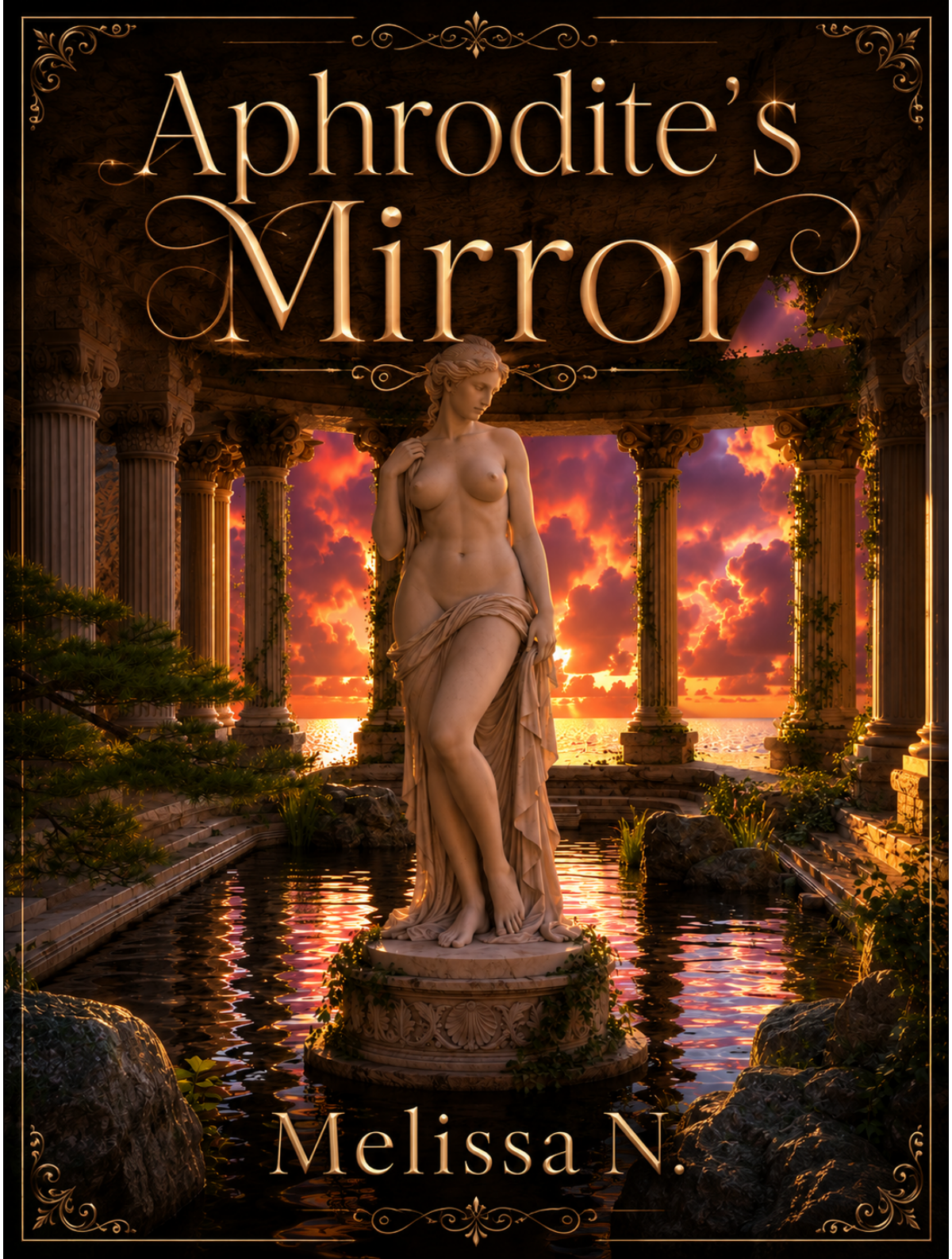

Aphrodite's Mirror
Melissa N.

MEET ANDREW WOODS, AN UNKNOWN ACTOR WHO DREAMED OF STARDOM, AND MARINA KATSAROS, A FLEDGLING JOURNALIST. THEY WERE A NEWLY MARRIED COUPLE WHO HAD JUST TRAVELED ALL THE WAY FROM THE USA TO THE BALKANS AFTER RECEIVING WHAT THEY BELIEVED TO BE THE BEST WEDDING GIFT EVER...

OH BABE! I JUST CAN'T BELIEVE HOW GREAT THIS PLACE LOOKS!

I'M STARTING TO BELIEVE YOU WERE RIGHT ALL ALONG... GREECE INDEED SEEMS TO BE THE MOST BEAUTIFUL PLACE IN THE WORLD!

I TOLD YOU, DIDN'T I?

THERE'S NO WAY I COULD REMEMBER EVERYTHING!

BUT EVEN I AM AMAZED AT HOW BEAUTIFUL EVERYTHING LOOKS AROUND HERE! YOU KNOW I LEFT GREECE WHEN I WAS STILL A LITTLE GIRL...

YEAH, YOU TOLD ME YOUR PARENTS DECIDED TO MOVE TO AMERICA WHEN YOU WERE STILL A CHILD, RIGHT? I BET IT MUST FEEL WONDERFUL TO BE BACK IN YOUR HOMELAND AFTER SO LONG.

AND ALL THIS THANKS TO THIS UNCLE OF YOURS! I DON'T KNOW HOW WE WILL EVER BE ABLE TO THANK HIM! HE NOT ONLY GAVE US THE AIR TICKETS BUT ALSO BOOKED ONE OF THE BEST ROOMS IN HIS HOTEL FOR US... ALL FOR FREE!

IF I REMEMBER UNCLE NIKOS WELL, HE'LL BE PLEASED IF WE JUST EAT AND DRINK WITH HIM UNTIL DAWN. HE HAS ALWAYS BEEN A *BON VIVANT*... THERE'S NOTHING HE LOVES MORE THAN A GOOD PARTY.

HA! SOUNDS LIKE SOMEONE I COULD DEFINITELY *GET ALONG WITH!*

A PERFECT PLAN, BABE! GOD, IT ALL ALMOST SEEMS *TOO GOOD* TO BE TRUE...

YOU'LL HAVE THE CHANCE TO MEET HIM TONIGHT.

BUT UNTIL THEN... WHY DON'T WE RELAX A LITTLE BIT AT THE POOL AND THEN WE CAN COME BACK TO OUR ROOM TO HAVE *SOME FUN*, HUH?



Chapter One
A Peculiar Offer

AH, HERE ARE MY GUESTS OF HONOUR! WELCOME!

HEY, UNCLE NIKOS!

NICE TO MEET YOU, MR. SAMARAS!

THE PLEASURE IS ALL MINE, YOUNG MAN! PLEASE, CALL ME NIKOS. YOU'RE PART OF THE FAMILY NOW!

AND HERE ARE MY LOVELY DAUGHTERS, EVA AND SOFIA!

HEY!

NOW LET'S SIT DOWN! MY CHEF HAS MADE A SPECIAL DINNER FOR US. WE COULD HAVE JUST WENT TO THE HOTEL RESTAURANT, SURE, BUT I THOUGHT YOU TWO WOULD ENJOY THIS PLACE. I WANT TO KNOW EVERYTHING ABOUT THE WEDDING. IT'S SO SAD THAT WE COULDN'T ATTEND!

SOME TIME LATER...

THE FOOD WAS WONDERFUL, NIKOS! THE DESSERT... WAS IT KATAIFI?

THAT'S CORRECT, ANDREW. HOW DID YOU KNOW?

OH, ANDREW STARTED RESEARCHING A LOT ABOUT GREECE SINCE WE STARTED DATING. HE'S REALLY GOOD AT MEMORIZING STUFF, WHICH IS IMPORTANT TO HIS WORK. HE EVEN LEARNED TO SPEAK SOME GREEK.

BUT AS YOU CAN SEE, HIS ACCENT ISN'T THAT GOOD.

Αληθής!

HAHAHA
HAHAHA
HAHAHA
HAHAHA

THIS REMINDS ME OF GIUSEPPE, AN OLD ITALIAN FRIEND OF MINE..

OH, HERE WE GO...

DAD LOVES TO TELL STORIES ABOUT THIS GIUSEPPE GUY. WE GREW UP LISTENING TO IT. THEY WERE INSEPARABLE IN YOUTH...

...AND GOT INTO A LOT OF TROUBLE.

UNTIL ONE OF THEM GOT MARRIED AND BECAME A RESPONSIBLE ADULT, AND IT WASN'T DAD.

NOW, NOW THERE'S NO REASON TO BE SO HARD ON YOUR OLD FATHER, GIRLS. THE THING IS, I'VE NEVER HAD MUCH LUCK IN RELATIONSHIPS.

BUT YOU'VE CERTAINLY TRIED A LOT, WITH MANY WOMEN.

HA! THIS I CAN'T DENY! BUT ANYWAY, AS I WAS SAYING, GIUSEPPE ALSO LEARNED SOME GREEK DURING THE TIME HE WAS HERE, ALTHOUGH HE WAS NEVER PARTICULARLY GOOD AT IT. THEN, ON A TRIP WE TOOK TO CRETA, HE... OH, BUT WAIT A MOMENT. THIS STORY DESERVES ANOTHER ROUND OF DRINKING. MARIOS, BRING MORE WINE, PLEASE!

HALF AN HOUR AND A LOT OF WINE LATER...

DID GIUSEPPE REALLY DISGUISE HIMSELF AS A GREEK ORTHODOX NUN? AND CONVINCED THE RESTAURANT OWNER HE HAD AN AMULET THAT HAD BELONGED TO ONE OF THE PROPHETS?

THAT WAS HOW WE MANAGED TO LEAVE THE RESTAURANT, AS WE FOUND OUT A LITTLE TOO LATE THAT WE DIDN'T HAVE THE MONEY TO PAY THE BILL.

OH, NIKOS, WHAT A HILARIOUS STORY!

BUT YOU'RE NOT DOING BAD AT ALL, NIKOS. THIS HOTEL OF YOURS IS A PARADISE! I WOULD SAY SPENDING YOUR DAYS HERE IS A GOOD WAY TO ENJOY LIFE.

ANYWAY, ALL THIS HAPPENED A LONG TIME AGO, WHEN I WAS STILL A YOUNG, RECKLESS MAN. THINGS ARE A LOT LESS EXCITING THESE DAYS.

I CAN'T DENY THAT I'VE BEEN LUCKY IN BUSINESS. I BOUGHT THIS PLACE WHEN THE REGION WASN'T SUCH A HOT SPOT, AND THEN THINGS JUST WORKED OUT.


YOU'RE BEING MODEST, UNCLE NIKOS. MY MOM ALWAYS SAID YOU'RE A BRILLIANT BUSINESSMAN

OH, YOUR MOTHER HAS ALWAYS BEEN A KIND WOMAN! BUT I'LL TELL YOU SOMETHING, I HAVE A BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY THAT, IF SUCCESSFUL, WILL REALLY MAKE ME HIT BIG! BUT MY CHANCES ARE NOT GOOD, I WOULD SAY.

WHY NOT?

LONG STORY SHORT, MY ACCOUNTANT PUT ME IN TOUCH WITH AN ALBANIAN BILLIONAIRE WHO IS INTERESTED IN OPENING A CHAIN OF RESORTS ACROSS THE BALKANS AND WANTS A PARTNER WITH KNOW-HOW IN THE AREA.

BUT THE THING IS, FROM WHAT I RESEARCHED, THE OLD MAN IS VERY CONSERVATIVE... A REAL RELIGIOUS ZEALOT, I'D SAY. I DON'T THINK HE WOULD DO BUSINESS WITH A MAN LIKE ME, A BACHELOR IN HIS FIFTIES, WITHOUT A 'TRADITIONAL FAMILY'.

AH, BUT NOW THAT I REMEMBERED THE STORY WITH MY OLD FRIEND GIUSEPPE, A CRAZY IDEA CROSSED MY MIND. TELL ME, YOUNG MAN, ARE YOU GOOD AT YOUR JOB? CAN YOU PLAY ANY ROLE?

WELL, I LIKE TO THINK I'M A GOOD ACTOR, YES, ALTHOUGH I STILL HAVE A LOT TO LEARN.

UMM... INTERESTING!

THEN WHAT YOU SAY ABOUT A LITTLE ADVENTURE?
THE ALBANIAN GUY WILL COME TO MY RESORT IN
A FEW DAYS. WHY DON'T YOU GET DISGUISED AS A WOMAN,
MY WIFE AND MOTHER OF MY LOVELY DAUGHTERS?

AH, YOU ARE KIDDING ME, RIGHT?
THERE IS NO WAY THIS COULD WORK!

WHY NOT? FROM WHAT I'VE HEARD, THE OLD MAN IS VIRTUALLY BLIND, ANYWAY. WE CAN SAY THAT YOU ARE THE DAUGHTER OF AN AMERICAN MAN WITH A GREEK WOMAN, AND THAT YOU SPENT MANY YEARS IN THE US, HENCE YOUR ACCENT.

BESIDES, DID I TELL YOU WHAT MY BELOVED DAUGHTERS DO FOR A LIVING? THEY OWN A VERY EXCLUSIVE BEAUTY SPA, THE MOST REQUESTED IN ATHENS, I'D DARE TO SAY. WHAT YOU THINK, GIRLS? COULD YOU TURN OUR FRIEND HERE INTO A CHARMING WIFE AND MOTHER FOR A FEW DAYS?

WELL, I THINK THIS IS POSSIBLE, IF HE REALLY IS A GOOD ACTOR.

YEAH, I LIKE THE CHALLENGE.

IF THIS WORKS, YOU'LL BE VERY WELL REWARDED, OF COURSE. BUT IF NOT, THAT'S FINE! AT LEAST WE'LL HAVE ANOTHER FUNNY STORY TO REMEMBER AT DINNER PARTIES.

WHAT YOU THINK BABE?

ARE YOU GUYS SERIOUS?! I CAN'T PICTURE YOU PASSING AS A WOMAN, ESPECIALLY AN OLDER ONE, BUT IF YOU WANT TO GIVE IT A TRY, I HAVE NO PROBLEM LENDING MY HUSBAND FOR A FEW DAYS SO THAT HE CAN BE MY UNCLE'S WIFE. IT MAKES YOU MY AUNT, I GUESS!

HA, VERY FUNNY! YOU KNOW WHAT, IT MAY BE THE WINE SPEAKING FOR ME, BUT THIS CRAZY IDEA SOUNDS LIKE AN INTERESTING CHALLENGE, INDEED...

OKAY, GUYS, LET'S TRY IT!

Chapter Two
Time for a Change

OH, YOU'RE FINALLY HERE!

WE WERE WAITING FOR YOU!

SORRY FOR BEING LATE, GIRLS. I HAVE A TERRIBLE HANGOVER, AND I WOULD PROBABLY STILL BE ASLEEP IF MARINA HADN'T WOKEN ME UP.

SHE THEN BROUGHT ME HERE AND WENT SHOPPING OR SOMETHING.

IT'S OKAY, DON'T WORRY. SO, ARE YOU READY FOR YOUR TRANSFORMATION?

UMM... ABOUT THIS, ARE YOU GUYS SURE IT'S A GOOD IDEA? LAST NIGHT I WAS SO DRUNK, AND...

NO GIVING UP NOW, DEAR! WE OPENED THE SALON EARLY ESPECIALLY FOR YOU. AS YOU'VE PROBABLY NOTICED, WE'RE REALLY LOOKING FORWARD TO FINALLY HAVING A MOM. EVEN IF JUST FOR A FEW DAYS.

ALRIGHT, ALRIGHT... LET'S DO IT THEN.

YOU CAN GO TO THE DRESSING ROOM TO CHANGE INTO A ROBE. THIS WAY YOU'LL BE MORE COMFORTABLE.

WE AND THE OTHER GIRLS WILL BE BE HERE WHEN YOU COME BACK.

AND SO THE MAKEOVER BEGAN.
FIRST STEP, FULL BODY WAXING...

MAN, THAT WAS THE MOST PAINFUL THING I'VE EVER EXPERIENCED!

THEN, A GAFF TO KEEP HIS UNWANTED PARTS OUT OF SIGHT...

IS T-THIS REALLY NECESSARY? C'MON, GIRLS!

FINALLY, A CORSET WITH INSERTS TO GIVE HIM A NICE FIGURE AND "SOME BOOBS".

I CAN'T 'BREATHE! I CAN'T 'BREATHE!

JUST TRY TO RELAX. YOU'LL GET USED TO IT IN NO TIME. NOW LET'S WORK ON YOUR FACE AND HAIR, SHALL WE, MOM?

NOW, WE'RE GOING TO WORK ON YOUR HAIR AND MAKEUP.

JUST PERFECT TO BE OUR ELEGANT AND EXQUISITE MOM!

WE'VE DONE THEATER MAKEUP BEFORE, SO WE KNOW A TRICK OR TWO TO MAKE YOU LOOK LIKE A BEAUTIFUL MATURE LADY.

EYEBROWS AND FOUNDATION DONE!

AND NOW EYESHADOW, EYELASHES AND BLUSH!

OUCH! WHAT WAS THAT?

I PIERCED YOUR EARS. A WOMAN LIKE YOU NEEDS TO WEAR FANCY EARRINGS PRETTY MUCH ALL THE TIME, AFTER ALL.

UMM... I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY YOU COVERED THE MIRROR. CAN I SEE HOW I LOOK?

NOT YET... YOU BETTER WAIT UNTIL THE END TO GET THE WHOLE PICTURE. IT'S TIME FOR YOUR EXTENSIONS.

YOU KNOW WHAT, MOM? I THINK THIS WOULD BE APPROPRIATE FOR YOU TO START TALKING AND BEHAVING LIKE A WOMAN YOUR AGE.

W-WHAT YOU MEAN?

Soft and Silky Lotion

YOU KNOW VERY WELL WHAT EVA IS TALKING ABOUT. I DON'T THINK IT'S RIGHT FOR OUR MOM TO SOUND LIKE A YOUNG AMERICAN MAN.

THE SOONER THE BETTER, DON'T YOU THINK?

DO I REALLY NEED TO TRY THIS NOW?

AHEM... HOW ABOUT THIS? DOES THIS SOUND GOOD?

NOT BAD... IT SEEMS LIKE YOU REALLY ARE A GOOD ACTOR... OR MAYBE YOU ARE JUST MEANT TO BE OUR MOM *GIGGLE* BUT YOU MUST SOUND A LITTLE MORE REFINED AND MATURE...WITH A SLIGHT SCRATCH IN YOUR VOICE IF POSSIBLE. AND DON'T FORGET TO SPEAK IN GREEK FROM NOW ON.

Σαν αυτό?

YEAH, LIKE THIS. YOU'RE ON THE RIGHT TRACK. WITH A LITTLE PRACTICE YOU'LL DO FINE. NOW, ARE YOU READY TO SEE THE NEW YOU, MRS. ELENA SAMARAS?

OH MY...!

Chapter Three
Dress to Success

NOW THOSE ARE BEAUTIFUL HEELS
FOR A BEAUTIFUL LADY!

THIS IS COMPLETELY CRAZY, MARINA!
I'VE SPENT THE LAST THREE DAYS PRACTICING WALKING IN HIGH HEELS BUT I'M STILL HAVING A HARD TIME.

AND THE HEELS AREN'T MY ONLY PROBLEM...
THE CORSET HAS BEEN KILLING ME
AND THE PROSTHETICS ARE A PAIN
IN THE ASS.

NOT TO MENTION EVERYTHING THAT GOES INTO PRETENDING TO BE A WOMAN... THE VOICE, MANNERISMS, GESTURES...

AS AN ACTOR, I HAD NO IDEA THIS WOULD BE SO DIFFICULT.

YOU ALMOST SOUND LIKE YOU'RE NOT HAVING FUN, MRS. SAMARAS.

HA! VERY FUNNY, YOUNG LADY! DO YOU REALLY NEED TO TREAT ME AS IF I REALLY WERE YOUR AUNT ALL THE TIME?

OF COURSE, MA'AM! THAT'S WHAT I PROMISED UNCLE NIKOS. FOR ALL INTENTS AND PURPOSES, YOU'RE JUST MY AUNT ELENA FOR NOW.

WELL, ALL I CAN SAY IS THAT I CAN HARDLY WAIT FOR THIS NIGHT TO BE OVER SO I CAN BE YOUR HUSBAND AGAIN. THIS IS NOT HOW I THOUGHT OF SPENDING OUR HONEYMOON.

KNOCK!
KNOCK!

SPEAKING OF HUSBAND, I THINK UNCLE NIKOS JUST ARRIVED. I'M SURE HE'LL BE PLEASED TO SEE HOW BEAUTIFUL YOU LOOK, AUNT ELENA.

GOOD EVENING, LADIES. OH, YOU LOOK STUNNING, ELENA, HONEY!

THE GIRLS REALLY DID A FABULOUS JOB ON HER, DIDN'T THEY, UNCLE NIKOS?

ABSOLUTELY! BUT MAKEUP OR NOT, ELENA IS ALWAYS A GORGEOUS WOMAN. I FEEL BLESSED TO HAVE FOUND SOMEONE SO SPECIAL.

OH, AUNT ELENA, YOU ARE SO LUCKY TO HAVE SUCH A LOVING HUSBAND WHO LIKES YOU SO MUCH!

NOW IF YOU'LL EXCUSE US, I'D LIKE TO SPEAK WITH MY WIFE ALONE FOR A MOMENT, MARINA.

OF COURSE, UNCLE NIKOS. I WILL GIVE YOU GUYS SOME PRIVACY.

HOW ARE YOU FEELING, DARLING?

HONESTLY? I'M TRYING TO KEEP IT COOL, BUT THE TRUTH IS THAT I'M ALMOST FREAKING OUT! IT'S SO WEIRD TO SEE EVERYONE AROUND ME TREATING ME AS IF I REALLY WERE YOUR MIDDLE-AGED WIFE.

WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT, ELENA? HOW ELSE WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE TREATED?

YOU **ARE** MY WIFE... AT LEAST FOR TONIGHT!

VERY FUNNY, NIKOS!

NOW SERIOUSLY, YOU'RE THE **ACTRESS** HERE, RIGHT? YOU KNOW BETTER THAN I DO THAT THE MORE YOU GET INTO CHARACTER, BELIEVING THAT YOU REALLY ARE ELENA SAMARAS, THE BETTER YOU'LL BE ABLE TO PLAY THE CHARACTER.

THIS... THIS MAKES SENSE, BUT...

RELAX, DEAR... EVERYTHING WILL BE ALRIGHT. AS I SAID BEFORE, YOU'LL BE VERY WELL REWARDED FOR YOUR INVALUABLE HELP. JUST HANG IN UNTIL THE END OF THE NIGHT AND I'LL GIVE YOU THIRTY THOUSAND DOLLARS FOR YOUR SERVICES.

T-THIRTY THOUSAND?

EXACTLY. I BELIEVE YOU'VE NEVER BEEN SO WELL PAID FOR A SINGLE GIG, EH? BUT TRY NOT TO SOUND SO EXCITED... I DON'T WANT TO THINK THAT I GOT MARRIED TO A GOLD DIGGER. *LAUGHTER*

BUT SPEAKING OF GETTING MARRIAGE, THERE IS SOMETHING IMPORTANT MISSING, I BELIEVE...

SOMETHING I WAS SUPPOSED TO HAVE DONE TWENTY-EIGHT YEARS AGO OR SO, I GUESS? ELENA, WOULD YOU DO ME THE HONOR OF BEING MY WIFE?

W-WHAT ARE YOU DOING, NIKOS?!

I... I G-GUESS SO?

FANTASTIC, DARLING. I PROMISE TO MAKE YOU THE HAPPIEST WOMAN IN THE WORLD!

DID HE REALLY JUST KISS ME ON THE CHEEK? GOD, ALL THIS IS SO FREAKING WEIRD!

AND THE RING... IT MAKES EVERYTHING SEEM SO TWISTED AND REAL... WHAT DID I GET MYSELF INTO?



Chapter Four
Now or Never

WE'RE ALMOST THERE, ELENA. WE'LL MEET THE ALBANIAN MAN AT THE SAME PLACE WE HAD DINNER A FEW NIGHTS AGO. YOU REMEMEBER THERE, RIGHT? WE'LL HAVE PRIVACY AND YOU WON'T HAVE TO INTERACT WITH ANYONE ELSE, BESIDES THE SERVICE STAFF, OF COURSE. ARE YOU OKAY?

I DON'T REMEMBER EVER BEING THIS NERVOUS, BUT I CAN DO IT... I KNOW I CAN.

I HAVE FULL CONFIDENCE IN YOU, DEAR.
I KNOW YOU'LL BE A PERFECT WIFE TONIGHT.
AND REMEMBER THAT I'LL BE BY YOUR SIDE THE WHOLE TIME.

T-THANK YOU...?

JUST ONE MORE THING BEFORE WE GO. WE'RE SUPPOSED TO BE TOGETHER FOR MANY, MANY YEARS, SO IT'S ONLY NATURAL THAT WE HAVE A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF INTIMACY. I MAY TOUCH YOUR ARM OR HOLD YOUR HAND FROM TIME TO TIME, AND IT'S IMPORTANT THAT YOU DON'T LOOK SURPRISED OR SCARED WHEN I DO SO.

O-OKAY... I UNDERSTAND.

FANTASTIC, ELENA! I KNEW I COULD COUNT ON YOU!

IS HE KISSING ME AGAIN? GOD, WHY DOES HE NEED TO KEEP KISSING ME ALL THE TIME?

SHALL WE GO, THEN?


SURE,
DEAR HUSBAND.
AH, I SEE YOU'RE GETTING MORE COMFORTABLE IN YOUR ROLE. THIS IS JUST GREAT!

I WOULDN'T SAY "COMFORTABLE" IS THE RIGHT WORD TO DESCRIBE HOW I'M FEELING. HOWEVER, I'M AN ACTOR, AND IT'S TIME TO PLAY MY ROLE... TONIGHT I'M ELENA SAMARAS, A MIDDLE-AGED WIFE AND MOTHER. IT'S NOW OR NEVER... WHAT CAN GO WRONG, RIGHT?

OH NO...

LOOK DOWN THERE. IT SEEMS OUR GUEST DIDN'T COME ALONE. HOW STUPID AM I! I SHOULD HAVE GUESSED THAT A MAN LIKE HIM WOULDN'T BE TRAVELLING BY HIMSELF!

WHAT?

WHAT WILL WE DO NOW, NIKOS? YOU SAID THE ALBANIAN MAN WAS VIRTUALLY BLIND! I DON'T THINK I CAN PASS AS A WOMAN IN FRONT OF SOMEONE ELSE WITH GOOD EYESIGHT, NO MATTER HOW GOOD EVA AND SOFIA ARE AS BEAUTICIANS!

KEEP CALM, DARLING. YOU TRUST ME, DON'T YOU? I HAVE A PLAN.

NICE TO MEET YOU, MR. TOSKA! I WAS LOOKING FORWARD TO FINALLY SEEING YOU IN PERSON. I HOPE YOU HAD A GOOD TRIP!

YES, YES, IT WAS OKAY.

PLEASE, LET ME INTRODUCE YOU TO ELENA, MY WIFE.

HELLO, MA'AM.

AND WHO IS YOUR ASSOCIATE, MR. TOSKA?

OH, IF YOU REALLY WANT TO KNOW, THIS IS JOEL KOCI, MY GOOD-FOR-NOTHING ASSISTANT. HE'S HERE TO TAKE NOTES. I DOUBT HE COULD DO MORE THAN THAT.

I'M SURE THAT MR. TOSKA IS JUST KIDDING AROUND, RIGHT? YOU LOOK VERY COMPETENT, YOUNG MAN. NICE TO MEET YOU!

OOPS...

OUCH!



I'M SORRY, JOEL.
I DIDN'T MEAN TO...

T-THAT'S FINE, MR. SAMARAS.
ACCIDENTS HAPPEN.

DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT. I'VE ALWAYS TOLD HIM THAT GLASSES ARE FOOLISHNESS. I FOR ONE HAVE NEVER WORN A PAIR!

THAT'S WHY HE CAN'T SEE AN INCH BEFORE HIS NOSE.

BUT ENOUGH OF THIS. SHALL WE DISCUSS BUSINESS? I DON'T HAVE ALL NIGHT.

OF COURSE, MR. TOSKA. PLEASE, TAKE A SIT.

AN HOUR LATER...

I BELIEVE EVERYTHING IS GOING SMOOTH SO FAR. GOD, I CAN'T BARELY WAIT FOR THIS NIGHT TO COME TO AN END! NIKOS WAS VERY CLEVER AT BREAKING JOEL'S GLASSES. HE SEEMS ALMOST BLIND NOW, JUST LIKE MR. TOSKA. I DON'T THINK ANY OF THEM WILL REALIZE THAT I AM A MAN IN DISGUISE.

PA[illegible] TO GET SOME DETAIL[illegible] RIGHT. OF COURSE, THIS IS NOT A SHOR[illegible]-TERM PLAN, SO WE NEED TO MAKE SUR[illegible] WE'RE ON THE SAME PAGE.

POOR GUY... HE LOOKS AS NERVOUS AS I AM. THAT'S NOT SURPRISING CONSIDERING WHO HIS BOSS IS. IT MUST BE TERRIBLE WORKING FOR SOMEONE LIKE MR. TOSKO.

I'LL WONDER FOREVER WHAT I WAS THINKING WHEN I AGREED TO TAKE PART IN THIS SCHEME. THAT'S WHYI DECIDED NOT TO DRINK TONIGHT. I CAN'T TRUST MYSELF WHEN I AM DRUNK.

AND WHAT DO YOU THINK, MRS. SAMARAS?

EXCUSE ME, MR. TOSKA? SORRY, I WAS DISTRACTED FOR A MOMENT.

IT SEEMS YOU'VE BEEN DISTRACTED ALL NIGHT. YOU ALSO SEEM TO BE AVOIDING FACING YOUR HUSBAND. IS EVERYTHING ALRIGHT? MAYBE YOU TWO ARE GOING THROUGH SOME COUPLE ISSUES?

OH, I HAVE TO SAY YOU COULDN'T BE FURTHER FROM THE TRUTH, MR. TOSKA! ELENA AND I ARE STILL AS CLOSE AS WHEN WE GOT MARRIED, NEARLY THIRTY YEARS AGO. RIGHT, DEAR?

O-OF COURSE, HONEY! FORGIVE ME FOR MY BEHAVIOR TONIGHT, MR. TOSKA. IT'S USUALLY NIKOS WHO TAKES CARE OF THE FAMILY BUSINESS.

I SEE... WELL, I HOPE THAT'S REALLY THE CASE. A MAN WHO CANNOT MANAGE HIS OWN FAMILY IS NOT FIT FOR BUSINESS. THAT'S WHAT I THINK.

M-MAYBE YOU JUST NEED A GLASS OF WINE, MRS. SAMARAS. I NOTICED YOUR GLASS IS STILL FULL.

NO!

I'M S-SORRY, MA'AM... I WAS JUST TRYING TO HELP.

PLEASE, FORGIVE ME, JOEL. I DIDN'T MEAN TO BE RUDE. IT'S JUST THAT I'M ON A DIET. YOU KNOW HOW WOMEN ARE... ALWAYS WANTING TO LOSE A POUND OR TWO. SO I'VE BEEN AVOIDING ALCOHOL. BUT... A LITTLE GLASS WON'T HURT, RIGHT?

AFTER BEING SUCH A BITCH, I'VE NO CHOICE BUT TO DRINK AT LEAST A GODDAMN GLASS OF WINE. THE WAY I'M ACTING, I'M GOING TO END UP SCREWING EVERYTHING UP. I NEED A MOMENT TO BREATHE.

NOW IF YOU GENTLEMEN WILL EXCUSE ME, I'M GOING TO THE LADIES' ROOM. I PROMISE I'LL BE BACK IN A MINUTE.

Chapter Five
With a Little Help From a Friend?


YOU NEED TO CALM DOWN, ANDREW...
NO, YOU NEED TO CALM DOWN, ELENA!
CALM DOWN RIGHT NOW!


YOU CAN DO IT. THIS IS JUST A BUSINESS DINNER, FOR GOD'S SAKE!

YOU CAN'T RUIN EVERYTHING FOR NIKOS.

HE... HE'S YOUR HUSBAND.
YOU HAVE TO BELIEVE IT!

JESUS, I HOPE THIS IS THE RIGHT PLACE!

WAIT... IS SOMEONE COMING? I WASN'T READY FOR IT. NIKOS SAID THIS RESTROOM WOULDN'T BE AVAILABLE TO THE GUESTS TONIGHT. WHAT AM I GOING TO DO NOW?

THIS IS THE RESTROOM, RIGHT?
WHY IS THIS SO DARK?

I'M S-SORRY. I FORGOT TO TURN ON
ALL THE LIGHTS AND...

