

MURDER *in* MYKONOS

SOMEONE IS PAINTING THE ISLAND RED.
BLOOD RED...



JEFFREY SIGER

THE NO. 1 GREEK BESTSELLER

Jeffrey Siger was born and raised in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He practiced law at a major Wall Street law firm and, while there, served as Special Counsel to the citizens group responsible for reporting on New York City's prison conditions. He left Wall Street to establish his own New York City law firm and continued as one of its name partners until giving it all up to write full-time among the people, life, and politics of his beloved Mykonos, his adopted home of twenty-five years, and spear fish in its Aegean waters. When he's not in Greece, he enjoys his other home, a farm outside New York City. *Murder in Mykonos*, the first in his Chief Inspector Andreas Kaldis series, was the number one best-selling English-language novel in Greece.

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Praise for Jeffrey Siger:

'Masterfully written . . . even if you are not a murder-mystery fanatic, you will adore this book . . .
genius'

Mykonos Magazine

'With ten million Greeks, half of who think they are writers, how come we had to wait for a foreigner
to come along to write such a book!'

Esquire Magazine (Greece)

'The must-read book of the week!'

OK! (Greece)

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Published by Hachette Digital

ISBN: 978-0-748-11788-8

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Hachette Digital
Little, Brown Book Group
100 Victoria Embankment
London EC4Y 0DY

www.hachette.co.uk

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*In Memory of Tassos Stamoulis,
the most beloved man on Mykonos,
and Ken, my brother.*

Acknowledgments

For all of you who helped me along the way, thank you.

Mihalis, Roz and Spiros Apostolou; Ersilia Bachauer; Olga Balafa; Tracy Beltran; Tonino Cacace; Cece Cord; Donald and Leena Crothers; Jody Duncan and Nikos Christodoulakis; Lori Estes-Markari; Donka Koleva; Andreas and Aleka Fiorentinos; Rebecca Friedman; Jane Gelfman; Susy Hammerson; Lillian Heiser; Nikos Ipiotis; Elizabeth Kabler; Nicholas Karahalios; Panos Kelaidis; Alexandros Kontogouris; Sharon Lock-Sikinioti; George Makrigiannis; Linda Marshall; Thomas and Renate McKnight; Leah Miller; Nikos Nazos; Wendy Popowich; Edward Prendergast and Roberto Mendes Coelho; Ellen Roth; Alan and Pat Siger; Jonathan (especially for his cover inspiration), Jennifer and Azriel Siger; Karen Siger; Peter and Joan Silbermann; George and Efi Sirinakis; Ed Stackler; Christine Smith; George and Theodore Stamoulis; Nolan and Chris Stripling; Hronis Taboulhanas; Margaret Wimberger.

And, of course, Aikaterini Lalaouni.

Prologue

Just past midnight the massive Rodanthi ferry silently made its grand entrance into Mykonos' narrow crescent-shaped harbor. Though it was still a bit early in the season for the partying crowds that swelled this Greek island's population from ten thousand to fifty thousand in July and August, the harbor was wildly alive with lights and people.

It was exactly as the young woman had imagined – a blaze of white buildings under a diamond-studded sky.

She'd been standing inside with other backpackers on the third-level passenger deck watching the island's lights slowly envelop the horizon. Now she stepped outside and walked to the bow railing. Feeling the Aegean breeze in her face, she re-doubled the elastic band holding her blond ponytail in place. It was all so beautiful. She regretted only one thing: being here alone.

She felt as much as heard the thrusting power of the reversing engines as the ship began its graceful one-quarter pirouette toward the dock. Drawing in a deep breath from the wind coming off the sea, she picked up her backpack, headed for the stairs nearest the bow, and made her way down to the exit deck. The ferry had docked at its stern, and when she reached the bottom level she had to squeeze her way past a collection of beat-up island-hopping cars, trucks, and motorcycles waiting to disembark. She knew that at six feet tall her well-toned figure was attracting a lot of attention, especially in hiking shorts and a tank top. Several drivers along the way yelled out to her in various languages, offering her a ride anywhere she wanted to go. She acted as if she didn't understand but smiled to herself.

Most of the passengers were off the boat by the time she was at the gangway. Now she had to find place to stay. That was not a problem. There were dozens of people offering accommodations, literally tugging at her for attention. She was inundated with photographs, brochures, letters of recommendation, all designed to funnel weary tourists into empty rooms.

The young woman spoke with the hawkers in English and picked what looked like a charming small hotel just above the town. The man, who claimed to be the owner, promised her a room with a private bath and a view of the town – at a 'special price.' He seemed very nice and with his gray hair was at least wise enough to mask any other interest he might have in her. Already, two couples from the ferry waited in his little van, so she wouldn't be going off alone with a stranger.

At the hotel she showed the owner her passport. He welcomed her in Dutch and told her he'd had many guests from the Netherlands, things that assured her she'd made the right choice. The room was as promised. She showered, put on her one sexy dress, and went out to wander the maze of winding, narrow paths lined by whitewashed buildings, adorned with brightly colored doors, shutters, and railings.

The town was awash in jewelry shops and bars. Vacationing families and pilgrims seeking early-morning connections to the nearby ancient and holy island of Delos were in their beds by now.

Summer nights in Mykonos belonged to all-night partiers seeking their own sorts of connections. Bedtime could wait until a much later hour. No pretty woman ever needed to pay for a drink or dinner here.

At one of the bars she met a local Greek about her age. He introduced her to the owner who said the young man was his son. Then he introduced her to an 'old family friend' – an American painter who told her he'd been coming to Mykonos every summer for more than thirty years. They all spoke in English although the young man seemed to know enough Dutch words to use at the right time to be charming. By the time she left the bar it was nearly light and the young man convinced her to ride on the back of his motorcycle to a place where they could watch the sun come up.

She mounted his bike and put her arms around him; the engine vibrated between her legs. For twenty minutes she pressed her body against his as he raced toward the rising sun. At the beach – deserted, he said, except for a single small house owned by a priest from England – they touched and kissed through the sunrise; then took off their clothes and swam naked. He tried to make love to her, but he had no condom and she refused. He pressed her; she resisted. He pushed her down, yanked away his clothes, and stormed off shouting at her in Greek.

