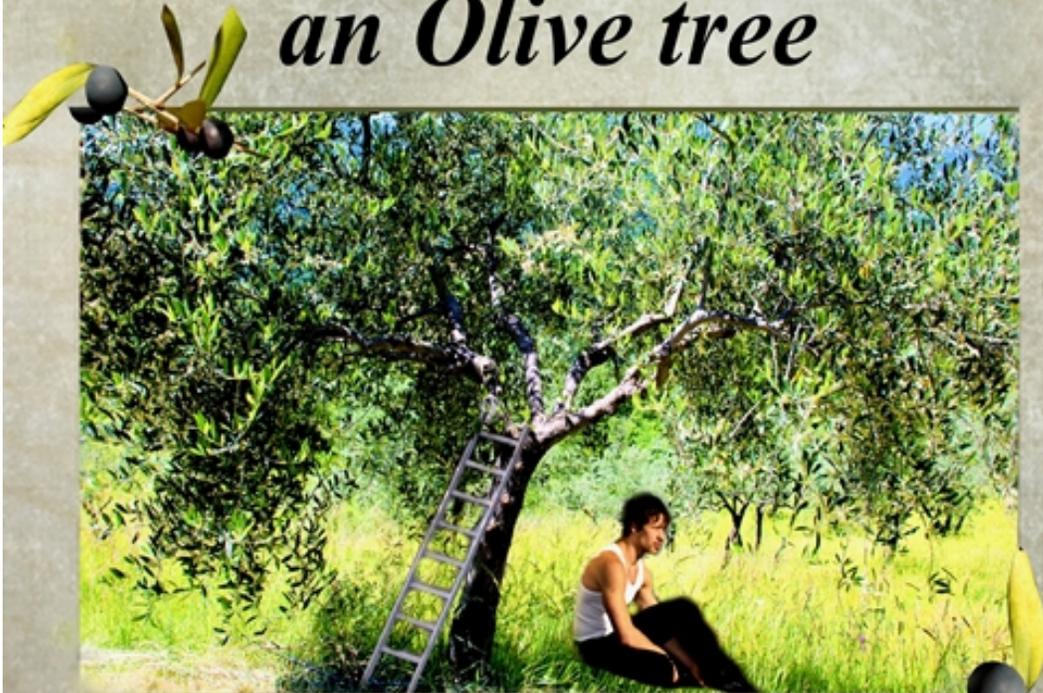




*Sitting on the branch of
an Olive tree*



Gene Thomas

Sitting on the Branch of an Olive Tree

Gene Thomas

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Fiction Statement

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are products of the authors' imaginations or are used fictitiously and are not to be construed as real. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, organizations, or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

Review by Jason Sinner

Sitting on the Branch of an Olive Tree: Gene Thomas has created an epic story of rising from humble beginnings to achieving the dreams that with proper actions and hard work can be accomplished. A tale of working class merged with high society and the secrets that are held in both. With mystery, intrigue, and at times seduction, the reader takes a journey through the lives of characters that touch the part of the spirit where the realness in all resides. The story shows that despite what people think at times, we are all the same deep down inside. The reader will find themselves engulfed in a story that they will not soon forget. Rich characters, like young Payton who dreams of a life past his father's fishing business, and the love he encounters on that journey, and Eleanor Joseph Mother Superior of the local Convent, who seems to have lost her way, but it is only a journey into a life she so desperately needs, are but two of the wonderful characters the reader will encounter in this story. Sit back, get comfortable, and open yourself to an epic tale.

Review by Christie Moses

A poignant romantic drama that realistically encompasses the lives of several different characters. Secrets, intrigue and well developed plot make this a must read.

The underlying message in this moving story, for me, was no matter the trials or tribulations, love does indeed conquer all.

Dedication

To Marilyn:

Thanks Babe, for everything!

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INTRODUCTION

With the war raging in Europe far to the north, life on the Spanos Olive farm seemed almost tranquil. That feeling was not shared by everyone who lived and worked on this family owned corner of northeastern Majorca.

No, there were many who were not satisfied with their lot or station in life. The differences were slowly becoming visible, even to a newcomer from the sea, like Payton Marko.

