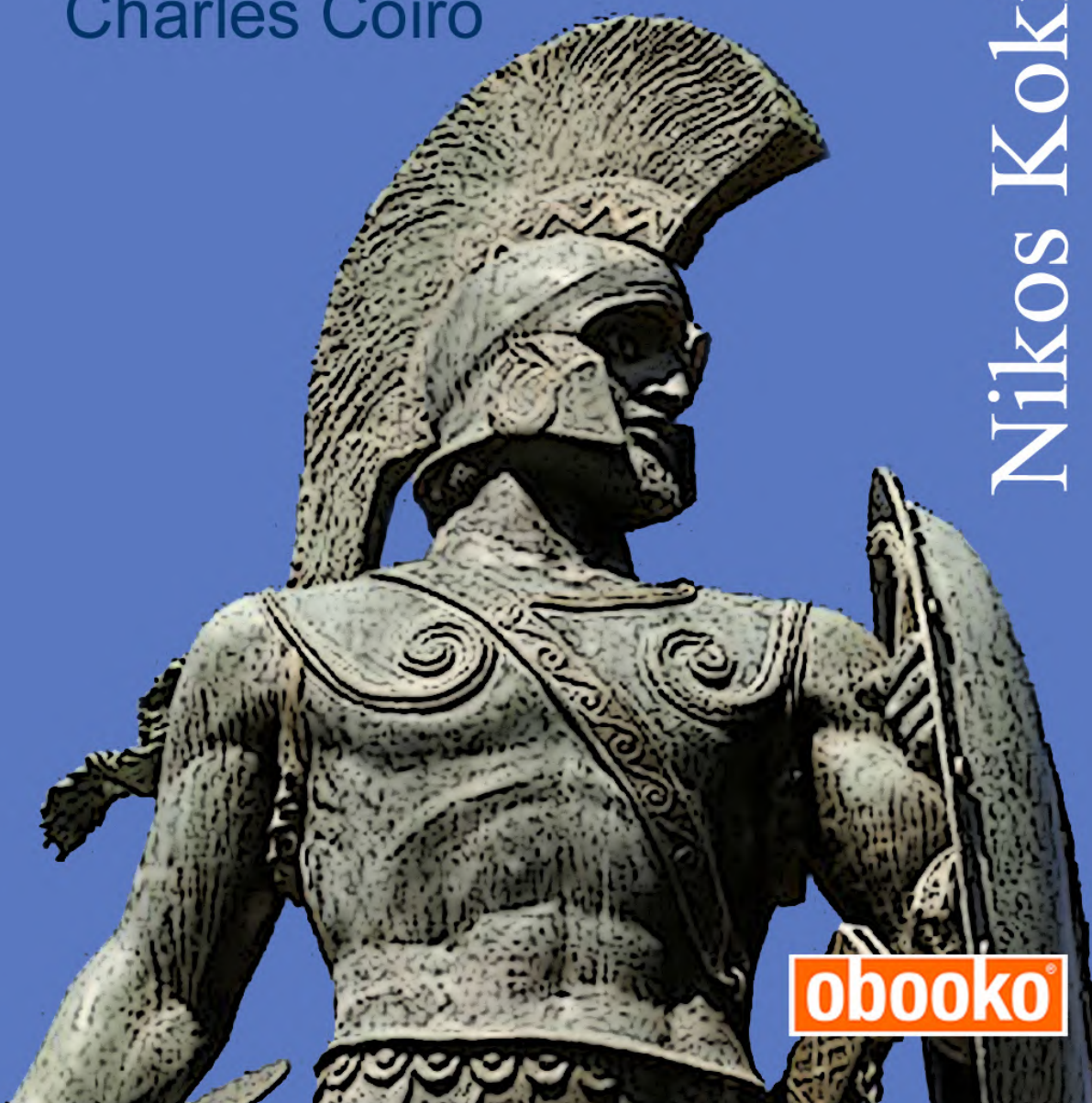


A NEW SPARTAN

Charles Coiro

Nikos Kokiniakos



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PART 1

(THE STORY BEGINS IN THE EARLY 1900'S JUST BEFORE THE OUTBREAK OF THE GRECO-TURKISH WAR)

“Nikos”, he heard his mother calling, “Come quick and see something beautiful”! Nikos had been playing quietly near the tiny spring that fed the well and that seeped into the field his mother had planted. He was actually sent to pull any weeds that would have taken the precious water away from the lentils and chickpeas they had growing in the small garden. Raising himself slowly and half wishing that he might be left alone so that he could do what he called thinking and fantasizing a little longer; but, at seven years of age, he had to heed his mother’s call. Besides, what could this wonderful thing be? Everything about the way they lived was as ordinary as breathing; there were no differences between one day or the other.

When he arrived at the small cottage they shared, the only thing he could see was that his mother was bent over and drying or rubbing something on the straw in front of her. There it was, a new born kid with its mother also lying down but obviously too weak to attend her own kid. The female goat had given birth prematurely and looked as though she would die at any moment.

Nikos’ mother looked up at him. There was a look of deep concern on her face as she painfully gasped that the small kid needed its mother to suckle him and even worse, what were they going to do if the mother goat died? There was no time to butcher the animal and make preparations to preserve the meat and if the she-goat died, so would the kid.

Maia Kokiniakis was still considered beautiful but her beauty had absolutely no meaning in the society in which they lived. Widowed at the early age of 29 it was considered that her life would now take on the widowed weeds and that she would never again be able to be dressed in anything but black. Once a widow, no matter what the age, life stopped. Maia was blessed with hair the color of rich wheat and she wore it braided and wound around her head like a golden crown. Women looked at her in envy when she passed and the men would inwardly stifle their hungry desires for this young widow. The black shawl she wore around her shoulders set off the contrast to an even greater degree. Her work in the garden and the small barley field kept her in perfect shape and the men thought of how great was the waste in following the customs of the times.

Maia Kokiniakis looked plaintively at her small son and said, “ you must run to all the houses of the town and tell them that we have a female goat that has died giving birth to her kid. Tell them that we cannot possibly make use of all the meat and that we want to follow the normal custom of each family taking the part of the goat they want and that when it is time for one of them to slaughter, they will return the meat they took from us.”

It was the custom to advise all who were interested to make their claim for part of the animal since no family could neither preserve or eat the meat when it slaughtered an animal. Since there was no refrigeration, the meat had to be made into sausages or dried, salted or smoked so that it could be used later. But with the possible death of the she goat, it also required preparation time to get the spices and the help of neighbors to do the work. The reason Maia said that the goat was a female was so that people would not think it was a male goat whose flesh was infused with testosterone and which made it almost inedible. Also, she told Nikos to be sure he mentioned that the goat died without disease; that it died giving birth. “And ask them if one of their goats has enough milk to feed our little one; I will pay them for the milk.” Young Nikos seeing the fear and consternation on his mother’s face, raced to the small closet where he had his shoes stored. Ordinarily, he went about barefoot, but with his having to go up rocky paths to see the neighbors, he had to use his shoes. As he hurried to bring his news to the neighboring farms, the thoughts that he had been fantasizing about when his mother called were about the Spartans. He remembered reading in his elementary class a story about the forebears of this part of Greece where he lived. At my age, I would have been taken off to study how to be a soldier. Instead of wearing shoes, I would have had to learn to go without shoes to toughen my feet. In his mind, Nikos, after learning from the elementary school picture book had decided that that is what he was – A Spartan; they were his ancestors. He was a Maniot. He recalled the tale his teacher had told his class about the fighting between Greece and the Ottoman Empire in 1821 where a small band of Maniot villagers (400 old men and women left in the village after their eligible men were at war,) attacked the invading Turks with scythes, sticks and stones and drove off the 1500 invaders, killing 1000 of the enemy troops. No other parts of Greece could call themselves Spartans or Maniots. Besides and best of all, he would no longer be required to listen to his mother like a child and run errands. Rather, he would be taught how to use a sword and a lance. Now, every time he put a stick in his hand and made believe it was a sword, he would hear her shouting to stop playing with a piece of wood because I might hurt myself. His deepest desire was that one day he would find a sword or a mask from those ancient times. In the picture books, he saw that most of the masks were similar and so there were times when he drew the shape of the mask on paper and then cut the places for the eyes. Without telling his mother, he would steal a little flour which he mixed with water and then painted over the paper. When the flour and water hardened, his mask was stiff and just like the real thing.

The little village where they lived was about 25 kilometers from Mani, the largest city near to where they lived. The land was rocky, dry and infertile except where there were little areas of plains flatlands where they planted the few crops they could; there was no electricity, phone or other amenities that most towns had. Mail service was twice a year; Christmas and Easter. The main road was passable only with a horse or a donkey and people who had to go to Mani had to hitch an animal to a small cart (to fit a small path that was only 4 feet wide before it widened to a road that you could pass with a normal wagon) if they wanted to carry back anything from the city. Their village was really no more than what it had been when the Spartans occupied the space. Water was practically non-existent and the small rare spring they had near

their home made it the envy of their neighbors. Only the small school had a generator which was used sparingly and since it required gasoline, it was rarely used. The school also served as a small dispensary so that if anyone was seriously ill, he or she could be tended to while someone made the trip to Mani to seek a doctor.

It was just at the beginning of the Greek-Ottoman War in 1919 that we find Nikos troubled with his boring life and dreaming of being a warrior when the country was beginning to sense that they would be at war with the Turks. At that time, an officer of the Army was sent to all the small villages to recruit troops for battle. Since most of the small villages were located in isolated areas and like the village where Nikos lived, cut off for most part with the major cities, it was necessary to recruit as many men as possible since the Turkish army, now under the leadership of Atatürk was a real threat to Greece's survival. A small recruitment office was set up in the village school and men from the many villages set out to inform the separated farms that there was a need for recruits to fight the Turkish army. (There was no need for recruitment talks since the Greeks hated the Turks as much as the Turks hated the Greeks).

One morning, after his mother had gone to the fields to tend to the crops, Nikos, on the pretext of delivering some napkins that their neighbor (an old woman who made a pittance embroidering napkins) was sending to Mani, Nikos made his way to the recruitment office at the village school. Arriving, he asked for the person in charge of recruitment to sign him up as a volunteer. He said that his name was Nikos Kokiniakis; that he was now 7 years old and in accordance with the Maniot rules, he was eligible for training as a soldier for the next 13 years or until he was 20. He indicated that at present, he had had no training but thought that with the coming war, his services could be used somehow, whether it be bringing water to the soldiers or being used to deliver messages "It is in my blood to defend my country and I want to continue the tradition of my ancestors". The intense, unsmiling recruitment officer looked at the small boy and his craggy face broke into a beaming smile.

"So you want to join our army to fight the Turks? It is little men like yourself that makes me proud to be a Greek. The spirit you are showing is what we need. It is, however, my sad duty to tell you that the army is no longer training young men like yourselves. It is too bad because Greece needs the spirit that you are showing. It is that spirit that will make us a proud power in the world today. As an officer in the Greek army, I am conferring on you a special recommendation that announces to all that you are a future soldier for our country. Also, to make this legal, I am giving you my small dagger so that you may wear it with pride." Saying that, he undid the small dagger and scabbard and placed them in the small boy's hand. Saluting the child, he told him to return home and that he should consider himself proud of being a Greek in the spirit of our great ancestors, "The Spartans".

With what pride did Nikos run home. What would his mother say now that he had a real military dagger that belonged to an officer? He decided, then and there, I am a proud Maniot and I will not give up my proud heritage to live like a small boy anymore. I shall assert my right to

be a man even though I realize that I have many years before me to learn. When I am able, I shall join the military and become a Greek soldier. I do not want to be a farmer or to be a goat herder.

Upon his return home, his mother was still in the field planting. Soon though, she would be arriving to prepare something for their midday meal. Rather than hide the dagger, Nikos placed the dagger on the table so that it would be in full view. His determination to be assertive was now fixed solidly in his mind and he wanted to put everything out in the open. It had to be now, not tomorrow or next week. Now!

Meanwhile, back in Mani, the small incident at the recruiting office involving the little 7 year old boy was circulating as a favorite story. The story amused most hearing it but with a general agreement that it was the Greek spirit of yesteryear that had given Greece its greatness. Among the people hearing of the “recruitment story” was the editor of the newspaper, Ethniki Foni (National Voice) who thought that the story was not only timely but that it would increase a spirit of Nationalism to learn that a 7 year old Greek boy was interested not only in being recruited but that he wanted to revivify the Spartan formula of recruitment at 7. The editor sent a photographer along with a Spartan helmet and a spear to photograph the young boy. The photographer arrived and finding young Nikos was easy since the village was so small, everyone knew everyone. Young Nikos was photographed with an authentic Spartan helmet at his feet and holding erect the 8 foot spear. The image was both startling to see this youngster holding a spear that towered over him that he would never have managed to hold if the spear was not supported by the ground and the fact that it pushed the idea that Greece was still great with its history of courage and its arts and its culture.

Published in Greece and picked up by the Greek newspaper in the United States, The Greek Star, the photograph and the story aroused international interest in Greece and its impending war against the Turks. Among the readers in the United States was a Janos Xenides, a Greek immigrant who made his fortune in America buying and selling real estate in New York City. Xenides was a fervent Greek nationalist and traditionalist. When he wanted to marry, he sent a letter to his Uncle to find him a real, Greek woman with a strong Greek tradition. His only requirements were that she should be intelligent, well figured for children (not too thin or narrowly hipped and thoroughly Greek in her manner. His uncle surveyed the Greek families in his village disregarding any notion of physical beauty. He based his choice on a young woman who knew her place as far as men were concerned; was subservient and whose hips were wide enough to allow for an easy birth. Janos approved of his Uncle’s choice and fathered twin girls, Anastasia and Antiope. There were to be no more children, however for his wife died in child birth and although he had wanted a son to carry on his business, he settled sensibly for Fate’s decision.

When Janos Xenides read of the young Greek boy who wanted to continue the traditions of his ancestors, the Spartans, Janos’s eyebrows lifted high against his hairline and he thought,

“Now there is a true son of Greece. Imagine, only seven and still with the Greek pride imbued within him. Just like me he thought. I must reward that spirit for it is that kind of feeling that will make Greece rebound to her former greatness. Xenides traced the story to the young boy and offered Nikos a to attend the prestigious New York Military Academy, some 40 miles from New York City as an International Cadet so that he could be given classes in English. The scholarship, not open to everyone was one of the schools that Janos Xenides supported and so young Nikos had no problem being admitted. After that, it would enable Nikos to then continue with a full scholarship to the University of his choice, (preferably West Point). Being a very wealthy man, he did not even consider the \$41,000.00 tuition per year as a problem. Nikos was told that he had to finish his elementary school first in Greece. And so on his 13th birthday, he was sent to be the protégé of Janos Xenides.

When the news was received by Maia Kokiniakis, she was beside herself in joy. Later, she realized that that joy was to separate her son from herself but she had the good sense to realize that if Nikos stayed with her, she would have deprived her son of his opportunities; something she could not provide. At least, she thought, he will have the same advantages as a rich man’s son.

Meanwhile, the war raged on between Greece and Turkey found themselves ripped asunder by the schism between the followers of King Constantine, who wanted to remain neutral but who favored aligning Greece with the Central Powers (Turkey and Bulgaria) of which the German Kaiser was his brother-in-law. The Allies (Britain, France and Italy) were favored by the Venizelos Liberals who opposed the Royalists (King Constantine) who felt that the Allies would win and therefore Greece would benefit in the Balkans and Turkey, lands won in the conflict. There were still thoughts of the “Megale Idea”, (The Great Idea) the goal of which was to establish a Greek state as a homeland for all Greeks and that formerly had Greek settlements. The idea was to annex the former Byzantine Empire from the Ionian Sea in the West; Asia Minor and the Black Sea in the East; and from Thrace, Macedonia and Epirus to the North and finally to Crete and Cyprus to the South. The new Greek state would have as its capitol, Constantinople, (Istanbul) which would replace Athens. The Greeks would be on two continents and have access to five seas.

With the ending of the First World War, there was promise of the realization of the “Megale Idea” which came into being as an idea in 1844. With the intent of annexing part of the Ottoman Empire as new territories of Greece, the Greeks invaded the city of Izmir (Smyrna). Greece gained Smyrna and the islands of Imbros and Tenedos plus Western and Eastern Thrace with a border only a few miles from Constantinople.

However, the new Turkish leader, Mustafa Kemal- known later as Ataturk rejected the treaty and In 1919 – 22, formed an army called the Nationalists Government and attacked the Greeks. With the Greeks defeated; Ataturk expelled the Greeks from Anatolia and the Treaty of Lausanne went into effect with Greece losing Eastern Thrace plus the islands Imbros and

Tenedos plus Smyrna. Eastern Thrace remained Greek, with the city of Smyrna once more called Izmir. In order to avoid territorial claims, Turkey and Greece agreed to an exchange of populations. More than 1,364, 700 Greeks moved back to Greece who had settled in Ottoman territory while some 380,000 Turks left Greek territories for the Ottoman Empire. With the retreat of the Greeks, however, Smyrna (Izmir) was sacked and burnt to the ground. It's women were raped and it's men of military age sent off to prison and work camps or killed. It was not the first time that the two nations hated each other.

When all had been settled regarding Nikos's trip, his mother Maia packed a small cardboard suitcase with his few belongings. He wore his only suit with matching peaked cap, one of his two shirts and tie. The rest of his clothes, the sweater knitted by his mother, 3 pairs of socks, 2 handkerchiefs and 5 pairs of underwear, plus 1 shirt were his entire luggage. He also carried an elementary book from school on the Spartans. At the bottom, unknown to Nikos, Maia placed a small bible. The Bible had been passed down for many generations. His mother felt that while he never read from it as she did, it deserved to be passed down to Nikos and his children when he had them.

Since Nikos would be spending his last Easter with his mother and she tried to give him some of their traditional foods to enjoy for his Easter meal. Because they lacked money, she made him a Mousaka, which is a combination of eggplant and meat with a white sauce. She also made him a special Kotopoul Lemenato (a lemon flavored chicken) and finally, some yoghurt sweetened with honey. To carry on his journey, she made Tsoureki, a special Easter bread with colored whole eggs baked into the bread. This last, he would carry with him to eat on his sea voyage. Their Easter meal was eaten almost silently. For Maia had no idea when she would next see her son and for Nikos because he would miss his mother and the idea of a trip to a new country and not even being able to speak was frightening. It was April 20th, Easter; when would they see each other again? Yes, they would write to each other but with the mail service to Mani only two times a year, they would have to wait months. Of course, Maia could always find someone who was going to Mani and perhaps there was even the possibility of being able to mail letters and have someone pick up the mail when there was someone coming from Mani.

The day after Easter, Nikos and his mother journeyed to Gytheio, some 40 kilometers from where he would be able to board the steamer to take him to America. The two left very early in the morning for the journey was difficult and slow. Each tried not to show his sadness too much so that the other did not suffer more than they had to. At Gytheio, Maia had to return since she could not afford to stay at a hotel. Mother and son embraced and promised to write faithfully. With her arms now empty, Maia could now cry openly and pray for her son's success and for a bright future for him. She thought "He is so little and I have had him for such a few years" but she was again bolstered by the thought that her son would have advantages that very few, if any, would have in their village or for that matter in all of Greece. The heaviness in her heart gave way to all the work that must be done on the farm without the help of Nikos and she

determined that even if was going to be more difficult, other woman could say that in the end, she was the luckiest mother of them all.

