

**Promethian Fire**  
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## CHAPTER 1

The man in the dark suit walked slowly and deliberately as he carried the violin case through the back alleys. The graffiti-infested walls had been constructed from the ruins of ancient temples, which honored the gods, man, and the democratic process. Now they served as borders for urban passageways that got narrower and more claustrophobic with each new civilization.

This Athenian night was cold, as was the heart of Yannis Diamantis. In actuality, he was more wood than cold. Stiff, dry and possibly petrified. The forty-year-old lieutenant of the old order accepted cruelty as inevitable, oppression of the weak by the strong as the natural order of the universe.

He entered through the stage door of the gathering place, joined by his other comrades, men from highly intelligent background from all over Europe, most with private Swiss bank accounts.

The Greeks had been over-run by Persian chariots, Roman cavalry, the Crusaders' bootheel, Turkish war wagons, German tanks, and now it was American dollars. Still, the Greeks knew how to be the freest conquered people in the world. Though the textbooks said that democracy was a gift from the gods, it was actually stolen from the heavens by mortal Promethian heroes who were destined to pay for their sins one day. Such a hero awaited Yannis inside the converted warehouse.

The assembly gathered without a single word. They followed Yannis' lead, as they always did, opening the cases which housed their weapons, the tools which gave definition to their existence and allowed them to live as aristocrats in a world which was moving more towards Flower Power chaos every day.

When the stew got boiled down to the bone, it was 1967. The radios on the streets pumped out the latest Beatles, Stones and Dylan tunes as fast as each new drug or moral experiment could inspire it. But inside the assembly, it was an earlier time, its cadence set and defined by the Swiss time pieces worn by every

member of the congregation—all except one.

A man plowed through the front door, a stale donut in his mouth. He scribbled out his latest plan to redefine the world on a bootleg copy of Rolling Stone. His unwashed hair flowed over his shoulders, his three-month mustache complimented a two-week-old beard. His jean jacket was unbuttoned, the plaid shirt underneath open to the navel. Underneath the hippie-biker facade lay a Herculean physique framed by a mortal's body.

Though Alan Kewalski was no Mister America, he was sprung up tight—eager, willing and able to take on a thousand Goliaths, whether they were clad in full Green Barret battlegear or Wall Street pinstripe suits. Before the 29 year old American expatriate sat a more powerful enemy of foes—the first row of twenty backed up by three more behind it.

It would be a battle royal, the primal struggle. Unquenchable fire vs. immovable ice. Alan knew there would be only one winner, as did his opponents. He drew out the last few notes of yet another battle plan, as non-cognizant of the people in front of him as they were non-understanding of his ultimate objective. The Revolution would be felt, designed and implemented TODAY, no matter how fiercely the stone-faced aristocrats resisted.

The first trumpeter shot out a long, loud piecing blast—ironically, a middle C. The other players synchronized their instruments to his, horns, drums, pipes, flutes, and strings set to attack the musical objective at hand in under twenty seconds flat—and sharp. The battle between symphony and conductor was about to begin, for the last time...once again.

Yannis, head bowed, his will resolute, approached Alan. “Maestro Kewalski, we are ready to begin. On schedule.”

“In a minute,” Alan related while frantically scribbling down the finale fortissimo chords of a rock opera which had been pounding in his head for the last three days.

“Maestro,” Yannis repeated. “Maestro?”

Alan stuck his head up, oblivious to everything except the vision in his head now materializing on the page. It was a private victory, but a sweet one. The connecting link between all the themes worked! Angst was magically dissolved by the joy of primal discovery, a rush known only to the boldest of artists. Alan had taken a homemade football all the way to the musical Superbowl and it was his victory run—the magical moment when only he scored yet another touchdown against his primal component, Dead Air.

“Maestro,” Yannis repeated with a dignified voice, a pleading tone. “We have a schedule.”

“You can’t schedule inspiration, my friend,” Alan related with a voice that had gone raspy from a 72-hour writing marathon. “You can’t schedule inspiration.”

The Swiss and German-trained musicians snubbed their noses, shook their heads and waited for the Julliard drop-out to finish his fit of “inspiration”, or to work his way out of whatever new drug he was into. Little did they know that though Maestro Kewalski knew every drug dealer from Paris to Ankara, he never toked, shot up, or drank anything other than primal fire. Inner madness was Alan’s drug of choice, best enjoyed straight.

Yannis had been brought up to obey God, the Church and everything that Alan labeled “Establishment”. But of all the people on both sides of the Atlantic, Yannis was Alan’s best friend. A part of Alan knew that, but not the part that got carried away with inspiration, or madness.

Yannis cleared his throat. “Maestro. Please. “ English having failed, he resorted to his native tongue, more pleasing to Alan’s ears than American ever was. “Patakalo.” But—

“One more bridge, just one more...” Alan completed the piece, scribbling the last scratches on the donut wrapper and made the victory against the Dull Our Demon known with a rebel yelp as loud as any bolted out by Jeb Stuart’s Confederate Cavalry. Touchdown AND field goal accomplished, witnessed and recorded where it REALLY counts. The matter of executing the vision was

just details. Funding, airtime and people were always just details to Alan. The sharing of a common vision was the most important thing, that Vision having earned the right to be manifest by being incubated in his own, lone, soul. Being pregnant with vision was not only an eccentricity, but a necessary sustenance, with which he could never be without, no matter how many fans worshipped his music and how many funders threw money into his pockets.

But his next vision would have to be shared with people who spent their lives with eyes closed, or, at best, looking downward. The assignment was on the page in front of him—the score by his closest friend, and mentor. “I hope we can get it right this time, Ludwig,” he confessed in desperation to the Beethoven score laid out for him by Yannis.

He looked up at the Athenian National Orchestra, his eyes somehow fixed on everyone at the same time. “Let us begin. Please,” he said softly, in English, then in Greek, in a very American accent, fully aware that though he had been living in Greece for nearly a year, he still depended on gestures or interpreters to buy a loaf of bread.

The first violinist nodded. Petros Karabellis had trained twenty years in five countries for the conductor post. A second-place winner in five German competitions, he had won more prizes for playing Bach than any Greek, his skill in the precision of the notes rather than their lyrical interpretation. By all logic the conductor’s chair was to go to Petros, but whenever Alan Kewalski entered anywhere, logic slipped out the back door. Karabellis was not going to accept an American “please” from a Draft-dodger who bastardized the Old Masters’ works by combining them with rock, jazz and Cajun rhythms. Karabellis’ battle with Maestro Kewalski would be ideological, political, spiritual, and to the death, no matter how many smiles they exchanged. The stakes—the orchestra itself, trained by Petros, now directed by Kewalski after the death of the venerated George Nicholoulis, a traditionalist’s traditionalist.

But this was about Beethoven, and—the moment. And—”The Leonora Overture...” Alan announced to the orchestra. Yannis translated in a terse, informational voice.



“By Ludwig van Beethoven...” the rebel-Maestro shouted out, praying that the musicians would understand and feel the subtext behind the other composer Alan considered greater than himself. Yannis repeated the words with a soft pianissimo volume and a gentle tone, attempting to remind Alan that the old Master’s greatness lay in his ability to listen with as much intensity as he spoke.

Alan nodded his head, smiling behind his eyes. “Point well taken,” his unspoken reply to Yannis as the ever-faithful assistant picked up his fiddle, taking his place next to the first violinist.

Alan took the baton in his hand, and raised it upward, holding it like a sword, fist clenched, eyes resolute. He let the Silence fill the auditorium, as was custom and necessity. The hushed montra infiltrated everyone, even Karabellis. It took a few seconds longer this time than all the others, but when it’s man vs. Infinity, a few seconds is a small time to wait, even for a man to whom patience was a vice, rather than a virtue. Then, as was not always part of the process, from the Maestro’s lips—”please” in the best Greek he could muster.

The Maestro bowed his head, closed his eyes and slashed the air in front of him with the baton with saber-like intensity. The notes coming back at him were pure, flawless and perfectly executed, but lacked one essential element. By the fifth measure, Alan knew it had gone wrong, and that it would only get worse, the chain of lifelessness continued with each progressive measure.

“No, no, no!!!” he screamed at the orchestra then screeched to the gods, burying his rage-filled head in the score written by his hero, mentor and friend.

Kerabellis smiled. With only a week left till the theater grand re-opening, there was only time for one way to play Beethoven, or anyone else—the CORRECT way. Some things had to be kept constant, civilized and non-violent. Karebellis had lost a father who was fanatical about massacring retreating Italian Fascists in WWII and an older brother who was fanatical about killing invading Macedonian Communists in the Civil War that followed.

His ex-wife destroyed his marriage and ended the life of his son because she insisted that the Karabellis clan continue the battle for honor against the Moslem Turks in Cyprus. Fanatics had done enough to destroy whatever gentle goodness life could offer, and VISITING conductor Alan Kewalski was as fanatical as they came West Gibraltar. But though Karabellis didn't say a word, every member of the orchestra owed some kind of allegiance to him, and the unspoken command now was 'stonewall'.

Yannis watched the eyes of the two titans, seeing the drama before his weary eyes. Alan would quit, just as so many guest conductors had. Kerabellis would take over the orchestra—maybe for good this time.

Kerabellis rose, the next selection in his hand. "Bach, the master of symmetry and gentle persuasion," he announced to the orchestra in Greek. But before he could say "BWV-listing ANYthing," Alan answered with a more primal kind of intelligence.

"No!!!" the American Maestro yelled, then pleaded. He asked Yannis to rise, a request given begrudgingly by the sometime-translator, full-time mediator.

"The Leonora Overture was composed by Ludwig van Beethoven in 1810..." Alan shared with the musicians wavering between passion and political correctness. Yannis' translation provided clarity, and gentility, to Alan's rant.

"It was part of an opera entitled Fidelio. The only opera Beethoven ever wrote."

Karebellis backed down, letting his tightened ass fall to the cushioned seat. It was up to the musicians to decide now, and though young-Turk Alan had their attention, elder Karebellis held mortgages on their souls.

Alan saw and felt the power, and paternalism, behind Karebellis' smile. All the Maestro had was the facts. "Fidelio says nothing about the intricacies of the most basic human pleasures as does Mozart's Don Giovanni," the Maestro confessed

as he spoke of the work he insisted be the featured concert piece, despite violent opposition from every level of the Ministry of Culture. “It lacks the courtly elegance of Strauss’ *Rossencavelier*. And the musical finesse of Rossini, even his ‘*William Tell*’ Overture. And by way of comedy in the libretto, even ‘*Die Meistersinger*’ pops a bigger laugh than *Fidelio*.”

The orchestra shared a muttering of laughter. Cordiality had won the day, and perhaps the concert program. Karebellis’ victory seemed assured, when from Kewalski’s sorrowful mouth blasted—

“*Fidelio* gets its point across a hell of a lot faster than Wagner’s *Lohengrin* or *Gotterdammerung*, and unlike ANYthing by Rossini, Mozart or Pucinni, speaks to the fire in the belly, not the gossip-box between the ears!” The die having been cast, the commitment made, the elder members of the orchestra nearly driven into a heart attack by the intensity of delivery, the obvious had to be stated. “Beethoven’s *Leonora Overture* from *Fidelio* is about liberation...A prisoner’s defiance in the face of political oppression. And his wife, *Leonora*, who sets out to find him. The most basic emotion, and the most universal kind of love.”

Even Karebellis had to agree, in letter and spirit. Still, the main point at hand needed to be explained.

“*Leonora* disguises herself and infiltrates the dictator’s prison,” story-teller Kewalski related, rediscovering the tale inside himself while telling it those who may, or may not, have heard it. It was Yannis’ official duty, and private pleasure, to translate. “Her eyes are opened when she goes into the jail and sees what powerful men do to ‘common’ men. She hears that her revolutionary husband is probably dead, but she doesn’t give up. She becomes committed to saving the whole Goddamn world, starting with a man in the worse torture cell in the place, who she doesn’t even know.”

It all came back. Some of the musicians who were trained to play the notes, and barely pay attention to the story they were providing melodies to recalled their own lives, and training. Others put on their ‘to do’ list to read the libretto of the opera this time. Karebellis knew he had been had, THIS time. He anticipated the

Maestro's next blow, bracing himself for the worst.

“Leonora becomes COMMITTED to something!” Alan screamed with the fervor of a Baptist Preacher who had just seen God, Jesus and Saint Peter. “Committed to become the Fire of Liberation! Therefore, when playing Beethoven, play it with FIRE!!! FIRE!!! PERONIUS!!!”

Alan made the rounds, to every instrument, demonstrating the passion he demanded, repeating the only Greek word he could ever pronounce correctly. “PERONIUS!!!” he yelled to the trumpeter after blasting out the liberation refrain from the crescendo in measure 19. “PERONIUS!!!” to the flutist following his demonstration of the escalation scale from the later part of the piece which released the tension-driven engine to full throttle. “Peronius” he gently, yet firmly, related to Kerabellis after grabbing the Stradevarious out of the third violinist's hand, showing how warmth and fire could be merged into something technically called tension, but passionately called Life.

Karebellis nodded his head. He was too smart to tell the Maestro's pitch was off, or that he missed whole clusters of notes written on Beethoven's original score, or that the passionate playing of the violin broke two strings which would have to be replaced out of his own pocket—again. But, for now, the upstart Yankee had won. “We'll try it his way,” became the new unspoken command from Kerabellis to his crew. “Yes Sir,” the free-thinking voters said behind their grimaces.

Drenched in sweat, exhausted from every part of his physical being, Alan climbed back on the podium. “Leonora Overture Number Three, by Ludwig von Beethoven,” he related in a voice made hoarse in tone, humble in subtext. He waited for the Silence again, the Presence to take over the hall, and, at It's command—— let the baton slash out with the first undulating chord.

Something had indeed taken over the room, and those who occupied it. Fortissomos were played loud, adagios with enough tensions behind them to erupt a volcano. The executors of the notes had been released from their shackles and seemed to enjoy the sensation of flight, even though they had never worn wings of

their own. Alan heard “accomplishment” between the notes, a job well done. But——this was a rehearsal.

Even before the last notes blasted out, Alan wondered. When it came time to share Beethoven’s gift with the world, would these by-the-numbers musicians be able to zoom out of orbit into regions beyond the realm of human experience and self-imposed limitation? Would they rocket Ludwig’s Vision into Infinity so it could be re-united once again with its Creator?

It was more than sales at the ticket box or a renewal of a contract that was at stake for the still-not-yet thirty Maestro from Mineola, New York. Alan had big plans for the National Athenian Orchestra, his host country and, eventually, the world. Music was his most effective tool, and the time clock was running out. Something in him said that unless the Revolution of the mind, body and collective political systems came fast, particularly to this country, all would be lost. The Kewalski-intuition was never wrong, his internal ‘urgency meter’ having predicted upgrading of the Police Action in Vietnam to a full-scale War, the escalation of the Cuban Missile Crisis to mano-a-mano to the day, the assassination of JFK AND a bullet with Martin Luther King’s name on it. What was in the air in Greece was still a mystery politically speaking. It had the potential for good, or bad, depending on how he played HIS hand of cards.

But whatever the outcome, this politically-sleeping backwater Mediterranean country could lose everything unless everyone who still had a sense of conscience acted with urgency. Kewalski needed his rival Karebellis to understand it, and he needed his assistant Yannis to accept it. What the all-knowing Maestro didn’t know was that to carry out the vision THIS time, he would need a soulmate, so the Promethian fire inside wouldn’t burn him alive, or destroy everything he had built.

## CHAPTER 2

The rehearsal was finally over, the ‘thank you’s’ said to every member of the orchestra, who then went home to their mothers, wives and/or mistresses. They no doubt all got a good night’s sleep, but Alan didn’t. The next day, the Leonora Overture kept pounding through his head, louder than any sound made in the ‘real’ world. Somewhere between the notes, chords and constellation of emotions of that piece lay his next new composition. But where? Who would play it? And would it really be the magical progression of notes that would soothe vicious minds and invigorate dying spirits?

The thoughts incubated through Alan’s head as he walked along the hallway to the main auditorium office, eyes on a two-week old Village Voice, a horde of fans clambering to get in the front door, Yannis by his side.

“You tear down the fences and the cattle STILL go back to their prison stalls,” Alan commented to Yannis between autographs and smiled delivered more out of pity than gratitude.

“They’re musicians, Maestro,” Yannis reminded the ‘assignment’ he was supposed to look after.

“They’re sheep, Yannis!” Alan shot back. He remembered the short lived victory at the rehearsal hall, which was lost at the tail end of the rehearsal when the music had become ‘triple fortissimo passion by the numbers’. “Dead sheep who don’t even know they’ve been slaughtered,” commented with a mixture of anger and pity.

“They will get better, Meastro.”

“Maybe with a few hits of acid.”

“A few hits of what?”

“Lysergic acid. Orange sunshine. An American experiment in spiritual exploration, and self-destruction. And speaking of self destruction, did ALL of your musicians go to conservatories in

Germany?”

“Switzerland, Maestro.”

“Worse. I knew there was a reason why ‘Herr Keribellis’ was leading the orchestra into sounding like a metronome in the final movement of the Brandenburg when I was trying to make them feel the jokes that Bach put in between the notes. Old Johan Sebastian lived like a fucking monk, but wanted to dance like a gypsy whore.”

Yannis smiled, respectfully, as he always did at his the boss’ jokes. “The Cultural Ministry thought that as guest seasonal conductor, you should have the most prestigious musicians in the country, Maestro.”

“The minute a musician becomes prestigious, he stops becoming an artist.”

“Is that why you left New York, Alan?”

Alan looked up, startled behind his tense eyes in front of a fan who understood neither his verbiage nor his real meaning. Seldom had Yannis violated his position as government liaison and tested his friendship by addressing him on such familiar terms, and with a subtext so direct. Alan smirked, signed his Jack Heinrick on the libretto of the music student and/or fan, and walked on towards his office. Then, ‘Prophet against Capitalistic Profit’ Kewalski declared his most sacred gospel to Yannis.

“One day, Mister Diamantis, artists will be politicians. One day, a poet will sit on a throne now occupied by a Russian Commissar. Probably in Yugoslavia. And one day a movie star will move into the White House. I just hope that he’s a real artist, or a damn good actor.”

“That is a dream, Alan.”

“No, Yannis. It is a very necessary....possibility.”

While Alan lingered above the clouds of Mount Olympus,

Yannis did his earthly duties, going through the mail. None of the packages or letter for Alan were local, or friendly. And no wonder....Alan had the look in his eyes so common in the British archeologists who built dreams with ancient ruin too big or obscure to ever take back home with them. Yannis knew many of the ‘what’s’ about the expatriate visionaries, but was not quite sure of the ‘whys’. As a man, it was a burning curiosity to find out about the ‘whys’. As a government civil servant hired to maintain the interests of his native country, it was his job to merely contain or direct those ethereal motivations.

As Alan plowed through all the ‘past due’ notices for personal expenses and hate mail from ex-fans in now distant places, it was Yannis’ time to be the Oracle. “You were the youngest man ever to conduct the New York, Philadelphia and Chicago Philharmonics, Maestro Kewalski.”

“It was good PR for the agents at Columbia Records when I wanted to cross-genre. Just don’t tell my friends at the Filmore East. Classical music isn’t hip till you put a gong into it, throw in a light show and make EVERYthing electric.”

“You gave up much, Alan.”

“Gotta give up ‘much’ to get it all, Yannis.”

“And what did Greece give you in return?”

Alan pondered the matter, all the notes in his head leading him to the alpha and omega home chord. “Freedom. A chance to be king of my OWN mountain.”

“Americans need to be big men to be free ones?” the Socratic challenge, delivered smack between the eyes.

Alan hid his re-opened wound behind a smart-assed smirk, and a legalese explanation. “I also had some political problems,” he declared as the final explanation for his current whereabouts.

“That Greeks DO understand,” Yannis assured the misery-burdened Maestro. For the first time, he saw the ‘refugee stare’ in



Alan's face. Greece wasn't a life-style experiment, it was a haven. But from what?

Yannis continued the clandestine interrogation. "You ran away from the land of the free to the birthplace of democracy?"

"And trying to keep it that way!" Alan shot back.

Yannis knew more than anyone else that Greek independence was threatened by the Red Menace to the East, the American Colonists to the West and Apathy from within. Alan saw himself as a player here and, so far, was playing for the enlightened side. But something brewed behind those bloodshot, overworked Yankee eyes. An alternate plan? A super-objective that was worth reporting to the Greek government who signed Yannis' paychecks? A new Greece run by Philosopher-King Alan Kewalski the First (and ONLY)? Even if that was the plan, there would be only one tyrant to overthrow, a common thread that could finally unit the Greek Communist, Socialist, Christian Democrats, Monarchists, Fascists and Anarchists.

On the way to the stage door, Alan started to mumble, Yannis' ears hearing more echo than words against the marble walls, but something worth noting under the New York-ese.

"What was that, Maestro?" Yannis asked, head bowed slightly.

"Ask me no questions, I'll tell you no lies. An American expression," his reply, with a wiseassed smirk.

"Mi rotas, in Greek," Yannis' retort, with a reassuring smile.

Alan felt Yannis' eyes seeing straight through him. Then, the light touch of his hand on his tension-gripped shoulder. "Be careful, Alan," he warned.

At the corner ahead lay a larger branch of the building still under construction. The workers had came back to work and were busy installing new walls on the old building that was to be reopened with Old World style AND New World class. "They're back from their break a half hour early," Alan commented. "Are

you paying them to come back early?”

Yannis responded with silence this time, letting his pupil fill in the gaps as he retrieved another package of mail marked, “For King Alan” in Greek. Yannis took it upon himself to bear the good, and bad, news as Alan pondered the importance of this concert with which he was entrusted. It was to be an opening of a New Music Hall for a New Era, according to the PR sent out by the Ministry of Culture. And even maestro-kings had to obey deadlines of ‘beaurocraps’. All the more so now, as government officials mulled about the halls of Alan’s new concert hall, checking that everything was according to standards, and plans. Imported King Kewlalsi had his objectives, and ‘Prime Minister’ Yannis had his orders.

“Maestro,” Yannis said in officialeze, straightening his back for whoever may be watching as he thumbed through the mail which Alan commanded him to open. “The Minister of Culture has granted you a conference on Wednesday at nine...”

“Starting at ten-thirty sharp, Greek time.”

“Your New York Times subscription is past due...”

“Guess I’ll have to get my lies from Rolling Stone or Playboy.”

“And your landlord wants the rent...today.”

“I make damn good salary. Why the hell should I give it to him? Fucking Capitalist slumlord!”

Yannis held his tongue. He knew that Alan earned ten times more than any musician in the orchestra, but that he lived a tenth as well. And just when Yannis felt Alan begin to open up about where his money REALLY went to---

“Mi rotas, Yannis. The next order of business?”

Yannis gazed at his clipboard once again, a tablet he carried around him like the ten commandments. Disobey anything written in ink, forget to relate anything to anyone, and there would be hell

to pay. A hell that was far worse than a weekend with his ex-wife in Crete.

“The printer says he has finished deciphering your ‘scribbles and dots’, Maestro. He finally has them in a musical score. They’ll be ready in a week.”

“Are there still eleven days in a Greek week?”

“Thirteen. It is Springtime.”

Alan reflected on the matter, and the Greek concept of time, a point of frustration when he arrived, custom as he became acclimated. Then, from the holy tablet in front of Yannis’ stern face—

“You have a meeting with the head of the Greek-American Tourism Board in ten minutes.”

“Yannis! I have important work to do. Artistic work.”

Yannis handed Alan a folder. Its seal was official, the stare of the Bald Eagle commanding his presence. “They operate on American time, Maestro.”

Alan caught a glimpse of a young busker outside, her flute playing Mozart with a joy befitting the season. Her face universal. The girl who left before you got to know her as a woman. The dream in long flowing blonde hair who never stayed long enough for the hues to turn to brown or gray. The tones could make a Klansmen cry, a Weatherman wilt and an Angel laugh. “Ya know, Yannis, I’d like to conduct an orchestra of her. Or maybe she could conduct me.”

Yannis broke out into a cold sweat as a Sub-Minister passed by, giving him the “I trust everything is going on schedule” nod. Everything was behind schedule musically, even by Greek standards. If he or Alan missed one more deadline, the game would be over for both of them.

Such matter of time and space meant little to Alan, as he

silently remembered his life back in 1964, before the troubles started. It was three years ago, but a lifetime back. When the revolutions was about fun and mischief as well as passion.

Then, as if on schedule, a man moved behind the dreamgirl playing the flute. This man's face was hidden by a Yankee baseball cap, his coat collar up, his eyes covered by military surplus sunglasses. He looked at his watch, carefully keeping a safe distance from the Police. His business was about life and death, and an appointment with the Maestro that was far more important than any Minister or Political Movement.

“You have nine minutes till your meeting with the Tourism Board, Maestro,” Yannis interjected.

“But—”

“Alan, A request from the GREEK Ministry. A favor to me.”

“Alan oriented himself to the real-world time-space continuum, then Yannis' warm brown eyes, his kind always-overworked heart and finally, his watch. “I need a half hour.”

“Maestro, if you want women, one who is even more appealing than the girl with the flute, the Ministry can make arrangements for you to—”

“—Yannis, please. It's important.” The words were simple, the motivation—desperate, as were the eyes of the man in the baseball cap who begged to keep his appointment with Maestro Alan.

A siren rang out, an ambulance trying to zip across the kind of Mediterranean street traffic that obeyed no laws of man, morality, or physics. The man in the Yankee hat walked, then ran away towards the caverns, the dark area of town where you could lose your hand in front of your face, an expression which often had very literal meaning.

“Eight minutes, Alan,” Yannis warned. “Or it will be our livelihoods.”

“Half an hour, or the price will be a lot higher.” With that, Alan walked away, disappearing into the crowd, then the traffic, then the other side of the street which represented a world that NO musician wrote happy love songs about.

The alley was dark, the man in the Yankee hat arriving first. He took off the cap, a regulation California Beach Boy mane of blonde hair flowing out of it, covering his baby blues like a sheepdog about to be slaughtered. He looked at the graffiti, trying to make sense of the half-English, half Greek multicolored letters that demanded his attention.

“It says Yankee Capitalists go home,” a voice rang out from the shadows behind him.

John Milos backed up against the wall like a Boston College Freshman caught on his first possession charge in Redneck Georgia. Though a metal pipe and a rusty butcher knife lay in the gutter next to him, easily within reach, he chose, for reasons still unknown to even himself, to arm himself appropriately.

From the shadows behind a rotted wooden cart, a gun was pushed ahead. There it lay, within John’s reach, a Russian pistol, probably bootlegged through the Turkish black market.

“You want to kill me? Then pick it up and use it,” the deep throat voice echoed from his shield of black shadow.

John pondered, again, the persuasive power of his big, blue eyes, a trick that had worked for 23 years of life so far. That, and the stethoscope around his belt, hidden by a white jacket. Common sense said to take the dare, gut feel said to trust something more powerful than knives or guns. Either that, or it was cowardess. He was not sure, as the figure behind the rat-infested wooden cart came out of the shadows and made his identity known in all his ferocity.

“Maestro Kewalski?” John asked through quivering lips, grateful that his pants were somehow still dry.

“Alan. Call me Alan,” the Maestro advised, picking up the pistol, fondling it like his most trusted lover, and favorite whore. “You passed the first test, Johnboy,” he continued.

“Was it loaded?” the fear-tempered ‘Doctor Milos’ challenged.

“For the courage to ask, you passed the second test, Johnboy.”

Alan offered to gun to John, handle first, forcing his trembling hand to take it, to see if it would ‘fit’.

“Shoot me, or I’ll shoot you,” the Maestro challenged with a blank stare, a poker face that dared the bluff. Alan retrieved a colt revolver from his own coat, the barrel aimed at John’s forehead, the organ which, so it seemed, the young upstart valued most. “I’ll count to five, Johnboy. One, two...”

“My name is John! John Milos,” the comeback as the boy-turned-man tossed his gun to the ground. “I’m a doctor!” the proclamation. “Actually, a medical student,” the qualified confession.

“With dry pants,” Alan noted with a proud smile, twirling the American and Russian pistols with Wild West style that would make him center stage at a Circus in Albuquerque or Moscow. “This here is my drug dealing gun. It nuc’s out straight Establishment G-men with something more powerful than steel, metal or lead, Pilgrim.”

“What’s that, Meastro Kewalski, I mean...Alan?” the sarcastic retort.

“Orange sunshine,” Alan’s comeback, demonstrated by red gop oozing out of his gun, aimed at the wall, burning into the wall a Peace Sign, over which he wrote the Kewalski battle-cry. “Peronias, NOW!!!” Three musical notes, the ones that heralded in Beethoven’s fifth, with an auditory description of such.

“Nikos sent me,” John commented while the Maestro indulged in what seemed like childlike mischief. He wondered if the underground ads for Alan were more hipe than reality. “Nikos is

the organizer of the International Student's Freedom League. He said you were a crazy motherfucker, not scared of anything."

"Nikos exaggerates a lot. About me, and his political importance," the comment as Alan got the idea of scribbling a few notes from his most recent composition onto the wall, hoping that some graffiti artist or hobo might want something to sing as he, or she, rummaged through the garbage for a meal or a blanket.

"I'm a fourth year medical student at the University of Athens," aspiring-Doctor Milos related.

"And..."

"I was born in Astoria, that's in Queens."

"And..."

"My parents were from Selonica and Crete."

"And..."

"My uncle is in the Greek Army. My father was in the Marine Corp. The AMERICAN Marine Corp."

"Sempre Fidelis...And..."

"I got this today." John handed over the envelope, drenched in his own sweat. The stationary was very official. The writing was Greek, but Alan instantly knew what the verbiage meant.

"A greetings notice from the Greek Army. Looks a lot more impressive than the ones from Uncle Sam that make such good kindling, as we demonstrated in Berkeley. An Uncle Sam draft card takes two seconds longer to burn than a maiden-form bra. These Greek ones...four seconds longer, on average." Alan's smart-assed smile said "party on", but he would not let John Milos see what was really behind it. Nobody in three years had, or would.

"They consider me a Greek citizen, Maestro Kewalski."

“Call me Alan, for fuck sake! We might just be cell mates one day.”

The concept of imprisonment had lingered in John’s head, but not into his gut. His white skin turned ghost-pale at the prospect as the possibility of the inevitable seemed like a realistic reality. “I’m considered a Greek citizen here because my father was born here. If I go back to the States, I’m IA.”

“1 A. A ‘good health’ sentence that will get your body killed, or your soul killed if you take the life of anyone else,” Alan replied. “A condition all of us share, whether we know it or not. And which...well, we have to do our best to remedy. IF we can.”



## CHAPTER 3

She sat at the table next to the green palm tree, yellow lilies and red roses. Sunlight shone in from the deep blue sky, bouncing its rays off the Adriatic as if they were sent from the Heavens for her alone. Her face belonged on the best fashion magazines, revealing the best of any age between eighteen and forty. Her perfectly-conditioned body was the definition of beauty, from her long, slender legs to a thin, supple neck connecting breasts that were size ‘perfect’. The soot-stained statue of the goddess Athena gazed down on her with envy, cursing her fellow gods for giving a mortal the beauty the Industrial Revolution had taken away from her.

But third-generation Greek-American Princess Jennifer Skelos revealed little about her youthful body under a Ladybird Johnson business suit. Her three-foot-long blonde mane was neatly ticked in a bun behind her neck, where no one could see it, her fluorescent coral-blue eyes covered by prescription sunglasses. Though she was the essence of ravenous beauty, ‘tastefully elegant’ was all she would show the world, or herself. Not yet 28, she had sentenced herself to execution by overwork and boredom, punishment to be carried out over the next 30 years of what would be a very ‘official’ life.

Jennifer was a prisoner, held hostage by her rank, wealth, and an eight-karat engagement ring. Her position was Principle American Cultural Representative. She was officially in charge of seeing that Iowan tourists had a vacation they would always remember, and unofficially responsible for seeing that Senators and Industrialists had more discreet pleasures no one would ever record. Her main job was to see that everything was perfect, ‘without incident’, between the Gringos and the Greeks, between the White House and King Constantine, and between the reckless Hippie she was three years ago and the born-again Republican Ultraconservative she had become now.

The café table was cluttered with piles of paper, arranged in a fortress-like structure separating her from the rest of the patrons. This time she was arranging a trip for the Utah Broadcasters Association, a state-run group that took orders from the Mormon

Church, the Osmond family and, when they agreed, God. “If anyone needed a glass-breaking experience dancing on tables till dawn, it’s these guys,” Jennifer thought, remembering how dull Greeks became after they had settled in America for a generation or two. But her eyes read the reality of the situation as she read the assignment sheet she had been given by her Greek AND American superiors. “Acropolis on the 19th three o’clock to five-fifteen. Six thirty AM on the 20th, scripture realigning, breakfast, Delphi till noon, an hour of free shopping time, two and a half hours leisure tour of the Saint Dimitri monastery, return to hotel for Scripture reading, then for the evening, Beethoven, Mozart and two experimental pieces by a guest conductor...TBA.”

Something twigged in Jennifer. She remembered something, and someone. “It couldn’t be Alan,” she verbalized, and prayed.

“Do you wish to order now?” the waiter interjected in English, with a heavy working class accent.

“Yes, thank you,” she replied in perfect Kathalevuse, the upper-class dialect spoken only by the highest members of Greek society. “Mousaka, salad and baklava for desert.”

“Very good, Madame,” the waiter replied, in English, bowing with a respect tempered by distance of class, rank and perspective as he made his exit.

Jennifer knew that she deserved the exclusion. She ordered the same meal she could have had in any Greek diner back home, ordered in the same way. But she was hungry and, in typical Greek manner, the TBA conductor she was to meet was late. “Let him order his own baklava and souvlaki,” she thought. “Let him TRY to laugh at me for being on time in a country where everything runs late,” she muttered while checking the Mormon ‘getaway’ itinerary for the last time, knowing it would be screwed up somewhere. “But, please don’t let him be Alan Kewalski,” she pleaded to the gods atop Mount Olympus, the Virgin Mary and the J-Man.

Her silent prayer was broken by a loud roar from the doorway, Beethoven’s ‘Ode to Joy’ bolting out in the worst broken Greek

she had ever heard.

Alan grabbed the nearest waitress, Morena, an eighteen-year old peasant girl who craved excitement but needed money. He danced his way into the room, anticipating the headwaiter informing him that his attire, and odor, were not up to the code of the California Café.

Jennifer looked up to the sky, her frustration converted to anger for the first time in three years. "You owe me! Get him out of my life!" she futilely grunted at whatever Deity, or deities, were responsible for Maestro Kewlalski's entrance, and very existence.

Alan tangoed, waltzed and watoozies Morena past the headwaiter, then the owner. The Hippie maestro made sure that he expressed the Beethovenian lyrics about universal disarmament to the Greek Colonels seated at three large tables who were negotiating with the Uniformed American arms dealers and Plainclothes crew-cut-bearing military advisors.

To add relevancy to the attack, Alan combined the Beethoven with music from Theodorakis, who was rapidly becoming the Bob Dylan of Athens, Sparta, Crete and even Macedonia. He invited the waitress to sing then the crowd to clap along. Most joined in, ignorant of the words or their meaning.

The Colonels were not pleased. Neither was a small-framed officer with big ambitions for power. A man built more for a career as an accountant than a soldier, Captain Basili Spiros worked hard for his rank, and he would not have the military of ANY country ridiculed by an American draft dodger. He publicly admired right wing Conservatives Winston Churchill, J Edgar Hoover and Richard Nixon. He privately worshipped right wing Fascists Hitler, Stalin and Napoleon. "One day, Maestro Kewalski, you will be singing MY tune," Spiros vowed under his breath. "Very soon."

"You need a proper jacket, Maestro Kewalski," restaurant owner George Lekas admonished, chasing the band-master around the confused, and indignant, international bankers who used the California Café as a place of business rather than mischief, many of them hiding tax money into the receipts for parties of 800 in the

450 capacity establishment . “You need a proper jacket!” the command as Lekas ‘offered’ one of the complimentary coats hanging on the rack, then his own.

“I got a proper jacket!” Alan gleefully exclaimed, tearing the blazer and underlying blouse from Morena and throwing them over his denim jacket. Morena enjoyed the exposure, her undergarment far more fashionable and classy than the assigned outer-garb at The California.

Having gotten most of the clients to clap, some of them to dance, even the Canadian mining engineer, King Kewalski took the dancefloor to the tabletop, inviting whoever dared to follow. Morena got pulled into the first round of the converted, or so she let Lekas believe.

The chaos turned into a free-form conga-line, stomping on tables and sacred cows. Congressman MacDougall had one too many oozos and found himself joining formation behind Illya Denosovic, a Russian sub-Ambassador who was now twice as drunk as he was. But the Greek Colonels were embarrassed, the American military men concerned. Proprietor Lekas was enraged. “No Incident Jennifer” prepared for WWII. She requested that a phone be brought to her table. She hid behind the foliage, hoping that her contacts were still her friends.

“You need a tie, Maestro!” Lekas persisted.

“Can it be a red tie?” Alan shouted out, seeing a golden opportunity to make a very private point.

“Yes, Maestro,” the reply. “It can be a red tie.”

Alan grabbed the red table cloth from under the china of a booth marked RESERVED. The client for whom it was saved was none other than Tim MacNeally, board member of Dow Chemical, producer of linoleum, glue and a new line of defoliating agents which had just been tested on the jungle outside Saigon AND Cambodia.

“Drum roll!” Alan commanded as he prepared for the whip the

table cloth out trick, or treat. Percussive accompaniment was first provided by MacDougall and Denosovic, having found more in common with ethyl alcohol than arguing over whether its appropriate carrier was vodka vs. Kentucky whiskey. Others of lower rank and lesser social stature joined in, Lekas steamed like Mt. Visuvius in the middle of one of Mama Nature's PMS attacks. Then, Morena joined in. She should have known better. How dare she jeopardize the opportunity to work in her Uncle's restaurant with half the demands and twice the pay of everyone else? He had raised her from dolls to dollar-seeking, and this was his reward?

"Don't worry, Morena," Alan related. "If he fires you, you can work in MY orchestra."

Alan pulled Morena over, hugged her, and gave her a big, sloppy kiss, smack on the lips, his other hand still holding onto the tablecloth, the countdown proceeding. The fact that only two plates broke in the whipping of the tablecloth from the table was impressive to all concerned, especially Alan. He was drunk with power, on a mission of no return this time, yet again.

Spiros reached for his gun, sternly giving the reporters sticking their noses into the front door the 'you'd best leave right now!' stare which gained him more than one promotion. His glance of revenge toward the Maestro was even more severe, and final.

Jennifer had second thoughts about what to do when the people at the other end of the phone answered. By the third "Jennifer, are you there?!", they would act according to their own instincts. The ball was in her court.

Alan allowed his eyes to meet Spiros', and the reporters'. The former meant business, and he had REAL bullets in his gun. As for the press, anything that made news was good enough. The more blood on the floor, the more newspapers would behold. The story meant little, just the pictures.

Seeing his chance for the limelight in places where he could never go, a bazooki player in the street found the rhythm of the room in his fingers and strummed out the score to the evolving drama with a riff worthy of any spaghetti Western or Marx

Brothers movie.

Alan threw on a hat with a brim wide enough to be worn by Clint Eastwood. He put up a finger, the index digit this time. “Ena”, the crowd echoed back as the countdown. “Dua”, the next number, Alan pointing his finger directly at Spiros and the Colonels. “Threa” found Alan’s fingers in a peace sign. “Desita”, a fist. “Bende” featured open palms, a request made to Morena to bring the emerging Fascists flowers, a request she conducted with grace, style and enough sexual allure to quench any angry intentions. But not so from Spiros, and the Colonel with the small mustache which was neatly groomed. With his superior’s permission, Spiros called in the police on his walkie-talkie.

Before anyone could say “Acropolis at the Apocalypse, reporter cameras were replaced with guns, inquisitive story seekers deposed by story-quenchers. Silence overtook the room, Spiros smiling in delight as Alan stood naked to the world, nothing to protect him now except his pride, and a reputation which would go down in history. It hit him, as his following fled. The only martyr in the Kewalski Rebellion would be Alan, and what of the historians? Would anyone have the guts, or vision, to tell the REAL story of how it ended?

Spiros rose. “Mister Kewalski——”

“——is with me,” a voice from the back of the room rang out. “He’s my responsibility, and the Embassy will cover all the damages,” Jennifer continued.

“Jenny?” Alan asked, not believing his eyes.

“Yes, Alan. It’s me,” her reply with a terse tone driven by a lifetime of repressed anger.

Lekas interrupted the reunion with a fresh jacket and REAL tie. “Maestro, please,” the restaurateur’s plea, meant from the heart of a man whose only real crimes had been in the spheres of money management with tax collectors and even more vicious business partners.

“Sure,” Alan conceded, putting on the jacket, leaving it unbuttoned, finding that it fit. The tie was from Disneyworld. “Goofy!” Alan related to the crowd, and to Spiros. “Goofy, Sneezzy, Dopy and Doc!” he continued, pointing to himself. “I pronounce you all cured of Dull Out Virus. And if you get a relapse, take two Beethoven concertos and a Wagnerian Overture and call me back in the morning.”

