

Island of Secrets

**A CHIEF INSPECTOR
ANDREAS KALDIS MYSTERY**

JEFFREY SIGER



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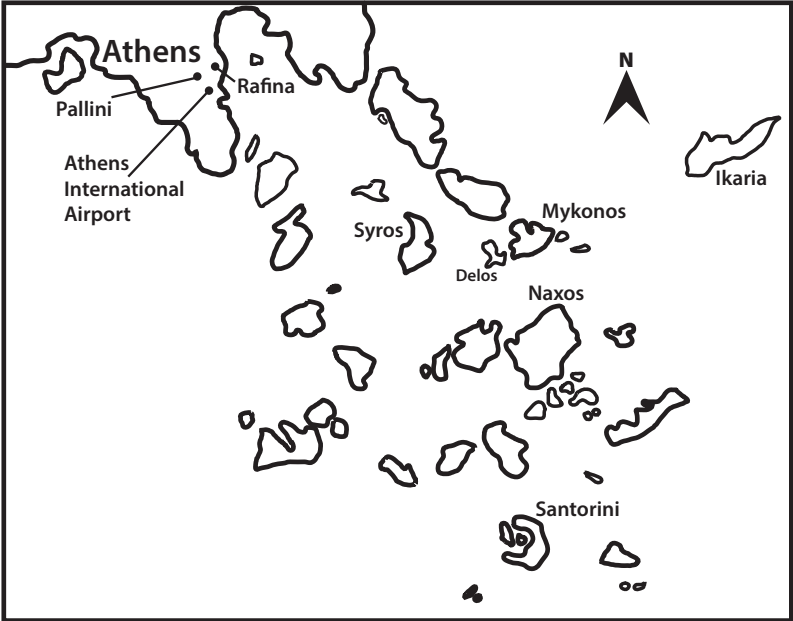
IN MEMORIAM

Nikolaos Andreas Fiorentinos (1994–2018)

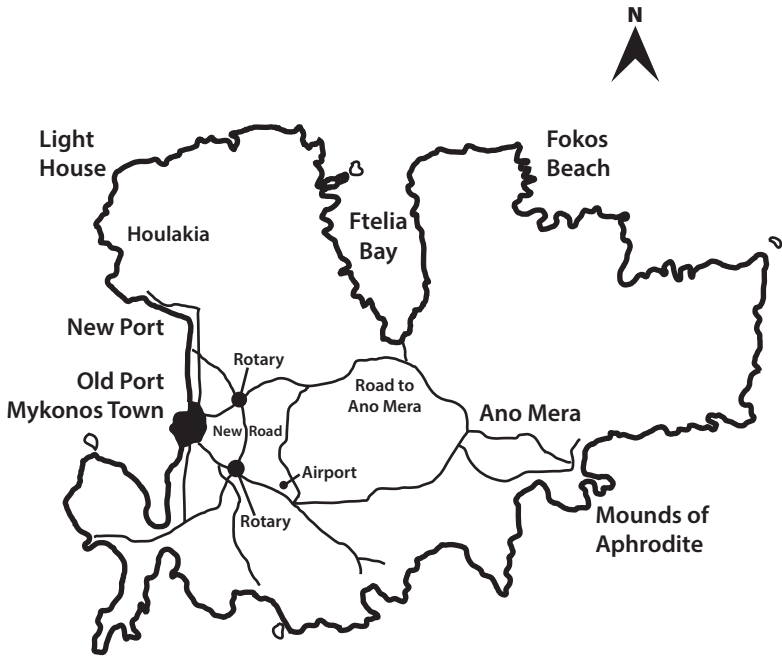
He called me Pappou, as do Anna and Mihalis.

*"I am like any other man.
All I do is supply a demand."*

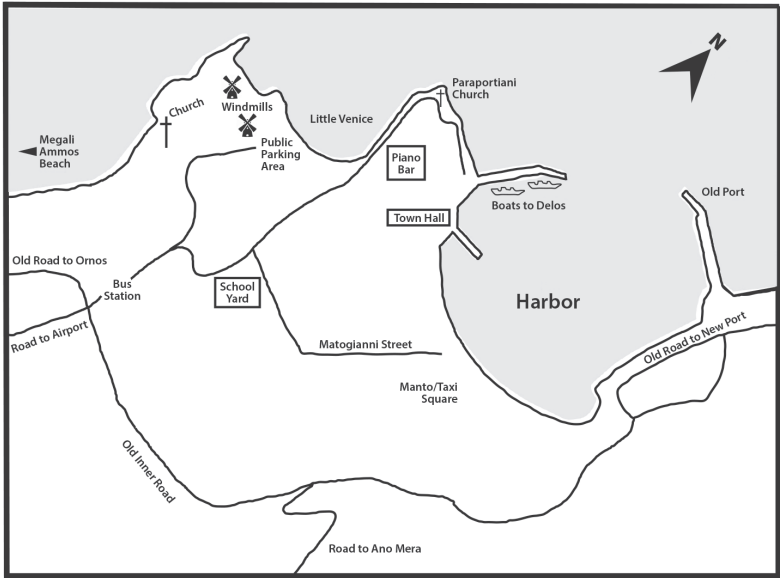
—Al Capone



Metropolitan Athens, Cycladic Islands, and Ikaria



Mykonos Island



Mykonos Town

Chapter One

He never wondered about the purpose of life or how he turned out as he had. It all just sort of happened. He became a cop because he saw it as the surest way for a kid born into Greece's working class in the tumultuous early 1960s to make a living. He got lucky when, after the fall of the Military Junta in 1974, he joined the youth movement of a left-wing political party that came to power in 1981 and remembered to reward its loyal friends.

As he rose in rank, the more friends and money he made, the more power he amassed. He kept careful track of where the bodies were buried and possessed an uncanny instinct for digging up the ones he needed to achieve his purposes. An effort by the opposition party to paint him as corrupt failed when the prosecution's main witness died in a boating accident. An investigation into the witness' death faded away soon after he announced his decision to retire from the Hellenic Police force with the rank of colonel.

That's when he began to make truly big money, capitalizing on his contacts and former position as head of police for the South Aegean Region, home to Greece's most popular tourist islands for the rich and hard-partying globe-trotting crowd.

Tonight, the Colonel was far away from all that glitz and glamour. He sat in a restaurant in a nondescript, middle-class eastern suburb of Athens, virtually equidistant from downtown Athens, its port town of Rafina, and Venizelos International Airport.

“A convenient place for a meeting,” said the one who’d arranged it.

The Colonel leaned back in his chair and yawned. The conversation had been as boring as the meal. Everything about the place was mediocre, from its tired, thirty-year-old decor to the hookers at the bar, and the ruddy-faced, pudgy man sitting across the table from him who had yet to say why their mutual business acquaintance thought they should meet.

“Am I keeping you awake, Colonel?”

“Barely.”

Ruddy Face smiled. “How do you like my place?”

The Colonel leaned forward. It was long past time to get down to business. “If this is your joint, why don’t you just tell me why you wanted to meet? You sure as hell don’t need my services to run this operation.”

