

Short stories written under the Aegean sun



My Grandfather's Hat
is in The Garden



Y U M A T Z U G A

NOTE

The characters in this short story are all inventions together with the personality of the narrator and bear no resemblance to living persons.

The author owns this work with all rights reserved. The end-user may not distribute without the permission of the copyright holder.

First edition © 2020

My Grandfather's Hat is in The Garden

By YUMATZUGA

PROLOGUE

TOE CAPS OF STEEL

DIAPHANOUS PELICAN

ANTE MEDIEM

POST MEDIEM

AFTER GOD AND LEAKING HULL

AS HAPPY AS LARRY EVER WAS

CORSICA LANDSCAPE LEARNED

ALIEN BEAR GRIN

“CHERRY PIE”, WHOO-AH!

FAREWELL TO CORSICA

TOWARDS SARDINIA

IL PARADISO TERRESTRE ISOLA DEL VENTO

TANGERINE BLUE

AMALFI AMORE

GODS LIVE ON ISLANDS AND SO DO MONSTERS

AFTERWORD

To all
living their daydreams under the Aegean sun.

Prologue

About six months after first releasing “*Somewhere on The Other Side*” short stories written during the days of blogging in 2007 – 2011, I finally realised the fact of how hopelessly I had been missing the whole process of writing. Sometimes I’ve been just lying and waiting there for a decent opportunity to desert all the daily business and set ideas free.

The “*Expeditions Irresistible*” blog has been the lifeline of day-to-day living for me so long that it feels more like a necessity. However, after these short stories were released, it felt that the real hobby ceased. I believe it’s not so much about the writing but the feeling of being inspired and able to record, at least to some extent, a readable short story outcome. I would say it’s a hobby and learning process of my innermost and dearest.

“Si Prega Di Non Disturbare, Si Prega Di Non Bestemmiare”

The new short story collection turned out to be this book. It is about a lot of different locations in Greece, France, and Italy. The stories, more or less, rely on facts but are still abundant in artistic freedom and sheer imagination. Characters are fictitious unless not referred to as already well-known public figures. Stories follow the already familiar way of describing the journey of a fictional protagonist. Occasionally there may be sunflower oil-driven recipes, poems or lyrics involved. They are located on the land, at sea and sometimes even in the air. These are the three elements, which I feel the deepest longings of my heart. Land being

especially in concern when being on an island. Water and sea as long as there are no islands in sight and the air when it is so high above and close to the door of space where even the biggest islands look like tiny rocks. It's a fact that sometimes the story may seem tedious and every day compared to the modern-day mega-spectacles.

Yet, they are the stories where I am to live the dream.

My writing dream that I'm pleased about.

Toe Caps of Steel

My breakfast tea with cherry biscuits is waiting in Nea Agora on the other side of the street. The last view in the opposite direction from Mandraki harbour, where Kostas Dimakis is only a fading rear left silhouette in the aquamarine morning haze, I notice Daphne's Lullaby in the basin. There is a touch in my heart while I realise what a magnificent vessel she is. I breathe the crisp December morning air. Just before taking the next step on the crosswalk, I just let the single moment take my breath away. At the same, I probably save myself from a disastrous accident with speeding biker accelerating massively towards the north-west on Evdomis Martiou street. Passing through the suffocating exhaust fumes, I wonder if the Greek boosters will ever slow down due to the sky-high cost of petrol. Most likely, they will not but eventually grow fever due to inevitable accidents.

On the front page the Rodiaki newspaper list down the ten most difficult things for the Greek to get over in tragical recession. Some celebrity, currently moved away from the island, has married her long-lost cousin and the stray dog situation of Rhodes bitterly argued between the mayor and active canine lovers. The second cup of excellent tea makes me sharpen the eyes on the magazine page. *"The City Council has decided to increase the monthly port charges immediately five times higher. The Port Police is to share reminders and will monitor the situation against customers that should disobey."* My friend Dimitri on the next-door table nods worried as I curse out excessively. What a devilish thing to do just now, as I have the agreed overhaul in shipyard only two months away. New engine for Daphne's Lullaby is waiting as

well as several other issues that will need service and attention. The relaxed atmosphere of a sunny Christmas spirit has just flown to the four winds.

"You hear me now. Either you will pay, or we will confiscate your vessel!" claimed the dull-looking young clerk at the harbour chief's office. I did not have any elbow room. I needed to make pretty fast decisions to avoid the next monthly fee, all of a sudden becoming way too high for my ability to pay. I had agreed for a long-term berth during last summer season ceased in October. After being calm for two months, the office is raising thunder and hell by renewing all contracts with a pretty one-sided decision. Something needs to be done about this robbery. I cannot afford any more expense wit the boat.

I need someone to help me out with the boat. I have decided to take Daphnes Lullaby near to my friend's place, something like 18 nautical miles southwest of Rhodes town, where she can stay moored for the rest of waiting until engine change and general overhaul. However, it's too risky to leave there single-handed. As my wife has an off-season vacation in southern France for the next following weeks, I need to ask someone else to help me out. So I give another call for Ned Andersen, the friend who has agreed to keep an eye on the boat, even he is no sailor kind at all. He probably hates the idea of going for a short sailing trip, but he still agrees to do it, while being a gourmet lover, for the juicy smoked leg of lamb that I promised to arrange. Ned is a helpful person, always ready to give a hand with a smile. His big grin reminds me of the wrench in my toolbox. Ned is a retired builder specialising

in steel structures. He still occasionally receives some request for structure design. It's more like a hobby for him. He has suffered severe diabetes in the last seven years but is by no means given to interfering with his life. Ned is living his retirement dream with her lovely wife, Helene.

We decided to sail on the day before New Year's Eve just to be sure there will not be any extra cost. To make a date, I needed to accomplish several preparations. Even the route is to be clear and short, I still loaded fresh and canned food for two days journey, checked all tools and navigation equipment like a routine job as always when going out to sea. The open sea is a harsh mistress and especially when your crew is not too experienced sailors.

Daphne's Lullaby is a wooden sloop built around 1970. The previous owner initially gave her the name. The yacht was for his family, and she sailed several seasons along the Mediterranean Sea. As the ship was completed right after baptising of his youngest baby child, he then decided to use part of her name. The yacht did lull the infant in sleepover several voyages. Measuring 34 Ft 9 inches long, with a 10 ft 14 beam and a 6 ft draft she is still easy to manoeuvre with a crew of two. She is a bit heavier built than most of the modern sailboats but even pleasant for sailing with a 47 ft mast and a 17 ft boom. For some summers we have had charter based private cruises arranged. Captain and boatswain with two to four guests. For a day cruise, it might be even more guests, but for the sake of convenient accommodation, the number is kept reasonably low. However, nowadays, people tend to invest a lot more they used to. Guests aim towards the

premium class sailing vacations, and unfortunately, our boat doesn't necessarily compete in that class anymore. As the competition has become more robust, we decided to leave the business even it has been a source of income and helped with the maintenance cost.

Town of Rhodes locates at the northern tip of the spearhead-shaped 1,400 square kilometres island. The city is relatively easy to go around with a bicycle through the classic folding bike from Brompton stays on board where it's bolted into bulkhead below the sturdy one-meter fire axe and Monte Bianco ice axe. There are no hills to climb in the town but Monte Smith. In there you certainly don't need any walking sticks not to mention ice axe. However, it's still possible to try out some moderately civilised hill climbing and to walk along the way, if one decides to wander further for the southern tip of the island. There is the island of Prasonisi on another side of sound, less than 800 meters away and reachable by foot during low tide. Based on the experience, I would recommend a scooter for daily commuting. They are pretty cheap and sturdy vehicles today. I've driven my Vespa over 10,000 km since I bought it some three years ago to back up my dying VW Beetle.

We meet together with Ned on the early evening of 29. of December at Daphne's Lullaby. Well, I've stayed on the boat since Christmas when I first read the news. We agreed to set the sail at dawn, but before that, we decided to have a bit of a farewell party. Just the two of us, having some good food, drinks and maybe even a few cigars and a lot of laughs. I have planned to prepare calamari with Maltese style by stuffing the

squid with rice, breadcrumbs, parsley, garlic, and capers and then gently stewing in red wine. Cooking in the pantry gas oven is easy. Dimitri fixed me a beautiful bowl of fresh calamari and the rest of the ingredients I have on the boat all ready. There's just a fresh salad to go with olive oil and balsamic vinegar dressing. It is simple yet delicious. Well, a farewell party dinner would not be complete without decent drinks, so I reserved a few bottles of Rhodian retsina. Exquisite and affordable thanks to escaping of the phylloxera epidemic so far.

At first, as it's still daylight, we enjoy Bloody Mary SSSS (straight self-service style) from glass canning jars upon the weary deck chairs. We chat about daily business and the nonsensical saving and fundraising going on lately. Other boaters like me are to leave the harbour due to unfairly raised mooring fees as well. After dinner, which succeeded exceptionally well if I may say, there are a few glasses of Bowmore 12-year-old. To be honest, it might have been too many in between some arm wrestling training we executed on the cabin roof. Right after Ned had beat me and while cheering out of joy, he fell overboard into, not so clear, water. What a splash!

The dawn opened up as beautiful as always in Rhodes island. Unfortunately, we did not. We both had a bit of hangover and felt pretty unable to operate the boat until sometime noon. Ned was even worse due to his nagging illness. He should be more careful with excessive liquor consumption. I blamed myself since; actually, I should have known better. It took us several hours before anyone

requested breakfast, and even less in the smell of half-burned La Libertad Demi Corona cigar. I felt being very much too old for such fiestas we did had last night. Once more, I silently promised never to touch any spirits.

That day Daphne's Lullaby motored out of Mandraki harbour pool with two wasted men. Tired but eager to get to open sea with mild but fresh northeast wind starboard side. We sailed about three nautical miles from the Rhodes island coast (290°) before turning towards the southwest (245°). The wind was steady but could not have been more than 5-6 m/s with quietly surging waves. The clinker-built hull of Daphnes' Lullaby gave a right smack amusingly now and then. This ship hull building method requires considerably less caulking in use as it's not so prone to leaks caused by dehydrated planks. It is seldom when Daphne's Lullaby needs to turn to the automated pump for excess bilge water removal.

We entered sunny Fane's bay after 16:00 30. of December after few hours pleasant sailing with no special events. Well, for me it was a pleasure but slowly waving western rolls did not help poor Ned recover his hangover any better. I don't know if it was just a sheer agony for him but his face often expressed funny theatrical smiles I never experienced before. Nevertheless we starter mooring by letting the anchor hit the sea bottom at a decent distance from the pier. Or at least we intended to do so since the following episode took place.

I need to point out that several things happened almost simultaneously. While I was at the helm, we slowly motored

closer to the pier. We had agreed that I would give a sign for Ned at the bow first to loosen up the anchor chain tension, then knock the devil's claw off and eventually let the anchor windlass lower the anchor at right spot. How stupid of me? I was soon to feel like a monkey leading a lion, but I gave the sign to Ned, and he waved OK back. Ned is no sailor, and despite the miniature devil's claw of Daphne's Lullaby, it still did its duty amazingly well and did resist Ned's brute force.

Meanwhile, I was discovering a suspicious amount of burnt clutch smell coming from under the engine cover. Naturally, it drew all the attention for a moment even it obviously should have not. Next thing I discovered was Ned screaming his lungs out for the shock! As soon as back on deck I saw Ned kneeling for his foot that had my Monte Bianco ice axe sticking right out from his left foot shoe's toe side. It took me few jumps of a tiger to reach Ned that stood amazingly calm, most evidently in shock, on the deck smiling the widest smile I ever have seen. I was devastated! Due to poor control of inexperienced guest on board, I had generated a severe accident and possibly life long injury.

Well, my friend, you know what? As an old hard hat, I never leave home without my safety shoes, and this is not the last pair I will wreck. Sorry about your beautiful axe, though.

Ned had decided to use my snow axe, unintentionally lying on the deck after yesterday's presentation of equipment, as some extra lever arm. Unaware of the fact that a devil's claw cannot be released while it is under tension he had used force and being excessively worried we would miss the agreed point of anchor release he had targeted the claw with a powerful hit. The axe didn't release the claw but ended up

landing on his toes. Miraculously only ruining his moderately new safety shoe and the tip of my, not so much used, snow axe.

Diaphanous Pelican

“The impossible missions are the only ones which succeed.”
– Jacques-Yves Cousteau (1910-1997)

I stayed onboard over the night and woke up the next morning along with the pouring rain. During the morning tea and shortcake biscuits, I tried to scan those steel coloured clouds rushing over the masthead. Also tried to get a grip of the situation by listening to the boat radio. As I finally discovered that it was most likely going to rain still sometimes, I then started tidying up the boat. I did let loud Ramones tunes out of the stereos and started performing the cleansing routines.

By midday, it had stopped raining. It was time to leave. After securing the boat, I left her well tied for strict supervision of the Andersen family. Ned is pretty keen on bird watching, and now his Bushnell Legend spotting scope will serve him to carry out the guarding task. Ned will have it stand-mounted and pointed right on the yacht at his living room terrace, that by the way, opens one excellent scenery. I gathered the essential belongings to my backpack, unfolded my wonder Brommie bike ready for action and rode the last five kilometres up home into Kalavarda village.

We own a small cabin with a garden greenhouse on a fair 0.5-acre site. The modest backyard is pretty much like from some meadow landscape painting of Monet, though it all tends to dry out during the wonderfully long and hot summer

months. It is not much yet sufficient for two adults and a couple of dogs. We haven't taken any more dogs after Bruno and Boris passed away. The plot is small, but we do not wish anything more significant. The heart of the matter is somewhere beyond owning land or property.

I have been lucky to have Claude Monet as one of my favourite landscape painters. The father of impressionism, with his numerous masterpieces, has been a dependable source of inspiration during adulthood years. Monet is the creator of dozens of spectacular landscape paintings. Not all are my favourites but Alley near Pourville from the year 1882 is. Indeed, some of the best enchant the mind so strongly, that sense of time begins to blur.

Many find them pretty satisfied while living without television. We dropped having such, since it is complete nonsense, over decades ago and have not missed that since. Instead, as an example, this painting with inviting view of a lovely seashore, equipped with elegant framework hanging on the wall, is something worth staring at. Especially after having a few rum toddies on a midwinter's cold night shared with inspiring music. Such combination shares comfort and flies anyone's mind far away even from the most brutal rat race.

Like tonight, when after a day doing nothing, I studied a bit of the Panart HMS Victory's 34 ft Lifeboat (1:16 Scale from Cornwall model boats) that I have started tinker with. It's a model of the type that they had aboard Admiral Lord Nelson's flagship "*Victory*". It was Victory's most significant (over 10

m) boat for multi-use purposes. It used to carry food, water, and other supplies. She was also a crew transfer vessel for the men and their weapons. There are two significant aspects of this model that fascinate me. At first, it is the real history of naval warfare, all the courageous but horrible battle and then the sheer beauty of something human-made. Wooden models may they be boats or planes, always make my silly heart jump out of anticipation. Maybe that is something boyish that the evil world never succeeded to beat out. I have had the model under construction for six months already but seems to me that another half a year is still required. Well, who would want to rush such a superb opportunity?

During the evening it started to get a bit parky around our tiny cottage. Earlier during summer, I had bought some truckloads of olive wood, that has dried for one year. It burns beautiful hot and steady but does generate very little smoke. Unfortunately, the cost of wood, like everything else, has slowly climbed higher and I should expect prices to skyrocket during the cold spring. Had I only been clever enough in identifying this recession well in advance it then would have been possible to acquire some old olive grow for a pile of good wood. What I have noticed is that now, as the heating bills tend to rise, many locals have turned back into their wood stoves to save gas, electricity or whatever they used to have.

After having the old Stanley wood burner hot, I could not refuse to make a delicious apple pie for the late-night tea. While cooking the cake, I searched the pantry for any well matured, slightly sweet honey flavoured, Wensleydale cheese.

I would have preferably used developed blue Stilton, though, if only I had one more piece in the freezer. The blue veins taste heavenly irresistible. There is an old saying “*An apple pie without the cheese is like a kiss without the squeeze!*” That I find pretty much right.

I often enjoy a glass or two good wine. After a day practically doing nothing else but tidying the boat I opened a bottle of fine Zenato Amarone della Valpolicella Classico. The rich and thick flavour lingers on my lips as I reread the short letter. She is going to stay somewhere in the Languedoc-Roussillon for quite some more time. This I did vaguely anticipate but still taking longer than expected anyway, I think. Well, I would expect her to return by the time Mallow Skippers are in the air again. Until that, I can have the privilege of mastering the house and daily living. After a while, my cloudy brains realise that an opportunity like this I should not miss! But instead of going around the house or empty beaches I should go and do a bit of travelling myself. I had good enough time before the boat repair is about to begin. Where should I navigate then? East (“no”) or west? South or north? Would I want to feel below zero temperatures, snow and ice after all this time is safe? Guess not.

We have an old wooden cabinet in the corridor between the living room and the kitchen. Among others, it stores some of the remembrances we have kept over the years. I droop half asleep already while immersing deeper into the future travel dream. Funny how I sense the waterbird looking crystal figure swing its throat pouch, winking me behind the glass door by saying “*Assumere est periculosum*”.

Ante Meridiem

“Fatigue at sea is a dangerous mistress.”

They say that 21 m/s wind can be described as strong gale and is nine on the Beaufort wind force scale. Beaufort scale is based on empirical measurements, and as the senses are the primary source of empirical evidence, then it's not easy for an unaccustomed observer to say anything exactly. Naturally, if one has an anemometer, wind speed measuring device that is, then it is easy if one is also familiar with equivalent Beaufort scale wind speeds. The expected wave height with nine Beaufort wind may be up to 10 meters. But I can tell you they feel like hundred feet tall for an everyday cruiser. Instead, I would use the definition of a cruiser than sailor as long as described in terms of experience about the marine life of yours truly. Not too much of a sailor but I can still tell the difference of sloop, yawl and ketch; and cutter rig. The differences are attractive for a landlubber like me. One can end up discussing further which of them is the best without genuinely knowing the facts. I would say that to me it does not matter since the best rig you can play is on the boat you are at and at that moment it is the most interesting one.

We left Royal Lymington Yacht Club five days ago for fetching more crew from little Scoil Mhuire (Schull) seaside village on west Cork's Atlantic coast in Ireland. It was the most pleasant passage towards the south-west, west, and north-west. It was occasionally offering changes for asymmetrical spinnaker tryout. Schull Harbour has a relatively secluded basin, and we went mooring there

overnight. One crew member was happy to get ashore and visit Schull dental clinic for an acute appointment. He had an issue that started to develop as we more or less followed it with repulsive interest. The dentist had drilled up an aching tooth, cleaned it and put a temporary patch on it. This operation, however, started to generate pressure that within a few days, developed into one hellish toothache. We had already got used to the idea that the patch must be necessary to remove at sea, but now the poor fellow was lucky enough to get decent treatment onshore. There are countries where the social safety net will provide a substantial amount of these dental services practically for free. Well, there may be a nominal cost, but it's ten times less than on the open commercial market anyway. Sounds great but has only one notable shortcoming. The waiting time can be troublesome and sometimes even impossible. They give out appointment times three to four months ahead. So if one can wait, then there will be pretty low expense required for keeping the teeth in good shape. I once realised that there are practically very few occasions when a man can have such affordable yet professional treatment by one or possibly even by two ladies.

