

## The Ancient Mariner



‘High time you served before the mast,’ announced Jim in a fine old maritime manner when David returned from Calabria in July. An old friend of his, it seemed, lived on a yacht somewhere on the Tuscany coast. ‘A bit mad you know, or was. Always in need of a crew.’ David found himself wondering what happened to the previous crews and had visions of walking the plank and keel hauling. Not altogether encouraging prospects although Jim assured him there weren’t many man-eating sharks in the Mediterranean.

‘What’ll you do?’

Jim beamed. ‘Oh I’ll potter about and keep out of everyone’s way.’

‘Where’ll we go?’

‘How about Greece. Visit the oracle at Delphi. See what she’s got to say for herself. Ithaca perhaps. Ulysses took nineteen years to make it, I rather hope we’ll manage in less.’ They traveled first to Rome and then by train up the flat coast to Orbitello. Across the lagoon stood the headland of Argentario with Porto Santo Stefano tucked among its northern bays.

‘Blue Dawn’ moored alongside the Cantiere Navale possessed at first untutored glance all the romantic appeal of a boat straight out of the Spanish Armada; a long bowsprit underhung by nets, a raised stern, two soaring masts with rope rigging up to the crosstrees and bundles of patched red sails strung along booms and yardarms. Her pedigree like his own was uncertain. Whether it had once been windjammer or pilot cutter age and innovation concealed and David neither knew or cared, but in his imagination she only needed Long John Silver and they could be Treasure Island bound.

A springy plank led across to the stern. Judging by knocking noises inside Jim’s old friend seemed busily occupied. ‘Oh it’s you,’ he called out. ‘Come on down. I’ve got this job to finish. Most important. That’s it, don’t mind the mess.’

David climbed down carefully into the galley and through to the main cabin. Bench seats softened by tatty cushions surrounded a big table littered with unwashed plates and a couple of much penciled charts. Stained photographs and mildewed books lined the walls. Jim’s friend was busy fixing a gadget to the paneling. In it he inverted a bottle of very dark rum. ‘It’s an optic,’ Jim whispered. ‘Got it from a pub in Dover,’ said the skipper, making a practice delivery run with a handy glass and moving back to relish his handiwork. He fixed David with a beady eye. ‘Stops the crew being too greedy.’

Push up once for a single and no doubles mind. And nothing at all until the sun sets over the yardarm. ‘



David's first impression of this Ancient Mariner was a wiry sea salt man, skin tanned to creased leather a stubble of iron grey hair and pale watercolor eyes. ‘Put the kettle on will you,’ said he and leaving David to fumble in the galley he helped Jim down with their bags. ‘With or without,’ asked the Ancient Mariner when David carried in mugs of blackish tea. David settled for ‘with’ until he realized it was rum not sugar he was talking about. ‘So when are we off?’ asked Jim. ‘Five bells, that suit you?’ ‘Aye, aye, sir,’ David felt obliged to reply.

‘But what are five bells,’ He asked later when Jim was trying to make room in their forward cabin mostly taken up with damp and patched sails.

‘I used to know a pub called the Five Bells. Perhaps it's the same as opening time, though it's more likely to be slap in the middle of my dreams. Goodnight.’ Lying in the damp dark David fell asleep to the slop of water against the bows and the creak of rigging overhead. It seemed barely minutes later that he felt a tight unfamiliar, grip on his arm. ‘Need you up on deck,’ said the Ancient Mariner and vanished. A faint orange glow silhouetted the outline of headland and harbor. David sniffed in scents of seaweed, sawn planks, dead fish, diesel fumes and tar that somehow belong to the sea and went back to find A.M. busy starting the engine. ‘Cast off,’ he shouted as David nimbled ashore to free the mooring ropes. ‘Hurry up. I've put her slow ahead.’ And while David struggled to heave in the plank A.M. trotted up front to winch in the anchor.

‘Neutral’ he shouted back, bent over the bows. ‘Steer to port.’ Grabbing the wheel David eased it over glancing at the back of his hand where Jim had thoughtfully inked a P on one and an S on the other. With A.M. securing the anchor and barking unintelligible orders David forced the reluctant gear lever to ‘Ahead’ and steered for the harbor entrance narrowly avoiding a fishing boat that appeared from nowhere going full blast over the milky grey sea. ‘Head into the wind,’ shouted A.M. once they were out into the open sea. ‘And come and help me with these blasted sails.’



Getting soundly cussed for his ignorance David heaved at ropes and grabbed for a hold on thrashing sails, scurrying about under A.M.'s abuse, coiling here and stowing there. Then as A.M. steered off the wind, with a whip crack of canvass the sails filled and Blue Dawn tilted her bows smartly into the first buffeting waves.



When David got back to the cockpit A.M. was concentrating on pissing over the stern. ‘Never pass water to windward,’ he instructed, but David got that muddled as well later on and came back from hanging over the shrouds to find he had doused A.M. with a generous spray. By now the wind had risen and they were fairly humming along, the headland spreading out behind, the island of Giglio away to the west and far to the north the faintest suggestion of the mountains of Elba .

Jim cooked scrambled eggs but David hardly got that down before A.M. decided to haul up the other jib sails and then raise the big stern mizzen. After that Blue Dawn really heeled over, snorting through washy seas, parting wave crests and thumping down in giant belly flops that showered spray over the decks.

During that first morning David learned the romance of sail the hard way. Every moment mattered for the Ancient Mariner and when David wasn’t scrubbing coiling or cleaning he was set to whip rope ends until they passed A.M.’s finicky scrutiny who then started him reciting the names of every rope, spar, rigging clew and piece of sail he could think of. Then when David was finally allowed to steer and stood barefoot at the wheel humming a sea shanty, A.M.’s beady eye noticed the sails wobbling and cursed with all the robust threats of the Spanish Inquisition. Only when the Argentario headland finally vanished into the horizon did A.M. relax a little. ‘High time I left there,’ he muttered. ‘I still owe them my winter mooring fee. This by the way is Looney.’

Until that moment David had never suspected another fellow human lurked beneath the ship’s decks. Looney was aptly, if cruelly named; his thin twisted frame was racked by persistent coughs, a burnt out cigarette stuck on his lip and a spoon dangled on a string around his neck, Only half of his face smiled but he used that to welcome David. The spoon was not a feeding utensil. ‘If he ever throws a fit,’ instructed A.M. ‘Shove it in his mouth. Stops him biting his tongue off.’

Looney like some relic found on the beach, had been acquired during a winter moored up at Gibraltar. He lived somewhere beneath the stern among paint pots and prop. shaft, eking out an existence on fags, old tea bags and dregs of rum. It was not that the Ancient Mariner was cruel; he just had no sense of sympathy whatsoever.



