

Boris was at home. Boris was dry. But this is not how he wanted to be! He wanted to be neither at home nor dry. He wanted to be wet, and submerged deep within some water - preferably chlorinated, but salinated at least would do - provided it were the right water. The only obstacle he faced was where to go, what to do, when and why. And perhaps other more unusual words beginning with W that I have forgotten. Should I write it 'W' or 'double u'? I'm asking you my dear reader. Perhaps the former is the more professional one, but I cannot help but feel the latter is warmer, and perhaps also more enjoyable to write. I'm not sure I can decide - or at least not yet anyway. Perhaps I won't need to write it again, but perhaps I will. We can know the past - but can we ever really know the future? I say no, but yet I know this lovely woman who lives in a caravan who claims she can see it clearly. In fact, she doesn't live too far from the home of Boris, and on this day I wasn't unsympathetic to the idea of going swimming too, so I thought perhaps she could help pick a place.

On that cheery note, I grabbed Boris and off we went on an awesome journey. As we set out the front door, we really did feel like this was the dawn of a grand new adventure - one in which we would traverse new lands, and find ourselves setting our sights ever higher, until we are at last consumed by the infinity of this strange earth. I said to Boris, and I said it seriously and I meant it: "I don't want to change the world, I'm not looking for a new England." And he said, "that's fine, I don't mind." And so together we skipped merrily down the road to the caravan park.

Although it was not all merry skipping, for the road itself was lined with only the strangest sights! To our left as we passed the utility shop, we saw clearly a swan, sat perfectly peacefully, except that it sat upon the head of a Carthaginian merchant. And I said to Boris: "Has not Carthage been destroyed? I do not recall that their people still roam the earth? That the flag of their mighty empire still flies high over our seven seas? That their people still peddle their goods in competition to the new merchants from China, India and Singapore?" And Boris said to me: "Africa has never fallen. It is only that we had our eyes not set upon it. In truth, Africa has only grown since those days. It has grown as the power of their leaders - such men as Muammar Gaddafi and Abdelaziz Bouteflika, have grown to encompass so much of that we call dear. My friend," he says, "Africa does not tell us of its history from the past - but of its mighty and growing future. It tells us of that slow train, that may not carry its cargo speedily, but reaches its destination more assuredly than any bullet train or other piece of new-fangled modern technology. Carthage is not consigned to the history books, but to the books of the future - those not yet written, and only conceived of."

And we watched in awe, as the Carthaginian merchant lifted from his head that swan and placed it down on the bow of his ship. We watched dumbfounded as the Carthaginian raised the sails of his great vessel, and took the helm. Carved of only the finest and most beautiful mahogany, the vessel itself was one incredible sight. Drawn out in intricate wood carvings were all manner of scenes from history. One saw on its side a noble soldier, moving swiftly with his sword outstretched. And one

saw also the great throne of Carthage, with a Carthaginian king sat upon it. All of this carved simply out of wood, by the hand of some craftsman in some dry dock somewhere within their proud empire.

And if that were not strange enough, as the boat sailed away, another sight caught our eyes by the stand of fruit and vegetables. A bottle sat upon a stone, but within the bottle sat a scrap of paper - it was aged and pale, and looked like nothing we had ever before seen, except on trips to museums and other such sites. I went for it, and snatched it up from the rock. Inside there was truly nothing more than papyrus. And upon this ancient paper were words written - but not of the sort I could recognize. And then Boris spoke and he said: "These are words of the sort I can recognize." And I looked again upon them, and saw only blocks of incomplete squares and other strange etchings. "This is writing from my people," said Boris, "from whom I have long since been separated. These are the words of the Israelites, as recorded in the old days." And then I knew that Boris was not only my friend but also a Jew. He was my first Jewish friend. And I vowed silently then that I would stay close with him, and learn from him, such that not only he, but I also, could enter the gates of heaven.

"But pray," I asked Boris, "what of the text? What of its meaning? Of what do these strange words tell?" And he looked upon it closely and he said: "upholding all things by the word of his power— having made purification..." but it was only a fragment, and there was no more that he could read. "That is all," he said. "That is the whole text, upon this scrap within a bottle."

And so we walked on towards where the caravans gather, and we walked past the entrance to the market, and the great gates through which one can enter the military dock. We walked past the shoemaker, and the butcher, and the baker, and the candlestick maker. We avoided the man peddling flowers on the side of the road, and we avoided the man attempting to push his tickets to some event somewhere of which we had no interest. And we had almost reached the site of the caravans when we saw upon our right a man sat on the floor, holding in his hands a strange flute, and sat before a basket.

