

The Red Eyed Cat

The Shadows of Rhodes
book 5

Georgina
Antoinette

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The Shadows of Rhodes, Book 5
The Red Eyed Cat

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*A lifetime ago, with many years and memories
shared. and finding the funny side of boredom.
This is for the braid pulling girl of Rancho Street.*

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

-GEORGINA ANTOINETTE-

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Sabotage



“*Camilla!*” The thought of her makes my blood boil. I had been in London for weeks. Dimitris and I had talked off and on, with the heartache apparent in our voices. I felt a part of me die each time I’d have to cut him off and end our conversation, or he would weaken my resolve.

“It is, what it is,” I told him, referring to the position in which we found ourselves. He sounded so depressed, and he knew how much *I* was hurting, although I tried to hide it. He would question me on why I left as if he didn’t know. I wouldn’t talk about it with him, as I would end up crying and losing my stance. When I said to “ask *Camilla*,” that should have been a big red flag for him.

Dimitris paced as he contemplated his predicament. As he thought about everything that was said, he wasn’t sure what it was to cause this major rift. If anyone would know, it would be Morgan, but would she betray a trust?

“Andreas! What you do on this warm day?” Dimitris asked from his cell phone.

“Hey Dimi, I’m getting my books updated. It’s been put off for too long, and now I must play ‘catch-up.’ Any news from Helena?”

“Is complicated. Will Morgana speak to this man?” Dimitris asked.

“What’s wrong? Is Helen alright?” Morgan asked.

“Nothing wrong, but I must ask. Do Helena tell about why she go? This

man do not understand what I do,” Dimitris asked.

“Geez, Dimi! It’s Camilla! You should know better,” she scolded.

“But I do not see Camilla. Do not know what to do. But, why she leave?”

“She didn’t tell you?” Morgan sighed in disbelief.

“She do not want to come back, Morgana. This man must do something,” he said.

“Why do I always get put in the middle of this kind of stuff? All I can tell you is that Camilla answered your phone and wouldn’t let Helena talk to you,” Morgan spewed.

“But how is possible? No! Is mistake.”

“Did you know Helena came home after the funeral and found Camilla’s earrings in the house, and Helena’s nightgown spread out on the bed? That pissed her off to no end. If it were me, I would have killed Andreas!”

“What? Camilla leave nightgown?” Dimitris asked.

“Not Camilla’s, it was Helena’s nightgown left on the bed. You should know better than to let her anywhere near the house.” Morgan scolded.

“Dimi, do not know of this. I do not see Camilla. She was not here!” He continued his solo in Greek. Morgan rolled her eyes in exasperation.

“I can’t understand what you’re saying! You’d better figure out what’s going on. Camilla is up to her old tricks, and this time Helena might not come back!”

“Efharisto, Morgana, thank you.” Dimitris ended the call to dial his sister-in-law.

The thought of Camilla causing more problems after everything she already did was more than he expected. She had already spent time in jail because of her cruel pranks, and everyone thought that would be the end of them.

“Reenie, where do Camilla live?” Dimitris asked.

“What’s going on, boy? Is Helena home now?” Rena asked.

“No, not home. Need to find Camilla. You know where she live?”

“Maybe you should call her. I can give you her number,” Rena suggested.

“Is better this man go to see, so no confusion on this,” he explained.

Thinking of the hurt that Camilla had already inflicted on Helena infuriated Dimitris. That, and not having Helena with him, made him feel sick along

with his anger. After settling the dogs, he drove the old VW south to Kremasti, Rhodes. When he pulled onto the street where her house stood, he had to stop to compose himself.

“This man will not lose temper, will not lose temper. WILL NOT LOSE TEMPER!” He pounded the steering. Taking a deep breath with hands gripping the steering wheel, he slowly drove up the street. When he approached the address, he noticed someone walking up the driveway to the house. Instead of stopping, he drove further up the street and around the corner of the block. He parked the car and peered back in the direction of her house.

“This insane!” He got out of the car and walked back toward her house. He could hear laughter and voices, other than Camilla’s. The car parked across the street must belong to her visitors. The closer he got, he could hear Camilla laughing that loud, shrill sound that sent the red of anger back into his eyes. His heart would pound with the breath he found he was holding. The group of people he could hear were congregating in the backyard of her house. Dimitris approached the side gate cautiously, as he could see three men. One of them was Bolio. Camilla came into view, handing out bottles of booze to each man. Dimitris quickly returned to the VW and pulled out his cell phone.

“Stefano, please give phone to Rena,” he rattled in Greek. Stefano, knowing his brother wouldn’t be so stressed that he’d speak the native tongue unless he was upset, handed her the phone.

“What has happened? Is it Helena?” Stefano asked in Greek.

“This man must have phone number of Camilla.” Stefano gave him the requested number.

“But what’s happened?” Stefano asked.

“If this man get arrested, you will come to Kremasti?”

“What are you doing? Why don’t you call the authorities? Don’t go off and make more trouble, you know that you’re being watched. Why chance it now?” Stefano tried to talk some sense to his brother.

The phone went silent in Stefano’s hand. There had to be a connection from Camilla to Helena’s absence. Stefano could only wait for word from

Dimi and hope it's not more trouble.

The connection to Camilla's phone seemed to be an endless wait until it started ringing. Finally, with laughter in the background, she answered her phone.

"Camilla," Dimitris said in a controlled voice.

"Dimi?" A phone call from him surprised her.

"This man would like to visit, would like to talk," he stated.

She was excited and unprepared. Her stammering was more from hearing his voice so unexpectedly than from the fact that she had been drinking.

"Yes, yes, but when? I've got people here, but I can get rid of them," she eagerly replied.

"Will see you in fifteen minutes."

"Yes, I'll be waiting." She quickly gathered the glasses from the men. "You have to go. Quickly, I have someone coming. Leave," she insisted in her rapid Greek.

The men all agreed to go to Taverna Alpha in town. They gathered their jackets and headed out the door to their car. As they were leaving the neighborhood, Dimitris could see their car traveling in the opposite direction than the little car was pointing. He waited a few more minutes, still trying to control his temper.

She looked as though she spent more time slathering on lipstick than she did straightening up the house. Camilla was wearing a floral shirtwaist dress that was too tight and unbuttoned from the top three buttons. She scooped her breasts up in her bra to enhance her voluptuous figure. She was preparing her game and laying the ground for an ambush.

"Dimi!"

"This man need to talk," he said.

"Come in," was her welcome in Greek. She was all smiles and giddy at the thought of her dream coming true. "Please come in. This is such a surprise! How are you?" She was excited and didn't wait for his answer, strutting her bosom into him and attempting a kiss.

Not looking at her, he discreetly moved her aside as he entered the doorway.

"It is time this man come to your home." It was hard to make small-talk

while the anger rises and is fighting to come out. Camilla closed the door behind him. He turned to speak to her. She threw her arms around his neck and planted a kiss on his lips that she thought would give him an undeniable message. He did not respond as she expected. She pulled back enough to ask him why he has come to her.

“It has been long time since we talk,” he said.

“Let me get us a drink, Retsina?” She asked, trying to give the idea of promised sex in every move.

“Beer, for this man.” Dimitris took the moment alone to scan the living room. Glancing at the decor, the lived-in mess, and at the end of a cardboard box that was tucked under an end table. The box was common enough, but this one seemed familiar; just another piece of the untidy room, perhaps?

“Mythos, it’s all I have. I hope you like.” She handed him the bottle and gazed deeply into his eyes. “You have surprised me with your visit. I thought you never would come to me,” she spoke in almost a whisper.

Dimitris reached into his pocket and withdrew the hoop earrings. The same earrings that he told the police he had already returned to her, and placed them on the coffee table.

“Where did you find them? I thought I lost these.”

“You did. You leave in my home.” His heart was pounding as his temper was rising. He always had a problem hiding his anger. His eyes betrayed him.

“How would I leave them there? Are you saying I come to your home without an invitation? They say your wife has the sticky fingers. She took them from Rena’s house. That’s where I left them.” She saw his eyes flare as they pinned her. She had to back-paddle before he lost his temper. “I’m not saying that she stole them, only that maybe she meant to give them back to me. Rena probably wanted her to drop them off to me, that’s what I meant.”

He stood abruptly and paced, thinking and trying to regain his composure. As he paced, he didn’t want to escalate the problem. He walked into the kitchen and with a deep exhalation; he grabbed the edge of the sink, looking down the drain. Camilla slithered up behind him, pushing him against the sink, her arms sliding around him.

“Please do not be angry, Dimi. I would do anything not to hurt you. You

can_,” she suddenly stepped back as Dimitris turned violently around and took a step toward her.

“What you try to do to this man, Camilla? Why? It make you happy to cause pain? You do not understand harm you do? Gives you pleasure? This is for the laughing?”

“I do nothing! I am but a small woman and live here quietly. I do nothing to that person you marry. And is *she* doing well?” Her last comment came gift wrapped with a snicker that silenced him. She revealed herself as an evil scourge from hell. He grabbed a chair at the kitchen dinette and sat, almost in a stupor-like daze, feeling beat, as if anything that he may say would make no difference to this creature.

“I’ll bring your beer, Dimi. You just relax.”

Dimitris felt defeated by her. In a state of depressive quietness, and to smooth his hair that she ruffled, he moved the newspaper on the table that was stuck to his elbow. What he uncovered brought him to life and gave him the answer to many questions.

He stood to leave.

“This man must go.”

“You must stay. I will cook, you have some wine, we will talk,” she sighed in that breathy sex-pot attitude.

“I will see you again, you will be sure of this.” He side-stepped her, gently closing the door behind him.

“I will see you soon, my darling,” Camilla said to the closed door in front of her. As she was washing up the glasses, she thought about Dimitris; of his eyes and running her fingers through his thick hair.

“I remember when we were growing up,” she continued, talking to herself, “you always wanted to be an astronaut when you grew up. Funny! And the time you kissed me in the agora. It was such a hot day, then you ran off to go swimming. You must have been fourteen years old. Oh, you were so handsome.” She gazed out the window over the sink as she wiped her hands. She strolled into the living room. A sly smile came over her face as the thought of Dimitris excited her. She knew that she would get her way.

“Speak,” the voice said, answering his cell phone.

“Bolio, I must see Primo right away,” she stated.

“What you want?” Bolio’s tone irritated Camilla.

“I have news for him, and I must see him,” she repeated.

“Why you don’t call him? You have number?” He asked in his broken Greek.

“No, I must see him, NOW,” she insisted. “You tell him.”

The excitement of putting her plan into action swallowed the irritation of Bolio. She held onto the magazine photo of Helena and Nick as she hummed a tune and danced to that tune.

Her excitement was hard to contain. She waited to hear from Primo, checking her hair and long red polished nails. After two hours, there was a knock at the door. She listened before opening the door.

“Who is it?” She listened for a reply.

“Vanderbur,” he answered abruptly.

“Thank God, you’ve come.” The urgency was clear in her voice.

“What is so important that I am here?” He asked.

“Please sit. Would you like a cool drink?” She offered.

“I have no time for this. What has happened?” He asked in an urgent, rushed tone.

“Primo, there has been a change of plans. I must tell you not to pursue Dimitris. He will be valuable to your project. He knows these islands and the people. His American wife is causing all the misery, and I can get to her through his family. *She* doesn’t matter, but leave Dimitris to me,” she insisted.

“What relevant information has he given you?” He asked.

Her mind was racing for a plausible answer.

“The University runs all the tests on relics and antiquities. The information is confidential. It is only available to the Department of Antiquities. It would be useful to see what they know,” she said. Primo began to take Camilla seriously.

“It is possible. And the American, she is in London?” He asked.

“This is why we should wait. Dimitris is lonely and he will tell me all about her,” Camilla convinced Primo.

“Very well. If he gets in the way, he will be dealt with. I must go.”

Primo left the house and was driven off in a black limousine.

“Dimi, why do you have to be so handsome? What can I do to...” she said aloud as she picked up the newspapers from the breakfast table. “I know, oh, I am brilliant!” She checked her lipstick, picked up her purse, and walked to the bus stop.

“Oh, it’s nice and cool in here. Pardon me, how can I look up a book I borrowed some time ago? I don’t remember the title,” she asked the Librarian.

“Do you have your card?” The Librarian asked.

“I don’t seem to have it on me,” Camilla admitted.

“What’s your name and the number of your address?”

“Helena Patakinis, number 1022,” Camilla looked around, making sure that no one familiar was within earshot.

The Librarian peeked over the top of her glasses scrutinizing Camilla.

“What is it? Why you look at me like this?” Camilla put on her indignant look.

“Nothing, it’s nothing,” the Librarian continued.

She left the library and immediately placed a call on her cell phone.

“...he work for airline. Why you need?” The little man with the bulging eyes asked.

“Have him find flight information on a passenger. I need everything on the American, ticketing, reservations, and any personal information you can find. Check the tour companies and get someone to follow her,” Camilla instructed. “I need everything you find immediately,” Camilla ordered.

“I get what I get,” Bolio said.

“You will get what I tell you and be quick about it. This is for Primo,” she barked.

“Yes, yes. I get,” Bolio jumped and ended the call.

Camilla drew out her mirror, checked her makeup, then re-entered the Library. She sat at a computer once again, with one purpose in mind. Public records, for a start.

“First, the public record of the marriage to Dimitris,” she said to herself.

“Ah, here we go. Name, Helen Page, residence in California, USA. This is her.”
She spent the afternoon gathering available information.

The next morning, she received a call.

“Yes, this is Camilla.”

“Bolio, I found something,” he reported.

“What? What did you find?” She demanded.

“She is in London now,” he said.

“Perfect, and where is Dimi?”

“Don’t know,” he answered.

“Oh, you are useless,” Camilla said and hung up the phone. She continued to mutter Greek expletives.

She sat at a bistro table, staring at the coffee swirling around in her cup. A devious smile came to her lips as she pictured her next move.

London



I was clearing the newspapers off the table when I found the theater pass given to me. To restore my spirits, I decided to treat myself to a night out. It was a Shakespearean play. My first experience with Shakespeare. It was surprisingly good, but it didn't lift my spirits at all. During the intermission, I heard my name called. I turned to look for a familiar face. At first, I didn't recognize anyone. Then out of the corner by the orchestra pit, I saw a hand wave. It was Nick.

I hadn't seen Nick since I had dinner in the pub with friends. He was the giver of the theater pass. I had to take a deep breath as I went toward him. His close resemblance to Dimitris was unnerving, except that Nick's hair had a soft curl to it and his eyes, something was different in the eyes. He had a supporting role in the play, and even with the stage makeup, his eyes sparkled like Dimi's, which made my heart race and made me feel uncomfortable.

He seemed happy to see me, which surprised me. We had only met one time. I thanked him again for the pass. He mentioned that the cast sometimes meets at a Bistro Pub down the street after a performance and would I want to meet him there?

The play was shorter than I thought it would be, and the Pub sounded like

a good place to get a bite to eat. Nick came a little later. He smiled and asked how I liked the play. He had so much enthusiasm about his role, and when he talked about the theater. I enjoyed his company, he was quite happy to talk about himself and his career. He ran down a long list of productions he acted in, and surprisingly enough, I had seen a few of the films, but I don't remember seeing him in them.

After dinner, he walked me to the tube then rode the line with me. "You have to be careful not to walk alone at night in the city." It was a few blocks to my door and he was right. It was about 11:30 p.m. by the time I got home.

I grabbed a cup of Chamomile tea and tried to relax before bed. I opened my laptop to catch up on email, which I neglected recently. Dimi's emails always pulled on my heart, but I had to tell him that I doubted I would ever return to live in Rhodes and for him to feel free to date. I didn't mention Camilla but I was sure he knew what I meant.

"Dimi! What are you doing here? I thought you were working with Andreas?" Rena, always chipper and able to cheer up anyone, was surprised that he would be there in Karpathos.

"Too quiet at home, too quiet," Dimi replied.

"Stefano had to go to the dig, but he'll be back by dinner time. Are you staying for dinner?"

"Must return, feed dogs and chickens," he said.

"Have you talked to Helena lately?"

"Only in dream, not on phone."

"For Pete's sake, Dimi! Call her! You two, what could be so bad that she left? What did you do?" Rena asked.

"Big misunderstanding," he said.

"Don't let it go on. You'll be able to get back to where you were," Rena suggested. This sounded like good advice.

Once he got home and fed all the animals, he sat at the computer. Just when he was going to send Helena an email, he received hers.

I no sooner sent the email and the phone started ringing. I had no excuse to not answer it. I knew it was Dimi before I saw the phone.

“Hello.”

“Helena, what you do to this man? What you mean ‘to date?’ Dimi do not date.”

“I’m just saying that you should go ahead and date, if you want to,” I said.

“Why Dimi want to do that? S’agapo, my wife.” He sounded so wounded.

“Don’t, Dimi. Please. Don’t say that to me.”

“Why I do not say? Dimi do not tell lie when I say this. Always will love my Heart.”

“You should have thought of that before. I can’t listen to it now,” I said.

“I do not understand. Why we are not together? This man miss his wife. Should be together, *now*.”

“Why do you say ‘now’ like that?” I asked.

“This go on long enough! This man do not do the project, do not go to Athens for it. Dimi is home, but no Helena here. So this man should come to you.”

“We still have the same problem getting between us.” My heart was pounding in my throat as the emotions tried to take over.

“No problem, there is *no problem*. Come home, you will see,” he said.

“Don’t you think I want to go home? I can’t! I can’t even think about it.”

“Why are you so hurting, Helena? What this stupid man do?”

“Stop it Dimi! I loved you more than life itself and it wasn’t enough. Now, I have to go to bed. Good night.” I went to bed holding back the tears.

The next morning when I arose, I made the coffee and saw the theater program on the table. It was such a nice evening. I hadn’t thought about how different London is from Rhodes, besides the obvious. It was a nice change. It seemed that the nightlife here never stopped. It was a well-needed diversion, going to the theater. Since I got here, I had been doing the tourist thing, but only halfheartedly, as my thoughts were always returning to Dimitris and Rhodes.

It was around two in the afternoon on a weekday, not long after my

conversation with Dimi. I went out to the mailbox which was among others on a covered vestibule.

“Helen!” I heard from behind me.

“Joy! How are you? What’s up?”

“What’s up, ha! You Americans! What “is up” is that I wanted to tell you about a job in Liverpool. It’s not that far by train, but you’d probably want to move there.”

“I appreciate you thinking of me and coming all the way over here, but I have to get my work permit and National number before I can start looking for a job. I don’t think I’m qualified to do much.”

“Oh, nonsense! There are ways to get around the Visa, or at least postpone the details. Oh, I almost forgot to give you this note. It’s from Nick. I guess you two got on very well?” Joy said.

“Nick is, let’s say he’s very interesting. We had a nice time,” I said.

“Yes, well, he does very well in conversation,” she smiled.

“Would you like some coffee or tea? Come in, Joy,” I said.

We sat and had our tea, talked as if we had known each other for years. I hadn’t laughed like that since I left Rhodes.

In her early fifties, Joy was about my height but very thin and wiry and had a vitality about her. She has grown sons and doesn’t admit to being a grandmother. She works as a Dresser in the theater and swears that’s how she keeps thin.

Her occupation interested me. Period clothing is a wonderment to me. As the afternoon turned to dusk, she suddenly jumped up and announced,

“Get your coat, we’re taking you to rehearsal.”

“We are?”

“Yes, come, my girl, I’ll show you where I work, and you can get a front-row seat. It’s the first dress rehearsal.”

She had a cheerful way of persuasion and I agreed to go. It was quite enlightening! I had no idea what went into such a production. Everything had to be timed, the rushing around backstage, changing of costumes and sets, and the inevitable personality clashes. I got a great look at the pre-production confusion.

I took a seat on the aisle once the curtain went up. There were a handful of other people also in the audience. The end of the play seemed to come so fast, I hadn't realized that an hour and a half had passed. I grabbed a taxi back to my apartment. The place seemed so dark and lonely. I missed Rhodes and the family I left there. I picked up the phone to call my sister in law.

"Rena?"

"Oh, my sainted Chinese grandmother! Helena, where have you been girl? I thought you forgot all about your old Chinese sister!"

The sound of her voice brought deep joy to my heart, and just as suddenly, a deep pain that I found hard to hide.

"I've missed you and Stefano. How have you been?" I struggled to say as my voice cracked.

"Oh, Helena, I'm sorry, don't cry, honey. You can always talk to me."

"Rena, I miss you all so much, and Rhodes."

"And Dimi?" She asked.

"Especially Dimi."

"Helena, he loves you so much, the poor boy doesn't know what to do with himself. He says you told him that you weren't coming back."

"I can't come back, after everything," I said.

"Dimi never said what happened between you, and I didn't dare ask him. It had to have been bad."

"With what we went through with the investigation and all the drama it stirred up, it was just a matter of time that something had to give. I mean, we ran on pure Adrenalin for a year. I don't know what happened, you'd have to ask Dimi."

"But you never came home after the funeral, we were beginning to wonder if you found someone else, or went back to Mark."

"Mark? You're not serious, are you?" I was surprised!

"Oh, I think Dimi might have dropped his name, he was just thinking out loud, trying to understand, I guess," she explained.

"I don't know why he's in such a state over this, he knows exactly why I left."

"The funeral you mean?"

“I came back from the funeral, Rena,” I said.

“You, what...when? What do you mean you came back? And then left again? When? Why...I’m confused,” she stammered.

“Rena, I told Dimi he should date someone.”

“Good heavens! This is more serious than I thought. Will we ever see you?” She asked.

“If I can straighten out my finances, I’d like to see you and Stefano. Morgan and Andreas, too.”

“And Dimitris?” She questioned

“Especially Dimitris, but not right now,” I said without further comment.

“We still haven’t had our girl’s adventure in Italy. Can we still do that?” Rena asked.

“I’d like that, but it’ll have to wait until I’m not so, so broke, and can save some money. We’ll make a plan, okay? Now, I really have to go. Love to Stefano.”

The Dating Game



I awoke to a gray, drizzly morning. Not unusual for London, even in the summer months. I wanted to stay under the covers. I needed my coffee to motivate myself. As I waited for the coffee to drip, I was remembering how lovingly Dimitris would make the coffee and bring a cup to me in bed. I glanced at the breakfast table and saw the note that Joy gave me from Nick. As I read it, I had to smile. The man has a personality that I didn't see the first time we met.

"I knew that you had a flair for theater, but you like to hide it! Shame on you! Joy didn't say you were going to be at the dress rehearsal, or I would have met you there. I was only a block away at the Criterion. Alas, 'twas not meant to be. Ahh, perchance to dream. My heart is breaking here! -Nick"

I put the note in the desk drawer and thought, how unusual it is that he has such a remarkable resemblance to Dimitris. There are so many things that do not compare to Dimi. Nick isn't what I'd call 'tall' but his face has a similar structure, and even his eyes, although not as dark, occasionally have that spark.

He talked me into a few casual meetings for drinks with friends or to show me around the night spots. It surprised me to see so many people in our age group who frequented the clubs and enjoyed the nightlife, right alongside the younger set. Wherever we went, he would run into people he knew. The ladies were not shy about coming up to him wherever we went.

"You seem to be a very popular man," I commented.

"No, most of these people are from a long time ago. School or jobs."

"You grew up here?"

"London? No, been here for some time, but no. Work is here, so I stay. Tell me about you, I know you're American. How much longer will you be in London?" Nick asked.

"I'm not sure. Probably awhile yet."

"Joy tells me you are looking for work," Nick asked.

"I'm keeping my eyes open, but I'm not sure I can get a work visa. I'm here as a tourist," I explained.

"What happens if you run out of time? What then?" He asked.

"I'll have to leave," I admitted.

"Back to America?"

"Maybe not," I confessed.

"Then, you're not going back to a husband?" He asked.

The question surprised me and I'm sure I physically reacted to it. I didn't want to think about it or talk about it.

"We won't go there, will we?" I sipped my drink with a small smile. He turned his head and seemed to stare out beyond my shoulder.

"What's wrong? You look like you've seen a ghost," I asked as he tried to recover from his gaze.

"It's nothing. It's these gangsters standing around. They seem to be watching us," Nick said.

I tried not to look frightened, but I casually turned and called our server, spotting the thugs against the far wall by the door. I knew immediately who they were. I tried not to be obvious in my behavior, but I nonchalantly scanned the room for the exits.

It appeared Nick was flirting, and with the frame of mind I had been in, I was thinking out every move, mine as well as his.

"You do remind me of someone," he said and looked as if he was thinking.

"You remind me of someone, too," I said.

"It's funny, I know we've never met before this, but it's so familiar, *deja vu* almost." He squinted as he thought, trying to remember.

I just smiled as I sipped my drink, not adding to the comment. He slowly reached his hand out for my hand, but I pulled back gracefully and made my excuses to head for home.

“Let me drop you off. I’ll be going that way,” Nick volunteered.

“Oh, no thanks. I have to stop before I go home, but thank you.” I used my cell phone to call a taxi, but he waited with me until it arrived. I was glad that he did, considering the men that were there, and hoped that they wouldn’t follow.

I didn’t want to lie to the man. He had been so considerate, but I couldn’t let him think I was “interested” or that I’m looking for companionship or a relationship. Just because I’m alone doesn’t mean that I’m looking. I wanted to make my escape before the “strong-arms” came outside and caused trouble. I hoped Nick was oblivious to the men and would leave for home soon.

I had a couple of calls to return, but I waited until I got home to call Dimitris.

“My Heart.” He sounded tired or depressed.

“Hi Dimi, you called earlier. What did you call about?”

“No reason, just to hear my Helena’s voice. Are you well?”

“Yes, I am. How is everyone?” I asked.

“No one is ill. Life is empty here. No reason to look for sun in morning,” he said.

“What are you saying?”

“I say there is nothing here for Dimi.”

“Maybe you should let Camilla wake you up,” I suggested.

“Camilla, do not ‘wake up’ this man! Only Helena will ‘wake’ this man. Morgana say she would visit if you give address.”

“I’ll have to call her. Is that all?” I asked.

“Only that Dimi miss you more than can say,” he cooed.

“We have to get beyond this Dimi so that we can start our lives over.”

“But not together? But we love each other. Gods send Helena to this man. I do not start again. Cannot do,” he said.

“Sometimes love is not enough. Sometimes it overwhelms a relationship,” I said, hoping that I am making myself understood.

“You think of this man. We have special connection, like no other,” he pled.

“Please, Dimi, don’t do this. Do you know when you’ll see Andreas and Morgan?”

“Andreas have job in Rhodes. Morgana may come to stay as well. Dimi work with Andreas so they come in one week. When did you come and take suitcase? When did you come here, Helena?”

“It was on a Friday. Three weeks ago. Now, I have to go, I’m glad that you’ll have them there.”

“Why?” He asked with that boyish, innocent voice.

“You won’t have to be alone. Goodbye, Dimi.” I had to end the call before we rehashed the reason for my leaving. It always ended with crying, missing him so much that I ached, and wondering if perhaps I was hasty.

That evening, Joy came over and brought some literature on shortcuts to getting a Visa. She had many questions about my past, which I touched on lightly.

This time she arrived with a fruity brandy in hand, and we talked a little more deeply than we did before. She wondered why I left Greece and my husband, but she was more interested in Mark, my ex, in California. She stayed until 11:30 PM.

When I got out of the shower, I saw Morgan had called and left a message.

“Hey, Helen, how are you? Rena says you’re thinking about coming for a visit. I wish you would. It might help Dimi out. Geez, he’s so depressed! Stefano says there’s no hope for him. Did you know Andreas has a job in Rhodes? I was going to come too, but if you’re not there, I don’t know. Call me, anytime.”

“Hi, Morgan. I got your message. How are you and Andreas?”

“Well, Andreas is trying to keep Dimi working, so we’ll both be in Rhodes for a while.”

“Ah! I was thinking of a visit sometime soon, but it’ll have to wait until I can save some money. I’m a little strapped right now,” I explained.

“Gee, I’d help you out if I could.”

“No, no, I didn’t mean that. I’m having Mark wire me the money that I loaned him last summer. He’s got it and says that he’ll wire it to me,” I said.

“You’re talking to him again? Why? Dimi would send you as much as you need,” Morgan suggested.

“Mark owes me, and besides, I don’t want Dimi to know that I’m broke, he’ll get all upset over it.”

“I owe you, too. I could probably get a couple of hundred from Amy, but I’ll have to know where to send it.” Morgan was fishing for an address.

“I still have PayPal. You could send it there.”

“Oh, okay,” she said solemnly.

“What?” I asked.

“You still won’t let us know where you are? I think now you’re just being mean,” Morgan said.

“That isn’t what I meant, it’s just that Dimi and I are so____.”

“Yeah, right.”

“Oh, Morgan, don’t get angry. I just don’t want Dimi to think that he can come and take me home. You know he’d try to do that if he got hold of my address.” After that, we had little to say to each other. I think she feels that I’ve abandoned her.

I didn’t sleep well. The talk I had with Morgan stayed on my mind. All I could think about was Dimitris. I know that leaving the way I did, hurt him deeply. I don’t think that he ever expected me to take this incident seriously.

I had a late start to the day, and I would never catch up. Having breakfast at lunchtime and lunch when I should have dinner, I was running late. I made a promise to Nick that I would take a dinner break with him. I should have bowed out, as it didn’t go well either.

