MEET ANDREW WOODS, AN UNKNOWN ACTOR WHO DREAMED OF STARDOM, AND MARINA KATSAROS, A FLEDGLING JOURNALIST. THEY WERE A NEWLY MARRIED COUPLE WHO HAD JUST TRAVELED ALL THE WAY FROM THE USA TO THE BALKANS AFTER RECEIVING WHAT THEY BELIEVED TO BE THE BEST WEDDING GIFT EVER...

OH BABE! I JUST CAN'T BELIEVE HOW GREAT THIS PLACE LOOKS!
I'M STARTING TO BELIEVE YOU WERE RIGHT ALL ALONG... GREECE INDEED SEEMS TO BE THE MOST BEAUTIFUL PLACE IN THE WORLD!

I TOLD YOU, DIDN'T I?
THERE'S NO WAY I COULD REMEMBER EVERYTHING!
BUT EVEN I AM AMAZED AT HOW BEAUTIFUL EVERYTHING LOOKS AROUND HERE! YOU KNOW I LEFT GREECE WHEN I WAS STILL A LITTLE GIRL...

YEAH, YOU TOLD ME YOUR PARENTS DECIDED TO MOVE TO AMERICA WHEN YOU WERE STILL A CHILD, RIGHT? I BET IT MUST FEEL WONDERFUL TO BE BACK IN YOUR HOMELAND AFTER SO LONG.
AND ALL THIS THANKS TO THIS UNCLE OF YOURS! I DON'T KNOW HOW WE WILL EVER BE ABLE TO THANK HIM! HE NOT ONLY GAVE US THE AIR TICKETS BUT ALSO BOOKED ONE OF THE BEST ROOMS IN HIS HOTEL FOR US... ALL FOR FREE!
IF I REMEMBER UNCLE NIKOS WELL, HE'LL BE PLEASED IF WE JUST EAT AND DRINK WITH HIM UNTIL DAWN. HE HAS ALWAYS BEEN A BON VIVANT... THERE'S NOTHING HE LOVES MORE THAN A GOOD PARTY.

HA! SOUNDS LIKE SOMEONE I COULD DEFINITELY GET ALONG WITH!
YOU'LL HAVE THE CHANCE TO MEET HIM TONIGHT.
BUT UNTIL THEN... WHY DON'T WE RELAX A LITTLE BIT AT THE POOL AND THEN WE CAN COME BACK TO OUR ROOM TO HAVE SOME FUN, HUH?
A PERFECT PLAN, BABE! GOD, IT ALL ALMOST SEEMS TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE...

Chapter One
A Peculiar Offer

AH, HERE ARE MY GUESTS OF HONOUR! WELCOME!

HEY, UNCLE NIKOS!
NICE TO MEET YOU, MR. SAMARAS!
THE PLEASURE IS ALL MINE, YOUNG MAN! PLEASE, CALL ME NIKOS. YOU'RE PART OF THE FAMILY NOW!

AND HERE ARE MY LOVELY DAUGHTERS, EVA AND SOFIA!
HEY!
NOW LET'S SIT DOWN! MY CHEF HAS MADE A SPECIAL DINNER FOR US. WE COULD HAVE JUST WENT TO THE HOTEL RESTAURANT, SURE, BUT I THOUGHT YOU TWO WOULD ENJOY THIS PLACE. I WANT TO KNOW EVERYTHING ABOUT THE WEDDING. IT'S SO SAD THAT WE COULDN'T ATTEND!

SOME TIME LATER...
THE FOOD WAS WONDERFUL, NIKOS! THE DESSERT... WAS IT KATAIFI?
THAT'S CORRECT, ANDREW. HOW DID YOU KNOW?

OH, ANDREW STARTED RESEARCHING A LOT ABOUT GREECE SINCE WE STARTED DATING. HE'S REALLY GOOD AT MEMORIZING STUFF, WHICH IS IMPORTANT TO HIS WORK. HE EVEN LEARNED TO SPEAK SOME GREEK.
BUT AS YOU CAN SEE, HIS ACCENT ISN'T THAT GOOD.
Αληθής!

HAHAHA
HAHAHA
HAHAHA

THIS REMINDS ME OF GIUSEPPE, AN OLD ITALIAN FRIEND OF MINE..
OH, HERE WE GO...
DAD LOVES TO TELL STORIES ABOUT THIS GIUSEPPE GUY. WE GREW UP LISTENING TO IT. THEY WERE INSEPARABLE IN YOUTH...
...AND GOT INTO A LOT OF TROUBLE.
UNTIL ONE OF THEM GOT MARRIED AND BECAME A RESPONSIBLE ADULT, AND IT WASN'T DAD.

NOW, NOW THERE'S NO REASON TO BE SO HARD ON YOUR OLD FATHER, GIRLS. THE THING IS, I'VE NEVER HAD MUCH LUCK IN RELATIONSHIPS.
BUT YOU'VE CERTAINLY TRIED A LOT, WITH MANY WOMEN.
HA! THIS I CAN'T DENY! BUT ANYWAY, AS I WAS SAYING, GIUSEPPE ALSO LEARNED SOME GREEK DURING THE TIME HE WAS HERE, ALTHOUGH HE WAS NEVER PARTICULARLY GOOD AT IT. THEN, ON A TRIP WE TOOK TO CRETA, HE... OH, BUT WAIT A MOMENT. THIS STORY DESERVES ANOTHER ROUND OF DRINKING. MARIOS, BRING MORE WINE, PLEASE!

HALF AN HOUR AND A LOT OF WINE LATER...
DID GIUSEPPE REALLY DISGUISE HIMSELF AS A GREEK ORTHODOX NUN? AND CONVINCED THE RESTAURANT OWNER HE HAD AN AMULET THAT HAD BELONGED TO ONE OF THE PROPHETS?
THAT WAS HOW WE MANAGED TO LEAVE THE RESTAURANT, AS WE FOUND OUT A LITTLE TOO LATE THAT WE DIDN'T HAVE THE MONEY TO PAY THE BILL.
OH, NIKOS, WHAT A HILARIOUS STORY!

ANYWAY, ALL THIS HAPPENED A LONG TIME AGO, WHEN I WAS STILL A YOUNG, RECKLESS MAN. THINGS ARE A LOT LESS EXCITING THESE DAYS.
BUT YOU'RE NOT DOING BAD AT ALL, NIKOS. THIS HOTEL OF YOURS IS A PARADISE! I WOULD SAY SPENDING YOUR DAYS HERE IS A GOOD WAY TO ENJOY LIFE.
I CAN'T DENY THAT I'VE BEEN LUCKY IN BUSINESS. I BOUGHT THIS PLACE WHEN THE REGION WASN'T SUCH A HOT SPOT, AND THEN THINGS JUST WORKED OUT.

YOU'RE BEING MODEST, UNCLE NIKOS. MY MOM ALWAYS SAID YOU'RE A BRILLIANT BUSINESSMAN

OH, YOUR MOTHER HAS ALWAYS BEEN A KIND WOMAN! BUT I'LL TELL YOU SOMETHING, I HAVE A BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY THAT, IF SUCCESSFUL, WILL REALLY MAKE ME HIT BIG! BUT MY CHANCES ARE NOT GOOD, I WOULD SAY.
WHY NOT?

LONG STORY SHORT, MY ACCOUNTANT PUT ME IN TOUCH WITH AN ALBANIAN BILLIONAIRE WHO IS INTERESTED IN OPENING A CHAIN OF RESORTS ACROSS THE BALKANS AND WANTS A PARTNER WITH KNOW-HOW IN THE AREA.
BUT THE THING IS, FROM WHAT I RESEARCHED, THE OLD MAN IS VERY CONSERVATIVE... A REAL RELIGIOUS ZEALOT, I'D SAY. I DON'T THINK HE WOULD DO BUSINESS WITH A MAN LIKE ME, A BACHELOR IN HIS FIFTIES, WITHOUT A 'TRADITIONAL FAMILY'.

AH, BUT NOW THAT I REMEMBERED THE STORY WITH MY OLD FRIEND GIUSEPPE, A CRAZY IDEA CROSSED MY MIND. TELL ME, YOUNG MAN, ARE YOU GOOD AT YOUR JOB? CAN YOU PLAY ANY ROLE?
WELL, I LIKE TO THINK I'M A GOOD ACTOR, YES, ALTHOUGH I STILL HAVE A LOT TO LEARN.
UMM... INTERESTING!

THEN WHAT YOU SAY ABOUT A LITTLE ADVENTURE? THE ALBANIAN GUY WILL COME TO MY RESORT IN A FEW DAYS. WHY DON'T YOU GET DISGUISED AS A WOMAN, MY WIFE AND MOTHER OF MY LOVELY DAUGHTERS?
AH, YOU ARE KIDDING ME, RIGHT? THERE IS NO WAY THIS COULD WORK!

WHY NOT? FROM WHAT I'VE HEARD, THE OLD MAN IS VIRTUALLY BLIND, ANYWAY. WE CAN SAY THAT YOU ARE THE DAUGHTER OF AN AMERICAN MAN WITH A GREEK WOMAN, AND THAT YOU SPENT MANY YEARS IN THE US, HENCE YOUR ACCENT.
BESIDES, DID I TELL YOU WHAT MY BELOVED DAUGHTERS DO FOR A LIVING? THEY OWN A VERY EXCLUSIVE BEAUTY SPA, THE MOST REQUESTED IN ATHENS, I'D DARE TO SAY. WHAT YOU THINK, GIRLS? COULD YOU TURN OUR FRIEND HERE INTO A CHARMING WIFE AND MOTHER FOR A FEW DAYS?

WELL, I THINK THIS IS POSSIBLE, IF HE REALLY IS A GOOD ACTOR.
YEAH, I LIKE THE CHALLENGE.

IF THIS WORKS, YOU'LL BE VERY WELL REWARDED, OF COURSE. BUT IF NOT, THAT'S FINE! AT LEAST WE'LL HAVE ANOTHER FUNNY STORY TO REMEMBER AT DINNER PARTIES.

WHAT YOU THINK BABE?
ARE YOU GUYS SERIOUS?! I CAN'T PICTURE YOU PASSING AS A WOMAN, ESPECIALLY AN OLDER ONE, BUT IF YOU WANT TO GIVE IT A TRY, I HAVE NO PROBLEM LENDING MY HUSBAND FOR A FEW DAYS SO THAT HE CAN BE MY UNCLE'S WIFE. IT MAKES YOU MY AUNT, I GUESS!

HA, VERY FUNNY! YOU KNOW WHAT, IT MAY BE THE WINE SPEAKING FOR ME, BUT THIS CRAZY IDEA SOUNDS LIKE AN INTERESTING CHALLENGE, INDEED...
OKAY, GUYS, LET'S TRY IT!

Chapter Two
Time for a Change

OH, YOU'RE FINALLY HERE!
WE WERE WAITING FOR YOU!

SORRY FOR BEING LATE, GIRLS. I HAVE A TERRIBLE HANGOVER, AND I WOULD PROBABLY STILL BE ASLEEP IF MARINA HADN'T WOKEN ME UP.
SHE THEN BROUGHT ME HERE AND WENT SHOPPING OR SOMETHING.

IT'S OKAY, DON'T WORRY. SO, ARE YOU READY FOR YOUR TRANSFORMATION?
UMM... ABOUT THIS, ARE YOU GUYS SURE IT'S A GOOD IDEA? LAST NIGHT I WAS SO DRUNK, AND...

NO GIVING UP NOW, DEAR! WE OPENED THE SALON EARLY ESPECIALLY FOR YOU. AS YOU'VE PROBABLY NOTICED, WE'RE REALLY LOOKING FORWARD TO FINALLY HAVING A MOM. EVEN IF JUST FOR A FEW DAYS.
ALRIGHT, ALRIGHT... LET'S DO IT THEN.

YOU CAN GO TO THE DRESSING ROOM TO CHANGE INTO A ROBE. THIS WAY YOU'LL BE MORE COMFORTABLE.
WE AND THE OTHER GIRLS WILL BE BE HERE WHEN YOU COME BACK.

AND SO THE MAKEOVER BEGAN.
FIRST STEP, FULL BODY WAXING...
MAN, THAT WAS THE MOST PAINFUL THING I'VE EVER EXPERIENCED!

THEN, A GAFF TO KEEP HIS UNWANTED PARTS OUT OF SIGHT...
IS T-THIS REALLY NECESSARY? C'MON, GIRLS!

FINALLY, A CORSET WITH INSERTS TO GIVE HIM A NICE FIGURE AND "SOME BOOBS".
I CAN'T 'BREATHE! I CAN'T 'BREATHE!
JUST TRY TO RELAX. YOU'LL GET USED TO IT IN NO TIME. NOW LET'S WORK ON YOUR FACE AND HAIR, SHALL WE, MOM?

NOW, WE'RE GOING TO WORK ON YOUR HAIR AND MAKEUP.
WE'VE DONE THEATER MAKEUP BEFORE, SO WE KNOW A TRICK OR TWO TO MAKE YOU LOOK LIKE A BEAUTIFUL MATURE LADY.
JUST PERFECT TO BE OUR ELEGANT AND EXQUISITE MOM!

EYEBROWS AND FOUNDATION DONE!

AND NOW EYESHADOW, EYELASHES AND BLUSH!

OUCH! WHAT WAS THAT?
I PIERCED YOUR EARS. A WOMAN LIKE YOU NEEDS TO WEAR FANCY EARRINGS PRETTY MUCH ALL THE TIME, AFTER ALL.

UMM... I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY YOU COVERED THE MIRROR. CAN I SEE HOW I LOOK?
NOT YET... YOU BETTER WAIT UNTIL THE END TO GET THE WHOLE PICTURE. IT'S TIME FOR YOUR EXTENSIONS.

