

To my former co-workers:

Thanks for giving me
plenty of grist for the mill!

Pisces Itinerary

14-Day Repositioning Cruise
From Southampton to Fort Lauderdale

<i>Date</i>	<i>Day</i>	<i>Port of Call</i>	<i>Arrival</i>	<i>Departure</i>
31-Oct	Sat	Southampton, England		5:00 PM
1-Nov	Sun	Paris/Le Havre, France	7:00 AM	8:00 PM
2-Nov	Mon	<i>At Sea</i>		
3-Nov	Tues	Vigo, Spain	10:00 AM	5:00 PM
4-Nov	Wed	Lisbon, Portugal	8:00 AM	5:00 PM
5-Nov	Thu	<i>At Sea</i>		
6-Nov	Fri	Ponta Delgado, Azores	10:00 AM	6:00 PM
7-Nov	Sat	<i>At Sea</i>		
8-Nov	Sun	<i>At Sea</i>		
9-Nov	Mon	<i>At Sea</i>		
10-Nov	Tues	<i>At Sea</i>		
11-Nov	Wed	West End, Bermuda	8:00 AM	4:00 PM
12-Nov	Thu	<i>At Sea</i>		
13-Nov	Fri	<i>At Sea</i>		
14-Nov	Sat	Fort Lauderdale, Florida	7:00 AM	

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PROLOGUE



**Thursday Morning
29th of October
11:27 AM GMT**

“There they are,” Alec pointed. “My parents are standing in front of Costa Coffee.”

Paige too excited to respond to her husband rushed ahead to embrace her father-in-law. Alec was steps behind her, toting a baggage trolley piled high with suitcases of different sizes. While Paige was hugging James DunBarton, Alec gently hugged his mother, Anne, who was leaning heavily on a wooden cane.

After giving Anne a kiss on her wrinkled cheek, Paige asked, “Are you still having trouble getting around on your new hip?”

Anne frowned. “I’m doing much better. I just don’t feel safe in this airport. There are too many people jostling each other and not watching where they’re going.” Pausing to give a scathing look at a young man, texting a message on his mobile device, she added, “What in the world could be so important. It’s shameful.”

James winked at his son congenially. "Your mother shouldn't need her cane once we leave the terminal. The car is parked nearby. Follow me."

On the way out, James asked Paige and Alec about their flight from Miami to London. Alec conveyed with an easy laugh that the trip went smoothly, and they were able to catch a few hours of sleep.

Smiling, Paige added, "When the plane landed, we had to separate at border control. It's a good thing that my Scottish husband was able to find his American wife in baggage reclaim, or you'd be going to the New Forest without me."

James directed the others to his rented car that was parked in the short-stay lot. Alec had some difficulty finding a place to stack their luggage. Alec's parents had taken up most of the boot with their numerous bags. The remaining suitcases were placed on the backseat between Paige and Anne.

Alec, in the front passenger seat, glanced back at his crumpled-up wife with a grin. "Don't worry, Lass. My father will soon have us on the road, and it will take only take an hour and a half to get to Lymington."

Once out of Heathrow's car park and on the M3 to Southampton, James heaved a sigh of relief. "We're on our way. At junction 13, we need to merge onto the M27 and then head south past Lyndhurst."

As he changed lanes, James remarked to Alec, "Thanks again for inviting us to your awards ceremony and, of course, on the cruise. It's going to be grand. I understand that Flagship Cruise Line is going to honor you along with its top sales' personnel from New York and London."

Paige, as the cruise consultant on the Pegasus, responded, "I wouldn't get too excited about meeting our Personal Sales Associates. I know they work hard to generate revenue for the company, but I've found them quite ruthless. They can be an aggressive bunch with dollar signs instead of hearts. I hope we don't run into them on the cruise."

Gazing at the fallen brown and gold leaves beside the road, Paige added, "I'm really looking forward to visiting Paris and some of the other ports of call in Europe."

Anne, who had been silent, perked up and revealed, "I plan to relax at the pool and just watch the world go by."

Not sure that he should bring up the topic, Alec cleared his throat. "Since I wrote you last ..., I found out that the cruise is going to feature movies and music from the '60's. Occasionally, a band might perform rock tunes on the Lido Deck."

There was a pause before Anne, an extremely well-bread English woman, cursed, "Bloody Hell!"

As the car turned onto the wide, tree-lined drive in front of Flagship Cruise Line's Sea View Resort, Alec whistled. Instead of seeing some modern monstrosity, Alec was thrilled to behold an elegant country home with ivy climbing up the sides of the three-story estate.

James pulled up to the entrance and signaled a porter to collect their luggage. While Anne and James stayed behind with the car, Alec escorted Paige to the lobby. In the reception area, Alec found the earth-tone colors and floral arrangements welcoming. Transferring his gaze to Paige, Alec winked. "I hope our bedroom is equally inviting. We're still newlyweds and"

Alec stopped in the middle of his sentence to listen to a guest at the front desk. With a slight British accent, she declared, "I just checked in—Clarice Gardner. The room you gave me is *not* suitable. I want one facing north and looks out upon the woodland. I require a tranquil place to meditate. Can you take care of it for me?"

While an elderly receptionist saw to her needs, Alec scrutinized her appearance. She was not only beautiful, but also very seductive looking. Her body was sleek and, when she moved her lithe limbs, she looked like a feline stretching, totally at ease with herself and in control of her environment.

It was not until she turned around and eyed Alec that his jaw literally dropped open. With a cryptic smile playing upon her lips

and her green eyes glinting with feral delight, she tossed her mane of dark brown hair and set off for the grand staircase.

Alec was told to close his mouth and go up to the next receptionist who had called him to her desk three times. Just as he was showing the woman his paperwork, James joined Alec. Together, the two men registered and were given information about the upcoming events scheduled for the employees of FCL and their guests. Ready to see their rooms and rest awhile, the DunBartons headed to their adjoining suites.

The accommodations met Alec's expectations. The walls were covered with beige wallpaper, and the drapes and bedspread were cut from the same dusty rose and evergreen-colored chintz material. The polished cherry wood furniture and overstuffed fabric chairs were not overpowering. Each piece was not only functional but also elegant.

Paige called Alec from one of the two over-sized windows. "We're facing the front lawn. It's so lovely, and the sun is finally out. I was afraid that it was going to be overcast all day."

Moving behind her, Alec slipped his arms around his wife's waist and whispered in her ear. "Let's try out our bed first and then go for a drive in the New Forest."

Before Paige could answer, a knock sounded at their door. While Alec helped the porter bring in their luggage, Paige took the opportunity to pop into the bathroom to wash away the dirt and grime from their overseas travel.

When she emerged fifteen minutes later, wrapped in a soft bath towel, Alec was stretched out on the bed. His eyes, heavy with sleep, watched her a moment as she unpacked their small suitcase containing clothes for their two-day stay at the Sea View Resort and Spa.