

Kind Hearts and Gentle People

"Kind Hearts and Gentle People." I would like to have written the song. Although my song writing expertise is limited, I feel that I could have come up with something even more beautiful.

I have an abundance of ingredients right here in my beloved Venosta, in the Gatineau Valley, in Quebec.

No kinder hearts nor gentler people have I known. It is a rejuvenation and a revelation just to be back among them again, after so long an absence. If I have any regrets in life the foremost has to be having left this sublime Heaven so many years ago.

People ask me if I'm lonely living way back here in the backwoods by myself. I am always taken aback by these questions. "What the heck are they talking about." My mind clamours for an answer. I've got everything. Well, everything a man could want, or need. I have my share of visitors. Mostly of the wild animal kind. But, also, I am surrounded by some of the nicest people I have known. Cousins, old school chums, and just plain good friends. All of whose company I enjoy. That is, all except the cute little field mouse who has kept me awake nights gnawing on something. And best of all, no, two bests of alls, I have my new career, writing, and, I'm back home again.

I have friends and relatives in the area whose love and respect I enjoy. I have deer, porcupine, racoons, chipmunks, and squirrels that are almost pets. I have a falcon who swoops by my window almost daily, as if in greeting, as she searches the ground for tasty morsels. She or he, I can't tell which, is becoming less shy as the summer goes by. I credit, or should I say blame, the falcon for getting rid of my field mouse who has



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kept me awake nights. She caught something not twenty feet from my trailer the other day. I haven't heard the mouse since.

I have mixed feelings about this one. Is there anything cuter than a big eared, wide eyed, field mouse sitting on the corner of your stove, making funny little faces at you in a teasing manner. But I expect the vacancy to be filled soon.

My present environment reminds me so much of the song, "Kind Hearts and Gentle People", that you all know so well. I have far greater wealth here than if I could live in the most magnificent of castles.

I can't describe the high I get when the feeling dawns on me that I'm truly home again. This time for keeps. Some jealousies in the countryside have prompted comments such as, "Venosta is an island". I'm glad it is. My island. If I'm ever shipwrecked, these are the shores I want to be washed to.

This tranquil island seems largely untainted by the outside world. The changes of the times, along with their unhappy influences, seems not to have

touched these happy, contented people. And their influence has been firmly implanted in their offspring. I haven't met a more respectful, and delightful group of youngsters. The senior element here is coddled. The only evil influence now seems to be me. I'm trying to mend my ways. But it's been so long.

As I observe the younger generation here the scenery keeps getting more interesting. They seem to win at everything they do. If they are not winning at sports, they are celebrating anniversaries, or baptizing babies. I hope the latter continues. The world needs more people of this calibre. Strikingly, unemployment is almost non-existent among them. Even in these times. Their wins are legend. How about seven playoff wins in a row by the girls broomball team. The boys have won so many playoffs in sports that it has become 'old hat'. At times they left the competition so far behind that they couldn't see them anymore.

These are all side benefits I'm hoping that some of Venosta's fame will rub off on me.

They say "you can't go home again". Mine is a prime case of proving that "they", whoever "they" are, wrong. I'm reintegrating nicely. I'm enjoying every facet of life here. For me, nothing much has changed here in the last half century. The ecstasy of the aroma of the new mown hay, the exquisite beauty of the red and white clover, and the scent, are the same. The cows amidst the lush greenery. The horses and sheep among them grazing on a hillside. The creeks and streams tumbling through narrows have not lost their ability to tranquillize.

Now ask me if I'm lonely here.