YOU KNOW WHAT, MOM? I THINK THIS WOULD BE APPROPRIATE FOR YOU TO START TALKING AND BEHAVING LIKE A WOMAN YOUR AGE.
W-WHAT YOU MEAN?
Soft and Silky Lotion

YOU KNOW VERY WELL WHAT EVA IS TALKING ABOUT. I DON'T THINK IT'S RIGHT FOR OUR MOM TO SOUND LIKE A YOUNG AMERICAN MAN.
DO I REALLY NEED TO TRY THIS NOW?
THE SOONER THE BETTER, DON'T YOU THINK?

AHEM... HOW ABOUT THIS? DOES THIS SOUND GOOD?
NOT BAD... IT SEEMS LIKE YOU REALLY ARE A GOOD ACTOR... OR MAYBE YOU ARE JUST MEANT TO BE OUR MOM *GIGGLE* BUT YOU MUST SOUND A LITTLE MORE REFINED AND MATURE...WITH A SLIGHT SCRATCH IN YOUR VOICE IF POSSIBLE. AND DON'T FORGET TO SPEAK IN GREEK FROM NOW ON.

Σαν αυτό?
YEAH, LIKE THIS. YOU'RE ON THE RIGHT TRACK. WITH A LITTLE PRACTICE YOU'LL DO FINE. NOW, ARE YOU READY TO SEE THE NEW YOU, MRS. ELENA SAMARAS?

OH MY...!

Chapter Three
Dress to Success

NOW THOSE ARE BEAUTIFUL HEELS FOR A BEAUTIFUL LADY!

THIS IS COMPLETELY CRAZY, MARINA! I'VE SPENT THE LAST THREE DAYS PRACTICING WALKING IN HIGH HEELS BUT I'M STILL HAVING A HARD TIME.

AND THE HEELS AREN'T MY ONLY PROBLEM... THE CORSET HAS BEEN KILLING ME AND THE PROSTHETICS ARE A PAIN IN THE ASS.

NOT TO MENTION EVERYTHING THAT GOES INTO PRETENDING TO BE A WOMAN... THE VOICE, MANNERISMS, GESTURES...

AS AN ACTOR, I HAD NO IDEA THIS WOULD BE SO DIFFICULT.

YOU ALMOST SOUND LIKE YOU'RE NOT HAVING FUN, MRS. SAMARAS.
HA! VERY FUNNY, YOUNG LADY! DO YOU REALLY NEED TO TREAT ME AS IF I REALLY WERE YOUR AUNT ALL THE TIME?

OF COURSE, MA'AM! THAT'S WHAT I PROMISED UNCLE NIKOS. FOR ALL INTENTS AND PURPOSES, YOU'RE JUST MY AUNT ELENA FOR NOW.

WELL, ALL I CAN SAY IS THAT I CAN HARDLY WAIT FOR THIS NIGHT TO BE OVER SO I CAN BE YOUR HUSBAND AGAIN. THIS IS NOT HOW I THOUGHT OF SPENDING OUR HONEYMOON.
KNOCK! KNOCK!

SPEAKING OF HUSBAND, I THINK UNCLE NIKOS JUST ARRIVED. I'M SURE HE'LL BE PLEASED TO SEE HOW BEAUTIFUL YOU LOOK, AUNT ELENA.

GOOD EVENING, LADIES. OH, YOU LOOK STUNNING, ELENA, HONEY!

THE GIRLS REALLY DID A FABULOUS JOB ON HER, DIDN'T THEY, UNCLE NIKOS?

ABSOLUTELY! BUT MAKEUP OR NOT, ELENA IS ALWAYS A GORGEOUS WOMAN. I FEEL BLESSED TO HAVE FOUND SOMEONE SO SPECIAL.
OH, AUNT ELENA, YOU ARE SO LUCKY TO HAVE SUCH A LOVING HUSBAND WHO LIKES YOU SO MUCH!

NOW IF YOU'LL EXCUSE US, I'D LIKE TO SPEAK WITH MY WIFE ALONE FOR A MOMENT, MARINA.
OF COURSE, UNCLE NIKOS. I WILL GIVE YOU GUYS SOME PRIVACY.

HOW ARE YOU FEELING, DARLING?
HONESTLY? I'M TRYING TO KEEP IT COOL, BUT THE TRUTH IS THAT I'M ALMOST FREAKING OUT! IT'S SO WEIRD TO SEE EVERYONE AROUND ME TREATING ME AS IF I REALLY WERE YOUR MIDDLE-AGED WIFE.

WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT, ELENA? HOW ELSE WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE TREATED?
YOU ARE MY WIFE... AT LEAST FOR TONIGHT!

VERY FUNNY, NIKOS!

NOW SERIOUSLY, YOU'RE THE ACTRESS HERE, RIGHT? YOU KNOW BETTER THAN I DO THAT THE MORE YOU GET INTO CHARACTER, BELIEVING THAT YOU REALLY ARE ELENA SAMARAS, THE BETTER YOU'LL BE ABLE TO PLAY THE CHARACTER.
THIS... THIS MAKES SENSE, BUT...

RELAX, DEAR... EVERYTHING WILL BE ALRIGHT. AS I SAID BEFORE, YOU'LL BE VERY WELL REWARDED FOR YOUR INVALUABLE HELP. JUST HANG IN UNTIL THE END OF THE NIGHT AND I'LL GIVE YOU THIRTY THOUSAND DOLLARS FOR YOUR SERVICES.

T-THIRTY THOUSAND?

EXACTLY. I BELIEVE YOU'VE NEVER BEEN SO WELL PAID FOR A SINGLE GIG, EH? BUT TRY NOT TO SOUND SO EXCITED... I DON'T WANT TO THINK THAT I GOT MARRIED TO A GOLD DIGGER. *LAUGHTER*

BUT SPEAKING OF GETTING MARRIAGE, THERE IS SOMETHING IMPORTANT MISSING, I BELIEVE...
SOMETHING I WAS SUPPOSED TO HAVE DONE TWENTY-EIGHT YEARS AGO OR SO, I GUESS? ELENA, WOULD YOU DO ME THE HONOR OF BEING MY WIFE?
W-WHAT ARE YOU DOING, NIKOS?!

I... I G-GUESS SO?

FANTASTIC, DARLING. I PROMISE TO MAKE YOU THE HAPPIEST WOMAN IN THE WORLD!

DID HE REALLY JUST KISS ME ON THE CHEEK? GOD, ALL THIS IS SO FREAKING WEIRD!
AND THE RING... IT MAKES EVERYTHING SEEM SO TWISTED AND REAL... WHAT DID I GET MYSELF INTO?

Chapter Four
Now or Never

WE'RE ALMOST THERE, ELENA. WE'LL MEET THE ALBANIAN MAN AT THE SAME PLACE WE HAD DINNER A FEW NIGHTS AGO. YOU REMEMEBER THERE, RIGHT? WE'LL HAVE PRIVACY AND YOU WON'T HAVE TO INTERACT WITH ANYONE ELSE, BESIDES THE SERVICE STAFF, OF COURSE. ARE YOU OKAY?

I DON'T REMEMBER EVER BEING THIS NERVOUS, BUT I CAN DO IT... I KNOW I CAN.

I HAVE FULL CONFIDENCE IN YOU, DEAR. I KNOW YOU'LL BE A PERFECT WIFE TONIGHT. AND REMEMBER THAT I'LL BE BY YOUR SIDE THE WHOLE TIME.
T-THANK YOU...?

JUST ONE MORE THING BEFORE WE GO. WE'RE SUPPOSED TO BE TOGETHER FOR MANY, MANY YEARS, SO IT'S ONLY NATURAL THAT WE HAVE A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF INTIMACY. I MAY TOUCH YOUR ARM OR HOLD YOUR HAND FROM TIME TO TIME, AND IT'S IMPORTANT THAT YOU DON'T LOOK SURPRISED OR SCARED WHEN I DO SO.
O-OKAY... I UNDERSTAND.

FANTASTIC, ELENA! I KNEW I COULD COUNT ON YOU!
IS HE KISSING ME AGAIN? GOD, WHY DOES HE NEED TO KEEP KISSING ME ALL THE TIME?

SHALL WE GO, THEN?

SURE, DEAR HUSBAND.
AH, I SEE YOU'RE GETTING MORE COMFORTABLE IN YOUR ROLE. THIS IS JUST GREAT!

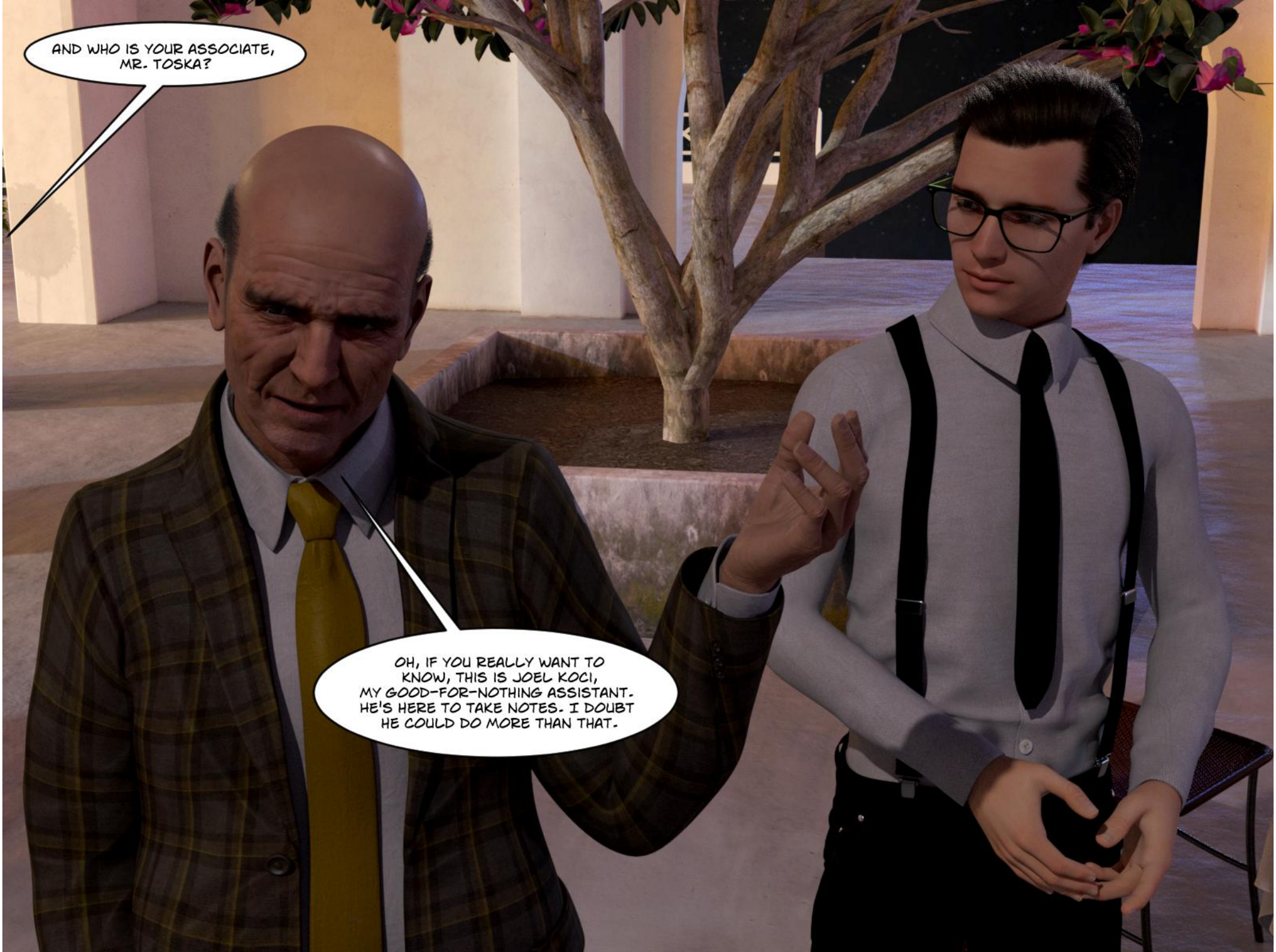
I WOULDN'T SAY "COMFORTABLE" IS THE RIGHT WORD TO DESCRIBE HOW I'M FEELING. HOWEVER, I'M AN ACTOR, AND IT'S TIME TO PLAY MY ROLE... TONIGHT I'M ELENA SAMARAS, A MIDDLE-AGED WIFE AND MOTHER. IT'S NOW OR NEVER... WHAT CAN GO WRONG, RIGHT?

OH NO...
LOOK DOWN THERE. IT SEEMS OUR GUEST DIDN'T COME ALONE. HOW STUPID AM I! I SHOULD HAVE GUESSED THAT A MAN LIKE HIM WOULDN'T BE TRAVELLING BY HIMSELF!
WHAT?

WHAT WILL WE DO NOW, NIKOS? YOU SAID THE ALBANIAN MAN WAS VIRTUALLY BLIND! I DON'T THINK I CAN PASS AS A WOMAN IN FRONT OF SOMEONE ELSE WITH GOOD EYESIGHT, NO MATTER HOW GOOD EVA AND SOFIA ARE AS BEAUTICIANS!
KEEP CALM, DARLING. YOU TRUST ME, DON'T YOU? I HAVE A PLAN.

NICE TO MEET YOU, MR. TOSKA! I WAS LOOKING FORWARD TO FINALLY SEEING YOU IN PERSON. I HOPE YOU HAD A GOOD TRIP!
YES, YES, IT WAS OKAY.

PLEASE, LET ME INTRODUCE YOU TO ELENA, MY WIFE.
HELLO, MA'AM.