“You’re right, it’s a dump.” Ruddy Face paused. “But I have plans.”

“What sort of plans?”

“I’m buying a club on the islands. It’s going to be first-class in every way.” He nodded toward the bar. “Including the girls.”

“Which island?”

“One you control.”

“Control is a mighty big word.”

Ruddy Face smiled. “Let’s just say, I don’t like the idea of getting involved in a business where my investment isn’t secure.”

“That’s prudent of you.”

“Can you help me?”

“If you’re asking for security, the answer is yes.”

“I’m talking about *protection* for *all* aspects of my business.”

The Colonel shrugged. “It’s all a matter of price. You tell me what you want, and I’ll tell you what it will cost you.”

“I hear you’re pricey.”

“You heard right. But I make sure things run smoothly.”

“How do you do that?”

“I don’t have competitors stirring things up, jockeying for business. I maintain order among the chaos.”

“They might see things differently.”

“If by *they* you mean competitors, there are no *they* on my island. I’m the only game in town.”

“I get your point,” said the man. “I’m sure we’ll come to terms.”

“If you want to open a club where I’m in business, I’m sure we will.”

The Colonel declined an offer of coffee, and the two men agreed to talk again once Ruddy Face had a better idea of what he might need from the Colonel.

He walked the Colonel to the front door, shook his hand, thanked him for coming, and wished him safe travels. “*Kalo taxidhi.*”

But the Colonel only made it as far as the front door of his Mercedes.

Greece’s General Police Headquarters, better known as GADA, sat close by the heart of Athens’ bustle, next door to a major hospital, down the block from Greece’s Supreme Court, and across the street from the stadium of one of Greece’s most popular soccer teams. GADA’s Special Crimes Unit, charged with investigating potential corruption and other matters of national concern—at least those that piqued the interest of its Chief Inspector Andreas Kaldis—occupied the eastern side of the fourth floor.

Andreas had been at his desk since shortly after sunrise. With two early-rising young children at home, it wasn't unusual for him to flee the morning domestic chaos for the relative calm of tracking down bad actors. His wife, Lila, never seemed to mind when he abandoned her to the ruckus, undoubtedly because she rightly considered him an active accessory to their children's early-morning mischief.

It wasn't as if he were leaving his wife alone to deal with their son and daughter; she did have a maid and nanny to help, a decidedly suspicious luxury on an honest cop's salary. But all of that, and more, had come with his marriage to the daughter of one of Greece's most respected and wealthiest families. He appreciated his good fortune and considered himself a lucky man.

Too bad he couldn't say the same thing for the guy plastered all over the morning news headlines: RETIRED POLICE COLONEL STAVROS AKTIPIS ASSASSINATED. That summed up virtually everything the various news stations had to report on the shooting, though they tried their best to spice up their coverage with references to corruption allegations that had haunted the victim.

All the allegations preceded Andreas' time as chief of Special Crimes, but he'd heard the stories and much more about the Colonel. Instinctively, Andreas believed the victim had been corrupt, for the system far too often brought temptations to one in his position. Yet, if Andreas pursued every case of official corruption brought to his attention, he'd need all the offices in the building to house his staff—not to mention an unimaginable number of additional prosecutors.

Compounding all of that, innovative criminal types from around the world kept introducing new schemes and methods into Greece that added to his caseload. Overwhelmed as his unit was, and Greece a decade into a crippling economic crisis, he knew he'd be wasting his time asking for more support from the government. That left Andreas with little choice but to pursue

the most egregious offenders, hoping to make an example of them in a manner that discouraged others from doing the same.

What happened last night to the Colonel, he knew, would be headed straight for his desk, in a file marked NASTY in all-red letters. The Colonel had been murdered for a reason, and it wasn't robbery. His wallet, filled with euros, and an expensive watch were untouched. Three quick bullets to the back of his head as he stood at his car door. No witnesses, and no terrorists claiming credit for the killing. At least none so far.

Andreas held a remote in his right hand, surfing through local news coverage on the wall-mounted TV screen to his right, while drumming the fingers of his left hand on his desktop. He looked at his watch. Detective Yianni Kouros should be at the scene by now. Andreas had called him at home as soon as he'd heard the early morning news. Yianni had been his right-hand man since their days together on Mykonos, back when Andreas was the island's police chief and Yianni a brash young bull of a rookie cop.

Andreas bit at his lip. Killing cops, retired or not, wasn't something even the most hardened criminals undertook lightly, especially when the victim was an ex-colonel. He'd been assassinated for a serious reason, most likely with the blessing of serious people. That's why he'd sent Yianni to the scene. He wanted his own people in on the investigation from the start. Screw-ups early on—unintentional or otherwise—haunted investigations, at times serving as a convenient pretext for bad guys getting away with murder. Not this time, though. Not if Andreas could help it.

Yes, this definitely would be a nasty one.

Early-morning traffic heading east out of Athens wasn't nearly as bad as that going in the other direction, but it still was far

from Detective Yianni Kouros' favorite way to start his day. He'd recently moved into an apartment in Kypseli, a staunchly working-class Athens neighborhood only a mile from his office at GADA, and his easy commute had spoiled him.

Athens' eastern suburbs were unfamiliar to Yianni, so he left it to his GPS to get him where he wanted to be. The town of Pallini lay in the central inland portion of the Attica Peninsula, a region known since antiquity as Mesogeia. Once filled with olive groves, fig trees, and grapevines, its fertile plains were now home to one town seemingly blending into the next. All Yianni knew about Pallini was that it lay along the Greek National Road on the way to Athens' port town of Rafina, from which he'd caught many a boat to the Cyclades Islands.

It took about a half-hour for him to cover the twelve miles from his home to the scene of the Colonel's murder, and when he arrived, a local blue-and-white police cruiser sat blocking the entrance to the restaurant's parking lot.

Yianni pulled onto the sidewalk just beyond the entrance and slowly walked toward the cruiser, taking care to pull his police ID out from under his shirt. No reason to make the two cops more nervous than they might already be, having spent all night at the scene of an ex-police colonel's murder by an unidentified assassin for reasons unknown.

"*Yia sas*," said Yianni to the driver through his open window. "I'm Detective Kouros. Special Crimes."

The driver and his partner got out of the car and shook hands with Yianni.

"So, what can you tell me?"

The driver gestured with his head at a late-model black Mercedes sedan parked facing the street ten meters to the right of where they stood, and directly across from the entrance to the restaurant. "That's the victim's car. He was killed at the driver-side front door."

“The body was removed once forensics finished up,” said the partner. “The spent shell casings are in evidence bags where they were found.” He pointed to three orange cones behind the Mercedes on its passenger side.

Yianni carefully walked toward the rear of the car, studying the ground as he did. He circled the car twice before returning to the cones. Two of the three nine-millimeter shell casings lay in close proximity to one another, indicating that the killer had fired from approximately the same location in relation to the victim, but the third lay several meters away from the other two, in the direction of the restaurant entrance. Yianni knelt to study the casings more closely and looked up at the cops.

