

Desperate characters search for love in a Mediterranean setting rife with war, political conflict and crime. The protagonist has dreams of fame but his adventure leads to violent consequences. Will he find peace with his lover? She must endure her own personal tragedy.

CITADEL BEYOND THE SEA

By H. C. Wallace

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H.C. Wallace

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SEVEN

Autumn was coming and the morning was unseasonably cold and there was a blanket of frost around the village and over the mountainside. By midmorning the sun had broken through the grayish clouds, the frost had melted off the amber fields and from the pine tree limbs that had bowed gently from the weight. It began to warm and it seemed like summer again as the morning passed into early afternoon. Sister Cora knew that the children were anxious to be outside and enjoy the resurgence of warmth and for that reason she warned them that this day was like all other days and they must file quietly and orderly out the door when class was dismissed. She knew that the boys, pent up like wild stallions pawing in a corral, would break into a gallop otherwise.

He had told Maria that he would stop by her house to see her after school and she said 'o.k.' as though it made little difference to her. Her diffident response had not bothered him because his father had been explaining about women and he knew that if you knew a girl for a while they had to remain modest and pretend that they were not interested in you. Pasquel

explained that it was their nature. He did not understand why this was but he took it from his father that it was a universal truth. His father had been disclosing several facts about women to Francisco lately and he had listened eagerly since it seemed to be a secret code from a mysterious society. His father warned him not to ponder the reasons for this behavior but merely take it as truth and this knowledge would serve him well in the future.

He rode his bicycle through the village and stopped at the window of the shoe store, tapped on the window and Pasquel looked up. He waved at his father and his father knew what that meant. It meant that he wanted to be away for several minutes and that later he would return to the shop to put in his time. Pasquel waved back and that meant that it met with his approval, but he still pointed at his watch to remind him not to be late. He peddled down the narrow street past Antonio's, past Leonardo's until he came to Maria's house and saw that she was sitting on the front steps with Gina, the youngest daughter of Vito, and they were engaged in animated conversation.

"Hello, Francisco." Maria waved her hand slowly.

"Hello girls."

“I must be off, Maria. Goodbye Francisco,” Gina said. She seemed nervous and embarrassed and she bolted from the steps and began walking away before he could answer.

“Tomorrow, Gina. See you in school.” However, Gina only turned and waved in her direction.

“She seems to be in a hurry.”

“She had someplace to go.”

“Maybe she is being modest.”

“Modest?” She gave him a quizzical look.

“Yes, we don’t know each other that well.”

“Perhaps, if you think so. Didn’t it turn out to be a glorious day?”

“Yes, hop on and we’ll go for a short ride.”

“Where to?”

“Up to the orchard.”

“Fine, but please don’t go too fast.”

“I know, I know.”

“You’re always so daring. That’s what they say.”

“What do you say?”

“I don’t want any adventures out of you.”

“No adventures, I swear.”

She raised herself up on the handlebars and straddled her legs to one side of the bars while he steadied the bicycle and he let the bike coast down the hill for a slow start. She grabbed her long skirt

and gathered it, tucked it between her knees so that it would not be tangled in the spokes of the wheel, and they started to gain speed and Maria exclaimed, "Slow, Francisco, careful."

"Yes, don't worry and don't move around, don't shift your weight."

They rolled down the hill and gathered speed until the street leveled out and they slowed and then he began peddling. The wind caught her hair and whipped it around into his face. He brushed her hair away with one hand and gripped his other hand tighter on the handlebars. They both laughed and she gathered her hair and stuffed it into the back of her blouse. He peddled across the two-lane road to the marina and to the dirt path leading to the orchard and he strained to peddle and get up the hill through the dirt until the wheels dug into the soft dirt and he could go no further. He stopped and held the bike steady for her.

"We'll walk the rest of the way. It's impossible to peddle from here."

He put the bike behind a large shrub beside the dirt path and the two of them trudged up the hill along the orchard.

"Let's go to the cliff side and watch the ships sail by," she said.