AND WHO IS YOUR ASSOCIATE, MR. TOSKA?
OH, IF YOU REALLY WANT TO KNOW, THIS IS JOEL KOCI, MY GOOD-FOR-NOTHING ASSISTANT. HE'S HERE TO TAKE NOTES. I DOUBT HE COULD DO MORE THAN THAT.

I'M SURE THAT MR. TOSKA IS JUST KIDDING AROUND, RIGHT? YOU LOOK VERY COMPETENT, YOUNG MAN. NICE TO MEET YOU!

OOPS...
OUCH!

I'M SORRY, JOEL. I DIDN'T MEAN TO...
T-THAT'S FINE, MR. SAMARAS. ACCIDENTS HAPPEN.

DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT. I'VE ALWAYS TOLD HIM THAT GLASSES ARE FOOLISHNESS. I FOR ONE HAVE NEVER WORN A PAIR!
THAT'S WHY HE CAN'T SEE AN INCH BEFORE HIS NOSE.

BUT ENOUGH OF THIS. SHALL WE DISCUSS BUSINESS? I DON'T HAVE ALL NIGHT.
OF COURSE, MR. TOSKA. PLEASE, TAKE A SIT.

AN HOUR LATER...
I BELIEVE EVERYTHING IS GOING SMOOTH SO FAR. GOD, I CAN'T BARELY WAIT FOR THIS NIGHT TO COME TO AN END! NIKOS WAS VERY CLEVER AT BREAKING JOEL'S GLASSES. HE SEEMS ALMOST BLIND NOW, JUST LIKE MR. TOSKA. I DON'T THINK ANY OF THEM WILL REALIZE THAT I AM A MAN IN DISGUISE.
SOME DETAIL RIGHT. OF COURSE, THIS IS NOT A SHOR -TERM PLAN, SO WE NEED TO MAKE SUR WE'RE ON THE SAME PAGE.
POOR GUY... HE LOOKS AS NERVOUS AS I AM. THAT'S NOT SURPRISING CONSIDERING WHO HIS BOSS IS. IT MUST BE TERRIBLE WORKING FOR SOMEONE LIKE MR. TOSKO.

I'LL WONDER FOREVER WHAT I WAS THINKING WHEN I AGREED TO TAKE PART IN THIS SCHEME. THAT'S WHYI DECIDED NOT TO DRINK TONIGHT. I CAN'T TRUST MYSELF WHEN I AM DRUNK.
AND WHAT DO YOU THINK, MRS. SAMARAS?

EXCUSE ME, MR. TOSKA? SORRY, I WAS DISTRACTED FOR A MOMENT.
IT SEEMS YOU'VE BEEN DISTRACTED ALL NIGHT. YOU ALSO SEEM TO BE AVOIDING FACING YOUR HUSBAND. IS EVERYTHING ALRIGHT? MAYBE YOU TWO ARE GOING THROUGH SOME COUPLE ISSUES?

OH, I HAVE TO SAY YOU COULDN'T BE FURTHER FROM THE TRUTH, MR. TOSKA! ELENA AND I ARE STILL AS CLOSE AS WHEN WE GOT MARRIED, NEARLY THIRTY YEARS AGO. RIGHT, DEAR?
O-OF COURSE, HONEY! FORGIVE ME FOR MY BEHAVIOR TONIGHT, MR. TOSKA. IT'S USUALLY NIKOS WHO TAKES CARE OF THE FAMILY BUSINESS.

I SEE... WELL, I HOPE THAT'S REALLY THE CASE. A MAN WHO CANNOT MANAGE HIS OWN FAMILY IS NOT FIT FOR BUSINESS. THAT'S WHAT I THINK.

M-MAYBE YOU JUST NEED A GLASS OF WINE, MRS. SAMARAS. I NOTICED YOUR GLASS IS STILL FULL.
NO!
I'M S-SORRY, MA'AM... I WAS JUST TRYING TO HELP.

PLEASE, FORGIVE ME, JOEL. I DIDN'T MEAN TO BE RUDE. IT'S JUST THAT I'M ON A DIET. YOU KNOW HOW WOMEN ARE... ALWAYS WANTING TO LOSE A POUND OR TWO. SO I'VE BEEN AVOIDING ALCOHOL. BUT... A LITTLE GLASS WON'T HURT, RIGHT?

AFTER BEING SUCH A BITCH, I'VE NO CHOICE BUT TO DRINK AT LEAST A GODDAMN GLASS OF WINE. THE WAY I'M ACTING, I'M GOING TO END UP SCREWING EVERYTHING UP. I NEED A MOMENT TO BREATHE.

NOW IF YOU GENTLEMEN WILL EXCUSE ME, I'M GOING TO THE LADIES' ROOM. I PROMISE I'LL BE BACK IN A MINUTE.

Chapter Five
With a Little Help From a Friend?

YOU NEED TO CALM DOWN, ANDREW...
NO, YOU NEED TO CALM DOWN, ELENA!
CALM DOWN RIGHT NOW!

YOU CAN DO IT. THIS IS JUST A BUSINESS DINNER, FOR GOD'S SAKE!

YOU CAN'T RUIN EVERYTHING FOR NIKOS.

HE... HE'S YOUR HUSBAND. YOU HAVE TO BELIEVE IT!

JESUS, I HOPE THIS IS THE RIGHT PLACE!
WAIT... IS SOMEONE COMING? I WASN'T READY FOR IT. NIKOS SAID THIS RESTROOM WOULDN'T BE AVAILABLE TO THE GUESTS TONIGHT. WHAT AM I GOING TO DO NOW?

THIS IS THE RESTROOM, RIGHT? WHY IS THIS SO DARK?
I'M S-SORRY. I FORGOT TO TURN ON ALL THE LIGHTS AND...

IT'S ALL RIGHT! MY HEAD IS KILLING ME. I THINK IT'S BETTER THIS WAY. SORRY ABOUT THE SUNGLASSES... DID I MENTION MY HEAD IS KILLING ME? I'M JOANNA, BY THE WAY. JOANNA MYLONAS. IT'S SOOO HARD TO FIND A RESTROOM IN THIS HOTEL!
MAYBE I GOT LOST. I WAS HAVING DINNER AT THE RESTAURANT AND IT TOOK ME FOREVER TO GET HERE. HOTELS IN GREECE ARE DEFINITELY NOT ON THE SAME LEVEL AS THOSE IN LONDON OR PARIS. YOU HAVE A FUNNY ACCENT. YOU'RE NOT GREEK, ARE YOU?

GOD, THIS WOMAN TALKS REALLY FAST. IT'S NOT EASY TO UNDERSTAND SOMEONE SPEAKING GREEK THIS WAY.

SO...?
S-SORRY! YES, IN FACT, I WAS BORN IN GREECE. BUT I'VE LIVED MANY YEARS IN AMERICA WHEN MY PARENTS MOVED THERE. I'M ELENA. ELENA SAMARAS.

AMERICA, HUH? OH, THAT MUST HAVE BEEN EXCITING! WHAT BROUGHT YOU BACK?
MY HUSBAND. HE'S ALSO GREEK, AND I CAME BACK WHEN WE GOT MARRIED.

HUSBANDS! ALWAYS DRAGGING US FROM ONE SIDE TO THE OTHER! I'M PRACTICALLY A NOMAD, YOU KNOW, AS MY HUSBAND HAS BUSINESSES ALL OVER THE WORLD. I WON'T DENY IT, THIS IS FABULOUS MOST OF THE TIME, BUT I CAN'T BE MORE DEPRESSED WHEN I HAVE TO SPEND MONTHS IN SOME GODFORSAKEN HOLE.
BEFORE THE LAST TRIP, I SAID THAT I WOULD ONLY GO ON THE CONDITION THAT I WOULD BE IMMENSELY REWARDED LATER. DO YOU SEE MY NOSE? THAT WAS MY REWARD. BELIEVE IT OR NOT, ATHENS HAS SOME AMAZING SURGEONS. THEY UNDERSTAND THE NEEDS OF A GREEK WOMAN BETTER THAN ANYONE ELSE!
I CAN INTRODUCE THEM TO YOU. IN FACT, WE SHOULD START BY DOING SOME SHOPPING! I'LL BE IN ATHENS FOR A WHILE THIS TIME. ONE YEAR AT LEAST. YOU HAVE GOOD TASTE. YES, YOUR DRESS IS A BIT TOO PLAIN FOR MY TASTE, BUT IT'S ELEGANT. I GIVE YOU THAT. SO, WHAT YOU SAY?

HMM... SURE, I WOULD LOVE THAT!
THANK GOD I'LL BE ELENA FOR JUST TONIGHT. I DON'T THINK I COULD BEAR TO SPEND MORE TIME WITH THIS WOMAN!

YOU SURE? I'M NOT BEING A NUISANCE, AM I? YOU'RE NOT TALKING MUCH.
OH I'M S-SORRY! THIS IS NOT ABOUT YOU. ACTUALLY, YOU'RE BEING SO KIND TO ME! I'M JUST WORRIED ABOUT SOMETHING ELSE.
WHAT IS IT, DARLING? YOU CAN OPEN UP TO ME.

HMM... I'M TAKING PART IN A BUSINESS DINNER WITH MY HUSBAND, BUT I DON'T THINK I'M BEING A GOOD COMPANY. I'M AFRAID THIS MIGHT HURT HIS EFFORTS. I SIMPLY CAN'T RELAX TONIGHT.

SO YOU CAN'T RELAX?
POOR DEAR...

BUT GOOD NEWS, I THINK I CAN HELP YOU...

I'M BACK, GENTLEMEN. DID I TAKE TOO LONG?

YOU KNOW EVERY SECOND AWAY FROM YOU IS AN ETERNITY TO ME, DARLING.

OH, SOMEONE'S FEELING ROMANTIC TONIGHT, HUH?

IF I MAY SAY SO, YOU SEEM IN A BETTER MOOD NOW, MRS. SAMARAS.
VERY WELL OBSERVED, JOEL, WHICH IS A RARE THING COMING FROM YOU.

I APOLOGIZE FOR MY BEHAVIOR EARLIER, GENTLEMEN.
I THINK I JUST NEEDED TO FRESHEN UP.

WEIRD... I ACTUALLY FEEL MUCH MORE RELAXED... ALMOST TOO RELAXED. WHAT'S GOING ON HERE? I JUST TOOK A SIP OF THAT WOMAN'S CHAMPAGNE IN THE BATHROOM... WELL, IT DOESN'T MATTER NOW. THIS IS HELPING ME TO PLAY MY ROLE. TONIGHT, I'M MRS. ELENA SAMARAS. IT'S TIME FOR FULL IMMERSION.

IN ANY CASE, THE NEGOTIATIONS ARE PROGRESSING SUPERBLY, DARLING. MY FRIEND HERE AND I ARE ALMOST REACHING AN UNDERSTANDING, AREN'T WE, MR. TOSKA?
I CAN'T DENY THE CONVERSATION IS GOING WELL. I STILL HAVEN'T MADE MY MIND, THOUGH.

OH, YOU SEEM MORE RELUCTANT THAN I WAS WHEN NIKOS PROPOSED TO ME. BELIEVE ME, IN THE END, IT'S JUST IMPOSSIBLE TO RESIST HIS CHARM!

SOME TIME LATER...
YOU SHOULD DRINK SOME MORE WINE, MA'AM. I HAVE TO SAY THIS CROP IS REMARKABLE!
ALRIGHT... JUST ONE MORE GLASS THEN, YOUNG MAN.

OKAY, MR. SAMARAS. YOU DON'T SEEM LIKE A SCAMMER, SO I'M WILLING TO PARTICIPATE IN A NEW ROUND OF NEGOTIATIONS.
N-NEW ROUND?

OF COURSE! YOU DIDN'T THINK I WOULD MAKE SUCH AN IMPORTANT DECISION AFTER MEETING YOU JUST ONCE, DID YOU? WE'LL SEE EACH OTHER AGAININ TWO OR THREE MONTHS, WHICH IS WHEN I'LL HAVE A NEW OPENING IN MY SCHEDULE. IN THE MEANTIME, I WANT JOEL TO STAY HERE IN ORDER TO CHECK ON YOUR DAY-TO-DAY BUSINESS OPERATIONS.

MR. TOSKA, I D-DON'T THINK...
OH, IT'LL BE OUR PLEASURE TO HOST JOEL, MR. TOSKA. MY HUSBAND AND I WILL DO EVERYTHING WE CAN TO MAKE HIM FEEL COMFORTABLE.

DO YOU HAVE ANY OBJECTIONS, MR. SAMARAS?
N-NO, OF COURSE NOT.
THAT'S SETTLED THEN.

SO I PROPOSE A TOAST. TO A LONG AND LASTING PARTNERSHIP!

TO A LONG AND LASTING PARTNERSHIP!

YOU REALIZE WHAT YOU JUST DID, RIGHT, DARLING?
I WOULD SAY I ACTED LIKE A PERFECT WIFE WHO KNOWS HOW TO SUPPORT HER HUSBAND.

THIS I CAN'T DENY... YOU WERE BRILLIANT!
OH, YOU REALLY KNOW HOW TO MAKE A WOMAN FEEL FLATTERED. EVEN AFTER ALL THESE YEARS.

HA! I WON'T FORGET THIS, ELENA. I GUESS I HAVE TO KEEP CALLING YOU ELENA SINCE YOU MADE SURE THAT MY WIFE IS HERE TO STAY, AT LEAST FOR THE NEXT FEW MONTHS.

W-WAIT... WHAT ARE YOU...

HUH?!

WHAT THE...

...HELL?!

YOU MADE ME A VERY HAPPY MAN TONIGHT, ELENA. THAT'S FOR SURE.