Payton never shared his father and brother's love for the sea. But with his rejection of their lifestyle, Payton found himself enmeshed in a world of class warfare and exclusion on dry land, right at the time he discovered the woman of his dreams.

The Spanos Family Olive Farm was both opportunity and danger for any young man, especially someone who aspired to win the hand of young Angelina.

But before he could ever hope to win her hand, Payton had to work his way up through the ranks of olive pickers and foremen—none of whom were keen on creating a space for him to fulfill his dreams.

Sitting on the Branch of an Olive Tree opens a window into a world of love, betrayal, sex and murder, all to preserve a lifestyle for a privileged few. The privileged few as Payton would find out, had more to hide than anyone else in his small village—with the possible exception of the secretive residents of the local Convent.

It would not take long for Payton and his family to find themselves involved in sins of the flesh that could not be contained behind the doors of the Convent.

Once Payton showed up, decades old family secrets, known only to a trusted few, began coming out. The high walls separating the Spanos family from the rest of the small Mediterranean town of Alcudia, where Payton was born, would be no match for his desire to pull them down once he saw who was behind them.

FISHING IS FOR FOOLS

“No you cannot stay home today or any other. We have fish to catch and you must help whether you like it or not, Payton.” Silvio Marko was a short, rough cut, slightly muscular man who looked like every other fisherman from their small village. His tanned, leathery face and dark eyes had seen too many sunrises on the open waters of the Mediterranean, and in his mind, this day would be no different.

“Poppa, you do not need me to catch fish. Take Julio. He loves to fish as much as you do, and he will not get in the way as I always seem to,” Payton said to his father, as he sat up and put his feet down on the floor next to his bed.

Unlike his father, at nineteen years old, Payton Marko was tall, lean and slightly muscular. Payton’s early childhood of hard work doing chores and helping his father with the nets developed his muscles, but kept him slim too.

It would take years for Payton to put on the kind of weight that would make him resemble his father. But make no mistake, the dark hair, tanned skin and sulky brown eyes made Payton every bit as attractive as his father was when he was Payton’s age.

Silvio and Alicia Marko and their five children shared the small five room cottage Silvio and his father built on the northeast edge of the bay near the small village of Alcutia, situated on the cove that fed into the Bahia De Pollensa. Silvio and his father would rise before the sun, push their tiny boat into the warm waters, and sail out past the edge of the corral rocks lining the cove to cast their nets.

When Silvio’s father was alive, it took two very strong men to haul the nets back into their tiny boat. Fish were abundant, large and seemingly endless. Many times the men had to release fish from their nets for fear of swamping their boat.

That was long before Payton was born.

On the days he did go out with his father, Payton wasn’t needed to help pull in the meager catch they’d spent hours trying to find. It was boring, thankless and unrewarding work.

But Silvio always insisted that the fish would return, and when they did, it would be as it was when he was Payton’s age. There would be no time to waste, only time to haul in more of what was once the life’s blood of their tiny village.

Only a foolish lazy man would stay away from fishing just because things got a little slow. What kind of message would a man be sending to his children about himself? Silvio pondered that question often as he rose before dawn every morning in good weather and had to go out to sea to scratch out a living for his family.

To Payton it was a different kind of message: Fishing is for Fools. Sooner or later all the fish will be gone. A man must adapt and change with the times, and for Payton that meant finding work on shore.

Suddenly his father’s husky voice jolted Payton back to the moment; “Payton, get a move on. The sun is almost up.” Silvio was already heading for the cottage door, hungrily stuffing half a piece of flat bread his wife had made into his mouth.

“And No, Julio is not going this time. I need you to help me with the big catch we will be bringing in today. I told you yesterday the Bonita and chad are starting their run now. So hurry or we will miss the sun.”

Payton slowly got to his feet and moved to follow his father out the door and down the small pathway in front of their cottage that led to the beach and their tiny fishing boat.

Silvio was right. The sun was beginning to crack through the night just as the rustle of the

waves began to increase their relentless cadence against the shore. Silvio swallowed the remnants of his breakfast and tossed a small gunny sack containing the two men's lunch into the bow of the boat.

Once Payton had hopped in and moved to the stern of the boat to get ready to drop the rudder into the water, Silvio grunted a few times and pushed the boat away from shore and into the suddenly choppy surf behind them.

