

Incorrigible

By
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Authors Note:

All the characters in this story are fictional, with the exception of some political figures—Hugo Chávez and Fidel Castro and his wife—with whom I have taken many fictional liberties (personality, sexual behavior, and basically everything but their name and country of origin) so that in no way, shape, or form are they true accounts of anything that, to my knowledge, has ever occurred in real life. Any coincidence would be just too funny and strange, but heck, anything is possible! Reality is only a figment of our imagination.

This novel contains explicit sexual content not intended for minors.

This novel is a fictional satire with fantasy, mystery, adventure, and romantic elements, intended only as entertainment.

All illustrations in this book are from the author's private collection and were made specifically for this book.



“Change is always a possibility as long as there is life and you are willing to take the risk.”

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Chapter 1

Escape from Cubantraz

If you had the opportunity to be your own God, would you? To have the power to manipulate your fate and make it your own will is grand indeed.

I am writing this today not just because I think it will be a best seller one day, but also because I want to share with you how I got away with murder, so to speak, and how to learn from my mistakes to become a better con. I've been holding on to too many secrets, and some are just too good to keep to oneself! (I am reminiscing with a shameless grin as I write these words.)

I have a really black heart and a hand with a watermark. The trick to owning a really black heart is not to let others know its true color so that they think you are as nice as any other person—so you blend in. We all like to pretend; we all like to think we are actors in our own movie, the one we call life. I just take it one step further and actually make good use of my acting skills. I dare to be what others sometimes find themselves too inhibited to be. Fear is such a shameful inhibitor!

I hide under a façade, a regular facade, just like most people. It's only that my facade is just more intricate and better thought out than most. I think of myself as having purpose, and this purpose gives me all the edge I need to dare to be who others won't.

My name is Maria. This is not my real name, but it serves a purpose. Every time I give somebody a name, they get a personality that goes along with it. In this case, Maria is such a common name that it can be you, the girl next door, or anybody for that matter. Beware of girls named Maria!

This story starts in Alcatraz—well, not quite Alcatraz but just as bad. I used to be Hugo Chávez's mistress, you see, and on one of his trips to Cuba, where he visited his friend Fidel, he took me with him. This was when Fidel became sweet on me—not a hard thing to do—and decided to keep me for himself. Hugo added me to his list of gifts to Fidel, giving more richness to their already lively friendship.

“Como puede un hombre quitarle a otro a quien llama su amigo? (How does a man take from a man he calls his friend?)” said Hugo, bantering.

Fidel walked over to Hugo and placed his hand on Hugo's shoulder and said, “It is not taking, my friend. Friends are generous with one another. Why don't you just give her to me as a gift? Sleep on it, dear friend,” Fidel said in a tone that was as gentle as a summer breeze. If you know anything about Fidel, however, his friendship can be more than you bargained for, and asking no matter how nicely was really a command; after all, he didn't get rule Cuba by being a kind and gentle leader. That just was not how it was done.

Hugo paced most of the night over this. I could tell part of him wondered whether “gifting” me would in some way demean his manhood. You know Spanish men—they are all about their male bravado. Needless to say, I felt I was being treated like a piece of cattle by two farmers.

I was really not happy to be stuck in that position, away from my country, about to lose all that I had known up until that point in my tiny life, probably never again to see my family or friends—about to be traded to a man who probably would keep me under his

power until he grew tired of me, and then what? If I were lucky, he would let me go so that I could live the rest of my days in poverty somewhere in the slums that had been long forgotten by God.



Hugo looked over at me as if it would be the last time he would ever look at me with desire.

“*Mujer, seras mia una vez mas!* (Woman, you shall be mine one last time!)” His tone was decisive. He was a no-questions-asked type of man. This meant that if you, as his mistress, asked too many questions, he would not hesitate; you would just be saying hello to the back and front of his hand.

“*Papi ven,* (Daddy come here),” I said to him in my sexy voice, making one last attempt to seduce him and be in his graces, but I feared it was already too late, for his mind was made up, and clearly his relationship with Fidel was more important to him than any woman who was not loved by him. His bravado was not as important to him in this situation.