As Jennifer took him behind the foliage, the crowd cheered, even the Colonels. Spiros was forced to pretend to clap. But one day, very soon, the dancefloor would belong to him, and EVERYONE would dance to his tune.

The meeting that Alan and Jennifer dreaded and prayed for had indeed happened. It started with the waiter approaching, as if it was just another day at the California. “May I have your order?” he respectfully asked Jennifer, ignoring her guest.

“Another waiter, please,” Alan interjected, pointing to Morena, being given a pink slip at the cash register. “Please,” the Meastro said to Jennifer.

“The hostess you requested has just left, Sir,” the waiter’s reply as Morena stormed out the door in a fit of angry pride.

“Good for her!” Alan’s retort. “I think she’ll make it. Think you’ll make it too, my friend, if you decide to stop serving morons and assholes in this five-star cesspool and start serving something REAL.”

Jennifer ordered in Kathelevuse, requesting a meal for herself and Alan, adding a few apologetic notes along the way.

The waiter exited with respect, nodding to Jennifer, looking at Alan as if he had leprosy rather than rabies. It was a look of pity rather than condemnation.

“What did you tell him?” Alan asked.

“That you have a brain tumor, and a neurological condition, and that you forgot your medication.” Jennifer took three pills out of a

bottle from her purse, slipping one to Alan, keeping two for herself. “Aspirin, Alan. For my headache.”

Alan acted ‘mental’, and put the medication in his mouth, while his ‘nurse’ clandestinely took hers. He picked up a glass of water, not wine, and looked towards the Colonels’ table. He toasted the men with a glass of water, and swallowed the pills, then pretended to feel ‘sane’. “I didn’t know you were a tourguide, Jennifer,” he commented from the side of his mouth.

“I’m head of the Cultural Tourism Board, Alan.”

“I thought you were going back to school after we got divorced. For something real, not an MRS degree,” Alan’s admonishment as he noted the rock on her wedding finger. “It is that estates lawyer your parents fixed you up with when you were six years old? Bernie Pappas. Winner of the Astoria Greek-American accountant of the year award, three years running, or rather crawling.”

Jennifer’s firey and heartbroken eyes turns downward. “It didn’t work out.”

“Fuckin glad of that!” Alan shot back, spitting the aspirin out of his mouth discreetly.

“Alan, your language!”

“Why is it that every ‘good Greek girl’ wants to hear everything except the truth? And that every Greek American father wants to keep his daughter a virgin till she has her third kid?”

“Alan, I didn’t—”

“—Bernie was a carrier of Dull Out disease. A viral germ warfare experiment that the US defense department keeps pumping out. Boredom is the biggest killer in the industrialized world. Even the goddamn Russians know that. But they keep killing themselves, too. Moscow is still the most boring city in the world, ranking with Washington, Astoria and wherever they get this toxic crap.”



“What are you talking about, Alan?”

“That Musak!” Alan looked up at the speakers, echoing the soothing, melodic tones that maintained the 75 beats per minute with non-offense tones. Songs that were top forty hits belonging to rebels two hundred years ago, now pabulum for the upper-crust. “That ‘music’ is a sacrilege. How dare they bastardize Mozart like that! Or anything else that was once Alive!”

“You were the leader of the band,” Jennifer related, opening up the history book written between them with bravado and revenge. “I was part of the band.”

“But you conducted me. You still are.” He felt his shield melt, his heart exposed. He reached for her hand.

“Alan, I’m involved with someone else.” The words burned her mouth as they came out.

“With another Bernie?” Alan felt drowned again. His survival instinct would force him to find solid footing, he hoped.

“He works at the American Consulate. He’s powerful, courteous, kind, gentle—”

“But is he Alive? Does he make you feel Alive?”

“I grew up, Alan.”

“You GAVE up, Jenny.”

“Someone has to be responsible. Pay the bills. Like the time you stole my brother’s van and ran off to the Yukon for a month.”

“I thought he was out of town. I did bring it back, with a full tank of gas.”

“The time I got you off on that pot possession charge.”

“I was holding it for a friend.”

“The time you skipped out of town after you got your draft notice, with no forwarding address. Where the hell were you, Alan?!!” Jennifer’s eyes fumed with volcanic rage. She had waited three years for an answer.

“I was held up,” Alan’s response, facing the floor.

“With an Eskimo bimbo groupie up in the Canadian Yukon.”

“With a different class of company. In Levinworth Prison!” the Maestro blasted out with triple fortissimo rage, followed by a soft, reflective passage delivered only to the most private of audiences. “I decided to come back and ‘face the music’”.

Jennifer could see through an Alan Kewalski lie a mile away, thought the darkest shades. This was no lie. Everything about his sabbatical from the world, and her, was very real, painful, and private. “I didn’t know, Alan. I’m sorry.”

She extended her hand out to Alan. He pulled away, back into himself, shielded by the smart-assed grin.

“I only had to do two years of hard labor,” he smirked with a quivering grin. “Learned the fine art of making rocks into rubble. Soft rock into mud...A pun in there, somewhere. Highway Engineering Rehabilitation training. Got myself put in solitary a lot. Food stinks in there, and after a month or two, so do you. But I got a lot of writing done. Most of it up here, in my head.”

“And now?”

The Maestro grabbed hold of a bottle of wine, maintaining it at a safe distance from his salty and parched mouth. “Me and the US State Department still don’t send Christmas cars to each other. I negotiated an early release for myself from the Levinworth Hilton, very unofficial, and unauthorized. The Feds just cued into it a month ago.”

“You miss the States, Alan?”

“New York, Berkeley, Oregon, Iowa, Philadelphia, PA and

Philadelphia, Mississippi.”

Alan continued to recall the places, Jennifer remembering the feelings. She had been with Alan from the Julliard days. Her tuition was paid for by restaurant-owning Greek immigrants who wanted their daughter to play flute in Carnegie Hall. To impress the relatives, ultimately. Alan had paid for his classical training on the weekdays by doing rock gigs on weekends.. The astrologically-matched Libra-Aries common-law marriage took place the moment they set eyes on each other, consummated with the notes played on their instruments while they were supposed to be playing a solemn Bach Cantata. The rest was musical history, a cross-genre mix of everything from Bach to Beatles, music that every listener either loved or hated, the inevitable fate of anything that had unbridled passion put into every note.

“Your air fueled my fire,” Alan confessed. “But you’ve become wooden, and this next Bernie is probably going to petrify you. At least you didn’t cut your hair. Or did you?”

Alan reached behind Jennifer’s neck, hoping that there was still a shaggy blond mane under the tight bun. She pulled away, allowing him no more than a confirmatory flick of his finger. “Fuck you, Alan!” her softly delivered, no-nonsense reply to his outstretched heart.

“Good!” the comeback. “I think there is still hope for you.” Alan’s Sigmund Freud act-out was never very authentic, but it always felt very real.

Jennifer lowered her voice, hoping that no one had seen her revert to a non-ladylike mode of communication. If anyone sensed the passion she was beginning to feel, again, it would cost her a husband, a job and maybe her last chance to live a comfortable ‘non incident’ life.

“I can’t be what I used to be,” she confessed. “Even if I want to. We have to do business together, Tour guide to Orchestra Conductor. Are you going to be okay with that, Maestro Kewalksi?”

“Are you, Jennifer?”

“You’re an anarchist-socialist who doesn’t believe in any rules, Alan. The world needs rules. And so do I.”

“Justice and Right are beyond rules. So is freedom. No rules for the braves ones. Are you still one of the brave ones, Jenny?”

“There are different ways of being brave, Alan.”

“Not with eyes close, and not if you don’t know fuck all about the country you’re showcasing, Ms. Tour Guide.”

“And you do, Alan! Your Greek is atrocious! And your vocabulary, as I heard it here, at the level of a two year old. Which, I guess you have grown into becoming here. And you claim to want to Enlighten this country?”

Alan absorbed and appreciated the dare, and the rejection. Logic left only one option. “Eight o’clock AM, American time, tomorrow.”

Alan got up, before the food arrived, and walked out, without incident. Jennifer sat behind a fortress of forms in a well-provisioned fort, unable to feed an empty stomach or an aching heart.

## CHAPTER 4

Alan zoomed his Harley chopper to a screeching halt below Jennifer's apartment at 9:15 sharp, the Flight of the Walkurie blasting out of a mega-sized eight-track. With the exception of his fringe-tan leather jacket bearing a beaded likeness of Beethoven on the back, his liquor-free breath and his non-intoxicated brain, everything else was regulation biker, intended to scare the life into the regulation American and American-wannabe suburbanites.

"You're late," Jennifer pointed out from a stoop behind him. "It's after nine."

"I'm early," Alan affirmed. "We said eight. You weren't stupid enough to wait for me for an hour and a half?"

Jennifer kept silent, then edged her way to the chopper, her tight skirt confining her stride length and forward motion.

"Is that what you call casual wear?" Alan commented on the gray business suit.

"The airlines lost my other luggage, Alan." She approached the chopper seat, futilely trying to find a way her chic knee-length skirt could be adjusted so that she would be ladylike, safe and-goddess Athena willing-comfortable.

"You're a tour guide, Jennifer. Yell at those morons at the airport about your luggage."

"I'm a diplomat who arranges tours, Alan."

"So yell at them diplomatically."

"Maybe if I could ride side-saddle," she calmly speculated.

"My bike, my rules!" Alan pulled out a large hunting knife from a fringed sheath under his buckskin Easy Rider jacket

Jennifer withdrew into herself, not letting on anything. Who

knew what Alan had in mind? Had he turned into a militant pacifist who emulated Malcolm X instead of Martin Luther King? Would he force her into submission as a transitional stage to blissful companionship?

She braced herself, said a silent prayer, and prepared for the worst. The blade made its cut just under her waist, in a quick, decisive stroke.

“That was a two-hundred dollar Christian Dior skirt you put a slit into, Alan!”

“Now it’s a Jennifer Pappas original!”

Alan ripped off Jennifer’s jacket, then tossed her touring material into the wind. “Let’s roll!”

Jennifer got on the bike. It felt good to feel the wind and sun on her shoulder and neck again. For a moment she felt like a captive queen, allowing her Barbarian conqueror to whisk her away to his kingdom, a place she would fall in love with at first sight, then control with the first kiss. Still, the Queen of Denial and the Beethovenian Barbarian were officially at War, for the moment.

“You have a helmet, Lord Kewalski?”

“King Alan,” the bareheaded Bear growled out.

“The peasant cops arrest you if you don’t have a helmet. They have bigger guns in their hands than you have between your legs.”

Alan contemplated the accuracy of Jennifer’s remark. Though not fluent in Greek civil law, she DID know the rules of the world as it is far better than Alan did. She read Time, Newsweek, New Republic and the New York Times cover to cover, but Alan read the eyes of the people the reporters wrote about. Big things were going to happen and soon. By land, Greece was bordered by Yugoslavia and Albania, Eastern bloc countries run by two-bit dictators who wanted to out-Stalin the Soviets. By sea, NATO warships, most under the American flag, kept the harbors full and well armed. Like Switzerland, Greece was a favorite vacation spot

for everybody, but its recreational attributes could not keep Greek neutrality alive very much longer.

“Helmet, Sir Alan?” Jennifer interjected into the rebel-composer’s trance.

“No problem,” the reply. He pulled out two surplus GI helmets with ram horns mounted on either side. “No Viking should be without one”.

Jennifer tried the helmet on. Indeed it did fit, over the head and between the ears. Then, before she could say “Das Reingold”, Alan belted out a hearty Wagnerian “Ohahhohooaaaa” in cadence to the Walkurie theme in his head, and on the rewind 8 track. He let loose the kickstand and rammed on the accelerator, flying off into kingdoms unimaginable in any Greek American Princess’ imagination.

Alan’s Greece was far more colorful than the tour brochure, or even the stories Jennifer were told by her Grandmother when the ‘men’ were in the living room talking about politics, and probably women. All the characters in Alan’s Greece were alive. The olive grower bringing in the black and green pearls of the mountain on a half-lame, half-blind mule. The fisherman rowing in his boat, hoping that he would get enough money for his catch to feed his stomach, empty engine and stubbornly-held-onto hopes to go out to sea yet another day. The middle-aged housewife outside the Orthodox Church crossing herself, asking God to pity the town whore, who was probably screwing her own husband. The laborers in the tavernas arguing politics, as loud as they were unconnected to the places where the real decisions were made. The buskers, the painters, the magicians, the street-actors. Artists seemed to be everywhere, listening to no one else other than themselves and perhaps God, their closest friend or their most competitive rival, or both.

At every corner, the locals asked for money, either directly or with overpriced goods on which they knew the foreign tourists would not barter a price. The physically-handicapped ones got Jennifer’s dimes, the psychologically-beaten ones her quarters. By noon, she had less money on her person than the poorest of them.

Jennifer lost orientation of time and place. She had not remembered feeling such an experience in a long time. Still, she kept looking at her watch whenever Alan wasn't looking. He strolled through the day to the music in his head. It was up to Jennifer to walk along side, highly noticeable by her formal-turned-renegade attire, but not noticed.

Alan eyed a scantily-clad twenty-something busker belting out "Freedom Now and Forever," lyrics by Alan, melody by Jennifer, one of the tunes that lived for a week on the top forty charts in the States and somehow found a steady home on the other side of the Atlantic. Alan pulled Jennifer into him, dancing to the tune they had both written between stops on the Jersey turnpike five years and a thousand lifetimes ago." She's playing our song, Jenny." he said with a warm and seldom-expressed smile.

"She's pressing your buttons, Alan," Jennifer noted, never losing sight of the busker's eyes, firmly fixed on Alan's smile, wallet, and ass. Still, she played along with Alan's request to dance in the interest of 'non-incident' international diplomacy.

"You're not having a good time, Jenny?"

"I'm having a very...education time, Alan."

"You're having a good time, but scared to admit it. You could have a great time if you let go of that baggage you're carrying around."

"My fiancée?" Jennifer stepped on Alan's foot, a pain-inducing gesture that amused the crowd and pleased herself to no end.

"Your guilt," Alan sternly directed to her in English, then Greek.

Jennifer stopped dead in her tracks. "Bullshit!" she said. "Bullseye!" she thought to herself, remembering her strict Greek Orthodox background, taught in Astoria, New York, by a stern, constipated-looking priest who always seemed to have a picture of Jesus suffering on the cross behind him. The lessons in Sunday



School were to be humble, compassionate and subservient. The game plan on Monday morning was to kick ass at work, school or play because your parents, the priest and even God was only proud of you if you were number one.

Jennifer caught sight of another Jesus on the cross in the marketplace, a Byzantine relief faded by the elements. The eyes were compassionate, giving and wise, but not kind, and certainly not Alive.

“Guilt,” Alan repeated as he heard the beats of the durge playing though Jennifer’s head. “You feel guilty for not making it as an A-level concert pianist or musical director, a task which is more about ass-kicking and ass kissing than talent.”

“Strike one, Maestro Kewalski,” Jennifer conceded.

“And you feel guilty about getting to where you are because it was on the backs of others.”

“I owed it to my parents to be a success at something, Alan. They worked hard to put me through college.”

“Because they wanted to show you off.”

“Like you did!”

Alan’s eyes turned downward, his soul pulled into a place her feared and valued most.

“I don’t care about how you might have screwed me in the record deals, the fame stuff, the money stuff, Alan. I care about the love stuff.”

“I offered you half of—”

“—half of WHAT, Macho Man Maestro? You were using me like every other man uses women.”

“For sex, right,” Alan replied sarcastically with a sadness under it.

“No. For your ego. You kept me around because I laughed at your jokes. To see if you could make other people laugh. I don’t remember the last time you laughed at MY jokes.”

“Air fuels fire, Jennifer. And fire ignites dead wood.”

“That fire also destroys wood, and itself.” She turned somber, reflective, then concerned well beyond the boundaries of Platonic or romantic love. “I had a dream about you, Alan. You and me were walking in the Rockies somewhere. One of those campgrounds where half of Manhattan comes to the same five acres of open space to get the ‘wilderness experience’”

Alan chuckled.

“We were talking about music stuff,” Jennifer continued. And there was a man next to me.”

“Bernie? Your fiancée?”

“A guide, Alan. He comes to me in dreams, sometimes. He told me about my aunt dying in a plane crash, my sister having a miscarriage, some other things that all came true or happened while he was talking to me. He said something to me, something that I was supposed to say to you.”

“That we should use our music royalties to buy IBM stock and US steel. So we could compute how cold our relationship would be one day.”

“‘Intensity is your life, Alan. And it will kill you.’” Jennifer was never more serious. “That’s what this ‘guide’ said about you. ‘Intensity is your life....and it will kill you.’”

“That’s the most ridiculous thing I ever heard,” Alan quipped back with his best Grouchesche grin, around an ad hoc pencil cigar.

“‘Intensity is your life and it will kill you’. That’s what he said to me about you.. He’s never been wrong.”

Alan sobered up and pondered the prophesy. No Groucho joke or Beethovenian riff could provide an escape from its validity. A chill ran through his body, felt down into the deepest recesses of the bone, gut, and heart. “So does that mean I should keep blasting forward faster than the speeding bullets, or slow down? Are you supposed to save me from myself, Jen?”

“I don’t know, Alan.” She took his hand, kissed him on the cheek, then withdrew. “The revolution still needs your energy. The Mormon businessmen need an entertaining, yet tasteful itinerary.”

“And what do you need, Jennifer?”

She looked down, then up feeling abandoned by both Angels and Demons. “I don’t know, Alan.”

## CHAPTER 5

The Marine Guard stood proudly outside the American Consulate, brass and leather shining so clean that it sharpened the soft rays of the Greek sunshine into hard, blinding flashes. Tourists shot photos of the feared and revered man in blue, their kids indulging in childlike laughter. But the Sergeant's gun barrel still aimed at imaginary ghosts ten thousand miles away.

L. Samuel Houston Johnson had lost a lot since 1965. His two year sabbatical in Southeast Asia cost him a high school sweetheart in Des Moines, a leg in the Mekong Delta, and a promising career as an offensive lineman in Dallas, Green Bay or Baltimore. But one thing Sergeant Johnson would never give up was his Baptist faith, and the belief that his sacrifices for God and country were worth it, and appreciated, somewhere. A born grunt and servant, raised on a West-Texas cattle ranch and nearby factory-town, Sam could not live in a world where there were no sacred cows. The shattered pieces of his broken heart were held together with too many rusty chains.

Inside the Consulate, everything was normal, predictably 'non-incident'. So Johnson believed. So the tourists believed. So Jennifer believed as she showed her pass at the gate. She asked that Alan escort her to, and into the building, officially American soil. She assured him that it was very important to her. She worried about Alan's fearful reluctance to comply, and his eagerness to through caution, and common sense, to the wind by going along with the request.

"Thank you, Ma'am," Johnson barked out at Attaché Jennifer Pappas, his head bowed slightly in the manner of his Old South forefathers, He stood erect, addressing Alan. "And you Sir?"

"I'm no 'Sir'," Alan grinned back. "I'm a--"

"—Lord," Jennifer found herself volleying into the mix. As the word echoed out of her mouth, playfully intended, she realized that for this one utterance, a left-right politico street fight could break out, starting the 1948 Greek Civil War all over again. Then, with reflexes still operative, and on the job, "Lord Alan Kewalski,

recently knighted by the Queen of England. Classical music conductor.”

“Music channeller,” Alan spat out, envisioning what he would say to the Queen of England if he was ever even admitted through the doors of Buckingham Palace. He turned from the worried face of his ex-beloved-everything to the no-nonsense Sgt. Johnson. “Music is everywhere, we just channel it. In song, voice, dance, even marching. As long as we don’t goose-step over other people while we march to the drummer’s beat.”

Johnson tightened the grip on his weapon, arched his back and prepared to defend the Star Spangled quarterback behind him with the affirmation of a thousand defensive linemen, defending the white streak on the pavement like it was the Alamo. “When you step over this line, ‘Sir’,” he advised the most popular draft ‘resistor’ in Greece, “you walk on American ground.”

“And this building is YOUR country, Gomer?” Alan shot back in counter-part harmony.

“Yes, ‘Sir’.” Johnson braced himself, stepping in between Jennifer and Alan. “If you don’t show proper identification, I cannot let you inside, ‘Sir’”.

“Do you know who I am?” Alan challenged. “More important, do you know who YOU are, and what they’ve made you become?”

Something in Johnson twiggled. Like the citizens of Athens in times of old challenged with the ranting questions of Old Man Socrates, he felt violated, invaded, and informed. A mirror had been rammed in front of his face. His half-closed eyelids, for a moment, were forced wide open. But, he was still a soldier. Even down to his doubt-festering Marine core. “I suggest that you remain outside...Sir,” he ‘advised’ in the strongest of tones.

“And I suggest that you open those eyes you keep hiding underneath that visor,” Alan mused. “You need a whole lotta lovin’. I could get you a weekend girlfriend. Or I could hug you myself, not a very American gesture, but since I’m on the Greek side of the line...”

Before Johnson had time to interpret and defend himself, Alan blitz-krieged him with a Grecian embrace.

Johnson counter-attacked with a push and a clear view of the business end of his M16.

Alan answered with an ever more powerful cannon-a freshly picked flow which he placed into the rifle barrel. He punctuated the barrage of kindness with a chorus of “Ode to Joy” and a sincerely-intended smile.

Johnson was trained to defend himself against all manners of foe, but not a lamb in radical revolutionary anarchist clothing. He cocked the hammer on his weapon and delivered the terms. “Mister Kewalski, You are infringing on American soil. If you do not remove yourself beyond the perimeter, I will be obliged to use physical force.”

“No one owns this country, Sergeant.” Alan advanced upon Johnson’s ‘line in the concrete’, prepared to take the whole American Army on if need be. He was confronted with an even more formidable force, a squad of Marines armed to kill, and trained to like it.

“He’s with me,” Jennifer interjected, showing another ID, coded, numbered, and very official.

“Ma’am, I can’t..” Johnson insisted.

“I’ll take full responsibility for his actions, Sergeant,” no-incident Jennifer promised Johnson. “Again...” she mumbled to herself.

Another flash of diplomatic paper put the Sgt. on the phone. The okay approved, he let them pass. “He’s under your custody, Ma’am.” No emotion emanated from the Texan Marine other than ‘firmly respectful’, to his God, flag, and the women he was entrusted to protect from Communist Traitors like Alan.

Alan turned solemn and cautious as he walked into a quarter-

block patch of ground officially belonging to his home country and, God help him, culture. Johnson smelled the odor of a starving rodent who wandered too far into the mouse trap for a scrap of cheese, but he didn't spring the trap. It was part of the unofficial order, and request, from Jennifer. A matter of Southern gentility, and military strategy.

The ancient Mediterranean had gone to war for Helen of Troy. The modern one might maintain an uneasy peace for Jennifer of Astoria—for now.

## CHAPTER 6

Captain Basili Spiros got off easy after his inability to restrain Alan in the California Café. The Maestro had cost Spiros a month's pay and a demotion to Lieutenant.

"I will cost you more than money, my old friend," Spiros vowed as he passed a marquee for the upcoming International Athenian Orchestra concert featuring Alan's smilingly defiant face plastered into the middle of it. "And I will demote you to the kind of creature you hate and pity," his pledge.

When Spiros first met Alan it was hate at first sight. The initial encounter was over a speeding ticket incurred by the Maestro motorcyclist as 'kamakazi-Kewalski' whizzed past a military parade on his motorcycle, Alan avoiding capture because he knew the narrow streets better than Spiros or any of his Greek Army goons did.

The second was a drug bust in which Spiros was given the honor of capturing a shipment of Turkish opium and hash. Alan's behind-the-scenes involvement resulted in the contraband burning up in smoke. The bonfire cost the CIA another boatload of drugs that could be used to distribute in Black neighborhood in Watts, or to trade to Central American rebels for guns earmarked for Africa. Spiros was out a stash which he could offload on the black Market in six countries of his own choosing, at his own pace.

The "Little Captain", now a lowly Lieutenant thanks to the 'situation' at the restaurant, adjusted his tie in the mirror of Nikos' Record Emporium, the establishment featuring the newest British and American exports, and the boldest Greek selections. Items included classic Dylan, the new psychedelic Beatles and the best of Theodorakis, a homegrown social-democrat musician whose lyrics and songs had a diversity which rivaled the Grateful Dead. Though every album in the store had a different beat, the tone was all the same-Alive! How out of place Spiros' reflection was in the window.

The five-foot-five officer fancied himself in another time,



another place. In public, he would sing praises of the 19th century Greek freedom fighters who overthrow the Turks. In more private company, the Nazi elite were his heroes. What drove Spiros was not money, ideology or fame, but power. He grew up as the always-ridiculed runt of five boys in an isolated dog-eat-dog village rich enough to buy only one seaworthy boat.

Young Spiros was never invited to take a ride on the village boat, and when he did sneak on, he was invariably thrown off in the middle of the lagoon, without his pants or underwear on. “The only way to make the other bullies stop laughing at you is to dominate them,” his waking thought everyday since that ‘birthday present’ conferred to him by the bigger or wittier kids. “Best to be feared than respected, or even loved,” the montra he would allow to ruminate in his head after his morning toast and coffee. “I curse the day you were born!” he said, again and again, to his deceased father who never raised a hand to protect him as a boy, projecting that he’d never grow up to be a man.

Spiros looked at his watch, then proceeded to the phone booth, on schedule, and dialed the number.

“I trust that you are obeying your orders, Lieutenant Spiros,” the Colonel answered from the other side of the static-ridden line.

“Yes Sir,” Spiros replied through vengeful lips, snapping to attention with his boot-heels. “My orders are to be blamed for the mistakes of my superiors, Sir. To sacrifice myself for the larger mission.”

“A lieutenant in the KYP has more power than a Major in the regular Army.”

“The KYP, Sir?” Spiros felt his shoulder rise up, the invisible eagles on his uniform sprouting wings, lifting him up to the top of Mount Olympus, and beyond.

“You made it in, Lieutenant Spiros. You are one of us now, not one of them. We need surgeons like you.”

“Surgeons, Sir?”

“Surgeons to cut out the Communist cancer which will take over our country if the ‘free’ elections scheduled by King Constantine are to go ahead as scheduled. Our country is very sick and we are its only healers.”

Spiros looked over to the poster of Alan, imagining the Maestro’s eyes broken. Then to the record store, envisioning a world where Wagner replaced Hendrix and crew cuts were standard issue for all civilians.

“Lieutenant Spiros,” the renegade Colonel yelled into the phone. “Are you there?!”

“Yes. Sir.” Spiros said clearly, and distinctly, leading him to the question he had dared not ask, till today. “Will it be soon?”

“Very soon, and very discrete.” A business-like tone, made more intense by its understatement.

Spiros heard the phone click at the other end and punctuated it with the click of his own bothers. “Seig Heil”, he whispered to himself as loudly as he dared.

## CHAPTER 7

Tourists were told that the American Ambassador and the President were in charge of the American Consulate. Newspaper editors suspected that it was Dow Corning or a KGB mole. But the insiders knew that the top was ruled from the bottom here, and the first floor predominately featured Bernie Bernstein's name in small, generic, and very readable print over the office door.

“Impressive title for Nowhere Man Number One,” Alan commented to Jennifer in full range of a few civilian passers by who he wanted to convert into citizens of the Kewalski Revolt. “This place looks like an accounting office. I thought accountants were too boring to even think about stealing. But maybe that’s the idea.”

“Alan, Shut up,” Jennifer retorted firmly.

“Absolutely. I like it when you stand up for yourself. It’s the thing that I always liked, loved and admired about---”

A Florsheim stiletto heel pounded its way through Alan’s leather boot.

“Thanks, Jen. I needed that,” the reply through a tight-lipped smirk.

“You always did enjoy pain, Alan.”

“Then take me to your leader. Or if he, she or it is not available, your fiancée.”

“My boss.”

“Wrong way to enter a job OR a marriage.”

“It beats being a groupie, or a disciple, Maestro.”

“Touchee, Jen.” Alan allowed himself three second of reflection and one of vulnerability. Jennifer could only see through a two-

second window, or so he remembered.

Alan's moment of truth and terror was interrupted by a deep voice from a place in his past he thought was dead. "Alan Kewalski's music sucks and he'll be at the bottom of the charts in the States a month." Bernie's Flushing, Queens accent made him sound just as crude, brash and truthful as his hometown. The image of Wall Street angst and Pennsylvania Avenue power turned to Jennifer "But the kids in Europe are still buying his records, and he could be very useful to us."

"Who is us?" Alan asked the balding thirty-two year old going on fifty on hold to another party at the other end of a black and red cordless phone. He expected to see the Ugly American but instead it was the Ordinary American, something far more frightening to a man who saw Gad as a sadist who killed humans by forcing them to submit and embrace mediocrity. Bernie's dead eyes and compliant expression drove terror into Alan, particularly when he saw Jennifer finding comfort in them. "Who the hell am I going to be useful to?" Alan demanded of THIS Bernie, who still held the phone receiver in his hand.

"Me," Jennifer interjected, just as Bernie's stone cold star turned white hot. "Alan is supposed to help me arrange for tours that have an international appeal."

Bernie pondered the matter, then gazed at the American flag on the wall. He recalled how his brother died of starvation in a Vietcong Prison camp, while Alan sustained himself on three almost-squares a day somewhere a lot safer. He remembered his immigrant ancestors who fled the Czar in Russia, then the Bolsheviks in Poland. He reminded himself of how much he could do from such an anonymous position, in such an untraceable way. Then he recalled how Jennifer's life path was intermingled with both Maestro Kewalski, and Alan.

Alan sensed it, and knew instantly that this 'Bernie' had more goods on him than any of the others Jennifer had fallen in 'like' with. The low ranking Ambassador Aide knew more about Alan than any official file, and kept the details secret—for now. He seemed to know about his 'college years' in the Levinworth Pen,

the heroically-intercepted drug deals, the aiding and abetting draft resisters on both sides of the Atlantic, and the triple-cross double-play Alan did to five secret government agencies, setting them against each other to effect his semi-legal escape from doing another five years of hard time in the States on Conspiracy charges. But for now, Bernie wanted something more from Alan than twenty years of his life behind bars.

“I’ll call you later, General,” the accountant who held all the books said into the receiver. He hung up, then turned to Alan. “Hey, pal. Bringing you in here, to American soil, while you still have a possible criminal record back in the States wasn’t my idea.”

“Then whose was it...Jennifer?” the Rebel’s inquiry.

“I wanted to avoid an incident, outside with the guard, and potential conflicting situations in the near future,” she said with eyes turned down to the waxed floor that mercilessly forced her to see a reflection of her guilt-ridden face. “Things are relatively stable, politically, and Bernie could arrange for a reduced sentence when you come home.”

“IF I come home!” Alan protested.

“You’ll run out of countries to hide out in one day, Alan,” she pleaded.

“And if I do, what’s in it for you, ‘Jennifer’?” Kewlaski blasted the accusation straight into Jennifer’s tearing eyes.

“A stable life,” Bernie interjected. “A debt she still thinks she owes you.”

“And what’s in it for you, Bernie?” Alan pressed.

“A stable political life for my country, ‘Maestro’.”

“A stable job here, or higher up in the Fourth Reich?” Alan mused, helping himself to the most comfortable and elevated seat in the place, Bernie’s chair. He then helped himself to one of Bernie’s cigarettes, clinching it in the manner so often adopted by

the German and Swiss members of his own orchestra, along with their special ‘amongst countrymen’ diction. “Fuehrer Lyndon Johnson hiring Jew boys in the SS now, hmmm, Reich Marshal Bernstein?”

Bernie’s bald pale head turned beet red. “If it were up to me, I’d—”

“-Have me do teenybopper fun fest? ‘Up with People’ happy tunes that tell the world that America is 150 percent A-okay? Music that helps us lie to ourselves.” Kewalski stood up, stroking the Red, White and Blue piece of cloth higher on Bernie’s desk than any of the pictures, central to the portraits of everyone. “Come on, Bernie! The Nazis got people to swarm into their ranks because they had great uniforms, a fantastic National Anthem and speakers who make our best Baptist Evangelists look like introverted engineering students. I create, interpret, and channel music because I honor the truth, big T. The same ideals this flag in here is supposed to stand for.”

“And still does.” Bernie pounded his fist on the desk.

“And still could, Mister Ambassador!” Alan’s fingers held on to the miniature Old Glory like it was his own.

“Alan”, Jennifer interjected. “Sugarcoat the message. That’s all.”

“The message is still political, Jenny!” Alan screamed out into Bernie’s bloodshot eyes. He walked to the window, gazing at the Country of his newfound freedom, and opportunity. “The message is political!” he asserted, again, caught between worlds, agendas and loyalties.

“It’s musical,” she asserted. “Music transcends politics, Alan. Sound familiar?”

Alan fumed, threatening to erupt volcanic fire out of his eyes. Then, from his parched throat, a primal scream—of laughter. “She’s good, Bernie. Very, very good. ‘Music transcends politics, demolishes demagogues, liquidates logic’. From ‘Requiem for the

Beyond Common Man' by Alan Kewalski, co-authored by Jennifer Skellos."

"What's he saying?" Bernie asked Jennifer as Alan bolted out a slur more frightening than any roar from his loud, every vocal mouth.

"That he'll cooperate with us," Jennifer stated.

"What else, Jennifer?" her balding, double-chinned fiancée inquired.

Jennifer stared down at the floor again, picking a spot where the rug would hide her eyes. Absorbing the pain in Alan's face, she translated the words he couldn't say through the now-mournful chuckle. "Maestro Kewalski is saying that he sees you and me being very happy together, Bernie." She turned to the object of her pre-marital affections "We are happy together, aren't we Bernie?"

"You better be," Alan's warning, breaking his laugh, his fist held up into Bernie's face. After a three second beat, reduced down to two seconds, he opened it in an outstretched hand, offered in friendship to the nerdy accountant with so much power, and influence. Alan forced his lips into a smile, offered to Bernie with sincerity, and desperation.

Bernie accepted the truce with a cautious handshake. "I have to go to Cyprus. Two days at the absolute most. A weeks tops."

"Something wrong, Alan? Bernie?" Jennifer asked, unable to read the words behind their poker faces.

"We're going to have a 'no-incident' two days, Jenny," Alan translated, from the side of his mouth.

"Platonic," Bernie retorted, negotiating stares with Alan.

"And fun!" Alan added.

"In the spirit of international cooperation... Maestro Kewalski?" Bernie said, then waited for Alan's reply.

The Rebel Expatriate showed every emotion in the libretto of his one-man solo, or, perhaps duet. To Jennifer the beats felt like an eternity.

“No problem,” Alan smiled back with a Buddhist bow. “If you live outside the law, you have to be honest, ‘Mister Ambassador’.”

The phone rang, summoning Bernie to business again, the kind of conversation that confirms big, intricate plans with minimal verbiage.

Alan looked at Jennifer, both of them reminiscing about how things were, lamenting how they couldn’t be.

Bernie grabbed his briefcase, hung up the phone, and gave his wife-to-be a peck on the cheek. Then, a question he thought she COULD answer accurately and without complications. “We have a dinner on Thursday. What do you serve at a hundred dollar a plate benefit for world hunger?”

“Threes Stooges for an appetizer,” Alan reflexively shot back with a boyish smile.

“Marx brothers for an entrée,” Jennifer added.

“And pies in the face all around for desert,” Alan and Jenny appended in unison, punctuated by a synchronized imitation of Stooze Curly.

“Huh?” Bernie’s dumbfounded reply.

“Pies in the face,” Alan explained, with a wide grin.

“A gag. It always works,” Jennifer clarified, with a warm chuckle.

“Hmm,” Bernie replied with an emotionless blank star. ‘I guess it might be funny to some people. But all that mess. Dry cleaning. Better go with the roast beef, potatoes and ice cream.’”



Bernie closed the door behind him on the way out, just like it was another day, somewhere else in a stable reality far away, and just over Jennifer's new horizon. Just like he was leaving their new house in Bayshore for the Long Island Railroad Express to Wall Street.

Barely ten minutes ago, Jennifer had a secure train ride to a life of comfort and security with Bernie. But now, she felt de-railed. Alan could take her to the moon, and beyond, but her roots were on earth and the higher the ride, the harder the fall.

## CHAPTER 8

Basili Dimitrius didn't recognize himself in the rusty mirror that hung on the wall of his great grandmother's farmhouse. To his left hung photographs of the original owners, the faces gaunt and proud, reflecting how important they thought it would be to spend three months' wages on a photograph. To Dimitrius' right, a tapestry by his grandmother defiantly sewn by Braille as he eyes gave way to diabetes and old age. On the bottom, his grandfather, wearing the uniform which won him a wife at home then ten Nazi bullets in the chest. Accompanying it, a photo of Dimitrius' father, victim of the Greek civil war in 1948, where Greeks fought Greeks in a conflict that should have been taking place between Yanks and Russians. Over the top, the ever-watching stare of the Byzantine Christos, reminding everyone that no matter how much humanity suffered, it would never relieve mankind of the debt owed to God for letting Jesus die on the cross.

Dimitrius had stared into the mirror every day of his life, and what he saw never lived up to his dreams or expectations—except for today. His warm, brown eyes were framed by a freshly-cropped head. Below what had normally been a smile of contentment and child-like compassion for every living thing sat a tight collar, studded with gold pins and bold, red insignia. The arms that had rescued countless sheep from wolves, nurtured numerous calves to health and hauled tons of silver-laden rock to put a few drachmas on the rotting family kitchen table were now wrapped by something more 'Grown up' than a mother's embrace. Dimitrius was now something no one in the village would ever laugh at, even with his nasal stutter, oversized honker, elephant ears and feminine-size hips. Dimitrius was now a solider.

"How do you like it?" Dimitrius said to a field mouse with one red and one black eye. 'Hercules' never considered himself a pet, but Dimitrius felt like his caretaker. Who better to show off his new life to than the closest friend he had in his hometown?

"How does it feel to be in the KYP, Corporal?" the voice range out from behind.

"I'm not a corporal, Lieutenant Spiros," Dimitrius replied from

a part of his body he had never felt before.

“You will be a Corporal soon,” Spiros assured him, seated on the only comfortable chair in the house with his jack-boots crossed, sipping the coffee his host had scraped from the bottom of the now empty-again jar. “And I will be a Colonel.”

“When? How? Are we going to war with the Turks again? The Yugoslavians? The Albanians? If it’s with the Italians, it will be over in a week, and we’ll have to make it look like we had to work for it.”

Dimitrius looked at the photo of his father. “What am I supposed to do for the KYP? Is it something special? Something needed? Something that will make me important? Hercules, what do you think about all of this?”

The mouse answered with a squeak, licking Dimitrius’ hand, despite the fact that the only thing on it was sweat, soap and the scent of pride.

“You will do something that will make yourself important everywhere, Corporal,” Spiros interjected.

Dimitrius put the hat on, three sizes too big. He turned around to his mother. “How do I look?”.

“Like a doctor,” she groaned from a chair used as a recovery room after an abortive accident and an overdose of tranquilizer given by a nurse-in-training. “My son, the doctor!” she exclaimed with a demonic pride, Delirium overtook her and she faded back behind the line between reality and purgatory.

“Mice carry germs, Corporal, did you know that?” Spiros suggested.

“But Hercules---”

“---is a rodent, an expendable creature in the bigger scheme of things.”

“And I’m---”

“---A soldier!” Spiros asserted. “Like a doctor, who serves many people, and many animals.”

“Soldiers kill people, don’t they?” Dimitrius eased Hercules’ shakes with a gentle and kind stroking action that said ‘love’ on every level.

“Soldiers kill evil people, or expendable people, to save helpless ones.” Spiros drew Dimitrius’ attention to his mother, her febrile and demented state rumored to have been due to everything from a genetic chemical imbalance to a curse from a gypsy from a nearby village with whom she had a despise over ownership of a stray goat. The Lt looked at the corporal with his pet rodent, angered at the deepest level by the animal’s smile. “And a real soldier will kill expendable and lower ‘things’ to save his family, country and Culture. Men are more important than mice.”

“It’s not right to kill expendable people if they are innocent,” Dimitrius offered, and proclaimed. “Hercules is my friend.”

“He is your enemy, and your mother’s enemy, because he carries a cancer...the kind of cancer that is killing your mother!”

Dimitrius gazed into his new mentor’s eyes and saw affirmation of the claim. “But...” the virgin-Corporal protested.

He was answered by a kick in the ribs and a slap across the face. Startled by the grunts, and the demons taking over his friend, Hercules found shelter in the box the lad-turning-man had made for him which he had been using as his ‘indoor’ home.

Meanwhile, Spiros went on about issues beyond Dimitrius’ village and Hercules’ home.

“Humiliation and pain are what these vermin inflict on us. Like the Communists who look so innocent, that mouse has inflicted pain, humiliation and suffering on your mother!” Spiros fat face turned beet red. “If we don’t eliminate the problem, now, your sister and everyone else’s mother and sister in this village will be

next to become infected with the disease that has crippled your mother. Who do you love more, Private, this mouse or your family. A Communist piece of vermin, or your blessed mother?"

"My mother, Sir." The words reflexively came out, but as for the belief, more adjustment had to be done.

Spiros rammed Dimitrius' face toward the wall, the bullet holes still there in remembrance of the Nazi and Yugoslavian occupations. "Do you respect the memory of your father and grandfather, Dimitrius?"

