



*Lovers  
Never  
Lie*

Gael Morrison

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To my husband Ron  
and to our sons,  
Allen, Andrew, Peter and Alex  
with love and heartfelt gratitude



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# Chapter One



Damn! Where had *she* come from?

Andrew Moore snatched up his *Cubs* cap from the front seat of his car, settled it on his head and yanked it low over his eyes. A woman like *that* couldn't be involved in this. She was no more than a girl, for God's sake.

A gust of wind caught the woman's skirt as she paused at the foot of the steps, blowing it up around her thighs, the material a blue mist against the tan of her skin. She was all legs. A woman's legs, not a girl's.

Her hands swept down and forced her skirt tight against her body. Nice curves, though a little thin. Andrew sank deeper into his seat.

"Get a move on, lady," he muttered. "Collect your damn charity money, or whatever the hell it is you're doing here, and go."

Nobody would make the pick up with her standing on the front steps. And if they did, she'd get caught in the middle. Might even get hurt, as

Nancy had.

A too familiar sense of helplessness and rage washed over him at the thought of his wife. Resolutely, Andrew shut his mind on his memories.

The woman looked cold out in that breeze. Fooled by the sunny weather? Or simply an optimist? The way she clutched her sweater around her breasts... Fool! Don't look at her breasts! He had more important things to worry about than some under-dressed female out to catch a cold.

Andrew forced his gaze from the woman and watched a cat instead, as it streaked from bush to bush in the yard of a neighboring house. But when the cat slipped beneath a porch and disappeared, he slowly, reluctantly glanced back toward the steps. The woman was still there.

She lifted her hand, reached to press the buzzer. The wind riffled her straight brown hair and for an instant exposed the skin at the base of her neck. He could almost feel the shiver streak across her shoulders then shimmy down the rest of her body.

She pulled her sweater tighter and turned to look around. Her eyes—a dark brown—although why he was convinced of that from this distance he didn't know—met his, then swiftly snapped away again.

Her chest rose, then fell, and for a second time she rang the buzzer. This time the door opened so suddenly, someone must have been standing and

waiting on the other side. The woman stepped inside, the door slammed shut, and she was gone.

Andrew glowered at the small clock on the dashboard of his car ticking away the minutes while he sat and waited. He rolled his shoulders to ease his bunched, tight muscles. A lone sheet of newspaper fluttered along the surface of the grass and slammed against the steps where the woman had stood.

No sign of her coming out again. Andrew's jaw tensed. Watching her enter the house had been like watching a butterfly flutter into a spider's web. He didn't know what she was there for, but if she wasn't out in five minutes, he was going in after her.

Stacia Roberts hid her distaste as the dry, bony fingers of the man touched hers. The whole house felt dry, as desiccated as a body in a tomb. And it was hot, like a furnace compared to the chill outside. She could scarcely bear to follow the man into his study, where the heat, combined with the musty odor of ancient, overstuffed furniture and seldom dusted bookshelves, was stifling.

The man slipped behind the massive oak desk dominating the room. "Have a seat, Miss Roberts." He gestured towards the cracked leather chair in front of the desk.

Stacia lowered herself carefully, as the seams on the chair looked as though they might rip apart

at the slightest touch.

“So glad, Miss Roberts, that you answered my advertisement.” The man surveyed her from head to foot. “You look quite perfect for the job.”

“Thank-you, Mr., uh...”

He hesitated for an instant. “Stone,” he finally said.

“Mr. Stone,” Stacia echoed. “I didn’t realize there were any special requirements for the job.”

“No, no, nothing of the sort,” he replied. “I meant you look...reliable.”

She was reliable, all right. But not for much longer. Footloose and fancy free. That’s what she wanted. No obligations, no complications... no money.

Stacia sighed. Reliable meant getting this job and, with it, a ticket to Greece. She smothered another sigh. She could do reliable for a while longer.

“How big is the package you want me to take?” she asked.

He reached into the bottom drawer of his desk and pulled out a brown paper package. He pushed aside a framed picture of a younger, thinner, more fully-haired version of himself and a dark-haired woman standing before an old stone church and passed the package to Stacia.

Whatever was inside was soft. Clothing? Stacia wondered. She placed the package back on the desk and glanced at Mr. Stone, surprised.

“There’s a sweater in there,” he explained. “Mrs. Andropolous knit it for her husband’s daughter-in-law.”

“Her *husband’s* daughter-in-law?”

“She’s my client’s second wife.” He leaned towards her, spittle flecking the corner of his mouth.

Stacia drew back, the chair’s leather giving way obligingly.

“Wrapped in the sweater is Mr. Andropolous’s last will and testament,” Stone continued solemnly, “to be delivered only into the hands of his eldest son, Darius. Mr. Andropolous’s younger son is not happy about the new will. My client is afraid he’ll attempt to intercept it.” Mr. Stone stared sternly at Stacia. “You mustn’t let on to anyone that you have the parcel with you.”

Stacia frowned. “Wouldn’t it be safer just to mail it or file it in your office?”

“Of course it would.” He suddenly straightened, his movement bringing a protesting squeal from the wheels of his chair. “But there’s no telling Mr. Andropolous that. The old man doesn’t trust *any* public institutions—banks, the postal service—let alone a lawyer’s office.”

Stacia nodded. Grandfather Roberts had been the same. They had found stashes of money everywhere after he died, under his mattress, in a paint can in the garage, tacked to the back of a picture frame. His attorney had shaken his head in despair.

Grandfather Roberts had also insisted on hanging on to his own will. It had been days before they finally located it wrapped in plastic and tucked between two pot roasts in the freezer.

Mr. Stone placed an envelope on top of the package, and released it from his fingers slowly. "I think you'll find everything you need in here. Airline tickets, money, hotel reservations for your first few nights in Athens." His brow creased. "Mr. Andropolous's son is a very busy man, is often out of Greece on business. He intends to meet you at the hotel upon your arrival, but he may well be delayed."

"Don't worry, Mr. Stone." Stacia took the envelope and tucked it into her purse. Then she picked up the package. "I'll bring this to him safely." There, that had been said with more certainty than she actually felt.