Payton dropped the rudder into the water then moved forward to get one of the two oars to help move the family boat into deeper waters. It would be another half hour before enough wind would be sufficient to inflate the sails on the tiny ship.

Soon enough, father and son were side by side rowing as one out to the edge of the cove and into the open waters of the Mediterranean.

An hour later, the father and son were nearing their usual fishing grounds under full sail, with Payton sitting on the rudder. Shortly after leaving the cove, Silvio had trimmed the sails to take full advantage of the northeastern winds. He looked wistfully to the back of the boat, glancing at his reluctant passenger while setting the fishing net up on the left edge of the boat.

Deploying the net was the easy part of their labors. If they were lucky, then retrieving their catch would take the better part of the afternoon and strain both men's backs to the breaking point.

Moments later, the nets went over the side and Payton began the slow circular process of letting the net unfold off the edge of the boat and into the water behind them. As the hundred foot, buoyed net slowly disappeared below the surface, Payton began to feel uncomfortable about his father's appearance.

For the first time in his life, Payton realized that his father was no longer the strong hardy man he had grown up respecting, loving and fearing. Silvio's back was to Payton most of the time that the net was going into the water, but every now and then Payton could see the sides of his father's head, and his chin.

Silvio's shock of jet black hair was now peppered with white specks and was nearly all white just above his ears. Silvio's leathery skin, once taunt and dark brown, was sagging—especially under his chin and around his armpits and waist.

The starkness of his father's mortality was brought home further when Payton saw his father motion to him for help in freeing a part of their net from a side oar hook on the boat.

This was an act Silvio used to casually do with one hand while eating his lunch or adjusting the sail. Now he visibly struggled with it, and the weight of the waterlogged net—to the point of asking for Payton's help.

Now Payton began to understand why his father was so insistent about them going out together. Silvio also realized his mortality, and soon enough his time on the water would be coming to an end.

It all made sense now. Silvio was looking out for his family in the only way he could now; by placing the family's survival in the hands of his offspring.

As the day droned on, Silvio absently pulled and tugged at the net testing its weight as only a net fisherman could. Accounting for the weight of the net in water, a good and growing catch represented a significant increase in the weight of the net. Unfortunately for Silvio and Payton, Silvio's tugging only served notice that barring an immediate influx of one or more schools of fish into the area, the day's catch would be minimal—at best.

Finally, towards the end of the afternoon, Silvio decided to haul the net back in to survey their catch. As yard by yard was drawn back into the boat, it became apparent that the day's

catch would be enough to feed the family, with very little else left to sell in the market place.

It was well after dark when Silvio and Payton dragged their partially laden boat back onto the beach in front of their cottage.

“Take these fish up to your mother and sister to cook, Payton. I will take the rest over to Gregorie in the village tonight and see what we can get for them,” Silvio said, handing a half dozen small fish on a stringer to his son. Silvio tossed the seven larger fish back into his gunny sack and started trudging off down the beach towards the village and his old friend’s fish market.

Payton said nothing, but stayed and watched his father shuffle off into the dimming light, silhouetted against the small torches and lanterns of the village he was heading towards.

Yes, fishing is for fools. Payton thought. And it's time I started looking for something else to make my life's work.

THE CHAIN BREAKS

“Here are the fish we caught today.” Payton said, laying the day’s catch, connected by an old rawhide stringer, into a small tub by the cottage door.

Alicia Marko, busy folding the day’s ironing and putting it away, didn’t bother to turn around but pointed absently towards the front of the kitchen. “Put them over there in the sink Payton. You know where I clean them. Now go fill the small tub with sea water to soak the fish in when I am done. Where is your father?”

Alicia Marko’s hair—unlike her husband’s, had turned grey years ago. Even after five children and a decade since the twins were born, she still had the figure of a woman half her age. Proof of Alicia’s youthful appearance was always in evidence when she stood alongside her twenty year old daughter. From behind and the neck down, it would be hard to tell who was younger. Only the larger flair of Alicia’s hips—a concession to five children, would give away the older woman’s age.

But that’s where the similarities ended.

