RISE UP AND ROAR

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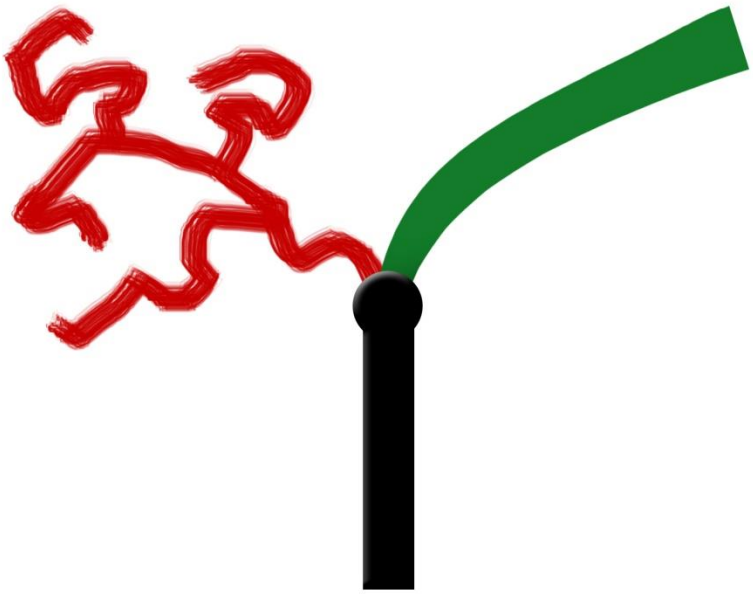

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The characters portrayed in this novel are fictitious.
No identification with actual persons is intended or should be inferred.

But the climate crisis, and the unrelenting wars, are absolutely real.

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This book is dedicated to the

Cradle of Life

The only planet of its kind
as it circles a star
in the vast emptiness
of our corner of the universe.

Volume I

And Neighbor Shall Reach Out To Neighbor

Part I

A Purpose

Chapter One

When I was seventeen, my mother took me to a Greek island, where I held a dying child in my arms.

I was a very normal seventeen-year-old Norwegian girl, which is perhaps why my mother was worried about me. I thought the entire world was inside my Smartphone, which I clung to like an electronic teddy bear. I was as much aware as the other kids of the wars somewhere out there in the world, of the refugees who brought all their problems to our quiet little country, and of this thing called climate change, which our teachers talked about in school, just enough to scare us. So we teenagers turned to the sanctuary of our Smartphones, where with a flick of our fingers we could choose our preferred reality.

My mother, Sofia Alexandra, a nurse who worked with premature infants in the maternity ward at the National Hospital in Oslo—she kept those tiny babies alive in their little incubators—had reached her limit with my blank stare at the little screen on my telephone. She announced in November of 2017 that during the Christmas vacation—from December 20 to January 5—we were going to spend two weeks together on the Greek island of Lesvos, working as volunteers to help the refugees who arrived on the beaches in their little rubber boats.

I stared at her in the kitchen, my phone in my hand. "We're going to *what?"*

She explained with a calm and determined voice—no longer her exhausted and exasperated voice—that she had signed us up as volunteers with the Norwegian organization, Drop in the Ocean. We would be part of a team of about twenty people, most of them Norwegian but some from other countries, who were trained to meet the boats filled with refugees as they arrived, to administer first aid, and to work in the camps when we were not out on patrol. Drop in the Ocean required that volunteers must be at least twenty-five years old, but since I would be with my mother, a nurse, I had been accepted into the program.

Then my mother stared at me, waiting for my reaction.

The truth was, that I was bored—utterly bored, bored, bored—with high school. Most of what I looked at while surfing on my phone were places I wanted to visit: I wanted to ride a red double-decker bus through London, I wanted to visit a cathedral in Paris where I could look up at the stained-glass windows, and I wanted to ride a

trolley-car up and down the hills of San Francisco. Maybe ride an elephant in . . . some far-off country.

The little town where we lived, half an hour by train south of Oslo, was very nice, very tidy, very quiet, very safe, and so utterly, utterly boring.

And the weather was gray, especially in the winter. Cold and gray.

A beach on a Greek island? At the very least, I could buy a Greek t-shirt, pink, and wear it to school in January.

So I said, "All right. But what can I do with a bunch of refugees?"

She smiled. "You're the night owl. Sometimes we'll be out on patrol at night. The little boats cross the sea at night when the Turkish coast guard can't see them. When the refugees approach a Greek island, they shine the lights of their telephones toward the beaches as a signal." Then she laughed. "You can shine your light back, letting them know that we have spotted them. You can finally put your phone to good use."

Yes, well, I could do that. And a beach on a Greek island at midnight . . . well, that was certainly more intriguing than life in a town that shut down at ten.

I tried to smile, letting her know that I was grateful. "All right. Maybe we should learn some Greek before we go."

"And Arabic, Sweetheart. We're going to need to learn some Arabic."

So on December 19, my mother and I, accompanied by my father and brother, took the airport train north to Gardermoen, where we would board an SAS flight to Athens. I must admit that I was excited. My brother would be hanging out for two weeks in all the usual places, while I was getting a suntan and eating Greek yoghurt and . . . helping the refugees.

I was also very glad, though I didn't say so, that my mother and I were friends again. No more arguing about the telephone; it was in my carry-on, and I left it there. No more arguing about my grades. No more arguing about my refusal to wear a nice, traditional Norwegian ski sweater. (Like all the other kids, I had three favorite colors: gray, dark gray, and black.)

Whatever it was we were doing, my mother and I were together on an adventure. We had a book of Beginner's Greek, and we had a book of Beginner's Arabic. I felt a glow of happiness, the first for a long, long time.

* * * * *

The people with Drop in the Ocean—the "Drops", as they called themselves—were wonderful. My mother and I were a little tired by the time we finally arrived at the hotel on the northern coast of Lesvos, but we were welcomed by a jubilant group of people who were making a taco dinner in the restaurant kitchen. They helped us to carry our bags to our room, and explained that if you wanted a really *hot* shower, it was best to try at eight in the morning. Then they led us back to the dining room and into the kitchen, where I was soon working with a woman from Poland, cutting up the most gorgeous red tomatoes I had ever seen in my life.

So much more I could say, but really, we need to get to that beach at night when I—yes, it was me, with my owl's eyes—spotted a faint speck of light maybe three hundred meters out from shore, surrounded by the darkness of a cold December night out on the Aegean Sea.

My mother was driving the little blue car that she had rented along a bumpy, rutted road that wound along at the top of a cliff overlooking a narrow black beach far below, and overlooking as well the broad black expanse of the sea. We were heading west, so that I, in the passenger seat, could look north out my open window, sweeping my eyes back and forth across the dark sea. In the distance, ten kilometers away, I could see lights scattered along the coast of Turkey. Occasionally I spotted the lights of a ship, or a fishing boat heading out before dawn. The night was cold—we had the car's heater on full blast—but I had to keep my window open so that I could see—

"Mom, I saw a light!"

