

The Gods Have Smiled

The Shadows of Rhodes book 2



by Georgina Antoinette

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The Gods Have Smiled

The Shadows of Rhodes II



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Second edition

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To he, who inspired the creation of this.

Across the vast distance of time,
had we met in another life,
in another place?
Did I love you then,
as I love you now?
Just as the magnets must follow their path, I
am drawn to you.

-THE AUTHOR

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The Shadows of Rhodes

Book 2

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Stumbling Blocks



When they brought the check, it seemed exorbitant. Dimitris went to inquire about the bill. They discussed it in Greek. The Host seemed to ask a lot of questions, especially after Dimitris handed him his credit card. Security over a credit card seemed a bit excessive. As I put on my coat, I could see the Host in a ranting attitude toward Dimitris and was gesturing out toward the dining area. He looked in his book, brought out some paper, and waved it around, then showing it to Dimi. I stood to leave the table.

“Come, we go,” Dimi uttered, in a voice that was clearly irritated. When he sat in the car, I asked him what it was all about. “Not important, just had tab bill added to dinner, is okay,” he smiled a very strained smile and patted my knee.

“I was wondering. I didn’t think our dinner was *that* expensive.”

“No, it was not.” After we left, and as we were driving home, he said, “Helena, if you go to dinner use credit card. You do not need to tab.”

“What?” I wasn’t sure I understood correctly.

“If you take guest to dine, pay with credit; do not tab.”

“Tab? I didn’t run a tab,” I said in my defense.

“But he show me tab, you sign.”

“I’ve never been to that restaurant before.” Dimitris looked at me as we turned at the signal.

“Maybe you not remember. You upset, maybe.”

“Dimi, I’m telling you that I’ve never been there before. This was the first time. Who would I take out to eat at a place like that?” He gestured that he didn’t know, and kept driving. When we got to the house, I had a few minutes to think, and I said,

“I hope you didn’t pay that bill.”

“Yes, I pay your tab,” he hunched his shoulders, “I don’t know.”

“It must be a mistake.” I wasn’t going to make anything more of this until I have a chance to look into it further. We lit the fire in the hearth. The heater was working too, so it didn’t take long to get things warm and cozy. Dimitris fed the dogs, and they were happy to get some attention.

“Sweetie, will you get the phone, please?” I asked.

In Greek, the discussion seemed matter-of-fact, no raising of voice or sign of distress. He looked up from his conversation and gave me that little-boy smile.

“Who was that?” I asked. He came up to me and put his arms around me.

“They say wedding dress, shoes, and wedding things to deliver. You can tell Dimi of this. Is good,” he smiled.

“Dimi, I didn’t do this. When would I do any shopping? I’d tell you if I did.”

“Is okay.” He kissed my forehead and went back into the kitchen.

“It wasn’t me!” I yelled at him as I followed him from the living room.

“Here, coffee.” He handed me my cup.

I put my cup down, turned toward Dimitris and took hold of his shoulders to face me. I wanted to be sure that he listened to me and that he believed what I said.

“Dimi, I didn’t go to the dress shop and buy these things. I didn’t go to the restaurant and run a tab. I think someone is using your credit. Something is going on here, so I don’t want you paying for any of this!”

“Who would do this?”

“Whoever left the pictures, maybe?” I was referring to the envelope of pictures left at our back door. Pictures of Dimitris in several compromising positions. He looked at me and said,

“Well, we don’t pay any more of this.”

I was beginning to get anxious about these unexpected events. Dimitris didn’t let on that it bothered him, but then he doesn’t think of the devious tricks that people pull on each other. He’s a little too trusting, and I’m just the opposite.

“You don’t think Aiden would be doing this, do you?” I asked.

“No, this is just mistake. It happens.”

The phone rang as Dimitris walked by.

“Hello, Rena! She talk to you, Helena.” He handed the phone to me.

“Hello.” Rena, who is married to Dimiris’ older brother, Stefano, began telling me that when she went to visit Camilla, an old childhood friend of Dimitris, she was told how well she and Aiden were getting along and that they have been dating a lot.

“That’s great,” I said. “Did you find any mail at the house that looked urgent?”

“That’s why I’m calling, there are two letters from Germany and three or four personal letters to Dimi,...uh, they smell of cheap perfume. I thought I’d tell you before you see them. At least you’ll be prepared. Then there’s a stack of bills and the usual junk, too.”

“Thanks, Rena, and the house? Is everything okay there?”

“It looks fine, just lonely. I’ve never seen it empty before.”

“Yeah, I’m sorry about that too. Well, listen, ...”

“Oh, and Professor Kanakaris called Stefano, and said that he wants to meet with Stefano. We think it’s about the little picture. He didn’t say that, but that’s what I think.”

“Oh, okay. We’ll get over to visit in a day or so, but we’ll have to call you,” I said.

“Okie-dokie, lady! I’ll talk to you later!”

“Rena said that there’s quite a lot of mail, and some perfume-soaked letters for you, my love,” I said in jest.

“If you not send, I know not who.”

“Yes, well, nothing surprises me anymore.”

Dimitris put his arms around me and said,

“None of this matters.”

I put my arms around him and looked into his eyes. I couldn't think of much to say; his eyes were happy with a twinkle that ignites my heart.

“What?” He questioned.

“I was thinking, what do you think of us using the room that shares the fireplace, for our bedroom?”

“If you wish, Helena, anything you want.”

“Come and look. We'll need to take this bed and put it upstairs.” I pointed to the double bed that was in this room. He sat on it, took my hand and pulled me closer.

“I have been very good today,” he said as he put his hands around my waist.

“You have.”

“Will you be mean to Dimi?” I took his face in my hands and said,

“No, I won't be mean,” then I kissed him, as he unbuttoned my jeans. We made love in this room which will be our hideaway. I had plans for this room which will give it a new life.

We heard the phone ringing again in the kitchen. Some days it seems to ring non-stop. Dimi called me to come to the phone.

“Hello?”

“Hey, it's me. Are you busy?” Morgan asked.

“No, not really, what's up?”

“Rena wants the face of the fireplace finished before Christmas. I don't know what I'm going to do, can you help me?”

“Sure, don't worry, when do you want to start?”

“Tomorrow, but we still have to buy the supplies. I don't know what I need to get!” She was getting panicky about it, and there wasn't a lot of time to fit this project in, before the Holidays.

“Hold on a minute, Morgan,” I asked Dimi about art supplies, and where we would have to go to get what we needed.

“Morgan, we'll have to go into Athens to get what we need. We're going to see Rena tomorrow anyway, so we'll pick you up and do whatever we have to

do to get this thing finished. Okay?”

“Oh, thanks. Then I’ll see you tomorrow?”

Morgan has been like a sister to me since high school. Our lives have gone in different directions, but we kept the connection strong. This trip to Greece was intended to rekindle our friendship after years of separation.

I called out for Dimitris. I didn’t see him in the bedroom. After a few minutes, he came into the kitchen for some water.

“Sugar, we’ll need to pick up Morgan and get the supplies for the fireplace before we go to Rena’s.”

“Is okay, Rena wants fireplace done?” He asked, but seemed distracted.

“Yes, there’s not much time to fit it in before the Holidays.”

“We will leave early,” he said as he took some aspirin.

“What’s the matter?” I asked.

“Nothing, just small headache.”

Time was getting short as the Holidays were rapidly approaching. We got up early and got ready to go to Athens. Dimitris seemed a little tired and not too enthused about the trip on the ferry.

“Are you feeling alright?”

“I am feeling wonderful, it is beautiful day,” he answered. Within an hour of boarding the ferry, Dimitris was feeling worse by the minute. He sat with his head hanging almost between his knees.

“Maybe we’d better go back home. Dimi, you’re getting sick.”

“No, no, we go to Rena’s,” he insisted. “How long takes to do fireplace?”

“If we get everything we need, I don’t think it will take more than two days.” I reached over and put my hand on his forehead. “You’re burning up, Dimi! You’re really sick. I’m taking you back.” He sat with his head resting against me. I could feel the heat from his fever radiating out of his body.

“Not sick, we go to Athens,” he struggled to say.

“You’re going back home to bed.”

“You make promise to Miss Morgana, so, we go to Athens then I can be sick at Rena’s.”

It wasn't long before he fell asleep. As we both caught up on some rest, we heard the docking announcement. Against my better judgment, we would be in Athens, and Morgan should be waiting.

"Dimi, I think we'd better get you home to bed. You're getting worse. Rena will understand. Morgan and I still have to go buy all of the supplies. You can't traipse all over hell and gone like this. Let's just go back home."

"Maybe, maybe I go to Andreas, and you go with Morgana to Rena's. Finish job. I call you when I get there."

"Andreas is in Santorini. I'll take you back home."

"Rena want the job done. You do with Morgana. Come home fast."

"Dimi, I can't leave you alone when you're so sick." He laid his arm across my lap and placed his clammy hand on mine. "I'll tell Morgan we'll have to wait to do the job."

"No, you go, you already here, so go. I can be okay. You make promise, so, go." He placed his hand on my cheek. "Please do."

"You have to make this difficult. When you get home, call me. Okay?"

"Yes, I call."

"God, I hate to leave you like this." I kissed his forehead and felt so bad to see him sick and not be able to take care of him. "Please, turn on the heat and get into bed as soon as you get home. I'll be home as soon as I can. Okay?"

"Yes, my Heart."

I kissed this poor man and said my farewell. When I met Morgan, I told her about Dimi and that I might have to leave early from the job.

"Well, let's get going, the sooner we get done, the sooner you can get back home," Morgan sympathized.

Two hours later, we located the supplies we needed, then we were on our way to the island of Karpathos. With all of the trips we've taken back and forth, we're getting to be pretty good at island hopping. Dimitris called my cell phone. He sounded terrible, almost incoherent. He tried to act cheerful like everything couldn't be better.

I called Rena and told her we'd be on the 5:00 p.m. flight. She was shocked to hear that Dimitris got sick. When we arrived, she had a meal spread out

for us as usual. We were starving and anxious to get started. As we ate, we went over the instructions for gilding. Considering that the fireplace was faced with stucco, the care of gentle handling of the gold leaf wouldn't be as crucial. We started without delay, and as expected, it was more difficult than we thought it would be on starting out. With trial and error, it took us an hour to get the knack of it. It was more tedious than other gold leaf projects would be because of the stucco texture. Our arms got tired of almost pounding the gold leaf into the holes and crevices that stucco provides.

Morgan and I worked well together, and we were able to knock out the lower half of the hearth facing by eight p.m. It was time for a break. I tried to call Dimitris, but he didn't answer. I didn't wait to leave a message, I figured that he was asleep, and I'd call once more before it gets too late. We ate dinner and were back at it again to get as much of the fireplace finished as we could. As it was, the lighting didn't quite make for adequate working conditions, and it wasn't long before our eyes were hurting from the glare off of the stucco. By 10:30 p.m. I was ready to call it a day. I could hardly focus my eyes, and that made for more mistakes.

"I think I'm done for tonight. I've got to call Dimi. I hope he's awake," I said. When I called again, I only let it ring four times. I didn't want to wake him. I went back out to the family, and Morgan was talking with Rena at the kitchen table.

"How's Dimi doing?" Rena asked.

"I think he's asleep; I didn't get an answer."

"Poor guy, I hope he's feeling better." Rena sympathized.

"I worry about him, being alone when he's so sick," I said.

"Helena, would you come back to my office? I've got some news," Stefano, Rena's husband and older brother to Dimitris, asked.

I went back to Stefano's office. He sat behind the desk and pulled out a file. When he mentioned that he had news, I knew that the little picture of a child that seemed to bring us so much grief was, at last, going to tell its story.

“We received some of the test results, and I think you’ll find it interesting. The little picture has proven to be quite a find. The signature; definitely Alain Deischant. The paper that was folded inside the frame had some words and symbols, still being examined, and here’s a surprise, the cardboard backing had a map drawn on it. It’s still being worked on to enhance it without destroying it, but it appears to be important information that in my opinion, could possibly lead to the recovery of Deischant’s stash of artifacts. Now, as far as your power of attorney, we might have no choice but to turn everything over to the Cypriot authorities. But, because of your amended clause of secrecy, we still have a chance to follow this a little further.”

“I wish Dimi were here. He would have a few questions.” I breathed a heavy sigh. “I can’t think about it now. This is the furthest thing from my mind.” I got up to leave, and it struck me, “Is there a way to get copies of the originals and the test results before they are finished?”

“I might be able to copy everything except what is in process.”

“I wish you would do that, just in case something happens, we’ll have copies of *something*.”

“Good idea, you never know,” he agreed.

“Thanks, Stefano.”

“I’ll give Dimi a call later. Where did he pick up the flu?” He asked.

“I don’t know, we’ve been stirring up a lot of dust and dirt in the old buildings, or maybe he picked it up on one of the ferries, it’s hard to say. So with this little information, we don’t really know what the map and all of it means. Are we still where we were before they started testing?” I asked.

“Not entirely, but there is more to know, and it’s encouraging.”

“I guess I’m going to bed, I’m exhausted. So, good night everyone.”

“Wait, Helena, take the mail in the box over there. It’s all for you and Dimi,” Rena said.

“Thanks, Rena, good night.”

I took the box of mail into the bedroom, but I needed to talk to Dimi. It’s not like him not to call. Even if he were on his deathbed, he’d manage to call. Now, it’s too late to consider calling him again, I realized.

I shuffled through some of the envelopes, and there was a definite smell

of perfume about the box of mail. There were three letters in the same hand that had a perfume smell to them, all addressed to Dimi. I looked at these envelopes and weighed them carefully in my hands. I was tempted to open one and read it, but they were addressed to Dimi, not to me.

There was a letter from my cousin, a letter from Mark, and a letter from Athens. I wondered what Mark could want? I thought that everything was settled. What more was there to say? I read the letter:

“Dear Helen.

“It’s been a while since I’ve heard from you. Even though I know that you aren’t coming back, at least, not back to me, I still wish you were here. I never realized during all of the time we were together, how much you meant to me. I guess you expected more and I never came through. I had to write to let you know that I’m thinking about you and all the good times we had together. I miss not being able to talk and joke around with you. You’re the only one who understands what I’m about. I miss that. I hope your life is going as good as expected. Maybe someday we can be friends again. I’d like that. Call me sometime.

Love,

Mark.”

Hmmm, this was a pleasant surprise. I expected I would be getting angry. I feel bad for Mark. I miss his friendship, too.

I opened the Athens letter next. It was signed by Aiden. It was one sheet, short and to the point.

“Helen.

“I’m sorry. I was led in the wrong direction. It wasn’t me.

Aiden”

“It wasn’t me,” what does that mean? What is he talking about?

I can’t seem to concentrate on the mail. Even the letters from my family seem unimportant. All I can think of is poor Dimi, alone and probably

miserably ill.

I awoke in the middle of the night. I looked at the clock, it was 2:30 am. I couldn't go back to sleep, so I got up. I sat in the kitchen and kept looking over to the fireplace. I made some coffee then went to my room to dress. By the time the coffee was made, I was dressed and ready to get started on the fireplace. With coffee at my side and the thought of getting home, I worked on the gilding until everyone got up.

"Helena, what have you been doing? Have you been up all night?" Rena asked.

"Not all night, I couldn't sleep."

"Geez, you got a lot done! How long have you been up?" Morgan asked.

"Well, I started working at it again about 3 a.m. I got almost all of it, but check what I did because I couldn't see very well, and I might have missed a few places. Do you think that you could finish it? I'd like to get home."

"Hell yes, thanks for everything you did," Morgan said.

I got my things, the box of mail and was on my way home. By the time I caught the flight to Kefalonia, I was half asleep. Going without sleep was catching up with me.

I was lulled almost to oblivion when we landed in Kefalonia. I suddenly realized that I had no way to get home. I called a taxi and waited ten minutes or more for a ride. When I came in the front door, the first thing I smelled was soup on the stove. I put my things down and went to the stove and turned off the flame. I thought I'd check on Dimi; things seemed pretty quiet. I peeked into the bedroom, and he was still asleep. I went into the room and sat on the bed. I reached to touch his forehead.

"Helena, what you do here? I should pick you up at docks," he said as he sat up.

"You've still got a fever; I've been worried about you. Have you taken any aspirin?" I asked as I fixed his blankets and pulled up the covers.

"No, not yet. I miss my Helena."

"What is this?" I asked as I pulled out a pair of red panties from under the

sheet.

“What?” He asked as he tried to focus his eyes. “Where you find?”

“Dimi, what’s been going on?” My eyes darted around the room, looking for other “things.” I didn’t see anything unusual. I couldn’t get mad at Dimi, and I know he’s not up to my questions. “Are you hungry? I can bring you some soup.”

“Okay,” he said. “You make soup?”

“Your soup, the soup you have on the stove.” There was no reaction. His fever was draining his strength. I went to the kitchen to fix a bowl of soup for him. When I reached into the cupboard for the serving tray, falling off the shelf and onto the counter were several Polaroid pictures. I didn’t think that these could be new pictures; who uses a Polaroid camera these days?

I looked at the pictures. Now I know where the red panties came from! I took the tray to the bedroom, with the soup, crackers, and juice. I put the aspirin next to the bed for Dimitris to take later.

“Dimi, Sweetie, take the aspirin after you eat.” He was pale as a ghost. “Where did you catch this bug?”

“Don’t know, hit me like truck!”

“When did Camilla come here?” I asked as I handed him a spoon.

“Camilla? I don’t see Camilla,” he said as he tried the soup. “Soup is hot. Other soup better.”

“What other soup is that, Sweetheart?”

“Other soup you make. You make next time.”

“Did you get out of bed to make this?” I asked.

“No, this soup, you make?”

“No, I didn’t make this. I think Camilla made it.” I was looking for a reaction when I said that, but there was none. “Dimi, was Camilla here? Do you remember her being here?”

“Maybe, maybe dream it,” he said.

“You didn’t dream it. She was here.”

“I cannot eat.” He said and laid back making a bitter expression.

“Okay.” I took the tray away. “It’s chilly in here, maybe I should turn on

the heat.” I took the soup and tray back to the kitchen, making sure that I avoided the pictures.

“Helena, come here.” He called out to me. When I came back to the room, he had his arm out to me, gesturing me to go to him.

“Come to bed, Helena.”

I slipped off my shoes and jeans, climbed in under the blankets and into his arms. I laid my head on his chest.

“Ah, this feels good.” I was ready for some sleep and couldn’t be more comfortable. Dimitris still felt a little feverish, although not as high as it was.

“I think you not home until late,” Dimi murmured.

“I was worried when I couldn’t get you on the phone, so I came home.”

“I sleep. Did not hear phone ring, just sleep.”

“Yes, well, you still need to rest.”

I had a hunch about what was going on, with the pictures and the underwear in the bed. I couldn’t be sure until Dimitris is feeling better when I can show him the pictures and perhaps give my opinion on what was the obvious scenario. When I awoke, I saw that it was after six p.m. I still had to unpack my bag and go through the rest of the mail. I tried to sneak away without disturbing Dimitris, but he woke up.

“Are you leaving? Come back to bed.”

“It’s too early for me, I have some things I should be doing. How are you feeling?” I buttoned my pants then put my hand on his brow. “There doesn’t seem to be any fever; you feel cool.” He removed my hand from his face and pulled me close to him.

“You worried about me?” He asked with a smile.

“Of course, I was worried sick. When you didn’t answer the phone, it made it worse. You could have called me on my cell.”

“My Heart, I was not awake. I was what you say, ‘out of it.’ Was reminded of you, when you so sick. But now, I am better. I get up.”

“Oh, no you don’t. Just because the fever is gone doesn’t make you well.”

“But you will leave me all alone in here. You should not leave me alone so much, my Heart.”

"I'm not going anywhere. Just yell if you need anything. I'll be right here. Give me a kiss, and I'll be in the kitchen." He kissed me like a schoolboy being punished, and I had to laugh. I started to go to the laundry room, and as I left, I could hear from our bedroom,

"My Heart?"

"Yes," I replied.

"Helena?"

"What is it?" I called back to him. I waited for an answer, and I waited. I started the load of laundry.

"Helena?"

I went back into the bedroom, sat on the edge of the bed and looked into his eyes.

"What can I do for you, Sweetheart?"

"You stay here, keep Dimi company."

"Sweetie, I can't get anything done if I stay in here. We need to get a TV!"

"No, I only need my Helena, and I will be happy."

"Okay, maybe, if you are up to it, maybe we can talk," I said.

"Yes, we do that." He sat up in bed.

"Keep the blankets up, I'm going to the kitchen, I'll be right back."

I reluctantly retrieved the photographs from the kitchen. I was tempted to tear up the pictures and forget about them, but I don't think Dimi would believe what she did unless he saw them.

"My Heart, where are you?" I could hear him calling.

"I'm right here." I sat on the bed. "Okay, we have some things to talk about, are you ready?"

"Yes, will you come under covers?" He asked. I moved next to him as he wanted to cuddle.

"Dimi, do you remember coming home yesterday?" I asked.

"Was sick. Worse sick!"

"And you got a taxi?" I asked. He hesitated.

"I, was sick, I....was dizzy. I think, Camilla, Camilla drove. Yes, she was on

ferry dock waiting. She drive from docks.”

“Camilla was here this morning. She slept here, in this bed last night.”

“No, she would not.....,” he said and looked at me.

“I found these this morning in the kitchen.” I showed him the photographs, one at a time, and felt his reactions to each one.

“What is this? What she doing?” He wondered.

As we looked at these, it was becoming more obvious that Dimitris was not only asleep, he was unconscious. I could feel Dimitris’ anger building. He was radiating body heat that had nothing to do with the fever that he is now rid of.

“Dimi, I didn’t want to show you these while you’re still sick.”

“I am happy you did. She did this to hurt you. To come between us.”

“I...” I caught my words. I didn’t really want to ask, as my gut was telling me all I needed to know. Asking would only re-enforce this bitter knowledge.

“Ask, Helena.” He said as he rubbed my shoulder while looking at the pictures.

“Were you and Camilla ever more than friends?” I waited and knew when he looked at me.

“She was there. I no love her, she was friend, and she, she was there.”

“How long were you together?”

“Not together, never together.”

“Well, how long did you two see each other?”

“Off and on, since I am back to Rhodes.”

“When your Mom got sick, and you came home, since then?” I could see that he was getting uncomfortable with the questions.

“Yes, but not always. She goes to Athens, I go to Karpathos, and when in Rhodes, I see her. I stop at over six months.”

“Why did you stop?” I asked, and by this time I was having a hard time keeping a calm composure.

“This man never, she expect more,” he said. He was feeling uncomfortable about telling me, but he continued. “She took things to mean more. Thought this man already husband. So I no see her.” He continued to rub my arm but

no longer looked at the photos.

“She’s a beautiful woman, smart, determined obviously, why didn’t you fall in love with her? She must still be in love with you.”

“We not in love, just friends.”

“Dimi, a woman doesn’t go to bed with a man like you for almost five years without falling in love.” As much as I didn’t want to say this, the words came out of my mouth.

“She is angry. I think she angry at you,” he said.

“No doubt she is, but I also think she’s hoping to break us up so that she can step in.”

“Tomorrow I go to get test results from doctor. We get ready for civil bond and put end to tricks.” Dimitris put both arms around me and kissed my forehead.

“Well, we can put these pictures away.”

“I burn,” he offered.

“No, I want to keep them. The tables may turn. You never know.”

“You are devious one,” he smiled.

“Call it insurance.”

“Does this make you angry at Dimi?”

“I’m not angry with you, but I might tear her hair out when I see her.” I laughed, mostly to release the tension building in my chest.

“My Helena, you surprise Dimi, I think you kill this poor man. This poor stupid man.”

“You’re not stupid, Dimi, maybe a little naive to the evil ways of women.”

“Are you evil, my Heart?”

“I can be, so watch out.” We both laughed, and Dimi rolled over on top of me to kiss me.

“You are too evil for me, Helena. S’agapo.”

“Yes, and now I’m going to be mean.” I started to get up.

“Oh no, no mean today, Dimi is too sick for you to be mean.” Then he pulled me back on to the pillow.

“Dimi, you’ve been terribly sick, remember? You be good. I’ll make us some dinner, and you will stay in bed and keep warm. Okay?” I talked my way out

of bed.

“Oh, Helena. You are too mean. What can I do?”

I still hadn't gone over all of the mail, and I wondered about the perfumed letters. I made a light dinner and let Dimitris come to the table to eat. Although I'm not a cook, Dimi was very gracious and tried to eat.

“Okay, Sugar, get back into bed, and we will have the fun of reading all the mail that Rena got for us. Doesn't that sound like fun?”

“If you say, then yes, is fun.” He was looking pale and tired.

“Come,” I said and helped him stand up. “Let's get you back to bed.”

I got him back under the covers and checked for fever. He had none, which was a relief, but he didn't look well.

“Here is the mail, with a few perfumed fan letters, and I will return after I clean the kitchen.” I kissed his brow and turned on the reading lamp next to the bed.

I returned after fifteen minutes. Dimitris had fallen asleep before he had opened any of the mail. He separated the suspect letters from the rest, but nothing was opened. I put everything back into the box, but I did leave the scented notes next to the lamp.

I fed and watered the dogs, made sure the house was locked then took a shower. It was a long day, and I welcomed the small bed we would share. Once I turned off the lamp and got comfortable, Dimitris cuddled in behind me, kissed my ear, and we went to sleep.

The Camilla Factor



I awoke with visions of Camilla, wondering what she's capable of in her pursuit of Dimitris. The blatant extremes she has gone to so far, makes me think that her desperation to possess him has become an obsession. Should I confront her, or should Dimitris? Would both of us together be more effective?

"Helena?" I heard whispered. I turned toward Dimitris.

"Hi Sugar, how are you feeling?" I put the back of my fingers against his cheek. "No fever today."

"We get busy today. Things to do for civil bond." He had that sparkle in his eyes this morning.

"I don't know if it's a good idea to be out running around so soon. You're still weak."

"I am strong, no more sick," he announced.

"I know, you're a very big, strong man," I said sarcastically. "But it's still too soon to be out." I was sitting when Dimitris got hold of my hair and pulled me back. My head fell back into his lap, and he said

"My Helena, I let you tell me things, and I obey. I give you my heart, and you take care of this man. You find pictures of Dimi that are not nice, and still, you are patient. This why Dimi love you." He leaned down and kissed me. "Now, I take shower and start day."

“Are you hungry?” He turned back to me quickly and said,
“I will cook when out of shower.”

I dumped the box of mail on the kitchen table and sorted out which mail Dimitris will handle and what mail I needed to read. After so many days away, we had to see to the bills without delay. Which reminded me, I didn't see any of my bills forwarded from America in the mix of mail.

Dimitris finally got around to the letters, and as I suspected, they were from Camilla. They were signed “C,” so it didn't take a detective to figure it out.

The first one, dated after Andreas Day was one of those “I haven't seen you in a very long time” and “remember how it used to be” type of letters. A lot of remembering when, and wishing for more.

The second letter was after we moved out of Rhodes. It had an aura of desperation in the tone of the writing. It sounded very much like she was pleading her case and begging for the chance to be with him again. She was adept at non-committal language. She never came right out and said anything specific as to her wants or expectations. She never came out and said that she wanted to be with him, but it was there none the less. She did make a point of bringing the Aiden card in, against me, and the American card against our future. I'm sure that if she knew at this point that I would marry him in the Greek Orthodox, she would have had some ammunition there as well. She gave a secret cell phone number for him to call, day or night when he wanted to meet with her.

The third letter was a frantic plea. Camilla never got a response from the other letters, nor a call on her secret cell phone. She poured out her heart and admitted to how much and how long she loved him, and that she could not bear to see him with anyone else. She came right to the point saying, “you're mine, and you know you always will be,” and “I should have kept our baby,” was the clincher!

The letters were in Greek. As Dimitris read them aloud, he didn't have any other reaction but that of contempt, especially when she turned her venom

on me. When he read the line about the baby, at first he was speechless. Then he got livid with anger. He was pacing back and forth cursing and talking to me in Greek.

“Dimi.” I took his hand as he passed by me. “Dimi, sit down, I can’t understand you.”

“What she say, she never say to me about baby. This is lie! Why she do this?”

“Dimi, she’s trying to get your attention. If she has to hurt you to do it, she will. There’s nothing you can do about it. If she ever got pregnant, there’s not much that can be done, is there?” I put my arms around him. “You know that she’s desperate. She’s bound to do or say anything to get you back, even if it comes to hurting you, picking at your vulnerable spots just to get your reaction. She knows that you’re lost to her. Now she’s bitter. It’s time to wash your hands of her.” I looked at his face. He was hurting. She accomplished her goal.

The rest of the mail paled in comparison to the devastation of the third letter. The pile of bills that sat on the table was untouched, and they would wait until the waters calm again. It was my regret that we opened this mail at all. With all of the shenanigans that Camilla has pulled, the thought of her coming into this house and somehow drugging Dimitris while he was so vulnerable, angered me to the point of wanting to have her arrested for whatever I could think of, assault, trespassing, or anything else I could think of.

I held Dimitris tightly. I whispered in his ear to try to calm him. I can imagine his emotional state. I can empathize with him in not knowing if she got pregnant or not. If she did, what happened? Did she purposely abort, or was it an accident? Did she leave the island long enough to have a baby and give it up? And after all this time, why would it be important enough to reveal now? She didn’t think it was important to tell him about it before.

“Do you want to go back to bed, and rest?”

“No, can’t rest,” he said and let out a sigh. He kissed my hand and apologized for the chaos.

“You have nothing to apologize for; I should have waited until you felt better to go through this. But it’s over now, isn’t it?” I asked. He didn’t say anything; he just hugged me.

“Oh, Helena,” he sighed.

As the day progressed, we were able to get a lot of things unpacked and make some semblance of order in the house.

“Helena, come here please.” I heard Dimitris call.

“What is it?” He was holding the phone out to me.

“Hello?” It was the medical office relaying the results of the blood tests and telling me what it meant. I smiled at Dimitris. He was beaming. “Thank you.”

“I did good?” I put my arms around his neck and said

“You did very well.” Then I kissed him.

“Now, you will go buy dress?”

“Yes, I will.”

The phone in the kitchen rang again. Dimitris picked it up to speak. I noticed he was talking in a low voice, pacing and looking at the floor. He turned and looked at me. He looked away, said something into the phone and gesturing with his hand as if scolding someone. I was walking into the living room when he called me back.

“Helena.” He then handed me the phone. I silently asked who it was, he kissed my hand and went into the living room.

“Hello?”

“It’s me, don’t hang up.”

“Aiden?”

“Don’t hang up, I have to talk to you.”

“What’s going on?”

“I told Dimitris, but he wanted me to tell you. I think Camilla is crazy! She’s been to your house. She’s the one who has been charging things to Dimitris’ accounts. I hate to admit it but she got me wrapped up in this, and I didn’t even see it coming.”

“I knew it was her.”

“I only wanted to apologize for getting into this mess. I let her influence my better judgment, and I feel bad for allowing myself to be manipulated by her. Once I took a step back, I finally saw what she was doing. I wanted to warn you. She’s out to cause trouble. That’s all.”

“And you told all this to Dimitris?”

“Yes, he needed to know.”

“Thank you, Aiden, I appreciate you telling us. Thank you. She has been stirring things up, and I think we’re both just about fed up with it all. I thought you two had a thing going, what happened?”

“She only wanted to know about you. She pumped me for information on us, and our time together. Then she led me to believe that you wanted me and that Dimitris was just a fling. She’s pretty convincing. She has a way with words.”

“She has a way with a lot of things.”

“She does.” We laughed. “It’s nice to hear you laugh. I felt so bad about the way I behaved at the house, really, that wasn’t me. You know I wouldn’t have done anything, don’t you?” He asked. “And Dimitris, he’s always been a good friend. I hope there’s a time we can be in the same room without problems.”

“I don’t know, Aiden, you need to work that out with him. We’ve had a lot going on recently, and I wouldn’t push it for now. Maybe later he’ll be more receptive, but thanks.”

“I...do you, would you want to have lunch sometime? Both of you, I mean? Would I be stepping out of line asking you that now?”

“It’s not a good idea. Let things settle for now. Dimitris has gone through a lot lately.”

“She is determined, and she has no conscience, so be careful of her.”

“Thanks, again.”

“He apologizes. Again. He is lost,” Dimitris said. He came to my side then moved my hair away from my neck. “He is in grips of Black Widow. Poor man.” Then he kissed my neck.

“Dimi, are you feeling okay? You feel a little warm.” He was pale and was listless.

“Am tired. Come to bed Helena. We talk.”

I filled a pitcher of water and brought a glass to put next to his bed. I slipped off my jeans and climbed into bed next to him.

“We know where trouble is, so now what to do?”

“Maybe we should invite her over, confront her,” I suggested.

“Would that be wise?”

“We could ignore it and hope she goes away, but I don’t think she will just give up.” Of that I was sure.

“What you think of Aiden. What he say?”

“I do believe that she took advantage of him. I don’t think he realized her motives until he was sucked in,” I surmised.

“Yes, she used him also. He is not at fault.”

“I feel sorry for him. She swooped in on him like a whirlwind. He didn’t have a chance,” I said.

“Yes, she will do that.”

“Dimi?” I looked up at him. “What do you think of Aiden?”

“Aiden? I think Camilla more than he can handle.”

“I mean, you used to be friends. I’d hate to have the end of your friendship on my conscience.”

“He’s okay. We can be friends, but he will not be alone with you.”

“Yeah, I know. I don’t think there will be any more problems.”

“No, there won’t.”

“Did you want to get some sleep?”

“Maybe yes. Will you stay?”

“There are some things I need to do, but I can stay for a while if you want,” I said.

“Yes, for a while more. My Heart?”

“Yes?”

“Do all this, these problems, make you wish to be back in America?”

“No.”

“All this, and you stay.” His tone was very depressed.

“Hey, Mr. Patakinas, I love you.” He rubbed his thumb across my cheek .

“If I was not too tired, I make love to you, Helena.”

“You’re still weak. You need to rest.” I kissed him, then got out of bed. I put on my jeans and went to his side. “Cover up and try to sleep. I’ll wake you for dinner, okay?” I kissed his sweet face and then closed the door to our room.

I sat in the living room, thinking about building a fire, but thought I should return a few calls before dinner time.

I called Morgan and told her about the latest with Camilla.

“You’re kidding. What did you do with them, burn ‘em?”

“No, I’m keeping them, just in case. I can haul out one of her pictures and hang it over her head as leverage.”

“Ah, I get it.”

“Then Aiden called,” I mentioned. I told her how Aiden got sucked into the clutches of Camilla.

“Yeah, he’s been over here quite a lot lately, seems he’s pretty steamed at Camilla. I don’t think he knew about this latest thing, he was here most of the time and wasn’t going to see her anymore.”

“That’s good to know. He said that she’s gone off the deep end. He wouldn’t help her anymore.” There seemed to be a lull in the conversation. “How did the fireplace turn out?”

“Beautiful. I talked Rena into the track lighting, so after she has that installed, it’ll be a real showplace.”

“And you got paid?”

“Shit yeah! I’ll be starting another project for a friend of hers, after the new year. This is so exciting! I can’t wait to get started.”

“That’s wonderful. Have you figured out how to charge for your services?”

“Kind of, but each one will have to be figured differently. I might have to hire some part-time people on some of the work. I can’t expect the guys to be helping all of the time.”

“Well, there are a lot of unemployed young men around, you’d have your pick!”

“Oh, yeah, that might be fun.” We both laughed.

“Well, I’ve got to start dinner, Dimi will get waited on tonight.”

“How does he like being waited on?”

“I don’t think he’s comfortable with it, but he’s been too sick to do much complaining.”

After dinner, I put a blanket over Dimitris so that he could sit in the living room by the fire for a while.

“Dimi, did you realize that we’ve only got two weeks until Christmas? We need to do some shopping, and I’d like to put up some lights, whenever you’re up to it.”

“I can shop today. I am feeling wonderful.”

“How about tomorrow. We’ll have the whole day.”

“Yes,” he agreed.

“Okay, we’ll see how you’re feeling, maybe we’ll make a day of it.”

“Yes,” he said, seeming a little distracted.

“How are the bills coming?” I asked.

“There is problem. I take care of later,” then he said something in Greek under his breath.

“What is it?”

“Not to worry, just mistake, is nothing,” he said.

I picked up a few of the open bills. There were charges from all over Greece. All were showing shops and restaurants and signed with a signature unrecognizable, that was not Dimitris’ or mine.

“That bitch.” I let slip.

“Helena, not to use language.”

“I’m sorry, Dimi. What are you going to do about this witch? You have to confront her.”

“Yes, I must. Must do in person.” His brow was pinched, and I could see that this would be a difficult thing for him to do. But he had to be the one to do it after he reported the cards stolen.

“Would you like some coffee or wine?”

“Maybe water, Helena.”

I brought him some water and got under the blanket with him. The fire was beginning to wane, and as much as Dimitris tried to be normal, he still

wasn't quite up to his usual energetic self and was soon asleep.

I went into the upstairs bathroom, a tub soak was calling me. I filled the tub and slipped into it up to my neck. It had been ages since I'd been in a tub deep enough to submerge my whole body. It felt like such a luxury. The quiet of the house, the warmth of this pool of water lulled me almost to sleep. When the water cooled, I added more hot water and soaked for a while longer.

Off in the distance, I heard noises that nudged me closer to awareness. I could hear footsteps coming up the stairs.

"Helena, you up here?" Dimitris called.

"I'm in here! What are you doing up?"

"May I come in?"

"Sure, come in, close the door quickly. What are you doing out of bed? It's cold up here.

"I wake up, you no answer, so I look," he said as he crouched down next to the tub. "Helena, you are upset with Dimi?"

I looked at him. He had a worried face and intent on my answering. I dried my hand as best I could with the face cloth and laid my hand on his cheek.

"No, Dimi, why do you ask?"

"You leave bedroom, you soak."

"Oh, come here." I kissed him. "I was just cold and tired, and this tub was begging me to get in. I'm not upset, Sweetie, so don't worry."

"It is too quiet downstairs, I think we get TV," he said as he wiped his cheeks.

"Okay." I had to laugh.

"This is nice," he ran his fingers down my wet leg. He leaned over the tub and gave me one of those kisses.

"Do you feel like putting a couple of logs on the fire?" I asked.

"Yes, I do now." Then he kissed me more sensually and left the room. I got out of the tub, pulled the plug, put on my robe and headed downstairs to the warmth of the fire and our bedroom. My hair still wrapped in a towel turban, I needed the fire to help take out the chill in the air. Dimitris came up behind me and put his hand on the back of the towel.

"Hair is wet?"

“I don’t think so, maybe just at the neck,” I said.

He kissed my neck, then picked me up and dumped me on the bed. He laid next to me, taking the towel off my hair and laying it out on the pillow.

“Oh Helena, you were away from this man too long.” He kissed me with such passion. He was gentle but hungry for something denied him. His hands unwrapped my robe and slid smoothly over my body. His lips found areas of pleasure that he slowly seized. In the shadows of the flickering flames, we abandoned all restraints and stole every intense emotion hidden within each other. There was nothing held back. We were at last and again one being, one soul in each other.

The morning crept in around us, slowly bringing light into the room. Dimitris’ arm came around my waist as he curled up next to me and nuzzled his face into my hair and neck.

“Good morning my Helena,” he whispered.

I pulled his arm from my waist and held his hand against my heart. I was too content to want to stir. Dimitris pulled up my hair and put it on the pillow at the headboard.

“Helena,” he whispered as he kissed me under the ear. “My Heart?”

“Hmm?” I said in a sleepy half whisper.

“I tell you some things,” he spoke into my ear, then I could feel him lean up on his elbow, looking to see if I had my eyes open.

“Now?” I sleepily said.

“You listen?”

“Okay,” I said, but I still couldn’t open my eyes.

“This man love the way you take care of Dimi when sick, and you want to fix problem with Camilla. The way you cook for Dimi and not like to cook.” He traced his finger up and down my arm as he paused between his ‘things.’ “The way you help friend and not expect in return. The way you make Dimi feel, the way you make love to this man, and how you let Dimi make love to you. So special, my Heart. No one like you, so sensitive. I miss you when you are not with this man. I can not take! What will I do when not with you?”

“When aren’t you going to be with me?” I asked as I turned toward him. I

looked into his dark eyes and almost got lost in them.

“Engagement. We are apart. I am missing you at thinking of it.”

“I don’t like it either, but there’s no way to avoid it. Can we cheat? I mean, who would know?”

“We must not. If we do, we no get the Orthodox blessing. Just Civil marriage.”

“Then we will have to be very good, and do our best,” I said.

“Will be hard for Dimi. And you, you must keep hands off,” he said with a laugh.

“It’s really not funny, you know, I’m not going to see you either.” He got a hurt look on his face when I said that.

“Why you no see me?”

“Because if I see you, I will not keep my hands off you, and we will be in trouble. So, no, I will not see you. You can call me, though,” I said.

He leaned over me and rested his cheek against mine and then turned my face to look into his eyes.

“What is best, I do.” Then he kissed me. “Come, let us get up and start day. We shop today.”

“I guess we’d better. We’ve got so much to do. I don’t know where to start. I don’t like asking, but, how are we doing financially? Are we okay with spending on the house and Christmas?”

“I am thinking to sell property on mainland. Ten acres of old grove. They wish to build condo there; I let them have it,” he said.

“No, Dimi, you don’t want to do that. The new year isn’t far off, and I have a little money put away, so...”

“We do not touch your money. This property, it is nothing, we let it go. It was meant to be sold, has served its purpose, so we sell now.”

“Can we go see it before you let it go?” He came around the table to say,

“You curious to see? We see.” He put his arm around my shoulder and looked intently into my eyes and said “You are not to worry about money, everything is good. I make list for you, and you make list of needs for house for me. We have wonderful shopping today for Christmas. And no worry.”

I don't want to question money matters with Dimitris. He hasn't opened the subject to me, and I guess I can understand that. I do wish he wouldn't keep me in the dark on the financial aspect, but he's a proud man, he wants to take care of me. He feels that it's all his responsibility, making the money, paying the bills and giving us a secure future. The only problem is that I am used to knowing where the money goes and budgeting what we have.

I descended the stairs to a candlelight dinner and a glass of wine waiting for me.

"Ooo, what's the occasion? It looks so nice."

"I make for you nice dinner. Sit." He led me to a chair and seated me near the head of the table. He kissed the top of my hand, then served a beautiful portion of Broiled Eggplant and other side dishes.

"This is so romantic, how did you do all this in such a short time?" I asked. His dark eyes sparkled in the glow of the candlelight, then he said,

"Never enough time for the romance. We will not be together soon, so I think I do a little extra of the romantic." Then he lifted his glass and tapped it to mine.

"You're so very sweet to me Dimi. No one has ever been as thoughtful to me as you are."

"You will not be neglected as before, Helena. You must get used to this. This is Greece, the woman not neglected here. And, when we separate, you will remember things, nice things."

"I don't want to talk about the separation. I feel so empty inside when I think about it. Am I to go to Rena's during that time?"

"It is up to you, either there or to Morgana's."

"It's too bad we took all of the furniture out of the Rhodes house. I wouldn't mind staying there."

"You not go there alone. We forget that house for now, maybe give to Angelo to live."

"Dimi, this is a beautiful dinner. I don't know how you do it. That reminds me, do you think it's too soon to check on the storage container?"

"Maybe yes, but we call Mathaios. He can find out where is."

Monday, December 15th was a day of busy confusion. As it approached 4 pm and the crown of the daylight hours had passed, we received the call from the magistrate that our papers were translated and could be picked up. I had a sudden throbbing in my chest. This is what we were waiting for, which in actuality, I never expected to happen. We were functioning in an almost automatic mode, taking it for granted that the papers were in order. To know that they were ready, was a dawning of realization; of finality in a way. I was suddenly both excited and fearful. I had a last chance to examine my intentions, my feelings, and my doubts. This was when I would either make the step into a new life or retreat to the familiar, safe, and boring life I had before.

“Dimi! Dimi?” I called from the front porch.

“I am on roof, what is it?” He asked.

“When you’re finished, come into the kitchen.” I still had a few minutes to mull it over in my mind, the photos, the life I’ve come to love here, my love for this man who is so sweet, and the unknown ahead. These were doubts and questions that I had, more about myself than of Dimitris. This change, I was willing to make, and as Morgan said, all or nothing, but still, I was apprehensive. Now the thought of Camilla and Dimi’s past with her troubled me. I don’t want to push too harshly for him to confront her until he’s stronger. But I don’t want him to think I’ve forgotten, either.

“I think we buy new bulbs. We have too many not to work!” He said in an exasperation that was due in part to him still fighting his weakness from the flu. I came up to him and flung my arms around him and held him tight.

“What has happened? What is wrong?”

“The documents have been translated, and we can pick them up anytime,” I said.

Dimitris put his arms around me, and we laughed and hugged each other.

“Oh, Helena, it will finally be! But you still do not have dress. You must find dress,” he said as he rocked me in a semi-circle motion.

“It’s so close to the holidays, should we wait until after the New Year?” I asked.

“Not to wait, we do now, tomorrow. You get dress; then we do tomorrow.”

“Don’t we need an appointment to get the civil marriage?”

“Well, usually yes, but we get past that,” he said.

“But Dimi, I have to find a dress, get my hair done and nails, there’s lots to do,” I said.

“No, not lots to do. You get dress. We go get civil bond, it is done.”

“What about a license or permit? Don’t we need to get something like that?” I asked.

“I make call. We get all we need to prepare. You only worry about dress. We get it done. Then worry about Christmas and Orthodox.” He kissed me with an excitement I had not felt in him before. He vibrated with life and enthusiasm that entered and enlivened me. This man, who has taken me body and soul, instills in me the feeling of life renewed! I’ve heard that the gods smile on these islands, as this surely is how I came to cross the path of Dimitris.

I have had in my life the practical love, the kind that is not an intense burning desire, that is reliable, true but dull. I’ve had the intense, short-lived self-extinguishing love that is so volatile that it was bound to burn itself out. Now I have this. Will this too, be bound to burn itself out?

The intensity is beyond anything I had ever experienced, and deep down I fear that he will tire of me, or that I will come to dread the fiery passion and attention that was lacking in other relationships. I have come to the realization that I am not the same person who came here. I don’t know if I’m going to turn suddenly, or if I’ll be able to embrace this new life indefinitely. The only thing I know at this point in my life is that this man is all I think of, all I care about and will do anything to have him near me. The fact that he seems to want me too is more than I expected.

I held on to Dimitris and let his energy flow through me. He radiated vibrations that went into every part of me. Not like the shocking electrical charges he gives me, even now when I look into his eyes, this was different;

an exciting healing that made me feel exhilarated. He hummed with this radiation, and I could feel my body absorbing it.

I looked up to Dimitris and could see he still wasn't quite as strong as he should be, and I worried about him up on the roof, stringing lights.

"Are you finished for now with the lights?" I hoped.

"Too many bad bulbs. Tomorrow buy more, so, yes, done for tonight."

"Good. What time is our event tomorrow?"

"We go at 4 p.m, should have all ready by then." He looked into my eyes and in a soft voice said,

"This man will meet you there, and you will be beautiful bride!"

"Will Rena and Stefano be there? Or Andreas?"

"Oh! We must tell them! I forget in all this happiness, Helena. You to shop with the ladies, and they bring you to Magistrate at 4 p.m. I call them now." He gave me a big kiss that made me laugh. Then he went to the phone.

When he got off the phone, he came over to me.

"I talk to Andreas, and they will be there too."

"I want to do a few things to our room. I want it to be a little special for tomorrow, so I'm going to close it up, and you don't peek! We'll sleep upstairs tonight okay? I want it to be a surprise."

"Oh, I like surprises, I will not peek." Then he put his face in the crevice of my neck where it tickles. I went into a laughing convulsive fit.

"Dimi. Stop doing that." I laughed.

"Now, I will go to market, we must have food if guests come tomorrow. You will come?"

"I have to do some things for tomorrow."

"Yes, you get ready things for tomorrow."

"You won't be gone long, will you?"

"No, but you will lock up after me, yes?"

"Yes, I will."

Since Dimitris was gone, I dove into the boxes and was lucky to find

everything. Without interruptions, I got the room started and found that all I needed to finish was a staple gun, which I'm not sure we own.

"Helena?" I heard from the living room.

"Just a minute, I'll be right out." I quickly turned off the light and left the room, closing the door behind me. When I got to the living room, Dimitris was bringing in bags of groceries. He had a big smile on his face as he came in, then gave me a quick kiss as he walked past me to the kitchen.

"How much did you get?" I asked as he hurried out the door. I started to unpack the bags. Dimitris made four more trips out to the car.

"Do you finish room already?"

"No, not exactly. I need a staple gun."

"We have. I get for you." He left the house for the outbuilding. I started putting away some of the food. I wasn't sure that we would have enough room in the refrigerator for the amount of food he bought.

"Here is staple, you need help?"

"No, thank you, I've got it made now. Where are we going to put all this food?"

"You will finish in bedroom, I will do this my Heart, but you can call if you need me to help you."

"You're sweet." I gave him a kiss and took the stapler back with me to the bedroom. With stapler in hand, I was able to finish the wall draping and sheers. After an hour or so I heard a scratching at the door. Then another scratching at the door.

"Helena, my Heart, what are you doing?"

"Don't come in." I said and put my body against the door.

"Are you almost finished?"

"Almost, what's wrong? Did you fit everything in the 'fridge?"

"Yes, it is fit in there. When you come out?"

"Well, I guess I'm done for now," I answered.

"Good. Come to kitchen." I heard him walk away from the door.

"You got it all put away, good." Dimitris handed me a glass of wine. He tapped his glass to mine and said,

"I have surprise for you, Helena." He took me by the shoulders, turned me

around and walked me into the living room.

“Oh! Dimi! How beautiful!” I gave him a big hug. “Where did you find such a beautiful tree? Did you buy all of these decorations today too?”

“No, not all. You like?”

“Yes, now it feels like Christmas. Thank you.” I couldn’t believe my eyes. He did this, and suddenly Christmas came to our home. “Thank you so much, Dimi.”

Suddenly I felt my heart pang in missing my family. I took a deep breath as I looked at the lights twinkling on the tree.

“Your eyes tearing, my Heart. You are missing your family. I know, it is a time for family. You call them,” he said as I clung to him. I wiped the corners of my eyes. We sat on the sofa with our wine and just watched the tree and cuddled.

“Maybe we think of bed. Tomorrow busy day.” Dimitris was right. There was going to be a lot of excitement tomorrow.

“Yes, big day tomorrow.” I sighed.

“You go up, I will turn off lights.” He said and kissed my hand after taking the wine glass from me.

I was changing when Dimitris came in. I slipped my nightgown on, then Dimitris caught the hem of the garment and pulled it the rest of the way down. He kissed my shoulder and said,

“I will not make love tonight, Helena. We rest, and tomorrow we make love married.” We laid in bed in each other’s arms. Dimitris ran his hand up and down my arm, and I thought he was going to say something.

It had been a stressful day, then he put up a Christmas tree which brought on an ache in my heart for my family. I held back an emotional outburst. I was good until he said “Shh.” Then all hell broke loose.

“I know. You can let out tears Helena, is okay.”

I rolled over to the side of the bed and grabbed some tissue. I blew my nose and wiped my eyes, and it was over. I took a deep breath, turned back to Dimitris’ open arms and laid my head on his chest again. He didn’t question it, just accepted it as part of me. It was hard, but we finally fell asleep.

Civil Bond



The morning of Tuesday, December 16th was bright and clear. Dimitris woke me by snuggling up against my ear and whispering in Greek.

“Dimi, I didn’t mean to get emotional last night,” I said as this was weighing on my mind all night.

“Is beautiful day to get married! We think of that!” He kissed my neck and slapped my hip. “We get up. The brothers are here in half hour.”

He bounced out of bed and went to put on the coffee. I was barely out of bed when Dimitris got out of the shower.

“Come, coffee waits, things to do!” He wiggled the bed then he sat on the edge, put his arm around me and drew my face up to look into his eyes. He just looked at me, deep into my eyes with his hand on my cheek, then softly said,

“Helena, will you marry me today?” Then he kissed me. I smiled, but he was still intent on looking at me until I gave him an answer.

“Yes, Dimi, today I will marry you.” I no sooner let the words escape my lips when he gave me a big kiss as he hummed. I hoped his kefi, his uncontrollable joy was under control, as this was going to be a strange enough day.

I threw some clothes on and went down for some coffee. I had barely sipped my first cup when Rena and Stefano came in the door.

“This is a happy day! Why aren’t you getting ready?”

“Hi, Rena! Have some coffee,” I said.

“We have to get going if we want to get into the spa, we’ll be lucky to get in.”

“Rena, I only want to get a dress, maybe do my hair and get hitched! I don’t want any pressure,” I said.

“Okay, well, have you picked out a dress?”

“I saw what I’d like to get here in town, that’s if they still have it.”

“They probably don’t open until 9 a.m. so, okay, give me some coffee,” she said.

“Anybody home?” Morgan said as they came in.

“Hey! Over here, how are you doing?” I asked.

“Good! Hi, Rena!”

“Hey!” Rena answered.

“This is kinda sudden, isn’t it? I mean, spontaneous?” Morgan asked.

“I thought about doing it after the Holidays, but Dimitris wanted to do it as soon as possible.”

“Geez, this doesn’t give you a chance to even prepare!”

“If it weren’t for all the distractions we would have been ready.”

Dimitris came up behind me and kissed me on the cheek, put his arms around me and said in my ear,

“We go to take care of everything. Come to office of Mayor at 4 pm. Keep cell phone close. I call if any problem.” He had the biggest smile. When I turned to him, he said, “We get married today, Helena.” Then he kissed me. The men left to take care of the last minute details.

“So what’s the big rush?”

“After Camilla’s last prank, Dimi figured it would put a stop to it once we’re married.”

“What did she do?” Morgan asked.

I proceeded to tell her about Camilla drugging Dimitris while he was sick, and what she did to him. I believe this is the first time that Rena heard all the details, too.

“You’re kidding! There’s something wrong with her,” Morgan said.

“I’ll be glad to see an end to it.”

“Well, I guess we should get going, okay?” Rena prodded.

The dress was still in the shop, in my size. We made it to the hairdresser, and they did a beautiful job with the hair. Now that I was getting ready to leave, I was getting nervous. Morgan and Rena were both looking very nice. I finally got everything right. The dress, the shoes, but I still didn't know why I needed a special dress for a civil bond, but this is what Dimitris wanted.

“Are we ready to go?” I asked.

“We're ready if you are,” Rena chirped. Rena drove us to the office of the Mayor. Stefano was waiting in the parking lot for us.

“We're still waiting. There's some kind of problem. I think the previous clients are holding things up. Well, Helena, today is the day. Are you ready?” Stefano asked.

“Yes. Let's do it,” I said.

When we walked into the lobby, there was Dimitris. He looked so happy and so handsome. When he saw me, he came to my side and acted like he was afraid to touch me.

“Helena, so beautiful, my bride.” Then he kissed me on the cheek. “For you.” He handed me a small bouquet of white flowers. I'm not sure what they were, but the fragrance was sweet and a little peppery.

“Will Morgana be witness?” We looked at her, and she nodded “yes.” Dimitris felt the material of my dress.

“What kind this called?”

“It's called Moire' Taffeta,” I answered.

“Is strange; it moves!” He made me laugh.

Andreas had his camera and was snapping pictures all over the place. He took so many pictures that I forgot what he was doing.

The big doors of the Mayor's office opened, then we were called in. There were papers to sign, and instructions on what to do. As we stood before the Mayor, he seemed to enjoy the oration of his own voice, so we listened. He gave us the civil oath and pronounced us married in the eyes of the law, even though it wouldn't be legal until it is registered and recorded.

Dimitris gave me a long passionate kiss, and we said our “I wills.” It seemed like I had been holding my breath for so long that now I could finally exhale, and be happy.

When we walked outside, suddenly we were beamed with Jordan Almonds. We got into the back seat of the land barge, then Andreas drove with Morgan in front.

“Ah, Helena, we married at last. Now you must choose your name,” Dimitris said in my ear as he nibbled my neck.

“What does that mean? I don’t understand.”

“It is tradition that when woman marries, she keeps father’s name. But in modern days, now she has choice of what name, father’s family or husband.” He was looking at me in anticipation of an answer.

“Do you care one way or the other?” I asked.

“It is your choice, Helena. You must choose.”

“How does Helena Patakinas sound?” I asked. Dimitris lit up. He would soon have to let his kefi loose on the world! He gave me a big bear hug and was speaking in Greek. Here was a happy man!

As we drove back to the house, Dimitris sat half-facing me with his arm along the back of the seat. Holding my hand and smiling, we listened to Andreas talking about something or other, but I couldn’t keep track. With Dimitris’ dark eyes twinkling at me I didn’t pay much attention to the conversation.

I put my hand up to his cheek and just looked into his eyes. I kissed him, and my heart was flying! He wrapped me in his arms and kissed me, then he kind of laughed. I looked at him and saw his eyes were glistening. I then whispered “S’agapo, Dimi Patakinis.” We embraced and sat in each other’s gaze.

When we arrived at the house, Dimi helped me out of the car, then picked me up to carry me over the threshold. Rena and Stefano were somewhere behind us, and although everything was okay, Rena seemed a little off today. I think the things I said about Camilla might be bothering her. Camilla had been getting pretty friendly with Rena lately.

“Gee, Helen, the house is starting to have a more homey feel. I like the new rugs,” Morgan commented.

“We’ve been trying to get things ready for the Holidays, but it seems it’s always one thing or another interrupting us.” I went to the Christmas tree and plugged it in. Then it sparkled with life.

“What a great tree! Where’d you find it?” Morgan asked.

“I don’t know, I think Dimi got it when he went to the hardware store, but I’m not sure from where, exactly.”

“There is my bride!” Dimitris said as he handed me a glass of Champagne, kissed me on the cheek, and handed one to Morgan. Andreas opened the front door to admit Rena and Stefano.

“You’re just in time for a toast!” Andreas said.

“Rena wanted to stop to buy a gift,” Stefano reported.

“Let me take. Thank you, Rena!” Dimitris then kissed her on the cheek.

“Use it in good health, Dimi.”

Dimitris put the gift on the coffee table and got Stefano and Rena a glass of Champagne. Andreas tapped a knife against his glass.

“A toast! We have a toast to the bride and groom! Here’s to my brother, who waited and waited, and found his bride. And to Helena, who fills my brother’s heart. May your love continue to grow!” Andreas raised his glass, and everyone tapped their drinks in the good wishes for the future.

“I also have toast! To my Helena. You wake in my heart passion I think not to exist.” He took my hand and placed it on his heart. “This man’s heart beat only for you, Helena. We will have good life together.” He kissed me, we toasted to each other, and the guests all chimed in with “Here! Here!”

“We need music!” Stefano piped up.

“Why don’t you get your work radio out of the car? Maybe you can find some music on it?” Rena suggested to Stefano. “He’s got a small shortwave he uses at the job, sometimes someone airs music. If he can get reception from the mainland, we could get this party going!” She said.

Dimitris stayed by my side and anticipated my every need. He read me too well and would make a suggestion when the thought was in my mind already. “Maybe you think about to change clothes?”

“I was thinking maybe I should.” I started for the stairs when Dimitris offered to help.

“No thank you, Dimi, you stay with our guests.” I knew we wouldn’t be back down right away if he came up to help me. He smiled and shook his head as he looked down at the glass in his hand.

I changed my clothes, and then the sound of clapping and yipping voices permeated the silence. Stefano must have found some music! As I came down the stairs, I heard Rena’s laugh and the men were weaving a pattern of dance through the living room. The radio had some noise that resembled music between the squelching interference. Everyone broke out in laughter when Andreas and Stefano started dancing, holding up little Rena so that her feet didn’t touch the floor! As she screeched with laughter, I sat on the stairs and laughed at the site. When the radio reception was lost, the dance ended and Dimitris came to me.

“Here you are, Mrs. Patakinis,” he said as he took my hand. “We must put out some food, my Heart.”

“Okay, I’ll try to help you. Just tell me what you want to do. There’s so much food. Where do we start?”

“We bring out all things and bread, and we slice cold things. I will cook.”

“Okay, let’s do it,” I said. Dimitris made a growling sound and leaned over to kiss me. He had a big smile on his face the whole time he prepared the food. We set out the meyyedes, and waited for the shrimp. We pulled out the Ouzo, some more Champagne, and beer, and we all munched to our heart’s content.

Dimitris brought out the shrimps on skewers.

“Dimi, how did you do that? I would have never thought of something like this! So fast and simple, but tasty!” Rena commented.

“Just do, secret is to have the stuff!”

We all had some excellent food, drink, and great conversation. Dimitris

kept the Champagne flowing as we devoured the shrimp and cold cuts.

Andreas found a signal on the radio, some oldies music, "If you leave me now" was playing, by Chicago. Dimitris stood and held out his hand to me. He took me to the middle of the room and started to dance. I was nervous. It was only the second event where we've danced together. And it had been forever since I danced before that.

He held me in such a tender way. He glided so smoothly, and I seemed to be a part of him, as we moved as one. He whispered in Greek and kissed my neck, then said,

"We must send them home." I looked at him, and we both started to laugh.

"No, it's still early. You don't want to be rude." I said softly. He started to growl, and when he went for my neck, I involuntarily screamed.

"What are you two doing over there?" Morgan asked.

"He tried to bite me!" I said as I laughed.

"This woman, she make this man do things!"

We started back to the sofa, Dimitris pushing me along by the waist, then kissed my ear from behind before I sat on the couch.

"I will get Champagne," he said and went back into the kitchen. I got up, and when Dimitris was opening the bottle, I stood behind him, put my arms around him, and laid my head against his back.

"Ah, this must be my bride!" He said and patted my hand. "I will be bad, right here, my Helena, if you do this."

