

IV. SUN BURNS BLIND

The plane touched down on the island of Corfu. The island was teeming with young English youth looking for the time of their lives. Helena felt the call of the Mediterranean from the moment that she felt the sea air blow through her. She had come down with two girls from school, Jennifer and Celia. Jennifer had always seemed so reserved at school. Celia was more of the party animal. But from the moment that the plane touched down, they were already into pleasure mode.

“Do you see that guy over there? I just want him for lunch.”

Jenny was already out of her shell.

“I saw him first.”

“Celia, this isn’t a game.”

“All’s fair in love and war.”

Helena interrupted, “Or the war of love.” The two girls were coming out of their skin with desire. It wouldn’t surprise her if they hooked up with guys before dinner. This wasn’t what she expected. For the moment, she tolerated them.

“This place is amazing.” Helena was in awe. The other girls were preoccupied looking at guys with their shirts off.

Celia offered her insight. “You can tell if a guy’s got it”

Helena appeared shocked.

“You can’t fall in love that quickly.”

“Who said anything about love?”

Jenny was more adamant

“I came here to forget myself. If I wanted complications, I’d have stayed home.”

“This is your ultimate fantasy. You don’t have to clean up after him. You just send him on his way.”

“I’ve got a million guys at home who want to spill their guts to me. It gets to be a real headache when these grown men start whimpering as if I’m their mother.”

“I want a real man.”

“Someone who knows how to make a woman feel alive.”

Celia was more explicit: “He’s got to have that slow touch.”

They both looked at each other and giggled.

“Like that Spanish guy last night.”

“Jose.”

Helena interjected “He barely knew a word of English. And what he did know seemed all the dirty talk.

“But he knew the international language.”

“That’s all that mattered.”

They both were dreadfully afraid of loneliness. They couldn’t face that side of themselves. Helena tried to close her eyes and just let go. Something seemed to be holding her back.

She couldn’t wait to get in the room. The sun was already overwhelming her. She just collapsed in the couch.

Jenny called to her, "There's a beach out there waiting for you."
 Helena was still hesitant, "I'll be out there soon."

She found an area of beach that had only a few people on it. She took off her sandals as she walked on the burning sands. She loved how it made her feel.

A young man was staring at her. He was in swim trunks and was just coming up from the water. She thought that she recognized him

"What are you doing here?"

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"I've got a break from school.

"Where are you attending school now?"

"Where?"

"I'm back in London. I served my jail time in Virginia. I got paroled"

"You always tried to cast me as the main offender."

"That was a joke. It's just that everyone took it seriously. By the time that I realized that, it was too late. I couldn't do anything to help. I suppose that's what you get for hanging out with n'er-do-wells such as me."

He smiled that charming smile of his. She just melted before his charm.

"You do look a little silly in a bathing suit."

"I could put on a suit jacket over it."

She laughed just imagining him in a blazer over his trunks.

"You're always such a clown.

He gave her a big hug. She felt all strange inside.

"I still don't trust you, Tony."

He looked all innocent as a puppy dog.

"You can't hate a face like this."

"You're such a geek." She pushed him gently.

"That hurts."

"Your little game only works with more naive girls."

"Like you were a couple of years ago."

She realized that a lifetime of success was premised on that teddy bear look with the big eyes of his.

The midday sun burned down relentlessly. Sweat dripped from her brow. After the dull English spring, the heat felt liberating. The cool water was a shock. They waded into deeper water.

"Come on!" Tony took her hand. They could still stand up in the water. They were almost over their head when they reached a sand bar.

"This is fantastic." Everywhere the water was chest level. And they seemed so far out. The rocks of the shore formed these elaborate sculptures.

"I've been here before", Tony tried to reassure her.

"Great. I love it here."

"Yeah. It's my favorite place in the world. It's my secret. I come here by myself and just float in the water. I just let go of all excess baggage. I become myself. Who I really am!"

She stared into his eyes. He was so close to her.

“You are beautiful”

“Thanks” She seemed to abandon all modesty. Time seemed to stop. He pulled her closer until they were slow dancing in the tide. She smiled.

“You are so wonderful.”

She chided him, “Don’t talk!”

He removed her bikini top. Now they were skin pressed against skin. It was all happening so fast. The sun reflecting off the water seemed to blind her. She was becoming something else. A creature driven by her desire. The heat was making her dizzy. She needed to pull back.

“I’m not going to have sex with you here.”

“Let’s go back to my room.”

“Tony, I hardly know you. You’re a lovely boy. I’m going to be here a few days. I just don’t want my heart getting ahead of my head.

“What if I had to leave today?”

“Then we’d have to continue this another day. I’m not a party girl. You have to give me time. I want to learn how to trust you.”

“You have to trust your body. Doesn’t this all feel so hypnotic?”

“I feel like I’m high. The only time that I ever felt like this was when I drank too much champagne. I’ve dreamt about this moment all my life. I just don’t want to ruin it.

“How can you ruin it?”

She didn’t want to answer any more questions. Tony needed to live for this moment. It was perfect for what it was. He was getting ahead of himself.

