

My dearest Brit,

If you are reading this letter it will mean that either I did not have the opportunity, or, more likely, the courage to talk to you before I died. It has never been easy for me to discuss matters of the heart. And I have been ever fearful that I might see disappointment, or even rejection, in your eyes. I could not have borne that.

About the villa on Corfu. It was a long time ago, before you were born. I had been working on the dig at Knossos on Crete and somehow I contacted Hepatitis A. Infected shellfish they thought. I was quite ill, in a hospital in Athens. When I was discharged my doctor told me that I was to rest, that I was not to return to work for some weeks. He suggested that Corfu would be a good place to recuperate since there was not much of great archaeological interest there — nothing to seduce me into working before my strength was fully restored. He had a villa on Corfu that he was trying to sell. It was unoccupied, so he offered me the use of it at a very reasonable rent. I was too ill to make the long trip back to California, so I accepted his offer.

It was there, on Corfu, that I met Maria Calbrese. I won't go into details, but we fell in love and, for a time, I thought we would spend the rest of our lives together. That's when I bought the villa. The villa was a happy place for me. Although I have never been back, I could not bear to part with it. I have carried the memories of my time there with me for a lifetime.

I have sensed your unhappiness in recent years. I knew the disastrous love affair with Lorne Browne left you quite distraught. I knew and was unable to help you.

Go to Corfu. I hope you will find there the peace, the beauty, the sheer joy in being alive that I found.

As for the villa, it's in the countryside on a hilltop near the village of Pelekas. I'm not sure what condition it may be in. I've had an arrangement with a local man, Emmanuel Nicolopoulos. He has been allowed to harvest the annual olive crop in return for looking after the place. However, no one has lived in the house for many years. It may require some work. Emmanuel will have a set of keys for you.

I have also left a small parcel with John for you to take to Maria. I believe she is living in or near Venice, but I do not know her address or even her married name. I believe her husband has a vineyard in the Veneto. I'm sure you will be able to find her.

Your mother, in her great wisdom, knew all that I am telling you. She was my friend, my kind and caring support.

I have never regretted the choice I made to return to her and to you, our as yet unborn daughter. You have been the best part of my life.

When you were born, I named you Britomartis after the Minoan goddess of the mountains and sea shores, the daughter of Zeus, king of the gods. Alas, I'm afraid your father is no god, but a mere mortal man, with all of man's failings. Do forgive me, my dear.

Your loving father

Chapter 1

Brit's mind whirled. Her father had left her a villa on a Greek island? He had a love affair there while he was married to her mother? Her mother was his friend, his kind and caring support? What was that supposed to mean? How dare he go and die and leave her questioning all that she'd taken for granted in her life. How could he do this to her?

The letter slipped from Brit's fingers and dropped unnoticed to the floor. She pushed herself out of her father's worn leather arm chair, walked out of the living room and slowly climbed the stairs. She winced when the third step from the top squeaked. It had always done that, giving her away when she was later than she should have been coming in from a date.

At the top of the landing she paused. Her mother's room was on the right. It hadn't been changed much since she'd died when Brit was just eight years old, although her Great Aunt Emily had occupied it for ten years after her mother's death.

Brit walked into it. Her eyes fell on the high, old fashioned bed. Her Aunt Em had let her climb into that bed with her whenever there was a thunder storm. She would hold her and smooth her hair and tell her there was nothing to be afraid of.

Brit smiled a small bitter smile. Nothing to be afraid of? Life was much scarier than thunderstorms.

Ghosts, only ghosts, wherever she looked. Her parents wedding photo on the wall. How young and remote her mother looked in her white veil and wedding dress. Brit tried to recall any moment of her childhood shared with her mother. Nothing. Somehow in her memory her mother always seemed lovely but distant. No more real than the photograph on the wall.