“Why are you asking *me*?” Nick asked like maybe I knew something about him I shouldn’t.

“Well, you live here. I’ve only been here a short time, and I figured you might know how I’d go about changing my name,” I said.

“What or who are you running away from?” He asked.

“Not running away, just making a fresh start,” I said.

When he reached across the table and touched my hand, I looked up at him. His eyes were Dimi’s eyes, and I felt that spark that could ignite a passion in me. I unconsciously jerked my hand back and spilled my water all over the table.

“Oh, geez, look at the mess I made!”

“Don’t worry about that, we’ve finished anyway. Why don’t we get out of here?” I saw the look of impatience on his face, which almost made me angry. The water incident already shook me, so I wasn’t in a mood to take his silent comments. We left the restaurant and then he suggested a pub in Soho that really “swings.”

“Thank you, Nick, but I’ve got an early morning commute and still have things to do tonight. I’m afraid I’ll have to pass.” I hailed a taxi and thanked him for dinner.

“I’ll try to find someone to help you, on that name change thing, so I’ll call you.”

We said our farewells, and I called it a night. I had made no plans, but after I got back to my apartment, I noticed shadows of men across the street, standing near a streetlight, smoking their cigarettes. Not an unusual sight in London, but it made me nervous knowing that those thugs might have found where I’m living. I thought perhaps I should visit my cousin in the North. Just as I put the key in the deadbolt, I got a call from Joy.

“Helena, have you found a job yet?” I locked my door instinctively.

“No, I haven’t been looking much. Why, did you find something interesting?” I asked.

“Actually, I had a meeting with my agent, and I was talking about you, well, your story, you know, Mark, and all that. Anyway, she wants to talk to you about maybe buying your story,” Joy said excitedly.

“You’re kidding me, aren’t you?”

“Take her number, call her. She wants to talk,” she said.

I gave her agent a call the next day after my nerves settled and set an appointment to meet during her lunch hour. I guess I was flattered and a little curious. I didn’t want to review my past with a stranger.

“Me? Write about my life? There’s nothing special about my life,” I said.

“The little that you’ve said and from what Joy told me, has me interested in seeing more of your story; what I can do is have you write a theme on the riggers and highlights and we’ll see what we’ve got,” she suggested.

“I might be able to do that, but I don’t know____.”

“If you can give me fifty pages in two weeks, that will be enough to see where it goes. I can only advance you five hundred. You’ll have the use of my flat in Edinburgh. It’s quiet, so you can write undisturbed.”

“Was that five hundred dollars?”

“Pounds, five hundred pounds,” she said.

“I’d like to try, but I wouldn’t know where to start.”

“Helen, we always start at the beginning.”

“When do I leave?”

“Right away.” She got my information for tax purposes and planned for a flight to Edinburgh.

The more I thought about it, the more I wondered what I got myself into. I could go into minute detail on what went on with Mark and me, but again, I wasn’t sure how much I wanted to reveal. I went back to my little campus room and packed my belongings. First thing in the early hours of the morning, I was on the earliest flight created by man. It seemed like ten minutes later we were landing.

I found my flat on St Mary’s St. to be very nice. Walking distance to High Street and all the shops and tourist spots. It was quiet, and I felt safe there. I had a computer at my disposal, plenty of pens, pencils, and paper. Now I just needed to write.

I wrote, tore it up, wrote again. Over and over, I couldn’t seem to transition from memory to pen. Then I remembered something that Dimi told me once. “If you’re first, go first quickly.” It made me laugh. Then I knew where to start.

First Step



Back in Rhodes, Dimitris took out his cell phone and called the Interpol agent, Loukianos Pantelidas. He told the agent what he had seen at Camilla's house.

"Mr. Patakinis, did you report the missing documents to the police? You know, the names you have mentioned are familiar to us, and it's not surprising to hear of these persons knowing each other, but there has to be a crime committed for us to take action."

"But they will disappear if you do not arrest them," he explained.

"If you file an anonymous report, stating you believe there is a criminal element at that residence, it may be possible to put surveillance on the activity there. Right now, that's all we can do."

This wasn't what Dimitris was expecting to hear, but he knew what he had to do.

The local police were notified that there was a break-in at the Patakinis residence. The Police then went to the house and were shown the pantry closet where the box of documents stood before they disappeared. Dimitris was vague about what the missing papers were, only that they were important and that they were stolen.

"Yes, there have been many break-ins. We can hardly keep up with it," the officer said as he wrote in his notebook. "Have you noticed anything unusual,

broken locks or windows, other items missing?”

“No, but find strange earrings,” Dimitris stated.

“Found in the house?” The officer asked.

Dimitris nodded.

“May I see them?” The officer was curious at Dimi’s hesitation.

“Give back to woman who belongs.”

The officer looked up. The look was that of disgust. “Mr. Patakinis, the Police aren’t here to settle neighborhood disputes. You are wasting my time.” He snapped his notebook closed and started for the door.

“No, no, you do not understand. This person come into my home when no one here, take things and leave earrings in house. Criminal behavior must put stop to. This man will file complaint.”

“Alright. I will have to question this person on the details of her movements.”

“There is problem. People go there, to her home, who have criminal record. She entertains criminals and don’t know what they get up to there. I think she sell the documents to these men.”

The officer looked at him in contemplation of how to proceed.

“Who are these ‘criminals’ you speak of? Do they live in the area?”

“Do not know for sure. You must research this. I see them go in, then out, drive around in big black car like Mafia. Dangerous men,” Dimitris explained.

“This you know?” the officer asked.

“Yes.” Dimitris was adamant.

The report was filed with Camilla’s name and address. Now maybe the Interpol agent will order surveillance. Dimitris hoped it wouldn’t backfire on him. When the officer left, Dimitris called Pantelidas at Interpol and reported what happened and that the local police have a report on the break-in.

“Mr. Patakinis, I’ve been reviewing the records that Mr. Sahj had on file, and I believe that your family has reason to worry about their safety. In recent months, there have been witness statements that Klaus Vanderbur is in Rhodes, and also a Mr. Alain Deischant. Rumors! They seem to enliven criminal activity on many of the islands, which is worrisome,” he exhaled in frustration. “So, I’m sending some people to watch what develops here in

Rhodes. Please, let them do their job, no interference. Maybe we can save Rhodes from more violence. We will keep you informed should there be anything further.”

Dimitris didn't feel as satisfied with the process as he had imagined. He tried to call Helena, but it went directly to message. Andreas pounded on the back door.

“Let me in, Dimi. This rooster has me cornered!” Andreas shouted.

“What you do, Andreas? This rooster likes you.”

“I think he wants to come in!” Andreas laughed.

“Ah, rooster think he owns everything. He will come in if not careful,” Dimitris reported.

“Morgana stayed at home. She has a job to finish, so she sends her apology,” Andreas conveyed.

“Yes, without my Helena, Morgana have no one to talk to, so, is best she is home.”

“That's what I said, and she agreed. She's almost finished with this Prince's Palace job, so she'll be busy. What's wrong? You talk to Helena?” Andreas asked.

“Why you say this?”

“It's written all over your face. Didn't go well?” Andreas asked.

“You will stay. We cook and tomorrow we work.”

Andreas knew that something was not going as planned with his brother. The time will pass as they work on the construction job, and Dimitris usually will discuss what is on his mind after he has exerted some pent-up anger and frustration in his labor.

They drove to the property under construction. Dimitris was setting foundation framing as Andreas went to pick up supplies. Dimi wielded his pick to use up some of the energy and nervous tension that plagued him.

“This man will *not* be without wife,” he uttered as he labored. “I must find her.”

“Who are you talking to, Dimi?”

“Aiden, what you do here?” The men had a brotherly hug.

“I wanted to talk to Andreas, but I don’t see him.”

“Are you well?” Dimi asked.

“I’m doing a lot better. Doc says I can start doing things, not overdo it, but I want to go back to work. I’ve sat around long enough.” Aiden’s color was good, his hair was coming back, and he looked like he was gaining weight.

“Andreas will be back soon,” Dimitris said.

As the day progressed and the men labored in the sun, the frustration and anger had dissipated.

“How is Helen?” Aiden asked.

“She is well. Do you talk to her?”

“I haven’t talked to her in weeks. Do you know where she is?” With this question, Dimitris turned and looked at Aiden. “Rena told me.”

“Is confused. She do not say where, just not here,” Dimitris answered.

“Well, she’ll be back. She gets emotional and takes off. You should be used to it.”

He looked at Aiden and realized that perhaps Aiden knows Helena better than he thought.

“Is hard to wait.” The men talked, although none had a solution. Not knowing where she went, there was no way to begin a search, and no chance for Dimitris to bring her home.

London

It had been an endless day, but being hungry didn’t help me fill fifty pages. I went up to the corner pub called, “The World’s End.” I needed to get something to eat. There’s nothing like Fish ‘n’ Chips in the U.K. They had a huge fillet of fish that was fabulous. I hated to leave the atmosphere at this corner of the pub, but I didn’t want to walk back to my flat in the dark.

I was just getting comfortable before sleeping when the phone rang.

“Helena?”

“Who is this?”

“Nick. Where are you? I asked Joy, but she said you might be writing. I didn’t know that you are a writer,” he said.

“Hi Nick, well, I’m not, but I’m giving it a try.”

“I expected to see you in Soho, with Joy,” Nick said.

“This came up suddenly, and they’ll pay me, so I jumped at the offer,” I said.

“Are you using an alias?” He laughed.

“You know, I just might,” I sighed.

“Sarah and Eric want to celebrate an anniversary in a few days and have a small get-together at the pub. Joy has her sister in town too, so it should be lively.”

“Gee, Nick, it sounds nice, but I might not be back by then.”

“Where are you?” He asked.

“Edinburgh.”

“The invitation stands if you’re in town.”

“Thanks.” After the mess that I made on our last outing, I didn’t think I’d be hearing from *him* any time soon.

It was ten o’clock in the evening when I got a call about the manuscript.

“I wanted to ask if you’ve included Greece and when you returned to Mark, that whole scenario?” Janet asked.

“It wasn’t exactly like that.”

“Well, you see what we’re after, conflict resolution and the happily ever after would be nice. Just the main outline would be fine. Our writers can take it from there.”

“I’ll do what I can.” I was sick. I couldn’t write a happily ever after ending. Even if I told the story and included Dimitris, it wouldn’t be what they want. I had a lot of rewriting to do since she only needed an outline.

As I laid awake thinking about what I’ve written, what they want, and how much I didn’t want to bring Dimi into it, I had to admit that I failed. I was running out of time, and I would have to do a complete rewrite. Even then, I wouldn’t be sure it would be accepted. It would only be fair to thank her for the opportunity, for staying in her flat, and refuse the payment.

The next morning, I awoke with a new attitude. I completed a very watered-down version of what I originally started, but I wrote two endings. I hoped that if they wanted to go forward with the idea, that would be the time to elaborate and know what ending is expected.

I grabbed the first flight back to London. I phoned Janet, the agent, and explained what my concept was for the theme, and put forth the idea of a double ending. She didn't sound exuberant but was agreeable enough. I dropped off the manuscript to her secretary and headed for my humble flat. It felt good to be back.

I no sooner took off my shoes, and the phone rang. Janet liked what I had submitted and liked the ending where I stayed in Rhodes with Dimitris. I would be responsible for getting a written release from him, to avoid any legal actions. I could download the stock form from the literary website.

They would pay me, as agreed, and that was a relief.

When I received the check, I immediately cashed it and bought groceries. While putting them in the pantry, I tripped in the kitchen and had such agony in my wrist, trying to catch myself by latching onto the sink. I iced it as best I could, but it was swelling and still very painful. I didn't know where to go for help. I wasn't sure if traveler's insurance covered me or not. I thought I could call Joy and get her advice. Her phone went directly to message. I didn't think to look in my contacts on my phone, since I was in a fit of fiery flashes of pain. Then I realized I had Nick's number.

He came to pick me up in a taxi. I was so glad that he came right away. He guided me down the front steps and put a comforting arm around me in the cab. He had Dimi's expression of compassion, and he was a comfort to me in my misery.

"How did you do this?" He asked.

"I tripped in the kitchen," I explained.

"It looks painful. I'm sorry."

"Sorry? For what?" I asked.

"It took so long to get here with this traffic. It looks like it could be broken. How are you going to write?"

"I think I finished the assignment, so I don't know if I'll have to do much more writing for a while."

"There might be a lot of things you won't be able to do. Just call me if you need help," he offered.

"Thanks, Nick, that's a very kind offer. I hope it's just a sprain." I was in

agony but tried to stay calm.

"We're almost there," Nick announced.

He seemed overly nervous, and his tenseness was making me nervous. When we arrived, he carefully guided me from the taxi into the emergency entrance of the hospital.

As usual, there were several pages of admitting papers to fill out. I was able to hold the pen, but I couldn't control it.

"Here, let me help you with this," he offered with a reassuring smile.

"Oh Nick, I think I can__."

"No, I'll do it for you, just answer and I'll write for you." He took the clipboard and pen and looked into my eyes the way Dimi used to do. I suddenly wanted Dimitris with me. The pain in my heart was more than the pain in my wrist. I could feel my eyes welling up.

After turning in the clipboard, it took another half hour or more before I was called for examination.

"Thank you, Nick, for everything. I don't know how long I'll be back there. You don't need to wait. I'll just call a taxi."

"I'll wait, it's not a problem," Nick volunteered.

I just smiled the best I could and followed the nurse to the exam room. After the x-rays were taken, I returned to the reception area to wait for the results.

"That was quick," he said, looking up from a magazine.

"I'm not finished yet."

"I injured my knee a few years ago. They have good doctors here. They'll take good care of you," Nick said.

"I'm worried about the cost. I don't have National Insurance."

"Don't worry, I took care of it." He patted my forearm as a gesture of comfort.

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"It's all taken care of; you don't have to pay anything," Nick advised.

"But, how is that possible?"

"I put my number on the papers, so don't worry," he said.

"Why did you do that? Won't you get in trouble?" I asked.

He put his finger to his lips and made a “shh” sound.

When I came out to the lobby waiting room, I was sporting a plaster cast in a sling, and feeling unsteady on my feet. There was Nick, waiting. The emergency lobby was packed. Everyone was milling about, and small children were fighting over the toys in the box in the corner. Then I noticed a tall, dark figure standing at the admitting window. I didn’t recognize him, but he had that look. The stance of a thug. A smartly dressed man in his thirties with a finely trimmed beard and mustache.

“You’re still here,” I said to Nick as he came to my side and held my elbow to steady my step.

“It is broken. How bad is it?” He asked.

“It’s not that bad, but it’s also got a sprain, so they gave me these pills for the pain.”

“Well, this has been quite a day for you. Did you have other plans?” Nick asked.

“No, I wasn’t going to do much, thank goodness,” I said in a quiet tone, hoping to not alert the thugs.

We arrived at the flat and Nick made sure that I went up the steps safely.

“Is there anything you want me to do while I’m here?”

“You’ve done more than enough, thank you, Nick. Would you like some coffee? I’ve got to have some,” I offered.

“Thank you, coffee sounds good.”

I invited him to come in, and we enjoyed a cup of weak coffee, by Brit standards. He was so much like Dimi. Suddenly it seemed like everything got awkward. I could see that he was interested and although I believe that everything he did for me was out of kindness, I couldn’t lead him on. What he saw in my eyes was meant for Dimitris.

“Nick, I really appreciate what you’ve done for me today. You were a lifesaver! I think you’re very sweet, and I enjoyed our time together, but____.”

“No, don’t say ‘but.’ I like your company, you make me laugh.” He took my hand and said, “I just want to be a friend to you, you’re so helpless, and you have no one to depend on.” When he smiled, I had to give in. He was so sweet that I had to chuckle.

“Well, you’re right about that. You came to my rescue today, and I appreciate it. I just don’t want you to expect more from me, you know? I can’t give it to you.”

“I know, you’ll have to leave sometime unless you get a visa, but it might not be for a while,” Nick said.

“Also, I’m still married.” I had to make his eyes meet mine.

“I thought you were separated,” he questioned.

“We *have* separated,” I said, hoping I wouldn’t have to explain any further.

“But, you can still appreciate what London offers,” he said.

“Yes, I can. I plan to see and do as much as I can, although I’ll have to work with a handicap!”

“You Americans, see, this is what I mean. You are very colorful, Helen.” Nick smiled.

“Colorful? That’s the first time I’ve heard that.”

We had a few laughs, and it eased the temporary tenseness that interrupted the day. When he left, I walked him to the door.

“You take your medication and I’ll check on you tomorrow. Rest!” I watched him walk to the corner and then he was gone.

I took the pain pills and laid on the sofa, thinking about Nick. It would be so easy to let things happen with him, but he was too much like Dimitris in so many ways. And Dimitris, when he enters my mind, I miss him so much it’s like an ache in my stomach. The pain pills kicked in, and as the image of the dark man I saw at the hospital seemed murky, I drifted off. I finally had to go to bed.

When the phone rang, it woke me to a dark room.

“Helena?”

“Hi, Rena.”

“Are you awake?” She asked.

“I’m awake, just a little groggy. How are you and Stefano?”

“Good, good, always good. I missed your call the other day and Stefano just now mentioned it. Sometimes I think he’s the absent-minded professor! I guess you talked to Dimi?” she asked.

“Yeah, we talked. Oh, please excuse me, Rena, I can’t stop yawning! I guess those pills were stronger than I thought.”

“What pills are those?” Rena asked.

“Gee, I don’t know what they are, I just got them,” I said.

“Can’t you sleep?”

“I have them for pain. I fell in the kitchen this morning and broke my wrist.”

“Broke your wrist? It must be painful. Are you okay, I mean, do you need anything? I can come and help for a few days,” Rena volunteered.

“It’s sweet of you to offer, but I’ll be fine. It’s just going to take some time to get used to this cast.”

“Good heavens, Helena, we’re family, I’ll be more than glad to come and help out.”

“I know, Rena, I know, and I appreciate the offer. I do. But it’s not that bad,” I said.

“You’re lucky that you didn’t hit your head on something. The kitchen is a dangerous place to fall. Were you all by yourself?”

“Yes, isn’t that the usual thing? Something like that never happens when there are people around,” I said.

“Well, honey, try to rest, and please call me if you need anything,” she offered.

Rena always babies everyone, it’s one of her endearing traits. She had always been kind to me. Even the first time we met, she was warm and friendly.

After a good night’s sleep, I was more cheerful and with the sun, it looked like a beautiful day ahead. I received a call from Janet at PressMark.

“Helen, this is Janet, we haven’t received back the consent form from,” she hesitated. “Mr. Patakinis. Do you know if he intends to sign it? If not, we may not accept the manuscript. If you would let us know as soon as possible, we would appreciate it.”

There it was. When I thought about it, I wasn’t so sure that I wanted that story in print. It was a painful time in my life, and I don’t think that Dimitris would want our meeting in print.

It had been three days since they delivered the letter to him. I know it was self-explanatory, nothing confusing about it, either sign on the dotted line to

give consent or don't allow the publication.

I couldn't help being anxious. I didn't want to argue over it but I would like to know his decision.

It relieved me to see it was Nick when the phone rang. He had an after-show closing party to go to and didn't want to go alone. I was glad for a brief diversion.

"I got you a 'comp' for the last performance. Then we can just make an appearance at the party. The director and the backers of the production will pat each other on the back, then we can leave. It's just in appreciation for their support."

"It sounds nice, I'd love to go."

The play was wonderful, and I enjoyed the evening. Most of the party crowd was cast members and stage support, and the conversations centered on business, and "schmoozing." The many Press people attending took interviews, which Nick avoided, but many pictures were taken and drinks to loosen tongues.

We stayed long enough for Nick to give his congratulations for a brilliant play. Then we made our excuses to leave.

"I hope that wasn't too much for you. That was mild compared to how some of them end up," he said.

"I had a great time, thanks for thinking of me," I said.

"I'm happy to see that you are managing that cast a little better. It certainly glows under those stage lights," he chuckled.

"Really? I didn't realize, I hope it didn't distract anyone."

"Because I knew where you were sitting, I couldn't help but look at it," Nick teased.

"I'm sorry, I guess I should cover it with a sweater or something."

"I'll say good night, Helen, and thank you for your company tonight."

"I enjoyed it. Good night," I said, and he left me at my door.

The evening was quite enjoyable, and it brought me out of my doldrums. As I got ready for bed, I resigned myself to the fact that everything wasn't

going as I expected. I wouldn't be able to work, as I wouldn't be able to get a work permit, and my little story wouldn't be published. I thought about going North, leaving London to visit my cousin, and then decide where to go from there. My funds were getting very thin, so I'd have to be careful how I spend. It all seemed very familiar. The story of my life of budgeting was repeating itself.

Rena is the only one I've talked to in Greece in weeks. My family has written, but I've avoided calling, at least until I've settled somewhere. The morning had a slight drizzle in the air and the rainbows seem to appear and glow against the gray sky, seemingly out of nowhere. It made me miss my home in Rhodes. I was at a point where I was thinking about reconciliation with Dimitris. The thought of it scared me a little. I didn't want to go back to Rhodes just because I couldn't stay in London.

I was tired, having spent so much time riding the train, going from Lambeth to Manchester and back. I hadn't slept well since they put the cast on my arm, but the bed was calling me. Moving the suitcase off the bed, the notebook and my journal spilled out on the floor. I hadn't realized how much stuff was in the suitcase's bottom. "I must have been out of it," I thought to myself. I picked up the contents of the top drawer to my dresser, which I emptied into my suitcase when I left Rhodes, and my journal. Still wedged in the suitcase's bottom were the drawings, which I laid on my desk.

It's been a very long five weeks since I've been able to do anything. I could finally try to write, now that my cast was removed.

Before calling it a night, I placed my journal on the desk and looked at the drawings. I chose one to tack to the wall by my bed. So strange to find so many variations of the same drawing. As I was laying in my rock-hard bed, I looked at the cat and soon fell asleep.

The mattress on the bed had to be made of bricks. Laying in any position for any length of time, I'd find my bones aching. Turning over was a major move, and it woke me to turn over. It was agony getting out of bed in the morning and it took a half-hour to work out the kinks.

I took some thumbtacks and hung another drawing that was on the desk.

It cheered me to see this cockeyed cat in its different interpretations.

I called Morgan since I hadn't talked to her in a long time.

"How the hell are you? Is everything okay?" She asked.

"It's okay. I hadn't heard from you, so I thought I'd see what's happening with you. Andreas is okay?" I asked.

"His kefi has gone wild and he's driving me nuts! We're just about ready to get married. I was hoping you would be here."

"When is it?" I asked.

"Saturday. You should book your flight ASAP!" She was quite intense.

"Where are you having it?"

"We decided on Karpathos. It saves us a lot of problems with the family, and Rena wants to throw the party for us, so it made sense to have it there," Morgan explained.

"That's the best thing to do, especially with Andreas's family," I hinted.

"Would you please be a witness at my wedding? Amy will be Maid of Honor or whatever, but I'd like to have you too, she asked."

"To be perfectly honest, I'd be honored to be a witness, but I don't know if I can afford to book a flight."

"You've got to be here, you have to come!" She pleaded. "If you fly out of GAT, it might be less expensive."

"I'll see what I can do, I'll let you know." I wondered how she knew I could use Gatwick? Maybe my cell phone showed a location? I don't know. I had to smile to myself. Knowing that after everything that has happened, she and Andreas were going to marry. He finally wore down her defenses. This was a long time in the works, and I would normally be excited about it, except that I knew I would have to confront Dimitris and I don't think that I would fare too well. I had to speak to Rena.

"Helena! Are you coming? I've got everything ready, you've got to come!" Rena said.

"I don't know how I can."

"Morgana will be so disappointed. You know how she gets in stressful situations. You're the only one who knows how to talk to her," Rena said.

"I would come, but I'd have to see Dimitris and I can't do that."

“Honey, I don’t quite understand why you two aren’t together. He loves you, you love him, so why aren’t you together?”

“You know why. If I can’t trust my husband, why stay together?”

“Oh, Helena! He loves you. Whatever he did, is it so bad that you can’t get past it?” Rena questioned.

“I’ve tried, but this problem keeps repeating. I don’t want to see more heartache for either of us.”

“Well, things are going to be very different for this celebration.” Rena sighed.

“Rena, do you know if he’s dating? I told him he should.”

“No, not as far as I know.”

“If you can convince him to bring a date, I’ll be there,” I said.

“How would that work? Would you bring a date, too?”

“No, that’s not what I mean. I just thought it would be easier to avoid each other if he has a date to think about,” I said.

“Maybe it would work, but I’d have to get to work on it,” she agreed.

“Tell Morgan to nag him until he agrees. He’d do it for her, after all, it’s her wedding.”

“Okay, we’ll give it a try.” Rena agreed

The next day I got an email from Morgan telling me she’s working on Dimitris to bring a date. Then at the bottom of the email was a receipt for an airline booking for Greece. “I can’t believe she did this!” I thought to myself.

End of the Line



The week seemed to fly by much too quickly. I received word that my story would not be published without the consent form submitted. This was no surprise. I couldn't stay in London much longer and concluded that I would need to decide where I would move and make the arrangements upon my return.

Having an unsuccessful afternoon of shopping, my mind kept going back to the fact that I will have to confront my husband by going to the wedding. There was no way that I would miss the wedding. Morgan and I have been friends for more years than I can count. She would disown me if I failed to show up.

"Helen!" Nick called.

"Oh, hi. I didn't see you!"

"I was calling after you for the last block. Are you alright? I haven't seen you in a while." Nick kissed my cheek in greeting.

"Yes, well, you're always gone somewhere. I heard you have a new gig coming up. Congratulations," I said.

"I was hoping I'd run into you, did you get your story published?"

"No, I'm afraid not," I answered without elaboration.

"That's too bad. I wanted to see you in print," he said.

"The money would have been nice."

“Where are you going?” He asked.

“Nowhere, just walking,” I replied in far-off thoughts, looking at my feet.

“You seem preoccupied,” Nick observed.

“Yeah, I just wanted to get some air. Just to think.”

“Could you use a drink? You seem worried. Maybe I can help,” he said.

“There’s nothing you can do. I’ve just gotten myself in an awkward position,” I said.

“Come with me, you can relax, and let me see if I can get your mind off things.” He took my arm as we walked.

He was happy and persuasive. We ducked into a local pub; I don’t even remember the name of the place. We sat at a booth and had our drinks in relative peace. Nick was happy to have landed the title role in a play that would open at the end of the month. I think the theater district is one of the major employers in London.

We usually have a good time together and his sense of humor keeps me laughing. I had forgotten my problems for the moment.

“Helen, you always make me laugh. It’s like you’re always one step ahead of me. You always know exactly what I’m going to say! I don’t know many people with whom I have a rapport, you know, really talk to, like we have a connection or something!” He smiled and his eyes twinkled in the subdued lights.

“You’re funny, Nick.”

“Where have you been all this time?” He said, his eyes shining along with his smile.

“You’re busy, I’ve been busy, that’s life.”

“Well, you’re not getting away this time. I want you to come to Edinburgh with me. It’ll be amazing. You can attend the play and there’s the castle. It’s more interesting than this. What do you say?” Nick asked.

“I’m speechless! I’m not sure what it is that you’re saying. I can’t think about anything but getting myself situated. I’m going to have to leave London. I’ve run out of time.”

“You weren’t able to get a visa?” He reached across the table and took my hand before I realized it. “When do you have to leave?”

"I've got a flight to Greece next week. I've got a wedding to go to, and from there, I haven't decided yet."

"Are you coming back here before you're banished?" He was joking about it, but it wasn't funny to me.

"I don't know, I don't know what I'm doing. I'll probably come back at some point," I said.

"Wow, I don't know what to tell you. Have you looked into Ireland, or maybe France?"

"The problem is that I'm broke. I don't have a lot of options." I looked at Nick, that pitiful expression that Dimitris would get, and I knew it was time to thank him for all his help, and his friendship, and say goodbye. I knew that if I couldn't resist Nick, I'd never be able to resist Dimi. "I wanted to thank you for everything, you've been so helpful. I appreciate all the help you've given me."

"How does a night out sound? Get your mind off things?" Nick smiled, and I found myself agreeing.

Later, Nick was at my door at 8:30 pm, and as it goes, a taxi was nowhere in sight. It didn't make any difference to me, but it irritated Nick.

"I'm sorry about this. I should have called for one earlier. I think we need to get the tube. Do you mind?" He asked.

"The tube is fine with me, it's only a couple of blocks from here," I said in an upbeat tone, hoping to lighten the mood.

It was only five minutes from our station at Lambeth to the theater district by tube. We had to walk another a few blocks to the theater. Nick was grumbling under his breath for the entire walk.

"It's not that bad, cheer up. It's a beautiful night for a walk. At least it's not as noisy as it is in the daytime."

"You're right, and I have such good company, too," Nick said.

We only had another two short blocks to go. As we walked by the stores and shops which were getting ready to close, we walked by a travel agency and a clothing boutique. I wanted to stop in to look at some clothes, but I didn't want to have Nick standing there getting impatient. We crossed the street at the signal, and before we crossed to the opposite corner, I glanced

over to the boutique. I wanted to remember the location. Then it hit me like a slap in the face. The travel agency business was closed, but on the wall facing the street was a poster. It looked like one of our “cat” drawings that I have at the apartment. I was comatose with shock. I stopped in my tracks with my heart racing. Nick was a few steps ahead of me.