“How did this go down?”

The driver answered. “The owner told us he’d said good night to the victim inside the restaurant, standing with him at the door leading out to the parking lot. The owner’s back was to the door when he heard the shots. At first he thought it was a motorbike backfire, but after the third shot he turned around and saw the victim on the ground. He ran outside, but by then the shooter was gone.”

Yianni looked down at the shell casings. “Do you know whether any vehicles entered or left the parking lot after the victim was shot?”

“The owner said he didn’t let anyone leave the parking lot until the police arrived.”

“And we were told not to let any vehicles budge until you gave the okay,” added the partner. “A lot of aggravated customers went home in taxis.”

Yianni nodded. “Thanks. What about vehicles that entered the parking lot after the shooting?”

The partner pointed to the left of the entrance. “They all parked over there, away from the scene.”

“And before police arrived?”

“The owner said no one entered or left.”

“Is there any other way in or out of the parking lot, besides this entrance?”

The driver answered no in the Greek style of a quick upward jerk of his head. “The perimeter’s fenced in, except for a low wall along its border with the front street.”

“We checked, and there’s no sign of tire tracks anywhere along the front wall,” added the partner. “But it would have been simple for anyone to get over the wall on foot.”

Yianni stood. “So, no vehicles entered or left the area after the shooting, except for official vehicles, and they parked away from the scene?”

“Yes,” said the two in unison.

“What about the ambulance that picked up the body?”

“The attendants used a stretcher,” said the driver.

“And kept far away from the cones marking the shell casings,” added the partner.

“I see that you get what I’m driving at.”

The cops smiled.

Yianni pointed at the shell casing closest to the restaurant’s front door. “That shell casing is directly between the front door and the rear of the victim’s car. It’s deformed at its open end. The others aren’t.”

“Perhaps the owner stepped on it when he ran to the victim?”

“Perhaps,” said Yianni, “but why is it so far away from the other two? Where’s the owner now?”

“He’s inside,” said the driver. “Taking a nap in his office.”

“Something I’m sure you’d like to be doing after a night of babysitting the scene.”

“At least it pays well,” smirked a cop.

“Yeah,” laughed his partner.

“Our universal cop lament,” smiled Yianni. “I’m going to check in with the owner, and once I’m done, you two can collect the shell casings for forensics and take off.” He headed in

the direction of the front door, but before reaching it, a small, ruddy-face man opened the door and stepped outside.

“You must be from GADA. I own this place and was told to wait for you.”

“I thought you were sleeping.”

“Who can sleep with what just happened?”

Yianni extended his hand. “I’m Detective Yianni Kouros. I know you’ve been asked this before, but I need to hear everything you remember about the shooting.”

The owner reached out and shook Yianni’s hand. “Everyone calls me Pepe.” He matter-of-factly repeated a story consistent with what Yianni had been told by the two cops.

“So, you saw no one?”

“Correct.”

“On foot or in a vehicle?”

“No one.”

“And no vehicle entered or left the parking lot from the moment you heard the shots?”

“That’s correct.”

“Do you have closed-circuit TV in your parking lot?”

“No. Though after this, I’m seriously considering the idea.”

“Are you expecting more shootings?”

Pepe gave a twisted grin. “I sincerely hope not.”

“What about inside, any CCTV there?”

“No, I think it’s safe to say we’re technologically challenged out here in the suburbs.”

“Do you know where the victim lived?”

“No.”

“Was he local?”

“No.”

“If he wasn’t local, why did he pick your restaurant to eat in?”

Pepe ran his tongue across his lower lip. “I asked him to meet me here.”

“You knew him?”

“No.”

“Then why the meeting?”

“He was recommended as someone who could help me with a new business I’m opening.”

“Who made the recommendation?”

Pepe gave a name Yianni didn’t recognize. He made a note of it in his pocket notebook.

“What sort of help were you looking for?”

“Security. I’m sure you know who the murdered man was.”

“What sort of business?”

“A club on Mykonos.”

Yianni made another note. “Did the victim say or do anything in his conversation with you that in any way suggested concern for his safety?”

Pepe gestured no. “Absolutely not.”

“Are you aware of anyone else who knew about your meeting with the Colonel?”

“No one I knew, that’s for sure.”

Yianni drew in and let out a deep breath. “What a terrible thing to happen on the front steps of your place of business.”

“Yes, but I can’t worry about that. I keep thinking of the poor man and his family.”

“Of course,” said Yianni. “I just wish you’d taken more care not to step on the shell casings.”

Pepe looked at him for a moment. “What? I didn’t step on anything.”

“How can you be sure?”

He pointed at the cones. “Because when I ran to him, I ran straight for him, and the casings aren’t anywhere near the line I took to get to him.” He paused again. “And once I realized he was dead, I knew the police would be investigating, so I was careful how I walked back to the restaurant.”

“Did you call the police from inside?”

“No, I stood by the front door and used my mobile.”

“And you remained outside until the police arrived?”
“And I kept everyone away from his car.”
“Thank you,” said Yianni. “You’ve been very helpful.”
More than you realize.

“Morning, Maggie. Is the Chief in?”

“He’s down in the cafeteria.”

“What! After all these years, he’s admitted to being tired of your coffee?”

Maggie scowled. “No, Detective Wise Ass. No one *ever* grows tired of my coffee. He’s hungry. He left home without breakfast.” She paused, then added with a twinkle in her eye, “Besides, he wouldn’t be brave enough to tell me if he were.”

“No one on earth is that brave,” deadpanned Yianni.

Maggie Sikestes, a sturdy, red-haired, five-foot-three-inch ball of energy and source of all knowledge of GADA’s many secrets and intricate ways, had been Andreas’ secretary since the luck of the draw landed them together when he assumed command of Special Crimes.

Maggie nodded sternly. “And don’t you forget it.”

“Forget what?” came a voice from the hallway behind Yianni.

Yianni turned to face Andreas. “Who really runs this place?”

“I already know that answer.” Andreas put a covered paper coffee cup down on Maggie’s desk. “Here’s your skim decaf cappuccino, your Highness, precisely as you told me to order it.”

Yianni burst out laughing.

“What’s so funny?” said Andreas.

Maggie glared at Yianni. “If you tell him, you’re a dead man.”

Yianni pointed at the coffee cup and laughed harder.

“Enough,” said Andreas. He waved for Yianni to follow him into his office.

Andreas went behind his desk and Yianni dropped onto the

couch in front of a row of windows looking out on the windows of an adjacent building.

“What have you’ve learned about the death of Colonel Aktipis?”

“It ain’t simple, Chief.” Yianni told him of his morning at the scene.

When Yianni finished, Andreas picked up a pencil and began tapping its eraser end on his desktop. “I take it you believe the owner is lying.”

“If he didn’t step on the shell casing, and no one else stepped on it, the only explanation is that someone drove over it. That would also explain why the casing was found so far away from the other two. A tire hit it at an angle that sent it tumbling off in the direction of the restaurant. But the owner insists no vehicles were anywhere near it. I think he’s lying because he knows whoever drove over it was the killer.”

