

Z J GALOS



ACROPOLIS

BOOK I FERVOUR



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Prologue

She moved fleet footed, sliding past him, alluring in her tight top and slacks tightly wrapped around her body, drawing him toward her. Her impression of a shadow in charcoal hues with her face inset like marble, as if she just rose in between these shards of antiquity, one exhibit that became alive he had to follow. Yet, the more he followed her, the more she seemed escaping.

He sat down on a marble bench, exhausted from his restless mind and his visual enquiries into the distant past. His fingers played on the well-worn half round edge of the seat, circling around a knob, reminded him of her breasts and her bodylines that had stirred him. Now, losing her, he felt the weight of sadness, like the stones of the temple, bearing on him.

Closing his eyes he was turning into a stone that fell from the wide-arched skies. A thumping sound reverberated from the ground. He woke. Arranging his knapsack, he was missing his cellphone. "Blast!" He swore, then placed his sketchbook aside and kneeling down below the marble seat he looked for it.

"Are you an archeologist?" He glanced up from his crouching position against the sun, and blinked with his eyes. Through his sunglasses he observed her slender body, the rising sun had consumed her clothes and had painted a halo around its articulated shape.

"No," he sighed and removed his glasses and wiped them on his tee-shirt.

"Well, I thought..." He cut into her sentence "I was looking for my cellphone..." He donned his sunglasses again. She bent down over the marble bench and he admired her

derriere. Her buttocks had shaped taught below the thin cotton cloth of her slacks and exposed her taught body shapes. In a sudden desire his fingers moved forward to touch her, his pulse racing to a fever pitch.

"Here we are!" She said coming up from her bent position, her breasts visible in the cleavage of the soft cotton top. She had stirred his physical desires into a rising sensation. She took a seat first and he followed, sitting down close to her.

"Oh thank you so much!" His fingers reached for the phone and folded around her fingers for a moment. A sting of electricity ran through him adding the sense of passion to his inner heat that matched the rising ambient temperature. He flushed as she smiled at him.

"I have definitely seen you before," she said in a low voice. "Following my thirst for studying sites of Classical antiquity I have followed you..." Her cellphone rang and she apologized; her dark brown eyes still gazed at him. She rose, strolled aside to take the call, her face radiated with a glow.

This is impossible, he mused, just when I ...On a sudden impulse he starts taking snapshots of her, intending to take a video clip. Finally, he found the setting and activated it. He saved all to the files on his phone and stood up to join her, but she had disappeared into the shadows of the pine trees, the shadows of the marble pieces and the stark shadows between the rocks.

He snapped his knapsack and moved forward, frantically searching for her with a newfound zeal, avoiding exposure to the searing heat, he rushed into the shadow of the Stoa of Attalos, wiping his brow and forehead. His strained eyes scanned the place around him, but neither the statues along the Stoa, nor the tired looking clerk in the kiosk, adjacent to the entrance of the museum, could give away any clue to her whereabouts. He resigned to the reality of having lost her. Disappointed he thought of it to be a dream, a *fata*

morgana in the searing heat of the late morning, when reality and imagination played games with his mind and ardent dialogues plagued his inner core.

"It's just one of your dreams!" a voice said.

"Bullshit!" his emotion countered, pushing the word like a sharp hiss into his breath, as he entered the bookshop. "She found my phone I had dropped, didn't she?"

The other voice kept still, as his blood came to a boil. I am insane, he thought, this heat and my relentless studies cause illusions. He looked for a blank notebook. Suddenly her face appeared on a cover and he grabbed the book and bought it. Outside in the shadow of the Stoa he took it from its paper bag and he looked for the description of the cover. *The Goddess Athena*, it said. He smiled, as he only saw the face of the woman he had fallen for like a stone falling from the skies. He placed the book into his knapsack and rose, drunk from his experience that had enmeshed itself with his love for Classical art. However, since he had encountered her fleeting presence, he felt himself floating above the historic sites of Athens, its temples and monuments like a fragment belonging to them. The fallen stone returned light as a feather and rose on wings of her smile toward the endless blue above.

Those who danced were thought to be quite insane
by those who could not hear the music.

Angela Monet.

Honest criticism means nothing; what one wants is
unrestrained passion, fire for fire.

Henry Miller.

1

He came to Greece for the art of the Classical times, the Parthenon upon the *Sacred Rock* beckoning to become his muse. He was seeking inspiration and wished to find it in the heart of the ancient city that lay buried below the surface. Lately that became public knowledge, as the city was dug-up to accommodate the new Athens underground. Archeologists found an enormous rich treasure and it created a feverish atmosphere of discovery that spilled over to him. He wished to be there, see all for himself, be surrounded by the magic of ancient times and set out on this journey of his own discoveries.