She heard the sound of his motorcycle as he drove away, leaving her alone to find her way back. She was thankful she hadn't been raped. Topsy, tired, and angry at herself, she dressed and started up the steep dirt road toward what she hoped would be town. She had to take off her heels to walk, and the stones hurt her feet. She wasn't used to this. She wanted to cry but kept on walking. It was a dry and rocky road, like the island itself. After fifteen minutes or so she heard a motor on the other side of a hill. For an instant she thought it might be him returning. It wasn't. It was a car, a taxi bearing down toward her in a cloud of dust. She was surprised to see one out here so early in the morning but frantically waved for him to stop.

She spoke to the driver in English and he responded in English. She started to cry. He told her to get in and asked what happened. She told him the story as if replaying a video of her ordeal. He listened quietly, not saying a word. When they reached her hotel he said he knew the young man and she really hadn't been in any danger; but on an island filled with so many strangers she must be very careful who she trusts – especially when it comes to young men with motorcycles. That made her feel a little better, though she still was mad at herself for thinking she was the first one he'd taken on a romantic sunrise motorcycle ride.

She slept until about two that afternoon, then took a bus to Paradise Beach. She refused to talk to anyone there, but the young Greek men persisted. Eventually, she moved to the nude, gay part of the beach where macho Greek Romeos were afraid to be seen. She stripped naked and read a book, undisturbed. That night she went back into town and spent her time talking with jewelers and souvenir sellers. Enough bar boys. One of the jewelers invited her to dinner at a fashionable restaurant. She had a great time and he was a perfect gentleman.

He walked her to a taxi and invited her to attend a Greek festival to be held in three days to honor a saint. She thanked him but said she was leaving the island in two days and promised to stop by his shop before she left.

Then, like so many other backpackers, she simply disappeared. No one paid the balance of her hotel bill – also not unusual in Mykonos. The hotel owner simply threw out whatever she'd left behind, reported nothing to the police, and rented the room to a new pretty woman from another midnight ferry.



Andreas Kaldis knew why his six-foot-two-inch body was crammed into a midget-sized window seat on a plane to Mykonos, and he didn't like it one bit. He'd been 'promoted' from the Greek police force's number one ass-kicker in central Athens to its chief dog-and-cat protector for Athenian weekenders. At least that's how he saw it. Thirty-four-year-old hotshot homicide detectives like one thing: catching killers. For them, the worst punishment imaginable was being taken away from the action. His promotion to chief of police for one of the smallest of the Cyclades islands meant just that: being as far away from what he was born to do as Andreas could imagine.

Ninety miles and less than thirty minutes from Athens by plane, or three hours by high-speed ferry, Mykonos was approximately one and a half times the size of the island of Manhattan and had become to Athens what Andreas understood 'the Hamptons' were to New Yorkers. Rich and superrich Athenians – together with thousands of wannabe celebrities from all over Europe – flocked to Mykonos on holiday. Many built mega-million-euro summer homes on the island or paid London hotel prices for far less than English five-star service.

What the locals wanted didn't matter anymore – even though most didn't know it yet. The moneyed visitors now had a say in how Mykonos would be run, and they had their complaints. For one thing, they were tired of putting up with the old ways. They also groused about too many break-ins, too many crazy, drunken drivers, and too much local political influence over police enforcement practices. The wealthy were demanding better policing, and they had the political influence to get it.

Enter Andreas Kaldis. His move to Mykonos – or rather, his departure from Athens – was exceptionally good news to certain powerful people. His aggressive investigation into a series of murders over control of the Athenian drug trade had worried them. Promoting him out of Athens – and out of the investigation – was a political masterstroke that even Andreas could appreciate. It hurt no one and made everyone happy. Everyone but Andreas.

Officially, he arrived under a mandate involving the European Union's insistence that Mykonos show more even handed law enforcement toward non-Greeks. Andreas took that as a political cover story for Greece's Public Order Ministry, which oversaw the police, to guard against the inevitable griping by Mykonian locals that Athens was trying to control their affairs – a perennial complaint among islanders.

Also mentioned in the official announcement of his appointment was the fact that Andreas lacked family ties to any Greek island. That made him a particularly desirable choice for police chief because no one could accuse him of favoritism toward islanders – a perennial complaint on the part of mainland Greeks. The fact that Andreas had served his obligatory service in the military at an air force installation on Mykonos was not mentioned.

Off the record, Andreas had orders to tread lightly with the locals. As a young, single man wielding

considerable power on a small island, he knew that word of his every move would get around fast. As far as he was concerned, Athens wasn't a much bigger place when it came to gossip – and he liked it that way. That was how he got some of his best leads. If the warning meant to avoid fooling around with the local women, he already knew better. Any self-respecting cop would. Besides, Andreas had no intention of incurring some local family's vendetta – or of tying his future to a Mykonos clan for the rest of his days.

His morning flight was packed with early-June tourists. He fit right in, except he already had his tan – it came, along with his dark hair and gray eyes, from his parents. So did his square jaw and decent good looks. The counterbalancing bump and slightly crooked tilt to his nose – the collective work of several folks who'd ended up looking a lot worse – let you know Andreas wasn't someone to mess with.

'Looks like it's going to be a busy season,' said the guy in the aisle seat next to him. He was about Andreas' size but looked twenty years older.

Andreas hated talking to people on airplanes. Something about planes made people want to tell you things they'd never dream of talking about with strangers on the ground. Maybe it was something about being up in the air, above the earth and closer to God. Or maybe it was just nerves.

'You're Greek, aren't you?' The man was speaking Greek with what sounded like a South African accent.

Andreas had to respond in order to avoid seeming rude. He nodded.

'Sure hope it's busy. Business was slow last year.'

This guy isn't going to stop, thought Andreas, nodding again. He turned his head and stared out the window.

'I'm a jeweler.'

Andreas knew the man was just trying to be friendly and he didn't have anything against jewelers someday he might even need one if he found the right girl. But this cheery nosiness was just the sort of thing he dreaded about being posted to Mykonos. Everyone wanted to know everyone else's business. Andreas turned back to the fellow and, with his most practiced, tired-cop look, said, 'That's nice,' and returned to the window.

The man took the hint and remained silent for the rest of the flight. After they landed and were walking from the plane to the terminal, he offered Andreas his hand, which Andreas shook graciously. 'Enjoy your time here among the gods,' the man said with a smile. 'After all, they were our first tourists.'

