

Sailing into Allegory

Part Two –

I'd like to say that Virg and I had a smooth sail across the Pacific to the islands of the Andaman Sea, but no. We were partners in a beat up and tired old boat. Things kept breaking, refusing to work, or just plain fell apart. Our cruise had become longer than planned. We had to make a few stops along the way to repair broken crap and to rest up. Sine Spe had been a pain the butt all the way from Astoria to the Adaman Sea. We managed to get most of the boat fixed. A brandy or two had helped.

Then one day on calm seas and with favoring winds, we sailed into the waters we both had dreamed of.

Island, Pale Blue

I suppose the place had a name, but there was no identification on our charts. It was a rather small island maybe 5 miles long and 2 or 3 wide. We circumnavigated it and found that one side was a rocky cliff about 50 feet high. A wide sandy beach ran along most of the other part of the island. As near as we could tell, there was only one village. Although the island was small, the village was surprisingly large. Most of the shacks were lined up along the length of the sandy beach. There were larger buildings farther back into the thick forests of mid island.

We could see no wharf or anything that looked like a place we could moor. Apparently, all supplies and people had to be landed by boat onto the sandy beach. For such a large village, it must mean a lot of work delivering the massive amounts of stores for such a large population.

We had arrived late in the afternoon, so we decided to wait until the next day before we'd paddle into the town. The night was quiet, too quiet for such a large village we thought. We slept soundly because of it. The first long sleep we'd had in weeks.

The restful night ended with the sunrise. We were up sitting in the cockpit drinking our coffee....waiting...Waiting for what surely would be a crowd of "Bum" boats. Those ubiquitous beggar boats expected at island ports that carry all kinds of native made junk, local fruits and vegetables. None showed up.

We waited an hour before deciding to paddle to the beach and check in.

As we pulled the dinghy onto the sandy shore, no one came running, no "official" demanding landing fees. No curious kids or dogs. It was kind of scary.

The beach was strewn with boxes and cases. Some had been opened, other still sealed. All kinds of material and supplies littered the shore. Food, some fresh, some rotting, spilled from open shipping containers. Rusty cans, rusting tools, all were lying untouched on the sand. We walked the beach for a quarter of a mile stepping around and over thousands of neglected supplies.

Then, in the distance, strolling down the beach ...people.

A dozen or more, men women and children came shuffling along the sand. It appeared that they were a group of varied cultures. Different races, skins of brown and white. They wore ragged clothes and were the dirtiest humans either Virg or I had ever seen !

The locals didn't seem to care about we two strangers who'd landed on their shores. They stood looking at us for a few minutes, then one older male spoke. His words came slowly and in poor English. "Wha cha brang us?" was all that came out of his food caked mouth.

Virg spoke. "We've come a long way to visit you. What do you call this island?". No one of the group of natives answered, but they all just stood there like sheep. A few seconds past then, they all started to move away toward the middle of the village. We followed behind the ragtag group.

We all walked along what might be called a main street of the village. At every doorway and "open space", groups of natives stood or sprawled. The ground was filthy and looked as if it had never been clean. Every nook and cranny was, as best as could be described, a sewer. No one seem to care.

No one was cleaning or repairing the scores of hovels in which people seem to be living. If you could call it living. No one moved as we past by.

I jogged ahead hoping to find someone in charge, but found no one who could be the leader. In back of the main group of shacks, there appeared an open field. It held hundreds of goats. They too looked like no one had ever cared for them. The total scene, dirty town and untended goat herd, was shocking.

No one seem to care for themselves or the island. We found the old man that had met us on the beach and I asked him, "How can you live like this? How do you survive ? " With his toothless grin he answered, " We gets taken care of. We don have to do a 'ting. Ain't worked a day since I come here. Purdy nice, eh? I turned and asked Virg what he thought of all this. His response was, "They are the laziest people I've ever seen. They are the most uncaring people I've ever known". I agreed. How a community could have allowed themselves to degrade so completely was aCrime.

We rowed back to our boat as fast as we could, raised anchor and motored away from that sick sick place.

Inked on our charts, we marked this destination as a place to avoid. This island, this abomanation, we would call.... " **Acedia** "

Several hours of sailing, we watched the island finally sink beneath the horizon. Thankfully, we were back to the sea, speeding away, letting the fresh ocean air clean our clothes and lungs of the stench of that island of indolence.

A few days later, the horizon gave us another island in the ocean of islands. Yet another unnamed speck of dirt among the many., it looked larger than the one we had just left, and as we sailed closer, it rose out of the sea like a castle

Island, Orange

.On our bow, we came upon what appeared to be a paradise. Green and peaceful in appearance. Standing in the center of that land was a prominance we estimated to be close to a thousand feet in elevation. Warm breezes blew us closer until we could see rows of neat houses lining a crescent bay.