"I can't help it, I'm in love with this man," I said in a secretive way in his ear. He suddenly turned around then bent me back in a kiss that I thought I would fall if he hadn't held me tight. Then he looked at me, still dipping me and before he brought me back up said in a whisper,

"You see what you make me do?" Then he brought me to an upright position, forced me back against the cupboard and kissed me with such intensity, pressing his body against mine.

"Where's that Champagne, Dimi?" We heard from the living room.

“Coming, coming,” Dimitris said as he slowly released his hold on me. He was still looking at me with those dreamy eyes, and I froze in his hypnotic spell. He kissed me slowly and gently and with his lips against mine he said, “They are still here!” He popped a quick kiss to my lips and took the bottle of Champagne into the living room. I turned and ran the cold water in the sink and let it run over my wrists. I brought some paper towels and a couple of the dishes of food to the coffee table.

“Oh, thank you, Helena. When are you two going to open the gift?” Rena asked.

“Dimi, would you open Rena’s gift, I’ve got my hands all wet!” I asked as I dried my hands. He tore into the gift. We both thanked Rena and Stefano for the little TV, which will go in our bedroom.

It was already dark, nearly 8 pm. and it was too late for Rena and Stefano to go home, so I thought I should arrange the upstairs bedroom so that they could stay over.

“Rena, you’re staying here tonight, so I want to get your room ready. Do you want to come up and help me change the bed?”

“Sure, I should warn you though, I sleepwalk! So if you hear things in the night, it’s just me walking around. I do that whenever I sleep in a strange place. Once I stumbled into the wrong tent in Arizona. Boy! Was that embarrassing!” She said as we ascended the stairs.

“Morgan! Come on up.” I called down to her, as she was warming her hands by the fire. She took another sip of the bubbly and came up the stairs behind us.

“Have you had a chance to plan a honeymoon?” Rena asked.

“We haven’t had the time to think about it, especially with everything else going on. This civil bond came up so suddenly. I’m still a little dizzy from it all!”

“Dimitris doesn’t let anything grow under his feet!” Morgan said.

“He’s a determined man. He makes a decision, and that’s what it will be. I always worried that his impetuosity would get him in trouble, but, he’s can be very rational,” Rena went on, “He knew right away when he met you, Helena! It bothered him terribly when you cut him off.”

“Which time was this?” Morgan asked.

“Remember, the first time you all came to our house? For a while there, he was spinning in circles not knowing what to do. Helena kinda threw a wrench into his plan.”

“We had been here, what, not even a week?” Morgan said.

“That’s what I mean! He knows what he wants, and he sets out to get it.” Rena uttered.

“I always wonder what would have happened if she didn’t cave, and left at the end of our vacation?” Morgan asked, and I was interested to hear this.

“I don’t know. Dimi might have gone to the US and pursued Helena there. It’s hard to say, he wouldn’t have given up easily, especially if he thought he had a chance. If you never had any attraction to him, he wouldn’t have let himself get involved,” she said.

“Andreas, is he like Dimi in this respect?” I asked Morgan.

“Not like Dimitris! He has a stubborn streak when it comes to things, but Andreas, he’s more of a ‘think it over’ type. Andreas takes his time,” she said.

“How is Stefano? Somewhere in the middle?” I asked.

“Oh, sometimes I have to build a fire under that man! He’s brilliant, but analyzes everything to death!” Rena moaned. “But I’ve got to say; he didn’t waste any time when he met me! I was too quick for him, and he knew he’d better hop to it if he wanted me!”

“I would have thought that you went after him, he’s so laid back,” I said.

“Don’t let that facade fool you! When he gets anxious, he moves pretty fast!” Rena laughed.

“You know, Morgan, we don’t have another bedroom, but there’s the sofa. I wish we would have had the time to make better arrangements.” I said.

“Don’t worry about it. We’ll sleep on the Athena. That’s what the plan was anyway.”

“Oh, that’s right! Stefano and I should stay on the boat and let you two be alone.”

“No, really! It’s not like we’ve never been together! But it’s up to you. You know you’re welcome to stay.” I said.

"I'll see what Stefano and Andreas think. After all, maybe Andreas wants to be alone with you, Morgana!" Rena quipped. Morgan got a little red in the face and laughed.

When we finished the room, I grabbed some of our clothes and night things so that we could dress in the morning without disturbing the occupants of the room. When Dimitris saw me with the laundry basket coming down the stairs, he ran up to meet me then took the basket from me.

"You should call for help with this," he told me. "Where to put?"

"I guess in the laundry room, for now." I watched him walk down the hall to the utility room.

The men were hanging around the kitchen nibbling and talking and generally cutting up. When Stefano's phone rang, he went into the hall to talk. Andreas stood behind Morgan with his arms wrapped around her neck. They were talking to Dimitris and Rena at the breakfast bar. When Stefano came back, he was anxious to say something.

"I hate to break things up, but I've got an early morning. Rena and I will need to get to our beds."

"You will stay here." Dimitris offered.

"Andreas has offered us a bed, so we'll stay on Athena, that way we'll be at the docks for an early launch and won't disturb anyone, but thank you, Dimi."

Rena and Stefano gave us their best wishes and congratulations, and went out to the car and drove to the docks.

"I guess we should think about leaving also," Andreas said.

"Is still early. Stay! We have all night to be alone," Dimitris said and then looked over to me. I had to laugh, but I agreed that they stay a while longer.

Morgan came with me to the fireplace where we hovered to talk in soft tones.

"How are things going with you and Andreas? Anything in the planning yet?" I asked.

"What is it with everybody? Someone gets married, and the first thing they

think is that we're gonna get married!" She said, flailing her hands.

"Sorry, don't get upset."

"Well, everyone keeps asking me that question."

"Who, Rena?"

"Rena, you, and Andreas pressuring me! God! I can't breathe with everyone bugging me."

I just stood there and didn't say anything. It was obvious that Andreas has been bringing up the subject and she has been under pressure. I thought she seemed a little on edge, and this explains it. She always seems to rant at the person who innocently steps into her touchy mood.

"I'm sorry, Helen, I shouldn't take it out on you."

"You know you can always talk to me, do you want to talk about it?"

"I need to see my daughter, especially at Christmas and all. It makes me edgy and irritable. She's planning on coming in on the 21st, that's if Richard doesn't have an attack!"

"Well, see? That's wonderful. I hope she's able to lose the tail so that you can have a good visit."

"Me too! Andreas says he can keep Richard out of our hair, if he does come, but he doesn't know Richard! It would take an act of God to distract Richard if he's in a mood," she said.

The fire was getting low, and I instinctively opened the fireplace screen to add more wood.

"You do not do that, Helena!" Dimitris yelled from the kitchen. Morgan looked at me like, "what did you do?" Dimitris came in, put his arm around my waist and his hand to my cheek and kissed me and said,

"You must call Dimi to do." Then he put the wood on the fire. Morgan looked at me, trying to hide a smile and I'm sure, biting her tongue.

"Thank you, Dimi." He got up and whispered in my ear,

"When flames die, we go to bed." I smiled in agreement. He kissed my hand and went back into the kitchen.

“He’s worse than Andreas!” Morgan said.

“I’m telling you, he spoils me that way. I never have to ask him to do something twice.”

“Andreas is good that way too. I’m starting to get used to it, and I hate to admit it but, I’m starting to count on it. I’m leaning on him more than I ever thought I would. He’s so sweet to me. I feel guilty for not giving in to him. But if, and that’s a big IF, I ever decide to take the plunge, I want it to be with a clear conscience that it’s not for the wrong reasons,” she confided.

“The main thing is that you love each other. Everything else will find a way to work out.”

“You should know, after all the crap you’ve gone through. I can’t believe that Camilla! You should have her arrested for drugging Dimitris. Does he remember any of it?”

“I think he only remembers her driving him home. Even that he didn’t remember until I prodded him a little.”

“How did she drug him? What could she have given him?”

“I don’t know what it was, but I think it was in the soup. He said the soup wasn’t any good and you know Camilla, she’s a good cook, she wouldn’t make a bad tasting soup, especially for Dimi.”

“Are you ladies going to leave us to occupy ourselves, or may we join you by the fire?” Andreas asked.

“You’re welcome to join us, we have no secrets,” I said. Suddenly everyone was laughing. “What? What’s so funny?”

“Everything is secrets!” Andreas said.

“There are no secrets here. You guys already know everything us girls are talking about!” I said.

“Well, not entirely,” Morgan inserted.

“You see? You women are always talking in secrets. Everything on the hush,” Andreas kidded.

“You don’t expect us to talk about you to your face, do you? You want to get a big head or something?”

“You talk about us? What you say?” Dimitris asked, smiling as he came over

to me and making me look him in the eye.

“You don’t really want to know, do you?”

“You tell Dimi.”

“Well, we were just comparing notes on you two and reminding ourselves how lucky we are.” With that, both men beamed with big smiles and Dimitris gave me a big hug.

“Well, what about you two? You’ve been hiding in the kitchen talking for hours! What secrets are you discussing without us?” Morgan asked.

“No secrets; surprises maybe, but no secrets,” Dimitris said.

“I don’t think I can handle any more surprises for a while, Dimi.” Dimitris came in behind me, put his arms around me and kissed the side of my cheek.

“Lots of surprises in store for you, Helena.”

“Uh-oh, I’m in for it!” I said with a bit of a nervous laugh. “Can you give me a hint of what these surprises are?”

“In time,” he said in my ear as he rocked me back and forth.

“Well, it’s getting late, and I guess you two want to be alone, so we’ll get going.” Andreas volunteered.

“Congrats, you two, I know you’ll be happy,” Morgan said and gave each of us an awkward hug. Andreas hugged his brother and gave me a peck on the cheek. Dimitris gave Andreas the keys to the land barge to get them to the Athena.

“Thanks, Dimi. You two make a great couple, take care of each other,” Andreas said, and they said goodnight.

“I think we never be alone!” Dimitris said as he closed the door. He came toward me with that dreamy-eyed look that still sends the electrical charges into me. He engulfed me in his arms and kissed me with a passion that vibrated through me.

“Helena.” He whispered and continued to smother me with passionate kisses. I took his hand and led him to the bedroom. There was still a little fire in the fireplace, and when I opened the door to our “Sultans Harem,” the glow

from the flames danced across the red sheers that nearly surrounded the bed. Dimitris' eyes widened when he entered the room. He walked over to the bed and felt the brocade quilt and the sheers. He opened the bed and removed the quilt. I was taking off my jeans when he came to me, slipped his arm around my waist and drew me near. He took the combs from my hair and kissed me deeply, intensely and passionately. He unzipped my top and let it drop to the floor.

We made our way to the bed where Dimitris quickly undressed. When he came to me, he whispered, "at last you are mine." He consumed me with his ravenous kisses and Greek whispers. We were breathless and weak, and I cried for my love for him, for the pleasure of him, and in the relief of accomplishing our goal. I kissed his hair, bringing his face up to mine and kissed him with a very gentle touch.

Dimitris wrapped me tightly in his arms, and there he held me, saying these Greek words to me in emotional whispers. I felt tears running down from his cheek. My tears combined with his as we held each other in the dim light of red coals.

I moved to grab the sheet and blankets to shield us from the encroaching cold that seemed to creep in when the fire goes down. Dimitris made sure the blankets were covering us as we cuddled in each other's arms. I could feel his heart beating. I kissed his chest, and he sighed.

"I'll always love you, Dimi," I whispered.

"We always will be happy, always," he said and tightened his hold on me.

"You are the best Christmas gift I've ever been given, Dimi," I said to him in all seriousness. He gave a little laugh and said

"Ah, Christmas! This is the best gift of Christmas, yes." I drew his face down to kiss him. The room was nearly completely dark.

"Do we have night clothes in here?" Dimitris asked.

"They're in the basket in the laundry room."

"Should I get?" He asked.

"If you feel like we'll need them."

He got up and went to get the laundry basket that I had brought from the upstairs bedroom.

“Will you throw me my...” I began, but Dimitris got my nightgown for me before I finished asking. He slipped on his pajama bottoms and came quickly back to the warmth of the bed.

“Burr! Is cold up!” He pulled the blankets up and scooted to the foot of the bed.

“You’re going to get lost down there!” I said. He put his hands around my waist in an attempt to move me down further in the bed. “What are you doing?” I asked.

“You come down here,” he said. I scooted further down the bed so that he could pull the blankets over our heads.

“There! Now we’ll sleep!” He started to laugh.

“You’re crazy Dimi!” I said, and in the dark, I could feel him groping for me under the covers. He pulled back the blankets from our heads, felt for my shoulder and reached to my face. He kissed me slowly and thoughtfully which I found very sexy, and he said,

“You will not leave Dimi? Ever?” He asked in a soft, sultry voice.

“I’m never going to leave you, Dimi.”

“That is good because you would kill this man.”

“How did I ever find someone like you?”

“I find you, walking on old stone road.”

He cuddled up to me with his head resting next to mine, speaking softly in my ear and kissing my shoulder occasionally.

“I watched you not to laugh in little car. You say you marry me if I can cook. See? You marry me!”

“Yes, I did. The best thing I’ve ever done!”

“Then you want to drive me crazy! Oh, my Heart, you were killing Dimi. I think my heart to break. I think you could leave island. There would be no life here for me.”

“How could I resist you? You stole my heart.”

“Yes, but you make Dimi work for it. You make me go away. You try to escape this man. And when you get sick, I worry about you. You too sick.”

“Yes, but sickness is inevitable, Dimi, we can’t escape sickness, like death,

it's waiting for us out there.”

“We only speak of life, our new life together. Only happy thoughts for us,” he sighed with contentment. “Yes, you did not want this man. Was not good. I have to think what to do. I think I scare you, make you afraid, but no, was something else. I was selfish thinking only of Dimi; Dimi’s poor breaking heart. I no think of what you go through.” He paused, and then said, “Was it hard for you, Helena?”

“Yes, it was a beautiful torture.”

“Tell me.”

“You were always so sweet; The first time I really saw you is when my struggle began. Your eyes made my heart leap. I couldn’t stop watching you. You found your way into my heart. Then you would wear that cologne. Even after I told you that it drove me crazy! I wanted you, but I wasn’t free to be looking. Someone so sweet; at first I thought, “wow! I’m finally feeling something good again,” and it was a wonderful feeling, but it got to be more than I could handle. I couldn’t play with it anymore. I was getting to a point where I was afraid I would lose control. And I knew that if I kissed you, I wouldn’t stop, so I pushed you away. Then there was my situation with Mark. You made it twice as hard after you kissed me on Karpathos. It was torture! I wanted you so bad, but I knew it would make it that much harder to leave if I let myself go. It was killing me, not to have you, but it would kill me more to have you, and then have to leave you. I remember how much I wanted you, but I had to tell myself ‘no.’ It was torture! I never dreamed that my life would change so much!”

“A good change!”

“The best change,” I agreed and kissed him.

“I wish I find you long time ago. I go too long without my Helena. Now I find, and I don’t let go,” he said and kissed my forehead.

“I’m getting hungry,” I said.

“We still have food out, I forget! Come, we go eat then put rest of it away.”

I put on my kimono and followed Dimitris into the kitchen. We still had food out on the coffee table as well, so Dimitris brought it all back to the

kitchen. Seeing him laughing, his hair all standing out everywhere, he was just too cute for words.

"I finish, you get under covers," he said and kissed me on the cheek. I was freezing. My feet were like ice, and the deck shoes I wore did not insulate against the cold floor. I went into the hall and turned the heater thermostat low enough to give some heat to keep the condensation from forming on our heads as we sleep! I got into bed, almost forgetting to take off my kimono. The temperature seemed to be dipping lower than what we've seen since we came to this house. Dimitris came bounding in, bouncing into bed and pulled up the blankets.

"Hey, you're letting in all the cold!" I complained.

"Is freezing!" He said as he cuddled up to me.

"I turned the heat on low, but I don't feel it."

"Let me check." He got out of bed and turned on the hall light. He checked the thermostat and the heater panel. I heard some mean Greek language in the hall. Then he returned to our room.

"Heater not work. I light fire so we no freeze tonight."

"Put something on. You're going to get sick again!" I yelled from the bed. Dimitris was bringing in wood from the living room.

"Dimi!"

"I get fire going."

"And in the meantime, you're catching pneumonia!" I got up and grabbed his robe and put it on his bare shoulders and back.

"Look, Helena! We have fire!" He announced. I got out of bed and brought the blanket with me. I put one end around Dimitris' shoulders and the other around me. He reached over to the chair and dragged it closer to the fireplace, and sat in it.

"Come here, my wife. Come sit." He held his arms open and wanted me to sit on his lap.

"I can't sit on your lap. You won't be comfortable."

"Come and sit with Dimi," he said and then put his arms around me to close the blanket and cover my legs. I was comfortable, but I wondered how he would hold up.

“See, we keep warm.” He said as I snuggled up to him. The fire was just what we needed to help us get sleepy. Before I knew it, I had fallen asleep on Dimitris’ lap, my head on his shoulder.

“Helena,” Dimitris said to wake me.

“Oh, Dimi.”

“We need to get up and go to bed.” He had a hard time moving.

“Oh, Dimi, I told you, let me help you,” I said as I took his hand and helped yank him out of the chair.

“I fall asleep too, and now I pay.” We laughed at the agony of it.

“What time is it? It looks like daylight is almost breaking.”

“Soon. We have good drapes, keep light out, is good.” He came to the bed, plopped down, and pulled up the sheet. I got the blanket and put it back on the bed.

After having that little bit of sleep, it seemed to have refreshed me. I got up and went upstairs to find another blanket to put on the bed. I brought back a huge afghan to the bedroom and spread it over Dimitris. He took my hand and kissed it and asked me to come to bed.

“I’m coming. Why is it so cold in here?”

“Come to bed.”

I was just about under the covers when it dawned on me. I should check the flew on the fireplace. The fire was out, so it should be closed. I went to the fireplace and could feel the cold air rushing in from the chimney. I opened the screen quietly and tried to find the flew handle, but I couldn’t reach far enough.

Suddenly the light went on.

“What you do, Helena?” Dimitris asked.

“I, well,” I looked at my hands as I had soot all over my arm up to my shoulder. Dimitris came over to me, helped me up and saw all the residue on me.

“Helena, what can I do with you? Look at this!”

“I was trying to close the flew, but I couldn’t find it. There’s supposed to be a flew handle somewhere on this thing.” He turned and flipped a handle that

protruded from the wall next to the mantle.

“Now, clean this off, so you come to bed.”

My foray into the fireplace did not amuse Dimitris, and I wasn't happy about the mess I had made of myself. I finally got the greasy mess off of my skin, but I was far from ready to go back to sleep. Without any heat in the house, the bed did look more appealing. I slipped into bed, trying not to disturb Dimitris when he cuddled in close behind me. His body heat warmed my bones, and I was soon asleep.

I was still asleep when I felt Dimitris moving around. I opened my eyes and turned to see him stretching his arms and yawning. I reached over and placed my hand on his chest.

“Good morning, my bride.” He brushed the hair off of my face and kissed my shoulder. I felt his hand on my cheek with his thumb rubbing my cheekbone. I opened my eyes, and he said “soot on face.”

“Ohhh.” I closed my eyes and could have gone back to sleep.

“Helena, why you not let Dimi do these things? You no need to dirty yourself with this.”

“I didn't want to wake you up.”

“But you must wake me to do for you! You get dirty, and I wake up anyway. You always to ask this man to do these things. You no need to do when Dimi here.”

“Is this what you want? I can bother you with small things that I can just as easily do myself?”

“This I want.”

“Okay, if it makes you happy, I'll call you to do things.” I sat up and leaned back against the headboard. “I just don't want you to resent me for calling to you for no reason.”

“Is not for no reason, and I do not resent. This I do for you, my wife.” Dimitris got close to my face and said: “Please Helena, let me do for you.”

“Alright, I can't fight the inevitable, but you have to let me do some things.”

“You have enough to do when sun comes out. You will be too busy.” I know he was referring to something he had in mind for later during the year, but I was too tired to question him on it. I just wanted to sleep now. Since I put

the afghan on the bed, I was too cozy to get up, and I needed to make up for such a disturbed night. I laid back on my pillow, and with the deep red and gold damask drapes, the room was dark enough to fall back to sleep. I pulled up the covers to my chin, closed my eyes and turned toward my husband and said:

“Were you getting up?”

“Should fix heater.” He leaned his head down close to my face and said in a soft voice, “If I make coffee, you will get up?”

“No.” I barely got the words out, then Dimitris said

“Then I will not get up either.”

We had been sleeping for a few hours when the phone started ringing.

“What they want?” Dimitris moaned without moving.

“Let it ring,” I said. It rang six times then stopped. A couple of minutes later it rang again. Dimitris let out a moan. It rang five more times. Ten minutes past and we were on the edge of sleep when Dimitris’ cell phone started ringing.

“Maybe I answer,” he got up and found his cell phone still with his clothes. He went out of the room to talk. I was beginning to think that it was useless to try to get any more sleep. Dimitris came back to bed and reclaimed his position laying behind me.

“What was that all about?”

“Shh, we sleep.” This got me curious. It also spirited my brain to an awake state. My eyes opened with a will of their own.

“Is everything okay?” I was sitting up at this point, but Dimitris laid there making snoring noises like he was asleep. “Dimi, come on, you don’t want me to be mean today, do you?” I threatened. His eyes popped open, then he supported himself on one elbow and said,

“That was Rena. They see Camilla at docks. She comes to Kefalonia.” He had that worried look, and I knew what that meant.

“I wonder if she knows we got married?”

“She sees newspaper announcement.”

“How did it get in the paper so quickly?”

“All marriage by Governor go to newspaper.”

“Wouldn’t you know that they would be quick about that? It figures.” I cuddled up to Dimitris, placing my hand on his heart. He put his hand over mine.

“Newspaper makes mistake. Announcement should publish after marriage recorded. We must not let it bother us. Not to think of things that are not here. We must get papers to church for Orthodox wedding. Start process. Maybe today we register marriage.” He was thinking aloud. I stroked his chest, but after all of the craziness yesterday I didn’t feel like moving from the comfort of the ‘red room.’

I fell back to sleep and didn’t know that Dimi had left the room. When I stirred, I felt behind me, but the bed was cold. As I turned to see if he was in bed, I heard the sound of metal on metal that echoed through the hall. When I looked at the clock, it was 11:30 a.m. I never expected to sleep that long. I went into the hall.

“Hello, my Heart, this heater, it is stubborn. It will need to have valve part, but trouble to remove it. Did I wake my Helena?”

“Why didn’t you wake me when you got up? It’s already time for lunch.”

“You were asleep. I do not wake.” He said as he stood away from the heater.

“Is there any coffee?”

“Yes, but maybe old, I will make new,” he stated as he put down the wrench.

“I’m going to get dressed.”

Every morning, I would hear Dimitris singing or humming. He had the glow of happiness, like a child on Christmas morning. After the legal bond, we took little day trips to some of the islands. Although we couldn’t stay, I found each place we went to be intriguing. I knew that soon Dimi would be back to work and most likely, commuting to Athens, so we appreciated those days that we had together.

There was a dark weather front coming in. The wind started to whip small dust devils across the driveway and down to the road.

“What to do today, Helena?” He asked as he handed me my ‘WUF’ cup.

“Gee, I don’t know.”

“Maybe we go to see Andreas and Morgana. We register then go see

Andreas?"

"No, I don't think so."

"What?" He looked at me with a curious expression.

"What."

"Why we no go see them? What is wrong?"

"Nothing is wrong. It's just that Morgan has been testy lately and I'd rather not be around her, at the moment."

"Maybe she under pressure for the decorating."

"I think she's homesick. She doesn't say much about it, but I'm pretty sure that's what it is," I said.

"But daughter to come for Christmas?"

"I think so, but things could change on that."

"Would you like we go see Rena and Stefano? What you think?"

"Yes, let's go to Karpathos."

There was a strange presence in the air like something was going to happen or change. The weather was cool and breezy, but it was more than just the weather that was in flux. Morgan was in one of her irrational moods, I could sense something was going on with Dimi, all the phone calls he's been getting, and although he has been attentive and sweet, there's something in his eyes that is different. Perhaps it was just me, getting tired of the pace that we've kept up since before the civil bond.

We drove to the airport in the little car. Dimi's phone rang, but he let it ring. When it started ringing again, I answered it. It was hard to hear anything with the typical noise of a Volkswagen, but even with covering my ear, I heard nothing. Inside the airport terminal, his phone rang again.

"Aren't you going to answer that?" I asked. The ringing was becoming a nuisance. He never said what it was about or who called. It was always a short call; again in Greek and the latest one was mildly tart. I didn't press him on it.

When he folded up his phone, I just looked at him, expecting him to tell me

something. Then we heard the announcement of our flight boarding. As we entered the plane, I watched as he turned off his phone. He gave me a slight smile and said,

“No more interruptions.”

As we went to our seats, I was thinking about it. It began to hurt. The fact that Dimi didn’t include me in this gave me the feeling of abandonment. I thought we were open to each other and shared everything. Although this was not anything that serious, it hurt my feelings, that he didn’t want to confide in me.

We sat buckled in our seats for the short flight. I looked out the window. I had my seat tilted back as far as possible and held my arm over my eyes to avert a headache.

“You have headache?” Dimi asked. I didn’t answer right away, then I nodded. He reached over me and slid the shutter closed on the window. “Is this better?”

“Yes, thank you,” I said. “Is there a time limit on registering the civil bond?”

“What you say?”

“I was wondering how much time we have to get the civil bond registered?” I asked.

When we landed, we called Rena to let her know. She was in the middle of preparing dinner and couldn’t leave. We decided to take a taxi. When Dimitris’ phone began to ring again, I asked,

“Who is it that keeps calling?” It was becoming a great irritation to me.

“Not to worry on this, Helena.” Before we reached the house, Dimi asked, “What you think of we go to Santorini before home?”

“I’d like that if we have time.”

“We make time.” He held my hand and kissed the wedding ring on my finger. He was speaking his Greek words in mellow, sultry tones.

Rena greeted us at the door.

“Come in, come in, how’s it going? You two having fun?”

“Everything is wonderful, Rena. How are you today? Where is Stefano?” Dimitris asked.

“Stefano is out back. That tree lost more branches with this wind.” She gave Dimitris a peck on the cheek as he passed by to go out the sliding glass door to the patio.

“What are you cooking, Rena? It looks good.”

“It’s just ready to put in the oven. It’s a sweet pork roast with almonds and garlic. Stefano doesn’t like too much garlic, so I go light on that. Then a just before it comes out of the oven, I’ll put on the finishing glaze.”

“You are all such good cooks, it makes me jealous,” I said. I sat at the breakfast bar as Rena finished getting the dish in the oven, while Dimi went outside to find Stefano.

“How’s the honeymoon going?” She asked as she wiped down the counter.

“We’ve had a great time. Just having Dimi to myself, will spoil me. I dread when he has to go back to work, and all that commuting to Athens.”

“Have you stopped in Athens on this trip? There are some excellent music festivals now. They’re celebrating the Arts all the rest of this week. I think the University is presenting “Homer’s Odyssey,” it’s supposed to be pretty good.”

“No, we’ve stayed away from Athens. I didn’t want to be chasing Dimi out of the University lab. I didn’t know about the celebration going on, though.”

“Some of the events will go on until the end of the month. You can probably still get tickets for some of the events before it’s over,” Rena suggested.

“No, I think we’ll pass on it this year. We’ve been on the go for months, it seems. I think it’s catching up with me.” I watched as she was preparing a bread dish, which looked similar to individual pizzas.

“Stefano!” Dimitris called.

“Dimi, you’re here already. What time is it?”

“Time for Stefano to go wash. What you do out here?”

“We had another tree come down. I’ve been cutting and clearing more debris out of here. When did you arrive?” He asked.

“Stefano, this man has problem.”

Rena had me laughing. She was telling me about Stefano and the fight he had with that old tree. He had once taken an ax to it because of its tendency to

shed its branches.

“He no sooner finished cleaning up the mess when that night, the wind brought down more branches. So, he was out there again. Two days, cutting branches and raking the mess. He was going to chop the poor tree to bits, but then he’d have to clean the yard again. I think I put my money on the tree next time!”

I could see the men in the backyard, hauling big limbs and picking up small twigs all over the yard. They were talking as they worked and although I didn’t see them joking around as they usually do, I could see that their conversation was mostly one-sided. Stefano seemed to add a nod and say a few words now and again, but the demeanor seemed to have a serious note to it.

“So, how is married life treating you?” Rena asked.

“Things are going fine, we’ve done a lot of island hopping lately, and we’ve had some fun.”

“Have you heard from Andreas or Morgana?”

“No, not since the wedding. Well, I did talk to Morgan on the phone, but we haven’t been home enough to get together.” Rena had an odd look on her face like she was dying to tell me something. “Why, have you heard from them?” I asked.

“I haven’t, no, but Stefano talked to Andreas the other day.”

“And?”

“And...well, I shouldn’t say anything. Stefano swore me to secrecy, so I can’t say.”

“Rena! Why did you bring it up? Is it something that I should know?”

“I’m sorry, Helena, Stefano would kill me, and it’s actually none of my business. Just forget that I said anything. We’re having a cocktail and a fruit salad before dinner. Do you want to get the men?”

I looked at her and could not believe that she could dangle the carrot in front of me like that. It wasn’t like her, so I was curious and disappointed.

I went out the slider onto the patio, but I didn’t see the men in the yard. I looked around the outside of the house in the side yard, but finally found signs of life in the garage. I entered the side door of the garage, hearing voices

as I came closer. Stefano seemed to be giving Dimitris a lecture in Greek, then Dimi would answer defensively.

“Dimi? Stefano? Do you guys want to clean up? We’re just about ready to eat!” They quickly turned their heads at the sound of my voice.

“My Heart, yes, we will be coming in.”

“Tell Rena that we’re on our way,” Stefano said.

“Okay,” I said, and as I hesitated to leave, I got the impression that I had interrupted something important. I turned and left the garage and could hear Dimi’s phone ring. When he answered it, I could no longer hear his voice. When I got back to the house, there was another surprise. Aiden had come in and greeted me with a smile and a kiss on the cheek.

“Helena, I heard you and Dimi tied the knot. That lucky Greek. How are things?”

“Fine, really good. How about you?”

“Would you come with me for a second? I want to show you something.”

“We’re just about to eat.”

“It’ll only take a second; come on.”

“Alright, where are we going?” I asked as I followed him down the long corridor to the front door. When he opened the door, a gust of wind caught it and nearly knocked him into me. He put his arm around my shoulder as protection or to brace himself.

“Are you okay? Maybe you should wait here.” I watched him go to his truck then fight the wind to come back. I stood in the doorway and watched, as he brought something in his hand.

Stefano and Dimitris came in through the patio door and going to wash before dinner. Dimitris got to the corner of the living room and the corridor and watched as he saw Aiden put something around my neck. I hugged him, and he kissed my hair. Dimitris turned to go back to the kitchen, then washed in the kitchen sink.

“Everyone, come in and eat,” Rena called.

When I got to the table, Aiden said goodbye to everyone as he had another appointment, then left. Dimitris was sitting side saddle on his chair with his

cell phone to his ear.

“Rena, everything looks delicious,” I said.

“Yes, it does, Rena, you are good cook.” Dimitris closed his phone as he complimented her.

“Stefano, would you pour our drinks, please?” She asked sweetly.

All during dinner, things seemed a little quiet. Rena would inject her little jokes, and we all laughed, but everyone seemed tired as the wind had taken its toll, especially on Stefano. Dimitris was quiet as well, and since Rena was the only one trying to liven things up, I would try to carry a little conversation, to break the silence between Rena’s attempts at humor.

“Rena, I think you make too much of the good food. This man can eat no more.”

“Thank you, Dimi. Maybe we should wait a while for dessert.” She suggested.

“Reenie, you have outdone yourself, again. You are going to make me fat.” Stefano said as he leaned back in his chair and rode his hands up and down his belly. Dimitris sipped his wine, glancing at me over the top of his glass. I began to gather my plate and silverware when Dimitris stood and grabbed the plate from me.

“No! You will sit. Dimi will do this.”

The men cleared the table, and as they cleaned the kitchen, Rena and I had another glass of wine.

“I love it when you two come over. I always get waited on after dinner.” Rena twinkled when she served up a pun.

We went into the living room to finish our wine, as Rena talked about the ladies of the University and a new charity event they were planning.

“Reenie, is this what we’re having for dessert?”

“Yes, Stefano, so don’t eat it yet until we’re ready,” she scolded.

“Maybe we should go ahead and serve it now Rena, and get all of the dirty dishes done and over with?” I suggested. Everyone agreed.

We all sat by the fireplace for our dessert, then Stefano turned on the big screen TV. As we watched, the volume was low enough that we were able to carry on a conversation. No one was saying much, Stefano kept yawning.

Dimitris kept getting up, first to take all the empty wine glasses into the kitchen, then he'd come back and sit for a few minutes, then he was up again, either going to the bathroom or going to the kitchen for water. He'd come back and sit on the edge of the sofa cushion and thumb through a magazine on the coffee table. He seemed nervous and distracted. He went into the kitchen to talk on his cell phone, then when he returned, folding his phone, he said,

"Thank you, Rena, for lovely dinner. We must go, flight in one hour."

"You're leaving, already?" Rena asked.

"What's wrong, Dimi?" I asked.

"We must catch flight. Busy day tomorrow," he answered.

"I guess we're leaving. Thank you guys for the wonderful dinner and evening. Take care of yourselves," I said as we left. We had a taxi waiting outside the door to take us to the airport.

"I thought we were going to spend the night. Is something wrong?" He held my hand on his thigh and fiddled with my wedding ring. He continually looked out the window. When I looked away, I took my hand from him. I moved over to the window and straightened my clothes. I wondered what could have been the problem.

As I sat in the airport, Dimitris seemed restless, pacing the floor and his eyebrows pinched together. I took his hand as he passed by. He stopped and looked down at me. Over the loudspeaker, our boarding flight was announced.

"Sweetie, what is it?" I asked. He took a deep breath and said,

"Come, we board now." He picked up my small bag and took my hand. When we got to our seats, he seemed okay. He smiled and had a little joke about "what if the captain had a mirror on this plane like the mirror in the little car!" By this time I had lost my sense of humor.

"Helena, if you not happy with this man, will you say to me this?"

"What kind of a question is that?"

"Just question, that is all."

"I don't think I'd have to say anything. You'd know it already."

What I meant was that when I'm "T'd off," it would be obvious. He didn't say anything. A long pause ensued, and the drone of the engines was beginning to pound behind my eyes. I closed my eyes and leaned my head toward the window with my eyes covered by my arm. I felt Dimi get up. It wasn't long before he returned.

"Here, Helena, drink," he said as he handed me a glass of ice water. "Better?"

"A little. Thanks. I should have brought my Dramamine," I said.

"You feel sick?"

"I hope not. It's stress, probably just a headache."

We sat in silence for the rest of our short flight. I wondered why we left Karpathos so abruptly, but with my head pounding the way it was, I was glad we were almost home.

A Grain of Doubt



We found the little car where we had left it, none the worse for its abandonment. As we drove home, Dimitris kept looking over to me. When we entered the dark house we were greeted by barking from the backyard. Dimitris went out to feed the dogs as I went to our room to change. When Dimitris came in, he stood in the doorway, watching me take off my black slip.

He came to me with his hands on my shoulders, he spun me around and kissed me so hard and ferociously that I fell back onto the bed. He quickly stripped off his clothes, turned off the lamp and pulled me to the edge of the bed. He pushed me back to a lying position. He was rough in his handling of me, and when I'd grimace from the discomfort, it seemed to make things more urgent and intense. He kissed me with an urgent passion, down my neck, and continuing further until he stopped, picked up the necklace that Aiden had placed there. He said something in Greek, then yanked the necklace off my neck, breaking the chain and throwing it against the wall in the corner. When I began to protest he said,

“This you do not wear. You are my wife now.” His kisses and caresses were impassioned, rough and erratic. He'd say things in Greek while tearing at my slip. Then he pushed himself on, in violent torrents, where I thought more of injury than pleasure. My gasps fueled his intensity. When he finished, he

collapsed beside me, trying to recover his breath. He draped his arm over me and sighed. I could feel his heart pounding in his throat that laid against my shoulder.

I didn't move. I didn't recognize this man lying next to me. My neck, still wet, was beating with pinching throbs, and my slip was a ring around my midsection. I was an emotional wreck when we separated. He, breathing now in even notes of contentment, left me wondering "what just happened?" This was pure animal, not the gentle, considerate and thoughtful lover I have known. I grabbed my kimono from the chair in the corner by the bed. I put it on and left the room. He looked as though he would sleep.

This time, I did run the bath. The hotter, the better. I poured every oil and sparkling bath salt I could find into this lagoon of a tub. The door had a hook and eye lock on it which I used. No interruptions!

I slid into the hot steaming water and although at an almost scalding temperature, it would soon be cooling off. I rolled a small towel to put behind my head and let my body slip until the waterline was under my chin. The quiet of the house allowed me the privilege of listening to the faucet drip into the bath. It would echo against the steamy walls, and in the misty cloud forming above me.

I thought about what just happened. So not like the Dimitris that I know, or thought I knew. His strength was more than I imagined; frightening.

To think of the wild look in Dimitris's eyes was scary. I was already a nervous wreck, and this was more than the topping on the cake. I was crushed that he would treat me this way, especially since we had such a beautiful week. I was so hurt by the experience. Knowing that it was Dimitris was like a sword in my heart. I started crying. The more I tried to stifle it, the more the hurt manifested. I tried to stop, which was temporarily successful as I let water out of the tub. I let it lower the level of water by half, then refilled it with the hot steamy comfort. Once the water was refilled, my mind would go back to the devastating hurt I felt, and the tears would come again.

I heard the sobbing pain in my own voice that had escaped me involuntarily and echoed off the damp bathroom walls. I hoped that Dimitris was asleep and that this echo didn't find its way downstairs.

"Helena?" Dimitris knocked and tried to enter the bathroom. A charge of fear jolted me. I felt like I had with Mark, the fear of breathing, the need for a place to hide; but there was no escape for me here.

"Helena?" He called again from outside the door. He tried the door again then his voice became more impatient. "Helena!"

"Go away."

"Helena, let me in."

I wasn't going to answer him, if I ignored him, he'd go away. I slipped a little further under the water. It was almost going up my nostrils. The water was still a little warmer than tepid, so I could soak a few more minutes before I'd have to refill the tub.

"My Heart! Let Dimi in. Helena."

"Use the downstairs bathroom," I replied.

"I do not come to use, I come to see you, open door."

"Leave me alone, I'm in the tub."

I pulled the plug on the tub and released some of its contents. I turned on the hot water and continued to soak.

"You must let Dimi in."

I silently sobbed at the sound of his voice, which gave me that hollow, sinking pain in my heart. I slipped back down to my nasal level in the water and put the washcloth over my face. Maybe it would relieve the puffy eyes.

With a slight boom, Dimitris broke open the door. It startled me! But I didn't get out of the tub. I straightened the washcloth on my face as Dimitris closed the bathroom door.

"This is enough, Helena, time to get out of bath," he said in a rather authoritarian tone. He took my wrist in an attempt to pull me up, but I pulled back and slipped out of his grasp.

"Go away." I fought to say intelligibly.

"You turn to prune, time to get out and talk."

The tears were still running under the face cloth, on my face. Dimitris

reached over and removed it.

“Give me that!” I tried to grab it back from him, but I was too late. I closed my eyes. I couldn’t look at him right now. I hurt too bad to see him.

“How long will you soak in tub?”

I kept my eyes from looking at him as I cupped the water in my hands and rinsed it over my face and shoulders.

“Your hair all wet now.” He crouched by the tub and felt the water. Then he reached over to splash a little water on my shoulder. When his finger touched my skin, I jerked away from him and tried to turn my body from him toward the wall.

“You must talk to Dimi, Helena.”

I heard him leave the room, but he came back. He had a huge towel over his shoulder.

“Come now, time to leave tub. Heaters are on, is nice downstairs!” He held the towel out for me. He was trying to be sweet, but it was too late for that to work on me, it only stabbed my heart further. I felt the tears rolling down my cheeks, although I don’t think they were visible in the steam and water that was on my face. My chest was in the reflex of the crying spasm, as it trembled, the water in the tub vibrated.

“Why you so stubborn?” He leaned over the tub, reaching into the water, he scooped me out of the tub getting himself all wet in the process.

“Stop! Put me down. Why can’t you leave me alone?” I cried out. He put me down and wrapped the towel around me.

“You soak enough! Time to dry; your hair all wet.”

He reached over and pulled out the plug in the tub. He turned to me, rubbing my arms in the towel like a child taken out of a bath. I left the room to find something to wear. I had my black velour set in the bedroom next to the upstairs bath. I dressed quickly. Dimitris was standing in the doorway of the room, and would not let me by.

“Will you let me pass?” I asked, keeping my eyes lowered, I could see that

he was soaked.

“We talk.”

“You’ve said enough.”

“What you mean?”

“Do I have to spell it out for you?”

“Yes! Spell for me,” he said.

“Look at this.” I pulled my hair back to expose my neck, where he tore the chain off of me. “Look at this,” I unzipped my top and opened it to expose the purple hickeys and teeth marks that went from my neck down one breast to my ribs. The look on his face was of shock, pain, and guilt. I closed my garment and tried to calm myself.

“Let me go.”

He tried to wrap his arms around me. I just stood there. He didn’t know what to say or if he should try to hold me.

“I did this?”

“You did this to *me*, Dimi! *Your wife*, not some, I could understand if you were drunk, but you weren’t.” I forced my way past him and went down the stairs. I could hear him following behind me.

“Helena, I don’t realize what I do.”

He grabbed my arm as I went toward our bedroom and spun me around.

“How I do this to you? We talk, Helena, please.”

“I don’t know what you can say, Dimi. I think your actions speak louder than words.”

“I do not realize what I hurt you.”

“What were you thinking?” I asked.

“I don’t think, that is problem.”

“It was scary, what you did. How do I know you won’t do worse one day? You’re making me afraid of you.”

“I do not know what I think but you need to tell me when I hurt you. I am oaf, you must say stop before I hurt you.”

“Yes, it’s my fault. I should say ‘no.’ When I was in pain you seemed to like

it more than if I said nothing. So I said nothing.”

“No, is not your fault, all my fault, but you must let me know these things.”

“It’s not only the bruising, Dimi, you treated me like you wouldn’t treat a dog. There was nothing pleasurable there for me, I felt used, and mistreated. I felt like I was being assaulted! Do you know what is the most hurtful part of it all?” He said nothing but had such a remorseful expression. “The worst part is knowing that it was *you*. The person I love most.”

This statement devastated him. I could see it on his face. I didn’t say it to hurt him. The pain in my heart went deeper as I put my thoughts into words. Sometimes things are better left unsaid, but not this time. I spared nothing in this revelation to him. Using the word “assault” was not what I wanted to say to him, but it was the only word that was an accurate description.

“I am totally exhausted. I’m going to bed.” I headed to the red room, our room. “I would like you to sleep upstairs.”

“Have I lost my Helena?”

I closed the door to the bedroom.

Once I was under the covers of what should have been *our* bed, my mind was not at ease and sleep would be hard to achieve. I saw that the bottled water next to his side of the bed wasn’t empty, so I went to the kitchen for my sleeping aid. Then it dawned on me that this is most likely what Camilla put in Dimi’s soup. The bottle had only about ten pills left in it, but it was full when I brought here.

Usually, under normal stress, I would break the pill into quarters and take only one-quarter of the dose. These were pretty potent. When I looked at the whole tablet in my hand, I took it. I didn’t think about it. I only wanted to numb myself to tossing in bed and to any dreams or thoughts of Dimitris. As I waited for the sleeping aid to work, I couldn’t lay here and look up to the sheers and draping around our bed. I stripped off all of the sheering and red drapings around the bed and stripped the bed. It brought back all the hurt I felt earlier. As I looked at the pile of sheets on the floor, I thought how much that pile reflected the condition of my marriage. I wish that it was as easy to

clean up my relationship as it is to clean the sheets.

I was pacing, kicking the pile of sheets and sheers, taking out my frustration on them. I saw my hair in the vanity mirror, it was a mess. My only recourse would be to cut it off, a tradition of what some Native American nations do, when in mourning, which I now was. I was mourning the deep loss of the bliss that excited me in our relationship; the illusion of perfection, and the loss of the innocence of the heart.

I went to the closet to get something fresh to wear, something new, something that would help to make me feel better and then changed my clothes. I went upstairs to the linen closet. I could see the light on in the bedroom from under the door, and slight stirring of noise inside.

I tried to open the linen closet quietly, but when I turned, there was Dimitris standing in the doorway of the bedroom, which was almost directly behind me. My body was crying inside when I saw him, this flood of emotion invading my attempted calm. I looked past him and continued my search of the linen closet for sheets. He came up behind me and put his hands softly on my shoulders. I couldn't deny that my love for him was strong and with it all, I still wanted him, but will it ever be the same? Would I ever be able to forget? How do we go on with this mountain of pain that he created in me?

"Helena." He whispered in my ear. It sent chills through me, and the tears of hurt were going to return if I didn't strengthen my resolve. I found the sheets and pillowcases and removed them from the shelf quickly. I couldn't face him, which I might have to do if I were to step back to close the cupboard, so I stepped to the side to end his grip on me and descend the stairs. I could feel the sleeping pill begin to do its work, as the stairs were a problem to descend without falling. I didn't know if I could stay awake long enough to brush out my hair and make the bed too. I had to do one or the other.

I dumped the clean linens on the stripped bed and moved the chair from the corner to sit on. The brush got heavier and heavier. I just wanted to rest my arm long enough to relieve the ache.

When I opened my eyes, I stumbled into the bathroom and like a zombie, I floated back out and flopped back into bed. After sleeping another couple of hours, I woke up hungry. Then it hit me; the bed was made. Last I remembered I was making a choice between my hair and the bed. I looked at my hair, and it appeared to be okay, but then, I saw a glass of juice on the nightstand.

As I laid there, I had the cloud of haze slowly lifting from my brain. As the fog lifted the pain of yesterday began to creep back in.

I could find no reason to leave this room or do any of the mundane actions of everyday life. The orange juice stood out like a beacon. A symbol of better times and sunnier mornings. It was a sweet attempt at reconciliation. I couldn't look at it, let alone drink it. There was so much hurt still reviving itself as the drug wore off.

I got up to look in the mirror, maybe in the light of day my neck wouldn't look as bad as I remember. I pulled open the drapes and took a look. It was barely visible, just a slight reddish irritation. My chest and ribs were a bit more "hicky-ish", but there was no pain and I was glad for that.

I made up my mind that I was not going to second-guess myself. I always start to wonder if maybe I'm too sensitive, maybe it's this or that. I won't do it this time. When it comes to Dimitris, I'm not ready to forgive and forget, yet. I turned away from the juice, and as I lay there I could see the brightest part of the day had passed me by and I didn't care. I went into the bathroom and brushed my teeth, washed my face and tried to find my brush, which was left in the bedroom. Opening the door, I was confronted by this big hunk of a man blocking my exit. When I tried to sidestep him, he would move to block me again. I was still groggy, and slow.

He seemed bigger than before, like a huge mountain impossible to avoid. He came toward me, too fast to sidestep him. He put his arms around me. He totally enveloped me and having his arms around me felt good, but I wasn't ready to go back to where we were before if that was even possible.

"Helena, you do not eat. I make something for you, will you eat something?" As he held me, my eyes were dripping, but I had no strength to actually cry. I couldn't put my arms around him but I wanted to, so badly.

He held me back at arms distance, wanting to look into my eyes. I would not look at him. I knew if I looked him in the eye, I would be lost. He knew it too.

“Come, eat.” He tried to lead me in the direction of the kitchen. I resisted but needed some water, so I complied.

“It is beautiful.” He said, commenting on the new garments. He went around to the refrigerator, getting ready to fix lunch. I felt like saying that my outfit was meant for our Honeymoon, but I didn’t have the strength to open another conversation. I took my water and went back to the red room. I just sat on the bed and wiped my eyes for the thousandth time when Dimitris came in the door.

“Oh, no!” I said under my breath, “I’m not ready for this.” He came toward my side of the bed. I curled up on the bed with my back to him.

“Helena, you must stop this, you did not drink juice, you have gone whole day with no food. Please, do not do this.” He sat on the edge of the bed and leaned over to speak in my ear while holding my shoulder.

“Helena. I am sorry. I go like headless chicken! I do not realize. You will hate Dimi, okay, but you must eat.”

I didn’t respond. I didn’t move. My pillow was wet with tears that continued. Every time he touched me it sent a jolt through me, and that made the pain in my heart worse. He went around to the other side of the bed then curled up, facing me, his head on his pillow, only a few inches away. While I kept my eyes closed, he stroked my cheek and moved my hair away from my face. He took my hand, my eyes still closed, and spoke softly.

“Helena, when you ask about date to file on civil bond, I fear you put off... to not file at all. This man worry, and you, you saying words with double meaning for me. And Aiden; I am again think you no want to file. I do not have intent to hurt you. I see what I do. I look at you and see fear and pain as you look to this man. I do not realize I take out feelings on you.”

My tears were pouring down my cheeks at this point. He stroked my cheek then put his arm around me, his cheek to my cheek and pulled himself as close to me as possible. Then said,

“Shh, Helena, shh.” He was wearing that cologne and he was being the gentle, sweet man that I fell in love with. He kissed my cheek, went into the bathroom and brought out a box of tissue. When he came to the bed, he laid the box of tissue on the nightstand, but took several tissues and put them in my hand. I took the tissue and wiped my nose. I opened my eyes and he was there, with his dark eyes penetrating mine, his hand on my shoulder.

“My Heart,” Dimitris said. “Soon it will be time for dinner. You need food now. You will eat? Please?”

I closed my eyes and felt Dimitris move around in frustration. He took off his shoes then as I opened my eyes he settled his head on his pillow, he looked closely at me. He put his hand on the back of my head and began to speak to me in Greek. I could feel his breath on my face. I closed my eyes and tried to go back to sleep.

I awoke hearing Chopin. I thought I was dreaming. The weather was cold and rainy, but Dimitris had the fire going in the living room fireplace. I had been laying in this bed for so long, I was getting stiff. I had to see where the music was coming from.

As I went into the living room, the Christmas tree twinkled and the music was coming from an entertainment center that occupied the entire wall. There was a big red bow on it. I couldn't believe my eyes!

“Good morning,” Dimitris said, then handed me my “WUF” cup of coffee. I didn't think his attempt at humor, the ‘good morning’ insinuation that I finally got up, was funny. I took the cup from his hand.

“Thank you, Mr. Patakinis,” I said. There was something in my voice that I heard, and I knew he heard it too. He put his arm around my shoulder and said,

“Merry Christmas, my Heart.” When he looked at me, I could tell that he tried to smile. I had no emotion. I felt dead inside. He could look at me and instead of having that euphoria, I felt the hurt and pain. I was in mourning for something that has left me.

“Chopin,” I said. I put my coffee down and turned. “I have to get dressed.” I looked into his eyes. I knew that he was miserable. I was miserable!

Making an excuse to change my clothes was an attempt to reinforce my resolve. When I returned from the bedroom, Dimitris was preparing something in the kitchen. I went out the front door. I had no plan, I just didn't want to confront him, not yet. I didn't know what my heart was telling me. My head was thinking that I shouldn't let the documents be recorded, that we should wait.

As I walked, I could smell the crisp air carrying the scent of the storm. It didn't calculate that I might be caught in the rain, I was still groggy or perhaps in shock of what happened last night. We were several miles from the city, so there was no destination that I could aim for, no refuge I could take to sort out my feelings.

I thought I was all cried out. The more I walked, the more I thought about Dimitris and our last episode. The pain didn't seem to get any better, the tears were no drier than before. The scene played over and over in my mind, and I soon didn't see a familiar landmark around me. I didn't realize how far I had come. I had to stop. I had to sit and think and figure out what to do next. I came up to a small bus stop that had a little bench inside a sheltered hut. It was just what I needed.

I suddenly woke up! I found myself sitting on the bench leaning against the corner wall. Time had escaped me and it was already past dusk. I heard a car horn, but the Volkswagen came and past by the hut before I could get out to the curb. I stood out on the street as the Bug kept going, honking the horn every quarter mile or so. He was out looking for me.

As I stood there, I had to make a decision. Do I continue in the direction I was headed or do I turn around and try to find my way back to familiar ground?

I walked another mile or so in the same direction, hoping to run into a small business or shop. I was tired. My thoughts of Dimitris seemed to have become a numbing factor as they neither hurt me or endeared me to him. I didn't even notice that Dimitris had passed me by going in the opposite direction until I heard the sound of tires screeching to a stop. I turned to look as he was turning the car around and coming up behind me. I stopped. He got out of

the car and came to me. He stopped short in front of me as if he didn't know what to say. He enveloped me in his arms, speaking his Greek as if there was so much to say, but I still felt numb, I had no reaction to him.

He held me at arms distance, trying to look into my eyes. Then he gently guided me to sit in the car, without words. I followed in my state of numb oblivion. When we got to the house, he opened my door, guided me gently into the house and to the sofa by the fire.

The sofa felt so good and comfortable. He brought me a small Brandy and sat next to me. He didn't say anything. I sipped my Brandy as he sat and watched me with his sad, expressive eyes.

Even though I felt flattened by it all, things couldn't keep going like this. I knew that I would have to accept his apology and see how it goes. I just couldn't make it all go away, and getting past it may never happen.

I slowly reached for his hand. He kissed my hand. I leaned back against the comfort of the sofa and slowly turned my gaze to him. When our eyes met, he wrapped his arms around me. As he held me, he buried his face in my hair and rocked me. I felt more love for him than I did fear or anger.

"I am sorry, Helena. I am one to cause this." He held my face in his hands and kissed me, then hugged me again.

"You will eat before all else." He loosened his hold on me. "Come with me to kitchen, I cook." He led me to the breakfast bar and sat me at it while he made his way around the kitchen. "You don't eat, you get sick. You get sick, we no make love." Suddenly, he stopped and looked at me. I lowered my eyes and must have had an odd expression on my face. He leaned over the bar, took my hands and kissed me on the cheek. "Do not fear me, Helena."

He went about the task of cooking, and as he did, I thought back to yesterday. I forgot or, at least, was confused on a few things.

"Dimi?"

"Yes, my Heart."

"Did you make the bed in the red room, or did I?"

"I make, you sleep." He said as he beat the eggs.

“The last thing I remember is trying to brush my hair, I”

“Yes, you fall asleep in chair with brush.”

“And you made the bed.”

He continued cooking for a while, then brought us each a plate, and sat next to me.

“You didn’t wake me.”

“No. You were sleep. I come in, you were ’sleep in chair, so, I make bed, put you in. You do not wake.” He looked at me, then stroked the hair falling down my back. “Hair still wet, so I finish brushing.”

“I must have been out of it!”

“You were not giving me grief.” He said with a little laugh.

“Yes, well..., and you slept...?”

“Upstairs bedroom. You no want me here.”

I looked at this man, and I wondered. We go through this episode of rough sex and yet when I’m defenseless, he doesn’t touch me.

“You not hardly eat. Finish,” he coaxed.

“I can’t eat anymore. I’m going to bed.”

After he was finished cleaning the kitchen, he came into the bedroom.

“Helena, we talk?”

“I’m pretty tired.”

“Dimi talk, you listen.” I made myself comfortable, but I really wanted to sleep. I guess he needed to say his piece, so I listened.

“Has this man lost his Helena? Is hard to know this. Dimi find my Heart and too stupid to hold.”

“I thought you wanted to talk. Don’t ask me any questions.” I turned over and shut off the lamp next to my bed.

Dimitris took off his shoes and got on the bed. He moved in close behind me and lightly stroked my arm.

“Please, listen to this man, Helena. Too many thoughts of losing my Heart, and fear you tire of Dimi or look for other man.” I heard this, and I had to comment.

“What did I do to make you think I’d be looking for another man?”

“This thought always there,just see things, and then you ask on time to file. Then this man see you with Aiden. This anger come to this man and can't help, so feelings go amuck.”

“I can't believe you ripped that necklace off my neck!”

“He have no business to give wife of this man gift, and put on!”

“It wasn't a gift, Dimi. He was giving back to me an old necklace that I had from when we were dating. It was my necklace.” He pulled back after hearing this, and slowly went out of the room and quietly closed the door. I wondered how he would react. I think he has realized that things aren't always as they seem. If he would have asked me about it at the time, it would have avoided all of this heartache. I wanted to get up and go to him, talk about this and clear the air, but I'm not ready to forgive him even though he misunderstood what happened with Aiden.

I took this time to try to sort it all out. With the Holidays shortly upon us, I didn't want them to be overshadowed by heartache and mistrust. I knew I had to make up my mind whether or not to go forward with this marriage. I can't see my life without him, but the other side of the coin may be worse. I don't know. The problem is that it's not a question of love. I know Dimitris loves me, and I love him, but can I be forgiving enough, and overlook all that has happened and pretend everything is alright?

The next morning I tried to get back to normal, force myself to be as happy as I can be in this Paradise. I could see Dimitris in the kitchen, wiping down the counters. That rush came over me as I saw his angelic face. He still had a pinched brow. Maybe if I can make him believe that everything will be okay perhaps I can make me believe it too.

“Good morning, how did you sleep?” I asked with a small smile. It was like he lit up. He came to me with that spark in his eyes and surrounded me in his arms. He held me close, saying something into the crevice of my neck, then kissing me on the cheek.

“Coffee? I get for you.”

He handed me the WUF cup. As I held it in my hand it made me think of when he first gave it to me. I smiled as I thought back to that time in our

relationship. I looked up to Dimitris watching me, like he had something to say, but wasn't sure if he should.

"What is it, Dimi?"

"This man have appointment in Athens today. Will you come to Athens? Maybe stop to see Morgana and Andreas?"

I wanted to ask what the appointment was, but it seemed there were many things that he doesn't tell me, so I didn't ask. I didn't want to intrude on Morgan, she probably was working on another decorating project and wouldn't want the interruption. I knew he wouldn't leave me alone, so I agreed to go.

A Stranger Before Me



We took the land barge to the docks, then boarded the ferry to the Greek mainland. The ferry was not crowded and although a weekday, some of the usual commuters were not aboard. Dimi and I found a comfortable booth in the bar where we could be alone. Dimitris went up to order us a triple cappuccino.

“This what I need.” Dimi sat next to me as he placed our coffee on the table. “This will be good day for us. We get papers filed, then we must make appointment to see priest. He will want to give instructions.” I must have looked as uncomfortable as I felt when he mentioned filing the papers. In the back of my mind there lingered doubt. Once the size of a grain of sand was now a mountainous stone in our path to happiness.

“What?” He asked as he turned my face, to look into my eyes.

“I was just thinking that I’ve got to see about my residence papers.” I didn’t want to bring my doubts to the forefront just as we’re trying to get our feelings sorted.

“Just formality. More forms. Priest will speak to us on importance of God in marriage, symbol of unity and the Sacrament. Still, will be for us maybe four weeks.”

“I’m not going to think about it, I wouldn’t care if it’s next month or next year.” He gave me a sideways glance.

“Helena, I take care of all, so you no worry.”

"I'm afraid if it were left to me, I wouldn't get it all done in my lifetime." I must have been off in thought and speaking automatically, not paying attention to what he said.

"Ah, Helena, you love to worry! Once it is all done, we take a moon trip, and you will be fine!"

"Do you mean a Honeymoon?" This woke me up.

"Yes. What I say?" He looked at me with a questioning face and a smile.

I thought: "You can be so cute, sometimes, Dimi," but I still had a bit of animosity toward him. I don't always hold resentment, but I was looking at him from a different angle than before. He took my hand and kissed my palm.

From the corner of my eye, I saw that very tall Egyptian man who was on the ferry when I was coming home last time. He was coming from the barkeeper to take a table. He has such a commanding presence that it is hard to miss him in a crowd.

When we were ten minutes from arrival, we left the bar, then walked toward the front of the ferry to watch the mainland approach. Dimitris kept me on his arm, and I noticed that he kept checking his phone. Finally, it rang, and with all of the Greek flying past me, I figured it's something business related. When he got off the phone, he didn't volunteer any information, so I didn't ask.

He seemed nervous and agitated. He kept tapping his hand on my hand that held his arm while looking out at the docks.

"What's wrong?" I finally asked.

"What? Nothing wrong. Why you ask, my Heart?"

"You seem so nervous."

"Helena, all is more okay,is perfect," he said as he put his arms around me and hugged me tightly. "Now, we will do all today until 2:45 p.m. then we must come back on 3:30 p.m. ferry. Maybe we call to ask if Andreas and Morgana will meet us for lunch. What you think?"

"I suppose." I wasn't really enthused about going there, especially since I still felt there was something we haven't settled.

We finally docked. When we made our way out of the ferry zone, Dimitris got another call. He was only on the phone for a minute, one or two words and he clicked off.

“That was short,” I said.

“Yes, no need to talk. We go,” he said and took my hand. “Come, I show you something.”

“Where are we going?” I asked as he took me across the parking lot.

“Here.”

We were standing by a car on the far end of the parking lot for the ferry. There were car rental agencies all over the area. He obtained the keys, and we were off to our destination.

“Wow, this is nice!”

“You like?”

“It’s beautiful,” I said as I sat back to enjoy the ride.

“I have call yesterday. I must go to talk about new job. Not to take long, so we go after lunch.”

“Is it just an interview?”

“Yes and no. More to settle on agreement. Just formality.”

We drove along the coastal highway to Athens. The scenery was breathtaking! The clouds coming and going made patchwork patterns that moved over the hills and cityscape. We stopped in an exclusive hotel area where the tourist shops and major big name hotels are in abundance. We stopped first to look at rings. Dimi wanted me to select my favorites in all price ranges. I was about to object when he said,

“You pick best favorites, later I surprise you!” I have to admit I wasn’t enthusiastic at the thought of this, but it did lighten my mood somewhat.

