

"This is international police procedural writing at its best."

—*Booklist*, Starred Review, for *Assassins of Athens*

MURDER IN MYKONOS

A CHIEF INSPECTOR ANDREAS KALDIS MYSTERY

FIRST IN SERIES

JEFFREY SIGER

INTERNATIONAL BESTSELLING AUTHOR

READING GROUP GUIDE

1. What are the official reasons for Andreas being sent to Mykonos? What are the unofficial reasons?
2. Characterize Andreas. What are his negative qualities? What do you like about him?
3. Describe Andreas's dynamic with other cops on the force. Do they work well together? If so, in what way?
4. How does Andreas seem to feel about his father? Do you think they had a good relationship?
5. What is the culture like on Mykonos? Would you like to live there?
6. What kinds of impediments do the police face in their investigation? Are any of these barriers intentional?
7. Describe Annika. Do you think she functioned well under such dangerous circumstances?

8. Outline Tassos's role in the stolen antiquities/murder operation. Do you think he should feel guilty?
9. When people like Tassos or Manny's father take justice into their own hands by killing criminals, do you think this is morally justifiable?
10. How did you feel about Andreas having to play political games with the mayor and Spiros?
11. Do you think unsolved crimes on Mykonos can ever be solved?

A CONVERSATION WITH THE AUTHOR

What led you, a former Wall Street lawyer, to give up that life and move to the Aegean Greek island of Mykonos to write mystery-thrillers?

Frankly, I think the answer is obvious from the question. Only kidding. Thirty-five years or so ago a friend told me to try Greece for a holiday. She said I'd love it, Mykonos for sure. She was right, for even though I'm not Greek by birth, from the moment I first set foot on Mykonos, I felt in my heart I was home again. What attracted me to Greece then, and still does, is the Greek people, in particular the Mykonians who treat me as family—in both the good and sometimes not so good connotations of the phrase.

After 9/11, I rethought my life and decided it was the time to move on to what I'd always longed to do. So, I said goodbye to practicing law in New York City, and *yia sou* to the writing life on Mykonos.

When you decided to start writing a crime series, what was the decision leading you to set it in Greece?

When I started writing *Murder in Mykonos*, I didn't intend on creating a series or becoming a chronicler of Greece's trials and tribulations. I thought I'd be writing a stand-alone novel telling the story of a Greek island I had come to know intimately. I wanted to write about the people, culture, myths, and politics of Mykonos, and only settled upon the mystery format because it struck me as the best vehicle for exploring how a tourist island society would respond to a threat to its newfound economic glory. When that book went on to be the #1 bestselling English-language book in Greece and made the *New York Times's* radar list of hardcover bestsellers, I realized I had a series.

By then I'd come to realize that Greece provided an inexhaustible source of material for the two central elements of a series: (1) an array of serious, modern-day issues that my characters must confront and overcome, and (2) a perspective on each issue to be found in the ancient past. There is no place on earth more closely linked to the ancient world than Greece—it is the birthplace of the gods, the cradle of European civilization, the bridge between East and West. Spartan courage, Athenian democracy, Olympic achievement, and Trojan intrigue all sprung from this wondrous land.

As for Greece's place in the modern world, just look at a map to see how many of today's greatest challenges are centered in Greece's Mediterranean neighborhood. I'd venture to say that no Western country is closer to what confronts our planet today than Greece. It is a paradise for mystery writers.

Your protagonist, Andreas Kaldis, is an intriguing character. Tell us a little about him.

Andreas Kaldis is an Athenian-born second-generation cop, a politically incorrect, honest observer of his times who endures

and grows, despite all that life and the powerful throw at him and his beloved country. In *Murder in Mykonos*, Andreas's vigorous pursuit of certain corrupt powerful officials gets him banished from Athens's police headquarters to serve as chief of police on Mykonos—the anything goes, glitzy summertime Aegean playground for the international rich and famous. Still, he moves forward, never compromising, always growing. Perhaps most significant is the unfettered access Andreas has to all levels of Greek society, be it the seamy underbelly of its most degenerate bottom rung, or the glittering lifestyles of its movers and shakers. All of which affords him—and the reader—a unique perspective on how serious issues, political and otherwise, are in reality handled behind the scenes.

The Greek press has called you a “prognosticator” of the country’s societal unrest and attitudes, with your finger on the nation’s pulse. What’s your secret to that feat?

At times I feel that Cassandra and I have much in common. It's flattering that so many Greeks see my work as about real people and real places, because my views on Greek society are at the very heart of my novels. It is a society rooted in the past trying to catch up with the present. Traditions can make that very difficult. That said, it's an honor to be thought of in such terms, but I think there's a simpler explanation for much of my “insight.” For example, in conducting my research for *Murder in Mykonos*, I simply took care to remain sober amid Mykonos's fabled late-night party lifestyle in conversations with persons possessing firsthand knowledge of the issues, experiences, and intrigues I used in my book—persons you'd think should know better than to share such secrets with a man holding a notebook and pen at five in the morning.

How did you come up with the plot for *Murder in Mykonos*?

I wanted a dynamite story that would allow me to make Mykonos a character in the book, one that would show all the things I loved about it. Something that would take the reader behind the scenes to see the Mykonos I know, something tourists, even off-island Greeks never see. But I just couldn't come up with a plot that appealed to me.

Then one day it hit me: A young woman on holiday to Mykonos disappears off the face of the earth, and no one notices. That is until a body turns up on top of a pile of bones under a remote mountain church and Andreas Kaldis starts finding bodies, bones, and suspects everywhere he looks. It's Greece's most unimaginable nightmare and one no politician wants to confront, but then another young woman disappears and Andreas is off on a rescue chase into forgotten island places and ancient myths, searching for a victim who's one tough cookie in her own right.

Simply put, my plot turns a lovely *Mama Mia* island paradise into *No Country for Old Men*.