He took notes and prepared a catalogue of galleries and museums he wished to visit. Besides the vase paintings, sculpture and architecture, he had extended interests in Greek philosophy and literature. The written word has captured his world of personal expression. He found parallels in the arts, detecting almost daily the richness within himself as he dug deeper into his layers of the subconscious mind. He sensed this underlying connection of his approach to art to form his canon of beauty, thus creating completeness in thoughts, with the written word and his progressive beliefs, almost touching the ancient world palpably.

He considered this trip as a venture to rub his mind on this agglomeration of a city with its stark contrasts and continual restlessness. The moment, he set eyes on the white gleaming marble on top of the Acropolis, his heart felt beating stronger and his mind became vivid, enticing his imagination. He thought of this culture that had been once the greatest inspiration for the emerging Western World,

where culturally, one hadn't yet achieved anything like the Greek world had. He thought of the building styles, applied to various magnificent temples to honor Greek gods and goddesses.

Ara was sitting in the National Library and he was engrossed in reading about Greek art and he started to jot down some notes, when suddenly he was inspired to write:

"Every time I come to Attica, I seek this one view that is burned into my mind's eye. I close my eyes and I see the *Sacred Rock*, dominated by the great temple's gables, and lately I recall the south-eastern elevation of its seventeen columns and the gap that had been ripped into its glorious structure, by the idiocy of men. But then men should pay for it. However nobody knows the perpetrator's names, except the historian, who has researched it. Some colorful and glossy tour-guides mention a name; do they punish his unforgivable deed that way? All along history, famous buildings were hit by bombs during the times of war, could this have been purposely avoided by conscious and responsible men, even enmeshed in bitter fighting? How do we know all the truthful answers? However wanton or incidentally destroyed, I have become emotionally attached to the great temple of *Athena Parthenos*, besides, successively, to all the sacred sites of historic Greece.

The Parthenon in particular, as it forms part of the education of an architect; perhaps that is one of the reasons. The fascination with the temple was initially intuitively brokered by a liking to it and as a kid I had read with gaping mouth in fascination the book about Greek Mythology. There was an additional fascination parallel to the knowledge of construction: The chryselephantine statue of the goddess Athina. One of the masterpieces of Phidias, we have been left only with reproductions.

I have been drawing in my bachelor pad in Vienna the Doric order to a half full scale, when I had a flicker of an image. It was perhaps late and the concentration for long

hours created images in front of my mind's eye. It was an oval face with an enigmatic smile. But then, I could not switch-off the image, or discard it out of my mind. The more I tried, the more insistent it stayed with me. I lost control of my drawing skills at one stage and as I applied a watercolor wash to the abacus on my drawing, my hand slipped, I panicked and the color spilled everywhere. I had no bathtub, to wash my drawing off, so I took it in a hurry to a friend close-by. When she opened the door to her flat, I was stunned. Her face at that moment gelled with the face I was seeing in my mind, the face that followed me. She was dark and had dark brown medium long hair. Her full red lips were alluring for a kiss.

"Hello Chrisane, how are you?" She looked surprised. "I hope I am not intruding into your personal life too harshly," I continued and then gave her a barrage of words indicating my emergency. "Oh no," she said, "come right through to the bathroom." I put the drawing into the tub, taking the hand held shower, and began washed the colouring off. Then I started teasing her and we talked a bit, during this soaking procedure we applied to the drawing that was fortunately rendered on thick paper. She held the drawing for me as I was carefully cleaning the last remaining spots of watercolor from the paper. Then, as I noted the uniformity of a slight ivory taint across the whole sheet, I stopped.

"Do you have a pin board Chrisane?"

"Yes from my days of drawing classes at school; I'll look in the store." She disappeared, fetching the soft beach wood board, dusted it off and then she laid it on the table. I brought the well-drained drawing of thick paper that was now curling and laid it out centrally on the wooden board.

"Do you still have some tacks?"

"What?" She responded tilting her head.

"Drawing pins!"

"Oh, somewhere I keep my drawing instruments." She disappeared into her room and rummaged through her

drawers. Then she returned with the broad headed pins. Fortunately they were the right type. I fixed the one into the top left corner of the drawing, well distanced from the outline of the drawn border, but also well within the paper.

"I do not want to tear it," I said to Chrisane, murmuring while I worked. Then I stretched the paper to the right, fixed the next pin, and so on until the drawing was reasonably plain. "It will flatten out while it dries," I told her. "Please keep an eye on it."

"Yes I will do that for you," she said with her dark voice and her slight giggle, adding it as a signature at the end of a sentence; the way she talked. I always used to tease her about that, since I first met her at a well-known cafe in the center of town, frequented by artists, writers, chess players, retired men and students, with their acquaintances and friends. "It looks now beautiful, she said, "like an antique original," she giggled. I thanked her, she was close and I kissed her cheeks. I felt her well-shaped breasts through my thin jersey I had in my hurry pulled over my torso. I had no time to dress properly. "You smell as if you had no time to wash," she commented. "Take a shower; I will bring you a towel."