Once that was done, which I tried to enjoy, we were on to the bridal gowns. Rena had given me an idea of what was expected for traditional dressing, and although the gowns were very beautiful, I really didn’t see anything that truly “grabbed” me. I believe my mood had something to do with it. This was going to be a very time-consuming job, at best, and with everything else we had to do, I needed to do this on my own, if at all.

“I can’t spend all day doing this, let’s get everything else done and I’ll have to get the dress when I can spend the time. I’d have to try on dresses, and you shouldn’t be here, anyway.”

“Why not? You no need my help?”

“Dimi, Dimi, Dimi.....it’s bad luck. We don’t need any more of that.” I added under my breath.

He took my hand, kissed it and wanted me to tell him all about the superstition as we walked back to the car.

We went from one government authority to another trying to file the civil marriage and get the certificates that need to go with the other documents for the church. After yet another swing in the opposite direction, I was frazzled.

“Let’s just forget it!” He stopped in his tracks and had that hurt look on his face.

“We must, Helena.”

“Let’s find somewhere to sit. We need to talk.”

We found a nice bench in a small park in the civic center. The sun was out and there was a nice breeze. My heart felt as though it would pop out of my chest if everything wasn’t laid out on the table. I had too many hesitations to leap into this without us talking

Dimitris sat at the edge of the bench seat, facing me. I found it hard to say what I needed to say with him watching me. I had to gaze at the grass and hoped I would be diplomatic. I took a deep breath and began.

“I wanted to talk to you before we finalize this; before we file.” His eyes were wide, and he didn’t breathe. “First, I want you to know that I love you more than anything on this Earth, and I don’t want to hurt you, intentionally.”

“What you say, Helena?”

“Things haven’t been going very well lately, for us. You’re very sweet, and you’ve done so much for me. I don’t want you to think that I’m ungrateful. But.....” He held my arm and pulled me to turn towards him.

“No say ‘but’ Helena. You must forgive this man. You love this man and will marry this man. Do not say ‘but.’” He was leaning toward me and trying

to capture my gaze in his eyes.

"I'm sorry this had to happen so close to Christmas." I could feel the tears welling up, and I didn't think I'd last much longer.

"What must this man do?"

"I don't know. There's nothing, it's not a matter of ___, I just don't know."

"There must be something."

"What is it that set you off? Is there something in me that you don't trust? Was it Aiden? I don't understand what happened or if there was a reason for it."

He sat there thinking, stroking my arm and playing with the ring he put on my finger.

"Will things ever be the same, again? Can we get back to where we were, Dimi, in blissful happiness? I love you very, very much, but I don't think we'll ever be able to go back to the way it was." The pain that was in my heart almost made me gasp.

"You will be happier without Dimi?"

"No! No, I don't think I'll ever be happy again." I was looking at the grass and leaves that were around my feet. Dimi put his arms around me and held me tight. His Greek whispers had a different sound to them, a heartbreaking tone that made me want to cry. When his phone rang again he reached into his pocket. As he answered the call, I began to walk.

The conversation was in Greek, I just wanted to get away to think.

"Stefano, what you say?"

"I heard from Professor Kanakaris, the photo backing, it has a map but also some kind of code. It doesn't seem that there is anywhere to go with this unless the key to all this is found. I've tracked down some names, but they would have to be researched to see if they are important." Stefano continued, "I don't have the authority to pursue this, so Helena would need to trace the possibility of a connection. Now..."

"Stefano, we speak of this later, yes?"

I was walking up the boulevard when I heard him.

"My Heart," he stepped lively to catch my arm, "We go through rough patch.

Is gods, they test us. This heart of Dimi's will stop without my Helena. Give this man chance to prove, you will be happy, you will not fear this oaf, please, Helena. If you no want to record paper, we wait. Dimi will wait." He kissed my cheek and then gave me a piece of his soul in his kiss.

"I have to walk," I said as I separated myself from him. He looked at me and I gave him my hand. We walked around the civic center, arm in arm, in silence. I was feeling better, as the heartache dissipated like a slow-moving haze, and I was able to breathe again.

"This stress. Dimi will not take stress out on you, my Heart. All this, wedding, legal duties, and stress of little picture, all mountain to overcome. Then have Holidays too. We go away, we go have Honeymoon."

"A Honeymoon, before the wedding. Are you serious?"

"Yes. This man has much to make up for, so what you think?"

We accidentally found the Office of Vital Statistics. He looked at me with those sad eyes, hoping that I would consent. I thought of the misery we both would endure if I stood my ground. My doubts were somewhat lessened by Dimis' sorrow, but I knew that my love for him is stronger than my doubts. He picked up my face that seemed to avoid his eyes. A slight smile formed on my lips, and suddenly it was as if the clouds had parted. Dimitris was so happy, he held me and rocked me in rotation saying his Greek whispers. I had a wave of excitement wash over me before we entered the building.

Setting my doubts aside, we registered the Civil Marriage. We both felt the gray cloud that hovered over us disappearing. It was like a big weight had been lifted and we were now legally married, almost. We still had to wait a week for the document to be recorded and mailed back to us, but our part in it was over. It was out of our hands. I was relieved that it was almost over, as I pushed the grain of doubt that lingered to the back of my mind. We had a good start for getting all our papers in order for the Orthodox ceremony, but I feel like I would rather wait to marry in the church and needed to stall for time. I seemed to be falling back into escape mode, as I had with Mark. Marrying in the Church, any church seemed to have such finality to it. No escape, no easy out. But with that, any delay would extend the separation

time.

“Andreas will meet us for lunch, we must hurry,” Dimitris told me. It was already at the 1 p.m. hour, and it would take us another 15 minutes to get to the hotel. I called Morgan on her cell and made sure that they knew that we would be there and that we were running late.

We drove up to the valet parking, and Dimitris handed over 50EU’s with the keys. He took me by the arm and escorted me into the hotel lobby. The restaurant was off to the left, through an indoor-outdoor patio; quite elegant, with a huge Turkish tiled fountain in the center. Morgan and Andreas had a beautiful table, and the attention of the hotel staff was excellent.

“Hi! How are you guys doing?” I asked as I hugged Morgan and got the European kiss from Andreas.

“We’re doing great! You two look so, what’s new?” Morgan asked.

“Little Andreas!” Dimitris said as the brothers greeted each other.

“Dimi, you have eaten the canary again! What exciting news are you sitting on?” Andreas asked.

“It is now official. We are married!” Dimitris beamed. He took my hand, and we got all the congratulations and hugs.

“So what happens now?” Morgan asked.

“You don’t want to know, it’s such a job! Dimi has to handle it, maybe he can wade through all the requirements.”

“It can’t be that bad, you sound depressed!” Morgan said.

“It can be a nightmare if you aren’t Greek Orthodox already!” Andreas confirmed.

“Well, at least you got the legal part done,” she said.

“Yes, this part done, maybe we relax before church blessing,” Dimitris said as he smiled at me, almost as if he was reading my mind, then he put his arm around my shoulder. “What keeps my little brother busy these days?” Dimitris asked.

“Trying to get through the Holidays. We will have a wonderful Christmas! My Morgana’s daughter is coming, and my daughter will also be here on Christmas day!”

“Little Lisa?”

“Yes, I can’t wait, but I’m a little nervous, it’s been four years. She might not remember me,” Andreas said.

“Oh, Andreas, it’ll be just like yesterday when you see her, you’ll see,” I said.

“That’s what I’ve been saying,” Morgan said.

We had a wonderful lunch, it was like being in an English garden solarium. As we talked, the time flew by us and soon it was time to leave.

“If we don’t see you before the 24th, then we’ll see you at Rena’s,” I said.

“Okay, I’ll call you,” Morgan said. “Oh! I was going to tell you, and I forgot. I heard that it was Camilla, prodding Rena to hurry with the fireplace! Thought you’d want to know.” Morgan said.

“Thanks, Morgan, it figures! We’ll see you,” I said as we left.

After we started driving back, I brought up the Camilla subject.

“We do not want to ruin the beautiful day with talk of Camilla, do we?” Dimitris asked.

“No, we certainly don’t. It’s just that it seems to all add up now,” I said.

“Add up?”

“It all makes sense, that she would manage to maneuver me to Rena’s to hurry the fireplace project. She figured that you would be home, it’s just bad luck that you got sick, too,” I said.

“Worse luck,” Dimitris said.

When we stopped, we were in a suburb of Athens, near a medical facility. The place was huge, a school of medical sciences, laboratories, and administration offices. This was a large complex, but I still wasn’t sure if it was a university or a private sector facility.

“I will drop you to look at shopping, and be back to get you after I see to job. Unless you would like to wait at lobby?”

“Shopping sounds good to me,” I said.

“Yes, I also think. But you stay where there are people, no go to where danger finds you.”

After an hour and twenty minutes, we were back on the road. When we pulled up to the docks we were in a loading area. I was thinking about the episode before we left Kefalonia. This burst of rough sex that scared me. Am I going to have to beware of him, or circumstances that may cause a repeat of the episode? Am I being naive, thinking that it will never happen again? I don't know.

"Okay, we can board." He said as he held out his hand to me. When I got out of the car, I could hear a slight sound come from under Dimitris' breath, like the first time he had seen the jeans skirt, which made me smile. We boarded the ferry then went to the above deck lounge, where we could sit, have a drink and enjoy the crossing.

Dimitris was sitting next to me on a small sofa. His arm was along the back of the sofa, and his other hand was laying across my lap. As he talked to me, he seemed to be so innocent, so young. I swallowed my thoughts of the episode and remembered why I love this man so much. He wore a white long-sleeved shirt. After his interview, he rolled the sleeves up to just below the elbow. It set off his dark hair that curled over the top of the collar and his pale olive complexion. He was just so sexy! I watched him walk to the barkeep and get our drinks. Such a sensual walk. While he was at the bar, I moved to a booth with a table. He brought us our drinks and slid in to sit next to me.

"A toast! To my Helena, who has made Dimi so happy when you be my bride. S'agapo, Mrs. Patakinis!"

He tapped my glass, and I forced a smile. I looked into his eyes and had to quickly look away. I sighed and knew he would be asking me what is wrong, was I not happy, and I wouldn't lie. But I didn't want to hurt him, so I said under my breath, "you're going to make me be bad." I hoped that would cover my exposed feelings.

He kissed my fingers, put his arm around me and whispered something Greek in my ear, kissing my cheek. I was trying to bury the doubts, the fears and the fact that I look at him in a new light.

"I forget! Mathaios say container is en route and if weather good, maybe it is here end of January. Ship always stop, one port then another, so he track for us and let us know progress," he said.

"I really appreciate him finding out about it. If I had more time to sort things out, I wouldn't have shipped that much stuff." I said.

"Well, we have lots of room for stuff."

We heard the whistle alerting us to port approach. We went to the rail to watch the entry and get some fresh air.

"Oh, Dimi, I left my shawl, would you go back to the booth for me?" I asked. He didn't hesitate and went back to get my shawl. When he returned, he stood behind me, his hand on the small of my back and said softly, "Can't resist in that skirt. We dock now, we need to go. Wait, skirt come untied," he said.

"Can you tie it for me?"

He pulled the laces and tied it in a bow and I could hear him laughing.

"What is it? You're laughing." He put the shawl up around my shoulders and spoke softly,

"This will make Dimi be bad before home." I laughed.

"If I can wait, so can you," I said.

"Ooo, Helena! You must smolder! Next time you will tell Dimi you smolder for him, we fix!" He cooed. I had a hard time keeping a straight face! We arrived at port and found the purser's office.

"You sit, wait for Dimi," he said and went into the purser's office.

The skies were threatening rain and it was getting very dark. The wind had the smell of Cedar whipping around the trees. Dimitris drove up in the land barge and drove us home.

"It will rain soon, need to get more wood," he said as he helped me out of the car.

"Go ahead, get some wood, I can open the house," I said. With the wind blowing in gusts that moved you along with the strength of it, we had to raise our voices to be heard.

"Quickly, go inside," he said.

I went in and turned on the lights as I made my way to the back of the house to open the adjoining door to the utility building.

I went to the red bedroom to change when I heard the front door burst open.

“Dimi?” I called.

There was no one there, but the front door had blown open with such force that it hit the wall. The wind was blowing in leaves and debris from the yard. The gale force gusts blew dust and dirt in the air that made it hard to fight your way to the door and close it.

I went to the kitchen to make some tea. I really needed something hot to drink. While I waited for the water to boil, I got out the dog food. It was going to be a cold, windy and wet night for the dogs unless they are confined.

I got my coat on and grabbed the dog food. As I went to the back door, Dimitris came through it with more wood.

“What you do? Dogs? I will feed dogs, too cold and windy for you, my Heart.” He said as he passed me.

“We should put the dogs in the outbuilding tonight.”

The fire felt good, but the wind made such a mess at the front door. I got the broom out and the dustpan. There were leaves everywhere and the floor was gritty with dirt. We must have a vortex in front of the house! Everything swirled and accumulated in the area at the front of the house. When the door opens during a wind, everything comes in.

“Dogs are settled, we have wood, and....what you do?” He asked.

I thought I’d be finished with the dust and leaves before he came back because I knew he wouldn’t let me do this.

“The front door blew open and all this dust blew in. I’ve got it though.” I said as I bent over with the dustpan and broom.

“Here, give to me, I do,” he said as he took the dustpan out of my hand.

“I can do this, go get yourself some tea and warm up,” I said.

“You can do next time, I do this time.” He insisted on taking the broom from me.

“Here.” I still felt like I was being manipulated. I know he didn’t mean it that way, but that’s how I felt. I turned and went to the kitchen to pour our tea. The wind was kicking up to a violent pace. The trees were scraping the whistling windows. I brought the tea into the living room, laid them on the coffee table, then turned on the Christmas tree lights. After taking out the debris and storing the broom and dustpan, Dimitris came in from the cold, hair standing up and out all over, eyes smiling.

“Is cold! Burr!” Dimitris came over to me by the fire and put his icy cold hands on my face. He got close to my face and I said

“Cold hands, warm heart?”

I removed his hands from my face, but he caught my fingers and pulled me to him. He smelled so good, so warm and alive.

“Our tea.” He saw the cups on the coffee table getting cold. “Come, we sit.”

We cuddled up on the sofa while we drank our hot tea, hearing the wind roaring through the trees and enjoying the warmth of the fire.

“You quiet tonight. This dress is very sexy,” Dimitris said.

“This skirt? What’s so sexy about it? It’s denim.”

“Oh, is solid.” He put down the cup then put his hand on my lap and slid it to my hip. “Is solid with ties and zipper, this material,” running his hand to the flounce, “When in light, can see through!” He kissed me with such emotion. He kissed me with a slow, sensuous kiss that made my heart feel the excitement that I thought had died during our “episode.” I could feel his hand running up my skirt, his lips on my neck in that special place that gets me going. He was whispering Greek words in my ear. I could think of nothing else but him and what he does to me.

Suddenly he stood up, bringing me to my feet. He took the pillows and afghan off of the sofa then laid them on the floor in front of the Christmas tree. He locked his lips to mine as we went down onto the pillows. He was gentle and careful with me as if he was guarding his actions or controlling his emotions. He was sweet and intoxicating and I wanted him. He gently lifted the flounce

of the skirt which was free and easy to play with. The denim would be a block to his advances which excited him. I helped him to hike my skirt, which allowed him to complete his mission.

This was not as I expected. It was sweet and gentle, but somewhat disappointing. I have the feeling that he was leery of falling into the out-of-control abyss that overtook him before. This troubled me. I've had it too good with him to end up with this. I was hurt, in a way. I started to think that maybe things would never be the same again. When I recounted the events over the last couple of days, I began to wonder if he thought that he had to surprise me with things to make me forgive him for the rough sex and his behavior. Now, is he subduing his emotions to avert another episode?

I know Dimitris. This wasn't spontaneous, he was holding back. I hope that he'll get beyond the earlier problem we had. I shouldn't take this personally, as we all have a bad day every once in a while, it's just that he is usually so loving and considerate in his lovemaking. I don't want him to think that he has to monitor his actions to the point of being robotic. I also don't want him to think that I'm a fragile piece of China.

I went to the kitchen for some water, then I noticed that Dimitris was watching me from the bar.

"What?" I asked.

"You." He said, leaning against the bar.

"Me? Me what?" He sat at one of the bar stools, his eyes sparkling with a smile. I went to stand in front of him, between his legs. I reached over to run my fingers through his hair which was still beneath his collar. He smelled so good, and sweet. I gave him a kiss on the neck then a very sensual kiss on the lips. I leaned into him and the kisses became deeper and faster and more exciting.

He picked me up and took me to the bedroom. He plopped me down on the bed then laid on top of me.

"Let me get out of these clothes. Sweetie." He rolled off of me, and when I stood, he untied the lace on the back of my skirt. I let the skirt drop to the floor and then slipped the sweater over my head. He dropped his drawers

then I pushed him back onto the mattress. I had him down and kissed him with all the passion I could muster. He was trying to make the move to roll me over to the side, but I got on top of him and continued kissing his neck and chest. I could hear him telling me things in Greek whispers. I was making movements that would lead to more, of which he would not misinterpret my intentions.

In breathless tears of exhaustion, Dimitris laid his head against my shoulder, his hot breath on my skin. I held him in my arms, rocking from side to side as we caught our breath. I brought his sweet face to meet mine, as I had to look into his eyes, these eyes that see my soul.

“We should dress,” I whispered to him.

“Not yet,” he answered. “S’agapo, my wife. I don’t believe I am so lucky.” He kissed me gently everywhere and breathed me in, with his eyes closed. He said something in Greek, then looked at me, brushed his hand over my cheek and said: “I must have you once more.” His tone was that of a question, but a wave of excitement washed over me and I kissed him with a new eagerness and opened up to him again.

As he rested and I recouped my strength, our reality crept in as a chill swept down the chimney after the fire went out. I could lay in his embrace forever, but the day had escaped us and it was getting close to dinner time.

“Sweetie, we should think about dinner. If you would want to start that.” I said in a soft voice.

“We think on it,” he said, then tightened his hold on me as we cuddled under the covers. I tried to get up but he held me down, and I started to laugh.

“You are getting to be a tease!” I said to him.

“Helena, you always with the surprises,” he said.

“What did I do?”

“Just when I am thinking I do wrong thing, you are there to make Dimi feel better,” he said in a soft voice as his hand gently stroked my arm.

“Huh? I don’t know what you are telling me, Dimi.”

“Before, this man afraid to go like headless chicken in making love, so it

wasn't so good for you, yes? Then, you show Dimi not to be afraid of emotion. I am more aware, for you." I know that the words came hard for him. I understood what he was saying, and I was relieved to know that he knew there was something that we fixed before it got to be a real problem.

"I will tell you a thing," he said.

"What is that?"

"You surprise Dimi with this way of making love. You did this because of before."

"Dimi, I... "

"I feel I disappoint, and you fix," he interrupted. "Helena, Dimi does not want to have you disappoint from making love."

"I just wanted you to know that you don't have to be afraid of me, afraid to make love to me." I put my forehead to his and looked into his dark eyes. "Okay? You are so much stronger than I am, just keep that in mind and we'll be okay." Then I kissed him.

"I can be big oaf, I forget," he paused. "Helena, you must know that when this man feel your skin or smell your scent, my heart race and wave of wonder come over this man. Too hard to believe it is I in this place, with this beautiful woman, this woman who has given consent to be mine. My heart cries with love, sometimes too impatient and get crazy. Then biggest wonder, you are patient, you stay with this stupid man, so I love you more. I will make mistake, and you will show me not to do mistake," he hesitated.

"Dimi, you have to tell me what's bothering you sometimes. If you would tell me, maybe we can avoid other problems. You know that it's inevitable that at one time or another we may disagree or argue, but if you have something on your mind that you should tell me, then tell me and get it out in the open before your frustrations come out somewhere else," I said. "Do you understand what I'm trying to say?"

"Yes, like in bedroom. I make you suffer from my anger that goes somewhere else. You are right and I get better with this. Helena, Dimi was alone for long time, always keep things in. Never wanted to burden you with things, and

complain, but yes, not good to keep inside.”

“You know that you can tell me anything, don’t you?” He looked into my eyes and said,

“S’agapo, my Heart.” Dimitris was stroking my hair and with his lips against my temple, he was saying something that I didn’t understand. I looked up at him, thinking that he’d repeat what he said, but he kissed me instead.

“What were you saying?” I asked.

“What?”

“You were saying something, were you talking to me?” I asked.

“I talk to self, Dimi in such wonder.”

“About what? The tv?”

“I think of how life is. When I become man, the ways of woman, such a mystery. Still is mystery. You know not what you can do to man. Man is lump, uh, basic. Big, hairy, rough. Man is what he is, oaf.”

I had to laugh! I don’t pretend to understand men, but to hear that there is a big mystery surrounding the female sex is news to me.

“Women are a mystery?” I asked.

“Yes, to man. Every day man has this body. We work or play hard, but body good for that. Hard, rough, hairy skin, is always there. But woman....soft, have scent of angel, all things man not.”

“I should hope so.” I said.

“Yes. They say woman weaker sex. Mostly, is true, but woman enjoy sex more. And woman make man beg, and we do.”

“You are funny.”

“If man honest, all say same thing,” he said and kissed my temple. “But is a mystery, a wondrous mystery. And scent of woman, drive man crazy.”

“Hopefully, you don’t go around sniffing women,” I said in jest.

“No.” He pulled my face up to kiss me.

“I never knew men thought this way.”

“Some men, yes, if awake. Others, no,” he said.

“I think it’s a matter of pheromones. Some men are more in tuned with pheromones than others.”

“They are not the same.”

“What?”

“Mmmm.”

“I actually think you have radar,” I said.

“Radar?”

“Yes,” I said. “When I first saw you, there was something. I don’t know how to explain it. It was like you were sending out some kind of static or electric pulse and I was the receiver, like a radio. It was like some substance in the air that I could feel.”

“Yes, I feel too. Like magnets meeting,” he said.

“Exactly! That’s the perfect description.”

“Science finds more not visible to human eye, but I think of star-struck lovers, meant to be, and so we fall in love,” he said, speaking as he laid his cheek on the side of my head. Then he looked at me and said, “Helena, we leave love to the gods.”

“Yes,” I said, a little far off in thought. I took his hand and was looking at it, his long slender fingers, not hard and calloused, but not soft and spongy either. Beautiful hands for a man. Even though he is handy to have around, he isn’t averse to the laborious jobs, but he’s also an academic, so he isn’t always abusing his hands.

“What you look at, Helena?” He asked as I was turning his hand.

“You have such beautiful hands, Dimi.”

“They are just hands,” he said. I got up from the sofa. “Where you go?”

“I have to move around a little. Shall we have a small Brandy?” I asked.

I went into the kitchen and poured two very small jigger sized liqueur glasses and brought one to Dimitris.

“Ah, is good,” he said.

“It doesn’t take much to warm the blood,” I said.

“Oh, Helena, I get too tired.”

“Do you want to go to bed?” I asked.

“Maybe, yes.” He sat up and gave me his hand as he stood. I picked up the glasses and cups. After turning out the lights, I met Dimitris under the covers.

“That Brandy really knocks me out,” I said.

“Yes, we sleep warm tonight. Goodnight, my wife.”

“Goodnight.”

Who Were Those Guys?



When Rena called and wanted me to shop with her, it seemed the perfect time to find a gift for Dimitris. I said I would find some new landline telephones, so he was not aware of my ulterior motives. Dimitris dropped me off at the ferry and I was again on the trek to the mainland.

I was waiting for the barkeeper to get me a coffee, or even water, but he ignored my attempts to flag him down.

“BARKEEP!” I heard a low voice behind me bellow. I looked around to see it was my Egyptian friend.

“Hello!” I said. “Mr. Sahj, we meet again.” I held out my hand in the manner of a handshake.

“Please, Ahmed,” he said as he took my hand, covered it with his other hand and kissed my knuckles. “Miss Helena, how are you?”

“I am wonderful, and how are you?” I asked.

“Very well, thank you, Martini dry? Yes?”

“Oh no, not for me, I could use a Cappuccino.”

“Barkeep!” He ordered our drinks. “Would you join me at my table?”

“Yes, thank you.” He got our drinks and led me to a table.

“You look better, you were under some stress when last we met,” he said.

“I’m afraid that I was. I see you’re still in Greece,” I said.

“My business takes me to the islands. One must oversee one’s interests. You are familiar with Pharaoh Trading?”

“No, I’m sorry, I’m still basically a tourist. I haven’t been in the islands that long at all.”

“Please forgive my arrogance. I have to contend with associates that are less than creative in the procurement of goods for my business, and I’m afraid I have lost all manner of social decorum”.

“It’s always difficult dealing with employees or associates who are entrusted with some responsibility,” I said.

“That is very true, there is no end to the problems in business. Tell me, Helena, do you always travel this route alone?”

“Only when I have to, I’m meeting my sister in law. We have some last minute holiday shopping to do,” I said.

Mr. Sahj appeared to be very educated, very articulate and it was obvious that he had money. He impressed me as being a person familiar with high society, but I was curious about this Pharaoh Trading. It sounded like an import-export business.

“Do you have family in the islands?” he asked.

“Yes, I have a wonderful family here. We are looking forward to being together for Christmas. And you?”

“I am afraid that my business is the only family I have. It is a wonderful thing to have family.”

“Yes, I am very lucky,” I said.

“Tell me, Helena, have you ever been to Italy?”

“No, I wish I could go one day, but I haven’t been to Italy yet.”

“There is a statue in Italy, *Apollo Citaredo*. You have a striking resemblance to it. You should go visit.”

“I may do that one day,” I said.

“You could have posed for this masterpiece.”

“Really? I’ve never heard of the piece.”

“May I order you another drink?”

“No, thank you, I’m fine,” I said.

“Please excuse me, Helena, it was my pleasure to see you again. I have calls

to make that can not wait. Business never sleeps,” he said as he left to make his calls.

He speaks very well. His accent was Egyptian. With his suave demeanor and his velvety voice, he seemed more attractive than his looks revealed.

I finished what was left of my Cappuccino and then went to the forward lounge. We were only twenty minutes from docking. The scene of the mainland approaching was always exciting. I was thinking about Dimitris. Remembering how hard it was to resist him in the beginning (and still is). Remembering back to our first meeting and the days that were so exciting, the denial of my attraction, and the struggle to keep emotions under control was such overwhelming torture. We’ll have that again once we’ve officially announced the engagement. I dreaded the time we would be separated, but I also, down deep inside, was looking forward to the chance to distance myself from him and be able to truly heal myself from our recent rift. The feelings we denied ourselves before, we will be denying again.

How can one look forward to the emotional pain? I don’t want to be away from Dimitris for a month, seeing him from a distance or across a room and not be able to touch him, hold him or feel his arms around me. It would be a long month, but I see it as necessary to clear my enduring doubts.

Then the thought of Camilla came to my mind. It infuriated me to think that she drugged Dimitris, took advantage of him and had the nerve to take pictures. If I saw her, I would not be able to keep my temper! When she hears of the official engagement, she might suddenly appear again to cause more problems.

Rena was waiting at the docks, her usual joyful self, waving and jumping up and down to be sure that I saw her.

“Helena.” She gave me a big hug as the news of the day was bursting to come out of her.

“Rena!” I said.

“Boy! You’ll never guess what’s happened! Have you talked to Morgana or Andreas?” She asked excitedly.

“No, I haven’t, what’s up?”

“Andreas got into a fight!”

“Andreas?” I was shocked, to say the least. It’s not in Andreas’ nature to be fighting, so this was a surprise.

“Yes, can you believe it? We got a call from him last night. Stefano and Andreas were going to get together and Morgana was going to stay here with me, but when Andreas called, he was at the emergency getting his nose looked at. Morgana was so upset”

“How is he?”

“He’s got some bruises and a broken nose! They said it wasn’t a bad break, so it doesn’t require any surgery. He’s lucky, I’ve seen broken noses that are terrible, terrible things.”

“How did all this happen? Did he get mugged?” I asked.

“We didn’t hear the whole story. Morgana was in shock, so she didn’t go into detail.”

“I’d better call Dimi. He’ll want to know.”

“I would have called you sooner, but I thought Morgana would have told you,” she said.

I dug out my cell phone then called Dimitris. He was in the middle of painting a room, and I hated to interrupt the progress. But if he wasn’t told of this, he would really be upset. As I expected, he was worried and the fact that Andreas had to go to the emergency unit, upset Dimitris even more.

“I will come on next ferry,” he stated.

“Do you want us to wait and pick you up?” I asked.

“I meet you at Andreas’ home. I get there in three hours and get rental car at docks.” His Greek interspersed in our conversation delineated his worry and anger at this event.

Rena and I decided to do our shopping then descend on Morgan and Andreas along with Dimitris. When I called Morgan, I didn’t get details, I just let her know that we would be there in a while. She sounded very weak, or tired. Her little voice seemed like a wisp in the wind.

Rena and I talked about a lot of things, given Rena’s gift of gab, it wasn’t a hard feat. One topic that I felt was more intense was the subject of Camilla. We discussed this strange woman in every detail that we knew about her. Since Camilla had made herself known to me, I dug for anything I could learn

about her. It seems that since the Andreas Day celebration, she has had an obsession with Dimitris.

She only talks about him, asks about him incessantly, and she brought out pictures of them together as children, according to Rena. I asked Rena if Camilla had ever mentioned having a baby, or even being pregnant. Apparently, she had not, but it didn't mean that she hasn't been pregnant at one time. Considering all of the pranks she has dreamed up, no one could take her seriously.

Rena did tell me that she had seen Camilla the other day and when Camilla started talking about Dimitris again, Rena told her that he was married. Rena said that this bit of news hit her hard. She didn't say anything and found suddenly, that she had to leave. Rena hasn't seen her since.

I didn't know whether to be relieved or alarmed. This woman isn't one to take things laying down. I wondered if we had bigger, more devastating things ahead of us with this woman.

We did some shopping, and Rena was somewhat helpful in giving me some ideas of what I could get for a man who can afford anything he needs. Besides the usual, clothes, etc., I ordered Dimitris a laptop computer. It would be delivered on Thursday. This major hurdle behind me, I was free from the Holiday shopping craziness that grips us once a year.

"We should probably get some lunch before we go to Andreas.' I'd hate to impose on them then expect to be fed," I said to Rena.

"There's a great place in town, I don't remember what it's called but they have the best sandwiches. You know those big ones on the French rolls. They call them Hoagies, or Subs, I've seen them called all kinds of things. They make a great Meatball and also Combo. Real good for the waistline!" She laughed.

As we were sitting at the "sandwich shack", I was trying to picture Andreas fighting.

"I can't imagine Andreas fighting. There must have been some reason for it, maybe he had to protect Morgan. You don't think she was getting mugged again, do you?" Rena asked.

“I doubt that, but, maybe they tried to rob him. I don’t see Andreas as a fighter, either. Dimitris - yes. Andreas, no.” I said.

“You think Dimi is a fighter?” Rena asked. “I’ve never heard of Dimi getting in a fight, ever. Why do you think he’d fight and not Andreas?”

“I don’t know, Dimi gets emotional,” I said. I didn’t want to bring up the Aiden thing again.

Just before we were ready to leave, some men came into the seating area and took the booth behind us. They looked to be in their late 40’s, wearing inexpensive older suits and eyeing us as they passed our booth. I had an uncomfortable feeling right away.

“Let’s get going, Rena,” I said in a hushed tone.

“Let me finish, you eat too fast!” She said as she continued to eat. The more we sat there, the more ill-at-ease I felt. Deep inside I had a fear building within me, and I was anxious to leave. These men were not the businessman type, they were more the gangster type.

There were five men, two of which looked like bouncers. Big, muscular goons, all but one had mustaches. All were talking in low tones. Those facing our booth kept their eyes on us. We could not hear the conversation, and I don’t think Rena was aware of them. I tried to prod her along and finally, we were leaving.

As we were walking out of the restaurant I dropped my sunglasses and they slid across the aisle into a planter by the entrance. When I stooped to pick them up, a hand held my upper arm, then helped me up.

“Do not say anything, walk out of the door and to your car. Do not look back. Leave quickly,” he said in a low voice, bending toward my ear.

When I looked at him, it was Ahmed Sahj! His eyes relayed the urgency, and I obeyed his suggestion. I latched onto Rena’s arm and hurried her along to the car.

“What’s going on? Who was that man? What are we doing?” Rena asked.

“We have to get out of here, Rena, so drive! Hurry!” I said as she looked at me with a question on her face and keys in the ignition.

“Let’s go!”

She took off like a bullet before I could finish belting in. I kept looking

behind us, but I couldn't see if anyone was following.

"I'm sorry Rena, I guess we can relax now," I said to her.

"What was that? Who was that man?"

I told her vaguely what happened. She listened with wide eyes and mouth agape.

"Rena, when you park, let's try to park somewhere off the street."

"I know the perfect place." She pulled into the parking lot closest to the farthest entrance to this castle-turned-condo. There was a trellis overgrown with vines that we parked behind, shielding us from street view.

"Okay, here we are. Now, what was that?" Rena asked.

"To tell you the truth, I don't know. When I picked up my sunglasses, I was told we should leave quickly. The men in the booth behind us gave me a bad feeling too, so, leaving quickly sounded urgent enough to scare me. I wasn't going to stick around and ask questions."

"That's it?"

"I don't know anything else."

"Well, let's go inside, Dimi will be here soon," Rena said.

We went up to the door and rang the bell. Morgan came right away. She spoke softly.

"Hi, come on in, Andreas is asleep."

"How's he doing?" I asked.

"He's got a lot of pain. It looks like both eyes are turning black. Can I get you something?" She asked.

"I'll make some coffee, you sit, Morgan," I said.

"We've been so worried, Stefano wants to stop by as soon as he gets back. Probably tomorrow," Rena said.

"Dimi should be here anytime, should I leave the door open? He won't have to ring the bell and wake Andreas," I said.

"Sure, that's okay," Morgan answered.

We just poured our coffee when Dimitris came in.

"Where is Helena?" He said as he closed the door.

"I'm over here, Dimi," I said as I came from the kitchen cupboard. He came to me and put his arms around me.

"You travel safely?" He asked in a low voice.

"Yes, no problems," I said. Dimitris turned to Morgan and asked

"Where is Andreas?"

"He's asleep. They had to give him something for the pain," Morgan said.

"Tell us what happened."

"Andreas will have to tell you, all I know is that we were waiting to be seated at a restaurant and the next thing I know, Andreas is in a fight!"

"That's it?" Rena asked. "Where are the details?"

"I don't know any, I couldn't understand what was said, it was happening so fast."

Suddenly Morgan got up from the table and went to the room where Andreas was sleeping. She reappeared with Andreas, her arm around his waist.

"Andreas, what has happened to you?" Dimitris asked as he pulled out a chair.

"I threw the first punch, I didn't think," Andreas said.

"Here, put the ice pack on it." Morgan handed it to him.

"They were discussing Morgana. I got angry," he said.

"That's what happened? Why didn't you tell me?" Morgan said.

"Because they were rude. A gentleman does not speak that way about a decent woman."

"Andreas!" Morgan said in exasperation. "So you want to get yourself put in a hospital because someone said something rude?"

"Andreas, next time you think it through," Dimitris said.

"It wasn't supposed to turn out like this," Andreas said with a painful smile.

"You are a pretty sight," I said. "You had us worried."

"Yes! You are going to come for Christmas aren't you?" Rena asked.

"I should be able to make it for Christmas," Andreas winced.

"We're expecting Amy on Wednesday, I hope you're doing better by then," Morgan said as she changed the ice pack.

"My Morgana, she worries," Andreas said.

"You can't be doing this whenever someone says something. Words don't mean anything, you have to ignore it. I'm not going to have you doing this

whenever we go somewhere,” Morgan said.

“How’s the pain, Andreas?” I asked.

“It only hurts when I touch it or sneeze, but I’m still on the pain pills.”

“Well, you scared the noodles out of me! My sainted Chinese grandmother! Don’t do this to your family, boy!” Rena was very distraught. I don’t think even she realized how she would react. She was on the verge of crying.

Dimitris went to Rena and put his arm around her, trying to calm her. He bent down to talk into her ear and hugged her closely.

“This could have been a lot worse. Thank God it wasn’t,” I said.

“We will take ferry, so should leave soon,” Dimitris said to me, and I nodded in agreement.

“Will you be at Rena’s Christmas eve?” I asked Morgan.

“Yes. If Andreas is up to it.”

“Yes, we will be there. We do not miss the Christmas celebration,” Andreas stated.

“Then we’ll go and let you rest,” I said.

“We will go, Andreas, you will not fight again!” Dimitris said with big brother authority.

“No, I’ll try not to fight again,” Andreas said.

We said goodbye to everyone and made our way back up the coast. Dimitris was driving, holding my hand on his knee.

“Did you have a good day?” He asked.

“Yes, pretty much,” I said. “And you? How much painting did you get done before I interrupted?”

“I finish lab and hall, then start next room, but not much done there,” he said.

“Something odd happened today, and I’m not sure if it means anything,” I said.

“What is that, Helena?”

“Rena and I went to lunch at the Sandwich Shack when a group of men came in and sat behind us. They gave me a bad feeling, I don’t know how to explain. I was feeling very uneasy. When we were leaving, I dropped my

sunglasses. I bent down to pick them up when this man, Ahmed Sahj, from out of nowhere, takes my arm and tells me we should leave and don't look back." I spoke in a bland tone so that Dimitris wouldn't get anxious about it.

"Who you say this man is?"

"His name is Ahmed Sahj," I said. "It's funny because I met him before on the ferry, then he was at the restaurant. He just appeared out of nowhere."

"I do not know him, and these men, did they do something?"

"No, actually. They just gave me a bad feeling."

"Well, we will watch for them," he said and tightened his grip on my hand.

"Dimi?"

"Yes, Helena."

"Have you ever heard of Pharaoh Trading?"

"No, no I don't hear of it," he said. "Why?"

"This man, Ahmed Sahj, he said that is what his business is called."

We got on the ferry after turning in the rental car and were on our way home. Dimitris was being very affectionate to almost an embarrassing degree.

"Stop, people are starting to watch," I said.

"We let them look," he said as he kissed my neck and held me in his arms. When he saw people nudging each other and whispering, he said in a loud voice

"We are newlyweds." My face was as red as a beet. I got so embarrassed.

"Dimi," I whispered.

"They know now, so is okay."

"You behave," I said. "Come with me!" I took my husband to the bar and found our cozy nook empty.

"Would you like to try their Cappuccino? It's pretty good," I asked.

"I will get for you." He went to the barkeep.

We had our coffee and had a little privacy in the dark corner of the coffee bar. Dimitris had his arms around me and was telling me little things in my ear. He was so funny. So sweet. I was laughing and he would find more things to make me laugh.

He seemed to have made a game of the "reasons why I love you," and whenever we were alone and ran out of things to say, the game would begin.

It was an endearing and enjoyable game that only we two could play.

When we finally got home, for the first time, it *felt* like home. I threw my purse onto the sofa, I turned to Dimitris as he closed the front door, and put my arms around him.

“We’re finally home, Dimi,” I said then kissed him. He responded in his usual warm, romantic way.

“I have to feed dogs,” he said but continued to smother me in kisses.

“I know, I want to get a fire going too. Dimi, do we have any plans for New Year’s Eve?”

“We will see in the New Year.”

“What does that mean? Are we staying home, going out, what?” I asked.

“We have choice, I tell you later. Now, we get to plan dinner, build fire and do what needs to be done.” He gave me a few quick kisses on the lips and we went in different directions to manage the chores at hand.

After dinner, dogs fed and clean-up finished, we were settling down to relax after a day of worry and shopping. When the phone rang, I almost dreaded having to answer it. Dimitris gave me the phone, it was Rena.

“Helena, did you tell Dimi about the men in the restaurant?” She asked rather excitedly.

“Yes, I told him, what’s wrong?” I asked.

“When I told Stefano, he got a little upset. He’s wanting to talk to Dimi about it.”

“What’s he upset about? Nothing happened.” I said.

“That’s just it! Maybe I say the wrong thing.” She said, then spoke some Chinese.

“Rena, calm down, he’s just worried about you.”

“Yes, but Stefano got *big eyes* when I tell him about the man who took your arm. He didn’t say anything to me, but I know when something is wrong. I just wanted to tell you, just in case you didn’t tell Dimi about it.” She took a quick breath. “Uh oh, Stefano wants the phone, hang on_____.”

“Helena, may I speak to Dimi?” Stefano asked.

“Sure, hold on.” I handed the phone to Dimitris. I would have stayed to hear what was said, but I retreated to go take a shower.

When I came back downstairs, Dimitris was putting more wood on the fire. He had the brandy on the breakfast bar with two small snifters. I poured the elixir and went to hand him his glass.

“Come, sit.” Dimitris said to me as I handed him the glass. “We drink to our health and happiness,” he said as we tapped our glasses together. We sat in front of the fire but Dimitris was a little anxious and I knew something was bothering him.

“What is it, Dimi?” I asked.

“Stefano worries on these men, and the one man.” He seemed to be having a hard time putting his thoughts into words.

“Nothing happened. I think Stefano is afraid that I might get Rena mugged.” I said to try to placate his mood.

“What is this man called?”

“His name is Ahmed Sahj. But he’s the one who warned me. I think there may have been something to be afraid of with the others, but not Ahmed.”

“Do you know this man?”

“I don’t *know* him, I’ve only talked to him a couple of times on the ferry. He’s quite dignified and educated. He’s not a thug,” I said.

“Tell me, again what happened.”

I recounted as much detail of the episode that I could remember. I couldn’t tell him verbatim the exact wording, but the gist of the encounter. I could see Dimitris thinking, but he was not alarmed.

“Did you ever tell to him personal things, like where you live?”

“No, I don’t know the man. The only time I talked to him, it was very formal and generic. He talked about his business, mostly.”

Dimitris leaned over and kissed my temple then said

“I no like to have you travel alone.”

“I know, I don’t like having to do it, either,” I said as I looked into his eyes. “You look so worried. You don’t need to worry, Dimi.”

“Yes, I think Stefano worries on mugging. Rena is too little for mugging,” He said and although the thought of mugging was anything but funny, I had to laugh.

We were tired, the day had been a long one so we turned off the lights

and pushed what was left of the fire to the back of the hearth. This gave the bedroom the benefit of what was still burning.

The Christmas tree was holding up well, and the mound of gifts under the tree was growing. Since I had arranged for the delivery of the computer, I was also able to schedule the delivery of the rest of the purchases that I had made that day. That was one big benefit I now take advantage of, delivery of my purchases from the mainland. With so many islands and having to ferry from one to another, the delivery services are a godsend.

When we got into bed it seemed the natural thing to do was to turn with our love to one another and become one, once more. We were at a time when there were no major obstacles and problems to get in the way. It was a time of freedom and happiness. It seemed that we had too few times like this, with nothing but the separation looming over our heads. We cuddled and had little conversations about everything and nothing.

“Dimi, I’m not looking forward to the engagement time. It’s going to be hard enough, I have to give you up for a month and have to go live somewhere else too.”

“Time will pass quickly, you will see.”

“I have to figure out where I’m going to be, I don’t want to stay with Rena or Morgan,” I said.

“Why?”

“I don’t want to put our relationships at risk.”

“But you can not be alone.”

“I know. I wish my sister would come and stay, then you could stay with Andreas.”

“Yes, that would work,” he said. “I will stay with Andreas, but you will not be alone here.”

“I guess it isn’t practical. I’ll stay with Morgan if they’ll have me.”

“Good, that is good Helena. Dimi not to worry if you with miss Morgana.”

“You know, Dimi, trying to get ready for a wedding, I’ll be a wreck. Poor Morgan and Andreas will want to kick me out before the big day!”

“Do not worry on things, all will be fine.”

“Yes, but I’ll have to still keep my hands off of *you* until after the reception. I don’t know if I can!” I laughed, but there was so much truth in it.

“I will make you keep hands off!” He proclaimed.

“Oh, yeah, right! It’s your fault that I’m so bad.” He snuggled into my neck and said

“I love for you to be bad.”

“That’s what I mean, you are a bad influence.”

“We are bad for each other, my Helena.”

After a slow start to the morning, I checked the telephone and found several missed calls. I returned a call to my Dad, he reminded me of things about Christmases past and was wondering if I was ever going to return to California. Of course, I said that I would visit, but couldn’t say that I would move back. This didn’t sit well with him, but I had to more or less skirt the issue.

We had a good chat that lasted for 40 minutes. He was telling me that I need to get a computer so that we can email. He has had several problems with his computer in the last month but found out that it was actually his slow internet that was the problem.

He said he had talked to Mark. This was a bit of a surprise considering our split up. I asked my father if Mark said anything to him about when he came here. The only thing said is that Mark wondered if I had said anything about coming back. My father didn’t know and said so. When I got off of the phone I quietly slid into bed. Dimitris drew me close to him as he curled in behind me ‘spoon’ style.

When we awoke, it was one of those clear crisp mornings that makes one feel glad to be alive.

“Good morning, my wife,” Dimitris said as he kissed my forehead.

“G’morning,” I was still half asleep as Dimitris was gently kissing my palm, and kissing his way up to my ear. He drew my hips closer to him as he snuggled my neck and whispered Greek to me. He kept my body tight against his as he made movements to encourage me. I wasn’t quite ready for this

activity.

“Why you do not let Dimi make love to you?”

“It’s so early and I’m so tired. It’s okay,” I said.

“No - is not okay,” he said.

“Dimi, are you going to let me sleep?” I mumbled to him through my pillow.

“Helena, we will talk on this.”

“Later, okay?” He kissed my hand, covered me with the blankets and went to take a shower. I was able to sleep another hour. When I got up I could smell the coffee from the kitchen. I couldn’t find my deck shoes which I usually slip on in the morning but put on my kimono just to sneak into the kitchen long enough to grab a cup of coffee.

When I hurried around the corner there sat Dimitris with Aiden having coffee. When they saw me they both stood. I quickly closed my kimono.

“I - I didn’t know we had company. Dimi would you bring me some coffee?” I went back to the bedroom quickly. I was wondering why Aiden is here. Dimitris came in with my WUF cup.

“Helena, you are beautiful in morning, but should keep robe closed,” he said as he handed me the cup.

“What is *he* doing here? I’m so embarrassed!” I whispered.

“He asks me for help, two men to load equipment, I help,” he said as he used his finger to move my hair off of my shoulder. He planted a sensuous kiss on my shoulder then said in a soft voice

“I must make love to you, Helena. I cannot rest until I do. You shouldn’t let Dimi go without making you happy.” Then he continued kissing my shoulder and neck.

“You’d better go see to Aiden, he’s waiting,” I said as I tore myself away from the spell he was weaving.

“Oh, Helena, do not send me away.”

“Aiden is waiting, Dimi,” I said in a little more stern voice.

“Always so mean, I go, but I will not stop thinking of making love to my wife.” He kissed my eyes and said, “you will think of this man until I return.”

“Are you going somewhere?”

“North Corfu, I help Aiden and I come home to my sweet Helena.” He

kissed me sensuously and slid his hand into the kimono and rested his hand on my breast.

“Oh, Helena, you make me crazy.” He kissed my neck, then left me with a kiss on my lips. I wasn’t sure when they were going to leave, but I dressed and then went out to the kitchen for another cup of coffee. They had left already and I had the house to myself for a while.

I poured myself another cup of coffee and went to the breakfast bar where they were sitting earlier. The newspaper was sitting there, which wasn’t unusual, so I looked at it as I drank my coffee. There was doodling on some of the pages and the crossword puzzle was half done. On the bottom of that page, there were words lined out, re-written then lined out again. I noticed “Helena Patakinis” written out then lined through. Then “Helena Kairne” then that was lined through. It was written several times, each lined through or scribbled out. It wasn’t Dimitris writing. I had to get rid of the newspaper before Dimitris saw it. I’m sure it was left here by accident, but I didn’t want Dimitris to get upset with Aiden again.

After disposing of the newspaper, I went to the back to see the room that was painted. It was pretty cold in this section but the smell of paint had almost dissipated, even in this weather. Had I not interrupted Dimitris, he would have gotten more done. The room looked very sterile, all white, still having the tarps on the floor, it was the only spot of color in the room. This room had lots of light from large windows but still would need more electrical outlets and lighting.

Since Andreas broke his nose, his duties for work would have to either be put off for a week or delegated. My guess with Aiden is that Dimitris had been drafted to step in for this one chore. I was very surprised to see Aiden here.

It’s hard for me to understand the minds of men. If I had a blow-out with a friend, especially over my lover, I would cut all ties with that person. My guess with Dimitris and Aiden is that now there are boundaries and they could move beyond the tension or the past events, as long as those boundaries are respected. It’s the only explanation that came to me. I know that the issue of trust was non-existent. Aiden would never be trusted, as far as I was

concerned.

The relationship between Aiden and myself will always be an awkward one. I would never be able to comfortably be around him, even if there were a crowd in the room. I don't think that Dimitris understands this.

After picking up cups and straightening up, myself included, I called Morgan.

"How is Andreas doing?" I asked.

"Well, he's still in pain, not as bad as it was, but he's still on the pain pills."

"What's going to happen with his nose?" I asked.

"He's going to another doctor tomorrow, to see if there's going to be any problems. I convinced him that if it's going to turn into a banana, they would have to break it again to fix it, so he's going to have it looked at."

"That's a good idea, it makes sense," I said. "Amy will be here in a day or two, right?"

"I'm going to call her tonight to make sure I'll meet her plane. Last time I talked to her she was ready to go, and wanted to find an earlier flight."

"It'll be so nice to have her here. If Christmas is anything close to what Andreas' Day was, it will be a great celebration. Have you talked to Rena?" I asked.

"Yes, I talked to her last night, she's all excited about the celebration, she wants everyone to plan on spending the night because the ferry won't be running, and we'll be there until late on Christmas eve anyway," she said.

"That's right, it won't be running Christmas Day, will it?" I asked.

"Probably not, so plan on packing for two nights. Geez! I wonder where everyone will sleep?" Morgan asked.

"She always manages. I think she thrives on all the action! Her daughter will be there today. I think Amy and Katie will get along pretty good, don't you?" I said.

"Yeah, they will. Andreas' daughter will be at Rena's too, but only on Christmas day."

"Oh, man! She'll have to see her father with his nose," I said.

"I haven't mentioned it to him since he broke it, I didn't want to make him feel worse." She said and cleared her voice. "Aiden was here a couple of days

ago. They were talking about the job and something about some equipment that has to be moved on Corfu. When Andreas told him that you two got married, he was obviously affected. He tried to cover it up by asking when and where, but he got fidgety and his voice got weird. I don't think he thought that you'd ever marry Dimitris. He kept shaking his head."

"He was at the house this morning. Dimitris went with him to help with that equipment. I was shocked to find him sitting in our kitchen when I got up!" I said.

"You know, he's basically a nice guy, but he does have a fatal attraction thing going on. I don't think the civil marriage is putting him off."

"What it is, is that he's got this idea that everything was so wonderful, back when we were together, and it was nice, and I loved him *then*. But you don't screw up something if it was that good. So I think he's living in a world of "what if's." Know what I mean?" I asked.

"That doesn't change the fact that he still thinks he's got a chance!"

"He'll have to get used to it, especially if he doesn't want Dimitris to kill him!" I kind of laughed.

"Aren't you afraid that he'll get you alone somewhere and try something again? Apparently the marriage, and Dimitris' threats haven't deterred him."

"I don't know. I just have to worry about things that are real; he'll get the point. He's not an idiot after all," I said, and I hoped that what I was saying was something I believed. I had my doubts about him begging off, but what could anyone do about it if he doesn't?

"I guess there's not much you can do until he makes a move," she said.

We talked for an hour, just to get caught up on everything. For the Holidays, we made arrangements for Andreas to call us from the docks when they get to Kefalonia, then we'll all go to Rena's together on Christmas eve since there was so much excess baggage we were carrying.

I sat at the breakfast bar and took stock of how my life has drastically changed in just a short time. I looked around me, this house, being alone in it and being basically a stranger in this country, I've turned from an independent woman, familiar with my surroundings to one who would be almost lost without this man. I've taken a man that I only knew for a short time and have

committed myself, body and soul to him.

I never dreamed that I would be this person who could take this step. It has been a change in everything from the food I eat to a new family. Not that I could ever abandon my family, but I have separated myself by distance and time zones. I've never been so alive as I have, since coming here. I have learned about living life, not racing through it at jet speed.

Since Dimitris was interrupted in painting and still had tarps down with paint cans ready, I put on an old shirt and rolled up my sleeves. I finished painting one room and cut-in the enamel work around the windows in the lab. If I had the right color of paint for the first guest room I would have continued. I know that Dimitris is going to be disgusted with me for doing the work, but there was still more to do before we could invite any guests to stay over.

While I was washing up, my mind went back to when Rena and I were in the Sandwich shop. My inner gut feelings sometimes are right on. When I get a bad feeling about a person or a situation, I'm usually not wrong. This day was unusual in that we had a warning from someone, other than my gut. Ahmed Sahj. Who is he and where did he come from in that restaurant? He didn't appear to be inside the restaurant, and if he just entered, I didn't see him come in. Why would he warn me? Does he know these unsavory men?

I could hear the phone ringing in the kitchen, and trying to get to it from the back room would be a close run race. I grabbed the phone on the run and almost dropped it.

"Hello?" I said breathlessly.

"Helena, are you alright?"

"Dimi, I'm fine, I was running, where are you?"

"You run? You must be careful! I want to tell you, Helena, I think of you."

"I think of you too. Are you on your way home?"

"Maybe in one hour. Still things to do. Did you let in dog?"

"Well, no. I forgot," I said.

"Helena, keep dog in when alone."

"I'll let one of them in when I hang up. I promise."

"I worry when you alone," he said.

"I know, it'll be okay. Have you talked to Andreas?" I asked.

"Yes, he is doing better. Should be back to work after Holidays. Poor man!"

"Hurry and finish your work, Dimi. I miss you. This place is so empty when you're gone," I said. "Your wife needs her husband," I added in a soft voice.

"Oh my God, Helena! Maybe we no stop for lunch! S'agapo, I will be home soon," he murmured.

When I got off of the phone, my heart felt so full. His voice, his sweetness, excites me. I want to share this feeling and tell everyone about this wonderful person and how he makes me feel, but it's mine. It's in my heart and I hold it dear like the precious jewel that it is.

I wasn't sure exactly how much time I had before he got home, but since I now have a car, I figured that I could make it to the paint store and get back before Dimitris gets home. Maybe I'd have time to start in the next room.

It only took an hour to get to the hardware store, find the paint, have it mixed and get home. I bought enough paint to do at least three rooms, maybe four. The color for the bedroom next to the red room was a soft peachy color, just a breath of color to offset the glare of the light from the window. It was an odd thing that in mixing this paint, there was added some blue tint to the base. It will be interesting to see it once it dries on the walls.

Most of the paint for the upstairs was in an off-white, just a tinge of color. Although the color of the islands can be quite vivid, the inside of the house needed a tranquil feel with possibilities for spur-of-the-moment decorating.

I let one of the dogs in the house as Dimitris requested. I saw that the time was getting close to 2 p.m. I still had enough daylight to get some painting done, so I started the guest room. Although it had been a depository for boxes that had been waiting to be unpacked, I was able to shift them around and work in spite of them. This wasn't really a large room so it didn't take any time at all to complete. We still have to do the enamel window sills and baseboards, but the majority of the work is done in this room. Time was flying by and I expected Dimitris any minute. When the phone rang, I thought it was he.

“Where are you?” I asked.

“Who is this?” I heard the voice say.

“Who is this?” I asked back.

“It’s Camilla, where’s Dimitris?” She demanded.

“You’ve got a lot of nerve calling here,” I said.

“I need to talk to Dimi.”

“I’m sorry, Mr. Patakinis is unavailable.”

“What? Who is this?”

“His wife!” I said and heard her hang up the phone in my ear.

I stood there, looking at the telephone receiver in my hand and thinking “I can’t believe this woman!” I was in shock! This took me by surprise! I suddenly was so furious that I couldn’t think. The woman is insane!

I started finding myself doing anything to work the anger out. I opened another can of paint and set to work in another room. After that, I was still talking to myself, but slowing down on the roller.

I heard Dimitris calling me from the living room.

“Helena, where are you?” He called again.

“I’m coming, I’m back here,” I yelled back as I put down the roller and wiped off my hands.

“What you do, paint?” He questioned as he came up and kissed me.

“I was keeping busy. I missed you,” I said and put my arms around him.

“Why do this? You hurt your hands!”

“Have you eaten?” I asked.

“No, we not eat, had to come home, and find you do this,” he said, looking at my hands.

“I just got so upset that I had to do something!” I said.

“What upsets you?”

“You had a call from Camilla,” I said. Dimitris looked at me like he dreaded to hear about this.

“What she want?”

“She wouldn’t talk to me,” I said. “She just hung up. She didn’t call you on your cell?”

“No. Her number blocked. No, do not accept from her phone.”

“What do you think she wants?” I asked.

“Psh, who can know?” He took my hand. “Come out of here, we go to kitchen.” He put the lid on the paint can, then guided me from the room.

“What did you bring?” I asked when I saw the bags from the market on the counter.

“I stop for bread and cheese, some Capocollo, some good things to fix lunch.”

I turned and put my arms around him.

“I missed you,” I said and just hugged him.

“I miss you too.” He stroked the back of my shoulder and started to put the groceries in the refrigerator.

“What’s wrong?” I asked him, he seemed quiet and down.

“Camilla, that woman will be problem.”

I couldn’t stand it anymore. She wasn’t going to start something just by the mention of her name!

“Dimi,” I said as I walked up to him by the sink. As he turned toward me I kissed him longer and deeper than he expected and he responded with the enthusiasm I hoped for. “How hungry are you?” I whispered to him.

We retreated to the bedroom and I reminded him of what was important to us. The thought of Camilla was soon removed from both of our minds as we renewed our love and commitment to each other.

“Oh, Helena, I stay away too much. Andreas should go back to work then Dimi stay here with you.”

“Yes, but soon you’ll be working, and you’ll be gone all day,” I said as I traced my finger over his eyebrow.

“Sometimes I stay here, work at home,” he said.

“I’m not sure exactly what it is that you do, but it’s going to be nice to have you here. I wasn’t looking forward to being alone all week once you take this job,” I said. He held me tight and kissed my ear and said

“Let’s fix dinner.”

Dimitris fixed an assortment of meyetes, which was enough for the two of us.

“Aiden tell me of Camilla. She must need doctor,” he casually commented as he poured the wine.

“What did he say?” I asked.

“He take her to dinner. All she do is ask about you. He gave answer, then stop after she ask more and more. She ask if he have pictures if you give him gifts, all manner of questions. She get angry at him not to answer or give answer she want.”

“Anything else?” I asked.

“He say she ask about personal, intimate thing between you and him.”

“And?”

“He shake head not to believe her. He do not say to her an answer.”

“She’s out to get me! I think she’s looking for ammunition to use against me,” I said.

“She cannot.” He put his arm around my shoulder. “Aiden more gentleman than I think. He keeps things quiet.”

“What are we going to do about Camilla? She can’t keep doing this. I don’t want her to do something that we can’t recover from,” I said as I looked at him. He reached for my hand and kissed my fingers, then said,

“There is nothing she can do that we not recover. Nothing will separate us, do you understand?” He spoke very carefully and articulately, looking into my eyes.

After cleaning up the kitchen we took our wine into the living room. Dimitris turned on the TV and I stood in front of the fire. It felt good. The peace, and having Dimitris home. He came up to me, putting his arms around me and kissed the side of my cheek.

“Aiden tell me how lucky to have such a wife. He say envious. I say yes, am very lucky man! He still has problem. He say I may be stuck with Camilla if you not come to Rhodes.” Then Dimitris kissed my cheek again.

“What did you say?”

“I say the gods bring my Helena to me. Now, my life complete. I no have to look, already I find.”

“You’re so sweet, Dimi, I might have to marry you again,” I said as I put my arm around him. He smiled and laughed.

“Helena, you tease your Dimi! But yes, this we do again, soon.”

“When does the separation start? I mean, we’ve already registered the civil

bond, so when's the official separation?

"We receive recorded papers from court; newspapers notified and then we start separation. Probably after holidays."

We talked about the upcoming separation and whatever two people in love talk about. It was a nice evening at home, just the two of us, and the name of Camilla didn't come up again that night.

The Holidays



The next few days went by quickly and we didn't hear from Camilla, whom we hadn't even thought of since her call. We woke up very early on the morning of Christmas Eve, to a clear calm day, good for getting out to sea. Today would be a day of gaiety, seeing old friends of the family, and the sharing of lots of food. We had to pack up all of the gifts and the food that Dimitris prepared, plus the clothes we packed for three days away from home. Everything went into the land barge. I decided I'd give Dimitris his gifts before we leave, and since we were to meet Andreas and Morgan at the Athena, we had a little time to spend together, and open the gifts.

Dimitris had his computer delivered on Thursday, but other small gifts I had gotten for him he opened.

I never knew what to expect from Dimitris, so I gave up trying to guess. He had already given me so much. I wasn't really expecting him to give me a gift for Christmas, however, he surprised me with a notebook computer and a beautiful Diamond pendant. The man is too generous and I'm afraid of what he's going to do next. He's always able to surprise me.

Dimitris told me to expect to be surrounded by the old aunts with an abundance of married life advice. I told him that if he leaves me to be stranded in this situation, that I could be very mean to him for a very long time to

come. He smiled and shook his head.

We agreed that if we were to go to the Greek Orthodox on Christmas day that we would go to the Catholic church for midnight mass. This was to be a very special Christmas.