Tough and resilient himself he had no patience with anyone who complained. During that first day with the seas slopping all over and David expected to jump about the decks and rigging like a monkey he rather inadvisably inquired about life jackets. There weren't any and as if to justify these deficiencies the A.M. barked, 'If you are going to drown then the sooner the better. No sense in prolonging the agony.'



In fact the 'man overboard' drill consisted of a packet of sliced and very moldy bread placed beside the helmsman. If anyone left the ship prematurely you were supposed to toss out slices of bread so that when the ship turned about she would be able to follow her way back to the unlucky victim.

Or as Jim commented, 'You could eat your way back to the ship if the seagulls didn't peck there first.'

The food on board lived up to the standard of the bread and consisted of a large assortment of very old and very rusty unmarked tins. The Ancient Mariner didn't concern himself with these things, he appeared to thrive off sea air and the tarry tobacco he smoked in a blackened pipe. He despised all creature comforts. The toilet had long since ceased to flush and the lavatory consisted of a large bucket which he insisted be used only on the forward deck. In a steep sea the daily endeavor, as Jim remarked, became quite a hazardous operation.

All these deficiencies became insignificant when compared to the condition of the ship itself. Pretty as a picture from a distance, ('A long distance'), closer inspection revealed main beams so rotten the timber crushed like sponge to the touch while the masts and deck appeared to move independently of the hull. The hull itself leaked like a sieve taking in at minimum two feet of sea an hour with only two hand pumps to control it.

'Goodness knows what'll happen when we hit a storm,' Jim remarked. There were no technical aids like a radio or transmitter on board and the only tools were rusted beyond recognition. For measuring speed and distance A.M. used what he called a 'Dutchman's Log' and consisted of tossing a slice of bread over the bows and counting the number of seconds it took to float to the stern. The distance was marked on the deck but he relied on someone else to make the calculation. Every noon A.M, got the sextant out and prepared to 'shoot the sun.' He put on a very nautical performance. While David called the countdown on the ship's chronometer (A tin alarm clock from Woolworth's guaranteed to gain ten minutes a day) the A.M. pursed his lips, cocked his head and raised the instrument to his eye like a shotgun.





When David shouted zero, A.M. twiddled the dials like mad, glared at the calibration and strode below to work out the position. How accurate he was no one ever knew as he was extremely reluctant to reveal the charts, most of which appeared to be of the Solent or the Firth of Clyde, and these were all covered with question marks.

‘Not exactly relevant to our present cruising,’ said Jim, ‘At least I hope not. A.M. relied on instinct. ‘It’s a wonderful gift,’ he told. David. ‘Very few people apart from the Polynesians possess it. They could navigate thousands of miles without a compass.’ Fortunately Blue Dawn still possessed one of those although Jim suggested it might be an idea to chain it up in case A.M. decided to pawn it when he got short of rum money.

A.M. navigated chiefly with an old pair of binoculars trying to recognize where he was even when there was no land visible. He had a lot of mumbo jumbo about seeing land in cloud reflections but David rather unfairly assumed he was just keeping a hopeful look out as well he might with water leaking in the rate it did. A.M. certainly lost no opportunity to hail any other ship or yachtsman. As he didn’t speak any other language but his own his method of being understood was to shout the same thing louder and louder ‘until it gets through their thick skulls.’ Fortunately the comments of some Italian fishermen were lost on him.

By these means and without any difficulty since they could see it all the way, they reached Elba in the late afternoon beating past the southern headland and tacking up the long inlet to Porto Azzuro. Blue Mountains rose back into the island, an old Spanish fort stood on a sandstone bluff and the town, all tile roofs and whitewashed walls lay tucked around the sheltered harbor crammed full of boats.

They dropped anchor outside partly because A.M. had a strong dislike to modern yachts, ‘Tupperware’, he called them, but mostly because the engine had an uneasy habit of sticking in gear and accelerating on its own much to the consternation of the owners of the neat rows of trim yachts parading along the warfs as Blue Dawn hurtled down on them like a death wish. Jim was in a generous mood that evening and when David had rowed the ship’s company minus Loony, ashore, he treated them to a seafood supper. He and A.M. got pleasantly sozzled and at midnight David rowed they back singing to the ship, ghostly pale in the darkness, its masthead light swaying like star over the inky swell.



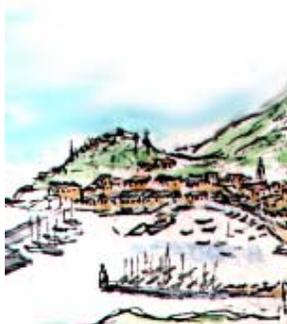
They spent a week circumnavigating Elba, sailing in light and usually contrary breezes, stopping in protected bays (Marino Campo) and the old fortified harbor of Porto Ferrara. Each morning the Ancient Mariner's calloused claw roused David who immediately dived overboard into the marvelous clear water. Each evening he rowed the A.M. and the elderly cabin boy ashore for their evening tot while he shopped for groceries, grease, toilet paper, varnish, screws, wine and anything else penciled on the list. Owing to the strong possibility of desertion Looney was invariably confined aboard and spent the evening drinking meths in the cubbyhole under the tiller.



At Porto Ferrara A.M. grudgingly took on fuel and water and set off down the eastern side of the island dotted with mine workings. Beating into the eye of a fresh wind they cleared the southern headland by mid afternoon and steered south west towards the mountain of MonteCristo, standing out far ahead on the horizon.

It was twilight before they reached the island but A.M didn't want to stop. 'There's no protected mooring,' he explained. 'Only safe way is to drop a bow anchor, put two stern ropes onto those rocks and keep the engine running in case the wind changes. You're not supposed to land anyway. It's a nature reserve. There's only a ruined church, and a few cottages. The place is overrun with goats.'

So although David would have liked to sneak ashore and explore he had to be content with the forbidden island keeping its secrets as they sailed on past into the night towards Giglio. Dark slopping seas broke over the deck. Neither moon nor stars were visible to aid the Ancient Mariners Polynesian navigation but fortunately they were able to steer on a faint cluster of lights on the mountaintop citadel of Giglio Castello. Sometime before dawn the lighthouse on the Northern Cape showed and as they rounded the tip of the island under its watchful stare David wondered what succession of shipwrecks had led to that particular name Capo Morto (Cape Death).



