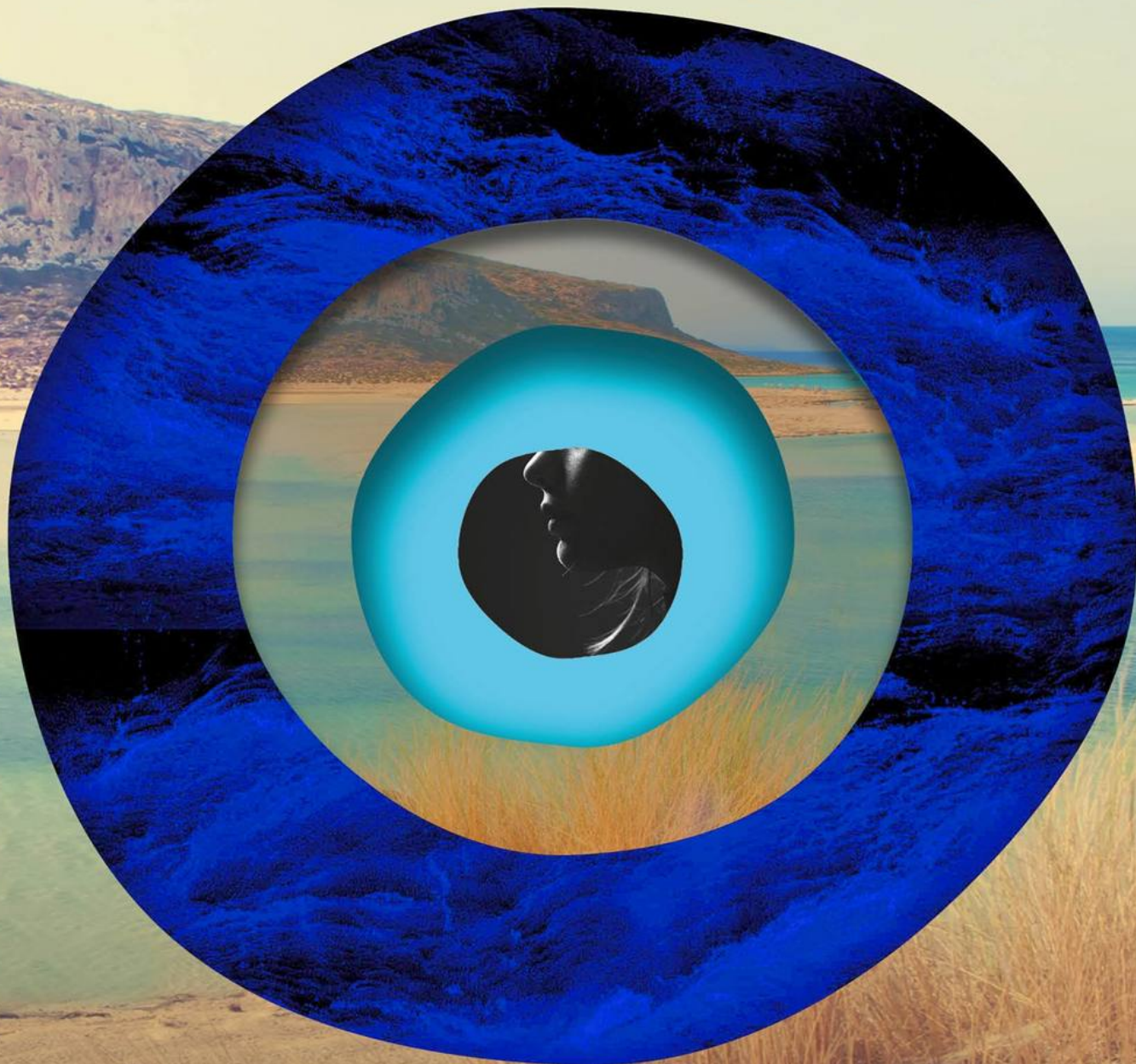


#1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF *THE SILENT PATIENT*

THE FURY



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for Uma

ἦθος ἀνθρώπῳ δαίμων
Character is destiny.
—HERACLEITUS

Prologue

Never open a book with the weather.