"Where, Honey?" She slowed to a halt, then looked out my window.

"Straight out. Maybe three hundred meters. Can you see it? A tiny speck of a light. It's moving. Yes, I can see that it's moving."

I snapped off my seat belt, swung open the door and stepped out carefully—the road was close to the edge of the cliff, with absolutely no guard rails—then I opened the rear door and grabbed a powerful flashlight from the back seat. I heard the squeak of the emergency brake as my mother set it, then she was out of the car and standing beside me as I shone our beacon toward the speck of light which she too could now see.

"Two lights!" I cheered, spotting a second speck. "They see us."

My mother was on her phone now, calling the Spanish lifeguards who kept their rescue boat in the harbor of the fishing village of Skala Sikamineas, a few kilometers

east of us . . . where the sky showed the first pearly glow of dawn. She told them—in English, the language we all used—where we were along the coastal road, and said that we would head back east about half a kilometer to where the road descended and a lane branched off down to the beach.

The wind atop the cliff was cold. When I had grabbed the flashlight, I had forgotten to put on my gloves. My mother was holding her phone with her bare hand. Neither of us were wearing our wool caps. I could only imagine how cold it must be out there on the open sea.

"All right," said my mother, handing me her phone. "Hop in and call the other Drops while I get us down to the beach."

We got back into the car—the engine was still running, the heat was blasting—and I phoned the Drop on night duty at the hotel while my mother released the brake and slowly drove backwards with a sharp turn, so that our headlights shone out over the sea. She blinked the lights several times, letting them know that we saw them, then she drove carefully forward with a sharp turn to the east. We could not drive fast; the road was too rutted, too close to the edge of the cliff, and in the darkness of night, we had to be especially careful. But she drove at a good steady pace, her eyes staring ahead. While I gave the night-duty Drop our location, and told him that we were now heading down to the beach, I marveled at my mother's courage.

By the time we were rocking from rut to rut down the lane—our headlights shone on the wreckage of previous rubber boats hauled up on shore—we could see the bright lights of those valiant Spaniards as they raced in their small rubber boat toward the cluster of faint specks, now about two hundred meters from shore. The Spaniards would tell the refugees to stay calm—"remain seated, remain seated" in Arabic—and then they would tow the refugee boat toward the spot on the beach where we would be waiting.

Now behind us followed the headlights of somebody's car coming down the lane; the lights bounced up and down as the car jounced over the ruts.

My mother drove to a broad spot where the lane ended, with the cliff to our left and the slope of the beach to our right, and huge boulders ahead of us. As we got out of the car and were reaching into the back for our hats and gloves and a scarf against the cold wind off the water, the lights of the car behind us shone for a moment on our yellow reflective vests. Then the lights went dark, and we stood on a black beach beside a black sea, beneath a dark sky with a few faint stars. My eyes were watering in the cold wind.

This was our first boat. My mother and I had been on night patrol for five nights, including Christmas Eve, without spotting a boat. Now, sometime during the week between Christmas and New Year's Eve, we had spotted our first boat. I was not excited. I was not afraid. But never, never, never before in my life had I felt so keenly alive.

Then I heard a voice from the car behind us, "Anna Katerina, you and your mother are the first to arrive. Did you spot them?"

"Yes," I called back. It was Nikos, one of the Greek lifeguards, a man whom I had gotten to know during the past few days.

"Good work," he called. "Good work." I could see, just barely in the darkness, that he was taking off his jacket, and shirt, down to his skin, then his trousers, down to his shorts. And now he was putting on his black rubber wetsuit. He and the other Greeks would wade out to meet the refugee boat. They would help the refugees, one by one, to shore, where the rest of us would be waiting to help.

We could hear voices now from the two small rubber boats approaching the beach, the Spanish rescue boat bright orange, the refugee boat black. The dinghies bobbed in the waves that grew steeper near shore. I could distinguish between voices speaking Arabic with instructions to stay calm, and voices shouting, wailing, weeping and praying in Arabic because the terrifying voyage was almost over. Some of the refugees, men, were standing up now in their boat, ready to jump overboard onto the beach.

Nikos was shouting now in Arabic, his voice firm, almost angry. The standing men sat back down. I knew the drill from our instructions at the hotel: first the children would be lifted from the boat. Then the women would be helped from the boat to the beach. And then the men would be helped to shore.

My mother and I walked carefully down the slope of the beach—it was not a sandy beach, but a beach of round stones the size of lemons—until we stood above the wash of the waves. My mother carried her first-aid case. I carried a blanket. We could see now that the refugee boat was not only filled with people—25 or 30 in one small rubber boat—but it was filled with water as well. Waves had clearly washed over the low, rounded sides of the boat. Maybe the refugees had a bucket for bailing, though I did not see one.

Some of the people, either unconscious or dead, were held in the arms of others. I looked at my mother. She said to me quietly, "Be strong, Anna. Be strong."

Now the Spaniards in their trim, well-equipped rubber rescue boat nudged the wallowing refugee boat bow-first toward the beach, so that it would not turn broadside to the waves and capsize. Two Greeks took hold of the sides of the bow and braced it as they let a wave carry the bow onto the beach. Another wave carried the boat a bit further up the beach . . . and then the boat, its bow on land, most of it still in the water, was stable enough that Nikos could reach over the side, pick up a child and wade with him to shore. The little boy, wailing with fright, was able to stand as he stared back toward the boat for his mother or father. My mother set down her first aid case, picked up the wet child and carried him toward our car, where we had dry clothes and blankets stored in the back.

The headlights of three cars came bobbing down the lane. The Drops were arriving. Each car, I knew, was packed with towels, warm clothing and wool blankets. And the metallic blankets that held in body heat. Bottles of water. Chocolate energy bars. Enough to keep these people alive until we got them to the refugee camp near Skala Sikamineas, where fires would be burning in barrels, and hot soup would be served, and warm beds would be ready.

"Anna!" Nikos was calling my name. "Come take this one."

I set down the blanket and walked in my Norwegian winter boots to where Nikos came wading out of the water with a small, limp body in his arms. "She is alive," he said to me as he passed a child gently into my arms. "Hold her so that you can brace her head." I looked down in the first faint glow of dawn at a little girl's face—she was perhaps four years old—her eyes shut, her mouth open, utterly drenched by the cold sea.

Nikos said quickly, "Her mother is in the boat." He glanced at the dark figures running across the beach from the cars. "Magnus! I need your strong arms!"

Magnus, one of our Drops—a dairy farmer from the west coast near Stavanger—ran past me in his yellow vest as I carried the limp girl up the beach toward our car.