Chapter Six
A New Dawn

THIS IS UNBELIEVABLE!

HUH? IS SOMEONE SCREAMING?
WHAT'S HAPPENING? WHERE I AM?
THIS IS NOT MY ROOM. WHERE IS MARINA?

WHAT THE HELL?
WHY AM I WEARING THIS?

SO SELFISH AND INSANE!

I NEED TO UNDERSTAND WHAT'S GOING ON... FUCK... THE ONLY SHOES AROUND ARE HIGH HEELS!

GOD, MY HEAD IS KILLING ME. HOW IS IT POSSIBLE THAT I DON'T REMEMBER ANYTHING FROM LAST NIGHT AFTER DINNER?
I'M STILL WEARING THE GAFF AND CORSET AND THOSE BREAST FORMS LOOK DISTURBINGLY REALISTIC ON THIS NIGHTGOWN... I JUST WANTED SOMETHING TO COVER ME UP...

WELL, THIS HERE IS BETTER THAN NOTHING. NOW I NEED TO GET OUT OF HERE!

AHH, HERE'S MY FAVORITE AUNT! DOESN'T SHE LOOK LOVELY THIS MORNING?

M-MARINA? WHAT'S GOING ON? WHAT HOUSE IS THIS?

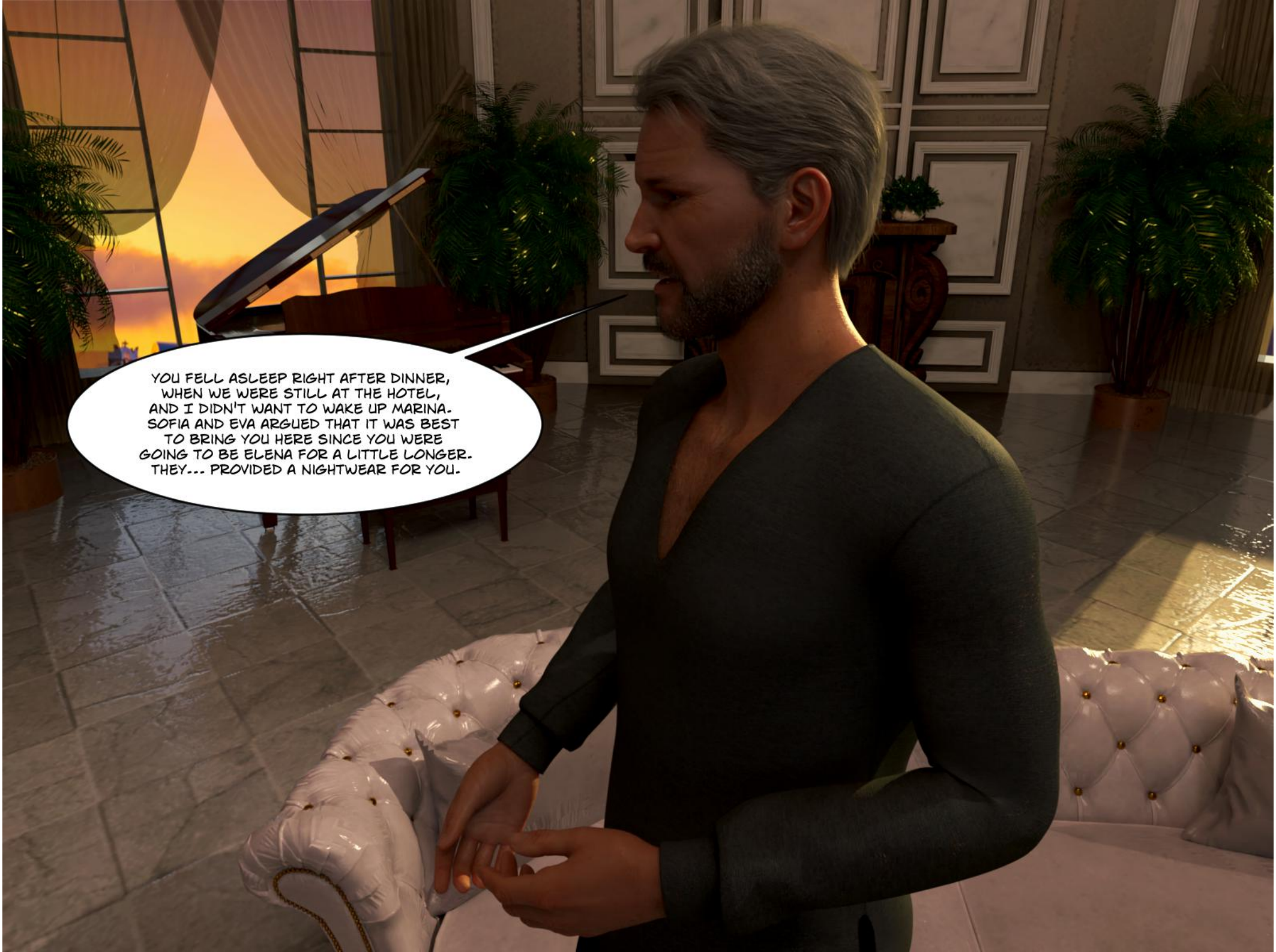
OH, DON'T YOU REMEMBER, AUNT ELENA? THIS IS UNCLE NIKOS' HOUSE. YOUR HOUSE TOO, SHOULD I SAY? SINCE YOU'VE DECIDED TO BE HIS WIFE *INDEFINITELY!*

I STILL DON'T UNDERSTAND.
NOTHING YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT MAKES SENSE TO ME, MARINA.

STOP PLAYING DUMB WITH ME! SOFIA AND EVA TOLD ME EVERYTHING. YOU'VE AGREED TO KEEP BEING UNCLE NIKOS' WIFE FOR THE NEXT FEW MONTHS! THAT'S RIGHT... MONTHS! DIDN'T YOU THINK ABOUT HOW I WOULD FEEL? IT WAS ONE THING TO PRETEND TO BE A WOMAN FOR ONE NIGHT, BUT NOW YOU'RE RUINING OUR HONEYMOON!

WHAT? I DON'T REMEMBER IT! DID THIS REALLY HAPPEN, NIKOS?
I'M AFRAID SO, ELEN... I MEAN, ANDREW. MR. TOSKA STATED HE WANTED HIS ASSISTANT TO BE HERE FOR A WHILE, AND YOU SAID WE WOULD DO OUR BEST TO MAKE HIS STAY A PLEASANT EXPERIENCE. I TRIED TO INTERVENE BUT YOU WERE TOO FAST. DON'T YOU REALLY REMEMBER? YOU HAD DRUNK SOME WINE, BUT YOU DIDN'T SEEM TO BE OUT OF YOUR MIND.

OH MY GOD... I THINK I'M REMEMBERING...
B-BUT HOW DID I END UP HERE AT YOUR HOUSE?


YOU FELL ASLEEP RIGHT AFTER DINNER, WHEN WE WERE STILL AT THE HOTEL, AND I DIDN'T WANT TO WAKE UP MARINA. SOFIA AND EVA ARGUED THAT IT WAS BEST TO BRING YOU HERE SINCE YOU WERE GOING TO BE ELENA FOR A LITTLE LONGER. THEY... PROVIDED A NIGHTWEAR FOR YOU.

THIS CAN'T BE, NIKOS! I'M SORRY BUT THERE'S NO WAY I CAN PRETEND TO BE YOUR WIFE FOR MONTHS! AS MARINA SAID, WE ARE ON OUR HONEYMOON!

OH NO, NOW YOU'VE GIVEN YOUR WORD, AUNT ELENA! YOU WON'T GIVE UP. THE GIRLS HAVE TOLD ME THEY ALREADY HAVE PLANS FOR YOU... SOME PROCEDURES TO ENSURE YOU CAN LOOK LIKE A MATURE WOMAN FOR A LONGER PERIOD OF TIME. IT SOUNDS EXCITING, DOESN'T IT?

B-BUT...

YOU KNOW WHAT? I NEED SOME TIME ALONE. DON'T TRY TO CONTACT ME.

I'M SO SORRY...

Chapter Seven
A Step Further

C'MON, GUYS! IS THIS REALLY NECESSARY? THERE MUST BE ANOTHER WAY!

NOW, NOW YOU HAVE TO CALM DOWN, MOM.
THAT'S RIGHT. WHAT'S DONE IS DONE. NOW WE NEED TO DEAL WITH THIS SITUATION THE BEST WE CAN.

BUT THIS IS COMPLETELY INSANE! HOW CAN I POSSIBLY LIVE AS A WOMAN FOR SEVERAL MONTHS?

YOU JUST NEED TO LISTEN AND TRUST US AND EVERYTHING WILL BE FINE!
PERHAPS THIS WON'T EVEN BE AS DIFFICULT AS YOU'RE THINKING!

BUT WHAT ABOUT MARINA? DID YOU GUYS TALK TO HER AGAIN?

YES, WE'RE IN TOUCH WITH HER. UNFORTUNATELY, SHE'S STILL VERY ANGRY AND HURT.
I THINK IT'S BEST TO GIVE HER SOME BREATHING ROOM... AT LEAST FOR A FEW DAYS.

BUT YOU KNOW WHAT WOULD MAKE THINGS EVEN WORSE? YOU BREAKING THE PROMISE YOU MADE TO DAD.
YOU KNOW MARINA AS WELL AS WE DO. FOR HER, LOYALTY IS VERY IMPORTANT. YOU SAID YOU WOULD BE OUR DEAR MOTHER FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE AFTER ALL, DIDN'T YOU?

THAT'S THE CRAZIEST THING! I DON'T REMEMBER VERY WELL WHAT HAPPENED LAST NIGHT! WAIT... WHEN I WENT TO THE BATHROOM, THERE WAS A WOMAN WITH HER FACE FULL OF BANDAGES... YEAH... SHE OFFERED ME A SIP OF CHAMPAGNE. IS IT POSSIBLE SHE DRUGGED ME OR SOMETHING?

DRUGGED YOU? IT DOESN'T SEEM VERY LIKELY. WHY WOULD ANYONE DO THAT?
IN ANY CASE, WE'VE ALREADY WASTED SO MUCH TIME. PLEASE SIT DOWN, MOM. WE HAVE A LOT OF WORK TO DO!

AS EVA SAID, IT'S IMPORTANT THAT YOU TRUST US. WE ARE BEAUTICIANS AND WE KNOW WHAT WE ARE DOING. LET ME START BY WIPING OFF YOUR MAKEUP.

LAST TIME, WE APPLYED LONG-LASTING MAKEUP ON YOU TO GIVE YOU A MORE MATURE LOOK. BUT GIVEN THE NEW CIRCUMSTANCES, WE DON'T THINK IT WILL BE ENOUGH FROM NOW ON.
THAT'S RIGHT. YOU'LL NEED TO LOOK CONVINCING ENOUGH AS A MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN EVEN IN BROAD DAYLIGHT.THAT'S WHY WE NEED TO TRY ANOTHER THING... SOME INJECTIONS IN YOUR FACE.

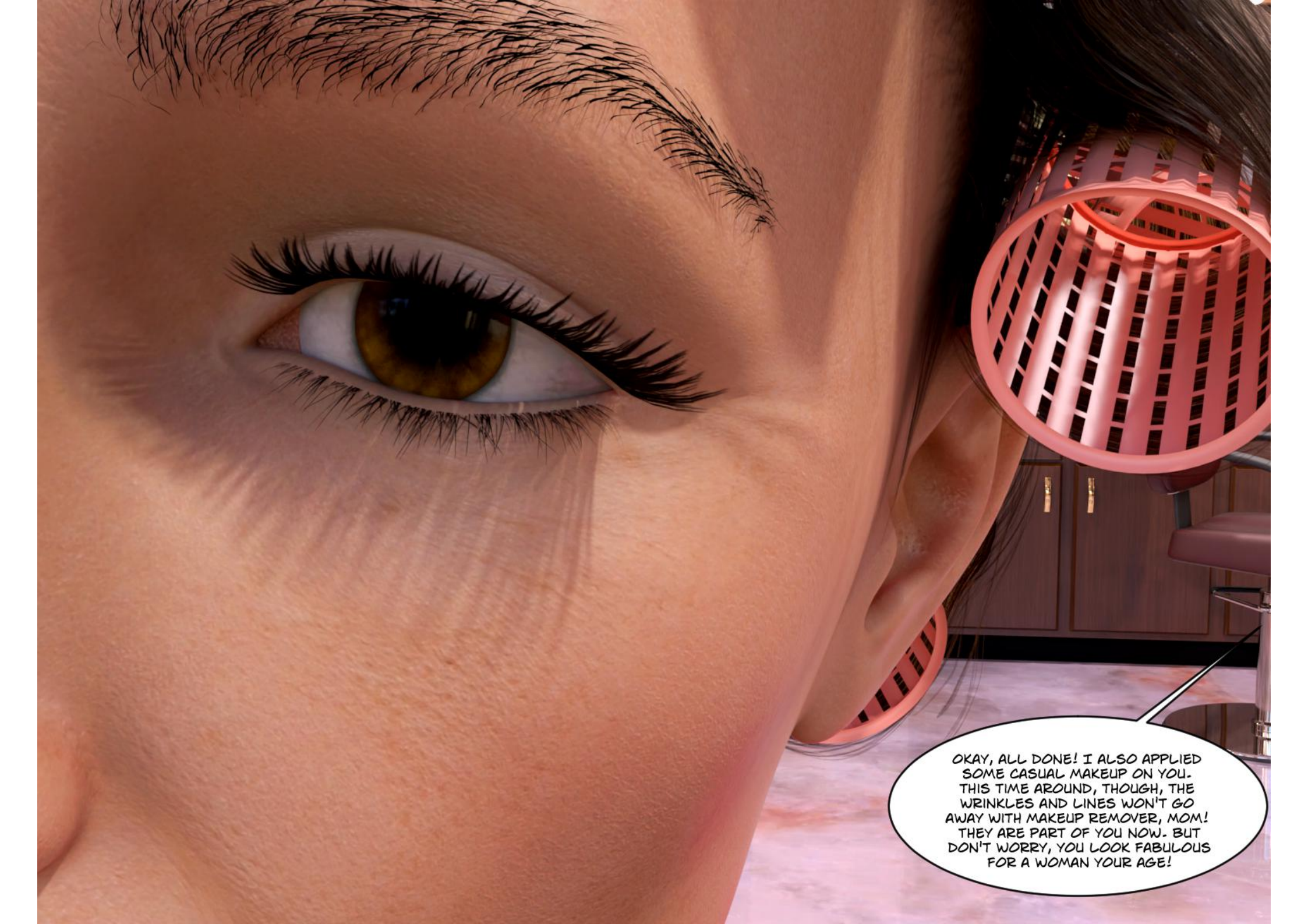
INJECTIONS?! WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
RELAX, MOM... WE'D NEVER DO ANYTHING THAT COULD HARM YOU. WE'LL JUST APPLY A SUBSTANCE TO YOUR FACE THAT WILL DECREASE THE AMOUNT OF COLLAGEN. THEN, WE'LL APPLY BOTOX, TO GIVE YOU THE LOOK OF A MIDDLE-AGED LADY WHO TAKES CARE OF HER APPEARANCE.
PLUS, FACIAL HARMONIZATION, TO SOFTEN YOUR FEATURES A BIT. HOWEVER, WE'LL ONLY WORK ON YOUR SKIN SURFACE, SO THE RESULT WILL NOT BE PERMANENT. YOU DON'T NEED TO WORRY.