Slowly she turned back to the dimly lit hallway. Her father's study and bedroom were on the left. It contained two old oak filing cabinets. Bookcases covered every available wall space. His large cluttered desk and comfortable desk chair faced a large window beyond which Brit could see the garden. She closed her eyes briefly and saw him sitting there, immersed in his writing, oblivious to her small form in the doorway hoping for a goodnight kiss. She remembered standing there so many nights, quietly waiting until he noticed her. When he did he always smiled and opened his arms. She would clamber into his lap and he'd hug and kiss her in his absent way. Pain ripped through her. She'd never see him again. Why could she not cry? She wanted to cry, but the tears wouldn't come.

Brit sat down in his squeaky desk chair and swiveled it as he used to. There, through a second doorway, she could see into his bedroom. A small room, furnished sparsely with a few book cases, his old-fashioned chest of drawers and Spartan single bed.

She drew a sharp breath as realization hit her with the force of a blow. Of course. Her parents had never shared a bedroom. How could she have been so stupid? How could she have failed to see the implication of that simple fact? Her friends. parents shared bedrooms. Hers never had. Her friends. parents laughed together and squabbled together and at times outright fought. Hers were unerringly polite to each other.

And yet it didn't seem to have been a bad marriage. They were fond of each other. They clearly

respected one another. And she never doubted their love for her. She knew she had been a late and unexpected child. Her mother was forty when she was born, her father forty-two. Much older than any of her friends. parents.

And then her mother had died when Brit was too young to realize just what the separate bedrooms and her parents. formal, distant behavior toward one another meant. Until this moment she'd never thought about their relationship. They were just her parents. Was it her father's choice that they had separate bedrooms? Was it because of that woman, Maria?

Of course her father was away more than most of her friends. fathers were. He was always off on archaeological digs in Greece or Turkey. Brit had missed him when he was on those field trips. Yet he somehow managed to be home for her birthdays when she was growing up. He was there for Christmases, and he'd never missed any of her graduations — high school, college, graduate school.

Brit had worshiped her father. Without a mother, she'd poured out all her love to her father. He was everything she believed right and true.

And he had betrayed her. He was married to her mother and had an affair with a woman in Greece. Had an affair possibly even while her mother was pregnant with her. How could he have done such a thing?

And then to ask her to find the woman, to take some package to her. What was he thinking? Anger roiled, making her almost sick to her stomach.

Brit turned off the light and walked slowly out of the room now so empty of her father's presence. Somehow his death seemed more real in this moment than it had this morning when she had scattered his ashes out where the bay met the ocean, the chartered boat rocking gently, the fog damp on her face. When she'd dropped roses, seventy-five of them, one for each year of his life, into the sea. He had always loved the scent of roses.

Brit's shoulders slumped in fatigue as she made her way toward the room at the end of the hall. She was deathly tired. She hadn't slept much since flying in from Boston to San Francisco to be by her father's side after his stroke ten days ago. Then this afternoon there had been the meeting in San Francisco with John Meyers, her father's lawyer, followed by the seemingly endless drive to the house in Old Palo Alto where Brit had grown up.

Entering her old room, she flicked the wall switch and gazed around, taking in the mementos of her childhood and school years. Awards and diplomas lined the walls interspersed with pictures of her classmates and friends. A banner from a football game she'd attended with her father. Her bed with its down pillows and puffy duvet covered in an old fashioned rose bud print chosen so many years ago by Aunt Em.

She hadn't been in this room for six years. Her father had visited her in Wellesley twice each year on his way to and from his work in Greece and Turkey, but she'd deliberately avoided returning to Palo Alto and its painful memories.

Brit undressed and took a pair of pajamas out of the antique pine chest. Even after all these years they still carried the scent of the lavender her great-aunt had always kept in the drawers.

The small carved olive wood box still sat on top of the chest, the box where Brit had kept all her treasures when she was a child. She lifted the lid. There it was. The pendant her father had given her for her fifteenth birthday. An exact copy of one in the National Museum of Archaeology in Athens, an artifact her father had discovered on Crete. It was an unusual piece of jewelry, hand worked in gold, with crossed axes entwined by a snake suspended from a delicate gold chain. The emblem of the Minoan goddess, Britomartis, for whom she was named. She hadn't worn it in years.