At first seeing this monstrous ship, Nikos felt awed. He watched the ship's crew doing their work and decided that perhaps working as a sailor was just as hard as working on the farm. As he looked about, he wondered how a ship made of iron could stay on top of the water and what made it stop from rolling over on its side . If he ran from one side to the other, the ship did not move at all. It was as though he was no more than a fly and his weight did not influence this big floating grey piece of metal. His eyes went up to the smoking funnels and he wondered why a fire was necessary for the ship to move. There were so many fascinating questions he asked himself that he knew he must find someone who could answer all his questions. Luckily his someone was Agoustos Pappas, a seaman who had worked most of his life on ships and someone who had no home to go to. Now near 48 years of age, he could no longer think of living in one place, although he was told by the ship's captain that he would have to retire after this return voyage because of his health. Agoustos had spent a great deal of his time as the Doctor's assistant on the ship. The doctor, a man inclined to excessive drinking sometimes needed assistance if there was an outbreak of some sickness or disease any sailor might have contracted in the various ports of call. In that way, after years of assisting the doctor, he was able to recognize symptoms of sicknesses; could set a broken arm or leg and learned most of the medications needed to cure. It was after the doctor retired from sea duty and the new doctor was installed that he was told that the new doctor did not require anyone to assist him in his duties. Agoustos was returned to his seaman's duties and while he was still strong and hardy as a man , his eyes were giving him trouble in that he could not see too well anymore. For a seaman who had to sometimes be a lookout, his inability to see well could endanger the entire ship. He told the Captain that he understood but secretly, he was not at all happy about leaving his life as a seaman for a life as a person who lived on land nor was he used to living in crowded cities where the air was always smelly. He would think this through on this, his last voyage. In one sense, Agoustos felt a sense of betrayal. Had he not spent his entire life on ships? He had started as a cabin boy at age eleven and learned the ways of the sea . His performed his duties as a seaman and aside from his work, he had no responsibilities in knowing where he would sleep or eat which made him carefree and unconcerned. Suddenly, he would be having to find some sort of work so that he could rent a room and buy food. This was going to be a big problem. He did not have any living soul who was family and absolutely no place where he could set anchor. He only knew about being a seaman and had never learned any trade other than assisting the doctor and here he was, being told that this was to be his last journey. Even though he was a strong , healthy man and confident in himself, he now felt a strange sensation of fear and uncertainty. As he leaned over the ship's rail, his eyes lit on the small figure climbing the gang plank with his small parcel of possessions. He thought, he must be ten or eleven years old, the same as I was some 37 years ago. Alone, without any parents or people with him, he must be frightened as I was. His heart went out to the young boy. Is he going to live somewhere with his family or relatives? I must find time to talk with him after we are at sea. Agostos, still

leaning on the rail, turned his eyes to the horizon toward the brown stone mountains, looking but not seeing but worrying about the problem of how he would live after being retired. He wondered how it would be when the only home he knew was not there for him to return to after he came back from shore leave. He spit a wad of tobacco juice over the side and was disturbed when the wad came back on the wind and wet his sleeve. "Can I have forgotten even the elementary things like not spitting against the wind? Hearing the Bosun's whistle, he snapped to attention and went about his duties of readying the ship for sailing.

As the ship left the port in Gytheio, the warm weather and the huge ship rolled gently in the sea. Both the ship and the sea were in agreement. A soft mounting over the small waves gave everything a feeling that there was complete harmony between the vessel and the sea that carried it. Even the sky, with its coral and light green blending was rapidly turning into an intense blue. For Nikos, the salt tinged air felt new to his lungs unlike the hot air in his village where the heat seemed to be sucking the moisture from his lungs.

It was on the second day out; no land mass could be seen and the horizons were similar except for the daybreak and the sunset. The sea remained calm and friendly. Agostous spotted Nikos, holding on to two stanchions and looking out over the small waves. As Agostous approached, a wave, a little larger than the rest had Nikos holding on for dear life. Settling his hand on Nikos' shoulder, he said, "Sometimes a wave asserts itself just so that you don't take the sea for granted. She has her own little ways of doing that and you just saw one of the ways she does that." Taking Niko's arm, he led him around the deck waiting for the young boy to get his sea legs while telling him that "after a while, the body and the knees just bend automatically without you even telling them to do so. Is this your first sea voyage?" Feeling the firm grip of the seaman's hand, Nikos looked up into the sailor's face and said, "Yes, how long will it be before we reach the end of our trip".

"That depends on where you are going", answered Agostous.

"I am going to New York, in America" replied Nikos.

"Ah then, that will be our last stop and it should be about 4 weeks from now. You see, a big ship such as this costs a great deal of money to sail and so we will be stopping in two other ports to deliver cargo and to pick up other cargo and at the same time, we will be taking other travelers. By the time we get to New York, you will be an experienced sea traveler".

As the two became acquainted, trust on both sides became evident. "Are you going visit your family" Nikos was asked?

"No," he replied. "I am going to school to become a soldier". Nikos went on to explain the story about how he tried to enlist in the Greek Army and how they took a picture of him and put it in the newspaper and how Janos Xenides saw the picture and decided to help him become a soldier.

“This Janos Xenides must be a very good friend of your family, No?”

“No”, he said, “I have never met Mr. Xenides but I know he loves Greece very much”.

The questions and answers went on and on until Nikos, grateful for his new friendship with Agostous said, “I have to go to my cabin for a few minutes. Will you wait for me so that we can talk some more?” Running to his cabin, Nikos wanted to share a piece of the Tsoureki bread his mother had baked for him to eat on his journey. When he returned he found Agostous leaning over the rail and looking at the sea deep in thought. When Nikos returned, Agostous turned in surprise as though the young Nikos was not there. Spying the loaf of bread, he exclaimed, “What a beautiful loaf of Tsoureki bread. Did your mother bake that for you”?

“Yes,” Nikos replied. “And I want to share some of it with you. Here, he said, breaking off a goodly piece, and I want you to have the piece with the colored egg. It will bring you good luck.”

Agostous was so moved by the unselfish offering and bent down to give the young Nikos a strong hug. “The little man must be very sensitive for he can sense my feelings” . The small act of giving brought out a feeling of protection in Agostous that was hard to define. Sure, Agostous had good friends who would extend their friendship to him, but this was a little boy who was transferring the “good luck” of the Tsoureki from himself to me. What an unselfish act- and in his present feelings of self pity and confusion about his future, his eyes teared, partly for the young boy’ unselfish gesture and partly for his being unappreciated service as a seaman. “Did you get something in your eye”, asked an innocent Nikos?

“Yes”, Agostous replied. It is probably some dust from the wind blowing on the sea”.

Taking Nikos’s hand in his own, he said, “Now I will show you around the ship, where the crew sleeps and where they eat and I shall also take you to the engine room where you can see the giant engines that drive the propellers that makes the ship sail.”

“Can you tell me why a ship made of iron floats on the water, asked Nikos?”

“Ah my boy, that is a question most people ask so it is a good question. You see how big this ship is.? Now if it was all iron it would sink like a stone in the water. But, because it is hollow inside and no way for the water to leak in, the bigness of the ship is less than the weight of the water it displaces and therefore it floats.” Now that might be a little complicated for you but at some point you will understand. Let me put it another way, he said. Have you ever tried to put a rubber ball under water? No, because it pops right up to the surface. If the insides of the ball was heavier than the water, it would sink?”

“The other question I have is what do those big chimneys do – they always have smoke coming out of them?”

“When we get down to the engine room, you will see the mighty engines running which are turning the propellers which make the ship move. So, in order for the engines to work, they need fuel to burn so that the energy makes the engines work. The smoke that you see is what is left over from burning the fuel. It’s like putting wood on a fire; after the heat (which is the energy of the fire), we get ashes instead of smoke.”

After taking young Nikos all over the ship to acquaint him with all the areas, he asked if he would like to see how the captain sails the ship. After knocking at the bridge where the captain was sitting and directing his crew, he was allowed in and Agostous asked if it would be alright to let the young boy see how and where the ship was sailed. All around him were dials with numbers and different letters on them. There were so many, that Nikos wondered how they remembered what they were all for. There were sailors with earphones listening to something called a telegraph so that they could send messages as far away as one could imagine. It was all fascinating to Nikos And gave Agostous a great deal of pride in being able to show him these marvels. Next they went to the galley where the cook was making all the meals for the passengers and the crew. Agostous asked the cook when they would be having a special meal. The cook replied, “Tomorrow, we are cooking some of our last supply of lamb as a sort of holiday meal. Agostous asked if he could invite his young friend to eat in the galley with the rest of the sailors. Given permission, Agostous asked Nikos if he would like to eat with the sailors in what he called the “Mess”. Giving Agostous a questioning look, it was explained that while the passengers ate in the dining room, the sailors ate in the Mess. In this way, a fast friendship grew between the little boy and the sailor. Whenever Agostous was free from duty, he sought out Nikos and taught him little things about the sea and sailing. When they reached one of the ports where they either refueled or unloaded supplies or people, Agostous would take Nikos around to the city or to taste the different foods and just to see how people in other countries lived.

One morning, when the light was just starting to dissolve the darkness, Nikos noticed that the ship seemed to be moving slower than usual. Agostous had told him that the ship was travelling at 14 knots per hour. For Nikos, 14 knots was as incomprehensible as kilometers per hour or miles per hour. He had no comprehension of the measurement of speed. He did know that he could run faster than his friend Demitrios but that was because Demitrios was smaller than he was. Agostous, realizing that some concepts would be better off learned in a school and left the question unanswered. But in any case, they were approaching a blurry something on the horizon. Agostous had told him last night that they would be arriving at Tunis, a city in the country, called Tunisia in the morning. He would be able to stretch his legs on land again for two days before they were off again on their journey. I have some time free time, perhaps we could go to see some of the things that make Tunisia different from Greece.

After disembarking, Nikos was excited by everything he saw. It was so different than anything he could imagine and even the fragrances of meat being roasted in the streets over small charcoal fires, the fragrances of bread being baked in small ovens made of clay and the

general excitement and movement of people was all a wonder to him. “As you can see, it is very hot and has many mountains just like parts of Greece but the people here are Muslim like the Turks that live on our border and their religion is Islam. Nikos noted that all the women dressed with long dresses and their faces were covered. Why do they over themselves up when it is so hot? Agostous explained that it was their custom not to have any men see the faces of the women except in their own families. The men, on the other hand were wearing long baggy trousers and a shirt with a red, felt skullcap.

“Everything smells so delicious here. What do they eat”?

“They eat a lot of wheat which they call couscous. This they eat with the flat bread you see the women making and the meat is goat and sheep. They like to drink hot tea.”

“And the strange looking horses – I have never seen one before.”

“Those are called camels. Do you see how big their feet are? That’s so they can walk on the sands without sinking. They are very good for this climate because there is very little water and the camel can walk long distances without needing water.”

After showing Nikos the tiny streets and the markets where there were all kinds of fresh and dried fruit, Agostous bought him some skewered lamb and pita along with some dates and a glass of tea.

“Now, let us return to the ship before night falls. If you are a stranger, it could be a little dangerous. Anyway, you have now been to Tunisia and when you are older and if you are interested, you can read about the city of Tunis and can learn more.”

A tired Nikos gratefully went to bed to sleep and recall the wonderful things he had seen that day with Agostous. The days passed quietly but always a new awareness of the sea. There were times when the color changed from green to light green and when he asked Agostous why this was”? He was told that there are currents, like swift streams flowing in the oceans which were moved by the differences of hot air that heated the water when it went past lands that were hot, they absorbed the heat.

As the journey to New York continued, the two were inseparable and the confidence of Nikos grew since he had never had a father to care for him or guide him or explain things to him. In a short time he bonded to Agostous and Agostous bonded to the little Nikos. Agostous had never had a truly normal life nor a family to take care of. His life was without responsibilities other than his duties on the ship. A single example of his fiercely protective feelings towards Nikos was when one of the crewmen said laughingly to Agostous that “I see you like little boys – a real Greek”. The crewman had said this as a joke and perhaps even with a bit of envy that the young boy had befriended Agostous. In a rage, Agostous slammed the seaman against the steel bulkhead and would have beaten him had the other crewmen not held

him back. The frightened crewman said, “Why are you getting so upset, I was only trying to get a laugh from the others”? Calmed down, Agostous said, “Here is a young boy of eleven years of age. He tried to join the Army when he was only seven and withstand the difficulties and hardships the way our Spartan forebears did. His courage was recognized by a rich Greek living in New York who offered him a scholarship to study in a Military academy. Nikos never knew his father because his father was bitten by a poisonous snake before he was born and left the raising of the child to his mother. Now he is going to New York without even having met his benefactor; he doesn’t speak English and has no idea when he will next see his mother again.. He is a splendid young man and completely unselfish. His mother had baked a tsoureki loaf of bread to eat on his journey and with the hopes that it would give him good luck. And what did he do? He broke the bread in two and gave me the part with the egg baked into it and said, “I hope this will bring you good luck. He did this without even knowing me. So if I hear another word against the boy, that person will have to deal with me. Am I understood?”

After their stopover in Tunisia, the ship headed to the city of Lisbon, in Portugal. Here they were to pick up a cargo of cork and some additional passengers. The arrival of their ship to Lisbon, the capitol of Portugal was less smooth than their stop in Tunisia. Holding tightly to Agostous’s hand, the two moved toward the docks where large bundles of cork were awaiting shipment to New York. “Do you know what cork is and how it grows?”

“No” replied Nikos. Here was another thing he had seen but had no idea about it other than it was used to seal a bottle of olive oil or wine. As the two wandered the pier, the weather started to turn cold. Portugal, like the bow of a ship faced the ocean and took the brunt of the cold winds that blew against it.

“Where does the cork come from” asked an astonished Nikos?

“Cork is the bark of an oak tree. It grows in cork woodlands where the soil is very acid, and the woodlands are called “montados”. After the cork is cut from the trunks, they have to wait for another 10 years before they can cut the cork again. The cork will be boiled to kill any insects. I have a friend in Lisbon who is a cork cutter and I shall ask him if he can take us to see the cork woodlands. There is a cork tree there that is about 200 years old and it is called the “Whistler Tree” because there used to be so many birds whistling in its branches. Since it is now May which is the season for cutting the cork, I am sure he will take us there. Later, we will taste some of the Portuguese food. They make especially nice sweets which I am sure you will like.”

The days went by quickly and the two were now good friends. While Nikos had a man who represented the father he never had, Agostous had a son which he never had. They talked a great deal about Nikos’s bad feelings in having to abandon his mother and how much extra work she would now have to take care of alone. “She even gave me the old Bible which has been in our family for so many hundreds of years. It was a Septuagint Bible that had been translated into Koine Greek which my mother could read. It was her joy to read every night from the bible

and now, she cannot even do that. I must send the bible back to her since I can't read it but more because she loved reading it so much. I don't have any money to mail it to her but when you get back to Gytheio, would you mail the bible to my mother. As soon as I can get some money, I will mail you the cost of sending the bible. I am also going to give you my dagger: the one I received when I tried to enlist. It is a good one so if you don't get the money, you can sell the dagger."

"If I had a wish, I would wish that you were my son. I am so proud of you and your generosity. In all my years of being a sailor, I have never found anyone so honest and good hearted as you." Agostous took the bible and the small village's name and handed back the dagger saying "You deserve the dagger for being what you are. I could never be good enough to deserve it."

They would be going to New York next where the ship would be tied up for some two weeks to prepare it to unload and fuel and to take on new cargo and passengers who wanted to go to Greece.

"Will Mr. Xenides be meeting you when the ship docks"?

"He didn't say but I have his address."

"Well, don't worry, I will wait with you until someone picks you up or I shall deliver you to Mr. Xenides' address."

After waiting for more than an hour, Agostous decided to deliver Nikos to Mr. Xenides address. When they reached the residence, an uncomprehending and somewhat angry Agostous said to Mr. Xenides, "The boy had no one to meet him. Since he doesn't speak English and knows nothing of a large city, it would have been more responsible of you to have had him met. Besides, he has no money." Agostous felt himself being enraged at this "rich" man for being so inconsiderate.

"You are a good man" Janos Xenides said to Agostous. I did have someone who was waiting for him and watching over him but I wanted to see how much of a Spartan he really was. I wanted to find out what he would do in a harsh circumstance – to see his response in the face of uncertainty. You know, I was attracted to the boy because he wanted to continue the Spartan tradition, do you understand?" Turning to Nikos, he said, "Welcome to America and I want to wish you the best of good luck as a son of Greece. While you are not in school, this will be your home." Having welcomed the young Nikos, he called to his two daughters, Anastasia and Antiope and said, "This is Nikos Kokiniakis. He is from Greece and he will be going to school here to become a soldier. You are to treat him like a brother."

Suddenly, Nikos had two sisters, two years older than he was. Anastasia was not as pretty as her sister Antiope. She was not as gentle and she was darker skinned than Antiope. Her

hair was straight which she wore cut short while Antiope's hair was curly. He knew immediately which sister he liked best and his face turned red whenever Antiope spoke to him.

"The first thing he is going to need is some clothing. After lunch, I want the housekeeper and both of you to go to Abercrombie and Fitch so that he has a wardrobe when he goes to school. Since you both know what boys wear, I want you to help him in selecting the clothes. Besides, he laughed, the housekeeper would dress him like an old man. This will also be an excellent time for you both to speak Greek. If you don't use the language, you will lose it."

And so, we find the young Nikos entering a new part of his life.

After bidding Agostous goodbye, he suddenly turned and whispered, "The Bible". Agostous nodded his head in agreement.

PART 2

The return trip to Greece was uneventful. Agostous was much absorbed in his own predicament but he was also happy that the young Nikos was in good hands. He was also sure that Nikos would set a fine example for all who came to know him. With a nostalgic recall of events, Agostous somehow knew that his life had changed. He would be like the young Nikos in trying to find himself and recalled Janos Xenides saying "I wanted to see what Nikos would do; was he of the Spartan stock?" "Nikos", Agostous said half aloud, we shall both be Spartans in that we will find our solutions to our problems using the courage of our Greek ancestors."

When the ship finally docked at Gytheio, the captain called him to his stateroom and tried to explain why it was necessary to let him go. "When we had the other doctor, I felt that your extra time as his assistant relieved you of the duty of watch. But if I excused you from that duty, your crew mates would feel that you were being treated differently from them and there would be a lack of harmony in the crew. I have written a recommendation for you which will record all the fine achievements and steadfastness of your work and the owners of the ship have authorized a tidy bonus for all the years you worked with us." Giving his hand in farewell, the captain wished him luck.

Agostous's crewmates gave him a farewell party as seamen do all over the world; a dinner, a drunken night in the local tavern and the best whore they could find. Agostous gratefully refused the third offer. All he would need now was a venereal disease to complicate his problems.

His first option was to find a room in a boarding house so that he would have a place to sleep at night. In wandering about the seafront and the dock area, he found a small room that

was moderately clean for a fair rental price. He decided to take the room with board and felt he could always find a restaurant that would give him a decent meal when he wanted it. Some fresh bread and some coffee were more than enough for breakfast and eating a late lunch could cover the need for dinner. The landlady would be doing his washing and so, he felt relatively secure. "It's not as difficult as I thought" he said to himself. "but I am going to need something to do; that might be a little trickier for me to handle."

