



Spying the Alcove



Laura
Tolomei

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By

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Chapter One

The sun shone brightly over the Selimos plain, coloring the ruins and making the distant Mediterranean sparkle. Like golden bits of straw, the blue water glistened at every wave, the image fuzzy under the glare as sea and sky melted into one at the far horizon.

Today's the hottest one so far, Valerio thought, wiping the sweat from his brow. *At this rate, we won't survive June.* He stopped digging to take his glasses off and wipe them dry. Placing them back on, he gazed at the ruins lying all around him, the ancient stones carelessly scattered on the plain or neatly piled in mounds at the building's foundations.

Not much remained standing of the once proud city of Selimos, destroyed twice by a spiteful fate disguised around 400 BC as Carthage, then in 250 BC as Rome. Named after the celery plant, its official symbol, Selimos had held twenty-five thousand people at the height of its prosperity.

Valerio knew all the history, but somehow it

became irrelevant whenever he looked at Selimos's breathtaking views, which gave the place a feeling of being out of the world, closer to the gods than to humans. *Hardly a casual effect*, Valerio considered, perfectly aware of the powerful connection to the divine that pervaded the entire area. Standing on the city's farthest western end, the roaring sea at his feet, there was no doubt in his mind the founders had followed the Greek tradition of selecting their locations based on how holy the place felt. *And this is as holy as it gets*, he mused, taking in one single glance the blue sky, the yellow sun, the blue-green sea, the sandy soil with its brown stones and the green hills at the back. *Maybe it also explains its doom, certainly the work of a vicious god, jealous of its beauty.*

Destiny had tied Selimos to Segesta, its long time enemy, which it had tried to defeat repeatedly, never actually succeeding. Eventually, this blind obsession had cost the celery city its integrity. As history taught, its first destruction was the result of an allegiance switch during the disastrous Greek military campaign in Sicily. As an independent city, Selimos had moved against Segesta, believing its Athenian ally would never spare any resource to save it from a destructive assault. But the ill winds of war had caused Segesta to switch sides and its new patron, the mighty Carthage, destroyed Selimos instead,

killing sixteen out of the twenty-five thousand inhabitants.

Rebuilt in later times, the city thrived again, even if it never reached its previous heights, until war between Carthage and Rome sealed its fate forever. After Rome's victory in the second Punic war, Selimos suffered destruction for the second and last time.

Quite a short, violent history for such beautiful settlement, Valerio reflected. Eventually though, destiny had paid its debt to Selimos. Today it was the largest archeological site of Europe, a part of humanity's treasures. Located in Sicily's southwestern border, set on top of a hill overlooking the Mediterranean Sea, Selimos lay in the fertile valley of two rivers, surrounded in the south and west by water while green plains embraced its northern side. The city had a linear design with a complex structure made of temples, sanctuaries and a necropolis, all protected by an impressive set of defensive walls. Archeology had also uncovered many private homes, which testified to a rich city flourishing on trade and agriculture. Too bad, the only building still standing was Temple E, dedicated to Hera according to some theories. The rest of what must have been Selimos's architectural magnificence was just rubble as if the city had suffered a major earthquake, its ruins resembling the pieces of a

giant puzzle designed for an unknown god's amusement.

The European Community had taken a great interest in the recovery of its ancient roots, financially backing many digging ventures, one of which justified Valerio's hard labor under the glaring sun, trying to reconstruct the history of the family living in one of the city's largest houses. Thanks to his pet project, Rome's University had won European funding to study Selimos's people. Naturally, its spiritual father—but mostly the best-qualified man for the job—Valerio Rossi had complete charge of the fieldwork. A brilliant mind, an expert in ancient Greek as well as Roman history, but mostly one of the youngest professors on staff, Valerio had gladly accepted the commission, enthusiastic about the archeological site and the chance to get away from Rome. Lately, things had become too complicated for his tastes, too many women requiring his undivided attention, suffocating him with an unwanted pressure he had been only too happy to escape.