Maria Marko was a beauty, much like her mother was when she was her age. Maria’s jet black hair, as was the custom of the women in the village, had never been cut. Only a modest trim of split ends from the time she was born kept Maria’s hair growing to its current four and a half foot length.

Maria’s eyes were much like her father’s were when he was her age; sparkling and flashing with the energy of youth. Her skin was the hue of nearly everyone in the area; clear but tanned brown by the warm, year round Equatorial sun. Maria’s breasts were nearly identical to her mother’s; large, firm and impossible to ignore.

Maria’s trips to the village were almost always marked now by unpleasant encounters with men both young and old, eager to fondle the large protrusions she tried unsuccessfully to conceal with bulky shawls and scarfs.

Until Silvio spirited Alicia away and into marriage, she too had to run the gauntlet of gropers and endure the leers on her daily trips to the market in the village.

But unlike her mother, Maria had no desire to marry young and start having kids. At twenty, she was already considered a spinster, and those were the kinder things being whispered about her.

In the pre-war years, many women suddenly realized they could do more with their lives than just child rearing and waiting on a man hand and foot. The spirit that eventually swept through America during World War II was already starting to show up in other countries, but not so much in Majorca.

The opportunities for women in Spain and elsewhere abroad were contingent upon their family’s socio-economic status and the enlightenment of the patriarch of the house.

Maria had her sights set on medicine; first a nurse, then in the future—a physician. But she kept most of that to herself for fear of being discouraged, or worse yet, laughed at.

The same yearning to become more than their parents gnawed at all of the Marko children. Payton and Maria would be affected by that yearning before their siblings, but the desire for a better life would be just as strong in Julio and the twins as it currently was in the older children.

None of those yearnings set well with Silvio.

Silvio had been a fisherman all his life. He’d watched his father take over from his grandfather who had taken over from his father. In Silvio’s mind, that was the nature and order of things.

These things should not be changed over some fleeting pipe dream that in Silvio's mind would fade away with a few good seasons of bountiful fishing—and a good woman. And the idea of a woman doing anything but getting married and having children and keeping house was as foreign to Silvio as the far side of the moon.

Silvio had never seen or heard of a woman professional, let alone a woman doctor. His only association with women in medicine was the mid-wife who helped Alicia deliver the twins. Before that, Alicia's mother was there to guide her through child birth.

Doctors were rare and too expensive. The only doctor in the village had only seen Silvio once, when he broke his arm in a freak accident—on dry land.

But Silvio was more perplexed by his oldest son's desire to do something other than fish.

All he could compare Payton's yearnings to were the old men who hung around the village square all day, swatting flies and leering at women. Most of the men Silvio saw there he had seen all his life. All they had done was get older, smellier and less inclined to find work.

The thought of that happening to his son sent a shudder through Silvio, so visible, Gregorie, the fish market owner, stopped examining Silvio's catch and looked over at his old friend.

Gregorie Davalos, like Silvio, was born and raised in Alcudia, a small fishing village southeast of Cala Sant Vicenc, just east of Port De Pollensa, on the island of Majorca, Spain.

Gregorie was the same age as his friend, but had been spared the leathery look years on the sea had done to his friend. His skin was lightly tanned which made the light grey flecks in his hair look even more distinguished. Also, Gregorie was much taller than Silvio. His lean, well-proportioned body was not muscular, but no one would call him fat either.

"Is there something wrong, Silvio?" the other man said, studying the man he had known since they were both boys playing in and around their fathers' fishing boats.

"My son is thinking about not carrying on with fishing. He has not said so exactly, but he no longer wants to get up and go fish with me, like you and I used to when we were young. I do not know what will happen to him if he does not want to fish. How will he take care of himself and his family?"

Silvio leaned back against the bench he had been sitting on and folded his hands behind his head and stared out the window of Gregorie's tiny shop. While his friend looked on in silence, Silvio continued...

"Remember when we were boys and used to *beg* our fathers to take us fishing with them? Remember the big fish we used to bring home *every day*? Now look at these," He said, pointing to the seven fish he'd brought in to sell.

"We sometimes threw them back as being only babies. I remember my father saying to them; *Come back when you are all grown.*" The two men nodded silently, each visualizing their youth.

Gregorie's father understood that he would one day have to give up fishing, so he chose to open a fish market to support his family and give his children another, better option than what he had.