"Yes Sir!" the shout and reflex.

"And them?" Spiros forced young Basili's head out the window towards the town square, a clearing in between the shacks where heavy labor broke the backs of old men and the dreams of young ones. "Do you want to live and die like them? They are slaves of slaves, and they laugh at you because they think you are weak. Are you weak, Private!"

"No, Sir!"

"Dimitrius' mother moaned, a prelude to another two seconds of epileptic "consciousness". The mysterious brain disease which took over her body six months ago was now edging in to possess her soul. Hercules crawled up below her feet, seeking comfort from the hot sun outside shedding rays over his house as it edged its way to its zenith in the coral blue, flaming hot sky.

"Are you strong, Corporal?"

"Yes Sir!"

"Then take this stick."

"Yes Sir!" Basili grabbed a metal pipe from the floor that had once been part of the plumbing.

"Rise it high and proud!"

“Yes Sir!!” Private-soon-to-be Corporal Dimitrius raised the rod raised up to the sky in an Aryan-like gesture as ancient as the Roman Empire and as vicious as anything Joseph Goebbels portrayed on Third Reich recruitment posters.

“Now, kill the Communist Cancer. The rat who is invading this birthplace of democracy.”

“Yes Sir!!” Dimitrius’ reply was loud the madness racing in behind his eyes and grabbing hold of his heart, strangling it. As the demon possessed him, his hands channeled the evil against Hercules, a whack across the back severing his brain from his body, the next rounds pushing portions of his liver, guts and lungs through his skin. With each silent scream of the dying animal, Spiros smiled. The boy inside Dimitrius was indeed dying, or perhaps dead. It would soon be time to train the man, a man who would have to be tough as nails, cold as steel and obedient to the ultimate objective of the KYP.

## CHAPTER 9

The outdoor market had a strange odor to Jennifer. Not sweet, not bitter, not pungent, not smoggy, not pastoral. It was a sensation painfully familiar to Alan, and foreign to her. The smell of ‘open’.

“This isn’t the first time I’ve been in an open aired market, Alan,” she claimed emphatically to her prisoner-in-custody as her eyes squinted at the brilliance and variety of the colors on this, the poor side of the poor side of town. “These people are entertaining enough, but they rip off tourists.”

“But not a tour guide,” Alan interjected. “You can get a cut. A fat wallet from a plump Senator gets lifted and you can see that it gets returned. Minus their five percent and your ‘whatever’ percent. It buys you good will, makes the ‘peasants’ look honest and, besides, rich people don’t count their money, anyway.”

She pondered the issue. “I’ll need extra security, Alan.”

“You have too much security, Jen,” Alan shot back without hesitation.

“Fuck you,” she delivered with volcanic rage filtered through a terse whisper.

Alan bent his ear closer. “Huh?” he asked in a voice and tone as American as roach-infested apple pie and ice-cold bootleg Colorado Mountain beer.

“I said, ‘fuck you’, Alan,” the confirmation, clearly enunciated and professionally delivered.

“Hellenica...Greek, Jen,” Alan chuckled. “This is your country, and with all the noise around us, I can’t understand you and besides---”

“---Fuck you, Alan!” Jennifer yelled out in her best kathalevous Greek.

The crowd around applauded for her. First the women. Then

the men who wanted to keep said women.. Alan lifted her hand up in celebration. “A liberated woman,” he boasted.

“Alan, let go of my hand or I will tear your arm off,” her angry whisper through a crowd-pleasing smile. Warning that she’d bite Alan’s balls off would only make matters worse.

With the eyes behind her head directed at the crowd that could turn into a mob, Alan saw his opportunity. He reached behind her neck, grabbed her other hand and moved it into place to untie the knot that held in what she was, and so much of what Alan remembered her as.

“What are you doing grabbing my—?” But before Jennifer could say ‘Foul’, “Strike” or “you’re out of here,” the tight elastic holding her hair in a proper bun came loose, thrown out to the crowd, leaving her naked to the world behind her yard-long mane. The wind blew in, accompanied by a fistful of the yellow gold sunshine onto her face.

“The bra! Take it off and liberate yourself!” the verbal command from a few of the women under thirty, and unsaid request from all of the men over fifty.

“You are their hero, Jenny!” Alan whispered to her. “You could be their legend.” He turned to the crowd. “Just like everyone here is a legend. Every man-and woman- a king, no one wears a crown. Translate that please, Jen.”

“Only if you go first, Sir Alan,” the dare with a sadistic smile.

“Huh?”

“Jockstrap or underwear?”

The roar of the crowd escalated as she translated. A mandolin player gave melody to the battle of the sexes between the two Gringos. “Dueling Yankees” seemed to be its title, written into every note.

“Bet you that I’m not wearing any jockstrap or underwear,”



Alan said to Jenny from the side of his mouth. “Double or nothing.”

“Fine,” Jennifer conceded. “You get naked, I will.”

“I already AM naked!!” Alan screamed out, opening the shirt, exposing his chest to the crowd, revealing the bare skin under his belt to Jennifer.

“What’s this about, Alan?” she asked, confused in mid flight about a journey which was taking her to the stars, or perhaps down to the depths of hell, or maybe both.

“Facing the world naked, Jenny. Every man a king, no one wears a crown.”

“Which you ripped off from Huey Long, ‘Maestro’.”

“Which he ripped off from ten thousand other guys. Translated-- Every man and woman a king, no one wears a crown.”

‘No-incident’ Jennifer thought, pondered, then prepared to jump off the cliff materializing in front of her shell-shocked eyes. Her hand reached into the lady Bird Johnson business jacket to do a very non lady-like act. The crowd came to a hush. A few police gathered around, lifting up their caps with respectful curiosity, third legs sprouting under their trouser pockets.

She looked at Alan, and saw something real, and unexpected—a commitment to something far more fun than mischief, and far more long lasting than getting laid, or even making love. “Every man- and woman - a king, no one wears a crown” he repeated, pleading in a whisper only she could hear, from a very special place.

“Every man a king. Every woman a queen. And NO one wears a crown-unless she wants to!” Jennifer proclaimed to the crowd as she tore off her bra and tossed it into the air. She wiggled her head, shaking her hair even looser, and found her stare firmly fixed not on revolution, but the revolutionary.

The Mandolin player accompanied the revolutionary romance with a rhapsody in red, white and blue. No rendition of the Star Spangled Banner was more tender, the riffs giving it an exotic and erotic flavor that would certainly ban it from any AM or even FM radio Station between Maine and Santa Barbara.

Jennifer's hand moved towards Alan's as if on its own accord. Then, up his arm.

"No," he said in Greek. "Not yet. Not now," the cautious whisper. "You're too important to me," the reason, delivered into her ear with a 'no' tone that seemed to all who were watching to be a definite "yes".

Heart, mind and body all commanded an embrace, a sharing of electrical energy into a unit which would redefine the unity of magnetic fields. Then, the intervention of the most primal and magnificent invention of the Ancient Greeks.

The rhythm of the Pythagorean scale was fast, intense and left no one within hearing range of the basooki and mandolin the option of self-inhibition. Jennifer's feet brought her back to innocent days of childhood, when play was something felt rather than learned.

For Alan, it affirmed a purpose that was beyond Jennifer, which he hoped would include her, one day. But she had come unexpectedly too close to his real secrets, and ultimate objectives. He had begged her to enter the inner-most chamber, and now had to keep her away from it. Some things even Jennifer wasn't ready for, not yet anyway.

Just as the Revolutions were about to burst open faster than any Revolutionaries time-table, the 'Universe' decided to set itself back to 'normality for a recheck, heralded by the arrival of Police, armed with more frightening-looking uniforms than weapons---so far anyway. At the helm of the traffic control squad, Lt. Spiros.

Alan spotted his armed-to-the-gritted teeth nemesis, then his motorcycle. "Come on, Jenny. This is going to be fun!"

"But Alan...I...I eh...We're not supposed to..."

“Hey Sprios!” Alan challenged. “On guard,” The Maestro motorcyclist proclaimed, whipping out his baton like a French dueling foil, pressing it into a rotted tomato and inserting it into Jennifer’s bra. He swirled the C-cup sling-shot with the skill of Wild Bill Hickock and the passion of King David. It landed squarely on Sprios’ freshly-pressed KYP uniform. “Blood stains, Generalissimo Spiros. Bad for the image.”

Before Spiros could utter a grunt of primal rage, Alan grabbed Jennifer and threw her on the motorcycle. Spiros commanded his men to move forward, into and around the crowd that gathered around to throw rotten lettuce, used condoms and bordello phone numbers inside more bras at the oncoming police.

Young Corporal Dimitrius had even never touched a woman’s underwear, with the exception of a few years of very secret curiosity with his mother and sister’s laundry. The scent of perfume and the fishy smell which must have been vaginal juice, with a welcoming wave from a gypsy harlot excited him. The new uniform made him a man, a woman right now could make him an important man, or perhaps a god.

But Spiros had other agendas in mind. So did Jennifer.

“Alan. This is not fun!” she protested as the Maestro revved up the Harley and bolted out of the square like the James Gang after stealing a treasure-chest of greenbacks from a Carpetbagger Yankee bank. “This is not fun, Alan...” her montra, and plea.

“It will be fun, once you go THROUGH the pain, not around it.” He flicked on the mini-speaker on the bike, the Flight of the Walkurie heralding his escape to the cheers of onlookers.

Spiros advanced in force. Though officially allowed only revolvers and rifles, most of his squad was now armed with automatic weapons, most of them American, some Russian. A few warning shots were fired, some that just made noise, most which were more accurately aimed with bullets that made far less of a ‘bang’ from guns which were designed to tear open flesh quietly, and effectively. One of the rounds hit Alan’s where it hurt most.

“Damn it, that hurt,” he grunted with as much bravado as he could muster. Jennifer held onto him for dear life, the bike somehow hugging onto the road, making every turn he asked of it. “Shoot me in the arm, leg, or balls, but in my authentic made-in-New York Apache buckskin fringe jacket!! This is definitely dishonorable.”

“Alan you, I, we could...” Jennifer’s trembling voice reeked of surrender, and fear.

“We could shot back, Jen? No chance. The rules of this war says we can’t fight it with guns.” Finding a quieter running gear, and a less bumpy road, he continued his getaway. “Besides, my death would be an embarasement, or worse, a martyrdom that would sway the free elections next week to an effective people-serving government. You getting shot would be an international incident. Right? They’re just trying to scare us. Maybe they’d make us plea to a drug pushing charge or some international banking fraud scheme thing...” Discretely, he steered the bike into a corner of an alley, taking a deep breath, looking into the crystal ball inside his head again.

Jennifer gently stroked his shaking shoulder. “I can’t buy your way out of this one, Alan.”

“Sure you can,” Alan asserted, snapping back into King Kewalski mode. “How much do you have on you?”

The police edged closer in, the walls of civilians around them dissolving into uniformed men with orders Alan or Jennifer would not be happy to comply with. “Alan, I...” spilled out of her mouth as a third, then fourth car arrived on the scene.

Then something ahead of her—something far more frightening than a revolutionary ex-lover on a suicidal joy ride. The walls were old, very religious, and very narrow, a Fresco above it of an angry Byzantine Saint, or a very guilt-throwing Jesus. From behind, the ‘Fuzz’, Spiros commanding them with unrestrained confidence and authority.

Alan looked at the getaway slit in the dead-end alley, barely big enough for donkey packing a kelo of snow or bootleg copies of the Communist Manifesto. With an even more precious cargo sitting behind him, Spiros' men behind her, he did the metaphysical math. "It's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man-or woman-to enter the gates of Heaven, Jenny. At least that's what the Bibles from the wardens said when they threw you in Solitary, buck naked with the rats."

"So."

"So got to make this camel a lot lighter."

The posse approached from behind, the left and the right, the spectacle diminishing, the reality of what would happen to Alan, and even Jennifer, hitting very, very hard. Escape route was clearly through that opening below the fresco. It's eyes said 'yes', 'now' and 'at your own risk'.

Alan grabbed inside Jennifer's shirt, bypassing the breasts and going for the gold. This time, it was from Jenny's most sacred chamber, the purse—American dollars she was holding onto, for some official reason or another.

The first fist-full of money he tossed to the right. The second, to the left. With the last one, a flood of greenback confetti. Behind the parade, street-cleaning peasants grabbing whatever they could to become princes and princesses.

The greed-fest held back the police. Spiros' men stopped to grab some unofficial payment from the ground, and the more helpless of the populous they were honor-bound to serve.. But Spiros still had Dimitrius and five other Dimitrius' would sought recognition more than economic stability.

The odds evened out—a little. Alan zoomed ahead toward the Christos getaway tunnel. "He who follows me, gets the prize of prizes," he noted.

Jennifer felt the wind hitting her flowing hair, then it pulled out another wad of cash she had stowed away under her panties. That

‘emergency storage’ modality was inherited from her security-obsessed mother and maiden aunts. Contrary to her mother’s claim, it DID feel good to have a lighter ass. More secure as well, as another five white-coated KYP delayed their pursuit.. Even Dimitrius stopped to see what was being left behind for the taking.

As Alan’s bike disappeared under the Byzantine relief, Spiros alone kept up the pursuit. The eyes of Jesus looked down on his ass he aimed his pistol, silencer at The Maestro’s head, solidly in his sights. “This is for You as much as me,” he commented to the Savior who once ruled his life and who, somehow, was still involved in the development of his demonic soul. “The ‘Magnificent Meastro’ is a cancer, and he must be...eliminated. The Wench with him is necessary but with Your help, she’ll only come out of this with a few scratches and a fine.” Spiros took aim, cocked the hammer, said a quick prayer, waited for his moment, then shot—hearing a loud—

“Click? This chamber can’t be empty.” He checked and indeed, no more bang-bang left in his pea shooter. His target was now well beyond the range of any of his weapons, and at the side of town where Jennifer could make the Press print whatever she, or Bernie, King Constantine, or President Johnson wanted to print about the “incident”. He looked up at the large melancholy likeness of Christ. The little Lieutenant felt small, hurt and humiliated. “This was YOUR fault!” Spiros screamed at the big, brown, suffering eyes. “Damn You, and all of your ‘friends’ to hell!”

Spiros filled his chamber with fresh bullets, adjusted the silencer, then emptied his ration of rounds into the fresco. He disfigured every portion of its greatness, except for the eyes, which remained, staring into Spiros’ soul. “ I will get rid of this Communist cancer whether You help me or not. It is my turn to do Your job, God help you.”

## CHAPTER 10

Jennifer's face went blank, then numb after she hung up the phone receiver at Alan's favorite hang out, an Old Greek's butcher shop converted into a Coffeehouse by a younger one. "It can't be. He's not capable of it," she thought to herself. "All is fine," she conveyed to Alan

"So...Something really IS wrong," he surmised.

"Nothing is wrong, Alan!" Non-incident Jennifer made an incident out of insisting.

"Nothing is always the worst something that can happen to you." Alan's tone was sincere, no digs intended within the penetrating and accurate pun.

The setting was appropriate for the call to Bernie, and another cold link in a long chain of disappointments. "Nowhere Man" played by the Greek copy-band. Strobe-lights outlining figures more reminiscent of a Greatful Dead jam at Filmore West than a gathering place for the most vocal political minds within 500 miles of the Acropolis. The faces young, eager to take on ancient Herculean challenges.

Jennifer felt experienced, and old. It was the only thing she and Alan had in common, and maybe the most important thing. They both had experienced failure, disappointment, pain and humiliation. Their ultimate master, opponent and friend found his way into their thoughts and conversation.

"What does death look like, Alan?" Jennifer asked.

"A gold-plated crucifix on a Manhattan coffin. An epitaph on a marble slab in Queens. A life lived anywhere with boredom, humiliation or regret." Alan had to continue. "A moment spent with anyone who cares more about business than love."

"Are you talking about Bernie?" She stopped walking, waiting for his reply, demanding it.

“No, I’m talking about me.” Alan put on his best ‘all is great with the Revolution’ grin and pinched the ass of a waitress passing by, stealing a beer from her tray and a groupie smile from her tender, succulent lips. A table of college students with giant-sized joints, global dreams and wild, untested spirits recognized Alan. They demanded his presence as New Monarch of the table, now deemed its own country, the declaration of Independence scribbled out on a napkin with a red crayon. The kicked out chair was to be Alan’s throne, an offer he could not refuse.

“Teaching people to be independent,” Alan related to Jenny with eyes on the waitress and his new ‘subjects’. “A dirty and self-contradictory job, but some one has to do it.”

The bar wench had sung along with every Dylan, Beatles and Alan Kewalski tune played that night, and she understood barely three words, none of them being ‘no’. She asked Alan for an autograph, offering a piece of paper and a pen, presenting them to him on top of her breast. Jennifer rolled her eyes in disgust as the Maestro complied, giving her everything she wanted, and more with the sparkle in his ocular portholes. “Revolution business, Jenny.”

“False feelings, Alan.”

“Better than no feelings at all.” Autograph signed, lines of propriety intact, he sent the waitress on her way. The chant for his presence as king of the trapezoid table escalated from a murmur to a grunt. “Feeling anything with passion beats feeling nothing at all,” he yelled out to the waitress in pre-rehearsed Greek that only deviated from its natural tone in two places.

Jennifer’s heart cracked open when she saw Alan call the waitress back to him, inviting her to sit on his lap as a child would for a Macy’s Santa on 34th Street back home.. It was not jealousy that Jenny felt, but pity. Pity for the angelic face framed by long, dark hair directed by star-struck eyes. Even Jennifer could see the old woman which would become of the co-dependent girl who was more groupie than babe. So many partiers who rebelled as long as there was someone else to be individualistic had been blown off their own Mount Olympus by their thirtieth birthday. There was



Jennifer's friend Karen, Jill, Gina, Celestina and, she feared, perhaps even herself.

“You belong to the world now, and yourself,” Alan whispered into the ear of the nymph who was good enough to serve drinks in Nikos' pub, but never good enough or hip enough to be part of what was supposed to go on there under the graffiti on the tables, and in the rooms upstairs reserved for the groovy, hip and cool kids. Though her main attraction was her ass, breasts and thighs, Alan seemed to be interested in something far deeper. Especially as Jennifer now saw it when she really DID look.

“Later?” the Barwench asked, in English, brought to the center of attention by her affiliation with the Master of Mayhem.

Alan gently kissed her hand and wrote a love lyric on her palm—the kind only the best of lovers would say to each other after they gave each other the best of gifts—their freedom. The words were private, the sentiments real. In barely a minute, Alan had experienced courtship, engagement, marriage, children, a few indiscretions of the flesh, and old age with this angelic vision of womanhood. She had, Alan hoped, experienced the same. A peck on the cheek made their divorce final and immortalized the mating of their souls forever.

She walked away with a strong stride, arched back, and a wiggling ass that seemed more appealing than ever everyone, even the ‘groovy guys’ who had seen her as a dog in a dress prior to her newly-found confidence. Maybe she would be corruptible with her new self-confidence, loners being the only real recipients of Visions which would advance this world, or the one beyond it. “The revolution business,” Alan commented with pride and regret.

But the more immediate business could not be contained any longer. “King Kewalski” was being summoned to his thrown at the table where discussions over the never-ending pitchers of beer would be deep, expansive and, perhaps, even followed up on when everyone sobered up the next morning.

“In a minute,” he screamed out to his students, grabbing hold of a glass of water pretending it was a beer, gulping it down in the

toast to Irrelevancy proposed at the table.

Jennifer saw it, thought it, and conveyed it with her eyes.

“You’re right,” his commentary from the side of a mouth which he manipulated to look drunk. “Madness IS best enjoyed straight. I’ve been sober for three years. And as for other temptations of lower desire... Since you and a night of recreation I mistook as passion, I’ve been a virgin. The most experienced virgin you know.”

“What does death look like to you?” she asked, seeing the demon attack her ex-lover from both sides of his brain, and heart.

“I can always count on you to cheer me up, Jenny. Is that what you do for Bernie? Cheer him up?”

“Love beats death, Alan. You wrote that. Or is that something else you just want everyone ELSE to believe?”

“Depends on how real the love is. And what kind of love it is.”

“Love is one on one, Alan.” She felt down to his empty, broken and lonely heart,. She opened his clenched fist with her fingers. His palm was cold and clammy, his lifeline reading ‘dead end’ very soon. “Love conquers death. Person to person love, Alan..”

“Person to PEOPLE, Jenny,” the softly delivered proclamation as he gave the students and possible converts at the nearby table the ‘in just one more minute’ sign. “It’s what you leave behind for the world that matters. One to many, not one to one.”

“Then why are your fingers digging into my hand?”

It was a direct hit, true, accurate and so very, very real. “Bioelectric energy to fuel the art, Jenny.”

“Bullshit, Alan.”

“We’re playing a dangerous game of I Chi with a volatile universe.” He felt the presence of that magical third person

emerging between them.

“Life is a dangerous game, Alan.”

“We can’t let our passions destroy our dreams.” He withdrew his hand. He waved to the club owner appearing at the table. This week, the pale-white Greek political science major was trying his best to look like a Black Panther. But Nikos secretly wondered if he would have the courage the Revolution would demand once the bullets started flying.

“You love me more than them., Alan,” Jennifer drive into Alan’s tormented soul. “At least I hope you love me, or someone LIKE me, more than the crowd.”

“You’re asking me to decide, Jenny. Let’s not go through that crap again. Loving one person more than the world is the basic problem. It’s the tool that the Establishment uses to oppress the masses.”

“‘Establishment’. ‘Oppress the masses’.” Jennifer’s compassion instantly ignited into self-righteous fire. “Your very defective leftist political logic aside-”

“Which you used to believe in, Jen-”

“Till I got a job, Alan, and stopped hanging around people who got their enlightenment out of a joint or a peyote subway token to the next galaxy-”

“Or a gulp of Jack Daniels on Wall Street between power deals that destroy third world countries, or a good-ole six-pack of beer on the way to another Nigger lynching party at—”

“Which happens because a Black Panther in Detroit kills a White cop who’s only trying to do his job-”

“Which is to see that the dope the CIA gets from Mexico goes to every Black, Hispanic and other undesirable in the ghetto. Kill them in fucking thirds. One third with humiliating jobs, one third with drugs, another third by an opportunity to serve fucking God

and goddamn country in SouthEast Asia.”

“You fucker! You like using that goddamn language, Alan. You fucking try that in Russia, China, the Peoples’ Republic of NORTH Korea. It’s because of straight, boring and obedient people that fuckers like you are allows to yell about anything you get pissed off about, you ungreatful, selfish, self-centered asshole!”

Jennifer’s fire had escalated her voice from a demure Jackie Kennedy to a raunchy fury worthy of Janis Joplin on a bad day of PMS AND a potent snort of cocaine. The string on onlookers gathered into a crowd, understanding none of the words but all of the commitment. The Leftist-Hippie-Flowerpower congregation gave the New Right Evangelist a standing ovation. All perhaps, according to Alan’s secret plan, or one of the plans which evolved around him so conveniently, thanks to the Divine Presence which seemed to guide, protect and torture him at every turn.

The payoffs for the surge of bravado were real. Man-sized drinks from three tables were delivered by three hot-looking waiters. A Cuban cigar-sized joint from Nikos was brought to Jennifer’s table between the knockers of a waitress who seemed sexually liberated with both genders. And, or course, a warm, smart-assed Kewalski smiled and provided vocal commentary on behalf of the rest of the Greek chorus. “Passion for something bigger than yourself, your soulmate, your family or your country. Compassion that makes everyone comrades because you care about family more. Passion that makes us godlike, and immune from the humiliation of life and the finality of death. That’s what keeps you Alive. That’s what you’ve got. Which is why I love you, and always will.”

Jennifer welcomed Alan’s warmth, but feared his fire, seeing the truth in his wisdom. “The truth shall set you free, but it always makes you a lot lonelier,” she thought, Her suspicions were confirmed when Alan got the nudge from Nikos. It was about business this time, not just political speculation of formulation. The kind of business wives, mistresses and protected friends were not allowed access to.

“Go ahead,” she said to him in an understanding tone. I’ve been

around enough Mafia wives to know the drill.”

Jennifer pondered the phone call made earlier as Alan went off the booth in the back, the one around which NO one drank or smokes. “Why was Bernie not at his desk, or at any of the other numbers she had called when on her ‘bathroom’ breaks? Why did he plan nothing on this special day, the anniversary of her birth, their meeting and their engagement? He couldn’t be in conference all day,” she thought. “The political situations here are tense, but it always is in this area of the world. Everyone always screams about politics in the Mediterranean, but everyone is still more passionate about local soccer than the East -West war for global domination. King Constantine is the constitutional monarch, and is doing a fine job doing nothing. The Socialists, Christians, Conservatives and Leftists all agree on that,” she remembered. “And Bernie always looks worried. He’s paid good money to look worried but to also tell everyone that everything is okay. He does that better than anyone I know. Is that why I think I love him.”

Another look at the hot carnal activities going on in the darker corners of the converted warehouse drove her into thinking in other directions. “Maybe Bernie really is having an affair,” she pondered. “Was I too much for him to handle? Was I too exciting for him? Too boring? Not pretty enough? Not plain enough? Whatever happened has to be my fault. Maybe if I could change my wardrobe, hair or-”

The downward spirals of “what ifs” were rudely interrupted in mid fall by a smoke-breathing creature whose breath could set the world on fire with just one match. “Hey. Maybe later if you want to, you know, we could...”

“I thought you were with Alan,” Jennifer said to Nikos as he downed another swig of oozo, trying to find courage and manhood at the bottom of the bottle.

“Alan is with his revolution,” he commented with a wink and an alluring nod.

“And you’re with your bottle, Nikos.”

“A little mischief with revolutions is healthy.” Nikos eyed Jennifer’s leg through the skirt torn from me to ass in the motorcycle getaway.

“Mischief is counter-revolutionary,” she pointed out, placing a large napkin bearing a tie-dyed peace-sign over the tear which she thought did nothing except open her legs up to cold drafts. “If you’re any kind of a Marxist-Leninist you should know that. Keep the masses preoccupied with mischief like drinking, doping and womanizing and they won’t think about revolution. That bottle is your dog collar, your shackle. So is this that joint that I won’t smoke, or report, for now. And so is that pencil sticking up out of your left pocket.”

“And your religious piety keeps you away from seeing the TRUE face of God,” Nikos countered. His body swayed like a drunkard, yet he seemed to see with the vision of a blinded prophet.

Jennifer looked down. She reflected on her life journey from a girl to a woman, remembering that she had written more than experienced, recorded more than she ever saw. The terror of becoming a crone, then a Willie Lomen prototype penetrated through her like a lightening bolt. “Who could break the spell?” she thought. “Who could turn the tragedy into laughter? What could transform her carefully-rationed fear into spontaneous action?”

She had done everything right, or so she thought. She accommodated every else’s needs and wants. She tried to serve life. So why did she feel so dead, so helpless? So betrayed by a Christian God who gave all the rewards to pagans or atheists. Just then, the hand of something more powerful than the Greek Orthodox God or the Roman Catholic Devil touched her.

“There is an ugly infestation on top of your heart,” Nikos slurred out. He moves his finger over Jennifer’s left breast. “I see an ugly roach who wants to eat you.”

“Don’t kill it,” she blurted out, feeling the electrical shock of pure human energy going through her, and a real roach with its six

legs ticking the most sensitive part of her flesh. “Flick it off. Gently.” Words and emotions never felt more detached as Nikos carefully moved his fingers into the inside of her torn blouse, in pursuit of the Texas-sized roach heading down into the hole between her two succulent breasts.

She felt the electricity in his finger penetrate through her bossum and into her love-starved heart.

“Yes,” she wanted to say. “Yes, yes, yes,” her silent scream bellowed out.

“NO!!” she heard with her ears. “No,” Alan repeated. “No one touches my ex like that.”

Nikos didn’t have time to explain that his intentions were honorable and Alan was in no state of mind to listen. The hand that cajoled and pushed songs of Universal Compassion from imitation ivory keyboards grabbed Nikos by the collar and tossed him against the wall.

“No one touches my wife like that!” he growled at Nikos, the student activist-musician who reminded him of himself before his freedom-loving idealism got tested by the law, isolation and imprisonment. “No one touches my wife,” the final word on the matter.

“EX-wife.” One of the Kewalski revolutionary road troupe said calmly. An outstretched hand placed on Alan’s shoulder with reassurance and friendship. “Mellow out, Alan.”

Alan’s friends knew him, but never met him. There was always a part of himself that he kept from people, the core of those secrets being expressed in his musical notes, but never overtly in his lyrics. The details of the ‘why’ behind the constantly-evolving Revolutionary dogma were also kept private.

“Let’s think with our heads now,” a woman’s voice commanded Alan from behind. It was from someone other than Jennifer this time. Helene Dragaris, a new local groupie to Nikos’ private revolution, knew that her prematurely-deep voice was often

mistaken as a man's. She didn't know that it sounded like Bubba Walton at the Levinworth "pleasure block", and that her abnormally large hand had touched Alan in the same spot that Bubba's did on that night when Alan decided to fight back against indignation with fists instead of ineffective verbiage.

Helene grunted when Alan's elbow jabbed a warning message into her stomach. He apologized to her once her gender and intentions were confirmed, and the apology was accepted. But the transaction of forgiven and understanding was not observed by George, Helene's superjock brother. He was confidentially sent to Nikos' by his parents to be sure that no one messed with his sister. George was on leave from Bootcamp, his cropped hair and shiny Army boots framing a body which Mother Nature and the Greek Army had co-fashioned into a fighting machine worthy of any Olympian god, and twice as ugly.

George grabbed Alan, jabbing the Yankee rebel in the gut, then the head with the full strength of his 250 pound body. Alan was flung across the room, thrown over a table, George inflicting on him a few 'correction shoves' and with very non-Kathelevuse Greek curses in preparation for his final hard-knucked "lesson."

Nikos attempted to deck George in defense of his friend and mentor with a maximal-force blow that succeeded in only breaking his own wrist. George replied by tossing Nikos into a speaker blasting out "Get Together, Fellow Earth Creatures".

'Non-incident' Jennifer just watched as the most primal instincts of man, and woman, displayed themselves in a private-party war started by one ugly cockroach, and a deluded Greek-American Princess. "Wanna come?" the miraculously-still-alive roach seemed to speak to her as it edged its way to an escape hole under a table in the back. "If only life could be that simple for 'evolved' life forms like us," her silent reply.



## CHAPTER 11

The brawl at Nikos' "All Together International Café" ended very unofficially. Arrests were made, but no police reports were filed.

The papers would say it was started by bad oozo, not bad kids. Or so Jennifer hoped after making the last of a long series of 'no-incident' phone calls. They were the usual calls, to the usual people, with the usual favors silently demanded at a future date.

But this time, some of the Colonels, Generals And Ambassadors were woken up from their Mistress's bed by Jennifer's calls. They were accessed by numbers Jennifer was not supposed to have access to. She swore to Bernie that she would never use those numbers. But the dance of her resurrecting soul was taking her feet over lines once sacred, now blurred.

For Alan, the aftermath was all too familiar, but maybe final this time, waking up in a strangely spacious apartment. He gazed into the bright light, his bloodshot eyes making out the figure of a distinguished, balding man with a large mustache pushing another needle into the cheek. "What's the damage?" Alan asked, bracing himself for the real answer, no mirror in sight, his head unable to move amidst the pillows supporting it.

"Ten stitches, but no scars," Jennifer related. "Right doctor?"

"He will be fine," the German-trained Professor of Medicine from the Athenian Medical School related in *kathelevuse* Greek, then English. "No scars, Mrs. Bernstein."

"Mrs. Bernstein, Jennifer?" Alan asked. Another needle went into his forehead, into the area not numbed by anesthetic, by accident or, by the look of the doctor's eyes, intent. Alan raised his head up, noting the poshness of the room. Jennifer's apartment did indeed have marriage photos on the wall, she and Bernie as Newly Weds in all the respectable places, doing all the respectable things, with the respectable smiles.

Jennifer lowered her head, recounting the consequences of her

miscalculations. “It was a private ceremony, Alan. We did it for ...legal purposes.”

“Or biological purposes, Jen?” He turned to the doctor, who said nothing. Jennifer faced the floor, staring into a past that she would share with no one, even her re-discovered ‘song mate’.

Alan turned to the Prussian-Greek Doc. “I think we’re finished here. What’s the damage?” Alan was grateful to find his arms and hands still attached to his body, but no so pleased when he reached into his pockets and found them empty. Blood oozed out of his left arm onto the bandage and his chest felt more like tossed salad than solid prime rib. This physician would want money if he was going to go any further, or if he was to remain silent about how the wounds got there in the first place.

The physician’s appearance matched Alan’s perceived intentions. Oversized handlebar mustache, pot belly and academic ego. His cologne was fragrant, sterile ‘clean’, but his karma reeked of respectable dirty. He was a professional, the kind who had not spent a day in hardship, pain or jail. Unless it was to use prisoners as guinea pigs for experimental drug trials that would make life easier on the population outside the walls. So the Kewalski intuition said, with findings that Alan prayed would be wrong, at least once.

“I’m not finished here, Mister Bernstien.” The doctor’s ‘mi rotas’ demeanor was perfect. No turn of the head, no blank stare, no shifting of the eyes. He lied at you straight to your face. “Hold still, Mister Bernstien,” the request as he prepared to stitch up another of Alan’s laceration which started to bleed again, more certainly a place for an infection if not treated immediately.

“Kewalski. My name is Kewalski, Meastro Kewalski,” Alan reiterated. “And yours, ‘doc’?”

“Professor. Professor Doctor Katsoris,” the counter attack, proudly defensive of his social rank to the revolutionary who was determined to forge a world in which there would be no rank at all.

“Professor Doctor Katsoris,” Alan repeated in a mocking

Germanic Hock-Deutch accent. “You say your name and social rank like I should remember it.”

“Maybe you will,” the speculation from Herr Professor K.

Jennifer could hear the tense drumbeats of a Western shutout as Alan once again set himself up for a mano-a-mano gunfight with this gunslinger from the Establishment. Would Katsoris spill the beans regarding Alan’s political activities over the last few days or, worse, his romantic ones? As a physician he had the legal right to recommend incarceration of people ‘harmful to themselves or others’ into mental hospitals, and Alan most certainly fit that description for any number of officially-sanctioned psychiatric disorders. But the off-the-record housecall was a diplomatic, not a personal favor to a woman trying to keep both feet in two worlds now oceans apart.

The worst case scenario raced through her mind. Katsoris could orchestrate a medical accident. Alan would sing his song of songs for an audience of interrogators in a locked white-walled rehearsal hall. The performance would be private, confidential and, if Alan was lucky, final. True, Jennifer wished Alan dead many times. Her favorite visualization was to have him transformed into a slave-woman and work his fingernails to the bone for a primal tribe of Neanderthal demagogues who looked, acted and smelled like his male persona. The term of servitude would last until hell froze over, or until Dick Clark finally gave up the ghost. But she never asked the Furies to deliver Alan death by humiliation or madness. Or maybe she had, and this was retribution, Her all-knowing Greek Orthodox God was great, vengeful and sadistic.

Katsoris reached into his medical bag, an immaculately kept basic black model used by three generations before him.

Alan felt a stream of blood pouring down his neck, maybe a newly discovered bleeder, or maybe a created one.

“Proper bandages, Mr. Bernstein,” Katsoris related in ‘mi rotas’ mode. “Proper bandages for where you cut yourself...in the kitchen, while making soup.”

“Beef and hot chile,” Alan filled in.

“Chicken and white rice,” the no-nonsense comeback.

“Exactly what I had in mind,” Alan said as he felt himself drift off into another world, light-headed, requiring only one thing as a liferaft back home. He reached out his blood-and-sweat-soaked hand to Jennifer, grabbing hold of her blouse, than yanked it off with all the strength left in him.

Jennifer stood naked to Prof. Doctor Katsoris, the photos of current hubby Bernie, and herself. She folded her arms as fast as she could, grabbing a blood stained sheet as an improvised robe, but it was too late. The truth about her inner anatomy was revealed, and the tragedy. She WAS VERY alone, very female and very wanted by one person in the room.

“Mrs.’ Bernstein?” Katsoris said with the eyes of a sex-starved sailor on an all-expense paid shore leave. He always imagined what the prim and proper hostess of hostesses had under the corsets, blouses and neck-high evening gowns.

“Looking good, doc? It only gets better with age, too.” Alan noted. “The older the Stradivarius, the sweeter the tune. He wrapped the torn blouse under his now-very-red neck, improvising a sling and bandage he had learned to make in places far less lofty than the Berlin Medical School.

“Could you leave us alone, Professor? Please.” Jennifer had no where to speak from except the truth. Katsoris had seen her sort-of naked before, in bits and pieces when performing the numerous medical exams required for Diplomatic Documentations, and some which were about real medical problems. He had never seen her like this, in her full glory, and angelic vulnerability, a Child of the Garden looking for the Caretaker who he hoped he would be one day.

Katsoris assessed his options, present and future. He gazed through the blanket Jennifer quickly put over her body, hoping it would fend back his penetrating stare. He looked into Maestro Kewalski’s hard face and reassessed his Achilles heels, all of them.

He packed up his books, ‘forgetting’ about the extra vials of antibiotics and pain killer on the table. He made his way to the door, then bowed slightly in a manner more Prussian than Mediterranean. “Mrs. Bernstein.”

Jennifer opened the door handle, her trembling right hand shaking. The left dropped an envelope into Katsoris’ pocket.

“Not necessary, Jennifer,” the physician remarked, seeing the stack of money, American, German and Greek currency all mixed in together.

“Payment in FULL,” Alan countered, punctuated by slamming the door in the esteemed Professor’s beet-red face.

The Maestro-turned-commoner looked at Jennifer. “”Mrs. Bernstein? You said you were engaged. Engaged women are fair game. Married ones—I’m an asshole, but not the kind who fucks married women.”

Jennifer’s eyes turned downward, guilty for sin she had not yet committed gripping her chest tight as a fist. “I was late for my period. Me and Bernie had an...an accident.”

“You visit the ‘accident’ on birthdays, Christmas and National Holidays?” He pressed on. “How old is this accident? What’s his or her name!?”

“Dead on arrival, four months after conception, secondary to birth defects that...” Tears ran down Jennifer’s red-hot cheeks. “It was a civil ceremony., We both had our positions to consider.”

“Position,” Alan lamented, his back turned.

“And my baby, Alan!” Jennifer screamed, not caring who was listening on the street, or in the Soviet Embassy around the block. “I couldn’t take a life. Life is sacred. God values life. Life is good., God is good. We are God’s children and all unborn children are...”

Alan felt her shakes, shivers and pain. Jennifer’s post-hippie morality system was medieval, contradictory and against most

things Alan valued. But it was still a code, and a person without a code is worse than dead.

He sat next to her, then considered, then took the gamble. Would a comforting arm over her shaking shoulders push her over the edge, crossing the adultery line she never talked about which was always there? “One more secret,” Alan reckoned. She needed the comfort of a friend—just a friend---to reveal one more secret. Then she can face all the skeletons in her closet and finally leave the jailhouse she’s locked herself into, before her apprehensions about the outside turned into paralyzing terror.

“Bernie was...kind. Or maybe he wasn’t,” Jennifer related between sobs that soaked Alan’s bandage down to the raw flesh, then the chilled bones. “The wedding was over by eight. Our private honeymoon celebration was over by nine. He went out at ten, and didn’t come back till three. I took a long shower, got into my sweats, then sat in the corner. I think I went to sleep. I felt...raped.”

“Did he hit you? Did that redneck Jew bastard lay a hand on you?”

“Yes. In all the right places. In all the right ways. Kind ways, but...unfeeling ways. It was like he was carrying this death disease with him. And I knew I was carrying his child.”

“YOUR child,” Alan assured her. “Strong genes always win over weak ones.”

“But not dead ones. I wanted that baby dead. I didn’t pray or ask for the baby to die, but I asked God, if it were at all possible, to just go back to a time when...”

Alan hugged Jennifer like a friend. She held him like a lover. Beethoven ran through the ears inside his head, and he could hear outside the window, a woman playing the flute solo to the Leonora Overture. Maybe it was there, maybe it wasn’t But Beethoven’s war arrows lay poised in Cupid’s bow.

Jennifer felt the tune too. “They’re playing our song,” she

thought as she realized that the auditory vision was real, even though it was from a crappy phonograph of a street musician trying to make a few drachmas to get through the next day. The single flute, breaking the tension of an entire orchestra with a bold, playful and exuberant song of liberation, joy and Life! The place in the Leonora Overture when everything opened up, especially when it was Jennifer at the flute and Alan at the podium.

Yin and yang merged, cold to hot fingers, shaking to firm bodies, wanting to needing eyes, then, finally, dried to moist lips. All merged into Infinity, the kind where one second equals a hour, one minute a lifetime,. An hour of hot passion survives beyond the stagnant memories that pull human lives into mediocrity, and the passion which erupted between Alan and Jennifer was, indeed, a fire of lust which warmed both their hearts.

## CHAPTER 12

Alan woke up with fire in his belly and Beethoven between his ears. It was a familiar buzz, but this time it was not about snagging a new convert for the Revolution, nor even liberating a new country into his own brand of Freedom. It was about something more complicated and bigger than that. A Revolution of the heart.

