

# **Copycat**

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## **Abstract**

An exchange programme involving students and academics from Egoli University in Johannesburg and the University of Athens provides the conduit for the smuggling of Venetian Grossi coins discovered on the Cycladic island of Naxos.

Thirty-five year old Delancey James, a Professor of Ethics at Egoli University, stumbles upon events associated with the murder of a post-graduate student. Through her investigation, she uncovers a web of intrigue that links the coin smuggling to corruption at the highest levels of the University, and, in the process, her life is placed in mortal danger.



The word plagiarism has its roots in the Latin word *plagiarius*, meaning kidnapper, abductor, seducer or plunderer. This root, in turn, is derived from *plaga* meaning to capture or trap.

(The Online Etymology Dictionary)



# PROLOGUE

He'd achieved what he'd come for. And it felt good. He sat back and savoured the warmth of the ten-year old Glenmorangie whisky as it slid down his throat, leaving a trace of musty peat on his tongue. He toasted his success as he replayed the moves over the past few months. Slick. Daring. Smart. He was not a man to be underestimated. He had to finalise one last part of the elaborate game and then he'd be gone. Untraceable. He'd secured his future.

He allowed his mind to wander into that future ... all the wealth he could desire, the best that money could buy ... women ... ah, yes, plenty of them. In time maybe he'd take on another assignment, but only if it interested him. After this project, he needn't work again.

He jolted at the loud rap of the brass knocker, returned his lucky talisman to his pocket and moved to the door. He never took precautions, even in Johannesburg. Who would ever dare threaten him? And, besides, it was her.

Two men pushed into the room, shoving him backwards. He stumbled and heard the door slam shut. The harsh overhead light cast their facial deformities into stark relief. His surprise now turned to anger but in that instant, he knew what a mistake he'd made doing business with them.

He pitched his weight into them with all the force he could muster but, together, they were stronger than him. He felt a sudden pain as one of the men slipped behind him, sliding a cord over his head and twisting it into his neck ... tighter and tighter. He felt light-headed as the cord dug deeper and deeper into his flesh. His knees buckled, and, as if in another space, he heard wood splinter and glass shatter. A shard of glass penetrated his side like a dagger and his arm buckled awkwardly under his body. Blackness descended.

### Three months earlier

Local fishermen haul in their yellow nets. Already restaurant vans line up at the harbour front, impatient drivers trying to secure their daily quota of fish which the sea now gives up so reluctantly. White houses, never more than two storeys high, dot the landscape in stark contrast to the azure expanse of blue and turquoise Mediterranean sky. Although not yet six am, the brightness of the June summer ushers in yet another idyllic day on the Greek Cycladic island of Naxos.

Taverna owners sweep away the excesses of the previous night. Someone hurls a pile of potato peels into the narrow street and strong words follow; no doubt a domestic argument is in progress. Through open windows, *yiayiádes*, grandmothers, prepare for the next onslaught of food wars. Even this early, baklava cools on window ledges and chickens lie plucked, ready for baking in the traditional dressing of tomato sauce and onion. Each day these *yiayiádes* attempt to outdo one another with dishes that hold captive the secrets of ancient recipes passed down by word of mouth from grandmother to daughter to granddaughter. Yet they all remain friends in the end and walk along the winding streets at sunset, arm in arm, in their black dresses and sensible shoes, deep in conversation.

She headed up the hill to Stelida. The rocky outcrop at the end of the line of tavernas afforded a view of the neighbouring island of Paros to the west, a favourite place, especially early in the morning. Quiet. She took off her sandals and felt the cool rock beneath her feet as she settled down in her usual place. Even in May, the sun, milder than it would become in the next few months, beat down on her back as she looked out to sea.

She touched her throat below her right ear, the two hard scar points where the knife had penetrated twice, where it had been poised to start its downward journey, a constant reminder of her branding, of what he did to her. She knew she could do nothing about carrying the physical mark for life, but she would not allow his actions to control her spirit. She'd never go back to that dark place again. Ever. And she felt the familiar ball of rage begin to grow deep inside.

Stavros Vassilis had plenty on his mind. The project was dangerous and he had to fine-tune it. The stakes were high. But then he thrived on risk. He felt the adrenalin rush rip through his body. He was always surprised by the intensity of the excitement he felt when he thought of this new assignment.

One last task to complete in Athens.

He locked his apartment situated off the Plaka District and began to walk the six long blocks to the National Library. Even this early, the place was humming with energy - shops, tourists, restaurants. Although it was May and only the beginning of summer, the heat shimmered off the asphalt streets. The Library, where he'd arranged to meet with his five Masters of Archaeology students each week, bordered the campus of the University of Athens. Most of the students preferred to meet in central Athens and not at the new campus in Zografou to the east where many of the academic departments had relocated. But the convenience for the students had been somewhat of an afterthought. He reflected on the eight years he'd worked at the University - bad pay - demanding work - irritating students. He'd be glad to leave it all behind and get on with a new life.

He welcomed the cool air as he entered the National Library. The lofty rooms and shelves of leather-bound books that reached to the ceilings neutralised any ambient noise and made him aware again of the churning in his stomach. He ran his fingers along a column as he passed by. The marble was cold. It reminded him of how resolute he needed to be and he renewed himself to this commitment.

Stavros opened the door to the reading room and was pleased to find all present at this, the last meeting for the semester. Yet, uppermost in his mind was how he would progress his own plans later on the island of Naxos.

'Guess you're all happy it's almost the end of your programme,' he said. 'A pity, though, you've got to finish your final field work during the summer.'

'Well, Prof, it's not too bad. At least we get to be on an island. It's murder staying in Athens during summer, especially in July and August,' said Eleni.

Eleni Papariga had achieved straight As on all her assignments ... bright ... conscientious ... always willing to please ... and a definite favourite with Stavros. Her long blonde hair, swept up, cascaded over her bare shoulders. Her green tube top matched her eyes

and its snugness showed off each curve to perfection. For Stavros, Eleni, indeed, was the prototype of a Greek goddess.

‘Let’s finalise the plans,’ he said, aware that his eyes lingered on Eleni longer than they needed to. ‘Marilena, Maria and Panos, you’re all going to Crete. Correct?’

The students nodded.

That was at least three of them out of the way.

‘Eleni and Dora, you’re going to Naxos where I’ll join you. Mrs Piperides from our department will be there as well. You all know her?’

The students nodded with little enthusiasm for the dour archaeologist. He couldn’t blame them ... her hair drawn back into a tight bun, flat, practical shoes, no make-up. Yes, Piperides was the epitome of a colourless spinster, although he believed she’d once been married.

‘They’ve reopened the site at Grotta. I did some work there last year with one of our students.’

‘And,’ Eleni smiled, ‘I believe Plaka Beach is the best swimming area in the whole of Greece.’

Stavros imagined Eleni in a tiny bikini that she no doubt possessed, her perfect body displayed to admiring glances. He saw her topless at St Peter, part of the larger Plaka beach, where young girls swarmed in the quest to acquire an all-over tan. That picture would be glorious. Dora wasn’t too bad either ... Stavros felt a growing urgency in his lower parts and moved behind the desk to hide it.

His selection of students was strategic. The two brightest in the class would be under his wing. The smart students usually got on with their own work and didn’t bother him. And into the bargain came Eleni. Who knew what other amusements could be in the offing? At the very least, spending a few weeks alongside a gorgeous young woman on an enchanting island and supervising her work, would never be a hardship. Yes, he imagined watching her in the sun as she dug on the site, a sheen of sweat on her well-exercised arms, her chest heaving with the exertion. He could enjoy that.

He spent the next hour finalising the details. He needed to avoid the problem they had two years ago on the site at Akrotiri in Santorini. He was the supervising archaeologist and had narrowly escaped all the fuss. Just. He put the distasteful incident out of his mind.

A church bell signalled midday and the end of the session.

‘You’ll all meet back in Athens again in September. I’ll still be in South Africa so if there are any questions, you can contact me through email. *Kaló kalokáiri*. I wish you a good summer.’

Stavros waited for Eleni to exit the room and his eyes followed the sway of her hips along the corridor. Not bad. He could definitely do with more of that.

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Stavros descended the marble steps from the National Library to Panepistimiou Street and headed in the direction of Syntagma Square. The heat was cloying. What a contradiction Athens was with its up-market shops - Zara, Louis Vuitton, Zonar’s, Attica - all bustling with customers and then, nearby, signs of the recent political riots - broken windowpanes, looting, graffiti, overturned dustbins. Even the large banks had all installed metal roller security shutters to ward off looting.

He chose a table at the back of the coffee shop, a traditional place on the Square, away from the lunchtime crowds, and ordered a Freddo Espresso, medium sweet, no milk. It was too hot to sit outside and, besides, he and Giorgos needed to talk. The chilled coffee arrived with a complimentary ouzo that Stavros knocked back while he waited for his brother. Time keeping was not Giorgos’s strong point. He watched the on-going activity as waiters emerged with plates balanced on extended arms and, to pass the time, he had a second ouzo. Giorgos arrived a little after one pm, a wad of papers in hand.

‘*Yeia sou*. Hello,’ he greeted Stavros with a kiss on each cheek.

Giorgos lost no time. ‘This consignment’s still a test run, but it’s going to prove our system works. So far, the first two arrived and cleared customs in Johannesburg without problems. Well, I should say, *almost* without problems. We had to pay a small facilitation fee, but it was sorted out.’

‘A facilitation fee?’

‘A bribe. That’s what they call it there.’

‘Sounds like Greece.’ Stavros chuckled. ‘Must remember that. A facilitation fee. Ha. Well put. So where to now?’

‘Well, you’ve got two big tasks for the next few months; your work on Naxos of course and to conclude the deal at Egoli University in Johannesburg when you get there.’

‘Nothing for nothing, I suppose. *Brávo*.’

‘Nothing for nothing,’ reiterated Giorgos. ‘But I see dollar signs, or at least, I should say, euro signs.’

‘Glad they’re not drachma signs,’ added Stavros, again looking at the graffiti on the opposite building.

The two sat in silence for a few minutes.

‘By the way,’ said Giorgos, ‘congratulations on your paper. You mentioned it was published. What journal did you say?’

‘*Ελληνική Αρχαιολογία. Greek Archaeology.* It has a limited readership though because all the papers are in Greek and it’s only the serious archaeologists who’ll read it. But I needed to get a paper published. You know all the pressure from the University pricks. But the fewer who read it the better.’ He winked.

Stavros signalled for more ouzo. ‘To us,’ he toasted. ‘And to a good relationship with Egoli University in Jo’burg. *Yeia mas.*’

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Stavros did a final check of his Louis Vuitton suitcase. Enough work clothes to wear on an archaeological site, but also a number of items suitable for meals and drinks at the more up-market restaurants in Naxos. He locked the case and left the room, admiring his solid physique as he caught his reflection in the full-length hallway mirror. He flexed his muscles and saw the ripple under his crisp white shirt. Good for a man of forty-eight years. The slight greying at his temples complemented the deep tan he took care to maintain throughout the year.

Stavros had furnished his penthouse with minimal items but all of superior quality. Plush sofas offered comfort to the body; rare antiques, comfort to the eye. A Jacuzzi with a view out to the Acropolis adjoined his bedroom He’d done well in supplementing his salary from the University of Athens. And he’d worked hard. So had Giorgos for that matter. They’d worked their way out the poverty they’d been born into. Giorgos would pack up his items of value over the next few weeks and store them for him until he located his new home.

From a panoramic window, he watched anxious business people in the Plaka District meeting, talking, networking - metallic filings drawn to each other and to the security of belonging - being seen - even in the mid-afternoon heat. He looked across at the imposing Acropolis, a fixed anchor in the midst of the Greek economic maelstrom.

He’d miss all of this. He liked Athens. It had a brutality about it. Survival was the name of the game here. But he was sure Rio or New York or Buenos Aires would do just fine. It was time to move on.

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The evening ferry was some kilometres out of the port of Piraeus. The nondescript maritime buildings, against which hundreds of port strikers lounged, were fading into the distance. Stavros stretched out in the comfortable seat and he felt his blood pressure return to normal. Once he was through the throng of tourists and the belligerent port authority guards he could enjoy the ferry ride to Naxos, and lounging in first class helped to quell his anger.

Bloody incompetents. With all these strikes and go-slows, the government's held to ransom. And they don't even have the balls to put a stop to it. Corrupt and incompetent - the whole damn lot. Lucky the ferry managed to get out. Late. But nevertheless out.

'Drink sir?' The cabin attendant stood before him.

'*Nai*. Yes. A glass of ouzo first. *Megálo*. Large. Very large. And some red wine. A big bottle too'.

'And, sir, the Purser apologises for the delay. You know the go-slow and things like that.'

'Don't I just. You're a young man. Do you want to stay in a country like this? No economic growth. All our politicians are corrupt. Strikes almost every day. Now people in the rural parts of Greece have to go back to a bartering system that went out centuries ago - they have to trade goods and services to stay alive - in this day and age.'

Without answering, the attendant poured the ouzo into a glass of ice and set down a bottle of Cabernet. Averting his eyes, he moved on to serve the next person.

'And we have to put up with bloody ignorant and mute people on top of it all,' said Stavros within earshot of the attendant.

The Highspeed 5 ferry cut through the blue Mediterranean waters, white froth trailing in its wake. Stavros began to mellow. The unsuccessful argument with a ferry dock hand to have his sleek gun-metal grey Audi coupé stowed far away from other vehicles on the ferry seemed less of an issue now. If anything happened to it, he'd sue the pants off these incompetents. Fuck. To think he was a first-class passenger and they treated him like this.

He made a place amongst the glasses and bottles on the tray in front of him and laid out the half-finished manuscript he was working on. He hadn't touched it for a while. He ran his hand over the first page wishing for some inspiration. At least the student who'd written the original paper was bright. It was always easier to write papers with bright students. The trick was to get enough credible work done with the least amount of effort and to make the University happy in the process. Then he smiled. Why was he bothering with more work like this in any case? He wasn't going to be back. It just goes to show how old habits die hard. He chuckled.

He closed his eyes. The journey was smooth as the large vessel stayed its course to Naxos. His mind wandered and he fantasised about Eleni. He longed to run his hands over her pert breasts and feel her nipples rise under his touch. He wanted to bed her and spend the hot summer in Naxos making love to her, over and over again. He wanted to ...

‘Sir?’ The attendant again. ‘More red wine?’

Bloody idiot. He was enjoying that. ‘Yes more red.’ He moved his hand over his crotch to rearrange his discomfort.

Pity Eleni’s a student but this was her last project. He remembered with distaste the sexual harassment charge levelled at his colleague in the Fine Arts Department - with devastating consequences to his career. On the other hand, Naxos was far from Athens. And again he smiled, remembering that he wouldn’t be back.

He savoured the last of the Cabernet; he had two hours to sober up before he reached his destination. Moving his academic work to the side, and putting thoughts of Eleni out of his mind, he pulled out a photograph and scrutinised it. He couldn’t be too careful.

*Must run, must run, before they get me, run, trip, run, hide. They scream; they fly into my head. Run. He's got his arms open. I'm safe. I look up; he's got no face. Here they come again. Sharp claws. Where can I hide?*

Delancey jerked upright in bed. A rivulet of sweat trickled down her back and her hair clung to her face. She'd waged a struggle with her nocturnal demons, back to haunt her.

She felt empty and deflated and her arms were leaden; the prospect of beginning again was always overwhelming. She remembered the darkness that had once kept her prisoner for several months - nothingness - the empty hours melting into one another until, at night, she could take the tablet to ensure oblivion for the next eight hours. The dark place.

Sun streamed into the bedroom but she shivered in spite of the ambient warmth. Images of the dream lingered before her mind kicked in and the thumping of her heart slowed down. She touched the scar below her ear. She wouldn't let it happen again. She heard her late mother's words. *Come on Delancey. You've got to be tough in this world. Only you can help yourself. No-one's going to do it for you.* She knew couldn't control her subconscious, but the hell, she could choose what she did about it.

She drew on her tracksuit and running shoes in a couple of swift movements and swept up her amber brown hair into a tight chignon. She felt the pain as her scalp stretched but she welcomed the feeling. She needed to punish herself for being weak - for allowing The Dream to creep into her head. But now she would defy it.

She stomped down the stairs leading from her bedroom to the living area. The primary-colour blue and yellow hanging tapestries contrasted with the stark white walls and spoke of island simplicity in spite of their rich textures. Her space was uncluttered, vibrant, happy. Only contaminated by The Dream.

Psyche Cyclops, the feral, now tamed one-eyed cat who'd adopted her, at least for the time she was on Naxos, crept closer to lap up the milk Delancey sloshed into her ceramic bowl. Purring, she resumed her place on the low wall outside the kitchen, ready to sleep the day away or at least until food was in the offing. She eyed Delancey through her good eye. Delancey gave the cat a quick stroke and felt her inner shiver ... never quite trusting ... never at ease. Maybe that's why they bonded so well.

She decided to take the longer route - a penalty after a bad night - and started down the hill to the small port of Agia Anna. Locals nodded in greeting when she passed - the woman from the far-off country, *Nótia Afrikí*, South Africa. She kept to herself on the island, cordial but reserved. It had taken enough energy to salvage her life and she didn't have any left to expend on relationships.

The local octogenarian was setting out his shells on the corner. '*Sfoungária kai kavouúkia*. Sponges and shells,' he called to no one in particular. His silver whistle glinted as it caught the sun. Delancey knew he would use it later in the day to get the attention of startled sunbathers as he plied his wares up and down the 17 km of sandy beach.

The smells of fresh coffee and crusty bread, just out of ovens, wafted from bakeries. Old men, bent, and with trousers held up by suspenders, headed towards the string of seafront *kafeneía*, cafés, to while away the next hours over strong espressos, in banter about politics, the laziness of the mayor, the state of the fishermen's haul, the flight from Athens that didn't arrive, the on-going evil of ferry strikes and other matters of island importance.

An hour later Delancey turned onto the tar road leading to the main town of the island, Chora. She took a break. Her lungs burned and she gulped the remains of her water, realising she should've brought a larger bottle with her. She was annoyed with herself about this lapse in judgement. Idiot.

The local fire engine was preparing for a quick drill along the airport runway on which the 7.15am flight from Athens would soon land. This was the most action the firemen ever saw, and with sirens blaring, made a good job of the display. They had no sooner finished when the plane appeared in the sky and, within seconds, dropped onto the runway, bouncing a few metres. Engines screeched to a halt leaving only a small gap between the nose of the aircraft and the boundary fence.

She turned around and headed through the small village of Agios Prokopios. The main road leading to the beach was a challenge for runners who had to navigate between both the tables on the narrow pavement and the numerous taverna owners, all trying to entice customers to sample their daily dishes, even this early in the morning. Dodging the obstacles, she tried to pick up some of the speed she'd lost. As she rounded the last corner, she collided with a man emerging from a taverna.

'*Signómi*. Sorry. Sorry.' he offered.

His muscular body filled the doorway; his dark eyes hinted at laughter.

‘Will you join me for a coffee, Professor James.’ He paused. ‘But I’m being rude. I’m Stavros. Stavros Vassilis.’

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That evening Delancey watched the red orb of the setting sun turn the surrounding sky magenta. The view was perfect from her bedroom balcony. The ice clinked in the large bowl of her long-stemmed wine glass and she savoured the local Sauvignon Blanc she’d bought from the corner mini-market - one of the better local wines. The soft interior light glowed through the window and, once again, she was grateful for having purchased this house. Not the biggest or the smartest on the island, but it was hers, and her work and dedicated savings had paid off - had made it possible for her to own a bit of paradise to escape to. For the first time in her life she felt she was in a place where no one would judge her; where she could leave her internal storm behind and not be reminded of the evils in the world and the daily corruption she had to wage war on.

Yet she couldn’t shake off a type of unease in her stomach. *Delancey, the world’s not a safe place. You must always be on guard* - her mother’s voice echoed again. And she’d experienced the truth of that warning first hand.

Get over yourself Delancey. She hated the intrusion of her mother’s voice into her life. There’s no connection between him and anything that’s happened in the past. And he’s sexy, tanned ... a good set of muscles under that close-fitting tee shirt. She felt an unfamiliar rush of ... something ... she wasn’t quite sure. And she remembered how it used to be. Why not experiment with a little flirtation? If only to practice. You’ll have to do this sometime Delancey, unless you plan to become a nun.

‘Bloody hell, Mike. How’d you let things get to so out of hand?’ The Vice-Chancellor of Egoli University glowered from behind his mahogany desk, his reptilian eyes bulging as if seeking a means of escape from the prison of his lenses. ‘Now we’ll have to be seen to be doing something.’

Professor Lloyd Dube was not a tall man but he commanded the room. And he was not a man to be trifled with; he had a short fuse.

Dube pounded the report in front of him. Not for the first time. The marble figurines on the desk jumped to attention. The bold lettering on the cover of the document stood out: *Alleged plagiarism by Professor Charlotte Mkhize: Report compiled by Professor Delancey James.*

Professor Mike Swaine, Dean of the Faculty of Management, sat across from Dube and he shifted in his seat trying to avoid Dube’s penetrating glare. As a recent appointee to the position of Dean he was not certain of the rules of the game. What was clear, however, was he’d angered the VC. He looked out of the window. Stripped of their summer leaves, branches of trees performed stick-men dances in the June wind. The Johannesburg winter echoed in the distinct chill in the room.

This was Swaine’s first visit to the VC’s office. Artefacts from different parts of the world, some encased behind glass but many unprotected on open shelves, spoke of Dube’s appreciation of the better things in life. He could almost smell Dube’s wealth. Trophies, clustered on a nearby table, also attested to Dube’s success and to the power he’d established in the five years since taking over as head of Egoli University - Achiever of the Year - Trailblazer in Higher Education in Africa - Recognised Researcher in the Sciences. Swaine’s accumulated accolades were somewhat more modest.

‘This Professor James in your faculty,’ continued Dube, ‘is a trouble-maker. I know her from the past.’

‘And stubborn as all hell, Vice-Chancellor. Gets hold of something she thinks is wrong, and bam, we have a whole issue on our hands to sort out. We’d all be much better off without Delancey James. Thank God she’s on the exchange programme in Greece right now.’

‘Well, there’s not much we can do about her,’ said Dube. ‘All this tenure rubbish. Short of raping a student or pulling a gun on someone, it’s difficult to fire an academic.’

Sheltered employment's what I call it. But I wish you'd nipped this in the bud, Mike - done something before she filed a formal report to me. Now we've no option - we've got to do something. I know Charlotte. She's a good academic. One of the best. So Delancey James had better have her facts right.'

'It's a pity Delancey's the ethics representative for Egoli,' said Swaine. 'I often wonder, myself, why universities need a rep for ethics in any case.'

'Well, it's a voluntary role, Mike. Can't you load her with additional teaching so she has no time to interfere?'

'I tried to suggest something along those lines - that she had more important things to do with her time - but she seems to enjoy sticking her nose into everyone's business. But could I ask, Vice-Chancellor, why you want me to handle this matter? From Delancey's report, this plagiarism issue has nothing to do with my Management Faculty; it's a matter for the Archaeology Faculty - it's one of their staff members, after all, who's supposed to have committed this offence.'

'I think you'd be able to keep a tighter control over Delancey James, Mike. You're her boss after all. If I get the Dean of Archaeology to manage this process, who knows how Delancey could manipulate him.'

'Okay, I'll sort it out ... I'll get some kind of committee together to lend credibility to the process. I'll work on it.'

'Remember Mike, we don't want more trouble. Choose the members strategically.'

Adjusting his crimson silk tie, Dube rose from behind his desk. Swaine knew this was the sign, the end of the meeting. Dube always kept his meetings short. 'Let me know the outcome after the winter break ... by the latest.'

Swaine would not dare challenge this tight deadline. No-one challenged Dube's deadlines even though Swaine knew how difficult it was to get a group of diverse academics together for such a meeting.

'Oh, and by the way, I need to talk to you about another project down the line. More pleasant I think.'

Swaine was relieved at the change in Dube's countenance which signalled, he hoped, that he was not in the Vice-Chancellor's bad books. Although he felt a growing loathing for Dube each time they met, he could not afford to be disliked by the Vice-Chancellor. He could hardly entertain thinking about the severe career-limiting implications should this happen.

Walking to the door, Swaine was again struck by the numerous statues and figurines on display, ceramic vases and masks from around the world, ordered and labelled, with not a

spot of dust on any of them. On a small table near the door, he caught sight of six metallic coins glinting in the weak sun. He leaned forward to inspect them. The carved relief patterns, different on each, personified what Swaine imagined to be Greek gods.

‘Beautiful, aren’t they?’ said Dube, not expecting a response.

Pompous little man. Swaine glared at Dube’s muscular back. Arrogant prick. And, in a swift movement he snatched up one of the coins and rammed it into the bottom of his jacket pocket.

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The faculty of management was housed a short distance from the main campus and away from Dube’s imposing office. That morning Swaine had decided to walk to his meeting with the Vice-Chancellor. Now he regretted that decision. The icy wind tore through his jacket, penetrating his bones; dry leaves swirled around his ankles. The coin felt heavy in his pocket. He thought about the meeting with Dube and how the man rattled him. He’d have to be on his guard and pay more attention when Dube was around. Something there he didn’t quite trust.

He fingered the metal and felt the relief pattern on one side and the protective baize on the other. Its coldness seemed to convey resentment about being moved from familiar surroundings - taciturn, was the adjective that came to Swaine’s mind. Now don’t go getting mad, Mike. Of course things like coins don’t have emotions.

He sniffed his fingers; they smelled of metal. He liked the smell - silver - he associated it with wealth. But with this came uninvited visions that flashed before him. What if Dube saw him taking it? He misses nothing with those beady little eyes of his. He imagined the Vice-Chancellor’s wrath - all five foot of it. He saw his dignity being destroyed under the harsh gaze of the administration ... the end of his career and of his dreams of making it in a new country.

‘Don’t be such a bloody fool,’ he chided himself aloud, shaking his head to evict the dark thoughts. ‘Lots of people are in and out of Dube’s office every day. Anyone could’ve taken it. He’ll never be able to link its disappearance to me with any certainty.’

He reflected on this observation for a few minutes and it restored his humour. Again he touched the coin. His ... no longer Dube’s. He owned it even though its symbolism still baffled him. He smiled. He’d got one up on the Vice-Chancellor.

Swaine entered his office and looked around, thinking it was a pity he couldn’t flaunt the coin right now. For a moment or two he studied the carved relief image of the owl on it. Damn it. What’s the owl supposed to represent? With a muffled thump, he set the coin down at the back of the small cabinet in which he stored his whisky, a number of bottles of

expensive Merlot and an assortment of lesser quality drinks for visitors. The cabinet felt wonky and he cursed the University administration that had promised him a new one months ago. Things always took so long to get done around here. However, for the time being the coin would be safe in its hidey-hole.

With her head down, Eleni swept the rock face, making precise and quick movements with the flick of her wrist. She tasted the dust and the grit on her tongue. In spite of her loose white clothing and wide-brimmed hat, the sun burned into her shoulders. She noticed the sweat pouring off Dora who worked alongside her.

‘What’s with the heat today?’ Eleni stretched her back and wiped the moisture from her neck. ‘Normally the breeze makes this place bearable.’

‘At least this is the last time we’ll be lackeys,’ said Dora. ‘Our next jobs will be as qualified archaeologists, discovering our own stuff. Not doing this mindless work.’

‘It has its advantages.’ Eleni motioned with her eyes to their professor working some metres in front of them. ‘Cuts a nice figure, even in this heat.’

Stavros Vassilis was bending low, examining a segment of rock.

‘What I like,’ continued Eleni with a half-smile, ‘are his shoulders. I like a man with broad shoulders. That’s my thing. Strong shoulders.’

‘Personally, I go for strong in another part of the body - where it matters. I take a lot of satisfying.’

‘And how do you know he’s not impressive there as well?’

‘Maybe he is, maybe he isn’t. But maybe you know?’

‘I wish, I wish. But there’s a rule against that. Professors and their students - that sort of behaviour’s frowned upon.’

‘Yeah, but this is our last semester and he won’t even be there when we get back to Athens in September. You could take a chance. Have a fling. In any case, he’d get into trouble, not you.’

Eleni imagined the feeling of her prof’s powerful arms around her and savoured the warm sensation tingling through her body.

‘Oh fuck,’ said Dora. ‘Now what does she want?’

Eleni looked up to see Mrs Piperides - thick-set face, furrowed brow - marching towards them, logbooks stacked under her arms.

‘What the hell’s upset her?’ said Dora.

‘Probably she’s mad that we haven’t kept our logbooks up to date.’

‘Do you think we should we make a run for it?’

‘The island’s too small for escape.’

As if on cue, Piperides missed her footing and lunged in the direction of Stavros. With legs flailing, logbooks flying in all directions, and with a litany of Greek expletives escaping from her tight lips, she landed beside him. Eleni noticed a fleeting look of disgust cross his face as this obese woman lay in a heap at his feet.

Stavros righted himself and looked away.

‘You okay Mrs Piperides?’

Eleni noticed he never called her by her first name even though they were colleagues.

Limping but still with a determined stalk, she headed for the site entrance. ‘I’ll be back later this afternoon,’ she spat. ‘Or maybe tomorrow. Eleni and Dora, pick up the logbooks and stack them in the library. We’ll discuss this matter later.’

‘The heat must’ve got to her,’ Stavros winked at Eleni and Dora.

‘And did you see what she was wearing under her skirt?’ Dora snorted.

‘Didn’t those things get flung out the ark with Noah?’ said Eleni.

‘They’re called bloomers.’ Dora smirked.

‘Well, thank God they’re not worn these days,’ said Stavros. ‘Except by Mrs Piperides. Why don’t you two take the rest of the day off? I’m going swimming at Agios Prokopios. Care to join me? Pure hell on a site when there’s no breeze.’

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Eleni spread her towel on the coarse white sand of Prokopios beach, using large white pebbles to anchor the corners. She lay back, stretched out in her sexiest bikini, and listened to the lapping of the small waves. She’d chosen to wear the black crocheted number. It always invited second and third glances at her tanned and lean body. She peeked at Dora lying beside her. Dora’s body was good, but not a patch on hers.

Although a cap shielded her face, she knew Stavros was staring at her. It was what men did. She arched her back and raised her pelvis a couple of centimetres to get comfortable. The sun was warm and a cool breeze skimmed her body. She’d like to make love to him right there and then. She heard him settle beside her.

‘I’m taking a long walk along the beach,’ said Dora. ‘I’ve had no exercise for days.’

‘Take your time. On such a glorious day we’ll not be in any hurry to leave,’ replied Stavros. ‘*Brávo.*’

Eleni heard Stavros inch his towel closer to hers. Still with her face covered, she began to rub sunscreen oil onto her arms.

'Here, let me help you,' he offered and, without waiting for her reply, he took the bottle from her.

She felt the sun-heated oil trickle first onto her left arm and then onto the other followed by Stavros massaging both her arms, alternating light strokes with a more intense movements.

Her heart was beating fast.

He stopped abruptly and lay beside her. She could smell the musk of his aftershave.

'I think this must be heaven,' he said.

Eleni agreed but could not think what to say. He was her prof after all. So she responded with a fleeting touch to his hand.

Delancey wondered if this new wine bar would survive on a Greek island. Yet, La Vigne, a small French oasis in the middle of the Venetian Kastro, seemed to be doing well. Tiny was perhaps a better word to describe it. Located three metres from the church of St Anna across the narrow passage, four tables were located inside and six along the wall outside. The subtle décor of rich wood, the interior created from old oak barrels, the trailing vines and the small round tables all played a part in transporting Delancey back to the Loire valley where she'd spent a summer a few years ago. Stavros steered her to a table in the corner.

'*Bon soir. Kaliméra.*' The owner Frederika, or Fred as everyone called her, kissed Stavros on each cheek. Without hesitation, she poured them each a glass of a 2007 *Chateau de Triniac*.

'*Brávo.* You've remembered my favourite wine.'

'*Mais oui.* But of course.'

'We'll start with your trout terrine. It's always good.' He turned his attention to Delancey. 'I'd hoped you would see me tonight.'

'You're persuasive.'

'Of course I am. Why would I not be with a beautiful woman?'

'I imagine it's in the Greek genes.'

'Well, some of us flirt, Delancey. But others of us - like me - know when they see a woman they want to get to know better.'

'Just so you know, I'm not on the market.'

'Married? Boyfriend?'

'I don't have to have commitments to justify why I'm not available.'

'But an attractive woman like you must have many men after her.'

'Let's not go there.'

'So,' continued Stavros somewhat more subdued, 'I remember the night early in May when our Vice-Chancellor introduced you at the University of Athens as one of the exchange faculty from Egoli University. It was at the opening of this year's programme between your University and mine. Do you remember that cocktail party? It was a hot night in Athens, unusual for the beginning of summer.'

'All I remember are the endless speeches and my high heels. The two were not compatible so I didn't stay long. Cocktail parties aren't my thing.'

‘Well, Professor Delancey James,’ he leaned across the table and took her hand between his, ‘what is your thing?’

Engulfed in his, Delancey’s hand felt small but she was uncomfortable with this unexpected intimacy and withdrew.

‘Tell me about you,’ he continued. ‘What brings you to Naxos?’

She recognised his charm and how the greying at his temples gave him a distinguished look - professorial. The creases at his mouth spoke of his enjoyment of good times. But, she didn’t know him. And she guarded against being fooled. She’d have dinner with him, but that was all.

‘Never mind about me, right now. I’m intrigued to know how you landed up on Naxos out of all the islands in your wonderful country.’

‘Actually there’re somewhere around 1400 but only about 227 are inhabited.’ The light caught the laughter in his eyes. ‘Depending on who’s counting - the geographers or the taxman.’

‘Okay, so how did you come to be here when there are another 226 islands to choose from?’

‘I’m born and bred here. My family’s from Naxos. Goes back many, many years. They farmed in the Melenes valley. Olives. And there were some involved in the emery mines near Moutsouna. I still know most of the old folk on the island. But the younger men like me ... of course I’m young, all things considered ... they left to go to Athens - to university like I did - or to find work.’

‘I think if I’d been born here I’d never move.’

‘You think that now, Delancey, but the island becomes small. Quickly. But you have a house here?’

‘Yes,’ she replied, ‘Do you still have family on Naxos?’

‘My parents died ten years ago - buried in the cemetery at the Church of Panagia Drosiani near Moni. Have you seen it?’

Delancey shook her head.

‘The best-preserved frescoes in Europe are to be found in the church. They need restoring of course, but you can still get some idea of the works of the old masters.’

‘That’s the special thing about Naxos,’ said Delancey. ‘You keep finding things even though you’ve explored the entire island - or so you think.’

Fred interrupted with their rillettes of rabbit with a fresh orange sauce. She refilled their glasses.

Stavros savoured the aroma. 'Wonderful, as always.' He turned back to Delancey. 'Now I've only a few family members left here on the island.'

'So you've come back to visit?'

'Not this time. I'm here to work. I've come with two of my archaeology students who're completing their final practical work. They're both smart girls. One of the perks of being their supervisor is I get to choose where they do their work. Not much more to find here on Naxos anymore, at least where they're excavating, but it's nice to come back.'

'And we happen to meet here in Naxos? What a coincidence.'

'Life's full of surprises but I'm sorry I didn't get this surprise a few months earlier. I could've shown you around Athens.' He leaned across the table and raised her hand to his lips. 'I imagine we could've enjoyed many things together there.'

Delancey'd forgotten how much she missed a man's touch but nevertheless she pulled back.

'I'm sure it would've been nice, but I was busy. I didn't have too much free time in Athens.'

'You come to Athens and spend all your time working?' Again his eyes twinkled under his heavy brows.

'I had a lot of teaching preparation to do for when I get back to Johannesburg. There'll be no time once I get back.'

He reached over again and rubbed the side of her hand with his broad thumb and lowered his voice. 'But we have some time here.'

She laughed. 'My, you are persistent, Stavros.'

'Compliments of our house.' Fred set down a cheeseboard replete with local cheeses - *Graviera*, *Kefalotiri* and the strong sour cottage cheese, *Xinomizídra*. It gave Delancey the break she needed to move her chair back a touch.

Over several more glasses of wine Stavros regaled Delancey with stories about his childhood on Naxos, often referring to places she now knew. The full-bodied *Liatiko* dessert wine at the end of their dinner contributed to an even more heady sensation. Pleasant. Mellow.

'This wine comes from southern Crete - a village called Sitia.' Stavros swirled the brick-coloured liquid around in his glass. 'You can smell the dried red fruit, the quinces, the sweet spices and, what for me is always intriguing ... the leather.'

Delancey sniffed. There was something primeval about the aroma.

‘So,’ she began, returning to her earlier question, ‘do all Greek professors meet foreign colleagues on romantic islands?’

‘Only the lucky ones.’

She felt her defences rise a touch. Be careful. It’s always the charming ones who’re not to be trusted.

‘It strikes me as strange that the island you come to do your work on is the same island where I have a house.’

‘Delancey, all the islands are regarded as potential archaeological treasure-troves - this island somewhat less than many of the others. But nevertheless, that I come exploring on Naxos and you have a house here, is a sheer fluke. The same thing could have happened if you’d bought a house on Santorini. I’ve done some work there and the place is full of foreigners who’ve bought holiday homes.’

‘I guess so. Greece does have a special allure to some people ... like me.’

‘Which is wonderful, Delancey. And I’m happy we met here, if Athens was not to be. There’ll also be time to get to know each other when I visit your University to teach on the exchange programme. *Bravó.*’

Stavros looked at his watch. ‘Time to go,’ he said, holding her gaze as he helped her out of her chair, placing her pashmina over her shoulders and allowing his hand to linger at her nape.

The Ursuline Convent bell signalled midnight.

‘I’ll drive you home. You’ve missed the last bus.’

With the effects of the wine and the ambience, Delancey felt little inclination to put up any resistance to Stavros’s offer. What the hell if he knows where she lived? Naxos was a small island and he’d find out sometime. And after all, they were colleagues in a manner of speaking.

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The outside table at Flamingo, one of the original restaurants in Chora overlooking the *paralía*, the pedestrian walkway along the seafront, commanded spectacular views over the harbour. The sun was setting and the breeze, cool on Eleni’s arms, tempered the heat of the day.

‘Wish we’d had some of this breeze earlier,’ said Dora. ‘Bloody agony on site. A type of Medieval torture.’

The long red shadows on the motionless water were broken only by a lone fisherman’s boat venturing out for the night haul. Small dinghies bobbed on the waves in the

adjoining yacht basin. The lights of Paros, some ten kilometres away, shone back at this island neighbour while the melodic sounds of the complex scales and rhythms of bouzouki music drifted in from the street below.

The waiter put down another half kilo of *lefkó*, the local white house wine.

‘Funny how they sell wine by the kilogramme here in Naxos,’ said Eleni. ‘Quaint.’

‘Thank God this stuff’s better than the battery acid we had last night.’ Dora swirled the wine in the small glass. ‘But fuck, I wonder why these glasses have to be so small?’

‘Helps you lose track of how much you’re drinking.’

‘Good thing about *lefkó* is that it always gets better after the second glass.’

‘And the third glass tastes like something good. Like something from France.’

The waiter appeared with their orders of *keftédes*, traditional spicy meatballs, a specialty of the island. The smell of fresh bread hung in the air and the pungent aroma of cloves and garlic in the *dolmádes*, *souvláki*, and *kléftiko* wafted through from the surrounding tables and mingled with the laughter and music.

‘Athens seems so far away right now. Like another country,’ said Eleni.

‘I wouldn’t mind getting a job as an archaeologist on an island, you know.’

‘But Naxos is too small for you, Dora. You’d get bored after a while. Somehow I think Santorini’d be more your style. Clubs. That sort of thing.’

‘Maybe. But I need to rethink becoming an archaeologist. Not sure I’m cut out for the dirt and all that.’

‘It’s all I’ve ever wanted to be. My dad took me to the Acropolis when I was five. I stood there and I revelled in what I was seeing. He could have left me there for days and I’d have been happy.’

‘At five? Huh, I was busy thinking about the boy next door when I was five,’ Dora laughed. ‘Not hunks of marble.’

The bouzouki player approached their table. ‘My ladies,’ he leaned towards them, ‘I’m playing a four-course tetrachordo bouzouki for you tonight. Special. I prefer it to the original instrument with six strings.’

Eleni was ignorant of the nuances of bouzouki instruments but she did notice how the long fingers of the player caressed the sixteen strings like the body of a woman, coaxing out the melody of Manolis Chiotis which drifted like vapour through the taverna. The soft light glanced off the bouzouki and Eleni, mellowing, thought again about Stavros.

‘Manolis Chiotis is one of the great bouzouki soloists of all time,’ said the bouzouki player with his eyes fixed on Dora.

Eleni saw that Dora was flushed.

‘Compliments of our house.’ The waiter dumped down another half kilo of *lefkó*.

‘We’re in for a night,’ said Eleni. ‘Would be nice if Piperides takes the day off tomorrow to recover after her fall today. I’m not sure I’m going to be any good on the site and I can imagine how pissed off she’ll be if we take it easy and don’t update our logbooks.’

