

Chapter 3 – A unsuspected Surprise

Daniel looked at Iboya who whipped her head towards him so quickly that it almost looked like her long blonde hair was turning in slow motion.

“Did he just say what I think he said,” she responded. Her voice shook slightly as she was trying to cover up the look of sheer fear on her face, but Daniel could see that fear linger inside her beautiful deep blue eyes. Marlysha was sound asleep on Daniel’s lap as he tried to comfort Iboya, but on the inside he shared the same faintheartedness.

This reaction was justified for one reason; it had been a hectic year and a half for the aviation industry.. On the 8th of March 2014, a Boeing 777-200ER of Malaysian Airlines with flight number 370, better known as MH370, carried 239 people, 227 passengers and twelve crew members, went off the radar only forty minutes after its departure from Kuala Lumpur International Airport to the International Airport of Beijing. The plane was never to be recovered and a year after the incident occurred all 239 passengers were declared dead. In the wake of the disappearance of MH370, on July 17th, 2014, another Boeing 777-200ER of Malaysian Airlines disappeared. This time, it was carrying 298 people: 283 passengers and fifteen crew members. The airliner lost contact approximately fifty kilometers from the Ukraine-Russia border and crashed near Torez in Donetsk Oblast, Ukraine. The crash occurred during the battle of Shakhtarsk Raion, part of the ongoing war in Donbass a region controlled by the Donbass People’s Militia. A Buk service-to-air 9M38-series missile with 9N314M warhead launched from Eastern Ukraine downed the airliner. The crash became the seventh worst air disaster in history, was Malaysia airlines worst incident, and its second major incident in twelve months.

How is it possible that they are still allowing commercial airliners to fly flight paths over these war thorn countries, Daniel thought. Syria was at war and heavily controlled by Isis who also controlled large parts of Iraq. Daniel hesitantly peeked out the window as if he were expecting to see a missile coming towards them, but when this did not transpire he let out a sigh of relief. After some painstaking minutes, he allowed himself to relax. Iboya had also calmed down and was now eating a sandwich she had purchased from the airplane caterer. “Who said comfort eating doesn’t help” her mouth filled with a BLT sandwich, she half smiled at Daniel. Daniel refrained himself from looking out the window until the captain had announced that they were approaching Heraklion, Greece. Although, when he finally did, he saw the silhouettes of islands arise over the horizon.

The plane started to slowly lose altitude and Daniel could see the gorgeous deep blue ocean creep closer and closer. As the plane started descending, Daniel braced himself. His ears popped and, at the same time, Marlysha was rudely awakened by the same feeling. She started screaming at the top of her lungs, and Daniel tried comforting her despite the fact that he felt as if he were losing his mind. Iboya grabbed Daniel’s hand and whispered that everything was going to be alright, but as the ocean got closer Daniel’s anxiety really started to get the best of him. All he wanted to do was curl up in a fetal position and scream at the top of his lungs alongside Marlysha.

Just as he was about to close his eyes and accept the fact that the plane was about to be swallowed by the dark blue Greek ocean, a runway appeared amidst the ocean. Daniel unclenched his butt cheeks as he felt the plane slightly bounce on the tarmac. He heard the sound of screeching tires and realized that they were in the clear. He put on his bravest face and glanced over at Iboya. He said, full of confidence, “let the vacation begin.”

The plane taxied slowly over the tarmac until it came to a complete stand still. Daniel looked at his watch and adjusted the time as the captain thanked everybody for flying with Transavia Airlines. It was now 12:30 local time, an hour time difference. It finally started to sink in that they had finally made it and their well-deserved vacation was just about to begin.

They slowly started making their way off the plane. As the family stepped outside they were greeted by a warm and welcoming blast of air. The weather was beautiful and the skies were clear. They made their way down the aircraft stair car. Iboya was holding Marlysha and Daniel was carrying their luggage. Airport personnel directed them to a point alongside the aircraft where Marlysha’s stroller laid on the tarmac. Daniel picked it up and unfolded it as Iboya swiftly strapped Marlysha in and lathered her with sunscreen. The three of them were then escorted by airport personnel into small transit busses that would take them from the tarmac to the airport’s main building, a large white building with huge blue letters that read Heraklion Airport N. Kazantzakis. The moment they stepped

inside the bus they were consumed by the humid atmosphere inside the small vehicle that lacked air-conditioning. People were ushered on to the bus until they were all packed inside it like thirty sardines in a tin can. Daniel watched Iboya's face as she uncomfortably wiggled on her spot. Iboya was mildly claustrophobic and did not do well in confined and crowded places.

"Are you all right?" Daniel asked as he expanded his body, and slightly nudged the guy behind him backwards with his Riut Bag to create a little bit more room and increase Iboya and Marlysha's personal space.

The bus closed its doors and the humidity intensified. Daniel could feel the sweat trickle down his forehead and arms as the bus took the short drive to the main building. Finally it stopped at a staircase alongside the building. The moment the doors opened people rushed out and Daniel and Iboya waited until there was enough space for them to move with the stroller. The three of them finally stepped out of the vehicle and made their way up the short flight of stairs and took a left through the door. It was a little less humid inside the building.

The first thing they saw as they had stepped through the door was the toilets that were on the left. Daniel decided to change Marlysha in the men's room because, unlike the women's room, there was no line. Daniel stepped inside a small bathroom and proceeded to change Marlysha on top of the sink. By the time Daniel and Marlysha had made it back into the large hallway Iboya was still standing in line. Iboya exited the ladies room and posed for a picture with Marlysha in front of a banner that read Welcome to Crete. After the quick photo shoot, the three of them made their way to the end of the wide yet short hallway where there was another flight of stairs going up to the right. Up to this point they had not encountered any security checks or anything one would normally expect of an airport. They walked up the stairs and got to a crowded hall with three small conveyer belts. Daniel spotted that their luggage would be arriving on Number 2. As time passed the conveyer belt started spitting out luggage. The way the different colored suitcases traveled on top of the conveyer belt reminded him of the kaiten-zushi bars, sushi bars with conveyer belt service, that were common in Japan.

After a couple minutes of looking at the different suitcases and amusingly relating them to different sorts of sushi, Daniel spotted one of their suitcases. When he walked up to grab it the same guy he had nudged on the bus shoulder checked him and grabbed the suitcase off the belt. Daniel bounced back and as he was about to start an argument with the tall and stocky brown haired guy, he noticed that the suitcase had a different color lock than their suitcase. The guy stepped aside as Daniel could see a small, satisfied grin on his face. Daniel took no offense to it and proceeded to wait for his bags. Daniel waited until it was just within arms length and then grabbed it with both hands and set it next to him, as he made sure to accidentally set it on top of his now openly declared rival's left foot. He put on the smuggest face that he could produce and apologized flamboyantly, as the grin that had appeared on the man's kisser disappeared as rapidly as it had reared its ugly face. Daniel soon spotted their second suitcase and grabbed it off the belt. He rolled them both towards his family without giving his rival a second look. Marlysha was clapping her hands together as she smiled at him and Iboya pushed the stroller towards the exit right in front of them..

"No security checks?" Daniel asked, flabbergasted.

"Apparently not," Iboya said whilst she pushed the stroller towards a mix of young looking males and females wearing bright yellow t-shirts that sported the Sunweb logo.

Whilst Daniel joked nonchalantly about how he could have smuggled anything into Greece if he wanted to and that the security was a laughing matter, Iboya stopped in front of the group of guides that were there to accompany the travelers to their resorts.

"Welcome to Greece" one of the girls said cheerfully. She was rather pale for someone that worked in Greece and had some freckles and a big bushy set of blonde curly hair. "What is your last name?" she asked.

"Jansen" Iboya quickly responded.

The girl let her eyes slide down a clipboard that she was holding. She proceeded to mark a cross next to their name with a pen that was tucked behind her right ear whilst she mumbled Gouves water park resort.

"Bus number 6, please" she said more audible this time as she pointed them in the direction of the busses.

There was a long line of busses with the names of different traveling agencies in the window that all had numbers assigned to them. They walked up to the bus that read Sunweb with the number 6

next to it. The bus driver of the large touring car bus who had a big bushy moustache helped them store their suitcases and the stroller in the storage compartment on the side of the bus. It was really hard to understand him as he tried to speak English with a Greek accent. It sounded more like he was singing rather than talking.

They were one of the first people on board of the bus so they could still pick where they wanted to sit. They decided to take a seat close to the back exit. Iboya took the window seat and Daniel took the one next to the aisle. He slid his Riut Bag on to one shoulder and put the diaper bag on the floor in front of him. Iboya had grabbed the sunscreen and started applying it on Marlysha's skin as Daniel handed her the Sippy cup. It was warm inside the touring car, but not as humid as it had been inside the way smaller transfer bus on the tarmac. The bus started to gradually fill up and people around them were cheerfully chatting away and discussing their vacation plans. Marlysha had grabbed the attention of an elderly lady who was wearing a stylish aquamarine hat that looked like it was straight out of a designer catalogue. She was sitting right across from them on the other side of the aisle.

After a good 10 minutes had passed, the pale, blonde curly haired girl was the last person to get on the bus. The driver fired up the engine as a calming cold breeze filled the air and the air-conditioning compressor kicked in. The bus slowly started driving as it swayed to the right to follow the road. It drove past the airport's parking lot and took a left. The pale girl with blonde curly hair stood up and started speaking through the intercom. She introduced herself as Monique, a tour guide who worked for Sunweb. She warned them about drinking the local tap water and swimming in the sea without sandals because of sea urchins coming in with the current. She also told them about the topography and the ins and outs of the island amongst other things. After Monique was done with her brief yet informative introduction to the island of Crete, she walked through the bus and handed everyone an envelope with his or her last name scribbled on top of it that concealed a stack of paperwork regarding his vacation.

The bus was driving up hill at high speed. There was a make shift railing guarding the cliff and the Aegean sea on their left side. On the right, there was a rock riddled hillside that looked like it used to be rustic two decades ago, but now looked like it could start coming down at any minute. Daniel also noticed, after making a couple stops at different resorts, that there was a real contrast between the rich and the poor. If the vegetation was thriving, you were most definitely in a good part of town. Sometimes the grass really is greener on the other side, he thought.

As the bus drove further and got closer to their destination, the visual scaring of Greece due to the recession and crisis was prominently dominant. They would see nice outstretched pieces of urban areas where the economy was still thriving at the seams alternating with what looked like a patchwork of nice architectural pieces amidst a sea of unfinished construction projects.

The bus kept driving through small seaside villages that were littered with car rentals. It was an 18-kilometer drive east from Heraklion to Gouves, which only took them a little over half an hour because of the few stops they had to make. They were now slowly leaving the outskirts of Gouves. "Picturesque my ass" Daniel scoffed as he looked at the faded and steadily decaying buildings. "How easy is it to make something look good in a picture," he thought. It is all about the angles, but the real life angles could not hide the fiscal scaring that plagued the Greek economy. Daniel almost felt sorry being there, but if it was not for their financial situation they would have probably traveled somewhere else.

The bus passed a little Supermarket like shop as Iboya frantically started looking around and said, "Try to remember where this is, Dan, so we can get some stuff here later." Daniel rolled his eyes, "Will do," he said sarcastically.

He kept his gaze locked right in front of him, because he could feel the look Iboya had shot him burn out of his peripheral vision. He just awkwardly stared at the baldhead of the elderly man that sat in front of him, until he could not keep in his laughter anymore. Iboya punched him and as Daniel rubbed his sore arm the bus started driving up hill.

