

POLLY  
ANTHUS C IS FOR  
CHAOS

Α ΤΕΣΣΑ ΛΩΠΙΚΑ ΦΗΩΔΙΠΠΙΤ



THE MEDITERRANEAN  
MYSTERIES III

## THE MEDITERRANEAN MYSTERIES



Universal praise for the *Mediterranean Mysteries Series*

*"Polly Anthus has created a landscape and characters that stay in the memory long after the sun has set"*

THE INDEPENDENT

*"Three cheers for The Mediterranean Mysteries: at last a cast of characters as warm as the Mediterranean sand"*

THE CHILFROME ECHO

*"Give me a Tessa Lonika Mystery and I am a happy girl. Give me an ouzo too and I am yours for life"*

THE DHRA MONTHLY BULLETIN



*Polly Anthus is the nom de plume of Freda Shufflebotton (DHRA member since 2006). Employed for more than 30 years in the travel industry (she is head of sales at Threadbreaks the Stinsford-based travel agency), she has travelled extensively throughout the West Country but has always harboured an ambition to travel to Greece.*

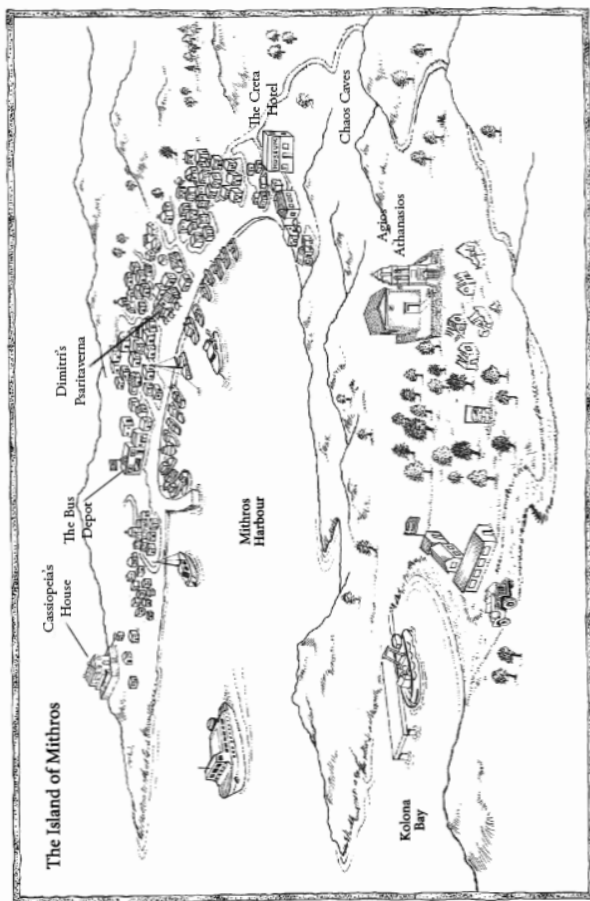
*Having advised many an adventurous traveller and researched the Greek Islands better to service her clients, she has all the local knowledge necessary to bring her novels to authentic life. Polly lives in Morcombelake with her twelve cats (Lesbos, Samos, Chios, Kefalonia, Andros, Kos, Icaria, Milos, Paros, Karpathos, Samathrace & Mr Naughty).*



POLLY ANTHUS

# C is for CHAOS





## CHAPTER ONE

The slowly setting sun kissed the terracotta rooves of the little town, casting long shadows from the masts of the multicoloured boats bobbing gently in the harbour. The light breeze - perfumed by the mountain herbs - rustled the patterned table cloths of the the *Psarotaverna Dimitri* as three late afternoon customers sat idly chatting, their eyes variably fixed on the glistening azure of the horizon.