Giglio Marina was a pretty harbored cove under the steep hill slopes of the island but it was an awful place to maneuver a yacht. 'The bottom is crisscrossed with rusty cables,' said A.N. as David reluctantly let go the anchor into their clutches while Jim reversed stern first into the packed lines of boats murmuring friendly enticements at the engine. The whole harbor was a cats cradle of mooring ropes and anchor chains but A.M. shouted until a boy on the warf took their lines and they moored on the outside of

this cheerful confusion just as the boats inside woke up and started to think of leaving,

Everyone stepping over everyone else, casting off, tying up, finding they were fouled on someone else's anchor or the notorious cables. Leaving A.M. and Looney to guard Blue Dawn Jim and David caught a bus across the high top of the island to a beach on the far side where Jim painted a tower and David swam and slept in the sun as though he hadn't been to bed for a week.



From Giglio they sailed south across sparkling seas to Gianutri, a humpy island shaped like a seahorse with Spalmatoi inlet to protect them from everything but a strong south-east blow. The water was clearer than at Elba and with the dingy they explored some deep grottos under the cliffs at the tail of the island and climbed up to a roman temple on a headland facing out north over the blue sea with Giglio in the distance.

The north wind that blew them past Ponza and Ventotenne took them towards the green mountains of Ischia and on the second day they sailed out of the sunset to moor below a castle dropping anchor in the lee of the causeway as the moon rose to haunt the dark water and unseen ghosts watched from the sombre castle on the crag above.



A morning here to stretch legs and buy supplies in the old cobblestone port of Ischia and they sailed away past Procida and the flat topped volcano of Solfatore, sails spread out, rolling in a stately fashion across the shipping lanes of the Bay of Naples towards the jagged mountains of Capri with David perched out on the bowsprit singing sea shanties and tooting on his recorder.

Capri seemed to attract sudden vicious gusts of wind. One thrust them into the concrete wall of the harbor and another tore them out the next morning leaving Blue Dawn becalmed shortly after. During their trip round the island they passed by the famous blue grotto with dozens of small boats waiting outside. David was more impressed by the huge natural arches on the south of the island that the A.M. risked steering through before an evening wind whisked them away towards the rugged Amalfi coastline.

'This is real Ulysses country,' said Jim. 'See those rocks.' (Some distance ahead three sharp crags poked out of the sea.), 'The Galli', David read from the chart. 'The Sirens,' said A.M., 'If you remember your "Odyssey"'

'Add mermaids and music,' said Jim, 'And no sailor would stand a chance.' It was difficult to imagine A.M. being seduced this or any other way, but taking no chances and having no wish to lay their bones alongside they kept going and anchored in the dusk off Laurito, a cove south of Positano.

A.M. wasn't at all happy about stopping the night there, 'With everything from a northeaster across to a southeasterly able to blow us to smithereens.' But Jim had promised to visit some friends who lived 'Two hundred steps above sea level,' David rowed him ashore and they climbed slowly and steeply up among wild figs and straggling olive trees until they came to what had been an olive mill. Outside, under a grove of lemon trees Jim sat chatting to his friends Barbara and Ernesto while below in the twilight they watched Blue Dawn riding at anchor, her lamp shining from the masthead.

'You know,' said Jim, 'I wonder if it isn't better to dream voyages than to do them.'

'You sound as if you want to stay here, Jim,' said Barbara. 'It must be the Galli.'

'Ah, just to sit here under the lemon tree, to drink the wine and watch the blue sea. What a life for a lotus eater.'

A.M. was right about the anchorage. During the night the wind got up and Blue Dawn heaved and sloped about until they had to strap themselves into their bunks. Once A.M. called David to help lay out a second anchor but the dingy tossed so much he decided they might get swamped in the attempt and abandoned the idea, leaving the anchor on the stern counter.

The onshore wind increased and at dawn A.M. decided to leave at once but the engine stopped abruptly and refused to turn. It was then they discovered the spare anchor rope had slipped overboard and was as tight as a drum. 'Damn thing's wound round the prop.' A.M. exclaimed. By now they were pitching so badly they had to clutch with both hands to stand up. At the foot of the cliffs thirty yards away vicious waves were hurling cannons of spray over the rocks but the most awesome sight was the way white clouds were being sucked out of the sky above Positano, sliding down the cliffs and blasting over the sea, tearing off wave crests in sheets. The dingy behind them sometimes took off and flew on its mooring rope.

'It'll get better soon,' said A.M. 'Once the day warms up that downdraught will cease. Then David can dive overboard and sort out the propeller.'

A.M. was right. After an hour the clouds stopped rolling over the cliff and the sea broke up into a big clumsy swell. Underwater it was easy to see what had happened. The anchor rope was wound so tight round the propeller David had to cut it. He couldn't see the bottom, just murky swirling depths.



They motored off without incident, set a reefed mainsail and a storm jib and fairly flew along the coast to Amalfi, entering the harbor just as the town prepared to celebrate its annual regatta. Ashore the local saint was on parade escorted by bands and banners and medieval costumes, while on the beach the galleys from Venice, Pisa, Genoa and Amalfi—the four maritime republics, were undergoing last minute polishing.

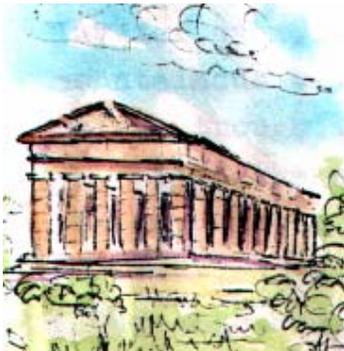


Watched by a vast flotilla of small craft plus an Italian destroyer the race started out at sea in the late afternoon, (By now the sea had calmed right down.) Although Pisa took the lead early on Amalfi passed them and to the frenzied accompaniment of cheering, rockets, church bells, boat horns and massed bands, the home crew came into the finish a length ahead. The flotilla at once dissembled and streaked across the harbor mouth in all directions with A.M. cursing in true deep-sea style as he weaved out without being hit and steered a course south for Agropoli.

Once again the wind got up in the night and Blue Dawn surfed down the waves to reach the broad empty harbor of Agropoli by daybreak. And here they rested for two days while Jim took off to explore the Greek temples at Paestum.

Paestum took David by surprise; tall pleated columns like guards on parade keeping watch over the receding sea, over the receding past, motionless, never moving a muscle, and yet in their eyes saying something, something that David for all his trying couldn't understand. Jim had no such problems of interpretation. With his sun umbrella tied to an oleander bush he sat on his folding stool and painted happily away.

South of Agropoli the coastline seemed to change and the sea also. A spur of land pushed a shoal of mottled undersea rocks before it to create Punto Licosa; a lighthouse on an islet that marked their entry into another realm where the sea changed from clear to crystal clear and the land seemed somehow less used; headlands capped by crumbling towers webbed together with coves of white sand or bleached pebble, sleepy harbors like Aciaroli and Camerota where sword fish were carved up and sold over the cobbles and a single tap that never worked supplied everyone. He had been here with Carlo but now, viewed from the sea he might have been seeing it for the first time like Ulysses. Hills fell down to the sea in a tangle of mottled greens. Inland pinewoods clutched the gaunt mountains like desperate refugees and the air was heady with the dry bruised scent of myrtle.



