



*Lietha Wards*

*The Greek  
Tycoon's  
Runaway Bride*

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## The Greek Tycoon's Runaway Bride

*My book list to date (in no real order)*

*Montana Sunset*

*Montana Sunset 02 Mitchell's Story*

*Immortal Promise*

*Warrior's Prisoner*

*The Billionaire's Secret Desire*

*The Greek Tycoon's Runaway Bride*

*Wild Obsession*

*The Makings of a Good Man*

*Mercenary's Conquest*

*The Cowboy and the Angel*

*The Doctor and the Assassin*

*The King's Lady*

## CHAPTER ONE

“Do you know what tonight is?” Said Paul, as he turned and locked the doors of the diner. It was a busy day and he was glad that she finished her chores the same time he did. Usually she left sooner, but this time he was able to clean the kitchen before she left. He had just finished locking up after they stepped out into the cool night air when he gathered the courage to ask her out again.

Sophie tilted her head at him in puzzlement.

He turned back to her with a grin on his handsome face, “It’s your nine month anniversary here.” He studied her lovely face under the orange amber illumination of the streetlight. He was looking for any sign that the attraction was mutual. He had yet to find one.

“Oh?” she smiled.

“Let me buy you a drink.” He added trying to keep the pleading out of his voice. Not one of his girlfriends could attest to him resorting to begging for a date. One thing he didn’t do was pursue women, but Sophie was different. Besides being a stunning credit to her sex, she was as sweet as hell. The most frustrating thing is that she didn’t seem attracted to him at all. Her faltering smile just confirmed that.

“I can’t...” she clutched her purse and shifted on her feet uncomfortably.

“Sophie,” his expression became serious, “I’ve known you from the first day you’ve walked into the diner asking for a job and not once have I seen you go out on a date. I know you’re not gay because God would be that cruel to create someone as beautiful as you in such a way.” He smiled when she blushed at his flattery, “But all I want is a drink...between friends.”

She pondered his request for a moment.

“It can’t be that hard of a decision?” He said incredulous. He

held up his hands, "I'll behave, I promise." He added hoping the lie didn't show on his face.

Forcing a smile she lifted her chin, "I suppose it wouldn't hurt." Sophie didn't have any friends. She had acquaintances that she'd come to know through her job, but she had kept to herself since she moved there not wanting to draw unneeded attention in her direction. However, she still got it mostly from the opposite sex no matter how she tried to discourage them. If Paul was offering friendship maybe she should set aside her reservations and accept. Yet, there was that niggling in her conscience that would let her be. It didn't feel right. Maybe it was her upbringing that made her feel like she was betraying someone even if it was all in innocence.

Paul inclined his head, "I'm very flattered that you even accepted."

She eyed him a moment longer, "Just this once Paul and like you said, as friends. I'm not—can't have a relationship." She rushed out.

"Honey, if that's all you can offer, I'll take it," He didn't know why she was so reluctant and quite truthfully, he knew less about her than he did a year ago except that she made his blood boil with desire every time he laid his eyes on her. Yet, he didn't miss the slight wince when he called her honey. It was a common endearment used by many people; however she reacted like it was aversive.

She seemed so helpless when she came into his parents' diner last year and removed the 'Help Wanted' sign from the window. It instantly roused male protective instincts in him—among other things. He'd asked her out barely a week into her working for them and she'd turned him down. It was done politely enough, but he was still devastated. By town's standards he was quite a catch, but she rarely looked at him like the other women her age did. She kept her emotions carefully guarded and

there was always a sadness about her. He actually hired her hoping that he would find her in his bed one day. That was nine months ago and he was no closer now than he was back then. However, he still hadn't given up hope and he did feel a little better when she turned down every other man who had asked her out also.

That didn't stop the suitors though. At least once a day flowers would come to the diner for her, even if it was her day off. Not only that, the patrons became mostly male. She could have screwed up every order and they wouldn't have minded, and most times she did. It was obvious to Paul that she had some social grace about her and came from money just from the way she walked, talked and greeted people. Yet she was very likable and never acted snobbish which made him rethink his previous assumption. The only other conclusion was that she was hiding from someone or something, and was willing to work as a waitress in a small town greasy spoon to do it. What could be so bad for her to want to disappear? He'd never asked the questions that carved holes in his conscience because for some odd feeling he knew that she would bolt and he'd never see her again.

It really didn't help that the woman looked like a playboy model either. Her body was a perfect ten. She had an hourglass figure with firm high breasts, tiny waist with flared hips and a face gorgeous enough to stop traffic. He swore that if she let those ebony curls down from the top of her head that they would tumble to her waist and frame that heart shaped face, adorned with pouty full lips and eyes as green as emeralds.

"Come on, there's a nice pub just down the road." He said smiling.

"I should go home and change." She looked down at her pink waitressing uniform.

He heard the hesitancy in her voice and new she was rethinking his invitation. If he let her go home, he doubted he

would go out with him like she said. "You look fine. Besides this is a small town and everyone knows where you work." She looked like a million dollars even in her uniform and as sexy as hell. It was snug in all of the right places and quite frankly he preferred she leave it on. In fact, he'd like to be the one to peel it off her.

"Oh, I guess." She said uncertainly.

He held out his hand and she looked from his hand to his eyes and clasped her purse tightly with hers. She wouldn't—couldn't do such a thing. Sophie was raised with very high morals, and to take a man's hand that she was not married to was unheard of.

"I don't bite honey." He said with a grin wondering what was so difficult about taking his hand. He realized his mistake of calling her honey again, but it was too late, she backed down completely.

"I know—it's just—" she looked around nervously, "I think I'll take a rain check on that drink." Suddenly this felt so very wrong to her.

Paul was stunned. What did he do? The more they stood there the more nervous she became. "Sophie, did someone hurt you in the past? Is that why you don't trust men?"

She shook her head quickly, "No, not the way you're thinking."

"Then in what way?"

"I should go. I'm so sorry. I really shouldn't be seen with you."

"What? Why?" Then something occurred to him. What if she was overly religious? What if she was some daughter of a pastor or raised in a very strict household. If that was true, everything about her suddenly made sense. She acted very virginal. It frustrated him that he still knew nothing about her, but he kept that to himself. She was like a fragile butterfly and he knew she would bolt if he pushed her. This small display just proved it.

She took a deep breath, “Paul, I know how you are with women—people talk, and I’ve seen you with a different girl every week—“

“Whoa—“ he interrupted gently trying his best charming smile on her, “—I can see where this is going, but I really like you.”

“You can’t!” she burst, “You just can’t!”

“What is wrong with that? A guy meets a girl, and when he likes her, he asks her out to see where things go from there.” She rapidly began shaking her head.

“No, we can’t possibly see each other—date, or anything else near that.”

“I can see this subject is really bothering you, so why don’t we both agree to just remain friends, and friends do hang out together. So why don’t we go get that drink and act as friends?” he said trying to change his tactic but not meaning one word of it. She bit her bottom lip contemplating his words, and then to his disappointment she shook her head.

“I really can’t. I’m sorry.” She started walking away, “I’ll see you tomorrow at work.” She added before she turned around and left at a brisk walk.

Paul released a breath of frustration watching her. *Damn*, he was so close. He was sure if he’d gained her trust it wouldn’t be long after that he could get her in bed. Yet, there was something wrong with this whole situation. She was terrified of being alone with him. Did a man hurt her despite what she said? One thing was certain, if that was his woman, he would treat her right in every way.

Whoever she was running from certainly would be missing her something awful. If it was him, he certainly wouldn’t give up looking for her. Still the thought that she was some preacher’s daughter didn’t fade either. Maybe it was both. Maybe she was in a relationship with some pastor. Oh hell, that would be farthest



from the truth. After what he'd just witnessed, he doubted she was ever even with another man. Tomorrow he would try and get some answers. However, the next day his questions were answered before he had the chance.

From the time the diner opened the next morning, it was a mad rush. Sophie was doing her best to keep up, but she kept mixing up the orders. He was thankful she looked the way she did because no one ever complained and if anything she helped business by the influx of male clients. Not only that, his mother adored her.

His mother had multiple Sclerosis, and Sophie had spent numerous hours visiting with her, even reading to her in the evening. When she had relapses, Sophie was by her side in the hospital when she wasn't working. The devotion was genuine and she really cared about his mother.

Paul had never met anyone like her and he'd dated a lot of women, sometimes more than one at the same time. He was confident in his abilities with them also because of his looks. He was tall blonde and blue-eyed and never had trouble getting a date or sex when he needed it. Yet Sophie was immune to his charms and his looks no matter what approach he tried.

After the night before when she shunned him, he watched her more closely than usual. It was obvious that she was mistrustful of men, but she didn't seem afraid of them. Maybe her last boyfriend was unfaithful and that's why she refused a date. However, she seemed warm with him but distant. If anyone were to get her to go out with them, he was sure it would be him especially after nine months!

He ached to see if that creamy skin of hers was congruent all over. He fantasized how beautiful she looked naked and even took it further to the things he could be doing with her. He always prided himself as a good lover although there were times when he'd been selfish just to reach his own release, but women

around town didn't complain. However, he did like things rough sometimes and there were a special few women that he used for that purpose. Would Sophie fit in that category? He wondered how much passion lay beneath that sophisticated sweet demeanor.

His eyes guided over her form as she passed by the window to the kitchen. Maybe she wouldn't be shocked, and maybe if he introduced her slowly to his type of rough play, she may enjoy it. A woman with a body like that could have men like him on his knees so easily. Paul prided himself in endurance too, and he could take all night with her. Glancing down his body he already knew he had an erection. It was a good thing he was by himself in the kitchen that day because it was very obvious. Oddly enough it wasn't as if he didn't have sex last night despite Sophie leaving him. He'd paid a call to one of his special companions and she'd satisfied him well enough according to the marks on his body, but you wouldn't know it the way he was feeling now. He wasn't gentle either, but she was willing and eager.

This wasn't doing him any good. He was going to have to get assertive and try and get her to talk to him about her past. It was never in him to force a woman to do anything, and he certainly wouldn't where this delicate flower was concerned because for some reason he knew the wait would make the conquest so much sweeter. Not only that, he did genuinely come to care for her. Only if she'd give a little more then he would know where he stood.

Later that afternoon, Paul came rushing out of the back when he heard the sound of a multitude of plates hitting tile and shattering. He saw Sophie standing still and white as a ghost staring out the big front diner window where, when he followed her gaze, the largest limousine he'd ever seen in his life guided to the curb. Broken shards of dishes lay on the floor around her feet, but she seemed completely unaware of them. "Sophie?"

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"He's found me." She managed a whisper looking out the large windows of the diner.

He was about to ask who she was talking about when people began to turn in their booths with distinct sounds of creaking of vinyl and instead he followed their gazes toward the front entrance of the diner. Then you could have heard a pin drop as the diner became oddly silent while two hulking men dressed in dark suits led by a tall undeniably handsome man in an expensive dove grey suit got out of the car. He pulled his jacket straight and brushed something off his sleeve before walking toward the front door as one of the hulks opened it for him. He stepped in first and they came in behind him. It was obvious that they were bodyguards which meant this man was important and by the looks of his clothing and the car, filthy rich. A car like that would have to come from the city over three hours away.

Limousines were never seen in this town, nor were men of the occupant's stature. He carried with him an air of undeniable wealth and masculine arrogance as his dark gaze scanned the surroundings. Looking at him, Paul was sure that his suit was worth more than he made in six months. He didn't miss the disapproval that crossed his features as he took in the surroundings of the diner.

"Honey, do you know him?" Paul said as one of her trembling hands wrapped absently around his forearm. He glanced down at the gesture, not once had Sophie touched him before, or anyone of that matter. Last night had proven that to him when she looked at his offered and like he had the plague. Now she did, and she trembled. Then he returned his gaze to her profile as she remained fixated on the newcomer. It didn't seem as though she was frightened it was almost as if she was completely shocked.

"Yes." She finally managed to answer Paul's question not tearing her eyes from the sight. Six foot four feet of perfect

masculine virility could only describe the man stepping into the diner flanked by two of his beefy security team. Dressed in a hand tailored Italian suit, Demetrius Vassiliadas was still as gorgeous as she remembered and instantly she felt her knees go weak at the sight of him. She hadn't even realized that she reached out and grabbed Paul to steady herself, but Demetrius did from the sharp retort in his voice.

*"Sophie let go of him!"*

Instantly she complied looking surprised at her gesture.

Paul stood beside Sophie watching as the man's dark eyes settled on her, then slid down to where her hand clasped his arm. He released an abrupt phrase in another language Paul didn't understand. Then in a few determined strides he approached her and gave her a mixed expression of surprise and displeasure, "Sophie?" the man said in a deep baritone that was thick with a foreign accent. It was in a tone of displeasure, not as if he didn't recognize her, but over what she was doing. Then he reached out to put his hands on her and instinctively Paul moved to stop him. That's when the other two men in dark suits intervened. Paul was shoved unceremoniously up against the diner counter releasing a painful grunt and he realized then that the distinguished man in the grey suit acted as if he wasn't even there. The other four patrons of the diner released gasps and exclamations of disbelief but weren't as foolish as Paul to interfere.

Demetrius set his large dark hands on Sophie's shoulders possessively letting his long fingers contract when he spoke. *"This is not appropriate."* He said in Greek and she answered him in the same language.

*"I know."* She answered softly. Not once did she feel shamed at what she was doing until Demetrius looked at her in such a way. Only he could make her feel vulnerable because of how she felt about him. She averted her gaze to her feet.

*"Get in the car. We will talk."* It wasn't a request. It was an

order of supreme finality and Demetrius used the tone he used with so many over the years knowing he wouldn't be disobeyed and Sophie wouldn't dare.

Paul didn't understand what the man said, but according to his senses he was a man that was used to having his orders followed without question and doled out the words in the same manner to Sophie. Apparently Sophie didn't miss it either. In surprise he saw her nod briefly and turn to leave.

*"Wait a minute."* Demetrius said reaching around behind her to untie the apron she wore leaning close so she could feel the heat of his body on hers.

Sophie stopped the gasp before it escaped her lips of his hands brushing around her waist. *Nothing has changed*, she thought, he could still rattle the nerves that spread throughout her entire body like she was electrocuted with barely a touch.

*"Now go."* He added.

In disbelief Paul watched her move to leave the diner.

"Sophie?" called Paul trying unsuccessfully to shrug the bodyguards' hands off of his shoulders. Their size wasn't for show; it felt like he was caught in bands of iron.

She turned and gave him an apologetic look, "Keep my pay check Paul and tell your mother I'm sorry, I'll call you when I can."

"What the hell is going on? Sophie?" He went to move again but this time the two men shoved him back against the counter in warning followed by an abrupt command he didn't understand. His eyes darted to the two of them. They meant business by the looks in both of their eyes. Then he shifted his attention back to her. She looked as if she meant to say something else when she was interrupted.

The stranger said something sharply and she darted her gaze to him and nodded. Even though his voice was abrupt, she didn't look fearful, if anything, she looked slightly embarrassed. Then

without another word or a look, she went through the diner doors and into the waiting car. The driver shut the door behind her. Paul focused his attention back on the well dressed man who walked several steps to stand in front of him, “Who the hell are you? This is my family’s business you have no right—“

He inclined his head to his two men who instantly released Paul.

Paul shook his shoulders and stood straight while straightening his shirt and glaring at him.

“My name is Demetrius Vassiliadas. I am Sophie’s husband.” He said raising his chin to display a mixture of pride and arrogance at that statement.

He paused and gaped at him, “Her *what?*” Did he hear the man right?

“Obviously she didn’t tell you that she was married.” He said with unsuppressed anger while thrusting the apron at him.

“What? Married?” The man gave him a look that could clearly empty a room of people. His dark simmering glare was created for just that reason, thought Paul. Add to that his towering height, good looks, obvious wealth and air of a man that always got what he wanted and Paul was suddenly feeling severely inadequate for his sex.

“Yes. She is my wife.”

“She’s too young to be married.” Paul defended shooting his eyes back toward the Limo. Wasn’t she? He was thinking that she was about eighteen. Demetrius answered his question.

“She’s nineteen. We were married when she was eighteen. She was old enough to make that decision.” He waved a hand as if explaining himself was becoming a task, “I’m telling you this so you know to stay away from her. That phone call she promised will not happen. I will not allow it.”

All of Paul’s fantasies about her were fading into dust. Obviously the stranger could see it in his expression for what he

said next.

His face darkened, "For your sake, you'd better not have touched her." He threatened.

Paul thought about lying, but then he also thought of Sophie. Was she running from him because he was abusive? However, she didn't seem upset in the least when the man laid his hands on her only moments ago. Just in case, he couldn't put her in that risk, "No one has touched her that I know of. She wouldn't accept any dates." He saw the man's eyes flicker something akin to relief. Yet, in a split second it was gone. He nodded to one of his men who pulled out a billfold and started flicking hundreds of dollars off it.

"What are you doing?"

"Naturally you are out an employee and my men have assaulted you. I'm compensating you for your trouble." Demetrius paused studying the younger man's expression, „You will also not try and contact my wife in the future."

Paul wanted to protest, to toss the money in the man's face just to see his smugness falter, but as one after another of the c-notes were flipped off the role, he found himself staring at the disgustingly large sum in awe.

Demetrius gave a smile of satisfaction. What would Sophie think knowing that her friend was bought for a pitiable sum? A man who boldly defended her only minutes ago. He gave a snort of disgust and without another word he was gone. No amount of money could buy Sophie from him. She was priceless.

One of the men slapped a pile of bills on the counter, gave him another warning glare, before followed Sophie's husband out the door.

Demetrius slid in next to his wife and told his bodyguards to sit in the front with the driver and closed the divider to give him privacy. He wanted to be able to speak with her alone. His arm slid around her shoulders but she kept her head averted to the

scenery outside the window beside her, "You left me." He said with a steel edge in his voice.

"I did." It was all she could manage. Seeing him after all of these months unnerved her. He always was formidable and seemingly untouchable, but now he seemed even more so with his anger. Demetrius didn't get angry, he got even.

Did he hear a tremor in her voice? "Sophie, look at me." When she did, he wasn't prepared for the sadness in her emerald gaze. "Why?"

"You made it clear that you did not want me." To her surprise he looked incredulous.

"I've never given any indication." He waved his free hand angrily. "What is this nonsense?"

"You didn't touch me. I waited for months—"

"You were eighteen *Bella*." He said almost painfully, "Too young for me...I am twelve years older than you."

"I was your wife." She accused, "Yet you take Helene—"

"I—" He sat straight and stared down at her in disbelief at her statement. Then when he was finally able to absorb her words, he was unwilling to conceal the anger in his tone or his dark eyes, "I did not!"

His denial was so strongly exclaimed that she hesitated, "She said you and she—that she was pregnant with your child—"

"I wouldn't touch that whore." He said furiously thrusting his arm in the air.

She flinched. "She's my *sister* Demetrius."

"A tramp!" He said angrily, not caring who she was to Sophie. "She was a shadow in comparison to you. It is an insult that I would even touch her when I had you."

Sophie's mouth fell open at his confession. Did he really mean that? "I saw her in your bed." She saw him shut his eyes obviously remembering, "You broke my heart Demetrius. I trusted you. I loved you..."



His eyes snapped open and centered on hers, "Nothing happened. You should take my word for it." His eyes darkened angrily, "You should have come to me instead of running away. I am your husband! You have overblown this entire situation and it cost me and your family too much. If you had come to me we could have confronted your sister together."

"Your reputation before we were married was—" he cut her off with an angry expletive causing her to blush.

"My past is just that, my past. I have no reason to explain my actions to you before we were married. These are the accusations of a jealous girlfriend, not a wife. I am taking you to Greece. You will have no bank account, no money. I'm going to get you pregnant so you can't leave me ever again. Then you will understand. There will be no more of these childish outbursts."

It was said so harshly, it hurt her. She turned her head again to look out at the window. Now she would be a prisoner to do her husband's bidding. She heard him sigh and then felt his warm fingers under her chin to turn her face towards him again.

"I am your husband Sophie. You should have come to me first." He said in a softer tone, "You should not have left me over the devious tactics of your sister. I spent almost a year looking for you. I will not risk this again. You have shattered my trust for you." He released her, and his expression darkened again, "Your virginity had better be intact or I will make your life miserable for the rest of your days after I kill the man that deflowered you." He added with venom.

Sadness consumed her. She was saving herself for her husband, for him, "I let no man touch me." She said half to herself and no one in particular. His expression was always so unreadable as much as his emotions. Even though his touch was gentle, his dark eyes scanned her face and revealed nothing.

"That remains to be seen." He said abruptly in a tone that left no doubt that his time of keeping her chaste was over.

Demetrius was angry and now that she looked back on what she did, it made sense. Never had he raised his voice to her even when she frustrated him in the past. She was young, she decided, and time away from him started to put things into perspective. He was so adamant about not sleeping with her sister and even wanting to confront her made her believe him. Why did she not see this before? Would a guilty man be willing to face his accuser so eagerly? She doubted it and he was right. Maybe she should have gone to him first. These past nine months were painful for her because of how much she loved and missed him.

“Who was that man to you?”

She swung her head toward him again, “Who--?”

“At that—establishment I found you in.” he ground out remembering how he’d found her. She was serving people. His wife! It just made him wonder how much she wanted to get away from him by doing such a thing. Sophie’s family was wealthy, and for her to do such a thing was shocking.

“Paul? He is no one Demetrius.” She said without hesitation, knowing that if he even suspected some sort of a relationship Demetrius would have his men work Paul over.

“Did he ever touch you?” he narrowed his dark eyes on her.

“No!” she said in a gasp. She would never let another man touch her because she was a married woman. Even if her husband didn’t want her, she honored her vows and would until the day she died or he divorced her. Her gut constricted at that thought. He could do that, divorce her. Then she would be truly shamed.

“I find that hard to believe. He is a man, you are beautiful. I did not miss the way he looked at you.”

She shook her head, “He asked to date me, and I refused. I am a married woman.”

“At least you took our vows seriously in that respect.” He reached into his breast pocket and withdrew something, “You left

this behind.” He gritted out while tossing it onto her lap, “Put it back on.”

Sophie looked down at her wedding ring. It was a large emerald surrounded by a cluster of diamonds and cost him a fortune. When he'd picked it out, he told her that he wanted the emerald because it was the same color as her eyes. The fact that he'd brought it with him so it would be back on her finger made her wonder if he was only doing this so she'd know who she belonged to. She already knew he didn't love her. At least she had some relief in knowing that he didn't intend to divorce her. She'd given him every right to do just that.

At first she loved his possessiveness because she associated it with love, but when he didn't come to her on their wedding night she began to wonder. He never told her he loved her either, so she started to feel like an object more than a wife. Her eyes flicked up to his, but his expression was still angry still not giving away any indication that he brought the ring because he loved her.

After looking at her ring again, she felt tears prick her eyes as she picked it up and did as he asked. It seemed bittersweet to put her ring back on in light of what had happened. Although she couldn't deny that she loved it and her hand never stopped feeling empty without it. She also couldn't deny that she loved him so much it hurt.

It was then she noticed that he wore his.

“For your sake and his, you had better not be lying to me.” He said tersely, “No man touches you—ever.”

She darted her gaze to his, “I swear.” She said with complete honesty.

His dark eyes studied hers.

The silence was unnerving. Not only because of his distrustful scrutiny, but Demetrius had that air of presence about him that could unnerve a corpse. He always seemed untouchable

emotionally although it never deterred her from her attraction to him. If anything it made her try harder to gain his attention. She was sure that air about him is what attracted woman to him like white on rice. Of course it never helped that the man was devastatingly handsome. "I'm not lying Demetrius. I am still a virgin." She blushed. It wasn't easy to discuss intimacy with a man that she had never been intimate before. However, he was her husband and she knew she had to become accustomed to it.

After another moment, he finally gave a curt nod, "Okay Sophie. However you will not contact him ever."

"I heard you in the diner." She said softly. He had threatened to burn down the diner if she so much as tried to call him. She hoped it was along the lines of jealousy because she would love to know that her husband was jealous of another man, but she knew better.

"Just so you know, he took the money I gave him to leave you be."

"Paul?" She sighed heavily, "I'm not surprised."

"No?" he said with a little surprise.

"His mother is ill, they need it."

"This does not bother you?"

"No," she said honestly, "Why would it? I told you he means nothing to me."

He couldn't help but feel relieved, "Sophie, it wouldn't matter to me who was ill in my family, no amount of money could buy you away from me..." His phone rang then and he answered it.

Sophie knew that was easy said when you were as rich as Demetrius was. However, she lived in poverty for nine months and understood more about worrying where you next meal came from now. She wished he would believe that her heart only belonged to him, but she certainly understood why he didn't think so after she took off.

“Yes Hektor, I found her.”

At the sound of her father's name she turned her head back to him.

His eyes roamed over her completely while listening to the man on the other end of the phone. “She is thin. This will change.” Another pause, “Yes I understand. I will bring her home tomorrow. ” He hung up and looked at her, „your father is relieved you are well.”

She did her best to restrain the tears that blurred her vision but he noticed.

“See little dove? I am not the only one who has missed you.”