“What’s wrong? What are looking at?”

“Oh, I thought I heard someone call my name. It’s nothing, I must have imagined it.”

The rest of the evening I was at a loss for small talk, and Nick had to keep poking me to get my attention. My mind was recovering from what I thought I saw. But how could it be? Here in London? I must be hallucinating. How is this possible?

“Helen,... Helen,” Nick poked me again.

“Oh, I’m sorry, what did you say?” He must think I’m deaf.

“I guess you aren’t a fan of Agatha Christie. Would you rather leave, go somewhere else?”

“No, no. It’s not that I don’t like the play, it’s just that I’ve got a lot on my mind. I’m sorry, I’ll try to pay attention.”

When we left the theater, Nick was mostly quiet. I was looking for the travel agency, but we seemed to have come out a different exit than when we entered.

“Thank you, for such a wonderful evening. I enjoyed the play.” I leaned toward him to catch his eye as he began the scene where the spoiled prince went into a sulk. When he looked up at me, he broke out with a big smile, laughing.

“I can’t fool you, Helen. I think you got me!” As he laughed, he put his arm around me as we walked. The conversation was nothing of a serious nature, and I was relieved that he didn’t take my comments about the play to heart. We laughed all the way to my front door. With my keys in my hand, I turned to Nick with my hand out to shake his “goodbye.” He wrapped his arms around me and gave me a kiss that I got lost in. I found myself responding without thinking.

“Oh, God, Helen,” he whispered. I opened my eyes and realized what was

happening.

“Don’t Nick, please,” I said, as I tried to distance myself from him. He pulled back with that dreamy gaze, watching my lips as I spoke.

“It’s getting late,” I tried to say as I turned the key in the door lock. He was behind me, moving my hair away from my neck. He reached around me and turned the key. The door opened, and he came in with me. “Nick, no, please don’t. You have to go.” I watched as his eyes seemed to come into focus.

“But Helen, I thought we had such a wonderful night, and...”

“Yes, we did. But now it’s time for you to go.” I didn’t want to say that. It seemed harsh. “Good night, and thank you.”

He turned and left. I took off my coat and collapsed on the sofa.

The night was long, and I couldn’t sleep. I tossed and turned. The mattress seemed especially hard tonight. I thought about the evening and how it ended. Then the poster on the wall of the travel agency made me think. I had to get up.

I know the poster is too close of a match to the drawings to be ignored. I had to go back to the agency and ask about it. I was so excited about it. I couldn’t wait for daylight, and this bit of news, albeit a long shot, I couldn’t keep to myself. At three o’clock in the morning, no one would welcome a call no matter what the news, so I waited.

I took the drawings to the kitchen table. As I looked at them, I could see that each was a different interpretation of the same thing. Some had numbers and symbols which could be taken as a child’s scribbling. The poems on the backs of a few of them were too coincidental to be an accident. I only had three of the drawings with me, but only two of them had a poem on the back.

I was ready to go back to the travel agency as soon as daylight broke. Anxious, and edgy, seem to be lackluster words to describe how I felt, waiting for the hour that I would be able to enter the agency and try to obtain more information.

The hour to leave my flat for the travel agency arrived. I was so exhilarated that I had a hard time remembering which tube station to get off at, giving me a wave of fear that I may get lost. When one is not familiar with a location, everything begins to look the same. Especially since it was dark when we had

walked by the travel agency. The more I thought about it, the more I feared I was lost.

I stopped in at a small bus substation and asked where the theater could be, as it was close to my destination. I had gone too far and had to retrace my steps. I needed to go one block over to the east, and I was soon on track. I spotted the agency from my location, I only needed to cross the intersection.

I had to wait while the business prepared to open, but I didn't see the poster on the wall where it had been. I panicked, and I almost fell into hyperventilation. This is the right agency. I could see the theater from here, so I couldn't be mistaken. Could I? I waited on a bus stop bench until I saw signs of life inside.

When I was able to enter the agency, I felt very weak. The proprietor greeted me, as I stumbled for words.

"Good Morning, may I help you? Are you alright?" The older gentleman offered me some water.

"No, thank you. I'm sorry, I had been waiting in the sun. I feel better now, thank you."

"What destination may I help you with? I hear an American accent, are you going home?" He asked.

"I was passing by your window last night and saw a poster on your wall. It doesn't seem to be here now," I commented.

"Yes, we change the posters once a week, so we have a variety of them that we rotate. Which one was it?" He asked.

"It seemed to be mostly blue and white and looked like a strange cat." The man gave me an odd look.

"A cat?"

"Yes, I've seen other pictures that seem to be different colors, but it's the same theme. A crazy-looking cat, with its mouth open."

"Ah! The cat, yes," he gave a silent laugh, covering his smile with his hand. "When I removed that poster, it ripped, so I threw it away," he explained.

I felt flattened. "May I have it? I might be able to repair it?" I was on the verge of tears. Having been up most of the night, and I hadn't eaten anything since dinner with Nick, I was feeling fairly weak.

“But, I do have another.” He went behind a partition and I could hear paper shuffling. When he returned, he handed it to me, still in the original tube.

“How much would you want for it?” I asked.

“Here, take it. They send me these maps every day. You would do me a favor to take it off my hands,” the little man smiled. I couldn’t believe it.

“Are you sure? I have to give you something for it. You said it’s a map?” I asked.

“Yes, it’s the Aegean. Very beautiful area to visit.”

I tried to give the man ten pounds for the map, but he refused. I was so overwhelmed.

“I can’t tell you what this means to me. Thank you so very much.” I gave the man a small hug, and I thought he’d pass out from shock.

“Thank you.” I was euphoric and don’t remember my journey home. I got to the flat and knew that I had to get to the wedding, and this map would be with me to show Stefano.

I wasted no time packing. I carefully laid the “maps” at the bottom of my rollaway luggage and then put my clothes over them. I wasn’t too neat about it, but the cushion that the clothes gave to the maps provided a layer of protection.

“Hi, Joy, how are you?” I asked.

“Great! No use complaining. How have you been?” She asked.

“I wanted to thank you for everything before I leave. You’ve been wonderful and if it wasn’t for your friendship, who knows what would have happened.”

“You’re leaving? Today?” She sounded shocked.

“Yes, I can’t stay any longer, I’ve run out of time. But, I couldn’t leave without thanking you and telling you how much your friendship means to me.” I was getting a clutch in my throat as I spoke. I didn’t think saying “goodbye” to London and everyone I met, would be this hard.

“When is your flight?” Joy asked.

“I’ll probably leave here about ten pm and take the ‘Red Eye’ on standby,” I said.

“So soon? You must be in a big hurry to get out of here. I don’t blame you,

I'd be tempted to leave too if I could," she said.

"I wanted to say goodbye." It seemed so final.

"You'll want to come back sometime, won't you?" She seemed hurt.

"I'm sorry I couldn't work out some way to stay. I want to keep in touch with you, you never know, I might come back and surprise you," I said.

"Gee, I don't know what to say. You take care of yourself, and call me once in a while."

"I will," I said. Goodbyes are always hard.

Next, I had to call Nick. It would be cruel not to let him know that I have to say goodbye.

"Helen, what's wrong?" He asked.

"I wanted to tell you I'm leaving. I wanted you to hear it from me. I'm so sorry that the last time I saw you there was a bit of tension between us, but I have to leave. I hope one of your plays will come to wherever I end up."

"When is your flight?"

"I'll be taking the 'Red Eye' on standby, so I imagine I'll be leaving here around 9:30 pm, and hope I get a seat."

"I'll take you. You'll need help with your luggage. You shouldn't be carrying anything yet, with your wrist still healing. I'll arrange a taxi and be there at 9:00 pm."

"That's unnecessary. I can manage the luggage." I felt lucky to get out what I had to say. He didn't want to hear it, even though he knows I can't stay.

The "Red Eye" hour came quickly. Nick came at exactly 9:00 pm, and we were on our way by 9:15 pm.

"When we get to the airport, I could sure use a cup of coffee." I felt like a zombie.

"Helen, I hate this. I wish you didn't have to go. I tried to figure something out for you, but there's not enough time. I'm sorry," Nick said in such a heartfelt tone.

"It wasn't meant to be. Tell me, what did you mean earlier? Something about going with you to Edinburgh?"

"Well, we get along so well, and I feel so comfortable with you. I mean, you

understand what I'm saying, even before I say it, and we have a good time, just being in each other's company. I've got to say that you've got me thinking..."

"Wait, Nick, I think you've got the wrong idea. I'm still married. We're separated, true, but I can't be going off with anyone."

"I know. I know that you have to leave, but I'm afraid that I might not see you again. I hate this."

"You're such a sweet man, and I appreciate everything you've done for me," I tried to be gentle, but firm.

"It's just that, I see in your eyes that you want or need more, and I've been thinking that maybe if we got away for a few days, that..."

"I would be so flattered if I were single, but I told you from the start that I'm married."

"You're different, more than anyone I've ever met. You don't let what I do bother you. You're not impressed by all the things that go with what I do, and I don't come across women like that. It's all the glamour and fame they're looking for, but it means nothing to you."

"We're here. Where can we find some coffee? You won't be able to go past security without a boarding pass," I said.

"We have time to go to the car rental area, they have vending machines in the waiting area if that's okay?"

"The coffee will be fine," I said.

"Not what I pictured for our last time together," he said.

After I registered with the airline desk for a standby flight, we sat and had our coffee, and the conversation came around to not knowing what I'm doing next. I told him that I don't like being in limbo, not knowing when or if I'll be back. We walked to the departure lobby, where we said our goodbyes.

"I hate this. I wish there was some way I could get you to stay. I don't want to lose contact with you. I hope you'll text me once in a while. Let me know how you're doing," Nick said with a plea in his expression.

He looked so sad, hurt, and grasping for words. I had to remind myself that he's an actor, and this might be his best performance.

"I will. Now, I should check in. You've been a lifesaver. I appreciate everything you've done for me. Thank you."

“Would you mind if I kissed you goodbye?” His eyes were Dimis’ eyes, and I must have implied that it was okay. He kissed me with so much emotion that I had to remind myself that this is not Dimi, even though it was one of those kisses that reach into the depths of your soul.

I pulled back, but his gaze penetrated my heart as he was about to kiss me again.

“I’ve got to go.” My eyes were welling up and I could see that Nick would take that as an open door to my heart. I quickly checked my luggage and went to the security check. I could hear him saying something to me as I left. I tried not to turn, but I did turn. He raised his hand to wave. I looked away and entered the security checkpoint.

While I waited for my flight to board, I thought about the drawings and how it seemed too coincidental that there were so many and in odd places. I wanted to find out more about them, but they may be just drawings and nothing else. Maybe it’s the poems that are bothering me? They were in far-flung areas and still; they had to be related to our investigation, which didn’t seem to me to be resolved. It all seemed so distant. It’s like we were trying to connect these things to *something*, but perhaps they are exactly what they appear to be, and not connected to anything.

When my flight landed, I descended the ramp where I waited for my luggage. I looked to my left and saw the disappearing specter of Bolio. It was just a glimpse of the little man, but I was sure that he must have been on my crowded flight. He may have boarded in Athens, but I didn’t see him. Once I had my suitcase, I took my time leaving the tarmac. I hoped that the little man would be gone when I reached the lobby of the arrival area. I stopped and called Rena. She was in shock that I was already here. I didn’t want to tell her I was coming too far in advance. I didn’t want to see Dimitris as I got off the plane.

I called Morgan while I waited for Rena.

“How the hell are you?” She was surprised that I called.

“I’m doing fine, just have to figure out a few things,” I said.

“Like what? Whether or not you’re going to come back?”

“I haven’t thought that far ahead. I still have Dimi to deal with. I don’t want

to hurt him," I explained.

"A little late for that, isn't it?" I chalked up her sarcasm as pre-wedding jitters.

"I feel bad enough about leaving, but he's got to do something before we can get back together."

"With Camilla? The only way to get rid of her is illegal," Morgan said.

"Unfortunately. Oh, I've got to go. Rena is here. I'll call you tomorrow."

Rena arrived within fifteen minutes of my call.

"Helena, over here! Here we are!"

"Hi, thank you for coming, where's Stefano?"

"Oh, he's over there somewhere." She was hugging me and excited to see me.

"This will be the last red-eye I'll ever take," I complained.

"Stefano! Stefano! Helena's here."

"Oh, hello, Helena, how was the flight?" I hugged him as he yawned.

"It wasn't bad at all. Have you talked to Dimi? Does he know that I'm here?"

"If he knew, he'd be here." Stefano was very blunt and to the point. I could tell by his tone that he thinks that I'm to blame for this whole fiasco.

The next day, Dimitris tried to talk to the Interpol agent who is familiar with the case.

"I must speak to Loukianos Pantelidas. I am Dimitris Patakinis."

After a wait of three minutes, the call was connected to his office.

"Mr. Patakinis. What can I do for you?"

"What has happened to the house we speak of? Is Interpol on surveillance?"

"There have been many developments in this case, but I am not at liberty to discuss it with you. You must understand the sensitive nature of this case."

"Yes, but there is nothing to tell this man? Is Patakinis family in danger?"

"I must ask you, Mr. Patakinis, in your complaint on the alleged criminal activity at that location, did you say that your stolen documents were seen in that home?"

"Yes, I find in kitchen, and maybe box in house, too."

"What exactly do these documents comprise, and are they identifiable if

presented as evidence? If you will come to my office, I may be able to divulge some information, but I will not speak on this over the phone.”

“Yes. Tomorrow?” Dimitris asked.

“Afternoon, around 3:00 pm.” He said.

“I will be there.” Dimitris may finally get some answers.

I settled into the room that Rena always gives Dimitris and me when we’d stay here. It feels like home, and it fills my heart with sweet memories. I put some of my clothes in the closet, but Dimi’s notes that he made when he was stuck in his lab and couldn’t find a solution to his scientific problem fell out onto the bed when I moved the suitcase. I began to read.

“My Dearest Heart,

Here this man sit and think of my Helena. How my angel can enter this man’s thoughts. Dimi will get lost in thought of blue eyes of Helena and think, ‘she is my wife.’ This man cannot believe. Gods give big smile to Dimi and do still smile on this man. Is not possible to love one so completely, and yet fall deeper in love every day...”

I had to stop reading. In this place, with all that has happened, I felt the tears were ready to fall with the thought of Dimitris. I fell asleep while they fell.

In the morning Morgan arrived with all her gear for the wedding. I tried to keep her calm, which wasn’t hard since she was so tired. I don’t think she slept the whole night before.

“Morgan, is Andreas still here?”

“No, he went to get Dimi. I told him to not come back before 7 pm,” Morgan said.

“It’ll be a beautiful evening for a wedding. I sure missed this place,” I said.

“Apparently, not enough to come back.” Her snide comment was ignored, as I knew she was stressed to the brink.

I was waiting for the third degree on why I left and why we aren’t together, but it didn’t happen.

When the 7 o’clock hour was upon us, we piled into Stefano’s Cadi and drove to a beautiful little park near the courthouse, where the little white

pavilion was decked out in white Tulle and lavender ribbons. I didn't want to see Dimitris. I could imagine him in his dark suit, white shirt, and his hair brushing the collar in that sexy way of his. I watched the back of Rena's heels as she walked in front of me to the staging area. A hand came out to meet mine. He wrapped it under his arm as he walked me to Morgan's side and kissed my hand before he left me there.

The vows that took place were very simple, heartfelt, and touching. The bride radiated a glow of happiness, as did the beaming groom. I had to look up as the groom kissed the bride and my eyes went straight to Dimitris. My heart was pounding hard, and I knew that this would not go as I hoped. He has already woven his spell on me and we haven't even spoken.

After the bride and groom descended the stairs to the lawn, Dimi came to my side and took my hand. I wasn't ready for this. I could hardly breathe from the rapid pulse that made me weak.

"Helena," he said as we walked. I didn't answer him. "Helena, we talk?" I didn't acknowledge him, again. Then he came to an abrupt stop and still holding my hand he lifted my chin to look into my eyes.

His arms encircled me, burying his face in my neck, and speaking his Greek words in low vibrating tones that entrance me.

"No, Dimi, don't." He didn't respond. "Please Dimi, stop." He stepped back, but still had me by the shoulders, leaning to look into my eyes. It was breaking my heart to have to stop him, to separate myself from him.

"Helena, you come home. Come, we must talk," he said in a soft, understanding tone.

"We have to join the celebration." I hoped he would release his hold on me. He put my hand thru his arm, covering it with his hand as we walked back to Stefano's Cadillac.

Sitting in the back seat while Stefano drives, he kept a hold of my hand, kneading it and lacing his fingers in mine. He was close enough to weave his spell. We didn't speak as we traveled the road to Stefano's home. When we got to the house, Dimi opened the door and held out his hand to me. As I got out of the car, he said,

"We must talk."

“Yes, later,” I agreed.

Rena came to me and took my arm. We walked arm in arm into the house.

“Are you okay?” She asked with concern.

“I’ll be alright, I’m just in shock, I think. I feel like I’ve got jet lag.”

“That’s not possible, is it?” She asked.

“I wouldn’t think so. Please, excuse me.” I got a glass of water and went to my room.

The bride and groom drove through town and the procession of guests fell in behind, like a tail on a kite. They followed the leader until they arrived here. The wine was poured and the toasts to the bride and groom were lively and the music boasted a Greek theme.

I had to compose myself and remember why I left Dimi in the first place. I had to reinforce my stand, and although I cannot get him out of my blood, I had to control my mind and my thoughts that he invades.

I went to the living room to congratulate my old friend and her new husband. She was glowing! Her happiness filled the room, and the light in Andreas’s eyes was a sight to behold. We toasted the happy couple, and the kefi was let loose to dance in line through the house and out to the patio.

I’d see Dimitris sitting at the dining room table or standing against the wall and he seemed to catch my eye and smile. He looked so handsome. His white dress shirt and black hair drew my eye like a beacon, and I’d catch myself watching him from across the room. He seemed so quiet, not really socializing, although he was not rude. It wasn’t the Dimitris I know.

I made my way to the bride and gave her my best wishes, and a kiss for the groom. I went to my room, locked the door, and turned off the light. I was hoping I wouldn’t be disturbed for a few minutes.

I sat on the bed with the moonlight streaming in through the lace curtains. I knew that when the time comes to talk; I am going to have to choose my words carefully and make sure that he understands my position. It was going to be hard to keep away from him and not get carried away. That is my greatest fear, losing control and surrendering my will to his. The more I thought about it, the less sure of myself I became. Escape was my first impulse.

It was a fair evening, as I didn’t need a sweater. I changed my clothes and

left by the front door. I just wanted to get away from the noise and try to think. As I walked, I took in the sweetness of the scent of Eucalyptus and the sea air. After being away for a while, the evening air was invigorating and tempting me to stay. I thought back to the people who befriended me in London. They made it bearable to stay for a brief respite from Rhodes. The short walk refreshed me and I felt more able to confront Dimitris and not fall under his spell. I was absent for over half an hour.

The house was alive with guests coming and going. The laughter and gaiety were contagious. I grabbed myself a tall glass and had Dimitris, who took up the role of bartender, fill it with a lite beer. Watching him, I was falling back into the times I would put my arms around him and lay my cheek on his back.

He smiled at me and leaned in closer to speak to me. I couldn't hear what he said, but I signaled to him that he would have to tell me later. I wandered around and found Rena talking to the two elderly ladies that run the laundry in town. I continued to the patio and sat at the picnic table and could watch the men standing around the barbecue pit. I enjoyed this space acquired and leaned my back against the house.

After watching the men tend the meat that smelled so good, Dimitris came out with a small pitcher of beer.

"Hey!" I said.

"Ah, there you are. You hide from Dimi?"

"No, just finding some peace." He filled my glass and sat down next to me.

"My Helena do not look at her Dimi."

"We'll have to talk tomorrow, after all this," I said.

"Yes, after all this. Do you publish story?"

"No."

"Why you do this?" He asked.

"I needed the money. Living expenses are very high," I said.

"You no need to do this. What Dimi has done for you to go?"

It wasn't the time or place for this.

"Dimi, we'll talk about this later."

"When Helena? You go for months and do not say why."

“Not here, Dimi, please.” He put his arm around behind me, holding the back of the bench. As he held my forearm, he put his lips up to my ear and said,

“This man want to take you home.” Then he started kissing my neck. I had to take control of this situation before I lost my mind.

“We’ll have to talk later, okay?”

“You will not run away from Dimi?”

“No. We’ll talk tomorrow. You can take me somewhere so that we can have our privacy.”

“Ooo, Dimi like.” I had to laugh.

“How have you been, Dimi?” I asked.

“This man so alone to want to die.”

“Don’t say that,” I said.

“Is true. No life here for Dimi.”

“Have you heard anything about the investigation? All the work we did on it, was it wasted?” I asked.

“Interpol or MI-6 do not advertise if they investigate more. So, is okay we do not hear. We do not worry on it.”

“I’m awfully tired. I’ll have to say goodnight to the happy couple,” I said.

“Yes, they are looking happy,” he said in a faraway tone. He stood to release me from my picnic table bondage.

“Goodnight, Dimi.” He could only slide his hand down my arm to my hand and then let me go.

Can We Talk?



My dreams revolved around the maps and Dimitris. Rena let me oversleep. When Rena brought a cup of coffee to me, it was in my blue “WUF” cup.

“Have you seen Dimi this morning?” I asked.

“Are you two back together?” Rena’s curiosity was in high gear.

“We haven’t talked yet,”

“I thought that you two were talking before we got home last night,” Rena said.

“No. There was too much commotion. We need to have time to talk. Do you know where he is?” I asked.

“I thought you knew he stayed at the Epiphany last night. He said it was best that he doesn’t sleep near you.”

“Oh. Is Stefano around? I’ve got something he needs to see.”

“He had to go to Marrakesh. He’ll be there a few days. You can call him,” Rena suggested.

“No, it can wait.”

“Gee, I hope you don’t take this the wrong way, but Dimi lined up a date to take to the wedding. She had a last-minute excuse, or he would have been with her.”

“I told him he should date. I’m glad that he’s with someone.” I headed back to the bedroom.

As I laid there, thinking about what Rena just said, that he would have had a date at the wedding, spirited me awake, and I found a new urgency to speak to Dimitris.

“Dimi, can I come over so that we can talk?” He agreed we should talk away from the house. He gave me the address, and I drove there in Rena’s car. I knocked on the door, and as I knocked again, a woman came out. Dimi greeted me and started to hug me.

“Helena, come in.” As I entered, he wrapped his arms around me. I could not respond. “Come, sit.”

“I’m happy to see that you’ve found someone,” I said.

“This man need his Helena, or I be alone,” he said.

“It looks like you’re not alone. How long have you known her?” I questioned my motives. I felt jealousy and anger that I tried to hide.

“You have been well? This man miss his Helena. You are home now? Has my Heart come back to Dimi?” His voice was soft and mellow, almost hypnotic.

“Could I get some water? I’m really dry.” I stalled for time to prepare for the business at hand. He sat at the table as he handed me a glass of water. “Thank you.”

“You have talk with Stefano?” He asked.

“Dimi, we need to straighten this thing out. You’ve been miserable, I’ve been miserable, but we never seem to land on the right answer. Have you figured out a way to keep Camilla out of our lives? You know that as long as she is on the loose, we’ll have problems.”

“Interpol put surveillance on house of Camilla. They do not tell this man what they do, but Dimi see stolen document on table, so I report.”

“I said I wouldn’t be back if she’s still hanging around.” I rose from my chair.

“But Interpol do the surveillance. Take time to do.” He stood, reaching for my hand.

“It’s been months, and still nothing! I can’t believe this. You keep telling me it’s being taken care of, and yet you probably never confronted her. How can I believe that you’re getting rid of her? She’s still running loose, causing havoc where ever she goes. I don’t think you care whether we’re together or

not!" I said, out of frustration.

"They will report when they arrest, so, we wait."

"I wanted to think of this trip as my *renewal*," I said.

"Renewal? What is?" Dimitris asked.

"It's a fresh start; a renewal of faith and trust in *you*, and our marriage." My eyes were tearing up, and that signaled my time to take a deep breath and leave. I turned and headed toward the door. He caught me by the arm and whirled me around to face him.

"You will not run away. You must let Dimi speak his heart." I felt confined, stifled, and began to panic. I knew that if I were to listen to what he had to say concerning what is in his heart, I'd be putty in his hands.

"No, Dimi, you've had time to do something, and you haven't. I have to go."

"Yes, is best you go away from Dimi," his words cut deeply.

"I'll be at Rena's. I have something to show Stefano when he gets back from Marrakesh." I could see the hurt in his eyes, and with my voice choked up, he knew I was also in pain. My eyes welled as I took my purse from the table. I opened the front door. It seemed like the leaving, this time, was in slow-motion. The pain cutting into my heart was so deep that I could barely breathe. Dimitris stood by the table and watched. When I stepped to the door, I turned and saw the look on his face. His expression hurt me more than I could bear. I drove Rena's Fiat back to its little space next to the garage. I turned the keys off in the ignition, and with my hands still gripping the steering wheel, I let all the hurt and tears come as they were meant to do, and I cried with the agony of a broken heart. I went over what was said, again and again in my mind. What did I do? I've been so determined to steel myself against melting at the sight of him that I may have ruined our chances of saving what's left of our marriage. I didn't think it would end this way.

The days I waited for Stefano seemed to go on forever. I have to admit that I was poor company for Rena, but she understood. She's the one person who sees both sides of the situation.

It was two days before Stefano came home. I thought Dimi would try to call. He didn't. When Stefano got back, he seemed cold, lacking any sign of emotion. I felt the sting of being shunned. Stefano is a fair judge of the

situation, but blood is thicker than water, and I could understand his lack of fair play. It was the second day after he got home that I finally approached him.

“I found something interesting in London.” We were eating dinner, but Stefano kept his eyes on his plate. “I think you should take a look and see if I’m crazy or imagining it.”

“Stefano, don’t be so rude, Helena is speaking to you,” Rena scolded.

“I didn’t hear you. What did you say?”

“I found something in London. I think it might be a major piece of the puzzle.”

“And what puzzle might that be?” He was purposely being antagonistic.

“Rena, dinner was exceptional, as usual. I better not have anymore. Thank you for putting up with me. I know it’s been hard on you both. Dimi has found someone, and I wish him the best. He deserves to be happy. Please excuse me.” I went to my room, laid on the bed, and with Dimitris on my mind, I fell asleep.

“What is the matter with you, Stefano? How can you be so rude to her? You act like this is all her fault. I don’t blame her one bit. If you were doing as Dimi has been, I’d divorce you before I murder you in your sleep,” Rena scolded.

“He was okay until she latched onto the photo and started asking all those questions. She’s lucky she didn’t get us all killed,” he said in his defense.

“Stefano! I’ve never heard you talk like this. She’s been a close friend to me, like the sister I used to have, so don’t you dare say anything more!” Rena slammed the cupboard door closed, threw the dishcloth in the sink, and bounded out of the house. The next morning, Rena made Stefano a substantial breakfast.

“Mmm, you outdid yourself, Reenie, I can not eat another bite.” Stefano finished his coffee. Rena wasn’t speaking. He snuggled her ear and poked her in the side, trying to break her silence. She squirmed and burst out giggling.

“Stop! Unhand me you big brute!”

“I have to go to the dig. They probably shorted out the generator again,”

Stefano said.

“You better apologize to Helena when you get home. I’ve never seen you that rude. You know this is Dimi’s fault. She’s been more patient with him than I ever would be with you. He hurt her very badly, and I’m surprised she came back at all.”

“You’re right, Reenie, I wasn’t thinking. None of my business, anyway,” he said.

I was sure that the map I got from the travel agent was what we needed to understand the rest of the information that we acquired. Although I only had part of the information, I assumed I was missing several drawings and many of the poems. If the poems were clues on where to go, I needed to make a working plan. I laid out the map and anchored it on the floor with books. I compared the other drawings and realized that it was right there in front of me all this time. I had to go step by step; like a treasure map, eliminating stumbling blocks as much as possible. When my eyes started to bother me, I pulled the shades to darken the room and took a nap. Around 2:30 p.m. I awoke, and excitement washed over me with the thought of what I knew was the end of the rainbow. I packed everything again. I wrote a note to Rena to offer my apologies. I let her know her Fiat will be waiting for her at the airport.

Two Arrows



In down direction, right on sea.
Left will find the sign you need.
Two arrows point, thine to thee.
Three trunks entwine, where shadows flee.

Georgina Antoinette

(c)2021

Without Hope



“Stefano! Stefano! Come quick! Where are you?”

“What is it, Reenie?” Stefano met Rena at the threshold of Helena’s bedroom door.

“Look! She’s gone. She must have left because you were so rude! Look, there’s a note that she wrote. Read it!” She handed him the note then wiped her eyes.