I debated whether or not to use my powers of influence on him once more, but in a way, the unexpected future was tempting to me. Perhaps it was time to change the breeze and inhale new airs. And I also thought that a fight between Hugo and Fidel over me would not benefit me in any way, even though I would have enjoyed the spectacle with some popcorn.

Hugo’s penis grew possessive of me; he stabbed my vagina with it as a weapon of war. He showed off his prowess to an invisible audience, making my insides sore. As he was about to come, he pulled out his penis and hosed me down with his sperm, marking his

territory as a woman who was once his. “Remember me, woman,” his actions said to me as dawn grew closer into another day, and I rested, waiting for my fate.

He slept quite peacefully after that; his breath was deep and breezy with no recourse and no remorse.

The next day I was moved into a different room in one of Fidel’s properties. The room was a shade of light blue and had a colonial feel with a European antique decor. There was a white vanity and an ocean view. The floor had an intricate mosaic pattern, and on the walls were several portraits from the eighteen hundreds of men and women who had once been important.

I was locked in that room for a couple of days before I saw Fidel. I guess a mistress must wait to be visited, as do all items of convenience. I was scared, but I didn’t really have a choice but to go on or die resisting. These are not great choices to have.

He came to my room and asked me to get dressed in lingerie; it was in such a polite manner that it surprised me—not what I was expecting from a political or military tyrant. He waited on the bed and watched me for a few minutes and then asked me to come over toward him. He touched me softly with hands that felt like feathers on my skin. He undid my red lace bra and exposed my breasts. He smothered his face all over them in delight. I almost felt as if I was getting ready to nurture him like a mother would a child. I followed my instinct and, without words, did just that. I figured if he liked me enough, he might be good to me, and my time in Cuba wouldn’t be so bad.

I grabbed his head in my hands and ran my red fingernails through his hair and coarse frizzy beard. He grabbed one of my hands and caressed his face tenderly with it; while doing so, he noticed the raised marks on the palm of my hand. I told him they were my watermark, and he looked at me, knowing I had been branded.



Fidel smelled like cigars smoked by a tranquil sea. When I kissed him, he tasted like a very strong aged rum. I sat on his lap like a child getting ready for a story. He liked this; I could tell. He smelled me like a bloodhound whenever his nose was close to my skin.

“You smell like magnolias,” he said to me sweetly. Part of me felt this was how he manipulated people and won them over, but I was not sure how transparent he was with me yet. I decided not to think too much about his ploy with me; after all, he didn’t have anything to gain from me at that point. I already was his. I, on the other hand, was forced to win him over and keep him happy for my own sake.

He laid me on the bed and started to caress my legs softly, and although I did not find him attractive, my body was reacting to the feeling of pleasure and erotic sensuality. This soothed me and left me vulnerable for an attack. He kissed my heels and even licked them with pleasure. This surprised me, for it was from a man with such power. He took my heel high heel off and played with my toes; he sniffed my feet, looking intoxicated by the aroma. I cringed secretly at this and hoped that my feet smelled good. He seemed pleased, so I didn’t disturb his odd behavior; in fact, I let him do whatever he wanted with my feet. He began to suck on my toes, and I quivered from this new sensation; it was wet and squishy, and I was pretty sure I didn’t like it. He then began to use his teeth,

and I had to stop myself from flinching. He licked my toes as if he was eating meat that falls right off the bone.

When he was finally done, he tickled me with his beard as he went up my thighs and lapped over my intimate lips like a serpent sticking out his tongue, in a hissing way. I moaned at this with pleasure; his tongue felt soft and smooth in just the right way. It was like wet velvet against my clitoris. I began to quiver with excitement the more intense he got. He teased me, not quite giving me an orgasm, and when I was almost ready to climax, he pulled his pants down, revealing his throbbing cock. The hair around his cock looked similar to his beard, except it had a big hard nose sticking out. It was so abundant that his testicles disappeared under the lush shrubbery. The tip of his penis slipped around my wet lips before entering me—something I noticed he enjoyed. I climaxed from the excitement as soon as he entered my body, and it was a good thing I did because he nearly came before me.

