

## An Attachment to Impermanent Things

Her beauty was obvious--- unadorned, natural, and unspoiled. She was dangerously outrageously beautiful, which sometimes offered a good deal of camouflage. Few suspected that she was quite bright, brilliant in fact. People, mostly men people, said things in her presence that they were certain she couldn't understand.

If they thought she had a vague understanding on a fundamental level, then they were equally certain that she couldn't quite comprehend all the complex subtleties of their conversations. She didn't challenge this view. She just smiled, nodded, and let the conversation drift harmlessly over her elegant head full of reddish curls— curls that were a high-priced composite of high and low lights, but how would they know. Her name was Shelley Doritidos. They sometimes wondered briefly about the origins of that name— chips? That is at the rare times when they thought about her in terms of being a person rather than a collection of particular physical attributes. She nodded and smiled, glanced upward with her sea-foam eyes, she cataloged and filed fact after fact for a future time when these facts might come together to her advantage. If this advantage didn't appear today or tomorrow, indeed there would certainly come a time. She would be prepared.

The two men who were most blissfully unaware were two co-workers with offices close by her reception desk. Two of the most unlikely men ever to be paired together. One, an overage former athlete who had possibly done nothing more athletic than raise a glass of single malt scotch to his lips, 40-year-old Glenfiddich maybe, in at least the last decade or so. He had a fine layer of straining flesh at his hand-tooled belt buckle to prove it. However, he did have a full head of thick wavy hair, beautifully

tailored suits, with manicured nails. Surely, that should count for something. His partner was younger and handsome, and he was most definitely proud of it. He glanced repeatedly into every reflective surface that came into view just to make certain that this fact hadn't changed during the preceding 10 minutes or so.

No one could tell you for certain as to what Shelley's job title was supposed to be. She sat at the reception area serenely seated in a classic Biedermeier chair behind a French oak desk. She blended in beautifully in the classic setting with the exception of her ebullient cascading hair that she dutifully attempted to constrain with a vintage pearl hair clip. Her pale grey flannel suit was fitted but not tight, and it offered the correct degree of elegance and business.

The business was rumored to be a sports agency, although there was very little in the outer offices to suggest the definition of which sports they represented, or the sports figures who were their clients. The work done here was primarily investments of the mythically out of proportion earnings of these athletes, most of whom, probably spent most their spare time hanging around clubs acting like the teenagers that most of them still were. In these offices, they were rarely seen. Only those who represented them came to talk to the men who invested and controlled most of the cash their naive clients earned.

Shelley's main job, most assumed, was to act as eye candy for representatives of representatives of clients as they strolled through on their way to meetings, or from meetings to lunch, or maybe just strolling through to maintain a façade of being both busy and important. On the rare occasion that an actual sports figure would happen through, he or she was viewed in the same way as the rare sighting of some exotic and slightly repellant zoo animal that had inadvertently wandered out of its cage.

The only person that had actual conversation with Shelley was Marty Ayres the IT person who worked part time at the agency while he completed his graduate studies in some abstract computer field involving lots of boring statistics and numbers. He wasn't given to long conversations with any of the guys, and they certainly weren't about to spend time with him. What did he know about real numbers—investments or money? Nothing, nada, zilch. However, he was good about explaining the basic irritations that were part and parcel of their I-pads, I-phones, and electronic trading systems. They didn't want to indulge in long conversations about these vexations. All they wanted was a quick fix. They wanted their e-mails, calendars, and conferences to be arranged with limited input from them. They were used to results—quick, painless, and profitable.

Marty didn't talk to Shelley much either. She did, at least, ask his opinion on whether an I-phone or an android might be better for her personal use. Would it be better for her to use Excel or Access to enter her data? Mostly, their conversations were that sort of thing—trivial without consequence. When she brought him a cup of coffee from the break room while he worked on a problem she had with saving data, he stammered his thanks, tripped, and slopped most of the contents on her printer.

