

The Zeybekikos

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«It has been so nice this evening, and it is a bit lonely here. I am wondering whether you could not stay on for a day or so». «I should love that. I live in a city and Capetown is just another city, although at the seaside. A brief stay at a farm would be a wonderful change, and I too enjoyed this evening very much.»

He came over to me, and placing his hand on my arm, smiled that cheery smile I had grown to like.

«Thanks, I am delighted.»

I put my hand on his shoulder and gave it a little squeeze.

«Come on. Bedtime, and we must clean our teeth. We farmers must get up early!»

When we had returned to the room I lay down naked on the bed for the heat of the day was still present in the room under the iron roof. Dennis put down the lamp and came and sat down on the edge of the bed.

«Tomorrow morning I must mend the gate and after that I want to start painting the doors and the windows -- would you like to help me or do you want to have a rest?»

«To enjoy my holiday completely I want to keep myself busy, and what could be nicer than to work with you.»

My one hand lay upon his thigh, and then I put my other hand on his shoulder and looked at him. Slowly he relaxed and his strong warm body pressed down on mine. The lamp flickered and threw shadows upon the walls of the room. The night was still save for the chirping of crickets and the buzz of insects. Much later we turned off the light and Dennis went over to his bed . . . all was peaceful and beautiful.

When I awoke next morning Dennis's bed was empty, but a moment later he came into the room clad only in a pair of shorts and bearing a tray with two cups of tea.

«Come on, lazybones. Farmers don't lie in bed all day». As he put down the tray, he sat on the edge of the bed, smiled at me and added . . . «and thanks, for the most wonderful night of my life».

. . . His parents returned ten days later and as we found out we got on well together, I spent the rest of my holiday on the farm. For three months afterwards Dennis and I wrote regularly to each other.

Then came that telegram . . .

«Deeply regret to inform you Dennis died this morning result of riding accident . . . Thompson».

Sitting here at my desk I look at the only tangible remains of a wonderful friendship . . . a bundle of letters and a large picture of Dennis sitting smilingly at the swimming tank in a small bathing slip . . . but there are also my memories that will not fade.

The Zeybekikos

It was raining in Athens that evening, and I was waiting for my friend Andreas in Zonar's Bar, the international haunt near the «Grande Bretagne» where «everybody» meets. There were some yank sailors, a few scholarly looking Englishmen, a beautiful Greek girl

talking animatedly to a Frenchman I knew slightly from the Embassy and the usual sprinkling of handsome Greek youths accompanied by distinguished middle-aged gentlemen: «Very expensive they are, my dear», Andreas had told me. «They require at least a pound a day and insist on being taken to only the best places!» I was just finishing my third Ouzo when Andreas burst in, later even than usual, Tyrolean hat at the usual dashing slant, umbrella dripping.

«My dear!» he exclaimed, «I am late, but when it rains the taxis are made of sugar! Nowhere could I find one! And these are for you.» I had been eyeing with slight apprehension the bunch of pink flowers clutched in his hand. But perhaps it was just an old Greek custom? Anyway, thank God they were not pansies, but wild cyclamen, as small as violets and very pretty. I took them awkwardly, wondering what to do with them, but Andreas soon put that right. «You shall give them to the barman», he said, «who will put them in water, and when you return to your hotel you shall collect them. And now, my dear, we shall go and dine. Do you mind if I take you somewhere low?» «The lower the better», I replied, and we set off into the rainy night, beneath Andreas' umbrella, and soon dived into a 'bus. «I shall take you where tourists do not go,» he informed me, «to see some Greek dancing. I think it will interest you.» Greek dancing? It conjured up in my mind charity matinées given by amateurs in village halls in England; of girls, bosoms criss-crossed with string like tied-up parcels, and long flowing skirts, twirling and posturing.

When we had got out of the 'bus in Omonia Square and walked along a narrow dark street, then descended a flight of stone steps into a tavern, the sight that met my eyes was very different indeed from that of the Village Hall. No dancing girls, but two Greek air-force boys, in uniform, dancing solemnly together to a five-piece string orchestra, and on a plain stone floor. Between them they held aloft a small piece of cloth, perhaps a handkerchief, and as they danced to a strange rhythm, occasionally they dipped, not always together, and touched the floor with their hands; sometimes they stamped with their feet; always their eyes were on the ground. The orchestra sang loudly all the while.

Andreas and I chose a table near the space reserved for the dancing, and ordered a meal and some retsina, the resin-tasting Greek wine.

Soon the orchestra stopped, the dancing finished, the two boys sat down at their table and continued their meal. There was no applause and throughout little notice had been taken by anyone of the dancing. After a short interval a young man got up, spoke to the orchestra which proceeded to play, and he danced, alone, absorbed, sometimes with a fluttering motion of the shoulders, as of wings, sometimes stooping to touch the ground with one hand, sometimes stamping the feet violently, but looking always at the floor. Again, when he had finished there was no applause and nobody had been looking at him particularly. He was followed by a succession of young male dancers, peasants, soldiers, workmen, and all followed the same 9/8 rhythm, but all danced, within this rhythm, individually and spontaneously.

I asked Andreas to explain this to me. Now Andreas is a scholar

and has made a study of Greek mythology. This is his explanation:

Zeybekikos: the first part «Zey» (from Zeus) symbolizing the spirit. The second half «bekos», meaning bread, symbolizes the body. The dance is said to satisfy the Soul and Body of Man. The dancer moves his shoulderblades like wings under his skin as if in flight and escape from his cares and misfortunes; he beats the soil violently with his feet in order to «take off», and maintain himself in flight between time and space. He looks at the earth so as not to lose his direction and balance, and often touches the soil with his hand, or his knee, to take strength and courage from the magnetic rays of his mother, the Earth, in order to face the difficulties of life. In the dance he achieves the relaxation of his whole being, and the removal of every distress and conflict with which he may be harassed.

The Zeybekikos, said to have been danced since 1200 B. C., is a «liberating» dance, a form, if you will, of self-psychoanalysis, and the dancer feels released, relaxed, spiritually «purged» after it. It is danced today all over Greece, and is becoming ever more popular.

«But what about the two, holding the handkerchief between them», I asked Andreas.

«Probably they do not know why they hold the handkerchief», he told me, «to them it is just a tradition. But the piece of cloth represents the headband the Greeks used to wear in ancient times, to tie back their hair. When they saw someone they fancied, they would take off the headband — as we say today, they would «let their hair down» — pass this piece of cloth beneath their armpits, then proffer it to the intended one to excite sexual desire. The two air-force boys you saw dancing together certainly share a bed together tonight».

It had stopped raining when we mounted the stone steps and came out into the narrow dark street. And the sugar taxis appeared once again in Omonia Square. Andreas dived into one, and I walked slowly, thoughtfully back to my hotel, the music of the Zeybekikos still drumming in my ear. But I remembered to stop in at Zonar's and collect the wild cyclamen.

M. M. W.

Fourth International Congress 1955

After one German and two Dutch congresses held mainly in German and Dutch it is now the Latin countries' turn to be put in the limelight.

Therefore the congress 1955 will be held in Paris from November 11th in the evening until November 14th in the afternoon. Main theme of the congress: «*Rights of Man and the Origins of Moral*». On this theme there will talk at least two French, one Italian, one German, one Scandinavian and one Dutch speaker. After each discourse discussion in German and English and translation into both of these languages.

The names of the speakers and the titles of their discourses as well as further details will be published in next month's ICSE-News.

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