“Dear Rena,

I am so sorry for leaving like this. I’ve decided that if there is ever to be an end to the misery I have caused, I will have to trace the path to the rainbow myself. I don’t want to drag all of you through it again, and if there’s any danger, I will shoulder it myself. Please forgive me for leaving so abruptly. I now know where to start, so I’m leaving this map that I wanted to show to Stefano. Maybe he’ll have more ideas to further his study. If I’m wrong, well, I’ll be back soon enough. I’ll try to keep my phone with me so Stefano can tell me where I’ve made my blunder. Maybe he’ll see something that I don’t. I’m borrowing your car. I’ll leave it at the airport, and the keys will be in the usual place. Love you both and hope to see you again. -Helena”

“What does she mean? Is she going to do this alone? Honey, you better call Dimi,” Rena suggested to Stefano, whose attention was nailed to the map, still anchored to the floor.

“If this is what she thinks is the end of the rainbow, I’m afraid she’s in over

her head. She'd never go by herself. She'll get someone to go with her. Aiden, probably," Stefano guessed.

"Oh, Stefano, you're not paying attention." Rena declared.

"Look at this. I don't know why I didn't recognize it. Of course! Hmm." Stefano was in a world of thought, oblivious to anything else.

I left the Fiat for Rena to retrieve in the parking lot of the airport. My first destination was Athens. From there, I could take a flight out of Athens to Kavala, Alexander the Great Airport. I was hoping the car rental area was close to arrivals. I was getting tired, and daylight was a flicker on the sunset horizon. As I waited for a car, I was excited at the prospect of the path I have set myself on. I had cried as much as I thought I ever could, but it didn't make me feel any better. Losing the love of my life is a sword I will carry for the rest of my days, but I am confident that I'm reaching the apex of my search and I am excited to get on with it.

I felt comfortable with a Mini Cooper. I wanted to find a hotel or pension where I could sleep and start the day fresh in the morning. I stopped at a hotel, the closest one that I could find to the airport. I needed to rest.

In the morning, the bed felt good to me. The linens had the scent of lavender and patchouli. The ceiling fixture looked like the gorgeous perforated brass and colored glass that's so popular in Turkey. I knew I was in Macedonia with its Turkish flavor. I wasn't hungry, but I had to eat some solid food before I lay my plans for the day. In the little cafe-style reception room lay a buffet of Greek Yogurt, cereal, waffle maker, and the usual breakfast bounty that is known in Greece. I filled my stomach, and the start of my day was only interrupted by my phone constantly ringing. I didn't answer the first call. I could see it was from Mark. He seems to have a radar for when things get rough.

"Stefano!" Rena called, "Did you call Dimi yet?"

Stefano was still studying the map that Helena left.

"Stefano. Where is that man?" Rena went to Stefano's office, and there he was, obviously bent over the map. "I've been calling you. Did you get around to calling Dimi?"

"Uh, no. Look at this, Sugarplum, I've been so blind," Stefano said as he

gazed at the map.

“Call Dimi, before you forget again,” Reena insisted.

“But what do I tell him? She was here, and now she’s gone?” He asked.

“Start with the map,” she suggested.

“Yes?”

“Dimi, are you alright? Did I wake you?” Rena asked.

“No, not sleeping,” Dimitris replied.

“Stefano’s been trying to call you. Hold on a minute.” Rena brought the phone to Stefano.

“What you want?” Dimitris was blunt.

Stefano told him about the map that Helena left; and the information that could be useful to end the mystery. Dimitris finally admitted to Stefano that he asked Helena to leave him alone. The pain of feeling the words fall from his lips broke his heart once again.

“Helena left here sometime in the early morning, but she left a note. It doesn’t say where she went, so we need to go over the drawings and the poems because I doubt that she’ll say where she’s heading if I call her. You need to call her.” Stefano’s voice was pointed to relay the urgency of his message.

“How we know what she do or where she go? I will bring box of investigation papers, we see what we find,” Dimitris said.

“Just bring any maps and poems that you have. Bring all those cat drawings too.”

They agreed to go over all the old information together to note locations of where she would likely go.

“Stefano, I know he won’t be happy until they’re together again. When are you going to tell him?”

“Tell him what? About the letter? I will when he comes,” Stefano offered.

Olive Hill



I had to turn around and go in the opposite direction at the intersection. All the pedestrians added to the difficulty of driving in a place where I had never been. Even though it's worse at night, I think this time my thoughts had me distracted.

I wanted to relax before embarking on the quest. Most of the hotels and apartment rentals close to the airport were booked. I had to go out further to find accommodations. My first hotel, although lovely, was too expensive. I found a wonderful gem of a hotel farther south. It wasn't too close to the tourist area. It's a lovely organic farm called *Olive Hill*. The "Olive Suite" had a peaceful view of the hills, and the room was enormous! As I settled in, I wanted to get everything organized to do my research. I felt I could take my time and discover local records and local legends.

I laid the drawings of "the cat" on the bed and looked behind each to see if any information may have been hidden and overlooked. I had three of the poems and a couple of drawings. Incomplete information that didn't help much, but it was enough to give me an incentive to begin:

"II. Rare is the vision
of the red-eyed cat,
for the one on the left
is where it sat.

IV. In darkness far
 within the maze,
 of far-out hills
 a trail to blaze.

VII. Pay for life,
 with loose of tongue,
 a generation
 soon be gone.”

Reading these poems aloud, it said that whatever is hidden, I would need to have the starting point and the direction in which to put these clues into action. The reference to the *red-eyed cat*, according to the map that I left with Stefano, would be the island in the North Aegean Sea. The island is Thassos. I made it this far, but after I take the ferry to that island, where do I go from there?

I was perfectly comfortable in the room at Olive Hill and so lucky they had a vacancy. The room was more like an apartment, and I could breathe and relax. I felt that I could stay here and take my time with the quest. There was no imminent danger from the thugs, and all seemed peaceful.

Dimitris arrived back on Karpathos on the mid-afternoon ferry. Rena and Stefano were waiting in the lounge near the end of the docks.

“Dimi, over here.” Rena was waiving him into the coffee bar.

“Why do you tell this man to come? Why are we here?” Dimitris sounded irritated.

“Dimi, we know what an awful time you’ve had with the separation and all, but I wanted to tell you that Helena thinks she knows where the end of her rainbow is,” Rena said in a soft voice to not upset him.

“How can she know this? Another geese chase.”

“Here’s the note she left.” Rena handed him the note. As he read, his eyes got wider as he clenched his fist.

“She will ask questions. Thugs hear of this and she puts herself in trouble again.”

"You should call her. Maybe she'll listen to you," Rena said.

"She will not talk to Dimi, but I try."

My phone startled me. I turned over in my bed to find my phone twisted within the blankets. By the time I got my phone, I answered it quickly, not taking notice of who was calling.

"Hello?"

"Helena, will you talk to this man?"

"I'm pretty busy at the moment. Is it important?"

"Where are you? You must not put yourself in danger. Are you okay?" Dimi asked.

"I, I'm not sure what you mean. I'm not in danger," I assured him.

"Why you bother with this? Authorities take care of, do you hear this man?" He tried to hold himself back, to not reveal his concern, but not succeeding.

"They have forgotten all the work we put into it to get this far. They've done nothing," I said in frustration.

"Camilla and Bolio get arrested. They are charged with accessory to grand theft and aiding known felons, so authorities working on it," he informed me.

He waited for my reaction.

"They arrested Camilla?"

"Yes. Now, what you do here? Is still danger for you." It seemed as if he has no interest in the maps and the poems that point the way. I felt very disheartened by his tone. If I were honest with myself, I'd say that I need his support and a little encouragement to see this through. I need his strength.

"I'm trying to make sense of the poems. There seems to be a message in them. Only, I don't have all the poems, so I'm a bit in limbo. I'll have to stumble around until I find out more." I was getting ready to hang up.

"You do not ask the people there, too dangerous." He warned me once again.

"Don't worry."

"I must worry. You take too many chances," he said.

"If I can't decipher the poems that I have with me, I'm afraid I'll have to ask someone. I'm sure they are familiar with the stories, superstitions, and all," I said in my defense.

“You must do this?”

“I’ve got to go, but I’m glad to hear that at least they arrested Camilla,” I said with a tone of relief.

“It is what you want, yes?” His attitude was sullen and antagonistic, as though there was little hope left in him. Stefano was still studying the bits and pieces that have come together. They uncovered many clues and provided many suspects, but there was a long way yet to go. The phone went quiet.

“My Heart,” was all he said.

“Would you be able to come here and bring the poems and the other maps? We can talk and it’s such a quiet, lovely place.” His heart was coming alive again, but he had to stifle any hopes that she would come home.

“Rena tell this man you find trouble again. I will come. Where are you?”

I wasn’t sure how long it would take him to get here, but I told him I would wait. I wanted to see him, and if everything goes smoothly, we may find some common ground. I think we both have paid a high price, and I have to take the blame for it. But I still believe it served a purpose.

While I waited for Dimi to come to Olive Hill, I made an effort to go to the local library to find more historical archives that would be pertinent to our search. I was able to find a record of smuggling crimes from a London newspaper involving artifacts and other news items. The links to other documents were not helpful. I knew that if I were to ask someone face to face, I may come away with more information. Time was getting short. I picked up my research and the copies I made and returned to Olive Hill in the early evening.

There was a call from the main desk wanting to send my “guests” to my room, but I told the receptionist that I would see *them* in the Lobby. I straightened the papers I had, put on a sweater, and walked to the Lobby. Did Rena and Stefano come? Was it the thugs, trying to fool me? I was nervous, and I didn’t know what to expect. I doubted it was Stefano, who has been so cold and distant, as I think I agitated him about my pursuits.

When I entered the lobby, I could see Dimi from across the room. He turned to look in my direction when I entered. When his eyes met mine, I

could see the spark in his eyes that I've missed for so long. His appearance was so changed that I hardly recognized him. My heart was throbbing wildly, as though it were in my throat. He walked over to me, held my shoulders at arm's length, and looked into my eyes.

"Helena. You are well?" He raised my chin as he gave me a very gentle kiss on the cheek.

"I almost didn't recognize you." His eyes sparkled as I greeted him.

"This look like comfortable place. How you find?" He asked in a very cordial tone.

"It was by accident."

He seemed so quiet and introspective. I thought it was going to be awkward, but not *this* bad. He had a full wrap beard, nicely trimmed, but not what I was used to seeing.

Dimi came over to sit next to me.

"I've missed you all," I said. He took hold of my hand and kissed it.

"Miss Morgana think you have forgotten. She say you don't know what you want," he stated carefully, trying not to upset me.

"I hope you don't believe that," I said.

"Maybe she right." He exhaled, as if in defeat.

"Dimi, I know I asked you to come, but, is there another reason you're here?" I asked.

"Camilla in jail, is what you want, yes? Will this let you come home? You say you miss this man." Dimitris held my hand, leaned forward, and looked deeply into my eyes. "This remind this man of Paradiso when you soak in pool. Could not take eyes off. We talk at that time." He had a slight smile, remembering, and a mild laugh when thinking of those days.

"I remember. Things seemed so much simpler then," I sighed.

"This man want to kiss you then."

"Everything was so..."

He covered my hand with his and said,

"I will say goodnight." He stood, kissed my cheek, and left. I assumed he would get a room. He left so abruptly that I didn't think to ask if he was staying or not. I was shocked that he left me there. I hoped he would kiss me

and try to make things better. It hurt that he didn't.

I sat by the fireplace, thinking about how a small photograph started the quest. Everything that has happened in the last year has centered around events caused or inspired by the discovery of the photo. It may well be the destruction of our marriage as well.

After the way things were left with Dimitris, I couldn't stop thinking about him. I know this quest has become an obsession. I do see that he has done the best he could, under the circumstances. As I thought about our relationship, I feared that I'd never be able to restore it to where it used to be. I went back to my room and wondered if Dimi was staying here too.

With all the maps and other documents that were in abundance, I agreed with Stefano that it would be more convenient to set up at Stefano's loft room, and safer, too, to go over the new information. We agreed to meet up with Stefano and Rena at their home. I think this was planned to get me to leave Olive Hill.

I packed and got ready to check out of the hotel.

"Thank you for such a lovely stay. This is such a beautiful place," I said.

"Yes, it was more beautiful for us than you know, epharisto," Dimi added.

"Oh, there you are," I said to Dimi. I wondered if he stayed here last night, but I didn't want to ask.

"You are very welcome, and we'd love to have you return," our hostess smiled. "I think I should tell you that someone was asking for you, Mrs. Patakinis."

"Oh, that was probably my sister-in-law."

"No, these men were enormous, wearing dark suits. Very intimidating. I wouldn't tell them anything. They frightened me," she said. Dimi and I looked at each other.

"When were they here?" I asked.

"They left here about a half-hour ago," she said. We thanked her and asked if the car rental agency would pick up Dimi's rental car here, then we went out to my car. Dimi kept hold of my hand.

"We be careful what we do." Dimi reached over to me and kissed my cheek

gently.

“Who do you think it is? How did they know where I am? Are they going to every hotel in Greece looking for me?” I was very uneasy at the thought of it.

“My Heart, you cause big problem, so thugs on alert to find you. They have many ears to know where you go. So maybe we think of using other names,” Dimitris spoke with caution, not wanting to alarm me.

“That would be hard to do,” I said. “This is all so ridiculous. After all these years they suddenly are interested in whatever this is, this puzzle? It has been under their noses all this time, and they have to torment *us*? It makes little sense,” I said.

“Remember when you and Morgana go incognito to take pictures? We do something like that, so they do not recognize us,” Dimitris suggested. I saw him smile with a little laugh, as he pictured that time in his mind when we took pictures of passengers on the ferry.

“I don’t know how long we’d be able to do that. Let’s hope we won’t have to go to extremes,” I said as we drove into the car rental agency near the airport to return my rented vehicle.

The rental agency was in a “U” shaped building. It was surrounded by a lawn with a fountain in the center. The vehicle return parking lot was on the West side of the structure. We parked in the “returns” lane and waited for the agent to come out and examine the car. We waited ten minutes in the hot sun.

“Let’s go inside. They must be busy,” I suggested.

We left the locked car with our luggage and entered the small lobby area.

“I will go find someone.” Dimitris left me sitting in the lobby. When he returned, he grabbed my hand and dragged me to the door.

“What’s wrong? What are you doing?” I asked. I saw the danger reflected in his eyes.

“Come, we drive to airport.” His demeanor reflected the urgency of the situation. We buckled in and took off like a bat out of hell. I wasn’t going to ask any questions. Somewhere in the back of my mind, I knew the situation.

“They were at the agency, weren’t they?” I stated.

“Yes, my Heart. They were there. We drive to airport. We have good start so we go ahead of them.”

“I thought it was something to do with them. Did they see you?” I asked.

“No, I hear them first. It was Deichant, with two others. They are looking for you. Do not worry on this, Helena, Dimi will never let them hurt you again.” He tapped my knee, and I held his hand on my thigh.

The conversation stopped as we both contemplated what happened. The gravity of the situation overshadowed our previous difficulties. Separation and the reason for the separation were far from our thoughts.

I was in London for almost five months. I didn’t think that my return to Greece would be noticed by anyone but family. My mind kept going into the thug scenario and how it affected both Morgan and me. The names of those that we are familiar with went through my mind, which led to the pictures of them we had pinned to the wall. Our wall of thugs, of which we spent so many hours researching and verifying facts, swirled visions of the camaraderie we all had in the joint effort to solve the puzzle. The face of Sahj, the mysterious man who seemed to appear from nowhere, and helped us in our time of need, gave me an acute sadness thinking of him, as Dimi and I drive the highway in the afternoon heat. The distance from Thessaloniki to Athens would take too much time to drive. As we approached the city limits, Dimitris pulled into a roadside cafe.

“We’re stopping?” I asked.

“We stop.” He got out of the car and came around to my door. He took my hand as I got out of the car, and he enveloped me in his arms. “Oh, Helena.”

“Dimi? Are you okay?” I asked as I could see the concern that he didn’t hide.

“My Heart. Do not fear, your Dimi will not let them find you. Now, we rest, and tomorrow we drive to airport.” He held me there for a few minutes.

“How long do you think it will take to get to Athens? Were you planning to stay at Morgan & Andreas’ after we arrive?” I asked, with a bit of trepidation in my voice.

“You no want to stay with Morgana?”

“I don’t think I’ll be welcome there,” I confessed. Dimitris held me by the

shoulders and tried to catch my eye.

“You will always be welcome, my Heart.”

“I don’t know. Things have changed. I don’t think Morgan will be happy to see me. We had a bit of a falling-out a while back.” I hoped Dimitris wouldn’t ask me to explain. His eyes penetrated my heart, and I lost my train of thought.

Dimitris got us a room, then took my hand as we followed the matron to our abode. It was small but adequate for our needs. Somehow, being alone with Dimitris seemed awkward. I was nervous. I felt very insecure like something is wrong or will be soon. I sat on the bed then laid back. Dimi came to my side.

“My Heart, you are tired?” He asked.

“A little,” I answered.

“Would you rather us drive to airport, or ferry tomorrow?” He asked.

“I don’t know, you choose.” I didn’t care.

“I will call Stefano.” He conferred with his brother and when he was finished he turned to me, his smile gone, eyebrows pinched.

“What?” I knew something was wrong.

“Camilla and Bolio out of jail. Someone bail them out,” Dimi said. He saw something in my expression that worried him. He knelt at my feet and took my hands. “You no worry on this,” he said looking into my eyes.

“What happened? I thought they had a pretty tight case against them,” I said.

“Stefano, say Deichant bail them out. 150,000 Euro. But we do not bother on this, they will go to prison. We wait.” Dimitris was convinced that they were on borrowed time.

“I don’t think anyone else has that kind of money. It figures that it was Deichant,” I commented to myself.

“I will call Interpol agent, see what happened,” Dimi spoke in Greek to the agent for almost twenty minutes.

“What did he say?” I asked.

“Agent, say incomplete documents, so bail granted to Bolio and Camilla, but they cannot leave Greece.”

“Well, that’s nothing. They weren’t in jail for more than a blink. They’ll probably make themselves scarce and never be found again.” I complained.

“Stefano say he will fix loft room with documents. Do Stefano have all drawings?” He asked.

“Yes, he has everything but what is in my luggage. Did you ever take the hidden documents out of the staircase drawer?” I asked. I could see that Dimi was thinking of other things.

“Yes, he has all important things.”

Thessaloniki

The heat was unrelenting. I couldn’t think about our personal problems when dealing with Deichant’s minions and being on guard that they’ll find us. I wasn’t prepared, although I thought I was, to deal with Dimitris, too. It was just too hot.

“And here we are again, still having to deal with Camilla,” I lamented. Dimitris could see that I was upset. This isn’t what we expected after all this time.

“Helena, what bothers you? This man being oaf again?” He questioned my unease that must be obvious. I had to hold my laughter at the question. I couldn’t tell him that our situation was still unsettled and that I wasn’t ready to mend our rift yet. When we went to bed, he slept in the overstuffed chair in the small TV nook.

The next day we drove in the heat to Thessaloniki airport. The heat of the day climbed quickly. We barely spoke on the plane to Karpathos. I would catch Dimi watching me, wanting to talk about our relationship. Accepting the fact that we’d always be plagued with Camilla and her nasty pranks was unthinkable. I questioned myself on whether I was admitting defeat by walking away from my life in Rhodes, or if it was my stubborn streak to not let her win that keeps me hanging on to Dimitris? Do I still have the strength to fight?

As we approached Karpathos, Dimi took my hand and made me conscious of his support for whatever was bothering me. He knew we were not back to where we should be in our relationship, but I don’t think he knew what he

could do to fix the situation.

“I feel as if we’re being held prisoner by that woman. What can we do?” I asked him.

“We be sure she is arrested.” He wrapped his protective arms around me.

“I’m glad you made it. With all this heat I thought you’d want to stay a little longer at Olive Hill,” Rena said as she was picking us up at the airport.

“We needed to get here, it’s always cool and nice in this house,” I said.

“I try to keep it livable, like seventy-eight degrees. This air conditioner will blast you into the deep freeze if we aren’t careful,” Rena said as she poured us a tall iced tea. She looked at me, then at Dimitris, then at me again with a question on her face.

“I’m going to go take a shower. Thanks for the ice tea. I needed that.” I made my excuse to go to the bedroom.

“What’s going on with you two? I thought you’d be back together, and happy,” Rena said.

“Is complicated,” Dimitris answered with a sigh.

“Well, you’d better not let Helena see Camilla. It will be the end for you two,” Rena said while pouring him another iced tea.

“Yes, but to keep Camilla away, is not easy if she want to make trouble,” Dimi uttered.

I went directly to our room and into the shower, while Dimi went with Stefano to the loft room. Between the two men, they were able to set up the maps and wall of criminals very similar to what we had at home before all this got blown out of proportion. Faces were connected with colored yarn to whomever they were proven to be associated with.

The notebook that Stefano opened was full of reports from the University on the testing of the little picture. He even had the original photograph that Dimi surrendered to them. These reports were still being worked on before I left. I welcomed the new information.

Klaus Vanderbur, the kingpin of the art smuggling ring, surrounds himself with Mafia-type thugs that do his dirty work. His second in command

seems to be Alain Deichant, the local bigwig who lords over the minions and “want to be’s.” Vanderbur also has some kind of relationship with individuals within the Rhodes government, which would account for the sheltering and preferential treatment of his cohorts. The colored yarn linking the most obvious individuals, the ones we are most familiar with, stood out in their pastel links on our wall of thieves.

The morning came early as the sun was on fire at 6:30 am. It was going to be a scorching hot day.

“My Heart? You are awake?” Dimi asked as he peeked in the door. I squinted from the bright light coming into the room.

“I’m awake. What time is it? It’s hot in here already,” I observed.

“Yes, it will be very warm today,” he said as he leaned over the bed and looked into my eyes. “Kalimera, Helena,” then he kissed my lips. He pulled back far enough to look into my eyes again, and I’m sure he could see that I am still in love with him.

“Kalimera, Dimi.”

“My Heart, you must see loft room. Come, tell Stefano if he make any mistakes. So, we have quick breakfast, and we begin,” Dimitris said, as he left the room.

Once I awoke I realized I haven’t told Dimitris about the many times I spotted Bolio, or I thought it was him. It might be a case of “too little, too late,” now that we know that Camilla and Bolio have been released from custody. Should I be preparing for trouble from them? It seems I’m always looking for problems with those two.

When I entered the loft room, I was amazed at how much more space was created by folding up the “hide-a-bed” and moving the conference table closer to the make-shift bulletin board. On the table were stacked the files of dead-end suspects and another pile of faces that haven’t proven to be linked to either of our suspects. The new information that Stefano found during my absence, I haven’t seen yet. Stefano’s primary interest seemed, to me at least, to be focused on his fixation with the Templars.

“Wow, Stefano, you’ve organized this beautifully,” I commented.

“We have coffee,” Rena announced. “Dimi is bringing up the pot. I don’t

want to stumble on those steps. You see how much more room you have when you get rid of all those relics you had sitting around up here?" Rena pointed her comment at Stefano.

"Yes, Reenie," Stefano replied automatically, and not paying much attention.

Dimitris brought up the coffee. Rena poured us each a cup.

"Oh! That phone again! I should turn it off. What could it be this time?" Rena checked to find out the caller. "Oh, I'd better go to the kitchen for this." Rena excused herself to return the call. Five minutes later, she returned. She sat quietly and listened to the conversation, not adding to it at all.

"Oh, I need this," I muttered. Stefano put on his teacher's cap.

"Okay, children, are you ready?" Stefano was tuning up. "I'll go over what you discovered, Helena, then I'll add what I found. The basic thing is our wall here. I eliminated some suspects from the wall, but if we can show their involvement, we can add them back to the wall where they belong," he said.

"Helena, you've done very well with the information you had, and I think you're right. Thassos gets a big red circle around it. This is where the 'body lies,' so to speak," Stefano said, pointing to the map on the wall.

"I knew it was important to our investigation, but where do we go after we get there? That's the problem." Dimi looked at me, as I knew he would.

"Okay, although we feel we're going in the right direction, we have to be cognizant of the thugs and where they fit in. This is a very dangerous journey we find ourselves on. We must not get diverted and run amok," Stefano said.

"I know Thassos is where we start, and most of the maps or drawings refer to this small island, but do we have any idea if it points the way further?" I asked.

"Not directly, but it is here obscurely. We can assume the poem with Roman numeral II., refers to Thassos. Here it is." Stefano pulled his glasses off his head and adjusted them on his nose. He approached the wall of thugs, then pointed to the paper tacked there.

"Number I. The key to the puzzle
for you to hold,
of tin, or iron,
but not of gold."

“I’m not sure about a *key* unless the poems are the key,” Stefano surmised, “and if so, there may well be other poems.”

“Sahj gave me an iron key. It opened a wooden box that had one of these poems and a small map inside,” I said.

“The *key* is mentioned several times. That is very significant. Do you still have the box and key?” I looked at Dimitris. He acknowledged that he still had the box. “Good, later we may wish to examine it,” Stefano said, making a note of our conversation.

“Number II. To guard the key
the cat does sit,
in wet surround
within the pit.”

“So, ‘to guard the key the cat does sit.’ Now, that really says something!” Rena chirped.

“I agree. It sounds like something is being guarded if you can believe the interpretation. Isn’t this the one that we sent for interpretation?” I asked.

“Yes, the University translated it. We have no reason to question it,” Stefano explained. “Poem number III is more specific. Then again its value, for us, rests on the map. So,” he continued,

“Number III. Rare is the vision
of the red-eyed cat,
for the one on the left
is where it sat.”

“Now that’s what I call a clue!” Rena squealed with excitement. “What does it mean?”

Stefano wanted to take a break, so we all went to the kitchen for a cold drink. The men went out to the patio, picking oranges and talking. Rena and I sat in the breakfast room in front of the fan that is used during these hot spells. After ten minutes, the men came back in and shared our fan.

“You can get heatstroke in this hot weather,” I said to Dimitris. He came over to me and took my hand.

“Come with me,” he said. We went to the bedroom, where Dimi sat next to me, still holding my hand. He was contemplating what to say.

“What’s wrong, Dimi?” I asked.

“Nothing wrong. Just... this man and Stefano will go to Rhodes, get wood box for Stefano to see,” he said.

“What’s the urgency? It couldn’t wait?” I asked.

He hunched his shoulders.

“What’s going on? Everything was running smoothly, and now you’re acting mysterious like there’s something you don’t want me to know,” I said.

“S’agapo, my Helena. Stefano want to go for wood box, so we come back quick,” he said as he looked at his feet.

“And?”

“And... this man want to make love to his wife,” he looked at me with a sad expression

“We will when the time is right. You understand, don’t you?” I asked.

“Will you be here when Dimi come back?” Before I could answer, we could hear Stefano calling Dimitris to leave.

“I’ll be here,” I said. We stood to leave the room. Dimi stood in front of me, still holding my hand. Looking down and into my eyes, my heart swelled with love for this man that drives me crazy, and when he kissed me I felt an urgent need for him. I wanted him, and I was ready to give up all my reasons for leaving, including my concerns with Camilla. He was intense and kissed me furiously. We could hear Stefano calling again.

“Dimi, we’d better go.” I didn’t want him to stop. It has been so long, and I yearned for this, but he had to leave and I’d have to wait. We straightened ourselves up and went to the kitchen.

“So, what is the plan?” I asked Rena.

“Stefano wants to see the box, so Dimi is taking him to the Rhodes house. The dogs need to be checked on too, but Stefano figured it would be easier for him to go with Dimi, look at the box there, then they’ll leave Rhodes and come here before going to Kremasti airport,” Rena was interrupted when Stefano and Dimi came in to say goodbye.

“We will be back late tomorrow, so we can finish the chart then. Dimi,

do you still have that old brass compass? Mine fell into the latrine at the student dig. Stupid, really, but I wasn't going to retrieve it!" Stefano said with exasperation. Rena, sitting next to me, thumped her forehead with the heel of her hand, then shook her head in disbelief.

The men kissed us goodbye, then they left.

As I relaxed on the patio with a tall iced tea, Rena checked the mailbox before joining me.

"If I wasn't trying to manage this iced tea, it would be a perfect time to tackle that Hammock!" I said.

"They can be very tricky," Rena said as she sat at the picnic table.

Stefano and Dimitris arrived in Rhodes and drove directly to the Rhodes house. Dimitris greeted his dogs with a loving ruff-up. The men entered the house to find papers all over the floor, the wall phone hanging by a thread, and drawers all gaping open.

"What happened in here?" Stefano asked.

"They do it again. They look for reason to make life misery," Dimitris answered.

They found a note in the bathroom, written on the mirror in red lipstick.

"Tell her to stop."

"What do they mean by that? Stop what?" Stefano asked.

"This threat to Helena, they try to intimidate. Camilla do this," Dimitris said.

"How do you know it's her?" Stefano asked.

"Helena do not wear this red grease on face. Here is box, you look. This man will be back. Wait for me."

There was a pounding on Camilla's door.

"Just a minute," she answered in Greek, preening her hair.

"Camilla!" Dimitris called.

"Come in, Dimi." She invited him in.

"You have been busy," he said.

"Oh, I have!" She tried to kiss him *hello*. He breezed by her without noticing.

"Today I ask again, why you try to cause misery for this man? Helena never

do anything to you. So, why?"