‘So,’ began Dora, ‘seems our prof has taken an interest in you. A keen interest.’

Eleni coloured. She looked forward to the attentions of Professor Stavros Vassilis that were becoming more and more obvious each day. She recalled the chance brushing together of their arms and his hand lingering on hers after helping her out of the archaeological pit. She recollected the heat from his body as his hand on her elbow guided her through the labyrinth of narrow passages of the Kastro, the ancient Venetian castle adjoining the Grotta site. Yesterday he’d pressed up behind her as they navigated a small tunnel and she’d felt his breath on her neck. Then there was the beach ... and now his offer of dinner. He’d made it clear the invitation did not include Dora.

‘Well,’ began Dora, ‘what do you think of him? He’s into you, Eleni. Are you going to play along? It could be interesting.’

‘He must be on the better side of forty-five. I’m twenty-four.’

‘Come on Eleni, you’ve always liked older men ... and you know that age’s all in the mind. What’s wrong about having a fling with a sexy man, professor or not? Maybe you can even take lessons from his experience.’

‘Or teach him something myself.’

‘Possibly. He’s got a lot going for him. Smart and distinguished. You don’t become a professor if you haven’t earned it. He oozes confidence. He’s got a kind of a presence and he’s sexy. What more do you want girl?’

‘Yes, you know that he’s around ... somewhere in the room even if you haven’t spotted him yet.’

‘He wants you, Eleni. Anyone can see that.’

‘He’s got a great bod and, to be honest, Dora,’ Eleni couldn’t disguise her thrill in anticipating Stavros’s touch, ‘I wouldn’t mind experiencing it. I don’t think you’d mind either, I saw you ogling him when he was diving over the waves.’

‘I was trying to get an idea of the state of the nation lower down, where his costume clung to his body.’

Eleni had also noticed that Stavros appeared to be well-endowed.

‘Just as well I came back from my walk when I did. Things were getting hot between you two. He was lusting after you Eleni ... from the evidence....’

‘So why don’t you let him know you’re interested?’

‘I’m not. Can’t say I don’t find him attractive. But now you and the prof. I can see that working.’

So could she. Why not take the chance? Stop thinking about artefacts and figurines and ancient discoveries for a while. Think of topping off this experience with a fling with Stavros ... She smiled.

They had long finished their *keftédes* but the pungent smell of the meat lingered from the empty clay pots. The bouzouki player’s finger still moved with vigour and Dora’s feet tapped in tune with the music. She urged Eleni to join her and those who had taken to the floor dancing the typical Naxian *Sirtós* dance of fishermen returning home. It seemed to Eleni that sensual bodies swaying like waves appealed to Dora.

A few minutes later Dora pulled Eleni to her feet. ‘Come dance. Now, talking about figurines, look at the guy over there. There’s a figurine I could explore. I prefer golden brown to white marble in any case.’

Eleni gave in and followed Dora, taking a last look at the fairy lights surrounding the harbour. A familiar figure on the road below caught her eye. She looked again and now with intent. Yes, it was Stavros. He was not alone. She felt the colour rise in her cheeks and a pang of jealousy hit her hard in the gut as she observed Stavros usher the woman beside him along the *paralía*, his hand spread over the small of her back. Eleni watched until the couple disappeared. Her heart was racing and she wiped away a light sweat at her neck.

‘Idiot,’ she admonished herself out loud. Making her way to the dance floor, she saw Dora had already inveigled her figurine. But the jealousy lingered at the thought of Stavros with another woman.

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Delancey heard her footsteps echoing off the thick walls of the Kastro as Stavros led the way through the winding narrow alleys after their dinner at *La Vigne*.

‘Evening prof.’ A voice made her swing around. Behind them were two young women. The blonde, thin and willowy with well-exercised muscles shaping skin-tight jeans, was rather more striking than the other. The off-the-shoulder tops worn by both women revealed golden tans and high heels accentuated their long legs. The one with brown hair clung to an Adonis-like figure. Her hand, in his back pocket, suggested a sense of intimacy.

‘Ah, Eleni and Dora,’ began Stavros. ‘Having a good evening I see.’

Both girls, their cheeks glowing, and with the smell of ouzo on their breath, appeared somewhat unsteady on their feet.

The woman called Dora disentangled herself from Adonis and lurched forward right into Stavros who caught her just in time.

‘Oops, sorry,’ she hung on for a little too long - squeezing the muscles on Stavros’s upper arms - before swaying back in the direction of her partner.

‘Honestly, Dora. Have some respect,’ said Eleni with her eyes fixed on Stavros.

‘No problem.’ Stavros smiled back at Eleni.

‘Off right now to a club. Have you ever been to Ghetto? It’s new,’ said Dora. ‘Got Eleni to chill out a bit. She’s so serious you know.’

‘Delancey, these are the students I was telling you about. Ladies, let me introduce you to Professor Delancey James from Egoli University in Johannesburg.’

‘Hi,’ said Dora, waving in an uncoordinated fashion.

‘Egoli. The city of Gold, isn’t it?’ said the blonde.

Delancey saw the way she looked at Stavros as well as the way his eyes travelled down her body.

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Fifteen minutes later Stavros stopped the car outside Delancey’s house.

‘It’s amazing how small the island is,’ said Delancey. ‘I’m used to the bigger distances in Johannesburg. You have to drive everywhere. It’s essential to have a car - even to pick up a few groceries.’

‘You’ll show me Johannesburg?’ Stavros moved to nuzzle into her hair and pressed his mouth onto her neck.

Involuntarily she pushed back. ‘Sorry, Stavros. Dinner’s dinner and it was great. I enjoyed myself but nothing more.’ She also felt uncomfortable about the unspoken intimacy between Stavros and the blonde. She got out of the car.

‘I’d like to get to know you a whole lot better, Professor Delancey James. We have time. Still some time here on Naxos, and time when I’m in Johannesburg.’

With that he was off.

Delancey watched as he drove away. She could still feel the evidence of his mouth on her neck. It felt good. She touched the spot but was immediately aware of the scar above it. She could escape, but somehow the past was always with her.

Although the Vodafone line crackled, Donald's voice was strong on the other end and Delancey was pleased to get the call.

'So glad to get through to you, Dee. I battled. Between Vodacom here in South Africa and Vodafone in Greece, I'm sure dropped calls create all these problems. Anyway, it's bloody freezing here in Jo'burg. And you, lucky bugger, are probably basking in the Greek sunshine.'

'You know, you're the only person who ever shortens my name.'

'But you like it.'

'I suppose I do. Forty degrees here yesterday.'

'And?'

Donald knew her so well. She hesitated.

'Teaching went well in Athens. The students were great but, like all universities, the University of Athens has its problems.'

'Can't imagine the Greek economy hasn't had some effect.'

'Yes, that. But also the issues of nepotism. Jobs for pals and the usual student problems of course. I was glad to see cheating doesn't only happen in Africa.'

'Dee, promise me you won't involve yourself in their mess. You're only in Greece for a short while. Stick to your own work and have a break. Enjoy your island.'

Donald was the one person who could be relied upon to remind her not to be too tough on herself.

'Promise,' she said.

'Is everything all right?'

'I've had The Dream again.'

'First time in a while?'

'First time since I arrived in Greece. I thought I'd worked through all of that, so this feels like a step backwards.'

'Be kind to yourself, Dee. You're going to have ups and downs. And I know you always take it personally. You're not to blame.'

‘It’s always the same but the last dream was more vivid. Sometimes I feel as if I’m going mad. I know bats don’t fly into people but those in my dream are all over me. They’re relentless. And he follows after them.’ She shivered.

‘Dee, listen to me. It’ll go away. It will get better. You have to remember though the psyche has its own way of recovering. It has its own agenda. You can’t rush it. You’re strong. Remember that. You survived.’

Delancey recollected that night three years ago ... locked in darkness ... gasping for breath ... feeling the blackness descend. She changed the subject.

‘I met this man.’

‘Ah, a Greek god, perhaps?’

‘It’s nothing. He invited me for dinner and, coincidentally, he’s a professor of Archaeology at the University of Athens.’

‘It gets better and better.’

‘Well, not quite. On the two occasions that I’ve met him, I had these funny twinges of concern but there was no reason for them.’

‘He obviously didn’t pick that up. He invited you out to dinner and I take it you went.’

‘Yes, last night. It was the first time I’ve been out with a man for a long time, alone that is.’

‘And it should’ve happened months ago. You’re gorgeous Dee. If my orientation was for women, I’d be all over you in a second. By the way, what’s he like apart from being an academic, which doesn’t count? Details, Dee. Details.’

‘Tall, distinguished looking. I’d say in his late forties.’

‘Well-built?’

‘Yep.’

‘Oozing sexual energy?’

‘I guess so.’ Delancey laughed. ‘Anyhow,’ she continued on another tack, ‘absolutely nothing’s happened or will happen. I’m resolute. Dinner. That was all.’

‘Go have some fun Dee. Fun’s always a great healer of the soul. And sex with the Greek god will do you good.’

‘Won’t happen Don. It’s been great to hear your voice again.’

Delancey surfaced to the distinctive peal of the St Anna church bells rising up the hill, mingling with the ringing of the nearby bells of St Peter's. The bell of the small church located in the Agia Anna harbour, after which the village was named, rang out more distinctively than the others. For Delancey, this bell always sounded louder, and more melodious and joyful than any of the others in the area. She loved Sunday mornings, the day the orthodox Greeks celebrated their religion. She lay back, trying to distinguish the different configurations of rings that changed often according to name days of the saints - days revered more than birthdays in Greek culture and which sometimes coincided with Sundays. She recognised the peal today, the name day of Saint Kallinikos, the victor of the sea. Ten long peals, followed by three short rings. And then again. She stretched out in bed with Psyche Cyclops snuggling up close, her tell-tale shiver abating somewhat at the touch of Delancey's stroke.

The garden gate squeaked on its hinges and the cat shot onto the window ledge.

'Delancey. Hope I'm not waking you.' The deep guttural voice of Stavros called up to her.

She jumped out of bed and looked out.

'Told you I'd surprise you today, Sunday.'

She was irritated at this invasion of her privacy; she always insisted on notice before guests arrived. Yet she recognised this was often the Greek way of doing things.

'You'd better give me a minute,' she hollered as she ran a brush through her hair and whipped on some shorts and a tank top. Quickly she splashed water on her face and brushed her teeth.

Stavros stood tall in the small garden and he held out his arms to embrace her but she remained at the front door.

'How did you know I wasn't off running somewhere, maybe going to church?' She sensed he'd recognised the pique in her tone.

'Well are you?'

'That's not the point.'

'Ah, but I said I'd surprise you and you never said you didn't want that. Come on, we're going sightseeing.'

'Actually, I've got things to do today.'

‘But can’t they wait? I want to show you a stunning part of my land. I’m sure you’ve not been there.’

Delancey hesitated. A bit of sightseeing was always tempting, but the intrusion was annoying. Nevertheless, she considered it could do no harm to spend a Sunday seeing something of Naxos that would be new to her.

‘You’ll have to give me some time to shower and get dressed. Come inside and make yourself some coffee.’

‘Then hurry. I’ll make friends with your cat in the meantime. What’s its name?’

‘*Her* full name is Psyche Cyclops. *Sykie* Cyclops. The Psyche part’s for the little patch - the sort of third eye on the top of her head; the Cyclops part’s obvious.’

‘Must be a bugger having only one eye.’

Delancey emerged twenty minutes later. She noticed the cat had retired to an outside garden wall and seemed to be observing Stavros with a degree of detachment. Stavros was nursing his hand.

‘What should I bring?’ she asked.

‘Nothing. Only you.’

They walked down the hill and Delancey saw the sails of a ketch, the only yacht of its kind in the Agia Anna harbour.

As she stepped aboard the restored wooden yacht, Delancey realised Stavros had spared no expense. On a small table to the side, glasses of Mötet and a platter of mini croissants, muffins and pastries filled with exotic fillings were set out.

‘Breakfast,’ he said, settling onto the plush cushion of a deck chair and beckoning her to join him.

She took a seat across from him. The wind was balmy and soon Agia Anna was a spec of glistening white on the coastline. The captain and his deck hand were invisible and she realised Stavros must have also paid a price for privacy and discretion.

By one pm the iconic rocks of the two islands to the east of Naxos, together comprising Koufonissia, came into sight. Stacked white pillars towered over the yacht as they sailed beneath them. The sea glimmered green and blue and Delancey trailed her hand over the side, observing the translucent fish darting back and forth, giving life to the iridescent water. A

black ray swam alongside the boat for a few seconds while larger fish, bright red and conical in shape, leaped from the water.

‘So inviting,’ she said.

‘And so I’ll invite you.’ Stavros stood up and indicated the steps to the side of the yacht. She heard the anchor rattle on its chain as the captain cast the mooring.

The water was colder than Delancey expected.

Stavros touched her arm. ‘You’ve got chicken bumps.’

‘Then I’ll have to warm up,’ she called back. ‘Race you to the beach over there.’

With that, she took off, her strong arms breaking through the water. She felt Stavros at her side. He, too, was a strong swimmer but, size for size, she knew she was at least his equal. They surfed in on the small waves coming to a stop on the rough sand in the shallow water.

They sat for some time letting the clear water lap over their legs.

‘Who hurt you there?’ Stavros indicated to her scar.

‘An old war wound. Nothing much,’ Delancey tried to joke but the memory always hovered in the background, waiting for this sort of opportunity. She shook her head, willing the intrusive image to go.

‘Must’ve been deep.’ Stavros reached out to touch the scar but Delancey flinched and moved away.

‘See you at the boat,’ she shouted, launching herself back into the water.

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The white beaches of the Koufonissia islands glistened in the sun. Delancey felt refreshed after the swim.

‘As a Professor of Ethics, do you keep your university on the straight and narrow?’ Stavros smiled wryly.

‘Well, I try to, especially its professors.’

‘So Professor Delancey James, how do you intend to keep me on the straight and narrow?’

‘I imagine it would be a bit of a challenge.’

‘Yes,’ he smiled, ‘Us Greek profs are especially difficult to keep on the straight and narrow. We like latitude. Is that the word? Freedom to explore.’

‘I guess one would have to take into account what you intended to explore.’

‘So a Greek professor could roam a little bit, on a boat, on a vast ocean, and not have to stick to the straight and narrow?’

‘I think that would be dangerous.’

‘I’d like to practice some danger with you, Delancey.’

‘I’m far too smart for that.’

‘But then you don’t know me, do you Delancey? I can be persistent.’

‘You’ll find me difficult to corrupt,’ she smiled.

‘I can be charming. And I think I could enjoy getting to know you much better. Even trying to corrupt you.’

‘That won’t happen Stavros. So don’t raise your hopes.’

Delancey felt her defences rise. Be careful. It’s always the charming ones who’re not to be trusted. But come on Delancey. It’s only a day. Enjoy it. See where it goes. Only a bit of fun. She deserved it. Too many years since she’d allowed herself this sort of male attention.

‘Top up of Möet and some vegetable bruschettas,’ offered the deck hand.

Delancey took the interruption as an opportunity to move into safer territory.

‘Greek islands have to be the most idyllic in the world,’ she said.

‘Well, I think so. I’d love to show you every one.’

‘All 227?’

‘Well, we’ll start with this one today. And who knows?’

The island of Kato Koufonissi, only inhabited periodically, came into sight, white sandy beaches lying deserted in expectation of discovery. A few minutes later, with the boat moored in a cove, Stavros moved to help her out of the yacht onto the small dinghy. He signalled he would motor the dinghy to the beach.

‘See you at five,’ said the captain. ‘You have my cell number if you want to come back earlier.’

With that, he and the yacht disappeared around the rocks.

Once on the beach, Stavros took Delancey’s hand as they clambered over an outcrop of rocks that concealed a small bay. Firmly anchored on the beach was a tent, replete with loungers in the shade and in the sun, tables of gourmet snacks, covered with light gauze, coolers with chilled wine. Delancey gasped at the spread and the style in which it had all been prepared.

‘Told you I’d surprise you.’ Stavros grinned, delighted at her disbelief. ‘*Brávo*. And what about a drop off this Nederburg Sauvignon Blanc? In case you’re a little homesick for South Africa.’

‘But how did you ...’

Stavros cut her short. ‘Plenty time for questions later.’

He moved two loungers together to the water’s edge and guided her to one. He poured the wine and settled beside her.

Delancey lay back. She watched the movement of a small beach crab as it scuttled along before disappearing down a hole. The wine was crisp and refreshing. Stavros took her glass and placed it on the nearby table. He moved to sit on the edge of her lounger and touched her face, moving his hand down the length of her neck.

She felt conflicted. What the hell. Take the risk Delancey. You’re not into anything long-term here. It could be a one-day project. And you need to see if you still know the moves. Just dive in. Don’t think about it.

‘What about others here? What if someone comes?’

‘I’ve hired the whole island,’ he murmured.

She placed her arms around his shoulders and felt his muscles tense as she moved her hands across his back. But immediately her guard kicked in and she pushed herself away.

‘Sorry, Stavros. I said it’s not going to happen.’

Back at the Coronis Hotel in the centre of Chora, Eleni settled down to start the report on her project - the final hurdle. After that, there would be a presentation to the faculty in September at the end of the course. She was the top student in the class; she was sure to graduate.

She pulled together the sketches of the recent marble figurine she'd helped to extract from its dank mud tomb deep inside the thick walls of the buried city at Grotta. After all this time and the indiscriminate plundering of sites, she marvelled at how cities, such as the one from which the figurine had been extracted, could still be discovered so recently and that new things within them could be found almost every day. This figurine, Stavros had told them, dated back to between 2800 and 2300 BC. She looked at the sketch she'd made in which she'd tried her best to represent the original - an oval face, prominent nose, an absence of eyes and mouth, arms set in parallel beneath two breasts. Sculptors of that era had not yet developed their art to the point of reflecting the likeness of the human body. Nevertheless, it was still beautiful in its own stark way. Now what had Stavros said about this? She could learn so much from her teacher and she was happy she'd chosen archaeology as a career - or more of a calling as she liked to think of it.

Her thoughts strayed to Stavros and she felt a tingle in her gut. Dora was right. They were far away from Athens and who'd know? Maybe if her work was good enough, he'd even ask her to join him on some other project and, once she graduated at the end of the next semester, perhaps they could be colleagues. But now what about that Professor Delancey James? He'd be sure to meet up with her when he arrived in Johannesburg. Again she felt a strong possessiveness towards him. Delancey was attractive - well turned out with a definite sense of style. Eleni could see how men would find her appealing. She had a strong, unspoken presence and she seemed to balance a type of aloofness and control with a kind of vulnerability. She also had stature as a professor and she would be on her own turf in Johannesburg - a distinct advantage. Would Stavros be attracted to all of that? Maybe he'd only taken her to dinner because she was a colleague, and, on top of that, she seemed to be here, alone, on Naxos.

Eleni realised she'd have to work quickly while she could still inveigle him ... while she could still get him to appreciate what he could have with her ... their work together ... and everything else. She was young after all, and this Professor James must be all of thirty-five at least. And then there was the dinner he'd suggested. She'd have to use the opportunity

wisely. But at that moment she wished with all her heart that Delancey James would go back to South Africa where she bloody belonged.

‘Damn. I’ve left my logbook on site.’ Eleni had already unpacked her books onto the long table in a corner of the room in the Archaeological Museum. The logbook was integral to her research. She considered packing up her belongings but then thought the security guard in the room may be up to a smile from a pretty girl in exchange for the favour of letting her leave her things behind for half an hour or so. It worked and she emerged into the late afternoon sunlight, making her way down the stairs on the outside of the Kastro.

Approaching the site she saw it was a hive of activity. Strange. Stavros had told all of them to get up to date on the library research he needed. Dora had, of course, gone off swimming with her new man, but why were Piperides and the other two archaeologists still here? The lot were huddled together and, in the centre, there was Stavros holding up ... she squinted ... she couldn’t quite see what ... something small. He was animated and his *bravós* were loud and energetic.

‘Hi there,’ said Eleni, ‘Did I get my times wrong? I thought we were all doing library research this afternoon.’

Stavros looked startled and glared at her. In one movement his hand covered the coin.

‘Didn’t I tell you I need that research by tomorrow? Why don’t students ever listen?’ His eyes were cold and their darkness bored into Eleni. ‘This has nothing to do with you or Dora so please abide by my request and get back to your research. Some things on site concern only my archaeologists. Not students.’

Eleni felt the blood rush to her face. She retreated and headed for her logbook that lay on a makeshift table.

‘I said get back to your research.’ Stavros’s anger was palpable.

Eleni felt a mix of embarrassment and confusion blend into a feeling she could not quite identify. Stavros’s words stung and she felt as if she’d been punched in her belly ... hard. With a sense of humiliation, she made her way off the site, shocked by this change in his manner towards her.

The afternoon was hot and cloying. Delancey arranged her clothes in meticulous order. It brought certainty to her life as she grouped the yellows together, ranging from pale to dark, then the greens, then the blues. Tops on one shelf; shorts on another. She must maintain the order. All the hangers must point in the same direction. Neat. Perfect. Yes, she had control over this at least. She felt out of balance; her equilibrium had been disrupted by the boat trip.

Psyche Cyclops lay sleeping on a heap of clothing yet to be slotted into place. Delancey somehow didn't mind the slight disorder the cat brought to the occasion. In the corner of the room, she'd placed the large bowl of fresh wild flowers, indigenous to the island, that Stavros had sent - lupins, lavender, cyclamen, corn poppies, rockroses, purple stock and camomile. The scent of the sprigs of jasmine, clustered among the flowers, filled the room. The accompanying card read: "*The first of many days of corruption. I'll keep trying ☺*". The scent of the sprigs of jasmine clustered among the flowers filled the room.

Part of her was mad at herself for almost having succumbed to Stavros. But then again, why couldn't this fling, if there was to be one, follow according to her own terms? As long as she controlled the movements and the outcome, she'd be fine. She'd been surprised at her need for physical contact. But she couldn't let it happen with Stavros now even though it was evident he wanted more. Much more.

Delancey took a gulp of spritzer. She was not in the habit of drinking wine by herself during the day but felt a need for something. And, she rationalised, she kept replacing the melted ice in the glass.

But there was also something niggling, something she couldn't quite identify. Get a grip, Delancey. You're reading all sorts of things into a day of fun. His intentions may be good. Enjoy him. You don't have to get involved. But, her memory was vivid of a dark place. She could never go back there again. No, for now Stavros would do quite nicely as a colleague - both in Greece and when he came to Johannesburg - and maybe for a bit of sex once she got to know him better, but certainly not now.

As if on cue, her cell phone rang. Stavros.

'Thank you for the flowers.'

'I wanted to see you tonight Delancey, but something's come up at the site. Maybe a drink tomorrow?'

Delancey felt relief and she exhaled deeply. ‘A drink tomorrow will be fine. Shall we say at Avali at eight?’ It felt good to be in control.

‘I look forward Delancey.’ He ended the call.

The day still had many sunny hours left in it. Delancey packed the last items of clothing in their correct places. Like her cupboards which were now neat and tidy, she felt as if her mind had also cleared. She picked up the keys to the car she’d rented for a few days and pulled out a map of the island.

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Delancey pulled off the main road to Moni, parked the Suzuki and closed the top. A weathered sign indicated the way to the Panagia Drosiani, a Byzantine church with stone walls and a round shingled dome. Five or six scrawny chickens ran in frantic chaos along the steps leading up to the church.

She was the only visitor. An elderly nun nodded a welcome but reverted to her work tending the candles in the nave.

She lingered in the eastern apse where the murals were best preserved. Layers of paintings, dating back to the 4<sup>th</sup> Century BC, covered the walls. The legend was that the Lady Panagia dripped with dew each time danger threatened the monastery or its residents, thus providing an early warning of enemy attacks. Delancey felt the wall, but it was dry. She took in the old murals, some painted in ochre; others in blue and cream. One mural depicted an archangel holding a sceptre and a sphere. In another, she could make out the shapes of a calf and a lion. The Lady Panagia, in pink, held the Infant, surrounded by the two Saints of medicine, Kosmas and Damianos. Delancey felt the cool marble flagstones under her sandals.

She dropped a few euros into the box and lit an obligatory candle in memory of her parents. She felt compelled to do this in such circumstances.

After half an hour or so, she emerged from the gloom of the church into the bright sunshine and headed to the adjoining small cemetery where there were, at most, twenty-seven gravestones. Immaculate. White. Some had small lamps on top; many had pictures of the deceased set in frames embedded into the marble. Purple bougainvillea bushes at the cemetery boundary formed a stark contrast to the cloudless blue sky and endless distant sea.

She looked for the gravestones of Stavros’s parents, translating the wording on the tombs from the Greek. *María Popoudopoulos, 2 August 1920 - 1 July 2002. Mother of Dimitri and Vangelina. RIP.* Another. *Petros Galatis, 1 January 1900 - 4 May 1970. Beloved husband of Anna.*

The solitude and the silence evoked a sense of sadness. She remembered the deaths of her parents. The private cremations, the wisps of smoke signalling the ending of life. Would it not have been better if she'd buried them? Would she ever have tended their graves in the way these Greek relatives did for their loved ones? She thought not. She moved a little faster. 'Vassilis, Vassilis.' She trailed her fingers across the weathered stones as would someone reading Braille and stopped in front of a mausoleum containing the remains of an entire family, except for one. She felt the loneliness of the outsider.

But she could not find the name of Vassilis.

He'd said his parents were buried here and had gone to great lengths to tell her about the wall murals. Delancey consulted her map again to make quite sure. She was definitely at the right place. She made her way back to the church, wanting to ask the nun about the location of the graves, but it was empty. The scent of burning candles was the only hint of the nun's earlier presence.

Constitutional Court Judge, Peter Harris, moved to secure the rattling window as the June wind whipped against the building. He always tried to escape Johannesburg winters by travelling to warmer climes, but this year he had to abandon that idea. There were too many cases requiring his expertise and sage judgement. The issue before him was one such instance, yet it was somewhat different to the usual cases he dealt with.

He ran his hands over the thick cream paper of the confidential letter couriered to him a few days before. The quality of the paper seemed to reinforce the import of its contents. He recognised the writing as coming from someone who was careful and deliberate - clear phrases; the absence of unnecessary words; the concern stated unequivocally.

For the third time he read the letter from his counterpart at the University of Athens, Stimatis Voulos, the Chair of the University's Council and a judge in the Athens High Court. It was alarming how corruption was now spreading into the tertiary educational environment, an environment regarded as sacrosanct in its mandate to contribute to moral development in society. Between the two of them, they had to get to the bottom of this matter. He was not sure whom he could trust at Egoli and there were few, if any, he could confide in. As Chair of the Egoli University Council, the highest authority of the institution, he was responsible for doing something. And that weight felt heavier to him than the thick dark green judicial robe hanging behind his door.

He looked at the CV in front of him. According to Judge Voulos, this man was the perfect person for the job, somewhat unconventional ... a maverick ... but nevertheless the best in his field. He consulted the time zones on his laptop and keyed in the number. It would be nine am in Massachusetts, USA.

Eleni gulped her iced water. The condensation dripped from the bottle and formed rivulets down her thin arms. The heat was oppressive, even at ten in the morning. She thought again of her simple query to Stavros the previous day that had evoked a sharp rebuke and an admonition to mind her own business and she knew she'd touched a nerve. Her throat felt constricted and sea salt caked her lips while her head filled with contradictory noise. She relived the humiliation of his sharp tongue as she looked at the excavations around her. Hiding in one of those holes forever seemed like a good option. She'd embarrassed herself and it felt as if someone had kicked her in the heart with thick studded workmen's boots.

Over the past day she'd replayed Stavros's words, making sure to get the sequence right but, at a point, she recognised that a tinge of anger began impinging on her feelings of humiliation. She was a student here - learning - and had every right to expect to be included when a treasure - it had to be - was excavated at the site. There could be no reason for Stavros to exclude her or Dora.

She recalled their swim on the beach of Agios Prokopios. She'd seen the lust in his eyes but maybe now things had changed between them. As well as feeling disappointed, she felt a fool.

'You look as white as a sheet.' Piperides headed over to Eleni. 'I think you'd better get out of the sun.'

Eleni welcomed the possibility of sitting under the tarp in the shade. She clutched her notes and allowed herself to be shepherded to the open-sided tent that served as a refuge of sorts.

The predictable north wind that moderated the summer heat at Grotta was absent again today. The birds were silent and only the bell of the Ursuline Convent broke the stillness as it recorded the passing of every fifteen minutes.

Eleni watched Piperides along with the other two permanent archaeologists and Dora sweeping earth from a distant ledge. Clouds of powder puffed up, momentarily suspended until dissipating as if they'd never existed. The atmosphere was dense with lethargy and no-one seemed inclined to talk for which she was grateful.

She moved over to a table and pulled out Volume 50 of *Greek Archaeology*. She spread it out, not caring too much that it rested on a sheet of archaeological dust.

Doesn't this heat ever let up? She felt the damp sweat on her chest. The tarp provided little relief.

She smoothed out the pages and let her fingers linger on the paper, thinking how apt it was that this journal should rest in the dust. One day soon, she'd also publish in here. No, not in this journal but rather in a journal where she could share wonderful discoveries with ordinary people, allowing others to glimpse at something buried for centuries. She cast her eye over the article by Vassilis and his counterpart from Egoli University in Johannesburg, published in Greek a month ago: *Recent discoveries on Naxos: Disappointment or reality?* How could any discovery be a disappointment?

She'd read the article again the night before, after her humiliation on the site, struggling at points with the technical Greek terminology. Not for the first time she thought it surprising Stavros hadn't mentioned he'd written something about the excavations at Naxos when he knew she and Dora would be completing their summer practical work there. Maybe she was missing something? At the same time, she remembered how he'd sometimes looked at her, his bottom lip jutting out a touch, his tongue moistening it periodically, and she felt a thrill of anticipation. But her recall of having been at the receiving end of his wrath overrode this image.

She retrieved a heavy thesis from her backpack, laid it next to Stavros's article and pulled out a sheet of paper on which to make notes. Thandi Zulu had described, in detail, her first 'discovery' - a coin at the Grotta site - *A Venetian Grosso*, 2.18 grams; over 98 per cent pure silver, introduced to Naxos during the Venetian occupation in 1204. She had detailed the exact spot on the site where she had extracted it from the ground, even the kind of dust covering it. Eleni imagined the thrill of making such a find. The thrill *she'd* experience making such a discovery. She saw the first glint of this small coin as she chiselled away at the last stubborn bit of rock. Carefully. You never knew what the earth would yield. And there it was. Eleni looked at the reproductions on both sides of the coin in Thandi's thesis. She ran her fingers over the flat page, willing the image of Christ, seated on a throne, to awaken in relief. She ran her thumb around the halo, wanting to hold this coin for real, to feel it, just once like Thandi must have done.

Thandi seemed taken with coins as artefacts. And her description of the discovery - how they removed all the soil, the care they took in cataloguing the coin - like giving a name to a child - made Eleni think she had to be sensitive to her work.

She stared at the sections she'd highlighted in both the thesis and the article and thought back to the coin Thandi'd discovered and the coin she'd seen Stavros holding - the

coin she'd glimpsed yesterday. Could it have been a Grosso? She couldn't swear to it; she never got a close enough look, and she'd been tired into the bargain.

Eleni began jotting down notes. Looking up, she surveyed the site and saw Dora and the others packing up for the lunch break. He hadn't cancelled the dinner invitation. Maybe she hadn't blown it after all. But then again, maybe she had. A war of emotions raged in her but her overriding thought was that she needed to see if she could win him over in spite of his anger towards her.

Situated high up in the Kastro, all rooms of the Venetian Museum commanded spectacular views out to the ocean. Eleni placed her palm on one of the stones of the thick wall - a stone laid down thousands of years ago - and caressed it, feeling its dents and rises. She imagined herself living back in that time. The battles that raged over the centuries did nothing to change the strength and dignity of the Kastro and she wondered if those who constructed this 13<sup>th</sup> Century castle had appreciated the serenity it commanded.

Being in the museum brought order to Eleni's thinking. She turned her attention to the coins displayed in the sturdy glass cases set against the walls. Could that coin be a 460 BC silver and gold alloy tetradrachm? She could almost feel her fingers running down the profile of the bearded head of Dionysos, the god of wine, and turning the coin over and tracing the naked outline of Silenos, his companion, holding a staff of giant fennel covered with ivy leaves and vines.

From the middle of the Kastro, from the Roman Catholic cathedral, the chanting of the medieval prayer, the *Anima Christi*, drifted through the passages: '*Et iube me venire ad te; Ut cum Sanctis tuis laudem te in saecula saeculorum.* To come to Thee, bid me; that I may praise Thee in the company of Thy Saints, for all eternity.' She listened, savouring every note.

'Fuck.' Dora bounded into the room. 'I've been looking all over the place for you. A person could get lost in all the passages and rooms here. Lost, never to be found. What's so urgent? I have to meet Yannis for lunch and I want to make the most of having Saturday off.'

'Well, if you've no time ...'

'No, no, sorry Eleni. It's fine. I have time. I'm just annoyed about having to rush around looking for you.'

They moved to a smaller room and settled down on a plush couch.

'What a view,' commented Dora.

'The sea's somehow a deeper blue today - more than it's been on other days,' said Eleni.

'Apparently it's got something to do with the lack of wind that we're complaining about. I don't know. That's what Yannis told me. But I don't think he's too bright. Anyhow it's not his intellect I'm after. Now, what's up?'

‘Not sure.’ Eleni extracted the large black thesis from her backpack.

‘And *that*? God Eleni, not on a Saturday. There’s plenty time for academic reading back in Athens. Can’t you get into the spirit of fun here?’

‘Dora, I’m concerned.’

‘Don’t blame me if I fall asleep. Yannis kept me awake till late.’

‘You know the PhD student I mentioned, Thandi Zulu?’

‘The South African who did her practical work here on Naxos?’

‘Stavros was her supervisor. She was part of the University exchange programme.’

‘So what? She’s finished.’

‘I got her thesis out of the library before we left Athens in preparation for our work.’

‘And you lugged it all this way? That’s pure madness.’

‘In itself it’s nothing. But I also printed out an article by our prof, published in that technical Greek journal, *Ελληνική Αρχαιολογία*, *Greek Archaeology*. Only the die-hards wade through it.’

‘And that bitch, Piperides, of course.’ Dora cast her eyes to the ceiling. ‘Well that should give you a couple more marks, reading our prof’s work will make him even more attracted to you. He’ll take it as a sign you’re returning his interest. Come to think of it, maybe you are.’

‘Dora, listen to me. Parts of the article are almost the same as long paragraphs from Thandi’s thesis if you translate the Greek article into English and compare it to the thesis.’

‘Well, what’s so wrong with that? He was her supervisor after all.’

‘She should have got credit for her work.’

‘Maybe the journal only allows for one author to be acknowledged.’

‘I’ve never heard of that and that’s not the case here. Look. The article’s by Vassilis and Thandi’s co-supervisor, the South African academic at Egoli. She’s the co-author.’

‘God, Eleni what’re you dredging up? Who the fuck cares? Why would Prof Vassilis go against academic rules? There must be an explanation.’

‘Maybe. But after the lecture we had on plagiarism, this looks like the real thing.’

‘Things aren’t always what they appear to be, Eleni. Don’t jump to conclusions.’

‘Maybe you’re right. Maybe there’s some explanation for this. Do you think I should ask him?’

‘It would break the romance, don’t you think?’

‘Any romance that may have been, Dora, I think has now died. You didn’t see his anger on site.’

‘Oh, don’t spoil things - it may not be so bad. At least fantasise for the moment. Imagine you’re lying in bed with him. Your head’s resting on one of his broad shoulders - the ones you say turn you on. And while he’s murmuring sweet nothings to you, spelling out your sexual charms and running his hands all over your body, you say “Excuse me Prof” - no you’d probably call him Stavros under those circumstances. In any case, in the middle of all the sexual energy racing around the room and through your bodies, you say “Excuse me Stavros, but could you explain why there are so many identical paragraphs in the thesis and in your article”?’ Dora giggled. ‘And then he would say,’ she pulled herself up between laughs, “‘my dahlink Eleni, you’re not only so beautiful, but you also ask the most amazing questions in bed. *Brávo*. Let me explain it to you”.’

Eleni smiled.

‘Ask him, if you must, but I think you’re imagining things. Hey, do you want to join Yannis and me for lunch?’

‘Not this time. And I don’t imagine I’d enjoy a threesome.’

‘Now there’s an idea,’ said Dora. ‘I can tell you Yannis would oblige.’

‘Fuck bloody Vodafone.’ Stavros pounded the table simultaneously glancing out of the window of his hotel penthouse suite before trying for the fifth time to make a connection to Athens. ‘Like the rest of this bloody country. Fools. And they still take my money for this poor service.’ He was about to give up when the voice of his brother, much softer in tone, came on at the other end.

‘Stavros, *yeia sou*. Hello.’

‘Eventually. Thank God I’ve managed to get hold of you Giorgos. Been trying for almost an hour now.’

Three years younger than Stavros, Giorgos was an established antiques dealer and ran successful import and export trade from his rather modest-looking shop on the edge of the Plaka District. The items he sold added to his growing wealth, but not to the same extent as did the contribution from the import-export business.

‘What news? Careful, this is an open line.’

‘I’ll be brief. I found them.’

‘The real ones?’

‘The exact ones. Thirty-six .... But remember it’s thirty-four officially. We keep one each.’

‘Let’s not talk too much here, Stavros. I’ll see you back in Athens.’

‘I’ll confirm the time in an sms.’

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Taking a deep drink of chilled Chardonnay, Stavros turned his thoughts to Eleni. In spite of reassurances to Giorgos that all was under control, he did feel some concern. He wondered about Eleni’s feelings of not being invited to witness the excavation of the Venetian Grosso coin and hoped this wouldn’t present trouble going forward. Eleni’s a bit too eager for her own good. He wished he’d known that before he chose her. She had a hot little body on her, but she was too keen ... too probing. He knew he shouldn’t have lost his temper but her appearance on the site almost ruined everything. And she still may put two and two together after seeing the coin. Bloody students. He’d be pleased to be rid of them after his visit to South Africa. Now, he’d have to manage her or else there’d be trouble. He just knew it. He must confirm the dinner invitation. With this resolution he pictured Eleni and his attitude

softened somewhat as he became aware of his reaction to images of her nubile nakedness. He'd handle the situation. After all, what's life without a few risks?

The wheels of the SAA Airbus 330-200 thumped down on the runway. Welcome to South Africa. He took in the lights of Johannesburg's O.R. Tambo International Airport as dusk set in. It had been a long trip from New York but it helped that he'd upgraded to first class. The University provided only a miserable standard economy fare, unlike his other clients who always provided him with a first class ticket. He slid the official University contract into his leather briefcase but his eyes lingered for a moment on another. The unofficial document was much more interesting.

Alex Hallie cleared customs quickly and, picking up his bags, made his way through the crowds awaiting the arrival of passengers from the many flights landing that evening. He recognised his name on the board held by the representative of the minivan transportation company and soon was ensconced in the passenger's seat next to the driver.

They passed the industrial area adjoining the airport and soon sped along the new highway.

Half an hour later the minivan stopped outside a high walled establishment with electric fencing protecting those inside. The driver helped to unload the luggage, acknowledged the handsome tip, and was off.

'Welcome Professor Hallie.' The owner seemed to have anticipated the exact moment of his arrival. The remote clicked and the security door swung open. 'Welcome to the *Hyena and Jackal*.'

Alex Hallie completed the required documentation before being ushered to his garden suite. The early-July chill closed in around him. His suite was spacious and he saw that it, like the others he passed on the way, was guaranteed privacy by the strategic placement of hedges and shrubs. His instructions had been specific about the location.

This will do well enough, and he'd be close enough to watch Stavros Vassilis when he checked into the *Wise Oak* next door sometime later.

Delancey declined Stavros's offer to fetch her. She walked along the beach as it was only three kilometres from her house to the restaurant. The soft sand was cool between her toes and all traces of the day's heat, forceful in July in Naxos, had evaporated. She stopped to watch the sun dip below the horizon a few minutes before eight pm, its soft glow still lighting up the sky. The moon was rising, a full moon tonight. She inhaled the salty air. She was not sure what to expect as he'd seemed a touch dismissive on the phone. But that was good from her point of view. *Remember, Delancey, said her mother, most men are dogs. Just out for what they can get.* Better to keep this yapping hound at arm's length.

Gentle waves lapped at the side of the concrete stairs leading from the beach to the Avali restaurant at the top of the hill overlooking Stelida, near the rocks she loved. She shook the sand from her feet and strapped on high heels, complementing her short black dress with its low back. A simple gold chain, the only item of her mother's belongings she'd kept, hung around her neck and glinted in the moonlight. She ran her hands through her hair and caught her reflection in the restaurant window. She looked good.

Entering from the rear, she could see the broad outline of Stavros. He seemed deep in thought, drumming his fingers on the table. At her movement he turned around and rose to meet her. His white shirt offset his dark tan to perfection. He leaned in to her, taking her shoulders in his hands, and kissed her on both cheeks. She returned the hug, but did not make it linger.