I... I REALLY DON'T THINK THIS IS A GOOD IDEA, GIRLS!
WELL, IT'S TOO LATE TO GIVE UP NOW. WE HAVE NO OTHER OPTION!

OUCH!

RELAX, IT WON'T TAKE LONG.

I SEE YOU ALSO NEED AN ELECTROLYSIS SESSION. YOUR FACIAL HAIR IS ALREADY GROWING OUT. WE CAN'T HAVE A BEARDED MOTHER, CAN WE?


OKAY, ALL DONE! I ALSO APPLIED SOME CASUAL MAKEUP ON YOU. THIS TIME AROUND, THOUGH, THE WRINKLES AND LINES WON'T GO AWAY WITH MAKEUP REMOVER, MOM! THEY ARE PART OF YOU NOW. BUT DON'T WORRY, YOU LOOK FABULOUS FOR A WOMAN YOUR AGE!

OH MY GOD...

I LOOK SO...

THAT'S AMAZING, ISN'T IT? NOW LET US WORK ON YOUR HAIR. I DON'T THINK YOU NEED ANY MAJOR CHANGES IN THAT DEPARTMENT, AT LEAST FOR NOW, AS YOUR EXTENSIONS STILL LOOK GOOD. BUT SOME VOLUME WOULD BE NICE.

THERE... MUCH BETTER.!

GIRLS, ARE YOU SURE THIS ISN'T JUST MAKEUP? EVEN WHEN I WASH MY FACE, WILL I STILL LOOK SO OLD?
YOU DON'T LOOK OLD, MOM... ANY FIFTY-FIVE-YEAR-OLD WOMAN WOULD LOVE TO LOOK AS YOUNG AS YOU DO. WE'VE ALSO MANAGED TO MAKE YOUR FACE A LITTLE SOFTER AND MORE FEMININE... MAYBE THAT WON'T BE ENOUGH, THOUGH... WE'LL SEE... IN ANY CASE, YES, THIS IS YOUR FACE NOW. IT WON'T COME OFF WHEN YOU REMOVE YOUR MAKE UP.

HOLY CRAP... THIS IS UNBELIEVABLE!
WATCH THE LANGUAGE, MOM... REMEMBER YOU ARE A LADY. YOU'LL HAVE TIME TO ADMIRE YOUR FACE LATER. NOW WE NEED TO KEEP WORKING ON YOU.

K-KEEP WORKING?
OF COURSE, WE ARE FAR FROM FINISHED! COME WITH US.

LAST TIME, WE USED INSERTS IN YOUR BRA TO MAKE IT LOOK LIKE YOU HAD BREASTS.
THIS TIME, THOUGH, WE'LL WORK WITH SOMETHING SAFER AND MORE REALISTIC. LET ME SHOW YOU.

WHAT THE... YOU WEREN'T KIDDING WHEN YOU SAID IT LOOKED REALISTIC! WILL YOU PUT THOSE THINGS IN MY BRA?
MORE OR LESS... LEAN BACK, PLEASE.

W-WHAT IS THIS? IT FEELS COLD.
JUST A MINUTE. LET THE GLUE DRY A LITTLE.

G-GLUE?!
HOLD ON JUST A LITTLE LONGER.

WAIT... THESE THINGS ARE LITERALLY STUCK ON ME!
THAT'S THE POINT, MOM... YOU'RE NOW THE OWNER OF A BEAUTIFUL PAIR OF MATURE BREASTS! ISN'T IT GREAT?

THEY'RE SO HEAVY... WHY DIDN'T YOU GIVE ME SMALLER FORMS?
MANY REASONS... SMALLER BREASTS WOULDN'T LOOK GOOD ON YOUR BODY TYPE... YOU ALREADY GAVE BIRTH AND BREASTFED TWICE... AND THE WOMEN IN OUR FAMILY TEND TO HAVE BIG BREASTS.

SO WEIRD...
YOU CAN PLAY WITH YOUR GIRLS LATER, MOM. DON'T YOU HAVE MANNERS? NOW, WE'RE GOING TO NEED YOU TO TRUST US. TAKE OFF YOUR PANTIES, PLEASE.

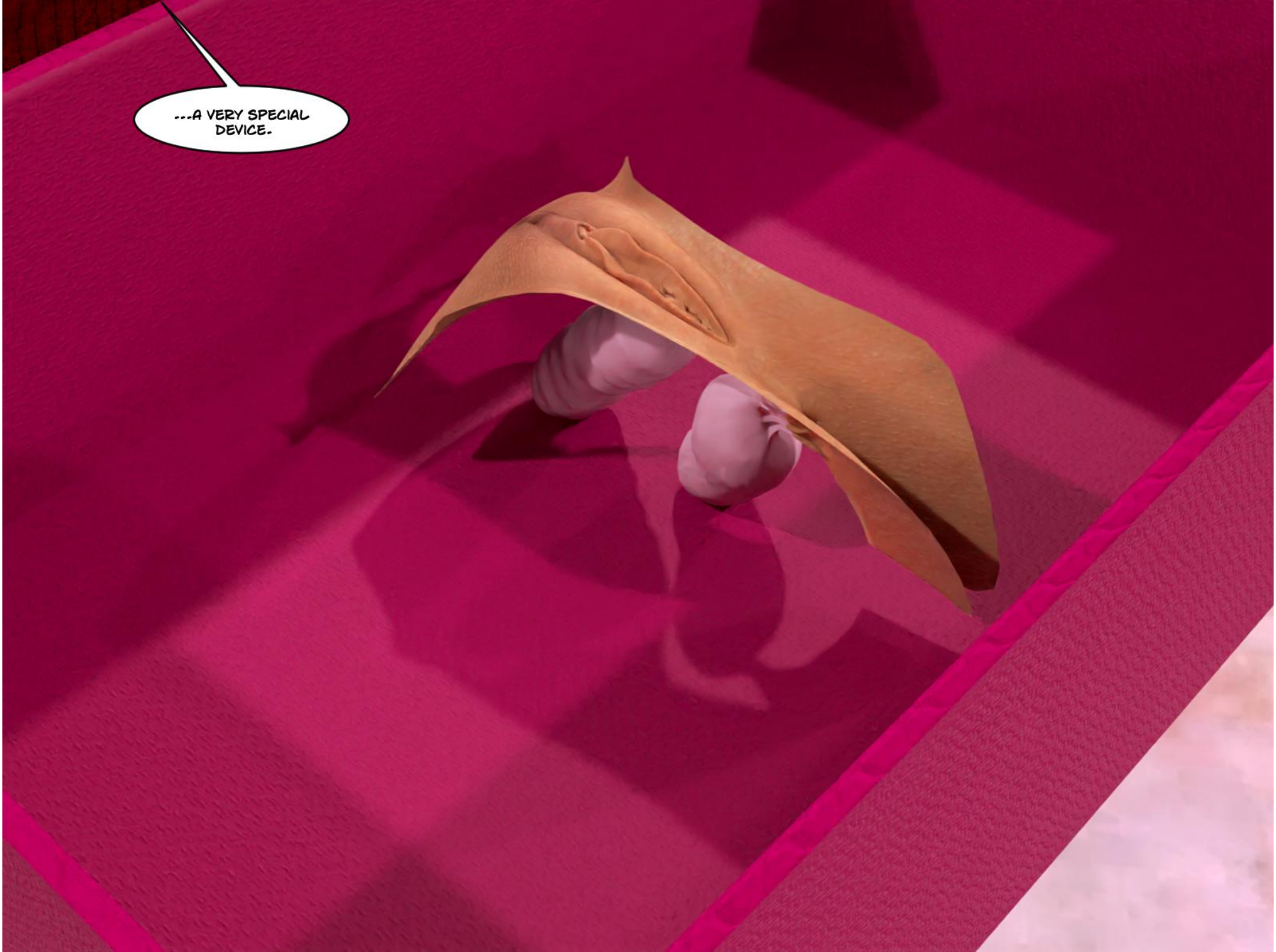
WHAT? WHY?
FOR THE NEXT STEP OF YOUR TRANSFORMATION. BUT FIRST, LET ME APPLY SOME MAKEUP TO THE EDGES OF YOUR BREASTS TO MAKE THEM BLEND BETTER. OH, AND WE CAN'T FORGET ABOUT YOUR CORSET!

THIS IS REALLY EMBARRASSING, OKAY? I'VE ALREADY LEARNED TO PUT ON THAT DAMN GAFF MYSELF!
I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU TODAY, MOM. DID YOU FORGET ALL ABOUT ETIQUETTE? YOU USED TO BE A REFINED LADY. WE'RE NOT GOING TO USE THE GAFF, ANYWAY...

CLICK!
WHAT THE...?!
THIS IS A CHASTITY CAGE, MOM.

AND WHY DID YOU PUT THIS ON ME?
AGAIN, LOTS OF REASONS... LIKE THIS WILL MAKE IT EASIER FOR YOU TO THINK AND FEEL LIKE A WOMAN WITHOUT YOUR LITTLE BUDDY DOWN THERE GETTING IN THE WAY ALL THE TIME...

BUT THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IS THAT THIS WILL BE ESSENTIAL SO THAT YOU DON'T HAVE ISSUES WEARING THE OTHER DEVICE WE HAVE FOR YOU...


...A VERY SPECIAL DEVICE.

I CAN'T BELIEVE I'M LETTING YOU DO THIS TO ME! WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU GUYS?
GLUE AGAIN?! AND HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO GET THESE BOOBS AND VAGINA OFF AT NIGHT WHEN I GO TO SLEEP?
DON'T MOVE SO MUCH, MOM. WE MANAGED TO FIT YOUR PARTS INSIDE THE POCKETS WITH NO PROBLEMS, BUT THE GLUE IS STILL DRYING.

WELL... YOU WON'T, MOM.
WHAT?!
WE USED SURGICAL GLUE. YOUR PROSTHESES WILL STAY IN PLACE FOR WEEKS, MAYBE MONTHS. AND THE MAKEUP WE APPLY ON YOUR CHEST AND GROIN IS SEMI-PERMANENT, WHICH MEANS IT'LL TAKE A LONG TIME BEFORE IT STARTS FADING OUT.

I CAN'T BELIEVE THIS! I NEED TO TALK TO MARINA. HER FAMILY IS COMPLETELY INSANE!

Chapter Eight
Down the Rabbit Hole

YOU NEED TO PUT YOUR SHIT TOGETHER, ANDREW. YOU'RE NOT THINKING STRAIGHT.

BUT CAN I REALLY BLAME MYSELF?

HERE I AM, BACK AT MY HUSBAND'S HOUSE – MY HOUSE TOO NOW, I GUESS – WEARING A BRA , A CORSET, A THONG AND HEELS. MY TWO DAUGHTERS ARE IN THE NEXT ROOM, READY TO GIVE ME YET ANOTHER LESSON IN FEMININITY. AT LEAST THEY WERE NICE ENOUGH TO LET ME TAKE A BATH FIRST. YEAH, BATH, BECAUSE I CAN'T TAKE A SHOWER ANYMORE. THEY DON'T THINK IT'S APPROPRIATE FOR A REFINED LADY LIKE ME.

HOW COULD I LET IT GO THIS FAR? BUT WHAT COULD I HAVE DONE? IT ALL HAPPENED SO FAST THAT I DIDN'T EVEN HAVE TIME TO REACT.

WELL, I GUESS I HAVE NOTHING TO GAIN BY FEELING SORRY FOR MYSELF. I SHOULD JUST TAKE THE DAMN BATH. PERHAPS THIS WILL HELP ME RELAX. THEN I'LL BE ABLE TO THINK OF A WAY OUT OF THIS MADNESS.