"I do nothing to her. She do to herself. She takes you to not be Greek man. You forget you are Greek and should be with Greek woman. But I have done nothing. I sit back and laugh, but do nothing," she said, looking down her nose, posing her chin outward in defiance, and licking her lips like a snake. This infuriated Dimitris.

"You think this?" He asked.

"I know this, and I am not the only one," she sniggered, lighting a cigarette.

Dimitris declined a call on his phone, knowing it to be Stefano.

"I must go. Do not make me come back here, Camilla. It will not be pleasant," he warned.

Dimitris carefully closed her door behind him. Camilla looked through fringed curtains as she watched him walk up the street and disappear around the corner. Thinking to herself, "How could he fall in love with *her*? He was mine, but she is confusing him." Seeing Dimitris unexpectedly stirred something deep inside her. Seeing him boosts her ego. Just the idea of him wanting to see her gives her a sexual thrill that dominates her mind, body, and soul.

"Are you and Dimi back together? I couldn't help seeing you two before they left." Rena was hopping with excitement at the prospect.

"Not quite, but I think we will be soon," I replied.

"This calls for a celebration! How about one of my famous Lime Margaritas?"

"Oh, Rena! You are evil!" Rena and I did more research on some suspects, but we were in such good humor, we accomplished little.

Between the hot weather and the Margaritas, I felt like a zombie and couldn't stop yawning. Rena fixed us a light meal, tuna salad, and crackers. It was all I could eat.

"That was wonderful; just right. I think I'm going to make it an early night, if you don't mind," I said.

"I love cool salads on hot days, it's so refreshing. If you want to go to bed, I've got to make a few calls," Rena said.

“I think I will. I wouldn’t be very good company for you tonight. I feel like I’m in a fog. I’ll see you in the morning.” I hugged her and went to bed.

Nearing the End



With the men back from Rhodes, it was time for us to get all our research and documents together to lay out a plan. We started again where we left off.

As we busied ourselves in searching old arrest records and official documents, certain names in high places were conspicuous.

“The University has access to people in high places, and with a little luck, we might gain information not available to the public,” Stefano commented. “Communication with Scotland Yard has been a continuous collaboration.”

During the hours we spent going over the most important documents, Stefano made a diagram and pinned it to the wall. Stefano is passionate about anything “Templar,” but we have to keep him on the right track with our investigation, and not get sidetracked onto Templar inquiries. This was an exercise in discipline, as many aspects of our investigation could overlap later Templar activities.

“Stefano, according to what you put there, it looks like this man, Nasir Hakim, is the boss-man. Is that the right name?” Rena asked.

“Where do you see that?” He asked.

“On the chart, on the left,” she said.

“No, Sugarplum, this is carried over, a continuation from the bottom of the first column,” he explained to Rena.

“You want to walk? Is too warm in house to breathe,” Dimitris said as he

came up to me.

“We can go out, it’ll feel good,” I said. He lent me his arm, and we continued up the street. Dimitris had little to say.

“I think we’re pretty close to the end of our quest. Don’t you?” I asked.

“Yes, my Heart.”

We had walked for about ten minutes. Dimitris was introspective. I didn’t want to be the one always asking questions or waiting for him to say something, so I figured it was time to go back to the house.

“I guess we should go back,” I said. He didn’t say anything, we just turned around and headed in the direction in which we came. “I wanted to tell you about the letter you got. It was sent to Stefano a few days ago. He gave it to me.” I handed it to him.

“Why Stefano get letter?” He asked.

“It went to the University, but Stefano figured it was for you.”

“Why you not read?” He asked.

“It wasn’t meant for me, and besides, I think it’s in Greek.”

“We read together, at house. Better to see,” he said.

Dimitris got that worried expression on his face. We walked back to the house. The silence didn’t go unnoticed.

“Dimi? You never asked me about London.” He was slow to respond.

“This man miss my Helena. No life for Dimi without wife. Now, my Helena come back and so thank God for blessing,” he said, looking into my eyes. There was more to it than what he just said. I could see it in his eyes.

“Dimi, read the letter.” I didn’t want to be guessing its contents, and he seemed reluctant to open it.

“It say, *I am back.* That is all it say.” He put the letter back into the envelope. I went to my room. I was stunned. I’m envisioning more chaos and more stress. I don’t like how this letter sounded with those few words.

Stefano had all the suspects up on the wall. When I came into the room, Dimi and Stefano were standing in front of the board, talking in low tones.

“Helena, I didn’t see you there,” Stefano said, and Dimitris turned around.

“I’m sorry that I’m late. Did I miss anything?” I said as I entered the loft

room.

Dimitris walked over and leaned on the table in front of me.

“My Heart, are you angry with this man?” he asked.

“No, of course not. Should I be?” His eyes met mine, searching deep into my soul.

“No,” he mumbled.

“Here I am. Okay, Stefano, you can call us all to order!” Rena joked, breaking the spell that Dimitris weaved.

Stefano pointed out the map and diagrams that he had on the wall and explained what the new documents that he brought from the university meant for our investigation. Most of it was corroborative information that backed up other findings. What stood out to me was the small story about the mother and child that went missing in the late 1950s from the old pink derelict house. It was a very small article and information on if they tried to find them; it didn’t say. I noticed that the publication date wasn’t until July 1998, and it was from an old copy of the local Police Gazette. Stefano translated the article and pinned it to the board. There was a picture with the article. The first time I’ve seen what the mother looked like. Unfortunately, it was a very poor-quality copy.

There was an arrest record for Nasir Hakim, nothing definite on convictions, but they charged him with theft, blackmail, arson, assault on an officer, and accomplice to murder. Somehow his strong-arm lawyers had the case transferred to Athens. There was no follow-up on this case. I wasn’t encouraged by this new information.

We were going over the identities of the thugs and noted how their appearance had changed over the years. Stefano and Dimitris went over the maps in fine detail, plotting our route from the clues we deciphered. We had most of the items we needed to take with us, so we were ready to begin in the morning.

Reading about the missing mother and daughter brought up memories of the beginning of our investigation. How we got a look through the derelict house, seeing firsthand what was left behind, and hearing of the gossip and tales surrounding the disappearance. It seems like a dream of long ago.

Although we are still not sure of the story behind the disappearance, the fact that it was swept under the rug at the time leaves a mystery that stirs curiosity, even today.

Preparation



Our eyes had taken a beating, staring at the wall of thieves for hours. “I think I’ll go to bed. I’m so tired and I don’t want to end up with a headache. So, good night everyone,” I descended the stairs of the loft room. I went to sleep almost immediately. The next thing I heard was a light knock on the door.

“Yes?” I answered. “Come in.”

“You awake?” Dimitris entered with coffee in hand.

“Thank you, I was just getting up,” I said. He placed the small tray with coffee and juice on the bedside table. “Where did you sleep last night?” I asked.

“Stefano’s office. We work on map ‘til it gets too late. We talk later, eh?” He kissed my temple and left the room. A lot of water has gone under the bridge since we’ve separated.

When I entered the kitchen, everyone was sitting at the breakfast table.

“Good morning everyone,” I said.

“Kalimara,” Stefano said.

“How did you sleep?” Rena asked.

“Wonderful, I always do when I’m here,” I said.

“Are you ready for a busy day? I think Stefano has a plan!” Rena said.

“We will go over the new map and discuss the poems. We should have them all now, we hope. If there are more, we may not complete our task,” Stefano

explained, “however, we will continue under the assumption that everything is complete.”

“Are we going to spend another day doing this? We can go over questions we have while on the road, can’t we?” Rena asked.

“Yes, that sounds good. We have to do this before those thugs find us still messing around.” I said, as I didn’t want to insist on continuing, but Rena is right. Those men will eventually catch up to us.

We agreed to discuss our questions as we travel. Stefano handed us some copies of the maps and the poems. We took the flight from Karpathos to Athens and from there to Kavala International Airport. We rented a car. From there, we headed to the inn where we would stay.

As we drove, Stefano spoke.

“So, getting back to it, the *red eye* of the cat is Thassos, as depicted on the drawing, here.” Stefano pointed to the island on the map that Rena held. “Now, when the red-eyed cat is enlarged, we can see veins, lines in the red of the eye. When I superimposed the enlargement over a large map of Thassos, voilà, veins are roads and markers,” he pointed again to the map.

“What are those x’s on the map?” Rena peeped through Stefano’s glasses.

“They mark the location of landmarks, caves, and other geological formations. We’ll need to check them as we go,” Stefano said, letting a small grin wash over his face.

“Be sure you check them. We don’t want to get lost,” Rena said.

“Reenie, this is not for you. You will wait for us,” Stefano gently enlightened his wife.

“You guys have all the fun!” Rena lamented, which always turns Stefano into jelly.

“This looks pretty rough. It doesn’t show how to get to some of these places. Are we going to need mountain climbing gear?” I asked.

“We may need in some of the more mountainous areas,” Stefano admitted.

“We take it slow, but some of this not for you to do. This man will not endanger my Helena,” Dimi said, with his arm across my shoulder.

“If I’ll be relaxing on the sidelines, there should be some of these places I can see on my own, and eliminate them from the list,” I said.

Dimitris and Stefano looked at each other. They know what that means. Without one of them to keep me out of trouble, they think I'll run amok all over the mountain.

"If you guys are going up the mountain, I don't want to be left behind. Those thugs might come in and grab me," Rena stated, her voice cracking.

"Reenie, we won't let anyone come for you. You know that, but you won't be able to manage this trek. I need you to be at a hotel close by. If we run into trouble, we'll need you to call for help. You understand?" Stefano was gentle, as he explained. Rena saw the importance in what he said, and she nodded "okay," in agreement.

"I'll keep you company since they want to explore this time. I'm sure it will take more than one outing to find where we have to go," I said to Rena.

"It would feel better not to be alone," she confessed.

It surprised Dimitris that I would stay back and not insist on going with them.

"There will be adventure enough in the coming weeks, so don't feel left out," I said to Rena, who looked abandoned.

"Yes, this will be difficult to get to. The terrain is very hostile to your delicate skin. I expect we'll run into Scorpions and snakes. They are very abundant in this hot weather," Stefano explained, something which I hadn't thought about.

I understood the trek would involve hiking through thick brush and undergrowth. I didn't want to get underfoot and hinder their progress on this first outing, and I didn't want to leave Rena alone.

I made my excuses to Rena and went to the shower. I thought this would lift my spirits.

"Where is everyone? Did I miss them?" I asked.

"They were in a hurry to start. There's a lot of things to set up before they are ready to begin. We'll go up there tomorrow after they find a hotel for us," Rena said.

"Gee, I didn't think I was in the shower that long! I wanted to see them off," I said.

"They probably won't get to Thassos until tomorrow afternoon, they

wanted to get going. What's wrong with Dimi? I thought you two made up," she asked.

"Not exactly," I answered. "We don't seem to connect like we've built an unseen barrier between us. We'll see how it goes, but he's got to show me we can make it. I don't know, sometimes I wonder."

Stefano and Dimitris finally arrived at Kavala International Airport. They rented a vehicle as soon as they could. They booked into the first inn with a vacancy.

"If we take only the bare essentials, we can always come back to the car if there is something we need," Stefano said as a matter of fact.

"We start tomorrow?" Dimi asked.

"Yes, it's too late now. We'll get an early start in the morning. Let's get those maps out and the poems, one more time," Stefano uttered.

Dimitris turned the TV on to hear the news, background noise mostly.

"Tomorrow we will pack lunch, will be long day," Dimitris said.

Stefano was winding the rope that they'll take tomorrow and watching Dimitris.

"What you look at, Stefano?" He asked.

"What is going on with you and Helena? You should be happy she's back," Stefano wondered.

"Don't know." He scrunched his shoulders up as he answered.

"What are you waiting for? She came back and you act like strangers." Stefano asked in his *big brother's* voice.

"Will never be the same," Dimitris lamented.

"It sure won't be, if you don't do something about it. What's holding you back?" Stefano scolded.

Dimitris shrugged his shoulders in bewilderment, almost like he was in a trance.

"I don't know which is worse, you here alone or when Helena is here. It doesn't seem to make any difference," Stefano said.

"Don't want to hope if there is none," Dimitris uttered.

"Did Helena show you the letter I got? I gave it to her."

"We have early day tomorrow," Dimitris said as he prepared to go to bed.

“Right,” Stefano agreed.

Rena and I didn’t leave until the next morning. Stefano called Rena at 5 a.m. and gave her the information we needed. I was looking forward to seeing Thassos. We arrived at 1 p.m.

“Here we are, finally. I wish it wasn’t so hot!” Rena complained.

“I know! It must be 110 degrees. When we get to the inn, maybe we could go for a swim,” I suggested.

The men were checking some caves near the coast. There were more than I thought. Most were either very small or inaccessible unless there is a very low tide, or they were partially collapsed and too dangerous to consider. They continued the search, getting further from their starting point.

When we were led to the room that Stefano booked for us, it surprised me he picked this inn. It had no pool; the room was dreary, small, and depressing. We could see that the men were in a hurry and left most of their gear still packed.

“Gee, Rena, this is awful! I’m not sure I want to touch anything. I certainly don’t want to sleep here,” I said. “Let’s get us a cold drink where they have internet. Maybe we can find another place to stay.”

“I know. Stefano usually goes to places he’s stayed at before, but this must be a first for him. It’s so hot in here I’m going to suffocate.” Rena complained.

We left our room and headed to the next inn up the street. It was new and looked good on the outside. When we went in, it was very pleasant. The first thing we asked is if they have a pool. When they said “yes,” we booked an enormous suite. The desk receptionist noticed that we were on foot. It didn’t take much persuasion to talk us into another rental car. He gave us a great discount that we jumped at, and we rented another vehicle.

We moved our belongings out and left a note at the front desk. We thanked our previous host and asked if they would give a note to Stefano when he comes in.

Rena finally reached Stefano and told him about the move.

“Reenie, do not expose yourselves. Stay indoors. Deichant and his men are in Kavala. We saw them coming out of the museum, in the curator’s company. They are searching for information and won’t be far behind us.” Stefano said.

“Do they know that we’re here?” Rena asked.

“They have many ears and eyes. We must be careful. Do not leave the room until we get there. We will be back by 6 P.M.” Stefano said.

Rena, wide-eyed and very nervous, relayed the news. We knew they were trying to protect us. It wasn’t a surprise to hear that Deichant’s cohorts were close behind us. If they have found some information that we don’t have, they could very well be ahead of us in the search.

Our new lodgings are an out-of-the-way lodge set back from the highway surrounded by olive trees. Only two blocks from the other place, but less likely to have unwelcome visitors.

It looks like we were the only guests since we checked in mid-week.

“Rena, I thought it might be wise to move the car away from our door. I’ll park at the back end of the property,” I said.

“Good idea,” she said in her meek little voice.

I moved the car and returned to our room. Rena was noticeably upset.

“I hope this doesn’t upset you too much, it’s just a precaution,” I explained.

“I worry about Stefano and Dimi. I’m sure that Dimi will take care of him, but that man can get himself into a mess so easily,” she said. I thought she was worried about something, but she’s very sensitive to anything too close to Stefano.

It was dusk when we heard a loud pounding. It shook the walls and startled us awake from our nap.

“What is that?” I heard Rena ask.

I gave her the silence code by putting my finger to my lips. The pounding continued, then we heard,

“I know you are there,” in a deep, accented man’s voice. Angry and unrelenting, he pounded again. I made my way to the far end of the windows, and carefully peeked through the slats in the window blinds.

“You cannot hide, I will find you.” He pounded with all his might. We could hear muttered cursing under his breath. There was no one in the room next to us. We didn’t know if perhaps this man was looking for his wife or if we were facing the thugs who look for us. It terrified us that our door would be pounded on next. This continued until Rena was shaking and in tears. I had

never had my heart beating so hard, I could hardly breathe.

Then it went quiet. I could hear the voices of two or three men in a discussion. I couldn't understand what they were saying.

"Stefano and Dimitris will be on their way, soon. I'd better call Stefano. I don't want them coming here while those men are outside," she stated with concern.

"I think they're still out there," I said as I carefully peeked through the window blinds. I could see them sitting in their car, which was parked in front of the room next door.

"It's getting late. I don't enjoy sitting in the dark," Rena said. "I'll call Stefano again."

Rena was so upset. As she was telling Stefano about these men, she was talking so fast that she started speaking in Chinese. I asked her to hand me her phone.

"Stefano? We're okay, and the men have stopped banging on the door, but they're sitting in their car. I don't think you should come back here for a while yet. When do you expect to arrive?" I asked.

"We're on our way, now. We should be there in another twenty minutes. I'll call again before we arrive. Stay put and we'll be there soon." Stefano was stressed and clicked off the phone.

"What did he say? Are they coming? What if those men are still out there? I don't want our guys to come and get mugged. What should we do?" Rena was close to panicking.

It was dark. The only light was one small security light at the end of the parking area. The big black car was still parked outside. Rena got a text message from Stefano, wanting to know if it was okay to come to the inn.

"Not yet. I'm afraid you'll get hurt, so you have to wait. We didn't pack all your stuff so you may as well go get your bags at the other inn," was her reply.

"You know, I've been thinking. Maybe you could call the reception desk and ask if they could get rid of those thugs? Complain about the noise. It might work," I said. She made the call, and we waited.

By 10 p.m. Rena and I were ready to fall asleep, mostly from boredom.

Dimitris called Rena's phone to ask if it's okay to come without danger. I

peeked out again, and they were gone.

“Yes, they’re gone. It should be safe for the men to come now,” I reported.

We felt relieved that the men in the black car were gone.

“They’ll be here in a few minutes.” Rena sighed and attempted to fix her stray hair.

Dirty Deeds



Once again, Camilla made herself comfortable at the Internet cafe. “This is going to be a difficult search,” she muttered to herself as she logged in. “I hope there is *something* on him,” she lamented.

After an hour of searching, she found nothing but dead ends. Camilla wasn’t used to not getting her way. She hit the keyboard with an angry deluge of Greek expletives.

“May I assist you? You seem to be having trouble finding what you need,” the clerk asked.

“Leave me alone. I’m finding everything I need!” She picked up her purse and papers, then left the cafe. Halfway down the street, a thought came to her. It was like a bolt of lightning from the blue, telling her what to look for in her search. She returned to the computer. After some bumbling through the search engine, she found a website listing for talent agencies with an index. On her first attempt, she found the listing for the talent agency that represents Nick. With some nimble dexterity, she found an obscure way of contacting him. This was her secret pass to insider information. With some manipulation, she got enough information about Nick. Now her devious plan was within her reach.

“Hello, I’m trying to contact the talent agent, Polly Gunn, but there is no listing for her. How would I go about contacting one of her clients?” Camilla

asked. The only answer she got was not very satisfying, but she had no other choice. A slick sneer came over her face as she thought out her plan.

She quickly typed out a note to Nick, leaving instructions for him to contact her. She posted the letter Express Delivery and noted on the front of the envelope, URGENT, in bold red ink.

Camilla prided herself on how devious and diabolical she can be, especially when it comes to revenge. Everyone unfortunate enough to encounter her knows to stay out of her line of vision.

After two days, Nick received the “urgent” message.

“I beg your pardon, but I got a message to call this number. It’s concerning Helena Patakinis,” he said awkwardly.

“Is this Nick? I’m so happy you contacted me. Yes, this is about Helena. Could we meet somewhere to talk? It’s important for Helena’s safety,” she said.

“Her safety? What happened? I mean, is she alright?” He asked in a tone of deep concern.

Camilla spun a story of an abused, captive Helena, unable to leave the house. Under her husband’s thumb, she pleaded with Camilla to help her escape. She inferred that because Helena ran off to London, Dimitris will not let her out of his sight. Camilla’s tale was meant to cause worry, and call for a desperate plan to help Helena flee.

“It would be impossible for me to get away. Let me see what I can do. I’ll have to call you back,” Nick said.

When Nick reacted as expected, his concern was a green light for the scenario to come. She convinced herself that when Dimitris sees Nick, she will only have to be loving, kind, and sympathetic. Then Dimitris will be hers.

Camilla had a new copy made of the photo taken at the Gala Awards. When she picked it up from the printer, she removed it from the photo sleeve.

“This could be Dimi! Oh my God, I can’t believe it! I could swear it’s him. This is too good to be true,” she said to herself. Camilla’s red lips morphed into a grin as she perfected the plan in her mind.

Returning home, she stopped at the corner taverna, where three of her cohorts spent their time digesting the local gossip.

Strutting her voluptuousness, she ordered a drink at the bar, then sat at the largest booth, waiting to be served. She removed her compact from her purse and slathered on more lipstick, conscious of the eyes that studied her. The mumble of Greek gossip came to a stop.

“Hello, Camilla.” Bolio walked up to her. “What news have you today?”

“Nothing, nothing. There is nothing new,” she answered, placing her mirror into her purse. “And what do you have to report, or have you wallowed in the dust of local gossip all day?”

“Did you meet with Primo? I told him...”

“What I do and say to Primo is none of your concern,” she snapped.

“Then you are aware of Kavala?” A slimy smirk crawled onto his face as he returned to his seat.

Camilla grabbed her purse, downed her drink, and stormed out of the taverna.

“There is nothing to bother me today. I will have my way, and no one will spoil it,” she thought, with Dimitris on her mind. As she entered her home, she had to rush to answer the phone.

“Yes!” she barked. Her tone changed when she realized it is Nick returning her call.

“I should arrive at Diagoras Airport tomorrow at 9:45 p.m.. Could you meet me?” Nick asked. Camilla was jumping with excitement.

“Yes, I will be happy to meet you there. Helena will be so grateful for your help,” Camilla said.

She had little time to prepare. She wanted to clean the house and fix a room for him. The next day she read again the biographical papers she printed at the internet cafe. The more she read, the more fascinating he seemed. She studied the extensive list of acting roles and titles in which he had appeared. The more she looked at Nick’s picture, the more enraptured she became.

“Hello,” Rena said, answering the telephone.

“Rena? This is Camilla. How are you, in good health, I hope,” she said giddily.

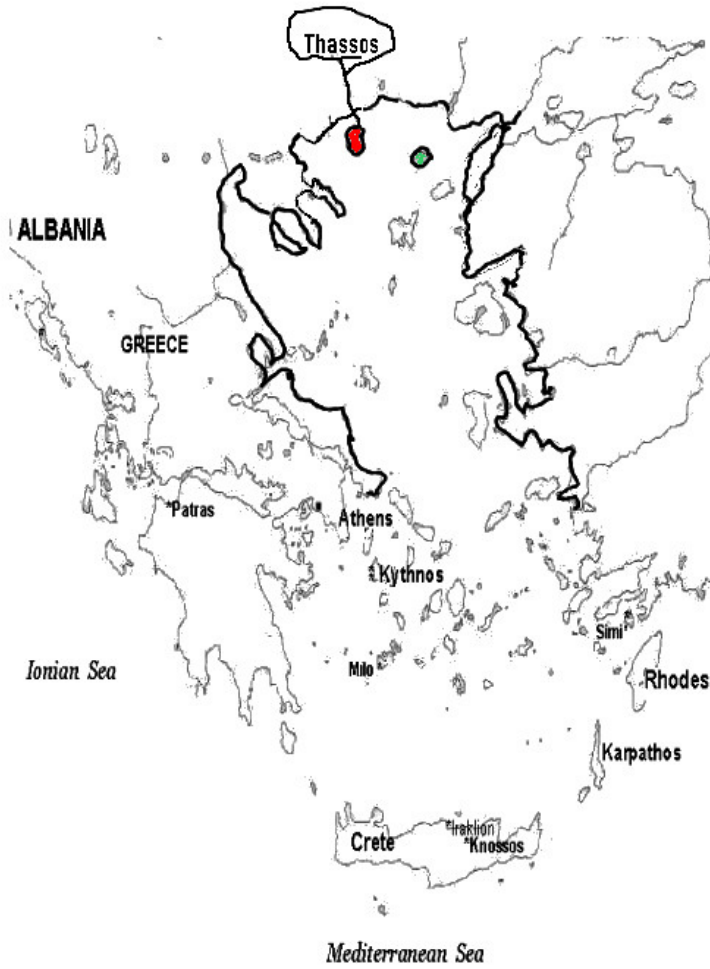
“We are doing well.” Rena did not encourage a conversation.

“Where are you? I can barely hear you. I only wanted to tell you that I will be in Athens for a week and that I can get for you anything you may need for our next name day.”

“I don’t think I need anything, but thank you,” Rena said. “I can’t speak now, I have to go,” Rena quickly ended the call. This didn’t settle too well with Camilla.

*Stefano's Map**





Confusion



Stefano and Dimitris arrived, driving slowly to not arise suspicion through the parking lot. Rena began immediately telling Stefano about what happened and how upsetting it was. When Dimitris came in, I was standing near the breakfast bar. When our eyes met, it was pure electric static. He came to me cautiously, putting his arms around me. It felt good to be held once again. Since the last time I saw him he has shaven off his beard, and I saw the man I married. He held me in a loving embrace, then asked if everything was alright. I said “yes.”

“Is getting late, we must eat,” and we all agreed. We found a small diner that says “Homemade Greek Food” on the sandwich board sign on the street. We could talk about their adventure for the day.

“Well, we could check off the list several caves and a couple of collapsed mines, but no real luck. In the morning, we’ll go around the island in the opposite direction,” Stefano said.

“Do you think there’s the possibility that one of those outcrops offshore would have a place to stow something?” I asked.

“There are caves in the sandstone, but these smaller outcrops wouldn’t have anything searchable. Some of them are completely submerged during high tides,” Stefano said.

Dimitris sat across from me in this small eatery. He didn’t say much, but I could feel his eyes on me. I began feeling like it was when we first met. If he

were to take me to our room, I would have no problem making love to him. Even though we haven't settled everything, I'm at a point where I'm getting sick of it all and could drop my objections. In my cloud of reverie, drowning in Dimi's eyes, Rena was telling Stefano about the door-pounding thugs.

"... but, should we go to the police? What should we do?" Rena asked.

"Did you see them? They didn't threaten you, and they were knocking on the other door. The police wouldn't listen, there's no evidence of harassment or anything you can prove," Stefano explained.

"You mean you aren't going to tell the police that those men scared us to death?" Rena was riled. "Well, I never! You want them to mug us?"

"Calm down, Sugarplum, don't excite about this. You'll be okay. Helena is here, and you have your phone, just keep it close, and if you see them again, call the police. Now, we have an early morning and must get some rest." Stefano needed Rena to calm herself so they both could sleep tonight.

When we went back to the inn, Dimitris picked up my bag and held my hand as we headed to the door.

"What number other room, Rena? Where we go to?" Dimitris asked. She pointed to the edge of the kitchenette countertop. "There's the key, Number 112, good night," Rena said. Dimi collected his gear from the car that they drove here. I was exhausted. After taking my medication, I was ready to get some asleep.

As Dimitris entered the room, I was in the shower. He was wiped out from fighting the bushes and terrain all day.

"What are you doing, young man?" I asked. Dimitris smiled. I laughed. "Dimi, Stefano is calling."

"Let him wait," he said as he sat at the foot of the bed. It had been so long since we were together. It felt awkward; off-balance. Nervous and feeling intimidated, I had built up this wall for so long I was afraid to tear it down.

"Helena, my Heart?"

I turned to him. He was sitting on the edge of the bed, his arm reaching out to me. I came closer; my heart beat so fast that I felt weak. He took my hand. When his lips met mine, it was like heaven and hell had come together. I was

led to a place of breathless kissing and the whispering of Greek secrets. I was drowning in a sea of gasping, quaking pleasure.

In the morning, I sat up and looked around. I didn't see Dimitris. Stefano pounded on the door. "Let's go. We want to get breakfast. Come on," he said.

Then Dimitris came out of the TV niche, yawning.

"Where were you?" I asked. He wandered to the coffeepot to warm some water.

"I sleep in there," he said, pointing to the niche, which has a love seat.

"I see." I was hurt and a little bewildered. The scenario that played out gave me a clear idea about any kind of future for us. Now, I am fully awake.

By the time we were ready to leave, Rena, and Stefano had left. Dimi called them.

"Where you go?" He asked.

"We are going to eat, so meet us at Anika's café. It's four blocks South." Stefano instructed.

"What's the plan?" I asked, not really wanting to continue this charade.

"We go to center of Earth today," Dimitris said.

After I dressed, I was brushing my hair when I gazed out the window. Those two thugs who were here yesterday were slowly driving through the parking area. They parked on the other side of my rental car at the back of the parking lot. There they sat.

"Dimi, there are those men again, the ones I told you about," I said. Dimi came to me to look from my window. He pulled me around behind him. He reached for the adjustment rod to tighten the closure of the blinds.

"We stay away from them. They do not know of other rental car, we use that. We must wait for our chance to go," he said.

"What other rental car?" I said.

"I rent one yesterday. Rena think is best we drive together, maybe talk."

As I watched the thugs, they were eye-balling my rental car. They couldn't get inside. They surveyed the interior of the car.

"How are we going to take the car with them sitting there?" I asked.

"We use car I bring. We wait until dark, if we must, then go." Dimi was

intent on watching those thugs that he was answering automatically like he was concentrating intently on our situation.