"Oh thanks Chrisane, I do have stress lately." I avoided the issue of a bathroom coming up in discussion, as it reminded me of my poor facilities. The shower was refreshing and I felt like newborn, certainly clean. She brought me a towel, stretching her hand through the door and I thanked her. The smell of fresh ground coffee wafted through the door. I was indeed famished as I joined her at the coffee table. She filled a cup and offered me some cereals and milk. "I have not much here," she apologized.

"It'll do fine, thank you. You saved me from starvation." We talked a bit more about past events, but it was time I went; she took me to the door. I kissed her cheeks again, but this time she brushed along my lips with hers. I felt a warm stirring in my loins.

"May I come back tomorrow?"

"Yes, I will be here until 11h00, and then I have to leave for my lecture."

"I'll see you then Chrisane, good bye."

"Good bye and take care," she called after me, as I descended the staircase.

By the time I got home I was tired. I sat on my bed, musing about a woman I saw during my work at night, so vividly with half-open lips, her dark eyes beckoning me. As I looked into her face now, her smile appeared to be less mysterious. I think I saw Chrisane first, but then the image altered again and again until I fell into a deep sleep.

I woke in the late afternoon. Gosh, I had forgotten completely about the drawing. I recalled seeing her early in the morning, when the drawing should have dried and I could finish off the coloring of it with a fresh start. Meanwhile I was thinking of the colors and then searched for the gouache box I kept tucked away in the cupboard. Then I sat down and wrote a letter to Chrisane, as I always did, when expressing my gratitude to someone, who I seldom could meet. Besides I wanted her to know about my feelings I cherished for her, but had never told her about.

In the evening I listened to some music from my record player and I was suddenly into this mood of drawing and painting. In automated moves my hands rushed across the paper and then as all the outlines and the concept of the drawing had been completed, I started to apply color to it, and used my gouache colors and felt good at what I was doing.

I went to bed early to be up in good time. I could not afford to have time for Chrisane, as I had to finish the work for my semester's critical examination.

Early up in the morning, I washed and put on some fresh clothes. I rushed over to Chrisane, knocked at her door. There was no answer. I had to leave her a message. We always missed each other. But this time I was on time. She

must have mixed-up her lecture times yesterday. Then I saw the note below her door. I pulled it out. It read: 'Ara, I had to go out with my mother. Your drawing is at the caretaker. Please leave her a tip. I will see you soon and come to your place.'

I rushed down the stairs, over to the caretaker's flat and rang the bell. An elderly woman opened the door. I introduced myself and told her about my drawing

"Wait here," she said and reappeared after some minutes with a rolled up drawing covered into wrapping paper. I thanked her and left her a tip. "Not necessary," she said with a hoarse voice. I thought she'll buy herself another drink with it smelling of cheap liqueur. I mused about Chrisane. I liked her, but we had little time left to meet with our educational commitments that left us frustrated. At night, I had to study, or finish a project, while she was perhaps sleeping, tired-out from the day and then as I had time to meet her, she studied for an exam. Her sister and her mother often visited her. I thought of a scenario I dreamed out, whereby her mother caught us together in bed. "It is better you come to my place Chrisane," I said to her a few times, "your family does not know my address, and you can always leave them a message that you are at university." She smiled at me always, and then at one stage, when we were close and intimate, she whispered to me "Perhaps, one day I just might come to you."

Ara looked up from his desk and he realized he sat in a huge well-tempered space, surrounded by books; many people were sitting close by and around. There was the hush of near-perfect stillness as libraries do have. Someone whispered from a distance, but the words could be heard clearly, only he could not understand them. Then he noticed he was sitting in the National library of Athens. He could not remember for how long, it must have been hours. It was already twelve and he immediately gathered his notebooks,

eyeing the page he worked on last. He saw his chapter of his writing and he recalled Chrisane's face. Then he saw that he had visited the Acropolis and he visualized his drawing of the column's capital he had struggled with colour rendering at his first attempt and then it all had merged into the column as he stood before the Great Temple, majestic, powerful, and so familiar. Then he saw Chrisane, with her dark hair cascading to her shoulders, her dusky eyes scanning the scenery, with her typical movements, her full breasts weaving below her cardigan.

"Chrisane," he murmured and then louder again:

"Chrisane, how are you? Tell me what are you doing here?" And as she turned, her features were now transferred into the features of a woman, who answered in Greek, he could not understand. He said

"I apologize, I mistook you for someone else."

"Oh," she said astonished, "that is alright, a friend of yours perhaps?"

"Yes, somebody from my student years in Vienna. You could be sisters!"