And, no doubt, those same gods knew that they wouldn't be the last.

As Andreas waited for his bags he looked around and saw a room full of excited, good-time-ready responsibilities. How would he possibly protect and police fifty thousand locals and visitors with only sixty cops – including the additional twenty-five assigned to him for the tourist season? He shook his head and chuckled aloud. Maybe he could summon a few of those gods from Delos in a pinch.

Outside the terminal he waited for whomever had been assigned to pick him up. The breeze felt good, but after five minutes of pushing his slightly too-long hair out of his eyes and over his forehead he picked up his briefcase and walked the hundred yards to the police station abutting the airport. It had been relocated there from the center of town a few years before – perhaps to shorten the walk for stranded chiefs. Andreas didn't mind the walk – he ran regularly to keep fit – but he did mind the lack of respect.

The two-story, thick-walled building had the traditional whitewash with blue trim found in Mykonian architecture. Police and civilian cars, SUVs, and motorcycles as well as an assortment of

vehicles mangled in road accidents were parked haphazardly along the front and left side of the building. Andreas wasn't in uniform, and the first things he noticed as he walked in were the ages and abrupt attitudes of the cops who got right in his face and asked what he wanted. All but a handful of the officers under his command were fresh out of the police academy, or still in it and assigned to Mykonos for the summer as part of their training. As green as green could be.

And their community-relations skills would need serious work. What would be even trickier was that, according to their personnel files, not one of these kids was from Mykonos. Mykonians were fiercely independent; they had no desire to be cops and little respect for those who were. Tourism had made Mykonians, on a per capita basis, the richest people in Greece. The financial benefits of police work – both lawful and otherwise – held no attraction for them. Besides, many boasted ancestors who had been unrepentant pirates.

One cop asked Andreas a second time – and more aggressively – what he wanted. Andreas couldn't help himself. 'Would you be kind enough to pick up my bags at the airport? I left them with the Olympic ticket agent.'

The young man, who was built like a bull, looked to his friends, then back at Andreas. 'Listen, wiseass, this is a police station. So get the hell out before you find out what happens when you fuck with cops.' He gave an 'I showed him' smirk to his buddies.

Andreas fixed his steel-gray eyes on the young cop and let a 'do I have your ass now' smile spread across his face. 'So nice to meet you, Officer – what does that say on your uniform? – Kouros. I'm Andreas Kaldis, your new chief of police.'

Someone should have checked Kouros' shorts at that moment, but there wasn't time. He proved himself smart enough to be out the door and in a car headed to the airport before Andreas could speak another word. Kouros' friends also jumped to attention, Andreas' point clearly made.

Chalk one up for the new chief. But there was no time to enjoy his little victory. He'd deal with Kouros and the man responsible for meeting him at the airport later, in private. For the moment, there was a lot of work to do. He just hoped to get half-accustomed to the job before all hell broke loose.

By the middle of his first week Andreas knew his job was impossible. Everyone on the island did what they wanted. It was as if the police didn't exist. For now, he could only manage triage, prioritizing what could be done. The impossible situations would be left alone. The insignificant would too. He'd focus attention on what he'd been told was the most politically sensitive concern: danger to tourists. Mykonos thrived because of its tourists, and he had to protect them – if only from themselves.

By the beginning of his second week he'd set up a series of floating checkpoints for catching drunk drivers, reckless drivers, and helmetless motorcyclists. It was the sort of high-visibility, aggressive police activity that, by word of mouth, would change the behavior of far more drivers than they could ever arrest.

He also set up a special unit to back up the cops who worked undercover at the island's most notorious, late-night tourist spots keeping an eye out for pickpockets and drug dealers. If a tourist at any of those places was robbed or assaulted that unit would appear in force – and in uniform. It was a not so subtle way of sending word to the owners that they'd better take care of their patrons if they wanted their places to remain free of more intrusive police activity.

Thefts from unlocked hotel rooms and unattended bags were grudgingly accepted as an unpreventable fact of modern life. But unprovoked violence and robbery against innocent tourists enjoying the island's freewheeling party life threatened the economic heart of Mykonos. Andreas' message was clear: no such threat to its reputation would be tolerated – from anyone.

In less than two weeks, Andreas felt that he was having a positive impact on the community. The island's longtime mayor – a sturdy combination of political-machine boss and preening cock of the walk – even stopped by to compliment him. Things seemed to be working out. He thought if he made it through the summer without ruffling any feathers or stepping on any toes he just might be able to work his way back into the good graces of the folks in Athens – and get transferred the hell out of here.

He thought it might help him to stay cool if he tried a little harder to relax. Go to the beach and blow off some steam. Maybe even one of those beaches where the tourist women like to show off the lack of tan lines. He wondered if they were still as hot for Greeks in uniform as they had been when he'd served here in the air force. It was early afternoon and he was getting into the fantasy when Kouros hurried into his office – after knocking, of course.

The news was not good: an Albanian moving stone on some property way over on the other side of the island called to say he'd found a dead body.

Andreas didn't want to believe what he was hearing and his voice showed it. 'A dead body, on Mykonos?'

'Yes, sir,' said Kouros. He'd learned to treat his chief with respect. 'He didn't say much more than that. Just the location. He was pretty frightened. I was surprised he even called. Most of them doing that sort of work are illegal and afraid of us.'

Andreas paused for a moment and stared off into the middle distance, contemplating a decision. 'Do you know how to get there?'

'Yes.'

Andreas got up from his desk. 'Well, let's take a ride over and see what he found.'

'Uh, sir?' Kouros' voice was tentative.

'Yes.'

In an even more uncertain tone: 'Aren't we supposed to call Syros whenever there's a homicide?'

Central Police Headquarters for the Cyclades was on Syros, the political capital for the circle of islands spanning one hundred miles from Andros on the north to Santorini on the south. All homicide investigators and criminal forensic facilities were based there – less than an hour from Mykonos by police boat.

Andreas knew Kouros was right, but he'd be damned if he'd let Syros trample over a murder scene in his jurisdiction before he had a chance to look at it. So much for playing it cool. 'Yeah, but let's just make sure it wasn't a dead goat he found before bothering Syros.'

Kouros said nothing, simply walked with Andreas to the car, got into the driver's seat, and began driving east. Andreas liked the way the big kid knew when to keep his mouth shut.