Not long after Gregorie took over the duties of the fish market, his father died. A few months later, almost to the day, Silvio's father was lost in a storm off the coast of Italy while returning from an extended fishing trip.

He and three other men had traveled several hundred miles over open water in a partially covered boat about twice the size of Silvio's current boat, looking for Albacore. They found and caught their limit but once in the storm, their overloaded boat floundered in rough seas and went down.

Maybe Silvio's father had other plans for his son. If so, he never shared them with him. All Silvio ever knew was fishing and the sea. It was a life he wanted to share with his sons, but his oldest son was already in the process of rejecting that notion even though Silvio was sure Payton had no idea what he wanted to do instead.

"*SILVIO !*" Gregorie's shout brought him back to the moment. "Where was your mind, my friend? If you believe you can steer any of your children in a direction they do not want to go, then you will die a very unhappy man."

"Perhaps. But I believe I owe it to my father and his father to try." Silvio said, standing and moving toward the table where Gregorie had counted out the money for his fish. "Thank you, my friend. I must be off now. Alicia will have dinner waiting for me."

When Silvio returned home, his wife was sitting outside on an old stool peeling potatoes for dinner.

"What, no dinner? What have you been doing all day, woman?" Silvio said in mock anger.

Alicia threw her carving knife into the pail of water and potatoes between her legs and looked up angrily at her husband. It was dark now and Alicia's face was only lit by the small lantern she had been using to see to peel the potatoes.

"Why is our son leaving tomorrow? What did you say to him today when you were fishing?" Alicia bent over, picked up the pot then stood up and headed inside without waiting for an answer.

Silvio followed in silence, searching for a connection between his son's time with him on the boat and his wife's concerns. Shrugging his shoulders, Silvio realized that he wouldn't have long to wait to find out.

Once inside, Silvio saw his two oldest children sitting silently at the dinner table, staring apprehensively at their parents. The others had either gone off to bed voluntarily, or more likely were told to. In any case, there was no place in the tiny cottage where people couldn't hear what was being said at the dinner table.

"What is this about you leaving, Payton? Where will you go? What will you do?" Silvio asked tentatively. He was unaccustomed to anything but blind obedience from everyone who lived under his roof.

Now he was confronted with someone who did not *want* to live under his roof. This was all uncharted territory for Silvio *and Alicia*.

"I plan on moving into the village and finding a job at the Spanos Olive farm. They are always looking for hard working men to harvest olives. After that, I do not know. Maybe I will travel to France. I am not sure, we shall see what happens...."

Payton's voice trailed off as if he had suddenly realized the finality of what he had said to his family.

Silvio had come into the cottage, closed the door and braced himself against it as if he were preparing for a fight.

"Do you mean you will not carry on the family tradition? You will not support your family, help me and your mother? How can you be so selfish, so ignorant of our heritage?"

Frustrated, Silvio had begun to repeat himself but stopped when he looked over at his wife. Alicia had folded her arms and had leaned back against the sink. Her scowl stopped her husband from further embarrassment.

After an awkward silence, where everyone tried to examine their fingers, the window, the dishes, anything but the other people in the room, Alicia finally cleared her throat and spoke.

"Husband, it is not up to us to force our children to follow our path. If our path is not good

enough for them to willingly choose to follow, then they must make their own path—their own way in the world.”

Alicia began to move around the dinner table and over to her husband where she slid herself under his left arm and braced herself with him and against the door before she continued.

“Payton, we—I would not be honest with you if I said I am not disappointed with your decision to leave. I am, but I would rather see you go away and come back a man fulfilled than stay here as the shell of a man who never realized his dreams.” Alicia could feel the sweat from Silvio’s underarm on the back of her neck as she stared back and forth at her two oldest children sitting on the other side of the table.

“We love you, Payton, and will always wish the best for you. But do know this; your father and I will disown you if, after a year or two, we go into town and find you by the fountain or somewhere in the square, drunk, swapping lies with other drunks and leering at the women moving about. Go from this house with our love, but *make something of yourself*—you hear me?”

Payton got up and moved around the table to embrace his mother and father. Silvio sidestepped his son and walked silently to the sink and filled a small glass of wine from a gourd left over from a recent celebration.

