, where the heck are you?"

"I had to go to a funeral."

"I know that, but you should have been back a week ago, where are you?"

"I'd rather not say, at least not yet."

"Oh. But you're okay?"

"I'm fine." I exhaled heavily.

"Geez, what happened now?" She sounded exasperated.

"What do you mean?"

"Dimi keeps calling, asking if I had talked to you. You two sure have a weird relationship."

...not running away!

“Just a little bumpy at the moment. Has Dimi told you anything?”

“He was talking to Andreas, but I don’t know what was said.”

“Camilla has raised her ugly head again. I don’t know what went on while I was gone, but when I tried to call Dimi, she answered his phone. That pissed me off that I couldn’t talk to him. Then when I went home, the house was quiet. The only thing out of place was a strange pair of hoop earrings, and my nightgown spread out on the bed.”

“That’s weird, but that doesn’t mean that he...”

“I wasn’t going to hang around. So I left. I was so hurt and angry, and I didn’t want to lose my temper, because I tell you, Morgan, I would probably try to kill her.”

“Doesn’t seem like these men know how to stand up to her.”

“I don’t know if I can take any more of Camilla. I’m not sure I want to try, I’m tired of it.”

“Oh, man! I didn’t want to hear that,” she said.

“I didn’t want to say it. I love that man so much, but I’m not strong enough to fight Camilla. She has an iron will, and I think I’m all worn out.” I could feel my throat tighten, and I was fighting off the tears.

“You haven’t talked to Dimi yet?”

“Not really. I should call him, but I’m so tired. I don’t have anything much to say to him that he’d want to hear. We went through all this with Camilla before. He should have known.”

“It’s been a while since I’ve talked to you,” she lamented.

“I know. I sure miss how it was when we all lived in the family home. Everything went so smoothly then.”

“Oh, I know, I miss it too, and living in Rhodes. I want to move back, but with Andreas’ work and the work I’ve got lined up, it might be a long time before we do any moving.”

“Yeah, it would be hard, now.”

“I guess Dimi has been talking to Stefano and trying to get some idea of what to do. Rena was laughing about how the guys go to Stefano with their problems. She said, ‘Stefano is like the camel looking for the oasis on a dark night when it comes to women.’ She made me laugh.”

“She is funny. If you talk to her, tell her I’ll call her soon.”

“Oh, Andreas wanted me to ask you if you have the files that were in the pantry. I guess Dimi was going to burn them or something, but he can’t find them.”

“I don’t have any files. I have some drawings. but I didn’t take any of the files. It should still be in the pantry.”

“I’ll tell Andreas.”

“Ask him to tell Dimi not to burn the photos.”

“Okay.”

After the call ended, I felt *really* alone. That empty feeling like you’re the only one left in the world. I didn’t like having that feeling. The thought of how happy we were when we were all together, and the communal living arrangement that, at the time, was a matter of convenience, ended up being one of the most important times of our lives. I longed for that. Now, I have to try to start my life over if I can.

After reviewing the visa requirements to obtain a work permit, I was doubtful that I would seek permanent residency in the UK, which was depressing. I might have to do freelance work until I can decide what to do.

I fell asleep, trying to think of a way to stay in the UK. It wasn’t going to be easy. Then I started thinking about the little picture and the files. I know when I left, the box was in the pantry. Unless it was moved, but Dimi would have had to move it, and I’m sure that he’d remember that. The only reason that I have a few drawings now is that they were put in the suitcase just to get them off of the dining room table. Otherwise, I would have nothing from the investigation.

By three in the morning, I had to call Dimi. I had been lying awake worried about the disappearance of the files.

“Dimi, did I wake you?”

“Helena? Are you okay, is something wrong?”

“Morgan told me that you couldn’t find the files.”

“Uhh, no, can not find. You did not take?”

...not running away!

“No, I don’t have any of the files, just a few drawings. You didn’t move them somewhere and forget about it?”

“Helena, if Dimi move, would remember doing. Files are gone,” he yawned.

“That means someone took them. Do you know if anything else is missing?”

“Do not know. Helena, you come home, this man no good alone. You come, and we will find together.”

“You’ve got to try to find the files. If they find out that we were digging up things that they don’t want people to know, you could be in danger. This could cause a lot of problems if it gets in the wrong hands. Are the hidden files still safe?”

“You still care about Dimi?” This question was like a dagger to my heart.

“Of course, I still care. Geez, Dimi, I love you, I don’t want anything to happen to you.”

“My Heart, why we not together?”

“If you don’t find those files, it may get into the wrong hands. You could all be in danger if they find out what we’ve been doing. You know this, Dimi.”

“Yes, Dimi know. You come home, Helena, we do this together.”

“I can’t.”

“But why?”

“Ask Camilla.”

* * *



Glossary



Glossary

Efharisto - Thank you

Kafenía - Coffee shop, Restaurant, etc.

Kalimera - Good morning

Kalispera - Good evening

Kefi - One's uncontrollable joy

Meyedes - Appetizers

S'agapo - I love you

Taverna - Pub, tavern, bar

* * *



Connect with the Author



If you enjoyed this story thus far, I would really love to hear from you. Your review of this book on Goodreads.com would very much be appreciated. By giving a star rating on Amazon or Goodreads it helps the author in so many ways. When a book has rating stars, it elevates the book in the ratings, which may give it better exposure. Thank you for giving my book a chance by purchasing and reading it.

To connect with the author please see the links below:

ginatoinette@yahoo.com

<http://www.georginaAntoinette.com>

<http://www.twitter.com/irite2>

<http://www.facebook.com/rhodesdreams>

* -!- *



Other books in this series:

1. The Shadows of Rhodes: The Beginning
2. The Gods Have Smiled
3. From Curiosity to Obsession (release date January 11, 2020)
4. The Price of the Puzzle (release date: February 15, 2020) *
5. The Red Eyed Cat (TBA)

*This book.

Map