She nodded too afraid to speak because of the tears that threatened to fall. Did he really mean it? That he missed her? She missed him more with every passing day, but Demetrius would never talk about his feelings unless he was angry and his feelings were those of anger. As for her father, she felt ill with worry over him. He had diabetes and she was sure the stress of her missing would have made it worse. She would have contacted him but knew he would instantly let Demetrius know where she was. Her father saw Demetrius as a second son after her brother Nikos, and like Nikos and Demetrius, seemed to insist to know what was best for her.

“Is he well?” She heard herself ask.

“As well as can be expected. He tires easily,” then his eyes darkened again, “It is your father's birthday celebration this evening and we are missing it.” He said abruptly.

Sophie didn't forget her father's birthday, “His birthday is tomorrow.”

Demetrius shook his head, “The celebration is tonight on the yacht. It was more convenient to celebrate it a day early because of your father's friends who are coming from all over the country. I was supposed to be there.” He added setting his dark eyes on hers, “Not only am I missing it, but I had to have your brother

intervene with very important clients while I chase halfway around the world after my wife.”

Just when Sophie didn't think she could feel any worse about her family she did. She never missed her father's birthday. She knew she had a lot to make up to her family because of her rash actions. Then there was the yacht. It wasn't a small boat, but a massive ship that Demetrius had commissioned for her as a wedding present and it was possibly the most beautiful yacht she'd ever seen. That was the advantage to be married to a man who built them for a living.

His gaze went to her hair, “Did you cut it?”

“No.” she answered.

“Take it down.” He said deeply watching her intently.

Obediently she reached up and released the pins that held her waist length ebony curls. One by one the locks tumbled down around her face, over her breasts and down her back.

“*Magnificent.*” He murmured as she shook her head tumbling her hair evenly around her. Reaching over he took a strand between his thumb and forefinger admiring the texture, “I always thought you had the most beautiful hair in Greece.” And that she was the most gorgeous woman he'd ever laid eyes on.

She always thought he was the most beautiful man in all of Greece, but she would never say it out loud. Not now, not when she was ready to break. She was so vulnerable in his presence that it frightened her. She could not say that about another human being.

His eyes went to hers, “did you not miss me Sophie?” he said deeply as two lean fingers caressed her jaw. Her skin felt like fine porcelain and he missed her so much he ached. Yet, not one hint of that reached his expression.

Her heart began to pound in her chest. *Every day, every minute of every hour of every day*, she wanted to scream at him, but she chose to remain silent. He already had her vulnerable

and defenseless, she wouldn't give him anymore ammunition to hurt her with. When she didn't answer she saw his eyes darken.

Releasing a frustrated breath, he released her and turned away, "when we get home to Greece and after you say your apologies to your family, we are going to my island of Aquinas and there you will stay until you learn where your place is."

"No more than a prisoner." She said before she could stop herself.

"No more than you deserve." He set his dark gaze back on her. "You embarrassed me, my family and your family with your running off like some spoiled child heiress."

"I told you..."

"You saw something that wasn't what it seemed and neglected to speak to me about it. That blame is entirely on you." He added with restrained anger, "You become a public servant." He waved his hand fervently at her waitressing outfit, "to avoid me. It is shameful!"

"Demetrius, at the time I didn't realize how I acted. Helene said she was pregnant. I was so hurt..." She defended.

"She was, but the seed wasn't nor ever will be planted by me. I am disgusted that you would think I would find her attractive." He said with aversion. "Or even touch her when I had you."

"But you didn't touch me!" she burst, "You wouldn't. I waited for you on our wedding night."

The silence stretched as he stared down at her flushed face. There was no doubt that she was vulnerable right now and to make that confession to him while he was angry, must've taken courage. "I told you why." He answered trying to calm his tone somewhat.

"I was old enough to marry; therefore I was old enough to consummate our marriage." She wanted him after months of courtship, months of wanting to be alone with him. It was becoming painful the ache that she had for him, and it took her

some time to discover that it was desire. Yes she was young, but she knew what she wanted.

"Maybe I should have." He conceded, allowing his temper to ease off a bit, "then I wouldn't be running around the world looking for you because you would have no doubt how desirable I found you and how repulsive your sister was to me." He held up his hand knowing that she was about to protest the insult of her sister again, "However, the fault is still yours. You left without telling me and you took it upon yourself to ignore a problem within our marriage. Marriages are for life, not a trivial event. Do you not think that other married couples deal with problems? This could have been straightened out quickly. Instead you leave me!"

"I—I" she stuttered for an explanation but he continued.

"Even if I had slept with your sister." An expression of repulsion followed that statement, "Which I did not, you do not run away."

She bowed her head. He had a completely valid point.

"You should know your sister better than anyone to understand the type of treachery she is capable of. Not only have you shamed your family, she has gone one step further and had a child out of wedlock." He added with malice. "Your family has suffered enough embarrassment to last a lifetime."

"She had the baby?" her brows lifted in surprise.

Eyeing her with irritation he nodded, "A blond blue eyed boy, named Markus. Then like the tart she was, she abandoned him with your father to raise." He gritted out thoroughly disgusted, "A woman with her stature should not have acted so shameless."

Her jaw fell. "She wouldn't."

He paused for a moment while studying her expression, "It seems that your opinion of your sister was higher than she deserved. A shame it didn't reflect on your husband. If I were the



father, which would be no more a miracle than Immaculate Conception, the child would at least look like me.” He said coolly.

“She lied to me.” She said in disbelief with his words finally hitting her. *How could she, her own sister?* Again her eyes went to his ring finger. *He still wore his ring*, she thought again. Did that mean he honestly took their marriage more seriously than she originally thought—more than she did? After all, she ran away at the first sign of trouble and left her ring on her dresser.

“She did.” He said simply as he eyed her closely, “Now you will behave like you are supposed to. A model wife fit for a family of my stature in every aspect...are you listening Sophie?”

She nodded but was too ashamed to look at him. If he was right, everything was her fault! She believed her sister. Everything she told her was convincing and she had no reason not to believe her. Now Demetrius shattered all of that. If he told the truth, which now she didn't doubt, he had every right to feel the way he did. “Why would she do this?”

He cocked an eyebrow, “You don't know?”

She shook her head allowing her eyes to go back to his.

“Sophie, your sister is jealous of you.” His eyes lowered to her mouth, “And with reason.”

“But Helene's beautiful!”

He gave an indignant snort, “To whom? Certainly not the Vassiliadas shipping tycoon. Because I had designs on her little sister and didn't even notice that she existed.” In his eyes, there was no one more perfect than her.

Sophie flushed. Could that be the reason Helene lied? Was she so besotted with Demetrius that she would risk betraying her own sister and destroying her marriage? Her eyes guided to his handsome face as he looked down at her with his pointed stare. As sudden as a thunderclap, she realized that her husband wasn't just appealing to her. Of course he was handsome, rich and virile, but how could her sister risk so much to try and have him? What

if her sister fell in love with him as she had, as all women within eyesight had? There had been many times when she was standing right beside him when a woman would practically throw themselves at him, yet, come to think of it, he never acknowledged it. Of course he was polite and charming, but that was where it ended and now that she looked back on those episodes, it was his hand that would search out hers and give a reassuring squeeze. God she was so blind about it all! It was just such a hard thing to grasp that her sister would do such a thing unless she was in love with him. "She must be in love with you." Her words didn't even faze him. It was like he heard that word more often than God himself.

"That was not my problem. I never encouraged her." He said icily and without the least bit of surprise.

"Oh Demetrius, can't you see, sometimes a woman can't help who she loves."

His gaze narrowed, "If you are speaking of that man in the diner, I will have him killed."

"No! I don't care about him!" she shouted, "I told you the truth. I never did! I was speaking of a woman's feelings and you..."

"*Cristo*, I am furious with you." He swore interrupting her, and removed a cigarette from a gold case tapping it twice on the flat shiny surface before putting it in his mouth and lighting it. He looked down at her and took a drag off of it before he spoke. His voice started to rise in anger again, "You will conceive me an heir as soon as possible. I will redeem my reputation to your father, my family."

Back to her shame. It made her currently forget her defense of her sister, which was his sole purpose. Demetrius obviously hated Helene, but he didn't realize that maybe she suffered too. Yet, everything was Sophie's fault and now she finally realized why, "Demetrius...I..."

"Save it." He cut in vehemently allowing his temper to rise again, "I don't wish to hear excuses, because there aren't any. If you even think about contemplating divorce, don't. I won't give you one. Not only that, but I think even you will not be selfish enough to embarrass your father further." He paused staring down at her again, "No argument?"

His words stung. "No Demetrius." She swallowed hard.

"I am not giving you a chance to take off again. I will kill you next time." He seethed, blowing the smoke out of his lungs with a forced breath. "Any man would have after being treated in such a way!"

"Yes Demetrius." She resigned sadly. Demetrius was angry. She knew he'd never lay a hand on her or he would have done it already when he first found her. However, maybe if he did she wouldn't have felt so guilty.

"How does it look that a man, a man like me, cannot hold onto his young wife?" He swore again.

My God, he was right. She did sound like a spoiled heiress. Not only did she disgrace her husband, but her actions had a ripple effect in her family. She had never considered through her grief of betrayal, a betrayal that he denied, that she would harm anyone. Maybe he was right and she was young in many ways. She always thought she was considerate, yet this just proved she wasn't. In all, his explanation made guilt flood through her like a burst dam. His anger was new to her and instinctively she reached out but he shoved her hand off him. She bit back the tears and turned away, but then he grabbed her hand and kissed it totally contradicting his prior rejection.

"What do you expect?" His said in a voice laced with conflict, "That I would fall at your feet?"

"No." She admitted in a voice of barely contained emotion. Demetrius Vassiliadas would never fall at a woman's feet.

"You will find a way to make this up to me and our families."

She nodded and he pulled her closer to him. He may have been furious with her, but he was still willing to comfort her. She doubted she would be so generous in his position. At that point her shame was so obvious to her she couldn't help herself and bury her face into his shoulder.

"That outfit is an eyesore." He thrust his hand with the lit cigarette between his lean brown fingers toward her, trying desperately to ignore how good she felt and how blatantly relieved he was that she settled into his embrace, "As soon as we get on my jet, you are changing. There are some of your clothes in the bedroom. They are outdated but they'll do until we land in Greece."

She wasn't going to argue, the clothes reminded her of what a fool she'd been. There was a long silence before he spoke again.

"Would you like a child Sophie?" he said softly.

Oh yes, she would. She loved children. Not only that, a child of Demetrius' would be no less than beautiful, "I would." She said with excitement for the first time.

Tilting his head back, he studied her expression; "Good!" he said with conviction, "At least there is something I can do to please you."

Everything about her husband pleased her. She was so much in love with him it hurt. That's why she ran. She couldn't bear the thought of him being with another woman. Even after all this time, her feelings hadn't faded; if anything they compounded just seeing him.

As the car pulled onto the tarmac of the small airport she was surprised that there was room enough for his plane to land. Then she saw the Gulfstream and realized he'd brought one of the smallest of his jets. She wasn't too sure how many he had, because he never talked about it, but when he flew her to England for a family wedding along with many other relatives, it was on a large Boeing.

Demetrius got out of the car and held his hand out for her as his security team kept watch. It was something she was more than used to. Her father made sure that no one came near her that didn't have his approval, even some of her own female friends. She was practically born with bodyguards by her side. Reaching out, she took his outstretched hand and allowed him to help her out of the car and lead her to the plane. Remembering her things back at her small apartment she pulled on his hand causing him to turn and look down at her with no less than an expression of impatience.

"Demetrius—my things—"

He gestured toward the jet, "Sophie, all of what is valuable to you is on the plane. I sent Gino over to your apartment earlier and he packed up the few things that you left me with. The rest was given to charity."

She should've known. Although she wanted to protest, she nearly bit her tongue. Obviously he could see that from the arrogant challenging tip of his head. So she kept quiet. He would not relent. Only she wished he could understand how much she struggled and saved to buy the meager things that she had. However, she guessed that she really didn't need them where she was going, but still; she'd never held material things so valuable before, because she never had to pay for them. Slowly she nodded, conceding.

"I am pleased to see that you are beginning to see things clearly."

"There's no point in arguing." She said solemnly knowing that there was no way he would understand the meaning in something with no value.

"No there isn't." he said seriously as his dark eyes studied her expression for a moment before turning and pulling her with him up the stairs into the plane.

Soon they were in the air and Demetrius was on the phone.

He wasn't one to micromanage, so he was always busy. It was one of the things she detested about his wealth because she wanted him all to herself and they kept getting interrupted by his mobile in the past. Yet, she didn't forget his words. She was a spoiled heiress and the past months made her realize how true that was. Demetrius showered her with gifts, expensive gifts, before they were engaged, during their engagement and even after they were married. He had the yacht built and named it *Sophie's Heart* to be given to her on their wedding day.

The whole time she never really realized how people struggled to make ends meet, even though she and Demetrius were involved in a multitude of charities. But now she did. Never would she take her life for granted again.

As she sat there across from him while he conducted business over the phone, she finally came to the only way he could have found her. Before she left him she had set up a private account that she could have access to. He must've found it and put a trace on any transactions. She was worried about that because she knew her husband had friends in high places and could do such a thing. Last week she dipped into it when Paul's mother was admitted to the hospital and couldn't make hospital bills. She paid the bill and didn't tell Paul or his mother what she had done, but because of it Demetrius found her.

However, she missed him as much as she would miss a part of herself. So maybe she did it to see if he still wanted her. Part of her was just as elated to see him walk through that door, as much as she was afraid of him over his reaction of finding her. In fact, she was breathless at the first sight of him.

He cast her a glance before continuing his conversation on the phone and she was momentarily stunned at how handsome he was and how those mocha eyes just made him more appealing. As far as she was concerned, even after all of this time, she still only had eyes for him. It was so easy for him to capture

her heart all over again, just by showing up, despite how furious he was. He was so charismatic that just by walking in the diner, sucked all the resistance out of her. That's why she moved so far away, there was no way she could resist him if he lied to her, but now she knew her mistake. It wouldn't have been a lie.

He covered the mouthpiece of the phone and locked his eyes on hers, "Bella, go and get changed. I want you out of those clothes." He said dipping his eyes over her.

She nodded and undid her seatbelt to make her way back to the stateroom while his deep voice followed her as he resumed his conversation on the phone. He actually sounded relaxed when he spoke to her only moments ago. Did that mean his temper had run its course? She sure hoped so because every time he spoke to her in anger it made her feel more ashamed and although she believed now that she deserved it, it was still difficult to take.

Sophie didn't know that Demetrius watched her closely, studying her every move, every delicate sway of her hips and the subtle gesture of her reaching up and sweeping her hair off her shoulders down her back while he talked to his executive assistant on the phone. Being no stranger to multi-tasking, his beautiful wife's presence certainly tested his skills at that moment and he nearly missed half the things his assistant was telling him.

For the past nine months it had felt if he swallowed jagged rocks by the way his gut ached over worrying about her. Not to mention the iron band that clamped onto his heart, squeezing it continuously over losing her.

Although he penned it to her as if he was a man that couldn't keep his wife, and her family's opinion of him was detrimental, that was secondary. Also, he didn't lie to her about being furious, he was. But he was also greatly relieved. The truth of it was he loved her too much and it cost him dearly. He swore he would

never make that mistake again.

## CHAPTER TWO

After the plane landed, Demetrius had her by the elbow as they left it and headed toward the stretched limo with his two bodyguards flanking them parked just a few meters from the steps. He knew exactly how impressive she looked especially when the male workers on the tarmac stopped what they were doing to gape at her. Sophie was always beyond beautiful, a rival for Helen of Troy in a time where wars were waged over the beauty of a woman and she was his.

“Wait.” He said seeing that the press was nearby taking pictures of them through the security fence. How they knew where he was before he did, he never knew. “Look happy.” He added and was impressed that she did as he slipped his arm around her waist to pose for the public. It was something they were both born into and knew that it was part of their lives to accept the invasion of privacy. They also knew how to keep their secrets from being known. By morning the headlines would be plastered with the pictures of the famous couple because of Sophie.

When he first saw her at seventeen, he’d approached her father with support from her brother Nikos. Hektor warned him that Sophie was stubborn and willful, but he’d thought he could chase that out of her; instead he ended up finding her more attractive. She resisted his interests on every turn, but he didn’t give up and showered her with attention that was typical of his experience with women, and soon she became more receptive. Her naïveté was no match for his experience and he knew it.

He’d married her at eighteen after a yearlong courtship. He couldn’t risk another man stealing her away from him. Yet he vowed not to take her until she was nineteen. It was the worst



few months of his life. He'd never taken another woman, he didn't want one, and he wanted Sophie. She was completely naïve on her beauty and it made her entirely more appealing.

Hektor was openly ecstatic about the match of Vassiliadas shipping merging with his Lazaridis sunglasses. Two multibillion dollar empires merging in a wedded union brought the hoards of press and several months later when she disappeared the Lazaridis' publicist created a rumor that she had lost a child and was too devastated to appear in public.

The press bought it, and public sympathy was outpouring, but recently the rumors started again, but now he had Sophie back and she would appear everywhere with him in public until he did what he swore to her he would do. Produce an heir. He knew she loved children and if he gave her one, she would never remove the child from its father. At least he knew that much about her. Then he would have her all to himself.

"Mrs. Vassiliadas, it is nice to have you home." Said Giorgio, the driver as he held the door open.

"Thank you Giorgio." She said genuinely.

Demetrius had to admit that he couldn't take his eyes off of her since she donned that snug white halter top dress that barely came to mid thigh. Her two inch heels gave her already splendid legs more definition and she did as he asked and left her hair down. She was a picture of sensual feminine sexuality and she was his. Lifting her chin for the elegant class that she was raised in, she displayed herself well as if nothing was wrong and allowed him to guide her to the car without resisting like they were still a genuinely happy couple. The press was never too far away and Sophie was raised in the public eye, so she knew how to behave perfectly.

She settled in the leather seat and crossed her legs, while Demetrius took his place beside her. "Are we going home to Papa's tonight?"

“Tomorrow. I want you to myself tonight. I’ve waited a year for you and I am not a patient man.” Despite his anger he allowed his gaze to rake heatedly over her form, “Maybe I will prove to be potent enough to get you pregnant the first time I make love to you.”

Her eyes searched his and despite her shame she couldn’t help but let a thrill go through her. Demetrius never let on that he desired her before and his admission stunned her. She didn’t deny she wanted him. She always wanted him from the first day he showed interest in her. Her nights were filled with dreams only consisting of Demetrius, but when the betrayal happened she was distraught and crushed.

He was an exceptional specimen of man, and she knew he was sought after by many women. She knew his reputation before they were married and it frightened her that she couldn’t live up to the experience that he was used to. Maybe this was another reason she ran. Then he didn’t come to her on their wedding night or thereafter and she finally thought that she wasn’t desirable or experienced enough to please him so her father’s words of her just being a trophy made perfect sense. Maybe other women could live like that, but she couldn’t.

“Will I expect a protest?” he asked, staring pointedly at her.

“No, I am your wife.” Averting her gaze, she blushed.

“That you are.” He said with an edge of possessiveness as his eyes dropped to her mouth then her chest.

The rest of the ride was in silence and when the car stopped in front of his apartment building, he took her hand and helped her out of the car. Sophie had only been at his penthouse once before and forgot the sheer size of it until she stood in the foyer looking at the polished marble floors. Demetrius had several large estates in the country where she usually stayed. It was for her protection, he told her when he first moved her there, but she was alone while he was at work and only came home on the

weekends to see her. Her father was rich, but Demetrius was disgustingly so.

"There you are Demetrius." Came a seductive feminine voice from down the hall, "Come in, I have a surprise for you."

Sophie turned her shocked and accusing gaze on her husband whose seasoned expression showed nothing as he stared back at her. She was sure he'd heard the woman because her voice echoed in the large hallway, but looking at him didn't show any indication of it. "Demetrius..." she narrowed her accusing emerald gaze on his impassive expression.

"Don't." was all he said severing any other words she was going to say. His voice was completely autocratic and firm. "You should know better now Sophie."

Should she? She waited for some sort of explanation when the woman's voice called his name again. Sophie felt herself tremble. Did he actually use this place to entertain his mistresses and neglect to let the woman know that he was bringing his wife here tonight? Instead she watched him cast a glance in the direction of the voice. Then he returned his eyes to hers and released an impatient breath at her expression of disbelief. Sighing heavily, he took her by the elbow and led her down the hall toward it.

Sophie turned away at the sight waiting for Demetrius. The woman was scantily clad in her lacy underclothes and sprawled across the sofa like a wanton seductress.

"Clarissa, this is my wife Sophie." He said with genuine indifference to the half naked woman

"Oh God! The woman hopped up and began to throw her clothes on. "Your *wife*?"

"I *am* married." He released Sophie and began to casually loosen his tie not giving Clarissa privacy to dress. "If you remember, our wedding was named the wedding of the decade by the press."

The woman turned beet red, “I know...but...I—mean I never seen you with her and. Oh God I’m sorry.” She stuttered shooting a look at a stunned Sophie while quickly doing up the buttons on her blouse, not being able to hide the blush that crept up her body.

“You can pick up your severance pay on Monday.’ He added a little more abruptly.

Sophie swung he gaze up to him noticing the slight change in his tone. All of a sudden she detected the slightest edge of anger. Obviously his mistress wasn’t aware of her coming home and what severance pay? He paid them?

As if hearing her thoughts he answered her unspoken questions as Clarissa released a sob and ran out of the penthouse much to his indifference, “She is...was my personal assistant Sophie, and no, I never slept with her. I do not sleep with my employees. It’s crude to think such a thing. Obviously she thought there was something between us. I assure you there isn’t.” he paused allowing his dark eyes to affect her before continuing, “Apparently you haven’t learned your lesson.”

Sophie didn’t miss that he didn’t even spare the woman a partial glance as she ran by him. Somehow it made her feel a bit relieved, “Lesson? Demetrius the woman was practically naked in your penthouse waiting for you!”

Suppressing a smile at her jealousy he continued, “I cannot help what women do around me. I did not encourage her.”

God, him even being in the same room as a woman, encouraged them! Didn’t he know that? “Is this common then?” she felt her anger rising. “Every time I enter one of your apartments, there’s a half naked woman present. First my sister, now her!” she gestured toward the hall the woman rushed down moments ago. She had no right to get jealous but she couldn’t help it. Half naked women throwing themselves at him were beginning to bother her. She was sure he had that happen as

soon as hit puberty, but it didn't mean she had to like it. "Every time I turn around, is another woman going to throw herself at you?"

"No." his masculine lips twitched.

"And where are your mistresses?" she waved an angry hand. Now she was just plain angry. It was a sick feeling in her gut to know that other women found him as desirable as she did. It was all of his fault for being so appealing to her sex.

"Plural...how flattering," he finally gave her a sexy grin making him look unfairly jaw dropping gorgeous. He was elated that she was displaying a rare show of temper. It added fire to her eyes and it affected him as well. He could feel heat enter his groin while watching her alive with passion even if it was jealousy. He didn't want a meek submissive wife despite his ranting about her obeying him earlier. He wanted a woman who could ignite a fire with a mere look from those gorgeous eyes his wife possessed. And she was certainly doing that because he was heating up.

Her father had her sheltered and when he demanded something, she obeyed, but when he first saw her by the pool his whole body lurched at the sight of her. Even if she acted in perfect poise, he wanted a passionate wife, and now he knew she was.

She shrugged trying to feign indifference, but inside her gut was twisting into a painful knot. She couldn't possibly expect him to remain celibate after she'd left. After all, he had a reputation. However the thought of him being with other women devastated her. Turning away, so he couldn't see the rising tears, he reached out and stopped her.

"Sophie, I don't have a mistress." He said sincerely seeing the glimmer of tears forming in her eyes. This recent act of Jealousy actually pleased him. If she was jealous then her feelings for him were genuine and still existed.

Her mouth fell open, “What? But Demetrius—“ she fought to keep the tremor out of her voice, but was unsuccessful, “—I left—and you, I mean—“

“I haven’t for some time.” He interrupted seeing her struggle with her confession, “Although, I should after what you have done. It certainly wouldn’t have been a crime after my wife had left me.”

She wasn’t sure she should believe him, but he had no reason to lie to her and he was right, he had every right to take one. “Why didn’t you?”

He reached up and caressed her cheek with the back of his hand as his eyes centered on hers, “Don’t you know?” Slowly she shook her head, and he smiled, “Of course you don’t. Go and get ready for me little one...I’ll join you in a bit. I have a few calls to make.” What he didn’t tell her was that he took his vows seriously also and no other woman appealed to him after he had married her.

“Yes Demetrius.” She turned to leave but he stopped her by seizing her arm and pulling her against his hard form. Before she knew what was happening, his mouth covered hers in a crushing possessive kiss. His hands framed her face and guided her head to better slant his mouth over hers. He had kissed her before, but not like this! They were affectionate and reserved whereas, this was completely unrestrained and she moaned when he thrust his tongue between her lips to caress hers. Never in her life did she expect such a small gesture to cause her stomach to contract and her lower body to flush with heat. Then abruptly he lifted his head but only a few inches.

She opened her eyes to his meet dark smoldering stare and she swore her knees suddenly turned to jelly.

Keeping his hands on either side of her head he spoke with a deep husky tone, “Now, Sophie...say my name again.”

She licked her lips slowly, took a deep breath and breathed,

“Demetrius.”