A glint in the dust caught his eye, making him forget the mess he had left behind in Rome. Bending on his knees, he picked up a gold bracelet, cleaning it carefully. This particular site seemed filled with many precious artifacts, a probable indication to the family's noble origin, judging also by the size of the house. Of course, no

walls stood, but the room's outlines were clearly visible, though buried under dust and debris. He would need to put it down on his report to the University –

“Hey, Prof, look what I found,” a voice interrupted his thoughts.

The Professor raised his head and smiled at the young man coming his way. “Yes, Andrea, what is it?”

Though funding had been limited, his work required at least two people. When the University had asked him whom he would bring along, he had had no doubt.

His assistant raced to his side. “Here, Prof,” he handed a terracotta object, “look what I found and it's miraculously whole.”

Indeed, it was a miracle, Valerio thought. Taking the object from his assistant, a strong electrical current cursed through him the second he touched the warm stone. *Andrea's fault no doubt*, the Professor reasoned, shaking his head. The young man had always struck him as being magnetically charged, maybe because of his looks, quite handsome for a man if Valerio was any judge. True, he seldom noticed outward appearances, focusing instead on the inner worth, but the sparkling green eyes, blondish hair and tall slim body made more than one woman's head turn around.

When he had first seen the young man as a student, Valerio had been a lowly assistant professor, struggling with a meager pay, not nearly enough to cover the enormous amount of work he had to handle. The laughing green gaze had caught his attention from the start, its mocking challenge to the world an irresistible attraction. If that were not enough, Andrea's age set him apart, too, for he was clearly older than most of his college mates. Perhaps the Sicilian born had indeed left his hometown in a hurry to escape a heart-wrenching past as malicious gossip claimed, but the explanation lacked any foundation. Whatever the reasons, the blondish man was definitely unique, though Valerio had waited for his academic results before expressing an opinion. In spite of his good looks, Andrea had studied hard, displaying intelligence above average, very interested about Roman history in particular.

When Valerio had finally become a full-fledged Professor, at the startling age of forty-two, he had looked around for a suitable assistant, hardly surprised to see Andrea's application and more than happy to accept it.

"This is amazing," Valerio agreed, looking at the artifact. It was a terracotta medallion, a household knick-knack, judging from its small size. He brushed off the last soil residues, thinking

it was another of the innumerable bits and pieces they had already uncovered. But the surprising picture on it stopped him cold. Looking closely, Valerio almost blushed for it depicted a man and a woman making love on a triclinium, the Roman laid-back couch used during official meals. The two of them lay side by side. The man behind the woman held her right leg high in the air while his cock, clearly visible, was halfway inside her vagina. The details were remarkable, both sexes finely designed, the faces showing the pleasure they must have felt in real life.

"What do you think?" Andrea asked. "Isn't it incredible?"

"What's incredible is that it's still whole after all these years and the..." He gestured at the ruins.

"Yeah, it survived the city's destruction apparently. Do you think it belonged to this family?" Andrea looked at the carving again. "Maybe she was the lady of the house."

"Quite a lady," Valerio grinned, thinking he would have liked to be the man behind her.

"Do you think that's her husband?" Andrea enquired.

Eyes glued to it, the Professor kept staring as if the medallion had the power to speak. "Somehow, I don't think so," he said at last, his index tracing the carving. "Why would a husband have something like this done for his wife?"

"Maybe she was dead and he wanted to remember her," his assistant offered.

Somehow, the explanation did not sound right. "Could be," he said tentatively, "but the passion depicted here seems more fitting to —"

"A lover," Andrea concluded as if the thought had struck him, too.

Valerio nodded. "But what is a Roman artifact doing here?" he asked to no one in particular, knowing Romans had never settled the city, their only contribution a destructive one.

"Perhaps a soldier lost it during the battle," Andrea suggested.

"Must have been her lover."

"Yeah. Or he carried it when he died here."

"Either way, it doesn't tell us who they were."

"Actually, it does have a clue," the blondish man objected, "if you look at the back."

Carefully, the Professor turned it around, peering at the smooth stone. "Hey, you're right!" he exclaimed excitedly. "There's a name engraved."

"Yeah, Lidia."

"Lidia?" Valerio studied the writing before agreeing with his assistant. "It's probably her praenomen," he concluded.

"Yeah. Too bad, we don't know much about this family."