Who was it who said that? I can't remember—some famous writer, I expect.

Whoever it was, they were right. Weather is boring. Nobody wants to read about weather; particularly in England, where we have so much of it. People want to read about *people*—and they generally skip descriptive paragraphs, in my experience.

Avoiding the weather is good advice—which I now disregard at my peril. An exception to prove the rule, I hope. Don't worry, my story isn't set in England, so I'm not talking about rain here. I draw the line at rain—no book should start with rain ever. No exceptions.

I'm talking about wind. The wind that whirls around the Greek islands. Wild, unpredictable Greek wind. Wind that drives you mad.

The wind was fierce that night—the night of the murder. It was ferocious, furious—crashing through trees, tearing along pathways, whistling, wailing, snatching all other sound and racing off with it.

Leo was outside when he heard the gunshots. He was on his hands and knees, at the back of the house, being sick in the vegetable garden. He wasn't drunk, just stoned. (Mea culpa, I'm afraid. He'd never smoked weed before; I probably shouldn't have given him any.) After an initial semi-ecstatic experience—apparently involving a supernatural vision—he felt nauseous and started throwing up.

Just then, the wind sped toward him—hurling the sound straight at him: *bang, bang, bang*. Three gunshots, in quick succession.

Leo pulled himself up. As steadily as he could, he battled his way against the gale, in the direction of the gunfire—away from the house,

along the path, through the olive grove, toward the ruin.

And there, in the clearing, sprawled on the ground ... was a body.

The body lay in a widening pool of blood, surrounded by the semicircle of ruined marble columns casting it partially in shadow. Leo cautiously approached it, peering at the face. Then he staggered backward, his expression contorted in horror—opening his mouth to scream.

I arrived at that moment, along with the others—in time to hear the beginnings of Leo's howl, before the wind grabbed the sound from his lips and ran off with it, disappearing into the dark.

We all stood still for a second, silent. It was a horrifying moment, terrifying—like the climactic scene in a Greek tragedy.

But the tragedy didn't end there.

It was just beginning.

ACT I

This is the saddest story I have ever heard.

—FORD MADOX FORD, *The Good Soldier*

1

This is a tale of murder.

Or maybe that's not quite true. At its heart, it's a love story, isn't it? The saddest kind of love story—about the end of love; the death of love.

So I guess I was right the first time.

You may think you know this story. You probably read about it at the time—the tabloids loved it, if you recall: MURDER ISLAND was a popular headline. Unsurprising, really, as it had all the perfect ingredients for a press sensation: a reclusive ex-movie star; a private Greek island cut off by the wind ... and, of course, a murder.

A lot of rubbish was written about that night. All kinds of wild, inaccurate theories about what may, or may not, have taken place. I avoided all of it. I had no interest in reading misinformed speculation about what might have happened on the island.

I knew what happened. I was there.

Who am I? Well, I am the narrator of this tale—and also a character in it.

There were seven of us in all, trapped on the island.

One of us was a murderer.

But before you start laying bets on which of us did it, I feel duty bound to inform you that this is not a whodunit. Thanks to Agatha Christie, we all know how this kind of story is meant to play out: a baffling crime, followed by a dogged investigation, an ingenious solution—then, if you're lucky, a twist in the tale. But this is a true story, not a work of fiction. It's about real people, in a real place. If anything, it's a *whydunit*—a character study, an examination of who we are; and why we do the things we do.

What follows is my sincere and heartfelt attempt to reconstruct the

events of that terrible night—the murder itself, and everything that led up to it. I pledge to present you with the plain, unvarnished truth—or as near to it as I can get. Everything we did, said, and thought.

But how? I hear you ask. *How is it possible?* How can I possibly know it *all*? Not just every action taken, everything said and done—but everything *undone, unsaid*, all the private thoughts in one another's minds?

For the most part, I am relying on the conversations we had, before the murder and afterward—those of us who survived, that is. As for the dead, I trust you'll grant me artistic license regarding their interior life. Given I am a playwright by trade, I am perhaps better qualified than most for this particular task.