"That is a compliment, I suppose," she smiled. He noticed her perfect set of teeth. She had an enigmatic smile, while she assessed him. Then he turned pale as it suddenly struck him. It was the portrait image he saw during his work at the Classical column of the Parthenon. That night he painted it and had the incident of color-spillage on it. It nearly cost him the semester, had it not been Chrisane, who helped him out. He told her.

Then he noted that she was alone. He must have talked with himself for a while, not noticing that she had suddenly appeared.

"Let me introduce myself, my name is Ara."

"Ana," she replied, "nice meeting you."

"Nice meeting you too, Ana. Could we walk a bit while we talk?" He took her arm and they exited the reception area walking to the locker area, fetching their knapsacks. He

touched her arm again, "you speak excellent English," he smiled at her. "I am glad you were here, and I found you to talk to."

"Oh, thank you. My English is not too good, although I had been studying it once."

"I can hear your slight accent, it is giving you away, American?," he teased her.

"Oh, indeed?' She had a mischievous frown on her face, as she did not believe him.

"I am just kidding you," he added, "it is not important as we all have accents. Besides it is enticing and colorful, adding to the personality of the speaker."

They conversed about aspects of the languages and their own backgrounds. Ara told her about his. But always turning back to the subject of art, she asked him in between many questions. He answered them all, but some he avoided. She noticed, but she did not press him. His impression of her was excellent, and he wondered if he idealized her. She was pretty with her dusky-eyed glow of a Southern look he always was attracted to. He thought of her immediately as intelligent, querying everything, almost endowed with a restless mind, similar to his.

He held her hand as they said good-bye. He did not want to let her go. He was suddenly sad and he disliked leaving tomorrow. He had known her for so long. As long as her life, as long as her story, she told him. As long as his life, as he set eyes on her for the first time, when they met at his birthday party and then had become inseparable friends. Ana incorporated all the qualities of his girlfriends and lovers he had encountered in his meandering life so far. Some he had loved, most he kissed and was lucky with. Women liked him, but hardly one or two would exchange with him their emotions and their feelings, the way he desired them to be exchanged and the way he wished to love and be loved back in return. However one young girl came closest to his ideal with regards to emotional depth

and that was Simchi. He told Ana about that and they exchanged some memories of their once most beloved.

The next morning he exited the library at the similar time, and he left behind the spirit of his protagonist, he encountered in this virtual dialogue he had created out of the stillness of the space and its inspiring atmosphere. In the city he had continued to write, not only as a discipline, but to further his dialogue with her. That night he dreamed about their encounter, visiting the Acropolis: "you have sprung from the head of the Parthenon's majestic columns, as the goddess Athena had sprung from the forehead of Zeus." He told her. Then he woke.

He recalled that he had to finish his research on the Acropolis; he needed to read all there was to read about it. But then, already dressed and having made breakfast, with one plate for his spouse, he recalled their conversation before they parted. "When do we meet again?"

"Tomorrow," he had said with a glance into her dusky eyes that made his blood boil. In a stirred-up suddenness he kissed her cheeks.

Their meetings carried on for days, he had noted down in his journal. He had not numbered them yet, but now he counted them. Then on the twenty-first day, he had sat at nightfall on the terrace of his rented place, staring at the light that transformed all objects, as it did the Parthenon. It was this magnificent view of the temples southeastern elevation. He counted again the columns, although he knew their number.

"Seventeen," he exclaimed aloud.

"What did you say?" his spouse, Barb, asked, who sat in the adjacent room doing her hair. She suffered from migraine lately. They had visited Athens for the third time, and Barb lauded him on the choice of accommodation in such a wonderful position. Then he explained to her carefully his observations.

"Tonight we will meet with a Greek family. I have met these two members of families in the poetry club online."

"I cannot go," Barb said, "my headache kills me."

"Then I have to go, but will apologize for you."

"Can't you phone them?" she insisted.

"I have tried, but the phone is always engaged." While he got up from his side of the bed, he noticed the curtain moved opposite his window. He had the pane slid back for air movement. It was hot and the cross ventilation was a welcome breeze, as Barb did not like air conditioning. Ara did not mind the rather dry heat. He stepped to the side of the window, moving his curtain a bit, and he stopped moving it as soon as he had a view of the opposite window in full.

There was a woman on the phone, he could hear her voice now clearly, and she was completely in the nude. Her hair was short and dyed blond. He could see her darker pubic hair, brunette.

"No, now don't frighten me...I take exception to that..."and she had quite an emotional dialogue with a person on the other end of the line. Almost a New Yorker's accent he thought. Then followed debates on prices, and her envisaged itinerary of her stay. She was absorbed in her call, and he could watch her gym-toned body. She was attractive, with almost child-like breasts. He wanted to name her as he gazed at her way she behaved on the phone. She would be unnerved by his looks if she had noticed them, so he kept quiet. On the other hand, she must have had a notion that someone will have a look from the opposing window to hers at some stage, especially if she attracted attention with her loud ongoing telephonic conversations. Perhaps she was inviting that. He watched her for a while, when he lost interest.