'Sir, I understand you were with Special Homicide Investigations in Athens?'

Word got around. 'Yes.'

'How many murders have you seen?'

'Of goats? Or sheep?'

'Nice day, sir.'

'Sure is.'

The rest of their conversation was about Kouros' family back in Athens and his roots on the Ionian island of Zákynthos. It was a pleasant chat, but one that let Kouros know there would be no personal information coming from the chief for him to share with his buddies over coffee.

The twenty-minute drive took them along the road past the air force's mountaintop 'secret' radar installation – the one everyone on the island knew about. Andreas had been stationed there twelve

years ago. He couldn't believe how much that part of the island had changed. Back then there was virtually nothing to see from up here but dirt roads and endless rocky, barren hillsides crisscrossed with centuries-old stone walls. Now the road was paved and elegant homes sprouted everywhere on seemingly unbuildable sites. It was amazing what people with money could do when they wanted something.

The road turned to dirt, then drifted back down the mountain to the east before heading north and up again toward the most desolate part of the island. These steep, gray-brown hillsides once were home to goat herders who could afford no better land, but even they long ago abandoned their little stone-fenced fields in favor of other places. For almost a century no one had wanted to be here. Too far out of town, too much wind, too little – if any – water.

Now, a recent island-wide ban on new construction on land without an existing foundation made an even long-abandoned, goat herder's shed valuable. Using an appropriately connected contractor to obtain – for a price – the necessary permits, you could 'finish' construction and truck in all the fresh water you wanted along the new road. All you needed was the money.

Andreas remembered old mines around here down by the sea. Some sort of mineral used in oil drilling – barite, maybe. He wondered if they still operated. Abandoned mines were great for hiding bodies. On an island like this, though, there had to be hundreds of places to get rid of one – if you had time to plan – but he knew murders rarely took place where the murderer would like them to. That meant moving the body or leaving it where the killer hadn't planned. Either way left clues. Most murders were poorly thought out beyond the decision to kill – unless, of course, professionals or terrorists were involved.

Then again, this was an island, and the best place to get rid of a body was the sea. No one would ever find one tossed in the sea if you knew how to keep it from popping up. Thankfully, most killers didn't have that skill – though Andreas was pretty sure that on an island of fishermen most Mykonian would know how or have a relative who did.

Just past a steep switchback, the road tied in to an older, badly beat-up dirt road coming around from the other side of the mountain. Andreas could see that it wound down to the mines and wondered if the body actually might be in one. This road was much worse than the other, and their car looked to be losing its battle with some deep ruts from winter-rain runoff. He was about to tell Kouros to call for an SUV when he saw a beat-up old motorcycle leaning against a boulder by the hillside. The bike was so dusty he couldn't tell its color. A slightly built man, more like a boy, was sitting in the dirt next to it. His dark hair, white T-shirt, and brown, coarse pants were as dusty as the bike. He jumped up as soon as he saw them. He must be their man.

Though he looked a good foot shorter and eighty pounds lighter than Andreas, the chief knew there was a good chance the man, like many of the Albanian laborers who worked like ants at tough, nasty jobs no Mykonian would ever do again, was stronger than he was. Building stone walls all day in relentless heat could do that, if it doesn't kill you. Andreas reached for a bottle of water from the backseat and got out of the car. He walked over and handed the water to the man without saying a word. The man thanked him and Andreas nodded but said nothing. Kouros kept his mouth shut.

From behind his sunglasses Andreas studied him. The Albanian was probably in his early twenties but his hands and arms bore the bruises and calluses of a far longer lifetime of manual labor. A seriously distressed wedding ring faintly glistened on his finger as he held the bottle to his lips. His hand was shaking and he was frightened. He should be; that was normal. Now to see if there was anything about his story or behavior that wasn't.

He let the man finish drinking and stared at him for a minute longer without saying a word.

Probably Kouros was right about the man being illegal. He must be scared to death he'll be asked to show his papers. ~~Andreas decided to let that fear fester while he went after what he really wanted to know. Kouros could deal with his papers later.~~

'Did you call?' Andreas kept his voice firm but pleasant. He didn't have to say about what; either he'd know or he wasn't the right guy.

'Yes, sir.'

'What's your name?'

'Alex.'

He didn't need his last name for now. 'Where are you from?'

'Ano Mera.'

That was the other town on Mykonos, located in the middle of the island. But that wasn't what Andreas meant by his question. He let it pass. The man had to know Andreas knew he was from Albania, if only from his heavily accented Greek.

'So, Alex, why don't you tell us what you're doing up here.'

'I was working here today.'

'Doing what?'

'Fixing stone walls.'

'Where?'

He turned and pointed two hundred yards up the steep hillside. 'By the church.'

Andreas looked where the man was pointing. All he saw were many muted shades of brown dirt, brown bushes, and brown rocks – though when he looked closer he saw the rocks were more gray and reddish than brown. The only church he saw was on a different hillside far off to the left. 'Do you mean there?' He pointed to the distant traditional, whitewashed, blue-doored, Mykonian family church with its distinctive terra-cotta-colored, horizontal half-cylinder shaped roof. They were all over the island, some no bigger than a hundred square feet.

'No, there.' The man pointed to where he'd pointed before.

Andreas walked over and sighted down the man's arm as if it were a rifle. Out of the brown he could just make out rocks forming a wall, and behind the wall a structure of some sort – also made of rocks – part way up the hill. He'd never seen an unpainted stone church on Mykonos.

'Who do you work for?'

The man gave the name of a well-known contractor on the island and said he was told to come here today to start rebuilding the walls around the church. As far as he knew, he was the first one to work here. Someone was supposed to help him but hadn't shown up. In fact, he hadn't seen anyone else around all day, except for an SUV or two that drove by while he was waiting for the police.

When Andreas asked why he called, the man got very nervous. Andreas pressed him. 'I know you don't want trouble, so just answer my questions. Why'd you call?'

He was literally shaking. 'If I not tell what I find, someone else come here and tell police, then you blame me when find I was here.'

A rational reason, Andreas thought, possibly too rational. He'd better keep a close eye on the guy until he saw the body. A fresh one would make this guy suspect numero uno.

'Okay, then. Where'd you find the body?'

'In the church.'