My account is also based on my notes—taken both before and after the murder. A word of explanation regarding this. I have been in the habit of keeping notebooks for some years now. I wouldn't call them diaries, they're not as structured as that. Just a record of my thoughts, ideas, dreams, snatches of conversations I overhear, my observations of the world. The notebooks themselves are nothing fancy, just plain black Moleskines. I have the relevant notebook from that year open now, by my side—and will no doubt consult it as we proceed.

I stress all this so that, if at any point during this narrative I mislead you, you will understand that it is by accident, not design—because I am clumsily skewing the events too much from my own point of view. An occupational hazard, perhaps, when one narrates a story in which one happens to play a minor role.

Nonetheless, I'll do my best not to hijack the narrative too often. Even so, I hope you'll indulge me the odd digression here and there. And before you accuse me of telling my story in a labyrinthine manner, let me remind you this is a true story—and in real life, that's how we communicate, isn't it? We're all over the place: we jump back and forth in time; slow down and expand on some moments; fast-forward through others; editing as we go, minimizing flaws and maximizing assets. We are all the unreliable narrators of our own lives.

It's funny, I feel that you and I should be sitting together on a couple of barstools, right now, as I tell you this tale—like two old friends, drinking at the bar.

This is a story for anyone who has ever loved, I say, sliding a drink in your direction—a large one, you'll need it—as you settle down, and I

begin.

I ask you not to interrupt too much, at least not at first. There will be plenty of opportunity for debate afterward. For now, I request you politely hear me out—as you might indulge a friend’s rather lengthy anecdote.

It’s time to meet our cast of suspects—in order of importance. And therefore, for the moment, I must reluctantly remain offstage. I’ll hover in the wings, waiting for my cue.

Let us begin—as we should—with the star.

Let’s begin with Lana.

2

Lana Farrar was a movie star.

Lana was a big star. She became a star when she was very young, back in the days when stardom still meant something—before anyone with an internet connection could become a celebrity.

No doubt many of you will know her name or have seen her movies. She made too many to mention. If you're anything like me, one or two of them are very dear to your heart.

Despite retiring a decade before our story begins, Lana's fame endured—and no doubt long after I am dead and forgotten, as though I never existed, Lana Farrar will be remembered; and rightly so. As Shakespeare wrote about Cleopatra, she has earned her “place i' the story.”

Lana was discovered at the age of nineteen, by the fabled Oscar-winning Hollywood producer Otto Krantz—whom she later married. Until his untimely death, Otto dedicated his considerable energy and clout to furthering Lana's career—designing entire movies as showcases for her talents. But Lana was destined to be a star, with or without Otto.

It wasn't just her flawless face, the sheer luminous beauty of a Botticelli angel—those eyes of endless blue—or the way she held herself, or spoke; or her famous smile. No, there was some *other* quality about Lana—something intangible, the trace of a demigoddess; something mythical, magical—it made her endlessly, compulsively watchable. In the presence of such beauty, all you wanted to do was gaze.

Lana made a lot of movies when she was young—and there was, to be honest, a slight sense of mud being slung at a wall, to see what would stick. And while her romantic comedies were hit-or-miss, in my opinion, and her thrillers came and went, gold was finally struck when Lana played

her first tragedy. She was Ophelia in a modern-day adaptation of *Hamlet* and received her first Oscar nomination. From then on, suffering nobly became Lana's speciality. Call them tearjerkers or weepies, Lana excelled as every doomed romantic heroine from Anna Karenina to Joan of Arc. She never got the guy; she rarely made it out alive—and we loved her for it.

As you can imagine, Lana made an enormous amount of money for a lot of people. When she was thirty-five, during an otherwise financially catastrophic couple of years for Paramount, the profits from one of her biggest successes kept the studio afloat. Which is why there was a sizable ripple of shock within the industry when Lana suddenly announced her retirement—at the height of her fame and beauty, at the tender age of forty.

It was a mystery why she had decided to quit—and was destined to remain one, for Lana offered no explanation—not then, nor in the years to come. She never spoke about it publicly.

She told me, though—one wintry night in London, as we drank whiskey by the fire, watching snowflakes drift past the window. She told me the whole story, and I told her about the—

Damn. There I go again—already worming my way back into the narrative. It seems that, despite my best intentions, I'm failing to keep myself out of Lana's story. Perhaps I should admit defeat—accept we are inseparably intertwined, she and I, knotted up like a ball of matted string, impossible to tell apart or disentangle.

