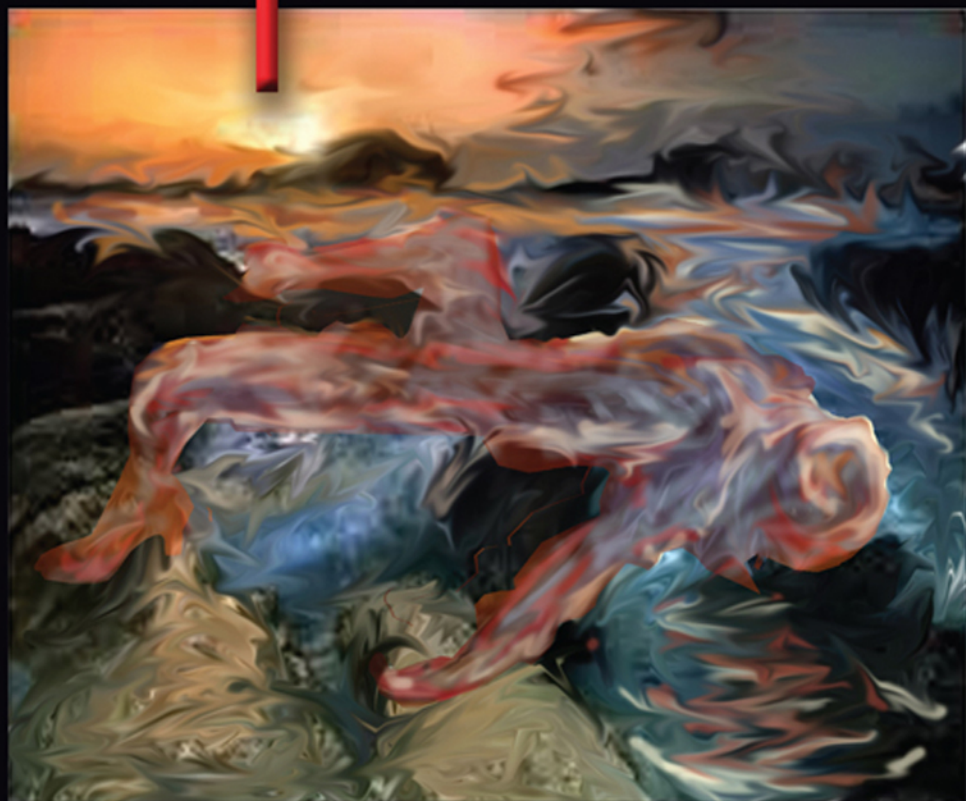


Out of the Picture



Russell James Dearden

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Strategic Book Group

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*To Lesley with thanks
for all your love and encouragement.*

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A note to the reader

I have tried to approach this novel with a balanced, respectful eye on the historical context in which I place the earlier scenarios of the saga.

The story spans over 35 years and whilst most of the characters are fictional, all could have existed and in the contexts and locations in which they are placed.

Excepting the references to the Salamis family and the obviously named fictional characters involved in the plot, all of the main protagonists involved in the events portrayed during and around the Invasion of Cyprus in 1975 did exist and played the mentioned part in the division of the island.

There is still much resentment on the island regarding its current political status and many islanders who were affected by the invasion are still having their lives influenced by those events today. Many who still live on the island and those who were exiled and unable to return.

It is ever more relevant today because of the application of Turkey to become a member of the European Union and the conditions placed upon it with regard to human rights.

It is with these innocent people in mind, on both sides, that I ask you dear reader to be patient with the historical detail that I find fascinating.

I hope you will too.

Chapter 1

In The Frame

There are few occasions in an average person's life when a single event can change everything forever. Something that can change the course of one's life, the way you see yourself and the way others perceive you. A thought, a word, a deed. When events spiral out of control. Details, which you know to be false, can become inexplicably true, to the extent that you begin to believe the lie that is all others' truth. It may be an incident, an action, an image that has unforeseen consequences for individuals and impacts on their lives forever.

Georgiou Salamis was prey to such an event. An event that would cause him to question everything he believed and everyone he trusted. Even his sanity would come into question.

Georgiou loved everything about his Greek-ness. He loved his religion, his culture and all that it had given the world. He loved his natural suntan, that so prized by the foreign tourists who flocked to his beloved Cypriot island. The thing he loved most of all, was his country. The ancient land, that had experienced tragedy, some of it as recent as the nineteen seventies. Some of which he himself had experienced.