Something of the hurry also went out of the Voyage. They were content to drift from one harbor to the next. At likely spots David rowed Jim ashore and swam until he was ready to return. Aboard A.M. passed the time stitching sails, bullying Looney, spitting, polishing and spitting again.

After Camerota they abandoned the land altogether and set out for Stromboli leaving at dusk and sailing through the night. With a fine northerly wind pushing them along they reached the island the following afternoon; a single black volcano rising out of the sea with nowhere to anchor safely except off what ever happened to be a lee shore at the time. The wind having veered to the south they lay off the north coast and keeping vigil David watched the dull explosions and fiery belches of flame the shot out of the crater high above every few hours throughout the night.

The winds in the Aeolian Islands are by nature light and variable and. they ended up (much to irritation) motoring to Sicily where they passed through the straits (without meeting either Scilla or Charybdis) and. entered the Ionian sea. According to A.M. this piece of water was notorious for storms but they were fortunate and although they had to beat across the gulf of Taranto against a north easterly wind the weather remained fine and after clearing Capo Lucia in a golden haze of sunset they headed into the straits of Otranto towards Corfu and Greece.

The storm took them completely by surprise. One moment they were sailing east under a light northerly breeze and next a whole gale blowing out of the south slapped Blue Dawn far over on its side, tore the tops off the waves and churned the sea into a maelstrom. 'Let the sails go!' shouted A.M., trying to luff up into the wind. From below came a tremendous crash of breaking objects while on the tilting deck lashed by waves David crawled forwards to the bows and. managed to haul in. two of the jibs leaving only the storm sail set. Struggling not to be swept away he got back to help A.M. winch down t he mainsail leaving only a reefed mizzen flapping .

By now, even in darkness the seas were a horrifying sight. Coiling avalanches of foaming water tore off in great sheets of spray and surged down on them. Blue Dawn pointing as close as she dared , lay far over, half awash, laboriously rising to each mountainous sea and lurching down hard into every bottomless trough.

When the storm struck they were only a few miles off Capo Lucia and even David knew Otranto wasn't so far away. But A.M. had a strong fear for entering unfamiliar and poorly lit small harbors by night. 'In a storm, laddie, you're always safer out at sea.' Beware of a lee shore .Remember that!



Down below amid a mess of broken mugs and up turned cupboards Jim was trying to brew up cocoa while Looney desperately worked at the pumps. In the cockpit blasted by spray and breaking seas, A.M. kept stern unyielding grip on the wheel his gaunt face alert for the slightest change in the shriek and roar of the storm.

‘Go below, laddie,’ he shouted at David. ‘Looney can man the pumps for an hour. Go and get some rest. I’ll be calling you soon enough, don’t you worry.’



If anything it was worse for David lying in his bunk than being on deck. He lay there eyes wide staring upwards, listening acutely, feeling the bows plunge, hearing the shriek and whine of the gale and the great thuds of waves battering the hull, holding his breath with numb fear when she heeled far far over as though she would never right herself again, praying, beseeching, imploring the storm to lessen just a little.

Then during one of those never ending lurches a shriek sounded above the roar of the gale and Looney came running through the boat. ‘She’s sinking he screamed, his mouth working with terror and froth dribbling at the corners. ‘She’s sinking She’s going fast!’ He clutched at David, his eyes starting from their sockets, then he fell to the floor shaking in uncontrollable spasms. ‘Shove that spoon in his mouth!’ bellowed A.M. from above. ‘Shove in that blasted spoon quick before he bites his tongue off’

‘You’d better help with the pumps,’ Jim advised in a calm voice, coming to the rescue.

What had happened was that one of the timbers had started loose and the sea was fairly spurting into the bilges. Water was swishing above the floorboards and even working flat out the pumps could scarcely make any headway at all. At this moment the boat rolled over onto its other beam as A.M. managed to put her about. ‘Try to take some of the strain off,’ he shouted down to them. David pumped until his back broke and his muscles seized and he still went on pumping but the seas came in quicker and after a few more hours with no letup in the storm things were getting desperate. ‘Come up here,’ A.M. shouted and David climbing into the cockpit was surprised to see a grey dawn breakage among ragged clouds. A.M. pointed. ‘Somewhere over there is Punto San Cataldo. According to the Admiralty Pilot there’s some sort of anchorage.



I'm starting the engine.' Somewhere over there, wondered David peering where A.M. had pointed over the massive seas, but it wasn't until they were less than a mile out that they saw the low coast at all and then it was not a comforting sight. An unbroken wall of surf spread along the shore interrupted only by a cluster of big rocks and a lighthouse peering above the mountainous seas.

'I hate going in like this,' said A.M. 'But the pumps will break any minute and we cannot launch the dingy in this sea'

Above the roar of the storm David heard the pounding of the surf. He saw figures on shore waving but there was no apparant gap in the line of breakers. Jim who had joined them in the cockpit patted his shoulder as A.M. made his decision.

'Let the sails go !' he shouted, and revving up the engine he put the helm over pointing the bows straight for where the men were standing. There was no time to consider, only a moment's terror as they mounted the crest of a mighty roller, hung there suspended and plunged forward into the blinding walls of surf. Then just as David expected a shuddering impact, there was only silence.

He opened his eyes. They had passed into a channel of calm protected by high plank breakwaters. The storm roared safely behind them.

'Run forward!' called A.M. 'Throw up a bow rope if we still have one.'

The channel turned into a broad basin with boats moored along a warf and a slipway at one end. There was no lack of helping hands to catch ropes. In fact the fishermen were so proud of having saved Blue Dawn that they arranged everything. The boat was hauled up onto the slipway to reveal the damage sustained and later they took A.M., Jim and David (Looney was resting) to a trattoria where they feasted and toasted them proudly and with much good humour.

They spent two days at Punto San Cataldo while timbers were replaced and others caulked and then once again they set out across the Otranto channel at dusk, the riding lamps gleaming red and green in the rigging, the moon shining between patches of ragged cloud and a sloppy sea splashing spray above the bows.

David chose to remain on watch keeping a lookout for the Fano lighthouse, although when it finally showed in those long hours before dawn; threeflashes every fifteen seconds, he became hypnotised by his own concentration and kept dozing off, his head reeling with a hundred lighthouses blinking all along the horizon.