After a couple of minutes of driving up hill the bus came to a total stand still. Monique stood up as she announced that they had made it to Gouves Waterpark Resort. Daniel heaved up his Riut Bag, slung the diaper bag over his shoulder, and took a right down the aisle. He took a left and walked down the staircase. He stepped into the blazing Greek sun and missed the air-conditioning the moment he stepped outside. Iboya quickly followed him as they waited for the bus driver to open up the

storage compartment. The short man with the bushy moustache walked up to them and greeted them. He opened up the compartment and handed Daniel the stroller.

As the bus driver got their luggage, Daniel unfolded the stroller so Iboya could put Marlysha in it. Monique explained to Marlysha that the bus would pick them up at the same spot on the day that they had to fly back. By the time Daniel walked to their suitcases and looked up to reorient himself, the bus driver had already stepped inside the bus and started driving away.

When the bus moved they were expecting to see a grand resort but all they saw was a cafe with the red and yellow neon letters on top of it that read "Gouves Sports Cafe" with a huge soccer ball to the right of the word café. Daniel looked confused, but they decided to walk towards the café. Marlysha was clapping her hands together and smiling. As they walked up the last bit of the hill, they noticed the sand colored building with red pillars of the resort reception starting to arise on their left.

They followed the road that took a slight left in front of the sports café and then started trailing down. Daniel looked at his watch it was now 13:45 as they slowly walked up the little ramp leading up to the big glass front doors of the reception building. They walked into the hallway that was filled with suitcases and people that would soon be departing paradise. There was a big reception desk to the left of them. A brunette haired lady, somewhere in her forties, wearing a dark blue uniform was talking to a girl of house keeping. A younger female roughly in her twenties with long black hair that had a reddish glow was helping 3 new arrivals. All of them looked Middle Eastern and spoke English with a thick French accent.

The girl behind the desk motioned for Daniel to come closer. Iboya, who had found a seat on one of the yellow couches on the opposite side of the reception desk, was playing with Marlysha. Daniel stepped forward and the girl greeted him with a friendly smile. Daniel said, "We have a reservation under the name Jansen." The girl nodded slightly as she checked the computer. After a couple of seconds, she looked back up at him and said "You also have a reservation for a baby cot is this correct?"

The way she spoke English was a way that Daniel had never heard before. Her thick Greek accent made it sound like she was singing in English while she was rapping at the same time.

"Pardon me," Daniel responded, "could you repeat the question?"

"You also have a reservation for a baby cot. Is this correct?" The receptionist asked again as Daniel listened really careful this time.

"Yes that is correct" Daniel answered proudly, realizing that he had understood her.

"One moment please" she said.

She picked up a phone and dialed a number; she transitioned from English to Greek and had a short conversation as she grabbed three forms for them to fill out. As she hung up the phone and handed him the forms, the Middle Eastern guy pointed at his own registration form to ask what he had to fill in. Before the girl could even open her mouth, Daniel started explaining that he had to fill in his last name. The guy looked at Daniel gratefully as the receptionist made copies of their passports. Daniel filled in all three forms, and then called Iboya over to sign her form. Iboya handed them to the receptionist who checked them and turn gave her back their passports. She proceeded to grab a key from a key holder behind her desk, and gave them their key. The yellow keychain label read 1205. There was a white card attached to the keychain label, which probably was to activate the electricity in the room. She told them to go outside and there would be someone to escort them to their room shortly.

As instructed Daniel took their suitcases as Iboya pushed Marlysha in the stroller. A golf cart with a back seat pulled up right next to them, and a tanned young man in a sand collared shirt and khaki shorts exited the cart. He started stacking their suitcases in the passenger seat up front as Daniel folded the stroller up again. They did not speak a word, the guy just pointed at the backseat and Iboya held Marlysha as Daniel sat next to them.

The car took off on a downhill path that was alongside the right side of the reception. They passed the spa on their left as they were making their way down a narrow path. At the end of the path they took a left and drove past one of the many pool areas that the resort had to offer. As Daniel snapped a selfie on his phone, the driver made his way onto a small pathway to their right.

They drove for another twenty seconds and then came to a halt at room 1205. The driver took their suitcases and walked up to the door. He used a master key to unlock the door for them. He walked through the door and put their suitcases next to the big brown closet next to the door. He

greeted them, but still did not speak a word. He got on his golf cart and drove off into the Greek sun.

Iboya squealed. "I can't believe we are finally here," she said.

She hugged Daniel and kissed him on the cheek. While in Iboya's arms, Marlysha grabbed Daniel by his scruffy beard and kissed it on the other cheek. They both laughed and Daniel grabbed Marlysha and walked over to the red and blue baby cot that stood in between the TV cabinet and the big brown closet. Iboya took the white card off the keychain and put it in the card slot next to the door. The gentle humming sound and cold breeze of the air conditioning filled the room.

"So what do you want to do first? Unpack or just wing it?" Daniel asked Iboya.

"Well I only want to unpack our swimming gear and quickly head out for lunch before the restaurant closes."

They got dressed appropriately for swimming, but also so they could still enjoy a meal without looking odd. Daniel put all of their valuables like passports, phones and money in the safe. Iboya was carrying a big bag with Marlysha's swimming toys and floaty, sunscreen, sunglasses, and camera. Daniel picked up their daughter and followed Iboya to the door. They took a left when they walked out the door and for the first time Daniel really started paying attention to his surroundings within the resort. They took a left and walked along side the white building that looked like an apartment complex. On their right was a big yellow dried up field of what used to look prosperous. Daniel thought back on his own words. "Sometimes the grass is greener on the other side". They took a left on the corner as they walked passed a pool area.

"This resort looks amazing! Doesn't it" Iboya said.

"Well apart from the yellow bits of tumbleweed, we did a pretty good job," Daniel smiled.

They took a right up to the pathway they had driven with the golf cart. They passed two beautiful maisonnettes that were gated off from the rest of the buildings. As they passed the spa on their right, Daniel posed in front of a palm tree as Iboya took a white Samsung camera out of the bag that casually hung from her shoulder. She snapped a picture and Daniel looked really confused in it. Marlysha was smiling, clapping her hands, and pointing up.

"What is wrong?" Iboya asked.

"Can't you hear that loud squawking?" Daniel asked.

"Yes I can, but what about it" Iboya responded.

"It is loud as hell," Daniel said as he peeked at a bush next to palm tree where the sound seemed to be coming from.

As Daniel peeked up at the bush, the sound stopped. Now Daniel looked even more confused. "Are they mocking me?" He asked as he looked closer and saw nothing at all in the bush. Iboya laughed and told them they had to keep walking if they still wanted to make it to the lunch buffet in time. They proceeded to walk down the pathway and took a right when they reached the corner of the reception building. They now noticed that there was a small resort shop just across from the reception, but they walked to the restaurant across the street from the shop instead. Daniel slowly walked up the stairs that were on each side of the restaurant as Iboya walked the stroller up the ramp that was next to the right side staircase. They walked into the restaurant and were welcomed by the manager named Giorgos. He showed them to a table and asked where they were from.

"We are from Holland," Daniel said.

"Oh, I lived in Groningen for seven years," Giorgos said, which totally surprised Daniel and Iboya.

George was a man in his fifties with grey hair and a bushy moustache. He advised them to get their food quickly because his staff already started cleaning out the buffet line. Iboya was helping Marlysha in a high chair, as Daniel made his way to the buffet to get them all sorted with some food. He did not even read the signs, he just scooped up everything that looked good, and did not pass up on the chicken. He made his way back to their table with two plates full of food. Iboya looked at the delicious chaos on her plate, and thanked him. She started eating as Daniel went back to get them some drinks. It was still fairly busy inside the restaurant. He sat down at the square dark brown table that was covered with a purple placemat. Marlysha had a fist full of chicken when she smiled a big semi-toothless grin. Daniel set down their drinks and dug in.

"The food is pretty good," Iboya said satisfied. "I am going to have a quick look at the desserts," she said as she stood up and left the table.

Daniel was a really fast eater. He enjoyed his food, but by the time Iboya had made it back

with desserts he had already cleaned out his plate. Marlysha's face looked like a battlefield as she shot him smile. Iboya cleaned her face with a baby wipe she had grabbed from their bag.

Daniel started tasting everything on their desert plate. He took bite of loukoumades, which were round donut balls drizzled with honey and walnuts. He then sampled the selfmade tiramisu, leaving a little bit more than half of the deserts for his two girls. Daniel stared out the window.

Iboya finished her desserts, and stood up to grab Marlysha, as Daniel grabbed their bag. She took a right in front of the table with the alcohol dispensers. There was a small hallway that led outside. The blazing sun welcomed them to get into the pool. They walked to the left where the children's pool was. It was surrounded by playing children. Iboya put their bag on top of a sunbed as she unfolded some towels, and got some sunscreen. She then applied sunscreen to herself as Daniel applied some to Marlysha.

After Daniel was done applying the sunscreen to Marlysha, he handed her to Iboya as he started blowing up her float. It was orange with blue letters that read "Baby Float". As Daniel finished inflating the baby float, Iboya walked towards the children's pool with Marlysha. As she gently entered the water, Marlysha hugged her tightly with a look of total fear on her face. Iboya proceeded to slowly lower their bodies into the water. Marlysha started screaming bloody murder. Daniel walked up with her baby float, and kissed them both. Marlysha put her arms up for Daniel to grab her. Which he did as he held her close.

"Are you going to swim for the first time, munchkin?" Daniel asked.

Marlysha smiled at him. Daniel tried to put her in her baby float but Marlysha struggled with all her might, yet after a couple of seconds she was floating in the water. She pouted her lip and tried to fake a couple of tears in her water filled eyes, but after just a couple of minutes Marlysha went on a rampage and started walking into all the children in the pool, as she was the only one with a baby float. Daniel was sitting on the corner as he scanned the pool area. He could hear kids screaming as they played with pool noodles in the distance. He could feel the warmth of the sun burning on his chest. Iboya was laying on a sunbed behind him.

"Do you want some pizza and a cold beverage?"

"Yes, I would love some," Iboya said as she turned her head and looked up at him.

"Well, while I walk over to the pizza corner can you keep an eye on this little terrorist before she gets in trouble with one of these bigger kids?"

Daniel got up and walked along the left side of the pool. He walked right into the small cafeteria that had a traditional pizza oven on the right side of the cafeteria. It was a nice and open space where they made fresh salads and pizzas straight out of the stone oven. Apparently the pizzas were really good because there was a line of at least 10 people. Daniel stepped in line as he watched the staff make their pizzas from scratch. There was an elderly man with a white fedora baking the pizzas and an old red haired lady who served the customers. A guy two places before Daniel reached the first place in the line as he filled up his plate with pizza. The woman dropped everything she was doing, grabbed a knife, and started wielding it as if she were a samurai. She didn't speak a word of English, but the guy quickly got rid of half of the pizza slices on his plate. Daniel grinned as the woman mischievously grinned satisfied. He waited for his turn and then grabbed 3 pizza slices, 1 cheese slice and 2 cheese and salami. He smiled at the red haired lady who returned a friendly grin. He made a pit stop at the cafeteria window. He asked them for two brandies, which the friendly, young Greek barman gave him. He walked around the corner where there was a dispenser for different flavors of soda, and added some pineapple juice to the brandy.

He walked back to the children's pool where Iboya had joined Marlysha, and they were now splashing water on each other. Marlysha laughed, and she was really enjoying being in the water. Daniel put his feet in the children's pool and started eating his pizza. As soon as Marlysha saw the pizza, she darted forward in her floaty pushing every kid who stood in her way. When she got to Daniel, she looked at him with her big brown eyes and tried to grab one of the pizza slices.

"Yes, you will get some just calm down, munchkin," Daniel said, as he grabbed the pizza slice with cheese, and started feeding her. Daniel noticed something white in her mouth.

"Iboya get over here for a moment please," Daniel requested.

Iboya crawled up to them, and looked at Marlysha as she was eating her pizza slice.