And as we looked and watched, we saw him play notes upon his instrument, and out of the end of it came strange pieces of fruit and vegetables. It looked as though tomatoes had been crushed, and celery too, and now this strange cocktail of vegetable and fruit was leaving the end of his flute. We stepped over and peered into his basket. It was as we had suspected. Inside was a small monkey - one that would emerge occasionally and grab the scraps of food that had emanated from the instrument and hastily consume them.

"That monkey appears strange!" I heard Boris suddenly exclaim, "it is not of a kind I have seen before." And the man put down his flute and replied: "And how many have you seen before? By what qualification are you such a knowledgeable man?" And Boris replied: "By my years of experience! I think perhaps you know not of my history. Let me tell you - and tell you briefly and without mincing words - that I was

once a man of science! For me, in fact, my studies will never end, only now I am retired from academia. And let me tell you - and tell you briefly and without generating confusion - that I am an expert on primates, having studied them for over ten years! Indeed, if there were a monkey I saw but did not know - or indeed even stumbled across in the dead of night, and only heard, and never even had any sense of the appearance - I should be able to identify it. For primates are to me what music is to the minstrel or the bard. They are to me what cookery is to the chef, or what war is to the bravest of soldiers. I live and breathe the life of primates. I feel their joys, and rejoice with him. I feel their sorrows, and I cry with them, and I have no fear when I am among them! From the grandest gorilla, to the smallest chimpanzee, when I am among them I say 'you are my brother!' and I say 'we are one and the same'. So when I look upon you, and look upon your primate, and say that it is none such that I recognize, it is not a statement born of ignorance or foolishness, but one of large concern and genuine scholarly interest."

But the man was not impressed. He looked perturbed, as if someone had invaded on his comfortable sphere, where all is well - and intruded with some dire news and a power to disrupt all that he knew. I said to him: "You are not from here, are you? You are from some other land!" And he looked me right in the eyes and he said: "I am from a land that neither of you know. That you cannot know! And you will never know! And so my monkey is too. I do not appreciate your intrusion into my day, and I wish that you leave me alone. For my business is my business, and yours is yours. And it would please me no end, should you complete yours and leave me to mine." And with these words, he stuck his head up with his face towards the sky, and we would engage with us no more. It was a pity, and we were sorrowful.

And as we passed him, we were now there - we stood at the entrance to our see-all's lair. And inside we knew: there were more than two, which could sit in their chair and see far into others' affairs.

We took a central route, and heard music from a lute, played by a man in a suit. When he was done, he looked up at the sun, and thought about shooting a bren gun.

So we went forth from his position and entered the caravan of the woman I knew. I believe, dear reader, that I have mentioned her previously to you. But as we saw her there, she looked even more ragged than I could ever describe to you. She was truly a terrible sight. She looked as if her life had been full of torrid trials, of the sort one could never conceive. When chatting to her on one previous occasion, she had told me of how in her youth, short of anything else to eat in the squalid hovel she shared with her thirteen sisters and fourteen brothers and two parents and one of her father's lovers, she had turned to consuming the cutlery from which they would usually eat. She told me with horror in her voice, and sadness in her eyes, how she had crunched down with all her might on that fork, and kept crunching and crunching and crunching, until she had broken the whole thing down into metal dust in her mouth, and how she had swallowed that metal dust and how it had only just filled her up. She told me she had on some months been given only one fork every

other day, and had nothing else more to survive upon. And she told me that it had gone on like this for some months - back in a long dark winter of some half-forgotten yesteryear during which the sun rose not once and nobody could go outside because it was too dark.

And so she was once again full of woe as we looked upon her in her caravan. Until she squawked: "What brings you here?!" And we immediately bowed our heads in respect of her esoteric wisdom. I began: "We have come to you to seek guidance, fair lady. We want to know where it is best that we may realize one of Boris's ambitions. For he desires more of his life than to remain at home from dawn till dusk on this day. It is not enough for him to rise in the morning and merely pass the time at home till he is overcome by slumber. He must realize one ambition on this day. He desires to submerge himself in a body of water, and from then conduct himself in such a way as to realize a leisurely feeling. Can you help us, dear woman, in selecting the appropriate place?"

And now, I take one moment from our story to address you, my reader, once more. For you may find it strange that we traveled to such a woman merely to select an appropriate spot to engage in leisure swimming, but to merely understand this and nothing more would be folly. For in my culture, there is a great tradition of visiting such people. Where perhaps in your culture you may find it more appropriate to merely consult a guidebook or the internet, in my culture it is not appropriate to make such a decision without consulting with a higher authority. For many in my family this simply means using tarot cards at home, or perhaps setting up an Ouija board and employing it to the same ends. But these are solutions for poorer people. That is not to say that I never douse or scry, for I do, and to great effect. But when I am at leisure, I prefer to pay a little for another to do it for me. It is more pleasurable that way, and yields a much better fortune on almost all occasions. I do hope that this clarifies things for you, my dear reader, for I had feared perhaps you may have seen my actions as unusual or inappropriate, when in actuality among my people they are not only usual, but appropriate also.