We got a call from Andreas. They were ten minutes out and would be docking soon.

“Holy shit!” Morgan said. “You sure have enough stuff!”

“Hi, Morgan” I greeted my friend. “And Amy! How are you doing, girl! You look great!”

“I’m fine, I hear you’ve been busy!” She said.

“Oh, Amy, this is Dimitris.” I introduced her to my new husband. I noticed her face when she saw him. Her eyes got a little wider, but she didn’t smile on this introduction, which she usually would do. It was hard for me to read her, but I guessed that she expected him to look a lot like Andreas, which he definitely does not.

“Hello, Amy, welcome to the islands,” he said and kissed her hand.

“How long are you staying?” I asked.

“I can only stay a week, then I’ve got to get back to work. I wish I had more time though.”

“Yeah, a week isn’t near enough time,” I said.

“Did you guys bring food, too? Wow!” Morgan commented.

“Yes, we bring food, too,” Dimitris said.

“We figured on maybe three days - two nights for sure. Unless you have other plans,” I said.

“It will be two nights, so you’re right,” Andreas said.

They loaded all the bags and stowed everything below for the launch.

We left Kefalonia as the sun was just breaking. It would be a smooth trip. We were all happy, it was going to be a beautiful day with lots of activity.

Morgan and I were in the galley, discussing how the holidays always seemed to take so much out of us, but not this year. This year was different.

Dimitris came down and slid in next to me in the booth. He took my hand in both of his and breathed his warm breath over them, then rubbed to warm

them.

“We will change clothes before Karpathos. Must not look like fisherman when we arrive,” Dimitris said.

“Do I look like a fisherman?” Morgan asked.

“No, Morgana, just that we must dress, is Christmas Eve, special day,” he explained.

“I’ll dress after we get to Rena’s. It’s too much trouble right now, I’ll never find my clothes without unpacking everything,” I said.

“I’ll be on the bridge,” Morgan said and excused herself, and Amy followed.

“Did I offend Morgana?” Dimitris asked.

“I don’t think so. You’re looking cute, why do you look so cute today?” I asked as I played with his hair that came down over his forehead.

“Maybe because I am in love. They say it does strange things to a man,” he said in a soft voice. “I will need to take suitcase to room.”

“We still have plenty of time for that, let’s get some coffee, you know the sea always makes me sleepy,” I said and began to yawn.

“Do you wish to sleep? We can nap if you are tired,” he said, playing with my braid.

“That’s pretty tempting, do you think Andreas and Morgan would mind?”

“I tell them, you wait here,” he kissed the tips of my fingers as he left the booth. I waited, and as I did the sound of the ocean beating against the hull of the boat was like a lullaby, and I found that my eyes getting heavier with the tranquil ocean rocking.

“Come, Helena,” Dimitris said from the doorway, with our suitcases in hand. He took me to the large room, the Captain’s quarters where the king size bed was so inviting. Dimitris turned on the little electric heater which made the room more livable.

“Andreas doesn’t mind if we get in bed?” I asked.

“Where else would we sleep?” He laughed.

“Well, I thought we’d just lay on top if it bothers him,” I said.

“Bed is to get into, so under the covers for you, Helena,” he said and opened the bed. He took off his shoes and trousers and put his clothes on a chair. He got in bed as I was removing my jeans. I couldn’t stop yawning.

“My goodness! Excuse me Dimi, I can’t stop!”

“Come, get in.” He held open the covers for me, I slid into bed next to him, and into his arms. I was so comfortable there, safe.

“This remind Dimi of things. Good things and not so good things.” He kissed my temple.

“Yeah, me too. It reminds me of the pain I felt, trying not to fall in love with you,” I said.

“Yes, you were being mean to me, to keep Dimi away. I felt pain also.”

“I’m glad we’re past that.”

He reached around me and drew me closer to him, his body pressing close to me, I could feel his breath on my neck, then his soft lips. He whispered something in Greek to me and he looked into my eyes. I was beginning to melt like I did when we first met. He sent electricity through me with his eyes and his voice. I thought I was past the feelings that first brought me to him, but he ignited them as though we were together for the first time. He kissed me so sensuously that I thought I would reach the end of my endurance.

We lay wrapped in each other’s arms, clinging to the energy and atmosphere we created. The warmth and comfort of each other, the knowledge that when we awake, the other would be there. We slept until there was a pounding at the door.

“Yes?” Dimitris called out.

“We’re coming into Karpathos,” Morgan said.

“Thank you, Morgana,” he called back. “We must dress, Helena.” he softly kissed my shoulder. “I will shower.”

Once we cleaned up and straightened the room we got dressed.

Stefano was waiting for us at the docks and helped load the food and bags into the wagon. Finally clean, the wagon was the only vehicle to handle all of our bags, the food, gifts and all five of us.

“Merry Christmas, Stefano,” I said as we greeted him.

“Rena is home cooking, Katie is helping too. Lots of things to keep us busy today.”

Morgan introduced Stefano to Amy, then we all squeezed into the station wagon.

“Andreas! How is the nose?” Stefano asked.

“Not as bad as it looks. If I didn’t have these black eyes, you’d never know it’s broken.”

“Amy, when did you arrive?” Stefano asked.

“I got in last night,” she said.

“Well, you haven’t seen much of the islands yet,” Stefano surmised.

“Not yet. I was hoping the weather would hold for a few days, maybe I could see the sights.”

“If you’re up to it, Katie can take you around, she’s my daughter. She knows Karpathos like the back of her hand.”

“Do you know how many people will come over for the celebration, Stefano?” I asked.

“Well, it’ll be about the same as Andreas’ Day, maybe more neighbors, the children like to sing carols, so there may be more people. Oh, and Rena has a few relatives that may drop by. They live in Turkey part of the year, in winter. So it’ll be crowded.”

When we got to the house everyone greeted each other and introduced Amy to Rena and Katie. Arthur was his usual self. Dimitris brought all the food to the kitchen for Rena to set out with the Christmas cakes and all of the other plates. We were put in the room we usually occupy when we stay at Rena’s.

We spent most of the afternoon nibbling and chatting. The men were out in the yard overseeing a roasting lamb and having their cigars, except for Dimitris. No cigar for him.

It was beginning to get dark when Dimitris came up to me, interrupting the ladies chatter. He hugged me from behind and gave me a kiss on the cheek and said.

“Time we must change.”

“Oh, it is getting late, we all need to change,” Rena said.

Once I had my dress on I sat before the vanity to fix my hair. Although it had been curled and presentable yesterday, I needed to salvage what was left. I removed the band that held the braid at bay then unbraided my hair. There

was still enough curl left so that I didn't have to fuss too much.

"Oh, Helena," Dimitris said as he came up and stood behind me. "Yes, I like black dress, you wear necklace with this dress?"

"Would you put it on me?" I asked, then I handed it to him. I pulled up my hair and he was able to clasp it.

"There! Perfect." He said and kissed the back of my neck. He lingered there for a bit and I was getting all those feelings again. If we weren't careful we would be back in the sack.

"Dimi," I said softly and put my hand on his cheek. I turned to him to see his eyes with that arduous glaze to them. I could see that he wasn't thinking about the festivities.

"Dimi, Sugar, we have to go," I said. He kissed my palm, pulled me up to face him and drew me tightly to him. He was wearing that cologne that drives me wild. I had a hard time trying to resist him when every muscle in my body grew weak with the passion of him. He was whispering in Greek and started to unzip my dress.

"Dimi, we can't!" I said, halfheartedly. "Dimi, stop, we can't do this now." I had to pull away from him, but he continued to kiss my palm. I put my hand on the back of his neck and tried to look into his eyes. "Dimi?"

"Yes."

"We have to get ready now," I said softly.

"I know, but it is hard to not touch," he said as he zipped up my dress.

I watched him from the vanity mirror, so cute, so sexy, so hard to keep away from. I finished my make up and put combs in my hair. I was as ready as I'd ever be. It wasn't like we were going to a gala event, but all of the people we would greet, and then going to mass tonight, called for some special dressing. I let Dimitris be the judge of my appearance, as he would know what is expected and what would be 'over-kill'.

When we came out of the room and entered the living room, Rena had the track lighting on and the living room really did look like a showpiece. The lights illuminated the antiquities and the fireplace was the exquisite centerpiece to the room.

"Oh, Dimi, look at this room! It's magnificent, isn't it?" I was in awe.

“It certainly is,” he said. “Would you like a drink, Helena?” We sat at the coffee table.

“Not right now, Babe, I don’t want to get silly tonight,” I said.

“Not silly, ever, Helena.”

“We have to go to mass later, I don’t want to drink any alcohol.”

“Yes.”

The festivities were happy, everyone seemed to enjoy the food and the guests were a steady flow of new faces.

I was standing with Morgan and Amy when a roar came over the people in the living room. We were on the patio and couldn’t see what was going on. A few minutes passed when Dimitris and Andreas came out onto the patio to find us.

“Helena, this is my brother Angelo.”

Finally, the meeting of the rogue brother Angelo. The young man of thirty-six years was an Adonis! Black curly hair, lightly olive complected big hazel eyes and six foot tall. He was wearing a fully wrapped, short-cropped beard and mustache. I can see why he’s considered the rebel, he has the devil in his eyes and when he smiles, deep dimples light up his face. Of all the brothers, Angelo resembles Dimitris the most.

The brothers were in conversations that would break out in laughter. When Mattaios and his wife Matyha came in, the family was complete. All the brothers together! They sat at the dining room table in a world of their own.

I went into the kitchen for something to drink. Dimitris called me over to him.

“Helena.” He waved me to the table. I stood next to him and kissed him. He wanted to give me his chair, but I said no, I would stand.

“You must not stand.” But I didn’t want to intrude on the brother’s reunion. The conversation came around to Dimitris and me, and how we met. Angelo got a kick out of the fact that Dimitris has taken a wife. He was sure that Dimitris would never marry again. To him, it was quite hilarious. It was starting to irritate me. I let it pass, though.

He was quite taken with Amy and zeroed in on her like a hawk and it’s prey. She would succumb to his charms if she weren’t careful.

It was the first time that I had met Matyha. She has a Turkish background. Her father was a diplomat so she was well traveled by the time she met Mattaios. She was quiet and demure and very likable. She was hard to bring out of her shell, but once we started talking, she was very interesting and funny.

“Dimi,” I said.

“Yes, my Heart?” He looked up at me as the men were still talking and laughing.

“We should be leaving for mass.” He looked up at the clock.

“We will be back in one hour,” he announced.

“Where are you off to? We still have to place the baby Jesus in the manger!” Rena said.

“We go to mass, be back soon,” Dimitris said.

We borrowed the Caddy from Stefano and drove to the church. It was a very old church that had frescoes painted on the deteriorating plaster, but the alter was all alight with candles. It was beautiful and had a holy presence about it.

The mass was celebrated in the old ways that reminded me of the Latin masses I attended many years ago. The mass was a loving reminder of family and tradition.

After mass, we went back to the house. All of the children were gone but the adult guests were still having a good time. The food was still out and the brothers were all still here, branched out into more comfortable chairs and sofas, by the fire.

We could hear Rena laughing as we came in the front door. I asked if Amy and Morgan had already gone to bed.

“No, I think Amy is on the patio with Angelo, and Morgana is in the loft, I think she’s looking at the yardage that was left over,” Stefano said.

“Oh, the loft, I see,” I said and a smile washed over my face, where I had to turn to Dimitris, and he smiled at me too.

“Now tomorrow, what time is the Orthodox rite?”

“I think they’re having a procession at 8 a.m. and the litany will start at 10 a.m.,” Rena said.

“Good, we don’t have to get up early,” I said.

I walked into the kitchen, as I was going to see if there was anything interesting to drink.

“Helena, what you do here?” Dimi came up to me and kissed my neck then kissed my lips. “I can’t keep hands off!” He whispered as his kissing got more intense.

“Dimi, what are you doing?”

“This dress, too sexy I can’t keep hands off,” he said as he continued kissing my neck.

“Someone’s going to come in,” I protested.

“Is okay, we are newlyweds,” he said in a breathless whisper.

“You like the dress, huh?” I joked.

“Grrrr.” He made his animal growl and was nuzzling my neck by the refrigerator.

“Hey, you two better get a room!” We heard from Angelo as he came into the kitchen. We were laughing and had to step aside to let Angelo get a beer out of the refrigerator.

“Is there any champagne?” I asked. Dimitris went to look inside the refrigerator.

“Yes! I find Champagne,” he said and got down some glasses from the cabinet. Dimitris asked if anyone else wanted some. They declined so we poured our glasses, toasted to each other and had a glass of the bubbly. We took our glasses and the bottle into the living room and sat together with our drinks while the conversations went on around us.

“I think we are tired. We go to bed now,” Dimitris announced, and we said our good nights to everyone.

When we got to the bedroom where I kicked off my shoes, Dimitris kicked off his shoes. He reached out to surround me in his arms. When he kissed me it seemed like we were going around in a circle. He spoke Greek and I melted into his kiss. He didn’t turn on the light, he let my dress drop to the floor then we landed on the bed in a fury of breathless kissing and grasping. It was like we had been apart for a year. It was fast, frantic and glorious. I couldn’t stop myself from being swept up in his passion. He was everything I

ever wanted in a man.

Just when you think “that’s all there is,” and life has passed you by, someone comes into your life and you find a new appreciation for what life really can be. Then you wonder, what have you been doing all this time? How can anything be this wonderful, and how long will it last?

I looked at this man who just shared his love with me and I think of how lucky I am and what happiness he brings me. I begin to thank the gods that gave me this treasure and pray that nothing will ever happen to him. I think of how quickly time passes and this moment will be gone before I am ready to let it go.

When we awoke, Dimitris put his hand on my cheek and spread his fingers through my hair. He said,

“Good morning, my Heart, Merry Christmas.” Then he kissed me so deep that I woke up.

“Merry Christmas, Dimi.....I....” and he kissed me again.

“Time to get up big brother, it’s Christmas! Can’t sleep all day!” Angelo pounded at the door.

Dimitris collapsed onto the pillow, and when his eyes met mine, we laughed.

“The gods are not smiling yet this morning,” he said and laughed. “Well, I get up.” He kissed my shoulder and lovingly slapped my hip. “We must get up, Angelo and Mattaios may leave today, so we visit.”

“I understand, Dimi, go see your brothers, I’ll be along in a few minutes, I’m going to shower first,” I said.

“I love you, Helena,” he said as he kissed me.

“S’agapo, Dimi,” I said to him, and as I hugged him, I kissed the top of his head, and nuzzled his face to my chest.

“Nnnnnn. I won’t go, I tell Angelo to wait,” he said as he kissed my chest and neck.

“Come on Dimitris, we don’t want to have to come and get you!” Angelo was persistent.

“I will not have brothers next time!” Dimitris said and started to dress. He turned to me and said, “you should dress or I will have to come back here.”

He kissed my palm and left the room.

Everyone got into whatever vehicle they would fit into. We drove like a caravan to town. We were there in time to watch the last block of the procession before it terminated at the church. There were so many people we were not able to get a seat in the pews. As it was standing room only we were able to observe the Litany from the back of the church. It was very beautiful and ancient. I felt I had gone back to Medieval times and was a part of the history of this church. I think it impressed Morgan and Amy also.

After the Litany, we gathered outside on the steps of the church. There was a discussion of what to do, and if there was a possibility of finding a nice place to have lunch. Christmas day, not too many choices. It was agreed to go to one of the best hotels on the island, as the restaurant would definitely be serving food.

I noticed that Morgan kept looking over to Amy, who was being pursued by Angelo. It looked as though Amy was having a good time, though it was hard to say if she was really interested. I hadn't had a chance to talk to either of them, as the time for 'girl talk' hadn't presented itself.

Andreas was talking to Rena about his daughter coming for Christmas dinner. Big dinners on special occasions seemed to run later than casual dinners so he didn't think she would arrive until 4 p.m. or 5 p.m. He had his cell phone though, should she arrive earlier than expected.

Andreas was noticeably nervous. He's not one to sit idle for too long by nature, but with the excitement of seeing his daughter, he could barely sit still for lunch.

The restaurant put us at a large round table. This worked out fairly well for five couples. Everyone could see everyone else. We had champagne and toasted to just about everything.

Dimitris made a very beautiful little toast to our first Christmas together. It was so beautiful I was sorry that there were so many people around. It was a very romantic toast, just for us, but it was shared with everyone. When Dimitris kissed me after the toast, everyone tapped their champagne glasses with their knives. Dimitris was so cute, I could have taken a bite out of him

right there!

After lunch, we all went back to Rena's and fixed a big pot of coffee. The men all went out to the patio and had their cigars and their gabfest. Even Arthur was part of the brotherhood.

Morgan and Rena were having a conversation, then Katie and Amy were having a great time and were getting ready to leave for some site seeing. I think Angelo was trying to get invited along.

Everyone seemed to be in deep conversation so I didn't intrude, I grabbed my shawl then went out the back patio and walked through the trees. The smell of a freshly crushed leaf from an Orange tree reminded me of my childhood when we had an old Orange tree in our yard. The wind was light and fresh. Suddenly I missed my family. It was a real heartache and although I couldn't be any happier where I am, a sudden wave of homesickness washed over me.

"Helena?" Dimitris said. "Why you out here alone? Come back inside." He came up to me and put his arm around me. "Everything is okay?"

"Yeah, everything is fine," I said. He looked at me but I didn't want to tell him about being homesick.

"Will you come in?"

"I don't want to interrupt you and your brothers. You go ahead. I think I might take a nap." He placed his hand on my forehead and said

"Are you feeling alright?"

"I'm fine, just tired."

He took my hand and we walked back into the house. I went to our room, and he went back to the brothers and whatever they were talking about in Greek.

Maybe I was just homesick, but my energy was sapped. I left my clothes on the chair and crawled between the sheets. I could smell Dimitris' scent on the pillow and sheets. His cologne was surrounding me. I finally fell asleep. I had shut out the noise of laughter and talking and dropped off. In the back of my mind, I knew that I couldn't sleep long, that dinner would be coming up soon and that it was rude to isolate myself from the family.

I heard a slight rustling sound, then I turned toward the door, my eyes

cracked just enough to see if someone came in. There was Dimitris coming toward the bed.

“Dimi?” I said softly.

“Didn’t want to wake you,” he whispered.

“What time is it?” I asked.

“Almost 5:30 p.m, can I get in?” He asked.

“Yes, Sweetie, come on.”

He got in bed and I cuddled up to him.

“Where your clothes?”

“I put them on the chair, they wrinkle.”

“Is okay, underwear is good, I like.”

“It’s for comfort, my dear, not for you,” I said in jest. He held me a little tighter and said

“Oh yes, for me also. Do you still wish to sleep?”

“I don’t think I’ll be able to go back to sleep, but I’d still like to rest a while.”

“Can we talk?” I looked up at him.

“What? Do we need to talk?” I thought I was missing something.

“Not need, want,” he said softly.

“Sure, what do we talk about?”

“I do not know,” he stroked his hand along my arm. “Are you sad, Helena?”

“Why do you ask that?”

“You seem alone, not so open.”

“I was hoping no one would notice,” I said.

“I notice.”

“Yes, you do,” I said, “I was thinking of my childhood, the smell of Orange leaves, would you believe that? The smell of a crushed leaf, made me miss my family. I’m sorry, Dimi.”

“Not to be sorry. Is normal to miss family. Did you call family for Christmas?”

“I was going to, but the time difference has thrown me off.”

“I will remind you tonight.”

“Thank you, Dimi, for being so sensitive. I’m grateful that you notice little things,” I said.

“Little things important like big things.” There was a slight pause in the conversation. “You never ask Dimi, if I would move to America. Why you never ask this?”

“What? What is this about?”

“Just question.”

“Because I know you’d never be happy there.”

“You know this?” He asked.

“I would never ask you to give up all this.” He held me tight and kissed my forehead.

“Helena, you make my heart skip beats.” I smiled and he said “I would not wish to move, but I would if you decide to go back. You would not go back alone.”

“Dimi, I have to turn over, you’re on my hair.”

“Oh, oaf!”

“It’s okay.” I rolled over on my side, took his arm with me and held it to my heart. He laid his head on mine and curled in tight behind me.

“Is this better?”

“Uh huh. I don’t think your brother believes that you took the plunge.”

“Plunge?”

“Got married.”

“Oh! Phft. He is born bachelor. Never change. He is playboy, never to get serious.”

“I don’t think he thought that you would either,” I said.

“If he find soul mate he change his mind, or he is fool.”

“Am I your soul mate?” I asked rather coyly.

“Yes! You no think so?”

“I’m talking about you.”

“But of course. This why I must have you. More than just a man wants woman, this man *must have*. There was no choice in matter. I would do what I must for you.” Then he half sat up, leaning over me to speak into my eyes. “You no understand what happened. Like bolt of lightning! Hit me like truck! Don’t know what to do, how to act. I do not want to scare you, but cannot let you go,...miss my chance. And you keep saying you leave in two weeks! Dimi

had not time to waste. You did not want to look at Dimi, but I saw you look. I think, "oh this woman not like dark, hairy man." Then I see you looking again, in mirror and smile - ah! Dimi have chance to be nice."

He made me laugh!

"You were tease for Dimi, first smile then pull away, then we have good talk. I'm thinking my heart is beating through my chest! I want to kiss, but you would not look to me, like at Valley of Butterflies, I think I'm dying of this heartache. It would have been beautiful to make love at Valley of Butterflies on that day."

"I think so, too. It would have led to my early downfall."

"How you mean 'downfall'?" He asked.

"We had only met a few days before and the day of the picnic was really the first chance we had to talk. If I would have made love to you at the Butterflies, even though I really wanted to, if I had, I'm afraid you wouldn't have thought very highly of me. You'd think I was just another tourist having a fling, and maybe even think that I do it all of the time, and that it didn't mean anything. I didn't know what you'd think of me. I wasn't so sure of myself either. I didn't know if I was coming or going and you were so very hard to resist."

"You fight me, make Dimi get desperate."

"Desperate?" I asked. "When were you desperate?"

"Oh, you were too mean to Dimi, not talk, make my heart break, when we go to Karpathos first time."

"Oh, yeah, well, you were making me fall for you, I had to try to stop."

"Yes, we were on path you try to stop. I had broken heart. You no speak, no look at Dimi, I think I do something wrong - maybe I insult and not know. I can't take no more of the silence, so I make move. I take chance! I go to my Helena and make big kiss. Then I feel little better, but still, I had heartache until you say you stay."

"I had heartache until then, too," I said.

"It was strange time. Not you, not Dimi, no one had control of it. Dimi was drawn like magnet. A magnet must go to where it is drawn. It has no other path."

"And I was drawn to you. I tried to fight it, but you were, oh, I get flustered

thinking about how much I wanted you. I couldn't allow myself to even think about it seriously, I was still with Mark! It wasn't a possibility for me. At first, I couldn't get over how sexy you were. I mean, even though I was still with Mark, you were very attractive to me."

"The first time I try to touch you, you pull back like I bite you," he said.

"You mean with the photo?"

"Yes."

"That was an involuntary reflex. When I saw your eyes, a shock went through me. My heart jumped!"

"I not scare you?"

"No, no." I thought for a second. "I think I was falling for you."

"On day of Picnic?"

"Yes." He gave me a big hug and kissed my cheek.

"You see how long we suffer?"

"It is amazing when you think about it."

What would make a man stay single for so long, not have a serious relationship on his mind in years, and suddenly do a complete turnabout? And then there's me, effectively married, not looking for someone, even discouraging outside relationships, my morality suddenly was crumbling before my eyes.

"You could not resist, my Helena." He said and kissed my shoulder. "It was meant to be."

"In all the time that you were alone, driving your taxi and meeting all these tourists, you never had this happen before?" I asked. "You know, the cute little helpless blonde that you help find her way, never a pang of the heart?"

"Helena, I was not living then. Only see others live, then I see something from little mirror, makes heart pound and I come back to life."

"It's like a fairy tale to me, I can't believe it," I said.

"What you no believe?"

"It's just hard for me to believe that it's me."

"That it is you? What is that?"

"It's hard for me to understand why it's me, that you actually have these feelings for me."

“Helena! What do I do for you to believe?” He pulled me close to him and turned me to face him. “Look to me Helena, when I tell you I love you, S’agapo, I do not say lightly, I do not say to listen to my voice speak. I say because I must. You must know what is here, and believe,” he placed his hand on his heart. “Do you think that I play with you, your feelings? No. I do not play with what is in my heart, Helena. S’agapo. Believe,” he said, his dark eyes penetrating my soul as he kissed me. “Now, should we get up and dress?”

“I think we should.” The question stayed in my mind. What did happen to my steadfast morality? I started to dress when Dimitris asked,

“On Karpathos, first time, you not speak or look at Dimi. What you think when I take your hand to park and kiss?”

“First I thought, *what’s wrong?* Then I didn’t know what you were doing. I think I was in shock!”

“And after kiss?” He asked as he lifted my hair out of the back of my dress.

“My heart was beating so fast that I was weak, I couldn’t think at all.”

“I think you would slap Dimi for being too bold. First time ever to do something like that.”

“Well, you certainly got the juices flowing!”

I put on a Georgette shrug that came with the dress, and Dimi looked at me from arm’s length.

“This is new? I like,” he said.

“Yes, it’s comfortable.”

“And expensive?”

“Yes.”

“Good. You buy more like this.”

“You’re so funny,” I said.

He put his arms around me and as he held me tight, he said

“Don’t ever think Dimi not crazy in love. You are my Helena, and will always be. This you must believe.”

We went out to the living room where everyone was chatting. The men were more animated than the ladies, they were roasting pork and some other meat on the patio but would come in and sit in on the conversation occasionally.

Dimitris sat me on the sofa next to Morgan. Matyha was next to her, then Rena, Amy, and Karen in the three chairs.

“I will get you a drink,” Dimitris said.

“I’ll take a beer, Sweetie.”

“Sweetie?” I heard Morgan say.

“He is! He is just the sweetest thing, I could just bite him!”

The girls chuckled at that. When Dimitris brought my beer, he bent down to my ear and said

“You can bite me all you want later if you are good.”

“But when I’m bad, I’m better,” I whispered back. Then he kissed my ear and went out with the men. Then he suddenly turned and looked at me, smiled and shook his head. It made me smile.

“I can see why you fell for him, Helen, what a hunk!” Amy said. I just smiled and tipped my beer bottle to her in agreement.

“That man has kept you so close to him, we haven’t been able to talk! How’s married life going for you? Any more problems?” Morgan asked.

“This week hasn’t been so bad. I should knock on wood!” I said.

“No more Camilla?” Morgan asked. The sound of her name made me angry and I didn’t want to discuss her, so I just said

“No, no Camilla.”

“Who’s Camilla?” Amy asked.

“I’ll tell you later,” Morgan said.

“I think what you’ve done with the room is quite remarkable, Rena,” Matyha said.

“I owe it all to my decorator - Morgana here made it all happen!” Rena bragged.

“I will have you come to my home Morgana, you will decorate for me,” Matyha said.

“Thank you, Matyha, I’d love to come!” Morgan said.

“Good, we’ll make arrangements,” she said.

Morgan was beaming! She’s found her niche and only had to come to the Greek islands to find it!

“Next week we can both go to the American Embassy and you can get your

visas," I said.

"Why do you have to go?" She asked.

"I have to change my name on my passport. I might as well get some visas while I'm there!"

"Hell, yes! Only go there when you have to and then get everything done at once," Katie said.

"Oh, that's for sure, Helena, there's so much red tape with everything!" Rena said.

We heard a big burst of laughter from the men, then they all started to come back in and sat by the women, wherever they could fit in.

"We were just saying that when it comes to going to the Embassy, get everything done at once because you'll be there all day!" Rena said.

"Excuse me, I'm going to get another beer, does anyone else want one?" I asked.

Three of the men and Katie spoke up.

"I will come to kitchen also," Dimitris said.

When we got to the kitchen, Dimitris slipped his arm inside the shrug then pulled me tight to him as he kissed me.

"Dimi."

"Cannot keep hands off," he breathlessly whispered.

"You're going to have to behave," I said.

He backed me up to the refrigerator and pressed his body against me.

"Let's get the drinks before someone comes in," I said as he was kissing my neck and going lower into the neckline of the dress.

"Dimi, cut it out!" I said. He stepped back, holding my hand and looking at the floor, catching his breath. I put my hand on his cheek and said

"You are so precious to me, Dimitris Patakinis."

He looked at me and got that devilish smile, took both hands to my face and planted a huge sensuous kiss on my lips.

"Dimi will be better now," he said and helped me get the bottles from the refrigerator.

We finally came out with the bottles, past them around then Angelo said

"Okay, Stefano, pay up! I told you it would take a while to get a beer."

I was so embarrassed. Dimitris said something in Greek and gave his little brother a cuff on the back of the head. Everyone had a good laugh, but I didn't find it all that funny. Dimitris sat on the arm of the sofa, holding my hand in his lap.

"Anyone would think you two are teenagers!" Angelo laughed.

"Grow up, Angelo." I found myself saying, then I got up and went out on the patio. I could hear everyone razzing Angelo, or perhaps they were surprised that I had said anything to him.

Dimitris followed me out onto the patio. I sat on the swing that finally got a new padded seat.

"Helena?" He came to sit next to me. I put my hand out for him to take.

"I'm sorry Dimi, I'm afraid I've embarrassed you. I didn't mean to pop off like that." I looked at him, his eyes were sparkling and he started laughing. He put his arm around me and said

"Oh, my Helena, you say what we all think! That Angelo, he is one to watch get in trouble with what he says."

"He was insulting. I'm afraid I lost it," I said.

"I know, he does not think what he says."

"I'm afraid I cannot be around Angelo."

"What you mean? Tell Dimi."

"I don't know what it is, Dimi, I don't want to dislike Angelo, I have no reason to, but he____."

"What? What is it, Helena?"

"You know how you and I have this connection? This uncontrollable pull to each other?"

"We do."

"It's just opposite with Angelo. I don't know why or what it is, but I can't be around him."

"Don't be upset on this, I will get beer for you."

"Get me a cigarette, too!" I called to him.

"What's this about a cigarette?" I turned and it was Aiden. Oh great, this is what I need!

"What are you doing here?" I asked with nil enthusiasm.

"I have no family, it's Christmas, so... Andreas said to stop by."

"Merry Christmas, Aiden," I said.

"Where's Dimitris?" He asked.

"I think he's running interference with his brother." Aiden gave me an odd look like he didn't understand. "I'm afraid I kind of told his brother Angelo to grow up! I didn't leave a good impression when I walked out!" Aiden laughed.

"You sure know how to keep things lively."

"I'll let that slide."

"I'd better say hi to Dimitris before he sees us talking. I'll be back." He said and tapped my forearm.

Dimitris came back with my beer *and* Angelo. *I'll crown him!*

"Helena, I am sorry if I offended you, I was only teasing Dimi," Angelo said.

"That's okay, think nothing of it," I said, and did not encourage more conversation. He excused himself, then I leered at Dimitris. He handed me my beer.

"He apologize, is better?"

"Dimi." I exhaled and put my arm on his back, rubbing him lightly between his shoulders. "Nothing."

"What, is not better?"

"Oh, Sweetie, everything is fine, just fine." I couldn't be angry, I couldn't even be upset. I wasn't really angry at Angelo.

The doorbell rang and there seemed to be a little excitement at the thought of it. Andreas' daughter came into the living room. Rena and Andreas were greeting her. Andreas was introducing her to almost everyone since she hadn't been here in years.

"We must say hello," Dimitris said then took my hand. He introduced me to this tall thin beauty. She looked like she could be a model. She gave little resemblance to Andreas except for her hair and color of eyes. Although she was very cordial, I could see she was a bit nervous meeting all these people. I told Dimitris I was going to the powder room, which I did, but mostly I wanted to back off and allow the family to get acquainted. When I came back, I sat at the bar and was able to watch the excitement in the living room.

Aiden came over to me and sat next to me on the next bar stool.

"I've heard a lot about Andreas' daughter. She doesn't look like him, does she?"

"She's very beautiful, I feel sorry for her," I said.

"Why?"

"Look, she's being swarmed by all these strangers. She'll never remember who all these people are. She's dreading every moment of it."

Aiden just looked at me, and probably thought I was being cynical.

"One thing I remember about you is that you were pretty intuitive. Now that I look at the scene, you're probably right. She probably is in hell right now!"

"Well, I wouldn't go as far as to say that. So, how is life without the 'C' woman?"

"Oh, you mean____."

"Don't say her name!"

"Life is a lot calmer, pretty much back to normal. I'm really glad it's over with, what a mess!"

"Yes, for your sake, I'm glad you found out how she really is. I wouldn't put anything past the woman."

"Andreas told me some of it, the pictures, drugging Dimitris, she could have killed him."

I didn't say anything to that, it was too terrible to think about.

From the bar, I was able to watch the reunion. One by one the others started to wander out to the patio or to the kitchen. Dimitris came over and brought me a cold beer.

"Thank you, Sugar, I needed this."

"Aiden, how is life treating you? Happy Christmas!" He said and reached over to shake his hand.

"Hey, Dimitris, Merry Christmas. Life is better these days."

"That is good. She is nice young lady, my niece," Dimitris said.

"She's very sweet," I said.

Stefano pulled a tarp up off the ground and removed several layers of burlap when the smoke from the roasting meat came up and permeated the air with the aroma of delicious pork and lamb.

Aiden moved to the other side of me and said, "Oh, look at that! I always wondered how that is done." He said as he leaned against the bar.

Everyone was wandering outside, the luscious aroma drawing them to it. The doorbell rang again and Mattaios went to answer it this time.

"Things get lively when smell of food wakes the appetite," Dimitris said.

"So now you think you can have both of them?"

I looked up and a fist flung out across my face! It knocked me back into the edge of the bar and into Aiden. I would have fallen over if Aiden wasn't there to block my fall.

Dimitris grabbed Camilla and said something in Greek to her. She looked at him and I could see her tears. She spoke in Greek back to him, then she struggled her arms away from him. She went to Aiden and grabbed his arm to wrench his grasp off of me, then dragged him off to the backyard.

"Did she hurt you?" Dimitris asked as he held me.

"I'm alright," I said as I held my cheek. Dimitris examined my face and muttered Greek under his breath. Suddenly he took out his phone and walked back to the orchard where Aiden and Camilla were arguing.

"This too much!" Dimitris said.

Morgan came over to me with Amy.

"Helen, come with us." They took me to the loft room where we sat on the fold out bed and could have some quiet.

"I saw her come in, but all this happened before I could tell you," Morgan said. "Does it hurt?"

"It stings. Not as bad as my other black eye! That woman needs a keeper, she's insane!"

"So, that was Camilla?" Amy asked.

"Yes, the now infamous Camilla, the original black widow of Rhodes," I said.

"This is quite a lively place. I can imagine the summertime excitement if this is how the dead of winter is!" Amy said.

"Did you ever tell Amy any of Camilla's other pranks?" I asked Morgan.

"Yes, I told her some of it, but not all."

“You should tell her the rest of it. Give her a well-rounded look at the black widow.”

Dimitris came rushing in and swooped me up into his arms. He was whispering Greek to me as he held me. He looked at me at arms distance. Then held me close, still speaking in Greek.

“Come, let me see in light.” He guided me back to the kitchen. Everyone was standing around asking how I was.

“I’m fine, really, it was just a slap,” I said. Dimitris was looking at my cheek.

“You are hurt! There is small cut on cheekbone. There’s blood,” he said. “I call police, they are here soon.” He turned to the ice on the bar. “Here, put on cheek, Helena.” He put the ice in a napkin to put on my face.

“Dimi, you know what this means?”

“Yes, I know. She will not hurt you again.”

“Dimi, Dimi,” I said as he had this worried look on his face, as he kissed my palm.

“I take you away, to keep from danger, when danger to you was Dimis’ fault. She was root of all problem. I do this.”

“Dimi, stop, don’t talk like this, I don’t want to hear you saying that,” I said. “Where did she go?”

“Aiden took her out into the grove in the backyard. I think she’s still there with him,” Amy said.

“Dimi.” He turned to Rena’s voice, then she nodded to the direction of the entry hall. “The police.”

Dimitris kissed my hand and went over to the police and started talking to them. They were conversing in Greek. It seemed a long drawn out conversation. He came to my side and softly said

“The police wish to talk to you, Helena.”

I went with him to Stefano’s office, there the police examined my face and asked me how I got the bruise. I recounted the episode and left the room.

Rena was in the kitchen preparing some hot side dishes. I asked her if I could help her with something.

“Everything is done, just warming things up. What did they say?” She asked.

“They just wanted to know how I got the bruise. I told them and left.”

"I wish Dimi didn't call the police. No good can come of having neighbors arrested." Rena said.

"I know, it's not good," I agreed.

Dimitris came out of the room with the Police following. He led them out the patio to the grove. I could hear her pleading to Dimitris. It was something that no one wanted. The police escorted her, crying and pleading, begging Dimitris not to have her arrested. As they brought her through the house she glared at me and I could feel her seething anger.

Dimitris put his arms around me and said something in Greek as he looked deep into my eyes. He kissed me and apologized again.

"Dimi, let's get a strong drink. It's Christmas. Let's forget about this for now. Okay?"

"Yes, we have drink." He went to the liquor cabinet and took out Tequila. He cut wedges of lemons and limes and called everyone to have a drink.

Aiden came in, stood behind me with his hands on my shoulders and said in my ear

"Did she hurt you badly?" I looked around and he said to Dimitris, "I'll take a double of that!"

I said, "No, she didn't hurt me."

Dimitris poured about ten shots of Tequila set out the fruit wedges and bowls of salt. We all picked up the shots, toasted to a Merry Christmas. I tapped Dimitris glass who stood in front of me, Aiden tapped both of our glasses.

"Whoa!" Aiden exclaimed. "Look at your cheek, I thought you said you weren't hurt!" He turned my head toward him and felt my cheek. "It's cut! You really should keep ice on that!"

I took my shot and set my glass out for a refill. Dimitris held my hand that held the shot glass as he filled it. I took a second shot. I got off the bar stool then went around the bar and flung my arms around Dimitris. My heart felt so full of him.

"What is it?" He asked me.

"I wish we could go home," I whispered to him. We walked into the living room and sat in the corner on the sofa. I just wanted his warmth, his arms

around me.

“We will eat soon, we forget this.”

Morgan and Amy came to sit with us. Andreas was with his daughter and Angelo was helping Stefano take the meat out of the pit.

“I am starving, it sure smells good. It’s times like this that I wish I wasn’t almost a vegetarian!” Morgan admitted.

“I’m sorry to have ruined Christmas for everyone,” I said.

“It was that witch, but it’s not ruined. No, this has been a really nice Christmas, witch and all!” Amy said.

I laughed. When Dimitris saw me laughing with Morgan and Amy, he relaxed a little.

“Dimi, you don’t have to babysit me, go talk to your brothers if you want to, I’m okay.”

He looked at Morgan and Amy, then looked at me. He got up kissed my good cheek and said he’d be close by.

Amy leaned in close so that I would hear her in a soft voice say,

“You are one lucky lady! He really is in love with you. And he’s such a hunk! I’m jealous! I really am. He makes my husband look like a real boob! Now I’m wondering why I ever married Richard! Tell me about him.” Amy said.

“What do you want to know?”

“Oh, I don’t know, what little thing makes him so, I don’t know, different, special, besides his looks.”

I didn’t have to sit and think, I had a smile on my face from the thought of him.

“Look at her face, Mom, she glows. What is it?”

“You might not think of this as anything, but sometimes when we run out of real conversation, he’ll want to play ‘the game.’ He’ll have me tell him little things I love about him, then he’ll tell me things he loves about me. Or we’ll talk about things that happened when we were first falling for each other. The torture of it all.”

“Awh, that is cute. He likes this game, you don’t have to break his arm?”

“No, this is something that just kind of happened.”

“What do you mean, torture?” Amy said.

“Oh, it was hell, wasn’t it Morgan?”

“Yeah, well, I guess it was difficult in your position,” Morgan said.

“What, I’m lost!” Amy said.

“Well, first off he has those eyes! Then he’d wear Jade East, and I’ve always had a weakness for it. Anyway, to make a long story short, I was trying not to fall in love with him because of Mark. But he made it so hard for me to resist him. Then I got sick - he nursed me back from the brink. Morgan can tell you about it, more than I can. I was out of it! Anyway the more I’d try not to fall for him, the more I couldn’t help it. I was very strongly attracted to him, and the more I’d try to not let him get to me, the harder it got. And then he would be so darn sweet, it was killing me. I finally knew I had to cut him completely out of my life, I wouldn’t look at him, if he talked to me, I’d be polite in answering, you know the cold shoulder. He’d get that hurt look, and I’d die inside. Finally, he planted a huge kiss on me in the park here on Karpathos. That was pretty much it, I was a goner!”

“Wow, that’s almost like a fairy tale, isn’t it? I mean he even came to your rescue in the taxi! No wonder you couldn’t resist! And you, Mom, what’s holding you up? You’ve got your own Adonis, you should nab him before someone else grabs him.”

I looked at Morgan and said,

“She’s already being affected.”

“What - affected by what?” Amy asked, her eyes darting from her mother to me.

“The island,” I said. “If you stay too long, you’ll never go back. They say it’s the gods. No one would believe it who hasn’t been here, but it’ll change you. If you stay too long, it’ll change your life.”

“I agree,” Morgan said.

“You two are serious!”

“It may not be true for some, it was for me,” I said.

“And me. I wouldn’t have said it before, but it’s true. I’ve never been happier,” Morgan said.

“Well, I know that you’re happy, Mom, that’s why I don’t know why you haven’t grabbed Andreas. He’s so nice, he’s cute, he’s crazy about you, what’s

the holdup?” Amy asked.

“The time isn’t right. I’ll know if I can do it, but not yet.”

“If I ever leave Richard, and you haven’t nabbed him, I might go for him myself!” Amy said. I don’t think that Morgan took that as a compliment.

“Well, there’s always Aiden,” Morgan said.

“Yes, Amy, Aiden. He’s a good catch,” I agreed.

She just sat with a smile, but I think that the seed has been planted.

Rena called everyone to come and eat. We all sat at a feast table at which you’d imagine the king and queen supping.

Everyone ate like they hadn’t eaten in months. All the laughter and gaiety, all of the ills of the day faded. Dimitris was at my side and looked at me with kind eyes. For now, all was right with the world.

Christmas wasn’t as hectic and scattered as Christmas Eve. Most of the guests from yesterday were home with their families, so things were peaceful for the most part. After dinner when clean up was finished, Katie and Arthur went home.

Amy and Angelo were getting cozy by the fireplace and Morgan and Andreas were talking with Stefano and Rena in the dining room. Dimitris got us a glass of Champagne then we went to sit on the other sofa by the fire.

I finally could take off my shoes and cozy up to Dimitris. He liked the fabric of the clothes I was wearing and played with the satin around the cuff. He would speak in Greek whispers in my ear and I listened as I drank my champagne. Amy and Angelo were speaking softly to each other and it looked as though she may be softening to his advances. I haven’t been in the islands long enough to be any kind of authority, but in my own opinion, the islands have a magic that is hard to explain to anyone who hasn’t been there, or to anyone who is not open to its magic.

It had been a busy Holiday and it seemed that it was slowing to a quiet close. After the strange events of the day, I know that Dimitris was feeling bad about Camilla.

Although he may never have fallen in love with her, there was an emotional element to their relationship. They had practically grown up together, and I understood that he could never be devoid of feelings for her. He kept it

well hidden. I don't believe that he wanted to admit to himself that there was something he felt for her.

This was neither the time or place to bring it up or if I should open the subject at all. It seemed that the other brothers were not concerned about it, that it was just another nuisance to deal with, but Dimitris is more sensitive and possibly feeling guilty for calling in the police.

Angelo and Amy got up and went into the dining room to join the others. We were left in the living room and could talk a little more freely.

"Dimi?" I said as I held his hand and cuddled on the sofa.

"Yes, my Heart."

"Is there any way that we can get Camilla out of jail tonight?" I asked. He sat up and looked at me. At first, I don't think he knew what to say.

"Why ask this?" He asked.

"It's Christmas." He put his hand on the back of my neck and drew me to him, kissing my temple.

"It is a hard lesson, she must learn."

"I understand what you're feeling. I won't be jealous or angry if you're regretting her arrest and want to drop the charges."

He looked at me, stood and brought me to stand with him. He looked into my eyes at arms distance, as he thought out his words, I placed my hand on his cheek and smiled. He took me in his arms and held me, then said,

"Helena, Helena. S'agapo. You are too kind. This woman do nothing but hurt you. She would do more to hurt you. You know this and still, you wish to let her go. I do this for you. She will learn I am not for her. No, we do nothing."

"I don't want you to feel guilty for her arrest."

"I no feel guilt. She do this to herself. I am sad that I have to do this, but it must be done. No other way, she must learn."

"I just want you to be happy," I said.

"I can be happy if you happy."

"Come on in here you two." We heard called to us from the dining room.

"We were just talking about tomorrow. We were wanting to make a stop in Zakynthos before Kefalonia. We thought Amy would enjoy it, you haven't

been there yet, have you, Helena?" Andreas asked.

"No, I haven't been there," I said.

"Yes, that would be nice place to see. We go." Dimitris said.

"Next time we think of Turkey for a visit. We show you golden temples and wide beaches," Mattaios said.

"That would be wonderful," Amy said.

"Morgana, you'll love Turkey! The shops will drive you wild with ideas! We'll go shopping real soon," Rena said.

"We'll have to plan a girl's day. Just for shopping!" I said. Dimitris looked at me and smiled.

"What time we leave, little Andreas?" Dimitris asked.

"We'll have to launch by 5 a.m. We'll go by south of Crete," he said.

"We will go to bed now. Good night," Dimitris said. Then he turned to Angelo and pointed his finger at him. "No comments from you." Then took a swipe at the back of Angelo's head.

I reached over to put my hair combs on the vanity. Dimitris stood behind me and took my kimono off and laid it across the vanity chair. He moved my hair then kissed my neck under my ear and was speaking in foreign whispers. I could do nothing but melt with his touch, his scent, and his kisses. He slipped one shoulder strap down and continued kissing my shoulder. When he turned me around, I saw his eyes and I had to bring his lips to mine. I fell into his kiss.

He's not a small man; large chest, and muscular physique. Sometimes I feel as though he could crush me in his arms with little effort. I feel so small in his hands. Every time we make love a wave of fear washes over me at the thought of ever losing him. I never want this moment of ecstasy to end. I am addicted to this man. I find that I want him all of the time.

"Helena, are you sleeping?" He asked me as I laid across his chest. I looked up to him.

"No, do you want me to move?" I asked.

"No." He laughed. "We need to call father."

"That's right. I guess that means I have to get up." I didn't want to leave

the bed, I was warm and comfortable where I was. Dimitris turned to the nightstand and grabbed his cell phone. He had the number programmed in, so he only had to press a button.

“Here, take,” he said. I didn’t have to move, I could stay where I was.

I was able to talk to my dad and wish him a Merry Christmas. Since we are ten hours ahead, I got to call him at a good time for him. It was so good to talk and hear his voice. Everything was fine at home. I gather that Mark called my dad to relay a Merry Christmas to me. I didn’t stay on too long, but it was wonderful to say hello. Before I hung up I thought of Dimi and said:

“Dimi, did you want to say hello?”

“Yes, I do.” He said and I handed him the phone.

He talked and laughed with my father. I’m sure that I was the topic of the conversation for a time, then he was talking about when they visit for the wedding. They talked for ten minutes more. I heard Dimitris saying something about the engagement and the wedding a month later, but I didn’t hear the entire conversation.

I came back to bed then Dimitris hung up the phone. “You have nice family. I like.” He said as he put the phone next to the bed. “I think we had good Christmas.”

“We had a wonderful Christmas, Sweetie.” I pulled out the folded up paper I had hidden under my pillow and handed it to him.

“What this, Helena?”

“I wrote this for you but I wanted to wait until we were alone.” He opened the paper and read:

Before you, I was broken and time mattered to me not,

waiting for words unspoken,

life was what I forgot.

I opened when you found me,

you forced my eyes to see,

life was all around me and all that I can be.

Your eyes, they saw right through me,

they penetrated my soul,

they broke down my defenses

*and then you made me whole.
My love for you is deeper than love I've ever known,
my heart is yours to keep dear,
the seeds of love are sewn.
My heart you filled with laughter,
protected from all harms. I knew that ever after
I'd be safe wrapped in your arms.
I Love You,
Your Helena*

"You write this for this man, Helena? Words so beautiful. I keep." He put the note to his heart and kissed me deeply.

"What were you talking about that took ten minutes?"

"We talk of you, my Heart! And wedding, they will come, we make visit nice for them." He smiled and kissed my hand. "I think we make appointment with Priest in mid-March. Yes, that would work. Then set wedding first possible Sunday after Easter." Dimitris thought out loud.

"Couldn't we speed this up a little? We could get the lessons done now and plan the wedding for February, before Lent. Couldn't we?"

"Well, yes, we could, but not during Lent. The weather better in May. Your family want to see things. Better to see things in good weather."

"But that's months away!" I said.

"Are we in rush?" He asked.

"No, I guess not, it just seems like a long way off. I guess I'm anxious to show off my new husband." I said as I sat on the edge of the bed. Dimitris pulled me back against his lap. He growled and snuggled my neck, then kissed me.

"Okay, we sleep, tomorrow we go home," he said.

I got into bed and curled up next to my husband. He was warm and smelled so good. He turned off the bed lamp and kissed me goodnight. I was at peace with Dimitris, my family and everything that had happened. We slept contented.

Green Eyed Monster



Zakynthos was a beautiful little island. The bay was a quiet, azure blue paradise. Above the bay was the ruins of a castle with a view of the coast. Once Andreas anchored, everyone went ashore to climb the steps to the top of the hill to the summit, where the castle had once stood. There were still remnants of this stone relic at the top, where roads and pathways were paved in stone. I could see from where we were that climbing steps into the clouds wasn't for me. Dimitris understood when I begged off the long trek. We found that we could spend time alone aboard the Athena and have a fine time in spite of being *party -poopers*.

Dimitris put his arm around me as we walked back to the ship along the dock. We were the only boat moored to the dock in this inlet, so we didn't have to use a dingy or taxi to go from the ship to the dock.

"Would you like something to drink, Helena?" Dimitris asked.

"Maybe just some water, Babe. Why don't we sit on the dock to wait for them?"

We took our drinks out to the mooring dock where we could put our feet in the water as we watched the others trek up the hill.

"There's a little bit of a breeze here," I said.

"Are you cold?"

"Can we sit in the sun for a bit longer?" I asked.

“But of course, if you wish,” he said.

“What will happen with Camilla?” I asked.

“I think she get warning and let go, but do not know for sure.”

“I hope there isn’t a court thing and having to testify.”

“I don’t know. Now, Helena, I think we get out of sun,” he suggested, so we went aboard then down to the galley. “Sun will fool us on mild days. Would you like coffee or something cold?”

“Maybe coffee,” I watched Dimitris make the coffee, how he measures the grains and pours the water. He turned around and caught me watching him.

“What?” He asked, and smiled.

“If they weren’t coming back in a few minutes, I would love to let you be bad.” He got the biggest grin on his face and put his arms around me.

“And I would be *really* bad,” he said then he kissed me. Things were just getting interesting when we heard the return of the others.

“I guess I’ll have to let you be bad after we get home,” I said. Dimitris put his forehead on my shoulder in defeat and shook his head.

“Oh, Helena, Dimi will die here!” He spoke in a soft voice.

“No, don’t do that,” I whispered back.

When we got home it felt like heaven. We lit the fire, made love and went to bed. It was a wonderful Holiday and it came to a beautiful end, with clear, warm weather, blue calm waters and the love of one another.

We had almost a whole week to ourselves to get the house painting finished, set up Dimitris’ lab, and dispose of all the empty boxes. We had the fencing company give us an estimate of how long it would take to do the work and I even managed to clear out some of the debris in the solarium.

We were debating whether or not to go to Stefano and Rena’s house for New Year’s Eve. We had planned on staying home, but we were home all week and I think the quietness of our corner of the world was starting to get to us. With the relatives all over these islands it was hard enough to see them during the year, so making an effort during the Holidays would be worth it.

“Sweetie, let’s go to Stefano and Rena’s for New Year’s Eve. It would be fun to celebrate together. We’ve got all the time in the world to be alone here.

What do you think?"

"If this is what you wish, we go. We will call Rena."

Dimitris was finishing the new lighting in the lab. He was humming a tune and seemed to be pretty content. I thought that if we fly tomorrow morning or mid-day, I'd be able to help Rena out and be rested up for the celebration. I wasn't too sure how many people would be there, but usually, there were more than one would expect. I began packing something nice for us to wear during the party and a change of clothing for travel. We would be away at most two nights.

The weather report said that a storm would hit the islands mid-afternoon on New Year's day, so we would need our coats as well. This would be our first New Year celebration together, and we want it to be a memorable one. I was hoping that Andreas would be taking pictures. If I could pick an alternate profession for him, it would be a photographer. He takes the most beautiful pictures with his digital camera. I would need to call Morgan if Rena hasn't heard from them. Then I called Rena to find out what the plan was, and if we should bring food.

"Everything is under control, as long as Stefano doesn't hit his head again!" She joked. "If you can get here around 5 or 6 p.m, that would be fine. How has it been going? Been busy?"

"We got a lot done around here, now I'm ready to relax. Will Andreas and Morgan be coming?" I asked.

"The last I heard they are, but I guess she's taking it hard, having her daughter leave, and Andreas' daughter left yesterday for home. So I'm not sure if we'll see them here."

"I should give her a call. Okay, Rena, we'll be there, we'll call once we've boarded the plane. We'll let you know when to pick us up."

We decided to go ahead and take the flight instead of waiting for Andreas. Morgan was giving Andreas some worry, and we didn't want to add to his burden. Rena was waiting for us when we arrived at the airport.

"Happy New Year, Rena! You're looking good!" I said to her as we left the

terminal.

“Yeah, well, I have to keep that man of mine interested or I might have to trade him in! How are the newlyweds doing?” She asked.

“We do wonderful, Rena,” Dimitris answered.

“Well, let’s go, it looks like it might rain later, doesn’t it? It’s a good way to bring in a New Year!” Rena commented.

“I hope it’s not an omen,” I said.

“Gee, Helena, I didn’t think you were superstitious,” Rena said.

“I never used to be, but after a while, things seem to point to some superstitions. Sometimes they should be heeded.”

“Really, like what? I’ve never paid any attention.”

“Oh, it’s silly I guess, but I would never get married on a rainy day!” I said, then reached for Dimitris’ arm. “Everyone I’ve seen that had a wedding on a rainy day end up divorcing.”

After Morgan and Andreas arrived, we had an early dinner and settled in to talk around the fireplace. Stefano brought a beer keg onto the patio, and I wondered how many people were expected.

At 7:30 p.m. Angelo arrived with a date in tow. I was surprised that Angelo would cramp his style and spend this night with family. His date, Heggga, was a very young looking Northern European girl. I think she was from Copenhagen. She was fairly tall and willowy and seemed to drape herself over Angelo. She was pretty quiet and looked very bored.

We were mostly either in the living room by the fire or on the patio by the fire pit and keg of beer. We were all laughing as Rena was telling us about her latest adventure in the market, and how the “hunky butcher” gives her special deals.

About 10 p.m. Aiden came with a lady friend. She appeared to be in her late 40’s. Millie was a pharmacist’s assistant in Crete. She was very stoic and had an uppity attitude. It seemed that she was no stranger to the drink and after an hour had lost her snooty demeanor.

I noticed that she was talking a lot of pharmaceutical talk with Dimitris. He was polite and seemed to enjoy talking along the lines of his work.

“Helena, are you drinking?” Aiden asked.

“I’m empty, would you mind?” Aiden went to the beer keg and refilled my mug.

“How have you been? You look great,” he commented as he handed me my mug.

“Things have been quiet, so we’re doing good.”

“It looks like my date is talking shop with Dimitris.”

“It’s good for him to be able to talk shop with someone who has similar interests. How long have you been going out?” I asked.

“I’ve only gone out with her twice, but we’ve talked whenever I’d hit the pharmacy.”

“She seems intelligent, not a bimbo,” I said.

“Oh, you mean..., yeah, well, you know Angelo!” Aiden laughed.

Dimitris looked over to me, and I gave a little wave with my fingers as I was holding my mug to my lips. He smiled, then he and Millie came to sit with Aiden and me.

We all had an interesting conversation, Dimitris sat with his arm around me, but it seemed that Millie had the floor with her conversation directed toward Dimitris. She acted like she was talking to everyone, but it was obvious to me that the subject was clearly directed at Dimitris.

“Helena, would you come here a minute?” Rena asked. I got up to go with Rena.

“I’ll be back in a minute, Dimi,” I said.

“Helena, I’m sorry to interrupt, but would you see if Morgan will talk to you? Andreas doesn’t seem to be communicating very well.”

“Sure, I’ll see what’s wrong, where is she?”

“She’s in their room,” Rena said.

I knocked on her door.

“It’s me, can I come in?” When I came into the room, she was lying on the bed. “What’s up?” I asked.

“They sent you in here?” She asked with a bite to her tone.

“I was wondering where you were, what’s wrong?”

“Since Amy left, I just feel so bad, like I’m homesick. I didn’t think her

leaving would affect me so badly. I feel like I should have gone with her.”

“Oh, Morgan. That’s your Maternal instinct, it’s hard for you as a mother to separate from your daughter, that’s all. You know how much she would have wanted to stay if she didn’t have to go back to her husband and job. Come on, let’s go have some laughs. You know, I need someone to make my snide remarks to, who understands where I’m coming from!” I said.

“You’re right, I guess. I know I’m just being emotional. I’ll be okay, thanks. You always seem to know what to say, and I really appreciate that. So, who are we being snide about?”

I started telling her about Hegga and Millie. We were laughing when we came out of the hall, into the living room. Andreas was at the breakfast bar and stood as he saw us emerge.

“Hey, Andreas! Happy New Year. Can I get a cold beer?” I asked.

“Yes, I’ll get you one, Morgana, what can I get for you?” He asked.

“I think I’ll have a beer. One or two won’t hurt, I could loosen up a little.”

I was looking for Dimitris, and didn’t spot him from where we were, although I did see Aiden and Rena on the sofa. Andreas came back with my beer, I thanked him and asked if he knew where Dimitris was.

“He’s out on the patio,” Andreas said. Morgan and Andreas went into the living room arm in arm. I headed toward the patio. Stefano was adding wood to the fire pit, Angelo and Hegga were filling their mugs at the tapper. When I finally spotted Dimitris, he was sitting on the lounge in his usual straddled position and although she wasn’t laying against him, Millie was sitting in front of him with her hands resting on his knee. I was beginning to get steamed. I sat at the little picnic table against the wall of the house, in the dark shadows. It was a little out of the way of the traffic that walks from the living room out to the patio.

I had my mug of beer, my black shawl and I sat to observe the scene. Millie was talking away and whenever she would make a point in her oration, she’d be touching his leg. I wondered when Dimitris was going to do something. He sat and listened and laughed. Every once in awhile he’d look toward the living room.

I was weighing my options in my mind.

A.) I could bring Dimitris a beer then walk off,

B.) I could go up to Millie and let her have it,

C.) I could ask Aiden to let her have it, or

D.) I could sit here in the dark, by myself and see what happens. I decided that I'd sit for awhile.

After 10 minutes of watching Miss Millie gradually work her way closer to Dimitris, I noticed that he made an attempt to get up, but she didn't move and sucked him back into her conversation. She was showing him the palm of her hand and pointing to her palm like there was something there. Dimitris took her hand and was looking at her palm. With her other hand, she was stroking his hair. He removed her hand from his hair and attempted to extricate himself from the lounge. I thought I'd better step in and help out the poor man.

I walked away from my dark piece of the patio when I knew he wouldn't see me. I walked up to them and as my shadow cast on them, Dimitris saw me approach.

"Would you like another beer? I'm getting a refill." I said. Before Dimitris had a chance to answer, Millie said

"Yes! Make mine a shooter." Then she put her hand on Dimitris' cheek and said: "What can she get for you?"

Dimitris was stuck in this lounge. I could see he was trying to get up without having to touch this woman, but she wasn't cooperating. I turned and walked away. I could hear Dimitris calling after me. I stopped at the beer tapper and filled my mug then got a glass filled for Dimitris. I walked back to Dimitris and stood there. He finally had to climb over her to remove himself.

"Here." I handed him his beer.

"My Heart, I could not get out of lounge, I was trap by this woman," he said.

"I know," I said. I was a little upset by the way he handled this. I was less than happy with him at the moment. I didn't want to make a big deal out of it, especially now. I wanted us to have a nice New Year's Eve.

"Did you talk with Morgana?"

"Yes, a long time ago. She's better now, she's even laughing."

"Dimi, there you are, Stefano needs you to help him, he's in the loft room,"

Rena said.

"I am back in a minute," he said to me.

Dimitris left to go to the loft room. I was standing by the bar when Millie came in with her beer mug. She was looking for Aiden.

"Where are all the men?" Millie asked.

"What does that mean?" Angelo said.

"I'm looking for my date," she said.

"They'll be back in a minute," I said.

"Helen!" Morgan called. I went to her in the hall. "Helen, what's going on? I was looking for you. I stood at the patio door and didn't see you out there, you weren't in here either, where'd you go?"

"I was on the patio."

"You were there?" She looked at me a little wide-eyed. "Then you saw.....?"

"Millie with Dimitris? Yes, I saw. I was waiting and watching."

"Oh. I wanted to ask if you know where I can find a bedspread like yours, I've looked everywhere, but I can't find red. They're all rust or burnt orange."

"I had to order it, but I don't know if they are still available. I'll give you the web address, maybe you can find it online."