I wanted to change my shoes and find my windbreaker before heading out. Comfort is the keyword for what I imagined being a rough dusty climb up billy goat trail. I could barely hear Dimi's conversation across the room. I wanted to be ready to go so that there would be no fallout over lagging behind. I put the hurt behind me for the moment. Just another thing to swallow. As much as it hurt knowing he'd rather sleep on the loveseat than with me, it must mean nothing to him.

I didn't get a briefing on anything that they had planned or even what they did yesterday. I asked him to fill me in. His explanations of where they went, how the trek was, or descriptions of any interiors were very vague. He wouldn't look at me, only a bit of a side glance. I think that whatever we had is now gone. I felt like there wouldn't be any need for me to make my plan for a home here.

"Stefano," Dimitris spoke in Greek to his brother.

"What has happened? Is everything okay?" Stefano asked. Stefano was alarmed by Dimitris speaking in Greek.

"We have goons on us. They follow if we go now. We must meet somewhere," Dimitris said in a hushed tone.

"And Helena?"

"Yes, we are here together, but we will try to leave when safe. Where you now?" Dimitris asked.

"We are driving, but I will call with instructions soon," Stefano said in a quiet response, to not wake Rena.

"Yes, yes. I wait." Dimitris looked at me as he ended his call.

I gathered a few pieces of clothing from the bed, a sweater, and a scarf. When I turned to leave the room, I saw Dimitris on the other side of the living room area, by the window. When our eyes met, it was like I was struck by lightning. His dark eyes sparkled through the casual conversational fog that went between us. My heart pounded harder as my breath caught in mid-air. I felt my heart breaking as he came to me, as if my heart was calling out to him. His arms embraced me. He held my face as he planted a deep kiss on my

lips. I could feel him as he went from stilted and tense to soft and compliant. I did not rebuff him as I thought I should. I wasn't going to allow him to manipulate me, but now I'm confused.

We took advantage of the time we had together to rediscover each other. Having those men outside in their car, the danger element, and time constraints added to the urgency.

As we recover our breath, we both see that we still have to settle a few things before everything would fall back into place. I let him think that my tears were from the ecstasy we had and not the hurt that won't mend. Even with the hurt, I can't resist him.

"I've missed you, you know?" I said, while his Greek whispers enveloped me. "I didn't think I'd ever stop having an ache in my heart. Every day, wherever I went, I had this awful emptiness," I said. Dimi held me and kissed my temple.

It was like the separation before we were married when we could finally be together. The ecstasy was a glorious torture I never wanted to end, but this was different.

Four hours later, the men in their car pulled away from the parking lot. During that time, I gave Dimitris the letter that was sent to Stefano. I knew it was from Camilla, trying to get to Dimitris through his brother.

"What is this? Addressed to Stefano, my Heart," he asked.

"It's for you."

"You do not open?" He asked. I didn't answer.

When he drew the letter out of the envelope, a magazine clipping flew out onto the floor. He read the note, then picked up the clipping. He unfolded it.

"Do you see this?" He asked. I saw the hurt in his eyes. He laid back on the bed with a heavy sigh.

"What?" I asked.

He handed me the clipping. I could feel his hurt.

He wouldn't look at me as he passed to the bathroom sink, to splash water on his face.

I sat at the little bistro table by the window. As tears welled up in my eyes, I could see Dimi throwing me to the wolves that are determined to make life a misery. I didn't read the newsprint. My heart was coming out of my chest

as my mind was finding more dire episodes ahead of me. The letter sat face up on the bed. It was in Greek.

Dimi came out of the bathroom and stood behind me, his hand on my shoulder. He said nothing.

“Dimi, I can explain,” I volunteered.

“No, my Heart. There is no need,” he said in a calm but strained voice.

He took the clipping from my hand and sat in the chair opposite me.

“Dimi, I want to explain this_____,” I said.

“You do not need. Come, we must ready ourselves for travel.”

“It’s not what it looks like,” I said. “This was taken in London.”

“Yes, I know. You were not with your Dimi then. So do not explain,” he said as he started for the door. I pulled him back.

“Don’t go outside, they might still be out there,” I said.

“Does it matter?”

“Yes, it matters. Now, sit and let me tell you about this.” He sat next to me on the bed. I told him everything about Nick.

“Camilla say you try to find another Dimi. This one look like me. She do not miss a trick. Camilla find new misery to give this man,” he said. I didn’t ask about what was in the letter. Probably more insults and pathetic pleas.

Sitting at the bistro table, I was purposely avoiding conversation by playing a word game on my phone. Deep in thought, my eyes welled up as my thoughts of the magazine clipping repeated in my mind. Dimitris stood behind me, talking about the episode at the other inn that we left earlier. His hand slid down my cheek, to my arm, to my phone, where I had to release it. He took my hand and drew me up to stand. He could tell that my eyes had welled up, and I was afraid. Afraid of what he’s thinking, that he might not forgive me and disregard what I told him about Nick. He could probably see all that. He led me to the bed and there he worked his magic once again, letting me feel everything would be alright.

When I heard his Greek whispers I missed so much, he made me feel that wherever he is, that’s where my heart and soul would be. We made passionate love for another hour, and how fast the time passes. When Dimi’s phone rang again, we laughed, as we knew it was Stefano.

Confusion

“Yes, yes.” Dimitris went to the window shade and peeked out. “Is clear, we leave now. Yes, yes, we hurry.”

We packed all the gear that was in the car and all the clothes we displaced into the rental car that Dimitris has, leaving my rental at the hotel. On the way out, we dropped off the keys. The car will be picked up by the agency.

I'm Starving



“Stefano say, ‘go north on highway number 69’ and so we do,” he smiled. “I know this is considered Greece, but it seems so sparse. So many buildings boarded up and not much traffic. Did something happen here?” I asked.

“This island have hard times, mostly poor. Was, that olive groves and goat farm main income for most. But now, will soon cater more to tourist in next season,” he explained with a sweet smile.

Even though we are on slightly better terms, I find my brain has left me without words, grasping at conversational openings.

“There seems to be a lot of small businesses for sale.” I wasn’t expecting a reply.

“Yes, some sell up at end of season, but most close.” I thought that made sense.

“There’s a lot of vacant land. It surprises me how much good grazing land there is, that’s not fenced. Aren’t they afraid the goats or horses will run off and get lost?” I asked.

“They will find home at sundown. The land is hot in summer, hard work to clear rocks, not many to do the work. They do best they can,” he said.

“I’m sure they do. It’s a beautiful little island,” I commented.

“Not for my Helena. Many do not take to outsiders. Is okay for tourist, but not to be neighbor,” he said.

"I see. That's okay, I love Rhodes and Kef," I answered.

"Yes, but Kefalonia do not work for us," he stated in a downcast voice.

"Still, I love it anyway." I cleared my throat. "How far is this place?"

"Not far," Dimi said.

"Hello, we're here," I said as we put down our bags.

"Good heavens, I thought you two got lost," Rena said as she opened the door to their abode.

"I didn't think we'd make it before dark," I said.

"There isn't much open around here. I don't know where we'll eat," Rena said.

"I don't either. Ugh, I've been sitting too long," I said.

Stefano and Dimitris left to find a Taverna or eatery. They were lucky to find a little market with a deli. They brought a nice variety to eat. We all were starving.

"Do you still have those sandwiches in your backpack?" Rena asked Stefano.

"I ate them," Stefano answered.

"I didn't see you eating anything. You're sneaky!" Rena chirped.

Stefano took out our project to find a direction to set our path on. We found the pictures of the two men who pounded on the door at our previous inn. They are wanted in several countries on charges of smuggling, fraud, theft, and suspicion of kidnapping. Normally, they would stay hidden from authorities, so it was unusual that they would be out to harass us.

"I hope they stay away from us," I said.

"They may take more chances on this small island, not many Police, many empty houses to hide in," Dimi said.

"We must be close. The more they are out trying to find us, the closer we must be to finding to the Mosaics," I said, thinking out loud.

"Criminals have the long arms, like tentacles," Dimitris said.

He was sitting next to me at the breakfast bar, where we enjoyed some coffee. His arm was resting across the back of my chair. He leaned in to say something in my ear.

"We must get away, go to our room," he said.

“We have to make a plan to where we’re headed. We can’t just expect to find anything. You’ve gone to how many sites already? If it was that easy, Deichant would have found it a long time ago,” I reasoned.

“You are right.” He flicked my hair that hung down the back of the bar stool.

“Okay, I think we’ve wasted enough time, let’s get this map updated and make a plan,” Stefano said, laying out the map with all the landmarks highlighted and the ones that they already visited X’d out.

“We’re agreed that poem number three is referring to some type of cave, right? So, let’s continue under that premise. We’re looking at this enlarged map,” Stefano raised his hand above it.

“So, number three says:

*To guard the key,
the cat does sit,
in wet surround
within the pit.”*

“We’re looking for a place that is close to water or has a water feature that we might have to contend with. We had better be prepared for this,” Stefano said.

“It’s obviously saying that we’ll have to contend with water, but first we have to go through bushes and undergrowth to get to the site. Considering the forest here, this is no surprise, but it won’t be an easy trek,” I said.

“There are hundreds of caves. The soil is porous and water will sometimes fall through the walls of the caves, so it’s surprising where the water will appear,” Stefano said.

“It sounds beautiful. I’d love to see that,” I said.

“Me too. Stefano, you never take me anywhere,” Rena kidded. Everyone broke out with laughter.

Stefano had two of the smaller maps laid out on the table. The poem’s translation was on a sticky note attached to the backs of the maps.

“Stefano, I thought it was the poems that were written on the backs. What do these say?” I asked, as I sat at the table.

“We found a few names which we already have information on. This one

says, 'Bolio will find the women,' and this says, 'Klaus will need this.' Not much new there, but it reinforces the names we have suspected," Stefano said, as he flipped over the other maps and looked them over.

As we listened to Stefano, Dimitris was running his finger down my back. I looked at him as he looked at me. He kissed my hand that he was holding. Every move, every look, sent a sensual message. I was falling under his spell. My heart was racing, and my breathing quickened. I was ready to excuse myself to head toward the bedroom, even with my doubts.

"Now, I think that for today we should see if we can find a cave that is big enough to hoard anything. There's no sense spending a lot of time in one place if it doesn't have the capacity for what we're looking for," Stefano said.

"What do you think we'll find, or better yet, what are we looking for?" Rena asked.

"Something of value, possibly lost arts, ancient relics, or even Hitler's stash of stolen goods. It's something that has such unspeakable value and rarity that it would be difficult to sell, even if smuggled out of the country. But I think it's more likely relics, or art, *valuable art*...perhaps," Stefano said, far off in examining the maps. Questions were answered robotically, without additional comment.

"What time is it getting to be? Do we have time to do any real exploration? It will be dark before we make up our minds on where to go, that's if we can make a decision," Rena said.

"Perhaps better we go early in morning. Make sure of best map. Maybe check internet. Google map with satellite. Then we see where we go," Dimitris suggested.

"I don't know why I didn't do that before! Thank you, Dimi, that is what we do. Let's get back to work." Stefano had a new clarity and was eager to search for the satellite images.

As the men monopolized the two laptops, Rena and I watched some television. The channel selection was terrible, so it was mainly background noise. Whenever we would hear a car door slam, Rena would jump with intense apprehension. I took a long look out of the window to see if there was anything unusual going on outside. Being close to the road, traffic would

occasionally go by. I saw nothing threatening.

“Rena, I’m going to our room and get ready for bed. I need a shower and relax a little if we’re off early tomorrow. Good night.”

“Okay, I’m nodding off too, but it looks like Stefano and Dimi will be up all night,” Rena surmised. I agreed and went to my room.

“Dimi, look! I think this should go to the top of the list. When I move the little person icon to the satellite view, I can see the highway and landscape. Now, when I swing the viewer around, I can see off-road. There’s a dark spot against the hills. We only get a glimpse between the trees. Look, over here. When I enlarge the page, there! Look between those old trees. It’s dark, and maybe the entrance to a cave.” Stefano pointed to the laptop screen.

“Helena, come look at this. Rena, come here, look.” Stefano and Dimitris both turned to find that Helena and Rena weren’t there.

“Where they go?” Dimitris was on his way out the door.

“They must have gone to bed. It’s 2:30 am.” Stefano closed his laptop, then called Rena’s cell phone.

“What is it, Stefano? I’m sleeping!” Rena grumbled in a half-asleep stupor.

“They went to bed,” Stefano reported to Dimitris.

Dimitris went to room 112 and carefully opened the door. He could see Helena napping on top of the King-size bed. He quietly closed the door and went back to room 110.

“Yes, asleep. We must stop for tonight. We let them sleep. I will sleep on sofa,” Dimitris said.

They pulled out the extra blanket from the closet shelf, and Dimitris settled on the sofa for the night.

5 a.m. came quickly and although the sun hadn’t risen, the promised heat could be felt on the gust of the pre-dawn wind. I collected any stray items that may have been lying around and got ready to leave. Stefano called at half past the hour, as they were getting up.

Dimitris came to my door. When I opened it to him, he had a serious look on his face. His eyes gave me that magnetic shock, and I seemed mesmerized by him. As he came nearer, I could feel his body heat reaching out to me. He slowly stepped closer and embraced me with a slow, deep kiss.

"We must leave," he said in hushed tones. "We will stop for breakfast."

"I'm ready to go," I said.

"Yes, we should eat something," he answered.

The men loaded both cars with our luggage and all the equipment they brought with them for this excavation. We headed out to the highway, the two-lane road which encircles the island of Thassos.

"Where are we going? How far?" Rena asked.

"Not too far. We should be on the road about a half-hour," Stefano answered.

"Are we going to eat? I'm starving," Rena complained.

Finding Crosswords



After all this time spent investigating the clues that we dug up, we were on our way to where the maps and drawings have shown us. As we drove, the weather got hotter. We were uncomfortable even with the car's air conditioner running full blast.

"Oh, my sainted Chinese grandmother! It's too hot! How can people live in this heat?" Rena moaned as she fidgeted in her seat. She looked through a magazine that someone left in the rental car. She thumbed through it with lightning speed. When she finished, she fanned herself a couple of times. Out of habit, she put the crossword magazine in her purse.

We stopped at a small market to pick up some water and snacks. I went to talk to Rena while the men were shopping.

"Hey, how's it going?" I asked her.

"This weather is going to kill me. Look at my hair!" Rena said in frustration.

"It's going to be scorching today, and our air conditioner doesn't get cold enough," I said.

"Use this to fan yourself. Next time I see a vendor selling those beautiful fans, I'll pick up a couple for us both. They come in handy," Rena said.

Rena handed me the magazine and I immediately fanned myself. The men loaded up the water and other snacks into the hatchback. Again we were on the road.

"Here, have nice cold water." Dimi placed his hand on my cheek. "You too

hot my Heart.” He poured some of his cold water onto some paper towels, then placed the folded towels across the back of my neck. “You must cool down, drink.”

“That feels so good, thank you, Sweetheart,” Dimitris looked at me with such a soulful gaze.

As we drove, I fanned myself as I listened to Dimitris. I didn’t even look out the window, as I was feeling very weak from the heat. We followed Stefano and Rena for twenty miles, then they pulled over in a shady roadside oasis.

“Are we stopping, again?” I complained.

“I will see what Stefano do.” Dimitris got out of the car to chat with Stefano. I could see Rena getting out of the car, so I got out and met her halfway.

“What’s going on?” I asked.

“Stefano wants to have a little picnic. This is a shady spot, and the stream runs right by us. Maybe you’ll feel better out in the fresh air?” Rena said.

“I feel a little better already. Being cooped up in that car with no cool air is killing me.”

“My Heart? We will have small picnic, you will feel better.” Dimitris felt my cheek again and smiled.

This was a pleasant respite from our usual intense routine. The air seemed fresher around the trees, and the sound of the water, scooting over the rocks in the stream, was relaxing for the short time we would be there. I picked up my magazine fan and was perfectly content where we sat.

“Isn’t this so much better than sitting in those cars? I love the sounds of the stream and birds. There are so many more birds here, don’t you think?” Rena asked.

“This is lovely, and such a relief.” I was cool and getting energized. I lay on my side after we ate. The blanket was good insulation on the ground. Dimitris sat next to me and pulled my hair off of my neck, letting the fresh air cool me. He picked up my magazine and opened it to a crossword puzzle.

“What is word for *getting closer*, seven letters?” He asked.

“Do you have any letters in it at all?” I asked.

“No, ah! Five-letter word for *absolutely not*, and the answer is *never*. So, word for *getting closer* will start with ‘N’,” he said.

“Nearer,” I said.

“Yes.”

“Well, I hate to break this up, but we have to get going,” Stefano announced.

“Yes, we go.” Dimitris agreed. We packed up everything and said goodbye to our little oasis by the side of the road and continued on our way.

“We stop here. Dimi and I will check this area for possibilities. Wait here, Sugarplum,” Stefano told Dimitris about the plan while we waited in the cars. This is one of many areas they wanted to check off the list. I continued the crossword puzzle while waiting.

“Helena? Did they say what they’re looking for? I mean, is it a cave, or a hole in the ground?” Rena asked.

“I don’t know. I gather it’s a fishing expedition, they’ll find what they find, I guess. I thought they had all the information they needed,” I said as I looked up from my puzzle.

“Sometimes it changes as they go, never the same twice,” Rena explained.

“Awk! I’ve got to take off these shoes. My feet are sweltering!” I said.

“Might as well be comfortable while you can. We might end up hiking in the bush for hours before they give up today,” Rena said.

“Ready? We go.” Dimi announced.

“Dimi, what happened?” I asked.

“Is nothing. Big mining goes on up there. Too big to search, and would not permit.” Dimitris explained that this commercial mining outfit would not allow Stefano to come in and take pictures or ask questions. So we’re off to the next site.

“I hope you and Stefano have a better plan than searching out each mine and landmark that comes along.” Dimi looked at me and smiled.

As we drove, I worked on several crossword puzzles, then I got to page forty-seven. I noticed there was writing in the margin by the centerfold.

“In down direction,” I muttered under my breath.

“What you say?” Dimitris asked.

“Oh, nothing. I was just reading this writing someone wrote. Maybe it was Rena,” I said. When I finished the puzzle, I turned to the next puzzle on page forty-nine.

“Right on sea,” it said. I turned the page again, and on page fifty-one, was “left could find.” I dug out a pen and paper from my purse.

“What you look for, my Heart?” Dimi asked.

“There’s something written in the margins.”

I began writing what was written and by the time I got to the end, I must have had my mouth agape.

“What is, Helena?” Dimitris became concerned. I must have had my eyes bugged out.

“Listen to this. I’m not sure if it’s possible,” I said and began reading the words.

“In down direction, right on sea, left could find, the sign you need. Two arrows point, thine to thee, three trunks entwine where shadows flee. -Sahj-”

“What it say? It say Sahj?” Dimitris asked with a renewed interest, or astonishment.

“Yes. Sahj. I don’t believe it. It can’t be Sahj, can it? No, no, he’s dead. Can it be a mistake? Someone with the same name?” I didn’t know if I was shocked, afraid, or amazed.

“What this say? Poem? Does not make sense. We go on geese chase again. Why he don’t say what means?” Dimitris was tired. This isn’t like him.

“Are you alright?” I asked, looking into his eyes.

“Dimi fine.” The answer was short and to the point.

“Being antagonistic isn’t going to help us, Dimi.” That’s all I had to say. He clammed up as I watch the scenery go by the window. I didn’t want to add to the problem.

The new poem was very vague. I looked at the label that was on the front cover. It had all the postal markings that are usual for a magazine, but it only had my first name, no address, and it must have been put in the car when we were all asleep.

I fiddled with the edge of the label. It was loose, but glued over another label and perhaps a name and address. If I could get the label off decently, it may reveal important information. But I couldn’t do it while traveling.

We finally stopped off the main road and up a dirt road to what looked like a huge gravel pit. There was no fence around it, just huge mounds of dirt and

gravel.

“Is this where you’re going? Stefano? Hey, is this where you want to explore? A big hole in the ground?” Rena was a little irritated.

“We will check to see if there is or was a cave here. It may have been destroyed if there was one.” Stefano didn’t look happy. He got out of the car to stretch, then Dimitris got out, reaching his hand out to me. I took his hand and stood by the car. The men surveyed the area, then made a plan.

Meanwhile, I got into Stefano’s car.

“It’s too hot to stand around out there, in the sun,” I said.

“What’s wrong with Dimi? He seems down in the dumps,” Rena asked.

“I think he’s tired. He hasn’t said anything, so I don’t know for sure. I worry about him,” I said.

“In this heat, I’m probably cranky too,” she replied.

Rena and I talked while Stefano, and Dimitris stood by the pit talking. Dimitris was listening, kicking at stones and stirring up dust. After ten minutes, they came back.

“This will not be the right place. Ground isn’t right, too sandy, so we’ll go to the next one.” Stefano sat in their car and Dimi came back to ours. I didn’t want to say anything, as this stop was quite disappointing.

I was getting impatient with the magazine label. It was begging to be removed. I worked at it again and again until Dimi covered the label with his hand.

“Leave it,” he said.

We were in a mountainous area, with trees and shade, but nowhere to turn off.

“Stop, Dimi, please pull over,” I asked. When he stopped the car, I got out and walked to the shoulder of the road ahead. There were a lot of white rocks strewn along the shoulder that fell from further up the mountain behind me. It was shady there. I knew that if I didn’t tell Dimitris what bothered me, it would fester. Dimi got out of the car and came to me.

“Helena? What is? Why you go out here?” He asked. I was trying not to blow my top. I thought he knew me by now.

“Why do you do that?” I asked.

“What I do?” He asked.

“Why are you jumping in my shit? What’s eating you?” I asked. He looked at me with a surprised expression.

“What, I do nothing,” he said.

“You don’t think I should pull off that label on the magazine and see what’s underneath, do you?” I asked.

He stood in front of me, put his hands on my cheeks, and looked into my eyes. He kissed me.

“Dimi, what are we doing? You want to be controlling and I don’t like to be controlled, and told what to do. You know this and yet you keep doing the same thing. Is it me? Am I doing something that you feel you have to take charge of? If this is a problem, then we had better rethink this,” I suggested. I heard myself saying this, but I was afraid to admit it to myself.

“Dimi only want you to be safe,” he said.

“What’s that got to do with it? I was trying to remove that label and you forced me to *‘leave it.’* Why did you say that and put your hand over the label?”

“This so unimportant to not speak on. This man cannot keep you safe when you do things that make trouble. Only do for your good,” he said.

“Don’t you think you’re overreacting? I know it’s nothing to make trouble over, that isn’t the point. You have a way of speaking to me that makes me feel..., makes me feel suppressed. What is it, Dimi? You’re not well? How long have you felt this way? We should get you home,” I said.

“This man is fine. No more sickness for Dimi. Now, do not make Dimi worry on you. You take off label and maybe find trouble. Now come, we make Stefano wait long enough,” he said, holding out his hand to me to guide me back to the car. I walked back on my own.

I didn’t want to make waves. I let it go for now, but I read and re-read the poem while we drove to another site.

“In down direction
Right on sea,
Left could find
The sign you need.”

Okay. Take the idea of Sahj still being alive. If this is true, he would help us, if he could. And if he knew how far we've come, he would send us in the right direction. So, if this is to help us... oh, I can't think! In down direction, what is that? The opposite of down is up, but if 'up' is heaven then down would be hell. Right on sea. The sea is all around an island, so I don't know how this helps.

Two arrows point
Thine to thee,
Three trunks entwine
Where shadows flee.

This is so confusing. I thought I might be on the right track with logic, but this? I may not have the mental acuity to understand; to figure it out. Now, having Dimi giving me a hard time, I find it difficult to think.

Stefano pulled into a small grocery deli before we head out to the next site. I took Dimi aside.

"Dimi, can we talk?"

"Of course," he said.

"I don't want anything to happen to you today. Are you feeling okay?" I asked.

"This man is wonderful. I have my Helena and everything is wonderful." He smiled and took my arm to escort me into the market.

"No, I mean your health. Are you feeling good? No fever?" I asked. He held my cheeks and kissed my forehead.

"See? No fever." He was trying to make me think everything is okay, all forgotten.

"I think Stefano needs to look at this writing. It's signed *Sahj*, so I think we should take it seriously."

"Yes, my Heart, you are right." He was holding my hand and when I turned to go to the car, he pulled me back and said,

"I apologize for earlier. This man trust your judgment, my Heart. Sometimes hard to know how to keep you safe. I do not think."

I had to listen to what he was trying to say, as I think he was fishing for words and might think that I want to leave again. It's been hard to get our

Finding Crosswords

relationship back to where we were before I left.

A Way Through the Maze



“Stefano, I found this. I want you to read it. It was in the car this morning. Someone put it there during the night,” I said.
“What is it?” He asked. I handed him the magazine.

“Start on page 47.”

After he read the poem, he took out the map he copied from Google Maps. He had everything marked and calculations of mileage. He read the poem again. I had some questions, but I didn’t want to interrupt his train of thought.

“Look at label, is strange,” Dimi pointed out.

Stefano carefully removed the loose label from the front cover.

“This is interesting, it was originally addressed to *Nikos Takis* in Rhodes.” Stefano was right.

“They do this to frighten you,” Stefano said as a matter-of-fact.

Dimi held me in his arms and rested his lips on my temple. Then in a soothing, mellow voice, he said,

“This why label should not be removed, this what happen. This man do not want to see you worry,” he said.

“What should we do?” I asked.

“This was to scare you. To make you think. I wouldn’t read too much into it. If Mr. Sahj wrote the poem, I don’t think there’s a hidden meaning.” Stefano said.

“Wait a minute, Sahj sent this. The message is signed Sahj,” I reasoned. “He

must still be alive.”

“What we have here is what will be a way through the maze, so we’d better buckle down and decipher it,” Stefano said.

“Since the last one didn’t pan out, where do you plan to go next?” Rena asked.

“We need to find a shady place to park where it’s cool so that Stefano can figure out this poem,” I said.

We returned to our cars and although we were in a shady place; we were also just off the lane of traffic. Every time a truck would go by, the dust would carry on the wind into our faces. The resort towns were everywhere along the coast, but Stefano found a grove of Olive trees that surrounded a clearing. We were able to pull far enough off the road and almost into the stand of trees for shade.

While we cooled off in the shade, the landowner came up to us to see if we were having car trouble and if we needed help. We explained we were trying to find a place on the map, and Stefano showed him one of our obsolete drawings. The men discussed the map in Greek, pointing to an area. Then one of them would shake his head. They finished with a cold beer, and the farmer wished us good luck on our travels.

“Helena, come, we go now,” Dimitris called from the car. Rena went to Stefano, and they were talking as they loaded up the picnic we had on the spur-of-the-moment.

“Dimi, I saw those thugs go by on the highway,” I said.

“Which way they go?” He asked.

“In the same direction as we’re going.”

Stefano came to the driver’s side of the car and said,

“I think I know where we’re headed. At least we can see if the clues fit. Let’s go, we have to go back.” Stefano made a gesture to turn left as we returned to the highway. I was relieved that we were headed in the opposite direction from the thugs.

We followed Stefano onto the highway that encircles the island. He was going slower and slower. Finally, he pulled into a small parking lot alongside a Greek market. Stefano signaled for us to come.

“Helena, come with me,” Rena called.

“I wonder why we stopped? I’ll be right back,” I said to Dimitris.

“What’s going on? Is Stefano lost?” I asked.

“He’s got an idea about this last poem. Every time I try to make a suggestion, he tells me ‘no, no, you don’t understand,’ so I’m taking a breather, away from him,” Rena said.

I could hear Dimitris calling me, so I left Rena in the fresh vegetable section of the market.

“My Heart, Stefano has idea, come,” Dimitris said as he took my hand.

“This poem is telling us how to get to the find. It’s very cryptic in its way, it’s invaluable to us, but I’ll try to give my interpretation.

*“In down direction,
right on sea,*

“I believe this is telling us that when on this highway, which is the only main road on the island, we should have the sea on our right-hand side, or we’ll miss where we want to go.

*“Left could find
the sign you need*

“So the sign we need will be on the left side of the road,” Stefano explained.

“That makes sense, but do we know what we’re looking for?” I asked.

“Two arrows point,
thine to thee.

Three trunks entwine,
where shadows flee.”

“I feel so stupid. It was right there. I should have seen that,” I said. I knew Dimitris was watching my reactions to Stefano’s explanations.

“There are a lot of signs along the road. How do we know what to look for?” Rena asked.

“I’m not sure, it could be arrows on a sign or ‘Arrows,’ like Arrows Pottery or Arrows Hotel, it’s hard to say. We’ll have to keep our eyes open and see what stands out,” Stefano suggested.

“Finally, this is getting fun!” Rena giddily said.

“Couldn’t this also be a warning?” I asked.

“What you mean, Helena?” Dimitris asked.

“The part of the poem that says “Two arrows point thine to thee. Couldn’t that be a warning of danger? Like, if we go much further we may find a trap, of arrows?” I asked.

“In my profession, I have found that when there is big treasure involved, even the Pharaohs set traps to protect against theft. It’s very well documented. So, yes, this could be a warning. So we must be vigilant, but careful.” Stefano rubbed his eyes as his wire-rimmed glasses were perched atop his head.