Another Drop, Anne Kari, was dressing the little boy—his wet clothing lay in a heap on the ground beside him—with a wool, hand-knit Norwegian sweater, red with blue snowflakes. He wore woolen trousers, such as a child might wear when playing on a kindergarten playground in the winter, and heavy woolen socks. My mother was opening a box in the back of the car, from which she took a child's woolen ski cap.

Bless those women back home, I thought, who knit sweater after sweater and sent them down to Lesvos.

"Mom," I called, "spread a blanket on the ground. This little girl is unconscious."

My mother handed Anne Kari the blue knit cap, then she stepped toward me and examined the child in my arms. She felt for a pulse under the jaw, then opened the lids of an eye. She laid her hand over the child's brow. "Hypothermia. She is deeply cold." I saw the concern in my mother's eyes, the same concern with which she must have examined a thousand premature babies . . . a concern which I had never before witnessed.

She took a blanket from the back of the car, then opened it to form a mattress big enough for a child and spread it on the ground. I gently laid the child on the blanket, while my mother supported her head. "Quick, Anna, fetch my first aid case, down on the beach. I need my stethoscope."

As my mother knelt over the child and began to unbutton her wet coat, I glanced at Anne Kari, who was putting the little boy on the passenger seat of the car—in the warmth of the blasting heater—then I ran down the beach and grabbed my mother's first aid case, almost hidden among the refugees now pouring out of their boat. I returned with the case to my mother, who lifted the lid, took out the stethoscope, fitted it to her ears and then leaned over the child while she pressed the silver disk on several spots of wet pale skin over the girl's heart. "You're a fighter, Sweetheart," she said to the unconscious child. "Keep fighting. Keep fighting."

Anne Kari now joined us, holding a blanket to block the wind off the sea as my mother undressed the child. I handed my mother a towel. She dried the child's dark hair, then her face and the front of her body. Rolling her over gently, my mother dried the girl's back, the backs of her legs, her feet.

"She is so cold that her heart, her brain, everything is very delicate now."

Rolling her over again, my mother dressed the girl with layers of woolen clothing that I fetched from the car. A traditional Norwegian sweater, red and white, with brown reindeer running across the chest. A white cap with a tassel. Blue-and-white mittens. Wool socks, and then another pair of wool socks. Still the eyes were closed, the mouth was open, but we could see now that the girl was breathing with more than imperceptible shallow breaths.

Magnus came walking toward us with a woman in his arms, a woman who also wore a Norwegian sweater and a cap and woolen trousers and wool socks, a woman who stared at the little girl on the blanket . . . who was safe and warm. "Lamar," she said, calling, as we guessed, the girl's name. Then she spoke in Arabic as Magnus, kneeling, set her on the ground beside her daughter. Apparently too weak to walk, or even to sit

upright, she lay down beside her daughter, wrapped her arm over her child and snuggled with her, their cheeks touching.

Anne Kari wrapped a blanket over them, tucking it beneath the mother's feet against the wind. My mother rolled up a towel and set it beneath their heads as a pillow.

Then the four of us, my mother and I, Anne Kari and Magnus, stood for a moment in a quiet circle, looking down at two survivors who had managed, somehow, to flee from a war, to reach the coast of Turkey, to cross the sea on a winter's night, and to find safety on a stony beach. Where was the husband, the father? Did these two refugees know that all the borders further north into Europe were closed? Did they know that even further north, all across Europe, holiday shoppers were buying champagne and fireworks in preparation for New Year's Eve?

That was the moment when I felt, for the first time in my life, the grief—the huge, black, overwhelming grief—for people who were strangers, to whom I could not even say "Hello", who were the victims of war. That was the moment when I understood, for the first time, that the word "humanity" meant "all of us".

"Magnus," said my mother, "will you help the mother into the car? The heater is on. We can place her daughter in her lap. Then Anna and I will take them to the camp. They can sit in a chair beside the fire burning in a barrel. The child needs real heat. And hot soup. And a bed."

Anne Kari spoke with the boy on the passenger seat. He was still shivering but clearly warmer. He kept asking for someone. He had family on the beach and he wanted to find them. Anne Kari held his hand as they walked toward the noisy crowd of refugees and Greeks and Drops; the boy kept calling out someone's name.

Kneeling again, Magnus lifted the mother and set her carefully on the passenger seat. Then he set the daughter on her mother's lap. The mother wrapped her arms around her child and sent up a wailing prayer.

Magnus looked at us briefly. "The bus should be here soon. We'll meet you at the camp." Then, grabbing armloads of blankets and woolens from the rear of our car, he hurried back down to the beach and disappeared into the crowd.

The Spaniards were pulling away now in their orange rescue boat; they would return to Skala Sikamineas, where they would be on call, ready for the next overloaded rubber boat filled with desperate refugees.

I made room for myself on the back seat. My mother drove the car in tight little turns, forward and back, until she managed to turn around and head up the rutted lane in low gear.

To the southeast, somewhere beyond the brown hills ahead of us, the winter sun was rising above the sea, bringing a new day to the inhabitants of planet Earth.

Chapter Two

My mother drove along the coastal road to the Lighthouse Refugee Relief Camp, built on a flat stretch of land between the brown hills and the blue-gray sea. This sanctuary was the most intelligent, the most compassionate little spot of human habitation that I had yet found in my young life. It was an informal camp, not a United Nations refugee camp with big tents on concrete platforms, but a collection of medium-sized tents of different colors, clustered in an orchard of olive trees. The camp had been built in 2015 by international volunteers who came and stayed for two weeks to a month—as nurses, as teachers, as cooks, as whatever was needed—before they departed and were replaced by other good-hearted people from around the world.

My mother parked our little blue car near the gate, then turned off the engine; the heater blasting warm air became silent. She looked at the mother in the seat beside her—we did not know her name—then she held out her hands as if to the heat of a fire; she mimicked eating soup with a spoon from a bowl; she laid her head on her hands as if sleeping. The woman—we did not know what country she was from—nodded and said something, clearly grateful.

I opened the back door and got out, then opened the passenger door and looked with delight—it was no doubt the greatest burst of happiness that I had ever felt in my life—at the face of the little girl who stared at me with open eyes. No smile, no expression, but she was sitting up, her head was no longer slumped against her mother's shoulder, and she was looking—*looking*—at the world where she now found herself.

I smiled at the mother and could only gesture with my hands toward her child while I cheered, "Wonderful!"

The mother smiled at me, and to this day, when I am now a mother with my own daughter, I can still remember her smile and her dark eyes that told me, "Thank you for keeping my child alive."

My mother stood beside me now. "Anna, carry the child. She will still be very unsteady. If her mother can walk, I will walk beside her."

