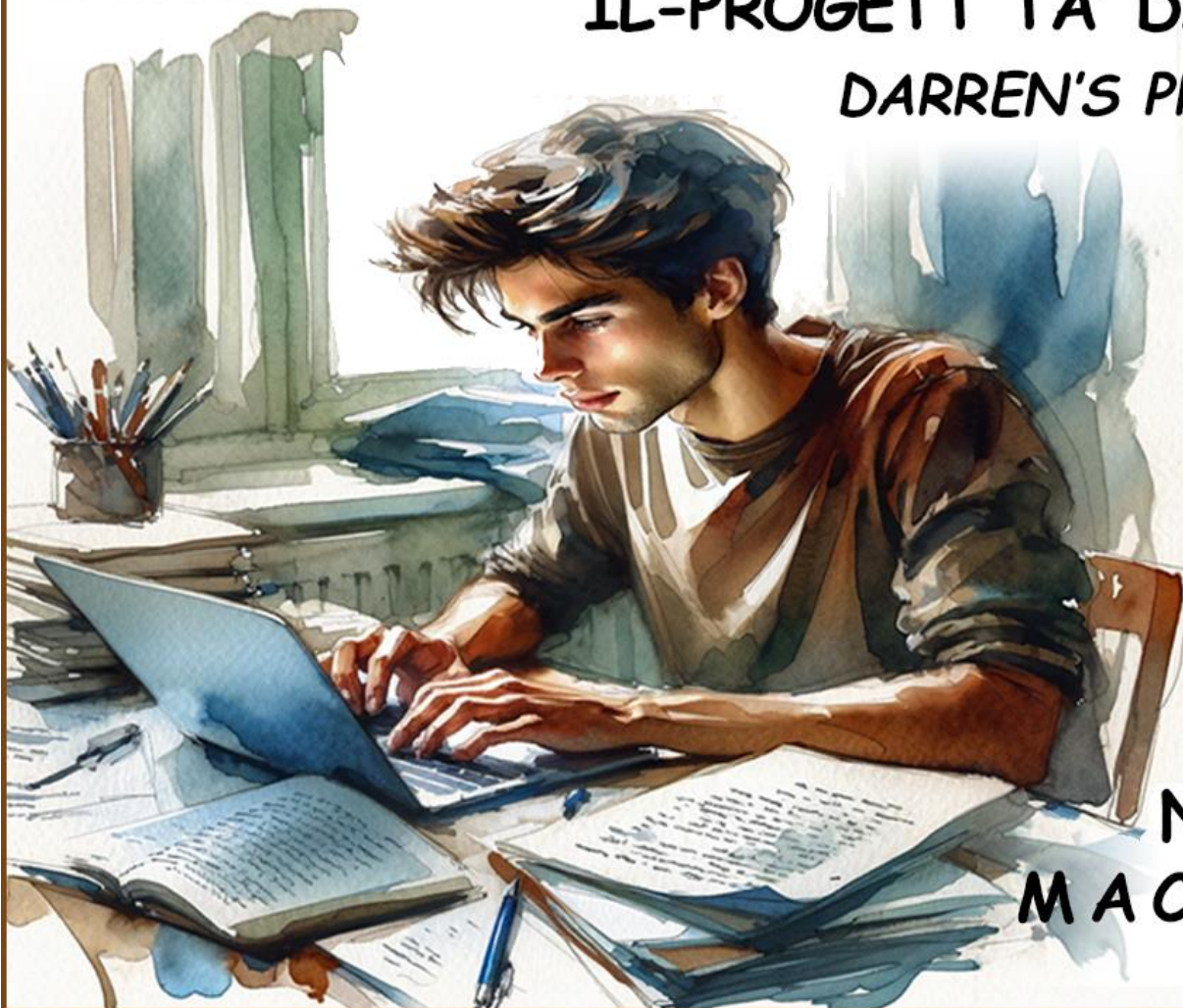


IL-PROGETT TA' DARREN
DARREN'S PROJECT



NORA
MACELLI

N O R A M A C E L L I

IL-PROĠETT TA' DARREN

DARREN'S PROJECT

English translation by Jean Killick

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Il-Proġett ta' Darren
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... għal żgħażaġh li, bħali, qed ifittxu tweġibiet dwar ħajjithom.
... to young people who, like myself, are looking for answers.
Darren

Ebook għaż-Żgħażaġh
A Young Adult ebook



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Werrej

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Minn Xiex Kien Għaddej Darren?

L-esperjenza għallmet lit-tfajjel Darren isir ħajbu f'daru stess. Lil ommu u missieru sar jistħajjilhom barri u matador, sbieħ u qliel. Waħda b'idha fl-arja tippoża u ddu u tagħqad biex tizzika, tniggeż u tonsob, u l-ieħor imnaffar, lest għall-attakk. U hu l-palju aħmar iperper mas-saqajn jistieden l-inkwiet. Kultant kienu jdawru l-irwoli wkoll. Skont il-burdata. Il-fatt li tgħallem jiddistakka ruħu mil-logħba perikoluża perpetwa tagħhom biex josservahom minn barra x-xatba ta' qalbu għenu jinħeba biex la jservi ta' stedina għal taqvida u lanqas jispiċċa miflug jew mgħaffegħ. U spicċa ħajbu. Hemm u mhux hemm. Bla ħoss, bla kliem, u bla sliem.

Kien wasal biex jirraġunaha waħdu li hu ma kienx jaħti. Izda li ma setax jifhem kien kif it-toroq

What's Up with Darren?

Experience had taught Darren to make himself invisible in his own home. He often imagined his parents as a bull and a matador, both fierce and beautiful – she with raised arms and mocking voice, ridiculing and trying to catch him out; he, snorting, disdainful and ready to attack. Sometimes they switched roles – depending on their mood. Darren himself was the red cape waving at them, provoking more trouble. Eventually, common sense taught him to detach himself from their never-ending dangerous game so he could observe them without letting them into his heart; he thus learned to hide to avoid being wounded and crushed. He became invisible – there but not quite there. There were no words, no communication.

Darren often tried to convince himself that he



imserrpa ta' moħħhom iwassluhom biex, minn sempliċi "pa, kif int, kif mort ix-xogħol illum?" twassal dritt dritt għal "eee, lil dak qed tistaqsi kif mar illum, jien ma neżistix għalik wara dak kollu li nagħmel għalik biex qatt ma jonqsok xejn? Lil dak l-ewwel li ssellem? Jien x'jien għalik mela?" Bumm bumm u f'sekonda l-barri u l-matador jiżbruffaw barra.

Għax, għalkemm separati, missieru u ommu baqgħu jgħixu temporanjament fl-istess dar bla ma jgħidu kelma lil xulxin. Sakemm ma jiftillux Darren jinsa u jkellem lil xi ħadd minnhom. Imma issa tgħallem. Tgħallem iħallihom bi kwiethom.

Ir-ritratti fil-frejms mimlija memorji tat-tlieta li huma jiddieħku fis-salott, fil-kċina, fil-ġnien, fil-kampanja, il-Belt, u bnadi oħra... dawn kollha sparixxew mill-kmamar. L-għajbien tagħhom irrenda d-dar u lil qalbu ċimiterju.

X'ferħ ferħ ġie jsemmilu s-Sur Camilleri għodu għodu? Jew kellu rasu mgħaddsa fir-ramel jew kien qed jgħix ħolma. Mhux bħalu! Il-ħitan tal-kamra

was not to blame. But he just couldn't understand how, in their convoluted minds, a simple "How are you, Pa, how was your day?" could lead to his mum's burst of anger: "Ooh, you only ask him about his day. Don't I exist? After all I do for you. Why only greet him? After all the things he did to us...?" Wham bam! In a second the bull and the matador charge out.

Although they were separated, his father and mother continued to live in the same house temporarily, although they never spoke a word to each other. That is, until Darren forgot and spoke to one of them. But he'd learnt his lesson now. He'd learnt to leave them well alone.