She frowned. Why had she taken it off? Then she remembered. It was to wear a trinket Lorne had given her on one of their weekend trips. Absently, Brit fastened the chain around her neck and fingered the smooth gold of the ancient emblem. Touching it gave her some measure of comfort.

Then anger and doubt returned. Had her father been seeing this woman, Maria during the summers when she was with him in Greece?

Her eyes fell on the photograph of Lorne Browne on her bedside table. Good lord, she'd forgotten it was there. How could she condemn her father? Hadn't she herself been involved with a married man? Isn't that what had made her run away from Stanford six years ago?

Brit met Lorne Browne when she was in her last year of graduate studies at Stanford. He was forty-something, British, and a recognized scholar in the field of nineteenth century English Literature. He had dark hair and brown eyes that turned obsidian when he was annoyed or angry, or, as she would later discover, when he made love to her. Tall, large-framed, ruggedly handsome, Lorne dominated any room he entered. He had a dangerous, almost predatory look, and the young women on campus signed up for his classes in droves.

He was her major professor and Brit had been assigned as his graduate teaching assistant. The title that sounded important, but in reality it meant that she marked test papers for him, prepared any materials he wanted to hand out in class, ran to the library to find books he needed and made sure there was always a cup of Earl Grey tea with milk and sugar on his desk in the morning. In general, Brit acted as his gofer. She occupied a small desk in his outer office.

From the start she realized that his interest in her was more than professional. At first, it was just something about the way his eyes lingered on her. Then there were times when their hands not so accidentally touched as she gave him something, or when he leaned over her desk to point out some small detail in the work he needed her to do, casually brushing her breast as he did so. Her body always responded with an involuntary jolt to these small unanticipated intimacies.

Brit was tense and uncomfortable around him. There were strict rules about professors and students. To become involved could be a problem for them both. But she admitted to herself that she was strongly attracted to him. She was also more than a little in awe of him. Lorne was an older man with an international reputation. She was surprised that he should have any interested in her, a mere graduate student.

One evening when she was working late at her desk, he telephoned her. "Brit, I've inadvertently left some papers that I need on my desk. Could you drop them by my flat on your way home?"

Brit hesitated. She suspected that going to his place would be a mistake, but before she could stop herself she answered. "Certainly. It's no problem." She was attracted to Lorne Browne and was frankly curious to see what would happen.

She knocked on the door to his apartment. He opened it, impatiently gestured her in and, taking the proffered papers out of her hands, threw them carelessly down on the coffee table.

Without a word, he pulled her roughly into his arms and kissed her, his tongue probing relentlessly, demandingly, leaving her breathless. He pushed her legs apart with his knee so that she could feel his heavy arousal. Her legs turned to water, almost unable to support her. He pulled her shirt over her head and tossed it aside. Then he reached around her to unfasten her bra and this too he threw aside. Lorne stood back for a moment, his eyes raking her, drinking her in.

"Beautiful," he said.

Brit stood immobilized, trembling, wanting to run, wanting to stay, wanting whatever was coming next. "I don't do this," she said, pleading.

"You do now," he replied. Then he picked her up and carried her to his bedroom. In moments, she was naked under him.

What followed was an overpowering assault on her senses. Lorne was a practiced lover who fully awakened Brit sexually for the first time in her life. He touched and caressed her in ways she had never imagined, bringing her to a shattering climax, only to begin again before she could even catch her breath. She was unable to stifle her moans and cries as he played her body much in the way a virtuoso violinist might play a Stradivarius. When he finally tired of his games and entered her, roughly pounding to his own release, her pleasure was so intense that it bordered on pain. Brit responded wildly to him, trying to still the small voice in her mind that said that something wasn't quite right.

Much later, deeply shaken by the experience, she dressed to leave.

Lorne watched through hooded eyes, amused, as she fumbled with her clothing. "There's a key on the bureau. Take it. I'll see you here at eight tomorrow night. Just let yourself in."