"I think I saw a tooth," Daniel said.

"No way," Iboya said as she tried to look at Marlysha. Marlysha smiled and Iboya could see a really

small white spot glimmer on her gums.

Iboya squealed, "Daniel! She is getting her first tooth. How amazing is that!" She smiled at Daniel proudly as she kissed him.

"Honey, not in front of the kids," Daniel said as he smiled and batted his eyes.

They finished eating their pizzas, and the hot Greek sun was making them tipsy very quickly. They decided to leave the pool after an hour so Marlysha could nap and they could unpack and get settled. Marlysha had already fallen asleep on Daniel's shoulder, so Iboya rummaged in his pocket, got the room key, and unlocked the door. Their plan was a success. Their room was nice and cool. At first it was still a little bit too chilly because their bodies were still wet from the pool, but as they dried up it became more soothing. Daniel had put Marlysha in the baby cot as Iboya had taken the liberty to lie on the bed and strategically pick her side. She was lying on the left side of the bed, which meant that when the sun came up it would first hit Daniel in the face before it would reach hers. She was reading through some of the documentation that was left in their room stating the opening and closing times of the pools, restaurant and cafeteria, and the housekeeping schedule among other things.

"I see something you will definitely like," Iboya said with a bit of a sparkle in her eyes.

"What is that," Daniel asked intrigued.

"Well, I see that they serve an American style breakfast here," she said as she rolled her eyes.

Daniel smiled, "Pancakes and waffles for breakfast for eight days in a row sounds like heaven."

"If I didn't know that you were Dutch, darling, I could mistake you for an American really easily," Iboya said.

"I don't know if I should take that as an insult or a compliment," Daniel said laughing.

Daniel did speak fluent English with an American accent. He picked it up from watching American cartoons in the late 80's. He could see what Iboya meant because he did have an inexplicable passion for American things. For example, his phone cover was an American flag, and one of his favorite hoodies oozed patriotism with an American flag and an eagle.

"I do understand your point of view, Iboya, but it's not that weird. Is it," he asked.

"How is that so," Iboya pondered with a confused look on her face.

"Well..." Daniel said hesitantly, "a lot of stuff comes over from the United States, and technically there is no such thing as a real American unless you want to get real technical about it. If you want to talk real Americans you might mean the Native Americans because technically the Americans are just as European as we are," Iboya already regretted asking what Daniel meant and she braced herself for a history lesson.

Daniel continued, "Christopher Columbus, born in Genoa, discovered America in 1492 under the auspices of the Christian Monarch's of Spain, even though Christopher Columbus was not the first European explorer to reach the America's. Having been preceded by Leif Ericson, who led a Norse expedition in the 11th century, it was the British, Dutch, and other settlers that colonized the New World. So, if you wanted to be very knit picky about it, I am an original American," Daniel said proudly.

"Oh, Daniel, didn't you just say that the natives were the original Americans?"

"Well you know what I mean," Daniel said swiftly. Iboya could not suppress her laughter.

"I don't know how you do it with that big brain of yours, but I love you and everything about you."

Daniel pointed at the baby who was sound asleep in the cot. Iboya whispered whoops as she blushed lightly. Daniel lied down in bed next to her.

"Thank you for going out of your way to make this vacation happen, babe. I... know we really needed this."

Daniel nodded and embraced her. As he was engulfed by her soft skin and sweet scent of her perfume, Daniel dozed off into her arms. Daniel slowly opened his eyes and when he looked at his watch he noticed it was almost 7 o'clock in the evening. He could see the shapely figure of Iboya wrapped in a towel getting some clothes from one of their suitcases. Daniel propped himself up on the bed, Marlysha stood up in the cot to start screaming at him.

"Yeah tell your daddy to get his lazy butt out of bed," Iboya said.

Daniel got out of as Iboya got dressed. "I just had a bath," She said. "It was really nice. Your clothes are in the closet. I already took the liberty of sorting our luggage. I would rather not live out of

a suitcase for eight days,” she said whilst she shot Daniel a look.

“What is that look for,” Daniel quickly inquired.

“You really have to ask,” Iboya said with a grin on her face.

Daniel was standing at the closet as he selected what to wear this evening. He went with an ash colored shirt with a model on it whose glasses and lips were candy apple red.

“How about you take a quick shower and then I will get Marlysha dressed. After you finish up we can go for dinner.”

Daniel walked into the bathroom that was right behind him. There was a bathtub on the left, a sink and mirror on his right, and a toilet right in the middle. He turned on the water as he smelled the light chlorine value. He took a quick shower, and got dressed. By the time he got out of the shower, Marlysha was dressed and his stomach was growling.

“Are you ready” Iboya asked as she grabbed the hotel room key.

“Yes, I’m ready. Let’s go! I am starving,” Daniel said.

They walked out the door and past the pool area to the restaurant. They took the quicker route area this time. Iboya pushed the stroller. Iboya only had her purse with her, which had their room key and their camera in it. Daniel carried the diaper bag. He looked at his watch and saw it was 19:18 as they walked up the ramp to the restaurant. As Iboya took a right to look for a place for them to sit, Daniel made a left towards the soda dispensers in the restaurant. He grabbed some juice for Marlysha and on his way back to find their table he walked by the buffet. The food they served in the evening resembled the same food they had for lunch a couple of hours ago. He stopped at the alcohol dispensers and grabbed two beers because Iboya thought the white wine this afternoon tasted dreadful. Iboya had already put Marlysha in a high chair.

“How about you go find yourself some food from the buffet,” Daniel said to Iboya.

Daniel was not as fussy about his food as Iboya. Iboya left for the buffet line. As Daniel looked out the window it was almost 19:30, and the weather outside was still beautiful. Daniel took a sip of his cold beer. His body instantly reacted to the chilling temperature of the beer that had a surprising fruity aftertaste.

“Are you cold Daniel? We can sit somewhere else if it is bothering you,” Iboya said as she noticed the Goosebumps on his arm.

“No, I am just enjoying a really nice beer,” he said cheerfully. “So is there anything nice on the menu tonight,” Daniel asked.

“No. It looks like a lot of the same food that we had for lunch earlier. So I just grabbed a lot of fries that don’t even seem to be cooked long enough, and a lot of different meat. I grabbed a bunch so we can just share,” she said innocently, but Daniel knew she had done this just in case she didn’t like it and Daniel would probably eat it all anyways.

The food was decent, but not exactly what you would have expected from a four-star resort buffet line.

“Well at least it tastes good,” Daniel smiled.

Iboya smiled as she fed Marlysha in between eating her own food. After they were done eating and enjoying a couple more glasses of beer, they made their way to one of the bars that was right above the reception. They walked into the reception to find an elevator that led them upstairs. There were a couple of tables and several kids playing on their parents’ tablets. Daniel and Iboya tried drinking some ouzo, but after taking just one sip decided that it was not to their liking, and went straight back to drinking brandy with pineapple juice. The sun had already set, and the moon looked extraordinarily large. It almost felt that if you jumped up real high, you would be able to touch it.

Marlysha started getting tired and fussy, so they decided to call it a night. They walked back to their hotel room via the quickest route and stopped at the pool area, which was beautifully lit at night. They took a couple of minutes to take it all in. Maybe it was the alcohol, or maybe it was the fact that Marlysha had already fallen asleep in his arms, but Daniel had not felt this at ease in a very long time.

Once they reached their hotel room, Iboya opened the door, and Daniel put Marlysha to bed. They decided to have a nice relaxing bubble bath accompanied by a couple alcoholic beverages.

“So what would you like to do for this glorious week,” Daniel asked Iboya as he leaned more backwards into the water.

“Well I was reading up on the island at the poolside, and I read something about Cretaquarium, which seemed really nice. And there is a market in Heraklion that I would like to visit.

Oh, and before I forget, I also read that you get a three course meal at a beach side restaurant called Smile with our resort arrangement. All we need to do is pay for the drinks and make a reservation at the reception twenty-four hours ahead of time.”

“That sounds pretty amazing,” Daniel said as Iboya turned around in the bathtub and leaned up against him.

“But first I would like to just wander around Gouves tomorrow, and visit that little shop we saw from the bus so we can get some water and stuff. I also figured out that the right door of the television cabinet has a small fridge inside it.”

“Mmm inspector Iboya Jansen. It has a nice ring to it, doesn’t it,” Daniel said as he kissed her neck and tried to dodge her soapy locks of hair.

“Oh did you know we are also relatively close to Hersonissos,” Iboya asked.

“How dare you question my knowledge about the teenage Mekka of Hersonissos! I am a bronze Greek god,” Daniel said whilst he flexed his muscles and soap trickled down his biceps.

Iboya splashed him with water whilst she laughed and said, “Well maybe we could also have a little day trip over there.”

“Are you going to be able to keep the girls away from me,” he asked as he flexed again.

“Oh, Daniel, those girls can’t handle you. You know that this bronze god needs a woman,” she said teasingly whilst she pressed her body closer to his. “My Hercules, my Adonis,” she said adoringly.

“You forgot about Zeus, babe, because I put the oceans in motion,” Daniel said and winked at her.

“Well let’s get out of this tub because this champagne in combination with this hot water is making me lightheaded,” Daniel said.

“That’s just me sweeping you off your feet,” Iboya said as she stood up and the water made its way down her curvy body.

She wrapped herself in a towel and bound her hair in a smaller towel.

“Now you are starting to resemble a Greek goddess. What is this a private toga party,” Daniel asked with a grin on his face.

Daniel also got out of the tub, and wrapped himself in a towel. They made their way out of the bathroom. They lied in bed and cuddled whilst they discussed more vacation plans and fell asleep in each other’s arms.

The morning came as quickly as the day had passed. Daniel could hear Marlysha softly crying as he rolled over, looked at his watch, and put it on his wrist. “7:15 might as well get an early morning start,” he thought as he looked next to him to find Iboya’s bedside empty. He quickly scanned the hotel room as he heard the toilet flush. As he stepped out of bed he could hear Iboya curse as she walked out of the bathroom.

“What’s wrong sweetheart,” Daniel asked.

“Oh I just forgot to mention to you how we are not supposed to flush toilet paper in case of it clogging up the system.”

“Oops Daniel damage has already been done I suppose,” Daniel said sheepishly.

“Yeah, I noticed because nasty Greek toilet water almost engulfed me,” Iboya said irritated.

Daniel laughed as he walked over to Marlysha and said, “Good morning, munchkin. Did you have a good night sleep?”

As Daniel picked her up, she used her legs to climb up the side of the cot and giggled because she had discovered something new. She hugged Daniel tightly and fiddled with his beard.

“Nothing beats the smell of fresh baby poo in the morning,” Daniel said sarcastically as he tried to hold his breath.

Iboya handed him a changing mat and a fresh diaper as she struggled to find the baby wipes. Once she found them, she unwrapped the changing mat so Daniel could lay Marlysha down and change her. This did not go without some technical difficulties and having to dodge fecal matter, as Marlysha did not appreciate to lie on her back, but Daniel won in the long run.

“Daddy 1 baby 0,” he said whilst he handed Iboya a dirty diaper so she could dispose of it.

Iboya took the diaper and disposed of it in the trashbin that stood in the corner in between the door and the bathroom. Daniel hopped in the shower as Iboya and Marlysha watched German cartoons on the TV. After he finished showering, it was Iboya’s turn to freshen up as Daniel got Marlysha

dressed.

They walked to the restaurant as soon as everyone was ready. They walked up the ramp of the restaurant and were happily greeted by George.

“How was your first day,” he asked.

“We really enjoyed it,” Iboya said.

“Well I’m really glad to hear that,” George said. “I hope you enjoy your breakfast and if there is anything I can do for you feel free to ask me anything. Have a nice day.”