The framed photos of the three of them smiling in the sitting room, the kitchen, the garden, the countryside, the city... they had all disappeared from the rooms and corridors. Their disappearance turned the house and his heart into a graveyard.

Why did Mr Camilleri have to talk to him about happiness this morning? His head must be buried in



tiegħu żarmati minn kollox. Ma kellux bżonn iżid mal-illużjonijiet ta' ħajtu. Bħalu, kamartu kienet qed tistenna li tkun taf għand min kienet ser tispicċa. Li kien jaf biċ-ċert hu li malli jagħlaq it-tmintax, kien se jitlaq jiġri minn hemm u għala biebu mill-bubù. L-imħabba kbira li darba waħda kellu għal ommu u missieru ħadet ċmajra minn kmieni, u ddubita jekk kienx għad hemm dellha xi mkien f'qalbu. Kien jiddubita tassew.

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the sand. Unlike him! Darren had finally swept his room clear of memories. It felt good to be rid of illusions in life. Like himself, his room was empty and waiting. He was certain that, as soon as he turned eighteen, he would be out of there in a flash; he wouldn't think twice about it. The fervent love he once had for his parents was now a mere shadow of its former self. He doubted whether there were any vestiges of it left in his heart.

Għalliem Jisfida lil Darren

Darren kien minn tal-ewwel fir-rassa biex jaħrab mill-klassi. Beda jimbotta lil sħabu u kien għoddu ħareġ meta s-Sur Camilleri sejjahlu. Nefah waħda u dawwar denbu.

“Għandek idea fuq xiex ser tagħmlu l-proġett das-sajf, Darren?”

“Le. Għadu kmieni wisq.”

“Naf. Imma għedt forsi għandek xi ħjiel.”

“Le, kif għedtlek ...”

“Naf. Smajtek. Għadu kmieni wisq.”

“Eżatt!”

“Jaqaw hemm xi ħaġa li qed iddejjeq, Darren?”

Darren ħabat se jkun sarkastiku mas-Sur Camilleri. Iżda ftakar li kien l-uniku għalliem li kien jitkellem miegħu bħala ħabib veru u waqqaf lilu nnifsu fil-ħin.

“Kollox qed idejjaqni!”

“Il-għala, Darren?”

“Il-għala? Għax imdejjaq! Xbajt minn kollox! Iġri nispiċċaw!”

A Teacher’s Challenge

Darren was among the first to push his way out of the classroom. He was almost out when Mr Camilleri called him back. He frowned, turned back, and sat down.

“Have you decided on a subject for your research project this summer, Darren?”

“No. It’s too early.”

“I know. But I thought that perhaps you had an inkling.”

“No, as I said...”

“I know, I heard you. It’s too early.”

“Exactly.”

“Is there something bothering you, Darren?”

Darren was about to make a sarcastic retort but remembered that Mr Camilleri was the only teacher that he could talk to, like a true friend. He stopped himself in time.

“Everything is bothering me!”

“Why is that, Darren?”

“Ili ma narak ferħan. Thassibni.”

“X’ferħan ferħan! Il-ferħ ma jeżistix. Illużjoni.”

“Jeżisti. U mhux illużjoni. Kultant jiġru affarijiet li jwegġġħuna u jgagħluna naħsbu li ma jeżistix ferħ. Imma jeżisti.”

“Mhux veru. Le, ma jeżistix. Qed ngħidlek. Naf!”

“Hmm... allura... ngħid jien... għax ma tirriċerkax din l-ipoteżi tiegħek, Darren? Almenu tara x’jaħseb ħaddieħor. Ma toqgħodx fuqi biss!”

“Qed tiċċajta!”

“Le. Malli kliemna waqa’ fuq hekk, faqqset din l-idea.”

“Taċ-ċajt din, Sir, bir-rispett kollu.”

“Owkej. F’idejk. Nafda fik. Xi tema li tinteressak issib żgur. Inti wieħed mill-aktar studenti li nammira.”

“X’fini x’tammira, Sir?”

“Għax moħħok ċar. Dejjem tistaqsi mistoqsijiet interessanti u tidhol f’ċertu dettall. Taqra ħafna. Taqra kotba ta’ kull tip. Tirrifletti fuq xi tkun qrajt u tiftakar l-mod kif awtur ikun żviluppa argument. Taf

“Why? Because I’m fed up. I’m fed up of everything. I wish I was done with my studies.”

“I haven’t seen you happy for some time. I’m worried about you.”

“Happy? What’s that? Happiness doesn’t exist. It’s an illusion.”

“Oh, it exists all right. And it’s no illusion. It’s very true that sometimes things happen that hurt us and make us think that happiness doesn’t exist. But it does exist.”

“That’s not true. No, it doesn’t exist, I tell you. I know!”

“Mmm.. well, I tell you what. Why don’t you research this theory of yours, Darren? At least, you could see what others think. Don’t just rely on my opinion.”

“You’re joking!”

“No. As soon as we spoke of it, this idea occurred to me.”

“With all due respect, Sir, it’s silly.”

“Okay, maybe. I leave it up to you. I trust you.



tqassar il-punti ewlenin. Taf tqabbel argument ma' ieħor biex turi aspetti differenti. Nista' nibqa' sejjer."

"Qed tesagera, Sir. Naħseb qed thawwadni ma' Philip."

"Nammetti li Philip ukoll għandu dawn id-doni. Rari jkolli studenti bħalkom. Nixtieq li kelli dawn il-ħiliet u doni meta kont daqskom."

Darren staħa jisma' dawk il-kumplimenti kollha. Sellem lis-Sur Camilleri u bewweg 'il barra.

✽

You'll surely find a theme that interests you. You are one of the students that I admire most."

"What's there to admire, Sir?"

"You think clearly. You're always ready to question and delve deeper into a subject. You read a lot, all sorts of books. You remember the thread of an author's argument and you know how to boil a text down to its main points. You can compare one argument with another to show different perspectives. I could go on."

"You're exaggerating, Sir. I think you're mixing me up with Philip."

"I admit that Philip also has these skills. I rarely have students like you two. I wish I'd had these skills and talents when I was your age."

Darren was embarrassed by all those compliments. He hurriedly mumbled a goodbye to Mr Camilleri and got out of there, fast.

✽

Lippu, Sid Mullu

Lura d-dar, flok mar jiekol quddiem it-televixin jew jistudja, Darren qatagħha li jaqbad ir-rota u jħalliha tispirah b'xi rotta. Sab ruħu f'tarf ir-raħal fil-qalba tal-kampanja. Għadda minn mogħdijiet imħarbtin bix-xita ta' ewlillejl. Xorob l-arja friska u ħallieha taħsdu u tmellu fl-istess waqt. Bidwi li kien qed jarma l-vann bid-duħ ifur bl-għelejjel ta' wcuħ ir-raba' sellimlu. Sellimlu lura. Waqaf jistrieħ u qagħad josservah. Il-bidwi nnutah u staqsieh jekk kellux aptit jgħinu jgħabbi.

Bla kliem, ħadmu spalla ma' spalla sakemm stivaw id-duħ kollu fil-vann. "Jekk trid timxi warajja, tista' tgħinni nħott kollox ir-razzett. M'hawnx bogħod." Darren għolla u niżżel rasu bħal žiemel u saq ir-rota wara l-vann. Waslu f'razzett kbir antik f'tarf raħal qrib. Kif il-bidwi fetaħ il-bieb tar-remissa mqaxxar u mimli skaldi, ħareg kelb 'il barra u beda jdur u jagħqad u jitla' u jbus lil sidu. Sidu niżel kokka jilgħab miegħu u jmellu u jħokklu wara widnejh u

Phil, Master of Mullu

Back home, Darren decided not to study or eat in front of the TV but to go out for a ride on his bike. Perhaps he would get some inspiration for the project on his way. Before long, he ended up beyond the village in the heart of the countryside. He cycled through lanes dotted all over with multi-coloured flowers. He drank in the fresh air and let it caress and surprise him. A farmer loading his van with crates of vegetables greeted him. Darren waved back and stopped for a rest to observe the farmer. The farmer noticed this and asked if he wanted to help him.

