



The Shadows of Rhodes
Book 3

from
Curiosity
To
Obsession

Georgina Antoinette

GEORGINA ANTOINETTE

From Curiosity to Obsession

The Shadows of Rhodes, book 3

First published by Blurb Publishing 2019

Copyright © 2019 by Georgina Antoinette

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, scanning, or otherwise without written permission from the publisher. It is illegal to copy this book, post it to a website, or distribute it by any other means without permission.

Georgina Antoinette asserts the moral right to be identified as the author of this work.

Georgina Antoinette has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party Internet Websites referred to in this publication and does not guarantee that any content on such Websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Designations used by companies to distinguish their products are often claimed as trademarks. All brand names and product names used in this book and on its cover are trade names, service marks, trademarks and registered trademarks of their respective owners. The publishers and the book are not associated with any product or vendor mentioned in this book. None of the companies referenced within the book have endorsed the book.

The author extends an invitation to readers to visit the author's web page at: <http://www.georginaAntoinette.com> or email to: ginatoinette@yahoo.com, to find the next book in the series, ask the author questions, and to submit your reviews. Your correspondence is very important to the author. Thank you.

First edition

This book was professionally typeset on Reedsy.

Find out more at reedsy.com

Contents

<i>..~ Dedication ~..</i>	v
<i>..~ Getting acquainted with Helena ~..</i>	vi
The Line-Up	1
Nikos Takis Inn	18
Heathrow	29
Saint or Sinner	33
Lost In Him	54
Good-bye Kefalonia	67
Mark Again	86
Do Not Question Gods	103
Play and Then Pay	115
Bachelor Audition	125
Preparations	141
Tree Hunt	153
Once in a Lifetime	158
Holidays in Karpathos	179
A Happy Christmas...For Some	213
The Full Meaning of Danger	222
Chemo	233
Dawning Realization	242
<i>..~Notations~..</i>	261
<i>..~!~..</i>	262
<i>..~Notations~..</i>	263
<i>..~ Glossary ~..</i>	264
<i>..~Notations~..</i>	265
<i>..~ Connecting with the Author ~..</i>	266

..- *Dedication* -..



This volume of *The Shadows of Rhodes* is dedicated with much love, to my two sisters, Sharon and Kathleen, recalling times when we were all together.

Sisters

*Hours turn to days, turn to months, turn to years,
Youth's memories come with laughter and tears.
My heart cries with yearning for the light in your eyes.
When time is so fleeting, know where my heart lies.*

~g~

..- Getting acquainted with Helena -..



Helen or Helena, whom she soon becomes, is a middle aged, however you define it, American woman who loves her husband of 20+ years, but their relationship has gradually become stale. They seem to argue more and Helen has come to realize that although she loves Mark, they have become more like friends, especially in the last two years. Helena is curious, creative and stubborn. When curious and stubborn combine, it usually meant trouble. Her natural instincts have been subdued to the point of suffocation. Having retired from a government job, Mark and Helen were together 24/7. Mark grew up in a large family, and as things go, he was the neglected one. Helena never knew some of the lurid details of Mark's childhood but it reflected occasionally as an adult in him. The verbal abuse became unending. Helena took the brunt of his dark days. Covering up bruises and making excuses, Helena became an expert in hiding the truth. Stress became too much for Helen, so she arranged for a two week vacation with her long-time friend, Morgan. They were going to have the time of their lives! Two weeks in Rhodes, Greece.

The Line-Up



I could see the penetrating stare of Nasir Hakim, pinning his glare on us, his jaw clenched as he spoke a sly threat under his breath, as the suspects filed out of the line-up room. We entered the lobby of the Prosecutor's office, where Dimitris and Andreas were waiting. I was feeling drained and faint. Morgan went straight into Andreas' arms.

"Please, to sit, I will go over statements, and you may ask questions at end," the officer said as we entered his office. Morgan and I were there for another hour reviewing our statements concerning our mugging. Men identified as Nasir and the other man, known as Mc Mathison, were the men who followed us that night from New Rhodes City to Afandu, threatening us then later abducting Morgan.

We signed the complaints and statements and were told that it would be two weeks to a month before we would be contacted on this matter. The action on behalf of the Crete authorities may have precedence over this case. It was at the request of the Crete officials that any action against these men would be referred to them. We would have to wait for them to contact us as their pending case proceeds.

"Did you see them? Were they in line-up?" Dimitris asked as he held me tight. Before I could answer, we were taken to another section of the building where another line-up was organized.

We were escorted into a darkened room where we sat in front of a mirrored

window. Dimi took my hand and kissed my fingertips to calm me and give me the strength to face those who have tormented us.

The curtain on the other side of the window opened. Seven men were standing in front of a gray wall that had height indicators. When the lights were adjusted to feature the faces that stared blankly at the one-way window glass, they were instructed to turn to their left, which all of them complied. We were asked to view each individual carefully and that we may approach the window for a closer view.

They were again asked to turn to their right-hand side, and we viewed them once more. Each took two steps forward as their number was called. Dimitris held my hand tighter. We were both given a small notepad and pencil to make notations on any suspects that can be tied to the case pending in Crete. We were told not to talk until the suspects have left the screening.

I recognized four of the individuals, Nasir included. I was only to associate the Crete crime to anyone I may recognize. Dimitris wasn't able to identify anyone with whom he might have come in contact. With his concussion, his memory wouldn't be reliable.

While we were waiting in the office afterward, Dimitris called Andreas on his cell and speaking in Greek, kept him informed on what was happening.

"Mr. and Mrs. Patakinis, I am so sorry to keep you waiting. Just sign the witness documents and complaints. These will be filed with the Crete court system, and they will contact you further. The government prosecutor will contact both of you when they are prepared to proceed. However, it is my understanding that Interpol has concerns at the forefront of this case, and they will undoubtedly also contact you."

"Are we finished here?" I asked impatiently.

"One more question, please." The officer cleared his throat. "Is this a correct address and contact number?" We gave him Stefano and Rena's address since we will be staying there. When we got outside, Andreas and Morgan were not in sight.

Dimitris supported me as we found a bench in the lobby of the civic center.

"Tell me," he asked, his eyes full of compassion.

"I'm okay. I didn't think that seeing them would bother me so much."

"We will find nice restaurant, and you will eat and feel better."

I know that Dimitris was worried about how I would react to seeing the thugs that accosted us. He was very caring and considerate. I seemed to have gone into a daze, a deep cavern of thought, going over again in my mind, the conversations of earlier in the day.

I was still somewhat dazed by the antagonism of Nasir. I wondered how Morgan was coping; then, my mind slipped back to earlier conversations.

"They'll probably want us to go over the whole thing, just to see if our stories have changed. I can't do it again," Morgan confessed, her voice shaky and on the verge of tears.

"This is nothing! We've got to go to Crete and probably testify, and who knows what else. If they want a full statement, I can't give it in front of Dimitris. I wish you could come with me for moral support," I said.

"Well, doesn't Dimitris have to do the same thing?" She asked.

"Yes, but it's not the same," I said. Morgan leaned forward to look into my eyes. "What is it? What happened to you?"

"It was disgusting, I'd rather not talk about it now," I said in a low voice.

"Geez, Helen, I didn't know. You sure hide it well. What about Dimi? Does he know?"

"I'm not sure if you're understanding me exactly. Dimi, he may know, but I'm not sure if he knows everything. He wasn't in good shape when all this happened. He's never come out and asked about it, but he's got his suspicions. He wasn't that far from where I was, so I'm sure he heard a lot of what went on. But like I say, he wasn't too coherent." Morgan clammed up and got an odd look on her face.

"Shit!" Morgan let slip.

"It's them," I whispered.

"Do you recognize any of these men?" The officer asked.

"Number eight and number five," I said.

"Yes, that's two of them, five and eight," Morgan stated.

Dimitris took my hand and brought my mind out of 'before' and back into

focus on the 'now.'

We're back in Greece, and we'll have to deal with whatever comes up, as it presents itself, but having been away for a short time has given us new strength. When we returned home to Rena's, the ladies retreated to the dining room to talk, as Rena was filling me in on what happened while we were gone.

"___things just got so quiet around here. The only sparks that were flying were between Aiden and Camilla! She has become so erratic," Rena said.

"I hope she doesn't know that we're back yet," I said.

"Not yet, but she's always asking about when the two of you will be coming back, and where did you move to, she even went to the Kefalonia house," Rena reported.

"She did? What did she want there?" I asked.

"She was snooping around, I guess. When she found out that the house was empty, she came over here like she had lost her mother or something. She has gotten very emotional, unreasonably so."

"There's something wrong with her. She always seemed to be the emotional, high strung type." I was being kind.

"She's worse now. She's usually reasonable, she would get excited over something, but she'd always calm down. I don't know. I don't encourage her to come over anymore," Rena said.

"Did you ever tell Stefano about those men?"

She looked around like she wanted to be sure no one was listening.

"Do you mean those men, before you left? No, I am being very careful." She spoke in hushed tones. "I watch and look around wherever I go, to be sure there are no suspicious people around. I try to stay home or be with Stefano. I won't go anywhere alone if I can help it. Did you tell Dimi?"

"No. We wouldn't be here if I did."

"What does it mean? Is it a secret code or something?" Rena asked, referring to the finger of the stranger pulling down his lower eyelid as he looked at her.

"Maybe, but I think it means that you're being watched. It might just be a scare tactic, but be careful," I suggested in trying to calm the atmosphere.

“How is Katie doing? How far along is she?”

“She’s only at seven weeks, but she’s had the morning sickness something awful. I never did have morning sickness. I’ve never seen anyone have it as bad as she has. She gets it all times of the day or night. If she smells something, she gets sick. If she sees a food commercial on TV, she gets sick. She’s had a tough time.”

“That’s got to be rough. What’s the scoop with Morgan and Andreas? I didn’t think I’d ever see an engagement happening!”

“Did you hear about the argument?”

“Andreas and Morgan?” I asked.

“Yes! Oh, it was bad. I thought Morgana was going to leave!”

“What happened?”

“Maybe Morgana should tell you.”

“Well, you’ve got me curious now!”

“I don’t know all of it, but I guess Andreas was talking to her again about making a deeper commitment. You know that he had been hinting around about it for six months. Well, I guess she lost her cool and went into a rant about being pressured and suffocating. I think Andreas lost his composure and told her that she’s got one foot with her daughter and one foot here. It got out of hand to where he finally said if she can’t commit by now, and if she doesn’t trust him by now, maybe she should be with her daughter.”

“Oh, no! Did he say that? That doesn’t sound like him. He must have felt frustrated. I’ve never seen him lose his temper.”

“Oh, he regretted it as soon as he said it, but it was too late. She packed a bag and came here. She was a mess! She cried for four days.”

“Was she going to leave the islands?”

“She was so distraught. I don’t think she knew what to do. She asked me if I could go to Andreas’ condo and get her stuff, but I made an excuse that I had to see Katie. I didn’t want to get in the middle of it.”

“So, what happened?”

“Well, Andreas didn’t call and didn’t call. Finally, she asked us if she could borrow the money for the airfare home. Stefano told her to wait, and he’ll get her the cash in the morning. There wasn’t much of a choice, and she

waited because the banks were closed and she couldn't get to her own money. Anyway, Stefano went to his office and called Andreas. Stefano read him the riot act! Stefano told him that she'd been here crying her heart out, and if she leaves, he's a fool for letting her go. He knew that Andreas needed a push, after all, he loves her, what was he waiting for? Andreas didn't know. He wasn't thinking. He just needed a boot to get him to make the first move. Anyway, Andreas came here, and they talked for hours," Rena said.

Rena and I relaxed in the massive living room, sipping our Margaritas and enjoying the glow from the sunset that pierced the curtains. Morgan and Andreas came in ten minutes later.

"Where did you two get off to? We didn't see you leave."

"I had to get out of there. We went to have some coffee and try to relax," Morgan said with a sigh.

"I figured you would leave the confines of the police compound, but I didn't think you'd *leave* us there."

"Sorry about that, but I was a wreck by the time I got out of there. How did your other line-up go?"

"I was getting pretty shaky by the time they got started, but not only was Nasir Hakim in that line-up, but so were three others that I recognized. I thought I'd faint before we got out of there. Oh, and when we finally finished signing court papers and we were leaving the lobby, I could swear that I saw the back of Sahj, going out the door to the street. By the time we got to the door, he was nowhere in sight."

"You do not tell Dimi this. Why you do not tell this man?" Dimitris asked intently.

"I wasn't sure it was him, and I didn't have the strength for a conversation about it." His expression changed from that of worry to a distant, defeated look.

"Where Stefano, Reenie?"

"He's picking up the branches that fell during the rain we had. If you're going out there, will you take him a cup of coffee?" Rena requested.

"He seems upset," Rena said to me.

“He probably thinks I’m keeping things from him. We’ll have to talk about it tonight, I guess.”

“Are you two at it again?” Morgan asked in a sarcastic tone.

“Morgan, come over here and sit. Let me see the ring.” She handed me her left hand.

“It’s a carat Princess cut. I can’t wear anything too big. You should have seen the first one Andreas wanted to get. It looked gigantic on my finger.”

“You gotta be comfortable with it. You’ll be wearing it for a long time.”

“That’s what I told Andreas,” she said.

“So, how is it that you caved?” I asked.

“Did Rena tell you about our fight?”

“Yes, she said you wanted to leave.”

“I was waiting for Stefano to come back from the bank. He was going to give me some cash so that I could fly out. Then here comes Andreas, being all irresistible. He apologized for what he said and then he asked me some questions. He wanted to know if I have any feelings for him at all and if our time together meant anything to me. I told him yes, yes, I love him. He wanted to make it permanent. He said he couldn’t keep going without a commitment. He said that I mean too much to him to let me go, but that he can’t plan our future if I don’t commit.”

“And? When did you decide to marry him?”

“Well, when I looked at his eyes, and he looked so serious, I told him that if he goes for the civil bond, I will do that. I guess he got me in a place where I couldn’t not say yes!”

“Have you set a date yet?” I asked.

“No, I’m not used to being engaged, yet!”

“You know, even with the problems that come up, you know that you’ve both still got each other, I mean if you really love each other, there’s no reason not to make it legal,” I said.

“Yeah, I’m not looking for anyone else, and I’d rather die than see anything happen to him, so, I guess I’m committed.”

“Dimi was commenting the other day. When you were missing, how Andreas was saying something like, ‘what am I going to do if something

happened to her?’ It was horrible for him.”

“He’s told me about how worried he was, but it’s nice to hear that he said it to someone. It’s different than just thinking about something. When you verbalize it, somehow, it makes it more real,” Morgan said.

“Well, I’m so glad that you made this decision. You’ll be so much happier. In time, you’ll be letting down your defenses, and true happiness will sneak in to fill the vacancy.”

“I’ve already noticed a change in me. I have this excitement deep inside me, you know, like when you’re a kid and waiting for Christmas. I also feel freer than I ever thought I would in this situation.”

“Andreas is a sweet guy, and he loves you. He’d do anything for you, so you’re a lucky lady. And just think, when you’re married, we’ll actually be related!” I said.

“Oh, yeah!” She smiled. “I didn’t think of that!”

“What’s the scoop on the ‘black widow’ and Aiden?” Morgan asked.

“Oh, when she found out that Dimi left, she took it out on Aiden. First, she’d be calling him and leading him on like nothing ever happened between them. It was like she was her old self and wanted to re-ignite any feelings they might have had for each other. But Aiden didn’t fall for it, which pissed her off. So, she started blaming him for you and Dimi leaving, saying it was his fault with all his *fatal attraction* towards you,” Rena said.

“Poor Aiden. How is he these days?” I asked.

“He’s been pretty quiet, but he doesn’t come around too much unless he’s with Andreas,” Rena said.

“Yeah, he’s been really quiet, almost depressed. I got tired of him moping around until I finally told him he’d better go find himself a woman,” Morgan said.

“You said that?”

“Yeah, well, he’d come over after work and ask about you, if I’ve heard from you, and all that. I finally said to him, ‘Hey, Helen is married, get over it!’ He hasn’t said too much to me since,” Morgan said.

“So, I guess he’s okay then?” I asked.

“If I didn’t know better, I’d say you care about him,” Morgan said.

"It's not that. It makes me wonder, that's all."

"He's always been okay, but he likes to dwell on things, I think. I don't get it. He disappears from your life like you never existed. Suddenly, he thinks you're the center of his world! What's that all about?" Morgan asked.

"I think he's just lonely," I said.

"Well, he doesn't have to be. He could have a lot of women, but he doesn't want to be with anyone. He likes to be miserable."

"Nobody likes to be miserable."

"Aiden seems to live in the past a lot. He seems to glorify events in his past," Rena said.

"He does! Everything good in his life seems to be in the past for him. Why would someone who's so good looking, and he has a nice personality, once he opens up; why would he want to be alone and so miserable?" Morgan questioned.

"Maybe it has something to do with being an 'only child.' Both of his parents are gone now, and he was an 'Army Brat' too, moving all of the time, and never living in one place long enough to make any lasting friendships. It can't be good. I would imagine it might affect you as an adult," I said, as we munched on some nuts."

"Hasn't he ever been in love? I mean, you'd think he'd want to have that again in his life. I don't know which is worse, the man who goes from one woman to another, or mooning over old relationships," Morgan said.

As we were talking, I could see out to the patio. The men huddled in a close group. They looked like they were up to something. I could see Dimitris look over to us in the dining room. Then they would talk and huddle again. They would roar with laughter every couple of minutes.

When the telephone rang, Rena got up to answer it. It was her daughter. Morgan and I were talking about the police and what had occurred.

"I don't want to go over what happened to me in Crete, either. If I have to, I don't want Dimi there. He doesn't need to hear the details, even though I think he already knows. He gets so upset at the mere mention of Nasir," I said.

Morgan looked at me like it just dawned on her that I might have had the

same thing happen to me, or worse, than what happened to her.

“You seem to have recovered from your nightmare pretty well,” Morgan said.

“I still think that I see those men on the street, in the market, on the freeway. And this is while we were in California! I was so shaken one time coming out of the theater. I thought I saw that fat slob from the Labyrinth. Dimi had to calm me down. It’s weird how the mind plays tricks on us,” I said.

I looked over to the men, and there was Dimitris, looking over to me. I had to go to him.

“Excuse me, Morgan, I’ve got to go kiss that irresistible man over there.”

“Geez!” She exclaimed.

I wanted to make amends. I planted a massive kiss on his lips. The men all let out the usual male yelps and howls. I went back to the dining room to sit with Morgan and Rena.

“What was all that about?” Rena asked.

“Nothing,” I said.

“The men got a big charge over it!” Morgan said.

“God, after all this time, I still can’t resist that man. He drives me crazy sometimes.”

“You two should be the poster couple for ‘Finding Love After Forty.’ I plan on writing a book on it one of these days. Or maybe you should write it, Helena!” Rena laughed.

“If I wrote it, it would only have one page. It would say - ‘Find a single Greek man.’ That’s about all I could say.”

“They aren’t all good men, you know. Especially the younger ones, they seem more worldly these days; I guess you could say. They don’t hold with the old world traditions so much, and now they have such a financial hardship that they aren’t prepared for marriage or anything serious,” Rena said.

“Things do seem to change with the generations. That’s one thing I’d hate to see change,” I said.

“I know, there’s already enough ass holes in the world, sure don’t need more!” Morgan uttered. We laughed at her choice of words.

“Rena, you’ve only been married once, right?” I asked.

“Oh, no. I was married before Stefano!” Rena chirped.

“Really?” Morgan said.

“I never mention his name, so don’t ever say anything, or Stefano will blow a gasket!” She said in a low voice. “This was when I was right out of school. I was in Peking. His name was Cho Lee Wong. He was very pro-military and very Mao. He was mean, and when he got drunk, he would beat me. At the time, I didn’t know any better, my mother was under the thumb of my father, so it was more or less expected,” Rena said.

“How did you get away from him?” I asked.

“When I lost my baby, I was in the hospital. The nurse knew by looking at me that I was beaten. So she helped me to escape. I was taken from Peking to Hong Kong, then to a family in the U.K. There is a big Chinatown in England, so he could never find me there. When I met Stefano, he changed my world, bless his heart!” She smiled as she glanced his way.

“Rena, I’m so sorry to hear about what you went through. Do you ever wonder if you’ll run into your ‘ex?’” I asked.

“I never think about it. I don’t think I’d recognize him now if I *did* see him.”

“Did you divorce him, or how would that work?” Morgan asked.

“At the time, it was more of an agreement between families, like a contract. I think my father got five tin cans and a pizza, in the deal. Anyway, once they agreed, papers were signed by the fathers, then a celebration party. Never a wedding. I guess because my father had no sons, he didn’t feel that getting rid of one of the daughters was worth a wedding,” she said.

“Then you met Stefano, and that was in London?” I asked.

“Yeah, the big lug! I was coming home when it suddenly started to pour down rain. I ran under an awning, and so did Stefano. He knocked me down! That man felt so bad about it and apologized all over the place. He was so cute, I let him take me for a coffee, and the rest is history,” she said.

“How long were you with Cho?” Morgan asked.

“I was with him for only four years. It seems like it was someone else, not me, you know what I mean?”

“Stefano must have been like a Saint in comparison,” I said.

“He was, still is! We joke a lot and tease each other, but we are really quite

in love.”

“We know, Rena,” I said, then I put my hand on hers. She had a little twinkle in her eye as she smiled.

“Stefano didn’t know what hit him when he met me!” Rena snapped out of her melancholia.

We were laughing with Rena at the story of how she decided she was going to get Stefano to pop the question. When she said that she got him so confused that he couldn’t do his work, we were almost rolling on the floor. The men were watching the women laughing. They couldn’t stand it anymore, so they had to come into the dining room to see what was so funny. Of course, no one would tell them exactly what it was, but they figured that if Rena was talking, it had to be about Stefano.

“God, I’ve missed this, everyone together like this. I don’t think I ever want to leave again,” I said.

“You will never have to leave, my Heart,” a voice from behind me purred. Then he gave me his hand and said: “Come.” We went out the front door, with his arm around me he gave me a peck on the temple.

“We have been gone too long, Helena.”

“It’s wonderful to be back, even in winter.”

We walked down the road and into a small lookout point by the side of the road. Dimitris put his arm around my shoulder, and I looked into his eyes. They sparkled with a happiness that I missed seeing in them. After watching the tide-pool and talking quietly, we walked back to the house. The air in Karpathos is unlike any in California. Fresh, with a mixture of the sea and the scent of Eucalyptus trees, I inhaled deeply as though I would be able to keep the tranquil, crisp sea air within.

“Helena, you are happy, here in islands?”

“Yes, I am happy, Dimi,” I said as we approached the driveway of Rena’s house. “Why do you ask?”

“I see happiness, but Dimi think you happy in California, with family,” he said. I turned to him, and looking into his dark eyes, I explained,

“When you’re happy, I’m happy, Sweetheart.” Then he kissed me the way he does that stirs my soul. When we went inside, Andreas and Stefano were

doing what Americans call an “Indian Arm Wrestle” to see who could put down their opponent’s arm on the table first. A test of strength and endurance. It wasn’t a fair fight as Stefano does such heavy labor in his excavations, and he must be three inches taller than Andreas with probably a twenty-five-pound advantage. Naturally, Andreas went down in a matter of minutes.

When Stefano saw Dimitris come in, in the native tongue, he challenged his younger brother to a game.

“No, Stefano, you wish to make Dimi lose the game in front of my bride. No, no,” he said.

“Oh, come on, Dimi, you can’t lose any worse than Andreas did,” Rena kidded.

“Oh, thanks, Rena!” Andreas laughed.

Dimitris stood behind me with his arms in a bear hug around my neck. He kissed my cheek and kept shaking his head.

“Okay, okay, you force me to embarrass you in front of whole family,” Dimitris said. He sat at the table, rolled up his sleeve, and prepared to engage in a test of strength with his older brother.

Andreas held their coupled fists upright and evenly placed. Then he pronounced, “Go!” The event began. Dimitris held his position and gave Stefano an evenly based fight. Neither Stefano nor Dimitris are small men. This challenge was more evenly matched than it was with Andreas. With Stefano, it was apparent that he had upper body strength, although he tends to put on a slight paunch around the middle during the Holidays. Dimitris’ carriage was built for strength. Large boned, broad shoulders, although I’ve never seen him lift weights, I know that he’s very strong. None of the brothers have let their bodies go with age. Although Stefano is in his early sixties, he looks more like his age would be around forty-five years.

The youthful attitude of all the Patakinis men is the secret to their fountain of youth. They all look forward to each day and live that day to its fullest. Nothing is ever taken too seriously unless it threatens those they love, then they band together like warriors. Watching these two Greek men, now in a battle over the stronger arm, was a test of sportsmanship as well. Each struggled, eye to eye, and fist to fist in a test of endurance, that neither wanted

to lose. As the women stood back and watched them, it was only a matter of time before one would fall. After seven minutes, they were still at it. Neither one would give up, even though their arms were beginning to cramp.

“Rena,” I called her over to have a little conspiracy. “If you pull Stefano back, I’ll grab Dimi, that way neither one will lose face. What do you think?” I asked.

“That’s the smartest idea I’ve heard yet, let’s do it.” We set our plan into action. I waited for Rena to get in position. She gave me the nod, then we each distracted our man. To get Dimi to give up the fight, I had to give him a big kiss, one that would make him lose concentration. He wasn’t going down without a fight, but with Rena’s pulling on Stefano and my kissing Dimitris, they gave up the ghost and called it a draw.

“I was going to win! I had Dimi right where I wanted him, and you ruined it!” Stefano said, panting and wiping his brow.

“No, no, you did not have Dimi; you were weak and ready to give it up!” Dimitris said, breathing in a slight pant. He looked at me; at first, I don’t think that he understood the interruption right away. He was flexing his arm, trying to relieve the cramping muscles. They began laughing with the agony.

“You two would go on with this all night! Ten minutes was long enough! Let’s have a glass of wine to celebrate Helena and Dimi’s return,” Rena suggested. Stefano was still flexing his arm, while Andreas and Rena poured the wine. I was massaging Dimi’s neck and shoulders for him when Andreas brought over the glasses.

“Welcome back to the islands Dimi and Helena!” We toasted to our return. We sat on the sofa. He had his hand on my knee.

“What’s this I hear about your family coming for Christmas, is that right?” Morgan asked.

“We hope they’ll come. Everyone said they would, but you know how things can change,” I said.

“We will have whole family come, make my Helena a Happy Christmas,” Dimitris said and then kissed my hand.

“Thank you for a great dinner, Rena. I’m afraid I’m exhausted and have to call it a night, we have a lot to do tomorrow. So I’ll say goodnight,” I said.

“Yes, we go to bed, goodnight,” Dimitris came into the bedroom behind me.

“Did it bother you? Rena and me stopping the arm wrestle?” I asked as I removed my shoes. He sat on the bed next to me and gave me a serious look, then was beginning to shake his finger at me. I thought I was in for a warning. This was the first time I had ever tried to interfere with something he was doing with his brother. I wasn’t sure how he would react to my butting in, initially. He grabbed me and growled into my neck until I screeched with laughter.

“Oh, Helena, you try to keep Dimi from the sin of pride.” He kissed my forehead and then went into the bathroom.

“Are you going to shower ahead of me? I was here first!” I joked.

“You can come with Dimi in shower.”

“No thanks, Sweetie, it’s too small, I get claustrophobic in there as it is, I miss our tub,” I said.

I put my hair in a clip and got undressed. I opened the bed and sat and filed my nails, waiting for Dimitris to finish. I was so tired, between the flight and everything, that I leaned on the pillow to rest until I could get into the shower.

When Dimitris came into the room, I was asleep. He covered me with the blankets then turned off the light. When he got in bed, he curled in behind me and removed the clip from my hair. He kissed my shoulder and said,
“S’agapo, Helena.”

In the morning, I was awakened by the feel of sweet lips on my shoulder.

“Good morning,” I said. He kissed my lips in his sensual way. He suddenly laid back on the pillow with a sigh and said,

“My Heart, we go to Rhodes. We get up, go to Rhodes.” He kissed me a couple of quick pecks then bounced out of bed to get dressed.

“Come, Helena, dress, and we go.”

“Are we going with Morgan and Andreas?”

“Yes, so we hurry.”

When we went into the kitchen, Andreas had made coffee, and Morgan

was still getting dressed. I finished washing up, had my coffee, and only had to brush my hair. Within a half-hour, we were launching out of Karpathos and heading for Rhodes. Four and a half hours later, as Rhodes came into view, Dimitris and I watched from the forward deck. He had his arms around me as we sat on the lounge.

He was telling me how much Rhodes reminds him of when we met. Even though Rhodes had its bitter memories, the beautiful, quirky, adventurous memories stand out. I miss our home, but as all of the other islands have their unique beauty, I have a special place in my heart for Rhodes.

Usually, we would sleep during our voyage, but for these four hours, we were excited to see Rhodes come into view again. As we approached the inlet to the harbor, Dimitris was holding me and had his lips against my temple, speaking Greek. It was so soft and so sweet, it reminded me of all of the reasons why I fell in love with him.

“We dock, so I must help Andreas tie off Athena.”

“I’ll wait for you in the galley, okay?” I said.

“I will be short time,” he said and kissed my hand as we went to different destinations. When I went to the galley, Morgan had just gotten there and sat in the booth.

“I guess we’re back in Rhodes,” she said in her meek little voice.

“I love Rhodes. I didn’t realize how much I love this place until we were gone from here. It’s so beautiful. I missed it,” I said.

“Yeah, I like Rhodes, too,” she admitted.

Once we were ashore, we got a taxi to the car rental agency.

“Sweetie, where did Andreas and Morgan go?”

“They meet us later, now, shall we eat?” Dimitris asked as he put his arm around me.

“Where do you want to go?” I asked.

“We find nice Kafenia, okay?”

“Sure.”

As we waited to be served, Dimitris put his arm around me and had a question in his eyes.

“What is it?” I asked when I looked at him.

“Is my Helena, okay?” He placed his hand over mine.

“I’m better.”

“You so pale, my Heart,” he said with concern.

“I was feeling a little faint earlier, but I’m better now.”

“You will eat, then we will see what we do,” he said.

We had our lunch in the quiet Kafenia Mou. The food was excellent, but I wasn’t too hungry. Dimitris took out his cell phone, making a call, he tapped my hand as he spoke.

“We will have coffee, then we go.”

“Were we going to meet Morgan and Andreas?”

“Maybe later, my Heart,” he answered. He had a destination when we left the Kafenia.

We turned in one of the back gates to the ancient walled city of Old Rhodes. It was getting dark, and the sparsely lit street seemed more mysterious within the wall.

“We park, then walk.”

“I thought we were going to the family home.”

“You have bad day, so we stay tonight, rest. You will like.”

“Where are we going?” He had a devilish twinkle in his eyes.

“Nikos Takis Inn.”

Nikos Takis Inn



Where are we going?” I asked. Dimitris put his hand over mine and said,
“We go to hotel. You go through big emotion at Police, so we rest at hotel.”

“What about Morgan and Andreas?”

“They do what they need to do, we see them in two days,” he said.

From the taxi, we walked a block to a hotel in the middle of old Rhodes Town. It had a white stucco exterior. The room was a huge suite, very luxurious.

“We didn’t bring a change of clothes with us,” I said.

“Well, then, we will wear these again. I want my Helena to rest. All bad memories go away. Then tomorrow, we have fun, and you will feel better.” Dimitris was very comforting. “Come, look at the bathroom.”

I went to the bathroom to see what I couldn’t believe would be in this hotel. There were dark marble sinks and counters, a huge deep tub plus a fancy stall shower with six spray heads. The heated towel rack was stacked with four thick towels, and there were new robes provided along with slippers. I was very impressed. Dimitris turned on the water to fill the tub. He poured in some bath oil that was provided. It smelled like Roses.

“For you, Helena.” Dimitris took me by the shoulders, kissed my forehead, and said, “You soak. I will go to desk for few minutes, be back.”

As I soaked in the luxury of the bathtub, I was so exhausted that the strain of going to identify the thugs that assaulted us melted away. I felt like I was ready to fall asleep. I got out of the tub and put on the robe. I was sitting on the bed when Dimitris came back.

“What did you do, go shopping?” I asked. Dimitris put down some shopping bags on the bed.

“I take shower.”

I peeked into the shopping bags. I found that this man went to a gift shop and bought us a change of clothes and something to sleep in. I had to laugh, there was a cute T-shirt, with “Kiss Me, I’m Greek!” printed on the front.

I brushed out my hair and put on the T-shirt, which covered my butt adequately, then got into the bed. Nothing has felt this good in quite a while. The sheets felt like silk, and the thin blanket that was under the quilt was like Cashmere. The scent of Cedar and the sea permeated the air. The breeze from the open window glanced over my face as I lay in the bed.

When Dimitris came out of the shower, his hair was wet and standing out from towel-drying it. After he dropped the towel, he quickly ran his fingers through his hair to tame it.

“That is better! Do you wish to sleep now?”

“Maybe, it feels so good in bed, I might sleep, but resting is nice too. Are you getting in?”

He got on top of the bed and leaned against the headboard. He picked up the remote control for the TV then turned it on.

“Thank you, Dimi, for the T-shirt.”

“Is comfortable?” He asked.

“Yes, thank you, it was very sweet of you to think of it.” I put my arm around him and hugged him. He put his arm around me and continued to flip through the channels.

“Dimi not sweet,” he said, kissing my forehead as I lay against him.

“Yes, you are, you are very sweet to me.” As I lay there, I was getting drowsy with the glare of the TV screen against my tired eyes.

Before I knew it, I was asleep. I had fitful dreams that made my heart rate soar. I awoke in a panic, trying to catch my breath. It was close to 7 pm when

I realized where I was and that I was not in danger. I turned to find that Dimitris was not in bed. I sat up and looked around the room. He was not here.

When I couldn't find him, I got dressed then went down to the lobby. I thought he might have gone down for a newspaper or coffee. I was curious about this gem of a hotel, right in the middle of this ancient walled city. I could see the walls and floor, that they were of the old construction. Outside, uneven plaster where it had been repaired, time and again, over the years, added to its beauty.

I didn't see Dimitris in the lobby, so I asked at the desk if he had been down here. The desk clerk didn't see him, but this clerk just came on shift duty. I went out of the front door to the street. Shops and other open-air stores were along the avenue, but I didn't check all these places. I felt like I was hunting him down. I turned around and went back to the room, and I wondered how long he had been gone. We had a balcony overlooking the street. I got a cold drink, brought over a chair, and watched the people walking and interacting as they do in a hometown village. I didn't have my glasses on, but I caught what I thought was Dimitris coming out of a Taverna down the way. This man had a woman hanging on his arm, talking to him, then she'd get in front of him walking backward as she spoke.

They stopped and talked for five or more minutes, laughing, and it looked like they were having a good time. She was touching his arm as they laughed. I was still not sure that it was Dimitris. I wished that I had my glasses with me. I couldn't stop watching, even though my heart was saying that it wasn't him. I could have sworn that it was he, and then the green-eyed monster raised its ugly head. I didn't want him to see me watching from my perch, but I stayed, and as this man came toward the hotel, he sent the woman back to where she came from, laughing loudly and sending him blown kisses off her fingertips. He looked up. When he saw me, he stopped in his tracks. I got up quickly and went inside. It was Dimitris!

What was he doing? Who was this woman? After everything we went through and still have to face, what is he trying to do? I can't believe this!

Madly in love one minute, then having to watch my husband, *just in case*

the next, and never being able to trust him out of my site. I won't do it! As much as I love him, I won't let him hurt me. I came away from the balcony. I didn't know what to do. I was hurt, but I couldn't confront him now. I would be so pissed off that I'd say things that I didn't mean.

I ran to the door, locked it, and blocked it with a chair. I needed time alone to think. I didn't know what I was going to do. I thought things were going reasonably well for us. I thought our problems would be over once the situation with the police reports were finished. And what about Dimi? What kind of reasoning can he come up with, and would I listen? All these thoughts jumbled around in my head and not one that showed me a clear path. I hated this. It gave me a feeling of dread. How could he do this?

I heard him trying the doorknob.

"Helena? My Heart. Door is locked," he said. He waited for me to open the door. Then I heard him knock louder. He waited a few more minutes. "Helena?" He knocked again.

I sat on the chair against the door. I wasn't going to let him get to me. I had a hollow place where my heart used to be. I picked up the cell phone from the bedside table, then went back to sit on the chair, blocking the door again.

"Hello?" I tried to talk in a quiet voice on the phone. "I'd like to order a taxi. Could he call this number when he arrives?" I gave them my cell number. I didn't hear Dimitris at the door. I wondered if he left to get the desk clerk to open the door. I went to the bathroom, dressed, gathered all my stuff, then listened at the door, and it was silent. I hurriedly scribbled a note and left it on the bed. I opened the door far enough to enable me to look down the hall. I didn't see Dimitris. I rushed up the corridor past the staircase and around the first intersecting corridor corner. I waited there for what seemed like an eternity. My cell phone silently buzzed. It was my taxi waiting.

"I'll be down in a minute, please wait," I said.

A few minutes later, Dimitris came up with another key to our room. When he entered our room, I hurried down the stairs and around the cobblestone walkway to the taxi near the outside wall.

"The airport, hurry, please," I said to the driver. We sped off to leave this beautiful place behind. I had a few minutes to think while en route to the

airport. Was I being hasty and jealous beyond reason? I don't know. I asked for the first flight out at the airport counter. I didn't care where it was going. I just needed to be on it. It wouldn't be boarding for another twenty minutes.

Dimitris entered the hotel room. He noticed the chair pulled away from the wall, and the balcony doors open.

"Helena? My Heart?" He called. He went to the bathroom, and it was empty. He turned to the nightstand then saw the note on the bed. It read:

"I can't wait around to be betrayed. I love you too much to stay."

My cell phone rang. It was Dimitris. My heart sank. I couldn't take his call. I couldn't talk to him yet. Once I'm on the plane, I'll call him. I owe him that, at least.

Dimitris wasn't sure where to look for his wife. He asked the clerk at the desk if anyone had left. The clerk said that a woman fitting the description that Dimitris gave, had left just a few minutes ago. There were only a couple of places where she might have gone, but to go to each location, he'd waste a lot of time. But where to start searching? First, he thought maybe the ferry, or the airport, or possibly the family home. No, she wouldn't go there. Perhaps another hotel, but not the Paradiso. He called Andreas.

"Has Helena called Morgana?" He asked in the native tongue.

"No, we haven't heard from her. What's happened?" Andreas asked.

"She has gone from Dimi," he said and clicked off his phone. Then he decided to call the taxi company. Maybe they would tell him her destination.

It seemed like I sat in this airport for hours, but my flight was finally announced. I showed my ticket at the gate and boarded the plane. The plane wasn't crowded, and I had enough room around me so that I could make a private phone call. I turned on my phone to find I had four missed calls — three of them from Dimitris. I knew I couldn't put off the inevitable, so I called him.

"Helena? Where you go?" I could tell he was upset. I could hear his breathing, rapid, and hard. I took a deep breath and made up my mind that I could control my emotions and talk to him.

"I'm sorry, Dimi, I have to go. I'm sorry."

"What you mean, 'go'?"

"I can't stay with you. I don't think we want the same things," I said.

"Tell me what I do for you to leave, Helena?"

"You should know. I shouldn't have to tell you."

"How will I know if you do not say?"

"It seems I made a mistake. I wanted you. That's all. First, you wanted me, and now, you want everyone else. We had this conversation once before. I told you once that I'm a jealous wife. Maybe now you'll believe me." I clicked off the phone. I felt my resolve wash away with my tears. I couldn't stop them now. Hearing him say my name and acting so innocent, I was softening, and I couldn't let myself do that.

The engines had started, and we were about to taxi down the runway. My phone rang again. I answered it to keep it from ringing.

"Helena, we must talk, where are you?" I didn't say anything at first. "Helena?" the roar of the engines was almost too loud to hear the phone.

"I can't talk. I'm sorry, Dimi." I was trying not to sound like I had been crying, but I'm not that good of an actress to pull it off. I sat buckled into my seat, the silent tears running down my cheeks as I looked out the small window.

My mind was in a realm of confusion. No single thought was definitive, as everything seemed to blur into a clouded kaleidoscope. I felt myself going down the abyss, fear, and paranoia over-taking me. I tried to tell myself that it's just nerves, to calm down so that I could think. I felt detached and outside of my body. That feeling that you're watching yourself, like in another dimension, but not able to change the path you're on. I tried to replay in my mind what I saw, but I couldn't. The whole scenario had floated away with my conscious mind.

As we cleared the air space over Rhodes, I turned my phone on to make a call. Then I thought, I can't call Morgan, I can't call Rena, who can I call?

Then it rang as it was in my hand. It was Dimi.

"Hello," I said. I felt weak like I was fading away.

"Helena, please tell Dimi you come back. Where you go? I am here without

my Helena.”

“You don’t need me, Dimi, you have no trouble finding women who are attracted to you and more than willing to keep you company.”

“Dimi only want you, Helena. I do not see other women. What you see, not what looks like. You break this man’s heart! Helena, please, let Dimi come to get you.”

“I don’t know why you want me there. Is it because of the Orthodox that you can’t let me go?”

“No, Helena, you no go because I love you. You no go because you love this man. We are together for always,” he said.

“I wish that were true, Dimi, I really do. I don’t have the strength for it. I can’t be the wife that knows her husband can’t be trusted and puts up with it. That’s not me. I won’t have a husband that I can’t trust. You put yourself in this position, and I can’t handle that. You can’t expect me to be that kind of wife. I love you too much to be sharing you. If you have to have the attention of other women, fine! You can have all the attention that they can give you. Just don’t expect me to be there to watch.”

“Helena, please to listen to Dimi. I want only my Heart. There is no one else. I see no one else!”

“Who were you with at the Taverna? Who was it that followed you down the street before you came back to the hotel?” He exhaled slowly, and there was a slight pause. “You see, you can’t even tell me that! I’m afraid it’s.....”

“I tell you, Helena, but you must listen to all.” He was waiting for me to respond that I would listen to what he had to say. The signal was lost, and the connection dropped from my phone. Of all times to drop a call! What could I do? I had to wait.

Dimitris couldn’t stand the torture of losing the call, not knowing where Helena was and sitting in the hotel where last they were together. It seemed everything went wrong so suddenly. He was worried about his wife being out there somewhere alone. He had no way to find her. It would be difficult to explain things over the phone, but he had to tell her everything if he ever expected her to come back. The more he paced and thought about it, the dread of the realization set in; that familiar sound and losing the call, it was

like *deja vu*. He thought to himself that he should have recognized the familiar sound. She's on a plane, to where?

The plane landed in Athens within the hour. I wished that the first flight out would have been further away, but just getting some distance between us was something of a relief. I was in the airport lounge, sitting with my hand to my forehead, trying to think of what to do next. I assessed my situation. I had nothing with me, not even a coat. I had no one to call, as I didn't want to get anyone here involved in our problem. The only alternative I could think of would be to catch a plane home. I didn't want to go back to California.

"May I buy you a drink, Helena?" I turned to the sound of a familiar voice. I looked at him with my heart in my throat. "Please let me apologize. Will you allow me to buy you a drink?" Sahj asked.

"Yes, thank you," I said. I was shocked to see this man. He walked with a cane to the bar.

"I hope a dry Martini is okay?"

"Yes, that's fine," I answered. He ordered the drinks.

"I have to offer my deepest and sincerest apologies to you and your husband. I never intended for anyone to get hurt. You must understand that this affair has many twists and turns, and too many players. One tends to lose control when conspirators are in the mix."

"Yes. We weren't sure exactly who you were or who you represented. You're not Ben-Abijah?" I asked.

"One must have many names."

"I'm sorry you were shot. I owe you a great debt of thanks, Mr. Sahj. If it weren't for you....."

"I am sorry that I couldn't prevent what happened. It was unforgivable. Are you alone?"

"Yes, I am."

"You aren't leaving Hellas, are you?"

"I think I may, yes," I said.

"You will testify?"

"I will leave a contact number. My husband will be able to contact me."

"He is not leaving with you?"

“No,” I said.

“What is his name?”

“Dimitris Patakinis.”

“Yes, I remember this information.”

“If I need to be contacted, he’ll know how to contact me,” I said.

“Where are you headed, may I ask?”

“I think, London.”

“I hope this ordeal is not the cause of your leaving....your husband,” he said.

“Ahmed, what should I do with your key? I don’t have it on me. I’ll have to mail it to you. I would need your address,” I said.

“It can wait until you return,” he said.

“I’m afraid I may not return. I just don’t know right now.”

“When you are settled, call my cell number, we’ll discuss it.”

“I’m glad that you are doing well. I didn’t know you were shot until that day at the hospital. They almost killed you!”

“In my profession, it’s something that can happen. You are leaving Greece. Are you okay? This event, has it soured you on Hellas?”

“No, I’m afraid we have personal issues we’re dealing with.”

“If you ever need my help, my assistance, I would be happy to help in any way that I can.” He handed me his card. “This is my cell number. If you are ever in trouble, I’ll try to help, call me. Again, I hope you will forgive me, and it has been my great pleasure to know you, Helena.”

“Goodbye, Mr. Sahj.” He kissed my hand and went to the gate to board his plane.

The more I thought about it, the better London sounded. I could be in London in three hours. I went to the ticketing agent and was able to book passage on the 8 pm flight to London. This would give me time to buy a coat and a few pieces of clothing from the duty-free stores before my trip. My cell phone rang again as I was checking my purchases at the cashier in one of the airport shops.

“Yes?” I said.

“Helena, my Heart. Will you give this poor man chance to talk?”

“I don’t have much time,” the cashier was asking for money. “Dimi, let me call you back. I promise I’ll call you right back.”

After I got through the cashier and was able to pack the clothes into a carpetbag that I bought. I sat in the airport lobby and called him back.

“Okay, go ahead, tell me what you have to say. I’ll listen,” I said.

“Helena, S’agapo.” Hearing him say that made my heart tear apart, but I listened. “This man has been so stupid. When I try to make big surprise for my Heart, I make Helena unhappy. I make plan that goes wrong.”

As we were talking, a flight announcement came over the loudspeaker in Greek. I had to repeat what I was saying.

“What surprise are you talking about?”

“We were to stay night at hotel, then Dimi plan to rent car, so we go to Valley of Butterfly tomorrow, where I would make mad love to my Helena, then to show my Heart your new home. We would live on Rhodes for always.”

I felt so totally devastated. I love this man so much, but I have to leave. It’s killing me to do this, but I don’t know what is worse, the pain I’m feeling at leaving him or the pain he’ll cause me if I don’t. I wish I didn’t have to do this. How can I ever trust him? When everything is going smoothly, and I’ve let down my guard, will he then do the same thing, just as I start to trust him again?

“Dimi, why do you make me so crazy?” I was crying. I don’t want him to think that I’m not serious about having faith in my husband. I don’t want him to believe that my threats to leave are only empty threats, and nothing more.

“Does Dimi make my Heart crazy?”

“Yes, you make me crazy. I don’t want to be one of those wives who has to know what you’re doing, and who you’re with, every minute of the day. I don’t want to feel that as soon as I’m not with you, as soon as my back is turned, that you’re flirting with other women,” I said.

“Dimi does not flirt,” he said.

“We talked about this before. I don’t see how we’re going to keep our marriage together. Maybe we need to be apart for awhile...until you can figure out what you want,” I said.

“No, not apart, Helena. I do only for you. Dimi will not live without his

Heart. You must come back to Dimi! If this man do not love my Helena, we no have Orthodox. I would not marry one, not in love with. Please, Helena, you torture this man.”

“You know I don’t want to go. You know how much I love you, and yet we always, somehow, come back to the same problem. Even though I love you more than life itself, I don’t know if I can ever, fully trust you, and that’s killing me,” I said.

“But Dimi has done nothing for you to be so mean, Helena.”

“Who was the woman that was chasing you down the street at the hotel? Who was that, Dimi?”

“When Dimi leave Taverna, I forget cell phone on the table. The waitress brings to me. Dimi thank her, want to give more tip. She say ‘no, epharisto,’ then I go. This is all. Please, Helena, you say you no run away, then do!”

“Let me call you back,” I said and clicked off my phone. Now I had some hard thinking to do, and I had to do it quickly. I had a flight to London that would be boarding in a matter of minutes. Do I believe his explanation? Can I trust this man? Am I the one who is being unreasonable? What about the long term, will I have faith in my husband? Is love enough? No one could help me with this. The more I try to think, the more confused I get. I was on my own.

I heard the “flight boarding” call. I walked up to the check-in desk. I hesitated, knowing that there was a line forming behind me. My mind was fighting my heart, but with tears flowing down my cheeks, I handed the agent my boarding pass.

Heathrow



Dimitris waited and waited for Helena to call. Pacing the floor and consulting his watch. After hours of fretting, anger began to creep in, quickening his pulse.

As I waited for the long flight to end, I knew that I had to talk to Dimitris. My mind was filled with thoughts of “What am I doing? What do I do after we land in London?” And then the big question, “Can I live without him?”

I knew the answers, but I couldn’t let Dimi see that I’m weak. I know that in the question of fidelity that I am right to demand it. I get thoughts of “What if I’m wrong?” I let doubts creep into my thoughts, and again, I weaken.

I found a Bistro not far from the boarding gates. I ordered a tall Iced Coffee and took a deep breath before trekking out to find lodging. My hand was shaking as I held my cell phone. I stared at it while I drank, still deciding what I’d say.

“I beg your pardon, Ma’am, is this seat taken?”

My spell was broken at the interruption of a stranger. I looked into his eyes, and I saw Dimitris! I knew this wasn’t my husband, but the resemblance was striking. I was dumbfounded and speechless.

“I’m sorry to intrude, but there doesn’t seem to be another empty seat,” he said.

“Oh, please,” I gestured for him to sit. I wasn’t in the mood for polite conversation. He smiled and had a charming demeanor.

“If I’m intruding, I’d be sad to find another table.” He smiled as he held his hand out in introducing himself.

“Helen,” I shook his hand. I was still holding my phone in my hand when it started ringing. “Please excuse me,” I answered the call, stepping a few feet from the table.

“Helena! We must talk. Where are you? When will you come home?” His tone was sharp and demanding. Not the usual sweet voice I’ve missed.

“We have a lot to talk about, Dimi, but I can’t go into it now. Can I call you later, we can talk?”

“We talk now! Why you do this?”

“You know why. I’ll have to call you back. I can’t talk here. There’s too much noise. Dimi? Dimi, are you there?” He ended the call without a word. I could hear something in his voice, a different tone or attitude. I turned back to the man at my table.

