



N STUDIES

by A.Carol

THE PORT OF MAHON

The port of Mahon is a narrow long bay inserted in the eastern side of Minorca coast, and Minorca is located in the far eastern part of the Balearic Islands. That puts it in the middle of the western Mediterranean sea.

The ponderous cliffs of "La Mola" fall abruptly over the entrance, protecting the harbour against northern storms, so usual in this part of the Mediterranean. The rear bottom of the harbour ends in a filthy marsh-land: the "Colarssega". The city of Mahon itself hangs on the bluffs of the southern border, settled behind the medieval walls. Only some fishermen's hovels are found outside the walls, aligned in front the shore.

On the other side, facing the town, a quarter of a mile farther on, there is a charming, obsolete military port. Above it, on top of a small hill, the Golden Farm -Nelson's ancient place of abode- lies in a wild country of scrubs, watching the town in quiet isolation. Two island have grown in the inland waters: one of them encloses the old Lazaret, now converted into a sort of Museum, the other, although called the King's Island, does not contain anything Royal, but just some withered military stuff.

The port is several miles long, waters are deep; the biggest ships could enter the harbour if they had to, but in general they hadn't. Nowadays it is principally visited by liners, fishing boats and cargo boats, which are enough for the trade needs of the island as they amount to some cheese and cheap jewelry.

MAHON COVERED MARKET

The Mahon covered market is a fabulous, delightful place to start your day whenever you can.

The place was in the old days the cloister of the St. Francis monastery, which is still there at the back of the Market. The whole site is hooked to the bluffs near the sea border, in the low part of the old town.

Inside, the market stalls display their food-goods around the columns and against the walls, in a mixture of tempting colours and odours. The tone is fresh, the light filtered and diffused spreads softly melting with the shades of the curved high ceilings. The walls have been whitewashed several times, but by chance, they have kept a comfortable old-dirty superficial aspect -The successive layers of lime applied to the old stones attempt to level the relieves in a rough rather unachieved way.

The vendors, men and women of the neighboring farms and fishing harbours, will easily give you the last gossips -odds and ends of the local situation- in their plain language. Then, as you wander lazily among people and columns from one stand to another, your sight is attracted by the variegated merchandises disposed in the little booths: they offer the most wonderful melons and water-melons in the world: all sizes -shapes and colours never seen elsewhere-, figs and prickly pears are also on the shelves, and peaches, sweetpeppers, egg-plants... and so many other fruits and vegetables!

The selling, by the way, goes on smoothly, even slowly. Everybody seems to be there to have a rest, a moment of fun and enjoyment. And you, you don't care; you are not in a hurry either, because-you know- when you are hurried, you better not go to the Mahon covered market.

A DREADFUL AWAKENING

A story of mystery and distress

originally written in French

by **Riel Carol**

It happened one Sunday night. As we came back home from an evening concert we found our sons awake and highly excited: Summoned to give an explanation, the youngest started the following tale:

"Some time after your departure, when my brother and I were already asleep, I was suddenly awakened by a surreptitious noise. I reached for my flash light but I couldn't find it, I tried then the switch of my reading lamp but there was no effect. I was getting a little bit scared trying to understand what was going on, when unexpectedly I felt something soft and velvety brushing my head!

Upset like hell I jumped up and turned on the main light, which this time flashed dazzlingly. A few seconds later, having accustomed my eyes to the new light, I could see that nobody was in the room. I started looking in the other rooms, lighting them up in turn, but nobody was there either. Finally, in the dining room I found out the explanation to my startling situation:

There, flying up and down, was a room full of strange but natural creatures: Dozens of bats that tried to get out hurriedly, making odd movements of escape, as soon as I showed up".

To end it up, my son said he found it funny and he had a good laugh.

Sarrià, Octobre del 1985

RED SAND IN MENORCA

They were hurriedly putting their battle dresses on. In the yard, the started motor trucks were noisily waiting for them.

A few minutes after, his truck was crossing Mahon at full speed leading for the main road of the island. They reached Alaior at sunset. The sun was speedily falling behind the houses making up a soft coloured landscape. - In the summertime, during the day, the sun light spreads sharply over the whole country, and it is not until the afternoon comes to its end that your eyes may have a rest; then, at last, you can open them full wide and appreciate the beautiness of the surrounding.

