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morrow we would be in Mykonos and perhaps I could find distraction.

«Adam,» Mother asked, coming to my bedroom door, »will you come out here for a moment?»

Listlessly, I rose and followed her. There in the living room sat Thanos, quiet and radiant.

«We have been talking, Thanos and I,» she went on. «Sit down, darling, you will want to hear this. Our faithful young guide here has come back to remind me that I promised him a reward yesterday. It seems he has come to collect.»

«I don't understand.»

Then let me explain. Of course, if you had been able to speak Greek I should never have had to make the promise of a reward in the first place. You know how much I have wanted you to learn. Thanos here has learnt English through books, and very well I might add, but that is the long, difficult method. And he is very interested in learning even better English. Therefore, he has named his reward. He has asked if you might teach him English, and in turn he will teach you Greek, both classic and modern. I have agreed, with one stipulation—that the two of you live here together; you must be inseparable.»

That was three years ago;—I now speak excellent Greek.

## FORT WAHID

by Chick Weston

The oppressive mid-summer heat and the monotonous droning of the engine of our Jeep merely increased my feeling of depression. When I had accepted this job of equipment inspection officer, it appeared to offer a pleasant change from the monotony of sitting «on my tail» at the supply base, but I was starting to question the wisdom of my actions. My main duty necessitated my travelling every few days to various units of the advance regiments to check and report on their equipment. In any other place but the Libyan desert it might have been enjoyable, but here it was nothing but heat and dust and bumping across the desert in a Jeep. My driver was a pleasant lad of 25, not particularly bright but good natured, and we made up quite a happy team.

We were travelling westward from Tobruk to one of the forward units of the Brigade. It was getting on towards midday when I suggested that we might stop for lunch. I told my driver to turn off towards the coast where we might find a spot where we could enjoy a swim before proceeding further. We turned off and ten minutes later reached the cliffs overhanging the sea—there was no real beach at this particular spot, but some three-hundred yards further along I saw what appeared to be the wall of some ancient building. We drove over and were amazed to find an old ruin. We got out and stretched our aching limbs, then proceeded to inspect the site. There was a square stone structure, some twenty feet in diameter with a doorway facing the desert. At the far end was an opening with steps leading down to a lower level. We descended and found ourselves in a room of similar size with an opening which led onto a small terrace surrounded by a low wall along the cliff edge. At the far end of this terrace was what appeared to be a pool of clear water. On closer inspection it turned out to be the remains of a pier, the sides of which had long since collapsed, forming this natural pool of clear water. As far as we could judge, the water at high tide would flood into this pool, and then slowly empty again as the tide went out.

Without further waste of time we stripped, dived into the cool water and finally emerged, feeling greatly refreshed. We then clambered back to the truck, fetched our rations, and returned to the terrace where we lay naked in the sun, and enjoyed our frugal meal. An hour later we set off again.

I noted the spot on my map, and since there was no place name shown, I called it «Fort Wahid» for no other reason than that my Christian names were *Walter Henry* and my driver's were *Ian David*. During the next two months we stopped there regularly on our trips, sometimes spending the night in the fort. During all this time we never saw another soul near the place.

Then I went to Cairo on leave, and when I returned I found that preparations were being made for an offensive, and I was instructed to make inspection trips to the front line units. My driver had fractured a small bone in his foot during my absence and was in plaster, and since no other drivers could be spared I travelled on my own.

It was mid-afternoon before I reached Fort Wahid, but I was determined to have my swim, and even contemplated spending the night there.

My surprise can easily be imagined when I saw another Jeep standing beside the fort as I arrived there. I could not see anyone on the sea-ward side of the terrace but when I went down the steps I saw a figure lying stretched out—he lay on his back, his head towards me and his one hand over his eyes. The sound of the waves breaking on the rocks had prevented him from hearing me, so I stripped and with my towel thrown over my shoulder I walked out onto the terrace.