He did not agree at all with his wife’s statement, but he was smart enough to remain silent until they were alone to voice his displeasure.

To Silvio, his wife had spoken Blasphemy. All Silvio knew and was brought up to value was about the sea and fish. How could his own son go against tradition so easily? How could his wife?

The fishing tradition was indeed very strong among the people who lived in and around the tiny village. But in recent times, more and more young men began to gravitate to the olive farms.

The Spanos family had the largest—and most modern in the area. Payton would be one of several young men looking for—and eventually landing the few non-fishing jobs in the community.

What Silvio and other fishermen his age could not come to grips with was the world around them was changing and rapidly.

The young men—and women in the village and surrounding area no longer saw tradition as a responsibility, they saw it as an obstacle. And in many young minds, that obstacle needed to be avoided at all costs.

SOMETIMES YOU ARE THE PASSION

“I do not want to talk about him. If he wants to leave, then let him leave.” Silvio grunted as he shed all his clothes and slid into bed. Alicia was already in bed, and bounced slightly when her husband’s weight hit their skimpy old mattress.

It was only a half an hour after Payton’s announcement, but already everyone had retreated to their respective bedrooms to try to sleep away the tension from all that was said a short time earlier.

Alicia had felt an awkward tension in Silvio, one that usually preceded a brief sexual encounter that almost always left her unfulfilled.

She dreaded those times with her husband because when the mood was right, Silvio’s love making would bring her to multiple climaxes throughout the time they were in a passionate way.

But this night, Alicia sensed that her husband wanted to regain some control over his life and family. That usually meant an uncaring stabbing and quick climax for Silvio, and painful raw insides for her.

Alicia understood and accepted the situation and fell back on the knowledge that often times she intentionally withheld sex from her husband, for no other reason than that she could.

In all their years together, Silvio never once forced past her objections to having sex, even though there were many times when they had sex and Alicia actually wasn’t in the mood. Her mother once told her that lack of sex always broadened a man’s wandering eye, even if he didn’t have one to begin with.

As it turned out, Silvio’s wandering eye always seemed to come to rest on *her* rear end and flaring hips. Alicia always knew Silvio was getting in the mood when she would catch him gazing at her body as if he was admiring a work of art. Twenty-one years of marriage and five children had never dampened that look—or Silvio’s passion once he had her alone.

After the events of the day, Alicia knew that Silvio’s emotions were closer to anger and betrayal than they were towards passion. But she decided they both needed a passionate release to take away the sting of seeing one of their children leave the nest.

After a short bit of tossing and turning, Alicia got up and walked over to the couple’s dresser. Looking back to see if Silvio was awake, Alicia removed her night slip and tossed it in a clothes basket by the door. Silvio was still lying on his side facing the wall away from the door, but facing Alicia’s spot on the bed. If he was fully awake, then he didn’t let on to Alicia.

Naked now, she quietly rubbed a small amount of scented olive oil between her thighs and over her breasts. Standing in the dark facing the bed, Alicia looked down at the shadows of her large, still firm breasts illuminated in the dim light cast by the fireplace that shown under their bedroom door.

Even after more than two decades, the thought of Silvio’s thick, hardened member penetrating her insides moistened her with anticipation. Her womanhood began to twitch in a way Alicia always knew would not stop until and unless she climaxed.

Silvio had been lying quietly on the bed ever since he laid down—awake. He could hear Alicia’s ragged breathing and felt her tossing around gently, the way she always did when she didn’t want to disturb him.

Silvio was disturbed. He was angry. Alicia was right. He did want to grab her and stab her quickly and in his mind reestablish himself as the “king of his castle”.

But the evening’s events softened Silvio’s desire to play selfish caveman with his wife.

There were very few times in their marriage when Alicia pressed herself against him the

way she did when they were talking to Payton about leaving. It was as if she was showing their son how important it was to be joined to someone or something—like a mate, or your family.

The family part stilled Silvio's urge to speak out in rage. But the mate part sent an even stronger message to him from Alicia;

I am your lover, friend and partner in this life. There is no safer place than to be snuggled under your strong arms, united against everything that comes at us.