IT'S ALL RIGHT! MY HEAD IS KILLING ME. I THINK IT'S BETTER THIS WAY. SORRY ABOUT THE SUNGLASSES... DID I MENTION MY HEAD IS KILLING ME? I'M JOANNA, BY THE WAY. JOANNA MYLONAS. IT'S SOOO HARD TO FIND A RESTROOM IN THIS HOTEL!

MAYBE I GOT LOST. I WAS HAVING DINNER AT THE RESTAURANT AND IT TOOK ME FOREVER TO GET HERE. HOTELS IN GREECE ARE DEFINITELY NOT ON THE SAME LEVEL AS THOSE IN LONDON OR PARIS. YOU HAVE A FUNNY ACCENT. YOU'RE NOT GREEK, ARE YOU?

GOD, THIS WOMAN TALKS REALLY FAST. IT'S NOT EASY TO UNDERSTAND SOMEONE SPEAKING GREEK THIS WAY.

SO...?

S-SORRY! YES, IN FACT, I WAS BORN IN GREECE. BUT I'VE LIVED MANY YEARS IN AMERICA WHEN MY PARENTS MOVED THERE. I'M ELENA. ELENA SAMARAS.

AMERICA, HUH? OH, THAT MUST HAVE BEEN EXCITING! WHAT BROUGHT YOU BACK?

MY HUSBAND. HE'S ALSO GREEK, AND I CAME BACK WHEN WE GOT MARRIED.

HUSBANDS! ALWAYS DRAGGING US FROM ONE SIDE TO THE OTHER! I'M PRACTICALLY A NOMAD, YOU KNOW, AS MY HUSBAND HAS BUSINESSES ALL OVER THE WORLD. I WON'T DENY IT, THIS IS FABULOUS MOST OF THE TIME, BUT I CAN'T BE MORE DEPRESSED WHEN I HAVE TO SPEND MONTHS IN SOME GODFORSAKEN HOLE.

BEFORE THE LAST TRIP, I SAID THAT I WOULD ONLY GO ON THE CONDITION THAT I WOULD BE IMMENSELY REWARDED LATER. DO YOU SEE MY NOSE? THAT WAS MY REWARD. BELIEVE IT OR NOT, ATHENS HAS SOME AMAZING SURGEONS. THEY UNDERSTAND THE NEEDS OF A GREEK WOMAN BETTER THAN ANYONE ELSE!

I CAN INTRODUCE THEM TO YOU. IN FACT, WE SHOULD START BY DOING SOME SHOPPING! I'LL BE IN ATHENS FOR A WHILE THIS TIME. ONE YEAR AT LEAST. YOU HAVE GOOD TASTE. YES, YOUR DRESS IS A BIT TOO PLAIN FOR MY TASTE, BUT IT'S ELEGANT. I GIVE YOU THAT. SO, WHAT YOU SAY?

HMM... SURE, I WOULD LOVE THAT!

THANK GOD I'LL BE ELENA FOR JUST TONIGHT. I DON'T THINK I COULD BEAR TO SPEND MORE TIME WITH THIS WOMAN!

YOU SURE? I'M NOT BEING A NUISANCE, AM I? YOU'RE NOT TALKING MUCH.

OH I'M S-SORRY! THIS IS NOT ABOUT YOU. ACTUALLY, YOU'RE BEING SO KIND TO ME! I'M JUST WORRIED ABOUT SOMETHING ELSE.

WHAT IS IT, DARLING? YOU CAN OPEN UP TO ME.

HMM... I'M TAKING PART IN A BUSINESS DINNER WITH MY HUSBAND, BUT I DON'T THINK I'M BEING A GOOD COMPANY. I'M AFRAID THIS MIGHT HURT HIS EFFORTS. I SIMPLY CAN'T RELAX TONIGHT.

SO YOU CAN'T RELAX?
POOR DEAR...

BUT GOOD NEWS, I THINK I CAN HELP YOU...

I'M BACK, GENTLEMEN.
DID I TAKE TOO LONG?

YOU KNOW EVERY SECOND AWAY FROM YOU IS AN ETERNITY TO ME, DARLING.

OH, SOMEONE'S FEELING ROMANTIC TONIGHT, HUH?

IF I MAY SAY SO, YOU SEEM IN A BETTER MOOD NOW, MRS. SAMARAS.

VERY WELL OBSERVED, JOEL, WHICH IS A RARE THING COMING FROM YOU.

I APOLOGIZE FOR MY BEHAVIOR EARLIER, GENTLEMEN.

I THINK I JUST NEEDED TO FRESHEN UP.

WEIRD... I ACTUALLY FEEL MUCH MORE RELAXED... ALMOST *TOO* RELAXED. WHAT'S GOING ON HERE? I JUST TOOK A SIP OF THAT WOMAN'S CHAMPAGNE IN THE BATHROOM... WELL, IT DOESN'T MATTER NOW. THIS IS HELPING ME TO PLAY MY ROLE. TONIGHT, I'M MRS. ELENA SAMARAS. IT'S TIME FOR *FULL IMMERSION*.

IN ANY CASE, THE NEGOTIATIONS ARE PROGRESSING SUPERBLY, DARLING. MY FRIEND HERE AND I ARE ALMOST REACHING AN UNDERSTANDING, AREN'T WE, MR. TOSKA?

I CAN'T DENY THE CONVERSATION IS GOING WELL. I STILL HAVEN'T MADE MY MIND, THOUGH.

OH, YOU SEEM MORE RELUCTANT THAN I WAS WHEN NIKOS PROPOSED TO ME. BELIEVE ME, IN THE END, IT'S JUST IMPOSSIBLE TO RESIST HIS CHARM!

SOME TIME LATER...

YOU SHOULD DRINK SOME MORE WINE, MA'AM. I HAVE TO SAY THIS CROP IS REMARKABLE!

ALRIGHT... JUST ONE MORE GLASS THEN, YOUNG MAN.

OKAY, MR. SAMARAS. YOU DON'T SEEM LIKE A SCAMMER, SO I'M WILLING TO PARTICIPATE IN A NEW ROUND OF NEGOTIATIONS.

N-NEW ROUND?

OF COURSE! YOU DIDN'T THINK I WOULD MAKE SUCH AN IMPORTANT DECISION AFTER MEETING YOU JUST ONCE, DID YOU? WE'LL SEE EACH OTHER AGAININ TWO OR THREE MONTHS, WHICH IS WHEN I'LL HAVE A NEW OPENING IN MY SCHEDULE. IN THE MEANTIME, I WANT JOEL TO STAY HERE IN ORDER TO CHECK ON YOUR DAY-TO-DAY BUSINESS OPERATIONS.

MR. TOSKA, I D-DON'T THINK...

OH, IT'LL BE OUR PLEASURE TO HOST JOEL, MR. TOSKA. MY HUSBAND AND I WILL DO EVERYTHING WE CAN TO MAKE HIM FEEL COMFORTABLE.

DO YOU HAVE ANY OBJECTIONS, MR. SAMARAS?

N-NO, OF COURSE NOT.

THAT'S SETTLED THEN.

SO I PROPOSE A TOAST. TO A LONG AND LASTING PARTNERSHIP!


TO A LONG AND LASTING PARTNERSHIP!

YOU REALIZE WHAT YOU JUST DID, RIGHT, DARLING?

I WOULD SAY I ACTED LIKE A PERFECT WIFE WHO KNOWS HOW TO SUPPORT HER HUSBAND.

THIS I CAN'T DENY... YOU WERE BRILLIANT!

OH, YOU REALLY KNOW HOW TO MAKE A WOMAN FEEL FLATTERED. EVEN AFTER ALL THESE YEARS.

HA! I WON'T FORGET THIS, ELENA. I GUESS I HAVE TO KEEP CALLING YOU ELENA SINCE YOU MADE SURE THAT MY WIFE IS HERE TO STAY, AT LEAST FOR THE NEXT FEW MONTHS.

W-WAIT... WHAT ARE YOU...

HUH?!



...

WHAT THE...

...HELL?!

YOU MADE ME A VERY HAPPY MAN TONIGHT, ELENA. THAT'S FOR SURE.

Chapter Six
A New Dawn


THIS IS UNBELIEVABLE!

HUH? IS SOMEONE SCREAMING?
WHAT'S HAPPENING? WHERE I AM?
THIS IS NOT MY ROOM. WHERE IS MARINA?


WHAT THE HELL?
WHY AM I WEARING THIS?

SO SELFISH AND INSANE!

I NEED TO UNDERSTAND WHAT'S GOING ON... FUCK... THE ONLY SHOES AROUND ARE HIGH HEELS!

GOD, MY HEAD IS KILLING ME. HOW IS IT POSSIBLE THAT I DON'T REMEMBER ANYTHING FROM LAST NIGHT AFTER DINNER?

I'M STILL WEARING THE GAFF AND CORSET AND THOSE BREAST FORMS LOOK DISTURBINGLY REALISTIC ON THIS NIGHTGOWN... I JUST WANTED SOMETHING TO COVER ME UP...


WELL, THIS HERE IS BETTER THAN NOTHING. NOW I NEED TO GET OUT OF HERE!

AHH, HERE'S MY *FAVORITE AUNT!* DOESN'T SHE LOOK LOVELY THIS MORNING?


M-MARINA? WHAT'S GOING ON?
WHAT HOUSE IS THIS?

OH, DON'T YOU REMEMBER, AUNT ELENA? THIS IS UNCLE NIKOS' HOUSE. YOUR HOUSE TOO, SHOULD I SAY? SINCE YOU'VE DECIDED TO BE HIS WIFE *INDEFINITELY!*

I STILL DON'T UNDERSTAND.

NOTHING YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT MAKES SENSE TO ME, MARINA.

STOP PLAYING DUMB WITH ME! SOFIA AND EVA TOLD ME EVERYTHING. YOU'VE AGREED TO KEEP BEING UNCLE NIKOS' WIFE FOR THE NEXT FEW MONTHS! THAT'S RIGHT... MONTHS! DIDN'T YOU THINK ABOUT HOW I WOULD FEEL? IT WAS ONE THING TO PRETEND TO BE A WOMAN FOR ONE NIGHT, BUT NOW YOU'RE RUINING OUR HONEYMOON!

WHAT? I DON'T REMEMBER IT! DID THIS REALLY HAPPEN, NIKOS?

I'M AFRAID SO, ELEN... I MEAN, ANDREW. MR. TOSKA STATED HE WANTED HIS ASSISTANT TO BE HERE FOR A WHILE, AND YOU SAID **WE** WOULD DO OUR BEST TO MAKE HIS STAY A PLEASANT EXPERIENCE. I TRIED TO INTERVENE BUT YOU WERE TOO FAST. DON'T YOU REALLY REMEMBER? YOU HAD DRUNK SOME WINE, BUT YOU DIDN'T SEEM TO BE OUT OF YOUR MIND.

OH MY GOD... I THINK I'M REMEMBERING...

B-BUT HOW DID I END UP HERE AT YOUR HOUSE?

YOU FELL ASLEEP RIGHT AFTER DINNER,
WHEN WE WERE STILL AT THE HOTEL,
AND I DIDN'T WANT TO WAKE UP MARINA.
SOFIA AND EVA ARGUED THAT IT WAS BEST
TO BRING YOU HERE SINCE YOU WERE
GOING TO BE ELENA FOR A LITTLE LONGER.
THEY... PROVIDED A NIGHTWEAR FOR YOU.

THIS CAN'T BE, NIKOS! I'M SORRY BUT THERE'S NO WAY I CAN PRETEND TO BE YOUR WIFE FOR MONTHS! AS MARINA SAID, WE ARE ON OUR HONEYMOON!

OH NO, NOW YOU'VE GIVEN YOUR WORD, AUNT ELENA! YOU WON'T GIVE UP. THE GIRLS HAVE TOLD ME THEY ALREADY HAVE PLANS FOR YOU... SOME PROCEDURES TO ENSURE YOU CAN LOOK LIKE A MATURE WOMAN FOR A LONGER PERIOD OF TIME. IT SOUNDS EXCITING, DOESN'T IT?


B-BUT...

YOU KNOW WHAT? I NEED SOME TIME ALONE. DON'T TRY TO CONTACT ME.

I'M SO SORRY...

Chapter Seven
A Step Further

C'MON, GUYS! IS THIS REALLY NECESSARY? THERE MUST BE ANOTHER WAY!

NOW, NOW YOU HAVE TO CALM DOWN, MOM.

THAT'S RIGHT. WHAT'S DONE IS DONE. NOW WE NEED TO DEAL WITH THIS SITUATION THE BEST WE CAN.

BUT THIS IS COMPLETELY INSANE! HOW CAN I POSSIBLY LIVE AS A WOMAN FOR SEVERAL MONTHS?

YOU JUST NEED TO LISTEN AND TRUST US AND EVERYTHING WILL BE FINE!

PERHAPS THIS WON'T EVEN BE AS DIFFICULT AS YOU'RE THINKING!

BUT WHAT ABOUT MARINA? DID YOU GUYS TALK TO HER AGAIN?

YES, WE'RE IN TOUCH WITH HER. UNFORTUNATELY, SHE'S STILL VERY ANGRY AND HURT.

I THINK IT'S BEST TO GIVE HER SOME BREATHING ROOM... AT LEAST FOR A FEW DAYS.

BUT YOU KNOW WHAT WOULD MAKE THINGS EVEN WORSE? YOU BREAKING THE PROMISE YOU MADE TO DAD.

YOU KNOW MARINA AS WELL AS WE DO. FOR HER, LOYALTY IS VERY IMPORTANT. YOU SAID YOU WOULD BE OUR DEAR MOTHER FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE AFTER ALL, DIDN'T YOU?

THAT'S THE CRAZIEST THING! I DON'T REMEMBER VERY WELL WHAT HAPPENED LAST NIGHT! WAIT... WHEN I WENT TO THE BATHROOM, THERE WAS A WOMAN WITH HER FACE FULL OF BANDAGES... YEAH... SHE OFFERED ME A SIP OF CHAMPAGNE. IS IT POSSIBLE SHE DRUGGED ME OR SOMETHING?

DRUGGED YOU? IT DOESN'T SEEM VERY LIKELY. WHY WOULD ANYONE DO THAT?

IN ANY CASE, WE'VE ALREADY WASTED SO MUCH TIME. PLEASE SIT DOWN, MOM. WE HAVE A LOT OF WORK TO DO!

AS EVA SAID, IT'S IMPORTANT THAT YOU TRUST US. WE ARE BEAUTICIANS AND WE KNOW WHAT WE ARE DOING. LET ME START BY WIPING OFF YOUR MAKEUP.

LAST TIME, WE APPLYED LONG-LASTING MAKEUP ON YOU TO GIVE YOU A MORE MATURE LOOK. BUT GIVEN THE NEW CIRCUMSTANCES, WE DON'T THINK IT WILL BE ENOUGH FROM NOW ON.

THAT'S RIGHT. YOU'LL NEED TO LOOK CONVINCING ENOUGH AS A MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN EVEN IN BROAD DAYLIGHT. THAT'S WHY WE NEED TO TRY ANOTHER THING... SOME INJECTIONS IN YOUR FACE.

INJECTIONS?! WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

RELAX, MOM... WE'D NEVER DO ANYTHING THAT COULD HARM YOU. WE'LL JUST APPLY A SUBSTANCE TO YOUR FACE THAT WILL DECREASE THE AMOUNT OF COLLAGEN. THEN, WE'LL APPLY BOTOX, TO GIVE YOU THE LOOK OF A MIDDLE-AGED LADY WHO TAKES CARE OF HER APPEARANCE.

PLUS, FACIAL HARMONIZATION, TO SOFTEN YOUR FEATURES A BIT. HOWEVER, WE'LL ONLY WORK ON YOUR SKIN SURFACE, SO THE RESULT WILL NOT BE PERMANENT. YOU DON'T NEED TO WORRY.

I... I REALLY DON'T THINK THIS IS A GOOD IDEA, GIRLS!

WELL, IT'S TOO LATE TO GIVE UP NOW. WE HAVE NO OTHER OPTION!


OUCH!


RELAX, IT WON'T TAKE LONG.


I SEE YOU ALSO NEED AN ELECTROLYSIS SESSION. YOUR FACIAL HAIR IS ALREADY GROWING OUT. WE CAN'T HAVE A BEARDED MOTHER, CAN WE?

OKAY, ALL DONE! I ALSO APPLIED SOME CASUAL MAKEUP ON YOU. THIS TIME AROUND, THOUGH, THE WRINKLES AND LINES WON'T GO AWAY WITH MAKEUP REMOVER, MOM! THEY ARE PART OF YOU NOW. BUT DON'T WORRY, YOU LOOK FABULOUS FOR A WOMAN YOUR AGE!


OH MY GOD...


I LOOK SO...

THAT'S AMAZING, ISN'T IT? NOW LET US WORK ON YOUR HAIR. I DON'T THINK YOU NEED ANY MAJOR CHANGES IN THAT DEPARTMENT, AT LEAST FOR NOW, AS YOUR EXTENSIONS STILL LOOK GOOD. BUT SOME VOLUME WOULD BE NICE.

THERE... MUCH BETTER.!

GIRLS, ARE YOU SURE THIS ISN'T JUST MAKEUP? EVEN WHEN I WASH MY FACE, WILL I STILL LOOK SO OLD?

YOU DON'T LOOK OLD, MOM... ANY FIFTY-FIVE-YEAR-OLD WOMAN WOULD LOVE TO LOOK AS YOUNG AS YOU DO. WE'VE ALSO MANAGED TO MAKE YOUR FACE A LITTLE SOFTER AND MORE FEMININE... MAYBE THAT WON'T BE ENOUGH, THOUGH... WE'LL SEE... IN ANY CASE, YES, THIS IS YOUR FACE NOW. IT WON'T COME OFF WHEN YOU REMOVE YOUR MAKE UP.

HOLY CRAP... THIS IS UNBELIEVABLE!

WATCH THE LANGUAGE, MOM... REMEMBER YOU ARE A LADY. YOU'LL HAVE TIME TO ADMIRE YOUR FACE LATER. NOW WE NEED TO KEEP WORKING ON YOU.

K-KEEP WORKING?

OF COURSE, WE ARE FAR FROM FINISHED! COME WITH US.

LAST TIME, WE USED INSERTS IN YOUR BRA TO MAKE IT LOOK LIKE YOU HAD BREASTS.

THIS TIME, THOUGH, WE'LL WORK WITH SOMETHING SAFER AND MORE REALISTIC. LET ME SHOW YOU.

WHAT THE... YOU WEREN'T KIDDING WHEN YOU SAID IT LOOKED REALISTIC! WILL YOU PUT THOSE THINGS IN MY BRA?

MORE OR LESS... LEAN BACK, PLEASE.

W-WHAT IS THIS? IT FEELS COLD.

JUST A MINUTE. LET THE GLUE DRY A LITTLE.

G-GLUE?!

HOLD ON JUST A LITTLE LONGER.

WAIT... THESE THINGS ARE LITERALLY STUCK ON ME!

THAT'S THE POINT, MOM... YOU'RE NOW THE OWNER OF A BEAUTIFUL PAIR OF MATURE BREASTS! ISN'T IT GREAT?

THEY'RE SO HEAVY... WHY DIDN'T YOU GIVE ME SMALLER FORMS?

MANY REASONS... SMALLER BREASTS WOULDN'T LOOK GOOD ON YOUR BODY TYPE... YOU ALREADY GAVE BIRTH AND BREASTFED TWICE... AND THE WOMEN IN OUR FAMILY TEND TO HAVE BIG BREASTS.


SO WEIRD...
YOU CAN PLAY WITH YOUR GIRLS LATER, MOM. DON'T YOU HAVE MANNERS? NOW, WE'RE GOING TO NEED YOU TO TRUST US. TAKE OFF YOUR PANTIES, PLEASE.

WHAT? WHY?

FOR THE NEXT STEP OF YOUR TRANSFORMATION. BUT FIRST, LET ME APPLY SOME MAKEUP TO THE EDGES OF YOUR BREASTS TO MAKE THEM BLEND BETTER. OH, AND WE CAN'T FORGET ABOUT YOUR CORSET!

THIS IS REALLY EMBARRASSING, OKAY? I'VE ALREADY LEARNED TO PUT ON THAT DAMN GAFF MYSELF!

I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU TODAY, MOM. DID YOU FORGET ALL ABOUT ETIQUETTE? YOU USED TO BE A REFINED LADY. WE'RE NOT GOING TO USE THE GAFF, ANYWAY...

CLICK!

WHAT THE...?!

THIS IS A CHASTITY CAGE, MOM.

AND WHY DID YOU PUT THIS ON ME?

AGAIN, LOTS OF REASONS... LIKE THIS WILL MAKE IT EASIER FOR YOU TO THINK AND FEEL LIKE A WOMAN WITHOUT YOUR LITTLE BUDDY DOWN THERE GETTING IN THE WAY ALL THE TIME...

BUT THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IS THAT THIS WILL BE ESSENTIAL SO THAT YOU DON'T HAVE ISSUES WEARING THE OTHER DEVICE WE HAVE FOR YOU...

...A VERY SPECIAL DEVICE.

I CAN'T BELIEVE I'M LETTING YOU DO THIS TO ME! WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU GUYS?

GLUE AGAIN?! AND HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO GET THESE BOOBS AND VAGINA OFF AT NIGHT WHEN I GO TO SLEEP?

DON'T MOVE SO MUCH, MOM. WE MANAGED TO FIT YOUR PARTS INSIDE THE POCKETS WITH NO PROBLEMS, BUT THE GLUE IS STILL DRYING.

WELL... YOU WON'T, MOM.

WHAT?!

WE USED SURGICAL GLUE. YOUR PROSTHESES WILL STAY IN PLACE FOR WEEKS, MAYBE MONTHS. AND THE MAKEUP WE APPLY ON YOUR CHEST AND GROIN IS SEMI-PERMANENT, WHICH MEANS IT'LL TAKE A LONG TIME BEFORE IT STARTS FADING OUT.

I CAN'T BELIEVE THIS! I NEED TO TALK TO MARINA. HER FAMILY IS COMPLETELY INSANE!

Chapter Eight
Down the Rabbit Hole

YOU NEED TO PUT YOUR SHIT TOGETHER, ANDREW. YOU'RE NOT THINKING STRAIGHT.

BUT CAN I REALLY BLAME MYSELF?

HERE I AM, BACK AT MY **HUSBAND'S** HOUSE – MY HOUSE TOO NOW, I GUESS – WEARING A BRA , A CORSET, A THONG AND HEELS. MY TWO **DAUGHTERS** ARE IN THE NEXT ROOM, READY TO GIVE ME YET ANOTHER LESSON IN FEMININITY. AT LEAST THEY WERE **NICE ENOUGH** TO LET ME TAKE A BATH FIRST. YEAH, BATH, BECAUSE I CAN'T TAKE A SHOWER ANYMORE. THEY DON'T THINK IT'S APPROPRIATE FOR A **REFINED LADY** LIKE ME.


HOW COULD I LET IT GO THIS FAR? BUT WHAT COULD I HAVE DONE? IT ALL HAPPENED SO FAST THAT I DIDN'T EVEN HAVE TIME TO REACT.

WELL, I GUESS I HAVE NOTHING TO GAIN BY FEELING SORRY FOR MYSELF. I SHOULD JUST TAKE THE DAMN BATH. PERHAPS THIS WILL HELP ME RELAX. THEN I'LL BE ABLE TO THINK OF A WAY OUT OF THIS MADNESS.

MAN, THIS IS SO FUCKED UP. I DON'T THINK I'LL EVER GET USED TO HOW HEAVY THESE FORMS ARE. IT'S LIKE I'M CARRYING TWO BAGS OF SAND ON MY CHEST! AND ALTHOUGH I'M NOT SUPPOSED TO FEEL ANYTHING WHEN I TOUCH THEM, SINCE THEY'RE NOT REAL, I DO FEEL SOMETHING... A WEIRD TINGLING, I'D SAY. I GUESS THIS IS MY MIND TRICKING ME? LIKE WITH PEOPLE WHO HAVE HAD AMPUTATIONS BUT KEEP FEELING THEIR LOST LIMBS?

AND THIS IS NO BETTER DOWN THERE...

IT'S GREAT TO FINALLY GET RID OF THIS STUPID THONG, WHICH CAN BE AS INFURIATING AS THE CORSET, SLIDING BETWEEN MY BUTT CHEEKS. BUT ON THE OTHER HAND...

IT'S SO DISTURBING TO SEE WHAT I HAVE BETWEEN MY LEGS NOW.

I KNOW MY VAGINA CAN'T BE PENETRATED AS THERE IS NO CHANNEL. THE TIP OF MY PENIS IS JUST BEHIND THE LITTLE LIPS, TIGHTLY HELD BY THE FUCKING CHASTITY CAGE.

STILL, THE ILLUSION IS PERFECT.

NO ONE WOULD DOUBT THAT I HAVE A REAL VAGINA. THE FEELING OF EMASCULATION IS SO OVERWHELMING!

AH, FREE FROM THE CORSET AT LAST! IT'S FANTASTIC TO BE ABLE TO BREATHE AGAIN.

CRAP, EVEN WITHOUT THE CORSET, MY BODY STILL LOOKS SO FEMININE! SURE, I DON'T HAVE WOMANLY WAIST AND HIPS, BUT THE BOOBS AND VAGINA ARE BAD ENOUGH ALREADY!


LET'S GO TO THE WATER THEN. MAN, I CAN'T DENY THAT THIS VIEW IS TRULY AMAZING.

HMM...

YEAH, IT FEELS GOOD.

NOW RELAX, ANDREW. YOU NEED TO HAVE A CALM MIND TO FIGURE OUT WHAT TO DO NEXT.

HOW SWEET OF THE GIRLS TO LEAVE A GLASS OF WINE FOR ME. TOO BAD THIS IS A WHITE ONE, THOUGH. THEY SAID FROM NOW ON I SHOULD ONLY DRINK WHITE OR ROSE WINE, AS THEY ARE MORE DELICATE AND FEMININE DRINKS.

AGAIN, THIS IS COMPLETELY INSANE! YES, I'M AN ACTOR, BUT HOW CAN THEY EXPECT ME TO PLAY A ROLE TWENTY-FOUR HOURS A DAY?

MARINA STATED I COULDN'T GIVE UP NOW THAT I'VE GIVEN MY WORD TO PRETEND TO BE ELENA, THE WIFE OF HER UNCLE, FOR THE NEXT FEW MONTHS. BUT SHE OBVIOUSLY ONLY SAID THAT BECAUSE SHE WAS MAD, RIGHT? I NEED TO CONVINCE HER THAT THIS HAS GONE TOO FAR. I THINK IT'S TIME TO CALL HER.


THERE'S NO WAY I CAN SPEND MONTHS SEEING THIS WHEN I LOOK DOWN!


FUCK, I CAN'T BELIEVE I'M GETTING AROUSED! BUT GLUED TO MY BODY OR NOT, THESE BOOBS ARE SO INCREDIBLY HOT. I'M A STRAIGHT GUY, AFTER ALL!


OUCH, IT HURTS SO BAD!
I CAN'T GET HARD BECAUSE
OF THIS DAMN CHASTITY CAGE!

TAKE A DEEP BREATH AND CALM DOWN, ANDREW! GOD, I CAN'T BELIEVE THIS IS HAPPENING TO ME!

THAT'S IT. I CAN'T GO ON LIVING LIKE THIS. THIS IS TORTURE! MARINA WILL HAVE TO UNDERSTAND.


FUCK, I DON'T HAVE HER NUMBER HERE! SOFIA AND EVA GAVE ME THIS PHONE THIS MORNING, SAYING IT DIDN'T MAKE SENSE FOR ME TO HAVE A U.S. NUMBER. MY CONTACT LIST ONLY HAS MY DAUGHTERS, SOMEONE NICKNAMED "DARLING", WHO I ASSUME IS MY HUSBAND, MR. TOSKA AND JOEL, BESIDES A LOT OF CLOTHING, SHOES AND JEWELRY SHOPS AND SOME BEAUTY CLINICS.

OKAY, NOW I'M PISSED OFF! IT'S TIME TO HAVE A GOOD CONVERSATION WITH MY DEAR GIRLS.

Bzzt

Bzzt

A CALL FROM AN UNKNOWN NUMBER... MAYBE THAT'S MARINA? THERE'S ONLY ONE WAY TO KNOW. JUST IN CASE, I THINK I'D BETTER SPEAK IN GREEK.


HELLO?
GOOD AFTERNOON, MRS. SARAMAS.
I'M GLAD YOU TOOK THE CALL.


SHIT, THAT'S A MAN!
WHO IS SPEAKING?

I'M A FRIEND, MRS. SAMARAS. I'M CALLING YOU TO GIVE YOU SOME ADVICE REGARDING MR. TOSKA. I BELIEVE YOUR HUSBAND IS DOING BUSINESS WITH HIM, ISN'T HE?

I WANT TO KNOW WHO YOU ARE RIGHT NOW. HOW DID YOU GET THIS NUMBER?

PLEASE CALM DOWN, MRS. SAMARAS. LIKE I SAID, I'M JUST A FRIEND. MR. TOSKA IS AN ECCENTRIC MAN, BUT HE CAN ALSO BECOME VERY DANGEROUS UNDER... CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES. I'VE DONE BUSINESS WITH HIM IN THE PAST. YOU NEED TO BE CAREFUL. IT'S POSSIBLE THAT HE'S SPYING ON YOU AND YOUR FAMILY.

AND WHO WOULD THE SPY BE? YOU?

OH NO, MRS. SAMARAS, YOU COULDN'T BE FURTHER FROM THE TRUTH. BUT, OF COURSE, YOU HAVE NO REASON TO BELIEVE ME RIGHT NOW. WHY DON'T WE SET UP A MEETING? IS THREE DAYS FROM NOW GOOD FOR YOU?

I DON'T THINK THAT'S A GOOD IDEA.

PLEASE CONSIDER IT, MA'AM. AND I THINK IT'S BEST TO KEEP THIS BETWEEN US FOR THE TIME BEING.

NOW WHAT THE HELL WAS THIS?


WHAT DOES THIS MAN REALLY WANT? BLACKMAIL ME? DOES HE KNOW WHO I REALLY AM?

NO, I'M JUST BEING PARANOID. HOW COULD HE KNOW? THIS IS SIMPLY IMPOSSIBLE... RIGHT?


IN ANY CASE, I NEED TO TALK TO MARINA MORE THAN EVER. WE NEED TO GET OUT OF HERE. THINGS ARE GETTING OUT OF CONTROL.



Chapter Nine
Doubts and Drama

OKAY, NOW IT'S TIME FOR THE TRUTH. I'M NOT GOING TO TELL THE GIRLS ABOUT THE CALL I JUST GOT, AT LEAST UNTIL I UNDERSTAND WHAT'S GOING ON. THEY WERE THE ONES WHO GAVE ME MY NEW PHONE. THEY MAY BE BEHIND ALL THIS.

YOU TWO, MAY I KNOW WHY I DON'T HAVE MARINA'S NUMBER ON MY PHONE?


CALM DOWN, MOM.
THE THING IS... SADLY, WE DON'T HAVE GOOD NEWS ABOUT MARINA.

OH, MY GOD, WHAT HAPPENED TO HER? AN ACCIDENT OR SOMETHING?

NO, THERE WAS NO ACCIDENT. SORRY, WE SHOULD HAVE BEEN CLEARER. MARINA... WELL, SHE LEFT ATHENS.

SHE WHAT?!!

I THINK IT'LL BE EASIER IF YOU LISTEN TO THE MESSAGE SHE SENT ME.

HEY EVA. I DECIDED TO GO TO CRETE FOR A FEW DAYS. I REALLY NEED TO SPEND SOME TIME ALONE. I THINK THIS IS THE ONLY WAY FOR ME TO CALM DOWN AND DEAL WITH WHAT'S GOING ON. THERE'S NO POINT IN TRYING TO CONTACT ME. I'M NOT TAKING MY PHONE. I'LL BE GONE FOR FOUR OR FIVE DAYS... MAYBE A LITTLE LONGER. TELL UNCLE NIKOS AND AUNT ELENA I WISH THEM GOOD LUCK IN THE DEAL THEY'RE CLOSING.

SHE'S GOING TO CRETE? IT CAN'T BE! I NEED TO GO TO THE HOTEL. MAYBE SHE HASN'T LEFT YET.

THIS IS TOO LATE. WE CALLED THE HOTEL AFTER HER MESSAGE. SHE LEFT A FEW HOURS AGO.


THEN I'M GOING TO CRETE AS WELL! I CAN'T JUST STAND HERE DOING NOTHING! SHE'S MY WIFE I NEED TO TALK TO HER. WE HAVE THINGS TO WORK OUT.

YOU NO LONGER HAVE A WIFE, BUT A HUSBAND. MARINA IS JUST YOUR NIECE NOW. EVEN IF YOU MANAGED TO LOCATE HER IN CRETE, IT WOULD ONLY MAKE MATTERS WORSE. SHE MADE IT VERY CLEAR IN THE MESSAGE THAT SHE HOPES "UNCLE NIKOS AND *AUNT ELENA*" WILL BE ABLE TO CLOSE THE DEAL THEY ARE NEGOTIATING. WE ALREADY TALKED ABOUT THIS. MARINA WON'T FORGIVE YOU IF YOU BREAK YOUR WORD.