While the sailor had his tooth renovated, the rest of us had dinner around the corner at The New Haven Restaurant. Afterwards, he joined us with swollen cheek but relieved. Some of us went across the street to pray in St. Mary's Catholic Church. The captain had an old wooden pulley he took out of his backpack, and it was given as sacrifice on the altar. Then afterwards as there was a bit of a walk around the village area and when we all had ensured the latest impulse purchases from local Eurospar, we had a pint or two at Hackett's Bar while waiting for the additional crew members

finally join us.

Since leaving Schull, we have been sailing south-east out of Hibernia towards Genoa, Italy in a sailing vessel registered for CE category: A – Unlimited ocean voyages. Genoa (AKA La Superba) is the capital of Liguria and second largest seaport after Marseille, France. It's the birthplace of Christopher Columbus, and his statue in there is looking at faraway lands standing high at the railway station square. This town is also the place where our sail vessel was born. I had never visited Genoa, but more was expected to see the small town of Rapallo, near Genoa. Wish to see this is naturally due to Göran Schildt, writer, and art historian that used to have his boat survive the winter in the shelter of Rapallo shipyard. He went sailing around Mediterranean multiple summers with wife and occasional bosuns. Several books he wrote about these magnificent explorations remain his historical legacy for anyone inspired by sailing on open seas and exploring unknown remoteness.

During the last 24 hours, the barometer reading had dropped down until 960 millibars. While the average atmospheric pressure at sea level, on earth is 1013.25 Mb, our current reading regards for extremely stormy conditions. The crew under continuous and unusual pressure is shortly running out positive attitude and jokes hear during the first days of the voyage. I notice a dangerous amount of fatigue creeping in the crew members. Even most members onboard are experienced seafarers they still need a decent share of food and sleep. The conditions have been against us for several days already. The ship chef is fighting kettles and pans in the rolling galley with

a demonic touch. It's a blessing that he has been able to keep up the appetite of men. But we all need sleep even there is no chance for it. Occasionally I notice nodding seamen here and there. I being among them and vaguely recalling that once being at sea in a terrible storm Columbus wrote to his journal that the men felt so worn out that they longed for death to end their dreadful suffering.

“Patience required!”

It is April 21. All I could previously remember from this specific day in history was that the town of Rome is celebrating its birthday today. Most likely, I shall utterly forget that fact and replace the given memory slot in my storage capacity with the events of today. If I ever should live so far. I was insisting against the use of Dramamine I have sure consumed a pretty considerable amount of different ginger products during the last day. Pure canned ginger root and multiple portions of ginger-based drinks. Fascinating how ginger works for me. It does not prevent my motion sickness symptoms completely but yet saves me from asking for an anchor and kind permission to jump overboard.

Our yacht is a wooden classic 59 ft Bermudian cutter that at the start of the nineties belonged to the famous guitar-smashing rock legend. Naturally, as soon as I had received this piece of information, I filled up the old AIWA cassette player with all possible tunes from this exquisite group to honour one of the previous boat masters. Now, in the middle of steel grey roaring sea, I comfort my shivering body with

gulps of ginger root beer accompanied by “Won’t Get Fooled Again”.

It takes an excellent boat, experienced crew, and some serious patience to come over gale wind waters of Bay of Biscay. History can tell that the designer once described, one key of his design philosophy, that a yacht should have the utmost docility and sureness of manoeuvring at sea, both in good or bad weather. At least for now, I’m confident that the given design specifications had been duly met on this sailing vessel.

There is nothing but a spitfire jib up as we travel under uncomfortable swell that would make around the world sailor Bernard Moitessier smile. He went solo around the world in his 39’ steel ketch, Joshua, in 1968-69. Rather than completing he instead abandoned the actual first Golden Globe Race after seven months at sea. He was a human not after personal fame and a record but instead sailed on ending up in Tahiti after a total of 10 months from his departure. Moitessier also wrote several fascinating books about his voyages and sailing. In his book “The Long Way” for example, he writes his conception about money very descriptively.

“Alas yes, money... for all our picking up butts and living with a reasonable amount of brains, more or less money is necessary, depending on one’s temperament. In any case, one thing is certain: one can go very far and lead an interesting life with very little money to start because one always makes

out once underway – provided one is underway.”

While being a boatswain on a sailing vessel, this size gives one opportunity to learn a lot. Crossing Atlantic ocean north to south differs from manoeuvring your half-sized craft on safe and warm coastal waters. I finally got the overhaul of Daphne's Lullaby finished before March 15. as it was the shipyard deadline. Then, as I was still alone at Kalavarda, I decided I could do some travelling. I started by going to Athens.

What a marvellous place it is for a visit after our tiny village at Rhodes. All that splendid chaos of art, masses of hectic life cycle and history. One never quite gets over it as a visitor. I know that native people seldom appreciate these arguments while living everyday life as we all do. It's often complicated to see the forest for the trees. Athens is magnificent, but I would not wish to stay too long. There are also many personal memories in that town. Then it was time for Paris with more than 12 million inhabitants. That is over twice the people in Athens. Paris is hard to pass or exceed by any measurement. It is the exact European centre of architecture, history, monuments, and landmarks as well as entertainment and performing arts. I could move there for life only if it weren't twelve million others. Paris, as a source, seems an endless supply of inspiration. But it's also darn expensive city, full with elegant yet rude and sourpuss Frenchmen not to mention non-existing empty taxis. It all reveals that I've spent away too short time in the City of Light.

Eurostar train got me travelling between Gare du Nord in Paris and Waterloo International station in London with less than 100€. London is amazingly different from the previous two metropolia. The world's leading financial centre, if we exclude New York City, will soon reach the limit where less than half of the residents are white Britons, being a minority in the city. Being such a multicultural place with more than 12 million residents in the metropolitan area it is even more fascinating than Paris or Athens. It's an unfortunate truth that if Athens didn't have a significant climate advantage over the others, then it would not be mentioned here. Treasures of London include numerous museums, galleries, and libraries. I wish I had all the time in the world to wander and explore all the exquisite historical and cultural gems of London town. Usually, it never happens due to this and that. It's always a too-busy schedule for any proper touring. Maybe I'm just too hungry. Too eager and greedy for such endless explorations as I honestly believe no human has an opportunity to go thru it all anyway. I will limit myself to my fate and try to do my best out of it since living is more than wandering in dusty galleries or dark basements. While in London I got a hint that there might be an open enlistment for a bosun within sail vessel travelling back to Mediterranean and Genoa. At first, I did not believe my chances, but things kind of developed with help from an old acquaintance and I soon realised that it would be more than 2400 nautical miles long journey ahead of us. The estimated time for making it was around 12 to 15 days as I had golden images of silver-blue sea and warm sunsets in my head.

Now I was just too busy to regret my decisions while performing the never-ending list of tasks given. It was soaking

wet, cold and pitch black. I guess that was the best practical situation that kept me going since it would not have made any difference anticipating an improvement of weather. Hours crawled, and exhaustion was inevitable. I was seasick up to the bones and far from pretty sight as I was told afterwards. It's a mystery how we all kept going thru the night. Eventually, as always, the barometer started showing signs of going upwards, and by the time we saw a pallid glimmer of the morning from the east, the wind had eased around 15 m/s. I had no clue about our location. I only knew it was an open sea and nothing else on sight but clear horizon all around. What I understood, however, was that we had slightly changed our course towards the French coast since the latest from given weather report suggested favourable weather in that direction. I looked fascinated delicate sun rays ripping the cloud mass in far. A couple of mugs of sailors tea and I was ready to hit the hay after having a generous share of offshore excitement. I felt safe and saved, but it was no religious feeling rather than confidence that had grown towards one old sailboat and its crew. I felt pretty fortunate landlubber that morning.

I woke up after a sharp six hours of sound sleep. They must have let me sleep longer than expected. D'Alembert's paradox and Hohmann transfer orbit were in my dreams at some point even I'm far from being mathematician or expert on astrodynamics. These things just pop up from somewhere at the back of my mind. Most likely, something I've read lately. The last I have read was "*Hunting With the Eskimos*" by Harry Whitney, sportsman, adventurer, and author. But I guess that has very little doing with mentioned sciences although it is excellent reading.

Post Meridiem

In his book, Harry Whitney describes the moon and aurora near arctic Crystal Palace glacier.

“It was a scene of rare beauty that can be witnessed nowhere in the world save in the Arctic, and seldom even there. Nature had combined ice, sky, moon, Aurora and all the elements in an unusual manner and in just the right proportions of colouring upon this occasion, to paint the picture to perfection.”

I had read that through in my mind several times during this voyage while trying to ease down to sleep in my bunk after some exciting graveyard shift. As we were travelling east for most of the time, we had the dawn ahead of us. The weather had been more or less on our side since Gibraltar presenting some unforgettable early morning scenarios.

Arriving Rapallo from the sea that early morning hour was an arresting experience to me. Faint dawn from behind 600 meters high Montallegro hill silhouette drew the sky cradle for a small town of Rapallo on the Italian Riviera in the Liguria region of northwest Italy. I had said good-bye to my excellent captain and crew members just a few days ago in Genoa. We had succeeded in sailing that classic boat back to her birth town for summer and celebration. Genoa was terrific but far too massive for my preferences, and despite all the alluring invitations, I required myself back on scheduled travel towards Rapallo. Naturally, the easiest way of doing it would have been by going to Piazza Principe Station and having a ticket for the train. I, however, wished for something

more memorable for my arrival to this magic place. I wanted to enter Rapallo from the sea like so many seafarers had done in the past. Unfortunately, there were no ferries of any kind available and I spent some quite a long time finding a proper ride. My Italian is poor yet very limited and was therefore extremely lucky to come across a Dutch couple on their way towards Corsica and Sardinia for the summer. They had spent the winter on Minorca for all the extraordinary things like megalithic stone monuments, reptiles, birds and a vast number of species of orchid.

Carrie and Joost Van Emst had left Minorca over two weeks ago motoring and sailing along the Spanish and French coast. The miracle of having them in Genoa happened to be my fortune. This elderly couple, as being natural science teachers, they had followed their adult lives the ideas of nature study by Anna Comstock from Cornell University. While recently retired and childless, they had possibilities to take over the dreams in an investigation the wonders of nature all year round. Their home, "*S/Y Sunride*", 32 ft Bèneteau Oceanis that has right types of equipment for year around onboard living is packed full for the summer sailing. It turned out to be their third season going around in the Mediterranean as they wish to stay in place during the winters. So I got on board with the Van Emst expedition as they headed towards the East.

The quiet and beautiful small cove harbour of Rapallo is pretty much open for all the wind and waves of Ligurian Sea. The harbour basin is measured about five hundred meters from shore to shore and has multiple breakwaters. In here, at last, it becomes noticeable and surprisingly genuine, Italians

have more significant aesthetics eye than the neighbouring French. Italians cherish the beauty of everyday life in everything they do even if it was simple breakwater.

The past few days with Van Emst had been great. We had light sunny sailing and some motoring under surprisingly calm sea towards Rapallo. Carrie turned out to be an excellent cook, and the moments after dinner was quite extraordinary with discussions over various subjects. Grace Kelly and Eva Peron were sitting on bar stools of minke whale foreskin while guests onboard Christina O, deep-fried Mars bars and tales of distant marinas, they all came together during my stay.

Before Carrie and Joost were to continue for Corsica, we decided to visit the Sanctuary of Nostra Signora di Montallegro built-in 1558 on the hill opposite the side of the Rapallo basin. This sanctuary was built on the spot where, on 2 July 1557, the Virgin Mary was reportedly sighted by a peasant, the farmer John Chichizola, returning from the vegetable market of Rapallo. Some part of its marble facade was added later in 1896. Cable car, built-in 1934 with cable 2349 meters long, is the most spectacular and most comfortable way to climb up there 612 meters high. It leaves every half hour from Piazzale Silvio Solari just five minutes walk from the marina. In less than nine minutes, you end up with a fantastic view of the town and marina. At first, we had some lunch at one of the two hotels restaurants that were open for both lunch and dinner. Then we spent a peaceful afternoon admiring all the details of the golden interior and many offerings, mostly for miracles at sea. Next morning I got up

early, had a light breakfast and walked for few minutes from Hotel Italia e Lido, just a stone's throw away from the Castello sul Mare, to the marina and met Carrie and Joost for wishing "*Buona navigazione*" as they were departing for new adventures.

I sent the last hand wave for receding sailboat and tried to see famous Lavagna shipyard in the distance, but it's of course much too far. After all, it is located at the mouth of the delta Levante about 15 km SE from Rapallo. Mr Ettore Sangermani started boat building 1896 at Mulinetti, a village on the Riviera di Levante. Still, in 1934, as the boats grew more significant, the Sangermani brothers decided to move the yard to Rapallo and then later in 1946 Cesare and Piero Sangermani transferred the yard to the current location in Lavagna. The exact location of the area reserved for maintained sailboats in the days of 1951 when Göran Schildt arrived with his wife for taking S/V Daphne for summer sailing from Rapallo, Italy to Crete, Greece and back, remains unclear for me. All I know it was all happening here at the beaches of Rapallo for half a lifetime ago. On the first pages of "*In The Wake Of Ulysses*" Schildt attractively describes the feelings and anticipation of voyages ahead.

"The first night in Daphne's cramped cabin with the sound of the dark and surging sea outside the door brings sober reflection and fitful sleep. Faced with stark reality, we are suddenly aware that sailing on the Mediterranean is not purely an idyll of delight, and that our immediate future is full of hardship, uncertainty and lurking peril. But what doubts can hold their ground against the glorious, calm morning that

follows the night? Our first dip in the Mediterranean utterly reconciles us to our situation.”

I ended up thinking my trip on a bench in the basilica of San Gervasio and Protasio next to road cross of Corso Italia and Via Venezia. The magnificent building and, like always, filling up the property to the brim. Sitting in front of the bench row, I looked the statue of Our Lady of Montallegro, with graceful face and two small angels watching down over kneeling peasant. Humility filled my mind in the peace of the basilica, and I felt encouraged by the inevitable feeling that there would be more places to discover and journeys to travel, before returning home.

Walking the promenade of Rapallo town was great. Going around the castle of Rapallo, just in front of my hotel, for relaxed sunbathing was superb. I, however, started to feel more and more eager to put up some sails and go forward, where ever that might be.

While lying under Ligurian sun, I saw dreams of Corsica and especially Sardinia. Variety of landscapes from the white beach sands up to hilly mountain views and lapping turquoise sea. I felt the inviting temptation of Tuaredda beach at the southernmost tip of Sardinia. I soon realised planning a sailing trip from Rapallo round to Sardinia and back to mainland Italy, Amalfi. How long would it take, where should I get the boat? How about the crew? I would not expect to go by myself with this little experience, now would I? It was the start of the season for boat charter business, and I expected to be late for a lower cost.

I was sipping the second anise-flavoured Pastis of the day in

a small seafront cafe on Via Avenaggi, on the eastern shore of Rapallo bay. Pastis made me think of French people and Corsica as I have not been there ever. I realised that even more than longing to discover Corsica I was feeling for Sardinia. I had made some calculations, and based on them, it should be possible to sail from Rapallo to Amalfi in less than ten days considering a few days stay in Sardinia. The plan and determination grew inside me, and that must have been due to the Pastis. Next morning I did not feel too confident at all. I was required to push fast forward without any idea about the crew or even the boat. So I decided to get the crew first and then do the searching for a proper yacht. I knew already that there were multiple charter companies to choose from. I was only needed to pick up the right one letting us sail to Amalfi.

Rapallo has about 150 sunny days a year. That is about half of the sunny days when compared to home island Rhodes, Greece. At least now the sunny days were not counted since there was a massive low around the town. After a while, I discovered that my plan should be quite the opposite to succeed. First, I should look for the boat and maybe I was able to find travellers who have similar ideas.

Going around the pouring wet marina promenade later the day I started to doubt my eyes while discovering a familiar figure of Carrie Van Emst on the boat deck. It turned out to be bad luck for Van Emst expedition this time. They had an engine issue soon after leaving Rapallo, and while trying to fix it, the manoeuvre went hazardously wrong, and Joost had broken a bone on his left-hand thumb. It's hard to say if they were tears or raindrops on her face, but I realised there had been a severe incident at sea. They had managed to turn back sailing and finally yesterday motoring into marina through the

last puffs of dying engine. It was some time after Joost came back from the first aid. Luckily there were no broken bones but one puffed up and sour thumb, now packed in tight bandages and sling going over his shoulder. It should be better in a week, that's what the doctor predicted at the hospital at least.

I was buying dinner for the weary travellers just for the sake of putting a bit of a smile on their faces. We went to La Goletta, close to the marina and down a back alley away from the rush. Great food elevated the atmosphere, and soon we were joking about the couple sailing in circles with their boat due to Joost's taped thumb. The main issue anticipated by the skipper was that the fuel line gasket leaked and the line sucked in the air, causing the engine not to run correctly. We decided to call a technician from the shipyard to take a look at it as soon as possible. Later in the evening, the discussion turned towards my future. I told Carrie and Joost about my plans to go sailing around Sardinia and visiting Amalfi. It did not take too long for them to offer me a lift to Corsica at least, only if I was interested. Joost was slightly handicapped anyway, and they sure did not wish to spend an extra week at the marina for waiting for the thumb to heal. I believe it was sometime after the third round of splendid Pastis drinks when we decided that I should follow Van Emst and "*S/Y Sunride*" as their assisting summer sailing bosun. Maybe I would finally get to taste if Sardinian limoncello was much different from the one made from Femminello St. Teresa lemons in Amalfi.

After God and Leaking Hull

We enjoyed light breakfast under a pleasant morning sun. It felt pretty airless in the marina. Sailing conditions did, however, expect to be celebrated as we only got out from the shelter of Rapallo. Tea with my favourite Carr's table water crackers and homemade apricot carrot jam I served. This jam was from the deep pantry of Van Emst. Pretty much similar to what I used to make but lacking one excellent ingredient, brandy. Thought we had that good enough portions last night as I was already onboard "*S/Y Sunride*" for expected departure at noon.

The stay at Rapallo had been a successful row of exquisite experiences among museum Attilio and Cleofe Gaffoglio, The Porta delle Saline, The Music Kiosk and The Sanctuary of Montallegro. Happy, beautiful days with a breathtaking view. View behind small window towards the Rapallo bay from a chapel dedicated to St. Cajetan especially etched in my mind.

It's always too much to do as you're about to sail. No matter how short the intended trip is. This time most of the preparations were already done as they had practically already left a few days ago just to return in agony due to that bluish and an aching thumb. What a relief the doctor presented by diagnosing no broken or even fractured bones. As they say, "*one man's loss is another man's gain*". I would not have made it so fast sailing forward without unfortunate incident for the captain.