"What do you see?" asked Barb.

"A naked woman," he replied aloud.

"You are joking," she murmured as she slid back into her sleep.

"I just named her Clarissa," he said in a soft tone, as he watched her turn, facing his window.

"Like Mrs. Dalloway?" Barb asked.

"Yes," he told her, "and I am leaving now, lock the door."

He went downstairs, using the straight steps that turned around in a semicircle at the beginning and the end of the stair flights. He enjoyed the way his feet carried him down to the ground floor on the soft marbled steps and then onto the carpeted floors to dampen any noise of trampling feet. Then he reached the ground floor, he encountered usually Maria, the dusky, friendly woman, who cleaned and cooked.

"Kalimera," he greeted her.

"Kalimera," she replied smiling at him. Often they shared a word or two in Greek of polite conversation. He exited into Vyronos Street, adopting a speed of stride, passed the shops and kiosks, some interesting ones that carried hand-painted pottery, the fruit shop and the various souvenir shops, a bookshop on religious art and icons. He always cast glances into shop windows, even if he walked along in a hurry. He had to notice things, note some matters down later; it had become almost compulsive with him. He did seek out objects, store some he considered worthy and of interest, perhaps he could later need the stored information in one way or another during his creative work.

Perhaps he came back again later and he bought something to take along.

After some minutes' walk, he saw the monument of Lysicrates in front of him for the first time, and he recalled its history. He stood there for a short while, his mind reeling off some anecdotes about Lord Byron, who had apparently locked himself inside its round base to have inspiration, and indeed his poem *Childe Herold* had been created there. His eyes absorbed the elegance of the structure, its delicate decorations. Once, indeed there was a notion hedged by an

opportunistic thief to disassemble the monument and ship it to the British Isles, and sell it to the highest bidder. Hearsay or not, he was glad it never happened. This tiny square and only this selected spot was the right place where it belonged. As his eyes flew off its top he embraced the majestic backdrop of the *Sacred Rock* behind, the Parthenon, to this charming square. Then he recalled in this connection the story about the Parthenon marbles, chiseled from the temple's *cella* wall and tympanum. Of course there were arguments of cultural disrespect and the outcries of profanity to such cunning deed. But then there is the other side of perhaps the good luck of conservation through it all. Perhaps this act saved it from utter destruction. However there will be a possible solution to this delicate problem in time. Then as he passed the statue of Melina Mercouri he thought about her as a great woman, but depicted rather not like she was. He wished though that her spirit lived on and some successor would be completing her famous stirring speech with some visible result and have at least an exhibition of the missing Parthenon marbles in Athens at last. As at present, the *Sacred Rock* was a World Heritage Site, there was no shortage of ideas to arrange such a task. Is man still stubborn on matters of art that now belonged rather to the world and not solely, due to the whims of a government, to one nation? Definitely a new world has been born with the 21st century that requires also a refurbished view in such matters as art, administration, and possession of all artifacts.

With such thoughts that stirred his emotions, he entered Cafe Dionysus. He found her sitting on the terrace. She remained seated and he kissed her on her cheeks. She felt his emotions and he explained to her his recent thinking. Then as he sat down and the waiter brought some wine, he tasted some of her pizza she fed to him. They spoke about their times together and their hands touched. He felt a rush of good feelings for her, while they talked and enjoyed their

incident of a reunification. It happened rather out of the blue and left them breathless at times. With difficulties to speak quietly, he noticed he would draw his breath in and she would do it in her turn to speak, as if to cover-up their prevalent emotions.

2

"I don't want to carry on like this," he told her on the window that popped up suddenly on his PC-screen. Since days he couldn't talk to her. It was the Christmas season and the days of unwinding and rest, with sumptuous lunches and dinners. Overindulgence with more drinks than usual, had put a sudden stop to their erotic relationship online. He was meeting her again, after many days of abstinence and with a yearning that popped out of his chest and sent his heart flying sky-high.

"I am sorry," she said immediately, "it is not my fault that the chat program is not working." She tried to soothe his anger, building up after one hour of typing upon another program she had proposed to him to try. He felt this time as wasted and a bad substitute for an established program, well tried and used before. She was buying time, as she had nothing to say. He felt he was polite long enough, having anticipated some togetherness and with it some transferred love. Instead he felt being treated at arm's length by her. She played a game, which was perhaps funny for her, but he felt a burn, as if she'd slapped his face and the sting of a needle, she'd inserted cunningly into his thigh. Then, feeling a sensation of it inserted into him deeper, he kicked-out like a mule and ignored her. He wished to leave, as he noticed her rather sadistic attitude. She laughed and had a good time, knowing about his tension. He disliked that. Then she asked him to turn-on the voice server and talk to her. He refused, and she connected. He listened to her child-like talk, then again about her discoveries of sex online. "Sex pages, but without pornographic content," she referred to them. He continued listening to her, but felt humiliated by

her behavior. Finally, he felt utterly frustrated and on the verge of telling her to leave him alone.