The idea of foreign travel both attracted and terrified her. All the more reason to do it. *Safe* was not something she wanted anymore. She'd been safe too long.

Stacia stood and followed Stone back down the dusty hall, shook his brittle fingers one last time, then stepped out into the crisp spring morning.

The grey car was still parked two doors down. The driver must be asleep, he was sitting so still, his chin tucked into his chest and his hat pulled over his eyes. Strange place to sleep.

He had startled her earlier—staring at her like

that. She had, of course, not looked at him properly. Dangerous to do that in the city, her father had always said. Avert your gaze. Don't talk to strangers.

Stacia brushed away the moisture that had welled in her eyes. She'd always been impatient with her father's advice, had ignored it for the most part, but now he was gone, she missed it.

She straightened her shoulders and started down the steps. Her father might be right about Chicago, but in Greece she planned to indulge her natural inclination to look people in the eye. She intended to meet all sorts, talk to anyone she cared to. Excitement surged through her, and she quickly walked away.

No matter which way she juggled her suitcases, Stacia's arms felt as though they might snap in two. She had considered investing in a suitcase on wheels instead of making do with Grandmother Roberts' heavy old case, but every dollar saved would lengthen her stay in Greece.

With a sigh, she squeezed her carry-on case more tightly against her body, until suddenly it slipped from beneath her arm. She lunged for it and the suitcase in her other hand clattered to the floor. It sprang open, the old metal latches not up to the strain.

Cotton dresses, shorts and tops, lingerie and bathing suits cascaded forth in a kaleidoscope of

purple, pink and turquoise, ending in a jumbled heap on the floor.

Her new silk panties slid across the linoleum and stopped against solid brown shoe leather.

A man's shoe.

Heat swept Stacia's cheeks. Without looking up, she leaned over the precariously tilted suitcase and snatched up her underwear.

"Let me help you," a voice offered.

"No, thank you," Stacia said. She reached for the clothes nearest her and jumbled them helter-skelter back into her case. She had spent a long time packing, had folded each item just so. The travel guide she'd read had promised that judicious packing and the right blend of synthetics would assure a wrinkle-free arrival. All that mattered now was to rescue her personal belongings from the gaze of a stranger.

She stretched toward a particularly elusive bikini top, but pulled back again when she encountered a hand, a man's hand. A warm current shot up her arm and through to her chest, leaving a peculiar tingling in its wake. She glanced upward and found herself staring into the face of the man belonging to the shoe.

No sign of laughter was evident on his lips, but it lurked in his eyes—impossibly blue eyes, the same blue as his sweater. He picked up her bikini top and, dangling it from between two fingers, offered it to her.

“Thank-you,” she said, taking care not to touch him again as she took it from him. She’d been thrown by the odd sensation when their fingers met the first time.

*Now* his amusement spread to his lips, lips made for laughter, full and mobile.

“I can manage the rest,” she said firmly, pulling her gaze from his lips. The flush warming her cheeks now spread to her neck.

He ignored her and with one broad sweep of his arm scooped up the rest of her clothes. He pulled the suitcase toward him, Stone’s parcel scraping the floor beneath it.

“Stop!” Stacia cried, reaching for the package. “You’ll tear it!”

The man was faster. He released her clothes and knelt before her, then lifted the suitcase and snatched up the parcel.

“Looks important,” he said. The sapphire blue of his eyes darkened to the ebony of a night sky.

He looked as fierce as the Greek warrior, Ulysses, Stacia thought dazedly, with his high cheekbones and deep set eyes. Intelligent and perceptive, they matched the man’s face.

She shook her head, tried to escape from the spell he cast over her. This wasn’t one of her library books, and this man was no Greek God. This man had Mr. Andropolous’s property and was busy pressing and probing the package as a child might do a Christmas present.

“Well?” he asked, glancing up from the package. He stared across at her. One eyebrow shot up and disappeared behind the shock of black hair covering his forehead.

“It’s nothing important,” Stacia said tensely, holding her hand out for the parcel.

“Clothes?” he asked. His fingers sank into the brown paper, fell just short of ripping it.

“Do you always pry into other people’s belongings?” Stacia demanded.

“I’m not usually gathering up a beautiful woman’s intimate apparel from an airport floor,” he replied with a smile. But his body seemed rigid—rock hard where it should be relaxed. He didn’t release his hold on the package.

Beautiful? Stacia frowned. What did this man want?

“No *gentleman* would pick up a woman’s personal belongings,” she said crossly, “then have the bad manners to comment on them.”

His smile widened to a grin. “No one’s ever accused me of being a gentleman before, and you haven’t answered my question.”

“It’s a sweater, if you must know.” She didn’t like the way he watched her. “Nothing exciting.”

She wasn’t cut out for this kind of work, didn’t know how to lie. Didn’t *want* to know how to lie. Yet, here she was doing it.

Damn it, all she wanted was to have her parcel back. She thrust out her hand again.

The man ignored it and gave the parcel another squeeze. The wrapping paper crackled ominously, clearly strained by his examination.

Stacia cleared her throat. "My parcel," she said firmly.

In answer, the man set the suitcase upright, dumped clothes and parcel in together, then slammed the lid shut. He snapped the locks closed and took a firm grip on the handle.

"You need a new suitcase," he said, standing, her bag still in his hand. "This one looks as though it came across on the Mayflower." He held out his hand as though to help her up.

Had she gone completely crazy? Was it his eyes compelling her to place her hand in his, or the implacable way he reached for her? Whatever the reason, however it happened, when his palm engulfed hers, it felt good. He pulled her up beside him, her body inches from his own, and she felt the zing of attraction, a connection beyond the physical.

Hastily, she snatched her hand away. She didn't want to feel connected to anyone again.

"Which gate are you going to?" the man asked.

"Why?"

His eyebrows rose. "You look as though you could use some help."

"I'll get a sky cap."

His gaze swept the cavernous length of O'Hare airport and the hundreds of people charging to and fro; helpful bodies in blue conspicuously absent.

“Good luck,” he said, facing her once more. “I’d be glad to help,” he added softly.

“I wouldn’t want you to go to the trouble.” She reached for her suitcase.

“No trouble,” he said, evading her reach. He stepped away, carrying her suitcase as though it weighed nothing. With another easy movement, he picked up his own leather satchel.