So back to it:

And the woman replied: "Of course, I can see all of this and more, and I need you only to cross my palm with silver, and we shall look far out from this tiny space, and see distant realms and incredible things and I am certain you shall be satisfied." So my hand went forth into my pocket, and withdrew some coinage. I chucked it down before her and she looked upon it and smiled and said: "It is perfect! Perfect wealth! With this money I can move forward, and purchase that which I need. I am certain your reading shall be good. I know of it most definitely! So sit now, sit and be comfortable, and we shall begin to look upon your question."

And so we sat down and made ourselves comfortable. The cushions were of a strange material, such as when you sat on them, they took your form, and when one came up from them, they retained that form for some seconds more. They were of a level of comfort I had not previously conceived, and such that when she said we

should sit on them and make ourselves comfortable, I would not have been able to predict just how comfortable I would become. It was a tremendous surprise and filled me with positive feeling, as she began her reading:

“For you I think we will find an appropriate place within my crystal ball. I know it in fact that the perfect swimming spot shall make itself known should I only look deeply and seek out those answers that I know are awaiting us. Yes yes, it is within here, oh my! Oh yes! The ball knows, surely it knows. It says that you will travel far - it says that you have not yet traveled far, yes? Is that right? Of course it is right! The ball is always right. But the ball says more. It says more now than what it has told, oh yes. I see it, I see more! I see that you will travel far. And not only over land. Yes, indeed, the place you are looking for is over water. To reach the place which you desire, you must go over the water. Yes I see it, over the water, but far! Oh, it is not close to here. Oh, by the antler’s of Beelzebub, it is far - it is a place to which neither of you have ever been! Oh, it is a glorious place! It is a perfect place for swimming, and I see too - when you are there you will learn new things. There is so much more to learn for you two there! And yes, you will both go! Both of your forms will find new meaning, and new dimensions oh yes! And there shall be three - out there, be wary of the three who hold the power! For they hold all the power and you should be watchful of them! Know that they will know so much. Oh, it is dark now! But the passage is true! It must be made! The journey must be made! The ball is right, it knows! It knows the way! The way is east! It is due east! Travel east and do not stop! Do not ever stop until you reach your destination! For your destination is your destiny!” And on that, she looked up from a crystal ball. Her eyes were maddened now, but the normal light of life flowed back into them. She looked at us once again as a human being does, and she spoke more: “It is over now. I am no longer one with the ball. I know not what I said, but I know that it was good and true, and that you two should now seek to realize the instructions that were given to you from on high. Do it now! Act immediately, before it is too late!” So we immediately rose to our feet, and left the caravan, and began traveling due East. It was only moments after leaving the caravan park that we reached the shore next to the military dock. Immediately, I knew what we must do: “we must travel the ocean, Boris, my friend,” I said aloud. “We must go directly to the shipyard, and see what has been traded in, and select the perfect vessel for our voyage. We must not delay, as the good lady instructed! We must go now Boris, there is no more time we can waste.

Such being true, we went to the shipyard directly and once inside went directly to the chief of the shipwrights, and I said to him: “We are in need of a vessel. Immediately and today - we must acquire one! Should you have any for which we could pay you and set off with within the hour?” And the chief said to us: “I should think you are in luck, and I should think you arrive at the perfect time. I’m not certain what boat you desire, but just some thirty minutes ago, one group of short men, each no more than three feet high, came in to trade a simple two-masted schooner for its value in precious metal. I’m afraid I cannot offer you any boat to which can be

attached an engine, but should you be satisfied with none more than this simple schooner, I should imagine we could find agreement.”

I looked immediately to Boris, and he nodded silently to me. I thought that this is it, that we had found the vessel to carry us away, and so I said to the chief: “we shall buy it!” And he applauded and jumped up on the spot, crying “hurrah!” And he lead us away to the dock.

