

# **My Corfu Love Story**

## **(EXCLUSIVE EXCERPT)**

**by**

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## EXCLUSIVE EXCERPT

Spyri and Markos walked side by side on their way to the beach, shooting the breeze and reminiscing, their eyes bright with mirth as they recalled memories from the summer they'd spent together as youngsters.

When they arrived at the beach, Markos walked up to the water. The tiny waves that came to lap gently on the shore splashed the front of his loafers, but he didn't seem to mind. He had his eyes closed now, arms spread wide apart, as he took in a deep breath, his head tilted back.

"Oh! How I've missed this beach, this place!" he said with a heavy sigh. When he turned to face Spyri, his expression was coloured with regret.

She knew instantly how he felt, even though he had said nothing else, and wondered if his regret could have anything to do with her at all, or if he was just feeling sorry that he had missed having so many magical summers here with his aunts and cousins.

She didn't have much time to ponder about it though because, out of the blue, he let out a cheer, and said:

"Look! The jetty! Do you remember, Spyri? We used to fish off its end! Can we go on it please?" He pointed to the sports jetty that stood at a close distance across from a hotel bar. The length of the beach from where they stood all the way to the jetty was lined with straw umbrellas. Bordering the lush lawn of the hotel property, a narrow wooden walkway ran the length of the beach as far as the eye could see.

"Of course," said Spyri with enthusiasm, even though she'd been on the jetty that morning. But she was happy to do whatever he wanted. Just being there with him felt like a surreal dream. "Can we use the walkway please?" She pointed to her sandals. "These aren't the best for walking on sand." Even though she'd normally grab a chance to walk on sand barefoot, she wanted badly to look pristine in his eyes.

Markos gave a cute little smile, looked down at his loafers, and shrugged his shoulders. "Sure. I'm easy either way." He didn't seem to mind they were wet at the toes. Smiling still, he gestured for her to go ahead.

As she walked along the walkway, Spyri could hear Markos's heavy footsteps behind her and still couldn't believe it was him following her. Everything had happened so quickly. Less than an hour ago, she was still unsure about visiting his aunt's house, and now she was on the beach, his intoxicating cologne wafting in the breeze, making her feel high. *High on love... And this doesn't even feel real... it'd better not be a dream or I'll wake up pretty cross in the morning!*

When they got onto the jetty, Markos approached her side again and, together, they walked to the end. There, they bent forward and looked down at the water in perfect sync, as if they had rehearsed it. The water was so serene and clear that they could see their faces on the surface, and every pebble on the seabed.

"Wow. All these years... where did they go?" he lamented out of the blue, turning to face her.

Spyri opened her mouth to say something jovial to change the mood. She could sense his sadness, and didn't understand it fully. She believed in moving forward, never lamenting, never regretting anything. She imagined he was upset over the divorce and the loss of his aunt. It would be best to change the subject. But, just then, noise from behind beat her to it.

There were a few people on the beach, guests at the hotel, no doubt, who sat at the bar. A little boy had been playing on the sand close by and was now shrieking at an ear-piercing volume. Another one stood before him, and they seemed to be fighting over a plastic little spade.

Neither of them seemed older than three or four years of age. A single bucket lay on the sand at their feet, and they both ignored it. The boys' chubby little hands were clutching the spade, both claiming it, like their lives depended on it. A

man and a woman intervened to take the spade away and dissolve the tension between the kids. It had worked. A soothing silence ensued.

Markos turned away from the incident and shook his head as he focused his eyes on the deep blue sea in the shimmering distance. "Kids..." he lamented.

Spyri gave a frown. "What about them?"

"I'm glad I didn't have any."

Spyri tilted her head. "Oh? You and your wife didn't want any?" she blurted out before she could stop herself.

He turned to her, and she gazed into his face for a few moments. He looked tired, but not just because he hadn't slept, like he'd said earlier. And his eyes, they looked clear now, and more green than ever before. In her mind, he turned fifteen again, the boy who used to stand beside her on this very spot, teaching her how to fish with a line.

"No. Of course I wanted kids," he said finally. "A proper family! But my ex-wife didn't. I should have seen it coming, Spyri..." He shook his head again, his features hardening. "I had seen all the warning signs but chose to ignore them, to my detriment. She was a fair-weather friend. She wanted the good life, the fancy stuff, the big house... but not to run a house, not to have any responsibilities at all, let alone to raise any children."

He hung his head down, his gaze falling upon his loafers, long lashes shading his eyes, and Spyri couldn't see them any more. "It's still beyond me, how I could have been so blind for so long." His voice had grown frail, its volume reduced to almost a whisper by the end of his sentence.

A long sigh escaped from his lips, those lips Spyri had lost so much sleep over when she was a young girl. Now, a fully grown, independent woman, she'd have thought she'd be stronger. Yet, she felt the same urge again to kiss him the way she ached to do when they were young. And it took all her restraint not to put her arms around him.

Spyri's heart contracted with feeling to see him so upset, so full of bitterness. Instead of holding him, she allowed herself to put out a hand and squeeze his arm gently.

The gesture seemed to sober him up somewhat, and he looked up and away, eyes focusing far, at the distant shores of Epirus and Albania across the water.

"Don't get me wrong," he said after a while, avoiding her eyes. "I don't love her any more. Actually, I can't even recall what it was like to love her." He gave a tired smile. "The magnitude of her betrayal, and her nasty character as well, meant I found it easy to stop having any feelings for her. But I can't stop feeling sorry..."

Finally, he turned to look at Spyri and, impossibly, now took her hand in his. "I feel so sorry for the time I lost. For all the summers that I could have had here. With my lovely aunt, my beloved cousins and dear old friends... friends like *you*, Spyri."

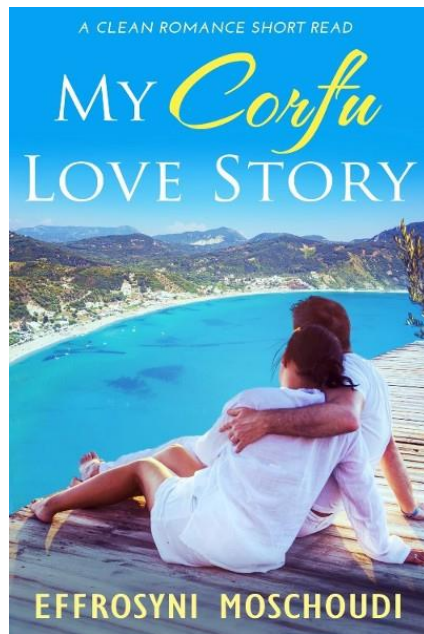
The warm feeling of his hand in hers caused Spyri to gaze at him mutely, and a huge lump formed in her throat. Blinking profusely, she tried to process what he'd just said and done, and realized her heart was thumping against her chest. *What is he saying? Am I just a friend to him? And if he has been missing only a friend all this time why is he holding my hand? Is that a friendly gesture, or am I supposed to think there's more?*

Lost for words still, she looked down at their hands that were clasped together. His fingertips were caressing hers ever so softly. She felt delicious tingles in the pit of her stomach and wondered if old friends were allowed to do that and call it just friendship.

"Um... shall we keep walking? Would you like to sit and have a coffee somewhere?" she managed to say in the end, pointing at the far distance where a line of snack bars and small family hotels were built on the shore. She almost suggested they visit The Seashells, her favourite coffee bar, but thought better of it so he could pick the place instead.

His face went ablaze with excitement at the sound of her suggestion. “Yes! Can we go to The Seashells? For old times’ sake! Remember my aunt and your grandmother used to take us there for ice cream? Please tell me it’s still down there!”

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