When the men came out of the loft room, Millie was there waiting. She started to talk to Dimitris and almost took his arm, but he walked right by her and came to me, took my hand and rushed me out the patio door to the dark corner of the patio. He took me to the far end of the table in that dark corner and turned to me, his hands on my face, holding me in a sensuous, urgent kiss. He backed me up to the table and did not leave my lips.

"Helena, this man is such a fool. S'agapo." He pressed his body against me, leaning me back. If we weren't in the place we were, I would have let the dance begin, but I left it to Dimitris to call a halt to his ardor.

I responded with less enthusiasm than I would have, had I not been aggravated by Millie.

"Helena, my Helena!" He said as he continued to kiss me.

"Dimi!" Andreas called.

"What he want?" Dimitris said in a soft voice. "Yes, Andreas, I am here."

"Would you want to make those shrimp on a skewer? We're going to fix

some snacks.”

“Yes, I fix,” he said to his brother.

He led me by the hand back inside, where he sat me at the bar. He kissed my hand and started to shell the shrimp.

“Do you want me to help?” I asked.

“No, you do not get smell on hands. I will do this.”

I watched him for a few minutes then excused myself to go to the powder room. When I got back I could hear laughter outside the front door. I went out to see Rena, Morgan, Angelo, and Aiden laughing at something that Rena said. Everyone was just coming back into the house, so I didn’t hear what was going on.

I headed for the kitchen, but Dimitris wasn’t there. I got my mug off the bar and took it out to the patio for a refill. Dimitris was cooking the skewered shrimp over the fire pit. Andreas, Aiden, and Morgan went outside and I joined him.

“It’s getting close to midnight, another half hour and it’ll be a new year,” Andreas said as he kissed Morgan.

Millie was asking questions about Rena’s decorator and the beautiful fireplace. She must have been getting drunk because she would ask the same question every couple of minutes. Then she went to Dimitris and bugged him about the shrimp. She started to “help” him.

“Aiden, maybe you should help Millie away from the fire, she might fall in,” I said.

“She’s a little drunk, I think,” he said, then went to take her into the house. He poured her a cup of coffee and was talking to her at the bar.

Rena laid out meyedes, a table of breads, meats, cheeses and several types of olives. When Dimitris brought in the shrimp, everyone began swarming the table.

Millie went to the table with Hegga and Angelo, so I sat at the bar. I was going to wait until everyone sat, before going to the table. Millie was filling her plate and was talking to Dimitris as he was filling a plate. They both laughed at something, but I noticed how she had her whole body turned towards him and was reaching across in front of him, and smiling. I could

feel my temperature rising. She was not a wallflower! She was beautiful, well educated, younger than me and dressed in expensive clothes.

I'm going to have to get used to the ladies who seem to flock to my husband. I'm not the only one, apparently, mesmerized by his eyes. Dimitris does not like to be rude, and his patience is usually limitless, however, I don't like the way he handles this type of situation. It seems that he waits too long to put a stop to flirtatious women, even though he does not openly encourage them.

I am, and admit that I am, the jealous wife. When I love, I love wholly and completely. I expect the same from the one I love. I have no doubts that Dimitris loves me, but to allow these flirtations, will lead to problems. I have to make him understand this. I am too volatile in this type of situation and I don't want to lose control. I also don't want the jealousy and frustration to lead me into the revenge mode. It could get nasty in its escalation.

I've tried, from the beginning with Camilla, to give Dimitris enough space so that he can deal with the problem himself. It has to come from him, not the jealous wife making a spectacle. This angle doesn't seem to be the right approach, at least so far it hasn't.

Dimitris doesn't realize how his reluctance to stop the ladies in the very beginning, is encouragement to them to pursue him more diligently. I don't want to have to be a watchdog in my relationship.

Dimitris left the table then brought his plate for me to share. He removed a shrimp from the skewer and offered it up to my mouth.

"Thank you, Sweetie, these are really good," I said. "I think I'll get some of those before they're gone." I went to the table to fill a plate. When I returned to the bar, there sat Millie and Aiden.

"Did I take your chair? Here, sit, please." Aiden said. Dimitris was standing on the other side of the bar in the kitchen. "Please, sit, I'll stand, I don't mind."

I reluctantly sat next to Millie. Dimitris moved over to stand more in front of me, but Millie turned on her stool to face him. Aiden was standing at the end of the bar, just the other side of Millie. She was talking, between bites of shrimp, about sea creatures and crustaceans. No one else was talking, just eating and listening to her.

"Dimitris, these are the most delicious shrimp! You'll have to show me how

it's done. Maybe you could come by sometime and give me lessons on the art of skewering." She said. I heard more than words in her tone. I was shooting Dimitris dagger eyes of disgust, but he was digging in his plate with a smile. I was becoming very angry. I left the bar with my mug to refill on the patio. Andreas and Morgan were sitting by the fire, having a private moment. I didn't interrupt.

Then I heard Rena banging on a pot and announcing

"Come here everyone, it's five minutes to countdown!" Everyone grabbed their glasses and mugs, then headed into the living room. I was standing by the patio slider when Dimitris came up to me and took my arm.

"We will toast the new year, Helena," he said.

As we went into the living room I could see everyone waiting for the countdown. Then it began. When the clock struck midnight, everyone started kissing everyone else and wishing a good new year.

Dimitris gave me a long sensuous kiss that got the juices flowing. He whispered some Greek in my ear and kissed me again. Rena came up then kissed me on both cheeks and Dimitris, wishing us a Happy New Year!

I hugged Stefano, Andreas, Morgan, and Angelo and wished everyone a Happy New Year. Millie worked her way around to Dimitris. I watched her put her arms around his neck and dive into a long, too long kiss. He pushed her back, but she was saying something, and gave him another kiss, which was way too intimate as she pushed her body against him.

Aiden came up to me, wished me a "Happy New Year." It was the wrong time for him to be near me. I was so furious at Dimitris. I took a hold of Aiden and gave him a very sensuous, long, deep kiss that I couldn't help letting myself go into its seriousness. I was not drunk, although I had a few beers, but not enough to let my emotions guide me to where ever they may go. Aiden fell into this kiss, then he pulled back and looked at me.

"Helen," he said in such a serious way.

I turned, with a tear in my eye. My eyes met Dimitris' eyes. I had my shawl. I went out the front door. I don't even think I was concerned about the time of night or that the fog had come in. I walked, and heard Dimitris calling me. I didn't know what I would say to him about kissing Aiden. The worst thing

I could have ever done.

The fog was so thick, visibility was only about ten feet in front of me. I had the dew dripping from my hair and my feet were getting wet from the ground. I past the children's playground then went to the gate. I sat on a swing seat, covering my nose and mouth with my shawl and breathing my warm breath into my covered hands.

I wished that I could just stay away from the house, from Dimitris and Aiden. I really screwed things up in my moment of jealous retaliation. I knew that I had to go back, clear the air and try to get things normal in my own mind. In this fog, Dimitris would never find me, which is good, but I had to start back to the house and finish what I started. Who knows what Millie is up to with Dimitris while I'm gone.

As I approached the house it was quiet outside, no one walking around. I tried to open the front door quietly. I slipped in unnoticed. I made it to the loft room unseen. There wasn't anyone in here, which I was glad of. It gave me a chance to assess my situation. What to do next? How do I act, and what do I say? I couldn't think! I'd have to play it by ear and hope that I use good judgment.

I went to the bathroom that is off the entry, across from the loft room. I fixed my wet hair and blotted the weather from my face. I wasn't crying, so my eyes looked okay. So, it's now or never, and I left the room.

Everyone was sitting in the living room. I bypassed the living room as best I could, to go into the kitchen. I grabbed a clean mug and was going to go out to the patio.

"Helena?"

I turned to find Dimitris coming into the kitchen. He surrounded me in his arms. "Where you go? Hair all damp, Helena." He saw me kissing Aiden, what was he doing? He took the mug from my hand and put it on the bar. "No more of this," he said.

I had a problem even looking at him. When he took my mug away from me, like all this was my fault, and that I had too much to drink, it made me furious. I wouldn't respond to him in word or action, I wasn't ready. My emotions wouldn't allow a rational discourse.

“Where you go, Helena?” He asked again.

“Since when do you care what I’m doing?” I heard myself say. My irrationality manifesting itself. I should never say anything until I calm down.

“What you mean, Dimi always care.” He held me by the shoulders and kept trying to make me look at him. I reached for my beer mug and broke from his grip.

“I need a drink,” I said in a flat monotone. I didn’t see Angelo or Millie. I don’t know if Aiden left with her, but I did see Hegga and Morgan in the living room. I went to the patio to fill my mug.

“Let Dimi do for you if you must,” he said.

“I must.” When he handed me the mug of beer, I gave him a dirty look and turned to go into the living room.

“Helena, Helena, we talk.” He said as he caught my arm.

“I can’t talk right now.”

“Yes, we talk now.” He took my beer mug, setting it down on the coffee table, he turned me to follow him, dragging me by the arm into the loft room. He closed the door and blocked it with a brick.

“Now, we talk,” he said. I was becoming livid. I resented him, forcing me to confront him before I’m ready, taking my beer mug and trying to control me.

“So talk,” I said.

“Why you always run away? This not what you say. Why go out there?”

“You’re missing the point.”

“Point to go away from Dimi,” he said.

I didn’t answer.

“Why you kissing Aiden like lover?”

I had to choose my words carefully. I didn’t want to be antagonistic, but it’s the only thing I know at this point of my emotional makeup.

“Why were you encouraging Millie?” I said.

“What you mean ‘encourage’?”

“I don’t want to do this right now, I don’t want to make this worse than it is already, we should talk later,” I said. He blocked me from leaving. He took my hand, kissed it, then led me to the stairs where he had me sit.

“Tell Dimi, what I do to upset my Heart, to make you run away.”

“To be blunt, you seem to enjoy the attention of other women. I don’t like it,” I said.

“What? Other women, I talk, that is all.”

“Then, what was going on between you and Millie was okay, it was nothing.”

“Was nothing, she talks, I listen.”

“Fine!” I said and stood up. I went to the door and moved the brick. I left the loft room.

“Helena, come back,” he came after me then grabbed my arm to stop me. I yanked my arm out of his grip.

“Don’t touch me,” I heard myself say. When I looked at the hurt expression on his face, it tore my heart in two. I saw the tears forming in my eyes.

“Please, say my good nights to everyone for me,” I said. Then hurried to the bedroom.

“Helena, talk to Dimi,” I heard from the other side of the door. Then he came in. I was brushing out my hair. “Helena, you no need to be jealous. Just New Years kiss and conversation.” He said as he stood behind me and tried to kiss the back of my neck.

“Dimi, I want you to find another bed for the night.” I got up from the vanity seat and went into the bathroom, locking the door. I started to run the tub water.

Dimitris left the room and found a seat in the living room.

“Where’s Helena?” Aiden asked as he came in from the patio.

“You - you enjoy this, kissing my Helena?”

“What?” Aiden responded.

“Okay, both of you, come with me.” Stefano took Aiden and Dimitris into his office, Andreas went also.

“What the hell is going on here?” Stefano asked.

“Aiden kissing Helena like in bed, what he tries to do with her?” Dimitris was upset.

“Hey, she kissed me! I didn’t do anything.”

“Why she want to kiss you?” Dimitris asked.

“I don’t know, she was upset with you,” Aiden said. This was a revelation to

Dimitris. He didn't realize that Helena was upset at this point in the evening. He was speechless for a moment. Aiden's words made him stop and think.

"Okay Aiden, let me talk to Dimi." Aiden left the office and went into the living room.

"Aiden, what's going on?" Morgan asked.

"Dimi, we tried to warn you what was going to happen if you didn't take it more seriously. This is what I was expecting to happen." Stefano said.

"You have to let the ladies know that you can't be available to them. Helena saw what was happening. Women know other women better than we do, it's a built-in radar device! They know by just looking at another woman if they are looking at their man. What are you doing, anyway?" Andreas asked.

"I do nothing, she talk, I listen, then New Year, she kiss me the New Year, that is all, mean nothing to Dimi." He said.

"It meant something to Helena. You haven't been around women enough, Dimi, she was coming on to you. You know this, but you let her. That's like putting on the green light." Andreas said.

"Dimi not think of what she do. I try to get away, but not to be rude is hard."

"You would rather lose Helena than be rude to a strange woman?" Stefano asked.

"I love Helena. I forget that she tell me she get jealous. Jealous over little thing, what I do now? She kisses Aiden, why she kiss him like that?" He wondered.

"Why do you think?" Andreas asked.

"To make Dimi jealous?"

"You know what you have to do, don't you?" Stefano asked.

"She won't talk, has me find other bed."

"Before you leave, Dimi, do you think you can stay clear of the ladies?" Stefano asked.

"More trouble to Dimi, only want Helena," he said as he went out the door. He went through the living room, bidding a good night to everyone.

He went down the hall to their room. He scratched on the door.

"Helena? My Heart?" He softly scratched at the door. There was no answer.

“Can I come in?” But still no answer.

He quietly opened the door, the light shown in the room from the bedside lamp, revealed that no one was in the bed. The bathroom door was closed so he scratched on that.

“Helena? Are you there?” He softly asked.

“Leave me alone.” He heard echoing from the other side of the door.

“Helena, please.” He tried the door and found it unlocked. “I come in, Helena.”

I wrung out the facecloth and threw it at him.

“Get out!” I said in a mean tone.

“We will talk.” He had the facecloth in his hand. He sat on the commode and searched for words.

“Well? What do you want?” I said.

“This is not how we should greet New Year.” He sat waiting for a response. There was none.

“You kiss Aiden. I see why you kiss him.” He still got no response. “Helena, if you no speak, Dimi not fixing problem.”

“I don’t know if this is something you can fix.” I said. I felt so defeated. I was beginning to lose my anger. I was finally ready to get some sleep. “Will you hand me the towel, behind you?”

He held the towel up for me, then wrapped it around me as I stepped from the tub. His arms were around me, but I wasn’t going to let him get to me. The cause of this rift would present itself again and again unless I stop it now. He kissed my shoulder as I held the towel.

“Will you let me finish in here? I’d like a little privacy,” I said. He looked at me, then reluctantly left the bathroom.

I brushed my teeth and brushed out my hair after I put on my nightgown and kimono. He was sitting on the bed when I came out.

“You’re still here,” I said.

“You kiss Aiden to make Dimi jealous.”

I didn’t say anything. I poured some water into the glass by the bed.

“Dimi deserve for my Helena to be mean.” There was a long pause as I reached around him to try to open the bed. “But why you kiss him like that,

Helena?”

“Excuse me,” I said as I tried to get him to move, in order to open the bed. He clamped onto my arm.

“Was it good?” He asked with his serious face on, pausing, then asking again, “was that kiss good?”

I looked at him.

“Yes, it was.” My heart was breaking as I let the words escape my lips. I wanted to say ‘not as good as yours’ or ‘no, it was not a good kiss’, but it was a good kiss, and I somehow wanted to hurt Dimitris.

I knew that by hurting him, I was hurting myself.

“I’m going to bed now,” I said. I reached to turn off the light.

“Please, Helena,” he said as he went to the door. “Sleep well.”

When he left the room, he had to go through the living room to get to the kitchen.

“Dimi! Come in here and sit.” Angelo said. “We haven’t had time to talk all day.”

Dimitris went to the kitchen to take some aspirin.

“Well, big guy, did you fix everything?” Rena asked. When he turned to face her, she could see that he didn’t. “Oh, Dimi, for Pete’s sake! What’s wrong with you? She loves you!”

“What I do, what I do?” He moaned to Rena.

“Why is it that a woman can spot what’s happening a mile away, and a man is always in the dark?” Morgan said as she opened the refrigerator. “Sorry, don’t mean to intrude.”

“Tell me, Morgana, what I do.”

“Nobody has said what this is all about, but I’m gonna guess. Millie! She did everything but fall all over you. I could see it from where I was sitting, so I know Helen saw it, too!” Morgan was getting quite animated.

“But I only talk to woman.”

“Gee, Dimi! Can’t you tell when a woman is flirting with you? She was leaning right up against you, she turned toward you with her back to Aiden, which I don’t understand why he didn’t say something to her.”

“But did not do anything,” he said.

“That’s just it! You didn’t do anything to stop it. You should have said something to her to discourage her. When you didn’t tell her that you’re married or whatever, you just encouraged stronger attention. That’s one reason Camilla got away with so much, you didn’t tell her to buzz off soon enough.”

“But we talk, she was nice.”

“Dimi, there’s one thing you have to know, when a woman is giving you all her attention, especially when she came with someone else, she’s after you, flirting. You can’t allow it when you are married. And then, right in front of your wife! Man, you’re in trouble!” Morgan said. Dimitris looked stunned. He didn’t say anything. “I can’t believe you didn’t know this. Where have you been, in a vacuum? Or are you just putting us on?”

“Putting on?”

“He’s not putting on an act,” Andreas said. Dimitris went to sit in the living room with Stefano.

“I can’t believe that Dimitris is this naive,” Morgan said to Andreas.

“I’m going to tell you something about my brother. When his marriage dissolved, he was a wreck. He didn’t talk, he only went to work and then home. He was only nineteen or so. He was a hermit. He never went out, he went back to school, but all he did was study. He didn’t do any dating for, well, he didn’t snap out of it for at least ten years. I don’t think he even dated on a regular basis. So he isolated himself for a long time. When Mama got sick he went back to Rhodes. I guess he went out with Camilla, but they grew up together, so it was like dating his sister. He didn’t come to life until Helena, now look at him.”

“Oh, boy.” Morgan sighed.

“What?” Andreas asked.

“I asked Helen when we met Camilla, why didn’t she say something to Dimitris about her, and she said that she was leaving it up to Dimi’s good judgment to tell her. I would have killed you a long time ago, if you were doing this. But she let it go. It took Camilla hitting Helen in the face to get Dimitris to do something. I hope we’re not seeing a pattern here.” Morgan said.

“Millie isn’t Camilla. That won’t happen again.”

“What I mean is that I hope when the women are attracted to Dimitris, he’s smart enough to put them off, or Helen isn’t going to stay with him.”

Dimitris was hearing the same advise from Rena as he heard from Morgan. The woman’s point of view.

“Not to believe how woman think. Devious, man has no chance! Be polite, be nice, never touch woman in anger. How to know woman’s schemes? Helena try to tell me woman can be mean, scheming, but Dimi have hard head, not to take serious.”

Dimitris went back down the hall. He scratched on the bedroom door.

“Helena?” He said in a soft voice. There was no answer. He quietly opened the door then entered, closing the door behind him. Pacing back and forth, he wanted to talk to Helena, but he didn’t want to wake her. He took off his shoes then laid on top of the bed.

He laid there without sleep for twenty minutes. Helena turned towards him and reached out. She laid her hand across his chest. He held her hand there then fell asleep.

In the morning, I awoke with Dimitris curled in behind me with my hand holding his to my heart. It felt right, and when I stirred, he kissed me under my ear. I started to turn, as I usually do, and slide in tighter towards him when I remembered what had occurred and the anger that resulted from the whole scenario. I suddenly leaned up on my elbows and asked: “What are you doing here?”

Dimitris was already awake.

“I.....”

“I can’t believe you, Dimi, I said I wanted to be alone.”

“Helena, please, we talk.”

“I can’t, I can’t talk now.”

“Helena, I am sorry. I do not realize.”

“Stop. Dimitris, please, just stop.” I got out of bed. I reached for my kimono at the foot of the bed. Dimitris took my wrist.

“Please, Helena, you must listen.” I turned and sat on the edge of the bed.

Dimitris sat next to me holding my hand.

He told me how he didn't understand what was happening, that he didn't know what it looked like, that everyone else knew what she was doing and he didn't add it up. I couldn't believe that he could be so innocent. I listened, he kissed my hand, then my shoulder and my neck.

"I've got to get dressed." I stood then went to the suitcase. I pulled out my clothes then I went into the bathroom to change.

When I came out he was there, waiting for me. I brushed my hair quickly, put a butterfly clip on it and I was out the door.

"Good morning, Helena, I'm surprised to see you up so early," Rena said.

"Well, I had to get up. I would probably still sleep for a few more hours if I could." Dimitris came into the kitchen and tried to kiss me on the cheek as he went by to get a cup of coffee. I turned away and let an "Oh, geesh" escape my lips.

I saw the look from Rena.

"Gee, I need some coffee." I couldn't stand the silence.

"I get for you." Dimitris said.

He handed me my coffee, I thanked him then I sat at the end of the table with Rena.

"Where's Stefano?"

"He's still asleep. It doesn't matter what time I go to bed, I always wake up at 6:30 a.m. I don't know why."

"It looks pretty gloomy out. I wonder if the sun will come out today?" I said.

"Probably not, I think it's going to rain. When my elbow hurts, it usually rains." Rena said.

"That's wonderful! I can't wait for it to rain." I said with a smile. I started to laugh. I don't know what came over me, I just started laughing and couldn't stop. I was losing my coffee and had to put it down for a second. I wiped up the spill with a napkin. I picked up my coffee again.

"Rena, she laughs, I love for her to laugh." Dimitris said, and was coming toward me to put his arm around me.

I was still laughing, with coffee in hand, I turned and went out onto the

patio. The cold air slapped me in the face and took away my humor. I sipped my coffee as I walked out to the orange trees in the yard. Dimitris came out with my shawl. He approached me cautiously.

“Here, to put on shoulders.” He put it around my shoulders and held me there for a moment. I didn’t say anything, I didn’t turn around, I continued to drink my coffee.

I knew that things needed to change. I needed to change. I needed to get my sanity back. My perspective of what our relationship is and what I hoped it would be, was out of focus. Maybe I was under the illusion of love’s perfection. No one is perfect and to think that Dimitris had no flaws was simply idiotic. I realized that there is a power struggle in our relationship. If I don’t assert myself for my wants and demands in our relationship, then I may lose any authority in the future. The last thing I want is a wimpy husband. I do expect loyalty and fidelity. If I have awakened a latent womanizer that has been in hibernation, I must lay down the law now, or live with it for what remains of my marriage.

Dimitris was sitting on the patio when I returned from the trees. I needed more coffee so I went inside. Morgan and Andreas were up and sitting at the table.

“Were you outside? It looks cold out there,” Morgan commented.

“Yeah, it is pretty chilly out,” I said.

I went to pour more coffee. I sat at the end of the table where I knew I would not have anyone sit next to me. Dimitris came in, closing the sliding glass door behind him. After he poured his coffee, he had to make a new pot.

“So, do we have a day plan yet?” Morgan asked the group.

“Nothing specific, maybe Stefano has a plan, but he’s not up yet,” Rena said.

“Dimi, you’re pretty quiet this morning. Have a hangover?” Andreas asked.

“No, no hangover.” He brought his cup to the table then sat on the left end of the table. He tried to take my hand, but I pulled my hand off of the table before he could grab it. He drank his coffee in silence, keeping his eyes in my direction most of the time.

“Good morning everyone.” Stefano came to the table with a plop. “Ahh, good coffee.”

“Now that everyone is up, shall we start breakfast?” Rena asked. “Come on, Dimi, help me get breakfast on.”

Dimitris went to the kitchen with Rena. Morgan gave me a look, like “Well? What’s happening?” I gave her a look, like “It’s a mess, I’ll tell you later.”

“Well, I’m going back to bed.” I said in a lowered voice. I didn’t want Dimitris to hear, so that I could quietly slip away.

“Aren’t you going to have breakfast?” Stefano asked. I closed my eyes, Morgan held her head and Dimitris looked at me as I was standing to leave. I left the room.

I got to the bedroom but I no sooner sat on the bed when Dimitris came into the room. I was removing my shoes.

“You are not having breakfast?”

“I’m really very tired.” I said. “I need to get more sleep, if you’ll excuse me.” I stood and removed my jeans. I climbed into bed and turned my back to Dimitris.

“Helena, we must talk,” he said.

“I’m sleeping.”

“We need to fix this.”

I didn’t say anything. I could hear his frustration at my ignoring him.

“We cannot go on this way. Tell Dimi what bothers you.”

“We do need to talk. But not now.” I said. “Please leave so that I can sleep.”

I heard him leave the room and close the door. I was finally able to breathe, relax and try to sleep.

I was pretty tired, but sleep didn’t come easily. I would think back on yesterday and wonder why this one area of behavior is such a contrast to everything else? I could see that at times, he tried to get clear of this woman. On the lounge, at the feast table, and a poor attempt at the strike of the New Year. But he wasn’t saying in words or actions, “I am not available” or “I’m married.” At best, as an observer, he appeared to be saying “I’m shy”, which is still a green light.

I know I have to talk to him, and putting it off isn’t going to change the matter. I want to be sure, this time, that I don’t cry and that I am capable of

conversing in a constructive way. I don't want to lose my temper and say something I don't mean. I have to make him understand that I have to be able to trust him around other women, especially when I'm not there to stop the problem. I don't want to be always wondering if maybe these flirtations have gone too far and he eventually might be caught up in it. If I can't trust him, I won't stay married to him.

I finally fell asleep and when I awoke it was two hours later. I changed my clothes after my shower. Being New Year's day, it would feel more special if I wore something nice. When I came out of the bedroom the others were watching TV, sports on New Year's day is universal. I made my way to the kitchen for some coffee.

"Hi Rena, any coffee?" I said.

"Sure." She poured a cup for me.

"Where is Dimitris?" I asked.

"He and Stefano went to the butcher. I had a cut of beef on order that they went to pick up."

"On New Year's day?"

"The hunky butcher is very nice, he kept it in his freezer because it wouldn't fit in ours." She handed me a plate of Tarelli. "When are you two going to kiss and make up?"

"It's not that simple. I think I may have a major problem on my hands that's not going to be easy to fix."

"Well, Dimi has been moping around here like the specter of death," she said.

"What am I going to do? I can't see myself wondering every time we're not attached at the hip if some woman is being led on," I said.

"You think he leads them on?" She asked.

"Indirectly, yes. He doesn't reject their interest in him. This is something that I wasn't prepared for. He seems so innocent. I mean, he's not flirting or seeking out these women," I said.

"He's always had women coming on to him, but before, he was emotionally injured. He didn't respond at all. Now that you're in his life, he's alive again. I don't know what goes on in the minds of men. I don't think he realized what

was happening.”

“That might even make it worse if he’s not aware of it,” I said.

At that moment, Dimitris, Andreas, Morgan, and Stefano came in the front door with a huge wrapped slab of beef. I was sitting at the bar when Dimitris came up behind me, put his hand on my back and gave me a kiss on the temple.

“Helena,” he said. When I looked around, everyone was pretty quiet and watching us.

“Andreas, may I borrow your jacket?” I asked.

“Sure, I guess.” He took off his jacket and handed it to me. I put it on and took Dimitris by the hand to the Caddy. I got in on the passenger side and slid over.

“Get in,” I said. Dimitris complied. “Let’s talk.”

It was easier to have our privacy and be able to talk freely in the car. I could play with the steering wheel while I talked and I didn’t have to face him, and have his eyes distracting me.

I laid out what I perceived to be a big problem. I made it as plain as possible. I didn’t want to be misunderstood in this.

He apologized profusely, and kept saying that he didn’t know, like a “babe in the woods.” This only irritated me further. Now, I saw this as two problems. The first being that he’s a man. No man is innocent of not knowing when a woman is coming on to him, and by not making it clear that he is not available and not interested, he is leading them on, whether intentionally or not. Secondly, if it never dawned on him that the women are encouraged to want more from him, then he’s not aware of what signals he is sending. If he’s not aware of this, how do I know that this is something he can change?

If I was to believe that he was just not paying attention to how his actions are perceived, then how can I be sure that he is now aware and will be more diligent the next time? Is this going to be a waiting game? I said that I want to trust him, but I don’t know if I can now. I also let him know that I can’t be married to someone that I have to watch every minute because of that lack of trust.

He didn’t want to hear that last part. Then I asked him if he wanted to ask

me about the Aiden kiss. If he was bothered by it, we need to get it out in the open now, and if he understood why I did it.

He said that he understood why I did it, he didn't like the fact that I did it, but he understood why. He didn't ask any questions. I think Aiden was secondary to his main problem, me.

Dimitris said that he will be more blunt with women and not worry about hurt feelings. He said he doesn't care how he impresses others if it will diffuse problems before they start.

This is what I wanted to hear.

"If you are serious about what you just said, then I think we can go on with our lives. I have to be able to trust you. Show me I can trust you and everything will be okay." I took his hand and looked into his eyes.

"Helena, S'agapo. You will trust. I promise."

"Okay, let's go back inside," I said. He got out then helped me out of the car. He put his arms around me and in Greek was telling me how sorry he is and how much he loves me. He kissed me all over my face and was heading for my neck.

"Dimi, let's go back inside." I wasn't up to a response to his ardor. I was still recovering from our ordeal, he felt it too, but he didn't say anything. I saw it in his eyes as I'm sure he saw it in mine.

This was not a good start to a new year. We wanted our first New Year celebration together to be a special one to remember. It will be remembered, but not for the pleasant memories. We joined the rest of the family. They assumed we had everything back to normal.

"Helen, would you come here for a minute?" Morgan was summoning me to her room.

"What's up?" I asked.

"That's what I want to ask you!"

"It may take some time, so we'll see," I said.

"What does that mean?"

"Well, I have to be able to trust him, and I lost that trust. So, we'll see if I can trust him again," I said.

"When we all went to get the meat, the men were talking to Dimitris. They

knew exactly what was going to happen. I guess Stefano had a talk with Dimitris last night in the middle of everything. I guess Dimitris thought that you were in a mood or tired and that's why you were a little quiet towards him. But they all told him that this Millie character wasn't shy with her flirting, even in front of Aiden!"

"That's the truth." I agreed.

"Anyway, the guys were telling him that sometimes you can't be polite if a woman is showing any interest. Times have changed and if he wants to keep you, he'd better stay away from any and all friendly females."

"What did he say?"

"He agreed that women and men can be politely friendly but that he has to draw a line. He said he never wanted to hurt someone's feelings by being rude, but he didn't realize that he was encouraging more attention by being a gentleman."

"Poor Dimi. That's just it, it's hard for me to understand that a man of his age and obvious education and experience in the sensual arts, doesn't understand women and can't see what's happening."

"I think he's too trusting and a little naive to the new age woman. Maybe women around here aren't so aggressive. I don't know, but I think he knows now why you're pissed." Morgan surmised.

"Now, the only problem is, I don't know if I can totally trust him again. I don't want a marriage where I have to police him, watching every woman that comes within reach. I can't do that," I lamented.

"Yeah, I know. So, what's next?"

"Tell me, did Dimi act like he was really concerned? Do you think he truly wants to fix this?" I asked.

"He was serious, it was written all over his face," she said.

"Did he mention me kissing Aiden?"

"Oh, yeah! He was seething about it! He said he should have been kissing you, not Aiden, and kept saying 'why, why.' I finally told him, *if you're going to fool around with women under your wife's nose, you're lucky if she only kisses him.* That opened his eyes. He looked at me like, if you say it out loud then it must be true! It suddenly looked like I got through to him."

"I guess I'll have the time to see how it goes," I said.

"You mean the Orthodox?" She asked.

"Yes. The Orthodox. I guess I should get out there, and try to let this thing go. I can't help feeling like I'm not quite ready to let him back in."

"Been there," she said.

We walked out to the living room together to find the men at the dining room table with their heads together. They all stopped and looked at us as we came closer.

"What are you all up to?" I asked as I passed by them to go into the kitchen. "Hi Rena, is there anything I can help with?"

"No, nothing yet, I think the boys are making a plan."

"May I borrow your car? I thought I'd drive into town, look around."

"Sure, but everything is closed today." She handed me the keys to her little Fiat.

"That's okay, I really just need to get some fresh air, maybe look in shop windows."

"Can you try to be back by 12 noon?"

"No problem. Thanks Rena."

I drove into town and parked a few blocks from the harbor. I sat in the car for a few minutes, just looking at this quaint piece of heaven. I thought about Dimitris, and wondered what is going to happen. I found Aiden creeping into my thoughts. That was an interesting kiss, even though I started it, he finished it, and it wasn't at all bad.

I got out of the car to walk the line of shops. There was the usual souvenir shops, beachwear, Crystal ware, shoes, and hats. Each shop with its own personality. I worked my way around to the other side of the harbor square. The first time we were here, I was rushed through these beautiful shops. This side of the square had sandwich shops, a fish fry, and fishing gear. The jeweler and bridal shops seemed out of place on this side of the square.

The sky was getting so dark, and it looked like the storm we had waited for was upon us. It first sprinkled a little rain and then the heavens opened up. I was at least three blocks from the car. As the rain poured down, I hurried

to a shop with a recessed doorway in which to stay out of the rain. I was looking for something to put over my head so that I wouldn't get completely drenched when I try to make a mad dash to the car. I heard someone running in the rain, to find shelter, no doubt. When I stuck my head out and turned, it was Dimitris coming toward me.

He took my hand and we rushed around the corner and across the street and stopped under the same tree in the corner park. It was pouring down rain, but Dimitris put his wet hands on my face and kissed me. He enveloped me in his kiss. We were dripping, but the passion in his kisses was healing the hole in my soul. As we were raising our passions, we were also getting soaked to the skin. He wiped the rain from my face with his hand as he looked into my eyes. Then he kissed me so passionately that I was wanting him, needing him urgently.

“Let me take you home, my Helena.”

When we got to the house, we were soaked to the skin. We went directly to our room after making some comments about the bad weather to the family. When we got to the room, we threw off our clothes and came together in an urgent need for each other. Even with all of the turmoil and hurt, our love for one another hasn't diminished. We made mad, passionate love, as powerful as the storm that wracked the house. It was intense, absolutely fulfilling in its sweetness. As tears of ecstasy soaked the pillow, we united in an emotionally overwhelming rapture.

A New Year



Once we were back at Rena's the mood lightened considerably. We were happy at the moment and let the problems go for now. The resolution of the situation wasn't going to be instantaneous, and it was still to be seen what the ultimate outcome would be. We enjoyed the rest of the time that we had with the family and tried not to air our problems.

Stefano came out of his den holding a fax that just came through.

"Helena, I have some news on the photo."

"I didn't think there was any thing to find. It's been a while since we've gotten an update." I replied.

"There's not much to report, since the paper is so fragile, it would take longer to handle, but the news is that there is a code of sorts written on the backing. It appears to be in poem form, but it's incomplete." Stefano sounded bored.

"That's it? It seems we're not getting the results we were hoping for. Well, thanks for trying. I appreciate the effort."

"Also, I found some old news clippings from when the first icons were found. There were a few arrests and names of some that were associated with Deichant. I told Dimi about this some time ago. I thought I'd copy everything I found, outside the current information. Anyway, here they are."

When Stefano said that he told Dimi about it some time ago, I looked at Dimi. I took the photo copies and put them back into the manila envelope,

then put it with my things. I knew that Dimitris wasn't happy with my fascination with the little picture that has caused us grief, but I didn't think he would hide things from me.

The storm was violent but short-lived. It brought down a huge limb from the tree in front of the house. It was lucky that Dimitris parked further down the drive than where Stefano usually parks. The men had to clear the huge mess with chainsaws and it took most of the morning. The rest of the area was pretty well drenched but no major damage.

We stayed another night so that Dimitris could help Stefano with other trees that took some damage. The oldest orange tree suffered a loss of several branches. Andreas and Morgan had to stay another day also. The seas were kicking up and he didn't want to take a chance in open waters.

When we finally got home we saw a lot of debris had blown into the vortex at our front door. Other than that it didn't seem like there was much damage, mostly just clean up of mud and debris from the trees and bushes.

The first night back in our home was a treat. The Christmas tree was still in good shape, although it would come down in the next day or so. After we saw to the dogs and did a little urgent cleanup, we relaxed by the fire in the living room hearth. I felt so totally drained. After my shower, I was so relaxed that I nearly fell asleep on the sofa.

"We can go to bed. You are so tired," he said and took my hand. "I will turn off lights and lock up."

I went to the bedroom and slipped into bed. Heaven never felt so good. When Dimitris came to bed he put his arm around me and put my hand on his heart. I could tell that he had something on his mind. He wanted to say something but hesitated.

"What is it Dimi?"

He kissed my hand, took a deep breath and looked at me. He glanced up to where the red sheers that draped over the bed once were, like he was choosing his words, but didn't know how to begin. He exhaled, kissed my forehead then reached to turn off the lamp.

“Good night, my Heart. S’agapo.”

During the first week of January, we heard of Camilla’s fate with the Police. She was brought before a judge on a charge of assault. She spent a total of ten days in the clink and let out with a slap on the hand. I didn’t expect she would be in jail that long, but being a Holiday week, it took longer to go before a judge.

Rena has informed us that Camilla has gone back to Rhodes with her tail between her legs. The way stories spread from one place to another, it wouldn’t be long before she will be known as the troublemaker or some other label will be attached to her.

Now that we’re into the New Year Dimitris had to spend a week in Athens. The new job required him to attend orientation, seminars, and meetings with staff and colleagues, with whom he will be dealing in his work. He surprised me that he wasn’t nervous about the new position at all and actually was excited to get working again.

I took a few days to go with Rena to the Turkish marketplace. We were only there to trace down the lamps and other decorating items for the house. Morgan wanted to go also, but she hasn’t been feeling well.

I came away with a lot more yardage goods and hanging brass and silver perforated lanterns; however, the lamps for the bedroom escaped my grasp when a man bought them at a higher price than I was willing to pay. The vendor said to come back the next day and he would have more lamps. Well, we couldn’t stay any longer and it seemed like a ploy to me.

My first impression of Turkey, I must sadly admit was not great. Unfortunately, we only saw the market which wasn’t a true reflection of Turkey. Next time I hope to stay and visit with Mattaios and his wife, Matyha. They would show us the true Turkey.

After two days, I was ready to come home. I was loaded down with so much stuff that I could hardly carry it all. I was lucky to have assistance getting the ferry, then I was able to take advantage of a cage type lock up on board, so I wouldn’t have to sit and watch my purchases continuously.

I was tired and couldn't wait to get some rest. I went to the coffee bar and once again ran into Mr. Sahj.

"Miss Helena!" I heard from a booth I had passed on my way up to the bar.

"Mr. Sahj." I stopped to go over to the man.

"Would you join me?" He asked as he kissed my hand.

"Let me get a coffee first," I said and immediately the man called the barkeep.

"Please sit, we'll get you coffee."

"Thank you," I ordered my drink with the barkeep when he came to the booth.

"How are you? I see you are going back to Greece."

"Yes, I'm curious about something. You warned me to leave the restaurant in Athens that day. Did you know those men?" I asked.

"In my line of work, I come across all types of unsavory scum. These were known to me. It was a precaution. I did not intend to alarm you. Better to be cautious."

I had more questions, but I thought I was not getting the full answers from this gentleman. There was something mysterious in the mannerisms of Mr. Sahj. I couldn't put my finger on it, but I got the impression that there's more than meets the eye with him. I wasn't comfortable with the idea that he was headed in the same direction as I was. With this intuitive information making me uncomfortable, the conversation became very awkward. I finished my coffee and made an excuse to leave.

I made my way through the passenger area, making sure that I wasn't being watched. I spent a twenty-minute stint in the Ladies lounge, hoping that I would not cross his path again on this voyage.

When I came out, I went to the lower deck to talk to the ferry personnel. I wanted to know if I could wait to unload my packages until the passengers have all disembarked. I was told that it would not be a problem as long as I was gone before the ferry had to leave again.

I wasn't allowed to stay on the lower deck and had to return to the passenger area. When we entered port I went to the cargo area. Being in an out of the way corner, I was able to watch the passengers descend the stairs and disembark the ferry. I noticed Mr. Sahj was off ship. He was standing and

looking around, for transportation most likely. I hoped he would leave soon.

After ten minutes I saw Mr. Sahj take out his cell phone to make a call. He waited by the gate and was picked up within minutes. Once he drove off I notified the employee of the ferry that I had to move my car to pick up my packages. They helped me to take the packages to my car, which I moved to a place just outside the gate. I was relieved to get into my car and start the engine.

I drove to the post office to purchase stamps and was there for a few minutes. I was able to make sure that I had no one follows me. I guess I'm getting paranoid, but with the luck I've had since coming here, I wanted to be sure I was safe.

I drove home. The last mile of this route was a quiet drive with little traffic. I was sure that no one was watching me pull into the driveway.

The dogs were very welcoming and it was a great feeling to be home. I put all the packages in the utility room temporarily and brought in both of the dogs. They were so excited to be in the house. They raced around, up and down the stairs and got their kefi out! After their burst of energy was expended they were fed and settled down.

After showering and building a fire I relaxed with the dogs at my feet. I missed Dimitris and wished he would call. He usually called every day, sometimes more than once. I missed him and had a hard time staying in the house by myself. It's not as bad, now that we have a TV, but I missed him and hoped that these trips to Athens would not be recurring that often.

I tried to keep occupied, writing letters, reading, but the time ticked by slowly. I hated to be alone for too long, as past demons began to creep into my thoughts. As much as I tried to distract my thoughts from past trials with Dimitris, I still have that reluctance to wed in the church. It was all still there, just below the surface waiting to reemerge. As much as I hate to admit it, even to myself, I still have doubts. Then the phone finally rang.

"Helena," Dimitris said.

"Dimi, I didn't think you were going to call. How's it going?"

"Will you come to dock, I come home," he said.

"I'll be right there," I said. I put my coat on over my nightgown, grabbed

my keys and I was out the door. I didn't take my purse, my shoes or lock the door, I just wanted to get him home.

When I pulled up to the lot, I moved over so that Dimitris could drive. When he got in, I hugged and kissed him and told him how much I missed him; for his sake as well as mine.

"I was missing my Helena. So I come home." He kissed me then hugged me again. "You not dress? You go out and not dress?"

"I was in a hurry," I said.

"We go," he said and drove us home.

When we got to the house, Dimitris helped me out of the car.

"You have no shoes? What you do Helena, you must put on shoes."

"It's okay, come on let's get in the house," I said.

"All I think of is to come home."

"What am I going to do if you have to leave all of the time?" I said.

"I do not leave, I will work here. When I have to go, you will come."

I looked into his eyes and fell into his kiss.

"Dimi, I'm afraid, ...I'm afraid I'm going to have to be bad," I said as I kissed him and unbuttoned his shirt. He took my hands, held them behind my back and kissed me passionately. He let me unzip his pants and when they fell, he laid me on the bed and let his passion fill the red room.

"Helena, you surprise Dimi," he said as he caught his breath. His hand gently stroked my hip as he pressed me to him. "You smell so beautiful." He nibbled my neck as I ran my fingers through his thick black hair.

"Dimi?"

"Huh?" He said in preoccupation.

"I'm not going to be able to do this engagement thing. You can't leave me for a whole month, I'll go nuts," I said, and I felt that to be the truth.

"I know. But we must. We must be strong, it is test, we can be strong."

"I don't know," I said as he was doing things that made my mind go blank. I could only think of him, having him and making him part of me.

We made love again and I never wanted to let him go. Being together, having him in this way made me complete. The thought of the time we have

been apart and will be again made me want him all the more.

When he held me, I could feel his heart pounding against me.

“S’agapo Helena, where have you been? I waste too much time alone.” He said, pressed against me, his hand on my cheek.

I asked him about the new job. I was assured that he was going to spend more time at home and only the occasional time in Athens for reports, seminars or meetings. He would take me with him on any extended time away from home.

Suddenly, one of the dogs jumped up on the bed.

“I forgot about them!” I said.

“I put them to bed now, they have done their job.” He got out of bed and quickly dressed. I put on my kimono and deck shoes.

When Dimitris came back in, he went into the kitchen.

“We have sandwiches, yes?”

“Sure, why not?” I answered.

I watched him make his way around the kitchen, so careful in his preparations. I had to smile, watching the way he carefully wrapped things and then put them back into the refrigerator.

“What? Did Dimi forget something?”

“No, I don’t think so. Everything is wonderful.” I went to him and put my arms around him.

“Come, we will eat.”

And just like that, all my tribulations, and distrust dissipated for now.

Everything was going smoothly. We finished setting up Dimitris’ lab and he was able to begin his work. When he was in the lab, the door closed, I knew not to disturb him. He never said this, it was assumed, and I respected his need to work undisturbed.

During the third week of January, Mattaios called. He had been keeping tabs on the cargo container, which was stalled outside of Genoa. He said that there was a problem with the ship being able to enter the port due to some detail in their manifest. Something that will not allow them to unload cargo until all documents are in order. There would be a delay in its arrival

to Greece.

I wasn't too concerned about it, but if we could get the container off of the ship in Italy, it would be here two to three weeks earlier than if we wait for it to get here. This was something to discuss with Dimitris, as he would have to make the necessary arrangements, and that might mean going to the port of Genoa and showing our shipping documents.

The more I thought about it the more I would like to have the container before Dimitris and I have to separate for a month. It would help me to pass the time more quickly if I have some of my stuff to help occupy my time.

Dimitris has had his new project in hand for a week and says he is making progress. He hasn't been giving details of the work he's doing and I guess it's supposed to be kept under the cuff.

He has taken to doing a lot of reading in the evenings and I've gotten used to the after-dinner routine. Once the table is cleared and everything put away, he'll get out his papers and either be reading or figuring calculations. He occupies usually two hours, then he turns his attention to me. Things seem to have finally settled into a routine which suits us comfortably.

He has a meeting in Athens at the end of the week and I will go with him. It is not expected to be a long meeting, although I think that it will last longer than expected.

This night we finished dinner and Dimitris went to the lab. He was there for a while, so I turned on the TV. I was going to watch it and do a crossword puzzle. Dimitris came out of his den and kissed me on the temple as I was filling a glass of water. He didn't say anything, he had some reading glasses on and carrying some papers.

He sat on the sofa next to the lamp and was going over the papers. He made a few notes then when I came into the room, he opened his arm out to me to sit next to him. He put his arm around my shoulder and kissed my cheek.

"I will finish this in few minutes."

"What is it?" I asked.

"Report, I give at meeting."

"It's all in Greek."

“Yes. Greek,” he said, kissed my temple and got up to take the papers back to the lab. A few minutes later he returned and sat with me on the sofa.

“Are you finished with your work for the week?” I asked. I still wasn’t sure how all this research and report procedure went. I didn’t know if he had continuing research or only for a particular project that needs the report.

“No, research may take long time. How are you, my Heart? Did you miss Dimi today?” He asked.

“I always miss you when you’re away from me.”

“My Helena. So much better I am home.”

“We should put a window in the door of your lab. At least I could take a peek at you when you’re busy. I won’t miss you so much if I could see you.” I said.

He looked at me like he just had a revelation. Something maybe he didn’t realize before. He rolled me up in his arms and stroked my back.

“My Helena, Helena.” Then he kissed me on the temple, “I think you love this man.”

“What gave you that idea?” I said and kissed him.

He was rubbing his eyes and pinching the bridge of his nose.

“Are you okay? Do you have a headache?” I asked.

“I think I read too much small print.”

“Do you want some aspirin?”

“No, we go to bed, okay?”

“Okay, go ahead, I’ll turn everything off.”

We got into bed, the lamp on the nightstand was on. Dimitris held open the blankets for me to come to his arms. It felt so good to get close to him. I kissed him on the lips then looked at his face.

“Is the glare from the light hurting your eyes?” I asked as it looked as if he was squinting.

“Just little bit.”

“Maybe you should turn off the light then, we don’t have to have it on to talk,” I said.

He turned the light off then kissed my head.

He sighed a heavy sigh.

“What is it, Dimi?”

“You really love this man, don’t you?”

“Is that a question?” I asked.

“No, you really love me,” he said.

“Of course I do, more than anything.”

“It hit me, this news, again I am surprised.”

“What do you mean?” I asked softly.

“It is hard for Dimi to believe. When man love a woman as I love you, is hard to believe she love the man the same, as much. Is too good to realize this.”

I reached over to turn on my bedside lamp. Dimitris pulled me back.

“No, do not do this, we talk in dark.”

“You know that I love you, why is it suddenly a surprise to you?” I asked softly.

“I know before, but _____.”

“But what, Dimi?” I asked as I laid my head on this shoulder.

“I only now see how deep. Only now realize how deep. I think I fear I fail you.”

“Fail me? Dimi, you could never fail me.” I sat up and brought his head to my chest and kissed the crown of his head. He curled up to me, putting his head on my stomach and held my hips. I stroked his back and shoulders.

“Helena, my heart so full for you, and I have headache. How can Dimi make love like this? You deserve to be loved. Now I fail you.”

“Shh, you’re not failing me. I love you, Dimi. Let me get you some aspirin, you’ll feel better. Okay?”

He didn’t answer and didn’t want to let me go, but I went to get the aspirin anyway. When I got back to the bedroom the lamp was on and he was laying with his arm covering his eyes. When I came in he sat up against the headboard. I handed him the water and aspirin. After he took them he took my hands and kissed them and thanked me.

I sat on the bed and looked at his eyes. They were so sad. I could see that he was in pain.

“Well, let’s turn off the light and go to sleep.” I held his face in my hands

and said, "Don't ever forget that I love you, Dimi."

In the morning I felt Dimitris moving my hair, then he came up to my ear, whispered something to me in Greek, then kissed me under my ear.

"S'agapo, Helena." He said in a whisper. I turned toward him and put my hand on his cheek.

"Good morning, Dimi," I said and smiled. "How are you feeling this morning?"

"I am wonderful," he said. He kissed my lips and said, "Today, I do not work, we do something."

"Okay, what do you want to do?"

"We will see, time to get up now, my Heart."

"Oh, I forgot. Mattaios called about the container," I said as Dimitris was dressing.

"What he say?"

"It's delayed outside of Genoa. We might be able to get it off ship in Genoa and bring it ourselves. It would save a couple of weeks in transport. I told him I'd talk it over with you."

"Mattaios say when, how late?"

"Maybe a couple of weeks. I don't know what we need to do to change the shipping orders, or if we even can, but I guess there is no real hurry."

"Maybe we can change it, I will see," he said. "Now, breakfast."

"I just want coffee," I said as I sat on the edge of the bed. Dimitris came over to me.

"You not eat?"

"Just coffee, I need to wake up."

"You are feeling okay?" He asked as he put his hand on my shoulder.

"I'm just tired, so, lots of coffee for me this morning," I said.

"Are you sure you feeling okay? You tire a lot lately," he said. "I will call Mattaios, see what to do to get shipment faster. You wait for things long enough."

"Thank you!"

He had left the room but from the hallway, I heard him say "Dimi not sweet,

my Heart.” He made the coffee and I got dressed. I could hear the phone ringing then Dimitris answered it. I couldn’t make out what was said, but he was happy and that sounded good. I splashed some water on my face before I went to the kitchen.

“Here is coffee.” He handed me my cup, then gave me a peck on the cheek. “I have surprise. We go to theater tonight, Stefano and Rena have guest passes.”

“Really? What are we going to see?” I asked.

“Greek Tragedy play in Athens, no need to go if you no like.”

“I think it would be fun. What time will we leave?”

“I think we go on 3 pm flight. I call Stefano. Do you ever see Greek Tragedy, Helena?”

“This will the first time for me,” I said.

“Is traditional. Traditional dress, traditional plot. Is interesting, I think you like,” he said.

“Why didn’t they ask Morgan and Andreas? They live right there!” I asked.

“Andreas take Morgana to Symi.”

“When?” I asked.

“They go today. Morgana love Symi, so Andreas take her.”

“Ooo, how romantic! Anything going on there?”

“Andreas and Miss Morgana? We will see,” he said, then put his hand on my shoulder, looked into my eyes and said,

“You are quite the romantic, my Helena.”

“I guess I am. You’re pretty romantic yourself.”

“Dimi not romantic.”

“You are a romantic.” He kind of smiled and drank his coffee. “What should I wear to this theater?” I asked. “Can I get away with wearing slacks?”

“Must dress for Greek Theater, is like opera, everyone dress. Maybe you wear black dress.”

“The velvet one?”

“Yes, is nice.”

“I’ll see what I’ve got, I’m not sure about the black velvet again.”

“You wear, is nice.”

I was looking forward to going out. It had been a long time since I’d attended

a play. I was going to ask if it was a University production, but it didn't matter. I was glad to be able to go.

It surprised me that Morgan didn't say anything about going to Symi. I know that she loved the island when they went there before, but she might have had the trip surprised on her, which seems to happen quite often.

Dimitris called brother Mattaios to find out what we needed to do to get the container.

"What did he say?" I asked.

"He will watch progress of ship. When ready to dock we act on your container. Mattaios will call us."

"So when it gets to port he'll let us know."

"Yes."

"Then what?" I asked.

"Mattaios will tell us what to do."

That night we all went to a Greek play, I should say, ancient Greek play. It was set amongst the ruins and was done in ancient Greek dress and the old Greek language. It was a little hard for the natives to understand, given the acoustics and the language difference, but I was able to enjoy it through interpretation. It was an interesting slant on political commentary of the day.

When we left the amphitheater, we went to a night spot that was very elegant and we were served Caviar meyesdes with our cocktails. Rena was wearing a very red and black outfit that screamed "designer". She had her hair up-swept which made her look three inches taller.

Dimitris always makes me proud to be with him. I never have to fight to get him to dress for the occasion. He's usually the one having to use a little persuasion on me. Black tux affairs always are enjoyable especially when Rena and Stefano are around. Nothing is ever taken too seriously and even the act of dressing for the event can be enjoyable!

We discussed the wedding, the play and all of the news from family and friends. Rena was telling us about Andreas and Morgan.

"Andreas figured he'd take Morgana to Symi. It was so hard on her when her daughter had to go home. I guess Andreas thought since she loved it there

that it would help her feel better. I hope he's right."

"She didn't seem to be too bad when I saw her. I know it was hard, it always is, but Morgan hides her emotions a lot until they get to a fever pitch. I hope she's alright."

"Excuse us, Rena," Dimitris said as he held out his hand to me. I took his hand and he led me to the balcony terrace where the cool breeze blew my hair back and into Dimitris' face.

"Oh, Dimi, I'm sorry. I should wear a snood."

"Is beautiful night, Helena, a perfect night."

"It is nice. What do you have on your mind Dimi?"

"Just to be alone with you for minute. Never alone together all night." I put my arm around him and looked into his eyes.

"You look so handsome tonight. You almost look like the groom on the wedding cake," I said. He beamed and said,

"Soon, my Helena, soon." He turned to me with something he wanted to say, I could see it in his eyes.

"What's bothering you, Dimi?" I asked.

"I think how lucky Dimi, for woman to forgive this oaf, I will never___."

"We won't talk about it." I interrupted and unconsciously began to step back.

"Helena." He held onto my arm that had dropped from his waist. He pulled me toward him and made me look into his eyes. "This I cannot forget I do, but never again. If I could take back, I do. Dimi will make it up to you, I promise." Then he kissed me, twice.

"We should go back," I said. He kissed my fingers, put my hair in order and said,

"We will be happy, Helena. You believe this?"

"Yes, Dimi, I know," I said and I kissed his cheek. He was being so sweet, and I know he was still feeling bad, but I didn't dwell on it and hoped that he wouldn't either. If the subject never came up again, it would be easier to put it behind us.

"Helena?" He pulled back my arm and looked me in the eyes to advise me of the importance of what he was to say.

“Yes?”

“I love you, my Heart, I make mistake and you do not hate Dimi?” He asked.

“Can we drop this? No, I do not hate you, and yes, I love you. I don’t want to hear about this anymore. It happened, and you’ve apologized, now, can we drop the subject?” I was getting angry, not at Dimitris’ need for reassurance, but for the anger I still harbored at the act itself, and the emotional hurt of it.

He looked wounded but I didn’t know how to heal him. I didn’t want him dwelling on this, but I didn’t want him to think that it was okay and that I’ve accepted it.

I reached up to touch his face, I put my hand on his cheek and was looking into his eyes. He took my hand from his cheek and kissed my palm.

“Dimi, I love you. You won’t do it again and that’s all I need to hear. Okay? Are we okay now?” I put my body as close to him as I could without attracting attention. We fell into a kiss that was monumental and we had to remember where we were.

“Helena, S’agapo,” he said with a restrained passion.

“We won’t speak of it again,” I said, looking up at him. “Come on, let’s go back.”

We returned to rejoin Rena and Stefano.

“Gee, we thought maybe you two left for home. Where were you?” Rena asked.

“We look at view from balcony, is beautiful night.”

“We were going to order a regular dinner, but we waited for you.”

“Yes, a dinner. We need to eat a meal,” Dimitris said.

After dinner, we went to a comedy club, only because we bowed out the last time we came to dinner in Athens. It was a lot of fun and I think Dimitris needed to laugh. I didn’t like seeing him have things weighing him down, and laughing together seemed to be the tonic we needed.

“We booked a couple of rooms at Dionysus’ so we’ll need a taxi. We can share one, or take two, it’s up to you.” Stefano said.

Dimitris looked at me, and answered,

“We can go in one taxi, no need for two.”

We had an enjoyable ride in the taxi. Rena sat on Stefano's lap and had us laughing the whole way to the hotel. She's a funny lady, especially after a few drinks.

We didn't bring any luggage so we didn't have any clothes to change into. The next morning as I lay in Dimitris' arms, I thought about this man I love, the healing that we both need, and the question: will we ever look at each other in the same way again?

Somewhere down the line, will I flash back to this event that I'm trying to put behind us? And what about him? Will he be looking at me, wondering if I'm still thinking about the incident, or if I've really forgiven him? I wonder if I should ever say what I've been thinking? The only thing is that I don't want to bring him unnecessary hurt or worry, but I don't know if what I say would make a difference either.

Somewhere along my mental wandering, Dimitris woke up and was watching me.

"What you think on, Helena?" He asked in a soft voice.

"You, us, life," I said, searching his eyes.

"How long you awake?"

"I guess maybe ten to fifteen minutes."

"Why you do not wake Dimi?"

"I'm not really awake myself, yet."

"Should we order coffee, or go down?"

"We should get dressed and go down for coffee," I said.

"Helena, are you okay?"

"Yes, of course, why do you ask?"

"You not here, thinking away out there."

"I'm still waking up."

He kissed me on the neck and said,

"You are smelling good." Then he held his arms tightly around me. He pulled my hair over to one side and laid my head on his shoulder. He said something in Greek. He snuggled his face into my hair and rolled me to the side where he gently explored my body with his lips and inhaled me as he kissed.

We dressed, met Rena and Stefano for breakfast and although it was a wonderful cuisine, we were running late and had to rush to the ferry. I was in a state of heightened sensitivity and whenever Dimitris eyes would glance over to me, it would send shocks to my heart.

We said our farewells at the dock and thanked them for the opportunity to see the play. Rena said that she would come with Morgan when it's time for the engagement separation, and we girls will have some fun.

As we boarded the ferry, Dimitris had his arm around me. We went to the passenger deck and watched the docks disappear into the distance.

"Should we sit?" Dimitris asked. He led me to the comfortable sofas. "I will get something to drink." He kissed my hand and went to the bar. I watched him as he made his way through the deck lounge, seats and other passengers. I couldn't help notice how he caught the attention of the female population on board. Smiles and turned heads followed him as he made his way to the bar. I always knew he was dripping with sexuality, and in his tuxedo, he was especially so. It made me smile when I'd see the ladies do a double-take as he went by. When he returned he brought me a tall, strange drink that I had never had before. It was very fruity but not really sweet.

"We need to make appointment to see priest, Helena."

"How far in advance do we need to schedule?"

"Depends. I think maybe two weeks, we see."

I looked into his eyes and it was hard for me to think of anything but making love to him. I could feel my face blush when he put his hand up to my cheek.

"You get all pink, are you okay?" He asked.

I leaned closer to him to whisper in his ear

"You make me smolder, Dimi."

He pulled back to look at me and my face had to be the color of a rose. It must have taken him by surprise because it took him longer than a pause to react to my confession.

He smiled as he pulled me towards him and kissed me, not too passionately, as I don't think he wanted to start something he couldn't finish. We sipped our drinks and exchanged secret smiles. I sat with my legs crossed and leaning a bit against Dimitris.

“This dress, very suggestive.” He said in my ear as he was looking at my legs.

“How do you mean?” I asked.

“Legs.”

“Yes, legs....and?”

“Some men love the legs. This dress has slit.”

“Yes, it does. You like?” I asked, with a bit of caution.

“Helena, I will have to take you right here! Yes, right here.” He said in a soft, low voice.

“I don’t know what you could be talking about, Mr. Patakinis. I might have to let you be bad.” He made a low rumbling ultrasonic purring into my neck and made me laugh. I noticed people glancing at us and a young man took a few pictures in our direction. I told Dimitris that maybe we should move to another area.

“Maybe a booth in bar?” Dimitris asked. “I will look. If I find I will call on cell. You come.” He kissed my hand and went to the bar, with all the ladies watching him.

When he was out of view, a woman sat next to me then said

“Excuse me, I was wondering, the man you’re with, is he a movie star? He seems familiar.”

“No, he’s not.”

“Really? He’s a nice looking man. He should be in movies.”

“I’ll suggest it to him,” I said with a smile.

“I don’t suppose he’s single?”

“No, he’s not.” Just then my cell phone rang. I excused myself and went to the bar to meet him.

When I got to the booth, two women were hovering over the booth, talking to Dimitris, trying to get an invitation to sit down. When he saw me, he stood. One of the women took that to mean she could sit in the booth. The other turned and saw me. She poked her seated friend. When Dimitris kissed me, they both went to another area of the bar. I couldn’t understand what they were saying, but it didn’t matter.

“Ah, Helena, I was in deadly peril! You have come to save Dimi from terrible

fate.” He said as we slipped into the corner booth. We were facing outward and could see the entire bar from our dark corner.

“I can’t leave you alone for a second, can I? The women swarm around you like bees to honey!”

“Makes me laugh!” He said.

“What does?”

“How people act. Sometimes wonder why.”

“Why people act the way they do?”