“Look at that”

Helena was pointing at a gull swooping down to grab a fish in its mouth. It all seemed so close. They both looked at each other and smiled. She buried her face in his chest as they pulled each other close. They held in that embrace for a long time. They could feel the waves lap around them.

“I need to go.”

“Not now.”

“Now, Tony. I know you’ve been used to getting everything that you want in life. I’m just not a prize.”

“I never said anything like that.” He seemed stubborn.

“I’m not trying to insult you. Sometimes I just feel…”

“What?”

“That you’re still this little boy who wants a new toy.”

He looked wounded. She had put her top on. They were walking hand in hand on the beach. He turned her around so they were face to face. She wanted to kiss her. But now she drew her resistance from the sun beating down on them.

“I do need to get back.”

“Helena, I told you about my favorite place. What is yours?”

“I love to go to the Tate and just lose myself in the paintings. It’s like another world. But more than that. There’s a small park off of Vauxhall Road, Bessborough Gardens. I go there to

have my lunch. It's not very big. But I sit on one of the stone benches. It's my refuge in the city"

"I want to go to your garden."

"I will take you some time."

She was finding it harder to resist his advances. She needed to get back to the hotel room. The world was now spinning around her.

"You didn't do something with him on the beach."

"Ocean sex is the best therapy."

Jenny and Celia were going crazy. They sensed a missed opportunity.

"No one's here for anything permanent. You needed to snag him while you could. Some other girl is just going to snap him up from you."

Helena wasn't going to let down her guard: "Jenny, I'm not going to roll around with him on the sand. I hardly know this boy. Besides he's just too cocky. I'm not one of his conquests."

Celia seemed even more excited: "You don't know what you're missing. That's why we're here, girl. You just have to go with your animal magnetism."

Helena laughed. It all seemed so preposterous.

"If I see him again, then it was worth the wait. If not, it's not like I'm dead. I'm still only twenty one."

"But all the best ones are going to get gobbled up if I don't act quickly." Jenny was just getting ahead of herself. Helena didn't want to end up in a meaningless tryst with some strange boy.

"You really have to learn about a man's assets while you have the chance."

"Besides, you have skills that need to be developed. You're wasting yourself." Celia seemed worse than Jenny.

"I know who I am. I've been like this all my life."

Jenny piped in, "You've been a little girl all your life. You need to know what it's like to be a woman."

"I'm all the woman that I can handle for right now. I need to rest before dinner. I'm going to be sick. Too much sun and sea."

She did feel a little dizzy. She was glad to get back to her room without the interference of Jenny and Celia. She hung up her wet suit and pulled the covers around her naked body. It felt so relaxing. Before she knew it, she just crashed into a deep sleep.

She felt so refreshed when she woke up. It felt good to be here alone. Things were moving like gang-busters on the beach. It was so easy to lose your head. Love wasn't something to be trifled with. Especially with a guy like Tony. He had everything going for him. A girl could lose her identity in such a situation. She needed to take a step back. She had come here to renew herself. Not to throw it all away.

How Jenny and Celia could be so cavalier? On Celia's part, Helena wondered how many guys had already wandered through that door.

When they got to dinner, Tony was there with his buddies. He waved at Helena, and then went back to acting silly with his friends. Maybe, Jenny was right. She needed to strike while the iron was hot.

She didn't look over at him during dinner. After they ate, Helena told the girls that she

wanted to head back to the room.

“The night’s still young.”

“Jenny, I’ve had too much living for one day.”

“Well walk you back.”

“It’s already getting late. I don’t want to stand in your way.”

She was playing it cool. She waved towards Tony’s table. He didn’t seem to notice. She didn’t want to get lost in that school of jellyfish. She headed off into the night.

“Where are you going, lovely lady?”

She jumped. She turned around and didn’t see anyone. She was a little afraid. Then Tony emerged from the shadows.

“Are you a ghost now? A ghost of a Greek fisherman.”

“I’m more of a phantom. A ghostly presence.”

“You seemed to be having a lot of fun with your mates.”

“They’re all just daft.”

“Off their heads.”

“Off with their heads.”

“So why didn’t you stay with them.”

“They’re off to pick up girls.”

“And you thought that you’d cash in your winnings yourself. That way it wouldn’t be a totally wasted day.

“You have me all wrong.”

The sun had already blessed her with a dark tan. Her bare shoulder seemed so appealing for a kiss. He put his hand around her waist.

“Tony, I’m not a sure thing. I don’t want to sleep with you tonight. I had a great time on the beach. For the time being, we need to leave it like that.”

“The breeze is so refreshing.”

She felt so comfortable. But she didn’t want to be seduced by the night.

“You can walk me back to the hotel. That’s as far as it goes. I’m not even sure that I like you.”

His white shirt was half-open. The sun had been kind to him as well. She wanted to run her hand along his chest. His muscles were more defined with the tan.

“Do you have something against me.?”

He paused and looked deep into her eyes. She wanted to kiss him. She needed to walk on. This was worse than the midday sun. Her dizziness was returning. She could feel the tides wash upon her.

“I don’t know what’s coming over me. I feel sick.”

“What did I do?”