“O.K. if you want.” Pasquel had told him that they could change their course in a moment.

They ran to the cliff and gazed out over the sea. The wind was up and the turquoise sea was topped with little white curls rising and licking at the surface. He sat on a large flat boulder, wrapped his arms around his knees and looked at Maria standing to his left. The light breeze flowed around her, her hair blew lazily around her face, her eyes were closed and her chin was slightly upraised.

“Did you think of traveling over the seas, Francisco? Not like a sailor but for a little while to feel what it is like. Only to go to some faraway place that we have read about in the school books.” She sat beside him and smiled at him.

“No, perhaps for a day to go with the fishermen.” The slight breeze wisped past her and a pleasant fragrance whisked around him and he thought of the flowers that his mother grew on the ledge of the kitchen window. It was a sweet fragrance. Suddenly he could feel himself giving way to a warmth that brought a weakness. The sun glinted from her eyes sharply and her tongue flicked quickly from her mouth to wet her lips slowly for the brisk wind had dried them. Her long supple neck parted the blouse where it rose as if a tender stem to support the flower

dabbed with a pinkish tint. Slowly at first, like a microscope turning narrower and narrowed onto an object to eliminate everything in its periphery, the surroundings began to fade first to opaque to gray then to darkness. The sky, the sea and the earth that they were bound with had dissolved. The frame of her face remained and all else was subtracted from his vision and he could now see her untouched by the mundane and unnecessary features of the world around her. He was not comfortable with the weakness in his stomach and his legs for it was unfamiliar to him and it was as though something were drawing him in against his will and he was not used to the loss of control that was seeping from his body. He wanted to grasp her arm but he was fearful that his grasp would be too clumsy. That grasp would surely take him closer to the center of the force, but he imagined that the result would be a rejection from her because she must be modest because she would have to be modest like the other girls. However, she was not like the other girls was she? He didn't know the reason and it was not something that he could explain but he saw it in her eyes and in the radiant flush as she gazed into him. He knew that he should say something to her but there were no words that he could form in his confused state, but he knew that if

he could find the words they would not leave his mouth since his mouth had turned to dust and his tongue had turned to leather. The smile dissolved from her mouth, an intense gaze came over her and he leaned closer to her, clasped his hand to the slender stem of her neck, pulled her into him and she leaned into him willingly. He mumbled something and she did not understand what he said and then he could not recall what he said and he did not know what it was that he intended to tell her. His courage rose from the proximity of her and he knew that her face was flushed for him now and not for the hot wind and he placed his mouth on hers and pressed lightly. He pressed firmly and she returned in kind and he tasted a moistness and suppleness of flesh that he did not know could exist. She placed her other hand on his knee to balance herself as she had leaned over and she was tittering slightly and he placed the palm of his hand on her flat stomach and then as far as he could until he could feel the soft crumpled nest through her dress.

“No, stop it. This is not right.” She drew away from him and pushed his hand away and rose to her feet. Her face was flushed and her eyes were moist. “See how you are? Too much adventure with you. Only a kiss, that’s all. You wanted to do something

wrong.” She pressed her hands along her legs to straighten her wrinkled dress, gathered her hair and tucked it back into her blouse.

“I...I thought that you.....” he was confused again and the heat faded to a chill and he was now uncomfortable with the gaze that had lured him. “I’m sorry Maria. I thought that you...” He feared that a moment had passed that could never be revisited. Such intensity could never be had again and her face receded into the portrait including the sea, the sky and the earth and the stem of the flower erupting from the delicate white lace collar of her blouse became her neck, the flush of the floral arrangement turned to flesh and her eyes were startled moons.

“O.k., you are sorry. I know..... I know.” She recovered her posture and moved over a little further from him and returned her gaze to the sea ahead of them and he moved a little further over on the flat rock and then he cast his eyes to the sea and they both sat there in silence looking out over the sea as though they were expecting the tongues of the waters to speak and rescue them from the uncomfortable moment. Then she attempted to recover the conversation. “Then you will be a cobbler and tied to the earth to stay here?”

