



TLC SHOWCASE

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Introduction to *Escape Rope*

On his first journey to Central Asia, straight away the author realized how effectively he has been brainwashed; not only as a child, but even today as an adult. His grassroots narrative, the *Cold War Epic*, documents this brainwashing, as a child growing up under capitalism and then later in life from the perspective of a Public Health Epidemiologist living among those who grew up under communism. In the 1970's you will trek in the mountains and remote savannah bush of southwestern Ethiopia and then later in the barren thornbush desert of Somalia, searching for the end of humankind's millennia scourge Smallpox. *African Medicine* from Tanzania challenges the West on just who is developing whom? In Sierra Leone you will experience everyday hardships, which a leisure culture could never imagine. Then you will jump to the Caucasus region and experience how those far-removed view a US presidential election. *Peace of Mind* takes you to Palestine to witness the marginalized abused by the marginalized. In ¡*Apaga la luz!* the author learns genuine compassion in a rural village in northwestern Mexico. Finally, you will visit the author's homeland as he experiences his most severe lifetime culture shock. Yet from his cultural trauma, peace of mind will re-emerge in the mountains of New Mexico, USA. *Escape Rope* captures the selfless friendship of people living in faraway places. People who go about unseen and unheard; yet with such prophetic wisdom and admirable perseverance.

Embarking on a lifelong passion to document my international experiences through creative writing, I felt very insecure. I had never attended a writer's workshop nor even subscribed to a writer's blog. The transparency and clarity of TLC's website prompted me to contact them for help. Their initial manuscript assessment directed me in a more productive direction and revealed major flaws early on with my novice writing. The year-long mentoring with an experienced editor not only taught me creative writing skills, but also provided much needed motivation. The full manuscript review led to a more cohesive manuscript which will communicate my messages more effectively. And TLC's advice relieved anxiety over that most daunting unknown, finding a publisher. From TLC's personable support and motivation, I have achieved my lifelong ambition.

Extract from *Escape Rope*

Four fully loaded, *don't give a damn* camels obstruct our onward passage down the dark-maroon dirt track. They stare at us with total indifference. A young mother with her baby tightly secured to her back by an earthen-brown cotton wrap, attempts to subdue her youngest and most unruly . . . camel. A razor thin, shirtless man wearing dark-blue trousers, vainly tries to coax the stubbornness from these four-legged rascallions into something reasonably accommodating; so that our Land Rover can pass. The grandmother, fully wrapped in her worn-out, grayish-white cotton sari; puts her entire frail body into pulling a reign to move one of the beasts . . . to no avail. The three meter, curved wooden poles strapped to each camel's side, bulky hides covering their backs and dangling gourds and pestles reveal that obviously . . . This family is on the move.

But waiting doesn't matter around here in 1978 in a remote corner of Somalia. And besides, it's green! On both sides of the road stand thick, dark-green twelve foot high bushes. That is, after you get passed the chest-high shrubs with 40 mm 22 gauge hypodermic thorns. So Abdullahi turns off the engine. The camel, the cornerstone of the nomad's economy providing food, transport, water, and dowry, traversing 150 kilometres in 3 to 4 days for as long as 30 days without a drink; indisputably, has the right of way. So we wait; enjoying the moment of tranquillity. There's a long, harsh journey ahead.

About an hour after being granted passage by the local Camel Transit Authority, the greenery along the side of the road fades into knee-high, yellow-green grass rising from pinkish-tan, coarse sand. We come upon a small cluster of domed, grass and cowhide covered huts; similar to the pastoral homes of the Mursi in southwestern Ethiopia. The perimeter of each home is left open 25 cm above ground. For ventilation perhaps? These nomadic huts represent the ultimate mobile home. They can be disassembled and loaded onto a camel's back into a neatly bound bundle and ready for travel in less than two hours. And putting one together sure beats IKEA.. Imagine! Building your entire home within less than two hours. And the ladies do it all!

Only the soothing soft sound of a wooden camel bell breaks the desert silence. A few mothers in well-worn, earthen grey, head to toe sari wrap-arounds mill about; avoiding even the slightest recognition of these two odd-looking male strangers; especially the white one, who doesn't even have a camel. A slender man of perhaps

forty wearing a yellow, black and tan chequered Somali lungi invites us inside his home, his aqal. We crouch through the small opening into cool, dark comfort, making ourselves comfortable on his immaculately clean, straw mats. For these two scruffy, unannounced strangers, who have disturbed his thornbush desert tranquillity with their obnoxious diesel-clattering Land Rover; Hussein's hospitality is most gracious indeed. Beyond expectations, he serves us freshly boiled goat meat. In these parts, getting any meat is a luxury. Actually, getting any food is a luxury.

Famished, I drool over the aroma of the freshly cooked meat. Hussein slices a huge chunk with his razor sharp, hand-forged, cow-horn handle nomad's knife. But salivating exhilaration quickly vaporizes into nausea; a hunger squelching letdown; as I reach for the chipped enamel plate full of greenish-grey fat, gristle, cartilage, and bone. In the nomad's cuisine, fat is the Grade A prime cut; thereby culturally required eating for the honoured guest. I cannot insult Hussein's generosity and struggle to show delight, while chomping on the thick green blob of, who knows from where, fat. I drink from a gourd filled with camel's milk . . . straight from the udder. Fresh camel's milk is more creamy than cow; but I prefer the slightly aged, slightly fermented variety. It helps dull your senses during heat oppressive, monotonous travel. Hussein, with his centimetre thick calloused bare feet, looks at my Bata trainers and smirks, as if saying 'you're not going to get anywhere in those things.' Abdullahi, my driver, offers his extremely limited, three word English translation. 'Shoe not good.' But Hussein's disgusted look tells all.

About the Writer

CC writes non-fiction based on lifetime friendships and experience as a Public Health Epidemiologist living and working in Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe and the USA. His motivation for writing centres on countering the destructive xenophobia spread through media disinformation and demagogues. By introducing you to people and places you never see nor read about, he aims at reinforcing awareness about critical political, human rights and environmental issues which are threatening our survival. He documents a not so distant yet already forgotten era, our time without the internet and 24/7 news. His favourite writers include Mark Twain, Rachel Carson, Vine Deloria Jr., Jonathan Raban, Wilfred Thesiger and Eliane Brum. Although he currently lives in a faraway land, he considers Albuquerque USA his homeland.



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