“Maybe he just doesn’t want to get involved. After all, it’s obvious this was a hit, meaning whoever’s behind taking out a police colonel has cast-iron balls. Taking out a witness like the owner would be a small matter by comparison.”

“But why didn’t he just tell me he’d stepped on the casing? That would have been the easiest, most believable explanation.”

Andreas shrugged. “For reasons I’ll never fully understand, liars concoct elaborate, broad explanations but somehow always trip up on the tiny details. It’s as if they’re trying to create the perfect exculpatory scenario with absolutely no suggestion of potential fault on their part. In this case, the owner has himself doing all the right things—he heard the shots, immediately ran outside, saw no one but the victim, and remained on the scene to make certain it was not disturbed. In that mindset, he simply couldn’t bring himself to admit to less than perfect conduct on his part, even though saying he *might* have stepped on the casing was the most logical, innocent explanation.”

“Are you saying he wasn’t involved in the assassination?”

Andreas shrugged. "He's sure as hell a suspect, but I can see where he could be lying simply out of fear that whoever ordered it might come after him if he admitted to being a witness."

"But that whole dinner scenario smells of an assassination setup."

"Of course it does. Because that's precisely what it was. In fact, it's so obviously a setup that my instincts are screaming the victim wasn't the only target of what went down."

"Meaning?"

"From what the owner told you, he and whoever suggested the meeting are the obvious bad guys. They knew the Colonel would be there. The question is, who else knew?"

"The owner said he'd told no one else."

"That leaves the one who recommended they meet. What's his name?"

Yianni took out his notebook. "Marcos Despotiko."

Andreas stopped tapping his pencil. "Come again?"

"Marcos Despotiko."

"You can't be serious."

"You sound like you know him."

"*Know him.*" Andreas rolled up his sleeve. "Look at the goosebumps crawling up my arm. He's in the deep shadows behind virtually every major criminal activity in Greece. Drugs are just part of it. He's involved in everything from bank fraud to smuggling embargoed terrorist oil from the Middle East into Greece through Turkey. No one talks about him, but even serious badasses know not to cross him. They give him a piece of any big deal that goes down in Greece. How could you not have heard of him?"

"You mean he's *the Despot?*" Yianni slapped his forehead. "I only knew him by his nickname. I can't believe I didn't make the connection."

"Don't feel bad. Truth is, I'm more familiar with his real name than are most Greeks, including cops, because I come across

it a lot, thanks to Lila. Despotiko's wife is a big-time socialite, and Lila and she sometimes end up on the same committees. Whenever there's a social event that might have me rubbing elbows with her husband, I manufacture some excuse not to attend. It aggravates the hell out of Lila, but I don't want anyone getting the idea I'm friendly with Marcos Despotiko."

"Is that your way of saying you want me to interview him?"

"It's my way of saying I wish you could. But I'm afraid there's no choice now. Besides, I think he'll be more cooperative if I'm along for the interview."

"Even if he has something to hide?"

"This guy has been hiding things for so long it's second nature to him. If he's involved, I doubt there's anything or anyone out there to link him to it."

"Anyone alive, you mean."

Andreas nodded. "Which further explains why the restaurant owner won't budge from his story. He's far more afraid of upsetting Despotiko than of anything we could do to him."

"That leaves us only with Despotiko for answers."

"Precisely. Here's hoping he wasn't involved, and that he'll be angry enough at the thought of someone setting him up as a suspect to give us a lead on who might be involved."

"What makes you think he'll cooperate with us rather than take revenge on his own terms?"

"I have no way of knowing how he'll react. All we can do is question him and hope for the best."

"While wearing a ballistic vest."

Andreas picked up his phone. "I'll have to get Despotiko's home number from Lila."

He called, and after deflecting a barrage of questions as to why he wanted the number of a man he so often went out of his way to avoid, he got it.

He dialed, and a male voice answered, Andreas introduced himself and asked to speak to Mr. Despotiko.

“I’m Kurt, Mr. Despotiko’s personal assistant. He said to tell you when you called that he’s been expecting to hear from you and is available to meet with you here at his home in Paleo Psychiko at your convenience any time this morning.”

Andreas said he’d be there in thirty minutes, hung up the phone, and stared stone-faced at Yianni. “He was expecting my call.”

“How could he have known?”

Andreas stood up and started toward the door. “That’ll be my first question for him.

Chapter Two

Just north of Athens and west of Kifissias Avenue, the suburb of Old Psychiko stood as a refuge of peace, greenery, and high walls for foreign embassies, exclusive private schools, and the upper echelon of Athenian society. A few more northern neighborhoods and one or two to the south might claim to be equally desirable, but none would dare argue to be greater.

Psychiko's confusing array of one-way streets, winding every which way about its tree-lined slopes and hills, was designed that way for a reason: to keep out casual passersby. But it hadn't worked as well on the new-money crowd. They flocked to the neighborhood, sending prices through the roof for houses they often tore down to build grander homes than their neighbors'. At least until the financial crisis hit.

To Yianni's eyes, this wealthy enclave must seem like a different universe compared to the modest suburb in which he'd spent his morning traipsing about a restaurant parking lot.

For Andreas, it was a reminder of how he'd overcome once-nagging thoughts of being unworthy of the elevated lifestyle that came with his marriage. He no longer lived in the working-class neighborhoods of the Athens that he'd known as the son of a cop. Instead, he now lived in a penthouse apartment

on the city's most prestigious avenue, next to the Presidential Palace and across from Greece's National Gardens.

He'd grown comfortable among the *crème de la crème* of Athens society, in large part because of his wife's down-to-earth attitude toward pretentious societal trappings. In part, too, because of his own merit-earned appointment to a stint as Minister of Civil Protection in charge of all police in Greece—a position he'd relinquished in order to return to chasing bad guys as head of Special Crimes.

Although familiar with the neighborhood, Andreas managed to get lost on the way to Despotiko's house. Ultimately, he found their destination, close by the highest point in Psychiko, on a property more befitting a park than a residence. Between the road and a white stucco house the size of many an apartment building stood a ten-foot-high wrought-iron fence spanning the length of the property. Ten meters of manicured grass separated the exterior fence from an even taller concrete-and-stucco wall mounted with cameras encircling the house.

"Wow, this place is more secure than Korydallos," said Yianni. "Funny how someone who should be in prison ends up living as if he already is."

"I'm sure his accommodations are a bit more upscale." Andreas parked on the sidewalk in front of a double-wide iron-spear gate in the exterior fence. Before he and Yianni left the car, a steel gate in the interior concrete wall sprang open, and two burly men dressed in black walked briskly in the direction of their car.

"Morning," said Andreas, walking up to the gate toward the two men.

"State your business, please," said the taller of the men.

"We have an appointment with Mr. Despotiko. The name's Kaldis."

The man nodded and spoke into his earpiece microphone.

"May I see identification, please?"

Andreas and Yianni showed them their police IDs.