“Thank you, George. You have a nice day as well,” Daniel said.

“Will do,” George said with a slight accent as he winked at them.

They walked into the restaurant; the smell of freshly baked pancakes and waffles filled the air. As Iboya looked for a place for them to have breakfast, Daniel followed his nose and the pancakes and waffles sizzled, calling his name. His feet carried him through the restaurant. He had tunnel vision, and bumped into the pancake line.

“Excuse me,” he said as the trance that had grasped him let go of him and planted him firmly with his feet on the ground.

He looked over his shoulder and through the restaurant as he saw a hand suddenly wave at him. It was Marlysha who was smiling at him as Iboya was putting her in a high chair as she had found a spot at the window in the back of the restaurant. The line slowly moved forward as Daniel’s stomach wished him a good morning. Two young men were working at the station that had a big pancake iron where they made freshly baked pancakes that smelled terrific. The waffles were made in a waffle iron that looked as if it had survived a couple of the great wars. Yet, the waffles it produced were heart shaped. Daniel could not help but smile at the irony of the iron.

The intoxicating smell of the American breakfast had him in his grasp as he grabbed two plates. The boy that made the waffles stepped forward to give Daniel some freshly baked waffles. Daniel could tell he was young. He had some light acne break outs, but he had the most intense blue eyes Daniel had ever seen. They were so intense that you hardly noticed the pimples scattered across his youthful face. He insecurely smiled at Daniel as he put two waffles on each plate and said enjoy your meal with a slight Russian accent. Daniel smiled back and stepped forward to also indulge in some pancakes. A girl trying to keep up with her mother lost her balance and let go of her plate, food and glasswork went flying in all directions, Daniel quickly rushed to the little girl even before her mother had the chance to react. He picked her up and put her as far away from the fragmented plate as possible. The only thing her mother could do was scold the girl in a thick northern British accent as she tried to get the restaurant personnel to clean up the mess her daughter had created. Daniel smiled at the little girl as he comforted her.

“Don’t worry about it. Life is about making mistakes, and you learn from them,” he said wisely.

The little girl smiled at him as she thanked him. She had strawberry blonde hair and her small pigtails swayed from left to right as she walked around the buffet line so she didn’t walk through the glass.

Daniel grabbed his plates as the waffle maker whispered something to his co-worker who then gave Daniel extra pancakes on each plate and smiled. Daniel grabbed three Loukoumades and put one on top of each plate. There was a big jug that was filled with honey and a honey dipper. Daniel dipped it in the honey as he zigzagged honey with surgical precision across his two plates. He stepped out of the line and walked around the buffet that consisted of three buffet tables filled to the brim with food. One had cereal related stuff. One was filled with fruit, salads, and sandwich spreads galore. The last of the buffet tables had sausages, bacon, and all sorts of warm omelet toppings. Daniel grabbed some fresh fruit and then made his way towards his two girls who were eagerly awaiting what Daniel had brought them to eat.

“Eat your hearts out,” Daniel said as he gave Iboya a plate and offered Marlysha a Loukoumades.

Daniel enjoyed his American style breakfast, and finished his plate as Iboya worked her way through the other half of her breakfast.

“Tastes really good,” Iboya said with her mouth half full of waffle.

“I am missing the maple syrup but this honey is a very good solution,” he responded.

“How about you surprise me with the plans for today as I go ‘sample’ the bacon. I’ll be right

back,” Daniel said as Iboya stared at him with disbelief that he was totally oblivious to.

He came back with a plate full of bacon. He was already eating, and Iboya imagined he had easily eaten half on the short walk from the buffet to the table.

“So what is the plan,” Daniel asked. The crunch of the bacon under the gnashing of his teeth dulled the intensity of his voice.

“Daniel, stop being so gross! Swallow before you speak,” Iboya said disgusted.

“I’m so sorry, but this bacon is just so DAMN good. You want some,” he asked. Iboya rolled her eyes.

“No, I’m good,” she responded.

“Did you just brush off bacon?” Daniel pouted as he shoveled another big hand full of bacon into his mouth.

“Well, after breakfast we could make a reservation to eat at that Smile restaurant tomorrow. Maybe today we could walk to Cretaquarium, and do some sight seeing along the way. We can also do a late lunch in Hersonisoss.”

“Sounds like a plan,” Daniel said as he offered the last bite of bacon to Marlysha, who had already eaten a quarter waffle and two Loukoumades.

“Are you done?” Daniel asked Iboya.

“Yeah, let’s get this show on the road. I don’t know how far it is to walk to Cretaquarium.”

. It was still very quiet at the pool because most people were either sleeping in or enjoying their breakfast still. They walked to the reception that was filled with people who were all getting ready to go back to the airport. The receptionist waved to them, instructing to walk to the desk.

“Good morning what can I help you with today,” she asked cheerfully in her usual melodic tone.

“We would love to make a reservation to eat at Smile tomorrow,” Iboya said.

“How late would you like to make the reservation,” the receptionist asked.

“Seven o’clock in the evening,” Iboya said as she looked over at Daniel who was staring at the painting behind the reception. It was a large painting of the sun’s breaking through the clouds as marble Greek gods stood amidst the ocean. Iboya nudged him.

“Eh, yeah seven o’clock is fine,” Daniel said.

“You get to choose your three course meal from a fixed menu, and you only need to pay for your drinks. Anything else I can help you with?”

“Yes, we want to walk to Cretaquarium. Is it far from here,” Daniel asked the receptionist.

“No, it is not far. You walk from here to the boulevard, passed Smile, and just keep walking all the way straight to get to Cretaquarium,” the receptionist responded. She grabbed a map, and marked where they were. She drew out the route, and handed them the map as she wished them a good day and good luck.

Back in their hotel room they packed everything they thought they needed into Daniel’s Riut bag. Iboya locked their hotel room as she started taking a left while Daniel started going right.

“Dan where are you going,” she asked with a face that resembled a jigsaw puzzle.

“Trust me, this way is shorter.”

“How do you know? You’ve never been here before.”

“Just trust me,” Daniel said confidently. Iboya followed him because Daniel had proven himself worthy of having a great sense of direction on many other occasions.

They walked down a small ramp and passed another building. At the end of the structure was a chain-linked barrier with a big grass field that resembled a parking lot riddled with rocks. They carried Marlysha over the chain and walked to the other side where there was a road where the infamous words ‘Car rental’ greeted them from all sides. There was a street with a couple of shops to their left where they took a short pit stop to stock up on water and some knock off ray ban sunglasses for a whopping 7 euros each. They walked out sixteen euros lighter, but two fresh looking sunglasses and cold bottles of water richer. Daniel put the bottles inside his Riut bag, and took a right as they followed the street down to a parking lot with another car rental place just across from the main entrance of Hotel Astir Beach. At the end of the parking lot they reached the boulevard of Gouves. They could see the beautiful light blue ocean that got deeper blue as the sea stretched onward. There were signs along the beach that described which part of the beach was owned by which resort. Daniel wanted to take some pictures, but he was too lazy to get the camera. Then it dawned on Daniel that he

had a spy watch. He held the top button for three seconds until he saw the led light underneath the six flash blue meaning the watch was ready to take pictures, take video, or record audio clips. Iboya was pushing the stroller and walking in front of Daniel, so his hands were free to indulge in some mischief.

As he walked by a group of woman on the beach who were only wearing their bikini bottoms, he turned his watch towards them and started pressing the top button with two second intervals. He was so busy snapping pictures that he almost missed the hole in the sidewalk and tripped. From that point on, he decided just to take pictures with the normal camera that he had Iboya take from his Riut bag.

They continued walking at a slow pace as they stopped along the boulevard to take some pictures. The sidewalk was full of holes and instead of fixing it the government just cordoned most of the holes off. At the end of the boulevard, they reached the edge of what looked like no man's land at the edge of a residential gated community that had a small chapel. The gate to the residential area was open so they stopped at the chapel to get hydrated and take some pictures. Then, they continued down a long asphalt road, as they watched airplanes fly by that on their way to Heraklion airport. Marlysha had fallen asleep. They could see the outline of Cretaquarium from a distance. It was getting hotter and hotter the longer it took them to walk to the Cretaquarium. Slowly but surely they made it on to the parking lot of the Cretaquarium, where locals were selling fruit from the trunks of their cars. There was a little van that had a popcorn maker next to it.. They walked along the side of the building where there was an upward sloping ramp. There was a huge octopus statue above the electrical sliding doors of the entrance, and next to the pathway there was a big yellow device with solar panels to the right that looked like it was made for nautical research.

As soon as they walked in the hallway their bodies seemed to cool of, and Marlysha started waking up. Daniel walked right up to the register and said, "Two tickets please."

The short Greek lady told him it was eighteen euros, and he paid her with a crisp blue twenty euro bill. She gave him his change, and pointed him to the direction of two big doors. He opened the door so Iboya could walk through with the stroller. They walked into a dimly lit room with fish tanks filled with hundreds of different species of fish organized by compatibility. There where big carousel things next to the tanks that you could turn, showing the information about the fish that inhabited the tank in different languages. Marlysha was paying more attention to her juice than to any of the fish, but Daniel and Iboya really enjoyed their time in the aquarium. The deeper they got inside the bowels of the aquarium the bigger the tanks got. There were huge tanks with humongous sharks that slowly drifted by. Almost everyone in the aquarium had a selfie stick and was taking selfies with the sharks. Daniel posed over at the grandiose shark tank as Iboya tried taking a picture of him while one of the sharks was swam straight for him.

"I think that shark is in love with you," Iboya said jokingly.

After viewing the shark tanks, Daniel found his favorite tank it filled with fish and one stunning turtle. They looked at this tank for a solid ten minutes as Daniel tried to get the perfect picture of the turtle. Even Marlysha was impressed and pointed at the turtle as she giggled. There were also some expositions set up in the larger spaces of the aquarium. There were beautiful jellyfish, tanks with crustaceans, and the not so funny clownfish. After walking through the aquarium and taking lots of pictures forty-five minutes had passed.

As the aquarium personnel boiled some water in a saucepan to make a bottle for Marlysha, they discovered that she probably dropped her Sippy cup in the aquarium, which they no longer had access to. Daniel walked up to the desk and asked if anyone left a Hello kitty Sippy cup at the lost and found. The woman at the desk told him there was nothing brought to the lost and found, but she advised him to walk through the aquarium again. Daniel went in by himself while Iboya waited for the hot water. He walked passed the aquarium in haste, but did take the time to linger at the big shark tanks and the tank with the turtle. He did not find the Sippy cup until the last corner before the exit. As he walked through the exit he was greeted by his two girls who were waiting for him.

"Look what daddy found, Marlysha," Iboya said as she took the Sippy cup from Daniel and put it back in the diaper bag.

They took a couple of minutes to walk through the aquarium shop, but they did not buy anything because everything was overpriced. They made their way out the front door of Cretaquarium. Daniel took some pictures of Marlysha in Iboya's arm as he was transfixed by a red Hibiscus rosa-sinensis that were scattered across the Greek landscape. Daniel looked at his watch. It

was currently a couple minutes to noon.

“Let’s head back to the hotel to grab some extra stuff and figure out how we get to Hersonissos so we can have a late lunch over there,” Daniel said. Iboya nodded and they made their way back to the hotel.

After a quick stop at their hotel room to restock the diaper bag and change into some fresh sweat free clothes, they went back to the reception. The receptionist explained to them that there was a bus stop at the edge of town on the main road that drove to Hersonissos. The bus fare was relatively cheap. They walked out of the reception and made their way off the resort grounds. They walked to the corner, and right in front of the restaurant was a wooden bus shelter. Daniel smiled as he admired his beautiful family. Shortly, a young man with curly hair walked up to the bus stop, and thus interrupted the moment. He wore a blue shirt and cargo pants.