'What were you doing in the church? I thought you were working on the walls.' Alex looked like he might run. Andreas moved to block off an escape down the hill. Kouros must have sensed the same thing because he moved to cut off a run the other way. Andreas wondered whether he should unholster

his gun. Not quite yet.

~~The man dropped to his knees and began shaking his head. 'I know I did wrong, I know I did wrong.'~~

Andreas' hand was now on his pistol. Kouros' already was out of the holster.

'I want to see what inside church. It so old and different from others.' As if to redeem himself, he added, 'but door not locked.'

'What was inside?' Andreas' tone was chillingly serious.

The man seemed afraid to look up from the ground. 'Icons, candles . . .' He trailed off.

Just what you'd expect to find in a church, thought Andreas. 'What else?'

No answer.

In a voice of unmistakable, ultimate authority Andreas said, 'What else?'

The man was breathing quickly. 'There a stone on the floor.' He paused. 'I want to see what under it.'

Andreas and Kouros looked at each other. He saw Kouros immediately relax, smile at him, and holster his weapon. Even Andreas had to fight back a laugh. This poor bastard obviously didn't know much about island churches. Cremation was forbidden in the Greek Orthodox faith, and there wasn't enough cemetery space on most islands – even the mainland – for permanent burial under ground. So the dead were buried in a cemetery only for three or four years. Then their bones were dug up and cleaned as part of a ritual before finally being interred in either the wall or under a floor slab in a family church – assuming the family had a church. Otherwise, they were stored in a building at the cemetery.

Alex probably was expecting to find some secret buried treasure and instead got the scare of his life when he opened a burial crypt.

Andreas wished he'd been there to see his face. Ah, what the hell, he thought; we've come this far and the guy did call us. Let's just play it out. 'Okay. Why don't you just show us what you found.'

The climb took about ten minutes for Andreas and Kouros, about six for Alex. No question who was in better shape for scrambling up hillsides, though Andreas tried to convince himself he was taking a bit longer to enjoy the view. And what a view it was. Each shade-of-brown hill faded into the next slightly darker rise until only a haze of retreating, graceful curves remained to vanish into a sapphire sea and slightly lighter sky. Salt-wind driven fragrances of wild rosemary, savory, and thyme seasoned the air. Whoever chose this site for looking out upon eternity knew what he was doing, thought Andreas.

From up here, he could see that the church was a testament to ancient craftsmanship in natural stone. But this was not an antiquities tour, and Andreas had a lot of work to do back in the office – boring things, but still things. He told Alex to lead the way inside.

Alex pushed open the unpainted wooden door. As usual for a church, the door faced west, toward the setting sun, and the altar at the other end faced east, and the rising sun. That meant there'd be no direct sunlight through the front door until late afternoon, but there was enough light to see. They followed him inside.

The church was smaller than it seemed from outside, probably only about eight feet wide by fifteen feet long, including the small separated space in the rear reserved for the priest. Each side wall had a tiny, tightly shuttered window opening. Looming above them was the cylindrical dome. At its highest point this one looked no more than fifteen feet from the floor. The floor was made of some sort of hard-packed, dirtlike material, but not dirt. Probably ground seashells. A delicately engraved slab of white marble about four and a half feet long by two and a half feet wide sat flush with the floor,

centered lengthwise in the middle of the main chamber. Obviously, Alex had taken the time to put it back in place.

As Alex had said, the interior of the church was neat and clean, with icons and candles in all the appropriate places. Andreas thought some family friend or neighbor must be looking after the place – unless the spirits were taking care of it themselves. There was no way the church could be in this condition without someone regularly caring for it. It was time to end Alex’s ordeal and get back to planning the next traffic stop.

Andreas pointed to the crypt. ‘Would you please open it up for us.’

Alex started to shake again. ‘No, please, I can’t. Please.’

Andreas was reluctant to force the man, but then again, cops don’t bend over in the presence of suspects – however unsuspected they may be. ‘Sit over there in the corner.’ He gestured to the far left. ‘Yianni, move the slab so we can get the hell out of here.’

Kouros walked over and put his fingers on a corner edge of the slab. It was a lot heavier than it looked, and when it didn’t budge at his initial tug Kouros gave a quick look over at Alex – which Andreas took for a sign of respect – then gripped and pulled hard enough to send the lid across the floor and crashing into the wall. Neither man bothered to check for damage. They were too busy gagging at the stench from the decomposing body beneath the slab.



Catia Vanden Haag was not concerned; just put off. Her only child, Annika, was away on holiday, and she'd heard from her just once since Catia and her husband returned home to the Netherlands after attending Annika's graduation ceremonies at Yale University. It was by postcard on her arrival in London to join her boyfriend, Peter, for the start of their six-week backpacking adventure through Italy and Greece – 'Having a great time, glad you're not here.' Catia knew her daughter well enough to know her note explained everything – she was too busy doing God knows what with her boyfriend to think of her poor mother.

A tendency to focus with single-minded determination on the matter at hand to the exclusion of everything else was a trait Annika inherited from her Dutch diplomat father. Catia smiled as she thought of a trait or two she'd passed on: the Greek passion for doing God knows what – and the physical stamina to recover afterward. Catia well remembered her own days of flitting through summers with boys in her native Greece. She was not worried one bit about Annika. Sooner or later she'd get a call.

It came that afternoon, but not from Annika.

Peter's father was calling to apologize.

'For what?' Catia had no idea what he was talking about.

'Peter told me what happened.'

Catia felt the anxiety before knowing why. 'Richard, what are you saying?'

'I just spoke to him in London and—'

It was so unlike her to interrupt. 'In London? But they're in Italy . . . or Greece . . . or . . .' She realized she had no idea where they were.

'I thought that too, that's why I was so surprised when he called and told me he wasn't.'

'He?' Catia's free hand instinctively went to her throat.

'Yes, that's why I'm calling. I couldn't believe my son would be so stupid as to allow your daughter to travel on holiday alone, no matter what the reason.'

Catia didn't know what to say, so she said the obvious: 'Why aren't they together?'

'I'm embarrassed to say, he won't tell me. All he said was they aren't traveling together and she's all right.'

Her control was back and her voice abrupt. 'Where's my daughter, Richard?'

There was surprise in his voice. 'Haven't you spoken with her?'