"If we keep digging, we might uncover more,

perhaps even the clues to their nomen."

Andrea raised his head. The sun was setting, its red globe about to plunge into the Mediterranean. "Perhaps we will tomorrow," he suggested, his gaze obviously caught by the beauty of the city's red-streaked ruins next to a sea prey to a raging fire.

Valerio turned to look at the beautiful setting, too. The day had flown by so fast, he had hardly been aware of time's passing. Then again, the days in April were still short, ending too quickly for his busy schedule. "All right," he agreed, "I guess we're through for today."

Absentmindedly, he closed his palm around the medallion, feeling an intense heat travel up his arm. Puzzled, he looked at it again, wondering if it was his imagination playing tricks. *But maybe not*, he thought, having the impression the artifact called him as if it wanted to tell him something important. *Impossible!* he scoffed, shaking his head free from dangerous delusions. "I'll take this along," he announced, wrapping it in thick paper layers before pocketing it. Then he picked up the first of his tools, packing it carefully inside his backpack.

In silence, Andrea followed his example and they hurried to clear the area from the annoying human presence. Luckily, authorities kept the site closed to visitors in order to give them privacy

during their work. Not that Selimos had ever a great affluence. The site did not have the advantage of adequate publicity so people seldom came, not even during high season while vacationing at the local sea resorts.

Walking slowly, the two archeologists headed out, passing Hera's Temple on the hill's eastern side, quickly reaching Valerio's rundown car. One more minute and they left the digging site for the day.

Chapter Two

They stayed at a quaint hotel near Marinella of Selimunte's beach. As a rule, it would have been too expensive for the project's meager funding, but being in low season, the hotel had been willing to help their archeological effort. After much haggling, Valerio had managed to get a very cheap price for two single rooms with breakfast and dinner included. The arrangement worked perfectly, especially since they were the hotel's only guests, receiving a great treatment for the little money they paid. *Well...maybe not always*, Valerio mused dejectedly, turning the menu around one more time.

"So will it be tuna or swordfish tonight?" Andrea mocked, his green eyes twinkling in amusement.

The restaurant had the advantage of a spacious balcony overlooking the sea and they always sat outside, enjoying the sound of the steady tide as they ate.

"I swear my body's developing gills because of this forced diet. When this is over, I don't want to see fish for the rest of my life, not even in a picture."

The main...no, the only diet Marinella of Selimunte seemed to follow was one of tuna and swordfish. They had eaten it fried, broiled, baked, grilled, raw...every way short of boiled. Even pasta did not escape this tragic destiny save the rare instances it had plain red sauce or, if very lucky, a delicious combination of eggplant, tomato and tasty goat cheese. But luck did not visit often.

"Come on, Prof," Andrea said lightly. "This food is good for us. I've already lost three kilos since we got here." He paused to gulp down the chilled white wine. "At least the wine's excellent, though I'm sure Paolo won't like me so skinny."

Valerio looked absentmindedly at Andrea's lean figure. "Paolo?"

"Yeah, my latest boyfriend. Come on, Prof, I must have already told you about him."

The Professor knew Andrea's tastes ran in one precise direction, still considered an unconventional one in twenty-first century Italy. To be fair, the news had not surprised him, just added to the young man's uniqueness, and he had accepted it easily enough when Andrea had first told him.

"I know the assistant's salary is ridiculous, certainly inadequate to the amount of work done." He had shaken his head, looking at his tiny and cluttered office. "I know it all too well." He had grinned. The newly appointed Professor had not been satisfied with his former colleagues, young men posing as assistants without any great love for the subject or the position. And even if the salary did not warrant a heartfelt commitment, he expected something more from his replacement.

Andrea's quick green gaze had smiled, too. "I guess I'll just have to postpone my plans for becoming rich a little more."

"A lot more, if you accept this job," Valerio mused.

"Especially since you're too young to give me a shot at that chair of yours any time soon," Andrea had teased.

"Right." The Professor knew he had been lucky. The academic system was one of the toughest careers, an assistant having to spend countless years with a miserable pay, hoping and praying that a Professor retired, went away or whatever other improbable situation in order to leave an open position. Even then, the job was not his by right. A nationwide exam offered the position to all those qualified to apply for it, but only those who scored the highest obtained it.

