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Sometimes as I travel, I imagine that the odd techniques, the ability to survive simply in a room or hut, with a few rows of vegetables and animals, will be left to the marginalised, the old, and the disabled. In Rhodes I watched an old woman clean out and tidy a chapel—oil in the lamps, floor swept, flowers, a song. I observed a tailor in a back street fitting cloth to a dummy, a man making shoes on a wooden last, a woman cutting out dress patterns from cloth in a tiny shop on a small street. These activities may seem redundant in the great myths of electronic progress, but have persisted.

Walking up from the port I found a room in subdued and vacant streets. The house was in the old Jewish quarter, still empty, as if remembering the trauma of its population being deported to camps during the Italian occupation of 1941. Next day, in the clear morning the sun rose over the sea above the blocky cubes of the town. The unknown day stretched before me, beginning in a white room, with a white bed, a tiled floor and a little engraving of the castle on the wall, still dominating the town. From the window, Turkey was a blue shadow above the line of the sea in the far distance. Beyond this remnant of the medieval quarter were spreading concrete buildings concealing the layers of other towns, going back to the Mycenaean era.

In the towering Palace Museum, objects from every period were caught up in an ambivalent space. The original medieval palace was destroyed by an earthquake, but was rebuilt by Mussolini as a summer house, and furnished. Some relic of the dogmatism and difficulty of the era seemed to hang around the innocent objects in the vista of rooms and corridors. Each era relates to the mute objects differently, and the relationship between the viewer and the viewed is a powerful current, an electricity that informs the act of seeing. Was this why I noticed the small terracotta flasks in the shape of fish, used as protective amulets? I hoped the objects could be immune from the classicising passions of Fascism which had distorted the restraint and order of Greek imagery into a rigid military discipline. I looked at two classical women who were poised in the marble grave relief, in some intense and muted psychological relationship, like a still from an Ingmar Bergman film. The inscription read

'For Kalliarista, daughter of Phileratos, for wisdom and virtue. For this reason her husband Damocles set up this carving as a memorial of love and may a benevolent spirit follow him for the rest of his life'.

In the maze of small streets and squares, sprinkled with boarded-up mosques and small churches, I went into a former chapel restored as a museum. The walls were stripped of ornament to display fourteenth century frescoes of Mary in a blue heaven. A fresco of Adam and Eve expelled from a luminous but disintegrating garden was bleached by fluorescent light. Sparsely positioned in a stone alcove, an icon of St John held a closed book. Another icon, Mary Magdalen mourning with hands raised above her bent head exactly mimicked ancient mourning statuettes. On the opposite wall, a sweet milky Virgin produced a small breast for her child, almost like a bottle, detached from her body.

To counteract the incomprehensible minimalism of what she had once known as a church, an old woman guardian, a black, shapeless figure, had brought in two new icons of Christ and the Virgin Mary. On a small shelf she had placed a jar for burning incense, a bowl of water for floating candles, and laid down pink roses, and a few lilies. As I watched, she lit candles in front of the almost indecipherable paintings of saints, and then turned to two Dutch children who'd come into the museum with their mother and showed them how to light candles too. The frescoes flickered and seemed to come alive, revived by the tiny glow of candle flames.

Suddenly the quiet was disturbed by two attendants loudly quarrelling, voices harshly echoing through the piercing acoustics of the domed and arched space. The strident quality of the female attendant's voice was equivalent to a concrete building roughly and thoughtlessly constructed. 'And put out those small flames', she barked at the old woman, who wordlessly extinguished the candles.

The children gazed, and went away.

*Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Diana Wood Conroy.*