Agostous walked along the docks, sat in parks or sipped a beer in a tavern while taking notice if there was work available. During that time, jobs were not plentiful and he noticed that he was starting to become a little lonely. It was difficult to just go up to someone and say, "I'm Agostous Pappas. Do you want to have a chat?" He thought about Nikos and how he was doing and thought, I have to mail the bible to his mother. The village was called San Domenico. Asking around, he discovered that the village was about 40 kilometers from Gytheio. "Not too far" he thought. "Shouldn't take more than 4 or 5 hours if the roads are O.K." Then and there, he decided that he would deliver the bible in person to Nikos's mother. Since he wanted to be in touch with Nikos, his mother would be able to give him an address. On his way to the village of San Domenico, he wondered if he should bring some gift since he was delivering the bible and not a complete stranger. Would the gift be too intimate? As he was wending his way, he noticed a shepherd and asked him if he had a live, baby lamb for sale that could live away from its mother? Being told that he did have one, a price was agreed upon and Agostous walked the last few kilometers to San Domenico with a baby lamb in tow. Just as he was entering the village, the road suddenly gave way to a path some 48 inches wide. "Why you cannot even get a cart through that pass. There must be another road!" But no, there was no other way into the village. No wonder the village exists the way it did when it was first settled by the few families that lived here. When Nikos had told him that mail came and went only 2 times per year, he thought the boy was exaggerating since Nikos would not have been receiving mail. But it was true.

Agostous had no difficulty finding Nikos's little house. The house was partly stone, which abounded in the area but also of clay brick stuccoed over in a white plaster. The single window was rather large but divided into small panes and it plus the door to the dwelling provided the light. The roof was made of flat slates supported by heavy branches. The house looked old and in one sense, not too well cared for since its occupants would more than likely be spending most of their time working in the fields. There was a small corral for animals made of tree branches which abutted a stone outcropping that had once been a shallow cave. It too had a small unsteady looking roof of flat slates. Chickens pecked in and out of the house and though the house was a poor person's house, it still had an orderly look to it. Nearby, in lone spot, the vegetation was dense for so arid a climate. Agostous surmised that that was where the small spring emerged that gave the family its water supply and the water needed to water the few crops of herbs near the house.

He saw her in the distance shading the sun from her eyes with her arm. Her hair was almost the color of platinum with her being in the sun so long. It was as Nikos had described it;

braided and wound around her head and as though she had just fixed it. As she slowly walked toward the house and where he was waiting, he could not but feel her curiosity and slight trepidation at seeing a strange man with a lamb. A thought entered her mind that the man was trying to sell the lamb and that would have solved the mystery. When she was within shouting distance, Agostous called in a loud voice, "Mrs. Kokiniakis?" Maia immediately felt the chill that the man was the bearer of bad news and that something had happened to Nikos. For the last 100 meters, she half trotted and half ran expecting to hear the worst. Agostous seeing her anxiety put out his hands and said "Don't worry, I am not bring bad news. I was a sailor on the steamship that Nikos was travelling on and we became great friends. He produced the bible and said Nikos had requested that I mail the bible to you since he knew how much you enjoyed reading it. I want to congratulate you on what a fine young man you have raised. Seeing he was red from the sun and somewhat tired from his walk, she thanked him for his kindness in returning the bible. As a good hostess, she asked that he come sit on the porch. She gave him some cold water from the spring. "oh yes," he said and "I want you to accept this small lamb as a token of my appreciation for the lovely time Nikos and I had. The man who sold her to me said that she could be fed and did not need her mother."

"Thank you, he will make a fine ram when he is mature. He is not a she." They laughed together and she could tell by his laugh that he was perhaps not too knowledgeable but a kind, decent man.

"But the man told me it was a she lamb, he laughed at his stupidity. I didn't even have the sense of looking but took him at his word. At any rate, perhaps he will father many sheep for you."

Again, with a look of anxiety on her face she asked when he had last seen Nikos. Was he feeling too lonely outside of his normal way of living; did Janos Xenides seem like a nice man; was his wife a kind lady?" I will answer all your questions but first, may I have another glass of your spring water"? Filling a small ceramic pitcher she suggested "it will be a little cooler in the shade." Petting the small sheep between her knees, she relaxed to listen whatever she could of Nikos's new adventure.

"First, I want you to know that Nikos is in the hands of a very, rich and intelligent man. He is about my age and has twin daughters, named Anastasia and Antiope. His wife died giving birth to the twins and so they have never had a mother. They are just about Nikos's age maybe about 2 years older and when I had left the Xenides house, they were off to buy him some clothes before starting school. Agostous told Maia how he took Nikos's hand and told his daughters that Nikos was to be considered as part of the family and that they should think of him as a brother. Whenever Nikos is on school holiday, this will be his home. He also told them to speak in Greek to Nikos since Nikos did not speak English yet and so that they would use the Greek language more and not forget the Greek they knew.

“I think that he will be very happy with the family when he is not in school. The school is in New York State and is an all boy’s school where everyone will be dressed in a uniform. Nikos will also have classes in English and that should be an advantage when he grows up. He is a really fine boy and it can only have been so because of his mother. I have been here for just a short time and I can see what a fine family he comes from. Do you know what he did with the beautiful Tsourekhi loaf you gave him. Well, he broke it in two and gave me the piece with the egg cooked in it. And then he said, this will give you good luck. You have no idea how touched I was. (and then trying to give a little information about himself without being obvious) You know, I am in a sort of way just like Nikos in that I started working as a cabin boy and started at the same age as Nikos; eleven. For 37 years I worked as a seaman without ever having a real home nor any family or relatives. For many years, I was the assistant of the ship’s doctor and learned a great deal about medicine and curing. Then, when the doctor I was assisting left the ship to retire, the new doctor said he did not need an assistant. Because my eyesight is not good, I was retired as a seaman.”

It was now 5 PM and the sun was starting to go down in the west. “I was just going to put on something to heat for supper. You are welcome to join me but it is only soup. With no one to cook for, one does not take the time to prepare too much.” (she was also trying give Agostous some information without appearing too obvious also). As she led the tiny lamb to the corral, she said, I have a small goat whose mother died and I am feeding her with a baby bottle. At least, the two will have each other as companions.”

Agostous, not daring to suggest that she put him up for the night, mildly protested her offer to have supper and said he had to return to Gytheio since it was some distance and he was not too sure of the way in the dark. Maia said, “Of course I cannot put you up in the house but if you like, you can sleep in the little lean-to where the donkey generally sleeps. There is fresh hay and there is a shallow cave where I think you will be O.K. It is just that being a woman alone would not look too good in the eyes of my neighbors if I had a man sleeping here.”

The next morning. Agostous awakened just before sunup. It was Sunday morning. All was quiet and he decided to just take a look around the small farm. Thirsty for some water, he went to the spring where a metal ladle hung from a string. Drinking the very cold water, he washed himself off since any type of bathing would be offensive to Maia. As he dried himself his mind was imagining how lovely it would be to live with the serenity and peace of this rural village. How would he improve it he wondered. The spring especially intrigued him since they were rare in this part of Greece. Noticing that the spring appeared to be coming from a large stone outcropping, he deduced that it was coming from some hidden source of water deep in the mountain. With no electricity and no way of storing food, he thought that this location would be an ideal place for a spring house. It’s location away from the sun and close to the house would be an added advantage. So, if there was too much of a crop or too much milk or eggs to keep fresh; with very little work one could give Maia a home with the added attraction of the spring house. In his mind, he was already figuring how big the house should be and saw that at least

two walls abutted the natural stone outcropping which where the spring emerged and would mean that two sides would not have to be touched. There was more than sufficient stone strewn over the property so that too would give all the building materials that would be needed. While he looked around, a farmer from a neighboring farm approached Maia's house, looked suspiciously at Agostous and assuming that he was visiting Maia asked if Maia had awakened. Agostous, on unsure grounds felt like he was involving Maia in some scandal and said that he thought that Maia was still asleep but that he wasn't sure since he spent the night in the stable.

Georgio Anastas was Maia's Greek neighbor. His family had been in the village longer than anyone else's and he was considered the leader of sorts of the 80 families that made up the village. His face was flushed as though he had been running for some time. In age, he appeared to be in his mid 60's but with the hard life the farmers led, he could have been younger. Ignoring Agostous' presence, he ran to the door of the house and called, "Maia, Maia, come quick,!" As Maia appeared in the doorway, Georgio Anastas said that his wife, Adonia had fallen in a crevice and that her leg was broken. She is in great pain and I wondered if you still have the herb mixture you used on Nikos when he hurt himself? "

"Yes", she replied, " I still have Kalami roots. We will make a tea to ease her pain. I will just get dressed and we can go. By the way, please say hello to Agostous Pappas. He was kind enough to take Nikos to meet the man who is putting Nikos through school".

Hearing the problem, Agostous spoke up and said, "I may be able to help you. I have worked with a doctor on the steamship for many years and I have had to set the broken leg of a sailor many times. When did your wife fall?"

"It was last night but we couldn't try to go to Mani. We have no road to have the ambulance come here," he replied. It was not so bad last night but this morning, her leg is very swollen and painful and all discolored".

"We had better get there quickly so that she doesn't develop a blood-clot. Have you some type of bandages and some flat pieces of wood, asked Agostous?"

"I have some pickets from a fence I was building but I have no bandages."

"Then we shall have to use some sheets cut in strips". By this time, Maia had dressed and had a handful of dried herbs including the Kalami roots. She also brought with her some herbs for tea to hopefully calm Georgio's wife, Adonia. The three went over to the small path where a donkey and a small cart had been tied up.

"I had to run from the path to your house because the cart will not pass the narrow path and that is why I am so out of breath". The three got into the cart and Georgios urged the donkey to move as fast as it could. When they arrived at Georgio's house, his wife Adonia was writhing on their bed trying in some way to stifle the pain. As soon as they got Adonia to lie

down, Georgio said, "This is a friend of Nikos who took him to meet the man who is paying for his school."

Agostous lifted the leg gently to try to ascertain where the break was. Fortunately, there did not appear to be any infection and Agotous then asked Maia to make a strong tea and for Georgio to bring the fence pickets and to bring at least two sheets cut into bandages. Seeing her sheets about to be ripped to pieces, Adonia started to protest but her pain was too intense to think about the sheets.

Having determined where the break was, he asked Adonia to drink large quantities of the tea and the Kalami root tea. He then told Adonia that he was sorry but that in order to set the bones together he would have to pull her leg so that he could put the bone on top of the other bone and that it will be very painful. But it must be done." Turning to Georgio, he said, "Find a twig so that she can bite down on it when the pain is too bad. Also, give Adonia a large glass of wine".

With Maia holding Adonia from above and with Georgio and Agostous pulling at her leg, they pulled until Agostous felt he had the bones aligned. Adonia screamed in agony and she bit down on the twig to ease the pain. Then putting some soft wool against her leg, he placed the wooden pickets so that the leg could not move and tied them with the sheet that had been cut into strips. All four were sweating profusely but soon, Adonia seemed to feel much less pain even though she was very uncomfortable, she felt relief.

"I shall have to look at her leg for a week or so to be sure there is no infection or if you like, you can bring her to the hospital in Mani." Hearing hospital, Adonia wailed out that she did not want to go to a hospital. Every time I hear of someone going to the hospital, they never return home. (It was true that without sterile conditions , some diseases were transmittable to the regret of the patients) .

"Won't you please come back to see her instead of going to the hospital"? Georgio said, "If you like, we can give you a room to sleep in."

"Thank you both but I have some work that I plan to do and besides, the donkey does not seem to mind me too much. If you like, you can pick me up at the narrow path the day after tomorrow at about noon when the sun is overhead. Agostous had heard that in the small villages, they had no use of time pieces and so by using the sun, he would be able to meet Georgio at noon.

Maia threw Agostous a questioning look about his having to do some work. She had not asked anything of him and in fact was anxious that he leave before too many people knew he was staying at her house, even though it was outside in the place where the donkey was tied up at night. On their way back, Georgio had driven them to the narrow path, Agostous lingered a

while looking at the situation. As they walked back to her house, she said, “What work do you have to do at my house, I have not asked you to do anything?”

“Oh, I wanted it to be a surprise and now that I have to see Adonia every few days, I will be able to do something for you that I think you will like. It will be in repayment for the friendship Nikos showed me and for his beautiful innocence. Agostous then told Maia that he had taken some water to drink and that its beautiful, cold clarity would be ideal for you to have a spring house. In that way, you will be able to keep your milk much longer and it will be as cool as the water in the spring. Also, if you have too much vegetables, you can use what you want and leave the rest in the spring house where they will stay fresh for a much longer time. You have all the materials at hand except for some planks for a door. I even saw a limestone outcropping which I can use to make mortar, the way the ancient Romans used to make it. Do you have a hammer and a stone chisel?”

While she said nothing, she could hardly suppress her joy. Cold milk, vegetables and even eggs. When she did speak, she said, “but I have no money to pay you”.

“As I said, I will have been repaid by Nikos’ kindness to me.”

“I am really sorry that I must let you sleep with the donkey, but I would be the talk of every household if it was to be known that you were sleeping in the house. Please understand me. You will be gone but I will be remembered for having had a man in my home for my entire life. It would even reflect on the life of my son Nikos. I want you to know, that I have never felt so strongly for a man, not even Nikos’s father. But, I was brought up to follow the rules and I must follow them even to my own regret. “

“You must know that I speak with all respect when I tell you that my intentions are honorable and sincere in wanting you to be my wife and be a father to Nikos. Please think seriously about my proposal. If it means that we must move from here, would you then consider it?”

“I know no other place; I was born here in San Dominico; I married and had my child here and the only people I know are the people here. I told you that I have no relatives or family except the people here. Please, let me think about it.”

In the meantime, Agostous started on his construction of the “spring house”. Fortunately, Maia had a chisel and a heavy hammer. The area was strewn with stones that would serve well. Tracing the spring where it disappeared in the earth, he found a clay like material which he needed as a material. After diverting the spring so that he could work, he dug a hole in the earth about 30 centimeters below the level of the spring and about 1 meter 50 centimeters square in which he placed the claylike soil. On top of that he set flat stones as a base and as a basin for the spring water. The wall projected from the stone outcropping left one side for the door. He set three shelves inside above the spring water and built a heavy door. He then created an earth

berm against the stone wall as an insulation material. For the roof, he set tree trunks about 15 centimeters in diameter over laid with stone tiles, the same as the house. Another layer of 10 centimeter branches covered over again with stone tiles to keep the sun from heating the tiles below. When he was finished, he diverted the spring back to its original path and the spring house had a permanent almost 30 centimeters of icy cold water in the basin and in which Maia could store her milk in clay jars. The spring house was the talk of the village. Unfortunately, it could not be duplicated since it would need a cold spring to make it effective.

On one of Agostous's visits to check Adonias broken leg, Georgio lamented how dangerous it was not having access to Mani because of the narrow path which would not permit anything over 1 meter to be driven past. Agostous asked Georgio to give him some time to look at the situation. Seeing that one side of the path was against a large, stone outcropping in which nothing could be done, he directed his attention to the side which opened onto the vast and deep valley below. He also noticed that the path was located at the side of the hill that was gently sloped about the same width as the path before it fell into a precipitous, almost vertical drop. He thought that it would be possible to cut a stepped ledge so that a wall could be built over it to support the widened path until it matched the existing road on either side. While the work would be hard, the length was only 20 meters which was not too long. Agostous conferred with Georgio and explained his idea. Since Georgio was the village leader, his acceptance of the idea was vital. It would be upon Georgio's agreeing that anything could be done.

"We would need the Municipality's agreement to go ahead with the work and I doubt they would be interested in spending money to rebuild the portion of the road that needs to be fixed. But if you could convince the village's men to undertake the work, you would not only be providing a connection to Mani but you would also be increasing the value of your properties. I would be willing to write our request that San Domenico would provide the manpower and that we would need only a few important materials such as steel rods, cement and some gravel when the wall is built to bring the new portion up to the level of the existing road."

Georgio listened and then said, "The idea is a good one but it would be dangerous to have men working near the cliff."

Agostous shot back, "We would tie ropes around the waists of the men so that that they would be safe; the same as the men who climb mountains do to be sure that they do not fall."

"I shall have to have a meeting with the men to first see if they think it is worth the trouble since we have lived here all our lives. It has been hard but we have managed. I will see. By the way, you shall have to give me the costs of your treating Adonia and for watching her every few days. You know, she is out of pain and can now get around a little with some crutches I made for her. This is all thanks to you and you must know that we are both grateful. We do not have much money but we can give you cheese and wine and olive oil."

“Perhaps you can do a favor for me some day. Let us just say I offered my services as a true friend of San Domenico and I am not asking for any pay. This is a beautiful village and I hope that it will be possible to live and work here some day.”

Agostous returned to Gytheio after learning that the men, guided by Georgio Pappas were interested in building the path into a road. Prior to his leaving San Domenico, he had written the municipality of Mani of the intention of the families to repair or build a 20 meter section of path that led to the main road utilizing the village’s labor and requiring the materials that had been sent as an addendum to their letter. Now it required the civic machinery to finally authorize and fund the proposal. Agostous had promised to return at the start of the work and had left open the options he had given to Maia. He felt optimistic about the road project and less so about what would happen between Maia and himself. He felt that perhaps things were happening too fast for Maia and that she needed time alone to respond.

PART 3

Nikos had two months to spend in New York City with his newly adopted family of Janos Xenides and his two daughters, Anastasia and Antiope before the start of school. Since the girls were also free from school, they utilized this time to show Nikos around. They went to the Zoo, Central Park, they rode the subways to their last stops and then returned; they visited the Museum of Natural History which interested Nikos a great deal since there was a section devoted to the Spartans. Displays showed how they lived and fought; the armor they wore, the type of clothes they wore and things as to show how they lived. He was also fascinated at seeing the stuffed animals and dinosaurs that lived in prehistoric times plus the ways of the first inhabitants. All was fascinating to him and he begged the girls to bring him here again or as he was learning to travel in the City, he would come back alone. When the girls decided to take him to the Planetarium, he was dumbfounded. He had, of course seen the stars at night and he saw the sun and the moon; but all these stars and planets and places like the earth, where they were living, he simply had no idea of. This simple, untaught boy was seeing the complexity of life that he had no idea about. When they visited the library, he asked, “What is a library”? He had his book from the school on the Spartans and the bible book he had asked Agostous to return to his mother but all these books! What was in them? When he was told that from the very beginning when men learned to write, they wrote about the stories they heard from their old men and woman who told about things that had happened before they were born. The books told of what the ancient people believed in for their gods; about how they made laws and rules to govern themselves, about how to grow the plants they ate and about how they hunted animals for meat. They also told about how they lived: the houses they built and about all the things they believed in.