Black hair curled around the nape of his neck. Wiry hair, and thick, like Samson’s hair in the story of Delilah.

Mythical characters on her brain again! She had to forget about heroes and books. If she compared everyone she encountered with people she had read about in books, she would never experience life. Besides, when she got back from this trip, she didn’t intend to be a librarian anymore. She would go to the university and study architecture as she had always wanted, perhaps live overseas. She would focus her attention on how buildings were made and try to restrain this passion for other people’s stories.

“I can manage,” she insisted.

He raised one thick brow.

Her heart skipped a beat.

“Gate 47,” she murmured, pushing aside every warning her father had ever uttered about men and what they wanted and what they would do to get it. Meeting men was a good thing, in her opinion. She had been hoping to meet some on

this trip. Good-looking men, with whom she could have fun.

“Right,” he said. He strode off without so much as a backward glance.

“Wait!” she called out, stunned by his quick departure.

He didn’t even break stride.

Stacia sucked in an angry breath and gathered up her carry-on bag and purse. She went after him, but he walked too quickly. Even without her suitcase, it seemed impossible to catch him.

The airport was jammed. Businessmen mostly, who, intent on their route, stalked along oblivious to everyone else, and woe to anyone who got in their way.

The stranger was already far ahead. Luckily, he was tall or she’d never be able to see him over the crowd.

What if he took off with her bag? Stacia quickened her step. Perspiration trickled into her eyes. She couldn’t see him anymore. She peered ahead anxiously, got one glimpse of his head as it bobbed into sight, then just as swiftly, was gone again.

Stacia swore under her breath and forced her feet faster. She hadn’t seen him turn off, but if he hadn’t, where was he? Her heart began to pound, and her throat burned. No air. Too much air. Had to slow down. Couldn’t.

Oh God, where was he?

Gate 47.

At last. She stood stock still and shut her eyes tight. Maybe when she opened them, a miracle would occur and he'd be there.

"What on earth are you doing?"

Her eyelids snapped wide at the sound of his voice, and like magic the rest of him appeared in front of her.

"Meditating?" he asked mildly.

"Praying for divine intervention."

"Did you think I'd made off with your bag?"

"You were going awfully fast."

"Sorry," he apologized softly, shrugging as he did so, the movement graceful and uniquely European.

Was he Greek? Mr. Andropolous's younger son might look like this man. Or perhaps he was some other faceless relative determined to get his hands on the old man's will. Uncertainty seeped through her like water through sand. Silently, she held out her hand for her suitcase.

The man simply stared at her. A frown creased his brow. "Enjoy your trip," he finally said, and handed over her bag.

There was no avoiding the touch of his fingers this time. They only rested against hers for the briefest of moments, but the sensation returned. It must be electricity, like the shock you got walking across carpets in an over-heated room.

Stacia's heart sank. It wasn't that kind of electricity at all.

## Chapter Two



First Class. With a contented sigh, Stacia settled into the wide, comfortable seat. Six months ago, she would never have imagined herself in First Class on an airplane bound for Greece.

Her father would have been against the idea. Too dangerous he would have said. Too foreign. Although he had said the same thing about Chicago, had nixed her plans to attend the university there, had even protested her infrequent shopping trips, saying the stores in their own small town had everything she needed.

And Grandmother Roberts.... Whenever Stacia brought up the idea of traveling abroad, her grandmother's lips had tightened. No proper dinners to be had abroad, she said. No turkey and stuffing. No roast beef and mashed potatoes.

Stacia grinned. The only foreign food she had ever convinced her grandmother to try was lasagna. Even then the old woman had stared at it suspiciously, and sniffed it once or twice before

raising a morsel to her lips. When she took her second bite, Stacia's father had winked at Stacia from his end of the table.

The open wound in Stacia's heart still gnawed at her chest. Her father had been dead for months, but the grieving didn't ease. She still missed him. As she did her mother.

She had only been twelve when her mother died, too young to understand the irrationality of the guilt that pierced her body-numbing grief. She had believed then it was *her* fault her mother had become sick, that if she had been a better daughter, hadn't argued so much, her mother wouldn't have got cancer. Wouldn't have died and left her and her father all alone.

She'd stood frozen by her mother's deathbed and had privately vowed to care for her father in her mother's place. She had managed it, too, had cleaned the house, made the meals, even worked in the local library instead of going on to the university.

It wasn't until her father died that Stacia realized how wrapped up she had been in his life, so worried about his happiness, she hadn't bothered with her own. And he had let her, for it kept her close and safe.

Stacia rolled her shoulders, released the tension gathering there. Her father was dead. No amount of grieving would bring him back. It was time now for adventure, perhaps even a little romance.

“Is it safe to sit here?”

She knew that voice.

“Or will your luggage fall on my head?”

“What are *you* doing here?” Stacia demanded, reluctantly twisting around to see him.

“Going on vacation,” the man with the sapphire eyes replied. He stretched up and slapped his satchel next to hers in the overhead compartment, then snapped the compartment door shut and flopped into the seat next to her. “Seems I’m not the only one.” He faced her. “Or are you going to Greece on business?”

“Vacation,” she said lightly. “A bit of adventure.” She frowned. “You didn’t tell me you were on this flight?”

He settled his seat belt over his hips and fastened it, his elbow passing precariously close to her breast. She leaned as far away from him as possible.

“I didn’t know we were on the same flight,” he replied. “When I met you, I hadn’t had a chance to look at my ticket yet. Didn’t know which gate my flight took off from.” He shot her a swift grin. “It seemed safer to get you where you needed to be first.”

“I don’t need anyone to keep me safe.” She hated the very word. If there was any way to eliminate it from the dictionary, she would.

“It’s not *your* safety I’m concerned with,” he replied, with a chuckle. “It’s the poor sucker

unlucky enough to get in your way the next time you toss your luggage around.”

“I did not throw my—”

“You’ve brought too many things. The first rule of traveling on your own, Miss Roberts, is to travel light.” He smiled smugly. “Like me.”

The heat drained from Stacia’s face. “How do you know my name?”

Before he could answer, the plane jolted into action. As it raced down the runway, Stacia grasped her arm rest. The aircraft shimmied and rattled, until at last it swept into the sky.

