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The Mountain Top

*Jennifer
Mueller*



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In ancient Greece men marry for money and land while finding their pleasure elsewhere. When Orestes saves a captured woman from slave traders just what is she supposed to do when she doesn't feel like sharing? Especially when she's literally ready to fight him over the matter.

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PART ONE

The morning sun broke over the horizon and streamed into the window of the house high atop the mountain and onto the closed lids of Orestes who woke immediately. He wrapped a sheet from the bed around him and went to the window, to one side stood a high snow capped mountain and to the other lay the Mediterranean Sea. He glanced down at the one road leading up to the house. The grapevines which provided his family's living lined both sides. Dressed in only a short chiton, a sleeveless belted tunic, and a pair of leather sandals. Orestes headed to the kitchen to find something to eat. He'd almost finished eating when a knock sounded at the door. Opening the door just as the visitors readied to knock again, he stood face-to-face with a pair of men. Mean looking men, wearing fine quality clothing. The clothing did not seem right on their overly muscular frames. Orestes wondered just how they'd come across such finery. Gold rings glittered on their fingers. Looking past them, a woman tied to a cart indicated exactly where such wealth came from. *Slave traders.*

"We are looking for the head of the house."

"I am Orestes. What can I do for you?"

Looking oddly at him, Orestes raised his eyebrows in challenge. His clothing did not reflect a master of the grand house he lived in. He dressed as a worker. "We have been here before and you are not he we spoke to then."

"My father died last year while I was away in the army. I am his eldest son though. I have taken over his affairs and I know for certain that you have never done business with him before."

It stumped them for only a moment. "True, he has not purchased any of our merchandise in the past. They were all males though and a

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fine gentleman such as your father, we thought would want to have a girl such as this one. A man with the taste to have such a house as he has built, deserves to have such a girl. We now extend the offer to you. She is the most beautiful creature you will have ever seen. We guarantee it.”

Orestes frowned to show his disbelief in the story they told. “If that is the case, then why have you not taken her to the city-states where she would fetch a higher price?”

“Ah, a true business man. She was sold to us for the price of a debt that her father owed. He is of some importance in Athens and he asked that she be taken where none of his acquaintances would be able to see her. Go, Tericles, bring her for the gentleman to view,” the one speaking ordered.

Soon Orestes stood face-to-face with the woman. With her this close, he could see her olive skin tanned darker by the sun. Her clear eyes, rimmed by thick black lashes and framed by sharp cheekbones, looked back unashamed. She indeed was beautiful. A veil of diaphanous yellow covered her from head to foot. Although interspersed by red glass beads, in no way did they disguise her nakedness. Under that light and filmy garment, Orestes could see she wore nothing. The veil wrapped around her and only her face remained bare.

Tericles grabbed her veil and ripped it from her body. Her eyes glared at the slave trader, but she still looked proud and stood tall as if dressed as a queen, making no attempt to hide herself. Long hair, black as night, flowing down her back was the first thing Orestes noticed. Walking around her as if surveying the goods, like any buyer, he couldn’t help but take in her striking features. The woman should have been a model for the statues of Athena, goddess of war. Nothing of her figure spoke of idling around a house. She bore scars like his, from fighting. *Spartan perhaps*, as he reached the far side of her, he caught sight of her arm covered by a winding tattooed vine. The marks of a soldier, but not a Greek one, they used no such markings. Tall and lean, her rope like muscles, belied her active lifestyle, but the exercise did not diminish the size of her breasts. *No archer then, they would have gotten in the way*. Above and below the elbow, fine gold bracelets decorated around her arm mimicking the winding tattoo. They were all she had been left with, they were delicate enough they would have been destroyed in their removal.

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Ilias, Orestes' youngest brother at sixteen years old, stopped behind Orestes. "Help her, Orestes." His whisper low so no one else heard him.

"A younger brother, I take it. She would be a fine teacher before he marries and a fine mistress for you." Tericles announced.

"Give her back her clothes, I've seen enough. But if I'm buying her for my brother, can you assure me that she is untested by the likes of you? I would hate to think of my brother getting whatever you have picked up on your travels."

They feigned shock at the accusation as Orestes heard his brother gasp behind him. "I assure you we have not touched her since she came into our possession. Before that we will make no claims since she was not under our control. You never know about those Politicians' daughters, anything to cause trouble."

Orestes looked over at the woman as she finished covering herself. "What price are you asking?"

"Only the debt her father sold her for." They announced a sum. Orestes frowned. No shame showed on her face, only hatred. He didn't blame her.

"Which I assume was quite great and then of course, there is your fee for handling the deal."

Tericles and Herakles looked at each other for a moment. Perhaps realizing Orestes wasn't as naïve as they thought. "Are a Politician's debt ever small? She is more than worth the price we ask." Herakles answered, a slight waver to his voice.

"Oh by the looks of her, she is worth more than the two of you put together. But do tell me, why is such a man selling off his daughter? He may have to pay her dowry, but there is prestige to gain in marrying her to a good family. There are other ways to pay off a debt, especially for the rich." Orestes saw a slight grin appear on the face of the girl. She obviously enjoyed watching her captors squirm.

"We are selling quality goods, I assure you. You will be the envy of all your neighbors with a Greek slave that was once rich."

"And why would such a man tattoo his Greek daughter in the manner of the Phrygians? You are not a Greek Politician's daughter are you?" Orestes asked her directly. The quick movement of her head to look at Orestes showed him; she did not expect to be spoken to.

"Of course not," she answered.

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“You . . .” Tericles yelled, but Orestes grabbed his hand before he could hit her. Although the man struggled, Orestes held fast. “I will buy her, but we are going to negotiate the price. I am not paying some made up debt just to line your pockets. Now, again, what price are you asking?”

A much lower sum was offered this time, probably owing to the fact that Orestes squeezed quite hard. The sweat slid down Tericles forehead readily.

“Ilias, go get the money.” Orestes ordered when he heard. When Ilias returned, the deal completed quickly as a multitude of coins traded hands. Many less than the traders first wanted as Orestes still held tight to the man’s hand. The two visiting brothers remained on the doorstep as if expecting to be invited in for breakfast. Orestes did not feel in a favorable mood.