“And these things are in these books”, he marveled? “But there are so many books to read them all you would have to read all the time until you were old and then you still would not have read them all “! There is so much to learn. And even when you learn, you will always feel that you know very little with so much to understand. At this early time in his life he had learned what many people took a whole lifetime to learn; that the more you know, the more you realize how little you do know, He and the two sisters became fast friends. Probably, it was his curiosity and not trying to know it all because he was a boy. When Nikos asked a question, the girls knew that they too needed to learn. Anastasia was the boss and she always was the one to decide where they were going and what they were going to see. Antiope usually followed Anastasia’s suggestions, not because she didn’t have a will of her own but mostly because there was so much to see and do that she willingly opened herself to the suggestion rather than just protest because she wanted her own way. Sometimes when all three were looking at a display, Nikos could feel Antiope’s coat or dress against him ever so slightly so that he spent more time feeling Antiope’s nearness than the exhibit they were looking at. Whenever they were walking three abreast, Nikos always made sure that he was walking next to Antiope. He always thought, “Antiope always smell so clean and fresh while Anastasia sometimes smelled a little stale. One time, when they were looking at an exhibit there was a little rail so that people could not get too close and put fingerprints on the glass. As they were absorbed in what they were seeing, he felt Antiope’s hand just touching his. He stopped looking at the exhibition and concentrated as to whether she pressed her hand against his on purpose or was it just an accident. As a boy of twelve, all this imagining was not in any way sexual. It was just that when he lived in San Domenico, his few playmates were boys. He had had very little contact with girls. Boys were always pushing each other or hitting each other or simply roughhousing in games like “king of the hill” where they could challenge each other to determine who was the leader. Of course, in nature, this is a natural outlet for the later asserting as to who would be more attractive to women, “the survival of the fittest”, but this lack of sensitivity offended him and when he discovered that sensibility in Antiope, he reached out. There were absolutely no sensations of sexuality, only a yearning to be with that other person. Nikos was not a sissy. On one occasion when the three were in the City, a young boy about 14 or 15 years of age tried to grab Antiope’s pocket book. Well, Nikos was off chasing the little thief until he caught him. He thrashed him mercilessly and had to be stopped by some passerbys. He took back the purse but not before giving the older boy a hard, merciless kick in the ribs. Both sisters looked on in awe and fright and Anastasia who was the bolder of all, thought secretly that there were limits as to how much she could bully Nikos. He was very tolerant of those he liked. This “New Spartan”, unlike the boys of old was not like his forebears. The training of the original Spartans was to abuse the young trainees by beating them, withholding food so that the trainee would either have to steal food or beat up anyone who did have food; to lie, cheat or whatever to survive. Things concerning sensitivity were not part of the training. In this way, the boy Nikos was fearless in the face of those who would do him wrong but unlike the original Spartan boys was also sensitive to the beauty around him.

On one of their outings, they visited the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Nikos had never seen the output of man in artistic terms. He had never seen a sculpture and the only introduction to drawings were in his simplified story books that the school used. When the three entered the Greek exhibit and Nikos saw the giant statues of the Spartan soldiers guarding the entrance to the exhibit, he thought, I had no idea that the Spartans were so big. In his mind, the giant sculptures were true depictions of the Spartan's size. He could not take his eyes away from the strength, the muscles, the helmets, the shields, the swords and the spears the Spartans used. He felt a young boy's pride in considering himself as a Spartan.

They walked on and on as though there was no end. He saw paintings and sculptures of naked men and women. He had never seen a naked woman before and not even at home did he ever see Maia in a state of dishabille. He lagged behind so as not to show how he was blushing and even tried to avert his eyes but they were drawn back to the figures. Oh, so much to learn. Some of the time periods showed pictures of people and places that were so real, that you thought the person could just jump down out of the picture. Then there were the pictures that looked so smudged that you had to sort of close your eyes to make out what the picture was about but the greatest of all were the pictures that his friend Mixlo's little brother drew. Well, here in this museum there were pictures exactly like that. Maybe Mixlo's brother was a real artist, too! He would have a great deal to write his mother about but he would not mention all the naked figures he saw.

As the weeks wore on, the hierarchy of the three established itself with Anastasia still the leader and Antiope a follower. Nikos followed because he felt that the introduction to so many, unimaginable things was another opening to his life on the so much to learn. When, however, something was important to Nikos, there was no argument as to which way things would go and he was never challenged.

Most of the time was spent with the two sisters but Janos Xenides was not unaware of what was happening. After all, this was his protégé and Janos was especially proud when he heard the story of how the stealing of Antiope's purse turned out. Imagine he said to himself, only twelve and he caught and beat the thief who was a little older than his age; a true son of Greece. Janos had written to the school where Nikos would be learning and ascertained that there were no problems seeing that the elementary education of a small town village might be way behind the courses of a large city school. Assured that there would be no problems, he still asked for an accounting of the new student. Janos did ask that the teachers be strict and demanding of Nikos. He had seen so many spoiled young men, placed in the school to get them out of the way so that the parents could be relieved of the responsibility of guiding their sons. Janos realized that this experience would form Nikos' life from this time forward.

After buying Nikos the required clothing, uniforms to underwear, he sent the boy alone to the school where would be studying. Janos wanted Nikos to take the responsibilities of doing things without help. "The sooner he is responsible for his own actions, the better he will be able

to survive.” Janos saw the boy off, wished him good luck and told him that he could always count on a home here with them when he was on vacation. He shook hands and gave Nikos a strong pat on the back. With the girls, however, Nikos received a warmer farewell and especially so with Antiope who promised to write to him every week. She also gave him a picture of herself so that he would not forget how she looked. Nikos had previously given her one of himself when he had his uniform fitted which Antiope thought made him look 14 or even 15 years old.

Nikos arrived at the Academy on a raw September morning. It had rained during the night and the trees and bushes were still dripping with rain. After he checked in, he was assigned a room with another boy his age called Gerhardt Karplus. Gerhardt was an Austrian boy whose parents wanted him to continue the family tradition of being in the military. Gerhardt’s line of ancestry reached back to when the Austro-Hungarian Empire was in flower between 1867 to 1918. Gerhardt’s parents were a proud family who after the 1918 dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, retained a part of the former glory the country had in the time of Emperor Franz Joseph. To Gerhardt’s family, their glorious background was as a part of the Army.

Gerhardt, even at his young age, could ski, ride a horse reasonably well, liked to read poetry and liked to run as his favorite sport. He had even started taking lessons in fencing. After the World War, his parents decided that it would be best if Gerhardt studied in the United States at an Academy that was known for its Spartan like discipline.

The two boys, slightly wary of each other at the beginning could not really speak to each other. They would have to rely on the English they were to be taught but each was proud of their countries accomplishments; Gerhardt referring to the powerful Austro-Hungarian Empire and Nikos of his Greek heritage. When he learned that Gerhardt liked running, he spoke of the run that Phidippides made to tell the Athenians that Greece had won the battle against the Persians and that the Persians were planning to attack Athens as a counter measure. Nikos told how Phidippides then ran back the 26 miles and then died from exhaustion.

Being unable to express themselves in English, the lack of dialogue leveled the playing field and they soon felt that they could sense a feeling of rapport with each other. For some reason, the two were excluded from the cliques formed among the other boys but both felt comfortable being with each other and a strong friendship soon evolved. In that first year, classes for the non-English speaking students revolved around language, plus discipline and sports where speaking was not as important. As is usual, hazing was administered by the upper classmen and in this, Nikos displayed a side of him that was not always evident. He could withstand the hazing and give back to the hazes a response that was not always expected. Knowing that, the upper classmen picked on the other boys where the younger would succumb to the punishments being doled out. Gerhardt, whose pride of family was strong but not when it came to being hazed. He looked up to Nikos since it seemed that Nikos was never intimidated. For Nikos, hazing or taking advantage of the younger students by those who had been studying

longer made no sense. He wondered whether it was the same as when people discriminated against any thing that was different or that they could not explain. It seemed that each individual had to “punish” another individual if the person was from a different country or a different religion or if their skin color was different or even if they dressed differently. Was it because you were unsure of yourself and so, in order to feel yourself superior, you had to make the other person feel inferior? He knew from the little he had read that the Spartans encouraged their young trainees to be without compassion or feelings for the others; to beat them and withhold food so that the young trainees would have to steal but for himself, Nikos thought that you should only hold anger for your enemy, not your brother soldier. He was evolving into the “new Spartan”.

His first year was almost over and soon the boys studying at the Academy would be going home for the year end vacation. When Nikos asked Gerhardt where he was going to spend the next two months, he was surprised to hear that since he did not have relatives in America, nor could his parents afford to pay for the trip back and forth to Vienna, that he would ask permission to stay at the school. Of course, his parents would have to pay for his room and board, but that is what he would be doing. Nikos, feeling sorry to lose his friend said, “I will write to Mr. Xenides and tell him about you and your problem and ask if you could stay with me. Mr. Xenides was the man who is paying for my schooling. After he read about my wanting to enlist in the army, he sent for me to become a soldier. If he says yes, that you can stay, would you want to come with me?”

“Yes, I would like to do that. There is nothing so terrible than being alone. I don’t blame my parents, we do not have so much money anymore and the trip back to Austria and then back to America would be too difficult for them. I hope Mr. Xenides says yes; we could have a good time together”.

“His name is Janos Xenides, said Nikos, and he lives with his twin daughters, Anastasia and Antiope; they are both 14 years old and I really like Antiope. Anastasia is nice too, but Antiope is very gentle and kind. Sometimes, Anastasia is a little pushy but she is basically a nice person. Their mother died when they were being born. The house is a big house because Mr. Xenides buys and sells houses and properties in New York; I think he is very rich. We eat a lot of Greek food since Mr. Xenides likes the traditions and customs of Greece. I will write tonight. Let’s keep our fingers crossed.”

Janos read the letter and was pleased that Nikos had met a friend he liked. Janos had Anastasia write back that her father would be happy to have Gerhardt visit for the school vacation. Janos had asked Anastasia to write noting that she would immediately pass the news to her sister, Antiope. Janos had noticed that the girls seemed to be concentrating too much on boys and so if Nikos and his friend Gerhardt were here, he would have solved the problem of the girls’ needing some male companionship and everything would be under his eyes and control.

When the two boys finally reached the home of Janos Xenides, he was met by the twins, Anastasia and Antiope. The girls of course knew Nikos and also knew that he would be bringing a classmate. Both were stunned by the new boy who would be living with them for the next two months. While Nikos was handsome in a boyish way, Gerhardt was beautiful. He was slight, had brilliant blonde hair and blue eyes that any girl would wish for. He looked so well groomed; even his nails looked cared for and his almost formal manner sent both girls in a whirl. It was Antiope though who really fell for this beautiful, Austrian boy. They were told that Gerhardt could ride a horse very well and that he could ski, (something that the girls had been very interested in learning since there were always nice young men on the ski slopes) and that he liked to read poetry. Everything about Gerhardt was a fanciful dream to an emerging feminine psyche full of romance and dreams.

At the beginning, Nikos did not notice that when the four were together, Antiope always managed to be beside Gerhardt and was always so attentive when Gerhardt made a remark or voiced a belief. Antiope was always in breathless agreement. Nikos thought, Antiope is really a good hostess to make such an effort to be nice and agreeable to Gerhardt. Soon though, Nikos noted that she no longer was paying any attention to him. At first, a wave of jealousy passed through and he felt slighted but in his usual agreeable way, reasoned that if Antiope liked Gerhardt more than she liked him, Gerhardt was his good friend and that if they liked each other, well he would accept the ignoring of himself by Antiope.

The four went everywhere together. They took a tourist boat that went all around Manhattan and both boys were astounded at the height of the buildings; the number of cars, taxis, buses and trucks that kept plying through the busy streets. It was a sight that both would carry with them for the rest of their lives. Visits to the various ethnic neighborhoods such as Chinatown, Little Italy, the section where all the Hasidic Jews lived, the German neighborhoods and Harlem where the Negroes lived. Each of the areas had signs in different languages and the restaurants served foods from those countries.

It was already Early August. During this time, Antiope made excuses and either stayed behind or moved ahead with Gerhardt. She wanted to be with him alone and even though Anastasia tried to keep everyone in a group, Antiope always tried to keep a distance between them. On one of their visits to the various ethnic neighborhoods, Gerhardt said that this coming August 20th, St. Stephens day was always celebrated. He indicated that he would like to celebrate the occasion by inviting the four to eat at a typical Austrian restaurant. It was to be a sort of farewell party since the boys would be returning to the Academy soon. After dinner, the four walked leisurely around the neighborhood; many girls were in Austrian dress wearing dirndl skirts and embroidered blouses. As usual, Antiope and Gerhardt lingered behind and then, went down a small street out of reach of the other two. When Anastasia looked around, the two had disappeared. A short search convinced them that Gerhardt and Antiope had finally achieved getting away from the other two and so it was just left at that. Anastasia and Nikos arrived home at about 6:00 pm when it was just starting to turn from afternoon to early evening.

The sky was a brilliant strip of golden light on the horizon while the eastern sky was blackening enough to see the first stars of evening. The two talked a while and Anastasia wondered aloud when the other two would return. "I'm glad my father is away for the next two days because he would really be angry at Antiope for staying out so late and at me for allowing her to elude us. I don't know what has come over Antiope, she was never so headstrong before – I hope everything will be alright". At about 7:30 pm, there was still no sign of the two and Nikos said that he was going to go to his room since he had some letters he wanted to write. A now worried Anastasia said, "Just wait till they get home, I will give Antiope a talking to like she has never received before and I shall tell Gerhardt that he is a guest of my father's and that his keeping my sister out so late is not appreciated or welcome. I am not blaming you Nikos, but Gerhardt is your friend and my father accepted him as our guest on your recommendation. I think you should talk to him and tell him how very upset I am and that I am not certain as to whether or not I should tell my father."

It was not until 9:30 PM that Gerhardt and Antiope showed up. Anastasia was furious with them both and Gerhardt apologized. Not Antiope though, she only said to her sister, "You're just jealous because Gerhardt likes me best." Saying that she stormed to her room, with a sense of wrongdoing and fear. She had never spoken to Anastasia that way before.

After the preliminary scolding of the pair, Anastasia said that we will discuss this tomorrow after we have all had a chance to calm down. I don't want the housekeeper to hear that we were arguing. Each went to his room and Gerhardt whose room adjoined Nikos and was separated by an adjoining bath heard the shower being turned on. After Gerhardt's bath was obviously over, Nikos knocked at the door. A confused and worried Gerhardt answered the door. He was in his pajamas and his hair was still wet. Gerhardt did not dare look Nikos in the eye and instead kept his gaze at his feet. "I do not understand you Gerhardt. What has come over you? If Mr. Xenides was here, I don't believe he would be so happy with you for keeping Antiope out so late nor for being alone with her without the company of her sister or me. What could have been going through head?" I thought I knew you as a level headed person who knew his place and not like some defiant fool who did what he wanted to do. Where did the two of you go and what were you trying to prove? We were in a different neighborhood; we knew no one and it was getting dark. We have both heard that New York City could be dangerous at night, especially for someone who did not speak English well. Why did you dare to put Antiope's life in danger? If anything had happened, you would have been sent back to the Academy but I would have been held responsible for having invited you. Why did you both try to hide from us? What did you think you were going to do"? I am aware that she held hands with you when we were walking together and especially when both of you lingered behind. The fact that she likes you better than me is not the point, the point is that you allowed yourself to be led on like a foolish lamb instead of a person who had respect and was thankful to the man who took you into his home as a guest. What happened when you suddenly disappeared and we went back to see if we could find you?"

“Antiope sort of pushed me into a store where they sold souvenirs and when we saw you, I was about to call you and tell you that we were in the souvenir shop but Antiope put her finger on my lips as though to tell me to keep quiet. I knew it was wrong but I guess I was also curious about what would happen if we were alone with each other.”

“And what did your curiosity lead you to? And what did you expect was going to happen?”

Gerhard whispered hoarsely that we just continued to walk away from where you both might see us. Antiope put her arm through mine and we held hands really tightly. A little later, we came upon a small park with a few benches and we sat close together and Antiope asked me if I would like to kiss her”? Instead of waiting for my answer, she pulled my face onto hers and we kissed.”

“And did you touch her, you know in places where you shouldn’t have touched her?”

“Not at first, we just kissed a lot and then she put my hand on her breast and asked if it didn’t feel nice to touch her breasts.”

“Did anything else happen; did you touch her anyplace else”? asked Nikos.

“I can’t remember but I guess it was everyplace. I wasn’t thinking of anything else except how good and exciting everything felt. I guess I just lost my sense of right or wrong, and besides, Antiope was excited as well and it just happened”.

“What “just happened” an almost non-believing Nikos asked. As Nikos asked, he felt a dead weight in his stomach and his throat felt too dry to speak. “You didn’t go all the way, did you?”

“I guess we did but everything happened so quickly that I didn’t have time to think of the consequences.”

“You GUESS you did? What will happen if Antiope becomes pregnant? What will be your responsibilities. Antiope is only 14 years old and you, why you still smell of your mother’s milk. Will your family take care of the baby until you are grown enough to assume your responsibilities? Will you marry Antiope when you are a man or will you just try to escape and hide? You are really a fool. And do you realize that my whole life will also be affected by your stupidity? We both know that Mr. Xenides will turn me out since I was the one who asked if you could spend your vacation with me? Your mother and father will be effected, my mother, Antiope and her father and her sister too. I should thrash you good for all the unhappiness you might be bringing to so many people but it would not solve anything, I think you should return to the Academy and leave off living here. Who knows what other stupid and foolish things you might be capable of doing? I suggest you spend the next hour writing a letter to Mr. Xenides saying that you could not wait to thank him for his hospitality but that you had to go back to the

Academy (give him any reason you think is feasible) at once. You realize that I can no longer consider you a friend, not after you have shown yourself to be such a selfish fool. I hope you have learned a lesson from all this; I know I have.”

Nikos made his way back to his own room and worried during the sleepless night as to whether or what he should tell Anastasia. How should he answer Mr. Xenides if Antiope is pregnant and a thousand other worries that the night magnifies.

The next morning, early enough so that none of the household was awake, Gerhardt knocked at Nikos’s door to try to apologize for his behavior. He was frightened the way any 13 year old boy would be after he thought of all the stupid things he did or allowed to happen. He left two envelopes, one for Mr. Xenides and one for Nikos under the door and disappeared.

Finally came the dawn; a day full of disaster for some and a day of anticipation for those lucky souls who had no worries. Making his way down the wide staircase with its richly carved mahogany balustrades and its deeply tufted carpet stairway, Nikos entered the dining room. The room was empty with the exception of the housekeeper who wanted to know whether he would want his breakfast now or would he prefer to wait until the others arrived? He asked if it would be alright to just have a cup of coffee since he was not hungry. A short time later, Anastasia arrived. Her eyes were puffy and red (obviously she had not slept either). Anastasia still did not know the extent of things that took place between her sister and Gerhardt. Casting a questioning look at Nikos, she obviously wanted to know what, if anything had taken place. She had decided that nothing unthinkable could have happened. So for Anastasia, it was simply a slight affair of being stubborn and irresponsible on the parts of Antiope and Gerhardt, something a stern talking to would resolve.

“Did you talk to Gerhardt about his very poor behavior” she asked?

“Gerhardt responded, “He left early this morning to go back to the Academy.”

”But there was no need to do that; he acted foolishly the same as Antiope and I think a good, stern talking to will be enough to serve as a lesson.” Nikos turned his head away from Anastasia as though he did not want to look her in the eyes. Anastasia became a little alarmed and tremblingly asked, “There was not anything more that happened was there?” To avoid answering the question, Nikos took the letter and said, “Gerhardt left this letter for your father. I have no idea what is in it but Gerhardt obviously thought he had better leave the house.”

“But what could they have done to merit sending my father a letter-----Oh No, she screamed, nothing could have happened like that. Why they were in the middle of New York City, with people everywhere. Did he tell you anything or confess to you what had taken place? What will my father think! He will blame me of course for not watching my sister since he thinks I am the one who is more stable. He will also blame you for inviting Gerhardt as your friend to share my father’s hospitality. I am going to drag Antiope down here and I want you to

be present to see if her story is different from Gerhardt's. I want to get to the bottom of this nightmare before my father comes home tomorrow," Saying that, she angrily dashed off to bring her sister down to the dining room. Without knocking, Anastasia found Antiope lounging dreamy eyed in bed. Anastasia threw her sister's bathrobe at her and told her to get down to the dining room at once. Frightened but determined to stand on her own, she asked, "What's in the dining room and then sheepishly, "Is Gerhardt up already?" There was no need to explain the importance of her sister's demand and so she followed her to the dining room.