“Don't shout at me!” She replied.

“But I am pissed-off!” He cried-out at her in anger.

“What is pissed-off?” She asked and he had to laugh out aloud. That broke the ice of tension. He sighed and took some deep breaths of air. Then he was calm and while he told her about her bodylines and the softness of character she usually displayed, which he liked, she went on to admire his body. Video communication was never more comforting to him. They kept in shape, and while she talked he could feel her voice stroking his body physically. This became stronger and he noticed his oncoming erection. Did she perform and create all this tension and subsequent fun to excite him?

His mind embraced her body, flew above his state of being as they engaged into tasting each other's bodies, letting the fantasy run free and adopting the way they'd prefer to make love to each other. Being online she talked sexy things and he responded, but then he was in her room, they never could talk lewd words, as she was specifically careful, due to her peculiar neighbor's curiosity and sharpened sense of eavesdropping into her private life. He wondered who this neighbor was, man or woman, and who the person was visiting her before him, and her neighbour was overhearing her with. Did he know the person from her life story she had told him in bits and pieces? Is she having a pyramidal graph assessing her lovers? He wondered how he rated amongst the illustrious friends of her amphisexual, adventurous world.

Yet, he was always assured in his love by her and she wanted him. But he had the impression of her being more excited, while she switched her desires between her friends. She lived a different erotic life to his. She had girlfriends and some previous friends, she exerted a magic spell of illusion on, but might be herself flourishing under, obliged to keep

loyalty towards them. In a way, he thought, he would know her by now after two and a half years, since he met her just after the new millennium year.

Ana had many cuts and facets to her personality, he did not entirely know yet. He would probably never fully know.

She touched his face: "I want to kiss you more," she chatted to him, creating an atmosphere willingly they could have been transmitting into an hour ago. He found himself in an indifferent mood first, but then his angry state has been lead into slumber, due to other matters she seemed to pursue, perhaps even talking to someone else. But he was passed the point of jealousy, as he found her interplay rather childish and idiotic even, as if she wanted to display an act of avoiding to meet him. As if the days of separation, from this magic of their instant feelings they shared, were now all gone and she did not want them back again for some reason. Perhaps out of fear of reaching the intensity of a climax, or even push it a bit further to the edge; besides the daily want that ran into a hackneyed regularity, killed any growing intensity of their desires. He felt suddenly aroused, and a great rush of rankness spread like fire through his body with his hands playing on his erection, playing on her body, devouring her, with a strong want to pierce her in this cry of a climax, she displayed to him with passion.

He followed her height a few seconds later, when she exclaimed within her short breath: "I am coming!" He could hear her clearly, increasing his own speed of masturbation. He cried out: "Ahhh!" with that tapered prolongation, spilling his semen all across his lowered pajama trousers, thighs and fingers. He gasped and sighed as much as she did, drooled and tasted her come, tasting his own. Suddenly he thought he would get a circulatory collapse. But as he breathed-in deeply and remained quiet for a while, all the sudden excitement was over and she left rather abruptly. She always left the start of their mutual cybersex sessions for

tasks of cleaning or posting letters, right at the end of togetherness, as if time pressure would be a potent drug of heightening her enticement. It seemed to be embedded in her nature and it made him mad and angry, as he became most vulnerable to her in this game. And as she talked about this mutual love [she disliked the word masturbation], and various techniques to release sexual tensions, for her it was all being part of this love. Perhaps she meant it was a technique, but not love, he thought, but he did not tell her that. Instead he started to have emotional outbursts that created vibrations in his chest, ending up in sobs, which surprised him. Then he let his feelings burst free and he sobbed uncontrolled, as if he would rid himself from some torture that was imposed on him by someone a long time ago. Somebody, who called himself a lover and had played him along all the time, pushing back his natural, libidinous life, and due to his present lover's minimal appearance, as she had to spend with friends and family. He felt alone, even abandoned, in deep need of her, but she did not come to his rescue this time. Even today he felt her aloof cruelty and her laugh signaled to him his weakness, he had to overcome. Did he indeed feel dependent for his payoff in her sexual games? He felt dependent indeed and he suddenly saw a huge gap opening up in front of him that was swallowing him up. He did not want to admit to himself, but he was indeed dependent on her ways exerting her feelings onto him and making him beg for a fuck?