As Brit reached for the key she noticed the photograph on the bureau. A woman and two boys. His wife and children, she thought, appalled at what she had done.

"We're separated. She's in England with the boys. There's a divorce in the works," Lorne assured her.

Brit looked back at Lorne questioningly, but he offered no further clarification.

After that first night, Brit was incapable of saying no. She wasn't sure an upcoming divorce made what they were doing right, but she was hungry for what Lorne offered.

They needed to be very circumspect around the University, but Lorne expected her to meet him at his apartment every evening unless there was some event he had to attend. Even then he told her to be there when he came home, however late that might be. She sometimes fell asleep in his bed waiting for

him, only to be awakened by him pushing roughly into her.

Her father met Lorne just once. It was when Lorne dropped Brit off after one of their weekend trips. He hadn't liked Lorne. It had shown on his face when he met him. But he hadn't remonstrated with Brit about having an affair with a married man.

Of course he hadn't, Brit thought with disgust. Like father like daughter.

At the beginning of their affair, Brit fantasized about what it might be like to be married to Lorne, but as time went on she was less and less sure that marriage to him was what she wanted. She was sexually intoxicated with him, but she didn't much like him, or the person she felt she was becoming when she was with him. Lorne never really talked or listened to her. He seemed to have little interest in her outside of bed.

Brit was considering how she might extricate herself from the situation and find some way to end their affair when the unthinkable happened. She let herself into his apartment with her key and came face to face with his wife.

"You must be the latest." The tall blond woman from the photograph in the bedroom looked at Brit appraisingly.

"I beg your pardon?" Brit stammered.

"You certainly don't think you're the first," Lorne's wife said. "Let me guess what he told you. He said he was separated from me. That there was a divorce pending. Am I right?"

Brit's stomach clutched and the blood left her head. Trembling, unable to continue standing, she grabbed the arm of the nearest chair for support and crumpled into it.

"There is no separation. No pending divorce, I assure you. I was in England to get the boys settled into their boarding school for the year. The plan was that I would join Lorne in December. I came early."

"I'm...I'm sorry." Brit put her head in her hands, tears scalding her eyes. "I would never..., I didn't know."

"They never do. You're the fourth in as many years. I've always overlooked Lorne's little amusements when I'm away, but I must admit it's wearing thin." The woman sat opposite Brit and sighed. "I'm sorry, my dear. But really, you are much too trusting."

Somehow Brit got out of the apartment. Tears ran down her cheeks unchecked as she made her way home.

She saw Lorne only once after that. When pressed, he confirmed that, indeed, there was no separation, no pending divorce. He shrugged his shoulders and smiled as he admitted it. Then he turned and walked away.

When Brit asked the dean to assign her to someone else, the transfer was made quickly and quietly. It wasn't the first time a replacement teaching assistant had to be found for Lorne Browne. The dean

thought fleetingly that perhaps in the future he should assign male teaching assistants to Dr. Browne.

Six years... it had been six years since that humiliating day when Lorne had turned his back on her and walked away. Brit looked again at the photograph, Lorne's arm draped casually around her shoulder, her face looking adoringly up into his. It had been taken on the first weekend they spent together. They had driven down the coast to Carmel and stayed at the Pine Inn. When that photograph had been taken, she had been absolutely besotted with him.

"Idiot!" she exclaimed, slamming the photograph face down on the bedside table. She pummeled her pillow and turned off the bedside light. "I'll never be able to sleep tonight."

She was asleep in moments.

The next morning Brit awoke and wandered into the kitchen to see what he could find in the way of breakfast. A coffee mug sat on the kitchen table. She got a lump in her throat. She had made that lopsided misshapen mug in pottery class when she was in fifth grade and had given it to her father for Christmas. He never drank his morning coffee out of anything else. She turned the mug over in her hands, remembering how he had treasured it. Carefully, Brit rinsed and dried the mug and put it away on a top shelf in the cupboard.