Enslavement, as far back as time has been recorded. Victories and defeats had taken place. Weapons as diverse as swords and modern military aircraft were used in anger. Many had possessed

this jewel. The English led by Richard the Lion heart. The Venetians. The Turks in 1571 making Cyprus part of the Ottoman Empire and almost Greece itself in 1915. During the First World War Britain offered it as a condition of Greece coming to Serbia's aid. Greece on this occasion declined.

Britain reclaimed the island in 1923 when she annexed it under the treaty of Lausanne. She became a crown colony until 1974 when she won Independence.....Of a sort.

Georgiou was at home with all that she had to offer both culturally and historically. He wanted to give something back to the home that had given him so much. He had felt compelled to paint the beauty he saw on an everyday basis. He wanted to share his love with the world. It was fortunate that the tourists he sold his paintings to were of the same opinion. They provided Georgiou with a modest but sustainable living. He was a true artist. He lived for his art and his art lived for him. The vibrant colours in which he expressed himself seemed to move as if viewing life through a window.

Many of his talented friends could represent the world as a photograph. Georgiou was a genius. His talent was video.

Georgiou's studio was a humble affair, situated in his mountainside village, 9 kilometres from Paphos in Ayios Neofytos. He preferred to work in humble surroundings without the trappings of success. He kept his studio separate from his home so he could feel he had physically gone to work without distractions.

His needs, when he worked were simple. All he required were his materials, paint, canvas etc, good light and a small stove with the means to prepare a convenient meal or brew a pot of coffee. These simple things gave him what he needed most. Inspiration. He was fortunate to have made enough money to be able to return home and live in the fairly opulent style he was now used to without appearing to demean his fellow villagers.

His villa was beautifully appointed and stylish. He had made a lot of money in the past and was careful not to squander it. Instead he had invested it wisely. Without flaunting his wealth, he was able to buy and renovate the villa and furnish his studio along with his two other extravagances. His prized possession of anything he had ever wanted to own was his classic Jaguar E-Type. Open top; wire wheels, 4.2 litre, 1974 model in gleaming

red. He wanted the '68 model but could not justify the £80,000 price tag for his preferred choice in the same condition.

Georgiou's favourite pastime when he wasn't working or driving Dolores, (she looked like a Dolores, he thought) was relaxing on his second extravagance, the 42-foot motor yacht "Artistry." A magnificent inboard powered Bavaria, with 50-foot masthead and a jib that could lick anything in the harbour. It had all the comforts of home. He often sailed alone or invited friends to spend warm pleasure filled days offshore. They would enjoy food prepared by Helena, his wife, listen to music and swim in the clear deep Mediterranean amongst beautifully coloured and surprisingly friendly fish.

Georgiou knew that life was good and he had earned everything he had around him. He was not about to be complacent. He was a fortunate man to be living in his beloved village with the stunning backdrop that is the Troudos Mountains. The ideal location for an artist.

The village was named after the hermit Neofytos who lived there until his death in 1219 AD. Everything about the place was steeped in history. The very rocks spoke volumes to Georgiou. All around were fascinating stories preserved in these same rocks. He was glad he returned home after all his years of travelling. He became weary of the outside world and, if the truth be known, a little afraid of it. The life Neofytos offered him was so appealing.

Unfortunately, one has to earn a living. He would not feel comfortable living off his savings and investments alone. Even a hermit has to eat. Not that he was a hermit. But he did enjoy solitude.

Georgiou, each day would load his beloved Delores with assorted canvasses, place his box of oils lovingly on the passenger seat beside him and travel to his chosen pitch to begin his days commerce, selling his children, as he liked to call them to the passing tourists. The contradiction was not lost on Georgiou.

Today he would travel the 9 kilometres to the tourist resort of Paphos. On this occasion he decided to pitch near to the entrance of the "Tombs of the Kings" in between the centres of the old and the new halves of the town. It had now become a parody of the ancient culture that once dominated the world ruled by the Ptolomies. Indeed Paphos was in those far off times the

administrative centre of the Egyptian world. The carefully preserved ruins bear witness to the greatness and power wielded by the pharaohs. Modern visitors now measured its greatness in how good a time it offered and the price of the beer.

Today was like any other day.....To begin with.

The "Tombs of the Kings" is situated just off the main road into Kato Paphos, the primary destination for pleasure seekers and tourists looking for the "real" Cyprus. Instead, they will find the Alexander the Great Hotel and an array of bars and night-clubs. The Kings would probably be spinning in their tombs if they saw how their legacy had been trivialised.