The smaller man unlocked the wrought-iron gate with a key and motioned for them to follow him. The taller man let them pass, locked the gate behind them, and trailed them toward the steel gate.

“These guys even follow prison lockup procedures,” whispered Yianni to Andreas.

“Probably comes from firsthand experience.”

When they reached the interior steel gate, the shorter man stopped and turned around. “Your weapons, please.”

Andreas smiled. “Sorry, no can do.”

“Then you can’t come inside.”

Andreas turned and stepped back so he could see both men and Yianni. Yianni mirrored Andreas’ maneuver.

Andreas looked from one man to the other. “Then permit me to make a suggestion for you to pass along to your employer. Either he honors his invitation and allows us to enter on our terms, or please ask him for the name of his attorney, so we can arrange for Mr. Despotiko to turn himself into GADA for questioning.” Andreas shrugged. “Of course, I can’t promise that we can keep a meeting at GADA regarding your employer’s possible involvement in the murder of an ex-police colonel out of the headlines. But, then again, Mr. Despotiko already knows all that. It’s why he suggested we meet him here in the first place, away from the media.”

The two men looked at each other, pressed at their earpieces, and listened without speaking.

The shorter man glanced at the taller. “It’s okay.” He stared at Andreas. “Follow me.”

Andreas winked at Yianni, waved at the camera above the gate, and said aloud, “Thank you.”

Yianni whispered to Andreas. “When did you figure all that out?”

“Like most things in life, as I was saying it.” Andreas leaned

in and whispered into Yianni's ear. "Considering how hard he works at keeping out of the press, it's the only thing that made sense to me. But there's a downside to being right. It makes the most sense if Despotiko's completely innocent."

They passed through the gate into a courtyard filled with elaborate plantings and classic and modern sculptures, revealing an eclectic but clearly expensive taste.

A short, trim, olive-skinned woman dressed in a pale blue maid's uniform stood between four rose-and-gold marble pillars framing the front entrance to a massive house. "Mr. Despotiko said to show you to his study. Follow me, please."

Andreas and Yianni did as she asked. The two bodyguards did not follow.

She led them into a grand marble foyer bordered by well-cared-for plants, potted in classic Greek shapes, encircling an array of sculptures more delicate than those in the courtyard. An elegant, understated reliance on nature continued inside the house, with plants, organic shapes, and natural fabrics carefully arranged everywhere. Someone with taste had been at work here.

Just beyond what some might call a living room, the maid stopped and pointed to a doorway. "Mr. Despotiko is inside."

"Thank you," said Andreas, clearing his throat and motioning for Yianni to enter first.

It was as if they'd stepped into a different world, one cluttered with mismatched overstuffed furniture, heavy Persian rugs, mounted trophies from foreign hunts, books arranged more for appearance than content, cut crystal decanters filled with varying shades of brown whiskeys, and a pervasive odor of cigar smoke burrowed deeply into the room's walls and fabrics.

"Welcome," said a well-fed, clean-shaven, bald-headed, bear of a man. He sat behind a massive mahogany desk, framed by a world globe on one side and a Tiffany desk lamp on the other.

As Andreas walked toward the desk, Despotiko struggled to his feet.

“Sorry for not standing sooner, but my old knees aren’t quite what they used to be.” At his full height he stood equal to Andreas but looked easily twenty-five years older. He extended his hand across the desk and Andreas shook it.

Andreas pointed at Yianni. “This is my colleague, Detective Kouros.”

Yianni and Despotiko shook hands.

“Please sit.” He pointed at two well-worn Chesterfield chairs in front of his desk.

Andreas sat and looked around the office. “Nice arrangement.”

“It works for me.”

“I’m sure.”

Despotiko smiled. “But not for my wife. She calls it my lair. I get to do whatever I want to do in here; she gets to do whatever she wants to do everywhere else.”

“A wise arrangement.”

“Yes, I’m sure you’ve come to the same conclusion. I think our wives spend their time together planning such things.”

Andreas smiled.

Despotiko picked up a humidor from his desk and held it out to Andreas. “Cigar?”

“No, thank you.”

He made the same offer to Yianni, who gestured no.

Despotiko put down the humidor, selected a cigar, and launched into an elaborate massaging, dampening, snipping, and lighting routine. “Cigars are a vice I just can’t give up.”

Andreas took that as his cue to get to the purpose of the meeting. “Thank you for seeing us on such short notice.”

Despotiko nodded, his eyes fixed on lighting his cigar.

“Why don’t you tell me why you knew we’d want to speak with you?”

He drew in and let out a tiny cloud of smoke. “Oh, it wasn’t all that hard to figure out. As soon as I heard that poor Colonel Aktipis had been murdered at a meeting with that restaurant

owner, Pepe, I had no doubt you'd be knocking on my door. I've done nothing wrong, mind you, but as you accurately described to my men, I don't want my name dragged through the mud by the press over this."

"Understood. So, how were you involved in what happened?"

He shut his eyes and sniffed at the cigar. "In what happened, nothing at all. In introducing the Colonel to Pepe, everything. That's what comes with doing a favor for someone."

"What sort of favor?"

He sighed. "My wife loves Mykonos. She spends a lot of her time over there, especially during the summer months. Pepe met her at some chichi island place, and when he said he planned on opening a club on Mykonos, she told him he'd need security. He asked for a recommendation and she said she'd ask me. It was such a no-brainer question for me that I straightaway named the Colonel when she asked."

He fixed his eyes on Andreas. "In retrospect, it was so much of a no-brainer that I wonder why he went to the trouble of having it put to me when anyone on Mykonos could have answered it for him."

"It being a no-brainer because...?" Andreas gestured for Despotiko to finish the answer.

"Because everyone on Mykonos knew security on the island was controlled by the Colonel."

"But aren't there a lot of different companies offering security on Mykonos?" said Yianni.

Despotiko drew in a puff, leaned back in his chair, and let the smoke drift out. "Many people would like to get into the security business there because it offers a lot of side benefits, including money laundering." He drew another puff. "At least that's what I'm told. But on Mykonos every security operation was owned by the Colonel. He just made it look as if he had competition."

"Are you saying the restaurant guy meant to somehow set you up?"

“No, I’m saying that once again my wife got mixed up with a fast-talking idiot. I doubt the man had the brains or balls to try to set me up.” He leaned forward. “However, I do think that whoever wanted to eliminate the Colonel used the idiot to set up the meeting and added my name to the mix in order to vouch for the idiot’s *bona fides* with the Colonel.”

“Any ideas about who that might have been?”

“No.”

“Would you tell me if you did?”

“No.”

“Are you going to look for him?”

“That’s your job, not mine.”

“I’ll take that as a maybe.”

Despotiko stared at Andreas. “What do you want me to say? I’m a responsible citizen with an unblemished record. I’m surrounded by lawyers paid handsomely to protect me from all sorts of scurrilous charges. Why would I possibly be interested in hunting down someone who presents no threat to me?”

Andreas stared back, waving his hand at the trophies mounted on the walls. “Because it’s in your blood.”

Despotiko laughed. “I like you. We really should get together with our wives.”