She sat down and took a sip of the Cretan *Metikos* red he poured for her. He'd already consumed about a third of the bottle.

'I leave tomorrow for Athens,' he said. 'Have to go back earlier than I planned. Sorry to leave you so soon.'

'And why the rush?'

'We came across an unexpected find at the Grotta dig. Some coins only before discovered at the village of Sangri. You know the village in the mountains?'

Delancey nodded.

'So this was a good find. But you said there wasn't too much to still discover on Naxos?'

‘It’s unexpected.’ Stavros’s eyes glinted. ‘Worked right through the night with three of my archaeologists. But I must take the coins back to Athens - back to my department for cataloguing.’

‘Wow, but that’s quick. Don’t the people of Naxos get the chance to peek at them first? Perhaps at the Archaeological Museum in the Kastro?’

‘Delancey, there’s protocol in these things.’

Delancey thought she detected Stavros checking himself and becoming more guarded.

He continued. ‘No time for that. With all the corruption in Greece we have to get the coins to safety

and have a paper trail. Do you know how much they’re worth?’

‘But here on Naxos, I’d have imagined they’d be safe. After all, there’s a curator at the museum. It seems such a pity that the locals don’t get to see a bit of their heritage. Their chances of one day viewing coins like this in Athens seem pretty remote to me.’

‘I’m not sure if the locals would appreciate the discovery in any case. You must remember they’re simple people. Never been to university and away from Chora, most can’t even speak English. And many of them are corrupt.’

‘But surely there’s some sort of moral ... ethical ... obligation to first show some find like this to the people of Naxos?’ Delancey persisted. ‘I can think, off hand, of a number of people who’d be interested.’

‘You seem to want your ethics to come into everything, don’t you, Delancey? Even you bring your work to this enchanting island. Don’t you ever want to get away from the work you do all the time?’ He reached for her hand, stroked it....

‘Including ethics?’

‘Ah, ethics,’ he pulled back. ‘How ethical would it be to have these coins stolen here in Naxos and deprive the Greeks - no world - of their discovery?’

‘Couldn’t they be guarded?’

‘Hah. I never underestimate anything. Don’t trust anyone. Not even on this island.’

‘But you said your family was from Naxos. You grew up here. You can’t think your fellow islanders are *all* corrupt.’ Delancey persevered.

‘I don’t regard myself as an islander anymore.’ Stavros’s words were harsh. ‘I grew out of it. I come back here for work and sometimes for relaxation. It is a wonderful island but I’m an Athenian. I prefer big cities. After a while the people on Naxos become ... how do you call it ... parochial.’

Delancey suspected she was beginning to push him too far. She drew back, sheathed her sword and changed the subject.

‘You know, yesterday I decided to visit the Panagia Drosiani you told me about, where your parents are buried.’

A fleeting look of annoyance appeared to cross Stavros’s face.

‘Did you find it? It’s a bit out of the way.’

‘Definitely out of the way, but I have a good map so it wasn’t too difficult. Seems few people ever visit the church.’

‘I’m sure you realised there wasn’t much to see. Even the murals haven’t been taken care of. Typical islanders. And now you seem to think I need to show them the coins too. They don’t even appreciate what they’ve got.’

‘There was an old nun tending to the candles. I wanted to ask her ...’

‘What?’

‘I looked for the tomb stones of your parents,’ she ventured. ‘I couldn’t find them. The cemetery’s not so big ...’

Stavros cut Delancey short. ‘The nun probably couldn’t speak English in any case. Delancey, what have I been saying about how the islanders don’t look after things? This is one more example. Probably they’ve left the cemetery to go to ... how do you say ... to rack and ruin. I haven’t been there for a long time.’

‘Actually it looked in good condition to me.’

‘But around the back. Did you go round the back?’

‘Well, no ...’

‘So you didn’t see the whole place.’ With that, Stavros changed the subject. ‘I hope you don’t regret our time visiting Kato Koufonissi. It was special for me.’

‘It was fun. I like to do that sort of thing.’

‘So you’ve done this before?’

‘Well I hadn’t been to Kato Koufonissi specifically. But adventures? Yes. What’s life for if not for adventures?’ She tried to sound breezy and offhand.

‘You don’t strike me, Delancey, as someone who gets into things like that too easily.’

‘But you don’t know me well at all, do you?’

‘We have a lot to look forward to in Johannesburg. I’m staying at a bed and breakfast that your University’s booked for me. Somewhere close to the University, in walking distance they say. Merville?’

‘Melville,’ corrected Delancey. ‘I live quite close by. It’s about five kilometres from downtown Johannesburg.’

‘So. The next time we meet, it will be in your home country. When do you arrive back?’

‘Around mid-July. Can’t say I’m looking forward to the prospects of leaving a sunny Greece to return to a winter in Johannesburg.’

‘But we’ll meet then. *Brávo.*’ With that, he rose to settle the bill and Delancey watched him move between the tables with a confidence that signalled control of his world.

Delancey insisted on making her own way home. She recognised Stavros had something on his mind - most likely the new discovery - and he said nothing to dissuade her but she felt a twang of disappointment that he was leaving so soon. *Put it aside, Delancey. You know you’re not ready for men after what happened.* Her mother’s voice of reason.

She headed for the main road but changed her mind. It was still early and, energised after their afternoon siestas, people were up and about and ready to eat and drink and laugh until well into the early morning. She fancied a glass of the rare *Chateau d’Yquem* dessert wine that La Vigne stocked. Even if she missed the last bus back, taxis were plentiful at this time of the year.

Cutting behind the tavernas lining the main streets into Chora, she walked barefoot along the beachfront. Bouzouki music tinkled in the background, adding to a festive feel. Half an hour later, she turned into the Kastro with its narrow winding streets. She stopped to dust the sand off her feet and to put on her sandals. Navigating between the small shops and the evening shoppers, she turned up a lane in time to hear the sound of familiar laughter. She spun around and darted back into a recessed doorway. Stavros and Eleni were crossing the threshold into La Vigne. From his body language, Stavros appeared to be enjoying their light banter.

Eleni was relieved that Stavros had not cancelled their dinner. At least she could try to make things right. Surely there had been some misunderstanding. She had now caught a glimpse of a different side to her professor but she rationalised that perhaps his outburst had been because of the strain of work. Or the heat. She was ready to forgive him.

Stavros embraced Fred as they entered *La Vigne* and he introduced Eleni. 'Don't they make students gorgeous these days? Especially the ones from Athens.'

Fred ushered them to a table and set down a bottle of wine. 'So what do you plan to do with your degree once you've finished?'

'Well,' Eleni cast a glance at Stavros, 'I want to enrol for the PhD programme but, of course, that'll depend on getting top grades. I'm mad about archaeology. Since I was a little girl, all I wanted to do was dig around and find old things. Of course what I found were spoons and parts of bicycles, not artefacts, but they were still my discoveries.'

'Well I'm sure there's still plenty to find in Greece,' said Fred.

'This young lady here's not only attractive,' commented Stavros, 'but smart as well. I've no doubt she'll make the cut. All she has to do now is complete her research report on the recent findings of some figurines at Grotta. Not much to write up these days, but it's sufficient from the point of view of student research. I recall there was something about these figurines in the local *Naxos Life*.'

'Exciting stuff,' said Fred. 'I hope they put them on display at the Archaeological Museum. I'll certainly go and have a look. It's wonderful they're still finding ancient relics'.

'What they don't tell you,' said Stavros, 'is that we're all dug out here on this island. Nothing much to find these days. But no, they make some insignificant discovery and it's blown out of all proportion on this small island. It's like they've discovered another *Koúros*. You know the one I mean - the statue of the youth you can see near Melenes?'

'I'd like to research ancient coins in the Cycladic region,' said Eleni. 'It'd mean I'd have to spend time here and on all the other twenty or so islands.'

Fred appeared to be interested. 'Are there any coins left to be discovered? I read in *Time Magazine* there haven't been discoveries of coins for a while - apart from those found in Sangria. But that seemed to be the end of the line.'

'Oh, I think we're in for a surprise. Only yesterday ...'

Stavros cut Eleni short. 'What's on offer today, Fred? Any gourmet house specials?'

‘You look wonderful tonight, Eleni. The sun does you good.’

Eleni felt Stavros’s eyes hone in on her low neckline.

‘And the green in your top matches those striking eyes.’ His leg rubbed against hers and he reached over for her hand, enveloping it between both of his. ‘About yesterday. I didn’t mean to be so abrupt with you. I’m sorry. I wanted to tell you that.’

‘It’s nothing prof.’ Eleni’s heart beat a little faster.

‘Please call me Stavros.’ His hands caressed hers.

Fred put down the plate of coq au vin and orange sauce and for a few moments they savoured the dish. ‘I always feel bad about spoiling Fred’s artistic creations,’ joked Stavros as he began to serve up for them. ‘To your good health, Eleni.’

Eleni took a sip of the *Chateau de Triniac*. ‘Prof ... Stavros, yesterday when that coin was discovered, you seemed to want me off the site. I’m confused. I have a fascination with ancient coins as you know.’ This time she leaned over the table. ‘Was it a Venetian Grosso you found?’

‘Eleni, I apologise for being harsh,’ said Stavros. ‘I’m sorry. My words must have hurt you.’

‘So... Stavros ... where’s it now?’

‘Eleni, I’m sure you believe that most people are good, decent. But it’s not so. Even archaeologists are not to be trusted. I needed to get the coin off site as quickly as possible. You can’t imagine how something like this could disappear. Did you read about the discovery of ceramic vessels at Akrotiri in Santorini a couple of years ago? While my back was turned, two of them disappeared. Can you believe that? Disappeared. We hunted everywhere. Spent days searching. Eventually we began querying if we’d got the numbers right in the first place. I say this to stress how you must guard any new find. But now I’m lecturing.’

‘But this was a single coin.’

‘I took precautions and now the coin’s safely lodged at the University. It’ll be catalogued and the research into its background can begin.’

‘I’d have enjoyed being part of that process. You know it’s what I want to focus on for my doctorate.’ She held his gaze.

‘About your choice of topic, Eleni, it’s too much of a risk to explore the possible discovery of coins in this region. The coin we found at Grotta now was a fluke. I’ve researched the area. Little left there.’

‘So you said. And in your recent article...’

‘You read my article?’

‘Yes, in *Greek Archaeology*.’

Stavros looked both surprised and annoyed.

‘Every word of it. You *did* say nothing more was to be found on Naxos.’

‘So there you go. As a scientist, you need to follow up on the conclusions reached by other scientists. And this one here,’ Stavros pointed to himself, ‘has found nothing much more on Naxos in spite of years and years of on-going work.’

Stavros seemed adamant he’d not engage in discussing the discovery but at least he didn’t seem to harbour any animosity towards her. Nevertheless, she was puzzled by his evasiveness. Maybe she was being too serious. Isn’t that what Dora always said about her? That she needed to lighten up? So lighten up Eleni. Now’s your chance to get what you want - to start the ball rolling and pave the way forward. She leaned back in her chair and fixed her eyes on him. She could see it worked. He looked alert and eager.

Stavros poured more wine. ‘Good wine, this. Can’t let it go to waste.’ He stretched over and kissed her lightly. ‘A foretaste of what’s to come,’ he whispered into her neck.

She recognised his fragrance - expensive - *Ambre Topkapi* - and breathed it in.

He pulled back, smiling at her. ‘I hope you feel a little bit for me. Perhaps?’

Eleni’d waited for this moment for a long time. ‘I’ve been thinking of you a lot.’

‘More than just as your professor?’

‘Much more than that.’

‘Do you know how attractive you are?’ Stavros leaned across and touched the hollow of her throat. ‘And you’re almost finished your course. You only live once you know.’

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An hour later Eleni and Stavros walked down a narrow lane in the Kastro in the direction of the Coronis Hotel. Stavros knew the wine had gone to Eleni’s head as she seemed pliant when his hand brushed against her breast. But he still needed to gauge her willingness. If she wasn’t so sexy he’d be annoyed at her persistence to know more about the coin. However, it seemed to him she’d lost interest in the matter.

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Stavros awoke early. He shielded his eyes from the eastern sun, glaring at six am, and looked at the sleeping Eleni. Dead to the world. The rumpled sheets told of the night’s activities. His eyes ran along the contour of her hip. He’d not been wrong. She was a lioness in bed. Hungry. And he’d satisfied her. Was it three or four times? My God, he was exhausted but it

was a good idea to get her drunk. Still, he had no clear idea of whether or not she suspected anything about the coins. He thought not. At least she'd only seen one of them. The alcohol hadn't helped to get her to talk about any suspicions she may have, but it had served another purpose. He could do what he wanted with a woman when her inhibitions weren't a factor. And more than that, it excited him when they groaned out aloud.

He dressed and scribbled a quick note, apologising that he had to return to Athens. He guessed he should have mentioned this fact to her last night. He took one last look at the sleeping Eleni as he closed the door, being careful to make as little noise as possible.

Stavros hurried to where he'd parked the car the night before. Good thinking to park so close to the Coronis Hotel. He now needed to collect his bag from his hotel in time to make the 7:30 am ferry back to Piraeus. Pity he wouldn't be seeing Eleni again. Pity. Real pity. But maybe just as well. He'd sort out some stuff in Athens and then be off to South Africa. And of course, back to Delancey. He smiled at the thought. Yes, she was a woman he imagined he could enjoy playing with. And he was sure, given a little time, he could break through that tough shell.

Giorgos stood at Gate E7 at the port of Piraeus. It was now a few minutes after midday and tourists jostled around in anticipation of the arrival of the ferries to take them to the idyllic island holidays promised in the travel brochures - Crete - Santorini - Mykonos. He stepped forward and greeted Stavros with a kiss on each cheek. '*Yeia sou*. So we did it.'

Stavros hugged Giorgos. 'Easier than I expected it to be. Here they are. Safe. *Bravo*.' He spread his large hand over the front of his jacket pocket.

'An ouzo to celebrate?' suggested Giorgos.

Stavros and Giorgos crossed the main road separating the port from the town and found a restaurant down a side street. Sitting at the back, Stavros withdrew the packet and lifted out one shiny Venetian Grosso. He'd polished all of them.

'For you Giorgos. And I'll keep one for myself. But best be careful here. Don't flash it around.' He returned the packet to the safety of his jacket pocket.

Giorgos savoured the coin for a second or two before opening a section in his wallet and placing it inside.

'Lucky for us the Grossi are so light. It makes the travelling easier.' He chuckled. 'Have to brush up on my vocabulary. I sometimes forget that the plural is Grossi. Anyway, your flight's all set via Cairo.'

Stavros placed the Grossi, less than half a kilogramme in total, in his change purse. Everyone needed money, coins, for tips, for a drink at the airport. No one would suspect a thing.

'Our contact at O.R. Tambo International in Jo'burg is Daffodil Kunene. She'll meet you there and make sure there's no trouble. You can trust her.'

'You're brilliant Giorgos - setting up all these networks.'

'No-one suspects anything? Not even that South African academic?'

Stavros noticed a sheen of sweat on his brother's forehead.

'Of course not. Don't you know me by now? I'm always cautious. I never leave anything to chance.'

'But sometimes not around women, Stavros. You know that.'

'Ah, but I'd never compromise this project. This is our entry into another world.'

After a couple more drinks, the brothers said their farewells.

‘Have a good flight tonight to Johannesburg and look after our interests.’ Giorgos tapped the front of Stavros’s jacket pocket.

Stavros headed off to hail a taxi to the Eleftherios Venizelos International airport. He couldn’t wait to get onto the plane. The puppets in Naxos had been paid off - Piperides and the other two archaeologists as well as the curator of the museum. And the last part of the jigsaw was about to fall into place.

Eleni called in sick. As much as she tried to rationalise the impossibility of any long-term relationship with Stavros, his sudden and unannounced departure hurt. She felt humiliated and disappointed; she had only begun to seduce him. Life was bloody unfair. She'd needed more time. She replayed their night together in slow motion - the sensuous movements in the elaborate love game he'd created. She longed for more as she relived the feeling of his muscles taut against her body. He'd found the right fusion for her of gentle build up, retreat, intermixed rhythm and pulsation, until her senses abandoned themselves to his touch, his breath, his movement. Now she felt betrayed. He had dumped her.

For two days Eleni hovered in a twilight world. She alternated between crying, fantasising and sleeping, mustering only as much energy as it took to keep Dora and Piperides at bay. The last thing she wanted was visitors. She felt hot and feverish and her eyes were red and swollen. She imagined she knew what a migraine in the stomach felt like.

By the third day, however, she sensed a change growing from within. Her melancholy made way for fury. How dare he use her like this. And for one night only.

Eleni plugged in her iPod and turned the volume high on the micro sound system she'd brought with her from Athens. Bon Jovi's words filled the small hotel apartment.

*An angel's smile is what you sell  
You promise me heaven, then put me through hell  
Chains of love got a hold on me  
When passion's a prison, you can't break free*

She knew she would never have slept with him if she'd know he'd be gone the next day.

*Your very first kiss was your first kiss goodbye  
You give love a bad name*

Stavros Vassilis, maybe you've messed with the wrong woman.

Dora dropped a bag of provisions on the lounge table. 'Well, at least you've let me in today,' she said, 'but you're not looking too good. Had to make all sorts of excuses to Piperides who's hell bent on getting a doctor up here to see you. I've put her off for now, but if you don't tell me what's going on, I'll get the doctor myself.'

It was four days since Eleni had spent the night with Stavros and she was feeling better. Nothing like anger to sort out self-pity.

'Tell me what's up. Just as well our Prof's already left or he'd also want to call a doctor.' Dora paused and looked at Eleni. 'Oh, I think I know. It has something to do with him, doesn't it?' She took out a bottle of chilled white wine and poured a glass for each of them. 'Was it good?'

'Yes. He was all that you suggested he'd be. Remember the night we spoke at the restaurant?'

'Well, that should be something.'

'But he never said anything about seeing me again, maybe after he returns from South Africa. Anyway, I'm over it now. Only a bastard would take advantage of a student like that.'

'I'm sure he wouldn't want to get caught up in all sorts of legal hassles at the University. He may just be a coward. But who knows? He may still contact you.'

'There's another problem. I'd had far too much to drink. I should have insisted on protection.'

'Oh God. Nothing? And I take it you know you're safe at this time?'

'That's just it. I've counted the days and I don't think I was safe. And also what about AIDS?'

Dora unpacked the bag of cheese and freshly-baked bread and topped up their wine. 'You go and tidy up, Eleni. Brush your hair and get out of those pyjamas. I'll have to think about this - unrequited love, a one night fling with a professor, and maybe unintended consequences.'

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A short time after Dora had left, Eleni Googled Stavros Vasillis. She marvelled how time - even a couple of days - put a different perspective on things. Her hurt at Stavros's betrayal had subsided somewhat and her quick mind was in gear, prepared to do some research. She was now fuelled by a determination to get her own back.

While she waited for the Google results, she scanned Thandi Zulu's thesis, and her eye settled on the section where Thandi had recommended further exploration.' She definitely thought that there were more Grossi to be discovered on Naxos.

The screen flickered as a list of sites appeared. Most provided only scant details of Professor Stavros Vassilis - his position at the University and a list of publications. She noted he'd not included his latest publication in *Greek Archaeology* amongst those listed on the University site. What was interesting, however, was the number of reports in the popular press linking him to the missing ceramic vessels on Santorini that he'd mentioned over dinner.

### **Source digs up dirt on missing vessels**

Yesterday a source who wished to remain anonymous stated that twenty-five ceramic vessels, dating back to the Minoan period, were discovered at the Akrotiri site on Santorini. However, Stavros Vassilis, Professor of Archaeology at the University of Athens and the lead archaeologist on the site, contradicted this statement. "How many times do I have to tell the press that artefacts are rarely found in a perfect state?" said Vassilis. "They're usually recovered in pieces and then assembled bit by bit. This explains the discrepancy in numbers. We only found twenty-three vessels, not twenty-five as we originally believed. I don't know what all the fuss is about."

Another report focused on the investigation itself.

### **Police serious about investigating missing Santorini vessels**

The Cycladic Police Authority from Syros have tried to get to the bottom of the mystery surrounding two missing ceramic vessels alleged to have been found at the Akrotiri site on Santorini. The Head of the Prefecture, Captain Spiros Manolis defended his team against the public criticism of not involving any local persons with archaeological backgrounds in the investigation. "I'm the best person to investigate this matter," said Manolis. "We can't involve any of the archaeologists on the island as they're all potential suspects. In addition, given the economic austerity measures implemented in Greece, we cannot afford to bring in resources from Athens. I have full confidence in my competence and that of my team from Syros to get to the bottom of this matter."

Eleni looked at the pictures below the article. Manolis sitting in a cake shop, his belly propped up against the table, clearly having savoured too many of the delicacies on offer; Manolis and two senior officers at a bar, in the corner of the picture, the tip of a beer can visible in the hand of one officer; Manolis and his tanned team on the beaches, in cafés, and always surrounded by pretty girls wearing short skirts.

The *Athens News* reported:

### **Captain defends investigation on Santorini**

Captain Spiros Manolis defended the public criticism of the work he and his team were undertaking in Santorini. Said Manolis: "It's essential we follow up on every lead and investigate the many people on our list, all in different situations. We have no doubt we'll get to the bottom of this matter in a few days."

From what Eleni could see, it proved to be an unmemorable investigation. Events in Athens, and the nation's focus on the internal political unrest, took precedence. Everyone forgot about the case and the vessels, if ever there were an additional two, were forgotten as well.

But a short article a couple of weeks later hinted that things were not quite right back at the University of Athens.

### **Yet another case of academic cover-up?**

In a terse report yesterday, the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Athens confirmed that its largest donor, *Athenian Information Technology*, had withdrawn its annual contribution. The company refused to comment, except to say that it was not unusual for companies to reassess their voluntary contributions to institutions on a regular basis. However, an inside source at the University, who requested not to be named for fear of repercussions to his career, said that the decision to no longer support the University was a direct result of the cloud hanging over archaeology professor, Stavros Vassilis, relating to the two ceramic vessels that allegedly went missing in Santorini a month ago. He went on to say the matter has been covered up as the Vice-Chancellor is married to the sister of the national Police

Commissioner. Vassilis refused to comment, saying it would be against University policy to do so.

Mike Swaine settled into his chair, running his hands over the plush leather armrests. He was relaxed after the University recess that ended in mid-July and the worst of the southern hemisphere winter was over. Life's good. No, not only life, he mused, but Africa's good. Full of opportunities. He smiled as he savoured again how he'd secured the position of Dean of the largest faculty at one of the most prestigious universities in Africa. Egoli University. University of the City of Gold. And his smile broadened. This job had come in the nick of time, as the net was closing in on him. And he'd escaped. More than escaped. He'd escaped to Africa, secured this position, and kept his reputation intact.

He soured at the thought of his previous job as a professor at a UK technikon, an unpleasant intrusion now. If it hadn't been for that little tart all would've been well. But at least it was over. A rush of warmth surged through him, replacing the distasteful scenario threatening to play out in his head. Ah, Africa. This job. A new beginning in a new country. A chance to start afresh. Not many people get that sort of break and it had been so easy.

Sinking still deeper into the chair, he placed his feet on the window ledge and stared at the gardens outside. The trees were bare from the winter wind. In contrast, bright yellow and orange African daisies bobbed in the breeze, their hardiness defying the elements. He replayed the tactics he'd used to secure the deanship some eight months before. So in awe of his UK credentials, members of the appointments committee had fallen over themselves to make him a job offer. He'd even managed to up the stakes somewhat. Yes, indeed, he'd bring developed world thinking to the underdeveloped masses in Africa.

Swaine savoured his victory. He and his family had settled into the country well. Already they'd made several trips to game parks, most recently to the Kruger National Park during the three-week University break. Even here in his office he could remember the cry of the vultures overhead as they circled the carcass of the young kudu bull, waiting to fight the hyenas for the last pickings. He heard the barking of wild baboons calling to each other. But wasn't Africa the home of baboons? And he laughed. These baboons had fallen for his wiles.

The image of the Vice-Chancellor floated in front of him. Never mind that he was surrounded by ancient artefacts, he remained a pygmy baboon wagging his finger. And the Dean baboons all dancing around the Vice-Chancellor baboon to curry favour. Swaine chortled at the reminder of the academics in his faculty - what an assortment of baboons - opinionated baboons, lazy baboons and some downright stupid baboons. He saw the lot

twirling in front of him, swinging from his curtains and light fittings, soon joined by the student baboons, learning how to use their ruses and acquired skills on their future employers.

Swaine couldn't contain his mirth. His office was a menagerie of baboons and he was the ringmaster. They were in his control and he could manipulate them at will. Even Delancey James.

A sharp knock at his door interrupted his sense of bonhomie. Sally, his secretary popped her head into his office. Her usual frantic countenance had an exaggerated air of concern about it. On impulse, Swaine swept his eyes around the room. 'What's it Sally?' He was annoyed by the intrusion.

'The VC's just called, Professor Swaine. He wants an update on the progress you've made in dealing with that plagiarism issue.'

Delancey was late. She shivered, still not accustomed to the Johannesburg winter chill after her recent few months in Greece. She walked past the rough earth-coloured murals adorning the outside walls of the lecture rooms and auditoriums surrounding the old historical house that served as the offices of the Faculty of Management, her University of Egoli home. Even in her haste, she was able to appreciate the relief replicas of elephants, giraffes, small bush animals, African drums and various African artefacts, all so well combined. Entering the house, she rushed past Mike Swaine's office and up the stairs, hoping to avoid contact with him. She'd been lucky to secure one of the best offices in the place. The old building with its high ceilings had a sense of history about it, something wholesome and honest. The young woman was already waiting outside her door.

'Sorry to keep you waiting.' Delancey caught her breath. 'It's Dr Zulu isn't it? Come on in.'

Thandi Zulu took a seat across the desk. She shifted in the chair, fidgeting with Delancey's papers lying in front of her. Delancey moved the papers to the side, in the process righting them and squaring off the framed picture of Psyche Cyclops who stared back through her one eye.

'So Dr Zulu,' began Delancey, 'you seemed upset when you called.'

'Please, call me Thandi. And thanks for seeing me so soon, Professor James. I was told you're the person to speak to if we have a problem, an ethical matter of sorts, something that's bothering us. In this case, something that's bothering me.'

Thandi's hands twisted in constant motion and she picked at her coral nail polish that matched the colour of her winter dress. Delancey recognised her anxiety but also noted that, in spite of this, she appeared to be a person who paid great attention to detail. The papers she now took out of her briefcase and placed on the desk in front of Delancey were ordered. Post-it notes, each stuck down with the same amount of paper extending out, indicated the sections she intended to refer to.

Delancey sat back in her chair, gesturing for Thandi to continue.

'I was an exchange student on the Athens-Egoli programme and landed up doing my final archaeological field work on the island of Naxos.'

'I know it well. I was there a few weeks ago.'

Delancey saw, however, that Thandi did not seem inclined to pursue any discussion of travel memories.

Thandi continued. 'Well we - that's the permanent archaeologists and I - found a number of flat white female figurines dating back to the Early Bronze Age. Some of them were cracked and we had to extract them in sections.'

Delancey noticed how Thandi warmed to her topic, she looked relaxed and her face lit up.

'You know Prof, it's criminal what's happening to artefacts like this in the Cycladic region. They're stolen from burial sites to satisfy the antiquities market. And this market's growing and growing. Looters destroy the artefacts they don't think will fetch top dollar. Something like sixty per cent of Cycladic figurines have been destroyed. So we'll never have any idea of the full range of artefacts that existed in this area.'

Delancey liked Thandi's obvious enthusiasm and was reluctant to interrupt. 'Getting back to the issue here ...'

'Yes, the issue.' Concern clouded her face. 'We also found a coin. A Venetian Grosso. They're rare, especially in this region ... and at today's prices, one Grosso might fetch close to five million dollars - US - on a Sotheby's auction. It's incredible what these coins go for. A 1933 Double Eagle coin sold in the US for almost eight million dollars and the Grossi - that's the collective term - seem to be next in line in the price stakes. We were lucky to find this coin before some looter did. The discovery of other minor artefacts near where we found the Grosso seems to suggest there could well be many more coins like this in the area.'

'All this sounds positive to me, Thandi,' said Delancey recalling Stavros's finding of coins at the Grotta site, 'but you have some concerns?'

'Apologies Prof. I escape into my work and my dreams. Let me get on with it. I wondered whether I should ignore the whole thing but it's been eating away at me.'

'The whole thing?'

'My supervisor and co-supervisor have written an article based on my thesis.'

'That's quite a compliment. Who were they?'

'Professor Vassilis from the University of Athens was my supervisor. I had a co-supervisor here at Egoli.'

Delancey took in this information. That Stavros was Thandi's supervisor came as no surprise. He seemed to be the person to supervise students who did their practical work on

any of the Cycladic islands. But it was strange he'd not mentioned to her that he'd so recently supervised a student from South Africa, knowing she, herself, came from Egoli University.

'Sorry, Thandi. Please go on.'

'Well, I received this note ...'

There was a rap at the door and Mike Swaine's secretary, Sally, entered without waiting for a response.

'Delancey, Professor Swaine needs your input urgently on setting up the committee that the VC wants.'

She glanced at Thandi and Delancey took her cryptic words to indicate confidentiality in front of a stranger.

'He would like to see you immediately.'

'Please could you tell Professor Swaine that I've begun a meeting with a past student. Ask him if he can give me about half an hour.'

'Can't do, Delancey.'

'My God, does he have to do this now?'

'Says he has to have this information to the Vice-Chancellor within an hour. You know what a dragon the VC is. You'll have to reschedule your meeting.'

Sally retreated and closed the door, not waiting for a reply.

'I'm so sorry, Thandi. Will Monday this coming week do?' Delancey opened her diary and penned in a time.

Thandi looked dismayed. 'That'll be okay.' But she did not look okay as she gathered her papers, straightening them and returning them to her bag. An email and the hand-written note she'd been about to show Delancey, escaped and fluttered to the floor near Delancey's feet. Delancey scooped them up and handed them back to Thandi.

Again Delancey apologised. 'I'm so sorry to cut our time short. Your concerns are important to me.'

'I understand but I'm worried. I know what happens when you go against the system like that case last year. Do you remember the student who went up against her lecturer? The student was victimised and ended up committing suicide.'

'I do remember,' said Delancey who felt the case had not been satisfactorily explored, 'but don't worry, we'll sort out any mix-up before it gets complicated.' She smiled, making light of her words.

Her phone rang.

'Delancey.' It was Sally. 'Prof Swaine's waiting. And he's not happy.'

Swaine reviewed the names on his list, strategically selected as Dube had advised. None appeared to have any experience in the field of ethics. One even, the Samuelson chap, seemed to have had some brush with the University's legal department for falsifying reimbursement claims for a seminar he'd attended. He'd make a great candidate. Still, Swaine was most unhappy. If Delancey James - the Rottweiler-Ethic Police Woman - hadn't raised this irritating matter with the Vice-Chancellor, he would have a lot less work to do. Well, she could bloody well do the administrative donkey-work. And she'd better oblige or there'd be trouble.

This job was sometimes more tiresome than he'd anticipated. Idiot baboons, all of them. Did Sam Heen actually think that he, Mike Swaine, should spend time authorising an air conditioner for his office? Did he have no appreciation of the hoops and rings that would need to be negotiated for the University to provide an item like that for someone who was only a senior lecturer? And Johan de Wet insisting that the top brand of cookies needed to be provided to staff at tea time. For someone in accounting, he had absolutely no idea of budgets. Now Louise Sheer ... there was a bit of skirt ... and she made a really nice contrast to that hag, Jane Spear. All idiots. All pretty innocuous. But now Delancey James ... he was not too sure about her.

Johan de Wet hummed to himself as he sauntered past the koi pond. He had a good baritone voice and enjoyed the reputation he'd acquired in this regard in the Faculty of Management. He cast his eye towards Swaine's office and saw some movement at the window.

Johan was content as he felt the weak late-July sun on his back. His long hair curled over his collar. He liked to believe the streaks of grey, betraying his fifty-six years, added to his charm and appeal as a hip professor of accounting and compensated somewhat for the beer-belly that seemed to grow by the day. He smiled to himself. He used his charisma to enliven the boring accounts lectures, even the ones that now had to include a section on governance after all the international and local scandals. Why did he have to teach that crap? His lectures were already overloaded as it was.

He sat down on a bench under a large jacaranda tree and took in the manicured ponds, clusters of shrubs and African daisies. Opening his copy of *Business Day*, he glared at the editorial comment and his countenance changed. Now we have to make way for black academics and women. Do these idiots know what they're doing to education in this country?

He felt a presence alongside and looked up to see Mike Swaine.

'Saw you sitting here from my window, Johan - *Joe Han*' - Swaine had not yet got the hang of Afrikaans pronunciations. 'Thought I'd join you. Nice to think of winter ending.'

'Yeah, but have you seen this latest article?' Johan thumped the offending article with his witlowed thumb. 'This employment equity thing's sure to sink the country. Good white males leaving in droves. Have to make place for black incompetents.'

'Tell me about it,' Swaine sighed. 'But you know some of the younger black guys aren't too bad. As Dean, I have to make the best of a bad situation. Think it all rests on how quickly we mentor them. Get them to think in our ways. That sort of thing. Mould them.'

'And God, there's a lot of moulding to do.'

'It's a never-ending job, I agree.'

'And you have to be lucky enough to get pliant ones.'

'And lots of them are militant as all hell, *Joe Han*.'

'Now the University's got some black staff union going. They only fight for their rights of course. Want promotion in a year. Higher salaries.'

‘That’s the sad thing. We now have to pay our black lecturers on a higher scale than our white teachers. The Vice-Chancellor says otherwise we won’t be able to attract them to Egoli.’

‘And, of course, Mike, the VC’s black.’

‘I guess that does play a part. All these black guys stick together like syrup.’

‘Molasses, I think’s a better description.’

‘At any rate *Joe Han* you’re quite safe. You’ve been here long enough to have tenure. They can’t chuck you out.’

‘But then why do they keep sending me all those nasty letters instructing me to increase my research output?’

‘Sorry I had to pass on that news to you. The University’s hell-bent on upping all our research. The competition’s on and it’s publish or perish. Universities these days are in major competition - major competition, *Joe Han* - to see which institution produces the most published articles each year. It doesn’t even matter about quality any more. And of course, if we Deans don’t ensure our staff produce the goods, it impacts our bonuses. But I’ll watch out for you.’

‘Maybe Mike, I could do a bit of research into the necessity of paying bribes when you do business in Africa. It’s the cost of doing business there and that sort of thing would interest me - presenting a different take on accountants. Poor buggers. They’re only trying to help their companies.’

‘Not a bad idea, *Joe Han*. Anything you can do to show them you’re doing some research.’

‘Yep. Everyone seems hell-bent on labelling all accountants a bunch of crooks.’

‘But that’s not what I’ve come to talk to you about.’

Dr Samuel Heen, or Sam as he was known, senior lecturer in industrial relations at Egoli University, was enjoying drinks with several of his students at a cosy pub in Melville. In fact, this was now the third round of drinks with different sets of students who rotated place. The convivial atmosphere, along with the mellowing effects of the alcohol, made Sam generous and the students exploited his largesse. Before he realised the time, it was well past midnight. He checked his cell phone and confirmed the worst. From the irate messages, he knew his wife, Sandy, was not to be reasoned with at this late hour. Best leave it to morning when he'd get her to see the necessity of staff-student interaction. Of course, it's critical to the learning process and students should see him as someone approachable.

'One last round,' he called.

Sam used routes where the cops were less likely to stop him and made it home without incident in spite of his progressed state of inebriation. Turning into the road that led a short distance to his house, he killed the engine and steered his dilapidated Land Rover the few metres downhill to the driveway. Sam adored his Landie, a sixties model - solid - reengineered a number of times. He felt rugged as he manoeuvred it through the suburbs.

He drew to a stop. Damn, where was the bloody remote? He searched in vain for the remote control to open the gate and ensure his silent entry into the house. He turned out his pockets and rummaged in the nooks and crannies in the car but to no avail. He decided at last that the best way out of this situation was to manoeuvre the car to below the garden wall and use the roof as a step onto it. He reckoned he'd then be able to jump down into the garden. It would be tricky, but he rationalised that the option of waking the household and confronting the irate Sandy posed a far greater risk.

The first part of the procedure progressed without event. This was significant in that the chances of the freewheeling Land Rover colliding with the wall had been a definite possibility. Bleary-eyed, Sam clambered up the vehicle, warding off waves of alcohol-induced nausea.

'God, this wall's high,' he muttered, stepping up onto it. 'Crime's bad, but surely not that bad.'

'Crime,' the word jolted Sam through his haze. As if orchestrated, he remembered they'd installed an electric fence that very morning. Too late. A bolt of pain surged through his body as it touched the fence. Yelping, he tumbled to the ground.

Thud. Stillness. For a few blissful seconds he felt numb and the damp ground beneath his body provided a reassuring calmness. But this soon gave way to a cacophony of barking dogs, screaming children and the piercing sound of the activated siren. The high wattage security lights swung into action, spotlighting the entire property like some sort of prison camp.

‘Ugh,’ he groaned, appreciating the domestic consequences of his indiscretion.

As if on cue, Sandy’s irate screech pierced the night. ‘Are you fucking mad? I thought you were a burglar, a rapist. Why didn’t you come through the gate like a normal person?’

Sam opened his mouth to attempt an explanation but words, he knew, would be useless. Also, as the nausea and the hammering of his heart receded, he became aware of the pounding of his arm. He raised himself from the ground thinking it better not to even mention his arm. His muscles were sore and he felt dizzy. But thank God 10 000 volts couldn’t cause any real damage.

Sam stumbled into the house and attempted to pacify the children. The Heen offspring, numbering five, ranged in age from four months to ten years, and all were in tears. Appeasement was at last reached, but not without promises of treats to movies, new iPods and visits to daddy’s office at the University to play games on the high speed Internet.

‘What the hell are you teaching them while I’m at work?’ Sam glowered at his wife. ‘The only thing the damn kids can think of is getting something out of the situation. At least two of them are too young to demand bribes. Thank God for small mercies.’

‘Oh, and now it’s all my fault? If you’d come home earlier you’d be able to help with their education.’

‘That’s bloody all you have to do every day.’

‘And what about my full time job of looking after you? Have to check you’ve put on the right socks. That both of your shoes match. That your tee shirt’s not inside out and back to front. And you have the cheek to insinuate I do nothing all day. Looking after you takes up more time than all the kids put together. Tonight proves my point. I rest my case.’

Sam lay in bed alongside the stone-silent Sandy. The video of the night’s happenings played in his head and the throbbing in his arm made sleep impossible. He slipped from the bed and pattered down the hallway. Disarming the now reset alarm, he made his way, naked, to the swimming pool at the end of the garden, oblivious to the winter chill. Maybe a swim would help ease the agony he was in. Birds were beginning to chirp.

He steadied himself on the side of the pool and launched into the centre. A surge of pain took his breath away and an adrenalin shot of panic ricocheted through him. He let out a wail. For the second time that evening the Heen property exploded into light. The lights of the adjoining house also came on and Sam's neighbour, golf club driver in hand, sprinted to the inter-leading gate.

'What on earth?' boomed the neighbour, a bodybuilder and aerobics teacher. Sandy emerged, nightgown flailing as she ran down the pathway in answer to the distress calls.

Sam gulped for air as he pounded the water with his good arm.

'Help,' he yelled.

Bodybuilder was over the gate and into the pool catching Sam by his bad arm.

'Yipes,' screamed Sam.

Clutching Sam in an iron grip, Bodybuilder stood up in the water that reached his chest.

'For God's sake Sam, what are you doing in the pool at this ungodly hour? It's winter and it's not even deep.'

'Are you mad?' wailed Sandy. 'Must I watch over you like a baby?'

For the second time in the space of three hours, Sam opened and closed his mouth, realising explanation would be futile.

Bodybuilder manoeuvred Sam to the steps. As both men emerged from the water, Sam was aware of his loutish nakedness against the strapping form next to him, silk boxer shorts clinging to the shimmering contours of a well-exercised body. Before the wave of pain engulfed him, he noticed his small manhood dangling between his legs and, as he sunk into oblivion, he saw the smirk on Sandy's face. She, too, had noticed.

Some hours later Sam sat at the kitchen table, his head resting on one hand. A plaster cast encased the other, along with the adjoining arm. Doctors had set his broken arm in the emergency clinic early that morning but the pain had not subsided. Rain, uncharacteristic for winter in Johannesburg, poured down in torrents, clattering on the tin roof. The leak that developed in the ceiling dripped into a metal bucket and the clatter amplified the hammering in his head. God, what a day. And it all started at two that morning.

He tried to put the night's events out of his mind and focus on his lesson preparation. He had no choice. He knew Mike Swaine would not be accommodating in this instance. In desperation, he stared at Sandy's fridge magnets for inspiration.

*Out of my mind, back in five minutes,* joked one.

*Lord if you won't make me skinny, please make my friends fat,* pleaded a second.

*Eat dessert first, life is so uncertain,* was the fridge magnet to which Sam could most relate and he wondered how he would shape his industrial relations lecture around it.