“No, why people put on act. Women act. So obvious,” he said.

“So, all these women who go out of their way to try to make an impression - they don’t impress you?”

“Yes, they impress, as desperate, silly. Not good impression.”

“It’s supposed to intrigue you, make you want more of the feminine wiles,” I said.

“Psh. Not interest Dimi.”

“Maybe not now, but didn’t it interest you when you were,___ before we met?”

“Don’t like these games. Not interested in games. Is fun to watch, but not be in.”

“Any other man would be gah-gah over some of these women.”

“Yes, but they like the games also.” He held my hand on his lap and rubbed his thumb against my wrist.

“Maybe it’s an ego thing,” I said.

“Yes, that it is,” he said. “For both.”

“The women are as bad as the men these days. I mean it used to be just the men trying to score. Now the women are just as...what’s the word I’m looking for?”

“I know word, but will only think it, not to say.”

“You are funny, my love,” I said.

“I like you say that, ‘my love,’ I like,” he said. “This feather thing, what is called?”

“It’s a boa.”

“Boa,” he repeated. “Is strange word for feather thing.”

“Dimi?”

“Yes, my Heart.”

“If we decide to have the container taken off in Genoa, will we have to be there?”

“I think yes, we will need to show shipping documents to authorize change in destination. Someone must sign.”

“I’d better get a visa on my passport then.”

“Yes! Maybe Tuesday you do. We go to Embassy.”

When we got home the first thing that was done was to light the fireplace. I couldn’t wait to get out of my dress and take a shower. While Dimitris saw to the dogs, I was luxuriating in a deep warm bath.

“You got here first! You are being bad already!”

“Come on in, Dimi, there’s plenty of room!”

“I no like faucet in back.”

“I’ll move up, get in behind me, you can be my pillow,” I said.

He undressed and slipped in behind me, the displaced water nearly overflowed the tub. I let some water out for a precaution, and then we were able to relax. I laid back against him.

“Ah, this good, Helena. I like!”

“Mmm. I’m so comfortable, I could drift off!”

“Don’t go to sleep.”

“I won’t, but it’s very tempting,” I cooed. Dimitris spoke into my ear softly.

“I could be very bad if you let me.”

“Will you sponge my back?”

“Ooo, this is new to Dimi, I like.” He then leaned forward to kiss the center of my back.

“That kind of tickles.” I was so relaxed, I knew I was ready for sleep.

“Let me do you now, we’ll need to trade places,” I said.

“No, Helena, you may do me next time. We get out now, before water too cold.” He got out of the tub and wrapped himself in a towel. He grabbed another towel for me and I was wrapped in his warm arms to dry.

After debating my choices I thought I should prepare for the container and the job of getting it here. It would be another time-consuming day at the Embassy trying to get a visa.

“Mattaio call on container. It will go on as directed. It clear Genoa to go on to Athens.”

“When did he call?” I asked.

“I call him from Lab, he called on progress. It cleared Genoa and on way to Athens.”

“Good, we don’t have to worry about it.”

Within eight days we had the container and I was happy to not have to worry about it anymore. I had all of my art supplies and my sewing machine, personal papers and all the things that I’ve managed to live without for so long. I should have tossed so much of this stuff instead of shipping it.

As it turned out I needed two rooms for all of my things. My yardage and sewing machine went in one room, and my crafting supplies in another.

Time seemed to pass by smoothly, as Dimitris didn’t have to leave for a couple of weeks and we got most of the storage items put in the house. We had our appointment set for seeing the parish priest, and although we had all of the documents ready, I was prepared for another delay.

“Are you ready?” Dimitris asked.

“Yes, Dimi.” He seated me in the car and we went to the office of the priest, which was located at the back of the church.

As we sat and listened to the priest, we were advised of the dire consequences of entering into a sacred union under false pretenses or expectations. We were also reminded of the promise of living separately for the next month. This first meeting was a preliminary orientation meeting. We will begin the formal instructions tomorrow night on Karpathos. All of our papers were in order and upon consulting the calendar, our wedding date will be May 6th. When we came out, we were both excited to finally get this going. It has been like the tooth that we knew had to come out. It always was looming in the distance and now it’s day has come. Now that I’ve got my stuff packed, I’ll go to Morgans’ tomorrow.

"I'll get the invitations made and call my family. Sweetie, I need you to make the airline reservations for two. Listen to me, I'm getting nervous!"

"My Heart, it will be fine." He put his hand on my knee as we drove home.

I got all my things together and was afraid I would forget something. I called Morgan so that they can come to the docks with the Athena and take me to Athens.

"Dimi, we're not really supposed to talk on the phone, are we?"

"I think that can be allowed, but that is all. If you see me in street, you must not speak."

"I can see not being alone together or not being able to touch each other, that makes sense. But I won't see you either, which will kill me."

"You will live with Morgana, but you must come to see priest for meetings. We may see one another, but no touch. We must discuss with priest about distance and travel problem for meetings, maybe he find better way to do this."

When I put my arms around Dimitris, I wanted to experience his touch, his scent. I knew he would be away from me while I'm at Morgans' and a month will be a long separation.

"Have we heard yet on dress?" He asked.

"I had a call that it's ready, I only have to go for the last fitting for any minor adjustments and the hem. I have to bring shoes to the fitting, too," I said.

"I will call church, Karpathos will see best wedding yet," he said and put his arms around me.

"Dimi, why didn't you marry in the church the first time?"

"Parents say not to marry, too young, so with head like rock, I marry anyway. But only civil. They knew best for Dimi, but Dimi too stubborn."

"I'm glad, your parents were right."

"Yes. I feel bad not to have Orthodox then, but with the gods, things always work out for best. Now, we will have Orthodox, and it is good."

"Dimi, Rena will be doing everything after the wedding, it's going to be so much work. I wish I could do something to help."

"You will be too busy to help. She will have help from Katie and Matyha. So do not worry."

“My family, where will they stay before the wedding? I can’t ask Andreas to put them up, too. I’m getting all confused on this.”

“You will spend last days at Renas’ with your family. Rena has everything ready for them. So, you have good visit before groom arrive to make you crazy.”

The Separation



I had almost everything packed. Then the last minute craziness comes when my mind is in another place, always thinking that there is something I'm forgetting.

Dimitris came up behind me in the bedroom and put his hands on my shoulders and kissed my neck.

"Month is too long of time, you don't forget Dimi?"

I turned to him and put my arms around him, his eyes looked so sad.

"I know, it is a long time, but you're all I'm going to think about," I said.

Dimitris made sweet love to me again as the time was slipping by us too fast. We would have miles of ocean between us soon, and this was our last chance of expressing the love we have and grasping at time that would soon escape us.

We expected a knock at the door at any moment. The clock rang 1 o'clock and I had to dress for the longest voyage. Andreas and Morgan would pick me up and take me to our meeting with the priest. From there, I would be in Athens for a month.

Dimitris sat next to me on the bed after I dressed and finished closing my suitcase. He knew I was on the verge of tears at this separation. It was painful and I felt like I would never see him again. The thought of being separated for a month was so hard to comprehend. To marry in the Greek Orthodox Church we had to separate from the time of the engagement announcement

to the wedding itself. I didn't understand why such a long time. I had to push it back, out of my thoughts so that it wouldn't consume me. Dimitris had been especially sweet, with every word, and every gesture. He had been so attentive and gentle, that I just wanted to hang onto him and not let him go.

He put his arm around me and his hand held my cheek as he whispered in my ear. He told me how much he loved me and that this time will be a lonely long sentence for him. He wanted me to be sure that my cell phone was always charged and on, and that I always think of him waiting for me. The more he talked the more the tears began to roll down my cheeks.

Morgan and Rena came to take me away to the meeting with the Priest in Karpathos. Andreas will take me back to Athens on the Athena, then Stefano and Andreas will take turns keeping Dimitris on the straight and narrow. Then there was the fatal knock at the door.

"Hello, come in," Dimitris said.

"Today's the day, are you ready Helena?" Rena asked.

"Hi, no, I'm never going to be ready for this, but I guess I'd better go," I said. Dimitris picked up both of my suitcases.

"I will put in car," he said.

"Do we have time for coffee?" I asked.

"We have to get going, we want to arrive in Karpathos before dark," Andreas said.

"Okay, Helena, I guess you're with us," Morgan said as they prodded me toward the door.

"You have to say goodbye here," Stefano said.

"But it is not necessary, I go to priest with Helena, we go, last time together."

"Dimi, you have to stay, Stefano will take you," Rena said.

"I'll stay with you tonight and tomorrow, then Andreas will come," Stefano said.

"Maybe it's better this way, Dimi," I said.

He wrapped me in his arms and held me tightly. His Greek whispers were fast and furious. He kissed me so gently and looked into my eyes and said

"I give this for you to put on left hand."

It was a diamond wedding band. He put it on my finger and said
“You are married, you wear band,” he said and held me in his arms and
rocked me.

“Come on, we’ve got to go,” Andreas prodded.

“This is just as hard as I thought it would be, I’m not very good at this,” I
said.

“You do not cry, Helena,” Dimitris said as I had to let him go.

“I know, it’ll be over soon,” I said.

Everyone was in the car, I rolled down the window and Dimitris kissed me
once more. Then we were gone to the meeting. I looked back and could see
Dimitris waving from the driveway. I felt like my heart was breaking.

We finally got through with the prenuptial lessons with the priest. It wasn’t
as involved as it would have been if we were going to have children in the
marriage. We were able to glide through with the basics pertaining to the
marriage itself, and the importance of the church in our lives, and the sanctity
of marriage. The priest was able to accommodate us by getting our meetings
down to three two hour meetings, and he also will perform the marriage on
Karpathos with the Kefalonia Catholic priest in attendance. These were the
last precious hours we were able to spend together, listening to the priest,
and Dimitris was able to speak to me as interpreter. We were kept three feet
apart so that we could not touch.

Our wedding date was set for Sunday, May 6th. Now, officially we are
engaged. Today we will begin the separation by my leaving with Morgan and
Andreas for a month, that’s if they can stand having me there that long. Then
I go to Renas’.

“It’s hard, I know,” Morgan said.

“God, I feel like I’m never going to see him again,” I said.

“Oh, Helena, we’ll see that the time goes quickly. One month sounds like
forever, but it will pass and that will make the celebration of the wedding so
much more special,” Andreas said.

“I wonder how many couples don’t make it, give up under the stress?”

“Surprisingly, very few,” Andreas said.

“That’s encouraging, at least!”

The trip to Athens was like a blur. I’m sure I carried on the conversation, purely by instinct, as I don’t remember any of it. All I could think of was how miserable I was feeling with the separation. I was somewhere absorbed in thought. The thought of the wedding wouldn’t affect me the way the separation will.

When we got to Athens, Morgan and Andreas took me out to dinner. I wasn’t very good company, I’m afraid and just wanted to go to bed. I had all my suitcases to unpack as well. Once back at the condo, I was able to finally rest.

At 7 p.m. Dimitris called on my cell phone.

“Dimi?”

“My Heart, I’m missing you.”

“Oh, Dimi, I can’t stand this. This will be the longest month of my life.”

“Yes, Helena, for me as well. We have many things still to do for wedding, but we will talk of that later. S’agapo, Helena. My heart is breaking in my chest. This test is for the strong. It will be hard for me.”

“You are strong, Sweetheart, stronger than I am. I’m afraid I won’t do well with this, I’m already so miserable without you.”

“Shh, I know. We must keep busy to make time go fast.”

“Dimi, Dimi? I’m losing the signal”

“I am here.”

“I’m afraid I’ll get cut off, Dimi?”

“I will say goodnight, my Helena.”

“Good night, Dimi, S’agapo!”

When I lost the call it was like something sucked the air right out of me. A feeling of loss covered me like a heavy blanket. I came out of the bedroom and into the kitchen, hoping for someone to talk to.

“Hi, thought you went to bed,” Morgan said as she and Andreas were sitting at the table.

“Hi guys, do you have a beer anywhere? I just talked to Dimi.”

“Yeah, in the ’fridge. What did he say?” Morgan asked.

“I think he’s doing better than I am,” I said. “We’ve only been apart a few hours and I’m already a basket case.”

“Let me see your ring, Helena.” I showed her my ring that Dimitris just gave me. “Wow! That really makes a beautiful set! It doesn’t look like a wedding set. Are those Sapphires?”

“And diamonds. You should see some of the bridal sets we were looking at! It’s so hard to believe that they are so expensive, beautiful but expensive.”

“He’ll probably pick the most expensive one,” Morgan said.

“You know Dimi, he’s not shy about getting what he wants, so we’ll see.”

“You mean you don’t know what he got for your wedding set?”

“Not yet, I won’t see them until the blessing of the rings. He had me select a slew of different rings that I liked, and he picked what he wanted out of those for me. He’s just so sweet,” I said. “Are you going back to Kefalonia tomorrow?” I asked Andreas.

“Yes, Rena and Stefano have prior commitments, so I’ll spend at least three days this week.”

“What time will you be leaving here?” I asked.

“Probably the 11 a.m. ferry.”

“Oh, you aren’t taking the Athena?”

“No, it’s just as easy to take the ferry, maybe less expensive too, but the Athena needs some repair before I take her out again. So___.”

“Repairs? What happened?” I asked.

“The radio is giving me problems. Maybe a short somewhere, but it has to be fixed.”

“Would you give Dimi a letter for me?”

“I don’t think I can. I’ll find out,” he said.

“If you can’t give it to him, just bring it back okay?” I said.

I went to my room and took out pen and paper and started to write. What could I write? Only that I’m miserable without him, that I miss him and wish I was home? He knew that, but I had to write anyway. I want him to know that I’m thinking of him. I didn’t want to get into personal things in a letter, should it be lost or if it makes him feel worse. I just wanted him to be assured

that I'm waiting. I also told him that I carry his picture with me. Every time I open my cell phone, I see his face and it reminds me how lucky I am and it gives me strength. He didn't know that I downloaded pictures of him to my phone.

I gave Andreas the letter and asked him to take care of my husband for me. Morgan and I didn't do much this first day, we talked and watched some movies. I told her that I could help her out on any projects that she's working on, and I think that ignited her creative juices. She had been working on a design, but it had stagnated with all of the distractions she's had.

I've been wanting to do some sewing, so tomorrow we may go out to find some yardage and other things that will be useful. It should help to fill up my terribly empty days.

As the week went slowly by, I took a few days to spend time with Rena. It gave Morgan a break, and Rena kept me busy. Dimitris called two or three times a day. I never get tired of hearing his voice, even if our conversations had nothing in them that I hadn't heard before, just hearing his voice was comforting. Sometimes when he would call me at night, he would play "the game", and remind me of our special times together. I asked about why he wasn't able to receive the letter, but he wasn't sure, but might be able to have it later in the separation. I had to feel lucky that we were able to talk on the phone.

Even though we could talk, there are some things that I would feel more comfortable putting in a letter. Maybe I think more clearly or express myself better if I can write it. But if it isn't meant to be, I could read my letter to him, I might get away with that.

We have been apart for sixteen days. A torturous sixteen days. I couldn't stand it anymore! When he called, he had to be the strong man that I knew he could be.

I told him of the pain in my heart that I carry continuously with me, especially when I think of his eyes. Missing his arms around me, his scent, the way he walks and makes me laugh. Everything that I see reminds me that I'm not with him, and counting the long slow days that barely pass. I told

him how I miss not being there to share the little things that we usually do, and how much I miss “the game.” The missing of making love is a given and if I went there, we might be banned from phone conversations, who knows for sure? I wasn’t going to take a chance. I told him that even after being together for five months, I still can’t get enough of him. I think he could hear the tears that streamed down my cheeks as I talked to him.

I could hear him on the phone, breathing, listening to everything that I said. I waited to hear him say something. He was at a loss for words as I knew it might take him a minute to respond. I had to get it all out, and I know he wasn’t prepared to hear everything I said, so as he came around to speaking, I could tell he was having a hard time finding his voice. He cleared his throat several times.

“My Heart. You say so much I am thinking too. Is hard to hear this. I cannot come to you. Is hard.”

“I’m sorry Dimi, I know it’s hard and I shouldn’t make it worse for you, but I’m so miserable without you. It’s only been sixteen days and I’m dying here.”

“No, please, do not say this. I try to work, and cannot, I do something, and forget, so have to do again because I think of you. Is not easy, Helena. S’agapo! We will have to be strong. Remember, think of family coming.”

“We need to talk about that.”

We talked until my cell phone went dead. We agreed on where the family would stay, preparations for the wedding and other details. He is taking care of the flowers and getting the house ready for guests, reminded me about getting his ring, the guest list, invitations and asked about the dress. I told him about Rena planning a “girls day” and that I had no idea what that would be. He laughed over that because Rena is renowned for unlimited energy and exuberance.

“It’s so good to hear you laugh, Dimi. I miss you so much.”

I knew that I still had to ask Matyha to be in the wedding, but I thought about it after I lost the call. I think Rena might have mentioned it to her, but I want to make sure. I’ve come to taking notes whenever I think of some item or question, and without my notes, I’d forget in all the confusion. When the call was dropped I was so hurt, like someone had died. I knew my cell phone

was losing its charge, but it's always a surprise when the call is dropped. It's always a sudden thing.

When I came out of the bedroom to report the latest from Dimitris, everyone knew that I had been crying, my puffy red eyes gave me away. Within twenty minutes, Matyha came in the door and it was Rena's cue to have our "girls day." She called Morgan. The plan was that we would grab the ferry to Athens, get Morgan and start out with dinner at a fancy restaurant, and who knows what from there. First on the agenda was to get the final fitting on my dress, and to check to see if the other dresses were ready. Although Morgan and Rena weren't in the actual ceremony, I wanted them to stand within the area of activity. They could step closer to the action after the three circles of the altar was finished. I know that it isn't traditional, but they have been my support through everything and I wanted the honor of their presence in the wedding. That meant that the men had to dress accordingly, which wasn't a problem for them.

We dressed for dinner "to the nine's" like Rena says, and she made reservations for dinner at the exclusive Ritz Carlton. She wanted to try their new cuisine. It was quite a distance from Morgans' flat, but the travel was so enjoyable with all us girls having such a fun time, and joking about the men in our lives.

We arrived early for our dinner reservations, so we waited in the dark bar lounge and relaxed over a pitcher of Margaritas. We were seated in an alcove corner of the room, which was separated from the view of the bar and the entrance by an arbor of greenery. It made our girls table quite private in the dark, lit only by a candle on the table.

After twenty minutes and several Margaritas, Matyha and I excused ourselves to go to the restroom. I could hear Renas' laughter from across the bar, even with the noise of the other patrons talking.

The main lighting in the bar came from beneath the working bar itself where the bartender mixed our drinks. The rest of the bar was very dark unless a candle was lit on the table. Usually unlit until someone is seated there.

As we came back from the ladies room we passed by several arbors of

greenery. I felt someone grab my hand as I walked by the hedge. It startled me to be clutched at in the dark and I instinctively wrenched my hand back from the grasp of the dark hand. I turned to look, but my eyes took a few seconds to focus in the dark. I could see a large dark shadow arise from the booth. It was Dimitris!

I was just about to say something when he placed his fingers across my mouth. I knew that we weren't allowed to talk to each other, but with my heart beating so fast, my mind wasn't thinking straight. I smiled beneath his fingers. Matyha put her arm across me like a roadblock so that I would remember that I couldn't go to him and put my arms around him. I knew as well as Dimitris that if I broke this rule, it would likely lead to other things. His eyes were smiling at me in the dim reflected light and I knew that we had to go our separate ways for a time yet. Stefano stepped up and pulled Dimitris away, but I kissed my fingers and laid them to his lips before I had to go to our table. Matyha pulled me away, but it was all I would be allowed at this point. Dimitris pressed his hand against my fingers that were on his lips and kissed them. I returned in time to go with the girls to our dining room table.

Although I felt like crying, I also felt exhilarated after seeing Dimitris. My heart was flying again, and I knew that I would make it through this trial.

After we were seated, I tried to see the door to the bar, but our table wasn't conducive to me keeping an eye out for Dimitris. After we had nearly completed our meal, I gave up on thinking that I would see him again. It might have been just a lucky fluke that we were at the same place at the same time, but I was grateful for it.

When we were ready to leave, the waiter brought the check. There was also a little note for me, written on the back of a blank restaurant order sheet. I read the note and it was so sweet.

"My Dear Helena,

I miss my Heart, I can not sleep or eat or do anything without thinking of you.

I had gods smile to me when you walk by. I see my Heart and I know I will be with you soon.

*S'agapo,
Dimi*

It was sweet and I held it dearly to my heart. The ladies were all very supportive and comforted me for having to leave Dimitris behind again.

"You were not supposed to see him!" Morgan said.

"It was so dark, I barely could see," I said.

"Yes, good. If it was here in the light, you would have to start over. Since there was no talking or kissing, you can continue," Matyha said.

"You mean that if they said something to each other they would have to start another month of separation?" Morgan asked.

"Yes, another month, to start fresh," she answered.

"It wouldn't pay to cheat," I said.

"If you did it on purpose, you would have to start over as it is, but since it was an accident, you were not aware he would be here, so, you can continue this separation," Matyha said.

"They mean what they say when they call it a test! It is a test of many things," I said.

"Yes, more than your love for each other, is a test of endurance, of faith, of faith in each other. It can be looked back on with profound inner strength and peace," Matyha said.

"I think I finally understand it! It would be a good test of strength and resolve, for both people. It's a beautiful thing," Morgan said.

I looked at my dear friend and thought to myself, "she's coming around, maybe she's ready."

This incident gave me a new strength and resolve to make it to the end. I no longer had that hopeless, lost feeling. I was renewed.

In the old tradition, the bride is dressed modestly, no cleavage or legs, or arms bared in the church ceremony. I chose a long hooded cape, others do not use a veil. Because of the covering of the head, the hooded cape seemed to go better with the dress. The dress was off-white silk gauze with beading around the hems that tapered up the dress with huge bell sleeves. The gauze had a puckered look, so although a near straight dress, it had enough give

to the material to give it almost an A-line appearance. It was very Medieval looking.

Dimitris had called me on my cell phone two to three times a day since we separated. The last week of separation, we were not to talk to each other, and wedding concerns were handled through our guardians. Everything was going as well as expected and two days before the wedding, my family was due to arrive in Athens. I wanted to be at the airport to greet them, so Morgan and Andreas took me to the terminal.

I was so happy! It had been nearly seven months since I'd seen them. My sister looked good and my dad looked healthy. They were both pretty tired.

Morgan greeted them as she hadn't seen my dad or sister in more than twenty years. She introduced Andreas to them and was showing signs of wanting to show him off.

"Where's Dimitris?" Karen asked.

"We won't see him until the wedding," I said.

"You know that guy gave us first class round trip tickets? Do you know how much they cost?" My dad said.

"Don't worry about it Dad, Dimi wanted to be sure that the flight was comfortable for you."

"I hate to interrupt but we have to go," Andreas said.

"Come on, we'll drive to the docks, it's about five hours out of port before we hit Karpathos," I said.

We left the airport then drove to the docks. We all laughed and had a good time. We arrived at the docks and Andreas got the Athena ready to board.

My dad couldn't get over what a beautiful yacht Andreas had. He stayed on the bridge with Andreas a good part of the time.

"Maybe I should move to the islands! I've never seen so many cute guys! Too bad most are so young!" Karen said.

"They're not all real young, besides, I thought you were going with a man from your work," Morgan said.

"I'm just kidding, but, phew! These men are all so good looking! Andreas is a doll! He seems nice too," Karen smiled.

"He is, he's a really sweet guy, too," I said. "All the brothers are one more

good-looking than the next, and they're all good eggs!"

"I can't wait to meet Dimitris, he sounds so nice! And he's funny!" Karen said.

"There's a guy that reeks sexy, Karen!" Morgan said. I had to chuckle.

"What's he look like?" I brought up the photos to show her.

"He's got black hair, brown eyes___" I got interrupted.

"Big dark brown eyes, heavy eyebrows, but they're sexy, and he's got a walk that ___well, you'll see!" Morgan said.

Everyone sat and looked at Morgan and smiled.

"What!" She flailed. "It's true!"

"That it is. He's pretty generous too, I have to watch him. He's not afraid to spend the money," I said. "I think I'm a bad influence on him. Rena once told me that he never spent money on hardly anything."

"I noticed your rings, wow! Is that real?" Karen asked.

"Yes, he said I should wear them since I'm married."

"That makes sense," Karen said.

"Yeah, but the Orthodox puts them on the right hand. So, he's getting something for me for this ceremony."

"He bought her a house too!" Morgan said. "And here we thought that he was just a taxi driver!"

"Geez, what did you say he does?" Karen asked.

"He's a scientist. And an inventor," Morgan said.

"Are you sure he doesn't speak with a lisp and have coke bottle glasses? He sounds like a nerd!" Karen said.

"Yeah, he's a nerd alright," Morgan said sarcastically and laughed.

"He is a little too generous, but he saved his money for a long time, never buying even a TV," I said.

"He was driving an old V.W. when we met him," Morgan said.

"We're going to Andreas' brother's house, so you'll meet Stefano and Rena. You'll love them. Rena is the funniest thing! It'll be like a slumber party! How long are you staying Morgan?" I asked.

"I have to talk to Andreas, but I think we'll go home tomorrow morning. We'll bring back Dimitris on Sunday morning and meet you at the church. I

think that's the plan."

"Morgan, you're maid of honor?" Karen asked.

"No, that will be Matyha, Mattaios wife," I said.

"Matyha?"

"She's Greek Orthodox so we have her and Stefano to be - like sponsors. They don't have the procession of bridesmaids and all that in the Orthodox," I said.

When my dad came down to the galley I poured him a cup of coffee and gave him my seat in the booth.

"How are you doing Dad?" I asked and gave him a peck on the cheek.

"Fine. This sure is nice. Andreas is Dimitris' brother?" He asked.

"Yes, Dad."

"He's a heck of a nice guy. He's not married?"

"He and Morgan are together, I think I told you about them," I said.

"Stefano is which one?" He asked.

"He's an older brother. He's an Archeologist. We're going to stay at his house until the wedding."

"Ah."

"So you'll have a few days to rest and get rid of any jet lag before the wedding."

When we arrived in Karpathos, Rena had the station wagon there to pick us up.

"Hey, Helena! Welcome all to Karpathos," she said in her little voice.

"Rena, this is my father and my sister Karen. This is my sister in-law, Rena."

We drove to the house, and right away the beauty of the living room struck awe upon entering. Morgan was beaming with the praise of the impact of the beauty and originality of the room.

Once everyone was given their rooms and things settled down, we all assembled on the patio where Rena brought out the meyesdes and wine to start the meal. As usual, a toast.

"Welcome to our new family, may the god's smile on you, in good health," Andreas said. Everyone tapped their glasses and the eating commenced.

The conversation was quite lively and as expected, Rena had everyone in

stitches. When my cell phone rang I had to run to my purse in the living room.

I answered my phone, it was Stefano, wanting me to put Rena on the line.

“Helena, don’t go anywhere, this is a message for you from Dimitris,” Rena said.

I had to speak through Rena to Stefano to Dimitris, and he the other way around, to communicate.

“Dimitris says he wanted to call you but this is the only way that he could.” She stopped and listened to Stefano’s relay.

“He says he has been waiting for this and will see you Sunday, my Heart.”

I smiled at the hurt of not being able to hear this from him, but it was cute coming from Rena, too.

“Tell him that I know, it’s been too long. S’agapo, amore mio.” I said to Rena.

She relayed the message to Stefano, then to Dimitris.

“Stefano says Dimi is laughing.” She listened again. “He says ‘after engagement, no more separation!’ and wants to know if you know about the three circles and the crowns?”

“Tell him, yes, but I may need to hold onto him to keep from tripping if he doesn’t mind.”

“He says ‘will never let you go’ and that he will wait at church for you, he thinks Sunday never comes for him.” He said something else, but Stefano doesn’t know what he said. He’s rambling,” Rena said.

“Ask him if he’s been getting any sleep, and that I’ll worry about him,” I said.

“He said ‘Dimi not sleep, he needs his Helena. You have done this to this man. The days are too empty.’”

I could feel the tears coming down the corners of my eyes, which Rena relayed, and I wish she hadn’t.

Our time was up and there was no more message. Even that, was taken away, as feeble as it was, it was too little. The family all sat and listened to the one-sided conversation. My tears were quiet ones, but my nose was running something awful. Morgan brought me some tissues. I went back to the table with Rena.

“There are some pretty stiff traditions here,” Karen said.

“Are you okay?” My dad put his arm around me to comfort me.

“I’m fine, it’s not that much longer now, I can manage a couple of more days.”

I hoped that I would be able to sleep. The next couple of days will leave me little time to relax so actual sleep time will be invaluable.

Tomorrow, Matyha and Mattaios will arrive and we’ll be going over any unknown details that I’m not aware of, as far as the ceremony goes. Matyha is my sponsor and is a major part of the ceremony along with Stefano.

My father and Karen were both pretty exhausted after the flight, the time change and the sea trip over here. They decided to nap for a few hours before dinner.

“Rena, Morgan, would you mind coming here a minute?” I had them come to the dining room table.

“I wanted to give you this before all hell breaks loose. I can’t have either of you in the wedding, but I wanted you to know that you are in my heart. I wanted you to have this,” I gave them each a strand of pearls.

They each thanked me and we all hugged.

At 6 p.m. I awoke my father and Karen so that they would have a chance to wake up, before dinner. Rena was preparing a wonderful dinner. I went into the kitchen.

“Can I help with anything, Rena?” I asked.

“Not yet, we won’t be ready to eat until 8 p.m.”

I went to the breakfast bar and gave Rena a big hug.

“Thank you, Rena, for putting up my family, and everything you and Stefano are doing for us. There’s no way I’d ever be able to repay your kindness.”

“Oh, Helena, that’s what families do! Your family is our family now!”

“I know that all this is going to mean so much to my Dad, and all of us. I’m so grateful to you, Stefano and Andreas and Morgan. It’s a big deal to me, I just don’t know how you manage it!” Rena just smiled and said,

“The gods help me a lot! Instead of elves, I’ve got the gods!” She chuckled.
“This last week hasn’t been easy, has it?”

“No! I miss not hearing his voice. I wanted to tell him so many things, but it’s not the same going through you and Stefano. I guess unless someone is dying, the message system just falls short!” I said.

“Yeah, it’s rough. I remember when we were getting married, Stefano was on a dig and I was in London. That was hard! I couldn’t even get a decent telephone connection on a good day, so we didn’t get to talk much at all for the whole month,” she said.

“Only two more days. I hope it goes fast,” I sighed. “What time is Stefano coming home?”

“He should be here anytime, I haven’t heard from him, but I expect he’s on his way,” she said.

“Andreas left a couple of hours ago, maybe they’ve crossed paths in the channel,” I joked.

“Probably, you can never tell!”

“Everything smells so good, thank you for having us,” Karen said.

“What smells so good?” My dad asked.

“Hello!” Stefano announced his arrival as he entered the door.

“We just started Honey, so go wash up,” Rena yelled.

There were introductions and good conversation during dinner. After dinner, Stefano led the group to the living room where they continued their conversation about digs and archeology.

“Helena,” Rena whispered to me. I got up to see what she wanted.

“Helena, Stefano slipped me this note, it’s from Dimi, for you. Stefano wasn’t sure if he should give it to you, but I read it and it’s okay. I hated having to read it, but___.”

“I know, Rena, I appreciate it, I wouldn’t want to screw things up now! Thank you.”

I slipped out the patio door to read my little note.

“My Dearest One,

I am telling you again how

I am missing you. I make promise

to sleep. I will do, and I will

dream we are together. I will not see
you until church. It will be joyous day!
I am thinking of you always.
S'agapo,
Dimi”

It made me smile to read his note. I sat there for a few minutes and read the note again and again. I could feel him in the words on this precious page.

When I went back in, I joined in the conversation. Morgan was telling Karen all about Symi and how beautiful it is. Later, as I got settled in bed I read the note again and felt close to my husband. I wished that we could speak, but for the next few days, I would be satisfied knowing he'll be here soon.

The last few days past much faster than the previous weeks. It was a joy to be with the family and to be able to watch my father and sister view some of the sites of Karpathos. My dad and Stefano got along very well. They have a similar disposition and Stefano showing them the dig was very exciting for them.

The way I understand the ceremony, in the Greek Orthodox, the bride and groom walk together from the vestibule in a procession with the priest. So that means we'll meet each other at the back of the church, instead of at the altar.

When we got there, I was rushed to the far side of the church. I put on my cape-veil and Matyha handed me flowers that Dimitris brought for me. I was excited to get this over with, and nervous also. It's come to be such a big deal, that the pomp and pageantry got scary for me.

The cape had a hood attached which would serve as a head-covering. All the beading made it heavier than I thought it would be and it was not going to stay on my head. The beading all around crushed my hair. I had a sterling wire neck piece that I could use as a sort of crown, to help hold the errant veil up and in place. It was a decent piece of jewelry that had an open basket weave that came to a point in the front. It was an unexpected element that

seemed to work as a headband to anchor the heavy beading. Having to use it on my head left my neck bare. Matyha let me borrow her Pearls that I gave her earlier. Something Borrowed.

Matyha entered the vestibule first. As I waited I was wondering what it is I'm forgetting. There must be something that I forgot to do, but my mind was a blank. When Matyha opened the door, a wave of fright washed over me. As I entered the church Dimitris was standing in the center, next to the priest. When he saw me his mouth dropped for an instant then a big smile came over him. He started to come to me, but Stefano made him stay where he was.

The priest gave Matyha the nod, then she took my right hand, led me to Dimitris and put my hand in his. That electrical charge that Dimitris gives me hit again as I took his hand and looked at his sweet face. The doors to the aisle opened, we followed the priest and the blessing of the rings began. Everything was done in threes. The rings were blessed and placed on and off the fingers three times. The crowns, ours were made from white flowers, were held over our heads while we walked around the altar three times. I didn't understand the body of the Litany but at the end, we definitely felt married.

Then Dimitris was allowed to kiss the bride. I've waited for this for so long! He kissed me so gently, and it was a sweet reverie. Everyone applauded. We left the main church and went to a side altar where the priest gave us the signed certificates and other papers we had signed. When we went out the main doors of the church everyone threw Jordan Almonds and rose petals. We got into the limo that waited and slowly drove to Renas' house.

I looked at my husband, so sweet, and looking irresistible in his tuxedo. He kissed me like I had never been kissed before. He was just so precious I had to remember that we were in no place to begin anything that could prove embarrassing.

"Dimi?"

"Helena, we did it! We pass the test, now we can be together," he said as he was kissing my neck.

"I didn't think this month would ever end. God, I missed you. You're going

to meet my dad and sister. Will we take them back with us when we go home?" I asked.

"But of course," he said. "This dress is ___," he sighed. "You are too beautiful, Helena," he looked at the crown of silver which was worn like a headband. "This looks like fairy angel." He put his hand up to my forehead but did not touch it.

"Will you help me take off this cape? It's heavier than it was supposed to be." I started to remove the headband.

"No, leave, for now, pictures will be taken so we wait, yes?" He had so much life in his eyes. He held my hand and as I looked at him, after all this time, my heart would jump knowing that the wait was over, and we are again together.

"I wasn't sure if you made plans for after the wedding."

"You mean moon trip? We will go after father goes home. Now, you have good visit with family."

"Do you know how much I love you?" I took his face in my hands and kissed him with everything I had in me. I couldn't hold myself back, everything that had been pent up for so long somehow wanted to manifest in this kiss.

"Helena, my Helena," Dimi tried to tear himself away from me. He nuzzled into my neck and I thought I'd go insane with his breath on my neck and his Greek whispers. "Helena, we must stop, my Heart." He pulled away from me and kissed my palm and the finger that wears the rings.

"I missed you so much, Dimi. God, I missed you."

"Oh, this is wonderful, my Helena. We will celebrate, your family is here, we will never forget this wonderful day. S'agapo, my wife."

"I love it when you say that," I said, then Dimitris kissed my hand.

When we got to Renas' everyone was there. I never expected so many people to show up at the reception. There were only about fifty people at the church, and I didn't recognize most of them, but here, there must be double that. When we got out of the Limo we were once again hit with the Rose petals and Jordan Almonds and confetti. I still had the flowers that Dimitris gave me, and they were taken by Matyha as we entered the house.

When everyone was in, Stefano led us all to a champagne fountain. Everyone filled their glass and a toast was given by Stefano. Then Dimitris

gave a toast.

“To my bride, I waited for all my life.
Now I have my life to make you happy,
Helena. I have found everything a man
could ever want. S’agapo, Helena.
To our happiness.”

We did the twisted sip on this toast, then there were a few more toasts. I think Dimitris was especially articulate for my family. Mattaios, being the oldest brother, made the longest toast. Once we finished toasting, one by one the guests started pinning money to my gown. Soon, the men went out to the patio for a cigar.

Morgan saw to introducing my dad and sister to all the brothers and their wives.

“Dimi, I need to take this veil off, will you help me?”

“I will help,” he said.

I was headed to my room when Rena stopped me.

“Helena, I had Morgan get your things ready to go. I had to give your room to Matyha and Mattaios.”

“Oh, well, that’s okay, I’ll have Dimi do this for me.”

I took Dimi’s hand and led him to the loft room. I called up the stairs to see if anyone was upstairs. There was no one there. I turned to Dimitris and removed my headband. As I looked at him, I reached up to untie the cape, it slid off my shoulders and I gently folded it and placed it on a box by the door. I took his face in my hands and kissed him passionately. He wrapped his arms around me and lifted me off my feet as he walked me to the stairs. He put me down then ran to the door, closed it and blocked it with a heavy slab of marble that Stefano had stored. We went up the stairs to the loft. The fold out bed was open and inviting.

Dimitris was so beautiful. He was sweet and was almost afraid to touch this dress. He was kissing my neck and trying to find a zipper or buttons, but there were none. We laid back on the bed and Dimitris’ kisses got more intense, more exploring. He ran his hand up the skirt of the gown. He pulled

down my garter gently. He was worried about ruining the beading on the dress.

“Dimi, wait,” I said. I pushed him over and had him remove his clothes. I slipped the dress off over my head and was left in a fancy white lace corset. I laid against him and pressed my lips to his with a hunger I had held for so long.

He was hot and breathless and I couldn’t stop kissing him. He turned me to him and kissed my body with a building frenzied urgency. I pulled him up to me, to kiss his lips and consent to surrender. His eyes would smile when he caught me gazing at him, as his head rested on my breast.

“We need to go downstairs, before they come looking for us,” I whispered.

“My Helena, I want to stay here with you,” he said and kissed my breast. “But you are right, my Heart. Is rude to leave for so long.”

We dressed, I fixed Dimitris’ tie and tried to get his hair to not look so wild. He tried to fix me, but I needed to get to my purse and put my make up back on.

I asked Dimitris if he could get my purse, he’d have to ask Morgan for it, and to bring it to me in the bathroom. When he returned he tapped on the door.

“Thank you, Sweetheart, I’ll be out as soon as I can,” I said and thought he went out with the men. Then I heard a small scratching on the door.

“Helena?” Dimitris said softly.

I opened the door. He came in, shut and locked the door then swooped me up in a sensuous kiss which took me by surprise. He started kissing my neck.

“Dimi, stop, we’ve got to go out there,” I said in a soft, not so sure I wanted to, voice.

“I am mad with love for my Helena.”

“I love you too, but we can’t,” I protested.

He pinned me back against the sink counter, picked up the skirt of the gown and ran his hand up to the corset. Nuzzling my neck he asked

“What you call this?”

“It’s a corset,” I said.

“Dimi like, no can stop thinking of my Helena.”

“Dimi, we have to go, we’ve been gone too long.”

“Okay, okay. But you will not be out of Dimis’ sight. We were apart too long already.”

“I know, just let me fix my face and hair and I’ll be right out. Go, have a drink with Dad.”

“S’agapo, hurry.” He kissed my hand, let out a sigh, and closed the door.

I tried to calm myself and reapply some make-up that had rubbed off. My hair wasn’t too bad. I put the silver headband back on, that seemed to pull my hair back to a presentable look.

When I came out into the living room, there were hoards of people that I didn’t know. The brothers and wives were all here along with most of the extended family, neighbors, and colleagues, all wanting to pin money on my dress.

Aiden showed up and kissed me with good luck.

“I had to come to wish you both luck. I know that Camilla made problems, but now you should have all of the gods smiling on you and Dimitris. Dimitris is a good, honest man and you couldn’t be in better hands. I’m happy for you,” he said as he held my hands and kissed my cheek.

“Thank you Aiden, that means a lot to me. I’m glad that you came.” He stepped a little closer to speak in my ear.

“Remember that if you ever have a problem or need me for anything, you only have to call. Okay?” He stepped back and looked at me expecting an answer.

“Yes, thank you Aiden.” He leaned toward me still holding my hands and kissed me, almost right on the lips, if I hadn’t turned my face. I hoped that Dimitris didn’t see that, although it was nothing to get upset over, I’m still a little gun-shy when it comes to Aiden and Dimitris.

As Aiden was walking away, Dimitris came toward me from the same direction. Aiden shook Dimitris’ hand and tapped him on the back. Aiden continued to the patio and Dimitris came to me.

“Helena, father looking for you. I like father! Karen nice too. Maybe we go to America in Fall to visit,” he said as he led me through all the congratulations and picture taking. Everyone was having a good time, and the food just kept

on coming.

Rena hired kitchen help who did the serving and kept the dishes washed and cleaned after guests. This is one time Rena was able to get out of the kitchen and enjoy herself.

We finally got out to the patio where there was more food, a fire in the pit and lots of places to sit. All the brothers were having cigars and soon the music came on. Arthur had his boom box blaring some traditional Greek music. Dimitris took a napkin from the table and let his kefi loose. Soon the line of dancers included all of the brothers, two old uncles, and several cousins. All the men trailed through the patio in the dance while the rest of us clapped in rhythm and enjoyed the site.

My father got a real kick out of it, and he didn't seem to have as much trouble with the language accents as I thought that he might. Karen and Morgan were laughing hysterically, and Rena was giggling next to me.

"Us girls need to show those men how it should be done!" Rena said.

"There's not enough of us who know how to do it, Rena. It would only be you, Katie and the old aunts." I said loudly to be heard over the music and the cheers.

Aiden came up behind me and tried to say something in my ear. I couldn't understand him from the noise. I stepped back near the edge of the patio to hear what he was saying.

"I said that Camillas' sister Frances told me that Camilla might show up here, to wish Dimitris luck," he said loudly.

I must have had a look of disbelief. I was almost floored. She would do this on our wedding day!

"She can't! She can't be here, Aiden! I won't let her ruin this day," I was getting panicky. I felt like I would hyperventilate. Aiden held me at arms distance and said

"Don't let her upset you. She isn't here now, maybe she won't show up," he tried to calm me.

"What is this? What is wrong? You upset my Helena, Aiden?" Dimitris had a stern command to his voice.

"No, Dimi, Aiden heard that Camilla might show up. Frances said she

wanted to come. I won't let her upset things. She's not going to ruin this day for us!" I said, and as I looked into his eyes, he seemed to calm me without saying anything.

"Thank you, Aiden," I said as Dimitris put his arm around me.

"Let's get some champagne," Dimitris suggested.

"Let's get lots of champagne!" I needed to calm down. All of the stress that had been building for so long had to be getting to me. Dimitris poured us some champagne, we tapped our glasses and he said,

"Nothing will ruin this day. Not even the sun will shine brighter than our happiness today."

"I'll drink to that," I said. "Thank you, my love."

My dad came over and put his arms around me and Dimitris and gave me a peck on the cheek.

"You two look like the bride and groom on the wedding cake! You're happy?" he asked.

"Helena has made me the happiest of men," Dimitris said.

"Yes, I am happy, Dad."

"I can tell, I know you will take care of my daughter, Dimitris. I leave her in your hands," he shook Dimitris' hand.

"She will never want for anything, father."

Then I hugged my dad. I was glad that he was there.

"Tomorrow we'll be going to our house for awhile. Have you been having a good time so far?"

"Everyone has been so wonderful to us. It's been very nice."

"I want you to enjoy everything. If there's anything that you need or want to do or see, tell us, we'll do it before you leave. There's so much to do and see, but I don't want you to overdo it," I said.

"Please, just say and we do," Dimitris said to him.

"Thank you. I wouldn't know what to do, so whatever you want to show us is fine," he said.

Aiden came over and introduced himself to my dad. Just then, I saw that Karen was alone, so I went to her and sat next to her.

"Are you having a good time? I haven't had a chance to see how you're

doing,” I said.

“I’m having fun! All these people are so nice! I just love that Rena! She is so funny!”

“Yeah, we get a kick out of her,” I said. “I wanted to tell you that tomorrow Andreas is taking us all to our house and you and Dad will stay with us for a while. We can really visit then, not so much commotion. Maybe we can have a girls day, something just for all of us to let our hair down.”

“That sounds like fun. I’m so happy for you, and I’m jealous. Your dress! It’s absolutely gorgeous! What is this material?”

“It’s a silk gauze, with silk embroidery and hand beading. It’s kind of weighty, I mean it must weigh ten pounds,” I said.

“It is really beautiful.”

“My Helena, the most beautiful bride!” Dimitris said as he sat on the arm of the sofa next to me, took my hand and kissed it.

“I was just saying what a gorgeous dress,” Karen commented.

“Please excuse, Karen, must steal my bride.” Dimitris took me to a group of the elder relatives to pay our respects.

The music was playing out on the patio and this time Stefano had Katie, Andreas, Rena, Angelo, and Mattaios doing the Greek dance. We could hear Rena laughing all the way across the living room. We had to go watch. My dad, Karen, and Morgan already had ring-side seats. Dimitris stood behind me just outside the patio doors, his arms around me, and watching the line of dancers go by. Rena had everyone smiling as they danced around the patio. I saw my dad, he was really enjoying himself. It made me feel good to see him having such a good time. He looked so happy.

The main course of the food was Stefanos’ famous roast lamb. Everyone was filling their plates with all of the good food. The Champagne seemed to flow freely, and it was such a refreshing, fruity, light Champagne that it left no aftertaste and wasn’t too heavy for us to freely indulge.

I was watching the line at the buffet table when Dimitris came up behind me and surrounded me in his arms. He kissed the side of my cheek and I had to ask him about tonight.

“Where are we sleeping tonight? Rena gave our room to Mattaios.”

He nuzzled my neck and said

“We sleep on Athena. We will have to ourselves.”

“Do you think I could change my gown?” I asked.

“Why? You only will wear once, why change?”

“I just thought I should, but if you would rather I keep it on, I will.”

“Just until we go to Athena, then I help take off,” he smiled.

“You are so funny Dimi, I don’t know what you’re up to,” I joked.

“Well, I think of things.”

“I can see that. You’re trying to be bad, aren’t you? Making up for lost time.”

“I no have to try.”

I just smiled at our little joke and knew that he was right.

“Oh, Dimi, Dimi, Dimi. I love you, I just can’t help it,” I sighed.

Once the main dinner was finished, we went through more toasts and cut the cake. Lots of picture taking and people giving us their best wishes. Some of the guests left after the cutting of the cake, and as the time went on, it was getting to the time for Dimitris and me to leave. We said our farewells and we left. Everything at Renas was still going strong. My sister and Dad were having a great time and were comfortable being here, so I was comfortable leaving them.

When we got to the docks the Athena was all alight. Andreas was aboard getting it ready for us. He had the cabin spread with Rose petals and Freesia, and candles lit across the vanity and along the bathroom counter. It looked very romantic.

“Ah, there you are, everything should be okay for the night. We’ll leave early before the tide comes in, have a good night,” Andreas said and tapped his brother on the back, and kissed me on the cheek. He left to go back to the party.

We went down to the cabin, Andreas had already picked up our bags and they were there waiting for us. The galley had been spread with meyedes if we got hungry.

Dimitris came up to me, his hand on my cheek. He looked into my eyes

and said

“I give you whole heart Helena. You make Dimi happiest man. This is most happy day for us.” He gently kissed me and asked, “would you like Champagne, Helena, we will toast?”

“Yes, what will we toast to?”

There was a bottle on ice that Andreas put out for us. Dimitris opened the bottle then poured our glasses.

“Let me do the toast this time, Dimi. To my husband, my heart, my soul, my everything. S’agapo Dimi,” we tapped glasses.

“S’agapo, Helena,” he said, and leaning forward he gave me a most passionate kiss.

“Now, I’ve got to take this gown off. I’ve already lost some of the beads from it.”

Dimitris unpinned the money from the dress. I carefully slipped the delicate gown over my head and gently laid it on the chair. Dimitris held my shoulders then moved my hair to kiss my neck. He enjoyed the look and feel of the white brocade corset.

“Mmm, Helena.” He turned me to face him and held my face in both hands as he kissed me with mounting urgency. I was on fire with him. He picked me up and gently laid me across the bed, his lips on mine, then to my neck and cleavage.

“Corset,” he said in a breathless whisper. His hands were touching the fabric, exploring every boned seam and lace. His lips traveled the length of me until I couldn’t wait for him to engage with me.

I unbuttoned his shirt, his dark eyes watching mine.

“Helena.” He whispered as his movements became urgent. His hot breath, speaking in a language my body understood. His power and strength dwarfed me and his gentleness touched my heart. He gave himself to me. He was mine, for now, and always.

We were left exhausted in each other’s arms. We were complete in each other. Whatever our previous life withheld from us was of no consequence now. We were reborn within ourselves and this life.

I put on my kimono and finished putting the gown with its cape folded away. Dimitris laid in bed and watched as I unlaced and unhooked the corset.

"I like corset, you wear more," he said.

"It's not something I want to wear very often, Dimi."

"Is uncomfortable?"

"Only if it's pulled too tight or if I have to bend, then it tends to hurt the ribs a little."

"But is nice. Sexy," he smiled.

"Do you want more Champagne or should we cork it?" I asked.

"We cork for now. I will do." He got up, put on his trousers and corked the bottle.

"I don't know why, but I'm hungry again," I said.

"Corset come off - you get hungry!"

I almost threw it at him, and he laughed.

"Very funny. Come on, let's eat some of this food before it gets stale."

"Okay, but when finish, I have surprise."

"More surprises? Tsk, tsk, tsk. What am I going to do with you?"

"What?" He said as he picked at a plate of Shrimp.

"How can I ever surprise you when you're always surprising me?" I asked.

He put his hand on the back of my neck and kissed my cheek then said,

"Is my job to surprise you."

"I guess while we're eating, we should finish off what's left of the Champagne. Would you get it for us, Sweetheart?"

"I will get."

He poured the Champagne. After he loaded a large plate with an assortment of meyes, he slid in next to me in the booth and had a continuous smile while he nibbled on the Shrimp and Pineapple.

"You're smiling," I said as I picked at the Salami and cheese.

"Yes, I am," he said and looked at me.

"Are you going to tell me?"

"I think I wait," he said coyly.

I got real close to his ear and said

"I think you like to tease me, Mr. Patakinis. You know, I can tease too, and

I can be very, very, mean, my sweet," I said.

"Helena, you may torture your Dimi and I still will not tell, yet." Then he kissed my hand, grinned and shook his head.

"Okay, this is very disappointing, Dimi, and here I thought you wanted to make me happy!"

"Oh no! You not trick Dimi into telling."

"Okay, this better be good, to make me wait," I said.

"Yes, and maybe I wait longer. We see."

I just gave him the look. The look of a wife, the look of playfulness. I knew he was just playing with me, and with all of the things he's surprising me with, there's nothing that could surprise me anymore. I play along because I think he has more fun with it if I do. It's little enough to see him smile.

I got up to get some water from the galley.

"Do you want a bottle of water to take to bed?" I asked.

"No, Dimi want *you* to take to bed."

I grabbed a bottle of water for him anyway.

"Come here, Helena," he asked. I brought the water with me, then Dimitris had me sit on his lap as he sat on the end of the booth seat. I put my arm around his shoulder and kissed his brow. He nuzzled my neck, his hand slipped into the fold of my kimono to touch my breast.

"Helena, my Helena." He kissed me and tried to get up, carrying me, but we both ended up on the floor. I started to laugh.

"Are you alright?" I asked.

"Dimi such the oaf!" He laughed.

"Oh, Dimi, you're so funny," I laughed.

"Come, we get up." He helped me up off of the floor.

"Let's put this food in the 'fridge' then we can go to bed," I said.

I put on a nightgown and waited for Dimitris to come to bed.

"Did you put out all the candles?" I asked.

"Yes, they are all out now," he said as he got in bed.

"This has been a long day, are you tired?" I asked.

"Feels good to be in bed," he sighed. "Now, did Dimi tell my Helena, you

were beautiful bride? And this man love how you make whole day perfect for Dimi. Even when Aiden come, all I see is my Helena. Did you know that dress glow see-through when in light? Can see legs. Best dress for wedding, make Dimi pay attention.”

I laughed! This is one funny man that I married. It seems it doesn't take that much to make him happy.

“We had a beautiful day, didn't we? I almost thought we would have a problem, but, it turned out perfect. I was getting pretty nervous there before the ceremony. Were you?”

“You nervous? You think not to do?”

“No, I was just anxious about the ceremony, I wasn't sure of what to do, and falling on my face. I was surprised by how many people showed up. You have a huge family!”

“Helena, I have to tell you a thing.” He seemed to have trouble finding words.

“What is it?” I asked.

“I, ...Dimi know how hard this for you, going to Greek Orthodox, the lesson, the test, and big ceremony. You do all for me. I know was hard for you. Dimi so proud of my Helena, makes Dimi stand tall. S'agapo, Helena. I do anything for my bride.”

He made me feel so warm inside that I just wanted to hug him and hold him tight.

“I did it because I love you, Dimi. I'm glad we did this. It was a test, and we did magnificently.”

“Yes, we do good at this test!” There was a short pause, then he chuckled under his breath. “When we get old we think back on today, we laugh about falling on floor!” He laughed as his hand slid up and down my back.

“We've got a lot of good things to remember, Dimi, and as long as you love me, there will be more things to remember.”

“I will always love my Helena. You believe this, yes?” He looked at me from his pillow.

“Yes, Dimi.”

“You not sure?” He questioned.

“You will show me, always is a long time. Are you sure you can put up with me when I lose my teeth?”

“Oh, Helena, you make Dimi laugh. I worry on a thing and you make it funny. See? I love about you, love to laugh. Nothing will be sad when you laugh. Do you remember we go from Athena when I wrap my Helena in blanket to go to car? So funny.”

“I think I was out of it! I don’t remember too much about all that.”

“Very sick, I worry on you then.”

“If it weren’t for you, Dimi, I would have ended up in the hospital.”

“Do you want to know, one big hope for me to love my Helena?”

“What?”

“When you not want me, so sad to not have my Helena at Karpathos, I feel to pout, and don’t know what to do! Then you come to sit with Dimi on lounge. My heart flies! Then you say it not to mean anything. I want to make love right there, but, had to be good, or my Helena go away forever.”

“Just think, what if I did go, if I would have left. I think I would be dying right about now, thinking of what an idiot I was!” I said.

“I do not think of this.”

“You must have thought about it at the time, what did you feel about the possibility?”

“Helena.” He rubbed my arm and drew me in a little closer to him. “When I had those thoughts, I panic.” He patted his chest. “A fear in my heart, I get desperate of what to do, but, can not scare Helena away. If she would go then, I would not be same Dimi. If Helena go after we make love, Dimi would not let Helena go, I hang on like tail.”

“Oh, you would not! You’d be sad for a couple of weeks, then....”

“Helena! Dimi lose heart before we make love, not after, but if you would go then, Dimi not want to stay here. I go to you and stay until you would see me. Forever, if I must.”

I listened and with a half smile I looked up to Dimitris, into his eyes. He was serious. He was not trying to make me laugh or see what kind of reaction I’d have to what he said. He was telling me what was in his heart.

“How did I ever deserve to be loved like this?” I wondered.

“Deserve? Why were you not loved like this long time before? Should always be!” I looked up to Dimitris and I kissed his neck.

“Dimi, you don’t seem to understand one thing,” I said.

“And what is that my bride?”

“You, ...other men aren’t like you. You are very special. You’re kind, compassionate, considerate, well mannered, I could go on and on, but the point is, most men are everything you’re not. They’re selfish, self-centered, womanizing, slobs that only think of how to get over. I guess that’s what I expected. I never expected you.”

“Get over, what?”

“Um, take the easy road, to take advantage of.”

“I see. We not talk of this, I have my Helena, I am happy man.”

“I am too, I’m happier than I’ve ever been in my life, because of you.”

He kissed me, then we made love. We made love off and on the rest of the night. By dawn, we were entwined in each other’s arms, finally sleeping.

I awoke to Dimitris coiled in behind me, kissing my shoulder. I reached back to his thick hair and suddenly I realized that the boat was moving.

“We’re moving! What time is it?” I said after being shocked out of a sleepy stooper.

“I think we sleep too late, Andreas has started to sea,” he said as he was still kissing my shoulder and neck.

I turned to lay on my back then Dimitris hovered over me with a deep kiss.

“Tell me something, Dimi.”

“What can I tell you, Helena?”

“I don’t know, tell me something about you or us that I don’t know.”

“Hmm, did I say that Andreas and Dimi make plan to be alone, so we go to Valley of Butterflies?”

“You never told me that it was planned.”

“We make plan, so I have my Helena alone. After we board, I say to Andreas to find way to let me be alone with my Heart. Dimi was going to kiss you that day, all plan in mind, but somehow plan not work out.”

I smiled and had to chuckle under my breath.

“Why you laugh?”

"I had a feeling you might try to kiss me."

"Yes, and then you run away from Dimi."

"What else?"

"I come to you at pool in Afandou. You lay in pool and I think of Mermaid. Like a Mermaid on rocks, you so peaceful, not to be disturbed."

"How long were you there?"

"Did not know where to find my Helena. I knock at door but not there, so I walk. I see from other side of pool. Do not know if you would want to see Dimi, so I stay on other side for ten minutes I think. Then I come sit near to you. I was quiet, to not disturb."

"Yes, you were very quiet, I was surprised," I said. He laid on his side and propped himself up on his elbow.

"When we talk, I think you are different from all others. My Helena, listen to Dimi and not laugh at my English, understand my story of regrets, and tell me of things that make you sad. I like! You so honest, and not putting on the stories. I feel I know you forever. So funny, easy to laugh. Suddenly, eyes are opened! I know, like the sun will rise tomorrow. Dimi think this woman is the one. She will make Dimi happy. Now I must make this woman mine. Must make this woman want Dimi. Here is when this man have problem."

"What problem?"

"How can I be close to this woman? You think of Mark, you no look to Dimi for anything but to talk, how can man get wonderful woman to see him and not scare away? I no want to make you think Dimi scary beast."

I laughed and thought he was the cutest thing, but this was too good to interrupt, so I didn't say anything.

"Then I think, no, would be wrong to try to take this woman from husband. I tell self to not think of Helena as woman to want, so I try to leave. I would go away from this woman now."

"And I called you back."

"You called Dimi back, and this man in the heavens and in hell too."

He was telling me things that I was feeling too. I put my hand to his cheek, then he kissed my palm.

"We walk and talk, laugh. So easy this talking with you, Helena. I feel like

this is what should be with woman. Life too short to spend with one who no talk or one always talking, yak, yak, yak and say nothing. This almost like first date. I no date in long time, do not know what to do, so I take small chance to let this woman see Dimi, and I kiss little kiss on cheek so not to frighten my Helena.”

“A beautiful kiss, Dimi.”

“I kiss one more beautiful kiss for Helena.”

He put his hand behind my head and gave a gentle sweet kiss on my lips.

“I go to sleep that night with my Helena on mind. I see in my head the love I will make with you. In morning Dimi had important thing to do, but you will not answer phone! First, thinking this woman change mind, she will not answer. Maybe Dimi scare away! I think this is end of it! She will not see Dimi again and go back home. My heart beat fast with fright of it. This cannot be, not now, when I find one to make Dimi happy,” he held my fingers to his lips.

“And then?”

“Dimi have important appointment, then race with little car to Afandou, I run from car and race through path. I think for positive that you go, leave Dimi, so when you at door I no stop to think, I hold you tight to never let go! Then Dimi remember, and have to step back. My heart almost break that day. I was late, and fear you gone.”

“The day we went to Karpathos to meet with Stefano.”

“Yes. WUF cup make you cry. I did not want you to cry for this.”

“That’s when I knew that I had fallen in love with you. I wasn’t sure if what the cup said meant more than just words on a cute cup or just an innocent little gift but it hit me that I had gone too far. I let this attraction go beyond just an attraction. I hurt so bad, because I was going to have to leave you, and I knew then, that I would have to hurt you. It was killing me. You did everything to help us, and you were so sweet. That’s when I realized that I had to stifle my feelings for you and stop you, before I hurt you, Dimi. I couldn’t let it go on, the way I felt about you, I was at the point of no return.”

“A knife to Dimis’ heart.”

“I didn’t believe you were actually in love. I thought you were just, well, in

lust, you know what I mean?" I asked.

"We need to remember these things for always."

"Mostly."

"Some things want to forget."

"Seasickness, Mark, the mugging. We'll forget those," I said. "I wouldn't have made it through these things if I didn't have you. I would have died with the seasickness alone, but you were there, taking care of me. I don't think I've ever had a fever that bad before. There's so much that I don't remember about that time. If it were anyone else, I don't know what else would have happened to me, since I was out of it. I guess it's just as well that I don't remember. Oh! You were going to surprise me. What were you going to tell me?"

"Well, I make plan for moon-trip after family leave. We will go away for week. I will do some work first, but then we go," he said.

"Where?"

"I tell you later, now, we get dressed. Time to join father and eat lunch."

I threw my pillow at him.

"You've got to tell me where; where are we going on our moon-trip? Tell me now, so that I can at least plan what clothes to bring, that will take me a month to figure out anyway." I said with frustration. He came to me and sat on the edge of the bed. He was smiling and took my hand.