Gradually, he smiled, “Much better. Now go and get ready for me. I’ll be along soon.”

Managing a small smile of her own for the first time since they’d been reunited, she turned with her gaze still on him as she walked off.

His eyes followed the elegant sway of her perfectly flared hips and felt a tightening in his groin. Despite his outward restraint he was more than eager to part her glorious thighs and bury himself deep within her. It was all he could think of since he married her and all he could think of when he lost her. It was the only thing left to possess her completely.

Placing his hands on his hips he glanced down at the front of his slacks. Even that small kiss gave him an erection hard enough to be painful. She felt so soft against him and tasted like fresh honey. He smiled to himself wondering if she tasted like that all over. He loved the taste of honey.

Now that he found her again she would be his. Time and time again he chastised himself for not claiming her a year ago when she was eighteen. Would she have left him then knowing how much he coveted her? Nikos told him to go slow with her, not to frighten her and although he knew he was right, he’d regretted it.

As for her accusations of a mistress, he lost the will to even touch other women when he married Sophie, though many have tried. Her sister for one.

He felt rage rise remembering that night finding her naked in his bed, soon to be his wedding bed. No, he hadn’t bedded Sophie yet but he was going to, and like hell another woman would lay in that same bed. He had the mattress removed after that incident. Maybe it seemed like a petty gesture, but to have that whore in the same bed as his virginal bride was insulting. Helene had been throwing herself at him for years, and he made

a point of not visiting Nikos' home as often because of that. Yet when he laid eyes on Sophie for the first time he was glad he went that day.

He took out his phone and dialed Hektor's number. It was time he told his father-in-law the truth of why Sophie ran. Helene needed to be taught a lesson, and it wasn't up to him although he really wanted to, it was up to her father.

Sophie wanted this night to be as her wedding night should have been. She managed to find her white lace teddy that she meant to wear that night. Then she sat down and proceeded to brush out her long hair. She had much to make up for with Demetrius and tonight would be their start.

When her brother Nikos brought him home over two years ago, she'd instantly fallen in love with him, but she was only seventeen, and she didn't think he was that interested. Then a few weeks later, her father called her into his study and told her that Demetrius Vassiliadas had offered for her hand in marriage. It must've been a full five minutes before she had the words to speak. She knew Demetrius' reputation and not once did she fathom him someone who would marry.

"Sophie?" her father stated with an edge of concern, "Does he not appeal to you?"

"It's Demetrius Vassiliadas Papa, who wouldn't he appeal to?" she said honestly. Of course he did. He was a striking man in his prime.

"That's not an answer daughter." He said with impatience while studying her expression.

She didn't want to admit how she felt to anyone. Demetrius had a killer reputation for women and she didn't want to be another notch on his belt even though she had to admit he affected her in a way that no man had ever. "I'm sorry Papa. I'm just surprised. He didn't seem to even notice me." Actually she thought he was a little interested in her when Nikos brought him



out to the pool to introduce him to her. However, she knew of Demetrius Vassiliadas and his ability to make any woman feel like they were the only one that existed at that time, so she was too afraid to put any faith in her feelings. Even when he sat down and started to ask her about herself he was so unbelievably charming and incredibly gorgeous that she found herself blurting out answers to his questions in surprising nervousness.

An amused smile spread across his lips at her statement. "No?"

She shook her head.

"Sophie, not all women are treated like a man's concubine. Some women, like you, are rare in many ways."

"I'm your daughter, you have to say that." His look told her she was wrong.

"No Sophie. Demetrius wants you because you are a trophy."

"A what?"

"Now," he straightened, ignoring her indignant expression, "If you refuse his offer, I will accept on your behalf. He is worth a fortune and merging our empires will be a good move."

Trophy? Good move? Oh God, her father was selling her to the highest bidder and Demetrius was filthy rich. "You can't be serious."

"I am. You need direction in your life. Nikos will be running my company in a few years and I've pampered you too much."

"Papa, I can look after myself."

He smiled, "I've indulged you and Helene, but unlike her, you have a kindness in you that reaches out to others. You have never had to work a day in your life Sophie and I don't ever want you to. Demetrius will protect and take care of you. He gives me his word."

"He is a womanizer Papa!" She exclaimed. How could her father make such a union sound so cold? Like any young woman, she had fantasized about love and a wedding full of love and a

marriage filled with children.

He smiled, "He is a Greek man in his prime, an alpha male. Of course he has women." He said as if it made perfect sense.

After the talk with her father, she felt like a piece of meat on the auction block and at first she resisted Demetrius' attentions, but as the weeks turned into months and he persisted, she began to feel eager at his visits. He never took her out, except for that trip to England with his large extended family, and when he visited her there was always someone else there. Gossip, she supposed. After all she was eleven years his junior. When she turned eighteen they set a date for the wedding. Only her wedding night was spent alone. She waited for him to come to her and he never did. Two months passed and he never even touched her beyond a gentle embrace, a chaste kiss, or to place a hand on her in possessiveness in public, such as taking her elbow or placing his palm on her lower spine. In truth, she was devastated. She was in love with him and he wouldn't touch her like a husband would touch his wife. Then she came home early from a function one night and found Helene in his bed, naked. She did the first thing that came to her, she ran from it. She was blinded by hurt and took what money she had and went to the airport catching the first plane out of the country.

Suddenly she felt as if she wasn't alone. Staring past her reflection she saw Demetrius leaning against the door frame of her room watching her with hooded eyes and his arms crossed casually on his chest. He'd taken time to remove his clothes and don a robe and to her he looked utterly sinful.

"Stunning." He straightened and walked in the room, pausing to shut the door before turning back to her, "Stand up Sophie. I want to look at you." He walked up to her as she did as he asked, and reached over to take her hand.

She did her best not to cover herself and stood bravely in front of him. It seemed like she waited for this night her whole

life and although she was terrified, she would try to please him. He lifted her hand up and twirled her around.

"You are perfect Sophie." He said thickly soaking up every inch of her in the lacy outfit.

She blushed, "Demetrius...I..." he placed a finger on her lips.

"No, we are not going to mention the past tonight." He started backing toward her bed pulling her with him, "I'm going to make you my wife in every way. Something I realize now, I should have done a year ago." He pulled her against his body and captured her mouth with his. One of his hands pushed up under her see-through top and caressed one of her full breasts, while the other worked its way down her back to cup her derriere pulling her tighter against him. He wanted every part of her touching him and to his delight; he felt her hands fumbling with the tie of his robe. Turning, he laid her down on the bed without breaking contact with her. To him, her body was still that perfect hourglass figure of sensuality. She may be a little thin, but she was all woman. He stood up and let the robe dropped to the floor revealing his naked form. Her eyes roved over him in fascination and he stood letting her study his body. She flushed but she didn't avert her gaze. Then it went lower and her large eyes widened when they settled on his erection.

"Don't be afraid Sophie," he murmured while bending over her, "I will be as gentle as I can."

Every inch of her was feminine delicacy and every inch of her was going to be touched and possessed by him tonight. Pushing the thin garment up over her head he bent and took one of her glorious nipples in his mouth and teased the tip with his tongue. She arched toward him and moaned. Like everything else about her, her breasts were perfect. He cupped the other and paid them equal attention until she was writhing with want. But it wasn't enough for him. He wanted her to beg and after he moved his attention lower, she did.

Clamping her thighs on either side of his head she whimpered and twisted against him crying out an orgasm. Then he took his time and worked her into another frenzy. He pulled her thighs apart and settled between them while crushing her mouth under his. Lifting her hips he guided himself into her groaning at her tightness until he felt the barrier of her virginity. The fact that she didn't lie and remained pure sent a wave of relief through him. Regardless of it being her first time, she was moist and ready for him. Slowly he withdrew and inched back in her telling her to open her eyes. He wanted to look into those emerald depths when he claimed her for himself. As soon as she did, he thrust deep tearing that fragile marker. She closed her eyes and cried out in pain. He smothered her cry with his mouth. Then he withdrew slowly and slid into her again and again, using the same careful rhythm until she was able to look at him in wonderment. Awash with arrogance at her reaction, he increased his tempo knowing that she felt the building tightness of pleasure as he did where they joined. Continuously his mouth moved expertly over hers as he rocked on top of her. The languor built in him like a bonfire and he closed his eyes and gritted his teeth trying to resist coming before her own pleasure. Roughly he pulled her thighs high over his hips without breaking his strokes to get deeper access to her untouched treasure. That did it. The noises started pouring from her mouth like a bubbling brook. Then she tensed, tightened her thighs and cried out. She continued to shudder as he plunged hard and deep into her growling his own release while arching high above her just to claim that precious last few millimeters in her as his seed poured into her. Releasing a rough breath he collapsed over her breathing raggedly.

Nothing could have prepared him for that. It was incredible. He rolled onto his side and pulled her against him and she nuzzled her face into his neck before as she fell asleep. Sophie

was beautiful everywhere and if he had any doubt before, it was gone now that he had seen her entirely naked. It was clear to him at this moment, he should have taken her on their wedding night, but he thought he was sparing her the shock of intimacy. He wanted her to be prepared for him. Now he realized it was a mistake. He would no longer allow her the freedom of making any decision regarding her future. Yes, he knew he was being possessive, but she was in fact, his wife.

The next morning as the sun rose he woke before her and propped himself up on an elbow to watch her sleeping form. He'd worn her out by waking her again in the middle of the night to fulfill his savage need for her. Even though it was her first time, he couldn't wait and wanted her again. Never in his life had he desired a woman as much as he did her, and she didn't disappoint him in the least. He smiled as his fingers traced a path down her cheek pushing her long silky black hair off of her face. Smiling, he thought sleeping beauty couldn't hold a candle to his wife. He felt himself harden again. He knew she felt guilty about what she had done, and he was going to use that to take her as often as he wanted until she became pregnant. Just when he thought he couldn't get any harder he stiffened like granite thinking about her having his child. It would be beautiful.

He hadn't had a woman since he married her. There had been times when he thought about it, but he knew it wouldn't be an easy fix. Even as angry as he was at her for leaving him, he couldn't and didn't want another woman. Before he was officially engaged to her he'd had plenty of women to try and occupy him and take his mind off of her, because he couldn't have her, but it didn't work. He only wanted one woman. Celibacy for a little over a year was a test of his devotion to her. Especially for a Greek male in his sexual prime when he was used to more than one woman a week, but now that he had her, it was worth every agonizing day. Not that there wasn't offers, because there were

plenty, but looking at her now with the light of dawn streaming through the windows draping over her perfect body told him exactly why no other woman would do. Sophie was voluptuous, sensual and sexually perfect and she was his. No woman should be gifted in so many ways and naïve at her capabilities.

His hand trailed down her soft shoulder and he brushed the blankets away to continue the path over her hip, across her flat belly to the triangle of hair between her thighs. The light from the window highlighted her exquisite curves; the narrowing of her small waist and flare of her perfectly rounded hips. Even as she slept her beauty was to be reckoned with. When his finger slipped into her, her eyes shot open and dilated focusing on him. With her awaking came a flood of moisture over his fingers. Almost instantly she was ready for him. He couldn't ask for a better response and watching her lips part in a silent gasp as he continued to tease her made him instantly hard. He couldn't help himself, he had been celibate for more than a year waiting for her, and because of that he was insatiable, especially after experiencing her passion. She responded to him like she was made specifically for his desires. He intended to take every opportunity to make love to her and teach her the pleasures that they could share.

When she said his name in that breathless passionate tone he'd come to love that night, he eased his fingers out of her and pressed her onto her back, flattening her to the mattress and coming on top of her. Slowly he moved into her taking into consideration that he already had her twice during the night while his mouth covered hers and his tongue thrust into her mouth in the same rhythm as he rocked inside her. Oh hell, she felt so good he almost forgotten himself. Then she started making these sexy noises with every deep stroke he really did. Nothing could encourage a man more than a woman enjoying the act as much as he was and he moved with more force, but she

never protested. Instead she dug her fingernails into the skin at his back and arched toward him.

Perspiration beaded both of their bodies as his movements became more urgent and demanding. The mewling noises she was making at the back of her throat was driving him wild. His wife. His beautiful wife. Groaning against her mouth he felt himself building for a climax and so was she by the lifting she was doing under him meeting his hips in time with intense noises she was making. "Tell me." He murmured against her lips as he continued to surge into her without breaking his rhythm.

She gasped and opened her eyes to lock with his.

"Tell me you love me." He repeated plunging deeper causing her to release a loud gasp of pleasure.

"I—" she gasped as he thrust again, "God, Demetrius!" Again, "—I love you." She threw back her head and said his name as she reached her pleasure.

He grabbed her hips and thrust hard and deep growling his own release, and thrust again holding himself there to feel the pulsing of his shaft releasing his seed deep in her. Then he collapsed on her breathing heavily into her shoulder. He had wondered if she did love him, now he knew. No one could lie under that intense sexual interrogation. It was one more thing he had on her that would hold her to him from now on.

Sophie felt intensely vulnerable after her passionate confession. He knew how she felt and was able to easily drag it out of her. In his extensive experience as a lover, he used her body to betray her emotions. Nothing was safe from him. Now she was raw and stripped down to her bare self. She felt like weeping and rolled away from him to hide her tears. Then she felt the bed shift as he got up and went to the bathroom.

It was true, she loved him, but he didn't love her. She was a trophy to him, like her father said. A perfect picture of the perfect wife for a billionaire. Maybe it wasn't what her sister had told her

a year ago that sent her running; maybe it was that she couldn't bear the fact that she was an object, a possession to him. By the time he came back to bed she was able to stop the tears. She didn't want him to know that he broke her. Then she felt his arms around her, pulling her back against him and shortly after came the rhythmic breathing of his sleep. No matter how much she wanted to she couldn't pull away. It felt so good to be with him after all of this time that she rather cut off her arm then move. Soon after, she too fell asleep.

"Sophie."

His deep drawling voice lifted her out of her slumber. Opening her eyes, she saw him immaculately dressed in a white cotton shirt and tan chinos sitting on the side of the bed. With a quick glance at the clock she realized she'd slept until almost noon. He had completely worn her out and his arrogant grin lent her the idea that he knew that.

Demetrius reached over and caressed her cheek, "Time to rise. Your father is expecting us this afternoon. Your clothing has arrived and the servants have already placed it in your dressing rooms."

She should have known that he took the liberty of shopping for her. "Okay." She stretched and sat up with a groan causing him to actually chuckle, and then his expression turned to concern.

"Sophie, I hope I wasn't too rough with you," he said sincerely as he cupped her chin and searched her eyes with his.

Quickly she shook her head, "No—I—" She flushed as images of their lovemaking flooded into her mind and lost her words. She could have never imagined something like that, it was incredible. She felt herself heat up remembering what he'd done to her all night. Then he gave her a devastating grin loaded with conceit almost as if he could read her thoughts.

"Good." He stated. "Tonight, I will expect much the same."



Although she was in a state of embarrassment she couldn't help but give him a wide smile.

"Again, no protest?" he returned her smile.

"Not even close." She answered with some boldness causing him to tilt his head back and laugh. It sounded wonderful. For the first time it felt as though there was nothing terrible between them and she wanted to capture that moment forever and savor it.

"Such a confession from a beautiful woman does wonders for a man's ego." He leaned over and brushed his lips across hers before he stood and left the room.

His ego didn't need a boost, the man was already very self-assured and with every reason to be. Although her wedding night came a year later, he had made it one of the most memorable events of her life. Just remembering his gentle strength and steeled control with her inexperience made waves of pleasure flop around in her belly. No wonder he was so popular with women, the man was a premier lover. Last night, he had made her feel so cherished like she was his sole object of affection. If she'd known back then how it was going to be with him, she definitely would have never left him. Sighing she got out of bed feeling the evidence of her night with Demetrius in every muscle she contained. Letting out a feminine groan she stood on shaky legs and went to the shower letting the jets sooth her sore body.

An hour later, she was just about finished getting ready. She chose to wear a cotton pale yellow strapless dress and white heels she sat down to pull up her hair. She had to admit, she missed her expensive wardrobe and the cool rich fabric felt wonderful on her skin.

"Leave it down Sophie. I already told you that I prefer it that way."

Distracted by his deep voice, she glanced up in her mirror to see his large form filling the doorway much like the night before,

and felt the effects of his presence on her body. Already her heart quickened along with her breathing and she swore she felt her breasts swell along with it. Then there was the heat flashing in her lower pelvis. He had practically branded her with his body last night from the way she reacted to him. Even if she had told him she hated him, her body would call her a liar. Keeping her eyes on him, she nodded and released the clump of curls letting them cascade down her back while watching as he approach her. He leaned down and set his lips into the nape of her neck causing her to close her eyes at the caress and tilt her head away from him to allow him access to the soft skin there. When she opened them he was looking at her in the reflection of the mirror, causing that familiar heat in her pelvis. God, a man shouldn't emit such sexual charisma. It was so unfair to women.

A slow smile spread across his handsome face at her reaction to him and he produced a velvet box for her. He knew his affect on women, but to see his wife act with such virginal wantonness at his touch only expanded his ego. He was impressed at his own abilities as a lover to know that he was able to please her. However, she had also pleased him and while she slept he made a trip to the jewelers to find her something to show his appreciation. Despite her actions of leaving him, she proved to be the most desirable woman he'd ever had in bed giving herself to him freely despite her shyness. Although, she was so beautiful, she really didn't need to make the effort and he still would have been aroused with uncontrollable lust to possess her.

Sophie's eyes widened at the gift. "What is this?"

"For you." He smiled.

She couldn't help but feel some elation. Except for her engagement and wedding ring, he'd never bought her jewellery before. He'd gotten her plenty of other things though, but it always seemed odd that he didn't buy her jewels. A sharp intake of breath escaped her lips as he opened the box and produced a

beautiful delicate dainty diamond necklace. He removed the necklace and told her to pull back her hair so he could clasp it around her neck.

"It's perfect for you."

She suppressed a shiver of pleasure as his fingers brushed her nape. Then studying her reflection she knew he was right. It wasn't elaborate and gaudy; it was delicate and dainty like her. It suited her well. In fact it was so perfect for her it was almost frightening that he understood her so well.

"Tonight, when you come to my bed, wear nothing, but it." He finished with his hands sliding up her ribcage and cupping the soft swell of breasts while trailing his mouth down her neck. His eyes watched her expression in the mirror and he felt absurdly confident in the affect he had on her. She tilted her lovely head back against him, closed her eyes and parted her lush full lips. Then abruptly he released her and stood, "We must go or we'll be late." He had to. A moment longer and he would have her flat on her back in bed again. He knew that she would let him do anything to her from her reaction and that turned him on more than he expected.

Her eyes opened and focused on him. She suddenly felt the sting of rejection. Why would she think like that? Demetrius had made love to her three times. Wasn't that enough? Or was it the fact that he seemed to turn his desire on and off so easily that bothered her? Knowing that he desired her made her feel like she was worth something to him and but when he was able to reject her, it seemed as though what she felt for him wasn't returned. She loved him, and was insecure beyond everything over his feelings for her especially after he made her confess it to him. Were they still the same? Did he ever love her or did he just desire her? She was vulnerable, an eggshell with her feelings, and he knew it. Yet, he never mentioned his feelings for her even before she left him. But would he chase her halfway around the

world if he didn't feeling something?

He saw the hurt in her eyes and for one of the few times in his life he explained, "Sophie, I can't take you again. I know you must be sore. Any woman would be after last night, and I was not easy on you for your first time." He left out the fact that he was physically aroused to the point of it being painful and he didn't want her to know the affect she had on him either.

Something in her felt like weeping at that confession. Demetrius didn't explain himself, yet he did to her of all people when she didn't deserve it after what she had done. Then he reached down and helped her to stand and his expression cast over again. Although she knew that it would take a long time for him to trust her again, and she deserved his indifference, it still hurt.

The three hour ride to her father's estate was gut wrenching. She already knew how angry he would be with her and had no desire to face him after she had humiliated her family.

"You must smile Sophie." Demetrius told her reading her worried expression. "Hektor will see that his daughter is happy to be reunited with her husband."

She lifted her chin, "I will Demetrius." Although she knew her father would chastise her and make her feel worse than she already did. Hektor was not a man who forgave easily.

He gave her a smile of approval

"Will everyone be there?"

"If you mean your entire extended family. Yes, except for Helene. She ran off when she heard you were coming home. It just lends to her guilt. Now, like a tramp she'll run around and your father will only hear from her when she needs money."

Sophie felt herself redden, "She's *still* my sister Demetrius."

He set his dark brown gaze on her for a full minute before he responded. Tilting his head slightly he finally spoke, "we do not chose our relatives."

Was that an apology? When he continued talking she knew it wasn't.

Placing a hand on her thigh possessively he continued, "You are nothing like her. If she was someone else, would you even consider her as a friend? Ask yourself that question. This was a woman who crawled into your husband's bed while he was in the shower to try and seduce him thinking that you were out for the night." He stared pointedly at her, "Her own *sister's* husband, and in turn nearly destroyed our marriage by lying to you about it. This was a woman who gave birth to an illegitimate son and dumped him unceremoniously on her father while she flitted across Europe with other men. A pregnancy that she unsuccessfully tried to blame on me." He finished with barely concealed rage.

"Demetrius..."

He waved a hand cutting her off, "Just answer the question Bella."

"It's not a fair question." She protested.

He stared at her with his dark eyes, "Only if you complicate it. If not, it is simple." He removed a cigarette and lit it. "Answer this then. Would you have left me otherwise?"

She had been reflecting over that question in the last twenty-four hours and came to the conclusion that it was the final straw that made her run from him. Yes, she loved him, but he wanted to own her, possess her and it became unbearable when he refused to touch her.

"Sophie?" He prompted with some hesitancy when she didn't answer right away.

Green eyes met dark brown as she brought her gaze to his, "I think it was a few things Demetrius."

He took a drag from his cigarette and to her acted as if her confession was no surprise. "Such as?"

"I think I felt as though you felt I was a trophy and object for

display...”

He waved an angry hand, cutting her off, “That’s the most ridiculous thing I’ve ever heard Sophie. You are no longer a juvenile you are my wife. I would not marry a trophy. A trophy is something you put on a shelf to display.” His eyes ran down the length of her legs then back up to her face, “You are exquisitely beautiful, I don’t deny this, but your reference to being a trophy is absurd.” Where on earth would she get that idea? He always thought of her as his partner, his lifelong mate, not some piece of tin. It was absurd!

After all of this time, she still didn’t know him. What was she then, if not what her father referred to her as? She stopped talking and turned her head to look out the window at the familiar countryside. Every time she opened her mouth she seemed to offend him. The only time they seemed to agree was in bed. Was she being ridiculous? It seemed like years ago when she left him, and she’d matured so much in the months that she was gone. She had learned to survive on her own. But God, she missed him. Turning her head, her eyes roamed over his handsome profile. The limousine could have housed a football team, it was so large, but he chose and always chose to sit directly beside her. Also, he always was touching her at some point. Even now, his hand still rested on her thigh and he only released her long enough to light his cigarette. Almost as if he let go, she would disappear. Why did she not see this before? If she was a trophy, would he behave in such a way? God he was so beautiful! Every line, every part of him dripped with masculinity. Her eyes dropped to his mouth. That same mouth that touched every inch of her last night and led her to experience such pleasure that she could never fathom. Heat stirred low in her pelvis at the memories.

“You’re staring.” He said finally turning and looking down at her.

She was amazed that all the anger was gone from his expression and there was a hint of desire in his eyes as they darkened while a sensual smile splayed across his face. The man could change moods so quickly it made her head spin. Managing a smile she said, "I can't help it." His smile widened.

"I already told you Sophie, it is too soon for you. Don't make me lose control and make love to you again. Not until tonight. Taking my bride in a moving car does have its appeals, but I'm a much better lover in bed, where I can take my time with you like you deserve." He gave her a heated appraisal as a blush crept into her cheeks.

### CHAPTER THREE

Servants were already waiting at the entrance of the villa to take their luggage. Pearce, the head butler informed Demetrius that Hektor wanted to speak to Sophie immediately. Demetrius felt Sophie tremble under his touch and he didn't offer any support, "This is no less than you deserve Sophie. Your father is not as forgiving as I am."

She stared up at him with worried eyes. He was right. Her father was ruthless, like Demetrius, but he had thirty more years of perfecting it. He was a tall man with dark eyes and salt and pepper hair and still undeniably handsome even at sixty-five. Demetrius led her to her father's study where Pearce said he was waiting.

Hektor had his back to them staring out the window across the fields of olive trees. When the door opened he turned and Sophie knew instantly that he was furious. His eyes were on her when he approached the couple as he extended his hand to Demetrius. Sophie kept her head bowed unable to bring herself to look at him.

"I trust the trip went well." Hektor said to Demetrius.

“Yes, she’s a little tired,” he paused, “And thin.”

“I see this.”

Sophie felt her father’s hand under her chin, guiding her gaze to his. She couldn’t bring herself to look at him on her own knowing that piercing dark gaze would make her crumble

“Do you have nothing to say to me?” he said sternly.

She blinked back tears and held his stern look. She loved her father very much, and now that she understood the impact of her actions she was completely ashamed, “forgive me papa.” She murmured.