Joost Van Emst is native Dutchman, and at 64 years old he still stands in good posture six-foot-three tall. Greybeard with short hair fashion and weathered face made him look, plausible seafarer and skipper. Joost is a tireless punster with a young boy's passion behind in adult man frame. Sail from Genova had made us know each other somewhat, and I was hoping for knowing him even better during the coming days.

The Van Emst expedition had set a target to start discovering the magic island of Corsica, the birth island of the French emperor Napoléon Bonaparte, from the west. The Scandola nature reserve and the biosphere reserve Valley Fango, especially Delta Fango, harbour a diverse fauna. Also, Ile de Gargalo Island I expect to be worth exploring. The tiny village of Galéria (pop. less than 350) is the closest place to disembark for Scandola but, in the hope of more sheltered marina, they had decided to sail Porto, a small village to the west of Corsica famous of being designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site. During the high season, this place was crowded with tourist but should yet be quite pleasant in May.

At noon the church bells of Rapallo started counting for our departure from the Porto Carlo Riva marina towards Porto, around 130 nautical miles from Rapallo. I was to remove the mooring line. Before that, I had a short negotiation with a boy who had already for some time travelled around the quay yelling "*Fresh Fruit*". He was trying to sell his mother's garden products. At least that was what he claimed with perfect English. Without demur, I handed him one five-euro note against tasty looking fruit selection basket. But I should have known better.

“*S/Y Sunride*”, 9.75 m Bèneteau Oceanis 320, is only slightly modified but otherwise well equipped for longer transitions. The boat is built in 1988 and initially purchased by Joost Van Emst for their third boat. Masthead sloop rig, single swept-back spreaders and aluminium Isomat spars with stainless steel standing rigging. Nice headsail furler with 130% genoa, Elvstrom Dacron full size main with two rigged reefs, spinnaker as well as mandatory spare main and genoa.

All control lines are naturally fed back to the cockpit winches for ease of handling. The vessel has Volvo Penta D1-30F 3 cylinder 29 hp, fresh water-cooled, diesel engine, and shaft driven three-bladed prop. Joost claimed that the fuel consumption at 2000 rpm is 2 litres per hour giving an approximate range of 125 nautical miles with 50 litres fuel tank. In addition to the forward-looking chart table, well-equipped galley and saloon there are two main cabins, one master aft and a larger than average double v berth in the forepeak. I concluded it was a relatively small but agile boat with a displacement of 4000 kg and maximum draught 1.40 m.

The roller slowly gained length and size. The Mediterranean Sea has an average depth of 1,500 m, but here at the Ligurian Sea, it reaches a maximum depth of more than 2,850 m northwest of Corsica. Soon open sea and Raymarine autopilot did lull us enjoy this a part of the Mediterranean Sea positioned between the Northwestern coast of Italy, the Southeastern coast of France, and to the north of the islands of

Corsica and Elba. Moderate rear wind of 7 m/s took us towards the South. Like before but especially now we noticed how much garbage there is in the Mediterranean Sea. It's just astonishing that people do not care about the cleanliness of the environment. Practically none should ever throw overboard anything but items only to be edible. Everything else should be kept on board for proper disposal.

It sounds like self-evident for all of us but the reality claims opposite. Looking some plastic wrappings slipping past the boat, I came to think of the enormous gyre of marine debris in the central North Pacific Ocean and the Atlantic Ocean. One time during the seventies a man from the Council of British Plastics Federation thoughtfully stated that "*Plastics litter is a very small proportion of all litter and causes no harm to the environment except as an eyesore.*" Thank God, our awareness of environmental conservation has stepped forward since those days. But during back then already, that is over thirty years ago, scientists discovered that large amounts of such debris were floating in parts of the Ligurian Sea.

Carrie was preparing lunch, and I offered help. Carrie Van Emst nee Carrie Fingerwood, a farmer's daughter from Surrey England, was a woman of good looks even in her mid-sixties. Her healthy dark brown hair had lovely shades of grey that made it shine lighter in the sunlight. The recipe reminded me of Fasolada, Greek Bean Soup, though being something else. It was served as a light meal with some salad and bread. I especially enjoyed the fresh-baked bread, from Rapallo, as long as that was still available. Ciabatta is one type of Italian white bread originating from Liguria.

We enjoyed the lunch along with discussing Tom Neale. He had during the fifties and sixties stayed alone on the island of Anchorage in the Suwarrow atoll, five hundred and thirteen miles north of Rarotonga, enjoying his dream of an isolated life. Neale wrote and became popular along with his autobiography "*An Island To Oneself*", describing his first stay period. He spent a total of sixteen years, in three periods, on that tiny island. True islomaniac, I would say.

I thought the fruit basket would add a sweet dessert and decided we could enjoy all else but the peaches. Since they should be consumed during the evening while already moored. While savouring the cherry and fig, all beautiful to the eye, we found fig overripe or even ruined towards the bottom of the basket. I know, I should have picked the fruit up from Rapallo market instead of relying on the little Mafioso. The peaches were all right, though. Following the traditional way, I would then later slice the peach into a glass for each and pour them full with white wine. Eating peach slices with the tip of my Laguiole knife was last I had in my mind before the wind dropped altogether.

Joost soon started the engine, and while it was humming away, I had a bite of Joseph Heller's book "*Catch-22*". Though being partly novel, the satire fascinated me. Location for the events is a small Island of Pianosa, an island situated in the Tyrrhenian Sea. The fifth-largest among the seven islands of the Tuscan Archipelago National Park since 1996 with a surface area of 10.3 kilometres squared and a coastal

perimeter of about 18 kilometres.

A special permit issued at the direction of the National Park is required for anyone willing to visit Pianosa. The old maximum-security penitentiary of the island established during the mid-nineteenth century. Towards the end of the century, the island became a destination for convicts suffering from tuberculosis. There are just one restaurant and a museum that presents the history of the guards and convicts living on this rare wildlife sanctuary. The atmosphere is extraordinary peaceful due to lacking any modern tourist attractions as well-being practically uninhabited. As Heller mentions in the epigraph that Pianosa is too small to accommodate all the action of “*Catch-22*” and the 256th squadron of the Army Air Forces. We know the island of Pianosa did never have a U.S. Air Force base though it would most likely have been a pretty good location. It’s the artistic freedom that rules.

Among being just a crazy book full of crazy people in a full insane world, it is most famous for presenting the *Catch-22* concept for universal use. “*Catch-22*” is describing a no-win situation with difficult circumstances, a vicious circle, a paradoxical law, from which there is no escape because of dependent conditions. The main character is John Yossarian, a 28-year-old bombardier and a captain in the U.S. Fighting 256th Squadron. An anti-heroic person lying in a military hospital nursing a liver illness that he is using to keep from flying missions bombing enemy positions in Italy and eastern France.

“Yossarian looked at him soberly and tried another approach.

Is Orr crazy?

He sure is, Doc Daneeka said.

Can you ground him?

I sure can. But first he has to ask me to. That’s part of the rule.

Then why doesn’t he ask you to?

Because he’s crazy, Doc Daneeka said. He has to be crazy to keep flying combat missions after all the close calls he’s had.

Sure, I can ground Orr. But first he has to ask me to.

That’s all he has to do to be grounded?

That’s all. Let him ask me.

And then you can ground him? Yossarian asked.

No. Then I can’t ground him.

You mean there’s a catch?

Sure there’s a catch, Doc Daneeka replied. Catch-22. Anyone who wants to get out of combat duty isn’t really crazy.”

Later the day there was practically no wind. Our captain informed that with limited motoring range, it would be best to seek for close harbour and wait for the proper wind. We might try small Port de Centuri west of Cape Corse. The pier is only allowed for boats under 10 m and should be deep enough for “*S/Y Sunride*” though services were not to be expected.

The only problem was that we would not make there before it was going to be pitch-black night. Sailing into a foreign harbour in the middle of the darkness is seldom suggested.

We finally decided to save fuel while drifting the night with stopped engine and navigation lights on. As we were three onboard, the watch was set for four hours with an eight-hour free shift. For avoiding continuous graveyard watch for one person, the 16:00-20:00 shift was split in two.

I started with 18:00 – 20:00 half shift for keeping an eye of Navman Chart Plotter/GPS for our position and course, Raymarine ST60+ Tridata for depth, speed, log, and water temperature. Plastimo Liquid compass was also present for double-checking the direction. The Raymarine VHF over the chart table was silent on channel 70.

I felt anxious landing Corsica, the island that James Boswell wrote a travelogue detailing his trip there in 1765. I had read it some years back and then got an idea of once visiting this rugged yet so beautiful island. My schedule was vague but still forcing me to return home at some point. This, at least was anticipated during that time. I had not heard anything about her for over a month now. Before leaving home, I did send a letter mentioning travelling plans, but I did not describe real schedules. And how could I have done that as I had selected the current way of moving forward? I just did not feel comfortable rushing home for an empty house just yet. The shimmering heat of the Mediterranean summer was in front of us. I should see Corsica, then maybe Sardinia and even Amalfi before returning 1300 km east for home.

Luck is believing you're lucky.

~ Tennessee Williams

At first I hardly even noticed it. An empty wooden cable spool floated just a few feet from the bow. It popped out of the darkness as big and bulky, three-quarters of it hiding underwater. I stared it going slowly by under my spotlight. It was instant collision alert on board as I could not determine if there were other similar mines like monsters floating ahead. What a miracle made us meet this terrible hull breaker while drifting through the night. Only imagine if we had raced with full sails or even motoring. We all sent a few selected prayers towards our guardian angels.

Joost started the engine, and we backed up towards the cable spool. The first idea was that we should do something to avoid any future collisions. We examined the bulky object under our strong searchlight. It had spent some time in the sea already as marine algae and snails covered it below the waterline.

How could we get rid of it so it would not be more dangerous for anyone? Could we sink it? Should we try to mark it somehow? Could we just break it into parts? An axe would not make much difference, and operating a chain saw from a relatively unstable inflatable boat in the middle of darkness at open sea would be more than a suicidal act. We tried to calculate how much anchor chain we would need to sink it and how that should be shackled. The decision was that we should not try to do anything more during the night. We secured the beast by a reasonable length of rope and some fenders.

Rest of the night passed in the tranquillity of calm swell. In the morning it took us almost an hour to chain the cable spool with 15 meters of old 1/2 inch anchor chain. We just smuggled the end of the chain through the spool centre and locked the loop with, two to be sure, steel anchor shackles. The estimated weight of this load was over 35 kg, and it did sink our trouble nicely. We expected the bastard soon absorb enough water and never break surface again.

Even morning did not create any breeze, so we decided to have a good breakfast after the sinking exercise. The motor was started, and the course was taken southeast towards the island of Corsica. According to the captain, we had quite sufficient fuel reservoir to make it Port de Centuri. As that was to be our first target though we knew the port did not offer any official services.

For starters, we had savoury whole egg sandwiches, also known as “*one-eyed jack*”, each. You fry a slice of white bread that you have punched a hole, as large possible leaving the edges intact. Fry in butter, first on one side and while flipping it to another side, you add an egg leaving the yolk intact. Add black pepper and salt, maybe a few drops of Tabasco or some flakes of dried chilli. You need to lower the temperature to avoid burning the bread. Just a moment under the cover gets egg entirely done. Frying on both sides with the egg will destroy the one-eyed jack. Instead, if you don't wish to eat whole egg yolk, then you may break it little in the beginning.

I especially like the whole egg sandwich with a slice of bacon. It serves an excellent start for the day. Then, for a sweet tooth, peanut butter and jelly sandwiches were served as well. Light toast, creamy peanut butter, sweet cherry jam, and breakfast tea. Despite our delicious breakfast, our conversation revolved around all the garbage and dangerous stuff floating around at sea. You would not expect it, but it's the reality nowadays. Say, the GPS and all other modern seafarers equipment are there to ease the sailing effort but offset is the polluted environment, unknown dangers like floating freight containers and even these smaller potential boat sinking objects.

I often felt envy for Joshua Slocum and his boat, "*the Spray*", sailing single-handily around the world for over three years. He was the first man to accomplish solo circumnavigation of the earth. He did not need to dodge fishing net marks or cable reels though he had a lot of other pressing issues to worry about. In his magnificent book "*Sailing Alone Around the World*" Slocum describes his momentary fear.

"Not only did the past, with electric speed, flash before me, but I had time while in my hazardous position for resolutions for the future that would take a long time to fulfil. The first one was, I remember, that if the Spray came through this danger I would dedicate my best energies to building a larger ship on her lines, which I hope yet to do. Other promises, less easily kept, I should have made under protest. However, the

incident, which filled me with fear, was only one more test of the Spray's seaworthiness. It reassured me against rude Cape Horn."

Captain Joshua Slocum eventually disappeared at sea during his winter voyage towards West Indies. It was believed that the Spray had been run down by a steamer or struck by a whale. Being aware of history made me search irony in my thoughts. Even he did not need to zigzag in between all man-made hurdles an incident still caught him at sea. On the other hand, I would consider something like that reasonably good alternative for long-term illness and languish at some nursing home. I would call his case as a nemesis. It will all happened as it is was written. Just only that we are allowed to read it afterwards.

We approached the coast and got a sight of Cap Corse. The sea colour started turning greenish like the gemstone I recall on my old Great Aunt's emerald memory ring. Though Port de Centuri is an exquisite port to visit, I still felt even greater anticipation for visiting the tiny island of Giraglia, at the northern tip of Cap Corse and maybe even Gorgona and Capraia on the eastern side of Corsica.

I felt being an islomaniac case of the most challenging kind. Islomania, yet recognised but less studied, is an inexplicable attraction to islands. Some dictionaries describe it as an obsessional enthusiasm or partiality for islands. I did not discover this part of myself until later in adult life but afterwards have realised it's been a part of me from early

childhood. I remembered an old saying that the mainland is for ordinary life, but islands differ.

The traffic at sea was quiet. I would believe that in a month or two, these waters and ports are crowded. We saw only one sailboat on our leg to Port de Centuri. "*S/Y Koekoeā*" was 46-foot Nautor Swan, carrying the British flag, desperately trying to accelerate in light aft breeze with all canvas available. It passed us that morning on the port side about 500 feet. We both explored each other through binoculars. There was a woman at the helm, and she replied to my salute. We had a pair of 7×50 onboard since they offer bright an image as could be obtained in a reasonably sized binocular.

Otherwise than that it was a peaceful approach to Cap Corse and I came to think over this way of travelling that I had been lucky to make use of. Naturally, it was not for everyone, and I'd like to point out that even some might think me as a free-rider I was most certainly not. Joost and Carrie did agree to take me in just for having a pair of extra hands and company. I could not accept that without taking some share of the cost. After a little negotiation, my enlistment was then finally approved somewhat grudgingly but leaving us all happy. I also spent some thoughts about going forward beyond Corsica. I would love to have the excellent opportunity for visiting Sardinia as well, and I'm quite aware my path would eventually need to be different from Van Emst expedition. Good wind of Gods had brought me so far, and I did not hesitate to carry on with confidence. Something would show up for me if I only kept my eyes and ears open.

Port de Centuri, the small fishing port, is one of the rare shelters in the west coast of Cap Corse though reserved for local fishers during peak season. We will stay on buoy north side of Island Capense just to avoid any uninvited guests. Rather small, yet irreplaceable, Zodiac CFR 250 dinghy with Honda BF 2.3 four stroke outboard would provide our connection onshore. We were yet uncertain to know how to refuel the boat since we know that no official service was available.

Quite early one morning, before tea, in a space where the early sky reflects like a gold foil from the sea as smooth as a millpond. The temperature was already too much to tolerate inside the cabin at this early hour. Captain and his wife had gone visiting the doctor since yesterday evening. It looked that his sour thumb had not healed as expected and they needed to get some medical opinion about it. They had decided to bunk onshore since the village doctor seemed to have entirely original appointment times. I enjoyed the solitude and was proud of being trusted to keep watch for the boat. I finally felt as being on long, endless summer vacation under the blazing sun.

Quick dipping in the refreshing sea made me ease the hot sun. While then lying and nodding on the afterdeck I slowly became aware of, with only half-open eyes, our next-door neighbour that had arrived at very late hours. "*S/Y Magpie*", slender and smart-looking 52 feet aluminium cutter under the Greek flag, was swinging lightly in the buoy next to us. I recall that Chinese, for example, regard the magpie as a good

luck symbol, happiness, and long-lasting fortune, and that made my heart smirk. I did not notice any movement onboard at the start, but sometime later, while inspecting the vessel with binoculars, I think I saw action in window curtains. It wasn't too long the cabin doors were swung open, and there was a burst of well-tanned kids all over the deck. I counted half a dozen but could not get the exact figure as I was staring at the woman who arrived out in behind. She looked after kids bustling around and jumping into the gentle warm sea.

Soon after they were all swimming around the bathing ladder, she looked directly towards "*S/Y Sunride*". She presented a pretty straightforward welcoming hand gesture, and I needed to make a quick decision if I should go and introduce myself rather than just remain unresponsive and practically watch the world go by. Well, that wasn't too hard to do. I waved back, made a quick note *Visiting neighbour* for Carrie and Joost should they arrive meanwhile. Then quickly checked the boat attachment, grabbed a purse of self-made citrus cookie-based Paw Paw & Macadamia triangles and detached the backup dinghy.

This dinghy was a tiny 6 feet inflatable with paddles. I had prepared it in use after Van Emst expedition taking the proper one. After a few paddle swings later, I was welcome to have a cup of tea with smiling bunch of the most bright-eyed children and their lovely chaperone, Ms Amandiakis.

As Happy as Larry Ever Was

“I long for eternity because there I shall meet my unwritten poems and my unpainted pictures.”

– Sand and Foam by Kahlil Gibran.

As the sun rose higher, so did the temperature and it was soon over +25 degree Celsius. Pale turquoise sky, whether to call it French or Italian, rapidly turned in deep blue and the sea become azure-cyan cooler. Invigorating dive into embracing crystal made the body feel alive. Afterwards, while drying the wet skin up on the teak deck, I tried to call to memory what was the equivalent temperature for +25 °C on Kelvin scale and came up with something little less than 300 K.

Well, they should know it better at the International Bureau of Weights and Measures, anyway. I fell into a sweet haze of mid-awake reflection of Heisenberg uncertainty principle where the ghost of William Thomson tried to explain me details about triple points of water. *“Son, you should have focused on serious thermodynamics instead of silly daydreaming!”* yelled the magnificent Lord Kelvin, just before my awakening wince.

I had been a deckhand for *“S/Y Sunride”*, the invaluable expedition of Van Emst, for more than a month now. We had sailed over Corsica, Port de Centuri, Cap Corse and even Gorgona and Capraia on the eastern side of Corsica. The journey had been like one for a lifetime. Memories of lovely

and graceful, young Ms Amandiakis, the bureaucracy hell we did go thru before receiving the permission from the Italian Ministry of Justice to land on tiny Gorgona, snorkelling at the marine sanctuary of Capraia, the splendid island of wine and succulent anchovies. Summer sailing around islands of the Tuscan Archipelago had been like an endless poem of life found in a row of small gemstones under the brightest sunshine.