On the way, we passed by one small building not more than ten feet in total height and set across two stories, from which emerged, two tiny men, each of not more than three feet in height. They wore strange hats that loosely flopped around at the top, rather like socks but over-sized and worn not on the feet, over one’s hair. One of them perked up at us: “Oi! Who’s them? They buy our boat? Oh oi, boys, they buy our boat.” And the chief looked down at them and said: “Indeed, they are the ones, they buy your boat.” And all the pair of them cheered and shouted “Oi oi, the big men buy our boat, the big men buy our boat!! We are the men who had the big men buy our boat!!” And they burst out into a joyful dance. Immediately one other, from the second floor, poked his head out of the window and cried: “The big men buy our boat?” And the one below replied: “Oi oi, the big men buy it, the big men buy it! I am one of the men who the big men buy his boat.” And then one of them picked up a tiny box and stood atop it so as to be some inches taller than his friend. “Look at me,” he said from atop his box, “I’m a big man and I buy boats. I love buying boats. Ooooh, I’m such a big man, look at me everyone I’m *sooooo* big!” And all of the other little people burst out into fits of laughter, rolling around on the floor. As they were doing so, a fourth small man, walked up along the street towards them. He asked: “Hey, what’s all this about? Why is everybody laughing so much? What’s going on?” And then a fifth small person popped their head out of the window, and this one was a woman and she shouted: “Hey, have you got the shopping?!” to the fourth small man whom had just arrived, and he replied: “Indeed, I have, my dearest and loving wife, but I desire to know why everybody here is so caught up in fits of laughter!” And it was then that one among them awoke from his fit of laughter and cried out: “The big men buy ought our boat! The big men buy our boat!” And then the small woman in the window was so overcome with merriment that she merrily fell out of the window. But she was not hurt. She landed harmlessly on her feet and immediately broke into a joyful dance, and her husband reached into his shopping bag and pulled out a fiddle, and began playing it loudly for all to hear. And then the three who were in laughing fits got up, and each one of them lined up outside the front of the house, and to the tune of the fifth person’s fiddle, they broke into song:

“Oh, the big men buy our boat,

I cannot cannot but gloat,

The big men bought our boat!

*We may now own a goat!
The big men buy our boat!
I've always dreamed of a raincoat!
I cannot sing the whole note!
I cast my one and only vote
To once again quote
The big men buy our boat!"*

And as they finished up, each one of them was visibly overwhelmed with joy, as they went round and patted one another on the back. They smiled and laughed and clearly rejoiced. And as they were overwhelmed with their tears of joy, we thanked them and walked onward towards our new boat.

As we stepped aboard for the first, we too began to understand the joy they had felt, for it was truly a work of art. It did need a little work, for instance, the rigging was extremely threadbare, with the bowsprit showing particular signs of strain, not to mention the jib and the gaff topsail looking as though they could snap apart at any moment. Looking through it further, it did appear that the foresail and the main gaff topsail were in no better condition, and neither were the mainsail, nor the end of the boom. Generally such boats also carry a mule above each staysail except for the fore staysail. One expected in this instance quite a simple set of sails with four triangular sails: a mainsail, a main staysail abaft the foremast, plus a forestaysail and a jib forward of the foremast. I thought this would be ideal, as such a setup is fairly easily handled and reefed by a small crew, as both staysails can be self-tacking. In this instance though, I was very surprised to see a rectangular boomed sail clewed to the foremast; which although it can be self-tacking, is smaller in area than a main staysail. The surprise was evident on Boris's face also, as his jaw almost dropped to the ground.

Regardless, after a short consultation with one another, we decided that we would not make any demands, and signed the last paperwork and closed the sale. We resolved to briefly collect some supplies, which by turned out to be as follows: one hundred tins of beans, three hundred hardtack biscuits, eighty jars of sauerkraut, twenty four packets of cream crackers, and one very large jar of gherkins. We resolved that such food should be more than appropriate for seafaring, and we loaded it into the hold.

Soon after, we set off across the great blue expanse, and we were happy on this day, for the seas were unusually kind. With our compass guiding us due east, we kept steady our direction, moving ever forward across the empty space, cutting through the wind, and listening to the constant cry of the gull and albatross above.

We consulted with our maps, and each one told the same thing. To head due east and to stay the course would lead us into nothing but sea. There would be sea, sea, sea and more sea and nothing more. We should expect in this direction to just continue traveling around the globe indefinitely, never again seeing any sight of land. But I was not without faith. For my people do not trust the mystics for nothing, and I knew that should we hold this course, and not fear, and not err from it, that we should eventually reach our destination. There could be no doubt in my mind that this was the truth and that my faith was not misplaced. It would be this way and this way alone that should lead us to the location we desired.

