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The Kanellis Scandal

By Michelle Reid



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"It is not wise to make him angry ..."

...But Anton Pallis is livid! As the adopted son of the Kanellis patriarch, he's set to inherit the vast family fortune. Until it's revealed there's a true heir—in the rather appealing shape of Zoe Ellis.

Zoe's Greek heritage means nothing to her—and to be involved with the Kanellis dynasty is to be cursed with scandal! Except now, it's pounding on her front door—or rather, Anton is, in all his dark, chiseled glory. And she has no idea what he's going to do next....



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Editorial Review

About the Author

Michelle Reid grew up on the southern edges of Manchester, the youngest in a family of five lively children. Now she lives in the beautiful county of Cheshire, with her busy executive husband and two grown-up daughters. She loves reading, the ballet, and playing tennis when she gets the chance. She hates cooking, cleaning, and despises ironing! Sleep she can do without and produces some of her best written work during the early hours of the morning.

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The assortment of telephones currently buzzing like angry wasps on his desk earned a flaring glance of impatience from Anton Pallis as he threw himself out of his chair and paced away from them down the length of his office.

He came to a stop in front of the floor-to-ceiling wall of glass which gave him unrivalled views of London's famous City skyline. A deep frown darkened his smooth, golden brow. Since the shock news reporting the death of Theo Kanellis's long-lost son had hit the news this morning, the stock market had gone into meltdown, and now those ringing telephones were attempting to take him to the same place.

'I understand the implications, Spiro,' he incised into the only phone he had deigned to take notice of. 'Which does not mean I am going to join in with everyone else and panic.'

'I did not even know that Theo had a son,' Spiro Lascaris declared in stunned incredulity that he had not been privy to such an important and potentially dangerous piece of information. 'Like most people, I believed that you were his heir.'

'I am not and never have been Theo's heir,' Anton denied, angry now that he had not bothered to scotch such rumours years ago when they had first started doing the rounds. 'We are not even distantly related.'

'But you lived as his son for the last twenty-three years!'

Anton threw back his dark head in a typically Greek negative gesture, because he so disliked being compelled to disclose anything to do with his relationship with Theo Kanellis. 'Theo took charge of my upbringing and education and that is all that he did,' he stated.

'As well as protecting your personal wealth and ensuring that the Pallis Group held its place at the top of the investment tree until you were old enough to take control,' Spiro pointed out. 'You can't tell me he did all of that out of the goodness of his heart.'

Because he did not have a heart, Spiro refrained from adding. Theo Kanellis was better known for his ruthless demolishing of other men's empires, not nurturing them.

'Admit it, Anton, Theo has been grooming you to take his place since you were ten years old, and everyone knows it.'

Anger flared to life inside Anton at Spiro's disparaging tone. 'Keep to the point of issue here,' he retaliated coldly. 'It is your job to work to squash any damaging rumours about the state of my relationship with Theo, not dig around in the dirt for more.'

The moment he'd finished speaking he sensed a change in atmosphere flowing down the telephone connection. He'd just pulled rank on one of his most trusted employees. 'Of course,' the lawyer in Spiro Lascaris came back coolly. 'I will get onto it straight away.'

The conversation finished with a distinctly chilly edge. With a snap of exasperation at the whole situation, Anton turned to stride back to his desk so he could toss the phone down on it along with the rest. It began ringing again almost immediately which did not surprise him. Anyone who was anyone in global finance was falling over themselves to find out what the death of Leander Kanellis—Theo's long-lost son—was going to mean to Anton's own current power-grip on Kanellis Intracom.

That was the real alarm bell ringing out there—not Anton's past relationship with Theo but his present relationship. He had been more or less running things for Theo since the old man had been taken ill two years ago and had retreated to his private island to live—although information about the seriousness of his illness had not yet found its way out there.

A small glimpse of light flickering in the midst of a raging storm, Anton mused grimly. Kanellis stock would not take yet another serious hit if it ever got out that Theo had been too sick to keep his finger on the pulse of his own business empire—which was the reason why Anton had allowed the general assumption to run that Theo was grooming him in preparation for the day when he would succeed him.

On a soft curse, he snatched up one of the phones again and called Spiro back to ensure his confidentiality with the information he had just imparted to him. Sounding stiff with offence that Anton had felt the need to remind him of such a basic ethic, Spiro promised that he would *never* divulge confidential information to anyone.