I held out my arms. The mother said something to her daughter, who let me lift her out of the car into the morning sunshine.

Now the mother managed to swing her feet out and, a little shaky, stand with one hand on the roof of the car. My mother held her arm, bracing her.

We walked toward the gate to the camp, a homemade arch made of various pieces of wood. Across the top were boards painted white, with the word "Welcome" painted in black in four languages: English, Arabic, Farsi, and Urdu. How nice, I thought. How nice.

To the right of the arch was a picture of a light house: the tall tower that kept people safe. To the left were various sheets of information, also in four languages.

Ahead of us, a path sprinkled with white gravel led into the olive orchard. Someone walked past a red tent, glanced at us, then kept walking. Above the path were light bulbs strung between the trees; they were off now, but at night, the camp would be well lit.

The little girl in my arms pointed up at the word "Welcome" in her own language. She spoke the word to her mother, who repeated the word, as if she could hardly believe it. For how many weeks, how many months, had they been walking on highways, riding in dusty trucks, huddled in a cold wet boat . . . until finally, someone did not ask for more money, but told them, "Welcome"?

As we walked beneath the arch, a woman with a clipboard appeared at the far end of the path. Someone had clearly alerted her that we had arrived. She hurried toward us, greeted the mother and her daughter with cheerful words in Arabic, then she spoke with my mother. She wrote down the details: How many refugees had been in the boat? How many children? Women? Men? Any fatalities?

My mother shook her head. "None that we know of."

"Super. We've got a good fire going. Pull up a chair and make yourselves at home. We'll have hot soup and bread ready in ten minutes."

And then the woman hurried back up the trail with her clipboard, calling ahead to alert the cooks that thirty "guests" were soon arriving. Her name was Birgit, she was from Dresden in what had once been East Germany, and she was a wizard at running the camp.

As we made our way along the path into the camp, we passed two signs, one pointing to the left, one to the right. "Women" in four languages, with a picture of a woman and a child: to the left. "Men" in four languages, with a picture of a man: to the right. The toilets, as I knew from previous visits, were neat and well equipped.

We passed an olive tree with red paper hearts strung on a brown cord wrapped around the ancient gray trunk. Each heart, bright red in the sunshine, had the word "love" written on it in one of many languages. The little girl in my arms found the word in her own language. She said it to her mother, who said it back, twice.

We came to an open area beneath a tarp roof, where brightly colored chairs were gathered around an upright, rusted barrel that served as a stove. A black stovepipe reached up through the roof. Large round stones wrapped around the bottom of the stove on the gravel floor. A fire burned inside. The child chirped with happiness as if someone had just handed her a piece of chocolate cake.

My mother arranged four chairs around the open front of the stove, close enough that the mother, when she sat down, could put her feet on a warm stone. I set the child down in a chair beside her mother. Life was coming back into the child's face. The deep cold of hypothermia had been slowly replaced by the growing warmth of the Norwegian wool, by the heater in the car, by the bright morning sunshine, and now, by the promise of warmth and safety in a place which finally—after who knew what horrors in a child's life—made sense.

My mother sat down and said, gesturing with her hand toward herself, "Sofia."

The mother said, speaking carefully, "Sofia." Then she gestured to herself and said, "Loreen."

My mother said, speaking carefully, "Loreen."

Loreen nodded, then she introduced her daughter, "Lamar."

My mother said, "Hello, Lamar."

Lamar said with a faint smile, "Allo, Sofia. Shukran." Thank you.

Now my mother introduced me, "Anna", who wished with all her heart that she could speak Arabic and truly get to know these two new friends.

Half an hour later, the others began to arrive. Our quiet sanctuary became a bustling reception hall where people sat around the three barrel stoves, sought a toilet, or sat at a table where bowls of steaming soup and cups of hot tea were now being distributed. One man stared up into the gray-green branches of an olive tree, perhaps remembering his own trees back home.

My mother, no longer needed by her hypothermia patient, asked me to stay with Lamar and Loreen, then she went out to the car to fetch her first aid case, and returned to her duties as a nurse.

The three of us stood up from our chairs, giving our places to people who were shivering and blue. We walked—Lamar was able to walk now, though slowly—to a table where we sat and inhaled the steam from large bowls of thick potato soup. I had picked up my spoon and was stirring the soup when I heard Lamar say, "Bon appétit!" I looked at her, seated across the table beside her mother, her eyes bright with the joy of this moment.

"Bon appétit," I said back, feeling myself to be in the presence of people whom I already, in a quiet but powerful way, was beginning to love.

Magnus joined us. He held up a plastic travel bag in each hand. Loreen and Lamar immediately recognized the luggage which they had brought on the boat. Hypothermia dulls the mind: they had completely forgotten about their bags.

Magnus set the bags on the ground, then sat on the bench beside me, wrapped one arm around my shoulders and gave me a burly hug. Loreen and Lamar opened their bags: everything inside was soaked with sea water. Loreen lifted out a cell phone and tried to turn it on: it was dead.

I made a sudden decision, a decision which, two weeks ago, I never would have made: to give my phone to a stranger with whom I was barely acquainted. I knew—all the volunteers who worked with refugees knew—that the cell phones were vital to the refugees. They called home . . . whatever was left of home in some war zone. They called to family in Europe. They called to people who knew a safe route further north. The phone was as precious to them as what little money they still had.

I looked around, spotted a dark-skinned person serving a basket of bread and asked him if he could translate from English to Arabic. He responded in English, "What would you like to say?"

I pointed at Loreen as she set her dead phone beside her bowl of soup. "Please tell her that I will give her my telephone. It is out in the car."

He delivered my message in Arabic. Loreen looked at me with surprise, and gratitude.

I continued, "When we are done with our soup, I will go out to get my phone. She can call home, if she wants. She can let them know that she and Lamar are safe on Lesvos."

Again the young man translated. Loreen's smile and vehement "Shukran, Anna" confirmed that I had been right: she wanted to let someone know that she and Lamar were safe.

Already I was thinking ahead. Loreen could use the phone now in the camp. Then my mother and I would take the phone with us to a shop in Molyvos, the town near our hotel, where we would buy a Greek sim card to replace the Norwegian card. And . . . we would set up an account when we returned home so that I could pay into it online from Norway. That way they would have a phone which would always work.

I would have to delete all my junk. Yes, it was like flushing away the old life. Good bye to all that high school nonsense.

My mother and I would make sure that my phone—Loreen's phone—could easily call my mother's phone. That way, if they needed us, just push a single icon and my mother would answer. Even at three in the morning. Family is family.

After we had finished our soup and warm bread and hot tea, and a salad with greens and tomatoes so fresh that they must have been growing in someone's garden until yesterday afternoon, I went out to the car and fetched my phone. Even before I walked back through the arch into the camp, I spent about five minutes deleting, deleting, deleting stuff that belonged to some childish little girl. Did I have even one single friend in that school? Or was it all just empty grins in the endless Selfies?