They worked together in silence, loading vegetables onto the van. "If you like, you can follow me and give me a hand to unload it all at the farm. It's not far." Darren nodded and cycled after the van, arriving at an old farmhouse at the edge of a nearby village. As soon as the farmer opened the splintered stable door, a dog burst out, circling and



jillixxalu sufu u jagħrxu. Kien fihom għaxqa.

Jafu jifirħu b'xulxin dawn! Dal-kelb donnu qed jidħak. Tgħid il-klieb jafu jidħku? U baqa' josservahom.

Komplew jaħdmu fis-skiet u, f'ħakka t'għajn, ħattew kollox minkejja l-giri mas-saqajn tal-kelb ferfuxi ferħan. Il-bidwi daħal ġewwa u ħalla l-bieb miftuħ. Darren daħal warajh. Dak saħħan l-ilma f'kitla fuq il-kuker tal-gass u ħareġ borża ottijiet minn kaxxa tal-ħobż tal-injam u offrieha lil Darren.

“Waħdek tgħix, nann?”

“Għajr għal Mullu hawn, iwa ħoj.”

“Kemmm ilek waħdek?”

“Ħmistux-il sena.”

“Mizzewweg?”

“Kint. Marì ħallietne ħmistux-il sen'ilu.”

“Jiddispjaċini, nann.”

“Ħmm.”

“Ma tiddejjaqx waħdek?”

“Lie. Għandi lil Mullu. Ma jonqosni xejn għel

jumping at his master with excitement, licking his hands and face. His master crouched down to play with him, patting and tickling him and scratching his ears. They were a lovely sight.

These two really enjoy each other! The dog seems to be laughing. Do dogs laugh? Darren wondered as he watched them together.

The farmer and Darren worked on in silence, quickly unloading the vegetable crates despite the frenzied dog running around them. The farmer went indoors leaving the door open invitingly. Darren followed him inside. The farmer put the kettle on the gas cooker, took out a bag of crunchy biscuits and offered them to Darren.

“Do you live here on your own, Grandad?”

“Yeah, myself and Mullu here.”

“How long have you been on your own?”

“Fifteen years.”

“Are you married?”

“I was. My Mary died...”

“I'm sorry, Grandad”



grazzje tal-ħenin Alla.”

“X’jismek? Jien Darren.”

“Isim sabejħ. Lippu jen.”

“Allura Lippu, emm ... nann, int ferħan?”

“Il-għela le?”

“Imma ferħan?”

“Iwa ħoj.”

“Xi jferrħek, nann?”

Lippu ferra’ t-te u żiedlu l-ħalib jagħli li kien għadu kif saħħan. Bdew ibillu l-ottijiet fit-te jikwi. Lippu baqa’ jaħseb. Darren ħaseb li jew ma fehmu, jew ma riedx iwiegħbu, jew li nesa li kien staqsieh mistoqsija.

Meta Lippu l-bidwi, sid Mullu, qatagħha li jwiegħbu, qallu:

“Mullu. L-għelqa. It-tbexbix. Inżul ix-xemx. Iskiet billojl. L-għelejjel. Il-ħemrija niedja ma’ keffet idi. Meta nifteħ il-vit u joħroġ l-ilma. Dawn l-ottijiet friski. Inti hawn, ġejt tgħinni mingħajr ma fittixtek. Dan killu.”

Darren ma qal xejn. Baqa’ jomgħod dik il-lista

“Hmm.”

“Don’t you get bored on your own?”

“No. I’ve got Mullu and my fields. I don’t need anything more, thank God.”

“What’s your name? I’m Darren.”

“That’s a nice name. I’m Phil.”

“Well, Phil... Grandad, are you happy?”

“Why not?”

“But are you happy?”

“Yes, that I am.”

“What makes you happy, Grandad?”

Phil poured out the tea and added hot milk. They dunked the biscuits in the scalding tea. Phil seemed pensive. Darren thought that perhaps he hadn’t understood him, or did not wish to reply, or had simply forgotten that he had asked him a question.

When Phil finally replied, it was with a list.

“Mullu. The fields. Dawn. Sunset. The silence at night. The farm produce. Damp soil on my hands. The rain. Turning the tap on and getting run-



mal-ottijiet. Sabha sempliċi u ta' veru.



Lura d-dar qatagħha li jibda r-riċerka. Xegħel il-kompjuter u niżżel dak kollu li ntqal bejnu u bejn Lippu bla ma ħalla xejn barra. Imbagħad beda jniżżel xi riflessjonijiet fuq dak li ġara.

- Kelb iħobbok u jferrħek. Tista' tkun kuntent waħdek ma' kelb.

- Kelb jifraħ meta jara li sidu wasal lura qawwi u šiħi. X'jaġġmel meta sidu jkun barra u hu magħluq ġewwa? Ikun ferħan jew denbu bejn saqajh?

- L-ambjent naturali jferraħ, imma trid tkun taf tapprezzah.

- Loqma fqira f'tarf jum xogħol iebes tagħmlek hieni.

- Affarijiet sempliċi li drajnathom qegħdin hemm, bħall-ilma, jistgħu jferrħu. Għaliex?

- Persuna li ma tafhiex tista' tferrħek. Lippu għaliex qal li ferraħtu? Għax għentu? Jew għax nieqes mill-kumpanija?

- Xi jfisser dan kollu għaliya? Nista' ngħid li l-

ning water. These fresh biscuits. Your being here - you came to help me without my looking for you. All this makes me happy."

Darren did not reply. He chewed on that list along with the biscuits. It seemed simple, real.



Back home, he decided to start his research. He switched on his laptop and wrote down all that Phil had told him, leaving nothing out. Then he started to jot down some thoughts on what had taken place.

~ A dog loves you and makes you happy. You could be happy on your own with a dog.

~ A dog is happy when he sees his master back safe and sound. What does he do when his master is away from home, and he's locked indoors? Does he mooch around with his tail between his legs?

~ The natural environment makes you happy, but you would have to be open to appreciating it.

~ A simple snack after a hard day's work can make you happy.

kumpanija ta' Lippu ferrhitni? Ma dejqitnix. Tatni x'naħseb. Niggżitni biex nibda l-proġett? Jista' jkun. Kont kurjuż nara jekk xi ħadd bħal Lippu jkunx jista' jwieġeb il-mistoqsija li għamiltlu.

☪

L-għada qatagħha li jerga' jasal wasla sa ħdejn Lippu biex jgħinu ftit. Ħassu tajjeb jagħmel ftit xogħol manwali. Iddeċieda li jistieden lil tlieta minn sħabu biex Lippu jkollu aktar għajnuna. U ħa l-kamera diġitali miegħu għax kien ilu ma jużaha.

☪

~ Simple things, like a drink of water, can make you happy. Why?

~ A person you'd never met before could make you happy. Why did Phil say that I had made him happy? Because I helped him? Or because he misses company?

~ What does all this mean to me? Can I say that Phil's company made me happy? It didn't bore me. It gave me something to think about. Did it spur me on to start the project? Possibly. I must admit I was curious to see whether someone like Phil could answer my questions.

☪

The next day, Darren decided to visit Phil and help him out a bit more. Manual work had made him feel good. He wanted to experience this new feeling more. This time he invited three of his mates to go with him. He even took his digital camera with him – it had been a long time since he last used it.

☪



Ix-Xwejhin ta' Spiritu Tewmi

Mal-wasla tal-vaganzi, Darren beda jbakkar, u erhjelha għal għonq it-triq bla pjan u direzzjoni. Ir-rotta u l-barżakka bil-ħobż u l-ilma kienu jakkumpanjawh kullimkien. Moħħu kien mimli mistoqsijiet li xtaq isaqsi lil xi ħadd.

