

Maria's Dinner party in London

>> This story takes place years after The Amorgos Escape

In the eighties, my wife Lucy and I ran into Maria in London, and she invited us to dinner at her new flat in Knightsbridge. I had gone into shipping then, first because I had to make a living, and secondly, because I thought if people were going to view me as a ship owner wherever I went, I might as well become one and try to make some money.

I expected an informal dinner such as the ones we had at the Becket's apartment in Geneva, and we brought our baby Delia. When we came in, we saw a table laid for eighteen, and I realized we had broken etiquette by bringing a baby to a Greek dinner party.

Not only a dinner party, but a political one at that. Elections would be held in Greece that year. Mitsotakis was running for the Conservatives against Papandreou and the Socialists. As Mitsotakis predicted, the Center had ceased to exist.

Maria had assembled a lot of prominent Mitsotakis supporters and other friends, including Maria's ex-husband Petros Bulgarides, a ship owner. I sat down next to Bulgarides, as I had gone into shipping by then and I thought we might have something in common. We may have had more in common even than I knew, for Maria absolutely refused to let us sit together. She ordered Bulgarides to change his seat and stood over him until he obeyed.

Thereupon baby Delia made such a rumpus that she and Lucy had to be excused. Then choosing the political statement that suited me, I excused myself to join them, leaving the grown-ups to carry on their discussion of the fate of the nation, while upstairs, Lucy and I and Maria's daughter Sandra, then a medical student in Geneva, played with Delia.

When at last I came downstairs with my wife and child, a roomful of Greek people turned to look at me, the way some group or other had looked at me ever since I was old enough to walk. This time, I looked at them all quite coolly and said, "The bad children have come to say good-night."