The man glanced sideways, his gaze probing her face the way his fingers had probed her package. “It’s on your suitcase,” he whispered solemnly.

Her breath escaped in a rush, and as it did, the plane straightened, found the correct elevation and leveled off. A fellow traveler. That’s all he was. Stone’s warning had made her paranoid.

Andrew studied the face of the girl beside him. If Stacia Roberts had nothing to hide, why had she turned so white? And why would she care if he knew her name?

Still...he shifted in his seat. She was difficult to figure, didn’t seem the sort to be a player in this game. But if the past had taught him anything at all, it had taught him it was dangerous to make assumptions. Especially about women!

And if this woman suspected he was on to her, he’d never get what he wanted.

“What’s *your* name?” she demanded, in a low husky voice. It shouldn’t have matched her face with those clear brown eyes and upturned nose, but somehow it did, hinting at passion and depth.

Andrew gave himself a mental shake. It didn’t matter how she looked or sounded.

Stacia Roberts was beginning to get to him and that had to stop.

“Did you hear me?” she asked, her face plainly anxious.

He opened his mouth, then closed it again, suddenly undecided. If he gave his real name, she’d know he was on to her, yet if she reacted, he’d have his answer. Besides which, names were tricky, hard to conceal, especially with passports, traveler’s cheques, and credit cards.

“Andrew Moore,” he replied finally, frowning as he saw the distrust in her eyes.

“Where are you from?” she asked.

“Here, there, and everywhere.” He shrugged, deliberately vague.

She stared at him with unwavering eyes.

*No you don’t, lady.* He averted his gaze. He had too much at stake to be pulled into this woman’s web with innocent looks.

“I mean *originally*,” she persisted.

He bit back an oath and faced her again. “Small town south of Chicago.”

Her eyes darkened to the deep brown of the earth after a rain. A man could get lost in eyes

like hers—could get wrapped in their promise and never escape. It was almost a relief when she turned and stared straight ahead.

“You look as though your family originally came from Italy.” She spoke as if she were reluctant to speak at all. “Or...or Greece?” The last word all but disappeared in the hum of conversation around them.

Greek relatives. He thought quickly. Might be useful to admit to a few. Easier to follow her around the country if he could casually mention a cousin here, or an uncle there.

“My mother was Greek.” He repressed a grin. His mother would turn in her grave if she could hear him say such a thing. She’d been British to the bone, had never even lost her accent despite the years she lived with his father’s midwest twang, and had carefully tutored them all on proper elocution, insisting fuzzy vowels were the quickest route to social disgrace.

“Oh,” Stacia Roberts said.

“Care for a drink before dinner, sir?”

The polite cadence of the flight attendant’s voice reassured Stacia and her breathing steadied as Andrew Moore transferred his penetrating gaze to the smiling woman in the aisle.

“Scotch, please,” he answered, without hesitation. “And a glass of white wine for the lady.”

“No, thank you,” Stacia said sharply.

He turned to her. “I could have sworn wine

would be your drink. What would you like then?" His tone was formal, his voice studiously polite.

She could refuse to have anything, but her mouth was so dry. "I'd like—" She cast around for something wonderfully wild to order, something she had never tried before. "—a bourbon and water, please."

Her father's drink. Not a nice drink for a woman, her grandmother would have said, but what did she know, living in the past as she had?

At least she had managed to startle Andrew Moore. Incredible how satisfying that felt. He had the most expressive eyebrows she'd ever seen. When he frowned they met in a bushy bridge above his nose. Wine indeed! She reached across him accepting her drink from the flight attendant.

No ice. Stacia stared at her glass doubtfully. Her father had never had ice. But her drink looked a little...brown, not thirst-quenching at all. She snuck a sideways peek at Andrew. He was watching her still. No time for second thoughts. Her father had liked bourbon. So would she.

She raised the drink to her lips slowly. Her stomach quailed as the fumes assailed her nose. Wine didn't smell.

But this was what traveling was all about. Trying new things. Off with the old, and on with the new. She should be grateful to Andrew Moore. She took a sip.

No, not grateful. The bourbon scorched a path down her throat into her stomach. Stacia twisted her head toward the window and pretended an interest in the blackness outside. She'd never be able to drink the entire glass. Damn it, there was no reason she had to.

“Drink all right?”

“Fine, thanks.” She faced him again, even attempted a smile. Difficult, with a mouth shrunken from the taste of bourbon.

He took a long sip of his scotch then set his glass on the table in front of him. His hands were nice. Long fingers, but strong and capable looking.

His face was the same. Fine, intelligent features, determined chin.... Not a man you'd want to oppose. She turned away. No reason to imagine she would have to.

“Is this your first trip to Greece?”

Reluctantly, she faced him again. “Yes,” she answered shortly. Her first trip *anywhere*.

“How long will you be staying?”

Was he simply being polite, one traveler to another? Surely there was nothing ominous about the question.

“I'm not sure.” Her answer startled her, yet filled her with a sudden pleasure. It had sounded so uncertain, as though she hadn't any plans at all. In the past, she'd always known exactly where she was going and what she would be doing. And had hated it, she suddenly realized.

“I thought I’d play it by ear,” she added impulsively.

He frowned.

She felt a surge of power. She could do whatever she wanted with no one to answer to, could drift with the wind or fly with the birds.

“You’ll want to be careful, you know—”

“Careful!”

“A woman traveling alone is a perfect target.”

“For what?”

His slow gaze seemed to take in every inch of her. A wave of heat began in the pit of her stomach and swept outward until it blazed her skin. She’d seen men look at other women like that, but never at *her*.

“For *that*,” he said forcibly. “In the Mediterranean, the men will take one look at you, then pounce.”

“I can take care of myself.” She ignored the flames fanning her cheeks, and brought her glass to her lips. This time the bourbon went down more easily, but did nothing to quench the fire within.

“I wouldn’t count on it,” Moore replied, too fast, too smooth.

Anger boiled up, overwhelming that other heat he had aroused. “Look Mr... *Moore*, I don’t need you to tell me what to watch out for.” She sucked in a shaky breath. “The most dangerous man I’m likely to meet in Greece is *you!*”

“You might be right, Miss Roberts.” His eyes grew distant. “You might be right.”