THEN WHAT YOU PROPOSE I DO? JUST SIT HERE WHILE ALL THIS IS HAPPENING?

IT'S FASCINATING HOW IN JUST A FEW DAYS OF INTENSE TRAINING "MOM" HAS ALREADY ASSIMILATED SOME ELEGANT AND FEMININE MANNERISMS, ESPECIALLY WHEN SHE'S STRESSED. THE FULL IMMERSION IS CERTAINLY HAVING AN EFFECT ON HER. SHE DOESN'T EVEN SEEM TO NOTICE IT.

LISTEN, MOM, THE BEST THING TO DO IS GIVE IT SOME TIME. MARINA WILL BE BACK AND YOU TWO WILL HAVE A CHANCE TO TALK. AND IT'S NOT ALL BAD NEWS. THIS MORNING, DAD HAD A NEW CONVERSATION WITH MR. TOSKA BEFORE THE MAN RETURNED TO ALBANIA. HE AGREED TO SIGN A PRE-CONTRACT WITH DAD. IF ALL GOES WELL, THIS STORY COULD END SOONER THAN EXPECTED.

PRE-CONTRACT?

EXACTLY! THIS IS GOING WELL, YOU SEE? DAD AND TOSKA'S ASSISTENT ALSO TRAVELED THIS MORNING TO THE NORTH IN ORDER TO ASSESS A POTENTIAL LOCATION FOR A NEW RESORT. DAD WANTED TO TALK TO YOU BEFORE LEAVING, BUT THERE WAS NO TIME.

SEEMS LIKE JOEL WAS CURIOUS IF YOU WERE GOING ON THE TRIP WITH THEM, BUT WE TOLD DAD IT WASN'T A GOOD IDEA. A FEW DAYS AWAY FROM JOEL WILL BE GREAT FOR YOU TO GET EVEN MORE USED TO YOUR NEW PERSONA AND MAKE NO MISTAKES WHEN HEIS AROUND.

AS AN EXCUSE, WE TOLD DAD TO EXPLAIN TO JOEL THAT YOU COULDN'T GO BECAUSE YOU ALREADY HAD A PROCEDURE SCHEDULED AT A BEAUTY CLINIC.

B-BEAUTY CLINIC? BUT THAT WAS JUST AN EXCUSE, RIGHT?

NOT NECESSARILY... WE HAVE SOMETHING IN MIND TO HELP YOU WITH YOUR NEW IDENTITY... A SIMPLE, NON-INVASIVE PROCEDURE, PRETTY MUCH LIKE WHAT WE DID IN THE SALON EARLIER TODAY. WE CAN TALK ABOUT IT LATER, THOUGH.

THERE IS NO WAY I WILL UNDERGO ANY OTHER CRAZY PROCEDURE! WHAT HAPPENED THIS MORNING IS BAD ENOUGH ALREADY. BUT THAT'S A BATTLE FOR ANOTHER TIME. NOW I NEED TO DISCUSS WHAT IS REALLY BOTHERING ME.

WHO DID YOU GIVE MY NEW PHONE NUMBER TO?

DAD, JOEL AND MR. TOSKA. WE COULDN'T GIVE IT TO MARINA AS SHE LEFT THE CITY WITHOUT TAKING HER PHONE. WHY?

OH, NOTHING... I GOT A CALL WHILE I WAS IN THE BATH, BUT THEN I GUESS SOMEONE CALLED ME BY MISTAKE.

THAT'S IT THEN... EVA, SOFIA, NIKOS, MR. TOSKA AND JOEL... ONE OF THEM GAVE MY NUMBER TO THAT SHADY MAN. BUT WHY? SINCE MARINA ISN'T HERE, I THINK IT'S BEST NOT TO TALK ABOUT IT TO ANYONE. I CAN'T BELIEVE MY WIFE LEFT ME HERE ALONE IN THIS SITUATION...

NOW WE'RE GOING TO HELP YOU GET DRESSED. BUT FIRST, WE NEED TO DISCUSS SOMETHING IMPORTANT.

IT SEEMS LIKE YOU FORGOT TO PUT YOUR WEDDING RING ON THIS MORNING. NOW THAT'S NOT RIGHT FOR A MARRIED WOMAN, IS IT?

YOU HAVE TO WEAR IT ALL THE TIME. NO EXCUSES. YOU DON'T WANT TO GIVE PEOPLETHE WRONG IMPRESSION, RIGHT?

O-OKAY.

THERE'S ANOTHER THING YOU'LL BE WEARING PRETTY MUCH ALL THE TIME FROM NOW ON... A PAIR OF HEELS.

W-WHAT?! NO WAY. I HATE HEELS! THEY HURT MY FEET SO MUCH!

YOU'LL GET USED TO IT, MOM. THE MOST IMPORTANT THING TO KEEP IN MIND IS THAT YOU WANT TO LOOK AS FEMININE AS POSSIBLE IN ORDER TO DISPEL ANY SUSPICION ABOUT YOU.

THEN THAT'S IT. YOU'RE A REFINED LADY WHO CANNOT LIVE WITHOUT HIGH HEELS. IT'S BEEN LIKE THIS SINCE YOUR YOUTH. HEELS ARE JUST PART OF YOUR IDENTITY AS A WOMAN.

ALSO... YOU MANAGED TO TAKE OFF YOUR CORSET BY YOURSELF IN THE BATHROOM, DIDN'T YOU?

Y-YES.

THIS IS BAD. IT MEANS THE CORSET WASN'T TIGHT ENOUGH. WE CAN FIX THIS, OF COURSE. BEFORE THAT, THOUGH, IT'S TIME FOR YOU TO LEARN HOW TO DO YOUR MAKEUP YOURSELF.

YOU DIDN'T REMOVE YOUR MAKEUP BEFORE BATHING FROM WHAT I CAN SEE. WE USED WATERPROOF MAKEUP ON YOU, BUT IT STILL ISN'T IDEAL. YOU HAVE SO MUCH TO LEARN, MOM...

FORTY MINUTES LATER...

OKAY, YOUR FOUNDATION, BRONZER, BLUSH AND EYESHADOW FINALLY LOOK GOOD. AND YOU MUST REMEMBER TO ALWAYS MOISTURIZE YOUR LIPS LIKE I TAUGHT YOU BEFORE APPLYING YOUR LIPSTICK. NOW LET'S MOVE TO THE EYELINER AND MASCARA.

PUTTING ON AND REMOVING MAKEUP WILL NOW PART OF YOUR ROUTINE, JUST LIKE SKIN AND HAIR CARE. ALL OF THIS NEEDS TO BECOME SECOND NATURE TO YOU, SO YOU HAVE TO PRACTICE SEVERAL TIMES A DAY.

OKAY, I THINK YOUR MAKEUP LOOKS GOOD ENOUGH... FOR NOW.

C'MON, GIRLS, IS IT REALLY NECESSARY FOR ME TO WEAR HEELS RIGHT NOW? I NEED A BREAK. MY FEET ARE KILLING ME!

WE'VE ALREADY TALKED ABOUT THIS, MOM. YOU'LL NOW LIVE ON HIGH HEELS. THEY MAKE YOU FEEL CONFIDENT, GRACEFUL AND FEMININE. ALSO, THIS PAIR ISN'T THAT HIGH!

YOU'LL REALIZE THAT FOR A WOMAN, ESPECIALLY A WOMAN IN YOUR POSITION, YOUR PERSONAL IMAGE IS SOMETHING VERY IMPORTANT. YOU ALWAYS WANT TO LOOK AT YOUR BEST, AND YOU FEEL GOOD ABOUT IT.

YOU WANT TO BE SEEN AS AN EXQUISITE, CHIC WOMAN WHO KNOWS HOW TO BEHAVE SOCIALLY AND ALSO BE A GOOD HOSTESS. MOST IMPORTANTLY, YOU'RE ALWAYS READY TO SUPPORT YOUR HUSBAND AND FAMILY WHENEVER NEEDED.

IN OTHER WORDS, FOR THIS TO WORK, YOU NEED TO ASSIMILATE THE IDEA OF BEING A DEVOTED WIFE AND A CARING MOTHER.

A DEVOTED WIFE AND A CARING MOTHER...
WHERE THE HELL DID I GET MYSELF INTO?
ONE THING IS FOR SURE, I SHOULD WIN
AN OSCAR FOR THIS ROLE!

NOW THAT YOU ARE PROPERLY DRESSED, WE'LL CONTINUE YOUR TRAINING. YOU'RE ALREADY MANAGING TO BEHAVE IN A WOMANLY WAY, BUT IT'S STILL NOT PERFECT.

DAD MENTIONED THAT YOU WERE NERVOUS AT THE BEGINNING OF DINNER WITH MR. TOSKAS, AND IT CAN'T HAPPEN AGAIN. KEEP IN MIND YOU'LL BE SEEN IN PUBLIC IN NOT CONTROLLED SITUATIONS. YOU NEED TO BE 100% COMFORTABLE BEING A MIDDLE AGED GREEK WOMAN. LET'S START WITH YOUR WALK.

HALF AN HOUR LATER...

THAT'S IT... YOU LOVE BEING ELEGANT AND FEMININE. YOUR WALK NEEDS TO BE AS DAINTY AS THAT OF A QUEEN. THE LAST THING YOU WANT IS TO LOOK STURDY AND TOUGH... THAT'S WHAT A MAN SHOULD LOOK LIKE, NOT YOU. WHAT ABOUT SITTING LIKE A LADY NOW?

SIGH
LIKE THIS?

THAT'S NOT BAD, BUT YOUR BACK ISN'T STRAIGHT, SO YOU DON'T LOOK SO LADYLIKE. YOU CAN DO BETTER THAN THAT!

MANY ATTEMPTS LATER...

YOU'RE GETTING THE HANG OF IT, MOM. YOUR EFFORT IS PAYING OFF. JUST REMEMBER THAT YOU ARE NOT MERELY PLAYING A ROLE. THIS IS *WHO YOU ARE* NOW, AND YOU ARE PROUD TO BE ELENA SAMARAS. IT BRINGS YOU JOY TO BE BEAUTIFUL AND FEMININE... YOU ADORE YOUR DRESSES AND HIGH HEELS... YOU LOVE YOUR HUSBAND AND FAMILY. NOW GET YOUR PURSE. WE'RE GOING OUT.

G-GOING OUT? BUT IT'S DAYTIME! I DON'T THINK I'M READY!

YOU JUST HAVE TO INTERNALIZE WHAT I JUST TOLD YOU. YOU'RE JUST A WOMAN GOING OUT WITH YOUR DAUGHTERS. THERE'S NOTHING UNUSUAL ABOUT IT. WHY WOULDN'T YOU BE READY FOR THAT? LET'S GO. THERE'S SOMEONE WE WANT YOU TO MEET.

Chapter Ten
Brave New Life

SOME TIME LATER...

YOU SEE, MOM? WE SAID YOU HAD NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT.

NO ONE IS LOOKING AT YOU AS ANYTHING OTHER THAN WHO YOU TRULY ARE, WHICH IS A MIDDLE-AGED LADY GOING FOR A WALK WITH HER DAUGHTERS. WHY WOULD ANYONE THINK OTHERWISE?

I CAN'T BELIEVE I'M DOING THIS. HERE I AM, DRESSED LIKE A WOMAN ON THE STREET!

I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU GIRLS ARE TALKING ABOUT. I'M COMPLETELY TERRIFIED! I'M SURE SOMEONE WILL REALIZE I AM, IN FACT, A MAN ANY MINUTE NOW!

A MAN? REALLY?

DOES A MAN GO OUT IN PUBLIC WEARING A PRETTY DRESS? DOES A MAN WEAR LACE LINGERIE? HIGH HEELS? MAKEUP? DOES A MAN HAVE BREASTS?

NO, B-BUT...

THEN STOP SAYING FUNNY THINGS, MOM.

ANYONE LOOKING AT YOU KNOWS YOU'RE A WOMAN. ANY OTHER POSSIBILITY WOULD BE RIDICULOUS.



HELLO, LADIES.

YOU LOOK GREAT, MA'AM!

W-WHAT? IS THAT MAN CHECKING ME OUT?!

I'D SAY SO, MOM! SEE? DO YOU STILL THINK IT MAKES SENSE TO THINK OF YOU AS ANYTHING OTHER THAN A PRETTY LADY?

THIS IS SO WEIRD. I FELT SO VULNERABLE...

WELL, WELCOME TO WOMANHOOD! DON'T WORRY, THOUGH. WE AND DADDY WOULD NEVER LET ANYONE LAY A FINGER ON YOU!


BUT THE THING IS...
WAIT A MINUTE!

THAT WOMAN AT THE TOP OF THE STAIRS...


SHE'S THE ONE WHO OFFERED ME CHAMPAGNE IN THE BATHROOM LAST NIGHT! I'M SURE OF THAT!

WOMAN? WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT, MOM?

HOW ARE YOU NOT SEEING HER? RIGHT THERE! AT THE TOP OF THE STAIRS!

THERE'S NO ONE THERE, MOM.

B-BUT...

I BELIEVE YOU'RE JUST TIRED, MOM. THE DAY HASN'T BEEN EASY FOR YOU. WE ADMIT WE'VE BEEN PUSHING YOU A LOT. HOLD ON JUST A LITTLE LONGER. SOON YOU CAN GO HOME AND GET SOME REST.

NOT LONG AFTER...

WELCOME, LADIES!

I'VE BEEN LOOKING FORWARD TO YOUR ARRIVAL. YOU'RE MRS. SAMARAS, ISN'T IT CORRECT? AND THOSE ARE YOUR LOVELY DAUGHTERS?

THAT'S RIGHT, MR. ANGELOS. I'M EVA AND THIS IS MY SISTER SOFIA.

WE'RE GLAD YOU WERE ABLE TO SEE US SO PROMPTLY. WE KNOW YOU ARE A BUSY MAN.

THE PLEASURE IS ALL MINE, I ASSURE YOU! TO WHAT DO I OWE THE HONOR OF YOUR PRESENCE, LADIES?

MOM WANTS TO ORGANIZE A RECEPTION PARTY FOR SOME IMPORTANT GUESTS WHO WILL BE ARRIVING IN A FEW MONTHS. NOTHING TOO BIG, BUT IT NEEDS TO BE PERFECT. AND WE KNOW YOU ARE THE BEST EVENT PLANNER IN ATHENS.

THAT'S VERY KIND OF YOU TO SAY SO, YOUNG LADY. I WOULDN'T HAVE THE ARROGANCE TO SAY I'M THE BEST, BUT YES... I DO HAVE MANY DECADES OF EXPERIENCE.

I'M DELIGHTED YOU LADIES ARE CONSIDERING SUCH AN EVENT. IF I MAY SAY SO, YOUR FAMILY WAS NEVER MUCH FOR ATTENDING HIGH SOCIETY PARTIES, DESPITE SO MANY INVITATIONS. ALWAYS SO MYSTERIOUS... GOD, I DON'T THINK I'VE SEEN MRS. SAMARAS BEFORE!


OH MY GOD, WHAT NOW?
THIS MAN IS CERTAINLY
SUSPICIOUS OF SOMETHING!

MOM HAD TO STAY IN THE US TO DEAL WITH SOME FAMILY ISSUES OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS. EVEN THOUGH SHE'S GREEK, SHE HAS STRONG TIES TO AMERICA.

AND DAD, WELL... HE WAS NEVER VERY FOND OF THIS KIND OF GATHERING. HE'D ALWAYS PREFERRED MORE... INFORMAL MEETINGS. BUT LET'S JUST SAY THEY'RE WILLING TO COME OUT OF THE COCOON NOW, RIGHT, MOM?

O-OF COURSE... NOW THAT I'M BACK I... HMM... WOULD LIKE TO MEET NEW PEOPLE.

THAT'S WONDERFUL TO HEAR! I'M SURE YOU WILL MAKE MANY, MANY FRIENDS. AND, OF COURSE, I AM AT YOUR SERVICE TO HELP YOU WITH YOUR EVENT. DO YOU ALREADY HAVE A LOCATION IN MIND?

I THINK MOM PREFERS TO HOLD THE PARTY IN OUR FAMILY'S RESORT, DON'T YOU, MOM?

CRAP! WHY ARE GIRLS DOING THIS? THIS PARTY THING DOESN'T SOUND LIKE A GOOD IDEA. I THINK IT WOULD BE MUCH BETTER FOR ME TO KEPT A LOW PROFILE SO AS NOT TO DRAW UNNECESSARY ATTENTION. I'LL TALK TO THEM LATER. FOR NOW, THOUGH, I GUESS I NEED TO KEEP THE CHARACTER. *SIGH*

THAT'S CORRECT, SOFIA, DEAR. I THINK WE HAVE THE PERFECT PLACE FOR OUR LITTLE GATHERING.

SOUNDS MARVELOUS! UNFORTUNATELY, I STILL HAVE SOME DETAILS TO WORK OUT ABOUT THE EVENT I'M ORGANIZING FOR TONIGHT, SO I CAN'T PROLONG OUR MEETING. IF THIS IS CONVENIENT FOR YOU, WE CAN MEET AGAIN NEXT WEEK, MRS. SAMARAS.

WELL, I THINK...

OH, MR. ANGELOS, EVERYTHING LOOKS JUST PERFECT!

HI, MRS. ROSI! I'M HAPPY TO HEAR THE DECOR IS TO YOUR LIKING.

YOU ALWAYS DO A SUPERB JOB, DARLING. AND WHO WE HAVE HERE?

THIS IS MRS. SAMARAS AND HER ADORABLE DAUGHTERS, EVA AND SOFIA. MRS. SAMARAS, THIS IS MRS. PETROU AND HER SON, STEFANOS.

SAMARAS? ARE YOU NIKOS SAMARAS' FAMILY?

THAT'S CORRECT, MRS. PATROU.

OH, THAT'S INTERESTING! PLEASE CALL ME DIMITRA, DEAR. WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN HIDING ALL THIS TIME, MRS. SAMARAS? HOW IS IT POSSIBLE THAT WE HAVEN'T BEEN INTRODUCED BEFORE?


YOU SEE, THE THING IS, I JUST RECENTLY RETURNED TO GREECE AFTER A LONG STAY IN THE US.

OH, THAT'S TOTALLY FINE, DARLING. FORGIVE ME IF I SOUNDED RUDE. WE'VE ALSO SPENT MOST OF THE LAST FIVE YEARS ABROAD. BUT NOW WE'RE HERE TO STAY, AREN'T WE, STEFANOS?


SO I HOPE. NICE TO MEET YOU, MRS. SAMARAS AND SOFIA...

EVA, IS THIS REALLY YOU?

OH MY GOSH, I WAS WONDERING IF YOU WOULD RECOGNIZE ME! IT'S BEEN SO LONG!

I MISSED YOU SO MUCH!

SO, YOU TWO KNOW EACH OTHER PRETTY WELL, HUH?

OH YES, MOM! LET'S SAY WE USED TO BE VERY CLOSE SOME YEARS AGO.


IT'S WEIRD TO THINK THAT JUST A FEW DAYS AGO I WAS A REGULAR MAN JUST LIKE THIS GUY. WE COULDN'T LOOK MORE DIFFERENT FROM EACH OTHER NOW.

HERE I AM, WITH MY WHOLE BODY WAXED AND MY NAILS POLISHED, WALKING ON HEELS...

I'M WEARING A DRESS, A LACE BRA HOLDING MY DISTURBINGLY REALISTIC HUGE BOOBS, A MATCHING THONG, WHICH IS WEDGING ITSELF BETWEEN MY BUTTOCKS WITH EACH STEP, AND THE DAMN CORSET...

MY DICK IS FIRMLY TRAPPED BEHIND MY VAGINA, AND THERE'S NO WAY I CAN RELEASE IT ON MY OWN.

ALL OF THIS NOT TO MENTION MY FACE, WHICH LOOKS AT LEAST TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OLDER THAN MY TRUE AGE. FOR ALL INTENTS AND PURPOSES, I'M NOW A MIDDLE-AGED WIFE AND MOTHER, WHILE HE'S A YOUNG MAN HITTING ON MY DAUGHTER.


WE DEFINITELY DON'T LOOK LIKE EACH OTHER AT ALL. STILL, IS IT POSSIBLE THAT I LOOK SO CONVINCING AS A WOMAN? MAYBE THEY'VE ALREADY REALIZED THE TRUTH ABOUT ME AND ARE JUST BEING POLITE?

AGAIN, NICE TO MEET YOU, MA'AM!

I'M SO GLAD TO FINALLY HAVE THE CHANCE TO MEET YOU IN PERSON!

M-ME TOO?

SO, ELENA, DARLING, WE'RE GOING TO HAVE A LITTLE GATHERING TONIGHT, AND WE'D BE DELIGHTED TO HAVE YOU AND YOUR FAMILY WITH US. WHAT DO YOU SAY?

IT'S VERY KIND OF YOU TO INVITE US, DIMITRA, HOWEVER... I DON'T KNOW ABOUT THE GIRLS, BUT MY HUSBAND IS ON A BUSINESS TRIP AND I STILL HAVEN'T FULLY RECOVERED FROM THE LONG TRIP BACK TO GREECE. I'VE ARRIVED JUST A FEW DAYS AGO. I'M SO SORRY!

THAT'S TOTALLY UNDERSTANDABLE, DEAR, DON'T WORRY. JUST DON'T THINK YOU CAN HIDE AWAY FROM ME FOREVER. OH, I HAVE A FEELING WE'LL GET ALONG SO WELL! AND WHO KNOWS...

MAYBE WE'LL HAVE TO PLAN A WEDDING TOGETHER.









Chapter Eleven
Past and Future

THREE DAYS LATER---


A YEAR AGO... I CAN'T BELIEVE IT'S BEEN SO LONG ALREADY...


EVERYTHING WAS DIFFERENT BACK THEN...

...AS IF IT WERE ANOTHER LIFE.


THAT EVENING, I WAS VERY ANXIOUS, JUST LIKE TONIGHT...

...BUT FOR VERY DIFFERENT REASONS.

GETTING READY WAS ALSO
A VERY DIFFERENT EXPERIENCE.

MORE DIFFERENT THAN I COULD HAVE THOUGHT POSSIBLE.


A TEN-MINUTE SHOWER WAS MORE THAN ENOUGH WHEN I WAS JUST A GUY.


BUT NOW CLEANING MYSELF IS A RITUAL THAT CAN TAKE OVER AN HOUR. OF COURSE, EVEN IN THE BATHTUB, I HAVE TO WEAR MY WATERPROOF CORSET, WHICH MY DAUGHTERS SO GENEROUSLY BOUGHT FOR ME. IT'S ALWAYS SO TIGHT THAT I SIMPLY CAN'T TAKE IT OFF WITHOUT HELP.


THEN I JUST NEEDED TO SHAVE, PUT ON SOME DEODORANT AND PERFUME, AND I WAS GOOD TO GO.

BUT NOW I NEED TO DRY AND STYLE MY HAIR, APPLY COUNTLESS CREAMS TO EVERY PART OF MY BODY, CHOOSE THE RIGHT DEODORANT AND PERFUME FOR EACH OCCASION, AND DO MY MAKEUP, ALWAYS KEEPING IN MIND MY OUTFIT FOR THE DAY.

WEARING A SIMPLE PAIR OF BOXERS IS A THING OF THE PAST, TOO.

AS ALL MY UNDERWEAR ARE NOW LACE LINGERIE SETS.

MY UNDERWEAR DRAWER LOOKS MORE LIKE A VICTORIA'S SECRET CATALOG.

AND, OF COURSE, I'M A WOMAN WHO LOVES AND JUST CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT THONGS

ABOUT FOOTWEAR, THE SITUATION IS EVEN WORSE. I REMEMBER THAT EVENING A YEAR AGO, AS I SLIPPED ON MY DRESS SHOES, MY ONLY THOUGHT WAS OF RELIEF THAT MARINA WASN'T AROUND. SHE CERTAINLY WOULDN'T BE HAPPY WITH THE MESS I'D MADE IN THE BATHROOM.

NOWADAYS, ON THE OTHER HAND, THE SHOES I'M WEARING IS A TOPIC THAT NEVER LEAVES MY MIND, AS IT'S BEEN A WEEK SINCE I'VE WORN ANYTHING OTHER THAN HIGH HEELS, AND THEY'RE JUST SO PAINFUL TO WEAR.

GOD, I DON'T KNOW HOW OTHER WOMEN CAN LIVE LIKE THIS! MY **DAUGHTERS** STILL HAVE THE NERVE TO SAY I'M LUCKY ABOUT MY HEELS BECAUSE THEY HAVEN'T MADE ME WEAR REALLY HIGH ONES YET!


BACK THEN, WEARING HEELS WAS AN IDEA THAT HAD NEVER CROSSED MY MIND.


JUST LIKE I HAD NEVER THOUGHT OF WEARING DRESSES AND PEARL EARRINGS AND NECKLACES.

A YEAR AGO... EXACTLY ONE YEAR AGO TONIGHT, I WAS JUST A TWENTY-SOMETHING GUY ABOUT TO PROPOSE TO MY GIRLFRIEND.

NOW, HOWEVER, FOR ALL INTENTS AND PURPOSES, I'M A FIFTY-FIVE YEARS OLD WIFE AND MOTHER.

AND IF I DON'T PLAY MY CARDS EXTREMELY WELL TONIGHT, I CAN BE STUCK IN THIS PERSONA FOR A VERY, VERY LONG TIME...

MEANWHILE IN CRETE...

HEY, DOLL! LOOKS LIKE SOMEONE REALLY WANTS TO MAKE THE MOST OF THE NIGHT. WE JUST OPENED TEN MINUTES AGO.

JUST GIVE ME A MARTINI, PLEASE.


AS YOU WISH!

THANKS, I'M REALLY IN NEED OF A DRINK RIGHT NOW.

HAVING ISSUES WITH YOUR BOYFRIEND OR SOMETHING?

I WOULDN'T SAY SO... AT THIS POINT, IT'S MORE ABOUT MY AUNT... MY AUNT AND NO ONE ELSE.

GOOD EVENING, MRS. SAMARAS!

GOOD EVENING, YOUNG MAN. YOU'RE FILIP, AREN'T YOU?

THAT'S RIGHT, MA'AM. PLEASE COME IN. I WILL TAKE YOU TO YOUR DESTINATION.

JUST LOOK AT THIS CAR. NIKOS HAS A FREAKING LIMOUSINE! THE GIRLS SAID THE DRIVER JUST STARTED IN THE JOB, SO HE'S NOT SURPRISED THAT THEIR FATHER SUDDENLY HAS A WIFE.

I'VE BEEN IGNORING THE CALLS FROM MY *HUSBAND* THE LAST FEW DAYS, BUT I DON'T THINK I CAN KEEP DOING THIS FOREVER. IT'S JUST THAT THIS IS ALL SO SCARY! *MY DAUGHTERS* ARE PUSHING ME MORE AND MORE TO ACT AND THINK LIKE A MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN 24/7, AND MARINA ISN'T HERE TO SUPPORT ME.

YOU NEED TO RELAX, ANDREW...
NO, ELENA! LIKE IT OR NOT, TONIGHT I HAVE TO BE PERFECT IN MY ROLE. I HAVE TO BELIEVE I'VE NEVER BEEN ANYONE ELSE BUT ELENA SAMARAS. OTHERWISE, THINGS CAN GET PRETTY BAD. I THINK I NEED ANOTHER GLASS OF WINE. JUST ONE MORE...


SIGH I CAN DO IT!

HERE WE ARE, MRS. SAMARAS. LET ME HELP YOU OUT OF THE CAR.

THANK YOU, FILIP.

YOU'RE WELCOME, MA'AM. WHEN YOU WANT TO GO HOME, JUST CALL ME. I'LL BE CLOSE BY.

DON'T EVEN THINK ABOUT GIVING UP NOW, ELENA. YOU DON'T NEED TO FEAR PEOPLE DISCOVERING THE TRUTH ABOUT YOU, BECAUSE THERE'S NOTHING TO HIDE. YOU ALWAYS WERE AND ALWAYS WILL BE ELENA SAMARAS, AN ELEGANT AND REFINED WOMAN.

IT WASN'T EASY MAKING UP AN EXCUSE TO GO OUT ALONE TONIGHT SO I CAN'T WASTE THE OPPORTUNITY. I HAD TO TELL MY DAUGHTERS I WAS GOING TO SEE MRS. PETROU, THE WOMAN WE MET THE OTHER DAY. THEY WERE PRETTY HAPPY TO HEAR THAT, THINKING I'M FINALLY EMBRACING MY NEW SELF. HOWEVER, MRS. PETROU ISN'T THE PERSON I'M GOING TO MEET TONIGHT, OH NO...

GOOD EVENING, MRS. SAMARAS. I'M GLAD TO FINALLY MEET YOU IN PERSON!

I'M HERE ONLY BECAUSE YOU SAID MY FAMILY MIGHT BE IN DANGER. I WANT YOU TO TELL ME EXACTLY WHO YOU ARE AND WHAT'S HAPPENING.

AS I TOLD YOU WHEN WE FIRST SPOKE, AND ALSO YESTERDAY WHEN WE SET UP THIS MEETING, I'M SOMEONE WHO HAS DONE BUSINESS WITH MR. TOSKA IN THE PAST. THERE ARE THINGS ABOUT HIM YOU NEED TO KNOW, MRS. SAMRAS. WOULD YOU LIKE SOMETHING TO DRINK?

I DON'T INTEND TO STAY LONG, MR...?

SEFERI, YOU CAN CALL ME SEFERI.

WHICH I ASSUME IS NOT YOUR REAL NAME, RIGHT? I DON'T KNOW WHAT KIND OF GAME THIS IS, BUT IF YOU DON'T EXPLAIN WHAT'S GOING ON RIGHT NOW, I'M GOING TO THE POLICE. MY FAMILY'S SAFETY ALWAYS COMES FIRST FOR ME.

I BELIEVE SO, MRS. SAMARAS, AND THAT'S WHY I CONTACTED YOU. AS A DEVOTED MOTHER AND WIFE, YOU SURELY DON'T WANT ANYTHING BAD TO HAPPEN TO THOSE CLOSE TO YOU. I INSIST, WHY DON'T YOU ORDER A GLASS OF WHITE WINE? I'VE A FEELING THIS IS YOUR FAVORITE ONE.

H-HOW DO YOU KNOW THAT?

PLEASE DON'T BE ALARMED, MA'AM. IT WAS JUST A GUESS, A RIGHT ONE FROM WHAT I CAN SEE. BUT THERE ARE THINGS I DO KNOW. LIKE THE FACT THAT YOU AND YOUR HUSBAND AREN'T LEGALLY MARRIED. IN FACT, IT IS QUITE CHALLENGING TO FIND ANY OFFICIAL INFORMATION ABOUT YOU, MRS. SAMARAS YOU SEE? THAT'S THE KIND OF THING THAT COULD REALLY COMPLICATE THINGS FOR YOU AND YOUR FAMILY IF MR. TOSKA FINDS OUT.

WHY AM I STILL WEARING THIS WEDDING RING, I WONDER? DOES IT STILL MAKE SENSE?

A YEAR AGO, THE GUY WHO WOULD LATER BECOME MY HUSBAND GAVE ME THIS TO PROPOSE TO ME. BUT IT SEEMS I DON'T HAVE A HUSBAND ANYMORE...

THERE'S THAT MAN AGAIN. SINCE I ARRIVED IN CRETE, HE APPEARS EVERYWHERE I GO.

THIS CAN'T BE A COINCIDENCE, RIGHT? HE'S CLEARLY FOLLOWING ME. BUT WHY? DOES HE FIND ME ATTRACTIVE BUT IS TOO SHY TO APPROACH ME? OR DOES HE HAVE DARKER INTENTIONS?

HEY, BABE, CAN I BUY YOU A DRINK?

SO YOU REALLY ARE SPYING ON MY FAMILY, EH? WHAT DO YOU REALLY WANT? WHETHER MY HUSBAND AND I ARE LEGALLY MARRIED OR NOT IS NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS!

PLEASE, CALM DOWN, MA'AM. YES, I'VE DONE SOME RESEARCH ON YOUR FAMILY, BUT YOU NEED TO UNDERSTAND THAT I'M ON YOUR SIDE!

OH, REALLY? THAT'S A CURIOUS WAY OF SHOWING SO! HOW DID YOU GET MY PHONE NUMBER, ANYWAY? WHO GAVE YOU THAT?

IT DOESN'T MATTER. MAYBE I TAPPED MR. TOSKA... MAYBE I GOT YOUR PHONE SOME OTHER WAY... THE REAL ISSUE HERE IS WHAT THAT MAN IS CAPABLE OF.

I THINK IT'S EASIER TO SHOW YOU. TAKE A LOOK AT THIS ARTICLE.