Back at the table, I sat beside Loreen and showed her how to use the phone. She understood immediately. "Aleppo," she said, already tapping in the country code and number.

I never in my life saw anyone so grateful to reach her connection. After the first flurry of Arabic, Loreen and Lamar stood up from the bench and walked to the relative quiet twenty meters away at the back edge of the camp. Beyond them was a little playground with a slide for small children, and the rocky slope of a hill. Loreen handed the phone to Lamar, who spoke to . . . perhaps her grandmother, too old to leave the war zone?

When they returned to the table, Loreen looked at me with deep gratitude, and peace, in her eyes. "Shukran, shukran", she said as she handed me the phone. I tried to explain that I would come back to the Lighthouse Camp tomorrow with the phone for her. Then she could keep it.

She held her hands over her heart and bowed to me.

After our meal, Birgit took us to a tent where Loreen and Lamar could sleep on two of the twenty beds, with sheets, wool blankets, and a pillow. There was a box beneath each bed for their belongings. They could hang their wet clothing on one of

several lines overhead. (My mother and I had brought, in plastic bags, the wet clothes they had been wearing.)

Two electric heaters, one at each end of the tent, kept the tent fairly warm. The men slept in their own tent at the other end of the camp.

My mother joined us long enough to give our new friends a hug. With the help of another refugee who could speak some English, my mother and I reassured Loreen and Lamar that we would return to Lighthouse tomorrow, with the telephone and a Greek sim card.

They told us, "Shukran, shukran." They understood. They trusted us.

And then—my mother's duties were done, another nurse had arrived on her shift—we walked out the path to our little blue car, where we found Magnus leaning against his little yellow car, looking—as we all felt—utterly exhausted.

"Good work, Drops," he said.

"Good work, Drop," I said back.

"Sofia, did you manage to eat anything?"

"I never had a moment to even think about a bowl of soup."

Magnus gestured with his thumb up the road. "What do you say we visit our favorite café in Skala Sikamineas and get you an omelet? And three cups of the best coffee in the world."

My mother laughed with gratitude. "Thank you, Magnus. You are ever the gentleman."

Chapter Three

So we drove to the little town with its picturesque harbor filled with small, brightly painted fishing boats. It was about ten in the morning now and people were sitting outside at the tables in the warm sun, reading a newspaper or watching the fishermen getting their boats ready to go out for a day of fishing. The sky arching over our perfect little world was a beautiful deep blue.

I noted a dozen pieces of octopus—each piece was two tentacles which had been neatly cut from the body—hanging from a line to dry. I kidded with my mother, "Perhaps you would like an octopus omelet?"

We walked to the Cavos Café, a stone building with a sign outside advertising "Coffees, pancakes, breakfast, ice cream" in English. Erato stepped out the door with a tray.

"Kaliméra, Erato," I called to the woman my mother's age.

She looked at me, shot me a smile and called, "Kaliméra, Anna," remembering my name. I felt so happy to be a part of this international world on a bright and sunny morning.

We stepped inside and said good morning to Giorgos, who waved from behind the counter where he was operating a noisy coffee machine. Magnus spoke with Giorgos while my mother and I walked to the back of the café and admired the big red-headed parrot, who gave us a squawk as if he was still waiting, a bit groggy, for his first cup of coffee.

Back out into the sunshine, we sat at a round table with a view of the small white boats with blue trim. Erato took our order, then I studied the Greek names on the bows of the boats. After a few days practice, I was now able to read, in Greek, the names of various goddesses: Athena, and Persephone, and Aphrodite.

The cats began to gather around our table. Never before had I seen so many cats as in this fishing village. When Erato brought out my mother's omelet—with goat cheese and bright red tomatoes—and our three cups of coffee, she also brought a spray bottle filled with water, so that we could spray the cats while they prowled and yowled beneath our table, to chase them away.

The coffee was exquisite. Usually, back home in Norway, I drank coffee only when we were out skiing. Then I had a thermos in my backpack, along with oranges and chocolate. But on that sunny morning in Greece . . . I began to think of moving south.

A question which had been troubling me during the past few days . . . had jumped to the front of my mind at the Lighthouse Relief Camp when I had looked at

the novel sight of the thirty cold and exhausted refugees crowded around the three barrel stoves. The question was, Why were there so many refugees arriving in their little boats? Yes, I knew they were fleeing from the wars in their home countries. In school, we had talked about the war in Syria. But . . . it was as if two completely different worlds were right next door to each other. In one, bombs were exploding. In the other, people were drinking their morning coffee in the sunshine.

My mother had finished her omelet and now sat with her face lifted to the sun, her eyes closed, enjoying the lovely peace.

Magnus, with the spray bottle in one hand, was looking across the harbor at a small white church with a red roof which blessed the fishermen on their way out to sea.

I disturbed their peace by asking, "Magnus, maybe this is an obvious question, and maybe I ought to already understand, but . . . Why are there so many refugees?"

He looked at me with his gentle blue eyes. "Because there are so many wars."

"But . . . Why are there so many wars?"

I could see a sadness in his eyes, and a hint of anger. "Because there are so many weapons."

My mother was looking at us now, first at me, then at Magnus.

"Ever since World War Two," he said, "the Americans and the Russians have poured weapons into the Middle East, in part to influence the various governments, in part to pay for oil. In 1953, the CIA overthrew the democratically elected government of Iran, installed the Shah, then traded weapons for oil. Both America and Russia tried to buy Egypt's loyalty by offering more and more weapons. Look at the situation today between America and Saudi Arabia: America trades weapons for oil, and then Saudi Arabia uses those weapons in its war against the tiny country of Yemen. Saudi Arabian pilots, trained by American pilots, drop American bombs from American jets, guided by American satellites, onto neighborhoods and hospitals in Yemen."

He paused, then he summarized with disgust, "Oil and weapons. The Boys do not care how many are killed, as long as they are paid for their oil and weapons."

"And Syria?" I asked, for I knew almost nothing about Yemen, but I did know at least a little bit about Syria from our discussion one day in school.

Magnus looked around, then waved to Erato, just returning from another table with her tray. "Erato, please, three more coffees. And three glasses of your great lemonade. Efcharistó polý."

Then he looked at me, as if wondering how much to say. I was, of course, just a teenager.