“You have a long journey back to wherever you bought her,” Orestes announced after letting her pass by him into the house. He closed the door firmly in the trader’s faces.

“Orestes, how could you? I said help her, not buy her for me.” Ilias cried.

“Ilias, go find her some clothes and wake Sofi. Have her get the extra room ready.”

“What is Mother going to say?” The boy whined.

“That this woman could have ended up with worse Masters than us. Go do as I ask.”

Ilias glared at his brother before running off.

Orestes asked her to follow him into a courtyard bathed in the Greek sun. Doric columns carved with Acanthus leaves held up the roof over the walkway. A simple pediment overhead on all four sides ran around a pool in the center that caught the rainwater. The courtyard boasted many flowers and plants. Several stone benches provided seating, -a table sat between two of them. In the corners of the courtyard, stood several pottery jars of enormous size painted with scenes of battles. She settled on one side of the table when he asked her to, with the flowers’ scent floating around her. The courtyard looked beautiful. A beautiful house, too, for being so far from anything. It belonged in a grand city. She looked over the frescoes decorating the wall, many depicting battles as fine as any she’d ever seen. Orestes sat so long, chin resting on his folded hands, she started to worry.

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For the first time, she really looked at him. She saw a well-built man with large arms and a broad chest, no doubt from working in the vineyard. Not an ounce of fat could be found on him, unlike the two she had just been purchased from. His black hair, thick and wavy, one lock kept falling across his forehead. He swept the hair back into place. His face, deeply tanned from working in the sun, matched the rest of him. He could have come from any statue of the gods she had seen. Orestes struck her as extremely handsome. Of course, his brother had been also. Looking confident in himself, he sat there seeming to know he did not have to worry about anyone bothering him. Except maybe the women, but he didn't look vain about that either. After what seemed an eternity, he raised his head and looked at her with dark eyes.

"You will not be a slave in the house, but at least for now, I have to ask that the sum be worked off. You will earn what the laborers earn that we hire at harvest. It is the end of the year before the harvest when funds are at the lowest. We can-not afford to not get something for the money we have spent."

Her mouth opened and closed at words she never expected to hear. Finally, she found her voice. "You have no slaves here?"

"Between me and the rest of the family, there are enough here that we get all what needs to be done, completed. As I mentioned though, we do hire extra hands at harvest."

"And just what work am I to do?" Her eyes narrowed, had he forgotten his words at the door?

He laughed. "We are wine makers and it takes many hands to accomplish the task. There will be more than enough work for you, without having to come to our beds. That is, unless you wish to do so." Orestes grinned at her. She could not help, but start laughing. Sofi came to the door, a pretty girl with the coloring of her brother. The whole family so far looked much like Orestes. All could have been statues of the gods.

"The room is ready and I have gotten some extra clothes out. They are on the bed when you wish to change."

"Come, I will show you to your room."

She followed him through the elaborate house. *They have money, but why no slaves?* Maybe this part of Greece did things differently. She was far from the dictates of the city-states. While traveling captive, she sighted shepherds with thousands of sheep and goats. A lake lay, at most, only half a mile away. Even though her captors did

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not tell her, she realized they traveled practically to the northern edge of Greece. It looked an absolutely beautiful place to live, she admitted to herself. Orestes opened a door to reveal a well-furnished room. Not the corner of a room, perhaps shared with many others, as she expected for a servant or a slave. It was a room fit for one of the family.

"I will be outside when you are ready and then I will show you around. What is your name, by the way? As you have heard, I am Orestes."

"Kybele."

* * * *

Kybele emerged shortly, interrupting the last of an argument between Orestes and Ilias. It only ended when Orestes told him of what he informed her of earlier.

"Then, she is not for me?"

Orestes smiled at his brother. "No. She will work as the rest of us do."

"Thank the gods. I do not think I could have owned anyone. But what will Mother say of this?"

"I told you, she is free. Do not worry, I will tell mother about it. Go and have your breakfast. Sofi will have already told everyone that there is someone new about."

"Thank you, Orestes." He ran off and Orestes turned to her.

"Ready for a tour or do you want breakfast first? I figured they probably had not fed you."

"Maybe just a little. I have not had much to eat lately."

Orestes pulled his hand from behind his back holding some bread and wine. "I thought so. If you do not mind, you can eat while we walk." He showed her about the entire property. Walking—the boundaries, Orestes spoke of the neighbors on each side.—Suggested the; daughters Kybele could become friends with if she wanted and, sons who might come courting her at night. Talking her through what work needed to be done and at what time of the year, he made Kybele feel quite at home. When finished with the tour, he took her to the mountain top above the house. It overlooked the lake, giving a view of the entire area.

"Do you mind my asking what happened?"

"My father was a trader. He traveled here with his wares often and I came with him, which is how I know your tongue. You are

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right, I am a Phrygian. Those men bought me from the Romans who captured me.”

“No one ever tried to take the gold off your arm?”

She smiled. “They tried that and more, but they soon regretted it and gave up. Those men thought that your father would buy me because he was soft hearted and sentimental. Why would they think that?”

“The same reason I bought you. You will see the reason at supper.” For the rest of the day, Orestes allowed her to roam around and just look at where she would live during the near future. She spent much of her time on the mountain top just getting used to it all. After all, Kybele had prepared herself for the buyer to treat her no better than the women at the bathhouses.

* * * *

That night at supper the family all stopped and stared as Orestes walked in with Kybele. All four of his brothers, and his two sisters were there, along with his mother. They all heard of her during the day, but only a few saw her. The women wore loosely folded himation, a long shawl, draped over their longer chitons. The men wore longer chitons as well. They may not have worn much for work, but for dinner they dressed. Despite being fully covered, Kybele felt under-dressed next to them. Melasandros was the second oldest, two years younger than Orestes’ twenty-six. Then came Nicias who was twenty-three. Sofi was twenty-one, the oldest of the girls. Demitrios was twenty, Aeneas came next at eighteen, then Ilias at sixteen and finally the last, the youngest girl at fifteen, Marina. The three brothers who had not yet seen her practically fell over.

“I guess someone forgot to tell them you were beautiful,” Orestes whispered.