We continued an affair for nearly four months. Life wasn't nearly as terrible as I had originally anticipated. The food was good; I ate generous portions of a beefy stew called *ropa vieja*, fried cassava plantains (both sweet and savory), beans, and all sorts of Latin delicacies that fill the hips with generous proportions. I had my own room, tons of beach time to enjoy by the ocean, and for the most part, when Fidel didn't need my services, I was on my own. I did notice, however, that I was often being watched. Fidel was always very careful not to speak too openly to me about his operations—or anything too serious, for that matter.

The presence of the armed forces was everywhere, even when I couldn't see them. It reminded me often of the reality of life there. The people looked resentful and scared despite their strong sense of pretense. Many distracted themselves in admirable ways, such as academic studies and the arts, as a way to focus on more pleasant and productive things. One thing that brought cheer to the community was salsa dancing and the contests held for it. I must say, I felt inspired to become the best dancer and secretly took it upon myself to find a partner to compete with. This did not take long.

When my feet touched the ground, I felt I had swift wings at my ankles and swiveled like a flame through the wind. My partner was a slim dark man with a very athletic figure. I often found myself admiring the perfection of his taut muscles. His skin had a natural glow to it. It was intriguing, in a way, how his skin glowed without the help of baby oil, but I guess we are all entitled to our secrets.

His name was Marco. His words when we practiced—and thank God that we practiced, because all that food I was eating would have stayed on my hips otherwise—were as follows: “*Muevete, mujer! Así, así, mueve esas caderas. Seduceme, mujer!* (Move, woman! This way, that way, move those hips. Seduce me, woman!)” His voice was aggressive and commanding, suggesting the power of his passion.

He was intoxicating. There was something in his persona that was palpably strong and magnetically alluring in the way he carried himself. It was this indefinable sense of self that carried over into his dance like an electrical current. I wished I could have been his lover, but I was *intocable*, which means “untouchable.” If any man was to be found with a woman who was Fidel's, at the very least they would have been thrown in jail, but a good beating was most likely the punishment, if not death.

Fidel's wife, Dalia, was a very jealous woman, something I guess I should have known, but somehow it had escaped me. I was as ignorant as always. It does happen to the best of

us from time to time. We go walking down that red carpet, thinking we own the world in the palm of our hands, and suddenly the rug gets pulled, we lose our balance, and down we go, sideswiped by life's events. Then again, I lived a life where she didn't really matter. I only knew who she was because of who she was married to, not because she was something to be feared or venerated—but of course, I don't worship people who are not myself, anyways; that sort of thing is beneath me and only worthy of a true god.

When I walked through the streets during the day, mothers would often take their children and cover their eyes, some women would snarl at me, and others would hold on to their boyfriends or husbands and force them to look away. I was becoming aware of the public hatred that people were starting to have for me; even though nobody said anything to me, I could still feel it.

The invisible wall of isolation that others give you when they fear and hate you was always amusing to me. It was powerful; it was liberating not to live by the public's approval of self but rather your own. But it was also lonely to stand alone in the crowd and feel this way. I wondered why I was hated more. Was it because I was Fidel's lover, because I slept with a married man, or because I was viewed as some type of prostitute? Probably all the above. The thought made me smirk. Hate is a stronger emotion than love, and I wielded its power.

At first I avoided these looks by walking the streets at night instead of the daytime, but I refused to be a prisoner to society, so I walked the streets during the day anyway, flaunting myself lewdly in their faces just to make their day—or should I say mine? If I really wanted to be bold, I'd wink or flirt with their men just to see them grow insecure toward their loved ones, thinking they would stray to the warmth of my arms and then some. They weren't going to keep me from watching the sea roar against the cliffs by sunset or even enjoy my life. Who did they think they were? They were not more powerful than me!

It was coming close to my salsa dance competition. I opted to play it safe and let Fidel know what I was going to do, because Cuba is a small country; if I didn't tell him something he probably already knew, someone else would be more slanderous in telling him so.

He told me he hoped I would win. I told him if he asked the judges to favor me, they would. He smiled at me and looked down slightly, pretending to be abashed, that we both acknowledged the full force of his level of power.

The night of the competition came, and Marco and I walked down to the hall where people waited with cheer.