MAN, THIS IS SO FUCKED UP. I DON'T THINK I'LL EVER GET USED TO HOW HEAVY THESE FORMS ARE. IT'S LIKE I'M CARRYING TWO BAGS OF SAND ON MY CHEST! AND ALTHOUGH I'M NOT SUPPOSED TO FEEL ANYTHING WHEN I TOUCH THEM, SINCE THEY'RE NOT REAL, I DO FEEL SOMETHING... A WEIRD TINGLING, I'D SAY. I GUESS THIS IS MY MIND TRICKING ME? LIKE WITH PEOPLE WHO HAVE HAD AMPUTATIONS BUT KEEP FEELING THEIR LOST LIMBS?

AND THIS IS NO BETTER DOWN THERE...

IT'S GREAT TO FINALLY GET RID OF THIS STUPID THONG, WHICH CAN BE AS INFURIATING AS THE CORSET, SLIDING BETWEEN MY BUTT CHEEKS. BUT ON THE OTHER HAND...

IT'S SO DISTURBING TO SEE WHAT I HAVE BETWEEN MY LEGS NOW.
I KNOW MY VAGINA CAN'T BE PENETRATED AS THERE IS NO CHANNEL. THE TIP OF MY PENIS IS JUST BEHIND THE LITTLE LIPS, TIGHTLY HELD BY THE FUCKING CHASTITY CAGE.

STILL, THE ILLUSION IS PERFECT.

NO ONE WOULD DOUBT THAT I HAVE A REAL VAGINA. THE FEELING OF EMASCULATION IS SO OVERWHELMING!

AH, FREE FROM THE CORSET AT LAST! IT'S FANTASTIC TO BE ABLE TO BREATHE AGAIN.

CRAP, EVEN WITHOUT THE CORSET, MY BODY STILL LOOKS SO FEMININE! SURE, I DON'T HAVE WOMANLY WAIST AND HIPS, BUT THE BOOBS AND VAGINA ARE BAD ENOUGH ALREADY!

LET'S GO TO THE WATER THEN. MAN, I CAN'T DENY THAT THIS VIEW IS TRULY AMAZING.

HMM...

YEAH, IT FEELS GOOD.

NOW RELAX, ANDREW. YOU NEED TO HAVE A CALM MIND TO FIGURE OUT WHAT TO DO NEXT.

HOW SWEET OF THE GIRLS TO LEAVE A GLASS OF WINE FOR ME. TOO BAD THIS IS A WHITE ONE, THOUGH. THEY SAID FROM NOW ON I SHOULD ONLY DRINK WHITE OR ROSE WINE, AS THEY ARE MORE DELICATE AND FEMININE DRINKS.

AGAIN, THIS IS COMPLETELY INSANE! YES, I'M AN ACTOR, BUT HOW CAN THEY EXPECT ME TO PLAY A ROLE TWENTY-FOUR HOURS A DAY?
MARINA STATED I COULDN'T GIVE UP NOW THAT I'VE GIVEN MY WORD TO PRETEND TO BE ELENA, THE WIFE OF HER UNCLE, FOR THE NEXT FEW MONTHS. BUT SHE OBVIOUSLY ONLY SAID THAT BECAUSE SHE WAS MAD, RIGHT? I NEED TO CONVINCE HER THAT THIS HAS GONE TOO FAR. I THINK IT'S TIME TO CALL HER.

THERE'S NO WAY I CAN SPEND MONTHS SEEING THIS WHEN I LOOK DOWN!

FUCK, I CAN'T BELIEVE I'M GETTING AROUSED! BUT GLUED TO MY BODY OR NOT, THESE BOOBS ARE SO INCREDIBLY HOT. I'M A STRAIGHT GUY, AFTER ALL!

OUCH, IT HURTS SO BAD!
I CAN'T GET HARD BECAUSE
OF THIS DAMN CHASTITY CAGE!

TAKE A DEEP BREATH AND CALM DOWN, ANDREW! GOD, I CAN'T BELIEVE THIS IS HAPPENING TO ME!

THAT'S IT. I CAN'T GO ON LIVING LIKE THIS. THIS IS TORTURE! MARINA WILL HAVE TO UNDERSTAND.

FUCK, I DON'T HAVE HER NUMBER HERE! SOFIA AND EVA GAVE ME THIS PHONE THIS MORNING, SAYING IT DIDN'T MAKE SENSE FOR ME TO HAVE A U.S. NUMBER. MY CONTACT LIST ONLY HAS MY DAUGHTERS, SOMEONE NICKNAMED "DARLING", WHO I ASSUME IS MY HUSBAND, MR. TOSKA AND JOEL, BESIDES A LOT OF CLOTHING, SHOES AND JEWELRY SHOPS AND SOME BEAUTY CLINICS.

OKAY, NOW I'M PISSED OFF! IT'S TIME TO HAVE A GOOD CONVERSATION WITH MY DEAR GIRLS.

Bzzt
Bzzt

A CALL FROM AN UNKNOWN NUMBER... MAYBE THAT'S MARINA? THERE'S ONLY ONE WAY TO KNOW. JUST IN CASE, I THINK I'D BETTER SPEAK IN GREEK.

HELLO?
GOOD AFTERNOON, MRS. SARAMAS. I'M GLAD YOU TOOK THE CALL.

SHIT, THAT'S A MAN!
WHO IS SPEAKING?

I'M A FRIEND, MRS. SAMARAS. I'M CALLING YOU TO GIVE YOU SOME ADVICE REGARDING MR. TOSKA. I BELIEVE YOUR HUSBAND IS DOING BUSINESS WITH HIM, ISN'T HE?
I WANT TO KNOW WHO YOU ARE RIGHT NOW. HOW DID YOU GET THIS NUMBER?

PLEASE CALM DOWN, MRS. SAMARAS. LIKE I SAID, I'M JUST A FRIEND. MR. TOSKA IS AN ECCENTRIC MAN, BUT HE CAN ALSO BECOME VERY DANGEROUS UNDER... CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES. I'VE DONE BUSINESS WITH HIM IN THE PAST. YOU NEED TO BE CAREFUL. IT'S POSSIBLE THAT HE'S SPYING ON YOU AND YOUR FAMILY.
AND WHO WOULD THE SPY BE? YOU?

OH NO, MRS. SAMARAS, YOU COULDN'T BE FURTHER FROM THE TRUTH. BUT, OF COURSE, YOU HAVE NO REASON TO BELIEVE ME RIGHT NOW. WHY DON'T WE SET UP A MEETING? IS THREE DAYS FROM NOW GOOD FOR YOU?
I DON'T THINK THAT'S A GOOD IDEA.
PLEASE CONSIDER IT, MA'AM. AND I THINK IT'S BEST TO KEEP THIS BETWEEN US FOR THE TIME BEING.

NOW WHAT THE HELL WAS THIS?

WHAT DOES THIS MAN REALLY WANT? BLACKMAIL ME? DOES HE KNOW WHO I REALLY AM?

NO, I'M JUST BEING PARANOID. HOW COULD HE KNOW? THIS IS SIMPLY IMPOSSIBLE... RIGHT?

IN ANY CASE, I NEED TO TALK TO MARINA MORE THAN EVER. WE NEED TO GET OUT OF HERE. THINGS ARE GETTING OUT OF CONTROL.

Chapter Nine
Doubts and Drama

OKAY, NOW IT'S TIME FOR THE TRUTH. I'M NOT GOING TO TELL THE GIRLS ABOUT THE CALL I JUST GOT, AT LEAST UNTIL I UNDERSTAND WHAT'S GOING ON. THEY WERE THE ONES WHO GAVE ME MY NEW PHONE. THEY MAY BE BEHIND ALL THIS.

YOU TWO, MAY I KNOW WHY I DON'T HAVE MARINA'S NUMBER ON MY PHONE?

CALM DOWN, MOM.
THE THING IS... SADLY, WE DON'T HAVE GOOD NEWS ABOUT MARINA.

OH, MY GOD, WHAT HAPPENED TO HER? AN ACCIDENT OR SOMETHING?

NO, THERE WAS NO ACCIDENT. SORRY, WE SHOULD HAVE BEEN CLEARER. MARINA... WELL, SHE LEFT ATHENS.

SHE WHAT?!!

I THINK IT'LL BE EASIER IF YOU LISTEN TO THE MESSAGE SHE SENT ME.

HEY EVA. I DECIDED TO GO TO CRETE FOR A FEW DAYS. I REALLY NEED TO SPEND SOME TIME ALONE. I THINK THIS IS THE ONLY WAY FOR ME TO CALM DOWN AND DEAL WITH WHAT'S GOING ON. THERE'S NO POINT IN TRYING TO CONTACT ME. I'M NOT TAKING MY PHONE. I'LL BE GONE FOR FOUR OR FIVE DAYS... MAYBE A LITTLE LONGER. TELL UNCLE NIKOS AND AUNT ELENA I WISH THEM GOOD LUCK IN THE DEAL THEY'RE CLOSING.

SHE'S GOING TO CRETE? IT CAN'T BE! I NEED TO GO TO THE HOTEL. MAYBE SHE HASN'T LEFT YET.
THIS IS TOO LATE. WE CALLED THE HOTEL AFTER HER MESSAGE. SHE LEFT A FEW HOURS AGO.

THEN I'M GOING TO CRETE AS WELL! I CAN'T JUST STAND HERE DOING NOTHING! SHE'S MY WIFE I NEED TO TALK TO HER. WE HAVE THINGS TO WORK OUT.

YOU NO LONGER HAVE A WIFE, BUT A HUSBAND. MARINA IS JUST YOUR NIECE NOW. EVEN IF YOU MANAGED TO LOCATE HER IN CRETE, IT WOULD ONLY MAKE MATTERS WORSE. SHE MADE IT VERY CLEAR IN THE MESSAGE THAT SHE HOPES "UNCLE NIKOS AND AUNT ELENA" WILL BE ABLE TO CLOSE THE DEAL THEY ARE NEGOTIATING. WE ALREADY TALKED ABOUT THIS. MARINA WON'T FORGIVE YOU IF YOU BREAK YOUR WORD.

THEN WHAT YOU PROPOSE I DO? JUST SIT HERE WHILE ALL THIS IS HAPPENING?
IT'S FASCINATING HOW IN JUST A FEW DAYS OF INTENSE TRAINING "MOM" HAS ALREADY ASSIMILATED SOME ELEGANT AND FEMININE MANNERISMS, ESPECIALLY WHEN SHE'S STRESSED. THE FULL IMMERSION IS CERTAINLY HAVING AN EFFECT ON HER. SHE DOESN'T EVEN SEEM TO NOTICE IT.

LISTEN, MOM, THE BEST THING TO DO IS GIVE IT SOME TIME. MARINA WILL BE BACK AND YOU TWO WILL HAVE A CHANCE TO TALK. AND IT'S NOT ALL BAD NEWS. THIS MORNING, DAD HAD A NEW CONVERSATION WITH MR. TOSKA BEFORE THE MAN RETURNED TO ALBANIA. HE AGREED TO SIGN A PRE-CONTRACT WITH DAD. IF ALL GOES WELL, THIS STORY COULD END SOONER THAN EXPECTED.

PRE-CONTRACT?
EXACTLY! THIS IS GOING WELL, YOU SEE? DAD AND TOSKA'S ASSISTENT ALSO TRAVELED THIS MORNING TO THE NORTH IN ORDER TO ASSESS A POTENTIAL LOCATION FOR A NEW RESORT. DAD WANTED TO TALK TO YOU BEFORE LEAVING, BUT THERE WAS NO TIME.

SEEMS LIKE JOEL WAS CURIOUS IF YOU WERE GOING ON THE TRIP WITH THEM, BUT WE TOLD DAD IT WASN'T A GOOD IDEA. A FEW DAYS AWAY FROM JOEL WILL BE GREAT FOR YOU TO GET EVEN MORE USED TO YOUR NEW PERSONA AND MAKE NO MISTAKES WHEN HEIS AROUND.
AS AN EXCUSE, WE TOLD DAD TO EXPLAIN TO JOEL THAT YOU COULDN'T GO BECAUSE YOU ALREADY HAD A PROCEDURE SCHEDULED AT A BEAUTY CLINIC.

B-BEAUTY CLINIC? BUT THAT WAS JUST AN EXCUSE, RIGHT?
NOT NECESSARILY... WE HAVE SOMETHING IN MIND TO HELP YOU WITH YOUR NEW IDENTITY... A SIMPLE, NON-INVASIVE PROCEDURE, PRETTY MUCH LIKE WHAT WE DID IN THE SALON EARLIER TODAY. WE CAN TALK ABOUT IT LATER, THOUGH.

THERE IS NO WAY I WILL UNDERGO ANY OTHER CRAZY PROCEDURE! WHAT HAPPENED THIS MORNING IS BAD ENOUGH ALREADY. BUT THAT'S A BATTLE FOR ANOTHER TIME. NOW I NEED TO DISCUSS WHAT IS REALLY BOTHERING ME.

WHO DID YOU GIVE MY NEW PHONE NUMBER TO?
DAD, JOEL AND MR. TOSKA. WE COULDN'T GIVE IT TO MARINA AS SHE LEFT THE CITY WITHOUT TAKING HER PHONE. WHY?

OH, NOTHING... I GOT A CALL WHILE I WAS IN THE BATH, BUT THEN I GUESS SOMEONE CALLED ME BY MISTAKE.

THAT'S IT THEN... EVA, SOFIA, NIKOS, MR. TOSKA AND JOEL... ONE OF THEM GAVE MY NUMBER TO THAT SHADY MAN. BUT WHY? SINCE MARINA ISN'T HERE, I THINK IT'S BEST NOT TO TALK ABOUT IT TO ANYONE. I CAN'T BELIEVE MY WIFE LEFT ME HERE ALONE IN THIS SITUATION...

NOW WE'RE GOING TO HELP YOU GET DRESSED. BUT FIRST, WE NEED TO DISCUSS SOMETHING IMPORTANT.