Dimitri, the proprietor, returning to the small bar counter after yet another scolding from his harrassed wife hard at work in the tiny kitchen, shouted to his son - a conscript waiter only recently released for the holidays from the tyranny of school. "*Andros! Grigora!*", he urged, "*quickly*", indicating as he did so the almost empty glasses of the three English customers. "*An empty glass is an empty till*" he chided, "*that's what you grandfather would have said and he knew a thing or two! Quickly, go offer them more olives and tell them we have fine fish: fresh today. Octopus and squid and sea bream so good Poseidon himself would be proud to feast upon them.*" Reluctantly the boy left his stool and wandered out onto the harbour side. Four tables stood in the semblence of a row, each topped by a brightly coloured umbrella advertising the local beer. Dimitri had been pleased to accept them and had done so before realising that they were less a gift than a commitment to the supplier: still they attracted customers (he supposed) and there was no doubting the value of the shade they provided at mid-day when the taverna was frequently home to a dozen or more diners happily exhausted from their morning walks and sightseeing excursions.

The little island enjoyed a reputation as a fine destination for the more discerning tourist - those more interested in its culture and

traditions than in its tiny coves and broad sandy beaches, fine though they were - and the little harbourside taverna had a reputation too; one Dimitri was keen to maintain *The best fish on the island*, the sign proclaimed and Dimitri believed it to be true even if the unsolicited reviews of some of its customers suggested otherwise. "*Pesevengis*" he called them though not, of course, to their faces for it was not a description they would have happily embraced.

The low-level sounds of bouzouki music - emanating from a cassette-deck so old it belonged in the Mithros Museum - was slowly obliterated, as the high piercing rasp of an approaching moped filled the air. Negotiating the narrow streets, a young couple seated astride the noisy beast came suddenly into view. Laughing carelessly, they dismounted, leaned the bike against the wall and brushed the dust from their clothes. The girl removed her helmet and placed it carefully on the end of the handlebars, her long blonde curls spilling on to her shoulders as she did so. The young man, who wore no helmet, turned instead to Dimitri greeting him in the familiar way of a relative newly arrived in town.

"*Tessa-mou*" Dimitri said, smiling at the boy but opening his arms instead to the girl who now ran towards him. "*Uncle*", she replied, though the term was more one of endearment than accuracy, for she was neither his niece nor even his relative; rather a once homesick young woman in whom Dimitri had taken a fatherly interest. His eyes betrayed the sign of a tear, so overwhelmed was he at seeing her once more. And after an absence of how long? Why nearly three years he quickly calculated. Yes three years since she had first arrived as a hapless rep for Tantalus Tours, the company upon which the tourist trade of the island and his own livelihood chiefly depended.

The commotion caused by the moped's arrival - for in the



somnolent atmosphere of the late afternoon that is surely what it amounted to - had roused the tourists who, having decided to stay, now observed the local reunion with the disdain Dimitri had learned was characteristic of the English abroad. "*They are stiffening their lips*", Dimitri thought, "*and feeling superior to we Greeks who wear our hearts on our sleeves and do not hide our emotions to keep up appearances*". He pitied them, for what was life if not the love of family and friends and food and the countryside. "*They have spikes in their arses*", he commented to Zak who had also noticed the effect of their disruption and was even now raising his eyebrows in pretended bafflement. The church bell tolled as Father Evangelos, late as always, made his way up the street as quickly as his 80 year old legs could carry him. "*Kali spera*", he called in a distracted voice, followed by "*Yes, yes, I'm coming*" - a remark he addressed to no-one in particular.

"*Come, drink, eat, what can I give you?*", Dimitri asked ignoring Andros who had at last persuaded the tourists to buy beers and ouzo and was drumming his fingers on the counter in impatient rebuke. Maria arrived from the kitchen and, the embraces repeated, the couple sat down inside the taverna. Dimitri served the tourists himself and, hypocritically, flattered and charmed his customers offering them a small plate of cured ham in the hope that they might be encouraged to stay to dine. The seed sewn, he returned to Tessa and Zac, sat down and lit a cigarette before letting out an exasperated sigh. "*Every year the same*", he complained, "*since I was a boy and for what? A few drachmas and as many headaches. May the saints forgive me my sins and fill my coffers. Then I can retire and fish and sleep.*" It was a speech he had made many times before and one that cut little ice with Maria battling even now in the kitchen whilst he relaxed at the table. "*You should be a Greek wife*", she called out, "*and I should be a donkey. Bless the Virgin and my mother!*" "*Leave your mother out of this*" Dimitri chided, "*she had to put up with you before I did.*" Tessa and Zac exchanged exploratory