I was going to leave the airport to find lodging, but David told me about a place that is closer to the theater district. I felt comfortable in accepting his help. We talked about his life in London and all the usual things one talks about when getting to know another person. I refrained from going over my life and current problems and only vaguely mentioned Greece.

Lodging was perfect and relatively inexpensive. As I looked around the room that I rented, being alone, the quietness of the night began to close in on me. Now, I’m alone, and I felt very isolated. I wasn’t sure whether or not Dimitris was waiting for my call, and I was reluctant to talk to him. It was approaching 2:00 am.

Sleep would not take me as I tossed and turned. Dimitris. I couldn’t rest until the air was cleared, and the only way to do that was face to face.

A few hours later, with four hours of sleep, I walked through Trafalgar Square and found a cute coffee shop. I know that Greece is two hours later than London time, so it would be the right time for me to call Dimitris.

Again, no answer.

It made me very anxious. I got a surge of nervous energy that wouldn’t

allow me to relax. As I walked, the beauty and grandeur of the square eluded my dull senses. There would be no rest until this thorn in the side of our marriage is settled. I suppose it's my own doing that I find myself in this situation. I could go back, pretend that nothing has happened, and turn a blind eye to Dimi's ways. But that's not me, and when he sees my weakness, his behavior may become worse than I could imagine.

I fell into a daze as I sat on the steps of the National Portrait Gallery. I was at the brink of sleep. I went back to my room and the hard mattress that was calling me.

I was asleep before my head hit the pillow. I didn't realize how long I slept until the pain I felt was like I was drilling a hole in cement with my hip. Sitting at a small desk, I debated on whether to try to place a call or if I was mentally alert enough to address the problem with Dimitris. I turned on the TV to hear the morning news. It was interesting to listen to the British viewpoint of world affairs.

I finally snapped out of my malaise when I heard that there was a strike by airport personnel, including the pilots who supported it. Suddenly I wondered if I would be able to leave London. The limitation on my options made it seem urgent that I return to Greece.

My plans hinged on my ability to fly out of here. It brought the problem of Dimitris and me into focus. I had to return to put an end to this battle of wills. We had to get back on an even keel.

Once the fog lifted in my mind, I knew what I had to do. I had to find a way to leave. It wouldn't be easy if the strike lasted more than a few days, as many people find themselves in the same situation. Everyone would be booking alternate transportation.

I thought that once Dimi heard of the strike that he would call me. He didn't. It ticked me off that he didn't call. I wasn't going to call him again, even though I was willing to iron out our difficulties. It seemed that this was turning into a one-sided conversation. Without words, he was winning.

It was four days. The strike wasn't over, but concessions with the employees union made it possible to fly out of London on a limited schedule. I soon found that there were no flights available for Greece, but I was able to book a

flight to Zurich.

The longer I had to wait for my flight out of Heathrow, the more my emotions ran amok. I had my reservations for days, and now, sitting in the lounge for the gate to my flight, I found that the departure was delayed two hours. I was exhausted.

Once we were airborne, it was only a little more than an hour later that we landed in Zurich. I had another hour between flights to kill. The trip from Athens to Karpathos would be a breeze, but I needed to call Rena.

Saint or Sinner



Rena met me at the airport with a hug. She was bursting with questions.

“What happened? You look like you haven’t slept. I’ve got your room ready.”

“Thanks, Rena. I haven’t had much sleep, and I feel like a zombie. I must look awful.”

“Where were you? Dimi has called several times, talking to Stefano. All that man would tell me is that you two were arguing, and Dimi needed advice.”

“It’s the same old problem that seems to keep coming up. Would you mind if I try to get some sleep when we get to the house?” I knew she would understand.

I slept for the rest of the day and all that night.

I awoke at 7 am. I found myself cuddled up to Dimitris. He was lying on top of the covers with his arm around me, my head on his shoulder, his cheek resting against my forehead. He held my hand to his heart, while dreams of the events from the previous days played back in my mind. While not quite awake, I was in deep thought as I stirred.

“Dimi missed his Heart,” I heard in a soft, almost whispered tone.

“Uhh.....what? WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?” I was still in a faraway

place, but realizing he was here, holding me, touching my soul, I lost it! He heard it in my voice. He leaned up and looked at me. I looked into his eyes, and he wanted to make love.

“We need to talk, Dimi, so let’s do that first, after I have my coffee. Please.” He pulled back and removed himself from the bedroom. I was still tired but wouldn’t be able to sleep since losing my temper on awakening.

We were seated at a table in a kafenia down the road.

“I’m not all that hungry. We didn’t need to go out to eat, you know,” I said.

“Please, Helena, you must eat something.”

“But I can’t eat breakfast, and I doubt if they’re serving lunch yet,” I said.

“They will make whatever you want.”

I was going to tell Dimitris how charming he’s being, but I didn’t want to sound like I was accusing him of anything or being antagonistic. I felt like I was on edge, wanting a confrontation. Dimitris had been so very sweet and considerate, but I still had our main issue eating away at me. It might take time to feel better and treat him in a normal way. In the meantime, I try to be “nice” and give him a chance to get back to normal too. We had a lot happen to us lately, and I still needed to watch him for any adverse symptoms from his head injury, which I haven’t helped by adding to his stress.

We were seated across the table from each other. There was no escaping his gaze. It was a little awkward, sitting across the table from this gorgeous man that I can’t resist, and still hold the anger and uncertainty within me. I found myself fidgeting and self-conscious. It seemed like it was taking forever to get our food. I was floundering for conversation and seemed to be avoiding the reason for our meeting.

“How’s your head? Any headaches, dizziness? Anything?” I asked.

“What is it? What is wrong, my Heart?”

“You mean besides ‘our problem,’ there’s nothing wrong, I guess I’m just hungry.” I was nervous. I had to find something on the wall to look at to distract me.

“Helena.” He took my hand, and as he pulled it toward him, I had to face

him. I got that shock that shoots through me when I'd look into his eyes. It was still there. He could always make my heart skip a beat. He leaned forward to kiss me, but I'd have to meet him halfway. I think he could see the lack of enthusiasm.

Dimitris got up then came over to me.

"May I sit?" He asked. He put his arm around the back of my chair and leaned forward to look at me.

"Helena, look at Dimi," he said in a voice so low and mellow. I looked at him and felt my heart breaking. "Dimi has love for this woman. Why you no look to me, Helena? Do I offend you? Do you scare of this hairy man?" I wanted to laugh, but he was serious, and the innocence of the question was sweet.

"Dimi, I don't know what I'm doing. You're driving me insane. We have to straighten this out if we want to save our marriage."

"You no love this man anymore?"

My throat closed, I couldn't speak with the knot in my throat. If I started to cry, then I've lost my ground. I turned to look in my purse to stall for time.

"My Heart, you are the only one for Dimi. Gods bring you to me and wake up this man." He had my hand and leaned over to catch my eyes. My eyes met his, and then he kissed me.

I was losing the battle, as his kiss penetrated me to the core.

"Stop, we have to talk."

We left the restaurant and ended up in the little park where he first kissed me. There was a picnic table under a shady tree away from the traffic. We sat facing each other, but he didn't let go of my hand.

"I have to know what's going on with you. I thought I knew you, but...."

"You know this man! You love this man, but you always run away from problem instead of to talk to Dimi."

"That's right. It's all my fault. I'm the one. It's me you saw in the street chasing down another man." I was getting hot under the collar and had to curb my tongue. He was getting upset, his eyebrows were pinched together, and then his grip on my hand was released.

"No, Helena is all my fault. What you see is not what seems."

"I know what you said; you left your phone, and she brought it back to you."

"Yes, is all."

"That's all? What about the hanging on your arm, and the blown kisses?"

My temperature was rising, the more I spoke.

"I know her from a child. She is like little cousin to Dimi. She like to play with Dimi."

"You have lived here your whole life, I understand this, and I'm the outsider, but I have to be able to trust you. Everything you tell me, I have to believe is the truth. I know I'm a jealous person, and I've tried to overcome it, but you seem to add fuel to the fire!" I was fighting back the tears as I tried to communicate clearly. The more hurt I felt, the harder the battle to keep from crying, which fueled my anger further.

"To not do what always has been is difficult. Greeks show emotion on greeting, maybe look like flirting but is not. If you do not like, Dimi will not do."

"You said that before," I said.

"Yes, I make promise to you. I do not break promise."

"I don't know. I want to believe you. I told you once that if you made me doubt you, I'd leave. It's not something I wanted to do, but I don't know how to make you understand. I just don't know. I need to get back to Rena's and get some more rest."

"I will take you home to Rena's, my Heart." He kissed me on the temple. He kept watching me, and I was getting flustered.

"Geez, Dimi! Stop watching me." His eyebrows went into a pinch again.

"Please, Helena, I am sorry." He looked at his hand, stroking mine. I suddenly felt a wave of panic coming over me. I felt that if I didn't get up and leave, I would explode. I wanted to get up from the table and walk, but I didn't.

"I worry for you, Helena. I do not want to do thing that hurt you. Dimi is here, my Heart." He cupped my cheek. I thought he would kiss me, but he didn't. "You can tell Dimi when ready."

He just sat there. He looked at me. Then a small smile came to his face to replace his pinched eyebrows.

“Helena, you know not what you do to your Dimi. You say one thing and do other thing.” He leaned into my ear and said, “You are being mean to Dimi.” Then he kissed my cheek. “Helena, you make your Dimi crazy.”

“I know.”

“You leave Dimi. I think I lose you. Then you come back. Where you go to, my Heart?”

“I just took a plane to where ever it was going.”

“You get on plane to go away from Dimi?”

“Let’s talk about something else.”

“You say you never run away again, yet you go to airport to go away from Dimi,” he said.

“I know I may seem to be out of my mind, but maybe I am when it comes to you.”

“But why you want to leave?”

“When I saw you in the street, then that woman ran up to you, I felt betrayed. I was hurt, and the only way I can think is to be away from you. So, I left. You’re still not out of the dog house, you know! The day that I know you’ve betrayed my trust and faith in you, I will be on the next plane. I won’t be coming back.” I didn’t want this to sound like a threat, but I’m afraid it did.

“That will not happen,” he said.

“Then, we have no problem.”

“But you jump on wrong conclusion. You see woman with me, and you leave Dimi? I have job, work with woman on occasion. I will have conversation. You too quick to judge.”

“I know, Dimi, I have been too judgmental, but you created my distrust and suspicions when you didn’t let other women know that you’re married. That’s when it all started.”

“But if you be more...what I try to say?” He fished for the right word.

“Tolerant? Indifferent? What?”

“Patient, Dimi will not encourage, I say right away I am married.”

“If you had done this before, we might not be having this conversation. I can try to be more tolerant, and I’m sure you will be more tolerant with Aiden.”

Dimitris looked at me, and I'm not sure what he was thinking, his look was one of irritation, and I think a little jealousy.

"We will not debate on this. No women for Dimi. No Aiden for Helena."

"That's not a problem for me," I said.

I didn't want our conversation to turn into a debate. I'm afraid my irritability was taking a mean turn, and dumping on Dimitris would only make things worse. When we left the kafenia, Dimitris had his hand on the back of my neck as we walked. I felt like I was being led like a dog on a leash. His grasp was definite and controlling. I know that my feelings were strained, and I was looking for another reason to argue. I knew this, and yet I couldn't help myself.

He led me to Rena's car. He kissed my hand and was speaking under his breath in Greek while he opened the door.

"What did you say?" I asked.

"Nothing, I say nothing."

"I heard you say something in Greek."

"Is nothing, I say to myself." He closed my door then came around to sit behind the steering wheel.

"If you're angry with me, please say what's on your mind." There was a pause, and I could tell that he wanted to say something.

"Why you bring up Aiden?" He finally asked.

"I thought you would see that the way you feel about Aiden compares to the way I feel about you and other women. I admit that it irritates me the way you conveniently forget to tell these women that you're married."

"What you say? You say I, Helena, Aiden touch you, Dimi no like. Yes. I will say Dimi jealous. This how you feel with Dimi talk to women?" He was thinking and realizing that we had a problem that didn't seem to be going away. He looked irritated and worried. He didn't want to say anything that would make things worse, but he usually chooses his words well.

"Helena, my Heart. There is nothing to upset over. This man will guard and honor your feelings in this. Perhaps Dimi not sensitive enough. I take care to avoid problem. You are wife to this man. I do as you ask - no question." He looked in my eyes and said, "Dimi swear on fate of death, you will not guess

on Dimi's fidelity."

"Thank you. Thank you, Dimi." I placed my hand on his knee and tried to clear my voice, "I only want to have my faith in you restored. That's all I ask."

"You will never have to question, my Heart." He placed a sweet kiss on my cheek.

When we arrived at the house, Rena was sweeping the patio. I started a pot of coffee.

"Helena, how are things?" She asked as she closed the patio sliding door.

"Things seem to be leveling out. It's been a roller coaster lately," I said. Dimitris came to me as I was seated at the breakfast bar. He kissed my temple then went to the cupboard for some cups.

"Were you two going back to Rhodes for a while?"

"We will stay on Rhodes when feeling better. Rhodes should be happy place. No go there with heavy heart," Dimitris said.

Rena didn't question what he said. She looked over to me, and I could tell that she had some questions, but they would wait for the "girl talk."

"Did you already have lunch? We were going to have an early dinner today. Stefano has to leave later to go out to the dig."

"We have eaten, but I'll help you start dinner whenever you're ready," I said.

"Oh, thanks. Have you talked to Morgan lately?" Rena asked.

"We saw them the other day, why, anything going on?" I asked.

"No, I just haven't talked to them in a few days. Just wondering what they've been up to lately."

"Where is that brother of mine?" Dimitris asked.

"He went to the loft room. He's got something he's looking for that he has to take with him," Rena said. Dimitris poured the coffee for everyone, then took a cup for Stefano to the loft room.

"What's with you two? I thought everything would be bright and sunny. You look like a big cloud dumped on you," Rena said.

"We're still trying to work out the thing with Dimitris and other women. We've had a couple of bad days, things have been tense," I said.

"Dimi and other women?" Rena was in shock that this was still an issue.

“He doesn’t or at least didn’t realize how jealous I get, and I warned him. He wasn’t letting other women know that he’s off the market. I finally had enough! I went off the deep end, maybe a little prematurely, but we’ve been at odds for the last couple of days.”

“He doesn’t realize that just because he’s wearing a wedding ring, that women know that he’s married, especially wearing it on the right hand,” Rena said. “But to some women, married or not, it makes no difference.”

“I think now he’s more aware of how I feel, and I think there will be some change.”

“Are you still upset?” She asked.

“I’m still in a daze over it. I think a lot of it is my nerves. My emotions have been all over the place lately. This morning, I was so keyed up that I had a hard time sitting across the table from Dimi, at the restaurant. I was nervous and angry.”

“There are times when I get like that. It doesn’t usually last long - a day or two. But I get myself in all kinds of trouble when that happens,” Rena said.

“What do you do when you can’t stop yourself from flipping out?” I asked.

“Oh, I get mad, then I go shopping! Stefano is used to it, so it doesn’t bother him like it used to in the beginning. Now that it doesn’t happen as often, life is going smoother, but I don’t go shopping as often,” she chuckled.

“I guess we’ll be going to Crete pretty soon. Maybe we can all go, make a day of it. It might be easier with family around, as we won’t be bouncing off each other as much.”

“That’s a good idea. We haven’t been to Crete in ages. It would be fun.”

My cell phone started ringing, and I had to dig into my purse. It was Morgan.

We talked for only a few minutes. They were coming into port in a couple of hours.

“Oh, good!” Rena said in her cheerful manner. “What’s this, did you drop this?” She picked up a business card off the floor and handed it to me.

“Yes, that’s mine.” It was Sahj’s business card. “I’ve got to put this number in my cell. I should do that right now.” I had my phone out, so I programmed the phone number into my cell phone. I forgot that I had seen this man recently.

“When are we having dinner, Reenie?” Stefano asked.

“Well, Andreas and Morgana are on their way, what do you want to do?”

“If Dimi helps me at the dig, we could be done in an hour or two, then eat when Andreas and Morgana get here.”

“Yes, I will help,” Dimi said.

“Okay, let’s go, we’ll be back as soon as we can,” Stefano said.

Dimitris came up to me and took my hand. “Come, Helena.” He guided me to the living room. “We will be back after few hours, my Heart.” He put his hand up to my cheek and looked into my eyes. “Your Dimi will only have his Helena in his heart.” Then he kissed me with one of his monumental kisses. “S’agapo.”

He looked at me with those bedroom eyes. He had a way of sending me into orbit with his sensual kisses.

“Okay, we go,” he said. He kissed my hand, then he and Stefano left for the dig with a gunny sack of supplies that Stefano took out of the loft room.

“Sometimes I think the men must have a scrum about us, the same as we do about them. All the advise flying everywhere. Sometimes I have to laugh,” Rena said.

“I’m sure they do.”

“I think that since Stefano and I have been married for so long, the boys go to Stefano for advice. It’s funny. I mean, Stefano knows zip about women, but I guess they figure he must know more than they do!” We had a good laugh over it. “You know, it’s really kind of cute with Dimi.”

“Why?” I asked.

“Stefano didn’t think Dimi would ever come to him for advice. He never has before, not until he met you.”

“He needed advice with me?” I asked.

“You have no idea, well, maybe you already know. The first time we met you, when you gave Dimi the silent treatment, I think that was the first time. Then there was a time when he was jealous over Aiden. He was a basket case over that. It made Stefano feel good knowing that Dimi came to him as the head of the family, for advice.”

“Rena, sometimes I don’t know how he puts up with me. If I ever left my

'ex' and took a plane somewhere, my 'ex' would have just gotten explosive and tell me to 'f-off.' Not Dimi, he's different; more than I ever expected."

She sat and looked into my eyes, wanting to know what happened. When I told her, her Chinese eyes got as big as saucers. "You actually got on a plane and left?"

"I had to get away from him. I can't think when he's around me. I was hurt, and I knew that if I stayed any longer I would be crying and he would wiggle his way right back into my heart, and if I let him smooth this over, it would be as if what he did was no big deal! And to me, it was a very big deal. I got the first plane out, and ended up in Athens, then London."

"But then he talked you into coming back?" She asked.

"It was hard to decide, and Dimi broke my heart as I listened to him."

"Not having any sisters, the emotions of women, to them, is like a foreign language. They usually don't have a clue, and when they get themselves in trouble, they just keep trying until they hit on the right solution to the problem. It never dawns on them to avoid a problem before they have to fix it," she said.

"Am I being totally unreasonable, Rena? I mean, I haven't seen him flirting and openly pursuing another woman. I don't think I've ever seen him look at a woman when I'm with him. He just can't be blunt. He encourages women to go for him by not being aloof and rebuffing their attention. Am I too sensitive and insecure?" I asked.

"It's natural to expect loyalty," she answered.

"I think what I worry about most is that Dimi is too nice. He doesn't want to offend anyone. I'm afraid one of these times it will go too far, and he'll be lost to me."

"Nothing is impossible, and we women have to protect men from themselves sometimes, but, and I hope you don't feel that I'm taking sides, but Dimi loves you. I've never seen anyone more in love than he is with you. I want to think that he wouldn't let something like that happen."

"I'd like to think that too, but I can't be living my life wondering," I said.

"Hello, where is everyone?"

"In here!" Rena answered. "It's Camilla."

I felt my temperature rise, and the pulse of anger quicken. There was nowhere for me to go without crossing her path.

“Oh, I didn’t know you had comp.....,” she dropped her words when we made eye contact.

“Camilla, you remember Helena?”

“Rena, I wanted to ask you if you are preparing dinner, I have a tray of goat’s meat that I thought you might want to use. It’s too much for just me,” Camilla droned on.

As she made a monologue about meat and being alone, I went into our bedroom and unpacked a few things. When I looked at the garments that I bought at the airport gift shop, I must have been out of my mind. What was I doing? I was so upset that I guess I wasn’t paying attention. I’ve been in a daze and going only on instinct since our rift, which I’m sure will fade away. But for now, I’m in automatic mode and not noticing my surroundings.

I didn’t remember putting a small packet of tissues and a book of matches in the pocket of my carpetbag, which I must have done at the airport. I was really upset, so I must have purchased the tissues when I bought the hideous clothes.

Going through the pockets in my bag, I found the receipt from the airport shops where I purchased the questionable items. There was no listing of the tissues. The matches, I pulled out again and wondered why I’d have them, I don’t smoke. It was just an ordinary book of matches, but on the inside was a squiggle of a cat, sort of, badly drawn. Nothing odd about the matches at all, just don’t know where I picked them up.

I thought I should go and look for something to go with the T-shirts, and that would give me a good excuse to leave while Camilla was here. I picked up my cell phone and called Rena.

“Hello?”

“Rena, don’t say anything, but I was wondering if I may borrow the Fiat?”

“Sure, uh, hold on a minute.” She made an excuse to Camilla, then came down the hall.

“Helena?” I opened the door. “Here are the keys; if you go out through the laundry room, the car is parked on the other side of the garage. I’ll keep

Camilla busy.”

“Thanks, Rena.”

I ducked out as Rena instructed and whipped around the corners of Karpathos until I found a cute shop. It was a unique little place. It was like a gypsy tea room, but there were garment racks all around the perimeter with a shawl draped table in the center, and a large crystal ball in the middle of it.

The young lady who helped me said that before I could buy the correct garment, I had to have my fortune read. Her logic was that “one could create an atmosphere of beauty, love, mystery, any emotion by the influence of certain vibrations that the aura surrounding the clothes worn create.”

Hmmm. That was too interesting not to contemplate, so I went along with it. I could use all the help I can get when it comes to Camilla. The old lady gypsy came out from behind a curtain, which led to another room, helped by the younger lady. She sat at the table and had me sit across from her.

She began by crossing herself three times. She raised her eyes to the heavens, then said something under her breath. She took out a deck of cards wrapped in a scarf and made the sign of the cross above them, three times. She dealt out the cards after I cut them. The younger lady interpreted what the older woman said.

“You have a new life force in your immediate future or near past. There is a man, two men in your life. You can be ecstatically happy or very miserable — a two-sided coin.

“Mystery and intrigue surround you. This can be dangerous. You must take care of those around you. You have a man who is blind with love for you. You must be careful that you do not sabotage that love. You are unique, do not follow the crowd. You are somewhat avant-garde. Your aura is that of mystery, intrigue, and sexual energy. You do not have a lot of men, but those who fall under your spell do not fall out of it easily. Your guiding number is ‘five.’ You have many ‘fives.’”

The old lady took my hand and inspected my palm. She felt it all over, manipulating the fingers and turning it over and over again.

“You will have a long life, although you will have during your life two major

life crisis'. You will survive, but perhaps at great cost. You have a great deal of travel in your life. There are four marriages or great loves. You are stubborn; you tend to stick to your ideals, even in the face of detriment. You are kind and generous, fiercely loyal. This makes you attractive to the opposite sex. However, it tends to complicate female relationships."

The old woman went to the crystal ball, waved her hands over it slowly, several times, with her eyes closed. Then she opened them and gazed into the sphere.

"I see a dark woman. This is a shadow of a dark specter. There could be trouble in marriage or perhaps in close relationships. I see a man in your life. He has a very sexual nature. I see a fork in the road ahead with this man. It is unclear what lies beyond. Interference may stand in the way of true happiness. I see many women surround you. It is unclear how they relate to you. You should be aware of them." The old lady took a deep breath and sat back in her chair. She rose and left the room.

"We can choose your clothing now."

I was led to a specific rack of garments in my size. It was amazing how many things I found that were my style, seemingly made just for me. I was feeling pretty good, even in the face of Camilla. I needed to get some shoes, and after finding only one pair, I went back to the gypsy shop and asked if I could change my clothes before I go home. I told the girl what I expect to walk in on when I got back, so she helped me decide what to wear home. Something to "wake Dimi up." I didn't want to wear something overly dressy, but I wanted something a little sassy.

When I got back to the house, Andreas and Morgan had already arrived, but Camilla was still there too. When I came in, I heard laughter and Rena telling one of her stories. Morgan came up to me very quickly, trying to divert me to the loft room.

"What is it?" I asked.

"Camilla is here."

"I know, she was here before I left," I said.

"Oh. We've been here for about an hour. There was a big scene with Camilla and Aiden. She was draping herself all over him, but he blew it! He cursed

her out; up one side and down the other. He told her what a bitch she is and to stay away from him. When she saw that Dimi wasn't coming to her rescue, she just laughed."

"Where is Dimi?" I asked.

"He's in there, everyone's just talking, but you know what? All the time she was hanging on Aiden, she was making eyes at Dimi. Like she was flaunting herself in front of him. I don't know, she's weird."

"And, Dimi?"

"He's been polite, that's all - rather cold actually. But you know Camilla, she keeps on like the Energizer Bunny," she said.

"Yeah, I know. I've heard her called that before. Did Aiden come with you guys?" I asked.

"Didn't you know that he's one of the brothers?"

"Well, how do I look? Not too obvious? I want Dimi to notice, but I don't want to seem conspicuous."

"This is great stuff, where did you find it?" Morgan asked.

"There's a great little gypsy shop in town, I'll have to tell you about it later," I said.

We came out of the loft room and into the dining area. Dimitris, Aiden, and Andreas were at the bar, Rena and Camilla were cooking. When I came into view, Dimitris got off his stool then came over to me. He kissed me, then took my hand.

"Come, Helena," he said as he led me back to the loft room. I thought I was in trouble. He closed the door, not letting go of my hand. He turned, put his hand up to my cheek, then kissed me.

"Oh, Helena. You gone for long time. Camilla say when she come here, you run away."

"I didn't run away, I went shopping," I said.

"This all new? I like. We go out there, show Camilla you are mine," I smiled and breathed a little sigh of relief. "You come with me, Mrs. Patakinis." He smiled and put my arm in his as we walked into the dining room.

Dimitris pulled out a stool for me to sit on, kissed my hand, and asked me if I want some wine. "Could you make me a Sangria cooler? That would be

nice.”

“We were wondering when you were getting here,” Aiden said.

“It took me a little longer than I thought it would.” Dimitris brought my drink.

“To my beautiful bride, who make Dimi crazy with love.” He kissed me, we tapped glasses and sipped our drinks. I got a glance of Camilla as Dimitris was giving his toast. She made an ugly face.

After hearing my fortune and coming back to face Camilla, I somehow felt confident. As we were sitting there and talking, I noticed that Camilla was giving me the evil stare. I think she was fuming. I had Aiden on one side of me, and Dimitris was standing next to me on the other. Dimitris was very attentive. He leaned into my ear and said, “Camilla is angry, you too sexy, Helena.” I put my hand up to his cheek, and he gave me that boyish smile.

“Oh, psh.” Camilla continued with Greek expletives under her breath. I saw Dimitris’ reaction to what she said. He was getting ready to go over to her, but I grabbed his arm and shook my head as a gesture for him to ignore her.

“Rena, is there anything I can do to help out?” I asked.

“I’m just going to lay everything out, buffet style, so if you would put out the flatware and plates, that would help.”

“I will get,” Dimitris said. As he was reaching for the plates, I could see Camilla going for the drawer right in front of him, which was a little too obvious. Dimitris moved away from her and turned to me with an expression like, ‘did you see what she did?’ then waited for her to move out of his way.

“Did you see that?” Aiden spoke softly as he leaned into me.

“She’s relentless, Aiden,” I answered. I turned on my stool to get off of it. I went to take the plates from Dimitris to put them on the table. I put down the dishes and was going to light the candles when Dimitris came up behind me and wrapped me in his arms. He had his lips next to my ear and said

“My Heart, they can not stop the looking. This man can not stop looking. You can make Dimi smolder. Your hair is smelling so sexy. I get dizzy with love of you, Helena.” I turned to him.

“Are you dizzy? Are you feeling okay?” I put my hand on his head, where

he was injured.

“No, my Heart, Dimi is not ill. Dimi is crazy for Helena.” Then he kissed me. Someone started tapping their glass with a spoon. After the kiss, I couldn’t take my eyes off of him.

“Okay, where’s my champagne?” Rena asked. “We have 20 minutes to wait for the Quiche. Then we’ll eat.”

We went into the living room and sat on the sofa. Stefano was talking to Aiden and Andreas in the dining room about his latest adventure with his students.

Dimitris poured our glasses. Camilla was looking in our direction from the bar area of the kitchen. I picked up my glass, took a sip of wine, and put my hand on Dimitris knee. He sat forward to look into my eyes. He was whispering in Greek as he ran his hand up my leg. Then he kissed me with such a gentle touch. He pulled back just enough to say something in Greek. I could feel his lips as they spoke, and his breath entering me. I looked in his eyes, and he was so sensual that I was hypnotized by him. I almost forgot my own name. He was slowly getting me to forget that we were warring.

I placed my hand over his, that was on my leg. He glanced down to my hand then he sucked in his breath through his teeth and said,

“Dimi will be bad, my Heart.”

We heard slamming of a kettle lid like it had been dropped. When we looked toward the noise, Camilla turned and walked into the kitchen in a huff.

“Why are you two in here by yourselves?” Andreas asked.

“Is too much in kitchen. We have quiet in here,” Dimitris said.

“That Camilla is a little odd,” he said.

“That’s putting it mildly,” I said.

“I can’t take much more of that!” Aiden said as he sat on the other sofa to my left.

“What’s the matter, Aiden?” I asked sympathetically.

“The woman is disturbed. Everything she touches, she either drops it or slams it!” He commented under his breath.

“We will have to ignore,” Dimitris said.

“Everyone is in here! I get left in there with the lunatic,” Morgan flailed, in

her usual outburst.

“I think Rena got sucked in, then it was too late to ask her to leave,” I said.

“Rena has dinner ready. I guess I’ll go see what’s on the menu,” Aiden said.

As I arrived at the table, Dimitris handed me a plate.

“Thank you, my love.” When I said that, he gave me a big bear hug and spoke some loud words in Greek. I almost dropped the plate. Then he kissed my cheek. Andreas and Stefano were laughing. I didn’t know what he said, but I was turning red!

“What did he say?” Morgan asked. “You’re all red.”

“I don’t know what he said,” I answered.

Morgan turned to Andreas and asked

“What did he say?”

“He said that he’s insane with love for this girl,” Andreas told Morgan.

Dimitris got his plate and came over to the bar. He put his plate down, then came to me. He put his arm around my neck, licked my cheek then kissed me and said,

“This girl taste so good! I love her.” I started to laugh and wiped my cheek.

Everyone was watching and laughing.

“This man is crazy!” I said.

“This man is in love.” He started to grab his napkin, but I put my hand on his and shook my head. He was going to let his kefi, his uncontrollable joy, loose, and dance, but he restrained himself.

“Shall we eat? I’m starving,” I said.

Morgan was laughing.

“I’ve got to go. Goodnight!” We heard Camilla say with Greek expletives, as she slammed the front door.

“This calls for a drink!” I said.

“Yes, and we shall make a toast.” Dimitris filled the glasses. “Here, we toast to peaceful days ahead.”

“Here! Here!” Aiden said. We all had a great meal, and the mood was lite and happy as we all had some lively conversation.

By midnight everyone was ready to say goodnight. We went to our room. I needed to get my shoes off.

“My Helena, I have such love for you,” Dimitris said. He knelt in front of me to remove my shoes for me.

“Don’t kneel like that, Dimi, I can take off my shoes,” I tried to encourage him to get up.

“You make this man crazy with love, Helena. This man is too proud to have such a wife.”

“If you compliment me all of the time, I’m going to get an inflated ego,” I said.

“You are too much for Dimi, I give truth for you, and you make joke.”

“Sweetie, I appreciate compliments from you, I’m glad that you want to flatter me, but there isn’t anything that is any more special or different about me than anyone else.”

“You do not accept compliment easily.”

“No, it’s hard for me. I get embarrassed.”

He knelt there for a while and looked at me. He reached up, putting his hand behind my neck, then drew me near to kiss me tenderly.

“There are not enough words for the compliments for you. Do not feel bad for the compliments.”

I removed the hair clips then slipped out of my clothes. I didn’t have a nightgown, so I used the T-shirt that Dimi got for me in Rhodes. I ran the brush through my hair as Dimitris opened the bed.

“Do you know that you are sexy even in T-shirt?” He said from the bed.

“You are funny, Mr. D,” I said as I got in bed.

“Dimi shall take his bride to more places to wear nice clothes.”

When I got into bed, Dimitris reached over to the lamp then turned it off. His arm around me, I laid my head on his shoulder.

“My Helena, I will tell you a thing.”

“Okay,” I said.

“When my Helena wear sexy clothes, make Dimi wake up.” He was stroking his thumb across my hand, which was on his heart. “

“Hmmm. Do you think that maybe I’m too easily seduced? I mean, maybe I should make you wait,” I joked.

“Helena! You would be too mean to Dimi. I think you will turn this man to

insane.”

“Yes, but if I let you have your way with me anytime you feel like it, you’re going to get tired of me, and get a wandering eye,” I said.

“No, Dimi too in love to wander. Dimi only have eyes for his Helena. I will be alone if you not with this man. You do not understand, my Heart. This man was not living. Then I see my Helena, and I come alive. I will die again without my Heart. Don’t make Dimi die again.”

“I want to tell you something,” I said. Dimitris waited without saying anything. “We seem to handle similar situations totally different, and I have to say how sorry I am.”

“Sorry?”

“Shh, wait. I’m sorry for causing you so much stress and worry. I should have been mature enough to talk to you about what bothered me in Rhodes. It was such a beautiful day until I lost my mind.”

“Why did you leave, Helena? Do you not feel comfortable to talk to Dimi?”

“You know that I have a hard time controlling my tears lately. I was so upset that I couldn’t talk. I might have killed you!” I said.

“You cannot kill Dimi with these little hands. Do I not understand your tears? Do I tell you they are silly or to stop them?”

“No,” I said.

“No.”

“But I am very jealous. I had to calm down, and I had to think. I can’t think when I’m around you. I get too emotional. When I’m angry, I’ll cry. When I’m happy, I’ll cry, so you can’t win.”

“S’agapo, my wife, I have won already,” he said. “But I do not understand why you go? Where you go to, Helena?”

“I was going to leave. I would just leave. I couldn’t stay. Seeing that woman chase you down the street, and you both were laughing. I saw her hanging on your arm, and you were smiling, it was like stabbing me in the heart. I only knew that I couldn’t live like that, always wondering and waiting for more pain, no, I wasn’t going to wait for you to betray me. I had to go. I had to leave. It wouldn’t matter to where, anywhere away from you.”

He sat up quickly and said

“No.” He reached the lamp and turned it on. “No, you will not leave this man, no. If I am stupid, you will tell me. I will not see women. Polite? Yes, that is all. I let all know that I am married to most wonderful woman, like no other. So you no go to anywhere.”

“Oh, Dimi, you know I would never leave you when I’m in my right mind. I love you too much to leave, but when I get that far out there, I get irrational. You do that to me. I’m not one for confrontation. I won’t fight over you. I figure that if you don’t love me enough to be with me and you feel the need for someone else’s affection, then I’m out of here - gone! It’s that simple.”

“If ever to be that stupid, my brothers would shoot me. And then Aiden - ah, he would be here to want you. So I am very stupid man if I do this to you.”

“We’ve had some strange things happen in the last few weeks. I think that our nerves have been on edge, with the travel and the police. We haven’t had a real chance to relax and rest. It’s been one thing after another. Oh! I forgot to tell you, I spoke to Sahj,” I said.

Dimitris looked at me. He had that questioning look on his face, but he brought up his hand and brushed my cheek. He kissed me, then held me tight. He sighed.

“Oh, Helena, why you do not tell Dimi before?”

“I haven’t had the chance to tell you. It was at the airport. He’s walking with a cane now,” I said.

“What he say?”

“He apologized again and said that he wished that there was more he could have done.”

“He is mysterious man. Does he not work undercovers?”

“I didn’t ask him. You know, I think that if it weren’t for him, it would have been much worse for us.”

“We will talk of more pleasant things, like where you find new sexy clothes? I like!”

“I don’t know if I understand what you mean,” I said.

“They are different, sexy, like no other...like you. You do not yell sex, but it is there. You are my sexy Helena.”

“I wish you wouldn’t keep saying that.”

“But is true.”

“Maybe it’s you, my love, you see sex in everything.”

“No, Dimi not sex maniac, it is a thing, like I say before. Woman do not know power they hold over man — so many things for woman. Only woman can enjoy sex until she pass out from ecstasy of it. Only woman can procreate, hold life within, and give this as gift to man. Only woman like a beacon for man, but she make choice, to take this man to make him happy or to not take him and make him miserable. Woman have all the mystery, and what is man without woman?”

“Tell me,” I said. After trying not to laugh, not from what he said, but the pure sweetness of it, I wanted to hear more of this male perspective.

He had his lips resting on my temple. The warmth of his breath and the scent of him made my heart jump. Then I could feel these low toned vibrations emanate from deep within him.

“Without woman, man just exist. Is not alive, is just there — day after another day, always same. Always to wonder, but when not finding the one woman, is just another day. When finally do find the one woman, then life begin, life is adventure even on ordinary day, because heart is full of love for woman.”

“Are you the only one who believes this? I mean, I always thought men wanted as many women as they can get and all the sex without commitment. You know, the swinging bachelor life. Don’t most men think of that as the best life? I didn’t think that most modern thinking men had a high priority for monogamy.”

“My Helena, it is too bad that woman will settle for this. If they would only know that they hold the key, things would change. These men do not know what they want. Most wouldn’t know the best is there for them in the one woman, because they do not appreciate the gift she has given. They hold that gift, to nourish and protect, to let grow, or to treat badly and take for granted.” He kissed me so sensually, and then I let the dance begin.

Lost In Him



In the morning, Morgan was in the kitchen with her coffee. She asked about how we were doing and if we've gotten our situation in hand.

"I'm afraid I gave him an ultimatum, but I didn't mean to do that. I said that if he needs the attention of other women, that we're through. I forget exactly how I put it, but I said something to the effect that if he expects me to overlook things, then he shouldn't mind that Aiden comes around. I think he understood at that point."

"I guess he could relate to that. I didn't know you knew anyone in London. Anyone, I know?" Morgan asked as I tried to explain my abrupt exit from Greece.

"No, actually I'm not even sure he lives in London. I mean, he's here, and there, and he travels a lot in his work so it might be hard to contact him in a pinch," I said.

"He, huh? Your friend is a 'he?' That would put the frosting on the cake if you left Dimi and go off to some man in London, whether or not it's a romantic thing," Morgan thought.

"I know, I'd have to be pretty pissed, I mean, Dimi would have to have done something terrible for me to contact David," I said.

"Why, what's the matter with him? Is he married?"

“No! He’s, well . . . he’s, he kinda reminds me of Dimi in a way, so I’m not sure it would be a good idea to go to London, yeah, no, I’d have to go anywhere but London,” I said, in deep thought.

“You know, I’m finding out that I don’t know you as well as I thought! Is he another one of those fatal attractions of yours?”

“No, no, I don’t know him very well, and I would only be contacting him out of desperation, if I had nowhere to go, besides, the whole concept is flawed, he’s always off somewhere.”

“What does he do?”

“He’s in the theater. Plays. They travel and do shows all over,” I said.

“Where did you meet him? Have I ever seen him in anything? When did you meet, tell me *something*?” Her curiosity was on fire.

“It’s no big deal. As I said, I barely know him. I met him at the airport. He just had that look, you know, something like Dimi. Anyway, we got along pretty good, casual chit chat, and I mentioned that I was looking for lodging. He told me about an affordable place to stay and gave me a theater pass, if I ever get out that way. We had a drink and talked until his flight. That’s how I met him,” I said.

“So, do you ever hear from him?” Morgan asked with determined curiosity.

“One email, it’s only been a couple of days. He’s a very busy actor, so it’s like I said, he doesn’t stand still in one place for long.”

“Now I’m curious to see what he looks like.”

“I’ve got something in my computer bag, it’s a big postcard program thing. It’s in the outside pocket.”

“Well, come show it to me.” We went to my room and I pulled out the program.

“Is this him?” She asked, pointing to the male figure.

“Yeah, that’s him.”

“Whoa! I see what you mean! He’s got the Dimi thing going on, for sure! Good grief, where do you find them? Yeah, it wouldn’t be a good idea to take refuge anywhere near *this* one!” We both laughed.

The phone rang, and Andreas ran to catch it. He was on the phone only a

couple of minutes.

“Rena and Stefano saw Katie. She’s okay, but she’s a wreck. I guess Rena is staying the night with Katie and will take her home tomorrow. Stefano is on his way home and will be here in an hour or so.” Andreas said. We entered the room as Andreas hung up the phone.

“I’m glad Katie is okay. Poor kid, it’s got to be heartbreaking for her,” I said as I came into the room.

“She will need care,” Dimitris said, looking over his glasses.

I got up to go over to him. He had been tied into his work for more than an hour. I came up behind him and put my hand on his shoulder.

“How’s it going, Sugar?” I asked as I kissed his hair.

“Is going slow.” He looked over his glasses at me and took my hand. “Here, sit, my Heart.”

I sat on the stool next to him. He was still working, and although I didn’t want to disturb him, I couldn’t help myself. I put my arm around the back of his stool, put my left hand on his knee, and rested my head against his shoulder.

“What is it, my Angel?” He asked as he kissed my forehead.

“Nothing,” I said.

“I am almost finish here. Then, maybe we do something.” He kissed my fingers.

“I’ll leave you alone then, and give you time to do your work,” I said and started to stand.

“Helena, think of what we will do to spend our day. Dimi will finish soon.”

“Okay.” I kissed him and moved into the living room. The TV was still on, but no one was watching it. After flipping through all the channels, I turned off the TV. There was no point in leaving it on, Morgan and Andreas had already left the room. I walked out the front door. The air was fresh, with a little breeze. We were having a lull in the cool, crisp weather that had been constant since we got back from the U.S. It felt good to smell the fresh air and watch the leaves that would glide in the breeze to the ground. I noticed that all along the front window, there were large rose bushes. The spent roses hung onto the bushes in an ugly reminder of beautiful blossoms. I went to

the first bush, as I twisted off many of the dried buds, the bush was looking cleaner and not so neglected. I noticed as I looked along the side of the house that all of the rose bushes were neglected. I hadn't planned on doing yard work, but as sad as the bushes were, I had nothing better to do than to try to help them. I thought it unusual that the neighbors kept their car running in the driveway next door. Even though the houses are separated by a sixty-foot wide piece of empty property, it was distracting hearing the drone of the motor.

When the fumes started to come my way, I tried to see the neighbors, and perhaps ask them if they are having trouble. The bushes that grow like a partition on the property line were overgrown somewhat, making it difficult to see the vehicle. It droned on continuously as if no one were tending the thing. I tried to ignore it, but these weren't my neighbors and not my place to say anything.

When Dimitris came out calling for me, I was finishing up the third bush.

"Helena, where are you?"

"I'm over here, Sugar," I yelled. Dimitris came around the corner and saw what I was doing.

"Here you are, what you do, Helena?"

"Are you finished with the paper?" I asked.

"Yes, only have to type up and submit. What you do out here?"

"I was waiting for you," I said as I brushed off my hands. Dimitris took my hand and looked at it, dirty and with some scratches from the roses. He exhaled heavily and shook his head a little.

"Do you think of what we do today?" I put my hand up to his cheek and said

"What would you think if I said we should spend the day in bed?"

"Helena, I think you want to be bad," he said.

"Come, Dimi, rescue me," I said. He got such a twinkle in his eyes. He gave me a peck on the cheek then, he picked me up and carried me in the front door. We laughed all the way down the hallway. When we got to our room, Dimitris gave me a growl and was tickling the crevice of my neck. We fell back on the bed in a game of tickling and laughter. His Greek would get more

rapid and kisses more serious. He pulled me over on top of him and took the combs and butterfly clip from my hair. As my hair fell to either side of his face, he laced his fingers in my hair and brought my face down to meet his lips.

His Greek whispers were gentle between his kisses that penetrated me. I was falling into his hypnotic spell when he popped a couple of quick kisses on my lips and said, "I must finish paper before this man is too bad."

I had slept for about an hour and a half when I felt Dimitris' lips on my shoulder. I was still tired, but I reached my hand to his cheek. He made love to me that was fast and passionate. He collapsed in rapturous exhaustion, and in his native tongue, he told me how much he loved me.

"Can I tell you something?" I asked.

"Yes, my Heart."

"I love how you whisper Greek to me, and I love your gentle touch. It makes me feel small and fragile. How you're always remembering my father, and reminding me when it's time to call him. I love the way you touch me or kiss me for no reason." I kissed his neck and settled in next to him.

"My turn." He cleared his throat. "I love you for everything you are that Dimi is not. You are soft and smooth, Dimi hard and hairy, you have the scent of the heavens, Dimi has smell of work, sweat. My Helena, you have deep faith, this I know. I see in ways you do not. Not all have the way of faith in behavior without pounding on head with it. My Helena has deep emotion on things, not to hide, and is good - even jealousy emotion, do not hide. Is good! You know how to wake up this man to his Helena. When Aiden come into kitchen, I see him watch you in T-shirt. To know other man would want you, make Dimi appreciate what I have. You choose Dimi above all others. A man could not want more." He cleared his throat again, then said, "But please, my Heart, do not run away from Dimi. I know this man is oaf and Dimi will anger you, but if you will tell Dimi what angers you, we fix."

"I've tried to do better. I soak in the tub, but you have to understand, I handle my hurt and anger differently than what you might expect. I'll try to not do anything rash, but Dimi, I can't be sure what will happen. I can only

try to do better. Okay?" I stated my case and hoped he understood.

"I will try not to anger my heart. If my Helena do not get anger at Dimi, you will not run away. Is this true?" I was surprised this ended in a question.

"I would say that you are right."

"Oh, oh, you are going to make Dimi want to take my Heart again. You must be careful, my Helena, this man is in love, and it will take little to make him be bad." He soothed his hand up and down my arm and kissed me below my ear. He was holding me, as I looked up to him, tracing my finger along his jawline. He took my hand and kissed my fingers and held them to his heart.

"Sweetie, are you hungry?" I asked.

"I could eat. You are still hungry? I will make another Pita," he said.

"I was thinking that we should eat, Rena probably won't be home, so maybe we should think about dinner." Then I noticed a little silver glow in his hair. "You know, you're getting a little touch of gray hair, here at the temples."

"Yes, it will want to creep up on me. Does this bother you, my Heart? It will make Dimi old?"

"No, it's kind of sexy - distinguished. I like." He laughed and grabbed me, then tickled me in the crevice of my neck. As I was laughing and trying to get away from his unrelenting teasing, I got off of the bed.

"Okay, Mr. Patakinis, it's time we saw to the dinner." I went to the vanity chair where my jeans were lying. Dimi quickly got out of bed, then came up behind me, picked me up, and dumped me with a bounce, onto the bed.

"I will see to the meal, my Heart, but you will have to be good." He was smiling and joking with me.

"I have to get dressed," I said.

"You tell me you wish to spend day in bed, but if you have to go out there, then yes. You will dress so if Aiden comes, he does not think of my Helena in T-shirt."

"We need to be sure that Stefano eats something, Sweetie, so I will need to get dressed," I said. "I don't think we need to worry about Aiden."

He looked my way as he was tying his shoe. He was smiling, looking so sexy with his white shirt and rolled-up sleeves.

"Maybe you'll let me help you in the kitchen? Stefano should be here any

time, right?" He leaned over to me and gave me a little slap on the thigh.

"Yes. Let's go make some dinner, my Heart."

After we made an effort to put on clothes, we went to the kitchen to search out supplies for dinner. Dimitris had the freezer open in the kitchen, looking for meat or fish, something quick and easy to make.

"Was Stefano supposed to be here before dinner or later?" I asked.

"He should be here by now, he is late," Dimitris said.

"We should go, let them have their home, and their privacy. They need to heal without a bunch of people around," I suggested.

"Maybe we stay on Athena, see if Andreas and Morgana will be here," Dimi said.

"Where are they? Did they leave?"

"Call Morgana, to see where they go," he asked. I placed a call to Morgan.

"Hi! Did you two finally get out of bed?" She joked.

"Temporarily, ha! Where are you guys?"

"Andreas brought me to a bakery on the southwest side of the island, I forget the town, anyway, what's up?"

"We were thinking that maybe we should leave Rena and Stefano to recuperate when they get home. Do you think we could stay on Athena if you're going to be in Karpathos? If you think you're coming back."

"We should be back in a half-hour or so. We can talk about it then, okay? And you can tell me more about David."

"David? Yeah, we'll see you in a while." Getting back to the subject at hand, I said, "What are we going to do for dinner, Sugar?"

"I will fix something, maybe fish, we see what we can find. We eat in two hours."

"What would I do without you?" I asked, and gave him a peck on the cheek.

"Would you mind if I go to lay down for a while?" I asked.

"Do you feel okay, my heart?" He asked.

"I have a little headache," I said.

"You go to bed. I will come in later."

I went to our room to lay down. It was quiet, and I could smell Dimitris' scent in the sheets. It made me happy, headache and all, to be here. I was missing him, even though I knew he was just in the other room. I had this love in my heart and this feeling of missing him so much that I dug out some paper and pen and decided I would write to him. I might never give him this letter, but I had to put down my feelings, verbalize them.

As I lay there and put my pen to paper, all these thoughts and emotions swept over me. How sweet he always is to me, even when I'm interrupting his work. His generosity and willingness to do whatever he can to make me happy. He's in there cooking now, I can hear the clatter of pots and pans, and it reminds me of how carefully and lovingly he prepares a meal.

My mind wandered over some sweet memories that I hope I'll never forget.

I began my letter.

"Dearest Dimi,

It seems we have had a mountain of strange circumstances swallow us up, and spit us out, only to find more obstacles in our life.

I have gone off track with my irrational behavior, and you're still here, being sweet and loving with everything I have put you through. How can anyone be so forgiving and caring?

When we were apart for the engagement separation, I knew that being away from you would be torture. It was a living agony that I held in my heart until I was able to be with you. I never thought that I could love someone this deeply and completely.

I know now that the gods brought us together. There were too many strange events that had to happen for us to come together. If just one thing were different, I would be home now, back in my dull life, and you would still be driving taxi.

I have never been so in love, as I am with you. It is hard to express how deep my love for you is. There are no words to describe this profound emotion created by you, for you.

All I can think of is you. It doesn't matter if I'm shopping or if we've had a disagreement. You are always there, at the front of my mind.

Now, it is time for us to make a home for each other. You are my world, Dimi, and I want you to be happy.

I've put what I see as your flaw in a little box at the back of my mind. It can be dealt with should the need arise. We don't need to speak of it unless....."

I fell asleep with paper and pen in hand on the bed. When Dimitris came into the room, he saw that I was sleeping. He removed the pen from my hand and picked up the notepad. He placed it on the vanity, then noticed his name on it. A letter? He was curious about why I would write him a letter, and was this bad news?