“Excuse me, do you know which way the bus to Hersonissos goes?” He pointed over to the other side of the road where there was another wooden bus shelter.

Daniel noticed a bus that was slowing down at the bus stop. A young female conductor stepped out of the bus and instructed them to take Marlysha out of her stroller as she opened up the storage compartment. Daniel folded up the stroller as Iboya carried Marlysha onto the bus. Daniel quickly followed them up the stairs. He was greeted by the cool breeze of the air conditioning. He met his two girls who were sitting in the seats right in front of the staircase. He took his seat and as the bus started driving, the conductor made his way towards them. She had some colored hair extensions, really red lipstick, and a piercing just underneath her lip.

“Destination?” She asked as she smiled and waved at Marlysha.

“Hersonissos,” Iboya answered before Daniel could.

“That will be 3,80 cents the conductor said as she tried to type something up in a little pad that she carried with her long fake nails.

After a second or two they heard an electronic sound coming from her hip. It was a small printer that printed their ticket.

“Here you go,” Iboya said and handed her four euros.

“It’s alright,” she said as the conductor struggled to get her the change.

She advised them to get off at bus stop twenty-one, It was about a twenty minute drive to Hersonissos. They passed a lot of fashion outlets in the middle of nowhere that promoted fur items, which all seemed to be imported from Russia. They passed a couple of health clinics and a super market. As the vegetation started to get more thriving, Daniel noticed that they were not too far from civilization. They drove into a busy street with shops on both sides. It was at that point that they realized they had reached Hersonissos.

After about five minutes they got to bus stop twenty-one, so they got ready to get off the bus. They got out in the heart of Hersonissos center. They got their stroller from the storage compartment as the conductor waved goodbye to Marlysha. With Marlysha in the stroller, Daniel and Iboya walked on the right sidewalk as they visited some shops, but didn’t buy much because most of the things were so overpriced. All of a sudden the smell of food had caught their attention as they looked over to their right. They were now almost parallel to a brasserie called Leidscheplein. The red letters on top of it read Leidscheplein Brasserie since 1999. The place just oozed Holland. There were a couple of Dutch ladies enjoying their lunch. Daniel looked over to Iboya who was just looking at him with big begging puppy eyes.

“How about we have lunch here,” Daniel said in a melodramatic fashion.

“YES,” Iboya yelled.

They walked in and the Dutch theme continued inside of the building. They were greeted by the owner, a long slender man with grey wavy hair. He took their orders which consisted of two plates of fries with Frikandellen, a sort of Dutch tubular hamburgers. The waitress came over to greet them as she also carried a little girl on her arm who was slightly older than Marlysha.

“Is everything to your liking,” she asked.

“Yes, these are the best fries I have had since we arrived on Crete,” Iboya said.

“Great! We import fat for our fryers from Holland. The Greek natives tend to fry stuff in olive oil.”

“Ah, that kind of makes sense,” Daniel responded.

Marlysha was in the process of trying to share her frikandel with the waitress’s daughter from

her highchair.

“No, Elisabeth,” the waitress said as her daughter took the frikandel from Marlysha.

“It is not a problem. She’s normally not into sharing especially when it comes to food,” Iboya said.

The waitress walked to the back and returned with little Elizabeth in a stroller and put her next to Marlysha.

“You don’t mind right,” she asked.

“No not at all. Your daughter is the first kid she has interacted with since we got here,” Daniel said smiling.

Elizabth looked at him with her big blue eyes and ran her fingers through her light blond hair. Marlysha kept giving Elizabeth her fries and frikandel bits as the two little girls ate and communicated in jibberish. When they finished their lunch they got ready to leave. The waitress offered them some more food on the house because of their generosity towards her daughter, but they declined. Daniel paid the bill and left a nice tip, Iboya shot him a look. She knew Daniel had a generous tipping habit because he had worked in fine dining, and his tips had gotten him out of some tight financial spots several times. He always tried to share this philosophy with Iboya. The moment she noticed the big smile on the waitress’s face she was reminded about this, and she wished her good luck and a nice day. She wished them a great day as she walked them to the stroller, and both she and Lizzy waved goodbye.

They spent the rest of the afternoon in Hersonisos trying to find cheap stores to get some necessary stuff. That was a challenge considering the twenty-eight percent tax raise by the Greek government. After spending a couple of hours walking up and down the main street in Hersonissos, they decided to head back to the resort to enjoy dinner. On the way back to the bus stop they spotted a patisserie shop.

“Let’s get something to celebrate Marlysha’s birthday,” Iboya said.

They walked into the patisserie shop. As they browsed the showcases, they settled on a heart shaped chocolate mouse cake. The female store clerk walked up to them and asked, “Can I help you?”

“We would like three heart shaped chocolate mouse cakes.”

The clerk boxed them and told them it was 5,55 euro. Iboya paid the clerk and they made their way to the bus stop. They waited for eight minutes until the bus to their resort arrived.

Back at the resort they put the chocolate mouse cakes in the room, and rushed to the restaurant to get dinner. It was nothing special, so they ate more because it was a necessity of life not because it was super enjoyable. As they made it back to their hotel room, the celebrations started.

“Happy birthday to you! Happy birthday, Marlysha. Happy birthday to you!” sounded from room 2015 in Gouves waterpark resort. Daniel, Iboya and Marlysha were sitting on the bed as they enjoyed some chocolate mouse cake. Marlysha had attempted to eat her still burning candle.

After all the festivities, they went to bed and the morning reared its ugly head way too early. Iboya and Marlysha were still asleep. Daniel got out of bed and started packing their bags. They had big plans today. They were going to visit Heraklion, and relax at the pool later in the afternoon. After he finished, he decided to get his MacBook out of his Riut bag and upload the pictures and videos they made in the last couple of days to free up some space on their memory cards. He then remembered the pictures he took in his moment of mischief on the boulevard. He unclipped his watch from his wrist and unscrewed the middle button. He fumbled for a USB to jack cable, and connected his watch to his MacBook. He skimmed through the pictures he took on the beach, and deleted them. His MacBook battery indicator started blinking as Daniel pulled his charger out of the back he heard and felt something that made his skin crawl. When he took his charger out of his Riut bag, his worst fear was confirmed. His MacBook charger cable had ruptured.

“SHIT,” Daniel yelled waking both Iboya and Marlysha up at the same time.

“What’s wrong, Dan,” Iboya asked as Daniel walked to Marlysha to comfort her.

“Oh, nothing. My MacBook charger just broke, and these things are not cheap.”

“You woke us up for a MacBook charger?”

“Yes, and I’m sorry for it.”

Daniel disconnected his watch that was still connected to the MacBook, and screwed the middle button back on. It was now 8:30. They got ready and were in the restaurant by 9:10. They had the same breakfast as the previous day due to a lack of other choices. They did, however, add two eggs

sunny side up each to their plates because they needed the protein for a very long day ahead. After they finished breakfast, they walked to the bus stop via the same route they had walked when they went to Hersonissos, only this time they took the bus that was going the other direction. Daniel had a weird feeling driving towards the airport, but not having to leave yet. They got off the bus at the bus depot that was a few stops after the airport in Heraklion. The hot sun stroked their skin while the clouds brought no refuge to the high temperatures of the day. Iboya was pushing the stroller as Daniel was carrying the diaper bag and his Riut bag. The mission of the day was to find the market in Heraklion, walk around, and sniff out some culture.

They looked around them, and decided to walk into the McDonalds that was across the street to ask for directions. It was really cool inside the McDonalds. Daniel would not mind spending the remainder of the day right there. They asked for directions and discovered that they had to go all the way up the hill. They took a right when they exited the McDonalds, and kept pushing forward. The further up the hill they got, the more unsteady the sidewalk got. It also varied in walking space. Some parts were broad and some were very small, to the point that you had to walk behind each other. They passed a couple of small gas stations and after a good twenty minutes of hiking, they made it to the intersection where they took a left onto Itanos. There the hill sloped down again, and they could see the market on their left.

They started there slow decent into the market that was surrounded by taxis. It was a big market on a rather large parking lot that was covered by different colored tents and canopies. At the market there was not a lot of interesting things. Daniel also noticed a couple of health code violations, but he could do nothing about it. They bought some fresh watermelons while they walked around the market. After finding nothing special about the shop, they decided it was time to eat.

So, they walked across the street from the market to a small park on Moni Preveli where they ate their watermelon slices on a bench in the park. Marlysha apparently did not like watermelon as she tried to eat it, but spit it all back out. After they finished, they asked an elderly man for directions to Heraklion Centre. He asked them where they were from. They replied that they were from Holland, and he said he had lived in Amsterdam for 17 years, but it was better to be back in Greece because the hot weather always made him want to have sex. He told them to continue straight until they reached a park, go through it, and they would reach the center to ask for directions to Lion Square. He gave Iboya a hand, and Daniel just greeted him formally, as he left in the opposite direction.

“Well, you didn’t have to be so rude,” Iboya said.

“I did not shake his hand on purpose, Iboya. After that whole sex comment, I would rather not shake that man’s hand,” Daniel responded. Iboya had a ghastly look on her face.

As they crossed the street, there was a patisserie on the corner with a lot of good looking chocolates and snacks in the showcases. Marlysha had fallen asleep as they continued walking straight on Geronimaki. They passed a drugstore on their right and a wash express on their left, but kept going straight as the man instructed. When they reached a T-junction on Republic Avenue, they crossed into Georgaidis Park. The park was wonderful apart from some vandalism and graffiti. “Art is in the eye of the beholder,” Daniel thought. He and Iboya took some pictures of the park as they slowly strolled towards the exit where they took a left towards Eleftherias Square, the main square that was close to the archeological Museum in Heraklion.

Once they reached the square there was an elderly lady who walked up to them with flowers and started putting flowers in Marlysha’s hair. She tried explaining in broken English that she was pregnant with a baby, and was selling flowers to make some extra money. Iboya kindly refused as she knew most of these things were scams. Daniel felt sorry for the woman, so he still gave her three euros whilst Iboya shot him a dirty look. Mopeds in all colors surrounded the square. They diagonally crossed Eleftherias Square to what seemed like a cinema that read Eutopia-Cyta on the corner that had gone out of business. From that point, they crossed into Dedalou Street, one of the commercial pedestrian shopping streets of Heraklion, that lead to Lions Square. They visited some shops, but everything in Dedalou was expensive.

After they walked out of Dedalou, they walked straight into the fountain on Lions Square, but it was less than glorious. The fountain was half full of dirty water, and several dead pigeons were floating in the water. Iboya posed in front of the empty shell of what the Lions Square fountain used to be, trying to not get the decomposing birds in the shot. They decided to take a left and crossed Justice Street into the little bazaar on the side street to the left. They spent some time wandering through the

different shops, but the shop that stood out the most to Daniel was a shop with different knives and replica guns. If he was allowed to take them through customs, he would have probably taken a couple home with him.

They decided to have a break on the corner of Kornarou Square. The penetrating smell of sewage was predominantly present as a Yanmar 3TNV76 was excavating around what seemed like the remains of a small chapel. As Iboya looked in the diaper bag for something for Marlysha to eat, Daniel looked for open Wi-Fi hotspots. He found one, connected to it, and decided to WhatsApp some family and friends. When he came across his best friend James's name, he decided to ask him if he needed new cigarettes. James responded by saying that he would appreciate it. He sent James some pictures he took.

"Babe do you need something to drink," Iboya asked.

"Yes, I would love some."

Iboya gave him a sip of Fanta from a baby blue can. It tasted so different from the Fanta in Holland. The orange flavor was more intense as it wasn't carbonated.

"I just promised James I would bring him a carton of cigarettes."