“I am not exactly dressed for dinner, but as for being beautiful, they see your sisters all the time. All of you could be one of the gods.”

Orestes grinned. “Yes, but you are not related. Do not worry about your clothes. We will get you something suitable for dinner soon. We have a trip to sell the wine before the end of the month.”

“Boys, please stop staring. You will make the girl feel unwelcome,” Helene, their mother, announced as she walked over and led Kybele to the table.

As she sat next to Helene, it was easy to figure out why they did not believe in slaves. She had reddish brown hair that just started to

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gray and green eyes. Her skin lighter than her children's as well. Kybele would have thought nothing of it as the Greeks prized the lighter coloring. Except half-hidden under her hair on her forehead, Helene had the brand of a slave, an owl in this case, the mark of Sparta. It looked a crude mark that some, cruel enough, put on those they owned and in turn, disfigured a very handsome woman. Kybele's, at least, was artful, and to her people, beautiful.

* * * *

The next morning, Kybele woke with the sun shining on her face and the sounds of Orestes already awake in the next room. She dressed quickly and went out to start working off her price. She worked in the vineyards, worked in the fields growing the food, helped with the harvest, helped make the wine, helped cook and clean. Whatever needed doing, Kybele attended to. None ever made her feel like a slave though.

"Kybele, would you care to go for a walk with me?" Melasandros asked trying to covet her favors.-

When Nicias found her, he had another approach. "There was a traveling peddler, Kybele, which had cloth for sale. I bought this for you. You do like it, don't you?"

Even Ilias remembered the words her captors used, although it seemed to take him a few hours to work up the courage to approach her. "Ummm, Kybele, I know Orestes freed you but when he bought you, it was as a teacher for me. I am past the age Orestes was his first time."

No, they didn't treat her like a slave. The boys treated her as if Orestes bought her to warm all their beds.

Kybele picked up a sword left lying on the table. The feel of it in her hand brought back the memories of her father dying. Her eyes closed, trying to force the vivid memory out of her mind. Arms suddenly slipped around her, snapping her eyes open in surprise, Kybele stiffened.

"Let me take that from you before you hurt yourself." Demitrios' voice rumbled in her ear.

"Let go of me." Kybele growled.

"Well if you are so determined to learn, then I will show you how to hold it properly." One of Demetrious' hands went for the sword but the other slipped up her thigh, raising her chiton with it.

The memories flooded back and she spun, the sword at his neck, held quite correctly. "I said let go of me." She ordered, he reached up

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as if to take the sword from her. Her words fell out sharply. "Don't even try. You will lose your head and you won't be the first."

Demitrios opened his eyes wide frozen in place.

"Demitrios, get out of here now," Orestes ordered from the doorway and the younger man bolted.

Walking slowly up behind her, she soon felt Orestes breath on her neck.

"If you have it in your head to fight, then fight me. Take your anger out on me, not some boy too horny for his own good.

Kybele turned her head to meet his gaze. The look Orestes gave wasn't like his brothers but what it did mean, she couldn't tell. Slowly he ran his hand down her arm and his hand closed around the sword, nothing more. Kybele kept her grip on the hilt as he tried to take it and found her back tight against him, all of him.

Her mouth opened to speak but Helene's call filled the air. "Orestes, there is a man here about the sheep we wanted."

"Coming," Orestes called.

* * * *

The view from the mountaintop encompassed all directions. The sun glowed fiery red as it sank beyond the horizon. Her hair was braided and coiled before being held in place with a ring of bronze, the last two feet snaking down her back. It was the first time she had worn it like before she was taken. It was not a Greek style, she knew it made her stand out. Kybele had been there weeks, daily working, and nightly fighting off four of the brothers.

"You shouldn't be out this near dark."

Kybele spun around at the sound of his voice, she never heard Orestes walk up behind her. Orestes, never laid a finger on her. He'd never said an inappropriate word. "I know how to take care of myself," she said.

Orestes grinned. "That part is obvious, but still the road that passes here is not well traveled, we have problems with thieves all the time. Whether you can use a sword or not, enough men and, even an Amazon will succumb eventually."

There was nothing to do but stare. "How long have you known?"

Orestes laid out on the large rock that jutted from the plateau. Hands behind his head, he looked as if he would just take a nap. "The day I bought you. I thought maybe you were Spartan, until I saw the tattoo."

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“You find it funny to buy a warrior to keep as a slave?” Kybele growled at the sight of his smile.

“You are free, Kybele. You may return home whenever you wish. I ask you to stay through harvest, a favor for buying your freedom. You are not a slave.”

“I could just walk away?” The only sound the birds overhead.

“If you wish.”

“And what will your brothers do if I went? You saw how they have been since I got here?”

Orestes laughter filled the air. “What will they do? They will let you go.” He stood, putting him at her eye level and only inches apart. “Shall I have some food packed for you on your journey home?”

Home. The thought hit her hard again, home was gone. She had nothing and leaving here would mean little more than being taken captive again. He was right, eventually even an Amazon could be overpowered. “I owe you the price you paid for me. When it is paid off, I will leave.” He freed her because his mother had been a slave, but why would he let her stay on as a free woman. At least as a bound servant, she had a roof and food without the chance of the Romans or even other Greeks taking her to sell again.

“You are not a slave.”

“How much do the workers you hire make? You said that yourself.”

“You will be here for years if you plan on paying it off that way.”

“Then I will be here years.” Kybele took his hard gaze without flinching. Why did she ache to touch him? Her fingers itched to reach over and follow the trail of sweat inching down his chest. Five brothers all beautiful, four made themselves clear they would love to have her. Orestes, showing no desire toward her, became the one she couldn’t get out of her mind. “This is when I would expect you to tell me that one night in your bed and it would be paid off.”

His lip twitched. “Which one made that offer?”

“Aeneas.”

“I will have to watch him more carefully then. I would not want him getting hurt when you show you mean no.”

“Why do you make no such attempts? The same parents raised you. Weeks your brothers have pushed, but never you.”

Orestes slid his hand around her neck, his thumb caressing gently just behind her ear and pulled her nearer his mouth. “When a woman

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comes to my bed, I do not want her there because I have begged so often she just wants to shut me up.”