At the guest harbour of Porto Vecchio, I prepared late lunch, Trofie Pasta Liguria (Pasta with Pesto, Potatoes and Green Beans) on that day. I was to depart from Carrie's and Joost's hospitable company. This tremendous vegetarian dish I served with good Vermentino from Patrimonio wine region located on the northern coast of the island. The wine completed our last meal correctly together. At the same, it concluded our shared journey of discovering northern Corsica and islands. I owed a lot to this beautiful couple that so generously allowed me to join their journey. Carrie and Joost will stay in my heart, and I love you guys.

A short quote from the first pages of *Journal of a Landscape Painter in Corsica* (1870), by Edward Lear, has become my favourite phrase while reading this book over again. It has already gained a lightly dog-eared appearance from being dragged around, but the content is what matters.

“So, then, you were determined to come and see Corsica? You have done rightly to hasten your visit, for in a very few years, thanks to the hand of progress and civilisation, they

who come to seek for Corsica will not find it.” – The Corsican Brothers, a Dramatic Romance.

On the same writing, Edward Lear describes his view of Porto Vecchio fascinatingly by saying that *“being more agreeable to a painter’s eye. Porto Vecchio, about which I make an exploring ramble before entering it, is a place of the forlorn appearance, with no little picturesqueness in its old grey walls and towers, but joined to a general look of decay, more agreeable to a painter’s eye than indicative of the inhabitants’ prosperity.”*

After lunch, I felt a considerable unease heading forward with my planned journey by visiting the highest village of Corse-du-Sud, the community of Ospedale, in the municipality of Porto Vecchio. I could also vividly imagine meeting the vineyards and hills in the sub-region of Vin de Corse-Figari of Southwest Corsica. I should most likely be fine by having a base camp in Porto Vecchio and making day trips over the island. I finally grabbed my backpack and after short but heart-rending goodbye I stood in Porto Vecchio port quay. By following the theory of Edward Lear saying that *“a study is next to impossible if you join a companion”*, I went on studying Corsica inlands.

It’s too easy to lose track of time, the days go by. I had left for Athens on the 3. of April, and it was almost mid of June already. I had come this far yet did not have had any space in my mind for being homesick. All that hit me while I was making towards town for searching for some accommodation

for the night. Therefore, to ease up my mind, I decided to look for the church of Saint John the Baptist near the central square of the old town.

Alongside the square, there were cars parked, actually very tight, like they use to do in Italy mainland as well. One individual vehicle caught my full attention like no other human-made object I had seen for a long time. Then I somehow heard a distant hum of Joe Walsh singing his *Life's Been Good*.

“Tililippiin-thad-da-tililippiin-thad-da, My Maserati does one-eighty-five, I lost my license, now I don't drive...”

There it was. Blue like Corsican sky, a 1976 Maserati Kyalami with Italian, black and white, old school, license plates and a 4.2-litre V-8 engine that claimed to have some 260 bhp and over 400 Nm torque. They never produced more than a little over 200 cars, and that makes it a unique vehicle. No wonder I could not get my eyes out of it. Most of us have heard of Italian car manufacturer Maserati. Meeting this kind of rarity at the centre of Porto Vecchio sure made my heart beat the native rhythm while my tour of the island's landscape started with such exquisite flavour; “*Kyalami*” means “*My home*” in the Zulu language.

After soaking my body for several weeks in water, mostly saltwater in varying temperatures, I felt heaven on earth while

having a bath. It was not a hot bath in a tub but the adequately warm and tranquil pool at the hotel Les Bungalows du Maquis. The quietness reminded me about stories of the Wilkes Hilton at Antarctica in what comes to the number of inhabitants. Otherwise, it was all, of course, completely different. Green plants and bright sunlight was offered in abundance. The pool water was body refreshing while the second Cuba Libre eased my mind into light sleep mode. I had picked up the book I saw at the hotel lobby corner shelf. It was the "*In Bed with Douglas Mawson: Travels Around Antarctica*" by Craig Cormick. That should keep me in its tight grip for the rest of the afternoon. I anyway got the pretty distinct impression that this season had a bit of stumbled start here at the outskirts of the town. All the nice looking and tidy hotel rooms were on -25% sale. The decision for staying overnight was made easy. I congratulated myself being very happy to end up here, some 8 kilometres west of Porto Vecchio, since like always, I so soon felt uneasy among the tourist crowds in the town. But going this far did push me to continue with the vague plan even I already had realised that tourist-free space on this island was rapidly running out like the species of Thylacine¹ once had.

I let my, unfortunately, ageing and in some places an ever-aching, body to rest under this mighty quietness and fresh smelling bright sun. Of all that, I questioned my mind about what was I looking for from here? What were the things I was after? Could I have had experienced this same peace and quietness, even in a more considerable extent, just in my garden tub? Probably yes, but then again not, at least in the same manner. The human mind is an odd environment. Some

¹ Tasmanian wolf believed to have become extinct in the 20. Century.

people tend to reach for faraway things just for the sake of it, even they could easily otherwise arrange, yet not fully experience the same, only by going around the next corner of their home. This intense urge emerges due to reasons. The unrest isomania and insatiable imagination in me. New unseen locations being one big reason but that certainly cannot be the only thing driving me to this mad travelling as it was not. I wanted to feel free, as silly as that sounded to me. What is being free anyway? If I were a religious person, I would say that the human soul can be free.

Then again, the mind and soul are pretty much together in my comprehension. I believe the only thing that can be as free as it's ever possible is the human mind, as long as you are sane. Then being a rational or not is another question that relies heavily on another person judgment. Eventually, all the things in life more or less depending on the environment, and one can never be ultimately free while alive. This paradox is unbreakable, but one can sure spend a lifetime in seeking the perfect state. I felt secure and amazingly happy being back on that graceful path again.

Corsica Landscape Learned

It is a long time since I left the Carlo Riva Marina at the southern basin of the harbour of Rapallo with Van Emst family. Great moments of the glorious voyage thru Corsica coast side are recorded and forever sealed in my memory.

I sit in a cafe & snack bar enjoying Pane Carasau, that is a traditional flatbread, with La Bottarga di Cabras, the roe of the Sardinian Flathead Mullet. It makes a genius snack. Especially when the fish are caught from the pond of Cabras. I know that I'm far from there yet and therefore need to start picking up the pace with my journey. Afterwards, while enjoying a glass of noon brandy and one of my very last petit corona cigars, I hear the radio playing a tune from the past, "*Second Chance*", a song by American rock band "*38 Special*". Something that reminds me of having a second chance of my own life. "*All I made was one mistake; how much more will I have to pay?*"

I have been born with a short fuse which I have occasionally had to pay quite a bit. This feature, as I have learned, is something one can never wholly weed out, but you can always develop. In general, the whole path of life seems to be just one steep walk on the line between development and purgatory. I recall an excellent definition of the mentality of the Mediterranean people. It is said that for example, an Italian being sharp and punctual is taking that as an act of slavery while driving fast is an act of liberation. This sentence explains quite a bit to me originating from faraway north. It was, however, far from driving fast for me this time.

I had managed to hire an old 2CV Fourgonnette van “*Weekend*” version with removable rear seating. It offered a possibility to overnight in the car if so needed. It was a fantastic relic from the good old days. Precisely like I preferred. After discovering the old beast of burden, I had rejected the previous plan for having a base camp in Porto Vecchio. Instead, I decided to go round the island on counterclockwise direction by first driving the 2CV eastern side up. All way till the town of Bastia on the Tyrrhenian sea, looking the Tuscan archipelago. It would be around a 150-kilometre trip that I should accomplish in three to four days. Undoubtedly, the 2CV could go the whole way in a single day, but why rush if we already come so far without any real schedule. Then I would say farewell to the Citroen and go onboard a train from Bastia to Ponte-Leccia junction and continue down to Ajaccio, which is terminus and capital in the southwest of Corsica.

All in all, it would eventually save me time and money while still discovering plenty of the island. We were having the first days of July already. Mixed emotions grabbed my mind. The fact was that I had been lazy and goofing around Porto-Vecchio for way too long. I needed to get myself away from Corsica well before August when the masses of European tourist will arrive. I had not planned anything after Ajaccio, but it would be great to sail to Sardinia, It did not need to be any similar blow of luck I had with Van Emst family, but any decent ferry would do me fine.

I had decided to leave this decision to be taken until on-site at the harbour and take it all forward day by day. In any case, I had a distant dream of eventually meet the beaches of Porto Pino and Pinetto Porto and that Caribbean-like turquoise sea at the very southern tip of Sardinia. After all, I concluded that my heart deserved a second chance.

I left Porto-Vecchio on 6. of June heading for Pont de Fautéa camping at Conca, a small strip of beach thru the commune of Lecci. I had decided that “my home is where my car is” would be my theme for this stage and Citroen was good enough vehicle to give some privacy and shelter for sleeping, and that was practically all I needed.

The ride was smooth as always on 2CV. Tiny engine purring steady like a kitten. I had the windows open and kind of regretted selecting such a hardtop model but after all this was the best vehicle to offer a long bed for sleeping. With up to date standard car this 30 km ride would take less than an hour. Today I was travelling more like at the speed of a scooter, and it took me over an hour to reach Pont de Fautéa. They advertised the restaurant with fish specialities, and as it was lunchtime already, I headed for fresh fish or even just a soup since it was a scorching day again. Don't get me wrong here. I love hot weather, and that never makes me complain. Well, at least if it will stay below + 35 °C.

The fish soup was very good with all the trimmings like stale bread, garlic, and mayonnaise. The camping site itself was pretty modest. It seemed that some camping sites are like

ten square meter supermarkets. Only the name reveals that they are actually for camping. Otherwise, the traveller would not notice this when the difference to real camping facilities is such huge. I ended up far from complaining.

The weather was like a dream. With the full stomach, I had a bit of a snooze in the shadow of the restaurant terrace looking to an enjoyable view towards the sea. While the moderately slow traffic passed by camping site, with some caravans and recreational vehicles, I had a somewhat ugly nightmare about the deadliest accident in aviation history at Tenerife airport.

On March 27, 1977, two similar Boeing 747 passenger jets collided on the runway at Los Rodeos Airport, on the island of Tenerife, Spanish Canary Islands. They were KLM Flight 4805 and Pan Am Flight 1736, killing a total of 583 people in the deadliest accident in aviation history so far. Out of a total of 644 persons, there were only 61 survivors in the front section of the Pan Am aircraft. None survived in the KLM aircraft.

Los Rodeos airport is at 633 metres above sea level, and it was concluded that the probable accident cause was due to several things. Foggy weather caused by actual clouds, communication misunderstandings, interference from simultaneous radio transmissions and finally use of non-standard phrases by the KLM co-pilot and the Tenerife control tower. Pretty much followed by this accident the establishment of crew resource management, that is a set of

training procedures, become a fundamental part of airline pilots' training.

After waking up, I decided, it is going to be for some time before I shall have fish soup again. I also decided completely discard all TV content from now on. Especially any aviation documentary. It is something I have well used to since we have not had any television at home for long since.

After some refreshing gulps of freshly squeezed lemon drink, I was slowly recalling a snippet of a poem and let myself back to the road and next camping site.

*“The sea was sapphire coloured, and the sky
Burned like a heated opal through the air;
We hoisted sail; the wind was blowing fair
For the blue lands that to the eastward lie.”*

Impression de voyage - Oscar Wilde

I managed to select a radio station that played my favourites from the seventies. I found it pretty odd but extremely amusing because these stations tend to play all modern tunes only. Today bands like 10cc, Journey and Thin Lizzy had their time in the air. It was around 30 km to beachside camping site Sole d'Or for the night, and I wanted to reach that during the daytime. Nothing wrong with the nights though but I just did not wish to end up chasing this perch in the dark with these dull yellow headlights.

Of course, it is not impossible to overnight in the bush either, but today I felt like having a shower and decent meal that would make my day. While driving the sunny coastline with old tunes from the past, I started to think that if, as it's been said, when perfection is no coincidence then were the hell all the young dolly birds? My wife had spent her time in southern France for some half a year already while it was initially supposed to be only a short vacation. She probably started wondering if there is coming back at all. Might have been involved with too many alluring whispers by Pierre.

Myself, I had been travelling here and there and starting to wonder the same. Is there going to be typical home at Kalavarda village for us? Well, maybe more prolonged separation would eventually clear the outcome of our relationship. I pushed and put the matter away from the view just simply to get rid of thinking the unpleasant issue of personal relationships and instead stay enjoying the slow road and magnificent scenery. The radio sound did suffer from little 2CV engine roar. Well, this, less than 400 ccs, the engine did not roar but was more like vaguely screaming in pain as we climbed some low hills. Yet, to my surprise, the screaming did not choke but continued as melodic Luna by Alessandro Safina, vanished utterly under the noise and become a part of the discord.

In 1909 Sir Ernest Henry Shackleton wrote in his book *The Heart of The Antarctic*,

“Men go out into the void spaces of the world for various reasons. Some are actuated simply by a love of adventure, some have the keen thirst for scientific knowledge, and others again are drawn away from the trodden paths by the “lure of little voices”, the mysterious fascination of the unknown.”

I'm pretty convinced that the last definition is right in my case. Leaving for this completely unplanned voyage just happened like most of the things in my life. Very little future I had planned and even if so then these might still not have happened at all. Again, I would not wish to determine me being at a loose end since even unplanned there has always been this *“lure of little voices”*.

Starting from Porto-Vecchio, the Corsican east side views are no different from any other southern landscape of today. In June the scenery is still moderately green all over. Mountains stay port side inlands and paint the horizon with occasional white tops. The road is good quality even not among the widest ever seen. The speed limit varies from 70 km/h downwards, and occasionally there are warning signs of deer danger. Also, multiple signs scattered for commercial accommodation, villas, beach bars, and restaurants. Practically the left side of the road is for private houses and right hand for these services and grazing land. There are occasional bridges over rivers running from the mountains. These rivers are, of course, at mid-summer time more or less dry furrows. At places, a power line pylons follow the road direction. The island has, in addition to traditional fuel power plants, various exciting energy projects of utilising wind, sun and hydrogen power.

I had a guide from a crumpled tourist map that I had grabbed somewhere in Porto-Vecchio. It showed that by boat shop Isula Marine Solenzara at the junction of Solaro, I should turn right and drive Marine de Solaro up till the beach. At the intersection, there was a luring sign informing about Le Crocodile Bar, and I could almost taste sweet Pastis and juicy, savoury olives.

The road becomes narrow and follows the side of boat shops fenced storage area. There are some private houses on the right side of the way. Now straight as an arrow and eventually ending at the parking lot right next to the sea. I have reached camping Sole d'Or Les Flots Bleus, the blue waves that is and what an excellent place it all turns out to be. Before anything else, I decided to park the vehicle. After doing so, I went towards refreshments at the beach bar in the near distance.

Solaro locates in the department of Haute-Corse region. At the beach, next door Sole d'Or campground is a stele erected on the beach in honour of the Corsican resistance against the Nazi troops until the liberation of Corsica on 4 October 1943, fifty years prior this mark was placed in the year 1993.

“On this beach, in April and June 1943, Dominique Poli, Mayor of Porto-Vecchio, organised the reception of submarines from Allied mission for the general Paulin Colonna, precinct unifier of resistance Corsica.”

On the same beach and very near, is a small bar named Les Flots Bleus. It will be my asylum for the next few hours. Sitting there, in the shade of the terrace, I slowly realise how my life is now delightfully chained in a geographical triangle of landscapes partially due to one mouth-watering ingredient in certain alcoholic beverages. Pimpinella anisum, the aniseed, is my weak spot when it comes to flavouring liquor. Pastis², Sambuca and Ouzo draw a triangle in between their origins of production. No wonder I love it, this annual plant is growing native to the eastern Mediterranean. There is a quiet TV at the bar playing a black and white film “The Corsican Brothers” featuring Douglas Fairbanks Jr. I vaguely recall a trivia that among being an actor of a very early age, he also become a war hero during the Second World War. After some time, somewhere in between the third and fourth glass of Pastis, I sit up and take notice that the same Italian tenor I hardly was able to hear earlier the day is played again in radio. The song is vigorously trying to make my drowsy consciousness to realise the Pastis coloured milky moon slowly waking from the sea at the horizon. He sings with languorous voice “*Porto per poeti che non scrivono – Port for poets who do not write*”.

Port for poets who do not write is the place, I agree. Not necessarily one needs to write anything if the essence of existing poetry already lives everywhere, so vividly it is sufficient to fulfil this hidden soul locker of poems. Then again, for some unknown reasons, maybe to keep their self-

² To be exact, Pastis is flavoured with *Illicium verum*, commonly called star aniseed.

esteem together or to regain and keep one's sanity, writing poems becomes a necessity for going forward. Still, they may remain in one's heart, unpublished and too fragile for the public but who can tell.

The human history acknowledges many great explorers, men, and women, possessing good qualities as writers, and sometimes they have written poems too. Those I find the most attractive ones, the great writers of history often saluted with particular envy but also with indescribable admiration.

The atmosphere is as pleasant as one can imagine after a good set of an aperitif in a cooling evening while browsing the beef menu. I'm going to risk it all and select a tenderloin cut of beef served with sweet Corsican cheese flambéed in brandy. One would never think this is even possible to serve such in such a small place. Still, it is listed, and I live in hope this dinner will assure me good nights sleep with no more catastrophe nightmares.

Next morning the amazing mackerel sky is looking like painted organ solo in "*Light My Fire by the Doors*". I'm close about to wake up despite lethargy. The late-night beef was excellent, and obviously, I had slept like a log until late in the morning in the shelter of Sole d'Or campground. After such a fair amount of Aqua Vita on top of hefty beef, I am not surprised to find the clock being over eleven. A dull headache makes me take a day off from driving. I discover that my drinking got out of hand, but that is what sometimes happens. The razor edge could use a sharper blade and facing the

bungalow mirror does certainly not appeal. Decent haircut and staying up less, especially with an alcoholic companion would do me right, I find myself mumbling half aloud.

Instead of going north by car, I decided to take a long walk up to the hills of Solaro with some picnic gear and food supplies. Solaro village is facing east on the mountain about 8 kilometres from the main road junction. This is Le Territoire de la Corse Orientale, and I want to have some bites going off the beaten path. Yesterday, while discussing a few words with the local bar customers, I heard that there is little natural park hidden along the road to the village. Nothing to do with wild meadows of good old Galehurst, I suspect, but the idea of having a picnic under the shelter of a furry chestnut tree was “lure of little voices” to my wandering ears.

From the campground mini-market, I select local salami and tomme de chèvre cheese, two tomatoes, a half a dozen figs, some white bread and a bottle of light and fruity white wine. I also purchase a large bottle of water and having guilty conscience come to think how disgusting habit it generally is to use bottled water in regions where one could consume tap water. I feel little stupid thinking all such but then decide to blame the hangover just to get it over.