For Valerio, things had happened very fast. First, the head of the Ancient History faculty had died of a heart attack. Second, at the exam that followed, Valerio achieved the top score so he became the youngest

Professor on staff. "I don't think you'd have my same luck," he continued, "at least I hope not for my sake."

"Don't worry, Professor," Andrea assured. "I wouldn't want anything to happen to you."

"Thanks," Valerio grinned. Before continuing, he shuffled some papers on his desk. "All right, if you accept to be my official assistant, I'll send your name to the employment department."

"Before you do, Professor – "

"Call me Valerio, please." In his mind, the age difference between them did not warrant using the formal address, an Italian deferential way to speak to strangers, casual acquaintances or older people.

"All right...Valerio. I know you've interviewed other candidates for this position so there's just one thing I'd like you to know before you make a choice." He paused, then took a deep breath. "I'm gay."

Valerio had not even flinched. "What does that have to do with your future job?" He did not care about people's sexual preferences, particularly in a business relationship. Everyone was entitled to their freedom, he had always believed, especially as far as sex was concerned. "You're a dedicated young man, with a passion for Roman history. You graduated at the top of your class, with good reason. You have a brilliant, analytical mind, focused on studying and researching, which are an assistant's main tasks. As far as I'm concerned, I don't need to know anything more about you. Your personal life is your business and yours alone. It makes no difference to me who you like or

don't like in bed, as long as you can carry out your job to the best of your abilities."

* * * *

"Thanks, Prof...Valerio, but telling you outright makes a difference...a very big difference to me because – " Andrea stopped, memories rushing back. *"I don't want to repeat past mistakes."*

He had tried forgetting his painful days in Syracuse. His native city had been the best place to live until he had discovered the truth about himself, though too late to stop the world from crashing down on him.

His life had followed the usual pattern and his engagement to Sofia, a classical Sicilian dark beauty, was as much in line with traditions as his University enrollment. Too bad, he had not considered stray variables, like his fellow student, Carmelo. Mostly, Andrea had not been able to ignore the young man's passionate gaze that followed him around wherever he turned. At first, he had only felt annoyed by the constant attention, his mind using Sofia as a shield to ward off the danger. But it had not prevented him from thinking about Carmelo more and more. Almost without realizing it, Andrea fell into the other man's allure, sticking to it as if it were a spider's web. When awareness finally hit him, it was already too late, his love a powerful emotion he could not ignore anymore.

To be fair, the feeling had not seemed right, but when Carmelo had grabbed his hard cock during an

archeological fieldtrip, Andrea's few doubts had melted like ice under the hot sun. With an excuse, the dark Sicilian had convinced Andrea to abandon the group, taking a different route away from the Greek theatre. In a small clearing, well protected by the ruins, his friend had pressed his hand on Andrea's crotch, finding him hard.

"I knew you wanted it," he mumbled, quickly unzipping his pants.

Andrea had no time to protest. The shot of pleasure from Carmelo's skillful touch first, then the warmth of his mouth enveloping the bulging head, silenced all remonstrations. The sensation had felt exquisite, more so since he had held off from Sofia, claiming to follow the Catholic rule that did not allow sex before marriage. It was an excuse and Andrea knew it well, but the truth was far worse. His cock had absolutely no reaction to his future bride. In spite of her obvious seductive attempts, not a stir, not a twitch, moved his usually demanding master, not even when she wore a bikini. As a matter of fact, no woman really excited him and his few sexual experiences had been tragic failures at best.

With Carmelo, instead, he had felt hard the moment he met him. Something about the dark-haired and blue-eyed man turned him on irresistibly. But what will my family think? How can I ruin their lives like this? With a bitter struggle, he had repressed the yearnings, spending countless hours to convince himself they were just a mind's trick, devil's temptation, a passing fancy that would end as soon as he married Sofia. All wasted

effort, he finally realized, surrendering to his friend's passion. With his cock securely lodged in the other man's mouth, he knew exactly where he stood.