Jennifer never looked older nor younger, sleeping through the Greek dawn that dared not disturb her slumber. No woman's hair looked more radiant, no legs as graceful, no pair of breasts so nurturing. But the most beautiful part of this girlfriend-turned-goddess was under the nose-her nose. Never had a smile said so much joy with so little movement.

"I hope yer dreaming about me," Alan said, but only to himself. "How do you tell your conquest that she has conquered you?" he pondered. "Better let her sleep past dawn, past getting to work on time, or past anything that would take her away."

Alan never made it a habit to sleep with anyone else's wife or betrothed. It was bad charisma, and besides,, the guilt would drive him introverted and no musician could ever write when he,. Or she, was introverted. Yet-this broke the rules. Or did it?

"Jennifer wasn't really engaged, or even married," rationalized to himself. "Not a least according to the law of the heart. Besides, anyone who obeys civil law by even trying to work around it is less than human, and far from bright. And Bernie didn't even care where she was in the last few days. Maybe he has something on the side. Maybe it's a blow-up doll of Nixon and John Wayne he salutes to, with his arm on a normal day and his pecker on a kinky one. And besides...., how many 'besides' was that, Ludwig? Fuck it. What I did with Jennifer last night was right, needed and the right and legal and moral thing, anyway. She's not married in the eyes of any authority I or you, recognize and none that she recognizes now, either. I think. So why is the theme to 'Camelot' going through my head? Ya know, the story about brave and noble Lancelot who falls in love with Guenevere, whose marriage to King Arthur was the only union that kept the kingdom together."



He pondered the issue further as Jennifer, now Jenny, turned, smiled and threw a kiss, then nodded out again, to an even happier place in dreamland.

“Heroes are supposed to suffer, even when they’re happy,” Alan posed to the bust of Beethoven always envisioned in front of his eyes. “So why the hell am I so happy? Here is always the part where something goes wrong in the world because the hero, which is me, I think, sleeps on the job or with the wrong woman.”

A shrill went through Alan. True, he did consider himself the center of attention, and the world. And in most instances, he was right. But...there were times when you didn’t want to be right, or the center of global upheaval.

The streets looked quiet enough when he opened the shades. Morning was supposed to ‘quiet’, but the silliness of the silence had something very ominous to it. No birds chirping out their love, hate or ‘just keep your song to yourself’ calls. No songs sung by all-night whinos who couldn’t find their way home. Not even the sound of a car engine-with one exception that emerged like a lightening bolt.

“Stay in your homes!” the man in the armored jeep commanded in a loud and situated voice of the loudspeakers made in Detroit with an echo straight from the depths of hell. “The Communist Cancer has been contained,” Spiros continued. His new rank was Major, two jumps up from demoted Lieutenant.

Backing up his Napoleonic posture standing on the jeep, two American-built tanks acquired from the Armory in the dead of night.

Though he was only a Major, he and his KYP recruits was armed to the teeth and would enjoy nothing more than to try out the Fascist rhetoric on whoever dared to oppose, or even question, them.

Jennifer was always a sound sleeper. Winters in Manhattan and summers in Atlantic Beach conditioned her to trucks, jeeps and even gunshots. But when the scream of a shot child and the cry of

her grieving mother reached the Greek-American Princess' ears—

“Alan, what’s going on?”

“Hell just froze over.” He turned the radio on.

“The Communist Cancer has been contained and we must work together to sterilize it!” one of the three Fascists Colonels flippantly known to Alan as ‘Moe, Larry and Curly’ proclaimed to the background of marching music. Indeed, the Devil was speaking, the birthplace of Democracy ‘protected’ from the free elections which were to take place soon.

“It’s my fault,” Alan noted, then realized, then screamed out in guilt-driven rage.

“Shut up!” Jennifer upped the volume on the radio.

All the ‘no’ commandments said it. “No meetings of more than five people in one place unless given a permit,” Colonel ‘Moe’ commanded boldly, and Jennifer translated painfully.

“A revolution with less than five leaders, or people, turns beurocratic on you, anyway,” Alan spat back.

“No one is to be on the street beyond curfew.”

“Greek time means you’re an hour late for everything. No sweat,” Alan mused.

“No one is to be bare-chested in public, men or women,” Colonel ‘Larry’ proclaimed.

“I knew Spiros was trying to hide something—he doesn’t get to share his hairy big breasts with us now because it’s illegal.”

“No travel without a permit,” Colonel ‘Curly’ announced.

“No problem. You travel astral airways. And besides, you are what you is, wherever you are.”

“Enough gospel according to Frank Zappa, Alan!” Jennifer screamed through chattering lips. “People are getting hurt out there. We have to get out there and—”

“---Get killed ourselves?” Alan challenged.

“If necessary,” Jennifer found herself saying, and believing.

“I agree. But know your enemy before spitting into his machine gun barrel.”

THE next ‘no’ commandment from Spiros et al... “No beards or long hair will be tolerated on Greeks or visitors to our now liberated land.”

“Guess the Schweppes Lemon guy can’t visit the Acropolis. The facial hair rule knocks out visits from ghosts of Lincoln, Socrates and Shakespeare, or even the J-man from Nazareth. “

“No music written by Communists will be allowed to be sold, aired or listened to during this critical and temporary transmission period,” the list continued.

“Teeny bopper bombshells excepted, or rather encouraged,” Allan appended. ““We’re gonna be made into HAPPY slaves. Elvis, the Beach Boys, maybe even Percy Faith, if we’re real good.”

“Alan, they’re serious!” Jennifer admonished.

“I know,” the somber reply as Alan heard the list of forbidden composers that included Dylan, the Rolling stones, his rival, Theodorakis, and the ban against ‘selected’ works by Alan Kewalski.

“I’m really pissed off now!” Alan spat out. “Only a ‘selected’ ban on my shit?! Spiros wants to ignore me? I’m not good enough to be put on the A-number-one hit list by the hitmen?!” He opened the window and started singing his tunes, the banned ones first, loud and furious. A few lyrics at a time, but defiantly enough to make it heard.

Jennifer picked up the phone. The lines had an in-and-out sort of static sound, and Alan's ranting didn't make technical difficulties over the line any easier. "Alan, shut up. I have to call Bernie."

"And tell him that we had a 'political discussion' that lasted all night long? Tell him you won, and that he lost. Besides, that swishing sound at the other end of the phone tells me that the Junta that's taken over this country will be listening in, and those morons DO know when someone's trying to talk in telephone code talk. Beside, you and Bernie probably don't have enough real secrets between you to have a code that could fool ANYone. "

"I have to call SOMEone!" Jennifer pleaded, hanging up the phone as the secretary at the Consulate answered.

"Divide and conquer, the way it happens when the fire in the belly turns into a smile of passive satisfaction," Alan sang out to the streets.

Jennifer shut the window before his second line of his improvised libretto could be delivered. "What are you doing, Maestro moron?"

"Drawing attention to myself."

"Why?"

"So you can get out the back door. And don't say ANYthing on the phone to ANYone."

"I'll use the secret line to the Consulate. They're not allowed to tap that one."

"They're not allowed to do what they just did last night, Jen, and are doing right fucking now! You, and everyone else in your world, should have spoken your mind to them,. While you still had minds, goddamn it!"

Jennifer leaned against the wall, huddling into the corner like a

child, maybe the one who she just heard screaming for her mother three blocks away. “What’s going on here, Alan? I’m scared.”

“So am I,” King Kewlaski found his stare focused on the Fresco of the J man under which he had made a colorful escape from Spiros’ Fourth Reich barely 24 hours ago. Then to the Parliament building in the distance. “King Constantine’s also scared. By the looks of his boarded-up and over-guarded house, he was relieved of his duties last night. So is the duly elected Parliament which has just been given the decade off. So is every one who isn’t one of them, or—”

Machine guns pounded out shells to the East. Moments later, cries from families dwindled in numbers, Then, bodies red with blood dumped out of a moving truck in the middle of the street. Then—silence. Then---tanks and jeeps echoing in from all directions. Then the sound of—order.

“I know a way out of here, Alan.” Jennifer said, dressing herself with frenetic speed, aligning some of her buttons correctly, others ‘close enough’. “If we can find our way to the back alley, a tunnel that the Monks used to use when the Turks occupied this place. If we can find our way to the Consulate, I can—”

“—tell the New York Times about it?” Alan offered, wavering between sarcasm and desperation-prompted optimism.

“The world outside HAS to know,” Jennifer affirmed.

“The world doesn’t know, and soon won’t even care.” Alan hoped, and prayed, that he was wrong. Jennifer knew he wasn’t.

## CHAPTER 13

“Everything’s under control,” Assistant Ambassador Bernie Bernstein assured his secretaries, especially those who had Greek Nationals as husbands, or clandestine boyfriends. “We’re Americans and this new government likes Americans. Our two countries have too many common interest for us to—”

“—Blow the world up in one swift bang?” Alan interjected upon his entrance.

“What he means is-” Jennifer added.

“-That we’re all in one big pile of shit,” Bernie shot back, keeping his bottom line opinion from anyone on the phone glued to his ear or on the General Staff mulling around him feverishly transferring confidential files into locked secret compartments, or the trash compactor. He knew why Jennifer showed up bra-less. He seemed not to care. “You kids have a good time last night?” he calmly asked Alan as he put down the phone then unlocked a draw and put several files through a paper shredder, twice.

“I want you to get Alan out of here,” Jennifer pleaded. “Back home.”

“No!!” Alan barked back.

“No skin off my teeth if King Kewalski gets shot by a Greek Colonel or gets locked up in Levinworth,” Bernie muttered from the side of his mouth.

“Give Alan a new identity!” Jennifer demanded.

“He could have a sex change operation and he’d still be found out,” Bernie cracked. “Of course, it would make his relationships with women interesting instead of just colorful.”

“What do you mean by that?” Jenny felt the strangly-framed dig going into her heart. “You’re my husband, right?”

“It’s a day when what’s written in stone is getting shredded into garbage.” Bernie never sounded more sincere.

“And...” Alan inquired of the Aide who seemed to be doing far more than his official job description.

“Officially this country is being taken over by a temporary anti-Communist government. Semi-officially, I’m still in charge of this three acre piece of America,” Bernie related. “But Unofficially...”

“The problems of three people don’t add up to hill of beans in this world,” Alan interjected, in Bogartese.

Bernie agreed, with a very non-colorful nod.

“Okay,” Jennifer protested. “I get to be Ingrid Bergman and this is the Zorba version of Casablanca.”

“She’s got her innuendoes down real good,” Alan commented.

“Well!” Bernie asserted. “She’s got it down WELL.”

Volleys of accusation and threats too powerful and intimate for words flashed back and forth between the bald-headed protector of the faith and the hairy god of irreverence.

“Well...” Jennifer said to break the tension. “Who gets to play Bogart and who’s the other guy?”

“Someone has to take care of her,” Alan noted, to Bernie.

“Bullshit!” Jennifer’s protest to both of them.

“And someone has to take care of the Revolution,” Bernie offered, with respect, to King Kewalski. “If guys like you got out of the Revolution business, I’m out of work. And maybe, we could use your services in a common cause one day, Mister Johansen.”

“Huh?” Alan let slip through dumbfounded lips as Bernie handed him his new passport, forged by the best Russian defectors

greenbacks could buy.

“Johansen travels a lot. He can get what he needs when he’s not on official business,” Bernie related.

“And what is my official business?” Alan waited for the answer.

“We like your Beethoven, even your Mozart. So do the American Generals and the Greek Colonels. Nothing’s changed in this country, right Maestro? So why shouldn’t you remain as head of the Athenian National Orchestra by day?”

“And by night?” Alan asked, knowing no answer that he could trust would be verbalized.

Bernie rubbed the top of his hairless head, then the 2- day stubble on his chin. “I’ll do everything I can to protect you.”

“One condition!” the demand. “That you do everything you can to protect and do right by Jennifer. She’s got songs in her that are better than anything I could ever write, and more powerful than anything you could market.”

“I’m touched,” Jennifer confessed.

“And I’m out of here,” Alan interjected. “Mrs.....what’s this guy’s name anyway?”

“Bernstein, Mister Johansen,” the Accountant-Ambassador said, offering a handshake that seemed very real. So was the ten thousand dollars inside the shirtsleeve he slipped into Alan’s empty pocket.

“What do you want me to use this for?” the inquiry.

“You’re smart enough to know that I’m not going to answer that,” the reply.

Tender farewells were cut short by another burst of gunfire, then a knock on the door. Then a ring of the phone that hadn’t



rung since the Cuban Missile Crisis.

“I have a back way out of here, Mister Johansen,” Bernie related. The knock on the door escalated to pounding, then the red light on the phone BEHIND the desk flashed. “I have to take this.” Bernie said. He picked up the phone, sending Alan toward the back door. Waiting was Sergeant Sam Johnson, in plain civilian clothing and regulation military firearms under them. With a courteous and dispassionate Texas twang, he assured ‘Mister Johanson’ that he would be able to find him and his companion the best way out of the Consulate and, perhaps, into a haven of safety in the ‘non-incident’ country that had become the most dangerous, and unknown, powder-keg in the Mediterranean.

## CHAPTER 14

“Time is measured in experiences, not days”, Jennifer remembered as she gazed upon the “Revolution Now” music store that once sold the irresponsibly ‘hip’ music she hated. It was nearly three months into a transitional government that had transformed the streets of Athens into something that looked like the dullest suburb in New Jersey or Iowa, and the main Head Shop of Athens was under new management. Even more frightening was a clerk she hardly recognized in the obsessively-hip music store.

“Nikos, is that you under that....?” Jennifer asked.

“Flat-top?” the self-styled formerly-long-haired revolutionary hippie Coffeehouse owner said with embarrassed eyes framed by a freshly shorn head. “Yes,” he continued defiantly while glancing at a KYP soldier inspecting a new shipment of records. “It still is me. Is that still you, Tourism lady?”

“Yeah,” her reply. “I think so,” she said as she stole a stare at KYP ‘Cultural Inspector’ Dimitrius examining the new shipments of vinyls, fresh insignia evident on his blood and soot-stained uniform.

KYP Recruit Dimitrius had just received his Sergeant Stripes, barely three weeks after the Junta that never happened in the army within the army that didn’t officially exist. But the country that once ignored him was his now. His gun enabled him to keep the people inside their houses, the assignment as media censor allowing him to keep their souls tied to the ground.

“Your new shipment has the Beach Boys, Elvis Presley and Percy Faith. This is acceptable, but the rest...” Dimitrius droned on, his eyes fixed on a clipboard which he carried like Moses with the Sinai tablets.

“The Beatles?” Nikos inquired, “The Beatles are forbidden, too?”

“Only the albums they made after they went to India. Sergeant Pepper’s Lonely Heart Club Band, when decoded, is the

Communist Manifesto.”

“Is that what your clipboard says, Seargent, or is it what you say?”

“I know orders, not music,” Dimitrius muttered back with the most vicious of emotions--sterility of spirit.

“Are the Rolling Stones are part of the Communist Cancer too?” Nikos asked, inner resignation edging dangerously towards surrender.

“Probably.”

“Theodorakis, and Bob Dylan, the Theodorakis of America?”

“Yes.”

“And...Alan Kewalski.”

“Is under careful scrutiny,” Dimitrius replied.

“What about his music?” Jennifer inquired with a concern for something she had ignored for years.

“Maestro Kewalski’s music is not approved for distribution,” Dimitrius noted.

“But he’s the best musician in this goddamn country!” Nikos asserted.

“Yes, he must be,” Dimitrius’ reply. “He’s conducting the Athenian National orchestra next week.” He turned to Jennifer, asking the question she thought would never be stated so clearly, “Are you his wife, mistress or girlfriend?”

“All of the above”, she commented sorrowfully. “And none of the above.”

“I don’t understand,” Dimitrius replied.

“That makes three of us,” her comeback from the pit of her yearning heart. And it was the truth.

After all, it had been three weeks and not a word to Jenny from Alan after she was re-established in her pre-Junta position by official parties she didn't know, and now didn't trust. Nothing, even when the door was open for whatever possibilities she wanted, or needed, without having to answer to or be with Bernie. All that came over the tapped phone lines or in the censored mail was a pair of complimentary symphony tickets in the delivery box of her apartment in the dead of night for her and “a date of her choice, for the concert of a lifetime.” The note was in blue ink, but the tightness and boldness of the print said ‘finality’.

First violinist Kerabellis felt the pinch harder than anyone else. He was as anti-Communist as you could get in a Greek civilian, and publicly stated that the Junta was a political necessity. “Better to be under Martial Law by our own people than the Communists,” he countered to every violation of the rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of vitality. He didn't mind the ban on Russian folk music, which he continued to enjoy behind closed doors, at very low volume. He didn't mind the rounding up of the whores, though he did miss ‘music lessons’ with one of them that reminded him of his daughter, and the now-unexpressed passions of his wife. Long ago, he had fallen in the habit of looking at them outside his apartment window like a father. Waiting, and hoping, that the daughters of the night would come back home to Daddy. But what hit him worst was the symphony chair next to him, now empty.

Maestro Kewalski also noted the absence of bassoonist Basili Lambrados, law-abiding musician who played for three months with the Metropolitan Opera and who never once dared to even jaywalk the streets of Manhattan. “Where's Lambrados?” Alan asked from the podium just before the day-minus-one concert tune up.

“He was detained,” Second trumpeter Muller related with anger over a deep guilt.

“Why?” Alan asked.

“He was holding ‘an illegal and potentially subversive discussion group’ in his home,” Kerabellis noted, with a subtext to the notes never played on his violin.

“What the hell was born-to-be-boring Basili Lambrados discussing that could get HIM arrested!?”

“Soccer scores,” Kerabellis answered, defiance edging its way through the terror his voice. “There were more than five people in his house, and they were discussing....soccer scores.”

Alan could have drilled into Kerabellis, but dared not. The Revolutionary-on-hold and the Ultraconservative-in-reflection had an understanding. Attacking a man when he was not looking was fair game. Hitting him when he was down was against the codes of both men.

Alan could read the reasons for the angst in Muller’s eyes and Keraberis’ heart. “I should have been there, too,” Kerabellis said through his tight face.

“My father’s family made the mistake of just stanning by in Germany in 33 and suffered for it in 42,” Miller shared, for the first time with ANYone. “We only know how powerful tyrants are after it is too late,” poured out of the tear ducts he dared not open because once opened, they wouldn’t stop.

“Music is your only friend, until the end,” Alan thought. “Beethoven, Leonora Overture , number Three,” he announced in a calm, dignified tone.

“With fire! Pironeas!” Kerabelis screamed out with a clenched fist.

Alan smiled, lifted his baton up, and prepared for a musical expression from the collective pain of an entire country, perhaps world. The real story would not be told in words, not in the NY Times, anyway, but the quality of the music could bypass the beancounters, censors and even politicians. “The commitment to freedom and vitality is expressed in a country’s music, not its books or newspapers,” Alan had written in a NY Times article,

edited by Jennifer. “Maybe you CAN believe in your own bullshit and turn it into something nutritious for the soul,” he thought to himself, desperately.

Beethoven never sounded so Alive. Yannis, from his observation post in the back of the auditorium, could see Old Ludwig’s ghost enter the room and even crack a smile. “Go home, Maestro Beethoven,” he warned the Spirit. “The KYP will most certainly arrest Maestro Kewalski for being true to your spirit. Then they will arrest you. And they can make any part of Earth or Heaven worse than any kind of Hell either of you can imagine.”

## CHAPTER 15

To the cameras, the Press and even the travel agents, it was a gala event. No orchestral season opener could have been more glamorous, glorious and gracious. No expense was spared to show the world that the Athenian International Orchestra was the best in the world, its music reflecting the joy of a country that was ridding itself of the Communist Cancer. The NY Times music reviewer was most impressed as he perused the red, white and blue decorum of the concert hall the afternoon of opening night. It would find its way perhaps to a 'no-incident' section of Sunday's edition. The front pages were loaded up with and pre-reserved for news about the MeKong Delta and unofficial police actions in Laos. Something had to fill the back pages and the entertainment section, and people who wrote back page stories were always paid more steady wages than those those who fought for the front page anyway. Still, somewhere in the back of his well-paid brain, every journalist wants to report an interesting story.

"The gold chandeliers, the marble statues, and the graciousness of your staff makes the Metropolitan Opera look like a Backwater Barndance," Clives Burns commented in rotund, uppercrust East-80s/Beacon Hill, to the liaison in a thoroughly-military uniform perfectly tailored for his non-military physique. "Yet my political reporters say this could be a way to make your country look good for the American dignitaries, Captain Spiros."

"A political reporter is a biased reporter, Mister Burns," Spiros replied. "And I'm a Major."

"You seem a tad upset about something, Major," Burns noted.

"Only when I read lies about my country in your newspapers."

"We haven't printed anything about Greece, except in the travel section. News about Vietnam is what the public wants to hear about now. One crisis at a time is the attention span of the American public."

"Because Americans are dying there, Mister Burns. From Communist bullets."

“Are Greeks dying here? Maybe from your bullets, Major Spiros?” Burns gently inquired. The freshly-shaven journalist remembered how he was asked to remove his beard before entering the country so as not to cause problems. His modest moustache and goutee was no cultural or psychological issue, until he was firmly ‘requested’ to remove it by the Customs authorities at the airport. “Are any Greeks dying here?” he pressed on to Spiros, angrily cursing the barber at the airport who had carved off the beard that had been part of his still-razor burned face for twenty very respectable years.

“No Greeks any American would be interested in,” Spiros related dispassionately. “And better us than the Communists.”

Maestro Kewalski briskly walked up the stage stairs to adjust the acoustics, his hair and beard shaggier than it had been in three years, his eyes fixed forward on an invisible plan getting bolder and more dangerous with every step. Burns gazed Alan’s way.

Burns called out, “Maestro Kewalski—”.

“—Needs to prepare himself, and his program,” Spiros interrupted.

Alan waved to Burns with his left hand and gave a ‘peace sign’ to Spiros with his right. He continued his own audio inspection of the newly-improved auditorium, placing tapes of different colors on specific areas of the stage floor. The new acoustically-designed improvements to the room which he had recommended seemed very satisfactory. Not so, the look from Spiros after he stared into Alan’s face, motioning for him to come read a document in his hand. A notice of ‘finality’ that Spiros politely disallowed Burns to read, and required Alan to absorb.

“I suppose you gentlemen need to talk?” Burns surmized as he got up, feeling his presence a danger to himself, and an interference with things as they were, or were about to become.

Yannis’ hair was combed into to ‘regulation citizen’ length, his arms overburdoned with music stands that he placed on stage at the



spots where Alan had placed tape. After completing his tasks on stage, the most powerful member of the audience summoned him to third row, center. Spiros didn't say a word, but with the slightest move of his finger, ordered Yannis to read what Alan could not look at anymore.

Yannis related it in words too painful to say without shedding a tear of defeat. "The program for tonight has been officially changed to Battle Hymn of the Republic, The 1812 Overture, cannon optional. The Stars and Stripes Forever. Anchors Away. And, if we would like, for an encore, excerpts from Mozart's Marriage of Figaro, The Blue Danube or Wagner's Die Meistersinger."

"How, why?" Kewalski asked, confounded.

"'Who' is the operative question, Alan," Major Spiros smirked, fondling the newly-acquired insignia, adjusting his freshly-pressed, virgin-white KYP-issue shirt.

"Alan? You never called me Alan, unless it was something....serious, or..."

"Someone leaked out what we were really going to play," Alan whispered to Yannis. "Why?"

"The legends and fairy tales about holding out against interrogation pain for hours and hours," Spiros said, apparently his elephant sized ears as large as they were sensitive.

"After ten minutes, EVERYbody talks," Alan somberly added. "I know. But there's one thing that still gets me. They have scopolamine. Truth serum always works to open sealed lips."

"Torture is not about getting information. It's about humiliation," Yannis said, eyes to the ground. Yannis walked away, saying nothing and feeling...everything.

Alan dared not ask if Yannis was the one who spilled the beans on a public display of defiance for an audience that would have more international dignitaries and reporters than a Presidential

Ball. Advancing inquiry into direct question about the only person who he could really trust was unwise.

Then from behind, a voice even more terrifying than that of self-doubt and betrayal. “The Battle Hymn of the Republic, Anchors Away, The 1812 Overture, Stars and Stripes Forever,” Spiros proclaimed in a calm voice that belied nothing except total control. “And please remember to be appropriately groomed, Maestro Kewlaski. We wouldn’t want to have you arrested. I can send my personal barber in, at no cost to you, to—”

“—The Battle Hymn of the Republic, Anchors Away, The 1812 Overture, Stars and Stripes...forever,” Alan submissively interjected, his voice fiery as luke warm water.

“Very good, Maestro. You look good, we look good. We can both be winners, Alan.” Spiros showed off his newly-capped white teeth with a wide smile, punctuating it with a comraderic pat on the Kewalski’s hunched and sweat-stained shoulders. “Rebellion makes a man old before his time, my friend, and steals his God given right to happiness and contentment.”

“What do you mean by that?” Alan inquired.

“Intensity WAS your life, Alan, but it won’t have to kill you,” Spiros answered.

“How did Spiros know that?” Alan thought. How did he know what Jennifer saw in her dreams from the Messenger who only spoke to her? Did the details about me and Jennifer become KYP data because they were stolen with hidden microphones, or freely given with a gently-asked inquiry? And maybe Jenny DID believe that forcing Alan to cease his political activities was for his own good?

But the operative question was more personal than even that. Life be made difficult, or impossible, for Jennifer if Alan didn’t tow the company line? The cardinal rule of being a revolutionary is not to develop any ties to anyone who wouldn’t voluntarily die for the revolution. Seeing Jenny on the cross, or a KYP torture-chamber table, for Alan’s sins would be the most painful

crucifixion of all---such was unthinkable.

“The 1812 Overture, Stars and Stripes Forever, Anchors Away and The Battle Hymn of the Republic,” Spiros affirmed, seeming to know every thought and feeling inside the Maestro’s confounded head.

“And Beethoven?”

“Mozart and Strauss, Alan. The lighter, happier selections we’ve suggested. Simple, direct and sincere.”

“Sincerity is a complicated and vulnerable emotion, Major.”

“Simple sincerity is easy. If you can fake that...Good day, Maestro.” Spiros bowed his head to Alan in the manner befitting of his social rank. But both men knew who was Master and who was puppet.

## CHAPTER 16

The inevitable passage of time forced Opening Night to happen, on schedule, a very formal and opulent affair. Bernie, in a black suit not much different than he wore for work or, as Jennifer related to Alan, in leisure time, returned from Cyprus, but as assistant ambassador, not husband or even ex-lover. He barely acknowledged Jennifer's presence in the people-packed lobby, and Alan failed, yet again, to return her "are you still alive?" phone calls. She was the Cinderella of the ball, more beautiful than the goddess Athena, but with no date from atop or below Mount Olympus. But there was one man who was drawn to her instantly.

"Jennifer, good to see you here," Dr. Katsoris, in a tuxedo that made his commonly construction body look like a dashing 19<sup>th</sup> century Prussian nobleman, said to her eyes while his ocular portholes viewed the most voluptuous set of breasts he had seen in a lifetime of medical practice. He wondered what they would look like uncovered. It had been months since he was called in to stitch up the bar fight wounds on Alan in the house call that was kept in strictest confidence. Katsoris had serviced many clients whose medical history were never written down, from American ambassadors, to KYP Colonels, to Greek prisoners in the jails that didn't officially exist. But when it came to women, he was a gentleman in the hallway, and a pig under the sheets. "You look quite elegant tonight, Mrs. Bernstein," he offered.

Jennifer's eyes roamed the room for a look, glance or acknowledgment of her existence from one man, barely aware of Katsoris' hungry eyes and cheap cologne. Even if the highly-skilled doctor was eyeing her anatomy as to its 'biomedical beauty', she was concerned with more important matters.

"Or is it Mrs. Kewalski, now?" Katsoris looked at her left hand, a wedding ring missing, the band under it pale white. "Or is it...Miss now?" he continued.

"Missed...Not 'Miss' or 'Ms'. As in 'missed' all the boats, but still swimming. And still trying to protect dolphins from sharks."

"You are alone tonight?" the good Doctor asked with a courtly

bow.

“We’re always alone, especially with someone we think we love,” her answer in a sing-song solemn melody.

“That tune is from...Verdi or Schubert? But from your lips, it sounds like the goddess of Athena herself.”

“Especially when I sing it with my closest partner,” she countered.

“Him?” Katsoris said, pointing to a poster featuring Alan in an introspective pose that would whet any woman’s panties.

“No, her,” Jennifer slurred from the side of her mouth, her finger pointed at an attractive woman just walking in alone with wide-open Aquarian eyes.

“Hmmm...Even more interesting,” Katsoris said, reminiscent about how his male nautical ancestors must have looked forward to highly confidential layovers on the isle of Lesbos where women were rumored to express the kind of love between them that men could not.

But there was something in the air even more foul than Katsoris’ sweat, cologne or pre-maturely released love-juices. Why did still-official-hubby Assistant-Ambassador Bernie Bernstein ask for a divorce that morning, and through a lawyer that offered a break-up with Jennifer getting anything any divorced woman could need, or want? Why did everything in the auditorium look so perfectly gracious, the way a classical concert in a civilized, first world, country should be? Why was the champagne from California instead of France? Why were the best seats in the house reserved for the Senators in charge of the American Armed Service budget advisory committee? And why did Alan look so....pensive, and groomed?

“Alan?” She said to a man who stepped in front of. A man who was clean-shaven with slicked back hair that extended barely to mid-ear level. “Is that you?”

“You tell me,” he slurred out of the corner of his mouth, eyes fixed on a piece of paper with highly volatile agenda on it.

“You’re up to something, Alan. And why do I think it’s about more than hiding that pony tail under your shirt collar?”

“Mi rotas,” still-assistant-to-the-conductor Yannis interjected, handing another list to Alan, one that intensified the fire in his gut, as well as the fear behind his eyes.

“What did he say?” Jennifer inquired.

“Mi rotas,” Alan repeated as he exited the lobby, disappearing into the crowd.

“Mi rotas?” Jennifer pleaded.

“Don’t ask,” Yannis clarified as he disappeared into the other direction, leaving Jennifer not only between two men, but in the middle of two worlds that would collide very soon, and very violently.

As Bernie’s still-official wife, Jennifer’s seat was third row center. Bernie smiled as he waved to the Speaker of the House from Washington, the Greek KYP Colonels who were now-kings, the Russian, French and British Ambassadors, and Major Spiros. His voice never seemed less sincere, the touch of his hand cold, the tremor in his voice oscillating between fear and unrelenting rage. Never once did he look directly at Jennifer. Never once did she dare look at him.

“The perfect marriage of political convenience,” she thought. “Timed to break up in six months, right on schedule, confidentially. Maybe I really did love Bernie, and he really did love me. There can’t be any other explanation for all this hurt he’s feeling, and, I think, I am,” she pondered behind a Jackie O smile worthy of any First Lady, or Primo Woman.

But there were bigger problems afoot than the misplaced passions of three American ex-patriots. Ushers had been replaced by soldiers, each packing firearms under the bulges no one dared

ask about. Exit doors on the stage were locked shut, not merely closed. And the program was far different than anything Alan or Jennifer would have designed. The playbill every audience member was given featured a doctored clean-cut photo of Kewalski smiling inside a logo showing the Greek and American flags merged together, with a musical selection that looked like a Military Rally to raise money to promote the Green Berets.

“Maybe Alan was right,” Jennifer commented softly as the orchestra tuned up. “To take over a country, you need a color coordinated flashy flag, a killer-hit national anthem, and distinguishing-looking facial hair. Maybe with a Stalin-special or a Garribaldi handlebar, Maestro Kewalski can be packaged as a new president, king, god, or—”

Bernie moved his hand on Jennifer’s wrist. The hold was tight, firm, but loving. It said ‘no’ to so many things she was thinking, and feeling. ‘No’, Kewalski is not in charge. ‘No’, even I can’t protect us if things get out of hand here tonight. ‘No’, I don’t hate you, I think I love you now, more than ever. ‘No’, we dare not think too loudly because Big Brother’s ears ARE listening.

Alan stepped onto the stage in the manner of a dignified conductor with the kind of professionalism expected of his musical rank. No passion, no feeling, no humanity. He took to the podium, opened the libretto, and instructed the orchestra to do the same.

Alan announced in English, Yannis translated in Greek. “The program tonight will be The Battle Hymn of the Republic, The 1812 Overture, Anchors Away and the Stars and Stripes Forever.”

Alan and Yannis displayed no emotion, blank stares in their eyes. Kerabelis and the other musicians were flabbergasted when they opened the seals on their scores and shuffled their papers in confusion.

Yannis nodded a firm ‘yes’ to the confounded musicians. What was before them was to be played, note for note, on Alan’s command.

Alan continued to talk to the audience, in a voice they had not

heard from him, from a clean-shaven face they had never seen. “It’s a new day, a new beginning, We celebrate the sterilization of the Communist cancer, a tribute to a political necessity which will become a new, stable democratic reality.”

Spiros smiled. The opening statement couldn’t have been written better himself. He even thought that Alan could be useful as the KYP’s top propaganda’s writer and spokesman. He sat back, prepared to enjoy his victory cake, with icing. Maybe Machevelli was right. Make your rival Prince a Duke in your kingdom, and he may become your closest ally, and friend. He imagined would it be like going whoring in the streets with Alan Kewalski, or perhaps sharing the prize he valued most---Jennifer

Jennifer felt the hurt more than anyone else. How could this sell-out happen? What bout of weakness could make Alan seem so dead behind the eyes, and so willing to embrace the death that comfort brings. He seemed to be looking at everyone in the audience except her. Even a look of hatred would have been better than nothing at all. “Nothing” is the most painful emotion of all, and non-incident Jennifer Pappas knew that from so much past non-experience she had endured since she left the only man who she really loved for a stable life she could trust.

Alan raised his baton, and let five seconds of deep silence overcome the room. He normally let the audience experience three seconds of the sound of Silence, so they could hook into the music inside themselves, as the music Beethoven must have felt and heard after his ears went deaf. The Silence made possible the greatest symphonies, Sonatas and quartets ever written. But this was about something a lot bigger than Beethoven. So said the Ghost of old Ludwig as he entered the auditorium and waited for the first note to be blasted out.

It was a dissonant chord at first, that got even more demonic by the second measure. Then, by the third measure, an emotion beyond Heaven and Hell—comedy. Battle Hymn of the Republic, The Stars and Stripes Forever, Anchors Away and The 1812 Overture were, apparently, NOT meant to be played simultaneously, but the inner melody and subtext of this new Opus Revolutionarie was understood by every musician, most



particularly Kerabellis, who played his violin at full volume to the Battle Hymn of the Republic while Lambrados, fresh from a KYP 'detention' cell, with scars to match, belted out Anchors Away on his trumpet like the cavalry charge of the Light Brigade.

Everyone in the audience got the joke, most particularly Jennifer. Even Bernie smiled, as did the ultraconservative Senator Whiteholm from the Great State of Mississippi, the only state in the Union Alan never visited because he said he'd need shots against Dull Out Virus and Redneck Fever. Parts of the scores even made sense, featuring improvised variations on themes of forbidden works by Theodorakis, Dylan and a Kewalski riff written by Jennifer. The group mind of the orchestra had become a single voice of rugged individualism, not a note missed, not a single musical beat not silently heard. Indeed, Swiss classically-trained musicians COULD improvise like New Orleans blues masters who couldn't read a single note. The brains in the guts were working, Alan putting down his baton during those sections and letting the band play on, each member of the orchestra having an equal shot, and an opportunity to stand while counter-pointing with the other members of the orchestra. It all, of course, looked like it was being read from the score, but only the Athenian National Orchestra knew that melody only was provided.

Spiros fumed, and shriveled in his seat. Guns were useless against laughter, and would do far more good than harm, particularly when the Journalists were the ones laughing loudest. Clive Burns hated any kind of bastardization of musical form, but something here worked. He hadn't remembered laughing at a musical joke for years. Remarkably, ambassadors and Congressmen who didn't know the difference between Bach and Backwater Blues got all the jokes too. Even Marine Guard Sam Johnson, who never forgave draft-dodger Kewalski for letting some other kid go over to Vietnam and get shot, admired the Maestro's performance. He didn't laugh, but, for the moment, gave him a forgiving smile.

Now-Sergeant Dimitrius didn't know what to make of it. To him, it was just music and irreverent gestures on stage by a class of people he would never had seen unless he had put on the KYP uniform in exchange for performing the occasional harassing,

beating or killing for the good of his country.

The Colonels were enraged, but more so at Spiros than Alan. But whatever they were thinking of doing had to be kept tightly behind forced smiles, as their American funders and protectors, down to every Congressman, Senator and New York Times Reporter, loved the music, and the skillfully scored expressions of humor imbedded into it.

Alan did end the patriotic ‘fugue’ correctly. Each of the prescribed Anthems had a final refrain, individually played. The top-off coda was “shave and a haircut, two bits”, to which Alan added his own voice as kazoo player, one in his mouth, the other in his ass pointed in Spiros’ direction.

The round of applause drowned out all of Spiros’ orders to his men. Alan finally looked at Jennifer and saw rejuvenated love in her eyes. From Bernie, respect, the kind only real men can give to other real men. But guns would still puncture human flesh. Even the ghost of Beethoven, now laughing in well-deserved elite, in the third tier balcony, knew that.

Alan got up on the podium and quieted the audience down.

“We had problems getting the appropriate scores for the prescribed program,” he announced in a cool, convincing manner. “So, in the meantime....”

Alan looked up at Ludwig, smiling down at him, fearful and hopeful at the same time, then at Spiros, his hand poised on his gun, prepared to off the mischievous Maestro, no matter what the international or personal consequences.

Alan’s throat choked, but he let the silence in the room linger for a few more seconds. They seemed like an eternity. What should follow this official apology, this political joke, this final statement? What would happen to him, to his orchestra, or to Jennifer? What could he say to all of these people who had all the power, all the guns, and all the cash, to hold back the tide of inevitable revenge? What voice could they all understand, or at least feel?

Alan looked at Jennifer for the answer. She nodded a subtle but firm ‘yes’.

The Maestro cleared his throat and announced in a clear blast of fire, moderated by the warmth of translator Yannis, “Beethoven.... Leonora Overture....Number Three.”

Alan turned around, pulled the uncut mane of hair from the tight rubber band behind his neck, raised his baton up, and let three seconds of silence overtake the room. Beethoven floated three feet over the tympany and gave Alan the thumbs up. Then—peronios. Fire!

No orchestra ever played with more passion and commitment. In the audience, feet tapped, heads nodded and clenched fists pounded along with the beat, from everyone. Marine Sergeant Johnson felt the pride of being a Marine, the way it was BEFORE 1964. KYP Sergeant Dimitrius experienced something wondrously human and magnificent, accessible to ALL classes of society. Bernie found himself singing along to a melody he had never heard before. Jennifer felt her fingers move in a way she thought had been lost. The flute solo played on her knee was in synch with the movement of Alan’s fingers.

For the hippie-Maestro, it was a tribute to mentor and friend Beethoven, and a serenade to ex-, now-refound, lover Jennifer. It was about politics AND love now, both merged into the most powerful of all human emotions—being Alive!!!

## CHAPTER 17

Alan finally got his wish. His music was banned from the record stores, the radio stations and television broadcasts. They never sold better as underground discs, re-labeled as Beach Boys Greatest hits, Elvis Goes Hawaiian and his favorite cover, Sergeant Barry Sandler's Green Baret Love Songs. Nikos made four times more money under the table selling outlawed records than pushing illegal dope, but then again the penalty for getting caught was ten times more punitive. The still-Leftist son of a Right-wing butcher father even found a new fire inside himself after giving up using dope. He finally realized that Alan was right—Madness IS best enjoyed straight.

Jennifer paid off everyone she could, and Bernie called in all his favors. As an American citizen, Alan was officially untouchable by the Junta, so long as he did not disobey any Greek law consistent with civil codes in the rest of Western Europe. Bernie got the most bribable legal council in the Mediterranean on the case, a Sicilian firm that he had used before to work an arrangement to allow the Mafia to control the Palermo City council so long as the right-wing Cosa Nostra kept as the Marxist Red Guard from setting up market operations on the Italian mainland.

The Baldino firm made it quite clear that until Alan was a Greek citizen, he had diplomatic immunity for any crimes excluding rape, murder, theft and embezzlement, as provable by an INTERnational Court. A promise was even made to bring the mob into the arms for drugs trade the CIA was doing in Latin America, but even the dumbest mooks in the Italian Mafia weren't stupid enough to buy into that one.

It was July Fourth on the official calender. Alan declared it Kewalski Dependence Day. Finally, his legally tying the knot with Jennifer was becoming a reality. He had looked forward to that day for nearly four years, but now that it was finally here—

“I'm doing the right thing here, right?” Alan asked first man Yannis at a traditional Greek alter, as a priest in a long beard droned out Gregorian chants that felt more like an initiation into a Transylvanian Fraternity than marriage to a woman he loved. “I

am doing the right thing, right?” he asked again.

“Mi rotas,” Yannis sarcastically related, reflecting on the failures of his first two marriages.

“What the hell do you mean by that?” Alan muttered through a smile meant to still convey to everyone in the wedding party that though he did know the difference between being brave and stupid. Or did he? Here he was, religiously atheistic, who valued freedom and rebellious discontentment above all things, decked out in a clean, white suit in front of a Priest, preparing to bond his life with another human being’s in marital bliss. And it was to a woman who prayed to a God he was constantly quarreling with on a daily basis.