Gradually the blackness behind the lighthouse accumulated and the hump of Fano island developed slowly in detail against the graying sea like a Polaroid print.



David stepped below to boil some water and soon after sitting in the cockpit hugging a mug of sweet tea he watched the light grow into the first pale ripple of dawn and through the vanishing mists the sleeping giants of the Albanian mountains stood up in array against the red glow of morning.

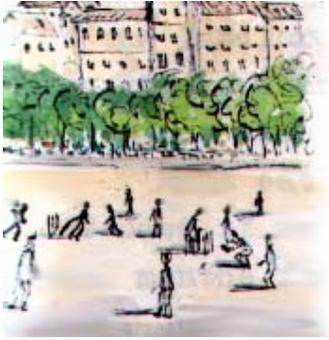
As the shine spread over the water three fishing boats chugged out from behind the headland and David keeping a careful watch for hidden reefs brought Blue Dawn gliding into the bay, sails flapping as she headed up into the wind and the anchor rattled out into the calm water. In the late morning Jim, A.M. and Looney rowed ashore in the dingy while David swam across to join them sitting at a table under a pomegranate tree with drying nets festooning the lower branches and a craggy fisherman carrying across a bottle of ouzo and thimble glasses.

They sat there in the shade sipping ouzo and eating sweet barbouya (red mullet) with slabs of sour goat's cheese and a fresh salad covered with black olives, listening to the harsher calls of another language and the tinkle of goat bells, the air rinsed with the tang of sea and the scent of myrtle. Out in the bay Blue Dawn rode at anchor like a pirate ship and the blue sea beyond studded with hazy islands tempted them south.

That evening they reached Sidari on the north coast of Corfu sailing under its sandstone headlands and dropping anchor as the moon flooded the bay into a pool of silver. They paddled ashore and walked to a tavern choosing from the pots in the kitchen and eating to the accompaniment of twangy bouzoukis from a nearby radio and a bottle of retsina wine that 'tasted of the tar.' 'It's also guaranteed to make the bowels work overtime,' said A.M.

Next morning there was not a shiver of wind ('or bowels, thank heavens' said Jim) and under a blazing sun they motored round to Ipsou bay passing through the narrows at the northern end of the island, the dun mountains of Albania only a mile across the water. Veiled with olive trees the island opened before them in a long reptilian loop and across the broad bay the Venetian facade of Corfu Town peered at them, its green shuttered windows deco rating the distant castled promontory.





Much to AM's disgust the immaculately attired port police confiscated their passports while they inspected Blue Dawn. It wasn't seaworthiness that was the problem. Greek regulations required a flushing toilet and the ship's bucket did not meet with approval. Finally they relented. 'Efkaristo (Thank you,)' smiled Jim, and they traipsed off up the narrow rather oriental streets to the Liston, that imposing square crowded with tables, and waiters plying their trade back and forth to the bars under the colonnades with laden trays of drinks and ice cream. 'Drink ginger beer if you like?' suggested Jim 'Play cricket too,' added the Ancient Mariner. David looked at them suspiciously.

'No,' said Jim. 'Quite serious. Y'see the British ruled these islands for sixty odd years. Probably were a bit odd too for the Greeks. However they undoubtedly approved of two things, if nothing else; Ginger Beer and Cricket, and stuck to them ever since.'

'I gather "Owzat" is now a part of the Greek language,' said A.M.

'Last time I played cricket,' mused Jim, 'Was in Rome up in the Doria Pamphili park. The outfield was littered with sepulchral statues and once in the dusk after switching position I found myself telling a not very funny story at great length to another silent fielder who on closer inspection turned out to be Pope Julius 11.'

For two days David explored much of the north of the island on a rented motorbike but on the third they left, helped on their way by a brisk northerly wind, past the citadel and the monastery islet in Ponticonissi bay, aiming away from the steep wooded shores towards the long looping sand spit of Lefkimi point where the shallows snapped the seas into short steep waves and. Jim poured the last of the red Chianti over the side. 'To placate Poseidon,' he explained. 'We're in his kingdom, now y'know. Should have done it earlier.'

Poseidon seemed satisfied, the wind died, the waves calmed and Jim, guide book in hand directed Blue Dawn into the Lefkimi River. 'Lefkimi is a decayed township,' he read aloud. 'Sounds just the place for us.' It was pleasant drifting slowly up river in the dying breeze, the raised dykes wooded and the low lying meadows beyond speckled with cattle and patches of corn. ('A bit like Holland,' said Jim.) At the bridge caiques were moored and they could go no further. Later they walked into the 'Decayed town' to find their supper.



Inquiries for a tavern were met with a derogatory nod-back of the head and 'occhi' sounding like a throat being cleared. In the only bar, full of staring fisherman they discovered a solitary blackened pot steaming over a primus stove. It was this, compliments of the landlord that his son brought over with the drinks; three heaped platefuls of a brown glutinous mess with an earthy anal smell. 'Must eat it,' said A.M. 'Be frightfully offended if we don't. It's probably been waiting here months for honored guests like us. Well here goes. Just smile and swallow.



And, that might have worked but Jim busy with his dictionary proudly announced, 'its goat's intestines,' just as David spooned in a mouthful. His throat constricted and, refused to swallow. Not that he blamed the throat but he was left with the smile and no other alternative than to rush outside and, spit the delicacy of the house over the bridge. As he made his way back the door pushed open and out thrust Jim beaming madly and with the same quest in mind, and hard on his heels came the Ancient Mariner grinning like a madman. That was how they ate their supper spooning in large mouthfuls, smiling broadly and moving swiftly to the bridge. On his last journey David noticed a small group of people watching curiously from under the only lamppost.

'And after that,' Jim said. 'I'll settle for one of those tins of corned beef on the shelf, if we can persuade mine host to part with them. The beaming landlord came across with a tin, clearly labeled 'War Department British Forces Overseas. 'Good grief,' said A.M. 'Must be over thirty years old.'

'Nothing,' remarked Jim, forking into a slice, 'Can ever be older than those goats' intestines.'

At this stage they were joined by an already inebriated fisherman who remained with them sharing their ouzo and beer. Verbal conversation was limited to 'Domani niente venti (tomorrow no wind),' on his part, and Jim's only phrase in Greek, 'If you speak slowly I can understand you.' Except he couldn't so they all smiled and the fisherman drank with grand fraternal feeling. He even

staggered back to Blue Dawn insisted on coming aboard and, collapsed asleep in the cockpit snoring 'like the 1812 overture,' said Jim next morning when only muddy footprints remained to declare his visit.