Members of the ad-hoc plagiarism committee were sitting in stoic silence when Delancey entered the boardroom. Mike Swaine nodded a dismissive greeting.

‘Colleagues, now that Professor James’s honoured us with her presence,’ he began with a glance at his watch, ‘we can start. You know Prof James is our University representative for ethics.’ Swaine was disinclined to waste time on other introductions.

Nods of agreement from all seated around the table. Delancey was well known in this role, although often not liked by some because of the pressure it placed them under. However, she’d been elected by the full Senate of the University to act in this capacity as her expertise in this field was beyond doubt.

‘Dean,’ began Delancey, ‘Dr Charlotte Mkhize of the Department of Archaeology has been accused by a student of publishing an article using the work of the student without any acknowledgment to her.’

‘And was the student’s work any good?’ piped up Dr Jane Spear from Management. ‘I think we need to focus on quality at this University. Such a lot of substandard work’s getting out, don’t you think Dean?’ She drew her coat around her thin shoulders.

‘Oh God,’ began Swaine, ‘another issue.’ He directed a look of disapproval at Delancey who had started this whole thing. ‘Dr Spear, we’re not going to debate the issue of quality in this meeting.’

‘Professor Swaine,’ piped up Dr Samuelson, stroking his greying beard, ‘may I implore you not to take the Lord’s name in vain. Some of us Jews hold deeply personal religious views and all the more so because I’m from Religious Studies.’

‘I agree,’ added Professor Farik, Associate Professor in the Mathematics Department. ‘I’m a Muslim and blasphemy’s offensive to our Lord Allah. I’ll have to leave the meeting if this happens again.’

Swaine was taken aback. He was not used to being chastised in public, and not by those whom he regarded as his intellectual and management inferiors. He reddened but recovered his authority. ‘I apologise. Now Delancey, please continue. And colleagues, let’s try not to wander off track.’

‘Sorry,’ interrupted Samuelson again, ‘but with due respect to you, Dean, the comments of Prof Farik and my own are important and not intended to derail the meeting or

get it off track. The ground rules should be clear. I repeat I won't tolerate blasphemy of my God.'

'A god you can't even prove exists,' Professor Longburn began. 'In science we have yet to prove that a god, or any other such being, exists.'

Samuelson's face turned scarlet but before he could respond, Miss Moeng from Social Work launched in. 'Professor Longburn, irrespective of whether you can or cannot prove God exists, don't you have any respect for religious choice and the fact we're a diverse group that has to coexist? You need to respect the views of others.'

'I respect views that make sense.' Longburn slammed his hand down on the table. 'And, I'm sick and tired of being politically correct. Have to be careful not to tread on the toes of any Muslim, Jew, atheist, woman, black, gay ...'

'Colleagues, colleagues,' implored Swaine.

'I take huge exception to your remarks Professor Longburn,' Moeng rose from her chair. 'As a black woman I take your comments as a personal insult.'

'Miss Moeng, sit down.' Swaine tried to control the scene threatening to develop into religious and cultural warfare. 'Let's focus on the issue at hand.'

'Not before Professor Longburn apologises.' Moeng was adamant. She remained standing.

'Just apologise for God's ... apologise.' Swaine glared at Longburn.

'I refuse. I'm entitled to my opinion, *for God's sake*.' Longburn glowered at Samuelson as he emphasised his words.

'Well, I'm leaving,' said Moeng.

Samuelson and Farik stood up as well.

'Enough.' Swaine was on his feet. 'The matter at hand's important and the Vice-Chancellor has to have a decision in the next week or so. Perhaps we can have a session outside this meeting where we iron out our religious and cultural differences.'

Longburn snorted.

'If you promise to convene such a meeting, I'll stay,' said Samuelson. 'I've always said debate about cultural diversity is essential in our country. But I insist on the participation of all who are here today.'

Moeng and Farik nodded in agreement. Longburn looked stormy.

'Good. All set.' Swaine was relieved at this temporary reprieve. Now the idiots want another meeting. *For God's sake*. He couldn't help repeating this phrase in his mind. It felt like winning the argument. Small price to pay, he supposed, for not letting them wreck this

process. After all, he'd chosen these imbeciles believing they knew nothing about ethics. He hadn't bargained on them defending their religious ideals so fervently.

'Delancey, please proceed.' Swaine gestured to her.

'The problem is that sometimes journal editors don't check to see if the research they publish has actually been done by the author who claims it to be his or her own work,' she began.

'Would academics sink so low?' queried Jane Spear.

'Bet some would,' commented Longburn, 'especially the religious types.' He glared at Samuelson.

'Chair,' began Samuelson.

'Colleagues, I insist we keep to the matter on the table. Delancey, continue.'

'Well, I've found evidence of this,' said Delancey. I checked and it seems that Dr Mkhize *has* used the work of a student for the article she wrote. She appears as the sole author without any recognition of the student, and, as such, Dr Mkhize's publication transgresses the University's research policy.'

'And how can you be so certain of this?' Alex Hallie's gaze focused on Delancey as he directed his question at her, his strong American accent coming to the fore.

'Sorry, I've not met you,' said Delancey. 'Would you mind introducing yourself?' She directed a look of annoyance at Swaine for this lapse in protocol.

'Oh, I'm Alex Hallie from Archaeology. Joined Egoli for a few months.'

He leaned back in his chair, adjusting the leather strap of his watch and fixing his blue-grey eyes on Delancey. In front of him, Delancey noticed, lay a top of the range Montblanc fountain pen.

'So perhaps you're not familiar with our software to detect plagiarism,' said Delancey.

'I simply wanted to make sure you'd used it properly. Are you sure Dr Mkhize, nowhere in the article, acknowledged the student in *any* way?'

'I'm certain of it. I did my homework Mr Hallie. You'll find me to be a thorough academic.'

'It's Professor Hallie. I'm not too hung up on titles, but I do go for accuracy.'

'Professor Hallie's been appointed as Visiting Professor occupying the annual Darwin Scholarship Chair. It's the prerogative of the University Council to make this appointment,' Swaine informed the meeting.

‘Well, Professor Hallie, I’ve documented the exact sections where the student’s work was used as I’m sure you saw in the report.’

‘Delancey,’ - Swaine now adopted a more conciliatory tone, - ‘I haven’t distributed your report yet. Only the VC and I’ve seen it. Wanted to talk about it here first in this committee and afterwards let the members have a look.’

‘So we’re making decisions here today without all the information?’ Delancey glared again at Swaine.

‘And Dr Mkhize’s of course black,’ said Moeng.

‘That has nothing to do with the issue,’ said Delancey.

‘But of course we need to be indulgent because she’s black.’ Longburn smirked.

‘We blacks have always been discriminated against.’ Moeng’s eyes spat fire. ‘How can we be sure this isn’t a race thing?’

‘I’m a scientist, Miss Moeng,’ continued Delancey. ‘I investigated this matter as I should when it was brought to my attention. I was not looking to nail any colleague.’

‘But still us blacks are more scrutinised than others in this University,’ continued Moeng.

Farik nodded in support. ‘More so than in any other university in the country.’

‘Is it true Delancey that more black students plagiarise in this University - more than white students do?’ Jane Spear queried.

Farik seemed ready to jump out of her chair. ‘I’d dispute that emphatically. Where’s the evidence for this?’ She glowered at Delancey as if accusing her of misrepresenting facts.

‘I’ve no such evidence,’ said Delancey.

Swaine rolled his eyes upwards but corrected his body language, aware his frustration was showing. His plaid handkerchief was soaked with mopped up sweat. These baboons hold senior degrees. This was a new experience for him. He’d misjudged the situation.

‘For my money,’ began Hallie, ‘I fail to see how we can make any decisions here today. Surely we need Professor James’s report?’

For the second time, Swaine was relieved at this reprieve. He could not face managing the war that seemed on the brink of erupting. ‘Time’s up. Let’s call it a day. I’ll send out a meeting notice for about a week’s time and I’ll have the report delivered to your offices.’

Swaine exited the room in a hurry. Dear God, they’d discussed absolutely bloody nothing. And with Dube breathing down his neck ...

Walking down the passage, he could hear the raised voices still emanating from the boardroom, punctuated with expletives and profanities. He realised Longburn didn't seem at all concerned about any real consequences of his blasphemy.

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Delancey's head was pounding by the time she reached her office and she recognised the tell-tale signs of an incipient migraine. She reached into the back of her desk drawer and popped two Migrils from the pack. It seemed to her she was swimming against a current that became stronger each year. Yet she was resolute. Not only resolute ... driven ... to address this matter. Surely the University stood for truth ... and that involved truth in academic publications as well. How could an academic simply take the work of a student and use it for self-gain in a publication to score points with the University? It was outrageous. And how could Swaine seem so dismissive of this crime?

The light was flashing on her answering machine and she pressed the message button.

'Delancey, I'm here in South Africa. I've left a few messages for you.' Stavros's guttural voice came through loud and clear. 'I'm on Extension 3124. When can I see you?'

Stavros rose to meet Delancey as she entered the refurbished *News Café*. Sounds of the traffic punctuated the night and police sirens screamed down the road. The Melville-Auckland Park area was known, years back, as a bohemian enclave. Later it turned rough and ready but the growing presence of universities in the area had reawakened an alternative, non-mainstream community. Small pavement cafés re-emerged with the nightlife spilling out until the early hours of the morning. Some up-market clubs drew considerable patronage from students and even from some members of university staff.

‘As always, you look great, Delancey,’ Stavros encircled her shoulders in his arms and drew her to him. She allowed him a brief peck on her cheek before moving away, pleased that this was her city and she was in control.

‘Nice to see you again,’ Delancey half-lied as she took him in. His charm was still evident and he looked good. But she also remembered the last time she’d seen him - at La Vigne with Eleni - and he’d certainly seemed enamoured with his student. She could see how students would be attracted to this warm and larger-than-life Greek. But what he did with his students in Greece was not her problem.

Stavros touched her arm.

‘Sorry, a busy day.’

‘Maybe I can help? I think I would know how to relax you.’

‘Ah, Stavros, as persistent as ever. That’s not going to happen.’

‘Never say never, Delancey. Perhaps you can order for us. I don’t know your South African food but I do know this South African professor is still ravishing.’ He leaned across the table and touched her face. ‘Even after a tough day. May I order the wine? I’ve been studying South African wines.’

In spite of the limited menu, Stavros ordered a respectable *Allesverloren Shiraz* and soon Delancey felt herself beginning to enjoy his company again, as she had on Naxos. He talked about his first days in Johannesburg - being pick-pocketed on the Gautrain from the airport to Park Station in the city - catching a mini-bus taxi which he believed to be a regular taxi and being swamped by street kids as the taxi headed through Hillbrow. Her mind trailed off and she wondered if there could be anything more with him - even if he would only be in the country for the next few months. Especially *because* he would only be in the country for a short time. Abruptly she checked herself. *Remember Delancey, it’s always the charming ones*

*who are out to chance their luck.* She could do without this charismatic Greek. She steered the conversation into safer territory.

‘You know, Stavros, I met a past student of yours the other day. She graduated in archaeology last year and mentioned she’d done her research in Naxos.’

‘Life’s full of coincidences, Delancey. Do you remember how I met you?’

‘Do you remember her? Thandi Zulu.’

‘Of course I remember her. I supervised her work. She was part of the exchange programme between our Universities.’

‘I thought you’d mention this to me, given that she was so recently a student from my University?’

‘Unfortunately, Thandi wasn’t a great student. You know your education system’s problematic in South Africa. She got her PhD, but if you ask me, she didn’t deserve it. Why should I spoil our time talking about this?’

‘But if you were her supervisor, why didn’t you refuse to let her pass?’

‘I tried, but your University overruled me. Her co-supervisor was from here and Egoli, after all, was her home University. She supported giving Thandi the degree.’

‘But at Egoli we’re intent on upholding standards.’

‘Knowing you, Delancey, I’m sure you do. But does this go for everyone at Egoli? Or at other South African universities for that matter?’

Delancey felt uncomfortable and had to concede there were difficulties in this area.

‘I’ve been reading your newspapers. It seems often the universities take in anyone who’s capable of putting on a good show. One report even mentioned how students buy their degrees. In fact, Thandi’s South African co-supervisor, my counterpart here at Egoli, was also a bit of a problem.’

‘But surely the examiners outside the University wouldn’t have passed a sub-standard thesis?’

‘Systems are fallible. The best I could do in this situation was to find a couple of examiners who were on their way out to retirement. I don’t think they were particularly interested in the thesis, but they got paid for examining it. Charlotte Mkhize - the co-supervisor that is - was adamant that black students in South Africa are disadvantaged from the start and so our expectations needed to be lowered in Thandi’s case.’

‘Charlotte Mkhize was the co-supervisor?’ Delancey tried to hide her visible shock at learning Charlotte Mkhize was also involved here. While Thandi had mentioned a co-

supervisor from Egoli, Delancey had never suspected it was the person she was currently investigating for plagiarism.

‘Yes. And it wouldn’t surprise me if Charlotte had bought her archaeological degrees as well. But let’s talk of more pleasant things. Not of incompetent students and their equally incompetent supervisors.’

He leaned over. ‘I’ve been looking forward to seeing you here and was relieved when you returned my call. Will you forgive me for leaving Naxos early? I’d wanted to show you parts of the island you’d never know existed.’

‘It was fine that you had to leave. Believe me, Stavros, I had plenty to do before I returned to South Africa.’

‘Maybe another time. Next year?’

The dinner was delicious; the wine flowed; the talk was of Naxos and the idiosyncrasies of the local people. They laughed about many things - at the way startled sunbathers responded to an octogenarian and his loud whistle; at the nudists covering up when the wedding party went by to the small church on the hill at Agia Anna; at a baptism Delancey had attended where the priest warded off evil to the baby by spitting into the baptismal water.

When he asked her to drop him off at his B&B accommodation, she recognised the subtle manner in which he intended to resume his seduction and how she was tempted to play along. And she resolved, even more strongly than before, to keep up her guard - at least until she got to know Stavros Vassilis a bit better.

He retained some power over her. Still.

Small, and with dim lighting, the seafood restaurant, *Kabeljou*, in Melville, exuded intimacy. A Mozart violin concerto played in the background, just at the right level to create mood yet allow for conversation. Those seated at the two- or four-place tables - no large ones here - tended to lower the tone of their voices, as if in harmony with the prevailing ambience. Waiters in crisp white shirts and coal black trousers hovered in the background, emerging when a simple flick of the hand or a backward glance indicated that their services were required.

No one knew him here but, to be certain, he'd used a false name when he'd booked. Having secured the table earlier, he met her at the door. She couldn't suspect he'd disguised his identity. He could leave nothing to chance tonight. This would be his only opportunity.

He looked at her across the table and realised she was as elegant as always. Her hair - drawn back from her face and looped into an elaborate plait - exposed her sharp features; her dark skin glowed in the soft light. After an initial awkwardness, she relaxed and appeared excited about the prospects of a fresh challenge and the shape her career was taking. Her hands expressed enthusiasm. He knew she always protected her hands with gloves when she worked.

As she spoke, he was relieved to realise she was not as angry with him as she'd been when she responded to his invitation. Now she said she wanted to forget the whole thing and get on with a new life. Nevertheless, he still wondered about this change. He was not sure he could trust her and it was too risky to take that chance; he could not afford to have the spotlight on him right now. Especially at this time.

She declined dessert and they finished their Dom Pérignon.

'Shall we walk off the excesses of tonight?' he suggested.

It was a short way to the small dam. It was late and he'd chosen his time with precision; he'd done his homework well.

'Is it safe?' she asked. 'Johannesburg's so full of crime.'

He reassured her they'd only venture in a little way and, after all, he was a strong man, he joked. He knew persuasion was one of his gifts.

They walked in silence for a few minutes. The leaves of the Acacia trees, lining the dirt path, rustled in the gentle wind; the reeds around the perimeter of the dam swayed in unison. The weather was good for early August and the cold of the recent winter was waning.

She wanted to turn back, but he gestured to a bench a few metres away - to sit for only for a few minutes. The path narrowed and he fell into step behind her, watching her petite frame move in front of him. He clenched and unclenched his fists.

In one swift movement, his large hands encircled her throat, his fingers gravitating to the carotid artery on the right side of her neck. He managed to muffle her scream but she was a demon and her nails tore at his shirt as she kicked out at his shins. She was stronger than he'd anticipated. He felt a bone crack under the pressure of his hands and after, a minute or so, her body sagged against him. She was light, but he'd known that. Her struggle was unexpected though. He pulled her head back and looked into her face. Her eyes were glassy and he wondered if it was true that the eyes of the dead could retain the image of their killer.

He needed to hurry. He rifled through her bag and found his note requesting that they meet. He crushed it and jammed it deep into the pocket of his trousers. Then he lifted her over his shoulder and headed for the dense copse of shrubs at the far end of the dam.

He knew the reeds would keep her prisoner for days.

Delancey knew where her fear of bats came from.

She tried to reconcile what she'd learned about these mammals with the horror they presented in The Dream. Maybe, if, again, she looked at how they reduced the insect population and the amounts of pesticides used by farmers, they would miraculously transmute into co-inhabitants with her on this earth. But she'd already researched fruit bats and insectivorous bats, and the fifty-six sub-species of these two groups, common in South Africa and, still, names such as Mauritian Tomb Bat, Slit-faced Bat and Temminck's Hairy Bat simply served to reinforce the fear they held for her. She stared at the picture of the Cape Serotine Bat - ugly little thing with translucent wings and an angry pixie face and sharp, pointed ears - a flying rat. And after their high-pitched scream had announced their arrival in The Dream, they most certainly *did* fly into her, tearing at her face and arms with barbed claws, winding themselves in her hair and boring holes deep into her scalp with their serrated teeth.

Delancey was bewildered that the logic which always served her well in other circumstances, did not seem to work in strengthening her armour in the fight against this night terror. But then she knew where the fear came from and how it had insidiously taken home in her psyche, latching on to the structure that had been provided for it. She shuddered.

'How can a big girl like you be scared of a harmless creature like a moth?'

Delancey knew the derision in her grandmother's voice signalled that nothing would be done to remove the insect which cast a monstrous shadow onto the wall alongside her bed. She heard the beat of its wings against the lamp shade. She burrowed down into the bed and clenched the blankets around her head, making only a small hole through which she could talk. It was mid-summer but sweltering under the blankets was the least of her problems right now.

'But it's really big and I'm scared. It's like a bat. And they suck your blood.'

'You're such a ninny. And, on top of it, you're already five. Your mommy and daddy are raising you to be a weakling. Scared of everything. Bah. You'll be just like your father - he's also scared of everything.'

'But can't you take it out?'

‘No. You’ve got to face up to your fears and learn to be brave. You know you won’t always have your mommy and me to look after you.’

‘But just this once. I promise next time, I’ll be brave.’

She left the room and Delancey heard the key turning in the lock, closing off any means of escape for either her or the moth.

In spite of the day's activities, Delancey felt restless. She packed away the week's shopping and hung up the bright turquoise outfit she'd bought. She contemplated the evening alone. Saturday night. Watch TV? Read the new Hilary Mantel novel? Accept Stavros's invitation for dinner again? Or see if someone wanted to take in a movie? It was still early. A long run would do her good and she'd decide afterwards.

Her route took her through the restaurant-lined streets of Melville. All around there was a buzz of things coming alive. Tables had been set up on the pavements under sturdy gas heaters designed to ward off the last of the winter chill. Many restaurant entrances boasted blackboards peppered with colourful chalk drawings detailing dinner menus. Saturday night was a busy time in the area.

Half an hour later she passed by the Randlord mansions on the ridge of Parktown, one of the oldest suburbs in Johannesburg. Majestic houses once owned by the rich mining moguls - the Lords of the Witwatersrand who established Johannesburg in the 1880s. Most houses were now offices and company headquarters though some bore the distinctive blue and white ceramic sign proclaiming their heritage status, thereby protecting them from the harsh destruction of progress.

If Delancey jogged in the early evening, she chose her route with care and stuck to well-populated roads. Johannesburg was not safe. The last part of her circuit took her through the main campus of Egoli University. Red telephones dotted the campus at strategic points to offer help and safety to students and staff who had cause to be there in the evenings.

She approached the vicinity of the small dam on the periphery of the University property. The administration believed it to be a potential security risk in spite of efforts to thin the tall reeds encircling it. On the other hand, the ornithologists from the Biology Department regarded it as a rare asset for a university located in a metropolitan area and mobilised an action group to lobby for its survival, although the motives of a large student component of this group remained questionable. Remnants of the posters from a recent protest still hung from trees. *Damn up the administration. Save our dam.*

Delancey was winded and stopped to read the words scrawled across a poster. Someone had drawn a lewd picture of a stick-couple fornicating. As if arranged, through a gap in the bushes, she spotted a couple doing the real thing some distance away, unaware of potential voyeurs. It seemed that students used this spot for recreation in the broad sense of

the term, but the dam did attract some reed cormorants and red-knobbed coots that appeared unperturbed by the human activity in the vicinity.

Delancey always felt apprehensive when she approached this section but she took it as a personal challenge to confront her demons by running alongside the dam to a section in the fence to the west which provided a short-cut to her house - her way of beating the past.

She was about to veer off onto the road when she saw Alex Hallie. He, too, was jogging but he approached her from another direction. Her heart sank. As if Johannesburg was not big enough. Now she had to bump into him on a Saturday. She stopped running.

Alex Hallie annoyed her although she'd only met him once - his American accent - his boyish Alpha-male overconfidence - his good looks and the sense he conveyed of not having a care in the world. Then again, why should he have a care? He'd landed a great Visiting Professor job at Egoli which Delancey knew carried double the salary paid to ordinary professors; he received royal treatment from the establishment; and he'd not be in the country long enough to make any real contribution to the University or the country, apart from the odd lecture he was required to present. Free-loading was the description Delancey felt best applied to Professor Alex Hallie.

'Delancey, what a surprise,' he drawled, coming to a stop, his athletic body - lean and toned with not an ounce of misplaced fat - exuded fitness.

Delancey noticed he hadn't even broken a sweat, and unlike she had.

'So glad I've met up with you here.'

She nodded .

'Wonder if you can help me? I was struggling with the software programme we use to detect plagiarism. It didn't seem to work for me.'

'Can't it wait until Monday? In any case, you said in our meeting you knew the programme well. In fact, you even challenged my thoroughness in using it.'

'Oh I know how it's supposed to work but I've never actually done it myself.' Alex's broad smile revealed a set of movie-star perfect white teeth.

'I know I'm interrupting you but I'd be grateful if could I take a moment of your time so you can explain it to me. I'm under a huge time constraint. Perhaps we can have something to drink at that café over there? I'm buying.' He gestured to the coffee shop about 300 metres away. 'Their lattes are the best I've tasted in Jo'burg. And that's saying something when they have to compete with Starbucks.'

'You Americans think you have the best of everything.'

'And I don't even mind that you look a bit dishevelled,' he added.

It was some time later when Delancey resumed her run that she wondered how Alex could take so long to pick up on the few simple procedures she illustrated and wrote down for him. He seemed to want to prolong their conversation. Probably he had no plans for the rest of the evening. By now, the sun had set and diners were trickling into the restaurants, and she had to get home. She opened the small gate that presented itself as some sort of artificial barrier between the formal Egoli grounds and the dam, and took a deep breath.

Charlotte Mkhize settled behind her computer. It was nightfall and she felt exhilarated as she turned up the volume of the pirated version of the Gumball Honesty Rap Lyrics and listened as the words ran into each other.

*When you wanna be honest, just beware!  
The truth hurts in this nitrogenic atmosphere!  
You gotta wake up, realize and recognize!  
Sometimes the truth has strategical lies!  
But keep them lies of a manageable size, or tears will arise, and hurt their eyes!*

She relived the events of the afternoon. Not often did she get the opportunity of spending five hours straight with her beau. Usually their lovemaking was confined to furtive kisses and quick half-dressed copulations behind his closed office door. Today was different. A special Saturday. He'd picked her up at the Sandton City shopping mall and they'd driven to the room booked at the Protea hotel half-way to Pretoria, a place where they were not likely to run into anyone they knew. Over an in-room meal and a couple of bottles of red wine, they'd made up for lost time. It helped that his wife was out of town.

She looked at the document before her. It wouldn't be too difficult to change this thesis into a publishable academic article. The student wrote well and the material was promising. Nevertheless, she would still have to put some effort into cutting it down and rearranging it but, at least, it was mindless work.

*You can trust in me, believe it when I say  
honesty is what I need,  
it's what I need  
the truth will set me free*

First to be deleted was the name of the student. Afterwards all the junk making up the periphery of the thesis - acknowledgements, contents pages, lists of tables. Students could be so long-winded, so grateful to all and sundry, what a bore. She read the dedication - *To my beloved husband, Stanley, for believing in me*. Well, that would definitely go. Bye-bye Stanley. Highlight. Delete button. Click. Gone. That cut it down somewhat. All so easy.

Pity the article still needed some work. She was hoping to finish it in two hours. She played a game with herself - trying to better her record each time. This manuscript needed a few more references to make it appear a little more weighty, academically speaking. She began to surf the Internet. Thank you Google. Thank you Wikipedia.

Charlotte was an expert at converting the theses of her research students into articles. In fact, this practice contributed to her publication record that had grown over the past years. Each article generated considerable money for the University from the government coffers, and the University rewarded their star researchers well. So much so, that she could look forward to promotion in the future. Possibly a vice-deanship? Maybe in the research area? It would be satisfying to put pressure on others to publish and be let off the hook for not doing so herself. She'd be a fully-fledged bureaucrat within the University structure - and everyone knew how protected they were. Who knew where she could go from there? She only needed to get her foot in the administrative doorway.

She keyed in the names of authors she considered to have written on this topic. Another easy task. The references at the end of the thesis listed some of the relevant sources. The decision of universities in Africa to go 'open-access' helped a lot. It was easy to download the full texts of articles. Free. Thereafter it was a simple cut-and-paste job. It even worked in the pdf versions of articles, courtesy of the new software that converted protected documents into Word-format texts. Simple. As long as she included the authors in her reference list, it was unlikely anyone would discover she'd used pages and pages of their original articles without changing a word. She sniggered. She reminded herself to take care not to copy authors who were too prominent in the field - the experts most likely to check who'd cited their works. That exercise might call attention to her article.

Highlight. Copy. Click. Paste. Done.

She'd have to wait a while before she sent this article off for publication - until the student had graduated and lost interest.

She saved the document in an electronic folder and, with satisfaction, noted it now stored five papers waiting to be submitted to unsuspecting journal editors at the mere click of a button. This would be the sixth. She changed to another song, stood up and moved her body to Beyoncé's lyrics.

*Honesty is such a lonely word  
Everyone is so untrue.  
Honesty is hardly ever heard.  
And mostly what I need from you.*

Delancey was annoyed with herself. She'd been lulled by the thought of summer around the corner and hadn't anticipated how quickly the darkness descended as soon as the sun went down. Her latté with Alex Hallie had taken more time than she'd bargained for and now she was committed to the route alongside the dam in the dusk. She was irritated with him. She sped up as she rounded the bushes, knowing the faster she ran, the quicker she'd get home, but she still had to cover the section at the extreme end where she knew she'd be out of sight and sound of other people.

The moon was not yet up and she chided herself for not taking the precaution of bringing a headlight. Hadn't her mother drilled into her that she must be prepared for anything? She was now a considerable distance from the gate at which she'd entered and it was quiet. She felt for the cell phone in her inside pocket of her running jacket, thinking she should've keyed in speed dial to be safe. But speed dial to whom? She extracted the phone hoping to use it as a makeshift torch. As she pressed one of the buttons to light up her path, her left foot hit something soft. She stumbled, sprawled and with hands outstretched, she skidded a metre or so into the slime at the side of the dam. Her cell phone slipped from her hand, sinking into the mud. Despite the shock from her tumble, she lunged for the phone and rescued it just in time.

Catching her breath, she pressed one of the keys, relieved it still gave off some light while her eyes acclimatised to the dark. The object she'd tripped over now lay half-submerged at the edge of the dam.

Stupid. Delancey reproached herself - and clumsy. Also, people shouldn't leave all sorts of junk lying around like this. She stood up, angry now both with herself and with the litterer. Whatever it was, she had no intention of retrieving it. She needed to get out of this place. She was caked with mud; she was cold; and the unease in her stomach was still there.

In the tumble her shoelaces had untied and she kneeled down, wasting no time, and double knotted each in turn. Looking up again, her eyes now closer to the level of the dam, she became aware of a larger object some metres into the water. The faint light from her cell phone barely illuminated what she saw, but she recognised the outline. She pressed the last number she'd entered on her phone and bolted back to the gate.

Blue police van lights cast a surreal glow on the water, the strobe alternating light with darkness. For seconds, trees lit up and then darted back into the dark as if in retreat from the horror they witnessed. It could have passed for a children's pantomime if not for the macabre props. The risen moon gave off a weak light.

The policemen waded out to the body which was caught up in submerged reeds and branches. The night chill engulfed Delancey and she shivered as she watched the procedure. Alex Hallie placed a thick woollen jacket around her.

'Thank God you'd taken my number ... and that you'd mentioned you were taking the route via the dam.' He pressed a hip flask with something strong inside it to her mouth. He'd been the one to arrive on the scene and summon the police after he'd received Delancey's call.

Delancey shivered. The liquid burned her throat as it slid down but the resultant warmth was reassuring.

Click, click ... click, click ... the strobe lights from the police vans whined, punctuating the silence.

How could such large men be so quiet? Watching them retrieve the body was like being part of a slow motion movie. No-one spoke. After some time the reeds gave way and they heaved the body to the edge of the dam. The victim's braids trailed her face and shoulders, strands of weeds and debris entwined around them. One breast was exposed from the torn shirt and, to one side, a long, elegant arm had twisted at an angle. Some ropes floated free around the body. Whoever had killed her and tied her up had done a shoddy job.

'Mam, don't think you should stay around for this. We've got your details. We'll contact you in the next day or so to get your statement. You must also be in shock.'

The badge identified the man as Detective Justice Tau. He was tall and thin - lanky - and towered over Delancey.

But Delancey felt magnetised to the scene. She could now see the victim's long fingers. A hooped earring was half-torn from an earlobe. The girl seemed tiny in the hands of the police officers as their grotesque bulk hovered over her in misplaced protection.

'Floating face down, full rigor mortis and the beginning signs of bloating and gas. Abrasions on the neck. From the greenish-blue tinge, she must have been in here for a couple of days,' remarked one of the policemen.

‘Only ‘bout twenty-five I think,’ said another, moving the braids from the victim’s face. ‘Still a baby.’

‘Mam, I do think you should go.’ Tau again.

The victim’s face was now exposed and Delancey drew back in horror. A wave of nausea swept through her. She felt dizzy, she leaned out to grab Alex’s arm.

‘You look as if you’re going to pass out,’ he said.

But Delancey remained standing. ‘I know her. She was in my office the other day. Her name’s Thandi Zulu.’

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Delancey allowed Alex to lead her to Detective Tau’s car but she declined his offer to accompany her home. She paused to watch the ambulance doors slam shut and draw away, taking with it its spectral lights. Apart from the yellow plastic strips identifying a section of the dam and surrounding area as a crime scene, it seemed to Delancey the night continued where it had left off. A lone policeman settled down to stand guard for the remainder of the evening.

Arriving home, she double-checked the locks on her doors. Her body felt heavy and she needed to shower. Instead she slumped onto the couch, appreciating the full force of the shock she’d experienced.

Gus, her shorthaired grey tabby, sidled up. She’d rescued him from the Randburg SPCA some years earlier.

‘We both escaped, my boy,’ she whispered into his fur. ‘Just.’

But now the dam brought it all back to her.

Lloyd Dube marched to the podium with determination. He did not look to his left or to his right; his footsteps were heavy on the wooden floor. The weak afternoon sun broke through the metallic August sky and cast pale rays across the auditorium. It signalled rain. Dube drew himself erect. The podium provided an artificial shield from the audience he'd assembled at short notice.

'I'm sure you've heard about the unfortunate incident that took place last Saturday.' Faces from University administrators and faculty stared back at him.

'One of our past students in archaeology was found dead in our dam on the south side of our property.' Dube told things as they were; he never used niceties to couch his words. 'Her name is - was - Thandi Zulu. Dr Zulu graduated last year.'

Silence.

'The police are investigating. We don't know the full story yet. Probably an act of random violence. Something we see daily. I've always been opposed to this dam. It's a dangerous place, draws a criminal element to it, and I've been proved right. We should've filled it in years ago.'

'But what about the wildlife, the moorhens?' Sam Heen seemed oblivious to the sentiment of the moment.

People shuffled in their chairs.

Dube stared at him with disdain. 'I don't know too much else at this point, but I'll keep you posted on email.'

Delancey, still shaken by Thandi's death, looked around the room. Most looked shocked, as one would expect. A few seemed to take this news in their stride as if a death on their doorstep happened every day. In fact, from the look of it, Stavros, more intent on focusing on his cell phone, behaved as if nothing out of the ordinary had occurred. He caught her eye and lifted his hand in a truncated wave.

'Are we safe here, Professor Dube?' ventured Dr Jane Spear, her tweed wrap pulled straightjacket-like across her flat chest. Others grunted in support of the question.

'This is an isolated attack,' responded Dube. 'However, I've put University security on high alert. I've also asked the Dean of Students to issue warnings to our students to take precautions. No late night walking alone, that sort of thing and I've assured the police of the full support of the University if they need it for their investigations.'

‘What effect will this have on our students and their parents?’ Spear piped up again.

Stavros stifled a yawn.

‘Donors and parents are usually not understanding in these circumstances. It’s unfortunate this had to happen on our property ... and with the University review coming up in a couple of weeks. This comes at a bad time. It’s annoying. But now to more pleasant things.’ Dube changed the topic with ease. ‘Many of you may have already met our new colleagues. Professor Alex Hallie has joined Egoli in the Archaeology Department as a Visiting Professor for six months. Ah there you are Alex.’ Dube gestured to Alex entering at the back of the auditorium.

‘But just to remind you, Professor Hallie, we pride ourselves at Egoli on being punctual - even though we’re in Africa.’

Ouch, thought Delancey.

Alex nodded in offer of apology but he didn’t look happy.

‘And Professor Stavros Vassilis, also in the Archaeology Department, here on exchange from the University of Athens will be with us for three months. I expect great things to come out of archaeology. Pity Dr Zulu was a graduate of that department,’ said Dube. ‘It rather puts a damper on things.’

With that he left the podium.

As the staff dispersed, Delancey turned to see Alex Hallie making his way across, his deep blue-grey eyes staring right at her.

‘We must talk.’

‘Can it wait? I have a ton of things to do. But thanks for coming to the dam when I called. I haven’t thanked you properly for that.’

Later that day Delancey settled herself in an overstuffed chair in the faculty staff room. Various academic bums, over the decades, moulded the lumps she now needed to avoid to secure moderate comfort.

‘Would be a good idea if they gave us some decent tea.’ Jane Spear emerged from a corner.

‘Well, hi there, Jane,’ said Dr Luanne Sheer. ‘Didn’t see you in that dingy alcove. God, they must have got masochists to design university staff rooms - uncomfortable with all sorts of nooks and crannies for people to hide in.’

‘Always beats me that parents pay such exorbitant fees, the alumni donate funds yet we still get paid a pittance, and on top of it all, they can’t even buy us decent tea,’ continued Jane, avoiding Luanne’s barb.

‘Wouldn’t it be great if some benefactor provided us with decent chairs as well,’ said Luanne. ‘How’re we supposed to impart knowledge to impressionable minds when we have sore butts?’

The door flew open and as if propelled sideways by a tornado, Sam Heen flew in. He was damp from the rain, his hair was dishevelled and his shirt hung out below his sweater.

‘Damn weather. Have you ever thought why we’re having so much rain in August?’

‘Hmmm, you do climate change, Sam?’ Luanne looked up. ‘You look a bit rough this afternoon,’ she gestured to his arm encased in plaster.

‘So would you,’ he shot back, ‘if you had to take three brats and a pre-schooler to school every day, make your way through the morning traffic then fetch them again for after-school events and make your way through the afternoon traffic. I swear the traffic in Johannesburg’s become intolerable and this rain doesn’t help.’

‘Doesn’t your wife do all that?’ Luanne stared at him over the top of her pink-rimmed glasses that matched the colour of her sweater. ‘Seems like a full-time job to me. Do you ever get time to do your academic work?’

Sam glared back

Luanne continued. ‘Have a cup of tea and tell me what you think about this murder. Our own little bit of fame in the city. Right on our doorstep, so to speak. Although murders are a dime a dozen in South Africa.’

‘No-one’s called it a murder yet,’ said Jane. ‘We shouldn’t jump to conclusions until we’ve heard the results of the autopsy.’

‘*Riiight*,’ Luanne drawled. ‘Choose to believe what you want, Jane. I’m putting my money on a murder. A body found in our University dam and you’re wondering if perhaps she’d decided to go for a swim? Don’t be so naïve.’

Sam settled into a battered chair, slopping his tea into his saucer. ‘I’m surprised we don’t have more incidents around here. So many of these students are provocative, their breasts and bums hanging out all over the place.’

‘Asking for trouble,’ said Jane wryly. ‘Tight jeans, low blouses, short skirts. You see them all over the place.’

‘Yes, and they blame the men who attack them,’ said Sam.

‘No means no,’ said Delancey from her corner seat. ‘Listen to yourself, Sam.’

‘Attack’s a bit of a strong word, isn’t it?’ Johan de Wet, entering the room, picked up the conversation. ‘But these young women do add spice to the campus. Take my Accounts II class. Full of tits and arse.’

He looked at the weak offering of tea and turned away in disgust.

‘Egoli University has a duty to protect its women,’ said Jane. ‘With all this crime and violence in Johannesburg, I’m scared to venture out at night.’

‘Got some important date to go out to?’ queried Johan. ‘Didn’t think you were the type that walks the streets at night.’

Jane retreated into her seat, drawing her wrap over her non-existent breasts.

‘Well,’ said Luanne, ‘it certainly puts a damper on things. My girlfriends and I like to go clubbing. We don’t usually feel any danger. But now I guess things may have changed.’ She stretched, arching her back and her nipples rose like two little lumps breaking the smoothness of her sweater.

‘But you’re married,’ remarked Sam.

‘We have an arrangement,’ said Luanne. ‘You know one man can’t give you everything, *darhling*. My husband says he needs a bit of variety and, in this day and age, I agree. We give ourselves the freedom to sample other goods, so to speak.’ She stretched again and wet her lips with her tongue. ‘And sometimes, the more the merrier. Threesomes and foursomes can be fun. Want to join in? If you haven’t tried yet, I’d recommend it. Spices up your marriage.’ Her eyes settled on Sam.

‘I think the world would be better off without all that,’ said Sam. ‘We could get on with our work without distraction.’

Luanne raised an eyebrow. 'Didn't know you could be so easily distracted, Sammy. Goes to show, doesn't it? You never know people, even if you work with them.'

*'Especially if you work with them,'* grunted Sam.

Delancey felt annoyed. All this meaningless banter when someone had died. She moved to the back of the room where it was quieter and began to go through her mail. Still the conversation cut through.

'Well, we certainly are disrupting the dreariness of this place by introducing some new blood,' said Luanne. 'What with Professor Hallie. Hey, we're looking up here.'

'He's on main campus, isn't he?' said Jane. 'Professor Dube said he's been appointed for a few months in that research position that's the prerogative of the Chair of Council to appoint? I believe it comes with all sorts of perks.'

'But he seems to like our campus. Saw him studying the murals on the wall the other day. Those awful elephants by the library - the ones messing up our place,' said Johan.

'Alex Hal-lie,' Luanne drawled out his last name. 'Now there's a man I could happily fuck.' Her tongue traced the outline of her lips.

'Don't see what you see in him,' ventured Sam. 'A bit uppity. Rumour has it that the University's given him a prize office as if he's been around for at least fifty years.'

'Jealousy'll get you nowhere, Sammy,' said Luanne. 'He can have his office as long as I get to do it with him on his Persian rug. I can feel myself sinking into the deep, soft pile ...'

'Persians aren't that thick, you idiot,' said Johan with an air of superiority.

'Well then, a flokati.'

'What the hell do you see in him, Lu?' said Johan. 'And if he's interested in anyone it's you, Delancey.'

Luanne looked sour at the mention of Delancey's name.

'Don't insinuate, Johan,' said Delancey, 'that there's anything going on between us.'

'Still,' said Luanne, 'he's got a good body on him. You must have seen him jogging around the place?'

'For goodness sakes, Lu,' said Sam, 'I'd hate my wife to go on like this about other men.'

'Ah, Sam, but you don't know what I give my husband.' She leered at Sam's crotch. 'Now there's something I forgot to tell all of you. Do you know, I saw Hallie having a glass of wine with ... what's her name? The girl who was murdered?'

'Thandi Zulu?' Jane queried.

‘The very one. About a week or two before she was found in the dam, in a pub on 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue, one of those bars where staff fraternise with students.’

She glanced at Sam before continuing. ‘Also saw the new Greek professor with some lovely looking things. What’s his name again? Savo? Stamata? Stav?’