“No, I will become a motorcycle racer, perhaps also race cars.” He blurted the response, now relieved to change course.

“What? Where would you get a motorcycle or a car? That’s crazy.”

“I’ll get one and I will race all around the country. I will visit those places in the books we read about in school.”

“Where will you live?”

“Where the racing will take me. Around the country.”

“The old Nun is right. Your body is in Dominia but your mind is far away.”

“Oh, yes the old frozen one.” That was the name some of the boys had given Sister Cora and by all appearances, it was fitting. Her pale white face was always frozen in the same expression hung from a wrinkled brow.

“Sister Cora will see my picture on a poster.”

“Maybe. You are always getting into things. Mischief.”

“They don’t want us to be curious.”

“What do you mean?”

“They want to pick our vocations. They want to make a path for us to follow.”

“They are trying to guide us.”

“It’s more than that. Come along, Maria. Enough of the sea, we’ll go back to the orchard.”

They walked to the orchard in silence since they remained awkward with one another after the youthful miscue, but halfway to the orchard she clutched his hand reassuringly. “I do like you and I did want to kiss you, but I didn’t want you to do that to me. That is for those other girls in the cities. I think you understand.”

The words struck him stronger than the kiss. It was true of the fragrance, the eyes and her soft manner, but also it was her words and the way she had of carefully framing them.

“I know. I understand.”

“I didn’t want to make fun of your plan. The racing and leaving here if you think you can do it. Isn’t it very dangerous?”

“Yes, there is some danger I suppose.” The reply was nonchalant.

“Don’t people get injured doing that?” She slowed her gait.

He slowed with her and returned the stare that was focused on him. “Of course there are injuries sometimes but we don’t think about that.”

“The cars are safer aren’t they? Not like the cars we drive on the road.”

“Not perfectly safe since they are built for speed.” They stopped and faced each other.

“Are they hard to control if they are so fast?”

“It takes a certain talent it is said.” He drew his shoulders back slightly. His voice was bolder. “There are those who teach you before you start racing. You don’t just jump into a car and start racing.”

She stepped closer to him. “It does not sound very safe.”

“Maria, the objective is not to stay safe. It is about tempting the edge.” His voice grew deeper.

“You go as fast as you can, always?” Her voice broke into a high pitch.

“Not always but of course the objective is to get to the finish line first. You take the best line through the course, pass your competitor and get ahead and stay ahead.”

“There are crashes. Isn’t that true?”

“Sometimes. They accept the risk. Sometimes the car fails or someone might crash into you or you take a line too aggressively.” He was looking down at her and his eyes narrowed. “Perhaps even serious injury is the result.”

“Be careful with this plan of yours.” She grasped his arm tightly.

“No, don’t worry about me.” He spoke in a smooth calming voice as though he were speaking to a child.

“Will you write to us? Will you come back to visit?”

“Yes, why not? You expect me to forget everyone?”

She grasped the handlebars and her knuckles turned white as she clenched desperately and she closed her eyes and imagined that she was racing with him. He was peddling as fast as he possibly could and she did not object. She could not find her breath. She could not open her eyes. She said nothing to him when they arrived and she ran into the house and lay in her bed that late afternoon and she recalled his mouth on her mouth, regretted that she had stopped his advances, could only imagine what would have followed and her imagination was punctuated by a warmth over the entirety of her skin. It could culminate by a submission of mind and body and that urge brought fear and unease. She pinched her arm smartly, then tighter and tighter.

