

In the Hotel des Bergeries in Geneva

>> **The story below follows Chapter Sixteen --- A Patch of sky**

(Page 118, after "I've always known," Michel said, "But Cyprus is a long way, and I wanted to save your money.")

In the Hotel des Bergeries in Geneva, Michel and his wife were sitting with Becket at a window overlooking the lake. On the opposite bank, we could see the white arch of the water-spout. This was a lot nicer than the hotels I'd been in recently, though none of us was staying there. Becket was wearing an open shirt and sunglasses. With his Gary Cooper good looks, he was the only one of all of us who looked as though he was staying at the hotel.

Being in Geneva, you couldn't imagine strife or violence anywhere in the world. That is probably why the city is an appropriate home for the International Red Cross, and exiles from oppressive regimes have come there throughout history, to live a life of hope and illusion, like one of the heroes of my adolescence, the Russian aristocrat Alexander Herzen.

"You're looking well," Michel said, "Elli, doesn't he look well."

"He needs a shave," said Elli said. She was a diminutive woman who wore a plain green dress.

I felt suddenly self-conscious, as I had as a child when I had to come down to meet my parents' friends.

"I've grown it specially," I said, "I don't want to be recognized, if I go."

I don't know why I said *if I go*. It popped out before I thought about it. I always intended to go, but we agreed at the beginning that they would decide. I wanted to feel that others were in charge, that I was a cog in the machinery.

"What do you mean if you go? If you don't go, who will?" she said.

I knew she'd pick up on that.

"I'm willing," I said. "You were going to decide. If it's necessary, I'll go."

"He'll go if it's necessary. What a concession."

"Elli, he says he's willing. Leave him alone."

Michel turned to Becket, and he was suddenly deferential.

"But you must have a talk with Mr. K," he said, talking about me as though I were not there, "And he must agree, there must be a stop to his irrational behavior."

I wheeled around in amazement. His friendly expression was gone.

"Do you deny that your attack of panic was unwise and dangerous?" Elli said. They were giving me a one-two punch. They were not a team for nothing.

Michel took up the attack. "You obliged Jim to take the needless risk of speaking my name over the telephone," he continued, "But I made no mistake with the telephone number. Besides, you had the address. You could have gone over and rung the doorbell."

They expected me to say something. They were at fault, but they expected me to apologize. It was all for Becket's benefit.

"It was a mistake," I said, "I think there have been several mistakes. The important thing is not to make any more mistakes."

"D'accord," Michel said with a smile.

"But how did this happen?" I said standing up suddenly, feeling angry as I usually did when it was too late and I'd missed the chance to show it. "Why did you send me a telegram if you didn't have a boat?"

"Sit down," Michel said, "It will happen when we are ready. There is no deadline."

"Oh, but there is," I said, in the mock whisper I had used in the Daniel Webster Debating Society at Exeter. "There very much is a deadline. Today is September 2, and the man will go down the cliff on the 12th. We have ten days. If he goes down the cliff and there's no boat, he can't get back up."

I didn't explain that we could get him a signal to change the date. No reason to go into that.

"By the way, are we looking for a boat with a cooperative captain, or just any boat?"

"Why?" What happened in Cannes?" Michel said, guessing why I was asking.

"Nothing. But the boat has a Greek captain and a Greek sailor. You'll never get a Greek captain to go through with a plan like this."

"So you won't tell him where you're actually going," Elli said, "When you are about to pass under the island of Amorgos, you'll say 'Isn't that Amorgos? Isn't our friend George staying on Amorgos? Let's go to Amorgos to see our friend George. '"

“And our friend George will just happen to be standing at the bottom of a cliff, waving a flashlight? You think the captain will believe that?”

“But why did you let the time go by?” I went on, getting excited again, “Why did you send me the telegram if you had nothing definite?”

“Sit down and stop worrying,” Michel said, “We’ll have our own captain, from Cyprus.”

He saw my amazement and smiled.

“Our friends in Cyprus understand the danger of the Colonels better than anyone. The colonels are intent on getting rid of Archbishop Makarios and if they do, all our Cypriot friends will be in prison. So you can be sure they’ll help us now, while they can.”

“They have a boat?”

“Of course.”

“When did you hear that?”

“I have known all the time. But Cyprus is a long way, and I was trying to save your money. I knew I couldn't be back in Geneva until today, and if you had to stay here doing nothing, I knew you'd go crazy and probably drive my wife crazy. So I gave you things to do.”

He saw I was not amused, and he added, “Of course, there might have been a boat in Milan or Cannes, and we could have saved the air-fare. But now we can't avoid it. We will have to go to Cyprus. We'll do what we have to.”

“All right, but to avoid the problem I had before,” I said, “I wonder if I could know your last name?”

Michel laughed. “Jimmy kept the secret well,” he said, smiling at Becket, “Raptis, Michael Raptis. Tailor in Greek.”