Hektor stood erect and flicked a gaze to Demetrius and asked him for a few moments with his daughter. Demetrius agreed took one look at the top of Sophie’s head and left.

Sophie felt overwhelming dread at being left alone with her father. If Demetrius seemed formidable, Hektor was terrifying when angered.

settling his dark stare back on his daughter, he spoke and there was no mistaking the disappointment in his tone, “In time, I will forgive you Sophie because you are my daughter, but right now, you need to know the full impact of what you have done to us, and your husband. This is more shameful than what Helene has ever done to this family. You have disgraced your husband Sophie.”

“Yes, I know.” She was unable to hold the tears back this time. It seemed more devastating knowing that she shattered her father’s trust for her. At least Demetrius still held her no matter how angry he’d gotten. Never had she seen her father so insensitive toward her. She was always daddy’s little girl and the way he looked at her now had no trace of it in his eyes.

“I expect proper behavior befitting of a wife of your status from now on.”

She nodded.

“If you are sincere, I feel you can redeem yourself by giving



me a grandchild. Demetrius has expressed his wish at becoming a father.”

“I know Papa. He has already spoken to me about it.” Told her what was expected of her was more like it. However, this was one of his demands that she was happy about.

He eyed her thoughtfully, appreciating the fact that she didn't argue. He actually expected it for she was only nineteen and every bit a spitting image of her mother. His beloved deceased wife that he would have given her anything if she'd asked for it, but fought him tooth and nail when she felt strongly about something. She was the only woman who could have him on bended knee pledging his love for her and he wouldn't have traded those years with her for anything. “Good.”

“But you have Markus.” Sophie watched her father's expression go from angry to extreme outrage.

“Markus is not legitimate! He is the by-product of my promiscuous daughter! I pray to God you haven't been so foolish in your absence.” He sliced an arm through the air in anger.

She almost flinched under his temper, “No Papa.” She answered averting her eyes in shame again, “I have not been foolish.” She knew he was staring down at her, she could feel the heat of his gaze on the top of her head.

“I take part of the blame for this. I have spoiled you Sophie.” His voice had calmed down somewhat, “I dread to think what would have happened if Demetrius divorced you for your behavior. Be thankful that he still wants you.”

She was.

He released a frustrated sigh, “There will be no more of this from you is that clear?”

She nodded.

Waving a hand in frustration he started pacing, “I am surprised at your behavior. Helene I expect, but not you. The publicity was enormous and I am grateful that it was handled

easier than expected. Demetrius was completely distraught.” This brought her head up, and he saw her expression, “You are surprised? You are foolish Sophie if you didn’t know. Not only that you took Helene’s word over your own husband.”

“She was convincing Papa. I found her in Demetrius’ bed.”

“Your sister has the scruples of a common street walker.” Sophie gasped, “So now you know. I should have disowned her years ago, but your mother made me promise not to. I had more faith in you Sophie. You shouldn’t have listened to the lies your sister told. You shouldn’t have run without finding out the truth. Now, that you know, you will not have anything to do with her.”

“But...”

“I mean it! Your husband is your priority now. You need to mend what trust you destroyed. Do you understand?”

Sophie couldn’t answer that right away. She loved her sister regardless of how she behaved. Not only that, she was certain Helene had her reasons only none of them knew what they were.

“Sophie?”

She bowed her head and nodded slowly, “I will do all I can to make Demetrius forgive me” she stated. More than anything she wanted to fall to her knees and beg her father for forgiveness, but she knew him and it wouldn’t be well received. His forgiveness needed to be earned. So instead she stood and agreed with everything he threw at her. Then her father launched into the events of the past year and how much she had put her family through making her feel more shameful with each passing word. She cried continuously and he acted as if he didn’t notice or didn’t care. After dealing with him for the next twenty minutes until he dismissed her with an abrupt wave of his hand she was relieved to see Demetrius waiting for her.

He was leaning with his shoulder against the wall and arms crossed under his chest waiting patiently. There was no sympathy in his eyes either, not that she expected it, but she

preferred him over her father at that moment. If she had been filled with guilt before, it was nothing compared to how her father made her feel.

"Your brother has just arrived." He said as Sophie approached him.

"I can't speak to him now." She was beside herself with shame as it was.

"You will." Demetrius demanded.

She glanced up at him, "Please, can I just have a few minutes?"

He sighed and looked over her head for a moment before directing his eyes back to hers, "All right Sophie—Christ—you cry now?" he stated with exasperation watching the tears streak down her cheeks.

She couldn't help it. The tears suddenly spilled forth and she began to sob as she stood there in front of him stripped of all dignity. "I'm so sorry." She choked out.

Demetrius' anger flooded out of him at the sincerity present in her statement. Hektor probably crushed her into an emotional ball after he'd left and he himself had been overbearing and abrupt since he'd removed her from the diner. Then he stripped what was left of her dignity in bed by making her confess her feelings for him. Yet he gave nothing. Her words were not laced with self-pity either. She was genuinely sorry. His heart clenched seeing his beautiful wife beaten down in such a way, because she was always so proud. Yes, he wanted her to pay for what she'd done for him, but now seeing her like this, it didn't seem so important. After all, he'd gotten her back and she was relatively healthy and most importantly, she still loved him. Nevertheless it didn't erase the anguish he felt over the last nine months looking for her, and vowed that when he found her, he would never let her rule his heart again. No, he still didn't trust her, and he still intended to control her every move, but maybe she was too

fragile to subject to so much right away.

At the risk of giving in even slightly he reached for her. "Enough." He said softly while gathering her into his arms. "I told you to hold your chin up."

"I'm trying." She managed in between sobs.

"Sophie love, you have done something disgraceful and your family has a right to confront you."

"I know....it's just so painful."

"Then I expect it will never happen again." He said trying to keep his own emotion out of his voice. If he didn't, she was too distraught to notice.

"Never!" she burst out and felt his arms tighten in response. "I'm sorry Demetrius, I'm so sorry! I should have come to you, but I believed her. I trusted Helene. Forgive me."

*My love, my precious love, don't cry*, he thought, but didn't say the words at the risk of making himself vulnerable toward him again. He lowered his head on hers. Forgiveness was a big step for him. She had hurt him deeply. No woman had been able to affect him in such a way. He never let any of them close except Sophie. "Together, we will rebuild what was destroyed Sophie. Do not ask me to forgive you right away. I've have been angry for a long time and it will take a long time to trust you again. I need you to prove to me, that you really do love me."

She nodded against his chest.

He pulled her back from him to look down at her, "Come, you need to go and freshen up before you meet Nikos." He gave her his handkerchief, "Dry your tears."

Nikos, her brother, and the man responsible for introducing her to her husband was waiting patiently for her when Demetrius escorted her into the sitting room. She remembered that day as clear as yesterday.

"Sophie-Bella," Nikos said in that silkily smooth voice that could charm the most frigid woman, "I want you to meet a close

friend of mine.” He stepped aside and introduced her to Demetrius. After Demetrius sat down next to her, Nikos promptly disappeared leaving her alone with a man that seemed to distract every one of her five senses. He was charming, undeniably masculine, confident, and smelled like pure male. It surprised her because she didn't realize pure gorgeous had such an alluring scent. In five minutes he had her hand in his warm grasp and was soothing her with his deep sexy voice while brushing her unruly hair off her cheeks telling her how beautiful she was. Ten minutes later, she was infatuated, and within twenty she was sure she was in love. There were other women with her that day, some friends, some relatives, but he made sure that she knew that his attention was only on her. The next day flowers arrived. In fact every day flowers arrived when he couldn't see her or when he was out of the country. When he was home, he would visit her and make her feel the way he did the first day they met. Although she did her best to try and resist him, he was too confident in his talents and seemed to know he was winning her. His attention continued even after her father told her that he'd offered for her. When he did offer for her the last of her resistance vanished despite what her father said. She was upset of course, but she would also have the man she loved as her husband.

This was a man who could have any woman, and has, but he chose her. At that time she was young and didn't question why, but now she wondered how come he'd picked her to marry. Only this was a question that couldn't just be blurted out at anytime. She would have to wait until the right moment. Was it because she was a good business proposition as her father indicated, or did he truly care for her?

Back in the present, Nikos was more forgiving than their father. He gave her a generous hug when he saw her and kissed her forehead, “Are you feeling well Sophie?”

“I am.”

“Come, I want you to remove the sadness from your expression. I know our father has probably put you through hell, I won’t do the same.” This confession brought a small smile, “Better.” He kissed her again, “Now Elena is here and is anxious to see you—no—don’t worry, our relatives no nothing. They all think that you went into hiding over the grief of a miscarriage.”

Sophie actually felt some relief for the first time in two days.

“Now go get changed and join her by the pool. There’s at least another half dozen of our relatives with her. Apparently they are all excited that you are feeling better and have decided to join the living again.”

Sophie was grateful for her relatives and Elena. Elena was her first cousin and only a few years older than her. She managed to evade questions of her absence when she was mobbed as she came out to the pool. Elena was kind enough to tell everyone to leave her alone for a moment. She expressed her sympathy at Sophie’s loss and noticed her red rimmed eyes.

“You are still upset?”

“I am.” It was true, but not for what she thought.

“I would probably feel the same way Sophie, especially losing a child from your gorgeous husband. It must’ve meant a lot for the both of you, because he was virtually unseen after you disappeared from the public. Your father said you were on Aquinas and Demetrius was with you as much as possible.”

Sophie just nodded.

“I’m sorry. I can see this is upsetting you. Let’s talk about something else.”

Sophie was relieved until Elena started in about Helene’s child.

“Imagine your sister.” Elena rolled her eyes, “I mean, she should know better. I like men Sophie, but she wasn’t careful enough and look how embarrassing it was.”

"Elena sometimes accidents do happen." She knew she shouldn't defend her, but she couldn't help herself.

Elena stared at her in surprise and then laughed, "Sophie, you are so sweet. There is no way a woman can get pregnant unless she really wants to. It's no wonder Demetrius picked you."

"What does that mean?"

She laughed again, "I do love you. You make me feel as though there is hope sometimes." She got up and walked off leaving Sophie completely baffled.

Nikos watched his sister through the patio doors that led to the pool. Demetrius was pacing behind him while on the phone. Sophie did not look herself. Even in the company of her much loved relatives she had an undeniable air of sorrow about her.

When Demetrius hung up Nikos turned to him, "My sister is unhappy."

"I know." The other man answered without hesitation.

"I expect you to correct this Demetrius." Nikos stated seriously. Sophie was always bubbly and happy. To see her like this was disturbing."

"I'm trying." He tucked his phone back in the pocket of his pants, "We were both betrayed. There is a lack of trust between us, but this will change." After he'd told Sophie to go to bed and wait for him the night before, he phoned Nikos and Hektor and told them why Sophie had run. To them it made sense, but Demetrius was still angry that she hadn't come to him.

"She is special Demetrius. Not like the women you and I are used to. She needs encouragement and love." He nodded toward the pool where Sophie was laying on a poolside lounge chair. "That is a shadow of my sister....correct it."

Demetrius nodded and walked up to stand beside Nikos to look at his wife through the window, "she was damaged over the act of your sister. She loves too deeply and was hurt." He spared his brother in law an intense gaze, "I treasure Sophie. I always

have.”

“I know you have.” Nikos answered not meaning to offend his best friend, “But to see her like this is disturbing. I mean no offense.”

Demetrius placed his hand on Nikos shoulder, “None taken. With Sophie, I need to proceed carefully. I can’t have her run again, or I may never find her.”

Nikos studied his expression for a moment, “Are you still angry?”

“Betrayed.” Demetrius offered, “Angry, and distrustful. Sophie was naïve and it cost us both. I should have done some things differently, but I can’t change the past. We will only stay here tonight, and then I will take her to Aquinas.”

“You mean to isolate her?” Nikos brows shot up.

“I mean to protect her from herself until I get her pregnant. I know enough about my wife to know she would not leave me again if she carries my child. Helene has a lot of influence on her and I want her out of reach.”

Nikos watched Demetrius as shifted his gaze to Sophie again. He wanted desperately to defend her, but would he have acted differently? Demetrius treated Sophie like a princess, they all did and look what had happened. Even if she didn’t confide in her own husband, she should have come to him, her brother. The situation could have been cleared up easily, but Sophie had never dealt with problems before in her life so she panicked and ran. Not only that she trusted her sister.

After some thought Nikos decided that Demetrius handled her well. He doubted very much that he would be so collected after finding out that his wife ran off for a similar reason. Beyond disciplining Sophie harshly, it was a valid choice. Demetrius usually dealt with betrayal with a violent vengeance, but he could see the relief in his expression after so many months of agonizing and worrying about her, and knew that whatever he was used to



doing in the past would not reflect on his sister. There was absolutely no doubt in his mind that Demetrius loved his sister to the point of obsession. Only she was too naïve to see it. This was a man that could have anyone, yet he wanted Sophie. Sophie possessed a genuine kindness that no one else of their class or her beauty had, and Demetrius knew this, the first day he set eyes on her.

Demetrius shifted his gaze back to his brother in law, "I'm asking you not to interfere in my marriage Nikos. You are more than welcome to come and see her, but she must remain on Aquinas."

Nikos managed a smile, "Interfere? No Demetrius I won't. I think Sophie needs to understand what her actions did to us as a family. As her husband, you have that right over us, but do not break her."

"I won't." he said confidently. *I just don't want to lose her again.*

Nikos nodded and watched Demetrius walk away. He remembered the months that followed Sophie's disappearance. Demetrius was distraught beyond reason. None of them knew why Sophie bolted from him. If Nikos didn't know his brother in law so well, he would have thought that he abused her. Now they all knew why she ran...Helene. Sophie idolized Helene and had every reason to believe what she had said, but Demetrius was correct, she should have gone to him. Demetrius withdrew from the public eye and Nikos father released lies to the press about Sophie's reclusiveness while they spent hundreds of thousands of dollars looking for her. He knew that Demetrius loved her beyond his own life, just from the first day he laid eyes on her.

Sophie was home from boarding school one summer after she turned seventeen. She was by the pool with several of her friends and relatives as she is now when Demetrius first spotted her. In fact they were standing in the exact same spot as they are

now.

“Nikos...” he stopped cold, “Who is that beautiful creature?”

Nikos remembered the look on his face to this very day. The man was entranced. Never again had he seen that expression from him except when he looked at Sophie. Normally he would have been angry that the Greek tycoon lusted after his little sister, especially with his reputation toward women, but that look changed everything.

“My sister.” He answered reading his friend’s gaze carefully.

Demetrius set his eyes on him with a look of disbelief, “*She* is your sister?”

“Yes.”

“How old is she?”

“Seventeen.”

“Only seventeen?” he near groaned out the words, “she seems much more...mature.” His eyes darted back to the bombshell just getting out of the water. The woman was gorgeous. She tossed her long hair back over her shoulders and stepped up onto the flagstone that surrounded the pool. Water glistened off her sun darkened skin and in that white bikini she was absolutely erotic.

The look of disappointment that crossed his expression was unmistakable. Nikos never believed in love at first sight, but if there was such a thing, it was displayed on Demetrius face as plain as the blue sky. The maturity that his friend referred to was Sophie’s beautiful body. She could make a Sports Illustrated model green with envy. “She’s an innocent Demetrius. My father has made sure that she stays pure. She attends an all girl school in Switzerland, and is accompanied by bodyguards at all times. A man has not touched her. My father has learned his lesson with Helene. She is not the type to sleep with a man. She *must* be married.”

Demetrius didn’t miss the two men in suits near her and he

suspected they were to protect her. Certainly if he was her father, he would do the same for she was exquisite.

Nikos continued with a smile seeing his friend was speechless and captivated. "Sophie is special, suitable for marriage only. If you want her, you need to speak to my father for a betrothal. Otherwise you will not get near her. I will speak to him on your behalf if you wish." To Nikos amusement, his friend was looked stunned when he finally took his eyes off of Sophie and focused them on him. Then something passed over his features akin to a kid at Christmas receiving the gift of his dreams. "You are fine with this? She is your baby sister."

Nikos actually expected some sort of protest at his suggestion, but was thrilled with his best friend's rapid acceptance. No other man came to mind for his precious baby sister except the one standing next to him, "I would wish for no other as a brother in law. You would make sure she is happy."

Demetrius nodded, "Everything I have, I would give to keep her happy." He said with unmistakable seriousness almost to himself.

Nikos didn't doubt it. The confession was one he thought he'd never hear from a womanizer like Demetrius, but he had said it, and meant it. Demetrius did not say things that he didn't mean.

"She is really young Nikos, at seventeen and I'm twenty eight." He said apprehensively. Demetrius dated women around his age, give or take a few years. Women who had more than enough experience to please him, but Sophie was a virgin and although it may have bothered him in the past, he couldn't help but find it desirable with her. The fact that no man had ever touched her struck a chord deep within him. She would be his and his alone.

"Not too young to be betrothed. You and I both know the age old traditions of our families. The only difference nowadays is,

she must agree.” He eyed his friend for a moment, “I have complete faith that you will not have a problem convincing her.” Demetrius grinned arrogantly in response.

His eyes guided to the beautiful woman taking a seat at a patio table to drink some lemonade. “I am thinking that she is unlike the women you and I are used to.”

“She is, so you must not frighten her. She doesn’t understand a man’s...” he cleared his throat, “...intentions. You need to go slow with her Demetrius.”

He nodded without taking his eyes off of the magnificent creature by the pool.

Nikos chuckled at his friend’s covetous look and placed a hand on Demetrius’ shoulder, “Come, I will introduce you. You will see she is as sweet on the inside as on the outside. I warn you though, that she has been sheltered her whole life and is very naïve. She isn’t used to men like you in pursuit. Helene’s wildness taught us a lesson.”

Demetrius knew the trouble they had with his older sister for time and time again her name ended up in the tabloids as the sunglass tycoon’s wayward daughter. Every picture caught of her showed her with a different man.

Nikos wasn’t concerned over Demetrius’ offer. He already knew his father would instantly approve of the match. Demetrius was a billionaire and would be considered the catch of the century. No one in their right mind would turn him down and he was right.

His mind was drawn back to the present as he saw Demetrius emerged in his swimming trunks and pull another lounge chair up next to his sister who was wearing a worried expression. Then he bent down kissed her then lingering for a bit speaking to her and causing her to smile before he turned and stretched his large frame on the chair beside her. Nikos smiled as Demetrius reached over and took Sophie’s hand in his. Even after

all of those months of betrayal, Demetrius still adored her. Nikos doubted he would have if it had happened to him.

He always thought that Demetrius represented the Greek male perfectly. He was tall dark, muscular, intelligent and self assured. He had many friends, but trusted very few of them and when he spoke, people stopped to listen. Women were drawn to him like a magnet, but he only had eyes for his sister now. Even now with half a dozen female relatives around the pool, some married, some not, but all watched him like he was forbidden fruit.

Sophie also watched her husband when he came out to the pool in his swim trunks. Her cousin Elena immediately made it to his side and Sophie felt a stab of jealousy as the woman put her hands on her husband's thick muscular chest. Then he said something that made her throw back her head and laugh. The smile on his face that he gave her made her want to weep. A year ago she would have said something, but she didn't deserve him after what she had done and turned her head away. Her cousin was promiscuous and she was sure Demetrius knew that. Who wouldn't? Yet, he paid attention to her and insulted her sister who he accused of the same thing. She was thankful for her sunglasses because her eyes began to water up when she heard his deep sexy chuckle and Elena's laugh again. She liked Elena, but how could she flirt with her husband when she was right across the pool from them? It was shameful. She was completely wallowing in self-pity when she heard the scraping of one of the lounge chairs. Turning her head, she watched Demetrius move the chair closer to her and a thrill went through her. Then to her ultimate delight he leaned down and kissed her. It wasn't a casual peck either. He kissed her fully on the mouth and she parted her lips to let his tongue access. Knowing that her relatives were watching she barely contained the moan that threatened to erupt. Then he lifted his head a bit, reached up and

removed her glasses to look at her watery eyes and smiled.

“There is no need to be jealous Sophie.” He spoke softly so no one else could hear him.

He never ceased to amaze her. Again he knew how she was feeling.

“I made love to my beautiful wife last night and the only woman on my mind is her.”

Sophie couldn't help but blush.

“Do you believe me?”

She nodded and gave him a small smile.

“I like the fact that you get jealous over me, but you shouldn't worry love.” Giving her glasses back, he took the chair beside her and stretched out his large muscular form on it. Then he reached over and took her hand, kissed it, and closed his eyes. “Maybe you should go for a swim so I can watch that beautiful body of yours get wet.”

She rolled over on her side and stared at him. Her body? His body was incredible. There wasn't an ounce of fat on him anywhere, and everywhere was adorned with thick muscle, tanned skin, and suddenly she realized that she couldn't fault Elena. Like every other woman that came near him, she was a victim to his powerful male form that seemed to emit his sexual capabilities. Only Demetrius could wear a Speedo and look as incredible as a Greek God. It hugged his body like a second skin and she relished the fact that she knew what was contained in the male bulge encased in Lycra. Just that thought alone made a heat stir low in her pelvis.

“You are staring again.” He said smiling, but not opening his eyes.

“I am.” How did he know?

He cracked his eyes open a bit and looked at her, studying her smoldering expression he subtly shook his head, “It seems my wife has discovered desire.”

“Only for you Demetrius.”

He chuckled, “You risk getting me aroused in front of your family? They will think I’m a rutting bull.” He inclined his head toward the pool, “Do as I say. Go for a swim. Tonight, I will satisfy your lust.”

She gave him a ravishing grin as his eyes slid to her breasts and darkened. “Yes Demetrius.” She got up and with a slow purposeful walk made her way to the side of the pool, stopped and tossed a meaningful look over her shoulder with a sensual grin before she dove gracefully into the water.

Demetrius near got up and followed her after that display. He would have tossed her over his shoulder and hauled her off to make love to her if he didn’t think she be too embarrassed. In the future he doubt he’d be able to restrain himself. Instead he sat up and watched her glide through the water like a swan diving beneath the surface with a beautiful momentarily view of her perfectly formed derriere, just to resurface a few yards down. There was no denying that he couldn’t take his eyes from her for she hadn’t changed much in a year except for the loss of weight, but she was still the most beautiful woman he’d ever seen and she was his. Not once did he regret marrying and he always thought he would, until he’d laid eyes on her.

Nikos knew right away that he was hooked and had introduced them. Actually he was surprised. Demetrius had a reputation for women, and most of it was true. He had mistress in practically every country he did business in, sometimes two, but Nikos still introduced him to his innocent little sister. Had he seen the obsession in him in that instance? That same obsession he felt grow in her absence and expound now that he had her back. Never again will he allow her the chance to run. It was hell dealing with not knowing for nine months. She could have been hurt or worse and he struggled to keep the images out of his mind over her fate.

Dinner with her family was amazing. She had never felt so happy in a long time. Her relatives steered clear of the subject of her so-called miscarriage and treated her like she had never left. The tables were set out back of the house in the courtyard among blossoming olive trees and she could have wept at how much she missed the beauty of her home. When Nikos stood and began to sing after dinner she did weep. What possessed her to leave all of this? Her eyes darted to her husband to find him staring back at her with an unreadable expression and she stopped smiling. Then he tilted his head ever so subtly as if to say 'see what you ran away from', and she averted her gaze flooding with shame again. Was she so spoiled that she didn't see what she had at the time? The answer that rang in her head was an unmistakable „yes'. Standing she excused herself making it seem that she needed a bathroom. When she climbed the stairs and went down the hall to her room, the noise of a child caught her attention. It was the sound of a baby. Obviously Markus. Curious about her sister's son, she entered his nursery.

“Mrs. Vassiliadas?” said the nursemaid who was holding Markus clearly surprised at her presence.

“I want to see my nephew.” She said softly, “do you mind?”

“Of course not.” The woman stood and handed him to Sophie, who didn't quite expect that. However, when the boy grinned and patted his chubby hand on her cheek she smiled back.

“He likes you already.”

“He seems quite happy.” She smiled as she ran her fingers though his blond curls.

“Yes, Mr. Lazardis makes sure all of his needs are met.”

“Except a mother.” She murmured.

“Pardon?”

“Nothing.” Sophie smiled.

“Sophie?”



Turning her head at her husband's unmistakable voice she saw him standing in the doorway looking undeniably attractive. Her smiled faltered when she noticed his expression of disapproval.

"What are you doing?" He knew he'd upset her again and couldn't help but follow to see if she was alright. The past twenty four hours would have destroyed any other female emotionally. Instead he found her in her nephew's nursery holding the baby. For a short moment he felt in awe at the beautiful sight of his wife holding a baby, but it was obliterated by whose child it was.

"I wanted to see my nephew."

He flicked a gaze to the nurse maid and dismissed her with a slight incline of his head.

Sophie adjusted the baby against her, "Do people always do as you ask?" she said after the woman left.

"Yes." He sauntered in the room and reached up touching the child's head, who beamed up at him. "You shouldn't be in here."

"Why not?"

"This is Helene's child."

She looked down at the baby who had stuck his thumb in his mouth and laid his head against her with heavy eyelids. "You said yourself that Helene wants nothing to do with him." Turning she lay him down in his crib and pulled the blanket over him, "My father acted like he was an abomination."

"He doesn't suffer." Already he could see where this was leading.

"He needs a mother. He needs someone to love him."