Andreas smiled.

“Perhaps on Mykonos,” said Despotiko.

“Why Mykonos?”

Despotiko studied the glow on the expanding ash of his cigar. “Because we both know you’ll be spending quite a bit of time there looking for the person or persons behind the Colonel’s assassination.” He paused. “At least that’s where I’d be looking if I were the hunter.”

“But you’re not in on this hunt.”

Despotiko kept his eyes fixed on his cigar. “True. But there’s always fishing.”

“And you undoubtedly have a knack for casting precisely the right bait in the direction of whatever you’re trying to hook.”

Despotiko shifted his gaze to meet Andreas’ eyes. “If by that you’re suggesting I’m trying to lure you into concentrating on Mykonos, it’s only because things there are not as they seem.”

“Since when have they ever been?”

“This is different. I get the sense that the island’s undergoing a changing of the guard, with the assassination only a start. And no one has any idea who’s behind it. Yes, there’s the usual gossip-mongering rubbish, accusing everyone from the mayor to the CIA, but no concrete information. And before you ask exactly what I’ve heard, trust me, whatever I’ve heard, you’d pick up in your first five minutes on the island.”

“Sounds to me like you’re overloading your hook with Mykonos bait.”

Despotiko shrugged. “It’s your case to run, but just ask yourself this question: What do I have to gain by helping you at all?”

“Good question. And one I won’t be able to answer unless I start looking.”

Despotiko smiled. “So, bite already.”

Andreas smiled back. “I just might.”

Back in their police cruiser, Andreas and Yianni sat for a moment, staring at the estate.

“How much do you think a place like that costs?” said Yianni.

“The more interesting question is how many places just like that does he have elsewhere?”

“You mean in Greece?”

“I mean around the world. Our wealthy Greek brethren are prone to acquiring homes in places they like to visit.”

“Haven’t they heard of hotels?”

“They buy those too.” Andreas turned on the engine and

eased off the sidewalk onto the street. “So, what did you make of all that?”

“Quite a performance. Despotiko acted as if he didn’t care about what was happening on Mykonos. He acted as if he were doing us a favor encouraging us to get involved in whatever mess is over there.”

“A bit of an overplayed hand, I’d say,” said Andreas. “The guy never has to earn another euro to continue living like a king, but that’s not what drives him.”

“Control?”

“Bingo. He’s been *the man* in Greece for what seems forever, and now someone is challenging his rule.”

“At least on Mykonos.”

“Mykonos generates a big slice of all the vice money he makes off tourism. He also realizes that whoever is muscling in on Mykonos isn’t likely to stop there.”

“Hard to imagine he hasn’t tried to figure out who might be the new bad guys. Maybe they’re not from Greece?”

“I’m sure he’s tried,” said Andreas, turning onto Kifissias Avenue in the direction of downtown Athens. “That’s what really concerns me. If with all his connections and power he really can’t ID the bad guys, Greeks or foreigners, then some very serious and disciplined new players are likely moving in on the black-money businesses.”

Yianni scratched the top of his head. “Or Despotiko knows who they are, but is unwilling or afraid to start something up with them. So, instead, he’s trying to hustle us into doing his dirty work.”

“Speaking of Despotiko and dirty work, there’s a story about him I think you might enjoy. It gives you a sense of the man, and what he’s capable of doing. It’s about a favor he did for a friend who’d asked him to recover photos a famous celebrity was using to blackmail a young woman the friend liked. Ever hear it?”

“No.”

“The friend came to Despotiko and asked him to recover the photos from the celebrity, but only if Despotiko promised not to beat or kill him. Despotiko promised, then arranged for the celebrity to be kidnapped, made to stand in freshly poured cement for seven hours, taken out in a boat and dropped into the water wearing his new concrete boots. Up until that point they’d not said a word to him about why they were doing what they were to him. Two and a half minutes later they pulled him back into the boat by a rope tied to the concrete. He was unconscious. After bringing him around, he started crying like a baby, and promised to do whatever they wanted. That’s when they told him. Needless to say, he destroyed the photos.”

“Sounds like a very effective approach.”

“The story’s not over. When the friend heard what had happened to the celebrity, he complained to Despotiko. Despotiko is reported to have told his friend, ‘I didn’t beat or kill him.’”

“Quite a story.”

“And a good one to circulate if you’re Despotiko. Even if it’s not true.” Andreas braked to avoid a motorcycle cutting in front of them to exit the wrong way onto a one-way street.

“*Malaka!*” yelled Yianni.

“Have you noticed that we’re not talking about Despotiko as tied into the Colonel’s murder?”

“Yeah,” said Yianni. “I don’t see him involved.”

“Me either. But keep an open mind to that possibility as you poke around Mykonos.”

Yianni stared at the side of his boss’ head. “I was wondering when you’d get around to that. So, when are we off to Mykonos?”

“Uh, not *we*. At least not right away. I’ve commitments that will keep me here until the weekend. But you should head over there tomorrow.”

“And do what?”

“Start by interviewing Mrs. Despotiko, see where things go from there.”

Yianni sat quietly, staring straight ahead.

“What’s bothering you?” said Andreas. “You’re single and Mykonos is a party island that you know intimately. I thought you’d jump at the chance.”

Yianni smiled ruefully. “Mykonos is expensive now. Really expensive. My cop buddies can’t afford to live there on a police salary.”

“You’ll only be there a few days.”

“Do you have any idea how much those couple of days will cost me? Nearly a month’s salary just for the hotel room. Do I get an expense account?”

Andreas rolled his eyes. “Expense account? These days?” He reached over and patted Yianni’s shoulder. “Don’t worry. I’m sure you can stay at Lila’s parents’ house.”

“I don’t want to impose.”

“You won’t be imposing. They’re away, and your presence will discourage burglars.”

Yianni’s expression changed to a grin. “If I hustle home to pack, I could make it there by tonight.”

Andreas shook his head. “I think I’ve just been had.”

Chapter Three

Andreas surprised Lila by making it home in time for dinner.

He found her in the kitchen, holding their seven-month-old daughter, Sofia, in her arms.

“She’s been in a real mood today. Doesn’t want me to let go of her.”

“I know the feeling,” said Andreas, gently pinching Sofia’s cheeks and kissing Lila’s.

“It must be a slow day for you to be home so early.”

“I wish that were true. Truth is, this might be the last chance I have to be home at a decent hour for quite a while.”

“What’s happening?”

“We have a serious—”

A rolling shout of “*Daddy*,” came roaring down the hallway in their direction from the lungs of a racing five-year-old.

“How’s my main man Tassaki?” said Andreas, bending down to scoop his son into his arms.

“You’re home.”

Andreas kissed him.

“Can we play?”

“After dinner,” said Lila.

Sofia leaned forward in her mother’s arms, reaching out for her father.

“I sense a bit of budding sibling rivalry,” said Lila.

“What’s that mean?” asked Tassaki.

Andreas tussled his son’s hair. “Your sister wants attention.”

“Girls,” said Tassaki distastefully, hugging his arms around his father’s neck.