The first couple on the dance floor shook their hips to the rhythm of the trumpets and drums. The judges scored them based on style, inventiveness, tempo, and flavor. They were scored a seven, two eights, and a nine out of ten. The next couple was probably not as good as the first. The woman missed a step here and there, and together their movements seemed as jerky and clumsy as a duck on a slide. They had a crew of friends and relatives cheering for them, making it seem as though they were the kings of the dance floor with this intimidating crowd behind them. *Cocksuckers*, I thought as I smiled placidly on the outside.

Marco looked at me and smiled almost as if he could read my thoughts. "*No te apures linda, nosotros les ganaremos* (Don't sweat it, cutie; we'll beat them)," he said as my eyes widened fiercely, taking up the dare.

The judges scored nines for the second couple, pissing me off even more as I tried my hardest to force a smile and applaud.

“The contest is fixed,” I said to Marco with a snarl. “*Hijueputas desgraciados!* (Bastards, sons of bitches!),” I went on in a rant. Twenty more couples went on to compete, all averaging a score of eight. Most of them were decent salsa dancers, but I knew we were better; I just wanted to prove it!

When Marco and I got on the dance floor, we started slow with a dramatic entrance as the light shone on us. I slipped into his hand like a dove on a cloud. He brought me near, spun me, and teased me, and I teased him back with the flirty sway of my hips and a smile of happiness as if I had just been bedded by the god of sex. Our moves were so precise and coordinated that we were a pleasure to watch, if I do say so myself. Back and forth and back again, spin, twist, and over. By the time we were done, we were both sweating and panting as if we had just had the most vigorous of sexual sessions, and I was almost just as satisfied—that was, until I heard our scores. We scored three nines and an eight, getting only second place to that lousy couple who went second. They actually won, and I was stirring in a pot of flames, wanting to do something evil about it. There was a brief award ceremony where we took our places to be honored. When Marco and I were announced, I heard only a mild applause. This angered me. I had no idea this was supposed to be a popularity contest. When the crowd cheered for the winning couple, I could feel the blood burning in my face as I pretended to smile happy for them, once more swallowing my frustration.

Marco tried to console me, letting me know there would be other times for us to win, but the truth was, there was no better time for me than now! I nodded silently, making Marco feel as if he had done his job.

“*Vamonos. Te llevo a casa* (Let’s go. I will take you home),” Marco said to me like a true gentleman.

“No, *esta bien quiero estar sola, papi. Déjame si?* (No, that’s OK, I want to be alone, babe. Is that OK?)” He looked at me reluctantly, but having discovered my strong will, he decided to go off with Raul, his friend, and get a drink instead.

I waited outside, hoping for the woman who won the contest to come out alone. I wanted to attack her. I wasn’t sure exactly how I would do this. I just wanted to tell her off or slap her in the face, but both would give enormous satisfaction. It simply would be enough just to upset her on the verge of her undeserved celebration.

The truth is, when you’re this angry, you just want to do something you never really think things through. You get all this anticipation from the rage building up, and the next thing you know, something you can’t take back happens, but that’s OK; at least the anger is gone. You did something about it, so you can go home and have a peaceful night’s sleep.

Before I could do anything at all, a car pulled up in front of me. A man came out from the backseat. He covered my head with a sack, bound my hands, shoved me into the vehicle quickly, and then we drove off somewhere into the night. However, none of these tasks were done obsequiously on my part.

The bag seemed to be made of some type of burlap. It was dusty and that made me cough as if I had just swallowed a gust of grainy sand. I was very nervous too. I could feel the adrenaline rushing back and forth, this time for a very different reason altogether than a few moments before. I kept wondering who or why this was being done.

My thoughts raced back and forth like a pendulum. I felt it was best not to talk or ask any questions at that moment. They might not have even answered me anyways.

I sensed there were three people in the car, at least that I could smell anyways. There was a man driving, a man next to me, and what felt like a woman. I felt it was a woman because of the strange distant aura she emanated and the musky sweet scent of her body. In my lifetime—and believe me, that is a while—I had never met a man who smelled as good as a woman.

They were all very silent at first, but the closer we got to our destination, the men started to talk.

“Señora si nos agarran nos van a matar. No estamos siguiendo ordenes (Ma’am, if they catch us, they will kill us. We are not following orders.)” a coarse voice said nervously.

“Yo tengo familia, Señora. Sin mi no sobreviven (I have family, ma’am. Without me, they won’t survive),” said the other with temerity.