He debated whether he should read it or not. He stood by the bed, and the more he looked down on his wife, the more he felt that heartbreak might lie on the page that he placed on the vanity. He turned to the vanity, the notepaper open and begging to be read. He went to the vanity and sat, playing with the corners of the paper, flipping them up and down while he pondered the ethical question of whether or not he should read this letter addressed to him. His heart was heavy, but he started to read.

When he was finished reading the letter, his heart was full, and he was relieved. He sat next to me on the edge of the bed, then picked up my hand. He was stroking my hand when I woke up.

"What time is it?" I groggily asked.

"It is time, Helena," he said.

"Did Rena or Stefano call?"

"No, but Andreas and Morgana are here."

"Oh, good," I said.

Dimitris leaned over and gave me a tender kiss, looking into my eyes. His eyes have so much expression in them. He usually isn't hard to read. When he worries, I can tell right away that there is something wrong. When he gets that twinkle in his eyes, it's easy to know that signal too. The way he was looking at me now seemed different somehow.

He went back to his cooking while I tried to wake up and look alive. When I went into the kitchen, I watched him with a white muslin flour sack wrapped around him for an apron. He had flour on his hands and was preparing some

pounded steak.

“How did you get to be so cute?” I asked. He smiled as he wiped his hands on the apron, then came to me and placed a sweet kiss on my lips. Then he said,

“Dimi cute only to his Angel.” Then he kissed me on the cheek. “We will have hot bread by dinner time.”

“Do you want some help with dinner?” I asked.

“Everything ready to go, just wait for Stefano and bread, then cook real fast and eat.” He wiped off the countertops and put away the flour and other items of preparation.

“I wonder what kind of mischief we can get into before dinner?” I said as I watched him dry his hands.

“Ohh, we can get many troubles for us, but first I must type report and fax to University.”

“How long will that be?” I asked.

“Not long. I only send answers, not questions, so will go fast.” He said with his hand on my forearm. “My Helena, this man has such full heart for you, make him dizzy, but now, Morgana is in living room, alone, you have ‘girl talk.’ I will finish soon.” He kissed my hand with loving reverie then kissed my lips and sent me into the living room.

I went to see what Morgan was doing. She was looking at photo proofs from Andreas’ camera.

“Hey, girl, what’s up?” I said.

“I was looking at some of the photos on Andreas’ camera. I didn’t realize how many pictures were taken. He took tons of pictures of your wedding and the family.”

I sat next to Morgan and looked at the camera with her. Some were very beautiful. He got one of Dimitris and I standing, facing each other with the sunset behind us, the sun glowing through my gown. It was pretty enough for a magazine. Then there were pages of shots of Morgan and Aiden and Rena all at the house. I’d like to download all of them.

It wasn't much longer, then Stefano came home. He was pretty tired and wasn't talking much. Everything was fine, but he wasn't too talkative under normal circumstances. After we ate, Stefano was so quiet that it was hard to know if he was here at all. He seemed a little lost without Rena.

"Dimi, maybe you should talk to him, maybe we shouldn't leave him alone," I said. He overheard our conversation.

"No, no, Rena is staying at Katie's tonight for emotional support. You know Arthur, he's not much on the emotions. So, go ahead, or stay, whatever you want, I'm fine, just tired," Stefano uttered.

"Andreas, what you do later?" Dimitris asked.

"Bedtime for Andreas, why?"

"We go to Rhodes tomorrow, if you like, we sleep on Athena tonight."

"Sure, we can do that," Andreas said.

"Okay, so we go to Athena, then in morning we go to Rhodes," Dimi said as he held my hand and looked into my eyes. I could only smile and agree. I didn't question.

It was my understanding that we were off the hook as far as having to go to Crete, at least not until we are notified. With the identification of two of our muggers, it was enough to hold them on assault charges, but the authorities were wanting to lay charges on these individuals that are tied to the thefts of the antiquities. When and if everything comes together, we may have to go wherever the trial is held. It may be here in Greece, or it could be any one of a dozen other countries.

"Morgan, I guess we'll be spending the night on Athena, but we don't want to put you and Andreas out of your cabin. We can take cabin two if you say so." I said.

"Yeah, that's okay, the bed is smaller, but it's comfortable. I got new linens for it, so it's not so dingy there. You were going to tell me where you went shopping the other day, when you got the white suit."

"Oh, yeah! Morgan, you'll love it. It's a gypsy shop. They'll only sell you clothes after they read your fortune. It's so neat! And the clothes! Everything on my rack was great."

"I'd really like to see it. I need to have my fortune told, did they do it with

Tarot cards?" She asked.

"Well, first she did the cards, then my palm, then a crystal ball. It was pretty much right on, I mean I could relate to most of what she said. Then I was led to the racks that coincide with my reading. The clothes were me. I tell ya, it was a cool experience."

"You'll have to show me where it's at; I'd like to buy something that's 'me.' I get tired of jeans and T-shirts," Morgan said.

"Rena knows some great shops on the mainland, too, but I don't get over there as often as I like. It's hard to shop for clothes with a man around," I said.

"Oh, I know, I hate it," she agreed.

"I don't think that Dimi minds, but I get antsy just knowing that he's there." Morgan chuckled as we knew how true it is. "A man can be patient, give an opinion, and even be non-intrusive in the least, but just knowing that he's there, waiting for a decision, makes me nervous."

"I don't like to be rushed. I always feel like I'm being rushed to make a decision, I can't be leisurely about trying things on and mulling it over," Morgan said.

Andreas and Dimitris came into the living room. They were sweet, as usual, and didn't want to interrupt.

"There's a storm coming in, and we thought you girls might want to see a movie. Maybe we can go to the theater?" Andreas asked. Morgan and I looked at each other.

"Let's go! I haven't been to a show in a long time. Do we know what's playing?" Morgan asked.

"We'll see when we get there," Andreas answered.

"This should be fun!" I said.

"You will need coat; rain will be here," Dimitris said.

We said our farewells to Stefano, and although it was sad to leave him alone, he was doing fine with the situation and was on and off of the phone with Rena and Katie. When we got to the theater, the wind had picked up considerably. The chill in the air foretold of mean weather ahead. We found that the theater was running only three movies because of being a weeknight,

mid-weekers don't get the full variety. We had our pick of an action-packed war movie, a mystery, or a comedy. The mystery was in English.

When we left the theater, it was pouring down rain, and the wind off the ocean would blow in gusts. It was only a couple of blocks to the Athena. We hurriedly piled into Rena's Fiat and drove to the Marina. It was seemingly impossible to walk from the dock, across a plank to board the Athena, but this is what we had to do. Even though it was securely attached to the pier, it bounded up and down with the ocean current. The little rope that one could hold to keep balance on the plank, was wet and slimy with salt water, but it did provide an idea of safety if nothing else.

Once aboard, we all went into the galley to warm up and get the hot water going. We were going to stay in Cabin #2, so Dimitris went to turn on the heater and lights. Cabin #2 was about half the size of the captains' cabin. The fold-out bed was only a double size. We had no luggage with us since we weren't planning on leaving Karpathos until tomorrow. After we had some hot chocolate to warm us, and played Canasta for a couple of hours, we were ready to get some sleep.

Our clothes still had a hint of dampness to them, so we had to place our jeans on hangers and then hang them over a cabinet door or door jam. Our coats were hung in the galley where the heat was more concentrated.

"Come, get under covers. Is too cold without clothes on," Dimitris said. I got into bed next to Dimitris. He had his arm over me, and we got cozy.

"This bed is pretty small," I said.

"Make easier to be close to my Helena," he said. "We no make love tonight, I think. We can be cozy in little bed, but not for making love."

"Dimi, you don't have to tell me when we aren't going to make love, it's okay. We'll just go with the moment. If it's right, that's fine, if it's not, that's fine too," I said.

"Helena, Helena," he stroked my arm, "you are still a wonder to Dimi." He gave me a peck on the temple and said "kalinikta" and rolled over, taking my hand to his heart.

Good-bye Kefalonia



The rocking of the ocean kept up a steady pace most of the night, and from the small porthole type windows, we could see lightning in the distance. The rumble of thunder seemed to be all around us. As the night wore on, the noise became very scary. Loud, clapping and rolling noises that were punctuated occasionally by claps that sounded like cannons firing over our heads.

I held Dimitris tighter during the worst of it. He put his arm around me as I laid my head on his chest. The violence of the storm was increasing, and the thunder seemed to become more frequent and much louder.

“Don’t be afraid, my Heart. Is only noise,” Dimitris said.

“I know, I’m not usually afraid, but this is worse than anything I’ve ever seen.” I jumped at the violence going on all around us. On the last big boom, I heard a screech. I realized it came out of me.

“It will be over soon,” he said as he stifled a little laughter. I could feel his laughter that he tried to hide. He thought that my screams were funny.

“It’s not funny, Dimi. Maybe we could get up. I don’t think I can sleep with this storm going on like this,” I said.

I started to get up, but Dimitris pulled me back and said,

“Is cold up. We wait to get up.” He was growling and trying to kiss me. I wouldn’t let him kiss me if he was going to tickle me. We rolled around for

a few minutes, him trying to kiss me and me trying to keep him away. We were laughing and playfully fighting.

“Come on, Dimi.” I was running out of breath, and he was pinning me down, looking into my eyes. Just then, an ear-piercing boom of thunder shook the Athena, and I screamed.

“Oh, Helena, S’agapo. You are going to make Dimi be bad. You see what you do to this man?” He held me in his protective arms and said something in Greek to calm me.

“I thought you said you were going to be good! You said you weren’t to make love to me, Dimi-mine.”

“What is this you call me?” He asked as he got on top of me. His lips were close to mine as I said,

“Dimi-mine, You’re mine, aren’t you?” I said slowly as his lips glided over mine as he slowly made love to me.

“All yours. S’agapo my Helena.” He slowly, so slowly moved. As the thunder and lightning continued, he restrained his movements and told me his Greek secrets. He was driving me insane. Everything was slow and deliberate. I wanted him to be wild and forceful, but he continued this slow, glorious torture. As the lightning struck all around us, it pronounced a monumental apex in ecstasy.

“What was that?” I asked breathlessly. He kissed my neck and then looked into my eyes.

“I have something to show you today.” He continued to kiss me.

“What would that be?” I asked.

“You will see.” He said with a twinkle in his eyes. Then he reached between my legs and finished what he had started, only this time we were wild and barely controlled.

It sounded like the fold-out bed wanted to collapse from under us, and although the sleeping was comfortable, the lovemaking presented problems with the bar that runs beneath the mattress on the fold-out frame.

We were finally able to sleep once the storm had passed, and the sea had calmed. We cuddled together in this small nest until daylight broke.

We had to go back to Stefano's to pick up my clothes. It was fairly early, but Stefano was up and invited us to stay for breakfast. He was doing pretty well and said that Rena would be home later.

We couldn't stay, and soon, we were back on board, on our way to Rhodes. I don't know what it is about Rhodes that excites me. Maybe it's full of exciting memories, or perhaps because I fell in love on Rhodes? I was just happy to be back.

We rented a car to take us from port to the family home. Again, Angelo was gone, and the place seemed almost deserted.

"Okay, now I want to show surprise," Dimitris said.

"No, no more surprises, Dimi," I said.

"Just one more and I finish, I promise." He put his hand on my knee and gave me a peck on the cheek. We left the family homestead and drove up the hill. We went around a curve and up a little paved lane that went around a tree-lined drive. When we crested at the top, there was that big white stucco house that the Nazi's had once occupied. It was clean, and the hedges were trimmed and manicured.

We pulled up in front of it, and it seemed so big.

"What the, what did you do? Dimi?" I didn't quite know what to say.

"Come out, Helena, I show you." He took my hand as I got out of the car. He had a look on his face like he was exploding to tell me something.

He took me inside, and I could not believe my eyes. Everything clean, painted, and polished. The floors shined, the staircase was immaculate.

"What have you done?" I noticed some of my things, some furniture from my storage were here, tables and lamps that I hadn't seen in almost a year. He had it all brought here to fill this old house.

"You need home of your own, Helena. You have been too long without a home to call your own," he said.

I was in a daze. I put my arms around him.

"We will be happy here, Helena, I promise."

"Who knows about this?" I asked.

"What you mean?"

“Does everyone know that you’ve done this?” I asked.

“Well, yes,” he said.

I couldn’t help it. I sat on the stairs as my eyes welled up. Dimitris sat next to me, put his arm around my shoulder and he looked in my eyes and asked, “Are these happy tears?”

I didn’t know what to say, I was happy, of course, but as often as I seem to cry over things, how is he to know that I am emotionally moved and that this does mean very much to me? This man not only puts up with my emotional outbursts and tears but takes the time to try to understand me, each and every time. What a patient man, and sometimes because of his patience and understanding, I am thrown off balance, because, I am expecting something completely different. He does these things, and I should be used to it. I put my arms around him and said,

“This is the last time you’re going to do this,” I said, then kissed him.

“Come up to look at bedrooms.” Dimitris led me to our room. He had it completely done up the way I had the red room in Kefalonia. When they emptied the house, it all went into this one.

“What will happen to the other house?”

“We discuss this,” he said.

“Thank you. Thanks for letting me in on this.”

“Kef house was your house to do with. Now Rhodes house is your house to do with.” He showed me all of the rooms, and we lit the fire in the bedroom fireplace.

“Are we staying here now?” I asked.

“Yes, Helena, we are home. This is where we stay.” He said as he looked up and around the surrounding walls and room.

That night when we were ready to go to bed, I wondered about how he manages to do this kind of thing without me finding out about it. It seems that everyone else knows, but they don’t ever let on to me about anything. Not only that, the time it would take to do all of this, the purchasing, the fixing, the contractors - well, maybe that’s where Andreas and the help of Aiden come in, but the idea that he manages to do this without me even catching wind of it is unsettling. I never suspected a thing!

We had a long talk about ‘surprises.’ He’s agreed that any major decisions will be a collaboration and that he won’t be springing things, such as a new house on me, again.

“But Helena, we need place to live. Kef was perhaps, not good idea.”

“Honey, Kefalonia was a beautiful idea, and it was starting to work for us. Sometimes things that don’t seem to be going the way we want, take on a life of their own, but that doesn’t mean that Kefalonia was a bad idea. Circumstances were working against us at the time. So don’t blame it on Kef. None of that was your fault, that’s just the way things had to work out for us. Fate!” I said. “But I’ve got to say, I’ve loved this house since the first time you showed it to me. Even though it was a Nazi house, it had to be rescued, and I’m so glad that you bought it.”

“Yes, this old place has been dream to me since a child. And now Dimi have two dreams together,” he said, as he kissed my forehead.

“Have you set up your lab yet?” I asked.

“Yes, but we have to share lab.”

“What do you mean?” I asked.

“We have your equipment in with Dimi’s lab. Room is big, so enough space to share.”

“So, my art stuff, canvas, and easels are in your lab?” I asked.

“Yes, our lab, but you will need to arrange as you like.”

“Can you work if I’m in there? I don’t want to interfere with your work, it’s too important for you not to be disturbed in your lab,” I said.

“You do not disturb, only when you too sexy, so, I may ask that you wear lab coat so that Dimi keep eye on work.”

We went to the master bedroom. I stood there with my mouth agape.

“Dimi, I know I shouldn’t ask questions about this, but who put up the sheers and the wall treatments in here? It looks almost like the ‘red room’ in Kef.”

“Morgana, she do ‘red room’ and entry to living room.”

“You are something! Tell me what else you’ve done.”

“Well, we bring chickens and dogs. All fenced, so we will have garden in Spring. Lots of rooms to fix and there is wine cellar and attic room.”

“Dimi, do you think that this is a little big for us, I mean there are only the two of us,” I asked.

“We must think of possibilities. You may have studio, maybe give classes, all kinds of possibilities, room for father and family to come. So we need space.”

“Christmas is coming. I don’t even know what the date is, and everyone is coming! Will we be ready for guests by Christmas? We’ve got some work ahead of us! Did the furniture go to the family home? You know, your mom’s furniture?”

“Yes, all back to Mama’s house. Angelo could use.”

“When did you do all this? I know that when we left Kefalonia, we were in limbo for a while, but this place has taken a lot of time and work to get it back in shape — then moving all our stuff! How did you do it? Now, we’ll need to look for furniture. This place is so huge. It will take some time to fill.”

“We will start looking. It will be a good time for us. We do together,” he said as he turned off the light.

“Goodnight, my love,” I said.

“S’agapo, Helena.”

This house, Dimi had shown it to me when we were still living in his parent’s old house. I wondered about it. It was a derelict house when he showed it to me the first time. It was used by transients, and full of trash, debris, and graffiti. Dimitris used to come here a lot when he was young. A Nazi confiscation, this enormous house had once been a beauty. The grounds at one time was a garden of Eden, or at least a rich man’s paradise. After the Nazi’s used it, altered it to their needs, and destroyed any beauty that it may have once had, they deserted it at the end of World War II, to deteriorate ever since. The locals had lived through the German occupation of the island, and wanted nothing to do with this poor outcast house. It was a Nazi symbol of oppression. No one would buy this property ever again if the superstitious elders of the island had any influence.

This house, which to my estimation was built before 1900, had been

restored structurally, but everything was painted white. The wood floors and staircase were in their natural wood stain. But there was no color anywhere. I could see that this house would be a long-term project.

Dimitris was called to go into Athens for his work. This symposium would determine whether or not the project he had been working on would be presented and funded in Switzerland. He was obligated to make a presentation in Athens. I decided that I would go also. It would be an ideal chance to look for furniture.

“We will be putting off Butterflies again,” Dimitris said as he held both of my hands and looked into my eyes.

“We’ll have our time there, and when we do, it will be unforgettable,” I said to ease his guilt. He was always promising that we would return to that magical place. It seemed that circumstances stood in the way of us returning.

“You will pack for four days in Athens. Bring something nice, we go to theater, or play, or go out on town, so bring something to wake this man!” He said, then kissed my forehead.

When we finally got to Athens, we spent some time with Andreas and Morgan. With all of the decorating, and not knowing the best places to find what I wanted, I relied on Morgan to take me to the most amazing shops in Athens. She was very familiar with my house, probably more so than I. She had excellent ideas and knew pretty much where to obtain what we needed.

When we got back from shopping, we were exhausted. We got a lot accomplished in one day, and Andreas got a kick out of our collaboration. We were hoping to find some antiques that would be suitable. I especially was looking for an antique bed but wasn’t happy with what I’d found. We were gone most of the day and had to stop for dinner at Rikos’ Gyros. I wasn’t sure about what Dimitris had to eat, and I was reluctant to call him. I was convinced that some dinner would be served for the symposium, but in the back of my mind, I worried that he hadn’t eaten.

On our way home I got a call from him, and his news was, don’t wait up, he’ll be late, even though he was much more consoling than that. I was not

happy about it, but it's all part of the job, and I have to learn to go with what is handed to us.

It had been quite a while since I had been to the home of Andreas and Morgan, and it looked like a whole new place. The stone floors were covered with carpeting, oriental rugs, and furniture. It was very well done and accentuated the medieval roots of the building.

"Morgan, it looks so beautiful, and I am so jealous of the veranda! It is such a wonderful accent to the room. It's beautiful. I don't know when Dimi will get here. He said he might be quite late," I said.

We sat at the dining room table for some juice. I had to ask Andreas about the engagement.

"I am so happy for you Andreas, I know it was a long, hard haul for you."

"Yes, Morgana made me work hard to win her," he said with a sweet smile as he gazed at her.

"Now, set the date so that we can plan a party or whatever. Usually, engagement means the date has been set," I said.

"We are discussing. Morgana would like to have Amy come for it, so we'll see."

"Amy needs to get time off from work, so it might not be until summer," Morgan added.

"That's okay, as long as you can settle on a date. You might not have a big wedding, but you can't get out of a party!"

"I don't mind the party. I'm looking forward to it!" Morgan smiled.

"Well, I think it's wonderful! So, with that, I'm going to call it a night," I said.

"Pleasant dreams," Morgan said.

"You too," I said.

As I laid in the dark, I thought about how much life had changed for me. I would have never dreamed that I would be spending my life on the other side of the world. It wasn't as hard to transition as I thought it would be; I thought I couldn't leave behind everything that I knew. My family is the

primary thing I'd be leaving, but with the internet, telephone, and air travel, it wasn't a hard choice. I thought this would be a good time to call my sister to see how things are going. I hadn't heard anything from the family in quite a while.

"Karen, it's me. How are things?" I asked.

"Pretty good. How are things there? Have you testified yet?"

"No, it hasn't gone to court, and won't for a while."

"How's Dimi?" She asked.

"He's good, how's Dad? You're still coming at Christmas, aren't you?"

"We're planning on it, but Frank and I have split up, so he's not coming with us."

"What happened?"

"Oh, I'll have to tell you about it later, but it's been coming for a long time."

"Rena is all excited about you all coming. You know how cute she can be, you should hear her go on about it - and just think, you'll be able to see what a name day is."

"I forget, it's a birthday, isn't it?" Karen asked.

"It kind of is, except it's more important than the birthday is here. On the 27th is Stefano's name day and there'll be a big to-do over it. I hope that it doesn't rain. We had the worst thunderstorm I'd been through since I got here, not that long ago. It was terrifying! Thunder and lightning, like you've never seen."

"Have you heard from Mark?" Karen asked.

"No, I haven't heard a thing from him in months. Anything new?" I asked.

"Dad heard from him the day before yesterday. He still asks about you and didn't know that you were here for three months. I think Dad spilled the beans, and Mark felt hurt. I don't know. You'd have to ask Dad."

"Gee Karen, I hate to cut this short, but it's almost 2 am here. I've got to hit the hay." We said our farewells, but it left a question in my mind about Mark.

As I laid there trying to sleep, I wondered about Mark. I felt terrible that he was hurt about me not contacting him while I was in California. Guilt, I guess.

It's hard to sleep without Dimitris here anyway, but now this bothered me, and it shouldn't. If I were to call him, I doubt if it would make him feel better. What could I say? I was in California for three months, and I didn't call. The only thing that would happen is that I'd have to tell Dimitris about calling Mark, then Dimitris would feel hurt. So it was best just to let it go and bury my guilt feelings.

I was getting restless, and although I was tired, it seemed impossible to relax enough to sleep. I picked up my cell phone and debated calling Dimitris. If I could send a text message, maybe he would get it. I had never posted one on this new phone, but I had nothing else to do, as sleep was not coming.

After several failed attempts, I finally got one to send. It only said, "I love you. Hurry home." I went into the kitchen, took a bottle of water from the refrigerator, and sat in the living room with a magazine. When I got bored with flipping pages, I went out on the veranda. It's times like this that I wished I smoked. I was restless, tired, and alone. There was a decanter of Ouzo on the little table by the entry. I poured a small taste, hoping that it would relax me, which it did. I headed back to the bedroom and soon fell asleep.

When Dimitris came in, he undressed and slipped into bed.

"You're late, my love," I said in a sleepy voice. With a big exhale, he said in a whisper,

"It was long day; long day." I put my head on his shoulder, with my eyes closed I said,

"I missed you." He put my hand to his heart, kissed my forehead and said, "S'agapo, Helena."

In the morning, Dimitris was still asleep when I got up. I quietly dressed and left the room. I poured some coffee and then Morgan came into the kitchen.

"You're up, did you sleep well?" She asked.

"Once I got to sleep, I did. It was hard to drop off, though," I said.

"What time did Dimi get in?"

"I'm not sure. It must have been after 3 am. I called Karen around 2 am; they seem to be all good. They're waiting for passports to arrive," I said.

"I thought Dimi was going to the University today," she said.
"I'd better wake him. He might be late."

"Dimi? Sweetie, it's 9 am." I said as I leaned over him and spoke softly in his ear. He took my arm, then opened his eyes.

"Helena," he said.

"I didn't want to wake you, but I wasn't sure if you had to leave again this morning."

"What is time?"

"It's 9 am," I said.

"Dekára! I must get up!" He kissed my hand and said, "It's late, I go," as he pulled on his trousers. He ran to wash up. He grabbed his cell phone, kissed me on his way out, and was gone. I didn't have a chance to ask him when he'll be back, so I waited for his call.

"Morgan, have you got any plans for this afternoon?" I asked.

"I don't, Andreas won't be home until around 8 pm. Why? Is there something you want to do?" She asked.

"I don't have anything important to do, but I thought maybe we could do some shopping for clothes."

"That sounds good to me."

"Dimi said that there was going to be a fancy dinner at the end of the seminar. I need to get something that Dimi hasn't seen before."

"Geez, you just bought some stuff at the gypsies, has he seen all those already?"

"No, but they aren't fancy. I need something that will impress his colleagues and wake up Dimitris."

"Wake him up?" Morgan laughed.

"Yeah, something suggestive."

"You don't need sexy with Dimitris! He is sex, so I don't imagine he needs help."

"Morgan! That's my husband you're talking about! But you're right. He doesn't need any help in that department, but he gets a charge out of it if I wear something a little - suggestive."

We were getting into the car when my cell phone rang.

“Hi, babe!”

“Helena, today will be long day again, and I am not with my Heart. Where are you?” He asked.

“Morgan and I thought we’d do some shopping. So what time do you think you’ll be home?” I asked.

“Maybe all night. If getting too late, I will stay here at dorm. I will call my Heart when I know.”

“Why all night?” I asked.

“Funding issues, cost projections, much to iron out. If all finish early, we go home early. Best to get it done,” he said with a sigh.

“Be sure to call me, okay? I miss you,” I said.

“Yes, my Heart, I call.”

Morgan and I spent the rest of the day, goofing off and having fun. It had been a long time since we had time together with no pressing appointments, or dreaded police activities hanging over our heads. We tried on crazy hats and went to expensive boutiques.

After a full day, we dragged ourselves back to the condo and waited for Andreas to come home before deciding on dinner plans. I still hadn’t heard from Dimitris, but I didn’t think he would be calling until later in the evening.

I was telling Morgan that with the sexy clothes that she bought today, that she and Andreas should come with us to the fancy dinner.

“I wouldn’t mind. It would be nice to have someplace to wear this stuff!” Morgan said.

“It’s supposed to be pretty posh, and you never know, you may get some design work from some of the guests,” I said.

“Maybe, find out what you can when you talk to Dimitris.”

“It would be fun to have you there, someone I know who speaks English! And, you might wake up Andreas with those sexy new duds!” I joked.

“It couldn’t hurt, even though he’s pretty awake most of the time!” We laughed.

When we came back from dinner, I excused myself to go to our room, so that Morgan and Andreas could have their home to themselves. I took these few minutes to bathe and write some letters. It was such a full day that I was tired enough to be able to sleep.

I heard my cell phone ringing, and as I shuffled through my blankets, I spotted the phone blinking.

“Hello?” I was half asleep.

“Helena, did I wake you?” Dimi asked.

“I was asleep. Where are you?” I asked sleepily.

“I should be in bed with my Heart. I will have to stay too late again.”

“Ohh, Dimi, again? Ohh.” I was tired and disappointed. I didn’t want Dimi to feel so bad that he’d drive back in the middle of the night. “Sweetie, I wish you were here, but if things go on too late, I’d rather you sleep there. I’ll sleep better knowing that you’re safe,” I said.

“Ohh, Helena,” he said in a soft dreamy voice. “S’agapo, my Helena. I want to hold you, and kiss fingers, my Heart. To smell your hair, and find your scent. S’agapo, Helena.”

“Dimi, don’t. Don’t make it harder. I want you here too. We’ll be together soon, but don’t make it harder,” I said.

“Dimi does not like to be alone, without my Helena. Married man should be with wife,” he said.

“I know, Dimi. You must try to come home tomorrow.”

“If we can work out funding, we will sleep together tomorrow, my heart.”

“Okay, that’s good.”

“S’agapo.”

“S’agapo Dimi. Kalinikta.”

The next day was windy, and it felt good to stay in by the fireplace and relax. Andreas had left very early, so Morgan and I had the whole day to do nothing in particular. She was throwing out ideas on decorating to me for an opinion, and I had some ideas to offer her as well. We collaborated on some designs

for a Mrs. Armen Baktari, a wealthy doctor's wife. Although the project wouldn't start until March, the wheels were turning in Morgan's head on design and decor.

We had a fire going in the hearth and big mugs of cocoa. We wrapped ourselves in Chenille lap blankets and fuzzy slippers.

"Are you ever going to stay in one place long enough to do your painting?" Morgan asked.

I guess I was shocked at the question coming out of the blue like that. I had to take a few seconds to digest the question.

"I hope so. Maybe I can get started in the Spring, after the Holidays," I said.

"If you can get some stuff together, I'd use them in my decorating. You helped me get going on this. Now I want to help you make a name for yourself here. You know, one hand washes the other," she said.

"Once I get past this court business, we'll get together on it. If you book your design jobs in advance, you can give me an idea of size and color, and I can come up with whatever you think you'd need," I said.

"That would work out good. I can give you several ideas I'm working on, and you can think about designs. You'll be my exclusive artist!" She noted with enthusiasm.

"Sounds like a deal."

"Deal!"

In the morning, we were having our coffee, Morgan and I were excited by our newly conceived alliance. When my phone rang I dashed back to the bedroom to answer it.

"Dimi?"

"Helena, I am sorry to not call."

"I know."

"It got so late, not to call so late to wake my Angel."

"Are you coming home today?" I asked.

"Still much to do, but try."

"The dinner is tonight. Are we still going?"

"Yes, we go, but we may have to meet if meeting go too long."

"You won't get away early enough to go with me?" I asked.

"I try, I will call to tell you. Dimi so sorry, my Heart."

"It can't be helped, I guess. We really don't have to go to the dinner if you're tied up."

"If Dimi is tied up, you must rescue me!"

"Would Morgan and Andreas be able to attend?" I asked.

"Yes, we make plan. Is Andreas home?"

"No, he's working. What are you up to, Dimi?"

"Dimi must go, my Heart. You will be beautiful for Dimi, and Dimi will see his bride at dinner."

"Okay, call me later. S'agapo."

"Yes, I call. S'agapo."

"Morgan, we've got a dinner to attend. I need to get my nails and hair done. You and Andreas are going too, so don't be surprised if Andreas calls and tells you to get dressed!" I said.

"Oh, boy, here we go! I guess we'll wear our new stuff. Let's go to D'Silvas' and get our hair done. We'll need to get over there early, or we'll never get an appointment," Morgan said.

"There's your phone. Want to lay odds what it's about?" I said. When she had finished talking, she hung up the phone and turned to me.

"You're right. That was Andreas. He's on his way home, so in about two or three hours we'll be getting ready to go to the big dinner. I guess we had better get going. Hopefully, D'Silvas will squeeze us in."

We were gone most of the day and were lucky to get into the salon for our hair and nails. This establishment is renowned for its expertise in all things beauty. We had a beautiful day, and although it was slightly windy, the evening was supposed to be perfect.

After we got back to the condo, we still had a couple of hours before the dinner to wonder where our men were. I figured that I would have to meet Dimitris there, as it seemed his work had monopolized his time.

"Morgan, when is Andreas supposed to be home?" I asked.

"I don't know. He should be here any time now," she said. When her phone rang, she said, "That's probably him now." She spoke quietly and would glance over to me. Then she hung up the phone. "That was Andreas. We have to take a taxi and meet them there. I guess he had to get Dimi a tux to bring to him."

"Okay, so, if it takes an hour to get there, we have to start dressing pretty soon," I said.

"I think I'm going to go ahead and dress. If I know me, I'll change my mind and wear something else," Morgan quipped.

"What you bought is so pretty, and you look really nice in it, sexy," I said.

"I don't know. I don't want to feel self-conscious in it," she said.

"You have to be comfortable, but I think you look amazing in it. I guess I'll get dressed, I wish Dimi would let me wear my hair off of my neck, but he's determined to have it hanging down."

"He is pretty picky about that, isn't he?" She commented.

"Yeah, well. Gotta love him." I went to my room to start dressing. I finally have a use for the seamed black nylons that I bought at the airport. It has been a long time since I've worn a garter belt, and I've never liked them. I might have to wear the corset from our wedding. Not liking that either, but it's lesser of two evils.

It gets so frustrating when things start to present problems before even getting dressed. I'm bound to be frazzled before we leave the condo.

Within an hour, Morgan was ready to go, and she was gorgeous.

I couldn't get anything to work for me.

"Why aren't you dressed yet?" Morgan asked.

"I can't wear this unless I wear that! I can't get anything organized. I'm so uptight! I don't want to go," I said.

"Okay, what you need to do is calm down. Don't do anything you don't want to do like if you aren't comfortable wearing this, wear something else. Just put on one thing. Then the next. It'll come together. Just relax."

"Right." I took a deep breath and started with the dress, if it looked okay, I could do the rest. I emerged from my inner sanctum as ready as I'd ever be, with outlook improved and nerves intact. Once I calmed down, I was able to

manage my mission.

“Morgan, do you ever have to decide what cologne to wear, or do you grab the first thing handy?” I asked.

“It depends on whether it’s daytime or night, hot or cold, and what mood I’m in.” She said with a smile.

“I’m definitely about the mood, but sometimes I’m in a place where I can’t make up my mind,” I said.

“Do you have any with you?”

“I have a perfume oil in my purse, a roll-on. I wear it all the time, though, so it’s not special.”

“Do you want to use one of mine?” She asked.

“Let me see what you have.” I looked through her collection of scents. I decided I’d use one that I would have chosen if I was at home with my collection. I could wear Aphrodesia, a hard one to find, and I knew that it wouldn’t ‘turn’ on me. I’d hate to be wearing a cologne that smells like tar after awhile!

“If you’re ready, shall we go?” Morgan asked.

“I’m ready. Let’s hit it!”

Our taxi was late, which added to our stress level. Morgan seemed to be calm and graceful. I was fidgeting and nervous. It seemed as though we would never get to our destination. Traffic, always horrific in Athens, was tough to get through and it looked like we would do better to get out and walk the last two blocks. After another ten minutes and only advancing a half of a block, I was too uptight about going further in a cab.

“Morgan, we can walk the last block, can’t we? I can’t take this traffic!”

“Yes. We can make better time on foot.” Morgan paid the cab, and we headed in a Northerly direction. The sidewalks were buzzing with people. Morgan was ahead of me by a long shot, and it seemed like people kept cutting me off, and I’d have to make a detour out on the street to get around groups that hovered. When I headed back to the sidewalk, I was suddenly confronted by the little man with the slick black hair and bulging eyes whom we had a run-in with when we first got to Greece. I gasped in shock!

The little man was just suddenly there, standing in front of me on the curb. When our eyes met, he gave me a “tipping of his hat” gesture again, and then his index finger slightly pulled down his lower eyelid. It was a shock that I wasn’t prepared for, as it seemed a little odd. He was an odd one anyway, the way he acted when we were stuck at the Athens airport, as we were desperate to get to Rhodes.

I didn’t acknowledge the little man even though we made eye contact. I sidestepped him in a hurry and got sucked into the crowd that was walking in my direction.

I almost got carried away in the sidewalk crowd, moving swiftly past the entrance where Morgan was waiting for me. If she hadn’t called my name, I would have gone too far.

When we got there, we were met by a doorman. We walked up two steps then saw our men coming to greet us. I wanted to tell Morgan who I saw outside, but it wasn’t that important, and our men were coming for us. They always are so handsome in their suits. Dimitris hugged me as he approached, then said something in my ear in Greek. He kissed me hello then placed my arm under his. He escorted me inside, following behind Andreas and Morgan.

They walked us over to the table where we sat with two other couples. I noticed that the majority of the guests were elderly. It would put an uncomfortable spin on what I was wearing. Most of the matronly women were well dressed but in a stuffy way. The others were more up to date in their fashions.

My dress was a black velvet straight design with a black sequined embroidered boat neckline. With my seamed nylons and velvet dress, even though rather plain, I was feeling conspicuous.

Dimitris eyes looked at me, in that dreamy way he has, so I guess I didn’t embarrass him.

“Helena, Morgan, please to meet Mr. and Mrs. Percabel Scott.”

“Hello.” We said as we were seated.

“Dimi?”

“Yes, my Heart.”

Good-bye Kefalonia

“I feel like I’m being stared at, and not in a good way,” I said.

“My Heart, they are all wishing to be so beautiful.”

“I think you’re just trying to be nice.”

Dimitris sat with his arm across the back of my chair and holding my hand in his lap. He kept smiling at me. I was feeling self-conscious anyway, but this didn’t help me either.

“What?” I asked Dimitris.

“What?” he answered.

“You’re staring at me.”

“Can’t help.” He leaned into my ear and tightened his hold on my hand and said

“I would be too bad for my Helena. I miss my Heart for too long,” he said.

As the dinner progressed, the thought of the little man crept into my mind. Athens is such a populated city, and although this man must live in Athens somewhere, what are the odds that we’d run into him again?

Mark Again



Hey! There you are! I was wondering if I'd see you today," Morgan said. "How are you feeling?"
"Still sore, but not as bad as this morning," Dimitris left the galley.

"Your face isn't as bad as it was."

"Did you say anything to Andreas about this?" I asked.

"I only mentioned that you warned him what might happen."

"How about some coffee?" I asked.

"I'll get it, refill?"

"Yes, please."

"I kinda hate to see you two moving farther away from us," she said.

"I know. The problem with these islands is that most of them are so beautiful that it's hard to pick just one to make our home. If I had to choose one, just for the beauty of the island itself, I couldn't do it. I loved Kefalonia when we lived there, and I loved Rhodes. There are so many. Most I've never seen," I said.

"I really like Symi. Besides Rhodes, Corfu, and Karpathos of course, so far, I've been to, Santorini, Kos, Crete and another little island, I forget the name, near Kos. I can't pick a favorite either. I love the condo and all, but I would like to live on one of the islands too." Morgan admitted.

"This coffee is so good," I said.

“Dimi made it, didn’t he?”

“Yes.”

“I can always tell when he makes the coffee. It’s always so good,” Morgan said.

“I have to go pack our stuff. I’ll see you later,” I said.

“Okay.”

I made my way down the corridor to cabin # 2. I laid on the fold-out bed for about ten minutes, when Dimitris came in. He sat next to me on the bed. He had me sit up so that he could sit behind me, then laid me back to rest my head and shoulders against him. I had his arms around me, and I was content.

“We will dock in half of hour,” he said as he studied my face.

“Don’t look at me, Dimi, my face is...”

“Beautiful,” he said and kissed me.

“Not beautiful.”

“Yes, beautiful. Always beautiful to me.” I tried to cover my mouth with my hand, but Dimi took it away. “Do not hide from Dimi. Can I tell you a thing?”

“What is it?”

“Dimi is oaf. You know this,”

“No, you’re not.”

“Please, not to interrupt, my Heart. Dimi make big mistake not to listen to my Angel. I had to have mustache, and then you pay. This man not realize. When Dimi growing into man, always around men, brothers, always the rough play and fight, never sisters, so easy to forget how delicate flower you are, fragile. Then whole life, deal mostly with the men. Now I have delicate flower to care for, to love. Dimi will do things, but these hands...,” he looked at his hands and shook his head. “These hands rough.”

“I know Dimi, but this wasn’t your fault.”

“Yes, was Dimi being oaf again..”

“No, I knew it was hurting, Dimi, but I didn’t say anything. I didn’t want to say anything.”

“But why? You no say, now look what I do.”

“Sweetie, I love you. I had to have you, do you understand? Loving you, here,” I laid my hand on my heart, “is what did this to me.” I hoped he understood what I meant.

“I make promise to my Helena, no more mustache or beard to hurt my best girl. But I will only grow if lost in jungle!”

“Lost in jungle. You are funny.”

“Now, I go to bridge. Then I come back to take boxes.” He popped a kiss to my forehead and left the cabin.

“Andreas will help with boxes, you and Morgana will make coffee,” he planted a sweet kiss on my lips, then went out the door.

“Morgan, did you hear that?” I asked.

“He is something,” she said.

“No comments?” I asked.

“No.”

“That doesn’t sound like you,” I said.

“I guess I’m used to the way these guys do things like Rena said. You have to get used to it. Once you can relax about it, it’s even a nice thing to observe,” she said.

“I still get myself in trouble, I’ll start doing things, take for instance these little boxes of clothes, I could have carried a few, but Dimi told me before, I don’t take in the boxes. He gets so frustrated with me sometimes.”

“I don’t know why we try to fight it, I don’t like manual labor type jobs, but I force myself to get things done, instead of waiting and asking Andreas. He gets so pissed, so I don’t even try anymore,” she said.

“I don’t want to be treated like a queen on her throne, but being treated like I’m a woman and not one of the guys is nice. I don’t know how many years I felt like just another guy in the room. You know, Morgan, I try not to make comparisons, as I don’t think Dimi can be compared to anyone, especially anyone in my past. Do you know how lucky we are?”

“Yes. When I think back, to how many jerks I’ve known and loved in my life! They’re all jerks compared to the Patakinis clan,” she said.

“I don’t think people believe me when I tell them how things are here,

especially how wonderful we've been treated. Rena and Stefano accepted us like family from the first day. When I told my sister about Andreas and Dimitris, she scoffed!"

"Scoffed? It is hard to imagine, especially being American, and everything over there has to be so...equal. I mean I think that women have tried so long and hard for women's rights, now that we have them, they're still in the mindset, and have become too competitive and have lost the men to laziness and boorishness. Geez! You're lucky even to have one hold open the door for you. And the women think nothing of it," I said.

"I called Nancy. Do you remember Nancy? She lived downstairs from me at the Lido Renaissance in Long Beach. I talked to her last week, and she didn't believe what I told her. She sounded like I was trying to brag, you know, stretch the truth or lie," Morgan said.

"I'll have to convince my cousin too. I'm hoping she'll come out with the family for Christmas. I know Karen told her, but she doesn't believe it. Oh, that reminds me, I wanted to introduce her to someone nice. Do you know if Andreas has any single eligible men around our age?" I asked.

"What about Aiden?" She asked.

"She needs someone who will treat her good and appreciate her," I said.

"I'll ask Andreas. He knows lots of people. Maybe one of the men on his crew, I'll let you talk to him."

"What I'd like is to meet the eligible men, at one of Rena's dinners. Just have Andreas bring them. I wish I knew someone. The only one I can think of is Captain Teddy bear."

"Oh yeah, he was so nice, but he's not very talkative. What about that cute guy that always takes the vegetables out to the car for us, you know who I mean?" She asked.

"Yeah, he's cute and friendly, but I don't know him, and he's pretty young," I said.

"Dimi might, he knows all these people, he grew up with most of them," she said.

"I'll have to ask him. He might know a brilliant scientist who's got it going on."

“A scientist that’s got it going on? You’re kidding me, aren’t you?”
“You never know.”

Dimitris and Andreas finally brought all of the boxes.

“Helena! My Heart, telephone, is your sister,” he said as he handed me the phone.

“Hello?” I said.

“Helen! What were you doing? Are you busy?” Karen asked.

“What’s up? Are you all getting ready to come?” I asked.

“We’re getting excited. Dad has been talking about nothing else!”

“Is everything alright?” I asked.

“Everything is fine. I heard from Patty. She’ll be able to come after all. I guess her boss is giving her a leave of absence.”

“I haven’t heard from anyone yet, so, I don’t know how many people to plan for. If you could take a headcount and get back to me soon, I’d appreciate it.”

“Sure, I think everyone is coming, but I’ll call you next week.”

“Great! How’s Dad? Is he doing good?”

“Yeah, he’s fine, his arthritis was bothering him, but he’s fine,” Karen said. “I talked to Dimi for about twenty minutes before he put you on. He’s so funny. He must keep you laughing. I sure miss you guys, having you stay with us was the best time we’ve had here, now it seems so empty.”

“Come live here, we can all be together and celebrate your name days, and Rena will keep you laughing every day, guaranteed!” I said.

“You know, Dad hasn’t stopped talking about Rena and Stefano and how wonderful they were to us. He’s so proud of Dimitris. I think they all made Dad feel like he was one of the brothers.”

“That makes me happy, I’m glad that Dad likes them so much,” I said.

“I have to go to bed so I’ll call you next week.”

“Helena!” Dimitris called in an urgent tone.

“Okay, Karen, call me. Bye.” Then I clicked off the phone. “Dimi? Where are you?”

Andreas, Morgan, and Dimitris were in the kitchen. When I went in,

Dimitris gave me his seat.

“Sit, Helena,” Dimitris said. I saw the look on Morgans face. She looked like she did when we went to the police station.

“What is it?” I asked.

“Helena, we find, Andreas, find ad in newspaper.”

“What is it?” I asked.

“Here, I’ll read it,” Andreas said. ” ‘FOUND: Womans wallet with photos and American business cards. Call 2210 PLB.’”

“This could be yours? Yes?” Dimitris asked.

“I suppose it could be mine,” I said.

“Should we call on it?” Morgan asked.

“I will call, ad in Greek, I call.” As he listened on the phone, he asked the color of the wallet. I gave a vague description. After a year, who could remember?

Dimitris dialed the number and spoke to the person who placed the ad.

When he hung up, he had the address of the finder.

“Helena, dress, I will take you. If this yours, we will need other information, where find, all this, we must know. It will be okay. You will be safe. Morgana come too.”

I changed my clothes. The house we were looking for was on a street that also had businesses, hotels, and restaurants. Dimitris was familiar with the area. He reached across the little car and took my hand.

“Do not worry, Helena.”

“I can’t help but worry, a little. Why do we want to bother with this? It’s not important. The wallet is nothing.”

“We must know where they find, how long ago, maybe find other things,” he said. He was right. Any new information that the police could use would be helpful. I couldn’t imagine what kind of condition the stuff would be in, after being lost for a year.

Morgan didn’t say a word on our travel to find the house. Andreas gave ‘back seat driver’ directions. We parked the car in front of a little old modest home with a small wall around the front of the small yard. Dimitris had his

arm around me.

“My Heart, all will be okay. Dimi is here.”

It was late afternoon as the sun had just set, the sky reflected a pink cast to it. He knocked at the door. Then it opened with a squeak. In Greek, Dimitris told the old man who we were, and we were invited in. I said hello to the frail man then he took out the wallet and other items from a drawer. He spread them out on the small table.

“Helena, look. This photo of Father and Mother? This wallet is yours?” He asked.

“Yes, it is, and the pictures.” I had forgotten some of the photos that I carried. When I saw the picture of my parents, it gave me a pain in my heart. When I came across the picture of my old dog, I suddenly felt a profound loss. Dimi said something to the old man, and as they talked, Dimitris kept his hand on my shoulder, caressing my neck.

Before we left, we were offered a cup of tea. I told Dimitris to give the old man some money in gratitude for his effort to find me.

“No, my Heart is insult. He do out of his heart, his honor, we no offer money, we invite him to our home,” he said.

They talked for a few more minutes. I gratefully shook the old man’s hand, then we left. Andreas was waiting in the car as Morgan went in with us. When we came back to the car, Morgan said,

“At least you got back some of your things.”

“Nothing of yours, Morgana?” Andreas asked.

“No.”

“He say he find wallet and pictures in trash can at beach. We search beach, we find nothing, but he say trash can was tip over on side, near fish-fry.”

“I guess there’s nothing to tell the police. When did he say he found it?” Andreas asked.

“Four days ago. So he have time to place ad.”

“It’s strange that it would turn up a year later, and in such good condition. Someone must have been keeping it. I wonder if there are other things to be found?” I said.

“We have dinner at fish-fry, then we have walk on beach. What you think?”

Dimitris asked.

“Anything you want, my love,” I said as I was looking at the pictures and my mind in a faraway place. Suddenly, Dimitris pulled the car over, got out, and came around to my door.

“What are you doing? What’s wrong?” Morgan asked. “What is he doing?”

He pulled me out of the car then wrapped me in his arms, burying his face in my hair at the crevice of my neck. “What is it, Dimi? Sugar?”

“Helena, my heart so full for you. When you stare at photo, I want to hold you and say all is okay. I feel my heart break for your tears, my Angel. Dimi never want to see you hurt like this. S’agapo.”

I just held him tight, and then my tears ran silently down my cheeks. This sweet expression of his love and concern touched me very deeply. He took my face in his hands and dried my cheeks with his thumbs. Then he kissed me, as the passers-by honked their horns.

“Geez! You scared the shit out of me, Dimi!” Morgan said as we got back into the car.

“Now, we go. We look for things!” He said.

“But it’s dark, we won’t be able to see anything,” Morgan pointed out.

“We look anyway,” he said.

“If you go down Hippodamou Street we should find a store down there. Maybe we can find some flashlights,” Andreas suggested.

“Ah, little brother has the good ideas,” Dimitris said.

We were lucky to find a pharmacy type variety store down this street that was still open for business and found some little self-contained flashlights. They had surprisingly bright light for what they were.

We manned our flashlights and set off to scour the surrounding area. The trash barrels were all empty except for the garbage pail and the grease bin. The others had been emptied this very day. We separated, Morgan and Andreas in one direction, and we went in the opposite direction, scanning our lights over the sandy pebble-strewn beach.

We weren’t prepared to stay out for very long, the breeze was getting cold

and damp, and we didn't have warm coats. I would have given up much sooner if I didn't have Dimitris to keep me warm.

"Dimi, we're wasting our time. We're not going to find anything out here," I said. "I'm getting too cold to be barefoot."

"Yes, we go back. We will sleep knowing we did look," he said as he pulled me a little closer as we walked, protecting me from the breeze that pushed us along.

Morgan and Andreas were already in the car, waiting for us.

"Any luck?" I asked.

"No, didn't find a thing," Morgan said.

"We tried. This area isn't too far from the alley where we were mugged. Hmm." I said as I thought about it.

When we got back to the house, there was a message on the phone. Dimitris returned the call to his lab associate. Andreas built a fire in the dining room fireplace. The heat felt good, as we huddled close to defrost our feet and hands.

When Dimitris got off the phone, he went to the kitchen to make some hot cocoa. I went into the kitchen to find out about the call. I put my arms around him as he was preparing the pot. I laid my head on his back, and he stroked my hand around his waist.

"What was the message about?" I asked.

"Work. More research, more report, my Heart."

"You don't have to go back to Athens right away. Do you?" I asked.

"No, but work will be more intense, so I try not to be cranky."

I laughed.

"You are a funny man," I said. He kissed my cheek.

"Get for me the cups, my Heart."

"Helen, I like this, having a fireplace in the dining room," Morgan said.

"You know, I haven't been here long enough to appreciate a lot of things about this house. We did get a guest room finished, so you'll have a comfortable room to sleep in. I think that if nothing else comes up, I'll have to get things ready for the Holidays. Time is getting short. Oh, Morgan, if you

come across any antique or really nice furniture pieces in your decorating search, keep us in mind. We want to find some great pieces, so we're open to anything you think we'll like."