Jum minnhom għadda minn toroq fgati bit-traffiku sakemm waqaf jistenna d-dawl aħmar jinbidel f'orangjo, u mbagħad aħdar, fi triq prinċipali. Osserva binja kbira fuq ix-xellug tiegħu u t-tabella kbira fuq il-bieb tad-daħla li tavża li kienet dar għall-anzjani. Fil-parapett, żewġ nisa xwejhin kienu qegħdin jilagħqu x-xemx, jitbissmu b'għajnejhom magħluqin. It-tnejn kienu lebsin libsa simili u gakketta tas-suf, ta' waħda kaffellatte u tal-oħra ċilesti. Xagħarhom abjad qoton kien maqtuġh qasir. Qatagħha li jmur ħdejjhom. Nizel mir-rotta u pespsilhom għal darba tnejn sakemm semgħuh fid-damdim. Fetħu għajnejhom beraħ f'daqqa.

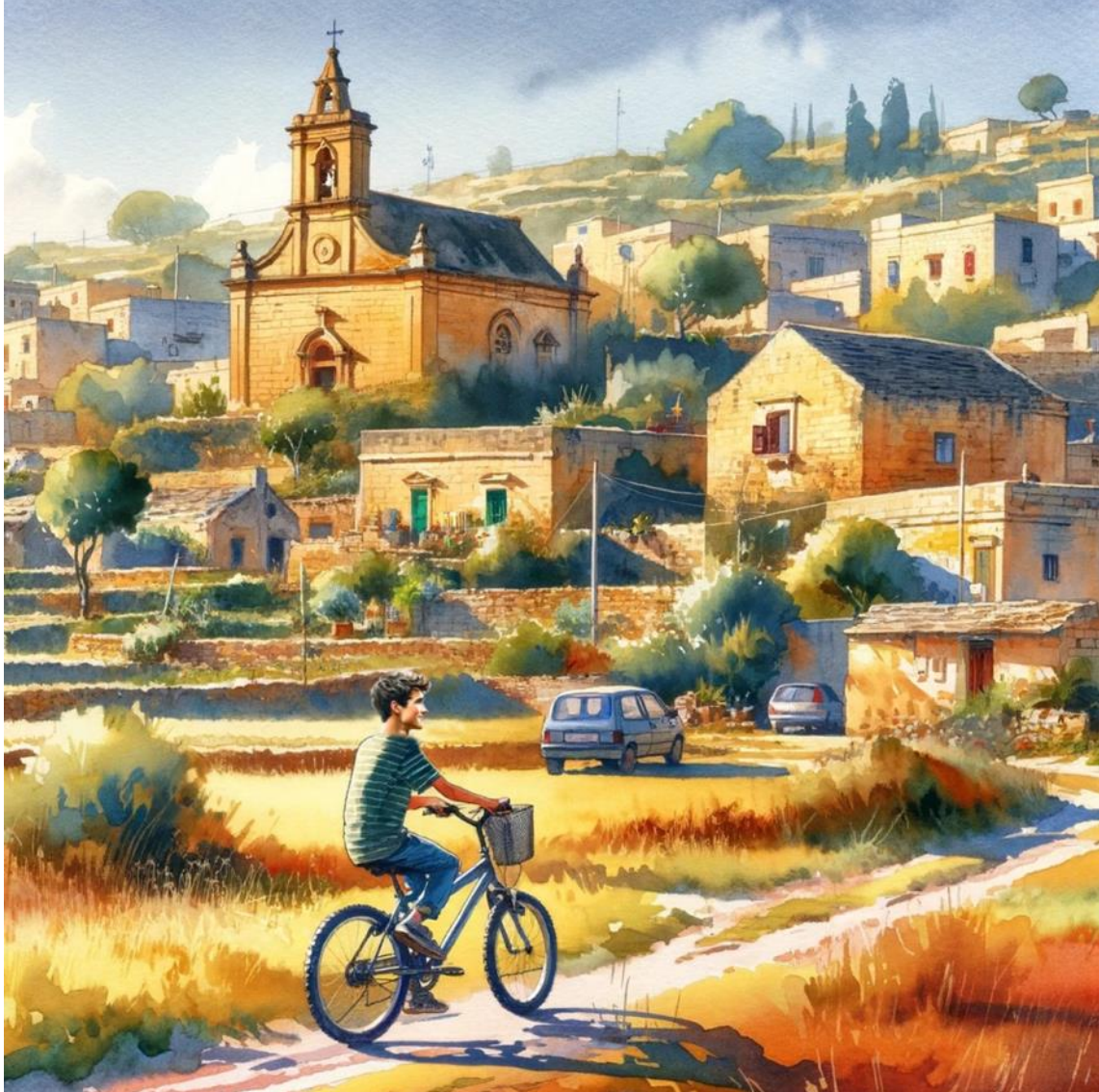
“Bongu għalikom. Nista' npoġġi ftit ħdejjkom ħa

The Old Ladies of Kindred Spirit

As soon as the holidays started, Darren woke early, setting off on bicycle trips without any plan or direction. The bike and a backpack containing sandwiches and water were his companions. His mind was full of questions that he wanted to ask.

One day, he cycled through a wide town road choked with traffic, until he had to stop at the traffic lights. On his left, there was a big building with a sign over the front door indicating that it was a home for the elderly. On a bench on the porch, two old women were sunning themselves, smiling, eyes shut. They were both wearing a similar-looking dress and a woollen cardigan—one light brown, the other powder blue. Their snow-white hair was cut short. He decided to get off the bike and attract their attention above the din of the traffic. At last, their eyes opened wide.

“Good morning to you. May I sit down beside you to eat my sandwiches? There's room on your



niekol biċċa ħobż? Hemm post fuq il-bank ħdejkom?”

“Ejja, ejja tfajjel. Oqgħod bilqiegħda ħdejna, qisu tiegħek.”

“Ilna ma nitkellmu ma’ tfajjel daqsek.”

“X’qed tagħmlu hawn barra f’did-daħna tat-traffiku?”

“Xi tridna nagħmlu sabiħ? M’għandniex x’nagħmlu!”

–“L-għala le?”

–“L-għala le? Għax li kellna nagħmlu għamilnieh.”

“X’għamiltu?”

“Uuu, li kieku nibdew ngħidulek ma titlaq qatt minn hawn sabiħ! Għandna mija u sittin sena bejnietna aħna t-tnejn. Kemm trid ħin biex ngħidulek x’għamilna f’das-snin kollha, tfajjel?”

“Għandi sajf shiħ kieku. Nista’ nistaqsikom xi haġa?”

“Staqsì, staqsì. M’għandniex appuntamenti, tafx.”

“Intom ferħana?”

bench.”

“Come sit beside us, young man. Make yourself at home.”

“It’s been a while since we spoke to a young man like you.”

“Why are you out here breathing in all these traffic fumes?”

“What else can we do, sweetie? We have nothing else to do!”

“Why not?”

“Why not? Because we’ve already done what we had to do.”

“What have you done?”

“Ooh, if we start telling you, you’d never leave here, sweetie! We’ve lived 160 years between us! How much time do you have for us to tell you what we’ve done in all those years, young man?”

“I’ve got all summer. Can I ask you something?”

“Go right ahead. We don’t have any engagements, you know.”

“Are you happy?”

“Uħ! Iva u ngħid.”

“Għalkemm, ħares ‘l hawn, jekk tidħol ġewwa u tistaqsi din il-mistoqsija lil sħabna jgħidulek li le għax qegħdin f’ħabs.”

“U intom m’intomx f’ħabs?”

“Skont mnejn tħares lejn l-affarijiet, tfajjel sbejjah. Tassew li ġisimna xraf u sar qoxra ta’ dak li kien. Imma baqgħalna l-memorji. Immorru fejn immorru dawk jibqgħu magħna. U hawn ma jonqosna xejn.”