IT SEEMS LIKE YOU FORGOT TO PUT YOUR WEDDING RING ON THIS MORNING. NOW THAT'S NOT RIGHT FOR A MARRIED WOMAN, IS IT?

YOU HAVE TO WEAR IT ALL THE TIME. NO EXCUSES. YOU DON'T WANT TO GIVE PEOPLETHE WRONG IMPRESSION, RIGHT?

O-OKAY.

THERE'S ANOTHER THING YOU'LL BE WEARING PRETTY MUCH ALL THE TIME FROM NOW ON... A PAIR OF HEELS.
W-WHAT?! NO WAY. I HATE HEELS! THEY HURT MY FEET SO MUCH!

YOU'LL GET USED TO IT, MOM. THE MOST IMPORTANT THING TO KEEP IN MIND IS THAT YOU WANT TO LOOK AS FEMININE AS POSSIBLE IN ORDER TO DISPEL ANY SUSPICION ABOUT YOU.
THEN THAT'S IT. YOU'RE A REFINED LADY WHO CANNOT LIVE WITHOUT HIGH HEELS. IT'S BEEN LIKE THIS SINCE YOUR YOUTH. HEELS ARE JUST PART OF YOUR IDENTITY AS A WOMAN.

ALSO... YOU MANAGED TO TAKE OFF YOUR CORSET BY YOURSELF IN THE BATHROOM, DIDN'T YOU?
Y-YES.
THIS IS BAD. IT MEANS THE CORSET WASN'T TIGHT ENOUGH. WE CAN FIX THIS, OF COURSE. BEFORE THAT, THOUGH, IT'S TIME FOR YOU TO LEARN HOW TO DO YOUR MAKEUP YOURSELF.

YOU DIDN'T REMOVE YOUR MAKEUP BEFORE BATHING FROM WHAT I CAN SEE. WE USED WATERPROOF MAKEUP ON YOU, BUT IT STILL ISN'T IDEAL. YOU HAVE SO MUCH TO LEARN, MOM...

FORTY MINUTES LATER...
OKAY, YOUR FOUNDATION, BRONZER, BLUSH AND EYESHADOW FINALLY LOOK GOOD. AND YOU MUST REMEMBER TO ALWAYS MOISTURIZE YOUR LIPS LIKE I TAUGHT YOU BEFORE APPLYING YOUR LIPSTICK. NOW LET'S MOVE TO THE EYELINER AND MASCARA.

PUTTING ON AND REMOVING MAKEUP WILL NOW PART OF YOUR ROUTINE, JUST LIKE SKIN AND HAIR CARE. ALL OF THIS NEEDS TO BECOME SECOND NATURE TO YOU, SO YOU HAVE TO PRACTICE SEVERAL TIMES A DAY.

OKAY, I THINK YOUR MAKEUP LOOKS GOOD ENOUGH... FOR NOW.

C'MON, GIRLS, IS IT REALLY NECESSARY FOR ME TO WEAR HEELS RIGHT NOW? I NEED A BREAK. MY FEET ARE KILLING ME!
WE'VE ALREADY TALKED ABOUT THIS, MOM. YOU'LL NOW LIVE ON HIGH HEELS. THEY MAKE YOU FEEL CONFIDENT, GRACEFUL AND FEMININE. ALSO, THIS PAIR ISN'T THAT HIGH!

YOU'LL REALIZE THAT FOR A WOMAN, ESPECIALLY A WOMAN IN YOUR POSITION, YOUR PERSONAL IMAGE IS SOMETHING VERY IMPORTANT. YOU ALWAYS WANT TO LOOK AT YOUR BEST, AND YOU FEEL GOOD ABOUT IT.

YOU WANT TO BE SEEN AS AN EXQUISITE, CHIC WOMAN WHO KNOWS HOW TO BEHAVE SOCIALLY AND ALSO BE A GOOD HOSTESS. MOST IMPORTANTLY, YOU'RE ALWAYS READY TO SUPPORT YOUR HUSBAND AND FAMILY WHENEVER NEEDED.
IN OTHER WORDS, FOR THIS TO WORK, YOU NEED TO ASSIMILATE THE IDEA OF BEING A DEVOTED WIFE AND A CARING MOTHER.

A DEVOTED WIFE AND A CARING MOTHER... WHERE THE HELL DID I GET MYSELF INTO? ONE THING IS FOR SURE, I SHOULD WIN AN OSCAR FOR THIS ROLE!

NOW THAT YOU ARE PROPERLY DRESSED, WE'LL CONTINUE YOUR TRAINING. YOU'RE ALREADY MANAGING TO BEHAVE IN A WOMANLY WAY, BUT IT'S STILL NOT PERFECT.
DAD MENTIONED THAT YOU WERE NERVOUS AT THE BEGINNING OF DINNER WITH MR. TOSKAS, AND IT CAN'T HAPPEN AGAIN. KEEP IN MIND YOU'LL BE SEEN IN PUBLIC IN NOT CONTROLLED SITUATIONS. YOU NEED TO BE 100% COMFORTABLE BEING A MIDDLE AGED GREEK WOMAN. LET'S START WITH YOUR WALK.

HALF AN HOUR LATER...
THAT'S IT... YOU LOVE BEING ELEGANT AND FEMININE. YOUR WALK NEEDS TO BE AS DAINTY AS THAT OF A QUEEN. THE LAST THING YOU WANT IS TO LOOK STURDY AND TOUGH... THAT'S WHAT A MAN SHOULD LOOK LIKE, NOT YOU. WHAT ABOUT SITTING LIKE A LADY NOW?

SIGH
LIKE THIS?
THAT'S NOT BAD, BUT YOUR BACK ISN'T STRAIGHT, SO YOU DON'T LOOK SO LADYLIKE. YOU CAN DO BETTER THAN THAT!

MANY ATTEMPTS LATER...
YOU'RE GETTING THE HANG OF IT, MOM. YOUR EFFORT IS PAYING OFF. JUST REMEMBER THAT YOU ARE NOT MERELY PLAYING A ROLE. THIS IS WHO YOU ARE NOW, AND YOU ARE PROUD TO BE ELENA SAMARAS. IT BRINGS YOU JOY TO BE BEAUTIFUL AND FEMININE... YOU ADORE YOUR DRESSES AND HIGH HEELS... YOU LOVE YOUR HUSBAND AND FAMILY. NOW GET YOUR PURSE. WE'RE GOING OUT.

G-GOING OUT? BUT IT'S DAYTIME! I DON'T THINK I'M READY!
YOU JUST HAVE TO INTERNALIZE WHAT I JUST TOLD YOU. YOU'RE JUST A WOMAN GOING OUT WITH YOUR DAUGHTERS. THERE'S NOTHING UNUSUAL ABOUT IT. WHY WOULDN'T YOU BE READY FOR THAT? LET'S GO. THERE'S SOMEONE WE WANT YOU TO MEET.

Chapter Ten
Brave New Life

SOME TIME LATER...

YOU SEE, MOM? WE SAID YOU HAD NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT.

NO ONE IS LOOKING AT YOU AS ANYTHING OTHER THAN WHO YOU TRULY ARE, WHICH IS A MIDDLE-AGED LADY GOING FOR A WALK WITH HER DAUGHTERS. WHY WOULD ANYONE THINK OTHERWISE?

I CAN'T BELIEVE I'M DOING THIS. HERE I AM, DRESSED LIKE A WOMAN ON THE STREET!

I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU GIRLS ARE TALKING ABOUT. I'M COMPLETELY TERRIFIED! I'M SURE SOMEONE WILL REALIZE I AM, IN FACT, A MAN ANY MINUTE NOW!

A MAN? REALLY?

DOES A MAN GO OUT IN PUBLIC WEARING A PRETTY DRESS? DOES A MAN WEAR LACE LINGERIE? HIGH HEELS? MAKEUP? DOES A MAN HAVE BREASTS?
NO, B-BUT...

THEN STOP SAYING FUNNY THINGS, MOM.
ANYONE LOOKING AT YOU KNOWS YOU'RE A WOMAN. ANY OTHER POSSIBILITY WOULD BE RIDICULOUS.

HELLO, LADIES.

YOU LOOK GREAT, MA'AM!

W-WHAT? IS THAT MAN CHECKING ME OUT?!

I'D SAY SO, MOM! SEE? DO YOU STILL THINK IT MAKES SENSE TO THINK OF YOU AS ANYTHING OTHER THAN A PRETTY LADY?

THIS IS SO WEIRD. I FELT SO VULNERABLE...
WELL, WELCOME TO WOMANHOOD! DON'T WORRY, THOUGH. WE AND DADDY WOULD NEVER LET ANYONE LAY A FINGER ON YOU!

BUT THE THING IS... WAIT A MINUTE!

THAT WOMAN AT THE TOP OF THE STAIRS...

SHE'S THE ONE WHO OFFERED ME CHAMPAGNE IN THE BATHROOM LAST NIGHT! I'M SURE OF THAT!

WOMAN? WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT, MOM?

HOW ARE YOU NOT SEEING HER? RIGHT THERE! AT THE TOP OF THE STAIRS!

THERE'S NO ONE THERE, MOM.

B-BUT...
I BELIEVE YOU'RE JUST TIRED, MOM. THE DAY HASN'T BEEN EASY FOR YOU. WE ADMIT WE'VE BEEN PUSHING YOU A LOT. HOLD ON JUST A LITTLE LONGER. SOON YOU CAN GO HOME AND GET SOME REST.

NOT LONG AFTER...
WELCOME, LADIES!

I'VE BEEN LOOKING FORWARD TO YOUR ARRIVAL. YOU'RE MRS. SAMARAS, ISN'T IT CORRECT? AND THOSE ARE YOUR LOVELY DAUGHTERS?

THAT'S RIGHT, MR. ANGELOS. I'M EVA AND THIS IS MY SISTER SOFIA.
WE'RE GLAD YOU WERE ABLE TO SEE US SO PROMPTLY. WE KNOW YOU ARE A BUSY MAN.

THE PLEASURE IS ALL MINE, I ASSURE YOU! TO WHAT DO I OWE THE HONOR OF YOUR PRESENCE, LADIES?
MOM WANTS TO ORGANIZE A RECEPTION PARTY FOR SOME IMPORTANT GUESTS WHO WILL BE ARRIVING IN A FEW MONTHS. NOTHING TOO BIG, BUT IT NEEDS TO BE PERFECT. AND WE KNOW YOU ARE THE BEST EVENT PLANNER IN ATHENS.

THAT'S VERY KIND OF YOU TO SAY SO, YOUNG LADY. I WOULDN'T HAVE THE ARROGANCE TO SAY I'M THE BEST, BUT YES... I DO HAVE MANY DECADES OF EXPERIENCE.
I'M DELIGHTED YOU LADIES ARE CONSIDERING SUCH AN EVENT. IF I MAY SAY SO, YOUR FAMILY WAS NEVER MUCH FOR ATTENDING HIGH SOCIETY PARTIES, DESPITE SO MANY INVITATIONS. ALWAYS SO MYSTERIOUS... GOD, I DON'T THINK I'VE SEEN MRS. SAMARAS BEFORE!

OH MY GOD, WHAT NOW? THIS MAN IS CERTAINLY SUSPICIOUS OF SOMETHING!

MOM HAD TO STAY IN THE US TO DEAL WITH SOME FAMILY ISSUES OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS. EVEN THOUGH SHE'S GREEK, SHE HAS STRONG TIES TO AMERICA.
AND DAD, WELL... HE WAS NEVER VERY FOND OF THIS KIND OF GATHERING. HE'D ALWAYS PREFERRED MORE... INFORMAL MEETINGS. BUT LET'S JUST SAY THEY'RE WILLING TO COME OUT OF THE COCOON NOW, RIGHT, MOM?

O-OF COURSE... NOW THAT I'M BACK I... HMM... WOULD LIKE TO MEET NEW PEOPLE.

THAT'S WONDERFUL TO HEAR! I'M SURE YOU WILL MAKE MANY, MANY FRIENDS. AND, OF COURSE, I AM AT YOUR SERVICE TO HELP YOU WITH YOUR EVENT. DO YOU ALREADY HAVE A LOCATION IN MIND?

I THINK MOM PREFERS TO HOLD THE PARTY IN OUR FAMILY'S RESORT, DON'T YOU, MOM?

CRAP! WHY ARE GIRLS DOING THIS? THIS PARTY THING DOESN'T SOUND LIKE A GOOD IDEA. I THINK IT WOULD BE MUCH BETTER FOR ME TO KEPT A LOW PROFILE SO AS NOT TO DRAW UNNECESSARY ATTENTION. I'LL TALK TO THEM LATER. FOR NOW, THOUGH, I GUESS I NEED TO KEEP THE CHARACTER. *SIGH*

THAT'S CORRECT, SOFIA, DEAR. I THINK WE HAVE THE PERFECT PLACE FOR OUR LITTLE GATHERING.
SOUNDS MARVELOUS! UNFORTUNATELY, I STILL HAVE SOME DETAILS TO WORK OUT ABOUT THE EVENT I'M ORGANIZING FOR TONIGHT, SO I CAN'T PROLONG OUR MEETING. IF THIS IS CONVENIENT FOR YOU, WE CAN MEET AGAIN NEXT WEEK, MRS. SAMARAS.

WELL, I THINK...
OH, MR. ANGELOS, EVERYTHING LOOKS JUST PERFECT!

HI, MRS. ROSI! I'M HAPPY TO HEAR THE DECOR IS TO YOUR LIKING.
YOU ALWAYS DO A SUPERB JOB, DARLING. AND WHO WE HAVE HERE?