Carmelo had sucked him hard, his tongue wrapped lavishly around the thick length, trying to swallow the bulging head pressing on his cheek. Hips pushing forward, Andrea had wanted to plunge deeper while savoring the avid tongue's vigorous laps on the stem. The man's hands worked as fast as the tongue, a steady slide that drove Andrea crazy and made him spill his guts into the hungry mouth.

Not at all surprised, Carmelo had not let go of the limp organ, nursing it back to a healthy stand, thanks to his tongue curl as well as the furious sucks almost to his throat. In a matter of minutes, Andrea was ready to start everything over again.

"Stick it in my ass," Carmelo had ordered, leaning against a stone pillar and pushing out his naked butt.

Excited by the risky situation, Andrea had pumped his throbbing cock in the inviting hole, shoving inside effortlessly. His friend groaned, bending his back further down to fit more of Andrea's stone shaft. With other forceful shoves, he penetrated to the hilt, his thick and long length firmly accommodated into Carmelo's narrow space. Moving faster with each thrust, Andrea had pumped harder, pushing and pulling in a frenzied tempo, until his senses shattered into a million pieces.

Yes, Andrea remembered all too clearly that first time, a pleasure he would soon regret as his affair with Carmelo deepened. The man taught him the exquisite

delights of male sex, how to give and receive with equal pleasure, drowning in sensual passions while refusing to face reality. The proper thing to do would have been to break off his engagement to Sofia, come out clean with his family and move in with his lover. These choices though, seemed foreclosed to the first-born male of the wealthy Di Natale family, an esteemed member of a culture that did not contemplate or allow gays, much less accepted them.

Feeling powerless to change the situation, Andrea had dragged his life, divided between his new lover and his old fiancée until Carmelo had made the choice for him. Obviously tired of having to share his time with a woman, he had spilled everything about their affair to Sofia. Predictably, the betrayed party had retorted with a scandal, which dragged Andrea's family name in dirt. His father and mother had not wanted to talk to him anymore, refusing to listen to anything he had to say on the subject, throwing him out in the streets and leaving him out in the cold.

Only his grandmother had been sympathetic. "Andrea, dear grandson," she had said, embracing him tightly, "I don't care about what you've done. I understand your way to love might be...unconventional." Taking a deep breath, she had gazed lovingly at his face. "Of course, I can't approve it, but I love you far too much to let this come between us." She had pulled back. "However, you can't stay here. You know that, don't you?"

He had nodded, painful tears lumping at the back of

his throat.

"Come on, dear grandson, get a grip on yourself. You're a man now and have to act as one. Go anywhere you want, but know that I'll provide for your living expenses, at least until you find a job." She handed him a check. "When this is finished, just call me and I'll send more over." She had hugged him again. "I love you, Andrea," she had repeated fiercely, "and I'm very sorry we have to part this way." She had pulled back. "Please go now while I still have the strength to bear it."

He had traveled around Italy a bit, a broken man, distrusting men and women alike. Unfortunately, his handsome face never ceased to attract attention so offers were plentiful from both sides, even if he steered clear of all. Reaching Rome, he had decided to pick up his interrupted University career, though his age was way above the average. Mostly, he wanted to pursue his first love, ancient history, with the passion he felt he had lost forever when it came to humans. People had no meaning for him anymore, except on a purely physical level.

Settling in Rome, he had discovered he could not live without sex, no matter how hard he tried. So he had gone on a rollercoaster ride with men of different ages and builds, not particularly choosy about his lovers since they had only to provide a stiff cock to release his tensions. For any other purpose, Andrea thought them inadequate. No heartfelt confession or deep sharing ever passed his lips because betrayal lurked around every

corner. And he had no wish to repeat the worst experience of his life. Unsurprisingly, no relationship ever lasted long enough for that to happen, its time running out the minute the sexual novelty lost its appeal.

But it was quite acceptable. In fact, it worked far better than Andrea expected, helping him find a balance—however fragile it might prove to be—that allowed him finally to confront his inclinations like he had never dared to do in Sicily.

Maybe the Prof had something to do with it, too, he mused, looking at the fine man sitting in front of him at the restaurant overlooking the sea.