"Okay, I did find a great antique carved entry table. You might like it." She said. "What are you going to do with the Kef house?" She asked.

"I hate to sell it, but I don't see us going back there to live again. I talked to an agent to get an idea of the market, and it doesn't look like now would be the best time to sell. So, I guess maybe we can lease it out for a while," I said.

"My Heart, Cocoa?" Dimitris was refilling everyone's cups. When the phone rang again, Dimitris answered it. When he said it was for me, I went into the kitchen. Morgan went to sit with Andreas in the dining room.

"Hello?" I said.

"Helen? Hi, how are you doing?"

"Who is this?" I asked.

"Mark, did you forget my voice?"

"No, it must be a bad connection. How are you?" I asked. I looked up and saw Dimitris in the dining room with Andreas and Morgan. He'd glance my way once in a while.

"I'm doing okay. I haven't heard from you in a long time. I heard you were here in California for three months. Why didn't you call me?"

"It was a very difficult time for me. I couldn't handle any more stress."

"What happened? Why did you come back, were you getting away from that Greek?"

"I was mugged, we both were abducted, and it just wasn't a pleasant experience, I guess I just needed to recoup without any fear or stress. I was quite upset and didn't think about it."

"What do you mean you were abducted? What is this guy getting you into?"

"I can't talk about it," I said.

"Do you want me to come over there and kick his ass? I will."

"No! You see? This is what I mean. I don't need more stress in my life. It wasn't Dimi's fault; what happened to us was my own fault."

"I'm coming over there next month. I'll get to the bottom of this. If this guy

is getting you in trouble, why did you go back? What did you mean by you both were abducted? Do you mean you and Morgan? Does your Dad know about this?"

"No, he doesn't, and I don't want you to upset him. I can't talk. This isn't something I can discuss. It's going to court soon, so I can't talk about it."

"You can tell me next month, after the Holidays when I come," Mark said.

"I won't be here."

"Don't give me that."

"We will be in Zurich, so don't come here," I said.

"What? Zurich? What's in Zurich?" He asked.

"I told you, I can't talk about it."

"You're running away, aren't you."

"No, Mark, we were summoned. We have to testify in a case. It involves Interpol. That's all I can say. I've already told you too much. And don't bother my Dad, he doesn't know about it."

"My God! What kind of trouble are you in?"

"Don't, alright? I've got to go."

"Well, I had some news to tell you, but it's not important."

"What is it?" I asked.

"I might get married."

"That's great! I didn't think you had it in you."

"I would have married you, but you never said you wanted that," he said.

"Well, I hope you'll be happy. Where'd you meet?" I wondered.

"She used to work at Trainer's Gym. I met her there."

"Ah, I figured something was going on when you worked there, but you denied it. So, you got back together?"

"We were never together. But we have been seeing each other for a couple of months."

"That's great. Really, I hope you'll be happy."

"I was happy. I didn't realize it at the time. I'm sorry."

"Okay, it's over with, so, take care, huh?" I said.

"I'll keep in touch."

When I hung up, Dimitris was standing behind me with his hand on my shoulder. I touched his hand. Then he took the phone from me.

“How is Mark?”

“He’s getting married, big news, for him.”

“Good. Man should be married,” he said.

I started to stand when Dimitris stood in front of me, took my hand and put it around his waist. Then he said as he looked into my eyes,

“My Heart, you do not miss this man, do you?”

“No, of course not.”

“Why he still call? Does he hurt you when he calls?” Dimitris asked. I hugged him and said,

“Dimi, the only one who can hurt me is you, and you haven’t done that today, have you?” He kissed me and said,

“Dimi wonder why he calls. Does he not know you are married?”

“Sweetie, I think he’s lonely. I don’t understand why he calls. It isn’t like him. If it bothers you, I won’t talk to him again.”

“My Heart, I know you have deep love for Dimi, but this man get jealous anyway, can’t help. If he calls, you talk. I do not have doubt of your love.” Then he gave me a toe-curling kiss.

“Are we good then?” I asked.

“We are more than good,” he answered.

“Would anyone like some dessert?” I offered.

“No, thank you, I’m still full,” Morgan replied.

“We have Pie a la Mode,” I tried to tempt someone into having dessert, but had no takers.

“Alright, maybe later,” Morgan said.

“This first time Andreas would pass on the dessert!” Dimitris said.

“I’m still tasting fish, Dimi, how can I think of dessert?” Andreas said.

“Let us go to the living room then, more comfort,” Dimitris said.

We had my old 1890’s couch reupholstered which sat in the living room with a William Morris chair and an old leather overstuffed chair. The room was

still sparse, but with the fire in the hearth, we made ourselves comfortable, then Dimitris poured some Brandy.

“What’s the occasion? Did we forget something?” Andreas asked.

“Yes, big occasion. This is first night my bride and Dimi welcome guests to sleep in our new home. So, a toast. To this home, it will be a happy one, always!”

“Here! Here!” We all toasted to the house and warmed ourselves by the fire.

“Thank you, Andreas, for toting us around on Athena. She’s been a godsend to us and all our belongings. Thank you.” I said.

“No thanks are needed, we do for you, and you do for us. It all works out.”

“I just wanted you to know that I am grateful.” Dimitris took my hand and pulled me to the chair where he sat. I sat across his lap with Brandy in hand.

“How can I not love this woman?”

“Have they made arrangements for your transportation to Zurich, or do you have to do that?” Morgan asked.

“From what I understand, they will have everything arranged, and then we will be notified a week in advance. It’s all very vague and iffy. You two should see if you can clear some time and go with us. It would be a nice trip.”

“I hate dealing with courts,” Morgan said.

“Oh, I know. We’ll probably get there and wait, and wait to be called to testify. It could go on for weeks and not even be called.”

“Months, you mean,” Morgan said.

“It would be a wonderful trip, but I have several jobs lined up. We’ll have to see how it goes,” Andreas said.

“I’ve got a few jobs I’ll be doing, but it depends on when,” Morgan added.

“It might be a great place to do some shopping,” I said. “For your clients, I mean.”

“It’s going to be pretty cold in Zurich in January. Do you have the kind of clothes that you’ll need for that kind of cold?” Morgan asked.

“Well, no, I don’t, and I hate the thought of having to buy them too,” I said. “I mean, it’s such a wasted expense, I’ll probably never have a use for them again.”

As the evening progressed, we had a lively discussion on what would

ultimately be considered as human behavior, the things people do and why, in theory. The subject eventually came around to Camilla.

We came clean with all the ugly Camilla details to Andreas and Morgan. Everything that she did to us and the reasoning or lack of logic behind it.

“Now that we’re back in Rhodes, I don’t know when we’ll see things erupt with her, but I think she’s crazy enough to try again,” I said.

“No, she will not bother us. She will go to jail if she will try again,” Dimitris said.

I gave this poor man a small smile. He’s such a trusting man, a little too innocent and naive, and always offering the benefit of doubt to someone.

“She still is friendly with Angelo, isn’t she?” I asked.

“Who could know what ideas she has with Angelo.”

“She’s a live wire and so is he, so nothing would surprise me there,” I said.

“That’s right. She seems to latch on to anything in pants, and Angelo isn’t shy,” Morgan said.

Dimitris and Andreas both smiled, but they looked at us like, we shouldn’t say this about their brother.

“Angelo too smart for Camilla,” Dimi said.

“You’re too smart for her, but she fooled you, Dimi,” I said and reached for his hand.

“But Angelo is wise to her tricks,” he said.

“Poor Aiden got sucked in by her too, but I don’t think he realized how devious she could be, at the time,” Morgan added.

“Yes, Aiden. He trust too much also,” Dimitris said.

“Now, there’s a guy I don’t quite understand. He’s good looking, makes good money, but he’s single. How does that happen?” Morgan said.

“Some men do not find ‘the one.’ Then some let ‘the one’ get away from them,” Dimitris said and gave me a small glance.

“Maybe he expects too much in a relationship. He’s an American, he thinks like an American male. He’s probably spoiled and wants everything his way,” Morgan said. “I mean I like the guy, but there’s something wrong there.”

“When he finds his true heart, he will know, and then he will change. Love will do that to a man,” Andreas inserted.

“Yes, he will come alive again,” Dimitris said. “He also must let go of things past to make room for the happiness.”

I think everyone knew what he was saying without coming out with it.

“The way the single women seem to outnumber the single men, I’m amazed that he isn’t at least dating someone,” I said.

“Camilla pours poison on his dating,” Dimitris said. “Now, maybe he not date Greek woman. She make it sour for him.”

“I wonder if he ever hears from his sons?” I asked.

“He told me that he only hears from them when they need money, or, about them when they’re in trouble. I think he’s washed his hands of them basically,” Morgan said.

“That’s too bad,” I said.

“I was wondering, are you two going to celebrate your wedding anniversary in a couple of weeks?” Morgan asked.

“We only have anniversary of Orthodox,” Dimitris said.

“Really? I thought you’d want to celebrate the first wedding, the civil bond. I mean it was legal and the first tie,” she wondered.

“We will acknowledge it, but to celebrate Orthodox, better,” he said.

“My cousin will be coming for Christmas, and I’d like her to meet a nice single man, about our age. Someone who likes to talk, but is not overbearing. Do you guys know someone who would be interested?” I asked

“Gregorio,” Dimitris said.

“Who?” Morgan asked.

“Gregorio, Captain of boat.”

“Captain Teddy bear,” I said. “No, well, maybe. Dimi, invite him to dinner so that I can get to know him a little better, and see him. It was so dark when we were with him. I wouldn’t know him if I saw him on the street. So yes, we’ll see. Anyone else? Andreas, you must know some good men who would like to meet someone.”

“I know a couple of men, yes, but I’m not sure if...”

“All you have to do is invite them to dinner, no big deal, we’ll all have dinner. If I think anyone, in particular, is right, we can see if he’s interested in meeting

someone. No pressure," I said.

"Yeah, okay, I'll make a few calls," Andreas said.

"Dimi, can you call Gregorio? Have him come to dinner tomorrow?" I asked.

"Yes, I call tomorrow."

"Well, I'm going to bathe then hit the hay, so I'll say goodnight. Morgan, I'll need to give you an extra blanket." We walked to a hall linen closet that was behind the staircase.

"Here, do you want more than one?"

"No, I don't think so, say, was that Mark on the phone earlier?"

"Yeah, did Dimi say anything about it?" I asked.

"No, but I could tell by the way he acted when you were talking that he was, I don't know.... distracted," Morgan said.

"What do you mean?"

"Well, he was talking to Andreas, but he wasn't there, you know what I mean?"

"So you figured it was Mark?"

"I don't know, maybe he mentioned it, but I don't remember him saying it was Mark," she said.

"I spent all those years with Mark, but I think Dimi is more jealous of Aiden than he is of Mark."

"Well, that's because Aiden is right here, and he knew you were in love with him."

"Men! Every day they bring new confusion to me. Dimi says they aren't hard to figure out, they are what they are - no mystery. I can't figure them out," I said.

"You know, ever since you said that the sexy clothes might wake him up, Andreas asks me to wear certain clothes now. He gets turned on when I do, and he can't keep his hands off of me!" I had to laugh.

"I told you it would wake him up."

"Yeah, but I expect him to be an animal at home, not when we're having dinner in a restaurant!"

"Really? I would never expect that with Andreas, he's always such a

gentleman,” I said.

“Yeah, but you don’t know, he’s sneaky! If we’re sitting in the back seat of the car, he might be nudging my skirt up over my knee, or he’ll start muttering Greek to me in my ear. I’ve got to keep him in line sometimes, or it could be embarrassing! Remember the dinner when we got all dolled up when Rena took us out to the spa, we stayed at the hotel in Athens?”

“Yeah, yeah.”

“After you and Dimi left, Andreas said he was going to the head. He called me on my cell and said to make an excuse to leave the table during dinner and to meet him on the balcony. When I got out there he took me behind the trees, well, bushes in planters out there. He started kissing me against the wall, and before I knew it, he had what he was after! It was earthshaking, but he’s getting so impulsive like we’ll never get caught!”

I was laughing, as it sounded like Dimi!

“It’s not funny. We’re going to get arrested one of these days!”

“We should compare notes,” I said, laughing.

“Dimi is obvious, though. Everyone knows what’s going on when you two disappear. He’s like electric sex, I mean he reeks of it, so it’s no surprise.”

“Oh, god, and here Dimi seems to think it’s a secret. These men! Well, here’s a down comforter, it’s lightweight, in case that hot-blooded Greek can’t keep you warm!”

“That’ll be the day!”

“Okay, see you in the morning.”

Do Not Question Gods



“**H**elena, are you sleeping?” Dimitris asked as he peeked in.

“No, I’m awake.”

“You must be careful not to sleep in tub. May I come in?”

“The water isn’t very warm.”

“Put more,” he said as he got undressed.

I refilled the hot water, and Dimitris handed me the corn starch, to add more to the water. He got in and sat behind me. We just laid in the luxury of the warmth surrounding us.

“My Heart, this makes water like silk. I like.” He kissed my neck and stroked his hand up and down my arm and shoulder.

“Did Morgan and Andreas go to bed?”

“They will enjoy fire before they sleep,” he said.

“I didn’t realize how tired I am. I’m sorry I’m not up to making love.”

“I am sorry too, Helena, but, we rest today and tomorrow another day.” I reached up to his cheek then he kissed my shoulder.

“You deserve to be made love to, Dimi,” I said.

“Ohh, Helena, sometimes you make life too hard for this man.”

“I don’t mean to,” I said and leaned back against his chest.

“Maybe we have the pie when we get out?”

“No, Dimi, no pie for me.”

“Come, we get out. Water get cold.” He stood then reached for the towel. “Come.” As I stood he put a towel around me. “Okay, my Heart, I will not tempt. We forget pie.”

When we were ready for bed, Dimitris opened his arms for me to get into bed and cuddle up to him.

“Dimi?”

“Yes, my Angel.”

“Are we okay?” He looked down at me and said,

“What you mean?”

“Well, I know you were feeling bad about this. You’re so..., I mean sex is a big part of our relationship and I...”

“Helena, my Heart, let me tell you a thing. When I find my Helena, I find a special one to be with always. I see this flower to laugh at little car, my heart is on fire, but I wait. Dimi want this woman, but do not want to make Helena run, I wait, and we fall in love together. We go for month of engagement, only to think of my Helena, and my heart pound. Sex? Yes, but without sex, my heart still pound for my Helena. I wait. Then we make beautiful love together, and be special, for both of us.”

“God! I love you!” I wanted to make love to him. He was so sweet.

He smoothed his finger over my lips and the surrounding area where the rash was healing. Then he kissed me very gently.

“Can I tell you something?” I said.

“Tell Dimi all.” He looked at me and said, “Go!”

“Do you know where I would be if I hadn’t met you?”

“But you do meet Dimi. Now we are here,” he said.

“Yes, but if I had never met you.”

“We do not want to think about that, you do meet Dimi, and we do fall in love. So we do not talk of not to meet.”

“Okay, you are very persuasive when you want to be,” I said. “I love how you put up with me, you are patient, sweet and you don’t hold things like this over my head,” I said.

“What you mean ‘over head’?”

“You don’t hold things like this against me, you know, like having to put off making love, bringing up my mistakes, my shortcomings and then throwing them in my face. You are very kind and forgiving, and I love you for that.”

“There are no things to not forgive.”

“You are a very patient man. Like when Mark called, it means so much to me that you allowed me to deal with him, and not try to interfere. You trust me enough to let me handle it. That’s a very special quality. There are not many men who would handle the situation the way that you have. I wish I had acknowledged my misery in my life a long time ago. I should have traveled a long time ago. I would have found you, perhaps a long time ago, also.”

“Ah, my Heart, we must not lament over these things, we have our time now, and for this I am grateful. The gods have chosen this time for us. Perhaps we weren’t ready before and would have missed our chance for the now. We do not question. We be happy for what we have.”

“You should be a philosopher, my love,” I said.

He made a growling sound nuzzling my neck. I started laughing, then he said, “Oh, Helena. I will have to be bad, or you make Dimi sleep in other room,” he laughed.

“Oh, no you don’t! I won’t tease you anymore.”

“Helena, sometimes Dimi has to be bad,” he said.

“Are you going to leave me alone in here?” I said as he started to get out of bed.

“Perhaps for tonight is best.” He kissed me a little more sensuously, made a deep sound in this throat, then left the room.

He went to the linen closet for a blanket then to the room where his lab was set up. There was a long bench seat against the wall next to the door, which had a pad on it similar to a lounge pad. He spread the blanket over him to try to get some sleep.

Sleep came in short segments, where I’d awaken to find my hand searching for Dimitris, and not finding him there. It seemed like I would never get uninterrupted sleep. By morning when I awoke, I could feel his arms around

me. It felt good. It felt right. I wouldn't want sleeping in separate rooms to be a recurring ritual. I smoothed his hand then he tightened his arm around me and kissed my ear.

"Kalimera, Dimi."

"Kalimera, my Helena." He pulled me over to cuddle with him.

"Hmm, I like this. I thought you were sleeping in the other room."

"Dimi could not sleep when I think you sleep in here. This where I must be," he said.

"I didn't sleep well either."

"You were sound asleep - not even think of your Dimi."

"You never left my mind, Sweetie."

"We get up. Make the coffee. Day is wasting, Helena."

"Good morning! We have to take Athena home before 11 am. We don't have much time." Andreas said.

"You will eat? I fix the breakfast," Dimi said.

"No, we'll eat on board," Andreas said.

"Is Helen up yet?" Morgan asked.

"Yes, she is dressing," Dimitris said.

"Good morning, is there any coffee?" I asked, as I entered the kitchen.

"Andreas say they leave now, not even to eat," Dimitris said.

"Why so early?" I asked.

"We're going all the way home. We're not going to stop at Rena's. We've got a ton of things to do," Morgan said.

"I wish you didn't have to leave so early. You're not staying to eat?" I asked.

"No, we can't," Morgan said.

Morgan and Andreas left for home as Dimitris took them to the docks in the little car. While he was gone, I got some of the dishes ready to prepare and set out the plates, etc. It only took 15 to 20 minutes for Dimitris to drop them off and come back.

"This will be beautiful day, my Heart." He came up behind me, put his arms around me and kissed my cheek. "Mmm, how is my Heart today?" He asked.

“I am good. How are you today?”

“It is a beautiful day, and I am wonderful, we shall have breakfast then start to get ready for Christmas, and family.” Then he gave me a squeeze and a peck on the cheek.

“You’re sure in a good mood this morning,” I said.

“And why not? It is beautiful day. I have beautiful wife and home, how could this man be happier?” He wrapped his arms around me and snuggled my neck until I was laughing.

When the telephone rang, I answered it. It was Stefano. He wanted to talk to his brother, so while they were catching up, I went to the bedroom to do some of the unpacking of my clothes.

This room that we decided would be the master bedroom was very large. Initially, there was a small utility room next to it, which had been converted into a huge walk-in closet. It was gigantic, for a closet. The huge closet was indicative of the grandiose tastes of the Nazi commandant who manned the helm here. It wouldn’t be surprising if there were secret panels or hidden rooms. The basement had a wine cellar which I still had not explored. Dimitris told me about when he was a young boy, he and his brothers used to explore the property, and discovered the wine cellar door behind discarded furniture and debris.

The ‘red room’ from the Kefalonia house had spoiled me. Now I was one of those people with an expectation of having a fireplace in my bedroom. Dimitris chose the perfect room for us because it did indeed have a large, beautiful fireplace. This room had my red sheers and the decorator items from our Kef bedroom, but this room was so much bigger that it still needed some work to make it look complete. Morgan did a good job of arranging what sheers and brocades I had, but I needed to make some changes and additions to make it right.

“Helena?” I could hear Dimitris calling me. He’d never find me in the depths of the closet.

“I’m coming,” I answered. “I was in the closet. What’s new with Stefano?”

“Come, we eat, it gets cold,” he said, as he took my hand and led me to the kitchen. I washed my hands of the dusty boxes I had handled.

“Rena plans Christmas. You will need to call later, she asks about father and family. Do we know who come yet?”

“I’m not sure, Karen is supposed to call me in a few days,” I said. We ate in the kitchen at a little table that had only two chairs. It would have been the perfect little table for a small collection of potted plants.

“My Heart, do you want to go to New Rhodes today?” He asked.

“Not particularly, why?” I asked.

“Business, I meet with lawyer, is formality, should not take long time. You can shop, or come to meeting.”

“No, I’ve got a lot to do here, we’ve been on the go for so long, it would be nice to settle in here. I need time to do that,” I said.

“Dimi will not be gone long, but bring dog in house. I will feed chickens if you wish before I go.”

“No, I’ll feed the chickens. I’ll be okay while you’re gone, but if you get held up, call me, okay?” I asked.

“Yes, my Heart. I will call.”

“What time is your meeting?”

“In forty minutes, I will go, after dishes.”

“I’ll take care of that. You go get ready,” I said.

“Yes, I get ready.” He kissed my fingers and left the kitchen.

We had so many boxes that still had to be unpacked for the kitchen. Pots and pans, serving dishes and utensils, all still in boxes. By the time Dimi would return from New Rhodes city, most of it should be organized and put away.

We had been away, from one house and off to another, and it was as if an avalanche of mail had finally caught up with us. When the postal truck pulled up in front of the house, the first thought that came to me was that Dimitris had another piece of lab equipment delivered. I was in shock to find it was just mail. Our mail had been forwarded from the Rhodes family home to Kefalonia, then from there to this house. I was also receiving mail that finally caught up from California. Some of this mail had postal dates almost a year

old.

As I sorted through the heap of envelopes and little packages, I noticed several of the letters that Mark said I never answered. They were already a year old. I found an envelope with a letter from a friend in Northern California. This was mailed back in August. There were pictures and news of relative's weddings, and new additions to distant relatives families. I had wondered whatever happened to forwarded mail from the USA. I figured it had been destroyed a long time ago, so I stopped expecting any.

Then there was a letter mailed from Athens to the family home. From there it went to Athens postal center, on to Kef, back to the Athens postal center, then finally here. When I opened it, it was from Aiden. It was written after Andreas Day last year. From the condition of the letter, it looked as though it had gotten stuck in some kind of mail sorting machine. It was puckered on one end, and the flap had been torn.

I hesitated to read the letter. At the time it was written, emotions ran high, and with the amount of time that had passed between then and now, so much had happened. Aiden and I are at last in a comfortable friendship-relationship. He has found a place in our lives, and we all are content. If I were to read this now, it could be the seed of things to come, so I'm not sure I should read it at all.

I put this letter to the side, in contemplation of whether to toss it or read it, perhaps at a later date. There were too many other mail items to go through at this time, to be bothered with this letter now.

I noticed three envelopes from the Rhodes police. They were dated at one-month intervals. I was sure that the subject was our going to identify items found concerning our mugging, but I would let Dimitris read these. It made me wonder if Morgan had ever received similar letters. She never said that she had.

All of the mail that was addressed to Dimitris or Morgan I put separately aside. Mine, I have to wade through as time permitted.

I heard the little car pull up the hill to the house and the sound of the kitchen door shut.

"My Heart, I am back." Dimitris sang. "Helena?"

"I'm in the dining room," I said as I called to him. He came into the room with a big smile, threw his arms around me with a kiss and asked,

"How is my Heart?"

"I'm fine, Sugar, how'd it go?" I asked.

"Wonderful!" His exuberance was contagious.

"We've got mail!" I said. "Okay, what have you been up to, Mr. Patakinis?" He had that look, like he had a surprise up his sleeve. I'm getting better at reading him, and although his eyes usually give him away on serious matters, when he is happy, it's a little harder to go deeper into any clandestine activities he may be working on, with any certainty.

"Come, I show you something." He took my hand then led me to the lab. He had me sit on a stool at a stainless steel lab table. He sat on a smaller stool on rollers. He rolled over to his safe, which was under a lab table next to a small box refrigerator. He opened the safe, took out a large envelope then rolled his stool in front of me.

"What is it?" I asked. He got a more serious expression on his face as he removed the papers from the envelope.

"My Heart, in safe are all important papers. You must have combination to safe. Take and put in safe place. You will need someday." He handed me the combination written on an index card.

"Okay," I said as I took the card.

"In safe, are papers for cars, deeds, insurance on house and cars, important you know where are and to get to easily — also, investment papers and Will. I go to lawyer today to make new Will and beneficiary on life insurance. You, my Heart, are sole beneficiary on all things, if something happen to Dimi, you no have to worry," he said as he laid his hand on mine. I was stunned and touched, but a wave of fear washed over me. The thought of ever losing him scared me.

"You're alright, aren't you? I mean there's nothing wrong with you, is there?" I was beginning to get emotional and could feel the tears welling up in my eyes. He put his hand on my cheek and said,

"No, Helena, Dimi is fine. I do not want you to fear for how your life be after Dimi gone. You will be provided for, my Heart."

"I don't want to talk about this. I can't even think about a life without you," I said and began to look for a tissue. Dimitris reached down the table for a box of tissues and handed it to me.

"Do not cry, Helena. I do for you, so you no have this worry," he slipped his hand around my waist.

"I know, but I can't have anything happen to you. Just the thought of losing you..."

"Shh, I do not do for you to cry on this. Now, all is in order. You only have to keep combination in safe place. Oh, almost forget. Lawyer say for you to make will and life insurance to sign. You call when ready to file Will. All is just precaution," he said with his hand caressing the back of my neck.

"I don't have anything, if I kick the bucket, you'll have to bury me, and that's it."

"No, my Heart. Everything, all I have is yours. You need to prepare. If God calls you after Dimi, you must designate estate in your Will."

"Why did you do this now? I know it's good to be prepared, but all this talk of it, I don't know, maybe I'm superstitious, but it seems unlucky." He looked at me, and I hoped he wasn't going to lecture me on the importance of being prepared. He put the papers back into the safe, locked it, then came to me in a warm hug and softly said,

"Because this man loves his Helena. Dimi always take care of his wife." We left the lab to go back for some fresh coffee.

"Dimi, this box of mail needs to have you go through it. There's a lot of old mail, some of it has taken almost a year to catch up with us," I said.

"Okay, we do that tonight," He said as he made his special brew of coffee.

"Sweetie, when was your last complete physical? You know, full blood panel, thyroid, cholesterol, prostate exam, blood pressure, the whole thing?"

"I just take blood test before," he said.

"No, I mean an examination by a doctor."

"Maybe five years. Dimi healthy," he said.

"I want to make you an appointment to see someone, is that okay?" I asked.

"But why?"

"Because it's been a long time. Things can change, especially after a certain

age, you need to have things checked, at least yearly. Would you go, if I make an appointment?"

"If it makes you feel better, not to worry. Yes, I will go."

The thought of a Will, and the possibility that someday, I may not have this man, was motivation enough for me to have him be checked out. I've always had a curiosity about the health aspects of the Greek diet. Although wine, cheeses and various meats are used in abundance, so is the use of Olive oil, a great variety of seafood and fresh vegetables and fruits. I know that Dimitris is a strong, healthy man, but men tend to let things go, and in this case, for too long.

Dimitris poured our coffee. I stood looking out the huge bay window, just staring into space, I guess. My mind was somewhere else.

"Helena?" I turned to Dimitris. I didn't hear a thing he had said.

"I'm sorry, Sweetie, I wasn't paying attention."

"This Will. It has upset you? Dimi has spoiled beautiful day for his Helena?"

"No, I was just looking out there, thinking. What was it you were saying?"

"I say chickens are laying. You want I build new nest boxes? I don't have chickens before, so what to do for them?"

"If you could build them for me it would help keep them off of the ground. If they don't have boxes to nest in, they'll lay them in the yard, and we'd have to hunt for them every morning."

"Then they must have boxes."

"I can make a diagram of what we need. And you can section an area for a coop."

"You draw, I will do," he said.

"Were you planning on doing it today?"

"We see what we can do."

Dimitris put his coffee down, leaned toward me as we kissed, then he said, "I will be outside if I get call."

"Okay," I said and poured me another cup of coffee. I watched him walk out of the kitchen door. When I looked from the kitchen window, I could see him out in the yard with the dogs. They do love their master.

I started thinking about the chickens, and although they manage to find a warm place to roost in the winter, they will need safe shelter at night. I thought about a practical place to put a chicken coop, then set out to draw an approximation of what I wanted built.

I designed a nesting box that would have six partitions and would hang from the wall of the garage. The coop would be open on one end with a fenced area for scratching. Once I made my sketch, I went out to look for Dimitris.

“Dimi?” I called. “Dimi?” I didn’t see him, and the grounds are too vast for me to go and search him out. I wondered if he was carrying his cell phone. I dialed him up.

“Hello, my Heart, are you missing your Dimi?” He said in a soft dreamy voice.

“Where are you, Sweetie? I’m out here in the yard, but I don’t see you or the dogs.”

“Ah, my good boys are here, I am around back of yard, down hill on plateau. I will be up to house to my Helena,” he said. “Wait for your Dimi.”

“Okay. I made a plan for the chickens.”

When he came up the hill from the little plateau, I was waiting for him. He put his arm around me, kissed my temple, then we walked back to the house.

“Where is this plan for chickens?”

“Before we do that, I wanted to remind you to see if you can contact Gregorio.”

“Oh yes, I call now,” he said.

From Curiosity to Obsession

Play and Then Pay



The seas were not as rough as we anticipated. If we had procrastinated and left Athens later in the morning, it would have been another story.

Stefano met us and brought us to their house on Karpathos. Upon entering the home, Rena was scrubbing the tile countertops with a toothbrush. It always made me chuckle when I'd see this little Chinese lady with Stefano, Dimitris' older brother. She, being so petite and him, the boyishly cute big lummo, whom she wrapped around her finger.

"Hi Rena, how are you doing? Huh?" I asked with concern.

"Hi, Helena." She began to wipe off her hands. I could see how distraught she was, even though she tried to hide it with her cheerful facade.

"Sit, and I'll pour some coffee. Where's Morgana, did she come?"

"Yeah, she's collecting the men's coats," I said. I went to Rena's side and gave her a little hug. "Are you okay?" I asked.

"Oh, I'm fine. I worry about Katie. She had been trying to get pregnant for so long, but it never happened. Now..."

"How is she doing? I mean health-wise, will she be okay?" I asked.

"She wasn't that far along to cause any damage physically, but she's so

depressed. I hated to leave her. Arthur isn't a real emotional person, and he isn't much support for her now. I think that he's relieved. I don't think he wanted this baby," she said.

"He does seem to be somewhat of a cold fish. I shouldn't say anything. I don't really know him. He never says anything to me," I said.

"You probably know him as well as we do! He never talks much, maybe to Stefano, but I have never had a real conversation with him." Rena said as she wiped the stovetop.

"Hi Rena, how's Katie?" Morgan asked.

The men all went into Stefano's office. I was hoping they weren't having a conference on taking us somewhere. They seem to do that when they huddle. They end up with a little surprise for us.

Rena continued spraying and wiping cupboard doors.

"Oh, I almost forgot. In all this confusion, I'm losing it!" Rena moaned. "This was sent to Dimi in care of Stefano. I think it's from Camilla."

She handed me an envelope. It was a plain envelope, no return address, nothing suspicious, but it carried with it the feeling of dread, trouble, and anger. As tempted as I was to drop it into the trash, I put it into my purse.

"Rena, come on and sit down, let's talk, huh?" I said.

"I'm sorry, Helena, I don't know what to do with myself. I can't relax."

"Maybe you should give her a call, it's been a while since you've been back, and it will ease your mind, just hearing her voice," I said. She kept running her cleaning cloth over everything. I got up and went to her. I put my hand on the rag to stop her. "Rena, call her."

She picked up the phone and dialed her daughter's number. I let her have her privacy.

"Morgan, where is everyone?" I asked.

"They're still in the office with Stefano. How's Rena?"

"I don't know, she's worried about Katie," I said. "What are they doing back there? I hope they don't have any sneaky surprises up their sleeves."

"Oh, for..., I didn't think of that! I hope not! Andreas doesn't do it that much anymore. The last time was when he took me to Symi," Morgan said.

"I'm sorry, girls. Thank you, Helena, I do feel so much better. Katie sounds good, almost her old self. Where are the men?" She asked.

"They are still in Stefano's office," Morgan said.

"I guess I have to go rattle Stefano's cage," Rena said.

"Let me call Dimi," I said, and I dialed his cell phone.

"My Heart," Dimitris said as he answered his cell phone.

"What are you guys up to?" I asked.

"We will come out now."

"Okay."

"They are coming out, aren't they?" Rena asked.

"Yeah, that's what they say."

We heard a loud clap of thunder that was not too far away. The storm was developing quickly. Morgan and I both knew that the men had something up their sleeves, from the look on their faces when they exited Stefano's office.

"Get your coats and we'll go to Rena's favorite club," Stefano announced.

"One of you can sit up front," Rena said as we were piling into the Caddy. Morgan sat up front since she is so petite, which left Andreas, Dimitris and me in the roomy back seat.

"You look pretty, Rena, how do you do it so quickly?" I asked.

"Oh thank you, I try always to be prepared, you never know with these guys," she said. "Were you able to find your clothes?"

"Not what I was looking for, but that's okay, I didn't want to unpack everything," I said.

"I think you'll enjoy this club. They usually have pretty good performers. Most of them are in the English language. Usually, the Greek language performers are at Pan's Palace, a club in Patras," Rena said. "We should go there sometime. It's a kick. If you don't understand the language, it's like watching pantomime!" She giggled.

As we were sitting in the back seat, Dimitris had his arm around me. I could smell that cologne that he knows drives me crazy. He barely puts any on, so it's only the occasional nuance that passes by that gives me a thrill. He

started to move the stray hair away from my ear then he whispered

“S’agapo Helena.” Then he kissed my neck. His new whiskers were poking my skin, but I didn’t say anything.

“Morgana and I haven’t eaten, so we’re getting pretty hungry. How is their food?” Andreas asked.

“They have a pretty good variety but don’t order the Sushi or the Meatloaf Jubilee. They try to dress up a bad meatloaf with a Cherry Jubilee sauce. It’s still bad meatloaf!” Rena advised.

“Their Prime Rib is excellent, and also the Chicken Almondine is pretty good,” Stefano added.

“Don’t do what Stefano did if you’re allergic to peanuts. They have a Chicken dish that’s to die for, but it’s got a Peanut - Ginger glaze sauce. The gods were rolling over with laughter with this guy! He ate that stuff so fast that I didn’t realize what he was eating. I looked across the table, and his face was all red, and he was getting huge knots on his neck! It looked like someone tightened his necktie too tight! He didn’t even say anything! If I didn’t ask him what was wrong, he would have waited until he had his second serving and we’re out in the car ready to leave!” Rena chirped.

“Reenie, I’ll be sure to ask you what I can eat,” Stefano said.

“There is a Macaroni with peas dish, of course, Mushroom- Spinach Quiche casserole is good,” Rena said.

“I’m getting hungry just listening to you,” I said.

We were seated at a booth on the second level tier. The dinner theater had the open floor for the stage, then set back in a semi-circle were the first two rows of tables. Then there was a tier that followed that pattern that was three to four feet higher than the stage floor tables, with a thin railing for safety. This level had half-shell booths that followed the semi-circle design of the interior of the room. Above that was another level of half-shell booths, meant for larger groups. In all, there were forty-two tables.

Dimitris took my jacket from me then I slid into the booth. We all settled in and went over the menu.

“Geez, I’m surprised that there are so many entrees,” Morgan said.

“Ah, my Morgana has finally found a decent menu. Now she won’t have to compromise,” Andreas said.

“I need to visit the ladies room, who wants to come with me?” Rena said, looking right at me.

“I’ll go with you, Rena.” I turned to Dimitris, who was letting me out of the booth and told him that if the waitress comes to order for me. He kissed my hand, and I left to follow Rena.

When we got to the ladies room, Rena asked:

“Helena, did you give that letter to Dimi?”

“Not yet. I didn’t want to ruin the evening. He’s been under a lot of stress lately. I hate to bring up the letter, too. It’ll wait until we get home.”

“Are you going to open it?” She asked.

“No, I won’t open it.”

“If you know what’s in it, you can prepare him,” Rena said.

“If it was addressed to both of us, that’s one thing, but it’s addressed to him. I won’t open his mail,” I said. “And it’s probably in Greek.”

“It would bother me to the point of distraction! I’d have to know what’s in that letter,” she said.

“Maybe I’ll give it to him before the comics. They might cheer him up.”

“Let’s go back. I’m sorry Helena, I hope it doesn’t ruin your night.”

When we got back to the table, Dimitris stood to let me in the booth. I took his hand and indicated to him to come with me. When we got to the lobby, I think he could tell by my expression that something was wrong. I turned to face him, and he started to put his arm around me.

“Dimi, Sweetie, I didn’t know when to give you this. I didn’t want to ruin your night, but.....”

“What is it, Helena?” He asked as he looked into my eyes. I drew the envelope out of my purse.

“Rena gave me this before we left the house. I didn’t want to give it to you, but it’s yours and your decision on what you want to do with it,” I said. He took the envelope from my hand. “Rena said that she thinks it’s from Camilla.”

He looked at me, put his hand on the back of my neck, and kissed me.

“We wait with this. We read in bed.” He smiled at me and put the letter back in my hand. “Put in purse, we read later.” Then he took my hand and led me back to the booth.

Our dinner was lovely, and between the comedians and Rena, we laughed all night. It was good to see Rena and Stefano letting go of the grief.

Poor Dimitris, also, every time he would kiss me or try to whisper in my ear, I’d jump from his whiskers jabbing me. I tried not to react to them, but it was hard not to do so.

After the show, we had an interesting drive back to the Athena. Rena kept us in stitches most of the time. I didn’t have a chance to talk to Morgan before we went to bed. Dimitris didn’t say too much about what I was wearing tonight, unusual for him. I think we were both tired. I know that although he wouldn’t show it, Dimitris was apprehensive about the letter. I was dreading the reading of the letter. It did add a sour note to a great evening.

“Tired?” He could tell by my eyes that I was tired or had a slight headache. My eyes were barely slits, and the glare from the light in the room made me squint.

“I’m beat.” I put my hand on his cheek. He took it and kissed it.

“We sleep tonight. Tomorrow Rhodes,” he said.

“Do you want to wait on the letter?” I asked.

I had my ‘kiss me’ T-shirt that I slipped over my head after I had undressed. As I brushed my hair, I could hear Dimitris sigh. I turned to look at him. He motioned for me to come to bed. I slipped under the sheets and into Dimitris arms.

“S’agapo Dimi,” I said and gave him a peck on the cheek. He put his arm around my waist and drew me nearer to him.

“Do you worry on letter, my Heart?” He asked in my ear. I turned to face him.

“I don’t want it to hurt you. We can only expect more misery from her.”

“My Angel, there is nothing to give us misery. If I have my Helena, I have everything. Where is letter? You get.”

I took it out of my purse. I brought it to him. As I watched him open the envelope, I started pacing. The anticipation of trouble and the anger I knew that would follow, made it hard to sit and wait for it.

He took the letter out of the envelope, shuffled to the last page and said, "My Helena, who sign this?" He had me look at the signature. Since he didn't have his reading glasses, I said,

"Camilla."

He ripped the letter in several pieces then put it in a trash bag next to the bed.

"There, no more problem. Now come back to bed," he said.

"You aren't curious?" I asked.

"No. We leave it alone. There is nothing there for Dimi. Now, we sleep. S'agapo," he said and kissed my lips. What started as a goodnight kiss turned to passion. He spoke his Greek, but I could tell by the tone that he was not pleased.

I wished that he would have read the letter, but it was probably for the best that he didn't. I know that he didn't notice that on the back of one of the sheets of the letter was some doodlings, scribbling of some sort. I wondered about it.

He rested on my shoulder then turned to lay on his pillow.

"What's wrong, Dimi?"

"I fail you, my Heart."

"You could never fail me," I said.

"But you were not fulfilled." He sounded so depressed.

"It's not important."

"No. Is very important for man to fulfill wife. Is most important for man to be all for one he loves."

"You are, Dimi."

"But I cause pain, not pleasure. What could be worse than what I do?"

"Don't make it sound so serious. Your mustache will grow out, and it won't be painful for me then."

"But how long to do that? And what I do until then?"

"We might have to stay away from each other, but you've got a good start

on it, and it's only been one day," I said.

"No, I do not stay away from my Heart. I have been too long without my wife. If whiskers not out in two days, I shave."

I laid my head on his chest and fell asleep smiling.

In the middle of the night, I felt Dimitris tighten his grip around my waist and snuggle deeper into my hair at my shoulder. I pulled his hand up to my heart and held it there. I could hear his Greek whispers and feel his breath.

"Are you awake, my Heart?" He whispered.

"Are you okay? What's wrong?" I asked.

"Dimi missing his Heart."

I turned to face him, and with the little light that came in the window, I could see his face. I put my hand on his cheek.

"I've missed you, too," I said. He started kissing me, and although his whiskers were poking my already delicate skin, I couldn't say anything, and we continued to make love.

My face was raw around my mouth and chin. I put some ointment on my face. In the morning, when I turned toward Dimitris, I heard,

"What has happened, my Heart?" I woke up enough to bring my fingers to my face.

"Oh, oh yeah, it's alright. Go back to sleep," I said. I didn't want to act like I was in pain.

"But Helena, is this what I do?" I didn't say anything at first, but he wouldn't let me go back to sleep. He had that pinched, worried look.

"It's okay, nothing serious."

"It is raw," he said.

He looked at me, then took me in his arms and kissed my cheek. He held me there with his lips on my temple for a while. Then he sprang out of bed and went into the bathroom. When he came back, he was cleanly shaven. He came to sit on the edge of the bed by me and gently placed his hand on my face. I held his hand there, as he looked so sorrowful.

I knew he was feeling bad. I sat up and put my arms around him.

“My Heart, I never.....”

“It looks worse than it is, it’s alright,” I said.

“You sure? If you wish, we can stay another day, go to Rhodes tomorrow?”

“I’m okay. We can go today,” I said. He looked at me with his sad eyes. He left the cabin to tell Andreas that we’re set to leave.

Once we were underway, Dimitris came back to our little cabin.

“Sugar, can we get some coffee?”

“I make.” He left the cabin. Before I followed him there, I took the pieces of the letter out of the trash. I wanted to see what she wrote on the back of the letter. I realized that whatever it was, it most likely was in Greek. I had to quench my curiosity. I put it into my purse, then went to the Galley.

“My Heart,” he said, leaning in to kiss my cheek. I slid into the booth to wait for the coffee to drip.

“When Athena dock at Rhodes, remember, you do not carry boxes,” he said and moved in next to me. He took my hand and looked at the rings he placed there. “We will prepare for Holidays, family coming soon.” He kissed my fingers then went to pour the coffee. I’d never been very good at not doing things that I am perfectly capable of doing. Dimitris had to remind me. I also am not very good at underhanded dealings in clandestine matters, such as the letter. Until I can see what it is, I have to keep my actions secret.

“I might need to buy some furniture. I guess we can talk about it after we get home.”

“We will make list, we get.”

“Dimi, we don’t just make a list and go get what’s on the list. That’s not how we buy furniture. We need to get out there and see what we can find. Let it speak to us. Then we’ll know we want it,” I said.

“We will need beds and sofas. We go look. I like, I buy. We have furniture,” he said.

“I’ll tell you what. Any furniture that we get, we’ll buy together, okay?” I requested.

“Yes, Helena. We do it together.”

“You’ll have to make time to go with me, is that okay?” He drew me near him as he sat on the end of the booth seat.

“Yes, my Heart.”

Bachelor Audition



Gregorio can be a hard man to find. He is more at sea than he is on land, but he does carry a cell phone. The conversation was amicable and in Greek. They talked for ten minutes then when the conversation ended, Dimitris said,

“Gregorio will come for dinner. He will make stop at Athens then come. He will call when dock in Rhodes.”

“Did you mention anything about meeting a woman?” I asked.

“No, I say nothing on that. Just dinner.”

“Did he ask you anything?” I asked.

“No, he say okay for dinner.”

“Gee, Dimi, you talked for ten minutes, does he ever ask questions?” Dimitris came over to me asking,

“What you want to know, Helena?”

“How long have you known Gregorio?”

“Always know Gregorio.”

“He’s not married?” I asked.

“No, was, but now is alone.”

“Where’s his wife?” I asked.

“She has passed, long time ago.”

“Oh, I’m sorry to hear that. He’s been alone all this time? No children?” I

asked.

“Yes, he has son and daughter. They marry, move away. So, now he has his boat.”

“He’s pretty quiet isn’t he?”

“Sometimes gets quiet. Stays quiet when others talk,” Dimitris said.

“Do you remember if he came to our wedding? Was he at Rena’s? I don’t remember.”

“Do not remember,” he said.

“I don’t even remember his face. He was wearing a hat and big slicker type coat when we were on-board the Atlantis. I remember he hadn’t shaved in a week, but I don’t remember his face.”

“You will see him at dinner.”

“What will we fix for dinner?” I asked.

“I will do, we have nice dinner.”

“If he’s alone during the Holidays, maybe he would enjoy being here for the celebration,” I said.

“Maybe,” Dimitris said with a small smile he tried to hide.

“What?” I asked. I put my arms around him and tried to look into his eyes. He smiled but tried to hide from my eyes.

“You, my Heart. When you think of this, I think you wish all could be like we, mad in love. These things the gods do, not you and I. But, I will give it chance because it will make you happy.” Then he kissed my cheek.

“No one could make a match like what we have, Dimi, I would like to see my cousin with a nice man, who can make her feel good about herself. She’s been alone for a long time. It’s been rough, and I know she’s been lonely.”

“We will find nice companion for cousin. If Gregorio not one, we find another man who has need of good woman,” he said. He went into the kitchen to take something out of the freezer.

“Sugar, do we have what we need for Greek coffee?”

“We need cream. I will get, also need tomato and more lettuce, and Feta.”

“I can go to town for the groceries.”

“I will go. You need to think on Will.”

“How can I make a Will when I don’t have a clue of what is in the estate?” I

asked.

“Open safe, look over papers, take notes. You will see the estate.” He kissed my cheek and said, “I will return in half hour.”

I wasn't sure that I wanted to go through the papers of the estate. I hadn't yet gotten used to the idea of it, the overwhelming massiveness of it. When I met Dimitris, I thought he was a wonderful man, who worked hard and lived simply. Now I'm looking at the possibility that this man I love has an estate above and beyond anything I ever expected, and it was beginning to scare me. I remember Aiden said something one time about Dimi's money. I had forgotten and put it from my mind.

I look around this grand old house, and I try to imagine how it would be without Dimi. I didn't like it, it scared me, and I felt overwhelmed. I don't like things complicated, and without Dimitris' strength, I was beginning to feel very insecure with the responsibility. The only thing I could do to get this Will business over with would be to split the entire estate. Entitle three quarters to his family to be divided equally amongst the brothers and one quarter to my family. Short and to the point, so that I don't have to dwell on it.

I still had a pile of my mail sitting on the table next to the stairs. I took it into the living room. The light was decent in there without having to turn on a lamp.

I started out tossing the junk mail that was always in abundance. Then the family letters that I should have received earlier I'd read first. Even though the news was old, it was comforting just to read family news.

Then the letters from Mark. They were less than pleasant. Always the twist of antagonism at the end of the statement. The questions with the double meaning. Even with his pride, I could read between the lines. He was hurt, lonely and didn't have a clue how to live alone. We had talked after these letters, and things are better, so even with the bitter taste that these letters leave, they held no surprises in them.

I shoved the Aiden letter to the side while I read most of the other letters and opened the small packages. The Aiden letter kept drawing my attention

back to it.

“My Heart? Dimi is home.” He announced as he came in the back door, carrying groceries.

“Are there any more bags?” I asked.

“Yes, I get.”

I started unpacking the bags and putting the groceries away. I noticed that there were some unusual items, more like picnic items. They come in handy, and ‘spur of the moment’ is something you can count on, and need to plan ahead for on these islands.

“I bring good heavy cream for Greek coffee and tonight, we have a roast. No fish for Gregorio!”

“What time do you think he’ll be here?”

“More close to 5 pm. Must come from Crete.”

“When he’s on land, where does Gregorio live?” I asked.

“Crete. He live there mostly in off-season. He do fishing and short cargo shipment.”

“Do you think Rena and Stefano would like to come for dinner?” I asked.

“I make big dinner, we let all know, then see who come,” he said. “Would you make calls?”

“I’ll do that right now.” I brought the portable phone to the little table in the kitchen then dialed Rena.

“Helena! What’s the word, kid?”

“You sound good. Everything going okay?”

“We’re fine, fine. How is Dimi?”

“We’re great. Hey listen, Dimitris is making a big roast for dinner, would you and Stefano like to come?”

“Oh, gee, we’d like to, but we’re supposed to go to Stefano’s board meeting in Athens. I’d rather come there instead, but you know how Stefano is; what’s the occasion? Anything special?”

“No, not special, I want to introduce my cousin to a nice single man, when she comes for Christmas. I wanted to meet some of the eligibles, so we’re having a dinner. Tonight Captain Gregorio is coming, and I thought the more,

the merrier. I sure wish you'd come. Let us repay you a little for everything you've done for us."

"I wish we could."

"Dinner will be around seven, so if you can, come on over," I said.

We left it at that, and then I called Morgan.

"Andreas isn't home yet, but I'll see if we can get out of here early enough."

"Sweetie, I called Rena and Morgan, they might come, but I don't expect them. I thought that if you wanted to call Angelo or anyone else, you should do that as soon as you can," I said.

"Yes, I will call. Angelo never home, but rude not to include and give invitation. I call." He wiped his hands and wearing a white butchers apron, I watched him walk over to the screened porch off the back door. He's still just as sexy as the first time I saw him.

I wasn't sure if Gregorio would remember me, it had been a strange but brief encounter that Morgan and I had with him. The sun was low on the horizon when there was a knock on the door. I opened the huge Mahogany door with an echo and a creak.

"Hey, welcome! I'm glad you were able to make it," I said.

"Ooo, you look nice, nobody told us to dress," Morgan said.

"Helena, this is Kristofos, he's the crew chief of my men in Neopolis," Andreas said.

"Hello, Kristofos, welcome to our home. Dimitris should be back. I'm surprised you didn't run into him, Andreas. He went to pick up Gregorio at the docks."

"We would have spotted the little car. It wasn't there!" Morgan said.

"I think he took the land barge. Please Kristofos, may I get you something? A beer? Some wine? Sit, Morgan, Andreas, make yourselves comfortable."

My cell phone began ringing. Then there was a knock at the door.

"Morgan, would you mind?"

"I will get the door," Andreas said as he stood.