THIS IS MRS. SAMARAS AND HER ADORABLE DAUGHTERS, EVA AND SOFIA. MRS. SAMARAS, THIS IS MRS. PETROU AND HER SON, STEFANOS.

SAMARAS? ARE YOU NIKOS SAMARAS' FAMILY?

THAT'S CORRECT, MRS. PATROU.
OH, THAT'S INTERESTING! PLEASE CALL ME DIMITRA, DEAR. WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN HIDING ALL THIS TIME, MRS. SAMARAS? HOW IS IT POSSIBLE THAT WE HAVEN'T BEEN INTRODUCED BEFORE?

YOU SEE, THE THING IS, I JUST RECENTLY RETURNED TO GREECE AFTER A LONG STAY IN THE US.

OH, THAT'S TOTALLY FINE, DARLING. FORGIVE ME IF I SOUNDED RUDE. WE'VE ALSO SPENT MOST OF THE LAST FIVE YEARS ABROAD. BUT NOW WE'RE HERE TO STAY, AREN'T WE, STEFANOS?

SO I HOPE. NICE TO MEET YOU, MRS. SAMARAS AND SOFIA...

EVA, IS THIS REALLY YOU?
OH MY GOSH, I WAS WONDERING IF YOU WOULD RECOGNIZE ME! IT'S BEEN SO LONG!

I MISSED YOU SO MUCH!

SO, YOU TWO KNOW EACH OTHER PRETTY WELL, HUH?
OH YES, MOM! LET'S SAY WE USED TO BE VERY CLOSE SOME YEARS AGO.

IT'S WEIRD TO THINK THAT JUST A FEW DAYS AGO I WAS A REGULAR MAN JUST LIKE THIS GUY. WE COULDN'T LOOK MORE DIFFERENT FROM EACH OTHER NOW.

HERE I AM, WITH MY WHOLE BODY WAXED AND MY NAILS POLISHED, WALKING ON HEELS...

I'M WEARING A DRESS, A LACE BRA HOLDING MY DISTURBINGLY REALISTIC HUGE BOOBS, A MATCHING THONG, WHICH IS WEDGING ITSELF BETWEEN MY BUTTOCKS WITH EACH STEP, AND THE DAMN CORSET...
MY DICK IS FIRMLY TRAPPED BEHIND MY VAGINA, AND THERE'S NO WAY I CAN RELEASE IT ON MY OWN.

ALL OF THIS NOT TO MENTION MY FACE, WHICH LOOKS AT LEAST TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OLDER THAN MY TRUE AGE. FOR ALL INTENTS AND PURPOSES, I'M NOW A MIDDLE-AGED WIFE AND MOTHER, WHILE HE'S A YOUNG MAN HITTING ON MY DAUGHTER.

WE DEFINITELY DON'T LOOK LIKE EACH OTHER AT ALL. STILL, IS IT POSSIBLE THAT I LOOK SO CONVINCING AS A WOMAN? MAYBE THEY'VE ALREADY REALIZED THE TRUTH ABOUT ME AND ARE JUST BEING POLITE?

AGAIN, NICE TO MEET YOU, MA'AM!

I'M SO GLAD TO FINALLY HAVE THE CHANCE TO MEET YOU IN PERSON!
M-ME TOO?

SO, ELENA, DARLING, WE'RE GOING TO HAVE A LITTLE GATHERING TONIGHT, AND WE'D BE DELIGHTED TO HAVE YOU AND YOUR FAMILY WITH US. WHAT DO YOU SAY?
IT'S VERY KIND OF YOU TO INVITE US, DIMITRA, HOWEVER... I DON'T KNOW ABOUT THE GIRLS, BUT MY HUSBAND IS ON A BUSINESS TRIP AND I STILL HAVEN'T FULLY RECOVERED FROM THE LONG TRIP BACK TO GREECE. I'VE ARRIVED JUST A FEW DAYS AGO. I'M SO SORRY!

THAT'S TOTALLY UNDERSTANDABLE, DEAR, DON'T WORRY. JUST DON'T THINK YOU CAN HIDE AWAY FROM ME FOREVER. OH, I HAVE A FEELING WE'LL GET ALONG SO WELL! AND WHO KNOWS...

MAYBE WE'LL HAVE TO PLAN A WEDDING TOGETHER.

Chapter Eleven
Past and Future

THREE DAYS LATER...

A YEAR AGO... I CAN'T BELIEVE IT'S BEEN SO LONG ALREADY...

EVERYTHING WAS DIFFERENT BACK THEN...

...AS IF IT WERE ANOTHER LIFE.

THAT EVENING, I WAS VERY ANXIOUS, JUST LIKE TONIGHT...

...BUT FOR VERY DIFFERENT REASONS.

GETTING READY WAS ALSO A VERY DIFFERENT EXPERIENCE.

MORE DIFFERENT THAN I COULD HAVE THOUGHT POSSIBLE.

A TEN-MINUTE SHOWER WAS MORE THAN ENOUGH WHEN I WAS JUST A GUY.

BUT NOW CLEANING MYSELF IS A RITUAL THAT CAN TAKE OVER AN HOUR. OF COURSE, EVEN IN THE BATHTUB, I HAVE TO WEAR MY WATERPROOF CORSET, WHICH MY DAUGHTERS SO GENEROUSLY BOUGHT FOR ME. IT'S ALWAYS SO TIGHT THAT I SIMPLY CAN'T TAKE IT OFF WITHOUT HELP.

THEN I JUST NEEDED TO SHAVE, PUT ON SOME DEODORANT AND PERFUME, AND I WAS GOOD TO GO.

BUT NOW I NEED TO DRY AND STYLE MY HAIR, APPLY COUNTLESS CREAMS TO EVERY PART OF MY BODY, CHOOSE THE RIGHT DEODORANT AND PERFUME FOR EACH OCCASION, AND DO MY MAKEUP, ALWAYS KEEPING IN MIND MY OUTFIT FOR THE DAY.

WEARING A SIMPLE PAIR OF BOXERS IS A THING OF THE PAST, TOO.

AS ALL MY UNDERWEAR ARE NOW LACE LINGERIE SETS.

MY UNDERWEAR DRAWER LOOKS MORE LIKE A VICTORIA'S SECRET CATALOG.

AND, OF COURSE, I'M A WOMAN WHO LOVES AND JUST CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT THONGS

ABOUT FOOTWEAR, THE SITUATION IS EVEN WORSE. I REMEMBER THAT EVENING A YEAR AGO, AS I SLIPPED ON MY DRESS SHOES, MY ONLY THOUGHT WAS OF RELIEF THAT MARINA WASN'T AROUND. SHE CERTAINLY WOULDN'T BE HAPPY WITH THE MESS I'D MADE IN THE BATHROOM.

NOWADAYS, ON THE OTHER HAND, THE SHOES I'M WEARING IS A TOPIC THAT NEVER LEAVES MY MIND, AS IT'S BEEN A WEEK SINCE I'VE WORN ANYTHING OTHER THAN HIGH HEELS, AND THEY'RE JUST SO PAINFUL TO WEAR.
GOD, I DON'T KNOW HOW OTHER WOMEN CAN LIVE LIKE THIS! MY DAUGHTERS STILL HAVE THE NERVE TO SAY I'M LUCKY ABOUT MY HEELS BECAUSE THEY HAVEN'T MADE ME WEAR REALLY HIGH ONES YET!

BACK THEN, WEARING HEELS WAS AN IDEA THAT HAD NEVER CROSSED MY MIND.

JUST LIKE I HAD NEVER THOUGHT OF WEARING DRESSES AND PEARL EARRINGS AND NECKLACES.

A YEAR AGO... EXACTLY ONE YEAR AGO TONIGHT, I WAS JUST A TWENTY-SOMETHING GUY ABOUT TO PROPOSE TO MY GIRLFRIEND.

NOW, HOWEVER, FOR ALL INTENTS AND PURPOSES, I'M A FIFTY-FIVE YEARS OLD WIFE AND MOTHER.

AND IF I DON'T PLAY MY CARDS EXTREMELY WELL TONIGHT, I CAN BE STUCK IN THIS PERSONA FOR A VERY, VERY LONG TIME...

MEANWHILE IN CRETE...

HEY, DOLL! LOOKS LIKE SOMEONE REALLY WANTS TO MAKE THE MOST OF THE NIGHT. WE JUST OPENED TEN MINUTES AGO.
JUST GIVE ME A MARTINI, PLEASE.
FROSTY BITE

AS YOU WISH!

THANKS, I'M REALLY IN NEED OF A DRINK RIGHT NOW.
HAVING ISSUES WITH YOUR BOYFRIEND OR SOMETHING?

I WOULDN'T SAY SO... AT THIS POINT, IT'S MORE ABOUT MY AUNT... MY AUNT AND NO ONE ELSE.

GOOD EVENING, MRS. SAMARAS!

GOOD EVENING, YOUNG MAN. YOU'RE FILIP, AREN'T YOU?

THAT'S RIGHT, MA'AM. PLEASE COME IN. I WILL TAKE YOU TO YOUR DESTINATION.

JUST LOOK AT THIS CAR. NIKOS HAS A FREAKING LIMOUSINE! THE GIRLS SAID THE DRIVER JUST STARTED IN THE JOB, SO HE'S NOT SURPRISED THAT THEIR FATHER SUDDENLY HAS A WIFE.

I'VE BEEN IGNORING THE CALLS FROM MY HUSBAND THE LAST FEW DAYS, BUT I DON'T THINK I CAN KEEP DOING THIS FOREVER. IT'S JUST THAT THIS IS ALL SO SCARY! MY DAUGHTERS ARE PUSHING ME MORE AND MORE TO ACT AND THINK LIKE A MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN 24/7, AND MARINA ISN'T HERE TO SUPPORT ME.

YOU NEED TO RELAX, ANDREW... NO, ELENA! LIKE IT OR NOT, TONIGHT I HAVE TO BE PERFECT IN MY ROLE. I HAVE TO BELIEVE I'VE NEVER BEEN ANYONE ELSE BUT ELENA SAMARAS. OTHERWISE, THINGS CAN GET PRETTY BAD. I THINK I NEED ANOTHER GLASS OF WINE. JUST ONE MORE...

SIGH I CAN DO IT!

HERE WE ARE, MRS. SAMARAS. LET ME HELP YOU OUT OF THE CAR.

THANK YOU, FILIP.
YOU'RE WELCOME, MA'AM. WHEN YOU WANT TO GO HOME, JUST CALL ME. I'LL BE CLOSE BY.

DON'T EVEN THINK ABOUT GIVING UP NOW, ELENA. YOU DON'T NEED TO FEAR PEOPLE DISCOVERING THE TRUTH ABOUT YOU, BECAUSE THERE'S NOTHING TO HIDE. YOU ALWAYS WERE AND ALWAYS WILL BE ELENA SAMARAS, AN ELEGANT AND REFINED WOMAN.
IT WASN'T EASY MAKING UP AN EXCUSE TO GO OUT ALONE TONIGHT SO I CAN'T WASTE THE OPPORTUNITY. I HAD TO TELL MY DAUGHTERS I WAS GOING TO SEE MRS. PETROU, THE WOMAN WE MET THE OTHER DAY. THEY WERE PRETTY HAPPY TO HEAR THAT, THINKING I'M FINALLY EMBRACING MY NEW SELF. HOWEVER, MRS. PETROU ISN'T THE PERSON I'M GOING TO MEET TONIGHT, OH NO...

GOOD EVENING, MRS. SAMARAS. I'M GLAD TO FINALLY MEET YOU IN PERSON!

I'M HERE ONLY BECAUSE YOU SAID MY FAMILY MIGHT BE IN DANGER. I WANT YOU TO TELL ME EXACTLY WHO YOU ARE AND WHAT'S HAPPENING.

AS I TOLD YOU WHEN WE FIRST SPOKE, AND ALSO YESTERDAY WHEN WE SET UP THIS MEETING, I'M SOMEONE WHO HAS DONE BUSINESS WITH MR. TOSKA IN THE PAST. THERE ARE THINGS ABOUT HIM YOU NEED TO KNOW, MRS. SAMRAS. WOULD YOU LIKE SOMETHING TO DRINK?
I DON'T INTEND TO STAY LONG, MR...?

SEFERI, YOU CAN CALL ME SEFERI.
WHICH I ASSUME IS NOT YOUR REAL NAME, RIGHT? I DON'T KNOW WHAT KIND OF GAME THIS IS, BUT IF YOU DON'T EXPLAIN WHAT'S GOING ON RIGHT NOW, I'M GOING TO THE POLICE. MY FAMILY'S SAFETY ALWAYS COMES FIRST FOR ME.

I BELIEVE SO, MRS. SAMARAS, AND THAT'S WHY I CONTACTED YOU. AS A DEVOTED MOTHER AND WIFE, YOU SURELY DON'T WANT ANYTHING BAD TO HAPPEN TO THOSE CLOSE TO YOU. I INSIST, WHY DON'T YOU ORDER A GLASS OF WHITE WINE? I'VE A FEELING THIS IS YOUR FAVORITE ONE.
H-HOW DO YOU KNOW THAT?

PLEASE DON'T BE ALARMED, MA'AM. IT WAS JUST A GUESS, A RIGHT ONE FROM WHAT I CAN SEE. BUT THERE ARE THINGS I DO KNOW. LIKE THE FACT THAT YOU AND YOUR HUSBAND AREN'T LEGALLY MARRIED. IN FACT, IT IS QUITE CHALLENGING TO FIND ANY OFFICIAL INFORMATION ABOUT YOU, MRS. SAMARAS YOU SEE? THAT'S THE KIND OF THING THAT COULD REALLY COMPLICATE THINGS FOR YOU AND YOUR FAMILY IF MR. TOSKA FINDS OUT.