

Bay of Kotor

Sun Kil Moon

Woke up this morning hungry, I walked along the Bay of Kotor
There's a market down there, past the sailboats, down the gravel road
I went looking for the kittens that I saw last night, and their protective mother
I found two short-haired cow-print kittens and the little gray one, they were all cuddled up

The little gray one didn't look up, I blew her kisses
She never turned her head, I petted her with my index finger
Felt her spine, she was all bones, not much flesh, she was dying
The other two kittens each had an eye missing

The mother sat close by and got up once to lick them
They sat quietly in an opening of the stone wall along the water
A rectangular shaped hole in the middle of the wall with rusty iron bars
And as I watched, I heard another kitten cry

From the other side of the wall, which stood about ten to twelve feet high
There's nothing I hate more than the sound of hungry animals crying
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Finding footing in the nook, I climb the stone wall
The dog walkers looked at me as if I was mentally ill
I saw another black-and-white kitten on the other side of the wall
Meowing "please mommy, please feed me, I'm hungry"

She was looking into my eyes from the field of purple flowers
She was pawing at the wall, trying to get to her mother, and her sister, and her brother
Stretched out from back to front paw she was maybe a foot long
And she cried, "waaah, waaah, waaah, waaah"

She had about five feet there, to get up to the nest
Of her siblings, to her mother's love, for that kitty in the purple flowers
Her mother didn't budge

I could've hurled myself over, to rescue the little one
But I would've broken my ankle like Dustin Hoffman in Papillon
I walked further down the street to the market on the corner
Where the locals and the tourists are gathered at 7 o'clock in the morning, waiting for the store to open

When it opened, I walked up and I down its lonely lanes
Listened to the customers and clerks speaking various foreign languages
I bought oranges and water, sardines, and bananas
Two mega-sized cans of tuna and carried the groceries past the dog walkers

I saw the mother cat with the two kittens, but the gray one was gone
Maybe her mother pushed her over, down to the purple flowers, to join the other one
When I petted the gray one earlier her chin was leaning on the edge of the wall, faced down towards the flowers
I thought of Mickey Rourke in Spun, he said, "My mom was drowning puppies in the bathtub. Why keep what you can't feed?"

I opened the cans of tuna, with the lid, and tossed them tuna over the wall
Aiming for the spot where I've seen the hungry kitten trying to crawl
And I sat the cans down near the kittens nest, two healthier cats smelled the tuna
Slouched their way over, one black, one butterscotch vanilla

Jet-lagged, a big wave hit me
I did all I could've done
I walked to the hotel breakfast room
With a maid who seems to have taken a liking to me
Mirjana, saw me eating my eggs like a hungry prisoner and said
"Easy, easy!"

I came back to my room
A book has been on the bedside stand since I arrived here
I'm not sure what language it's in, but it says
"Svetski bestseller #1, Danielle Steel"
The four biggest words on the book were spelled like this:
"K-N-J-I-G-A
S-A-D I Z-A-U-V-E-K"

I couldn't fall asleep, Mirjana came and knocked on my door
"Here are some towels. Come, eat, Mark! Eat, eat, you must eat some more!"
"Give me a few minutes", I said, "I'll be right over"; "Oh, you, Mark! Come down!"
And when I walked towards the breakfast area she ordered me to get the others, she said, "Mark, go get them now"

I said, "I can't wake them", I told her, "they're sleeping and they need some rest"
"Tell me", she said, "why do you look like this? So sad all the time... so sad... why, Mark? Why do you look like this?"
"'Cause I'm jet-lagged", I told her, "and then my clock is off
Please knock on my door around 5 p.m. to wake me and you might just see a happier Mark"

"You might even see a smile!"; And she said, in her Serbian accent, "I will do that! Do you know who you remind me of, Mark?"
"Who?", I said; "John Malkovich"
I ate some cereal and scrambled eggs and went back to bed
She knocked on my door an hour early, 4 p.m

"Mark, wake up! Wake up!"; I picked up my pants from the floor
I put on some slippers and my t-shirt and decided to swim in the Bay of Kotor
The same shirt I've been wearing for the last three days
And I walked down the path of oleanders, wisteria, and agave