She managed to put together a breakfast of instant coffee and some rather tasteless generic pastries she found in the freezer and made herself a mental note to go shopping for coffee, milk, cheese, fruit and bread. She thought about her father coming back to this house time and again from his research trips during the last six years, only to be alone since she'd moved to Wellesley.

After her mother died, Aunt Em had moved in with them. While Brit and Aunt Em had been in the house, her father got nourishing meals when he came home. She knew that he rarely noticed what he was eating. His mind was always elsewhere, but still it pained her to think of him sitting alone at the kitchen table, eating prepackaged frozen meals.

Rinsing her coffee cup in the sink, Brit shook her head. Time to get started. Should she work on his study first, or his bedroom? His study. In his will, he had left his professional books and papers to the University and they told her they would send someone for them later this week. She must get them ready.

It was five o'clock in the afternoon when Brit, dusty and tired, looked with satisfaction at the first section of empty bookshelves. She realized she'd somehow missed lunch and that there was still nothing in the house to eat.

Damn, she thought. Guess I'll have to eat out.

She took a quick shower and pulled on a pair of clean jeans, topping them with a shirt and oversized sweater. After running a brush perfunctorily through her long auburn hair she tied it back with a scarf, thinking, that will do. It's not as if I'm going any place fancy.

She headed toward the curb and her rental car, then changed her mind and went back to the garage. There it was. Her father's 1960 MG convertible, the keys hanging in their usual place, on a hook by the kitchen door. She smiled briefly in recollection. How she had loved rebuilding that car with him. And how he'd loved tinkering with it. Those had been days of such closeness between them.

Was he leading a double life even then? Seeing Maria on his trips to Greece?

She shook off the thought and headed for Luigi's, a spaghetti house she remembered from her student days. When she pulled up in front of the place, she was dismayed to find that where the scruffy old student hangout had once been there was now a fancy French restaurant.

Brit looked in disgust at the over-decorated, doubtless overpriced establishment and considered going elsewhere but she was hungry and it was getting late. She parked the car, slung her soft leather bag over her shoulder and went in.

"Does Madame have a reservation?" the maitre's asked.

"No, Madame does not have a reservation, but I see a room full of empty tables, and Madame is very hungry. You do serve food, don't you?"

"But of course." The man looked at her jeans and sweater with barely concealed disapproval. "Please come this way." He led her to a small table in a corner almost obscured by a potted palm, pulled out her chair and offered her a menu.

To her surprise, the menu featured a number of dishes Brit liked. She ordered chicken cooked in red wine, with onion soup to start. Good, hearty, country food.

She finished her soup and was starting on her main course when the door opened and Lorne Browne walked in. With him was a young woman, not more than twenty-two years old. He didn't notice Brit as his attention was fully focused on the beautiful blond clinging to his arm. For her part, the girl looked at him with something approaching adoration.

I know that look, Brit thought. That's the way I'm looking at him in that photograph.

The maitre'd greeted them. "Ah. Good evening Dr. Browne. Would you like your usual table?" He led them to a table by a window where he hovered and offered Lorne the menu and the wine list. "We have some very nice caneton a l'orange tonight. I recall you particularly like that dish the last time you were in. And perhaps a nice Bordeaux to go with it?"

"Yes, Yes. That will be fine," Lorne said, waving the man away.

Brit watched with almost clinical detachment as Lorne reached across the table, took both the girl's hands in his own and looked into her eyes.

That used to be me, she thought. That used to be me who believed, however briefly, that he was the most wonderful man in the world, and that we might spend the rest of our lives together. How could I have been so stupid? What is it with men? Are they incapable of fidelity? Of simple honesty? Do they all

lie and cheat?

She continued her meal eating every bite of the beautifully prepared chicken dish and then ordered a pear tart for dessert. On the way out of the restaurant, Brit couldn't resist the temptation to stop and speak.

"Lorne. How nice to see you."

He nearly knocked his chair over in an effort to get up quickly, and looked for a moment as if he were considering flight. Then recovering, he blustered, "Brit, what a surprise. I thought you were in the east someplace. Wellesley, wasn't it?"

"I'm here for my father's funeral."