“Beware of what you want...” Nikos warned.

Just then, Alan turned around and saw the package he bought into.

“You just might get it,” Yannis continued.

“Yes, you will,” Alan said with a smile as he saw Jennifer walk down the aisle.

Her hair was long, and golden, flowing freely down her back. Around her neck, a Hopi Indian choker with beads featuring colors so magnificent they had no names in Oxford English or Kathalevuse Greek. Her dress was a flea-market off-white special, decorated with fresh flowers from the deep-cut neck-line, down her slender waist, to the hemline just above her knees. Below that—nothing.

“I’ll give you barefoot, Alan, but we’ll have to talk about pregnant,” she whispered to her shell-shocked beloved at the alter.

“Is she allowed to talk to me like that?” Alan asked the Priest. Yannis translated.

Father Georgos, in mid-chant, nodded a ‘yes’ of resignation, no doubt reflecting on the mistake he made getting married before

becoming a Priest, and being obliged to keep ‘the wife’ attached to his life, and ever-exhausting liturgical duties.

On Jennifer’s side of the aisle sat the friends who aligned with her after the quicky, discrete and very legal divorce from Bernie, and some that sympathized with him. On Alan’s (left) side, Greek hippies with short hair and conservative clothing, but wild eyes, and Greek orchestra musicians with wilder spirits. The most solid of followers, friends and co-believers were there. Amongst them, John Milos, the American Med Student Alan had saved from conscription into the Greek Army, so far at least.

Father Georgos droned on, mixing English in with the Greek so Alan’s mind would be put at ease with regard to the terms of the arrangement. When he got to the ‘do you take this person’ part. Jennifer gave a ‘sure’, Alan a ‘why not?’. “May God sit on your head,” the Priest said with affirmation.

“Huh?” Alan countered.

“That’s a good thing, Alan,” Jennifer related. “It loses a lot in translation.”

“Huh?” Alan asked Yannis.

“Mi rotas,” Yannis repeated.

“Don’t ask, just do.” Jennifer said, perking her lips for the kiss of life, or death. “And I want tongue on this one.”

Alan smiled one of his affirmative grins, but before he could get his lips perked up, Jennifer landed one smack on HIS mouth.

Both sides of the alter gave a standing ovation, the lovers locked in a kiss that lasted over a minute. Only after Father Georgos cleared his breath for the third time did Alan come up for air.

Awaiting the happy couple outside, a bazooki-rock-band playing counterpoint with a mini-chamber orchestra under the baton of Kerabellis himself. Rice, laughter and music filled the air

as Alan carried Jennifer to the Harley he would drive to the reception, and to the Macedonian cabin retreat afterwards. Gifts were showered upon the new couple from Princes, paupers, and one soldier, who was out of uniform.

“Major Spiros,” Alan said amidst the celebration, keeping the situation as private as he could.

“Captain Spiros, Maestro,” Spiros said as he gave Alan a giftwrapped box, with a sincere bow and sorrowful smile that seemed...sincere.

Alan instructed Yannis to keep the crowd, and Jenny, occupied with the music that had evolved into a street-dance while he dealt with the business of resolving old differences with what seemed to be a defeated, or perhaps even an Enlightened, former adversary. True to form, Yannis complied.

“Beware of Greeks bearing gifts,” Alan said to Spiros, who hardly recognizable in civilian clothes as the now married Maestro proceeded on to a more celebratory event than even perhaps his marriage to Jenny.

“Is this a bomb?” Alan said as he opened up the gift in Spiros’ presence, as far from the crowd as he could get.

“It’s something a lot more explosive than that, Maestro,” Spiros warned.

Alan could hardly believe his eyes when he saw it.

“Yes, Maestro. It’s a book. A biography of Beethoven.”

“And what about the Beethoven at the concert? And that demotion those bosses threw on you because of...me, and others who---?” Alan asked.

“---Forgiven and forgotten,” Spiros smiled, putting another tastefully-wrapped package into Alan’s clammy hands. “A wedding gift,” he explained. The eyes behind Spiros’ extended handshake seemed sincere. As did the sentiment behind it. “You

now have a wife and, soon, a family. This is more important than any military promotion or recording contract.”

“You’re invited to join us,” Alan offered, breathing with the kind of relief not experienced for years. “Maybe you can find a woman here to make an honest man out of YOU. Or at least a happy one.”

“I have work to do. And things to un-do,” Spiros related in a tone revealing to Alan both respect and remorse on his way down the street.

The wedding celebration went on longer than anyone anticipated, Alan having requested that everything flowing freely except anything containing alcohol or mind altering pharmaceuticals, everyone’s watches turned in to Yannis to be returned at...the appropriate time. But the sun was setting, and curfew laws were curfew laws. Martial law still required that everyone be inside after dark, a situation that suited Alan and Jenny very well.

The exit from the taverna was loud and jovial, Alan’s Harley beating out a pounding rythm that both orchestra and band kept in tempo with. The send off song—Rossini’s William Tell Overture, alias Long Ranger theme.

“Hih’ho Silver!” Alan screeched out, drunk with happiness, though not an ounce of ooze had passed his lips. “Away!” Jenny added, feeling a bit giddy after only the one glass of champagne she knew she should have passed up.

Alan put a his bandanna over his face, and rode the beast off into the sunset with a one-wheely screech heard round the world.

“Who was that masked man?” a drunk Nikos asked a very sober Yannis.

“The lone strangers,” Yannis’ reply, feeling that something very prophetically wrong was about to happen, and knowing that he dare not share that fear with anyone around him.



A quarter mile out, Jenny saw something in the road ahead. “Is that a construction site?”

“There ARE some rules, even for the brave ones.” He slowed down to safe, then civilized speed.

“Those guys behind it look like....they have auras that are sideways, and dark. Are they aliens?” Jenny asked behind eyes gone slightly psychedelic from the glass of bubbly and only Nikos knew what else.

“They’re a lot more powerful than aliens, and a lot more dangerous.” Alan came to an abrupt stop in front of the roadblock. Approaching from his left, Spiros, in full military uniform.

“Captain Spiros?” Alan inquired.

“Major,” he replied, back in uniform, his rank restored.

“Huh?” Alan said.

“He’s been saying that a lot today,” Jenny slurred out, her tongue loosened by the kind of Madness that was enjoyed ‘straight’.

“Is this Jennifer Pappas?” Spiros asked in a dispassionate official capacity, looking at his clipboard.

“I think so,” she affirmed with a belch, having drunk way too much of what she was TOLD was non-alcoholic rum from Nikos’ special celebration stock. She took out her multi-card ID pack, spilling the papers on the ground. “Yeah. I must be me. Look at the pictures.”

“You are Granddaughter to Helena Pappas of Sparta?” Spiros asked in an official, passionless tone.

“I knew we should have invited her to the wedding, Alan!” she said to her very sober husband as Spiros’ aides displayed their firearms.

“Your grandmother died twenty years ago,” Alan noted.

“Then we’re late for the funeral, Alan!” Jennifer mused about two subjects ‘good Greek American girls’ never joked about, relatives and death.

“And you have just married this woman, Mister Kewalski?” Spiros continued.

“Yeah. So....” Alan looked into Spiros’ eyes, wondering why he was so content behind them.

“By Greek law, she is a citizen of this country with full rights and responsibilities it carries. By marrying her, you are also a citizen, with full rights and responsibilities it carried. Therefore...”

“Therefore what?” Alan asked cautiously.

Spiros motioned for his men to move in, surrounding Alan, guns drawn.

“Jennifer. Go into my left pocket and take out my passport and diplomatic papers,” Alan said softly. “Slowly”.

“Alan, why are all those rabbits pointing carrots at us?”

“Because we ate forbidden fruit,” Alan blurred out, remembering the ‘timing’ behind the night of love with Jennifer, followed by the ‘morning after’ KYP breakfast inflicted upon the country he loved perhaps even more than his own.

“Huuh...I don’t....” She fainted, into Alan’s arms. The soldiers quickly moved in and pulled Alan off his bike, cuffing him, and dragging him into a black funeral car with darkened windows.

Jennifer was grabbed ‘discretely’ seized by the Spiros’ second detachment and gingerly fed two pills. She spit them out, then took a lump of flesh from the ‘orderly’ who tried to get them into her. The second attempt to get the medicinals into her was far more forceful, and successful, appended with the entire contents of a flash of American-made Scotch. What remained of her body and

consciousness was carried into a private limo.

Spiros ordered the motorcycle to be set afire on the spot, a dead body of similar built to Alan's dropped on top of it.

Spiros had given clear instructions to the fire department to avoid all calls from that area of town, as there was a special allowance for testing newly-imported explosives. No need to alarm the local population, nor the world. It was late, and everyone needed their sleep. Indeed, the next day would be tiring enough.

## CHAPTER 17

Jennifer woke up with Santana in her gut and the hangover of a century between her ears, her memory of the previous day, and night that followed, blurred. The bed was her own, but the men beside it—

“Doctor Katsoris?” she asked, recognizing the man standing over her. “What happened? Where’s....”

“....Alan?” Marine Sergeant Johnson said, approaching the bed from the other side with a foul smelling Texan recipe elixir that was more repulsive to the nose than anything Katsoris ever made her drink. “We need to get you sober, then we can talk.” He insisted that she drink the witches brew, despite the fact that Jennifer insisted she was never drunk.

When Jennifer did swallow it, she looked at her hand, her left hand, now ringless. “Who took my wedding ring?”

“Maybe you threw it out, after you left your husband,” Katsoris suggested. “Some marriages break up ten years after the wedding, and some ten minutes after you leave the church. And you have been very emotionally stressed the last few months.”

“I was married yesterday, to a man I loved. Alan Kewalski. Where the hell is he?!”

“I had my people look into it, Ma’am.” Johnson calmly noted.

“I’m calling MY people and having THEM look into it!” Jennifer reached for the phone. Johnson grabbed her arm. “They already know.”

“They know WHAT?”

“An American was burned up on a motorcycle after he hit a roadblock. The body was charred beyond recognition, but his identify was confirmed prior to the accident,” Katsoris related.

“And MY people believe that, Sergeant Johnson?” Jennifer

pressed.

“You were under the influence of drugs and booze after the fight you had with Alan. There were witnesses,” the true blue Marine uttered with a blank stare so often used in Da Nang in press conferences with investigative reporters.

Katsoris nodded in a ‘we do know what’s best for you, little girl’ manner she had seen all too often from so many men, except one—the man to whom she had just pledged to love, honor and cherish. Her new husband’s safety undoubtedly depended on her saying nothing, and doing everything.

## CHAPTER 18

Alan knew that the free ride to an undisclosed location in an unidentifiable vehicle with a blindfold on would happen one day, but there was one nightmare he never anticipated happening while he was still wide awake.

“Herman’s Hermits, The Dave Clark Five and Merle Haggert!” he yelled out to the driver after his ears had been subjected to the blasts from the approved radio station. “That teenie-bopper and redneck dribble DOES carry dull-out-virus, and kills brain cells. I confess, already! I DID have an intimate love affair with Ludwig von Beethoven, and he was great under the sheets! And when me and Jim Morrison met in Paris, we got a room of our own, turned off the lights, and—”

“I will change the station, Maestro Kewalski,” Sergeant Dimitrius said in an official and respectful tone.

“Let’s hear some Deutschland Uber Alas. Maybe Gotterdamering. Ya know, the only reason why the Nazi’s took power and kept it is because they had great taste in music. For real. Like Custer and the Gary Owen. I’d make even ME proud to ride into a Sioux village of women and children and cut them up into pieces while whistlin’ the Gary Owen, to the rhythm of my sword chopping up Pagans into mince meat for the buzzards.”

Alan bobbed his head, pursed his lips and tapped his shackled feet to a whistled version of the Seventh Cavalry theme, imagining the open plains of the Little Big Horn in front of his blindfolded eyes, knowing fully well that a worse fate awaited him than General George Custard-ed. Still, it made the primal sin of defiance bearable, and understandable.

Dimitrius listened for the first chorus, as did the soldier next to him. Alan could feel something odd about this pair, as he tried to find a way out of the handcuffs tearing into his wrists every time he’d try to break loose. Still, a little bit of bloodshed beat not breaking a sweat in the attempt to stay Alive between the ears.

By the third chorus of the Gary Owen, Dimitrius cleared his throat, from the chakra point best identified as Evil, or more frighteningly, death. Only one strategy could work against the living dead doing the demon of all demons work.

“I know, guys,” Alan conceded. “You don’t know the words. A whistle in ‘Merican still ain’t the same as it is in Greek. You guys spreckensie English?”

“No, Maestro Kewalski,” the soldier next to Dimitrius blurted out in a voice that sounded familiar.

“Gen’ral Spiros! That you?”

“No, Maestro Kewalski,” he countered back in a tone more vicious than Dimitrius, or even Spiros, and twice as final. “And where you are going, your American sense of humor will not be appreciated.”

“But will my jokes be UNDERSTOOD? Being hated is better than being ignored.”

“There is no shortage of people who will hate you, and your jokes where we are going.”

“Even better. Being hated gets you noticed.” He paused, then had to relate the rest. “And I suppose that the place we’re going doesn’t get a whole lot of press coverage.”

From Dimitrius and the Lieutenant next to him, silence. Then, light—from the windshield. Alan could see the eyes of his captors now, and a long, deserted road ahead. Then, a ferryboat, taking him to an island fortress where he saw despair oozing out of the walls, desperation behind the steel doors. Above those doors, still not faded completely by the elements, ‘SS Stalag Swansig’.

“May I have a cigarette?” Alan asked, having heard the horror stories about the island prison used by the Nazis in 1943. Tales about the horror of Stalag Swansig were the only thing that kept the pro-Communist ELOS and the anti-Fascist ELAN Greek partisans united during that year. Both groups hated each other

more than the Italians, or even the Germans, and united for only two operations. The first was destroying a bridge which maintained Rommel's most important supply lines, a valiant action that made all the history books. The second ELOS and ELAN operation, one that didn't make the history books, was to bust open Stalag Swansig, letting ALL the Greeks out, no matter what their affiliation. That attempt failed miserably, three-hundred and twenty Greek guerrillas becoming buzzard food, and ten villages burned to the ground by the Nazis in retribution as they extracted information. Some claimed that prisoners were used for biological experiments as well, providing post-War Germany, as well as Britain and Russia, with medical 'breakthroughs' in pain assessment, psychiatric diseases, and reproductive biology which showed what would work on the laboratory rats.

It was the Madness about Swansig that scared Alan the most. Worse, it was the lifelessness that came with submission. In Levinworth and a hundred other lock-ups and prisons he had seen faces of men who were as Alive as ever, or ocular portholes that said 'beaten and defeated', like the lab mice who had learned to be helpless to such a point that they would prefer to let themselves sink and drowned in a tank of water than exert two strokes to a safe platform. Or, maybe there was another option waiting.

"I got the blindfold, can I have a cigarette?" Alan asked the Lieutenant.

"They are dangerous to your health," the officer answered, followed by a sadistic laugh, and an unsaid order to Dimitrius to laugh along.

Something happened to Dimitrius when he laughed. Alan could see it in the rear-view mirror. The boy had become one of the guys by joining in on the joke, from the outside. But what about the human being still left inside? This kid's eyes were becoming cold, but not yet cruel. Or so Alan hoped when he tapped Dimitrius on the shoulder, gently and with the utmost—vulnerability.

"Can I have a cigarette?" Alan asked Dimitrius, knowing that the Sergeant could see into his eyes through the blindfold. "Please."



Dimitrius looked to the Lieutenant, who gave him a shrugged ‘yes’.

“Thank you,” Alan said to Dimitrius, simply, plainly, and with genuine appreciation. “Can I ask you your name?”

Dimitrius looked to the Lieutenant, who gave a firm ‘no’ to the request.

“My name’s Alan. You sound like a Yannis, a Nikos, an Elias, a Georgos, a.....”

Alan went through every Greek name he could pronounce correctly and the ones he couldn’t. Then, when the steel door opened— “Basili. Your silence feels like a Basili silence. Basili...Bill means defender of what is right and just. Am I right?”

Dimitrius kept the silence going, according to orders. But his eyes said ‘guilty’ to a list of crimes he had committed already, and another list he was about to be promoted to. Dimitrius wished he could go back to just being Billy, a big man who loved the smallest of mice, but it was too late now, for everyone.

## CHAPTER 19

Jennifer's calls to Bernie went unanswered, and tapped as she tried, once again, to use the communication lines at her apartment. Ironically, or perhaps on purpose, everything there was exactly the same as it was before she ran into Alan. No windows were broken. No draws were broken into. And all food deliveries came to her door on time. She was able to even purchase a new phone at no cost from the Consolate. But as for what came over those lines, she recalled Alan's warnings about how the clicks and buzzes on the phone line meant that Big Brother was very much alive, and very interested. But on every call? And from everywhere she tried to call from?

There was only one person to go to, a man whose ultimate political agenda was the direct opposite to Alan's—or was it?

"It's about freedom, Sergeant Johnson," she pleaded over set of beers at the California Café, whose atmosphere was now as dull as its new 'All American' menu. "You fought for freedom in Vietnam."

"And Alan fought for the Vietcong," Johnson pointed out. "His friends were my enemies," the terse compulsion.

"Alan wanted the war to end," she protested.

"For them, or us, Mrs. Kewalski?"

"For everyone, Sergeant!"

"You really DO have it all backside up, Jennifer." He took another gulp from his officially-allowed beer, spiked with his own flash of whiskey to be sure it would have its effect. "War's always about them or us. Family first."

"Is that who you gave your leg for?" she blurted out, realizing as the words came out that philosophical dialogue had overstep both practicality and the basic rules of compassionate discourse.

Johnson looked down at the stump that once had attached to it

50% of a package that was 90% on the way to a starting position with the Dallas Cowboys. “I offered my life for my brother, sisters, and mother. For the first three months over there, I also thought it was about my a sweetheart from Waco who turned out to be the cheatenest bitch this side of the Pecos..” He pondered a moment. “You’re doing this for Alan, right?”

“I think so,” her reply.

“Did he ever cheat on you? Have a kid by someone else he didn’t quite get ‘round to tellin’ you about?”

“None that he knew about,” Jennifer found coming out her mouth with a Grouchoesche tone from someplace she thought had died inside her. “I’m sorry.”

“Fer what?” He called the waitress over, asking for a bottle of something stronger than beer with the flash of an American five dollar bill. “You love that egotistical Hippie-Commie conductor and you’d do anything fer him, right?” he asked Jennifer, prepared for any answer she would give him.

“I think so,” her reply. “Yeah. Anything.”

“And that ‘anything’ would include pushing around Greek beurocrats, and embarrasin’ whatever Congressman ya have to, right?”

“Yeah.”

“And that ‘anything’ might also include pushin’ his case in front of the line.”

“Of course.”

“Even if ya ignore all those other ‘Alans’ who went missin’. And even if ya have ta kill boys who were drafted into the KYP Gestapo as men.” His bloodshot eyes penetrated Jennifer’s soul, forcing her to answer. “You’d put Alan’s welfare, life and well-being in front of a stranger.”

“Yeah, I think I would.”

Johnson swallowed the better half of a bottle of ooze like it was lemon koolaid during a 104 degree day at Dallas stadium, then took note of civilians and soldiers in the streets outside the window, once-freely-expressive Greeks now hiding their real feelings, opinions and political intentions. “You’d put your beloved’s welfare in front of that kid in a uniform, that cab driver with the cheesy mustache, that mother with a three year old kid, and even that kid...Right!!!!???”

Jennifer couldn’t lie her way out of this one. Her eyes said ‘guilty’, but her heart said “So what?”

Johnson grabbed a glass from the nearby table and poured a very officially disallowed stiff one for himself, and Jennifer. “Selective compassion. I do unthinkable things to folks I don’t know ‘cause I care too much, or too stupidly, ‘bout the folks I do know. I made that mistake in Vietnam, and other places I wouldn’t talk to even YOU about, even after a horse trough full ‘a this Greek rockgut. The theory goes that if ya care ‘bout any stranger as much as yer friends, ya won’t start nor continue wars. Universal compassion. Einstein and Ghandi talked a lot about that. Universal compassion. Beethoven said it in his only opera, Fidelio.”

“How do you know about opera?”

“I read the opera programs, Ma’am. Beats listenin’ ta the music fer a country boy like me.”

“You hate classical music, Sergeant.”

“Only when ya sing it. Sounds like a steer bein’ castrated three times over. Don’t like hearin’ it on the ranch, won’t pay to hear it in La Scala.”

“You’ve been to La Scala?” She was genuinely shocked.

“They serve up a mean Fidelio there. And a loud one, as I recall. Didn’t recall name of the conductor at the Podium. He seemed to slip out just before the lights went on, a replacement

they pulled in the last minute, as I remember.”

Jennifer sipped her whiskey, feeling the right and need to talk at a deeper even more intimate level. “You remember a lot, there, Sam.”

“Beethoven’s only opera, ‘Fidelio’,” he continued, his Texan twang making him non-understandable to English speaking Greeks around him, and almost to Jennifer herself. “An Opera ‘bout Leonora, this woman who doesn’t give a shit about anyone ‘cept her own politico-husband, and personal security, then tries to find him by masquerading as a water boy in a prison, then finds out that other wives’ husbands suffer too, and then dedicates herself to whoever she can save, if it’s her husband or not.”

He raised his glass in a toast “ Selective compassion turnin’ into universal compassion. A class act. Evereveryone’s a friend. But—” Sergeant Sam’s face turned blank, and haunting.

“But what?” Jennifer asked.

Sam turned back into Sergeant, rethinking his Mission, purpose and strategy. “If ya do become a champion of universal compassion, you won’t have no friends. So in the meantime, ‘long as we stay stupid friends with each other, we got selective compassion.”

“So does this mean that you’ll help me find Alan?”

“Why should I?” he blasted out with a boozier’s breath that could ignite with even THINKING the wrong answer.

“Because you’re my friend, whether either of us know it, or like it.” Jennifer clicked Johnson’s glass, punctuated with a warm smile that said something felt, but maybe not intended.

“You offerin’ me special favors, Mrs. Kewalski?” Johnson inquired as he gazed over Jennifer’s breasts. “You DO look more beautiful when yer angry.”

“So, does that mean you’ll help me?” She poured him another

drink, and one for herself.

“You get me drunk, I might tell you things you’re not supposed to know, Ma’am”.

“And if you do?”

“If I tell ya too much, I’ll be obliged to kill ya,” the Texan’s retort wondering if he should cross that line he wavered around every time a decision regarding a woman’s honor or welfare. “It wouldn’t be nothin’ personal. Just a matter of National Security. Maybe INTERnational security.”

“I’ve had a lifetime of security! Tell me what I need to know!” Jennifer found her fists clenched, and around an object she would least expect—the handle of a steak knife sharp enough to take a piece out of anyone’s hide.

Johnson looked inside himself. He could lose far more than he would ever gain from this. Though only a Sergeant, he had access to National Secrets most Generals didn’t even know existed. A fact that was inferred to Jennifer while she was at the Embassy, confirmed with every word he said, and didn’t say to her.

One of Johnson’s unsaid communications was how powerful the KYP really was, and how actively it was supported by the most powerful country in the Free World. Another was that Jennifer had no idea who she was going up against. One question had to be asked first, and answered to his satisfaction before he would share the list of contacts that he dared not even relate to his favorite horse.

“What do you value most, Mrs. Bernstein?” he asked.

“My integrity and honor,” she answered assertively. “Just like you.”

“That’s what I was afraid of, Jennifer.”

“What do you mean by that?”

“Those are the first things that you’ll probably lose, or have taken from ya,” his reply, a world of pain behind the words. And a warning that said danger, red light and urgent, all at once.

Still, she pulled a pencil from her pocket and an old program from Alan’s last concert.

“Tell me who I should see,” she demanded.

Johnson wrote, Jennifer read. The names were hardly who she expected. Then again, it was the beginning of a no-incident life where she would have to make incidences happen, in ways smart and heroic. Even Jennifer knew that smart and heroic never came together in one package, but....

## CHAPTER 19

Spiros looked admiringly at his new protégé in the administrative offices of Swansig, comfortable chairs, new desks and appropriate gustatory delights recently brought in to make the staff feel at home in the kind of jobs their mothers would never imagine possible for their sons. Who would ever think that the meek, small and whimpish Basili Dimitrius would have ever made a soldier, to say nothing about a KYP interrogator? Indeed, as Spiros' right hand man, he did a better and more effective job at using cruelty in the name of anti-Communist Christian justice than anyone else in his command. AND without wanting to ever be promoted above Spiros himself!

“You and Seargent Dimitrius have done a good job with him, Spiros,” the prison doctor said after examining the most recent suicide victim, a spry and insolent lad of 19 who was originally scheduled for release as a slow-moving 20 year old going on 50. “I can see no bruises on his body, but in his eyes, and his face...”

“Pain,” Spiros affirmed.

“And humiliation, fear, regret, too,” the doctor noted. “I’ve studied faces of the living and the dead for most of my life, and I still cannot tell you what kinds of lines, wrinkles or complexion makes for the most tragic of human emotions,” he continued.

“So, the Red Cross, New York Times and others would say he was psychologically disturbed before coming here?”

“Even Amnesty International would concur,” the Physician noted, sadness and guilt in his eyes. Saying what in his heart would not only get himself killed, but others as well. The aging doctor remembered all too well that the Nazis would punish rebels by burning villages of innocent civilians. So, in their turn, did the Greek Fascist and Greek Communists that followed in 1945, when the rest of the world was celebrating the abolition of tyranny. Greek tragedy was like that, he recalled. Greeks suffer when the world does not notice them. Or maybe BECAUSE the world doesn’t notice them? It was a moot point, though. As a State



doctor, called in to moderate prison suffering, it was his job to be neutral, and compliant.

“So, you will be here next week?” Spiros asked as he escorted the deposed healer out the doors of cold steel through corridors stinking of hopelessness.

“What time?” the Physician asked as he was led to the outside entrance of Swansig, its gate decorated with recently planted yellow flowers and vines of brilliantly-green ivy.

“Ten o’clock,” Spiros answered. We’ll pick you up at the usual spot, Dr. Katsoris.”

Katsoris thought about the whole situation, the route that took him from the Hippocratic Oath to one that obliged him to do as MUCH harm as he could to patients deemed prisoners. But is was a political necessity if the Communist Cancer was to be stopped, and if the mutilation of Katsoris’ family at the hands of the Marxist ELAN in their 1945 raid on Athens was to be avenged.

“You look worried, Doctor,” Spiros commented as the sun came out from behind the clouds, blinding Katsoris with its brightness, and warmth.

The ‘good’ Doctor looked at the forest surrounding “Swansig”, now overgrown sufficiently so that no only the most trained recognizance pilot could see anything other than rocky mountain beneath the thistle-thorned green brush. He looked through an opening between two pine trees, into a black hole that he recognized very, very well.

“Cell 14,” Spiros commented. “This cell interests you.”

“It was where my father was put after the ELAN turned him in to the Nazis,” A tear came down his eye, the first time in years he let the tightness in his chest be released with so much unbridled grief—and anger. “Lambarkos and his Marxist thugs even helped the SS Officer in charge, in exchange for a private arrangement to be smuggled to Egypt in the horrible days when the Germans knew they had lost the war, yet fought it most sadistically. Men against

man is the most horrible kind of warfare.”

Spiros watched Katsoris choke up as the civilian fishing boat operated by a military crew prepared to cast off. Born to the sign of Scorpio and brought up as a ‘sissy boy’ in a house of spoiled sisters, Spiros had become a master of manipulation. It was his way, and had become his pleasure. “You don’t have to talk about it if you don’t want to,” he said to the good doctor with an empathetic hand on his shoulder that said “open for leaning on.”

Katsoris sniffed in some snot, then poured out a flood of tears. On cue, Spiros waved to the crew, informing them to give a man in mid-grief the privacy he deserves, and needs.

“You really don’t have to talk about it,” Spiros added, using a mixture of sympathy and empathy to extract his most effective new ally’s most hidden secrets.

“They pulled out my father’s fingernails, and he still didn’t tell them where his village was hiding after the buildings had been demolished,” Katsoris boasted through the sobs. “They burnt out his left eye, and he said that it was his COMMUNIST eye and he was better off without it. They electrocuted his genitals and he said that he had more children than he wanted, anyway. They put him in a box with rats, no light, and the stench of a hundred other men’s excretions and he STILL wouldn’t talk. But...eventually, everyone talks. Everyone.”

“What made him talk?” Spiros asked, offering Katsoris a cigarette.

“Me.” Katsoris confessed, taking a puff, gazing hypnotically into the burning tip, remembering how effective a lit cigarette could be in the hand of torturer who knows how to use it. “I was captured, held up to the window of that cell up there. The life of the village or mine, was the offer.”

“Your father must have known that the information was old, and useless.”

“It wasn’t,” Katsoris related bitterly, gazing at his reflection in

the water, seeing the faces of his massacred fellow villagers, dedicated anti-Communist ELAS guerrillas who distrusted Stalin as much as they hated Hitler.

Spiros knew the power of survivor's guilt, and what Cell 14 meant for Katsoris.

“The prisoner in Cell 14 will pay for your father's death,” Spiros asserted. “The Communist Cancer will be stopped here. Albania and Yugoslavia are lost to the Soviets, and we must do what we have to do to keep them away from our country.”

Katsoris knew it too. It was a hard choice, but a necessary one. The fate of his country, and the memory of his father, depended on it.

## CHAPTER 20

It was a small room, in a taverna that had, nor needed, no name, in a twelve house village that was only known to its inhabitants.

Jennifer's list of contacts from Marine Sergeant Johnson included a few disillusioned Amnesty International observers, a mercenary who even the French Foreign Legion threw out, and a Cuban technology specialist whose loyalties could have gone either way since he lost his son at the Bay of Pigs in 1963. But there was one name that cued her into the biggest invisible hole that went straight through the 6 inch steel walls of Stalag Swansig. A gut feel as a result of knowing him in the past, and knowing about him in the present.

"The Arch Bishop of Peleponesos. He's the I want to work with on this," Jennifer told Sergeant Sam Johnson in the hotel room rented in the name of John Smith, and guest.

"When I picked you up in town, you were dressed like a ten-dollar whore," Johnson pointed out after eyeing the outfit Jennifer showed up in. "And an interestingly attractive one at that, Ma'am. If you weren't a married woman, I'd take ya fer a roll in the hay myself."

"Not with what I have to do," Jennifer interjected, opening up the box of items she requested that Johnson obtain in the most clandestine manner. "You'll have to answer to a Military Tribunal and Saint Peter," she continued, pulling out a long black dress, Nun's habit and Arabian-looking veil adorned with Christian medallions. "Fuck a Nun, and it's a sure ticket to Hell, no matter how many times you've been decorated for saving Christian countries from Communist Atheists," she noted, and affirmed.

"Them's fightin' words, Mrs. K," Johnson commented as Jennifer tried the outfit on. "But do you know the 'why' and the 'how' about this war?"

"The 'why' is to find Alan and get him out, with whatever connections I have left." Jennifer struggled with the clerical headpiece that didn't seem to fit her swelled head.

“And the ‘how’?” Johnson continued.

“Like we talked about on the way over here, Sergeant ‘Smith’.” She tossed the habit on the bed, shaking caked sweat from her waist-long blonde mane.

“Father Gregor ain’t gonna go along with this,” Johnson warned.

“Of course he will. He knows what will happen to him if the Arch Bishop finds out about what really happened on Crete when he took that vacation with his divinity students.” She took a few strides in the boots at the bottom of Johnson’s box, two sizes too small. She strolled around in the black dress, the hemline four inches too long.

Sergeant Sam lit up a Lucky Strike, his last pack of American smokes. “What DID happen between Gregor and his alter boys?” he inquired.

“I don’t know,” Jennifer related. “But Father Gregor does, and whatever it is will get him fired from the Church, and a comfortable place in Heaven, no matter how lenient Jesus might be. And since most of the Orthodox Church, particularly the Arch Bishop of Peloponesis, is allied with the KYP, a morals charge will get Father Gregor a special cell of his own in Stalag Swanzig.”

“Like the Turks in the Revolution back in the 1820s,” Johnson related. “The Moslem Turks kept the Greeks as field niggers by assigning the Priests the job of being their overseers. Well paid overseers at that.”

Jennifer was surprised that Texan WASP Johnson knew so much about Greek history, the kind of information that went beyond memorizing dates of battles and casualty numbers. But there was a battle of her own looming. The Liberator-in-training looked in the mirror, placing the veil over her mouth. “At least this fits,” she said.

“Does this?” Johnson asked, holding up a small device, state of

the art.

“Made in Japan?” Jennifer asked, noting its size, and probably function.

“A tape recorder, sensitive enough ta fit into yer pocket, yer hat, or...”

“Your vagina,” she somberly surmised.

“They normally don’t search Nuns who assist Priests on their rounds at Prisons.” Johnson seemed sure of the claim.

“But—?” She gazed at the crucifix in the ‘costume box’, seeing more humanity in the likeness of Jesus than even the artist ever intended.

“Swansig ain’t a normal prison,” Sergeant Sam added.

Jennifer struggled with the headpiece, the narrowly thin rim of habit. “I told you my hat size is a 10, not a seven!”

“You musta growed a lot between the ears since you last measured it,” Johnson chuckled. “And the last thing you need now, is a swelled head.”

“What the hell are you talking about!!!”

“This!” Johnson screamed back. Jennifer had never heard Sergeant Sam never raised his voice in her presence, and it scared her half way to Hell. The rest of the trip was instantly expressed when he took hold of her hair, firmly, and tenderly, in a combination Jennifer had never seen from any man. “THIS is what I’m talking about, ‘Ma’am’.”

“They WILL do a body search,” Sergeant Sam said calmly. “And a swelled head like yers is a dead give away.”

“Huh?” Jennifer muttered.

Johnson pulled out a pair of scissors from under the bottom lid

of the costume box. An item Jennifer didn't request, but which she would need.

Jennifer was always scared when her parents took her for the yearly trim on her always-long mane. It remained long for years, even when it was a 'mop', Alan's preferred style. Though she was tempted several times to chop it off and start all over again, for many reasons, and several men, something had always stopped her.

"They will look under that habit," Johnson said. "The Colonels might still be afraid of the Lord Almighty, but Spiros ain't." He let go of Jennifer's lockes, taking stock of his position and potential.

Jennifer looked at herself in the mirror. "Hmmm," she commented reflectively. "I made Alan one promise after we left each other in 1964."

"What was that?" Johnson asked gently.

"To not cut my hair.". With that she took the scissors in her right hand, a chunk of mane in her left and took the first snip, two inches above the scalpline. After a look and a feel, she boldly moved on to the rest of the job, completing it with the speed and accuracy of a downhome 'bootcamp' chop job done in the dead of night after downing three six-packs of Budweiser.

Johnson had never seen a woman chop off five years worth of hair in twice as many seconds, but it reminded him of something else. Jennifer's eyes looked different when she looked into the mirror, then tried on the habit headpiece, which now fit like a glove. There was something about her face that seemed—

"Angelic. You look like an angel of mercy, Sister Jennifer," Johnson commented.

"I goddamn well hope so," her laconic reply.

## CHAPTER 21

Alan whistled the theme to the ‘Bridge of the River Kwai’ to himself as he was escorted down the darkened hallways that stank of manure, blood and hopelessness. Moans and screams came from all directions at once. But for the Maestro, there was no pain, no mutilation of flesh. Not even a prison hairstylist whose job it was to make everyone look like Yul Brenner with rusty razor blades, some of which took off chunks of scalp as well as hair.

All the ‘maybes’ echoed in Alan’s head. Maybe this was just a scare tactic, designed by Spiros to drive Alan and the Kewalski Enlightenment Rebellion into Turkey, Egypt, or even Albania. Maybe the New York Time reporter was behind one of the steel doors, with a deal from the CIA and the KYP to get out of town with his new wife to a backwater country of his choosing, a place where he could have something the revolution never really gave him—happiness.

Something else was happening too. Alan had worked himself out of the cuffs, but Sergeant Dimitrius didn’t seem to notice, and his Lieutenant didn’t seem to care.

Alan took the initiative. He broke into song with his greatest underground hit, “To Ludwig”, a rock adaptation of the Beethoven’s *Creatures of Prometheus* dedicated to the composer and the Greek deity of antiquity who was bold enough to defy the rest of the gods on behalf of an enslaved humanity, giving mankind the gift of fire and, according to some feminist versions of the tale, womankind the gift of reading so that the men would not burn the houses down.

From Dimitrius, nothing. From the Lieutenant, a condescending sigh. But from the cells in E block, accompaniments with whatever voices were left in the prisoners, a raspy dysharmonic chorus, in English, Greek, German and even Russian. Alan smiled, then another flash—he grabbed a pencil from his pocket and jotted down the idea—a musical idea for another ten minute piece that flashed into him in less than a second.

Then, from the Lieutenant—”Forward!”



Then, from Spiros, waiting at the other end of the corridor, applause. Behind Spiros, a line of chefs decked out in finest Parisian cuisine, a seven course meal on a white table cloth.

“Welcome, Maestro,” Spiros said, head bowed. He opened the door to Cell 14.

Alan had expected the worst, and it was granted, or so his inner gut said in triple fortissimo trumpet blasts.

“I hope that you like your steak rare, your mattresses clean, and pillows soft,” Spiros related. “I was rushed, so had to make do with what we had on hand. The chef prepared an appetizer which I am told is to your liking.”

Alan put his finger into the frosted flake/banana-peanut butter/ice cream slop that had been his secret pleasure food ever since he was a kid. Only Jennifer knew about it, or perhaps relatives still alive, and maybe well, in Hempstead, Long Island. But before putting it into his mouth—

“You put out a mean spread of hemlock,” Alan interjected. “Death by food poisoning, Spiros?”

“Hardly,” Spiros commented, helping himself to a generous portion of the grunge-dip.

There was something about Spiros’ smile, something that told Alan the five-foot nothing Napoleon wannabe was holding all aces, and the jokers.

“What do you want from me?” Alan asked.

“Nothing we don’t already have,” Spiros said. He gave Alan an article from the New York Times. “All the news that’s fit to print!”

“And great asswipe, too,” Alan’s appendix. “This is BULLSHIT!” he said as he read the article about him.

“Yes, it is. Maestro Kewalski would never run a drug,

prostitution and child pornography operation. But Alan would kill yourself in a motorcycle accident if anyone found out.”

“No one will believe this!” Alan asserted.

“They already have.” Spiros gave the Maestro a copy of the Village Voice, Playboy and Rolling Stone, the editors commenting on the corruption, and loss, of the only real Moral Revolutionary to come out of 60s.

Alan considered all the maybe’s banking on the one that seemed most rational, and hopeful. “You had these newspaper articles printed up!”

“Maybe we did, and maybe we didn’t,” the calm retort. “But matters of the world and struggles in it are immaterial now. For you, a life of quiet contemplation, comfort and—”

“—and what?” Alan asked.

“Maestro, are you Jewish?” the answer.

“ I converted to Greek Orthodoxy, for the wedding.”

“A pity,” Spiros added. “You can buy your way out of Jewish guilt. You can confess your way out of Catholic guilt. But Greek guilt is always with, you, and it never leaves.”

Spiros walked down the hallway with a firm cadence, whistling the Gary Owen. This time, Alan felt like the Indians a few years AFTER Little Big Horn, set up for a revenge that would make Wounded Knee look like a slap on the wrist.

## CHAPTER 22

Father Gregor grew up on an island less than two kilometers wide, but he never did get used to the ocean. The Adriatic could be smooth as a lake, but Gregor would always feel the bumps the boat found on the water. It was a source of ridicule for every sailor he met, based in perhaps the inner ear infection he had as a weakling child that took half the hearing from his left ear, or the fact that he couldn't swim. Or maybe it was the place he was going to today, and the company he was keeping.

“Look at the horizon,” ‘Sister Jen’ suggested to Gregor as pale, green skin appeared beneath his thick, black beard. “‘Swansig’ is only a mile away, and you would not want these KYP goons to see you barf,” she softly advised,

“We’re going to minister to the sick at ‘Kirokos Sanitarium’,” he admonished. “And if you want to be alive long enough to ever see your husband again, you remain silent, ‘Sister Helena.’”

The sea answered with a burst of wind. Jennifer adjusted her habit, feeling the cold of the wind through her closely-cropped ‘Nun-shag’. She adjusted the veil on her mouth, hearing the tinkling of the religious medals hanging over them, hoping that they would protect her from the nakedness she now felt.

She re-adjusted the tape recorder embedded in her vagina, silently saying, “God, please don’t let me have my period NOW! I’m on a holy mission, here, Goddamn it!”

Jennifer looked at the soldiers and sailors, and below deck at the door that remained locked, even to members of the Church. Behind it, a moan, hopeless agony that seemed familiar.

“I recognize that pain,” Jennifer said. “It could be Alan.”

“There are lots of ‘Alans’ in this Sanitarium and in the leper colony inside its walls” Gregor related, in English, then Latin, a tongue sometimes used by the Byzantine sect that doubled as Catholic and Greek Orthodox, depending on clerical convenience and political necessity. “And your job is to listen, not talk.”