And the palm trees to the bay; my stomach growled with hunger so I kept walking past the boats and the sunbathers
The dog walkers with their dogs on their collars, and the stray dogs, and the skinny cats, to a restaurant called "Ellas"

A waitress named Sandra came and took my order
"Fish soup with Greek salad, please, and a large bottle of sparkling water"
I looked across the Aquafresh-Crest-toothpaste-colored water
At the town of Muo with the little stucco houses with the Spanish roofs

I asked Sandra what the orange things were, floating in the water
She said, "They're called 'bova' and they have nets and they harvest black mussels"
On my walk back to the hotel I jumped into the Bay of Kotor
As I walked along the mossy rocks the moss soothed the bottom of my feet

I was wading out in the seaweed looking at the girls layin' out in their bikinis
I never wrote a song about girls in bikinis; if I did, maybe I'd have a hit like The Beach Boys
I saw a bandmate walking down the road
He noticed me out in the water and said, "Hey, Mark, soundcheck's pretty soon, we better go"

While we were rehearsing, Mirjana heard the music echoing around the tile floor
She knocked on the door and asked if she could come listen, and we said, "Yeah, sure!"
She heard two songs, we said, "What do you think?"; she said, "Sounds like Steely Dan, but crazy!"

Sea Rock Festival, July 21
From the start my guitar was out of tune
So I sat it on the stand and walked towards the front of the stage
Howled to the castles up in the mountains and sang tunefully to the moon

Ramon on guitar, Chris on Piano, they held their end stoically and steadily
A nice, receptive, family-oriented crowd; I didn't make adjustments for them

I gave them the good, the bad, the ugly
I sang Mother's Love, and 666 Post, and I encouraged them to cheer
For Andrew Golota, though I doubt many there heard of him in Montenegro
It was a fun night, cathartic and exhilarating

The next day at lunch a stray dog kept me company over at Ellas
The waiter came by and had the check in his hand in an oblong folder
He was asking me in Serbian if I was ready for the check
(I thought that's what he was asking)

And when I nodded, "Yes", he smacked the dog on the butt
The dog let out a high-pitched "Woof!" and ran off
I stood up and said, "Why did you do that!?"; he said "Dogs are problem here"
I went and found the dog and petted his head

Lured him back to my table with a piece of French bread, he sat next to my table
I told the waiter, "Don't ever do that again
It's ok. I like the dog near me"
The dog was picky and didn't like the bread
So I put a piece of penne pasta up to his nose instead

And he bit my hand, finicky stray
"That's OK", I told him. "Bite my hand all you want
Keep me company awhile. Your bites are nothing compared to the sick feeling I suffer
Every time I turn on American TV news channels"

I paid the check and left with my large bottle of sparkling water
And when I got up, Mirjana had just been seated at a nearby table with another maid
She said, "Mark, I must tell you. You are like a machine
You Sleep, you eat, you shit, you make music. You are a machine"

I said "I guess so" and I went back to my room
At about 9 p.m. Chris knocked on my door and woke me
Chris and Ramon and I took a cab into the old part of town for dinner
But before we left, three maids, including Mirjana, who are always sitting d

own the cement walkway from me
Drinking wine, coffee, and smoking cigarettes
Observing the coming and goings of passersby, started talking to us

...Chris and Ramon, with me standing right there, "I told Mark today
He is a machine. He eats, sleeps, shits, and plays music. This man is a machine"

Then she introduced us to Ljiljana, whom I already met a bunch of times
And the other maid who has never spoken a word to me, Milica

Mirjana pointed to Milica and said, "Mark, Milica has something to tell you
She wants to marry you", I took a step back
Then I smiled and said "Her and I have never spoken a word
But, yeah, If I lived in Kotor, sure... why not... I would marry her"
Then Milica corrected Mirjana in Serbian
Mirjana then said to me, "Oh, I misunderstood
Milica said she wants to fuck you"

Ramon and Chris and I let out an awkward giggle, then we were speechless
I then politely asked Mirjana what her friend's name was again
"It's Milica, you crazy man! You are crazy!"
Ramon saved me, "Hey you guys, I want to get going, I just wanna get a cab"
That was our segue and Chris and I followed along

But not before I told the maids, "Hey, you all have a nice life here
Drinking wine among friends, looking out at the bay
I've seen you all at the restaurant down the street and laying out on the beach
This is a nice life you have, ending your days this way
It's beautiful here - the smell of the salt water and the Italian pines"

