

## Made's Magical Morning

Made [pronounced Marday] looks after Christa's house over in the next village. It is a beautiful place with a wonderful cool Bale upstairs that overlooks the rice fields. It is very large and can easily hold 20 people for meditation or drawing classes. Christa does both when she is in residence... all the way from Germany to avoid the winter.

Christa, her friend Serve, Made, Nyoman and I were in the midst of one of Nyoman's wonderful dinners at Pondok when Christa declared that tomorrow morning we were all to come with her to a very magical part of Bali... an experience, a special place... bring some swimwear and a towel.



There was no opportunity to refuse the invitation, it was Christa's treat and besides we would all be back by 11 o'clock! They would pick us up at 4 am the next morning. Made would drive the car and look after everything.

Bali is very dark at 4 am. It is pre rooster for another hour. Balinese roosters are pretty much organized to start their crowing around 5am and the Balinese are usually out and about after that. At 4am it is deep, dark. Dark because it is night and deep because this is the spirit time and there are mysterious things about.

The rice fields are a dense velvet and there is a potent silence. Bali is its nighttime self, no motor bikes and traffic noise, just deep dark, sleeping Bali. Nyoman and I waited silently for Made in this dark.

His Kjang intruded into our driveway, Christa waving welcome and get in, we were on our way. Our party had expanded somewhat to include six of Made's family, two sisters and two sisters in law plus two of their children... a special outing, so in true Balinese fashion we were a sleepy 11 in the car.

I love driving in Bali at night and the early, early morning is even better. We were all quiet, sleeping or gazing... Made, very much in charge and liberated by the lack of traffic drove with frightening enthusiasm.

We were traveling east, across the sloping foothills of Mt. Agung towards Padung Bay and the Sea. This is the heartland of Bali, the ancient base of the culture, fertile, established. Through the villages the motor echoed back at us from the buildings, and then out across the rice fields again, vulnerable to the night and the dark open space.

Surprisingly, at Klungkung we were met by a police barricade and directed to detour around the town. Out to the villages again and the first signs of life as the pre markets started up. This is when the growers bring in their produce early to barter or swap, sometimes on selling in the market proper that will start an hour later.

The hint of an impending dawn met us at the coast where we could see the eastern sky. Somewhere along the coastal road Made drove with a relieving apprehension looking for the turnoff, through a village and suddenly left up a frightening hill, along and around and all over the place on the thinnest of roads. I was pleased it was still dark and I couldn't properly see the steep slopes and weak edges. One final ascent and we stopped because there was no more road. Made gave the car a final roar in neutral and jubilantly shut off the motor. I could just see that he was grinning with accomplishment as he announced our obviously safe arrival.

We cautiously ungripped ourselves and accommodated the new stillness and silence. We had torches and some bags, and with Made in the lead we descended down a narrow winding path towards the sea. Strangely the path was edged with prickly pear, endless spiky slabs of it, thick and everywhere. Stumbling was not an option.

Fifteen minutes later we heard the beach before we saw it, a regular wavy welcome, its sound ignored the dark, beckoning us to listen. What an invitation! Soon the beach gave us its squeaky sound underfoot and the receding waves rattled the shoreline shells.

It was time for a sunrise!



Torches off now and we can just see, getting used to the space, a small cove, white sand, waves and rocky outcrops at either end, palm trees and hill a behind us.

Beautiful.

Christa has brought a thermos of coffee and Made had some apple pancakes. Somehow the food completed the journey and started the dawn. Out there at the back of the sea a glow spread, opalising the water. Somehow the moon, indifferent to lighting our journey danced behind us in the palm trees bathing the beach and the sea in a bluish light not wanting to compete with the sunrise.

We drifted to different spots on the beach to watch the magic. Ever so slowly there was colour and light, a great saga of a sunrise with an untidy repertoire of clouds straggling to fill the sky and our expectations.

Stage left, a fisherman came into view, gently rowing his outrigger, gliding across the scene and back with graceful nonchalance, intent on his lines.

Great shafts of sunlight spread and dazzled the sea, squinting our eyes and etching the fisherman. The swell made footprints on the water as it passed over the reefs and small fish darted through the glassy waves that slapped the shore.

The fisherman had a strike, a leaping silver Pike like adversary, large enough to drag his boat. Their tussle captured our wonder, as with great care he took and gave his line until the fish gifted itself to his boat.

There was some warmth in the sun by now. Made and Serve were exercising along the beach. Christa remained meditating on the rocks and Made's family made for the shoreline to sit, saronged with the sand, shells and waves, hugely enjoying getting wet.

I walked to the other headland to take in the scene and watch the fisherman repeat and repeat his skillful harvest. Down the beach at the other headland Christa's long blue scarf wafted out from her meditation like a spirit nourishing this beauty. Behind her rocks and palm trees, detailed now spread up the slope around and along to me on my rocks. We were in a perfect cove with a deep beach about 200 metres long. At the back of the beach in the palms were a few driftwoody shelters and a little stream that didn't make it to the sea.



From behind Christa and the palm trees a large ferry, huge, like a cardboard cutout glided past from the next bay, making everything look small. As it shifted out its motors met the wind and drowned us in thump thump until it faded off into the distance. Off to Lombok I suspect. So our little spot was near the ferry harbour.

Sunrise, fisherman, ferryboat, waves and wonder were with us all! What more would the morning make? The beach was ours and we used it as a promenade. Sitting wet bottomed on the shore swimming a little, gazing, pointing, talking and walking. Christa gave a shriek of delight and pointed to the back of the beach... one of the shelters was becoming a shop, and another a restaurant! Christa gathered us all up and declared breakfast, leading us up the sand.

A woman and her son had carried a restaurant down the slope on their heads, three trips in all, and a mighty task. They had everything, soft drinks, beer, cookies, fruits, cigarettes, sweets, batik, clothes and much more, plus a menu with 30 dishes on it!

We all sat on benches at a rickety table and gazed at the menu while the restaurant was set up. Soon there was a fire underway and ice over the drinks. An offering, a menu board and an Umbul Umbul fluttering in the breeze, plus 11 customers... how good is that!

There was then the task of deciding. Made's relatives were lost in the realm of choice, spaghetti bolognese, and brushetta were explained in great detail, along with the varieties of mei and nasi gorings, the sambals and the side dishes, the steamed and the satayed. Every possibility was discussed from the amazing movable menu.

You guessed it, the conversation waned towards rice and inevitably there was a unilateral decision that they would have... yes ... fried rice. A home away from home, when it came to food, adventure was for another day. Every Balinese loves their rice for breakfast.

For me it was no contest also, grilled fresh fish, [from the fisherman] with garlic/lime butter and fresh sambal and steamed rice... bliss, bliss ,bliss!... at the alarming price of A\$1.40... what a breakfast!

Variously our food arrived and we talked and bantered, I chose a Batik from the rack and there was a round of deep consideration about my purchase, lots of apprehension and relief that there was good bargaining and a fair price. Christa went off to the next shop... there were two more by now and returned with an armful of presents. We all had Coca Cola to celebrate our day and Made declared it was time to go. It was 9.30 and we are all deeply satisfied.

I would like to think that going home was fun but it wasn't. Getting back to the car was fine but it was now hot and steep up the cactussy hill. We had air con but we also had Made at the wheel and Bali's inevitable traffic, fume belching trucks and leaps of transitory traffic faith that tested the worth of our adventure.

Everyone slept except Made and me, both driving... he with his heart and me in the back, with my mind.

We all survived!