The whispers caught the eye of one onlooker. Adriana was her name, a long-legged, firm-breasted whore with a mane of flaming red hair that flowed just below her perfectly-shaped ass. She knew the art of how to make every man feel special, unique, and even loved. It had been the custom of sailors and soldiers to take recreation with them, particularly when engaged in the most horrible of wars. Ten minutes of beauty could make a man forget twenty-four-hour-a-day of ugliness, whether it was initiated by him or inflicted upon him.

Adriana winked at Jennifer, having gotten a glimpse of her face.

“What does she want?” Jennifer whispered to Gregor with a tremble in her voice.

“Have you ever been intimate with a woman, ‘Sister’?” Gregor inquired.

“Only from the neck up, so far.” Jennifer’s honest, and understated reply.

“Let’s hope that Adrianna’s head is as loyal and compassionate as it is discrete,” the very non-Virgin unmarried Priest offered, and even prayed.

Adrianna smiled, then moved on to pleasure ‘Yannis number three’ below deck. The ‘Yannises’ on this boat were underpaid in money for their services to ‘sterlize the Communist cancer, well paid in ‘fringe’ benefits that only Adrianna could provide. Her work station was just next to the room containing the prisoners who were now officially lepers, a comfortable enough dwelling all things considered. Her lodgings at Swansig were appreciably more luxurious, a Five Star hotel room patterned after the American Hilton, according to what Gregor said he had been told.

‘Yannis number 2’ manned the helm, his hands firmly on the wheel, his trousers wet and sticky between the legs. His job was to keep the boat clear of submerged Albanian mines, lost tourists or journalists out to find the island that didn’t exist on any published map.

Jennifer opened a prayer book and bowed her head. “What do they do with whores in the Sanitorium?” she speculated, loud enough for Father Gregor to hear, knowing that Adrianna pitied her very existence as a woman who had given up being a woman.

From Gregor, a long silence. Then, “The human mind can pervert even the pleasures of the flesh into torture of the soul.” Anticipating Jennifer’s unspoken ‘huh?’, he continued. “We know human compassion, virtue, and happiness. The caretakers of the Kirikos Leper Colony and Sanitorium are masters in cruelty.”

## CHAPTER 23

Alan had said it in song years ago, “The only time you know your real self is in jail, in war or in a relationship with a hard-boiled hard-assed, hard-headed woman..” “Hard-Assed Hanna” didn’t have a beat you could easily dance to, but it was one of Alan’s most humorous, and profound classic-rock tunes. It had beating out the others on the charts in that emerging ‘youth’ European markets, including Keith Emerson’s ‘Five Bridges’ album, Zappa’s second record with the Mothers of Invention and Procol Harum’s ‘Salty Dog’. But ‘Hard-Assed Hanna’ was more than Phil Och’s ‘Pleasures of the Harbor’. It contained a far more enriched musical score and harder-biting satirical edge. And it was about inner angels, demons and inner possibilities.

The Maestro’s first night in the KYP Hilton was a restless one, as it had been for Alan every ‘first night’ when the locked door slammed behind him. The important thing wasn’t what was outside the small, barred window, twenty feet above his head, wide enough to let the Light in but too narrow to see the sky. It was about the shadows on the wall, shadows of himself, or a deeper self he had yet to discover.

That ‘inner stuff’ was still a matter of investigation, and morning brought no answers, only the primal question. “What is that shadow on the wall, Ludwig?” Alan asked the ghost of his patron saint, constant friend and most admired composer. “Is it gonna be bigger than me today or smaller? Will it show me how much courage I have inside, like Levinworth? How much tenacity, like in that hole in Tallahassee? Will it dance, sing, make me flatteringly-handsome? Or will it be like Columbus, where that shaved head made me look like a monkey, redneck boozier, or Buddhist monk, depending on what kind of light was coming in the window, and what kind of music was coming out of my hands.”

Alan pulled the three-inch pencil from the recesses of his pocket, and the pads of paper he had put on either side of his ass. He assessed his situations, and possibilities. “No body search. No haircut. Four star breakfast delivered under the slot, with a pencil and paper for me to order what I want for lunch and din-din.

Isolation from record agents, beurocrats, government censors, lifeless-musicians, needy fans, arrogant revolutionary wannabes, druggies, boozers, junkies....and...and...Jenny.”

Alan looked at the shadow, motionless and expressionless. Then, into his ear, the devil’s real voice.

“Nothing. I hear nothing.” Alan took stock of his emotions, then remembered the logic of it all. “Evil isn’t the presence of cruelty, it’s the absence of life, Big L. It’s the absence of vitality, fire and individual-iron-clad-free will. We chose evil when we retreat from a challenge or an opportunity.” He pulled over the first page, wrote down the first melody.

“A fugue to start off with, Ludwig, how does that sound?” Alan’s inner ear heard the counterpoint, a syncopated ragtime tempo, and a way both out and in. And he wasn’t alone, the Ghost of his teacher and friend, ‘Professor B’ activating all his senses. “I hear you Ludwig. It works for me, too,” he said as he continued writing. “No microphone Spiros has in this cell will be able to hear THIS triple-fortissimo masterpiece.”

## CHAPTER 24

Johnson was right about Swansig, just as he was right about everything else. Jennifer was asked to strip, to check for lice.

“It is for you safety and the well being of the prisoners,” the boy-turned-sadist KYP soldier, his nametag reading ‘Dimitrius’, proclaimed as he personally removed Jennifer’s veil and habit, motioning for her to remove her dress as well. “It is to insure that we stop the Communist Cancer, as God Fearing Christians!” he screamed out, hoping that the appeal would reach God in time so the Devil wouldn’t have him condemned to his own cell in Hell for disrobing a Nun.

“This is an outrage!” Gregor admonished, after having just completed the head to toe and mouth to ass inspection himself. “I am filing a formal protest with the Arch Bishop of Timilos.”

“You can deliver it to him personally,” a voice from behind said calmly. “He’s in Ward C, recovering from an intestinal worm infection that made him quite ill, and malnourished, Father,” Major Spiros continued.

Spiros seemed ten feet tall, swaggering about in the manner of the SS Officers who made Swansig so infamous for Right and Left Wing Greeks during the Nazi Occupation. His accent even acquired some German flavor, the short vowels and sharp consonants being giving sharp definition to his Commoner Greek that competed very well with even the best upper-class Katalevuse for attention and respect. The Napoleon wannabe really was a Napoleon now.

Jennifer bowed her head, showing as much of her chopped, brown-bleached stubble-mat to Spiros as possible, hiding her face... and eyes. As she started to unbutton her dress, she noticed Adrianna, passing through the gate untouched, but very watched.

“That whore is going through here without taking off her dress,” Gregor protested.

“She’ll be naked, soon enough,” Spiros commented, winking to



the harlot as she sauntered down the dark corridor. He turned to Jennifer, taking note of her anatomy with even more favor. “And this is your pleasure bitch?”

“Sister Helena is my assistant, a trained Nurse who ministers to the sick and consoles the dying,” Gregor asserted.

Jennifer stopped at the underwear, put her hands out, humbly submitting to the body frisk. Her head remained bowed, her mind focused on prayer. Above all, her energy concentration was focused on the vaginal muscles that she hoped would keep Johnson’s superbug recorder in the orifice that Spiros seemed most interested in as he personally frisked her from head to toe.

Jennifer felt her skin crawl, snakes emerging in every part of her body that Spiros’ steel cold hands touched. She shivered, shaked and felt, for the first time, the presence of something inside her that could accurately be called only one thing—Evil.

“Major! This violated the agreement you made with the Church.” Gregor protested.

“Or maybe the agreement you made with her?” Spiros smirked. “I know that EVERY unmarried Priest gets some pleasures of the flesh in the Church. Some from other Priests, some from Nuns, some from goats, some from boys, some from.—”

Gregor couldn’t contain himself as Spiros fingered Jennifer’s crotch, playing her emotions like a pianist from Hell, composing a music score for a Satanic Mass. Tears poured down Jennifer’s cheek, her body shaking like an autumn leaf ready to crash to the ground in the face of a cold, hard impersonal North wind.

“Enough!” Gregor screamed. He grabbed Spiros by the throat, choking with all of his might.

Spiros held on to his breath, and composure. He lifted his hand up, holding his men back from shooting the mad Priest. Still, Spiros fingered Jennifer’s crotch, playing with it like a boy who just discovered a new toy, forbidden fruit tasted for the first time. The more he tickled, the harder Gregor choked.

But it was Jennifer's face that became hot with tears, Gregor's cheeks that turned blood red in anger, and Spiros' smile that became wider.

Just as Spiros' grubby finger reached deep enough to almost feel the vaginally-implanted tape recorder, a miracle happened. He let go, just in the niche of time. A snap in Spiros' already unbalanced personality, decency finding its way into his black heart? Or maybe the prayer delivered by the pretend Nun was accepted by the real God.

Then, the world took over. Gregor was on the ground, restrained like a dog, about to be shackled with the special cuffs that pricked into the skin every time you tried to squirm out of them by an ever-obedient Sergeant Dimitrius..

"No, Sergeant!" Spiros ordered. "Let that man go."

Spiros let go of Jennifer, handing over her dress, habit and veil in a manner befitting an Old South Virginia gentlemen to a Southern Belle that had just been violated by a 'Dirty Yankee'.

"What are you going to do to us?" Gregor asked, braced for the worst.

"Let you go about your business," Spiros' dignified reply. "I heard stories about you and the boys in Kirokos. If you fight so hard to keep this Nun whore, those stories can't be true."

Hands shaking, but heart grateful, Jennifer quickly put on the dress, habit and veil, buttons and adjustments on everything maligned. She said a Rosary of thanks, really meaning it this time.

Spiros led the duo through a steel door under clearly painted sign reading 'Infectious Disease Ward,' then down the hallway, the blinding bright lights above making the complexion of the walls seem ever darker. Jennifer smelled the excrement, blood and hopelessness. She could hear the screams of prisoners in torture, and those having had it. She reached into the slot under her dress and turned Brady's tape recorder on. Perhaps the supersensitive

devise could document on tape what Jennifer's inner ear could hear, and what her third eye saw so much clearer than ever before. But just as Jenny flicked on the button that she hoped was 'on'—

“Your Sister Helena is a one-woman man, Father Gregor,” Spiros commented.

“Does this mean you are going to have me killed, so you can have her?” Gregor boldly asked, grateful that a big black beard could hide the fear behind the words.

“No,” Spiros smirked. “A duel would be more appropriate. It would be fair, honorable, and fun.”

Jennifer saw another face of cruelty in Spiros' eyes. Human pain was a game to him, a source of amusement.

“If one percent of all the pain you caused others was ever inflicted on you—” Jennifer fumed under her breath in her most vicious, and probably ungrammatical High School Latin.

“She talks?” Spiros commented to Gregor.

“She prays assertively.”

“And beautifully,” Spiros added, “And she looks so familiar.”

“They all do,” Gregor commented.

“I suppose so,” Spiros conceded. He opened the door to the next Ward, the stench of rotted flesh leading them to the first patient, or corpse.

## CHAPTER 25

Alan's communication with Ludwig van Beethoven was never better as he scribbled down the third movement of his next multi-genred symphony, a cacophony of rock, jazz, Baroque and Wagnerian chord augmentations accompanied by a chorus of men, women and a few selected farm animals. Even the Beethoven's ghost seemed to be looking at Kewalski's score for his new Opus, "Revolutionary Blues", with a "not bad, kid. Couldn't do better myself".

"It's a poor student that doesn't excel his teacher, Ludwig," Alan smirked out of the side of his mouth.

"Ludwig?" the Ghost replied indignantly.

"You can call me King Kewalski, or Scum Bucket, whichever comes most naturally," the Promethian Hippie-disciple answered.

"Fine, Alan," Ludwig's reply from inside Alan's ever expanding brain. "But the budget for this concerto of yours—"

"——Shhhh!" Alan countered. "I can't here myself convert from mass into energy."

"Don't play deaf with me, Alan! I was a master at it." The walls echoed, in stereo.

"I knew I was right, Ludwig. You told the world you were deaf so the no minds would stop yammering at ya."

"Great Spirits have always encountered violent opposition from mediocre minds', Alan."

"Yeah, I know." Alan conceded, feeling the emptiness under the turmoil, once again. "I read Einstein, too."

"Loneliness scares a younger man. It sustains an older one," Ludwig offered.

"Bullshit." Alan stared at his shadow, alone, dark and drained

of vitality.

“I’d miss her, too,” Ludwig conceded. “If I ever had a woman like her, I’d have—”

“—You’d WHAT!!!”

Ludwig took a deep breath. Then, a tender refrain. “I’d have written more than just one Opera. But, there is only one Leonora in every man’s life.”

“And one Fidelio. But why did you REALLY write three Leonara Overtures to it?”

“I didn’t hear you, Alan.”

“Translation—You’ll tell me the answer to that after I finish the fourth movement of ‘Revolutionary Blues’.”

Alan saw the ghost smile, then fade away into the walls, then out through the hole in the window, but not without having the last word. “Your food is getting cold, Alan, and even I knew enough to keep myself fed. Mozart may have been stupid enough to die of consumption, but not me. Eat, then write. Then I’ll come by to argue with you about things that REALLY matter. Kant, Spinoza, Goethe, and the New York Mets.”

Alan looked at lunch. It was hamburger this time, well cooked, probably containing some chicken. It tasted exotic, as did the triple doses of bacon for breakfast, and it was plentiful. “Just you and me again, kid,” he said to the shadow still lingering on the wall. “Cheers—”

“Indeed,” a voice echoed from behind the walls. Then, the door that hadn’t opened for days moved. Behind it, evil incarnate—or maybe not.

Spiros looked small to Alan’s eyes, particularly amongst the inferiors around him who were of superior physical stature. It was odd, but Spiros appeared defeated, despite the fact that the guards behind him were armed to their blackened, liquor-rotted teeth.

“You have been quite prolific, Maestro,” Spiros said. “The best I can do with paper is turn it into ass-wipe. But you....I can’t read music, but I know this is symphony of yours is...magnificent. The pen is indeed mightier than the sword.”

“No good deed goes unpunished,” Alan affirmed to the man who seemed to be Spiros’ favorite, a familiar face, coincidentally, standing next to him like a loyal dog. “And no bad deed is ever unforgivable, Sergeant-soon-to-be Lieutenant Basili Dimitriou. I’m an artist, you’re a soldier. Politics is such an ugly profession, for the lowest form of life, cockroaches, rats and record producers who made one too many bad financial decisions. Left and right, arguing about that bullshit takes ALL of us off-center.”

Spiros sent his men out, except for Basili. In his eyes, alone in the luxury cell of Swansig, he showed an emotion Alan least expected—remorse, and vulnerability, for real this time. He looked through Alan’s notes as if they were Sacred Writings from God, or love letters from a woman whose heart belonged to someone else.

“Basili. No one calls me Basili anymore, Alan. Only my friends, but—it is impossible to have power without friends. How have you done it?” The boy-turned-torturer was genuinely confused. Maybe the interrogatee did know more than the interrogator.

Alan waited for the moment when Basili’s sterilized heart might be open enough to really hear him. “I have friends, not Allies.”

“And a lover,” Sergeant Basili answered according to Spiros’ script, and assigned subtext.

“Where is she?!” Spiros pressed.

“You WILL tell us,” Spiros’ willing puppet blasted out into the Maestro’s face.

“Hey, I’m confused,” Alan confessed. “Which one of you is the good cop, and which is the bad one?”

Dimitrius clenched his fist. Spiros scratched his chin.

“You’ll see her, somewhere outside those walls that imprison me as much as you, very soon,” the Master Puppeteer said. “Our governments have to work out some details. Minor things at this point.”

“Hey! I’m flexible!” Alan exclaimed. “Just don’t give me a passport with a Black guy’s picture on it. I’d be caught in a minute. The truth is, I can write the music, but can’t dance. My feet just know how to dance around the truth a lot. And it’s been a lotta years since I had the right partner.”

Alan offered his guest a chunk of meat.

“No thank you, Maestro,” Spiros said.

Dimitrius nodded no, as if taking a single bite would put him into a Hell worse than Swansig.

“What, it’s Friday today? You turning religious on me? Come on, celebrate our mutual liberations. It tastes great.” Alan took another bite. “Your meat buffet, three times a day, has kept my mind alive, my hands writing, and my inner ear listening tuned in to the highest form of madness. Ya gotta give me the recipe.”

Spiros smelled the meat, describing with the utmost pleasure its ingredients. “Basil, oregano, onions, and...Homo Sapien.”

“Huh!” Alan’s jaw dropped.

Spiros took out a list. “Nikos Timolopius, your follower at the record store, provided his arm for that hamburger. We took his left arm, because we know you like your food spicy.”

“That’s another bullshit story, Spiros!!! Like that crap about me in the fake newspaper articles you brought in!” Alan gathered in all his reason, fire and courage, firing out the next volley in the most powerful weapon in his arsenal. “Besides, Nikos is a smelly, hairy, dope smoking pig. I didn’t smell any cunt juice, cough up any hair, or get off on any weed. You’re bullshitting me. And you got

nothing on Yannis. He's a wannabe revolutionary who didn't do nothin' except talk big, dream bigger and do whatever he had to get laid."

"You're right, Alan. We had nothing on Yannis. All he did was make you his hero. But—"

"But what?"

"Let's get it from the horse's mouth." Spiros whistled, mockingly, with the opening notes of 'Revolutionary Blues', the Maestro's most recent Work, and Passion, written in Greek and English.

A bag was thrown into the cell. Spiros bowed to Alan, left the cell, then instructed his men to sing along with his refrain of 'Revolutionary Blues'.

The bag had the odor of death to it. "Ludwig, tell me what to do!!!!" Alan screamed out. But no answer from the ghost this time. He turned to the shadow. "You!!! Tell me this is a dream. Tell me this is—"

Then, a rip, a tear from the sac, from the inside. A mouse emerged. Alan moved in closer to the creature, letting it crawl onto his hand. "Another creature of Prometheus," he said by way of relief. "The human-animal bond might be something we humanoids do when we fuck up relationships with each other, but at least it's honest. At least it's—"

Spiros subtly nodded to Dimitrius, who briskly pulled out his knife, ripping a larger hole in the sac, unleashing the real gift within the Welcome package.

"Nikkooooo....." Alan couldn't let the name pass his quivering lips as he gazed upon recently-severed head of Nikos, the student-Revolutionary Coffehouse owner who tried to become a free-thinking man in Alan's image. The face was fixed in the most horrifying expressions. The most Spiritual Agnostic in the Young Revolutionary Movement had no doubt seen his Maker, and perhaps betrayed his Comrades, his soul held hostage by terror,



remorse and regret.

Alan threw the head to the opposite side of the room, recently clotted blood in it staining the sheets on the mattress that the Maestro had slept so well on during the previous night. Prisoner Kewalski knew now that he would not sleep well again, not for a long, long time.

Then—just at the time when guilt, fear and anger fused into the most Hellish of emotions—another package under the door. The paper was first quality music score notes, the pens multicolored. “Write (Right) on, Maestro!” the note said, in bright, red blood.

## CHAPTER 26

Johnson had one vice, and virtue. Though one of his legs was wooden, the one in his groin never lost its ability to function, even in the hardest times. By the time his contact came into the ten dollar a week taverna hotel room, he had already showered, his woman-of-the-hour gone.

“Huh!” Johnson uttered as he looked into the eyes of the fisherman who smelled like squid and looked like his head had just been through a washing machine.

“It’s me,” Jennifer said. “A bad haircut and a smelly shipyard guarded only by the seagulls gives me lots of identity options.”

Johnson couldn’t believe his eyes, as could Jennifer when she looked into a mirror with a blank stare. “What am I becoming, Sergeant Sam?”

“We’ll both know when you get there,” his reply. “You’re three hours late. What did you see?”

Jennifer offloaded her scribbled notes, and the blood-stained tape-recorder. “I got Amnesty International all the screams, threats and accusations on tape. But, the feelings——”

“You get used to them,” Johnson offered.

“I never smelled burning flesh before,” she said with a blank stare. “Just once, in a cancer ward where my mother died. Where they ‘sterilize the cancer’.”

Johnson offered Jennifer a bottle of oozo. She poured it down her throat faster than any other sailor on this or any other island ever did. She stopped half way, then looked at her new mentor.

“Aren’t you going to stop me?” she swaggered out.

“Do you want me to?”

“I didn’t see Alan.”

“But you did see the other Alans.”

“Cigarette burns, electrocuted testicles, starvation, lungs drowned out by mock drownings, beatings everywhere except where you can see the bruises—where the fuck should I start!???” No-Incident Jennifer couldn’t believe what she was saying, and how she was saying it.

“Start at the beginning, Jennifer.” He grabbed the bottle of ooze. In its place, a pen with enough paper to write War and Peace, part II.

“Do you want it clean, or dirty?”

“Real and accurate, ‘Sister Helena’.”

Jennifer wrote, tears mixing with the ink. She remembered something from a “A Viking’s Carol”, a gritty Christmas made for TV movie. “Nature never gives you a problem without a solution,” visionary Sam O’Brien spouted in that drama. If only “Viking’s Carol” played SOMEwhere outside Western Canada. And if only REEL reality was REAL reality.

Still, there was one person still left to see.

“Bernie. What do you make of him, Seargent Sam?”

“Hell hath no fury like a geeky guy dumped for a super-stud, Jenny. Where did you say he was?”

“I didn’t,” her guarded remark. “But I need a plane. And the best pilot you can find.”

## CHAPTER 27

“Remember the big picture,” Alan’s common sense screamed at him as the walls of the spacious Hilton Special Luxury cell seemed to move closer and closer in towards his quivering body, and shattering mind.

“The freedom lives with what we leave behind,” Beethoven’s ghost echoed in. “Music is your only friend....until the end,” from the memory of Jim Morrison embedded in Alan’s head.

When breakfast came in, featuring leg of Petros Koropilus, and lunch contained an entry of rump roast from prisoners identified as ‘Kewalski Chorus leaders Heckle and Jeckle,’ all Alan could do was to sit and stare. Stare at the blank pages in front of him. Stare at the accommodations that featured comfortable rugs, clean linen, and a soft mattress. Stare at the cords on the curtains over the cell window and blood-stained walls, but not strong enough to suspend a human body in mid air and crack a neck in three seconds flat. Stare at the shadow on the opposite wall, hoping it would develop a life of its own, grab the curtain ropes, and do the deed that had to be done.

Even Beethoven’s voice was deafened by the hopelessness. But offering solace where humans and spirits couldn’t—Mickey Mouse. The unsuspecting rodent room-mate dropped a lump of food onto Kewalski’s shaking, sweat-soaked hand.

“No! No!!!!” Alan screamed out. “I didn’t kill you! Or you, or you or you!!!” he ranted on to the heads which he couldn’t throw out of the cell, and couldn’t bring himself to destroy, or even touch. Only one corner remained non-desecrated. He stood up, trying to walk, march or...dance. A stomp of the feet, stamping of the feet. Not watched by the eyes, not controlled by the head, or mind, echoing voices of the massacred with deafening voices that seemed to go away with by stomping of the feet until---

“No—Don’t drop that on THIS floor. Not here not!!!” Alan’s feet had stamped on the chunk of red meat with all of his effort, then heard a crunch. “No...No...I didn’t...”

Alan had killed and eaten cockroaches in Texas jails, lizards in Floridian holding cells, a snake or two in Utah, and enough rat meat to write his own cookbook. But Mikey Mouse had a personality, that is until...

“Assertive rage, Maestro?” Spiros opened the cell door, entering with a soft walk, knelt down, crossed himself and said a prayer. He held the dead mouse up by its tail. The rodent was still squeaking, still alive, still kicking.

“Ttthhaattt’s mmmmyyyy....” Alan screeched from the other corner of the room.

“Supper?” Spiros smirked.

“What do you want!?” Alan screamed, reaching out for the four-legged friend who died by his own hand, and foot.

“What you value most,” Spiros’ reply, putting the mouse in his pocket, grasping its squeaking throat with his grubby fingers.

“What do you want?” Alan cried, with real tears, and real vulnerability. “My dignity?” He sank to his knees. “Please, let Mikey go. You have my dignity.”

“There’s something you value more than your dignity, Maestro.”

“What?”

“Your vitality. Your fire.” Spiros flicked on a lighter, and proceeded to roast the mouse. It’s hair started to singe, its flesh burning with the odor that had scared so many animals from woods, groves and swamp in times of old when the thunder from the gods set forest ablaze with no rhyme nor reason save chance and bad luck.

“Give me Mikey!!!!” Alan pleaded, tears running down his beet-red face.

“Water puts out fire. Cry him a river.” Spiros shoved the mouse

under his feet as Alan fell to the floor, onto his knees, then chest.

To see Alan in a fetal position, crying like a baby, over a mouse that had hardly been bruised was what Spiros wanted to see.

“You value something after all, Maestro.”

“Yeah! I do!” the defiant scream back, holding on to Mikey like he was the last animal, or human, on earth. “I DO still value something, Spiros!”

“This will change, too, Alan.” True to form, and script, Spiros completed the job, crushing Mickey’s throat with a meticulous, sterile tweek of his fingers, leaving Alan to the next stage in his special interrogation, and punishment.

Stutters and shakes came from Alan’s oral cavity, manure from his back end. But something in the middle kept him together. “Jennifer. I still value Jennifer,” he said, in words.

“The dead worshipping the vanished. This is...appropriate.”

“Huh?” filtered out of the Maestro’s quivering lips.

“She was on her way to a visit her newly betrothed...Bernard Bernstein, in Cyprus, when---”

Alan’s brain decided to make a comeback, along with memories of what happened before that fateful night of April 21<sup>st</sup>. “No one knew that Bernie was in Cyprus, except—”

“Your ‘wife’ remarried. Out of biological, political necessity and family wishes. A child needs a father who can take care of it, no matter who the father really is. Then...God took her, according to a wisdom far greater than you or I have access to.” Spiros explained, clearly and sincerely.

It had been many ‘experiences’ since Alan heard sincerity, and he was in a position where he would accept it from anyone.

Spiros continued, his cheeks flush and ready to release, yes,

tears. “It was an American Aircraft, flown by a Cuban pilot with mixed motivations after the Bay of Pigs. There were no survivors.”

Spiros left the newspaper article behind. Alan read it as if it were his own obituary. His only comfort was the hope that it was a fabrication, and that Mikey the Mouse was the second coming of Jesus with a miracle or two up his now lifeless hairy, little arms.

## CHAPTER 28

The plane had taken off as scheduled at 06:30 from a farm field in Macadamia. Everyone on board was accounted for, save one. The newspaper in the Times read: “Private plane of Japanese Tourists and American Envoys Crashes at Sea.”

“Was there a reason why you got lost on the way to Macadonia, Johnson?” Jennifer asked the Marine who claimed to know every back road into and out of Greece from Albania to Turkey.

“It worked out for the best,” he said as he raced back through the donkey trails mascerading as roads, back to non-existent village where the fishing boats left for Swanzig twice a day now. “How does it feel to be dead?”

“I never felt more alive,” Jennifer conceded. “Is that cruel?”

“No,” Johnson admitted, somberly. “It’s...accurate. Accurate as hell.”

“So, what now, Sergeant Carter?” Jennifer asked in her best Gomer Pyle act-out.

“God knows,,” Sergeant Sam replied.

Jennifer noticed something she least expected in his pocket. Request for Discharge papers from the US Marines, a family Johnson valued more than his own life.

“Father Gregor and Sister Helena are due on Swansig by 16:30 today,” Johnson continued.

“Four thirty in American time. That means 6:30 Greek time?”

“16:30.” Johnson asserted. He looked at his watch, worried.

“What, yer late for a date? Who’s it with?”

“A lady.”



“A lady who....”

“A lady who knows enough to save Alan, and a lady who will get you AND me killed if I keep her waiting.”

Johnson floored the jeep, most probably appropriated by less than legal means by KYP or USMC standards, catapulting it into the air over jumps that mountain goats would shutter at taking. “What are you thinking?” Jennifer’s female side wanted to ask. “What do you want me to do?” the sensible part of her brain sent out her mouth.

Johnson dumped a pile of information labeled ‘TOP SECRET’ in Greek, English and Russian on her lap. “Read, listen, and pray like hell, Sister,” ex-Sergeant Sam’s terse reply to all of Jennifer’s unasked questions.

## CHAPTER 29

Alan had plenty of soft toilet paper, but it seemed more fitting to use the manuscripts from Revolutionary Blues. “This new ‘Opus’ is bullshit, anyway,” came muttering out of his lifeless lips as he wiped the remains of what his body still had to defecate after a two-week-long, self-induced fast. “Maybe I can die from starvation,” he said to the shadow, a rail that looked more like a skeleton than the projection of a real man. “Of course, that’ll mean the death of both of us.”

By now, meat from identified human sources had been shunted under the door and had spread everywhere. Alan’s world was a three by four foot corner that reeked of urine, feces and blood that had come out of his anus. Spiros had removed all the cords from the curtains, and came in every day to make friends with ‘Mikey 2’, a replacement rodent companion which Alan had ignored, most particularly because the Spirit-broken Maestro needed him .

“He likes what I brought him today,” Spiros said as he fed the rodent fresh cheese. “It’s real feta, Alan. From goats. And the carrots on the table are from the garden. Mousaka made from eggplant. It’s vegetarian day, Maestro. Friday. You should eat.”

Alan’s stare remained blank, fixed on the ugliest visions of all, behind his eyes.

“Mikey two likes me,” Spiros commented. “I think he is saying, ‘I want to go home with you, Major Spiros’. What do you think, Alan?”

From Alan, still nothing. Even the deadness of his catatonia remained the same. Connecting to anything Alive would keep him from dying. He yearned to connect to Mikey 2, a creature who was most kind, gentle and giving. He dared not accept the gift, or had forgotten how to.

Spiros moved to the next Act in the KYP-commissioned Opera. “Then if you don’t have any objections, Alan, I’ll take Mikey two home with me. Do you want to say goodbye to him?”

Spiros put the rodent on Alan's arm, an emaciated appendage that was more bone than flesh, cold to the touch, shaking in rhythm to the symphony of death between his ears. But yet—

“Nothing, Alan? If you say you want this Mikey, he's yours. Just say it. My word as a Greek, Christian, an Officer of the KYP.”

Still from Alan, nothing. Even less than nothing.

“It's been said that people who value nothing are not people,” Spiros commented. “They are less than people. They are less than dead.” He turned to his staff, in the manner of a Chief Attending giving the final word to his chosen group of interns and residents. “You see for yourself. The experiment has succeeded.”

“I see a man who's broken,” Doctor Katsoris countered. “He's useless to you now.”

“But he's disarmed,” Sergeant Dimitrius added, walking into the cell that didn't need a lock to keep the prisoner inside.

“Precisely,” Spiros said. “We break down Maestro Alan Kewlaski down and built him up in our image.”

“Like you did to Sergeant Dimitrius?” Katsoris pointed out.

“Precisely!” Spiros boasted.

Dimitrius flashed on something. “Am I a lab rat, Major?”

“No, you are a man!” Spiros added. “A man who has the courage to do horrible things to people who would do even worse things to our country.”

“Masterfully trained by a man who knows how to train rats better than he knows people,” Katsoris added.

“Doctor...” Spiros warned.

“Major...” Katsoris countered.

“Gentleman”, the voice of Yin reason echoed from the back of the procession.

“Adrianna. This is man’s business!” Spiros warned as the woman who any man who was a man wanted, or maybe needed, sauntered in.

“I could have broken his heart, then his spirit,” she said. She moved her way to Alan, caressing him with more affection than had been shown to any man in the prison, even Spiros.

“What are you doing?” Spiros asked.

“Proving to you that he still wants to be with Jennifer.” She gently massaged Alan’s chest, thighs and scrotum. “His records show that he’s not a homosexual, and his penis shows nothing except indifference. He wants to be with Jennifer. If she’s dead, he wants to be dead, too.”

“Exactly!” Spiros offered. “For the common good, we must convert fireballs like Alan into creampuffs.”

“And sensitive boys into cruel men?” Katsoris countered, gazing at Dimitrius’s hardened yet still hairless face, contemplating what he needed to be finally said.

“How I train my men is my own business, Doctor,” Spiros added. “Your job is medicine. And we are all here to sterile the Communist Cancer.”

Katsoris looked at the blood on the walls. True, it was red, and it most probably did come from a Communist or Communist sympathizer. But it was human blood, the only color that mattered in Katsoris’ political dictionary now. If only he had remembered that when he took the blood oath with Spiros on that fateful night of April 21st, the night the KYP resurrected itself from obscurity, and the whole world lay sleeping.

## CHAPTER 30

“So...mine freund.. Maybe you still haf relatifs in New Jersey, hmmm?” the soft voice echoed into Johnson’s ears as a wet tongue licked his colliflouer ear, long fingers messaged his red neck, and hot legs held him in a full Nelson.

“Yeah, I suppose so, Adriana,” he grogged out in effortless bliss. “But I ain’t gonna tell you, nor no other woman alive what the L. in front of my legal name really stands fer.”

“Come on, for me?” she pressed on, rubbing her nose against his, sniffing out the truth behind the best kept secret East or West of the Iron Curtain. “Larry, Linden, Lars, Lorenzo....hmmmm....

“I won’t tell ya,” Johnson asserted in mid grog. “I won’t tell ya.”

“Mister wiggly between your legs is standing at attention. I’ll ask him.”

Adrianna moved in, her on the bottom, soon-to-be ex-Sergeant Sam on top. She gently placed his cannon into her cavern, a warm and tender place, particularly to a man like Brady who had been in so many cold and dangerous ones. But the most under-rated Sergeant in the US Army knew only went first class. Her heart rhythm became his, and the beat of passion was unstoppable. Still—

“Pleasure’s pleasure, and business is business, Adrianna,” Johnson protested as his ejaculate welled up, threatening to cloud all reason. “I won’t tell you what the L stands for. And we got work on gettin prisoners out to still——”

“——Come on, for me...for me....for me...” Each wave of pleading came with another surge of blood in Johnson’s cannon.

“I can’t...won’t...shouldn’t...AHHHHH!!!!!!”

The screams of delight woke up every donkey for ten miles around. Johnson was drained, yet comforted beyond all of his

imagination. The world had been transformed for him by an experience with a woman who really DID make him feel like a real man, with a real home and a real chance of living a happy life. Adrianna's face, framed by her ample breasts radiated like a wife, mother, mistress, temptress and angel, all at the same time. There was only one detail left to reach Paradise.

“So....What does the L stand for, Sergeant Johnson with a great johnson?” Adrianna puckered out.

“Lori,” he confessed in blissful grog. “The way a girl spells it? I just made passionate love to a man with a girl's name? Promise you won't tell no one, okay?”

“I use love for interrogation of Greek Fascists, and to comfort those other bastards on Swansig, not on real men like you, Sergeant Johnson.”

“I'm glad yer working fer us.” he smiled, seeing Texas in the Greek goddesses. “If you ever want to come to the US or A, fer keeps.” His gentle hug got firmer, and kinder.

“I don't think that is a good idea.” She cuddled her head under his strong arms. “We are both here to defend democracy. The right for free speech.”

“And passionate expression,” Johnson's solemn coda. Just then, Adrianna's hands came up to his throat, the eyes penetrated through to the back of his skull, and her lips touched his—giving him tongue this time.

“We have paperwork to do. What are you....eh...doing?”

“Being passionately expressive,” she offered, and scolded.

Johnson looked at the alarm clock as it fell to the floor. “I'll find a way to contact everyone with what they need to know a little later,” he pondered. “And as long as Adrianna is paid in Texan love and American money, she's the most powerful contact we have,” he secretly thought. “Who knows, maybe she really DOES love me, and the country I want to bring her back to,” he silently

affirmed as the final conclusion.

## CHAPTER 31

When Father Gregor arrived on Swanzig the next day, he had puked up more than he had eaten in the last week. Maybe it was the four-foot swells that blew up like they were forty, courtesy of Neptune, god of the sea. Maybe it was the Captain, as the rudder between his legs was far firmer than the wheel in his hand, thanks to Adrianna, prize of the Greek fleet. Or maybe it was the list of prisoners who needed to be ministered to, with a full description of what had been done to them, obtained from Adrianna's light hands and mischievous heart.

"You'll have to go in alone," Gregor told Jennifer when the steel PT boat, camouflaged with a rotted wooden frame, arrived on the pier, letting off the prisoners on one side, and everyone else on the other. "I'm no good to you, those prisoners, or even God in there today."

"Who's on the list, Father?" Jennifer asked in Latin.

"People who I..."

"...Sent here?" Jennifer filled in. She grabbed the list from the depths of his pocket with the ease and skill of a Times Square pick-pocket on New Years Eve. "You sent all these people here, Father Gregor?"

"I didn't know the KYP listened at the Confessional. Why the HELL did I have to be a Byzantine CATHOLIC priest?! If I were Greek Orthodox, there would be no confessional, and my practitioners would keep their sins to themselves," he lamented.

"They would also keep the guilt to themselves," Jennifer added as she helped Gregor on the boat heading back to the mainland, giving him the last of her ration of seasick pills, scraping the barf juice off his black cassock, wiping his crucifix off with a reverence for life she never experienced before, and an anger for the Almighty who let Swansig happen which she did not know was in her.

The sailors and soldiers only saw a Nun who seemed angry at



some point of clerical trivia. But Adrianna saw something different, keeping all the thoughts and agendas to herself.

Jennifer didn't appreciate the 'you really look beautiful when you're angry' from the ship's harlot. With firmness of stare, she let Adrianna know that she would send a special message to St. Peter to look up her rap sheet before she tried getting her way into heaven with a blow job under the virgin white robes.

"That woman is really pissing me off!!!" Jennifer grunted to Gregor from behind her veil. "And so is this whole situation. And your official orders..."

"To drive the fear of God into the prisoners so they confess sins committed in the name of Communism, Satan's most powerful tool", Gregor recited with hatred, remorse and defeat. "It was a political decision, not followed by everyone. Priests don't have guns, but the KYP do. God requires that we protect humanity in ways that don't always involve use of earthly weapons."

"Alan always said that God was the most colorful sadist he knew." She looked at the slits in the walls of Swansig, remembering the Book of Job, about a man tested by God in ways that no human being deserved to be subjected to, even for a Heavenly Cause. "How many 'Jobs' is God torturing in there today? A hundred on the first floor, another hundred on the second, and who knows how many in the basement. Or basements. How many 'Jobs' does God need!!!"

"Don't be angry at God, Jennifer," Gregor warned. "Or Mother Church."

"Then who is responsible for all of this..this...?"

"This misplacement of passion." Gregor finally swallowed the last of the anti-seasick pills Jennifer had given him, hoping they would work. "All of these pills will make me sleep. And I don't want to sleep!"

"Why not?"

“The demons are stronger in our sleep. And they know how to use the demons in Swansig better than anywhere else in the world!!!” He bobbed his head around, feeling the world turn dizzy, then faint, then..irrelevant.

Jennifer massaged Gregor’s earlobes and rubbed the mid-point of his chest, hoping that wives tales from the sailors on the boat and the pamphlets from Oriental healers wandering through Bleecker Street about how to avoid seasickness was true. Adrianna came by, watching with intense interest.

“I am treating Father Gregor, medically,” Jennifer asserted, in Aristocratic kathaevuse Greek, eyes on Gregor, inner attention on the God she had learned to hate, love and serve, all at the same time.

Adrianna gave a ‘yeah, right’ smirk, with a nod of her head, then an extension of her hand to the veil to see the face underneath it.

Jennifer reflexly slapped the whore’s hand, then held back.

A ‘whooh’ echoed from the crew. A ‘wow!’ from an excited Adrianna. A ‘hoooh there!’ from a voice that assured, then instantly terrified Jennifer.

“Hold it!” Doctor Katsoris warned. “This woman is a woman of God. You go to hell if you desecrate her or her authority.”

“Hell has to be more interesting than any Heaven a SHE or other kathelvuse elitists prays about,” Adrianna countered.

The crew enjoyed the laugh.

“And I need her,” Katsoris asserted.

Another ‘woow’ from the crew.

An ‘up the antie’ smirk form Adrianna.

“She is a trained medical professional, who has special

experience treating lepers with infectious diseases,” Katsoris said, extending his hand to Jennifer.

When she felt it, there was a feeling of warmth, and assurance, even though it shook like a leaf. “Mary Magdeline was the only one who knew where Jesus’ body was,” he whispered into her ear.

“I don’t...understand....” she muttered between her quivering lips and was led to the gate where the strip search would be carried out, as usual.

“The devil’s fire can be God’s most powerful tool,” he continued in kathaevuse that he hoped the lower-class sailors in ruling-class uniforms would not understand.

Jennifer looked behind her as Adrianna passed through gates untouched by all the guards, but watched by every set of male eyes present. “I still do not understand, Doctor,” she said to Katsoris regarding his seemingly self-contradictory metaphysical remark.

“I don’t either, Jennifer,” his final reply, whispered. “Sister Helena, please lift your habit so we can examine you for lice, boils and infectious warts,” he said loud enough for the guards to hear him, carrying out his duties in visible range of Major Spiros, and the Commandant’s assistant, the Devil himself.