Indeed he was now. But at this delicate stage in their relationship he did not mind. He wished to have a fresh look at his personality, when he was in a critical state with his mind. He needed a rest, maybe a swim, to have a refreshed body and to move back to a balanced normality, he probably never knew. It involved passed times, he could not get back to again. He missed all those intimate and tender times he used to have with her before. Now it had become something different again. He thought of the ancient sites of

the Greek and how well they prepared their boys for their first sexual experiences. He wondered if they thus coped emotionally as well as the girls did with their own gender education, he did know nothing in depth about.

In the evening she sent him messages and notes, followed by a letter. Then a flurry of communication that astounded him, She had a slightly dented conscious that emerged in explanations and finally in declarations of her love for him. As if she felt sorry about the hour of engaging him in a labyrinth of mere technical mishaps online, while she was busy with her own life of excitements, explaining to him her imminent arousals. He wondered about her methods of communication. He recalled that she might thrive on a hue of sadism, to hold his desire at bay, until at the last moment, when she had worked him up to a state of rising anger. Then she would give in, offering her love to him, herself already totally excited. She put this fact forward to cement her declaration: "How could I have come so quickly, if I would not have been aroused all the time?"

Of course he could neither argue about this fact, nor did he want to discuss the means and causes of her ongoing and repetitively strong arousals. It would have been senseless and of no importance, as she often told him. Yet he felt of having been betrayed and also loved by her at the same time, in one short moment of a morning, yet one long hour of trying to work out a program that he would utterly dislike. He remembered back, when they met on this window that brought them their first pleasant togetherness, but also their first fiery fight, as she had many more calls to talk to, disrupting the pleasant atmosphere of their communication. These were invitations by some other program users; she used to tell him, even while they were engaged into their own conversation. He could not stand interruptions of any kind, while they conversed.

If she had annoyed him enough, as she obviously enjoyed the attentions from others, he would have to cool down his

temper, but then left their sporadic conversation at some stage. She always thought then that she had lost him. But he had no desire to engage into a talk with someone he knew and heighten their sexual desires with the impatient worries of another person, he was intimate with at one stage. How could he? It was a lack of online etiquette. However the thought crossed his mind, as he was in a good mood imagining that Ana could do that to him now. In this horrid morning of his sensitive inner balance that had experienced the pain of her withdrawal into the folds of her family and her social life during the festive season. He wished it to be less important, as it is to an artist or creative person, who works well with the daily smile of a muse and lacking it, he'll use his magic to rush these social celebrations to come to an early end.

Besides he thought of a charade that had nothing left for most people, but some days of having a good time, get drunk and exert themselves financially on a spending spree, due to an oversupply of goods and beverages. People always act nowadays, as if the final days of mankind had been announced by an Angel of Death. In Africa of the South this Angel claims the lives of at least eight hundred per day as noted in officially published statistics. And some preachers of Christian churches lecture of signs that the world is coming to an end. With such somber ending thoughts he accepted her explanations and her vigorous messages that spoke of her love and her happiness with him, even online, as she exclaimed. He was perplexed and relieved at the same time, still having her, but being unable holding her in reality, as only then would he be able to find his inner balance. But then would he?

3

The airplane sets to land on the stretched-out tarmac of the airfield, with the airport's wing-like features gleaming in the morning light. Brand new it shines like a seated metallic bird, hovering on top of the flattened portions of the steam-rolled land. He is elated and his senses are alerted to be in Athens once again. He has not been here for seventeen years, expecting to find the taste of the atmosphere for a mere five days. And while he is busy to think of all the notebooks, pencils and his pen and paper he had strewn around his seat, he collects that bundle of items, he will slide into his hand luggage, when the airplane has stopped rolling. The landing was smooth and it is Saturday morning, six o'clock, still dark outside this time in January, when rain falls and temperatures can drop to lower levels, yet if lucky, it will be only fresh, not cold, in accordance with the captains report. They have landed well. Barb feels sleepy and exhausted from the half leaning, half cowering position in a tourist-class seat all night. Yet, this is the shortest flight from Africa of the South to the European shores. Just eight and three quarter hours and even then the body's circulatory system is put to a grueling test. Swollen feet are heavy like lead. Formalities are speedy and once the doors bi-parted to give access to the taxi ranks, the air feels fresh on the covered walkway to the taxi that is their turn, waiting along the curb in a civilized manner, unlike the way back in Jo'burg with its chaotic conditions. He thinks of being away from unruliness, disorderly behavior, crowding and a different way of survival.