They motored out of the Lefkimi River into misty calm. A.M. sniffed critically. 'Sun will burn off this mist. Then we'll have a fine breeze,' he predicted. 'Probably from the north.' Ahead the



tail of the island chopped off abruptly in the white slanting cliffs of Capo Bianco. Offshore a caique was taking on cargo from a rowing boat; two sheep, a barrel of wine and a motorbike before continuing south to Paxos just visible as a green hump in the distance.

A.M. was right. The mist dried out and the sun glittered off the sea. David dived overboard rope in hand for his morning dip and swam far down through a web of light beams into blue kaleidoscopic depths

‘Paxos is a hilly island almost entirely covered with olive trees’ Jim read out from the guide book ‘it doesn’t say anymore.’

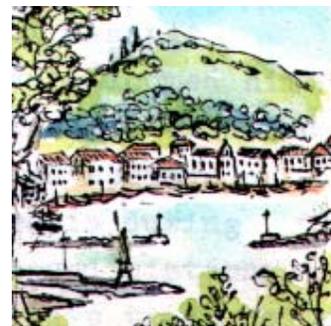
‘Good thing too, said A.M. ‘Might even be unspoiled.’

As they got nearer they could see the unbroken canopy of green burying the island. Craggy olive trees overhung cliffs and clambered right down into pebbly coves, and although David Knew it was inhibited he declared it his best Treasure Island of the voyage.

They first put into Laka, a sleepy village set in a deep bay at the north end of the island but next morning they sailed down the east coast to the main port Giaos, hidden behind a tall wooded islet where later David climbed up a series of broken stairways buried beneath dense pine trees and came upon the stone ramparts of an old Venetian castle with rusty cannons, their supports long since rotted away, pointing seawards.

Beyond this lay a smaller flatter islet, - Madonna Island, with not even a jetty to moor up to, its bare windswept sides rising to a white wall protecting a few pomegranate trees and a solitary chapel. Protected behind these two islets and inside a short breakwater bearing the statue of a boy holding aloft a flaming brand, fishing boats lay tethered to a curving waterfront backed by whitewashed houses. Half way along a whitewashed square revealed a neat whitewashed church surrounded by trees with whitewashed trunks. Even AM’s hardened eyes blinked against the glare. There were no other yachts. They swung Blue Dawn around, dropped anchor and reversed without fuss up to the wall where their ropes were taken and tied by a couple of barefoot boys. They had arrived (although they didn’t realize it then) at the end of their voyage.

‘The land of Lotus,’ remarked Jim an hour later as they sat in the noonday square, their patch of shade draped by a purple bougainvillea. ‘More like Mad Dogs and Englishmen,’ said A.M. a knotted handkerchief over his head as he sipped cold beer.



In patches of shade barefoot fishermen sat mending their nets, their bobbins weaving quickly. A donkey ee-awed its discontent from the wooded hill slopes and in reply the island bus sounded its klaxon to announce imminent departure for Laka, laden with more packages than people; rolls of wire netting, live chickens tied in bundles and the friendly priest smoking a cigarette, tall black robed and bearded.

One of the reasons why Blue Dawn remained moored in Port Gaios was that its Captain was moored to the whitewashed square where every shop doorway offered cool shade and thimble glass of ouzo along with their other products. It was impossible to shop for rope or condensed milk without being tempted and even David was trapped by fishermen trying (with the aid of ouzo) to teach him demotic Greek.

They always made an occasion out of it; a boy was sent to bring bread, tomato, a slice of feta cheese and some black olives before they set to work. Once David, who had been looking in Jim's dictionary, surprised them by asking for 'Apokoritirio,' the only sort of lavatory the dictionary possessed, but which really meant the Gentlemen's and Ladies retiring chamber, a facility the fishing village of Gaios didn't abound in. The fishermen respectfully doffed their caps and directed him round the back

'If you mean 'topos' (the place), then I suggest,' said Andrea, 'You use it at lunch time. The flies all come back to the kitchen then.'

Greek lavatories in summertime were not the most wholesome of places. Andrea was the baker's assistant and he lost his big toe the night he showed David how bread was made. Sitting barefoot on the edge of the dough mixer, his bare feet dangling inside, Andrea tipped ouzo from the bottle while he admired the fat cockroaches escaping from the flour.

By some injudicious miscalculation the whirling blades whipped off his toe and tourniquetted the rest of his foot in sticky dough. While David helped him hobble off to wake the Doctor the baker returned and unknowing continued the baking. When he discovered it was too late, and rather than deprive island of their daily bread it was thought more prudent to say nothing. Although it was quite usual for cockroaches to turn up in the daily loaf no one ever admitted finding Andrea's big toe.

Under the shade of the olive trees there were always nice places to clamber to over the island and David during the hot afternoons often walked to Mousmouli where the mother of Gianni's Tranakas an old friend of Jim's always welcomed him into her cool spacious house to feed his tidbits and give him a drink of water. There were no springs on Paxos and all the water came off the roofs during winter storms and collected in underground cisterns. Behind the house at Mousmouli a steep track led through the trees to emerge on top of the cliffs of Hiros, tremendous high cliffs plunging straight into the turbulent booming seas



swirling far below. Only birds and rabbits came here and fishermen with long ropes, nets and dynamite. (Paxos, like San Mamiliano showed a high proportion of missing fingers.) Walking there one morning David discovered the most beautiful girl he had ever imagined. A white vest and loose blue running shorts lightly clad her lithe limbs. The breeze tugged at her dark hair and even though she was not looking at him there was something about her expression that made him love her on sight. He did not believe she could be real. At any moment he expected her to transform into a rock or vanish into the sea. He stood there, uncertain. To go past would be to lose her but he could not open his mouth. His tongue was frozen and there were no words he could imagine that were adequate. Suddenly she caught him in a fleeting glance and he was scared lest she might smile and say something. He stumbled forward to pass and slipped on a loose stone, lurching against her for balance. Clutching ludicrously at each other the embarrassment changed to laughter. They swapped names and together climbed carefully down to the southern corner of the island where a narrow channel from the sea surged past the islet of Kalkonisi and a deserted chapel guarded a pool of still water where they dived as playfully as otters, twisting and frolicking together, their bodies shining like satin.

That evening they walked back there from Gaios until the track vanished among rocks and juniper trees. Across the bay on Kalkonisi the mad swine-herd who lived all alone with his pigs was busily chasing them into the sea for a swim as he did every night.

Behind the rocks in a hidden valley filled with fireflies and the scent of sage they sat very close for a long time and when she said, 'Je t'aime,' he shivered in the storm of his confusion trapped for an instant by the idea that what they were planning was totally impossible. Then he felt her hand on his skin and lying forwards discovered his open mouth pressed against the strands of her fine dark hair.