“Callen, cobardes! Por algo quiero que desaparezca. Los muertos no hablan. (Shut up, cowards! There is a reason I want her to disappear. The dead don’t speak.)” The woman had a very dry way of saying this. Perhaps it was the chill up my spine as she spoke that made it seem that way. Or maybe it was the thought of a death being so near that worried me. I can’t really remember the last time I dealt with my own death or why I felt this long-forgotten feeling again. Oh yes, It was because I was actually alive again!

The ride seemed endless. In a way that was good, I suppose. It potentially gave me the time to think about my situation and how to get out of it. I thought I could try and run as soon as the car stopped and they opened the door. Then I sighed; what a terrible idea! What if I got shot? I wouldn’t be able to see, and I was also bound. Did I have any other options? Should I beg for my life? No, absolutely not! That was beneath me. Was there anything that I could say to change her mind about killing me? Hmm...

The car stopped, and I swallowed hard, thinking of the fate that awaited me. Life was pounding out of my chest and running away like a coward. There was no real value in cowardice even for somebody like me, so I went and got my fear and shoved it back where the sun don’t shine! Then again, staying calm increases your chances for survival by 30 percent, and then there is another 10 percent that is merely associated with luck. But who really needs luck in a situation like this?

The driver got out and slammed the door; he came around and opened the other door for the woman who was riding next to me. Both the man and the woman in the backseat came out, and then the door opened, and I was jerked out of the car, falling abruptly on to the ground. I felt the dirt and the rocks all around my hands and knees as I hit the earth. There was this gritty feeling on my hands, and I had to try and dust the dirt off—a task that seemed quite hard when your hands were tied, but even so, I wasn’t sure why clean hands mattered so much at a time like this. It wasn’t like my tombstone would say, “And the woman died with clean hands.” *How silly*, I thought, but I suppose the anxiety you get at a moment like this does spurt out unusual thoughts in the brain. Then, again, that just might be me.

They took me for a walk. I could feel the cobblestones underneath my feet, so I knew we weren’t on a regular road anymore. I felt like my toes wanted to clench the edges of those cobblestones rather than move forward, but the dust made my foot slip off, so that wouldn’t have worked anyway.

“Take the bag off!” growled the woman. I adjusted quickly to the low nighttime light. The color of the full moon was glistening with as much orange as reddish hues. It looked like a ominous bloody moon. Perhaps my imagination was becoming too vivid...

I was thankful for the light from the moon though, and the nighttime lighting from the bottom outside edges of the castle. It was quite romantic, in a way that meant I could at least witness my demise and not go from one dark place to another without being able to see how it happened.

I recognized where we were. We were at the edge of a cliff at the Castle El Morro, by the water, far from the main road, houses, and people.

The woman stood in front of me in an A position, her hipbones protruding forward, almost as if exaggerating her dominance in this situation. *That’s OK*, I thought. I’d stay on my knees for now and wait to see what happens. She wore a white flowing cotton dress and a red belt fastened tightly on her small waist. She had shoulder-length curly black hair, and from my perspective, she seemed to have very thick legs for the rest of her body proportions, but just to show I am not a hater, I’ll throw in that this actually worked for her, and it made her somewhat attractive.

“Do you know why you are here, you whore?” She was not just angry but also full of spite when she said this, almost as if she had been waiting to get something off her chest for a long time. As she spoke, my anger started to swell up painfully inside me. She had some nerve calling me a whore! The worst part was that I was not even in a position to be able to do anything about it.

“I guess you hate me because I’m prettier than you!” I showed her a piece of me with a big bold smile, mocking her. The blind side of her anger was making her pupils dilate and redden even more. The upper hand she so smugly had was washed off her face, and not knowing how to answer me, she gave me a villainous laugh instead, the type you normally see in children’s cartoons. Then I began to think how humiliating it would be to be annihilated by someone with the emotional and intellectual maturity of a child.

“You make me laugh! I am Fidel’s wife, Dalia. You thought you could screw around with my husband and not pay for it?” she said, recuperating her stance and gathering momentum for more. “I see you have a very vulgar type of so-called beauty, but that doesn’t give you enough brains to stay out of my way,” she said, waving her gloved hand as if she was swatting an imaginary fly.