SEVENTEEN

He was leaning against a tree with his knees drawn up to his chest. The bark on the tree dug into his back and after a few minutes he shifted his weight against the tree to alleviate the discomfort. He was sitting in the orchard and he could see the villa washed in a gold aura from the reflecting sun over his shoulder. He imagined Giovanna in the villa. What was she doing at this moment? She has everything she needs now. Probably all of the things that she had dreamed about as a young girl were in her grasp. She has no reason for regrets. Besides, couldn't she come to visit them as often as she cared? He had always asked about her life in the villa whenever she came for one of her visits, but her responses were always vague. She would not elaborate on the details of her daily life and she would only reply that she was comfortable. That was probably because she didn't want to boast about her wealth and life style. The arrangement had turned out for the best. She is not a prisoner in the villa and she resents nothing about that day. Certainly, she had misgivings on that day because it was a step into the unknown, but since then she had come to see that everything had turned for the

best. She is as free as she always was and we have no concerns for her welfare since everything has turned in her favor.

He sensed something on his shoulder. It was light. He laid his hand on the soft skin.

“Alberto.”

He looked around and he kept his hand on her hand.

“Come along. You have to be at work early in the morning.”

“Yes, of course. I was only thinking of her.”

“I know, I know.” Her voice was soft and reassuring. He stood, stretched his arms, and they went slowly through the orchard and along the dirt path to the village street leading to their house.

“The streets are so quiet these days. There is not much chattering in the air.”

“Oh, I don’t know. You have to listen.”

“It is quiet at the cannery also.”

“Who knows why? The talk comes and goes like the wind.”

She opened the front door and they were met by stale air. They did not notice the thick taste of it when they inhaled. It was taken in with the food, conversation and sleep then exhaled back into the confining quarters of the old house.

“Sit in the kitchen. I will get a glass of wine for us.”

“Vito did not say anything when he passed me in the street this morning.”

“So you are better off for it.” She smiled.

“Giovanna seemed to be comfortable when she visited.”

“I would say so.”

“Though she didn’t have a lot to say.”

“It is a different life that she has now.”

“She doesn’t say much since I think she doesn’t want to talk about the things she has now.”

“Yes, I am sure you are right about that.”

“We wouldn’t be envious with her like the rest of the village.”

“Certainly not. It is in her nature to be humble,” Lucinda offered. She poured a glass of wine for the two of them and sat the carafe on the center of the table.

“The scar though. What do you suppose happened?”

“An accident I suspect.”

“I once asked but she turned away and said nothing.”

“It is understandable since women are sensitive to disfigurements.”

“It appeared so perfect.”

“Only an accident.”

He sipped the wine slowly and quiet filled the stale air of the kitchen. Lucinda stared into her wine glass. She looked up at him and he resumed talking. She was listening to him but then she was listening to something else also and watching something else. She acknowledged his voice and nodded in turn. The small face stared out from the carriage and the clop of horseshoes echoed in the room and then came the sound of the wheels of the carriage clapping over the stone street. The birds along the street flushed and their wings beat furiously as they rose to the sky and the horses bolted. There was a murmuring of voices along the street and the clapping on the stone street grew fainter and fainter. The small face turned away and did not look back and then she and Alberto retreated into the house.

“.....so I told that ass to slow the line. He had the whole line screwed up and he ignored me. Who does that bastard think he is? I’ve been working there for twenty years and he’s been there for what, two years?”

“It seems like yesterday.”

“What?”

“Her.”

“I know, I know. Did you hear what I was saying.....the cannery?”

“There’s one in every crowd.”

“When I went to the boss he told me to shut-up and mind my own business!”

“Nothing comes of complaining. You should look the other way.”

“Perhaps you’re right. It’s not like I own the place. What do I care?”

It continued with day dissolving to darkness with the waiting and the solitude and moments of silence interrupted with conversation about the cannery and what Lucinda would prepare for his lunch and what she would prepare for their supper when he returned. Some days they would go to the cliff and look over the emerald sea in the late afternoon and they would talk of taking a voyage to the islands for a week or so and they would talk about the islands and the pictures of the islands that they had seen in the magazines. They talked until the afternoon faded into a crepuscule for two and the bronze and orange skies covered them and the starlight would envelope them and silence would come.

“There are many places beyond these waters that we have not seen.”

“Yes, many places far beyond the sun of Dominia.”