## CHAPTER 32

Alan's 'pleasure cell' was isolated from the rest, but easily connected by the vents that allowed screams, moans and even grunts to enter in from all corners of the prison. It was a design originally intended for the four-foot-five master of the castle to gain access through any passage to any other cell in the place. Mortar between the bricks effectively hid the passageways now. But the ear could always hear the ways in and out.

Spiros orchestrated it like a stereo system in his own chamber of horror orchestra hall. Indeed, that was what he called it.

Sergeant Dimitrius barely knew how a flushing toilet worked, but became an ace in operating an electrocution rod with the accuracy of a trained engineer. Still, there was one thing he wanted to know about the 'pleasure palace.'

"Where is it, Sir?" Dimitrius asked 'Professor Spiros' regarding the 'magic electrical wand' when being led to the 'research lab' the Major had established in the most guarded and inaccessible region of the prison. "And why must Doctor Katsoris now be blindfolded when going back and forth between the research lab and Maestro Kewalski's cell?"

"This, you don't need to know," Spiros related. "And he is not a Maestro anymore."

"Quite," Katsoris added, from behind his blindfold, something now required for 'added security measures'. "Maestro Kewalski is now a rodent in the Spiros University Research Center, as perhaps are we."

Spiros held his tongue. As did the veiled Byzantine Nun behind him, armed with a gut full of fire and a vagina loaded with the most powerful tape recorder Johnson could steal from the Special Forces Training Centre.

"I find it interesting that men with these 'conditions' were all brought here, Major," Katsoris continued. "It reminds me of the Camps in Germany where prisoners were used as guinea pigs to

test everything from pain thresholds, to what kind of acids would promote wound repair fastest, to new kinds of sterilization, to....”

“Doctor,” Spiros warned.

“...to test new ways to drive the human mind insane, without doing a thing to harm the body...” Katsoris speculated while being led by ropes from one corridor to another.

“Doctor, this is inappropriate,” Spiros delivered as a sombre ‘strike two’. “Lying in the presence of a woman of God is a sin.”

“And so is creating University Research lab of your own when you didn’t even graduate from secondary school,” Katsoris challenged.

Spiros stopped dead in his tracks and lifted his index finger, counting down from five.

By ‘four’, Jennifer bowed her head and said the fastest one second prayer she knew.

By ‘three’, Dimitrius had cocked his weapon, aiming it at Katsoris’ head.

By ‘two’, a trickle of urine flowed down the good Dr’s pant-leg.

By ‘one’, Spiros laughed, removing Katsoris’ blindfold. “You see, you’re a guinea pig, too, Doctor. We all are. And when we get rid of the Communist Cancer in this country, the information we get from the patients here may even give us information about how to cure cancer of the neck, brain, or even...breasts.”

He turned to the Nun with the bowed head. He lifted up her skirt. “No wet trousers on you, Sister. And no loose tongue, either. You must be very wise in the ways of heaven and Earth,” he said, getting no reply in voice or body movement.

Finally sure that this Nun wasn’t going to give him problems like the last two, Spiros gazed upon the slots in the corridors that led to under-lit chambers of horror on the other side. “Pray for

these souls, Sister,” he said with a tone that seemed possessed, yet sincere. “Pray that the mutilated patients delivered to us from the Communist torturers who are NOT as merciful as us have a painless death.” He looked up. “And pray that the ones..or one...most responsible for their misery pays the highest price.”

As Spiros crossed himself, Jennifer wondered how many floors and levels would have to be passed through to find Alan, before it was too late. She remembered something from her betrothed’s second album. “Insanity is passed on by the cruel and the cold. . Madness tortures those with brains who care. It ain’t right, and it certainly ain’t fair. But we gotta still keep fightin’ the demon, if we dare.”

## CHAPTER 33

Jennifer re-established a new base at an old Monastery on the mainland near Swansig that was left alone by the Church, the KYP and the Priests. “Sister Helena” had a private room which everyone knew about but dared not enter.

Every day Jennifer visited the prison, she would see more human tragedy, and bring home more conversations recorded through the steel and stone walls. She busied herself learning information about prisoners in the hope that she would find Alan, but whoever was willing to talk knew nothing about his whereabouts, or fate. But in the meantime, through her efforts, Amnesty International certainly could be informed about the other ‘Alans’ imprisoned by the Junta. Maybe it would be enough to get enough dirt on Spiros to get him to say what happened to Alan, and where he REALLY was. But such required hard evidence, as the world outside of the now-heavily guarded borders of Greece seemed to believe Spiros’ lies about Alan dying in a car accident and that the small Mediteranean country was ‘all okay’ now.

A drop-off system was set in place, a priest hired by Johnson came by the Monastery every day to pick up the tape recorder and any other information, from the confessional where Sister Helena would pray every day, and confess her sins to Father Gregor who, for unrevealed reasons, remained on the mainland. A package of instructions would be left at the Church pew for the next day, to be opened in private, once the door to her 5 by 6 foot room at the monastery was closed shut for the night.

Sister Helena very private room in Swanzig had a window that afforded a relatively generous view of the sky. Alan could see it too, she hoped, and prayed, even if it was through the eyes of his imagination from whatever dungeon he was kept in. “Alan, look at that star,” she would say to the walls of the prison when she had to remain there overnight because the ferry was ‘occupied elsewhere’. “That moonlit cloud. That constellation beyond the goats. It looks like two goats getting it on in positions you and I never even imagined, but will experience for ourselves, some day, very soon.”

As for Spiros, he continued to eye the mystery veiled Nun with a yearning he felt for reasons he seemed to not be able to understand, giving her allowance not even Adrianna was afforded. He found it curious that she was asking questions about a prisoner who, according to official records, did not exist. But, he let her keep asking the questions anyway, diverting her attentions elsewhere and having one way philosophical discussions with her in which he reminded her that Jesus was a staunch Anti-Communist and that the Devil was now cloaking himself as a Socialist.

Everyone in the prison who was on the unlocked sides of the doors knew the famous, or infamous, Meastro Kewalski was there, but no one was talking. And if they did spill the beans, Spiros would spill their blood on the floor within a millisecond afterward. The Napoleon wannabe could hear the faintest whispers in the prison that become his personal home, palace and kingdom.

‘Sister Helena’ said her rosaries on the way out of the Swansig’s main gate as the boat to the mainland waited for her, and another boatful of ‘dangerous criminals’ approached from the other side of the peer. Spiros waved hello to her from his window overlooking the boats, the ‘correctional and containment facility’ and the pristine-looking mainland beyond the sea. waters. at the end of another day of finding out more than she ever wanted to know aboJennifer’s mind imagined the worst for Spiros. A personal hell in which he would constantly breath in soot which spat out the smokestacks of Secaucus, New Jersey. Or the little Greek Napoleon would be locked into a thick fur coat and experience the humidity of Washington, D.C., in August and have AM top forty teenibopper dribble musac pounded through his head 24 hours a day. His chow would be TV dinners loaded with specs of aluminum, the salsberry steak packed with enough cholesterol to clog his arteries and give him a stroke. The fruit juice he would drink to relieve the heat would rot his teeth, and the bombshell babe boinking him would carry an entire arsenal of ugly infectious germ warfare agents in her vagina.

“Hey,” she realized in mid thought as she boarded the ferry to the mainland, seeing Spiros nod a reverent ‘goodbye’ to her. “That’s the American reality! Spiros is fighting Communism for



America. Spiros is gonna die of an overdose of the American dream,” the first thought that brought a smile to her face in at over three days.

She took her position at the starboard side of the boat, isolated from the others. A rumor that dying prisoners may be carrying a deadly form of bubonic plague and a new strain of leprosy grew into story then believed fact. Such was the explanation given to the sailors, soldiers and Greek press about why they had to be isolated from the main population beyond their prescribed sentences, and why the bodies of the dead were so emaciated, with all manner of skin and limb deformities. While administering Last Rights to the dying, and the dead, Jennifer was able to take pictures of them with another Made In Japan marvel mini-camera that was smaller and more accurate than any Ian Flemming novel or James Bond movie. While in her private spot on the boat, she looked at the latest batch.

“I know those eyes,” she said when flipping to photo 24, pasted into her Prayer Missel. “I know those eyes!” she affirmed. “Like I know all the other eyes now,” she relented. “You are ALL Alans. But, I still don’t know why, I have to find Alan Kewalski. Plato said that words move mountains, but that music moves I world. Alan moves music. He’s indispensable. Not because he’s my husband, but because of how powerful he was, and how powerful he still could be...it’s nothing personal, I think...”

A flash of light woke her up from the world inside her head. She looked up at the light, a setting sun that had found its way to penetrating a hole in the clouds just before it set over the horizon. It showed itself to her in a loud hush of Silence as well, accompanied by familiar music originating between her ears. “Is that Beethoven I hear, Eternal silence, or just plain empty?” She said to herself. Then, something from the real world, atop a hill on the shore, more easily seen than climbed.

Johnson always said to Jennifer that if anything ever happened to him, he’d send an Elvis Christmas wreath to her from the other side of the rainbow. The boy on the motoscooter smiled as he put the simple branched of pine with a photo of the King on the Monastery door.

He saw Sister Helena gasp, then crossed herself, then ran off, before the Mother Superior chased him away.

Adrianna smiled. Jennifer sensed that it was not about a lesbian come-on this time.

The boy nodded.

Indeed, maybe Katsoris was right. Maybe the whore with the lustful smile and intelligent eyes was the only one who could find Alan, and even get him out.

Jennifer looked at Adrianna, requesting with her hand that she sit next to her, offering her a piece of stale bread.

Adrianna took small bites, but said far more. “He’s dead,” she said in English.

“How do YOU know?”

“You ask very stupid questions for a smart person, Jennifer,” out of the side of her mouth.

“What do you want?”

Adrianna smiled, and gently stroked Jennifer’s cheek.

“Did you kill him?” Jennifer offered, boldly.

“If I did, do you think I would ever tell YOU, Sister Helena?”

Jennifer saw intelligence in the slut’s eyes as her body started turning into jelly, then a shivering leaf. She knew enough to stay quiet, stay listening, and give Adrianna whatever she wanted to know. Still, some things needed to be said. “Where’s Alan?” Jennifer asked.

“You look like you had long, beautiful hair once,” Adrianna offered, moving her fingers under Jennifer’s habit.

Jennifer pulled away as the coldness in Adrianna's fingers froze her cold, "And..."

"I wish it were me who cut if off," Adrianna said. "It's a 'weakness' I have. Some say a sickness. It compliments my other strengths, and contacts."

Adrianna kissed Sister Helena's hand, and moved to her next client below deck, a Mississippi-based Congressional Lobbyist who just finished negotiating a heroine for arms trade with Spiros.

Jennifer knew that the next kiss from this Greek Matahari would be on a more intimate area of the body, and in a more secluded place. But perverted lust with Adrianna would be a small price to pay for being reunited with her true love, Alan. It was the way things got done in the music biz in Hollywood, Nashville and even New York. But this Record was for keeps, not for the top forty charts.

## CHAPTER 34

The “lioness’ cave” in Swansig looked more like the dwelling of a blind bear after a hard drunk, all manners of pillows, sheets, blankets scattered around it than the personal business room for the Prison’s most valued whore. The air smelled like cheap cologne, the stained linen reeking of rank sweat and expressions more personal than urine.

Adrianna shut the door behind her and turned on the matching 40 WATT orange-red lamps.

“Where did these yellow stains come from?” Jennifer asked.

“A man, Sister Helena.” Adrianna’s reply. “They’re all the same in here. Two varieties, victim and victor.” She pulled out a knife, a Turkish prayer to Allah embedded into its eight-inch steel blade one side, a Greek offering to the Virgin Mary on the other.

Adrianna looked at herself in both sides of the blade. “Victim and victor. Which one are you?” She turned around and with a single swish of the mini-sword, cut off Jennifer’s Nunary robes, leaving the black cloth lying on the floor like a rug ready to roll into. “Who are you?” Adrianna demanded to know, from the seat of the most universally raw emotions known to man or womankind.

“I’m a woman who’s looking for her husband,” Jennifer said with her own voice, having used it for the first time since she had become a ‘Nun’. “One who knows more people in the Church and the Army than you do.”

“Maybe not, Jenny.” Adrianna poured herself a stiff drink of Spiros’ private stock of oozo, gulped it down, then smashed the glass on the wall.

Jennifer was not aware of Adrianna being part of the inner circle organized with, and through, Seargent Johnson. The one-legged redneck was now dead, according to the message the boy with the pine branch delivered. Perhaps it was at Adrianna’s hand. Those hands had painted nails that looked sparkly to the eye, but

were probably laced with mind-numbing elixir if you licked them, toxic poison if she decided to claw you with them. And with ingredients far more deadly than ricin or any other new inventions of the KGB, or CIA, biochemists.

As predicted, and promised, no soldiers knocked at the door, no bootheals changed cadence, and no alarms sounded off as Adrianna got drunker and drunker, loudly destroying three items of ‘furnishings’ for each swig of ooze.

The Greek harlot poured another round, offering her guest a drink. “Who are YOU, Jennifer Pappas-Kewalski,” she asked, this time with a seductive tone to her intoxicated voice.

“Someone who can get us BOTH killed, if I talk too much,” Jennifer said. She sniffed the drink offered by her host and while Adrianna threw nother glassful down her own throat, Jennifer poured her on the black rug that was her Holy cassock, then smashed it on the wall. “And someone who knows that madness is best enjoyed straight.”

Something snapped in Adrianna. She offered Jennifer the knife handle. “Undress me, Jenny.”

“Why?” Jennifer asked her.

“Because I’m going to undress you, bitch”. Adrianna yelled out in a drunken scream of unbridled passion.

Before Jennifer could say “Mother Mary” or even “Mothers of Invention”, Adrianna’s gentle hands had transformed into catlike paws, ripping off every stitch of clothing still on her body, leaving her naked to the world, and her most primal instinct. And it was an instinct Jennifer didn’t expect. Something said to trust this drunken, demonic roadmap, as it would lead to a Heavenly place and Divinely sanctioned agenda.

“That’s it!” Adrianna screamed in ecstasy as Jennifer used the knife to tear off her new love-hate partner’s slip and bra, and then ripped out the diaphragm that had survived ten soldiers, ten sailors and two oil execs from Houston. “Keep goin Jenny,”

“Don’t call me Jenny!” Jennifer grunted with the Turkish dagger to Adrianna’s Greek throat. “Only Alan calls me Jenny! Only Alan does!”

“Yes,” Adrianna confided with sincerity, and regret. “I know.”

“How do you know?”

“He told me.”

All the questions blurted out of Jennifer’s mouth. “When?” “How?” but the most important, the only one Adrianna answered—“Why?”

“I was following orders, Jennifer.”

“Whose?” Jennifer held the knife on Adrianna’s throat.

“The question you want to ask me, before you kill me, is ‘where?’” Adrianna said, with a stare that was very familiar. The kind that dying prisoners who actually DID do some criminal activities had when they were about to meet their Maker showed to Sister Helena just before they ‘expired’.

“You know where he is!” Jennifer allowed herself to say, and believe. “You know where Alan is!”

Adrianna nodded ‘yes’. “They give me maps, with colors, codes and arrows on them. I have no sense of direction. Spiros knows this, so this is why he entrusts me with the maps.”

“Why didn’t you say anything? Did you tell Johnson?”

The whore with the heart of secrets hesitated, then finally said what was on her mind. “Getting in is easy. Getting out is...”

“....Something I’ll figure out when I get there.”

“You’ll get killed,” Adrianna warned, with few secrets behind her words.

“I’ll take that chance,” Jennifer claimed, and hoped she meant.

“You’ll get Alan found killed, Jennifer. Or worse.”

“What’s worse than death?”

“Lifelessness,” Adrianna’s confession. “Evil isn’t the presence of cruelty, its the absence of life. And there are other...considerations in my case.” Adrianna produced a paper to Jennifer. Though Jennifer’s could barely pronounce the long word describing Adrianna’s recently-diagnosed condition, it came down to one simple word that even the most illiterate Greeks could understand. “Cancer,” she said. “Maybe from something I got in here, or my clients somewhere else. There are many varieties of cancer that are a lot more deadly than the ‘Communist Cancer’ you know. But...you don’t live forever, right? Particularly if you...prevent others from living as long as they are able to...” Adrianna took another drink, ‘then sobered up’. “But enough about my traitorous and pathetic soul. Alan, when I, under orders, offered him my ‘gifts’, he just...”

“So, Alan DID talk to you when you....ya know...” Jennifer said the word for sex with her fingers rather than her mouth.

“He didn’t do anything, and he didn’t talk. He only muttered things, Things about you.” Adrianna took another bottle of Spartan rockgut from the shelves. “This is Major Spiros’ personal stock. He admired Hitler because of the uniforms. And because he was a primitive man who made himself heard in a refined world. Everyone has to have a hero. Seig Heil, mien lepshe.” With that, the whore with the heart of fool’s gold poured the bottle of rockgut down her throat.

To Jennifer, it seemed odd. She sniffed the empty bottle.

“Yes, Jenny. It is cyanide, mixed with hemlock and arsenic.” Adrianna had a glace of nobility over her big baby brown blue eyed. “Socrates was put to death with a mixture not unlike this one. Because he knew too much.”

Jennifer did whatever she could to get the poison back up, pumping the belly, sticking the finger in the back of the tongue, even sucking out the poison from Adrianna's mouth with her own lips.

"No....no." Adrianna protested, pushing Jennifer aside. "I know too much."

"What do you know?" Jennifer asked.

Adrianna fell to the floor, then rose to her knees. "Sister Helena, can you hear my confession?"

"Sure, if you want...I could...eh..."

Adrianna let her faint head rest between Jennifer's firm, and ample breasts, feeling the sensation of 'home' for the first time in a dog's, or bitch's age. "I did it for the money, Sister Jennifer." She twirled her earrings, diamonds inside of pearls. "I was also well paid by your government to watch my government. I did that for...the security." She bit her lips, in that gesture woman only share with other women, and never men, even husbands.

Jennifer reviewed her own experiences with that all-too-familiar idealism vs. practicality issue. "Safe is good, and..."

"I was also paid by my government to watch Sergeant Johnson, Jennifer."

"And me?"

"I did it for my baby," Adrianna started to cry. "Please don't tell God about my baby. I don't want her to suffer for what I did."

"What did you do?" Jennifer caressed Adrianna's chin and earlobes, sneaking a feel of her pulse. It was strong, steady, and even. Whatever Adrianna had taken was killing her between the ears, not below the neck. Or so Jennifer hoped, even prayed. "What did you do?" Jennifer asserted. "Confess it now and it is all forgiven."



“I let Johnson die. I let Alan live. And I let Spiros...I let Spiros...” Adrianna hyperventilated, went into a full blown panic attack, then grabbed Jennifer’s crucifix, the only thing still hanging on her naked body. “Jesus! This is my body, this is my blood!”

With the last ounce of strength in her cold, shaking, blood-soaked hand, Adrianna grabbed Jennifer’s wrist. “You, my Sister, Jennifer, do what you have to do. Do what I couldn’t, but should have. Let me feel you inside me. With your hand...”

“Buuutttt”, Jennifer muttered incoherently.

“Reach inside me! Now!!!!” the scream from the thin line separating life and death.

Adrianna spread her legs, spastic as they were. Jennifer reached in between them, though the public hair stubble, then to a place inside that connected both of them.

“Thank you! Thank you!” Adrianna’s last moan of gratitude. “Thank you, my Sister, my Jenny.”

Adrianna fell to the floor like a cold stone, but just before life left her body, she pointed her finger to a box and opened it. She placed the blood and vaginal juice-coated paper in Jennifer’s hand as it became cold, pale and still.

Adrianna’s last, or perhaps only, act of valor delivered into Jennifer’s sweat-soaked palm a map of a floor of the prison that didn’t officially exist, revealing a ‘pleasure cell’ that housed had Alan’s name on it. “Do what you have to do with my body, my Sister,” Adrianna said, awakening from the dead for the first, and last time before her body went into a final convulsion that left it stiff and lifeless.

Then, a thought came to mind to Jennifer. Was it from God, the devil, or a source far more human, and ultimately, humane?

“Adrianna and me could be sisters, same average height, hot built, gently-chiseled faces...lonely eyes.” Jennifer said to herself. “Maybe we were sisters in a past lifetime, or I’ll have to argue

with her for the top bunk on a shared room in our parents house on a spaceship somewhere NEXT lifetime,” she mused. “If only I could get into her body, and her life, for one...night”, Jennifer pondered, running her bloodsoaked fingers through the 2-inch mop on her own head, admiring the three-foot mane of unstained hair on Adrianna.

Jennifer noticed her reflection in the cracked mirror above what had been Adrianna’s ‘nightstand’, wondering if she should trust what the eyes looking back at her were saying. “Yes”, they screamed. “You have to be practical, here.”

“No,” Jennifer protested. “Some ends don’t justify the ends. Some things you just don’t do.”

“Dorothy, you aren’t in Kansas anymore...Or Oz,” the hallucination spoke back. “Just do it.”

Jennifer rummaged through the rubble that had been Adrianna’s ‘love nest’ and pulled out the Turkish knife she greeted her with. She then asked forgiveness from Allah, Buddha and Jesus, and grabbed the red mane that had been the hallmark of the hottest whore this side of Bleecker Street. “It is a good day to die,” Jennifer said, with a shaking hand. “It is a better day for Alan to start living again.”

Firmness overcame Jennifer’s shaking hand, leading to a clean and even cut that was true, accurate and right on the money.

“Hmmm” she said to herself when seeing her handiwork hanging in her hand. “I never knew it was so easy to scalp anyone.” The next step seemed harder, but there was no turning back. The look in the mirror after the right headband was picked as an accessory confirmed it. “I never knew it would fit me so well, too. I don’t recognize myself. I hope the hell that no one else does. Except, Alan, maybe....”

The rest was easy. The lion’s cave had a toilet that dumped everything straight into the ocean. What the knife couldn’t make unrecognizable, the sharks would devour. “Goodbye Sister,” Jennifer said to the remains as she dumped them into the King

Neptune's junkyard. "I'll get the bastards, for both of us," she pledged. "So help me, Whoever."

## CHAPTER 35

Back in 1678, when the Chief engineer for the Sultan of Selonica devised the tunnel between what had been Adrianna's Lioness' Den and what was now Alan's Pleasure Palace, it was to be sure that the Sultan's Moslem wife and Christian mistress never knew each other. The only real stature he had was from his unexpressed genes, not his genetic expression. How a six-foot-ten Sheek with brown eyes gave birth to a four-foot-four son with more brains than his father was a source of mystery, and embarrassment.

But though the Chief Engineer for Sultan of Selonica was the Black Sheep of the Ottoman Empire, he was no Bird Brain, and was more clever than any fox who raided the chicken coup. For every legitimate entrance to each special holding cell, there was an escape route put into place...just in case the people who commissioned the building of the prison decided to imprison the guy who designed it.

Nothing in the tunnels drawn on Adrianna's well-preserved antique map leading to an escape route from the Pleasure Palace made sense, as Jennifer found out when she traversed the first dimly-lit cavern, a hallway lined with frescos which featured the Sultan as the hero in every battle, and the villain as a man with a mug that resembled the Sheek. "Interesting paintings", she noted, looking for the one that would indicate the hidden door leading to the next corridor according to the map. "So, where's the 'dumb-assed sheep'?"

Two reliefs later, a lamb with a face resembling the Sultan fell upon her eyes. Behind the very satisfied lamb stood a demonic shepherd with part of his anatomy up the anal cavity of the ewe. "Dis must be the place," Jennifer said to herself as she pushed into the wall.

Life rewarded her intensity with another opportunity—another dimly-lit cavern with walls of charcoal-textured rock. The wooden floor seemed passable, and had fluorescent arrows pointing the way. But there was something about the walls. They seemed to be alive. Then, when Jennifer let fear utter through her breath, and

sweat pour out of her brow under the scalp of red mane atop her defiant, yet humiliated head—

“Bats!!!” she screamed as one of the winged rodents flashed over her head. “Rabies! Madness!” her next thoughts, felt so loudly that she was not even sure if she gave them voice. But then again, she didn’t have to. “They smell fear!!!” she remembered as she kept her eye on the arrows, her mind on the end of the tunnel that had to end somewhere in the land of the living. “I can’t sweat,” she muttered to herself as the swoops went from being two feet above her head to barely inches in front of her eyes. “Animals smell sweat. Can’t let the demons see ya sweat. Even though they can’t see for shit...”

With that brave thought, one of the larger rocks came to life, hanging around her head like a vulture waiting for lunch, or perhaps a lost infant ghost finally finding its mother. “Get away! Get the fuck away from me, Goddamn it!” she screams, wielding the Sultan’s knife that gave tribute to Prophet Mohammed and Savior Jesus. “Get away, you mother-fucking pieces of——”

Jennifer pulled out the Turkish dagger given to Adrianna posthumously and let it do the rest of her talking. The swing of the blade cut more than the thick air of the hallways that had become a cave. A black rope had been severed by the swing, causing a fall of dirt, mortar and ceiling. Making her escape after having half of her clothing torn off, Jennifer crawled, then squatted, then ran through the underground ‘corridors’ that seemed to go up, down or both at the same time. Moldy rock and became putrid brick, then rotted wood, then cold steel.

The rest of the plan raced through Jennifer’s head in a flash of brilliance that seemed to come from heaven, hell and somewhere very human in between. “Adrianna, which is me, struts down the corridor from the entrance to the floor of the Pleasure Palace that doesn’t exist. I show off to the goons, particularly the married ones, what they can’t have, then ask to see the prisoner and interrogate him by appealing to ‘whatever male weakness he has left’, under orders from Spiros of course. We fake an orgasm, or maybe even have a real one, than Alan ‘dies’ of a heart attack. I scream ‘leper’ and the KYP goons run and hide. I sneak into the

tunnel going down. Then a detour to the coroner's room, grabbing a few body bags and a lab coat, and then back down to the lioness' den where me and Alan get acquainted again, then flip a coin to see who gets to be corpse and who gets to be boatperson on a rowboat out of here that disposes of dead bodies. Hey, I might even get him to wear this red wig and be Adrianna for a night. That'd be....kinky, me the corpse and him the hooker. It'd be..."

Before Jennifer could say 'Mata Harrold', she found herself, nearly half naked, in a corridor that looked more like a scene from a Gestapo training movie than anything in real life. The very 'Presidential' sub-sector was for only the most important prisoners, and even Spiros wasn't about to entrust its maintenance to the rank and file. Before Jennifer could get her bearings, a man with extreme military bearing looked straight into her eyes.

"You are early, Madamme Adrianna" Sergeant Dimitrius darted out of his mouth with a terse tone that said nothing else but 'official'.

"It's better than being late, particularly in my line of work" Jennifer said with a cough, hoping that her eyes, throat, and anatomical features would match this very large, but well-armed, work-horse's expectations of her Sister in Slime.

"Excuse me?" Dimitrius pressed on.

Jennifer smiled and instinctively OPENED her dusty blouse, then ripped a larger slit up her tattered skirt. Jennifer saw two of the cards Dimitrius was holding behind his anxious eyes and gambled that his full house was really empty. "What is your name?" she asked seductively.

"Sergeant Dimitrius," the bold reply.

"Virgin Dimitrius?" her counter, loud enough to be heard by the lad, but low enough to not be heard by the villager-turned-KYP specialist's subordinates. "Or Sergeant stud?"

"This is not the time," Dimitrius answered, bargaining with the ghost of his dead mother behind him and the stern face of the

Virgin Mary appearing on the blood-stained walls. “We are sterilizing the Communist Cancer,” his bold boast. “Aren’t we?” his doubtful appendum.

“Yes, Sergeant Stud,” Jennifer said with a stroke of her hand on his hand, then cheek, then chest. She looked at his crotch. “I salute you, too. But first I have to have another conversation with Comrade Kewalski.”

“The Maestro? He is still where he always was,” Dimitrius’ reply.

His eyes looked down the corridor. The three-inch steel door was formidable, blood stained...and open.

“He can leave at anytime. But he doesn’t want to,” Dimitrius boasted. “The learned helplessness experiment is a success.”

Terror of the worst kind overcame Jennifer. Alan feared lifelessness more than death. “The purpose of life is to be Alive,” was always the overstated subtext of every Kewalski lyric book. “When the singer has no songs to sing, the singer must be no more,” never got put into print, or song. Was it time for Alan to be no more? Was he already one of those walking corpses who had stopped being part of the solution and was on his way to being part of the problem?

The twenty-foot walk to the cell might as well have been twenty-miles for Jennifer. It felt that exhausting when she reached her hand to the door. Inside lay a man with his back turned, emaciated, empty and without purpose. He turned around, let his jaw fall, and said “Huh?”

“Alan. It’s me,” Jennifer said with the depth of her being.

“So it is, Jennifer,” the voice echoed from behind.

Jennifer turned around and saw the demon face on.

Spiros shut the door, bolt-locked it shut, then smiled. “The face, the eyes and the voice. It all fits together, Mrs. Kewalski.”

Alan turned his back to Jennifer, choosing to surrender his full attention back to the demons in front of his own empty lifeless eyes. Jennifer fumbled, then reached into her pocket, pulling out the reserves she always kept on hand, particularly in Swansig, turning her attention to Spiros. “Here. I have three-hundred and twenty American dollars. Three minutes for—”

“—Three hundred and twenty-ONE dollars, Mrs. Kewalski.” He pocketed the cash, sniffing a distinctive odor on it. “It smells like it was hard earned by privately-arranged sexual favors granted by Adrianna, or perhaps by yourself, Sister Helena?”

“Okay,” she conceded. From another pocket, a checkbook, grabbing a pen from Spiros’ pocket. “I have an account in New York. Two-thousand and forty bucks for an hour.”

“Two thousand and forty ONE,” he said, taking the check.

She took a deep breath, then pulled the black pad out of Spiros’ pocket, the one he never shared with anyone. “My Swiss bank account. Assuming that Bernie hasn’t bought himself a lobotomy, or a new hairpiece, there should be forty-thousand, four hundred and forty-four dollars in it.”

“The price is four thousand, four hundred and forty-FIVE dollars, Mrs. Kewalski.”

“So, what is your price, Major.”

“The price for what?”

“Alan’s freedom.”

“Your dignity, Mrs. Kewalski.” He popped open the buttons on her blouse with his riding crop and fingered her chest. “And my pleasure.”

“YOUR pleasure, not mine.”

“Yours too, Jenny.” Spiros put the cash, check, and Swiss bank



account number into her bussom. “We all do what we have to do, even me.”

Jennifer’s body shuttered, as if the hand of death touched her and was working its way to the part of her that was still alive, and still lucid. “Whhhaattt do you want, Major Spiros?”

“Being powerful makes you very tired, and lonely, Mrs. Kewalski.”

“And cruel.” Jennifer felt Spiros’ other hand fingering her abdomen and crotch. The ‘how’s’ said so much more about the ‘why’s’ . “You really are inexperienced in the ways of love, and lust.”

“Did Adrianna tell you that?”

“No. You are, right now.”

“So, kind mistress and dedicated wife, teach me.” Spiros kissed her hand. “Please.”

It was an offer that couldn’t be refused. Spiros was as pitiful as he was powerful, but Hell hath no fury like a Greco-Napoleonic Fascist scorned. Jennifer knew that, as did Sister Helena, and even Alan, if indeed he was still Alan.

## CHAPTER 36

Jennifer's send off from Swansig was a regal event. Not only did she get a car, extra cash, forged passports, and her husband's freedom, but there were accessories thrown in for free. Spiros never told Jennifer where he got the four-foot-long blonde wig that restored her original 'look', but she knew that it came off a prisoner now degraded into a slave in the woman's 'leper colony' that no one except he knew about.

It had been only two months since Jennifer had taken her vows as Sister Helena. While trying to find Alan, she had gathered clandestine information on at least 250 prisoners of conscience, a newfound ability to be her own master and mistress, and, most importantly, a blessing the Almighty gave to only his most valuable Angels—the gift of disbelief in His active existence. No longer could Jenny believe in God, humanity or even the virtues of goodness. The only thing left to believe in now was Alan Kewalski, and he was now someone she hardly recognized.

“Well,” she said to Alan while driving the VW bug up the mountain road going North toward the Macedonian border. “It's just you and me, now, kid. We're both dead officially dead now, unless we want to emerge from the Swiss Mountain Valley where we got lost hiking. We got cash from the assholes on the Right. A farm in Macadonia from the cowards on the Left. And a world to share in the middle. How does it feel?”

From Alan, nothing. Just that unending stare forward, shell-shock in his eyes, and the destination sign reading 'Nowhere' on his pale, white forehead.

“Alan, it's me, Jenny.” She held up a fistful of the blonde mane, admiring its beauty and potential. “Okay, the hair's not mine, not yet. But look on the bright side. I can dye it brown, black, red, or even green. Ya think the world will ever come to a point where chicks will dye their hair green? Maybe the earth mamas, cause green comes out of the dirt, and lots of those Nature Babes have the dirtiest minds I know.”

Still nothing from Alan. Just tremors of the hand, a groan of

agony with every breath out, a rush of fear with every breath in.

“Okay. Music is your only friend...” Jennifer turned on the tape deck. Mozart, Eina Kleina Nache music

Alan moved his hand over, felt for the dial, and turned it off.

“I agree. Something with more teeth to it.” The next take, Beethoven’s Ninth, the rousing Choral movement—All men become brothers!

Alan held his ears and screamed.

“Okay, I’ll turn it down,” Jennifer’s frantic reply as her brail methodology of operating machinery only upped the volume three notches.

Alan kicked at the door, ignoring the three-hundred-foot drop only three feet to his right. The screams got louder, in a language that seemed demonically-planted.

“Okay...off. We’ll turn it—” Jennifer fumbled, but Alan’s boot-heel did the job required.

Three kicks on the dash prevented the newly-obtained super 8 deck from blasting out any music again. Alan breathed several deep sighs of relieve, then retreated back into the cave between his ears.

“Can we talk then?” Jennifer moved her hand toward Alan, slowly and gently. “Please, can we—”

Alan withdrew into a fetal position the instant Jennifer’s hand touched him. Apparently, the demons didn’t want to be disturbed, a sentiment shared by the man who used to be the source of her fire, vitality and reason for living.

“We’ll talk later,” she continued, eyes on the road. From the corner of her eye, she saw Alan ease up, but he was still deep in the cave. His clenched fists uncurled, his overgrown fingernails having broken skin in the palms, again. His legs shook, his foot

tapping the rhythm of a symphony composed in the deepest circles of hell. His eyes showed something far worse than terror or pain—dead.

The village of Hiloikos was barely a village at all. Buried in the Macedonian hills, it was equally obscure to the Greeks, Bulgarians and even the Albanians. Rumor had it that the 300 inhabitants were all inbred, and had escaped being noticed for as many years by every incoming Army. Still, Harrington, Stravotsky and Petarkos land developers missed no opportunity to scoop it up as a plot of land they would convert into a ski resort once the silly business about the Cold War would end, and the moguls of the world would grow up, screwing each other over money instead of ideology. But in the meantime, Hiloikos was an oasis of obscurity perfect for two people who needed to find each other again.

Jennifer drove up the road past town that turned into a cow pasture, then a goat-path to the final destination. “Okay, I’ll look at the map, you ask directions. Or as the chick am I supposed to ask directions? I don’t know....”

Alan seemed aloof, but when the sight of the Macedonian plains came to view, with two horses running through it, something sparked behind his lifeless eyes.

“Yeah, Toto. We ARE in Kansas. Maybe Oz, too.”

Jennifer’s instincts were right. Maybe her karma as well. Alan had spent his childhood in Kansas, Colorado and West Texas, in country as flat as any amateur copy band from suburban anywhere. It was a childhood he never talked about, but the land and the horses seemed to be something he related to.

One of the horses spotted a herd of sheep that had broken through a fence. The lead horse led the way, herding the sheep back to their home pasture, aided by his pushing his neck down and helping the lead ram across to his side of the line with a hearty-heave-ho.

Alan smiled.

“I’ll take that as a ‘yes’?” Jennifer asked.

Alan nodded a cautious ‘yeah’, his beloved’s voice reminding of where he REALLY was.

“The map says our place is five miles up, or is it down? Or is it kilometers or miles or cubits? What is a cubit, anyway?” She just looked at the road ahead, the uninhabited horizon, and Alan’s cautiously comforted eyes. “I guess it’s close. Close is better than far, I guess.”

Alan nodded in appreciation, then, without eye contact, moved his hand to her arm. He touched her, then pulled away. Jenny knew enough not to push for more. The virus of hopelessness was still running through his veins, the same contagious feeling that she felt from the prisoners in Swansig she couldn’t save who had succumbed to death at their own hands or the slightest intervention of disease. Training wild horses required a gentle touch and a little time. Putting the fire back into a gelded stallion would be a lot harder.

## CHAPTER 37

Amnesty International owed Jennifer a lot for looking after the interests of the ‘many’. She chose to collect by asking them to help her look after the ‘one’. Several physicians had been recruited to treat the bodies of torture victims, but few knew how to treat the scars below the scalp. The facility in Switzerland would have been medically ideal for Alan, with twenty psychiatrists on staff, and access to the newest drugs. The drugs were expensive, and she demanded the best the facility had to offer, to be given on her terms, and her turf.

Jennifer had been burnt-out from all sides, and realized that the 60s revolution was already over. Soon, the ‘hip and cool’ revolutionaries professing world harmony and free love would form clichés of their own and become the most obnoxious whores the world had every known. Hippies would be a thing of the past in the very near future, the only real ones left being those that never called themselves anything at all.

“You come to Hiloikis and treat Alan, your defeated champion, THERE,” she demanded of every Human Rights Organization that contacted her by post, phone or non-existent ‘private messenger’ as a condition that she would continue her work as a human rights monitor and perhaps even lecturer. “Give me your best, and I’ll give you my best,” the final salutation in every correspondence to Amnesty’s head office, as well as its economically-challenged affiliates.

But her response went unheaded. Choosing to make her stand against the world from the rented ranchhouse and the arid mountain farm worth no more than a dollar an acre, she was now out of the loop. Paying for specialists to come in and help Alan proved to not be an option after a few months either, and for reasons that went beyond finances. Alan was now officially dead, a situation which became very safe and politically-convenient to Washington, Moscow and Athens. Whatever Kewalski had, the world didn’t seem to want now. “But,” Jennifer pondered as she looked at a bootleg copy of the Village Voice that showed none of his records on ANY of the charts anymore, “Maybe Maestro Kewalski just wants to be just another Alan now. And with ABBA rising up the charts faster than Dylan ever did, maybe, as Phil Ochs said, ‘to the safety of sterility the crowd has been refined’” Such was the wish of the powers that be, and even Kewalski himself now, but not his wife.

“Food”, she reminded him at the three and a quarter-legged dinner table as she set it down. “You planted it, sort of. You helped me cook it. Or at least smelled it while I was adding things to it. And it has no meat in it! I promise!” she insisted, having remembered the beef stew she had made once that turned him into a zombie for a week. Why Alan was terrified of even the smell of meat was beyond her. Why he refused to listen to any music, or put anything to print as notes or words, was also a source of bewilderment.

“Are we going to talk today, or is it my turn again?” She sat down, taking a sip from the cabbage, macaroni, peas, beans and rice soup that, according to the Very, Absolute, For Real Last Whole Earth Catalogue, had all the essential amino acids found in

animal protein.

The lead horse whinnied from outside, then found the barrel of oats laid out for him. Alan's ears perked up.

“You feed those animals better than you feed yourself. And with the shit-eating grin on his face, I KNOW you're feeding him some loco weed that would bring in twenty-five bucks an ounce anywhere in Berkeley.”

Alan smirked. It was the closest thing to a laugh he had experienced since their arrival.

“He wants to be ridden, Alan,” Jennifer noted, and said, handing her beloved a weatherbeaten bridle which probably dated back to the 1821 rebellions against the Turks.

Alan retreated back into the cave, losing himself in the now cold soup in front of him. Jennifer put his hand around a spoon, moving his arm into the soup and then into his mouth. After two bitefuls he took over, in small bits. The horse whinnyed, then approached the window, nudging the glass with his nose and his stare to Alan. As if there was something in the steed's eyes more scary than friendly, Alan focused on the soup, throwing it down his throat with as much force and intensity as he could.

Jennifer took away his spoon, forcing him to look at her. “I know the way you look at that horse. I know it's been years since you've been on one of those guys. But somewhere under all that...all that...pain, is a cowboy who needs to connect back the wildness of the land, and seeing by all the ‘conveniences’ we don't have in this Hiloikos Hilton Hideaway—”

Alan bashed his spoon on the table, banging several times.

“No...” Jennifer pleaded, noting that she had, once again, pushed her most beloved beast into corners inhabited by demons she could not see. “I'm not complaining. But you and horses. When I asked you if you think you'd be hurting them when you ride them, your eyes said ‘yes’. But look at that horse out there. He WANTS to be ridden. He WANTS to be your friend. He WANTS

you to raise hell chasing goats, rams and coyotes up and down the mountains here.”

Alan opened his lips, uttering from his shaking throat the most commonly used words in his new very limited vocabulary , “No harm, no harm, no harm...”

“Yeah, I know. ‘No harm. No harm....’ What the hell does that mean THIS time?!!!”