"Hello?" I answered my phone. "Sugar, where are you?" I was on my cell for a couple of minutes. "Dimitris is on his way. It'll be a few minutes," I told our guests.

Rena and Stefano came in, carrying a large tray of appetizers or 'meyedes' and a couple of bottles of wine.

"Hi you guys, I haven't seen you in a while, you look good. How is everything?" I asked.

"Oh, we're fine. Helena, this is a good friend of ours, John Nicosia, he used to be a student of Stefano's, now they work together."

"Hello, John, welcome to our home. Do you know Andreas and Morgan, and this is their good friend Kristofos. Stefano, how are you?" I asked.

"I am very well. Where is that brother of mine?"

"He's on his way. He should be here any minute," I answered.

"Something smells good. Oh, Helena! The table looks so nice. Can I help with anything?" Rena asked.

"Yeah, why don't we lay out the meyedes on the buffet over there, and, oh, I think Dimi is home. Please, everyone, make yourselves at home."

Everyone was introducing each other and diving into the food. I went to the front door and opened it for Dimitris.

When he came in, I greeted him at the door. Following him was the big man we affectionately dubbed Captain Teddy Bear - Gregorio.

"Gregorio, this is my beautiful wife Helena, do you remember her and there is Morgana, they were on your boat when first they come to Hellas?" Dimitris said.

"Yes, I remember. Two lost souls - almost drowned rats on the sea. Hello." He turned to Dimitris and said something to him in Greek. Dimitris looked at me, with his arm on around my shoulder, smiling.

"He said I am such a lucky man." I held out my hand to the man who brought Dimitris to me.

"Thank you, Gregorio, welcome to our home," I said.

He kissed my hand and looked in my eyes. I saw this man for the first

time. He was clean shaven and dressed nicely. His eyes were large and a bluish - green color. Without his hat, I could see his face was tanned, and although he didn't look old, the sun and sea had left their mark. He was actually quite handsome. He had a somewhat quiet demeanor, but it might have been because of his first meeting of this crowd of strangers. He wasn't very talkative when we met him the first time, either.

"Dimi, I've got the lower oven on, so just before you are ready to cut the roast, we can put in the mushrooms for ten minutes," I said. He put his arm around my waist and kissed my cheek.

"You look beautiful, Helena," he said. I looked at him as I was surprised by his tone. He seemed a little on the protective side. He stayed at my side, and either had his arm around my waist or held my arm at the elbow. I don't know what it is that would make him like this in our own home.

Andreas introduced Kristofos again and began to tell me about this man. Dimitris had met him before. Kristofos was not as tall as Andreas, probably the same height as Aiden. Kristofos was an engineer by education but never pursued his license, so by choice, he was working under Andreas' license.

He does a lot of estimating jobs, hiring the men, and over-seeing the crews. He seemed to be nice. He had an accent that was not pure Greek, I couldn't put my finger on it, but he was pleasant and courteous. He had brown hair with gray sprinkled from the temples around to the back of his head. He was divorced with four adult children and some grandchildren.

John Nicosia was very tall, slender, with a dark olive complexion, he seemed very sweet. He had an underlying sexiness about him, not like Dimitris who's sexiness radiates all around him, but it was a confident demeanor or the way he would look right at you when he spoke like you were the only person in the room. It was quite attractive.

As the evening went on, we had a wonderful dinner, and it was a vivacious group of guests in our home. Captain Gregorio had some wonderful stories of his adventures on the sea, and a few memories of our trip with him.

“When he brought you to pier with luggage, what could I do? I say yes. I no have passenger area, but make do,” he said.

“It was very kind of you to help us out. We didn’t know what we were doing. We were desperate,” I said.

“Yeah, but if someone would have told us that we could have taken a ferry or ‘hop-flight’ right away, we wouldn’t have had to go through all that,” Morgan said.

“Yes, but then you would not need taxi and Dimi would not have my Helena,” Dimitris said.

“That’s true, and we wouldn’t have met either, Morgana,” Andreas added.

“The gods work very hard to have their way at times,” Gregorio said with a bright smile. There was something about this man. He was pleasant, non-obtrusive and had an infectious laugh. I couldn’t help be attracted to him.

He kidded Morgan about how she had rejected his Seaweed broth, thinking he didn’t understand English.

“Even if I knew you understood English, I still wouldn’t have drank that stuff,” Morgan stated. We all had to chuckle over her insistence.

“Ah, but you miss one great pleasure of the sea,” Gregorio said. “Miss Helena take. But not to taste, miss many good things.”

“I have to be careful what I eat,” she said defensively.

“I didn’t know you two rode in on a fishing boat. It’s no wonder you didn’t smell like fish!” Rena commented.

“The sea was pretty choppy that night. We got soaked,” I said.

“I must apologize for not to bring you into cabin. I was angry at that little man, to put me in bad position. I take this anger and place on you.” He looked at me, and it seemed like we made a connection. I could feel Dimitris reach under the table and place his hand on my thigh. I held his hand and smiled at him. I’m not sure what he was sensing at the time.

“The way things went for you two that night, it’s no wonder the gods took over. You didn’t have a clue,” Rena said.

“We got off track and let our emotions run amok. We should have just stayed where we were,” Morgan said. “Eventually it turned out okay, and we

were in safe hands, so I'm grateful for that."

"It looks like you made the right choice. Sometimes fate has its way in Hellas," John said.

"How about you, John, how have the gods treated you?" I asked.

"The problem is when a man gets impatient waiting for the gods to lead the way. A man does what he thinks is right for the time. When a man sees those that the gods have smiled on, he knows that he is not one of them," John said.

"This is true, and very well put. A man can see when other men have the gods on their side. A man has to learn to be patient," Stefano said.

"The gods smiled on this man when he brought me to my Helena. Now, life is as it should be," Dimitris said and gave me a peck on the cheek.

"Sometimes the gods get offended, then all goes wrong. You think they are smiling, but do something to offend them, then all blows up in face." Kristofos said.

"You do not offend gods! Worse to do! Is worse than not to have gods smile at all," Dimitris said.

"The first time Stefano told me about the gods smiling on him when we met, I thought he was nuts! Here we are in the twenty-first century, in London, and this guy starts telling me about the gods. But by the time we got to Greece, and I had been here a while, I began to understand what that meant," Rena said.

"I think the biggest cynic was Morgan," Andreas said.

"Yes, Morgan," we all agreed.

"I've got to admit that it took me a long time, but there is something, gods if you like, but there is something about this place. It changes you," she said.

"She was hard one for the gods to handle. I think they had to work very hard to influence our American ladies," Andreas said, with his dimpled smile and sparkling eyes.

"One wonders if the gods will smile on a man more than once. He is lucky to have them to smile at all on him, but to have more than once? Very rare," Gregorio said.

It was a sad note. I understood, and I felt a pang of sorrow for him. To think a big virile man like this would give up, was sad.

“The gods, they have deserted me, so I no count on them any longer,” Kristofos said.

“Dimi, I think we should bring out the dessert,” I said.

“Yes, we must have the dessert,” Dimitris said as he held my chair as I rose. We went to the kitchen. “What you think?” He said to me as he leaned into my ear.

“There should be enough, but don’t serve me any. There should be plenty,” I said.

“No, of the men? What you think?”

“They’re all nice, I’m not sure about Kristofos, he seems bitter, but we’ll see. Did I tell you how handsome you are tonight?” I asked as he put dollops of whipped cream on the dessert. He smiled and blushed a little. I held his arm and reached to kiss his cheek.

“I have idea. We have party invite all men. Cousin can meet all. We no have to be matchmaker,” he said.

“Let me ask you something. You’re a man...”

“Yes, I am man.”

“Not to interrupt, my Heart,” I said to him, as he once said to me. “If you were invited to a Christmas party and you knew that there were several other single men there, would you make the effort to be ‘the one man?’” He had a smile on his face as he came up to me, putting his arm around my shoulder, he said in my ear

“If you were at party, I would make effort,” then he kissed me under my ear.

“We’ll work on that theory. Okay, you ask Gregorio. Later maybe Andreas can ask Kristofos, and Stefano can ask John. Do you think that Gregorio is too...”

“Old?”

“No, he’s not old, he’s accepted being single, I mean, he doesn’t date or have anything to do with women, does he?”

“He is man! He like women. He go to many ports and know many people. I do not know if he see a woman,” Dimitris said.

“We had better take this tray out there,” I said as I finished placing the dessert cups on the serving tray.

“I take,” Dimitris said.

“Here we are, dessert.” Dimitris set the tray on the buffet.

“Gregorio, John may I get a dessert for you?” I asked. They both agreed. “Anyone else, Rena, Stefano?” Dimitris handed the dessert to Kristofos and Morgan.

All of the desserts were eaten, and we then had some wine. We all went into the living room, where Dimitris re-kindled the fire. We had some funny conversations and not only were we able to get to know these men a little better, we could add them to our circle of friends.

At the end of the evening, Morgan, Andreas, and Kristofos went to the Athena to sleep. Gregario went to his vessel, the Atlantis, to sleep. Rena, Stefano, and John stayed at our house. We had the one double bed upstairs and a couple of single beds ready for guests.

“I will finish. I come to bed after.” Dimitris said as he took the dessert cups from my hands.

“I’d better feed the dogs,” I said.

“Already fed, my Heart.”

I went to our “red room,” got undressed, then after I brushed my hair, I got into bed, but remembered all the mail that I hadn’t finished reading. I put on my kimono and then picked up the mail from the hall table.

The letters from Mark were, at the time meant to upset me, but they didn’t bother me now. They were full of regrets and although not in Mark’s nature to beg, they had a tone of pleading for my return. If I wasn’t so happy with Dimitris, I am sure these letters would have a different meaning for me. As it stands, they can only be a reminder of the past.

My father's letters were precious to me, and I was glad that they caught up with us.

My friend from Northern California had written in amazement of my decision to move out of the country. She was always such a happy person, and I was, at one time very close to her and her family. As we both had our lives, we saw less and less of each other over the years, but I made it my mission to stay in contact.

I found the letter from Aiden, which I haven't read. I need to put it away where it won't bug me into reading it. I put it under some papers in my bedside drawer.

My eyes were getting so tired and strained, trying to read the fine print on this bright white paper, that I closed my eyes, just for a minute to rest them.

"My Heart?" Dimitris said in a soft voice. As he saw that I was asleep, he got undressed then came to my side. He picked up all the letters and mail, then put them on the vanity table. He turned off my lamp, then got in bed. He reached over then turned out his light.

I awoke when he cuddled in behind me, putting his arm around me and kissing my ear.

"Sweetie?" I said in a soft groggy voice.

"Shh, we sleep," he said, then I was asleep within seconds. I was so exhausted.

"Helena?" I heard Dimitris voice. "Helena."

I awoke with Dimitris stroking my hand and leaning over me.

"Stefano need to leave early, Andreas waits at dock for them," he said as I sat up.

"What time is it?" I asked.

"Is 8:30 am. I will take them to Athena."

"I'll get dressed. How long have you been up?" I asked.

"Only one hour, I fix breakfast, saved you dish in microwave oven."

"You've all eaten already?" I asked.

"Yes, they hurry."

"Okay, I want to say goodbye, at least. You should have woken me earlier," I said.

“I wish you didn’t have to leave already,” I said to everyone as I came into the kitchen.

“Good morning, Helena, well, John has to get back, and Andreas offered to take us home, so we don’t want to keep him waiting. We had such a good time, and dinner was wonderful. We don’t have beef too often, and rarely have roast, it was a real treat,” Rena said. “Thank you for inviting us.”

“Yes, thank you for inviting me to your home. The dinner was wonderful as was the company. It was such a pleasure to meet you both.” John said.

“We will do again, and expect to see you here, John,” Dimitris said as he shook his hand.

“I would be honored.” He took my hand and kissed it and said, “it has been such a pleasure, Helena.”

I hugged Rena and Stefano, we said goodbye, and I got a kiss from my husband as they went out the door.

While I had the house to myself, I poured my coffee and tried to wake up. Thinking about last night, I thought it went well. I had to think about these men that we had in our home. John was telling us how he started on a study grant in Anthropology, but went one summer on a student dig project on Karpathos, to collect information on the site and as part of his thesis. It got so interesting for him that he changed his major to Archeology with a minor in Anthropology. Now, he is very involved in this particular site, and is Stefano’s second in command.

He is very knowledgeable and has a great personality. He reminds me a little of Sahj, but not mysterious and better looking. He had a charm about him, a very easy smile and didn’t put on airs. His family was mostly in Cyprus, but now, what he has left of immediate family are settled in Southern Italy and Athens.

John is a front runner, and if he’s interested, I’d like to have him meet Gracie. If for some reason he is not available, I think my second choice would be Kristofos, only because I get the feeling from Gregario that he has found

his life and is content with it. Not that he wouldn't be a catch, if he were interested, I would want to introduce him to her.

Kristofos is likable and does not appear to be put-off in meeting a lady. I'm not sure if he would be right for her, or if their personalities would mesh.

Now, John, John shines! He's got an open personality, easy to talk to and is full of life once he's talking. He almost sparkles with charm, but not the type of charm that you can see is an act, to make an impression. He'll do nicely, and I think that even if he isn't smitten, he will be gracious and attentive while she's here.

As time slipped by, I poured another cup of coffee then went out to feed the chickens. They had an area of hardened dirt, so I threw a few handfuls of chicken feed, then filled a trough for them.

I found four eggs hidden in the overgrown flower bed along the sunny Southern facing wall of the house. If there are others, they are hidden elsewhere. I was standing there, watching the chickens, when Dimitris drove up. He brought the little car up near the side of the house where I was standing.

"Helena," he said when he got out of the car. He walked up with a smile and put his arms around me.

"Ooo, careful," I stepped back. "I've got eggs in my pocket."

"Oh, my Heart, this is beautiful morning, sun dance off your hair, make heart leap when Dimi come up from drive," he held me gently and kissed me, then said, "John say he like to meet American cousin. He say he has no plans for Holidays."

"Wonderful, that's great news. I think she'll like him," I said. I had my arm around his waist as we walked back to the house.

"Gregorio, he think I am lucky man. He say 'If only gods would bring me my own Helena,' make Dimi proud," he said.

"He looked very nice. I would never have recognized him. I never really saw his face before. He's a nice man. We should have him come for the Holidays anyway. He'll be alone, most likely," I said.

"I will have to watch this man with my Helena. I am thinking he may steal my Heart away from Dimi." I laughed.

“You think that about everyone. You’re so funny, Dimi.”

“Give to me eggs. I put away.” He held out his hand as I dug out the eggs from my sweater pocket. He held all four in one hand without the danger of dropping them. Me, unless I wanted to drop one, I needed two hands to hold all the eggs. “He say he cannot imagine American woman to want man who drives boat.”

“What did *you* say?” I asked.

“I say nothing. He may be right.”

“When I fell in love with you, you were driving a taxi. I had no expectations of anything else. It was you I fell in love with, not your job.”

“But there is no other like my Helena, this why I do more than just drive taxi.”

“The dinner went well, didn’t it Sugar?” I said.

“Yes, and mushrooms very good.”

“You liked them? No sage,” I said.

“Yes! No sage,” He said making a face.

“We really need to go through all that mail, Sweetheart. You may have some important things mixed in there,” I said.

“We will look after breakfast. You do not eat yet. I make fresh.”

“What did you make before?” I asked.

“Is not good now. I throw away. Make new.”

“I’ll just wait for lunch, Dimi.”

“No, you will eat something.”

He insisted on making me another breakfast, using our fresh eggs. It has been a long time since I had eggs from our own hens.

“I will make chicken coop if you have plan, Helena.”

“I do have a plan.” I dragged out my sketch and explained what I wanted for our chickens.

“Do we need against wall?” He asked.

“I thought it would save time to use a wall, rather than build one completely free-standing,” I said as I pointed out the feature.

“We build free-stand.”

“You know, Dimi, I forget that I don’t have to be so frugal with everything. If you are building it free-standing, where do you think it should be? We’ll need to be sure that the feathers and any odor don’t blow towards the house,” I said.

We were looking at the plan, with our heads almost touching. He took me in his arms and kissed me so sensuously. He made a low pitched sound then said,

“My Heart, we wait one more day. When tomorrow comes, we go to Valley of Butterflies.” He kissed me again, and I was soaring.

“Promises, promises,” I said. He let out a kind of yelp, then backed away from me.

“It will be special.”

“It’s always special, Dimi,” I said to him as he kissed my palm, then my wrist.

Preparations



I returned to the mail and found amongst the group, the bill for Mark's life insurance. It was past due by almost three months. I set this one aside.

There were three small padded envelopes. Two of them were items I had ordered before my life changed. By the time the order was finally shipped, I was in another life, another world. I had forgotten what I had ordered, it had been so long ago. The third little package was from my pharmacy.

The bills and the life insurance, I needed to handle today. Getting these taken care of would ease my mind of having any debt hanging over my head.

I wrote all of the checks for the full amount of the debt. The life insurance, I brought up to date and would mail it with the rest of the bills. I had to write a note to Mark explaining what I did, and give him a receipt for the payment.

The letter to Mark had to be handled delicately. I had to explain that I paid all the back payments and that he needed to contact the insurance company to change the beneficiary. I didn't want it to sound like a business letter, stiff and formal, but I didn't want it to sound as an open invitation to start up again.

When the phone rang I was deep into writing the letter and hesitated to be distracted. When I answered the telephone, I was surprised to hear the voice of the daughter of Mark's only dear friend, Jim.

"Hi Suzi, what a surprise! How are you and your Dad?"

“We’re fine, I didn’t know you moved, no wonder I never heard from you. Don’t you get email anymore? My dad talked to Mark last night, so I asked him to get your number, so I could call you. A lady with an accent gave me this number.”

“That must have been my sister-in-law.” I said.

We continued to catch up, then she asked about how I ended up here. I invited her and her father to come for Christmas, they only have to get their passports and catch the plane. I got her phone number and told her I’d call her back.

When Dimitris came back he had rolls of chicken wire fencing and boxes of nails and other supplies.

“Dimi?” I said as I walked up to the land barge. “Did you get everything?” I asked. I could see that there was no lumber.

“Rest to deliver. In two days we build. You look for Dimi?”

“Yes, I got a call from the daughter of an old friend. I thought it would be the trip of a lifetime for them, and we could do this for them. They’ve had it so rough, I’ve never seen bad luck stick to anyone like it has to them.”

“Yes, we do for them. You have kind heart, Helena, not too many want to do this for others. Another reason to love my Heart.” His hand to my cheek, he kissed me very gently.

“Don’t forget, we need to go through the mail.”

“We do tonight.”

It wasn’t like Dimitris to procrastinate on anything, but I could see he was busy and would get to the mail later.

The next day I woke up with Dimitris’ arm draped over me as he laid on his stomach. He tightened his arm as he turned toward me.

“Kalimera, my Heart,” he said as he slowly awoke.

“Kalimera, Dimi, I’ve got to get up and shower, do you want some juice or anything before I get in?”

“Do not go yet, let me see my Helena for awhile.”

“You’re not going to go back to sleep again, are you?” I asked.

“No. I think. When I see my Helena still here in morning with Dimi, how

many mornings I wake with no Helena next to me? I am lucky man. Any man you ever with who do not think how lucky, was fool." He was so sweet in his sleepiness, he made me smile.

"What brought this on?" I asked.

"I have dream," Dimitris said. "I dream I have empty bed. Was not good dream. In dream, I wake, I see pillow, but no Helena, and wonder if Helena is dream."

"It was just a dream, Dimi. I'm here, and I'm not going anywhere." I said as I brushed his hair off his forehead. He rolled over me and gave me a beautiful kiss.

"I do believe you plan to seduce me, Mr. Patakinis," I said playfully. He smiled then popped a quick kiss on my lips.

"Come, we get up."

When I answered the phone, it was Morgan.

"Helen! I found some fantastic furniture, you need to come to Athens to see."

"Hi Morgan, where did you find it?"

"There's a shop on the east end of Athens, I don't know the name of it, but it's got antiques that you wouldn't believe. When can you come?"

"Maybe tomorrow, I'll have to let you know for sure." I said.

"Tomorrow wouldn't be good, Andreas will be in Kos all day. How about the day after tomorrow? We'll need the men to carry the furniture. Anything you buy we can take on the Athena, so we'll need the men."

"Let me call you after I check with Dimi."

"Okay, call me."

"Helena?" Dimitris called from the kitchen. When I went to the kitchen, I didn't see him at first.

"Oh, there you are!" I said.

"Ah, Helena, you are ready?" He asked.

"Not quite, were you calling me?"

"I will wash and after we have lunch, maybe in afternoon, what you think we

go to Athens? We fly from Rhodes, we stay night with Andreas and Morgana?"

"I would love it, but we'll need to call them, see if they already have plans."

"My Heart, you will want to pack for night at Andreas'."

"I'll pack for us both." I said, then went to bedroom to pack.

"Helena, we are ready?" He grabbed his keys and jacket.

It wasn't that far to our destination, just the traffic and road repair could make it seem like a further distance. Dimitris was wearing his sexy cologne that I can't resist.

"My Heart, we are happy, yes?"

"Are *you* happy?" I asked.

"A man can not be so happy as Dimi."

"Then, I am happy. Why do you ask this?"

"My Heart, a man can never know when a thing will change, a thing can make a man wonder."

"A thing? What kind of thing?" I asked.

"All in mind. We are happy, and Dimi in love with Helena. The gods are good."

"Dimi, Dimi, Dimi, sometimes you make me wonder." I said. I reached up to his cheek and rubbed my thumb on his cheek where there was a remnant of soap. He sighed a sexy tone when I wiped his cheek with the back of my fingers.

"Helena, you will make this man crazy."

"I'm sorry, am I distracting your driving?"

"S'agapo, Helena."

"I know, Sweetie."

The traffic bogged down as a lane was under repair. Dimitris reached over to my cheek and kissed me very sensuously, deep and seductive. At this point, it didn't take much to get in gear. His cologne, his expressive eyes and warm touch, I was on fire.

"S'agapo, my Heart," he whispered.

The horns of the cars behind us were honking for us to proceed. Dimitris put us back on the road to our destination. My heart was throbbing and it

was like every nerve in my body was alive with sensation.

The way things had been put on hold lately, it wouldn't take the Valley of the Butterflies to make me want to devour him. I put my head on his shoulder, and said

"Oh, Dimi, I love you." He rested his arm on my lap. What I'd like to have him do to me would certainly effect his ability to drive.

When we turned off the main road, we drove down a dirt road that paralleled the dense overgrowth of trees and bushes that followed the stream. It seemed that we passed the turn where we went before, where we had to get out and walk part of the way. We turned in at the general area, but further down the road. We were able to drive completely into the dense growth. When we stopped, we were still in the dense shade of the trees, where it blocked the sun with its thick canopy. Dimitris got out, then walked over to my door and helped me out of this huge vehicle. He kissed me so deep, so long, that I was starting to lose my breath from my heart beating so fast.

The area facing the side of our car was cleared into a sort of cave in the overgrowth. Someone had cleared it for use by a tent, it appeared.

I didn't know what Dimitris had planned but he set about to prepare us a little private sanctuary. He laid out a blanket to cover the ground.

"We should walk, show all the beauties of this place." I wanted to grab him and let the dance begin, but this place was so beautiful. Dimitris took my hand and led me to the oasis pool, where little waterfalls splashed down the rocks, to join the stream below. Everything was green and fresh. The smell in the air reminded me of moss and cedar.

We found a rock we could sit on by the pond. Dimitris held my hand and looked into my eyes.

"My Heart, we were here when you were running from Dimi. You were still with Mark and we never made love," he said.

"Yes, I remember. I was fighting my feelings for you. You were so sweet, and I was falling in love." He was sitting a little above me on this boulder, with his hands cupping one of mine.

"Helena, Dimi wanted to make mad love when we were here. This place make Dimi want to hold you in arms and not to let go." He reached to the

back of my neck, then I instinctively looked up to him. He kissed me so passionately that I nearly slipped off of my perch. He helped me to stand then we made our way off of the rock. He had his arms around me as we walked toward the land barge. From where we approached the car, the cove was not visible from either side of the car. Our cove was totally secluded as the car created a wall of privacy. There weren't many people around the area today, and being winter made even less of the tourists to bother us.

"We are in Paradise, Helena," Dimitris said as we squeezed between the bushes and the car to enter our secluded cove.

"My heart is so full for my Helena. We wait long time to come here." He put his hand on the back of my head then drew me near. He kissed me and then looked at me with those dreamy eyes, then began his Greek whispers. He kissed me again with more fervor and I was wanting him.

"No, come here, Dimi."

I lifted my foot and said, "would you take off my shoes, my love?"

He knelt then removed my shoe, his hand sliding up the calf of my leg. He sighed. The sound was low and whispered under his breath, an erotically hypnotic sound that sent me spinning. He removed the other shoe, then kissed my ankle. I could hear his Greek words softly on his breath, that sent an excitement through me. I sat up, I reached for his beautiful face and kissed him with a passion that had been building. He came up to lay by me and surrounded me with his arms. Our passions were frantic and desperate to have each other.

Suddenly, he separated from me. He kissed me with such intensity that I wondered how I got so distracted that I didn't notice his phone had been ringing.

He rested momentarily, propped up on his elbows, his hands on my cheeks and looking into my eyes. His gaze sent an electrical charge through me as I caught my breath. He kissed me, slow and sincere and he said in a whisper,

"Andreas. He calls from Kos. This man must answer."

"Yes, I guess you'd better."

He spoke in Greek and made a plan, while I tried to recover my poise.

“Helena.” He smoothed his hand up and down my arm.

“Dimi, you make me forget how old I am. When we make love, I’m twenty again.”

“True love does not age.” This simple statement was a revelation to me. It was simple but I never realized the truth in it. Although we didn’t make love, when we do, I see myself in his eyes, young, perfect and alive with love. Everything else fades in comparison to how this man makes me feel, about him, about myself and this place.

“Dimi, do you hear voices?” I asked.

“Yes, we should go, my Heart,” he said as he kissed my shoulder then my forehead.

“Dimi, when did we want to hit the airport?”

“Arrive? Maybe 2 pm.”

He checked the time on his cell phone.

“Is almost 2pm!”

“Did you let Andreas know we were coming?”

“We talk, everything is okay,” he said.

“I talked to Morgan earlier,” I said.

“Andreas comes from Kos when we talk.”

“You should have told me that you talked to Andreas earlier.”

He kissed my cheek and hovered there, smelling my hair. He nuzzled my neck with a sigh and said,

“My Heart, we must go.”

We drove out of the Valley of the Butterflies at a dangerous speed. I wasn’t comfortable with having to rush the pace. I tried not to say anything, but I was gripping the door with white knuckles.

“Dimi good driver, my Heart, do not fear.”

“I know *you’re* a good driver, but not everyone is, and you’re scaring me!” I almost screamed when we had to swerve on a curve in the road to miss some debris.

“I will drive slower for my Helena. But we must not miss this flight,” he said

and reached my thigh. I put my hand over his, and breathed a sigh of relief.

“Thank you, Dimi. It’s better than killing ourselves on the road. You don’t drive like this very often, do you?”

“Not often,” he said.

“I wish you would *never* drive like that. I can’t have anything happen to you. Now, I’m going to worry every time I know you’re driving somewhere.” I was still waiting for my heart to stop racing.

“Dimi will not worry his heart.”

“I guess I should call Morgan. I’ll have to let them know that we might have to wait for the next flight.”

“Not yet, my Heart, we maybe get plane. Short flight not always on time, or we have to wait for next week flight.” I had forgotten that the winter schedule will often be inconvenient.

Dimitris called the airline to check on our departure. In Greek, Dimitris conversed with the desk clerk to find that the plane hadn’t boarded yet and that there is still another half hour delay. After dodging the in-town traffic we arrived at the airport.

“Good, we have time.”

We went into the small airport to purchase our tickets and get our boarding passes.

The flight was most enjoyable and everyone was quite congenial. Dimitris has a way with people, and has a way of making a stranger feel as though they’ve been old friends.

We called Morgan before we landed, so she could meet us at the airport. We got our suitcase and found a seat in the lobby. We didn’t expect Morgan to arrive for at least twenty minutes. Dimitris sat next to me, either with his arm around my shoulder or holding my hand. I asked him if he had any change, so that I could get something to drink.

As I watched him move across the lobby to the vending machines, I could tell that he was laughing to himself. When he came back, he had a shy smile and his eyes were sparkling, so I had to smile. He looked down, shook his head smiling. When he handed me the cold drink. I asked him,

“What’s so funny, Dimi?”

He sat next to me with his arm around the back of my chair. I took a sip of soda and handed it in offering to him, then I leaned toward him to speak in his ear

“You make me smolder.”

His dark eyes sparkled as he looked at me. He let out a kind of frustrated groan, then kissed my neck.

“Maybe we wait outside for Morgan.”

“Okay, I hope it won’t be too much longer.”

“Yes, if Morgan take too long, your Dimi will want to be bad.”

We stood and grabbed our suitcase, then I took his arm as we walked through the lobby and out the door. There was a bench at the taxi stand where we waited. Just as I was sitting I noticed the back of a man, walking away rather hurriedly. It looked strange to me, and given our previous experiences here in Athens, it set my senses to sharp focus. Was it that little man, who always seems to show up? It was almost like *deja vu*. I didn’t want to tell Dimi about it and have him running off to confront the man.

“Dimi, Morgan wants to show me an antique shop, if I find something for the house would you mind helping me get it home?”

“You no need ask Dimi this. Anything I do for you. Andreas and Dimi bring home anything you want, my Heart.” As he was sitting there, he seemed to be thinking, he was leaning forward with his elbows on his knees, looking down at his feet. I put my hand on his back.

“What is it, Sugar?” I asked.

“I am thinking maybe we take trip to find your antique furnitures. Would you want to do that?”

“That would be nice. Maybe in the Spring or Summer?”

“We take care of other business first, Holidays, court, all worries, then when done, we go, maybe Andreas and Morgana too. We go for fun, maybe you find some things to buy. We see,” he said.

I put my hand on his cheek and kissed him. The next thing I hear is Morgan’s horn honking at us.

“Hi, I thought you were going to call?” Morgan asked.

“I was, but Andreas and Dimi had already talked, but I thought Andreas would have told you we were coming early.”

“He didn’t say anything until he called,” she said.

“What are we going to do today?” I asked.

“We didn’t really plan anything, maybe later when Andreas gets back.”

“We can just stay in, play cards, watch a movie, doesn’t matter, we can just talk,” I said.

“I’m sure these guys want to talk,” Morgan said.

“We talk,” Dimitris said.

“I don’t know why we need to make a plan, we’ll just ‘go with the flow’ and see what comes up,” I said.

“If Dimi is with Helena, I no care what we do,” he answered. I gave him a smooch on the cheek as we approached Andreas’ condo.

“You look a little tired Helen, didn’t you sleep?” Morgan said.

“Travel always makes me tired. I think it’s waiting in less than comfortable chairs then sitting in transport seats, it’s tiring,” I said.

“I know, they don’t want it to be too comfortable, they’d have to go around waking everyone up!” She said.

“That’s true!” I agreed.

“My Heart, suitcase on bed,” he told me then kissed my cheek. “Dimi will go to store, anything for me to get for you?”

“I can’t think of anything. Hurry back.” He gave me a peck on the cheek then left.

“How did the dinner go? Make any connections for your cousin?” Morgan asked.

“They were all nice, and Dimi told me that maybe we should have them all over, let nature take it’s course. John is really nice, well, they all are possibilities.”

“Kristofos has possibilities, I mean he’s an engineer, he just never bothered to take out his license, he said it’s less headaches working for someone else. He likes to dig into the work. When you’re the boss, there’s all that paperwork, you know, permits, employee problems, payroll, taxes, bidding

jobs, overseeing, and on and on. I don't blame him. Andreas does all that and spends ten days straight every month just doing the paperwork, like non-stop. You have to be organized. I can see where a bachelor wouldn't want to do it." She said.

"Do you think he would be interested in meeting someone?" I asked.

"I asked him that on the way home. He says he's always interested in meeting women."

"Huh-oh, what does that mean? Is he a playboy?"

"I don't know, I hardly know him. I've only talked to him a few times." Morgan said.

"I don't know, maybe Dimi is right, let the gods handle it," I said.

"Maybe that's the best way to go, they'll be here for a week, so who knows?" she said.

"It won't be long, either, so I've got to get some furniture and some carpets before everyone gets here. I really should go to the Turkish market for those things. This place we're going to today, do they have any sofas and chairs?"

"I think you'll really like what they have, but we should go tomorrow. Andreas will be tired when he gets home," Morgan said.

"Where is my Helena?"

"I'm here, Babe."

We were tired, and by the time that Andreas got home, he was exhausted. Tomorrow will be a full day for us, so we went to bed early.

The Next Day...

Once we got to town we drove to the east end of Athens. We found several little shops and an interesting looking restaurant. Morgan took us to her prized shop. When we first entered this place, it was a fascination, a treasure waiting to be discovered.

The inside of the shop was bigger than expected from the outside. On first entering, it seemed small and dark with lots of small items. At the back of the room was a staircase to the right that went up and over an archway. Stepping

down through the archway the place opened up to a huge room, high ceilings and sufficient light.

The furniture was in this section of the building. I was in awe of the variety and quality of the antiques. Dimitris enjoyed this adventure, and Morgan had a chance to list what she would need on her next decorator's assignment.

We went wild in this secret source of antiquities. We bought enough to get our home furnished. We spent the entire afternoon, forgoing lunch and enjoying every minute of it. The shopkeeper agreed, for a fee, to do the shipping of the furniture. That saved us many problems. We would have our shipment by the end of five days.

"My Helena, you have cleaned out this man's store, I think we will eat before you buy the building!" He joked.

When we got home we were both excited about the furniture and the adventure we had in digging out other unusual finds together. For once in my life I was not pinching pennies nor have to worry about what I would have to sacrifice to indulge in something else.

Although I didn't completely run amuck, Dimi had just as much fun as I did in choosing the things we would be living with.

Tree Hunt



What you think, we find Christmas tree?" Dimitris asked as he kissed my temple, his arms wrapped around me from behind. "Let's do it tonight, okay? I love looking through Christmas trees on a cold night."

"Okay, we go. Andreas will come to help with chicken house, so Dimi must go to buy some beer. He say Aiden comes to help also."

"Is the weather going to cooperate? I mean, you won't be able to build the chicken coop in the rain, can you?"

"Weather should be okay."

"Is Morgan coming?" I asked.

"I do not know." I decided I would call her. Since Andreas and Aiden were coming anyway, she might as well come too. When she answered the phone, it sounded like I had interrupted an argument. I could hear Andreas' voice in the background. She decided not to come, just to have some time to herself. She needed a break.

As the men worked on the chicken coop, I was called to come out to see how they were doing.

“Wow, this is going up fast! The only thing, and I don’t want to disrupt everything, but the front should be partially closed off for weather protection. I hope there’s enough lumber.”

“We will do, no worry. We buy more lumber.” Dimitris said.

“Sweetheart, maybe you can use the wood you were going to use for the floor. The chickens like dirt floors anyway.” I said. “Who wants a beer?”

“We wait, my heart.”

I went back to the house. I was still placing furniture and some of the other small things we purchased. The lamps were not that old, but they seemed to add to the room, and brighten it up.

When I finished, I got myself a beer. I grabbed three more to take outside. They surely must be thirsty by now.

“Oh, that’s what I need, a nice cold one.” I heard from Aiden as I approached. He came to me to help with the bottles. “Here, let me take a couple of those.” He said looking right at me. Even after a year, I can’t help but find a double meaning when Aiden says anything to me.

“Here you go,” I said as he grabbed two of the bottles.

“Dimi.” I handed him a bottle as I interrupted his pounding of nails.

“Efharisto, Helena,” Dimitris said as he gave me a peck on the cheek.

“Everything is coming together very nicely. How long do you think it’ll take to finish?” I asked.

“We should be finished with the coop in an hour, maybe forty-five minutes for today. Then it will only take another couple of hours for the fence,” Andreas said.

We all sat for a few minutes and drank our beer. We were laughing at Andreas, imitating a chicken. Whatever it was that irritated him at home, didn’t seem to be bothering him now.

“Ah you make the fun, little brother, but we have best eggs in Rhodes,” Dimitris said to him.

“What made you decide to have chickens?” Aiden asked Dimitris.

“My Helena want chickens. We have chickens.”

“I would have never thought about it,” Aiden said.

“We’ll have a small garden too, when we’re home long enough to get a plot

ready," I said.

"Yes, my Helena wants to make us to be farmers," Dimitris said.

"No, not farmers, just appreciate the land and what it can give us," I said with a bit of a defensive tone.

"Yes, we will stay healthy," Dimitris said and tapped his bottle to mine.

"Okay, guys, let's get this done, my Morgana is home alone. I must not neglect my Morgana," Andreas said.

"What can I do?" I asked as I picked up a hammer. Dimitris reached out and took the tool out of my hand.

"No, my Heart, you will maybe get us another beer. We will do work."

"I don't think you want me to help, Dimi, I might just have to be mean to you," I looked at him as I released the hammer to him.

"You don't want to get her angry, Dimi, she looks like she could be dangerous with those little hands," Aiden said with a laugh.

"I'll go get the beer," I said with a sly smile at Dimitris. He acknowledged that he understood the innuendo.

Once the coop was finished, Andreas and Aiden planted the fence posts and stretched the roll of chicken wire, while Dimitris and I measured for the gate and put it together. We had such a great time together, and actually made a gate that fit the opening.

We didn't get the project completed in time for the chickens to roost, but when it's feeding time in the morning, they'll be introduced to their new home.

While we were finishing up, putting hinges on the gate and hanging the nesting boxes, the postal worker honked his horn on the mail truck. Dimitris ran out to collect a delivery. He opened and read the letter before he got back to us.

"What is it, Babe?" I asked. He showed me a registered letter from Zurich.

"What does it say? I can't read without my glasses," I said.

"It says we go to preliminary hearing after New Year. This is mistake. I call lawyer, we only go to Zurich to testify in court, not the hearing." He folded the letter, put it in his pocket and put his arm around my neck. He put his forehead against mine and ran a finger down my cheek to my lips then said,

“We no worry on it now, let us go inside.”

“It looks like you might have to stay tonight, Andreas, you’re both welcome to sleep here instead of onboard,” I offered.

“Oh, thank you, but no, we’ll have to be ready to launch at first light, so we’ll stay there,” he said.

“We must clean ourselves up, I take all to dinner, before you head to your beds,” Dimitris announced.

We went to a casual little place that was in the middle of Old Rhodes. *Kuprianos* was as much a neighborhood pub as it was a tourist spot. It was amongst the tile roofed buildings and narrow winding streets. I would never be able to find it again, amongst the maze of old Rhodes.

Long before entering, I could smell the aroma of food from down the block. The cuisine was a mixture of Greek, Italian, Albanian, Turkish and Bulgarian dishes. I thought I saw soy sauce on one of the tables, which was not surprising. We had a large pitcher of beer which came to our table in a huge crockery stein type vessel. I couldn’t put my finger on exactly what the origin or the tradition of this heavy utilitarian ewer was, but it’s impact was unmistakable.

This was such an enjoyable evening. We laughed and there was none of the awkwardness that usually comes up when Aiden is present. The group of ladies who were seated at a nearby table had placed themselves noticeably in a position that allowed them a good view of the men, especially when one of them would excuse himself to the men’s room. I enjoyed watching them, watching the men.

There was one woman who was so obvious in her attention grasping behavior, especially whenever Andreas would walk by. Andreas was a gentleman, but didn’t bat an eye at her aggression.

After we left the pub, we came outside to a crisp breezy evening. Everything seemed so clear and crystalline. The lights that shown on the street and from windows along the row of buildings seemed like diamonds, sparkling in the night.

“I wish to take my Helena to find a Christmas tree. Would you like to come also, or go to Athena?” Dimitris asked as we walked to our car.

“I’d like to see some Christmas trees. It’ll remind me of home,” Aiden said.

“Yes, let’s go, I wish Morgana would have come, she would enjoy this,” Andreas said.

When we pulled up to the tree lot, we saw the Christmas lights strung around the perimeter of the trees and over an arch shaped entrance to the fenced-in trees. Aiden and Andreas got out of the car and proceeded into the trees. Dimitris took my hand, kissed it and said,

“My Heart, we have wonderful day, yes? Now we have this. This has been most happy year for this man.” He kissed me gently and then we went into the trees, with his arm at my waist.

The cold air was whipping through the trees in this open area of the outskirts of the city. I huddled against my husband, letting his body block the wind from my cold face.

The perfume of fresh cut trees was intoxicating. They weren’t quite the smell of the pine trees we had in America, but it was reminiscent of other Christmas tree adventures. We had such a wonderful day, and now this glorious night.

It was getting so cold, and I was tired so we put our tag on a tree that we would pick up tomorrow, then headed to the docks to drop off Andreas and Aiden.

When we got back home the dogs were hungry, the house was cold and I was freezing. Dimitris went to feed the dogs as I turned on the heat and lights. Now, when I come into a room, I see the antique furniture and decorative things that seem to make this a more livable place. It seemed so bleak before, and it was hard to be comfortable with such cold starkness.

“Ah, better.” Dimitris said as the fire in the hearth caught hold. I came quickly to his side to warm my hands.

“Thank goodness we have a fireplace!” I said as I warmed my hands. Dimitris stood behind me, wrapping his arms around me and kissing my cheek.

“This has been wonderful day,” he said.

Once in a Lifetime



Rena and I had a chance to get together, to do some last minute shopping. Everything was ready for the celebration and although we will have a dozen or so guests from my family, it won't be as many as I had hoped. It might be pretty hectic with our guests in addition to the Patakinis clan, but Rena and Stefano were looking forward to more family.

After my shower, as I was dressing, Dimitris came in and sat on the bed.

"My Heart, Karen call, flight was delayed, they land at 1:30 pm instead of 10:30 am," he said.

"That will give us more time to be sure we're ready," I said as I brushed out my wet hair.

"We *are* ready. Nothing to check, all is ready for family," he reassured. I went to Dimitris and stood in front of him, then put my hands on his shoulders.

"Have I told you how much I love you? This is a wonderful thing you're doing for me, and everyday you make me see what a lucky woman I am," I kissed him long and with unquestionable intent. I pushed him back on the bed and laid on top of him. It didn't take much encouragement to get the response I was after.

He wove his fingers into my wet hair taking it away from my face. Having

my dripping hair in his face seemed to enliven him, give him more fervor like going from the shade into the light. He pulled my kimono off of my shoulders, kissed me there and continued up to my ear. When he rolled me over, he continued making love to me. With Dimitris, it's good, special, and he always makes me feel special. He can't be compared to anyone else in my life.

It's not a matter of comparison when my thoughts go back to how my previous life was, and wasn't. I was never, even in the throws of passion, treated as well and as precious as with this man. It's not only the great sex, this man is passionate in so many ways. He makes it his mission to shower me with affection at every chance. To me, it has been like going from starvation to abundance.

So many men, I'm afraid to say, think that being "Macho" means that to show affection in any way is effeminate, unless it's the prelude to sex. Even then, it's the end goal that they are after, more than the expression of love. Given that, it's surprising that women put up with it and accept it, being made to think *that* is the way it is. I was among this group of women. What a fool I had been, for so many years, maybe since the beginning of my journey into adulthood. In our modern times, and how the roles of women of the 21st century had changed from the past, it's surprising that *here*, this stronghold of male virility has held on to a way of life or maybe a way of thinking that holds in great esteem, the woman.

We were looking forward to a very happy Christmas. We were in a home where we are comfortable, our families were going to be around us and we had no problems that were hovering over us. Things were finally starting to run smoothly in our life on Rhodes.

"Sugar, will everyone fit in the land barge, or will we need to take both cars?"

"We hire airport van, all will ride from there," he said.

"You already hired a van?"

"Yes, I call before, they pick up at curb."

This man thinks of everything. I know that after the long flight they all would want to rest, but Rena wanted to have a dinner for them, before all of

the Patakinis relations come in.

“Does the house look okay? Did we put the chickens in the coop? Did we put the Champagne on ice?” I asked, then looked at Dimitris. He came up to me, then took my hair clip out of my hair. He put his arms around me and said,

“Helena, everything is fine. You must calm down. House is fine, chickens fine, Dimi fine. You are beautiful and calm, yes?”

“I can’t help it, I’m a nervous wreck. I’ll try to calm myself, but I get a little crazy when I’m excited, so, yes, I’ll try to relax,” I said.

“Good, my Heart, we are ready to go?”

I took a deep breath.

“Sweetie, could you call the airport, see if the flight is going to come in around 1:30 pm?”

“Yes, I call.”

While he was on the telephone, I looked over the house, the Christmas tree and the downstairs bedrooms. A quick peek reassured me that I hadn’t forgotten anything.

“Flight will land in 20 minutes, my Heart, we must go now to airport.”

Dimitris said with a hint of strained patience.

“Let’s go.”

We pulled into the parking area of Diagoras airport and saw the transport van waiting. We were told on the phone that they would arrive at gate 6, but there were no desk clerks or attendants to ask to be sure.

We knew the major airline names, but the charter would not use the commercial airline gate, so I was very apprehensive. Dimitris asked at another airline desk and was told that we could wait outside the baggage claim area, as most passengers would go that way after landing.

When we entered the area outside the luggage area, I saw the driver of the van. Dimitris approached him, then asked the gentleman to follow us back to the house.

It always seems like a long wait when waiting for loved ones to leave the plane, and this time was no different.

“Helena, come, sit.” Dimitris motioned to the chairs that lined the wall. I tried sitting but I couldn’t. I couldn’t see the planes, I couldn’t see anything from sitting back there.

“Honey, I can’t sit.” I got up to stand by the door. The first few passengers to come in were from Delta Airlines and they passed by us quickly. Then I saw some familiar faces. First my sister and cousin Gracie, my old friend Nina and her brother Greg, Jim and his daughter Suzi, and my dad. I was so overwhelmed to see these faces after so long. I hadn’t seen Nina in almost twenty years, and her brother even longer. Jim was a close friend of Mark and myself, and he was a site for sore eyes.

We had a quick emotional reunion. I introduced Dimitris en mass, but I’ll have to introduce him to each one individually later.

“Grab your luggage, we have a van and our car. We can fit four in our car with luggage, so whoever wants to come with us, we’re parked over here.”

We got everyone safely to our house. Everyone was talking and wanting to tell us about the flight. Dimitris carried two or three suitcases to the front door, and unlocked the door for our entrance. He stepped in to turn on the lights, then came back out to help with more of the bags.

“Come on in, just put your bags in by the wall, we’ll get them later,” I said.

Everyone came inside, I walked the last few steps with my dad.

“How are you doing, Dad? Was the flight okay?” I asked.

“I think I slept most of the time,” he said.

I grabbed Dimitris as he closed the door, putting my arms around him and giving him a big hug.

“Thank you, Dimi. S’agapo.”

“S’agapo,” he said and kissed my forehead.

“Will you build a fire, my love?” I asked.

“Yes, my Heart,” he said, kissed my temple and went to the fireplace.

We spread the table with meyedes, then Dimitris made a Greek dish that I wasn’t familiar with, but it was one of his quick one-dish meals that was quite good with crusty bread. That, along with all of the side dishes that made up

the meyedes, there was a lot of food laid out in a matter of minutes.

One by one our guests retreated to their rooms and once again the house was quiet.

“Are you happy? All is okay, yes?” Dimitris asked.

“Better than okay. Let me help you clean up this mess.” I started picking up the dishes from the table. Once the kitchen was in order we headed for the bedroom.

“Father was very tired. Has he been well?” Dimitris asked.

“He always says he’s fine, but I worry about him. I’ll have to ask my sister when I have a chance,” I said.

“What do you plan for tomorrow?” Dimitris asked.

“I didn’t want to do too much, I thought we’d stay close to home, maybe go to the Grand Masters Palace. They’ll still be tired, so I don’t want to push too much on them the first day.”

“What you say I take all men on Athena in two days, if weather good? Give time for ‘girl talk?’” I had to smile at the suggestion, it was such a sweet and thoughtful offer.

“That would be nice, and it will give you a chance to get to know Greg and Jim, my dad doesn’t know them well either. So that would be good.”

“So, we do that,” he said. “Then next day we go Karpathos for Christmas eve. Will we see the procession or Midnight Mass?” He asked.

“I don’t know, we’ll see,” I yawned as I cuddled with him. “Sweetie, did you have a chance to call about the court thing?”

“Yes, they were to call back, lawyer will let us know,” he said. “Also, lawyer want to know if you make will, who you designate as beneficiary. You do that?”

“I don’t think all of our guests are particularly religious, so I guess we’ll pass on going to Mass,” I said.

“You will talk to lawyer on beneficiary?” He held my face to look into his eyes, so I could not avoid the question again. “You must do, Helena.”

“Do we have to talk about this?” I asked.

“Yes, my Heart, must not put off,” he insisted.

“Yes, yes, I’ll see what I can do, but I don’t understand all of the things that

you've been doing, all the investments and patents. I want to understand what it is that I'm dealing with. You wouldn't want me to just let a stranger write something up and I'll sign it, not knowing what I'm doing, would you?" I asked.

"You are right, Helena, you are right. Dimi should take time to explain. We do that after Christmas holidays. We put off no more!"

We were just about asleep when my cell phone rang.

"What is that?" I said, even though I knew. "Who would call now?"

"Let ring, answer call in morning," Dimitris said.

"I'd better answer it, it might be someone trying to contact one of our guests," I found my cell phone in the living room.

"Hello?"

"I am so sorry to disturb you so late."

"Who is this, please?" I said.

"This is Ahmed."

I felt my heart drop through the floor. I know that he had nothing to do with what happened to us, but the fact that we were not helped right away out of our hell, made me full of anxiety.

"I wanted to let you know that a group of men are arriving in Rhodes with a man called Vanderbur, Klaus Vanderbur. Be aware of this."

"What does this mean?" I asked.

"He does not come out of hiding for long, and not very often. He will then disappear again. He doesn't expose himself unless there is reason. I do not know the reason, but you must be on your guard. Be careful, do not expose yourself to harm. I thought you should know, and be aware of his presence, he is not here for nothing."

"Thank you for the warning."

"I feel I owe you this, there is much to make up for."

"Mr. Sahj, what are you doing Christmas eve?" I asked.

"I have a day of rest, amongst many days of rest."

"Would you like to join us in celebrating the Holiday? You are more than

welcome, and I hate to see you by yourself. Maybe we could talk.”

“Thank you, Helena, I will look forward to it.”

I gave the time and location of where to meet us on Karpathos. This was going to be an unusual celebration, to say the least. When I came back to bed, Dimitris was asleep. I got into bed quietly and was asleep in a few minutes.