"Sorry about your father. I hadn't heard."

Brit glanced at the girl then looked back at Lorne. "How are your wife and children? Are they still in England or are they here with you this year?"

The blond looked at Lorne, shock written on her face. "Wife?"

"They're in England. The boys are in school there," Lorne said, glancing at the girl with him, trying to assess the damage.

Brit lost her taste for the game. She shook her head, turned away from them without another word, and headed out the door. Lorne was apologizing to the girl as she left, probably spinning the same story he'd told her about his separation and pending divorce.

She slammed the car into gear and headed back home. She was shaking when she reached her front door. How could she have let him get to her that way? She didn't love him anymore. She didn't think she had ever loved him. She didn't even like him. It had always been about sex, not about love. It was true, she had found him fascinating. That distinguished continental look, that suave English accent, the fact that he was an older man, a member of the faculty. She'd found his attentions flattering.

And as to what she had felt when she found out the truth, she wasn't devastated as her father had suggested in his letter. She was furious. Furious at him for being such a liar, and at herself for being so gullible, so absurdly trusting.

Of course it didn't help that she had to hear the story from his wife — that she was just the latest in a long line of graduate students with whom he'd had tawdry affairs. In the end, all she had felt for Lorne Browne was contempt. And when the offer of a teaching position came from Wellesley College, Brit had been grateful for the opportunity to put distance between herself and the whole messy scene.

She'd thrown herself into her new job and deliberately closed men out of her life after Lorne Browne. Not because she was heartbroken. Far from it. She'd done it simply out of fear. She greeted the slightest overtures from men with frosty rejection. How could she trust herself with any man? Lorne had manipulated her, pushed her sexual buttons so easily. He had made a fool of her. Brit vowed never to let

that happen again.

Her mind turned to her father, to his affair with a woman on Corfu. Had the woman known he was married? Or had she, like Brit, simply believed what she was told? For that matter, what had her father told his lover? Had he said there was a divorce in the works?

Brit went to bed that night no more settled in her mind than when she'd first read her father's letter. After a restless night, at six in the morning she decided to get up and work rather than continue to try to sleep.

The next two weeks flew by. It took Brit several days to sort through her father's professional files and notebooks. Somehow she was reluctant to send them away without at least looking through them. He had kept meticulous notes on all his digs. It was difficult not to stop and read each one as she took it down. She could hear his voice in every description. His love of his work shone through the pages.

By the end of the week, his study was stripped of all traces of her father. She looked at the bare shelves, the empty desktop and the old oak filing cabinets with their now empty drawers and had the wrenching thought that there was nothing left of him here. How could a man's life be so easily erased? Brit was filled with almost physical pain at the thought.

Sighing, she walked into his bedroom. It was time to deal with his personal things.

There was not much here to show for seventy-five years of a man's life. The bookcase held a few more academic volumes on archaeology, including several he had authored, and a shelf of notebooks, much like the ones in his study in which he kept his field notes. Why were they here in his bedroom with his personal things?

Opening one, Brit was shocked to see that it was a personal journal, comments on his daily life meticulously entered and dated, day by day. Flipping through the first volume, she saw that it was from her father's first year at the university, long before she was born. Most of the entries were very brief.

20 November 1965

Ridiculous faculty meeting. Who cares where the coffee machine is located?

18 April 1966

I leave for Turkey tomorrow. I must say that I can't wait to get back into field work. I don't mind the teaching so much. I like working with bright young minds. But the endless meetings in academia are mind numbing.

Brit thumbed hurriedly through the volumes. Perhaps some of the answers she sought were here. She skimmed through several volumes until she came to the year of her birth. She opened it, her hands shaking, fearful of what she might find.

When she discovered there no entries between early April, when he was getting ready to leave for Greece, and the following December, she felt an almost physical shock. It was as if he had ceased to exist for that eight month period.

The journal resumed on the day of her birth.

