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The Monk And The Sly Chickpea: Travels On Corfu



Synopsis

THE MONK AND THE SLY CHICKPEA tells the story of a journey the author and photographer Thomas K. Shor took in 1981 as a young man to the Greek island of Corfu. His journey starts in an idyllic coastal village in a house surrounded by lush fruit and olive trees. While many a young man's journey to Greece would feature a coastal village and even a strip of white beach, Thomas K. Shor's journey led him, with a certain inevitability, to the island's highest mountain, the wind-swept and craggy Mount Pantokrator, and to the ancient stone monastery that crowns its peak. It was there that he lived with the monastery's sole inhabitant of over forty years, the fiery-eyed Greek Orthodox monk Evthymios Koskinidis, a man of both the mountain and of God. From that stormy peak, often pounded by bolder-splitting lightning, sharing meals of chickpeas seasoned with the mountain's wild herbs drenched in olive oil, Shor comes to some startlingly profound insights for a young man of twenty-two. THE MONK AND THE SLY CHICKPEA, which is revised and has a new Postscript describing the author's return to Corfu and his encounters with the monk after twenty years, was originally published as Part I of the book WINDBLOWN CLOUDS by Escape Media Publishers, USA, in 2003. FROM THE REVIEW BY THE RENOWNED BRITISH POET KATHLEEN RAINE: In Thomas Shor's narrative the absorbing writing is the least of his gifts: he creates the imaginative adventure of his life as he lives it. He plunges into the story almost by accident, leaving a steamer bound for Athens by mistake at Corfu. But in Thomas Shor's life there are no mistakes, only opportunities, and before long we find him sharing the life of the last surviving monk at a monastery high on Mount Pantokrator, his meals of chick peas, garlic and olive oil, his toils, and the dense fogs and storms of the highest mountain on Corfu. The old monk wants him to become his successor, but life runs on, leading perhaps inevitably to the Indian sub-continent. Thomas Shor's life is a continual unfolding of those inner and outer worlds which his sense of wonder discovers continually. His story reminds us that we are, or could be, travelers in a world of marvels, of love, and encounters with men and women themselves on pilgrimages of the imagination. Did not the Emperor Haroun al-Rashid for a thousand and one nights hear in the city of Baghdad endless stories that make up the one story of the world? Once involved in Thomas Shor's adventure of life, one hopes only for more. Kathleen Raine (D.Litt., Cambridge; Commander of the Ordre des Arts et des Lettres, France; Commander of the British Empire; Winner's Queen's Gold Medal for Poetry, England, etc.)

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