After we had sailed for forty one days, without sight of land, and without sight of another ship for ten days, I said to Boris as we stood together on the bow: "I know, in my heart, that man is good. That what is right will always triumph and that there is meaning and worth to each and every life." And Boris nodded and smiled and he said: "Peace is not the absence of conflict, it is the ability to handle conflict by peaceful means." And I knew immediately that he spoke the truth. In all those days at sea, we had so much time to think, and on successive days, we stood out on that bow, and we thought and we dreamed and we spoke, and I said: "There are no constraints on the human mind, no walls around the human spirit, no barriers to our progress except those we ourselves erect." And Boris nodded and he smiled, because he knew that the words I spoke were true. And he looked inside himself and he spoke these words: "There are no great limits to growth because there are no great limits to human intelligence, imagination and wonder." I thought then: was there no bottom to this well of wisdom we had discovered inside of ourselves? Would there be no end to what we could discover far out in this deep ocean? Would our words continue to come forth from us forever like this. And he said: "There are no easy answers, but there are simple answers. We must have the courage to do what we know is morally right." It was then that I knew, and I knew for certain, that my philosophy in life was that if one made up one's mind what one was going to make of one life, then worked hard toward that goal, one could never lose - somehow one would always win out.

It was around this time that we assembled our fishing rod. We took a length of twine from the rigging and attached it to the end of plank we had torn off from one side of the ship. We made a hook out of a belt buckle, and slipped on to the end of it some sauerkraut. This was to be our second source of food, should the hold cease to interest us or become infected with weevils. It took some days before we caught anything, but when we did make a catch it was awesome. Hauled up from the water, the creature that had taken our bait was a mighty tuna. We hauled it on board and marveled at its size. It was at least twelve feet long, and it was full of fish meat. As it flailed on the boat, the whole vessel rocked, and indeed even began letting in water. I weighed it by lifting it in my arms and estimated that its weight was at least four hundred and fifty pounds. And of course, a tuna too can be eaten raw, and although we lacked a knife we still managed to separate the meat from its bones, and tasted its sweet flesh atop our hardtack biscuits and cream crackers. We were overjoyed on that day, and its is a time that I will never in all my years forget. We were so alive as

we chomped down on that tuna and hardtack, and so full of joy that I cannot even conceive of being so happy ever in my life again.

And it was only after we had sailed for ninety five days that we began to worry. We had not then see another ship for sixty four days, and had very little idea where in the world we actually were. Our compass told us that we were still heading due east and so we continued sailing. We had very little food, and the last of our delicious tuna had rotted away, and we had not been so lucky in our fishing escapades since. As it was we had to consign ourselves to sharing the one pilchard we would catch every few days, and sometimes less often than once a week.

Ten days after we began to worry, our food ran out. We thought for a moment that we were in a fix but then suddenly over the horizon there began emerge a great vessel. It carried a flag we had never before seen - neither of us could identify its strange colors. It was all in blues and greens and turquoises. It looked like a work of art from some strange distant and weird land. It was like some painting never before conceived of in the mind of any earthly artist. It looked like the work of the mind of an artist who had never before seen earth, nor conceived of any part of its appearance. It looked drawn up from the inside of some ocean planet, where all people were fish, and nobody lived above ground. It looked like nothing that we had ever seen before with our human eyes.

And as the vessel grew larger on the horizon, and approached towards us, we waved our hands to it, and it came to us and it came close along side us.

“Please,” I shouted to the strange people aboard, “we are but wary travelers heading due east, seeking out the perfect place at which to enjoy our time at leisure. Please stop with us and trade with us some food, for we are hungry and have run out of our rations today.” And one man with a tricorne hat stepped forward. He was dressed eloquently in a grand robe, but it was not alike to any uniform of any navy anywhere on our earth. Rather he looked more like a monk or a priest of some hidden and secret order. He spoke solemnly: “We are kind people, and we take pity on you, we shall send out our boards and our boats shall join, come aboard and you shall eat with us. We believe your journey is almost over. We believe it has been hard up to here, but soon it shall be much easier.”

And so they boarded us, and we went aboard their boat. There was no shortage of food on the deck - we looked around and saw an abundance of it. We saw people chomping on bread and we saw a man peeling fruit - purple oranges, poking each yellow chunk hard onto plates swankily - it truly was a strange sight, and it was hard not to notice a special meaning behind his unusual yet deliberate method. Each of these people were kind and generous in sharing their food, and when we asked them what we should give them in return, they said that they wanted nothing of ours. They said: “Our land is a land of milk and honey, where all is joy and nobody is sad or alone, or hungry or thirsty. All is well where we come from, and all people are satisfied. We live happy lives, and not one person ever complains. You would like it

where we come from - everybody does - because it is perfection, because it is like living in what you call the garden of Eden, or what we call in our own language aGahth iuGreten.” And we thanked them. And they said “We do ask one thing of you in return however, and that is that you spend some time in our captain’s cabin and listen to his ideas.” And so we went to their captain’s cabin and he told us of his ideas: “Those who do not love me” he began, “do not deserve to live. Ideas are more powerful than guns, we do not let our enemies have guns, why should we let them have ideas? Education is a weapon whose effects depend on who holds it in his hands and at whom it is aimed. Nations whose nationalism is destroyed are subject to ruin. It is always darkest before it is totally black. I learned these things whilst traversing the seas. You can learn a lot from traversing the seas, and there is great wisdom within the seas. Like this wisdom for instance: politics is war without bloodshed while war is politics with bloodshed. You see? One becomes so wise at sea. You should stay at sea longer. I think you should keep traveling due east. I am certain that then you will reach your destination.” And with just that, he was finished speaking and had run out of ideas. We went back to our boat, restocked with supplies and relieved of worry, and set off due east again. We waved goodbye to the strange people of the strange ship and set off once more towards the horizon.