As he looked at his wife through partially shutter eyes, Silvio's lust for her began to grow. Lust; many married couples find it odd when others look at them and see that even after years of sleeping in the same bed and dealing with every kind of feeling two people can experience, they still can't keep their passion for each other in check. The thought of one or both people lusting after each other is not strange at all—to the couple.

Alicia quietly moved back to the bed as if she didn't want to wake her husband, but that was *exactly* what she wanted to do.

As she sat down on the edge and prepared to swing her feet up on the bed, she suddenly felt Silvio's arm reach up and grab for her. Her first thought was that he would be quick and selfish and she would come away unfulfilled.

But as Silvio's arm slid under hers and to her waist, Alicia knew instantly her husband was aroused and passionate but was preparing his passion for the both of them—not just himself.

Alicia turned inward towards her husband and melted into his arms. Silvio's lips rushed to connect with hers in ways they both knew were designed to excite her with the promise of pleasurable things to come.

As Silvio's hand closed around her waist, Alicia moved quickly to close the gap between their groins, and as she did so, the first of many moans and gasps escaped her lips. Silvio's manhood immediately stiffened, but he resisted the urge to thrust himself into his wife before he felt she was ready to accept his eager penetration.

Silvio's hand began to roam over the familiar territory of Alicia's ample breasts, squeezing her erect nipples, then plunging into her dark, hairy canyon. Alicia thrust her hips at Silvio's left hand while she pinned his right arm under her body. In a movement familiar to them both, Silvio pushed his right arm under Alicia's body and brought it out the other side, gripped her shoulder bringing her even closer to him.

As their bodies began to seek more than passionate stroking, Silvio rolled Alicia over and onto his stomach and watched as she inserted his stiff member into her womanhood. Neither person was surprised at how easily the connection was made. Alicia's insides had been soaked from the moment Silvio reached for her.

Alicia began to buck wildly on top of her husband, pausing only to drop her head down and push her tongue into his mouth. Silvio, for his part, pinned his knees under his wife's bottom allowing her to stay connected with his member for as long as she wanted.

But minutes later, Silvio took Alicia by the head and shoulders and flipped her onto her side and finally repositioned her under him. All of their thrusting continued without missing a beat, which brought Alicia to her first screeching climax.

When Silvio realized his wife was about to come, he pushed his right shoulder over her face to muffle the sound of what he knew would wake up the sheep and goats on the ridge above their cottage.

But that didn't mean their children couldn't hear it.

Maria had heard the sound of her parents making love longer than her siblings and to a certain extent had become used to it. The thin walls of the small cottage barely muffled the sound

of someone sneezing two rooms away, let alone the groans of someone in the throes of passion.

While she had often wondered what sex would be like, Maria was usually not stimulated by what she heard coming from her parents' room.

But this night a different feeling came over her. As her loins became moist hearing the primal sounds being forced from her mother's throat, Maria knew that sooner or later, she too must find passion in someone else's arms. And when she did, it would be far from where she was now, trying hard—and failing—to keep from visualizing what her parents looked like right at that moment in the other room.

MARIA'S ESCAPE?

Maria's Escape and the rest of the book are available by clicking one of the links below.
To order "Sitting on the Branch of an Olive Tree" from Smashwords [click here!](#)
To order "Sitting on the Branch of an Olive Tree" from Amazon [click here!](#)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Gene Thomas has had several major careers. His first career was in air traffic control. Another was a Defense Contractor during the Reagan era.

After a career in Education and extensive travels to different countries, Gene now devotes the majority of his time to pursuing his first love, writing.

You will find that Gene's writing style has always been characterized an easy read. His books in print (Amazon, Barnes & Noble) "Tales from the Tree House, 2010", "Tree House to Palm Trees, 2011" mark the start of a prolific writing career that includes a collection of short stories, poems and novels already posted on sites like <http://www.readwave.com/doceft/>.

"Rock Hands" – a Depression Era saga reminiscent of John Steinbeck will be coming out later this year. The rights to that book are currently under contract with Quattro Media Publications.

Gene has finished six 26 mile marathons and thousands of shorter races and still maintains an active exercise routine that includes walking no less than four miles a day.

Gene currently lives in Belize, Central America, but was born in Brooklyn, New York.