The church tower of Alaior dropped behind the scene and the Republican Army convoy pushing earnestly went through Mercadal to the Binimel.lah road. The road there was nothing more than a dusty track bending amid the alfalfa fields. The sight was bounded by the pleasant little hills that grew all around.

The trucks were going slowly now, lights were cut off and darkness was growing. At the Cavalleria crossing the convoy stopped and they all went down. They had been told that a Rebel Commando coming from Mallorca was going to land in the Cavalleria beach for a sabotage mission.

He carried his gun on his shoulder as he mounted the hill before the sea. When he reached the top the moon was lightening over the sea; bright waves

came swiftly on the sand. -The back of the bunker scarcely showed up in the left side of the cove, against the rocks, near the shore.

It was a kind of tunnel made of big irregular stones in a dry assembly, like most of the fields enclosures are made in the island. He went in by the back door and settled his gun in the corresponding loop-hole that opened in front of the waters. The spot he saw from there, looked pleasant but somehow dreadful.

After a while, suddenly, without making any sound, the dark shadow of a launch boat appeared ducking ahead to the beach; sailing after her there were two more of them. -You wouldn't have thought they were going fast -they seemed to be easy targets. He pointed his gun carefully, thinking that several guns and other more powerful weapons were being adjusted at the same time.

The first boat was arriving. You could already see the people in her deck, when a heavy gun went off giving sound to the picture; immediately a machine gun started in the right side busterling shrilly. Other guns in the left side were cross-firing the three boats. Water was splashing up all around them, flashes shined from every side.

It took him few moments to overcome the violence of the situation; by this time the first boat had already been badly hit and her people were dumped into the sea, the second one was trying to land and the last attempted to scape. However the situation was hopeless for the two remaining boats. -His gun went off and a man fell on the sand-. Only two men were still alive in the shore when they decided to surrender.

The surviving boat was going back painfully across the little waves. Nevertheless she was far from getting out of the range of the gun; two bullets fell just behind, the third struck her in the middle.

The battle was over, the enemy had been defeated. At that moment he realized that the moon was now illuminating a highly disturbing scene.

Sarrià, Març 1985

AN EXTRAORDINARY HOME WORK

based on a story from

Cédric Carol

He was following the Milky Way, heading west across the fields. It fascinated him this overdensity of starlight drawing a faint path in the dark transparent sky of that starlit night. However Cédric drove his bike carefully trying not to be led off of the beaten tracks.

From time to time a shooting star broke into the sky printing a sharp dying line. That is because in this time of the year -in the middle of August- the Earth was going through a field of errant meteorites.

He rode till the Talayot of Trepuco, an ancient megalithic Sanctuary, which presently -during the day hours- has become a conventional tourist rendezvous -cars, buses, guides and everything- but as soon as night comes recovers its charmed atmosphere. At this very moment -while he was quitting the bike- a new shooting star burst into the sky, across the moon; and this time it didn't die but, on the contrary, it came nearer quickly and landed noiseless on the terrace before the Talayot, in front of the boy.

He knew at once that the wonderful object was a flying saucer, like the ones he had often seen in the movies. A door opened in the base of the spacecraft and a very odd being walked out. He was not by any means, like earth human beings: He was obviously a being of another world -an ET!

By the time he had realized all that, Cédric had also managed to half hide himself behind a pile of old stones. Anyway the ET discovered him, and as he approached, Cédric got more and more scared: he didn't move though.

The ET came finally in front of Cédric and facing him said:

"I speak and I understand all the tongues in the Universe, even those of the animals -therefore speak!"

"What are you doing in the Earth?" asked then Cédric, feeling less impressed and more interested.

The ET answered:

"I'm a child like you, and like you I go to school every day. Last Friday our teacher of Universal Geography asked me, as an special home work, to go to Earth, to find there a human being and to talk with him....Oh! excuse me, I have not finished my presentation, my name is Istris and I come from Jupiter."

"I'm Cédric -said my son- I'm on holiday here; I love to visit this place by night, I'm glad to have met you. By the way I see you have accomplished your work, but... tell me -added Cédric with a sudden professional curiosity- how could you demonstrate it to your teacher?"

"Ugh, well, don't worry about that - explained Istris - I have made some photographs of you and me during the talking and all our conversation has been recorded. Furthermore we have a device that could check the authenticity of these documents." He made a pause, then he continued:

"Now Cédric, I'm leaving, I can't delay my departure anymore

without..." "I understand -interrupted Cédric- but before you leave you should explain the secret of your flying machine."