"Sophie—"

"What will he think when he is old enough to know when his mother discarded him." She continued.

"It is not our problem."

Turning her face up to him, she studied the hard lines of his handsome features before settling on his eyes, "You and I were

raised with love Demetrius. The child is innocent and to think that he will have nothing like we knew is almost unbearable." To her surprise he smiled.

"You will have a child of your own soon." He lifted a lean tanned hand and caressed her cheek.

"I have enough love for more than one."

"Then I will give you more than one." He answered matter-of-factly. "I'm sure I'm capable of getting you pregnant more than once."

She didn't doubt that for a minute. He radiated so much masculine sexuality that he could probably impregnate a woman with a mere glance. "What about Markus. What if I want Markus?"

"You would take the child of a woman who doesn't know the father. A woman who betrayed us?" dropping his hand he frowned. "When I can give you as many legitimate children as you wish?"

"I would." She lifted her chin slightly. "It is not his fault."

"This is not a discussion." He waved his hand and turned to leave.

"Demetrius—"

Stopping he turned to face her, and she could see the barely contained rage, "I will not raise a child as my own that was used to try and destroy our marriage!" he whispered harshly as not to disturb the child.

"When we go to Aquinas tomorrow, are you going back to work?"

"Is there a point to this?" he said in frustration.

"I will be alone."

"For some time until you have your own child Sophie." His voice softened a little. "I will come to you as much as I can."

She approached him cautiously and placed a hand on his chest. Then her eyes locked with his, "You want to trust me. I

want to prove to you that you can, but please don't deny me this because you are angry with my sister and my actions. It is not the child's fault. If it were any other circumstance, would you allow my request?"

He would have given her the moon if she'd asked for it. His eyes darted to the crib then to the window and the scenery beyond. Demetrius loved children too. He always wanted to be a father of many, but to raise a child that was not his own and in such circumstance would be almost impossible to love. Would it not? Refocusing his gaze on his wife and the pleading in her emerald depths could have had him on his knees, but that was before she betrayed him. She may have been ready to take the steps to forgive her sister, but he wasn't. He never would. Yet, she was right; it wasn't the child's fault. Could he look at the child and not get angry? His eyes went to the crib again and the view of blond curls peeking out from the blanket. The baby was beautiful. At least Helene got something right in her life, she could make beautiful babies. This was not a decision to take lightly or decide on the spot. Gliding his eyes back to his wife he set his jaw, "No." There was no doubt that she was crestfallen but she succumbed and nodded. This is what drew him to her. She was loaded with compassion and was unselfish. It was a side of women he was not used to and he fell hard for her the first day Nikos introduced them.

At first her beautiful body captivated him, then she opened her mouth and her sweet voice struck a chord deep within him. Not only that, she had actually started asking him about himself. Most women only cared about themselves and their image. Yet, she didn't. It didn't take long for him to realize that her sweetness ran through to the bone. Never in his life had he met a woman like her. In many ways she seemed so mature for her seventeen years except when it came to men. Because of her lack of experience in that field, she was incredibly naïve, however,

that just added to her attractiveness for him. She never wore any makeup, not that she needed any. She was naturally beautiful.

"It was too much to expect. I understand." She admitted solemnly.

Of course she did. He reached down and tipped her face up to his, "Markus is taken care of Sophie. Your father is angry at Helene, but he will overcome it."

"You do not know my father like I do." This caused him to smile.

"You are wrong." He kissed her cheek, "Now it is time for bed. Go remove your clothes and warm our bed. Leave the necklace on and I will join you soon."

"Yes Demetrius." She turned and walked out of the room

As always, he watched her and had to resist following her right then. Being hard with her was harder on him, but he couldn't let her know that. Was he being too harsh? According to Hektor and Nikos, he wasn't, but still it made his heart ache to think that he was hurting her. His eyes guided back to the crib and the bundle in it. Would it be such a crime to give her something to make her happy? Maybe he could come to love the child. Not only that, if he granted her request, would she finally understand the sacrifices he was willing to make for her and not leave him again. Yes, he was furious with Helene. In fact, he truly hated the woman, but Sophie was right. It wasn't Markus' fault. Also, Sophie had more than enough love in her for more than one child. However, did he love Sophie enough to look past her sister's deceit? Sighing, he already knew the answer to that.

Demetrius didn't fear anything. He was raised to run an empire and people obeyed him without question except his own wife, and the only thing he found himself fearing in all of his years is the fact that she would leave him again. The months without her gracing his household with that gorgeous smile and sensual feminine presence were complete torture. Not once did

he wish he hadn't married her, even after what she had put him through. If he did have regrets, bedding her erased all of that. She may have been a virgin, but she had voracious passion and was able to match his stamina. He felt his groin tighten at the images coursing through his mind. Never in his life had he had a woman so sensual and desirable. If anything their absence from one another made her more desirable, if that was possible. Turning on his heel he headed to his room. It was time he satisfied his lust and put these conflicting thoughts aside

The next morning Sophie awoke alone. Realizing Demetrius hardly slept she dragged her aching body out of bed. The man had a sexual appetite like a machine. A slow smile spread across her face, not that she complained, but her body certainly did. However, to become accustomed to waking alone left her somewhat unsettled. The pillow was still indented from where he'd laid his head. Dragging herself to the shower she couldn't help feeling the dread of being alone on Aquinas. How was she to get along at Aquinas without him, without friends?

An hour later she was showered and dressed in a short tan skirt and white blouse Markus was a bubble of baby words when she stopped in to see him and she felt sadness well up inside her over his situation. When Demetrius made a decision she knew it was finite. Although, she really wanted to breach the subject again, but knew it would be in vein. Yet, when she'd asked him last night, she saw something in his eyes, a flicker of indecision maybe? But as quick as it appeared it was gone. She had no right to ask such a request and she knew it. It was too much too soon and the hurt was still fresh in both of them. To ask her husband to love and raise her sister's child was an impossible request.

Demetrius, Nikos and her father were having breakfast by the pool when she emerged. All the men stood and Demetrius pulled out a chair for her. They greeted her and took their seats again after she did. Greek men had no shortness on manners

towards women and it was sometimes a nice contrast to the aggressive streak they possessed. She sat silently while the men steered the conversation towards business and ate her breakfast.

Unknown to her Demetrius watched her carefully. Last night was a mind blowing marathon of flesh on flesh and she had given herself to him over and over again without one complaint. Sipping his coffee he tried to control the hardening of his erection. Would he ever get enough of her? Just watching her now as she fiddled with her food taking tiny bites every now and then seemed oddly erotic to him. Gazing at her seemed to be a favorite all consuming pastime of his. Beautiful and passionate beyond all measure, Sophie had no equal. Knowing that her glorious thighs were wrapped around him as he buried himself in her over and over again where no other man had been, made him rock hard. As if feeling his eyes on her, she slowly raised hers and locked gazes with him. Then something oddly electric passed between them. From the parting of her lips he knew she felt it too. It crackled like hot static as their gazes remained fixated. Before he knew it, he stood, took her hand and practically dragged her out of her seat not caring about the other two men present, and pulled her back into the house. To his surprise she didn't protest. She still didn't protest when he made it as far as the downstairs bathroom, planted her bottom on the vanity, parted her thighs and brought his hardness against her. In fact, she eagerly fumbled with his belt and zipper helping him. He hiked up her skirt, tore her panties and entered her as his mouth took hers smothering her gasp.

The two remaining men stared in disbelief at the departing couple, and then exchanged a knowing smile before returning to their discussion.

Demetrius came deep and hard in her with a shout that couldn't have stopped at the locked door. Yet he couldn't care one bit at that moment. He kissed her softly and caressingly

while his arms held her tightly. Never in all of his life had he been so impatient. She drove him wild with want and she had absolutely no idea of her affect on him. Finally when he lifted his head, his eyes searched hers.

"Wow." She said breathlessly and he smiled. Then he started doing up her blouse. She hadn't realized that he'd gotten it open and managed to flip her bra up to expose her breasts. He had managed to get her so worked up, that she even forgot where she was. Despite the awkwardness of being taken in the bathroom she giggled at the situation.

"It's your fault Sophie." He murmured while leaning down and kissing her neck. "You are like an addictive drug."

"My fault?" she stared wide-eyed and innocently as he lifted his head to look at her, "Who dragged who away from the table. I didn't even finish breakfast."

"We jumped to desert." He grinned.

"There is no desert at breakfast." She countered.

"There is from now on." He kissed her again and she responded. Then he began to unbutton her shirt again.

It was another hour before they emerged from the bathroom, and by then the car was waiting to take them to the airport. She was relieved because she didn't think she could face her brother and father after that display even though it didn't seem to bother Demetrius at all. When she asked him about it, he just smiled and said "you're my wife. It is expected." It was more than obvious of what they were doing when he dragged her from the table. Do most married couples have sex in the downstairs bathroom? She sincerely doubted it, feeling a blush rise to her cheeks. Yet, she found herself smiling because she certainly wasn't complaining. Demetrius was an amazing lover and she found herself unable to deny him anything.

Sophie slept against him in the car and it was apparent to him that he had worn her out. An arrogant grin lit his face and

his hand smoothed over her bare thigh below the hem of her skirt. Any opportunity to touch her wasn't wasted. He could rarely keep his hands to himself when she was around. In fact he was stifling the urge to drag that gorgeous creature on to his lap and hold her while she slept. She was still half asleep when they got in the helicopter and only when they circled his island did he rouse her. The view was stunning and he knew she wouldn't want to miss it. He was right. She held her breath as she looked at the island from above. Then her eyes darted to his with complete wonderment and he swelled with pride that he was able to see that in her.

## CHAPTER FOUR

She knew he would leave her in the morning to go back to Athens for work and her gut clenched knowing that she would be alone for awhile. That night he took her slowly without the possessiveness that she'd become accustomed to and before long the night was over, and when she awoke he was gone.

Sophie never cried as much as she had since he'd found her, but she cried at the emptiness in her knowing that he was gone. Over the next three weeks, she hadn't seen him, but he phoned her every night to check on her and she was grateful, but it wasn't the same as having him beside her at night.

Then on the morning of the third week she awoke feeling dizzy, then nauseous. Quickly she scrambled out of bed and made it to the bathroom where she got wretchedly sick. An hour later she was still on the floor beside the toilet, when Marie her maid came in and found her.

Then Gino the head of the security team left to watch her came in alerted by the maid and picked her up, placing her back in bed. "I will alert the physician." He said clearly worried.

"I'm fine." She said weakly.



"No Mrs. Vassiliadas, I don't think you are. I will phone your husband."

Her eyes shot open and her hand grabbed the sleeve of his shirt, "No! Gino please don't!"

"But—"

"Please," she pleaded, "Let me tell him that he will be a father. I don't want him to hear it from someone else."

This brought a smile to Gino's face and he crouched beside the bed to bring himself level with her, "Is that why you are ill?"

She nodded.

"Ah—then you will have a healthy boy. My wife was very ill with our son, not so much our daughter. I won't tell your husband, if that is what you wish. However, I am going to call the physician from the town to come and see you."

She reached out and touched his cheek. "You are sweet Gino. Thank you." She saw color rise to his cheeks as he stood, nodded and left.

The physician was a man in his mid-fifties and confirmed what she already knew. He prescribed prenatal vitamins and told her she had to eat more because her weight was not adequate.

Meanwhile, Demetrius had finally caught up on all the work that piled up in his absence. Unfortunately it took three weeks and he missed Sophie something fierce. When he phoned her he didn't miss the longing or the loneliness in her voice and because of that he managed to come to a decision about Markus. Hearing her sadness made him feel guilty, something he never had to deal with before in his life over a woman. His lawyers had already drawn up the adoption papers and he'd already spoken to Hektor of her wishes to raise Markus the day before. He'd made a trip out to his estate after work.

Nikos ran the cooperate office in town and Hektor usually worked out of the estate. If there was a need he went to Athens once a week, but most of the business was being handled by

Nikos now.

“Are you sure this is what you want Demetrius. I won’t stand in your way if it is.” Hektor said with surprise.

“It’s what Sophie wants.”

Hektor tilted his head slightly and gave him a knowing look, “You are spoiling her again.”

“I can’t help it.” He sighed in resignation, “She is unhappy Hektor. I can’t bear the thought that I caused it.”

“She doesn’t deserve your forgiveness quite yet Demetrius. My daughter needs to learn obedience. I indulged her, Nikos did, and now you. For her to be miserable is nothing to what she put us through.”

“I think I forgave her the moment I had her back.” He confessed to his father in law with a sheepish shrug of his shoulders.

“Yes, I think you did.” He agreed as he leaned back in his chair with an expression of understanding, “Her mother was beautiful too. I think I could forgive that woman anything with just a tilt of her head.”

Demetrius smiled, “I’m not surprised”

“Ah—Sophie is the spitting image of her mother. Not just in beauty, but she was genuinely unselfish, but headstrong and stubborn. She came from a poor family, but when I saw her, my heart stopped.” Hektor grinned at the memory, “I swear it didn’t start beating again until I married her.”

Demetrius chuckled.

“I see the way you look at my daughter. From the first day you set foot in my study with Nikos by your side asking for permission to marry her, I knew then that you loved her. There was no way I could deny your request because that look on your face told me that you would have her whether I approved or not.” Demetrius’ subtle nod confirmed it, “I know you still love her. However, all of us have indulged her and although she is spoiled,

she has her mother's generous qualities, but she is very naïve. I agree with the way you keep her at arm's length. She needs to understand and learn to obey her husband, but now you give her Markus. It throws this all off." He gestured with his hand.

"She is lonely Hektor."

"I know she is, but it is no less than what she deserves right now. Think of all those lonely miserable days we searched for her. If you give in to her, it may reoccur."

"I've thought about that."

Hektor's intelligent gaze studied him, "Of course you have." He was sure the man laid awake endless nights going over the consequences of this decision. Helene had betrayed them both and now he was willing to raise her son for the love for his wife.

"I also know that until I get her pregnant, she has nothing to hold her to me. I can't go through that again Hektor. Markus is the key at this point. She would never remove the boy from his grandfather, and me, his adoptive father."

"Can you learn to love him though?"

"That remains to be seen. Though I will try." He said honestly.

After a moment Hektor nodded, "All right Demetrius. I will find Helene, and we will go together to get her to sign the adoption papers."

Demetrius held out his hand and Hektor took it.

Sophie had just come in from a long walk along the beach when Marie told her there was a phone call for her. Hoping it was Demetrius she was breathless when she answered the phone. He hadn't phoned her in several days and she began to let all kinds of insecurities seep in. Like his fascination with her was over, and was he with another woman? Both of those made her gut ache.

"Sophie?"

She stilled her breath, "Paul?"

"Oh thank God, it took me forever to track you down."

“You shouldn’t be calling me Paul.” She blurted out. Somehow she felt like she was betraying Demetrius just by speaking to him.

“I just wanted to make sure that you were okay.”

“I’m fine.”

“You left so quickly. Mother was really upset—“

“Oh no! Is she okay?”

“She’s fine now, but I just wanted to find out if you were okay. I did some research on the internet a few days after you left. How come you didn’t tell me you were *the* Sophie Vassiliadas?”

“I—I couldn’t.”

“Does he hurt you?”

“Demetrius? Of course not!” she protested almost angry that he could suggest such a thing. Demetrius would never lay a hand on a woman no matter how angry he got.

“Then why were you running from him?”

“Paul, this is personal, and you should know that I’m fine. It was a stupid misunderstanding on my part and I have a lot to make up for.” She finally admitted, “But I have to go. You shouldn’t call here again.”

“Actually I was thinking of taking a trip to Greece and thought we could get together.”

“I can’t possibly—“ she started but he interrupted her.

“It would be like old times Soph.” he pressured. “I was thinking about taking mom on a cruise in the fall and the boat docks in Athens. She would love to see you. She always wanted to go on a cruise and we sort of ran into some money so I thought I would grant her wish before she could no longer walk. We got one of those two for one deals—are you anywhere near there?”

“No, I’m on our—Demetrius’ island.” Although what he told her pulled at her heart. She really would love to see them especially after leaving so suddenly. She felt a little guilty at

leaving them shorthanded. Of course she already knew the money he was speaking about was what Demetrius had given him, but she also knew that he would put it to good use. Taking his mother on a cruise was very generous of him, when he could have used it on himself. She always thought Paul was a kind man, but she wasn't attracted to him. She never was. Her husband was hard for any man to measure up to in her eyes.

"Could you be in Athens for a day if I give you the date?"

Sophie actually considered it. Paul and his mother were very good to her, but she knew that Demetrius would be dead set against it. He may not ever lay a hand on her in anger, but he certainly would with Paul. Despite the fact that he had a security team, Demetrius was well trained in martial arts and actually had a personal trainer that he worked with three times a week. His spectacular body was hard earned. He'd been doing this since his father was worried about his son's safety at eight after an attempted kidnapping. "I'll see, but I can't promise anything."

"That's better than nothing. Mom would love to see you."

Sophie hung up the phone after she said goodbye and stared at it completely unaware of Gino standing behind her in the doorway with a look of disapproval.

Gino watched her leave through another door and inwardly wished he was around when the call came through. There was no way he would have allowed the man to talk to Sophie. He was under Demetrius' orders to screen every call that came through to her. Now he would have to tell him what he'd witnessed and he didn't wish that task on anyone. He knew how possessive he was of his wife and rightly so after what the man had been through over the past year. Now he had to fire the staff member who allowed it to happen.

Gino had known Demetrius since he was barely in his teens over twenty years and knew of his relationships with women among other things that he'd dare not break confidence over. Yet,

none of those women ever turned the man's head like Sophie. So Gino took on the responsibility of protecting her as if she were his own child. The staff that was assigned to her before were all fired when she disappeared. Gino took this responsibility very seriously and now she was speaking to another man. He knew nothing of this Paul, but he would find out before he gave Demetrius his report.

Several days later Hektor had finally tracked Helene down in Athens at some man's apartment. She'd been staying with him since they returned from the United States trying to keep a low profile. Demetrius didn't care as long as she signed the papers and gave his wife what she wanted. However, after her initial shock at seeing them outside when she opened the door, it was clear to both Hektor and him that she had no intention of doing so and Demetrius' patience was wearing thin.

"You will sign the papers." Demetrius said with unconcealed menace.

Helene looked helplessly at her father who offered no support, "Are you going to let him speak to me like this?"

"Do as he asks." Hektor said not feeling the least bit sympathetic where she was concerned. He had just about enough of his oldest daughter and her outrageous behavior.

Shooting a hateful look at Demetrius she spoke in a shrill voice, "this is all for Sophie! Everything is for her! I get nothing! Now she wants my son."

"You certainly don't." said Demetrius as he leaned over her placing his hands on the table. He shoved the papers towards her, "Sign them." His voice remained eerily calm. It was the same voice he used to close deals many times and not once had his authoritative tone failed him, "Now." He finished. To his satisfaction he saw her flinch even though she tried to hide it.

"And if I don't..." she said trying her best to stay brave under Demetrius' dark hateful stare. Her father could give her the same

look but it never affected her like that. Demetrius' eyes burned through her and made her feel less than human over her actions. He could probably give a sociopath a conscience with it.

He hated her because she took his precious Sophie away. Even if she tried to explain that she didn't mean for it to end up that way, he would still see it as her fault because Sophie was perfect in his eyes. She was perfect in anyone's eyes. Sophie never got blamed for anything.

"Then I will cut you off completely." Said Hektor, "something I should have done long ago. I will write you out of my will and our lives."

"Nikos won't let you." She countered shakily, knowing that her brother loved her despite the way she behaved. Her father's next words crushed her.

"Nikos suggested it." He answered.

Helene's mouth fell, and she shot an accusing gaze to Demetrius, "this is your entire fault."

"No. it is yours. You have brought this on yourself. Now I have my wife back despite your attempts to destroy my marriage. If anything you owe her."

She folded her arms under her chest, "What do I get if I sign my son over to your wife?"

Demetrius thought she sunk to an all time low and the look of disgust was evident on his face. He straightened himself to his full height and stared down at her with a look that would make grown men shiver. "What is it you want?"

"Compensation for what you think Sophie's possession of my son is worth." Helene tried to be brave as that man looked down at her, but eventually she turned her head away.

"I won't be extorted." He said slipping his hands into the pockets of his slacks.

"Then I won't sign."

"You will!" Said Hektor raising his voice for one of the few

times in his life towards her. "By God Helene, you are shameless. I find it hard to believe that you came from my loins!" He pounded his fist on the table making her jump, "Sign the fucking papers!"

"I want something Papa!" Despite her brave words, she couldn't stop her lips from quivering. Her father's face was flushed with rage. She'd never seen him like that before and it did frighten her.

Hektor made a move toward her causing her to flinch, but Demetrius stopped him by placing his hand on his father-in-law's arm, while his eyes focused on Helene, "How much?"

Darting her eyes back and forth between the two, she gave him a number.

"You sell your son cheaply Helene. Have you no pride?" He said in apparent revulsion as he shoved the papers toward her again, "Sign them and I will agree to your request."

Paling she grabbed the pen and scribbled in the four spots that were indicated. "Why did you agree?" she said quietly as she slid the papers back to him unable to meet his sharp gaze again.

He stood upright and gave her a chilling glare, "Because your sister still has faith in you regardless of your actions. Now I will tell her you sold your son for a meager sum and she will for once and all, be done with you."

Then she threw down the pen and stood up turning her back on the two of them to hide her tears, "Leave."

Demetrius took no notice of her and retrieved the papers, nodded to Hektor and left.

Hektor eyed his eldest daughter for a moment, "Your mother would be ashamed of you."

"I know papa." She said quietly without turning around.

He released a frustrated breath and retrieved his jacket off the back of the chair he left it on.

"Papa?"



Hektor turned back to her. She was facing him now, "What is it?"

"Is she all right—I mean—"

He grew furious, "After what you did! How do you think she is Helene? You nearly destroyed her marriage."

"I just wanted to show her what kind of a man he was!" she defended.

"But you were wrong weren't you?" he said with contempt, "And in the process, broke your sister's heart."

She remained silent.

"Did you find that shocking? That he wouldn't want you? Didn't want you because he only wanted your sister—"

"Stop it Papa."

"Was that the truth Helene? I think you wanted Demetrius and when he didn't fall for your charms you resorted to humiliating her instead."

"It wasn't like that." She said in barely a whisper. Honestly she didn't mean for Sophie to find her in her husband's bed.

"No?" he straightened to his full height of six foot two, "Did you know that she still defended your actions?"

"W—what?" she said in disbelief.

"Demetrius told me that she defended you." He shook his finger in her direction, "After your betrayal, she was still making excuses for you to him and me for that matter! You are a selfish woman Helene and you can't even begin to measure up to Sophie."

That hurt. Ever since Sophie was born that's all she had heard about. Perfect Sophie, with her perfect green eyes and ebony hair who looked like their mother. It always made her feel so plain and she ended up spending her whole life trying to get noticed by her father as much as Sophie was. Sophie, who never needed to put effort into anything. She finished school the top of her class, was popular, and had managed to snag one of the most

gorgeous men in Greece and have him practically swoon at her feet whenever she made an entrance. Men like Demetrius didn't do things like that for any woman, but he did for Sophie. He even had his one of his shipyards built her a yacht for her wedding day and named it *Sophie's Heart*. It was incredibly beautiful and probably cost as much as it would to purchase a small country, and it was Sophie's. No man had ever done such a thing for her and she doubted any man ever would, yet her virginal sister brought the patron son of Greece to his knees after five minutes of meeting him. Helene could remember that day her brother brought Demetrius out to the pool to introduce them and she felt her hopes and dreams flush away when she saw the look on the handsome tycoon's face at the sight of Sophie. From that day she cursed her sister for being there at the same time because she wanted Demetrius. She had seen him first! Then to her ultimate shock he had gone to their father two days later to offer marriage. Two days! The man was unequalled in his conquests of women, but he wanted Sophie for his wife after only knowing her a short time. Was her baby sister that special?

The worst part was, Sophie had no idea how incredibly beautiful she was. So Helene finally got angry and decided to seduce her husband so she could have something that Sophie had. Not only that, she'd been wanting Demetrius even before he'd met Sophie so she thought it was her right. There had been many times that she'd seen him with her brother, but he barely spent more than a few moments talking to her, and she was crazy about him. So one night she thought Sophie was gone to her charity event and as luck would have it the power went out at the hotel and she came home early just as she snuck into his bedroom, stripped off her clothes and crawled into bed while he was in the shower. Ruled by her selfishness, she kept telling herself she had every right because she saw him first.

Sophie came home early and stopped by his bedroom to tell

him what had happened when she saw her. So she came up with a story that they were sleeping together, and the baby she was pregnant with was his. What she didn't tell her was that Demetrius was so furious when he found her there that she was terrified of him. He had her escorted out of his home by the security team barely giving her time to dress. Sophie was already in the confines of her own room and was unaware of how Demetrius reacted. She was so humiliated she never told her the truth. The look of betrayal and hurt on her sister's face nearly made her tell her the truth but she didn't. Then two days later, she was gone.

Guilt set in and Helene herself went a little wild. Especially after she saw how devastated Demetrius was. It was then she realized that he really loved her and the truth of her actions hit home. In her own selfishness she thought she destroyed the lives of two people and in turn her whole family was affected.