"Anna, Syria is a training ground for the next war. Right now, on this very day, Russian pilots are flying Russian jets over Syria, and American pilots are flying American jets over Syria, and sometimes the Russian jets are right behind the American jets—'on their tail', as they say—in the combat position which would enable

them to shoot down their enemy. They do not shoot, of course. The Russian and American pilots are busy targeting the Islamic State and various rebels and insurgents and mercenaries and nineteen-year-old farm boys—poorly educated kids who have grown up milking goats—who are now soldiers drafted into somebody's holy army. Israel sends in a missile now and then. Turkey fires artillery at the Kurds. Everybody is testing their weapons, training their pilots and flight crews, training their infantry, training their officers, training their radio operators and truck drivers and medical teams . . . in preparation for the *next* war." He shook his head, this Norwegian dairy farmer who knew so much about the world. "They do not really give a damn about Syria."

"They don't care about people like . . . Loreen and Lamar?"

"Anna, they have already demonstrated, for *years*, that not only can they drop their bombs on a hospital, but on the *maternity ward* of a hospital, and then fly back to the base for a hot shower and a hamburger."

My mother stiffened in her chair. She was listening, very carefully.

"Something more," said Magnus. "Something more than oil and weapons, the evil twins. Something more than training to fly helicopters and jets." He paused. "The Boys are showing off how powerful they are. The bullies are swaggering."

Erato arrived with our three coffees, and three lemonades, and three breakfast rolls which were, as she told us, "On the house."

"Efcharistó polý," said Magnus with his warm voice and gentle eyes.

We all three took a drink of our coffee as we watched—taking a pause in the discussion of war and refugees—a fishing boat coming into the harbor with a flock of white gulls wheeling overhead in the blue sky.

"Anna," said Magnus, tired but determined, "when George Dubyah Bush and the Boys invaded Iraq in March of 2003, they did something that Lyndon Johnson and the Boys had done back in the spring of 1965. On both occasions, America attacked a small country which had done nothing—absolutely *nothing*—to America. Not a single person from Vietnam had harmed, or even threatened to harm, on Vietnamese soil or on American soil, a single person from America. The Vietnamese had not so much as fired a pea shooter at any American target. And yet . . . Johnson ordered, after years of a limited American military presence in Vietnam, a sudden and massive escalation: Operation Rolling Thunder. Huge B-52 bombers were flown across the Pacific to airbases near Vietnam, so that they could drop their bombs—in many cases chemical bombs—on people who lived in thatch villages and plowed their rice paddies with water buffalo."

He paused, then he asked me, "And do you know why?"

I could only shake my head. The war in Vietnam was ancient history to me.

"They didn't give a damn about Vietnam. Their purpose was to show China and Russia, Vietnam's neighbors, that *America* was the boss in Asia. America would

dominate the markets. America would harvest the resources. America would control the shipping routes. America could not drop its bombs on the Soviet Union, because that would be the start of World War Three and the launching of nuclear missiles. America could not drop its bombs on China, because no one was ever going to win a war against a billion fanatics. So America bombed the hell out of Vietnam—America dropped more bombs on Vietnam over the next ten years than had been dropped in all of World War Two—just to show to anyone in doubt that America was Number One Superpower."

The fishing boat pulled broadside to the wharf near our table, then its engine became silent. The lone fisherman tied his stern line to a piling. The cats began to gather.

"And then, following tradition, Dubyah and the Boys, in March of 2003, invaded another small country far from American shores, a country which had not so much as tossed a pebble at any American citizen. Those terrorists in the jets which flew into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon were mostly from Saudi Arabia. They were *not* from Iraq. Never mind. In Operation Shock and Awe—the Americans are great for coming up with catchy names—during the opening days of the invasion, Bush and the Boys launched roughly 320 cruise missiles at targets in and around Baghdad."

The fisherman walked to the front of his boat and tied the bow line to a piling. Twenty cats—at least—sat along the edge of the wharf, peering into the boat for fish.

The three of us were watching the fisherman and the cats while we listened to Magnus as he spoke with increasing anger in his voice. Maybe we needed something nice to look at, something *positive*, something *reassuring*, while we listened to this tale of madness.

"Anna, do you know what a cruise missile is?"

I glanced at Magnus and shook my head.

"It is a very large missile which carries a very large warhead—either what they still call 'conventional', or nuclear—and it is capable of destroying a very large target. Like an airport. Or an entire factory. Or an electrical power plant. Or a military base."

Several cats jumped from the wharf into the boat. The fisherman paid no attention as he put away various pieces of equipment in the stern. The cats moved toward the heap of nylon net in the bow.

"Cruise missiles travel from their launch site to their target in a very special way. They do not arch through the sky, but fly at a very low altitude, below radar, following a terrain map in their onboard computer—up over hills, down into valleys, around mountains, over lakes—until they reach, with pinpoint precision, their targets. Suddenly, out of nowhere, a giant bomb explodes in downtown Baghdad, knocking out an electrical power plant . . . and shattering, with its shock wave, thousands of

windows in all the surrounding buildings. Apartment buildings, hospitals, schools: suddenly their rooms are full of flying, shattered shards of glass."

More cats were hopping aboard the boat. The cats which had been pestering us beneath our table now joined the others.

"Those cruise missiles had been launched from ten different American ships in the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea. Yes, they were launched from four guided missile cruisers, four destroyers, and two submarines. In addition, two aircraft carriers were sending Hornet and Tomcat fighter jets loaded with bombs—bombs fitted with state-of-the-art guidance systems—to various targets in Baghdad."

The fisherman came out of his wheelhouse, walked to the bow and began to unfold the heap of his yellow net. He tossed the larger fish into an open crate. He tossed the smaller fish, or fish of a sort which he did not want to keep, among the cats swarming around his feet. The cats yowled twice as loudly as they had yowled beneath our table.

"Do you understand, Anna, that the firing of over three hundred cruise missiles, from a fleet of ten ships in two neighboring seas, was a show. A magnificent, horrible show. Yes, in part it was a military maneuver which alerted Saddam Hussein that his days were numbered. But five cruise missiles could have done the job. Even one, with the promise of more to come."

Cats were now hopping from the boat back onto the wharf, each with a small silver fish in its jaws.

"Keep in mind that America was bombing a civilian city whose inhabitants had not harmed, or even threatened to harm, America in any way. The fabled Iraqi nuclear weapons program was bogus. But the oil was very real. Not a single one of those 320 cruise missiles landed on the oil ministry. Oh, this is a dark and dirty story."

The cats spread themselves among the tables of the café, with adequate space between them as they gnawed off the fish heads and removed the meat from the bones.

"The main purpose of Operation Shock and Awe was to display, primarily for the audience in Moscow, a massive show of sophisticated military force. It was a *show*, for the Russians, for the Chinese, for the Iranians, and for the voters back home in America. Letting everybody know that America was top dog."

Magnus drank his coffee. I wondered why we had never invited him to speak at our safe and boring little high school.