Previously, after all the sailing, I had purchased some new batteries in Porto-Vecchio for Aiwa Walkman. I did not dare to use it at all in such a humid environment, but now it is loaded with a cassette of Jean-Luc Ponty playing full Aurora album from 1975. I'm mesmerised how the goddess of dawn

presented in Roman mythology converts to ear-pleasing jazz. I recall a magnificent illusionistic ceiling painting, the fresco of Aurora by Guercino, in Casino di Villa Boncompagni Ludovisi, Rome. Guercino used effects like foreshortening to create the illusion of three-dimensional space on a flat base. With that view in the recesses of my mind, I continue upwards, along the ever-narrowing road towards the west.

Eight-kilometre walk under toasty sunshine makes me sweat considerably. While entering the outskirts of the village, I try to spot the 17th-century church of San Giovanni Baptista on the eastern edge of the town. The vague information received from campsite reception is my only guide. I need to take a minute on a bench beside the road. There are some of these laid in places where one can spend a silent moment or two for admiring the peaceful scenery. The traffic is practically non-existing. Only two cars have passed me during the whole walk. No walkers, no bikers or anyone else. Continuing the last kilometre up to the village centre reveals old rundown-looking grey stone houses, some whitewashed but only a few plastered in vivid colour and plenty of gardens, few of them remaining neglected. Finally, the village road has some people going around. It would be fun to chat with these peasants if I only could Corsican or even French. The use of Corsican over French has been declining. Only about ten per cent of the population is using it as a first language.

They say that one of the most regretted things among people lying on their deathbeds is that they never studied and learned more languages. Another unfortunate thing was that one did not travel enough. I sure had been given a good share of

travelling this summer even walking here among Corsica landscape it feels much like reading “*Les Aventures de Tintin*” in French while enjoying only pictures but skipping all text. To be honest, it feels a lot better due to the stunning scent of the macchia. Tintin, by the way, is the only Belgian I have made friends so far. Pardon my saying, the Belgians have always remained as a distant mix of Celtic and Germanic people to me. Almost the same applies to my conception about Belgian like what Edward Lear wrote about Albania “*To the unlearned tourist, indeed, Albania is a puzzle of the highest order.*” That said, I think I actually might still do something for removing this reason from my list of regrettable subjects. How to manage that, I can’t dare to consider, since I’m just in the middle of seeking old age core and line of my future for remaining years. Then, what is that? I’ve been going around Europe in the past months and ended up walking in Corsica. Part of my senses say that I should get back home for the autumn, but the other part tries to appease and just make me enjoy lightly the days of summer. Am I feeling another wave of homesickness, or is it just my unsettled mind tossing small razor-sharp spears of conscience?

I’m not yet to announce the village of Solaro as a garden of Eden, but this enjoyable walk certainly makes me feel like quoting Voltaire, French philosopher “*Le paradis terrestre est où je suis.*” Returning down from the hill along the narrow and meandering road while the trees occasionally give way to the front of the landscape of Parc Naturel régional de Corse. Staying and resting in the shadow of shrubs and pines with my picnic snack makes me notice how local salami and cheese with tomatoes on top of bread are restoring my strength and driving any remaining headache away. Slicing

rest of the salami and figs with my Laguiole knife, I decided it must be best to keep on going with the plan and shortly head north to Bastia. Instead of drinking any wine, I take a few good gulps of warm water and wonder if I could even try to reach Bastia early tomorrow.

Despite the hiking, I feel freshened and soon hurry back downhill to the campsite with brisk pace stretching my mind with exciting mythology and debate about the insect depicted on the back of the Laguiole knife. They are all fully hand made and therefore unique. The blade is forged out of 440 steel. The blade is very strong, excellent to cut with and never becomes rusty. As the material of the handle is also very important, I chose mine to be from a horn. There is a cross on the side of the handle. It has a name of the Three Bishops Cross.

The story is that in the past, Aubrac peasants used to stuck their knife in the earth to pray in front of the cross. All the brass parts are decorated with notches, and the upper spring has carved figures. At the top of the handle, the famous fly rests, representing Aubrac cows herds flies. There are variations of this understanding. Whatever the legend truly is I'm still convinced the insect is representing Aubrac cow fly. It is one high-quality equipment I very seldom leave home without.

Alien Bear Grin

“Wisdom is to have dreams that are big enough not to lose sight when we pursue them!”

-Oscar Wilde

We leave Solaro early next morning and force the pedal to the metal. The road continues straight as a ruler thru flat land towards the north. We pass some fenced piece of land with occasional roadside restaurants and hotels. The scenery is vast and restful with mountains of inland to the left and burning sun on the right of us. Blue sky ahead is open for a sunny day. As the old beast of burden does pretty obviously not have any air conditioning, we keep windows open. That is an excellent alternative since it gives us a feeling of free space and all the distinct aroma of the beautiful and ever-warming landscape. If our car was a standard 2CV, then I could let the roof canvas down. The vehicle is, however, as previously noted, so-called Fourgonnette van with a hardtop.

We soon leave Solaro completely behind and enter Territoire de la Côtés des Nacrés by going over a bridge that crosses the dried riverbed from the mountains. This is the Travo river, a small coastal river, that takes source west of Monte Incudine, near the Bocca di Chiralba at 1743 meters above sea level and flows into the Tyrrhenian Sea between the towns of Ventiseri and Solaro. The Travo river is famous for kayaking and trekking among active tourists seeking real hand-on experience on the landscape of Corsica. The village of Nacrés also turns as a delight to the eye and serves us alternative view after driving thru the countryside. The

vaguely picturesque small community intrigues me, and I would have of course want to stop there even if for a few days. Instead, we halt on the sandy open-air cinema parking lot for a short overall view and then leave with a few turns around laughing while making dust. How stupid and useless, but surprisingly amusing.

The National Road 198 passes the triple armour fence of airbase 126 Ventiseri-Solenzara on the eastern side. Signs on the wall indicate restricted military zone with photographing prohibited. Why did they establish high secrecy demanding airfield premises in such an open area? There are two logical reasons I can imagine. The land is flat by default, so building a runway is easy. Also, the required service in means of fuel and food and ammunition can be delivered across the sea.

This NATO airfield runway is nearly 2650 meters in length. It was established in 1960. It is currently serving as a tactical training centre. The garrison has about 950 persons, and among them, it can accommodate up to 40 fighter planes and ten tactical transport aircraft. Any airbase on these islands west from Italy practically reminds me of book *Catch-22* and story of Captain John Yossarian serving as a U.S. Army Air Forces B-25 bombardier. The idea of visiting the airbase fascinates but then again how would we, everyday tourists, be welcome without any official invitation. In addition to that, we are in a rush. I cannot be without noticing the grin of an alien bear on my new co-drivers shining green eyes. Most likely due to me being able to make those narrow 125×15 tires of old Citroën 2CV to scream occasionally.

Quenza is a little green and furry teddy bear from somewhere quite far, I think. I had him picked up from the campground lost property corner since he demanded me to take him to the town of Bastia and make it fast. I did not question his reasons but without slightest hesitation grabbed him by the hand, and there he is now riding shotgun as we scud thru the road of east Corsica passing roadside vineyards and all green country.

Quenza turns out to be one magnificent companion for keeping both of us in good spirits and awake on such a peaceful road trip. He is telling stories about a sound man of Grateful Death, Augustus Owsley Stanley The Third, also known as Bear. I guess all extraordinary bears know each other by default. He lists the islands in the Mediterranean by heart and finally explains me the principles of Maxwell's demon, all about violating the Second Law of Thermodynamics. When I think nothing could surprise me anymore, Quenza enjoys himself by describing the life of French leader of the UFO religion known as Raëlism, Claude Maurice Marcel Vorilhon. We then discuss vaguely ancient astronauts, the book of Ezekiel and end up to Greek dark ages by lunchtime.

After tasty Pasta Norma and several glasses of cold water, we are ready and eager to pick up where we left in driving and especially in conversation. We share our views of Pale Blue Dot, a picture snapped by Voyager 1 space probe, without forgetting astronomer and author Carl Sagan.

We also discover and share the opinion that a voyage to planet Mars is something the humankind is nowadays anticipating with the same urge that made sailors from ancient Africa accidentally reach the shores of America and like people from South America that settled Polynesia. For them, these voyages were meant to be one way only, and even our bold technology keeps evolving the Martian explorers of the future most likely need to accept the same destiny still for quite a long time.

We then come inspired to recite poems, and I start by letting out loud one of my own.

*“Further away of the sun-shade
on the yellow sand
turquoise surf waves hug and fade
Close behind the dark glasses
from the sunburnt hand
rosy dreams flow between the fingers*

*A candle turns weak in the watchtower
with a sideswiped wand
the wind is free for a sea bird’s hover
– The victim in bed 7 is a gonner.”*

Then Quenza replies, improvising out of the moment.

*“I hear light steps on my tomb
asking you to dance beside me
bringing the joy of flowers to my day
and a blue prayer for the night.”*

The speed and extra strain probably affected the next episode as we quickly learned to know how it feels to ride a 2VC with the exploded front tire. Luckily it broke on the shotgun side and did not force us in the oncoming lane but leaning heavily towards the wild bushes of the roadside. After smoking breaks and branches striking the windshield, it becomes tranquil for a little moment. While grasping my breath, Quenza yells tears in his terrified eyes “Throttle Up! Feel that mother go!” I’m unable to comment anything more, but “Now, let us pray for Shackleton.” *

One flatbed truck slowed soon down ahead of us. The driver did not resemble my memory of Sir Ernest, but he still offered for assistance. Feeling comfortable enough, I shook head to Quenza, and he promptly replied with amazingly manly voice “Ne vous inquiétez pas, nous gérons bien. Merci!” from the shadow of our tiny vehicle. I was feeling a bit of ashamed of my lame French and felt admiration for my furry assistant. The left wheel tyre was ruined, but rim looked intact. The spare wheel was in place under the bonnet, and then we only needed to find suitable tools like jack and wheel nut wrench.

It took us hefty fifteen minutes to change the wheel and check the car for any other damages. As we did not find any other visible problems, we packed all tools and the exploded

tyre back to the Citroën and accelerated back to the open road.

I don't know about Quenza's sensation right after our accident but recalled that those words he yelled at the halt, became known and famous from another accident of considerable devastating scale. The disaster occurred on January 28, 1986, as Space Shuttle Challenger broke apart after 73 seconds flight, leading to the deaths of its all crew members. The disintegration of the space shuttle began after an O-ring seal failing in its right side solid rocket booster. Design engineers later added a third O-ring seal to the joints between the segments due to this disaster. We came into a shared conclusion with Quenza. It was easy to say, but humankind and green teddy bears were counting much too heavily on rubber rings of various size.

The commune of Ghisonaccia is the next step towards Aleria and Bastia. It has a population about 3000 and some of the best beaches on eastern Corsica. I cannot let myself down by missing the seashore despite Quenza's urge to Bastia. We agree on a quick sidestep to the beach thru Route de la Mer. At first, we think to take a left turn that would lead us to camping U Casone. It has been here since 1972 with a good reputation, but after discovering from the map that it is not directly on the beach, we instead continue the road ahead as that should end to the sea.

After spending a good time in the sea, I grab a portion of moules frites with a bottle of water to go from the little beach restaurant. I notice Quenza still sleeping in the shade of

Citroën. I could take a nap as well, but while being hungry, I first finish my pot of Belgian national dish and suddenly realise having more things common to Belgians than just Tintin. With a full stomach, I lay down in the shadow of 2CV trunk spacious enough even for two people.

I wake up shivering at a very late dinner time. The night has fallen, and no matter where I look Quenza is nowhere in sight. After a while, I spot a piece of paper under the windshield wiper. It's a handwritten note from Quenza. "Did not want to wake you. I need to rush for Bastia, and sorry to say decided to hitchhike with a nice family leaving right away. *Thank's for the ride and pleasant companion. Yours truly, Quenza.*" Whoo-ah! That little green teddy bear was in a hurry!

I don't feel especially confident in driving on a foreign road under a pitch-black night sky, but after exceptionally long afternoon nap I don't have too many good alternatives. What would I do here anymore? After studying the map, I decide to continue at least to Moriani-Plage some 50 km north. Carrying enough fuel and water even to Bastia, I still try to keep a realistic target. The headlights of this old 2CV resemble two yellow candles on sides of the hood. After short thinking and encouraged by the engine purring like a kitten, I finally collect all grit and head to the darkness.

**"For scientific discovery give me Scott; for speed and efficiency of travel give me Amundsen; but when disaster strikes and all hope is gone, get down on your knees and pray for Shackleton."* – Sir Raymond Priestly, Antarctic Explorer and Geologist.

“Cherry Pie”, whoo-ah!

Arriving at Bastia is happening after a long night drive. With a modern vehicle, this all would have been a trivial task. Citroën 2CV, however, was much different due to old age. Yet it was just what I had ever wished since these cars are distinctive and soulful pieces of engineering.

The road is getting somewhat crowded, and I thank myself for not spending another night at any campsite. I think it's time for a small celebration and luxury at this point of travelling. The trip went along a lot easier than ever anticipated. The road was empty during the late hours despite a few local drives speeding familiar routes merely like bats out of hell.

The headlights helped very little, and I was slowing speed even more after every roadside deer warning sign. Luckily there were no encountering with animals crossing the road. I did have one break for admiring the deep blue night sky that often reminds me about Sir Arthur Charles Clarke, the co-writer of the screenplay for 2001: A Space Odyssey movie. He was also the man to popularise Herman Potočnik's idea of geosynchronous satellites. These objects located in geostationary orbit, also called a Clarke orbit, at an altitude of approximately 35,786 km above earth sea level having an orbital period same as the Earth's rotation period. So they practically stay in place relative to Earth.

Corsica was totally magnificent and actually, just the way my doctor could have prescribed to my vagabond spirit. At night, lying under the deep blue sky of Corsica made me feel like I was visiting at the edge of the observable universe.

Entering suburbs of Bastia at early breakfast time is a relief and one of my goals on this trip. I am eager to visit the old palace of the Genoese governors, accommodating a museum of Corsican ethnography since 1952. My eyes also urge to see the fortress of Bastia and stay beside that old lighthouse just enjoying the scenery. Now being here at Bastia I probably cannot leave to Ajaccio, without taking a short sidestep to Cap Corse, the northernmost tip of Corsica with some exquisite palaces from the 19th and 20th century.

Before all that, I wish to locate decent accommodation and proper serving for breakfast. Then afterwards I need to return the car. At early hours I had anticipated awarding myself with several warm cups of tea and large slices of tasty pies. Concluding the recent events of roller coaster-like imagination running haywire must have been the aftermath of slight sunstroke received while hiking the hills of Solano.

I take the seaside way towards downtown. The scenery grows to be good with calm sea and distant ships popping up among roadside palm trees. Slow cruising on streets of Bastia gives me a good view of the town with different architecture and condition. I have agreed to leave the car at the train station of Bastia and still well enough time to drive around before Chemins de Fer de la Corse.

A single room from Hôtel Bonaparte at 45 Boulevard du Galerie Graziani should be good for a two-night stay. After leaving my luggage to the reception I take a drive to the nearby railway station, going the car to my contact. I need to pay some extra for the damaged tyre and after the guy has checked everything else is in the order I then pass the keys

and give farewell to this ancient yet splendid companion.

As I walk back to the hotel, I seek for some possibility of having breakfast, and there are plenty to choose from. Early in the morning, it would have been just tea and some pie. Now I felt too hungry due it was closing to midday already and felt like being able to consume brunch as well.

While enjoying well-laid brunch table servings and browsing advertisement of hikers track, Tra Mare e Monti Nord, 9 to 11-day long trail with daily distances in between waypoints varying from 8 to 20 km in length. Something quite fascinating, still maybe yet not me. It takes more strength and gear than I possess. Instead of hiking, I shall be eager to go around Musée de Bastia and the Governors’ Palace before heading onboard the train from Bastia to Ponte-Leccia junction and Ajaccio.

This brunch serves cherry pie which is among the best I have ever had. Companies with green tea with honey and lemon inspire me sharing the recipe of old DIY Cherry Pie.

1 x 400g ready-made short pastry from the freezer
1 x 350g sour cherry in a glass jar
1 x 200g sour cream
1 x 50g caster sugar
2 x teaspoons of vanilla sugar
1 x fresh chicken egg

Let the oven warm up to 200 degrees Celsius. Grease the pie dish with butter and spread dough evenly to the edges. Remove the juice of cherries. Combine all the rest of the ingredients separately, mix lightly. When the base is

complete, add the cherries, and evenly pour over the cream mixture. Then bake in the lower level of about 30-35 min.

Use loud enough timer for exact baking time. Allow to cool and solidify properly. Serve with hot coffee or favourite tea and vanilla ice cream.

I just love cherries. If all in the world was lost then as a last wish I would ask for a bowl of ripe cherries. I know I would be just fine.

Farewell to Corsica

“Whatever you do will be insignificant, but it is very important that you do it.”

– Mahatma Gandhi

During the following few days, I went to Musée de Bastia, being established initially back more than a century ago. The Governors’ Palace was as magnificent as ever expected. While wandering around those high stone walls, I inevitably ended learning some philosophical self-study.

Recluse noun – a person who lives a solitary life and tends to avoid other people.

I sure can live with that definition; however, I don’t know if that is the most dominant feature of my personality. I believe that it’s only one part of myself while others are being several. During a more extended holiday, especially if not travelling, it is a good time for some slow-down and self-examination. This time I was going, for a longer period already but got philosophically inspired along realising the sheer nullity of my existence. Inside this marvellous structure, I, however, felt like losing myself in the sanctuary. Entirely escaped from the rushing world out there.

Being accurate and punctilious are strong values in my scale. Sometimes I wonder how did these features go out of fashion so vaguely? When did it happen that being accurate was considered disadvantage and uselessly pedant? I find natural penchant to act and speak sincerely and in earnest, rather than in a joking or living half-heartedly. Disliking jibe still does not prevent me from falling into sarcasm and irony much too often, though. I sure get insulted quite easily, but only when some trusted person is to keep me a fool. I don't practically give too much attention to what unknown individuals think of my acts or presence.

For some of us, sounds, smells, and different sensations caused strong reactions. It is believed that around 20 per cent of humans are specifically sensitive people. Yet it is not diagnosed as a disease, but the nervous system feature. I've noted getting easily distressed and feeling strong compassion when I pick little child's inconsolable cry. Steady or unsteady clanking noise, knocking or clicking makes nerves get to the surface quite quickly. Background noise often prevents me from following the discussion on the phone. It may be a lousy mobile as well, but having slight tinnitus certainly does not help. I should have protected the hearing already far in my youth.

Having a short temper is very unfortunate, but I have learned and will calm down quickly. I sometimes feel the most profound remorse and the need for reconciliation. Still, I

don't tend to worry too much. Trying to be perfect is an unluckily incorrigible feature and can only be helped when understanding that it is most often to no purpose. Above all dream a lot. Positive, sunny and beautiful thoughts. In that extent that I genuinely believe in sayings and lyrics like in the song "*You only live twice*". Occasionally I would just wish to follow the guideline of Dr Samuel Johnson: "*He who makes a beast of himself gets rid of the pain of being a man.*" I don't think I could never be a viciously unkind person, though.