“Bilħaqq, ilbieraħ kien se jħarrikna pulizija għall-veloċità!”

“Xiex? Mel’intom issuqu?”

“Seħibti hawn m’għadhiex tara sew u jien bilkemm għadni nista’ nimxi fuq dawn il-bankini mbewqa. Inħobbu nimxuha sal-pjazza għall-quddies.”

“Allura x’għara?”

“Eee... mela. Ilbieraħ konna qed naqsmu l-istrixxi bojod fil-pjazza mimlija traffiku. Jien inżomm lambranzetta ma’ seħibti hawn għax ma narax sew

“Oh yes, I’d say,” said one of them.

“Although, look here,” said the other, “if you go indoors and ask our friends, they’d say no, because they’re in a prison.”

“And aren’t you too in a prison?”

“It depends how you look at things, youngster. It’s true, our bodies are shrivelled and shells of what we once were. But we still have our memories. Wherever we go, those are still with us. And we do have whatever we need here.”

“By the way, yesterday, we were almost fined by a policeman for speeding!”

“What? Do you still drive?”

“My friend here doesn’t see very well and I can hardly walk on these messed-up pavements. We like to walk to the square for mass.”

“So, what happened?”

“Well, yesterday we were waiting at the zebra crossing in the square, which was full of traffic. I was hanging on to my friend here because I can’t see well and she’s shaky on her legs. Horns were



u hi se taqa' u ma taqax. Il-ħornijiet idoqqu u aħna nitriegħdu bid-daħk għax kulħadd madwarna bla sabar.”

“U mbagħad?”

- Mela, mela. Imbagħad ħenn għalina dal-pulizjott. Qalilna biex ma ngħagglux għax se jħarrikna għall-velocità!”

U hemm, ix-xwejħin bdew jidħqu tant li Darren spicča jidħaq magħhom. Mesħu d-dmugh b'maktur li ħargu minn basket f'ħogorhom.

“Nammirakom tafx.”

“Għal xiex, tfajjel?”

“Għax tafu tidħku bikom infuskom.”

“Għax is-sigriet tal-ħajja nafuh aħna, tafx!”

“X'sigriet hu dan?”

“Li tkun taf tidħak bik innifsek. Li ma tiħux lilek innifsek bis-serjetà.”

“Aaa!”

“Fhimtha din, tfajjel?”

“Qed nipprova, nann. Irrid naħseb aktar fuqha din.”

blaring and we're shaking with laughter because everyone around us seemed in such a hurry.”

“And then?”

“Well, then, this policeman took pity on us. He told us not to hurry because he would fine us for speeding!”

At this, both women started laughing so hard that Darren couldn't help laughing with them. They mopped up their tears of laughter.

“You know, I admire you both.”

“How's that, young man?”

“Because you can laugh at yourselves.”

“It's because we know life's secret, you know!”

“What secret is that?”

“The ability to laugh at yourself. Not to take yourself seriously. Many do, you know, and they are unhappy.”

“Yes, that's it.”

“Have you known each other long?”

“We met here three years ago and clicked.”

“At first, I was a bit depressed because my chil-

“Aħseb, aħseb.”

“Mela, mela.”

“Allura ilkom xejn tafu lil xulxin?”

“Iltqajna hawn xi tliet snin ilu u ingwalajnieha.”

“Għall-ewwel ħbatt se nagħmel f’qalbi għax uliedi u n-neputijiet ma tantx isibu ħin jiġu sa fejni. Waħdi ma nistax immur inżurhom. Imma mbagħad iltqajt ma’ seħibti hawn. Għall-grazzja tal-ħanin Alla, naqblu sew aħna.”

“Indunajt jien! Tajjeb li jkollok ħabiba tal-qalb.”

“Tajjeb u ngħid, tfajjel! Ħabib tal-qalb jimlielek ħajtek.”

“Mela, mela.”

“Allura, hemm ġew, hemm min hu ferħan bħalkom?”

“Hemm ġew bank tas-swied il-qalb, sabiħ.”

“Tassew, tassew. Idħol sa ġewwa tfajjel, u ħlief gdiadem u qrid ma tarax u ma tismax.”

“Sew qed tgħid. Hemm ġew issibhom ringiela bilqiegħda b’għajnejhom magħluqa jistennew irraqda ta’ dejjem.”

dren and grandchildren don’t often find the time to visit me. I can’t visit them on my own. Then I met my friend here. Thank God, we get on really well.”

“I can see that! It’s so good to have a real friend.”

“You can say that again, young man! A real friend fills your life.”

“That’s right”.

“So, in there, is there anyone who’s happy like you?”

“There’s a lot of sadness in there, sweetie.”

“You’re right. If you go in, all you will see are mostly long faces and much complaining.”

“Yes, you’ll find them sitting in a row, with eyes closed, waiting for the eternal sleep.”

“So, there’s absolutely nobody else happy in there?”

“Oh no. You’ll find a happy soul or two. But you need to look hard.”

“Tell me about when you were happy.”

So they did. The old ladies told him about mar-

“Allura, hadd hadd mhu ferħan hemm ġew?”

“U le, le. Issib xi baħbuħ ferrieħi wkoll. Imma trid tfittxu b’nemes.”

“Għiduli dwar meta kontu henjin.”

U qalulu. Qalulu x-xwejħin dwar waqtiet meraviljużi meta l-ħajja donnha kienet waqfet ħesrem biex tagħthom ħjiel ċkejken mimli leqqizza u sbuħija. Sekondi fejn kelma, ħarsa, tbissima, tferfira u demgħa saru ħaġa waħda u fissru d-dinja f’tikka ta’ sekonda. Pinġewlu pjanura mċajpra bi ċlampu mtektka b’eluf ta’ tikek ta’ kull lewn li salvaw il-pjanura mis-swidija u għamlu minnha qawsalla.

Qatgħulu nifsu. Ried jiżgiċċa minn hemm biex isib rokna kwjeta ħalli bil-kitba jaħfen is-seħer impinġi b’fommhom. Beża’ li dak kollu li tgħallem minnhom kien se jisparixxilu.

✽

vellous moments, when life seemed to stand still, giving them tiny glimpses full of sparkle and beauty. Moments when a word, a glance, a smile, a flutter and a tear became one and meant the world in a fraction of a second. They painted a world with thousands of flecks of every colour, that saved the landscape from darkness and made it a rainbow.

The old souls took his breath away. He wanted to escape, to find a quiet corner so that he could write and try to understand the magic painted in his mind by their words. He was afraid that the concept of happiness distilled through their words to him would disappear. How would he get hold of them again?

✽

Iż-Żagħżuġ Sur Patri

Hu u riesaq lejn il-wilġa ra dabra sewda titħarrek fil-bogħod 'il bogħod. Kien għadu kif stħajjel li kien waħdu f'dawk l-inħawi miżgħudin raba' mogħxa msaqqfa b'ġelu kaħlani. Hu, l-art u s-sema. Issa hemm is-sema, l-art, hu u d-dabra sewdiniġa. It-tidwir tar-rota fis qorbu lejn id-dabra li ssawret f'patri mgħaġġel. Darren niżel mir-rota u ħaffef wara l-patri.

“Hawn, Sur Patri! Il-jum it-tajjeb!”

“Lilek ukoll, sieħeb.”

“Fejn sejjer?”

“Ma nafx.”

“Kif ma tafx?”

“Għax kuljum ngħaddi minn mogħdijiet li ma nafx biex forsi nispiċċa fi nħawi li ma nafx.”

“U jekk tispiċċa fi nħawi li taf?”

“Nieħu gost li nasal f'post li diġà naf milli post li ma nkunx naf.”

“U jekk tispiċċa f'post li ma tafx?”

The Young Monk

As he approached the valley, he saw a dark smudge in the far distance. He had thought he was alone in that landscape of fertile fields under a marvellous blue sky. The land, the sky and him. Now there was the land, the sky, himself, and the dark smudge. The bike soon took him closer to that brown smudge which turned out to be a monk hurrying along on his own bike. Darren got off his and hurried after him.