MATEO SEFERI AND FAMILY ARE CONVICTED OF FRAUD AND EMBEZZLEMENT...

DION TOSKA'S FORMER PARTNER, MATEO SEFERI, HIS WIFE AND BROTHER WERE SENTENCED TO TWENTY YEARS IN PRISON... AFTER A LONG TRIAL, THEY WERE FOUND GUILTY OF EMBEZZLING TEN MILLION DOLLARS, AMONG OTHER CRIMES... SEFERI HAD ALREADY BEEN INVOLVED IN A SCANDAL LAST YEAR WHEN IT BECAME PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE HE HAD AN EXTRAMARITAL AFFAIR WITH ANOTHER MAN.

THIS MAN IS YOU, ISN'T IT? THEN YOUR NAME REALLY IS MATEO SEFERI. IF YOU SERVED YOUR FULL SENTENCE, THIS ALL HAPPENED AT LEAST TWENTY YEARS AGO.

TWENTY-TWO YEARS, TO BE MORE PRECISE.

I'M SORRY ABOUT THAT, MR. SEFERI, BUT WITH ALL DUE RESPECT, MY HUSBAND AND I DO NOT INTEND TO STEAL MR. TOSKA.

I DIDN'T STEAL ANYTHING EITHER, MA'AM! THINK ABOUT IT FOR A MOMENT. HAVE YOU EVER WONDERED WHY TOSKA ONLY DO BUSINESS WITH "FAMILY MEN"?

YOU MAY HAVE MET LUNATIC REACTIONARIES BEFORE, BUT I DOUBT ANY OF THEM ARE AS CRAZY AS THAT OLD BASTARD. HE WAS ENRAGED WHEN HE LEARNED THAT I WAS HAVING AN AFFAIR WITH... ANOTHER MAN. YES, IT REALLY HAPPENED, AND I'M NOT PROUD THAT I CHEATED ON MY WIFE. I JUST... WELL, THIS IS NOT RELEVANT FOR OUR CONVERSATION.

THE IMPORTANT THING IS THAT TOSKA WAS FURIOUS. FOR HIM, ANY ASSOCIATION WITH SOMEONE LIKE ME WAS INADMISSIBLE, AN OUTRAGE. HE THEN DECIDED TO TAKE REVANGE AND GET RID OF ME.

BY BRIBING ACCOUNTANTS, LAWYERS AND JUDGES, HE MANAGED TO CONVINCE PUBLIC OPINION THAT I WAS ROBBING THE COMPANY. THIS WAY, HE MANAGED TO UNDO OUR PARTNERSHIP, STEAL ALL MY MONEY AND PUT ME IN JAIL FOR TWENTY YEARS. NOTJUST ME, BUT ALSO MY FAMILY!

NOW, KNOWING ALL THIS, YOU SURELY UNDERSTAND WHY I THINK MR. TOSKA HAS PEOPLE WATCHING YOU AND YOUR FAMILY. AS FAR AS I COULD GATHER, HE'S GOTTEN EVEN MORE PARANOID AND ZEALOT OVER THE YEARS. CAN YOU IMAGINE WHAT HE COULD DO TO ALL OF YOU IF HE SUSPECTED YOU WERE INVOLVED IN ANYTHING HE THOUGHT WAS *INAPPROPRIATE*?

Chapter Twelve
Against the Wall

THE NEXT MORNING...

knock!
knock!

COME IN!

WELL, HELLO, MOM! I SEE YOU FINALLY WOKE UP! DID YOU GO TO SLEEP LATE LAST NIGHT?

HMM... YES. DIMITRA JUST KEPT TALKING AND TALKING AND TALKING... IT TOOK ME A LONG TIME TO FINALLY MANAGE TO COME BACK HOME.

OH, IT'S CURIOUS TO HEAR SO, MOM...

BECAUSE EVA IS WITH STEFANOS, MRS. PETROU'S SON, RIGHT NOW. HE SAID HE SPENT THE NIGHT WITH HIS MOTHER, AND GUESS WHAT? YOU WEREN'T THERE. EVA JUST TEXTED ME THIS. WHY ARE YOU LYING TO US, MOM?

ALRIGHT, YOU GOT ME. LAST NIGHT, I... I WENT OUT TO MEET A MAN.

A MAN? WHAT DO YOU MEAN? ARE YOU CHEATING ON DAD?!

WHAT?! NO, OF COURSE I'M NOT CHEATING ON YOUR FATHER! HOW CAN YOU THINK SOMETHING LIKE THAT?

OKAY... BECAUSE YOU LOVE HIM SO MUCH THAT THE IDEA OF CHEATING ON HIM DOESN'T EVEN CROSS YOUR MIND?

Y-YES? I MEAN NO! I COULDN'T CHEAT ON HIM BECAUSE... BECAUSE I'M NOT HIS WIFE FOR REAL, RIGHT?

WRONG ANSWER! OF COURSE YOU'RE HIS WIFE! WHO ELSE COULD YOU BE? JUST LOOK AT YOU! WEARING YOUR PRETTY LINGERIE AND DOING YOUR MAKEUP LIKE A PROPER LADY. THAT'S WHO YOU TRULY ARE... AN EXQUISITE WIFE AND MOTHER. ARE WE CLEAR?

SIGH AS YOU SAY, DEAR DAUGHTER!

THAT'S BETTER. SO WHY DON'T YOU TELL ME NOW ABOUT THIS MAN YOU MET LAST NIGHT?

FINE! I WILL TELL YOU EVERYTHING.

FIFTEEN MINUTES LATER...

SO, LET ME SEE IF I GOT THIS RIGHT. THIS MYSTERIOUS MAN CAME TO YOU TO SAY THAT HE HAD A PARTNERSHIP WITH MR. TOSKA IN THE PAST AND HE ENDED UP IN JAIL BECAUSE HE WAS SECRETLY GAY? THAT'S A VERY STRANGE STORY, TO SAY THE LEAST. WHY WERE YOU RELUCTANT TO TELL ME ALL THIS, ANYWAY?

I... I DON'T KNOW FOR SURE. I JUST CAN'T SEEM TO THINK STRAIGHT WITH EVERYTHING THAT'S GOING ON, OKAY? I GUESS I WAS HOPING MARINA WOULD COME BACK SOON SO I WOULD BE ABLE TO TALK TO HER FIRST.

SO YOU TRUST YOUR NIECE MORE THAN YOUR OWN DAUGHTERS? YOU SEE, MOM? THAT'S THE PROBLEM WITH YOU.

YOU ARE NOT TAKING THIS SERIOUSLY. IF THIS MAN YOU MET IS TELLING THE TRUTH, WE COULD ALL END UP IN JAIL. BUT YOU KEEP DAYDREAMING ABOUT BEING A YOUNG MAN AND ALL SORTS OF NONSENSE.

I THINK IT'S TIME TO END THIS FARCE. THIS HAS GONE TOO FAR, AND IS TOO DANGEROUS NOW. LIKE YOU SAID, WE COULD ALL END UP IN JAIL. NIKOS SHOULD GIVE UP DOING BUSINESS WITH MR. TOSKA.

HE CAN'T SIMPLY GIVE UP NOW. DO YOU REMEMBER THE PRE-CONTRACT THEY SIGNED? THIS PROVIDES FOR A MULTIMILLION FINE IN CASE OF WITHDRAWAL ON DAD'S PART. A FINE THAT WE CANNOT PAY!

I'LL TELL YOU WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN NOW. WE'LL SCHEDULE THAT *LITTLE PROCEDURE* AT THE BEAUTY CLINIC WE MENTIONED BEFORE. MORE THAN EVER, YOUR NEW IDENTITY HAS TO BE PERFECT. THAT'S IT. YOU NEED TO BE UNABLE TO BE ANYONE ELSE BESIDES ELENA SAMARAS EVEN IF YOU WANTED TO!

MEANWHILE, NOT FAR FROM THERE...

RING!
RING!

HELLO? OH YEAH, OF COURSE THAT'S YOU. I WAS WAITING FOR YOUR CALL. I SEE YOU'RE USING A NEW NUMBER.

YES, I'VE MET OUR TARGET. MRS. SAMARAS IS... A VERY INTERESTING WOMAN, I HAVE TO SAY.

THAT'S RIGHT. I DO BELIEVE WE CAN MAKE THIS WORK. WE JUST NEED TO MOVE OUR PIECES WELL. AND MRS. SAMARAS IS, UNDOUBTEDLY, THE MOST IMPORTANT PIECE ON THE BOARD RIGHT NOW.



Chapter Thirteen
Face to Face

A FEW DAYS LATER...


OH MY GOD...

A-ANDREW, IS THIS REALLY YOU?


YES, THAT'S ME, MARINA.

B-BUT HOW IS THIS EVEN POSSIBLE?

DO YOU REMEMBER THE PROCEDURES EVA AND SOFIA SAID THEY HAD IN MIND IN ORDER TO MAKE ME LOOK LIKE A MATURE WOMAN FOR A LONGER PERIOD OF TIME? WELL, THAT'S THE RESULT OF SUCH PROCEDURES.


I NEVER EXPECTED THEM TO TAKE IT SO SERIOUSLY! I MEAN, YOU EVEN HAVE BOOBS! T-THEY... AREN'T REAL, RIGHT?

OF COURSE THEY ARE NOT REAL! MY DAUGHTERS... I MEAN, YOUR COUSINS, THEY'RE CRAZY, BUT NOT TO THAT EXTENT. THAT'S SOMETHING I WANT TO BELIEVE, AT LEAST! IT DOESN'T MEAN THEY DON'T WEIGH LIKE REAL BREASTS, THOUGH, AND TRUST ME, THEY ARE SUPER HEAVY!

THEY LOOK VERY HEAVY INDEED, AND ALSO SO REALISTIC! DO THE GIRLS MAKE YOU WEAR THEM WHENEVER YOU LEAVE HOME?

WHEN I LEAVE HOME? THESE BREASTS ARE ATTACHED TO ME 24 HOURS PER DAY, EVEN WHEN I'M SLEEPING OR TAKING A BATH! EVA AND SOFIA USED SOME KIND OF SURGICAL GLUE SO I CAN'T REMOVE THEM ON MY OWN!

THIS IS NOT ALL! I HAVE TO WEAR A CORSET ALL THE TIME, AND MY PARTS *DOWN THERE* ARE ALSO TRAPPED BEHIND A PROSTHETIC FEMALE GENITALIA. AND DO YOU SEE HOW OLD I LOOK? THIS ISN'T JUST MAKEUP ANYMORE. EVA AND SOFIA USED A PRODUCT ON MY SKIN TO MAKE ME LOOK A LOT OLDER. THIS IS THE FACE I SEE WHENEVER I LOOK IN THE MIRROR, EVEN WHEN I WAKE UP!

I REALLY DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY... A-ANDREW? GOD, IT SOUNDS SO WEIRD TO CALL YOU ANDREW SEEING HOW YOU LOOK!

YOU COULD START BY EXPLAINING WHERE YOU'VE BEEN THE LAST FEW DAYS. HOW COULD YOU ABANDON ME IN SUCH A TOUGH SITUATION, MARINA? FOR GOD'S SAKE, I'M YOUR HUSBAND!

OH REALLY? ARE YOU SURE YOU'RE **STILL** MY HUSBAND? AS FAR AS I REMEMBER, IT WAS YOU WHO AGREED TO SPEND MONTHS AS UNCLE NIKOS' WIFE, AND DURING OUR HONEYMOON!

I TRIED TO EXPLAIN TO YOU WHAT REALLY HAPPENED, BUT YOU TURNED YOUR BACK WITHOUT EVEN LISTENING TO ME! ON THE NIGHT OF THE DINNER WITH MR. TOSKAS, I MET A WOMAN IN THE BATHROOM AND SHE OFFERED ME A SIP OF HER DRINK. I SUSPECT SHE DRUGGED ME.

THIS IS THE ONLY POSSIBLE EXPLANATION! AFTER THAT, I DON'T REMEMBER WHAT WAS GOING EXACTLY. ALL I KNOW IS THAT I SUPPOSEDLY AGREED TO KEEP PRETENDING TO BE ELENA FOR MONTHS!

BUT WHY WOULD THIS WOMAN DRUG YOU? WHAT WOULD SHE HAVE TO GAIN FROM IT? TO ME, THIS WHOLE SITUATION SOUNDS A LOT LIKE THAT ISSUE WE HAD A FEW MONTHS AGO.

I... I ALREADY APOLOGIZED FOR THAT, MARINA, AND YOU FORGAVE ME! THIS IS NOT FAIR OF YOU TO THROW IT IN MY FACE NOW!

THIS IS ALL SO DISTURBING. THE MORE I TALK TO ANDREW, THE MORE I REALIZE HOW CONVINCING HE IS AS *AUNT ELENA*. I JUST CAN'T RECOGNIZE MY HUSBAND ANYMORE, AND I'M NOT TALKING ONLY ABOUT THE WAY HE LOOKS!

WHY DID YOU WANT TO MEET ME EXACTLY HERE, ANYWAY? THIS IS THE PLACE WE CAME TO AS SOON AS WE ARRIVED IN ATHENS. IT WAS JUST A FEW DAYS AGO BUT FOR SOME REASON IT FEELS ALMOST LIKE ANOTHER LIFETIME!

THINGS ARE MORE TROUBLED AND DANGEROUS THAN YOU THINK, MARINA. THERE'S A LOT YOU NEED TO KNOW...

SOME TIME LATER...

SO, THIS SEFERI GUY CAME TO YOU TO SAY HE SPENT DECADES IN JAIL BECAUSE OF MR. TOSKA? NOT JUST HIM, BUT HIS WHOLE FAMILY? AND YOU SUSPECT THAT SOMEONE IS WATCHING YOU THE WHOLE TIME AT THE BEHEST OF MR. TOSKA?

EXACTLY!

MAYBE I'M JUST BEING PARANOID, BUT I HAVE THE FEELING THERE ARE PEOPLE FOLLOWING ME WHENEVER I LEAVE HOME. I KEEP SEEING SOME FACES AGAIN AND AGAIN EVERYWHERE.

AND I FEEL IN DANGER EVEN INSIDE NIKOS' HOUSE. NONE OF THE SERVENTS HAVE WORKED FOR HIM FOR A LONG TIME AS IT SEEMS NIKOS HASN'T BEEN USING THE HOUSE SO MUCH LATELY. ONE OF THEM COULD EASILY BE SPYING US. THERE'S NO WAY TO KNOW FOR SURE. THAT'S WHY I WANTED TO MEET YOU HERE.

IT'S FUNNY YOU SAY YOU THINK YOU'RE BEING FOLLOWED BECAUSE I HAD THE SAME FEELING IN CRETE. THERE WAS THIS GUY WHO SHOWED UP EVERYWHERE I WENT.

AND WHAT DID YOU DO?

I... HMM... GOT HELP TO DEAL WITH THE SITUATION, B-BUT THAT'S NOT THE POINT. WHY WOULD MR.TOSKA BE STALKING US ALL LIKE THIS? IS HE REALLY JUST A LUNATIC CONSERVATIVE?

THE GIRLS DID SOME RESEARCH ON THE MATTER. IT LOOKS LIKE MR. SEFERI TOLD ME THE TRUTH, AT LEAST ABOUT SPENDING TWENTY YEARS IN JAIL. IT ALSO SEEMS THAT MR. TOSKA MAY HAVE POLITICAL PRETENSIONS, WHICH COULD EXPLAIN PART OF HIS BEHAVIOR.

WORST OF ALL, NIKOS HAS ALREADY SIGNED A PRE-CONTRACT WITH MR. TOSKA, AND SUCH A CONTRACT PROVIDES FOR A MILLIONAIRE FINE IN CASE OF NIKOS' WITHDRAWAL. I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO, MARINA! IF EVERYTHING THEY SAY IS REAL, AND MR. TOSKA FINDS OUT THE TRUTH ABOUT ME, HE MAY DESTROY OUR LIVES!

OH MY GOD, THIS IS BAD! LIKE REALLY FUCKING BAD! I GUESS WE DON'T HAVE A CHOICE NOW. YOU'LL HAVE TO KEEP BEING *AUNT ELENA* FOR THE TIME BEING.

SIGH I GUESS SO. BUT EVA AND SOFIA KEEP SAYING MY DISGUISE ISN'T PERFECT YET. GOD, THEY CAN BE SO PUSHY AND ANNOYING WHEN THEY WANT TO!

THEY ARE PESTERING ME TO GO TO A BEAUTY CLINIC IN ORDER TO UNDERGO WHAT THEY CALL A "SMALL COSMETIC PROCEDURE" TO SMOOTH MY FEATURES AND MAKE MY FACE MORE FEMININE. THEY SAY THIS IS TOTALLY REVERSIBLE, BUT I'M NOT COMFORTABLE WITH THEIR PLAN. COULD YOU PLEASE TALK TO THEM, AND EXPLAIN THIS IS AN ABSURD IDEA?

YOU KNOW WHAT... I THINK THEY'RE RIGHT! LOOKING AT YOU CLOSELY, YOUR FACE THE ONLY PART OF YOUR APPEARANCE THAT STILL SEEMS A BIT MASCULINE.

W-WHAT?!

LISTEN, YOU WERE THE ONE WHO SAID THIS SITUATION IS A LOT MORE DANGEROUS THAN ANTICIPATED, *AUNT ELENA* - I GUESS I REALLY HAVE TO GET USED TO CALLING YOU THIS WAY FROM NOW ON - I DON'T KNOW WHAT WE WERE THINKING WHEN WE AGREED TO THIS STUPID JOKE OF DISGUISING AS UNCLE NIKOS' WIFE, BUT WHAT'S DONE IS DONE.

NOW WE HAVE TO DO EVERYTHING WE CAN TO MAKE THIS WORK OR WE'RE SCREWED! I'LL DEFINITELY TALK TO THE GIRLS, BUT ONLY TO MAKE SURE THAT WHAT THEY HAVE IN MIND REALLY IS SAFE AND REVERSIBLE. THE SOONER YOU ACCEPT THIS THE BETTER. THE TRUTH IS... YOU'RE A *WOMAN* NOW!

Chapter Fourteen
Extreme Measures

A WEEK LATER...

ALRIGHT, MRS. SAMARAS, I'M HAPPY TO SAY THAT I'VE CHECKED YOUR TESTS AND YOU'RE PERFECTLY HEALTHY!


HAVE I BEEN TO THE BUSTON,
HOW'S YOUR SCHEDULE TODAY?

WHAT'S GOING ON? AM I IN A DOCTOR'S OFFICE? HOW DID I GET HERE? GOD, I'M SO CONFUSED... I CAN BARELY UNDERSTAND WHAT THE DOCTOR IS SPEAKING AND MY EYESIGHT IS SO BLURRY!

WAIT, I THINK I'M REMEMBERING. I'M HERE FOR A SECOND APPOINTMENT WITH DR. GIANAKOS TO FURTHER DISCUSS THE PROCEDURE HE HAS IN MIND FOR MY FACE. I WAS PERSUADED BY EVA, SOFIA AND EVEN MARINA THAT I HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO UNDERGO SUCH A PROCEDURE, ESPECIALLY AFTER WHAT HAPPENED YESTERDAY...

ARE YOU FOLLOWING ME, MRS. SARAMAS?

IT DOESN'T MATTER WHETHER YOU ARE FULLY UNDERSTANDING WHAT HE'S SAYING OR NOT, ELENA! YOU JUST NEED TO AGREE WITH WHATEVER HE SAYS!

HE ALREADY KNOWS THE TRUTH ABOUT ME... AT LEAST "*THE TRUTH*" THE GIRLS MADE UP; AND I'M AWARE OF THE PROCEDURE HE HAS IN MIND FOR ME. I JUST NEED HIM TO KEEP BELIEVING THAT I'VE ALWAYS BEEN A WOMAN AT HEART.

YES, I'M LISTENING, DR. GIANAKOS.

THAT'S GOOD TO HEAR, MRS. SAMARAS.

SO, ARE YOU BUSY THIS AFTERNOON? I KNOW WE DIDN'T INTEND TO PERFORM THE PROCEDURE TODAY, BUT I HAVE AN OPENING IN MY SCHEDULE AND YOUR TEST RESULTS SHOW THAT YOU ARE MORE THAN FIT FOR SURGERY. WHAT DO YOU THINK, MA'AM?

CRAP, I HAVE ONLY THE VAGUEST IDEA ABOUT WHAT THE DOCTOR JUST SAID. I GUESS I'LL JUST STICK TO THE PLAN AND AGREE WITH HIM. IF HE GIVES UP THE PROCEDURE I'M IN TROUBLE!


HMM... SURE, DR. GIANAKOS.
IT SOUNDS PERFECT!

GREAT! I THINK IT'S ADVISABLE TO CONTACT SOMEONE IN YOUR FAMILY BEFORE THE SURGERY, JUST IN CASE SOMETHING GOES WRONG. THERE ARE ALWAYS RISKS IN SURGERIES, EVEN IF SMALL. I BELIEVE YOUR NIECE IS THE ONE ACCOMPANYING YOU TODAY, RIGHT?

IT'S AMAZING HOW YOU'RE SURROUNDED BY SUCH KIND AND UNDERSTANDING PEOPLE, MRS. SAMARAS. YOU HAVE A LOVING FAMILY FOR SURE! FROM WHAT YOU TOLD ME, YOU'VE ALREADY BEEN LIVING AS A WOMAN 24/7 FOR TWO YEARS, RIGHT? YOU EVEN HAVE A HUSBAND, AND YOU'VE ADOPTED HIS TWO DAUGHTERS AS YOUR OWN. ALSO IMPORTANT TO POINT OUT, YOU'VE BEEN DIAGNOSED BY A THERAPIST WITH NOT ONLY GENDER BUT ALSO AGE DYSPHORIA. ISN'T ALL THIS CORRECT?

HMM... YES, DOCTOR!

I SEE! YOU DON'T HAVE TO FEEL ASHAMED, MRS. SAMARAS. I'M NOT HERE TO JUDGE YOU. MY GOAL IS SIMPLY TO HELP YOU BE THE PERSON YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN INSIDE. FOR THIS REASON, I HAVE SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR YOU. WE CAN DO SO MUCH MORE THAN JUST WORK ON YOUR FACE...

WE HAVE TO DISCUSS EACH PROCEDURE IN DETAIL, OF COURSE, TO KNOW EXACTLY WHAT YOU WISH AND HOW YOU ENVISION YOURSELF IN THE FUTURE. BUT TO START WITH, I'D SUGGEST BREAST IMPLANTS, SO YOU WON'T NEED TO WEAR BREAST FORMS ANYMORE. THERE'S A NEW TECHNIQUE AVAILABLE, MIXING YOUR OWN FAT, PREFERABLY FROM YOUR WAIST AREA, AND ABSORBABLE IMPLANTS. IT'LL FEEL 100% REAL. IN FACT, IT WILL BE REAL.

THIS IS SOMETHING TO KEEP IN MIND. AFTER SOME TIME, THE PROCEDURE WILL BE... IRREVERSIBLE, SO TO SPEAK. THOSE BREASTS WILL LITERALLY BE PART OF YOUR BODY. TO REMOVE THEM, A MASTECTOMY WOULD BE REQUIRED, MUTILATING YOUR UPPER BODY. FORGIVE ME FOR THE HARSH WORDS, BUT IT'S NECESSARY THAT YOU UNDERSTAND THAT THIS IS A SERIOUS DECISION. IT DOESN'T SEEM TO BE A ISSUE, THOUGH, CONSIDERING THAT YOU'VE BEEN LIVING AS ELENA SAMARAS FOR TWO YEARS NOW, AND HAVE NO INTENTION OF PRESENTING YOURSELF AS A MAN AGAIN. AM I RIGHT?

OF COURSE, DOCTOR! THIS ALL SOUNDS LIKE A DREAM COME TRUE! I'M A WOMAN. THIS IS THE LIFE I'VE ALWAYS DREAMED OF... BEING A LOVING WIFE AND MOTHER!

IN THAT CASE, LET'S DISCUSS THE OTHER PROCEDURES WE CAN PERFORM, MRS. SAMARAS. I ASSURE YOU THAT I'LL DO EVERYTHING IN MY POWER TO HELP YOU WITH YOUR TRANSITION. NEVER AGAIN WILL YOU HAVE TO PRETEND TO BE ANYONE OTHER THAN YOUR TRUE SELF!

ONE HOUR BEFORE...

YOU LOOK ANXIOUS, AUNT ELENA. YOU NEED TO RELAX.

RELAX, HUH? EASIER SAID THAN DONE. I DON'T LIKE WHAT'S GOING ON HERE, MARINA. AND YOU KNOW IT!

LISTEN, AUNT ELENA, YOU'RE JUST MAKING THINGS EVEN MORE DIFFICULT! YOU DON'T WANT THE DOCTOR TO GET SUSPICIOUS, DO YOU?

SIGH THIS IS SO WEIRD TO HEAR YOU CALL ME "*AUNT ELENA*". ARE YOU SURE YOU REALLY NEED TO DO THIS ALL THE TIME? EVEN WHEN WE'RE ALONE?

WHAT ELSE SHOULD I CALL YOU? THAT'S WHO YOU ARE, ELENA SAMARAS, MY AUNT. TO THINK OTHERWISE IS NONSENSE. AND KEEP IN MIND WE CAN'T BE SURE WE'RE TRULY ALONE, NOT AFTER WHAT HAPPENED YESTERDAY...

EXCUSE ME, LADIES. WOULD YOU LIKE SOME TEA WHILE YOU WAIT FOR YOUR APPOINTMENT?

THANK YOU! WE APPRECIATE IT!

WELL, THIS IS FANCY PLACE FOR SURE, JUST PERFECT FOR A SOPHISTICATED LADY LIKE YOU. NEVER BEFORE HAVE I BEEN OFFERED TEA BEFORE A DOCTOR'S APPOINTMENT!

ALRIGHT, MARINA, YOU'RE GETTING ON MY NERVES! WHY IN THE HEAVENS DO YOU NEED TO...

WITH ALL DUE RESPECT, IT'S TIME FOR YOU TO TAKE A DEEP BREATH AND START ACTING LIKE A PROPER LADY, AUNT ELENA! YOU KNOW AS WELL AS I DO THAT WE'RE IN A TIGHT SPOT. JUST YESTERDAY WE FOUND CAMERAS HIDDEN IN UNCLE NIKOS' HOUSE, WHICH IS YOUR HOUSE, TOO, SINCE YOU'RE *HIS WIFE*, RIGHT? *YOUR DAUGHTERS* ARE RIGHT NOW CHECKING IF THERE ARE STILL ANY CAMERAS LEFT!

AS IF THAT WASN'T ENOUGH, THE DRIVER UNCLE NIKOS HIRED JUST A FEW DAYS AGO DISAPPEARED IN THIN AIR. NOBODY KNOWS WHERE HE IS OR WHAT HE'S DOING. PLUS, UNCLE NIKOS AND JOEL ARE RETURNING TO ATHENS TODAY, WHICH JUST COMPLICATES THINGS EVEN FURTHER. THIS WHOLE THING GETS MORE DANGEROUS BY THE MINUTE, SO I THINK YOU BETTER STOP BEING SO STUBBORN, *MA'AM*.

OH, AND THERE'S ONE MORE THING...

RING!
RING!


HMM... THE HOTEL IS CALLING ME.
NOT ANOTHER BAD NEWS, PLEASE!

HELLO?

AND WHO IS IT?

HI, MRS. WOODS. SORRY FOR BOTHERING YOU, BUT THERE'S SOMEONE AT RECEPTION WANTING TO SPEAK WITH YOU, AND HE SAYS IT'S URGENT.

IT'S YOUR HUSBAND, MRS. WOODS.

OH MY...

IS EVERYTHING OKAY, MARINA? IT LOOKS LIKE YOU'VE SEEN A GHOST!

I... I GOTTA GO, AUNT ELENA.

WHAT? NOW?! WHAT ABOUT THE APPOINTMENT?

JUST STICK TO THE PLAN. YOU KNOW WHAT YOU NEED TO TELL THE DOCTOR. JUST MAKE SURE HE AGREES TO PERFORM THE PROCEDURE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. I'LL EXPLAIN EVERYTHING LATER!

B-BUT...

WELL, WELL, WELL,
I CAN'T BELIEVE IT!
LOOK WHO'S HERE...

Y-YOU...!

Chapter Fifteen
Is This the Real Life?




HMM?

AM I BACK IN MY BEDROOM? I DON'T UNDERSTAND... WHAT TIME IS IT? WASN'T I IN THE DOCTOR'S OFFICE A MINUTE AGO?

I'M SO CONFUSED...


YAWN


GOD, MY HEAD IS KILLING ME AND MY TONGUE FEELS LIKE SANDPAPER! THE LAST TIME I WOKE UP FEELING THIS BAD WAS THAT DAMN DAY A FEW MONTHS. YEAH, MARINA GOT REALLY MAD AT ME... WHAT WAS I EVEN THINKING AT THAT TIME?


YAWN





OUCH! WHY ARE MY HEELS HURTING SO BADLY? IT'S LIKE I HAVE NEEDLES PIERCING MY FEET. I CAN BARELY STAND!

WEIRD... IT FEELS SO MUCH BETTER WHEN I WEAR HIGH HEELS. NOT THAT THESE DAMN SHOES ARE SUDDENLY COMFORTABLE OR ANYTHING - THEY'RE STILL A PAIN IN THE ASS, BUT AT LEAST I FEEL LIKE I CAN WALK NOW.





WHAT'S GOING ON HERE? MY BODY... EVERYTHING FEELS SO ALIEN AND OUT OF PLACE.

IS T-THIS A BAD DREAM? AM I STILL SLEEPING?



I'M NOT WEARING A CORSET... THEN WHY IS MY WAIST SO SMALL?

WHAT ABOUT MY BREAST FORMS?
ARE THEY BIGGER NOW?

MY HAIR EXTENSIONS ARE ALSO LONGER SOMEHOW. I CAN FEEL THEM BRUSHING MY NECK!

I... I NEED TO LOOK IN THE MIRROR.





OH MY...



NO, THIS CAN'T BE ME!

I CAN'T RECOGNIZE MYSELF IN THE MIRROR. MY FACE LOOKS SO FEMININE...

...SO OLD!

AND MY FORMS...
THEY ARE GIANTS!

IT'S CRAZY. I CAN FEEL THEM AS IF I REALLY HAD BOOBS!

AND... *GASP* THEY ARE VERY SENSITIVE!

I CAN'T BELIEVE THIS IS HAPPENING!


IS IT POSSIBLE THAT THESE THINGS... NO, I DON'T EVEN WANT TO THINK ABOUT IT!

IN ANY CASE, THIS WHOLE SITUATION IS SO INSANE I THINK I'D BETTER...

...TAKE A LOOK DOWN THERE.

HMM...


DOES MY PROSTHETIC VAGINA LOOK A BIT MORE REALISTIC?


MAYBE I'M JUST SEEING THINGS.


I... I NEED TO CHECK IT OUT.


GOD, THIS SURELY LOOKS LIKE A REAL PUSSY.


AND I CAN EVEN FEEL IT!

I MUST BE LOSING MY... *GASP*

KNOCK!
KNOCK!

ARE YOU AWAKE, HONEY? CAN I COME IN?

J-JUST A MINUTE!

GOSH, I NEED TO COVER MYSELF!

ARE YOU SURE EVERYTHING IS OKAY?

YES, I'M R-READY NOW!

AH, I'M SO HAPPY TO SEE YOU ON YOUR FEET AGAIN! YOU GAVE US QUITE A SCARE YESTERDAY, DARLING.

N-NIKOS! I DIDN'T KNOW IT WAS YOU. I SHOULD HAVE ASSUMED SO SINCE IT WAS A MALE VOICE, BUT I'M SO CONFUSED RIGHT NOW! MY POINT IS, I DIDN'T HAVE TIME TO DRESS PROPERLY AND...

DON'T WORRY YOUR PRETTY LITTLE HEAD ABOUT IT. YOU LOOK STUNNING, ELENA! IN FACT, YOU JUST KEEP GETTING MORE AND MORE GORGEOUS...



Chapter Sixteen
A Night to Remember

AT NIGHT---


HOW ABOUT YOU TAKE OFF YOUR TOWEL SO I CAN HELP YOU GET READY FOR THE NIGHT, MA'AM?


SIGH


ALRIGHT...

BUT I WANT YOU TO KNOW THAT I'M NOT HAPPY ABOUT THIS.

AH, DON'T BE SO GRUMMY, MRS. SAMARAS! I UNDERSTAND THAT YOU'RE STILL RECOVERING, BUT THINK ABOUT HOW MUCH FUN YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TONIGHT!

YOUR WHOLE FAMILY WILL BE GATHERED, AND I HEAR THERE WILL EVEN BE GUESTS!

I STILL DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY MY DAUGHTERS DIDN'T COME TO SEE ME THE WHOLE DAY. WHY AREN'T THEY HERE NOW?