As long I can recall, I've been fond of beautiful objects. For example, it does not differ if a beautiful vase or a model steam engine is in question. Such a feature must be an inherited feature. My parents did always select pretty things around them. So I had a bit of practice already while growing up. The older I have grown, the more I tend to pay attention to the subject, but I sure agree that the beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder. Now and then I realise that I find something fascinatingly beautiful, even though most people do not agree at all. Practicality is one issue for sure, but you know, I can go and buy an acid-proof stainless steel fixed snap shackle just for the great looks of it. I could imagine doing that even without owning a boat to hook it—silly me.

Sometimes I have dreamed of having a bright-coloured shiny new surfboard just for hanging that on the wall or purchasing a brand new longboard for vestibule decoration. It is a crazy nut idea since I never even discovered the ability of

skating and the only skaters in my life were the kids of the neighbourhood a long time ago. But I was thinking not to skate at all. I felt just enjoying exceptional craftsmanship and excellent beauty. It's the inbuilt designer in me, I believe.

The same urge goes for music. I've listened to all kind of music and artists, but I have only had one true love. Since childhood, I have loved piano music. Most likely, due to my mother, as she often used to play the piano. At least every Christmas she would go thru all notebooks in-house. I find it a bit odd it was never discussed if I wanted or better yet needed to have piano lessons? Viewed from a distance, I might add possessing a genome for musical talent. I am aware that my grandfather was locally famous for his skill with a violin. It must have been something in his youth since I sadly never recall him playing anything.

The weather has been the crown of this whole trip. Especially on this evening, it seemed to be very promising. It was almost dark by the time I finally departed from The Governors' Palace and entered the warm but mainly dry evening in the town of Bastia. It's amazing what one can spot from the clear night sky. Avoiding artificial light sources and seek the right places for findings in the sky is essential. The first thing I'm usually able to spot is Ursa Major. Staring at the deep blue night sky often reminds me about Arthur C. Clarke, the creator of "*2001: A Space Odyssey*". He was the man to popularise Herman Potočnik's idea of geosynchronous

satellites. I think Clarke was an extraordinary science fiction author and futurist. Looking at the distant stars made me also ponder several other things. Like the current stage of a space elevator and research for good enough carbon nanotubes. Then again, what if Lofstrom loop would be something far easier to achieve? The design concept was initially published by Keith Lofstrom, an American electrical engineer. The loop describes an active structure maglev cable transport system that would be maintained at an altitude of up to 80-90 km. A launch loop would be held up at this altitude by the momentum of a belt that circulates the structure

This night I was able to spot three separate satellites cruising over the firmament within half an hour. The first was going towards the north, second towards the northeast and the last travelled towards the southeast. All these had very similar velocity. For me, it takes some time to get the eyes readjusted in the darkness as

I belong to the one-third of the population with slight myopia. What I have noticed is that averted vision works great with satellites when trying to follow them on their trajectory. You can also detect motion better with your peripheral vision since it is primarily rod vision. Rod cells are almost entirely responsible for night vision.

While stargazing, like often, I waited for a falling star to

appear. And then it finally did! Good and several seconds long bright meteor flared over my head from the Northwest towards the southeast. I do not know why is it that people wish upon falling stars. I guess I have learned this habit from my parents. They claimed that if you wish upon a falling star and keep the wish to yourself and do not tell anybody, then it might turn out to be true. Well, I did, and the results remain to be seen.

Maybe even before heading onboard the train from Bastia to Ponte-Leccia junction and Ajaccio.

“When nothing is sure, everything is possible.”

-Margaret Drabble

I was already gone so far thru the land of Corsica. I felt the urge to view the scenery of Cap Corse from the ground as well. “S/Y Sunride” had carried the impassable hospitable family of Van Emst and me beyond Cap Corse, yet I wanted to encounter the vista of the sea over to eternity. With rented Lambretta scooter, I drove the route about 55 km from Bastia to Macinaggio and up north to Barcaggio village.

The mountainous landscape descends to the blue sea, and soon I was on a narrow strip of white sand beach right to east from Barcaggio centre. There was a lot of boats and yacht attached to buoys on that bay. The Ile de la Giraglia erects there in the distance. It is known for the lighthouse and the

Torra di Giraglia. That is a Genoese tower also among the official historical monuments of France.

There is an annual Mediterranean regatta held in June, named after the island of Giraglia, established by three men René Levainville, Franco Gavagnin, and Beppe Croce. The race starts from St. Tropez, France passes the island of Giraglia, and then finally finishes off in Genoa, Italy. It has been held annually since 1953, and since 1977 it has been known as “Giraglia Rolex Cup”. This 243 nautical miles long regatta may be considered the most significant offshore sailing event in the Mediterranean with over 200 sailing teams participating internationally.

There was a good-sized trailer on the beach having large speakers playing Highway to Hell out loud. AC/DC recorded legendary Highway to Hell early 1979. Now, this is a tune that really cannot be passed by without noticing. Unfortunately, as I recall, the talented singer, Bon Scott perished just about six months after the song was released. RIP.

I ended up having a bowl of small deep-fried fish with lemon and spicy olives. The view was just glorious. Just like one would expect easy-going summer day by the sea-shore to be like. I decided to rent a sun chair, and in the shadow of a parasol, I'll take an opportunity to read a few chapters of

Lear's Journal of a Landscape Painter. Farther the greatest white soul singer alive sang her first solo single. I was soon dozing in the delightfully warm breeze.

Later the day I took the scooter another 15 km ride to the west coast Port de Centuri. At this place, we already visited with Elms family, though I regrettably skipped going onshore. Visiting the port had haunted me since, and this was an opportunity not to miss. While driving slowly across the countryside, I looked at any fields around in hope spotting visible crop circles in the hay. I would most likely felt sheer naked fear to find out anything similar to around the village of Avebury in Wiltshire county, in Southwest England. They have reported hundreds of complex figures found on fields there. The phenomenon has been going on already since 1970 and later spread practically all over the globe.

Crop circle related studies have taken place since the very beginning, and there are varying opinions all over investigators. Majority acknowledge them mostly as a pure hoax and public environmental art. Yet not all. The subject is fascinating, and I'm a sucker for more scientific studies. I did not spot anything but everyday crops raising from the earth just as it is expected to happen. Should I have found something, it would have messed my life anyway, so I had warm gratitude in my heart while finally reaching the village of Centuri.

I have to admit that all the grey houses of this place were pretty terrible looking. They might have used little more vivid colours while whitewashing their homes. Lack of colours makes this village somewhat dull-looking despite the terrific scenery over the sea.

The overall view is telling the truth about negligence and a poor state of the quiet fishing village. When compared practically to any French or Italian small village, the looks of this place is ashamed of its existence. Yet, it's all worthwhile of seeing. The contrast between blue skies, the sea, and this rocky shore is just too overwhelming. This is pretty typical to old Corsican fishing villages, though. It was also the time of the year when nature is drying out and getting brown and grey, and it does not, unfortunately, help at all. There was a thought that I should have gone to the inlands where it's more green.

One little drawback to my Corsican voyage seemed to pop my awareness more and more often. I was slowly but happily late with my, practically nonexistent, schedule and yet I was here goofing around some tiny villages on a scooter. Maybe I was not to make it to Sardinia at all but instead head straight home by taking the next plane from Aéroport de Ajaccio Campo Dell'Oro also named Ajaccio Napoleon Bonaparte Airport.

Then again, what was I thinking now? Was I letting to go when reached so far already? Please excuse me, you wicked subconscious part of my mind. I was not to surrender voluntarily. Even it would mean that I would make sacrifices in terms of seeing it all. I finally started to realise that even a whole summer would not be sufficient for discovering all parts of Corsica the way I had dreamed of. I could only comfort this hurting reality with light wishes of unknown return.

Despite these internal struggles, I made a one-night reservation in Le Vieux Moulin hotel that has quite exceptional views to the Centuri town harbour. After two Negroni cocktails, I was ready to eat light shellfish mix with a variety of tidbits, and for some odd reason, I started imaging about angels on horseback. A nice bottle of Vermentino made me eventually decide. Sardinia was calling me, and I should not resist any longer. As said, I could spend the rest of my life here but would never get rid of the haunting Sardinian whisper. Starting early morning, I should have only one goal and that target was lying at the southmost tip of Sardinia island.

That decision finally clear in my mind I went for a long walk to the port of Centuri, Tried to pick the spot we had been moored and sucked around the serene views with my eyes hurting. I stepped on the pier constructed in the 18th century.

Visited Saint Antoine Chapel located nearby for a silent moment. Being an agnostic makes me pretty neutral for prayers, but there was a particular voiceless wish in my mind that I sent to all the holders of the worlds.

“Please, release me to go beyond.”

Next morning, after a quite restless sleep, I woke up early. It must have been less than four AM when I packed my toothbrush and left the key to the counter of empty reception. On my way to the scooter, I saw early seabirds screaming in the morning sun, picked three ripe and mellow pear-shaped citrus from the hotel garden and rushed for Bastia for the next train to Ajaccio.

Towards Sardinia

“Difference in between charity and philanthropy is when a kind-hearted gives hungry person a fish then a philanthropist is teaching them how to fish.”

I have had my share of travelling on a train but now and then it is a necessity. It is around 100 km as the crow flies from Bastia to Ajaccio and another 50+ km if you travel by car. The railroad is 158 km long to be exact. The scenery was my main reason for choosing a train thru the town of Corte. Driving at Corsica, I had experienced already, and now it was time to see the views and not to worry next corner road construction surprises. I also pondered, for a short time, if I could manage to catch a plane and fly over Corsica to Ajaccio.

Viewing those colossal mountains from above would certainly make a highlight of my voyage on this less than 10 000 square meter island. Sticking to the original plan with the train was, however, more or less stipulated by my wallet.

Railways of Corsica (CFC) train is pale white with blue stripes and has four separate wagons. They also have red with yellow lines, but these are used on beach express tracks from Calvi. I should have visited Calvi town. If not anything else then to see the ancient remains of a house wall that is claimed to be a wall of the actual house where Christopher Columbus was born. Well, this is a legend that practically none can prove. According to history books Columbus was born 1451 in the territory of the Republic of Genoa.

Missing to visit Calvi was not worth regretting since I had

entirely unfortunately lost too many other fascinating sites already. Yet I managed to visit one fabulous one right before stepping onboard the train. Oratoire de la Confrérie de Sainte Croix is a small chapel that lies in the heart of Terra Nova. It holds a black crucifix of Christ that was, according to the legend, found tucked in a fishing net of fishers in 1482. The clerk suggested this hidden treasure at the train ticket office as I was questioning what would be the place to visit still before the train was leaving in three hours. I really cannot explain the interest of visiting these chapels and churches, but this turned out to be one spectacular place not to miss by anyone being in Bastia town.

There is a gloomy and dark, 1422 meter long, tunnel of Torreta soon after the train station. It starts the three and half hour journey with Chemins de Fer de la Corse, onboard train number 23 from Bastia to Ajaccio. I had confident anticipation in my heart for meeting some of the magnificent mountains, Gustave Eiffel's steel built viaduct at Vecchio and finally almost four kilometres long tunnel at Vizzavona. It would have been great to have time to check up these by walk, except for the tunnel, of course. At the time of leaving Bastia, I did not know what was coming to me, so I just relaxed and stared out the railway wagon window.

The view is soothing to eyes as green trees rush here and there occasionally opening a broader scenery to mountain tops in the distance. It is pretty and welcoming sight making me happy to explore even more. While stretching myself on the train seat, I finally realise how much better opportunity this is for a traveller to enjoy when compared to taking the same trip by rented car. I love driving around, but it's all about keeping an eye on the road and traffic and a lot less to the views. Sure

one can, and always should stop for the higher examination of the landscape. That is too easy to forget as getting to the destination seems to be more critical. Yet it is not about the goal but the journey, as they say.

The train wheels generated a mild screech when the train went thru slight curves. It was an amazingly comfortable ride, though, when considering the age of the train. Windows were significant for a good view, and even the seat was certainly not among the most comfortable I still was enjoying it all. I had some apples, brocciu cheese and thin slices of prizuttu ham to go with a few thick slices of buttered Corsican loaf and bottled water. Brocciu cheese is as I know, considered as one of the national food in Corsica. One of the great features of it is that brocciu does not contain lactose. I don't personally have any issues, but for lactose-intolerant persons, this is a surprising delicacy which can be thoroughly enjoyed without any unpleasant disadvantages. What an ideal lunch box after a busy morning. I felt a bit hungry wondering where, how and whom with to enjoy it. There is an old African saying: *“Do not let us eat alone.”*

In my life, I've met people with different looks. Small kids were so pretty as Easter bunnies, gorgeous looking women leaving you speechless and men so ugly they had to shave in the dark. A few seats ahead of where I was sitting, facing towards me, I saw two young girls. One lean and brown-skinned, with boyish short sand coloured straight hair. The other had lit radiant skin and dark brown long curly hair. They were excitedly looking out the window and communicating the scenery with someone who sat opposite them.

For some odd reason, I imagined they reminded me of two

daughters of Le Patourels. This is, of course, a recollection from the book, “*Green Dolphin Country*”. An epic story of two sisters living on the Channel Islands in the mid-1800s, and the man they both love. “*Green Dolphin Country*” by Elizabeth Goudge is, more than the 700-page monolith, the book of my childhood. From there I can also recall the mother of daughters, Sophie Le Patourel, sophisticated woman, horrified by bustle and vulgarity and noise which George Stephenson’s terrible steam engine caused hurtling people to destruction at twenty-five miles an hour. The train kept going slowly but steadily along the railroad. Our journey seemed to take longer than it was. Happy wobbling from side to side prepared a cradle for my sweet afternoon nap. Yet I tried to keep eyes open, having pistachio out of my pocket now and then. I should not fall into sleep soon. I had been eagerly waiting to see one sensational landmark of Corsica.

Gustave Eiffel, a French civil engineer, an architect, had his engineering skills used at Corsica as well. “*Le Pont Eiffel*” is the most massive viaduct built between 1890 and 1892, in fact, a rail bridge and stretching more than 170 meters over the river Vecchio. This fabulous 84 m high construction is entirely built out of steel metal. It was built for a small train named le Trinichellu, a link in between Bastia and Ajaccio. Later in 1827, a road bridge was also built below Le Pont Eiffel, for all other vehicles. Le Pont Eiffel was named as a “*Monument Historique*” on 29th July 1976 and classified in 1992.

Then suddenly I felt the train slowing down remarkably. Soon it was going slower a man would be walking. There it was. The bridge revealed itself to my eyes. We were crawling over the river Vecchio! What scenery. What construction! I

was honoured to feel the presence of Gustave Eiffel and his hard worked team in every meter of the structure. I every bolt and each rivet. “Je vous souhaite les salutations!”.

Il paradiso terrestre isola del vento

“Il buon Dio è nei dettagli” / “The good God is in the details”

For me, my soul, entering Sardinia, turned to be a bloody uphill battle eventually. I had been on the road, land, and sea, practically since March and August were closing in a few days. I also was surprised while being pretty low on the travelling budget. On top of this, I did finally confess to myself; homesickness was engraving my innermost with wicked sharp claws. At the end of the day there were precisely two options left. Either I would boldly step on Sardinian soil, travel and finally sit to the southmost tip of the anticipated heaven on earth. The other option was to take the next flight from Campo Dell Oro, Ajaccio, directly to Ellinikon International Airport, Athens. With these options and need to decide I simply flipped a coin with only one consolation along the legendary words of Mr Eugene Francis Krantz “Risk is the price of progress.”

Heads or tails! One thing I know, no God or destiny decided on me. It was all happening by chance. I would not end sitting penniless on a foreign beach but fly East and catch a ferry to home. Yet sounding crazy I felt endlessly disappointed while simultaneously being joyous happy.

At that point, I started executing necessary *“Quick’s the word, and sharp’s the action”* order in wish not to regret the guidance of my only material Corsican souvenir, 1762 4 soldo silver coin with mermaids, purchased from a coin shop in

downtown alley Bastia. The next thing after receiving a boarding pass and walking through to literally non-existent security check was exquisite Bloody Mary cocktail at the bar. The celery tasted sweet like in Corsican country soup, and rich tomato juice gave the looks of blood. I let that be the blood of my vicious battle solved by mere coincidence.

The flight from Ajaccio to Athens took about two hours. After a few Bloody Marys, I did sleep like a mummy right till the landing. I almost felt sorry for those who were hit by my heavy snoring. The flight landed Athens during very early hours at 2:45 AM. The ferry, I expected to catch from Piraeus, would not leave until 7:00 PM with more than 16 hours of expected sailing ahead until finally landing at Rhodes.

I had plenty of extra time and pretty little to do. After dozing some four hours at the airport terminal, I took Athens-Piraeus Electric Railways, actually of the oldest metro lines in the world, to Piraeus port. At 7:00 AM, I took two phone calls. I needed to collect some courage for the first one for home. It ended with no answer. The second call was addressed to Helene and Ned Andersen's house to check if I still had the boat. The boat was there but on a cruise at the moment! Some strange square head from Germany had been urging to cruise Daphnes Lullaby for the whole month of August and was expected to be back soon. The entire season had been one incredible success so far. It seemed that the crew had booked full season after not being aware of my location or well-being. The sailing crew had been anxiously at work, less waiting for any sign of me. Running business the whole summer they had started shortly after my departure. They had

collected money as it was coming in the form of right customers and asking fewer reasons for this unexpectedly good wind. That was, at least, the message of how I received it from good old Ned.

It turned out to be more of money on my bank account that I even realised. I had not checked the number of deposits after leaving Greece. All the money I had over the trip I had in cash. I needed to do some financial accounting exercise and decided to get back to Athens for overnight at least. It was necessary to visit the bank and check if this big surprise was even real. If it were, then the crew would have a wealthy bonus, and maybe I could do some shopping?

So I went back to Athens for banking but before that ended up in one small breakfast cafe at Syngrou Avenue. I had a cup of coffee and croissant with Greek morning sun over the parasol. I also enjoyed some yoghurt with wonderful home-made Glyko Karpouzi. The preserved watermelon rind just takes your sweet tooth away. I could not help, but it also reminded me of Bob. My dear soul mate and longtime friend who suffered fatal accident here in Athens not so many years ago. His remains may rest in the distant bay, St Xnamya bay in between Kalymnos and Pserimos, yet his soul will always stay with me. Rest in peace, Bob.

National bank of Greece did have a surprise for me. I guess the successful overhaul of Daphnes Lullaby had made my captain and boatswain somewhat proud of the old lady and instead of fair pricing they had tripled the cost of cruising.

They had also made a bold move for having the berth practically opposite to Central Port Authority of Rodos close to the church of Ekklesia Evaggelismos. We gained an advantage when fighting over the day trip cruise customers. Luckily there had been many of those who wanted to spend more time cruising the Mediterranean archipelago.