“Hey there, Monk, good day to you!”

“To you too, brother.”

“Where are you off to?”

“I don't know.”

“How come you don't know?”

“Well, every day I walk or cycle along paths that I am not familiar with; perhaps then I'll end up in a place that I don't know about.”

“What if you end up in a place that you do know?”



“Aaa! Nogħxa niskopri dak l-imkien ġdid.”

“Għalfejn dit-tfittxija ta’ mogħdijiet ġodda? Mhux aħjar tgħaddi minn toroq li diġà taf li jwassluk fejn taf li se tasal?”

“Ma nistax niskopri bla ma nħuf. Niġġammja. Anke dak li jidher diġà magħruf issiblu trufijiet ġodda jekk tersaq lejħ minn bnadi oħra.”

“Kif?”

“Qatt imxejt b’wiċċek ’il fuq?”

“Iva. Darba ppruvajt nagħmel hekk il-Belt. Inħobb inħares lejħ il-bini b’gallariji ta’ kull għamla u daqs. Ridt nitpaxxa narahom sew jien u miexi. Imma dħalt f’ħofra darbtejn u ħadtha għal wiċċi. “

“U qtajt qalbek.”

“Iva. Ma rgajt ippruvajt.”

“Aaa!”

“U darb’oħra ridt nara sew il-pittura meraviljuża mas-soqfa tal-Palazz tal-Belt. Imma qlajt għonqi. U m’hemmx fejn tista’ tpoġġi biex togħhod tħares lejħom sew fit-tul b’wiċċek ’il fuq. Poġġejt fl-art u ma ħallewnix.

“Then I’m glad to arrive in a place I know from a place that I didn’t know.”

“And if you end up in a place that you don’t know?”

“Ah! I would be overjoyed to discover that new place.”

“Why are you looking for new paths and places? Isn’t it better if you stick to roads that you already know will lead you to places that you know? That way, you won’t get lost.”

“I can’t discover new places unless I wander around. I would grind to a halt. Even what appears already known can provide new clues if you approach it from a different direction.”

“How’s that?”

“Have you ever walked with your head tipped up?”

“Yes. I tried doing that once in Valletta. I like looking at buildings which have balconies of every kind and size. I wanted to admire them while I was walking. But I tripped twice and fell on my face.”



“U qtajt qalbek.”

“Tassew. Imma nixtieq niddobba sigġu bir-roti biex nidhol bih. Imbagħad inkun nista’ nizzerzaq ħelu ħelu fih, b’wiċċi ’l fuq. Hekk żgur jirnexxili narahom sew bil-kwiet.”

“Idea tajba, sieħeb.”

“Taħseb?”

“Il-għala le?”

“Aaa! Emm, allura inti patri?”

“Hekk hu. M’iniex biss liebes libsa ta’ patri imma jien tassew patri.”

“Tista’ tgħid li int ferħan, Sur Patri?”

“Iva. Bniedem hieni jien!”

“Fejn toqgħod, Sur Patri?”

“Noqgħod hemm u hawn. Xorta waħda għalija. Bħalissa qed noqgħod hemm, ara. U ppuntalu subgħu lejn monasteru b’kappella ċkejna mħaxkna miegħu fuq għolja ftit imbiegħda.”

“Jekk trid ejja sa fejni meta tkun tista’. Indawrek mal-post u tkun tista’ tiltaqa’ ma’ shabi l-patrijiet. Wieħed minnhom iħobb jivvjagġa bir-rotta bħalek.

“And you gave up.”

“That’s right. I never tried again.”

“Ah!”

“Another time, I wanted to look carefully at the marvellous paintings on the ceilings of the Grandmasters’ Palace in Valletta. But my neck hurt. And there’s nowhere to sit and look at them properly. I sat on the floor, but they made me get up.”

“And you gave up.”

“I did, yes. But I’d like to borrow a wheelchair; then I could glide around with my head tipped up. I would then be able to see the splendid paintings well.”

“Why not?”

“Hmm, so you’re a monk?”

“That’s right. I’m not just dressed as a monk, you know. I’m really a monk.”

“Would you say that you’re happy, Reverend?”

“Yes. I’m a very happy person!”

“Where do you live, Monk?”

“Here and there. It’s all the same to me. At pre-

Għandu rota b'wieħed u għoxrin gear.”

“Niġi, grazzi ħafna. Allura, il-għala għedtli li, toqgħod fejn toqgħod, xorta waħda għalik?”

“Għax hekk hu. Qalbi mhix marbuta ma’ bini u ma’ ta’ ġo fih.”

“Imma importanti li jkollok dar, le?”

“Huwa tajjeb li wieħed ikollu kenn, mela le. Imma mhux biex jintrabat u jorbot qalbu miegħu żżejjed.”

“Ma’ xiex torbot qalbek mela?”

“Tista’ tgħid ma’ xejn, sieħeb. Biss, il-ftit li għandi napprezzah, tafx. U nħobb lil kull min Alla jagħtini l-grazzja li niltaqa’ miegħu u nsir nafu.”

“U l-ilma, l-arja, l-għelieqi, il-fjuri, is-siġar?”

“Aaa! Dawk rigali meraviljużi minn Alla Divin. Nixrob is-sbuħija tagħhom u nitrejjaq minnhom. Ma neqridhomx bil-kilba.”

“U ommok u missierek?”

“Aħna mislufin lilhom sakemm inkunu nistgħu nieqfu fuq saqajna biex nishru ħalli nilhqu l-milja ta’ ħajjitna. U huma mislufin lilna biex inħobbuhom u

sent, I’m living over there,” pointing at a monastery with a small chapel tucked into its side, on a far-off hillside.

“You can come over some time if you wish. I can take you round and you could meet my brother monks. One of them loves riding his bike, like you and me. His bike has twenty-one gears.”

“I will, thank you for inviting me. So, why did you say that it doesn’t matter where you live?”

“That’s how it is. I’m not attached to any building or things.”

“It’s important to have a home, isn’t it?”

“It’s good to have shelter, of course. But one should not be too attached to it.”

“Well, what are you attached to, then?”

“Nothing, really. But I do appreciate the little that I have. And I love those God gives me the grace to meet and get to know.”

“What about water, the air, the fields, flowers, trees?”

“Ah! Those are marvellous gifts from God Al-

nirrispettawhom, anke meta jidhrulna mxaqqin, mhux perfetti.”

“Kif tista’ thobb lil xi ħadd imxaqqaq?”

U qallu. Qallu li l-imħabba tbejjiet u titwieled u toktor u tfur bl-abbundanza u xxappap lil ħaddieħor f’qalb li thobb u thobb mingħajr ġudizzju.



U f’moħħ Darren baqgħet tberren xi ħaġa oħra li qallu s-Sur Patri - li qabelxejn wieħed għandu jittgħallem iħobb lilu nnifsu. Il-għala dan? Xtaq jifhem tassew. U raqad u tqalleb, u ħolom u tqalleb u dam sa ma fehem.

Mal-għodwa bakkar u xtara żewġ qsari pariġġ bilward qed jiftaħ. Poġġa waħda mal-bieb tal-kamra t’ommu u l-oħra ma’ dik ta’ missieru. Ħallielhom nota pariġġ mal-qasrija li tgħid:

Qed naħdem fuq proġett.

Miexi.

Inħobbkom, naf.

Bħalissa qed nipprova nifhem kif inħobb lili

nnifsi.

mighty. I drink in their beauty and am nurtured by them. I will not destroy them through greed.”

“And your parents?”

“We are on loan to them until we can stand on our own feet and work to achieve the fullness of our lives. And they are on loan to us for us to love, respect and cherish them, even when they seem to us to be cracked, not perfect.”

“How can you love someone who’s cracked?”

The young monk told Darren how, when one is open to it, love nests in people’s hearts, grows and overflows - touching others in the process; how love accepts others without judging them.