I'M STARTING TO THINK YOU DON'T ENJOY MY COMPANY SO MUCH, MA'AM. WE HAD A GOOD TIME AT THE BEAUTY SALON YESTERDAY, DIDN'T WE?

AS FOR EVA AND SOFIA, I THINK THEY WERE BUSY ALL DAY WITH THE DINNER PREPARATIONS. THEY DIDN'T SHOW UP AT THE SALON TODAY EITHER. BUT, OF COURSE, THEY'LL EXPLAIN EVERYTHING TO YOU SOON ENOUGH!

I'M SORRY, ANGELIKI. I KNOW I'M BEING... DIFFICULT TONIGHT. NONE OF THIS IS YOUR FAULT. ARE YOU SURE IT'S A GOOD IDEA TO WEAR STOCKINGS?

OF COURSE, MA'AM! I BELIEVE YOU WANT TO LOOK BEAUTIFUL FOR YOUR HUSBAND, DON'T YOU?

L-LOOK BEAUTIFUL FOR MY HUSBAND?

I MEAN, YOU SPENT A COUPLE OF WEEKS IN THE HOSPITAL. SURELY, HE MISSES YOU A LOT. OH, I HOPE ONE DAY TO HAVE A MARRIAGE LIKE YOURS, MA'AM! ANYONE CAN SEE YOU TWO WERE MADE FOR EACH OTHER!


THIS GIRL IS INSANE, JUST LIKE EVERYONE ELSE I'VE MET SINCE I ARRIVED IN GREECE. CRAP, I CAN BARELY SEE WHAT I'M DOING WITH THOSE HUGE BOOBS IN THE WAY!

SEE, MRS. SAMARAS, THE STOCKINGS LOOK PERFECT! YOU TOLD ME IT'S BEEN A WHILE SINCE YOU LAST WORE NYLONS, BUT A SOPHISTICATED LADY LIKE YOU HAD NO TROUBLE PUTTING THEM ON. DON'T THEY FEEL AMAZING?

GOSH, I CAN'T DENY THESE DAMN STOCKINGS FEEL MARVELOUS AGAINST MY SOFT, HAIRLESS SKIN. THEY ARE SENDING SHIVERS ALL OVER MY BODY! I DON'T KNOW WHY I'M GETTING ALL DOLLED UP LIKE A SUBMISSIVE LITTLE WIFE. I SHOULD BE TEARING THIS HOUSE DOWN, ESPECIALLY AFTER WHAT NIKOS TOLD ME THIS MORNING...

YOU... A MAN?! I REALLY DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT, ELENA, HONEY.

B-BUT...

I'VE NEVER HEARD OF ANY ANDREW WOODS, AND BELIEVE ME, I WOULD KNOW IF MY WIFE AND MOTHER OF MY DAUGHTERS, WHOM I'VE BEEN MARRIED TO FOR NEARLY THIRTY YEARS, WAS AN AMERICAN GUY IN HIS TWENTIES.

I... I DON'T UNDERSTAND...

WHY DON'T YOU TRY AND GET A LITTLE MORE REST, DARLING? I'M SURE IT'S NORMAL THAT YOU'RE CONFUSED AFTER SPENDING SO MUCH TIME UNCONSCIOUS. BUT I PROMISE YOU SOMETHING... YOU'RE SAFE NOW. I'LL TAKE CARE OF YOU.

NOW, IT'S TIME FOR YOUR MAKEUP, MRS. SAMARAS.

ANGELIKI, I DON'T REALLY REMEMBER WHAT HAPPENED YESTERDAY, BUT LET'S STOP KIDDING AROUND, PLEASE! YOU KNOW THAT ALL THIS IS JUST A DISGUISE, RIGHT? YOU WERE THERE AT THE SALON ON MY FIRST VISIT, WHEN I WAS JUST A GUY.

NO ONE IS TELLING ME WHAT'S REALLY GOING ON. HOW ABOUT YOU? ALL I KNOW IS THAT I FELL ASLEEP IN THE DOCTOR'S OFFICE AND WHEN I WOKE UP I LOOKED LIKE THIS!

YOU... A GUY?! *GIGGLES*

I NEVER HEARD ANYTHING STRANGER IN MY LIFE, MA'AM! I'VE KNOWN YOU FOR AT LEAST THREE YEARS, SINCE I STARTED WORKING FOR YOUR DAUGHTER, AND TRUST ME, NOT IN A THOUSAND YEARS COULD YOU BE A GUY. YOU'RE THE MOST FEMININE WOMAN I'VE EVER MET!

B-BUT...

WHO ELSE, UPON LEAVING THE HOSPITAL, WOULD HEAD STRAIGHT TO THE BEAUTY SALON FOR A MAKEOVER? YOUR DAUGHTERS WEREN'T THERE, BUT I THINK THE OTHER GIRLS AND I DID A GOOD JOB, DIDN'T WE?

THAT'S IT, MRS. SAMARAS. DO YOU LIKE WHAT YOU SEE? I THINK THIS LIPSTICK REALLY SUITS YOU, MA'AM!

...


NOW, LET'S WORK ON YOUR HAIR, SHALL WE?

I REALLY DON'T UNDERSTAND. WHY IS EVEN ANGELIKI PRETENDING I'VE ALWAYS BEEN A WOMAN? I NEED TO FIND MARINA. SHE'LL HAVE TO EXPLAIN EVERYTHING TO ME! WHY HASN'T SHE ANSWERED HER PHONE ALL DAY?

ALRIGHT, MRS. SAMARAS. A VERY ELEGANT AND GRACEFUL HAIRSTYLE, DON'T YOU THINK?

OH MY...

I... I C-CAN'T BELIEVE IT...

I KNOW, RIGHT? YOU LOOK STUNNING! NOW LET'S GET YOU DRESSED. YOUR HUSBAND WILL BE HERE ANY MOMENT NOW TO PICK YOU UP, MA'AM!

THESE HEELS ARE WAY TOO HIGH, ANGELIKI! I DON'T THINK I CAN WALK ON THEM.

VERY FUNNY, MRS. SAMARAS!
I SEE YOU WEARING SKY-HIGH HEELS PRETTY MUCH ALL THE TIME AND YOU DO THIS SO EFFORTLESSLY THAT IT SEEMS YOU WERE BORN ON A PAIR OF LOUBOUTIN STILETTOS!

SIGH FINE! BUT THIS DRESS IS... DEFINITELY NOT A GOOD CHOICE!

WOMEN... *GIGGLES* WE'RE ALL THE SAME, AREN'T WE? ALWAYS INSECURE ABOUT OUR OUTFITS! BELIEVE ME, MA'AM, YOU'LL LOOK BREATHTAKING IN THIS DRESS. MR. SAMARAS WON'T BE ABLE TO TAKE HIS EYES OFF YOU ALL NIGHT!


NONE OF THIS MAKES SENSE...

IN THE BEGINNING, IT WAS ALL ABOUT PRETENDING TO BE A WOMAN FOR ONE NIGHT TO GET A DEAL DONE.

NOW, HOWEVER, I LOOK LIKE A PERFECT MATURE LADY FROM HEAD TO TOE, ALL DRESSED UP TO PLEASE MY HUSBAND, AND HAVE NO IDEA IF I'VE BEEN SUBJECTED TO ANY IRREVERSIBLE PROCEDURE. I NEED ANSWERS, AND I NEED THEM TONIGHT...

HERE'S YOUR PURSE, MRS. SAMARAS. I PUT EVERYTHING YOU MAY NEED INSIDE IT.

MAKEUP, A MIRROR, SOME TISSUES... SURE, THAT'S ALL I NEED... WAIT, IS THAT AN ID?

NO, THIS CAN'T BE REAL...

ΔΕΛΤΙΟ ΤΑΥΤΟΤΗΤΑΣ

ΑΚ 47320

A NEW ID?! T LOOKS DISTURBINGLY AUTHENTIC AND EVEN HAS A PICTURE OF THE 'NEW ME'!

HELLENIC REPUBLIC
MINISTRY OF PUBLIC ORDER
HELLENIC POLICE HEADQUARTERS

ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΙΘΑΓΕΝΕΙΑ

HELLENIC NATIONALITY

ΟΜΑΔΑ ΑΙΜΑΤΟΣ (BLOOD TYPE)

Rh

ΥΠΟΓΡΑΦΗ ΚΑΤΟΧΟΥ

Elena Samaras

ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ
ΥΠΟΥΡΓΕΙΟ ΔΗΜΟΣΙΑΣ ΤΑΞΗΣ
ΑΡΧΗΓΕΙΟ ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗΣ ΑΣΤΥΝΟΜΙΑΣ

ΔΕΛΤΙΟ ΤΑΥΤΟΤΗΤΑΣ
IDENTITY CARD

AK 47320

ΕΚΔΟΘΗΚΕ

Ο ΔΙΟΙΚΗΤΗΣ

Elena Samaras

ELENA SAMARAS, DAUGHTER OF RICHARD AND MONIKA BENNET, BORN APRIL 4, 1968. SO, IF THIS ID IS REAL, DOES THAT MEAN I'M OFFICIALLY A FIFTY-FIVE YEAR OLD WOMAN NOW? AND IF MY LAST NAME IS SAMARAS, AM I LEGALLY MARRIED TO NIKOS?

THIS ALSO STATES I WAS BORN IN ATHENS AND THAT I'M 5'5 TALL. I WAS NEVER A TALL GUY, BUT I WASN'T THIS SHORT! DID I GET 4 INCHES SHORTER SOMEHOW?

THIS HAS TO BE A NIGHTMARE! HOW WAS NIKOS, OR WHOEVER IS BEHIND THIS, ABLE TO MAKE THIS NEW ID SO QUICKLY? IF I REALLY GOT OUT OF THE HOSPITAL YESTERDAY, HOW IS IT POSSIBLE THAT THIS DOCUMENT ALREADY HAS A PICTURE OF ME AFTER THE PROCEDURES?

GOSH, IS IT POSSIBLE THAT I... REALLY HAVE ALWAYS BEEN ELENA, AND AM I CONFUSED AFTER BEING UNCONSCIOUS FOR SO MANY DAYS? NO, OF COURSE NOT, ELENA... I MEAN, ANDREW! THOSE PEOPLE ARE JUST TRYING TO MESS WITH MY MIND! I NEED TO STAY FOCUSED SO I DON'T LOSE MY SANITY!

ΣΤΟΙΧΕΙΑ ΤΑΥΤΟΤΗΤΑΣ

ΕΠΩΝΥΜΟ
ΣΑΜΑΡΑΣ
SURNAME
SAMARAS
ΟΝΟΜΑ
ΕΛΕΝΑ
GIVEN NAMES
ELENA
ΟΝΟΜΑ ΠΑΤΕΡΑ
RICHARD
FATHER'S NAME
RICHARD
ΕΠΩΝΥΜΟ ΠΑΤΕΡΑ
BENNET
ΟΝΟΜΑ ΜΗΤΕΡΑΣ
MONIKA
ΕΠΩΝΥΜΟ ΜΗΤΕΡΑΣ
BENNET
ΗΜΕΡΟΜΗΝΙΑ ΓΕΝΝΗΣΗΣ (DATE OF BIRTH)
04/04/1968
ΤΟΠΟΣ ΓΕΝΝΗΣΗΣ
ΑΘΗΝΑ
ΥΨΟΣ (HEIGHT)
1,65
ΔΗΜΟΤΗΣ
Τ.Α. ΑΘΗΝΑ
ΑΡΧΗ ΕΚΔΟΣΗΣ ΔΕΛΤΙΟΥ ΤΑΥΤΟΤΗΤΑΣ
Ο ΣΥΝΤΑΞΑΣ ΤΟ Δ.Τ.
Elena Samaras
ΥΠΟΓΡΑΦΗ ΕΚΔΟΥΣΑΣ

Knock!
Knock!

IT SEEMS LIKE YOUR KNIGHT IN SHINING ARMOR HAS ARRIVED, MA'AM. CAN I OPEN THE DOOR?

Y-YES, ANGELIKI.

GOD... ELENA, YOU LOOK...

...BREATHTAKING!

I TOLD YOU, MRS. SAMARAS! I TOLD YOU THAT YOUR HUSBAND WOULD LOVE TO SEE YOU IN THIS DRESS! NOW IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME, I'LL LEAVE YOU TWO ALONE.

EVEN AFTER ALL THESE YEARS, YOU JUST KEEP GETTING PRETTIER AND PRETTIER, ELENA. AND I'M MORE AND MORE IN LOVE WITH YOU.

THESE ARE FOR YOU, MY DARLING!




T-THANK YOU...?

GOSH, SHOULDN'T I BE MAD THAT NIKOS KEEPS KISSING ME ALL THE TIME? W-WHAT THE HELL IS WRONG WITH ME?

AND WHY DO I FEEL SO FLATTERED HEARING HIM SAY THESE THINGS? I KNOW THIS IS ALL NONSENSE! HE TALKS LIKE WE REALLY HAVE BEEN MARRIED FOR DECADES, BUT WE ACTUALLY MET JUST A FEW WEEKS AGO... RIGHT?

OH, I HAVE ANOTHER GIFT FOR YOU, HONEY.

IT SEEMS THAT FOR ONE REASON OR ANOTHER, YOU KEEP TAKING YOUR WEDDING RING OFF. I SAVED IT WHILE YOU WERE AT THE HOSPITAL. HOW ABOUT YOU NOW KEEP IT ON YOUR FINGER FOREVER, MY LOVE?

Chapter Seventeen
Welcome Home

RING!
RING!

HELLO?

I THOUGHT YOU WERE GOING TO CALL ME EARLIER. IS THERE A PROBLEM? YOU SURE? FINE, THEN.

YES, I VISITED MRS. SAMARAS YESTERDAY, JUST BEFORE SHE WAS DISCHARGED FROM THE HOSPITAL. SHE UNDERSTOOD EVERYTHING, I BELIEVE.

YOU KNOW I'M NOT HAPPY ABOUT ANY OF THIS, RIGHT? NO, I'M NOT THINKING OF GIVING UP. I DON'T HAVE A CHOICE NOW, DO I? YOU MADE IT CLEAR ALREADY.

ANYWAY, I'VE DONE MY PART FOR THE TIME BEING. NOW IT'S UP TO YOU AT THE PARTY. TALK TO YOU LATER.

SIGH

ARE YOU READY TO GO, ELENA, HONEY?

JUST A MINUTE, NIKOS. I'M... HMM... REFRESHING MY MAKEUP!

JUST TAKE A DEEP BREATH, ELENA! YOU CAN DO THIS! THAT'S IT, UNTIL I FIND MARINA, I NEED TO STAY IN CHARACTER. GOD ONLY KNOWS WHAT ELSE THESE CRAZY PEOPLE CAN DO TO ME. I NEED THEM TO BELIEVE I'M COOPERATING!

HOPEFULLY I'LL BE ABLE TO END THIS MADNESS TONIGHT!



HERE WE ARE. I'M JUST A FEW STEPS AWAY FROM MY WIFE NOW. BUT, GOD, EACH STEP ON THESE KILLER HEELS IS TORTURE!

THAT'S NOT THE ONLY PROBLEM, THOUGH... EVERYTHING ABOUT MY BODY FEELS WRONG, LIKE THE WEIGHT OF MY MATURE BREASTS, GOING UP AND DOWN NONSTOP... SO ANNOYING! I REALLY HOPE THEY ARE JUST HIGH TECH FORMS OR SOMETHING!

AND HOW CAN I FORGET MY HUGE BUTT, WHICH MAKES IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR ME TO WALK WITHOUT MOVING MY HIPS FROM SIDE TO SIDE IN AN EXTRAVAGANT MANNER, LIKE SOME SEXY COUGAR.

THE STRANGEST THING IS THAT I CAN'T DENY I KEEP ENJOYING THE SOFTNESS OF MY STOCKINGS.

GOSH, AS MUCH AS MY FEET HURT LIKE HELL WITH EVERY STEP, I ALSO FEEL A RUSH OF PLEASURE AS MY THICK THIGHS RUB AGAINST ONE ANOTHER. ALL THIS IS SO BIZARRE!

IS EVERYTHING OKAY, DEAR? YOU'RE A LITTLE QUIET TONIGHT.

I... I GUESS I'M JUST A LITTLE NERVOUS.

THERE'S NO REASON TO BE NERVOUS, MY DARLING. YOU WILL BE AMONG YOUR FAMILY AND FRIENDS.

OH, JUST A LITTLE REMINDER, JAMES WILL BE WITH US AT THE DINNER, SO IT WOULD BE POLITE TO SPEAK TO HIM IN HIS NATIVE TONGUE WHENEVER POSSIBLE. I KNOW YOU HAVE TROUBLE SPEAKING ENGLISH, DESPITE THE TIME YOU'VE LIVED IN AMERICA, BUT WE WANT TO MAKE OUR GUESTS FEEL AT EASE, DON'T WE?

JAMES?

WAIT A MINUTE... HAVE I BEEN SPEAKING GREEK THIS WHOLE TIME SINCE I WOKE UP IN MY ROOM?! HOW DID I NOT NOTICE THIS BEFORE? WHAT'S WRONG WITH ME?

THERE ARE OUR GUESTS, MY LOVE. I SEE NOT EVERYONE HAS ARRIVED YET, BUT I'M SURE ALL OF THEM WILL BE HAPPY TO HAVE YOU BACK HOME!

MANY GREETINGS LATER...

OH, ELENA, IT'S SO GOOD TO SEE YOU SAFE AND SOUND! THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR INVITING US TO THIS GATHERING. STEFANOS AND I WERE SO WORRIED WHEN WE HEARD ABOUT YOUR ACCIDENT!

A-ACCIDENT?

I'M SORRY, I DIDN'T MEAN TO BE INVASIVE. EVA TOLD STEFANOS THAT YOU DON'T REMEMBER WELL WHAT HAPPENED ON THAT UNFORTUNATE DAY. I WAS PRAYING FOR YOU THE WHOLE TIME. A CAR ACCIDENT IS ALWAYS SO DANGEROUS!

I HEARD IT WASN'T YOUR DRIVER'S FAULT. THE MAN IN THE OTHER CAR WAS COMPLETELY DRUNK. HOW IRRESPONSIBLE! I'M GLAD YOU GOT OUT OF THE HOSPITAL AND THAT EVERYTHING IS FINE NOW!

T-THANKS? THAT'S SO KIND OF YOU, DIMITRA!

A CAR ACCIDENT... SO THAT WAS THE EXCUSE THEY CAME UP WITH TO EXPLAIN MY DISAPPEARANCE. I REMEMBER THAT FILIP, OUR DRIVER, HAD DISAPPEARED THE WEEK I WENT TO THE HOSPITAL. IS IT POSSIBLE THAT HE HAS RETURNED?

AND I WONDER WHAT ELSE HAPPENED WHILE I WAS UNCONSCIOUS...

ANYWAY, I KNOW THIS PROBABLY ISN'T THE BEST TIME, BUT I'D LIKE TO ASK YOU A FAVOR.

A FAVOR?

YES, YOU SEE, I'M A MEMBER OF A LITTLE ASSOCIATION THAT ORGANIZES CHARITY EVENTS FOR UNDERPRIVILEGED CHILDREN IN ATHENS, AND WE'RE COMMITTED TO BRINGING NEW PEOPLE INTO THE GROUP.

I'M SURE YOU'D GET ALONG GREAT WITH THE GIRLS. THEY ARE ALL SO FRIENDLY AND LOVABLE! AND IT'S ALWAYS A WONDERFUL FEELING TO BE ABLE TO HELP THOSE MOST IN NEED. JUST THINK ABOUT IT, PLEASE?

I REALLY HOPE WE CAN GET CLOSER AND BECOME GOOD FRIENDS, ELENA! I MENTIONED IT BEFORE AS A JOKE, BUT WHO KNOWS... PERHAPS THERE REALLY IS A POSSIBILITY THAT WE'LL HAVE TO ORGANIZE A VERY IMPORTANT EVENT TOGETHER!

STEFANOS IS REALLY IN LOVE WITH YOUR ADORABLE DAUGHTER. DON'T THINK I'M JUST SAYING THIS BECAUSE I'M HIS MOTHER, BUT HE'S AN AMAZING YOUNG MAN, SO KIND AND SWEET, AND HE'S EAGER TO INTRODUCE HIMSELF PROPERLY TO YOU AND YOUR HUSBAND.

HE MAY BE A LOT YOUNGER THAN US, BUT HE'S ALREADY SUFFERED A LOT. I HAVEN'T SEEN SO HAPPY IN A LONG TIME! IT FILLS MY HEART WITH JOY. I'M SURE THAT YOU, AS A MOTHER, UNDERSTAND WHAT I MEAN. THAT'S A MOTHER'S GREATEST HAPPINESS, ISN'T IT?

AND TALKING ABOUT COUPLES IN LOVE...


OH MY GOD...


WHO THE HECK IS THAT MAN WITH MARINA?!

OH, AUNT ELENA!

*MARINA IS SPEAKING ENGLISH

I'M SO HAPPY TO SEE YOU WELL AGAIN! YOU GAVE US QUITE A SCARE!

JUST LOOK AT YOU. YOU LOOK STUNNING! AS CLASSY AND ELEGANT AS EVER!

I... I...

WHAT'S GOING ON HERE? WHY AM I HAVING A SLIGHT TROUBLE FOLLOWING WHAT MARINA IS SAYING?

MARINA, WE NID TO TALK.

OF COURSE, AUNT ELENA! I'M SO LOOKING FORWARD TO CATCHING UP WITH YOU! WHERE DID YOU BUY THOSE EARRINGS, BY THE WAY? THEY ARE MARVELOUS!

BUT BEFORE THE "GIRLY TALK", I NEED TO SAY HELLO TO THE OTHER PEOPLE. YOU REMEMBER JAMES, MY HUSBAND, RIGHT?

IT'S A PLEASURE TO SEE YOU AGAIN, MA'AM. WE WERE VERY WORRIED ABOUT YOU.

ONCE AGAIN, THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR INVITING US TO SPEND OUR HONEYMOON HERE. THIS IS THE BEST WEDDING GIFT WE COULD ASK FOR, AND IT'S ALL THANKS TO YOU AND MR. SAMARAS.

DID SOMEONE SAY MY NAME?

OH, YES, MR. SAMARAS!
I WAS THANKING YOUR LOVELY WIFE FOR EVERYTHING YOU TWO HAVE DONE FOR US.

THIS IS NOTHING, YOUNG MAN!
YOU'RE FAMILY NOW, REMEMBER?
ELENA AND I COULDN'T BE MORE DELIGHTED TO HAVE YOU AND MARINA WITH US.

NOW, IF THIS YOUNG COUPLE DOESN'T MIND LISTENING TO AN OLD MAN'S NONSENSE STORIES AND JOKES, I'D LIKE TO INVITE YOU TO THE TABLE. WE HAVE A LOT TO CELEBRATE TONIGHT, RIGHT, ELENA, HONEY?

R-RIGHT, DEAR!

GOD, IS IT POSSIBLE THAT I REALLY HAVE GONE MAD? HAVE I ALWAYS BEEN ELENA AND STARTED FANTASIZING I WAS A YOUNG AMERICAN MAN MARRIED TO MY OWN NIECE AFTER A CAR ACCIDENT?

WHAT OTHER REASONABLE EXPLANATION IS THERE? I LOOK LIKE A PERFECT MATURE LADY, EVEN DOWN TO MY PRIVATE PARTS... THERE IS NO SIGN ON MY BODY THAT SHOWS THAT I AM OR HAVE EVER WAS A MAN. AS IF THAT WASN'T ENOUGH, I CAN BARELY SPEAK AND UNDERSTAND ENGLISH. MY ACCENT IS SO STRONG SPEAKING ENGLISH THAT I ACTUALLY SOUND LIKE A NATIVE GREEK. JESUS, I'M EVEN THINKING IN GREEK AGAIN!

AND MARINA IS HERE ON HER HONEYMOON WITH ANOTHER MAN. EVERYONE ACT LIKE THIS IS THE MOST NATURAL THING IN THE WORLD. IS THIS A CUNNING PLOT TO TRICK ME? FOR WHAT REASON? WHAT WOULD THEY HAVE TO GAIN FROM IT? I'M SOUNDING PARANOID. PERHAPS THE SIMPLEST EXPLANATION IS THAT I REALLY AM ELENA SAMARAS, A FIFTY-FIVE YEARS OLD MOTHER AND WIFE.

THREE HOURS LATER...

AND THAT'S HOW, WITH MY BROKEN ENGLISH, I CAN BEST EXPLAIN HOW I ESCAPED THE MESS IN THAT BAR WITH A *NOT-TOO-FRIENDLY* CLIENTELE USING ONLY A RUBBER BAND AND SOME CHEWING GUM!


YOUR ENGLISH IS GREAT MR. SAMARAS! I THANK YOU FOR SPEAKING IN MY LANGUAGE SINCE I CAN'T SPEAK A WORD IN GREEK.

I THINK GREEK SOUNDS AMAZING, BUT IT SEEMS TO BE THE HARDEST LANGUAGE IN THE WORLD TO LEARN! I DOUBT ANYONE COULD BECOME FLUENT IN SUCH A LANGUAGE WITHOUT YEARS OF STUDY! EVEN MARINA, WHO WAS BORN HERE, CAN BARELY SPEAK GREEK NOWADAYS SINCE SHE LEFT THE COUNTRY WHEN SHE WAS JUST A LITTLE GIRL.

IN ANY CASE, IT'S SAFE TO SAY YOU'VE HAD MANY ADVENTURES, MR. SAMARAS. YOU'RE SOMEONE WHO REALLY HAS MANY STORIES TO TELL FOR SURE!

PLEASE, CALL ME NIKOS. YOU DON'T HAVE TO MAKE ME FEEL EVEN OLDER THAN I ALREADY AM. ABOUT THE STORIES I TOLD YOU, ALL OF THAT WAS MANY YEARS AGO, AND NONE OF THEM COMPARES TO THE GREATEST ADVENTURE OF ALL... MEETING THE WOMAN OF MY LIFE!

ISN'T IT RIGHT, HONEY?

Y-YES?


OH, DAD, YOU'RE MAKING MOM BLUSH! TAKE NOTE, BOYS. THIS IS HOW YOU ARE SUPPOSED TO TREAT YOUR LADIES, EVEN AFTER DECADES TOGETHER!


THAT'S TRUE, GENTLEMEN! STEFANOS, YOU'RE DATING MY DAUGHTER... AND JAMES, YOU MARRIED MY NIECE, WHO I CONSIDER AS A DAUGHTER TOO. THEY ARE TWO VERY SPECIAL WOMEN, AND I EXPECT YOU GUYS TO TREAT THEM WITH LOVE AND RESPECT!

THAT'S WHAT WOMEN DESERVE!

GASP

I CAN'T BELIEVE NIKOS IS KISSING ME IN FRONT OF EVERYONE! IN FRONT OF MY WIFE, FOR GOD'S SAKE! I MEAN, IF SHE REALLY IS MY WIFE... I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO THINK ANYMORE.

HOW SWEET! AGAIN, TAKE NOTES GUYS! AND SPEAKING OF GUYS, JOEL IS REALLY TAKING HIS TIME IN THE BATHROOM, ISN'T HE?

WELL, I NEED TO GO TO THE RESTROOM, AS WELL. IF I SEE HIM ON THE WAY, I ASK IF HE'S OKAY.

DON'T TAKE TOO LONG, BABE. I'M GOING TO MISS YOU.

I'LL BE RIGHT BACK, DARLING. YOU SEE, UNCLE NIKOS? YOU ARE NOT THE ONLY GALLANT HUSBAND AROUND HERE!

HMM... I THINK I'M GOING TO THE LADIES ROOM WITH YOU, MARINA.

WHAT A LOVELY IDEA, AUNT ELENA! WE GIRLS ALWAYS GO TO THE BATHROOM TOGETHER, DON'T WE? THIS IS SOMETHING MEN WILL NEVER UNDERSTAND.



...IT'S LIKE I WAS TELLING YOU, AUNT ELENA.

IT WAS A BEAUTIFUL WEDDING, INDEED! SO SAD YOU AND UNCLE NIKOS COULDN'T MAKE IT.

STOP TALKING NONSENS AT, MARINA! I WANT KNOW TRUTH ABOUT WHAT HAPPEN HERE!

I... I DON'T UNDERSTAND, AUNT ELENA.

OH, YOU UNDERSTAND WELL! I WANT KNOW WHO IS THIS JAMES GUY BECAUSE I KNOW YOUR HASBAND HE WAS NOT!

AUNT ELENA, ARE YOU ALRIGHT? I GUESS YOU'RE STILL CONFUSED DUE TO THE ACCIDENT. WHY DON'T WE CHANGE THE SUBJECT? DID I MENTION THAT I <u>REALLY</u> LIKE YOUR EARRINGS?

THE EARRING, I DON'T CARE ABOUT THEM, AND...

NO, SIR, PLEASE! YOU HAVE TO BELIEVE ME!

DID YOU HEAR THAT, AUNT ELENA? LET'S CHECK IT OUT!

JOEL! WHAT'S WRONG? WHO IS WITH YOU?

HMM... HELLO, MRS. EVANS AND MRS. SAMARAS. I APOLOGIZE IF I SCARED YOU LADIES. THERE'S NOBODY WITH ME. I WAS JUST... ON THE PHONE.

OH THE PHONE? BUT WHY WERE YOU SO TROUBLED? IS SOMEONE THREATENING YOU OR SOMETHING?

DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME, MRS. EVANS. I ASSURE YOU THAT EVERYTHING IS UNDER CONTROL. NOW, IF IT'S NOT TOO MUCH TO ASK, COULD YOU GIVE ME A MOMENT WITH MRS. SAMARAS , PLEASE?


THIS IS NOT THE GUD TIME, JOEL.

THAT'S OKAY, AUNT ELENA. JOEL IS CLEARLY IN NEED OF TALKING TO SOMEONE, EVEN IF HE DOESN'T WANT TO ADMIT IT.

BUHT...

WE CAN TALK LATER.



I'M SORRY ABOUT THIS, MRS. SAMARAS, AND I PROMISE I WON'T TAKE UP TOO MUCH OF YOUR TIME. I JUST NEED TO KNOW...


HAVE YOU EVER SEEN THIS MAN?


SO...?

DAT MAN LUKKS FAMILIAR. BUT I KENT REMEMBA WHERE I SAW AT 'IM.

REALLY? HAVE YOU SEEN HIM BEFORE? PLEASE, TRY TO REMEMBER WHERE, MRS. SAMARAS. THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT!

WHAT IF I TELL YOU
HIS NAME IS ROAN GJOKA?
DOES IT RING A BELL?

KIND OF...

I HEAR DIS NAME BEFORE. I'M SURE 'BOUT DAT. HE FROM ALBANIA TOO, NO? WHO HE BE, ANYWAYS?

THAT MAN IS THE HEAD OF THE MOST DANGEROUS MAFIA IN ALBANIA. HE'S BEEN A FUGITIVE FOR YEARS, BUT NO ONE HAS EVER MANAGED TO PUT HIM BEHIND BARS.

TRUE? HE HERE IN GREECE NOW? WHAT HE DOIN' HERE FOR?

HE WORKS WITH MR. TOSKA, MA'AM. THEY HAVE BEEN COOPERATING FOR SOME TIME NOW. I CAN'T SAY WHAT THEY PLAN EXACTLY, BUT ONE THING IS FOR SURE... MR. TOSKA IS GETTING INCREASINGLY PARANOID AND DETACHED FROM REALITY, AND AN ALLIANCE WITH SOMEONE LIKE ROAN GJOKA MAKES HIM EVEN MORE THREATENING.

JUS' NOW, WHEN YOU UPSET... YOU TALKIN' TO MR. TOSKA, YES?

YOU'RE RIGHT, MRS. SAMARAS. LIKE I SAID, HE'S GETTING MORE AND MORE PARANOID. NOW HE'S CONVINCED THAT I'M CONSPIRING WITH YOUR HUSBAND TO STEAL HIS MONEY.

DIS ABSURD! NIKOS NO NEED TO ROB NOBODY FOR SUCCESS!

PLEASE, FORGIVE ME IF I OFFENDED YOU, MA'AM. BUT LIKE I SAID, IT'S MR. TOSKA WHO THINKS THAT. AND IN HIS SICK MIND I'M ALSO INVOLVED IN THIS SUPPOSED CONSPIRACY.

GOSH, WHERE DID IT COME FROM? WHY, ALL OUT OF THE BLUE, DID I DECIDE TO DEFEND NIKOS SO PASSIONATELY? YOU CAN'T GET LOST IN CHARACTER, ELENA! YOU NEED TO REMEMBER WHO YOU REALLY ARE! I'M NOT A MIDDLE-AGED GREEK LADY... RIGHT?

BUT THEN, WHY AM I HAVING SO MUCH TROUBLE SPEAKING SIMPLE ENGLISH SENTENCES TO THE POINT WHERE I HAVE A HEADACHE? WHY AM I THINKING IN GREEK RIGHT NOW?