"Oh,"she said," I see Gerhardt's still asleep."

"Gerhardt is not asleep, the coward has beat a fast retreat. He abandoned you, you little fool. He abandoned you like a rat leaves a sinking ship."

"Why have you used such angry words with me. What right have you to talk to me this way. When our father gets home, I am going to tell him what you said to me." Antiope looked nervously at both Nikos and her sister.

" What do they know and why did Gerhardt leave? " She was really confused but had an idea they knew what had happened last night with Gerhardt.

"Gerhardt left this letter for father with Nikos and told Nikos to give the letter to father when he returns. I have not read the letter but Gerhardt also confessed to Nikos about everything that happened. How could you act like a she bitch and do your filthy things in an alley? I am going to give you the chance to explain how and why everything took place. Was it Gerhardt's fault or did you entice him to act like a boor?

At first, Antiope played innocent and said "Nothing happened last night. We just lost sight of you and decided to walk around the neighborhood and before we knew it, time disappeared. Besides, you have no right to interfere in my private life."

"Obviously, you didn't hear me when I told you he confessed everything to Nikos, and being the cowardly snake that he is, he ran out early this morning. What do you think of your gorgeous Gerhardt now? I am going to give you a chance to tell your side of the story since Nikos has already heard Gerhard's. What will you do if you are pregnant? We both know our father; he will probably have Uncle find a nice old man for you in Greece and with the money he will be offered, he will not refuse. And you can be sure it won't be in Athens but will be in some small village where the man's family will be watching everything you do. Don't think for one minute he will not disown you either; because once Father is deceived, he has no heart nor any pity for whomever deceives him. You know, I am only saying what would be the least that he will do. He might simply tell you to leave to find your own way in the streets. So, tell your side of the story and let's hear if it is like that coward's story who abandoned you."

Nikos hearing the harshness of the possible consequences if Antiope became pregnant spoke out. "Let me say that all this trouble came about because of me. If I had not invited Gerhardt to spend the summer vacation with us. I admit, that I never saw that part of Gerhardt and took him to be my friend because I thought he was different. I am afraid, the fault is all mine. Please listen to what I have to say before we go any further. I suggest we hold off giving Gerhardt's letter to your father until we know definitively that Antiope is pregnant. If it turns out that she is, I will tell your father that I was the one who took advantage of her and through my carelessness accept all responsibility. I shall propose that I will marry Antiope after I graduate and am at least 18 years old. I will tell him that at least the child will be Greek since we all know how important it is for his grandchild to carry Greek blood. Would you accept my suggestion Antiope? I know that you are in love with Gerhardt but sometimes we must make decisions that will not destroy our lives. So I suggest that we withhold Gerhardt's letter from your father until we know for sure that Antiope is not going to have a baby. And, if she is, my offer will hold. As you know, I have deep feelings for Antiope and had secretly hoped that she would someday be my wife.

Anastasia, holding the unopened letter in her hand looked first at Antiope and then at Nikos. She thought what a decent person he was. After all, she and Nikos were with the other two and had no way of knowing what would happen or that Antiope and Gerhardt would try to elude them. She then said to Antiope, "At least someone is honorable but it will be up to you to decide. What should we do with the letter? "

"Open it said Antiope, maybe he wants me to wait for him?"

"No", said Nikos. "It is best that we just leave the letter sealed so that no one knows what Gerhardt wrote. It will be his secret and his alone. I will take the unsealed letter and destroy it. And as far as lying to your father, I will tell him. You must never lie to your father. You must never start; you must always be open and respectful. I will tell your father that Gerhardt received a call from the Academy telling him that he was urgently needed to return to Austria immediately to be with his father who had had a serious accident."

Giving the letter to Nikos, Anastasia said, "Antiope does not really deserve having someone who is so honest and honorable, perhaps this will be a lesson for her."

That evening when Janos Xenides returned, he was met by his two daughters and Nikos. Noting that Gerhardt was not with them he asked, "Is Gerhardt well?" A lightening look at each other by the two girls and Nikos and then Nikos telling Mr. Xenides about the telephone call from the Academy and about Gerhardt's leaving early that morning.

"Poor boy", said Janos, "I hope that it is not too serious. And so, what have you all been up to during my two days away from home? Have you been visiting in the City? I am really tired" he said, "I think I will go to bed early." As Janos was mounting the stair to go to his

bedroom, he sighed aloud and in a half voice almost whispered to himself, he said “Poor boy, I hope everything is O.K.”

PART 4

It was almost 3 months after the petition was sent to the Municipality in Mani concerning the repair of the road to San Domenico that the civil engineer made his visit to the small village to inspect the proposed plan and to see if the plan was viable or whether it entail too much of an expenditure for the Town of Mani. After all, the village had existed for hundreds of years with no noticeable disadvantages for the 80 families who lived uncomplainingly in the village. But, times were changing. There were too many small, out of the way villages living free, i.e. without paying any taxes to an already stretched town. One could not ask for even a very small tax unless you were being benefitted by some service being performed by the Town. Besides which, the Town would not dare offer a permit if there was anything hazardous about the work to be done or that required an engineer’s knowledge.

In the interval, after the petition was made, Georgio organized the village men and said, “Let us start the shaping of the stepped stone base. With 3 large and heavy rings of iron, the men installed the rings at 20 meter intervals in the outcropping of stone which bordered the path. The iron rings were to be used to secure the ropes the men would tie around their bodies when they were working to prevent any serious accidents from occurring. Each man devoted about 3 hours per day to create the stone base upon which the thick stone wall would be built. In less than 2 months, a stepped horizontal base was built with none of the villagers feeling that he was being asked to sacrifice too much. There was pride as each man lowered himself on the dangerous edge of the hill and a sense of camaraderie was observed in their combined effort to give themselves an accessible road, the same as other villages had. After the engineer had inspected the site and the work that had been accomplished, he congratulated the men and told them that they would need to use “star drills” to install the iron rods necessary to reinforce the wall. On being asked who would be the foreman or head of the project, Georgio said that when the materials were delivered, they would have the man who was going to be foreman and who was presently living in Gytheio. The engineer calculated the number of “star drills” and sledge hammers, the iron rods, the cement they would need for mortar and the rolls of wire to tie the vertical and horizontal iron rods together. The materials would be arriving in about 2 weeks. In the meantime, the engineer suggested they start gathering flat stones for the walls. He applauded their use of the ropes as a safety factor and left feeling that the project was in good hands.

No sooner had the engineer left than Georgio indicated that he would go to tell Agostous that the materials were coming and that the village was waiting for his arrival. Georgio decided that Agostous would stay at his house since it would be unthinkable that he board with Maia Kokiniacos. Georgio thought to himself, Agostous had said that he would want to live in a

village such as San Domenico and he seemed to be attracted to Maia. They would make a valuable pair for the village and with Nikos becoming an officer in the Army, would give the village some importance. I must discuss this with my wife Adonia. She knows more about whether Maia would be accepted as a new wife to someone not of our village. Yes, he thought, that might be the solution for everything. What would he do here without a woman or even a new family. Maia is still young and strong and works very hard. Suddenly he felt a little foolish in thinking of himself as a matchmaker – better to leave that to the women.

Inconceivably, the materials did arrive in two weeks. Knowing the municipalities promises, the villagers had not expected that they would receive the materials for at least 3 months. Luckily Agostous arrived early hoping to convince Maia that he wanted to marry her and live in San Domenico. He had no preconceived ideas as to where to live since he had never lived in a village or a town. Besides, he was attracted to the simple life in San Domenico. He felt that he would enjoy living as the others in the village and thought that with his modest skills as a healer, he would be an important and needed part of the community. With the arrival of the engineer, both men went over the details of the required work such as the placing and depth of the steel rods on the stepped base, the height and the wiring of the horizontal rods with the vertical rods; the placement of “weepholes” so that whenever there was a severe rain, no water would be trapped below the new portion of the road. The engineer had calculated the amount of gravel needed after the wall was built and said that the gravel would be sent upon the finishing of the supporting wall. With the village elders meeting, they made a list of how many men would be working so that there would be as little disruption to the duties of the individual workers on their own farms. After the lists were made, all the villagers were brought together to make any adjustments to their working times, etc. A small barrel of wine was brought out and the entire village drank and celebrated the soon to be constructed road. During this time, Agostous lived with Georgio and Adonia. Encouraged by Georgio, his wife Adonia found reasons to invite Maia to their home. Georgio had talked with Adonia about how important it would be for the village to have someone like Agostous as a part of the village and both knew that Agostous and Maia favored each other. After dinner talks with Georgio revealed the sincerity of Agostous’ feeling towards Maia and with hers for him. He lamented that fact that Maia felt she could not marry and remain in the village; there would be too much talk and since she had no intention of leaving the village, she had determined that marriage would be out of the question.

With a half hidden smile, Georgio had mentioned that it would be very agreeable to have a man such as Agostous as part of the village and he realized that a man cannot simply live alone. He needs a woman and perhaps a family to give root to something permanent. Georgio slyly indicated that he and Adonia had noticed that Maia and Agostous seemed to get along well and Adonia had discussed the matter with most of the women that it would really be good for Maia and the village if the two could marry. I can only speak for myself, she said, but he healed my leg when it was broken and had not even charged them one drachma for his work and his visits afterwards to make sure I had no infection. And we all owe our gratitude to Agostous for

suggesting that we build the new road extension and for his help in writing the municipality in Mani to donate all the materials. Sure, we have given our sweat in labor but even that does not seem to interfere with our own duties. I believe the two want to marry but Maia is afraid that the village would not support her marriage. Georgio, my husband has said that he is convinced that such a marriage would be good for our village that he had offered to give the bride away at the church since she had only her son Nikos as a relative. I think that you all should tell the others that we need Agostous in our village and that my husband and I are encouraging the marriage.

When word went out that Georgio, the village head and leader and his wife Adonia were encouraging the wedding of Agostous and Maia, few criticisms were heard. Look at how much Agostous had already contributed to their village and never once did he ask for pay. His treating of Adonia when she broke her leg was successful and even though he is not a licensed doctor, his years as an assistant to the ship's doctor gave him a great deal of experience and he was able to heal Adonia and she does not even have a limp when she walks.

When Adonia invited both Maia and Agostous to dinner on a Sunday, Maia thought it odd since she had never really been invited to have dinner. Invitations were given when a family was introducing a new couple for an impending wedding or when there was a funeral. It was Georgio, who after clearing his throat spoke first.

"First I would like to ask a few personal questions to you both. I hope you will not think that I am interfering in your lives but our village is very grateful to Agostous for the generous amount of time he has given us without asking for any fee. It is my understanding, after talking privately with you, that you would like to make your home with us in San Domenico and that you would like to marry and perhaps have a family. Agostous, please tell me plainly whether you would want to spend your life with us. I have taken it upon myself to ask if there would be any disagreement to your marrying and living here with our villagers and they overwhelmingly said they would welcome you and a wife. Would you want that"?

Looking at Maia, Agostous said in a firm voice, "Yes I would but only with a woman that I have grown to love and respect; Maia Kokiniakos, that is if she will have me."

"If the village would accept me, I would, with all my heart marry Agostous. He is kind and gentle and I believe he loves my son Nikos. From the letters I have received from Nikos, there is not one that doesn't ask about Agostous and how wonderful it was to be with him".

"Again, I am only asking Maia, but I would be proud and honored if you would allow me to give you away at the church. I know you have only Nikos so in one way, your family and mine would become as one. One other thing, to be sure that the entire village would attend your wedding, I would like to suggest that your wedding celebration be held at the same time as we celebrate the finishing of our new road, after all we owe the new road to Agostous".

Word spread to all 80 families about the double celebration and the women met to suggest that everyone contribute to the double feast. One person could not possibly provide for everyone and so there were plans being made about everything from tables and benches, fires to roast lambs and goats, breads that were special and of course olive oils and wine with each man anxious to show off his finest wines to the others. There was even talk of sacrificing a bull; Agostous offered to pay for it with the money he had received when he was discharged by the ship's owners as was the customs in the ancient traditions to sanctify and celebrate both events. With so many people expected to attend, it was thought that the sacrifice of the bull would satisfy everyone as to commemorating the events and be a point to recall in the years ahead. The wedding would take place in about 3 months or so when it was calculated that the new road would be finished. There was a buzz of excitement not simply for the coming events but also because it would be a festival; a rare happening for the village.

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PART 5

Each morning, an anxious Anastasia and Nikos waited to see if Antiope had had the hoped for period. Antiope, knowing of their concern put an innocent, unconcerned face on and sat at her place at the table without commenting or looking in the least bit concerned or worried.

"Is everything alright asked Anastasia", looking directly and questioningly into Antiope's eyes? Antiope's eyes looked back in an innocent uncomprehending way at her sister as if to say, "What are you asking me about"? Antiope would then pour herself some coffee and sweetly ask, "Did anything come in the mail for me?" Anastasia and Nikos, realizing that nothing had happened sat back and waited for some good news from Antiope. In reality, Antiope, had been very concerned after hearing Anastasia's explanation of what her father might do and this added stress brought on her period. But, she thought, "let them suffer a little. It serves them right since they think nothing of interfering in my personal life." Still, she felt disappointed that Gerhardt had not gotten in touch with her and that he indeed did abandon her. "What if I was pregnant, would he have just disappeared and forgotten me to deal with raising our child?" Including the fear about what her father's reaction would be, she felt greatly disillusioned and disappointed in Gerhardt. Antiope would withhold any information to the others until she felt sure they had suffered enough, or until the waiting period for her period was over. Would Nikos take it upon himself to talk to my father about his being to blame for everything? No, she would have to tell them that she had just had her period and that all was well – but they did have to suffer a little first.

Since Janos's return, he was quite nervous and testy. He spent most of his day in his home office either writing letters or making and receiving phone calls. He told everyone that he was not to be disturbed for any reason; the only exception was that he was expecting an important visit and was to be called at once if his visitor arrived. It was all so mysterious since no one could remember his being so abrupt in the past.

One day, quite by accident, the door to her father's office was slightly ajar and she observed an envelope passing between her father and Nikos. She turned white with fright. Nikos had said that he would not give Gerhardt's letter to her father. She returned to her room and then knocked at Anastasia's door to consult with her sister.

"Why has Nikos broken his word by giving father Gerhardt's letter; He promised he would not if everything was alright;?" "

"I know nothing about his giving father the letter. He said nothing to me".

They both noted that their father seemed highly disturbed and had Nikos sitting in his office for a long time. There were no raised voices but then, the door was closed. Both girls casually passed their father's office hoping to hear what was being said but it seemed that Janos was speaking almost conspiratorially and Nikos was only heard to be saying "yes" to whatever was being asked of him. When a slightly whitened Nikos finally emerged from Janos's office, he walked straight to his room and locked the door.

Unbeknownst to all was that Janos's expected visitor was hired to be a courier for Janos and a group of prosperous Greek group that were raising large amounts of money to be sent to Greece for the purchase of arms for an insurrectionist, conservative faction who were trying to offset the liberal tendencies that the country was sliding into. With the absence of the courier for reasons unknown, the plan was to be enacted within the next few days. Passage on a steamer was bought and everything was set for the courier to carry certain bank notes to a receiver in Greece. Almost panicking, Janos decided to engage Nikos to take the place of the absent courier. In his closed office talks, he confided that Nikos' replacing the other courier would mean that he would be unable to return to school this year but that everything would be as it was the following year.

"This is the time to show your Greek courage and to doing something that is vital for our country". Nikos was stunned by the responsibilities being asked of him but without even thinking a moment if there were dangers involved, he accepted with a sense of pride. As far as politics was concerned, Nikos had neither the understanding of the aims of the Greek Liberals nor of the aims of the Conservatives. He only knew the Janos Xenides had helped him because Nikos wanted to follow the way of the Spartan and that was certainly conservative.

The letter Antiope saw being passed between them was a letter of introduction that Nikos was to deliver to the agent in Athens explaining the switch in couriers.

The girls were still unaware and would know nothing of Nikos' mission. When they were told that evening at supper that Nikos would be returning home to Greece, they both imagined his leaving as part of their fathers wrath. The strange thing was that if Nikos was being sent back to Greece, the only reason they could think was the result of the Gerhardt problem. Surprisingly, Janos did not speak in any manner that could be interpreted as punishment for the girls. Nikos was absolutely silent when they asked about what had taken place with their father or why he had switched his word and gave Gerhardt's letter to Janos. It was all too incomprehensible for them. Not being given any restrictions or punishments, they steered clear of Janos, just in case.

In a few days time, Nikos was boarding the steamer that would take him to Athens where he was to be met by Demetrius Ionis, a person who was very high within the Conservative faction. After ascertaining that the man was Demetrius, Nikos handed over the sealed envelope that he was instructed to deliver and waited for instructions as to what he was to do or where he was to go. The only thing that Janos Xenides told him was that the Conservative leader would give him his next instructions.

It was now 1926. There were strange pulses in the market and even though the market was thriving, Janos felt ominous signs occurring in the economy. He could not put his finger on anything specific but there were light fluctuations in the real estate market. Were others sensing something unusual too? He thought, I am going to follow my instincts and start to sell as much of my assets as possible and cut my expenses. While he did not have Nikos only in mind, it passed over his thinking that he would have to curtail certain expenses like the \$41,000 tuition he would be paying Nikos and then the much greater expense if he sent Nikos for a University degree. When he made the proposal, everything was looking great and he felt optimistic. Also, he would have to shelve his nationalistic plans for helping the Conservatives overthrow the Liberals. If what he felt was going to happen, it would affect not only the United States but also the entire world. Janos did not know it but he was unconsciously projecting the upcoming Great Depression. He did not want to disappoint Nikos but he felt he had no choice. In his letter to Greece, he asked that Nikos be directed to the Commandant involved with the actual insurrectionists with the idea that he learn about warfare by being involved directly in it. At least he will be under the Commandant's care and will learn the discipline of being in the field. Janos was to suffer much on making this decision since the innocent enthusiasm of Nikos was so honest. When his daughters questioned him about Nikos and when he would be returning to go to school, Janos always skirted the question and said, "We will have to see". Janos felt in his bones that something calamitous was in the winds.

PART 6

At long last, the steamer docked in Athens. The port was vast and the activity was overwhelmingly confusing in Nikos' mind. On the voyage to Greece, he remembered how pleasant it was to have Agostous as his friend. He remembered Agostous' patience in explaining the mysteries of the ship and how pleasant it was to have a companion. On this return trip, he was completely alone and was following Janos' instructions to talk to no one nor to remain in sight too much. Nikos only knew that whatever he was delivering must be extremely important and so he followed Janos' instructions to the letter.

As he walked down the gangplank, there were hundreds of people waiting to welcome their loved ones and he scanned from side to side to see if anyone was Demetrius Ionis. When he reached the bottom of the gangplank, a rather jovial man in his 50's was waiting. Demetrius ionis obviously knew Nikos without introductions for he took the small piece of luggage and said, "I have a car waiting". Demetrius' pleasant face, his reddened cheeks and his slight corpulence gave him the aspect of being a favorite uncle meeting his nephew after a trip to America. Demetrius was dressed in a tan sport jacket with an unbuttoned sport shirt and tan slacks. He could have been your average tourist. In his hand, he had a camera that looked like he was ready to take pictures.