“Tony, it’s not you. Something’s coming over me. I need to get back. Let’s just take it slow.”

They walked arm in arm along the cobbled path. He propped her up. She feel that she was drawing life from him.

“The hotel’s just ahead.” He motioned up to her room.

“Parting is such sweet sorrow. But I must go.” They both smiled. He moved closer as if

to kiss her and she shied away. She wondered what she was protecting. Would she be condemned to spending her whole life by herself? Her promise for life was staring her in her face. A lonely, empty room waited for her upstairs.

She was more emphatic, "I really must go."

He gripped her arm stronger. He whispered, "I want you."

"Not now." She tried to struggle out of his grasp. His lips were so close to hers. Hers were half-opened like a flower. He wanted to taste her honey.

She tried to brace herself as she fell into his embrace. Nothing was in their way. The kisses were deep and so refreshing. She gave of herself completely. He seemed so passionate. But it all seemed like a dream.

"I really must go." It was driving her crazy. Her heart was beating fast. She felt like Cinderella. She pushed him away and rushed up to the room.

When she got up there, she felt so embarrassed. She didn't have to run from him. She was afraid that he was going to turn into a vampire or something worse. She laughed to herself as the key made its way into the door. What a relief!

She couldn't sleep. Her nap had taken the edge off of her fatigue. Now she faced a deeper tiredness, the lethargy of the soul. A soul without love. She wanted to give in to Tony. She was being silly. He had taken her back to the hotel. He wasn't off chasing other girls. What had she done? The kiss still mesmerized her. She had been with other boys. But never had she felt such passion. It was as if Tony knew something deep. He already could sense her secrets. This made her afraid. She had been warned about this kind of love. It was dominated by pleasure. Its spell was worse than what Celia and Jenny felt.

"If you let romantic love get the best of you, you have no security at all."

"Jenny's right. It will destroy you from within."

That was the basis of their hedonism. They were protecting their hearts. Helena was so vulnerable.

She woke up early before either of the girls. They had a rough night of drinking and carousing.

"You knew I'd find you here."

"I really thought that you'd keep away after last night. I really embarrassed myself."

"Helena, you're a great kisser."

"I know the game. That isn't all that I can do well."

"I didn't say that."

"I know about lads like you."

"I stand accused."

They both laughed.

"You've got a great laugh."

"Don't you ever stop?"

"What?"

"The bull shit flattery. You just have to turn it off for a while. Just be yourself. You're not such a bad guy beneath all the hype." After criticizing him, she doesn't want to look him in the eyes.

"You really do have it in for me."

“Tony, I wasn’t born yesterday.”

“But you’re as fresh as if you had been.”

She was now right next to him. She needed to answer while the fire was hot. “You’re the one who’s fresh. You ought to be slapped.”

“And who’s going to do it.”

She pretended to swing at him, and he caught her arms and pulled him close.”

“Let’s continue from where we left off.”

“Tony, it doesn’t work like that.”

“Helena what do you want?”

She whispered, “I want you.”

“You know there’s an echo here. It’s an ancient echo. Like the gods talking inside us. We can’t resist.”

She melted before him. He pulled her closer to kiss him. She lost all resistance. His kisses were so spontaneous. Everything that she was flowed into him. His hands moved so naturally across her body. She was no longer herself. She could feel a spirit enter her body and lead her on. She went with the feeling.

He caressed her neck. He kissed her. His hand moved along her back. It undid the top of her swimsuit. Again there was that electricity of skin against skin. Nothing was standing in their way this time. The two of them flowed in the water. They felt one with the tides. She could feel her flesh become one with his. His heartbeat ran closer and closer to hers until he could feel his blood pumping through her veins.

She lost track of all time as they moved together. She could sense this dark cave where he was taking her. She progressed into this place. She had never before known this type of love. She dared to call it love without any restraint.

As they swayed together, she was overcome by his intensity. What was tender, now became slightly aggressive. She matched his fury. There was no return. There was now something almost savage in their unity. She took him back to her room. And he opened up new territory for her there. Things that she had never shared with a man. Her body was given completely over to him.

Just when she thought that there was nothing more to give, she sensed the passion again flare up. It had at first seemed so otherworldly. Now she was drawn to his body. The muscles in his legs. His firm buttocks. His magnificent strength just filling her up.

She could think about nothing else. The sex was driving her crazy. She tried to catch her breath. She was losing herself in the flesh. She hoped that there was something more to this. Her heart was a victim to such sensuality!

After the love making, they lay next to each other on the bed. He held her. How could any of this ever be real.

“I’m going to have to go back in two days.”

“We’ll see each other in England.”

“Of course we will. We still have two nights here before I go.”

She wanted to all start again. She kissed him deeply.

“I need to sleep if there’s anything left of me.”

He smiled. She fell asleep in his arms. When she awoke, it was early evening. He was

still next to her. It wasn't a dream.

“Let's go get some dinner.”

“I need to take a shower. I'll meet you”

“I know this place where the tourists don't go.”

There was a glow in her face that he hadn't noticed before.

His flowing white shirt covered his wide tanned shoulders. He held her. He made her feel protected. Nothing could harm her.