Istris smiled widely and said:

"But it's very easy -in a way- those space ships are pushed by the energy of dreams and it happens that only chills can steer them, and now: Bye bye Cédric, I'll never forget you"

"Thank you, until a next visit, may be. Have a good trip back home, Istris."

The two kids waved their hands at each other.

I WAS WITH MY SHIP AT MYLAE

*"There I saw one I knew, and stopped him,
crying:*

-Stetson!

You that were with me in the ships at Mylae!"

**T.S. Eliot: The burial of
the dead**

A few days ago after reading Eliot's "Waste Land", I was reminded of a very odd adventure which occurred in my youth.

We were at the time of the story, crossing the central Mediterranean sea from Vulcano to Milazzo in Sicilia on our ship. The water was very still, the thin column of smoke over the Vulcano's summit waved like a friendly flag. I can't remember any particular signal warning against hidden perils.

At night fall my ship mates went to sleep and I started my shift on the deck beside the helm. The softness of the night made the sailing so easy that, doubtless, I fell asleep very soon, and this lasted quite a while since -queerly enough- nobody came up for the changing of the shift.

Thus, when I woke up, the resplendent and bestarred peace of the dawn was torn into squalid tatters by howls of rage and shrieks of lament rising over a terrible sea battle developing in front of me.

I was scarcely aware of the situation, that a huge Roman trireme coming straight into our ship made me jump to the helm; she failed to hit us, but as she passed alongside I could see on the forecastle the ferocious faces of the Roman legionaries cursing at us.

I thought we were lost; at the next turn we should be sunk. Fortunately, at this very moment a Carthaginian ship maneuvered skillfully beside the Roman giant breaking her oars as though they had been sawed into pieces. So the Roman ship was immobilized, turning around like a bug with broken legs - The danger was over.

But then, on the deck of the Carthaginian ship, while I was thanking them for their help, I saw the most astonishing thing of this story: Among the Carthaginian sailors, a man dressed in present American clothes waved a big cow-boy hat to me:

"What's that?" I couldn't help asking him.

"The battle of Mylae! don't you see?" he answered, *"run away while there is still time!"*.

His ship was now entering a thick fog:

"Your name!" I shouted hurriedly-

"Stetson!" was the last word I got before the whole scene vanished, blended into mist.

My mates came on the deck an hour later, by this time the mist had disappeared, the sun was shining, and Milazzo was in sight. I didn't dare to explain the strange events I have endured to them -I didn't dare until today.

Sarrià, Novembre 1985

A SPANIARD IN PARIS

I have not seen her for years. May be I will never see her again. I don't know whether she is actually alive. But now, flying back to Paris after many years, I remember quite well the first time we met.

It was several years ago. At this time I was in Paris studying French culture and one afternoon, when I happened to be near the Louvre a car stopped by me and she showed her gentle figure through the open window.

She asked me in bad French if I could speak English; when I said that I could, she told me she was going to visit the "Tour Eiffel" and she had lost her way:

- "Could you help me?" She finished.

- "Of course"- I said, accepting what seemed to be an invitation. I sat down into the car and made her drive into Rivoli Street towards the Concorde Place.

She was wearing a smart red dress -I noticed before we arrived at the Champs de Mars where we left the car.

- I'm in holidays - she told me when I asked her.

- I just arrived yesterday and I'm spending a whole week here. I want to fully visit this town - she added.

I don't remember now where she was coming from exactly. Perhaps she never told me that particular. She had a soft southern accent as though she had been living in California for a time.

We bought tickets and got into the elevator on the first floor. I had never before visited the Eiffel Tower myself, and as the elevator rose we discovered an impressive sight over the Paris roofs.

- Look - I said, pointing my finger to the " Dame Notre " towers, that were there standing up beside the bends of the river - That's "Notre Dame" - She was getting excited - and that? - she asked with amazement, taking my arm and pointing to the "Sacre Coeur".

The weather was incredible fine in this spring evening. We had a good time having dinner at the 3rd floor restaurant.

The week ended with warm friendship. So when her plain took-off in a sunny Saturday morning, I was there staring at the sky in low sprits.

After that we met twice more in Paris. We had a lot of fun, but the last time she looked worried. I knew she had got a problem she couldn't tell me about. Before leaving, at the railroad station, she promised she would write me her following address. But she didn't.

Sarrià, 18 de Febrer del 1985