In the car being driven by a small, dark Greek man with oily hair combed straight back, Nikos could smell the abundant hair tonic that was used. He also noticed, that unlike Demetrius, the man was sweating profusely. Demetrius turned to Nikos and said, "I believe you have an envelope for me".

Reaching into his pocket, Nikos gave Demetrius the envelope which he immediately started to read while turning is back to Nikos. Demetrius read the contents of the letter; glanced at Nikos and reread the letter again. Turning to face Nikos again, he said, come, let us have a lovely lunch; I am sure the food they served on board left something to be desired. "

"Where will I be staying," asked Nikos. I was just told to deliver the letter and nothing else."

"Did you receive some money to pay for your hotel and food?"

"Yes, Mr. Xenides gave me money. Do you have any idea when I am to return to America?"

"There have been some changes in plan, but later today, I will have someone drive you to meet Chrystos, our Commandant in the field. Another thing, you must never mention Mr. Xenides by name to anyone. His name must disappear from your mind. It is very important that you understand that."

“I understand, Nikos said. Does Chrystos have a last name”?

“No, everyone knows him just as Chrystos. Don’t worry, Chrystos will take care of you. I will write him a letter that you are to give to him when you arrive at the camp.”

For the next 6 hours, Nikos was driven by the man with the strong hair tonic. He had stopped sweating but he did not speak or ask questions except to ask if Nikos had to pee. It was already dark when they reached the camp. The camp was located in an isolated part of the country and was surrounded by mountainous desert with pockets of twisted olive trees that were old and obviously no longer being cared for. Overhead, the sky had darkened and the stars appeared like points of cold light. On the ground, small campfires burned orange in contrast to the blue light from the stars. A bouzouki was being played quietly so that it’s 8 strings vibrated almost as though the player was playing with half closed eyes thinking of some other time and some other place. The music was sad but lively and did not have the exuberance of a wedding performance or some other pleasant event. The sound of the instrument, notes arcing out from the instruments like the bright sparks from a burning log and then just as quickly, being absorbed by the blackness of the night. These impressions would always remain in Nikos’ mind and memory as the beginning of his life in camp. The small fires, built with pine and dead olive branches had a strange fragrance almost like Retsina wine. The smoke lingered like horizontal layers of fog and he remembered Janos Xenides saying one time at dinner that Retsina wine was made in the time of Homer.

When Nikos was brought to Chrystos’s tent, he was met by eyes that were black as olives. The face from which the eyes peered was dark and had the lines of Chrystos’ screwing up his face in the harsh sunlight. When he stopped screwing up his face, the lines were reddish white. Black curly hair that had not been cut for a long while hid ears and his and his skin looked very oily. He had the aspect of someone who is sure of his command and who could inspire confidence in those who followed him. Sitting cross legged in front of the fire, Nikos could not tell whether the man was short or tall, but the certainty of himself made him appear 3 meters tall. Reading the note from Demetrius, he looked closely at this young man who had tried to enlist and be a soldier when he was seven. Spotting the dagger, he said, “That is a fine dagger you have, where did you get it”?

Nikos told him it was a present from the recruiting officer, given to him when he tried to enlist. “I have always wanted to be a soldier like my ancestors, the Spartans.”

Chrystos pulled no punches. “Do you know that you were assigned to me to be part of our struggle to win our cause”?

“Do you mean to join with your men and fight?”

“Well maybe not to fight, not until you are trained but I have decided that you will go with me wherever I go. Sometimes it is even in battle. Tell me, do you have a family living in Greece”?

“My mother is living in San Domenico. It’s a tiny village near Gytheio, there are only 80 families, but I am going to school in New York, (He was careful not to use Mr. Xenides’ name) and I was going to be going to a military school. Then I was chosen to be a courier when the other courier did not show up.”

“What did you learn in military school, did you learn to shoot a rifle?”

“No, my first year I went to learn to speak English. I am to start my real military school when I go back to America.”

“If I were to tell you that you were not going to be able to go back to America, would that make you feel bad?”

“Not if it meant I could stay and fight with you and your men”.

“Well, you must be tired after your long trip on the ship and then in the car from Athens. For tonight, we will set you up in my tent and then tomorrow, we will assign you a tent.”

“But I am not at all tired or sleepy. I can go to sleep later” he said as his chin rested on his chest and he was sleeping soundly. Chrystos called one of his men and told him to bring a mattress and a blanket and to put the boy to sleep.

On the following morning, Nikos was excited and curious. So this was a soldiers camp he thought. I am going to walk around; it seems no one is up yet. Very shortly after, he started to smell the wood smoke of the small fires being built to cook breakfast. Mostly, they had coffee and bread with a piece of dry sausage. Nikos was starved, he fell asleep before he could eat last night and decided to return to Chrystos’ tent. Chrystos’ orderly was readying the coffee for breakfast and the bread. He asked Nikos, “Are you hungry? I have some lentils and sausage from last night and some bread and coffee. Chrystos will be back soon and he will tell you what to do. In the meantime, sit outside and I will give you your breakfast.”

Most of the men were still resting since they did most of their fighting in the night. The camp was quiet except for some coughing and spitting. A huge tank of water was on one side and the men came over with their own small basins to wash and prepare for the day. Today, there was to be a meeting in which Chrystos would explain their mission for that night. Chrystos had planned a raid on a Liberal meeting place deep in the woods and away from everything else. Nikos wondered he would be allowed to go and decided he would go back to Chrystos’ tent to see if he had been assigned a place to sleep and to see what plans they had for him.

Late that afternoon, the troops had dined early and were relaxing in front of the small fires they built to either warm up or to simply gather together. It was not good to be alone before a battle and so the camaraderie gave them a little more courage since they were all going into battle. Nikos sat cross legged in front of the fire where the man with the Bouzouki was playing. He had never heard much music when he lived with his mother and in New York, Janos' daughters only listened to the popular music of the day. As he sat in front of the fire, the music had the affect of mesmerizing him and his thoughts were of his home, his mother and the village and far from where he was at the moment. So deep in memories was he that he did not see the huge man who was approaching. The man's name was Anatoly and he was the camp's biggest bully. When Nikos looked up at this mass of a man, his first reaction was that he must be at least 2 meters tall. He was huge and his chest grew out of his waist like a giant appendage that was foreign to the waist below. His arms were long and hairy and Nikos instantly thought of the apes he had seen at the Zoo in New York. His face was red from exposure to the sun and had an asymmetric aspect because he had only two teeth, both of which were on the left side of his mouth. Swaggering toward the fire, his pig eyes noted every man and then suddenly lighted on Nikos. Nikos could feel that this man was coming over to him and wondered how he should react towards him since there was a menacing strut and a threatening look in his eyes. Moving towards the fire where Nikos was sitting, Anatoly deliberately stepped on Nikos' ankles and growled, "When did we start having kindergarten children with us." He then took hold of Nikos' ear and started pulling him away from the fire. "You are in my place at the fire" and then noticed the dagger Nikos was wearing on his waist. "That's a fine dagger, I think I can use that". Pulling Nikos' ear and reaching for the dagger at the same time he was surprised to see Nikos withdraw the dagger and suddenly felt the dagger as it stabbed into his thigh. He let out a herculean roar and fell down to grab the wounded leg. Nikos, jumped up and started kicking him in the face and on his head until Anatoly had to use his hands to ward off the kicks. The loud bellow of pain that came from Anatoly brought everyone to the fire including Chrystos to see what was happening. Chrystos seeing Anatoly on the ground being kicked savagely by Nikos grabbed the boy's arms and flung him back. He roared,

"What is going on here? We have a raid to make tonight and I find you fighting. What happened and who started the fight?"

Nikos spoke up. We were all sitting around the fire except him he said, looking at Anatoly. When he came, he looked at me and said "When did we start having Kindergarten children with us". Then he came over to me and stepped hard on my ankles and pulled me up by the ear saying, "you're sitting in my place." Then when he saw my dagger he said, "I think I can use that dagger". That's when I pulled the dagger out and stabbed him in the leg. After he fell on the ground holding his leg, I started kicking him in the head and the face. Then you came and stopped the fight".

Chrystos looked at Anatoly and said, "You let a small boy beat you up like that"?

Anatoly, rubbing his head and his face said, “that’s no mere boy, he is like stinging wasp. Offering his hand in friendship Anatoly said, “that’s the type of man I want to back me up. He licked me fair and square and he’s the type of man I want at my side when we do battle.”

Looking at Anatoly, Chrystos said, “will you be able to go with us on the raid tonight? With your stab wound? I had better let you be our backup and you can take Nikos with you, he will have to start sometime”. Both Nikos and Anatoly looked at each other and Anatoly said, “I would be proud to have a brother soldier like Nikos at my side.” Nikos beamed.

Chrystos said to Nikos, “Go with Anatoly, he is one of our best fighters although it didn’t look like it tonight. Anatoly will show you what we must do and pay strict attention to Anatoly, that’s an order” Placing his huge hand on Nikos’ shoulder, both Anatoly and Nikos went off to talk with Anatoly rubbing his head where Nikos had kicked him so hard. A strong friendship was to evolve between the young boy and the big brute of a man. Everywhere Anatoly went, he made sure that Nikos was at his side so that he could guide him and make him aware of the dangers that loomed everywhere.

That night as the men prepared for the raid, Anatoly said, “I will teach you to shoot a rifle tomorrow but tonight I want to show you how to throw a grenade he said it is not hard but it is dangerous especially if you don’t pay attention. “

Removing a grenade from his pack, he explained the different parts; the pin and the handle which must be held until the grenade is to be thrown and then the necessity of the hasty retreat so that one is not caught in the explosive force of the grenade. Taking the grenade in his hand, he showed Nikos how to pull the pin and how to keep his hand on the handle. He then said that if you didn’t want to explode the grenade, you could always put the pin back in and the grenade would not explode . Anatoly gave Nikos the grenade and told him to feel the weight. Then he said, when you throw a grenade, you must be sure that the grenade can reach its target. If you are in the woods, sometimes the branches prevent you from reaching your target and the grenade falls short. Then you are in real trouble for it is only a matter of seconds before the grenade explodes. So, you must always be aware of your position in relation to that of the target. You cannot miscalculate or misjudge because the grenade will get you and not your enemy.” After having Nikos pull out the pin and then reinsert it a number of times, he said, “Always remember what I said and the grenade will be your weapon and not the enemy’s weapon against you.”

That night, the 8 man team walked silently in single file . There was no moonlight and so they were veritably invisible to the “Liberal Meeting Hall”. Within the meeting place, information had been passed to Chrysto that there was to be some high ranking generals and strategists and destroying the men would give a great deal of help to the Conservatives. When they reached the site of the meeting place, Chrystos had his men placed in strategic sites so that they could see how many guards would be patrolling the area. The men sat quietly as Chrystos

looked at the plans of the meeting hall; what would be their escape route back to their base and to ascertain what rifles the enemy was using. In their dealings with England, the Liberals had requested arms. These rifles were sure to be the Lee-Enfield .303 which was capable of firing 12 shots/minute. An excellent rifle but it had the disadvantage of taking too much time to reload, which was a point in Chrystos' favor, Chrystos had the Austro-Hungarian Steyr-Mannlicher M95 rifles which were superior in fire power and could be reloaded faster than the Lee-Enfield. The operation would have to be a lightning strike with no time to lose. His men would have to act with the utmost speed and rendezvous in the area they had agreed to and anyone wounded would unfortunately be captured by the enemy. It was a difficult decision but all the men agreed before hand that for the mission to succeed, there would be no alternative. The fastest man had been assigned to throw the grenades through the only window in the meeting room. He was to creep up to the window and remain below and out of site until the window where he would throw the grenade could be fired upon and broken. Four sharpshooters would knock out the window just to be sure that the grenade could be thrown clear. As the grenadier readied himself under the window, Chrystos waited until he received the signal to destroy the window. Just at that point, the grenadier was spotted; he signaled for the window to be blown up but had no time to throw the grenades. In a flash, Chrystos summoned Nikos who was undoubtedly the fastest person there to throw grenades into the window while the rest of their force kept the enemy at bay. He hurriedly placed 4 grenades (two in each hand in Nikos' hand with the pins already pulled. Telling him to hold on to the handles tightly until he could throw the 4 grenade into the window and run for all he was worth to where they were to rendezvous.

Taking Nikos by the shoulder he said, "This will be your baptism of fire", I know you are brave and if you are able to complete this mission, you will have served Greece in the most honorable way there is. God bless you my son and give Greece the glory it deserves".

Telling his men to keep firing to cover Nikos, he sent the boy running for all he was worth toward the open window. Throwing first the one hand's grenades, he promptly threw the second set of grenades and ran towards the place he was instructed to run. There was an enormous explosion and confusion and panic from the enemy troops and Nikos was able to make his escape but not before a piece of glass shrapnel sliced off two of his fingers. The enemy meeting hall was completely demolished but there was no way of knowing which of the strategists was killed. In the meantime Anatoly wrapped Nikos's hand to keep the blood from flowing and all escaped without mishap except for Nikos.

Back at their campsite, Chrystos was able to send a courier to deliver the news and to wait until he could be told which of the officials was killed in the bombing. When the news came back that all of the high officials were killed, there was great jubilation at the base. Nikos was the hero and despite the loss of two fingers, he felt he was fulfilling his dreams of being a soldier. Everyone in the camp applauded him and congratulated him on his skill and courage. Anatoly was proudest of all since he had taken young Nikos under his wing. The next morning, the camp moved to another location for there would sure to be forces looking for them.

Positioned in their new camp, there were no immediate plans for Chrystos. The men settled onto doing some training but in general were not being asked to prepare for any operation.

PART 7

The truth was that there were darkening clouds passing over the world. Janos had been right, there was a tightening of business and the economies of most of the world was being affected. Janos Xenides was struggling to remain in business. His generous response in funding the Conservatives stopped completely (sending Nikos to school was now out of the question) and the feuding between the Liberals and the Conservatives was becoming less important since everything was going more to the Conservative thinking. A meeting of the ways seemed to be taking place and the country was interested more in remaining solvent. With no supplies being sent, the Conservatives were asked to hide their weapons and to terminate operations against each other. With no funding, the groups of soldiers disbanded; some going home, others searching for regiments that could still operate. The fight, for the present At least was over.

Nikos and his now inseparable friend Anatoly had decided to travel north. They worked for two years taking care of a large olive plantation pruning trees, gathering olives and preparing them for shipment to other countries. When the workers had finished their jobs, the owners had to let them go since they could no longer afford to hire help.

Nikos had decided to see his mother and her new husband, Agostous. They had been married a little over two years and there were already two children. Nikos, understanding the hardships, did not want to burden his family since they were probably living a subsistence type of life, still, he wanted to warmly embrace Agostous as his new father and to meet his two new step-brothers. Nikos told Anatoly about his wishing to see his mother but also said, we cannot stay longer than two days because we would be putting them to expenses that I am sure they cannot afford.

When they finally arrived at San Domenico, Nikos was surprised to see the village so changed. He knew that they were widening the main road but had no idea how much prosperity it brought the village. There was a now a bus stop since a bus could now be driven through the village and there was a small restaurant at the bus stop. A restaurant; he could not have imagined that such a thing could exist. There were also several new houses that had been constructed all because the road could now connect to other villages and cities. When he arrived at his mother's house, the house in which he was born and where he spent his childhood, he was even more astonished. Agostous, with the arrival of the two children had added two new rooms and had even extended the growing fields that had been too rock strewn to plant. He even introduced a minor system of irrigation using the runoff from the spring to water his crops. With

the bounty that Nature provides, he was able to sell the extra produce and to bring in drachmas. Normally, the buying and selling that took place in the village was by barter. Agostous had enlarged the spring house and so more products could be kept for a longer time.

Maia had not known that Nikos would be visiting them and when she saw two men coming down the road to her house, one giant of a man and the other a young man, she strained to make out who it was. In one sense, it was the same scene that was repeating itself when Agostous first came to return the bible. Calling Agostous, she said, "there are two men coming down our road. I wonder what they want? I hope there is no bad news about Nikos". As the two men approached, she suddenly could make out the familiar gait of Nikos. Handing her two babies to Agostous, he ran to meet her son and his companion. Her face was radiant with joy and she was crying openly. About 10 meters from her son, she let out an anguished, joyous cry and rushed to him. She fell on her knees with her arms tightly hugging his waist and simply said over and over, Nikos, Nikos, Nikos. Lifting his mother to her feet and feeling a little embarrassed at her greeting, he kissed her wet cheeks and noticed that his own cheeks were wet with tears. With their arms around each other they walked towards the house to greet Agostous and his two step brothers. She could not get over how tall he had grown and when her eyes fell upon his hand where he had lost the two fingers she winced but at least he was with her again. The meeting with Agostous was warm and the recall of how wonderful and caring Agostous had been with him, he really felt overjoyed. By this time, his mother's two arms were filled with his new baby brothers. He kissed them gently and took one of them when the child started to cry at be held by someone that was not recognizable.

Turning towards Anatoly, he said with great pride, "This is my best friend Anatoly. We have been in the war together and after that stopped, we have been working in an olive farm taking care of the trees and harvesting the olives. But, as everything has bad for the country, we have decided to try to work on board a ship, like Agostous did for so many years."

"Stay here," his mother said. With your help, we can produce so much more and earn drachmas."

"Thank you mother, but I am now grown and I must make my own way. With Anatoly as my friend, we can find a new life. Besides, you now have a new life and a new family and by the look of you, you are very happy. I have never known you to smile so much and be so enthusiastic before and I am sure it is all due to my new father, Agostous". Maia moved next to Agostous and smiled lovingly into his face. She had never shown such open affection and Nikos was sure that her life was now fulfilled and happy.

"You both must be tired and thirsty after your trip. Come, sit down and drink some cool wine with us. We don't drink wine in the daytime but this is a real occasion. Agostous, why don't you show Nikos the spring house and the new fields and the new rooms you built. I will sit with Anatoly so you two can be together for a little while. So Anatoly, please come sit on the

porch and have some wine.” Maia had wanted Nikos to be alone with Agostous but she also wanted to talk to Anatoly about her son and about how he lost his fingers. She could see that Anatoly was older than Nikos and wanted to express her thanks for keeping Nikos on a straight path. Nikos was impressionable and had not had the time in years to take care of himself. “How did he lose his fingers”, she wanted to know. Anatoly told her of Nikos’ bravery and he even told her of his first encounter with Nikos where he beat me fairly – I guess I was sort of a bully, but I will now trust Nikos with my life and I would give up mine to keep him protected.” A warm feeling glowed from Maia and she placed her hand over Anatoly’s in thanks and said, “God bless you for your kindness”.

“Have you already gotten a job as seaman on a steamer”?

“No, not yet but that is our plan. If that fails, we will think of something else.”

“Do you have a family” she asked and Anatoly told her that he never knew his parents and that he was raised by an elderly woman who was now dead. “That was the reason I joined the fighting forces, at least I would have a place to sleep and food to eat. It is not a bad life, but it does become lonely sometimes.”

“Maybe we should find you a nice wife to be at your side!”

“Oh no” he said, “first of all I am too ugly for any woman to have me but most of all, I do not feel that I could not stay in any one place too long”.