HMM... ARE YOU STILL WITH ME, MRS. SAMARAS?

HUH? YEAH, I LISTENIN'! IF MR. TOSKA SO DANG'ROUS, YOU STILL WORK FOR HIM WHY? AND WHY YOU NO TELL OUR FAM'LY 'BOUT ALL DIS RISK?

IT'S NOT SO SIMPLE, MA'AM. BEFORE ME, A RELATIVE OF MINE USED TO DO BUSINESS WITH MR. TOSKA. THIS DID NOT END WELL FOR MY RELATIVE, AND I WAS FORCED TO TAKE ON THIS JOB AS A WAY TO HUMILIATE MY FAMILY. I DON'T HAVE THE OPTION OF RESIGNING. MR. TOSKA HAS ALREADY MADE IT VERY CLEAR.

AND I DID TRY TO WARN YOUR HUSBAND ABOUT WHAT WAS GOING ON WHEN WE WERE TRAVELING TOGETHER, BUT HE TREATED IT LIKE A JOKE. YOU CERTAINLY KNOW YOUR MR. SAMARAS BETTER THAN I DO. WHEN HE HAS SOMETHING ON HIS MIND, IT'S HARD TO DISSUADE HIM. NOT TO MENTION THE CONTRACT HE HAS SIGNED WITH MR. TOSKA. HOWEVER, I'M SURE YOU'LL BE ABLE TO BRING HIM TO HIS SENSES... IN TIME.

SO I'M HERE TO OFFER YOU A DEAL, MRS. SAMARAS. I KNOW ROAN GJOKA IS IN GREECE. MR. TOSKA USED THIS INFORMATION TO THREATEN ME. IF WE CAN PROVE THEIR INVOLVEMENT, YOUR HUSBAND WILL BE ABLE TO TERMINATE THE CONTRACT WITH MR. TORKA, AND I COULD BREAK FREE OF THIS PRISON I LIVE IN.

NOW, I'M NOT PROPOSING THAT YOU DO ANYTHING RISKY. BUT YOU HAVE CONNECTIONS IN ATHENS, DON'T YOU? JUST ASKING HERE AND THERE IF ANYONE SAW OUR TARGET WOULD BE EXTREMELY HELPFUL.

I DON'T KNOW WHETHER JOEL IS TELLING ME THE TRUTH OR NOT. HOW CAN I TRUST HIM? HOW CAN I TRUST ANYONE? IT SEEMS THAT EVERYONE AROUND ME IS WRAPPED UP IN SECRETS AND CONSPIRACIES. BUT IF NIKOS' CONTRACT WITH MR. TOSKA REALLY GETS CANCELLED, THEN I COULD GO BACK TO BEING A MAN...

LISSEN, IF YOU RILLY WANT MAKE DILL, I ALSO WANT HELP FOR FINDIN' SUM-ONE.

SOME TIME LATER...

GOD, THE DINNER PARTY IS OVER, AND I DIDN'T GET ANY OF THE ANSWERS I WAS SEEKING. JOEL COULDN'T HAVE SHOWN UP AT A WORSE TIME. IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO TALK TO MARINA ALONE AGAIN.

AAARRGH, MY FEET ARE KILLING ME!

BUT THE WEIRD THING IS...

IT HURTS EVEN WORSE WHEN I PUT MY FOOT DOWN! AS TOUGH AS THIS IS FOR MY CALVES, IT FEELS LIKE I NEED TO STAY ON MY TOES ALL THE TIME NOW.


THAT CRAZY DOCTOR REALLY SCREWED ME OVER! I WENT THERE FOR A LITTLE 'NON-INVASIVE' PROCEDURE, BUT LOOK AT ME NOW!

I CAN ONLY HOPE THAT ALL OF THIS CAN BE UNDONE. I DON'T WANT TO SPEND THE REST OF MY LIFE WEARING DRESSES AND HIGH HEELS, PLAYING THE PART OF A SOCIALITE WHO HAS NO OBLIGATIONS OTHER THAN ATTENDING SOCIAL EVENTS AND TAKING CARE OF MY **DAUGHTERS** AND **HUSBAND** - A HUSBAND WHO CAN'T KEEP HIS LIPS AWAY FROM MINE FOR EVEN A MINUTE!

SPEAKING OF NIKOS, I SHOULD GET CHANGED BEFORE HE GETS OUT OF THE SHOWER. THE LAST THING I NEED IS FOR HIM TO SEE ME HALF-NAKED! BUT I'M 'VACUUM PACKED' INSIDE THIS DRESS. HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO GET OUT OF THIS THING WITHOUT ANGELIKI'S HELP?


HMM...


LOOKS LIKE THERE'S A LADY AROUND IN NEED OF HELP, HUH?

LET ME GIVE YOU A HAND, MY DEAR.

DON'T WORRY, NIKOS, I...


RELAX, BABY. I'M HERE FOR YOU. I'LL ALWAYS BE HERE FOR YOU.

WHAT THE HELL IS WRONG WITH ME? WHY IS MY HEART BEATING LIKE A DRUM AND MY KNEES SHAKING SO BAD? GOSH, I CAN BARELY STAND ON MY FEET RIGHT NOW! IS THAT JUST BECAUSE NIKOS WHISPERED IN MY EAR? HE HAS SUCH A DEEP, MANLY VOICE... WHAT AM I THINKING?! I HAVE NEVER EVER BEEN INTO MEN!

NOW I REALIZE... I DON'T NEED TO FEAR NIKOS... I SHOULD FEAR MYSELF! WHY DID I DECIDE TO GET CHANGED HERE, IN THE MIDDLE OF THE ROOM? I HAVE A CLOSET! WAS I... DEEP DOWN... TRYING TO SEDUCE MY HUSBAND?!



MOAN

UnHook!

GOSH, IT FEELS SO GOOD...

MY BREASTS ARE SO DAMN SENSITIVE! NIKOS SURELY KNOWS HOW TO TURN A WOMAN ON. MY NIPPLES ARE SO HARD IT'S ALMOST PAINTFUL!

LET'S FACE IT, ELENA. THERE'S NO WAY THESE ARE BREAST FORMS! I HAVE REAL BOOBS NOW... BIG, MATURE BOOBS!


AHHHHHH...
OH GOD...


YOU'RE ENJOYING THIS A LOT, AREN'T YOU, HONEY? DO YOU WANT ME TO KEEP PLAYING WITH *YOUR GIRLS*? THEN ASK FOR IT. I WANT YOU TO **BEG** FOR IT NOW!
P-PLEASE, NIKOS, DON'T STOP! GOD, I LOVE WHAT YOU'RE DOING! YOU ARE M-MAKING ME FEEL... AHHH... SO GOOD!

GOOD GIRL...


AREN'T YOU SUCH A SEXY, HORNY LITTLE WIFE?

GOD, I CAN FEEL SOMETHING REALLY HARD AGAINST MY BUTT. IS THAT... NIKOS COCK?! I GUESS I'M NOT THE ONLY ONE TURNED ON HERE. SHOULDN'T I...

AHH, HE'S KISSING ME AGAIN.
I JUST CAN'T THINK STRAIGHT.
I'M SO DAMN AROUSED!


IS THAT HIS TONGUE?!


GOSH, NOW HE WANTS TO FRENCH KISS ME! I CAN'T BELIEVE I'M ABOUT TO DO THIS WITH A MAN. HIS TONGUE IS SO WIDE AND STRONG, JUST LIKE HIS HANDS AND ARMS. HIS LIPS AREN'T SMOOTH OR SOFT... NO, I'M THE ONE WITH SMOOTH, SOFT AND PAINTED LIPS. HIS BEARD KEEPS STINGING MY DELICATE, HAIRLESS FACE. ALL THIS FEELS WEIRD, BUT...


HEAVENS, I JUST CAN'T HELP IT!
HE'S THE MAN HERE... MY HUSBAND!
I'M HIS SEXY, HORNY LITTLE WIFE.
LET HIM EXPLORE MY MOUTH...


W-WHAT ARE YOU DOING, NIKOS?


I'M TAKING YOU TO BED, LOVE. AND I'M GOING TO MAKE YOU A VERY HAPPY WOMAN TONIGHT.

OH, ELENA, YOU ARE SO BEAUTIFUL... SO HOT...






AHHHH---


OH, NIKOS...
IT FEELS SO...

---SO FREAKING GOOD!


THAT'S WHY I'M HERE, MY LOVE...

...TO MAKE YOU FEEL GOOD.



OH MY GOD, NIKOS IS ABOUT TO TAKE MY PANTIES OFF. I ALREADY KNOW THAT I HAVE REAL BOOBS. DO I REALLY WANT TO KNOW RIGHT NOW WHETHER...

...MY PUSSY IS ALSO A REAL ONE OR NOT?


WAIT, NIKOS, I'M NOT READY FOR THIS!

YOU SURE? BUT YOU WERE SO...
AH, NEVERMIND! THAT'S OKAY, DARLING.
I'D NEVER DO SOMETHING YOU DON'T WANT.
I KNOW YOU'RE STILL RECOVERING FROM
THE ACCIDENT, BUT I... WELL, I THINK
I'VE HAD TOO MUCH WINE TONIGHT!


I'M SORRY, MY DEAR!

GOD, THIS IS GETTING MORE AND MORE CONFUSING. NIKOS KEEPS TREATING ME LIKE I'VE BEEN ELENA MY WHOLE LIFE. BUT CAN I REALLY BLAME HIM? JUST A SECOND AGO, I WAS ACTING LIKE A PASSIONATE AND HORNY WIFE! HOW CAN I SAY I'M A STRAIGHT GUY IF I GOT SO TURNED ON BY MY HUSBAND? MY *HUSBAND*! I'M SO LOST...



Chapter Eighteen
A Day in the Life


TWO WEEKS LATER...





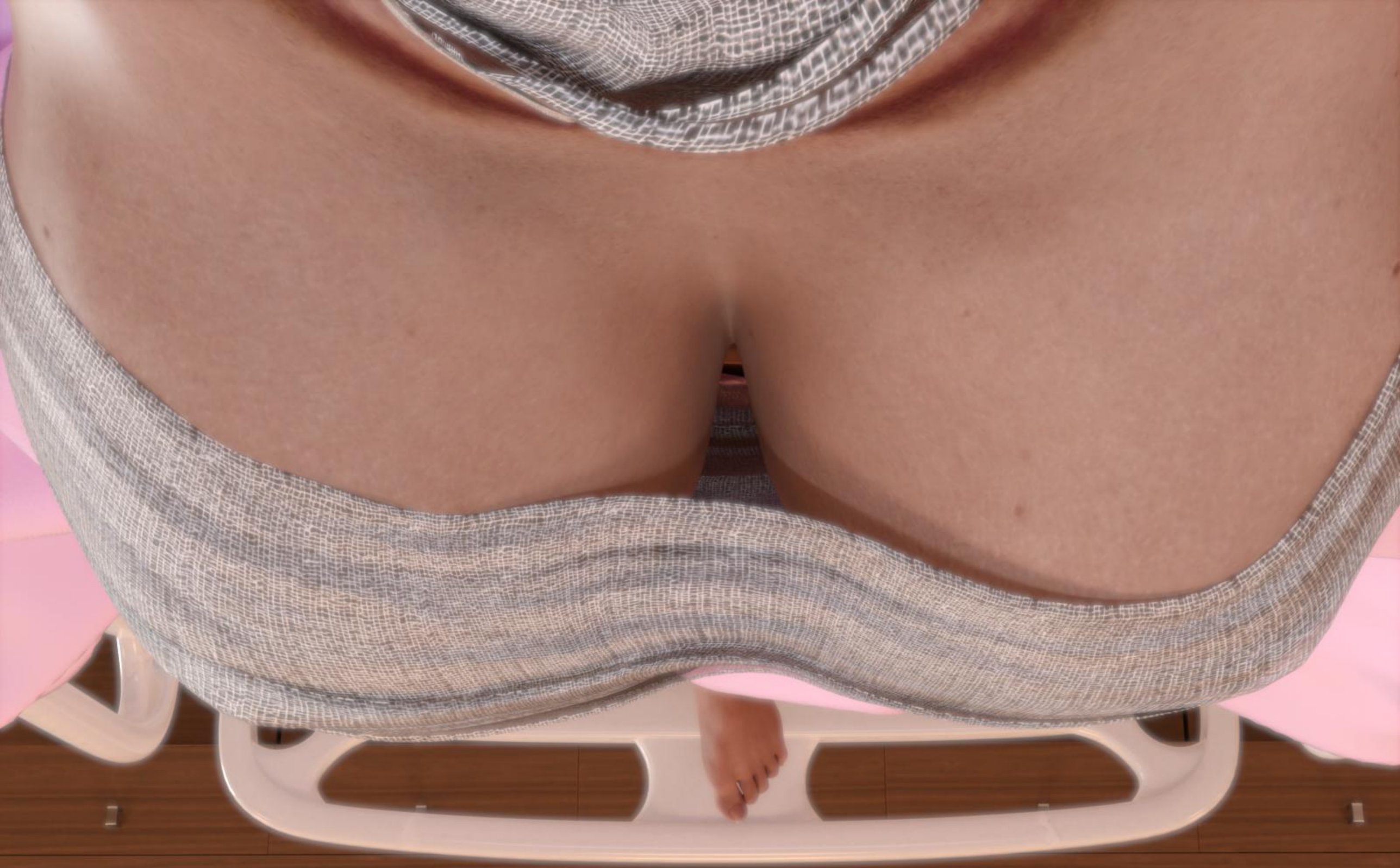




UUGH...


Knock!
Knock!


HUH...?





GOOD MORNING, MRS. SAMARAS! IT'S GOOD TO SEE THAT YOU'RE FINALLY AWAKE.

IT'S BEEN A FEW WEEKS SINCE WE LAST TALKED!

I... I...


OUCH!

PLEASE, TRY NOT TO SPEAK FOR NOW, MA'AM. YOUR VOCAL CORDS ARE STILL HEALING!

BUT I ASSURE YOU THAT YOU HAVE NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT! ALL PROCEDURES WERE SUCCESSFUL, INCLUDING THOSE ON YOUR BREASTS AND PRIVATE PARTS...

SURGERY ON MY BREASTS AND PRIVATE PARTS?! WHAT IS GOING ON? I CAME HERE JUST FOR A SMALL PROCEDURE ON MY FACE!

I UNDERSTAND THIS ALL SOUNDS VERY EXCITING, BUT I'M GOING TO INSIST THAT YOU DON'T TRY TO SPEAK ANYTHING RIGHT NOW, MRS. SAMARAS. AS I SAID, YOU COULD INJURE YOUR VOCAL CORDS.

BUT SINCE I'M HERE, WHY DON'T I REPORT TO YOU ALL THE PROCEDURES THAT WERE PERFORMED? I'M HAPPY TO SAY THAT WE WERE ABLE TO ACCOMPLISH EVERYTHING THAT WE HAD PREVIOUSLY DISCUSSED AND AGREED UPON, MA'AM. LET ME TAKE A SIT, OKAY?

BEING SOMEONE WITH NOT ONLY GENDER BUT ALSO AGE DYSPHORIA, AS YOU MADE CLEAR EARLIER, WHAT YOU WANTED WAS NOT ONLY TO BE A WOMAN, BUT SPECIFICALLY A WOMAN OVER FIFTY, SO THAT YOU COULD LIVE COMFORTABLY IN YOUR TRUE SELF AS A MIDDLE-AGED WIFE AND MOTHER.

WITH THAT IN MIND, MY TEAM AND I STARTED WORKING WITH A BIT OF FAT REDISTRIBUTION, REMOVING FAT FROM YOUR WAIST AND RELOCATING IT TO YOUR HIPS, LOWER BELLY AND BUTTOCKS, GIVING YOUR BODY THE LOOK OF THAT OF A WOMAN WHO HAS GAVE BIRTH MORE THAN ONCE, JUST AS YOU ASKED, MA'AM. TO MAKE IT LOOKS EVEN BETTER, WE ALSO WIDEN YOUR HIP BONES WITH TITANIUM PLATES.

MOST OF THE FAT, HOWEVER, WAS USED IN YOUR NEW BREASTS, ALONG WITH THE ABSORBABLE IMPLANTS WE DISCUSSED EARLIER. YOU'RE NOW THE PROUD OWNER OF G-CUP **NATURAL** BREASTS. AS I WARNED YOU, THOSE IMPLANTS ARE NOT PROSTHESES THAT CAN BE REMOVED. BY NOW, TWO WEEKS AFTER THE PROCEDURE, YOUR BODY HAS ALREADY ABSORBED THEM, AND YOUR BREASTS ARE AS MUCH A PART OF YOU AS YOUR ARMS OR LEGS.

THIS CAN ONLY BE A NIGHTMARE! THESE IMPLANTS CAN'T BE REMOVED?! WHY ON EARTH WOULD I AGREE TO SOMETHING LIKE THAT? I DON'T WANT TO BE A MATURE LADY WITH GIANT BOOBS FOREVER!

TALKING ABOUT YOUR ARMS AND LEGS, YOU'LL FIND IT PRETTY DIFFICULT FOR YOU TO GAIN MUSCLE MASS FROM NOW ON, MAKING YOUR BODY MORE FEMININE AND DELICATE. THIS IS POSSIBLE THANKS TO A SUBCUTANEOUS HORMONAL IMPLANT THAT IS CONTINUOUSLY INTRODUCING VAST DOSES OF FEMALE HORMONES INTO YOUR BODY, IN ADDITION TO BLOCKING MALE HORMONES.

THE HORMONES WILL ALSO PRODUCE OTHER NICE EFFECTS LIKE SMOOTHER SKIN, SOFTER AND SILKIER HAIR, EVEN WIDER HIPS, MORE SENSITIVE BREASTS, AND SO ON.

I'M AFRAID TO SAY, THOUGH, THAT YOU MAY ALSO EXPERIENCE SOME UNPLEASANT SIDE EFFECTS, SUCH AS TIREDNESS, PAIN IN YOUR JOINTS CAUSED BY MUSCLE WASTING AND THINNING OF THE BONES, DIFFICULTY LOSING WEIGHT, HEADACHES, LOSS OF MEMORY AND CONCENTRATION CAPACITY, SUDDEN MOOD SWINGS, HOT FLUSHES AND FEELING OF LOSS OF SELF.

I KNOW THIS SOUNDS WORRYING, BUT IT'S IMPORTANT TO KEEP IN MIND THAT YOU WON'T NECESSARILY EXPERIENCE **ALL** OF THOSE SYMPTOMS. ALSO, MA'AM, YOU STATED YOU WANTED THE MOST AUTHENTIC EXPERIENCE OF A MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN'S LIFE, SINCE THAT'S HOW YOU SEE YOURSELF, AND SUCH SYMPTOMS ARE CONSISTENT WITH THOSE OF A MENOPAUSAL WOMAN TAKING HORMONE REPLACEMENT THERAPY.

MOVING ON, WE PERFORMED A BONE-SHORTENING SURGERY ON YOUR LEGS, SO THAT YOU COULD HAVE THE HEIGHT YOU ALWAYS WANTED. SUCH A PROCEDURE INVOLVES REMOVING A PART OF THE FEMUR, THEN USING METAL PLATES TO HOLD THE REMAINING PIECES OF BONE TOGETHER.

USUALLY, THAT SURGERY IS ONLY PERFORMED IN PATIENTS WITH LEG LENGTH DIFFERENCE OR TO CORRECT BONES THAT ARE UNEVENLY LONG. HOWEVER, YOU MA'AM DID HAVE LEGS THAT WERE A LITTLE TOO LONG FOR SOMEONE WHO WAS BORN AS A MAN, WHICH MADE THE SURGERY POSSIBLE.

STILL ON YOUR LOWER LIMBS, ALTHOUGH I WAS RELUCTANT, WE'VE ALSO SHORTENED YOUR ACHILLES TENDON, SOMETHING COMMON TO HAPPEN TO WOMEN WHO HAVE WORN HIGH HEELS ALL THEIR LIVES, AND PERFORMED A SURGERY ON YOUR BIG TOES TO GIVE THEM SLIGHT BUNIONS FROM CONTINUALLY WEARING POINTY SHOES.

FURTHERMORE, YOU UNDERWENT A FULL FACIAL RECONSTRUCTION, WITH JAW SHAVING, LIP AND CHEEKBONES AUGMENTATION, RHINOPLASTY, BLEPHAROPLASTYAND AND, OF COURSE ADAM'S APPLE REMOVAL.

WE ALSO WORKED ON YOUR VOCAL CHORDS, SO NOW YOU'LL HAVE A LOVELY FEMALE VOICE ONCE YOUR THROAT HEALS. PLUS, SINCE YOU'VE EMPHASIZED SO MUCH THAT YOU IDENTIFY AS A GREEK WOMAN, AND DON'T WANT TO LEAVE ANY ROOM FOR DOUBT ABOUT IT, OUR SPEECH THERAPY TEAM PERFORMED A PROCEDURE TO PERMANENTLY PARALYZE SOME MUSCLES IN YOUR TONGUE SO THAT YOU'LL HAVE ISSUES SPEAKING SOME SOUNDS THAT DO NOT EXIST IN GREEK, LIKE THE POSTALVEOLAR FRICATIVES AND AFFRICATES. I'M SURE YOU, MA'AM, WILL BE VERY PLEASED WITH THE RESULTS!

ANOTHER IMPORTANT POINT, YOU UNDERWENT THE TREATMENT WITH ULTRAVIOLET RADIATION AND CERTAIN PROTEIN BLOCKERS TO KILL MOST OF THE COLLAGEN IN ALL LAYERS OF YOUR SKIN, MAKING IT LOOKS BEFITTING YOUR AGE.

SUCH A PROCEDURE WILL ALSO PREVENT YOUR BODY FROM PRODUCING THE SAME AMOUNT OF COLLAGEN AS BEFORE, ENSURING THAT YOU WON'T LOOK LIKE A YOUNG ADULT AGAIN, BEING ABLE TO AGE LIKE ANY OTHER LADY YOUR AGE.

FINALLY, AS I'M SURE YOU'RE EAGER TO HEAR, LET'S TALK ABOUT YOUR PRIVATE PARTS. NEITHER I NOR ANYONE ELSE AT THIS CLINIC HAS THE EXPERTISE TO PERFORM A GENDER REASSIGNMENT SURGERY, AND YOU SAID YOU COULDN'T SPEND MONTHS RECOVERING FROM SUCH A COMPLEX PROCEDURE RIGHT NOW, MA'AM.

WHAT WE WERE ABLE TO DO THEN WAS TO GIVE YOU A MUCH MORE ADVANCED PROSTHETIC VAGINA THAN THE ONE YOU WERE USING. IT EVEN ALLOWS PENETRATION, ALTHOUGH IT DOESN'T GO DEEPER THAN TEN CENTIMETERS. IN ORDER TO PROCEED WITH YOUR TRANSITION, WE ALSO PERFORMED A BILATERAL ORCHIECTOMY, AND YOUR REMAINING MALE PARTS WERE CONDITIONED IN A SMALL CAVITY BEHIND THE PROSTHESIS, WHICH CANNOT BE REMOVED WITHOUT SURGERY.

IN ANY CASE, AS SOON AS YOU HAVE TIME, AND RECOVER FROM THE RECENT SURGERIES, OF COURSE, I CAN GET THE BEST SPECIALIST IN THE WORLD TO DO YOUR FINAL SURGERY, MRS. SAMARAS.

NO, I CAN'T BELIEVE THIS IS ACTUALLY HAPPENING...




NURSE! NURSE!

AHHHH!


W-WHAT'S WRONG?

N-NOTHING. SORRY FOR WAKING YOU UP. I... I JUST...

DON'T LIE TO ME, HONEY. YOU HAD ANOTHER NIGHTMARE, DIDN'T YOU?

FINE, YOU'RE RIGHT. I GUESS THERE'S NO POINT IN TRYING TO HIDE IT FROM YOU!

YOU DON'T NEED TO HIDE ANYTHING FROM ME, ELENA. I JUST WANT TO SEE YOU HAPPY. IF I COULD, I'D JUST RIP THOSE NIGHTMARES YOU'RE HAVING OUT OF YOUR HEAD! THAT'S THE THIRD TIME THIS WEEK, ISN'T IT? ARE YOU SURE YOU DON'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT WHAT YOU SEE IN THOSE BAD DREAMS?

THERE'S NOTHING TO TALK ABOUT. THOSE ARE JUST SILLY NIGHTMARES. I'LL BE FINE, I SWEAR! NOW GET SOME MORE SLEEP. I NEED TO GET UP BECAUSE I HAVE TO MEET DIMITRA. SHE WANTS TO INTRODUCE ME TO SOMEONE WHO CAN HELP US WITH THE CHARITY EVENT WE ARE ORGANIZING, SO I CAN'T BE LATE. WE'LL TALK LATER, OKAY, DARLING?





SIGH

NIKOS IS RIGHT. IT WAS THE THIRD TIME I HAD THIS NIGHTMARE THIS WEEK, AND IT KEEPS GETTING MORE AND MORE SCARY EVERY TIME. IS THE NIGHTMARE A MEMORY OF WHAT HAPPENED TO ME AT THE CLINIC? OR IS THIS JUST A HALLUCINATION THAT MY MIND CREATED AFTER THE CAR ACCIDENT I WAS SUPPOSEDLY IN?

I KNOW NIKOS IS WORRIED ABOUT ME, BUT WHAT POINT WOULD THERE BE IN TALKING TO HIM ABOUT MY BAD DREAMS? EITHER HE'S GOING TO THINK I'VE REALLY GONE CRAZY FOR CONTINUING TO FANTASIZE I'M A YOUNG AMERICAN MAN, OR, IF I REALLY USED TO BE ANDREW, AND NIKOS IS PART OF A SICK SCHEME TO TURN ME INTO HIS MIDDLE-AGED WIFE, I GUESS HE WOULD JUST TRY TO CONVINCE ME THAT I'VE DEFINITELY LOST MY MIND. EITHER WAY, IT'S GOING TO LOOK LIKE I'M INSANE. IT'S A LOSE-LOSE SITUATION

BUT I STILL CAN'T BELIEVE THAT NIKOS WOULD BE INVOLVED IN A PLOT AGAINT ME. HE'S JUST... SO KIND! A TRUE GENTLEMAN, ALWAYS SUPPORTING ME AND BEING AFFECTIONATE. HE DOESN'T SEEM LIKE A CRUEL MAN, NOT IN A MILLION YEARS!

HE DIDN'T EVEN TRY TO HAVE SEX WITH ME AGAIN AFTER THAT NIGHT WEEKS AGO, RESPECTING ME AFTER I TOLD HIM I WASN'T READY FOR THAT. I THINK THIS IS BEING TOUGH FOR HIM. I CAN SEE HOW HE LOOKS AT MY BODY. AND WHO AM I KIDDING? I FEEL VERY ATTRACTED TO HIM, AS WELL!

CONSIDERING ALL THIS, HOW CAN I THINK I TRULY USED TO BE A STRAIGHT YOUNG MAN? WHAT STRAIGHT GUY WOULD BE SEXUALLY ATTRACTED TO ANOTHER MAN?

NOT ONLY THAT, BUT EVEN IF THOSE MAD PEOPLE AT THE CLINIC HAVE SOMEHOW MODIFIED MY TONGUE SO THAT I HAVE TROUBLE SPEAKING CERTAIN PHONEMES, WHAT WOULD EXPLAIN MY DIFFICULT EVEN UNDERSTANDING PEOPLE TALKING IN ENGLISH? GOD, I'M THINKING IN GREEK RIGHT NOW! DOES IT MAKE SENSE TO THINK THAT I WAS BORN AND LIVED ALL MY LIFE IN AMERICA?

BUT THERE'S AN EASY WAY TO FIND OUT THE TRUTH, RIGHT? I JUST NEED TO CHECK THE DEPTH I AM DOWN THERE, AND I DON'T EVEN NEED NIKOS FOR THAT. WHY HAVEN'T I TRIED THIS YET?

MAYBE I'M JUST TOO SCARED TO KNOW? IF I HAVE A REAL VAGINA, THAT MEANS I'VE ALWAYS BEEN ELENA AND MY OLD LIFE IS AN ILLUSION. BUT IF THIS IS JUST A PROSTHESIS, THEN I'M BEING BETRAYED AND DECEIVED BY EVERYONE AROUND ME, AND I DON'T EVEN HAVE A CHANCE TO GO BACK TO MY OLD SELF, HAVING IN MIND EVERYTHING THEY'VE DONE TO ME AT THE CLINIC.

NO, I CAN'T THINK THIS WAY.
IF I REALLY AM ANDREW WOODS,
I'M GOING TO RECLAIM MY IDENTITY
NO MATTER WHAT. I'LL FIND A WAY!

SOME TIME LATER...

OH, HELLO...

GOOD MORNING, FILIP!


GOOD MORNING, MRS. SAMARAS!
HOW ARE YOU TODAY?

I'M FINE, THANKS. YOU, ON THE OTHER HAND, SHOULD BE RESTING IN BED, YOUNG MAN! YOU'RE NOT FULLY RECOVERED FROM THE ACCIDENT YET.

DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME, MA'AM. I FEEL PERFECTLY HEALTHY! AND AGAIN, I'D LIKE TO THANK YOU AND YOUR HUSBAND FOR NOT FIRING ME AFTER WHAT HAPPENED.

THANK YOU, MA'AM!

THERE'S NO REASON TO THANK ME, FILIP. I DON'T REMEMBER ANYTHING ABOUT THE ACCIDENT, BUT I WAS ASSURED THAT YOU WERE NOT AT FAULT. I TRUST YOU.

YOU HAVE NO IDEA HOW MUCH I APPRECIATE HEARING SO, MRS. SAMARAS. SHOULD WE GET GOING THEN? I'M SURE YOU DON'T WANT TO BE LATE FOR YOUR MEETING.

YOU'RE RIGHT, FILIP. LET'S GO.

CONTRARY TO WHAT I SAID, I DON'T TRUST FILIP ONE BIT, BUT I NEED TO KEEP UP APPEARANCES. ASSUMING MY MEMORIES AS ANDREW ARE REAL, I REMEMBER HE HAD DISAPPEARED SHORTLY BEFORE MY SURGERIES, AND NO ONE KNEW WHERE HE WAS AND WHAT HE WAS DOING.

VERY SUSPICIOUS, I'D SAY. GOD, HE MIGHT EVEN HAVE TAKEN ON THIS CHAUFFEUR JOB TO SPY ON ME, BUT ON WHOSE ORDERS?

THE STRANGEST THING IS THAT EVERYONE NOW SUPPORTS THE STORY THAT HE AND I WERE TOGETHER IN AN ACCIDENT, WHEN IN THE PAST NO ONE COULD EXPLAIN HIS DISAPPEARANCE. THIS SITUATION COULDN'T BE MORE INSANE!


SO, MRS. SAMARAS, I HEARD THAT YOUR NIECE FROM AMERICA AND HER HUSBAND ARE GOING TO STAY IN ATHENS LONGER, AREN'T THEY?

HMM... THAT'S RIGHT, FILIP. JAMES IS AN ACCOUNTANT, AND NIKOS HAS ARRANGED FOR HIM A POSITION IN THE HOTEL'S ACCOUNTING OFFICE, DEALING WITH NON-GREEK-SPEAKING CUSTOMERS AND SUPPLIERS. AND MARINA, WHO IS A JOURNALIST, GOT A FREELANCE JOB AS A CORRESPONDENT IN THE BALKANS.

IT'S UNCLEAR HOW LONG THEY'LL BE HERE, BUT THAT'S THE SITUATION AT THE MOMENT.