“It would not be difficult to visit some of those places.”

“We will go there some day.”

“We are not too old yet.”

“Yes, a lot of time.”

Some days the Priest would come to visit with them for an hour or two and he would ask about their health. Lucinda and Alberto always looked forward to his visit since it was their only opportunity for outside conversation. There were few villagers that would offer them anything but a few minutes of conversation. He would bring the latest news that could only be had by chatter between neighbors and confiding friends and they would gather up the rumor and gossip like starving mice. Alberto would complain that the villagers were distant because they were envious for Giovanna’s life. The Priest would comment that they must ignore the cool reception that came with rumor and gossip and that in time it would dissipate. Also, the old *Polizia* would come for a visit and he and Alberto would talk about the Malvarindas and he would tell Alberto that if Giovanna spoke of anything of the family he should confide in him. Alberto would listen attentively and agree but secretly

he vowed that if Giovanna said anything about the family he would never disclose anything to him. He never objected to this line of questioning from the old *Polizia* since he enjoyed the few minutes of his visit. He would often keep him longer by offering him good wine and the old men would drink and tell stories of their childhood, but then Alberto would suddenly catch himself and he would abruptly hush since he suspected that the old *Polizia* was trying to draw him in to gain his confidence for information.

He would pace the floors late into the evening and Lucinda would watch him and he did not notice that she was watching him. Then she would tell him to stop pacing and asked him to come and sit with her to keep her company. Then, with his legs tiring, he would sit beside her and they would listen to the radio until late in the evening and the station would close for the day and they would wake to its crackle early in the morning. With the next sun, she would prepare his lunch and he would start the slow walk to the cannery. She would retreat to the bedroom and lie in bed after he departed. There was too much time in the day and not enough to fill in the idle moments and her mind would wander in the darkness of the hours. There was time for her to think on his violation. She could not deny that at times she imagined driving that

nail deeper, deeper than her loneliness ran. She had been on the verge of that often and she would look through his cloud and she could not drive that nail. She dare not take what little he had left as there would be nothing remaining for her. What remained was a single strand of a web that had been the network of their lives, but it was something. It was that strand that kept her from attempting a destruction. She would continue to soothe him instead and he would continue in his way in the years to follow.

One day he told her that he would go for a walk alone for he was weary of talking about the places that he knew they would never go.

“Where are you going?”

“Around the village.”

“But where?”

“Around. I’ll be back soon.”

He would go in the late afternoon when the sun was sitting over the emerald sea and he would watch the fishermen return with their daily catch. He would count the boats and he would silently call the names of the owners of those boats as they came into view. He would remain there until the boats arrived and he would watch them unload their catch that would be his chore at the cannery the next day. He was

reassured when all of the fishing boats returned after their long absence. He recalled the visits from Giovanna and he became confused and could not remember when it was that she had come to visit last. Wasn't it in April? Was that April of last year? He could not remember the date of the cool rain, a crisp day and it must have been spring. No, not this year. It must have been last year, but didn't Lucinda say that it was March of last year? What was the scar? Why was the remainder of her face so...bland? He did recall that she did not have much to say to him or to Lucinda and that she seemed to be agitated by something. She had not stayed long.

He continued to visit the cliff by the sea for many days and then one evening he did not return. Lucinda had waited for him that evening and the more she waited the more anxious she became and she knew that she must not take this alone and she went to the church to pray and make an offering. She was in the church alone and it was dark except for a few candles burning low to cast a dim light around her. She knew that he would not return, but she prayed for his return anyway as she did not know what else she should do. She prayed for Giovanna and she prayed for herself, but she knew that it was time to let go.