Kybele closed her eyes, wishing Orestes would just touch his lips to her neck, so close already. “Does it work?”

“The boys beg trying to keep up.”

Kybele raised an eyebrow. “You have had that many?”

“They think I have. That is all that matters.”

Slowly opening her eyes Orestes still held her close, but only by the hair. They touched in no other way. Maddeningly, so close and yet so far, she spoke quietly. “What do you think?”

“I think you are doing a very good job of living up to the Amazon ideal. Courageous and bold. Never cruel, or cowardly. Brave, daring, fearless combatant.”

She opened her mouth and then started shaking her head. “If I was fearless, I never would have been captured. You confuse me with those women, told of in stories, who live without men. I watched my father cut down on one side of me, my brother on the other. In the moment they were gone, I stopped fighting long enough to allow the Romans to overtake me. Too much in shock even to fight back.”

“I am sorry for that.”

Kybele lowered her eyes far enough to see the scars that marred his chest and arms. “You’ve survived fighting as well?”

“I have been given the chance to peruse yours. Should I strip so you can see all of mine?”

“Don’t tempt me.”

His grin returned. “Too bad. I came to tell you Mother wants to see you.”

* * * *

Orestes knew he was being watched as he practiced swords with Melasandros. Years as a soldier kept him alert even there on the mountaintop. Couldn’t Melasandros sense someone just out of sight? However, the younger man would not even give Orestes enough of a breather to see who watched them, but he suspected it to be Kybele. Back and forth, they pushed until finally Orestes saw an opening and thrust. The blade stopped an inch from Melasandros’ sternum and the defeated man froze.

“Go wash up. I think I saw your neighbor girl hanging around.” Orestes grinned at his deception as Melasandros ran off without a

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word. "I suppose you have a suggestion on my technique," he said to the empty courtyard.

A second later, Kybele peered around the corner. She eyed him cautiously for a second before speaking. "Have you told them all?"

"No, I have said nothing. I'm surprised Melasandros has not noticed. He spent almost as much time as I did in the army. He has never mentioned he noticed anything other than your tight little ass."

Orestes held both swords and in an instant, Kybele took one. The sword fit well in her hand. Kybele held it tightly as memories flooded back. Her breathing shortened and her eyes shut to the visions bombarding her. *Father!* her mind screamed. The clang of the swords ripped her eyes open. Orestes reacted when she pulled the sword from his hand. Her attack stopped. Instinctive reaction caused the first clash, but now he paused.

The vision of her father disappeared and now a very gorgeous man stared at her. She challenged him with her words, wanting to let off some steam. "Is that why you do not come panting like a bull around a cow in heat like the rest? Are you afraid I might beat you if we fought?"

Orestes grinned. "So let's see what you have."

She rounded him swinging her sword but he caught the attack easily. Setting her jaw in determination, her blows came quickly. Each one Orestes blocked but he moved closer to the wall behind him. She drove him back. Once more, she attacked. He caught her arm as she brought her sword around. Kybele pinned him to the wall, her arm against his throat. Breathing heavily, Kybele suddenly knew he had her just where he wanted her. How could she not when the corner of his mouth curled up almost as if in invitation.

"You held back." She hissed. "Do not."

"Are we still talking about swords?"

Her eyes narrowed. "You have never looked at me like a lust filled bull. Now you talk of such as we fight. You are a strange one, Orestes."

He pulled his head forward, bringing it closer. His scent filled the hot air. Then he attacked his lips covering hers, no holding back this time. Kybele offered no resistance, soon he pinned her to the wall. Kybele's sword hit the ground only to be replaced as she grabbed another hard length.

Orestes growled in her ear only making her grip him tighter. His tongue explored her lips, cheek, and one ear, then he stopped the

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sound of footsteps clear on the rocky ground. Stepping back, he picked up the swords and put them away only a moment before Melasandros walked in the courtyard.

"I did not see her anywhere." Melasandros announced after looking for the girl next door he had gone in search of.

"Must have been confused." Orestes answered with a wink only Kybele saw.

Why did Orestes make her heart pound? Five brothers all invited her to bed but only one did not make her feel like a slave bid to do a task. Walking past the two brothers, she tried not to let the breath escape too loudly.

* * * *

The sound in his room instantly woke Orestes. When he opened his eyes, the moon was so full there was enough light to see Kybele's chiton fall to the floor. Even having seen her naked once before the fact she was naked in his room amazed him even more. Before he could say a word, she lifted the covers and moved over him. On all fours, she rubbed against his quickly rising cock. She was so wet there was no resistance as she slid onto him. Shuddering so hard as his length filled her, she felt almost like she'd already come.

"Don't hold back this time," she whispered.

"So all Amazon women sneak in to men's rooms and take what they want?"

"Only when the lack of it is driving us crazy. You could have stopped me."

"If it had been up to me, I would have gotten you here the day I bought you. I have been waiting for you to show up. You think I'm going to stop you?"

Kybele lifted her body enough to look into his eyes. "What made you so sure I would choose you?"

There was no denying the glint in Orestes eyes as he caressed the bottom of her breasts. The sigh she let out spoke far more than she did. Then he found her nipples. His grin grew at the strangled moan escaping her lips and he rolled, pressing her to the bed. Orestes slowly moved his hips as he got to know the body that had been given to him. Each muscle and rib was traced with gentle fingertips showing special attention to the scars he found.

"The strongest Spartan soldier gets the most beautiful woman so their children will be the strongest, fairest, around." His grin filled his face. "It was inevitable you would make this choice."

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“What an ass.”

As his hands moved lower, he brushed against her stomach and Kybele started giggling at the sensation. “I never would have guessed that.”

Her hands found his sides, but he did not give a twitch. “Are you not ticklish?”

“I will not I promise. Most undignified for an Amazon. Now why, when you came to me, do you keep distracting me?” Kybele let out a sigh as Orestes started to slide in and out once more. “Now that noise I think I will just have to make you repeat.” Orestes slid out.

“No, please.” Kybele groaned.

“Please what?” Orestes asked as his tongue found a nipple. The groan cut off any answer she might have had, she heard him speak lowly. “I want to taste you.”