Now Sophie wanted Marcus, and to make her happy, Demetrius bought her son from her for his wife. Tears started to fall from her eyes. Her father was right; she was not even close to what Sophie was. She just sold her son.

Seeing his daughter's tears he softened his voice to a condemning tone, "I see that you understand some of what you have done. Maybe in time, you can beg Sophie to forgive you. I will tell you right now that Demetrius won't. I have already spoken to your sister and told her not to have anything to do with you in view of her fractured marriage. She must repair the damaged that you have instigated first."

Helene turned away from him while her tears continued to fall. She had done many things that her mother would be disappointed about, but hurting Sophie affected her more than anything especially if what her father said was true, that her sister still defended her after what she had done. No one had defended her before. Every inch of respect in this family had to

be earned and kept up. Helene knew from an early age that she could never be what Sophie was. Now the sister that she couldn't measure up to defended her making her feel even more worthless.

She heard the door close as her father left, not even saying good-bye. Not that she expected him to, but again, it managed to break her heart.

Sophie was miserable and lonely. Gino did his best when he accompanied her on her strolls along the beach and to town for brief shopping trips, but she missed Demetrius. Maybe she could talk him into letting her cousin come and stay with her for awhile so at least she had some family around her.

The time alone also gave her time to reflect more on her actions and including the telephone call with Paul. She'd already made up her mind that she wouldn't go see him. She couldn't risk betraying her husband again. Rebuilding her relationship with her husband was more important. He had still been generous toward her despite her actions and it surprised her. Although he still hadn't told her how he felt about her, his lovemaking had been tender and full of love. She may not have the experience like other women, but she was certain the way he made her feel during their time together wasn't one sided. At least she hoped it wasn't. As angry as he was with her, it never made it into their bed and that made her love him even more because she agreed with him to an extent. She was wrong in doing what she did, but she was naïve and careless. It wouldn't happen again. She'd already told him that and every day she was thankful that he still wanted her.

Later she would return Paul's call and tell him not to contact her again. Demetrius was all she needed.

Several hours later, the clack-clack sound of the helicopter shot a wave of anticipation through Sophie. She practically ran to the window to see it speed overtop of the house. Circle out over

the water and hover in for a landing on the pad located on the front lawn. She couldn't stop the smile that graced her face and turned to run out to meet him as fast as her feet could carry her. She didn't even bother putting on sandals but raced across the lawn in bare feet. When she saw Demetrius emerge she felt undeniable elation that he'd come home to see her. Then she paused as she watched him turn and retrieve what looked like Markus' car seat. It was Markus! Demetrius was smiling as he approached her.

"How...what...?" she was at a loss for words.

"He is yours Bella." He said grinning.

"Mine?" she said wide-eyed and breathless.

"Your sister signed the adoption papers. We are his parents now." The look on her face would last him a lifetime. She was happy. He watched her bend down and kiss the chubby cheeks of the sleeping baby.

"I'll take him Mr. Vassiliadas." Said the nurse maid casting a glance at the couple with a smile.

Demetrius handed him over and stopped Sophie's protests, "Let him sleep. He'll wake later and you can be with him." He pulled her to him, "right now," he said deeply, "I need to be with my wife."

Without hesitation Sophie threw her arms around him and kissed him. "Oh Demetrius, you did this for me!"

"For us." He murmured capturing her mouth again.

Two hours later they lay in a tangle of sheets. Demetrius had one arm propped behind his head as he stared down at her. His other was wrapped under her keeping her tight to his side. Her head was nestled in the crook of his shoulder as she was absently twirling her fingers in his chest hair.

She lifted her head to look at him, "How did you do it?"

"Markus?" he said moving his gaze over her face. Demetrius couldn't deny that she had to be the most beautiful woman he'd

ever set eyes on. She was unique with those deep emerald eyes that clearly held every emotion she was experiencing at the time. There were times he'd thought he would go insane lately because he'd missed her, but he still needed to hold back if even a little. Sophie had hurt him deeply and he didn't want to give her that key to his heart again despite how much he'd already forgiven her.

"Yes." She adjusted herself so she could stare down at him. Her glorious curls fell in a cascade onto the satin sheets.

"I bought him." He said truthfully and watched her beautiful mouth fall in a gasp. "Don't be so shocked Sophie. You know what your sister is like."

"I just never thought..." she turned and sat up bringing her hand to her forehead in disbelief causing the sheet to fall from her body to her lap, but she didn't seem to notice.

"Maybe I shouldn't have told you." His fingers trailed a path down her spine taking in the enticing curve of her back.

"No, you should." She said softly without turning around. "You tried to tell me what she was like."

"She didn't want him Sophie. Now he has us. We will raise him as ours."

She turned and looked at him with tears in her eyes, "You would do this? Even after what Helene did to us?" she swallowed hard, "What I did to you?"

"I would do it for *you* Sophie." He answered as he sat up and pulled her back into his embrace wrapping his arms under her breasts, "I would do anything for you." He said while kissing the soft curve of her neck.

She turned her face into his neck, "I love you Demetrius."

Entangling his fingers in her hair, he pulled her head back and crushed her mouth under his. It was the first time she said that without coercion. Then he reached down and adjusted her onto his lap, so he could move into her from behind. She arched

back against him as he impaled himself deeply within her causing her to cry out in pleasure as he splayed his hand over her flat abdomen guiding her rhythm.

"Like this." He rasped out moving her legs on either side of his with his free hand and coaxing her movements.

Her throaty cries were tantalizing and heightened his pleasure and soon his voice joined hers as he quickened his pace. She reached over and grabbed the bed poster as gripped her hips and moved within her until she released a strangled cry of pleasure that was drowned out by his own shout, releasing his seed deeply in her womb. Reaching over and unclasped her fingers from the poster and pulled her back down into the bed with him. They were both trying to catch their breath and covered in perspiration.

"I—never thought..." she finally said referring to that position but slightly embarrassed at what they'd just done.

He kissed her, "there are many things I can show you." He murmured against her mouth kissing her again.

"I can't feel my legs."

He smiled, "Neither can I." this caused her to laugh then she turned completely serious.

"I have something to tell you."

"Is this a good thing?" He said arching his brows at her expression.

"I hope so." She smiled, "I'm pregnant."

He let of a string of endearments before he captured her mouth again and moved over her.

"Oh Demetrius, " she moaned as she arched toward him, "I don't think I can..."

"You will." He said huskily seducing her with his mouth and sliding into her at the same time. He pinned her hands over her head with his and watched her as he took her much more slowly this time. "Look at me Bella," he groaned, "I want to see you look

at me while I'm in you." She opened her eyes and did as he asked. Her emerald eyes were dark with desire, her soft full mouth parted in a gasp every time he sunk into her. Then those sexy noises he'd come to adore began to leave her parted lips as her pleasure built within her. "Tell me what you want—" he asked with a voice cracking with desire. "—I'll give you anything."

"More...." She gasped, "Faster...."

"Yes my love." He complied pulling her knees roughly over his hips and plunging in her none to gently until she literally screamed her release.

Later he carried her to the shower and delicately washed her from head to toe. She stared down at his erection then back up at him in disbelief.

He chuckled huskily "I can't help it Bella. You do this to me."

"I love you Demetrius, but I don't think I can." She almost laughed, "I can barely walk."

"There are other ways to satisfy a man..." he placed his hands on the tile on either side of her head and leaned into her and whispered deeply in her ear. He wasn't sure if it was too soon to introduce this knowledge to her, but she'd taken everything he'd dished out so far with an unmatched passion.

Sophie's eyes widened with what he was telling her, and then a sensual smile pulled at her lips. In a moment she was on her knees taking him in her mouth while he groaned instructions to her. His hands splayed across both sides of the shower to brace himself. After a moment he lost his words and moaned continuously as she sucked and teased him to oblivion. He'd had women do this to him many times, but his wife in all of her inexperience of the act was an incredible turn on combined with seeing her between his legs with that full perfect mouth wrapped around the length of him. If he thought he was the only one getting pleasure from it, it was squashed when he heard her moan in the act completely startling him to a heightened sense of



pleasure.

Water continued to spray from the jets of the shower over both of them and he tilted his head back and released a continuous groan while her head moved back and forth over him. Normally he wouldn't have lasted so long, but they had already made love three times in bed. Then he felt the rising climax and released a guttural moan, "God, Sophie I'm going to come." He reached down, and pulled her mouth off him while hauling her up and turning her to enter her from behind. His hands cupped her breasts as she braced herself against the tile while he thrust into her. She cried his name over and over again until they both climaxed. He spun her around and embraced her while kissing her soundly. "The things you do to me to get me wild for you."

"I liked that." Her eyes glinted with a new knowledge. "I would have thought that such a thing could make a man growl."

"Never doubt that I can." He grinned showing his even straight white teeth, "Now let's get out of here before we drain the island spring of water." Her response was a laugh.

The next morning he was gone before she woke, but there was a black velvet box on his pillow. Smiling she reached for it and gasped at the diamond bracelet it contained. Then she saw the note and rolling onto her stomach she opened it. She could tell he'd written it before he left and wept at what it said. „Thank you for making me a father' then he signed it. She wished he'd signed it 'love Demetrius' but knew it would be too much to ask. Now she would have his child and maybe, just maybe he would find it in his heart to love her.

In the following month Demetrius managed to come to Aquinas every weekend to see her. She didn't miss the circles under his eyes, and knew he was working himself to the bone and trying to fit her in too.

"You need to rest." She said to him before he left early Monday morning, "I'm worried about you."

He kissed her, "I will rest darling, there is just much to be handled now. It won't be like this always.

When you get closer to your due date, I will take the time." With that, he hopped into the helicopter and was gone.

Later that day she started bleeding.

## CHAPTER FIVE

Demetrius met Gino at the hospital. The large man looked pale to him and worry lines etched his face. That meant the news wasn't good. "Where's the doctor?"

"He's waiting for you Mr. Vassiliadas." Gino led the way to the man's office opening the door for him.

Before he went in he turned to speak to the man he left in charge of Sophie's security, "Gino, go and stay with Sophie. Tell her I will be there as soon as I'm done with the doctor."

"Yes, Mr. Vassiliadas." Gino nodded and shut the door behind him. He still could hear Sophie's panicked screams. When he burst into her room, she was standing in the middle of it clutching a pillow and white as a ghost. She wasn't screaming anymore but was staring vacantly at the wall. He finally got it out of her what was wrong and withdrew his mobile to alert the pilot that they needed to get to the hospital. Then he had the grim task of phoning Demetrius on his private line and he could hear the panicked concern even over the phone. An hour later in two hour traffic, he arrived. Gino worked for Demetrius long enough to know the man may have looked composed, but the tone of his voice betrayed him. Only a select few could determine that of him. It was something he'd never reveal to another human being. It was the same tone he heard nine months ago when Sophie had disappeared.

He reached into his inside pocket and fingered the envelope he'd received the day before knowing that he had to give it to

Demetrius at some point. This Paul seemed to think that he could win Sophie from her husband. Obviously he was delusional. Sophie loved her husband, it was as plain as the day on her face when she looked at him.

Demetrius sat and listened to the obstetrician all with the composure of a marble stature, but on the inside he was a mess.

"She has what we call placenta previa. It is dangerous, but manageable." The doctor slid some literature across the desk to him and Demetrius took it.

"For your babies..."

His head shot up, "What did you say?"

"Twins, Mr. Vassiliadas." He noticed that the man's composure finally showed some concern at his confession.

"This is the first I've heard of it." he said with awe.

"Sometimes, the second baby is missed in an ultrasound. I can see that she has had regular checkups with the physician on Aquinas. He is very capable and as luck would have it, he is an old obstetrician. Unfortunately, it sometimes isn't easy to detect twins. Their heartbeats synchronize and..." He paused, "Mr. Vassiliadas?"

"Give me a minute." He felt himself pale at the news.

The doctor smiled, "I understand this is quite a shock."

A total understatement. "Does she know?"

"Yes. I also told her the consequences of the pregnancy. She will have to take it easy...and Mr. Vassiliadas, which means absolutely no stress." He paused again, "That includes sex. Your wife is a high risk pregnancy. She will have to have a caesarean section because even in her condition, there is no chance of a normal childbirth. Also, I would feel better if I saw her every two weeks and more often if it becomes necessary."

"I understand. That won't be a problem."

Doctor Metaxis eyed the billionaire carefully. He certainly seemed to understand, but if Sophie was his wife, he doubted

very much he could keep his hands to himself. Even as a professional he fell victim to the woman's beauty. When she began to cry at the news he gave her, he couldn't help himself and hugged her. Only when the bodyguard cleared his throat and gave the man a warning stare did he release her. Pregnant or not, married or not, the woman felt like fine silk and smelled of lavender and citrus. Of course he knew who she was, because a year ago her face was plastered all over the newspapers. She was the young heiress bride to a tycoon. The newspapers painted her with sympathy, when she supposedly lost a child. Obviously she'd never been pregnant before, so he knew it was something else. If it had to do with her husband, he couldn't see it. The man truly cared about her. He may have been as indifferent as wallpaper, but as soon as he mentioned the dangers, he paled considerably. Not only that, who couldn't love such a gorgeous creature? "Fortunately your wife is young and therefore capable of handling such a heavy risk because she is healthy."

"Can I take her home?"

"Of course, but I understand that you are staying on an island." His nod confirmed it.

"How far is it from this hospital if complications were to arise?"

"About forty five minutes."

"That's it?"

"I have a helicopter at my disposal."

The doctor smiled, he should have known. "Of course. Well, I have no problem then if you wish to take her home. You have an advantage that most don't. Especially if it is a place she will relax."

"Yes, our son is there. She enjoys him."

The doctor's brows rose, "I didn't know she had a child before....it's not in her history." He began flipping through her chart.

"He's adopted." Demetrius stared at the man for a moment, "Doctor Metaxis, you already know that she has never been pregnant from her file. The world doesn't always need to know about our private lives."

The doctor nodded in understanding, "Of course Mr. Vassiliadas, you do not need to worry because this conversation and all others are strictly confidential. Now for your wife's well being, maybe you should look at hiring a nurse. There are plenty that deal with high risk pregnancies and are highly trained to handle complications. I can give you some names if you wish. I know a few that are quite trustworthy in view of your fame."

"I would appreciate it." He sat straight, "Now, I have a few requests. One, you do not discuss this diagnosis with my wife again until I agree..."

"But Mr. Vassiliadas..."

"I'm not finished. My wife is very vulnerable right now, and if you do not comply with my wishes I will find another capable doctor." He leaned forward in the chair, "I'm sure you understand that I have her best interests at heart, I care for her very much, and the last thing I want is for her to be upset and possibly cause the miscarriage of our future children. She will comply with my wishes without hearing of the risks of her pregnancy. Do you understand?"

"Doctor Metaxis slowly nodded his head. He was concerned for the man's wife and would prefer if he could keep her as his client. He would get renowned fame by delivering the Vassiliadas twins.

"I see you do." He stood to leave reaching inside the breast pocket of his suit he produced a card, "This is my private number. I expect a call every time after her biweekly checkups." The doctor took the card and Demetrius went in search of his wife.

Sophie was lying on her side curled into a ball with her back

to the door. Gino came in about twenty minutes ago and told her that Demetrius was talking with the doctor. Despite her fears she was happy that he came so quickly. Not only that she needed him, she was terrified. The doctor had explained everything to her and she was beside herself with worry. If she lost the babies, would Demetrius still want her? Worse yet, could she carry another child.

“Sophie?”

She didn’t hear the door open or hear him enter, but she knew his voice. Turning she saw him standing by the door and a sob escaped her.

Demetrius wasn’t prepared for the look on her face. She was grief stricken with worry. Her eyes were swollen and red from crying. Quickly approached her in several long strides, he gathered her in his arms, “Don’t worry darling, everything will be fine.” He kissed her, “I’ll take you home to Aquinas and stay with you for a bit until you are feeling better.”

“You would?” she said in disbelief. Also she felt a sense of relief, because he was being very supportive and didn’t seem worried at all even after speaking with the doctor. Maybe she blew things out of proportion. Certainly it wouldn’t be the first time.

He smiled, “Of course. You are my wife. This is very stressful for you.” His hand went to her swollen abdomen, “Twins Sophie, isn’t that wonderful news?”

“It is.” She wished she could sound more excited, but her fears were drowning it out. He seemed to notice.

“Nothing will happen. The doctor says that you can’t be stressed; now set your worries aside. I’m hiring a nurse to stay with you when I return to work. I’ll make sure that one of my helicopters is always there just in case a problem arises. Does that make you feel better?”

She nodded and buried her face in his chest. “Don’t send me

back to Aquinas Demetrius.”

“Sophie—“

“Please,” she sobbed, “I’ll stay with Papa, and I promise, I won’t ever leave you again. I’m just so alone on Aquinas. I miss my family.”

He sighed heavily. He could understand her need to be with her family. Yet his reasons for isolating her were more for her protection and to keep her from Helene. Pulling back from her, he cupped her face in his hands and searched her eyes with his, “I have your word.”

She flung herself at him, “Oh yes, you have my word!”

“All right Sophie. I’ll call your father and speak to him about this, but you need to follow my instructions carefully. I don’t want you going to town without Gino and my security team. As soon as the public becomes aware of your pregnancy and that you carry the heirs to my fortune, you will be mobbed by the paparazzi and a target for my enemies.”

“I will listen, I swear.” She said without hesitation.

A few minutes later he was on the phone explaining things to Hektor who couldn’t hide the concern in his tone.

“Not just one nurse Demetrius, I want two.” He said, “And what about a Doctor?”

Demetrius almost laughed, he thought *he* was being protective. “Doctor Mataxis assured me that he would be available here at the hospital if complications arise. I will make sure one of my helicopters is on the estate with a pilot. It would be a short trip here from there.”

There was a pause before Hektor answered. He was considering Demetrius’ words, “If you feel it is sufficient I will agree.”

“We will be there in about two hours.”

“That’s fine Demetrius. I’ll see you then.”

Demetrius hung up the phone and went back into Sophie’s

room. Gino was standing just inside the door and Sophie sat on the bed waiting. She quickly stood up when he walked in.

“What did Papa say?”

“He was more than agreeable.” She was openly relieved. “Knowing that you’ll be taken care of at home with family.”

“Can we go now?”

He nodded, “I’ll just get Gino to have Giorgios pull the car around.” He turned and nodded to Gino who was already pulling out his phone.

Demetrius tucked her close to him as he led her out of the hospital and into the car. A small crowd had already gathered at the sight of the limousine and several people took pictures, but it wasn’t anything he wasn’t used to. He told Sophie to smile and keep her chin up so nothing looked as if it was wrong. He was proud of her, she did her best.

Once in the car he pulled her as close to him as he could possibly get and she closed her eyes and leaned into him. Gino sat across from him and Demetrius could see that he finally let the concern hit his expression while she slept. For a moment their eyes met and an understanding passed between them. It was then he knew that Gino wouldn’t let anything happen to her on his life. Instinctively he tightened his hold on his resting wife as he turned his attention to the world outside while deep in thought.

She had a valid point. Staying with her father in his home was probably the best possible solution.

Demetrius had an empire to run and he was not known to delegate tasks. However, maybe he should look into it for the future when other emergencies such as this showed up. Nikos had been doing an excellent job with the American deal for new communication systems for his shipping vessels. Although he was still helping his father with his own cooperation that he was to inherit soon, he all but completed the deal with Maximilian



King, the American billionaire and CEO of his own communications company. However, he needed to find Sophie.

She was more important to him at the time regardless of how the new systems would increase his productivity with his tankers and in turn increase his wealth. Money was nothing without her, and it didn't take him long to figure that out when she left him.

Demetrius couldn't have been more thankful for Nikos at that time. He handled himself very well. Of course he was no stranger to dealing with business, but Nikos had never done this sort of deal before and he knew virtually nothing about the shipping industry except for what Demetrius had taught him. Luckily Nikos was highly intelligent. Now Demetrius needed to complete the deal by flying to Chicago soon, which he intended on taking his wife in view of Max's recent engagement.

Fortunately Max seemed to understand when he met him at his father in laws the day he left for the United States to retrieve her. Max extended an invitation to both of them. He needed to go, but he'd leave Sophie in capable hands and ask Nikos to join him.

He knew Sophie would need him over the next few months and putting her through any kind of stress, wasn't an option. He looked down at the top of her head thinking of how much he needed a cigarette, but again, he couldn't put any more strain on her. It was unhealthy to smoke to begin with and exposing his wife and unborn children to it wasn't an option. Although he didn't smoke often, it was still a risk and he should think about quitting.

They arrived at her father's estate two hours later. Hektor was pacing out front of the house waiting for them and when Sophie emerged he didn't hold back on how concerned he was for her.

"Bella—tell me are you feeling okay?" he cupped her

shoulders studying her expression.

"I'm fine now Papa." She said softly almost weeping at his concern for her. All trace of his previous anger and disappointment was gone.

He pulled her into a tight embrace, "We will take good care of you here."

"I will send for her things on Aquinas," Demetrius said.

Hektor released his daughter and shook Demetrius' hand, "Can I have a word with you."

"Of course." He took Sophie's elbow, "I will be down after I see that Sophie lays down."

Sophie didn't argue, she was exhausted. The whole episode terrified her, but through it all Demetrius was there for her and she wanted to weep. She had left him and he came when she needed him the most. As usual he knew exactly what she needed. Absently she reached out and clutched his suit jacket to pull herself close to him causing him to slide his hand from her elbow to her waist. He never said a word, but a slight squeeze of his fingers let her know that he knew she needed him. She couldn't ask for anything else from him at that moment except those three words that she'd been telling him over the past few weeks.

Demetrius sat her down on their bed and got down on one knee to remove her shoes. Then he stood, gently laid her down and covered her with a thin blanket. "Do you feel better Sophie?"

"Much."

He sat down on the bed and caressed the soft skin of her cheek, "If you need anything, I won't be too far away. I already rearranged my schedule."

"Just for today?"

"It's going to take me a few days to take care of some things, and then I'll be able to spend a few days with you." He paused, "I need to go to Chicago next week Sophie. I had planned on taking you with me, but now—"

"It's alright I understand."

"There is no real concern right now with our babies," He lied, and he knew he did it well because her eyes brightened, "But the doctor said we shouldn't take any risks and to keep your life stress free." He couldn't help but feel some responsibility for what has happened to her because of the incredible amount of stress he'd put on her after he'd gotten her back. In truth, he felt like a tyrant, punishing her the way he was. Leaning over her, he brushed his lips across her forehead, "Get some sleep, I'll be here."

"I love you." She murmured closing her eyes.

*I love you too*, he thought, *so much it hurts*. Yet, something kept him from saying it. The same something that kept him rising before her and leaving her to waken alone in the morning. He was still holding back from giving her his all because of the scars she'd given him. He feared if he told her, it would leave him vulnerable again. That weakness was one he never had to contend with in his life and only when she left him did he discover it. No woman could have brought him to his knees like that, except Sophie.

Hektor shut the door of his study after Demetrius entered. "I owe you an apology Demetrius." He went over to the liquor cabinet, "Would you like a drink?"

"Whatever you're drinking." He said.

Hektor nodded and removed another glass from the shelf, "As I was saying, I need to apologize. I was too hard on her. You were correct in giving in to her. I fear I caused this." He turned and handed him a glass.

It was then that Demetrius saw the unshed tears in his eyes, "She will be fine Hektor. I have the Doctor's assurance as long as the rest of her pregnancy isn't stressful." It was a little disturbing to see the aging Lazardis so distraught. It was obvious that he felt as protective of Sophie as he did and Demetrius felt some relief

to know that leaving her here was the right choice. Not only Nikos, but Hektor would take very good care of her in his absence.

“I still can’t help but feel some responsibility. I will make it up to her Demetrius.”

Two days later Sophie sat on a blanket playing with Marcus. She started to feel much better about her pregnancy, especially with all of the encouragement from her family and Demetrius. Although she hadn’t seen Demetrius in the last two days, because he had to stay at the penthouse in Athens due to work, but he did stay with her as he said and she didn’t take one minute for granted. He was so attentive that it felt as though nothing was wrong between them. She missed him terribly, but her father was unusually caring also and it made her heart soar. He had obviously forgiven her just like Demetrius said he would. Things couldn’t be better for her.

“Sophie.”

She froze knowing that familiar voice while Markus still squealed and bubbled baby words on the blanket in front of her.

“I know you are probably mad at me, but can we talk?”

Sophie turned around to see her sister standing behind her just as Gino was coming through the doors with the nanny, Anna on his heels. Quickly she stood up and shook her head at Gino. Her sister sounded sincere and she wanted to hear what she had to say. Part of her was still very angry with her for lying to her, but she was still her sister and at least deserved a chance to explain herself.

Gino didn’t listen to her gesture and explained why, “Mrs. Vassiliadas, I have specific instructions from your husband not to allow your sister near you.”

“I’ll speak to Demetrius.” She said.

“Anna, take Markus in the house,” Said Gino to the nanny, who instantly bent over and retrieved him, “Mrs. Vassiladias, I

apologize, but I have my orders." He held out his hand.

"She is my sister," Helene turned on the hulking man, "I have every right to talk to her."

"No, you don't" he said sternly. He couldn't keep the glare out of his eyes as he indicated with a wave of his fingers from his outstretched hand for Sophie to comply.