Some children had spied the crumpled form on the rocks below the cliff the following day. It was an item of curiosity for them and they imagined it was something that had been lost at sea and had washed up to the rocky shoreline, but as they made their way down the cliff, tripping and slipping along the way and came closer, they could see the bloody head and contorted limbs protruding from under a gnarled piece of driftwood. The body rocked back and forth gently in the incoming waves and seaweed had drifted in and became tangled around the neck and shoulders like little necklaces. Foam spheres swelled on the lifeless form and burst open as they expanded. A crab had found its way to the head of the body and perched there with its articulated claw and plucked at the man's hair. The children stood there for a few moments and tried to absorb what they saw and gradually, gradually because possibly they did want to believe what they saw, came to realize that a human had become still forever and not another breath would be taken by the person lying in the cradle of rocks. The children scrambled up the steep, rock strewn cliff as fast as they could and upon reaching the cliff edge began screaming and their voices could be heard all the way through the orchard and meadows to the *Polizia* Station. They burst

through the door of the station pointing in the direction of the sea and each of them began talking excitedly in a simultaneous chime. The Captain ignored the descriptions of the body that the children added to the tragedy for all he needed to know was that a body lay at the bottom of the cliff. He ordered the children to return to their homes and wait for him and he drove to the marina and commandeered a skiff and gathered a couple of volunteers. They sped to the rocky shore in silence, in silence since they harbored the same dread feeling of the chore. The duty of retrieving a corpse. It was awkward to maneuver the body into the boat for nothing is as unmanageable as the dead weight of a body. The Captain immediately identified Alberto and he made his way to Lucinda's house within a few minutes of arriving in the village. When he arrived, she greeted him with a worn expression for she had not slept the previous night. She had returned from the church and she sat in the chair next to the window overlooking the cobblestone street and waited for them to arrive.

“Why didn't you come to us when he didn't return?”

“I fell asleep and woke late.”

“What did he tell you before he left?”

“Nothing. He always went for a walk in the afternoon.”

“When did you expect him to return?”

“Late. Sometimes he would return after dark.”

“Was he despondent lately?”

“No, there was no reason for that.”

“Did he leave a note for you?”

“Why would he leave a note?”

“I think it was suicide and most people would.”

“No, that is not possible. He could not do that. It must have been an accident.”

They sat in the dark room, took each other in, and there was a long pause while the Captain absorbed Lucinda’s comments.

“Could you open the window? It is a bit stuffy in here. I think I need air.” He was beginning to sweat and he coughed and cleared his throat quietly.

“Would you care for a glass of water?”

“No, no thank-you.”

She stood and moved around to the window and braced her hands under the window and strained to push the window up and there was a creak of resistance. She struck the heels of her hands upward to release the window, but it would not budge.

“Let me help.” He had already stepped toward her.

She stepped back and he placed his hands under the window and pushed upward. The window inched up slowly against the inside rail with a screech. It stuck at the midway point and he left it there and he stood there for a moment and drank in the fresh air.

“It has been some time since the outside came in.” He looked directly into her eyes.

“We both know and we don’t need to revisit this history.”

“Giovanna has not been here recently. True?”

“You know the answer to that. This house is watched in curiosity.”

“I know it has been difficult for the two of you.”

“There is alone and there is lonely.”

“Which was it?”

“We were simply alone.”

“Then I will leave you alone. I know that you do not care to reveal more.”

The Captain left and Lucinda watched him walk hurriedly down the street until he was out of sight. She went to the window, pushed it shut and returned to her chair. He did not need to remind her and she knew it cruel of him to bring it to her attention. Would she return for this? She was not certain, but even though she had not visited in such a long time

and the distance had grown to miles, she hoped that she would.

Giovanna did return to attend the funeral. Giovanna stood solemnly and dutifully by the side of Lucinda at the funeral. Lucinda had held her hand for comfort and felt the remote chill and looked to her for a sign of solace but there was nothing to be detected. Her expression was as blank as a clouded night. They stood together and bore witness to the ceremony for the passing of an exile. The men had nodded their heads in Lucinda's direction to acknowledge her and Vito's and Antonio's wives came to her briefly to offer their condolences. All eyes were turned from Giovanna and she gave no indication that it bothered her in the least. After the gathering of somber villagers, when the slow wave of mourners flowed through the iron gates of the cemetery, Giovanna and Lucinda went back to the house. They walked side by side in silence along the cobblestone street that had been Giovanna's avenue of departure. Lucinda went up the steps and turned and stood facing Giovanna. Giovanna remained standing on the street below the steps.

