

Part 6- Juan les Pins

I caught a ride with a caravan and then did a night train to Barcelona. Tonight I'll be sleeping on the beach in Juan les Pins. No rooms and no money. I'll have to play while I'm here...should be good cause there's lots of tourists...but it's not the same as playing for yourself.

The beach is warm and clean, not rocky like some of the others on the way. I hear rumours that there are problems with thieves on the beach at night...but already I see other wayfarers hanging out...I'll sleep with them.

The espresso in France is different. I don't need any milk or sugar. I like it black.

Really, I haven't the desire to write even though it's been a while. The Key of G has been good company and I'm learning some of the songs.

I can't read his handwritten notes all that well, but so far from what I can glean, it's all a long conversation with a woman...broken up. More poetry than anything else.

His words always start with "She asks."

She asks me why

She asks me how

She asks me of...such and such.

She asks me where...

Every possible variety of question. Who is she? That's what I'd like to know...all these songs are for her.

I wish I could have spent more time with G.

n- Sun is coming up soon. Just spent my second night on the beach. Good crowd so the cops haven't moved us along yet. But if any more join us they'll kick us out of here.

So what do we do? We're telling other wayfarers, 'stay in small groups'. Nobody likes a crowd. Spread out. There is no strength in numbers here. It's just a place to sleep when you're alone and poor. Ha!

n- I was going to push off and go down the coast this morning...a week is long enough here and things are getting sloppy as there are more of us. Two of the guys who showed

up a couple of nights ago aren't really travellers. Party-ers though. They were making enough noise to piss everyone off, and so everyone was going their own way because of these two guys.

We asked them to move down the beach but that made them go strange. You never know for sure what's downunder. But they can't keep it a secret forever.

The happiest is the saddest...right out of the Key of G.

Anyway they did us a favor and split. So, I'll stay one more night, check and see if there is mail for me in Nice and then find a nice little fishing village west of San Remo, over the border. I hear its cheaper by far...I'd like to learn some Italian anyway.

n- Why did I come here? It's crowded man. It's hot. Full of princesses. I thought I'd make a little coin. But it's just work playing for change. I came here to meet an old man and sing his poem...so it seems.

I had just finished playing for the afternoon and had packed up my six string when this older guy...big greying moustache but a pugilist's physique, sunburned forehead, wearing a hawaiian shirt, khaki shorts and flip flops, walked over and sat down next to the guitar case. At first I thought he wanted some money but he just laughed and said something with a Scottish accent so thick, I couldn't understand.

When he spoke, he ended every sentence with a chuckle. I chuckled too so he would think I understood what he was saying.

"I'veapome." he chuckled.

"That's good" I chuckled back.

"Idlikeitatowrrriteatuneforitandsingitformeladdy." Again he chuckled.

" Right on man," I chuckled back.

" It'sasadpomeboutmedogandhowilethimstarvebouthetebottomofawell.
Wouldyabesokind?"

" Is five francs alright?" I offered him one of the coins thinking he was asking me for a little help.

He reaches into his pocket and pulls out a five hundred franc note and hands it to me. Now he had my undivided attention because I figured he was a con man or was going to try to put me up to something.

Wayfarers are always on the list...it seems. You travel light so your morals are stooped...so they think.

Then he turned sideways and pulled out a piece of paper. Unfolding it, he pulled the three pages apart. He cast a serious gaze in my direction.

" I'llbelisteningforitomorrowladdy. Donyabedisappointinmenow." No chuckle this time. He handed me the papers, and walked across the corner under the pines, straight into an open air cafe. I watched him sit down with his back to me and order a pint.

I still didn't understand what he said. Something about disappointment. But I had the big note and the papers, so I walked across the road to the beach side and along the sidewalk, dodging the poodle shit, till I found some shade.

It turns out the papers were a poem. And then the epiphany. I did understand what he said. It just took a few minutes to sink in. Like a single malt.

Oh yeah, I could just put this to G's standard...the one with the lilt... and we're there...problem is making it through the poem. I mean everyone loves dogs.

I better get to work. Write it out so I can remember it.

To My Master

Once I ran and played the field
No hedgehog safe from the teeth I wield.
Running hither far from home,
I crashed the boards, in a wintry storm.

I hear his plaintiff call I do...Hark!
But I'm a good boy, I was trained not to bark.
For on his kind mistress as a pup I did pounce
She taught me silence unless he wasn't around.

Though she left us just one rhyme, to her words I stay true.
I hear him again...just there! He's come for me so soon!
Over the ledge he will appear so I keep my head down,
He will be so proud 'cause I didn't make a sound!

He'll see me sitting with my happy ears
And I am sure he will cry with joy and shed some tears
And he will offer me a morsel and smile to see my tail wag
For he is my master who saves me... that I again may chase the stag.

But the voice fades away, and now silence reigns,
Blizzard blasts over this narrow pipe as master carries home his pain.
My master is a good man, so all men must be true.
Whose fault is it that these boards I fell through?

Days pass by...my feet have become numb
The circle gets tighter, nothing to suckle for I have no thumb.
He fed me twice a day... yes! That's right!
And when it was cold put a heat lamp over my bed at night.

Though I would smell of stink and such
He let me in to the hearth where I felt his touch.
When injured by fence fox wolf or hedgehog by the place
He took me many times to the doctor who stitched my face.

Again! He is back! Now a voice in despair.
Woe to his pain! I feel for him! Look here...not there!
I wait in silence as would be his want,
yet he walks wrong way, his fading call left to haunt.

My stomach is empty, sleep is near,
a church bell rings far away, it rings for me I fear.
So I look up with these last few moments in time,
Clear as the sky! Only her words could end this rhyme.

"Our days of play come fast and fine, finally fast they go.
Like famine, they too fall hard into this very same black hole.
That I could speak, that he might see, for such fickle folly we foolish fell...
But my master was a good man, so I die happily..." at the bottom of this cold well.
Author- Scrum of Boagh
for me dog Shamus

Whew! Heavy man.

n- I introduced it as an old Scottish folk song. I sang the song three times to three different crowds. It was the last song of each set.

I was set up in the same place and looked over to see if the Scotsman Scrum, was in the cafe. He was there, and he was listening. Each time I sang the song however he got up from the bar leaving his drink. I remember thinking, "C'mon man. Hold that pint in another minute."

He didn't come over, but he waved his white hankey after the third set. Ah, it still hurts. So sorry man. So sorry. Glad I'm not in his shoes.

I never made so much coin in one afternoon. Plus the 500 he paid me. . I'll be singing that one again and again.

I'm going to Eze later this morning. Not too far so I can take the bus. Juan les Pins was good to me. It feels good when you put together something that connects, even if it's not yours.

As G says, "Every song ever sung belonged to the wind."

Yes It is.