"Of course, not so long after, on May 1, 2003, the world was treated to pictures on global television of President Bush landing in a fighter jet on the deck of the aircraft carrier *Abraham Lincoln* off the coast of San Diego. Bush emerged from the jet in a flight suit. He had been a passenger, not the pilot, but he was dressed in a cocky military jacket . . . for show. He posed for pictures with the flight crew. He later gave a speech to America, and to the world, with words that few of us remember,

but with a long banner behind him which all of us remember, for it read, on television screens around the world, 'MISSION ACCOMPLISHED'. Yes, this was a show. A pompous and belligerent show."

Magnus stared out at the sea, his face filled with both anguish and outrage. "The war that Bush and the Boys started back in the spring of 2003 rages on today, almost fifteen years later, in Iraq, in Afghanistan, in Syria, and in a half-dozen other countries where the proxy wars go on and on. The refugees pour out, terrified, desperate, their homes suddenly in the middle of a war zone. A woman and her daughter somehow make their way—without a husband, without a father—to the coast of Turkey, where thieves take her money and put them in a small rubber boat that will *perhaps* take them across a cold dark sea at night, in winter . . . to a beach where a few good-hearted folks will carry them in their arms to safety. A nurse will listen with her stethoscope to a girl's faintly beating heart to know whether or not the girl is still alive. Drops will give them warm clothing. Angels at the Lighthouse will give them a bowl of hot soup and a warm bed."

Magnus paused, then he cupped his hands and shouted north across the sea, "And then *Europe* will tell them that the borders are closed, you have to go live in Moria Camp on the southern tip of Lesvos, which is half prison and half muddy slum. Until we figure out what to do with you."

Now he looked at me, and I saw the tears of rage in his eyes. "That, Anna, is why there are so many refugees."

My mother touched his arm and said quietly, "Thank you, Magnus."

He slumped back in his chair. "You are welcome. You are both welcome. Now please tell me why Norwegians voted last September to re-elect a government which plans to drill for oil in the Arctic. Don't you see, it will be the Persian Gulf, this time on top of the planet. American oil ships, Russian oil ships, American military ships, Russian military ships, submarines prowling out of sight, aircraft carriers parading like cocky roosters along the boundaries of our 'international zones', and no one knows—*no one knows*—how many of those ships and planes and submarines are carrying nuclear weapons."

I heard my mother say—for the first time in my life I heard my mother say—"Shit."

Magnus turned to me with the look of a father achingly afraid for his child. "Anna, we have failed you. We have failed you and your generation. Because it seems that our only policy is . . . to have no policy at all. Our policy is to make the same old mistakes, again and again, and then to dump the entire unprecedented catastrophe into your laps. Here you go, kids. Here's a massive oil spill, at forty degrees below zero in the middle of the Arctic night, when a polar storm rips apart what is left of the ice cap and sends giant sheets of ice toward the oil platforms,

cutting them down as if knives were cutting through little wooden matches." He shook his head, horrified at the vision. "Nobody's going to shut down those dozens of damaged wells gushing oil. It'll be the biggest oil slick in our long and filthy history."

He turned to my mother. "And the oil tankers, adrift in that storm? The aircraft carriers that crash on the rocky coast of Russia with their nukes on board? Sofia, drilling for oil in the Arctic will be our final suicidal madness."

I could see in her face that she was just as afraid as he was. That she *had* been afraid for a long time. Without telling me.

Now Magnus looked at me again, his eyes studying me. "Anna, when the women of the world rise up and roar, this poor old battered world will finally move in a new direction. This poor old world will finally begin to heal. Because women, you women, have never believed in any of this shit. You never had to parade around in a flight suit to show us what a Stud you are. You never ordered giant planes to bomb the peasants in Vietnam for *ten years*. You never ordered gas chambers in Auschwitz, or the siege of Leningrad. You never created mustard gas in a laboratory, and then ordered young soldiers to toss canisters back and forth between their trenches."

Magnus stared at me, searching, hoping. "Anna, I believe in you. I believe in the wisdom and the instincts of women. When a million women march in every country around the world, we will have peace. When they demand an end to the oil, when they demand an end to the weapons, we will have *peace*. When they vote for each other and gain their rightful majority in government, we will have peace."

He paused, until he said with quiet determination, "And then . . . people can finally become what we were born to become, what we were destined to become. Something far better than what we are today."

My mother raised her glass of lemonade. "I'll toast to that."

And so we did, the three of us clinking our glasses together, and then drinking the cold water flavored with strong, fresh lemons.

We thanked Erato and Giorgos. Magnus, ever the gentleman, paid the bill. We said good-bye to the cats, who paid no attention. And then we got into our little blue car and little yellow car and drove back along the coastal road—past the Lighthouse Relief Camp where Lamar and Loreen were sleeping—to the hotel where we mumbled sleepy hellos to the Drops in the lobby, then climbed the stairs to our rooms and took off our yellow vests and winter clothes, and crawled into bed and slept.

Chapter Four

"Sweetheart. Sweetheart." I could hear my mother's voice, singing to me, "Sweeeeeeeetheart!"

I opened my eyes and glanced from my bed toward the hotel room windows; dusk, almost dark. I had slept from noon to . . . "What time is it?"

"Eight o'clock. The hotel dining room is closed. What do you say we go out for a nice dinner in Molyvos? We've got four hours until we head out on patrol at midnight."

"Oh," I groaned. "I hope it's a quiet night."

"Me too. Maybe they declared world peace."

"Mmmmmm." I closed my eyes, drifting back into sleep.

"Anna, I want to show you something that you might find interesting."

"Huh?" I lifted my head from the pillow so that I could see her, seated at our one small desk, looking at the screen of her laptop. "What is it?"

"Something for you to think about. Please, come take a look." She patted the seat of an empty chair, already in place beside her and waiting for me.

I stared at her for a moment, remembering when she had knelt on the beach beside the cold, unconscious body of a little girl. My mother had unbuttoned the sodden jacket and the shirt, tugged up a wet undershirt, then she placed her stethoscope on the wet pale skin over the girl's heart. I had waited . . . waited . . . and then I heard my mother say, "You're a fighter, Sweetheart. Keep fighting. Keep fighting."

I tossed off the blanket, sat up on the edge of the bed, glanced down at my rumpled pink nightgown, then shuffled over to my mother. I sat in the chair and peered at the screen. "What is it?"

She pointed at the title of a website as she read it to me, "Norwegian Center for Human Rights. It's a branch of the Law School at the University of Oslo."

I looked at a picture of a woman standing at the front of a classroom, giving a lecture. And now, as my mother clicked, I saw a picture of a group of students, clearly from a broad range of countries, each one holding a rose as they celebrated some special event. I looked at a picture of a sign in some foreign country that said, "Ballots not bullets." And at a picture of soldiers in camouflage, one of them tying up a prisoner on the ground while another pointed a rifle at the man's head.