It seemed that I had just gotten into bed and then it was time to get up. Dimitris had his arm around me as we slept. His face almost next to mine, I could feel his breath on my neck. It's times like this when I think of our first days in Rhodes, how he rescued Morgan and me in the middle of the night. How sweet he has always been, even before I knew him. I would have never dreamed that the swinging mirror in the little taxi he drove would lead me here.

I was looking at this angel, his dark thick hair, he looked so sweet. We had to get up and I hated to wake him.

I tried to raise myself up a little. Dimitris rolled a little more to his side. I leaned over him and kissed him on the neck. His arm came up my back and he said,

“Kalimera.” In a sleepy voice.

“I hated to wake you,” I said.

“Is it late?”

“We've got guests, we should be up,” I said as I started to get up. His arm came around me and held me down.

“We stay here, talk. Dimi fall asleep last night, not even to say ‘good night’ to my bride.” He had his head on my shoulder with his arm across me. His thumb was rubbing against my rib as he talked. “Will we want to eat at home, I cook?...or we take all out to eat?”

“I don't know, we'll probably be out most of the day, maybe we should eat out.”

“You are smelling too good this morning, Helena. I may want to be bad,” he cooed.

“If you want to be bad, I might let you be a little bad now, but you'll have to be better later.” He looked up at me with a sparkle in his eyes. He reached

his hand to my face and slowly kissed me, more and more sensuously, but slow and purposeful. He sighed a sensual sound. Then he kissed me as he slowly progressed making my heart race and senses come alive. It was slow and beautiful and perhaps the beginning of things to come later.

He was so sweet, and gentle and I wanted to stay like this, loving and perfect. We had a houseful of people waiting for us, and this thought stayed with me.

Dimitris held me in his arms until our hearts stopped racing. He kissed my temple and said,

“Breakfast. We should prepare breakfast my love.” I knew he was right, but I dreaded the separation and having to share him today.

“Kalimera, Father, how did you sleep?” Dimitris greeted my dad with a pat on the back.

“Good, slept like a baby. This ocean air is so relaxing,” he said.

“Good morning, Dad, how are you feeling?” I asked as I gave him a good morning kiss.

“I feel great! I could use some coffee,” he said.

“I could use some too,” I agreed. “I guess everyone else is having a slow start. Sometimes it takes a few days to catch up with the time difference.”

Dimitris poured us a cup of coffee and started to take things out in preparation for breakfast.

My dad put his arm around my shoulder and said,

“You look happy. Is everything going okay?”

“Everything is wonderful, Dad. I could only be happier if you would live here,” I said.

“What about this court case? Any word on that?”

“The lawyer is working on it, we hope we won’t have to go until we’re officially called to testify. It might not be for a long time yet, but whenever they want, they can demand that we are present for the proceedings.”

“Helen?” I heard someone call. “Helen are you in there?”

“In the kitchen,” I answered.

“The coffee smells so good, I’ll bet Dimi made it!” Karen guessed.

“Yes, Dimi made the coffee,” I confirmed.

“But my Helena makes excellent coffee.” Dimitris said from the stove.

“Where is everyone?” The voices were coming from the dining room.

Greg and Jim with Nina and Suzi came into the kitchen. Within a few minutes everyone was either in the kitchen or dining room.

“I will fix breakfast,” Dimitris announced.

“Does anyone want to go with me out to collect some eggs?” I asked.

“I didn’t know you had chickens. I thought that rooster was somewhere down the road!” Gracie commented.

“Well, come on, I’ve got to get the eggs,” I said to anyone interested in the tour. “So, how are you Gracie? I’m so glad you could come,” I said.

“I’m getting by okay. The job is okay, they agreed to let me take some sick leave with my accumulated vacation time, so I was able to get two weeks.”

“Ah, wait until you see the hunks we want you to meet. You might want to use that extra week here in Rhodes,” I said.

“You’ll love it here Gracie, the men are really gorgeous!” Karen said.

“You wouldn’t have an extra one for me would you?” Nina asked.

“I’ll tell you all the plan, we are going to Karpathos for Christmas Eve, and there are going to be some very nice, sweet men that we have invited, mainly to meet a single woman, but also because otherwise they would be alone on the Holiday. So, you all will meet them, just don’t fight over them!” I laughed.

I opened the chicken coop door and went into check the boxes for eggs. We had a good beginning with six eggs out of ten hens.

I handed the eggs to Nina, and grabbed the sack of feed. Inside a small coffee can dipped into the ground corn feed. I threw a couple of handfuls on the ground, then poured the rest into a trough. I refreshed the water and the chickens were set for the day.

“Gee, these eggs are all different! What are the small greenish looking ones?” Nina asked.

“Those are Guinea hen eggs, the huge brown ones are Rhode Island Reds, the medium light brown are Plymouth Rock hens, and the off white ones with the brown freckles are from the small wiry looking hens, they remind me of Road Runners. Our leghorns aren’t laying for some reason.”

“What do they taste like?” She asked. “Say, who is that man down there? Is

he a neighbor? He keeps looking up here.”

I didn't recognize him, but it alarmed me. When we went back to the house, I told Dimi about it, quietly. I didn't want to upset everyone.

“We do not worry on this, Helena, but we are very careful. We must not upset father.”

“This is such a beautiful place, Helen, what do your payments run on something like this?” Gracie asked.

“There are no payments, just insurance, and it's not bad,” I said. My mind was thinking about the stranger by the fence, and I was answering her in auto-mode.

“No payments? Was it an inheritance?” Her tone of voice woke me.

“What?”

“Was it an inheritance?” She repeated.

“No, we left our house in Kefalonia. We liked Rhodes so much, and it is where we met, so Dimi got us this. He had his brothers help him restore it. It was a Nazi headquarters in WWII.”

“Wow, how do you know?” She asked. She was a bit on the skeptical side.

“It had been abandoned. The locals are pretty superstitious about luck, so they wouldn't come near this place after the Nazis left.”

“How big is this property? It looks like it goes down to the street,” she said.

“I'm not sure of the size, but it does go down and around the hill at the street, then in the back it goes another half acre, I'm guessing at that, but it goes back to the tree line.” I said.

“You've got your privacy up here. It's nice and quiet!” Gracie commented.

“I'd better get these eggs into Dimi.”

My cousin and I came back into the house, while the others scouted out the property.

“Here are a half a dozen eggs, Sweetie, not enough, I'm afraid.” He gently took the eggs from my hands then leaned over to kiss me under my ear and said,

“Thank you, my Heart.”

I pulled Dimi aside and asked,

“Should we call off the dinner? Tell the men we have to cancel?”

“We have commitment, my Heart. All will have good time, but we watch for those men. I will tell the brothers. All will be okay. Now, see to our guests.”

Gracie and I went into the living room where I sat her down to tell her about the men I want to introduce to her.

“Okay, we thought that we would have the single men come on Christmas eve to the celebration so that it’s not so awkward. You’ll have a chance to talk and mingle, no pressure. Everyone will be in a festive mood, and if you don’t click with one of the men, maybe one of the others will be a better pick for you.”

“Who are these men? Tell me something about them,” she said. She had a bit of a sarcastic tone to her voice.

“I’m not going to push you into meeting any of them if you’re not interested, it’s up to you. They’re going to be there, and a few of the other guests might be looking for someone. These men are all good men. They’ve either become widowed or divorced. They all have good friendly personalities and good jobs. They aren’t bums.”

“I don’t suppose Dimitris has a single brother?” She asked.

“Well, he does, but he’s somewhat younger and a bit of a Romeo. He may be there too, but I have to warn you, he’s full of charm and damn good looking, but like I say, he’s a Romeo.”

“Too bad,” she said. “So, which of the men want to meet someone? By the way, how many are coming?”

“As far as I know, three men who *want* to meet a lady are going to be there,” I said.

“They want to meet a lady? Did you tell them anything about me?” She asked.

“We only asked if they’d be interested in meeting a single lady in our age group. They said they are interested. The celebration will have lots of people coming and going so it will be relaxed, you won’t feel like you’re committed to make small talk.”

“I’m getting nervous, but it sounds good. Tell me about them.”

“I don’t know too much about John, but he’s a colleague of Stefano, Dimis’ brother. We’ll be at his house, by the way. This man’s name is John Nicosia. He got his degree in Anthropology and Archeology. He works with Stefano on these ancient dig sites. It’s fascinating work. He’s very nice and personable, I think you’ll like him.

“Then there’s Gregorio. He’s a sweetheart. Morgan and I nicknamed him Captain Teddy Bear. He brought us to Rhodes when we got stranded in Athens. He’s got his own fishing boat, and he’s really very good looking, you have to look beyond the sun tan, he’s got gorgeous blue-green eyes.”

“Then there’s Kristofos, a friend of Andreas, Morgan’s fiancée. Andreas is Dimi’s younger brother. Kristofos is a contractor and works with Andreas. He makes pretty good money, and he is very nice. Actually, they’re all very nice or I wouldn’t have you meet them.”

“They sound good. What do they look like, all beer bellies?” She kidded.

“I know, if they’re that great, what’s wrong with them, right?”

“Yeah.”

“Well, Gregorio was widowed and I’m not saying he’s been celibate, but he just raised his kids, worked and got into fishing. He travels a lot in the islands, and I don’t think many women want to go from port to port, or maybe worry about a husband who’s at sea a good part of the time. But, I’ll tell ya, if you find he’s the right man, you could possibly change that. These men put great stock in finding the “one woman”, and nothing will keep them from keeping that woman.”

“What are you saying? These men are slaves to their wives?” She asked, trying to comprehend.

“What’s this I’m hearing?” Nina came in during our conversation, and got curious.

“I was telling my cousin how highly the Greek men, at least the one’s I know, regard their women. If they find their true love, there’s nothing they wouldn’t do for her.”

“I’ve noticed how Dimi is with you, I can tell he really loves you. Most men I’ve ever known don’t show affection in public, like it makes them a “wuss,” Nina quipped.

“Oh, I know,” I agreed. “If they only knew how much more appealing they are when they show affection.”

“Really!” She agreed. “Does Dimi do the cooking very often, he seems to be enjoying himself?”

“He does most all of it. I don’t believe he really wants me to cook. He loves it, and he’s good at it, so, I think it’s great. I’ve never had a real passion for cooking so it works out really well.”

“Nina, where’s Peter? Didn’t he want to come or is he working?”

“I don’t know what he’s doing. We separated over six months ago.” She said as a matter- of-fact.

“I wish you would have written.”

“I did, a year ago and never heard from you, so...!”

“Gee, I’m sorry, I know I’ve been terrible at keeping in contact. This last year has been something else. I only just got some mail from last year.”

“Good postal system!” She laughed. “Yeah, we were fighting, so he got involved in some internet romance thing. After we were separated a month or so, I found out that he was listed on a singles site, and bar hopping with someone from his work. He was getting weird years before that, and I just kept quiet about it, until I couldn’t take it anymore,” Nina confessed.

“I’m sorry that I wasn’t there for you, Nina,” I said.

“I’m so glad that you got a hold of me, because I was getting ready to move again, and I might have lost contact with you.”

“Have you filed for divorce?” I asked.

“I filed, but I haven’t pursued it. I start to second guess my decision then procrastinate.”

“Well, you’ll get it sorted out and things will start looking up. You might even find a nice man that will appreciate you,” I said.

“Excuse me, I didn’t want to interrupt,” Jim said.

“Jim, you’ve all met, I gather? How’ve you been? It’s been ages. I’m glad you were able to come. What can I get for you?” I said as I gave him a hug.

“I was wondering if I might use your phone?”

“Sure, help yourself. There’s an extension in the kitchen and in the dining room.”

“Thanks.”

“Now, there goes an eligible man, ladies.”

“My Heart?” Dimi spoke from the doorway.

“Excuse me a second, this one is mine!” I said to the ladies.

“Should we also have French Toast? I make omelets and fry potatoes but maybe French Toast for extra?” He asked with such a serious face. I had to smile, and reassure his efforts.

“Sweetie, you have done so wonderfully, but yes, French Toast would be great. I love French Toast,” I said. He kissed my cheek and said,

“Then for my Helena we will have the French Toast.”

“I’ll set the table, Sugar,” I said.

Once we all sat at the dining room table, the food disappeared quickly. Everyone raved about what a great cook Dimitris was and how lucky to have a man who cooks so well.

Everyone was looking forward to seeing the island and some of the major sites. The Old Rhodes walled city was one of the important sites along with the Grand Masters Palace.

We piled into the ‘land barge’ and one of our bachelors drove my car, following us down the hill into town. The traffic was quite thick on our main route, so instead of taking the coast road we had to go through some of the inside streets and alleys to bypass the congestion. En route to the Masters Palace, we went by the crumbling pink house of our mysterious photo. The site of it was like a hypnotic trance that drew me in. As I turned my head when we passed it, Dimitris took my hand. It brought me back to the present. I looked at Dimitris as he looked at me with his reassuring eyes.

We parked outside the gate then we all went inside for a tour. Everyone was the ‘typical tourist,’ the ooo’s and ahh’s and taking pictures ensued. Dimitris held me back to give us a little distance from the rest. When we turned a corner past the hidden doorway of another blocked aisle, Dimitris pulled me into the shadow. He began to smother me in kisses, his lips on my neck sending me into a heightened state of awareness. He was speaking into my ear in his native tongue and forcing his hand down into my jeans.

“Dimi, what are you doing?” I whispered.

“My Helena, Helena ...”

“Dimi, stop, someone’s coming,” I said out of sheer protection from embarrassment.

“You have been away from Dimi,” he said as he pressed his body against mine and continued kissing me.

“I’ve been here, Dimi,” I said in a low voice.

“I will keep you with Dimi, even if you with your girls day,” he said as he looked into my eyes.

“That’s not for a few more days.” We started to slowly walk, with our arms around each other, toward the rest of the group, who were quite a ways ahead of us.

“Helena, you no understand, I see you there, talk with friends and Dimi think ‘this woman is mine, she is for me alone.’ Then this man want to take you away, to make love and look in eyes, smell your hair. This life too short to waste time apart,” he said as we walked, his lips against the side of my forehead.

“You’re going to take the men somewhere, when? Christmas day, or the 26th?” I asked.

“I am thinking I let Stefano do, I stay with my Helena.” I looked at his eyes and I thought he might be serious.

“Ha, you’re funny, Dimi. You’re just teasing me now,” I said.

“Not to tease.” He swooped around in front of me and held me by the shoulders. “My Helena, you will not go with friends to forget Dimi?”

I looked at his troubled eyes and wondered. I stroked his cheek and looked at those beautiful sad eyes.

“Where did this come from? What is it, Sweetie?”

“My Heart, you laugh about old times with friends, before you know Dimi. I think, maybe you happier then, maybe you wish you go back, be with friends, and laugh.”

I took this big man by the hand, turned and led him out the exit, into the sunshine. We sat on a bench outside the Museum. I looked into his sweet, worried face.

“You listen to me Mr. Patakinis. I was happy to see my old friends and family, but I’m more happy to be here with you than anywhere else. There is no happiness for me without you. I don’t want to hear you questioning my love for you. Even if you are joking, it’s not funny.” I was standing in front of him. My hands on his cheeks, I kissed him sensuously. With his hands at my waist he held me and I held his head to my chest. “Do you understand Dimi?”

“Yes, my Heart. I am sorry. Maybe Dimi feel jealous of old times. It was time when we were not one, I no like,” he said.

“If I had you then, my life would have been so happy. But I have you now, and I couldn’t be happier. Now, kiss me!” He stood and kissed me so sweetly.

“I have shame, my Heart. I no mean to make you angry. Dimi just have too much love, you do this to this man.”

I put my arm around him and said

“You know, I have no one else in my heart, just a man called Dimitris Patakinis. There is no more room in here for anyone else.” I put my hand on my heart. He had a sweet smile and his worried eyes were more at ease. “Come on, Sweetie, let’s catch up with our friends.”

“Helena, your Dimi must learn a thing.”

“What is that, Sugar?”

“Dimi must learn that only my Helena know how to keep friend for so many years. Not easy to do these days, and Dimi must not interfere,” he said.

“Do you think Angelo will come for the celebration? I was thinking maybe Suzi would enjoy someone close to her age.” He looked at me for a few seconds, then said,

“It is possible, my Heart. Can I tell my Helena a thing?”

“Sure.”

“Men talk while cooking, Greg say he had crush on my Heart, long time ago. Then Jim say he too, had feelings. You see? You do not know these things, this why Dimi get crazy.”

“Sugar, you are crazy anyway,” I laughed.

He laughed and moved his arm up around my neck and gave me a big smooch on my cheek.

“Dimi, I never realized how sensitive you are. These things, they really

bother you?" I asked.

"Not bother, but think on," he confessed.

"What you did, bringing these people here, you didn't have to do that, and I know that you did it to make me happy. It's a wonderful thing you've done. I don't deserve to have someone like you love me this much."

We stopped in the middle of the museums main hall and Dimitris wrapped his arms around me and held me tightly. With my forehead resting against his neck he said

"Your Dimi have such love for his Helena. Maybe I get too, too __what I say? __ too holding, uh__"

"Possessive?"

"Yes! Dimi too possessive. You give all to Dimi, this I know. Sometimes Dimi want all and more, for always. What will you do with this man, Helena?" He looked at me with those beautiful dark eyes.

"Well, I'm just going to have to love you more," I said, then he kissed me with such passion, that I had to catch my breath, my heart was beating out of my chest.

"Ahem." We heard coming from behind Dimitris.

"Karen, did you finish the tour? What do you think?" I asked.

"There's more people watching you than taking the tour!" she said.

"Oops!" I said with a grin.

"My Heart will not let this man take hands off!" We started laughing, hoping to cover our embarrassment.

"Have you ever seen such a place as this? It's no wonder that you're in Paradise here," Karen said.

"Where's Dad?" I asked.

"He's coming, he's with Jim and Greg. Nina is showing Suzi something, I'm not sure exactly where they are, they were behind me," she said.

"I'd like to keep everyone together."

"What's wrong? Is it them?"

"I just don't want to take a chance losing anyone."

Dimi pulled me aside,

"We must not frighten family, my Heart."

We drove through New Rhodes City, winding our way down narrow streets and then back toward our home to the South of the city congestion. At a special time, before the sun set we parked the car on a bluff, where we could see the ocean. Everyone got out of the car as we stood in the breeze to watch the sunset. The sky turned so many colors of red, yellow and orange before the sun dipped beyond the horizon. It was the most vivid colorful event, one that we hope they'll always remember.

As we drove toward home, I wondered about dinner.

"What should we do for dinner, my love?" He gave me a look, with that twinkle in his eyes and he laid his hand on my thigh.

"There is the Royal Palace Hotel for fancy or Nikos or fish place on beach."

I asked my dad, Karen and Gracie who rode with us, what they wanted to eat and described the many choices.

Everyone agreed that after so much walking and having the sun and wind in their faces most of the day, that a casual pub meal where it was relaxing just to sit and eat, would be ideal.

We went to Nikos Taverna and had the owner pull the tables together for our group. Everyone ordered what they wanted and had some beer with the meal. Everyone was pretty tired and although the conversation never died, it was a little more refined and less boisterous than we had been. The sea air had made everyone quite tired.

"This is the perfect place to end our trek for the day. We can get to bed a little early tonight, and tomorrow we'll be going to Karpathos, to Dimitris' brother's home. We'll celebrate the Holiday, and there will be the unexpected and expected neighbors and we'll plan on spending a few nights there. In the afternoon on Christmas, if the weather holds, we'll take the Athena out to sea for some island hopping, or we can make other plans."

"All I can think of is going to bed. I can't believe how tired I am," Karen yawned.

"What are we supposed to wear to the celebration?" Gracie asked.

"I think we should dress. What ever nice clothes you've brought. And ladies, the single men will be there, so do your best."

I didn't want to be giving speeches, but everyone was in close proximity

and we were all tired.

“Yes, we must rest for tomorrow, so we’ll call it an early night.”

By the time we got home the clouds descended on us. It threatened one of those storms that come in, do their mean deeds and leave quickly, like a thief in the night.

The fireplace was burning the most aromatic wood for some quiet relaxing before bed. The clouds brought with them a cold chill, and although we were warm and comfortable, the dampness in the air made us realize that it is winter, and not every day will be as beautiful as those we’ve had.

Dimitris brought out the Ouzo and glasses. “Before bed, nice Ouzo to relax and warm.” He poured out a dozen shot glasses of the crystalline potion. Everyone grabbed a glass except Suzi. “We toast to good health and good friends.”

Everyone took their cue to retreat to their rooms. Dimitris and I gathered the glasses and decanter of Ouzo.

“I will do, my Heart, you go to bed. Dimi will be there soon,” he said as he ran the water to wash the glasses.

By the time Dimitris cleaned the kitchen and came to bed, I was already asleep. I didn’t feel him getting into bed or put his arm across me as he cuddled in.

It seemed like I had only just closed my eyes, when a deep rumbling could be heard. I tried not to wake completely. Then the thunder and lightning got fierce and rapid in it’s repetitions. When the thunder hit the house like a bomb, making the windows shake, I couldn’t help but scream. It was an involuntary reflex that escaped from within.

Dimitris chuckled a little and tried to comfort me.

“Will be gone soon, my Helena,” he began kissing me. The electric atmosphere set the senses on fire and like an electrical conductor, we were vibrating and sensitive.

Making love during an electrical storm seemed to heighten our senses, to intensify the glory of the dance. We were on fire, every touch, every whisper was an aphrodisiac that heightened the pleasure and brought a new level of intensity to our union.

The explosive charges that were all around us, the flashing and clapping, so violent that when we reached the apex it was a celebration of the mystery of life, a new appreciation of the gift we give to each other.

When we became one light, our strength exhausted, we clung to each other in blissful rest. The storm was unrelenting. Winds that would toss debris from the trees against the house insured no sleep for us. I could hear voices in the living room, where our guests gathered in mutual apprehension.

"Maybe we should get up, make some hot chocolate or something," I said.

"Do you not get these storms in California?"

"Never like this. We rarely get thunderstorms where I'm from," I said.

"Then yes, we will get up, and calm our guests," he said, and slipped back into his clothes. I wasn't going to get dressed, and I knew that Dimitris wouldn't approve of me not doing so. I put on a pair of flannel pajamas with my kimono over them. Fully covered and warm, I came out to the living room.

"Can't sleep, eh?" I joked as I entered the room. Dimitris was in the kitchen making some hot chocolate, so I asked Greg if he'd make a fire for us.

"Holy cow! Are the storms always this bad? I've never been in one like this!" Suzi said with a scream and curled herself up on the sofa.

"This is a pretty bad one, they don't usually go on for long. This is unusual," I said.

"My god, it's shaking the house!" Jim commented.

"We have hot chocolate for all," Dimitris announced. The cups were laid out on the dining room table along with some cookies that Rena had made.

"Is this storm going to ruin the party?" Nina asked as she sipped her hot drink.

"No, but if it continues like this, it may disrupt transportation between the islands." I said. "Dimi, Sweetie, will Andreas try to bring the Athena in with this storm?"

"No, not to take chance, Gregorio no come if weather not improve," he added.

We all could feel the storm was beginning to move on, subside in its violence.

It was still raining, but the worst of it seemed to have passed. We all went back to bed to try to get some sleep. With a big event coming the next day, we needed our rest. The hot chocolate was soothing and warm, and it helped us to relax. Sleep wasn't an impossibility now.

Holidays in Karpathos



The one thing that we didn't need was to be aroused by the telephone the first thing in the morning. Dimitris answered in a state of grogginess.

"Is Rena, for you," he said as he handed me the phone.

"Hi Rena," I barely said.

"Was that some kind of storm?" She chirped. "I was wondering what time you will get here? With the storm damage, everything is a mess here."

"What happened?" I asked.

"We had a couple of trees take some damage, and the Eucalyptus at the end of the driveway had a big branch fall, almost hitting the station wagon." She sounded almost out of breath. "We've *never* had weather like this, in all the years I've been here, I've never seen it get this bad!"

"Well, we're going to get a couple hours of sleep. When we get up we'll see, we have to call Andreas and Gregorio, since they come by boat. I don't know when we'll actually be there."

"How many are you?"

"I think eleven, counting Dimi and I." As Rena rattled on, I almost went back to sleep. "I'll call you before we leave, bye for now."

We settled back into our cozy bed, as I fit myself behind Dimitris, my arm over him and my head lay on the pillow next to his. He held my hand against his chest, as we slipped back to sleep.

“Dimi? Sweetie?” I didn’t want to wake him, but everyone else had risen and I could smell something cooking. “Honey, I smell something cooking.”

“What? What you say?” He asked.

“We’d better get up. It’s 10:30 a.m.”

Dimitris turned and took my wrist. He pulled me to him and said

“We stay here for few minutes.” I laid my head on his shoulder as his arm went around me.

“I will tell you a thing,” he said.

“Okay.”

“I love to make love to my Heart in storm. We are special connection to each other, so huge, uh, enormous in my Heart. Cannot explain.”

“I know, there are no words to describe what we have.”

“You see, this I love on you. You know, without Dimi have to say. Is special thing. We understand, you and I, without words, and will not be jealous. No one will have this, what we have for each other.”

“I know, Dimi. The gods were generous and good to us,” I said. I realized that I am talking the same way that I heard others speak about Greece. I must be losing my tourist standing.

He kissed me sweetly and looked into my eyes. He knows that I can’t resist his eyes. We made love again, gently, sweetly, lovingly.

The smell of breakfast cooking was a pleasant surprise for us. Almost everyone was up and eating.

“There you two are, sleeping in this morning?” Karen asked.

“That storm kept us awake, so I’m still tired,” I said. “We need to get going, we’ll find out about the tide, then we’ll have a better idea of when we’ll go. Dimitris is calling Andreas now,” I said.

“Who’s Andreas again?” Gracie asked.

“Dimis’ younger brother. He’ll be taking us to Karpathos.”

“Let me cook you breakfast, where’s Dimi?” Karen asked.

“Oh, Karen, Dimi will cook ours, you go ahead and eat, but thanks.”

After he got off the phone, he announced that we should take our dress clothes and anything we will need to spend a couple of nights, then we’ll have to go before another storm comes in. We’ll dress for the party at Rena’s.

Once we had breakfast, everyone prepared for our Christmas trip. We had our bags at the door, ready to go within twenty minutes.

We waited for Andreas to let us know when he has docked. We had a very small window in which to travel to Karpathos, so we didn’t waste time.

We were waiting at the dock while the Athena came slowly into port. We had Andreas help everyone aboard the heaving deck. Once we were all aboard, we left the Rhodes harbor behind us. Dimi called Rena once we were on open seas.

I was afraid to go below deck, so I sat wrapped in a blanket on the patio deck. Everyone else was below in the forward lounge and galley. I laid on the sofa and closed my eyes. I could use the rest and the fresh air kept me from getting sick.

“Helen, what are you doing out here?” I heard my dad ask.

“I don’t want to get sea sick, so I’m staying up here. Are you doing okay?” I asked.

“I’m fine. It’s been a long time since I was on a sea this choppy. Are you sure you want to stay out here in the cold?” He asked.

“Yeah, it won’t be long,” I said, as my dad went below.

Dimitris came to me, asking why I was out here also.

“I’m not taking a chance on getting sea sick,” I said.

“I will stay with you,” he said as he sat down next to me and put his arm around me.

“We will not have you sea sick, my Helena.”

“Do you want some of this blanket?” I asked.

“No, you keep. Do not let in the cold air,” he said.

“Where is Morgan? Didn’t she come?” I asked.

“She already at Rena’s. She wait.”

“What about Gregorio? Is he going to make it?”

“Do not know. Cell not connect to him,” Dimitris said.

“Hey, are you okay? We missed you down there,” Jim said.

“I’m fine, I just need air. How is it going down there?”

“A little lonely, they sent me up to look for you,” he said. I looked at Dimitris.

“I guess I’d better go down for a minute.”

“I will go too,” Dimitris said.

“Go ahead, Jim, lead the way,” I said.

We followed Jim below deck, and I could tell before I got down the stairs that this was asking for trouble. I felt I was already losing equilibrium. I clasped onto Dimitris.

“Are you okay, Helena?” He put his arm around me and held me tightly as we made our way to the forward lounge.

“I’ll have to do this quickly, then go back up,” I said. I quickly poked my head into the lounge where Jim, Greg and Nina were.

“I can’t stay below, I just wondered if everyone is okay? If you start to feel sick, come top-side and I’ll share my blanket with you. Okay? I’ll see you all when we dock.” I turned to Dimitris, “Help me back up, Dimi, I’m feeling dizzy.”

He almost picked me up to carry me, but it would be a dangerous thing to do with the boat in rough seas. He held me tightly against him and helped me up the stairs to the patio deck. Just having the sea air in my face helped me to get back my bearings and feelings of normalcy.

“Helena, this is not good. We must not let you come onboard in rough seas. We fly instead.” His eyes were worried. That expression came to me in a flash of what had happened before, when he pulled me from the railing and when he nursed me back to health. I couldn’t bear having him look at me like that again, it was too painful to think of the worry I put him through. I put my hand on his cheek and kissed him.

“I’m fine now, Dimi,” I said. “I just needed some fresh air.”

“You will worry this man, Helena. Dimi will never leave you alone on boat,” he said.

“Only in rough seas, my sweet,” I said. He looked at me, smiled and kissed my forehead.

“Merry Christmas guys!”

“Merry Christmas, Rena.”

“Welcome, to our home,” she said graciously. I introduced each person as they entered the door.

“Where Stefano, little Reenie?” Dimitris asked with his arm around her and gave her a peck on the head.

“Oh, he’s out there trying to clean up the patio. That storm made a real mess out there. Well, let’s see, we have to settle the bed situation, couples will take the double and king beds, and there are some singles, so, we have several options. Helena, would you show the couples the double rooms? Father, or should I call you ‘Dad’, we’re old pals now, you and I!”

My dad put his arm around Rena and said,

“You can call me Dad, if you want.”

“Dad, I’ve got a room for you down the hall,” she said

Dimitris put us in the usual room, then I showed the couples to their rooms. Morgan and Andreas already had their usual room, then we doubled up Karen and Gracie in one King room, Nina and Suzi in a double. The men got the single beds and pull-outs in the office and den. The guest bachelors would have a choice of the Athena or a roll-away bed.

I caught Morgan coming out of their room.

“Hi Morgan! Are you ready for the celebration?”

“I guess, as ready as I can be,” she said.

“Did Kristofos come?” I asked.

“He said he would be here by 8pm. His parents and sister are here on Karpathos, so he’s there today.”

“Oh, good.”

“Rena, have the men already left for the market?”

“Yes, they just left, did you need something?”

“Would you by chance have any Sloe Gin?” I asked.

“No, we don’t. Maybe you can call them before they get there?” Rena

suggested. I caught Dimi just as they were parking the car.

“Hello my Heart.”

“Dimi, do you think you can find any Sloe Gin?” I asked.

“Sloe Gin? I look. Are you missing your Dimi already?” He cooed.

“You know that’s why I called you, you didn’t even say you were going.”

“I am sorry, Helena. Is there something else?”

“Yes, get some lemons too. Oh, don’t forget that you have to call Gregorio.”

“Yes, Helena, I call. We are back soon.”

“Rena, what about John, is he coming?”

“Yes, he’ll be here right around 6:30 pm, I told him not to be too late because all of the relatives will be coming from 8pm on. He was so cute, he’s really looking forward to meeting his own ‘American Beauty’ as he says.”

“That sounds familiar,” I said.

“I thought it would,” she laughed.

When Stefano and Dimitris returned I wanted to ask about Gregorio. They came in with bags of groceries and the items I requested.

“Dimi? Dimi.” He put the bag down and gave me his attention.

“Yes, my Heart.”

“Did you call Gregorio?”

“He does not receive. Maybe phone not work.”

“I hope nothing happened to him.”

“What could happen?”

“What if he was out in the storm? The seas have been so rough.”

“He is excellent seaman. Not to worry, Helena.”

“I’m so lucky that you are not a seaman, Dimi, I couldn’t take this kind of worry over you.” He wrapped me in his arms and rocked me.

“Helena, S’agapo. Gods bless this man. Every day I am reminded of this.” He sighed and kissed my cheek. “Where is Father? I must see him,” he asked.

“He’s getting settled in his room down the hall.”

We were lucky when the expected second storm passed to the North. The day was a little breezy but the sun shined keeping its promise to leave us a

beautiful day and a crisp night.

Rena had everyone laughing in the kitchen and dining room, as she recounted some of Stefanos adventures in Archeology. The men were even having a good time. Some of the men were outside with Stefano and Dimitris while they cleaned up the patio. Katie, Rena's daughter, came in carrying gifts and a canvas shopping bag of food she had made.

"Mom, I'm here, I finally made it!"

"Hi Katie, how are you doing?" I asked.

"I'm doing good. Glad to have the Holidays, it cheers me up," she said.

"I'm so sorry about the baby. Does the doctor know why it happened?"

"He seems to think that my anemia may have been part of the reason, but they're only guessing."

"You're okay though?" I asked.

"I'm fine," she said, but she clearly was still suffering emotionally.

It was beginning to get dark and I knew that our bachelors would be showing up soon. I could see that my cousin was looking nervously around, anticipating the arrival of all the gorgeous bachelors that I had been bragging about.

"Ladies, I hate to interrupt, but the guests will be coming in within the next couple hours, so I think it's time we dress and pretty ourselves up a little," Rena said.

I grabbed a slice of cheese then Dimi came over to me.

"My Heart, what you bring to wear?"

"You'll see, something I think you'll approve of," I said as I made my way to our room.

"You will want to make this man crazy, Helena," he said as he left me at the door to our room. I went inside, opened our suit case and took out our clothes. Before I did anything else, I took the white shirt to the laundry room, placed it in the dryer with a damp cloth, and sent it spinning. It would be ready to wear in a few minutes.

I got dressed as quickly as I could. The one great thing about being away from home is not having a big choice of clothing and not having to go through

the multitude of possibilities of what to wear! My dress was a slinky fabric cut on the bias, in black with purple metallic threads, like tiny stripes that slithered on the diagonal.

When Dimitris came back into the room, I was putting on my earrings.

“How you know about shirt wrinkles, my Heart?”

“You mean getting them out without ironing? It’s just a little trick I picked up.”

“This dress is nice,” he uttered as he stood facing me. “There is chill, maybe want shawl tonight” he said as he put on his shirt.

I helped him button his shirt. His scent was getting to me.

“You like?”

“I like.”

“Have you heard anything from Gregorio?” I asked, trying to distract him.

“Huh?” He kept kissing me, and making me lose my concentration. He was wearing his exotic and irresistible Jade East cologne, that made it hard to stay focused. He does this, it seems, every time we dress for an occasion. I had to take control of this, because I can’t ruin these nylons, not having another pair.

“Sugar, Dimi, come on, you need to dress, then you should call Gregorio,” I said as I tried to widen the gap between us. He let me back off but he held on to my arms and ended in kissing my fingers.

“My Heart makes it hard for this man to be good.”

I smiled and shook my head in dismay of this sweet man. When he saw me smile he kissed me, taking me down onto the bed on top of him. He rolled me over and unclipped my hair as he held my head. I couldn’t escape his lips to protest.

“Dimi!” I was able to say before his lips were on me again. I had to forcibly hold him back, which I hated to do, but was a necessity.

“Ohh, you have made Dimi too crazy,” he said between his Greek words.

“I’m sorry, I don’t want to ruin my dress, you understand, don’t you?” I pleaded

“Yes, yes, I see. You are right, but.....” he reluctantly stood and held out his

hand to help me up. I stood, he placed his hands on my shoulders then sat on the bed, holding onto my hands and taking a couple of deep breaths. "Helena, you will have to stay away from this man or I will be in trouble." He kissed my fingers again then rose to kiss my neck.

"Hmm," he muttered. "I get dressed." He finished straightening up and combed his hair. "My heart, you wait for Dimi?"

"Yes, my sweet, I wait for you," I said. He came to me and said,

"I think this man is too much in love, my Heart. I will try to keep hands off," then he kissed my cheek.

"You are just too cute, Dimi. But yes, we should try to keep hands off," I said.

As he dressed I went to straighten his collar and unbutton the top couple of buttons of his shirt. He always looks so sexy in a white shirt.

"Gregorio, I begin to worry he will not come," Dimitris said.

"I wonder about him, too. If something might have happened to him out there on the water, who would know? I mean, who would miss him, normally?"

"I do not know. Only if he do not go to next appointment, or if coastal patrol find him adrift."

"Maybe we should call someone, the coast patrol, or authorities?" I asked.

"I will try to call again."

"Do you think maybe Andreas' radio on the Athena would be a way to contact him?" I asked.

"Yes, is good, I will ask Andreas."

"You look so handsome, my love," I told Dimitris. "Are we ready?"

"We are ready."

When we entered the living room from the hall, a few of the men were sitting in the dining room, Stefano and Andreas were doing some last minute preparations on the patio.

"I will be on patio," Dimitris said as he kissed my hand.

I sat at the dining room table next to Greg. Nina sat on the end and Jim sat directly across from me.

"I'm so glad you all decided to come. It's been such a long time." I grabbed Nina's hand and gave Greg a hug.

"You look like you've lived here all your life, you love it here, don't you?" Greg asked.

"I do. I really do love it here. It's so rich in so many ways. You'll love it too. I'm hoping the weather will cooperate so that you will be able to see it properly. There's so much to see."

"How did you meet this guy?" Jim asked.

"It's kind of a weird story....." I re-told the story of how we met. Without all of the details of my getting sick and Dimitris nursing me back to health. It seems that everyone found it hard to accept that after knowing Dimitris for such a short time, that I gave up my old life for a new one.

"What about Mark?" Jim asked.

"What about Mark?"

"What happened to you two that made you want to leave him?" Jim asked. He wasn't interrogating me, but I could see concern in his face. I realized that he and Mark used to be like brothers, but with him, a more detailed explanation might be due.

"Will you all please excuse us for a minute? Jim, will you come with me?" I asked as I rose from the table.

I took Jim's arm and we walked into Stefano's office.

"Jim, I know you and Mark are still friends, but I want you to understand that things with Mark and I, got to a point where we were very stale together. We were more friends than anything. I didn't come here to have a fling. I didn't set out to hurt Mark. I still love him, I always will, but not in the same way as I once did. I was very unhappy with the way our relationship had changed. I needed more, that Mark wouldn't or couldn't give me, and this didn't happen overnight. I stuck it out with Mark, as unhappy as I was, because I didn't want to hurt him. But I couldn't continue living the rest of my life unhappy. Life isn't worth living if you're unhappy. Dimitris makes me happy."

"I understand, I guess. I just never thought that you two ever had any serious problems. I guess I figured you two together is how it is and how it

will be.”

“Jim, nothing ever remains the same indefinitely. Your life has changed, but you’re the same person. Our lives have changed, but we’re the same people, too, just independent of each other.”

“Sure, I just didn’t understand. Mark doesn’t seem to get it, so I couldn’t understand what happened.”

“Mark knows what happened, he just denied it all the time we were together. He figured that because of all of the things I overlooked over the years, that my unhappiness would pass too. Jim, I would appreciate it if you wouldn’t tell him about Dimi. I never wanted to hurt him so I never told him about Dimi, not until we got married. He doesn’t need to be hurt and angry all over again. I think he would love to blame this whole thing on me, so I don’t want him to know anything about my personal life anymore. Do you understand?”

“Yes, I understand.”

“Do I have your promise.”

“Yes. I promise.”

“Thank you, Jim.”

When we came out of the office we were greeted by Morgan and Andreas in the living room. Andreas gave me a look. I introduced Jim again and got them talking then I asked Morgan if she’s seen Dimitris.

“He was here a few minutes ago, looking for you,” she said.

“Where did he go?”

“I didn’t see where he went.”

I looked from the living room into the dining room. Beyond that the patio door was opened but I didn’t see him.

“Rena, have you seen Dimitris?”

“Yeah, he went into your room.”

“Thanks, Rena.”

I went back to our room, opened the door and peeked in. There was Dimitris, on the bed with his back to me, doing something with the bed table drawer.

“Sugar? What are you doing back in here, are you sick?” I asked.

“Oh, oh Helena, come, sit by me,” he said.

“What is it? Not bad news, I hope.”

“Bad news? No, no bad news.” I sat by him. As he put his arm around me, he kissed me then handed me a small gift. “Happy Christmas, Helena.”

“Sweetie, we agreed, no gifts for each other this year. You swore that you wouldn’t.”

“Could not help, I get. Open,” he said.

I looked at his face and the anticipation was written all over it. When I opened it, I couldn’t believe my eyes. I was speechless.

“You like? Put on,” he picked up the bracelet and put it on my wrist. “There!”

As I looked at him, at this sweet man, I couldn’t speak. I felt my throat get a big lump in it. If I say anything, I’d cry.

“You like? I break promise, my Heart. I see in window I say ‘my Helena would like this,’ so, I buy. You will not be angry with Dimi?”

“What can I do with you? I love it, Dimi, but I . . ., I didn’t. . . .”

“Shh, you no get for me because you keep promise, Dimi break promise, so you no worry. S’agapo, Helena. Happy Christmas,” he said as I gave him a big hug and felt the tears run down my cheeks. “Come, we go, before Dimi is bad and ruin beautiful dress.”

“Dimi, I. . .”

“No, you no need to speak.”

“I might have to let you have your way later,” he smiled and led me from the room by the hand.

When we returned, I could see that John Nicosia was talking to my cousin, Gracie. They seemed to be enjoying each other, so all was well on that front.

“Dimi, will you ask Andreas about Gregorio?” He nodded that he would, kissed my palm, then went into the sitting area by the fireplace.

“Helen, come here a minute, would you?” Morgan called.

“Yeah, what’s up?”

“Kristofos will be here in twenty minutes. Your cousin seems occupied with John.”

“Well, we’ll have to figure something out when he gets here, maybe Suzi can talk to him until I can get Gracie alone.”

“Where is our Captain?” Morgan asked.

“I don’t know. We’ve been trying to contact him. I hope he’s okay. We’re worried that he might have been at sea during that storm,” I said.

“Gee, I hope not.”

“Pardon Dimi, Morgana....Helena, we go to Athena, find Gregorio, we are back soon,” he gave me a peck on the side of my head then told Stefano where they were going. Dimitris invited my dad to go with them.

“Have you seen Karen?” I asked Morgan.

“She’s out on the patio, I think she’s talking to Aiden,” Morgan said.

“Aiden? When did he get here?” I asked.

“He’s been here about a half hour.”

“Everyone seems to be entertained, for the moment. I thought Suzi was talking to Kristofos. Oh, I’m getting confused. Everyone is with someone, so, I’m going to leave everyone to figure out what they’re doing. I get tired trying to be a matchmaker. At least the women aren’t alone, thank goodness.”

“No, I think there’s going to be too many men,” Morgan calculated.

“Nina won’t find a man if she ropes herself to her brother, what can we do about that?”

“What can you do? She’s kind of shy, maybe she doesn’t want to meet anyone,” she said.

“I think we need to get the brother busy, then have someone meet with her, but who?” I asked for input.

“I think maybe Aiden would suit her, but he doesn’t talk enough, it takes him too long to loosen up. She should meet Kristofos. He can talk and will make her laugh,” Morgan said.

“Right, oh, there’s Kristofos! I’ll go get Greg and you introduce Kristofos.”

“I hope you know what you’re doing,” Morgan said.

“Greg, may I steal you away for a minute?”

“Sure, what’s up?” We left Nina and walked toward the dining room.

“I wanted to get Nina alone for a minute so that we could introduce her to someone. Do you mind?” I asked.

“No, I don’t care, do you have someone I can meet?” He asked.

“Did you have a chance to meet Katie, Rena’s daughter? She’s in the kitchen. I think she just separated from her dullard husband. She could use someone to talk to.”

“I was talking to her earlier, she seems nice,” he said.

“Great, now we’ll get Nina set,” I said.

“Helena?” I heard Rena calling.

“There you are, what’s going on?” I asked.

“Where is Andreas and Dimi? I need someone to help Stefano,” she said.

“How about Jim? He’s not busy.”

When I led Jim over to Rena, I could see that Stefano was trying to build a fire in the patio pit, but was having a hard time finding dry wood. I could see that he had set up a bunch of chairs around the fire pit. I thought I knew what that meant, but I would be surprised if the ritual was done on Christmas eve.

I stood at the patio door watching the sorting of the wet wood. I could see that the breeze had picked up and it was getting cold. I wondered about Andreas and Dimitris, if they were able to find Gregorio.

The doorbell rang then Rena yelled “come in.” It was the cousins and Aunts and Uncle Septic, (his name actually is Septimos, but Septic seemed to fit and it somehow stuck) the long lost husband of Aunt Thessa. I had met her at one of the name day celebrations and was under the impression that her husband was dead. Now I think that he was only dead to her. Apparently he’s known as quite a womanizer, or maybe he was in his younger days. Given that, I was warned to stay clear of him.

As the front door remained opened I wandered over to it, the cold breeze was blowing in the cold air and loose debris from the driveway. I looked out, but not seeing Dimitris, I closed the door. As I walked back to the living room, Gracie caught up to me.

“Helen. Do I look okay? I feel like I’ve got a sign over my head that reads *single and desperate*.”

“Why what’s wrong?”

“These men, I mean they’ve been perfect gentlemen, and they’re nice and

all, but I'm not used to a man who actually listens to what I say! It makes me uncomfortable, like every word is so important. I feel like if I'm not careful, I'll insult someone by accident. I don't think I'm up for this."

"You have just been initiated to the world of the Greek Gods, my dear. I've found that there are men in Greece that treat the women differently than most men do, on the whole. So, who do you like, I mean, did you click with one in particular?"

"Well, I think John is nice. He's friendly."

"Yeah, but did you click?" I asked.

"I think so, we'll see." She was looking at John, then he lifted his drink to her in greeting from across the room. While we were talking the front door burst open. It was a combination of Angelo carrying a mountain of gifts and the wind.

"Happy Christmas everyone!" He said as he carefully balanced the gifts that were stacked up to his chin. I looked at Gracie and she had that look in her eye, like, this is a man she'd like to meet.

"Angelo!" Rena cried out as she ran up to him and took some of the gifts off the top of the load. "I didn't think you were around this year, where have you been keeping yourself?" She asked.

"I was in Albania for three months, then I went to Italy for a month. How is everyone?" He asked.

"Fine, Stefano is on the patio and Dimi, and Andreas should be back soon," she told him.

Another half hour ticked by when Dimitris and Andreas came back.

"Well?" I asked as I walked up to Dimi. He put his arm around me, kissed my temple and began,

"My Heart, not to worry. Gregorio come."

"Where was he all this time?" I asked.

"He try to buy new cell phone. Old phone fall overboard, so he go out to buy new one," he said.

"Did you tell him that we thought *he* fell overboard?" I asked. Dimitris just smiled and hugged me tighter.

“Dimi, what has this brother been up to? You don’t look like marriage has hurt you any!” Angelo said. “I see we have some new faces this year!”

“My Helena has her family this year, so you will behave yourself,” Dimitris said as he knuckled Angelo’s head.

The door opened again with a crowd of relatives. Atsi, Thomas, Nicolos, all of the cousins that were here last year and their children. Then Frances came in with Camilla.

She didn’t see me as she was behind several of the relatives. I retreated to our room down the hall. I didn’t want to have to confront her, and I wanted to freshen up a little, too.

There was a knock at the bedroom door.

“Yes?” I answered. “Yes?” I had to open the door as the noise from the house made it hard for someone to hear me.

“Helena,” Dimitris said as he put his arms around me, then kissed me very deeply and tenderly. “You are so beautiful tonight. I no want you to be angry.”

“What?” I questioned.

“My Heart, Camilla has come, she sits out there now.”

“I know, I saw her.” I said as I looked at his serious, searching eyes. He was wondering what was going to happen. Would there be a problem, would I confront her, or let her antics wash over me like water off a duck’s back?

“You know this? Is this why you are here?” He asked.

“I just wanted to freshen up, gather my thoughts. I’m not hiding if that’s what you’re thinking,” I said.

“Of course not. But we must watch that she do not hook one of your friends,” he said as he stood closer, and looked down into my eyes.

“How did you ever get so sexy?” I asked with a smile. He kissed me hard and with an urgency that he tried to hold back. He had his hands holding my face as he whispered his Greek to me, he kissed my forehead then said,

“We must go out there, my Helena. S’agapo. You will make me crazy tonight.” He kissed my hand and said “Come, we go out there together.”

When we reached the living room, the brothers swarmed Dimitris and dragged him out to the patio. I sat inside with my dad and my sister.

“How are you doing, Dad?” I asked.

“Where have you been?” he asked.

“Busy, trying to be sure everyone is having a good time. What were you doing when you went with Dimi and Andreas?”

“Not much really, just went for the ride. I sure like Andreas’ yacht. It’s a beauty!” He said.

“It is, and it’s not only a pleasure craft, it’s a necessity. We’ve depended on Andreas’ kindness many times, and he never refuses to help us out,” I said. My dad put his arm around my shoulder and said,

“I know I don’t have to worry about you with Dimitris and his family, they’re very good people,” he said.

“I know, I’m very lucky,” I said. I was just beginning to relax when I saw Aiden come up. I thought he was going to continue his conversation with my sister. He stood in front of me and bent toward me and said he needed to talk to me. I held out my hand to him.

“Can you help me up?” I asked. I was stuck in between my dad and sister, making it impossible to stand without help. He took my hand and helped me to rise.

“Dad, excuse me a minute. I’ll be right back.” We walked over to the loft room to get some privacy.

“What’s the problem, Aiden?” I asked.

“Camilla is starting to act weird again. I thought I’d tell you before she does something.” He said as he stood in front of me.

“What else? Are *you* okay? You look like something’s on your mind.”

“It’s just, well, I, Helen I wish you hadn’t brought all these single women here. I don’t like to be rude, and you know I’m not really looking for anyone. Did you think it would make me forget?” He started to put his hands on my shoulders, then changed his mind.

“Aiden, I didn’t bring anyone here to meet you. It just happened that those who came here are single at the moment. If you feel trapped, just excuse yourself and move to another area, none of these ladies will follow you, I don’t think. Just say you’re married if anyone asks.”

“I could tell them where my heart lies, but I don’t want to start another

incident.”

“Just don’t respond to their advances. You should be able to handle it.”

“I still can’t believe all this.” He said, looking at me.

“What is that?” I asked.

“You, here, of all places. After all those years I find you here, and with *him*. Whenever I see you, and now, thinking about chickens and watching you help with the coop, I die a little more inside every minute I see you two together,” he said, blocking my exit from the door.