'Not since she left for London.'

He paused. 'Peter doesn't know.'

'Then how can he possibly know she's all right?' Her tone was angry and dismissive, but she didn't care.

‘Catia, I’m sorry, I don’t know what to say.’ His voice was sincere, but that wouldn’t help find Annika.

Catia was silent for a moment, then asked, ‘Do you have your son’s telephone number?’ Her anger kept her from saying the boy’s name.

‘Yes,’ Richard said, and gave it to her. ‘Catia, I . . . I—’

She cut him off again. ‘I have to get off now, but thank you for calling to tell us.’

‘I really am sorry.’

‘Goodbye.’

It took Andreas only an instant to recover from the surprise of finding a body where only bones should be. He pulled his gun and ordered the wide-eyed Alex outside; then pushed a green-faced Kouros out behind him, yelling at him not to dare puke in the middle of a crime scene.

Andreas was pretty sure the laborer wasn’t the killer – the corpse wasn’t fresh – but he wasn’t one for taking chances with murder suspects, and anyone who finds a body is a suspect until proven otherwise. He told Kouros to use the car radio to notify Syros of the body and to hold Alex at the station for further questioning but not to treat him as a murder suspect quite yet. In other words, no blowtorch and days of pain in a closet style interrogation. Andreas said he’d stay at the church until the Syros investigators arrived – but to leave Alex’s motorcycle just in case he needed it.

Neither Andreas nor Kouros raised the obvious: another officer could be there in ten minutes to secure the scene and free up Andreas. Nor did Kouros ask what his chief planned to do out here all alone while waiting for the men from Syros. He just silently walked the handcuffed suspect down the hill, put him in the backseat, and got into the car.

Andreas watched them drive off and turned to study the crime scene – his crime scene.

He stood by the door and looked carefully down the hill. Nothing seemed out of place. Not a bush or a weed crushed by a tire or a single telltale sign of dragged or carried weight. Just endless gray-green-to-brown dry brush and brown rocky dirt mixed with wild-goat and donkey crap. The only tracks were Kouros’, Alex’s and his, and Alex’s tracks bore out his story that he’d worked on the wall and walked to the church from there.

Andreas looked up toward the top of the hill and slowly scanned it just as carefully, moving his eyes back and forth in sections. He saw nothing unusual. He didn’t expect to, because he couldn’t imagine why someone would haul a body over the top of a mountain to get here. There was no more cover going that way than climbing up from the road below – and you’d be visible on the mountain for a lot longer to a lot more people if you did. Anyway, he expected Syros to go over every inch of the mountain looking for clues. Better chance at hitting the lottery, if you asked him.

As far as Andreas was concerned there were two conceivable explanations for the lack of tracks – and one was strictly for James Bond fans. It involved a helicopter dropping a body at a deserted church rather than into the deepest part of the sea. Not a chance.

No tracks meant only one thing to him: the body had been here for at least two weeks. Andreas had arrived in Mykonos the day after an unheard of early-June rainstorm. More like a deluge, he was told. Whatever tracks there were – and there must have been some – were wiped out by that rain. A bit of luck for the killer. Any other signs left on that hillside were long gone by now in the rough, northerly winds that regularly battered this part of the island.

If there was a clue, Andreas knew it had to be inside the church. He scanned the ground outside the door for tracks, scuff marks, any clue to how the body got there. Nothing but footprints he recognized. To be thorough, he checked outside the windows but, as he expected, found nothing there. The sun sti

wasn't throwing much light inside, and he thought about opening the shutters but decided against disturbing the scene any more than he already had. Even in this light, though, he could see the body. It was bent on its side, its back to him, bald and naked.

Andreas took a small flashlight out of his pocket and scanned the floor. He didn't want to step on anything important. He took three careful steps to the edge of the crypt by the front of the body and knelt down, all the time breathing only through his mouth. That cut down on the stench. He could never get used to that smell – and never wanted to.

The crypt was about four feet deep but about a foot longer and wider than the slab covering it. It was lined with the same sort of gray and red granite that made up the church walls. The body was crammed into a too small space for its height on top of a pile of bones – human bones. For an instant he forgot not to breathe through his nose and gagged on the stench. He turned toward the door to find a fresher breath of air, then back to study the body.

It was taller than five feet, probably closer to six, and slim. Because of the size and bald head, he'd thought from the door it was a man, but now he saw it was a woman; and her head was shaved, not bald. She just looked bald from a distance because the stubble of hair was a very light color, probably blond. Her ankles were bound together by thick hemp twine. A separate piece tied her hands crossed at the wrists, then looped a dozen times around her body, pinning her forearms and hands flat across her body at the bottom of her chest before ending leash-like about her neck.

He wanted to examine her face but didn't think he'd see much without moving the body or getting into the crypt. He couldn't do either until forensics had photographed, videotaped, and catalogued everything. He braced himself with one hand against the edge of the crypt and, with his flashlight in the other, held his breath and leaned in to see what he could.

Her eyes and mouth were closed. Nothing particularly unusual about that – perhaps the only thing so far that wasn't. As he lifted himself away from her face his flashlight caught a bit of white at one nostril. He leaned back in. It wasn't at the nostril, it was in it. It looked like cotton, and it wasn't in one nostril, it was in both.

Andreas got to his feet and walked outside. Like most Greeks, he smoked, but he liked to think he only did when stressed. He lit up. This was not a simple murder. There was a message to this one. He'd seen murders with messages before but not like this. This message was meant to remain secret to everyone but the sender.

He knew the word to describe this sort of preparation – the religious location, shaved head, bound feet, clasped hands, naked body, and whatever in the nostrils – but he couldn't say it until he had more proof. Suggesting there'd been a ritual murder on Mykonos wouldn't get him any more compliments from the mayor, or any closer to his old job in Athens. He would just wait for Syros to investigate and let them break the bad news to the town fathers.

He finished his cigarette and decided to have another look inside. Perhaps something about the church held a clue to why the killer chose this spot. Andreas wasn't very religious, but like virtually every Greek, he was Orthodox and he knew the basics. Everything looked perfectly normal. The candles were in the right places, as were the required four icons: the Blessed Virgin, Jesus, the archangels and the saint after which the church was named. He didn't recognize that icon and leaned forward to read the name. Saint Calliope. If he remembered correctly, she was a young woman tortured and put to death for her commitment to Christianity. That would fit.