Valerio was not a beauty, Andrea had thought the first time he had seen him. Still, he liked him far more than he cared to admit. His open attitude, so unusual for Italian standards, probably had much to do with it. Physically, he fit the Professor's type to a tee. Lanky with elongated limbs and face, dark brown hair down to his shoulders and a stylish beard, he hid his eyes behind thick glasses. Andrea had liked his philosopher's look from the start, soon discovering the appeal of the soft hazel hue behind the lenses, its undefined shade between brown and green was utterly fascinating.

Maybe it was the reason Andrea had such a different attitude with him, completely unlike the

standoffish one he reserved people in general. Ever since the interview, it had come natural to open his soul to what was still a stranger, despite his fierce emotional isolation. Trust remained a big issue with him, the broken pieces of his shattered faith still hurting like hell. But somehow, Valerio had called for his confidence. Hungry for the chance, Andrea had poured his heart out, telling him about past and present misbehaviors, firmly convinced the Professor would never betray him. Exactly where the conviction came from, he had no idea. He trusted Valerio implicitly, in spite—or *maybe because*—of his negative experience. In time, the feeling had grown as he shared more of himself than he dared with anyone else. In fact, this relationship, which should have been work oriented alone, quickly shifted to a personal level, closely resembling the intimate friendships he used to entertain in Sicily.

Andrea cleared his throat. “Paolo’s a new entry I just met at the University.”

“A student?” Valerio inquired.

The assistant shook his head. “No, he’s a friend of a student. He came by to pick up info about the thesis and he found me.”

Andrea had noticed the cute young man jotting down the visiting hours pinned to his door. “May I help you?” he had asked, wondering why the man was there.

He looked too old to be a student, his confident air betraying an age closer to him than to the average student.

"Maybe you can." Paolo had flashed a pair of startling blue eyes, the same color as Carmelo's, and Andrea had lost grip on reality. With only one thing in mind, he had given Paolo all the information his friend required, playing the suave Professor part. Quite casually, he had dropped the hint he was done for the day, inviting the young man to join him for a drink. From the empty bar to Andrea's bedroom, it had taken less time and effort than expected.

Inside the assistant's apartment, they tumbled on the bed in different positions, their mouths avidly working on the hard cocks that demanded attention. Sucking vigorously, Andrea trapped Paolo's twitching dick, sometimes opposing it to avoid suffocation. Initially curled around the bulging head to hold it tight, his tongue lapped down to the base before running straight to the top. Lying on his back, he enhanced the movement, sliding his head up to get the hard shaft deeper just as Paolo pushed it down while holding Andrea's cock captive in his mouth. Feeling more pleasure than he could stand, the assistant pulled his mouth back as the scorching heat from the lavish lapping traveled in fiery rods through his body, almost causing a complete spill ahead of time. "Wait," he begged hoarsely, stopping Paolo's mouth and shifting position.

Turning around, they continued their oral sex until

Paolo trapped Andrea under him, leaning heavily on his buttocks to keep him down. Despite the attempts to break free, Andrea could not stop Paolo from using his firm roundness as a playground, either sinking his teeth into the tempting flesh or teasing the narrow hole with long, forceful licks. Understanding the new game, Andrea stopped struggling, surrendering to Paolo's interested explorations.

Switching to wet fingertips, Paolo traced the outer rim of the hidden hole, feeding Andrea's burning desire. The assistant groaned, pushing his ass further up, willing to sacrifice it to Paolo's own hot excitement. Yet, for both men the torture seemed too sweet to end. Paolo bent again, his tongue replacing the finger's slow stirring. With a hard point, he licked the edges, then pushed inside the narrow opening and Andrea's flesh wrapped around it, sucking him down its depths. Paolo pulled back, then shoved forward, increasing the rhythm to match Andrea's swaying movements.

"Please, take me," Andrea begged, his nerves completely on fire.

Paolo obeyed. Aiming his cock at the narrow hole, he nudged the entrance to get inside. With relaxed muscles, Andrea surrounded the bulging head penetrating inside, sucking it down. After another groan, he raised himself on his hands and knees to accommodate the cock better. Adjusting to the change, Paolo first pulled back, then shoved forward, sliding the entire bulging head through. One more push and Paolo was firmly inside, held prisoner by the tight flesh that

wrapped around his thickness.