“Whoa there,” said Lila. “Don’t say that sort of thing. Boys and girls both want their daddy’s attention.”

“And their mommy’s,” added Andreas.

“But Sofia gets to spend all day at home with mommy doing mommy things, and I only get to be with you when you’re not at work doing daddy things.”

Andreas sensed before he saw his wife’s raised eyebrows. “Care to help me out on this?” he said.

Lila handed Sofia to Andreas in exchange for Tassaki. She held him so they were eye to eye. “You know how I always tell you that you can be anything you want to be when you grow up, as long as you always try your best?”

Tassaki nodded.

“Well, the same is true for your sister. Just like boys, girls can be anything they want to be if they try hard enough. Your sister can do daddy things, and you can do mommy things.” She kissed him on the forehead.

“But I want to be like daddy and do policeman things.”

Lila smiled. “If that’s what you want, that’s fine.”

“So, won’t Sofia want to be just like you, and do what you do at home?”

Lila stared blankly at Andreas. “Your turn on the witness stand.”

“Your mommy does all sorts of things.”

“But you go to the office and she stays home.”

“That doesn’t make what I do any more important than what your mommy does.”

A buzzer went off. “What’s that?” said Andreas.

“You being saved by the bell.” Lila put Tassaki down. “The chicken’s ready.”

“Where Marietta? And the nanny? You could use their help.”

“It’s Marietta’s evening off, and Anna’s doing laundry. But what’s the big deal? It’s just plain, everyday cooking, cleaning, baby-sitting, diaper changing, and philosophizing with a five-year-old.”

“Right, just mommy things,” Andreas whispered in her ear.

Lila offered a forced smile. “A wise decision, keeping those thoughts quiet at this particular moment.”

“I value my domestic bliss.”

She waved Andreas off into the dining room. “Put the baby in her high chair.”

“Can I help you with something?”

“Just do that and keep them entertained until I get them their dinners.”

Andreas’ cozy evening at home with his family was not going as envisioned. He saw a serious discussion looming on the horizon over careers and role models. Lila had been hinting at a desire to get back into what she called “the adult world.” She feared that after so many years of child-rearing she’d lost the spunk that once made her the premier fundraiser in Athens’ art-and-museum scene.

Andreas had assured her that she’d not lost a step, but both knew that Greece’s ongoing financial crisis had dramatically changed the fundraising world as she’d known it. Austerity had generosity on the wane, and frustration had replaced the “fun” in fundraising. Resuming her old work was a non-starter. She needed to find another career, one that utilized her talents and invigorated her but did not require her to sacrifice the many joyful aspects of being a mom.

Andreas wished he had an answer for her.

Lila knew she didn’t have to cook, clean, or, for that matter, do any domestic chores. She led a privileged life, in which money

was not a concern and help readily available. She did what housework she did for herself, in order to maintain, as best she could, the sense of self-worth she'd once held as a career woman.

Five years—almost six—had slipped by in the blink of an eye. Now her son was off to school, and she was back to rearing another baby. She wondered if she'd be asking herself the same question in five more years—*Where has my life gone?*

She wanted to cry. But she had a chicken to get on the dinner table for her son and husband, and an egg to prepare for her daughter.

Am I depressed? Perhaps it's postpartum depression. That wouldn't be unheard of.

She shook her head. She had no time for such thoughts now. Maybe after the babies were asleep.

Except Tassaki wasn't a baby anymore.

Her mind wandered, unfocused thoughts jumping in and out. She concentrated on putting dinner on the table. She'd get into everything else later. With Andreas. But how could she unload all of this on him? He had his own problems at work, and hoped to find peace at home. She couldn't do that to him. But if not to her husband, to whom? And why were his problems any more significant than hers?

Yes. We'll talk later.

Lila swung out into the dining room, platters in each hand. "Dinner is served."

Tassaki took great pride showing off his skills with knife and fork, and Sofia ate most of her egg. In light of how things had started out, Andreas considered dinner a major success. He thought to compliment Lila, but decided not to raise the subject. How well she was rearing the children touched too closely on what troubled her. Instead, he stuck to general political and

social gossip, leaving Lila to decide when to bring up what he knew occupied her thoughts.

When Lila got up to clear the table, Andreas motioned for her to remain seated. “No, you cooked. Tassaki and I will do this. In this Greek household, men share domestic chores with women.”

Lila stared at him. “Don’t you think you’re pushing the point a bit hard?”

“It has to be made when the children are young.”

“I’ll carry my plate, Daddy.”

Andreas winked at Lila. “That’s my boy.”

“Okay, I’ll get Sofia ready for bed. Tassaki already had his bath, so just put him in his pajamas.”

“And read him three stories,” added Tassaki, carrying his plate toward the kitchen.

Lila struggled to suppress a smile. “Okay, mister negotiator, but only *one* story.”

“Two,” said Tassaki.

Andreas shrugged. “He *is* helping with the dishes.”

Lila sighed through a now-irrepressible smile, “I know when I’m being tag-teamed. Okay. Two stories. But that’s my final offer.”

“Deal,” said Tassaki, raising his right hand to high-five his father.

“Great,” said Andreas. “Now let’s show Mommy what we can do in the kitchen.”

By the time they’d finished cleaning up, Sofia was in bed; Lila joined them for the storytelling.

Tassaki was fast asleep before Andreas had finished the second story. They crept out of his room and crossed over to the other side of the apartment, into a living room offering an unobstructed panoramic view of the brightly lit Acropolis. They sat on their favorite couch and stared quietly out the windows.

“I never tire of this view,” said Andreas.

“That’s because you don’t see it twenty-four/seven.”

Andreas patted her thigh. “I wondered when you’d get around to that subject.”

She patted his thigh. “Well, wonder no longer.”

Andreas drew in and let out a breath. “So, what do you want to do with the rest of your life?”

“How nice of you to put the question so succinctly.” Lila leaned her head against Andreas’ shoulder. “If I knew, I wouldn’t be in this lousy mood.”

“Then let me put it differently,” Andreas said, kissing her forehead. “Something has your thinking all jammed up. What do you think it is?”

“Same answer.”

“But try.”

Lila fluttered breath out between her lips, and shut her eyes. “I feel as if I’m irrelevant.”

“That’s not so. You—”

Lila put her hand over Andreas’ mouth without opening her eyes. “I don’t need a cheerleader. You asked me to answer a question. So let me do it in my own way.”

“Sorry.”

“As I said, I’m feeling irrelevant. I see nothing I do as truly mattering, nothing to change the world or even contribute to the world. And, yes, I know one can say properly raising children accomplishes all of those things, but *only* if they grow up to matter, change, or contribute to the world. In other words, I’m kicking my responsibility for having my own meaningful life down the road to my children. I’m putting my burden on them. And that doesn’t strike me as fair for any of us.”

Andreas said nothing.

Lila opened her eyes. “You can speak now.”

He swallowed. “Not sure that I agree, but let’s assume you’re correct. Are you talking about bringing about change to the world or something more personal?”