Iboya rolled her eyes and said, "well then, let's look for a tobacco shop."

"Yeah, hold up a moment. I'm checking my bank account."

He glanced over at his phone as he saw that the Neko Neko Ni had transferred money into his bank account.

"It seems we are ready to go. I just got paid, so we are good to survive for another couple days. So, let's find a cigarette shop, and then slowly make our way back to the bus station," Daniel said. Iboya agreed.

They took a right on Kornarou Square and found a cigarette shop not too far away on Cyril Loukareos Street. They entered the small crowded shop. Daniel walked up to the counter and asked, "Do you guys happen to have a carton of Gauloise blue?"

The young Greek man behind the counter looked rather confused, and started frantically looking through several drawers behind the counter.

"Yes, we still have one," he said as he smiled and looked hopeful. He probably had not sold a lot today, and was most likely hoping to make a sale.

"How much is it," Daniel asked.

"Thirty-five euros," the man responded with a still hopeful smile on his face.

Daniel was contemplating haggling, but it was already cheaper than a carton back home. Daniel slid the Riut bag from his shoulder, and retrieved his wallet from the top compartment. He gave the man the thirty-five euros as the man put the carton in a plastic bag and thanked him with a grateful smile. As Daniel went to turn around, he saw a couple of scratch tickets from the corner of his eye. He was never much of a gambling man, but somehow he was just aching to make another purchase just to somehow support the man behind the counter.

"Can I also get two of those five euro scratch tickets from you?"

"Yes, you can," the man behind the counter said as he got two scratch cards. He handed them to Daniel as he put the ten euros into the cash register.

"Iboya, my dear, do you maybe have some change so I can scratch these cards?"

"Can't you do that later? I'm kind of hungry, Dan. How about you scratch them later?"

"Fair enough," Daniel said as he thanked the guy behind the counter and wished him a good day.

They walked out of the shop, took a right, and continued walking on Cyril Loukareos Street. They took a right at the first street and kept walking until they walked straight into Lion Square. They walked passed the fountain, and through the street towards the harbor. An entourage of cars passed by as the bells to Saint Titus Church rang, and a bridal party got out of one of the cars. There was a path of candles and flowers that led up to the doors. Daniel took a couple pictures before they moved on. They passed a Starbucks on the left as a man was sitting on the curb trying to sell some tomato splat balls. They kept walking until they reached the roundabout that connected Mitsotakis street to Nearchou Avenue where they could see the beautiful boats in the harbor and the clear blue sea stretched out for miles. They took a right on to Nearchou Avenue as they walked on the sidewalk and admired the beauty of some of the old structures. They followed Nearchou Avenue until they reached a part of an old bridge where they had some signs related to a series or movie that was

recorded in the region. So, they stopped there to take some pictures and enjoy the view.

“So, what would you like to eat babe,” Daniel asked Iboya.

“To be quite honest, Dan, I wouldn’t mind going to McDonalds.”

“You sly devil you. You have been thinking about that McDonalds ever since we passed it haven’t you? But, that means if I’m correct, we might have to go up that first hill again to reach it after walking passed the bus station.

Iboya frowned as she thought it over, “Well I don’t mind. We have been walking all day already. What’s an extra quarter mile,” she said smiling?

Marlysha was passed out in the stroller as Iboya tried to walk as much as possible in the shade with her.

“I am so thirsty right now,” Daniel said as he cleared his throat.

After they passed under the old bridge, they walked passed another roundabout as they were now passing the GDM Megaron Hotel on their right, and they continued straight for just a couple of minutes as they walked by the bus station. They walked straight until the first intersection where they took a right on to ETH Resistance Avenue where the road had sloped up, but they knew that the McDonalds was really close now They followed the street slowly up hill until they could see the big yellow arches arise from further down the street. By the time they made it to the Mcdonalds the sun had whooped their behinds and they were tired, agitated and hungry.

“Let’s just go inside and get a bite,” Daniel said as he opened the door to let Iboya and Marlysha through. The change in temperature gave Daniel instant Goosebumps. Daniel took the stroller and started looking for a spot to sit as Iboya went to take their orders. Marlysha always had the cunning ability to wake up whenever food was near. Daniel was happy that she had woken up all by herself as he had to put her in a high chair. He strapped her in and just as he was done Iboya gestured to him to come help her carry the food. He walked up to her as she just smiled at him gloatingly.

“What’s up?” Daniel asked interested.

“Well, everything might be super expensive in Greece, but I just paid half of what we do in Holland for this meal,” she said smiling.

“Might be good that we don’t live here then because we would probably become obese.”

They walked to the table and had a very enjoyable meal as Daniel remembered he still had his scratch cards.

“Iboya, can you hand me a coin,” he asked with his mouth full of French fries.

She handed him a coin out of her wallet as Daniel frantically started scratching his first card. Nothing... Marlysha smiled at Daniel as she tried grabbing the freshly scratched card.

“Munchkin you also want to have a try,” Daniel said as he put the second card in front of her.

“Daniel, let’s not do that,” Iboya said as she frowned at him.

Oh, Iboya, maybe she is my lucky charm,” Daniel said as he handed her the coin and grabbed her little hand to help her scratch the card.

Marlysha smiled as Daniel scratched the card slowly and his eyes almost popped out of his head.

“Iboya, are you seeing this?” Daniel asked with excitement.

Iboya looked over at the scratch ticket that indicated they had just won 450 euros. Marlysha smiled and put a chicken nugget in her mouth.

“You did good, Munchkin,” Daniel said still full of shock.

Daniel tried to finish his food without gloating too much as Iboya looked at the ticket with which they could claim their winnings. After they finished their meal, they walked to get their winnings. When they collected their winnings, they headed back to the bus station. As they walked into the bus station it was very crowded with people trying to get tickets to get on their busses. They bought two tickets. While Iboya was paying for the tickets, a filthy young girl around the age of seven approached Daniel who stood in front with a cup. Daniel quickly slid her a couple of euros, but as soon as he put the money in her cup he saw that she quickly removed the money from the cup and slid it into her pocket as she moved on to the next person. Iboya shot Daniel a dirty look and muttered, “I don’t understand people use their children to do their dirty work.”

As they walked to the place their bus was departing over twenty minutes from then, it was around 16:45. They were sitting at the pool area, and Marlysha was playing in the pool with a blonde haired, five-year-old boy with a British accent. Daniel was sitting on the edge of the kids pool as Iboya

had struck up a conversation with the boy named Maximilian's parents. Daniel was now playing with Marlysha and Max, and the three of them were having a marvelous time.

"Daniel could you come over here for a second?" Iboya asked him.

Daniel got up, told Max to take good care of Marlysha, and gave him a fist bump. Max made an electronic sounding noise that Daniel recognized as the sound that Baymax makes in the Pixar movie Big Hero 6.

"Is that from Big Hero 6?" he asked Max.

"Yeah, Baymax is the man innit," he said proudly.

Daniel walked over and introduced himself to Max's parents, and they introduced themselves as David and Charlotte Evans from Liverpool. David was a stonemason and Charlotte was an interior designer. They lived on the countryside of Liverpool.

"Charlotte was just telling me that they just arrived here from Cyprus and that they wished they had stayed there because everything was cheaper. And the flights are apparently relatively cheap," Iboya said.

"Oh, really! We might have to look into that because we are already flying back in a couple of days. So, let's look at that tonight, and see if we can make that happen as soon as possible. Well I should thank you for the advice," Daniel told the Evans.

"So what made you come to Greece if I may ask."

"Well, my wife works on Cyprus. She is doing the interior design of some new housing projects there, you see, and we decided to take a little vacation before we fly back to the UK next week. Cyprus was more business than pleasure, and the boys go back to school soon," David said.

He was a pretty tall brunette who had that mysterious look to him almost as if he could be working for MI6. Daniel didn't ask him this just in case he really had a license to kill.

"Boys you said? I only met Max," Daniel said confused.

"Yes, his older brother Phillip is in the other pool. He is our eldest," Charlotte said.

Charlotte was a dark blonde and well spoken. She was kind of short. Daniel could totally see her as an interior designer as everything about her indicated a great sense of taste. They talked for a good thirty minutes as the kids frolicked in the pool. The Evans and their children were lovely and Daniel and Iboya wished they had met them earlier on in the vacation.

"Sorry to interrupt, but it is almost 18:00," Daniel told Iboya who was telling the Evans about the Cretaquarium.

"We have to be at smile in about an hour sweetheart."

"Darn, almost forgot," Iboya said as she started packing their stuff.

Daniel walked over to the kid's pool and thanked Max for watching Marlysha. As Daniel tried to get Marlysha out of the floaty, she kicked and screamed. During the struggle Daniel banged his watch against the side of the pool so the 3,5 mm jack port was not airtight anymore and some water got into his watch. He managed to get a kicking and screaming Marlysha out of the pool and they made their way to their hotel room.

Back in their hotel room they got dressed and were just about to get out of the door as Daniel glanced at his watch to see how late it was. He cursed profusely.

"What's wrong?" Iboya asked him.

Daniel had just noticed that the button was not the way it was supposed to be and was now frantically pressing all the buttons on his watch and discovered that he had to unscrew the button to make it air tight again.

"I think my watch is broken," he said agitated.

"Well the hour hand is still working, but the LED is not coming on so the camera might be broken."

"At least the hour hand still works," Iboya said. "I'm kind of hungry maybe we can look at it later."

They walked to Smile on the boulevard, and as they reached the restaurant they gave the waiter at the door their last name and room number. Daniel kept pressing the button on his watch periodically as he was hoping that the led might come back on, but nothing happened. The waiter helped them to their seats and got a high chair for Marlysha. He explained the menu as the receptionist had also done the day before, and added that the cocktails on the drink menu were buy one get one free, which helped lighten the mood. The waiter brought them their appetizers off the fixed menu, and

Daniel and Iboya both ordered a cocktail. Shortly after, the waiter arrived with their cocktails and appetizers of bread and assorted spreads. In the meantime, musicians were playing traditional Greek music on the opposite end of the restaurant.

The bread and spreads were quite good, but everything went down hill after that. A young French couple sat next to them as the waiter arrived with their main course, which consisted of muscles, chicken pasta, and shashlicks. Daniel was wondering how three totally different dishes could get plated together. The couple glanced over at them, and looked just as confused as Daniel and Iboya. Daniel regretted eating there as the food was bland, the portions too big and dry, and it seemed as if it had been made hours before only to be reheated when ordered. Daniel looked over to the French couple and said “la nourriture est terrible”. They half smiled at him nervously. All of a sudden, it hit him. Smile must be owned by the resort and all the food that was left over from lunch had to have been sent by the resort kitchen to be given away in this monstrosity of a free menu. It was the worst meal Daniel had ever had. They hardly touched their food, but rather stuck to drinking instead.

After the nightmare was over, they decided to stay for a few more drinks before going back to the resort to try and get some edible food before the restaurant closed. The food in the resort restaurant tasted as if it were a four star meal even though it was the same food they had eaten for the last couple of days.

After they finished, they hurried back to their hotel room to have a look at flights to Cyprus. Daniel hooked up his watch and to his amazement his camera was still working. Apparently the LED was the only thing that was broken, and the rest of the features of the spy watch were still intact. He decided to get on the Ipad instead and looked for flights to Cyprus. After looking for a while he found a flight for the next day from Heraklion to Larnaca Cyprus with Aegan Airlines. They could depart early in the morning, and return later that evening. Plus, it would only cost about 250 euros. He decided to book it straight away as they had won the 450 euros from the scratch ticket, and he hoped they could do some cheaper shopping on Cyprus before heading back to Holland. Iboya had just bathed Marlysha and was putting her to bed.