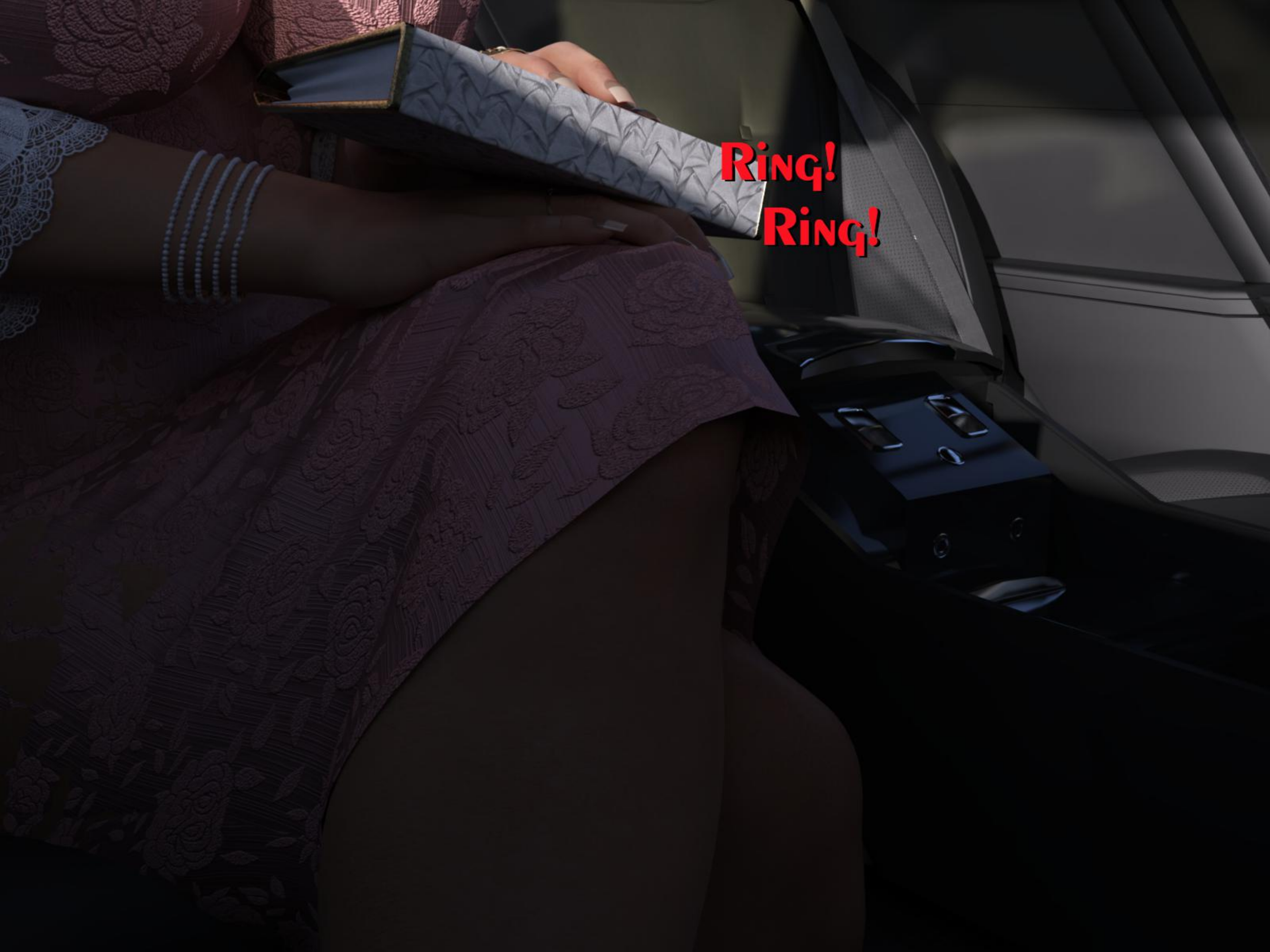
OH, IT'S ALWAYS NICE TO HAVE THE FAMILY AROUND, ISN'T IT? YOUR NIECE IS A KIND AND GENTLE WOMAN. AS FOR HER HUSBAND, THOUGH...


WHAT? WHAT'S WRONG ABOUT HER HUSBAND?

N-NOTHING, MA'AM. I WAS JUST ABOUT TO SAY THAT I HAVEN'T HAD A CHANCE TO INTERACT WITH HIM YET. BUT SINCE YOUR NIECE CHOSE HIM AS HER HUSBAND, I BELIEVE HE'S A WONDERFUL PERSON, TOO. YOUR FAMILY SEEMS TO KNOW VERY WELL WHO TO GET INVOLVED WITH. IN ANY CASE, FORGIVE ME FOR MEDDLING IN MATTERS THAT ARE NONE OF MY BUSINESS.

EVEN MORE SUSPICIOUS. WHY DID FILIP ALL OF A SUDDEN DECIDE TO TALK ABOUT MARINA AND "HER HUSBAND"? IS THIS A HINT AT ME? DOES HE KNOW I'M MARINA'S REAL HUSBAND?

IS HE THREATENING ME WITH THIS "YOUR FAMILY KNOWS WHO TO GET INVOLVED WITH" TALK? GOD, PERHAPS I'M JUST BEING PARANOID, BUT I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO THINK ANYMORE!


Ring!
Ring!

HELLO?

MRS. SAMARAS? IT'S ME, JOEL. LISTEN, I HAVE NEWS ABOUT THE PERSON YOU ASKED ME TO HELP YOU FIND. CAN YOU SPEAK NOW?

YES, I CAN SPEAK! WHAT DID YOU FIND OUT?

IT'S A GOOD THING YOU'RE USING AN ALTERNATE PHONE TO TALK TO ME. THIS REDUCES THE CHANCES OF US BEING SPIED ON, MA'AM.

ANYWAY, THE NIGHT WE FIRST TALKED ABOUT THE CURRENT SITUATION, AND I MENTIONED ROAN GJOKA, YOU SAID YOU WANTED ME TO SEARCH FOR A WOMAN CALLED JOANNA MYLONAS, WHO YOU'VE MET TWICE.

YESTERDAY, I WAS FINALLY ABLE TO OBTAIN COPIES OF THE HOTEL AND CLINIC SECURITY CAMERAS FROM THE RESPECTIVE DAYS THAT YOU'VE MET THIS WOMAN. SADLY, THOUGH, I COULDN'T SEE OUR TARGET ON ANY OF THE FOOTAGE.

WHAT?! THAT'S NOT POSSIBLE! I'M SURE I'VE BEEN WITH HER!

CALM DOWN, MRS. SAMARAS. LET ME FINISH, PLEASE. THE THING IS, THERE ARE PARTS MISSING FROM BOTH RECORDINGS, PRECISELY AROUND THE TIME YOU SAID YOU MET THE WOMAN. NO ONE COULD EXPLAIN TO ME HOW THIS HAPPENED, NEITHER AT THE HOTEL NOR AT THE CLINIC.

LOOKS LIKE WE'RE OUT OF LUCK FOR NOW, MA'AM, BUT I MUST INSIST THAT WE CANNOT GIVE UP. I HAVE A NEW IDEA TO FIND A LEAD ON MRS. MYLONAS. THE FACT THAT SHE TOOK THE TROUBLE TO ERASE THE TRACES OF HER MEETINGS WITH YOU SHOWS THAT SHE REALLY IS INVOLVED IN SOMETHING SHADY. AND AS I TOLD YOU BEFORE, HER NAME SOUNDS VERY FAMILIAR, ALTHOUGH I CAN'T REMEMBER WHERE I'VE HEARD IT BEFORE. I JUST BEG YOU TO KEEP ASKING HERE AND THERE ABOUT MR. GJOKA. JUST DON'T FORGET TO BE DISCREET. THIS IS ESSENTIAL!

GOD, THIS IS SO FRUSTRATING! I DESPERATELY NEED MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THIS JOANA MYLONAS. I'M ABSOLUTELY SURE SHE DRUGGED ME THE NIGHT I FIRST PRETENDED TO BE NIKOS'S WIFE, DURING THE DINNER WITH MR. TOSKA, AND I BELIEVE SHE DID THE SAME THING THAT DAY AT THE CLINIC AFTER MARINA LEFT. SHE WAS THE LAST PERSON I MET BEFORE SEEING DR. GIANAKOS, AND WHEN I WALKED INTO HIS OFFICE, I WAS TOTALLY CONFUSED, BARELY UNDERSTANDING WHAT THE DOCTOR WAS SAYING.

WELL, WELL, WELL,
I CAN'T BELIEVE IT!
LOOK WHO'S HERE...

Y-YOU...!

OH, ELENA, DEAR, IT'S SO NICE TO SEE THAT YOU DECIDED TO TAKE MY ADVICE! YOU ARE BOOKED WITH DR. GIANAKOS, AREN'T YOU?

HOW DO YOU KNOW THAT?

I KNOW A LOT OF THINGS... A LOT FOR SURE! IS IT TEA, BY THE WAY? IT LOOKS SOO TASTY, DARLING...

SOME TIME LATER...



OKAY, THERE'S DIMITRA.
BUT WHO...


...IS THAT WOMAN WITH HER?

GOD, I CAN'T BELIEVE IT! IS IT REALLY HER? I NEED TO TAKE A PIC BEFORE THEY SEE ME!

ALL THIS JUST COULDN'T BE MORE BIZARRE, MRS. SAMARAS! THIS WOMAN... NOW I KNOW WHY HER NAME SOUNDED SO FAMILIAR!

FIVE MINUTES LATER...

ELENA, DARLING, SO GLAD YOU'RE HERE!

THIS IS THEODORA MAKRIS, THE WOMAN I'VE BEEN LOOKING FORWARD TO INTRODUCING YOU TO!

NICE TO MEET YOU, ELENA. OH, I LOVE YOUR HAIRSTYLE! SO ELEGANT!


THIS BITCH'S NERVE! NOT ONLY DID SHE COME UP WITH ANOTHER FAKE NAME, BUT IT LOOKS LIKE SHE'S REALLY GOING TO ACT LIKE SHE'S NEVER SEEN ME BEFORE! I NEED TO PLAY MY CARDS RIGHT.

AFTER A COUPLE OF CUPS OF TEA...

...AND THAT'S HOW I MET DIMITRA. IT WAS ALL A HAPPY COINCIDENCE, REALLY, BECAUSE I WASN'T GOING TO ATTEND THE GET-TOGETHER AT MR. MORAITIS', AS I HAD A TERRIBLE HEADACHE THAT DAY. BUT HE WAS VERY INSISTENT, AND CONSIDERING HOW CLOSE HE IS TO MY HUSBAND, I COULDN'T REFUSE.

A HAPPY COINCIDENCE, INDEED! DIMITRA IS SUCH A LOVELY PERSON, ISN'T SHE? WAS YOUR HUSBAND AT THE GATHERING, TOO? YOU SAID HE'S CLOSE TO THE HOST, MR. MORAITIS, RIGHT?

ALSO... ARE YOU SURE WE'VE NEVER MET BEFORE? YOU LOOK SOMEHOW FAMILIAR.

I DON'T THINK SO, DEAR, AND BELIEVE ME, I NEVER FORGET A FACE. THIS WOULDN'T HAPPEN RIGHT WITH SUCH A GRACEFUL AND STYLISH LADY LIKE YOU!

ABOUT MY HUSBAND, NO, HE WASN'T THERE. WHEN WE MOVED TO ATHENS, HE PROMISED THAT WE WOULD SPEND MORE TIME TOGETHER, BUT IN LESS THAN A WEEK HE WAS AWAY ON ANOTHER BUSINESS TRIP, OR SO HE SAID! LAST I HEARD FROM HIM, HE WAS ON CRETE. NOT ALL HUSBANDS TREAT THEIR WIVES LIKE QUEENS. FROM WHAT DIMITRA TOLD ME, YOU ARE A VERY LUCKY WOMAN, ELENA!

WHAT A SOCIOPATH... I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYONE LIE SO EASILY! THAT SHOULDN'T COME AS A SURPRISE, THOUGH, CONSIDERING THIS WOMAN'S BACKGROUND. JOEL TOLD ME SHE'S BEEN IN JAIL FOR MANY CRIMES, AND IS CURRENTLY THE WIFE OF ROAN GJOKA, THE MOBSTER WHO IS SUPPOSEDLY WORKING WITH MR. TOSKA.

I WONDER WHY SHE MENTIONED CRETE. IS SHE THREATENING ME TO KEEP QUIET? DOES SHE KNOW THAT MARINA HAS BEEN TO THE ISLAND? I COULD ASK MARINA IF SHE'S SEEN ANYONE LIKE MR. GJOKA ON HER TRIP, BUT SHE HAS BEEN REFUSING TO HAVE ANY REAL CONVERSATION WITH ME. WHENEVER I TRY TO TALK TO HER, SHE ALWAYS MENTIONS HOW BEAUTIFUL SHE THINKS MY EARRINGS ARE. THE CHAT IS ALWAYS FRIVOLOUS AND SUPERFICIAL. THIS IS SO INFURIATING! GOD, I CAN BARELY LOOK HER IN THE FACE THESE DAYS!

WELL, LADIES, NOW THAT YOU'VE MET EACH OTHER, HOW ABOUT WE VISIT THE HALL WHERE OUR NEXT CHARITY EVENT WILL BE HELD? WE HAVE A FULL DAY AHEAD OF US!

IN THE EVENING...

HUH?

WHAT IS GOING ON?
WHY IS THE FLOOR FULL
OF FLOWERS?



ELENA, NEVER FORGET THAT YOU ARE THE WOMAN OF MY LIFE AND THAT I WILL ALWAYS BE THERE FOR YOU. EVERY DAY IS SPECIAL WITH YOU IN MY LIFE. WOULD YOU LIKE TO GO ON A DATE? I HAVE A SURPRISE FOR YOU. I'M WAITING IN OUR SPECIAL PLACE. FOREVER YOURS, NIKOS.

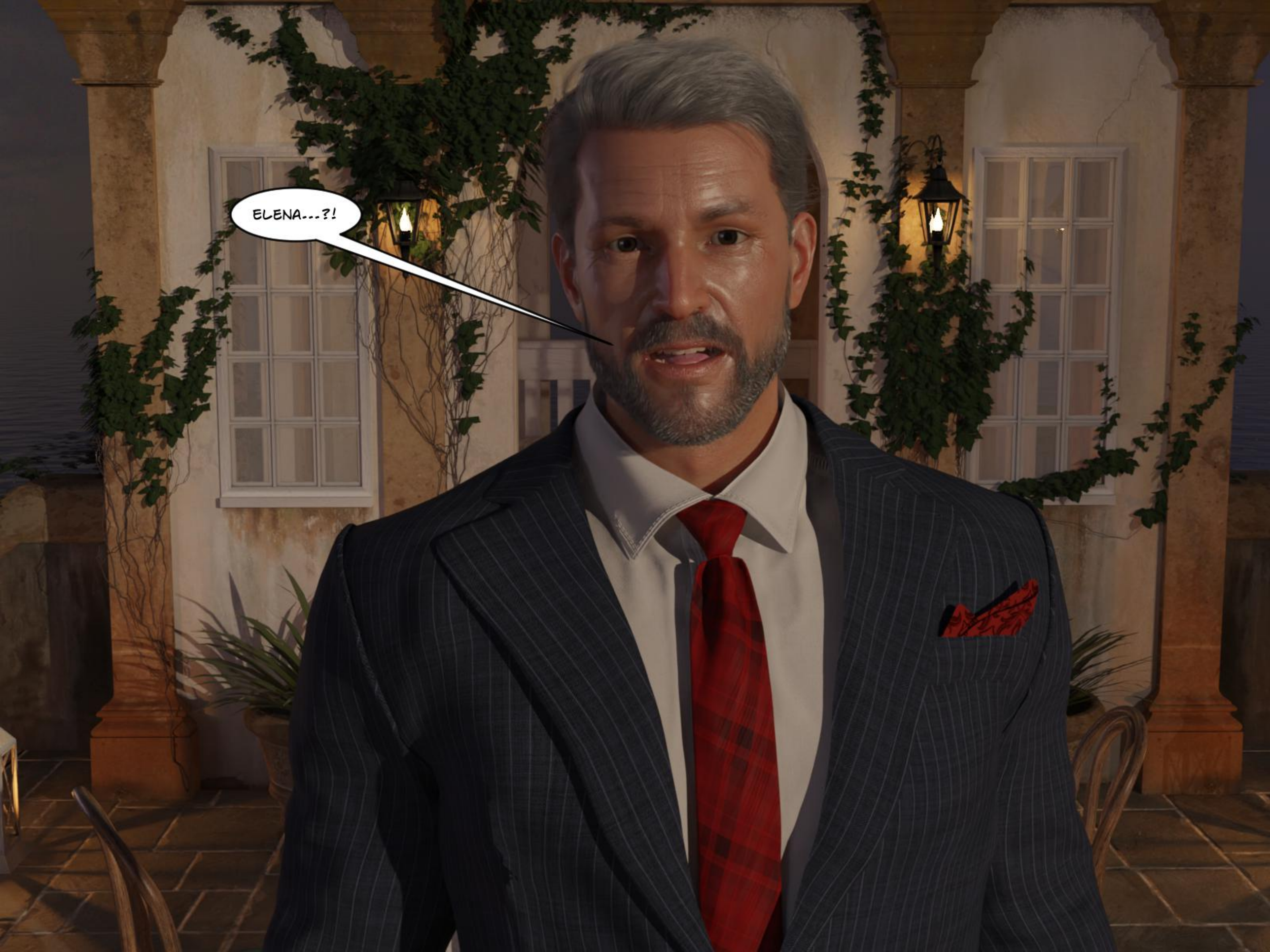
OH, NIKOS, YOU MAKE IT SO HARD NOT TO FALL FOR YOU, DON'T YOU?

YES, I THINK I SHOULD PLEASE MY HUSBAND TONIGHT. HE'S BEEN SO, SO GOOD TO ME...

Chapter Nineteen
Wonderful Tonight

HALF A MILE FROM SHORE...




ELENA...?!




YOU... YOU...

WHAT'S WRONG, HONEY? THAT'S THE FIRST TIME I SEE YOU HAVING SO MUCH TROUBLE WITH WORDS.

IT'S JUST THAT I CAN'T BELIEVE HOW BREATHTAKING YOU LOOK, DEAR! I MEAN, YOU ALWAYS LOOK STUNNING, BUT TONIGHT... GOD, MORE THAN EVER I FEEL LIKE THE LUCKIEST MAN IN THE WORLD!

THANK YOU, MY LOVE! IT'S ALWAYS A PLEASURE GETTING ALL DOLLED UP FOR YOU. YOU, MORE THAN ANYONE, KNOW HOW TO MAKE A WIFE FEEL SPECIAL AND LOVED. I HOPE TONIGHT WE'LL HAVE AS MUCH FUN AS WE HAD WHEN YOU FIRST BROUGHT ME HERE. I REMEMBER IT LIKE IT WAS YESTERDAY, EVEN THOUGH IT WAS DECADES AGO.



I LOVE YOU, ELENA. I LOVE YOU LIKE I'VE NEVER LOVED ANOTHER WOMAN. I PROMISE YOU WE'LL HAVE AN UNFORGETTABLE NIGHT. LIKE I SAID IN THE NOTE, A HAVE A SURPRISE FOR YOU!

MEANWHILE BACK IN THE CITY...

HELLO? FINALLY, SOPHIA! I'VE BEEN TRYING TO TALK TO YOU FOR HOURS! I'M STARTING TO THINK YOU'RE AVOIDING ME, YOU KNOW?

YES, WE NEED TO TALK NOW! WHERE'S AUNT ELENA? HER PHONE IS OUT OF SERVICE.

WHAT?! ARE YOU TELLING ME SHE IS RIGHT NOW IN THE MIDDLE OF THE OCEAN WITH UNCLE NIKOS? BUT WHY? WHAT'S THE POINT OF THAT?

NONE OF THIS MAKES SENSE, SOPHIA! THAT'S NOT WHAT WE AGREED ON. AUNT ELENA HAS BEEN ACTING STRANGE. SHE'S BEEN IGNORING ME EVERY TIME I USE THE CODE TO TELL HER THAT WE NEED TO TALK IN A SAFE PLACE. THE CODE SHE CAME UP WITH HERSELF!

SOME TIME LATER...


SO, DID YOU ENJOY THE DINNER, ELENA?

ABSOLUTELY DEAR! THE FOOD WAS SUPERB, AND THE WINE WAS THE BEST ONE I'VE HAD IN A LONG TIME. THANK YOU FOR ALL THIS!

BELIEVE ME, IT'S ALWAYS MY PLEASURE TO MAKE YOU HAPPY. AS I KEEP SAYING, I FEEL GRATEFUL EVERYDAY FOR HAVING YOU BY MY SIDE.

NOW, LIKE I SAID BEFORE,
I HAVE A SURPRISE FOR YOU.

ELENA...


WOULD YOU LIKE TO MARRY ME?

I DON'T UNDERSTAND, NIKOS! WE'RE ALREADY MARRIED, AREN'T WE?

OF COURSE WE ARE, DARLING, BUT WE NEVER HAD A PROPER WEDDING CEREMONY, RIGHT?

WE CAN CALL IT A VOW RENEWAL OR SOMETHING, BUT THE THING IS, I WANT TO SHOW EVERYONE HOW MUCH I LOVE YOU, AND LET THE WHOLE CITY KNOW THAT I WANT TO SPEND THE REST OF MY LIFE WITH YOU! THAT'S WHAT WE DESERVE. A CEREMONY THAT NO ONE WILL EVER FORGET!

IS NIKOS REALLY PROPOSING THIS? GOD, IT SEEMS LIKE HE WANTS US TO BE A COUPLE... A REAL COUPLE, AND NOT A FAKE ONE... FOREVER! IS THIS MY FATE? BEING A DEVOTED MIDDLE-AGED WIFE, ALWAYS LOOKING BEAUTIFUL FOR MY HUSBAND IN CLASSY DRESSES AND SKY-HIGH HEELS?

THAT SOUNDS SCARY, BUT ALSO... KIND OF TEMPTING? WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU, ELENA? WHY ARE YOU EVEN CONSIDERING THIS IDEA?

I... I ACCEPT, NIKOS.
OF COURSE I ACCEPT IT!

THEN GIVE ME YOUR FINGER, MY LOVE!






NOW TAKE ME TO BED, HANDSOME. IT'S TIME FOR YOU TO MAKE ME YOUR WOMAN!

SHORTLY AFTER...



AHHHH!


DON'T YOU LOVE IT, BABE?
TO BE A HORNY LITTLE WIFE?



AHHHHH!

OH, GOD... IT FEELS...
AHHH... SO GOOD...

TELL ME HOW MUCH YOU LOVE IT, ELENA. I WANT TO HEAR IT FROM YOUR SEXY LIPS!

Iaaa Iaaa


I LOVE BEING A HORNY LITTLE WIFE.
YOUR HORNY LITTLE WIFE!



AND I WANT TO MAKE MY HUNKY HUSBAND THE HAPPIEST MAN ON EARTH!

'COS THAT'S WHAT YOU DESERVE.

WHEN WE'RE IN BED...


I'M JUST YOUR LITTLE SLUT!

GOD, NIKOS' MEMBER IS HUGE! THAT'S A LITTLE SCARY BUT ALSO...

...EXCITING?


IT FEELS IMPOSSIBLE TO RESIST SUCH A BIG, MANLY COCK.

IT TASTES... DIFFERENT?
BUT NOT BAD AT ALL.

OH, ELENA, THIS IS SO HOT!

OH, DO YOU LIKE IT, BIG BOY? THIS IS JUST THE BEGINNING. REMEMBER, I'M HERE TO MAKE YOU FEEL GOOD!

OHH...

AHHH---!


THAT'S IT, ELENA...

SHOW YOUR HUSBAND WHAT A GOOD COCKSUCKER YOU CAN BE!

CHOKING

THIS COCK REALLY IS A MONSTER! IT'S ALREADY REACHING MY THROAT AND I STILL HAVEN'T MANAGED TO GET IT ALL IN MY MOUTH. MY MOUTH... MY HUSBAND'S COCK IS IN MY MOUTH, AND IT FEELS MARVELOUS TO PLEASURE HIM. GOD, I DON'T REMEMBER EVER FEELING SO TURNED ON! TRY HARDER, ELENA!


CHOKING
CHOKING

YEAH, I GOT IT ALL! THIS DELICIOUS COCK IS ALL MINE FOR ME TO SUCK EVERY SINGLE DAY OF MY LIFE, LIKE THE LITTLE SLUTTY WIFE I AM! I... I LOVE THIS FEELING SO MUCH!

BUT NOW... I WANT TO FEEL MY HUSBAND INSIDE ME UNTIL I CAN'T TAKE IT ANYMORE!




OH, ELENA...

YOU REALLY ARE SUCH A HORNY COCKSUCKER, AREN'T YOU? I CAN'T BELIEVE HOW AMAZING IT FEELS!

THE PLEASURE IS ALL MINE, HANDSOME. I JUST CAN'T GET ENOUGH OF THIS DELICIOUS MEMBER OF YOURS!

I LOVE IT SO MUCH THAT NOW I WANT TO FEEL IT INSIDE ME. AND TONIGHT, I'D LIKE YOU TO GET INSIDE ME FROM BEHIND!

FROM BEHIND?!

OH, AS CRAZY AS IT IS, IT SEEMS LIKE YOUR HUGE MANHOOD GOT EVEN BIGGER AND HARDER WITH THE IDEA. GOD, I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING THIS HOT!




VERY WELL, ELENA...
YOU'RE GOING TO GET EXACTLY
WHAT YOU ASKED FOR!

AHHH!




IT'S TIME FOR US TO WE GOT RID OF YOUR PRETTY PANTIES, DON'T YOU THINK?



ARE YOU ENJOYING IT? ARE YOU ENJOYING THE FEELING OF MY COCK RUBBING YOUR BUTTOCKS? JUST IMAGINE WHAT IT'S GOING TO BE LIKE WHEN IT'S INSIDE YOU!


GOD, THIS IS SO FREAKING AROUSING! THAT'S DEFINITELY WHO I'M SUPPOSED TO BE. I LOVE BEING DOMINATED BY NIKOS, MY HUSBAND, IN BED. I LOVE HIS COCK SO MUCH!

PLEASE, FUCK ME NOW! I'M BEGGING YOU- I CAN WAIT NO LONGER!

ALRIGHT THEN. YOUR WAIT IS OVER!





JUST RELAX AND ENJOY IT...




WHAT A HOT, TIGHT ASS! THIS ALREADY FEELS SO GOOD. AND WE'RE JUST GETTING STARTED!

OH, GOD, I CAN FEEL NIKOS ENTERING ME. IT FEELS LIKE HE'S GOING TO BREAK ME IN TWO WITH HIS HUGE COOK!



AHHHH...!


ARE YOU OKAY, HONEY? DO YOU WANT ME TO...
DON'T YOU EVEN THINK ABOUT STOPPING!

C'MON ELENA, YOU CAN'T GIVE UP NOW! YOU KNOW YOU WANT THIS. START SHAKING YOUR BOOTY ON HIS DICK. SHOW YOUR HUSBAND YOU CAN DO THIS!

AHHH---!

THAT'S IT... IT STILL HURTS LIKE HELL, BUT I CAN FEEL NIKOS DEEPER AND DEEPER INSIDE ME!

I JUST NEED TO RELAX... RELAX WHILE MY HUSBAND FUCKS ME! WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME I HAD ANY SEXUAL RELIEF? I NEED THIS AND... AND...

OH GOD, THIS IS STARTING TO FEEL... KIND OF GOOD?

AHHH---


OHHHH...!


THAT'S IT, I'M BEING FUCKED...

I'M BEING FUCKED BY MY HUSBAND AND IT FEELS SO GOOD!


OH, GOD!!!!

ARE YOU ENJOYING IT? TELL ME HOW MUCH YOU LIKE IT... NOW!

I... I'M LOVING THIS! I LOVE FEELING YOUR FAT DICK INSIDE ME!


THAT'S GOOD...



SLAP!

I'M GLAD MY NAUGHTY LITTLE WIFE IS HAVING FUN. I THINK NOW YOU'RE READY TO TAKE IT ALL!

AHHHH---

AHHHHHH!!!

OH, GOD, IT SEEMED IMPOSSIBLE
BUT NIKOS' COCK IS ALL INSIDE ME.
I CAN FEEL IT! IT'S BURNING LIKE FIRE,
BUT AT THE SAME TIME IT FEELS... NICE.
NICE? WHO AM I TRYING TO FOOL?
IT FEELS WONDERFUL!

HERE I AM, ON ALL FOURS, GETTING FUCKED IN THE ASS LIKE A GOOD SUBMISSIVE WIFE!

EVEN IF I REALLY USED TO BE A YOUNG MAN NOT LONG AGO, WHICH I'M NOT SO SURE ABOUT, HOW COULD I GO BACK TO MY OLD LIFE NOW? HOW COULD I LOOK IN THE MIRROR AND SEE A MAN? HOW COULD I THINK OF MARINA AS MY WIFE?

I WAS THE ONE WHO BEGGED TO BE FUCKED, EVEN THOUGH I DON'T KNOW EXACTLY WHY. IT JUST FELT... RIGHT. MAYBE THAT'S WHAT I'M MEANT TO BE.... A MATURE, DEVOTED WIFE WHO LIVES IN HEELS AND FANCY DRESSES AND LOVES TO PLEASE HER HUSBAND...


AH--- AHHH---
OH, GOD!




IT FEELS SO DAMN GOOD!


OH, YEAH?
YES, JUST INCREDIBLE!


THEN TELL ME...

WHAT? WHAT DO YOU WANT TO HEAR, NIKOS?

TELL ME THAT YOU'LL STAY WITH ME...

...AS MY BELOVED WIFE...

...FOREVER!

THIS IS NOT A GAME, ELENA. NOT ANYMORE! I TRULY WANT... NO, I NEED YOU IN MY LIFE! I WANT US TO STAY TOGETHER TILL DEATH DO US APART!

I... I...

OH, GOD, IS NIKOS REALLY DOING WHAT I THINK HE'S DOING? SHOULDN'T I BE HESITANT? WHY DOES THE ANSWER SEEM SO SIMPLE?

OF COURSE I WILL BE YOUR WIFE FOREVER, DARLING! NOTHING WOULD MAKE ME HAPPIER!

I LOVE YOU, ELENA!

I LOVE YOU TOO, NIKOS!


OH... AHHH... I T-THINK I'M COMING!


AHHHH---

AHHHHHH---

AHH... AHHHHH...
OH MY GOD!!


AHHHHHHH!!!

Taking out

OH, ELENA...
GASP


IT WAS WONDERFUL, BABE!


YOU DEFINITELY MAKE ME THE HAPPIEST MAN IN THE WORLD, IN EVERY POSSIBLE WAY!



THIS WAS THE BEST ORGASM I'VE EVER HAD... I SURELY FEEL LIKE A FULL WOMAN NOW. HOWEVER, SHOULDN'T I BE WORRIED ABOUT...

NO, I WON'T THINK ABOUT IT TONIGHT. I DESERVE AT LEAST A PEACEFUL NIGHT'S SLEEP.








HMM? WHERE I AM?

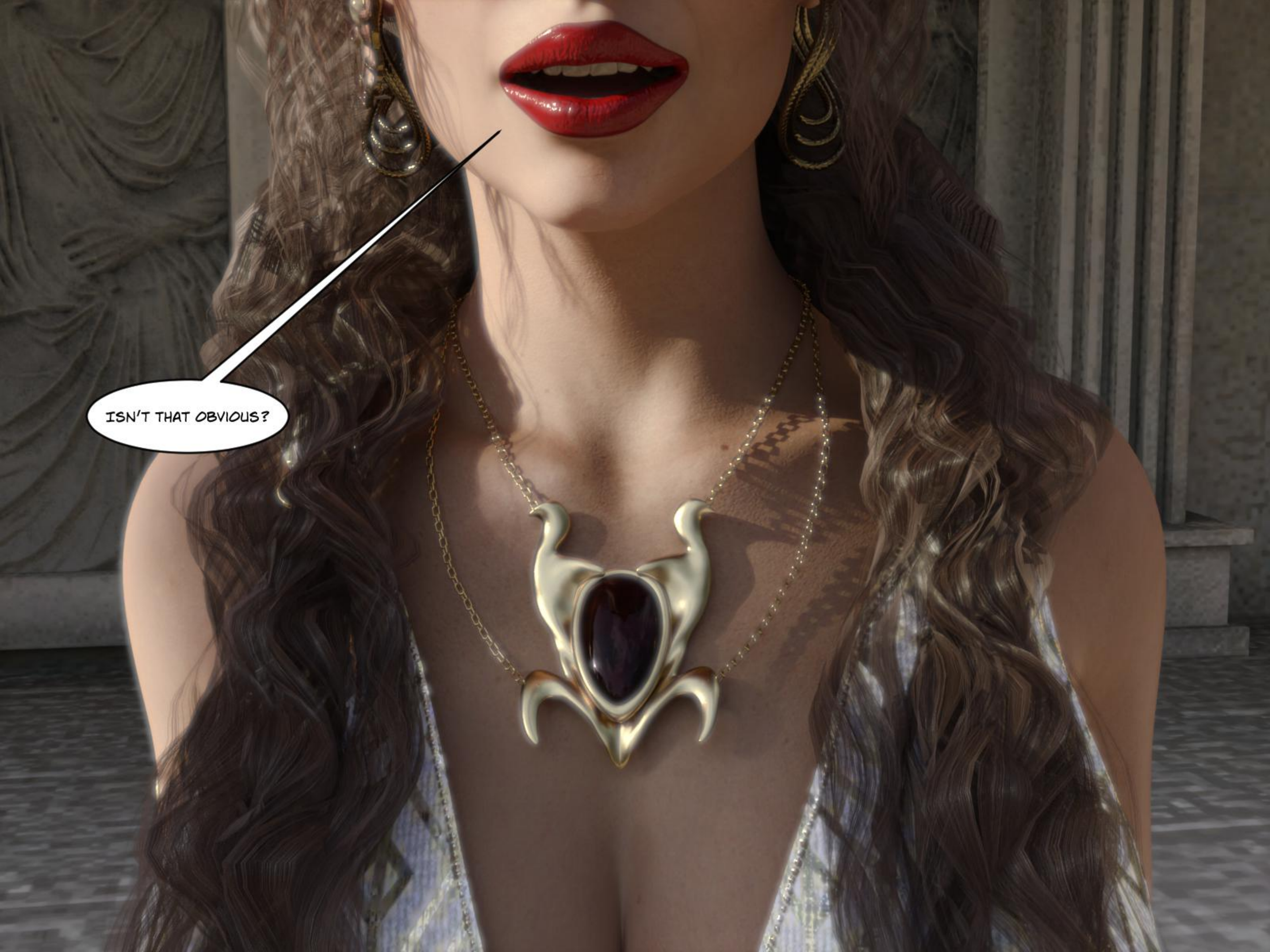



WELL, WELL, WELL,
LOOK WHO'S HERE!