Yet even as they lay together trying that moment of ineffable sweetness past and hearing beyond his pounding heart the quiet murmur of the breaking sea he knew they were doomed. Her yacht would leave next day or the one after and he could only guess how many times ahead he would go mad trying to reconstruct what they were doing now in all the time ahead when he would never know her again ,

The next day they spent water skiing from her father's speedboat and the day after went across to Anti-Paxos and then as suddenly as she had come she was gone.

After he watched her yacht motor quietly out of the harbour and set sail beyond Madonna Island he ran back and on an impulse caught the caique that crossed each day to Anti-Paxos and moored in the white sand bay between the twisted cliffs. Here on this remote island lived forty families growing grapes to make their heady red wine, fishing or shooting the quail that flew in from Africa in the autumn. The fishermen of Gaios claimed all the people of Anti-Paxos were a little mad and when their small open caiques came in for supplies manned by gaunt men and sturdy ragged boys David had found himself looking for differences; a third eye, serpents for hair, webbed feet.



'Children of Poseidon,' said Jim when David told him. 'But why shouldn't they be beautiful?'

And it was there, that day, above the cliffs of Anti-Paxos, naked, glorying in the wide glittering sea and the blazing sky that David felt the God in him, that special God of Greece. Felt like Icarus poised to soar into the sky or with Poseidon's black horses gallop through the waves. Up there, alone, he wanted the God to take possession. To pluck him there and then, except it never quite happened and later he returned strangely disappointed to the caique waiting in the clear bay to make the journey back to Gaios.

Paxos was the sound of a cock crowing at midnight, the scent of sage, women under the trees collecting into baskets the fat black fallen olives. Paxos was the lantern fishermen, the hissing glare of their lamps like the glitter of glow-worms on the night sea. Paxos was the tomato seller weaving in from Porto Parga on the mainland drunk as a lord on his leaking caique everyone guessing if he would make the harbour entrance.

At the feast of the Madonna the whole population were rowed out to the white-walled islet where mass was chanted under the gaze of gilded icons in a rich gloom of incense and lonely candlelight, while outside under the windworn trees food was laid, goats cheese wrapped in vine leaves, meats and fish, tomatoes stuffed with rice, and bread.

That evening the men gathered in the square to dance. Long stately lines, arms linked, the music raucous and chanting, neapolitan, turkish, arabic all mixed up, hauntingly sad and hauntingly happy leaving David with the same sense of mystery he felt at Phaestum.

'But what do you want of these people?' asked Jim. 'After all what more to life is there than to be born and to love, to marry and to mourn. 'And he read aloud a line of Sefferis from his Mystical Journey. "Their oars mark the places where they fell on the shore. No one remembers them. Justice."'



'If it's Gods you're after,' said Jim. 'You couldn't do better than go to Delphi. Find 'em behind every bush.'

They were in Athens,(The A.M. having decided to winter in Paxos) staying in a rather shabby hotel near Onomia Square.

'I think it's a brothel,' said Jim. 'It wasn't before the war, you know. Still I suppose that gives it plenty of time to slip downhill in the trade listings.'

Of trade there was certainly no shortage especially at certain hours and none of it stayed very long. In the cramped lobby a number of hefty big thighed mini-skirted dames with peroxide hair tried to entice passers-by. But they were always excessively polite to Jim who reserved his room for the following week when they left for Delphi.

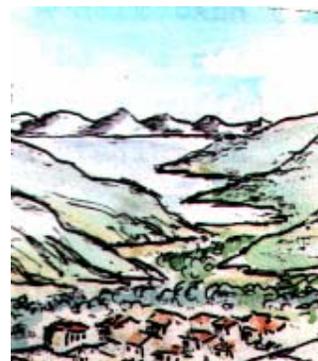
'It's not such a bad place,' he said. 'Plenty of local colour.' The bus to Delphi bumped and rattled westwards in a cloud of diesel fumes tossing aside plains of plucked out cotton fields, charging mountains busy with beehives and re-afforestation, stopping once for an obligatory halt at a bustling taverna where mutton lunch was turning on a spit over a pit of glowing charcoal, and finally hurtling through thirty miles of hairpin bends to arrive at Delphi in the middle of the afternoon.

The village seemed too preoccupied with tourist boutiques to appreciate the view but there it stretched nevertheless, tumbling down between olive groves to an inlet of the sea with the mountains of the Peleponese sawing the distant horizon.

Jim was in no hurry to rush round and pay his respects to the monuments. 'Anyway they're probably closed now.' Instead over an early supper he took the opportunity to say something about them,

'Visitors to the oracle,' he explained.'Used to drink from a spring which still flows from the foot of the mountain. They were called the waters of Lethe, or waters of forgetfulness. In other words once you were free from the burden of memory, opinions, prejudices and any such nonsense you were ready to climb up the sacred way leading to the temple and to the oracle. You had to take a couple of symbolic gift, honey or barley cakes I believe, and bribe attendant priests into the bargain. She, the oracle was probably completely batty and drugged but everyone believed the God could speak through her

He paused to take a sip of retsina. 'Dreadful stuff,' he commented refilling his glass. 'They do say the turks invented the idea to put the greeks off drinking.



Wasn't totally successful wouldn't you say?' He looked at David keenly. 'What would you say to a stroll later, now the ticket collectors and suchlike have gone home.'



By the time they left the lights of the village behind the moon had risen casting an eerie glow over the landscape. The valley below fell away steeply into a shroud of darkness. Ahead loomed the outline of Parnassus. Trees crowded the boulders above the road like spectators, alert, whispering.

Jim left the road and climbed up a broken track buried in shadows. 'Ah,' he said. 'Here we are. I think.' They were standing on the rim of a pool that filled the rocky basin. Out of the cliff face at the back a gout of black water jetted.

'The waters of Lethe,' said Jim. 'Drink deeply.'

David hesitated. He had no wish to make the God angry by their intrusion. He would have liked a chance to explain. But these ancient gods were so different. It was rather like speaking to a sleeping giant. Not exactly knowing how to proceed he knelt down cupped his hands and swallowed hoping some strange sensation might take possession.

'Come along,' called Jim who had hooked down the wire fence blocking the path with his walking stick. They proceeded up the Sacred Way between a line of cypress trees. Ahead columns of the temple stood up stark against the sky their bases buried in inky shadows.

'Come on,' said Jim. 'Don't go into a trance yet.'

'But where's the oracle.'

'No one knows for sure. It's not like Cumae where as you know you can still enter the actual cavern where the Sybill used to babble. But look at this.' Carved on a smooth slab of rock were inscriptions that David traced with his finger. 'The Appolonian Hymns,' said Jim. 'It says "Man Know Thyself."