Laying the phone aside again, Anton swung round to rest his hips against the edge of his desk and frowned thoughtfully down at his shoes. He felt like a juggler, he realised with a brief, dry twist of a grimace: one ball demanded he keep Theo's business interests spinning happily up there in the air alongside his own global group of companies, another ball demanded he defend his own integrity and pride. And now a third ball had been tossed up there in the middle of the others, a far more unpredictable ball that belonged to the late Leander Kanellis—a man Anton only had a vague memory of, who had escaped from his arranged marriage at the youthful age of eighteen and had never been seen or heard of again.

Until now, that was, when the poor guy had turned up dead. A sigh slid from him. It was not even the death of Theo's previously forgotten son that was causing the current storm raging out there. No, it was the discovery that Leander had left a family behind him.

Legitimate Kanellis heirs.

Stretching out a long-fingered hand, Anton gathered up the tabloid that had broken the story and looked down at the photograph some bright young spark of a junior reporter had unearthed from somewhere. It showed Leander Kanellis standing with his family on what looked like a fun day out. There was a lake, trees and sunshine shimmering in the background. An old-fashioned wicker picnic-basket rested on the bonnet of an old-model sports car. In front of the car Leander Kanellis stood, tall, dark and very good-looking, and with a startling likeness to how Theo had looked several long decades ago.

Leander was laughing into the camera. Happy, Anton saw. Proud of the two women he held clasped beneath each substantial shoulder. Both women were fair-skinned blondes. The older one, Leander's wife, was so serenely beautiful it was no wonder their marriage had remained strong throughout twenty-three years of relative hardship—relative to what they could have had if Theo had not.

Anton stopped that thought before it formed fully, aware that the tension suddenly crushing his stomach muscles belonged to a previously alien sensation—guilt. From the age of eight, he had received the best of everything Theo's vast wealth could offer him while these people had struggled to...

Again he cut the thought short, not ready yet to deal with what it was going to mean to him.

Happy; he dealt with that phenomenon instead, because in its own way it was significant. If there was one thing that Theo's son had enjoyed which Anton had not experienced much of, then it was the happiness he could see shining out from all three people in this photograph.

His focus moved to the other female Leander hugged into his side. Though the photograph must have been an old one, because she looked about sixteen here, Zoe Kanellis was already showing promise of turning into a beauty made in her mother's image: the same long, slender figure and bright golden hair, the same shining blue eyes and wide sensual smile.

Happy. The word hit him again, like an ugly blow this time. There was another photograph printed alongside the first one which showed the now twenty-two-year-old version of Leander's daughter leaving the hospital with the newest member of her family cradled protectively in her arms. Shock and grief had wiped out the happiness. She looked pale, thin and drawn.

Zoe Kanellis, leaving hospital with her new baby brother, the caption read. The twenty-two-year-old was away at University in Manchester when her parents were involved in a fatal car accident last week. Leander Kanellis died at the scene from his injuries. His wife, Laura, survived only long enough to give birth to their son. The tragedy took place on the—

The sound of a tentative knock on his door brought Anton's head up as Ruby, his PA, stepped into the room.

'What now?' he demanded curtly.

'I'm sorry to disturb you, Anton,' she apologised with a fleeting glance at the still-buzzing phones. 'Theo Kanellis is on my main line and he's demanding to speak to you.'

A choice curse rattled around the tight casing of his ribs as he put the newspaper down then straightened up from the desk. He stood for a second, actually seriously considering turning chicken and refusing to take Theo's call.

But, no, he could not do that—as Ruby had known he couldn't, which was why she had interrupted him.

'OK. Put him through.' Anton strode around his desk and lowered himself back down into his chair, picked up the phone and waited for Ruby to connect the call.

He knew what was coming. Hell, he knew what was coming.

'*Kalispera*, Theo,' he greeted smoothly.

'I want the boy, Anton.' Theo Kanellis's famously hard and irascible voice sounded in his ear. 'Get me my grandson!'

'I didn't know you were a Kanellis,' Susie said, eyeing with an expression of awe the famous business logo belonging to Kanellis Intracom which headed the letter Zoe had just discarded on the kitchen table with a contemptuous flick of her hand.

'Dad dropped the "Kan" when he came to England to live.' *Because he was scared of being hunted down and dragged back to Greece by his bully of a father and forced into doing his duty*, she tagged on bitterly, though she gave a different reason to Susie. 'He thought Ellis was an easier name to use here in the UK.'

Susie's eyes were still round as saucers. 'But you've always known you are a Kanellis?'

Zoe nodded. 'It's on my birth certificate.'

And now it was on Toby's birth certificate, she added silently, h...

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Daryl Glover:

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