Lila paused. "I'm not vain enough to think anything I might do would ever rise to the level of achieving world peace, but I would like it to be significant to a broader swath of society than just our family. My fundraising work gave me that sort of satisfaction."

"It sounds to me that you're making progress. If I'm reading you correctly, you've ruled out any sort of commercial enterprise."

"If you mean selling art, fashion, or tequila, the answer is yes."

"I mean anything where the primary goal is making money for private profit, as opposed to making money for charitable purposes."

"Yes, I must say I'm attracted to eleemosynary causes."

"Are we having one of those, 'You say potato, I say potahto,' moments, à la Ella Fitzgerald?"

Lila offered him a blank stare. Then rolled her eyes. "Okay, I get it. 'You say charity, I say eleemosynary.'"

"Bingo."

"The title of the song happens to be, 'Let's Call the Whole Thing Off.'"

"Whoops. Not intended."

She smiled. "I know." She squeezed his hand.

He squeezed back.

"I need to get back in the world, into the swing of things and see what's out there that might interest me. Teas and charitable events are not doing it. I've got to learn firsthand what other women are doing to overcome these feelings. I can't be the first mother to feel so adrift."

"Sounds like a plan to me. But where do you intend to start?"

"In a place where I can find the kind of women I need to meet."

"In Athens?"

"No. I already know their stories, and, as inspiring as they might be to some, I want to meet new women, from different

walks of life and foreign cultures. I won't find them in Athens in summertime."

Andreas shrugged. "Then where?"

"A place that draws successful types from all over the world, and where I have connections to arrange introductions." Lila bit at her lip. "The place that immediately comes to mind is Mykonos."

Andreas sat quietly for a moment. "You know, at first I thought that a silly idea, but on reflection, I think it's a damned good one. Some of the most influential people in the world come to Mykonos on holiday, and they love to go on and on, talking about their work and offering insights on subjects they'd never think of discussing with strangers back home. Come to think of it, it's a *brilliant* idea."

"There you go again, overselling."

Andreas slapped his thigh. "No, I'm not. I'm dead serious. I think it's the perfect way for you to spend the summer."

Lila's face drooped into a pout.

"What's wrong?" said Andreas.

Lila looked down. "You don't seem the least bit upset at the thought of the children and me being away on Mykonos all summer while you're alone back here in Athens."

Andreas grinned. "What makes you think I'll be alone?"

She looked up and glared at her husband. "And what's that supposed to mean?"

"Remember back before dinner when I said something serious had come up at work that would affect my ability to spend time at home?"

Lila cocked her head. "Yes."

"Well, that something is on Mykonos!"

"You mean—"

"I mean all those foreign ladies won't have you to themselves. They'll have to share you with me."

Lila wrapped her arms around Andreas' neck and kissed him. "What can I say? It must be fate."

“Whatever it is, I plan on taking advantage of it at every opportunity.”

Lila stood up, pulled at Andreas’ arm, dragged him off the couch, and led him away. “And there’s no better opportunity than now.”

He glanced up at the Acropolis as they headed off to the bedroom. “Thank you, dear Fates.”

Yianni got the last available seat on the early morning flight to Mykonos out of Venizelos Airport, but only because he used his badge and a bit of smooth-talking to finagle a supervisor into putting him into a cockpit jump seat behind the pilots. Though less than a half-hour flight, the trip between Athens and Mykonos held the dubious distinction of being the most expensive per mile route in Europe, and still the planes flew packed throughout the summer.

Approximately one and a half times the size of the island of Manhattan and ninety miles southeast of Athens, Mykonos hosted a population of ten thousand year-round citizens that swelled by fifty thousand visitors in tourist season, plus ten thousand day-trippers who came off behemoth cruise ships that treated Mykonos as the new Mecca for their Mediterranean cruises.

Getting to that point had been a long time coming. As with everything in Greece, the history of Mykonos entwined with the gods. Some said the island’s name came from Apollo’s grandson, Mykons. Others claimed it just meant “a pile of rocks.” Whatever the source of its name, Mykonos’ habitation dated back more than six thousand years, virtually all of that time spent as one of the poorest islands in Greece.

Against those millennia of struggle, it seemed impossible that in little more than a single generation the island had achieved worldwide renown as a twenty-four/seven summer

playground for international celebrities and the super-rich, drawing in hordes of everyday folk wishing to be in on the glitz of it all and transforming long-impooverished Mykonians into among the wealthiest per capita people in Greece.

But it came at a price. Much of their traditional agrarian and seafaring ways had been sacrificed to cater to the whims, desires, and fantasies of holidaymakers who flocked to their island from around the globe.

Its dozens of breathtaking beaches now boasted world-class clubs and restaurants, many designed to keep sun worshipers and partiers on-site and consuming from morning until well beyond the witching hour. Mykonos and Santorini were practically the only places in Greece untouched by the financial crisis, and everyone in Greece wanted to get in on the action. Good guys and bad.

Yianni hadn't been back to Mykonos in over a year and wondered how much the island had changed. He had no doubt that it had. Locals who'd run traditional businesses out of buildings in town that had been in their families for generations now realized they'd make far more by turning their shops into bars, or renting their spaces to national and international fashion brands, receiving huge under-the-table sweetener payments to do so. Outside of town, farmers found themselves making more from the sale of a parcel of land than they could ever hope to make in a lifetime of farming that same soil.

Yianni stared out the cockpit window at the horizon, where a bright blue sky met a deep blue sea filled with white-edged waves and beige-brown islands flecked with green and white.

At least some things hadn't changed.

Yianni was first off the plane and, with only a carry-on, he was out of the terminal in two minutes. It took another three minutes to cover the hundred meters from the airport to the police station. Police procedures required him to check in with the local police chief.

How much he chose to tell him was another story.

The police chief turned out to be a decent guy, but that alone wasn't a good enough reason for trusting him. He hadn't displayed the curiosity Yianni expected when Yianni told him that he'd be nosing around the chief's turf on official business. The chief's non-reaction might have reflected polite deference to Yianni's Special Crimes Unit status, or an indifference worn into him by the impossibly frustrating task of trying to maintain order and safeguard the lives and property of so many tourists and locals on an out-of-control party island with fewer than fifty cops available to him for the summer.

Then there was a third possibility: the chief already knew why Yianni was there. Despotiko was nothing if not efficient, and he'd probably informed the chief in advance that cops from Athens would be asking questions about his wife.

Even if Despotiko had beaten him to the police chief's door, Yianni's instincts told him not to ask the man about Mrs. Despotiko. He'd speak to her first. No reason to risk having word reach her about what was on his mind before he had the chance to confront her face-to-face. He knew he'd made the right decision when, out of the blue, he asked the chief for directions to the Despotiko home, and without hesitation or the slightest sign of interest in Yianni's reason for asking, he recited precise, detailed driving directions.

Given the chief's advance preparation, Yianni wondered what he could expect from Mrs. Despotiko. The only way to find out was to ask her, so he borrowed a marked police car and drove in the direction of the Despotiko home.

He didn't bother to call ahead; he assumed the chief would do that for him.