Darren’s mind pondered something else the monk had told him - that one must first learn to love oneself. Why was that? He really wanted to understand. Once back home, he slept, tossed, and turned, dreamt and eventually started to understand.

He woke early and went out to buy two identical



Hemm torta tat-tuffieħ friska fil-frigġ.

Għadni ma qsamthiex.

Darren.

F'hinijiet differenti dakinhar stess, l-omm u l-missier raw u qraw in-nota ta' binhom. It-tnejn damu hemm stenduti jharsu lejn in-nota. Sthajluha torta b'hafna saffi u toghmiet. Habblihom u qanqlithom fl-istess hin. Demgħa pariġġ żelqet ma' ħaddejn it-tnejn. Imma ma kinux jafu.

Torta oħra sabet ruħha f'hoġor iż-żewġt ixjuħ ta' spiritu tewmi. Ferħu u qasmuha ma' shabhom li ta' kuljum igorru li ma jzurhom ħadd. Żammew biċċa għal mat-te ħalli jkunu jistgħu jgħidu lit-tfajjel x'togħma bnina kellha dik it-torta tat-tuffieħ.

✽

Omm Darren daħlet f'kamret binha u waqfet ħesrem. Kienet drat id-dehra għerja tal-kamra-ċella ta' binha. Imm'issa, imwaħħla mal-ħajt, rat numru ta' ritratti bil-kitba taħthom. Marret tara x'kienu. Hi u tara u taqra u tixtarr żelqitilha minn idha n-nota li kienet gābet magħha għal binha.

✽

flowering plants. He placed one against the door to his mother's room, and the other against his father's. He left a note with each plant that said:

I am working on a project.

It's going well.

I love you both you know.

At present, I am trying to understand how I can love myself.

There is a fresh apple pie in the fridge, I haven't cut it yet.

Darren.

At different times that same day, his mother and father read their son's note. Both stood there for some time, looking at the note which seemed to them to be like a multi-layered cake of different flavours. It bothered and moved them at the same time. A tear slid down each cheek.

Another pie found its way to the two old ladies with kindred spirits. They were happy to share it with their companions who daily complained that nobody visited them. They kept back a slice to have

with their tea, so they could tell the young man how good it was.

❧

Darren's mother entered her son's bedroom and stopped short. She was used to seeing the bare cell-like walls of his room. But now, there were several photos with writing underneath them. She moved closer, reading and looking carefully at it all, while the note she had brought for her son slid from her fingers.

❧



Louise ta' Qalbha Sewda

Hu u għaddej minn trejqa fil-kampanja waqaf
ħdejn kappella ċkejna antika li donnha kienet qed
tindokra x-xagħri. Serrah ir-rota mal-ħajt tal-ġenb u
qagħad japprezza l-ġmiel tal-madwar. Sema' bħal
bikja u mexa lejn il-ħoss. Ir-riħ li nġema' mal-jum
kien batta, u xtaq kieku jħaffef biex isib ħanut fl-
eqreb raħal ħalli jitrejjaq b'te vojta u xi biskuttell
imfettet bħalma dara jieħu għand Lippu, sid Mullu.
Izda dik il-bikja li kien sema' sejħitlu lejha.

Fuq kantun fil-baxx wara l-kappella lemaħ tfajla
liebsa jeans u hoodie bilqiegħda, rasha f'ħoġorha
marsusa bejn il-pali ta' jdejha. Poġġa ħdejha.

"Xi ġralek, tfajla? Nista' nġinek?"

"ħallini!" qaltlu bla ma tħarrket jew refġet
rasha.

"Ma rridx indejkek. Smajtek u tħassibt. Dak
kollu. Jekk tridni nitlaq, nitlaq."

Għadda l-ħin bla ma Darren ta kas. Nesa x-
xewqa għat-te vojta jismot u biskuttell imfettet.

Sad Louise

As he was riding along a bumpy rural pathway,
he heard a sobbing sound coming from behind a
tiny old chapel which seemed to him to be guarding
the barren land thereabouts. Leaning his bike
against the nearest side of the chapel, Darren
walked towards the sound. The wind had died
down and he hoped to hurry off to a village tea shop
where he could get some tea and rusks to dunk in it;
he had gotten used to doing that whenever he visit-
ed Phil, Mullu's master. But the crying drew him
towards it.

Seated low against a dry-stone wall was a young
girl wearing a jeans and hoodie, head bowed and
clasped between her hands. He sat next to her.

"Hello there. What's the matter. Can I help you?"

"Leave me alone!" the girl said without moving
or looking up.

"I don't want to bother you. I was worried when
I heard you, that's all. If you want me to leave, I'll



Quddiemu kien hemm mifruxa medda għelieqi fertili u sema fiddien, u maġenbu tfajla bi spirtu sewdieni. Naħa mlietu bil-hena u naħa b'taqtiġh il-qalb. Stenna. Xorob id-dehra u sema' nifs it-tfajla.

"Għadek hawn?"

"Ehe."

"Għaliex? Ma tafnix. Mur."

"Bqajt għax ma nafekx. Kieku nafek kont inkun naf jekk għandix nitlaq. La ma nafekx, bqajt. Għal li jista' jkun."

"M'iniex se nagħmel xi waħda. Tibzax."

"Tajjeb."

"Telaqni l-għuvni li mignuna warajh."

"Taf il-għala?"

"Sab oħra li toqgħodlu."

"Iblah li hu!"

"Ma tafnix."

- Veru, imma la qed tibkih, għandek qalb."

"B'daqshekk?"

"Għandek xi haġa prezzjuża. Taf thobb. Hawn min ma jafx iħobb għax moħħu biss fih innifsu. Naf

leave."

Time went by. He forgot his yearning for hot tea and rusks. In front of him, a limitless spread of silvery sky, and next to him a young girl with a miserable heart. One side filled him with happiness, and the other with concern. He waited, drinking in the view, until the girl gasped.

"You're still here?"

"Yeah."

"Why? You don't know me. Go away."

"I stayed because I don't know you. If I did, I would have known if I should leave. As I don't, I stayed. Just in case."

"I'm not going to do anything stupid, don't worry."

"Good".

"The boy I'm mad about left me."

"Do you know why?"

"He's got someone else who does what he wants."

"He's an idiot."



nies li kibru u baqgħu tfal.”

“Għadek żgħir. Kif taf dan kollu?”

- Aghma m’iniex.”

“Ma naħsibx li qatt nista’ nerga’ nħobb.”

“Bħalissa hekk qed tħoss. Naturali. Jekk qalbek ma ddeffishiex fit-tajn u tinbela’ fit-tiċlis, ‘il quddiem taraha mod ieħor.”

“U int, bħalek, kif taf? Għadek żgħir.”

“M’intix akbar minni wisq. Bħalissa qed inħossni ħanex f’dinja bla qies. Biss naf li anka għal ħanex hawn post. Kif nista’ naqta’ qalbi meta naf li tant hemm x’niskopri?”

“Donnok xiħ.”

“Dak għax dan l-aħħar qed nithaddet ma’ min jaf aktar minni. Qed naqra ħafna u naħseb ukoll.”

“Għalfejn?”

“Qed nagħmel proġett fuq il-ferħ. Imma issa sar aktar minn sempliċi proġett għalija.”

“Il-ferħ ma jeżistix. Naħsbu li nkunu ferħana meta ma nkunux. U meta naħsbu li nkunu, tiġri xi ħaġa li tfarrkilna kollox. Hu minni ...”

“You don’t know me.”

“You’re right. But, if you’re crying, you’ve got a heart.”

“So what?”

“You have something precious. You know how to love. There are people who don’t know how to love because they’re always thinking only of themselves. I know adults who are still children.”

“You’re young. How do you know all this?”

“I’m not blind.”

“I don’t think I can ever love again.”

“That’s how you feel now. It’s only natural. If you don’t bury your heart in the mud, you’ll think differently in future.”

