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Cretan Tails

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## **Chapter 1**

# **The Horrible Sand Manster**

A cool breeze was blowing. They sat relaxed from their daily mid-morning Mediterranean swim, thankful for the cool breeze but possibly not thankful for the mediocre quasi-Cretan meal from “Mama’s Place” settling uncertainly in their stomachs. Their attention wandered aimlessly from the tables full of beach clad euro-tourists, to the questionable smells of Mama’s cooking, then to the clicking of dishes and the ratchety singing of cicadas backed by rebetiko rhythms, and finally over to the yellowish tan sands edging Stavros bay where more well toasted tourists lay stunned under multicolored beach umbrellas tilted by the breeze. Across the blue green bay, they saw a dramatic mountain slop-

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ing far upwards upon which goats were nibbling thyme and rosemary. The scent of the wild herbs upon the mountain swept down, across the green waters, up the beach, over the charred tourists, and into their flared nostrils. The magnificent smell, mixed also with the aromas of sea salt and fertile soil was irresistibly pleasing and the two of them sucked in slow satisfying breaths.

AAA looked across the properly square taverna table at his friend KKK who was contemplatively drawing thoughts from his brain out through his nose by gentle tugs on his handsome mustache. Unable to restrain himself, AAA reached across the table and gave KKK's bushy thinking aid a decisive pull. KKK, jolted from his meditations, said

“What was that for?!”

AAA laughed and explained:

“Not having a mustache of my own to help along my thoughts, I decided to borrow yours. And, in fact, as soon as I pulled on your walrus-like appendage, I was suddenly reminded of a story that NNN, my old fisherman friend from here in Stavros, told me the other day! Would you like to hear it?”

KKK replied quickly: “I’d greatly prefer to hear that story than to have you tear out more of my hairs in search of another!”

“For now, agreed, but if on another occasion I draw a blank on story telling, I reserve the right to draw out another by similar means.”

“Just get on with the story”, KKK growled while

lifting his hand protectively to his face.

“Gladly!” AAA replied. And as he reclined further into his seat, fingers interlocking behind his head, he began:

“Once upon an island, the Tourist slid his small rental car (of sturdy German build) to a halt aside the beach of Stavros bay. Backing up to perfectly bridge two parking spots, his rear bumper collided with the first of a row of bicycles which started a domino like cascade. The car was stuffed full of all the customary vacation gear of a well prepared, no... OVER prepared tourist of his species. Flung carelessly upon the vacant passenger seat was the ‘Been there done that: Crete at light speed’ travel guide he had acquired at the airport. On the floor beneath his feet, where 15 crushed frappe cups, 11 empty Mythos beer cans, and the crusty remains of a 2 day old dako all of which poured out onto the street as he lumbered out of the rental (of sturdy German build). First streaming his eyes furtively for a chance glimpse of a topless sun bather, he then hastily pulled out from the car: beach towels, sun tan lotion, boom box, umbrella, beach chair, paddle ball game (hope springs eternal), a cooler, mask, snorkel, base ball hat with built in solar powered fan, a large e-cigarette, cell phone, camera, tripod, inflatable chair (with beer can holders), and finally, his optimistically slender, garish red uber-speedo.

The Tourist was well aware that the beach before him was the very one danced upon by Zorba the Greek.

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This fact was firmly established by a large banner picturing Anthony Quinn with arms out stretched which had been strung over the entrance to the beach. Gathering up his beach gear he headed for what he presumed was the exact spot where Zorba performed the legendary dance. Ignoring the fact that this particular spot was already occupied by a family of vacationing Greeks, he unburdened himself of his gear among them, found his cell phone, and proudly took his 135th self portrait. While examining this photograph intently, his eyes were too busy admiring his own person to notice the angry family of Greek faces in its periphery. His inspection complete, the Tourist attempted to upload his now word of art onto the internet, but found, for the first time of the trip, devoid of a connection. And suddenly, though he was surrounded by hundreds of people, he felt like he had been plunged into the darkest inhabited jungle.

“No internet?!” he mused “he delightfully primitive and authentic!”

In a flash, he tore off all his cloths, startling and offending beach goers near and far. Next he wriggled into his tight speedo in a well practiced process resembling nature footage of a chubby snake shedding its skin but played in reverse. The process complete, he swelled his chest, sucked in mighty droughts of salt air, pounded his flabby chest apishly, let out a boisterous Tarzan bellow, and threw himself into the sea. The Greek family vacated.

While the Tourist bobbed contentedly in the clear

waters, he was unaware that hidden in the mountains behind Stavros is the abandoned monastery of (NAME)... and that very near this monastery is the cave of St. John the hermit. Deep within this cave, ancient spirits began to stir and an otherworldly howl poured out its mouth and echoed sorrowfully off the surrounding hills. For a moment, nature was hushed: The goats ceased calling, the cicada's songs concluded, the breeze died off, and even the spiders paused constructing their unfinished webs.

Quickly tiring of his swimming and not a little disappointed that his manly display had not attracted positive female attention, the Tourist returned to his conquered spot upon the sands. He spread out his favorite towel, one with a life sized pinup girl graphic, and stretched out under the sun. Before long he began to snore. Meanwhile, the breeze, which had temporarily stilled, returned with more energy than before. As it strengthened, the beach goers started clinging to their hats and anchoring their nearly escaping umbrellas. Gradually, unsupervised beach towels were lifted from the beach and rolled along like colorful tumbleweeds. Oblivious to the worsening weather, the Tourist snored on. But sand kicked up by the gusts was sticking to his still wet skin and before long he was completely coated in it. Meanwhile the storm continued to build and now panicked parents were dragging their screaming children away from the frothing sea, breach umbrellas ascended into the heavens, underwear and sun hats swirled about



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energetically, and stray dogs barked hysterically in delight of the chaos.

## **Chapter 2**

# **The Carnivorous River**