After calculating all wages and good-sized bonus for seasonal work to the crew, I still had the account balance in amazingly good condition. I felt my awakening business pride though sitting there in a big banking hall with my shorts and shabby T-shirt on. I might have looked more like a hobo than an affluent businessman. Nevertheless, account balance seemed fine, and I was ready to redeem yet one of my dreams before going back home.

All I needed to do was to visit the nearest travel agency, and I was sold. Alitalia flies from Athens to Fiumicino and further to Cagliari, Sardinia a few times every day. The time to reach Sardinia is less than four hours with one stopover in Rome. I selected one week stay without accommodation and headed back to the Ellinikon International Airport. My head was hurting, and I was tired and in need of good night sleep. No hope of such until on the island of my desire. I did have a few hours nap before Alitalia was departing back to the west at 14:45. I had spent 12 hours in Athens, visited the port of Piraeus and almost bought a ticket to the ferry back to Rhodes. One phone call had reversed my target of travel back to the island. I thought I would never manage to step on. I had done some shopping for a new backpack and clothes, performed little inventory for my supplies and finally left my

luggage to the long-term storage.

I decided to travel light as it was only one more week expected. Passport, toothbrush, and wallet were the necessities needed. Well, I also had a book of Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, a lengthy narrative poem written by Lord Byron and my trusty AIWA HS-PX101, some batteries and a new headset. Suddenly I was quivering of eagerness and determined to meet my earthly paradise at Sardinia.

*“The Moon is up, and yet it is not night,—
Sunset divides the sky with her,—a sea
Of glory streams along the Alpine height
Of blue Friuli's mountains; Heaven is free
From clouds, but of all colors seems to be -
Melted to one vast Iris of the West,
Where the day joins the past Eternity;
While, on the other hand, meek Dian's crest
Floats through the azure air,—an island of the blest!”*

The flight to Rome FCO went by in a jiffy. In a quite modern airport bar, I browsed thru the menu. My body was so confused it was craving for English muffins topped with a good slice of ham, a poached egg and hollandaise sauce. Eggs Benedict and large coffee would have made it, but I was to settle with savoury cheddar pancakes topped with a fried egg. That was just fine, light enough not to upset my stomach yet nutritious. Coffee and especially the flavoured tomato juice got me finally awake even it was late afternoon.

There were not many passengers continuing to Sardinia, so

the transition to the next flight was smooth and uncomplicated. I experienced a strange and mournful dream of Ho 229, the first flying wing to be powered by jet engines by Gothaer Waggonfabrik late in World War II. It's bizarre how many great inventions have emerged from the brutality of killing other human beings.

We landed on almost three kilometres long runway of Cagliari Elmas Airport early in the evening. I did expect to spend a full day entering the medieval past and Roman roots of Cagliari before going any further. Especially the exquisite Santuario e Basilica di Bonaria and Cathedral of Santa Maria. A Roman amphitheatre of Caralis, partially carved in the rock as well as the Bastione San Remy and finally the town's medieval castle, The Castle of San Michele.

As I was travelling remarkably light, I took an airport taxi but instead of following my travel agency recommendations, not to Hotel Regina Margherita, four-star accommodation in the heart of Cagliari. Instead, I asked the cab for an affordable one night stay near the town centre. He immediately suggested, B&B on Viale Trieste. He explained like an experienced travel guide, in pleasant fluent English, all the advantages of this residence of his cousin. The place was to reside nearby Cagliari train station and not far from the harbour. Just what I thought would be a good starting point. Though at first, I was to have a good night sleep to recover from all travelling back and forth to East and West.

The Sardinian weather in September was beautiful. Still

warm days only slightly cloudier sky than during previous months. Also while in July and August the temperatures would reach up to 38°C, the temperatures during September should be around 24-26°C. I did expect Sardinia to be at its best when the hordes of tourists had mostly left back to their boring offices. Furthermore, Sardinia is also known to be the windy island. This is due to the summer mistral blowing warm winds that come from the north-west making the land and vegetation eventually dry out. Other wind like the Levant generally enters during the summer from the south-west. It brings winds all away from Northern Africa with good moisture from the Mediterranean. Later, the Scirocco, Mediterranean wind that comes from the Sahara start blowing. This wind might last anything between a half a day or even several days at a time.

Cagliari turned out to be one fascinating city with all great sightings, marina quarter and the fantastic beach. One of my favourite scenes opened up at Capo Bellavista lighthouse (1866), next to Torre di Calamosca, looking south to Tunis beyond the horizon. It beams two white flashes every 10 seconds at the height of 165 meters from sea level. The base is a 2-story house that has a square cylindrical tower with a lantern on top of it.

I also visited Santuario e Basilica di Bonaria, on Piazza Bonaria, It is a dull-looking small fourteenth-century church, formerly the chapel of the fortified citadel built by the Aragonese, which today is on the left side of the actual basilica. The sanctuary has some chapels and altar with a

fourteenth-century wooden statue of the Madonna and Child. There are multiple objects donated in the refuge, often hung on the side walls: especially one quite old item, a small ship of ivory. The legend tells that it became a pilgrimage destination of the fishermen in the area. The vessel was expected to show the direction of currents and upcoming wind.

While standing outside the basilica facing the facade and looking the Latin text engraved high above the three entrance doors it read

*“DEO OM IN HONOREM B MARIA VIRE DE BONARIA
DICATVM ANNO DOMIN MCMLIV”*

Unfortunately Latin was never my strongest asset, so practically the only thing I was able to translate was the roman numbers MCMLIV. I thought it would be the year 1954.

Sardinia offers countless alternatives for an exquisite beach holiday. Villasimius, for instance, provides a splendid getaway practically just around the corner to East from Cagliari. Villasimius region is a good one hour ride from the town on a peaceful day. Facilities are excellent, plenty of restaurants and spotless sand beaches. If you decide to follow the shoreline towards south from Cagliari, there are areas around Chia blessed with beautiful beaches just 55 km from Cagliari. The most famous must be Su Giudeu Beach. Crystal clear waters and lovely soft sand is waiting for a tired

traveller. My target, however, was Tuaredda beach at the southernmost tip of Sardinia. Well, Faro Capo Spartivento is on the southernmost tip of the island. It is a lighthouse built in 1866 located practically at the midpoint from Chia to Spiaggia di Tuerredda. It is also one of the oldest lighthouses still in operation in Sardinia. The house itself is about 19 meters in height, and the signal light is over 80 meters from sea level. It is expected to be unmanned as automated during 1972.

I planned to rent a car, preferably a four-wheel drive. To be honest, I was not looking for any Toyota but more like legendary Land Rover Series III that was built from 1971 to 1985. I could imagine me driving one across the Sardinian country with dark green colour and white rooftop and wheels. I think these cars ended up being the most common Series vehicle with over 440 000 units manufactured. To be realistic, who would have such for rent these days? They were just too old already. So I quietly kind of upgraded my desired vehicle thinking it would not hurt to have one baby underwear blue Range Rover Classic either. It is a lot more comfortable 4×4 luxury car with modern technology. I reckon they were manufactured somewhere between the years 1970 and 1995. It might be possible to find one though I did not imagine it would be as easy it turned out to be.

B&B of Viale Trieste turned out to be a gem among accommodation in Cagliari. It was all thanks to the taxi driver's cousin Bertu Mentura. Mr Mentura was a born businessman and tradesman. This room I had for two nights only was not the only source of income he was involved. He had several apartments, butchers shop and on top of that, you

know what, car rental and service garage.

*“Winter’s grip melting rushes cheering out to play
Ordering me a fat roasted chicken with crispy chips
makes the heart have dreams of cherry pie in the hay
Come, feel how the summers yearning tickles on my hips”*

The island of Sardinia has about 30 active lighthouses, and even I was not going to seek them all I still, as being a sucker for lighthouses, wanted to search and find some of the best along with my generally vague route.

The Lighthouse of Faro Capo Spartivento lies just a stone throw away from deep blue Tyrrhenia sea. I’m not sure if it was built-in 1854 or 1866 yet presumably by the Italian Navy anyway. It is one of the oldest operative lighthouses in Sardinia. The order for construction originated from Victor Emmanuel II, His Majesty The King of Sardinia and later His Majesty The King of Italy.

Whatever the case maybe it all hit my mind like one devilish hurricane. The silhouette of The Lighthouse of Faro Capo Spartivento was, after all my dusty travelling, a sight that brought big salty tears to my eyes and made my throat chuckle. I arrived the very late evening or early September with the Range Rover I had rented from taxi driver’s cousin in Cagliari. It must have been an old car by then but yet comfortable if you dare to compare to a lot more former Land Rover Series. 3.9 litre V8 with automatic transmission and

power steering. The driving lights were not that spectacular, though. I was lucky still to arrive.

There I was. Dusted, alone and pretty tired. Still extremely grateful to all the gods of travelling as they allowed me to reach and stay somewhere I had dreamed of such a long time. I saw no one else around in the neighbourhood. Well, it was pitch black anyway, and therefore I was pleased to light up a veteran paraffin lantern. After I had revealed my plan to go camping around southmost shores, Mr Mentura had specifically demanded me to have one of his lantern originating from Swedish Civil Defense. Most likely, one main reason for this was that he expected me to have a lot less danger of setting wildfire with lantern than a typical campfire. The model was pretty rare Radius 119 with a special stovetop. It turned out to be one genius device. Easy to light up with few drops of rubbing alcohol and patience. It gave remarkably bright light and jolly wheeze when in full flow.

On top of everything, I planned to prepare some late-night supper on the stove. In the light of Radius, I was successful in setting up my brand new tent for the first time. I selected free area from the Eastern side of the lighthouse just in case there would be occasional visitors on the opposite side that has the parking place. Never would that have been possible in the blackness of night without such great lantern.

I have always been an early bird. This morning was no exception despite being up pretty late. The sun was rising from the East. The air was humid, and the sky was clear as

always during the long summer of Sardinia. I could not see Sicily, the tiny island of Malta nor even Tunis on the shores of North Africa but I knew they were intact on their places. I had a pleasant walk around the lighthouse and made some pretty rough sketches of the scenery. I felt terrible not to be any better in drawing things. I should probably just try harder and do the exercise lot more often. I could have had bought me a camera like an ordinary tourist would have done, but no, I was far from average like always. At least in my mind. It must have been an hour later, I finally returned to my camp and prepared breakfast: tea, biscuits with orange jam and two leftover sausages. I had boiled a few cups of water previously with the lantern stove, and it was still warm enough after being in a thermos for maybe five hours. After breakfast, I laid down by the tent for a little nap under the warming morning sun.

I felt I could enjoy an excellent day bathing in the sea. After some half an hour laziness I disassemble the tent, packed all carefully and left for the car: no surprises or other people insight. I finally left the lighthouse and headed for the beach. Spiaggia di Ferraglione was my destination. Yet there was a catch. By looking from the map, it seemed to be almost impossible to take the shortest route. If you were following the marked road, it would have required me to drive a long way back where I came from last night and reach the beach after some 6 kilometres. After studying the map, I noticed there was a footpath leading from the far corner of the lighthouse. I had seen it while going around in the morning. By looking at the map, it seemed to go pretty directly towards Spiaggia di Ferraglione in a distance of around two kilometres only. I estimated the first 600 to 700 meters from the

lighthouse would be the most robust and most narrow path. After this, it would turn out to the usual type of south Sardinian small road. Well, I thought. I did have a four-wheel jeep, Range Rover and too little forbearance for following the main road so why wouldn't I try the off-road alternative?

I'm glad to the date I did follow the inner travel guide in me. The path to the beach was something special. Full of bumps and stones. Yet nothing I was unable to take over. Climbing there slowly across scenery so dry and dusty was like travelling on a desert. I felt good to know the sea was ahead of me along with the deserted beach of Spiaggia di Ferraglione. After reaching the sandy shore, I became very emotional. Even deep dives in the crystal clear sea did not wash my emotions away. Silly me. It was an experience worth a poem. Yet humble and short, the way I love the most.

*“Hey traveller, from the northern shores,
did you see an island silhouette, one of middle-aged?
Looking south, at the wheeze of waves
of the elderly in your ears.
Forgotten shall be the enchantment of the northern forests
so stingy and harsh.
Only by then, when the sea is gently lounging on the sand,
my soul in a soft wind is undoubtedly at home.”*

My travel along cart paths of the western coastline of Sardinia passed the village of Pedra Longa finally on to Strada Provinciale 71 towards Northwest sweeping the seashore. Spend a full day for snorkelling and camping overnight at

empty Spiaggia di Tuerredda. The beach is said to be on the top ten list of most beautiful beaches on the southern coast of Sardinia. Not at all so rocky as Spiaggia di Ferraglione. Lot fewer boulders and more of that warm golden sand tickling in between toes. Crystal clear water offering an excellent opportunity for snorkelling while taking away the comprehension of time surprised me after spending several hours just enjoying.

Did not caught any fish since I did not have the proper equipment. Well, I wasn't here for going to spearfishing. Instead, I had a few slices of bread with salty anchovy, with local medium-aged pecorino, which was a pleasant fit with half a bottle of Semidano white wine. I cut the dough with my Laguiole knife. It is a two-piece 12 cm model with a blade, a corkscrew, and black cow horn handle. An excellent companion manufactured for the past 200 years in village Laguiole of 1200 inhabitants in the heart of the Aubrac France located at an altitude of 1100 meters. Each of the knives is unique since they are entirely hand-made.

The tent was easy to put up. I put a few extra Paracord tethers to keep the refuge steady if it should start blowing during the night. The dusk was entering after sunset around 20:00. The Radius 119 was warmly hot while I gazed at the distance. Soon it was pitch black night with stars. I had to reduce the power of lantern to the minimum and lie down on the other side of the tent before I have able to get eyes used to darkness so I could see the stars as well as possible. The silence, dark and bright sky above was something outraging magnificent.

The eternal question of humankind and especially modern times must have been the thought if someone somewhere there in vast space was looking at us and thinking there as we are. Are we alone? Scientists are drawing theories and astronomers configuring their telescopes and other equipment from findings to another. The fact, however, is that no hard evidence of extraterrestrial intelligence or life form exists. We have, of course, seen quite many cases of ET encountering and legends of abduction in public.

It's strange how for instance five out of ten most notable abduction claims in history has appeared in the U.S. A sceptic mind would quickly think the U.S. is the best ground for paperback abduction book sales as well. Generally, paperback novels fall into the \$13.95 to \$17.95 price range in North-America. If you think of a book sold USD 17.95 and you multiply this with 250 copies in average per year or around 3,000 copies over its lifetime then this sums up roughly \$4500 per year or \$55000 in total sales. By writing ten separate books around the abduction along the way might total earnings over a half of million U.S. dollars. That is something to think about. Seriously.

After morning routines and minimalistic breakfast tea, I drove up to Capo Malfatano, and I walked through beige hay deeper to the peninsula on Torre di Capo Malfatano for magnificent 360-degree view extending to the sea. There is a tower of Torre di Capo Malfatano. It is among the 105 known ancient towers built against pirates starting to attack against

Sardinia in the eighth century. Built-in 1639 it was with lighter defence and were usually guarded by an artilleryman and two or three men, and typically equipped with two medium-calibre cannons, two pushers, and five rifles. The dimensions were about 13 meters in diameter and 10 in height. Over three hundred years this miniature fortress had stood against stormy weathers and alien invaders. While leaning with closed eyes to the rough, sun-warmed rock wall, I heard my heart silently whispering “I wish you were here.”

Next destination was Island of Sant’Antioco with the municipality of Sant’Antioco being the island’s largest community. No beach like Spiaggia di Monte Cogoni was expected. Historical perspective should be overwhelming in the Palaeo-Christian Basilica of Sant’Antioco and Ancient Acropolis. Yet I had so travelling to do while I was already in my dreams longing cool Tequila Screwdriver made with one shot of tequila, orange juice and a pinch of sea salt. It might be possible in some bar of Sant’Antioco, but that would be unthinkable and foolish. Having fresh swordfish fillet with roasted bell peppers and zucchini in a decent restaurant with chilled Limoncello as an after-dinner digestive would be considered a lot more preferable.

The Palaeo-Christian Basilica of Sant’Antioco is among the oldest churches in Sardinia. It is situated in front of Piazza De Gasperi. It produced a sweet retrospective moment with the silent skeletons in dark catacombs below the rush of daily life. There is a quite wide-spread network of catacombs under Sant’Antioco where among else a few fragments of frescos

can still be detected. According to legend, St Antiochus refused to recant his faith and was condemned by the Romans. An underground Christian group hid him in these catacombs after his successful escape to work in the island's lead mines. Based on this there may still be parts of undiscovered secret areas hidden.

Coming back to the surface of the earth, I felt a warm and fresh summer air breath. Small Espresso Martini enjoyed at the nearby market made me think if I had discovered enough of ancient culture for my appetite. I once more realised how far from home I was. Yet still, far from Mount Vesuvius and the town of Amalfi, I urged to experience. More than two thousand kilometres from my little cabin in Kalavarda village.

Tangerine blue

Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic.

- Arthur C. Clarke

I sat with my face to the sun on one old steel bench at the northern end of small Piazza Umberto of Sant'Antioco and enjoyed sheep milk ice cream. The massive palm trees surrounding the plaza were buzzing in the wind—the Land Rover I had parked in the shade of the dense trees growing over Corso Vittorio Emanuele. Mr Bertu Mentura was expecting me to return the vehicle by the end of the week and it was Tuesday already. I should then be heading back to Cagliari first about 35 km to the Northeast and then about 50 km to the East. It felt peaceful just to enjoy the sun and empty thoughts. Leaving here was a necessity that I could no longer push any further.

Manolis Lars Strakilis was a Swedish Greek man of his forties. Five feet seven inches tall and lightweight build, like a bird with a roman nose and falcon eyes. He had been flying since the age of fourteen, since his parents had a share of a private airfield in Hudiksvall, Sweden. He did his training with the family Cessna C 152 and now finally owned a plane of his dreams. He earned a living by providing wealthy people with old-time flight experiences.

I was untruly lucky to meet Lars earlier during the day while he had just flown from Naples International Airport. I understood he was eager to fly back this 400 km route even

the same day. Usually, he tried to avoid the risk of flying over the vast area of seas. This time the money helped him with decision making. Some suddenly enriched widow heiress had persuaded Lars to fly her to Sardinia with old-fashioned style to show off to relatives. After arrival, Lars had put up a sign at the airport clerk's desk. The sign was clear and straightforward. "*Wanna fly to Naples today? It will be a little different flight! Ask at the counter.*" There were not too many people present—only one older couple in front of me. I hear the disappointed comment from them to say "*OK. For only one person, erh. Then we are unable to take it, sorry.*"

Now it was my turn to persuade Lars to fly back with me even I most likely could not pay up to his standard fee. I reasoned that he had to go back anyway. I also had to go back, and for this excellent opportunity, I wanted to do it with style like his previous lady passenger. I had bought one week's travel from Athens and the time was due to tomorrow. I could hardly make the return flight departing from Cagliari Elmas Airport around 300 km from Olbia anyway. Maybe I could offer some reasonable sum of money and look at what it leads to. As we discussed the plane's operating features, it came clear to me that the engine consumed around 45 litres of kerosene on the hour. The 400 km distance would take us around two and a half hours expecting fair winds. The cost of fuel only would be 250 to 350 dollars, depending on what kind of agreement he had with the supplier. Of course, flying takes a lot more than just the fuel cost, especially on such rare old school planes.