"We will stay in villa, at Lake Como," he said and looked at me with those dark sparkling eyes.

I threw my arms around him and kissed him, I was so elated that I didn't know what else to say. "I've never been to Italy, Dimi, I'll love it, I know!"

"It will be like Paradise! Now, is 11:20 a.m. Time to fix lunch." He kissed me on the forehead then went to our bags for some clothes. "Come, get up, Helena."

"I am, I just can't take my eyes off of you." He smiled.

When we came out of the cabin, Dimitris went to the galley to fix lunch. I peeked in and told him that I'd be looking for everyone else.

"Hey, Dad, how are you this morning?" I asked as I gave him a kiss.

“This is beautiful, I’m doing fine. Is this how you get around, by boat?” He asked.

“When we can, otherwise we take the ferry. It’s kind of a nuisance to take a boat everywhere, but we can’t drive to the other islands, so..!” I said.

“The weather is like California,” he commented.

“It makes for an easy transition. Dimi wanted me to ask you if you’d think about moving here, live with us, we’ve got lots of room. We’d love to have you live with us. Will you think about it?”

“It’s hard to resist such a beautiful place.”

“There’s no rush, just think about it, okay?” He nodded in the affirmative. “What do you think of Dimi?”

“He’s nice, his family, all very nice.”

“Did I do good, Dad or what?”

“Yes you did, Helen, he really loves you. I hope he takes care of you. Where is he?”

“He’s fixing lunch, we’ll be eating in a minute or two, if you want to go down to the galley. Where is everyone else?”

“I don’t know, maybe on the bridge?”

“If you want to head down to the galley, I’ll tell Andreas we’re ready to eat.”

When I got to the bridge, everyone was there.

“Dimi is fixing lunch in the galley if anyone is hungry.”

“I’m starving!” Karen said.

“I’ll be down in a minute, I want to get out of the shipping lane, then I’ll be there,” Andreas said to Morgan before he gave her a peck on the cheek.

Karen walked with me to the galley.

“Dimitris is fixing lunch?”

“Yeah, he does most of the cooking at home. He loves it, so who am I to argue?” I said.

“What is he fixing?”

“We’ll see.”

“You know, we’ve had such a great time. Rena was so cute, she had some great things to say about both you and Morgan. I gather these guys were

confirmed bachelors when you met! I know you said something about a taxi, but how did you convert Dimitris? I mean, he's quite a catch!" Karen said.

"He's just so sweet to me, that I couldn't resist him, and believe me, I tried," I said.

"He is very sweet. I bet the women can't keep off of him."

"Well, I've watched from a distance how these women act around him. You wouldn't believe it! But he was in a tux and pretty irresistible!" I said.

When we went into the galley as Dimitris was almost ready for us.

Dimitris made a wonderful lunch, a surprising accomplishment with what limited supplies we had on hand. Andreas joined us as soon as we were in safe waters. As I sat there I was so proud of both Dimitris and Andreas. They were so gracious to my dad and sister and really made them a part of the family. The amazing part that dawned on me as I sat at the galley table, was that this is the way they are. Making my family welcome, this was the genuine way of them. It was no act, no going out of their way to make an impression. The way they were to my family is the way they are.

By the time we got to Kefalonia it was just light enough to see our way to harbor. We buttoned everything down for the night and went ashore. When we got to the house it was pitch dark. We brought in all the luggage then Dimitris lit the fireplace and put our bags in our room.

Sugar, would you put my dad next to us, Karen in the third bedroom upstairs and Morgan and Andreas in our old room. We'd better turn the heater on up there too."

We all gathered in the living room around the fire, Dimitris brought in some Ouzo, and we had a toast to "family."

"This place has a lot of rooms!" My dad commented.

"We haven't had a chance to really do any decorating yet. We did some painting and curtains, but with the wedding and the separation, I haven't had a chance to do much. Dimitris did some things while I was gone, which helped to prepare for you. I hope you'll be comfortable."

"Yes, tomorrow you see rest of it, in the daylight. Helena will have chickens soon."

“Chickens?” Morgan asked. “Oh my God Helen, you’re going to be a farmer!”

“Chickens are for eggs, but they pretty much take care of themselves. Eventually, I hope to have a garden, but there’s so much to do on the inside. I’m going to be pretty busy.”

“Is this fireplace, does it open on the other side? There’s no back on it!” Karen said.

“Come here, let me show you.” I took her into my bedroom. The fire shown light into the red room and we were able to see. I turned on a table lamp.

“Wow, this is neat! I love it! Especially the fireplace in the bedroom! Neat!”

“I wish you would think about spending the summer here, although it gets pretty hot. It would be fun, and maybe you can help me get this place together. I don’t think I’ll ever get it all done by myself.” I said.

“What about Dimitris, he’s handy isn’t he?” She asked.

“Yes, but he works at home. I hate to interrupt him from his work. It’s just a thought, and you know that you’re always welcome to stay as long as you want. I’m sure Dimi would be glad to pay for your flight, too. See if you can clear some time to come back.”

“I’ll try, but I don’t know about Frank,” she said.

“Bring him, too.”

When I turned off the light and returned to the living room, the men were all huddled together in conversation with my dad. I don’t know what they manage to talk about. They’d laugh and then Dimitris put another couple of logs on the fire. I went up behind him as he was crouched down getting the fire fixed. I put my arms around his neck and said in a soft voice

“Thank you, Dimi.” I kissed his hair. He tapped my hand and smiled. “Have you shown your lab to my dad yet?”

“No, tomorrow. He is getting tired, we wait.”

Since the men were huddled together, I took my water and asked Morgan and Karen to come to the other sofa, and turned on the TV.

Morgan told Karen all about the trouble we had with the little photograph, and many other adventures that the islands gave us. When she told about my

bout with seasickness and what Dimitris did, she listened with her mouth opened.

“You could have died! He saved you! You were so lucky that he knew what to do. You were so lucky that he was there.”

“Yes, well, things seemed to finally work out, but I never want to be that far out of it again! Morgan had to tell me what he did, 'cause I had no idea!” Then, Morgan told of how I lucked out being nekkid, and we laughed at the humor in the situation. We all sat there laughing, we could hardly catch our breath at the imagery.

“Oh, I miss this! We haven’t laughed like this in ages!” Karen said.

“I know, I miss it too,” Morgan said.

When the guys heard us laughing so boisterously, they came over to see what all the ruckus was about. Dimitris brought my dad the big chair that was by the fireplace.

We welcomed the men into the circle.

“I love to hear my Helena to laugh,” Dimitris said as he sat on the arm of the sofa next to me. I gave him my hand and he kissed it.

“We were just telling my sister about Rena. She really knows how to tell some funny stories about Stefano. She is so funny,” I said.

“She was really sweet to us. I hope we’ll be able to see them before we leave.” Karen said.

“What time is your flight out of Athens?” I asked.

“We got a 3 p.m. flight,” Karen said.

“We go to Karpathos before flight, stay night have farewell celebration. You like!”

Everyone agreed that would be fun.

“That sounds like a plan, maybe we can show them some of the islands,” Andreas said.

“We’re in your hands. It sounds good.” My dad said. “Well, I’m going to hit the hay. I’ll see you all in the morning.” My dad said and gave Karen and me a kiss goodnight.

For the next week, we went to some of the islands and did some site seeing. We

acquainted the family with the glories of the ferry system and our dependency on them. The weather was staying nice, which meant no rain, no fog and not hot enough to cause problems.

I could see that the sites were beginning to wear my dad out. Now, we were on the Athena on our way to Karpathos. We wanted more relaxing activities for the last few days of their visit. Stefano wanted to guide my father through the dig and the museum, which my dad seemed to have an interest in. Andreas is going to take all of the men fishing, which will leave the ladies to have a “girls” day.

When we got to Renas’ she had a beautiful table of mezedes, the Greek antipastos, waiting for us. We all went out to the patio, as it was late afternoon and the sunset was magnificent. Stefano and my dad were like old pals and they seemed to get along so well.

At 8 p.m. Dimitris came to me and said,

“We talk, Helena,” he took my hand and led me to the loft room.

“What are we doing?” I asked.

“You come with Dimi,” he led me to the stairs. He sat on the step and I sat next to him in the dim light. He held my hand and put his arm around me. With his head next to mine he said,

“Helena, we will go to fish very early. Andreas say we sleep on Athena tonight to leave very, very early. So, I want to be with my Helena.”

“You’re going to sleep on Athena tonight?”

“I will stay on Athena, yes, sleep? No. I do not sleep well without my Helena.”

“Oh, Dimi, it looks like I won’t sleep very well tonight either,” I said as I gave him a big hug.

“Rena wants to have all girls night, to party. You girls can get drunk with no men to bother you. But be careful my Heart,” he said as he kissed my fingers.

“As long as I have some sleep and my aspirin, I should be good. I wish you could be here, but if it’s all girls, maybe it’s good that you’re not. I wouldn’t want Morgan or Karen to get their hands on you!” I joked.

“Oh, Helena! You are bad,” he laughed. “We will leave soon, few minutes.” He was looking into my eyes.

“Come here,” I took his hand then brought him up the stairs. When we got to the top I flung my arms around him and kissed him with an urgency that let him know that I wanted him. He took me fervently and without hesitation. We didn’t have a lot of time and I wanted to use it to the fullest advantage. “Helena, I stay, no go to fish,” he said kissing my neck.

“No, you go and take care of my dad, Dimi.” I kissed his hair and his forehead. “And catch *lots a fish!*” I laughed. “Just be careful, and come home soon.”

“Oh, okay, but I am thinking of you here, and I will not have good time with the fish.”

“No, you’re going to have a good time, make sure my dad is having a good time and come home safely to me. I’ll be waiting.”

“Better dress, Andreas says to leave to docks by 10 p.m. Always on the schedule!”

We straightened ourselves up and went back down to the dining room, holding hands.

“Andreas, there he is. Andreas was looking for you, Dimi,” Morgan said.

“Dimi, have you got everything?” Andreas asked.

“I am ready to go, little brother,” Dimitris said and put on his jacket. I walked with him outside and while we were waiting for Stefano to bring the Caddy around, I put my hands under his jacket and wrapped him in my arms. I put my head on his shoulder and he just rocked me, and we waited for Stefano. He was so warm and had such a wonderful scent about him.

When Stefano brought the Caddy around, I kissed Dimitris then went to my dad.

“Be careful out there, okay? You don’t want to fall in!” I gave him a kiss farewell. I put my arm around Dimitris again, he whispered little Greek things to me that ended in “S’agapo”.

“We will be back tomorrow, Helena. S’agapo.”

“I love you, Dimi, be careful.”

In the morning we sat talking about everything that makes this such a happy time, the wedding, the visit of family and the men, of course. We went into town for some shopping, then, by early evening we ate at the Sandwich Shack. When we got home Rena announced,

“Okay, ladies! Let’s party!” Rena spoke in her little voice. “Let’s get those Margaritas in the blender.” She went to the stereo and put some music on low volume.

Our little party of girls included Rena, Karen, Morgan and myself. We all sat at the kitchen table and let the drinks pour. It is well known that Stefano has a tendency to be clumsy, so Rena had us in stitches with some of his minor catastrophes.

For instance, the time he was excavating a dig and was pointing out areas that weren’t safe, he turns as he’s walking and knocks himself out when his head hit an overhead beam. Or the time he was walking to his lecture on campus and tripped over a sprinkler head, knocked it off and had a fountain of water shoot up his pants. He had water dripping off his head, smearing his lecture notes, then he ended up having to wing it!

“Then one time we went to Madrid. There were bugs everywhere, grasshoppers and bees! You should have seen Stefano, trying to keep them off of me, swatting at them in mid-air. Then he kept telling me, ‘Rena, they go after you because you use hairspray and perfume.’ The next thing we heard was Stefano yelling and grabbing his pants! A bee walked up the inside of his pant leg and stung him on the upper thigh! He was in agony!”

We were all laughing so hard, with the imagery of it. She has a way with words and tone that makes things very hilarious to listen to. The Margaritas got stronger as every batch was made.

Then Rena turned up the music and was determined to teach us the Traditional Greek dance. It was a riot watching Rena! Such a tiny little Chinese lady drinking Mexican liquor doing a Greek dance! We never did get the dance down straight but we had a great time in the learning process. Rena started telling Karen about the first time Morgan and I came to Karpathos to meet them.

“It wasn’t a surprise that Andreas brought Morgan, he always brought girls over. But to see Dimi with Helena, we were really shocked! I told Stefano, he’s in love with her! Of course Stefano, he doesn’t pay attention, he just doesn’t think about it. When I saw what was happening though, I got confused.” Rena said.

“Why?” Karen asked. “What happened?”

“Well, here Dimitris is all dreamy eyed like he’s floating, but Helena isn’t even looking at him. I mean, she was pleasant, friendly to us, but I didn’t see her warming to Dimi. And he was, well, he looked like someone died! You might not notice it if you don’t know him because he was joking with his brothers and that, but I was watching, he was talking to his brothers, but he barely took his eye off of Helena. Then when Helena left the table to go to the powder room, Dimi came to me and asked me if he had bad breath or smelled or something. I didn’t know what was going on, but he was miserable. He doesn’t hide his emotions very well. He wouldn’t have a cigar with the men. They all wondered about that! Then he kept looking over to Helena when she was sitting with us girls.”

“So you weren’t talking to him? What did he do for you to do that?” Karen asked.

“He didn’t do anything wrong. He did everything right, that was the problem!” I said.

“Yes, and I never did know why you went over and sat with him after not giving him the time of day all day,” Morgan said.

“Well, besides me having had a few beers, he was just being so sweet. I felt bad for shutting him out, but I told him when I sat down that just because I’m sitting with him, it doesn’t mean anything.”

“After you went to sit with him, he was a new person, I never saw him look so relieved like a big weight had been lifted. Then I think Andreas and Morgan weren’t doing too well at first, but later Andreas was a lovesick puppy! He was so cute, it was like Christmas for him! They kept everything pretty private, I mean there wasn’t the obvious problems with them. I don’t know if they were in love, at that point in time.” There was a slight pause as Rena poured more Margaritas. “Dimitris was never the one to bring home girls. I mean he went out a lot but never was wanting to bring them home. He told me once that when a guy brings his girlfriend home to meet the family, it’s like the girls think that he wants to marry them, so he never brought them home.”

I sat and listened and laughed a little at this. It was typical Dimitris. If he’s

not serious, he's not going to imply that he is.

"I kept asking him if he'd like to meet so-and-so, she's really nice and all that. Nope, doesn't need 'fix-up'. I knew some ladies, all of them wanted to date him, but he said that he's never getting married again, so don't fix him up with girls if they are looking for something serious. Well, no one wants to date a guy who has no intention of having a relationship." Rena explained.

"I don't get it. Over here is Dimitris, a confirmed bachelor, then over here is Helena, married to Mark and not available. There was supposed to be only two weeks. What happened?" Karen asked. Morgan kind of rolled her eyes and I had a big grin on my face. "You know what I mean, what made him do a complete reversal? Men are too stubborn to just do that! I can see if he just was interested or wanted to date, but get married? Just like that?" Karen questioned.

"Well, he was just so sexy and so sweet, he wore down my resistance," I said.

"Oh come on! I can see all that, but you were with Mark if you didn't give Dimitris the impression that you were available, how did you get together?" Karen asked with insistence.

"Okay, let me give you the facts ma'am, he wore me down. I mean I'll admit that I was attracted to him, who wouldn't be? I wasn't going to let it get out of hand, but I couldn't ignore him completely after all that he did for us when we got here. I just couldn't be that mean to him. I mean, he was wearing Jade East. He took me to the Valley of the Butterflies and I think that's where I knew I was on the path of no return, that I had to stop playing around. If I didn't, I would have grabbed him right there!" All the girls had a good laugh.

"I was there when he drove to the picnic and it was like watching star-crossed lovers! He had his eyes only on Helen from the beginning. It was like I wasn't even there. I think with him, it was love at first sight, as corny as that sounds. He wanted her from the first time we got in that car!" Morgan said.

"How could you tell?" Karen asked. "Did he swoop in with the flirting?"

"No, it was very much on the sly, like the little things. He'd be looking at her and if he saw that I was looking, he'd look somewhere else, like he wasn't looking. But I saw him, looking at you in the rear view mirror!" She directed her comment to me. "He would be smiling, and I thought he'd say something,

but, no, he was smiling at you. When we went on that picnic, remember when we were eating and you went to the car to get the other blanket? He asked me some stuff about you before you got back. He made me promise not to say anything.” Morgan said.

“Really? What did he ask?” I wanted to know.

“Yeah, tell us,” Karen said.

“There was only a couple of minutes, but he wanted to know if she loved Mark if she’s happy, and that’s when I said that she wasn’t married to Mark. That they only live together.”

“You said that you told Andreas.”

“Yeah, well, I didn’t want you to hate me, we still had a week of vacation to go!” We all laughed!

“What did Dimi say to that?” Karen asked.

“He seemed to perk up. He said ‘she no married Mark?’ And I said ‘no.’”

“So that’s how he found out. Do you want to know what he told me once? He said that when I found out he can cook, I said ‘if you can cook, I might have to marry you’, and he thought it was a good idea. That’s when he decided he was going to marry me. Just like that!”

“Awh, that’s cute,” Karen said. “How did you ever luck out?”

“All the brothers say that the gods have smiled on these islands. I’ve come to believe it,” I said.

“When did you say you’d have to marry him if he can cook?” Rena asked.

“Let me think, it was the first time we met Andreas, I think. I was only kidding! He was telling me before, about his first marriage going down the toilet, then I think he said something about fixing lunch, and to lighten the mood, I said ‘if you can cook I might, have to marry you myself!’ That’s all I said and it was meant as a joke. I mean, how many men are around that love to cook?”

“You got me there! The only thing Stefano cooks are buried in a pit! If I ever saw him boil an egg, I’d faint dead away!” Rena said.

“Well, Rena, you more than make up for Stefano’s not cooking, because you are a terrific cook! Here’s to Rena!” I said and all of us girls toasted our hostess.

“So tell me, Dimitris is a scientist? I never met a scientist. Does that mean he makes a lot of money discovering things, or does he teach?” Karen asked.

“To be truthful, I don’t know a lot about what he does. I don’t know about the money either. He makes decent money, though. I know that he does a lot of the work at home in his lab. Then he has to go to the mainland to give his reports. It’s all very mysterious. He’s so cute, he locks himself in that lab all day, so when I suggested that the door needed a window so that I could take a peek every once in a while, the next thing I know, he’s put a window in the door!”

“That’s one thing that amazes me about Andreas, too, is that I never ask twice for anything!” Morgan said.

“Now, Andreas, there’s a man who seems to be pretty energetic - lively!” Karen said.

“Yeah, he tires me out,” Morgan said and laughed. When she said he tires her out, we all looked at each other with a big grin on our faces. I think she knew what we were thinking. “He’s hard to keep up with is all I meant, geez!” Her face was all red, and she was embarrassed.

“How is Frank? Are you two still together?” I asked my sister.

“Oh, he’s the same, everything is still the same. We went to Vegas a couple of times, not much more than that,” she said. “This is the biggest thing that’s gone on in ages. When Peggy found out, she called me a couple of weeks ago, I told her about you and Dimitris. She didn’t say much, but she had that smart-alec attitude like she gets when she’s all jealous. Just the fact that you took the trip was enough to turn her green!” She said of my old neighbor. “So, are you guys going to have a Honeymoon?”

“Dimi just told me a while ago that he made plans to go to Lake Como for a week, but he’s got some work to get ahead of first. I’ve never been there, but I know it’s very beautiful.” I said.

“Where is it?”

“It’s in Italy, I believe in the northern area,” I said.

“Oh, man! Wait until Peggy hears this! She’ll be chartreuse!” Karen laughed.

“Did I ever meet Peggy?” Morgan asked.

“Yes, I think you did, she’s pretty tall, has straight thick red hair,” Karen

said.

We laughed. It was almost 2 a.m. in the morning and we had laughed ourselves silly the whole night. I finally got to bed and asleep at 3 a.m. It was easier to sleep alone here than at home, I don't know why. My thoughts were with Dimitris as I drifted off.

There was a knock at the door. "Helena?" Rena said.

"What?" I answered in a groggy haze.

"It's 11 a.m, are you getting up soon?"

"Not for a while," I answered.

"Okay, I'll let you sleep, I might be gone this afternoon for a while."

"Okay, see you later," I said, took some more aspirin as the Margaritas were more than I bargained for, and went back to sleep. There was another knock at the door.

"What?" I testily answered.

"When are you getting up?" Karen said as she opened the door. "It's getting late, are you okay?"

"I'm getting a headache, I'll be up in a while," I said and she went away. I had to hide my eyes under my pillow as the light was too bright in this room, so then I tried to go back to sleep.

There was another knock on the door. I picked up my shoe and threw it at the door.

"Go away!" I yelled. The shoe had hit it's mark and then landed on the floor in front of the door. I heard the knob being twisted and the door opened. I moaned at the thought of another disturbance.

"Helena, you have lost a shoe," he said.

"Dimi?" The fog was beginning to lift and I was starting to come back to the world of the living. I pulled the pillow off of my head and saw Dimitris taking off his jacket. "Did you just get back? What time is it?"

"It's near 3 p.m.," he said as he sat on the bed. He leaned over and kissed me, then a funny face.

"I know, breath. I'm sorry. We had Margaritas. How was the fishing?" I asked.

“Good! We catch lots of fish. You must get up now,” He said and slapped my hip.

“Ohh, okay, I’ll get up.”

“Why you throw shoe at door, Helena?”

“Everyone kept waking me up, finally I couldn’t take it anymore. Sorry about that, I’m a little hung over,” I said.

The plan was that after fishing if they got back early enough we might go to Rhodes. It was too late for that, and they were tired from fishing, so it was a quiet afternoon. Rena prepared some of the fish that was caught, Dimitris made his famous shrimp on a skewer. Everyone raved about the meal and settled to a quiet evening of talk and TV. Dimitris was at my side the whole evening, which was so precious. I wasn’t used to all of the attention that he bestows on me. After so many years of no show of affection, this was still new to me, even after the length of time that we’ve been together.

My father was considered to be one the brothers. He seemed to understand Dimitris with little effort, which surprised me. He, Dimitris, Andreas and Stefano all got along so well, that I think my dad will be sad to go home. Stefano wants to take him for Golf one time before he leaves, but we won’t be able to fit that in for him.

“I just love this fish, Rena, you’ll have to tell me your secret!” Karen said.

“Sure, I’ll write it down for you.” Rena got up to write down the recipe. “And the shrimp! I’m going to remember to try this, it seems so easy.”

“Very easy to make, but not to burn or skewer will wilt!” Dimitris said.

She laughed and the food disappeared as fast as it was served.

We spent the night here then had to head out the next morning to the mainland. Today I would be sending off my family, and not see them again for maybe another six months.

The airport has never been my favorite place. It’s always a place of sad goodbyes. My worst weakness, the goodbyes, whether at airports, bus or train terminals is always hard for me. I was in tears and made the promise to come and visit them soon. The soonest we’d be able to visit wouldn’t be until near Thanksgiving, although we’d try to make it sooner. Dimitris promised that he would not let me travel alone and we would be glad to come for a stay.

We waived them off after an emotional farewell. With Dimitris' arms around me, we went back to Andreas' place. Dimitris was consoling, so my saying goodbye wasn't hurting so badly. I had him to hold onto all the way back to the condo.

"You no ask about "Moon trip" anymore, do you forget on it?" He asked, but he sounded very tired.

"Are you okay?" I felt his forehead and he was cool. "I've been so wrapped up with my family, I'm sorry, Dimi, it totally left my mind."

"I think maybe we go for week, rest, maybe then stop in Rome or Venice. You think on it, we do it."

"That sounds wonderful. We could use the rest, we've had a really stressful month. Thank you, Sweetie." I gave him a kiss on the cheek and snuggled in the back seat with him all way back to Andreas' and Morgan's place.

We spent another night at the home of his brother. It was always fun and easy at their home. We have so much in common that there is never a lack of conversation.

The men were talking about their fishing adventure and how much they enjoyed having my dad along on the trip. They couldn't get over what a nice man he is, and apparently, he reminds them somewhat of their own father.

We went to bed early. The next day would be an early ferry ride home, then preparing for the week ahead, and getting into a normal life routine.

"Good morning Helena, do you want breakfast?"

"When did you get up?" I asked.

He picked up my hand, kissed it and placed my WUF cup in it with coffee.

"Hour or so, you were sleep," he said.

"Thanks, I didn't hear you get up," I yawned.

"No, you were sleep." He came over to me, put his arm around my shoulder and kissed my temple.

"You know what today is?" He asked.

"Sunday," I said.

"Yes, Sunday. We have anniversary of two weeks!" He smiled and had that devilish gleam in his eyes. I put my cup down then wrapped my arms around

him and kissed his luscious lips.

“Happy Anniversary, Sweetheart,” I said. We kissed and had our coffee. It was so comfortable to languish in bed, with my sweet husband and a cup of coffee. We talked about the upcoming trip, the fun we had with my dad and sister. Everything that seemed so difficult before the wedding that’s now a memory, and doesn’t seem as if it was difficult after all.

Who is he, really?



I drove up to the hills finding a beautiful old crumbling building with a beautiful view of the harbor. I shot many pictures here and if I could, I would be back to paint in a few weeks. I started down the hill back toward home, but I turned on an old road that was very eroded with deep crevices. It came up on a deserted old town. The buildings were in bad shape, but it looked like there were storefronts, a small public building, and several small homes. There were wild trees that started to swallow the little main street. It was like stepping back in time. I wandered around, taking more pictures. It was so beautiful that I let the time pass by before I realized how long I had been gone. I had trouble turning the car around. The erosion in the old path that led me here was so deep that I was in danger of running the Volkswagen into a crevice that I wouldn't be able to get out of easily. My cell phone rang as I was navigating the ditches.

"Hi, Sugar!" I said.

"Where are you?" Dimitris asked. "I was looking for you."

"Did you find the note I left for you?"

"Yes, but you are gone over an hour from then. Where you go, my Heart?"

"I'm up in the hills. I'm coming home now, so if I can manage to get to the main road I'll be home in twenty minutes. Do you want me to stop for anything on my way back?"

"No, please to be careful, my Heart. Come home."

“As soon as I can. Love you.” I got the car in a safe position, maneuvered the little car over bumps and sandy bogs then turned out onto the main road. I whipped around the curves and was getting good at driving Greek style. When I looked in the wayward mirror, I saw some red and blue lights flashing in from behind me.

“Oh shit! I’m in trouble now!” The officer came up to my window. I tried to explain that I now live here. I didn’t have a Greek drivers license or even my passport with me. As far as he was concerned I was an illegal, driving around committing unspeakable crimes.

He didn’t understand me, and I couldn’t communicate effectively. I was swiftly arrested and placed in the Police custody holding area. I was waiting for an interpreter. I hadn’t been given the choice to call Dimitris. My phone was taken from me along with what little identification I had on me.

When an officer came in who could understand me, I was told what I did wrong and what the consequences were. I had to wait for a magistrate to decide what was going to happen to me. I told the officer that I now live locally, I married a Greek national and I needed to call him to come to talk to them. After another 45 minutes I was given my cell phone and identification.

“Helena, where are you?” Dimitris asked.

“Dimi, can you come to the Police station? I got arrested.” I moaned.

“What happened? Are you alright?”

“Yeah, I’m okay, I’m sorry Dimi, will you hurry?”

“Yes, I come now.” He hung up the phone and I hoped that it wouldn’t take long to get out of here. As I waited, the lights in the room got more irritating to my eyes, and every sound seemed to echo. I jumped at every noise. I was put in a holding cell away from the men that were detained and I found that this experience, although not as bad as I had imagined, was something not to be repeated. I wondered what legal procedures I would have ahead of me, and if I needed to contact the American Embassy.

I was getting cold and it didn’t seem like Dimitris would ever come to rescue me. I heard someone coming down the hall and hoped I would be released. I didn’t expect to be passed by and not even updated on my situation.

“Excuse me! When am I getting out of here?” I asked. I was ignored. I sat

back down and tried to find a comfortable position. After several hours I was brought to a room where Dimitris was talking to someone in authority. I was finally released to Dimitris' custody. As soon as we stepped outside, I threw my arms around him.

"God, honey, I'm so sorry for this! I don't know why I got arrested." I held on to him and looked into his eyes. He was enjoying my little romp with the law.

"Why are you smiling? I got arrested!"

"Helena, my Heart. We must get a license for you to drive. You will go to jail next time." He said with a big grin on his face.

"How did you get me out?"

"I bring marriage certificate and passport. Here, put in purse." He handed me my things, then put his hand on my knee as we drove home.

"What about the little car?"

"We get tomorrow. You must still pay fine."

"Oh great. How much?"

"Do not worry, you get license tomorrow then all will be fine, my Heart." He was so reassuring that I didn't worry about it. It was a waste of a beautiful day.

When we got home, I was too tired to do anything but shower and head for bed. When Dimitris came to bed he got in with a kiss and I asked him,

"Sweetie, I was hoping to go into the hills and do some painting. Would you mind if I go?"

"You wish to be alone?"

"I want to paint, and it's easier to concentrate when I'm alone, is that okay?" He gave a look like he wanted to object, but he kissed me and said,

"Will you take one dog with you?"

"Yes, I'll take one of the dogs." I knew that he would feel better if I did.

"Good! You will not have police call me?"

"That's not funny!"

He moved me to lay my head on his shoulder, with his arm around me.

"No, it is not, I am sorry."

"I found a place up in the hills that I might want to paint, a little deserted

town up there. It's nothing compared to the Valley of the Butterflies, but I'd like to go back there sometime." He looked me in the eyes and kissed my forehead.

"I will take you to Rhodes to paint there. We will go together. Perhaps we stay at house of Angelo."

"When do you think we can go?"

"Soon, I will catch up on work, we call Angelo."

"I've wanted to go back there since you first showed it to me, Dimi."

"I too would like to see it with you. I will bring my work to keep busy while you paint, or you won't keep hands off." I looked at him, and we both laughed.

We cuddled for a while in the peacefulness of our surroundings, then went to sleep. The thought of going back to the Butterflies was exciting and romantic. I wanted it to be special for us.

We were asleep when Dimitris' cell phone rang. It was next to the bed so it couldn't be ignored. He answered it in a groggy voice. I couldn't understand what was said, and he didn't want to keep me awake, so he left the room. I was thinking about the Valley and going back to that beautiful spot when I fell back to sleep.

I woke up with no one beside me. I looked at the clock. It was only 5:30 a.m. I wondered if Dimitris ever came back to bed or if he was still up. After ten minutes I got up to look for him.

I could smell coffee as I went toward the kitchen. He was standing with his hands gripping the sink counter and just staring into the sink. I put my arms around him, laying my head against his back. He laid his hand over mine. When he turned around he pulled my hand around his waist and hugged me.

"Dimi?" He had a worried look on his face. I knew that the phone call had to be bad news. "What is it?"

We met with Stefano in Athens at the Venture Hellas Hotel. We were early for our 1 p.m. meeting, but Dimitris was anxious and ill at ease in his behavior. He seated us at a booth in the bar and found a waiter to bring us a drink.

"Dimi, why are you so nervous? What did Stefano say?" He took my hand and while we were sitting at the booth, looked into my eyes. He had that

worried expression that was so hard for him to hide.

“Stefano has news on tests, the little picture.”

“Did he say what it’s about?”

“No, just want to talk, to both of us,” he said.

“I wondered if we’d hear any more about it.”

“I worry for you, Helena. No good can come from this. Nothing but trouble from start.”

“There won’t be anything to worry about, we’ll just listen to what he has to say,” I said. He put his arm around my shoulder and with his lips against my temple he spoke his Greek words softly. I knew that he was afraid that this little photo would be the catalyst for more trouble.

Dimitris stood when Stefano came to the table. He greeted us with a kiss and a hand shake and put a large manilla envelope on the table.

“Well, there is good news, and there is bad news. First of all with the photo, the map that was on the back, it was vital to placing a location for the other maps. There were symbols on the folded paper, they were meaningless without the photo. As you know, Deischant stashed relics and icons; thousands of items. More than 60% of the loot was never found. These clues are going to lead to the recovery of some of them, that is if they haven’t been moved. The research shows that since none of the items have shown up since Deischant’s arrest, that they must still be hidden. According to what our antiquities professor has found on the maps, it is likely that a good portion of them never left the islands. These ancient islands have natural caves, archaeological sites and ruins that would be ideal hiding places. The maps that have been deciphered indicate that something is hidden close by. It’s just a matter of comparing topographical land maps against the partial maps we’ve come up with here. Now for the bad news. These items are worth more than you can imagine and that’s why the circle of Deischant’s people are still active, and they are still a threat to anyone who would be an obstacle for them. *That is you!*” Stefano looked at me. “You have to disassociate yourself from this before it” He hesitated and looked at Dimitris. “This can be *very* dangerous.”

Dimitris placed his hand over my hand he held in his lap, he leaned close to

me to say;

“Helena, we must not keep, too dangerous.”

I didn't want to give him the idea that I would go against his wishes and disregard his fears. I soothed my hand over his. I knew that he was worried and has been since the beginning. He advised me then to *leave it alone*, on the first day that I showed the photo to him; on the day of the picnic. Who would have guessed at that time, that this innocent looking photograph of a young girl would lead us into these current events? Being involved in something so dangerous, even possibly deadly, stirred my curiosity to know more of the details of the investigation; against my better judgment.

“Are all of the tests done, the investigation, is it finished? Do you have all of the reports?” I asked Stefano as I looked over the papers on the table.

“Everything that could be deciphered we have but,” Stefano looked at Dimitris and then he looked at me and said; “if word gets out about the discovery of the map or that it has been clarified, I'd hate to think what could happen. I had our antiquities professor go back to the list of icons and seals that are known to be missing. Along with the list was a fact sheet of the investigation and trial of Deischant, of which we have copies. There was a list of suspects and with most of them, their involvement couldn't be proven; but that doesn't mean that they weren't involved. Most of these men are dead now, but some are still in the search. No one knows their whereabouts or how many there are. There's too much money involved here to be anything but dangerous.” He put his hand on the envelope and tapped it to bring his point home. “What you have here, people have *died* for this information. If you hadn't dictated the rule of secrecy and ownership over these documents, the university may find the funding to dig for more answers, follow the clues. As far as the testing is concerned, it's a dead end, we can't go any further, and neither should you.”

Dimitris looked at me and he could see that I was intrigued by the latest revelations. I must have had that wide eyed curious look, as he turned my face toward him and said,

“No. Too dangerous, Helena, too dangerous.” He would squeeze my hand trying to emphasize the importance of what he said. I knew he was right.

In my mind, I knew the danger. I knew that everything that Stefano and Dimitris were saying, was true. The warnings were very clear, but the more I was warned off, the more deeply in my subconscious I wanted to dive into the investigation. I felt the compelling need to see this through. I think that Dimitris could either sense this or see it in my eyes.

“All of the records at the university that pertains to this are numerically coded and on micro film. They get filed away by number, so no one can know what they are unless they already have the code. They are safe, so you shouldn’t worry,” Stefano said. “We are assured that any material acquired over the computer has been purged and all slides and film are in the safe at the Professor’s discretion.”

Dimitris was worried.

I looked through the file in the envelope. It all seemed so innocent. I saw nothing on first glance that raised any flags. There was a few graphs, calculations, and other things in Greek that I didn’t understand. There was two or three pages of a report that was in Greek, with a photocopy of the original list of items known to be missing. Then I came across a couple of pages of photo scans of some of the icons and seals that were recovered and what amounted to mug shots of Deischant and those who were originally associated with the arrest. Other documents and small photo scans were attached as well, which I didn’t look closely at, but it all seemed benign and non threatening. The maps were a concern, but they were incomplete and would need a professional to decipher and reference them.

I put my hand over Dimitris’ hand which was holding mine so intently.

“What do I have to do to sign over the files and everything to the university?” I asked.

“I have a release you may sign,” Stefano said.

Dimitris grabbed my head and kissed my cheek.

“Thank you, Helena, for this.”

“Yes, well, I guess the best thing is to be happy with my little photograph.” I pushed the envelope to the center of the table.

“This is yours, we don’t need it,” Stefano said and handed it back to me.

We finished our lunch and had a great afternoon. We took the ferry home

before the threatening storm closed in. The sea was beginning to churn in the channel but we were home at first sign of rain.

Dimitris had the fire going in the fireplace and I made the coffee.

"Dimi, the coffee is ready." I poured his cup and mine. He reached across the breakfast bar to take my hand.

"I do not want anything to happen to you. You understand? This is over." He kissed my hand. "This make Dimi happy."

"I know, Sweetie."

We went into the living room with our coffee and sat by the fire. When the phone rang, Dimitris went to answer it. As he was talking, he turned and looked at me, then turned again. When he hung up, he had lost his smile.

"We must turn on TV." He said as he picked up the remote.

"What's happened?" I asked. He put his hand on my shoulder as we sat on the sofa. As we watched, the Greek news was showing icons and relics with old photo clips of Deischant. I didn't understand what was being said, but Dimitris listened intently.

"What are they saying?" Dimitris ran his hand down my back as he listened to the news. I watched, and listened and waited.

"Helena." Dimitris took the envelope from the breakfast bar and brought it back to the coffee table in front of the TV.

"What was that about?"

Dimitris emptied the envelope onto the table. He looked over the copies of the reports and separated out the copies of the photos from the graphs and tests. He read the reports and looked over the top of his reading glasses at me.

"Helena, the news say that the University tell of research on Deischant case."

"What? Already?" I was a little shocked at the swift release of this information. "It doesn't matter, it's out of our hands. It was just a matter of time that it would become known." I rationalized.

"Stefano will see Professor Kanakaris and call with any news. We should not worry, Stefano will see what is happening."

I wasn't really worried about it, if the University was going to search for

the lost icons, this would have made news eventually.

I started to pick up the reports and put them back in the envelope. I scooped up all of the papers to put them away, when the photos slipped out onto the floor. Dimitris picked them up, then handed them to me. On the top was a photo of a familiar face. It was not very well focused and I wasn't really sure if my eyes were playing tricks on me.

"Sugar, let me borrow your glasses a minute." He handed me his readers.

"What is it?"

I was at a loss for words. A wave of fear smothered me as I looked at this poor photo copy. The face was very young, but not so young as to not know this person.

The writing on the page was all in Greek, so I didn't know whether or not there was an identity given to this image.

"Helena, tell Dimi what is wrong."

"I know this face. What does this say?"

"You are looking pale! This frightens you. Who is this man,Saiset Ben Abijah?"

"Who?"

"His name, Saiset Ben Abijah."

"He said his name was Ahmed Sahj."

"This is Sahj?" Dimi's eyes widened.

"Maybe it isn't him, the picture isn't real clear, a scratchy looking black and white photo, it's hard to tell," I said. I tried to placate Dimitris, maybe it wasn't the same man. But what if it was?

"This Sahj, he is one who tell you to leave restaurant with Rena?"

"Yes, he didn't seem threatening though," I said.

"Where you meet this man?"

"On the ferry. He said his business was called Pharaoh Trading."

"We think on what to do. If this man Sahj is same as Ben Abijah, we need to tell authority," he said.

"But who? The police here are not up to this type of crime. Maybe Interpol?"

"Maybe Interpol good idea," he agreed.

“Good! Let’s call them then,” I said.

“We should maybe go to Athens to do this.”

“We just came from there, isn’t there any other way? Call and see what we should do,” I requested. “Maybe Stefano can get a better copy of the picture. We might not have to go to Athens then.”

“Yes, maybe we worry over nothing,” he agreed. “He consults with a Professor at University, we let them take care of all.”

“I just want it to end. I want us to have some peace and quiet! With all of the running around and island hopping we’ve done, I’ve lost 20 pounds!” I said.

“You will get sick if lose too fast.”

“Well, I could lose a few more pounds; it wouldn’t hurt. Just wish it wouldn’t make me so tired,” I said.

“You no need to lose more, you already perfect.”

“Oh, you’re sweet, but I’d like to lose another 20 pounds.”

“No like skinny,” he said. “Woman should be soft, no bony.”

“You are so funny, Dimi, I don’t think most American men would agree with you.”

I had to laugh to myself. There isn’t a man on earth that would pass up a skinny model for a more rounded, mature female. At least that’s what it’s been up until we came here. The gods haven’t changed men that much, even in Greece!

“Well, I’m going up for a soak. Dimi, would you see to the fireplace?” I asked. He came to my side and looked into my eyes.

“Are you feeling okay, not upset with Dimi?”

“No, of course not.”

“Bath is just bath then?”

“Yes, just a bath. I need to relax, you’re welcome to join me.” I said as I put my hand against his chest.

“No, I wait for Stefano to call.” He kissed my temple. I was then off to the bath.

It felt so good to lay back in my own lagoon of steaming comfort. I almost forgot how good it felt. When I came downstairs, Dimitris was in his lab. I

peeked through the window to see him on his cell phone. The fire was lit in the fireplace and as I sat with the TV on, I thought about the things that have been uncovered lately. It came to me that maybe I should get on the Internet and see what I can find on Pharaoh Trading, Sahj and Abijah.

I found several references to Pharaoh Trading. No where was the name Ahmed Sahj connected with this information. However, the name Saiset Ben Abijah came up with a criminal record, court appearances, and some archived news clippings.

All of the pictures shown were of a young man. A passport photo, a mug shot and candid in action "man on the street" type photos. Considering the age of the photos, and the resemblance of the features to Ahmed Sahj, there was a distinct possibility of them being one and the same person. It was a close enough match to make me uncomfortable.

I went back down the hall and saw that the lab door was ajar. When I peeked through the window I saw Dimitris in his white lab coat standing at a table making notes. I was just going to turn away when he spotted me and waved me to come in.

"Am I disturbing you?" I asked. He came to me smiling and said

"No, my Helena, I just make notes."

"I was just online, trying to find out anything on this stuff. What are you up to, Sugar?"

"Recheck the figures, I make too many errors when thinking of my Helena. Now I fix."

"Did Stefano call?" I asked.

"Not yet."

"The telephone seems to be out in the kitchen, I think the lines might be down." I didn't think he'd drop what he was doing to look at the phone.

"I will look." I followed him to the kitchen.

"I thought maybe Stefano had called you on your cell."

"No, he did not." He checked the telephone in the kitchen and it was still making odd noises. "Is not dead, I will check outside connection." He started to go toward the door. After several minutes Dimitris came back inside. His

hair was all wet and face dripping with rain, he said,

“Connection is good, so, we only wait.”

“It’s probably the storm,” I said.

When he came in, it seemed that he reported the condition, swept through the room to hang his coat and went back into the lab. His mind was somewhere else, and although I can understand being preoccupied, this was a new behavior to me. After a half hour of boring television, I took another peek at the lab. Dimitris was leaning against the desk, talking on his cell phone. This time I carefully opened the door and entered the room. I couldn’t hear what was said, but as soon as he noticed I was there, he got off the phone.

“Helena.” He smiled and came over to me with a kiss.

“I’m interrupting something?” I asked.

“No, I am coming out, in few seconds.”

“Do you want anything, wine?” I asked.

“No, I am fine.”

“Okay, I’ll leave you to finish up,” I said and left the lab. It was nearly 11 p.m. and I was getting tired. I watched the news, in Greek, so after twenty minutes I turned off the TV and went to bed. It seemed weird to come to this bed alone. He must be preoccupied with something, but I wish he’d tell me what’s going on.

In the middle of the night I started to get overheated. It woke me to find that Dimitris still wasn’t in bed. I sat up and tried to squint at the clock. It was 3:40 a.m. I found my kimono and deck shoes and made the trek to the lab.

I opened the door very slowly and quietly, not wanting to disturb him. When I came up to him sitting at the desk, he was sleeping with his head laying on his arm, next to the microscope. I put my arm around him, bending to speak softly to him.

“Dimi, Sugar?” He started to stir and looked at me. Then realized where he was.

“I fall asleep!”

“I know, do you want to come to bed now?” I asked as I smoothed his hair.

“Yes, bed.” He took my hand, turned off the desk lamp then we left the lab. “Dimi turn off lights. Sorry, my Heart, this man fell asleep. Good night.” He kissed me on the cheek and rolled over with a sigh. I wanted to hold him and ask him what was the problem, but he seemed so tired, I left him to sleep. I laid there for a long time, not sleeping.

Come morning I awoke to Dimitris, his arm around me, his face in my hair. I moved his hand up to my heart and we slept there for a few hours more.

He started to stir and was going to remove his arm from around me, but I held his arm to my chest and rolled over to look into his eyes.

“What is it? What’s the problem, Dimi?” I asked.

“Helena, we shall have coffee,” he said, then popped a few kisses on my lips. He got up and left the room.

“Dimi!” I put on my robe and shoes and caught up with him in the kitchen.

“Stefano say that Professor Kanakaras at University find artifacts from map on photo. Your little photo led to this discovery,” he said.

“Really?” I was shocked to hear this. “But that’s good news!”

“Yes,” he said. “Stefano say that you should be there. He say it is once in lifetime to discover such antiquities, you must go.”

“This is so exciting! But why are you so solemn about this?” I asked.

“It will stir problems,” he said.

I could see that he was worried about the discovery, and especially telling me about it. He knew that my curiosity and sense of the find would make me want to see the artifacts.

“Dimi, I don’t think there will be any danger in going. This is going to be big news, you don’t think the thugs are going to show themselves in such a high profile project, do you? It will be well guarded and I’m sure no one who doesn’t belong there will be allowed in,” I reasoned.

“Would you like coffee?” He asked.

I placed my hand on his cheek and looked into his big worried eyes and said;

“Why don’t we go back to bed?” I took his hand. “Come on, let’s go back to bed for a while.”

He followed me to bed and we slept reluctantly, for a couple of hours more.

When I woke, Dimitris was curled in behind me, I could feel his fingers fidgeting so I knew that he was running this scenario through in his mind. I turned to face him. I looked at him, his eyes betrayed his cheerful greeting.

“Tell me everything that Stefano told you, and what you haven’t told me, Dimi.”

“Stefano will be there, if you must be there we go with Stefano. I will call him,” he said.

We met with Stefano at the docks in Athens. From there we joined the University “diggers” and boarded a hop flight back to Rhodes. While in transit, Stefano told us of other facts he had uncovered in the search for information. Those who originally stole the arts were just the tip of the iceberg in this scenario. There was the involvement of smugglers, church and government officials, Mafia and Libyan gangsters, and others too numerous to mention. Only two or three individuals were ever nabbed in connection with the goods. There are over 20,000 items still missing, at last count. Any individual who has had knowledge of the whereabouts or is involved in concealing the booty have had death threats or have mysteriously disappeared.

There is still an active force lying in wait to step in and relieve anyone of the burden of possession of the loot. It is believed that there are several places where these artifacts are hidden. A good portion may still be well hidden in the Greek islands, but the possibility of hoards of stash still to be found may be in Munich, Damascus, Japan and the USA. Scotland Yard has been trying to eliminate possible hiding places when information surfaces, but more often than not, the informers are misleading MI-6 and other authorities. It’s a tangled web where there are no ethics and no conscience.

Dimitris didn’t say anything but I could feel his concern radiating from his body. I knew that he considered this a perilous road that we have tread on. I felt it too. I began to wonder why we were here. Seeing the discovery and viewing the site wasn’t something that we needed to do. The little picture had reaped big rewards for the University. It had served its purpose and in

that capacity would be retired.

Dimitris would tap my arm or squeeze my hand. He was nervous, apprehensive of the things to come from this endeavor.

When we landed in Rhodes the group had to rent a minibus to accommodate them and their gear.

“Stefano?” I tried to get his attention, but he was involved with the equipment and students.

“Dimi?” I turned to my husband. “Dimi, what would you say to not going with Stefano? How about we rent a car and go up to the house?” When I said this, Dimitris wrapped me in his arms, snuggled his face into my neck and softly said,

“Yes, yes we do that,” and he looked into my eyes.

“Tell Stefano that we changed our minds,” I said. His soft eyes sparkled as he kissed my forehead.

Stefano knew why we changed our minds. We had officially washed our hands of the project. We rented a car and drove up to the family home. Angelo wasn't there, we didn't expect him to be. It felt good coming back to the old homestead.

“It looks good,” I said as we stopped in the circular driveway. I looked at Dimitris and he was smiling.

“Home, yes it is good,” he said.

When we entered the house it seemed so sparse of furniture. I could tell that Dimitris was saddened to see the house so bare.

“Dimi?” I said to him, “Honey, what can we do to bring back some of the furniture?”

“Bring back?”

“Yes, we can get other furniture, and bring your folks' furniture back home, where it belongs,” I suggested.

“Would you want this?”

“I want you to be happy. If the furniture belongs here, it should be here.” I said. “And it might be fun for us to track down the furniture we'd like to put

into our house.”

“That would be nice. Nice to have Mama’s furniture here, but is too much trouble.”

“Not really, if we do it a little at a time, it would take longer, but would be easy to do,” I said.

“Yes, we will do that,” he said and kissed my hand. “This will make this house happy again.”

We walked in the yard and the trees were all doing fine, so Dimitris was relieved that the time we had been away didn’t harm the old homestead.

“Would you like to go to Valley of Butterflies today, before we go home?” He asked.

“Not today, Sweetie, we should head for home. Maybe we can stop and get cheese and wine before we leave.”

By the time we got the ferry it was becoming dusk and the sunset on the water was spectacular. We got our usual secluded booth in the bar and had a tall cappuccino, which helped warm us up. Dimitris was visibly relieved that the end of the episodes with the artifacts was behind us. We had a new outlook like a cloud over us had gone away. When we were waiting to get another coffee, I left to visit the Ladies room. Going back to the bar I was stopped by Sahj.

“Miss Helena, how are you?” He suddenly was standing in front of me, blocking my path. My heart had jumped into my throat and I was at a loss for words. I tried to regain my composure.

“Mr. Sahj, how are you?” I asked.

“Please sit,” he clasped my arm, not in a threatening way but I was very apprehensive about the possibility of violence that I complied.

“I really can’t stay,” I said.

“I am sorry if I frightened you, at the restaurant. I have to confess that our meeting was not an accident. The men in the restaurant are after information that you can provide. I know that word is out on the vital evidence possessed by an American woman. You must be careful to whom

you give this information.”

“I think there is a mistake. I don’t know what____.”

“The photo,” he said.

I didn’t know what to say. I was shocked. I didn’t know what I could or should tell him. How he knows about the photo, and any information it may have contained is the question. I was suddenly frightened of this man.

“I don’t know what you are talking about,” I said. I attempted to stand and leave. He clasped my arm again.

“I tell you this for your protection. I do not wish you to be hurt, therefore you must not allow the information to go into the wrong hands. I cannot warn you strongly enough of the danger you have put yourself in, and the urgency in which this matter must be resolved. There are forces surrounding this endeavor which will swallow you without warning. Do you understand what you have become involved in?”

“Who are you? What do you want from me?” I asked. I hoped that he would tell me something, anything that would help me understand. I looked into his dark eyes. He had kind eyes, but I wasn’t connecting the actual events to my intuitive awareness. What I saw in him and what my gut feelings were, was pretty much in agreement. However, what he was telling me was different. He suddenly rose and walked away, down the stairs to the cargo area.

Dimitris came up behind me. I was still in shock at the encounter. He put his arm around my shoulder and asked,

“Helena, was that Sahj? Was that man Sahj? Are you alright? Helena!” He was agitated and concerned. I turned to hug Dimitris. I just needed to catch my breath and compose myself. Dimitris got up and started to leave in the direction that Sahj went.

“Dimi, no! Don’t. Please don’t.” I pleaded. He looked back at me and thought better of his pursuit of Sahj and returned to not leave me abandoned. He offered me his hand. We left the area and returned to the protected alcove in the bar. Dimitris held me tight as we sat in the dark corner.

“Tell me. Tell Dimi about it,” he said.

“He came from out of nowhere, he was just suddenly there.”

“And you sit with him?”

“I didn’t have much choice, he had my arm and__,” I didn’t even finish when Dimitris started to get up. I tried to grab his wrist, but he slipped out of my grasp. “Wait! Dimi, don’t go.”

“I will find him!”

“Dimi, he knows about the photo.” When I heard myself say it, I realized that if he knows about the photo, who else knows? What else does he know?

“What? How? What else?” He asked as he came to sit next to me.

“He said that I have vital information and that I should be careful who I give it to. Dimi, I don’t think he’s a threat, but I’m afraid. If he knows about the photo, and others know that an American woman has *vital information*, what’s going to happen? I’ve got to tell Morgan! She may be in danger.”

“Helena, maybe you should spend time with father. Go away from here for awhile.”

I could hardly believe what he just said. This was something that never entered my mind, even with all of the violence that has come about, the thought of leaving never entered my mind.

“You’re sending me away?” He looked away from me with his sad eyes, but he didn’t say anything. He had my hand, he was looking down but wouldn’t answer. “No, Dimi.”

Our ferry stopped in Athens before it went on to Kefalonia.

“Come.” Dimitris stood and surprised me with his sudden decision to leave the bar. We would normally wait here until we arrive at our destination. He took my hand as he led me to the railing. We saw Sahj leave with other passengers.

“We go now also,” he said.

“Where are we going?” I asked.

“We must rent car.”

When we got to the apartment, Morgan was glad to see us. I told her about

our latest meeting with Sahj and asked her if she could tell us anything about her abduction that she can remember, that might have escaped her memory before. I think that she understood the urgency of this, but she wasn't able to give us any answers. I could see that she felt under pressure because of the circumstances that continue to come up, and I know she was trying to help us. She was trying to think. She turned in contemplation, and I had hoped that something new would emerge.

"I said everything I could remember. Why does this keep coming up?" She was getting flustered.

"I don't mean to upset you again, I just want you to try to think if you might have overheard something, or if they asked you anything a little unusual. Do you remember them mentioning any names or places, anything?"

"I can't think with everybody staring at me!" Morgan said.

"Okay, well, I'm sorry. If anything comes to you, will you write it down or call me?" I asked. I thought that if I mentioned any of the names that were on the investigation reports, maybe it would stir some memory, but I didn't want to pollute her memory with implanted names that are suggested. She seemed to clam up with the subject of the time she was held. I know that it was traumatizing, but there was something else. Something she's not saying.

"They were speaking in another language, it didn't sound like Greek. If they had said anything, I wouldn't have understood it," she said. "They did threaten to kill us if I didn't tell them where the photo was. That's all I remember." She seemed to have run out of steam, like a deflated balloon, it stole her strength to recount what little she said.

"Thanks, Morgan, I appreciate it. Be careful! Don't go anywhere alone," I said.

"Come, Helena, we go now," Dimitris placed his hand on the small of my back.

"I thought you wanted to wait for Andreas?" Morgan questioned.

"We maybe come back," Dimitris said.

When we got to the car I looked at Dimitris. He had a plan, he had a

destination, and he was determined.

“Where are we headed, my love?” I asked.

“We will see Interpol investigators. We can not play anymore, Helena,” he said.

“But what can we tell them? We don’t know if this Sahj is someone else or who these people are that are after us...we have no proof,” I said.

“Still, we tell them. We tell them all we know.”

We were ushered into a small office after filling out some papers. The questions on the forms had nothing in common with the reason we were there. When we were interviewed it was all very formal and it didn’t seem that there was much interest in what we said. We were wasting our time and they figured we were wasting theirs as well.

As we were leaving, I pointed out to Dimitris that we were being watched as we left the building. He was able to see two or three men conversing as they watched us leave, by their reflections in the glass door we passed through.

“Yes, Helena, I think you are right.”

“What do we do now?”

“We will go to Andreas’ and Morgana’s. Tomorrow we go home.” He put his arm around me then said “I will not let something happen to hurt you. We will leave if we must. But first, we will go to our envelope of papers. See what is there. Maybe we miss something.”

We stayed in Athens for the night and mentioned to Andreas the way we were treated by the investigators. Morgan had little to say on the subject. She was quite reclusive most of the time we were there. I thought I’d talk to her alone to see if she would say to me what she wouldn’t say in front of the men. I didn’t have a chance before we had to leave.

When we got to the docks, the ferry hadn’t arrived yet, and the tide was such that it may be up to an hour late. Dimitris and I decided to wait our time in a kafenia across the square from the loading area. We were seated at a booth next to the front window. We had a great view of the docks and the activities in the loading area, plus we could watch the people who came and went in

this small area of the city. Here is where the locals would come to collect shipments and packages from other areas. It was as much a commercial line as it was a passenger carrier, so the activity was continuous, rain or shine.

While we waited, we had a Greek coffee and we talked about Morgan's demeanor. She was a worry still, at this late date, and Andreas hid his concerns fairly well.

When Dimitris came back from the bar he moved in next to me, putting his arm around me and holding my wrist. He kissed me under my ear and whispered sweeties in my ear. I had a feeling that we would be playing "the game" on the way home.

I laughed at some of the things he was saying when I noticed on the docks, three dark men who seemed to be loitering around some crates that were to be loaded. I wouldn't have paid much attention except that after a few minutes, Sahj walked up to the men. It appeared that they were in a discussion.

"Dimi, look over there. That's Sahj. Can you see what he's doing? I wish I had my camera. If I could get a picture of him, maybe we could find out who he is," I said as we watched his movements.

"I no like to have him on same boat as my Helena," he said with his hand gripping my wrist.

"Sweetie, he's never threatened me, so I'm not afraid of him so much, at least when I'm in public. I would like to find out what and how much he knows."

"Please do not encourage, Helena. I will worry until this business finish!" He gripped my wrist tighter. I looked at his worried face, and I knew that I could do nothing that would jeopardize his love for me, with my curiosity and stubbornness.

I placed my hand over his and kissed his lips.

"I will do nothing Dimi," I said as I looked into his worried eyes. "Don't worry."

"You are too curious Helena, you will get in trouble if not careful," he warned. When we looked again, Sahj was not in view. His companions were not visible either.

“Maybe he isn’t taking the ferry to Kefalonia,” I said. We waited in the booth until the ferry docked.

When we boarded the ferry, there were more passengers going than I had ever experienced. There were so many tourists there was only room for me to sit, so Dimitris had to stand. Not only were there adult tourists but a class of pupils at the age of around 10 years old that were running about all over the boat.

It was very noisy and we could not talk without having to yell over the noise of the passengers. I wanted to use the facilities, so Dimitris and I walked to the back of the ferry. I was lucky that there were only two other women in the powder room.

Dimitris wasn’t as lucky. The men’s room was “standing room only”. When he finally exited the men’s room he waited outside the corridor. Children were running everywhere, as the time seemed to pass so slowly. After fifteen minutes of waiting, Dimitris took out his cell phone. There was no connection, so he waited patiently as other women came and went. After forty minutes Dimitris went to the door of the ladies room. Whenever someone came in or out of the door he’d try to peer into the lounge, hoping to see Helena.

When the ferry came into dock, the crowds of people descended on the stairs to the lower deck past the corridor to the restrooms. While Dimitris stood in the corridor looking all around for Helena, a young boy of around ten years bent down to retrieve an envelope that lay at Dimitris’ feet. In Greek the boy said:

“Sir, you dropped this?”

Dimitris tried to wave him off, but he saw his name on the envelope. He took it from the boy. As he curiously looked at it, the boy was pushed by the crowd and swallowed in the confusion.

Dimitris opened the envelope. The first item he saw was a Polaroid photo of Helena in the ocean water being pulled out by unsavory type men. The tail of a small boat was visible in the photo also, but no identifying marks

were visible. This made Dimitris' heart jump with fear of what might have happened, and of what might be ahead.

As the crowd was vacating the passenger area, Dimitris was able to sit. He pulled open the note that was with the Polaroid.

In Greek it read:

YOU WILL BE CONTACTED.

There was no doubt that Helena was in danger. He was sick with worry at the thought of harm coming to his wife. He was willing to do whatever it took to get her back safely. In the back of his mind, he had the dreaded feeling that this may not have a happy ending. Even with complying with the demands of these individuals, these people were not honorable, what they say and what they do would be two different things.

Once the ferry seemed to be free of passengers, Dimitris knocked on the ladies lounge door, went inside and looked around. He knew that she wouldn't be there, but he had to know in his own mind that it was true. He went to the dock to see if anyone was loitering or looking conspicuous. There was no one.

When he entered the house he was greeted by barking. The house was cold and quiet. The mail was generic, there were no messages on the phone. He let the dogs in to be fed. They were happy to be in the house with him, but they brought him no comfort. He began pacing the floor, going over in his mind the events of the day that preceded the incident.

He remembered seeing Sahj and some other men on the docks. Other than that, there was nothing that stood out as unusual. When the telephone rang in the kitchen, he picked it up before it could ring again.

"Dimitris, could I talk to Helena? Where have you guys been?" Morgan inquired.

"I will give message to call back." He said and hung up the phone. He didn't want to tell her what happened but didn't intend to be rude either.

It was already dark and still no word. He was beginning to regret not calling

the authorities. Since they had earlier made a report to Interpol, maybe he should have called them? It was a dilemma that he could not rationally sort out in his own mind.

As Dimitris paced, he looked out the front window at the sound of every vehicle that passed the house. He could not think. His emotions were running the gamut of fear, anger, and worry. He tried to sit. He re-read the note over and over, but it always said the same thing. The photo was fair quality, it was easy to see that Helena was in the ocean grasping for help. How could this happen on a vessel with so many people on board? Didn't anyone see anything, or try to stop it?

He stood again and paced, back and forth. What is happening? Why don't they call? He hadn't had these feelings since Helena and Morgan were mugged, but he knew that this would be much worse. The implications were dire. He felt helpless, and yet he knew that he had to follow instructions. He couldn't take a chance that he would put Helena in further danger if he did not comply with their demands. In the back of his mind, he kept wondering if he should have gone to Interpol at the beginning. But, there was too much at stake and he could not gamble.