“You’re not much older than me. At present, I feel like a worm in a huge world. But I do know that there’s room even for a worm. I can’t be discouraged when there is so much to discover.”

“You sound like an old man.”

“That’s because lately I’ve been talking with people who are much wiser than me. I’m also reading

“Sa ftit ilu hekk kont naħsibha.”

“U issa?”

“Għadni qed nipprova nifhem. Kmieni wisq. Dalgħodu, pereżempju, tkellimt ma’ żagħżuġh daqsi. Ma kontx nafu qabel. Kien qed isuq rota hu wkoll u waqaf jgħinni waqt li kont qed nonfoħ it-tajer tar-rota tiegħi. Billi ingwalajnieha sew, qtajnieha li mmorru dawra bir-roti flimkien. Tgħidx kemm tkellimna. Dan sieħbi Simon għadu qed jistudja bħali. Qed iħossu mgħobbi bir-responsabbiltà li jgħin lil ommu biex tieħu ħsieb ‘l oħtu b’dizabbiltà. Ġieli joħroġha miegħu, u issa sħabu lanqas iridu jafu bih aktar. Imma taf x’qalli meta staqsejtu jekk għamilx f’qalbu u jekk hux qed jieħu lil oħtu fuq demm id-dars?”

“X’qallek?”

“Simon qalli, ‘U ma tarax! Se nikkoppa għax jaħsbuha hekk? Huma tilfu! Li kieku saru jafu lil Cynthia, forsi kienu jitgħallmu xi ħaġa. Inkun ġifa jekk inħossni nistħi għax Cynthia oħti jew għax ġieli toħroġ miegħi.’ Tbissem meta qalli hekk. Veru

and thinking a lot.”

“Why?”

“I’m doing a project on happiness. But it’s become more than a project for me.”

“Happiness doesn’t exist. We think that we’re happy when we’re not. And when we think we are, something happens to ruin everything. Look at me...”

“I used to think that.”

“And now?”

“I’m still trying to understand. It’s too early. This morning, for example, I talked to a young man my age. I hadn’t met him before. He was cycling too and stopped to help me pump up my bike tyre. We got on well, so we cycled along together. We talked and talked. Simon is still studying, like me. He feels responsible for helping his mother take care of his disabled sister. Sometimes, he takes her out and now his friends are abandoning him. But do you know what he said when I asked him if he was sad and fed up with his sister.”



skantani u għallimni dan Simon li sirt naf illum.”

“Ha ngħidlek, ma tantx issib bħalu!”

“Issib, mela ma ssibx. Nies bħal Simon trid tagħrafhom.”

“Xi trid tgħid biha?”

“Kultant naħseb li qed infittxu f’ħaddieħor affarijiet vojta.”

“Allura, fuq li għedtli qabel, int ferħan?”

“Qed niskopri affarijiet li jagħmluni ferħan. Bħal Simon, pereżempju. Ili żmien twil ma nitkellem ma’ xi ħadd bħalma tkellimt ma’ Simon. Lanqas m’ommi u missieri ma nitkellem hekk. Il-fatt li stajt nitkellem miegħu, u semagħni u jien smajtu ... iva, ħassejtni ferħan.”

“Jien ukoll.”

U tbissmitlu u ħaditlu b’idejh.

“Jien Louise bilħaqq, u nħossni aħjar li ltqajt miegħek illejla!”



“What did he say?”

“Simon told me ‘Of course not! Why should I care if that’s what they think? Their loss! If they got to know Cynthia, perhaps they’d learn something. I’d be a fool to feel ashamed that Cynthia is my sister or that she goes out with me sometimes.’ He smiled when he said that. He really surprised me and taught me something, this guy I’ve only just met.”

“You don’t meet many people like him!”

“You do, you know. You just have to look for people like Simon.”

“What do you mean by that?”

“Sometimes I think we’re looking for frivolous things in others.”

“So, what you said before, are you happy?”

“I’m discovering things that make me happy. Like Simon, for example. It’s been a long time since I talked with someone, like I did with Simon. I don’t even speak with my parents like that. Speaking to him, he listened to me, I listened to him... yes, I felt



happy.”

“Me too.” She smiled at him and shook his hand.

“By the way, I’m Louise, and I feel much better for having met you today!”

✪✪

Darren Jispicča I-Proġett

Il-ħajt ċimiterju tal-kamra ta' Darren beda jimtela bl-uċuħ tal-persuni ġodda li ħajtu ħabtet ma' tagħhom u beda jsir jaħhom. Magħhom zied in-nota t'ommu li stednitu jmorru jieklu ikla ħut fir-ristorant favorit tagħha, weħidhom. Dakinhar ukoll, missieru staqsieh jekk iridx rota ġdida.

Darren qallu li b'li kellu kien moqdi. Missieru nstamat għax stenna li Darren kien se jaħtfu fil-kelma, u ma qallu xejn aktar. Darren kien se jispjegalu li kien qed jagħmel esperiment biex ma joqgħodx dejjem jixxennaq għal affarijiet ġodda, iżda waqaf għax ma kienx il-waqt. Minflok, stieden lil missieru jmorru mixja mal-kosta. Missieru tbissem u ħatfu fil-kelma.

Fuq il-kompjuter, il-proġett kien qed jinħema ġmielu. Jum fost l-oħrajn, hu u jistenbaħ, Darren ħass ġismu ħafif u moħħu ċar. Fommu ċċarrat fi tbissima kbira. Tar mis-sodda mimli ħerqa, miftuħ għal jum ieħor, iġib li jġib miegħu. Kien lest.
—TMIEM

Project Completed

The dead walls of Darren's room were gradually coming to life with faces of people who had recently come into his life and whom he had started to know. He added his mother's note, which invited him to a fish meal at her favourite restaurant, just her and him. That day, too, his father asked if he wanted a new bike. Darren replied that he was making do with the one he had. His father was taken aback – he had thought that Darren would jump at the offer; but he did not insist. Darren was about to explain that he was experimenting with not always yearning for new things, to be happy with what he had, but stopped himself. It wasn't yet the right time. Instead, Darren invited his father for a walk along the coast road. His father smiled and readily accepted.

But on his computer, the project was taking shape.

One day, Darren woke up feeling clear-headed and light. Beaming with happiness, he sprang out of bed, eager to embrace another day, come what may. He was ready.
—THE END



Kotba oħra mill-awtrici / Other books by the author:

- ◇ *L-Irġiel tal-garaxxijiet u stejjer oħra*, 2006. ISBN-13:978-99932-0-468-8 ISBN-10: 99932-0-468-4
- ◇ *Ir-Regettier u l-mużew tal-klassi: novelli*, 2009. ISBN 978-99932-0-779-5
- ◇ *Il-Kwiekeb fid-dlam Jixegħlu: Vjaġġi ta' tama mterrqa minn qraba ta' persuni b'mard mentali*. Edituri: Connie Magro u Nora Macelli. Mental Health Association Malta & St Jeanne Antide Foundation, 2011. ISBN-978-99932-0-965-2
- ◇ *Stars shine brightly in the dark: Journeys of hope by relatives of mentally ill persons*. Editors: Connie Magro and Nora Macelli. Mental Health Association Malta & St Jeanne Antide Foundation, 2013; ebook: ISBN-978-99957-0-455-1
- ◇ *Bdoti fil-maltemp: Kif tieħu ħsieb qarib b'mard mentali*. Edituri: Nora Macelli u Connie Magro. Pubblikazzjoni tas-St Jeanne Antide Foundation & Mental Health Association Malta, 2015. ISBN-978-99957-0-677-7

L-istorja *Il-Proġett ta' Darren* dehret għall-ewwel darba fl-2009 fil-ġabra ta' novelli tal-awtrici - *Ir-Regettier u l-Mużew tal-Klassi*.

Darren's Project first appeared in 2009 in the author's book of short stories - *Ir-Regettier u l-Mużew tal-Klassi*.