Even if that's true, however, our friendship came later. At this point in the story, we hadn't met. In those days, I was living with Barbara West in London. And Lana, of course, was in Los Angeles.

Lana was a Californian, born and bred. She lived there, worked there, made the majority of her movies there. However, once Otto died and she had retired, Lana decided to leave Los Angeles for a fresh start.

But where to go?

Tennessee Williams famously said there is nowhere to go when you retire from the movies—unless you go to the moon.

But Lana didn't go to the moon. She went to England, instead.

She moved to London with her young son, Leo. She bought them a massive house in Mayfair, six stories high. She didn't intend to stay for long—certainly not forever; it was a temporary experiment in a new style of living while Lana worked out what to do with the rest of her life.

The problem was, without her all-consuming career to define her, Lana had the uncomfortable realization that she didn't know who she was—nor what she wanted to do with herself. She felt lost, she told me.

It's hard for those of us who remember Lana Farrar's movies to picture her as being "lost." On-screen, she suffered a great deal but did so with stoicism, inner fortitude, and tremendous guts. She would face her destiny without flinching and go down fighting. She was everything you want in a hero.

In real life, Lana couldn't be more different from her screen persona. Once you got to know her intimately, you began to glimpse another person hidden behind the façade: a more fragile and complicated self. Someone who was much less sure of herself. Most people never encountered this other person. But as this story unfolds, we must keep a lookout for her, you and I. For she holds all its secrets.

This discrepancy, for want of a better word, between Lana's public and private selves was something I struggled with over the years. I know Lana struggled with it, too. Particularly when she first left Hollywood and moved to London.

Thankfully she didn't have to struggle too long before fate intervened, and Lana fell in love—with an Englishman; a slightly younger, handsome businessman named Jason Miller.

Whether this falling in love was, in fact, fate, or just a convenient distraction—a way for Lana to postpone, perhaps indefinitely, all those tricky existential dilemmas about herself and her future—is open to question. In my mind, at least.

Anyway, Lana and Jason were married; and London became Lana's permanent home.

★ ★ ★

Lana liked London. She liked it largely, I suspect, because of the English reserve—people there tended to leave her alone. It's not in the English national character to accost ex-movie stars on the street, demanding selfies and autographs, no matter how famous they might be. So, for the most part, Lana could walk around the city undisturbed.

She walked a lot. Lana enjoyed walking—when the weather allowed it.

Ah, the weather. Like anyone else who spends any length of time in Britain, Lana developed an unhealthy preoccupation with the climate. As the years passed, it became a constant source of frustration for her. She

liked London, but, after nearly ten years of living there, the city and its weather had become synonymous in her mind. They were inextricably linked: London equaled *wet*, equaled *rain*, equaled *gray*.

This year had been particularly gloomy. It was nearly Easter and, so far, not a hint of spring had materialized. Currently, it was threatening rain.

Lana glanced up at the blackening skies as she wandered through Soho.

Sure enough, she then felt a spot of rain on her face—and another on her hand. *Damn*. She had better turn back now, before it got worse.

Lana started retracing her steps—and her thoughts. She returned to the thorny problem she had been mulling over. Something was bothering her, but she didn't know what it was. She had been feeling anxious for several days. She felt restless, uneasy, as if pursued by something and trying to give it the slip—keeping her head down in the narrow streets, evading what was tailing her. But what was it?

Think, she told herself. *Work it out*.

As she walked, Lana made an inventory of her life—searching for any glaring dissatisfactions or worries. Was it her marriage? Unlikely. Jason was stressed about work, but that was nothing new—their relationship was in a good place at the moment. The problem wasn't there. Then where? Her son? Leo? Was it their conversation the other day? It was just an amicable chat about his future, wasn't it?

Or was it far more complicated?

Another spot of rain distracted her. Lana glared resentfully at the clouds. No wonder she couldn't think straight. If only she could see the sky ... see the *sun*.

As she made her way home, her mind played on this idea of escaping the weather. Here, at least, something could be done.