glances. *Bless the saints and all creation. Would they end up like this?*

Kostakis sipped a dark Greek coffee in the small smoke-filled office that served as the administrative centre of the *Aphrodite Island-wide Motor-Transport Company*. Before him stood three buses - the entire fleet - vehicles that should have been out on the road bringing tourists back from the places of interest to which the daily schedule of excursions would normally have taken them. The Spetsis Mountain Springs, the Temple of Aphrodite (after which the Company had taken its name), the ancient sunken harbour of Amathus and the Chaos Caves were the reason many tourists came to the island and the mainstay of the *Aphrodite Island-wide Motor-Transport Company's* admittedly meagre profits. Little matter that the buses were ancient and the roads worse (part of "*the cultural experience*" the guides were instructed to explain), keeping the tourists happy and the buses in broadly serviceable condition was Kostakis' principal concern: his *raison d'être* and the cause of his current malaise. For his drivers - "*may the saints rot their blackened souls*" - had downed tools and now refused to return to work until the Company met their impossible demands. Their portly leader - Achilleos Stamvoulis - a man for whom a heart-attack seemed less a likelihood than a probability - had called the strike after the Company had refused to raise wages, reduce hours and increase the length of coffee-breaks and matters had not been improved when during "*negotiations*" Kostakis had called Stamvoulis (a school classmate with whom he had "*a history*") a communist agitator as well as a "*son of a whore*" and, worst of all, "*a dogshit eater*" - accusations which (the last in particular) he would have been hard pressed to substantiate.

It had been four days since the buses had left the garage and Kostakis was beginning to suspect that it was his bluff rather than the drivers' that was being called. He drained his cup a little too enthusiastically ingesting a quantity of coffee grounds he was

forced to spit out. "*Panagea*", he exclaimed in vituperative agitation adding, in recognition of the island's extended summer droughts, "*why does it never rain on my side of the mountain?*"

The telephone rang and he answered with no great enthusiasm. "*Is that Kyrios Kostakis?*" the voice at the other end asked. "*Indeed it is, may the saints be cursed*", he answered, unable to keep the simmering disaffection from his voice. Though he was tempted to slam down the receiver in the hope that it might break and grant him - for the moment at least - a small satisfaction, he held on long enough for his caller to identify himself as Kyrios Andreas Larontis, the Manager of the Creta Hotel. The Creta Hotel was the island's finest, the jewel in the crown of Tantalus Tours' Mithros portfolio, and the destination of choice for those tourists most likely to want to take in the Island's cultural attractions. As the hotel's manager, Kyrios Larontis was to be feared as well as respected, for at his whim business could appear and disappear as Kosatkis well knew.

"*Kali spera, Kyrios*", he added quickly in his most respectful and beseeching voice, "*and how may I be of help to you at this late hour?*" "*You could begin by restoring your services and taking our guests where they want to go*", Larontis replied without a hint of sarcasm. "*I need hardly tell you that until my customers are happy I am not happy and if I am not happy ...*" He allowed the threat to hang in the air. Kostakis moved uneasily in his seat and inspected the bottom of his coffee cup, wondering if he might not feel better if he swallowed what remained and choked in the process. "*We are ... that is to say I am trying to do everything I can*", he said, "*but the unions - Kyrios - the unions they are not easy as you yourself know. Why only yesterday I was threatened with a heavy wrench just for implying Kyrios Stamvoulis was a less than honourable man and ...*". Larontis cut him short. "*I have no time for such considerations*", he interrupted. "*Your problems are your own. Please ensure that they do not become mine for a moment longer. I require your vehicles to be*

*at our disposal at 8 am tomorrow or there will be consequences".* Larontis' voice was replaced by the steady tone of the now firmly dis-engaged telephone. Not for the first time Kostakis wondered how things had come to this.