“You won't come in will you?”

“It is not my place.”

“Some places cannot be denied. A person’s beginning is lasting.”

“The only thing lasting is his violation.”

“There are events that must be forgiven.”

“Not his. Not something like that.”

“So you created a violation to cancel a violation?”

“What is it that you expect of me? It is not as though nothing has happened. It is not as though I have been visiting another town for a few weeks or that I have been away on an exciting vacation.”

“It is not too late.”

“Yes, it is too late. This house is the house of another person.”

Giovanna continued down the street to the villa and Lucinda went into the house, shut the door and took her vigil in the chair by the window and waited. She did not know if they would come for the night. She did not know if she would be surrounded in the cloak of their comfort until the new sun rose. Now, the sun had dipped low and the dark was crawling over the sea and beyond though the village. It would be this time of day that the vision would always come back. She was certain it would. The bruised and battered body at the cliff side would rise from the foam soaked rocks and she would wait for that

resurrection and they would talk of the places that they would visit. Then the next day would be the same at this time of day and she would wait for the resurrection again and they would....

.....but now, they were coming up the street. The widow's congregation was coming through the encroaching darkness. They were bunched closely together and they slowly approached the house. She rose from the chair, straightened her blouse and dress and stood at the hallway mirror. Was she presentable? She must make coffee for them.

The Priest and Ricardo sat in the rectory. It was quiet and in the evening after the ceremony. They looked across the small table at each other. The Priest was tired and appeared drained of energy. He always did after a funeral since the solace he extended, the preparation and its aftermath tired him. He looked away from the eyes across the table.

“Do you claim that he slipped and fell from a place that he knew like the back of his hand, a place that he had known since his childhood?”

“Yes, that is precisely what happened. He lost his footing in the dark, slipped, and fell. The Mayor's nephew heard a scream in that direction late that evening. It was roughly the time that Alberto was there.”

“That scream means that he slipped and fell. Is that right?”

“No one committing suicide would scream as they jumped.”

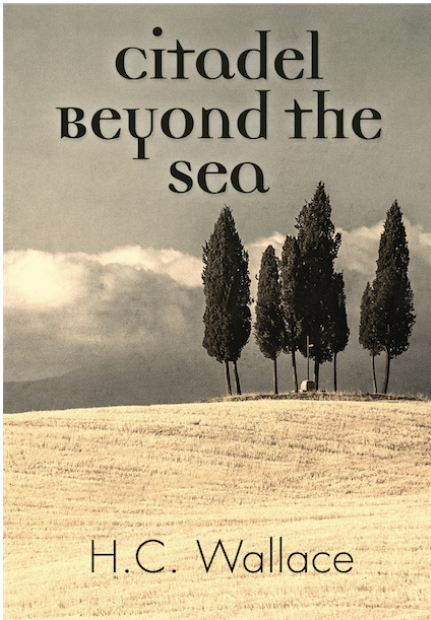
“I suppose that you are right about that.”

“Who was it in our past, in the history of the exiles, that has done such a thing? That is not what we are.”

“I suppose if I were to ask the Mayor’s nephew about this he would confirm what you said.”

“I do not expect you to question this. I have granted him the rite as it was an accident and it will be known as an accident henceforth. He has been sent to Him, as would any exile. Your official investigation will confirm the facts that I have given you.”

“The only fact I know is that the judgment of him has not been put away today and his story will continue to fill the markets and the homes and many will claim they knew more than they did about the affair.”



Desperate characters search for love in a Mediterranean setting rife with war, political conflict and crime. The protagonist has dreams of fame but his adventure leads to violent consequences. Will he find peace with his lover? She must endure her own personal tragedy.

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