‘Stavros,’ said Johan. ‘Looks like an okay chap to me. In fact Swaine and Dube want to arrange a meeting with him - me included.’

‘What a waste,’ said Luanne. ‘I’d make the most of a meeting with him. And, thinking about it, why not with both of them - Stavros and Alex?’

‘I come in here to have a cup of tea and get assaulted by all your depraved ideas,’ said Jane. ‘You belong in a brothel, not in a place of higher learning.’

‘Jane’s on her high horse,’ chirped Johan. ‘Our voice of conscience. Our own morality police.’

Jane gathered up her papers and stalked out of the room, followed, a few minutes later by the others, leaving Delancey behind.

Alex Hallie and Thandi Zulu having a drink? They must have known each other but he’d never let on. Not even when he saw her body being dragged from the dam.

## **Autopsy Report**

Thandi Zulu: Twenty-six year old African female.

The autopsy reveals that the victim was in sound health but suffered trauma to her head and neck. Petechiae or ruptured capillaries were found under the victim's eyelids including on the face and neck. Blood-red eyes, the result of ruptured capillaries in the white part of the eyes, are indicative of a "vigorous struggle" between the victim and assailant. The evidence indicated death by strangulation due to pressure on the larynx/trachea causing asphyxia and the consequent restriction of blood to the brain, leading to brain damage and death. Other signs of physical assault observed were evidence of blunt force injury to the tissues of the neck, resulting in small round bruises on the neck, blueness of tongue and bleeding under the skin. Scratch marks on the victim's neck are further indications of a struggle. The victim was immersed in water post death. The lack of water in the lungs, consistent with death prior to being immersed in water, is evidence of this fact. Death was, therefore, by suffocation from asphyxia rather than by drowning.

**RE:** Dr Thandi Zulu  
**FROM:** Professor Lloyd Dube, Vice-Chancellor  
**SENT:** 15 August  
**TO:** All members of staff

I inform you that the police have confirmed that former student of Egoli University, Dr Thandi Zulu, whose body was found in the University dam last week, was murdered. The police have opened a homicide docket in this regard. We have conveyed our condolences to her family.

Once the police work has been completed, I've ordered the dam to be filled in. The shack nearby will also be demolished. The matter is now closed and I'll not entertain any discussion.

Professor Lloyd Dube  
Vice-Chancellor and Principal

As if in sympathy, the mid-August sky was dull and cloudy. A cold wind pounded the spring buds on the trees outside. Alex Hallie sat in a pew in the back row of the church where he had a good view of those attending the memorial service for Thandi Zulu.

The small church, nestled in the suburb of Auckland Park, was originally an Afrikaans Dutch Reformed church before it was taken over by the Pentecostals when the church became too small for the growing Afrikaner congregation in the area. Thick stone walls amplified the cold, and the pews were solid and unforgiving. The stained glass window behind the altar was the only redeeming feature though it faced neither east nor west to catch the rising or setting sun.

A three-piece ensemble played *Amazing Grace* as people trickled in. Members of the choir, dressed in long blue gowns with red sashes - eyes closed - praised their God.

A tall man in a smart suit, perhaps cashmere - it looked expensive to Alex - accompanied Delancey. He didn't seem to be an academic if appearances were anything to go by. Relatives and close friends of the Zulu family occupied the three front pews, clinging onto and comforting each other amidst loud sobs. It was painful to watch the manifestations of their sorrow. A group - perhaps contemporaries of Thandi - huddled together on the far left side; they didn't seem to belong. Dube entered, together with a woman. They sat close. A little too close, observed Alex.

'Brothers and sisters,' began the minister, 'today we say farewell in spirit to Dr Thandi Zulu. Daughter. Archaeologist. Adventurer. Sister-in-the-Lord. And past student of Egoli University. A young woman who's entire life lay in front of her, yet she was taken away so tragically.'

'Hallelujah.' A woman in the front row raised both her hands.

'Yes, Hallelujah, sister. You're quite right. We must praise God in every circumstance. It's God's will our sister was taken from us; that her life was extinguished like a used match. We'll never understand His reasons. Never. Yet we believe. We must always believe even if we don't know why.'

*Yes. It's God's will. Praise the Lord. Hallelujah. We believe,* sang the choir.

‘And now I ask Thandi’s brother, Missionary George Zulu, to come up to the front to say a few words.

As Missionary Zulu strode to the podium, the choir burst into song. The hallelujahs rose from the front pews. Hands swayed in prayer, punctuated by sobs.

‘My sisters and brothers in the Lord,’ began George Zulu. ‘I stand before you today, broken-hearted. My young sister - my only sister - has been taken from our family. Taken away just as she was coming into her prime. As a beautiful woman. As a scholar. Taken away by crime infesting our country. Oozing its way into everything. Contaminating the very water we drink. Filling our air so we can’t breathe. Causing our wonderful country to become a dark, dark land.’

*Praise the Lord. Praise Him. Praise Him - for air; for water.*

‘My brothers and sisters, Thandi was on her way to doing great things. She’d been offered an opportunity to go teach at the University of Massachusetts in the United States. Yes, that’s right. The-U-ni-ted-States-of-America. She’d signed the contract. They approached her to join this prestigious University because they recognised her brilliance. They saw what a good scholar she was. A dedicated scholar.’

*And it’s all because of You, Lord. Hallelujah. Oh Praise Him.*

‘Yes, that’s right. Our Lord bestowed on her generous gifts. And we are grateful for that. Grateful. But also we have to forgive those who committed this abominable act. Those who cut short a young life. We have to forgive them as we’re taught in the Bible.’

*Forgive them their sins for they know not what they do.*

The minister stepped forward and hugged George Zulu.

‘Thank you my brother. And, now I call upon the Vice-Chancellor of Egoli University - the University where Thandi received her doctoral degree last year - to address us. We thought it appropriate to have a word from the University where she was so happy.’

Dube rose and adjusted his tie as he moved to the podium. He seemed ill at ease. The minister lowered the mike that was attached to the lectern and which threatened to hide him from the congregation.

‘Ladies and gentlemen,’ began Dube, ‘this is indeed a sad moment. A moment that no Vice-Chancellor ever wishes to experience. A moment we’d rather delegate to someone else. A moment when we have to confront the evil of this world ...’

*Hallelujah. The evil of this world.*

‘... As I was saying,’ Dube drew himself up, ‘... the evil has now become real to us. One of our own, a past student of Egoli University, has been taken from us. I didn’t know Dr Zulu personally but any student who graduates with a doctorate from Egoli, by definition, is good. Not only good. Great.’

*Oh praise Him. She was great. Praise, praise the Lord.*

‘We’ll do all we can to help the authorities get to the bottom of this scurrilous crime. Murder.’ Dube glowered at the congregation. ‘This sort of thing can’t be tolerated in our country.’ His hand thumped the lectern. He turned and walked back to his seat. His cell phone began ringing.

The minister resumed his place. ‘My brothers and sisters in the Lord, Professor Dube has shared great words of wisdom. Mandela suffered for our country. Many suffered. We are still suffering. I suffered as a black man in a land that denied blacks their human rights. And our State President, Jacob Zuma, also suffered. He’s also a black man and knows what it’s like to suffer. Now he’s going to make things right. He’s going to stem this tide of corruption. He’s going to make South Africa a wonderful place.’

*All praise to God. Zuma will win over evil. God will strengthen his hand. Hallelujah.*

‘My brothers and sisters let us pray for our country and for our State President. Oh Lord God, bless Jacob Zuma. Bless his five wives and his fiancée. Bless his twenty children...’

‘Twenty-two,’ a voice corrected.

‘And all his grandchildren,’ piped up another.

‘Yes ... and his several grandchildren. Make them prosperous. Give him the wisdom and strength to strike a deathly blow to evil. To ward off Satan. To protect our land. Let his feet never stumble as he serves us.’

*Lord protect Jacob Zuma. Strengthen his hand. Bless him, O Lord. Hallelujah.*

‘And now let us sing Hymn 128. *I am going home.*’

The choir burst forth. Those in the front pews stood, hands raised, eyes closed. Some clapped in time with the beat.

*Hallelujah, I am going home,  
Going home never more to roam;  
I am not complaining, every day I'm gaining,  
Hallelujah, I'm going home.*

Alex made his way to the door. This was about as much as he could take. He saw Delancey make a quick exit out of the side entrance, followed by the well-dressed man. He was amused to see Dube trapped in his pew.

‘Professor Alex Hallie?’ A skinny woman moved towards him and raised her sunglasses. ‘You’re the new professor in Archaeology, aren’t you? I’m Luanne Sheer from Management. God that was awful.’ She gestured with her cigarette in the direction of the church.

The second hymn was in progress. The choir belted out the words.

‘Care to join me for a drink to settle the nerves?’

‘So Alex, what brings you to our crime-infested country?’ Luanne Sheer lit a Sobranie Black Russian. Its gold filter shimmered between her long fingers and she ran her tongue around it. Her French manicure with diamante insets glinted under the light. She and Alex sat in a bar, way off the main roads of Melville - one where the management didn’t seem to care about the anti-smoking laws of the country. Luanne had chosen the place.

‘I like to see the world and I hadn’t yet been to South Africa even though I’ve lived abroad in several other countries. So when I heard about this job going here at Egoli I applied.’

‘But your accent’s from ... let me guess ... Boston? I used to pride myself on being able to distinguish the subtleties in American accents.’ She gave him a suggestive look and trailed her finger over the ice in her wine glass.

‘Oh mine’s from all over. I’ve lived in about twelve of the fifty states so I don’t sport a single accent.’

‘But you must have a home somewhere. Where did you work in the US?’

Alex was evasive. ‘No one particular place,’ he said, knowing she could source this information by Googling him on the Internet. Maybe she’d try to do this; maybe she wouldn’t. He didn’t see Luanne Sheer as someone who’d expend too much effort on things that did not meet her immediate needs. And it didn’t seem as if her immediate need was to discover his pedigree if her body language was anything to go by.

‘I can’t imagine why someone would pack up an academic job in the US to come out here. Our salaries are appalling and the education system’s crap. Not to mention students getting murdered right in front of us.’

‘I’m only here for a few months - so I wouldn’t say I’ve quite packed up to stay here ... but that was a rather unfortunate incident. Did you know Thandi Zulu?’

‘Lord no but to think an educated person was raised in a happy-clappy family like that. It defies belief.’

‘I must say it was a first for me. My religious habits are somewhat more sober.’

‘Oh I think religion gets in the way of things. People become so restricted when they’re religious. Suppressed. I believe life’s here for the living. Got to plunge right in.’ She reached over and took his hand, leaving little of her cleavage to his imagination. ‘And it’s not

every day we get handsome professors flying into our orbit. And you? You look as if you know how to live life.'

Alex withdrew his hand. He felt uneasy. At first he'd been amused by her forwardness in inviting him for a drink but it was clear now she'd sought him out. He was usually the one to do the chasing; this was a total reversal of roles for him.

'You say you're in the Management Faculty.' Alex tried to ease any affront Luanne may have felt by the removal of his hand though she seemed not to have taken offence.

'Teach Information Technology and Information Systems.'

'You must know Delancey James.'

'Oh Delancey. Of course I know her. Who doesn't? She makes it her business to be known.'

'By the sound of it, you're not too keen on her.'

'She's a know-it-all with her goody-two-shoes morals about student cheating. Heaven forbid she gets wind of an academic cheating. You'd think it was the worst crime in the world - maybe second only to murder. I don't think she understands the pressure we're under to publish - that we sometimes have to take short-cuts.'

'She seems competent in her field. I checked out her publications on Egoli's Intranet and she seems to be quite an authority on ethics.'

'You checked out her publications? Sounds as if you're interested in her. Are you?'

Alex took a moment to gather his thoughts as Luanne fixed her gaze on him.

'No, not interested. I sit on a committee with her. I like to investigate the company I keep.'

'So you'll be doing a check on me?' Luanne's eyes glinted with what Alex interpreted to be a degree of eagerness.

'Maybe.'

'Well, Alex,' she took his hand again, 'you'll find there's lots to learn about me.'

He doubted that.

For the second time he eased his hand out of Luanne's predatorial clutch.

'Delancey's so frigid. I think she must find it difficult to climax. I can't see her doing it with a man. With anybody for that matter. Not even with a vibrator.'

Alex felt his proverbial jaw drop.

'But something happened to her a few years ago,' Luanne continued before he could think of an appropriate reply. 'All hush-hush.'

'Something happened to her? What?'

‘Well, we were never told but it was three or four years back. She took a year’s leave of absence. Moved away from Johannesburg. Kind of disappeared. Something must have unbalanced her. But I give her this, she hid the details well and when she came back she threw herself into her work. I know she likes the Egoli-Athens exchange programme too. Apparently enjoys Greece.’

‘I’d heard that.’

‘Must be mad to go to that corruption-riddled country. Out of the frying pan and into the fire’s what I say. As if we don’t have corruption and crime coming out of our ears here, she’s off to find more of it.’

‘Well, I guess there’s no accounting for taste.’

‘And talking about taste, Professor Hallie’ ... Luanne made a point of leaning over and rubbing the hair that curled out from the top of his unbuttoned shirt, ‘I find you most attractive and I don’t beat about the bush. I like to come straight to the point.’

‘Clearly.’

‘I’d like to fuck you.’

She lifted her eyebrows awaiting a response.

Delancey placed the sleeping tablets at her bedside. She'd picked up the prescription from the doctor on her way home. She needed to be fresh to teach in the coming weeks and for this she needed her sleep. The dark rings under her eyes reflected her exhaustion.

The Dream had come every day for the past week. It stole up upon her in the early hours of the morning and she'd lie awake, warding off the horror until she heard the sparrows chirp, signifying an acceptable time to rise. Delancey always harboured the futile hope she'd fall asleep again after the psychological warfare. But it never happened. She knew as well that the death of Thandi Zulu had triggered this unrelenting assault.

Images of Thandi's distraught family, the feverish songs sung by the choir and the cacophony of hallelujahs from the morning's memorial service were still emblazoned in her mind. As she switched on the kettle to make some tea, the intercom buzzed.

'Professor James? It's Detective Justice Tau. I'm calling about the case of Dr Thandi Zulu.'

Delancey checked the screen monitor. The outline of the lanky detective filled the space and she remembered his kindness to her at the dam. She'd also seen him at the memorial service that morning.

'Be with you in a minute.'

She unbolted the front door and slid back the custom-made thick security chains. She'd spared no expense in fortifying her home.

'I was about to make myself some tea, Detective. Would you like some?'

Tau nodded and followed Delancey into the kitchen. They sat down at the yellowwood table and Delancey added an extra cup to the tray while Tau drew out a large manila envelope from his brief case.

'It's addressed to you from Dr Zulu. Of course we had to open it.'

Delancey saw her name printed in a strong and definite hand, in letters that were precise and regular.

'I wanted to bring them over to you myself - to apologise for opening the envelope, but also to see if there's anything in here you think could give us some further idea as to what happened. But it seems to me to be only a lot of academic papers.'

Delancey slid the contents of the envelope onto the table and looked at the pile in front of her - an article published in Greek. The authors' names were clear: Professor Stavros

Vassilis from the University of Athens and Dr Charlotte Mkhize from Egoli University in Johannesburg. Another document appeared to be a rough translation of the article. Underneath was the print-out of an email. Her eyes scanned the signature.

Eleni Papariga.

She got up to pour the tea and to give herself some time to adjust to this new information.

‘Detective, I mentioned to you at the dam that Thandi had come to see me. She seemed concerned. Nervous. She was telling me about her field work on Naxos.’

‘Naxos? Is that a picture of the place?’ Tau gestured to the fridge where small magnets secured several pictures of Delancey’s life on Naxos - Psyche Cyclops, the view out to the harbour, some islands with the label of Koufonissia below them.

‘Looks great.’

Delancey paged through the papers again.

‘You read Greek?’ Tau pointed to the Greek article.

‘I’m nowhere near good enough with the language to decipher this, although it looks like someone’s had a go at it. Tell you what, Detective, let me look through these papers and get back to you.’

After Tau had departed, Delancey thought about Stavros and Charlotte, the supervisors of Thandi; her co-incidental meeting of Stavros on Naxos; that Alex appeared to know Thandi. Now this email from Eleni. She imagined Tau already knew some of this but there was no need to fan the flame of unfounded suspicion by asking his opinion. In any case, although Tau seemed genuine, who knew who one could trust in the police force these days?

What puzzled Delancey, though, was that there was no evidence in the batch of papers of the hand-written note she’d retrieved from her office floor and given back to Thandi.

‘Dee darling, so *good* to see you.’ Donald articulated air kisses and beamed at Delancey as his hands grasped her shoulders. He studied her face. ‘Come sit down.’

Delancey looked around the large studio office. Poster-size pictures of exotic parts of the world Donald had visited covered the walls. Pictures taken with friends; most times with his partner, Siphon – of the Iguazu falls in Brazil, the pyramids in Cairo, the pale green and pink northern lights - the aurora borealis - in Alaska, a train trip through the Rocky Mountains in Canada. One entire section was devoted to his last trip to the Kingdom of Bhutan, the landlocked state in South Asia located at the eastern end of the Himalayas. Delancey remembered how Donald regaled her with stories of his visit to this, the acknowledged happiest country in Asia. And then there were the fun pictures - Donald sitting next to an oversized teddy bear in the departure lounge of some airport - him shying away from a horse on an Argentinian prairie - Donald and Siphon holding a mini-me wrought iron warthog from their visit to a game farm.

Delancey enjoyed his banter.

‘Dee, Siphon and I would love to use your house in Naxos some time. After translating those interminable house documents, I feel part of it. And I need to woo the man you know. He’s so temperamental. By the way, it didn’t seem appropriate at the memorial to ask you about the Greek god. Are you sleeping with him?’

‘Not for lack of his trying.’

‘Nothing like a good bit of sex to make the world go round. God Dee, if I swung the other way, I’d be trying to get into your pants. Or put it like this, if you were a man, I’d even think of abandoning Siphon. Show you what good gay sex is all about. You’re hot my love. Hot.’

‘And have you thought of the girls out there you’re depriving?’

Donald was well-built and handsome to boot.

‘Let me get the docs for you, Dee. Got my best translator on to it. We’ve gone through such an expansion of the business in the last few months, been busy, busy. Picked up a whole lot of new international contracts. Big ones. Had to increase my staff to thirty translators. But the money’s good. And talking about money, I hope Egoli pays on time, this time. Do you know they took fucking ten months to pay me for all those contracts we translated into Greek a few years ago? Something to do with the arrangement between Egoli

and the University of Athens. Swore I'd never do any work for them again. Universities are bad, bad payers. Very bad payers.'

'I'll make sure to keep tabs on the payment for you. I can be a tyrant when it comes to following up things like this.'

'I'm sure you are, darling.' He pecked Delancey's cheek before striding off to collect her work.

Delancey looked at the pictures again. They'd created good times together - he and Siphos - not material stuff, memories.

'Here we are Dee. Must say this looks boring. But then I'm not Greek and I know fuck-all about archaeology. The closest I come to digging is when I start beavering into Siphos. But let me stop there before I get carried away.'

Delancey looked at the two articles before her - one in *Ελληνική Αρχαιολογία*, *Greek Archaeology*; the other, a translation.

'We even did a back translation. Translated it from Greek into English first and then back into Greek afterwards. Guarantees this is as close to a perfect translation as you can get.'

'I appreciate the speed. Thanks so much.'

'Don't tell me you're cutting your teeth on the Greek language with this article, Dee.'

'No, it's a professional problem. And would I ever let you bill Egoli for my own personal work?'

'I'm joking. God you're tense. I mean it. Some good sex would do you the world of good.'

'And how, Mr Know-It-All, do you *know* I'm not getting this good sex you talk about?'

'Darling, I'm attuned to matters sexual. Believe me. And I know when something of the good old medicine's needed. Invoice's in there. Also a disk with the translation on it. Want to do a dinner sometime? Siphos was saying the other day he misses you. He hasn't seen you for ages. And accompanying you to the memorial service doesn't count for me.'

'Let me call you in a couple of days. I've got a lot on my plate right now and I have to get something seen to. Your translation will be a big help.'

Delancey left the office smiling. Donald was one of the few people she felt completely at ease with. For goodness sake, Delancey, you even let him talk dirty to you.

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Later that evening Delancey spread out the documents. From home she had easy access to the University's electronic services. She uploaded the electronic version of Thandi's thesis,

acquired from the library. Thank God that the thesis had been written in English. Thereafter she uploaded the electronic copy of the English version of the article that appeared in *Greek Archaeology* provided by Donald. She pushed the 'send' button launching the documents into cyberspace to be compared to each other and read, yet again, the single-sheet email, dated 1 July and written from Naxos.

'Dear Dr Zulu,

Forgive me for taking the liberty of writing to you since we've never met. I study archaeology at the University of Athens and am working on Naxos for the summer vacation. In preparing for this field work I came across a copy of your doctoral thesis in the library. I also found an article written about the discoveries on Naxos by Professor Stavros Vassilis who you acknowledge in your thesis as being your supervisor from the University of Athens, and Dr Charlotte Mkhize from your University who was your co-supervisor. Prof Vassilis is also my supervisor. What concerns me is that they drew almost entirely on your work which they translated into Greek, even word for word in some places, but nowhere is your name mentioned. I've attached a copy of the article as well as my rough translation of it. You may want to follow up. Being a student myself, I know I'd want to be acknowledged if an article was published based on my work.

Kind regards,

Eleni Pappariga'

Delancey checked her computer and saw the reports were in. She enlarged the screen, rubbed her eyes and studied the figures again to make sure. The similarity index between the thesis and the article left no doubt that the article was based on the thesis. She pressed the print button.

She watched the pages spew from the printer, picked them up and stacked them, recalling Thandi's concern about her safety. Could a student be at risk by reporting something like this? She knew when academic careers were in question, the stakes were high. Every article published brought the University a hundred and twenty thousand rand. If academics didn't publish, they were kicked out. But would murder ever be part of the picture?

She compared the two documents, page by page and, while on line, clicked on those paragraphs in the article that appeared to emanate from the thesis. This took her to the direct

source so she'd be one hundred per cent certain that the article was based on the thesis. This was going to be a long night, she knew. But there was no short-cut. For an academic to be labelled a plagiarist was a serious matter. She had to be certain of her facts. Her thoughts went back to Stavros. There must be some mix-up in all of this.

As she worked, she felt a deep sense of loneliness - an empty shell connected to no-one. Drawing a deep breath, she knew the only way to deal with feelings like this was to order her thoughts and to look at them rationally.

She double checked the locks on her doors before she settled down to read the thesis again.

Swaine psyched himself up. He wouldn't let them get to him this time. He was prepared. They must just come with all their rubbish about black rights and religious tolerance. No, this time he was ready for the bloody baboons.

With determination, he sat down at the boardroom table.

'Colleagues we have to get to a decision today and I've allocated only one hour for this meeting. I insist we stick to the point. Delancey, are you ready?'

Delancey began. 'At our last meeting I mentioned a student had laid a complaint against Dr Charlotte Mkhize from the Archaeology Department for taking her work and using it in an academic publication without any acknowledgment to her, the student. I take it you've all had a chance to read my report on that one. It's a simple and clear cut case of plagiarism.'

'Plagiarism's a vile thing,' commented Jane Spear.

Longburn from Mathematics snorted.

'The second complaint's more complicated,' Delancey squared up her papers. She'd gone over in her mind several times how she'd present the material to the committee.

'Two weeks ago, I had a visit from Dr Thandi Zulu.'

'The poor girl who's been murdered?' queried Samuelson from Religious Studies.

'Sadly, yes. She wanted to discuss a concern she had but we had to reschedule.'

Delancey glanced at Swaine. 'I'll cut a long story short and give you the gist of the issue.'

'I appreciate your consideration of our time,' said Swaine.

'Documents were found in Thandi's house - to be more specific, an article that appeared in a Greek journal and an email from a Greek student alerting Thandi to the plagiarism of her work.'

'And how did you come by them?' Alex Hallie queried, lifting his eyebrows and fixing his blue-grey eyes on her.

'We don't have time for all that, Alex. Allow Delancey to get on with the fundamentals of the issue,' said Swaine.

'Professor Swaine,' Jane Spear ventured, 'shouldn't we acknowledge the death of Dr Zulu in some way?'

'I agree,' added Samuelson. 'I can say a prayer for the departed.'

‘But Professor Samuelson, your prayer would come from the Jewish faith. I’m a Muslim,’ said Professor Farik from Mathematics. ‘I’d be happy with this only if we could balance it. I’ll say a Dua Prayer for the Dead.’

‘So you’re certain she was a believer, Professor Farik?’ queried Samuelson. ‘I thought you could only pray the intercessionary prayer if you know the departed was a believer.’

Longburn piped up. ‘So now we’re in church?’

‘We don’t call it a church in the Muslim faith,’ said Farik. ‘It’s a mosque.’

Alex Hallie intervened. ‘I suggest we have a minute’s silence in recognition of this tragedy.’

‘Be quiet the lot of you.’ Swaine held up his hand. ‘Yes, we’ll have a minute’s silence.’

Only Jane Spear and Delancey bowed their heads; the others shifted in their seats.

Judging the minute to be over, Swaine broke the silence.

‘Professor Swaine, that was under a minute,’ complained Ms Moeng from Social Work, pointing to her watch.

Swaine rolled his eyes. ‘Delancey please go on.’

‘Well, to make certain that the Greek article plagiarised Thandi’s thesis, I got an electronic copy of the thesis from the library and had the Greek article translated. I put them both through our software programme. The similarity was eighty per cent. The thesis was plagiarised in the article. No question.’

‘So now we have two allegations of plagiarism against Dr Mkhize?’ queried Jane Spear.

‘Delancey,’ interjected Alex, ‘I take it the translator was certified to undertake this job.’

‘Of course.’

‘Who did the translation?’ Moeng queried.

‘Global Translators. Here in Johannesburg’.

‘The company run by Donald Hurst?’ asked Samuelson.

‘You mean that moffie?’ Longburn sneered. ‘He gave us a presentation once. God, I felt as if I was in a bloody gay pantomime.’

‘I take exception to that.’ Moeng’s eye’s blazed. ‘You have no tolerance for diversity of any kind Professor Longburn.’

‘And he’s got a black boyfriend, *for God’s sake*,’ added Longburn for emphasis.

‘And again we’re subjected to your blasphemy,’ Samuelson glowered. ‘Professor Swaine, have you managed to arrange the cultural diversity workshop we all agreed to attend?’

‘Haven’t had time.’ Swaine was curt.

‘If you can’t find a facilitator, I can run it for us,’ suggested Moeng. ‘After all I’m a social worker.’

‘And *you’d* be objective?’ snorted Longburn, ‘I bloody much doubt that.’

Samuelson drew himself erect. ‘Dean, please control the language in this room. I’m uncomfortable with the word bloody.’

Bloody hell, fuck, damnation, thought Swaine. God these people are self-opinionated baboons. ‘Colleagues, let’s adhere to good academic protocol - argument with no swearing ... or blasphemy.’

Swaine felt the heat rising in him. Another hour of this and he’d lose it. He’d give that pompous Samuelson a slug that would take him out of his ever-so-perfect religious world. ‘However,’ he began, ‘I think this matter has somewhat resolved itself.’

All looked at him.

‘Thandi Zulu, the person who would be the complainant in the last matter is, unfortunately, dead.

‘So I fail to see how this changes things,’ interjected Samuelson.

Swaine looked annoyed. ‘Well, if I have to spell it out as I would to a four-year old, Professor Samuelson, I’d say she’s not around to give her evidence should we consider any formal enquiry. In fact she’s done us a bit of a favour.’

Stunned silence. Well, that had shut them up. ‘How can we go on with any enquiry without her around?’ Swaine glared at the group defying anyone to contradict him.

‘I don’t think it’s as simple as that, Professor Swaine,’ Delancey came in. ‘We still have the documents. Those didn’t disappear with her.’

‘But Delancey,’ said Swaine, ‘Dr Zulu’s *not here* to lay a charge.’

‘But we have the evidence.’ Delancey’s voice rose. ‘We’re duty bound, as a University, to still progress an investigation into the matter.’

‘Good black academics are so difficult to find,’ interjected Moeng. ‘I suggest we call Dr Mkhize in and give her a warning. I’m sure this was all an innocent mistake.’

‘Bloody hell,’ began Longburn ‘Sorry. I mean hell. Do you have a problem with the word hell as well, Professor Samuelson?’ He didn’t wait for Samuelson’s reply. ‘Honest mistakes, if there are such things, still bear consequences. We can’t let it go.’

Moeng took the bait. ‘Fucking racist,’ she muttered.

‘One more profanity and I shall leave this meeting.’ Samuelson’s eyes bulged.

‘You called me a *what?* Did I hear you call me a fucking racist?’ Longburn pounded the table.

‘Enough.’ Swaine yelled. ‘Why can’t you, a group of academics, focus on the issue and come to some agreement, damn it?’

‘That’s why we need the diversity workshop,’ said Moeng.

‘I’m bloody, fucking sick of this nonsense.’ Swaine was on his feet. ‘I’m going to make *my* recommendation to the Vice-Chancellor and bugger you lot.’ He glared at Samuelson, daring him to challenge his use of language. ‘All I ask is for you to remember our discussion here is confidential. Especially you, Alex, being in the department where all of this is happening.’

‘And the diversity workshop?’ queried Moeng.

Swaine pretended not to hear and exited the room. What he did hear, though, was Longburn suggesting the group lay a formal complaint against him for his derogatory comments. How ironic that they now become united.

‘Fuck, fuck, fuck,’ he said under his breath as he stomped down the passage. The repetition of the word brought slight relief. Thank God that’s over. ‘Fuck, fuck, fuck.’ But how the hell am I going to break the news to Dube? And I’ll have to work out a way to deal with Delancey James. Interfering baboon.

The heels of Delancey's boots clicked on the polished parquet hall flooring as she stomped down the passage leading away from the Vice-Chancellor's office. Portraits of Vice-Chancellors who'd served Egoli over the past eighty years blurred into one another as she passed by them - serious looking men in red caps with gold tassels; elegant scarlet robes embroidered with the University's crest. Even now, she could feel the weight of the office they seemed to bear. Delancey recalled the last Vice-Chancellor during whose tenure she'd been appointed - a warm-hearted anthropologist whose ethical stance was beyond question. But things seemed to be slipping now - so many in the University didn't seem at all definite about their position on moral issues anymore.

'Walk you back to your campus,' said Alex, catching up to her. His purple shirt caught the sunlight as they emerged from the building. Purple was one of Delancey's favourite colours, but she quickly put that thought out of her head. His tailored skin-tight black pants seemed to give extra length to his already long legs that quickly matched her stride.

Delancey would rather have been left alone to walk off her anger. She disliked Alex, for reasons which were not too clear to her, apart from his incessant double-guessing of her work. Yet, she still felt indebted to him for being with her when Thandi's body was retrieved from the dam. And besides, there was something about him that intrigued her - something that didn't quite fit. It bothered her he'd not yet mentioned he'd known Thandi. But then again, who knows what sort of mischief Luanne Sheer was capable of getting up to? It was not beyond the realms of possibility that she'd mentioned Alex's drink with Thandi simply to see the response it would evoke. Nasty woman.

'Your work *is* thorough Delancey. Sorry I offended you by questioning it but I was trying to help your case by backing you up.'

'And that should make me happy?'

'Look, I'm on your side on this. You need all the friends you can get, you know.'

She wondered about his choice of words. Sides? Her needing friends?

'You don't, perhaps, see me as a woman to be pitied after being bullied by men who are my work superiors do you?' Again she bristled at the reminder of Dube and Swaine laying into her verbally.

'You give as good as you get, Delancey.'

She doffed her head in his direction.

‘But this Vassilis guy. I’m not sure what he’s about.’

‘We don’t have all the facts, in case that’s escaped you and I try not to judge people in the absence of such facts.’

‘But come on, Delancey. You yourself said there was evidence the article he and Charlotte produced was based on Thandi’s work.’

‘Sure, but we should hold an official enquiry where he has a chance to present his version of things. Maybe there’s some explanation. Something we’ve ... I’ve overlooked. I’m sure that would please you.’

Alex looked amused.

‘Know him well?’

‘I met him when I was in Greece on the exchange programme.’ Her guard was up.

‘Seemed to me you knew him ... should I say, rather better than you would a mere colleague. Maybe something more?’

‘It’s none of your bloody business, Alex.’

‘Good thing Samuelson and Farik can’t hear you use the b-word.’ Alex smiled. ‘But, in all seriousness Delancey, I warn you to be careful. I don’t think Vassilis’s to be trusted.’

‘He hasn’t had the chance to tell his side of the story yet. And if there’s a fight about this matter, it seems to me you’ve got more to lose if you side with me. You’re only visiting here for a few months. They could put you back to a plane from wherever you came from, notwithstanding you’re Council’s Pick of the Year. I can fall back on years of service at Egoli. And I wouldn’t go without a noise.’

‘I’m sure you’re well capable of that, Delancey. I see your fighting spirit.’

‘Well, you’ve seen nothing yet.’

They’d reached the Management campus.

‘Going to invite me to your office for some coffee?’

‘I’ve got work to do.’

‘Maybe a strong drink would help. Any chance of you joining me this evening?’

‘I’d prefer to keep our relationship professional, Alex. Colleagues who’ve been thrown together to sort out this cheating matter.’

‘Aren’t you forgetting we got thrown together, too, in the small matter of a murder?’

‘And for that I’ve already thanked you for your help at the dam. I’ve got to go. Don’t you have something you can go dig up? They’re still finding things at the Cradle of Humankind.’

He laughed. 'I'm aware of that but I think I'll stick close to Egoli right now. Sure to be more action in this part of the world, maybe even fireworks sometime. But expect my call. I don't give up.'

'Nor do I,' said Delancey.

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Some hours later Alex Hallie strolled down from the *Hyena and Jackal* to the main street in Melville. He enjoyed the buzz of the cafés and the ambience, people walking along the pavements, chatting, laughing, carefree.

Delancey intrigued him. Bright, feisty, determined and also good looking. He liked the glint in her ice-blue eyes when she was angry and the energy in her step. He recalled a moment when he'd seen her at dinner, some time ago, with Stavros Vassilis, the soft light reflecting off her cheeks, an amber shine to her hair as it fell over her bare shoulders. He remembered how he'd felt and it had surprised him.

He chose a seat at the window of a small pub crowded with university students and savoured his glass of Merlot, swirling the rich liquid around in the oversized goblet. As much as he tried to think about Thandi's death and all the implications, his mind kept wandering back to Delancey, trying to understand why she kept up her guard, more like a sparring partner than any kind of colleague he'd ever come across. Usually he was the one to play hard to get. But not with her. Keeps him at arm's length. He recalled the meeting with the Vice-Chancellor. She had the guts to stand up to Dube. But he might have to change his own tactics. She didn't seem attracted to his nice side. Probably, no certainly, she was upset that he'd checked her work, but then he'd had to satisfy himself. A lot was at stake here.

A hearty laugh emanated from an alcove to the side. Alex turned to see Stavros pouring generous glasses of white wine for a trio of students. He hadn't taken long to find an admiring audience and each pretty girl was at least half his age. For a second, Alex wondered if Stavros wore a gold chain around his neck beneath his shirt. He knew the man wasn't to be trusted and, on top of it all, it seemed that the death of his past student hadn't affected him in the least.

Delancey threw some ingredients into a mixing bowl. Kneading bread was the best way to use her pent-up fury. Pounding, mashing the dough, hitting Dube and Swaine at the same time ... She left it to rise and poured herself a glass of Glenfiddich single malt. Sipping at it, she reflected on the meeting earlier that day. Hardly a meeting. A monologue from the Vice-Chancellor, spitting mad with her that she wanted an enquiry into Charlotte Mkhize's conduct. Swaine too had thrown in the odd snide comment, making no attempt whatsoever to defend her, one of his own staff members.

She could hear Dube's voice, irate and piercing: 'You, Professor James, are on a witch hunt, accusing Dr Charlotte Mkhize, one of our up and coming young black academics, of cheating. You'd better have all your facts straight.'

She recognised that Alex had tried to help out. But he'd the audacity to say he'd checked all her documents and could verify their accuracy. What a nerve. And probably she'd helped him do this by the information she'd given him over the lattes they'd drunk near the dam. Now she had to put up with, not only the conniving Swaine and a Vice-Chancellor who was trying to protect a cheater, but this interfering American was on her case too. Delancey felt a fresh wave of resentment and took a gulp of whisky. She was now not sure which of the three men spiked the most rage in her - each seemed to make her blood boil. The only slight bit of humour, if there was any in the whole meeting, was Swaine alluding to Alex's investigation of her work.

'Our own research police,' he'd said. 'Imported from the USA, noga! *No-gal.*'

And the only time Dube seemed to become less annoyed was when Swaine recommended that Charlotte Mkhize be given a verbal reprimand. That's when she'd let rip.

'A reprimand. Why not give her a bloody gold star?'

She poured herself another drink. Her hands shook and she dropped the ice-tray in the sink. The clatter against the aluminium jangled her nerves. She needed to talk to someone. Donald perhaps. Also, what didn't help matters now was that she had a nagging query at the back of her mind about the innocence of Stavros in the plagiarism issue.

The smell of the fresh bread wafted from the oven and the steam rose as Delancey took the loaf out and set it down on a baking tray. She cut a thick slice and slathered it with butter. No low fat margarine tonight. Thick butter. Real butter.

She felt compelled to do one last task before she called Donald and she opened her laptop.

‘Dear Honourable Judge Harris ...’ She began her letter to the Chairman of the University Council.

Detective Justice Tau sat behind his modest desk in the Hillbrow police station from where he could see the government-issued posters of the State President and the Minister of Police beginning to peel off the beige walls in the hallway. The laminated card displaying emergency numbers was skew. His office, like the rest of the station, was drab and unwelcoming. Large Cypress trees outside blanked out any hope of sun during the daytime and the room exuded perpetual gloom, brightened up only by a large portrait of his wife on their wedding day. A gust of wind blew down the hallway and into his office and Tau switched on the second bar of the small metallic heater at his feet. It offered little comfort against the last of the winter elements.

Before him lay the open docket. A picture of Thandi Zulu, provided by her brother, beamed out at the world. The photographs taken of her at the dam told a different story. He looked at her wounds, captured in raw red Technicolor by the camera's macro lens, and he wondered about the evil in the world. How people could be so cruel and unrelenting in their quest for greed, for revenge, for inflicting hurt. He'd been in the police force for fifteen years but he still never got used to working on a case like this.

He scanned his notes. This was not a random killing; it was a personal attack on the victim. Nothing was taken. Her bag was found with everything intact - house keys - identification - driver's licence - money. In fact, a considerable amount of money. He was certain the perpetrator knew the victim, though her family was at a loss to think of anyone who'd want to kill her. Her friends described her as outgoing, smart, and dedicated to her work.

Tau rubbed his temples. No clear lead anywhere. The only source of connection was Egoli University. He shuffled through the notes he'd gleaned from the University Administration. Details of Thandi's academic records for the years she'd attended Egoli; copies of her selection interviews to attend the University of Athens as an exchange student for three months; details of next of kin. She appeared to have been a good student if her grades were anything to go by.

But his own notes told a more interesting story. How was he going to connect the dots?

Tau felt perplexed. He had a reputation for getting to the bottom of things in a short space of time but this case did not appear to be as straightforward as the cases he'd dealt with

before. He reflected on the many crime scenes he'd attended. Usually robbery and maybe rape were involved, crimes endemic to the country and even the police now took them in their stride. But not him. He had a burning passion to see criminals brought to book. But who was the criminal in this case?

Tau ran through the list of all the academics he'd encountered so far - their lofty ideals and the way in which they spoke about their work - hardly any connection he could make out between what they said and what the real man in the street experienced. Especially that Samuel Heen chap - lives in another world. Mike Swaine was out to make a quick buck in South Africa, as far as he could see. Would imagine he'd go back to the UK, quick as a shot, if a better job prospect raised its head. But what motive would any of them have to kill Thandi Zulu?

Nevertheless, his experiences with academics over the years had taught him that they were a strange bunch. And not a group to be overlooked.

Donald opened the large wooden front door and Delancey could hear the Chopin piano concerto No. 1 in the background. He hugged her tight.

‘Come on in, Darling. Siphos out, so I’m all yours. Thanks for the Cabernet ... good vintage.’

Delancey almost tumbled through the doorway.

‘God Don, I blew off at the VC. I don’t know what came over me. I even pushed back my chair with so much force that it toppled over and almost hit one of his precious statues, and then I knocked over a box of old coins by accident and he nearly had a bloody fit. Dube’s eyes simmered - black as coals. He was mad, mad, mad and ranted at me while he leaped across the room, picking them up.’

‘Dee. Come sit. Let me open the wine and you can fill me in on all the drama.’

Delancey sank into the deep couch. The thick cushions enveloped her and she felt herself begin to relax.

‘Okay, Dee. I got the overview of the story on the phone but what’s happened now?’

‘Dube and Swaine don’t care that staff are cheating. It’s a bloody crime, Don, and they turn their backs on it. And Dube seems hell-bent on protecting Charlotte Mkhize. If you can believe it, they both felt because Thandi Zulu’s dead the matter can be laid to rest. That nothing further needed to be done, in spite of the documentary evidence. Not a back bone between them.’

