

drought. The spring air smelled of wild herbs, but in a few weeks that rare softness would be overtaken by the dry scent of dead leaves. Things like this had been constant for millennia.

Villages thrived in pockets of fertile land linked by serpentine country roads. In the countryside near one of these, the hill village of Melanes, where ancient peoples once quarried marble, a twentieth-century farmer had built a stone hut to shelter him when he followed his flock across the open land. No more than a square box, the hut was made from rough rocks like those used for dry stone walls, and was just big enough for a man to lie down in. It was far enough from the road to go unnoticed, and even from the footpath nearby it looked uninviting. Its flat concrete roof was littered with chunks of stone as if to hold it down, but it wasn't going anywhere. By the entrance, a bit of rusty steel mesh lay

discarded, grown through by weeds.

The stone hut had no windows, the entrance had no door, and for many years it had served no purpose. Its state of decrepitude was a guarantee of loneliness and eventual collapse. The little shelter had an air of having given up hope.

It was the perfect place to hide a body. The killer never expected anyone to venture inside.

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Martin Day, archaeologist and television presenter, came laughing out of the office of the Curator of the Naxos Archaeological Museum, and took the steps two at a time to the ground floor. An English-speaking tour group filled the reception area of the museum, and Day waited for them to disperse before trying to leave. He was quite keen, anyway, to hear what their tour guide was telling them. He had just recognised him as an old friend from England.

“Ladies and Gentlemen, welcome to the outstanding Archaeological Museum of Naxos. Inside you’ll find a truly impressive collection of items, including the famous Roman mosaic floor. Naxos was an important centre of Cycladic culture through a range of periods, so the museum covers a great many fascinating eras. I know you’re particularly excited to see the beautiful Cycladic figurines, like the ones which we saw in Athens when we visited the Museum of Cycladic Art. The figurines have a captivating beauty that appeals to us today and have inspired many of our great modern artists - think of the paintings of Picasso and Modigliani, and the sculptures of Barbara Hepworth and Henry Moore.”

Day permitted himself a small smile. The tour guide paused for breath and glanced in Day’s direction. Having been a Classics undergraduate at Cambridge alongside Day, Paul was a fellow escapee from a life of

academia. Paul now led 'cultural tours' of Greek sites, while Day was freelance, writing successful books on Greek archaeology and presenting television history programmes on subjects that took his fancy. Neither of them found conventional careers appealing.

Paul grinned and nodded to Day, before continuing with his lecture without missing a beat.

“Cycladic figurines are often female in form, with arms crossed and marks on the belly that suggest pregnancy. Their original purpose is unknown, but they may have been fertility symbols or funerary items. Many are broken across the middle, and could even have been broken deliberately as part of some ceremonial event. Many of these lovely statuettes were found buried in one single, remote pit. Mysterious as well as beautiful objects.”

Day squeezed round the group and out into the