With no dangerous reefs ahead, upon which we might be marooned, we ghosted into the bay and after dropping the sails, we motored to an inviting looking dock. Standing there above us were scores of people all laughing and shouting as we made the lines secure. With great expectancy that we might have found the perfect isand, we climbed a short ladder to the deck above.

"Welcome friend-shh, You shh-ould have a wee drinky ! " A very large, red faced man belched a greeting..

It was the first and only words we heard. The rest of the crowd gave us cheers and extended their hands holding either some kind of meat or many various shapes and colors of glass and ceramic bottles. Behind the crowd we could see that there were rows of stalls each with massive piles of meats , vegetables and , as we discovered, row upon row of sweets. We hadn't walked 20 feet and our arms were loaded with every kind of edible. Glasses of potent brews were tipped into our mouths.

As we wandered into the village, Virg and I noticed that everyone of the natives was massively overweight and all appeared to be very intoxicated. Small wonder, they continually drank and ate as we walked along the dock and then into their village.

Moving into the city, more and more of the roly poly villagers came out of their houses. Each had hands full of food and glasses of liquids, which we later found to be filled with different kinds of beers, wines and distilled spirits. We couldn't count the number of sides of meat on spits cooking along the street. Besides the huge citizens, the street was filled with dozens of wandering pigs. We knew that they would be butchered and end up on those turning frames.

My insides ached with the intake of food and drink. Virg had snuck behind a dwelling and emptied his. But, the bacchanal continued all through the day and into the night. We broke away from the crowds and painfully made our way back to our boat, **Sine Spe**.

In the morning, he and I walked back into town. There lying in the streets and propped up in doorways were all the citizens of this village. Half eaten food lay everywhere. The contents of scores of overfilled stomachs splattered on the streets and walls of houses. The smells were sickening.

One of the men lying in a doorway, likely weighing well over 300 pounds, woke, burped and vomitted. He then looking at us and wheezed, "Ain't this great? We'll do it again tonight. Be sure to come. The new wines will be opened and we've slaughtered 20 hogs. We will celebrate your visit. "

The thought of being there in that mess made us even sicker. That's all these people did. Eat and drink and grow huge until they died of it all. Virg and I rushed to our boat, started the engine and hauled in the mooring lines. We just had to leave or be stuck in this place of overindulgence.

Once out in the clean sea again, Virg marked the navigation chart's position of the island with a black "X" Alongside the position he gave it a name..... "**Gula**"

Island, Red

We had an uneventful sail for 4 days and then came upon our next target. Another no name island. Getting close we could see that it was a large but baren place with sparse vegetation. We circumnavigated a roundish island of approximately 10 miles in diameter. Finding only one open spot by which we could enter. Navigating through a narrow opening in an ugly set of coral reefs, we entered a small bay. In the far distance we saw several coral stone shelters. A small band of humans standing on the rocky beach close to what looked like a dock of some kind. They didn't move. They just stood and stared at us. All carried spears or bows and were dressed in what must have been warrior garb.

As we came closer, the tallest of the group shouted, in perfect English, "Go away ! We don't want you here ! " The rest of the troop began to chant, "Go away! Go away!".

We then heard a loud tone. It must have been coming from a shell horn like many islanders of the past used. At the second sounding, the whole group broke running away from us and toward the stone huts. From another part of the cove, we heard drums beating and soon saw a second band of warriors running to the first group. What happened next could only be called a War. Fighting between each group carried on for the rest of the day. As the sun set, all hosilities stopped.

Within the hour, a canoe of warriors from the first group, came from the dock. The canoe bumped alongside our boat and the same tall man spoke out. "We don't want your kind here. Go away" and following that demand, he shouted obscenities and made gestures that can only be called insulting.

I shouted back that we'd leave at first light the next morning. The occupants of the canoe took up the shouted vile words and beat their weapons upon our hull.

Virg and I shouted back that we didn't want to be there and would leave. That seemed to quiet them for a moment. Strong arms pushed the canoe away, and with those hateful words still ringing in their voices, they faded into the dark of the night.

Virg and I stood on and off watch all night long and at the first glimmer of the dawn, we pulled anchor and started the engine.

Before passing through those treacherous reefs , we both looked around to watch yet another battle between the two armies. As each group captured it's enemy, they cutt off the arms and legs. It was a brutal, bloody affair.

We both breathed a big sigh as we lifted over the swell coming across the reef. I wrote in the Log and made note on the chart, that this place should be avoided by all ships passing by. In the log and on the chart I wrote the name I gave this god forsaken island .

" Ira "

After the experiences we'd had, Virg and I past many islands that might have been destinations.

We shuddered thinking what might have been.

But, the fresh air and the clear blue waters soon made us whole again.

We plotted a course for a different set of islands, some that were far away from those we'd visited.

The world awaited us and we were ready for it.

End Part Two.....