‘Rough day.’

‘Dube’s such a prick.’ She imitated Dube’s high pitched voice: ‘I’m the Vice-Chancellor, *Professor James*. I can make the decision not to have a formal enquiry if I like. And that’s the end of it.’

Donald shook his head. ‘I know he can be dogmatic. I’ve seen that trait in him on the couple of occasions we’ve met. There’s no doubt he always wants to get his own way.’

‘And then, as if things aren’t bad enough, that American, Alex Hallie, was also in the meeting and for fucks-sake, you know what his contribution was?’

‘I’m sure you’ll tell me.’

‘He had the gall to say he’d checked my work and it was accurate. I can’t get over it. The absolute audacity.’

‘Maybe he was trying to help?’

‘He helped me when Thandi’s body was found - at least he came when I called and he contacted the cops. I don’t need more help from him. Especially not in an area which is as familiar to me as this one is.’

‘I’m sure he doesn’t realise what a tough nut you are Dee. You don’t take nonsense from anyone.’

‘But if you can believe it, Don, I’ve gone and made matters worse.’

‘Not sure it could get any worse.’

‘In the heat of the moment I reported the matter to the Chairman of the University Council. I’d told Dube I’d report him, and I’ve gone and bloody well done so.’

‘Fuck.’ Donald looked concerned. ‘Dube’s going to go ballistic.’

‘What other option do I have?’

‘You’re happy to take on Dube?’

‘I’m not ecstatic about it, no. What we have to appreciate here, Don, is that he’s the Vice-Chancellor of the University - the equivalent of the CEO of a large company. He *has* to deal with crises and he gets paid well for it. And I’m intent on doing something about it after he dismissed the cheating as a squabble amongst academics. It seems to escape him that universities should be role models of ethics. They can’t allow things like this to go unchallenged.’

‘Sadly, Dee, it seems as if universities ... education in this country ... is going to the dogs - cheating in high-school exams, bribing those who mark papers, buying degrees over the Internet. Do you know only yesterday I caught someone out who’d applied for a job with us with a fake qualification - you know the piece of paper you frame and hang on the wall?’

Delancey nodded but got back to the subject. ‘And before I stormed out he leaned back in his chair and he stared at me and said: “Well, well, Professor James. You’re going to report *me* to the University Council? That takes a brave person.”’

Stavros rose to greet Delancey. He held out a huge bunch of sunflowers.

‘I’ve ordered us a bottle of Tranquille. Its blush reminds me of you. Come sit. You look worried.’

‘I need to talk to you about something, Stavros. Something’s bothering me.’

‘I’m honoured you’re confiding in me.’ He took her hand.

‘Not confiding.’ She withdrew. ‘What I need to discuss with you is something more immediate. Something you’re involved in.’

‘Me?’ he chuckled. ‘Am I in trouble so soon?’

‘You Stavros... yes ...’

Delancey took a deep drink of the chilled wine. She braced herself as she plonked a copy of the article in *Greek Archaeology* and its translation in front of him.

‘Why is Thandi Zulu’s name not mentioned as an author of this article? It was based on her work after all.’

Stavros picked it up, looked relieved and laughed aloud.

‘Is this what’s bothering you?’ He chortled again. ‘Delancey, Delancey, have I taught you nothing about Greece? I can explain everything.’

Delancey was taken aback by his nonchalance. ‘This is serious, Stavros.’

‘Didn’t I say to you that Greeks are often incompetent? Sometimes they’re crooks as well. You find it everywhere - even in the publishing of academic articles now. Yes, of course I condensed Thandi’s thesis into an article, translated it into Greek and sent it off on behalf of all three of us -Thandi as the student, me as the supervisor and Charlotte Mkhize as the co-supervisor, although Charlotte never deserved to be part of it for the little she contributed. Of course I did that. Why wouldn’t I? I know the academic protocols.’

‘So then where’s Thandi’s name?’

‘I wrote to the editor before I left Athens and told him about the error. The omission of Thandi’s name was their mistake even though they make thousands of euros publishing articles to educate the academic world.’

‘So you informed them?’

‘Of course I did. Isn’t that what any good academic would do?’

Stavros looked hurt. 'It'll take some organising given the general chaos in the country but I can get a letter from the editor confirming I've requested Thandi's name be added to the article. It may take time though.'

Delancey leaned over and touched his hand. 'I hope you don't mind that I raised this with you.'

'Not at all. You're doing your job. Keeping us all on the straight and narrow. Isn't that what you always do?'

'I think I may have overstepped my mark trying to keep the VC on the straight and narrow. I reported him to the Chair of Council for not taking the University's plagiarism policy seriously.'

'You did what?' Stavros looked hard at her and Delancey realised her mistake. She shouldn't have let something like that slip out.

'Getting back to Thandi Zulu ...'

'She's dead now so is it worth talking about her?'

'Don't be crass, Stavros. Anyway, I overheard in our staff room she had a drink with Alex Hallie. The new guy in your department.'

'That pompous American.'

'The very one.'

'And so?'

'Well that means he knew her.'

'And what's so wrong with that? Academics have drinks with students all the time?'

'But he's recently joined Egoli and she graduated last year.'

'Maybe they had some area of research - some area of interest - in common. Like we have a common area of interest.'

'Well I found it strange he hadn't mentioned this to me.'

'And why, should he think of mentioning it to you? Do you know Hallie?'

Delancey stopped herself short. Stavros knew nothing about the plagiarism meeting concerning Charlotte Mkhize and without this knowledge, why, indeed, according to him, should she have interacted with Alex in any way? Also, there was no publicity around Alex and her witnessing the police retrieving Thandi's body from the dam. Detective Tau had though it best to not give out too much information.

'Do you know him?' This time Stavros's words were more directed and he cast an enquiring look in her direction.

'You know, I'm getting my wires crossed.'

Stavros continued to stare at her and Delancey knew she must do something to diffuse the situation . As if about to gesture something with her hand, she flicked it across her wine glass, sending it to the floor with a crash.

‘Let me get you another glass.’ Stavros beckoned a waiter and when all was cleared up it seemed to Delancey he’d forgotten her previous comments.

‘By the way, how’d you get hold of that?’ Stavros gestured to the article in *Greek Archaeology* still lying on the table between them.

Delancey couldn’t see how to avoid answering this outright question.

‘It seems your student, Eleni Papariga, alerted Thandi to it.’

Stavros drew himself erect in the chair. ‘Eleni’s a little bitch. She’s ambitious and wanted some extra consideration in exchange for, how do you call it ... for some attention. A conniving, sexually feral little bitch and because I didn’t play along with her, she’s trying to get back at me ...’

‘Well, from what I could see, you seemed to like the attention she was showering on you?’

‘You saw us?’ Stavros reddened. ‘Were you following me?’

‘Of course not. I happened to be in the Kastro when you and Eleni went into *La Vigne* which, incidentally, seems to be a favourite haunt of yours.’

Stavros seemed to duck this comment. ‘Don’t you think the right thing for Eleni to do was to bring this matter to my attention rather than shooting off an email to Thandi?’

‘That would seem the best way to have dealt with it but then, again, maybe she didn’t want to cause any waves - between the two of you that is.’

Abruptly, Stavros dropped his voice to a conspiratorial tone. ‘Let’s have some dessert. I’ve been eyeing that chocolate cake all evening. And afterwards ...’

‘In your dreams, Stavros. In your dreams.’

Delancey felt heated from the exchange with him and her level of disquiet had increased.

Later she realised she’d left his flowers in the restaurant.

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Back at the *Wise Oak*, Stavros sprawled across the couch and poured himself a glass of wine from the unfinished bottle opened the night before. It had been a close call tonight at dinner and he’d nearly been tripped up by a stupid mistake. For the umpteenth time he berated himself for publishing the article in *Greek Archaeology*. He’d been stupid. He knew the University expected a publication from him and he was behind on his publications - so

behind that the Administration had sent him a letter of warning. As a full professor he was expected to publish at least eight articles a year. He'd tried to stall for time as he didn't need the academic spotlight on him before Naxos and certainly not before his work at Egoli had been completed. Nonetheless, there had also been a strategic component to submitting this article. So maybe it had not been a total mistake. That thought made him feel much better.

**RE:** Confidential  
**FROM:** Judge Peter Harris  
**SENT:** 30 August  
**TO:** Professor Delancey James

Dear Professor James,

I was distressed to receive your communication about the response of the Vice-Chancellor to the issue of plagiarism you raised. I wonder if we might meet to discuss this matter? Would 15h00 Monday 20 September suit you? I'll be at my office at the address below and suggest we meet there. I'm sorry I cannot make it sooner but I leave tomorrow for a conference on modern day genocide at the International Criminal Court in The Hague. You can also contact me on my cell phone at 089 2003476 at any time if you need to.

I look forward to receiving your confirmation as well as to meeting you.

Sincerely,

Peter Harris

*The Honourable Peter Harris MA. PhD. D.Phil (Honoris Causa)  
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‘My company?’ Johan de Wet was caught in a trap. His mind reeled as he thought of the split second response he needed to make. Deny or admit?

Fortunately Dube made the choice for him. ‘The company you run for us on the side. Of course, technically it’s not your company. It belongs to the Faculty of Management and therefore to the University.’

Johan cast an accusatory glance at Swaine. ‘You said the University didn’t know about it.’

Dube smirked.

Swaine squirmed in his seat. ‘Well, Professor Dube here is astute, *Joe Han.*’

‘But nevertheless it is illegal, is it not?’ added Dube.

The seconds of silence that ensued felt interminable to Johan. Eventually he blurted out.

‘But Vice-Chancellor, you’re not thinking of closing it down are you?’

Johan was panicked. He earned well out of the company and he’d adjusted his lifestyle accordingly over the years. In a flash he saw himself shopping at Spar, not at the luxury food stores of Thrupps, Fournos and Woolworths. He saw his car being downgraded from a BMW to a Tazz. Maybe he’d even have to move into a townhouse, and what about his trips to the health farm to control his weight? He certainly couldn’t support his current good life on a university salary alone. He gulped and his Adam’s apple bobbed up and down in his fatty neck.

‘Vice-chancellor, we use the company to run executive programmes to help our academics supplement the paltry salaries the University pays. Nothing untoward about that if you look at it from the point of view of the end justifying the means.’

‘And what about my point of view that the money which could be accruing to the University is being diverted into the pockets of the academics who’re paid to teach in any case?’

Johan was about to defend his position again, but Dube continued.

‘And, you obviously benefit handsomely from this arrangement yourself. I hear you made a couple of million last year.’

‘I work hard, Vice-Chancellor. Very hard. And it’s all in addition to my academic job.’

‘For which you get paid,’ added Dube. ‘How many times do I have to remind you that the University pays people like you to do a job. And if it involves running additional programmes for executives, so be it.’

Johan gulped. This was threatening to become a disaster. The Vice-Chancellor simply could not close down the company. *His* company.

‘There are heaps of things I do - organise the programmes, market them ...’

‘Under the University’s radar, I should add,’ interrupted Dube.

Johan shot another glance at Swaine, whom he now regarded as a traitor.

‘But, also, Vice-Chancellor, it’s taken some real ingenuity to keep this whole thing under wraps. Even the academics who teach on the programmes think the extra income’s approved by the University. It’s only that the University doesn’t ... didn’t ... know about it.’

Dube did not look impressed.

The secretary entered the room and poured the coffee. Only coffee as Dube didn’t drink tea. The chocolate biscuits were generous though but no-one moved to the refreshments.

Johan looked at Dube. ‘You mean to close down the company?’

‘Well actually, no. I’ve found a reason to not do that. And that’s why I’ve invited you here today. But first some coffee.’

Johan’s sigh of relief was audible. He leaned over the table and prized apart two white chocolate biscuits that had stuck together. Bugger his diet today.

‘Better eat both now,’ commanded Dube, looking at Johan’s chewed-down finger nails and his stubby fingers splayed out over both biscuits. ‘But let’s get down to business. This is where the illegal company that you’ve established comes in.’

This was the first time ever that Johan had seen Dube smile.

‘Professor Dube,’ began Swaine, ‘I don’t think Johan’s met Professor Vassilis.’

‘You do the honours then.’ Dube was dismissive as he gestured to Stavros.

In his intent to save his company, Johan had not paid any attention to the fourth member in the room, sitting to the side. He nodded at Stavros.

‘We’ve kept this project under wraps, so to speak, *Joe Han*,’ began Swaine. ‘Had to keep it close to our chests. You know how things like this can get out of hand.’

Johan nodded although he had no idea what Swaine was talking about. His fingers itched to grab another biscuit or two.

‘You’ll find two delegates on the executive programme you’re running next week,’ said Swaine. ‘Two Russians, based in Uzbekistan.’

‘Wow. Two Russians heard about our programme?’ Johan was incredulous.

‘No idiot,’ said Swaine. ‘How would two Russians hear about your piddling programme? Honestly, *Joe Han*, for a professor in accounting, you can sometimes be so dense. We’ve invited them to attend the programme. That’s how we’re going to conduct the transaction.’

‘The transaction?’

‘We’re using the company account for a transfer of funds,’ Swaine continued. ‘From the Russians to us.’

‘The *illegal* account,’ emphasised Dube.

‘And you’re going to see that all this runs according to plan,’ added Swaine. ‘Make sure the Russians attend the programme to keep up appearances, that sort of thing.’

‘And what are we trading?’ Johan’s relief at the prospect of the company not being closed was palpable and translated into an immediate identification with the new project. In fact, it would have his total support and commitment. It’d saved his bacon. He’d even forgive Swaine his indiscretion of revealing their secret to Dube.

‘No more details for now. It’s on a need to know basis, and this is as much as you need to know,’ said Dube. ‘But what I can say is that after the deal’s done, we’ve agreed - that’s Professor Swaine, myself and Professor Vassilis of course - we’ll give you a little sweetener for your help. A token of our appreciation, so to speak.’

‘Could I ask the size of the ... token?’

‘No you can’t. We’ll decide on it later but I assure you it will reflect our appreciation. Call it a performance bonus,’ said Dube.

Johan’s eyes glinted at the prospect of extra cash.

‘By the way, *Joe Han*,’ said Swaine, ‘what programme are you running next week?’

‘Business Ethics and Governance. Delancey’s programme. Don’t see myself why people want to learn that crap ... I mean, that stuff.’ He glanced at Dube to see if he’d caused any offence. ‘Anyway, the poor buggers will be stuck with Delancey James.’

‘That’s all.’ Dube signalled the end of the meeting.

All rose from their seats but Stavros indicated there was still an issue to discuss. Dube gestured for Johan to leave.

Wow, thought Johan as he left the office. Now things are looking up. Good old VC. I’m key to this project so I’m sure they’ll reward me well. Maybe now that yellow Lamborghini was within reach. Spanking new. Out of the box. He felt exhilarated.

*'Money, money, money, must be funny, in the rich man's world.'* He hummed his favourite Abba song as he skipped down the passage.

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'So what's it now?' Dube seemed disinclined to prolong the meeting. The three men were still standing.

'Vice-Chancellor,' Swaine piped up. 'Before Stavros begins, is there any chance of seeing one of the coins up close? I only saw those that dropped out when Delancey tipped over the box the other day. I'd love to see an old coin like that. Found on an island.'

'You're not supposed to reveal what the transaction's about, Mike.' Dube brooded. 'Be careful around Johan de Wet. Seems like a bit of a loose cannon to me.'

'And, it's not just a coin. It's a Venetian Grosso,' corrected Stavros. 'And they were found on the island of Naxos to be specific.'

Swaine looked daggers at Stavros. 'Any chance of seeing one, Prof Dube?'

'Afraid that's not going to happen,' said Dube. 'Now, Stavros. what did you want to speak to me about? I've got a hell of a day ahead.'

Stavros drew himself erect. 'You'd better know that Delancey James's written to your University Council and reported you about some plagiarism matter.'

Swaine rolled his eyes to the ceiling.

'What?' exploded Dube. 'Bloody woman. Can't keep her nose out of my business.' He was quiet for a few seconds. 'Thank you,' he grunted. 'I'll deal with the matter.'

Dube led the way to the door. In a deliberate movement that appeared to Stavros to be in direct contradiction to Dube's mood, he ran his fingers in a gentle caress over the five coins resting on the small table.

'Beautiful aren't they?' he murmured, looking at Swaine.

As soon as the door closed behind Swaine and Vassilis, Dube paced the room with his fists clenched.

‘Bloody interfering bitch.’ He pounded his hand on his desk as he stomped past it. He felt his blood pressure rise. His temples pounded. He saw red. He could barely restrain himself from throwing something at the wall. The only thing stopping him was his appreciation of what an expensive breakage it would be.

‘How dare she report me to the Council. She’s pushed me once too far.’

Dube consulted the electronic directory on his cell phone and pressed the green button.

The sultry voice of Luanne Sheer responded.

‘VC - *Vee Cee*. How good to hear from you again.’

Dube was somewhat taken aback that his undisclosed private number displayed on her phone but she was an IT whiz after all. Not rocket science for her to arrange.

‘You there Professor Dube?’

‘Yes of course. Luanne I need a favour.’

‘Anything *Vee Cee*. Your wish is my command.’

‘Come to my office.’

Dube could hear Luanne smiling on the other end of the line. That night together some months ago had proved handy for occasions like this.

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Swaine felt nervous all the way back to his office. What if Dube knew he’d stolen the coin from the set near his door? Dube’s glance seemed directed at him, and from the way he’d handled the remaining coins, they must rate amongst his favourites.

Swaine drew a key from his pocket and opened the rickety cabinet that the University maintenance had still not replaced. His hand connected with the coin still lodged behind the bottles of alcohol.

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Luanne enjoyed her breasts being pummelled. She never wore a bra in case the occasion arose. Now her nipples stood up, awakened by the pinching and sucking. She felt the goose bumps on her body and she heard Lloyd Dube’s breathing become faster, hot on her neck. He did this job so well.

‘Luanne, I must just get this one thing out of the way before we start this.’ Dube withdrew from her and stood up straight. He crossed the room.

‘If it’s *that* urgent, I suppose.’ She knew she sounded petulant.

She took a seat a short distance from where Dube was standing, knowing it gave Dube the best view of her slim, long legs; she sat in such a way as to tantalise him. It appeared to be working as he seemed to struggle to avert his eyes. She made no attempt to pull up her blouse that he’d dragged off her shoulders a few minutes before.

‘You know that nerd in the University’s IT office? The person you used to help me access some emails last year?’

‘He’s not a nerd, *Vee Cee*. Not in the true sense of the word. He’s rather sexy, in a complex sort of way.’ Luanne arched her back, revealing more leg.

‘Luanne, I’ve got no time right now to care about your sexual proclivities. I need your help. Can you get hold of him to access an email for me?’

‘Well, his price will be a bit higher this time. Now that he’s got a permanent girlfriend and all, I can’t arrange to pay him partly in kind.’

‘Fuck the price. I’ll sort that out. Do you think he’ll help?’

‘I can make sure of it, *Vee Cee*. You know I’m great at handling matters like this.’

‘That’s why I rely on you.’

‘Oh, and has anything been discussed about my promotion to Associate Professor?’

‘It’s on my ‘to do’ list as soon as I get a moment to talk to Swaine about it. There won’t be any problem. I can assure you of that.’

‘Great. The title of Prof’s appealing to me. I’m sort of getting left behind in the title show in Management.’

‘It would help if you did a bit of research too, you know. It would make the promotion thing easier to justify from my side. But we’re not talking about that now.’

‘What email do you want him to access?’

‘Delancey James ...’

‘Oh God. Not her again.’ Luanne scowled.

‘Delancey James has written to the Chair of Council, Professor Peter Harris. She probably sent the message from her home computer ...’

‘Which will be no problem if she did this via her Egoli Intranet account. Most staff do it that way. Even if she used another electronic address, you know how I work miracles with the nerd. You want us to try to recall it?’

‘Obviously. But at the least I want to have sight of the contents.’

‘Won’t be a problem.’

‘And mail me from your private email account when you get the information if I’m not around. To my private one. Still got it?’

‘Of course.’

Dube emerged from behind the desk.

‘Glad we’re getting on to important things now,’ said Luanne, uncoiling her legs and sinking to the floor in front of him. She heard him exhale as she unzipped his fly.

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The sex with Luanne relieved Dube’s tension. From behind his desk he cast his eyes around the office and calculated his wealth, the pieces which, though not as rare as those at home, were still stunning.

He looked at the pictures to the side of his desk - receiving his PhD; his inauguration as the Vice-Chancellor of the University. He considered the metallic coins - five now, not six - on the table by the door. They were among his favourite pieces. But his eye drifted to one of the glass-fronted cabinets. He got up and walked over to the table and retrieved the cabinet key from under the dish in which the five coins rested. Unlocking the cabinet, he lifted the lid on an innocuous-looking box. He’d locked it up after Delancey had tipped it over and he berated himself that he’d not done that earlier. He couldn’t afford to be slack now. He knew that he perhaps should keep the Venetian Grossi in a bank safety deposit box, considering their value. But he couldn’t bring himself to do it. It would be difficult enough handing them over to the Russians. He needed to enjoy them while he could.

Retrieving the coins from the box, Dube inspected them. They were indeed lovely. He raised one coin level with his eyes and admired the detail in the work. How could such a small coin bear such beauty? Maybe he could make a deal with the Russians to get a couple back when they met somewhere in South America a few months hence with his cohort of collectors - dealers - from around the world. God, he’d worked this deal for them after all and it had been a long time in the planning. It had been a stroke of brilliance to use the relationship between Egoli and the University of Athens as the conduit. Stavros and Giorgos had demonstrated their reliability in the smaller trial projects over the past year. And so far, Stavros had come through with the Grossi. He ran his fingers over the coins.

Thirty-four of them.

‘My darlings,’ he murmured. He touched them as if they were the most important things to him in his life. In fact, they were.

But his thoughts soon reverted to Delancey. ‘Damn the woman,’ he muttered. He felt the tension return and soon his anger was palpable. He’d like to wring her neck. Slowly. Strangle her. Make sure she never had the opportunity to interfere again. He would not allow her to rock the boat. For the next couple of weeks everything had to run smoothly and he didn’t want any spotlight on him. Stavros Vassilis was going to make him rich. And Delancey James would not spoil his plans.

Delancey approached the two men who'd taken up seats in the back row of the classroom. They were the first of the delegates to arrive. They looked out of place. The word bouncers seemed to her to be an apt description of them - the one probably had a broken nose reset sometime in the past; the other had a deep scar running down the left side of his face. From her quick scan of the class list she realised they were Russians.

'Welcome to the programme. It's great to have you with us.'

'Da,' said the man with the crooked nose. His name tag identified him as Vladimir Tsvetkov.

'You both speak English?'

'Of course. Of course.'

'Foreigners in the classroom always enrich the discussion. I hope you'll share your experiences when we discuss issues. I keep my lectures short and concentrate on debate and input from the delegates.'

'But we pay to hear lecture from expert,' said Scarface - Alexander Bazarov.

She laughed. 'I give plenty of input, don't worry, but I try to extract the issues from the class so we debate real live ethical problems.'

Delancey went back to the lectern, plugged in her laptop and checked that the Power Point presentation worked. She was always relieved when the technology functioned. Sometimes it was hit and miss, even in a management faculty. She perused the class list again, annoyed she'd received it at the last minute. There were the usual spread of industry executives representing the major corporates. Her course now attracted growing numbers of delegates as she was regarded as one of the leading ethics experts in the country. She noted that the Russians were employed by the security company, Uzbekparim, headquartered in Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan. They must have stayed on in Uzbekistan after its independence from Russia.

Shortly before nine am the delegates filed into the room. Johan de Wet introduced Delancey and, to her surprise, she saw Stavros sneak in late and take a seat next to the Russians. He lifted his hand in greeting to her. His name hadn't been on the list of delegates which she found surprising. Even colleagues from the University were listed if they attended one of the programmes. Obviously, Johan was not keeping a tight enough rein on his support

staff to check these mundane details. He always managed to get the money part right, though. Companies paid big bucks to send their delegates on Johan's courses.

Delancey began with a discussion of international corruption and put up a slide detailing the latest figures published by the Swiss-based *Transparency International*.

Crooked Nose raised his hand. 'What this?'

'It's a table showing how panels of experts around the world perceive countries to be well governed or to be corrupt,' Delancey replied.

As in previous years, Russia and Uzbekistan were rated as two of the most corrupt countries in the world. They were almost at the bottom of the list, only saved from this indignity by the likes of Somalia.

'Of course it doesn't mean that all people in those countries are corrupt,' she continued. 'But generally the politicians are corrupt and there are lots of corrupt business practices.'

'What an example of corrupt?' continued Crooked Nose.

Again, Delancey wondered how these two had landed up on her programme.

'Well, I could give you plenty of examples of corruption from South Africa and I'm sure Professor Vassilis sitting next to you could give you plenty of examples from Greece. But how about you think of some business practices from your own country that are not quite above board?'

'Above what board?' Scarface queried.

'What I mean is for you to give us some examples of business practices you may think are not legitimate in your country.'

A delegate from a construction company, raised his hand. 'I read in *Time Magazine* that Uzbekistan's a major hub for trafficking men to Russia to work as cheap labour. Wouldn't that qualify as a corrupt practice?'

'But Russia need labour,' answered Crooked Nose.

A delegate from an investment bank broke the stunned silence that greeted this comment. 'I've heard that in the former Soviet bloc countries, money laundering's quite prevalent.'

'Laundry?' queried Scarface.

The class sniggered.

'Money laundering. Finding ways to get money from the proceeds of corruption into legitimate projects and then out again,' said the investment banker. 'For example, if a mafia

boss has acquired plenty of money from the black market he buys a house with the money and then sells the house. He's then got legitimate money from the proceeds of the house and his illegal money has disappeared into the system.'

'Hmm.' Scarface considered this. 'I give example.'

'Go ahead,' said Delancey.

'There are coins found somewhere in ... in Europe. Say in Greece. And they smuggled out of country and bought by ...'

A noise erupted at the back of the class next to Scarface and Crooked Nose. It seemed Stavros was choking.

'You okay?' Delancey asked.

'Need water,' he gasped, his face purple, his body wracked by a fit of coughing.

'Let's take a break,' suggested Delancey. She needed time to consider how she could restrain these imbeciles who were threatening to derail the programme.

When the class resumed and for the rest of the day, Delancey was puzzled, but more than relieved, that the Russians remained silent.

Sam Heen pressed himself up against the wall of a classroom and peered around the corner.

The Greek guy from Archaeology was yelling. 'Are you bloody mad to give the example of the coins in front of everyone?'

'But good example.' The voice belonged to one of the Russians he'd seen hanging around campus for the past few days. A deep scar ran down the side of his face.

'I don't care whether the example was good or not, it was bloody stupid to use it. You could have blown everything.'

'You call me stupid - *stoopid*?'

'Johan, you'd better baby sit these morons over the next few days. Don't let them out of your sight. Not for a minute.'

Sam imagined he'd be a good detective. He could see himself trailing the baddies, following up clues and taking on the criminals in direct combat, culminating in a successful arrest and his widespread recognition and adulation as the hero. So passionate was he about this fantasy that he'd often conceal the detective comic books of his young son under his shirt and read them in the bathroom. On more than one occasion he'd had to explain these extended absences to Sandy - that it was not what she imagined. Nevertheless, conceal the comics, he must. He knew her scorn would know no boundaries if she discovered his secret. Her voice echoed in his head. 'What did I tell you Sam? I was right. You behave like one of the kids. The only difference is they'll grow up some day.'

So when he'd seen the Russians milling around the campus, he'd been intrigued. They bulged out of their tight business suits and seemed ill at ease, glancing around from time to time. They kept to themselves, even in the refreshment area and in the canteen, never mingling or networking with other delegates in spite of this opportunity to develop new business relationships. And why on earth would they come all the way to South Africa to attend an ethics programme? Delancey was good, but surely not *that* good. There must be ethics programmes to attend nearer home, though they certainly didn't look the types to be concerned in the least by ethics. No, Sam concluded, they seemed to be 'casing out the joint,' in detective-speak.

He approached Johan de Wet to express his concerns.

‘For God’s sake, Sam. We get delegates and their money from wherever we can. Who cares if these chaps look rough? It’s their money that counts after all. And if they pick up a few tips along the way by attending one of our programmes, it’s all very well. I consider it a bonus.’

‘They look dangerous to me,’ Sam replied. ‘And it looked like you and the Greek guy were arguing with them.’

‘It’s none of your business and if you’re such a wimp, stay as far away from them as you can. And shouldn’t you be doing something valuable with your time instead of entertaining your paranoia? Like updating your lectures? If you want to earn a bit extra by teaching on my programmes you’d better smarten up. We got lots of complaints last time you taught. Had to refund some of the delegates their money. They came for an update on industrial relations in South Africa but left with bloody half-baked notes on the impact of globalisation on Africa.’

‘I should inform you Johan, knowing what’s going on in the world and, particularly, what’s going on in Africa, is of paramount importance for executives. How can you do business when you’re ignorant of your environment?’

‘Yes, but not when you pay to get a cutting-edge update on industrial relations and labour law so you can handle strikes and wage bargaining, and all the other rubbish in our bloody unionised environment.’

‘Maybe you should introduce a course on African business. I’ll run it.’

‘The hell you will. I’m giving you one last chance to perform on the industrial relations course, but you’ll have to prove to me you’ve updated your material and promise to stick to it. Not introduce a whole different syllabus.’

‘Still a bit difficult to work my computer with this cast on my arm.’

‘Shouldn’t it have come off by now. You malingering?’

‘The break’s not healing because I keep bumping it.’ Sam looked forlorn.

‘Excuses are all very well Sam. But money talks and I expect delivery from the academics I get to teach on my programmes.’

‘*Your* programmes? The programmes belong to our faculty. They don’t belong to any single individual - whether or not he co-ordinates these programmes. I’ve a good mind to inform Swaine about your attitude.’

‘Be my guest. I’ve already filled him in on your disastrous performance in the classroom last time. You’re not his favourite person right now. So go ahead. Run to him about me. But don’t expect a sympathetic ear from that quarter.’

Sam conceded Johan had won that round. He skulked off, intent on pursuing his fantasy career as a detective.

**RE:** Confidential request  
**FROM:** Dr Luanne Sheer (private address)  
**SENT:** 1 September  
**TO:** Professor Lloyd Dube (private address)

Dear VC

As promised, I'm forwarding the email sent from Delancey James to Judge Harris. I've included the attachments she sent to him as well. Makes interesting reading. Unfortunately, I couldn't recall the message as Harris had already opened it. Will forward you details of payment for the 'nerd' who helped us. Maybe I could go through all of this with you in person?

Regards

Luanne

Luanne Sheer luxuriated on the down duvet she usually shared with her husband. Her hand stroked Stavros's hairy chest and she inhaled the strong scent of musk their bodies exuded. She stretched out on her back. The regular sex with Stavros was not only satisfying; it was exciting. Each time she thought there could be nothing new to experience, Stavros managed to introduce a different move, always surprising to her as she believed she had mastered every trick in the book.

'You're great in bed,' Stavros murmured, his fingers caressing the outline of her breast and hip. 'I don't think I've ever felt so fulfilled. So ... how do you call it? So spent.'

She could feel his breath hot in her ear as he licked it suggestively. She rolled onto her stomach and allowed him to run his hand down her back. 'But where did you learn all those moves, Stav?'

'Make it my business to learn new things ... so I can compete with you. Your husband's a lucky man. He's away a lot?'

'Pretty much. But I like it. I need freedom.' Luanne nipped at the flesh on Stavros's neck.

'Well, we'll have to make the most of his trips away then.'

'Yes, right now I think this boy down here needs more attention.'

Some hours later Stavros and Luanne lay exhausted in each other's arms. The last round was the most tiring, but Luanne kept Stavros going.

'You'll be the death of me,' he murmured.

'And what a way to go. You're great in bed Stav. Especially where it makes me most happy.'

Luanne saw he enjoyed the compliment.

'It must be lonely being away from your lovers in Greece. By the way, are you married?'

'It is lonely. But now I've found you.' Stavros nestled into Luanne's long jet-black hair.

'Poor baby. Lonely in our big city. Glad I can give you friendship.'

'Not only friendship,' Stavros touched her breast. 'Passion. You drive me crazy, darling.'

They lay for a while, entangled, sipping their Möet, cold and crisp and just what Luanne's hot body needed.

'You enjoying working at Egoli?' she raised herself up a touch and ran her nails down the side of Stavros's body. She felt him shiver.

'It has its benefits. Meeting you, for example.'

'I have an insatiable appetite, you know.'

'I'm coming to realise that. But I like the touch of the nympho I see in you.'

'You're Greek, you should know where that word comes from.'

'Nymphomaniac? No doubt you'll tell me.' Stavros caressed her breast.

'They say us nymphs, as females, are outside the control of men and we mate with men or women, whenever we want to.'

'Sounds good to me.'

They lay in silence for a while and Luanne wondered if she should suggest a threesome some time. She didn't think Stavros would be into men, but maybe another woman? She looked at him. He seemed to be dozing off.

'Stav, how are you going to get out of this plagiarism thing?'

Stavros tensed. 'What plagiarism thing?'

'You've been a bit of a naughty boy.'

'What do you know about this?' His words were sharp.

'Oh, I read Delancey's email to the Chair of Council. About Charlotte Mkhize. And you were mentioned.'

'How'd you get your hands on that?'

'Little job I did for Dube. But don't worry. Your secret's safe with me.' She rubbed herself against his extended leg and let out a groan suggesting she could start all over again.

'I explained the confusion to Delancey.'

'Good. I'm not interested - especially not about Delancey. You know, I mentioned to someone the other day I can't imagine her in bed with anyone. And if she does do it, it would probably be in the missionary position all the time. She seems so frigid to me. But how do you know her?'

'She came to talk to me about this plagiarism thing, as you call it. That's all.'

'And what do you think about her potential - sexually speaking of course?'

'Who's measuring? But anyone would have a hard time meeting your standards.' His voice was now less harsh as his hands slid down her body and parted her legs. 'Ready for more?'

Leaning over she began to run her tongue down his torso. She felt his muscles stiffen.

‘No more talking now,’ she whispered. ‘More important things to do.’

With renewed urgency Luanne set herself astride Stavros and gave over to the sensations rippling through her body.

After Stavros had gone, Luanne settled back on the bed. But her thoughts were not on Stavros. She wondered what a pounding in bed with Alex Hallie would feel like? She allowed herself to indulge in this licentious image and wondered if Alex’d prefer her in her red G-string and push-up bra, or the black one? Did he like it rough? She snuggled down, hoping to fill her dreams with lusty debauchery.

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Stavros pulled the ticket out of his bedside drawer. Couriered from Greece. Good old Giorgos. His escape. He was a survivor. With the money from the Grossi that he and Dube would split, he’d be able to buy anything but he had to get through the next week.

He had more than welcomed Luanne’s overtures when they’d bumped into each other at a pub in Melville some weeks back. The sex was hot. Maybe there could be more of it. But the real bonus was to learn about Delancey’s report to Council. When Delancey’d revealed to him at dinner that she’d written to the Chair of Council, it sounded to him that she’d only reported Dube for his inaction about cheating at the University. She hadn’t let on that she’d mentioned his name as well. He clenched his fist. Bloody woman. Dube’s right. Why does she have to meddle in everything?

On the positive side, Delancey did seem to enjoy his company even if she wouldn’t let him get close. But he must be careful. He couldn’t draw any attention to himself right now. If he did, he was sure Dube’d hang him out to dry. Dump him and let him get on with his own fate. What good luck that he’d met Luanne. And she seemed intent on only one thing. This was good. He didn’t need complications in the last week of his stay in South Africa. But he’d have to be alert around Dube. The man had a temper and he controlled it; also, he was astute although that attribute was well disguised. How had he inveigled Luanne into getting hold of Delancey’s mail?

All that was left to do was for the Russian morons to ensure the payment from Uzbekistan when Dube handed over the coins ... and then the morons had to get the coins out of the country. But that was their problem. Dube would pay him his share and he’d be off. Pity he’d needed Dube for this transaction. It would have been much simpler to sell the coins

to the Russians direct but he knew Dube had some hold over them, and there was no chance of double-crossing the Vice-Chancellor.

The note read: “Your lecture was riveting. I couldn’t stop looking at you. Dinner tomorrow?  
s”.

Bright yellow sunflowers, blue irises, yellow spring daisies, all mixed in unison in the clay  
bowl. They’d been sent to her house. She’d never given him her home address.

It didn't add up. Documents lay spread around Delancey's study - on her desk; on the floor. Normally neat and ordered, the room looked like a paper repository. Gus alternated between falling asleep on a heap or amusing himself by using a paw to distribute the papers around the floor. A third cup of coffee had become cold as she absorbed herself in this task.

She'd clustered the papers in a way that made logical sense, interspersing Thandi's documents with her own copious notes. Yet she was missing something. She looked again at Thandi's thesis and the translation of the Greek article. Why would Eleni not have checked out her concerns about the plagiarism of Thandi's work with Stavros? Stavros was right. This would have been the correct thing to do.

She was also getting a contradictory picture of Thandi. On the one hand, Stavros portrayed her as an incompetent student who was handed her degree as she was a black South African, an historically disadvantaged student in need of special privilege. But her brief meeting with Thandi told another story. She knew her subject and was passionate talking about it. Her thesis was ordered and logical. Delancey could appreciate this methodical approach in spite of not being an expert in the subject. The essentials for any doctoral thesis were there - structure, early statement of the research problem, declaration of the objectives of the study, things like that. In fact, Delancey had no doubt Thandi had been a perfectionist and her study was a fine piece of academic work.

And the measured handwriting on the envelope Tau had given her spoke of someone definite. Someone in control. She'd confirmed with Thandi's brother that, indeed, Thandi was about to take up a job offer at the University of Massachusetts. Their standards for employing academics were known to be high. After all, it was one of the best universities in the Boston area. The second picture of Thandi was of someone smart and in charge of her own destiny.

And what about the Eleni factor? Stavros had run her down as well and his reason seemed plausible - a student who'd wanted some excitement with her professor on a romantic Greek island. But Delancey recalled how Stavros had related to Eleni when she'd spotted them outside *La Vigne*. He did not appear, then, to be concerned about an intimate student-professor interaction.

Over the years, Delancey had learned to trust her instincts. She didn't always act on them as she should, but they'd proved to be correct later on. Something was not right here, but she was damned if she could put her finger on it.

And then there was Alex Hallie. A puzzle.

She opened Google and keyed in his name. Click. There it was:

Alexander Kellan Hallie, b. 7 May 1970, Boston, Mass. USA. Currently Visiting Professor of Archaeology at Egoli University, South Africa occupying the Darwin Chair of Research. Formerly Professor of Forensic Archaeology at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. MA. Prior positions: Professor of Archaeology at Stanford University, CA., Assistant Professor of Archaeology at the University of Michigan. Expertise 11<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> Century Italian and Greek coins. Considered the international expert on the rare 11<sup>th</sup> Century Venetian Grosso coin. Wife, Helen Sargent, archaeologist, deceased.

Delancey mulled over this new bit of information. Alex, an expert on the same coins Stavros discovered on Naxos. Did Stavros know this? And his link with Thandi, if Luanne Sheer's to be believed? Furthermore, Thandi was about to join the faculty of his former University. What was she not getting in all of this? As she scrolled through his detailed CV, she also noted an unexplained gap - for three years.

On impulse Delancey also keyed in Stavros's name. But despite several attempts, the message - "error on page" - remained. The University of Athens site listed the barest of details and Google only displayed references to press articles in Greek that Delancey assumed dealt with his research exploits at various archaeological sites.

Missionary George Zulu was much taller close up than Delancey recalled him being at Thandi's memorial service. Gospel music rang out in full force as he ushered Delancey into the modest living room. Framed photographs of Thandi adorned the walls and were positioned on the tops of bookcases, which, she observed, contained probably all the books the veteran evangelist, Billy Graham, had ever written.

'Let me turn this off,' said George Zulu as he headed towards the old and rather outdated sound system. 'Only plays loud or nothing at all, but you can't be fussy when it's a donation.'

'Again, let me say how sorry I am for your loss, Missionary Zulu. I only met Thandi once but she made a definite impression on me.'

Mrs Zulu entered and set down a tray of tea and chocolate cake dripping with thick glossy icing.

'Hope you didn't go to all this trouble for me,' said Delancey, gesturing to the cake.

'We enjoy having guests, Professor James. Especially ones who make the connection between us and my departed sister,' said Missionary Zulu.

Mrs Zulu poured the tea and cut the cake. 'I'll leave you two to talk,' she said, retreating from the room.

'Missionary Zulu,' began Delancey, 'I don't want to rehash what we already know, but I was wondering if Thandi ever said anything to you about a Professor Alex Hallie?'

'I met him.'

'Met him?'