“Not this again. Aiden, you’ve got to stop this. You’re getting obsessed. It’ll only lead to trouble. You’ve got this idea that everything was wonderful back then. If it was so wonderful, and if you loved me then, why did you leave? You just left, disappeared. It could have been beautiful, but it never happened. You had better fish to fry, and eventually, I moved on. There’s no room for you in my heart, Aiden. I live and breathe for Dimitris. He’s everything to me. Do you understand?” I said.

“But there was love between us then. Wasn’t there? Can you say you never loved me?”

“No, I can’t say that. I loved you very deeply at the time. But that was then.” I said. “I’ve got to get back, are we finished here?”

“Yes, I’ll let you go.” He stepped aside to allow me to exit. As I walked by him he took my arm and said, “I’ll be here.”

When we came out, Gregorio was just coming in. He was dressed neatly and was very apologetic.

“Please, forgive this man for being so late. I have no excuses,” he said as he kissed my hand.

“Please come in Gregorio,” I saw Dimitris coming from the living room. He greeted his friend and took him to the kitchen for a drink. I was hoping that Dimitris would do all of the introducing since he knows Gregorio. I was looking for some peace. Now with the thought of Camilla starting trouble, I was beginning to feel very vulnerable. It had been a high tension day. Joyful, but I felt emotionally exhausted and needed to re-charge my batteries.

I laid down in our room, without any lights turned on, it was a respite that I

needed, especially with a long night ahead of us.

I had been in our room for only ten minutes when Dimitris came in.

"Helena?" He said in a soft voice.

"Yeah?"

He closed the door quietly and got on the bed next to me. I put my head on his shoulder as I laid there in his arms.

"This is nice," I said.

"Are you okay? They wonder on you, Helena."

"I just needed to get away from it all for a few minutes. I hear Camilla is acting strange." I said.

"Not so strange, not for Camilla," he said. I had to chuckle at that.

"She's probably wondering why all of the bachelors are here tonight," I said.

"Yes, she would wonder," he said and kissed my head. "You and Aiden talk?" This question startled me.

"Yes." I said waiting for the other shoe to drop. I was expecting a tirade of accusations and emotional outbursts.

"What he say?"

"He was concerned that I had brought all these single women to meet *him*. I guess he was feeling trapped by one of them. I don't know."

"He does not want to give up his hopes. If he let himself fall in love, he would have to let go of dream of you. This I know."

"How did you know that we talked?" I asked.

"I see him come to you. I watch. I wait."

"I see. It didn't bother you?"

"I bother! But Dimi know you love only him and I trust. But I watch anyway. I do not let him talk too long, or Dimi come in to know you are not in danger. But, I think maybe Aiden think twice on touching you."

"I told him he was getting obsessed. And that I only have you in my heart."

"Dimi could be very bad right now, but we must see to our guests. Is rude to stay away too long." He kissed my neck and reached to turn on the lamp. "My Helena, you lose comb. Best to fix hair. I go." He looked into my eyes and smoothing his hand up and down my arm he kissed me with passion.

"Ohh, I will go, before___." He shot off of the bed and out the door. He

didn't even look back. I had to smile at that.

On my way out of the hallway, I saw Dimitris standing at the end of it, just before entering the living room. When I came up behind him, I put my hands at this waste to have him move aside. He put his arm down to block my path.

"What's the matter?" I asked.

"Look, to the dining room," he said.

I tried to see what he was looking at, but without my glasses and people mingling and roaming about, I couldn't see what I was supposed to be seeing.

"I can't see, Sugar, what is it?" I asked.

"Camilla sits on Jim," he said.

"What?" It sounded so funny, but not to be laughed at. I couldn't think of anything worse. Well, I could, but this certainly wasn't good. I didn't know if I should interfere or let her hang herself.

"We will ignore," Dimi said as though he had read my mind.

"Thank you, Sweetie, I'm glad you said that."

"Yes, we will let it be." He took my hand as we went past Camilla and into the kitchen. Dimitris grabbed us a beer, tapped our bottles together and with his arm around my shoulder he said,

"A toast to us, my Heart, let nothing set us apart." He kissed me and we sipped our beer.

"That was a strange toast," I said, "Why did you make *that* toast?"

"To remind gods they do not take back what they give." He kissed my hand and I could see that he didn't want me to know how much it bothered him to see me go into the loft room with Aiden. I put my hand on his cheek and looked into his eyes. I didn't say anything, I just kissed him, and held him close to me.

"Hey! You in the kitchen, bring a beer for your guests!"

Dimi and I stepped apart at the screech we heard from the dining room. Camilla was laughing and talking loudly, clearly trying to get attention. Dimi was ready to do something about her behavior, but I pulled him back.

"Let's go outside," I said as I took his arm. Stefano was trying to keep the fire going in the pit, as the smoke from the damp wood was choking him.

“Good heavens, Stefano, you’re going to choke to death out here,” I said as we closed the patio sliding door.

“We’re having a heck of a time finding dry wood,” Greg said.

“I’ve never seen so much smoke out of such a little fire,” I kidded.

“Ah, it’s a mess! I guess we won’t have our ‘can’t get up’ tonight,” Stefano lamented.

“What about the wood you have under the tarp in the loft room? Is it archeological or can you burn it?” I asked.

“What wood?” He asked with a bewildered look on his face.

“What wood?” Dimi and Andreas said in unison.

“Behind the stairs, way in the back. Under a tarp.” I was having a hard time getting through. “Under the green painters canvas in the back, under the window. Next to where the sewing machine was...you know! Uhhhh! Come on, I’ll show you.” I led the parade of men to the loft room where, low and behold, under a dusty old canvas tarp was a good size stack of wood.

“My Helena, how you know about this?” Dimitris asked.

“When I was looking for that gimp for the pillows, I looked under it. It’s probably been here a long time.”

“Well I’ll be damned!” Stefano was dumbfounded. “This has been here since we built the house! I forgot all about it.”

“Well, I don’t know how you could miss it! It takes up enough space.” I said.

“You could not find it if it bit you, Stefano. You have all stuff everywhere here,” Dimitris said.

“Okay, well, I’ll leave you big muscle bound men to do your thing. I need another beer,” I said. I turned to leave when Dimitris grabbed my arm.

“Thank you, my Heart. Please to bring beer for Dimi also,” he said and brushed his hand across my cheek.

It was a long line of men, each carrying as much wood as they could handle. The only one not helping was Uncle Septic. He wasn’t infirmed or so old that he couldn’t carry anything, he just didn’t want to help, after all, he’s a *guest*.

“Rena! Where have you been? I haven’t had a chance to talk to you all night,” I said.

“Hey girl! You’ve been busy! Did you do that?” She was referring to the

men and the removal of the wood.

“Stefano wanted dry wood, I only reminded him that there was a pile under the tarp,” I said.

“I gave up on that wood pile ages ago. Helena, you have the cutest father. He was in here getting more of my Curried Shrimp. He put his arm around my neck and kissed my head and said ‘this is the best shrimp I’ve ever tasted.’ He is so cute.”

“Rena, what’s with Camilla?” I asked.

“Oh, she went on and on about being alone. I tried to change the subject but I ended up telling her she could come over if she didn’t start up anything. She promised she would be a ‘fly on the wall,’ no one would know she is here. Well, she’s drinking and I’m hoping she passes out before she does anything stupid.”

“I might have to step on her if she starts up with Dimi again,” I said.

“It looks like she’s latched onto your friend. What do you think of that?” Rena asked.

“Well, he could use a good time, but she better not have anything contagious!”

“No, I mean your friend, is he looking?”

“For a relationship? I suppose he’d be open to one, but I don’t think she’s serious. I think she’s still trying to get under our skin, you know, especially Dimi, she’ll try anything to get his attention.”

“Do you want a beer?” Rena asked.

“Oh! I was supposed to bring one to Dimi.”

I grabbed a couple of bottles of beer then went to find him stacking the wood in a protected corner of the patio.

“Dimi, I’m so bad, I got side tracked. I forgot all about the beer.” He stood, brushing off his hands he took the bottle, tapped it to mine and kissed my cheek.

“Is okay. I see your friend. Someone need to go rescue him,” he said.

“Yes, someone should,” I said. He sipped his beer, looking in at my friend who looked miserable with Camilla on his lap. Dimi sipped his beer again

then looked at me.

“No, not you, Dimi.” He gave me a big bear hug, and a big hard kiss on the lips with that sound he makes that’s so sensuous.

“S’agapo, Helena.” He had a sweet smile and a sparkle in his eyes. “Now, Stefano will have ‘not get up’ and we find way to rescue Jim.”

“Good. I’m going inside for my shawl, it’s a little chilly for me tonight,” I said.

“We build big fire, so come back quickly, my Heart,” I turned and said I’d be right out.

While I was getting my shawl, I heard someone beating on a kettle. It sounded like someone calling in the hands from the range. When I came out, it was Stefano giving everyone instructions on how the game went. All the guests were around the fire pit as instructed. Everyone had their bottle of beer. Stefano was explaining to everyone what was going to happen. Dimitris spotted me standing near the patio door. He hurried to me, then pulled me to where he was sitting. He opened a beer for me then we were ready for the fun.

Stefano started clapping his hands in rhythm as everyone joined in, then he recited the poem. He added his own line that he made up, to the end of the poem, then we shouted, “and she couldn’t get up!” He then took a mouthful of beer swallowing half and spit half of it out onto the fire while the clapping continued. The next person in line did the same thing, adding his own line of dialog to the end of Stefano’s line of dialog, everyone shouting ‘and she couldn’t get up,’ the beer was spit on the fire then it continued from there, until each would have a turn. All these people were totally taken aback by it and the hilarity of not being able to remember even the poem after it had been recited several times, made this a highlight of the evening.

Uncle Septic and all of the older Aunts didn’t participate.

This was, for some reason, the first celebration where the *kefi* of the men seemed to be under control. There had been a few things during the year that would dampen some of the celebratory mood, Katie losing the baby,

and her separation from her husband, our ongoing court appointments and what preceded it. I doubted that the catalyst for suppressing the *kefi*, the uncontrollable consequence of happiness, was consciously known to anyone.

There were so many around the fire that Dimitris and I sat back on our favorite lounge watching the fun. Dimitris had his arms around me and would kiss my temple or my fingers every few minutes. I saw Jim looking our way then he came over, drawing up a chair.

“You two have the best idea, stand back and watch.” Jim smiled as he sat.

“How are you doing, Jim?” I asked.

“I thought that woman would never get off of my lap. I was getting numb,” he said.

“Gee, Jim, I’m sorry I couldn’t rescue you from her, but she and I have no love for each other. I couldn’t do anything but make it worse.”

“That’s okay. She’s quite a lively one,” Jim said.

“I don’t think she’s, well, let’s just say___.”

“Trouble! You be careful, Jim. She get a web like the spider. You get caught in,” Dimitris said.

“It’s a fair warning Jim, she ____, let’s just say that you don’t want to get caught up in her antics. Just ask Aiden,” I said.

“Dimitris, I have to thank you for all this, Suzi and I have never been this far out of the country before, we’ve never traveled. This is really a nice place to live. I had no idea that so many people would speak English.”

“My English not too good,” Dimitris said.

“What I mean is that I thought no one would speak much English outside of the states and the British Isles,” he said. “There’s more to this place than meets the eye.”

“Yes, the more you look, more you see,” Dimi said.

“Can I get you a beer or something, I’m going that way?” Jim asked.

“Yes, thank you. You will find in Refrigerator,” Dimitris said.

“Thanks, Jim,” I said.

As we were watching the fun around the fire pit, Dimitris was laughing at how the typical outcome of the game eventually made itself apparent and then

there was nothing but laughter. No poem, no ‘couldn’t get up,’ just laughter.

Someone put on some Christmas carols on the stereo, then the little children had their cue to form a company on the patio, and they began to sing with the music. It was very cute, all the smallest children in the front were playing, and the shy, little ones would just look around in their innocence.

As we were watching, more guests were coming in the front door. We heard the familiar squeal of delight come from Rena. Then she announced that Mattaios and Matyha had arrived.

Dimitris and I got out of the lounge and went into the living room to greet his brother from Turkey, and his wife. It had been a long time since we had seen them and it was such a surprise that they came tonight. Dimitris was about to introduce to them my father, when Rena answered the door again.

“Helena,” Rena said, getting my attention. I looked over to her closing the front door, then I saw Sahj. I excused myself from Dimitris. He was occupied with the introductions.

“Mr. Sahj, Merry Christmas! I’m so glad you were able to come. Please come in.” I took his arm as he was still walking with a cane.

“Please call me Ahmed,” he said.

“How have you been Mr. Sa__ Ahmed? Are you still in a lot of pain?” I asked as we walked toward the living room.

“I am, but I live with it. I expect it will diminish given time,” he said.

“Please, sit, may I get you a drink?” I asked.

“Thank you.”

“Let me see if I can get you a dry Martini,” I said.

“Thank you, but please don’t go to any trouble.”

“Excuse me, I’ll be right back with your drink. If you’d like to help yourself to the table, we have meyedes and cakes.”

I went to get Dimitris who was out on the patio with my dad, Mattaios and Aiden. My cousin came up to me, curious about Ahmed.

“Who is that tall man that just came in? He looks very....exotic,” she asked. “Where’s he from?”

“His name is Ahmed Sahj. I think he’s from Egypt, but I’m not sure. He recently had an accident, so he’s using a cane,” I said.

“Is he single?” She asked. I looked at her and felt the look of astonishment creep over my face. “Does he have a harem?”

“Oh, no, I’m sorry, I just didn’t think of him as a possible...do you want to meet him?”

“Yeah, he looks interesting. He is a sharp dresser. Is he nice?” She asked.

“Gracie, I don’t know, I could introduce you, but I wouldn’t expect much in the way of a relationship.”

“What did you say is his name?” She asked again.

“Ahmed Sahj,” I said.

When I went to ask Dimi if he would mix a drink for our guest, I looked back and saw Gracie go over to Sahj and start up a conversation.

“Dimi, excuse me, I don’t want to interrupt.”

“Helena, where you been, my bride?” He said with a grin, then put his arm around me.

“Sweetie, Sahj is here.” Dimi quickly turned to see where he was. “Would you know how to mix a dry Martini?”

“What he do here?” He asked.

“I asked him if he would come.” Dimitris looked at me, and I could see that he didn’t know what to think. “Would you make him a dry Martini?”

He went to the kitchen and I followed. He began to make the drink. He was very quiet, and I think he was apprehensive about Sahj.

“Sweetie, I didn’t have a chance to tell you. He called to tell us, or warn us about the ringleader thug being in Rhodes. I didn’t tell you that night, you were asleep when I came back to bed. He was going to be all alone, Dimi. I thought that no one should be alone on Christmas Eve. So, I invited him.”

“My Heart, this man save us, we are honored to have him as guest. Come, we will greet him.”

We brought his drink, and Dimitris welcomed him and thanked him for his bravery in the situation. The conversation got a little too detailed, and I wanted to hush it up, being in front of my cousin and all. I interrupted, rudely

I'm afraid, to bring Dimitris away. I lied.

"Excuse us Ahmed, Dimi has an important phone call." I took Dimitris arm and dragged him off to the loft room, and closed the door. The lamp was on at the desk table, so we weren't in complete darkness.

"Where is phone, who call on Christmas Eve?" He asked.

"Sweetie, there is no phone call. I lied to you."

"Why, why you do this?" He asked so innocently.

"I needed to talk to you. We both owe Sahj, a great debt of gratitude. I'm sure he knows how grateful we are, but, Sweetie, my cousin was listening to the whole conversation. She's going to be asking me questions. She's probably asking *him* questions right now. I don't want her to be in danger, there's too many people involved already. It's too dangerous having her questioning me. I don't want any of the family to know the details of what we went through." I put my arms around him and laid my head against his shoulder.

"You are right, Helena. I do not think before I speak. I do not intend to say with cousin there, but do. I am sorry." He picked up my face and said "Will my Heart forgive this stupid man?"

"I lied to you. I'm sorry."

"It was good lie, you do for good of others, is okay."

"How did you get like this?" I asked.

"Me? Like what, My Heart?"

"Like this. You are understanding, forgiving, and you didn't question my judgment on inviting Sahj." His eyes were kind and I was so proud of him. "You make my heart swell with pride, and love for you, Dimi."

I heard him speaking to me in Greek in a subdued voice that was lighting a fire in my soul. I could see his dark eyes spark in the light that bounced off of them. He put his lips against my temple and continued speaking his Greek secrets, as I smoldered in his arms. He kissed me with a peck on the temple, then said,

"My Heart, come, we go out there before you are driving me crazy."

"You're driving *me* crazy. You make me smolder, and now you want to leave. What am I to do with you, Mr. Patakinis?" I smiled at him and looked in his eyes before he took my hand, then we left the loft room.

“Merry Christmas!” Aiden said as he walked up to the bar where I was sitting. He pulled out a stool for my sister to sit.

“What will you drink Karina, ...uh, Karen?” Dimitris asked.

“That’s okay, you can call me Karina, I kinda like it! I’d like Champagne, if there’s any.” She said. I noticed she was all smiles. I knew that face. That was the expression of the gods getting a grip on her heart. I knew it well.

“I’ll have a beer if they’re cold,” Aiden said.

We got our drinks then found a place for all of us to sit in the living room. In the “pen” seating arrangement that Rena had by the fireplace, was seated Nina, who was being entertained by John, and Suzi, who had Angelo making small talk. Every couple of minutes one of the cousins would walk by and mess up Dimitris’ hair. I think it was a way to irritate him, more than just playfulness.

There was some loud conversation coming from the patio area, although we couldn’t see from where we were, we knew it was Camilla. I didn’t want a confrontation, but it aggravated me that my family had to witness her behavior. It was a worry that she would cause another scene.

“That woman is going to cause trouble, I just know it,” Aiden said. “Rena and Stefano should be made aware of her behavior.”

Just as he was saying that, Stefano rushed in to see what the problem was. Everything suddenly got very quiet. With all these people, the spread of hush was unmistakable. When he came back into the house, all seemed to be okay. There didn’t seem to be any ruckus coming from the patio area. Then I wondered, where was Jim?

“My Heart, you must not worry, these are adults. They know what they do.” He took my hand and kissed my fingers, then we left the bar to find Morgan and Andreas talking with Gregorio, out at the patio table.

“This brother of mine, is always on the go, where were you when Camilla had her fit?” Andreas asked.

“Dimi have better things to worry on. What you two do out here? You have best seat to see all that goes on.”

“It’s a good thing that you weren’t out here,” Morgan said.

“What happened?” I asked.

“She started bad mouthing you to Jim. He was trying to quiet her, placate her, which made her angry. I think she was trying to get a rise out of him. It looked like it, anyway.”

“Is that when Stefano came out here?”

“As soon as she saw Stefano, she sat down and shut up. She’s been pretty normal since, for her.”

“How are you Gregorio? You sure had us worried about you,” I said.

“No one worries for Gregorio.” He looked down and cleared his voice. His eyes looked up and he said, “I never had to think of someone to worry on me. I am sorry.”

“My Helena, she will worry on all she knows,” Dimitris said. I know he meant it as a compliment, but I was a little embarrassed.

“We thought you got caught in that bad storm we had,” I said.

“My phone get caught in storm, now, the gods of sea will make the phone call,” he joked.

“Well, I’m glad nothing worse happened,” I said.

“Gregorio, you go to Milos very often? I have to ask you about the harbor there,” Andreas asked.

Andreas and Gregorio began a conversation about business and the harbor at Milos. Morgan had a plate of fruit and cheese. She ate and listened as Andreas talked.

Dimitris seemed to be acting just a little odd. He seemed to be wanting me to pay more attention to him, at least that’s the way I saw it. He would almost turn his back on Gregorio by sitting by me with his arm coming across the table to stroke my arm furthest from him. I looked at him as he was almost hovering. I didn’t want to think of him hovering or I might not be so appreciative of his attention.

“Excuse me a minute,” I said to Morgan. I gave Dimitris a finger to my lips sign, like ‘I’ll be right back’, and to stay put. I didn’t know what was happening. I was having weird feelings come over me. I was feeling like he was suffocating me. Suddenly, I wanted to be alone. I don’t know why I suddenly would have this terrible wave come over me. I had to get away, this

hollow, sinking feeling in my stomach. Something was making my emotions, from deep inside my chest, go crazy. I went inside the house, got myself a cold glass of water and retreated to the bedroom. I wanted to leave for a while, just to breathe, but I promised Dimi that I would not do that, run, leave without a word. I couldn't break my promise to him.

I laid on the bed, lights off, in the quiet solitude to restore my soul. I don't know why I had a need to lose myself when something with Dimitris upsets me. I don't know why I have such a problem sometimes, communicating with him. I don't want to lose him, and I guess I fear a confrontation when I'm upset. It's still a mystery why this small gesture on his part would upset me so.

I couldn't lay here, I had to get out. I grabbed my shawl, went to the kitchen and grabbed a couple of beers then went out the front door. There was an old porch swing on the far end of the front veranda. I brushed it off, drank my beer, and thought. I could hear the party going strong, the talk and the laughter. People came and went, but I was in a dark area of the porch, hidden from the view of the entryway. I opened the second bottle of beer and began to drink it. I felt that I was getting my breath back. I was feeling a little better, but the feeling of dread was still with me.

I saw Dimitris rush out to the front of the house. I knew he was looking for me. The trees in the front were dwarf citrus trees that hid the front porch from view, especially at night, so he could not see me when he came back to the house. When he reached the steps of the porch, I called to him.

"Over here, Dimi." He stopped when he heard my voice. "I'm on the porch." He came over and sat next to me on the swing.

"You have been here? Why you not tell Dimi?"

I drank my beer but I couldn't look at him. He took the beer from me then put it down next to the empty bottle. When he put his arms around me and held me close to him, the tears rolled down my cheeks.

"Shh. Don't cry," he said in a soft voice. I had a pain in my heart, but it angered me when he took my drink from me. I didn't like what I was feeling, and it scared me to think that he could be the cause of these feelings.

"I'm not crying." I retorted. He pulled away from me just far enough to

see my face. The tears were rolling down my cheeks, but my refusal to acknowledge them didn't make sense, to him or to me.

"No, my Angel, you do not cry."

Suddenly, like a wave washing over me, my heart was calmed. I could feel his warmth and it felt good to have him hold me, without questions, without irritation at me, without understanding. He accepted the situation.

"What time is it?" I asked.

"It is about 10 p.m."

He continued to hold me, and we swung slowly on this old porch swing, listening to the groans it made with each swing. It seemed to sooth the turmoil within. I could smell his cologne and I could feel his body heat with my forehead against his neck. Once I calmed down, I began to feel very drained. My strength had left me and all I could do was cling to him and feel his warmth.

"Helena? You do too much this day. Come back inside." He took my hand and led me to the bedroom where we sat on the edge of the bed for a few minutes just holding each other. He kissed me gently and said, "come, you lay down. Rest." I removed my shoes then he asked if I wanted to get under the covers.

"No," I said. He started for the door. "You're not going to leave me, are you?"

"No, my Heart." He joined me on the bed and held me in his arms.

We laid there for almost a half hour, listening to the music and laughter. The clapping and yelping sounds coming from the living room told us that someone had let loose of their kefi, that uncontrollable joy that seemed lacking on this Holiday celebration. I could feel that Dimi was anxious to join the others.

"Why don't you go ahead? I'll be out in a few minutes." I said.

"I will wait."

"No, you go, Dimi." I wasn't going to spoil his fun if he wanted to go. He sat up, leaning on one elbow and still holding my hand to his heart. The room wasn't completely dark, as the light from outside glowed into the room. I couldn't see his face, but I could feel his questions, wanting to know if he did

something wrong, and if that was why I was acting so strangely.

“You are okay?” He finally asked.

“Yeah.”

He kissed my hand then left the room. I wondered what set me off. I never used to be that emotional, and sensitive, a cry baby. Maybe my medication with the drink had played it's card against me. Perhaps I've just taken on too much emotional strain, having too many guests at one time, worrying if they are entertained every minute. I wondered if Sahj came here to talk or if he just didn't want to be alone. I wondered if Dimi was upset that I worried over Gregorio. Aiden was another question.

Dimitris sat at the bar, listening to the conversations around him, when the hands slid over his shoulders. He took the hand and kissed the palm of that hand. He felt a face come to his ear but noticed the hair was dark, not blond, not Helen. He bolted from the stool and began a tirade of cursing in Greek. Camilla could hold her own in an argument, but Dimitris was livid.

Stefano stepped in to calm the waters and to get the two into separate corners. I could hear some commotion from where I was in the bedroom. I thought that Camilla had once again caused an argument and got the attention that she craved. I could hear loud voices then the door slammed, shaking the walls.

The commotion brought me around to more normalcy. I turned to the bathroom to repair my make up and fix my hair. When I came out, all was quiet and Stefano was escorting Camilla out the front door. Everyone watched in silence as Stefano forced her into his car. She was babbling on in a flurry of indiscernible Greek language. I went over to Rena and asked,

“What's going on?”

“Camilla, what else!” She said. “Where were you, girl? She was doing something that really ticked Dimi off, he left the house all pissed off! I've never seen him that angry.”

“He left the house?”

“Yeah, he slammed the door on his way out.”

I went back to the bedroom to grab my sweater, then went to find this man. I thought he might be on the porch swing, but he wasn't. I went down the

driveway, calling him. I couldn't see him anywhere.

"Dimi?" I called out in the darkness. When I walked around the outside of the house I called him again. I saw Rena's Fiat. The door opened and there he was, getting out of the car.

"Are you okay?" I tried to look at him as he took me into his arms and buried his face in my hair. He was speaking softly in Greek. I held him tightly. Whatever happened had affected him and now he needed to be held, without the questions.

He held me and rocked me, his breathing was heavy and I could feel his heart beating hard. I just held on to him, comforting him as best I could, until he calmed down.

"S'agapo, Dimi." I said, after a few seconds.

"Oh, Helena, I lose temper at Camilla."

"I know, it's okay." I said, in an effort to give support.

"Is not okay. Never to lose temper, not like this," he said.

"Shh, it's over now, she's gone," I said. "We won't let her ruin this Holiday. You know that whatever she did, was just to get your attention. I know that if it were me, I would have lost my temper a long time ago. You're not to blame." I looked into his eyes, his worried brow pinched. "Come." I held his arm and led him to the veranda where we sat on the swing and let it's movement lull away the tension.

I held him as we swung on the old porch swing. After a few minutes, I asked,

"Sugar, shall we get some meyedes?"

He looked at me, and I could see the tension in his face had disappeared. He put his hand on my cheek and smiled.

"Yes, my Heart, we will get ourselves the meyedes. Always better to eat with the drink." He kissed my hand, pulled me up from the swing, and we went inside the house.

With his arm around my waist, he whispered, "My Heart, did I tell how beautiful you are?"

"Yes, Dimi, you did." He gave me a peck on the temple, and pulled me to the great hall near the front door. He looked like there was something he was

trying to say.

“This man, I do not lose temper always, I am sorry.”

“There’s no need to...”

“Yes, there is, should never lose. Not on woman.”

“I think you should have told her off a long time ago. You have nothing to feel bad about, Dimi. Let’s not talk about it now. Let’s just enjoy our time with our guests.”

“What will you drink, Helena?”

“I’ll just have water. Thanks, Sweetie.”

A Happy Christmas....For Some



“**M**r. & Mrs. Patakinis, thank you for such an enjoyable evening. Thank you for including me among your guests. I must leave now, and say goodnight,” Sahj said. We stood to say good night.

“Thank you for coming, I’m sorry that we didn’t have a chance to talk,” I said.

“Yes, Sahj, we do apologize for unpleasantness,” Dimitris said.

“Please do not apologize, I had a wonderful time. Goodnight, Happy Christmas.”

“Happy Christmas, Sahj,” Dimi said. My cousin walked with Sahj to the door.

I went back with Dimitris to the sofa. He opened his arms to me as I sat next to him. On this night, the comfort we found in each others arms was more than just the affection we had for each other, and we both knew this.

“I told Morgan that all plans for tomorrow are canceled. We’re all going to rest, have a wonderful dinner, and let everyone do as they wish. No set plans, just rest or spontaneity. We need some time to breathe, Dimi,” I said.

“Yes, we will relax.”

I leaned back and took a deep breath. Dimi leaned over me, looking me in

the eyes and placed a small gentle kiss on my lips. I welcomed this kiss as my emotional state had been drained. It gave me a renewed faith in him, not hovering, not crowding or suffocating me.

The guests were beginning to go to their own homes and finally the evening was winding down. The music was turned down low and the conversations turned into intimate muted tones in cozy corners. The children had gone home to wait for Christmas morning where another holiday tradition awaited them. After the midnight placing of the Christ child in the manger, and a prayer of praise and blessing, one by one the bedrooms became occupied with guests that had become new members of this family.

As Dimitris and I gathered the scattered plates from around the living room, Andreas took Morgan's hand. She had been quiet for some time now, obviously tired.

"Good night everyone, we're going to bed. Merry Christmas," Morgan said.

"Good night, see you in the morning," Rena replied.

"I didn't think that it was ever going to stop! Doesn't anyone watch their kids anymore? I had my toes stepped on three or four times tonight," Morgan complained to Andreas as they entered their room.

"Well, they get excited, it's Christmas!" Andreas said.

"Geez! I know it's Christmas! That never kept me from watching my kid when she was little. They just let them run crazy. ... I've got a headache." She rubbed her temples and sat on the edge of the bed.

"Morgana, would you like something for that headache? I can ask Rena..."

"No, Andreas, I've got something I can take, but I could use a bottle of water."

He placed his hand on her shoulder as she closed her eyes against the glare of the overhead light.

"Get into bed, Sweet Pea, and turn on the lamp, I'll turn off the light overhead," he said as he left the room. It had been a long day for everyone and we were ready for the quiet paradise of our rooms. She was nearly asleep when Andreas returned.

"My Sweet, here's your water. Do need anything else? I could rub your neck or..."

“No, Andreas, I just want to sleep. I’ll feel better in the morning.” He laid the bottle on the table next to the bed, kissed her on the forehead and got undressed. He turned off the bed lamp as he got into bed.

“I’m sorry, Andreas,” Morgan whispered.

“I know, try to sleep, Babe, morning will come soon enough,” he said as he soothed his hand over her arm.

We stacked the plates and serving dishes, but Rena insisted that we go to bed and that the clean-up could wait until tomorrow. We bid her and Stefano a “good night” and headed to our room. As I began to undress, Dimitris came to my side to take my dress from my hand. He gently laid it across the vanity chair, taking care that the hems were kept off of the floor. He came up behind me and as he moved my hair to one side, kissed my shoulder and pressed me to him.

“Dimi...”

“Happy Christmas, my Heart,” he kissed me under the ear, and stroked my arm.

“Merry Christmas, my love,” I said.

“You are so tired, my Helena, too much these Holidays take from you.” He was right. I was very exhausted, more than I had realized, until now. Dimi could see it in my face.

“I’m okay, I’m fine.” I turned to him to hold him in my arms, and as he held me and rocked me, I knew that we would not make love. I hadn’t realized how much this day had taken out of him. He never let on that he was tired, pushing himself, always helping anyone who needed help, whether it be carrying packages for the Aunts or stacking the wood, playing with the little children and putting up with the antics of the cousins and their pranks. And of course, me. Me and the worry or aggravation that I provide this dear man.

We were happy that at last we were alone. We had the quietness of the night, and we had each other. We put the day behind us and what seemed to be our troubles for the moment, faded away. Sleep came to us quickly.

I was awakened when I felt Dimitris move. He seemed to be dreaming. I

could feel the vibration of low murmurs and movements. I could hear very tormented tones, that made me sad to hear, coming from him. The moans and painful sighs were getting worse, more pronounced. I was taught to never wake someone from a bad dream or nightmare. So, I listened, and my heart broke as I heard his torment.

Suddenly, he voiced a loud sound and jerked his body, as he was still holding me at my waist, I put my hand over his.

“My Heart? Helena?” I rubbed his hand.

“I’m here, Dimi.”

He grabbed ahold of me, and pulled me toward him. He urgently put his arms around me and brought me to rest my head against his shoulder. He kissed me as if I had been lost to him.

“My Helena. I have such bad dream.”

“Ohh, Dimi, everything is okay. It was just a dream.”

“Bad dream...bad dream.” He held me a bit tighter and I felt so bad for him. I could feel his heart still racing.

“Try to go back to sleep, Sweetie, it was only a dream, everything is okay,” I reassured him.

This had been a wonderful special Christmas. We exchanged gifts and it seemed that we were one happy family. Aiden stayed for dinner as did John Nicosia. It was very nice. The weather stayed gray and blustery and threatened rain. The cold chill in the air made the fire in the living room hearth that much more cozy.

The men settled in the living room after dinner as they watched sports on the tv. The women chatted in the dining room and we all had a good time. Rena was telling the girls how she met Stefano, and some of the things that they had done over the years. Her Chinese accent, with her high pitched, nasally sounding voice made it sound twice as funny. She’s a funny lady anyway, but this only added to her cuteness.

“...Stefano was in a hurry, he got dressed and we were out of the house

in a flash. We went to the deli and it was so crowded! Standing room only. Stefano ordered our sandwiches and came back to sit with me against the wall, while we waited for our order. Everybody was standing around waiting, when Stefano heard them call out our order, he got up to go get it. I noticed when he started to walk up to the counter that there was something hanging off of the back of his pants, at the belt line.

“I reached up to take it off his pants, but as he walked away, it stretched longer and longer! Then I realized that it was stuck inside his pants! I kept pulling on it but it kept stretching more and more, and I thought, well, if I let it go, it’ll snap back and hang out there worse than before, so I kept pulling on it. I was laughing so hard I couldn’t stop! But it kept stretching, until finally it snapped out of his pants. He looked back at me like, ‘what the heck was that?’” She laughed.

We were all rolling on the floor in laughter. The visualization of this was priceless, as she described the life of a knee-high stocking.

“It must have been still in the dryer when I put his clothes in to dry. I still don’t know how he missed it when he got dressed, unless it was stuck to his underwear first, then hung out there after he slipped on his trousers!”

“And there were other people right there?” Karen asked.

“Yes, they were sitting next to me and some were trying to walk between Stefano and me, but the nylon was a roadblock! They waited until it snapped out into my hand before they could walk by. I couldn’t stop laughing and he didn’t have a clue what I was laughing about.”

“Oh, Rena, you are too much!” I laughed. It was so funny that my eyes were tearing. I looked toward the men. They were all looking our way, wondering what was so funny. I could hardly catch my breath from all the laughing. I’d think about that nylon knee high, I’d look at my sister and we’d both start laughing all over again with the picture that Rena had painted in our minds! It was a contagious thing!

During this Christmas day there would be the occasional knock at the door, with a neighbor or friend, bringing cakes and pastry gifts. A lovely tradition of the Holiday. This is something that we would be doing had we stayed at

home and hadn't any guests. It's a beautiful way to introduce oneself to your neighbors.

After a couple of hours of noisy sports on the tv, the men joined us and offered to play a game that everyone could play. The majority wanted to play poker. It became a rip-roaring good time for all. I bowed out of playing after four hands. I never liked Poker, not that I didn't win any hands, I did, it's just not a challenging enough game for me, and I lose interest.

I hung around and watched for a while, more for Dimi than for myself, but I needed to write some letters home, and thought that my time would be better spent doing that. Since the onset of "email," I hadn't written any letters for some time. My handwriting skills were beginning to become a thing of the past, as I could hardly read my own writing any more.

I grabbed my sweater and went out onto the patio. The light wasn't especially good, but it was pretty quiet outside, away from the laughter, where I could concentrate. I must have been outside for nearly a half hour and soon the chill was grabbing my feet.

"What are you doing? Aren't you cold out here?" Aiden asked as he closed the patio sliding door.

"I was just about to go back inside. Who's winning?" I asked.

"Rena!" He laughed.

"Rena?"

"Yep, she's beating the pants off everyone." I just smiled and gathered up my letters and writing paper. I dropped my pen and had to fish for it under the picnic table. Aiden stood in front of me, blocking the light.

"I can't see, you're blocking the light, Aiden." He crouched down on the side of me, out of the light and out of the field of view from the dining room. He reached his hand over and laid it on my hand, which was supporting me from falling over as I searched with my other hand for my pen.

"What is it, Aiden?" He had something that he wanted to say, but wouldn't come out with it. "What?"

"I...I know I've been a nuisance, and you probably hate me. I don't.....that is, I..."

“What is it, Aiden? I thought you were with my sister.”

“She’s very nice, but I need to...”

I looked at his eyes and knew that there was something wrong. “What’s wrong, what is it Aiden?”

“Helen, I have Cancer,” he said, and hung his head.

“What? What did you say? No, I don’t believe it. Not you, Aiden.” I was almost speechless, it was such a shock.

“I was wondering if maybe, ..if maybe I could count on you to go with me to Chemo. I wouldn’t ask, with Dimi and all, but I have no one.” He said in a quiet tone, almost as if he was ashamed.

“My God, Aiden, I’ll help in any way that I can.” I reached out to hug him, and realized how lonely he was, and then getting this kind of news, I felt so bad for him. He clung to me, and it hurt me to see him like this, so vulnerable. “When did you find out?”

“Two weeks ago, on Thursday.”

“You’ve kept this to yourself since then? Why?” I asked.

“I wasn’t sure what or if I wanted to do anything about it. It’s been eating away at my insides, it’s all I can think about, so I had to do something.”

“What kind of cancer is it?” I asked, trying to be both sympathetic and supportive.

“Prostate.”

“And it’s operable?”

“Yes, they want me to go through Chemo, too, and I’m not sure if I can handle it.” I put my arms around him and I knew that I had to encourage him, not to let him think that anything worse will happen.

“It’s still in the early stages, it hasn’t spread?”

“Not yet,” he said quietly. “They’ve been pretty vague, but I guess they’ll know for sure when they operate.”

“Don’t they usually do radiation on something like this?” I asked.

“I asked about that, I guess that the skin would get too thin, but he just said something like the radiation might destroy anything that’s still left. By the time I got out of his office, I was in so much shock and denial. I don’t think I

fully understood anything.”

“Have you told anyone about this?”

“There’s no one to tell.”

“You haven’t told Andreas?” I asked.

“Not yet, I was hoping I wouldn’t have to tell him.”

“You have to tell him. You’re not going to be able to work for a while. You have to tell him.”

“I’ll wait until after the Holidays. I want to....”

“I know Aiden, I hate the thought of what you’ve got ahead of you. I’ll be there if you need me.”

“Thank you, Helen.” He started to leave, and as he was going back inside the house, Dimi was coming out.

“Helena?” I wrapped my arms around Dimitris and held him close to me. “What is wrong? Look to me, Helena, what is wrong?” I looked at him, and he knows me well enough now that I can not hide my emotions from him. “What, Aiden do this?”

“Dimi,” I held him close to speak in his ear. “Dimi, you must not say anything to Andreas.” He pulled me away from him and looked into my eyes. “Aiden has Prostate Cancer.”

“Aiden?” He stroked his hands down my arms to my hands, then kissed my fingers.

“Aiden.” He put his arms around me again and held me, then said

“If you must cry, is okay.”

“No, I don’t need to cry, Dimi.”

“He just say this?” He asked.

“He has no one, Dimi, he needed to tell someone.”

“This I understand. Why he no tell Karina?”

“Sweetie, he doesn’t know her, why would he say something to someone he just met?”

“He will have hard time with no wife, not even have girl friend,” he said.

“I know. It will be hard. He has to go through chemotherapy. Dimi, we have to help him, it’s going to be hard for him alone.”

“We will do what we can, he is alone, we help.”

“He hasn’t told Andreas yet, so, we shouldn’t say anything, either.”
That night when we went to bed, we talked about Aiden and how sad it is that he has no one.

“I have seen what Chemo will do,” Dimitris said.

“Yes, so have I. I pray that these doctors know what they’re doing.”

“If he find good doctor and is in time, he will be okay,” Dimi said.

“I hope so.” I laid there in Dimis’ arms for a minute or so. “It’s time you went for your physical. You’ve put it off too long.”

“Yes, I will do.”

“I mean it, no more procrastinating because we’re busy. I’ll make the appointment if you don’t.”

“Do not upset, Helena, I will go.”

The Full Meaning of Danger



On the 26th of December we all went to the Turkish market that was on the island of Symi and since it was such a beautiful day, the men were enjoying the shopping spree as much as the women. Rena was shopping for Stefano's Day, so there was a method to her madness. So many different foods and spices, treats of all kinds, several types of breads and meats. We were all loaded with bags to bring home.

The celebration for Stefano's Day was a huge and happy occasion. Neighbors and relatives stopped by as did his colleagues and students. Once the students arrived Rena's home became very lively. The gaiety was contagious, the music was invigorating, as the group grabbed Stefano and did the traditional line dance. Where it used to be just the men who did their dance, now, everyone is invited to participate.

As the dance wound around the house and out onto the patio, I watched the faces of my family and friends. Everyone was having a good time. My dad was especially enjoying this, as he had become one of the brothers. I was afraid that all the celebrating would eventually get tiring for them, but they each were welcomed here, and made to feel at home. They could do as they

wished, but all were having fun.

In the early evening when we were relaxing after dinner clean up was done, Dimitris comes up to me with his cell phone in hand.

“Who is it?” I whispered as he handed me the phone.

“Sahj,” he whispered.

“Ahmed!”

“How are you Helena? I am so sorry to disturb your evening,” he said.

“That’s okay, we weren’t doing anything, how are you?”

“I am very well, thank you. I would like to meet with you and your husband as soon as possible. There is information that I think you should know.”

I looked at Dimitris and we agreed to meet with him.

“I think we should meet also. We will be at the airport next week, that is probably the soonest we can manage it.”

“That is fine, I will call again to meet with you.”

This was going to be a curious end to our Holidays. I knew that Sahj wanted to talk, but this sounded more involved than just a slight warning. We agreed to see what the meeting was about, but it would have to wait until after my family is safely back home.

Before we headed back to Rhodes, Stefano took some of the men out for a round of golf. While they were gone we had a visit from John. He wanted to spend more time with Gracie before she would have to leave. They left to go somewhere together and were gone until eleven p.m.

We planned to return to Rhodes early the next morning. Rena and Stefano were such wonderful hosts to my family, but they needed a break from having a houseful of people. Andreas had a call and had to urgently check on a job that had major problems come up suddenly, so we had the pleasure of introducing the group to the ferry system.

We got home late the day before New Years Eve. We were all tired from the travel, activities and partying. It was nice to get home. We had planned to celebrate the New Year at Rena and Stefano’s, but with Andreas having to leave, we would have had to wait until January 2nd to be able to take the ferry.

Our New Year celebration was fairly quiet, given all the excitement we have had the last week of December, it was a welcomed change. We built a fire in the hearth and had drinks and plenty of food. The conversations were calm and easy and relaxed. Everyone was pretty well rested but still tired from all the activity. Soon after toasting in the New Year, one by one we all went to bed. It had been a hectic week.

“Helena, Rena say to you, ‘Happy New Year’ when she call.”

“When did she call?”

“When you in shower. She say Katie come over and was start to cry, so not so happy for her.”

“Yeah, she had a rough couple of months. Maybe she’ll do better in the coming year,” I said.

“She should be happy as we are happy. She deserve happiness,” he said. We cuddled for a while, discussing many of the small events that occurred over the last week, when the phone rang.

“Who call at this time in night?” Dimi wondered as he answered the phone on his night stand. There was someone on the other end of the line, but would not speak.

“Hello, hello! Speak if you are there!” He hung up the phone in frustration. “Probably wrong number on this night.”

“You’re going to be working after tomorrow, aren’t you,” I said as a matter of fact to be confirmed.

“I begin where tests end, so more of continue in work. Why you ask, my heart?”

“I thought that if the weather was good I might take everyone to Lindos, or maybe the beach at Afandou, but it all hinges on the weather.”

“Then we will see. If weather nice, I put off work, we take father and others to special place.”

“I don’t know how you escaped being grabbed by so many women for all this time,” I said. He stroked my arm and said,

“When person is dead, there is only dead time. One day like another. Only when life revived did Dimi see what he needed. Now, for Dimi, all life is beautiful.”

“You should have been a philosopher.”

“You tease.”

“No, really. I’ve said it before. Sometimes you are very deep.”

“Deep?”

“Profound.”

“Ah, deep.”

The week seemed to fly by. It was full of activity. We had our “girls day” when the men went fishing, and everyone enjoyed the day as we had time to visit the gypsy dress shop and Athens. Once we were on the mainland, we found new adventures to explore, in the limited time we were there. Rena knew all of the out of the way unusual places where tourists rarely go.

Before we knew it, it was time to take everyone to the airport. I always have to prepare myself for the goodbyes, but it was inevitable, and I cried at their departure. Everyone seemed well rested for their trip home and with the weather being clear, I didn’t worry so much. It was a long time since I had seen some of our guests and it may be a lifetime before I see them again. I tried not to think of it that way.

We were aware that the “top dog” of the shifting of goods in the Cypriot thefts, Klaus Vanderbur, was still a wanted man, and although he had been identified, he was still active and a very big threat to us if he chose to be. His ring of thugs and thieves were ever vigilant in protecting the hidden goods that were still unaccounted for by the authorities. Estimated current value is worth close to one hundred million dollars American, but actually priceless to the Greek Orthodox Church and the Cypriot people. What makes it especially sad is the fact that some of the artifacts, mosaics, iconic paintings and murals and other precious works, had been damaged or destroyed in their removal from the churches of Northern Cyprus.

In comparison, one is reminded of the thefts of the Ghant, Belgium, painted panels that disappeared August 11th, 1934. The masterpieces of painted wooden panels of “St. John the Baptist” “The Just Judges” and “The Lamb of

God”, painted by Van Eyck brothers, were stolen from Bavons Cathedral, and were never recovered despite the return of one of the paintings, as proof of possession of the last two.

There were several leads, which never produced results, but it was thought at the time that it was an inside job, or perhaps that high powered persons in government might have had a hand in the origin of the thefts, if not the cover up or lack of pursuit of the return of the other two masterpieces. The Germans later searched for the works, during World War II, and it is *believed* they were not found.

The two crimes, separated by forty odd years and thousands of miles, have similarities in common. The innuendo of government officials having been involved; the proximity of the Nazis; the offering of artifacts for ransom; major works that seemed to have disappeared, even though the moving and transport of such large items wouldn't have gone unnoticed. The ability to steal, transport and hide such antiquities would involve more than one or two individuals. It leaves one to wonder how such secrets had been kept for so long and what other crimes, such as murder and the mysterious disappearances of individuals, could be tied to these crimes, if investigated deep enough?

To think that a handful of unscrupulous men hold in their hands these priceless pieces from a period in history so revered by the Orthodox Church, historians, and the people of the island, is mind boggling.

Aside from Sahj, we have heard nothing on the subject of Vanderbur. The authorities seem to regard his threat to us as a low to non existent area of concern. I've come to believe that in this area of the world, our little island takes care of itself, as best it can with resources available. If we expect top notch protection and diligent pursuit of criminals, it wasn't going to happen in the islands, unless on an international scale.

The immense number of Greek islands and the area they occupy, makes it very difficult to monitor in the area of illegal activities. The number of small insignificant islets that don't have official names, is reason enough to assume that there could be treasures hidden from centuries ago on any one of them.

These small dots in the sea, some if not most having never been found on a map, are riddled with subterranean caves. Some of the larger islets that have nothing to offer but a mariner's headache, are ideal places to hide ones cache.

It is well known that even in modern times, the threat of pirates in these waters is still very real. Dotted throughout the Aegean and Ionian seas are the remnants of pirating, on deserted beach alcoves, in the rocky shallows, and in the depths of the seas.

This makes the search for stolen goods of any kind almost impossible to find. The ability to organize and carry out a methodical search of these complex islands would be a monumental undertaking. The odds of finding anything specific? Not good, and a financial impossibility. Pirates, thieves and smugglers understand this and use it to their advantage.

The fact that there have been few arrests of those responsible for the Cypriot arts, is not surprising. Even making an identification of some of the people involved has taken twenty to thirty years or more, and that is only because most of the names surfacing are those of men who are no longer living and it's safe to expose these names now. Since the discovery of thousands of icons, priceless mosaics and alter pieces in places like Switzerland, Japan, Turkey and Germany, Interpol and Scotland Yard became involved in the investigation of the origin of these precious objects. Over time, the USA, and Japan had uncovered additional pieces in private collections and auction houses, and in co-operation with the other investigations, the same names keep surfacing. Whenever an auction or private sale opens, the assumption that finding more of the missing artworks increases. Most of the known pieces have been discovered in private collections. When they are discovered, those objects are confiscated and through interrogation, familiar names in the distribution of priceless arts comes up again and again. In these modern times with the electronic communications, several nations have combined their investigatory expertise, and have confirmed that certain names keep coming up.

Our worry was that although we were no longer in possession of any evidence, this fact may not be known to the heavy handed players in this scenario. They made it clear that we would be dealt with unless and probably

even if we cooperated with them and gave them the rest of the found evidence, which we do not have. We had to let the authorities, the museum and Interpol take any evidence that we inadvertently picked up. Not knowing the importance of what was in our possession, we had put ourselves at risk. Now that we are no longer in possession of the evidence, and we had nothing these criminals would want, we hoped that they became aware of the authorities taking possession of what we did have.

The University made headlines with the discovery of the map, which I thought would release us from being pursued by these hoodlums. It was obvious that the news of the map and having it deciphered would lead to hidden treasures, but it doesn't seem to have put a halt to the threat of more harm to come to us.

This makes me wonder if there is *more* evidence, maps, or clues to the whereabouts of the rest of the missing pieces. Is there something specific that they believe we might have? I've tried to think if there is anything I'm missing, and trying to remember the events that might be a clue to why we are still being pursued. We've tried to identify as many of the men that we could, but that wouldn't be the reason for the ongoing harassment.

The more I thought about it the more I began to think about the little picture, and the house that fascinated me. I wondered if there was more evidence. Evidence that they believe we possess.

We had received the call from Sahj and made arrangements to meet on our return to Rhodes. We met in the upper floor of the Governor's Palace. The building is a brilliant white stucco with arches and decorative detail.

When we entered the Governor's Palace we ascended the stairs to the second floor. In the text that Sahj sent me, we were to go to room B14. Although I was apprehensive of the meeting, I could feel that we were being watched from the time we entered the building.

"You must relax, my Heart. We see Sahj then leave quickly."

"Yes. It can't be quick enough for me," I said.

We knocked twice then entered the room. Sahj was seated at a small desk that faced the door. He stood as we entered.

"Hello, Helena and Dimitris. Please sit. You made sure you came alone? No

one has followed?”

“I don’t think we were followed,” I said. I gave him his key, and he thanked me for keeping it safe for him.