«Good afternoon. Has the waiter been round with the tea yet?» I said in my most casual voice. The sleeper awoke with a start and looked around with alarm, at the same time instinctively covering his manhood with his left hand. When he saw I was alone and equally naked, he appeared to relax, sat up and blinked.

«Hell, but you gave me a fright,» was his first remark.

«I'm sorry, but I could not help pulling your leg. At any rate my name is *Walter Brekhill*. I travel up and down the main road quite frequently and having discovered this spot some months back, have called here frequently to swim, to relax and to forget this blasted war. This is the first time, however, that I have ever met anyone here. Are you a frequent visitor?»

«Well, in the first place, I am *Derrick Anderson*. We moved into this area a couple of weeks ago and the men go bathing on the beach a couple of miles up the coast. One afternoon, wishing to be on my own I decided to find a quiet spot and stumbled on this place, but this is the first time anyone else has been here.»

«That is no doubt because I was on leave when you arrived in this area—otherwise I am sure we would have met before.»

Whilst we were talking, I had a chance to study *Derrick*. I estimated his age to be about 25. He was about my height (5'10"), with the solid build of a footballer rather than a runner. His hair was a light brown, his skin, naturally fair, was deeply bronzed from long exposure to the sun. His eyes were steel grey, his teeth white and regular; the lips slightly full and sensuous. Down the centre of his chest was a slight growth of hair like the trunk of a tree, the branches spreading out on both sides as if lending shade to the nipples which were very broad and flat.

We spent a pleasant hour lying there in the sun, chatting about the war and our respective jobs—he was a junior Artillery Officer, and his duties consisted of remaining «on call» for eight hours, then off for another eight hours, with periodical breaks of half a day or a full day occasionally so that he had plenty of time to come down and swim and lie in the sun. He told me that he was going on duty again at midnight until 8 a.m., and then asked me whether I should like to come back to his mess for supper since I had decided to spend the night at this spot. I readily agreed, and so we had a final dip and got dressed.

Then I suddenly had a feeling that I should like to get to know him much better, and to this end suggested that we go up to his mess in his jeep and that he could bring me back afterwards—it was late summer and the nights were warm enough that we could swim and lie around for a while before he returned to duty. He welcomed the suggestion, and so it was that we came back some two hours later.

We stripped and went and sat on the low wall of the terrace overlooking the sea. It was almost high tide and the sea was rushing in and filling the pool. It was a couple of nights after the full moon, just enough light to see, yet dark enough to feel the peace and tranquility around us. We fell to discussing the planets and I was pointing out certain stars—as I did so, I placed my right hand on his shoulder and pointed up with my left hand. I felt him quiver a little, then slowly I pulled him down toward me, till his head rested on my chest, and his arm came down on my leg for support.

After a few minutes I gently raised his arms sufficiently to allow me to slip mine underneath and around his chest. I let my fingers run lightly through the hairs of his chest to where they ended half way down to his navel, and then back again. He said nothing for a while, then I felt his hand tighten its grip on my leg as he turned his head slightly towards me.

«Wally, I cannot remember when I have been so relaxed; when I have felt so at peace with the world. I wish we could just stay like this and forget what lies up in the desert over there.»

He looked up at me and I gently kissed his forehead. He shifted his position, so that his mouth brushed mine, and in a moment we were in a tight embrace. His lips were soft and seeking.

His need and mine required no words. After a few minutes we slowly relaxed our embrace and slipping off the ledge went into the little room where I had previously spread my sleeping bag. For a while we lay in close embrace, content to let our lips speak of our mutual need, then our hands spread out carrying the flaming torch over the whole body, knowing that there was no turning back, nor even wanting one. Like a tornado, sweeping all before it, so did the need for release sweep on, fiery and irresistible, until that final climax, joyous and triumphant, leaving us both peaceful in mind and body.

We lay there in silence for a few minutes longer, content merely to be together and to feel the comforting presence of each other. Derrick was the first to break the silence.