He went outside again and sat in the shade of the church wall, waiting. Later, he heard the sirens. The boys from Syros were here.

Although the call from Peter's father triggered her Greek temper, on balance Catia actually felt more relieved than worried by what she'd heard. She'd never liked Peter and had told Annika so more than once. She'd hoped the relationship would end when he left Yale to study in London but it hadn't. Something about him grated on her. She described him to her husband, Schuyler, as the quintessential pretentious Athenian braggart, consumed by appearance over substance. He pointed out to his wife that Peter came from an old-line English family and that bourgeois was a French word not confined to Greeks. She preferred her description.

Catia was sure their breakup explained why she'd not heard from her daughter. Annika didn't take well to 'I told you so' scenarios – even if the actual words were never uttered. Still, Schuyler was right; a young woman should not be backpacking across Europe alone. She'd learned to accept in silence her daughter's assorted injuries and broken bones as part of the price for raising an independent, athletically gifted child. She no longer even winced when Annika described such things as hang gliding and skydiving as 'too routine.' But for Catia's own peace of mind, whether Annika wanted to talk to her mother today or not, she would have to. It had been too long – far longer than most mothers would tolerate.

She dialed Annika's mobile and waited for her voice to say 'Please leave a message for Annika at the beep.' Annika rarely answered her phone. That was a practice she picked up in college to cut down on distractions from studying. Every few hours she checked her messages and called back those she wanted to – or had to. Catia intended to leave a message, putting her at the very top of Annika's 'must-call' list. Finally, voice mail picked up, but instead of her daughter's voice, she heard, 'Sorry, this voice mail box is full and cannot accept additional messages. Please try again later.' She tried again, and again, each time getting the same message. That was not at all like Annika.

She decided to call Peter in London.

'Hello.'

Catia tried sounding warm and charming. 'Hello, Peter, it's Catia Vanden Haag. How are you?'

He spoke abruptly. 'My father called you, didn't he?'

So much for civility, she thought. 'Yes, he did.'

His voice became icy and distant. That old pretentious tone. 'I'm sorry, but there's nothing I have to say.'

'Excuse me, young man, but I expect a bit more respect from you than I'm receiving at the moment.' She knew how to sound like a senior career diplomat's wife when necessary.

His voice wavered a bit. 'I meant no disrespect, Mrs Vanden Haag, I simply think that whatever is said to you on the subject should be Annika's decision, not mine.'

That answer did not assuage her, but she sensed that if she got any testier, he'd probably hang up. 'Peter, I haven't heard from Annika since she left to meet you in London. You certainly must appreciate that I'm worried.'

He paused. 'Yes, I do, but honestly, Mrs Vanden Haag, I haven't spoken with Annika since she left and I don't know where she is.'

'Do you have any idea who may know where she is or how I can reach her? I've tried calling her cell, but all I get is a recording that her voice mail box is full.'

'No, but the reason you can't reach her is she forgot to take her phone.' Again he paused. 'She was very angry when she left. She wouldn't talk to me, just threw her things in her backpack and walked out. I didn't find her phone until later. It was turned off and I left it off.'

Catia shut her eyes to compose herself. If Annika called her phone to find where she'd left it, there'd be no answer. Was he just stupid or vindictive? Greek men were legendary for screaming at

the drop of a hat; it was a cultural trait that serendipitously taught most Greek women patience. She let out a long, silent breath. ‘Thank you, and if you think of anything that might help us find her, please call me. And please, send me Annika’s phone – I’ll give you our FedEx number.’

When she hung up, the word in her mind was asshole. Not very ladylike she knew, but accurate.

Her daughter’s incommunicado jaunt around Europe must stop at once. No matter what the reason. The first thing to do was call Annika’s friends and find how to reach her. Surely they’d know. No, she thought. The first thing to do was tell her husband. Oh boy.

It was a virtually deserted, almost impassable road, but all three police cars arrived with sirens blaring. So much for keeping things quiet, thought Andreas. They’re attracting the whole island. Sure enough, a gray Jeep Grand Cherokee and a beat-up black Fiat sedan pulled up behind them. Two guys got out of the Fiat and started up the hill before the investigators had their equipment out of the cars.

Andreas shook his head. Greeks – they were more curious than cats. He yelled at the two to stay on the road. They kept coming, as if they didn’t hear or didn’t understand. He yelled to one of his officers to arrest them if they didn’t turn back immediately. That stopped them. He heard them mumbling questions about his parentage, but they were retreating back to the road.

There were eight men in the police cars: Kouros, three other Mykonos officers, and four strangers dressed in jackets and ties – in ninety degree heat. These guys were going to be a pain in the ass, he could just tell. He yelled to Kouros and another local officer to help the investigators with their equipment and told the other two to keep the curious off the hillside. He also told them to get the names, addresses, and phone numbers of everyone who stopped to watch – starting with the two in the Fiat. Andreas wanted them to know that he was particularly proud of his parentage.

Andreas took a schoolboy-like joy in watching the jacketed cops labor up the hill in twice the time it had taken him. It wasn’t because of the equipment they carried but because three of the strangers clearly were deferring to the fourth – and much stouter – man’s difficulty with the climb. At least no one Andreas knew was in charge. By the time they reached the church, the heavy one was sweating like the proverbial pig but still wore his jacket and tie. He stopped about five yards from Andreas and looked back as if reviewing his path. Andreas knew he was trying to catch his breath. He took that moment to step forward and introduce himself.

‘Welcome to Mykonos.’

The stout man turned toward him and nodded. He said nothing, just kept trying to breathe.

‘I’m Andreas Kaldis.’

The man nodded again and was able to say, ‘I know.’ He was about a half foot shorter than Andreas, with bushy, dark brown hair. From the almost pure gray of his eyebrows, Andreas guessed his hair was dyed.

Andreas was starting to enjoy this but decided he’d better stop. No reason to antagonize the man unnecessarily.

The man said, ‘I knew your father, good man.’

That caught Andreas off guard. His father had been on the secret police force during the Junta or the Regime of the Colonels or the Dictatorship, depending on your point of view. Most cops avoided open discussions of those seven years and certainly wouldn’t risk offering compliments on someone from that part of Greek police history to a stranger, even a son. Especially a son of his father.