30 December 1978

Today my daughter was born. She is a beautiful baby, all rosy and plump and so tiny that she takes my breath away. I find myself wanting above all things to protect her. To keep her forever from harm's way. I have never felt such a surge of pure joy as when holding that tiny sleeping bundle. If I had any remaining doubts about my decision, I know now it was the right one.

His decision? What decision? Had he returned to her mother because she was pregnant?

Brit raced ahead, but after that the journals resumed their terse style briefly describing his daily life at the university. Only now she found references to herself on almost every page. Her first word, her first tooth, her first steps were all documented. How could she have felt that he was never there? Perusing his diary entries, she realized that her father had been aware of every important moment in her life. Reading his thoughts, Brit had no doubt that her father loved her. That she was important to him. This, at least, was true.

She took the collection of small notebooks off the shelf and walked through to her room with them. She would start reading them tonight and would take them back to Wellesley to finish them there. They were a window into her father's mind. Perhaps, even though the period of his life when he was on Corfu was missing, the rest would give her some insight into those missing months. Into the shocking disclosures of his letter.

By the end of the week, all that was left to deal with was a closet with a few dress suits he wore on those rare occasions in his life when one was necessary, and the small chest of drawers holding his more common working clothes, jeans, khaki shorts, field jackets and vests with multiple pockets. Methodically, Brit checked the pockets of each garment before folding it and placing it in a box she would later take to the Goodwill.

The last piece she found in the bottom drawer was his oldest vest, faded and so worn she decided it should just be discarded.

Then she thought, no, she'd keep this one. It was his favorite vest. She'd wear it to remind her of him and of the wonderful times they had the two summers when he took her with him to work at the dig on Crete.

Mechanically she started going through the pockets as she had for each item.

There was something in the right breast pocket. She reached in and pulled out a small antique coin with

the goddess Athena on one side and the Athenian Owl, the age-old symbol of wisdom, on the other. When she was fifteen she'd found it in a shop in Athens and had insisted on buying it for him for his birthday. He had told her he would carry it always. He had been true to his word.

Brit slumped to the floor, grasping the small coin and realized that tears were streaming down her face. She hadn't cried when the doctor told her he was gone or when she scattered her father's ashes. She had been unable to cry as she went through his papers and books or cleared out all his clothing. Now she couldn't stop crying. She cried for her mother who was only a distant memory, for her father who she now suspected had chosen the half-life of a loveless marriage because of her and she cried for her own empty life.

At thirty-two, after one stupid, senseless love affair, she had no one. The last person in her life she had loved and been loved by unconditionally was gone. Brit was alone, and finally she admitted to herself that she was desperately unhappy. Everything she believed seemed to be exposed as fiction.

What had her father said in his letter? That he had sensed her unhappiness? That she should go to Corfu?

She dried her tears on her shirt sleeve. What nonsense, she thought. She couldn't take off for some Greek island simply because life wasn't all she had hoped for.

She took a shuddering breath as her mind raced on. She did have a year's leave from Wellesley beginning in September. Her request for sabbatical leave stated she would stay in Boston and work on her novel, but why shouldn't she go to Corfu? She could write there as well as anywhere.

As she sat on the floor in her father's bedroom, surrounded by the meager remains of his life, Brit made her decision. She vowed not to let her own life slip through her fingers. She would go to Corfu, open the villa and stay there. Perhaps she could find her way to that elusive happiness referred to in her father's letter and, if it was not to be found, at least she could piece together something of what his life there had been.

Who was Maria Calbrese? How had her father met her? Had he gone back to find her after Brit's mother died? Brit had a dawning sense that to live her own life free of shadows she must trace the path of her father's past.

The decision to go to Corfu energized Brit. She went through the rest of the Palo Alto house, emptying drawers and closets of all remaining personal items. Then she arranged for storage of her father's MG. She could have sold it for quite a good price, but somehow, she couldn't bring herself to part with it.

On August thirtieth she turned the keys to the house over to the family who would be renting it for the next year, and went to the airport to catch a flight back to Boston. She had to notify her department head about her change of sabbatical plans and do something about subletting her apartment, then she'd be off to Corfu, for better or worse.