«Wally, you've just taught me something I never knew before. You have shown me how perfect love making can be. I have had a few experiences, but each previous partner has sought merely the fulfilment of his own pleasure. You have given yourself entirely, not asking for more than you have given in its place. Now I have a confession to make. I am married and expecting to become a father at any time. My wife knows nothing of this side of my nature for I lived very discreetly at home, and mixed with a normal crowd most of the time. When I got married I was not sure whether I could forget my true nature, but in the three months before I came out Africa I did not attempt to have any affairs. My wife was two months pregnant when I left home. Since coming out here I have met several people who gave me the glad eye, but they did not interest me. Then this afternoon you came along. As we sat talking I felt myself attracted to you, and when you suggested that we go up to my mess in my jeep so that I would have to bring you back here, I knew that it meant that the attraction was mutual—you see, I was prepared for what has happened. I am glad now, for I know that I can never deny my true self. Do you understand?»

«Yes, Derrick, I can understand. As to giving myself completely, I have always found that lasting love can only come when there is compatibility, and



that can only happen when both give their first thought to gratifying the partner. I reckon we found that.»

The minutes ticked by, yet we were loath to leave, but Derrick had to go back to duty.

I promised to wait the following morning until he came off duty, and he joined me for swim before I left for the front line.

I found a hive of activity for the offensive was believed to be scheduled for a week later. My duties completed I left for my base camp. Derrick was on duty but told me that he would be free at 8 p.m. that evening until midday the following day. I drove to the Fort and awaited his arrival.

Although neither of us mentioned the subject, I think we both had the feeling that this might be our last meeting. It was my birthday and so we had a celebration with a couple of bottles of beer. He did not return to camp that night, and we were bound to each other by a bond that death alone could sever.

After our early morning dip I fetched my camera and took a couple of pictures of Derrick, leaning against the terrace wall, and he took some of me. Then we parted—he to his unit and I to return to my base camp.

A week later I drove up to the front line again, only to find that his unit had left the area. I never saw him again, for when I made enquiries at 2nd Echelon some weeks later I learned that he had been killed in action on the second day of the offensive. I wrote a letter to his widow, and in due course received a reply in which she informed me that she had given birth to a son—on the day of my birthday—and that she had named him Derrick.

The war ended when I was in Italy, but at my request I was transferred back Egypt. I managed to get some transport and drove back over the old familiar scenes to Fort Wahid, and then on to the spot where Graves Registration had informed me that I would find Derrick's grave. A few months later I returned home. Perhaps I should have visited his widow and seen his son, but I never did.

The years passed rapidly. I took over my father's business which prospered to such an extent that I was able to dispose of it eventually at a very good price. I was now able to retire, but as I felt too young to be idle I accepted a position as Manager of a Y.M.C.A. at a town on the coast. The main building was built on top of a low cliff above the yacht club, and next to it was the gymnasium with an open air swimming pool beyond, surrounded by a wall on the land side, so that the members could swim, sunbathe and exercise in the nude...

One afternoon I happened to be strolling around and went into the swimming enclosure. A group of members were throwing about a medicine ball and the only other person present was a young lad of about seventeen, sitting with his back to the wall watching the others. As I strolled over I received a shock—I stared at him for fully half a minute, then strode over and said: «Are you perhaps Derrick Anderson?» «Yes,» he said, looking at me in surprise, and started to rise. I motioned him to remain seated.

«How do you know my name? I am only a visitor and this is the first time I have been here—the first time I have come down here on holiday.»

I did not reply, but reached into my inner jacket pocket and pulled out my wallet. I opened it, then pulled out a slightly tattered, much fingered photograph showing the head and upper body of a young man leaning against a stone wall and smiling happily at me.

Young Derrick took the picture from me and looked down at a picture of himself a few years hence. He looked at it in silence for a few moments, then looked up at me... «Gosh, this is my Dad!» I don't think he could understand the strange expression on my face as I slowly and wordlessly nodded in confirmation.