Meanwhile, Agostous and Nikos talked and Nikos told him of all that had transpired in New York; about Anastasia and Antiope and about the problem with Gerhardt and also told him about Janos had to send him to Greece to deliver the bank notes when the original courier did not show up and finally about his being sent to fight with Chrystos and how he lost his fingers.

“And now, you want to become a seaman. I know I spent some of my best years as a seaman and felt a sense of security in knowing where my meals and my bed were. But tell me, is there any other dream you have”? I remember your telling me that you wanted to be a soldier and to fight more than anything else. You have now seen what it is like to be in war and also how dangerous it could be, do you still want to be a soldier”?

“I think now that I must take time to see more of the world. The world is more than living in a village but then, maybe that is the ideal life after all. I just feel that I must find more experience and then decide what I want to do”.

“I think that is wise. We can’t know what we want until we have the possibility of choosing”.

Nikos said, “I did not think the village would change so much, Is it all because of the opening of the road?”

“I think it was mostly that but also, I think the villagers wanted to move out of the past and take advantage of the opportunities that are presenting themselves now. Even though the economic situation is difficult, it is less difficult if people want to see improvement. This is the first time that the people are earning drachmas and do not have to rely on bartering. With real money, they can buy things that were denied to them for hundreds of years and this makes them work harder.”

“Have you made any contacts with ship owners to get a job on the steamers? If you like, I could write to the Captain of the ship I was on and could at least give you a point at which to start. Would you like me to write a letter for you? I do not know Anatoly but I am sure if you chose him to be your friend, he must be a good man.”

“Yes, we would both appreciate that. I have been with Anatoly since we left the Army and we get on really well and with Anatoly being so big, no one ever tries to take advantage of us because we are strangers. Anatoly has no family and was raised by an elderly woman so that is the only family he had, but because she died, he is left alone. I understand Anatoly, and we get along real well but he doesn’t have too many other friends because he feels that people reject him and he reacts by being aggressive with them and bullying them. He feels that as long as they don’t like him, he will give them real reasons to dislike him. That makes him even more alone since no one wants to be friends with someone who might suddenly bully you. It is sort of complicated but I understand him and so we are great friends.”

After Nikos and Anatoly were there 2 days, Nikos told his other and Agostous that they were going to Gytheio now that they had the letter Agostous wrote and try their luck there. Both also realized that by being guests, his parents had to act as hosts which kept them from their work and strained their food supply since Anatoly could eat large quantities of food. Maia gave them three loaves of bread, some dried sausages, some olives and a small bottle of olive oil so that they could eat the bread dipped in olive oil and a small bottle of their wine. She also hardboiled some eggs since the spring house permitted them to keep some foods much longer. With their little cache of foods, the two left and Maia asked Nikos to please write so they could keep in touch. When the two felt like a little something to eat, Nikos found a small piece of cloth that was wrapping some drachmas. He showed Anatoly and said “they do not have enough for themselves and still, she gave me some money”.

“She is a good woman and a wonderful mother; you are a lucky son.”

The trip to Gytheio was without events but they decided to walk and save the drachmas for when they might really need them. Besides, they had had two days of rest and sufficient food to last them a while. Both were quiet and Anatoly wanted to permit Nikos to have his recollections of his visit home. Walking South, the sun started to color the Western horizon.

Shades of lavender and purple mixed with the black sky gave a comforting light to the cooling air. Dogs barked on the horizons when they neared a dwelling and the earth appeared to be giving a great sigh of relief to welcome the darkness and the peace the darkness brought with it .

The huge ship was in its berth and the area was bright with lights. Men and horses were carrying wagons of merchandize and trade goods to the holds where large derricks lifted the flats of cargo to the awaiting large holes of the hatches. The first cool winds were starting to be felt and the stevedores were in sweaters and short jackets. Arriving at the fenced entrance to the ship, Nikos approached the guard and asked when he could see the Captain.

“The Captain won’t be here until tomorrow morning. Why do you want to see the Captain?” Nikos brought out the letter Agostous had written and showed it to the guard. Noticing the Agostous’ signature, he smiled brightly, “So you are a friend of Agostous? What is he doing now, and where is he living”?

“Actually”, said Nikos, “He is my stepfather, he married my mother and they have two little boys”. He is living in San Domenico and farming. Do you think that we could sleep in one of the cargo storage area until tomorrow”?

“Ordinarily, I would say no but since you are Agostous’ son and are looking for a berth on our steamer, I will allow you. There is even a part of this storage area that has just had a load of fresh straw. We use the straw when we have cargo that is delicate so as not to have the cargo shift and break something. There is also a toilet with a shower nearby that the stevedores use so you can use that. The Captain usually come here at about 5:00 AM so be sure you are up and waiting outside the gate here just before the Captain arrives.”

They left the guard with him exclaiming to himself in a amused way, “Married and with two children already. He’s not losing any time. The boys’ will be pleased to hear about Agostous after all this time. A farmer, Hah.”

The new hay was sweet and fresh. It was slightly damp from just being cut but you could just lie back, a piece of sweet hay in your mouth and fall off as innocent as a baby. After their walk from San Domenico, no hotel could be more comfortable.

Dawn is an anonymous entity. One could never know whether the day would be fair or whether rainy breezes would make themselves known. It was just before sunup when the sun, still invisible was sending its warming rays to the atmosphere. The warming of the sun’s rays on the upper air warmed it making it rise and which resulted in cooler air sweeping in to replace it. Those early morning gusts were always the coldest.

The Captain arrived promptly at 5:00 AM and was greeted by the guard who reported that all was well and in order. Then he said, “Captain, these men have a letter for you”.

Taking the letter, the Captain first read the signature, then he looked up in surprise and said, "My old friend Agostous. It says here that you are now his step son."

"Maybe you don't remember Captain but I sailed on your ship when I was going to New York a few years ago. You let Agostous take me to the bridge to see the controls and how you sailed the ship".

Why yes," the Captain responded, you were the boy who asked all the questions. So, you want to become a sailor. What have you been doing?"

"Well Sir, "he responded, I stayed one year in New York and went to a military school to learn to be a soldier. Unfortunately, I had to return to Greece where I went to fight with the Conservatives in the North. And now, with the war over, I want to go to sea."

"Noticing the two fingers missing on his hand, he asked, "Did you lose those fingers fighting"?

It was then that Anatoly spoke up and told of the heroism shown by Nikos when they were wiping out a Liberal meeting place of high officials while under the leadership of Chrystos, the legendary leader of the Insurrectionists. He told of how their squad of eight men were discovered and how Nikos used grenades to bomb the meeting place with the result of killing important members of the Liberals. It was after that the politicians started to be concerned about the world's economic situation that we were furloughed and had to return to civilian life.

"Oh yes, now I remember, you were the 7 year old boy who wanted to enlist in the Army and to train like the Spartans. It was in all the newspapers. So Agostous is now your step father!" What is Agostous doing now?"

"He and my mother have a farm in San Domenico and have two children."

"Did Agostous send you to me"?

"No Sir, my friend Anatoly and I went to visit them and we told him that we were going to try to find a job as seaman . It was then that Agostous offered to write a letter to you to see if you might be able to hire us or suggest something for us. My friend, Anatoly is very strong as you can see. I am not so strong but I will work hard."

"I can certainly use Anatoly as a seaman and maybe I can use you on the bridge with me. I will send the Quartermaster your names and he will tell the guard when he can see you. In the meantime, we will find some quarters for you both and you can eat in our mess."

Anatoly looked at Nikos in a strange way, "Mess"! what kind of a place is that. But Nikos said, "they call the dining room the mess but it is not really such a mess, only a name." The Captain only smiled, it had been a long time since he confronted such innocence. "So wait

here until the Quartermaster comes for you and then looking at Anatoly in the eye, he said “and I expect you to not make any trouble with the others”

“Oh no Sir, we won’t be any trouble at all, “ both Anatoly and Nikos said at the same time.

PART 8

For the first few years, working on the ship was really delightful. Recalling their days in the Army and remembering some of the hardships such as carrying the heavy packs plus weapons and ammunition; the need for quantities of food and water; the inability of bathing, sometimes for a week at a time, The dirty, sweaty clothes and the sleeping on the tent floor with a thin mattress. It seems one was always sweating and not being able to dry off. And the paths along which they marched, most times they were formed by the troops themselves. Those were the hardships that were difficult to forget. While they weren’t off fighting on the ship, you had a hot meal, three times a day, you could wash and dry your clothes, there was a bunk bed or a hammock you could sleep in and the heavy weight was carried by the ship. You never had to trudge miles and miles because the ship sailed you and while the iron deck was not as soft as the earth, it was at least flat. At night, when the duties were done, you could talk with your shipmates about events and sights you had seen and of course the major conversation being about the women you either had or saw. Never mind that most of the talk was either wishful thinking or fantasy, it helped ease the passing of the day into night. Also, the games of cards for those who still had some money left or for those, who simply liked to sit like knitting women worked on their scrimshaw making knotted mats or other beautiful knotted objects. Fortunately, there was also a library of sorts made up mostly of books passengers had left behind and a set of encyclopedias to look up the answers to most of your questions. For Nikos, the library was where he enjoyed spending his nights. When the Captain observed him in the library a few times, he congratulated his efforts to educate himself.

“What are you basically reading, novels, history”?

“No, I am basically trying to be more fluent in English and so I am reading anything that has to do with America. I studied for only one year when I went to America and the people I was with didn’t speak Greek so I had to learn pretty fast.”

“I may be able to help you there. I have a collection of books on learning English. As a sea Captain, it is very necessary to speak as many languages as you can and I think that English is one of the most useful. You know, if you ever put your mind to making the sea your career, there is a great deal to learn to become a Captain. I could guide you. It is a good life. Since you are on the bridge with me, perhaps you can be shown certain things.”

It was another thing to think about. There is not only the Army that fights, there is also the Navy. It was something that had never crossed his mind before. With Greece, surrounded by water and needing to protect her coasts, being a Navy sea Captain had some very strong appeal for him. "I am still young" he thought but I must really be certain as to where I shall put all my efforts, you don't get too many chances if you are looking for a position in which you can plan instead of just following plans somebody else has made."

Early the following morning, the ship was loaded and was ready to set sail. The crew which had worked very hard loading the vessel was given the weekend off. Their first stop as usual would be Tunis, Tunisia. They would be unloading and loading merchandise and would be in Tunis for 4 days. In the first trip that Nikos made when he was travelling to New York, he was still young. On this trip he was 20 years old. He had listened to the crew talk about how fantastic the women were in Tunis and as he had never had any sexual experience with a woman, he was not only curious but anxious to follow the ways and habits of men his age. Speaking to Anatoly, he said, "You know, I have never been with a woman and my thoughts are more and more towards thinking that it is probably time for me have a woman . Of course, it would be nice to meet a woman who you could fall in love with but with our short time in port, I don't see that that would be very possible. How old were you when you had your first woman, "he asked Anatoly?

"Me", I was only 14 years old and my friends brought me to see a prostitute in Athens. I was a little nervous but I had to show my friends that I was not nervous at all. It happened so fast, that before you knew it, she told me to put on my pants and that was all. I didn't really know what had happened but then I put out my chest to my friends and made them think it was more than it actually was. It's funny, but after a while, I really believed I had a great time. I remember that the whore was pretty old and she was not so good looking and when I was close to her, she smelled a little. Of course, I didn't tell any of that to my friends but privately, I didn't think it was all that much. Maybe because it was in the back of an old truck with a piece of cardboard on the floor and maybe it was because she had this tiny baby on the floor while we were doing it. I don't know, but I think it should be someplace nice when you have your first experience. Maybe we can ask at the bar if anyone could recommend a decent woman. We'll try to find someone young and good looking and maybe we can find someone who speaks Greek or even English! And now that I'm thinking about it, we don't want some girl working the streets. They accept anybody who will pay the price. Those are the girls who will give you a dose of clap or syphilis. But I think you should get a woman. You can't wait forever and I understand that these Tunisian women are really great".

Having settled in his mind that he would have his first experience, he kept in mind what Anatoly had said and having decided that Anatoly was as experienced as anyone, he would do it.

When they arrived at the port in Tunis, the weather was beautiful. Everyone had said that the climate of Tunisia was among the best in the world. Looking seaward, there were no lights

of smoke to blank out the stars and the heavens were alive with stars like chips of broken glass on velvet. The port, which was in full light was overrun with stevedores loading and unloading crates and bales. Cranes were like giant hands probing the holds of the ship and carefully extracting goods. The men worked hard and generally without too much talking. When they finished their work period, they would have a great deal of talk and about the liberty they would have at the end of the work. After working so hard, it took a great deal of willpower to go ashore. What they wanted most was to go to their bunks and sleep away the sore muscles. But come the weekend, watch out !

PART 9

There must be some reserve of strength or enthusiasm within us that makes us awaken to dreams and fantasies. Even though the ship's crew was exhausted, the prospect of the whole weekend to do anything they wanted to do, renewed hopes and the men found strength and enthusiasm.

So that the men would have money to spend, at each port of call, a part of their pay was given to them. The men, bathed and shaved and smelling more like whores with their over scented lotions than the girls themselves; their pockets and blood full of money, hurried down the gangplanks rushing to get to the city as though it might get away from them. They wanted every minute to count and with their throats waiting to drink Celtia Beer, the best beer in Tunisia, and looking forward to getting drunk, gambling and to finding a woman, this was the vacation time that they looked forward to with great anticipation.

Mindful of what he had promised Nikos, after a few beers Anatoly, could be heard above the rest laughing loudly but always ready to bully the person if anybody was disagreeing with him or laughing at him.

After being friendly with the owner of the tavern, Anatoly asked the owner to have a private word with him. In a low voice, Anatoly mentioned that the young friend that was with him was anxious to make the acquaintance of a lady of the night but that it being for the first time, he felt intimidated. "What I am trying to find out is whether you can possibly help him in this matter. I would prefer that he not just attempt anything with a woman in the streets but perhaps a woman who was more private in her dealings and perhaps a little more discriminating in the men she accepts. Since my friend is Greek, he would find it ideal if the woman spoke Greek or even English. Realizing that this might cost more, I would make up the difference. "

"Let me think. You know I don't let any girls come into the tavern to solicit since I want to stay on the good side of the police." Suddenly, his face brightened and he said, "There is

a very good looking woman who operates in her own house by the name of Leila. She is in her late twenties, and even employs a guard to sit outside her house to make sure there are no problems with her clients. I understand she only sees two clients a day and is very discriminating as to whom she accepts. She speaks English too. From what I heard, she was caught making love to her boyfriend by her father who was very strict and told to go live in the streets since he would no longer pay for her living in his house. The story was that she decided to become a prostitute just to spite her father and supposedly said, "If he thinks I am a prostitute, then I will satisfy his wishes." "Leila also attends the University in her spare time. You know, citizens of Tunisia are given free education including books if they attend schools here, even if they are attending the University".

"But getting back to your young friend, he would have to go to Leila's house and tell the guard that he would like to make an appointment with Leila. If she agrees, that's that. I will give you Leila's address and he can take it from there. Since the guard does not speak Greek, I will write a short note for your friend so it will be understood why he was there."

Nikos, given the address used a taxi to reach the house. The house was located in a relatively quiet neighborhood but not far from the commercial center of Tunis. There were not too many people in the streets which attested to its being a residential part of town. The house which was fronted by a separate wall, stuccoed white with a single arched opening protected by a iron grill painted a bright blue. Upon reaching the grill, the guard, an elderly man looked at Nikos questioningly, his countenance a mixture of scowl and anger at being disturbed. Nikos beckoned him over and seemed to elicit even more contempt for disturbing him. Nikos handed the guard the note and waited. The note had said that the bearer did not speak either Arab or French but that he did speak English. The space between the outer wall and the front wall of the house was planted with decorative plants and flowers and was obviously well taken care of. Everything was green and in immaculate condition. No dead branches or flowers marred the garden and a sense of freshness and serenity was brought to the space. Unbeknown to Nikos, a shuttered window was momentarily opened so that the person inside could observe the caller. In about 15 minutes of waiting, the guard came back with a note from the person inside in English telling him to come back in two hours. It was 8:30 AM at that time and Nikos wondered what he would do or where he could go for two hours. Nevertheless, he decided to walk around the neighborhood to see how people lived, and to get a feel of the city in general. It was too early for the sun to bear down with its hot rays and so Nikos walked slowly until he came upon a small park at the intersection of two streets. There were some tall date palms which offered a rather poor shade and two benches cast in concrete and stuccoed in white. The white of most of the houses gave a sense of composition to the many forms of the walls and the ever present blue of the front doors harmonized well.

After the two hours had passed, a slightly perceptible annoyance on Nikos' face was noticeable; after all, he was bringing business and was not seeking any favors. The guard, rose to his feet and ambled toward a side door not visible from the street. He heard a woman's voice

telling the guard to let the stranger enter. Swinging open the blue metal grill, the guard then showed him the side door and returned to sit comfortably in his chair.

Unseen, the voice asked Nikos to please take off his shoes and come in. It took a few minutes for Nikos' eyes to get used to the cool, shaded interior. All was white with a ceiling fan turning very slowly and just enough to move the miasmic smoke of the incense burning in a clay dish. With the windows shuttered, there was a very serene aspect to the space. The light hum of the ceiling fan gave a slight texture to the serene, quiet space. A crystal vase of fresh flowers was set on a small table. and a screened off area in the corner made up the space. On the white tiled floor, a heavy mattress was set some 2 feet above the floor on a stucco base with a clean, white sheet that seemed inviting and cool. Nikos heard the pouring of water from a pitcher into a basin and then there she appeared. A beautiful, beautifully shaped woman whose white complexion was in sharp contrast to the raven wing black hair, pulled severely back and complimented the high cheek bones. She extended her hand, and said, "My name is Leila". Leila was dressed in three layers of light blue gauze so that you knew she was naked underneath but you could not make out any details of her shapely body. She extended her hand to point out where Nikos was to sit on the bed and then asked.

"How or who told you about me and where I live"?

Nikos explained that a friend who is also a shipmate made inquiries at a Tavern. "I was given a note since I speak no Arab or French and so I find myself here."

"Why didn't you find yourself a woman someplace else-either in a brothel or even on the street? Do you know how much it will cost you to sleep with me? I am not inexpensive but I try to make everything beautiful so that you will remember Leila. I will only allow you to have normal sex, no anal and no fellatio. Also, once you have an orgasm, the session is over. Do you understand what I am saying? Pointing to the screened off corner of the room, she said, there is water in the pitcher and a basin and a small towel. Wash yourself and then let's continue.

So, you are from Greece? What did you do before you became a seaman?"

Nikos spoke of his early childhood in San Domenico; his early attempts to join the army, his invitation to study in New York and finally his activities in the war. There was no attempt at boasting and Leila was impressed at how Nikos seemed to take everything in stride in his quiet, reassuring way. Nikos, red faced and shy admitted that he had never been with a woman before and that he was not sure how to start. His simple and apologetic manner made Leila suddenly respond in an almost motherly fashion. Here was this young, innocent, unpretentious boy, offering up his virginity to a woman who hardly deserved the honor, she thought. There are a million like me for every one like him.

"Let us be very gentle with each other she said. I want you to be aware of what is happening and to feel that there is more than just animal lust and pleasure. For a man to learn to

please a woman, it will take patience, understanding and most of all true feeling and consideration for the other person. Do you understand what I am trying to say? Most men believe that since they are paying for their pleasure, that they have no obligation to please the women they are with. Remember, to give always results in being given. If you can make a woman feel that you are considering her feelings even more than your own, you will be given so much more than you had anticipated.”