"Sophie?" Helene said incredulous.

She released a heavy sigh of defeat and moved toward him, "I'm sorry Helene, I promised Demetrius I would listen. I can't betray his trust again." She felt Gino's hand on the small of her back as she walked back into the house with him hovering behind her, but the tears started falling. It was hard to walk away from her sister, but it was harder to hurt Demetrius again.

Moments later Helene knocked on the door of her father's study.

"What is it?" he called through the door.

"It's Helene."

There was a pause before he told her to come in.

He was just hanging up the phone when she walked in and stood as she approached him.

"Papa, I need to speak to Sophie."

"I don't think that is wise." He said standing up, "You shouldn't even be here. You have no idea what stress could do to her unborn children."

Helene looked down at the floor, "I want to apologize to her." She had found out through the newspapers and tabloids that her baby sister was pregnant. It was devastating to know that her family hadn't even bothered to tell her about it. It was then that she realized how much damage she caused to be shut out by them completely. Suddenly she felt very alone.

"Do you?" he said looking down at the top of her head with a foreboding stare, "Sophie has been diagnosed with a complication to her pregnancy. If Sophie loses my grandchildren

due to this, it will most definitely destroy what they have tried to repair from your damage.”

“A risk?” she said suddenly feeling more ashamed.

“Your sister has a high risk pregnancy. That is why she is here, not on Aquinas to be with her family and decrease her stress.” Then he lifted his brows remembering what she said, “And why is it do you suddenly feel sorry?”

“I always did.” She lifted her eyes to his, “I was too ashamed to say anything.”

“If you want my help, I want the truth from you Helene.”

She swallowed hard, “Papa—I—“

“The truth.”

Nodding she reached over and grabbed the arm of a nearby chair to sit down, „When Nikos and Demetrius became friends in college I knew I wanted him then. Sophie was only fourteen and away at school except for a few weeks in the summer when you’d bring her home. I started thinking that I could win him despite his reputation with women. However, when he caught sight of Sophie that day, I was here Papa. I felt like I died when I saw the look on his face when he came out to the pool.”

“Some things just aren’t meant to be Helene.”

“I know, but Sophie has always had everything.”

His expression grew dark, “That is privilege speaking. She was denied many of her friends and relationships because of the things you have done. I sent her away to an all girls school, isolated her. I even told her to marry Demetrius Vassiliadas. I never even gave her the option to say no. Sophie has never had the choices you had. I dictate to her, Nikos did and now Demetrius.”

Her mouth hung open, “I—I didn’t realize—“

“That’s why I told you that its privilege talking. I have given you the freedom to do what you wish and look what you have done with your life—“ she turned her head away, “I see you can

understand some of what I am saying Helene. Even now, with Sophie knowing your betrayal, she still raises your son."

She swung her head back to her father, "Papa Demetrius didn't give me a choice, he—"

"He did!" Hektor interrupted furiously, "He asked you to name a sum and you did. He was giving you a choice to name some unfathomable amount that he would refuse! How could you not see that Helene?"

"Oh God."

"But you really didn't want Markus did you?"

"He's better off with Sophie and Demetrius Papa."

"Is he?"

"I would not be a good mother."

"You never even tried." He said angrily waving his arm in her direction, "You give up too easily because I've given you everything. Maybe you should live a few weeks in poverty to see what your sister had to endure away from her husband, and this family."

"Papa you wouldn't!" she shot to her feet.

"If you do this, I might consider helping you with Sophie."

"I can't do that. I know I can't."

"Then I can't help you." He said not giving anything away in his expression.

As soon as Demetrius' plane landed at Chicago O'Hare international Airport he pulled out his phone to call his wife and tell her that he and Nikos landed safely like she asked. Nikos shot him a sideways smirk as he walked passed him to shake hands with Max King and Luke Shayne. So much for Demetrius holding his sister at arm's length. He was as much in love with her as he was when she left if not more.

"It has been a while," said Nikos with genuine warmth to the two men. Luke was the brother to Max's fiancé and Max's most

trusted broker

“How is your father?”

“No change.” Nikos grinned, “He still insists on running everything despite his diabetes.”

“Some of us think we’ll die if we slow down for a moment,” said Max with a smile as his eyes guided to Demetrius who was just hanging up the phone.

“Sophie insists that he phone.” Explained Nikos causing Luke and Max to shoot each other an amused glance.

“I apologize,” said Demetrius as he shook both of the men’s hands, “My wife worries.”

“No need to explain,” Said Max, “Luke’s sister is very much the same.” Obviously whatever differences Demetrius had with his wife was worked out. Last time he was in Greece he had dealt with Nikos because Demetrius’ wife had run away from him. He looked like hell then, now, he looked genuinely happy.

“How is Lily?” Said Nikos.

Demetrius didn’t miss the darkening of Max’s pale grey eyes as he set them on Nikos. Being no stranger to jealousy he would have to ask his brother in law what this was about later. However, Nikos only looked amused by the man’s glare.

“Back at school.” Offered Luke, “Finishing her degree.”

“Ah—and which college is that?”

Luke told him not seeing Max’s gaze flash toward him in a warning, but Demetrius did and it would have explained a lot when at lunch Max had received a phone call and instantly excused himself leaving Luke to entertain him.

He already figured out what had happened. Nikos had decided to do some sightseeing not joining them for lunch and it didn’t take his intelligent calculating mind long to put things into perspective. Nikos had gone and sought out Max’s fiancé for some reason and obviously Max was just alerted to that fact. Why Nikos would be getting involved in something like this was



unusual. He never had problems with women and he never interfered in relationships. This Lily must be quite beautiful for Nikos to risk such a thing. However, mixing business with pleasure especially when such a large sum of money was involved was not acceptable and it was completely out of his character.

Obviously there was something else going on here, Nikos would never risk breaking negotiations unless he had a really good reason. He would have to speak with Nikos and smooth things over with Max. If Lily was anything close to Sophie, he already knew the man would be possessive and most likely drop the contract. He wouldn't hesitate if it involved his wife and unfortunately they were signing the contracts over dinner later that evening.

His eyes guided to Luke who had just apologized for Max's hasty exit. "Your sister must be incredibly beautiful."

"She is." He said without hesitation. Then he lifted a brow, "How did you know?"

"Where Max was going?" Demetrius gave him a reassuring smile, "Nikos will be spoken to Luke. He certainly means no harm."

"Max spoke highly of him when they came back from Greece." He said taking a drink from his wine glass. "It is not commonplace for him to give compliments lightly. He spoke of dropping the contract before when your brother in law showed interest in my sister."

Demetrius held up his hand to dispel the man's worries, "I will speak with Nikos, this will stop."

"I would appreciate that. Max loves her and is very possessive where she is concerned." Luke admitted.

"I understand." Demetrius really did despite his guarded expression. He was close to killing the man that Sophie had been working for when she left him even though he hadn't laid a hand on her. Max leaving at such an important moment made him

know that he was just as possessive of Lily as he was of Sophie. So much so that he was willing to lose this contract because of it and he didn't even seem to hesitate after the phone call. It actually impressed him that he wasn't the only besotted fool on the planet. For all his wealth and experience, he was completely hopeless when it came to Sophie.

## CHAPTER SIX

That evening back at their hotel while getting ready for dinner Demetrius found time to speak to Nikos. They had been invited to Luke's penthouse for dinner because apparently he was an excellent cook and insisted on treating them with his skills. Demetrius knew that it was Luke's way of helping Max and he come to an understanding. Luke said there were no worries where Lily was concerned because he was certain she was crazy about Max despite her young age although he stated that she was too young to know what love was.

Max disagreed, "Sophie is a year younger than your sister Luke, and she professes her love to me every day." This made the other mans' brows to rise causing him to smile, "When a woman loves a man, it is deep. Not so for us. Men seemed to fall in love when they desire a woman, but it does not last. Then a woman comes along, one woman, and the earth is pulled out from under our feet."

"As with your wife?" Luke offered with an amused grin.

"Yes." He answered easily. "When I first set eyes on Sophie breathing didn't seem as important anymore." This caused Luke to laugh, "I mean it, Luke, when you find the love of your life, all those other times you thought you were in love are meaningless." He added seriously.

"Still Demetrius, I can't help but think that Lily hasn't experienced life to understand what true love is."

“Do not underestimate a woman’s feelings.” He added with a smile knowing all too well what betrayal did to his marriage. “There will come a time when you will feel the earth shake under you and remember what I said.” The other man looked slightly uncomfortable at that statement.

Nikos came walking out of his room at that moment straightening his tie and bringing him back to the present.

“What is it about this Lily that you risk our contract over?”

Nikos stopped and looked at his brother in law, “It is not like that.”

“Then explain it to me.” He said gesturing angrily, “Because Max King seems to think otherwise.”

“Lily is in love with Max, Demetrius. I was just—encouraging him.” He grinned.

“Not during negotiation.” He said tersely, “You know better.”

“I have no interest in pursuing Lily Shayne. At first I did, but after I saw how she was toward Max, I bowed defeat and told him this. We are just friends and I would never break my word. I’ll apologize to him tonight, Demetrius.” He conceded with a sheepish smile, “Max needed a nudge. I gave it to him.”

“I would appreciate your help in this deal Nikos.” He studied his friend’s expression, he was telling the truth, “Just leave the Shayne woman alone.”

“I will.”

An hour later they were being picked up by Max in a long dark grey stretched limousine. After they seated across from him in the car Nikos took it upon himself to apologize for his behavior to Max. After a moment the tycoon tipped his head in acknowledgment while keeping his pale eyes on him and his expression blocked. He actually reminded him a lot of his brother in law.

He was completely confident in himself and it showed from

the poise he gave off. One hand rested on the seat while the other lay across the window ledge and his long legs were crossed at the knees. It was an open posture despite his anger. Although his expression never gave it away his eyes did. He already knew he was possessive because of the way he behaved around Lily in Greece. Not one man was able to get near her and he kept her close to him at all times. Even their male servants received warning looks from the man. Yet didn't he realize that he had nothing to worry about? Lily Shayne looked at him as if the sun rose and set on him.

"We had gone over this before Nikos." He reminded him.

"Yes, we have and I've kept my word. I'm not pursuing your fiancé." He said with complete honesty, "As I said before, she only has eyes for you." He watched Max consider his words before he spoke.

"I will take your word Nikos, but know this—I'm prepared to end this deal over her," his eyes guided to Demetrius, "I'm sure you understand if you love your wife as much as I covet Lily. Money is nothing compared to me losing her."

"I understand." Said Demetrius without the slightest hesitation. He really did. When he lost Sophie, his whole world collapsed. He would have given anything to have her back including his fortune.

After dinner Max handed over the contracts for him to sign. They had already been reviewed by both parties' lawyers. Then they stood and shook hands and finished the evening over a bottle of two hundred year old brandy.

Demetrius had to admit that Nikos rendition of Max and Luke was exactly as he perceived them. It wasn't often that you ran into such admirable men in his business and Demetrius knew then and there that they had the making of a lifelong friendship, which also wasn't common in his life because of who he was. It was a rarity to meet men of his stature and wealth that he could

trust. It was Max's on reputation alone that made him seek him out and offer him the contract. Like him he didn't micro manage and at times he may be brutal, but he was honest.

"You must come back to Greece and bring your fiancé Max. I will take time and my wife and I will show you Aquinas like it is meant to be shown." Demetrius stated meaning every word. He knew right off that Lily and Sophie would get along from what Nikos had told him about her.

"We would like that." He said ignoring the look Luke was giving him. Max wasn't the only one protective of Lily and he would have married her years ago if Luke had let him.

Two days later they were home, and Demetrius was swamped in work. He had managed to phone Sophie once during the next week and began to feel incredibly guilty over neglecting his wife in the condition that she was in. That is until Gino showed up at his office one day and asked to see him privately.

Demetrius dismissed his team and had his assistant shut the door behind him. "Is Sophie well?"

"She is." The large man said while reaching into his pocket and withdrawing an envelope. "Last month that man she worked for, his name is Paul Suttner, phoned her at Aquinas wanting to meet with her." He handed the envelope to Demetrius.

"Has she?" he said guarding his expression over the rage that started to rise in him. Gino had taken a month to inform him of this. If it had been any other employee he would have fired him for not letting him know sooner, but Gino must have had his reasons.

"No Mr. Vassiliadas, not yet." He nodded toward the envelope, "That is the transcript from the phone conversation and Suttner's background. His mother and he had purchased cruise tickets to Athens in the fall. All the information of when and where the ship will dock is in there also."

Without opening it he tossed it on the desk and stood up and

turned to the window to look out over his beloved city.

Gino waited patiently. He knew Demetrius was absorbing the information and it wasn't easy for him knowing how possessive he was of Sophie, even more so now that he'd gotten her back. He watched the tall billionaire clasp his hands behind his back while deep in thought. To him the whole conversation seemed innocent on Sophie's behalf and it was Paul who used his mother's illness to manipulate her, but he wasn't sure if Demetrius would see it the same way. He himself was quite protective of her, but she was first and foremost, Demetrius' wife. Finally he turned around with his expression still masked, but he was certain it was hiding a turmoil of emotion.

"Has she tried calling him back?"

"No."

"Has he tried to contact her again?"

"Yes, twice." However, he'd left strict instructions with the staff not to allow the call to go through this time. "I already fired the maid that gave her the call last time."

Demetrius nodded already knowing that Gino would do such a thing. He was one of the few people that knew how Demetrius would have reacted and he was the only one that he trusted with Sophie. Yet, as angry as he was, he couldn't possibly confront his wife in her condition

Because he knew he would explode and cause her some sort of stress. There was no way he could talk to her calmly about this. His eyes went to the envelope. Part of him wanted to burn it and not open it at all, because he knew Gino was thorough and if it was not good news, it would destroy him.

Gino saw his eyes direct toward the envelope, "It isn't as bad as you may think. Mrs. Vassiliadas is very naïve about the man and is easily manipulated." He saw his boss nod and visibly relax somewhat.

"That is true Gino, but I've already told her that she was to

have no contact with him.” He said finally picking up the envelope and pulling out the contents, “Sophie needs to realize what is important in her life,” he continued sorting through the papers, “It is certainly not this man!”

Sophie was woken up from a nap by the familiar deep tone of her husband's voice. It took her a few moments to realize she wasn't dreaming.

“Demetrius.” She said excitedly while tossing back the covers then she stilled at his expression. Something was wrong, “What is it?”

“It?” he said raising his brows.

“You look unhappy.” She saw him purse his lips as if contemplating her words then he shook his head.

“It is nothing but a trying week.” He lied. Demetrius knew he was good at keeping his demeanor unreadable. He didn't want her to know how he felt about Paul and his raging anger that went with it. He had instructed Gino to keep a close eye on her and step up security. If Paul came within a mile of her, he would deal with him himself. He also meant to stay away from her until he managed to calm down, but he had to see for himself if she harbored any hidden secrets about this Paul. Unfortunately she did notice the change in him, but he did his best to stifle it.

Her heart must have fell in her stomach at that statement. She desperately wanted to hear him say that he missed her if even a little bit. There was something else to that he wasn't letting on about. She was sure of it. He may have tried to hide it, but there was that dark expression in his eyes that he couldn't hide. He looked angry.

“How are you feeling?” he finally asked.

“Fine,” she smiled a little unsure of herself, “The babies are growing,” she said running her hand over her swollen belly, “I feel them kick now.”

Instantly he was besides her covering her hand with his

unable to keep the look of pride out of his expression.

“Come Sophie,” he said, “I’m taking you to dinner.”

She blinked a couple of times, “dinner? Just you and me?”

“Of course.” He said smiling not letting it reach his eyes, “The press should see us together.”

Sophie would have normally jumped for joy to have time alone with him, but she couldn’t shake that feeling that she’d done something wrong especially after that statement.

Over the next four months she hardly saw him and the strain was taking its toll on her emotions and her body. If it wasn’t for her family’s encouragement she probably would have stopped eating. He rarely even called her now and her regular checkups at the doctor’s were with Gino and his security team, not her husband. This was something that she wanted to share with him, not his staff. Luckily there weren’t any more complications, but she was still heartbroken. She had come to the conclusion that he really didn’t love her and that she was just a possession to him and now that she was going to give him children he would have no use for her. At least she had Markus to keep her on focus even if her marriage seemed hopeless. Most times she went through the days in a haze doing her best to not upset herself over him. She had more to think about than just herself.

At her last doctor’s visit, the paparazzi were waiting and things got out of hand. A lot of shoving ensued while she was being directed to the limousine and she ended up getting knocked down. Although she checked out okay, she was sure that Gino would have told Demetrius and he might come home to see for himself that she and his future heirs were in good health but he didn’t.

It wasn’t until she found out from the newspaper that her father had delivered regularly that he’d filed a multimillion dollar lawsuit against the tabloid that the reporter who knocked her down worked for. She sat in stunned silence reading the article.



As usual the papers painted him as someone who loved his wife and described the blatant injustice over what happened to her. The tabloid fired the reporter and the lawsuit was dropped. This time she grew angry as she went on to read how the public perceived their perfect marriage. Perfect? She hadn't seen him in months, and he rarely even called her anymore. When he did, it was if talking to her was a strain. She stood up and slapped the paper on the table. Enough was enough, she thought turning to go and seek out Gino. She was going to see him today and clear the air.

But she never made it.

Nikos was sitting in his office in Athens when the call came in. Earlier that morning he saw Demetrius off to Denmark. He wanted to talk to him about Sophie, who seemed broken hearted over Demetrius' lack of attention.

"Stay out of my business Nikos." Demetrius said with the face of a steel trap.

"I know I told you that I wouldn't interfere, but Sophie is suffering."

Demetrius looked out the window for a moment giving nothing away in his expression. After a moment he turned back to him, "she's been speaking to another man."

Demetrius' jealousy astounded him. "So?"

"It's the same man who she worked for in the States. He's coming to see her."

"She wouldn't Demetrius." He said knowing his sister knew her husband came first. Still this took him by surprise.

"She told him she would try."

"Sophie would never betray you again Demetrius. You should see how she looks and you would never doubt her feelings for you. She's suffering."

*No more than I am*, he thought to himself, "I will find out soon enough. This Paul is coming to Athens in a few days."

“Demetrius—“ he held up his hand and cut him off.

“Nikos, if I go near her again I will lose my temper. I can’t risk upsetting her until after the babies are born. I am doing this for both of us. Then we will speak about Paul.”

“She wouldn’t betray you.” Nikos knew his sister and as far as he was concerned, both of them were being ridiculous. They loved each other but Demetrius was too stubborn to tell her and Sophie was too afraid to confront him. All they needed was a push, like Max and Lily. He would have to think on how to do this one.

“I will find out soon enough.” He said almost to himself.

Nikos left it be. He would figure out a way to fix this for the both of them. Neither one of them would take that first step to heal this rift between them.

The door to his office flew open and his personal assistant rushed in, “There’s a call from the hospital, your sister has been in a car accident.”

“Helene?” he felt dread creep into him. He’d been horrible to her lately and he felt it was for her own good after what she’d put Sophie and Demetrius through. It was nine months of worry and fear wondering if his younger sister was well when she took off, so he agreed with his father on severing ties until she took on some responsibility. They had tried many things over the years and Nikos always disagreed with his father’s harsh decisions where she was concerned, so he wouldn’t support him. This time he did about cutting off her funds. Only it wasn’t Helene. His assistant’s next words changed his dread to a sickening terror.

“No, the other one.”

“Oh Christ!” He grabbed the phone and pushed the flashing hold button. It never occurred to him that Sophie would be on the road. She was supposed to be at home and her next doctor’s appointment wasn’t until next week. All her needs were seen to at the estate. Their father and Demetrius had made sure it was

fully staffed with around the clock specialty nurses. What the hell would she be doing in Athens?

Demetrius' plane was still in the air when mobile went off. Pulling it out he saw that it was Nikos. He nearly considered not answering it because he was certain he was going to try and convince him that Sophie was as loyal as a dutiful wife should be. After the seventh ring he reluctantly flipped it open and put it to his ear ready for an argument. What he got made the blood drain from his face. The more Nikos talked the more Demetrius paled.

"I'm on my way there now Demetrius." Nikos continued in a panicked voice. "I don't know if she's even dead or alive. The hospital said that there were two people killed and I think one of them was the driver."

"I'm signaling the pilot to turn the plane around now." He said in a calm voice that even frightened himself. He suddenly felt numb as if this wasn't happening to him, but more like a bad dream that he couldn't wake up from. Sophie had to be alive. She just had to be.

Meanwhile Nikos' car had to detour because of the accident. How they managed to end up on the same street seemed almost like fate.

Then he saw the car. It was a ball of scrunched metal like it was made out of tinfoil. He'd been on the phone constantly and released an exclamation of shock as Demetrius' Limousine came into view through the emergency vehicles. It was all he could do not to fall to pieces seeing the back end of the car where Sophie would be sitting. He tried not thinking about it and did his best to start praying. Sophie always sat facing the front of the car and that was the worst part. He hoped God was with her and for some reason she sat with her back to the driver. But that wasn't the only concern. Sophie was six months pregnant she was already at risk. If she survived, what would the impact have done to the unborn children? This had to be the longest most

agonizing car ride of his life, he couldn't possibly come close to understanding the hell Demetrius was going through right now.

Demetrius was in an outright panic although you'd never know it from the way he looked when he came down the stairs from his plane to his waiting car. His expression seemed etched in stone and his walk was a trademark of confidence fitting for a man of his stature and reputation. The press had already started to gather like vultures at a fresh kill, yet he revealed nothing as the camera flashes went off in his face and they shouted questions while his team cleared the way to the car.

*"Is your wife alive?"*

*"How do you feel Mr. Vassiliadas?"*

*"Did the babies survive?"*

They had no idea what those questions did to a man. It was like someone just twisted a knife in his gut. No one would know how the news of his wife affected him unless they caught the trembling of his hand as he pulled out his mobile to dial Nikos before he got in the limousine. But someone did and it would be all over the headlines the next morning with pictures of the crash.

*Distraught Tycoon Rushes to Wife's Side*

Nikos answered his phone immediately. "Demetrius, she's going into surgery." He said quickly, "You need to get here; the doctor needs to see you right away."

A wave of emotion washed through him. She was alive. "I'm ten minutes out." He said not able to stop the crack in his voice, "Is she—"

"It's not good. I can't tell you anything because the surgeon needed to speak with you first."

"Tell him I'm almost there."

"I will."

"Is Hektor on his way?"

"yes."

His next words were even harder to say, "Was Markus—" "He's fine. Sophie left him with the nanny."

Demetrius released a rush of air in relief. He didn't deny that he'd come to care for the baby, maybe not as much as Sophie had, but at least that was a start. If Sophie lived, he would put in more of an effort where he was concerned and—he couldn't think of her not making it. She had to, or his life was over.

Maybe he should have spoken to her about Paul. Then they could get through this together. Yes, he was furious that she disobeyed him, but he could he be blowing this all out of proportion because he was so much in love with her that he was obsessed. He wouldn't know until he spoke to Sophie. If he could get a chance to do that. A shudder ran through him over that.

Just then the car pulled up to the hospital entrance through a throng of reporters. His team got out first and pushed an opening through the crowd. Police were already there trying to control the mob and he was thankful because it saved him some time getting to the building.

Sophie was well loved by the public because of her charity work and those who met her never forgot how sweet she was. She would give as much respect to a poor man as she would to one of privilege and despite her sheltered upbringing; she never acted like a snob. It was one of the things that made him fall in love with her moments after meeting her. Yet, he never told her.

He was afraid that by giving himself over completely, he would show vulnerability and he was raised never to show any weakness, but because of it Sophie suffered. He knew she did. He saw the pain in her eyes when he saw her last. Months ago. How could he stay away from his beautiful wife so long? He'd thrown himself into his work and put in eighteen hour days just so he'd exhaust himself. Not being beside her at night was painful. There were times that he reached out absently forgetting that he was alone.

After he spent time reflecting on that, he realized how hard he'd been on her and she took it. She must love him. Why it took such a tragedy for him to understand this, was his fault. If she lived, he would spend the rest of his life making it up to her.

He approached the nurses' station and the staff all stopped what they were doing and turned toward him. He was a remarkable sight despite the worry now showing on his handsome face. Also the six large men with him were impressive to the staff and the patients awaiting treatment in the sitting area.

"My wife?" was all he said knowing full well they recognized him.

A chubby older nurse with dark hair and eyes answered him, "Mr. Vassiliadas, the surgeon is waiting for you. I'll take you to him." She said coming out from behind the station and leading the way down a long hall to a door that was labeled conference room.

She opened the door to see Hektor, Nikos, and Helene besides the surgeon. He didn't even bother with pleasantries. In fact he didn't even pay Helene any attention because he was too worried.

"Mr. Vassiliadas." Said the surgeon stepping forward shaking his hand, "I understand that you would want to get to the point." He gave a curt nod for his answer and the surgeon continued, "Your wife is being prepped for surgery as we speak. She has internal bleeding and we know for certain that her spleen has been ruptured—"

"My babies." He interrupted.

"That is what I need to speak to you about. " he paused seeing the billionaire pale somewhat, "If there is a complication I need your permission to terminate—"

"No!" Sophie would never forgive him even if she overcame the grief of losing her unborn children.

