

Rusty Nail part B

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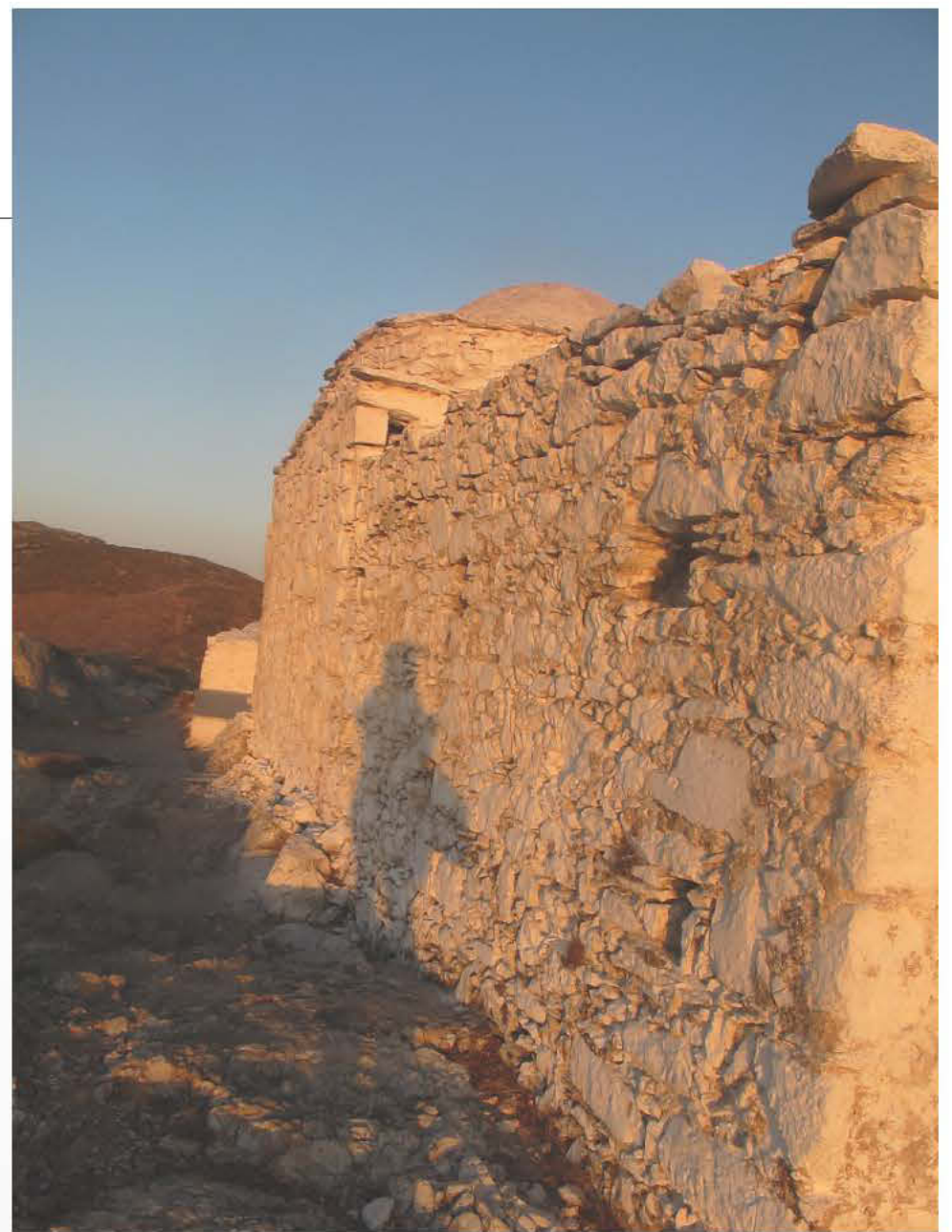
There were no secrets in the village. When Grigoritsa wanted to humiliate her husband she screamed for help out of the window facing the town where her mother lived. People muttered about Costa's daily visits to the young widow and wondered what other, unrevealed treasures Nikos brought back from Smyrni. A young girl's reputation was the dearest thing she had; all it took to invite disaster was a look in the wrong direction.

Most villagers shared the same pattern of day with every task arriving in its own good time; the sowing, the growing, the harvesting, the slaughtering, the eating. Every season had its celebration and the colour black, ostensibly for mourning, rendered the young widow, sexless, invisible, undangerous. There was little room for difference. It was noted and censured. Shame had power in the village. With too many people living in the same small place they had to learn to share, to pull their weight. Responsibility came early and child shepherds spent their first night alone in the fields, learning how to control their fear. This was no environment for adolescence; children saw too much, knew too much and matured too early.

A little girl, oh about seven, walks across the fields to a family holding some distance away. Her mother makes her wear a headscarf stiffened with

calico to keep her skin fair; dark, tanned skin is not beautiful and she must one day marry. Her job is to water the crops. She has to climb a ladder set against a boskina - a tank built out of stone and clay - which is fed by a small stream, and maneuver a long stick into water deeper than she is tall, to open a trapdoor and release the flow. There are four crops, so she has to do this four times. Sometimes it takes all day. When the job is finished, she must jump into the tank to replace the trapdoor, making it watertight. This is the bit she hates because sometimes there are snakes in the bottom of the tank.

Memories were long and gossip supplanted truth so that tiny jealousies escalated into spite. Ill will became bad acts. These were the bleaker aspects of village life. However, there was also support and kindness and the ills which afflict us all; alcoholism, madness, badness, sadness, illness, old and senile



age, were somehow caught and dealt with. Children belonged as much to the village as to the family. People lived to a rhythm and a beat which were ordained by the seasons and heralded by the winds and a collective gladdening occurred as winter folded back into itself and the early spring flowers emerged. The perfume from the apple blossoms softened the air, grapes grew purple on the vine and wood smoke from winter fires was replaced by the smell of orange blossom. Spring brought

new beginnings.

A young bride goes to her new home. She's beautiful - fresh, triumphant, confident. She has married an Australezo and has plans, which do not include her staying there for long. She has cast her hopes much further away. And when she leaves her island for good, she will throw a black stone behind her to prevent her return. But now she is taking the first step into her new life, by riding in state to her husband's village. Her white

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