Stacia scrunched her eyes more tightly shut, but she couldn't avoid the light hitting her squarely in the face. Morning. She must have slept after all. A weight pressed against her, a warm weight... nice. The smooth-rough texture of skin brushed her hand. Someone else's skin.

She snapped her eyes open. Andrew Moore was leaning across her, his face just inches from her own.

“What are you doing?” she demanded, her body stiffening. His eyes weren't simply blue. There was grey in them, also, and they shifted and changed with the light, from slate to almost black.

He smiled at her, a casual, sexy sort of grin. But she couldn't smile back. Not with his lips this close, lips she suddenly felt like kissing.

His gaze flickered to her mouth, and the black in his eyes suddenly dominated.

“Just fastening your seat belt,” he explained. “I didn't want to wake you.”

“I can do it myself.” She lifted his hand away from her side. His skin was warm. And smooth. Though a roughness was there, also, as though he knew about hard work. An exhilarating hand to hold. With a sharp intake of breath, she dropped it.

He pulled away from her slowly. The disappearance of his warmth left her strangely bereft.

But she was able to breathe again now that he no longer touched her. She searched for the end of her seat belt buried somewhere between them, and clicked it shut.

The plane dipped.

“We’re almost there,” Andrew murmured.

Stacia ran her hand through her hair. She must look a mess. Andrew had not only combed his hair, but had shaved and put on aftershave. The scent of it tickled her nose and sent a tingle spiralling through her chest. She swallowed hard, and turned to the window. When she released the blind, the yellow warmth shafting through transformed into a blanket. Through the glass, she could see the aircraft already making its approach to the runway.

“Where are you staying in Athens?” Andrew asked.

“With...with friends.” Frowning, Stacia reached beneath her seat and brought her purse to her lap. She unclasped it and slipped her fingers inside.

The envelope containing her hotel reservations and money was still tucked between her passport and wallet. The paper crackled as her fingers closed around it.

She wanted to believe he had asked the question from mere politeness, as one traveler to another, but she’d been unable to shake the nagging suspicion of the night before, that Andrew Moore could be Andropolous’s younger son.

“Let’s get together for a drink in Athens,” he suggested.

Startled, Stacia released the envelope back into her purse. “Perhaps,” she said evasively.

“If you give me your friend’s phone number—”

“The number is in my suitcase. When we get off the plane maybe I can dig it out.”

He frowned. “What about the rest of your trip? Does your travel agent have you well organized?”

“As much as I need to be.” Hotel reservations, tickets, and a thick wad of Greek drachmas were in that envelope, but they weren’t from any travel agent, and they weren’t for Andrew to see.

The plane rocked as it hit the runway. Stacia dropped her purse onto her lap and took hold of the arm rests.

“It’s all right,” Andrew said softly, seeming to know she feared the landing. He covered her hand with his.

She pulled her hand away.

“Travel rule number two,” he added. “Never let *anyone* see you’re afraid.”

“Who’s afraid,” she said fiercely, forcing herself to loosen her grip.

“Present company excluded, of course.”

“I don’t intend to trust anyone.”

“Good,” he said.

Unexpectedly, his approval warmed her.

When the plane rolled to a stop, he snapped open his seat belt. Standing, he pulled down both

their bags from the overhead compartment.

Stacia stood, also, her legs stiff from disuse. She took her bag from Andrew's outstretched hand and stepped into the aisle before him.

Goodbye, she had intended to say upon landing, and have a good trip. But suddenly, now that the moment had come, she wished they were still in the air.

Passengers surged behind them, jamming Andrew up against her. His body was hard beneath his loose-fitting clothes, and incredibly warm. She fit against him perfectly, the top of her head coming just beneath his chin.

Comfortable. She shifted her body forward. Comfortable was not what she wanted; independence was what she craved.

The passengers shuffled forward like prisoners in a chain gang. Stacia returned the flight attendant's parting smile, unclenched her stiff fingers and stepped off the plane.

It was warmer than Chicago. Perhaps the air-conditioning was off in the terminal building. She glanced around. There might not be any air-conditioning.

The signs on the wall were indecipherable. Different alphabet, different sounds. No hope of figuring it out. But the uncertainty was exciting, even if a little unnerving. Better not let Andrew see she was nervous. He had an irritating tendency to want to help.

She would follow the crowd. They seemed to know where they were going. There! Something in English. Money changer. Might have guessed.

Andrew's aftershave still assailed her senses. Stacia tried to breathe more shallowly. She stared past the barriers to the waiting crowds, and her excitement grew.

This place was nothing like home. The people themselves didn't look much different, although their clothes were distinctively Greek, with the black shawls around the old women's shoulders and the fisherman caps on the grizzled grey heads of the men. It was more an atmosphere, an ambiance, an air of promise.

"Need any money changed?" Andrew asked, his breath warm against her ear.

"No thanks." The envelope in her purse held plenty of money, both Greek and American.

The line suddenly moved faster. The luggage carousel was just ahead, with her suitcase perched on top of the chute ready to hurtle down. Stacia prayed it wouldn't open again, could envision too clearly her underwear cannoning down and circling round and round on top of other people's baggage. When her suitcase had successfully navigated the drop, she let out her breath slowly.

"Got anything to hide?"

She whirled around and found Andrew's blue gaze fixed intently on her face.

"Greek customs' officials are amongst the

toughest in the world," he added.

She frowned, didn't answer, and moved away through the crowd to retrieve her bag. She heaved it off the carousel, then looked for Andrew again. Couldn't see him.

Seemed impossible he'd been faster than her, but if she didn't see him again, it would save any need for final words. His disappearance felt funny though, made the trip feel unfinished. Especially as he'd suggested they get together in Athens. Disconcerting, how disappointed she felt that they wouldn't.

A man lunged for his bag as it swept around the carousel away from him. Stacia shifted sideways, made her way out of the path of those still collecting their luggage, and headed with other passengers towards the customs' desk.

Once through customs, she would hit the tourist bureau. No, the hotel first, where she would find Mr. Andropolous's son and get rid of the package.