Sliding in, then out, he set the pace for their ride, Andrea soon following his movement, pushing back at every thrust until Paolo pulled out and tipped the assistant down on the bed, making him lie on his back. Grabbing his legs, he held them against his chest, raising the ass to meet his still hungry cock. His first shove penetrated almost to the hilt and they resumed their dance more vigorously than before.

Andrea lost track of time as the afternoon turned into evening while twisting in and out of his bed. And it did not end as a one-night stand, rather it was the beginning of a new affair, which he could not wait to share with Valerio.

* * * *

Dinner passed talking about Paolo. Valerio listened, as he had learned to do, paying more attention to the great emptiness inside Andrea, which nothing seemed to fill, rather than the words that tried to hide it. His heart had gone out to the young man when he had learned about his tale of love and betrayal in a seemingly medieval Sicily. From that moment on, he had been Andrea's ears, seldom talking about his own life because there usually was no time after the detailed recaps. And Paolo was just the latest of a long series of similar stories.

The Professor yawned. After an entire day's

hard work, he felt more tired than he cared to admit. "Would you be upset if I went to bed?" he asked, yawning again loudly.

"I'm sorry, Prof. I think I bored the hell out of you tonight with all my blabbing about Paolo."

"Oh no," Valerio shook his head. "You have an interesting way to talk about people. It makes them come alive." He got up. "But tonight I'm really beat and I need to turn in. Please excuse me."

Andrea got up as well. "Sure, Prof, have a good night rest."

"Good night to you, too, Andrea."

With long strides, he went the short way that separated the dining room from his room, falling gladly into bed as soon as he got inside. *Tired, too tired that's how I feel.* Placing his glasses on the night table, he closed his eyes, invoking sleep, uncaring if he was still dressed. Yet, after only five minutes, he was as wide-awake as if he had slept twelve straight hours.

Annoyed, he turned on a side, trying to get fast asleep. But again, after only five minutes, he was staring at the wall next to the bed. Shifting on the other side, he felt a hard bulge, pressing at his side. With a start, he pulled up, his hand flying to the source of the annoyance and tracing the round, stiff object that, in the haste to get to dinner, he had forgotten inside his pocket.

Carefully, he took out the ancient medallion still folded in its protective paper, worried it may have ruined during his tossing and turning. He did not want to look at it again, simply place it where it would suffer no harm. Yet, in spite of his intentions, he slowly unwrapped the thin paper foils covering it. When it was free, Valerio felt like a magnetic attraction was pulling his gaze to the medallion's center and holding it prisoner. Unable to tear off his eyes, he had no choice but to look at the exquisite carving. This time, probably due to his tiredness, it seemed to come alive, the man actually moving on the triclinium, his cock sliding inside, then out of the woman's yielding pussy. She pushed back, her raised leg swaying along with the rest of her body.

Startled, Valerio pulled his head back and rubbed his eyes. He knew they played tricks without proper aids so he placed his glasses on his nose and peered at the picture again. Oddly enough, it still looked alive as if the man and woman were having sex in front of him. *Impossible*, his rational side scolded. *You're just too tired* – But before he could complete the thought, the voice started in his head and he could not hold back the sensual images any longer.

About the Author

Born 1965 in Rome Italy, I grew up in Lagos Nigeria then moved to Atlanta GA, to complete my studies. In Rome, I graduated in Political Science and now work in the import/export business.

I have always loved writing and started in college by working with Emory University's magazine The Phoenix. Since then, I have been writing and publishing in both Italian and English, specializing in various genres of erotica, mostly fantasy, sci-fi and paranormal, sometimes trespassing into the contemporary. Recently I published by eXtasy Books:

Roman Seduction, short story— gay, GBLT, ménage, series, romance, historical, adventure. 1st century AD, Egypt, sun, heat, passion and the army...can these ingredients shape the destiny of two Roman soldiers? Don't miss the sensually hot Trespassing prequel.

Slave for Sex, short story in eXtasy's Anthology Emerald Envisage.

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