As Nikos removed his clothing, he hung his clothes behind the corner screen where he had washed. After being told to lie quietly, Leila slowly removed one of the three gauze coverings that was wrapped around her body. As she gently removed another gauze covering, she spoke gently and unhurriedly. When she was finally naked before him, she lay down at his side and asked if would like to caress her? In a still confused attempt, Nikos gently placed his hand on her arm and moved it imperceptibly. Leila asked if he would lie to caress her breasts, Nikos reddened again and said he would not do anything that would show disrespect for her.

“Where did this little angel come from, she asked herself? Leila was actually becoming attracted to this innocent babe. No one had ever treated her with such respect and gentleness. Removing his hand from her breast, he trembled. This sigh and trembling had so moved Leila that she asked whether she was pleasing him or offending him.

“No he said, it is just that you are so very beautiful that I want to feel myself with you more.” If we make love, I don’t think I will be able to hold myself and since you told me that once I had an orgasm, everything would be over. Could we just talk a while more so that I can feel you with me? To be able to look at you and at how beautiful you are and to inhale the beautiful fragrance of your body is more beautiful than I had ever imagined.” As he said this, his mind went back to Anatoly whose experience on the floor with the woman’s child next to them and that had left him with feelings of disgust. The contrast with being with Leila would always be remembered as one of the most beautiful remembrances of his life.

With Leila beside him, his caresses became more ardent. Leila responded as she never had until finally, the inevitable moment of no return overcame them. They clung to each other, in a desperation at wanting to enter wholly into the other; to become a part of this being with whom you were so desperately trying to become as one. Leila, was in a daze of joy and wonder. For the first time in her life she had actually climaxed. Her tenderness knew no bounds. An innocent sleep overtook them but shortly after, Nikos noticed that Leila was no longer at his side. Still exhausted from his lovemaking, Nikos returned to the deep sleep from which he was awakened. Leila, had gone to urinate and to freshen her private parts. She was realistic enough to know that any unpleasant fragrance, even though it would not be mentioned could, in a subtle way break the spell. Seeing the naked form of Nikos, she gently kissed his prepuce and softly rolled the tip of her tongue against the head of his penis. The sensation of the responding Nikos to the erotic kiss awakened him and they spent the next few hours lovingly caressing each other and basking in the joy if belonging to each other. Pressing her against him he whispered, please let me make love to you again. For Leila’s hushed “yes” was the answer both wanted.

Leila knew that Nikos would be leaving Tunis on Monday morning and she did not want to miss one minute of being together. She suggested he sleep there with her and then in the morning, they both could take a picnic basket and ride her motorcycle to the ancient city of Carthage and visit the Stele field and look at some of the remaining mosaics. The sea was in full view and they could bath in the sea to cool off and walk around the ruins. Leila had also brought along a thin volume of French poems she was translating from French into Arabic. She was interested in seeing what his reaction would be to hearing her recite in Arabic and then to translate into English so he could understand.

The morning air was cool to the cheek as they rode in the half empty roadway. Leila, whose hair she now wore loose, caressed Nikos' cheeks by the wind. Her hair, which she had just washed gave off a perfumed fragrance that made Nikos hold on tighter to her waist. They stopped at a small village along the way and bought fresh, hot Turkish coffee with fresh coucous and freshly grilled lamb. Their love making had left them both famished.

Knowing so little about each other, Leila and Nikos talked, trying to fill in all the blank spaces of their separate lives. Leila asked, "How old are you?"

Nikos, a little embarrassed and realizing that Leila was older than he, stammered that he was almost 19 years old. Leila, openly stated that she was 29 years old but that for her, it was not the years that counted but the sensitivity and concern both people felt for each other. "Does my being older dismay you? I have been with older men and have always been disappointed. I thought, "Why not see what it is like with a younger man. No my love, the differences in our age might only be my hardship later on when you will become tired of me and be looking for a younger woman. There are not too many chances in life to finding the perfect mate and when one does, you must accept whatever there might be and embrace with all the soul and heart that which presents itself."

They talked of their childhood, their dreams, their hopes and disappointments. None of us would be at the development or stage that we now are without those hopes and disappointments having happened. I will no longer be able or interested in the life I had before I met you. For me, it will not be possible any longer. I have some money that I saved and I shall finish my doctorate degree and hopefully shall teach. For me the choice is easy. But what will you do? I would hope that you would still not consider being a seaman. I don't think I could live with you away for months at a time."

"I have been talking with the Captain of our ship and he has been encouraging me to become a sea captain. I will have to start studying soon but I am afraid that it would mean being at sea for long stretches at a time."

"Already a conflict after only 15 hours of being together. But I would agree to anything to be able to remain together. Since I have no family, I would go wherever you led me. Have you ever thought that we might go to America? Your English is very good and mine is also

quite good. I would be able to study for a post graduate degree in 20th Century French literature and poetry and at least I would be in a large city. If we were to stay here, both our careers would be limited not only because there are fewer opportunities but also because in both our countries, positions go to the influential and not to the most worthy.”

The talk had been a sobering discussion on what would eventually have been a must and a test to realizing what decisions would have to be resolved before their relationship had deepened and had included the other reality of life. Physically, they were perfect with each other but they could not always resolve domestic problems simply by going to bed. Perhaps, the discussion was broached and led by Leila who had had much more experience in life than Nikos, but it was a realism she was seeking and not a dream.

The day thankfully was long and languorous, the morning coolness melted in the competing sun and our lovers moved from shady place to shady place trying to outfox the sun. Then, with some cool mint tea to share, Leila started to read some of the poetry of Paul Verlaine. She explained that she was translating the French to the Arabic and that it was not simply using the words that meant the same thing but more importantly that the feeling be translated. “When you say something, we only have our words to express what we are trying to say. We can never say what we are truly feeling. The Poet comes closest to composing his words so that he can come nearer to saying what he feels.”

Nikos listened but she was not sure whether he understood or not. After all, he never went past grade school but she could tell he was intelligent and simply had not had the time to learn and understand. They did what they did best, they caressed, they kissed they exchanged hidden touches from anyone who might be near and in their hearts, they knew what each would do to each when they were completely alone. The day had been sweet and there had been time to see if it was only the sex that held them together. But soon, it was time to return to Tunis and the sorrowful parting. Leila left him at the tavern where he was to meet Anatoly at 8:00 PM that evening. Leila parked the motorcycle in the shadows and the uncomfortable time for words or gestures was soon over. She left him and watched him walk toward the tavern. As the footsteps grew fainter, she felt that a ribbon was unwinding and that all would soon be a memory. But in her heart, even though there were some surprises in terms of a realism that had to be contended to, she was happy. Soon, even the footsteps faded and she wondered, “Was this all a dream, some secret wish on my part? Did we really love each other in our caresses and fondling, in our sharing of breaths and heartbeats or was it all an imagining on my part. That Nikos is the same as all men, get what you want and leave. But no, she convinced herself – it is that he is still young and innocent. He does love me; he must love me; I can no longer live in dreams. If only I could remember what his voice sounded like; how he shivered in pleasure when I kissed him and touched him.”

When she arrived home, she immediately went to the bed and smelled the pillow case and the sheets for a trace of him. He was so strongly in her feelings, she was so sure of him: he is so innocent, beautiful and trusting, Fate cannot betray me.

Early the following morning, Leila jumped out of bed. Her skin was bright with happiness and she felt she couldn't remain in the house another minute. I want people to see me, to see what happiness really is. I want to be out among the others. She bathed and dressed and told the guard, "If anyone is looking for me, tell them I no longer live here and that you don't know where I can be reached. The guard looked up in incomprehension and she told him that she was sorry, but that she was no longer offering her services. To anyone! She would explain everything when she returned and that he was to guard the house as usual.

There was a slight smell of rain in the air and the sky had clouded over. She would sit outside the café; read the newspaper and just look out at the awakening city. When she arrived at her destination, she ordered a large, very black, strong Arabian coffee with fresh hot rolls. And oh yes, would the waiter bring a copy of this morning's newspaper? She breathed in the still unpolluted air; spread her napkin on her lap and waited for her breakfast. In the meantime, the waiter brought the newspaper and she settled down to see what was transpiring in the world. As she spread the newspaper on the small table, her eyes swiftly perused the headlines and the usual political news and she turned the page. At that moment, her scanning was interrupted by the waiter bringing her the coffee and rolls. Just as she was about to move the newspaper to make room for the coffee; out of the corner of her eye she thought she saw the blurred headline with the word "Palmyra Cifu". Folding the newspaper so that it could be held more comfortably, she thought, "I knew about the sailing of the Palmyra Cifu. Let's see what the article is about".

The Palmyra Cifu, a Greek steamship left the port of Tunis this morning at 5:00AM with two less seamen. Both seamen were found early this morning after having been attacked last night on their way back to their ship. It was estimated by police that the attack took place sometime between 8:00 PM and 9:00 PM. Police are searching for the motive since robbery was ruled out; both men still had their wallets and watches. After questioning the bars in the vicinity, it was learned that the bar, La Taverna, was the scene of a violent argument that took place with one of the victims. It seems that the victim, a huge man weighing some 110 kilos, created a great deal of damage and was violent after an argument with some five other men. There was no information on the other victim. The mortally wounded man was named Anatoly Pitale and had been a seaman on the Palmira Cifu for the last three years. Before joining the steamship, Pitale had fought with the Conservative faction in the northern mountains for many years. After the economic situation caused a stop to the giving of aid, the Conservatives disbanded. The body of Anatoly was taken aboard the Palmyra Cifu for a burial at sea.

The other victim, Nikos Kokiniakis was brutally beaten with iron pipes and doctors could not confirm whether he would live or not. The victim, Kokiniakis was transferred to a ship returning to Gytheio, where it was felt the facilities were better than here in Tunis.

Leila was stunned. With her eyes streaming tears, she tried to decipher the words so that they were meaningful to her. She had left him just last night at 8:00PM where he was going to meet his friend to return to his ship. Her heart was heavy at his leaving but she was also filled with an indescribable joy at having at last found a person she loved. It was only some 21 hours that they knew each other but how does one count time ; whether 21 months or 21 weeks or only 21 hours. Thinking of what she should do, she decided to take her motorcycle to the hospital here in Tunis. Perhaps if she spoke to the doctor's in charge, she could find out more about his condition or they could tell her what hospital he was transferred to in Gytheio, Greece. After arriving at the hospital, she was told that the doctor in charge had gone home to rest and would not be back for at least 2 hours. Her mind flashed back to her telling the guard at her house to have Nikos return in two hours. " Was Fate playing a game with her"?

Leila waited in the waiting room for the doctor's return. When the doctor was informed that there was someone who had waited two hours for his return and wanted to question him about the condition of Nikos Kokiniakis ;boyfriend , he invited Leila into his office. She was told that the Nikos had had both legs broken including the ankles and the knees. The doctor could not determine how many ribs were fractured or broken and it was then decided that the facilities here in Tunis would not be sufficient to bring him out of danger. Nikos would need equipment to keep him breathing. After a short pause. the doctor said," I want to be as honest with you as I can, but I do not feel too positive about his return to a normal life if he survives." As to the hospital Nikos was transferred to in Gytheio, he could only say that the case was no longer in the hands of the Tunis hospital and that there was no other information he could give her. " If you like, I could give you the name of a friend of mine, a doctor, who is connected with the hospital in Gytheio but he does not speak either French or Arabic – only Greek".

With the name of the doctor in Gytheio, she searched her mind as to whom she could consult who spoke Greek. Finally, she went to the University and found a professor who taught Greek and she implored him to write a letter concerning the condition of Nikos Kokiniakis. She was determined to follow the trail until there was no long any path left. After several weeks, the professor she had asked to write the letter left a message for her which regretfully had no information except to say that the patient had been transferred to Athens. Leila went back to the professor of Greek and told him that Nikos had been transferred to an Athens hospital. Would he please re-write the letter he had written to Gytheio asking for information on Nikos Kokiniakis and where he might be visited. After a long wait of two months, a letter informed them that there was no record of Nikos Kokiniakis; that he requested he be discharged from the hospital and no other suggestions as to how to follow through.

A truly disheartened Leila had done all she could do to locate Nikos but now, the path was lost. Leila could no longer even think of resuming the life she had before. Instead, she

strove to complete her doctorate and then would go to New York; try to obtain a teaching position; do some post graduate work so that she could write on the subject.

During her life as a writer, teacher and researcher on her subject, she often read news of Greece. She had not really expected to find anything about Nikos but in one of the papers, there was mentioned that the guerilla leader, Chrystos had some men who would later become outstanding in their duties. There was a brief mention of a Nikos Kokiniakis, citing his bravery in the destruction of an important meeting place of the Liberal faction and thus putting the war in the hands of the Conservatives. There was also the mentioning of the commemoration and the sculpture in the park in Athens where Kokiniakis spent his time. Excitedly, Leila followed the leads in the paper she had read and was able to trace the park and the commemorative sculpture. For her next vacation, she decided to visit Athens and seek out the park. Leila at this point in her life was over 70 years of age. Her life had been in the study and writing of the French influence on Tunisian poetry especially, the poetry of Paul Verlaine and Rimbaud. She had never married even though an attractive woman as she was, she had many who would be her suitors. She was one of the rare creatures who once bonded, never sought or desired another person. She often thought, "Can it really have been only 24 hours of knowing each other that has made me feel this faithful to another person?" She warmed in the knowledge that the change from her past experiences was not truly a life but more a resentment and a hatred for her father who simply shift for herself. "Strange, I hardly even remember my father and I certainly don't feel any hatred for him any longer". This she attributed to the absolution given when love is felt for another. Nikos had died at age 50 from the complications of his injuries. "There would have still been time for each other even though I would have been 60 years old."

That June, she decided to sail to Athens. One of the reasons was that she would have been tracing his sailing from America to Greece and the second reason was that she wanted to have time to prepare her thoughts on this last encounter with Nikos even though he was in his grave.

Athens was loud and crowded. She saw and heard more people shouting at each other than she had ever encountered before. "Were the Greek people really so belligerent? Or was there something to their ties with Sparta that passed down to the present?" Everywhere the buildings were painted white, not too unlike her Tunisia and there were palm trees and flowers very similar to her country. Everything made her feel less strange than she thought she would feel. It was only the language that was different but now, many of the stores and shops had someone who spoke English to handle the hoards of tourists had visited. Leila rented a comfortable room in a hotel nearby to the park so that she could walk and visit. The following morning was sunny and warm. The trees had recently come into bloom and were a bright green. There were geraniums planted in pots and hanging from the windows. Everything was so perfect for her visit to Nikos. First she visited the park where the sculpture was installed. In front of a group of trees, there with the background of peace was the small concrete bench with the armor, the shield, the helmet and the sword were artfully arranged. The bronze with which

they were sculpted had mellowed and the soft green patina caressed the forms in an almost femininely protective way. A small plaque, written in Greek simply stated:

NIKOS KOKINIAKIS
1913 1963
THE NEW SPARTAN
AND THE NEW SPIRIT

This had been dedicated to her Nikos; the Nikos that had softened her hatred and that brought beauty into her life. So short a time together and now at least she would know where his last days were spent. Leila's face shown in pride. She was still left with the beauty of knowing him. All this time and she knew her wait had been rewarded. She sat a long time on the bench and felt that in the end, Fate had given her this last chance to be together.

Behind the trees, there loomed the 3 story building called; The Old Sailors Home. The building had been neglected but there were still elderly men in their 80's and 90's still being protected from the abandonment of society and families. Upon entering, Leila drew a gasp of air from the strong odor of urine. She realized that there would only be a few women who voluntarily spent time at the "home" to keep it clean and to assist the two nurses that had to take care of all the patients. Locating the director's office, she knocked and entered. The small office had a window that was conveniently open and a fan to blow the air outside.

Asked to sit down, Leila went directly to the point. She was considering leaving a large legacy to the home for its upkeep and for the bettering of conditions for the patients. She was especially interested since a very close friend had lived here for some time unknown to herself. She said, however there are conditions to my behest of this large sum of money and that payment of the sum money would be directly under the law firm who would have the final word as to whether the monthly payment would be made or not. First, the sum would be one million American dollars divided into equal yearly payments at the current rate of exchange of the Drachma and the dollar. The monies not paid would be invested in secure investments so that there was always an income from the money invested. The conditions are quite simple. I live alone without any family or relatives. The primary condition is that upon my death, my ashes be buried in the grave of Nikos Kokiniakis and that the urn shall never be removed for any reason whatsoever. Secondly, I want to replace the stone marker for one of similar size made of Pentelic marble from Mount Pentelikon with the following words inscribed:

NIKOS KOKINIAKIS
B. 1913 D. 1963
WITH ETERNAL LOVE
LEILA

Of course with everything written in Greek. If you are in agreement with my requests, I shall engage a reputable law firm to arrange the formalities. It is my intention that the “Home” be remodeled and repaired and that an adequate number of nurses be hired to take care of the patients. There is one other thing, I would want the name of the Old Seaman’s Home to include the name, Nikos Kokiniakis.

The director was beside himself. One million dollars to revamp the old home and to bury the urn of this patroness with that of a national hero. He accepted but did mention that since the “home” was a state institution, he would have to obtain permission from the proper authorities.

“We will let the law firm do that since they will be able to answer any questions the authorities might have.”

With a tentative agreement, Leila went to the State University in Athens and spoke with the director as to what established, reputable and honest law firm she could hire to do the work she requested. As a prominent author and recognized scholar, she had no trouble talking to an important head of the University. Given a list of three names, Leila interviewed the firms to satisfy herself as to the appearance of the office the number of employees and the request that each give her a list of three of their largest clients. The selected law firm would associate itself with the law firm she worked with in the U.S. There was nothing more she could do to protect her gift from being squandered or used as a boon to the firm whose benefactress was living in America.

Leila was very happy. She had found Nikos’ grave, had visited his monument and had made the arrangements necessary to complete her intentions. After having visited Nikos’ grave many times, she knew she would have to wait until the political requirements could be met and agreed to. Since she was in Athens, she decided to visit the historic sites and to get a feel of the people. After her second week, she decided that at the end of this final semester, she would resettle and retire in Athens. She would need only a small house, outside of the noisy Athens and could settle there to continue her writing. She was 70 years old and no longer looking to better her position. Now she needed the quiet and solace of a rural location where she could be surrounded by simple, rural people. She made some enquiries as to areas and also to medical facilities should she need immediate attention. She would eventually hire a driver/handy man that could take care of emergencies in the house and so that she would not be completely alone. She felt she something to look forward to and excited about the new surroundings. Of course, she would have to learn some rudimentary Greek so that she could be independent and so that she could shop and go to the post office. Somehow, this planning and change in her lifestyle while a little frightening, she also felt the challenge that was awaiting her and she felt completely invigorated.

The rest of the story is all positive. Leila fulfilled her life artistically and in a satisfaction in knowing that her efforts were recognized. She had fulfilled her strong desire to find Nikos’

grave and to find the satisfaction that he too had gained recognition. She was able to find a means of honoring Nikos and felt close to him even in death. Her time was short for life but the active was replaced by the contemplative and she would have it no other way.

With Maia and Agostous, their lives were happy and contented. Maia had of course mourned not only the death of Nikos but also his insistence that he make his own way. She was proud of her son even though she was apart from him.

The years had brought them the simple bounty that was complete contentment. They had the opportunity to have all that they wanted and could now await an end without regrets.

THE END.

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