Her other breast was not neglected as he squeezed the nipple gently. The smell of her want grew stronger.

“Ilias said he is older now than you were your first time.” Kybele whispered.

“I was already off to the army though. Thought it would make me more of a man, messed it up endlessly of course. The woman at the bathhouse felt so sorry for me, she did not even charge me. Ilias thinks of nothing but the age.” Kybele started to laugh. “I have improved since then.” His voice seemed muffled, she forced her eyes open.

The flats of his thumbs still teased her nipples but his mouth settled on her stomach covering every inch. She had no words as he pulled his hands along her torso. He inhaled deeply of the scent he found between her legs. Orestes did not have to search for the wetness he could smell. It dripped from her. Kybele bit off a cry as his finger ran over her mound.

Kybele was beyond answering though. Without breaking his rhythm, Orestes moved along side her. The moment she saw that he was there she took hold of his mouth. Tongues fenced as if they were swords swirling around each other until she was out of breath. Orestes still nipped at her bottom lip when she spoke.

“I came to seduce you because you are the first man I have ever wanted.” Her kiss was slow this time, just as slow as his fingers were below. Every movement he made she echoed with her tongue until it was Orestes that moaned. He pulled himself away, the finger drifting faintly in the folds but no longer deeply.

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“If I ever say anything so thoughtless again, make sure I make it up to you.” He whispered in her ear before he made his way back down the length of her. His fingers spread the folds wide and at first, his tongue touched only lightly. At the whimper from deep in her belly, he demanded entry and she was unable to speak for all the noise she made. Unable to deny her any longer he sought out the nub and pulled it into his mouth. Kybele started bucking almost immediately, gripping his head with her thighs as she rode wave after wave of her climax and still Orestes did not let up. Even after the first one passed, while she laid there, he gently lapped more. Kybele twitched as each new spasm overtook her, only when those subsided did he remove himself.

“I think I could get used to any comment you made if that was the repayment but next time take longer.”

“You said not to hold back. Just following orders. Orestes grinned into her thigh. “Are you asking for more repayment right now?”

“No, I have a lot to pay off. I’ll be around awhile.”

Crawling back up, Orestes stopped just at her opening as he kissed her. “Do you still want slow? Or could I get you to change your mind?”

Kybele lay there lazily while Orestes ran a finger along her bottom lip. How she could have ever doubted how he felt. There was no denying it in his eyes as he gazed down at her. “If it would feel like that again, I will give up slow.”

“Well, I will not get cocky and promise but I will try my damndest.”

“Then move your cock and show me what you can do.” Kybele thrust her hips under him and even knowing she slid on to him with ease earlier, he pushed in only a bit at first enjoying the feel of just how wet she was. Each thrust he moved in a little more, each thrust he felt a little more of himself get lost in her. When he hit her womb, Kybele grimaced but then she grabbed hold of his ass and pulled him closer. That was the end of his being gentle. Orestes picked up speed and Kybele’s fingernails scraped hard down his back. Orestes heard her panting, already moaning his name, and it only drove him harder.

As hard as he thrust, he managed to hold himself until he felt her tightening around him. Only then did he think of his own climax and flooded her with his seed. Orestes grunted but he knew he would be drowned out by her cries echoing off the stone walls. He lay over her

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lightly supported on his elbows as he got his breath back. His forehead rested on hers. Kybele knew why she fell for Orestes and not one of his brothers. They may have all been gorgeous, all well built from work and sun, all with that dark hair and eyes. Of the five, Orestes was the one with a head to guess her past and a heart not to do the wrong thing every time.

* * * *

Kybele's eyes flew open at a deep tug of desire deep in her belly. Orestes grinned even as he suckled a nipple. A moan ripped through her hard as he pulled it even further in his mouth and bit lightly. Then he stopped abruptly.

"You should get back to your own room. If you do not want to have me fighting my brothers over you, we should probably keep this quiet."

"You think I am just going to be able to go back to my room after you did that to me? Besides, we both know no one in this family but you gets up till late." Her hand shot under his chiton and grabbed hold of the very thick, very hard cock she found. "I do not think you want me to leave even if you say the words."

"I do not remember saying it had to be immediately."

A pounding on the door made them both spin in its direction. "Orestes, Kybele's not answering her door. I could use her help. Do you know where she is?" Sofi called.

"I sent her up to the north field to check on the grapes. I was just headed to go help her." He leaned near her ear. "I will meet you at the mountain top and we can finish what we started. I will make sure she does not see you leave." Orestes headed for the door giving Kybele a view of his back.

"Orestes, pull the top of your chiton up." She hissed before his hand reached the latch.

"Why?"

She held up her hand. "I seem to have left my mark."

Orestes looked over his shoulder with a grin. "So you have." Flipping up the ends, Orestes tied them over his shoulders hiding the marks of her passion. "Cover your head, you in my bed is just as telling as those." Kybele barely covered herself before he ripped the door open.

"For Olympus sake, Orestes, we have got to find you boys some women! What will anyone think if they saw you going around like that when they arrived?" Sofi chided.

The Mountain Top

“Maybe if you had a husband, you would not be noticing your brothers,” Orestes said shutting the door behind him as Sofi’s gasp filled the air.

Kybele bit her hand to stifle a laugh.

PART TWO

Kybele had been there for just over a year. Several men came to the house while the men were down the coast selling that year's wine production. Walking back from the fields Kybele saw them harassing young Marina. For a moment, Kybele froze not sure what to do. It had been a long time since she

'd to deal with such things. The house on the mountain kept the world at bay, for the most part. Then Marina screamed and it broke Kybele's silence and her misgivings about what action to take.

"Marina, go inside now." She called loudly as she came up behind them. The men let go of Marina, and turned to see who spoke. Kybele watched Marina slip away and make it to the house easily. She was not far.

"So, what is it I can do for you?" Kybele asked the men.-

"Look what we have here, men. One that knows how to play. Slaves are always fun," one replied and chaos erupted.

Helene and Sofi reached the door to see what was going on, Marina on their heels. When they looked out, it was all over.

* * * *

Helene came down to meet her sons even before they'd finished putting the horses in the stable. Busily unloading the supplies purchased with the proceeds of the sale of the wine.