The words burst in David's mind with a strange brilliance. An idea never before considered but now like the face in the mosaic at Lixus suddenly clear, meaning everything. Then just as quickly their illumination faded and they were only words again.



Ahead the path skirted the curved stone benches of the theatre and continued uphill towards a dark band of forest. Jim halted. 'Listen,' he said, 'Do you mind awefully if we don't go on just now. I'm a bit puffed and perhaps it would be better to see the stadium in daylight.'

'The stadium?'



'Where the games were held- the Pythian Games. Apollo, you see had this confusing knack of turning into a python .Anyway the 'agonies', were held here in his honour. Athletes came from all over the place. It was about the only time greeks stopped fighting each other.'

'Agonies?' It sounded like ceremonial torture.

'Ancient greek for sports. At least I think so, y'know how we change meanings.' He was already descending the track. Far below in the valley another row of columns glowed palely in the moonlight.

'That's the temple to Athena,' Jim pointed out. 'We'll go and pay her our respects tomorrow.'

That night the waters of Lethe took effect and David dreamed deeply struggling with Theseus against the Minotaur all night until Jim roused him before dawn. David followed him sleepy and yawning across the village. A braying donkey and a couple of early cockerels later and they were striding up the steep flank of Parnassus with the village vanishing below the brow of the slope. To the east a gleam of gold outlined the mountain peaks. All of a sudden the ground at their feet fell away, tumbling down steeply into an arena of broken rock and pine trees massed around the precise symmetry of the stadium. The Gods themselves must have excavated it out of the mountain. They made their way carefully down until they were sitting in the long rows of stone seats.

'Easy to imagine isn't it,' said Jim getting out his sketch pad.

In his mind David could see clearly posters advertising 'Pythian Games' and children hurrying up the track followed by panting mothers carrying bundles of food, pedlars touting souvenirs, men arguing and making bets over their favorites. And there in the arena the athletes themselves. Poised at the start the runners, their oiled bodies rippling, javelins soaring their lazy foreshortened flight, that last contorted twist of the discus thrower, the thrusts of the weight. Around the arena he watched the rows of excited faces craning forwards and heard the jubilant roars of approval. In the evening after the heroes had been crowned with laurel and the choirs had sung their odes the families wearily trampled back in the twilight.

As they walked down Jim and David passed the first tourists toiling up. 'It's not the paying I object to,' said Jim when they cleared the gates. 'It's the barriers and the neat little signs in six languages. Makes it like a zoo.'



David lay under an olive tree, sunshine dappling his face. Nearby a waterfall tinkled over mossy stones and in the glade beyond the mottled columns of the temple to Athena stood out against a backcloth of mauve mountains.



'Sylvan is the apt word, I think,' commented Jim delving into his satchel. 'Just the sort of place you'd expect to find Titania and her brood of fairies. And high time we had a bite of breakfast, eh.' He handed across bread and cheese. 'And a little of the local retsina to wash it down.'

While they were eating peasants passed leading their mules down to lower terraces. 'Kalimera,' they greeted with dignity. 'Kalimerasas,' replied Jim.

David lay back and rubbed his shoulders comfortably into the soft grass. 'I could lie here all day.'

'Better not. I'd hate to disappoint you but this delightful waterfall is probably the result of some farmer irrigating his olives. Suddenly you'll find that like *Midsummer Nights Dream*, it'll get switched off.'

'Jim,' asked David. 'Last night. Why did we turn back?' Jim looked thoughtful and hesitated before replying. 'Tell you the truth I didn't somehow feel we had come prepared. Have to make the right votive offerings you know, placate the Gods. Remember pouring wine into the sea for Poseidon.' He paused, undecided whether to continue. 'I sensed something wasn't quite right, as if one or both of us wasn't welcome. And I didn't want to risk a horde of screaming priestesses leaping down the mountain after us. Got to be especially careful near a full moon.'

David wondered about this all day long but however much he dreaded the idea he knew he would get no peace until he returned on his own to discover whatever there was to discover. After supper while Jim was chatting to a french couple he announced he was going out for a walk and made his way back along the road towards the mountain.



The full moon shone more brightly than ever. an unearthly luminous glow that brooded over the inky shadows casting every kind of uncanny fear to crawl upon his imagination. But some strange impulse forced him on through the furtive shadows and the whispering trees to the edge of the broken pool where he sat for a long while quite still until stepping over to the spring he knelt down, cupped his hands and drank.

'Yasu,' came the unsurprised greeting from the shadows as two boys emerged into the moonlight. They looked identical, their pale faces offset by dark curly

hair. They wore simple white tunics, 'Yasu,' they said again, smiling; the simple demotic greeting of fishermen and friends.



'Yasu.' David responded as they approached.

One of the twins plucked at his sleeve, the other handed him a tunic and sandals which he changed into leaving his own clothes by the pool.

They set off up the sacred way, one of the boys ahead, the other behind; past the columns of the temple and the Apollonian hymns shouting their simple message down the centuries, past the treasury where all the gifts to the oracle had been kept, past the earth navel and the amphitheatre up towards the dark band of trees hiding the stadium.

The track ended. The empty stadium lay in darkness under the encircling trees. Only the outline of the tiers of stone seats opposite were faintly visible. And yet it wasn't empty. Something was there and as the companions guided him forwards David could make out a pale figure seated on a plinth that turned slowly to face him.

The cry he uttered was surprise and amazement for the face watching him was his own, staring back at him like a mirror, yet different somehow as if he was inhabited by a stranger.

His face was speaking, saying something, but he didn't understand it. He tried to back away but the companions held him firmly. Then with a slow sweeping movement the figure reached up and started to pull off the face as if it was a mask.

'No!' he shrieked wrestling to be free, terrified of what he might see revealed, what smashed, mutilated. despairing, aged version of himself, but when with a final rip the face came away the strangest thing of all was there was nothing, only an echoing voice fading away until it resembled the sound of falling water.

He was lying beside the pool fully clothed with Jim sitting patiently nearby. 'I didn't want to wake you,' he said. 'You seemed to be sleeping in the lap of the Gods.'

'Did I say anything. Did I call out?'

Jim nodded. 'You were babbling a bit and if it didn't suggest I was more batty than I am I'd say you were speaking ancient greek. "If the soul is to know itself it is unto a soul it must look. The stranger and the enemy, we see him in the mirror." Don't worry, it wasn't you. Not even your voice. I should hazard Plato at a guess.' He paused. 'Did I ever tell you of the time I heard the roman legion pass close to me one evening in Wales; the tramp of their sandals, the clash of their greaves and breastplates and the marching songs. I couldn't see them but I could hear them in the dusk in their hundreds passing up the valley along one of the old roman ways.'

