

Chapter Two

The narrow, cobbled lane leading down from the shop was deserted as Louisa made her way to Bar Street, from where it was a short walk to the shopping centre and the supermarket. She knew the lack of people was not only due to the early hour. Turkey's main tourist season wouldn't start for another month, after which the streets, roads and marinas of Marmaris would become saturated with humanity and the locals would be out in force to lure unsuspecting tourists to eat at their restaurants, cruise on their gullets or buy genuine fake Gucci, Armani, Diesel or other copied designer gear from their stores. But for now she could enjoy the relative peace and quiet, before madness descended.

A warm breeze tugged at her light skirt as she made her way past the restaurant at the bottom of the hill and turned right into Bar Street. She loved this time of year, when the temperature was a balmy twenty-two degrees, the rains had ceased and everything smelled of newness, before the summer's sun had chance to parch everything, and everyone.

Behind her, the Old Fort stood guard atop its hill, its grey-white stones gleaming under the morning sun, watching over the bay and its surrounding sprawl of buildings as it had done for centuries.

When Louisa had first travelled to Turkey from her native Arkansas as the first

stage of her 'great adventure', she had never expected to fall in love with the country; but she had, and when Mehmet had offered her a job looking after his curios shop she had jumped at the chance. Now, some three years on, she did not regret that decision one bit.

Louisa's thoughts turned to Mehmet. He had texted her two days ago to say he was due back that evening, which was the reason for her trip to the supermarket. She wanted to cook his favourite meal; lamb casserole, or kuzu guvec in Turkish. Cubed lamb, green beans, tomatoes, eggplant, peppers and the like, just the smell of it cooking would be enough to welcome him home from wherever he had disappeared to this time. It had been two months since he'd left and she was eager to see what he had acquired on his travels. Mostly, it was useless artefacts he could sell on to gullible tourists, but occasionally he brought something of value; a gift to himself. She never knew what he did with those pieces, and suspected he had them held somewhere safe and private, where he could view them at his leisure.

They'd met soon after her arrival in Turkey, when she had called into his shop after a visit to the Old Fort. It had seemed as though fate had drawn her to that spot at that time. As soon as their eyes made contact she felt as though she knew him. Not that they had ever seen each other before, but she *knew* him. Deep within the core of her being she felt as though she had always known him. His olive skin seemed to burn with an inner fire that glowed through the flesh, setting the dim interior of his small shop aglow. In Mehmet she found a kindred spirit, and talked to him about life, her aspirations, her journeys, her ex and the reasons for her sabbatical. Before she knew it dusk had fallen,

she had bought nothing and the street outside was deserted, the tourists having drifted to the main town for the evening. Mehmet had taken her to dinner and, after eating, offered her the job. For the second time in her life, she did something impulsive and accepted. And Turkey was not a bad place to start afresh. The people were friendly, the weather wonderful and the food outstanding. What more could she have asked for?

It did not take long for her to purchase the items she needed and start the short walk home. Although neither she nor Mehmet drank very much, with this trip having been his longest yet, she felt some sort of celebration was in order and had picked up a bottle of red wine. It was locally produced, and she hoped it was okay.

On making her way up the hill toward the small shop with its apartment above, she paused in her stride as she neared the front door. It was open, and she was sure she had closed it when leaving. Frowning, she walked slowly on until she came level with the dark opening, then halted and poked her head through.

The interior was gloomy, the single window shadowed by the building opposite, and it took a moment for her eyes to adjust. Even so, she could make out the racks half-stacked with curios for the coming season, the glass displays that held the more expensive items and the bead curtain in the rear wall that covered the doorway leading through to the apartment stairway. Everything appeared to be just as she had left it.

“Hello? Is anybody there?”

Her voice came out tremulous and fearful, and she mentally chastised herself for sounding weak. Clearing her throat, she tried again.

“Hello? Is anybody there?”

There was no reply. Sighing, she stepped through. She mustn't have latched the door fully when she'd left. Arms laden, she heeled the door closed behind her and made her way across the floor and through the bead curtain to make her way up the stairs. On reaching the small, timbered landing she shouldered open the door to the apartment – and screamed. The bags of shopping crashed to the floor, the wine bottle releasing its contents in a tide of burgundy.