As we left them, Boris said to me: “I wonder if we are really explorers, and this is really exploration? Are we really traveling for our own desires, or are we advancing the knowledge of man? Will our voyage be a success? What even is a success? I suppose in this context we should consider any kind of discovery a success - or else should we only consider it a success if we uncover what we initially set out to uncover? The way I think of it, I reckon any kind of act can be a success provided it achieves an end. But the argument that it is only a success if it achieves the originally intended goal is strong too. Let’s say that I plan to go to buy cheese, and I go to the shop and buy only detergent and then come home, well in that case I haven’t really succeeded. But if I also needed detergent, could I call it a success? It seems hard for me to think so because when I set out in this case, my target and goal would have been to obtain cheese. It is not within any reasonable stretch of the imagination that one could define detergent as cheese, in fact it is quite the opposite because it is not even edible. This trip to the shop could only really be considered a success if the guidelines for what is and is not a success were to be changed part way through. But let’s say two cars are racing and the drivers set off thinking that the car that crosses the finish line first is the winner. But part way through the race one driver changes his mind and decided that whoever crosses the finish line last is the true winner. Is it then possible that they can both be successful? How is this any different from changing what one needs once one is already at the shop? I suppose the difference between them is that in the case of the racing drivers, there is a competitive element, whereas in the case of going shopping there is no opponent. Perhaps one could argue that they both failed in the case of the racing drivers, because by aiming for different ends they had eliminated the competitive element, such that neither of them really won. At best they just attained arbitrary targets set for themselves

individually. Although it is hard to justify going to the shop to buy one piece of food as anything more than an arbitrary target. It is after all only serving the interests of one individual: the person who does the shopping. Surely then anything decided upon within the mind of an individual can be a success to that individual, even things that they choose flippantly - like deciding that their day will be improved if they don't do anything useful or productive. If they then sit and do nothing all day have they not then made a success of that day? Or if they want to build a model aircraft but then instead they decide they want to eat a whole cake. If they succeed in eating the whole cake one would be hard pressed to argue that they'd done good for themselves, on the contrary they had likely just made themselves ill. No, I think that there has to be a broader social element to success. I don't believe it is possible to be successful just because one achieves some arbitrary goal set by oneself. I think it is necessary to create some kind of tangible value in an act in order to consider it successful. If, for instance, one set a goal of running ten miles every day and one did it, the achievement would be a tangible sense of improved fitness - a genuinely measurable thing. However, if one set a goal of watching wet paint until it dried, one would scarcely be able to demonstrate a socially measurable quality or product that came out of such an act. It would be, in essence, unverifiable by a broader social unit. I suppose *that* is the key to success. If one went to the shop to buy cheese and came back with detergent, one has still advanced oneself, because one has detergent that was needed - and after buying it and bringing it home is no longer needed. That is a verifiable thing. If two racing drivers set out to race each other, but one of them decided part way through that he intends to come last there is no way of verifying that, and there is no ordinarily conceivable way that it could be viewed positively by broader observers. A race in itself is always positive to the broader community so long as it is fair and plays by the rules throughout, because it shows the broader community a measurement of individuals, and allows people to better understand how members of a group fair compared to one another and allows the group to see more easily the strengths and weaknesses of individuals. But if the rules are not adhered to throughout, such as in the case of the driver who decided he wants to come last instead of first, then it provides no such productive measure, and as such no tangible value. In the case of the racing drivers, I think it is necessary that the rules remain the same throughout otherwise there can be no success, for it is the race itself that provides the value, not the experience of individuals. With regard to the shopping: either detergent or cheese could be considered a success as both would have been replenished. In our case, I think that so long as we find *something*, we have advanced the knowledge of our community (provided at least we return to tell them of it) - or else if we find a pool, or anything else worth of our enjoyment, I should still term this trip a success, because we will have come across something of verifiable value. In this case, that value would be joy for ourselves should we find a pool or some other object of our enjoyment, or else knowledge should we return and share what we have learned. I'm not sure how close we really are to either end, but at least I can see clearly where the goalposts lie." And I could not but agree with his analysis.