How about a change of scene? It was Easter next weekend. What if they took a last-minute trip—in search of sunshine?

Why not go to Greece, for a few days? To the island?

Why not, indeed? It would do them good—Jason, Leo, and Lana in particular. She could invite Kate and Elliot, too, she thought.

Yes, that would be fun. Lana smiled. The promise of sunlight and blue skies instantly brightened her mood.

She pulled her phone out of her pocket.

She'd call Kate straightaway.

3

Kate was in the middle of a rehearsal.

She was due to open in just over a week, at the Old Vic—in a new, highly anticipated production of *Agamemnon*, the tragedy by Aeschylus. Kate was playing Clytemnestra.

This was the first run-through of the play in the actual theater, and it was not going well. Kate was still struggling with her performance—more specifically, with her lines; which, at this late stage of the game, was not a good sign.

“For Christ’s sake, Kate,” yelled the director, Gordon, from the stalls, in his booming Glaswegian accent. “We open in ten days! Can you not, for the love of God, sit down with the fucking book and learn the lines?”

Kate was equally exasperated. “I know the lines, Gordon. That’s not the problem.”

“Then what is? Pray enlighten me, love.” But Gordon was being heavily sarcastic and not waiting for an answer. “Keep going,” he shouted.

Between you and me—entre nous, as Barbara West used to say—I don’t blame Gordon for losing his temper.

You see, despite Kate’s immense talent—and she was hugely talented, let’s make no mistake about that—she was also chaotic; messy; temperamental; usually tardy; often belligerent; not always sober; as well as, of course, brilliant, charismatic, funny—and possessing an unerring instinct for truth, both on- and offstage. All of which combined meant—as poor Gordon had discovered—she was a bloody nightmare to work with.

Ah ... but that’s not fair, is it? Slipping in my judgment of Kate like that—under the radar, so to speak—as if you wouldn’t notice. I’m a sly one, aren’t I? I’ve sworn to be objective, inasmuch as it’s possible, and let

you make up your own mind. So, I must honor that vow. Henceforth, I will endeavor to keep my opinions to myself.

I will stick to the facts:

Kate Crosby was a British theater actor. She grew up in London, in a working-class family, south of the river; though any trace of an accent had long since been obliterated by years of drama school and voice training. Kate spoke with what used to be known as a BBC accent—rather refined and hard to place—but, it must be said, her vocabulary remained as earthy as ever. She was deliberately provocative, with a touch of “the end of the pier”—as Barbara West put it. *Bawdy* is the word I’d use.

There was a famous story about how Kate once met King Charles, when he was still Prince of Wales, at a charity luncheon he was hosting. Kate asked Charles how far away the toilets were—adding she was so desperate, sir, if she had to, she’d piss in the sink. Charles roared with laughter, apparently; entirely charmed. Kate’s eventual damehood was no doubt secured there and then.

Kate was in her late forties when our story begins. Or possibly older—it’s hard to know exactly. Like many actors, the precise date of her birth was a movable feast. She didn’t look her age, anyway. She was lovely to look at, as dark as Lana was fair—dark eyes, dark hair. In her own way, Kate was every inch as attractive as her American friend. Unlike Lana, she used a great deal of makeup; heavy use of eyeliner and several layers of thick black mascara accentuating her big eyes. The mascara never came off, to my knowledge; I think she just added a layer or two daily.

Kate’s whole look was more “actressy” than Lana’s—lots of jewelry, chains, bracelets, scarves, boots, big coats. It’s as if she were doing everything she could to be noticed. Whereas Lana, who in many ways was truly extraordinary, always dressed in as simple a manner as possible—as if drawing undue attention to herself would be in bad taste, somehow.

Kate was a dramatic person; larger-than-life, with a restless energy. She drank and smoked constantly. In this, and every other regard, I suppose, Lana and Kate must be regarded as opposites. Their friendship was always a bit of a mystery to me, I’ll admit. They seemed to have so little in common, yet were the very best of friends—and had been for a long time.

In fact, of all the several intertwining love stories in this tale, Lana and Kate’s relationship was the earliest, endured the longest—and was perhaps the saddest of all.

How did two such different people ever become friends?