“Very good. We can’t be too careful. How have you both been? I am so sorry to have to meet like this.” The niceties out of the way, he got down to business.

“You must understand what danger surrounds you? The last we’ve heard is that Deichant and Vanderbur are both on the island. This never happens. They would never be together under normal circumstances. We assume that something big is about to happen. They have not tipped their hand as to what that might be. We want to avert any problems in the making.” His eyes focused on me, and I knew that he was directing his warning at me.

“It is vital that you do not make yourself vulnerable in *any* circumstance. We do not know why they are here, but it is our guess that they intend on making sure they get what they are after. Whether that is the information they believe you are in possession of, or if other activities will be carried out. We will have them under surveillance, but we are hoping to cull more information before we resort to arrests.”

“But, will my Helena need protection?”

“Under normal circumstances I would say no. That is why I am going to give you this.” He opened a large envelope that was on the desk. He withdrew a parchment.

“What is it?” I asked.

“You will only use this in the most extreme situation. If you find yourself beyond the reach of any help we can give you, offer this map to affect your release.”

“Release? You believe they take my Helena again?” Dimitris grabbed my hand and rose from his chair. “Come, we go, we leave this place.”

“Mr. Patakinis, leaving will not help Helena.” Dimitris looked Sahj in the eye and he could see that more was intimated than was said. Was it a threat, or a warning?

I was in the living room, looking out the bay window at the gray sky. The fog seemed to hang heavy over the trees. From our little hill we could see some of the downward slopes of the surrounding hills and the thick mist that clung to them.

“What you see out there?” Dimitris stood behind me and looked out the window with me, from over my shoulders. “Is very misty out, too cold to go out there. We stay in today, yes? We have fire, and stay inside today.”

“Yeah, I guess.” I wasn’t very responsive, my thoughts being off where I knew they shouldn’t be.

“What you think on Helena? Tell Dimi, what is it?”

“Remember when Sahj came to the party, he said something about a warning? This Vanderbur being seen in Rhodes, or something like that?”

“He say this? You no tell Dimi this.”

“I meant to tell you about it.”

“You must not worry on this, Helena. You will not be unprotected if Dimi not here,” he said.

“I know that those men must be dangerous, but I wonder why they would take a chance getting caught, just to harm us? They must know that the authorities have all of the evidence we found.”

“Yes, they must know this, but how can we know what these men are thinking?” Dimi had a point, what were they thinking?

“I think there *is* more. I mean, maybe they think we have more information than what has been publicized? There must be another map or a letter or something that has not been found that they think we are holding.” I looked into his eyes. What he saw in mine, he didn’t like.

“No, Helena. No. There will be no more of this. The trouble the photo bring to us and now to find more trouble? No.” He was adamant.

I knew he was right. I know the trouble that we stirred by innocently possessing the photo. Knowingly going to search for trouble, is exactly what we would find. I knew in my heart what kind of price we would pay for any further involvement.

“Helena! Helena, you not listen to Dimi. No more of this! This man fear for you. To find more trouble, with these men out there to hurt you? No, I

will take away my wife to not come back to Hellas,” he said as he looked into my eyes.

I had this almost uncontrollable need to go back to the ugly pink house that taunted me with its iron grates and shredded window curtains. It's like what ever secrets there were, whether it be maps, notes or what ever it was that kept the criminals searching, were to be found within the property that had been gated off for so many years. Somehow, this was not a guess. I knew.

I didn't know what was eating at me more, was it what I knew something was to be found somewhere in the pink house, or was it not being able to search for it? I couldn't go against Dimitris' wishes, and the thought of what would happen to him, I couldn't take that chance. If it were only myself who would take the risk, there would be no doubt of my continuing in the search for further clues. But, I had to think of the danger in which I would be putting those I love.

I looked into the eyes of this man who loves me and wants to protect me. I couldn't think of hurting him, especially if it could be avoided. I put my arms around him and reassured him that I was finished. I would not let this fever overtake me, and what I knew deep down inside, would have to stay there. He hugged me and said,

“Dimi know you have intuitions. I do not pretend to know how works, this feeling. Aiden say you know things, without question. If you say to me something is at this wreck of house, maybe you are right, but this not for you to find.” He said, and kissed my forehead.

“What did Aiden say?”

“He say you know things, psychic.”

“I'm not psychic.”

“He say you know things, but should not, but do. Dimi know what he say. You do to Dimi always.”

“What do you mean? And since when are you and Aiden talking about me?” I asked. He kissed my lips and said

“Thank you, Helena, for drop of the search.” He turned toward the kitchen.

“Hey! Wait a minute, you have to tell me. Why do you two think I'm psychic and why are you talking about me with Aiden?” I followed him into

the kitchen and waited for him to answer. He stood at the counter fixing the coffee, not paying any attention, so I stood right up against him, pressing myself into him. I reached over to put my hand on his wrist.

“Dimi? Sweetie?”

He suddenly turned and said

“You are tease to Dimi!” Then he held me tight against him, and almost like a dance that I could not escape, he walked me backwards into the livingroom and plops down on the sofa with me on top of him. “What is this you want to know, my angel?” I rolled off of him and sat on the sofa.

“What did Aiden tell you?”

“He say something like you tell him something about himself before he know you. He say he do not know how you would know this on him.”

“When were you two talking about me?”

“Long time past,” he said. I gave him a kind of look, like, I wasn’t so sure I believed that it was a long time ago. “Well, maybe only few weeks ago,” he said.

“Why?”

“Why, what?”

“What brought up the subject anyway? Why were you talking...”

“About you? with Aiden?” he asked and I nodded.

“Yeah.”

“Let me think. I tell Andreas how our connection together, we know before we speak. We feel same, think same, mostly, and do not have to say. Then Aiden say how you tell him things about himself, you should not know, but do. He say psychic.”

“I’m curious, how much do you tell your brothers about us?” I asked. “I mean, personal things.”

“Personal is private, for Dimi and my Heart only. I only say what beautiful mystery my Helena is to Dimi.” Then he kissed me. “Are you ready for coffee?”

“Yes, I’m ready.”

Chemo



“**A**iden wants me to go with him when he has his chemo treatments. He doesn’t think he can handle it alone.”
“It will be hard thing to watch, Helena, are you strong for this?”
Dimi asked.

“Yes, I can handle it, I just want to be sure that you’re okay with it.” I said.

“Where he go for this treatment?”

“I didn’t ask, I guess on the mainland.”

“How long you are gone with this?” He asked.

“I’m not sure, he didn’t talk about it at the party. I imagine that he may need someone to be there, make sure he gets home okay. I’m not sure how long the treatment will be, but I just want to get him started, make sure he’s coping. I’ve never seen him like this, I’m worried.” Dimitris reached across the table and held my hand.

“We do what we must for him.” He tapped my hand as a comforting gesture.
“Now, Dimi have work in lab. What will my heart do today?”

“Maybe work in the garden.”

“Too cold for garden, my Heart,” he smiled, put his cup in the sink then went to his lab.

I had been working in my studio for almost two hours when the phone rang.

“Helena, what’s up?” Rena asked.

“Not much, what are *you* up to?”

“It’s been pretty quiet around here. I haven’t heard from hardly anyone since the party.” Rena reported.

“So, what’s new?” I asked.

“Did you know that your friend, Greg, has been calling Katie?”

“No, I didn’t know that.”

“He seems to be very nice, very respectful. Has he been married before?” She wondered.

“Yes. He’s got a little boy, but only gets the occasional weekend with him. Does Katie like him?”

“Katie has done nothing but talk about this Greg since New Years. I guess they hit it off pretty good. I’m so happy to see her smile again. I just don’t want to see her hurt, especially so soon after, you know.”

“Yeah, I didn’t know that he had called her, that’s great news. He had a pretty nasty breakup, I mean, she was a nice person, but immature, you know, but he’s a great guy and can be very funny. I’m glad they hit it off.”

“How are you and Dimi?” Rena asked.

“We’re great. How are you two doing?” I asked.

“We’re always good. Oh! Did I tell you? Old Septimos, you’ll never guess what.” Rena sounded like this was big news, something to excite the natives!

“What? Let me guess, he went home with Camilla.”

“How did you know? Did Stefano already spill the beans? I’ll kill him!”

“No, we haven’t heard from Stefano, it was just a lucky guess. It was a surprise to see him, I’d heard a lot about him. I thought he was dead,” I said.

“No, not dead, dead. Just dead to Thessa. Yeah, it was a bit of a shock to see him just come right in, and make himself at home.”

“I guess he was once a bit of a dog?” I asked.

“He still is, you know he kept pinching me? I was ready to let him have it!” Rena fumed.

“Maybe he and Camilla make a good match.”

“They do, they do. Have you talked to Andreas or Morgana?”

"No, I haven't."

"I guess you don't know then," she said.

"What is that?"

"About Aiden?" She cleared her throat.

"Oh, Rena, I know about Aiden, he told me."

"He did? When?"

"I think it was on Christmas eve. Have you talked to him?" I asked.

"No, I had no idea about it until Andreas called. He only just found out about it the other day."

"Do you know if he has started the chemotherapy yet?"

"Don't you know? He decided not to have it, he said it's not worth the trouble. I thought you knew."

"My God, Rena, what is he thinking?"

"I thought he would have told you that," she said in amazement.

"He wanted me to go with him. What is he thinking?" I cleared my throat.

"Do you know if Andreas is home, or away from Athens?"

"He's home for the time being," she said.

"Thanks, Rena, I'll call you."

"Andreas, I need to get in contact with Aiden."

"He's on a job right now, but I've got his cell phone number."

"I tried his cell phone, it doesn't connect, unless he got a new number."

"He had to get a new phone, wait, I'll give you the number."

"What did he say about his condition?" I asked.

"He didn't say much, you know how quiet he gets, well, I figured he didn't want to talk about it."

"Well, thanks, Andreas, I'll give him a call."

I called Aiden. There were no second thoughts on this, no consulting Dimitris, this was something I had to do. When I talked to Aiden, I couldn't believe that I was talking to the same person. He sounded old, tired and depressed. He had a defeatist attitude that was not like him. He was on a job in an area on the north end of Lindos. He would be there the rest of the week.

"Dimi, are you busy?" I asked as I entered the lab.

“Yes, Helena. What is it?” He sweetly asked, even though his mind was into his work.

“I don’t want to bother you, I’ll tell you later.”

“Yes.” He was so preoccupied that I don’t think that he actually realized that I was even in the room.

I scribbled a quick note, telling Dimi what happened and where I went. I took the little car and was on my way. Lindos was south of Rhodes city. Aiden and his crew were staying at an Inn further south of the job site. I told him I would meet him in the lobby. It took me longer to get there than I thought, between the traffic and not knowing exactly where the Inn was, but when I pulled into the parking lot, Aiden was waiting.

“I thought you changed your mind,” he uttered as I got out of the car. He hugged me and invited me to come in.

“What are you doing, Aiden? You can’t be wasting time with this. Just jump in there and get it over with! If you wait too long, there’s no going back. You don’t want that.” I scolded, in a tender way. We sat in the dim lobby, lit by small sconces on the rough hewn stone walls and by the light from the main entrance when people came and went, passing us on their way.

“Helen, let’s go to the bar, we can talk there.” We found a booth in the bar where we could talk a little more freely.

“You didn’t need to drive all the way over here, Helen. I’ve made up my mind, it’s just too much, I don’t have time for all that, I can’t take off work that long, and, well, I just can’t do it.”

I looked at him. It was hard not to notice his depression. The underlying fear that he wouldn’t admit to and the fact that he had no one, added to his anxiety.

“Please, Aiden. Please don’t do this. You’re too young to just give up. Come on, Aiden, look at me.”

He looked everywhere but at me.

“I’ve done nothing but think about this since I was diagnosed. There’s not much for me here. I can’t talk to my sons, I don’t have anyone to answer to but myself. It’s not like I’ve got a woman in my life to care for, and you, well, you’ve got Dimitris. Why bother fighting? For what - this?”

“Aiden,_____.” I had to stop to answer my cell phone. “Hi, Sweetie.” I left the booth to talk to Dimitris.

“Where you at, Helena?”

“Did you find my note? I left you a note.”

“Yes, find note, but why you not tell Dimi? You should not go alone. There is danger for you, Helena.”

“I’m okay, we’re in a public place so there won’t be any misunderstandings. Dimi, he’s in bad shape. He wants to die, he doesn’t think there is anything worth living for, I’m worried about him.”

“You should tell Dimi where you go, so far from this man.”

“I tried to tell you, but you were too busy in your work, and this is something I have to do. I’ll be home in a few hours. Okay?”

“You will be safe where you are?”

“Yes. Dimi, he’s very vulnerable now, I need to be here. You understand that, don’t you?”

“Yes, I understand.”

I went back to the booth. Aiden looked older somehow, that zest for life has waned and it showed in his face. It was heartbreaking to see.

“I’m sorry, Aiden, I had to take that call. Dimi is concerned for you, Rena is worried sick. You’ve become one of the family.” I held his wrist as I looked at him. “Aiden, there is so much more to life than what you’re doing here, you still have time to find that special lady and let yourself be happy. You have to want happiness in your life and know that it’s there for you. Stop dwelling on things that have passed, there’s too much in life to look forward to, if you’ll just open your eyes and see!” I was getting more upset with his defeatist attitude and scolded him coarsely.

He let all the wrong thoughts flood his mind, to confuse the issue. I hoped that I was getting through to him. We talked about the Cancer and what the doctors told him, his treatment and prognosis. He kept saying things, although not directly, but innuendos pertaining to that long ago time, when we were so much in love. I made him understand that when we were in love, we were young, intense and that over time, he had romanticized the time we

were together. I told him that instead of thinking of how wonderful it was and could have been, he should also remember the reasons why he left and remember how he felt about me when he made that choice.

He sat with his head down, looking at his hands, in a world of thought and self pity. I could see that he was having a hard time coming to grips with the Cancer and the treatment. Every hurt he ever felt, every mistake he ever made in his life, he now lamented over, and let rule his better judgement. It was heartbreaking.

“I just don’t think I can handle it. All the misery, the sickness, going bald.”

I saw tears coming to his cheeks as he tried to hide them. I put my arm around him and he collapsed against me, holding on to me and crying on my shoulder.

“Shh, it’s okay, Aiden. Let it all out.” I did my best to comfort him. I had never had a man come to me in tears, and it was difficult for me not to cry with him.

“I’m sorry, this is so hard for me, just too much to handle.”

“Shh, it’s okay.” I looked up and saw Dimitris come into the bar. He knew that I saw him, but I continued to hold Aiden as he tried to gain control of himself. “Aiden, you’re going to be okay, but you must start treatment. Others have gone through it, so, you’ll be able to handle it, but you have to have a more positive attitude. You’re strong, you can fight it, but you have to start now.” I looked at Dimitris, he slid into the booth on the other side of Aiden. He put his hand gently on Aiden’s back shoulder.

“You must do as this woman say, or she will never forgive.” Dimitris said.

“Dimitris. I’m sorry, man. I, I’m___.”

“No, Aiden, I am sorry I intrude. I will let you talk, I leave.”

“No, don’t leave, I’ll buy you a beer, sit down.” Aiden straightened himself up, and had the waitress bring another round of beer.

“Aiden, you know there are a lot of people who care about you? Maybe you should allow them to show you that they care,” I said.

“I don’t know what you mean.”

“You tend to build this wall around yourself. You have friends, but you step back, not letting anyone get too close. It’s time to let down your defenses,

Aiden. Let the people who care about you in, and let yourself love someone special.”

“You must listen, Aiden. You are good man, much life out there for you not to miss. Those who care, Rena, Stefano, Andreas, Helena and Morgana, all worry on you. Is not ‘oh, too bad,’ is ‘oh, my God, why he does nothing to stop this cancer?’ They worry on you Aiden, care for you to be okay.”

“I don’t know what to say, I . . .”

“We know that it’s been an emotional upheaval in your life, and you’ve had to bear the burden by yourself, but we’re all here for you, just let us help you through it. Okay?”

I looked at Dimitris, he had that worried look on his face. Aiden sighed deeply. I was still holding his forearm and trying to coax him to agree. The silence was profound then he finally said,

“Okay, I’ll give it a try.”

I was overjoyed, then the tears came as I hugged him. Dimitris patted him on the back and said,

“Good man, Aiden. Where is this treatment to be? When to start?”

“They want to do surgery first, then the chemo. I’m not looking forward to the surgery, but that doesn’t bother me. It’s the chemo that scares me.”

“They want to do the surgery first, then chemo? I wonder why they aren’t doing the radiation treatments? Aren’t they easier on the body than chemo?” I asked.

“I asked the doctor that too, but he said considering where the cancer is and how delicate the tissue is anyway, besides the surgery, it wouldn’t be as effective. I didn’t argue, I figured he should know what he’s talking about,” Aiden explained.

“Is better, Aiden, with possible spread to lymph glands, chemo best to stop,” Dimi said.

“Call, make the arrangements. We’ll be there, we’ll take you in, and wait until you’re out of surgery. Here, call your doctor. Now, Aiden.”

“Better to do as she say, Aiden.” Dimitris sighed. Aiden gave a little chuckle then took my cell phone. He called for the surgery schedule. When he got off the phone he said,

“There. Tomorrow morning I go to the lab at Metaxas Memorial and they’ll draw blood and do whatever tests they do. The surgery will be on Wednesday.” He took a deep breath. “I feel better already.”

“Thank you, Aiden.” I hugged him again but I took Dimitris’ hand that was on the table. I didn’t want him to have any hard feelings about Aiden or my behavior with him.

“Do you need someone to go with you for the lab work?” I asked.

“No, I can do it on my own. I feel like I’ve been such a baby about this, I have to apologize. No, I’ll get over there tomorrow, I guess they don’t want me to eat anything before they take my blood, so I’ll get over there the first thing in the morning,” he promised.

“I’m going to be checking on you, so you’d better follow through,” I said sternly, and gave him a smile. “Where did you say they are doing the surgery?” I asked again.

“Metaxas Memorial in Piraeus.” Aiden said, then I looked at Dimitris.

“I know where is,” he said.

“I’ve kept you enough for one day, I guess I’d better get back home, and get prepared,” Aiden said.

“Do you need ride?” Dimi asked.

“No, I’ve got my truck here. If I hurry I can still get the ferry.” He held his hand out Dimitris to shake. “Thank you, Dimitris, for being so understanding. I appreciate it.” They shook hands, and Dimitris said

“Call to tell how goes at lab.”

“I will.” Aiden turned to me and I hugged him once more and I said,

“Everything will be alright. You’re doing the right thing. I’m going to call you if you don’t let me know how it goes tomorrow.” There was a long pause as I pulled back to look in his eyes. “Everything will be okay, Aiden, remember that.” He smiled, but I think he was only saying what I wanted to hear.

“I will. Now, I’ve got to go. Thank you, Helen, Dimitris.” Then he left.

We stood together in the parking lot, watching Aiden leave. Dimitris put his arm around my waist as he walked me to the little car.

“You will drive carefully, my Heart,” he said.

“You, too.” I kissed him. He held my face in his hands, then looking at me,

he hugged me gently, then opened the car door for me.

“You go, I follow,” he said as he helped me into the car, and closed the door.

As I drove back up the coast, I thought about Aiden. It was such a worrisome thing, one that I felt helpless in the face of, and knowing that no one can know what he’s going through but himself, I knew I could only be as supportive as Dimitris would let me.

Then I thought about Dimitris. This man, I know we still have some talking to be done on this whole matter, but his generosity in allowing me to go to Aiden’s side, not giving me a guilty conscience about it and then lending support to Aiden in this crisis, this is something that amazed me. I was ready, and expecting the guilt trip, the innuendos and the temper tantrums. Instead, he gave his support, and his trust. He allowed me to be me, to use my own judgment. I wasn’t used to this!

There was a time when I would have had accusations, and threats thrown at me as if I were doing something wrong. Compassion is a fragile thing, and with Dimi, mine was not threatened or broken. I was able to be compassionate and show another human being that he mattered. What was important to me, became important to him, unselfishly.

Dawning Realization



It was dark by the time we got home. Having collected my purse and put on my shoe, Dimitris opened my door to help me out of the car. “How does this woman drive without shoes?” He said to himself as he waited for me to put on the other shoe. I looked at his face when I took his hand, he was shaking his head with the humor he found in it.

“Haven’t you ever driven without shoes, Dimi?”

After getting the fire going and warming up the house, we only want to sit in the quietness and reflect on what this day brought us.

“My Heart, you do wonderful thing for Aiden, now he gets treatment and get better. You do this,” he said softly, kissed me quickly then went to the fireplace. “We must get this fire to go, get chill off.”

I made a pot of hot chocolate. It was nice to sit by the fire and sip the warm richness. It was what we needed to restore our bodies and spirits.

“Sweetie, did you get any work done today, in the lab?”

“I make big advance in my theory, and study go well. Still to write report, but Dimi make big step today. Helena? We should make the food, fish or chicken?”

“I’m not very hungry, all I need is something small, just a snack. I don’t

know, even that doesn't grab me." Dimitris came up to me, kissed my cheek and said,

"This man will not have my Helena not eat. Today have over emotion, now time to relax and have the food."

"Dimi, let's just have something small and light, just nibble. I can't eat a full course dinner. Do you mind?" He looked at me, those big dark eyes looking worried, then he sighed slightly, and gave me an understanding smile.

"Yes, my Heart, we nibble." He went to the kitchen and began preparing something we could snack on, as I poured two wine glasses with a local Sangria. I took the wine glasses into the red room. I turned the tv on and lowered the volume.

"Helena? Where you go?" I heard from the living room.

"I'm in the bedroom." He came in with the snack tray and laid it on the vanity seat.

"Why we come in here?"

"I'm so tired, I thought we could have our snack and a little wine, watch a little tv maybe, and relax. Do you mind?"

"Is good, but is early, do you wish to sleep?"

"Not really, but it's cozy in here, and I haven't seen you all day. I thought we could just loll around in bed. It would feel like such a luxury."

"We do then." He gave me a peck on the temple and left the room. I got undressed and put on something comfortable then got into bed. Dimitris fed the dogs and chickens and wasted no time taking off his clothes and bringing the snack tray to the bed with him. I made room on the large tray for the wine glasses to sit.

"I give toast to my Angel. I will learn to be kind as my Helena is kind," he said as he tapped my glass.

"You're a kind man, what sort of toast was that?"

"Dimi see more than you know."

"Let me see your hand."

"You do not eat,...eat." He said, as I took his hand. "What you see there, my Heart?"

"Let me see...I see...you will have a long and happy life___." He started

looking at his palm with me. "And here, this is your heart line, and it has been broken, but only once." He looked at me and smiled. "Over here, tells me you are a romantic, but over here, you have kept this hidden for a long time." He kissed my neck. "Over here, tells me you have a wife, who loves you very, very much.....and here..."

"Oh, my Love." He continued speaking in a soft voice in Greek. I looked into his eyes and melted. He kissed me passionately. The tray and glasses were removed from the bed, and we made love. I felt alive and my spirit reborn. I realized a new appreciation for his love for me. Seeing Aiden in such low spirits and the thought of death, breathing down his neck, made me more aware and appreciative of what I have in my life. Selfishly, I made love to my husband and thanked God for him being alive and healthy.

I held him tightly against me, close to my heart. I could never fully make him understand how much I love him. To have to uncouple gives me a pang of fear. It's a feeling that I've never had with anyone else, and it's hard let go of him.

"My Helena, I must tell you a thing," he said.

"What is that Sweetheart?" I said. He placed my hand over his heart.

"Dimi love his Heart. You have most beautiful soul. You do for others, not ask for any return. Dimi think, when Aiden come here, Dimi would lose his angel to him. Now, I see,..I can see..." I kissed him as he was fishing for words.

"Not to interrupt, my Heart. Tomorrow, Dimi have appointment with doctor. Get checkup, so my Helena no have to worry. You have appointment to see lawyer. More papers to take to him. Get out of way, so you spend time when Aiden need you."

"You have been so wonderful about this, thank you, Dimi."

In the morning I was awakened by a most sensuous kiss, in the dark. Dimitris was sitting on the edge of the bed, all dressed and ready to leave.

"Dimi will miss his heart today." He said in a soft voice as he leaned over me.

"Where are you off to so early?" I asked, still half asleep.

“Meeting at University. Doctor will be there, so Dimi hit both birds with stone.”

“Aren’t you going to have breakfast, or anything?”

“No, my Heart, we eat when there. Now, papers for lawyer on table, he see you at 10:30 am. Do not forget, take papers. I will call later. Now, I go. S’agapo, Helena.”

I slept until almost 9 am. I went to the kitchen, to make coffee, and found a little note on the counter from Dimi:

“Only to add water, my Heart.

S’agapo

D”

“That’s so sweet,” I thought that he would make coffee before he left. He’s such a gift. I rambled around this old house that’s so quiet when he’s not home.

After the morning rituals, I got into the little car, it’s cute little ‘tinker-toy’ noise that it makes, with its swinging mirror, performed in it’s little old faithful way, as we journeyed around the hills down into New Rhodes City. Finding a place to park took longer than the drive into town. I finally squeezed in a very tight spot, but at least the little car wasn’t in a tow away zone. I had to walk almost four blocks to the legal offices. When I got there, there was a sign on the wall which listed all of the names of the attorneys and their suite numbers. I forgot the attorney’s name. I had to take out the papers to read the name on the letterhead. I found the name of the lawyer in a suite on the eleventh floor. As I rose in the elevator, it would stop at nearly every floor. I finally exited on the eleventh floor and found the office of Marcus Milanopolos.

As I sat in the waiting room, I looked over the papers. They were mostly in Greek, copies of insurance policies on the house, the other property on Kefalonia and a few other documents. I found a power of attorney, a copy of Dimitris’ codicil to his will and a copy of his birth certificate.

I looked over the certificate of birth, which had stapled to it the English

translation. It gave his father's name, occupation and age, Mother's name, maiden name, age, (no occupation for her on this document). Number of previous pregnancies, then listed the vital statistics for the birth of Dimitris Patakinis. But as I read the English document, there must have been a mistake in the typing or translation.

When I was called into the office, I sat before a small, thin man. He reminded me of a little book worm.

"Mrs. Patakinis, please, hello, my name is Harold Carstairs, Jr. I am Mr Milanopolos' assistant, how are you? I am very happy to make your acquaintance. You have the documents?"

"Hello, Mr. Carstairs, I think there might be a slight error on one of the documents." I said.

"Oh, really? Can you tell me where it might be?" He asked as he laid out the papers across his desk.

"It's on the second page of the Record of Birth. The date of birth was translated wrong." I said.

"I am sorry, I do not, ...no, I do not see where there is an error. You see this," he pointed to the document, "in Greek, is this", pointing again to the document.

"But the date is wrong." I said.

"I am sorry, Mrs. Patakinis, I will check on this, of course, and we will make the necessary changes."

"Mr. Patakinis said that I was to finalize my will," I said. "I believe that Mr. Milanopolos was to notarize it for me".

"Yes, I can do that for you."

"He also wanted you to explain the estate to me," I said.

I was in a daze, when I left the lawyer's office. Everything that I thought I already knew, turned out to be radically different than I had expected. I was in shock to say the least. I had signed so many papers, had documents notarized, some were going to be filed with the court, others were kept with the attorney, and I was bringing back photo copies with me. I seemed to be driving in circles, even though I wasn't lost, I just didn't pay much attention to where this little car was taking me.

Most of the documents were in Greek and I had to trust that the attorney knew what I was doing when I signed them. After he had explained what needed to be done and why, I was handed a pen and each document as instructed.

The thoughts of what I had learned swarmed my mind as I drove. My heart was racing and I needed to stop to gather myself together, to relax and get some perspective. I pulled into a parking space on the main road, then walked to an outdoor sidewalk café. I ordered a coffee and fruit bowl, and while I waited, I tried sorting the thoughts in my mind. Even though I had this associate attorney explain what all the investments and properties were and the savings, stocks, and other things, I got so overwhelmed that my mind shut down. The main thing that threw me completely off balance was his birth certificate.

It wouldn't have made any difference if the dates were only off by a few years, but this! It's off more than I could be comfortable with, and I don't know if Dimitris knew of the difference in our ages. This detail scared me more than the other things that I didn't understand.

I finished at the café, then drove toward the house and I felt my heart sending me into a panic. I knew that Dimitris wasn't home yet, so why would I get such reactions? I pulled up the driveway and before I opened the gate, I looked at the house, the chickens in the yard, the garden beyond, it was almost perfect.

After I pulled in and fed the chickens. I felt better. There's something about watching these miracles of nature, that was relaxing. Even the dogs were behaving. I wasn't sure when Dimitris would be home, I assumed that he'd be home close to 5pm. When he called, I decided to wait to bring up the birth certificate.

"I am missing my Heart, Helena, do you miss your Dimi?"

"Yes, I miss you, Sweetie, when will you be home?"

"I will take next ferry."

"Oh, you've already done the work at the lab? That was pretty quick."

"Results in two days."

“Any more tests?”

“No, not yet, how was day for my Helena?”

“I think it went okay, I signed everything and still don’t know if I understand it all.”

“Yes, too many different things to worry on. Dimi will change that, but for now, we leave alone.”

“Where are you now?”

“I wait for ferry. Another twenty minutes,” he said.

“Okay, do you want me to pick you up?” I asked.

“No, have land barge at docks already, I am home soon, my Heart.”

I put the water on the stove to make tea, and knew that by taking the hydroplane, he would be home at any time. I was anxious about my discovery and wasn’t sure where our mutual revelation would lead us. I know that these days an age difference in married couples is not a big deal, but I wasn’t comfortable with this information not coming out in the beginning of our relationship. It never even entered my mind as I was too bowled over with all of the confusion that our early relationship had. I don’t know why he never asked me my age, but then I never asked him either. The celebration of name day has nothing to do with gaining another year of age, and perhaps not counting is better. Still, I was apprehensive at having to open this conversation.

I went to my studio. On the easel facing me, was my current work, a very uninspired landscape. It didn’t invite me to work on it.

“My Heart, Dimi is home.” I heard his voice from the kitchen. I covered my work area and left the studio.

“Dimi, you’re home. I missed my Dimi,” I said as I put my arms around him and gave him a kiss.

“Ah, my Heart, I am home,” he said as he kissed me ‘hello.’

“I’m making tea, do you feel like a cup?” I asked as I turned toward the kitchen.

“Tea, yes, is good.” He took off his coat and came into the kitchen behind me. I reached up to get him a cup when he put his arms around me and

snuggled my neck. "I miss my Helena today, mmm smelling good."

I smiled and tapped his arm. "Careful, I'm pouring the hot water here." He kissed my neck then went to the refrigerator.

"What we will have for dinner?"

"Something quick and easy. You've had a full day; I'll cook something," I said and handed him the tea cup. He put his hand on mine then said,

"You are tired. Dimi will cook." He kissed my shoulder, and all that I could think of was that birth certificate. When the phone rang, Dimitris kissed my fingers and went to the phone. I could tell he was talking to Andreas. When he finished, he came to me, kissed my temple and said,

"Morgana and Andreas come in ten minutes. We pick up at docks then we go out to eat. Is better?"

"Yeah, that sounds better, it's been a while since we all went out. Where should we eat?"

"We all vote on where to go, huh?"

"Come, let's sit in the living room to have our tea." I took his cup as we went to the living room.

I put the tea pot on the table and turned toward Dimitris, sitting on the sofa. I wanted to ask him a few things, but I didn't know how to bring up the subject. Age, even the thought of the numbers that get larger and larger, is not something that you'd like to bring up in casual conversation. It's not an issue as far as how I feel, mentally, and although I wonder how long it will be before my body falls apart, I live my life at an age I feel I have always been. I don't believe that adding numbers to your total time of existence makes you old, perhaps it's your life experience, or maybe you've always been an "older" age than your years, but the idea of having to discuss it with my new husband made me nervous.

On top of the age issue was the overwhelming body of worth that this man has accumulated that I had no inkling about until recently. Learning this made me apprehensive. I'm not used to it. As much as I try to appear self-confident and capable, I wonder if I'm wrong in my way of thinking about myself, and what I am capable of, on my own.

I put my arm around his shoulder and kissed his cheek. I had my fingers playing with his hair that finds its way into his collar.

“Mr. Milanopolos, you understand as he talks?”

“I saw a Mr. Carstairs. He spoke English, but there’s too much for me to take in at one time.” I said as I fished for an opportunity to open the subject.

“Dimi will simplify one day soon. Many things to consolidate, make easier. You will see.” He had this sweet smile that pulled on my heart. I felt like I was about to burst his bubble of happiness.

When the phone rang, I almost jumped out of my skin. It jarred my thoughts out of my dreaded topic and back into what was going on around me. Andreas and Morgan were at the docks, so we had to go to pick them up. When we got there, the Athena was tied off and moored, and Andreas and Morgan were sitting on the bench at the end of the dock.

“I hope you guys are hungry because I’m starving,” Morgan said as soon as they were in the car.

“Where do you want to eat?” I was open to any suggestions, and Dimitris wasn’t picky, so he didn’t care where we went.

“I feel like a huge fruit salad, or something like that, something cold and crisp,” she said.

“I know perfect place,” Dimitris said, as he turned the car West. We traveled down the Western side of the island, then South to a pub that was off the main road, but overlooked the ocean. It didn’t look like much on the outside, but when we went in, I was pleasantly surprised. We picked a cramped booth with a window that looked out at the sea.

“How is your decorating going, Morgan?” I asked.

“I’m not busy at the moment, but I’ve got two designs and estimates to do, and then I imagine I’ll be in a crunch for time. It never rains, but it pours!”

“What this mean, rains or pours?” Dimitris asked.

“Well, I go a month with nothing to do then suddenly everyone wants things done all at once. It’s frustrating.” Morgan replied.

“Yes, I see, too much at one time, is not good. American language is funny.”

“She will run herself ragged with the decorating,” Andreas said.

“I have to have something to keep me busy. You’re gone so much of the

time; I'd go nuts otherwise." She said.

"I will not let my Helena go nuts. I will keep her close, or Dimi go nuts." We all laughed at that. His use of the language brings a bit of humor that I'm not sure is always intended.

"So what are we going to do today?" Morgan asked.

"You girls can have a free day together while Dimi and I fix fences," Andreas answered.

"What's wrong with the fence?" I thought maybe he might have been speaking metaphorically.

"Trees in way on property line. Knock down fence. Maybe we clear trees." Dimi said.

"Oh, don't cut down the trees. Just move the fence away from them." I hated to see these old trees be cut down, after so many years of survival.

Dimitris put an arm around my neck and with a peck on the cheek, he said

"You see, my Helena? To save the trees she will give away the land. Too kind to hurt the trees. Okay, we move, but this only for my Helena." Dimitris said with a smile, looking into my eyes.

"It isn't that I'm giving away the land."

"Yes, I know, just joke, my Heart."

Once we got back to the house, the men gathered the supplies they needed and headed out to the downed fence line. Morgan and I were talking about Aiden and then the conversation allowed me to release some of my pent-up anxiety.

"Morgan, when I went to see the attorney to sign papers, there was something there that really shocked me."

"What, that he's probably a millionaire?" She joked.

"No, well, not quite, but you know how they make a big deal about 'name day' here, and birthdays kind of go by without much notice?"

"Yeah."

"Well, I got a look at Dimis' birth certificate."

"And?"

"He's a lot younger than I thought."

“How much younger?” She asked. I looked at my friend and was hesitant to say it, like if I said it out loud, it would actually be true.

“Eleven years.”

“Eleven?”

“Yes, I thought maybe, he would be close to my age, but eleven years, that’s more than I figured.”

“That’s not a big deal. If it were twenty years, then, yeah, I’d worry, but doesn’t he already know all this?”

I hadn’t thought about whether he knew already. I hesitated in answering.

“I don’t know. He’s never asked me my age. Shit, he saw everything else before we even really knew each other, you’d think he would ask my age, though.”

“Maybe it doesn’t matter to him. Didn’t you have to have a birth certificate to get married?”

“Yes. He took care of the civil paperwork, and he never said a thing!” I gasped. “He’s known all this time, I’ll bet.”

“It’s not a big deal; you worry too much.”

“What about you and Andreas?” Her expression suddenly got very serious, and she clammed up. It was as though she had a revelation and it scared her.

“I didn’t think of that; he’s never actually asked me mine. Crap! He’s younger than Dimi! Shit Helen, we’re robbing the cradle!” She exclaimed, then smiled.

“I wouldn’t say that exactly, but you’d think we’d know our husband’s age. Where have we been? I’m out of it, obviously!”

“Have you asked him about it? No, I guess not. Wow, now I’ve got to worry about this too. I think when we had that first serious talk on Athena, he said something about not being a teenager or something! I was so nervous and flustered, I don’t know what he said. Thanks, Helen.” She said with dagger eyes.

“Hey, don’t blame me. I’ve got to bring up the subject to Dimi, but I’m a little gun-shy.”

“You? I’m in the same boat, but you’re married. If Andreas, oh my____, what is Andreas going to think? He’ll probably tell me he’s changed his mind. So,

now what?" She flustered.

"I guess the first thing is to try to see the humor in it, and since I don't see anything funny."

"Me either."

"Then, I guess we'll have to see where they stand. Maybe they never thought about it, since 'name day' is the day they celebrate, maybe they have a whole other concept on age? I've never brought up the subject before, so I don't know." I said.

"Well, it's obvious that it doesn't matter to Dimi, he loves you so it wouldn't matter to him. I'm not sure about Andreas. I mean there might be even more than eleven years difference with him and I. Crap! And I was only just getting used to the idea of maybe getting married. I guess that's the end of that! I knew it wasn't going to last." Morgan was already defeated before the conflict.

"I don't think that there will be a problem, at least, I hope not. I have no doubt of their love for us, it's just that, what if they don't know? What if they never thought about it and we're opening up a can worms by bringing it up? I'll look at Dimi and wonder what he's thinking, is the revelation going to eat into him and eventually, he'll find someone younger? All these thoughts have been going through my mind since I saw that birth certificate. I wish I never saw it."

"What are you going to do, tell him you saw his birth certificate and tell him your age?" Morgan asked the question that I had been asking myself. How will I bring this up?

"I don't know. I'll have to clear the air; I just can't sit on something like this and wait for it to blow up in my face."

"Now it's going to be bugging me; I was fine until you pointed it out. I don't know why I never asked his age; I guess maybe I thought it wouldn't last anyway, so..." Morgan sounded defeated.

"I've had several hours with this bit of news on my brain, but how are you with it? I know it blows your mind, but how serious of a deal is it to you?"

"You're right about it blowing my mind, but I don't know. It's like you said, what if he's totally unaware of there being a big difference in our age and then he gets all weird about it?" She was beginning to flail.

“Well, then you’ll know. You’ll know that it does matter to him. What about Dimi? He married me, maybe thinking I was a little younger, he doesn’t have a way out, so I might never know how he really feels.”

“When are you going to bring it up?” She asked.

“Probably tonight, when we’re alone.”

“In bed.”

“Yeah.”

When the phone rang, I was fixing the fireplace for the fire tonight.

“Would you get that for me?” I asked.

“Helena, it’s Aiden.” She handed me the phone as I was wiping the soot off of my hands.

“Hello, Aiden. How’d it go?” I asked.

“They ran a bunch of blood tests. I thought they already did all those tests before, but what do I know? It took all day; they gave about fifty pages of instructions of things I should do to help me from getting sick on the chemo and man! What I did to get this, I don’t know.”

“I know, Aiden, it’ll be rough, but you can do this. Have they given you a time for the surgery?”

“Yes, I have to fast and go in the morning. I guess they’ll start the chemo right away. Maybe before I leave the hospital. So, I’m on my way,” he said with reluctance.

“Where are you now? I worry that you aren’t keeping positive thoughts.”

“Oh, Helen, you always wanted the silver lining. I’ve tried to have a good outlook. I know the surgery will be a piece of cake. So, don’t worry about me.”

“Did they say how long you’ll be in the hospital?”

“I think just overnight,” he said.

“Do you want me to be there?”

“I don’t think you need to make the trip. I’ll be out of it anyway,” he sounded resigned.

When I got off of the phone, I didn’t see Morgan anywhere. I went into the

kitchen and put on more water on for tea.

“Morgan? Morgan?” I called. I didn’t see where she went but figured she was in the bathroom.

“Helen, I really like what you did in your studio!” She was enthusiastic and upbeat.

“Yeah, I needed to have a place where I could sit and relax, think. The room is so damn big, I put a sitting area on the side, to help use up the some of the space. It would echo when I’d walk across the floor, it was distracting,” I said.

“It really looks nice, for a studio. I like the grouping of small pictures and things on the wall. The use of lace curtains for room dividers is a nice touch.”

“I’ve got the water on to boil; I thought we’d have some tea,” I said.

“That sounds good.”

We talked over our tea for about a half hour before the men came in. They were full of dirt and leaves from the trees. They tried to brush themselves off, but the smell of fresh air and dried leaves was all about them. Andreas went to Morgan’s side, and she picked leaves out of his hair. Dimitris gave me a bear hug and nuzzled his face into my neck, took the clip out of my hair and gave a little growl.

“How is the fence coming?” I asked.

“Oh, is wonderful,” Dimitris said. “We have gone around your beautiful trees, my heart.”

“Are you finished out there?”

“No, much to do, still. We rest, have maybe some wine and cheese, and then we go out before too cold out there.”

“Is he keeping you busy, Andreas?” I asked.

“My brother is a slave driver, I should have him back working with my crew. If I could have more men like Dimi and Aiden, I’d have all the work in the islands.”

“It does Dimi good to get outside and do a little hard work. He’s stuck in that lab too many hours in the week,” I said.

“This woman worries for the health of this man, Andreas. If my Helena did not have Dimi see doctor, the doctor would never see me. Poor Aiden, he has no one to make him stay healthy.”

“Oh, Dimi, Aiden called.”

“What he say?”

“He’ll be checking into the hospital in the morning. I guess the surgery will be around 9 am.” I pulled out some cookies to go with the wine Dimi poured.

“You must go there tomorrow, he will want to have someone there when waking,” he said.

“He doesn’t seem to want anyone there.”

“Yes, well,” he kissed my forehead, “you will be there just the same. Andreas, we must go back before getting dark.”

“I shall return, my little bumble bee,” Andreas said to Morgan and kissed her on the top of the head. She turned a little red and Dimi and I both laughed.

Dimitris planted a juicy kiss on my lips, and then they went back out to work on the fence.

“Morgan, I’m supposed to go to see Aiden tomorrow, are you going to be busy?”

“Not really, I was going to work on some designs while we’re here, but I don’t have to. Does he know anything yet on the chemo?” She asked.

“He seems to think that they’ll start it before he leaves the hospital. Poor Aiden, he’s so scared and doesn’t know what questions to ask. He really needs someone in his life. I wish he’d just meet someone.”

“He’s not as bad as he used to be, I think he’s accepted the fact that you’re married now.” Morgan sounded sad. “How long will he be on the chemo?”

“See? I don’t know, he doesn’t know, he’s in such shock over it all, that he hasn’t asked any questions. Maybe they won’t know until after they do the surgery.”

“I guess we’re spending the night, but if you need to be there in the morning, you’ll have to fly,” she said.

“What?” My attention was diverted elsewhere. “It’s Dimi. He’s sooo, I don’t know how I ever landed him. He’s so kind and considerate, he came into the restaurant while I was comforting Aiden, and he was supportive and sympathetic. I’ve never seen anyone like him. If it were Mark, I’d be dead.”

“Well, he’s Dimi, and in case it slipped by you, he landed you.”

I smiled, and I guess it was meant to be reassuring. We were laughing at

how things seem to have a way of working out, even when we expect the worst.

“When Aiden had his crisis, and then Dimitris walked in, I was expecting to see a real volcano erupt, and what I saw was a compassionate, understanding man who lent his support.”

“I would be surprised if he did anything else in that circumstance. You know that they have spoiled us for anyone else? We’d better make this thing work with them, well, I’d better find out where I stand with Andreas. I don’t want to get an ulcer, worrying about it,” she said.

“I don’t think you have anything to worry about.”

“No? I have more to worry about than you do. He’s a lot younger than Dimitris, and Dimitris is younger than I am!”

“Oh, you’re exaggerating!” I joked, trying to lighten the mood.

“I don’t know about that.”

“I think we should start something for dinner. They’ll be hungry when they come in. We were going to go out to eat, weren’t we? I don’t know where my mind is, I swear! I think I’m too nervous to go somewhere to eat, I’d be so on edge that Dimi would want to know right away what’s going on with me. Come into the kitchen with me, you can help me fix something that you’ll be able to eat.”

“I don’t feel like having to change my clothes just to eat somewhere, either.” Morgan was sounding down in the mouth now, also.

“We have a few choices of things to fix, things that everyone could eat.” Morgan made a face when I suggested a meatless spaghetti dish. We made a huge salad. We were just about ready to call in the guys when they came into the house laughing.

“What is smelling so good, my Heart? What you do?”

“We were just going to call you in to eat. Go ahead and get cleaned up. I’ll put the food on the table.” He gave me a big hug and a smooch on the cheek. He had the smell of the outdoor air on him, and the cold on his cheeks. “Get washed up.” I whispered, and kissed his cheek.

Considering that I threw a bunch of things together in a bowl and stir fried some fresh vegetables, dinner came out pretty good and I have to admit that

the Tofu Marinade that Morgan made, wasn't half bad. We had our Brandy by the fire and laughed about my trees and how carefully they moved the property line. Andreas was teasing Morgan about her lack of height as she was teasing him on his inability to sit through a movie.

When Dimitris went to the kitchen, I followed him in to talk about Aiden.

"Sugar, I was talking to Morgan about maybe going with me tomorrow to see Aiden."

"Good, you should not go alone."

"It's okay then? Do you want to go? We'll have to fly." I said.

"I will go with Andreas, he will take the Athena back to Athens, but first stop at Karpathos."

"Then what will you be doing? Are you going to meet us later, or should we just go to the condo and wait for you?" I asked.

"Best to go to condo, we do a thing before we go to Athens, so not to wait at hospital."

"You're a little mysterious." I said. He kissed me and whispered

"Yes, Dimi has the many secrets." Then he kissed me and we went back to the living room.

"We're going to bed; it will be an early morning." Andreas was referring to the tide and launching the Athena.

"We, too, will go to bed, little Andreas."

I was brushing out my hair when Dimitris came in and got into the shower. When he got out, I was already in bed. I watched him, with a white towel around his waist and a towel drying his thick black hair.

When he came to bed, I suddenly got scared, and nervous about what I was going to say, which seemed like I had rehearsed it all, over and over in my head.

"Helena? Do you know where is hospital?"

"No, but I think that Morgan does."

"Perhaps take taxi, better to be safe." He put his arms around me. When he put his hand on my cheek and went to kiss me, I almost jumped in a nervous twitch.

“What is it, my Angel?” He looked at me with such a sweet, concerned expression. I said everything was fine. We made love, and it was sweet, but my mind was on other things, and he knew.

“Helena, Helena,” he said as he collapsed by my side, bringing me to lay my head on his shoulder, my hand on his chest. “Will Dimi know what is bothering you?”

“I, it’s just...”

“Tell Dimi, my Heart, is it to do with Aiden? You no want Dimi to go to hospital?”

“No, no, it’s nothing to do with him.” I said.

“You will tell Dimi.” He was so calming, so comforting, I just didn’t want to tell him this, but I knew that I couldn’t go on this way, not knowing if he knew.

“I, when I went to the attorney, there was a copy of your birth certificate.”

“Yes, they will have copy of both our birth certificates.”

“Have you seen mine?” I nervously asked.

“Yes, we have copies for the legal reasons,” he answered.

“Dimi, do you know the difference in our ages?” He reached up to turn on his lamp. He propped himself up on one elbow and looked at me. He knew that I was upset, but I’m not sure if he knew what to say. He hesitated. “Don’t look at me, Dimi,” I said as I tried to turn away. I was going to sit on the side of the bed, and walk to the vanity or the bathroom. I couldn’t look at him, or have him look at me. I suddenly felt like I was open to a world of hurt, and I was preparing myself for it.

“What you mean ‘don’t look’?” He pulled me back to my pillow. “Helena, look to Dimi. This is what upsets you? Do not understand, what to upset over?” He stroked my arm and brushed my hair away from my neck. “My heart? Look to Dimi. Look to me, Helena.” He leaned over me and looked into my eyes. My eyes were welling up, and I knew I had to come out with it now, or I wouldn’t be able to speak.

“Dimi, did you realize that I am eleven years older than you?” It was out. I said it out loud, and I felt very flattened and vulnerable.

“Helena, these things you let upset you. This, Dimi know. Is not important, so never discuss. You are my Helena, that is what is important to Dimi.” He kissed my forehead and held me close to him. He put his lips next to my ear and whispered, “S’agapo, Helena. This of no importance to Dimi.” He kissed my neck a couple of times then suddenly stopped. He looked at me like something had just dawned on him.

“This is problem, Helena? That Dimi too young for my Heart? This is problem for you? Tell me.”

I put my hand to his cheek, and smiled through my tearing eyes and said

“I didn’t know, Dimi. I didn’t know you were that much younger.” He took my hand and kissed my fingers.

“My Heart, please do not throw back this fish.” Through the tears that streaked my cheeks, I smiled as I caught the spark in his eyes.

..-Notations-..





Look for all of The Shadows of Rhodes books in ebook or print. Print books are available at

<http://www.blurb.com>. The ebooks for this series is on Amazon.com.

Book 1. The Beginning

Book 2. The Gods Have Smiled

Book 3. Curiosity or Obsession (Release date: 01/11/2020)

Book 4. The Price of the Puzzle (Release date: 02/15/2020)

Soon to be released:

Book 5. The Red Eyed Cat

..-Notations-..



..- Glossary -..



Efhartisto.....	Thank you
Kafenía.....	Coffee Shop, Restaurant
Kalimera.....	Good Morning
Kalinikta.....	Good Night
Kalispera.....	Good Afternoon
Kefi.....	Ones uncontrollable joy
Meyedes.....	Appetizers, food, snacks
S'agapo.....	I love you
Taverna.....	Tavern/Pub

..-Notations-..



..- Connecting with the Author -..



If you enjoyed this story thus far, I would really love to hear from you. Your review of this book on Goodreads.com would very much be appreciated. By giving a star rating on Amazon or Goodreads it helps the author in so many ways. When a book has rating stars, it elevates the book in the ratings, which may give it better exposure. Thank you for giving my book a chance by purchasing and reading it.

To connect with the author please see the links below:

ginatoinette@yahoo.com

<http://www.georginaAntoinette.com>

<http://www.twitter.com/irite2>

<http://www.facebook.com/rhodesdreams>

..-Atlas-..