When he arrived at the day's pitch he set up his easel and canvas in front of his inspiration. The entrance to the tombs with the Mediterranean Sea providing a stunning backdrop. It always impresses the tourists and they are always more likely to want to buy a snapshot of that so beautifully captured by Georgiou. He took up his brushes and surveyed his surroundings for inspiration.

Many of his contemporaries would paint to order. The tourists sometimes bought from the caricaturists that painted stylized portraits of family members and subjects of personal interest. When they came to Georgiou they saw an artist paint what came into his head and so had a unique expression of his surroundings. He was not a commercial artist in the same sense. All of his pictures were different and therefore collectable.

He smiled at the children accompanied by their mothers and was amused at the antics of some of the scantily dressed foreign girls. Greek women would not behave so blatantly.

Georgiou was quite old fashioned in the way he expected women to conduct themselves. Georgiou was not always this way. He had mellowed. He was no prude, but he admired women with taste and decorum. He had known many such women in his life among his travels. He was always saddened when he was reminded that standards were dropping daily.

This stylish man with his classically good looking face, strong chiseled chin and slim but muscular frame had been used to women throwing themselves at him. He still loved women and found them the most stimulating company, but there were certain types that he no longer wanted to associate with.

He began to paint.

It was not long before a steady trade picked up. A crowd would usually form around him, for he painted with such vigour and vitality, it was difficult to know whether it was true passion in which he was immersed, or polished salesmanship. Tourists loved a show especially if they bought his wares. They liked to feel they were getting their monies worth. If they didn't buy, no matter, they usually dropped a few pounds into his Panama hat.

It was a great existence for someone who had lived enough of the fast life to appreciate the important things. The glistening droplets of rain after a long hot summer. The colours found in nature that rewarded his meticulous attention to detail. The fascination that life in a beautiful land held. The respect for his father and the love for a sister. But most of all the woman who had saved his life. The one who had rescued him from despair and the reason why every day was a blessed event. His raven-haired wife Helena.

He had known her since they were children and had wished the time he had spent away between the Turkish Invasion in nineteen seventy-four, and his return five years ago, had not occurred. He mourned the lost time away from her and he almost obsessively tried to make up that time. Other than painting and his family, all he wanted from life was in her.

Today Georgiou was inspired. It was a bright sunny day. The heat, gently engulfing him in a familiar comfort blanket. The, still rising, sun was not yet at its zenith. The light was bright enough to capture the hues and pigments of his subject without being overpowering. The light was always good. Perfect conditions in which to paint. He looked beyond the cliffs to the peninsular. He could see the maize fields merging with the rocks as they dramatically rushed down to the sea. He painted with a fever. He was possessed. The crowd loved it. They watched each brush stroke intensely with the same passion that Georgiou created. It was pure theatre. Sweeping strokes created texture, movement and sensation. His picture was coming alive. He was on autopilot and the image was flowing from him. Bright golden colours with jagged edges of blue and black, the vivid beauty of azure, jet and crimson red.

When he had finished, he was weakened. His fatigue was

obvious to those around him and so was his talent. He placed the masterpiece on the ground in front of the impressed bystanders, expecting offers for the piece. Many stood marveling; especially his young female audience, but he did not expect one woman's reaction. She voiced an emotion that concerned him deeply. In fact it shocked him. "That is disgusting," said the obviously English woman in her sixties. "How can we be expected to witness such depravity, let alone pay for it?"

The woman was situated to Georgiou's right and had a portrait view of the painting. He picked up the picture and before he could engage the woman in an attempt to understand her reaction, she left in disgust. It was fortunate she did and that the other members of the surrounding crowd had not been privy to the same view. He would not have made another sale that day if they had.

It became apparent to him when turning the picture on its side what had caused the vitriol leveled at him. He held the landscape in front of him, so, only the frame at the back could be seen by others. He studied the subject matter and was chilled to the bone both by what he had painted and the fact that he had painted it.

Lying amongst the beautiful swaying field of maize was, in obvious detail, the form of a young woman attired in a long flowing dress. She was pretty and at that age when reclining on a summer's day in a field of maize with a lover was the most natural thing to do. There was nothing natural about this scene, however, it did show her lying back as if she hadn't a care in the world, but on closer inspection her face was contorted in a grimace of pain, her dress had smears of blood. The blood was coming from a wound situated in her neck. Georgiou knew enough about human biology from college to know that it was a carotid artery and death would follow such a dramatic cut.

He was looking at a murder scene.

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