"Orestes, could you come talk to Kybele? She has been in her room for the last week and will not talk to anyone. She has not even eaten. You are the one she trusts most."

"Lucky man." Aeneas replied nudging him in the ribs.

Orestes thought of Kybele's behavior, not his brothers. "What happened? She would not do this unless something was wrong."

Her mother hung her head down. "A week ago some men came to the house. I do not know what they would have done to Marina if Kybele had not been here. She gave Marina the chance to escape to the safety of the house."

"Are you praising her for sacrificing herself to rape for Marina's sake?" Orestes demanded.

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“No, No, they did nothing to Kybele, Son.” A long pause followed. “She killed all three of those men.” She paused again, “with their own weapons.”

Orestes watched his four brothers stare at their mother with their mouths hanging open.

“Go, Brother, we will finish up here.” Melasandros finally announced.

* * * *

When Orestes knocked on the door, there was no answer and none a second time either. He pushed the door open slowly to find Kybele sitting on the windowsill, blankly staring out the window. She wore a long chiton of finely woven linen in the Spartan style that hung open on the sides. It hung unbound since she had not finished dressing, her hair hung past her waist in soft curls. Sometime anyway, she planned on going to dinner.

“Kybele?” She did not even acknowledge he was there. When Orestes walked over to her, she did not even look up until he laid a hand on her arm.

“I told myself I would never kill again, not after Thessius,” she whispered.

“You were at the battle of Thessius?” He remembered hearing the news of the battle, slaughter on both sides. The Phrygians fought to keep the Romans out of their lands. Even as far out as they lived, the news reached them quickly.

“It was when I was taken prisoner. My family was killed, my friends dead. I saw the killing, the slaughter, I caused it myself to save my life. I have no regrets since it saved Marina and most likely all of us, but it still hurts, too many have died.” She sat silently for a moment and then the tears began to fall down her cheeks. “I was carrying your child. I did not even know until the bleeding started. They struck me in the stomach. I would have loved to be the mother of your child. I am falling in love with you.” Resting a hand on her cheek, Kybele leaned into his touch and asked, “I admit love and it does not bother you.”

When he could hold her face in his hands, only then did he speak. “Fall as hard as you want. I will catch you.” Orestes sat next to her, leaning back against the wall, rested her head to his chest. It hid his tears at the loss of the child.

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“New business came up. I have to sail next week. I am not going to leave you here alone, not after this. Have you ever been to Tyre?”

“Does this make me your mistress? I have not forgotten about my debt.”

“Forget your damn debt. You are the one that continues bringing that debt up. You are free. I would have told them of us long before, if you would allow it.” To Kybele, she would owe them a debt until the day the last Drachma was paid, many years hence. Kybele pulled away from him but could not speak. The look on her face worried him. “You are well after losing the child? Do we need to send for the physician?”

“No, I was not far enough along that it caused me much pain other feeling like my hearts was ripped out.”

Orestes reached up and wiped away the tears from her cheeks. “Finish getting dressed. Everyone is worried about you. They will be happy if you make it to dinner. Tonight you can cry and I will be there.”

“Would you stay? I do not think I am ready to be alone again.” Orestes smiled and kissed her forehead.

“I will not move from this spot.”

When Kybele turned to face him, her chiton was bound at the waist by a golden ribbon with dangling gold pomegranates. Her hair, pulled with long corkscrews, escaped here and there. The most impressive item was the gold diadem with the scene of a lion attacking a bull that her hairstyle—arranged around. The styling allowed him to see a pair of good-sized pendants with a figure of Eros hanging from each ear. Around her neck hung a beaded gold necklace, semiprecious stone acorns attached to every other bead.

“Kybele, where did you get those?”

She looked down self-consciously. “They were in the bags of the men I killed. Your mother insisted I keep them.”

“Mother is right that you should have them. You have earned them.” Then another thought crossed his mind. “If you will not let us forget the debt, you could sell them and pay it off easily.”

Kybele looked at the gold finery she wore. “I have little in my life. I think perhaps I would like to keep them and work off my debt.”

Orestes wiped off the tears that still fell freely. “Is there another reason you refuse to let us forgive the debt or pay it off early?” Kybele pulled back slightly so that she could look at him.

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"I missed you while you were gone." She whispered.

"I missed you, too." Orestes kiss remained gentle despite how strongly he'd-missed her. Losing his child had hurt the both of them. When he finally released her from his arms, the tears had subsided. He hoped for good.-

"Now you are ready to go." He whispered as they headed to the door.

Kybele was smiling for the first time in a week. "Orestes, can you not tell the others about Thessius? Even if they can guess the rest now."

He smiled faintly and kissed her palm. "Of course."

* * * *

The whole family went to the festival of Greater Dionysia, the wine god, in Athens with what remained of the wine from the last harvest. Everyone wore huge flower crowns as they traded wine for everything they would need for the coming year. It was, in essence, the yearly vacation for the family.-The one time, for people living so far from the city-states, to actually celebrate. Many more to choose from but the fact it was a festival to the wine god proved too much of a lure to sell wine, it became both.

"I suppose I should have guessed you were an Amazon." Aeneas announced as he rested against the doorway to the courtyard where they were staying. "I suppose it would take a woman of strength to resist me."

Kybele turned slowly. He wasn't a boy anymore so calling him one would have just been petty. "Orestes knew the day he bought me. I think your mother knew for some time. Are you so blind?"

Aeneas turned red at her words. "You might be fucking the man, but he doesn't love you! You think any Greek man loves the woman he's married to. Too many mistresses out there who give a good lay and aren't encumbered by money and land."

"Just who are you talking about, Brother?"

Aeneas froze before slowly turning to find Orestes behind him. "Orestes, please." He muttered knowing what was coming.

Kybele could play that game as well. "You said yourself no man loves his wife and I am no man's wife. I have a lot of money to pay off though and I might as well have pleasure while I do it. Go find some girl, Aeneas, and make your mother proud. I made my choice a long time ago. Your acting like a child won't change that." The boy ran. Orestes hand skimmed her back barely tempting the hairs there.

The Mountain Top

When had he moved? He was there but nothing in his touch would confirm it.