The routine of push and pull, advance and retreat, had become the only reliable thing in the Kewalski’s day, broken only by unannounced blasts of winter air , monsoon rains pouring out of abruptly-changed clear blue skies, and an electric generator that chose to go South whenever it was needed most. But this night, an even colder interruption would come in.

The knock on the door was soft and even. The man behind it, cold, but broken. Jennifer could hardly believe her already bloodshot eyes.

“Doctor Katsoris?” she asked.

“Yes,” the frail, yet humbled man in a ragged jacket, hole-ridden shoes and a bolar hat said through the chilled air in his chest. “It used to me.” He coughed up a wade of bloody-mucous, covering his mouth with as much dignity as he could with his frostbitten fingers. “Mmmmayyy I comeee in?” he asked.

“Yeeeahhhh, I think so,” Jennifer’s cautious reply.

Alan heard nothing, and felt the same. “No...harm. No harm...” he kept muttering by way of wish, vow and regret into his reflection in the bowl of soup, then to the horse outside, to whom he fed the last of the winter’s carrots. “No harm...no harm.”

“What’s he saying?” Jennifer asked.

“Above all things, do no harm,” Katsoris related as he warmed his hands by the wooden stove, noting the books on the shelves which all seemed unopened, and the musical score paper on the



desk unmarked by pen. “It’s the physician’s code. Above all things do no harm. It works for Doctors, because Nature helps us. But healing the Collective Soul of Humanity....That’s much harder than brain surgery.”

“What do you want?” Jennifer pressed.

“To be of service to you, and Maestro Kewalski.”

“Should we trust you?”

“If I were you, I wouldn’t.”

“So why should we?”

“Because I am asking. And I’m dead, just as you are.”

Katsoris took the newspapers out of his coat pocket, an American Journal, The London Times and the Yugoslavian Worker. “They all said I committed suicide. I jumped off a cliff when I was visiting an island castle.”

“Whose body was it?”

“He was dead anyway, thankfully.” Katsoris stared at the floor, absorbed with primal guilt, then moved his attention to the cabinet. “Do you have any liquor here?”

“Madness is best enjoyed straight, Doctor Katsoris.” Jennifer looked at the rest of the newspapers. “My God, there is a global conspiracy going on. Every paper is lying to me with the same story. And none of them say anything about Greece. No wonder newspapers are valued for ass-wipe and firewood here.” She paused a moment, then smiled. “But it does feel good again, being lied to in print. I miss reading.”

“And Alan hasn’t been doing any reading?”

Alan shuffled outside, indulging in whatever pleasures he could in the psycho-realm that was keeping his soul hostage. He stroked the horse, speaking to it in a language that was neither human, nor

equine, avoiding the saddle and reins purposely left out by Jennifer.

“He hasn’t been doing any writing either. Or riding, either. I know he wants to do both.”

“You have to relate to something. Tell him that the car is broken, and you need the horse for transportation.”

“I did, and it is. But Alan walks the horse to town, then carries half the supplies home on his OWN back.”

“What kind of medication is he on?”

“Love, Dr. Katsoris.”

“Sometimes, love is NOT all you need, Jennifer.”

“What do you mean?”

“The owners of this farm gave you a defective generator and a barn full of chemicals, the mountains give you cold winds and mysterious plants, and I...”

“You what?”

Katsoris pondered the matter at hand, letting it incubate in his troubled mind for one more moment, then committed to the lingering and overdue agenda. “I have a medical degree, training in the most prestigious research institutes in the world, and a desire to use them for something productive.”

“Why should I trust Alan’s brain to your drugs?” Jenny’s challenge.

“Because I know how to cure rats of learned helplessness,” Katsoris’ sombre reply.

“Alan is not a lab rat!” Jennifer insisted.

“I know he isn’t,” Katsoris conceded. “And that’s going to

make our job that much harder.”

## CHAPTER 38

Every week, Katsoris showed up with a new herb designed around a new neurotransmitter that was found the week earlier. “Plants are just drugs that aren’t in bottles yet,” he kept insisting as Jennifer collected three shelf-fulls of mind-altering teas and soup seasonings that did more by way of flavoring the food than awakening the mind.

On October 10, he rode in on his bicycle with the latest potion. “Here it is!” he boasted. “Serotonin is the most important neurotransmitter in the brain. This herb that I blended last night, and this drug I got smuggled to me yesterday from my janitorial contact in the university will put the fire back into the Maestro’s head.”

“Will it make ‘Revolutionary Blues’ come out of his hand, and onto paper?” Jennifer asked.

“He’ll be singing it from the rooftops, and they’ll hear him from here to Athens!” Katsoris boasted.

“And what IS happening in Athens?” she asked, allocating out the tablets and herbal flakes according to the Professor-turned-gypsy-farmer’s instructions.

“Nothing, so I hear.” His voice dropped an octave.

“Hmmm” Jennifer commented stirring the latest concoction into the morning cereal destined for Alan’s unsuspecting mouth. “Ya think the world has been nuc’d and people like us in places like this are the only ones still alive?”

“One can only hope,” Katsoris noted, his eye on Alan with bridle in hand, cautiously wondering if the world will fall apart if he dared to put it around the horse’s neck and gallop away from the demons holding his soul hostage. “We’re making SOME progress,” he noted.

“He got on the horse yesterday...” Jennifer related.

“That is excellent!”

“Then fell off.”

“Did he get back on again?”

“I don’t know. I think so. Maybe the medication IS working.”

“It’s HELPING. No drug can activate the soul, it can only help us see where it is.”

Jennifer looked through the cracked-glass window. She pulled her shoulder-length hair back, tying it with a strand of leather.

“Is he eating meat now?”

“No,” Jennifer commented. “But he’s at least talking about why he can’t, sort of.”

“It will come out in the notes, not the words. He’s a musician.”

“When will he musicianize?”

“As soon as he gets back on the horse.”

The ex-Cultural Liason and the former-Professor gazed at the Maestro outside the window. Alan cajoled a newly-adopted horse into getting the bit into his mouth, then jumped on him, then rode the animal at a walk, belly on the saddle.

“Is the horse trained? If that’s a problem—”

“Oh, yes. I’ve ridden him myself, when Alan wasn’t looking.”

“But to Alan, it has to be a wild horse.”

“To Alan, it is...I’m enough of a woman to know not to destroy a man’s manhood. Though everything we do as women is aimed at taming the wildest man we can find.”

“You have become quite the psychiatrist, too, Mrs. Kewalski.

You've been reading the books I brought in?"

"Only the novels. After Alan glances through them. "

"You know, you are very lucky, Mrs. Kewalski."

"Why?"

"You were able to make love with your husband."

"Yeah...And he FINALLY came. It only took every trick in the Kamasutra to get him aroused."

"And the child? Have you told him?"

"Which one? His, or...."

Jennifer looked down at the floor, regret and shame at the same time.

"Major Spiros?" Katsoris surmised.

"Sometimes winter clothes and a catatonic husband are real good at hiding pregnancies."

"And delivery?"

Jennifer dived into a part of herself she thought dead, and gone. "I was born half Catholic and half Greek Orthodox. Abortion is a sin, and that life in me was a life. It was a small baby, and I told the midwife two valleys away that I was a whore, running away from a gangster husband. And that I couldn't afford to take care of it, And that it would be in better hands with someone else anyway. Hmm...Maybe that wasn't too far from the truth."

For the first time since the wedding, Jennifer allowed herself to be hugged by someone who gave her back more than what she put in. For Katsoris, it was the first time in years that he felt like a healer, in the fundamental sense of the word.

"I could have said 'no' to Spiros," Jennifer confessed through

the tears. “He told me that the happier I made him for that hour, the happier he could make it for Alan for the rest of his life. But I didn’t know there would be a...child.” Teardrops gave way to a downpour from eyes that had been hiding the truth for too long.

“The child you gave birth to knows nothing of Major Spiros, or the KYP. And the child you have in you now.....” Katsoris gazed upon the two-month old embryo inside Jennifer’s womb. “Does Alan know yet?”

“No.”

“You should tell him.”

“He doesn’t need that responsibility.”

“On the contrary!” Katsoris barked. “He needs that purpose. A man without purpose is no man at all.”

Katsoris kissed Jennifer on the cheek. She pulled back.

“What was that for?” she challenged.

“I’ve wanted to do a lot more than that with you for the last four years. But I’d rather be your child’s godfather than its father, if that’s alright with you, Mrs. Kewalski.” He offered Jennifer the rag from his moth-eaten coat in the manner of a Royal gentleman at the Metropolitan Opera.

Jennifer wiped the tears from her eyes. She was grateful for Katsoris’ gallantry, class and compassion. But something else seemed wrong.

“Spiros. Do you think that he wanted to have a child with me all along? Was that why he did all of this?” she asked.

“Only he, and the spies he has on BOTH sides of the Greek border, know for sure.”

The sun set early that night, but the morning rose on another day, and new possibilities.

## CHAPTER 38

The first of December came directly on schedule on Macedonian time—November 2, on the dot. With it, the first snowfall over the terrain that had so meagerly supplied the fruits of summer and the harvest of fall. The mail delivery was late, though.

Jennifer opened the envelope slowly. “Your request to write a book for McMillan is denied. We thank you for your offer of writing a novel about ‘political prisoners in the Greek Mediterranean’, but they do not fit our current publishing mandates,” the form letter read, ending with the salutation, “sincerely yours”. “Fucktually yours!” Jenny screamed against the backdrop of the oncoming morning wind. She put on the radio, hoping for anything, even static. Instead, she got Beethoven’s Eroica, the freedom symphony, played by the Czech Philharmonic, well behind the Iron Curtain.

It reminded her that the free-est music came from people in the most imprisoned places. No performance by the New York or London Symphony ever released so much fire and defiance. If only the editors at the publishing Houses really knew

“What’s going on?” Alan asked, entering the kitchen bare-naked except from the neck up, his whitish beard now having grown to Mountain Man length, and twice as smelly. His ears heard the music, loud and clear. His hand instantly turned it off. He looked Jenny’s way, ready for another argument about his request that no music be played in the house. Her counter would be that Alan sang louder than any radio, when he was asleep. Alan would deny it, Jennifer would counter with proof, showing him the melody he had sung, written out in notes that he recognized but vehemently denied writing. Alan would say that he had to ride his horse, to check cattle, fences or see if the mail truck needed his equine assistance. Jennifer would say that she heard him hum more than one bar or two while mounted, particularly at a gallop.

But this morning, Alan saw Jennifer holding a note, its contents hidden from his view. He reached for the paper.

“My...eh...aunt. She can’t send any more money this year,”



Jenny blurted out, tossing the fifth rejection slip in as many weeks into the wood-burning stove, hoping that bullshit excuses would at least make good fire wood. “Did you get back to the school in the village about them wanting you to teach music?”

“Yeah, I did,” Alan’s answer, scraping out the last of the nut-grain bread from the back of the cupboard. He looked outside, noticing the haybails covered with snow, taking note of how much less fat his prize horse, now deemed ‘Plato’, had on him relative to last year. “I’ll figure out something.”

“We can’t afford any more freebie music lessons, Alan!” Jenny screamed, feeling the life in her belly that would soon need more than hope and enlightenment to stay alive. “No more freebies!”

“I agree.”

“So...”

Alan poured hot water into a quarter-ration tea bag and sipped it. He slipped on his jeans, his lumberjack shirt, and denim jacket.

“And....?” she pressed on.

“I know we need money,” he conceded. “All three of us.”

“How did you know?”

“Katsoris told me...After he let me trick it out of him.”

“What else did he tell you?” Jenny blasted out, indignant.

“That you decided to declare yourself officially ALIVE, to the highest bidder. I thought being dead up here in God’s country made you feel more alive than...”

“Alan. We need money!”

“And I’m going to get it!” Alan screamed back. He pulled out a doctor’s bag from under the sink. His hands seemed new to the instruments. “I made a deal with the good doctor. He uses these

medico-chopsticks by night, I use them by day. This hemostat here could buy us a new bedroom, and the first year's tuition at Harvard for the little Alan, or Jenny Jr., if he or she is dumb enough to need to go."

"Alan. That's a forceps, not a hemostat."

"Chopstick is a chopstick, right?" Alan went through the rest of the bag, taking note of the drugs on hand.

She closed the blinds faster than a narc could say 'up against the wall' "Alan...Madness is best enjoyed straight, right? You know what they do to drug dealers in this part of the world?"

"A customized cell almost as bad as what they give to prisoner's of conscience..." His voice dropped down below the ground. "...or guilt."

Jennifer moved closer to Alan, offering her hand. This time, it was accepted, with gratitude, and affection. Still, there was something about Alan's plan that had a very hidden, and deadly, catch.

"Relax, you two," he said to mother and child. "I'm gonna be an animal doctor. A veterinary."

"A veterinarian! What if a cow needs a C section?"

"Stop talking about yourself like that, Jenny."

"Bad pun aside, what if you get stuck doing surgery in the middle of an operation after getting too bold with this?" She held up a scalpel. "What will you do then?"

"Ask the animal what to do next," the reply with the wise-assed Kewalski smile that always had delivery at the end of it, somehow. "Animals always talk, we just gotta listen," he continued in Kansanese, gently pulling the scalpel blade back, putting it into the box, careful to not look into its reflection. "I used to be a damn good backyard animal doctor back in Kansas," he related. "Doc Thomkins said I knew animals better than people."

“You never mentioned Doc Thomkins,” Jennifer commented, noticing Alan re-acquiring instant skills with his hands that he had hidden from her, and probably himself, for as long as either of them could remember. “What was he like?”

Alan pulled open the shades, gazed at his faithful horse ‘Plato’, and acquired a far-away look that Jennifer had never seen. “Thomkins was a hundred years behind and a thousand years ahead. A Nobel Prize biochemist AND top flight investigative journalist who got burnt out too early. He dusted off his Vertebrate Physiology degree, set out for the hills, and set up shop as the smartest, most illegal, and most popular vet in town. Said that the world of animals and Nature is the way things should be. The world of people’s the way things are. After spending enough time in the world the way it should be, he forgot about the way things are....Then he forgot about writing, reading, and even talking. The last book he wrote...brilliant. But only two people I knew could even understand it.”

“Who?” Jenny asked.

“Him, and me,” he commented, a blank stare in his eyes, terrorized about going to the Enlightened side of madness. He reached for Jennifer’s shoulder, trying to find grounding in her. She gently put her hand over his, enough to feel his presence but not enough to hold him down. Not unless he wanted to be, at least.

“What are you scared of, Alan?” she asked, in words.

“The way everything is going to turn out,” he said. “This story of mine can’t have a happy ending. You DO know that.”

“No, I DON’T know that!” she insisted again and again, hugging Alan with all her might, to bring his oscillating energy back to Earth, or at least to a planet where she could administer first aid to a wound that had been opened up somewhere inside of him.

Plato whinnied. Alan answered the call. “Gotta go save some animals, collect some bucks, make it a better world.” He kissed

Jennifer on the lips, and the bambino/bambina on what he thought was its belly.

With a hearty ‘high-ho Plato’, Doc Kewalski galloped out to save the collective animal souls in the world.

Though Jennifer wanted to hear the William Tell Overture playing in her head, she sensed trouble—both at home fort, and over the mountains to the South. “How long will it be until one of her letters or manuscripts to a publisher in New York gets to Spiros and he sends ‘messengers’ to silence me, and Alan, forever?” she asked herself. “How much longer can we be so different here and not be noticed, then reported to the wrong Policeman?” question two. Finally, “How much longer can I stay quiet and Alan stay away from the final battle both of us need to fight, for the sake of our baby, and so many others, in the European birthplace of Western Democracy?”

## CHAPTER 39

The tanks and jeeps came closer and closer to the non-declared no-man's zone on the Greek side of the Slavic 'frontier', displaying the newest equipment in American and Japanese antennae. But Marshall Tito's Police weren't impressed much. Yugoslavians had made a conscious decision to stay neutral, denying themselves the perks of being first mates to the American Eagle or the Russian Bear. The Yugo cars ran on one and a half cylinders, if at all, but it didn't matter much. There wasn't any petrol to put into them. Had the Yugoslavians been more precise at clock-making or more vicious in matters of finance, they could have been the Switzerland of the Balkans. But what Marshall Tito said, went. Except, of course, in no-man's land where the border cops had all the say and, so the official reports read, all the guns.

Meanwhile, the Cowboy Doctor was making quite a name for himself curing animals of diseases inflicted by microbes and humanly-created environmental toxins. 'Doc Al' knew enough to listen to skilled farmers, Katsoris, the animals and, most importantly, the advise of departed mentor Doc Thomkins, when it came to matters medical. But when it came to being expressive, the dance was far different than the Kewalski shuffle. Words like 'kind', 'generous' and even 'likable' came to mind when he rode off in a cloud of dust, waving his fedora like a cowboy hat. He even was said to have tapped his foot and hummed along with a Country Music tape from the States, most particularly "Okie from Askoke".

But still, he avoided music, and in the Macedonian hills, the music seemed to be from everywhere except Macedonia. Basque guitar from Spain, gypsy violin from Hungary, and Turkish boozooki all merged into chaotic bliss at the tavernas. Jennifer and her actively-growing unborn child went into town on ever occasion to take in the musical experience. Alan either stayed at home, or found a medical call to do here, or there, in the cause of saving an animal or salvaging a roof on the old homestead.

Jennifer seemed pleased with the arrangement, and the cash coming in. But something was very, very wrong. "Alan seems...happy," he said to Katsoris on the way back to the car with

a week's worth of groceries, medical supplies and even American-style toilet paper. "Alan is never happy. It's like he's still not Alan."

Katsoris remained silent, and distant.

"What's going on?" Jenny asked the spiritually-poor rich man who was now more well-endowed in wisdom than any uncle, aunt, or even lover, she ever knew. "There's something wrong with Alan, on the inside."

"You are pregnant," Katsoris replied succinctly. "And men go crazier in pregnant times than women do," he mused. "You should have seen me when my first child was born. I got more nauseous than my wife did...And it was me who did the cooking. I remember a morning, long before the War, when the sun was—"

"Ahhhh!!!!" Jennifer screamed.

Katsoris looked, saw, then allowed himself a moment of panic. "Yoooouu are...."

"About to deliver. I think I..."

Katsoris pushed the crowd in the street aside. "Out of my way!" he yelled in Greek, Yugoslavian and even Russian. "Out of my—  
—"

"Ahhhh!!!!" Jenny moaned again. She pointed to the taverna hotel.

"No!" Katsoris insisted. "My goddaughter isn't going to be born in a brothel."

"Then she's gonna be born in the street," Jenny asserted between moans, groans and grunts, as her water broke.

By her screams and strains, and a quick look-see, Katsoris could sense a ten-pound baby trying to get out a canal designed for a seven pound bambino. He did the calculations regarding how far it was to the village with a hospital, how long the clenbuterol

would keep the child inside the womb, and how many of the town whores hanging out the window he could trust as nurses in the event that things got medically-complicated.

“Alllaannnnnnn!!!!” Jennifer screamed out in Brandoesche fashion ala Street Car.

“Jenny!!!” Alan screamed back from the plains just over the mountaintop. He turned his horse around and galloped down as fast as he could. But by the time he got down to the door of the hotel—

“She’s with the doctor,” Whore number one said to Alan. “It’s bad luck for the husband to be around when his baby is being born,” she said in broken English.

“Bullshit!” Alan replied in Yugoslavian.

He rammed his way in, more forcefully than a pimp squeezed out of his cut on a three-grand night. But when he got upstairs, a face he couldn’t argue with stared him straight in the eye.

“She’s alright,” Katsoris calmly related.

“Then why’s all that blood on your hands!” Alan protested. “I want to see my wife!”

Alan kicked the door down, and saw something he had never expected to in a lifetime. “Jenny?” he asked.

“Alana”, her reply, nuzzling the new addition to the Kewalski clan in her arms. “Alana. Is that a name?” Jenny asked, drenched in sweat, not minding that she had lost enough blood to make most any other woman fade into unconsciousness, or worse.

Alan kept his distance as he saw the stitches being put into his beloved wife. Watching and doing surgery on animals was easy, but when it came to people, watching or doing anything where skin got broken turned Cowboy Kewalski into a woozy schoolkid, ready to fall on the floor with the slightest wind from an open window. Whore number two, who had no knowledge of English,

but a stellar background in nursing and interpersonal communication, broke his fall.

“Come say hello to your daughter,” Katsoris said.

“Alana, say hello to Alan,” Jennifer said, handing over the child to her father for a look see.

“Alana Kewalski,” Alan said smilingly to the child. “Your middle name is....Maestra...Maestra Kewalski. Writer of your own musical destiny.”

Katsoris and Jenny knew that to mention the name ‘Kewalski’ within 500 miles of Athens could mean their discovery, and death. But, fortune of the Virgin Mary, they were in the presence of women who were anything but virgins, accustomed to keeping secrets of the heart.

“There’s something I want to do for you, Alana,” Alan said to his new daughter.

“Sing her a song?” Jenny asked.

“Better.”

Alan gave Alana back to Jenny and left. He mounted his horse, and galloped off.

“Where’s he going?” she asked Katsoris.

“A veterinary call?” the physician offered, lying through his gritted teeth.

The alternatives were far worse. Perhaps Spiros’ sharpshooters would pick him off. Perhaps Alan was on his way to Albania. Perhaps the joy of a child was too much to handle and he would find a mountain to fall off of.

“Go to sleep, my dear,” Katsoris said, taking Alana away from a very worried Jennifer. “You’ve lost a lot of blood.”



“But...”

“Go to sleep,” Katsoris ordered in a fatherly tone.

Jennifer saw a cone of ether moving toward her then experienced ten seconds of the worst brand of confused hell imaginable. Then, following a restless-sleep punctuated by intermittent pain—

“Music?” Jennifer asked, hearing a keyboard pouring out a symphonic work she found familiar, yet strange.

“Yeah,” Alan said. His hands on a piano lifting up everyone and everything in the room, accompanied in some with librettos sung by everyone in the room as he handed them out.

“‘Revolutionary Blues’ the title.”

“You wrote that in...”

“Swansig....Some of it, Jen.” The refrain turned intense, sweet, tragic, then, miraculously, humorous. With jokes even the musically-uninitiated could understand, and laugh with. “You took down the notes I screamed in my sleep, I embellished on the melodies, and...”

No musico-neuroscientist could have designed a tune more able to move the human soul to tears, laughter, and action, all at the same time. And for the coda—

“I made a call,” Alan said, continuing the piece. “To a publisher friend of mine. Mannie the Munch.”

“The thief of Brooklyn Heights?”

“The king of Hollyweird, now. I made him an offer he couldn’t refuse.”

“How much?”

“Alana will be able to BUY Harvard,” Alan boasted. “And ‘Rev Blues’ is the best I’ve ever written, or ever will.” He became

solemn, even fatalistic. “Most of the world won’t get the REAL jokes in ‘Blues’, and the real message. But that’s for the real mountain climbers. Like Mozart’s Requiem, and Beethoven’s Ninth, it’s all about the top of the mountain.”

The proof was in the pudding, or more accurately, the music. At no time were people of so many backgrounds moved by something so avantguard, so new, so non-understandable to the average musician mind. Yet, it made its mark. And the person who smiled most of all—little, and actively growing, Maestra Alana.

## CHAPTER 40

“What creatures are you going to save today?” Jennifer asked Cowboy Kewalski as he packed his saddlebag for a busy day of animal healing, three-month-old Alana sucking at her nipple.

“The owners of whoever paid me yesterday?” Alan offered, pulling up the girth on Plato, prepared for a long, hard ride.

“I asked you for the truth, Alan,” Jenny protested. “Not what I wanted to hear.”

“What do you need to hear?” he asked.

“You, singing another stanza to Alana.” Jenny looked at the wonder-child and speculated the limitlessness of her horizons. “Is she going to be a rocker, a blues chick, a bluegrass gal, a Mozart aficionado, a Beethoven fanatic...”

Alana answered with a laugh.

“Okay, all of the above.” Jenny buried her worried face in Allan’s open and uninhibited smile.

Alan looked on, from a distance. He knew that Alana would sing before she could talk, and that the product of his firey genes with Jennifer’s gentle ones would make for a formidable ball of mischief, and a person who would know what happiness really was. But there was the unfinished business that he had to do, over the horizon, ten clicks East and three south, adding up to thirteen, his unlucky number.

Still, Plato insisted. It was time to go.

“When will you be back?” Jennifer asked as Alan clicked Plato on to a firm trot, then spurred him on to a steady gallop. “When will you be back?!!!” she asked, again.

Alan answered with a wave of his hand, and two fingers, the index one used for pointing and the third digit reserved for special expressions of discontent.

Jenny wondered as she showed Alana her cowboy-musician Daddy disappearing into a cloud of dust. Did Alan mean two minutes, two hours, two days, or was the gesture of the Churchillian Victory and Pacifist Peace? And what was the battle about, anyway? Alan seemed so happy, even contented. Music was back in his life, as was the reason for it.

From Alan's viewpoint, it looked far different. The plateau between Ytelios and Kletia looked more like the mesa between Albuquerque and Sante Fe, a flat, desert without a single tree except one, at the center of all the reference-less 'open'.

"That is the tree in question," Alan said to Plato as he stopped the steed a quarter mile away. "You remember our deal. I give you your head, I make a loud scream and maybe fire this 0.38 capgun I bought off the black market, and you run like hell, throwing me off whenever and however you can."

Alan had planned it well, and for the most noble of reasons. But Plato needed verbal verifications about the 'why' before the 'how' "That hanging tree is like the one that Old Doc Thompson found himself wrapped on for his last breath. When he started writing things that even Hemingway couldn't understand, but needed to know, it was time to be ended. When the writer has no more things to write, it is time for the writer to be no more. Like Mozart's Requiem. No way Wolfgang would have been able to top that. And there is no way that Revolutionary Blues will be understood in my lifetime."

Alan sung the second movement of the thirteen-note scaled composition that had chord inter-conversions and harmonic jumps more beautiful than Wagner and twice as complex. The fifths changed into thirds, the rhythms using three tempos at once, providing a beat no drummer could simulate, and no dancer could dance to, unless they listened with the inner ear. As for Plato, he wiggled his ears with interest, and genuine curiosity.

"I knew it," Alan said, petting the animal, allowing the steed to hook on to the Silence of the plains again. "Alana will understand it one day. And I think Jennifer knows the heart of the piece now."

They'll figure out what to do with it. How to make it bring in money, and historical impact. But...the way, place where it was composed. And the people 'Revolutionary Blues' really cost..."

Alan saw the faces of fallen comrades and misguided followers everywhere he looked. In the thorny woodberry-brush was the face of Nikos, the runaway kid from a conservative Athenian suburb who wanted to be a Revolutionary anywhere else. And, according to very believable rumor, the recently-executed Yannis, Maestro Kewalski's faithful aid at the Athenian National orchestra, speaking from the windblown sand pits. And there were so many others, arrested, jailed, then beheaded because they dared to be moved by the music and/or the man who was Maestro Kewalski. "Revolutionary Blues" was a tribute to them, and a Requiem to another.

"You know how it goes," Alan related to Plato as he started the third movement, then clicked the horse on to a lope, pulling his bandanna over his eyes to assure a quick, fast and fatal fall, hopefully into one of the mini-ravines that broke up the plateau. "Faster!" he said, spurring the animal onward as the steed approached the tree, letting go of the reins. "Faster!!!" he said between fortissimo blasts of song from his mouth and blasts from the trumpet hidden in his saddlebag. But something was going very, very wrong.

"Faster!!!!" Alan screamed at Plato, as the horse refused to break out of the steady lope to which he had become so accustomed over the 2,000 plus miles he and Cowboy Kewalski had shared in the last year. "Faster!!! I told you to kill me, you bastard!!!" Alan kept insisting as Plato loped toward the tree, and the limb that would break his rider's back, head or neck.

Alan shot off the gun, startling Plato, putting him into a gallop, then an abrupt turn, thanks to untimely emergence of a rabid coyote from underneath the hanging tree.

Why and how Alan remained on was something which amazed and frightened him. Something in his feet said "live", despite the agenda between his head. His hands grabbed the reins, his feet gripped the runaway horse, and his eyes opened—seeing

something that was his destiny.

The flat-out run ended at the overlook between the Macedonian plateau and the Greek Mountains. There, on the other side, the impossible was happening.

“Why the hell are they pulling OUT?” Alan asked Plato, seeing American tanks with Greek insignias pulling out, going back home, humiliation and fear on the faces of their KYP drivers.

The expressions of glee on the villagers seemed sincere. The songs being played on the radio seemed even more bizarre. Alan rode as close as he could to hear them without being noticed.

“What the hell...?” he asked Plato. Alan smiled with satisfaction as the local radio station, connected to the University of Athens antennae, blasted out forbidden tunes by Theodorakis, Dylan and a forgotten musician thought dead.

“They’re playing my songs!” Alan exclaimed with pride, and relief.

Plato snorted sternly.

“Okay, OUR songs,” the mounted Maestro conceded. “This revolution, we can’t miss.”

Alan pulled Plato around, tried to sense the fastest route back home, and put the pedal to the medal, galloping back to the people who most needed to here the news.

“Jenny! It’s time to go home!” he yelled for ten miles till his mouth grew hoarse, sore, then silent.

Upon his arrival, all was set to go. Jennifer had heard the news about the student revolts in Athens from Katsoris. The old doctor called in all his favors, providing Alan with a coming home gift.

“I couldn’t get you a Harley Davidson, but would a Triumph do?” the old Professor offered, apologetically, showing his adopted student, and teacher, his new transportation. “You and Jennifer

have some unfinished business in Athens.”

“What about Alana?” Alan said, noticing that everything was packed on the horse-with-wheels except baby clothes.

“She’s staying here,” Jennifer said, walking out of the door of the farmhouse clad in urban-biker and Sioux-warrior leather from neck to toe. “They asked for us in Athens.”

“Who?” Alan asked.

“I’ll tell you when we get there,” Jenny said, pulling out matching sets of Viking headgear, WWI helmets pulled out of the ground with attached oxen-horns.

Alan looked up at the sky, inserting the keys into the ignition, and uttered the fateful battlecry he never thought would ever come out of his mouth. “It’s a good day to LIVE!”

With a Confederate-Comanche yelp emanating from Great-Grandpa Kewalski and Greater Uncle Ludwig von Beethoven, they were off, prepared to test the hypothesis that motorcycles and visions could beat tanks and bullets.

## CHAPTER 41

An early version of “Revolutionary Blues” blasted out of the student stations across the country on November 17, 1974, but between Alan’s ears, Beethoven’s Seventh, the third movement. Even when seeing the tanks come up one street, and bare-chested workers with five-day old beards carrying placards in support of the student sit-ins. Alan had reserved hearing that tense, durge-like movement for the Apocalypse, and this seemed to be it.

Student uprisings were shaming unarmed ‘citizens’ into screaming obscenities at the heavily-armed soldiers in the streets, and half of the soldiers wanted to throw away their arms and join the students. Some actually did. And it was happening, everywhere. The only people who didn’t seem to notice, as usual, were the journalists. Not a single reporter with any reputation to lose seemed to be present to record the Woodstock that was about peace, love, and revolution. And as every revolutionary knows, a revolution that is not observed by an outside party and written about is a revolution that is doomed to fail.

“Who are we supposed to see?” Alan asked Jennifer as he drove through the back-streets, avoiding the tanks and machine gun fire as best as he could, waving to onlookers who recognized the bandanna’s rider with the long beard who finally resurrected from the grave, perhaps as a reward for the people demanding their country back. “They all look familiar, somehow, but I don’t know any of them. Do I?” he inquired.

“A stranger is a friend you never met yet, right?” Jennifer replied.

“Right!” Alan said by way of affirmation. Then, “Wrong.”

Ahead, in a block that was demolished to rubble, isolated from the rest of the city, and perhaps the world, lay the real enemy, a jeep in retreat, its driver ordering some kind of regrouping of troops that seemed desperate, but if he succeeded, deadly. Spiros seemed smaller than ever now, but why meet this diminished man? Why now? And why had the gods, and the Godhead, directed Alan to the man he most hated, and still feared.



Alan stopped the motorcycle for a closer look. “It’s always about you vs. someone else, not you against the system,” Alan recalled from Levinworth cellmate, then mentor, ‘Bottomwater Billy’, a Civil Rights ‘agitator’ who fought back against every White Cracker guard who tried to make him feel like a Nigger rather than a Black man. . “I win this fight against this redneck today, it’s like beating George Wallace his-self on a Coast to Coast debate that’s seen by everyone,” was Bottomwater’s mantra, and code. He lived by it, and died by it, before he ever got a chance to have a hearing with the Parole board.

Alan could hear Jennifer’s unsaid warning, but there was no turning back now. “Spiros!” he yelled out.

Spiros turned around his jeep, pointing the tourit gun directly at Alan. “Maestro,” he related, calmly. “And, Jennifer, my pet,” he continued, perking his lips. “How is our child.”

Alan looked at Jennifer. She couldn’t deny the truth, nor the accusations.

“I loved the way you tickled my chest, licked my ear, and signed your name around my...well, you know,” he continued.

The rest were details that Alan knew very, very well. “Our Jennifer is quite the whore when she needs to be. As in Hollywood, sincerity is your most effective weapon, and if you can fake that—”

“What’s he saying,” Alan blurted at Jenny.

“That I want your child, because you must have given away, or killed mine!” Spiros’ screamed. “I can find her,” he affirmed with a commitment that matched Alan’s, or even Beethoven’s.

“How did you know it was a daughter?” Alan asked, confounded.

“I didn’t. Sometimes you get lucky,” Spiros shot back, tossing a revolver directly in front of Alan’s boot. “Do you feel lucky today,

Maestro?”

Spiros got out of his jeep, opening up the flap on his pistol holster. “On the count of...ten?”

“Five!” Alan blasted back.

“Alan, that gun may be empty,” Jennifer cautioned.

“And so might the one he has,” Alan challenged. “FOUR!”

“No one has to die here,” Jennifer pleaded.

“Part of me already has,” Alan countered. “THREE”.

Jennifer put herself in between the two adversaries. To the right, the students were marching, to the left, more tanks rolled in. “Let’s let THEM decide who wins this.”

“Two?” Spiros offered.

“Two,” Alan confirmed. He pushed Jennifer aside, and stood back, edging his trigger finger on the handle of the bootleg Russian revolver.

The countdown to one took an eternity, at least in Jennifer’s mind.

Entry of a KYP patrol didn’t make the playing field any easier. Spiros lifted his hand up, allowing the games to proceed, as planned. Whatever he barked out in street Greek must have meant “he’s mine, or I’m his.”

For Alan, it was facing the devil straight in the eye. And it was a devil that knew how the strings to the human mind worked.

Spiros sang Revolutionary Blues out loud, the version Alan wrote in jail, before the heads of fallen comrades and unsuspecting followers rolled into his cell.

The notes made Alan feel the chill of learned helplessness, once

again. He shivered, quivered and stuttered incoherent phrases that said ‘soul repossessed’ in every grunt.

Spiros knew that at the last note in the melody, the rat would succumb to surrender, as Alan did in the Pleasure Palace. But this time he held out, delaying the F-sharp concluding chord until Alan dropped his guard, his hand, then, unloosened his gunbelt, and let it fall to the ground. He raised his fists, summoning Spiros to hand to hand combat, man to man.

“One” Spiros sang out as the final note of his OWN symphony, aiming his gun.

Alan kept his eyes open, prepared to face his Maker with dignity.

Jennifer ran out to stand in front of him, but she was held back by Spiros’ soldiers.

“It’s alright, Jen,” Alan assured her. “Major Spiros is an honorable man, whose military reputation depends on him staying honorable, and fighting an honorable fight, with his own hands and not a gun given to him by the American Military Industrial Complex.”

“Yes, indeed,” Spiros said, as he lowered his gun, then motioned for his men to ‘turn around’, then aimed the pistol at Alan’s head.

Spiros’ smile widened as he pulled the trigger, then heard a thud from the empty chamber.

“Alana!” Jennifer screamed out. “Remember Alana!”

Alan quickly reached for his gun, prepared to shoot as much lead as it took into the Devil’s Ambassador to send him, and all the other demons, back to Hell. But Earthly matters prevailed. Spiros pulled out another gun with an American Army issue silencer, firing one round that hit Alan in the leg, another four rounds that pushed Duelist Kewalski’s shooting iron away from his reach.

“The arithmetic in this experiment is simple,” Spiros said, his soldiers’ backs still to the duel at hand as he strided his opponent and kicked Alan into the dirt. He pointed his gun at Alan’s head, his boot-heel now on the Maestro’s shooting hand. “I am the master, you are the rat. And all rats must do what they are trained to do. It’s a biological law.”

“What am I trained to do?” Alan asked.

“Die, Maestro Kewalski. Die.”

Spiros cocked the hammer, then listened for the shot. He heard it—loud and clear, as the bullet entered his back.

When Spiros turned around, it was Sergeant Dimitrius’ gun that was smoking.

“What, why...” Spiros asked his prize protege, slave and, in weaker moments, only real confidant. “Why did you...shoot ME! You ungrateful—”

“Experiment?” Dimitrius filled in, punctuated by another shot to the left kneecap. “Puppet?” The next round went into his shoulder. “Playtoy!!!” the next accusation, the 45 caliber slug blowing off both of Spiros’ testicles.

“And killer!” Alan added, plugging a hole straight into Spiros’ head from his own gun, moving in to tear out the KYP Napoleon’s eyes’ out. Ocular portholes that kept reminding Alan of what he used to be before 1967, had become in Swansig, and could always be pulled back into at a time of the “Ghosts” choosing.

Jennifer broke loose from her captors, holding back Alan as the aggression that had been turned inward was released outward, so vividly and viciously.

Then—gun shots, more screams, and more running of feet on concrete, to the left and the right. But from the platoon of goons—nothing.

The KYP soldiers watched, and listened. They were more

concerned with the tank and armoured car retreat, and the upsurge of citizen support for the students in the street. With an unwritten order from their new squad leader, they scattered in all directions, stripping off their uniforms as quickly as they could. But one soldier stood firm.

“Time for both of us to get naked,” Alan said to Dimitrius. “I’ll go first.”

Alan talked, Jennifer translated. making sure the words and the sincerity behind them were understood by the once-proud KYP torturer who had just liberated himself from the personal hell in which he was imprisoned with so much precision and finesse.

Alan took off his shirt. “Statute number...whatever...’Penalty to walk around with no shirt on. One year in jail’.”

Dimitrius pondered the matter, then dove into himself, to a place neither Jennifer nor Alan trusted.

The next step was Alan’s bandanna. “And for wearing a beard, particularly one that makes you look like Che Rivera on the more experienced side of thirty, another four months in the clink.”

Nothing from Dimitrius this time. A blank stare that seemed to replay everything in his mind at once, at full volume.

“I know. The pants.” Alan unbuckled his belt, and pulled down his zipper. “Indecent exposure. A ten year stay at—”

But before Alan could show Dimitrius his cannon, Dimitrius fired his own—straight into his OWN head, up the orbit of the eyes, in the manner that is most effective, clean and effective.

“You bastard! Live, you bastard! Live!!!” Alan pleaded of the man who administered so much cruelty to his comrades and to his own spirit. “Live you Goddamn piece of shit!!!! We need you!!!” he begged, tears streaming down his eyes, blood drenching his trembling hands.

Jennifer offered her hand, and her heart. While Alan sobbed

into her bussom, a purgative action was happening all around them. It felt so—global, and so final.

The sounds of the tanks vanished, overcome by the music of freedom, shouted, chanted and sung.

“It’s a good day to live,” Alan admitted to Jennifer as he heard the transformation around him. “It’s a fucking goddamn GREAT day to live!!!” The sun came out from behind the clouds, and even the ghost of Ludwig van Beethoven seemed to be smiling. There was, however, one last detail to take care of.

## CHAPTER 42

The re-opening of the Athenian Inter-National Orchestra had some new faces when Alan stepped onto the podium, most of which had not been seen by the audience that now comprised a cabinet of artists and thinkers instead of tyrants. But there was an empty seat in the flute section, causing him much concern. Still, the show had to go on.

Yannis was not there to translate, so Alan did his best with broken Greek, hoping that a Texan-Bronx accent wouldn't muddle up the words too much.

"We are pleased to present, in honor of the restoration of Democracy, and Enlightened Chaos, a work by Ludwig van Beethoven," the introduction. "The Leonora Overture Number 3."

Alan turned to the orchestra. "With *pironeas*" he related to the orchestra in a whisper. Everyone agreed this time, and gave no arguments back.

The first notes echoed the bravado of primal vitality and Promethian Fire that could bring down Mount Olympus itself. But still, the flautist was absent, and it was approaching the critical solo. "Where is the goddamn—?" Alan asked himself silently a measure before the softest instrument in the orchestra was to deliver the most vibrant blast of freedom in this, Beethoven's only opera. Then, with less than a sixteenth note to spare—the flute crescendo, played with precision, brilliance and a subtext that said 'Alive' with every note.

Jennifer smiled as she showed her face, after hiding it behind the bassoonist's score-stand. Alan smiled even louder as she delivered through her flute far more than he ever imagined in the music, or in his conducting. Indeed, they were conducting each other, in the Overture about an opera that they had just lived.

Only one more voice had to be heard. "I now pronounce you genius and high-priestess," Beethoven spoke to Alan between the Maestro's ears. "But don't let it get to your heads."