While enjoying lunch at the airport cafeteria, we ended up

negotiating the financial aspects of the flight. My Negroni stared tasting too bitter. Campari was never my darling alcohol. Still, I continued persuading Lars.

– Lars, I'll pay you 250 dollars to take me to Naples, what do you say?

– Erh hmm...

– You need to return anyway. Why wouldn't you have some relief on the cost?

– What sort of luggage are you carrying?

– I have a backpack only.

– Then, let me put it this way. The lowest cost for you is three hundred dollars. No more, no less.

– Well... all right then. I'll give you 200 now and the hundred if we land safe and sound to Naples.

– Vad säger du? Vi flyger till Neapel och jag är jävla säkert att vi kommer dit också! Så inga bekymmer, min vänn.

– Erhm... OK.

– We leave in three hours. Grab your luggage and follow me.

The lunch ended as it was settled then. I did not mention Lars anything about being able to understand the Swedish language, though.

Olbia Costa Smeralda Airport is a medium-sized airport where commercial flights gradually returned after it was targeted by Allied bombing in World War II—introducing jet flights in the seventies. The current airport construction completed in 1974. The utterly new terminal was unveiled during summer 2004. Today it is capable of handling 4.5

million passengers per year. Despite heavy tourist traffic during the peak season, the airfield also supports non-commercial flight operations. Due to almost off-season time, the airport felt quiet and more significant to its size when we were walking to the hangar in bright sunlight.

“What a beauty” I yelled as Lars presented me the Spirit of Yellow Peril sitting in Olbia Costa Smeralda Airport, in the area reserved for small aeroplanes. It was a conventional biplane with a fabric-covered wooden wingspan of almost 10 meters. A vintage 1942 Boeing Stearman model 75 by Stearman Aircraft Division of Boeing in Wichita, Kansas, US. The previous model, Stearman’s Model 6 “Cloudboy”, was designed already long back in 1930. Before and during World War II Model 75 was used as a military trainer aircraft. It carries a crew of two, practically the student and instructor in open cockpits in tandem. After the war, most left survivors were sold as surplus. They grew quite popular as crop dusters and sports planes all over the US. One could acquire a single aircraft at \$500. Equipped with Continental R-670-5 seven-cylinder air-cooled radial engine roaring 220 hp it has an average cruise speed of 155 km/h with a service ceiling just a little above 4000 meters. It has a maximum take-off weight of 1,200 kg. By default, the Stearman has the range of travel about 440 kilometres without reserves. However, this aircraft had a 25-litre reserve tank, allowing about half-hour extra flight time.

In front of the hangar #7, we performed the aeroplane pre-flight inspection while Lars was explaining me some of the aircraft’s finer details. Lars guided me to the cockpit via a

walkway on the left lower wing. By using the handles on the centre section of the upper wing, the access was pretty easy. I soon sat there, in my quite spacey but spartan front cockpit where the sidewalls sit well above the shoulder line. This fact and a five-point harness were giving some feeling of security.

“Prat, prat, praat...Praatatata tata ta tataa tatataa” roared the engine without hesitation, creating a large puff of smoke, shaking the plane and rotating huge Hamilton Standard Model 5404 duralumin blade propeller. *“Avoid all engine operations above 1900 rpm except during take-off.”* said the yellow text on the blood-red label. To my left were a throttle and mixture control. Fore and aft trim levers being lower down. The magneto switch on my lower left and the carburettor heat to the right. There was all kind of analogue flight instruments on the black cockpit panel. On the right, the RPM/Tach gauge and a separate label were saying *“Max RPM 2075”*. Up left side an airspeed indicator in miles per hour and below that the altimeter. In the middle, at topmost, there was a wet compass nicknamed *“whiskey compass.”* This nickname originates from old times when alcohol was used as the primary lubricant and non-freezing liquid in a magnetic compass. Below the compass, there was the turn and bank indicator followed by another compass looking gauge, the heading indicator. To the right there we still a climb rate indicator and the engine oil temperature and pressure gauge and a small clock. The plane also had a pretty rectangular-shaped windshield protecting the passenger from the massive airflow generated by the large propeller.

I had a proper modern helmet but funny vintage flying

goggles that I was trying to adjust while Lars was already slowly taxiing the plane from hangar and passing by the terminal to the main runway. Olbia Costa Smeralda Airport only has one runway for smaller aeroplanes to use it as well. I felt like I was jumping back to 1942 when this great plane flew for the first time. Overwhelmed and at the same time, a little scared about the future. I knew we should be just fine since Lars as anyone else with such a great plane would not end up taking any risk in flight operations. So, instead of worrying, I decided to hang on and enjoy this extraordinary flight.

Boeing Stearman Model 75 has a take-off distance of about 300 meters with a max rate of climb from 4,5 to 10 m per second. We stopped, and Lars completed the pre-takeoff sequences before moving to the runway. At the end of the runway, Lars got the permit from air traffic control for take-off. He did not anticipate but pushed the throttle to the max, and with a thunderous roar, the aircraft immediately accelerated. Only a few moments after the tail was up, the runway re-appeared over the yellow nose, and we were raised to the sky. We were flying! Olbia Costa Smeralda Airport opened up below us. The blue heaven above just widened in between the upper and lower wings. Having a look at the ground, I could see all the small islands on Olbia port where cruise ships left for Livorno and Genova. As the aeroplane climbed higher, I felt a dizzying feeling. I think I even saw a glimpse of Museo Archeologico di Olbia down there while Lars made the plane fly towards the Northeast and over the deep blue sea. It felt like I was driving over 150 km an hour on the most powerful device in the amusement park yet a lot better.

I was staring at the clock on my cockpit panel. I realised I was practically time travelling in two ways. At first, I sat on this magnificent aeroplane from the past and secondly we were flying east where the day is ahead of us. Thinking of time dilation how it explains why two working clocks will report different times after different accelerations. Time dilation has been several times demonstrated. Scientists have discovered small disparities in a pair of atomic clocks after one of them is sent on a space trip. For instance, on watches in the Space Shuttle running slightly slower than Earth reference clocks. As strange it may sound, time dilation is a thing that technically provides the means for time travel. Cuddly small brown teddy bear mascot was hanging in the cockpit. It reminded me about Quenza and also the mascots being taken in cockpits of Soyuz rockets where the mission mascots serve a serious purpose. After the rockets have finished burning and the spaceship reaches orbit, the toys will start floating free. They indicate to the crew that they are now in weightlessness. Well, this time the service ceiling was at 4300 meters, and we were probably flying about 1000 meter lower altitude over the Tyrrhenian Sea. Even larger ships seemed small. It was a fascinating feeling to look at them with such visible details you seldom ever notice from a modern jet aeroplane.

I felt Aeolus, the son of Hippotes and keeper of the winds providing us with a west wind to carry us to Naples. I felt intoxicated by the atmosphere only old world aeroplane and open cockpit could offer. All I could see in the left and front side was the blue cottonwool hanging over the sea in the distance. Due to the winds, we were not flying direct line

from Olbia to Naples but little more like an arc-shaped route. We had already passed the arc peak and now closing to Naples from the Northwest. To my right, I saw rays of the setting sun reflecting from the yellow wings. It made the colours being genuinely vivid. The orange sun shone in the distance, and yellow wings flew over that vast blueness. I was amazed how true it was what Vincent Van Gogh once wrote, “There is no blue without yellow and without orange, and if you put in the blue, then you must put in the yellow and orange too, mustn’t you?”

*When cockle shells turn into silvery bells,
then will my love return to me.
When roses grow in the wintery snow,
then will my love return to me.*

*Oh waly, waly, love be by me
and bright as a jewel when first new...*

*But love grows old, and waxes cold,
and fades away like morning dew.*

*There is a ship, it sails the sea,
It’s loaded high and (as) deep can be.
But not so deep as my love for you.
I know not if I sink or swim.*

Oh waly, waly, love be by me

Bright as a jewel when first new...

But love grows old and waxes cold,
and fades away like morning dew

“Waly, Waly – Eva Cassidy”

Amalfi amore

L'estetica è soprattutto una prospettiva italiana - i pensieri dello scrittore

An American poet and educator Henry Wadsworth Longfellow has a beautiful poem "*Amalfi*" published in an anthology named Poem of Places. I hardly can recall the complete poem but the first few lines I had written in my sketchbook a long time ago. It starts like this.

*Sweet the memory is to me
Of a land beyond the sea,
Where the waves and mountains meet,
Where amid her mulberry-trees
Sits Amalfi in the heat,
Bathing ever her white feet
In the tideless summer seas.*

The landing to Naples airport did not go as smoothly as expected. All was well until the landing gear on the right partially deceived the strength of the arrival. Lars succeeded to keep the plane on the tarmac, but I managed to hit the left wrist quite hard to the flight instruments on the cockpit side. Lars felt terrible for letting me down; even it was a mechanical failure and not directly his fault. The plane was under continuous service program and just had less than 25 flight hours after the last check-up. We agreed I could have half of my money back as Lars insisted I would not give him up if I should go to the hospital for a check-up. I was aware that the human wrist and palm have a total of thirteen bones. Eight of them are in the wrist only. I started looking for the

nearest hospital.

The wrist was checked. X-ray examination revealed that there was a fracture of one bone at the wrist. The doctor informed that the symptoms are usually mild: pain, slight swelling at the thumb side of the wrist, and pain associated with moving and using the hand. She prescribed some pain killers and wished me well as the symptoms usually go away within 1-2 weeks. So I ended up wandering the streets of sunny Naples with possible two-week convalescence ahead. What should I do? The fact was that I should be soon going back home. This message banged my occipital.

On the other hand, I was just close to the Amalfi coast, and I knew I could not let that pass without regretting. There are several ways to get from Naples to Amalfi. By train, taxi, bus and car. The recommended approach is by taking the train from Napoli P. Garibaldi to Via Nocera and then taking the cab from Via Nocera to Amalfi. This should take about one and a half hours. In theory but the practice, I would be lucky to reach my destination within the same day. Well, I had too few options to choose from. Could not rent a lovely small Italian sports car and make one joyful ride down to the beautiful lemon groves either.

While pondering the alternatives, I was digging deep the backpack to empty it for fast full inventory. At the bottom of it, I found my Peterson, the oldest continuously operating pipe-markers Irish Made Army 101 Tobacco Pipe. Buried and forgotten even the advertisement claims it is a perfect choice

for a pipe to carry in your pocket all day long. Well, not entirely wrong, I had carried it in my backpack for the whole long journey. In the next corner shop, I bought some Dunhill Three Year Matured, a box of matches and filled the pipe. Smoking a pipe is not so much ordinary as it used to be. I think I learned this questionable skill from my father though he heavily insisted on me not to. He was an architect and had smoked the pipe since he did not wish to drop hot ash on drawings.

Finally arriving at Amalfi became an exceptional experience while encountered from backseat of taxi rolling through a narrow street to Amalfi City centre. A high mountain on a left and devious drop to the blue sea on the right side. I was occasionally going through shady tunnels and the opening fantastic views towards the market square, Amalfi to Capri ferry terminal and all fresh blue sea. I thanked for the ride and paid little too much extra to the driver, but I ended up thinking it was all worth it. My aching hand was happy to escape any steering wheel activity. As I felt hungry and relieved, I had some late lunch with Ciabatta bread with olive oil, ground black pepper, slices of tomato topped with salty anchovy and some small capers. Delicious lunch that made me think of childhood breakfasts like big dark and a sweet slice of archipelago bread with butter and thin slices of gravlax and fresh dill on top. I was, however, experiencing the essence of Amalfi, Italy and therefore could not escape *Delizia al Limone* dessert with a glass of cold *Limoncello* digestive.

A few days in Amalfi and surroundings filled my memory bank with beauty and crowds. Sunny days with way too many

dollars spent on food and accommodation. I only had dollars with me since it was the most convenient way of having money while hopping from a country to another. Amalfi was great but maybe a little overrated to my taste. Very tiny and limited spot on the rocky coast of Italy. I loved every step, but it seemed as if I could get no traction in life. Yet after discovering Amalfi to be the most expensive location after Paris and London, I just wished to return home. I prepared a strait forward plan in my mind. First to leave Amalfi and reach Rome for Fiumicino airport. Then take a flight to Athens and reach a ferry to Rhodes. Basic and no fuzz plan.

So It was back to Naples by taxi again. The left wrist was not aching so much but certainly was too sore for any driving. Then a dull Italian train from Naples to Rome. The only joy of travelling by train was sleep. As much you can imagine one can sleep when there is a mid full car of other passengers and their noisy offsprings. It was a relief to reach Rome. Since there was plenty of time before my flight, I went for a little sightseeing bus tour to refresh the list of the most famous sights in my memory. The weather was really on my side though it was close to the halfway of the fall.

Gods live on islands and so do monsters

“Life shrinks or expands in proportion to one’s courage.”
– Anais Nin

It is a pretty beautiful feeling to be back on your land. The date is on the 3. of November. I had travelled countless distance since the early days of April. It felt like being for too long. Leaving here eight months ago is like an eternity: Spring and the whole Mediterranean summer I had spent seeking myself. I do admit I became seriously homesick toward the end of the unplanned journey. I don’t think if I ever felt such away in the past. It probably happens when you start growing old and yes, low on cash.

To the south of the French island of Corsica lies the Italian island of Sardinia, the second-largest island in the Mediterranean Sea. Among Corsica, Sardinia had always been my number one preferred destination. The nature and climate despite my personal favourite, The Lighthouse of Faro Capo Spartivento would make me suggest Sardinia be among the top five Mediterranean locations for every travelling individual to enter. I was extremely fortunate to visit and experience all the people and places during my odyssey. For me, this has been the voyage of a lifetime.

I have finally returned to my home where Rhode, the sea nymph, once became the protector goddess of the island in

Greek mythology. Born as the daughter of Poseidon she came to Rhodes and became the wife of Helios the Sun god. Helios was one of the Titans, son of Hyperion and Theia portrayed as driving a four-horse chariot across the sky daily. All in all, Helios and Rhode had seven sons, collectively called the Heliadae, and one daughter, Electryone. The Heliadae then became astronomers and rulers of the island. There are so many famous characters in Greek mythology that one can quickly get a little confused. Then it is essential to narrow down and try to identify the ones that will most likely affect your life. It's not necessarily so easy to distinguish good from evil.

The Cyclops are Greek giants and monsters in the mythology of Greek. They only have one eye in the middle of the forehead. Unfortunately, they did not possess either social manners nor fear of the Greek Gods. Three children of Uranos and Gaia were the three-first Cyclops who helped the gods of Olympus in battles against the mighty Titans. Kronos, the strongest of all titans suffered terrible destiny with his fellow titans. His children overthrew him with help from Zeus. Kronos was captured and closed in Tartarus where the Furies would torture him until the end of times. Throughout Greek mythology, there are stories of gods born and living on islands. The given fact might be due to scattered and numerous, perhaps inaccessible islands. Delos was considered the birthplace of the god Apollo. Zeus, the actual father of all other gods, was born in Crete. It is also believed that the Cyclops lived on some a distant island as well. I did not meet

any Cyclops, but I sure felt the presence of the gods on several occasions. I was also to meet the monsters living on the island.

My old friend, Ned Andersen, gives me the news. At first, he urges me to sit down and have a glass of decent Balvenie 12-Year-Old whisky. The story turns out not too well for me at all. Daphnes Lullaby has been shipwrecked and sunk. What I hear she did go down luckily without any personal injury though. The insurance company is still investigating the situation. The captain has taken in custody. It does not end here, however. Bad and even worse news continues. Our home at Kalavarda has burned to the ground. All is lost. Another insurance company is still investigating the situation with the police.

When police later interrogate me, I am utterly devastated and only able to murmur “oh yeah, oh hell yeah”. I’m being questioned and if I had any alibi against insurance fraud since this is what authorities first suspect. I tell them I only have the low-cost necessary insurances taken. I have been travelling for a longer time and just recently arrived back. All is lost, everything is gone and made by monsters of sea and fire. Tears were falling. Would I have been able to prevent disasters from happening if I was not selfishly travelling? Let it remain a mystery.

*I have come from the city of Rome. I bring you a welcome gift
with a sharp point³ that you may remember me.
I ask, if fortune allowed, that I might be able to give
as generously as the way is long and as my purse is empty.*

She looks beautiful as ever. My wife is standing there smiling in bright sunlight with her summer floral shirt, a workman's jeans, and sturdy footwear. She wears my grandfather's old hat amusingly tilted and has a big bowl of ripe red cherries on her hands.

I hug her tight and kiss her.

I love her.

³ The iron stylus – used to write on wax-filled wooden writing tablets – dates to around AD 70, just a few decades after Roman London was founded.

“By twelve o'clock we had everything on board. Lois wrote "Only the mountains never meet" in our guestbook in a neat schoolgirlish hand, and Niko heard my lesson one last time: "My grandfather's hat is in the garden." We glided slowly out from the jetty, tacked toward the little white cathedral and then headed due south. The breeze was as strong as a summer sou'westerly on a July day at home in the Gulf of Finland archipelago, with small white wave-crests glistening across the bay and a good fresh spray over the bows, but instead of low, smooth granite slabs and wind-bent pines there were high blue mountains silhouetted against a warmer sky. ”

- Göran Schildt, 1951 “In The Wake Of Ulysses”.

This collection of short stories took me longer than ever expected, almost nine years to complete. The daily writing degenerated into a monthly task, and towards till the end, I had long pauses in between any book writing. The “Expeditions Irresistible” blog suffered a lot of this, and even the rarest visitors finally disappeared at the end.

The whole story of the “Expeditions Irresistible” blog first started like most of the blogs at that time around fifteen years ago. It became my place of thoughts, poems, and all insignificant scribblings that for some reason was plenty. Only later, after several years, I discovered the truth, like hidden, the meaning of all the loose stories. They unawares started to grow into a logical series of short stories. Stories that built up the first collection of Somewhere on the other side — Short stories written under the Aegean sun. The new short story collection turned out to be this book “My Grandfather’s Hat is in The Garden” you are reading.

After growing up with reading some of the significant travel writers such as Lawrence Durrell, George Millar and magnificent Göran Schildt, I undoubtedly have been

influenced heavily by their superiority. The joy of sharing my inspiration and gratitude for them has been my fuel of exploration and humble production.

These are the stories where I have lived the dream of my life, my writing dream, that I'm incredibly pleased.

Cheerio

Yumatzuga © 24.5.2020



My Grandfather's Hat is in The Garden

*This dinghy was a tiny 6 feet inflatable with
paddles. I had prepared it in use after Van
Emst expedition taking the proper one.
After a few paddle swings later, I was
welcome to have a cup of tea with smiling
bunch of the most bright-eyed children
and their lovely chaperone, Ms Amandiakis.*



This work is owned by its author with all rights reserved.
End user may not distribute without the permission of the copyright holder.
First edition © 2020