Most of the men snickered behind Marty's back. They knew, of course, that no matter how many degrees he managed to drudge through, he wouldn't make one-tenth of what their clients made with, maybe, one year of heavily tutored college work. If they ever had a client graduate from college, God forbid, you know that kid had absolutely nothing going for him. No scouts looking for him in the draft. That kid was hardly ever on the scouting boards unless he had come on exceptionally strong in his senior year.

Marty was called in to update Shelley's spreadsheets. She had a great screen view of Cyprus Island. A spectacular view of the shoreline at Aphrodite Rock.

"Heard that these waves that hit that rock look like a pillar of water. Some people say that it looks human. Takes a human form, you know. I know it is really a sea stack caused by erosion but sounds good."

"You been there?"

"No, just heard that once. You?"

"Oh yes, I used to go there in summers. That was where my grandparents were from. They still lived there when I was a kid. I used to like to swim around the Aphrodite Rock. My goal was to swim around three times anti-clockwise."

Marty cocked his head sideways.

"The myth is that if you do that, you know, swim around three times anti-clockwise, you attain eternal beauty."

"So, did you do it?"

She laughed. He noticed a dimple in her left cheek that he hadn't noticed before. It broke the surface of her flawless face, and he somehow didn't doubt that she had.

"We better see how this money gets moved around on this computer before the trolls come around, don't you think? I hope to get back to Cyprus one day. Ayia Napa has great sandy beaches and really has the great night life, the lace and embroideries at Lefkara Village near the monastery at Stavrovouni are fantastic. You need to go there."

He shook his head. "I just know about the Bank of Cyprus. I have heard that it has market shares across all areas of the economy. Suppose some of the guys here would know about that part of it. Guess I would need to know something about how to find all

these wonderful tourist type places. I know that I would have to have someone with me to show me around.” Then a slow flush moved from the base of his throat slowly up his face. He stuttered a quick goodbye and practically ran down the hall.

She laughed. Deep and full. A laugh full of mystery.

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The next time Shelley saw Marty she needed to ask him about how virtual computer accounts worked. Seemed that she might have to work from home if they cut back on their staff in-house. Of course, the powers that be wanted her there to greet all the golden boys that came through reception. God knows they wouldn't want her wearing a mask, but she would probably ask to work from her apartment if she could.

She invited him to go across to the park, so they could be outside, keep a safe distance, and could talk freely. She picked up great burgers and fries from the carry out in the ground floor of the building. They ate and talked through her lunch break about computers, how to manage bank accounts online, how to manage virtual platform meetings. Marty opened up with the intelligence of her questions and the way in which she skillfully led him through all sorts of data related questions. Since lunch time was not nearly long enough to finish the discussion, they planned to meet for drinks and dinner at a Greek restaurant that she knew.

The dinner was wonderful. Marty was surprised that the owners and waitstaff all seemed to know and care about Shelley. Adrian, the owner, had a hearty laugh, a warm smile, and made Marty feel relaxed and comfortable. They drank Rakomelo which was a drink that combined honey and tsikoudia, Shelly told him, whatever that was. It was warm and sweet and after the second drink Marty became more and more relaxed. The

chicken and lamb dishes were great. Marty had never been focused on food that much, but Shelley ordered, and he ate. All he seemed to be aware of was the shell pink of her fingernails as they slid up and down on the stem of her wine glass. They talked and talked finally finishing their meal after midnight and taking in on to a conversation at her apartment.

The last thing he remembered her clearly saying was “You are going to love Cyprus.”

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They watched the waves roll toward gold purity of the beach. The turquoise waters crystal clear. The sky a deep cloudless blue.

“Is that supposed to be Aphrodite’s Rock? He pointed to the vertical column of rock in the distance.

“It is.”

She grabbed his hand and pulled him to his feet. This beach is too wonderful not to explore. Maybe we can find shells or stones to keep. You need a heart-shaped stone to keep.

“Why would I need that?”

“Oh, you know the other legend, a heart-shaped stone will aid one’s love life. Now that you, my wonderful computer genius, have moved all that money here, why not really enjoy it? Aid to one’s love life is always a bonus. She gave him a quick hip bump, grabbed his hand, and pulled him with her into the warm rich golden light.