“If arrows found, what is next?” Dimitris asked.

“We take one step at a time. Now that we know what to look for, we’ll be more aware of what we see. We will have clarity as it presents itself. So, we start with finding arrows,” Stefano said.

Stefano brought out the map that he downloaded and printed.

“Where are we now?” I asked.

“We are about here,” pointing to the map.

“Why aren’t there any markers along this coast?” Rena asked.

“Not many live out here. Mostly Goat farmers and forest,” Dimitris answered.

We got back into the car and followed Stefano “in down direction,” while trying to find anything seeming to resemble arrows. It could be a poster, a picture in a window, a sign, or a tree carving. We weren’t sure what we need to spot, but we kept looking for arrows.

The traffic slowed to a crawl behind a big cement truck. Almost impossible to pass, it made looking for the arrows a little easier at this slower pace. We passed several Olive groves and acres of free-running goats. The sparsely populated countryside was beautiful. We were still dealing with the heat, but it wasn’t so bad while driving along the coast.

Stefano stopped, then turned onto the shoulder on the opposite side of the road.

“We’re stopping. Did we miss it? I didn’t see any arrows,” I said. I called Rena from my cell phone.

“Hey, why are we stopping? Did you find the arrows?”

“I don’t know. Stefano wants to look at something he saw, but I’m not sure what it is,” Rena explained.

“Okay, I guess we’ll wait and see.”

I told Dimitris what’s happening, and he got out to explore with Stefano. I was glad that I had a few minutes to myself. I hadn’t had time to appreciate the island of Thassos. It still has a lot of rural landscapes and from the road, we could get glimpses of the blue ocean, so serene. I closed my eyes and then Dimitris got back in the car.

“You sleep?”

“No, just resting my eyes. What did you find out?” I asked.

“He think he see marks on old tree trunk. This man think Stefano need new glasses,” Dimitris laughed.

“I think we’re getting dehydrated with this heat. We’ll all be hallucinating before long,” I said. Dimi reached over to me, brushing my hair off my face, then kissed me gently.

The highway was getting very scary to me. We drove along the sea edge at quite an elevation. A sign read ‘curves ahead’ and they weren’t kidding. I was holding my breath, and it seemed that we were on the very edge. When we came into an area that was close to the small resort beaches, the road became wider and placated my nerves. There were still a few hairpin curves, and as we passed the loop in the curve, I spotted two arrows.

“There they are! I saw the arrows, Dimi, we have to turn around!” I said excitedly.

We turned around in a wide shoulder area off the lane of traffic. We waited for Stefano. When they caught up with us, we told Stefano to follow us. We drove back up the road for half a mile.

When we hit the spot where the two arrows met, we parked off-road and walked another fifty feet to view the arrows.

“I think we found it,” I said.

Looking at the road signs, they were attached to metal posts, a white arrow against black-painted rectangular metal. A plain traffic sign, one facing the other, nose to nose. It made me wonder how many times it is passed by

A Way Through the Maze

without notice? I was floored! We were all astonished. The possibility of success was perhaps within our grasp.

*Three Trunks**





Throughout the Greek islands with its volcanic nature and thousands of eroding sandstone caves dot the shores of its 6,000 islands and islets. Many treasures of long ago may still be hidden, waiting to be rediscovered.

High Hopes



Running along the back of the small safety rail was a dirt path that looked like a motorbike trail. A compact car could pass on it with care.

“We’ll know soon enough. We’ll follow this trail as far as we can, then we can decide if there’s any reason to go further,” Stefano said. He led us to park the cars at the end of the loop where the dirt road ended. We all had a new outlook and renewed energy to complete our project.

Stefano and Dimitris loaded up their backpacks with as much gear as they could carry. Rena and I followed behind as they set out upon a narrow, tree-covered path toward the hills.

“If we have to hike through this jungle, how do we know where to go? I can’t see the hill, or anything else,” Rena commented.

“What is the next line of the poem?” I asked.

“*Three trunks entwine*. Hmm. I’m not sure what that means. I guess we’ll know when we see it,” Rena muttered.

Dimitris led me by the hand through the dense undergrowth of bushes and trees. We had further to hike than I thought.

“Stefano, Honey, let’s stop for a couple of minutes. I’ve got something in my shoe,” Rena begged.

“Yes, we stop and drink water. Must not dehydrate,” Dimitris added.

We found a place to rest for a few minutes in the shade.

“When is the heat going to let up? It’s so humid here,” Rena complained. “I’m not used to hiking in the heat.”

We hiked for another half hour when we came to an open area. The air felt cool. Stefano started looking at the compass and marking down information in his notebook.

“Dimi, Helena, do you see what I’m seeing?” He asked.

“Yes, this man see place to drop gear and set-up tent. We walk enough today,” Dimi said.

“Yes, but what else?”

“Oh, for Pete’s sake Stefano, tell us! We’re too tired to play games now!” Rena moaned.

“Look against the hill. Do you see that dark area above the treeline? This is where we go,” he pointed out.

“Three trunks entwine,” I said.

“What you say? Ah, trunks, yes,” Dimitris realized.

“Is this it? Are you sure?” Rena asked.

“If it fits the clues, and the cave hasn’t collapsed, we may be in luck,” Stefano said.

“I’m beat, Stefano, so don’t ask us to go up there now. I can’t move.” Rena was on the brink of exhaustion. We all were pretty stiff from the tiny rental cars we had and then walking through the bushes added to the discomfort. It was time for us to relax.

Once tents were erected, Rena went to bed. We couldn’t have a fire and it was too hot to think about having one. Once Stefano went to bed, I was ready to call it a day as well.

“It will not be pleasant to sleep in tent. Is too warm,” Dimi said.

“I don’t want to get bitten, so I’ll manage in the tent. Does it look like we’re where we’re supposed to be?” I asked.

“Stefano and your Dimi will look, to see if safe. Then we will know,” he said.

“I’d better get the bedrolls fixed. It’ll be like sleeping on cement.” I went to the dark tent and Dimi came in a few minutes later, bringing me a battery-operated lantern.

"I bring light. This remind Dimi of picnic on deserted hill, on Rhodes," he said.

"That was beautiful, only we didn't have a tent." I smiled at the sweet memory. Dimi looked at my jeans draped over his backpack in the corner.

"You undress?"

"I can't sleep in my jeans, it's still too hot. I don't think it'll get cooler tonight," I said.

"No, it will be very warm in tent," Dimi said.

He came over and sat on the top of his sleeping bag I laid out next to mine. He leaned on his folded elbow towards me. I was already inside my bag, trying to find some comfort.

"Do you need water? I will get."

"I have water. Did Stefano say what we'll do tomorrow?" I asked.

"He say we inspect cave, make sure of no danger, then go in, if ok. He will want to leave early." He paused, looking at me with his soulful eyes. "Helena, my Heart, do this man bother you?" He asked.

"I'm just tired. We've done a lot of walking today, and no, you don't bother me. Why do you think that?" I asked.

"No reason, just wonder."

His tone seemed quiet and depressed.

"You should be happy, after getting so far on the map and the clues. Why aren't you happy?" I asked. I knew why. He's thinking I'm going to go off on a tangent with any discovery that may be ahead. He leaned toward me and kissed me. I fell into this kiss as he was becoming more passionate. Then Stefano called him.

"Dimi? Dimi, come here and bring your lantern." Stefano sounded excited.

"He will do this *now*. I will come back," he said, giving me a kiss of promise. He took the lantern and closed the tent.

After getting comfortable, I thought about the way I've treated Dimitris. I want to mend our differences and get us back to where we were. I want to close this chapter in our lives and feel free enough to rekindle the feelings I know that are buried deep within me. Memories of happier times with Dimitris played in my mind. I remember how hard I fought to keep myself

from falling in love with him. A smile came to my lips thinking about the time that I gave him the silent treatment, hoping that would keep him away from me, and keep *me* from falling in love with him, and now, I'm hoping to salvage what is left and hopefully build on that.

Beginning the new day was a slow process as the men were getting ready to leave, to inspect the cavern against the hills. The men were running around in a near frenzy, making sure they take the equipment they may need, while Rena and I moved at a snail's pace, waiting for the water to heat. A French-press coffee maker was perfect for us two to make some coffee.

"I'm glad I put this coffee dripper in Stefano's backpack," Rena said as she yawned.

I seemed to stare out into space while the smell of coffee wafted in the shrub-scented air. It was quiet; then birds would break the silence with their songs.

"Coffee is ready. Come on and grab a cup," Rena announced.

"We'll need to make another pot," I said as we downed our cups of coffee in a blink.

"I hope Stefano put a new Propane canister on this stove," Rena commented.

"You went to bed early yesterday. You must have been exhausted," I said.

"I must have been. I don't even remember going to bed," she explained.

"Where are the guys?" I asked.

"Oh, Stefano wanted to survey the cavern for stability, just so we can safely go in. They should be back soon," Rena explained as she added water to the press.

"I wish Dimi would have said they were leaving. I'm a little stiff this morning. I don't think I turned over in my bed once last night. I didn't think I'd be able to sleep in that stuffy tent," I said, pouring myself another cup of coffee.

"That poem, I would never get that figured out. Stefano is good at it. Of course, in his work, he does a lot of deciphering of ancient languages and symbols. What I don't understand is, who wrote these poems? If these are clues to finding the treasure, if that's what it is, then someone already knows where it is, and could have found it a long time ago. Why didn't they?" Rena

asked.

“Did you ever ask Stefano what he thinks?” I asked.

“No, not in so many words. I mean, he said something a long time ago about how discoveries happen when the time is right, like political environment or when the gods are smiling, or something like that. I figured that he probably didn’t know and was answering just to throw something out there,” Rena explained.

“It’s a question I’ve wondered about too, and now, with the possibility of Mr. Sahj still being alive, it seems to be purposely aimed at us. I don’t know how I got involved with something like this,” I said.

“Mr. Sahj, he’s such a sweet man. I could tell by the short time I talked to him, that he’s very intellectual, and educated. I hope he’s still alive. I liked him,” she said.

We heard Stefano and Dimitris coming down through the trees and deep undergrowth toward camp. From the sound of their voices, they were happy with their mission.

They dumped their empty backpacks and headed for the coffee.

“This is what we need. It’s freezing up there, so we’ll need to layer our clothing. Sugarplum, did you bring your down jacket?” Stefano asked.

“Yes, but it’s in the car,” she confessed.

“There is my Heart,” Dimitris said as he put his arm around me and kissed my cheek.

“How was it? Will we be able to enter the cave?” I asked.

“Yes, but you will need coat. Did you bring?” Dimitris asked.

“I forgot my heavy jacket. Will I be able to go?” I said, feeling like an idiot.

“Stefano bring extra, so yes, you will come,” he said.

“Where did you sleep last night? I’m sorry I crashed so early,” I said contritely.

“This man go down to car, make sure is okay, I sleep there.”

“I see,” I said.

We packed up everything. The trek to the cave was a struggle. I found the steep trail disappearing in the brush. The sandy soil made it slippery and hard to get a sturdy foothold. There were places where I couldn’t see a way

up without scaling an abrupt cliff. Stefano found a way around the blockage, but it was still very steep and dangerous.

When we approached our destination, the air became very cool, blowing from deep within the cave. There, blocking the entrance, were three monstrous, ancient trees. The trunks were twisted together and as they grew, the center tree looked as if it was being held up by the other two. Up above, there were letters carved into the bark. Some, I'm sure, were the typical letters within a heart, but looking closer toward the back of the tree were two arrows, nose to nose.

"Okay, children, everything seems safe, but be aware of your surroundings. I've got a gauge to determine oxygen levels, so if you feel lite headed yell out. We don't want to continue if we hit a gas pocket," Stefano spoke in his *professor's* voice.

We each had a headlamp, flashlight, and gloves. Stefano had extra climbing gear, just in case. The trail we used was getting narrower and narrower. In a few places, we had to squeeze by sideways. The ceiling was getting lower and we could see little puddles of water that were still in the lower areas of the dry wash that went through the cave from further up the mountain. We came into a clearing, an open space where we could rest. It seemed the further down we went, the more narrow paths we would navigate. As we rested a few minutes in the open area, Stefano would catch up in his journal on the events so far today.

"My Heart, are you cold?" Dimitris knelt at my feet and placed the back of his fingers on my cheek. He removed my glove and massaged my hand, breathing his warm breath across the palm of my hand.

"That feels good. Are we close to where Stefano wants to be?" I asked Dimitris.

"He will say to stop, so we will know."

"This looks like a good place to set up a base camp." I moved over so that Dimi could sit.

"Yes. He say trail getting smaller. Yes, maybe better to camp here tonight."

At Every Turn



Dimitris convinced Stefano to set up camp in this high-domed room, the largest area we've come across yet, in this cave. We had to find a level area to erect the tents. While Rena and I figure out a dinner plan, the men could scout out the narrow path that seems to be a dead end.

We got the tents set up and bedrolls ready. Rena didn't know what to do with herself, being the dinner hour, and nothing to prepare.

Stefano was at the end of the trail where the little stream bed ended in a near-empty pond. The water that had pooled up was still fresh. Stefano took out his pocket pick and at the base of the wall where the trail ended, he scraped some sandstone and contemplated it by rolling it in his palm and through his fingers.

Dimitris wrapped his arm around me and let me slither inside his jacket to keep warm.

"What are we planning for dinner, anybody know? I will not eat lizard or bat!" Rena said.

"Did we bring anything, Dimi? We can't exactly run to the market," I said.

"I think Stefano have survival packets, will do in pinch," he said.

"Reenie, I packed the survival packets in my backpack. We only need to lite the camp stove, get the water hot and start cooking," Stefano smiled.

Stefano was used to preparing dehydrated army-issue foods. He had

“Roast Beef with Rice,” “Chicken and Rice,” and “Gumbo Surprise.” When he opened the packets, they were just as expected. Our water was limited, so we sacrificed the Gumbo Surprise and only prepared the other two. The package said it served three. The meats were rehydrated and the rice would thicken the gravy by the time it finished cooking. It wasn’t bad. We all shared in both varieties and were satisfied. We went to the safety of our tents for the night. It was surprising how the darkness seemed to swallow the lantern light.

After six hours of sleep, we woke automatically. Our inner alarm clock woke us with the sound of trickling water.

“My Heart, we must get up,” Dimitris said as he kissed me on the cheek.

“Is that water I hear?” I asked.

“Yes. I must wake Stefano.”

By the time Dimitris put on his shoes and left the tent, Stefano was already up.

“Dimi, we better collect anything that is lying around and move the gear to the higher plateau. This water may rise quickly.”

We all scurried around to collect our gear, then moved the tents. There was only a small trickle of water, but the sound amplified with the echo.

“Where is it coming from?” Rena asked.

“If streams above over-run, it may percolate to below ground,” Dimitris said.

Rena gave her greetings, then pulled me aside.

“Helena, I could really use a bathroom. Stefano usually has one set up, but I think he forgot that there are women here too,” she said.

“We can fix something up, but ask Stefano if he brought any of that,” I suggested.

Stefano fixed us up with temporary relief. Rena waited for me as we explored a little before we went back to camp. We could see several little crevasses that could be tunnels coming off the primary room. I wouldn’t go in, but we could feel air blowing in from them. The rain seemed to spout out of the walls on one side, closest to the stream bed. I had seen nothing like this before.

There was a section of wall near the entrance that had fallen and it created

a “U” shaped alcove, separating it from the large cavern entrance. It received no ambient light from the area where we set up our tents. Rena was walking in front of me, scouting around this secondary room. Suddenly, a scream echoed through the cave.

“Reenie? Where are you? Rena?” Stefano dropped what he was doing and came looking for her.

“Rena, are you alright?” I called as I shined my flashlight on the area that the sound came from. “Did you fall?” I asked as I helped her to her feet.

“No, I...”

“Are you okay? What happened? Did you trip?” Stefano embraced his wife. She was nearly in tears and told Stefano her story in Chinese.

Dimitris came up to them. Stefano told Dimitris in Greek what happened.

“Hey, what happened?” I poked Dimi to let me in on the news.

“She think she find bones. She say in *that* corner, bones lay there,” Dimitris said.

“They’re over there, in that alcove,” she pointed in the cove’s direction.

“We will look. You stay with Rena,” Dimitris said to me calmly.

The men went to the suspected area, finding the bones covered by shards of shale and other debris. They worked to remove the stones from the area as they would an archaeological site. Rena and I went back to the camp area and waited. Within a half-hour the men came back to camp, Stefano trying to place a call on his cell phone.

Dimitris took my hand as he sat down next to me.

“My Heart, bones are of child. We find small bracelet, very sad,” Dimitris uttered.

“Oh, no,” I said.

“A child? A little girl? Oh my,” Rena said, her voice wavering.

“We will clear stones and Stefano to take pictures,” Dimi said. “Something more, too.”

“What, what is it?” I asked.

“More bones. Adult, Stefano will find more information but looks like female, maybe teenager and not ancient is modern. Stefano know more later. Need other equipment to see.” Dimitris spoke respectfully and didn’t want to

upset Rena.

We settled in for some coffee and homemade bread. We didn't prepare for a long stay. Rena and I made another pot of coffee to mull over the situation while the men went back to the site discovery.

"What we should do first is document where everything is in this area. I'll take pictures so there won't be any need for diagrams. I'll do that if you could ease some of these mammoth slabs of granite. Once one is moved, I'll make some notes," Stefano told Dimitris, and they began documenting the site.

Stefano began by laying out a tape measure, then snapping pictures. This continued as the stones were uncovered. Rena was shaken and weepy and paced back and forth.

"Rena, maybe you should have a shot of brandy. It may calm your nerves," I suggested.

"It's just that Stefano is going to get caught up in the investigation and who knows, he might be in Athens for the rest of the year. I'm dreading what they'll find here," Rena sobbed.

"Would you like to see, before police arrive?" Dimitris asked.

"Yes, I would," I said.

"I guess I will too," Rena answered.

We followed Dimitris to the alcove area. After all the loose debris was removed, the spectacle was shocking to witness. I didn't expect to see full skeletal remains, still bearing traces of hair and clothing. I think Rena and I both gasped as the flashlight shone on them. Rena sobbed loudly and turned away.

"Do not cry, Rena. This happened long ago," Dimitris said.

"I'll bet no one else cried for them, so go ahead and cry, Rena," I said.

"Why you say this? Why?" Dimi asked.

"Don't you see? These poor souls are probably the woman and child of the old pink house on Rhodes," I said. Everything went silent. Even the trickle of water stopped.

"Oh my God, Helena, I think you're right. Poor souls, they probably got lost," Rena sniffled.

"If it were only that simple," I commented.

We came together in thoughtful conversation, emotionally recuperating from the shock of the discovery. Stefano was used to this type of development in his work, but not us.

“Well, what should we do? Call the Police?” Rena asked.

“We will do our work as best we can under the circumstances, but when authorities come, we cannot continue. I’ll need to contact them when I can get a connection. The remains will be alright, they aren’t going anywhere,” Stefano said. We agreed and adjourned to find our rainbow’s end.

The Red Menace



Camilla was determined to have her plan work. She picked up Nick at the airport and was beguiled by him at first glance. Nick didn't think that Camilla was anything but helpful in the situation presented to him.

"Your flight is early. I hope you had a pleasant trip," Camilla said as she drove.

"It was an uneventful flight. I hope I won't be a bother to you. I appreciate all the help you've given me. How did you know about me and Helena?" Nick asked.

"Helena told me all about you. She was very complimentary. I think she's relying on you. You're the only one who might help her leave. She sounded desperate," Camilla said. She glanced over to him as she spoke of Helena, and didn't miss his expression. It was that of a man worried about a lover.

"Where is she? Will I be able to see her?" Nick turned toward Camilla as he spoke.

"You'll have to wait for the right moment, but yes, you'll have to make an escape plan to get her away from here. You'll stay at my place, and you'll be able to talk to her and figure out what to do. I'll help all I can," she offered.

The Mariner Inn was the perfect place to take Nick to dinner. She zipped around the corners of the hills outside of New Rhodes City to the cliff-side restaurant.

"I really must eat something. I hope you don't mind. It's easier to talk when I don't have the distraction of the road," Camilla said, batting her long black eyelashes. "What did you say is your surname?"

"Yes, let's eat something. I don't think I've had Greek food before. My name is Nick Santino," he said.

"I've heard your name before," she said.

Camilla took Nick's arm and giddily escorted him to a booth overlooking the ocean. The story she spun about how terribly Helena was being treated by Dimitris now had a two-fold purpose. As the meal was devoured between conversations, Camilla's interest in Nick was piqued, and her behavior changed from the helpful, good samaritan to the lusty, jilted victim.

Her side of the story is that Dimitris was hers, and as fickle as some men can be, he dumped her when Helena came to Rhodes. It wasn't Helena's fault that she fell under Dimitris's spell. He was known as the playboy who never was satisfied and always on the prowl for someone new.

The idea of making Dimitris the villain gave Camilla the illusion of being the savior of a fellow victim of the same demon. She could play off this scenario to her advantage, and having Nick staying at her home gave her maximum exposure to him.

She talked the entire drive along the coast to Kremasti.

"I've fixed a room for you so that you don't have to worry about a hotel. How much time will you have?" She asked.

"I may stay a week, but not much longer. The cast of my new show will rehearse in two weeks, so I'll need to return for costume fittings and all that. But this is nice, and I appreciate the trouble you've gone to, preparing a room for me. Thank you. You've been very kind," he said. "When will I be able to see Helena?"

"I'll call Helena's sister-in-law and find out. We may need to make a plan for this, so tomorrow we can start a rescue."

"Thank you, Camilla, good night."

Camilla couldn't stop thinking of her plan and how to execute it. She went to bed with Nick on her mind. So much like Dimi, but not Dimi. He doesn't know her past, and it would be exciting to pursue him. The more she

thought of him, knowing he was just beyond the wall to her bedroom, sent her fantasizing about the possibilities with him.

She awoke at 7:30 a.m. to the aroma of coffee. She showered, put on a silk, short kimono over her wet skin, then entered the kitchen, where Nick was standing by the percolator.

"I thought I smelled coffee. I didn't think you were up yet," she said as she calmly reached up to the cupboard for two coffee cups. Nick was dumb-struck by this raven-haired beauty who seemed oblivious to the state of her attire. Nick, regaining his senses, stammered as he said,

"I... I wasn't sure how strong to make the coffee."

"It smells wonderful," she said as she pulled the hem of her silk kimono, as it had begun to open down the front. Nick's eyes automatically traced the curve of her breasts as the garment continued to absorb the droplets from her wet hair.

He wasn't sure how to react to her. Camilla poured the coffee. As she turned to ask if he wanted milk in his coffee, she noticed his manhood coming to life. Unconsciously, a sensuous moan escaped her lips. He moved a wet curl from the back of her garment, moving closer to her as he smelled her hair. She turned to face him, then kissed him.

She vamped him with everything she knew in her bedroom arsenal. They stayed in bed for the rest of the day and that night. She made sure that Helena's name wasn't mentioned.

Camilla was truly captivated by this Englishman. She wasn't looking for a new lover, only someone to dangle in front of Dimitris. This man surprised her, and she found herself becoming emotionally entangled.

"When I came here, I wanted to help Helena. I haven't been able to do that yet," Nick lamented.

"I've tried to contact her, but I'll have to call her sister-in-law to find out where she is. With Dimitris no doubt," she stated.

"You know that I have to go back to London soon," He said. "My time is getting short here, and I'll have to leave."

"I know. You have to do your play. Do you always have a little romance on your trips?" She asked. She pushed him back to a laying position and vamped

him again.

“You are unbelievable,” he said as she dressed. She gave him that overconfident sideways glance that she finds men drool over.

“I must go into town. I won’t be gone long. Do you want to come with me?” She asked.

“Yes, I’ll go with you. Are the Pharmacies well equipped?” He asked.

“Probably not to what you are accustomed. Maybe we can stop at the Co-op,” she suggested. Her phone rang as she grabbed her purse.

“Do you have anything new to report? Primo will leave Rhodes today,” Bolio asked.

“Do not overshadow me,” she warned in pointed, low Greek tones. “When I am ready, I will contact Primo myself, you slimy little man,” she seethed and ended the call. She looked back at Nick.

“I hope I’m not in the way,” he asked.

“Never. Shall we go?” She took his arm. Camilla drove like a race car driver, whipping around the hills disregarding posted speed limits. “If you’re afraid of my driving, I’ll slow down.” Camilla smiled, still planning her scheme. “Helena always makes me drive like a snail. She has no sense of adventure.”

“I don’t think adventure is what Helena needs,” Nick said.

“I’ll try calling her sister-in-law when we stop.”

They drove to several business offices from Faliraki to New Rhodes city. Nick always remained in the car while Camilla did her “business.” Once again, she returned empty-handed.

“Ready to go?” She asked.

“I really must see about Helena. I’ve been here four days and don’t have much more time,” Nick said.

“Don’t worry. When we get home I’ll make a few more calls. She might be hiding out from her husband. We’ll see.”

“I’ve got to do something. I feel so useless,” Nick said. She reached her hand across to rest on Nick’s thigh.

The Way Out



Stefano led us back to the end of the stream, telling us he suspected another room beyond the wall that may have been blocked deliberately. Then over the years, the limestone may have covered over the debris and the entrance by compaction or erosion.

“It just looks like a dead-end. How can you tell if this was ever open?” I asked.

“Up at the top, where the low ceiling merges with this sandstone,” Stefano took a deep breath as if he were very tired.

“Sandstone soft, Granite very hard, so...” Dimitris was saying.

“Okay, okay, blah, blah, blah. I’ve heard all this before, but how much longer are we going to dig? I’m getting hungry. We didn’t prepare for a long stay,” Rena said in her cranky voice.

“Maybe we should call it a day for now. We can come back after the police finish attending to the bones,” Stefano suggested.

I looked at Dimitris. He didn’t react, but Rena came alive. She has been emotional since we had to walk in the heat. It has been a very uneventful search, except for the discovery of the bones, and we still haven’t proved the location of any treasure, Nazi, Cyprian, or anything else.

Rena collected their gear and anything that may have been misplaced. Dimitris and Stefano were talking between themselves, then Stefano went back to the suspicious wall.

“My Heart, this man has neglected his wife,” he said, coming to me with an embrace.

“What have we got planned for the rest of the night, Dimi?” I asked. He held my hand and squatted in front of me.

“Stefano need to stay and work, but you and Rena can leave,” he said.

“It would be nice to get some sleep,” I said.

“This man must stay with Stefano. Not good to be alone here, but take Rena back to hotel, maybe,” he said, fishing for the car keys in his pocket.

“No, we’ll stay here with you guys. I don’t want to be worrying about you two the rest of the night,” I said. Dimitris kneaded my fingers, then touched my cheek. The strange situation between us was slowly dissipating.

“Dimi! Get the girls out of here! We’ve sprung a leak!” Stefano yelled.

We all jumped at the alert. The back wall where Stefano was using a pick suddenly opened to fill the pond at the end of the small stream bed. As the water poured out of the sandstone wall, the hole was enlarging, allowing the water to gush more ferociously.

“Dimi, grab the tents and anything you can carry. We’ve got to get out!” Stefano ordered.

We scrambled as quickly as we could, retreating the same way we came in. It didn’t seem like we walked over a mile inside the cave, but now, trying to leave, it seemed a long distance to go safely. There was a section of our path that may flood. If we didn’t hurry, our exit would be impassable.

As we made our way, there seemed to be a lot of water dripping from the top of the tunnel and slithering down the side walls. Small puddles were forming on the trail, making our trek like an obstacle course.

We came to the patch where the trail crossed a deep gully and, as we suspected, the water was pooling up. We were discussing the situation, trying to find the safest way to proceed, but we went silent when we heard voices coming from the other side of this valley. As voices echo, we couldn’t understand what was said, but Rena suggested it may be the police.

“No, not police. Hello? Hello,” Stefano called.

We were met with silence. Stefano was immediately suspicious. If it were the police, there would have been an answer.

“Stay down. Try not to be seen,” Stefano instructed.

Immediately, my heart was racing with fear. Rena was trying not to cry by covering her mouth.

We were on a higher ledge than the men on the other side. They were looking up in our direction, mumbling amongst themselves. We heard a couple of shots bounce off the ceiling, echoing repeatedly. Stefano looked up at the ceiling above us.

“Move back, get back,” he spoke in an urgent tone.

“What are they doing? Are they crazy?” I asked. Dimitris stood behind me, his arms around me.

“I think we’ve got company,” Stefano surmised.

We were backed up to the wall as far as we could be, and still, we felt the dust and small grit falling from the ceiling. Stefano beamed his flashlight up at the ceiling. It appeared unstable and wouldn’t take much to cause a cave-in.

“You, up there! Stay where you are. Do not attempt to escape,” the big mouth below us barked. His English was hard to decipher given the echoes and thick accent. Stefano backed up, bringing Rena by the hand, backing up the trail to a safer distance. We followed.

“What can we do? We can’t wait for them to come up here,” I asked.

“There may be another way, but we need to backtrack,” Stefano suggested.

We started back in the direction of the water deluge, Stefano leading and investigating anything that looked like an off-shoot trail that may lead us around the flooded valley and the thugs who occupy it. We could hear more shooting and yelling echoing throughout the cave.