Tessa yawned wearily. It was late and their little party had eaten well - red snappers and fangri with delicious roast potatoes and a pile of vegetables which alone would have satisfied her usually small appetite. But the mixture of good company and strong local wine had encouraged her to eat far more than usual and now she felt heavy and not a little guilty. Zak glanced in her direction and suggested that it was time to leave. "*You don't forget that Anita Drill-Sargent arrives tomorrow?*", he said, aware that it was the last thing Tessa would forget since she had been fretting about the visit since her arrival two days ago.

Anita Drill-Sargent was the personel manager of Tantalus Tours and, as such, Tessa's immediate boss. She was coming from England to inspect operations as part of her overall drive to ensure that Tantalus Tours' reputation for first class service was safe in Tessa's hands. She had already expressed a desire to accompany Tessa on her trip to the Chaos Caves and Tessa was accutely aware that she had homework to do if her guided tour was to meet Ms Drill-Sargent's exacting standards. "*Time to go*" she sighed, to Dimitri's evident disappointment. "*If you must*" he said, "*but you must come back very soon mana-mou. I have twelve year old brandy that cries out to you to drink it!*"

Above the little Taverna, the black sky was pocked with stars, the Milky Way absurdly visible and almost begging for a hand to reach out and touch it. The harbour lights too twinkled as the faint sound of the sea slapping the keels of the anchored boats was borne on the evening air. "*Kali nikta Tessa-mou!*" Dimitri called as she retrieved her helmet from the moped's handlebars and Zak

prepared - somewhat unsteadily - to kick the reluctant machine into life. "*Kali nikta*", she responded "*Sto gallo*".

Dimitri watched the dim red tail light of the moped ascend the road out of the harbour and sighed heavily. Though whether it was a sigh of contentment or concern not even he knew.

Brooding in his office, Kostakis distractedly turned the empty whisky bottle in his hand and again cursed his fortune, his life and above all that damned Achilleos Stamvoulis. Stamvoulis the Red. That man was the bane of his life... had always been trouble. Even when they had been children together. That man made his life impossible and he should be stopped. That man must be taught a lesson and, come what may, tomorrow's trips *would* go ahead, even if he had to drive the damned buses himself and run over the protesting drivers in the process. Lighting yet another cigarette, an idea began to form in his head ... The Chaos Caves ... Ancient legend associated them with divine retribution and retribution was precisely what he sought. The Chaos Caves - dark, deep and secretive - now there was a thought.

*Now read on ....*

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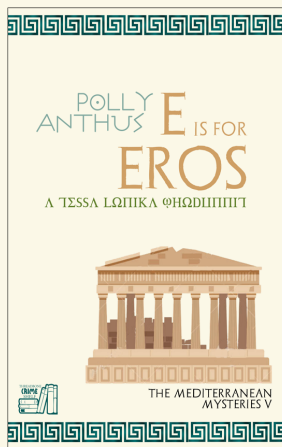
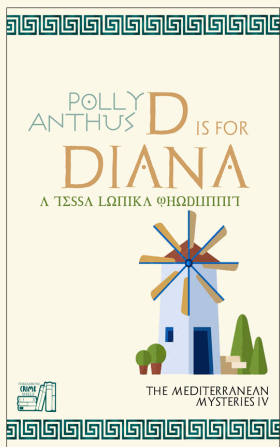
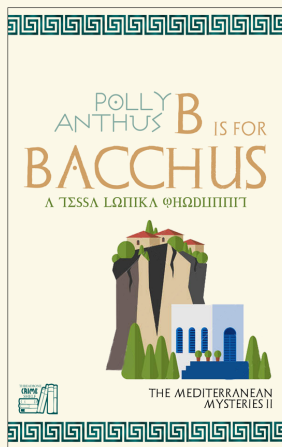
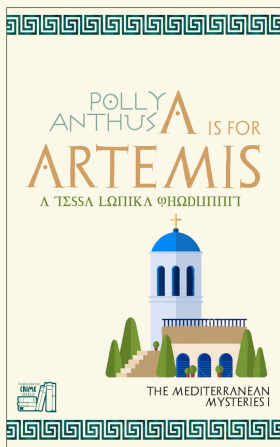
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Universal praise for the *Mediterranean Mysteries Series*

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