I suspect *youth* had a lot to do with it. The friends we make when young are rarely the kind of people we seek out later in life. The length of time we have known them accords them a kind of nostalgia in our eyes, if you will; an indulgence; a “free pass” in our lives.

Kate and Lana met thirty years ago—on a film set. An independent movie being shot in London: an adaptation of *The Awkward Age*, by Henry James. Vanessa Redgrave was playing the lead, Mrs. Brook; and Lana was her daughter, the ingenue, Nanda Brookenham. Kate had the comic supporting role of the Italian cousin, Aggie. Kate made Lana laugh off camera as well as on, and over the summer shoot, the two young women became friends. Kate introduced Lana to London nightlife and they were soon out every night, having a raucous time—turning up on set hungover; sometimes, no doubt, knowing Kate, still drunk.

It’s like falling in love, isn’t it, when you make a new friend? And Kate was Lana’s first close female friend. Her first ally in life.

Where was I? Forgive me, it’s proving rather a tricky thing to keep hold of, a linear narrative. I must endeavor to master it, or we’ll never make it to the island—let alone the murder.

Kate’s rehearsal, that’s it.

Well, it struggled on limply, and she kept stumbling through her speeches. But not because she didn’t know the lines. She knew the lines. She just didn’t feel comfortable in the part—she felt lost.

Clytemnestra is an iconic character. The original femme fatale. She killed her husband and his mistress. A monster—or a victim, depending on how you look at it. What a gift to an actor. Something to sink your teeth into. You’d think so, anyway. But Kate’s performance was remaining bloodless. She seemed unable to summon up the requisite Greek fire in her belly. Somehow, she needed to burrow her way inside the skin, into the heart and mind of the character; discover a small chink of connection that would allow her to inhabit her. Acting, for Kate, was a muddy, magical process. But right now, there was no magic—just mud.

They staggered on to the end. Kate put a brave face on it but she felt wretched. Thank God she had a few days off now, for Easter, before the tech and dress rehearsals. A few days to regroup, rethink—and pray.

Gordon announced at the end of rehearsal that he wanted everyone word-perfect after Easter. “Or I will not be responsible for my actions. Is that clear?” He addressed this to the whole cast, but everyone knew he

meant Kate.

Kate gave him a big smile and a pretend kiss on the cheek. “Gordon, love. Don’t worry, it’s all under control. *Promise.*”

Gordon rolled his eyes, unconvinced.



Kate went backstage to get her stuff. She was still moving into the star’s dressing room, and it was a mess: half-unpacked bags, makeup and clothes everywhere.

The first thing Kate did in any dressing room was light the jasmine candle she always bought, for good luck, and to banish that stuffy backstage smell of stale air, old wood, carpet, damp exposed brick—not to mention the sneaky cigarettes she would puff on out the window.

Having relit the candle, Kate rummaged inside her bag, pulling out a bottle of pills. She shook a Xanax into her hand. She didn’t want the whole pill, just a little bit, a *nibble*—to take the edge off her anxiety. She broke it in half, then bit off a quarter. She let the fragment of bitter pill dissolve on her tongue. She rather enjoyed the harsh chemical taste of it; she imagined the nasty taste meant it was working.

Kate glanced out the window. It was raining. It didn’t look heavy—it might brighten up soon. She’d go for a walk along the river. A walk would be good. She needed to clear her head. She had so much on her mind; she felt quite dizzy with it all.... So much ahead—so much to think about, to worry about—but she couldn’t bear to face it just now.

Perhaps a drink would help. She opened the little fridge under the dressing table and took out a bottle of white wine.

She poured herself a glass and perched on the dressing table. And she lit a cigarette, strictly against theater rules, punishable by death, but fuck it—the way things were looking, this was the last time she’d act in this theater; or any other, come to that.

She threw a look of hatred at the script. It glared back at her from the dressing table. She reached over and turned it face down. *What a disaster.* Whatever made her think *Agamemnon* was a good idea? She must have been high when she agreed to it. She cringed, visualizing the vicious reviews. The *Times* theater critic already hated her; she’d have a field day tearing her apart. So would that bastard at the *Evening Standard*.

Her phone rang—a welcome distraction from her thoughts. She reached for it and checked the screen. It was Lana.