Somewhere a long time ago, I had read that if someone was going to kill you, they would do it within the first thirty seconds; otherwise, they were too chicken to go ahead with it. Looking at the fact that this woman was dressed in white—how ironic—I somehow doubted she would actually want to get her hands dirty with my blood, but who knew? Maybe she might surprise me.

“Well, clearly I am important to you! Despite my so-called vulgarity, you actually know who I am—but me, up until this moment, I had no idea who you were. Clearly you’re the one who needs to get off her high horse. I didn’t get in your way. You put me in it!”

The two men around us looked as if the acid in the pit of their stomachs had made a nuclear explosion in their pants. They all stared at me as if I was crazy, because most people would be pleading for their lives, and I guess this is what Dalia wanted, but I refused to give her the satisfaction of seeing me beg. She even had my hands tied in the form of one who says a prayer. She clearly was overconfident about how things would turn out that night. I just didn’t want to make it too easy for this ugly princess.

“You got in my way the moment you snaked yourself into Fidel’s bed!” Clearly Dalia was more insane than me, but even more than that, she was stupid enough to fight for her two-faced man.

“Listen, you think I want Fidel? That’s insane! You can keep the man and his bushy dick for all I care! You just have to try and keep him in your bed—that is, if you can!” I gave her my signature smirk of evil bravado—the one where I nearly wink with my cheekbone, it is so high up on my face.

“Gimme the gun. *Ya no quiero oir a esta puta!* (I don’t want to hear this bitch anymore.)”

The man closest to her hands her a small gun, something I later knew to be a .347 magnum. I could see why she would like to hold something so small and apparently easy to handle (that was not a sexual pun); however, it wasn’t until she stood there aiming at me for what seemed to be an eternity that I realized she had never killed anybody or shot anybody before. She’d never used a gun. *Maybe she had practiced before and she was just nervous*, I thought, giving her the benefit of the doubt. This gave me hope that she might miss and give up, a thought that curled my lips upward for an instant. After a few more moments of hesitation, she lowered her gun and handed it back to the other man.

“Take care of her. I’ll wait in the car.” She walked away, looking undignified almost as if killing someone was below her stature, and in some way, this demeaned her position.

The driver followed her back into the car, where they both waited for the other man to shoot me. I sighed in mocking resignation, but with all the time that passed, I actually had an idea. I was willing to try anything to live; after all, death seemed certain. I had nothing to lose.

“You know, you should shoot me over the edge of the cliff. That way I’ll just fall right into the water. No cleanup.” The man looked at me quizzically, but somehow this made sense to him.

“Are you not afraid of death, *senorita?*”

“Well, when a woman like me dies, she doesn’t go to heaven and tell God all the great deeds she has done. She goes to hell to get high fives by the devil. So what do you think? Aren’t you afraid I will come back from the dead for you?” I said this like a true devil worshiper staring boldly in his eyes, and seeing the fear of God in the man’s face, I could tell he hesitated just as much as Dalia did when she tried to shoot me.

He laughed nervously, trying to brush the thought off.

I continued, saying, “You know, when they find my body washed up ashore tied, Fidel is going to know my death was no accident, and he is not a very forgiving man.” I could tell my words were making plenty of sense to him, and he began to worry even more.

“What else can I do then? I have to shoot you.” Clearly Dalia had some power over this man as well.

“Listen, I got an idea. Why don’t you shoot to my side? I’ll pretend that you hit me and jump in the water. That way I won’t come and haunt you and your family at night. You know how annoying *las limpias son*, and they don’t always work anyway. Even better, you can hand me a knife so that I can untie myself on the way down, and it will look like I committed suicide instead of being murdered,” I said, bobbing my head in agreement lightly and hypnotically.

Las Limpias is a practice commonly done around these places to rid oneself of evil spirits and bad *yu-yu*. Most natives have not only a strong fear of God but also a stronger fear of

the unknown malevolence of the spirit world. So no matter how illogical something may be, fear is a strong motivator—or shall I say inhibitor?

“What if you survive?” he asked, sensing that there might be a hole in the plan.