“Liar.” He whispered in her ear, his breath sending shivers down her back.

She’d fought at battles that killed and known with less fear than in her stomach right now. “I have admitted that this is more than me taking pleasure, but he is right. If becoming your wife means you taking up with other women, then I will stay your mistress.”

“Maybe they only take mistresses because their fathers picked out their wives for them for the sake of money and land. If I thought you would not have taken my head for bringing it up, I would have chosen you long before you came to my room. I love an Amazon, Kybele. Mistress or wife, there will be no others in my heart.”

“Until your mother chooses a wife for you to propagate the line. A nice woman of good family with a large dowry you can take to her bed out of duty. Then one day she will complain one time too much and I will be sent away. Probably taken as a slave before I ever reach home, a home that is destroyed. I have nowhere to go back to.” His finger over her mouth stopped the reason she kept telling herself she stayed. She knew she should not fall in love. It was foolish.

“So you refuse to pay off the debt even though we both know you have the gold to do it. As my debtor, you feel you have a place with me.” A single arm wrapped around her and he lifted her easily off her feet. “I would have thought a warrior would fight more for what she wants.”

“Where are you taking me?” Orestes growled in her ear and Kybele felt the want pool between her legs.

“The debts gone. If you are staying, it is because you want to be here. Now if you do not want me to show how I feel, you better start fighting.”

Fighting, start fighting, no she wrapped her legs around his waist. Each step he took towards his room rubbed against her mound.

“No sword to take my head, good.” The door slammed behind him and they were alone for the first time on the trip. It was the first time since she lost the child that Kybele wrapped around Orestes wanting him inside her.

“You know I’m good at using a man’s weapons against him. How about I use your sword to defeat you?” Pulling her legs from around him, Kybele pushed Orestes back to the bed. When he lay his lips at her breasts, she pushed him away, not letting him play.

The Mountain Top

Kneeling, she flipped his chiton up and put her mouth to his sword. At the first moan, Kybele knew she had all of him, heart and body. Maybe it was time to realize she had a place even if she never married him.

PART THREE

Some two years later Kybele leaned over the table in Orestes room. Knowing he was to meet her, she hiked her chiton high making sure he would have a view of all when he opened the door. The whispered whoosh of air told her Orestes was there but she kept her eyes to the tablets dealing with the trading they would soon need to do in Athens. His hands settled on either side of her hips and she could feel the tip of his cock teasing the entrance she left bared for him. All the time they had been together and she still could not help but sigh when he slipped inside.

“Now that is a sound I love to hear.” He rasped in her ear.

Kybele grabbed hold of the table to give her leverage as he stroked in and out. The curly hair on his chest tickled her back as he leaned over with her. Strong hands slipped around to her front and lavished her nipples with care. Then suddenly Orestes froze without letting go, feeling her belly now without the previous passion.

“Have I been blind and just completely missed that you have gone without your courses for a while?”

“Must be blind, but do not just stop. It is making me horny as Hades.”

Kybele's words drove him fast with need and his hands picked up the measuring he had started. Only now, they covered her stomach searching for the bump that was his child within. Horny did not cover what it was making her and her breathing quickly grew to pants. Orestes ran a hand down her side until they were skin to skin wherever possible, his free hand finding her mound.

“Why did you not tell me?”

“Sofi was talking of her coming child and she told of how your mother said that in the early part, it is easy to lose the child. I have lost one. I want this one.”

Orestes planted a soft kiss in the middle of her back. With one hand on her breast, one circling her mound, and his cock deep inside

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her as he took up his rhythm again. It was difficult her not to come immediately. Kybele tried to just enjoy the feel of Orestes but he wasn't going to let her. She felt the tightening grow before the explosion started. Orestes, thrust even faster, grabbing hold of her hips and, joining her in orgasm before she'd finished. Legs barely recovered, Kybele felt herself lifted as Orestes took her in his arms and carried her to the bed.

"Now that I am not distracted with that ass of yours in my face, let me feel our baby."

* * * *

"Then we have an agreement of marriage between my Kariakoula and your Orestes." Carrying in a jug of wine for supper, Kybele froze when she heard the words.

Helene must have caught the movement in the hall and looked up to find Kybele's eyes wide with surprise and fright. Kybele could only run. Busying herself in the kitchen, she could not break the feeling her heart was to be ripped out again. She had no home to return to, there was only one man she loved and the thought of him with another, even if he proclaimed he still loved her, made her sick. That he seemed so happy the day before when she told him she was pregnant again stabbed at her heart. Did he know the negotiations went on?

"Mama asked that you meet her in the courtyard." Marina said quietly.

"Kybele, come and join me? There is a talk we need to have." Helene called as Kybele found her. Helene sat on one of the stone benches and patted the spot next to her.

"Is there something I have done to displease you?"

Helene laughed. "No, in fact, quite the opposite. It seems that your price has been paid off in full."

"Orestes forgave all that two years ago."

Kybele found no look of shock or surprise in Helen's green eyes. "I knew long before he told me of it. There has always been something in the way he looked at you and you him. Why have you treated yourself as a slave, never giving yourself freedom, even when you know of his feelings and he freed you of your obligation?"

"I have no dowry, no position, and no family. I am not even Greek. What kind of a wife would I make for him? At least, this way, I am with him. What can I offer him? What can he take from me?"

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“Love.”

“Orestes already has that. I gave it freely a long time ago and he knows he has it.” Helene smiled knowingly. Kybele had to know why.

“What?” Kybele snapped.

“Well, that is the one other reason I know. I have the room on the other side of Orestes.” Helene watched the beautiful woman at her side blush furiously. “I am going to tell you something that I have not even told the children, something I think you need to hear most of all. Many have come seeking my children’s hand in marriage, despite the fact we live so far from everything. I could have amassed a fortune if I accepted the offers, but I would also have the most miserable of children. If you want to stay, as it sounds you do, marry Orestes. You have my blessing. I would never arrange anything, with Kariakoula most of all. I have not seen him as happy as he has been since you came to us. You are the best thing for him.”

“I am nothing more than a freed slave!”