"Mr. Vassiliadas, you must understand that your wife may die." He added carefully.

He released a wretched hoarse noise and reached for a chair sitting down and burying his face in his hands. He wasn't able to think. Not Sophie—his precious wife! After a moment he felt a strong hand curl over his shoulder followed by Nikos voice.

"Save the babies Doctor. Sophie would want it that way. Aren't they developed enough to survive outside of her?"

"I'm not one hundred percent sure they can. They are only at twenty four weeks. Their lungs may not be developed enough yet and she may not be able to recover if we don't take them. Twins are small to begin with. If this was one baby I would say yes, but until we remove them, we won't know."

"Try and save them." Nikos repeated.

The doctor's eyes went to the distraught man waiting for some sign that he agreed. There was a brief nod, but he didn't lift his head. "All right then." He said before he left.

Helene never felt such grief and guilt as she saw Demetrius so tormented. She was wrong to do what she did, she already knew that, but this was like a slap in the face. She was probably the most horrible person in the world. At least she felt like it. He did love her sister and she knew then and there that no man would ever love her the way Demetrius did Sophie. No wonder he hated her so much for her actions!

Tears slipped from her eyes and ran down her cheeks as she stared down at him. It had been a long time since she cried over anyone but herself but she felt indirectly responsible for all of this.

"Helene."

Nikos' voice brought her head up. He indicated with a nod toward the door for her to leave. Then she felt her father's arm around her shoulders as he led her out of the room. Nikos was right. Demetrius didn't need people looking at him when he was

so distraught.

Once the door was closed she released a sob and found her father's arms around her. She felt him shudder. Her father, who never gave either Sophie or him an inkling of sympathy, was finally betraying his self control.

"Papa, do you think—"

"Let's not think Helene." He said tightening his embrace, "Let God decide."

Back inside the room Demetrius was able to regain some of his poise. He stood and shoved his hands in his pockets while looking at Nikos. "I was too hard on her."

"Do not even begin to bring the past up Demetrius." Nikos frowned, "We have all done things we will regret, even more so if she doesn't make it. It does not help Sophie if those are the things we dwell on." The other man wasn't crying but he could see the moisture in his eyes.

Demetrius nodded. He was right.

It was several agonizing hours later when the surgeon reappeared. Demetrius and Nikos had been sitting in silence in the same room. Hektor went and got them both a coffee before joining them. He'd sent Helene home worried about adding more stress on Demetrius due to his feelings toward her promising he would keep her updated as soon as he heard anything.

All of the men stood when the Doctor walked in the room. When he broke into a smile the relief visible on all three of their faces made him know he made the right career choice. If he could save the life of someone so loved it made everything worthwhile. "She's alive—" he held up his hand as Demetrius went to speak, "—but she's still not out of danger. She's being transferred to intensive care once we have her stabilized in recovery and I have no prediction on when she'll wake up. Her spleen was ruptured. She had a lacerated liver and a fractured sternum from the seatbelt."



"Sophie wore a seatbelt?" Said Demetrius not remembering the last time she ever had.

"Yes, it probably saved her life."

He should have known that she'd put the safety of their unborn children first.

"As for your sons—"

Demetrius stiffened waiting for some news that they were damaged in some way.

"Because of the damage to your wife, we had to take them, but they are fine and breathing on their own as we speak but in neonatal intensive care in incubators."

"Thank God!" he finally said in a rush of relief, "Can I go see them—and Sophie?"

"You can certainly go see your babies, but your wife is not in ICU yet. I'll send someone to find you as soon as she can receive visitors."

Demetrius was more than willing to be patient after that news. Even if Sophie was still in danger, she'd made it this far and their babies lived.

"Can I hold them?" He heard himself say looking at the tiny sleeping forms while Nikos stood beside him. Nothing could have prepared him for the emotions washing through him. He was a father. A father of twin boys and to him they seemed to be the most beautiful babies in the world.

"Of course you may Mr. Vassiliadas." Said one of the maternity nurses while pulling up a chair. "First you need to wash your hands over there at the sink, then you need to sit down and wear this gown overtop of your clothing to prevent them from getting sick. They are still fragile."

Demetrius didn't hesitate and after he scrubbed his hands, he threw on the gown while sitting in the chair she pulled up. Moments later he had a baby in each of his strong arms.

"Looking at them makes me want to have one of my own."

Nikos confessed standing beside him. "Who knew people could be so tiny."

"They're very premature." Said the nurse standing nearby watching the billionaire croon over his new offspring. She couldn't help but smile. There was no mistaking the pride that filled his expression followed by wonderment every time one of them moved. Her eyes studied the man's expression thinking he didn't seem as formidable as she thought he would be. He was already in love with his new heirs and although she followed the tabloids, she never put much into gossip, it was for entertainment only. However, she wondered if it was true about him and his wife losing a child and if he was as much in love with her as they said.

She never seen his wife personally but if it was anything like seeing this handsome man in person, the pictures in the newspapers didn't even come close to how gorgeous he was. That meant that Sophie Vassiliadas had to be very beautiful. She sighed inwardly watching him with his newborns. He was hopelessly enamored by them and she was glad that he had gotten two sons from her because he'd heard that she probably wouldn't be able to have any more children after the accident.

Just then another nurse entered the nursery, "Mr. Vassiliadas, the surgeon says you may come and see your wife now."

He looked up and nodded while the maternity nurse retrieved his sons and placed them back in the incubator. Then without saying a word he stripped off the gown and followed the nurse down to intensive care with Nikos beside him. If he spoke he knew that he would come undone.

Before they went into the unit she stopped and turned to him, "Mr. Vassiliadas, I just want to warn you that there are a lot of tubes and machines around your wife and to be prepared for it." He gave a curt nod, "Also she hasn't responded to our coaxing

so she's still in a coma—“

“Coma?” he finally said with an expression of surprise.

“I was sure the doctor told you.”

“No, he said she wasn't sure when she'd wake up.” He added finally showing his grief realizing that he was putting it lightly. Something that many people may not know is Demetrius didn't like anything sugar coated. He would have preferred the surgeon to give him the absolute basic truth.

“He's right, but just to ease your worries; her pupils are dilating so she has brain activity. The surgeon doesn't think there's any damage there.” She continued guiding her eyes to the other man, “There can be only one visitor at a time.”

Nikos squeezed Demetrius' shoulder, “Take all the time you need Demetrius. I'll be in the waiting room with my father. We'll wait our turn.” With that he turned and left.

Demetrius may have been warned but the sight of his precious wife encased in crisp white sheets with several tubes and wires coming out of her hooked up to blipping machines and other apparatuses still took him by surprise. She looked so fragile he almost wept. Did he do this to her? Was she coming to see him? It was the only conclusion that he could have drawn. The street that the accident had occurred on was several blocks from his office building. He hadn't informed her that he would be out of the country for a few days. For him being out of sight was out of mind. It was driving him insane that he couldn't touch her or be with her like he wanted to. Then there was this Paul. He couldn't bring himself to confront her and upset her either, but did he do more harm not approaching the subject?

He knew now that he'd made more mistakes with her and in pushing her away caused her pain. He should've listened to Demetrius this morning, cancelled his trip and gone and spoke to her.

His hand rubbed the back of his neck as he looked down at

her. This was entirely his fault. He knew it was and the guilt that hit him while realizing it was unbearable. All he wanted to do was protect her and instead he was the one that she needed protecting from.

Pulling up a chair he sat down next to the bed and took her hand in his. Her face was bruised, but by the looks of it, there would be no permanent scars. One of her eyes was swollen shut too. Not that he cared about the scars, but she may. He didn't care about anything now, except her. She had to wake up. Then he could tell her how he really felt. Closing his eyes and bowing his head, he prayed silently making that bargain.

Down the hall, Nikos took a seat beside his father in one of the waiting rooms. He figured he would be in the one closest to ICU and he was right.

"The police were here." He said taking a sip of his coffee unwilling to discuss Sophie just yet.

"What did they have to say?"

"Some elderly man ran a red light." He cast him a glance. "They don't know why he was going so fast and they won't. He died in the accident."

"Who else? I heard there were two."

"Giorgio." Wards

Nikos swore. That was Demetrius' driver.

"Gino was with her too, he has a broken leg, one arm, and some fractured ribs."

"Is he here?"

"Yes, but like Sophie, sound asleep after surgery. His wife is beside him as we speak. I checked in on them already and told her if she needed anything from us to just ask."

Nikos nodded, "I've seen the car. It looked as if it would be the passengers not the driver who died."

"Well I guess there are miracles then." Said Hektor looking at his son finally ready to hear the news, "How is Sophie?"

"The nurse said she was in a coma." That made Hektor bow his head and Nikos was impressed that the man still maintained his legendary calm. Nikos himself felt like he needed to cry. Sophie was special to all of them.

"My poor Bella." Hektor finally said almost to himself.

"Demetrius got to hold his babies." Nikos added trying to cheer them both up, "You should see them. They're like mini Demetriuses, all the way down to the dark hair.

Hektor released a chuckle and brought his gaze back up to Nikos, "Will they live?"

"They seem pink and healthy and the nurse said they were fragile but she seemed confident that they were normal."

"That is good news." Said Hektor, "I'm proud of both of them. Now I have three grandsons."

That was the first time that Nikos heard him refer to Markus in that manner and quite frankly he was glad to hear it. At first their father was furious at Helene for having a child out of wedlock, and he immediately isolated her so the press wouldn't get wind of it. After the baby was born Hektor barely spared him or Helene a glance, but now that Demetrius and Sophie had adopted him, he seemed to show more interest. Was it because of them or was it because Demetrius was able to set aside his hatred for Helene for the sake of the baby and his love for his wife that made him come to his senses? Either way he was glad his father saw the light.

The next day Gino woke up and gave the police his statement. Hektor and Nikos went to see him and he told them what had happened. He'd seen the car coming and sheltered Sophie's body with his. She actually insisted that he wear a seatbelt too, and admitted that if she hadn't he wouldn't be here.

"How is she?" he asked even before they began questioning him.

"She's alive but still in a coma and before you ask, the babies

are fine.” Nikos informed him. “We got to see her for a short time yesterday. Demetrius hasn’t left her side except to let us in to see her for a few minutes.”

Gino was relieved to hear that she was still alive, “I tried to talk her out of it.” He said laying back and looking up at the ceiling, “But she wanted to see her husband.”

“Demetrius had already figured that out Gino.”

“I feel responsible.” He said shifting his eyes back to the two men, “I should have insisted she stay home.”

“You’ll have to get in line Gino,” said Nikos, “Demetrius is standing at the front of that with us a close second.”

Gino nodded feeling his own eyes betray his guilt, “I’ll pray for her.”

“We both will.” Said his wife taking her husband’s hand and kissing it.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

It was almost two weeks before Sophie finally woke up. During that time Demetrius rarely left her side and even Nikos began to worry about him. She had been moved to a private room after she was out of danger so everyone could come in and visit her. Nikos would find Demetrius sound asleep in a chair beside the bed with his head resting next to her hip and his hand still clasping hers.

Helene still was asked to stay away but she’d been at the hospital hoping that Demetrius would allow her near her sister. Her father had warned her to keep her distance not to upset him because he had enough on his mind. So she spent her time in the chapel praying as did a lot of their relatives. They weren’t the only ones.

Public sympathy was phenomenal since the accident and it seemed as if all of Greece rallied behind them. Sophie’s charity

work was enormous and people didn't forget her generosity. Flowers, cards, balloons and gifts flooded the hospital and finally Demetrius had to start turning them away because there was no more room for them. Hektor handled the press letting them know the progress of the Vassiliadas twins, but didn't comment on Sophie's condition except to tell them to keep her in their prayers.

Demetrius held her limp hand and talked to her for hours about how he longed to see his sons play on the beach on their island and watch them grow into strong men.

Sophie felt as though someone parked a truck on her head when she opened her eyes. The first person she saw was Demetrius. He had a hold of one of her hands and was bowed over it like he was in prayer. She tried to say his name but nothing came out but a small breath of air, but it brought his head up. She was surprised to see him look so worn. It looked as though he thinned out and strain was evident on his face.

"Sophie." He stood and leaned over to kiss her mouth, "you are awake."

"What happened?" she mouthed.

"There was...an accident." He said reaching for a glass of water and a straw, "Here, take a sip."

She did and coughed once before she actually let his words set in. Her eyes widened and her hand went to her belly which was now flat as the bed she lay in. Instantly tears sprang to her eyes and she released an anguished cry.

His warm hand covered hers, "Shh darling, the babies are fine." He smiled, "you needed emergency surgery, but our sons are fine."

She managed a smile, „sons?'

"They need some attention for the next few weeks, but the doctors assure me that they are both healthy."

"How do they look? Do they *look* healthy?" she cut in still

concerned.

“Beautiful.” He glowed dispelling her worries, “Absolutely perfect. They are a miracle.”

“Like you.” She murmured.

Demetrius felt tears prick his eyes, but quickly stifled them, “Are you in any pain?”

“No, but my stomach hurts a little.”

“They had to take the babies besides your surgery. The doctor said you can’t lift anything for the next six weeks. But I’m taking time off to take care of you.”

“You will—oh Demetrius—” she started to cry. That was all she wanted was to be with him.

“Hush my dove; do not get yourself worked up. We have a lot of time to discuss things. Okay?”

Eventually she nodded letting her eyes rove over his worn expression. He had at least two days worth of stubble, “How long was I unconscious?” Her voice was beginning to return because it was barely a whisper. She saw the strain return to his features but he tried to soften it with a smile.

“Two weeks.” He finally admitted with some reluctance.

“God.” She choked out, “My poor Demetrius. It must’ve been horrible for you.”

He leaned down and set his cheek next to hers, “Leave it to you to think of me.” He lifted his head to look at her. “But you are awake now. It was worth the wait.”

“When was the last time you slept?” she said lifting her hand to run a finger along the dark area under one of his eyes.

“Quit it.” He scolded softly. “When I get you and the children back to Aquinas, I will find time to sleep. We have to concentrate on you right now.”

She looked around the room at the enormous amount of flowers and gifts. “From you?”

He smiled, “Most of them. The rest are from your and my



relatives, some congratulating us on parenthood, others hoping you get better." He sighed and sat down in the chair beside her again, "It was touch and go for a bit. They didn't think you'd pull through."

"At least the babies survived."

"It wouldn't have been enough for me." He answered finally letting his voice crack. Never in his life had he experienced so much torment. Even when she left him, it wasn't near to what he had experienced over the past few weeks.

She wanted to ask what he meant by that when the door opened interrupting her. In stepped her father and her brother. Both splaying smiles across their faces when they saw her awake. They took turns kissing her on the forehead.

"Demetrius wants to bring you home to us for a few days to help you recover. Would you like that?" Said Hektor with hope in his eyes.

She turned and looked at her husband, "Do you?"

"I thought you may like to be around your family too Sophie."

Yes, she would, "I would like that." She answered with a smile.

Hektor looked at Demetrius, "Come, you need coffee." He held out his arm.

Demetrius knew the look in the man's eyes. He wouldn't take no for an answer. Reluctantly he got up told Sophie he'd be back in a minute and preceded Hektor out of the room.

Nikos waited a minute before he turned to his sister, "Sophie, who is Paul?"

Her eyes widened, "Why?"

"He's been making inquiries about you."

"What? Paul is here?"

"Demetrius thinks you are too fragile to confront, I on the other hand, think it's important to release my friend of his

misery.”

“What misery?”

“He seems to think you’re having an affair with this man.”

“What...impossible. Paul was someone I worked with when I ran away. I have no interest in him.”

He studied her for a moment and nodded, “Then you’d better tell your husband. He is grief-stricken thinking you love another man.”

“It’s impossible.” She said with conviction, “I only love Demetrius. I have told him that.”

“This Paul has been trying to track you down here since he phoned you last spring.”

Her eyes widened, “How did you know?”

“You have a very possessive Jealous husband Sophie. Don’t you know how much that man loves you?”

She felt tears fall, “No, I don’t. He has never said. He wouldn’t come see me. I thought he didn’t care about me that way.”

He sighed half in frustration, “Demetrius isn’t a man of many words. Can you not see how he fawns all over you? He’s clearly besotted with you Sophie! Maybe you are too young yet to understand a man’s feelings, but Demetrius loves you. He has from the first day he set eyes on you. I know, I was there. He has done his best to make you happy. He made Helene give up Markus for you when you wanted him. A child that is not his own. That man would do anything for you.”

She was speechless.

“Did he tell you that the Doctors asked him to make a choice over you and the babies. Without hesitation he chose your life.” She gasped, “Then he knew that you couldn’t live with yourself if the babies died and you lived. It was an anguishing decision for him.”

She shook her head, “Who did he choose?”

“He refused to make the decision. I did. I chose the babies because he wasn’t capable of one sane thought at the time and I knew it was what you would have wanted.” Nikos took the chair beside the bed that Demetrius sat in only moments ago, “Demetrius hasn’t slept, eaten or hardly even gone home for a shower and a change of clothes since you were in intensive care. I’ve never seen a man in so much grief. Then to top it all off, you were talking another man regardless of how you told Demetrius that he meant nothing to you.”

“I was concerned on how his mother was. She was not a healthy person.” She defended, “I never had any feeling for Paul. Also Demetrius had me imprisoned on Aquinas with no one.”

“Can you blame him? Last time you ran away and put him through hell.”

Ashamed she turned away from him.

“Sophie I’m not telling you this to hurt you. I’m telling you this to let you know how much Demetrius loves you.” She nodded.

“I feel like a fool.” Why did it always take her so long to see the obvious? Nikos was right. Everything Demetrius has done for her was his way of showing her how much he loved her. Yet, she needed to hear those words for some silly reason when he’d gone deeper and showed her every time he touched her. How many women could brag about such a thing? The lack of jewellery even made sense now. He had a reputation for doting on his mistresses with such expensive gifts and she never got anything except for those few pieces, but they weren’t disgustingly expensive except for her wedding ring. And like her ring, they were chosen according to her likes, and her whole demeanor. They weren’t picked out of haste. Demetrius had chosen the necklace and the bracelet carefully making sure they suited her and she would like them. She never realized that he knew her so well.

For a man to take his wife into consideration so much must really love her. Then there was the yacht. He'd had a yacht built for her and named it *Sophie's heart*. It was unequalled in luxury and beauty and every bit of planning for it was overseen by him personally. It wasn't until her wedding day that she knew the yacht was for her. He'd run off many times in the year prior to see to some complication when it was being built. Every bit of it was built with love and she didn't see it.

When he first took her to it she actually wept at such a beautiful gift but it didn't make sense to her why he would give her such a thing. Beyond taking it out the first time, they had never stayed overnight in it despite the fully furnished closets. Was that to be her original wedding night? The more she thought about it the more it made sense. He admitted that he wanted to wait until she was older before they consummated their marriage and would he have made it that special to her? She already knew the answer to that. He would have. It was a place where he'd brought no other woman, and he could have her totally to himself.

Then there was Markus. He hated her sister with a venom she never seen before in anyone, yet he literally bought Helene's son to make her happy. A child that her sister tried to proclaim he was the father of and near destroyed their marriage over. No one would do such a thing, but he did—for her.

"No Sophie, you are learning." Said Nikos squeezing her hand to try and ease her guilt.

"I didn't see it Nikos." She said allowing more tears to fall, "What is wrong with me?"

"Sometimes people need a nudge." He managed with a grin thinking of Lily and Max, "So I thought I'd help. There's nothing wrong with you. You just let your insecurities get in the way because you've never been so vulnerable before."

"I always wondered why he did certain things." She

admitted. "Like Markus and the yacht."

"No other woman could say that their husbands did such a thing for them." He said, "He actually consulted me quite a bit on your likes and dislikes for *Sophie's Heart*."

"Really?"

He nodded, "So Sophie, do you see it now?"

"More than you know." She answered.

Just then Hektor and Demetrius returned. Nikos got up as Demetrius approached Sophie. He heard Sophie say his name and hold her arms up to him. Demetrius set down his coffee and accepted the embrace while she spoke softly in his ear. Nikos turned to his father and urged him out of the room while they talked. Before he shut the door he saw Demetrius wrap his arms around his wife and hold her tightly.

"You told her."

"Yes." Nikos said, "She was being foolish. I fear we have indulged her too much."

"Maybe Nikos, but both of them have a lot to learn." Said Hektor.

When it came time to leave the hospital two more weeks later Nikos had purchased matching car seats for their sons and hired several more bodyguards to accompany them out of the building. When he came into her room his wife was arguing with the nurse. She wanted Sophie to get in the wheelchair and she was refusing.

"I can walk on my own two feet." Fumed Sophie, "Not be wheeled out of here like some old woman."

"Mrs. Vassiliadias, the hospital policy is..."

"If Mrs. Vassiliadias wishes to walk, than she will." Said Demetrius. The woman looked at him and paled.

"But sir..."

He held up his hand to silence her, "she is right. She is not an invalid. There are over two hundred paparazzi and reporters

out there waiting for a glimpse of us as a family and my wife will not be wheeled around like an invalid.” He could see out of the corner of his eye Sophie give him a ravishing grin.

“Yes Mr. Vassiliadias.” The woman nodded and made a quick exit.

Demetrius set the seats on her now empty and made bed then turned to her holding out his arms. She went to him without hesitation.

“Thank you Demetrius.” She said holding him tightly.

“Anything for you.” He said and meant it. Then he kissed her lightly before releasing her, “We must go. We’re holding up traffic with all of this attention. The cars are out front and drawing hoards of paparazzi blocking traffic.”

“Oh,” she smiled watching him lift their sons Alexis and Darius out of their bassinets and place them in their car seats. They had insisted on having the babies next to her when they were out of danger. She even refused a nanny for them and besides the help of one of the nurses, did all the care herself. Demetrius stayed as much as he could but when she insisted that he should return and clear up his schedule so he could spend more time with them he finally complied.

He had named them himself and asked her if she approved. She did. It meant a lot to her that he named his own children and she told him that.

As she watched him handle them with tenderness so unlike his outward appearance she thought her heart would burst. He was different toward her now and although he never told her he loved her, she realized now he didn’t have to. Maybe the words were difficult for him to say, but he’d been showing her all along. Just now, the way he looked at his sons with unmasked love was enough to never care if he ever said those three words to her because now that she realized it, he’d been looking at her like that since she met him.

As for Paul, she told him again that he meant nothing to her and she was and always would be in love with him. One day she asked if he'd harmed him in any way because she was sure that he did come to Athens like he wanted. It took her some time to figure out how Paul actually looked at her. Now that she knew what desire was it was hard to mistake. Although she never even thought that way about him, because she was so besotted with her husband to notice it. Demetrius only told her that his men helped him kindly back to the cruise ship with a stern warning and no amount of coaxing from her would get him to admit what kind of warning he had given him. He would just smile with a mischievous glint in his eyes and tell her not to worry, but Paul was completely unharmed.

However, one day she would find out because Demetrius had also made her aware of her own talents as a woman, and how easily she could get him to give in to her. She released a sly smile of her own while watching him finish tucking the babies in their seats.

She couldn't deny that she loved him so much more when she thought it wasn't possible as she looked at their sons. Besides what he did for her with Markus, they were the ultimate gift to her. Knowing that they would take on their father's incredible good looks, she already knew she was in trouble. However being the little sister of a rake gave her some knowledge—she hoped.

Nikos came in at that moment, placed an adoring kiss on his sister's forehead, "Can I help?"

"All of the luggage has already left, „Said Demetrius, "But you can escort Sophie. Regardless of the proclamation you made earlier Bella, I don't want you to fall. You are still recovering."

She looped her arm in Nikos offered one, "Whatever you say." She grinned.

Demetrius wasn't lying about the paparazzi. At that moment she was thankful that he'd covered both boys with small baby

blankets with the amount of flash bulbs going off. They exited the hospital with a dozen bodyguards and slid into the middle of three limousines while reporters hollered questions at them.

“God.” Sophie said looking out the tinted windows, “they’re like sharks.”

“You are Greece’s sweetheart.” He said while buckling the baby seats in.

“Me?” She said astonished.

He sat beside her and tilted her chin up to meet his gaze, “Don’t you know? You have the face of an angel Sophie. When the tabloids started printing pictures of you when we first got married, they weren’t the least bit hostile. Although they did compare you to your sister tremendously, creating enough news to sell the papers. However, in the process they pretty much isolated you on a pedestal.”

“Poor Helene.”

“Her reputation was ruined long before you married me. Do not feel sorry for her.” He said harshly.

Sophie knew no she could never change Demetrius’ opinion of her sister, so she didn’t even try. Instead she just resigned herself to nodding.

“Then,” He continued, “You were in the accident and by then you were back in the tabloids recovering from being a recluse. We had Markus and they automatically thought you had given birth to another son during this time and didn’t want to risk another miscarriage. Now we have the twins.” He smiled.

Her eyes suddenly widened, “Really?”

“Yes. Now this time the press was able to follow your pregnancy and when you got into that car accident I swear all of Greece prayed for your recovery. Including me.”

Cupping his handsome tanned face in her hands she searched his gaze, “I love you Demetrius. So much it hurts.”

He leaned down and covered her mouth with his, “I’ve



missed you Sophie. You are my life.” He nuzzled her neck with his lips, “We have a lot of time to make up for.”

“We do.” She breathed.