“Even though I hate flying, I just booked a flight for us to Cyprus for tomorrow because I love you so much. So, we can do some cheap shopping that the Evans told us about.”

“You did?” Iboya asked excited.

“Yes, we are flying tomorrow morning at eight o’clock, and we should be there about noon. That gives us the entire day to do some shopping. We’ll fly back at eight in the evening, so we should be back in Crete around midnight.”

“That is quite late for Marlysha, but that sounds amazing,” Iboya said cheerfully.

They heard beeping noises as the Ipad indicated that the battery only had 1% left. As Daniel plugged it in to recharge, the Ipad screen went black and did not come back on or recharge whatsoever.

“What the hell is wrong with all these electric appliances? Everything is breaking or just deciding to stop working! It is starting to feel like a bad omen...”

“Oh, stop being so dramatic Daniel. Let’s go to bed. We have a long and exciting day tomorrow, and maybe we can look for some new chargers in Cyprus when we arrive,” Iboya smiled.

Daniel decided to pack their bags with everything they needed for their flight the next day as Iboya started getting ready for bed. Daniel went through their bags several times before deciding he did not forget anything. Then, he went to sleep.

The next morning, they woke up early and had the reception get them a taxi to Heraklion Airport. Daniel had gotten their plane tickets printed at the reception while they were waiting for the taxi to arrive. Before they knew it, they had been airborne and landed on Larnaca International Airport. After a brief stop in Athens, the flight to Cyprus had only been three and a half hours in which they had both taken the liberty to get a well deserved powernap.

By the time they arrived it was almost noon. The airport was more impressive than the airport in Heraklion. It was more modern and sophisticated. They waited for the bus that was going to be taking them to Nicosia, about fifty kilometers from the airport to Nicosia center.

“Aren’t we lucky, Iboya? If we were any later, we would have had to wait for an entire hour,” Daniel said.

“Thank god!”

The bus cost fourteen euros for two-day tickets, which was more than they paid in Greece, but

if that was the only thing that was more expensive Daniel could live with it. The moment the bus started moving, Daniel noticed that Cyprus looked like Greece 2.0. Instead of everything's being in a state of decay, everything looked marvelous. During the long drive by bus to Nicosia Daniel was reading a brochure that he grabbed off the plane with information regarding Cyprus. Marlysha was sitting on Iboya's lap and they enjoyed the view through the window. Iboya regretted the fact that they had not changed their vacation plans to travel to Cyprus in the first place.

After about thirty minutes into the long painstaking trip, Iboya had dozed off thanks to Daniel took Marlysha off her lap so she could enjoy her little siesta. The bus was a mixture of tourists and locals. The tourists, who just started their holiday, were all very excited to finally be there. In order to amuse himself, Daniel spent ten minutes trying to teach Marlysha some new words before he came to the realization that it was not going to happen.

"You must have gotten that from your mother's side because your father is obviously so brilliant," he smiled.

He took a moment to glance over at Iboya to see if she had heard it or not. Marlysha was too busy trying to read the travel brochure. Due to the fact that it was the only thing that kept her quiet, Daniel let her play with while he looked outside and enjoyed the view as he slipped into a daydream. A screaming Iboya rudely interrupted him as the bus joltingly came to a halt at a bus stop. Daniel glanced over at her to look what the fuss was about. He noticed half of the brochure page was missing, and Marlysha was looking at him with a guilt ridden face and traces of paper in the corner of her mouth as she tried to smile at him.

"I'm sorry, Iboya. I should have paid better attention, but I got caught up in the wonderful view of this mesmerizing island."

"Are you sure it is the Island? Or is it the beautiful Cypriote women that have you daydreaming," she said jokingly.

"I wouldn't want to do that to the beautiful women of Cyprus unless they have a very good dental plan because you would probably knock their teeth out, and we would spend the rest of the day at a police station," Daniel replied perky.

Just before the eighth bus stop there was an announcement that they were about to reach Makarios Avenue,

As they got out at the bus stop, they noticed that it all looked very modern. It was a commercial center with a lot of residential buildings unlike Greece where a lot of older buildings were preserved. The bus stop was almost in front of the Marks & Spencer's.

"How about we have quick coffee before we start our day here?"

"I would love to visit Ledra street which was closed for thirty-four years until April 3rd, 2008. It is only a kilometer away, so it should be easily accessible on foot."

"Wow, you sure know a lot about Cyprus," Iboya said.

"Yeah, I could have known more, but the other half of that page is inside your daughter's stomach, so if we need more information we can always get it after her bowels decide to let go of the page they are currently holding hostage."

"Last time I checked, she is your daughter too and I did not eat paper when I was younger unlike someone else," she smiled.

"Remind me later to never let you discuss my youth with my mother ever again," Daniel said a little ill at ease.

"Aw, Daniel if you get hungry you can always eat the other half of that page," Iboya said teasingly.

"Let's just get a move on it will you. I'm dying for a good cup of coffee," Daniel said as they started walking.

After a minute or two, they reached Iberry Café at 1060 Mikarios Avenue, but it was closed. Daniel could almost taste the sweet black liquid that would fuel his engine for most of the afternoon.

"It's closed, and it doesn't have an opening time noted anywhere," Iboya said with a confused look on her face.

Daniel grabbed his phone from his Riut Bag, swiped his finger over the fingerprint scanner, and quickly connected with the first free Wi-Fi network he find.

"Oh the dangers of open Wi-Fi connections! But for that black gold, I don't mind living on the edge for a few minutes."

Upon a quick google search of the café, Daniel found that it was likely closed for good. We might as well keep walking until we reach Ledra street and have some real Turkish coffee,” Daniel said.

Daniel glanced at a building just across from the Iberry Café that looked very old, yet very well taken care of. It was the color of sand with golden letters attached to it. It had two stories with five columns each and the first and second buildings had beautiful white marble banisters. It was the headquarters of the National Bank of Greece on Cyprus; Daniel took some pictures of it before they started walking again. As they walked, Daniel started to notice small things that were significantly different from Greece. For example, the sidewalks were all at the same level and had ramps, which made it much easier to walk with a stroller. They followed the sidewalk until they reached the intersection where the Cyprus Development bank was and in that moment Daniel saw the red and white sign for the Lukoil gas station that signaled they were walking the wrong way.

“Iboya, that is the gas station we passed when we first got here. In the search for a place to drink coffee I must have gotten caught up to notice we were walking down the wrong side of the street.”

Iboya looked at him as if she had just verbally been slapped.

“Well, at least we got to see this side of Makarios street as well. I can't help the fact that your daughter ate the map,” Daniel smirked at her.

They retraced their steps until they had made it back to Marks & Spencers. They walked to the passed some small shops, as a cool breeze led them to the intersection that connected Makarios Avenue with Leonidou Street and Evagorou Street. As they passed a cocktail bar called Square. Iboya could not help but laugh because Daniel led them straight to the American College on 3 Omirou Avenue.

“Can you take some pictures of me in front of the college,” Daniel asked with an ear-to-ear grin on his face.

“How does this not surprise me,” Iboya said.

“Well it was on the way to Ledra Street and I told you I had a route with a couple of things we could see on the way,” Daniel said nonchalantly.

Iboya took a picture of him in front of the sand colored building with big neon letters on it. They continued their journey passed Mo Botique club, a nightclub next to the American college.

“How do these students get any work done with a cocktail bar and a nightclub just around every corner? Daddy knows where you are not studying when you grow up,” he said as he winked at Marlysha.

They followed Omirou Avenue until they reached the intersection of Solomos Square where the central bus station of Nicosia was located. Daniel knew that Ledra Street was a couple of streets behind the other side of the bus station, .

As they had crossed Salomon Square bus station to Kostaki pantelidi, they crossed to the other side and took a right. They followed the path until they had reached Eleftherias Square where they took a left and walked straight passed the Subway as Daniel made a corny joke about a foot long. Iboya acted like she had not heard him.

Daniel stopped a moment to soak it all in and then said, “Ok, now let's get some coffee.”

“Yeah, I could go for a drink after all that walking too. I also need to change Marlysha,” Iboya said. They walked passed various shops and small diners as they admired the architecture of the old town. Finally they came across Debenhams, a big department store that was the tallest building in Lefkosia. Daniel made his way towards the entrance as he was telling Iboya about the cafeteria on the sixth floor and its grand panoramic view of the old city of Nicosia. At the same moment he wanted to inform her about the museum that was located on the eleventh floor. He stepped over the threshold and the electric doors slid open. Over one thousand volatile aromatic compounds stalled him as the roasted chocolatey sweetness filled his nostrils. As he turned his head to locate where the smell was coming from, he spotted the familiar green, black and white sign that read Starbucks Coffee. He spun on his heels, did a perfect 180, and walked diagonally across the street to the Starbucks where he ordered two caramel macchiatos and some lukewarm water for a baby bottle. When Daniel completed the order, he peered out the door as if he were looking for something important..

“What are you looking at,” Iboya asked him as she returned, with a smiling Marlysha who signaled to Daniel that she wanted her bottle.

“Daniel, they don’t have a restroom so I couldn’t change the munchkin yet,” Iboya said as she grabbed her coffee and took a long dragging sip.

“I am kind of hungry. How about you, Daniel?” asked Iboya.

“I could go for a bite,” Daniel said as he smiled at her because of the whipped cream moustache that made her look extra delicious.

“How about we grab a quick lunch in Debenhams and we can probably find a toilet to change the munchkin there. We could enjoy that panoramic view while we enjoy our food,” said Daniel.

As they approached Shacolas Tower, Daniel saw several men go around the back of the building. Though they appeared normal, in some way they stood out. Maybe it was the way they walked slightly faster than the other people. Maybe it was the way they walked in a perfectly straight synced line. Maybe it was how they all had the same haircut. From the first moment he locked eyes on them, he just knew they were military.

Finally making it through the front door, they walked up to the escalators and started the tedious ascend up to the sixth floor. Iboya heard Daniel’s stomach complain that the escalators were not doing the only job they had fast enough. Iboya could smell a wonderful mixture of flavors and they were greeted by the tang of fresh lemon, coriander and grilled meats.

they made it up the last escalator that would take them up to The Venue Café Ledra, the cafeteria that housed itself on the sixth floor of the Shakolas tower. At a first glance, it did not look like the cafeteria belonged in the marvelous building that was the Shakolas tower. It had grainy wooden tables and white plastic chairs, nothing like the grandeur of the rest of the building. The cafeteria was like the red headed soulless stepchild who did not get anyone’s full attention. But, the 270 degree panoramic view and wonderful smelling food made up for all the minor imperfections.

They decided to take a seat near the window so they could take in the view while they enjoyed their meals. The cafeteria was self-service and the food reminded him of the food at Gouve’s waterpark resort, which really put the fact in perspective that the apparent four-star resort was serving food at a cafeteria level, or maybe the cafeteria was serving food at four-star resort level. Was the glass half empty or half full? Well, at least the food tasted great. Food always tastes better when you are in good company, apart from the food at Happy Smile. Iboya smiled at him as Marlysha was picking away at all the peas that were scattered across her plate. She licked them in order to experience their taste before she decided if they were tasteful enough to disappear into her small toothless salivating mouth. She grinned at Daniel and looked over to Iboya as she grabbed another pea. Daniel was eating his salad, but while he waited to take another bite he looked over at Iboya and asked, “So is there anything you would like to do after lunch?”

“I would really love to cross into the Turkish part. We then technically still have been in turkey on this vacation. Plus, I am hoping that the prices are cheaper on the Turkish side.”

“Well then how about we compromise and we first visit the museum up on the eleventh floor and then we cross over into the north side,” Daniel suggested.

“That sounds perfect. Just give me the time to change Marlysha before I forget,” she said as she grabbed the diaper bag in one arm and Marlysha in the other.