When the time reached 8 p.m. he was ready to lift the phone and call Interpol. He hesitated before taking the receiver. The phone rang as his hand rested on it.

"Hello?" Dimitris waited but the line was quiet.

"Dimitris Patakinis." The male voice had an accent unfamiliar to him. The person continued in broken Greek. The instructions were simple. He was to bring the photo and maps and any other information pertaining to the photo to the docks at 6 a.m. He was to wait. He would be contacted at that point. Do not tell anyone or Helena would be hurt.

When Dimitris told them that he wanted to speak to Helena, the line went dead. Now there was the whole night to wait. He emptied out the manila envelope again. The photo wasn't with the copies and pages of test results. Where did it go? He sorted through the papers, all photocopies of mug shots, and photos in one stack. The tests in another. Dimitris made copies of everything. All copies were put in the safe in the lab. The only copies he

would turn over was the reports and charts. The photograph still needed to be found.

Dimitris thought about when the last time the photograph was spoken of, which was when Stefano gave them the file. He handed the photo to Helena separately from the file, and she must have put it in her purse. He would have to search the house.

He searched every cupboard and drawer in her studio and in the main house. He dreaded the thought of having to search through her dresser and bath.

He had no choice. He had to find it and procrastination was not in his nature. He carefully ran his hands through one drawer then another. The scent of the lingerie drawer was intoxicating, and it was breaking his heart. He found letters and other small mementos in the corners of the drawers, in small boxes, but no photo.

In the studio was a table which had a drawer behind a drawer. It was an old security table from a more naive time. He had searched the reference file cabinets and the first drawer of this table on the first round of searching, but this secret drawer was not searched.

He pulled out the first drawer, it had small boxes, a notebook, a stack of greeting cards. Underneath it all...the photo! There it was, after hours of frustration and painful searching. He picked up the drawer to replace it, but then he spotted the second drawer. He hesitated but then pulled it out far enough to take a look inside. There was a small cloth bound journal with a ribbon marker. He picked it up and ran his hand over the Chinese silk brocade. He contemplated the contents. He put it back without opening it. He took the photo to the scanner. He made copies of everything and saved it all to a folder on the computer. By 3 am he had all the copies of everything scanned into the computer. He wrote a letter outlining the events leading up to this latest scenario. This would be an explanation to anyone who may investigate the disappearance of Mr & Mrs. Dimitris Patakinis.

He then wrote a letter to Stefano. Very short with instructions on where to find the file on the computer, and the password, should anything happen to him.

By 5 a.m. Dimitris was exhausted but unable to relax. He checked the time so many times that he lost count. He picked up the envelope, put on a jacket then left for the docks. There wasn't any point to wandering around this empty house. He started the little car and drove to the docks. He sat there until 5:50 am. He then went to the Pursers office and waited.

The ferry approached and was ready for docking when his cell phone rang. When he answered, the voice on the other end began to make demands.

"I must talk to Helena. I must know she is not hurt." Dimitris said in Greek. He could hear the voice speaking another language to someone else, then speaking in Greek to him. He held on the phone and waited.

"Dimi?"

"Helena! Helena are you okay?"

"They want the photo and map, Dimi, be careful___."

"Helena? Helena?" She was not there.

He was to board the ferry and go to Crete. He will be instructed on what to do next. He did as they asked. He sat on the ferry in transit to Crete. He expected to be approached by any number of individuals. Each stop along the way received more passengers. Dimitris paced the floor of the passenger area. He went to the bar and got a tall coffee. He sat at the table near the door, keeping his eyes open for suspicious characters.

A well-dressed woman in her mid-thirties to early forties asked if she could sit at his table. He gave her his chair.

"Thank you, are you going to sit?" She asked.

"No, I will go." He returned to the passenger lounge. He spotted Sahj sitting by the snack kiosk reading a newspaper.

"Where is my wife?" Dimitris demanded.

"I beg your pardon," Sahj replied.

Dimitris was trying to control his anger. He was shaking from the anger

that had been building inside and he knew that Helena's life may rest in his ability to control himself.

Dimitris sat in the seat near Mr. Sahj and again he asked in a softer voice so that he would not attract attention.

"Where is my wife, Helena?"

"I'm sorry, I have no idea to what you are referring," he answered.

"I bring envelope." He opened his jacket and showed the envelope, which was tucked inside the waistband of his trousers. "Tell me where she is."

"You are mistaken, sir. I am sorry." Sahj then stood and walked away. Dimitris was going to follow him when his phone rang.

"What? Where is she?" He yelled into the phone.

The voice told him to disembark in Crete. He is to wait at the monument in Iraklion. This could be an attempt to steal the documents. This was no guarantee that Helena would be on Crete. He couldn't be sure that he'd ever see her again. A thought came to him that he could call Stefano and he could be in Crete before the ferry got there, but getting anyone else involved would make it more dangerous.

Sahj disembarked in Patras. Dimitris watched him from the deck railing as Sahj started talking on his cell phone when he walked down the docks to a taxi. There was something about this Ahmed Sahj. It was apparent that he was not the person calling Dimitris. There was no proof that he was involved, but for him to know as much as he seemed to know, was not a coincidence.

Dimitris sat. Everyone he saw, he saw in a new light. Was this person a part of it, or that person perhaps? If there were ever a time when Dimitris wished he smoked, this is the time. He couldn't sit still.

"Barman...Ouzo," he said.

"A little early for Ouzo, isn't it?" Dimitris turned around and saw Aiden.

"What you do here?"

"I was going to ask you the same thing!" Aiden said, tapping Dimitris on the back. "Give me a tall coffee please."

"I have job to do," Dimitris said.

“What’s wrong? You and Helen have a fight?” Aiden asked.

“Why you ask this?”

“You look like somebody died, I figured you two had a blow-out.”

“If only so simple,” Dimitris muttered as he drank his Ouzo.

“So, what gives, can I help?” Aiden asked.

Dimitris was tempted to confide in Aiden, but he resisted the urge and put him off.

“No, no is nothing. Family problem.”

“Well, it’ll pass, they usually do.”

“Where you go, Aiden?” Dimitris asked.

“Milos, I’m bidding a job for Andreas. It’s a restoration, so it’s small, probably not more than a four-day job,” he answered. “Only problem with small jobs, is that after you meet with the owner, it turns into a big job. Are you heading to Karpathos?” Aiden asked.

“Yes, Karpathos,” He couldn’t let on to his real destination.

Dimitris’ phone rang again, it was Morgan.

“Dimitris, I’ve been trying to call Helen. Where is she? May I talk to her?”

“She will call later, Miss Morgana,” he said.

“What’s wrong? Where is she?” Morgan asked.

“I will have her call,” he said. “Goodbye.”

Morgan knew from Dimitris’ tone that something was wrong. When there was no answer to her call, and the cell phone not receiving for two days, Morgan knew something had happened. When his phone rang again, he could see that the caller was either Andreas or Morgan again. He denied the call and re-booted his cell phone.

“You’re a popular man today,” Aiden said. “So how is married life and your beautiful bride?”

“She is wonderful! We have a wonderful life!” Dimitris said without a smile, without looking up, without his usual exuberance.

“I didn’t mean to intrude on your privacy,” Aiden was just about to excuse himself.

“I am sorry, Aiden. I do not think. I must apologize for rudeness.”

“No, don’t worry about it,” he said. “I have to make a call; take it easy, man.”
Aiden went to a booth and made a call.

When the phone rang again it was Stefano. They spoke in Greek to each other. Dimitris couldn’t tell anyone what the problem was, for their own safety as well as Helen’s.

He was losing his patience with the third degree questioning that Stefano was giving him. It was obvious to Dimitris that Aiden called Andreas, and Andreas called Stefano. Everyone knew that something was going on, and now they knew that he was alone on a ferry to Karpathos. He did not correct this misinformation, but he did elude to Stefano that he would not be at the docks in Karpathos, so don’t bother trying to pick him up there. There were only so many stops on this ferry line. Dimitris had to be blunt with Stefano and clicked off the phone. He had to keep his phone clear for the instructions he was expecting to get at any time.

Labyrinth



Late, as usual, the ferry arrived in Iraklion, Crete. The monument where Dimitris was to wait wasn't far and he could walk the distance in twenty minutes. His senses were sharpened to notice every face, every bench, any place where someone might be lurking. He had the envelope safely tucked into his waistband, under his zippered jacket.

The area where the ferry docked was near both the bus depot and the airport. The more he thought about it the more he was convinced that the photo was the best insurance he had. Without the photo, he had no leverage in gaining Helen's release. It might come as the last resort for her freedom. He decided that he should stow the photo. The safest thing that he could think of would be to take it to a photo shop and ask them to copy the photo without taking it apart. He would return later to pick it up, thinking that it would be a good excuse to return with Helena to a public place. Once they are able to hand over the photo, they can return home. At least this would be the goal.

The monument stood in a public square where tourists and traffic would pass by. As he answered his phone he was instructed to leave the envelope in the trash canister near the street.

"I must see Helena before I give documents," he said. He knew that when it came right down to it, he had no leverage. They threatened again and made

it clear that they were not playing games.

“I do not play games either. I will be taken to Helena or the documents will be destroyed.” He had only this choice. If they were to harm Helena, it is certain that he was in danger as well, but his safety was not what was important to him. He could only think of seeing his wife.

He was told to go from Iraklion to Knossos. He would be met at the entrance to the Palace. He crossed the street to wave a taxi when he spotted Aiden peering out at him from within one of the shops. Dimitris went into the shop to confront him.

“What you do, follow Dimitris?”

“Hey, man, everyone is worried, Andreas asked me to keep an eye out, make sure everything is okay,” he said.

“You do not follow,” Dimitris warned then turned to leave.

“Where’s Helen? What’s going on?” Aiden asked as Dimitris was leaving. He turned to Aiden.

“If you want to help Helena, stay away,” Dimitris started to leave, then turned back to Aiden.

“Do you know about photo of little girl?” He asked.

“I’ve heard some of it, what Helen and Morgan went through because of it.”

“Then you know it is dangerous,” Dimitris said.

“Yeah. They took her, didn’t they?” Aiden asked.

“Yes. You wish to help? It will be danger for you.”

“What do I do?” Aiden was willing to get involved.

Dimitris looked around. This little shop had an aisle of clothing racks which blocked the view from the street and provided more privacy. He removed the envelope and dug out the letter to Stefano.

“I will call with news. Maybe take hours. If you no hear from me by 5 p.m., go to police. Here is letter, give to Stefano if I no return.” He jotted down the name of the photo store on the Avenue with the word “photo” underlined three times and handed the letter to Aiden.

“You have my cell phone number?” Aiden asked. Dimitris re-checked. The number was already keyed into the phone.

“I must go, I will call,” Dimitris said. “Thank you, Aiden.” He shook his hand, tucked the envelope back into his trousers then left to flag down a taxi. “Knossos.” He told the cab driver as Aiden waited for the next taxi.

Aiden flagged a taxi to go to back to the docks. He called Andreas to keep him informed of what was happening. The chain of communication was activated. The news update went from Aiden to Andreas to Stefano.

When Dimitris arrived at the Palace entrance, he waited outside, pacing. Twenty minutes passed when his cell phone finally rang. The voice on the other end instructed him to take the envelope to the far end of the parking lot and place it on the seat of the green sedan parked there. He was then instructed to take the tour of the Palace.

Dimitris made his own demands.

“I will no surrender documents until I see Helena. You will take me to her. I will turn over papers to Interpol if you do not take me to her!”

The line went dead. There was no further communication. Two hours went by without any word. Dimitris felt like he was losing his sanity. He saw a taxi approach the parking lot. He waived it and got in. His destination was to be the airport. He thought he could contact Interpol through the airport police.

He was not taken to the airport, as the taxi was going further into the hills.

“Where you take me, this is not airport,” he said in Greek to the driver.

“Relax, you want to see wife?” The man answered in poor English and was not a taxi driver. He was dressed in work clothes, fisherman’s hat, plaid wool jacket, dirty work boots. His accent was unfamiliar. He did not look back nor speak beyond what was already said. They drove around what seemed like a big circle.

When the taxi stopped in the hills, Dimitris was taken from the cab where dirt trails curved up between bushes and large stones. He was told to follow the trail, someone will be waiting.

As he moved further into a crevice in the hills, he was directed to follow this person through boulders and rock debris that covered the entrance to a

cave. The remnants of iron gates were cast off to the side, leaving an entrance to a dark cavern. An old iron door was open and broken chains lay near the open doorway. He was guided by flashlight, lighting the way into the tunnel. From what he could see, he knew from stories from when he was a child that he was at the Labyrinth of Knossos, Crete. The legend of Minotaur began here.

Dimitris knew that if Helena was in the Labyrinth, she would be hard to find. A blindfold was put over his eyes, he was searched. His cell phone, wallet and the envelope were all taken from him. He was led uphill, downhill and what seemed like around in circles.

When they stopped and removed the hood from Dimitris' head, he was facing a short stocky man who was going over the contents of the envelope on a desk at which he was seated.

There was a generator and lights in this stuffy room, which was carved out of solid rock. There were two other tall men standing on either side of Dimitris.

"You have a very stubborn wife, my friend." The short man said.

"Where is she?" Dimitris asked.

"My name is Nasir Hakim. I tell you this because I know you will never tell anyone. I have searched for this for many, many years, now my search is... ..where is it? Where is the photo? The photo is not here," Nasir ripped the large envelope in his desperate search.

"I have photo in safe place. You get when Helena is safe," Dimitris told him.

"How cliché. You use the vital piece as leverage. Very smart, but it will not work. You see my friend, I have your wife," Nasir said.

"This information will be no use without photo, you will take me to my wife," Dimitris spoke clearly in his heightened awareness.

Nasir nodded to his two thugs. They grabbed Dimitris, one on each side, bending his arms behind him. Nasir got down to ground level where Dimitris' head was almost touching and told him,

"Your wife, she wasn't so co-operative when she first arrived. With a little persuasion, she gave us little information, I am afraid that she will

be persuaded to give more. If it wasn't for Abijah, my colleagues might have had their way with her."

Dimitris struggled to free his arms from the two gangsters. They had the advantage over him.

"Your wife has the most beautiful hair. I would wager that her skin is like silk," he said.

"You will not touch her!" Dimitris said.

"She has the fire in her eyes. A temper, that one has. She has the fire in bed also, I suspect," Nasir taunted.

Nasir knew how to get a reaction out of Dimitris. Dimitris got so angry that he pulled one arm free from one of the thugs. He punched him once in the face then in the stomach. The thug fell over the foot of his companion. As Dimitris turned, he was hit on the back of the head, then he went down.

"Dimitris! Dimi!" I cried when they dumped him in the dirt. I was barely able to move but made myself crawl to where they dumped him. "Dimi, oh Dimi, what did they do to you?" In the darkness, I could hardly see as I tried to gently roll him over and place his bleeding head in my lap. He was bleeding profusely from a gash on the back of the head. He lay unconscious in my lap as I rocked him, my tears streaking his cheek.

The light in the little alcove room was cast from the main corridor. There were very few lights available in all of the dozens of rooms in this underground cave. Lighting was only set up to accommodate rooms and corridors up to the first tri-way, where the first of many corridors cross.

The Labyrinth had never been completely mapped, but what was known of the layout of this maze of corridors was kept in scientific journals. It is historically known to have been occupied in the 14th century. Then, the Germans later vacated their occupation of the cave near the end of World War II. The entrances were bombed to keep hidden a large stash of explosives.

This was a place that one would *not* find it difficult to get lost. Paths and corridors that lead to collapsed interiors, one path crossing others was meant to confuse. Finding a way in was easy, but finding a way out was another

matter. Strangers to the Labyrinth were soon caught by the inhabitants and dealt with.

I had been punched, starved, tied up, manhandled and not allowed to sleep since I was taken from the ferry. Dimitris now was not able to escape on his own, so the prospects of us being able to slip away unnoticed was not good.

I had been tied and made to sit on the dirt floor. Now I was holding my injured husband in my lap, the tears cleaning a path down my soiled cheeks. There wasn't anything I could do for Dimitris. I had been isolated in this dungeon for almost 24 hours, gradually feeling weaker from lack of food and water.

I felt someone's hand on my shoulder, and as I looked up I saw Sahj. He handed me a bottle of water. I reached up, wrists tied in front of me to accept the bottle offered.

"Thank you." I sobbed. I sipped some of the water. I tore off a piece of cloth from my ripped blouse, wet it and placed it on the back of Dimitris' head. The bleeding had nearly stopped, but the wound had great swelling. "Why are you doing this to us?" I asked. Sahj placed his finger to his lips to shush me and then left.

"Dimi? Dimi." I wet my hand and ran it over his face. "Dimi?" He started to respond. I wet the cloth again and wiped it over his brow. He started to open his eyes.

"Uhh, my head! What ___." He looked up at me, trying to care for him in the shadows. "My Heart," he said with great pain.

"Shh, Dimi." I tried to calm him and not draw attention to him. His head was swollen and blood had caked in his hair.

"Helena! My Heart," he tried to sit up, he put his arm around me as I still held him in my lap. I bent my head down to hold him close to me. "I think I never see you. What they do to you?" He whispered.

"Dimi, don't get up, you've had a hard knock, you need to rest. Here's some water, drink."

"We need to leave, go out of this place," he said.

"Sahj is here," I said.

When the men came back, they pulled Dimitris away from me and tossed him into a corner.

“Now, let me see that fire in you,” Nasir said. Dimitris tried to get up. They kicked him in the chest and pulled out a gun. I tried to scoot away from Nasir as his hand reached out for my shoulder. I couldn’t get away with the binding still wrapped around my ankles. I waved my fists in an attempt to keep him from touching me. He caught my arms in flight then dragged me from the alcove where Dimitris lay conscious, but just barely. I was dragged to another room off of the corridor where four others were sitting and smoking some horrible smelling tobacco, where my hands were then bound behind my back.

Dimitris was trying to get his bearings. His head was throbbing and he couldn’t focus his eyes in the low light of the cave. The sound of Helena screaming echoed throughout the chambers but he knew that whatever was happening to her, he could not stop it.

The screams continued and they ripped through Dimitris’ heart. He was in pain as well, hearing the sounds reverberate in his head. The man guarding Dimitris went to the other room to investigate. Dimitris tried to stand, but his equilibrium was out of kilter and made it difficult for him to keep his balance. He heard the silence of screams, then the murmurs and laughter of men. The sound of gagging, and vomiting, meant that Helena was at least still alive, but what she went through, Dimitris hated to think about. He was hoping there was a way to get out of this alcove without being discovered, but the outlook for this was bleak.

My hair was being pulled to the point where my head was forced back, leaving my back in an arch. I had no more fight in me, the muscles of my neck were no match to the strength of the men. I was being held down on the dirt floor.

After having my clothes torn to shreds, and being held down in the dirt, these pigs gathered around me. It was a “contest.” I fought and screamed, but it didn’t help me. I had to close my eyes and mouth, hoping that the semen that landed on my face would not enter me. I got nauseous at the sight of them, as I turned my face away, I began to vomit.

I was recovering from the vomiting, but was gagging and could hardly breathe. They let loose of me to get sick in the dirt. I could not move from the overexertion that weakened me. I lay panting to try to catch my breath in this dust pit. I was grateful that I was in a different room than Dimitris, as I didn't want him to see what they were doing to me.

I laid still, hoping to be forgotten. There was one of the men, a dirty slimy looking man in his mid-sixties with a stubble beard and gut that hung almost to his knees, standing in the corner of the room, watching the "contest." When the game was over and the others sat on their haunches in a circle discussing the documents and looking at the papers, this slob stood over me then started to open his breeches. I tried to move away but he caught my leg. He was trying to get my jeans down but with his weight leaning on my leg and my ankles tied together, the jeans were difficult to cooperate. It didn't seem to matter to him. He laid on top of me and breathed his sour breath on me. His rough dirty hands were all over me. The rags that were left of my clothes left me open, vulnerable and cold. I was grateful for being in a dimly lit corner where I didn't have to see the horror that I felt.

There was a huge boom that echoed through the dark cavernous chamber. All the men stood and seemed to be straightening out their clothes. The slob who was so intent on humping my leg wasn't fazed by the noise and continued his act.

I could hear a voice speaking in a foreign tongue with authority over the others. The men all left the room. One man came over to the slob and nudged him with his foot hard enough to knock him off of me. He spoke severely at the pig, who got up and left in a rush.

I was left in the room alone. I could not do much but lay there on my side. My hands were tied and ankles were burned from the ropes. I heard scuffling sounds and could see the glow of dust in the air reflecting off the distant lights.

"Helena?" I heard whispered from the corridor. "Helena?" I heard again.

"Dimi," I whispered back. "Dimi, over here," I said in a soft voice. He was

hugging the wall, trying to stand but not able to remain upright.

“Over here, Dimi, be careful.” I couldn’t lift my head off of the dirt floor. Dimitris had to crawl to me.

“Helena, Helena are you hurt?”

“Dimi.” I started to cry. I didn’t want him to see me like this. He came to me but didn’t know where to begin to help me. He brushed the hair off my face and helped me to sit up.

“What they do to you? Dimi so sorry, so sorry I did not help you,” he said as he tried to untie the rope on my wrists.

“Hurry, Dimi.” I sobbed.

“We will leave to go to America. You will not stay here_____.”

“Shhh! Someone’s coming,” I said.

We sat quietly waiting to see what was happening.

From the glare of the dirt against the light, I could only see a shadowy figure in the corridor, speaking what sounded like German to another person. He soon turned to our alcove room. He walked up to us, a very tall figure. It was Sahj.

He took out a knife then came up to me. Dimitris had his arm around me, trying to cover and protect me. Sahj leaned over me then cut the rope around my wrists. In a quiet voice, he said,

“It would be best to give them what they want.”

“I don’t have it,” I said.

“I have it!” Dimitris piped up, then Sahj turned to him. “Is in locker at airport.”

“Airports do not have lockers,” Sahj said. “You would do well not to play games.” Dimitris looked at me.

“Will you free us?” I asked.

“Tell me.” Sahj insisted.

“It is in town, at photo store.” Dimitris said, with hope that everything went as planned.

Sahj, Nasir, and the other men were huddled in conversation. Suddenly all of the men, except Sahj, left. The place was suddenly quiet. Then Sahj took

out his cell phone. He was walking into the main corridor talking quietly on his cell.

I dragged myself over to Dimitris. He looked as if his vision was blurred and wasn't quite himself yet. I'm sure he was in a lot of pain. I put my arms around him and looked into his pained eyes. He took off his shirt and put it around me. I put it on and buttoned it. His t-shirt was bloodstained and was no protection from the dankness that whipped through the corridor on occasion.

"Thank you, Sweetheart," I said. Every time I would try to look into Dimitris' eyes, the tears would begin to streak my face. He put his hand on my cheek, then held me.

"Are you alright, Helena?"

"Yes, I'm not hurt. How is your pain?"

"Terrible head," he said. After ten minutes, Sahj came back.

"Are you alright?" He asked from his tall stance.

I was reluctant to answer. Why was this man asking how we are? I didn't get it. We are put through this hell and he's asking if we're alright. I was confused. It had been a long time since I'd slept, I don't even know how long it had been.

"I think Dimitris is hurt," I said. Sahj untied my legs.

"Can you walk?" He asked me. I wondered where I was to be taken.

"Yes," I answered. He helped Dimitris up.

"I do wish that I could have prevented this, but I think it will all work out in the end." He was helping us to find our way out of the maze. When we got close enough to see the light leaking into the darkness ahead, he stopped.

"Wait, I will check to see if it's clear," he said as he set Dimitris down against the wall. I looked at Dimitris. He was leaning against me, holding his head.

"It's almost over, Sweetie," I said.

Sahj went to the exit. We could hear what sounded like several male voices

shouting and arguing. We couldn't understand what was said, as the voices all became garbled in echoes that bounced around the inside of this cave. The sound of gunfire pierced the echoes in this chamber of the Labyrinth and then the lights went out. Dimitris and I huddled together trying to stay out of sight. We could see the reflection of light coming from the only open exit. The small shaft of light that shown into the corridor was suddenly gone. The echo of a key in the lock of an iron door reverberated throughout the chambers. We both knew what this meant.

"Dimi, hold me," I said. It felt so comforting and wonderful to have him near me.

"Helena, we must find our way out of here," he said.

"Can we rest here for a minute? I haven't slept and you need to rest before we try to find a way out."

We laid in a way that we could rest on each other. It was awkward, but we were both so exhausted that our togetherness made up for the discomfort. Although sleep was eluding us, we were still able to rest enough to restore some of our strength. With his head injury, I worried about letting Dimitris go to sleep.

"Helena? Do we know where we are?" Dimitris asked.

"I think we're about fifty yards or so from where I came in. There's a generator for lights, but I don't know exactly where it is. If we come across it maybe we'll have some light," I said. We tried to stand with the little strength we gained from our rest.

"Do you know where this room is, where Nasir had desk?"

"Maybe, I'd have to feel my way. Watch your head as we go, Dimi, the ceiling is low in some places," I said.

I felt my way around the wall until I knew what direction I was headed. To get to the little room where the desk was, we'd have to cross the corridor.

"Hold onto me, Dimi, we have to go to the other side," I said.

Dimitris held onto the waistband of my jeans. I had to have two hands to be

able to feel the walls and check overhead for low ceilings. It was a greater distance across the corridor in the darkness than I anticipated. I began to feel disoriented. I wasn't sure anymore if I was headed in the right direction. The rocks and debris that had fallen from the ceiling and walls were stumbling blocks in the dark, and with my bare feet, they felt like I was walking on shards of pottery. If Dimitris hadn't been hanging onto me, I would have tripped several times.

We found our way across the corridor where I could feel the wall to the next chamber. This chamber seemed quite large, and we felt for sure that we had gone too far off of our mark. We could easily be lost down the wrong corridor in this immense subterranean maze of the ancient ones. It was originally constructed to allow strangers in, but without proper knowledge, they would not find a way out and even in these modern times people have become trapped. We could possibly be the next victims of the Labyrinth.

"Dimi, if we've gone too far we should backtrack, or we'll lose our bearings altogether," I said.

"Helena, stop. I must rest for one minute."

"Sugar, are you feeling worse?" I took his hand from my waistband. "Careful, feel the wall and sit against it." He did as I asked. He was coughing more and more. I was beginning to worry about it, but we had to find a way out before we both were down. I felt for his shoulder, then he lifted his arm for me to be sheltered. I laid my head on his shoulder. Being in his warmth was a comfort to me.

"Helena, did they hurt you? Did they put their filthy hands on you?"

"They pushed me around a little, but no, I'm fine. How is your head? Do you feel dizzy?" I asked. I didn't want to go through the details of my ordeal with Dimitris in such a condition, there was plenty of time to discuss it. I worried about him, we needed to find a way out. He needed to go to a hospital. I tried to feel where his face was, I just wanted to be close to him. I could snuggle into his neck, his scent a comfort to me, and having his arms around me made me feel safe, even here in this place.

“No, not dizzy, just weak, tired,” he said. “Stomach upset, too.”

“It’s probably shock,” I said, and was deeply praying it wasn’t a concussion.

“Come, let’s get up and try again,” he said.

“They took your cell phone?”

“They take all.”

“Be sure you hang on to me, we can’t get separated,” I said.

The time was after 7 p.m. Aiden did exactly as Dimitris directed. When he hadn’t heard anything from Dimitris by 5 p.m., he called the Interpol investigators. He retrieved the photo from the little shop and called Stefano.

Stefano told Aiden to open the letter and read it to him. Stefano knew what the photo meant, but where are Dimitris and Helena?

“I heard him order a cab to Knossos,” Aiden told Stefano.

“Knossos?” Stefano knew Knossos. In his line of work, it was the most prestigious ancient structure of it’s kind. This would be the most likely place they may have been taken, it was virtually deserted at night.

Stefano didn’t waste time, he had access to swift transport, even after dark. He took advantage of the antiquities department that was funded by the University. Since they were indebted to Stefano for the vital clues to Deischant’s treasures, he had a helicopter ready to take him to Crete.

When he boarded the helicopter he was surprised to see Professor Kanakaras.

“I couldn’t let you have all the adventure to yourself!” Professor Kanakaras said to Stefano.

“This may have nothing to do with Deischant or the antiquities, professor,” Stefano said.

“But the possibilities are fascinating!”

When their helicopter landed at the Iraklion airport, there were red and blue lights blinking all around the terminal. Stefano’s pilot told them that the terminal is closed and that they would have to remain on-board until they

had clearance.

“We can’t sit here all night, I’m getting off,” Stefano said.

“But isn’t it against the wishes of the authorities?” The professor asked.

“Yes, but I have more urgent matters to deal with,” Stefano said.

“Well, let’s go then.” They made their way into the terminal through the loading ramp area of one of the gates. They were asked for identification and cleared to leave the airport.

“Stefano! Stefano, over here!” Aiden called out. “How did you get here so fast?”

“Have you heard anything from Dimitris?” Stefano asked.

“No, I guess Morgan and Andreas have been trying to contact him also, with no luck,” Aiden said. “Here, here’s the letter and the photo.”

“Ah, the photo, the troublesome photo. May I see it?” Professor Kanakaras inquired.

The authorities were swarmed around six or seven men, all laid out on the floor of the airport lobby with their hands stretched up behind their heads.

“Aiden, were you here when all this started?” Stefano asked.

“No,” Aiden reported.

“Professor Kanakaras, this is Aiden, a friend of my brother. Professor, we have an errand, would you mind taking a room and keeping the photo with you? I’ll call you when we’re finished.” Stefano asked.

“Yes, I would like to spend some time with the photo, thank you. I will stay at Iraklion Grand Hotel.”

“Okay, we’ll be going to Knossos, I’ll call you with our progress,” Stefano said.

Aiden and Stefano waved down a taxi.

“Knossos Palace,” Stefano told the driver.

“Palace closed.” The driver said with a very uninterested attitude.

“We know, just go,” Stefano said.

“What is this Knossos? I’ve seen it on maps.” Aiden asked.

“Well, there’s the Palace of Knossos and then there’s the Labyrinth, in the hills. Something tells me that Dimitris didn’t go to the Palace.” Stefano surmised.

“He was very distracted, he looked pretty bad.”

“Did he say anything to indicate where he was going or what he was doing?” Stefano asked.

“No, he wasn’t really very talkative. He was pretty worried about Helen, but I heard him tell the cab driver to go to Knossos. That’s about all, besides the envelope,” Aiden said.

“Envelope? A large manila envelope?”

“Yeah,” Aiden said.

Stefano took out his cell phone. “Andreas, I need your help.....”

“I think that we might have to turn around, I don’t think that it was this far, Sugar. I keep stepping on something cold and squishy. I hope it’s not anything alive, I lost my shoes,” I said.

I could feel Dimitris fall from behind me.

“Dimi! Where are you?” I turned and by waving my arms around, I couldn’t find him. I got down on the ground and crawled, feeling my way along the dirt floor for him. “Dimi, where are you?” I could hear him moan. I felt a little further back when I found his arm. He was laying with his face in the dirt. I tried to help him up. “Sweetie, you’re going to be okay. Dimi?” I sat next to him to allow his head to rest on my lap. I patted his face gently, “Sweetie?”

“Helena,” he said as he reached his arm up to rest his hand on my knee. “You must find the room with desk...a lantern or candle.” He was speaking in fragments and I was fearing his complete collapse.

“I can’t leave you here, come, you have to stand.”

“I get dizzy, lose balance, you do better. Go quicker without Dimi.” He was getting short of breath and I knew that I had to get him out of here and to a hospital as quickly as possible.

“Okay, but you have to keep talking to me. It will help me to navigate. I hate to leave you here,” I said.

“You go, find light.”

I headed in the same direction that we had been going. It would have gone faster if I had shoes, but I did get around the massive room. There was an

alcove area off of this huge room that was wet. The walls were dripping and I had to tread over a wet slab floor. I worked my way out of that nook and finally out of the huge room.

"Dimi? I can't hear you." I said as I continued along the wall.

"I am here. You do good, Helena." He was sounding far away and very tired. I hoped I would find something soon.

I finally came into a small room. There was a desk and cabinets which I ran into with my bare feet. I searched for anything that my fingers could identify. I found a book of matches. I lit one to hopefully find a candle or something that would give us some light. I looked at the walls for anything, but there were only electric lights with no power.

I rolled up some paper that I found in the drawer and lit it. I was able to make it back to Dimitris before it went out.

"Dimi, are you awake, Honey?" I got down to the ground, his head was resting on his hand. The torch I made was going out but I could see Dimi sleeping.

"Dimi, get up, come on Honey, get up! Let's move!" I had to be firm to get a reaction.

"Helena, I get up." I helped him stand.

"Let's go to the office room, maybe you can help me find a candle. Can you walk?" I asked.

"I try," he said.

When we got to the room, Dimi sat in the chair and put his head on the desk. We were running out of matches. Before my match went out, I found a cabinet in a far niche in the room. In the dark of the extinguished match, I felt my way over to it, then opened the doors. I felt along the shelves. I know the possibility of there being spider webs, and if I got bitten, well, I wouldn't worry about it, not now. I had to find something useful. There were several small candles in a box, mostly stumps of used up candles with wicks that were indiscernible within the wax. There were only three matches left, so I prayed that I could get a candle that would burn.

Holding my breath, I struck a match. The candle was stubborn, as the wick was somewhat submerged beneath the wax. I was able to light a smaller candle, which was a start. Hoping that it wouldn't go out I went back to check on Dimi. He wasn't too coherent and it was hard to get a rise out of him.

"Dimi, Sweetie!" I went to him and put my arms around his shoulders, kissing his hair. I put my hand on his forearm as I leaned closer to speak to him. "We're going to get out of here, Dimi," I said in a soft voice. He brought his hand up to my wrist.

When Stefano and Aiden got to the Palace, it was obvious that there had been no activity that was out of the ordinary. The gates at the Palace were locked, and the parking lot empty and very quiet.

"Take us to the Labyrinth." Stefano was aware of the fact that even if there are signs of recent activity at the Labyrinth, he had no flashlight or any way of illuminating their way. The taxi driver just looked in his rear view mirror. The taxi wound around the hills to a dirt road. From here it was dark, deserted and quite a distance from the city lights. They came to a clearing where several walking trails terminated.

"Deserted. No one comes here. Is off limits to public," the taxi driver said. Stefano knew that this place had been blocked from the public due to its delicate archival condition and that anyone wandering into it may never find their way out. Munitions were stored here at one time, and quite possibly still has dangerous explosives within. The government built iron gates to keep people out. This was not a place for tourists.

Andreas was able to bring the Athena into harbor, a dangerous endeavor at night. He walked from the docks at Kefalonia to Dimitris little car at the docks. Because of the constant travel between islands and family gatherings, Andreas had an extra key to the Bug. He did not, however, have an extra key to the house, and had to break in. When he entered, he heard the dogs barking and thought that he should feed the dogs while there. Once fed, Andreas turned on Dimitris' computer in the lab.

Stefano gave Andreas the password, which Dimitris provided to Stefano in the letter. When Andreas accessed the file that Dimitris saved, there was no mention of where he might have gone. There was the mention of Sahj and the little photo, but nothing giving any indication of his whereabouts.

As Andreas was in the kitchen, he noticed that the telephone was blinking. There was one message in the inbox. Andreas walked by it as he took the dogs back outside. As he locked the patio door and turned off the lights, the message indicator light blinked brightly. He decided to play the message.

It was Dimitris. His voice was very low, almost a whisper. He kept repeating "Knossos - Labyrinth." Then, overheard was Dimi asking someone he was with, "I will see my wife?" And "you will take me to Helena." There was no answer to this dialog.

Andreas called Stefano and replayed the message for Stefano to hear.

The taxi driver informed his passengers that this place is no place to be left in the dark, and warned of those who have disappeared here. He handed Stefano a flashlight and said that he would follow them. When Stefano and Aiden got out, there was a dirt path shrouded by bushes.

The moon wasn't much illumination for them as they worked their way up the path.

"Do not go further, too dangerous." The taxi driver warned as he trailed along behind the men. The path narrowed around rock formations that jutted out across the trail, causing them to pull back branches and make a new path. They approached the clearing in front of the iron gate.

There was an obstacle lying across the foot of the gate.

"Stefano! There's someone up there. He looks dead!" Aiden exclaimed.

Stefano approached the person on the ground and ascertained that he was still alive. He took out his cell phone and called the police. The man was laying in a pool of blood. He was unconscious. Stefano turned him over to reveal a wound in the upper chest. His breathing was shallow and gurgling.

"Aiden, check his pocket for some kind of identification," Stefano asked.

"He's not dead?" The cab driver asked curiously.

"Not yet, but he's not good," Stefano said.

Aiden found some identification in the man's pocket.

"His name is Saiset Ben-Abijah from Damascus."

"Look!" The cab driver pointed to a metal tag protruding from under the man's leg.

Aiden bent down then picked up the object. It was an old postal tag attached to a large, heavy key and some smaller keys. The tag had some German words engraved on it.

As the ambulance approached, Stefano took the keys and then gave what little information he had to the attendants. They took Ben-Abijah to the hospital in Iraklion, but Stefano and Aiden still had to give a statement at the police station before noon the next day.

Stefano, still having the keys tried one of the small keys on the lock on the iron gate. It opened the padlock. The iron door, which covered the entrance, was cemented in around it's frame from when the Germans occupied this area during WWII. The large key should fit this old lock. Stefano put the key into the old lock, it stiffly opened the lock with a heavy thud. The echo could be heard from the outside. The heavy door creaked open, and it's echo reverberated over and over and over.

"Do you hear that? Dimi? Sweetie?" Dimitris was out, he wouldn't wake up with my coaxing. I made my way to the main corridor, trying to listen for sounds of life, without revealing where we were.

"Dimitris! Helena!" I heard our names being called! At this distance and with the echo, it was hard to tell who was calling us. I needed to help Dimitris. He was falling deeper into his unconscious state.

"Hello, over here! Help!" I yelled.

"Helena? Where are you?"

I took two of the candles, lit them from what was left of our candle and placed them in the center of the main corridor. They were able to see the reflection of the candles off of the ceiling.

"We're coming, keep talking so that we can hear you." I could hardly speak anymore. I hadn't had any water for quite a while and the dust had dried me out long ago.

“Over here, hurry,” I said.

“We’re coming!” I could tell that it was Stefano.

“Stefano? Hurry, Dimi’s hurt,” I said.

When they came up to us, I couldn’t see with the flashlight glaring out to us. My eyes weren’t accustomed to light after so many hours below ground.

“Dimi is hurt, he’s in here.” I went into the room with the desk. Dimi still had his head on the desk when we approached.

“Are you okay?” Stefano asked me as he went to his brother.

Dimitris didn’t say anything until Stefano nudged him awake.

“I’ll be okay,” he said.

“Helen, are you okay?” Aiden asked as he hugged me.

“I’m fine.”

“You look like you’ve been through hell. Here, put this on.” Aiden took off his windbreaker and put it around my shoulders.

“We’ve got to get Dimi out of here,” I said. “They hit him with something, his head was bleeding.”

“Here, hold the flashlight. Aiden, help me get him up.” Stefano and Aiden got on either side of Dimitris and propped him up. They walked him out to the corridor. “Lead the way Helena, we’ll follow.”

I held the flashlight that blazed like a beacon in this black hole in the earth. When we got outside we called for another ambulance to come to this location. The taxi driver swore that he could get us all to the hospital in his cab. We waited instead for the ambulance, as Dimitris was barely coherent. When he did say something, he only said my name, then he was out again.

When we got to the hospital, Dimitris was brought into the emergency. They wanted to look at me, and I knew that all I needed was a shower and a gallon of drinking water. As we waited for word on Dimitris, the police were asking questions and wanting DNA samples. They asked about what we knew about Sahj. There wasn’t a lot that I could say, except that I thought his name was Ben-Abijah, and that he helped us to some extent. They took more pictures of bruises and wanted a signed statement.

I won’t be coming back to Crete once I leave, so they would need to get the statement ready before we go home. Dimitris was admitted to the hospital.

He had a concussion. He would be okay, but they wanted to monitor him. They also didn't like the sound of his lungs.

They put him in a room with three other patients. I sat next to the bed, waiting for him to awaken. Stefano called the Professor and informed him of what happened. After Dimitris was put into the room, Stefano went back to the hotel. After an hour of waiting, I was at the peak of my exhaustion. I wanted to get some shoes, and a shower to feel human again, but I collapsed in the chair next to Dimitris' bed.

"Ma'am, excuse me, Ma'am, you can't sleep here."

"I'll leave when my husband is awake." The attendant left me alone after that. I fell back to sleep in the chair.

"Helen, Helen, do you want to get a cup of coffee?" Aiden asked.

"What? What are you doing here?" I asked.

"Look at you, you're a mess, why didn't you have that doctor take a look at you?" Aiden scolded.

"What? I'm too tired for this, Aiden," I said.

Aiden went into the bathroom and brought out a wet face cloth.

"Here." He handed it to me.

"Thanks." I took the wet cloth and wiped my face. "Thanks, Aiden, that feels good."

"Why don't you come back to the hotel with me, take a shower, sleep, then come back in the morning?"

"I'm not leaving him," I said.

"I'll get you something from the cafeteria," Aiden said and left the room. Once he was gone, I went to the bathroom to rinse off the face cloth. I had to try to clean up a little. Once I washed off my feet, I felt so much better.

"Helena? Where's my heart?" Dimitris asked.

"I'm here, Dimi. You've got a concussion; you need to rest," I said.

"My Heart, are you okay? I did not help you, I am sorry."

"You did good, Dimi. Stefano found us because of you. Get some sleep, and maybe we can go home in the morning," I said.

“Come, Helena.” He moved over and held his arm out to me. “Come, my Heart.”

It felt so good to get close to him. I had worried so much about him that my body had tightened up; but now I finally felt like I could breathe again. I sat on the bed and leaned my head near my husband. I was so exhausted.

Aiden came back with some coffee, but when he saw that Dimitris was awake, he bid his excuses to go back to the hotel and left.

We were able to sleep a few hours until first rounds, which started at 5:30 a.m.

“You must not be here Ma’am,” the nurse advised.

“Oh, right, I’m leaving,” I said as I got off the bed. “When can my husband be released?”

“The doctor will be here for his rounds at 7 a.m., you can ask him any questions you may have.”

“No, Helena, stay with Dimi.”

“Let me get some coffee, and I’ll be back,” I gave him a kiss.

The nurse gave me some house slippers to put on my feet. I was sitting in the cafeteria, and I just had to close my eyes. I leaned against the wall at my table and held the coffee in both hands. I almost dropped my cup from exhaustion. I opened my eyes and found Aiden sitting there.

“Stefano is in with Dimitris. How are you holding up?”

“Okay, I hope they release Dimi soon, I don’t think he’s happy being in here,” I said.

Aiden reached across the table and took my hand. I have been so physically and emotionally drained that I accepted his offer of comfort.

“It’s over Helen. We think they arrested the men responsible for all of this,” Aiden said.

“I don’t know if it will ever be over,” I said. I couldn’t allow myself the luxury of thinking that it was over. “I think that when Dimi is up to it, we’ll go away for awhile. Leave the country.”

“Oh, don’t talk like that.” He kissed my hand. “Stefano is finding out more

about this Sahj, maybe it's over now. Think positive."

"Aiden, I appreciate you being here, I do. I just...I." I couldn't handle it anymore and started to sob. I'd been so worried about Dimitris, I hadn't had more than three hours of sleep in the last two days, and it seemed like suddenly I couldn't hold it together anymore.

"Helen, Helen don't. Everything's okay now, you'll see," he started to get up to come and comfort me.

"Don't Aiden, I'm fine, really."

"Helen, Dimi's awake, he's asking for you," Stefano said. "Are you okay?"

"Yeah, I'm fine, just really tired I guess. I'll go see Dimi," I said.

When I got to Dimitris' room, he wasn't in bed. I sat by the bed, then when he came out of the bathroom, he was dressed and ready to put on his shoes.

"What are you doing? Have they released you?" I asked. He kissed my forehead.

"We go home," he said.

"You can't leave yet, the doctor needs to release you," I said.

"Dimi is fine, we go."

"The doctor will be here any minute, would you please wait for him?" I asked.

"Helena, Helena. I will if you tell me what happened when they take you." He put his arm around my neck and gave me a peck on the head. He continued to put on his shoes.

"It doesn't matter now, it's over and I'd like to get home after the doctor see's you." I reached out to hold his hand. He put his other hand on top of mine and looked into my eyes.

"Helena, you must tell Dimi what they did to hurt you. I know they touch you, humiliate you, but if you keep all inside - is not good. You feel better to get it out." I held his sweet face in my hands and kissed him.

"Let's worry about getting you home, okay?" I said.

The doctor finally saw Dimitris. He wasn't real happy about us wanting to take him home. He said the concussion wasn't serious but it was bad enough to warrant him staying another night. Dimitris was adamant about

leaving. The doctor warned him not to exert himself, rest and watch for other symptoms. The doctor gave Dimi a script for his pain.

When we left the room, we met Stefano in the lobby.

“Dimi, you’re both coming to our house for a few days, let Rena get you two back in shape,” Stefano said as he opened the door.

“Yes, we let Rena help. Helena gone through much. She must rest,” he said as he tried to remove the bandage. He wouldn’t admit it but I knew his head was throbbing.

“Dimi, leave the bandage, at least until we get to Stefano’s. We really appreciate everything, Stefano, especially being there to rescue us,” I said.

“It’s not over yet, we still have to see who tried to kill Sahj or Ben-Abijah or whoever he is, and we’ll most likely have to look at mug shots. Now that Interpol is involved, we’ll see some action on this,” he said.

“Sahj? What happened to Sahj?” I asked.

“He was shot outside the Labyrinth entrance, but he should be okay. They’ll want to ask him some questions too,” Stefano said.

“Did they bring him here?” I asked.

“Do not worry on this Helena, they take good care of him,” Dimitris said.

I looked to Stefano, as he took a deep breath and looked over to Dimi, I knew that Sahj was here.

“I’ve got to see Sahj,” I said. I stopped, turned around and headed for the registry desk at admitting. Dimitris took my arm and kept up with me.

“You probably shouldn’t be asking him questions, the authorities will be watching him. You should be as low profile as possible, Helena.” Stefano said, trying to divert my path.

“She will do as she pleases, Stefano, I know that now. You can’t stop her.” Aiden said as he caught up with everyone. I ignored them all, except Dimitris, who was supportive on this.

When I inquired about Sahj, I wasn’t sure what name to ask for, Sahj or Abijah. I took a chance and used Saiset Ben-Abijah, and it was good that I did. I had to state that I was his cousin, his only living relative, to be able to gain access

to a visit. I was given a yellow “pass” that I had to show the guard outside his door. Dimi had to wait outside the door.

When I entered his room it was dimmed and seemed cold. I opened the blinds to admit a little light, and then he opened his eyes. They had him hooked up to iv’s, and a heart monitor.

“Helena?” I heard him say in a weakened voice. I went to his side and took his hand.

“Hey, Ahmed, what are you doing here?” I asked in a soft voice.

“I should ask you that. Why did you come?”

“I couldn’t let you have all this fun by yourself,” I said and smiled.

“It might not be safe for you here, you must be careful.”

“Have you talked to your doctor yet?” I asked.

“He says I’m lucky, but the bullet traveled quite erratically. I will need another surgery to remove the bullet, near the spine.” He said in short segments.

“I hope everything goes well, they seem to know what they’re doing here. I wanted to thank you again for what you were able to do for us,” I said. He covered my hand with his and tried to lean up to tell me something. I got closer to hear what he said.

“You have to be careful, people watch you, it is not safe. This is too big for you to be involved.”

“I have to know one thing, Ahmed, does this have to do with the Cypriot thefts?”

His eyes got enlarged, he looked around as if making sure no one else could hear.

“In my shoe, in closet, there, bring the left shoe.” He pointed over my shoulder to the small patient closet. “Don’t let anyone see.”

I made sure that no one was standing outside the window in the door, then I carefully extracted the left shoe.

“Toe cap, twist it off, take the key.” The shoe was similar to a Wingtip style, the toe was a patterned leather, but this one would twist one-half turn then

pop out. A very small compartment had a key in it. I put the shoe back in its original position and brought the key to Sahj.

“Take this, keep it safe. I will contact you if I need it,” he said.

“Are you sure you want to trust me with it? It must be important.” His eyes were pleading, and looking into my heart. I could see that it was vital that I do as he asked.

“If anything happens to me, use it. Piraeus Bank, Nicosia.”

“Ahmed, I can’t, I...”

“You must. It’s for your safety that you have this. Please...”

“Good morning Mr. Abijah, ma’am you’ll have to come back later. Mr. Abijah has to go to X-ray.” The medical assistant said. Ahmed, still holding my hand had a plea in his expression as they started to wheel out his bed. I gave him a nod and a smile and let him go.

I saw Dimitris waiting down the hall. I took his arm and we walked to find a taxi.

“Too bad about Sahj, if it weren’t for him, I don’t know what would have happened,” I said. Dimitris put his arm around me as we rode in the taxi to the docks, his lips against my temple.

I wondered about Sahj. Who is he? Is he one of Deischant’s cronies, or is he MI-6, CIA or Interpol? Maybe he’s Ben-Abijah, but whoever he is, we owed him a great debt. I wasn’t sure when to tell Dimitris about the key. I didn’t like keeping secrets from him, but this might be better kept under wraps for awhile.

“Will you be okay, Helena, going on ferry?” Dimi asked. I think he was worried that because of the little dip I took off the ferry in the abduction, it would have a traumatizing effect on me.

“Yeah, don’t worry, I’m fine,” I said.

“Professor Kanakaras is going over the photo. I’ll have to call him to bring it back. Then you can take it home,” Stefano said.

We sat on the ferry, huddled together there, we were almost asleep when we docked in Karpathos. We were met at the docks by Rena.

“My God!” She exclaimed as she put her arms around Dimitris. “What happened to you two?” She turned to me and said, “Helena, come on, we’ll get you some clothes. Oh, my God!”

When we got to the house, Rena gave me a MuMu. I headed for the shower and Dimitris came in to remove the bandage.

“Helena?” Dimitris called.

“Come in, Dimi.” I was just running the water and getting ready for a shower.

“Would you take off bandage for this man? ...is stuck!”

“Sit. What did you do? How did you get the adhesive tape in your hair?” I asked.

“Don’t know, stuck!”

“Oh, Sweetie, let me get my shower and we’ll have to go get some ice cubes,” I said.

“Just cut off!”

“No, I’m not going to cut your beautiful hair. Let me take a shower and we’ll comb it out after I’m done.”

I started to get undressed and Dimitris asked

“What is this you wear?”

“Aiden gave me this to put on over your shirt.”

“What they do to your clothes, Helena?”

I took off the shirt and Dimitris’ eyes widened until I thought he was going to have an aneurysm. The rags I was wearing used to be a button down cotton blouse. What was left was ripped at the sleeves, the breast pockets were ripped and hanging open and the buttons were half missing and buttonholes ripped. My bra was hanging by one strap and I was covered in dirt, streaked up and down my neck, arms legs and in every orifice of my body. The dried mixture of dirt and semen was caked in my hair. Not having shoes since I was pulled out of the water, my feet were cut, scraped, and filthy.

In the bright light of the bathroom, I looked like I had been taken out of a mud bath. Dimitris’ eyes told me the whole story. He stood, reaching out, he

took the ragged garment off my shoulders gently, as if I would break.

“What happen’ to back?”

“What?”

“All scraped up.”

“Oh.”

“What they do to you?”

“Come on, Dimi, let me shower, okay?”

He looked at my back, taking my shoulders, he turned me around then gently hugged me.

“We will go to visit father. Leave for awhile. You show me your home, Helena.”

After I got out of the shower, Dimitris already had taken a scissors to his hair. He showered and came to bed. He put his arms around me and I cuddled up to him.

“It is funny thing, nothing ever happen’ here. For always was always same. Now, all mix-up.”

“Maybe it’s over now. I’m so sorry, Dimi.”

“I am sorry too, but tomorrow new day, we are together and is all I care of.” He kissed my forehead. “I was think you lost to me, Helena. I take chance to get to you. I think they kill you anyway. Never want to feel this again, never!”

“If I never see that picture again, it would be too soon. I never wanted to hurt you, Dimi, I’d rather die first than see that. How is your head? Do you still have a headache?” I asked.

Dimitris sat up halfway, leaning on one arm, looked at me and said as he traced his finger down my cheek,

“How you know I have headache, Helena? You know your Dimi too well.”

“You are funny!”

“What?”

“You can’t hide things from me, Mr. Patakinis, don’t you know that by now?” I said and he kissed me. “Okay, now you need to rest. When we get up, you take your medication.”

“We rest until dinner.”

“Okay.”

“Professor, please come in,” Rena said as she greeted Kanakaras at the door.

“I must speak to Stefano immediately!”

Stefano and the Professor went into Stefano’s office and closed the door. Rena didn’t think much about it, it was a normal occurrence. They stayed in the office for hours without even coming out for refreshments.

Rena picked up the dirty laundry that Dimitris placed in a bag outside the bedroom door. She took the bag and dumped the contents into the washer without looking at it, setting the wash cycle and leaving it to wash.

She went on to make preparations for dinner, which would be in a few hours. Stefano and Professor Kanakaras were locked in their inner sanctum and Dimitris and Helen would be sleeping, so Rena had a short respite in which she could call Morgan and Andreas.

“Hey, Morgana! What’s shakin’?” Rena asked.

“Not much right now, what’s up with you?” She asked. “Did Dimi get released from the hospital?”

“Yeah, they’re here for the night, they’ve been through hell.”

“How is Helen? Is she okay?” Morgan asked.

“I haven’t had a chance to talk to her or Dimi. I’ll be waking them for dinner, maybe they’ll fill us in.”

They talked for almost an hour. Andreas wants to bring Dimitris and Helen home on the Athena, so that will be a more pleasant trip than going on the ferry again. After Rena got off of the phone she finished preparing the fresh vegetables and went to load the laundry into the dryer. From there she knocked on Stefano’s office door.

“Come in.”

“I didn’t want to interrupt, but Professor, you are staying for dinner? Would you like me to prepare a room for the night?”

“No, thank you Mrs. Patakinis, that’s very kind, but no, my daughter lives in Aperi, I’ll go there for the night,” he said.

“Okay, dinner will be ready in 20 minutes.” She excused herself. She was heading back to the kitchen when she heard a clankity noise in the dryer. She

opened it, removing the clothes and felt around in the bottom, trying to find anything that may be running loose and making the noise. She thought she felt a stone. She pulled it out and looked at it. She could see it wasn't a stone. She went back to Stefano's office.

"Stefano?"

"Come in."

"I found this in the dryer with Dimi's clothes. Is it anything?" She handed him the small object. Stefano placed his glasses on his nose and looked at the object in the light. He studied the fragment carefully, then looked over to his colleague.

"Professor, look at this." He handed it to Kanakaras.

"Ah-ha!"

"Thank you, Rena, please close the door."

"We'll be eating in 15 minutes," she said as she closed the door.

I heard a knock at the door and a little voice say,

"Wake up, we'll eat dinner in 15 minutes."

"Thank you, Rena," Dimitris called back. "We must get up, my Heart," he said in a soft voice.

"I'm so tired. I'm not hungry, let's stay here, okay?" I said.

"No, we must get up. You must eat something."

"Okay, I guess I'll have to wear this Mu-Mu. No wonder it's called a Mu-Mu. It makes me look like a cow!" I said as I looked in the vanity mirror.

"It certainly has flowers! But better than old rags." He stood behind me and ran his hands down my arms. "Come, we eat, be nice, and we come to bed."

The conversation at dinner was mostly about the previous days and the events that happened.

"The Professor has looked at your photo and has some news," Stefano said. "Also, Rena found this." He handed the object to Dimitris. "It was with your clothes. Where did you find it?"

"I no see this before," Dimitris said and handed it to me. I looked it over and looked at Dimitris.

"I found it when I was sitting on the ground in the cave. I was in an alcove type room that had a lot of rubble from the collapse. It was in all the debris. I just stuck it in my pocket and forgot about it."

"My dear, do you know what it is you have found?" The Professor asked.

"I thought it looked like a piece of broken pottery," I said.

"This is part of a mosaic. A priceless antiquity. The age of it is right, the style and construction of make, it has to be part of any number of missing mosaics. The location would be vital to its complete recovery. You must show us where it was found, the Labyrinth is so vast, but if you would be able to lead us to it____."

"No! We finish with this!" Dimitris roared. I placed my hand over his to soothe him.

"I wouldn't be able to help you. All I can say is that it was in a room that had partially collapsed. It should be off of the main corridor, but I don't know how far from the entrance it was. It was so dark in most areas, I don't know exactly where I picked it up."

"But it would be excellent if you would lead....."

"No, no, I can't. My husband doesn't want this, so, no. I will not go back there." There was a lull in the conversation as Rena served dinner.

"Your picture has some interesting new aspects that define an area of exploration." The Professor said.

"Keep the photo. I never want to see it again," I said. "It had been nothing but a curse on us from the beginning. Thank you, Rena, for a wonderful dinner. We're going back to bed," I said. "It's been a very long, long day. We'll see you in the morning. Good night everyone," I said.

"But it's only 8 p.m., there is much exciting news now with this new piece!"

"Good night, sir," Dimitris muttered.

We were so exhausted. I took off the floral garment and got into bed.

"Helena, I make love to my Heart, would I hurt you?" He held me close with my head resting on his shoulder.

"You need to rest, Dimi, remember? No exertion. I just want to hold you, and we can get some sleep," I said. It seemed that we had just closed our eyes,

then it was morning. We took the first ferry home.

When we got home, Dimitris made the decision to leave. We would go to America to see my family. He wanted to leave the problems behind.

We knew that with all of the legal issues surrounding what happened to us, that we would be summoned back to Greece as witness/victim/plaintiffs. We hoped that everything would culminate in one legal session. That remained to be dealt with in our not too distant future. Our immediate priority was evident.

As we began to recover from our Labyrinth nightmare, Dimitris' headaches became less painful and seemed not as frequent. My dreams that seemed so real, the kind that seem to take days to recover from were less frequent also. We were improving physically from the trauma which relieved my worry of Dimi leaving the island.

Dimitris made a few phone calls, one to his employer, one to Andreas and Stefano. He arranged for the dogs to be taken care of and the house looked after. The only things that we packed to take with us were our clothes, the jewelry that Dimitris gave me and his essential lab equipment. We had our flight booked out of Athens and within a week, we left our Greek life behind us....for now.

To The Reader



True Facts

In 1974, after the Turkish occupation of northern Cyprus, looters stripped the ancient churches of their artifacts. Icons, Bibles, wood carvings, Chalices, mosaics, frescoes, Crucifixes and other rare, irreplaceable objects were stolen or destroyed. It is estimated the count of Icons alone to number from 15,000 to 20,000. Thousands of Chalices, several dozen major frescoes and mosaics were amongst the antiquities stolen. Some items have been recovered, but it is estimated that 70% to 90% of the items have not been found. The Labyrinth, located on the Greek island of Crete, was a strong hold for German weaponry during WWII. It is known to have been in existence much earlier than 1444 A.D., the earliest readable inscription amongst thousands of inscriptions on the interior walls of this cave. In 1982, the Speleological Exploring Hellenic Group (SPELEO) explored and mapped the interior in detail. Again, in 1999 the Cretan Dept. of the Hellenic Speleological Society obtained permission to open the cave to study its morphology, damage caused by the German bombing and to document the deteriorating signatures and inscriptions found on the walls. It is estimated that the interior caves and alcoves carved into the rock mountain reach 9,000 square kilometers.

Book Release information



This is far from being the end of The Shadows of Rhodes. Book 3 will come out in print and Ebook in the Summer of 2019, with more danger, threats, and emotional upheaval. Listed here are the books in the series and the approximate release dates for those to come.

Ebooks available at <http://www.Amazon.com> Print editions available at <http://www.georginaAntoinette.com>, <http://www.blurb.com> or may be ordered at any book seller.

Book One: The Shadows of Rhodes, Released 2018

(Print) The Shadows of Rhodes, The Beginning (Blurb.com, Barnes & Noble, etc.)

ISBN: 978-1-38-883726-6

(Print) The Shadows of Rhodes, The Beginning

(Amazon) ISBN: 978-1-38-884232-1,

(ebook 1 part 1) (Amazon) ASIN: B07CZ31KPY

(ebook 1 part 2) (Amazon) ASIN: B00VHGC842

Book Two: The Gods Have Smiled (this book) Ebook: (Amazon) B07QHD-CQP

Book Three: From Curiosity to Obsession (avail. Summer 2019)

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Acknowledgments



Where do I begin? Looking back to those who had influenced me most in my life, I have to say my most profound gratitude has to go to my mother. She was the strength that molded me, and was always my champion. Her love and encouragement is something I deeply miss; especially now that I've taken a new path in my creative endeavors.

About the Author



Georgina Antoinette has lived most of her life in Southern California and then relocated to the West coast of Washington state, where she lives with husband Harry, a cat, Henry and a jailbird dog, Barkley, that add to the joys of living. As life throws us a curve, she resurfaced focusing on a new path.

“Just when I thought life was beginning to get easier I suddenly found myself a widow. I dove into writing “The Shadows of Rhodes” series as a form of therapy, I guess, which got me through my grief. It was a whole new direction for me to forge.”

Glossary



Glossary

Efharisto - Thank You

Kafenía - Restaurant, coffee shop etc

Kalimera - Good morning

Kalispera - Good evening

Kefi - One's uncontrollable joy

Meyedes - Appetizers



About the Author



You can connect with me on:

 <http://www.georginaantoinette.com>

 <http://www.twitter.com/irite2>

 <http://www.facebook.com/rhodesdreams>