Chapter Twenty
Aphrodite's Mirror

GET UP, MORTAL!
IT'S NOT RIGHT TO KEEP
A GODDESS WAITING!


W-WHO ARE YOU?


ISN'T THAT OBVIOUS?

I'M APHRODITE, THE GODDESS OF LOVE, BEAUTY, PLEASURE AND PROCREATION. MORTALS LIKE YOU HAVE WORSHIPED ME FOR COUNTLESS AGES. I CAN GRANT YOU THE GRACE OF A SERENE, FULFILLING LOVE, OR MAYBE A BREATHTAKING, OVERWHELMING PASSION; I CAN MAKE PEOPLE DESPERATELY WANT YOU, AND MAKE YOU HAVE SO MUCH SEXUAL JOY THAT YOU COULD DIE FROM IT; I CAN ALSO BLESS YOU WITH SO MANY DESCENDANTS THAT YOUR DYNASTY WOULD LIVE FOREVER!

DO YOU KNOW WHY I'M SO POWERFUL? I'VE EMERGED FROM THE FOAM OF THE SEA WHICH HAD GATHERED AROUND THE MUTILATED GENITALIA OF URANUS – THE PRIMORDIAL GOD OF THE SKY – THROWN INTO THE SEA BY KRONOS, AFTER HE HAD UNMANNED HIS OWN FATHER. I DOUBT YOUR PETTY MIND CAN UNDERSTAND THE MAGNITUDE OF THIS!

THAT'S HOW I CAME INTO BEING. AND YOU ARE HERE TO REQUEST MY DIVINE GRACE, AREN'T YOU? MORE THAN THAT... YOU ARE HERE TO LOOK IN THE MIRROR! WELL, THE GODS ALWAYS APPRECIATE OFFERINGS...

HMMM...?

AHHH!?


WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?!

I'M GRANTING YOU MY GRACE. BUT WE OBVIOUSLY CAN'T STOP HERE, RIGHT? YOU NEED SOMETHING NEW BETWEEN YOUR LEGS!

WHAT?! NO, WAIT!

WHAT THE---

GASP

YOU HAD NO RIGHT TO DO THAT! GIVE ME MY COCK BACK!

BELIEVE ME, YOU WON'T MISS THAT USELESS THING! YOU'VE ALREADY FOUND OTHER WAYS TO GET PLEASURE, HAVEN'T YOU? NOW THE ONLY MANHOOD YOU NEED IS THAT OF YOUR HUSBAND!

WAIT A MINUTE...

I KNOW YOU!
YES, I... I'VE CREATED YOU!
I REMEMBER NOW!

KIND OF BOLD OF YOU TO SAY
THAT TO A GOODNESS, DON'T YOU THINK?
ESPECIALLY WHEN YOU'RE THE ONE HERE
TO LOOK IN THE MIRROR.

SOME PEOPLE HAVE ALWAYS THOUGHT THAT MY CONNECTION WITH MIRRORS IS JUST DUE TO PRIDE AND VANITY. THIS, ACCORDING TO THEM, WOULD MAKE ME A WEAK, FRAGILE GODDESS, WITH NO DESIRE OR POWER OTHER THAN THE CARNAL.

BUT THE TRUTH IS, ALTHOUGH THERE IS NOTHING WRONG WITH PRIDE AND VANITY, THE MIRROR IS SOMETHING MUCH MORE POWERFUL. IT REPRESENTS REVELATION. WHEN YOU LOOK INTO YOUR OWN EYES IN THE MIRROR, WHAT YOU'RE SEEING IS A REFLECTION OF YOUR SOUL.

IN SHORT, THE MIRROR IS THE SYMBOL OF TRUTH. THIS CAN BE HARSH OR GENTLE, BUT IT ALWAYS NEEDS TO BE FACED. THE TRUTH IS IN THE HUMAN BODY, IN THE IMAGINATION OF MORTALS AND GODS, AND – MOST IMPORTANTLY – IN THE SOUL, WHICH DETERMINES YOUR ENTIRE EXISTENCE.

I THINK YOU UNDERSTAND WHY I'M TELLING YOU THIS, RIGHT?

...

WHAT IS GOING ON?
DID I LOSE ALL MY BODY HAIR?
AM I GROWING BOOBS?!

WHAT THE HELL...?!!


WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING? I DIDN'T ASK FOR ANY OF THIS!

OH, YOU COULDN'T BE MORE WRONG.
YOU ASKED FOR ALL OF THIS AND MORE...
MUCH MORE! LET ME SHOW YOU.

I... I'M FEELING SOMETHING WEIRD.



WHAT THE HEEL IS THIS?!!

JUST SOMETHING TO CHEER YOU UP AND REMIND YOU OF WHO YOU TRULY ARE. WEREN'T YOU A MINUTE AGO CRYING WITH PLEASURE AS YOUR HUSBAND PENETRATED YOU WITH HIS SUBLIME MANHOOD?

AHHHH... NOW I REMEMBER...

I MADE YOU, AND THEN YOU MADE ME SOMEONE ELSE...

STILL THIS NONSENSE? WHY ARE YOU SO RELUCTANT TO ACCEPT THE TRUTH? YOU KNOW VERY WELL YOU HAVE ONLY NOW FOUND TRUE LOVE. BEFORE THAT, YOU WERE IN AN UNHAPPY MARRIAGE – A MARRIAGE YOU WERE FORCED INTO!

I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT! I'VE ALWAYS BEEN HAPPY WITH MARINA, EVEN BEFORE WE GOT MARRIED! I WAS DEFINITELY NOT FORCED TO MARRY HER!

ONCE AGAIN I HAVE TO SAY THAT OUR STORIES ARE VERY SIMILAR. I WAS IN AN UNHAPPY MARRIAGE, TOO, HAVING BEEN FORCED BY ZEUS HIMSELF TO MARRY HEPHAESTUS, A WEAK, WHINING MAN. YOU HAVE NO IDEA HOW DIFFICULT IT WAS... OR MAYBE YOU HAVE, AFTER ALL, HUH?

ARES, ON THE OTHER HAND, OH MY...! IT'S HARD TO EVEN BEGIN TO DESCRIBE HIM. SUCH A MANLY AND IMPOSING GOD, WITH HIS THICK BEARD, HARD FACE AND MUSCULAR BODY... AND HIS EYES, OH, IT FELT LIKE HE COULD SEE MY SOUL WHEN HE FACED ME! YOU CAN RELATE TO THAT, CAN'T YOU? YOU DEFINITELY CAN. ARES MADE ME FEEL LIKE A WOMAN FOR THE FIRST TIME, JUST LIKE YOUR HUSBAND DID FOR YOU. VENUS AND MARS, YOU KNOW.

YOU SAY YOU WERE HAPPY WITH MARINA, BUT IF THAT WERE TRUE, WOULD YOU HAVE DONE WHAT YOU DID A FEW MONTHS AGO? WITH SO LITTLE TIME LEFT UNTIL THE WEDDING?

I... I...





AHHHH---

AHHHHHH!!




GASP

IT SEEMS YOU HAD YET ANOTHER ORGASM. YOU'VE HAD YOUR FUN, MORTAL. GET UP NOW!



YOU MAY HAVE THE POWER TO TURN ME INTO AN OLD LADY, BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN I WANT TO TALK ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED BETWEEN ME AND MARINA. YOU HAVE NO POWER TO CHANGE THIS... NOT THIS!

YOU THINK SO? AS YOU SAID, YOU'VE CREATED ME AND I'VE CREATED YOU. I'M NOTHING MORE THAN A CHARACTER IN YOUR HEAD. IF I'M MENTIONING MARINA, IT'S BECAUSE THIS IS SOMETHING YOU NEED TO TALK ABOUT.

WHY ALL THIS PERFORMANCE AND MYTHOLOGICAL TALK? WHY PRETEND TO BE APHRODITE? ISN'T IT A LITTLE *TOO THEATRICAL?*

DARLING, WE'RE IN GREECE, AREN'T WE? AND YOU USED TO BE AN ACTRESS BEFORE YOU DECIDED TO DEDICATE YOURSELF FULL TIME TO TAKING CARE OF YOUR FAMILY. YOU CAN'T REALLY BLAME YOUR MIND FOR WORKING THEATRICALLY! PLUS, I BELIEVE EVERY WORD I SAID. YOU TRULY LOVE YOUR NEW LIFE! AND IF I BELIEVE SO...

STOP! YOU'RE ONLY SAYING THAT BECAUSE THAT'S WHAT YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO DO. THIS IS ALL ABOUT METHOD ACTING! I NEEDED TO FULLY BELIEVE THAT I WAS ELENA SAMARAS, A MIDDLE-AGED MOTHER AND WIFE. I NEEDED TO FEEL LIKE ELENA, THINK LIKE ELENA, SEE THE WORLD THE WAY SHE WOULD. GOD, I EVEN BLOCKED MY ABILITY TO SPEAK ENGLISH PROPERLY!

NOT LONG AGO YOU WERE BEGGING YOUR HUSBAND TO FUCK YOU, YOU SUCKED HIS COCK LIKE YOUR LIFE DEPENDED ON IT, AND THEN YOU HAD THE BEST ORGASM OF YOUR LIFE WHILE HIS MEMBER WAS SHOVED DEEP INSIDE YOU. IF THIS WAS ALL ABOUT METHOD ACTING, I'M SURE MR. ORLOV WOULD BE VERY PROUD OF YOU, DEAR!

I... I DON'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT MR. ORLOV EITHER!

YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO HIDE FROM YOUR GHOSTS FOREVER, ELENA. ESPECIALLY WHEN ALL THE GHOSTS HAVE THE SAME ORIGIN.

ALL I WANT TO KNOW IS WHY THE HELL I'VE CREATED YOU! WHY SOMETHING SO EXTREME? I WAS MANAGING TO PLAY MY ROLE AS ELENA WELL ENOUGH BEFORE YOU!


YOU REALLY DON'T REMEMBER, DO YOU? WHY WOULD YOU ERASE EXACTLY THIS MEMORY FROM YOUR MIND? I HAVE A HUNCH, BUT I'LL LET YOU FIND OUT FOR YOURSELF.

IN ANY CASE, LET ME SHOW YOU THE CIRCUMSTANCES UNDER WHICH WE MET EACH OTHER...

Chapter Twenty-One

Most Wanted




Knock!
Knock!


HMM... WHERE AM I?

EXCUSE ME, MRS. SAMARAS. MAY I COME IN?

MR SEFERI? IS THAT YOU?
WHAT'S GOING ON?

YOU'RE IN THE HOSPITAL, MA'AM. DON'T YOU REMEMBER? WELL, I THINK IT'S NORMAL FOR YOU TO BE CONFUSED AFTER SUCH A TERRIBLE ACCIDENT.

HOSPITAL? SO DID THEY REALLY PERFORM ALL THOSE CRAZY SURGERIES ON MY BODY? I THOUGHT THAT HAD BEEN JUST A FREAKING NIGHTMARE! BUT MR. SEFERI MENTIONED AN ACCIDENT. WHAT ACCIDENT, FOR GOD'S SAKE! I MUST HAVE LOST MY MIND!

I WISH I HAD COME TO SEE YOU SOONER, MA'AM, BUT THE TRUTH IS THAT THINGS GOT EVEN MORE COMPLICATED AND DANGEROUS RECENTLY. THERE'S SOMETHING IMPORTANT I NEED TO ASK YOU.

BEFORE THAT, THOUGH, LET ME SAY THAT I'M VERY HAPPY TO SEE YOU RECOVERING. I HEARD YOU'RE BEING DISCHARGED TODAY. THAT'S WHY I BROUGHT YOU THESE FLOWERS.

THEY ARE CALLED RED POPPIES AND ARE THE SYMBOL OF ALBANIA. THEY REPRESENT, AMONG OTHER THINGS, HOPE FOR BETTER TIMES. A LITTLE HOPE NEVER HURT ANYONE, DON'T YOU THINK, MRS. SAMARAS?

HOPE IS GOOD, BUT KNOWING THE TRUTH IS AN EVEN BETTER FEELING, MR. SEFERI! WHAT'S SO IMPORTANT THAT YOU HAD TO COME TO THE HOSPITAL TO ASK ME? NOTHING MAKES SENSE RIGHT NOW!

ONCE AGAIN, JUST LIKE THE NIGHT WE FIRST MET, IT'S EASIER TO JUST SHOW YOU.

HAVE YOU EVER SEEN THIS MAN, MRS. SAMARAS?

OH, GOD...

THIS IS ME! OR AT LEAST WHO I USED TO BE BEFORE WHAT THOSE CRAZY DOCTORS DID TO MY FACE AND BODY!

SO, MA'AM. WHAT DO YOU SAY?

NO, I'VE NEVER SEEN THIS MAN BEFORE, MR. SEFERI. WHO IS HE?

WELL, IT CERTAINLY MAKES THINGS MORE... PUZZLING.

I'VE BEEN INFORMED BY A RELIABLE SOURCE THAT MR. TOSKA IS AFTER THIS MAN, WHOSE NAME IS ANDREW WOODS. THE OLD BASTARD IS CONVINCED THAT WOODS IS AT THE CENTER OF A CONSPIRACY TO STEAL HIS MONEY.

A CONSPIRACY HE BELIEVES YOUR FAMILY IS PART OF. I STILL DON'T KNOW ALL THE DETAILS, BUT MR. TOSKA HAS A LOT OF MEN AFTER WOODS. DANGEROUS MEN.

OH GOD, CAN THIS BE TRUE? DOES MR. TOSKA REALLY KNOW ABOUT ME? THAT'S TERRIFYING!

ARE YOU SURE YOU DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT WOODS, MA'AM? YOU LOOK WORRIED.

OF COURSE I'M WORRIED!
YOU'RE SAYING THAT A CRAZY MAN
THINKS THAT MY FAMILY IS INVOLVED
IN A CONSPIRACY TO ROB HIM!
THIS IS ABSURD!

TELL ME, MRS. SAMARAS, MARINA KATSAROS IS SOMEONE YOU'RE AWARE OF, RIGHT?

O-OF COURSE, SHE'S OUR NIECE. DAUGHTER OF NIKOS' SISTER.

AND SHE'S IN GREECE, ISN'T SHE? ON HER HONEYMOON? MR. TOSKA THINKS SHE IS ANDREW WOODS' WIFE. SHE WAS IN CRETE RECENTLY, AND ONE OF TOSKA'S HENCHMEN WAS FOLLOWING HER, WHILE AN ASSOCIATE OF MINE WAS FOLLOWING TOSKA'S MAN.

FROM WHAT I WAS TOLD, SHE AND HER HUSBAND APPROACHED THE MAN WHO WAS WATCHING THEM ON TOSKA'S ORDERS. HER HUSBAND IS IN FACT A MAN NAMED JAMES COLLINS, WHICH MEANS THAT TOSKA WAS WRONG. I DON'T THINK HE'S CONVINCED, THOUGH. HE'S ALWAYS BEEN AS STUBBORN AS HE'S CRUEL.

MARINA MARRIED TO A MAN NAMED JAMES?! WHAT THE HELL IS HE TALKING ABOUT? BUT NOW THAT I'M THINKING ABOUT IT, MARINA ACTUALLY SAID THAT SHE WAS BEING FOLLOWED IN CRETE, AND THAT SHE HAD HELP TO DEAL WITH THE SITUATION. COULD THIS JAMES BE THE ONE WHO HELPED HER?

IN ANY CASE, I ALSO HAVE A PHOTO HERE OF THE MAN WHO WAS FOLLOWING MARINA. LET ME SHOW YOU.

I'VE NEVER SEEN THIS MAN EITHER.

THIS DOESN'T SURPRISE ME. HIS NAME IS ROAN GJOKA, AND HE'S AN ALBANIAN MOBSTER. FROM WHAT I COULD GATHER, HE'S WORKING FOR MR. TOSKA, WHICH MAKES THAT LUNATIC OLD MAN EVEN MORE DANGEROUS.

I ALREADY TOLD YOU WHAT TOSKA DID TO ME, MRS. SAMARAS, SO I'LL WARN YOU AGAIN. YES, YOUR FAMILY IS AT GREAT RISK. YOU SAY YOU DON'T KNOW THIS ANDREW WOODS, WHICH IS GOOD. STILL, IF YOU SEE HIM, KEEP HIM AWAY FROM YOUR FAMILY. THIS IS BEST FOR EVERYONE'S SAFETY.

I HAVE TO GO NOW. YOU KNOW HOW TO FIND ME IF YOU NEED MY HELP. AGAIN, I WISH YOU A SPEEDY RECOVERY, MA'AM.

I CAN'T BELIEVE THIS. WILL THIS NIGHTMARE NEVER END?

NURSE! NURSE!
I NEED A PHONE!

SOME TIME LATER...


ANDREW...?


HEY, MARINA... COME IN, AND CLOSE THE DOOR, PLEASE.

OH GOSH! IS IT REALLY YOU? I CAME TO VISIT YOU WHEN YOU WERE STILL IN BANDAGES, BUT I HAD NO IDEA THEY HAD MADE YOU LOOK SO...


SO OLD?

I...I WAS GOING TO SAY YOU LOOK SO DIFFERENT... BUT YEAH... YOU LOOK MUCH OLDER, TOO! HOW DID THIS HAPPEN? DR. GIANAKOS SHOWED US PAPERS WITH YOUR SIGNATURE AUTHORIZING COUNTLESS SURGERIES.

GOD, I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND HALF OF THE PROCEDURES YOU WERE SUBJECTED TO. WHY DID YOU ACCEPT IT? THIS WAS WAY BEYOND WHAT WE AGREED TO!

I WAS DRUGGED. SO DRUGGED THAT I COULD BARELY UNDERSTAND WHAT THE DOCTOR WAS SAYING. I AGREED TO EVERYTHING NOT KNOWING HE WAS SUGGESTING NEW SURGERIES.

I THOUGHT HE WAS JUST TELLING ME AGAIN THE PROCEDURE WE WERE ALREADY PLANNING TO DO, SO I STICK TO THE PLAN.

WHAT?! THE DOCTOR DRUGGED YOU BEFORE EVEN EXPLAINING TO YOU WHAT HE WAS ABOUT TO DO?! WE'RE GOING TO SUE THAT SON OF A BITCH UNTIL...

IT WASN'T THE DOCTOR WHO DRUGGED ME, MARINA. WAIT, LET ME GET UP. I CAN'T STAND LYING DOWN ANYMORE. *AARGH*

I... I'LL HELP YOU.

GOD, THIS MAKES ME FEEL EVEN MORE LIKE AN OLD LADY! HERE I AM, NEEDING MARINA'S HELP TO EVEN GET UP! HOW CAN I THINK OF MYSELF AS HER HUSBAND NOW?


WHAT THE...

YOUR BREATS... THEY ARE HUGE!

TELL ME ABOUT THAT! I FEEL LIKE I HAVE TWO BAGS OF SAND ON MY CHEST!

CAN I... YOU KNOW... TAKE A LOOK AT THEM?

WHAT?!!

FIVE MINUTES LATER...

I STILL THINK THIS IS A BAD IDEA.

C'MON, ANDREW, AREN'T YOU CURIOUS TO SEE THE DAMAGE THAT HAS BEEN DONE?

YES, BUT... WAIT, YOU SHOULDN'T CALL ME ANDREW, MARINA.


WHY? DO YOU WANT ME TO CALL YOU AUNT ELENA EVEN WHEN WE'RE ALONE?! JESUS, YOUR BODY...

IT'S JUST THAT...


OH, FUCK---

THESE THINGS...

...THEY'RE EVEN HEAVIER THAN I THOUGHT!

T-TURN AROUND, PLEASE.


LOOK AT THIS, MARINA!

HOLY CRAP!

HOW THE FUCK DID THEY MANAGE TO DO THIS TO YOU IN SUCH A SHORT TIME?!

I MEAN, YOU ARRIVED AT THE HOSPITAL ABOUT A MONTH AGO, AND NOW YOU HAVE THE BODY OF A BUSTY AND VOLUPTUOUS MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN. EVERYTHING LOOKS SO PERFECT AND NATURAL... AND THERE'S NO BRUISES OR STITCHES ANYWHERE!

HOW WERE YOU ABLE TO RECOVER SO QUICKLY FROM SUCH EXTREME PROCEDURES? I NEVER KNEW SURGERIES LIKE THAT WERE POSSIBLE!


GOD, YOUR BREASTS...


GASP

THEY DON'T LOOK LIKE IMPLANTS AT ALL! AND THEY FEEL SO REAL... IT'S AS IF YOU REALLY WERE A MIDDLE-AGED LADY WITH HUGE, MATURE BOOBS!

AHHH...!

AND I CAN SEE THEY ARE VERY SENSITIVE TO TOUCH, RIGHT?

YES, THEY ARE, SO I WOULD APPRECIATE IT IF YOU COULD STOP MESSING AROUND WITH THEM LIKE THAT. ISN'T IT A LITTLE... WEIRD?


I'M SORRY. I DIDN'T MEAN TO EMBARRASS YOU. IT'S JUST...

...THIS IS SHOCKING TO SEE THAT MY HUSBAND NOW HAS BREASTS THAT ARE BIGGER THAN MINE! WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO, ANDREW?

I'VE ALREADY ASKED YOU NOT TO CALL ME ANDREW, MARINA.

AND WHY IS THAT? HAVE YOU FOUND TRUE HAPPINESS AS A FIFTY-SOMETHING WIFE AND MOTHER? IS THAT WHO YOU WANT TO BE FROM NOW ON, AUNT ELENA?

OF COURSE NOT! WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU? HOW CAN YOU EVEN ASSUME SOMETHING LIKE THAT?

SIGH LISTEN, MARINA, I THINK WE BOTH NEED TO CALM DOWN. I KNOW THIS IS ALL SHOCKING, BUT IF THOSE CRAZY DOCTORS WERE ABLE TO DO ALL THIS TO MY BODY, IT CAN CERTAINLY BE UNDONE, RIGHT? WE WILL FIND A WAY... TOGETHER!

DO I REALLY BELIEVE THIS? CONSIDERING EVERYTHING DR. GIANAKOS TOLD ME? WELL, I CAN'T THINK ABOUT IT RIGHT NOW. I NEED TO FOCUS ON WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE.

AT THIS MOMENT, THOUGH, WE'RE IN GREAT DANGER. LET ME SHOW YOU A PHOTO AND YOU TELL ME IF YOU'VE EVER SEEN THIS MAN, OKAY?

OH MY GOSH, YES! I KNOW HIM! HE'S THE MAN WHO WAS FOLLOWING ME EVERYWHERE IN CRETE. THIS ONLY STOPPED WHEN...

WHEN JAMES, YOUR HUSBAND, HELPED YOU OUT?

D-DO YOU KNOW ABOUT JAMES?
HOW? WHO TOLD YOU?

JUST TELL ME SOMETHING, MARINA, AND I BEG YOU TO BE COMPLETELY HONEST WITH ME. ARE YOU IN LOVE WITH HIM?


WHAT?! WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

I DON'T KNOW WHO TOLD YOU ABOUT JAMES, BUT DON'T YOU THINK YOU SHOULD LISTEN TO YOUR WIFE BEFORE JUMPING TO STUPID CONCLUSIONS LIKE THAT? I'LL EXPLAIN WHAT HAPPENED.

HEY, BABE, CAN I BUY YOU A DRINK?

HUH...?

I'M JAMES, BY THE WAY. WHAT ABOUT YOU?

LISTEN, JAMES, I THANK YOU FOR THE OFFER, BUT I'M NOT INTERESTED, OKAY?

C'MON, BABE, CAN'T YOU EVEN TELL ME YOUR NAME? ARE YOU MARRIED OR SOMETHING?

YES, I'M MARRIED.
HAPPY NOW?


YOU SURE? WHERE'S YOUR HUSBAND THEN? COULD HE BE THAT BUDDY OVER THERE?

HE DEFINITELY DOESN'T TAKE HIS EYES OFF YOU!

OH, NO! THAT MAN IS JUST A WEIRDO WHO'S BEEN FOLLOWING ME WHEREVER I GO IN CRETE. HE DOESN'T EVEN TRY TO DISGUISE IT ANYMORE!


A STALKER THEN? WELL, I THINK I CAN HELP YOU WITH THAT!

WHERE THE HECK YOU THINK YOU'RE GOING?

RELAX, I'M JUST GOING TO GIVE HIM A LITTLE SCARE.

LISTEN, MAN, WHY ARE YOU FOLLOWING MY WIFE?

NAME.


YOU TELL ME YOUR NAME FIRST!


TARGET FOR A GOOD TIME
TARGET FOR A GOOD TIME


NAME. NOW.

WHOA, WAIT A MINUTE, BUDDY! LET'S NOT LOSE OUR COOL.

WE DON'T WANT ANY TROUBLE, OKAY? MY NAME IS JAMES COLLINS. LET ME JUST ASK YOU – DO YOU HAVE ANY BUSINESS TO DISCUSS WITH MY WIFE? SHE'S THE FEELING YOU'VE BEEN FOLLOWING HER AROUND.

SHE IS REALLY YOUR WIFE?
YOU LYING?


WOMEN'S WRESTLING
CHANNEL Z
OF COURSE SHE'S MY WIFE! ALRIGHT, MAN, I KNOW YOU HAVE A GUN, BUT THAT DOESN'T GIVE YOU THE RIGHT TO DOUBT MY WORD!



OKAY.

OKAY? SIMPLE LIKE THAT?


NEXT UP LIVE
WOMEN'S WRESTLIN
CHANNEL
GET OUT OF MY WAY.



IT WAS HOW I MET JAMES, AND THAT'S ALL THAT HAPPENED IN CRETE!

I HAD NO IDEA YOU HAD BEEN THREATENED WITH A GUN! YOU DIDN'T TELL ME THAT WHEN YOU RETURNED TO ATHENS.

THERE WAS A LOT GOING ON BACK THEN. JUST SEEING HOW MUCH YOU HAD CHANGED WAS A HUGE SHOCK IN ITSELF. NOT AS MUCH AS TODAY, OF COURSE! BESIDES, I WAS SURE THAT THE MAN WITH A GUN WAS JUST A CRAZY STALKER. I DIDN'T EVEN BELIEVE THE GUN WAS REAL.

IT WASN'T UNTIL YOU TOLD ME THAT THERE WERE PEOPLE WATCHING THE ENTIRE FAMILY THAT I REALIZED THE SITUATION WAS MORE SERIOUS THAN I WAS THINKING.

ANYWAY, I SAW JAMES AGAIN THE DAY YOU AND I WERE WAITING TO JUST TALK TO DR. GIANAKOS, BUT YOU ENDED UP GOING INTO SURGERY THAT VERY AFTERNOON.

HMM... THE HOTEL IS CALLING ME.
NOT ANOTHER BAD NEWS, PLEASE!

HELLO?

AND WHO IS IT?

HI, MRS. WOODS. SORRY FOR BOTHERING YOU, BUT THERE'S SOMEONE AT RECEPTION WANTING TO SPEAK WITH YOU, AND HE SAYS IT'S URGENT.

IT'S YOUR HUSBAND, MRS. WOODS.

OH MY...

IS EVERYTHING OKAY, MARINA? IT LOOKS LIKE YOU'VE SEEN A GHOST!

I... I GOTTA GO, AUNT ELENA.

WHAT? NOW?! WHAT ABOUT THE APPOINTMENT?

JUST STICK TO THE PLAN. YOU KNOW WHAT YOU NEED TO TELL THE DOCTOR. JUST MAKE SURE HE AGREES TO PERFORM THE PROCEDURE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. I'LL EXPLAIN EVERYTHING LATER!

B-BUT...








WELL, WELL, WELL,
YOU'RE FINALLY HERE!


CAN YOU TELL ME WHAT THE HELL YOU'RE DOING?

WHAT YOU MEAN, DEAR? CAN'T A HUSBAND VISIT HIS LOVELY WIFE ANYMORE?

LISTEN, JAMES, I THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP IN CRETE, BUT THIS ISN'T EVEN FUNNY. I TOLD YOU NOT TO COME HERE.

I DON'T WANT TO CAUSE ANY PROBLEMS.
THE THING IS, I'M HEADING BACK TO AMERICA
LATER TODAY AND MY FLIGHT LEAVES FROM ATHENS.
SO I THOUGHT I'D TAKE THE OPPORTUNITY
TO SAY GOODBYE.


HOW ABOUT ONE LAST TOAST?

I DON'T THINK THAST'S A GOOD...


MARINA?

OH, NO...


U-UNCLE NIKOS?


HEY, MARINA.

SO YOU ARE THE FAMOUS MARINA? YOUR UNCLE SPOKE HIGHLY OF YOU! YOU CAME TO GREECE FOR YOUR HONEYMOON, RIGHT?

UMM... T-THAT'S TRUE.

WELL, WHERE ARE MY MANNERS?
MARINA, THIS IS JOEL KOCI, THE GOOD YOUNG MAN WHO HAS BEEN WORKING WITH ME RECENTLY.
WE HAVE JUST RETURNED TO ATHENS FROM A TRIP UP NORTH.


NICE TO MEET YOU, MRS...?
AND YOUR COMPANION...?

YOU CAN CALL ME JUST MARINA. AND HE IS... JAMES COLLINS, M-MY HUSBAND!

THIS IS DEFINITELY A LOVELY PLACE FOR A HONEYMOON. I'M SURE YOU TWO ARE HAVING A GREAT TIME!

UMM... SURE! WE'RE HAVING SO MUCH FUN, AREN'T WE, HONEY?

ABSOLUTELY, BABE!

AND THIS IS WHAT HAPPENED. KNOWING ABOUT JOEL'S CONNECTION WITH MR. TOSKA, I GOT NERVOUS AND ENDED UP SAYING THAT JAMES WAS MY HUSBAND. AND I HAVE TO SAY, I DON'T TRUST JOEL AT ALL! I DON'T THINK HE'S AS INNOCENT AND HARMLESS AS HE SEEMS. I DON'T KNOW... IT FELT LIKE HE WAS TESTING ME THE WHOLE TIME.

TO KEEP UP APPEARANCES, JAMES HAS PRETENDED TO BE MY HUSBAND WHEN WE'RE IN PUBLIC SINCE THEN. I CONVINCED HIM TO STAY IN GREECE FOR A WHILE LONGER. BUT I ASSURE YOU, NOTHING HAPPENED BETWEEN US!

WHAT DOES HE KNOW ABOUT ME... ABOUT US?

HE KNOWS I'M MARRIED, AND I TOLD HIM THAT MY HUSBAND HAD TO GO IN HIDING FOR A WHILE. I DIDN'T TELL HIM THAT MY HUSBAND IS ACTUALLY MY AUNT ELENA, THOUGH. THAT WOULD HAVE BEEN... TOO MUCH INFORMATION!

AND HE'S PRETENDING TO BE YOUR HUSBAND SIMPLY OUT OF KINDNESS? WANTING NOTHING IN RETURN?

LISTEN, ANDREW, YOU NEED TO TRUST ME HERE! OF COURSE, HE ALREADY TRIED TO SEDUCE ME, BUT I WAS VERY HARSH TO HIM AFTER SUCH ADVANCES. I THINK HE GOT THE MESSAGE!

WHAT DOES HE HAVE TO LOSE? AFTER BACKPACKING AROUND EUROPE, HE WAS ALREADY HEADING HOME BECAUSE HE RAN OUT OF MONEY. NOW, HE CAN STAY FOR FREE AT THE MOST EXPENSIVE RESORT IN ATHENS. I'D SAY THAT'S A GOOD DEAL FOR HIM TO PRETEND TO BE MY HUSBAND EVEN NOT GETTING INTO MY PANTIES!

I'M GOING TO ASK YOU ONCE AGAIN TO STOP CALLING ME ANDREW, MARINA. THIS SITUATION IS EVEN MORE DANGEROUS THAN WE WERE THINKING. THE MAN WHO WAS FOLLOWING YOU IN CRETE IS FROM THE MAFIA, AND HE'S WORKING WITH MR. TOSKA.

IT WAS MR. SEFERI WHO TOLD ME THIS, THE MAN WHO SPENT OVER TWENTY YEARS IN JAIL BECAUSE OF TOSKA.