“Have you seen the rocks and the rough current here? Survival—don’t make me laugh!” I tried my most convincing voice ever, even though this was not hard. Surviving a dive here was not easy even for someone who is an expert diver. Unfortunately, that wasn’t me. Even if I managed to convince this man to pull a hoax here, I still had to face what looked like certain death with rough cliffs at open sea. After a moment of deep thought, he bobbed his head in agreement with me. My magical persuasion never fails.

He grabbed his chin between his index finger and thumb, when Dalia screamed from the car to hurry up.

“OK, OK!” he said both to me and her, I assumed. “Climb onto the ledge,” he said to me, handing me a knife and putting it in between my hands covertly. I stood facing the ocean, and I started cutting the rope discreetly with the blade. The man counted to three in a very low tone so that I could prepare to dive without screaming on my way down and also to jump on cue.

One...*thump, thump*. My heart pounded. Two...louder and quicker *thump, thump, thump*. Three! *Bang!*

I inclined three quarters of the way on the ledge, with my feet still touching it, so that I looked as if I just fell from the shot and not leaped into a dive. I managed to untie my hands, and as I continued to incline from the fall in slow motion, I pushed with the strength of my toes off the ledge with as much might as I could to avoid the rocks from the bottom of the castle. I tried my best to position my body, as vertical as possible for an amateur diver, in order to avoid injury to my body by falling flat. I calculated the distance from the water in order to time accurately when to take as deep a breath as I could to sustain life under water and adjust my need for oxygen while I cut the rope tied to my feet and tried to swim my way out. It was the adrenaline surging through my body that kept me focused on the best possibilities for survival; however, it was my keen optimism that led me to believe this stunt might actually work.

“I am made of fire and water. I rise from the steam. From the core of the earth, I bear life,” I recalled my mantra in prayer to give me the strength to reawaken who I carry within.

At the time, this seemed to be insanity, but then, again, insanity had become like an old friend you acquired an odd taste for. You see, you start doing crazy things long enough, you’ll begin to wonder how you ever went about life without doing so before. Crazy becomes an exciting addiction and there is no life worth living without excitement.

I felt like I was falling in slow motion. I suspended time, and then my hands touched the water; I took a gulp of air and went under. One thousand and one...one thousand and two...one thousand and three...The seconds go by, and my heart exploded at ninety miles per hour.

Chapter 2

Escape into the Last Breath

At another place and time the gods came together...

And so she blew air so hot that the sea boiled, and from the depths, another God held the fire in his hands and forged circles of rocks.

From their souls combined a purity of light and power—a source so bright it made the sun jealous, and he cried long and hard until vegetation started to grow, covering the orb with softness.

Sometime later, while they looked down on earth they found a soul on the verge of perdition. They observed her and pondered upon humanity.

“I am angry, yet I weep in silence. I am hungry, yet I starve. My sorrow feeds me but does not sustain me.” Her soul, her thoughts were the song of solemnness.

She wept from the side where the sand touched the soft wetness of the foamy water. She wanted to go into the sea; she wanted to forget. So many tears had come down from her eyes that the sea itself could be a puddle of lament.

It was almost dusk, and her white dress fluttered away in the wind, another weightless item that needed to come off and vanish into the air like nothingness, carried invisibly by Helios. Her hair swept in the air a graceful dance of good-bye as she walked into a cold, wet end.

It was a slow march, and in every step, a lightness would continue to evaporate her soul to another place. It was a somber peace at last, as her alabaster skin would start to shine in glimpses of mother or pearl and crystal sand. She shone like a falling star about to go out. It is those stars that leave behind the vast fearsome darkness of the unknown, the same type that once could have been the brightest. She was suddenly more fabled in agony than precious in life.

“Oh my life!” she lamented. Suddenly, “alive” and “living” were two different things; one was once an aspiration and the other just a heartbeat about to take its last pump of blood. It was the air that changed from peaceful to violent and in it the last breath that choked in water. She tried to hold her breath at first, but with that inevitable reflex of survival that had kicked in, it only made surrender to breathe in the wetness of a puddle of tears that much more pleasurable. It was a painful resistance at first, but soon she understood that all change is painful when you resist, and change is almost always better. “What could be worse than being alive?” she would ask herself, but arrogance lay in her ignorance.

“Could anything be worse than this life?”

This was the last thought, a thought that was cut short of her last breath and into another unknown state.