'That's right. Thandi brought him round for dinner. He'd arrived in the country round about mid-July. He'd interviewed her for the job at the University of Massachusetts. I saw him at Thandi's memorial service, so kind to be there. But I didn't get to talk to him though - so many people wanted to express their condolences that I didn't get to meet half of them. He seemed like a nice guy to me but a bit of a maverick. Certainly not the idea I have of professors,' he chortled, 'with his hip clothes - bright red shirt; matching red shoes, a bag slung over his shoulder with all his goodies in it. I think of you people as being much more sombre. But he was a nice guy and a mine of information. Even I got intrigued about all the old stuff they dig up. And then of course, I was fascinated when he told me how he goes about hunting down the criminals who try to steal all these things.'

‘Did he go into any detail?’

‘Not too much but he said there are huge international syndicates who make so much money from this sort of theft - international rings - he called them.’

‘Did you ever get to meet Stavros Vassilis, Thandi’s supervisor from the University of Athens?’

‘No, but she did mention him on a couple of occasions. I got the impression she didn’t like him but most of her talk over the weeks before she died - the weeks before she was murdered - involved her plans for moving to the US. She called a while back though, saying she needed to talk to me. Something about a note in the post box at her house. But later on she said it wasn’t important and I put it down to some kind of prank. You know what people are like. More tea?’

Delancey's house in Melville was, for her, a refuge of sorts, a place where she could reflect ... on her life choices ... on her job ... on the recent tragedy of Thandi Zulu. She'd laid a table for her supper in the well-secured garden and listened to the fading chirps of the weavers in the branches overhanging the swimming pool as they settled in for the night. Soon the rasp of crickets and the guttural croaking of the frogs in the small feng-shui pond located near the wooden gate to the house was all she could hear. She loved this part of the year - early September, the beginning of Spring. She'd bought this house in a secluded leafy cul-de-sac and well away from the sounds of cars and the buzz of people who frequented the shops and restaurants in the area. Gus made a half-hearted attempt to swipe a passing moth. He was getting old.

She reflected on her meeting with Missionary Zulu but her eyes soon strayed to the piece of chocolate cake that Mrs Zulu had insisted she take home with her. It seemed to make mockery of her otherwise austere meal and she wondered why chocolate cake was her favourite, in spite of the bad association she had with it.

'I'm not sure how you think I can go on and on trying to make friends for you.'

Six-year old Delancey sat on a chair, her legs swinging to and fro. The sticky sugar icing ran down the sides of her mother's hands. She wanted to lick it off and taste the sweetness filling her mouth. The entire kitchen felt like an oven. The fairy cakes rose and rose. They were perfect. Golden brown. Rich. She anticipated the silky white icing that her mother was preparing to shower them with, dripping down their sides like snow.

'You're going to have to get out there like other children. Go up to them and say you're coming over for a swim. It's easy.'

'How long will they take to cool down?'

'Cool down?' her mother followed her gaze to the oven. 'Oh I thought you were talking about the swimming pool. Can you only think about yourself and food? No wonder you're becoming a little piggy.'

Delancey pulled her stomach in. Her grade school teacher had a little pig. Did she look like it? Pudgy, is what Hendrik next door called her the other day. And then he laughed and ran off to his new swimming pool.

‘Are you listening to me?’ Her skinny mother was cross. She didn’t look like a pig. Rather like a dog - a long, tall dog that Delancey would give her favourite doll to have. She’d call her Pansy or something like that. Not Sue. That was her mother’s name.

‘Is it because you think you’re fat that you don’t want to play next door? Remember, you’re clever. Can’t have everything is what I always say. Clever can make up for lots of things. And you know how looks fade. Have you ever seen an attractive eighty year old? Look at granny, for example. It wouldn’t matter now that she was good-looking in her day, would it?’

Delancey had a flash of her grandmother as a witch. She was small and bent and lived in the flat built onto their modest house in a poor area of Johannesburg. The addition had been expensive, as her dad always reminded them.

And she was fat.

Delancey imagined that if her grandmother had been a dog, she’d have been a bull dog with thousands of wrinkles on a mean looking face. Ready to snap at any moment. Or maybe, even, she’d have been a pig.

‘Why don’t you make an effort yourself to go swim next door? They can’t eat you, you know,’ continued her mother.

Eat? - Delancey looked again at the rising fairy cakes. ‘I’ll try.’

‘Don’t say you’ll try. That’s what you always say and what good does that do? What’s wrong with you? Just do it. God you’d think you have something to be embarrassed about the way you’re so scared of talking to them. You should be pleased you don’t have their family, you know.’

She didn’t know.

They had a pool.

‘Smitty Verschoor thinks he’s a big deal with his new car and that fancy swimming pool. But I’d hate to be his wife. Know things about him that you’re too young to hear. But trust me, you’re much better off.’

Delancey kept thinking of their pool and wasn’t sure how better off she was.

‘When can I have some?’ Her eyes bored a hole into the oven door.

‘You can have *one* when I offer them to the Verschoor kids. It’ll be an excuse to ask them to let you swim with them. See what I do for you? Always having to make some plan to make friends for you. Why can’t you be outgoing like other children? They wouldn’t think twice if they wanted to come over here and play? Nah. They’d just arrive.’

‘Can’t I just have one before you give them all away?’

The laughter next door came through Delancey's thick net bedroom curtains. She hated these curtains. Yellow and heavy with dust. But they couldn't see her watching them.

She saw her mother approach Hendrik. She saw him run off with the plate and the laughter started up again. They were having some race and the winner got a fairy cake.

'Well, I tried, darling,' said her mother. 'Maybe next Saturday I'll try chocolate cake.'

Eleni Papariga sat on a bench under an evergreen olive tree on the pedestrian walkway separating the Acropolis from the New Acropolis Museum. September was a pleasant time in Athens - cooling down, with fewer tourists. She'd enjoyed her time on Naxos, but was happy to be back with friends and family in her home city - especially after her disappointment with Stavros.

The large glass panes of the museum, hailed as one of the best in Europe, glinted in the sun. This morning she spent four hours on the first floor studying the 420BC Caryatids, the marble statues of young women that had, in the ancient world, substituted for columns in the Erechtheion Temple on the Acropolis. She'd listened to the seasoned archaeologist explain the religious rituals that occurred in this temple and marvelled at the intricate carvings detailing the clothing of the Caryatids and their thick braids which served to strengthen their heads and necks to take up the weight of the marble slabs resting on them.

She knew she'd chosen the right profession. Again, she felt a renewed sting at the recollection of Stavros's behaviour towards her - that he'd not allowed her to be part of the coin discovery at Grotta. And that he'd used her. Well, he'd be sorry, wouldn't he? She opened her laptop and saw she had just enough power to send her message.

Dear Professor James,

I was shocked to hear of Dr Zulu's murder last month. Please could you let me have the contact details of her family so I can send them my condolences.

To answer your first question, Stavros Vasillis took advantage of me. I was drunk. He raped me after a dinner so I didn't feel comfortable checking out my concerns with him about what I thought was plagiarism of Thandi's work. To answer your second question, I came onto the dig at Grotta, unexpectedly, and found Prof Vassilis with the three senior archaeologists dusting off a coin. Having read Thandi's thesis I was sure it was a Venetian Grosso. In a seminar the other day, here back in Athens, one of the archaeologists who was present at the discovery, Mrs Piperides, let it slip that more than one coin had been excavated that night.

I thought you'd also be interested in some articles that appeared about Professor Vassilis about two years ago. They're to do with work he was involved in on Santorini. I've translated them into English and attached them to this message.

Please don't hesitate to contact me if you need to query anything else.

Eleni Papariga

P.S. I'm pleased to say I'm not pregnant nor HIV positive. I've sworn I'll never have so much to drink again in a situation like that, especially not with a pig like Stavros Vassilis. I've also spoken to our Dean at the University and he's helping me to lay a charge of sexual harassment against him.

*The bats screech; their high pitched staccato cry - meant for me. They fly into my hair. Sharp teeth. Claws. All over me. He's here. Run, run, run. Trip, run, hide. Can't get away. No escape. Run. Run.*

Delancey's nightie was soaked and her hair clung in strips to her neck. She was breathing hard and her dry tongue stuck to the roof of her mouth. She reached for the bedside lamp. Its glow cast the room in soft colours and gave her some relief. She lay with her eyes closed for a few minutes, still trapped in The Dream. She loathed how she felt, the chink in her armour it exposed.

She turned over and tried to throw herself back into sleep, willing herself to blank out the horror of the nightmare but a vice gripped her in the pit of her stomach. She knew it was there - silent, lurking - waiting to pounce the moment she let down her guard.

Gus drew closer. He seemed to sense her distress. With her hand on his fur, she felt the loud purrs emanating deep in his body. It helped to restore a sense of normality and she felt the pounding of her heartbeat recede. As she lay with her eyes closed she became aware of another dream that preceded the nightmare - locked in her subconscious, trying to make its way to the surface. She knew from her past therapy the importance of letting these memories come through - and they would if she allowed them.

Images flowed into her head ... coins ... dirt ... dust ... Eleni and Stavros laughing outside *La Vigne* ... Thandi in her office. Stavros saying, 'Look Delancey, look' .... coins falling from his hands ... Thandi steeped in archaeological dust holding up a single coin, saying 'there are more to be found, more to be found, more to be found ...'

A beep from her laptop in the adjoining study signalled an incoming message and the dream faded. She got up and made notes as she'd learned to do, fearing her thoughts might evaporate once she was fully awake.

She headed for the kitchen and filled the coffee maker. She always felt low after The Dream.

Coffee in hand, she opened her email. Two new messages. She clicked on the message she'd been waiting for and read it on the screen. She re-read the PS at the end of the message several times.

Well, well, well. This certainly cast some new light on things. She sipped her coffee but it was cold. She read the message again and then returned to the kitchen to refresh the

cup. Absently, she picked up the cloth and wiped down the counter where, earlier, she'd spilled coffee. Stavros trying to make out that Eleni was the one chasing *him*.

She returned to the bedroom and her eye fell on the bowl of flowers he'd sent. She was pleased she hadn't succumbed to him, but nevertheless, she felt as if he'd tried to dupe her. And if anything made Delancey mad, it was the thought of someone trying to pull the wool over her eyes. She picked up the bowl and sent it crashing onto the tiles. Gus took off like wild fire down the passage. Flowers lay in wet clumps and she noticed some tiles had cracked.

Delancey served up a her favourite Greek dish of stolen lamb. The lights in her well-appointed open-planned kitchen cum dining room reflected the warmth of the yellowwood furniture and the large picture windows showcased the garden in the early evening light. The meat had been in the oven for six hours and now lay before them, replete in its succulent juices.

‘I should send Don over here to learn how to cook,’ said Siphon ladling some of the reduced liquid over his potatoes and carrots. ‘The garlic and feta has given this lamb an amazing taste.’

‘And we don’t even mind paying the price of listening to your Egoli woes in exchange for this.’ Donald, too, savoured the meal.

‘But before we go there,’ interjected Siphon, ‘Don mentioned that you’d met this Greek god, Stavros, on Naxos and now he’s here in Jo’burg. Is he the subject of all the concern here with this Egoli stuff?’

‘Siphon, nothing happened - over there or here.’

‘But Dee, fess up. You were attracted to him.’

‘Well, he’s charismatic ... and I had thought ...’

‘That you could get involved?’ Donald looked hard at her.

‘Well maybe that I could start somewhere ... getting into the dating game again.’

‘Yippee,’ said Siphon.

‘But I have my doubts about his integrity. So I’m pleased I didn’t get inveigled into what I now think is a grand scheme game. I’m also not sure if our meeting on Naxos was quite as co-incidental as he made it out to be.’

‘Dee there’ll be plenty more men. Though you could have used him you know, for recreation, even if he is a crook.’

‘Well, Don, lucky for me I used my own head ... at least this time.’ She gave Donald a nudge on his arm. ‘But getting back to Egoli and Stavros, there’re so many inconsistencies for me so it helps to talk it through with friends like you outside the University.’

‘I’ve filled in Siphon about the story so far.’

Delancey pulled out the translated newspaper articles Eleni had sent her and passed them to Donald and Siphon.

‘Well, Dee,’ said Donald ‘there’s something definitely amiss with the discovery at the Akrotiri site on Santorini. But you can’t be sure this Vassilis chap stole the two missing artefacts.’

‘No I can’t, and obviously others couldn’t pin the loss, if there was any, onto him. But there seems to be a link between ... ’ she paged through Thandi’s thesis, ‘... missing artefacts and something that doesn’t quite make sense when I think back to what he said about the discovery of the Venetian Grosso coins on Naxos.’

‘You’re a scientist, Dee. Approach this with logic. What was Thandi’s central finding?’

Delancey hauled Thandi’s thesis out and, placing it on the table between the dinner dishes, found the relevant page. She shuffled through her notes from the dream and looked up.

‘You, Don, are a genius.’

Dube grunted with pleasure. She was spread-eagled over the edge of his desk, bent with her face forward. Her arms gripped each side of the desk and her ample buttocks rose in a way that said 'fuck you' to the world. He withdrew from her, hoping his secretary in the adjoining office had not heard the thumping. He tucked in his shirt and zipped up his fly.

'Good fuck that,' he said, giving her buttocks a sharp smack. 'I like a well-endowed woman. But maybe you're becoming a little too well-endowed.' He smirked.

Charlotte Mkhize slid off the desk and pulled down her skirt. It had gathered around her thick waist like a child's swimming tube. She managed to yank it over her nether region.

'Maybe you're right,' she said. 'I have put on a little weight. It's because I'm so unhappy.'

'You know where the bathroom is,' said Dube, gesturing to the private facility off his office.

Charlotte emerged a few minutes later. She'd reapplied her makeup and tidied her hair. 'Honesty Lloyd, how long are we going to go on like this?'

'Like what?' He looked up from behind his desk and from the papers in front of him.

'Like this. Sneaking moments. And all we do is fuck. I want a real relationship. A relationship where I can come home to a man at night, be seen with him during the day.'

'Charlotte, I told you I'd take care of things all in good time.'

'Have you told your wife yet that you want a divorce?'

'The time's bad now.'

'It's always bad. First your wife's ill. Then your kid's broken his foot. Or your mother-in-law's in hospital. There's always an excuse.'

'Charlotte, I *said* I'd take care of it. Don't you trust me? I have to wait until it's possible - financially, that is.'

'You're the highest paid Vice-Chancellor in the country. That's what the newspapers said the other day.'

Dube scowled. 'Don't believe all you read in those tabloids. They're only out to get a story. Do you know what it costs me to keep a wife who doesn't work and a kid in a private school? And another one on ...' He stopped dead.

'What? Are you saying your wife's expecting another baby?'

‘Of course not. You didn’t hear me. I said another problem’s on its way. Remember the Russians?’

‘The ones you’re doing this deal with that’s going to make you rich so you can leave your wife and kid?’

‘Exactly.’ Dube exhaled. He’d managed to catch things in time. ‘The deal’s almost through. Only a few more days to put up with these Neanderthals.’

‘Thought you said they’re Russians.’

Dube stared at Charlotte. Definitely not the sharpest intellect in the academic toolkit.

‘They have a lot of business savvy. It’s surprising but there you are. Can’t judge a book by its cover, it appears in this case.’

‘Talking about books and things, I’ve got six articles waiting to go off for publication at the right time. At the click of a button.’

‘And who’re the unfortunate students? I’m assuming you’ve copied their work as usual.’

‘Oh Lloyd, don’t act so high and mighty. You and your people - University administrators - are the ones forcing us academics to publish. What else must I do?’

‘That’s nice for you.’

‘And you’ll push for me to get the faculty research position when it comes vacant next year?’

‘Of course, Charlotte. Would I go back on my word? I promised I’d engineer it. The position’s yours. But you’d better keep a low profile for a while.’

‘Why?’

‘Professor Delancey James is hell bent on pursuing your little plagiarism escapade. Including the article you and Stavros Vassilis wrote based on Thandi Zulu’s work.’

‘How did you get to know about that one? You never take any interest in my research.’

‘The stupid woman’s reported me to the University Council.’

Charlotte laughed. ‘You mean to tell me you can’t keep the Plagiarism Police from reporting this matter to Council?’

‘No, Charlotte, not reporting *this matter* to Council. Reporting *me* for trying to protect you.’

Again Dube directed his stare at Charlotte. She was good for sex, but he couldn’t imagine living with her denseness in the long-term. How she’d ever got a foothold into

academia was beyond him. However, he was the Vice-Chancellor and her fate was in his hands. And that included her personal fate as his lover.

‘By the way, I never asked you. When you were over in Greece teaching at the University of Athens and co-supervising Thandi Zulu with Stavros Vassilis, did you ever fuck him?’

‘Lloyd that was well before we got involved and we said we wouldn’t talk about past dalliances. But if it’s any consolation to you, I keep my distance from him when I bump into him in the archaeology department. I’ve little respect for his morals.’

They'd chosen a table at the back of the restaurant. They were the only patrons and the service was so bad that no obtrusive waiters encroached on their space. Luanne slid in beside Stavros, rubbing her leg against his. She felt the heat of his body as she handed him the sheets of emails.

'So there you have it, darling.' She ran her fingers down the inside of his leg. 'Delancey's mail to the Chair of Council and his reply. The stuff I got for Dube. Delancey's going to meet the Council guy. And, for you, her mail to this Eleni Papegaai in Greece. And of course the response.'

*'Papa Guy?'*

'Whatever. I must admit it's becoming intriguing. Delancey reporting the VC to Council for not taking a stance on cheating. And then her enquiring with this Eleni about your goings on ... on that island. What's its name again?'

'Naxos.'

'And then there's mention of Thandi and ... you've been a naughty boy, sleeping with Eleni. Shame, the poor thing. She even thought she might be pregnant. And you simply left.' Luanne pouted in mock sympathy with Eleni but then ran her tongue around the outside of her lips. They glistened.

'Eleni's a stupid fool.'

'I don't think the love-sick student's your biggest problem from what I can see. I understand fuck-all about coins and all that ancient rubbish. Sorry to be so blunt about it. I know it's your profession. But I can only think if Delancey James's asking about all of this, she must be on to something. I've known her for years. So what have you done, my naughty boy, my little Stavvie?'

'Don't call me Stavvie.'

Stavros broke the silence. He hoped he'd not offended her. He still needed her.

'Luanne, do you think we could get onto a more pleasant activity? I'm grateful for all this information but it's only a passing interest I have.'

He leaned over and ran his fingers over the top of her breasts protruding from her sweater. 'Hmm,' he closed his eyes, 'and I can imagine what's under there.'

'I know a place nearby where we can go for a quickie,' she slid his hand down her body to her crotch. 'And I'm ready for you, lover.'

Delancey set down her coffee mug. Even though her office at the University was cold - as offices often are in old buildings - she saw it was going to be a glorious day, early spring. Already the sun was hot outside. She had slept well; the pills helped. She couldn't believe she'd ever found Stavros attractive ... well, now she knew.

She reviewed her notes on the plagiarism meetings and began to write down her ideas in preparation for her meeting with Judge Peter Harris but her mind kept returning to Thandi Zulu. There were still so many open ends but she felt as if she was getting closer.

The cursor blinked on the screen between the words and her thoughts. *Coins still to be discovered (Thandi's thesis); coins found (mentioned by Stavros); no more coins to be found (Stavros and Charlotte's article)...*

A few seconds after the campus clocked signalled midday, she heard footsteps in the passage and a scraping outside her door. She saw the handle turning. There was no time to cross the room to lock the door. She was alone in the building. Had she locked the main door to the office block? A flashback of a hand across her mouth ... the final blow ...

'Delancey, are you here?'

Stavros.

'How did you get in?' Her tone was sharp - sharper than she intended it to be. 'You scared me to death.'

'The door down stairs was open,' Stavros smiled. 'I was passing and I saw your car. You've not returned my calls so I've come to check if you're okay.' He threw his jacket over a chair in the corner and a number of coins and keys spilled out. He bent down to collect them, but continued looking at her. 'So are you okay?'

'I'm fine. Busy.' She knew her words sounded cold so, with a conscious effort, she invited him to sit down, indicating the chair that Thandi had once occupied. 'I was looking at my pictures of the Koufonissia islands.' She clicked on the icon.

'Ah yes, Kato Koufonissi. I remember the wonderful day as if it was a moment ago. You'll have to let me show you some other islands as I promised - when you're back in my country next year. You will be doing your exchange teaching at my University again?'

'It seems like a permanent feature in my life. And of course, I always want to get back to Naxos.'

‘Delancey, I feel there’s something wrong. Something ... how do you say in English ... something amiss?’

He stood up, moved around her desk and placed his hands on her shoulders, attempting to massage her neck. She shook him off.

‘Stavros, stop trying to get lucky with me.’

‘You’re tense, Delancey.’

‘I’ve been busy. Plenty of marking, teaching, that sort of thing. You saw the intensity of the class the other day. By the way, thank you for the flowers. Did you enjoy the class?’ She indicated he should move back to the chair.

‘Delancey, I sat there enchanted. You had such command of the room. You handled the Russians so diplomatically.’

‘Ah, the Russians. Odd people. And you sat right next to them.’

‘They smelled of Vodka even so early in the morning. But we’re getting off the subject. Have I done something wrong??’

‘No Stavros. I guess I’m preoccupied.’

‘Then you’ll have dinner with me? Soon I’ll have to go back to Athens so we’ve got to make the most while I’m still here.’

After he left, Delancey found it difficult to get back to work. She had controlled her anger at him well under the circumstances. She needed one last bit of information from him so she’d conceded to dinner. Her suspicions were growing and with them, her fury at the man who thought he could manipulate her. She got up to set the chairs and papers straight, hoping any order created would rub off on her disjointed thoughts.

It was under the papers she found Stavros’s key to *The Sapling* cottage. And with that came the realisation of an opportunity she’d never dared hope for.

\*\*\*\*\*

The next morning Stavros found a brief note in his pigeon hole at the University:

Dear Stavros,

You left this key to your cottage in my office. Hope you didn’t have trouble getting in.

Delancey

Behind the dense shrubs, Delancey waited some time for the electronic gates to the *Wise Oak B&B* to open as a guest drove out. Taking her chance, she scuttled into the property and, avoiding the guard house, secreted herself in the shadows as she made her way to *The Sapling* cottage. It was getting dark and her black track suit helped her blend in with the surrounding shrubbery. Her hand tightened around the duplicate key for the cottage she'd had cut. She wondered about the lack of the security at the B&B. You'd think they'd have better security here. Crime's not a joke in the country and she'd just proved how easy it was to gain access to the place.

She heard the latch click, exhaled with relief as she entered the room and closed the door, careful not to make any noise. Looking at her watch she confirmed she had about half-an-hour, to be safe. Maybe a bit more if Stavros's guest lecture to the University community ran over schedule.

Her eyes adjusted to the dusky light. She didn't switch on any of the lamps but, instead, pulled out a pocket mag torch and scanned the lounge cum kitchenette. For a man who was always so well groomed, the suite was a mess. But there was no time to contemplate Stavros's domestic habits.

Opening kitchen drawers, she saw nothing unusual among the piled plates and cups. Wine bottles were stacked at the kitchen sink; half-eaten hamburgers and soggy chips lay in packets on the table and a hunk of roughly-cut cheese was beginning to dry out. The bedroom told a similar story - messy sheets and a particular pungent odour spoke of recent activity. This image drew, in her, a mixture of emotions - relief that she'd not succumbed to Stavros's flirtations; anger that he'd tried to mislead her. But she had no time to indulge her feelings right now. Plenty time for that later.

Delancey opened the bedside table drawer. Now there was something interesting. A first-class ticket to Brazil with travel on to Guatemala. She checked the date before returning it to the drawer, placing it exactly how she found it. She moved onto the cupboard. Stavros's suits and jackets dangled on coat hangers with an air of carelessness about them, some stacked together on a single hanger, unlike the clothes in her cupboard which hung all pointing in the same direction. But there was no time to think about this either; time was running out.

She rifled through jacket pockets, replacing empty sweet wrappers, condom packs and packets of medication. One packet announced itself to be a treatment for Chlamydia. She shuddered. She started on the trouser pockets where she found much the same assortment of articles and mused how Stavros managed to conceal these bulges, this paraphernalia, on his person.

Just as her frustration was beginning to increase, Delancey's hand dug deep into the pocket of the last pair of trousers and she withdrew a crumpled note. First prize.

The night was closing in. Dube allowed himself to savour the moment - one of the last few in this house. He cast his eye around his private study in the palatial home provided by the University as part of his package, replete with rich oak tables and tall bookshelves, opulent red sofas, wooden and onyx carvings. He gazed at a small statuette of Athena. He'd be able to take with him only the few pieces which wouldn't draw any queries if they were detected by customs officials. He'd have enough money to replace them. He'd be rich. Very rich. It was like leaving old friends behind ... but he'd make new ones. And he had his collection in Mexico after all. At any rate, friendship was an overrated concept and he'd done fine being a loner all his life.

All the elements were coming together. Timing was key in this exercise. He'd be happy to be rid of the responsibilities at Egoli. He'd milked the system well and it couldn't give him much more. With all the money he could go anywhere. Maybe not Uzbekistan. Who'd want to go to Uzbekistan? A cold country populated by inbred imbeciles. Or Greece? A hot land run by incompetents. But anywhere else in the world would be fine.

He looked through the doorway and from the side could see his pregnant wife scrapbooking in the lounge. He'd have to leave her something. After all, he wasn't a cold-hearted bastard. Still, he imagined his freedom, without her, without the brat, without Charlotte ...

Delancey followed Luanne Sheer at a safe distance.

Luanne took the elevator to Dube's office, but not before stopping to view her reflection in various windows she passed and to make slight adjustments to her tight top.

Delancey watched her. Could she get her skirt any higher or her sweater any tighter? Didn't the University have some sort of dress code she was transgressing?

Delancey took the stairs two by two, emerging at the designated floor in time to see Luanne step into Dube's office. She pressed herself into an alcove in the passage outside Dube's office door and was relieved to see the secretary's empty desk.

Luanne's deliberate low-key tone wafted through. 'I see your gate-keeper's not here, *Vee Cee*. Great organising. I feel like it rough and loud today.'

Maybe their noisy love-making would provide a good cover, but Delancey needed access. She waited.

'Let's go to the boardroom,' said Dube, 'the couch in there's softer.'

She heard the boardroom door slam shut

Dube must need this badly. Already she could hear the advanced progress being made. They hadn't seemed inclined to waste any time on foreplay or even to take precautions in locking the outer door. She knew she'd have to hurry.

Entering his office, she scurried across the carpet, the thick pile masking any sound, to the bookcase at the opposite end of the room, near Dube's desk. The box she'd knocked over during her last visit had been moved to the glass-fronted cabinet alongside the bookcase. It was locked. She scanned the office. No keys in sight. She heard a loud groan from the boardroom and hoped it wasn't a sign of the end of the dalliance. But more pants and grunts signalled that things were only starting to heat up now. And Luanne had not joked when she said she wanted it loud.

Carefully, Delancey opened desk drawers. Still no keys. Her hands skipped over an airline ticket and various other papers on the desk. Interesting. Both Stavros and Dube had one-way international tickets. Were they planning to make a run for it? But she had to move on. In desperation she scoured the room. Dube's jacket behind the half open office door ... almost hidden.

She padded back to the door and immediately felt the weight of a bundle of keys in the jacket pocket. She looked for one that resembled a cabinet key. Three looked alike.

Returning to the cabinet, she tried each in turn. No luck. And as she was about to give up and go, her eye spotted five coins in a dish near the office door. She'd passed them when she'd entered the room but, now, from this angle, the dish looked slightly elevated on one side. She scooted over and lifted it. A small silver key glinted back at her. Dube hadn't put the key back exactly in the recess under the dish.

It worked. The cabinet door opened. Delancey lifted the lid. There they were - the Grossi. Quite distinctive. The stark image of Christ with his halo, sitting on his throne, could not be mistaken; it was the image she'd seen when studying the photographs and drawings in Thandi's thesis.

Her eye fell on a thick black garbage bag lining the dustbin next to Dube's desk. She grabbed it, pulled at it slowly until it came loose, not worrying about its contents. Gently she tipped the coins into the bag. They didn't weigh much. She replaced the now-empty box and locked the cabinet, then put the key back under the dish exactly as she'd found it and returned Dube's bunch to his pocket. Heading for the office door, she passed two ceramic jugs standing on a table by themselves. A small sign denoted they came from Akrotiri in Santorini.

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Charlotte Mkhize wore nothing under a thin coat. Lloyd liked that. Most people had already left campus so she figured the chances of anyone seeing her sneak into the Vice-Chancellor's office was remote.

She looked in the rear view mirror of her mini coupé and adjusted her make-up, ensuring that her thick black mascara and silver-blue eye shadow had not smudged. She wondered if the blue clashed with the pink nail varnish, but put the thought aside. Lloyd wasn't that observant.

As she was about to open the car door, she spotted movement to her left - someone exiting the building. And in a hurry. Delancey James.

Charlotte felt the anger well up in her. I wonder why the bitch's in such a hurry? And what's with a black garbage bag under her arm? Strange. She watched Delancey throw the bag into her boot, slide into the driver's seat and reverse. She saw how closely she missed scraping another car, how she abruptly slowed down - she actually waved to the campus policeman. Professor James - always so cool and collected - was in a hurry.

And she wondered why.

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Delancey sat in a café nursing a skinny café latté. She played with the plastic label of the key for the *Postnet* safety deposit box, switching it from hand to hand. At least she'd found a safe place to hide the coins; a rental box taken out in a false name. She needed to think. The connection between Stavros and the coins had come to her in a flash but it was still a conundrum as to how Alex Hallie fitted in.

She needed to tell the police about all of this. But it seemed so far-fetched. Would they care about coins at all? And if she handed the coins in they'd most likely go missing, the cops would help themselves. They did it at crime scenes all the time and they stole from the police safes - confiscated firearms, jewellery and money. What about Tau? He seemed like a good cop.

Better still, Judge Peter Harris would understand.

Soon after Luanne had limped off, Dube noticed the box in the cabinet was askew. The key for the cabinet was still under the dish of coins, but when he accessed the cabinet and opened the lid, the box was empty. He seethed. His precious coins. The ones that ensured his escape - unfettered - to start again in a new country as a rich, rich man. And he was angry with himself. He should have locked them up in the bank vault. He now recognised the folly of his sentiment. He ran through the list of possible suspects. He'd get them back of course.

At that moment the door swung open and Charlotte barged into his office. He straightened his tie. Had she seen Luanne leave?

'You pleased to see me Lloyd honey?' Charlotte's voice sounded like syrup on a hot day.

'It's a bad time, Charlotte. And haven't I always told you to let me know when you're coming?'

'Tried to call, but your cell just rang. Anyway, can't a woman surprise her man?'

'Not now. '

'Was Delancey James here to see you today?'

'No. Charlotte I can't talk now.'

'You're not having a scene with Delancey are you?'

'Of course not. You know how I detest the woman and I've got more important things on my mind.'

'I saw her rushing off and, if you can believe it, she had a black garbage bag under her arm. You have a quickie with her, Lloyd? Lloyd. Lloyd are you listening to me?'

But Dube was looking at his dustbin which was now missing its inner black lining.

Lloyd Dube prided himself on his strategic prowess. His eagle eye spotted things in time - like seeing Delancey James's forwarding address to Naxos as he was signing off on the exchange programme for several staff going to Athens. The Universe was full of nasty tricks. Imagine if he hadn't caught that one in time and alerted Stavros. Imagine. With her snooping into everyone's affairs, she may have stumbled onto the whole thing. And now, in spite of Stavros's reassurances, maybe she had. But getting back to the Russians ...

Perhaps he could use the disappearance of the coins to his advantage - as long as nothing went wrong with the transfer of the funds from Uzbekistan. He'd get the Russians to do two more small jobs for him first. Stavros Vassilis knew too much and his role as a middle-man had been completed. But now that James woman ... she would not wreck his plans. And she had the coins. The Russians should enjoy this one.

Dube knew he had to work fast. He also had to work smart.

He let Luanne back into his office.

‘Hungry so soon?’

‘Luanne, I have to ask you to concentrate. No side shows right now.’

‘Not even a little one?’

‘Absolutely not. Not even a little one. After this I promise I’ll satiate you. But first we’ve got work to do.’

‘I doubt you’ll be able to ever do that *Vee Cee*. But what’s the job now? You hinted there’d be some money in it for me?’

‘It involves a bit of phone and account hacking.’

‘Easy peasy.’

Stavros swirled his whisky around the glass in an anti-clockwise direction. Things were going right. He stretched out on the sofa in his B&B suite. Nothing he couldn't handle. After all, he was Stavros Vassilis. And hadn't he orchestrated the whole thing efficiently so far? It was always going to be a gamble, but then, what was life without a few risks?

He had booked a table at *The Barking Frog*, alerting the maître d'hôtel to chill the Dom Pérignon. He needed to create the atmosphere. Get Delancey cosy and off guard. Get her talking. Once he identified how much she knew, he'd be able to decide on his next steps. He touched the Rohypnol tablet in his pocket. Half a tablet should do the trick ...

He fingered the airline ticket which he now carried with him wherever he went, transferring it from one jacket pocket to another according to his attire, a constant reminder of what was to come. A good symbol of his future. As was his other talisman. He extracted the Venetian Grosso from his wallet and rubbed its surface.

He heard the hefty rap of the brass knocker and smiled to himself. A quickie with Luanne was what he needed to add to his anticipation of what was to come later. He had time. It was just before eight pm. He hadn't been sure if Luanne had got his cryptic message, but obviously she had. And she must want this badly as well, if that rap was any indication of urgency. He chuckled. His biggest challenge would be getting Luanne to leave so he could get to Delancey in half-an hour's time.

Returning the coin to his wallet, he moved to the door and opened it.

Sam Heen spotted the Russians drinking coffee in a café in the University Corner Centre. They seemed to walk the suburbs all day. He imagined them as KGB agents in the cold war. They fitted the profile. Hefty. Scarred with signs of physical combat. Pocked skin. Ugly. And they didn't have to speak to convey the message 'Don't fuck with us.'

Sam sat down at a table some distance away. They seemed not to communicate with each other apart from the occasional nodding of heads. Sometime just before eight pm the Russians got up, throwing down a substantial tip for the waitress. Scarface looked at her with lecherous eyes, maybe trying to set up something for later. Sam couldn't quite understand the non-verbal transaction.

He followed them, criss-crossing blocks; they knew their way around Melville. At last they stopped outside a guest house, the board at the gate identified it as the *Wise Oak B&B*. Sam hid behind shrubs on the pavement. Crooked Nose pulled an object out of his backpack and hoisted himself onto the branch of a tree overhanging the wall. Sam saw him connect to the electric fence something that looked like a type of miniature computer. He heard a mild buzz and then a snap as the electric security wires were cut. The Russian lowered himself to the ground and both men crouched behind a large bush and waited. After a few minutes, they edged their way to the wrought iron gate and Crooked Nose attached another contraption to the lock. This time Sam heard a louder crack and the gate opened a few centimetres. The Russians crouched again in the bushes to the side, waiting for any response to their intrusion. There was none. They shimmied their large bodies through the gate and pushed it closed but the lock did not click into place.

Sam took them for professionals. Their movements were smooth and they knew what they were doing. Slipping in behind them, he followed them down the narrow pathway alongside the main house in the direction of the arrow pointing to the *Sapling* cottage. As they approached the cottage door, Sam's foot hit a paving tile that rose from the ground.

'Shit.' He muffled a cry as he tumbled and his bad arm, still encased in plaster, hit the soil to the side of the pathway.

Scarface turned around and raised his hand, cocked his ear ...

Sam held his breath, lay low in the flowerbed. He didn't fancy a face-to-face altercation with these guys.

Hearing nothing the Russians proceeded to the door. Sam heard the single sharp rap of the knocker and sucked in his breath when he saw the Greek professor of archaeology appear in the doorway.

The Russians pushed their way inside, slamming the door behind them. It was the first time Sam noticed they wore gloves although it was spring, and not at all chilly.

‘What the hell ...’ Stavros glared at the men as he recovered his balance. Their facial deformities were amplified by the harsh overhead light. His surprise turned to anger. ‘Thought you’d left already. You got what you came for. You’ve got the coins.’

The Russians pushed their way further into the room.

Stavros moved to position himself squarely in front of them. He realised he should never have trusted them. He clenched his fists, squaring up for a fight. If there was ever a time to pray, it was now. Would the talisman in his wallet, imprinted with Christ’s likeness protect him?

‘You call me *stoopid* - stupid?’ Scarface glared at Stavros.

He’d not anticipated the deftness of the Russian who moved behind him. Before he could reconsider his defence, he felt a sudden pain, a cord twisting into his flesh. He struggled, managed to lodge a hand between the cord and his neck. He felt the stickiness of his blood running from his hand ... from his throat. His knees collapsed. He fell onto the low coffee table. Glass shattered. A shard penetrated his side; his arm buckled under his body. Through the pain he heard a crash outside before blackness engulfed him.

Sam scaled up a small tree. Bugger his arm. This was important detective work. He needed to see what was going on inside the *Sapling* cottage. Lodging his foot in the V of two branches, he was able to peek into the cottage through the window next to the door.

His arm throbbed. Then he felt pins and needles in his right leg, the leg that held most of his not inconsiderable weight and which was lodged in the branches. Gripping onto a branch to the side to steady himself, he sucked in his breath as pain shot through his bad arm. And that's when he saw the scuffle. The Russians seemed to overpower the Greek and Sam saw him stumble and let out a yell.

God, they're killing him. Sam was paralysed by panic. What should he do? How could he raise the alarm? Could he fight them? He thought not. And with that, his leg now numb from its incarceration, caved in beneath him. He made one last lunge to secure his position in the tree before the branches snapped and he tumbled to the ground. Although stunned, he was aware, nevertheless, of the commotion he'd made. He jumped up and propelled himself into the dense foliage nearby. He lay dead still and held his breath as he saw the Russians emerge from the cottage and look around.

They muttered something in Russian. The one with the crooked nose ventured towards the verge of the pathway but the other straightened his gloves and urged his companion to hurry up as they saw the outline of a woman heading up the pathway.

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Still crouched in the shrubbery, Sam saw Louise Sheer bang on the door of *The Sapling* cottage. He watched as she tapped her foot and lit up a cigarette. After a few minutes she strode off in a manner that indicated to Sam she was not very happy.

At the *Barking Frog* Delancey sipped at the Dom Pérignon 2004 Vintage.

‘Especially ordered by Professor Vassilis,’ the waiter explained.

Bloody Stavros still trying to impress her. From the familiarity she detected in the waiter’s tone, this was not Stavros’s first visit to the restaurant. No surprises, Delancey.

She needed information, and the only way to get it was from the horse’s mouth. What part had she played in his elaborate game?

It was unusual for Stavros to be late. In fact, he arrived before her on most occasions. She waited yet there was no word from him. Delancey checked her phone. No messages. She dialled his cell. No reply. It went straight to voice mail.

She pulled out the email from Eleni Pappariga that set out this student’s version of events and a new wave of anger ripped through her. She’d confront him about this as well. His lies. Clearly the student was the victim in all of this.

Another half-hour passed. Delancey realised she’d been stood up. The champagne was delicious and she’d enjoyed drinking it on her own, but where was he? It was now nine pm.

‘Delancey.’

She turned, but it wasn’t Stavros.

‘Alex.’

‘Got a moment?’

‘I’m waiting for Stavros. I’m sure we don’t need a third party at a collegial dinner.’

‘I’ll wait with you until he arrives.’ Alex helped himself to the Dom Pérignon.

‘Still the sassy American I see.’

‘Could you suspend your hostility to me for a few minutes. I think we have something in common. Can we call a treaty?’

‘I have nothing in common with you Alex. And stop sounding so self-righteous. For God’s sake ... a treaty ... why not just say a truce?’

‘Well, a truce then.’ He signalled to the waiter for another bottle.

‘So what do you want to talk about? More lessons in using the University’s software to check my work?’

‘I know you’re pissed off with me about checking up on your facts.’

‘Bloody right.’

‘But I needed to be certain.’

‘Of what?’

‘Of the role you play in this entire business ... plagiarism ... Stavros ... the coins.’

‘You know, I’ve done some checking myself, Alex. You’re regarded as a world expert on the coin Thandi discusses in her thesis and that Stavros and Charlotte mention in their article.’

‘So?’

‘You arrive here out of the blue. You know Thandi Zulu. In fact you met with her for a drink and had supper at her brother’s house ...’

‘You’ve done your research well, Professor James.’

‘You don’t have to patronise me.’

‘Then let me tell you how I came to be at Egoli,’ said Alex.

‘Should make a good story.’

‘Why Judge Peter Harris arranged for me to be here.’

‘For the last couple of years, the Chair of the Council of the University of Athens, Judge Stimatis Voulos, has been on a campaign to get to the source of the antiquities thefts in Greece. Of course they happen all over the world where there are rare artefacts to be found, but Voulos has been relentless in trying to stem the plundering in Greece.’

‘And you, as a forensic archaeologist, are assisting?’

‘You know that? I don’t make my forensic qualifications too public.’

‘I told you I Googled you. You should be more careful to cover your tracks.’

‘Quite the detective aren’t you, Delancey?’ Alex hesitated. ‘It’s a bit complicated.’

‘How complicated can it be? A start date would be good.’