On the one hundred and fifteenth day of our journey, we hit land once more. This time, it was somewhere neither of us had never seen nor heard of before - some strange place. We looked upon it in shock and surprise. The trees were yellow and blue. The sand on the beaches was bright pink, and the turtles on the shore all luminous orange. I said to Boris: "This appears to be a remarkable place." And he replied: "Oh yes, truly it is. Never in all my travels, from the horn of Africa to the mountains of Hokkaido, from the snowy lands of the Inuit to the strange landscapes of fiordland, have I ever seen such a sight as this. I am without words, my friend, I know no such terms that can describe this magnificent but weird sight. Where are my words? How can I translate this sight into speech? How can I translate my thoughts into something that any other man or woman could understand?" And with that he lifted his arms up into the air towards the landmass, with his palms facing upwards toward the sky.

As we came close to the beach of bright pink sand, we set down our anchor. Short of any rowing boat, we gestured to two turtles that they should stay still in the water, and we clambered down the side of our boat, and sat atop their backs. We gestured with our hands that they should move onward, and they carried us in to the shore.

As we came to stand on the sand, a beautiful woman with long flowing hair dressed in robes approached us. She said: "More wary travelers have come. Pray, from where do you hail?" I said: "A far land, due west, one hundred and fifteen days sailing by schooner." And she replied: "I know, of course, it is a famous land. And have you visited our proud country before?" I thought it best to lie so I said: "Yes, many times." And the woman said: "I should think its best that you do not lie." And so I decided to stop lying and sheepishly told her: "Well, yes, in truth we haven't been here before." And then Boris stepped out before me and said: "Behold, for I am Boris, knower of Primates, and expert in their ways. I have come to study your creatures. I have been recognized by many reputable universities, and you will find my knowledge not lacking. Please, tell me, in which direction do we travel to reach the nearest town?" And she replied: "You are speaking sense, good Boris, head this way," and she towards the trees, "pass the trees that are yellow and blue, and you will come to the highway, cross it and keep going, and you will shortly enter the arena of judgment, pass through this and you will reach the leisure center, with the broadest selection of the most excellent swimming pools and other leisure apparatus in all of the land." She looked as though she desired to continue speaking, but Boris cut her off: "Thank you beautiful lady, but you have told me all that I need to know. We shall travel directly to the leisure center - that is our desire." She nodded, and let us go on our way.

And as she said, on the other side of the blue and yellow trees, we came across a highway, it was not busy and we crossed it easily. Next we saw that we were entering a town, there were buildings to our left and right. It was however strangely deserted. But as the woman had said, as we kept our path true and straight, we arrived directly at the entrance of the arena of judgment. We started to look for a

reasonable way around it. But as we did so, a man wearing blue armor, and carrying a trident put up his hand before us and said: "Halt! Why are you people not in the arena?" And I replied: "Because we are seeking the leisure center. It is our desire to swim in your magnificent pools." But the man did not look impressed: "Irrelevant," he said, "if you are within the city you must attend the judgment: it is a trial in the selection of a new leader for our noble but hidden continent. All people within the city limits must attend." And so we were shepherded inside and to some seats within the stands of the arena.

Below us, we could see all the action. Three men with great gray beards were stood on pedestals, each with a great tome before him. I asked one person sat next to me in the stands for some plot exposition and they told me: "These men are the great judges of our country, they will select the new ruler. You see, we have no need for democracy in this land, because all is well. Instead, members of the general populace are permitted to present theses to these grand judges, within a certain word limit of course, and the winner gets some prize, usually a special title. Since our community here basically runs itself they can call themselves whatever they like, and they are kind of elevated above the others in some strange and ambiguous way. At least that's how it used to work, I hear this year they might just be giving the winner a big heap of cash from the city treasury." I told the man what I thought: "I think this is tremendously interesting." I watched the bearded judges reading the texts. One of them looked particularly perturbed. I asked my new friend why, and he told me: "There is one entry this year that is said to be interminable. They say it goes on and on, for a tremendously long time about all manner of different things. Different parts of it barely tie up with one another, and it is said to be a bore and a chore. It is said that it doesn't have much coherence throughout and is at times irreverent and referential. This is only what I've heard though, I can't guarantee the truth of any of it." Looking down at the judges though, it was clear which one had been cursed with reading this monstrous text. His face contained a mixture of confusion, tedium and horror, but still he kept going through it - he appeared determined to read the whole thing, so as to base his score on a real concrete judgment and not just on an initial impression. After all, I thought, what score could you really give a text if you do not read it to the end? It is always highly possible that the ending could make all of the rest of it make sense. It is always conceivable that what once appeared to be a collection of weird and somewhat disconnected episodes of events could have some great overarching meaning that only becomes obvious once one reaches the end. I asked my new friend: "Must the judges always read the text to the end?" And he replied: "In every instance, they must. It is not only a legal imperative, but an ethical one too. How can one truly judge any text without a full understanding of it? Some judges - the best of them by my account - even read the texts more than once to try to truly appreciate their nuances and intricacies. Even a text which may initially seem to be overlong and uninteresting can often contain many interesting and enjoyable moments that one initially overlooks. As this is sometimes the case, it is recommended at each of these competitions that the judges read each text more