Against his original instincts, Andreas thought he might actually like this guy. ‘Thank you for saying that,’ he said and extended his hand.

Taking off his sunglasses, the other man reached out and shook his hand. ‘Tassos Stamatos, chief

homicide investigator for the Cyclades.'

Andreas had heard of him, a real old-timer. One of those guys who'd never retire and had the political connections to keep his job. He probably was about sixty, but strangely, his weight and short bulldog build made him look ten years younger. Andreas decided there was no need to mention his homicide background to Tassos. It seemed pretty clear he already knew it. Politically connected cops knew that sort of stuff. It's how they kept off the wrong toes.

'So, what do we have here, Kaldis?' Tassos asked, his tone crisply official.

Andreas took the use of his last name as force of habit more than an effort to show who was in charge. 'A body in a crypt, female, probably between fifteen and thirty, Caucasian, light-colored hair, dead a few weeks I'd say.' He stopped.

'That's it?' Tassos seemed surprised.

'No, not at all,' said Andreas.

A glint of anger came to Tassos' voice. 'What's this, a little test for the boys from the islands?'

So he knew Andreas' history. He tried putting the conversation on a more personal footing. 'Not at all, Tassos, I just thought it might be better for you to look at this with fresh eyes and reach your own conclusions.'

Tassos stared at Andreas for a moment. He seemed to be deciding whether this was just another – albeit former – Athens hot-shot putting on the local cops. 'All right, have it your way. Show me what we've got.'

Andreas pointed him toward the open door and watched as Tassos studied the room from the doorway, just as Andreas had, then carefully approached and methodically examined the body with his flashlight, just as Andreas had. Tassos walked past Andreas without saying a word. Once outside, he told the three men with him, 'I want everything in there recorded and rerecorded. Get an ambulance here. We're taking the body and everything else in there back to Syros.' Then he walked away from the church.

From their equipment, Andreas could tell one of the three was with the coroner's office and another was a crime scene technician. The third probably was one of Tassos' investigators. All three went inside. Andreas told them to let him know when they were ready to inspect the body – and told Kouros to keep an eye on them to make sure they did.

Tassos was sitting on a low stone wall in the shade of a wild fig tree looking at the view. Andreas sat next to him. A soft breeze was blowing in off the sea, mixing the scents of wildflowers and herbs.

'There are no views in the world like the ones from our Greek islands, Andreas.' A bridge had been built.

'It's eternal,' said Andreas.

Neither spoke for a moment.

'What are we going to do about this?' Tassos' voice was flat and serious.

'Do we have a choice?' Andreas used the same tone.

'A murder in paradise is bad. A tourist murdered in paradise is worse. But something like this . . . is unthinkable.' Tassos was shaking his head.

'Why do you say she's a tourist?'

Tassos looked down and kicked at the dirt. 'In thirty years on Syros I've only seen a few Mykonian or other local woman that tall, and she's not one of them.'

Andreas smiled at the obvious – and Tassos' insight. 'What's on your mind?'

Tassos looked down. 'Something neither of us wants to say, and no one anywhere in Greece will want to hear.'

‘That’s about what I thought.’

‘So, I guess we won’t call it what it is, just use the clues to catch the bastard who did it.’ Tassos kicked at the dirt again.

‘As long as we catch the bad guy,’ Andreas said.

‘Yeah, as long as we catch the bad guy.’

Andreas picked up a bit of something else in Tassos’ tone. ‘What’s bothering you?’

Tassos looked up and stared out toward the sea. ‘One summer, about ten years ago, an American girl working at a bar here in town didn’t show up for her shift. A girlfriend went looking for her and found her room covered in blood but no body. Brutal thing. Another young woman, a Scandinavian, disappeared around the same time. The whole island went crazy.’

A small lizard, as brown as the dirt, scurried out from the base of the wall, past their feet, and into the shade of a wild thistle. Tassos didn’t seem to notice.

‘We tied the American to an Irishman here on holiday. He’d met her at the bar. He was a convicted child killer released from an English prison after twenty-five years.’ Tassos paused long enough to shake his head, a disgusted look on his face. ‘On humanitarian grounds, because of a bad heart. We caught up with him by the Bulgarian border and brought him back to Mykonos for questioning. Had to get him drunk to talk – his heart wouldn’t stand up to how I wanted to interrogate the bastard.’ He didn’t have to explain to Andreas what he meant by that.

‘He finally showed us where he’d buried the American’s body – over there by Paradise Beach.’ He gestured south. ‘But he wouldn’t say what happened to the other one. He refused to talk about it. Never denied it, never admitted it.’ Tassos took out his cigarettes and offered one to Andreas. They shared a match.

‘We had the military, police cadets, Boy Scouts, farmers – anyone willing to help – out looking for the other woman’s body. Never thought we’d find her, but we did.’

Tassos took a drag on his cigarette. ‘She was in a shallow grave, right by a road not far from here almost like she was meant to be found there, to end the search. The Irishman still wouldn’t admit to killing her but everyone from the mayor on down wanted to pin it on him, mark both murders solved and move on to other things. One killer here was enough bad publicity – no reason to suggest another one might still be lurking around.’

He paused to puff again. ‘Besides, if someone else did it, it had to be a tourist long gone by now who wouldn’t dare come back – at least that’s what the mayor said.’

Tassos flicked the ash from his cigarette. ‘Before the Irishman could come to trial and maybe say which murders were his – and which weren’t – he committed suicide in custody.’ He looked directly at Andreas. ‘I took that for a “case closed.”’

Andreas shrugged. ‘We have to put up with that sort of cover-up shit all the time. Politicians don’t like loose ends.’

Tassos smiled. ‘Funny you should say “loose ends.” The American was cut up, raped, and beaten to death in one place then buried in another, cleverly hidden location. The Scandinavian was full of crystal meth – the “let’s have sex drug” – but otherwise unmarked and died of suffocation – buried alive – under a virtual “find me here” sign.’

Bitching at bureaucrats was a hallowed police pastime, but that didn’t seem to be what this was about. ‘How’s all that tie in to this?’ asked Andreas.

Tassos stared off at the horizon again. ‘Never thought the Irishman did the Scandinavian.’ Without looking back, he pointed toward the church with his cigarette. ‘She was shaved and tied up just like the one back there.’

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