A large woman with damp patches under her arms suddenly blocked Stacia's way. They both danced crazily in an effort to get around each other. The large woman smiled and gestured to her right, then glanced over Stacia's shoulder, and her eyes widened.

There was no time to turn, no time to think. A flash of light, a sudden roar, and Stacia's world burst apart.

## Chapter Three



The blast swept Stacia off her feet and flung her like a rag doll sideways into the crowd. The large woman flew with her, their limbs entwined in a tangled web of soft flesh and hard bones. With a painful thump, they landed together on the ground.

The air fled Stacia's lungs. The suffocating smell of acrid smoke filled the space left behind.

Madness erupted. Muted confusion became screams of terror. Moans and piteous crying swelled to the high-pitched keening of the wounded.

Andrew. His image wobbled in and out of Stacia's consciousness, piercing the fog surrounding her brain. She lifted her head, and a pain unconnected to broken bones or punctured skin penetrated her soul.

She couldn't bear for it to happen, for death to strike her life again so soon. She didn't love Andrew as she had loved her father, but she wouldn't *allow* him to be dead.

He had to have been behind her, somewhere closer to the blast. She struggled to rise, but something heavy lay across her shoulders. She curled her fingers into fists and pushed her upper body from the ground. The person on top groaned, and flopped to one side.

Other passengers raised their heads, and gazed around, also, their hands reaching for the reassuring presence of loved ones. She couldn't see Andrew. Stacia sucked in a breath of air and struggled to beat back her fear.

Other people slowly stood and clutched at family members, picked up their suitcases, and swiftly moved away. It was as though another bomb, if that's what the explosion had been, was about to blow them up at any moment.

Stacia got to her feet and glanced toward the luggage carousel. It was a twisted mass of jagged metal, covered in and surrounded by scraps of fluttering material. Suitcases full of clothes had been flung high by the blast and lay scattered like broken matchsticks, their contents exposed and incongruously normal amongst the chaos. Stacia forced her way toward the carousel, fighting against an ever-increasing tide of panic-stricken passengers going in the opposite direction.

"Andrew," she called, her cry a croaked whisper.

Alarms went off, some loud and strident, others with the mind-numbing syncopation of police sirens.

Uniformed officials, their faces white and strained, pushed their way through the crowd. They commanded in loud voices that those passengers who were able should move to the left side of the customs' lounge quickly and quietly.

“Andrew!” Stacia shouted again, louder this time.

“Stacia!”

She heard him call her name before his hand touched her shoulder. She swung around to face him, found his eyes two bottomless wells of blue, and his arms a haven. With a muffled cry, she fell into his embrace and wrapped herself in his comforting warmth.

She stood against him trembling, stunned by the enormity of her relief. He clung to her as tightly, the heat from his body penetrating the chill encasing her own. Vaguely, she became aware of the official again, who was urging them both to move.

Embarrassed, she pulled herself away from Andrew's arms. “I thought you'd been killed,” she mumbled.

“I'm glad you care,” he said softly.

“Of course, I care.” She didn't look at him, stared instead at the chaos surrounding them.

“Come on,” he said gently, putting his arm around her shoulders. “Let's get out of here.”

Getting out of there would have taken longer if

Andrew hadn't smoothed the way, Stacia admitted to herself ruefully. He had located her suitcases as well as his own and had led Stacia to where they were supposed to go. On the way, he had helped others; a woman and her child, an old man dazed and staggering. Despite the confusion engulfing the hall, they had been processed, their passports stamped, and their bags passed back to them.

The police, a special emergency squad by the looks of their uniforms, had watched the customs officers work. They had eyed each passenger suspiciously and demanded addresses of where they could be reached in Athens.

Andrew's eyebrows lifted when Stacia gave the name of the Hotel Athena. *Not* staying with friends, the compressed line of his mouth seemed to say.

But none of that mattered, she decided dully, not compared to the explosion and the danger they'd been in, the fact some people were injured, perhaps even killed.

She couldn't tell the full extent of the damage, for the police had erected barriers, screening off the area from passengers' curious stares. When they began to carry out stretchers, she looked away, determined to stop the trembling from beginning again.

Along with the other passengers, she and Andrew were escorted through the yellow-ribbed police lines. The crush was unbelievable,

the confusion overwhelming. Joyful greetings took place as terrified relatives hailed emerging passengers. Noisy reunions resulted with everyone talking at once.

The police cleared the building, and directed the crowd out the side doors. Taxis, too, had been diverted away from the main entrance, away from interference with police vehicles and ambulances.

“Wait here,” Andrew instructed. He dropped his bag at Stacia’s feet and moved swiftly away. “I’ll get a cab.”

“I—” Stacia bit back her words. There was no point in calling after him. At least he’d be easier to spot in this country, standing head and shoulders above everyone else.

The taxis were lined up helter-skelter, nose in to the sidewalk. Their prospective passengers were chaotic. People jerked open the doors before the taxi had even stopped and lunged in before someone else got there first.

Stacia felt drained. She yearned for the silence of her hotel room and a long soothing soak in a hot bath. Anything, to push back the images of bombs and destruction.

Images of Andrew, also.

With a frown, she dumped her bags on top of his, not able to go her own way while watching his luggage as well as her own. She could see him now, crouched over and speaking to one of the taxi drivers, then all at once he straightened, and

waved in her direction.

He smiled like a small boy bringing home a prize, making it difficult to hang on to her annoyance. Stacia averted her face to hide her answering smile, and stared at the crowd instead. People choked the sidewalk, pushing and shoving in their eagerness to depart. Except for a couple strolling towards her, who seemed to have no business at the airport at all. They had no luggage, no air of purpose.

The horror of the bomb still sat inside Stacia's brain ready to explode a second time. She mustn't think about the bombing now, mustn't look at every person passing as though they were the bombers themselves. She rolled her shoulders in a vain attempt to loosen her tension.

The couple drew closer. The woman's jeans were frayed, the holes in the knees beyond repair. Probably the leader of fashion in her own circle of friends.

Someone bumped against Stacia and she pulled her luggage closer, straddling the largest suitcase with her legs before glancing again at the unkempt couple.

The woman's companion ran grimy fingers through his uncombed hair. His gaze shifted from side to side, not resting on anything.