My mother scrolled down to the text, which she had clearly already read. "Following high school graduation, the law program at the University takes five years, two of them at the International Center for Human Rights. The work entails a

combination of both courses and research. Here, look." She pointed, "Human Rights and Conflict. You would work with a research group, investigating the human rights of people like Loreen and Lamar."

I leaned toward the screen, reading carefully. "I could work with a research group?"

"Isn't that what you always complain about at your 'dull, dreary, horrible, boring high school'? You're sick of the courses and the exams. You want to *do* something."

"Mom, I've got another year and a half of high school. Can I start at the law school in January?"

"Anna, first you've got to be accepted. I am sure that the entrance requirements are very high. Whereas your grades . . . Well, let's say that you have a year and a half to prove yourself."

She was right. My grades stunk. But high school was so totally, totally *boring*.

"Look here," said my mother, clicking on Studies. She typed in a course number, 5570. I read, International Criminal Law. She scrolled down to Course Content, then pointed with her finger, "International Criminal Law is undergoing a dramatic development these days. This course seeks to present the most current state of this field and its place in the modern international legal system."

She moved her finger down. "This course will discuss . . . the notion of international crimes." A bit further, "War crimes, genocide, crimes against humanity and crimes against peace will be discussed."

She scrolled down a bit further. "The course will seek to discuss current themes such as (for example) . . . military interventions such as the one in Iraq."

Now she looked at me, her eyes questioning. "Maybe the world is waiting for Anna Katerina to take George Dubyah Bush to court. And to kick his ass."

Never in my life had I thought about being a lawyer. Those were dull gray guys with briefcases who made a lot of money and drove fancy cars.

But then again, I had never thought about being a *human rights* lawyer. Nikos, the Greek lifeguard, had lifted that little girl out of the rubber boat and put her into my arms. Maybe that was the start of something.

"What I think you might do," said my mother, "is, when we get home in January, you go visit the Norwegian Center for Human Rights." She clicked on Contact. We saw a picture of a yellow building with a blue trolley in front of it. "They're not at the main law campus, but about a ten minute walk away, as I can see

from the map. Here," she pointed, "they're at Cort Adelersgate 30, second and third floors. You would take the train to National Theater, then walk on Ruseløkkveien through Victoria Terrasse—the Concert Hall will be on your left—to Cort Adelers Street. Turn right and walk about a hundred meters. The yellow building is on your right. It says somewhere in the website that they have a restaurant, so you could have lunch there."

Yes, I knew where the Concert House was. My parents had been taking me there since I was ten years old.

My mother studied me. "What do you think?"

"Will you come with me?"

She smiled. "Yes, I know it's a bit overwhelming. But if you walk in alone, a nicely dressed high school girl who has already studied the website, and you ask for a tour of the Norwegian Center for Human Rights—be sure to ask to see the library—then you will really impress them. Talk with them about admission requirements. Don't tell them about your grades. We've got a year and a half to transform you into an Olympic student. Ask them . . . yes, ask them if you might sit in on some classes. Ask them if you might do some research in the library. Anna, you'll impress them." She nodded, confident, even a little proud.

She continued, "Have lunch in the cafeteria. Treat yourself to a nice big lunch with a cup of coffee, and remember our cups of coffee at the Cavos Café in Skala Sikamineas on Lesvos Island. Then walk over to the main campus of the Law School. Take a peek into the classrooms. Visit the library. Then," she laughed as she clapped her hands, "take the train home to old horrible, boring, dreary Ås and tell your mother about your day."

I sat back in the chair. Could I really do all this?

My mother looked at her watch. "Eight-twenty-five. Anna, you take a shower, then I'll take a shower, and then let's go out to our favorite restaurant in Molyvos."

"The Geia Mas," I said, "with the wonderful family." A family of four—mother and father and two handsome Greek sons—who always greeted us with big smiles. The garlic bread was the best in the world. The salads were so huge, they alone could be a full meal.

"Yes," said my mother, clicking off the laptop. "We'll dress up a bit. Let's celebrate."

And so it came to pass, that a seventeen-year-old girl became, with her mother's guidance, a seventeen-year-old young woman, who, for the first time in her life, had a *purpose*. A purpose that would guide me for the next sixty years. Because, you see, the old lady of seventy-eight is still shaking her fist at any malevolent bastard who even *thinks* that he's going to hurt my precious world.

I had no idea that I—after my successful application, and my entry into Law School in August of 2019—would not only witness but participate in two of the great events in all of human history—a peaceful uprising in 2020, which led to a second peaceful uprising in 2021—each one a long bold stride toward an entirely different future on planet Earth.

Yes, the law student became an architect, one of many architects around the world, of a powerful legal system, of an unprecedented economic system, of a magnificently successful energy system. And, as a result, we all became as well . . . architects of peace.

But I run ahead of myself. We have time, plenty of time, for that momentous story.

My mother and I got dressed, each in the one fancy dress that we had brought, ready for our Night on the Town. We drove into the ancient harbor town of Molyvos, with its castle lit by spotlights on the top of the hill. My mother navigated the narrow cobblestone streets, then we walked to the old stone building where the two handsome sons—Alesandro and Gregory—met us at the door. They led us upstairs, where their mother—"the Boss" as they kidded—and their father—"the best chef on the island"—treated us like honored guests.

My mother and I drank Greek wine, emptied a basket of garlic bread, swooned over the bright red tomatoes in our salads, marveled at the barbecued chicken, then treated ourselves to Greek pastries with unpronounceable names. We both finished with a cup of strong coffee to keep us going through the night.

Because, of course, after dinner, we would drive back to the hotel and change into our layers of Norwegian wool, and our mountain boots and down jackets, wool ski caps and scarves. We would load the back of our little blue car with blankets and winter clothing, with bottles of water, and my mother's first aid case.

Then at midnight, we would roll out of the hotel parking lot onto the road heading east along the northern coast of Lesvos, a rutted dirt road that jounced and wound along the edge of a cliff with no guard rails, no lights. A road that we shared

with occasional other cars from other volunteer organizations—Swiss, Dutch, French, German—with whom we would stop and speak from car window to car window about the news of the night.

Every ten minutes or so we would halt our little blue car, set the emergency brake, then get out and button our coats against the cold wind off the night sea. Standing side by side, wearing gloves, my mother and I would scan the dark water with our binoculars, searching for the faint lights of a tiny black boat, listening for the faint hum of a motor.

And hoping for the day—Would that day ever come?—when mothers and daughters no longer stood at the top of a dark abyss, searching the restless sea for mothers and daughters who had been driven by humanity's madness to abandon their homes in a war zone.

Yes, we searched for refuges on their long desperate journey to find a new home . . . a home which might, perhaps, welcome them.