“They will cause a collapse, if they don’t kill themselves first,” I heard Stefano mutter.

As we followed, I thought I felt a vibration, but then it would stop as the shooting stopped. I figured the echoing sounds were causing the ground to shake. Stefano got us into a covered outcrop when the small rocks and dust started to fall. Just as we were going to return to the trail, dust billowed out over the path ahead of us. We huddled together, covering our heads with our coats and hiding our faces as best we could. The dust permeated every crevice. Breathing was near impossible. I thought to myself,

“This is it. If it’s my time to go, I’m glad I’m with Dimitris.” I could feel him holding me in a way that if anything were to fall, it would hit him instead of me.

“Oh, I’m choking! Stefano, where are you? Where *are* you?” Rena coughed as she tried to speak.

“I’m here, right here, Sugarplum, we’re okay. Everything will be okay,” he said reassuringly.

We tried to see if there was any air that looked free of dust. The dust was dense and cut the light to stop at a brown curtain in front of us.

“The best we can do right now is to hunker down against the wall,” Stefano said. He opened his backpack and pulled out a shirt. He tore it into several pieces. “I’m going to look for some clean water. Stay here until I return,” he said, then he was off.

Stefano returned after a few minutes with the pieces of shirting saturated with water and gave a piece to each of us. By instinct, we all ran the wet cloth over our faces.

“Wring out the excess water and try to breathe through the cloth. It will help clean the air,” he instructed. “I felt the air circulating near the collapse. That’s good news,” Stefano said encouragingly.

We waited for the air to clear somewhat before making a move. Dimitris was holding me in a way that I missed. His Greek whispers comforted me, calming the fear that grabs one’s heart and makes you weak.

“We should move now, so keep close. There may not be a way out, but it’s a chance we have to take. Let’s go,” Stefano said.

We followed behind Stefano and Rena, choking and trying to see through the dust. It was settling somewhat, except for the flashlight beams that bounced back off the airborne particles.

The trail ahead of us was blocked by the rockfall. The water entering the back chamber was trickling in our direction. Stefano instructed us to huddle against the wall while he and Dimitris went forward to determine our path.

“Helena, can I sit over by you?” Rena seemed so tiny, so innocent, like a frightened little bird.

“Yes, of course. Come on over here. Are you okay? You’re not hurt?” I

asked. I couldn't see her as she moved, feeling her way towards me.

"Where are you? Oh, was that your foot I just stepped on?" She asked. I could feel her arms waving around, causing the air to rush by me.

"Here, over here," I said. I caught her arm as it swooshed by me. "I've got you. I think there's room for you to sit next to me," I said as I guided her.

"Oh, my God, Helena, will we ever get out of here? This is the worst! I've seen some scary things with Stefano's work, cave-ins, and such, but this is bad. If we don't choke to death, we might drown. And I'm so cold," she said.

I let her talk, as we were both scared. We huddled together to keep warm. We could hear the thugs still yelling, an unintelligible echoing noise. They sounded angry, and I expected another round of bullets at any moment. I could hear Stefano's voice talking to Dimitris. They were coming closer.

"Stefano? We're over here," Rena called between coughs.

I could see some light piercing the dusty brown curtain. The men returned to us as we prepared for the bad news.

"Did you find a way out?" I asked.

"There is a small trail, and it seems to have fresh air coming from it. It will be a tight squeeze thru that wall, and I'm not sure if we'll be able to follow it very far. It might be dangerous, so you girls talk it over. Do you want to try?" Stefano didn't sound very encouraging.

"I don't know. Can we fit through there?" Rena asked.

"I don't see where we have a choice. We've got to try," I said. We were all depressed at the prospect of our remaining days being spent here. Dimitris held me and whispered in my ear.

"I don't know what you said, Dimi," I said, and he repeated what he said.

"You are brave lady. We go," he agreed.

"Okay, let's go," Rena said enthusiastically.

We left all the gear we were carrying. The only things we kept were a few picks, flashlights, a rope, Stefano's notebook, and the keys to our vehicles. We followed Stefano to a gaping crack in the cave wall. The air was clear and seemed fresh. It gave us hope.

Fat Man's Misery



We headed to the opening in the wall. The cool air filled our lungs. It felt good to breathe again. Stefano led with a flashlight glowing and his oxygen sensor meter in his left hand. Checking the air in this section as a precaution, Stefano spoke of geological formations as we carefully walked or climbed over the large rocks on the path.

The path was getting narrower. The walls were like two slices of concrete. Stefano and Dimitris could scarcely set their feet down, where the slab stones came together like a wedge. They had to slide sideways and hope that the gap opens up again. Stefano pulled Rena up and over him, giving her the flashlight. She could go ahead, to see if we would have to turn back.

We waited, hoping for one more bit of luck to get us through. I was feeling claustrophobic. I didn't want to go into panic mode. Knowing that, Dimitris kept me grounded.

We could hear Rena calling to us from beyond the crevice. We couldn't understand what she said. She sounded happy, but we may be in "fat man's misery" for a while yet. Stefano was having a hard time getting through. The soles of his shoes were wedged between the two stone slices. We had to scale the walls to avoid getting stuck too tightly. I was afraid that Stefano and Dimitris, being large men, might not be able to go any further.

Stefano struggled to remove his belt, which had a knife and other items hanging off of it. When he finally got it off, he called Rena to retrieve it as he

gave it a toss.

We were stuck in the gap for twenty minutes until Stefano scraped his body against the stone slabs, sliding his feet out of his shoes, and scraping his forearms and knees in the struggle. Rena, being so petite, could return to the wedged in shoes and toss them out to the men.

Once we passed “fat man’s misery” we stopped to take stock of our injuries and look around. There was a boulder the size of a mountain in front of us. We found we could climb the smaller mounds of rocks at the foot of this mountain. When we got around to the other side, the area sloped down to an open cavern. Stefano and Dimitris flashed their lights, hoping to find an opening where the fresh air emanated from.

“Oh, my God. Oh my God, look!” Rena let out a squeal.

Dimitris and I looked from the other side of this dark cavern. The glow of shining gold shone out of the dark. Dimitris held me back and put his arm around me.

“We have found the end of your rainbow.” His voice rang with sadness. I understood what he was saying. We have the end of the rainbow, but we may pay with our lives.

I sat on a rock next to the trail and let it sink in. The meaning of this discovery, will it bring good and happiness, or death and sorrow? Rena was excited about the find. She and Stefano entered the other side of the darkness with light. I saw flashes from Stefano’s cell phone, documenting the treasure.

“Would you like to go see? We can...” he stopped mid-sentence when he turned to find me wiping tears from my cheek while sitting on my rock. “What is? Helena,” Dimi came over to me, his hand on my shoulder.

“No, I don’t want to see,” I said.

“Why you cry? You have succeeded to find your rainbow.” He sat next to me and put his arms around me. His comforting arms made me feel more secure and safe.

Stefano continues to take pictures and then writing in his little notebook. I could hear the occasional “ooh” and “aha” as he discovered what was stacked and piled.

“Aren’t you going to see what you’ve found? This is a monumental find.

You persevered, and now the rewards are yours. When we get out of here, I'll report to the University, and they will contact Interpol," Stefano reported.

"How did they get it all in here? We could barely get through," I said.

"Tectonic movement is possible, but it's doubtful. It would have happened too long ago. There has to be another point of access, and *that* could have been buried under a rockfall. It's hard to see. We need more light to be sure. Now, we should rest and then we can look for a way out," Stefano spoke with hope in his voice.

"If you could see what is over there, you'll go nuts!" Rena said, directing her comment to me. "Oh, God! I'm so cold, Stefano, can't we find something to burn and get a campfire going?"

"No, Sugarplum, we can't use the air for a fire. Too much smoke."

"I'm so glad that it's over. It is over, isn't it Dimi?" I asked. Dimi put his arm around me as I put my head on his shoulder.

"Yes, my Heart, all over now," he agreed.

We were ready to find a way out of this cave, other than the way we came in. Stefano and Rena went one way, and Dimitris and I went around in the opposite direction. All the walls had stalactites, or stalagmites growing like pillars and knives hanging from the ceiling. The water seemed to hug the one side where the floor seemed to slope. I don't remember water when we first came in.

"We must find where air comes in, maybe we find way out," Dimitris advised.

He took my hand. Then we continued to look for the origin of the breeze. When we'd come in the direction indicated, the breeze seemed to stop completely or come from a different direction. Rena and Stefano weren't having any luck in the area they explored, either.

After a half-hour of feeling around for escaping air, I stumbled over a loose rock and fell back into Dimi's arms.

"Helena!" He enveloped me in his arms. "Helena, my Helena. You okay? We will find the way, you will see." He reached my chin, pulling my face up to look into my eyes. Then he kissed me.

"Dimi, I'm so sorry. This is all my fault, again. I can't seem to keep everyone out of danger. I never meant for anyone to get hurt. I never imagined that

this would ever come to anything,” I sobbed and wiped my eyes.

“You must not cry, my Heart, you are dehydrated. We are close now, we will find a way out,” he reassured.

I feel as though I’m in a daze, sleep-deprived, dehydrated, and getting more confused.

A billow of dust fell, then the sound of small rocks pouring from a height.

“Stefano! Rena!” Dimitris yelled out. He stood and flashed his light around to locate them.

“Go, Dimi, go look for them! I’ll be alright. Hurry!” I would be okay to stay where I am, even in the dark, temporarily.

“Stefano! Stefano, where are you? Rena! Are you okay?” His frantic calls were not answered. He moved a distance, calling their names as he went. I could hear his voice. It was getting further away. I could barely hear him as his voice returned to a normal tone. I didn’t hear a thing for what seemed like hours. It was only fifteen minutes. As I waited in the pitch of darkness, I could barely discern a conversation. It eased my mind that there was no sign of panic in the voices I heard.

“Helena? Are you okay? We didn’t mean to scare you, but Stefano thought he was onto something. You know how he gets sidetracked. He pulled back a huge rock lying along the side of the little stream, and all that gravel fell off the wall. Then he had to fall in the stream, trying to take cover from the stones. I don’t know about him sometimes.” Rena shook her head as she sat down next to me.

“Oh, Rena, I’m so relieved,” I said as I hugged her. “Where are the guys?” I asked.

“They’re looking around, but I grabbed Stefano’s flashlight so you wouldn’t have to sit in the dark,” she said.

“Thanks. Were you able to escape this dungeon?” I asked.

“Don’t tell Stefano. He’s a stickler for preserving a find, but I grabbed this.” She reached in her pocket and drew out a small icon. It looked like a gold coin at first glance. She handed it to me.

“It’s beautiful, but I don’t think it’s a coin. It’s got a frame around it; it must be solid gold. The etching is damaged, but it’s gorgeous. Are you going to

keep it?" I wondered.

"No, I'll give it to Stefano. He'll kill me when he sees I picked it up, but I don't think it will make a big difference in the find's outcome," she said.

We could hear the faint calls and curses from the thugs we left behind. Between fearing the worst of being stranded and the possibility of Deichant's men finding us again, our determination to find a way out stole our appetites. Food was far from our minds. We were getting desperate for water.

"Shh - do you hear?" Dimitris asked. "Voices." Everyone stopped to listen.

"What?" Rena asked.

"Listen."

We didn't hear voices, but there was the sound of shovels and digging.

We looked at each other in contemplation of the sounds. We know that *we* have shoveled nothing. Should we expect a rescue? Maybe the thugs were getting closer? It was an uncomfortable question.

The sounds seemed to come from the direction left of the treasure hoard. It was hard to pinpoint, but Stefano tapped on the wall. He instructed Dimitris to use the pick on the sandstone.

"Careful, Dimi, go slow. We don't want another collapse." Stefano kept an eagle eye on the progress.

Loud voices filtered through the wall. The pounding stopped as Dimitris and Stefano listened. When they looked at each other, it reinforced the knowledge of whom the voices belong.

"Deichant," they said in unison.

"What? What did you say?" I asked.

"Why did you stop? Did you open a way out? What? What's wrong?" Rena asked, wide-eyed and curious.

We stood a moment, looking one to another to have the answer.

"We must open it, Dimi. We have to get water for the women. I don't think we have a choice," Stefano said.

"It will be fine. My Heart, please, stand behind this stone." Dimitris pointed to a large boulder. Rena and I complied with the request.

A billowing rush of dust, the fall of rocks, the sound like that of an earthquake filled the echoing chamber. The men flew backward in the dusty

wind. Choking the dust from their lungs. I could hear Dimitris calling my name. Then Stefano, trying to choke out Rena's.

"My Heart, Helena, where are you?" Dimitris called, his eyes squinting from the dust-filled air.

The echoes drown out our voices.

"Reenie, are you alright? Where are you?" Stefano called. There was no answer from her.

"She was right here! Rena!" I searched my surroundings in a blind panic. I knew she had to be close as I didn't see her leave my side. Dimitris found me feeling around for her. The dust cut our visibility considerably.

"Helena?" Dimitris came to my side. His arms flew around me in a protective hold.

"I can't find her. Rena!" I called. "She was right here."

We were all coughing and trying to call out for her. No answer was heard. The air was slowly clearing, then we heard voices. The wall that Stefano and Dimitris were chipping away on had a huge hole in it and it looked like flashlights waving through the dusty fog.

"Stefano," we heard a small voice coming from the mound of debris.

"Reenie, are you hurt? Talk to me. Where are you?" Stefano said, hoping to find her.

"Over here," she choked. Her little voice was drowned by the chaos. She was coughing and we could see dirt and stones rolling off of her back. Stefano hurried to her, helping her to sit up. The dust and stones rolled off her like a small avalanche. Stefano scooped her up in his arms and carried her away from the chaos. She seemed confused and out of it. Then she passed out.

Stefano tried to find a place to put her down where the air is breathable. He wiped the dust from her face and checked her mouth. Dimitris had such a fearful expression. We held our breath in anticipation of her revival.

Through the passage that Dimitris and Stefano opened in the wall, men were attempting to enter. Several young men surrounded us. I didn't recognize their language, but they looked like mercenaries. They were bedecked with ammunition belts, khaki shirts, and bandanas. Two of them stood watching Stefano trying to revive Rena. They made us sit in the dirt, hands clasped

behind our heads. Their automatic weapons didn't go unnoticed.

The opening in the wall led to a smaller chamber. The men had bright lights that reflected off the thick dust laden air. We couldn't tell how many men were yet to appear, but there seemed to be many.

The commotion from the armed men drew the attention of our guards. They were curious and left us for a few minutes.

"Helena? We must be very careful. You are okay?" Dimi asked.

"How's Rena?" I asked.

"She will be okay," Stefano answered. Rena nestled further into Stefano's tender embrace.

More men came forward to bark out questions to us. None seemed to speak English. Neither Stefano nor Dimitris could understand the language. The man in authority tried to communicate with Stefano. He barked out orders to the others, and they complied as if a military command had been given.

Stefano found another language to speak to the authority figure, one they both attempted to understand. Suddenly, one man took Rena and me to another area, away from our husbands. I was ready to do what I could to protect Rena. We were brought to the opened section, beyond the dusty opening, between the two caverns.

"Where are you taking us?" I asked. Rena and I were pushed along, heading toward an outside passage. The air was clear and fresh, but we were afraid we'd never see our husbands again. Forced to sit close to the outside wall, we filled our lungs with the fresh ocean air. Two men in military garb were posted to guard us.

Stefano and Dimitris were still inside the large chamber. Stefano was explaining to our captors why it is important to protect the artifacts. The monetary value is a pittance compared to the historical value, and cannot be replaced. They didn't want to hear about it; didn't want or need to be "preached" at. He was pushed to the ground and kicked in the back.

"Dimi, don't. I'll handle it," Stefano said to his brother. Dimitris's hands were clenched into fists. It seemed that Stefano couldn't handle the situation.

As Rena and I sat in the fresh air stream, the guards paced back and forth, trying to see what was beyond the gaping hole in the stone cavern wall. We

sat there for twenty minutes. The interest of the guards was on the activity in the other chamber.

"Pst! Pst!" Rena was trying to get my attention. She nodded to the outside corridor.

"What is it? Are you cold?" I asked.

"Someone threw a couple of stones at me," she said, nodding toward the outside opening.

"I don't see anyone, are you sure?" I whispered. I tried to look into the distance, down the corridor for a possible rescuer. I saw no one.

"I'm sure someone threw a stone at me," Rena repeated. We sat on stone boulders, which were more comfortable than the dirt floor, and when the guard glanced at where I moved to sit, he did nothing. His partner went further down the corridor for a cigarette, then our guard joined him.

After ten minutes of no guards, we heard a voice call from the dark corridor. A young man stepped out of the corridor and waved us over to him. He reminded me of a Boy Scout. Rena and I looked at each other and in a blink, we agreed to comply. The young man hid us behind a large boulder on the pathway. He spoke Greek, which neither of us understood. He placed a small lap blanket over our shoulders while leading us away from the cavern.

There were more lights further down from the corridor and what looked like military or law enforcement uniformed men.

"Who are all these people? Excuse me," I tried to communicate with someone.

Out of the bright light came a very tall, thin man. The uniform was a khaki color. He smiled as he stooped to help Rena stand.

"Hello, Helena."

"Oh, my God. Sahj," I said, and without thought, I embraced this man who has once again come to our rescue.

"How have you been, Helena?" He asked most sincerely.

"I'm not sure, I think I'm dreaming!"

"No, you are not dreaming. You have been an enormous help to us. Now you must go with this fellow, and we will talk later," he said.

"Dimitris and Stefano are still in the cavern with those thugs. They have

some serious weapons. I don't want to see them hurt," I said.

"We will do our best."

We were led out into the open air. How sweet the smell of the ocean breeze. It was dark. We were taken to a tactical trailer and given comfort and a cup of coffee.

"Are you injured? Is there something I can do for you?" The medic asked.

"Rena, have him look at you," I suggested. She went to the curtained partition. Then the medic began asking her questions.

Taking Cover



Dimitris and Stefano tried to reason with the criminals.

“There is nothing we have that you would want,” Stefano answered.

“I am getting very impatient with you. We followed your lady for quite some time. It’s not as though we are ignorant of her intentions. You have led us on a merry chase on this Island. Now, we can search this mountain until we level it if we have to. But it will be in your best interest to co-operate with us. My business partner in this enterprise is not as patient as I have been. When he arrives, you’ll be left in his hands. It will not be pleasant, I can assure you,” Deichant said. “I am a pussy cat. But if you wait, my partner is German, and he does not have my patience.”

“Where are our wives? What you do with them?” Dimitris asked.

“We will see how useful they will be. If you co-operate, we would have no use for them.”

“What do you want from us? You have men to chase us out, we leave all behind. We have nothing,” Dimitris said. Deichant grabbed the hair on top of Dimitris’s head. Pulling his head back, he spoke with a hiss into Dimitris’s ear.

“There is more than a map in your woman’s eyes, and we will find out what you both hide.” Deichant whipped Dimitris’s head down forcefully.

“We can’t give you what we do not have. You’ve found the cave. Your guess

is as good as mine what is there. Go look for yourself.” Stefano was seething with anger.

There was a commotion of small men running up to Deichant. They came up to him in a cloud of dust, all talking at the same time. Deichant looked over at Stefano and Dimitris. He waved a large pistol around indicating that the Patakinis clan is dispensable. Two young men were appointed to guard Stefano and Dimitris. Deichant hurried off to the other chamber. The loud voices echoed continuously. All the other minions went back through the gaping hole in the wall, into the smaller cave, where there was handgun fire.

“Take cover, Dimi,” Stefano said. They both ducked behind a large boulder as best they could. Stefano was able to cut his wrist ties, then cut his brother’s. They stayed a safe distance from the small cavern, where the gunfire continued. The heavy gunfire expected never happened.

When the firing ceased, they rose from their shelter. Under the cover of dust and debris in the air, they cautiously slipped through both caverns toward the bright lights of the outside clearing. There was field personnel tending to the injured. It was a small war zone. Stefano and Dimitris were greeted in another language by military personnel and taken to the medic for examination.

Sitting behind the curtained partition in a field tent, we could feel the cold air swoosh in when someone would enter. The voices of the men entering were familiar.

“Dimi, is that you?” I asked.

“Stefano? Stefano, are you okay?” Rena said, hopping off the exam table. The medic was still writing notes on Rena’s examination.

“You may come in, she’s fine. There’s a small abrasion on her face and back, but she’s ready to go,” the medic reported in English. “Just let her rest a day or two. She’ll be fine.”

“Thank you,” Stefano said.

“My Heart, are you hurt?” Dimitris wrapped me in his arms.

“No, I’m fine now. I’m so relieved. I thought they’d kill you,” I said.

“This man is fine. All is good,” Dimi said, as he rocked me in an embrace.

“Did you see Sahj? He’s alive. He’s here.” I said.

“Let’s get a ride back to our car. I’m going to sleep for a week,” Rena moaned.

“I think Sahj wants to talk to us,” I said.

“I can’t. I want to go! Stefano, let’s go,” Rena was ready to have a breakdown.

“Take her back. We can talk to Sahj. We’ll see you back at the hotel,” I said.

“Yes, there isn’t anything that we can do. If you need the pictures I took, message me, and...” Stefano got interrupted.

“Come on, Stefano, let’s go,” Rena said in an urgent tone.

Stefano guided Rena from the trailer.

“Dimi,” I was so relieved to see him. He lifted my face to gaze into my eyes.

“My Heart, this man think they take you away from me. Worst to feel this. We will go home to Rhodes. Soon.”

Sahj entered and took us to a sectioned-off area in the corner.

“How is possible? We thought you dead,” Dimitris said.

“I must apologize. It was necessary to use Helena to lure these criminals to a place where they would gather. We wouldn’t normally get civilians involved, but this is a slippery, dangerous bunch who seem to always be one step ahead of us,” Sahj explained while shaking Dimitris’s hand.

“So, you put my Helena in danger?” Dimitris was building in anger.

“It was not intentional. Helena, you always ask the questions and do not rest until you find the answers. Since we were working to the same end, we let Helena pursue the answers and keep our investigation on a parallel path.” Sahj spoke in near whispers, to keep our conversation as private as possible.

“And the danger?” Dimitris asked.

“You were always under surveillance, and never in real danger,” Sahj said to me. “As you know, this type of crime, namely art theft, and artifacts smuggling, which is an international crime, is not an easy task for local law enforcement. There are six thousand islands and islets within the Greek sovereignty. Not enough personnel to adequately enforce the law. Vanderbur and Deichant have been on the radar for a long time. The major icons and relics that have been sold are likely in private collections, and will probably never be recovered. But we must try. How you managed to find these men and not get yourself killed is admirable,” Sahj explained.

“They followed us. It wasn’t a choice we would have made,” I said.

“Yes, but now it is done. The head of the snake has been bitten off. We may track and recover more artifacts now, than what we could do before,” Sahj said.

“What about the rest of them? The men who harassed us, will they be arrested?” I asked.

“We have rounded up many of them. Many factors will need to fall into place before this smuggling ring rises again. It is hoped that vital information will come to light, through these arrests,” Sahj explained. “We have made a major advance in this enterprise, and the arrests, in this case, will be far-reaching,” Sahj reported. “Thank you, Helena.”

Sahj arranged transportation around the mountain to where our car is parked. I fell asleep while Dimitris drove us back to the hotel.

“My Heart, we are here,” Dimi said, gently touching my cheek.

I slept like a rock. Dimitris didn’t wake me as Rena and Stefano left for home. By three in the afternoon, I was up and wanted some food. We decided we would check out of the hotel.

Arrival at Rhodes Diagoras airport was at 6:30 PM. It was getting close to dusk. Looking around at this familiar place, it seems so long ago when I came here, not knowing how much my life would change.

The house was dark and looked lonely. We relaxed on the sofa with a small brandy. We were both so exhausted, there wasn’t much conversation. Dimitris came up to me, kissed me gently, and looked deeply into my eyes.

“Is there need to talk?” He asked.

“No, there is no need to talk,” I answered. We went to bed early.

We cuddled most of the night, avoiding fitful dreams.

The next morning I arose early. Dimitris already had breakfast started. I took my place at the table. The newspaper came later than usual. Dimitris slowly walked into the kitchen, where I was still having coffee. He placed the folded paper in front of me without a word. I opened the newspaper. The headline read:

“EUREKA! TEMPLAR TREASURE FOUND”

Taking Cover

Dimitris saw that look in my eyes.

“No, Helena.” He drew my face up to look into my eyes. He gently kissed my lips and said, “no.”

The End

Epilogue



In this story, the ancient artifacts, gold coins, and precious gems that were found were part of the Templar Treasure. It was located in a small chamber near the bones of the mother and child. Not as large of a find that Templar aficionados would expect, it leaves open the possibility of more treasure hidden elsewhere. It wasn't until the chamber was pumped out that the bigger discovery was made. Stefano was the lead archaeologist on the project. The stolen and looted mosaics, chalices, icons, and grand religious paintings found are in need of major restoration. Crates of gold crucifixes, chalices, and statuary would be cataloged and returned to the Cypriot authorities. Being an incomplete recovery, the possibility of further investigations into the recipients of the smuggled goods would be ongoing, in hopes of further recovery of goods. Scotland Yard has stepped in to assist in possible European involvement.

Deichant, VanderBur, Bolio, and a handful of other criminals were arrested and will be prosecuted. They are looking at long prison sentences.

Nick and Camilla were inseparable and although she made excuses for Dimitris and Helena's relationship, Nick returned to London with Camilla following later. Somehow, Camilla obtained a bogus passport and joined Nick in London. She sent a photo of herself with Nick to Rena, knowing that Rena would show it to Helena. Although Nick and Camilla have a volatile relationship, Camilla has not yet returned to Rhodes, Greece.

Helena and Dimitris work on the restoration of their relationship. Neither

Epilogue

will admit that it's not back to where they were before, but they are secure in the knowledge that they love each other fiercely, and that they will be okay.

Dimitris keeps his emotions in check as Helena tends to take an interest in "finding the answers," in related mysteries. She's aware of his displeasure and tries not to let curiosity consume her.

In Closing



Thank you for selecting my book, “The Shadows of Rhodes.” This last entry, book 5, was written during the Corona Virus lockdown, 2020/2021. As someone who is considered “at risk,” my husband and I have done our best to self isolate as much as possible and to wear masks when it is necessary to leave the confines of our home. Heeding all precautions, there is still the danger of exposure and pending consequences.

It’s a sobering realization that as I write this today, I could be on a ventilator within a few days, fighting for my life. I wanted to finish this book, just in case, and not have the burden of knowing that no one else would. I have a special relationship with my characters and I want them to be remembered, by someone, at some time in the future.

During these momentous times, we are on a precipice, not knowing from one day to the next if we will suddenly lose a friend or loved one to Covid-19. We pray that this pandemic will be gone soon. My sincerest condolences to all those who have lost a loved one to Covid-19. Prayers also go out to all the medical people who selflessly give, and are at high risk of contracting this pandemic. Bless you, all.

Please let me know what you think of *The Shadows of Rhodes*. A short comment means so much to an author. A review or even a shout on Good Reads or Amazon would be a great way to help me to improve my writing to your expectations. All comments are welcome. Thank you!

In Closing

https://www.goodreads.com/author/show/13516713.Georgina_Antoinette

<https://www.amazon.com/~e/B00WFFBHIM>

Glossary



A guide to the most used Greek words in *The Shadows of Rhodes* series

Efharisto - Thank You

Kafenia - Restaurant, coffee shop, etc

Kalimera - Good morning

Kefi - One's uncontrollable joy

Meyedes - Appetizers

S' agapo - I Love You

Taverna - Tavern/pub



About the Author



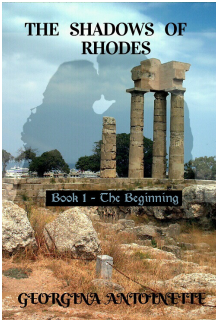
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Also by Georgina Antoinette



The Shadows of Rhodes, Book 1, The Beginning

<http://www.georginaantoinette.com>

Beyond the beauty and peaceful ruins of the Greek island of Rhodes, a crime force of smuggling ancient arts and relics turn their efforts to finding the looted religious articles pillaged from the Greek Orthodox churches of Cyprus. An old picture of a child holds the key to uncovering where it may be hidden. A tourist innocently purchases this picture. Crime boss VanderBur directs a wave of tactics to relieve the tourist of this photo of a child. A romance begins between the tourist and a taxi driver who tries to help, which puts them both in danger.

Book 1 The Shadows of Rhodes, book 1,
The Beginning,

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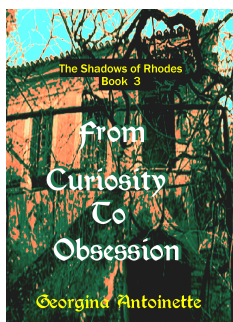
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Many stumbling blocks seemed to instill hesitation in finalizing the civil bond. Without filing it in Athens, the civil bond would be voided. This was another avenue of escape for Helena. All the stresses with Camilla and other life issues become too much and Helena goes into “escape” mode. She doesn’t want to hurt Dimitris, but it is her nature to isolate herself to enable her to think things through. The army of thugs that seem to pop up in odd places are still a threat, but if trust goes out the window, Helena will follow.

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