Some defense mechanism inside Stacia jarred to life. She slung her purse around her neck and clutched its strap, meanwhile tightening her legs

around her suitcase. The couple parted as they approached her, the man going left, and the woman right.

Close up, the expression in the man's eyes made Stacia's skin crawl. Goose bumps erupted on her neck and traveled across her shoulders. She twisted around to follow his movement, not trusting to lift her gaze from his deliberate saunter. Then with a suddenness that stunned, he began to run.

A sudden slash of a knife disturbed the air on Stacia's right, creating a breeze, an instant of cold. Her purse fell from her shoulder, and the woman was now running, holding in her hand, Stacia's purse. The strap the woman had cut dragged on the floor after her.

The air fled Stacia's lungs. She screamed in protest, but the sound of her scream was as inaudible as the cry of a gull in the face of a storm. Untangling her feet, she chased after the couple.

The next time she screamed, people heard her. But the man and woman were elusive, darting and dodging so swiftly, onlookers had no time to react.

Stacia tried to run faster but the only feeling in her legs was numbness. She might have been moving in slow motion, she made so little progress. There were no guards here to help her, and no police. They were all inside the airport, dealing with a disaster much more serious than a

stolen purse.

Rage surged through her. There had been too much taking. Taking purses, taking lives. It had to stop. Suddenly Stacia heard footsteps thundering behind. Irrationally, terror replaced the rage, and engulfed her as though she were the one pursued.

She couldn't breathe. Couldn't think. Didn't want to think.

The footsteps drew closer, but she couldn't run any faster. There were too many people. Her throat was raw with the effort of calling out, of simply breathing. Amazingly, the woman appeared in front of her again. Stacia's rage resurfaced. Everything she needed was in that purse—her money, passport, tickets, and hotel vouchers. She lunged for the woman's shirt, but the thief side-stepped and she missed. The man was suddenly there instead and in his hand was another knife.

He slashed at Stacia's face, but she twisted away. The next instant he was gone, and the woman, too.

A hand clamped onto Stacia's shoulder and swung her around.

"What the hell do you think you're doing?" Andrew's eyes blazed into hers.

"They've taken my purse," she cried. Her hands formed fists and she raised them to Andrew's chest.

"So you chased them? Risked getting killed?"

"Everything I need is in that purse."

"It's not worth dying over." His fingers tightened

on her shoulder. "Tell me what happened."

"Two people...a man...a woman." She struggled to think clearly. "The man looked so...dangerous." An uncontrollable spasm shook her entire body.

Andrew grabbed hold of her other shoulder and drew his hands down the length of her arms. She crossed her arms in front of her, unsettled by his touch.

"The woman—"

"Slowly. Just tell me slowly." He touched her again, but lightly, as though to gentle her.

"The woman took my purse. Cut the strap. Pulled on it." She glared at him. "If I hadn't been anchored with all that luggage..."

Andrew glanced critically at her waist. "Travel rule number three, Ms Roberts, you should have worn a money belt."

"Well, I didn't." Though the guide books had made that recommendation, too. She had planned to buy a leather one in Athens. "Just go away," she muttered, furious with herself.

"And leave you here alone?"

"Yes!"

"You need me."

"I do *not* need you."

"How do you plan to pay for a taxi into Athens?" Her stomach lurched sickeningly.

"Do you have money stashed anywhere else?"

"No."

"Traveler's cheques?"

Wordlessly, she shook her head. The cash in the envelope had been enough. She hadn't bothered with traveler's cheques.

She had money in the bank back home, but to send for it would take time. Besides, it was the weekend. No banks were open. The sick feeling intensified. Her hotel vouchers were gone, along with her passport, bank card, and credit cards.

"I wouldn't count on getting anything back," Andrew said. "In the meantime—"

Her ears buzzed.

"—you'd better come with me."

"Come with *you*?" she repeated incredulously.

"I don't see you have much choice."

The sick feeling deepened to desperation.

"We'll report the theft to the police," he said, taking her by the arm, "then check into a hotel. But we'll get our luggage first. Better hope it's still there."

Stacia stifled a gasp. Mr. Andropolous's package was in her suitcase. Her clothes she could afford to lose. She couldn't lose the package.

An old woman was sitting on Stacia's suitcase when they returned, her own small bundle at her feet and a crooked wooden cane lying menacingly across her lap. When she caught sight of Stacia, she smiled and stood. Andrew thrust his hand into his pocket and pulled out an American ten dollar bill. With an emphatic shake of her head, the woman melted away into the crowd.

Two airport guards, too late to catch the thieves, emerged at last from the now near empty airport. With their stern and tense expressions, they looked as impossible to approach as any villain. Fatigue washed over Stacia, but she took a bag in each hand and stuck close to Andrew as he pushed his way toward the guards.

“I’m booked at the Hotel Athena,” Stacia said wearily, when finally she and Andrew climbed into a cab.

“So you told the police before. Why did you lie to *me*?”

“Surely you know why! It’s probably one of your rules! Never let on to strangers where you are staying.”

He didn’t answer.

“It’s only for a night or two.” Once she got rid of the package, she would move somewhere else.

“Why the Athena?” Andrew watched her closely through narrow eyes.

“I have to meet someone there.” Mr. Stone had said tell no one, but Mr. Stone hadn’t figured she would lose all her money. The inside of Stacia’s cheek felt raw from chewing.

“The Athena’s expensive.”

“I’ll pay you back.” If it took every cent in her savings account. “My bank will be open Monday and I’ll phone the U.S. Embassy. They probably have an aid fund for stranded travelers.”

Andrew shrugged, then leaned forward and gave the taxi driver the name of the Athena.

Stacia tilted her head backward, but still couldn't see every detail of the vaulted ceiling. All of Mount Olympus could have fit into the Athena's lobby, and after the too-fast, blistering hot taxi ride, the hotel's cool, tomb-like interior felt wonderfully peaceful. She hadn't dared shut her eyes in the taxi, convinced that if she did, they would never make it to their destination alive.