"Fuck you, crazy man! You join us in the kitchen tomorrow!
Work with us and see how good this life is, you fuck!"
"Hey", I told her, "We all have to go to work
You think this life is glamorous? It took me 30 hours to get here
And I'm gonna spend 30 hours in airports and on airplanes to get home"

She said, "I know, I know, you work hard, Mark, It's true, I know
You know something? You look like John Malkovich"
I said, "I know, you told me that earlier"
I'll never forget Mirjana
I think I'll send her a postcard when I get back to San Francisco

After having dinner in the old part of town, Ramon stayed to see some jazz
And Chris and I came back with a plan to meet in five minutes down by the gate and go for a walk along the bay
I walked down to my room and Milica appeared with a large empty water bottle
"Water?", she asked; I think it was Freudian, to see if I wanted to fill the bottle
I said that I'd be ok, but for her to please wait, and that I'd bring her a CD
(Mirjana said that Milica wanted a copy of my music)
I gave her Mark Kozelek Night Talks and she shyly walked off towards their little smoking area
And that's the last I've seen of her before the night
I know the loneliness of the road but in that moment I knew the loneliness of the live-in maid

Chris and I then walked along the bay and to my usual spot, Ellas
The same place where the waitress explained the orange things that harvested mussels
And where the guy whacked the dog on the butt
We had sparkling water and ice cream

Howe Gelb stopped by and said hi
I'm back in my room now
I've not turned on this TV since I've been here... bliss
It's 3:29 a.m
Goodnight from my hotel room
Kotor, Montenegro, 7/23/2018

Today I awoke at 6:55 a.m, in time for breakfast
Mirjana said to me, "This thing you say last night... about how we have a good life... why... why did you say that to us?"
I think she thought I was being patronizing but I wasn't
I said, "I told you that because I grew up in the middle of a bunch of cornfields, nowhere near the Adriatic Sea or the Bay of Kotor"

"You seem to have a nice bond with your co-workers and it seems like a nice place to relax
And at the end of the day to look up at the stars
But this is my weekend trip and this is your everyday, so I understand if you're upset by what I said"
She said, "My friends only think of themselves. Never mind all of this beauty you see. It's inside of here!", pointing to her chest
Inside of here, Mark, is shit. They tell me, 'Do this! Do that!' This life is shit!"

I got up and hugged her and told her that I meant no harm, that I meant well
That I understood she works very hard, and we hugged for a long time, no nervous pats on the back
She said "What will you do now, after breakfast?"; I said "The same thing I always do - go back to my room and get some sleep"
She told me, "Please, come back before 10 o'clock in the morning and eat some more", and I said I'd try

She wrote her name on a piece of paper; I told her I'd send her a postcard if I didn't get a chance to say goodbye
I went back to bed and woke up at 12:25 p.m
I'm gonna walk along the road to Ellas, past the stray cats, and dogs, and oleanders, and agave, and palm trees, and sailboats, and sunbathers again
Taking a towel and plan to wade around in the Bay of Kotor one last time

3 a.m. call for our flight back to San Francisco from some place in Croatia tonight

I'm back in my room; it was overcast and I skipped swimming
I just shadow boxed four three-minute rounds with a bottle of water in each of my hands
3:12 p.m, Kotor, Montenegro, 7/23/2018

I wrote those words then back in July, but just sang them today, August 15th, 2018
It's day 6 of the six-day recording session, we're wrapping up this record that I recorded with Donny and Jim
Last night I told Nathan, "Man, my ears are burned out, I'm so fucking tired. Let's go to Colombo tomorrow, the town they discovered gold
Back on January 24th, my birthday, but, you know, 1848"; Nathan said, "Sure, ok. We'll go"

So we drove out there this morning and got in the water and I swam from one side of the American river to the other, and back
I picked some blackberries and put them in my bottle of water, and planted a cactus that was getting too big for my apartment
It was nice to see all of the apple orchards and cows along the way; we talked about what guys have been to Vacaville, what guys have been to Folsom Prison
I need to go out there and do all that to be able to do what I just did

Goodnight
9:55 p.m, August 15th, 2018
San Francisco