The cab driver's English is reasonable and as Ara asks some questions pointing to some monuments along the way

to the center of town, the cabbie would name them. There is dense and heavy traffic towards the city's core, although it is still early until offices and shops will open for business. He could hear the driver announcing *Syntagma Square* and *Parliament*. *Hotel Grand Bretagne*, he emphasizes, best in town. Half asleep in the warm interior, Ara notices the cathedral and soon the cab stops at a corner. The driver places their luggage to the pavement, while Ara fishes for some notes of Euro in his wallet, which he hands to the driver, who in turn hands him some change, Ara pockets.

Barb takes the hand luggage, she wheels along behind her and he takes the two suitcases with the built-in wheels to haul the lot a few meters into the hotel's entrance. Hotel Plaka, simple black letters are affixed above the plate glass bi-parting entrance doors, as soon as the radar beam is activated by body movements. The lobby is airy and paved in light colored natural marble slabs. The receptionist is business-like, registering them speedily. They take their lift to the third floor, although later installed, it is sufficient in space for their luggage as well. Their room, at the corridor's end is neat and as shown on the website, he studied beforehand. Barb heads immediately to the bathroom, to prepare a hot bath. Ara pulls the curtains aside to be able to absorb the view onto the Acropolis, as the Hotel's prospectus had promised. He admires the morning's glow in the marble of the north-east gable of the great Parthenon temple. He had studied the sight from photographs before, and now he is just staring onto its real appearance with awe. The rising sun rays illuminate one of the greatest icons of antiquity setting the marble of columns and the gable aglow in an orange-pink reflection: A marvelous magical jewelry box from this distance, he muses in awe.

He leaves the curtains open, to enjoy the unusual view of the temple that took him into its magical ban, while Barb is busy in the bath. He is preparing himself to have an initial walk into the city close by, to refresh his mind and buy a

chip for his cellular phone, perhaps he could find an internet cafe and contact his poetry friends. Then get on with his initial chores and finish his exploration with spotting an attractive place nearby, where one can eat in pleasant surroundings. He looks for his guide book in his trunk and he packs it into his dark grey knapsack he brought along.

He tells Barb he will be away for a while, and while he talks, she falls into bed and is asleep immediately. He does not know if she understood all he said. He rather writes her a note. He leaves the room, walking down to reception, the clerk giving him directions for a nearby electronics shop. Then, as he gazes out the plate glass doors, he can see a woman passing by. She is dressed in dark clothes, and as she turns to face him, she smiles at him with dark hazel eyes. He is mesmerized by her at this moment of direct eye contact. He thanks the clerk, rushing out the bi-parting doors, and he cannot see her anywhere. Has he witnessed a spook? Her face looked familiar: a friend, someone he knew from way back?

He proceeds down towards Monastiraki to find the shop the clerk had scribbled on a piece of paper, but he has to stop at times, retrieve his fold-up map from the inner city and fold it the way to display the area he is presently in. Studying the Greek letters of the street names that are written as well in English below, he thus started his refreshment of the Greek alphabet, he has once learned at school. Strolling passed a travel office, he notices the display of a huge colorful poster of Santorini Island. His trip with Barb seventeen years ago comes to his mind.

"That's it!" He almost shouts. He remembered the woman's face, passing the hotel just before. He met this woman with dark hair, dusky hazel eyes, and with dark clothes on that island. He recalls an exhibition of watercolors in an art gallery there. Then, trying to recall the artist's name, he remembers part of his first name. It was a long first name, like Xenophon, Xstophorus, or similar, he

muses. The woman there had been curious about his whereabouts, interested in the same artist. He told her he was living in Africa. She looked at him with her dark warm eyes and there was a change of that warmth radiating from her glances with the light altering, as if she had the same vivid inner life. Perhaps she even might be an actress.

Then she smiled at him. "You are lucky," she said, "you wanted the painting first." The sales lady told him that it was one of the last watercolours, as all Xenophorus' paintings had been sold out. As he paid and turned to ask the dusky-eyed woman for her name, she was gone without him not noticing. The saleslady did not know her, "a tourist," she murmured between her efforts of wrapping his picture up.

"She looked to me Greek," he prodded further.

"Many Greeks come here to visit from the mainland," she added. He took his wrapped watercolour and left for his hotel to fetch Barb and show her his acquisition.

That woman's image appeared from then on regularly on his mind's eye, sometimes as a clear picture, sometimes slipping into a host of identities. He often started to muse about then and recall some memories he had still access to that were connected to dusky-eyed women. But most of the women were other than Greek, the closest was an Italian. By the time he had quizzed his mind about all dark haired women he had met, he landed up this time in Spain and southern Italy and all southern countries around the Mediterranean Sea. Some images had anchored themselves deep in his heart and the files of his extended memory.

He reached the comm.'s shop. Then he asked the assistant to help him load a temporary chip, so he was able to communicate locally. The friendly lad with long curls installed it and he tried his first call, phoning his friend, a poet. At times he conversed with him on the internet and he'd sent him poetry and notes on literature. At other times he received news back from Athens.