‘I’ve been working on this for years, but had a bit of a gap ...’

‘A gap? A break from your work, Professor Hallie? How nice. Many of us would love to take a break in our work. Wasn’t it for about three years, if my Internet sources are to be believed?’

‘A gap after my wife died in 2006.’

Delancey kicked herself. ‘I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to be so tactless, Alex.’

‘I ducked out of life - bought a 35’ yacht and sailed to any place I wanted to. I needed to figure out what I was going to do with my life. I grew my hair, and tried to decide if I was going to go back to archaeology at all. It was my fault Helen died.’

‘What happened?’

‘I’m always so gung-ho. Nothing’s a problem. I was the Chief Archaeologist on a site outside Luxor in Egypt. I failed to ensure the retaining wall we’d erected was strong enough. It’s difficult to forgive my negligence. Of course it was an accident, but had I been a little less self-assured, a little less blasé, I could have prevented it.’

‘And how are you now?’ she asked.

‘I came to terms with the accident; I’ve stopped beating myself up about it but I still carry the blame.’

Delancey reached over the table and touched his hand. ‘So you decided to go back to archaeology.’

‘It’s all I know. I’d be useless at anything else.’

She doubted that.

‘And that’s when I accepted the job at the University of Massachusetts. I threw myself anew into busting the smuggling racket - I guess as a way of making amends - of doing something to right a wrong in the world.’

‘And that’s what you’ve obviously done,’ said Delancey.

‘It’s how I met Thandi Zulu.’

‘Oh?’

‘Judge Voulos is a crafty man. He reads everything written on the latest discoveries at excavations; he attends every conference on the subject. And he came across Thandi’s thesis. He put a couple of things together - the missing ceramic vessels at Santorini being one of the concerns. The common denominator was Stavros Vassilis.’

‘So you knew about Stavros before you met him here in South Africa?’

‘Yes, but I came to South Africa to see if he could lead us to others ... to more of the syndicate members ... and I’d met with Thandi at U Mass. After reading her thesis, I was so impressed that I motivated for us to offer her a position at our University. But we didn’t let on to her anything about the crime syndicate; we didn’t want to involve her in this messy investigation. We believed she’d be an asset to our University.’

‘So she was good. I thought so. But why didn’t you let on at the dam that you knew her.’

‘You were in too much shock to see how I reacted. But in any case, I needed to be discrete. I didn’t know where you fitted into the picture.’

‘And you thought I may be a crook? Aiding and abetting Stavros?’

‘I couldn’t rule out anything especially since you let on that you’d met him in Greece.’

Delancey let that one pass and signalled for Alex to continue with his story.

‘Voulos was also intrigued that Thandi believed, based on her research, that more Grossi were buried on Naxos. So when you informed us of the plagiarism of Thandi’s work by Vassilis and Mkhize ...’

‘You saw that Thandi’s conclusions had been changed in the article that Vassilis and Mkhize published in *Greek Archaeology*.’

‘In common parlance, they call it falsifying data. But I see you’d already come to this conclusion hadn’t you?’

Delancey smiled.

‘I told you once before, Professor Hallie, I always do my homework thoroughly.’

‘Now, Professor Delancey James, do you think we can declare that truce? I’ve got the word right this time.’

Johan watched Swaine ration the portions of his best Aberfeldy single malt whisky as he poured for his guests.

‘Tonight calls for Rare and Expensive,’ said Swaine. ‘And thank you, especially, Vice-Chancellor, for gracing us with your presence at our humble faculty offices, late as it is.’

‘Less than humble I’d say,’ Dube cast his eye around Swaine’s office.

Johan noticed Dube sounded as he always did on the few occasions he’d met him face-to-face. Abrupt. However, he seemed on edge tonight. A nervous tick appeared at the corner of his left eye.

‘Waiting for Stavros,’ said Swaine. ‘He’s late.’

‘Can’t wait all night,’ said Dube. ‘I’m busy. Meeting the Russians to hand over the coins and to get the money into the account. Then we’ll all be happy.’

‘Coins?’ queried Johan. ‘Is that what we’re transacting? Wow.’

‘*Joe Han*, give Professor Vassilis a call. See where he is. You’ve got his mobile number I take it?’

Johan withdrew from the group to call Stavros but returned a few minutes later.

‘No reply. I left a message. Probably forgot about the meeting and is sleeping already.’ He stifled a yawn.

‘Well,’ said Dube. ‘He’ll have to catch up. After tonight, I’m afraid I’ll have to close down your little illegal company Johan. It’s served its purpose for this project.’

Johan gulped. ‘But what about my extra income ... I mean the source to supplement the salaries of our academics?’

‘Sorry Johan. Surely you want to protect yourself? I know I want to protect myself. Once the company’s closed it’ll take a devil’s amount of work to trace the transactions. We’re using the account for the last time - for our current little business venture. That’s all.’

‘But, Vice-Chancellor ...’

‘A toast to our success.’ Swaine raised his glass. ‘You’re sure the money’s guaranteed, Vice-Chancellor?’

Dube glared but, nevertheless, drew a print-out from his pocket. ‘Right here. A guarantee for \$US 170 million from Uzbekparim, Tashkent, Uzbekistan, to be paid as soon as Mr Bazarov sends the sms confirming they have the coins.’

‘Bazarov aka Scarface, not so?’ said Swaine. ‘Clever of these buggers to do the deal through Uzbekistan. Whew. \$170 million equates to 1.7 billion rand at the current exchange rate.

‘And how many coins did you say there are, Vice-Chancellor?’ Johan was in awe.

‘Thirty-four.’

‘So that’s \$5 million a coin.’ Johan whistled through his teeth.

‘It’s the going rate for some coins on the black market,’ said Dube. ‘Maybe even a bit low for a coin like this.’

Johan tried to do the mental division. There’s Dube, Vassilis, Swaine and himself. No doubt Dube was going to discuss how the money was to be divided. ‘What are the Russians going to do with the coins?’ he asked.

‘Bugged if I care,’ answered Dube. ‘Another crooked deal to make their money clean. Believe me, they’ve done their sums. We think this is a huge amount of money. They’re sure to make much more off this deal. The antiquities market knows no bounds. Some greedy people out there.’

Johan couldn’t think how much more than almost \$2 billion could possibly be made from thirty-four coins.

They moved to the small table Johan had set up in Swaine’s office.

‘You’ll be sitting here when I call,’ instructed Dube looking intently at Johan.

Johan nodded.

‘And when I let you know that the Russians have confirmed receiving the coins, you’ll immediately check that the money’s in the account. Call me on this number and I’ll confirm that you must transfer the money into the account number I’ve set up for us. After that I’ll do the distribution. You’ve all given me your account details.’

‘When will this all happen, Vice-Chancellor?’ queried Johan.

A commotion outside interrupted this question. The tornado, Sam Heen burst in. He knocked into Dube who, in turn, looked startled as he staggered back into the room.

‘What the hell ...’ yelled Swaine. ‘

Johan smiled to see Dube’s look of bewilderment.

‘Sam, explain yourself.’ Swaine was angry. ‘I’ll not have any member of my staff barging in to my office. Unannounced at that. You’d better have a good reason. Can’t you see the Vice-Chancellor’s here?’

Sam spluttered. He stood in the middle of the room, dishevelled. His shirt was ripped down the side; his shoes were caked with mud. And his plaster cast looked the worse for wear.

‘Well, spit it out man,’ said Swaine. ‘What’s the problem?’

‘It was awful. It’s the Greek professor. He’s dead. Been murdered.’

‘Murdered?’ Swaine’s eyebrows rose in two perfect arcs.

‘I called the police. Just told them where to find the body. Was scared the killers would come after me too.’

Johan moved Sam towards a chair.

Swaine gestured to the drinks cabinet. ‘Get him a drink. But not the Aberfeldy.’ He sat down in the chair beside Sam. ‘And be careful, the cabinet’s not too stable.’

Johan reached behind the bottles and was about to extract a bottle of *Klipdrift* brandy when the corner of his jacket pocket caught the door handle of the cabinet. The force of his movement caused the cabinet, precarious at the best of times, to tilt forward. His jacket ripped and before he could do anything, the cabinet came crashing down. Just in time he managed to jump out of the way.

Johan looked at the mess of wood and broken glass; the slicks of alcohol pooling on the floor; the mingled smell of whisky and wine that threatened to permeate the room. And then - silence - broken only by the noise of a solitary coin rolling across the room. It stopped at Dube’s feet.

Dube fixed his eyes on Swaine. ‘The prodigal coin returns.’ He picked it up and looked at the image of the owl on the front of the coin for a few seconds before heading out of the room. ‘I’ll be in contact with you in an hour or so,’ he barked to Johan. ‘Don’t move from this spot.’

Swaine glanced at the mess in his office before taking off after Dube. ‘Vice-Chancellor, I can explain.’

But Dube’s stride suggested he was not interested in any explanations.

And Johan was left wondering about Professor Stavros Vassilis’s fate that no-one seemed at all concerned about.

Delancey had felt the adrenaline surge with Alex's story. His explanation was plausible and she had no reason to mistrust the judgment of the Chair of Council. Indeed, as Swaine and Dube, her bosses so to speak, were now her enemies, Harris was the one she identified as her ally and she'd alerted him to her concerns after all. Nevertheless, she was pleased she'd not revealed to Alex that she had the note and the coins. She needed to keep that to herself for the time being.

But she was mad as all hell. How dare Stavros use her. Deceive her. Present himself as a colleague and, if she'd let him ... more than a colleague. She'd confront him tomorrow.

Dube lost no time after the meeting at Swaine's office. He drove back to his own office, periodically touching his recovered coin. Luanne was waiting outside.

'God, *Vee Cee*, it's already late. We should be curled up in bed. You'd better make this worthwhile for me.' She gave him a salacious smile but Dube seemed disinclined to talk.

'These Russians are morons. With a little help from my friend at *TNC-Mobile* it was easy to hack into their phones. Pay-as-you-go is not as secure as it seems. And I can't tell you the amount of porn on their browsers. Disgusting pigs.'

'You got the cell number?'

'So simple it was boring. The only name listed for Uzbekistan on both their phones is for a certain Babayev at the security company, Uzbekparim, in Tashkent. And if you can believe it, they actually had the word *coins* keyed in next to his name. In Russian of course. *Монеты*. Microsoft Translator's a gift from God.'

'And you worked out how we'll receive their response.'

Luanne cast her eyes upwards. 'Of course. When I hacked into their phones, I made sure any message would be directed to your cell. Your communication with Babayev will appear to come from Tsvetkov's or Bazarov's cell. I suggest you ditch yours after this. They're sure to find out some time and you don't need the Russian or the Uzbek mafia coming after you, do you?'

Dube moved behind his desk and Luanne perched on the armrest next to him. He punched in the number 00 998 71 97654388 and held his breath. This message would confirm receipt of the coins. So many things could still go wrong. What if Babayev called back? What if Babayev was not the person the message should go to in the first place? What if he needed to send a message with the sms? What if Babayev realised the message was not sent by Tsvetkov or Bazarov? Also he had insisted right from the beginning that no clearance period would apply to the transfer of funds. What now if that didn't work? He needed to move fast. He felt the sweat collect on his forehead.

A beep on his cell brought him back to reality.

Luanne peered over his shoulder and reached out for the phone. Quick as a flash she opened the browser on Dube's cell and entered the Russian words, *Средства, переведенные*, into Translator.

'Funds transferred.' She beamed.

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Johan confirmed to Dube that the money reflected in the company account. He'd pre-loaded the beneficiary details that Dube had given him and simply entered the amount now, making sure all the zeros were in place. He wondered how long it would take Dube to transfer his portion. Bundling Sam up, Johan moved toward the door. As he passed the table he noticed a small piece of paper lying at the edge, behind the computer, detailing a series of names and payment amounts. Recognising Dube's miniscule handwriting, he imagined that Dube had forgotten it. He stuffed it into his pocket to read later as the now-whimpering Sam required his attention. He realised that Sam would probably spend the remainder of the night and the early morning hours with the cops. Poor bugger.

Delancey awoke with a start. She still felt fuzzy from the sleeping tablet she'd taken and in her half-awake state, she remembered her discussion with Alex. She also wondered what had happened to Stavros, but all these thoughts seemed scrambled in her mind. The green light of the bedside clock flickered 11.20. Blink. Blink. 11.21. Blink. Blink. She'd not been asleep for long and she felt unsafe, not sure why. The hairs stood up on the back of her neck. No Delancey, he *can't* come back, he won't hurt you. You're safe. But the past was never far away and in that moment she knew she was not safe.

She sat up and forced herself to think clearly. Was it The Dream again? Silence. Had she been imaging it? She lay still and listened, her senses alert. No, there it was again. The crunch on gravel. Why hadn't the alarm gone off? She remembered setting it. She was obsessive about security. She looked at the panel to the side of her bedroom door. No red lights blinking and sending the comforting signal of a connection to safety. Why had the security company not called? They must've received a signal indicating the alarm failed.

Her throat tightened and she clutched it. She felt the hard scar points on the side of her neck. Must do something. Can't just lie here.

She crept out of bed ... her footsteps sounded loud ... she was sure they were breaking the night's silence. Where was the cell? She ran her hands along the dressing table. One hand collided with a bottle of perfume. She lunged at it to stop it from rolling off the side. At the back of her mind she registered she'd not used the cell in the house that night. It could be anywhere. She needed to get to the land-line. She steadied herself. She must keep her wits about her. Get to the phone and call the cops. Or the security company.

The tiles were cold on her bare feet. She felt the sting as a shard of glass sliced into her foot and stifled her cry. Her blood was slippery on the tiles. Damn that bowl of flowers.

Passing the dead alarm panel, she made her way down the passage, making out the shape of the phone in the gloom. Safety. She inched nearer to it. Police #1; Security #2. She lifted the handset. Nothing. She heard the glass shatter.

*Run, Delancey, run. Trip, run, hide. We're in your head; we're in your hair. Run.*

She felt the blow and slid into silence.

As Alex drew up to the *Hyena and Jackal* in noticed police vans, strobe lights flashing, parked outside the *Wise Oak*. A group of people was assembled on the pavement. He'd missed all the action. Parking his car, he headed in the direction of the two policemen. It was midnight.

He'd not been able to sleep after his meeting with Delancey and he'd had a nightcap while he sorted out his thoughts. He now knew for certain that Vassilis had looted the Grotta site of the Venetian Grossi.

'Crime scene, sir. Have to ask you not to go inside the gate,' said the policeman standing guard.

'Can you tell me what happened?'

'Not allowed to say anything, sir. Orders.'

But one of the residents of the *Wise Oak* was quick to oblige, eager to relate her take on the night's action.

'I've been awake half the night. You should have just seen all the activity here. First, roundabout eight, I saw two suspicious-looking characters with foreign accents go inside the Greek professor's cottage. There seemed to be a scuffle, but I couldn't hear too well. Then some idiot fell out of a tree and ruined the beautiful flower bed, the new blooms just about to come out ...'

'You said the Greek professor's cottage?'

'Yes. Then a woman with black hair tried to beat the door down. Even threw her cigarette but down on the path here. Showed it to the cops when they arrived. They found the poor devil. I'm not sure if he's going to make it. Looked awfully beat up and they said he must have been lying there for almost an hour. They wanted to know if any of us had raised the alarm but this was the first we knew of it. Seems someone anonymous alerted the cops.'

Alex raced back to his car, hell bent on getting to Delancey.

Alex thrust his foot flat on the accelerator of his hired car. The Range Rover leaped through red lights and he was relieved that there were no other cars around this early in the morning. He looked at the clock in the car. It was 12:15.

He stopped outside Delancey's house. It was dark and he knew something was wrong; the gate was unlocked and he wondered why Delancey'd disarmed the security system.

Circling the house he saw shards of glass from the kitchen window and that the thick burglar bars had been wrenched off the frame. He recognised a professional job when he saw one. He climbed through, edged his way to the door and flipped the switch.

Pots and pans were strewn across the floor; condiments from the pantry lay in splattered heaps; the refrigerator was open; cupboard doors sagged on their broken hinges.

A cat darted to the window and yowled.

He tiptoed down the passage reminding himself not to touch anything. He called Delancey's name. Silence.

The other rooms fared no better. Books lay in heaps with their spines broken; chairs were overturned; not a cupboard or a drawer was intact; papers were scattered everywhere. Clearly whoever did this was looking for something. He inspected the laptop and printer standing undisturbed in the sea of chaos. Obviously not a robbery. Other items of value seemed also to not have attracted the interest of the intruder or intruders. He bent down to look at a landscape painting. The signature indicated the South African artist, Pierneef. He knew the value.

Returning to the kitchen he saw the cat sitting amongst the chaos. Reaching for a packet of pellets on the counter, he tipped some into a plastic bowl. A key came clattering out. Nearby he also saw a state of the art heavy duty micro saw cutter with the company name on the side. Uzbekparim.

Delancey tried to focus. She must have drifted in and out of consciousness several times. She recalled light and darkness alternating. Everything was blurred and she ached all over. It felt as if hot coals had been poured into her head. She had difficulty breathing and she tasted blood in her mouth. The cold from the damp soil penetrated her thin nightie. Slowly the fog in her mind cleared. She seemed to be enclosed in some sort of shack - wooden from the look of the walls. Musty. A sliver of light from under the door created a dull gloom.

Through her haze, Delancey willed herself to listen. She lay still. In the distance she could hear the muffled sounds of cars. A police siren faded away. And she heard the lapping of water. Cars, water. And with a sense of trepidation she realised she was in the shack at the dam. She caught her breath and felt the terror of the past mingle with her current dread. She also realised this was near the spot where Thandi Zulu had been found.

The shack was hidden from the pathway and had long been abandoned. No-one would find her and she had no idea of the time or of how long she'd been here. A rough blanket had been thrown over her. She tried to move. The action sent searing bolts of pain ricocheting throughout her body, but she was relieved to realise that she was not tied up; beaten up yes, but not bound. It was easier to lie still. The last thing she remembered was cowering behind a chair in her passageway. And then all had gone black.

A wave of nausea hit her. Her tongue was dry and stuck to her palate. She wondered about Gus. Pain stabbed her back, her legs, her head. She gasped and willed herself not to succumb to unconsciousness again. She rolled onto her side and eased herself up, taking deep breaths to deflect the agony in her bones. And that was when she noticed the wooden paddle lying nearby. They must have used it to beat her.

She forced herself into a kneeling position, warding off the nausea. Perspiration trickled down her spine. Only the thought of the alternative kept her going.

After a while she heard muffled voices through the closed door and the lock snapped. A shaft of light penetrated the room for a moment, silhouetting two men.

'Da, Professor James. You now talk to us? You tell us where coins are?'

Delancey raised her head. She looked into the sallow eyes of Scarface and Crooked Nose and knew whether she told them or not, they would ensure her life ended soon.

At that moment a lone bat, disturbed by the movement in the shed, swooped down. Delancey felt the whisper of air across her face as the bat passed by. She let out a scream.

‘Where coins?’ Scarface leaned forward. His breath smelled foul. Delancey tried to move her head. Her neck hurt. In the gloom, the men appeared as ogres, their outlines being the only aspect of them visible to her.

‘You tell us where coins. We go get coins. And then you go. Only then.’

She did not believe this fake reassurance for a moment.

Crooked Nose stood up as if to stretch and landed a vicious kick to Delancey’s ribs.

She doubled up with the pain, she cried out ... Inexplicably, the pain made way for sheer rage. The past three years of repressed fear now met its match and she knew she had a choice - fight or succumb forever. She felt herself grow alert as the adrenalin kicked in. This was the power of the mind.

‘Dube’s got the coins.’

‘No. He wanker. Take money. Lose coins,’ said Scarface.

‘What about Vassilis?’

‘He dead. We kill him. Still no coins.’

Delancey took in this news. They’d killed Stavros. She had to buy time. She doubted the loyalty of each man to the other. Their world was one of survival of the fittest. No loyalty among thieves.

‘Da.’ Scarface was by her side. He looked agitated. ‘You decide now to tell where coins.’ He struck her shoulder.

‘Okay, okay, don’t hurt me,’ she gathered her strength, ‘But you’ll have to take me to my house.’

‘Been house. That where we find you. Nothing there.’ Crooked Nose’s eyes burned with hatred.

Delancey decided to risk it. She had to distract them.

‘It’s a key. I locked up the coins.’

‘Where key?’ Scarface’s mouth was hard in the dim light.

‘In the kitchen.’

‘We look kitchen. Nothing there.’ Scarface continued to stare at her.

‘In the freezer. I buried it in the ice at the back.’

‘You go look,’ said Scarface to his companion. ‘I stay here with Professor. And Professor, if no key, I kill you.’ He twisted his hands in a way that left no doubt he’d wring her neck.

‘I stay with girl.’ Crooked Nose glared at Scarface. ‘You go house.’ He looked ready to fight.

Delancey had been right. The men appeared to bear no kind sentiment towards each other. In the end it was decided that Scarface would return to Delancey’s house.

After some minutes, Delancey judged that Crooked Nose seemed to be relaxing. She imagined he believed it would be child’s play to take care of a woman by himself. That was perhaps why they hadn’t thought it necessary to tie her up. She took the gap. With the full force of her 55 kilogrammes, she lunged for the wooden paddle lying next to her and threw herself at him. He looked surprised and stumbled back. In one move, she swung the paddle hard, with all her determination and her might. She heard a crack, saw him stagger, holding his face in his hands. Blood gushed from between his fingers. Dropping the paddle, she made for the door. This was her only chance.

The sunlight blinded her for an instant but she knew she had only seconds to escape. The pain in her ribs was excruciating and thorns penetrated the soles of her feet. But she ran. She ran through the bushes and put distance between herself and the shack. Minutes later she crashed through the gate that led onto the Egoli campus and lunged for the red emergency phone.

Delancey allowed herself to be admitted overnight for observation in a private ward at the Milpark Hospital. Her ribs ached but there was not much that could be done about that; only time was the healer in this case. She'd also needed a couple of odd stitches for the gashes in her arm and on her neck, but they were not more than superficial lesions in the scheme of things. She reckoned she'd been lucky; the Russians could have inflicted more serious wounds on her. She felt she didn't require hospital care but she had an ulterior motive.

Detective Tau, appraised of many details in this saga, had agreed to humour her and now he accompanied her to the ward in which Stavros lay. He had not died, but was, nevertheless, in a critical condition.

Tau indicated to the policeman stationed outside the ward that Delancey should be let in. 'I'll wait for you here,' he said, pulling up a chair next to the policeman.

Delancey moved as quickly as she could into the room and closed the door behind her.

Stavros was conscious but he'd been battered by the Russians. Again, Delancey could only be grateful she'd got off so lightly. His elevated arm was in a plaster cast; dressings covered his neck; his swollen face was almost unrecognisable. She could see from the bandages that his wounds were severe and she surmised that something could have happened to his vocal chords. She imagined his neck being held together by hundreds of stitches. He seemed surprised to see her.

She began in a measured way. 'Don't worry Stavros, you don't have to talk.' But she fixed him with a glare for a few minutes, allowing him to comprehend her anger. 'I'm here to tell you that you're despicable. The lowest form of life that I've ever encountered. If the Russians hadn't done this to you, ethics aside, I would have.'

Behind the bandages, Stavros glared at her.

'The story's out. I know about your attempt to hide the truth of Thandi's discovery on Naxos and that's why you killed her.'

Delancey smoothed out the handwritten note and read:

*Thandi, I know you're angry with me but I can explain everything about the article. Eleni Papariga, who you said emailed you, is not to be trusted and it will be a mistake to pursue*

this matter further with Professor James. Let it drop. I would not like to have to invoke my influence to bring to bear on your archaeological career, so I would like the opportunity to meet with you to clear things up. Kabbeljou in Melville at 8h00 on Thursday? I'll be expecting you. Stavros Vassilis.

'Of course this is a copy. The police have the real thing and they've verified your description with the maître d'hôtel of the restaurant. Everything's now fallen into place. No wonder I couldn't find the grave stones of your parents. They were never on Naxos. You're a fraud from beginning to end.' She threw the newspaper article sent to her by Eleni on the bed.

'When I first read this I felt a bit sorry for you - your childhood and all of that. But hundreds of people in the same circumstances don't grow up to be crooked. They say you'll recover. Lucky you. You'll come to appreciate what it's like to be in a South African prison. You're contemptible. Oh, and by the way, don't think you'll get any money from the Grossi transaction.'

Stavros's eyes bulged and Delancey realised that, in his state, he'd not heard what had transpired in the intervening days.

She turned and strutted out, cursing that her ribs prevented her from striding out as she would like to have done under these circumstances.

'Bravo!' She shot back over her shoulder, returning to her ward, and the flower arrangements from Alex and Donald and the whole world it seemed.

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The nurse read the article to Stavros that Delancey had thrown onto his bed. It was from the Greek English paper, *The Athens News*.

Plaka-based antiques dealer, Giorgos Vassilis, has been detained by the police for questioning in connection with the alleged possession of antiquities thought to have been illegally acquired from archaeological sites not yet authorised by the Government for further excavation. A court-ordered search of Mr Vassilis's home and place of work revealed, also, his possession of a rare Venetian Grosso coin. It is understood Mr Vassilis is part of an international underground ring of antiquities dealers who plunder sites and who, on occasion, destroy artefacts, the heritage of Greece, to push up prices on the black market. Mr Vassilis is the brother of University of Athens, Professor of Archaeology, Stavros Vassilis.

The police were given the lead by Athens High Court Judge and the Chair of the Council of the University of Athens, Stimatis Voulos, who has been working tirelessly with counterparts around the world to crack this crime syndicate.

A cursory investigation into the background of the Vassilis brothers reveals a story of a meteoric climb from poverty to the heights they have attained in business and academia. Born into a poor family in the Organi area of Rhodope, north-eastern Greece, the brothers were removed from the care of their parents as infants, the father being an habitual criminal and their mother spending extended periods in mental institutions. They spent their childhood first in Hostel ELIZA-SOS in Marousi, Athens and then at the SOS Children's Village in Vari, Attica. Against great odds, the brothers displayed academic potential and both won scholarships to study archaeology at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. The University records for Stavros Vassilis contain verified incidents of theft and cheating but none of them serious enough to warrant expulsion.

Giorgos Vassilis is currently being detained at the Aghios Panteleimonas police cells in Athens awaiting his bail hearing. All that is known at this point about his brother, Stavros Vassilis, is that he is on a teaching exchange programme in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Sam Heen made a remarkable recovery and showed no visible ill effects from his ordeal in the grounds of the *Wise Oak*, compounded by his later extended visit to the police station. He read the article in *The Star* for the fifth time. He was proud and satisfied at his accomplishment. His arm had been reset and a new clean cast now encased it. It had all been worth it. The only pity was that Vassilis had not been murdered. A murder certainly had more flair. Nevertheless, he'd done well.

***Foreign professor attacked at his lodgings***

Visiting Professor of Archaeology, Stavros Vassilis, was attacked two days ago at the B&B, *The Wise Oak*, in Melville, Johannesburg. Vassilis, 48, was due to return to the University of Athens at the end of the week. He is in a serious condition in the Milpark Hospital but a hospital spokesperson refused to give further details saying, they were in the process of contacting his next of kin.

The police were informed of the crime by Egoli academic, Dr Samuel Heen, who said his acute detective skills alerted him to something wrong. He'd raised the alarm anonymously at first, but then recognised his civic duty to provide the police with as much information as he could that may lead to the arrest of the perpetrators.

Police are seeking the whereabouts of two Russian men who are suspected of going by the names of Vladimir Tsvetkov and Alexander Bazarov. No record could be found of their entry into the country but it is understood they work for the security company, Uzbekparim, headquartered in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. The public are warned not to approach these men as they are considered dangerous.

'Fuck, Sam.' Sandy glared at him over the breakfast table. 'How the hell can you embarrass yourself like this? When are you going to resign to take up your new calling?'

Their youngest son sat on her stout lap, drooling into her plate of chocolate cornflakes. She looked daggers at Sam.

'Look what *this* paper's calling you.'

She thrust the cartoon caricature of Sam in his face. 'I'll be the laughing stock of the book club.'

Indeed, even Sam could appreciate the caricature was not flattering. He looked out from the page, dishevelled, mortar board askew, plaster cast unravelling, and a large star badge proclaiming him to be 'Detective Dr. Samuel Heen'.

'Detective Heen indeed.' snorted Sandy.

‘Another latté?’

She nodded. ‘For old time’s sake. But the lattés here are much better than Starbucks. Just for the record.’

‘Well we’ll have to subject that to scientific research by either taking one of these to the US or bringing one in from Starbucks.’

Alex got up to order.

Delancey watched him move to the counter. She’d never noticed before but there was a definite appeal in the way he walked; and, along with that, a gentleness that she was coming to appreciate. He didn’t have rippling muscles of Stavros but then sexy could be displayed in other ways.

‘Do you know what Harris had the cheek to tell me?’ Alex set the two mugs down.

‘I could venture a guess, but I think you’d enjoy telling me.’

‘He said that had he known that Professor Delancey James was such an accomplished detective, he’d never have had to spend the money recruiting me. The cheek of it.’

‘I told you men always underestimate me.’

‘Well, Vassilis certainly did. And if you hadn’t put together the incongruences in his story - him pretending that the archaeological soil in Naxos was barren, in contradiction to Thandi’s conclusions and his own discovery of the Grossi, he may have got away with it.’

‘Most definitely he didn’t want any serious archaeologists descending on the place - and they’re the ones who read *Greek Archaeology*. But I can’t take all the credit. It was Eleni who started the ball rolling and Thandi seemed to have been prepared to blow the whole thing wide open ... or, at the least, given me the ammunition to so.’

‘But, my dear, it was your eagle eye that found the note she wanted to show you in your office. By the way, you’ve never told me how you found it.’

‘All in good time, Alex. And there’s still the grand finale to come later today.’

‘I wouldn’t miss it for the world.’ He touched the plaster on her face that covered two stitches. ‘I never miss a grand finale.’

Lloyd Dube paced his office. Things had not gone quite according to plan. At least the money was safe but he still needed to tie up some loose ends. The biggest challenge was to get to the airport and onto the plane to Florida, USA tonight. He'd changed his route once he suspected Charlotte had taken his ticket. Damn the bloody woman. But he couldn't think of that now. He needed to get out quickly. The Russians would soon discover that, not only were the coins missing but also that the money had been transferred from Uzbekistan, and they would come looking for him. He could only imagine what their paying US\$ 170 million and having nothing to show for it could mean for him.

One more graduation ceremony to officiate and he'd be gone directly afterwards. He considered skipping the ceremony, but it would raise all sorts of questions and they might put two and two together too soon ... he didn't have time on his side. But he'd arranged to get out quickly after the formalities.

On a positive note, the money was in his account. He remembered how Swaine's eyes glinted whenever they spoke about the money. Idiot. I'd like to see the shock on his face once he realises he has no money in the Caymans. Serves him right for stealing my coin.

Dube touched the coin he'd retrieved from Swaine's office, still in his pocket. This was coming with him; it symbolised his triumph. And his collection in Mexico was still safe. He savoured, for a moment, the reminder of the collection of antiquities he'd acquired over the years, buying and selling on the black market. In fact, even influencing market prices. His private collection. Nevertheless he'd still be sorry to leave these pieces behind. And if he could have kept some of the Grossi, it would certainly have been a prize. Ah well, one can't have everything. At least the money was in his bank account in the Cayman Islands.

Dube manoeuvred himself into the heavy robe, its red and gold trim befitting of a Vice-Chancellor. Last time he'd be wearing this. Preparing to leave his office to walk to the auditorium, he glanced at his reflection in his office window. He gasped in surprise.

‘So Professor Dube,’ said Delancey as she emerged from the door where she’d been observing him, ‘the game’s up.’

‘How’d you get in here? I’ll call security.’

‘Well, I wouldn’t be so keen to call attention to yourself, if I was you. Anyway I won’t take long.’

Dube glowered at her.

‘Those Grossi are magnificent. I can quite see how someone could become so attached to them - I imagine I could become partial to them, myself. And if you can’t keep them, well, then selling them to the Russians is probably a good second best.’

Dube’s eyes were stormy.

‘And, in case you think you can hurt me now, others besides me know about your little game with Professor Vassilis and the Russians.’

With that, Delancey turned and walked out. She wanted to keep it short and she felt gratified. Even experiencing Dube’s hate boring into her back, felt good. Over her shoulder she made one last comment. ‘Don’t you have a graduation to officiate at, Professor Dube? We’re all expecting you there. In fact, I see the Chair of Council’s here to accompany you down to the auditorium.’

Luanne Sheer congratulated herself as she entered the OR Tambo International Airport. She replayed the steps.

‘God, Luanne, you’re bloody brilliant,’ she said aloud as she gripped her passport and the ticket to Paris. With all this money she could afford to travel first class. And once she got to Paris she’d reinvent herself. Get lost and assume a new identity. With the money she could buy anything. Good old Dube. Good old *Vee Cee*. He’d underestimated her.

It had been fun hacking into the emails of Dube, Delancey and Stavros. Nothing of much interest in Stavros’s mail, except that Stavvie seemed to be a very, very naughty boy. The accusations in the email from his wife said it all. She’d heard about his little fling with Eleni. Some archaeologist - Pipette? Piperidie - something like that - felt she’d not been fairly remunerated for her work on the Naxos site, so she paid Mrs Vassilis a visit.

It was during the course of monitoring Dube’s communications that Luanne came across the instructions to the bank in the Cayman Islands. It had taken all the skill she had to crack the bank’s firewall but she was good. Exceptional. She set up the diversion and immediately after leaving Dube’s office, having facilitated the funds transfer from Uzbekistan, she logged onto Dube’s account. It was simple after that. So silly, Lloyd, to trust me. All those emails, all those instruction. I’m no ordinary woman, lover boy.

She’d have to cover her tracks later but for now she was safe. Once she got to Paris she’d close her new Cayman account and deposit the money into an undisclosed Swiss account under another name. It would be easier to do it from there.

Pity about Stavvie. She could’ve grown to like him. More pity about Alex. She never even got the chance to try him out but she was sure there were plenty of new prospects in Paris. And, in any case, she’d keep close tabs on Alex Hallie from a distance.

The University choir filled the auditorium with the jocular, light-hearted 18<sup>th</sup> Century hymn.

*Gaudeamus igitur  
Juvenes dum sumus.  
Let us therefore rejoice  
While we are young.*

Tau smiled at the irony of the composition, poking fun at university life with several references to sex and death. He sat at the back of the auditorium, on the aisle, where he knew Dube would see him when he entered. His strategy was in place and he was going to enjoy the outcome.

‘That’s why I call you Sweet Justice,’ his wife had said when she kissed him goodbye earlier that evening.

The procession made its way down the aisle amidst the admiring glances of the audience. Swaine looked pompous in his Dean’s attire. Dark green with gold trim. The black tassel of his academic cap kept covering his eyes. Johan de Wet appeared subdued. His greasy curls covered the back of his collar and he seemed not to have slept or washed for a day or two. He had also gained a few more kilos. And there was Sam Heen. His cap fell over one eye and he seemed to be in imminent danger of tripping over his untied shoelaces. The new plaster cast on his arm was already showing signs of wear and tear.

Charlotte Mkhize tottered down the aisle looking less like an academic and more like a prostitute in her strappy high platform shoes, revealing bright orange nail varnish on her toes.

What a bunch ... And they’re responsible for the next generation of leaders in our country.

He smiled at Delancey who sat beside him. She looked battered and bruised but somehow, in spite of all of this, exuded a sense of strength and calm.

The last members of the procession entered the auditorium. Dube squared himself off and pushed out his chest, but Tau noticed the twitch in the corner of his left eye. He was

under strain. At that moment Dube spotted Tau and fixed him with what Tau interpreted to be a stare of pure hatred. Tau nodded his head in greeting. Dube glared at Delancey.

The Chairman of Council, Judge Peter Harris, following Dube, gave a barely discernible nod to Tau and Delancey. He was followed by the Chair of Convocation carrying the silver University mace, symbolising internal authority over members and independence from external influence. Again Tau marvelled at the irony of this symbol.

Tau settled in for, what he knew would be a boring two hours as streams of graduands filed onto the stage to be recognised for their achievements. Most academics came prepared for this boredom. Those fortunate enough to be relegated to one of the back rows, usually the junior staff, secreted manuscripts under their robes, and read or marked them during the ceremony.

Swaine had already fallen asleep in full view of the audience.

‘Universities play a vital role in the moral development of students.’ boomed the guest speaker, at the point when Dube tried to sneak out. Tau, about to rise from his seat, noticed how Harris, sitting alongside Dube, placed a firm, restraining hand on Dube’s arm. Harris had been alerted to Dube’s possible moves.

As the choir again sung one of the final stanzas of *Gaudeamus igitur*, Tau and Delancey slipped away. The audience rose as the Chair of Convocation led the procession out of the auditorium.

As Dube exited, Tau stepped up to him. ‘Professor Lloyd Dube, you’re under arrest for complicity in a crime and in fraud.’

A policeman snapped handcuffs onto Dube and another did the same to an astonished Swaine.

The words of the choir drifted through the air.

*Vivat nostra societas*

*Vivant studiosi*

*Crescat una veritas.*

*Long live our fellowship*

*Long live the studios*

*May truth and honesty thrive.*

And Tau smiled. Sweet Justice indeed.

## EPILOGUE

‘Thought you’d never come back. What took you so long? I was starting to get worried.’

Delancey mopped her brow. She caught her breath and touched her side. The effects of her ordeal at the hands of the Russians had not fully disappeared.

‘I’m out of practice. For the last couple of weeks I’ve hardly had any exercise. But I also wanted to visit my old haunts.’

‘Are there any places left for us to discover together?’

‘This island’s not that small. I suspect there are still some for us to find.’

‘Not regretting inviting me?’

Laughter wafted up the hill from the large taverna in the village.

‘Not at all. Let me take a quick shower and we can go down to Agia Anna for lunch.’

‘I’ll continue my bonding with Psyche Cyclops. I think she’s getting to like me.’

‘Greek cats obviously don’t have the discrimination that South African ones have,’ joked Delancey.

Bouzouki music filled the restaurant. They ordered platters of meze and the local house wine.

‘Got to show you something I printed out this morning while you were jogging.’ Alex unfolded an email and began reading it to her.

**RE:** Confidential  
**FROM:** Judge Peter Harris  
**SENT:** 2 October  
**TO:** Professor Alex Hallie

Dear Alex,

I’m writing to let you know that the final pieces of the puzzle are falling into place. Professor Johan de Wet disclosed the existence of the company through which the financial transaction from Uzbekistan was processed. Apparently he was somewhat piqued that Professor Dube had not allocated him sufficient funds for all his efforts. However, it appears that the money has disappeared. It never got to Professor Dube’s account in the Cayman Islands. Members of the forensic team at the Reserve Bank are quite baffled and pursue their investigations. De Wet has been granted immunity for turning state’s witness and helping the police. Professors Dube and Swaine are in custody with no bail being granted as

they are both regarded as flight risks. Professor Vassilis remains in hospital under police guard and, in spite of his attempt to be extradited to Greece, the authorities are adamant he'll be tried in South Africa for the murder of Dr Zulu. Arrangements are being made for the return of all thirty-three Venetian Grossi coins to Greece where they will be housed in the New Acropolis Museum with the exception of one, which will be displayed in the Archaeological Museum in Naxos as a way of preserving its heritage for the local people. The Grosso that was found in Vassilis's wallet will be kept, at least for the time being, as evidence in his trial.

Alex paused. 'Thirty-three? Weren't there thirty-four coins? That's after the two Vassilis and his brother held back for themselves. Probably Harris's got it wrong.' He continued.

Dr Charlotte Mkhize linked Dube to the Russians who are now behind bars as well, awaiting trial. It also helped that the black garbage bag that Professor James used when she appropriated the coins from Professor Dube's office, contained documents linking the bag to Professor Dube.

'Appropriated?' Delancey's eyebrows rose in question.

'You make a gorgeous thief, my dear ...' Alex continued reading.

I trust you are finding the time to relax. Maybe we can have a drink when you return from your archaeological explorations in Greece.

Peter.

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'Archaeological explorations?' Delancey nudged Alex.

The cooler weather at the beginning of October was still balmy and she felt the mellowness of the sun and the wine and the food seep into her.

‘Don’t they have mandatory siestas here?’ enquired Alex after a while. ‘And afterwards I could ensure you get some regular exercise.’

‘And you get to explore?’

They made their way back to Delancey’s house. Psyche Cyclops was fast asleep outside the kitchen window, the warm sun streaming onto her back.

Sometime later, Delancey sat on the balcony, gazing out to the sea and sipping a glass of cold Sauvignon Blanc. The sun was setting, and unlike the earlier months when she was last on Naxos, she could feel the chill already in the air, signalling the beginning of winter. The events of the past few weeks seemed far away; her bruises were fading and her ribs had healed. She looked through the bedroom shutters. Alex was still sound asleep. She felt content. The Dream had not come back. Not yet. Nonetheless, she wasn’t quite ready to believe it had disappeared forever.

And she lingered on that thought, her fingers caressing the single Venetian Grosso in her pocket.

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