There was no sign of Andropolous's son. She had hoped he would be here when she arrived, relaxing in one of the lobby's deep-cushioned chairs. She cast another glance around. There were people in the lobby, but none of them seemed to be looking for her. Though Andropolous's son might not realize she was the courier. He wouldn't be expecting her to be accompanied by a man.

Perhaps he had left her a message. Stacia moved toward the reception desk where Andrew stood frowning at the clerk.

"I'm sorry, sir," the clerk said, "but it's the best I can do."

"Then it will have to do," Andrew replied grimly, looking suddenly as weary as Stacia felt. He scrawled something on the register and turned to face her. "Ready?"

"You've registered already?" She glanced at the clerk. "Are there any messages for me? My

name's Stacia Roberts."

"Roberts?" The clerk cast Andrew a puzzled glance.

"Her maiden name," Andrew explained swiftly. "We're newlyweds. Come along, darling." Unexpectedly, he took Stacia by the arm and brushed her cheek with his lips.

Stacia raised her hand to her cheek, her heart suddenly pounding.

"Just play along," Andrew whispered, his lips now skimming her ear. "If they get any messages for you, darling," he said, speaking louder, "they'll send them on up." He glanced inquiringly at the clerk.

"Certainly, sir. Immediately."

Stacia tried to pull her arm away. Andrew's grip tightened.

"What's going on?" Had he gone mad?

He followed the porter toward the elevator, pulling her along with him. "I'll explain when we get to the room," he murmured, not looking crazy, simply out of sorts.

The porter halted in front of the wrought iron doors of an ancient elevator. An ornate metal cage swept toward them from above and settled to a halt with a gentle hiss.

The door slid open and the pressure of Andrew's fingers on Stacia's elbow increased. She snatched her arm free and stepped into the elevator. She'd follow Andrew's lead for the

moment, but he'd better have a damned good explanation.

On the sixth floor, the elevator shuddered to a stop. The porter led the way down a plushly carpeted hall to a pair of double doors. When he swung them wide open, Stacia stared into the room.

This hotel *was* expensive. Ornate antique furniture rested on Persian carpets, and marble fixtures gleamed from the bathroom beyond. But it was the view that must have cost the earth. Across the intervening roof tops, the white columns of the Parthenon climbed toward the sky.

With difficulty, Stacia pulled her gaze from the magic of antiquity. *Andrew* didn't seem in the least bit stunned by the hotel's grandeur. He carelessly slipped the porter some money and shut the door behind him.

"Why did you lie about us being married?" Stacia demanded.

"To get us a room," Andrew replied cryptically. He unzipped his bag and dumped its contents on the bed, then heaved her bag up beside his.

"We're not *both* staying here?" she croaked, suddenly nervous now that the porter had left her alone with a mad man.

"Yup."

"But where—"

"There's plenty of space." He grabbed a pile of shirts and placed them in the bottom drawer of the dresser.

“If you think for one minute—”

He turned to her, and grinned. “Just think of it as protecting your honor.”

“My *honor*?”

“They needed a passport for registration and you don’t have yours. It was simpler to say you were with me.”

“Simpler?” Andrew’s eyes seemed bluer than ever. Blue. Brown. White slave trader’s eyes came in all colors according to her father.

“There didn’t seem any other choice.” Andrew shrugged and turned away. He picked up a bundle of shorts and pants, and dropped them in the drawer next to his shirts.

“I must have my own room,” Stacia stated firmly. Andrew might be a man used to making decisions, but he wasn’t deciding for her. Sitting next to him on the plane had been difficult enough, sharing a room was unthinkable.” Couldn’t we get a suite with two adjoining bedrooms? That wouldn’t require me showing a passport.”

He carried his shaving gear into the bathroom.

“If it’s the money you’re worried about—”

He came out again, his bulk filling the bathroom doorway. “It’s not the money.”

“What then?”

“I don’t *know* you,” he said softly, “but somehow you’ve become my responsibility.”

“You are *not* responsible for me! The embassy—” His smile stopped her.

“Whether you’ll admit it or not,” he said, “you have no money, no passport, and no ticket out of here. I have all three and I don’t mind sharing.” One brow lifted. “So seeing as how I’m investing in you,” he added slowly, “I’m sticking to you like glue.”

Stacia stared at him in disbelief.

“Besides,” he continued, a dimple flashing onto his chin, “this was the last vacancy they had in the place. *Your* reservation seems to have vanished with the wind.” He glanced appreciatively around the room before turning back to her. “Welcome to the honeymoon suite.”

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# Gael Morrison

Gael's love of travel and adventure has led her all over the world and provided exciting backdrops for her stories. Together with her husband, Gael backpacked through Europe and Turkey, taught high school for two years in the primitive paradise of Papua New Guinea, explored the varied cultures of Asia and India, and encountered a camel caravan in the Afghanistan desert.

Upon returning home to Canada, Gael and her husband worked at an Outward Bound camp for juvenile delinquents while her husband attended Law School, and began raising the first two of their four sons. Gael also taught during this time as a Learning Assistance teacher in a special program for First Nations students.

Gael and her family traveled to Cambridge, England to live for a year, where they studied, took up squash, and enjoyed long walks along the river Cam. They explored Europe as a family, enjoying the delights of France, Italy and Spain.

After returning to Canada, Gael and her husband had two more sons and she settled into teaching English as a Second Language to refugees and new Canadians at a community college, where Prince Charles of England visited her class.

Her love of storytelling and adventure led her to writing where she combines romance and suspense in finely crafted romantic mysteries.

You can email her at [morrison@max-net.com](mailto:morrison@max-net.com).



Photo by Peter Lee

# Gael Morrison

**“This spark flying romance makes for a grand read.”**

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After playing it safe her entire life, Stacia Roberts longs for adventure. When she travels to Greece she expects sunshine and excitement, but gets more than she bargains for when strangers try to kill her. She suspects fellow traveler, Andrew Moore, to be the enemy—or is he a friend?

Andrew blames himself for his wife’s death. When he falls in love with Stacia, he vows to keep her safe, a difficult task when he discovers she is an international thief.

**“Gael Morrison transports the reader into a world of intrigue, danger, and love. Her excellent characterization and deft use of the language creates romantic tension, and her suspenseful plot will keep you on the edge of your chair from beginning to end. This is a ‘must read’ book..”**

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