“Hold on. I know what you’re doing,” Daniel said as he narrowed his eyes. “You are leaving me behind with the bill while you’re going on a shopping spree. Aren’t you?” He said half smiling.

“You are right, Daniel. That is exactly what I was planning to do. I was going to sneak out on you,” Iboya said sarcastically. “Especially since we already paid for it right after we walked the buffet line,” she picked up Marlysha as she made her way to the rest rooms and swung the diaper bag over her shoulder.

As soon as Iboya disappeared around the corner, Daniel stood up and walked to the window. He frantically tried to look down at the store signs, continuing to look for something. He felt on edge and failed to register that Iboya was standing behind him until he noticed her reflection in the glass when she put Marlysha in the stroller. He took those swift seconds to readjust his composure.

“So, uhhhh, did you pay the bill?” Iboya asked smirking.

“No, but I think we might have to go to the doctor,” Daniel said dramatically as if all the power had just been drained from his body.

“Are you all right?” Iboya asked as she rushed towards him and caught him mid faint.

“Yeah, I’m all right,” Daniel smiled, “just have the occasional pain in the ass and by pain in the ass I mean you,” he said as he simultaneously dodged Iboya’s furious front and backhand.

“Nice form! Have you played tennis before,” Daniel joked as he took two steps to the side and whispered love you.

They made their way down the escalators and walked in as a cool breeze swept through Ledra street. Even though the physical barricade had been lifted since April of 2008 it was still exciting to be walking in a place that had been closed off from the public because of conflict for such a long time. Marlysha was passed out in the stroller as they walked up to the marble white and red building that read Pasaport Kontrol with the red crescent moon and star that had represented Turkey since 1844.

“I can’t believe we are here,” Iboya squealed in a high pitched fourteen-year-old pubescent voice.

“Don’t get too excited. You might wake up the baby, and if you keep acting so creepily excited they might think you are up to something, lock you up, and throw away the key,” Daniel said as he tried not to laugh.

They got two white Visa forms that they had to fill in with their passport information. They handed in the forms as the young man behind the desk inserted their information into a computer. After he blankly stared at the screen for what seemed like a minute and glanced over at them and the passport several times, he gave them back. After a quick bag check they were good to cross into Lefkosia.

As soon as they switched sides one could feel the atmosphere shift and division of cultures. It was almost 15:15, and Daniel noticed as soon as they crossed the border that Iboya had this satisfying bargain hunter look in her eyes. Hunting season had just commenced. The search was on for the best souvenirs they could find and haggle for on the south side. He did not let Iboya’s enthusiasm disrupt his focus, as he had some plans of his own. He was a man on a mission as he scanned the area and was taking mental notes that he would need later. It had only taken Iboya just short of an hour and a half to secure a dozen souvenirs at outstanding prices.

“I knew I had him on the ropes when he called me the mafia,” she said proudly as she was boasting about her newly claimed spoil.

“Are you all right, Dan?” Iboya asked as Daniel tried to regain his composure.

“Yes, I am just getting a little bit of an appetite as it’s almost around dinner time.”

“How about you go get us a table at a café or something and I will join you and the munchkin in a bit.”

“There was this little shop we passed earlier where I saw something for Marlysha as we haven’t really gotten her a birthday present yet have we?” Daniel asked as Iboya stood there like she was thinking it over.

“I can’t believe we forgot about that,” she said as she pouted her face.

“I will find us a place to eat. Then you can be on present duty,” she winked, “just be careful will you? Don’t go wandering into any of the side alleys too much.”

“Oh don’t you worry, Iboya. Ledra is a two kilometers straight street. I can hardly get lost, and I will be back in thirty minutes. I promise.”

Iboya kissed him and Daniel patted Iboya on her head as she smiled at him.

“I’ll text you the name of the place I find,” Iboya shouted to him as he turned around.

“That’s all right. I’ll see you girls in a bit. Love you,” Daniel said as he started walking slightly faster.

As soon as Iboya turned around, he found himself a side street, slipped his Riut bag from his shoulders, unzipped it, and pulled out his grey hoodie with an American flag and an eagle on the front. He then slid into a different pair of army tinted cargo shorts that he wore on top of the ones he was already wearing, slung his backpack back over his shoulders, and walked onto Ledra street as a man with a new identity. He walked at a steady pace and tried to cover his face by looking down at the floor as much as possible just in case.... After walking for ten minutes he had found what he was looking for, a small jewelry store on the lefkosia side of Ledra. He was friendly greeted as he walked in and slid the hood off.

“iyi günler, how can I help you today,” a friendly elderly man with a thick Turkish accent greeted him as he came to the door.

“Good afternoon. I am looking for something very specific,” Daniel answered.

“What is it that you are looking for, my friend,” the man said as he patted Daniel on the back and he guided him deeper into the shop.

“Well I am looking for a silver engagement ring, but time is of the essence as I have to catch a flight back to Greece tonight.”

“Then let’s not waste time,” the man said as he motioned for Daniel to take a seat at a table at the back of the store.

“Can I offer you some tea while we conduct our business?” the man asked.

“I would love some,” Daniel said, “it might calm my nerves.”

The man walked to a door in the shop and shouted, “Fatima bana biraz çay ve nişan yüzüklerini ile kutuyu getir.”

He then turned back to Daniel and sat on the opposite side of the table and said the rings and tea would be there shortly. A couple minutes went by and a younger woman came in and set down a pot of tea on the table and poured them both a cup. She then left and returned with a big silver colored display case with all sorts of rings. Daniel took a sip of his tea, which was really sweet, but it still had a well-balanced taste.

The man smiled at Daniel and said, “Conversations without tea are like a night sky without the moon,” as he raised his glass to Daniel.

“So how about you have a look and tell me which ones you like?”

Daniel briefly scanned the display and quickly singled out a handful of rings Iboya might like. He pointed out the rings as the elderly man removed them from the display. When his hands touched the first ring, he noticed that they were shaking softly.

“Oh, get a grip, Daniel,” he thought to himself, “you are going to get through this. You are going to man up, get down on your knee, and ask the love of your life if she wants to spend the rest of her life with you.” He closed his eyes as he took another sip of his tea, and somehow as if he were given a sign, he knew which ring it was going to be. He grabbed it, looked at it for a couple of seconds, looked the elderly man dead in the eye, and said, “I will be needing this one in a size five and a half.”

“That is an excellent choice, my friend,” the man said smiling.

It was a fourteen karat white gold ring with a heart shaped brilliant center piece surrounded by twelve smaller brilliants, which kind of made it resemble a flower.

“But this is not silver, it is white gold.” He pointed out the 585 inscription in the ring.

“Well as long as it is not regular colored gold, we should be ok,” Daniel said as he braced himself for the price.

“That will be 658,86 Lira,” the elderly Turkish man said after he weighed it and did some calculations on an old Casio calculator.

Daniel got a little nervous.

“Well there is one problem, you see. It was hard enough for me to give my girlfriend the slip to get to this shop, so the problem is I only have euros on me, since she doesn’t even know the existence of the money for the ring,” he said nervously.

“I understand,” the Turkish man said while he scratched the back of head. He grabbed the Casio from the table and started frantically pressing the buttons. It seemed like the sound that the buttons emitted went on forever.

“That would be about 200 euros, my friend,” the man said as he smiled convulsively.

Daniel quickly grabbed 300 euros out of one of the secret side pockets of his Riut bag.

“Just keep it all. It will cover any transaction fees that you should encounter,” he said as he planted the wad of money in the man’s hand while shaking it firmly.

The man ordered the younger woman to get the ring in the right size as Daniel drank all of his remaining tea in two big gulps. Nearly choking as he was so ecstatic that he nearly forgot to swallow. The woman returned with a small white wooden box with flowers carved into it. As she opened it, Daniel saw the ring he picked, and feelings of pride and joy overwhelmed him.

“I am glad that I could do business with you,” the short elderly man told him. “Take good care of her.”

They parted their ways at the front door. Daniel who hadn’t let go yet of the little box, opened it as he stared at it while ducking into a side street to get changed back into his regular clothes. After he got changed, he slipped the box into the Riut bag and turned around to make his way back towards Marlysha and Iboya. Just as he hit the corner to get back onto Ledra, a man bumped into him and

started running off with his bag. Before Daniel could even react, the man got tackled by a bystander and dropped the bag, but managed to get away.

“Are you all right?”

“Yeah, I am fine, my friend. I think this belongs to you,” he said as he handed over the bag to Daniel. Daniel who was trying to make sense of what just transpired, shook the stranger’s hand.

“Salam, I’m Ahmed. It’s nice to meet you. Friend, are you alright?”

“Yeah, I am fine,” Daniel said still shook up.

“Well thank you. If you hadn’t been around, I don’t know what would have happened. I just bought my girlfriend an engagement ring, and just thank you so much,” Daniel said almost tripping over his words.

“Oh, it was nothing, my friend, inshallah,” Ahmed said. “So you are going to propose to your girlfriend? I wish you well, my friend. Can I at least buy you a drink? You still look quite shaken up. I didn’t get your name.”

“Oh, it’s Daniel Jansen. And I am kind of in a hurry. I need to catch a flight back to Greece tonight and...”

“Come on. You can’t deny a free celebratory drink from the man who just stopped you from being a pick pocket statistic,” Ahmed said with a cocky smile on his face.

“Well I guess you’re right. A free drink never hurt anyone.”

“Come on. My favorite bar is just around the corner! This way, my friend,” Ahmed said waving him back into the side street.

Daniel didn’t know which corner he meant, but the side street was connected to a maze of little streets. As they went deeper into the network of smaller streets Ahmed ran into two of his friends who he took the time to introduce to Daniel. He just told him that they were also going to go to the bar with them. Ever since they had joined Daniel on his flanks and had remained a couple of feet behind him placing phone calls. This gave Daniel an uneasy feeling, but it didn’t bother him too much.

“Ok, just one more left here, and then we are here,” Ahmed said as he clapped in his hands and disappeared around the corner.

They stopped in front of a little bar with a small terrace in front of it. Ahmed held open the door and said, “After you, my friend.”

Daniel walked into the bar. About eight tables were scattered across the establishment and a hand full of patrons were enjoying a beverage over a game of cards.

“Sit, my friend. Sit,” Ahmed gestured towards the stools in front of the bar.

One of his friends made his way towards the patrons at the table and greeted them cheerfully. The other sat right next to Daniel as Ahmed sat down on his left.

“So, what are we having, my friend. We are celebrating your engagement.”

“Ok, one quick drink, then I can’t stay too long. My soon to be fiancé is waiting for me. She made the dinner reservations.

“Ok. Then let’s get this show on the road,” Ahmed said as he slammed his hands on the table.

“The owner is a good friend of mine, and I happen to know he has a good twenty-one-year-old, Cardhu,” he winked. “Ibrahim ...,” Ahmed called out.

A young man in his thirties with a big grey beard made his way to the bar from the open kitchen doors.

“Salam alaykum,” Ibrahim said to Ahmed.

“Ibo, we are here to celebrate Daniel’s upcoming engagement. Do you still have some of that Cardhu?” Ahmed asked.

“Yes, my friend. Do you guys want it on the rocks?”

“Yes please,” Ahmed answered.

“I have to go to the toilet for a moment,” Ahmed said as he stood up to leave to the backside of the bar.

Ibrahim kneeled down and opened one of the small freezers. “Daniel,” Ahmed called out from the other side of the room.

“Yes ???” he said as he turned around.

“Watch our drinks, will you? They are very expensive,” Ahmed said as he shot him a great smile.

The moment Daniel turned around, he saw Ibrahim come back up, but he looked different. He had a gasmask on as he threw something in the air that created a white dust cloud, and Daniel's vision slowly blurred as his mind slowly went blank.....