Helene chuckled slightly. “Nor am I and Theron never held that against me nor has Orestes held it against you. You have your past and I have mine. Perhaps it is time that you heard of mine.”

“Orestes told you everything?” Kybele asked her voice faltering a bit.

“I only know that it is rare for a woman to kill three men, especially when she is carrying no weapon of her own and used her attacker's weapon to do the job. There is a past in that.”

Kybele lowered her head, but Helene continued without letting her answer.

“It is a story that many know, but since it happened so long ago, no one talks of it anymore. Over thirty years ago in Sparta, there was a soldier named Theron that I met while serving him at dinner at an acquaintance of his father's. The very next morning he was back to see me again. That I was a slave did not matter to him, and I was truly a slave. No master freed me as soon as I was purchased, as Orestes did with you. I was born into it, my parents captured as mere children. Theron came many times before my owner found out we were already talking of marriage. He would just buy me and he would free me. My owner refused any price, refused to let me go, and even branded me thinking that it would turn him from his suite of me. To the man that owned me, he was saving the Spartan city-state. Every man had the duty to marry and have more sons to fill the army,

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Spartan sons not some half blood slave. He was wrong that the brand would change Theron's mind. Theron waited until my owner was at a dinner away from the house and stole me."

Helene laughed faintly. "Well you could not exactly call it that since he left the fair price with an influential friend to deliver the next day. He could not call him a thief when it could be proved that he was paid. Theron had been here when he was fighting. He always thought that Lake Pombatius would be where he would live one day. So here is where we came. We lived here for almost five years in a little shack no better than any of the shepherds we were friends with. We were happy. By then we already had Orestes and Melasandros. I was carrying a child that I lost. A messenger arrived telling us that my husband's brother died several years previous and his father only the day before. He was the youngest of four and he was his father's only heir. We were wealthy with a fortune we never expected to possess. Life dealt us differently. We went back for the funeral and lived there while this house was built. We were still snubbed because of what I had been. We have never been back. I bore nine of Theron's children, two died as children, all far stronger than most that are from the city and because he actually loved me well, far more than most women would have. None of them have been raised to believe they should marry for position and money and find their pleasures elsewhere. Theron taught the boys to fight as any Spartan would and Orestes and Melasandros have served in the local Army. They have heaped new honors on the family. We tried to see that our children were not brought up in a way of life that made me a slave for seventeen of my years and my parents for even longer. They would never be happy trapped by those we left behind. They have been free to do as they wish, the girls especially. They would never do well married to a man who would make them prisoner in their own home." Helene took Kybele's hand and dropped a gold key in it and closed it back around.

Kybele slowly opened her hand, she could only stare. "What is this?"

"The key to your freedom. For the chains that any other master might have put on you. That is why that man was here. He is the gold smith and he came to deliver that. He just thought he would try to arrange my eldest son to gain a vineyard for his bratty daughter."

"Where is Orestes?"

The Mountain Top

“Up in the northern fields.” Helene pushed her toward the door, smiling as Kybele left. Now if only the rest of her children would find someone as Orestes had. Sofi had and now a child was coming. Aeneas spoke of a dark eyed girl selling in the market of Delphi every time they returned. Perhaps something would come of that. Now if Melasandros would only do more than take the neighbor girl to bed, he might get somewhere.

* * * *

Kybele walked through the vines of the northern fields. All that distinguished her from the other women of the house was her arm with its tattoo and gold of vines. Somehow, now it was more appropriate than it had been in her old life, for she now made her life among the vines. Orestes was nowhere to be found. On a hunch, she made it up to the mountain top. There she found him with his back to her, staring at the reflection of the red sunset blazing in the water of the lake. Kybele slipped her arms around him and entwined her fingers with his.

“Did you have your Mother come and talk to me?”

“I should have thought of it. Even with the child, you never made mention of us, only that you wanted the baby.”

“I was a slave. How was I ever to think your future included me?”

“You were never a slave and even if you were, I would not have cared.”

“I know that now.”

Orestes turned and kissed her forehead. “Does that mean that if I asked you that you would say yes to marrying me?”

Kybele buried her head against his chest. These words she thought she would never hear, words she thought she would never be able to answer. “Yes.”

* * * *

Only weeks later they married. Helene softly smiled when asked about the impending child. How no one else saw it happening was beyond her. Kybele entered the room to go to bed and there, laid out on a table used for the accounts, was an entire treasure trove of goods from her homeland. Cloth in colors only be found through trade. Scarlet and purples interwoven and embroidered with gold and silver thread, cloth of fine linen, costly perfumes, gold jewelry in the form of necklaces, headdresses, and every other item of the finest quality. The lid of a chest lay open to reveal jewelry of many designs from all

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over the area. A gold Scythian pectoral necklace filled with scenes of animals in combat, gold lion headed bracelets, earrings of exaggerated gold boat hulls on which dense clusters of gold ducks dangled. Gold beads yet to be strung, buttons, plaques for clothes, one with the bust of a woman embossed on it. Earrings of smaller styles, one pair even with goats heads decorated with emeralds and pearls, and a heavy gold toque. Many other pieces, including a gold necklace of Colchian design, beads with very detailed graduated turtles around the whole length, the largest of which was the size of an egg and would hang almost to her waist. A choker necklace of red coral, a ring with the bust of Athena, a pair of earrings with the figure of Nike on them as well as carnelian, garnet, emerald and glass. Most spectacular of all though was a gold wreath of thinly hammered gold ivy leaves and bunches of grapes hanging from it. The rest of the horde removed from the men she had killed, the part she insisted Helene keep. Without hearing a noise, Kybele turned to find Orestes there watching her.

“Do you like it?”

“It is too good for the likes of a freed slave.”

“And the master of a house of this quality can not have his wife running around in the clothes of a vine worker. You are the mistress of the house. You deserve every piece of it. Mother also said you deserved a dowry. You have killed for it, it is only right. She has other family pieces that the girls will receive.”

“Then, I don’t deserve you.”

“Perhaps.” Orestes was grinning when Kybele flew at him and they landed on the bed. His wife was, after all, one of the Amazons of the Phrygians. The only way Kybele could get rid of that smile, well, it took other means she didn’t learn on the battlefield.

THE END