than one time through.” And I replied: “Really? Is it truly the case, even if the text is needlessly long and very boring or irrelevant?” And he replied: “Even in those cases, yes, a good judge should read them more than once. How else is a judge to know that something he read and thought was boring or stupid is not actually interesting and clever had it only been inspected more closely? Of course, on such closer inspection, it is always possible that the text could instead appear worse or maybe even more boring or more silly than it seemed on a first reading, but that is the risk of the rereading. Either way, it can only make one a better judge - it is only a lottery as to whether becomes a more bored judge or not.” I replied: “But what of the judges themselves? Who are they? I imagine they are the wisest and most brilliant people in all the land?” And he replied: “Not necessarily. Generally they are selected from among the scholars of our nation by the organizer of the competition. Although it has never been codified it has been said that you can influence their score through personal compliments, although this has never been confirmed.” And I said to him: “I choose to believe that they are all excellent people, with truly brilliant minds. You know, if I entered a thesis into this competition, I’d tell them that. I’d tell them that they were brilliant people - real bright stars among the human race, and I’d hope that they gave me a better score.” And he replied: “You know what, my friend, I think that might just work. They say that these judges are not infallible, and can be influenced. Personal compliments I think is a great way of influencing them and should definitely yield a higher score.” I responded: “Yes! Definitely. These judges must be truly magnificent human beings, I’m so glad they specifically were the ones selected to do the judging. I know that they will give the right scores, because I feel I can put my faith in them! I feel that if I entered a text, it would definitely get a high score and perhaps even be the winner!” And my friend replied: “Oh yes, I should think you would be the winner with that kind of attitude. Remember, the judges are full of wisdom and goodness. They are very intelligent and extremely likable. It would be an honor to count any one of them among my friends.”

And so we watched smiling, as each text was read, and the judges facial expressions changed as they traveled on emotional roller-coasters with a variety of authors. After some hours of our watching slight changes in the facial expressions of unknown bearded men in a foreign land, a man walked up in front of the judges and addressed the crowd: “My friends, and fellow countrymen, the judges have called a recess. Their final judgment shall be called within days. Ready yourself, my fellow countrymen, for you will soon be called upon to return and hear judgment. The judges are very wise and extremely likable so we all have faith that they will make the right decision. This meeting is adjourned.”

Immediately everybody began filing out of the stands. As we were near the entrance, we were caught up in this immediately. I lost my friend in the ensuing madness, but Boris stayed with me. Soon we were back on the street, only now they were completely packed full of people. Jumping to look above the crowd, I started to figure out which way we needed to go. I figured that if we traveled around the perimeter of the arena of judgment, we would reach its far side, and from there we

would have only to continue to reach our final destination. As such, we pushed our way through the crowd until it began to thin out. Yes, I thought, this was the right way. And as we looked around on the far side, we saw a little way down a straight road, there was a great building, with a huge pink sculpture of a dolphin on top of it. I shouted to Boris in excitement: "There! There it is! The leisure center." And so we walked swiftly in its direction. And as we walked we passed many people, mostly unremarkable ordinary people, until we spotted one out of the great mass that was truly extraordinary. I said to Boris: "There! Look there!" And he looked, and he saw. Before us in the crowd was a man with a swan on his head. We moved closer towards him to have a better look, and indeed, it was most definitely him. And Boris said: "I remember him! Yes, from before! From before we left! The Carthaginian merchant! I can hardly believe it! But you know, my friend, now that we see something from the start of our journey, it must mean that we are near the end." And I said: "Most certainly, I believe we must be. We have come so far and seen so much, but now we are nearer our goal than ever before. Let us go!" And so we went and we soon reached the doors of the leisure center.

Pushing our way inside this vast building, we found ourselves at reception. Boris stated our intention: "We want to swim!" And they gave us a yellow wristband each. We grabbed one pair of swimming trunks each from the rail in their shop, and passed through into the changing rooms. We changed into our new purchases, and went directly to the main and largest pool.

Boris ran up and jumped straight in to the water. I quickly followed in exactly the same motion. As we floated around in the pool, he said to me: "This is it. We have made it." And I replied: "Yes, we certainly have. This was our goal and we have achieved it." And Boris said: "I like swimming." And I said: "Я тоже."

And that, my dear reader, is the end of my story.