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## Corfiot Bliss - Beach house Sinfonia

*The glowing orb, perfectly round, horizon bound  
reminds me of delicate Kumquat fruit of Chinese lore  
Which upon this Ionian island alone is found.*

*After winter gales I plucked you ripe  
Not to bury you senseless deep in fruit or jam  
But to celebrate the colour of island life.*

*To play spring games with suitors bold in tall glasses  
chilled to cold upon the fingertips and eager lips  
of friendships new and friendships old.*

*Graced with the tart tinge of tea  
Enlivened with an effervescence clear  
Piquant and fresh, as clear blue sea.*

Softly sibilant, wavelets ripple across the white sand then recedes, leaving only faint dampness which swiftly absorbs down through soft, fine grains. Precious moments in the sleepy hours of the seemingly endless sunny days in the golden years.

The beach house is a glittering, reflective palace set in a sea of azure, striated with cobalt blue and sheltered within the pink coral horseshoe reef upon which the waves expend their energy before reaching the lee shore. The dwelling is framed against an ever-changing backdrop of verdant greens and browns punctuated by coruscations of ruby red, pineapple yellow, amethyst purple and salamander orange blooms. A spectrum to reflect the chakras of those who dwell here. In the beginning the palace had been an upturned keel upon eight vertical poles, its walls just waving, whispering palm fronds and a floor of rushes. Generations built, one upon another, year upon year, until the curved roof recalls the upturned keel but is now sturdily thatched against all weathers. Through transparent walls family keep watch over sand, sea and rocks embraced by glistening seaweed. Reflections shimmer on the turquoise lagoon and a small craft, sometimes set with sail but equipped with a trustworthy engine, idles at the jetty, rocking gently with the tide.

The sub-aqua realm within the coral walls teems with life. Free swimming rainbow-hued fish, sea stars, sea cucumbers, clams and small octopus. Occasionally a sea turtle passes languorously by, luxuriating in the warm shallow water. On the reef fish graze upon the algae and tiny plants which thrive in the filtered sunlight. The circle of life turns within this place, sustaining each other. Over the lagoon the tang of brine drifts on slow breezes.

Though it is early yet, the grandchildren are already on the beach scavenging for shells which they plop into their small baskets. An occasional squeal of delight, always within earshot, signals the discovery of something special, a sonorous conch or exotic nautilus or abalone shining with rainbow luminescence. They precariously walk along a sea-weathered log buried in the sand, crossing Kong Chasm, or crawl from the gentle surf, Robinson and Crusoe discovering virgin land. This is safe space for all, a haven while Mum and Dad sail in deeper seas, leaving grandparents and grandkids to endlessly explore,

tirelessly treasure hunt and excitedly enjoy warm sun, warm seas. The white sand runs from littoral zone to tree-line; cool and damp or dry and soft squeezing between bare toes exposed by the childlike and nonchalant discarding of flip flops.

In the old rattan chair, rocking synchronously with the undulating, eternally moving waves, he takes needle and shuttle in hand to craft a new net. This net will not be used to ensnare living things with casual indiscrimination. With rod and line they catch the occasional fresh fish for the table through need not desire. The nets find many uses. Holding toys in the children's bedroom, suspending fruit from a nail and occasionally a net can be sold.

The very first net spoke of the days since the storm hit the boat and brought them to shore in this place. One knot for each day; at a century of knots they knew they had found the place they did not know they had been searching for in their dreams. At five hundred knots they had a shelter growing into a home. By a chiliad of knots they knew there could be no other place where they would live. They no longer count the knots; the days continue to be etched in their bones.

With his loaded shuttle in his right hand and gauge in his left he loops and threads, tightens and knots as the net grows. This is thinking and remembering time, essential for the tale he will tell the children as they sit by his chair in the afternoon shade. Part truth, part imagination but always fresh.

His reverie is accompanied by the music of Nature. Where Vivaldi represented all of nature from tumbling streams to feathered chansons and barking dogs, from the Beach House Sinfonia natural sounds play for him as the musical instruments which were once his life, an echo of a time before this place.

He raises his baton, a personal memento, and taps gently but firmly on the rattan arm, calling Nature's orchestra to order. As if by command the bamboo tubular bells above his head begin to chime in the breeze; low, middle and high, a three-part harmony of xylophone and piano as overture. They herald the arrival of the harps - tinkling shells woven in the net slung between poles on the beach below. Seagulls keening overhead are violins and violas, producing high piercing tones to counterpoint the soft sushing, sushing rhythm of the waves upon the sand and the deep moaning breeze through palm fronds, like brushes on tympani. Distant storm clouds rumble a bass section, bassoon and string bass. Occasionally a bigger wave crashes against the rocks on the headland, the crashing of cymbals behind the strings and horns. The vocal section is provided by the wild parrots and macaws which make their homes amongst the trees, filling the air with voices like mermaids singing. If mermaids truly lived, they would live in a magical place such as this.

The children approach with their own timpani; the lad beating a rhythmic tap upon a large conch shell; his sister shaking razor clam shells threaded on rattan twine as if they were maracas. In the old man's imagination these sounds merge to a sweet, lilting, mellifluous refrain which warmly envelops the Beach House. The performance concludes with a single, grandiloquent and resonant blow upon the conch, akin to the note of C, C sharp or D, echoing along the waves.

Together, nature's symphony, family and Beach House comprise their *ikegai* – the joy they find together in living this lifetime through each and every day – *ashita*, *asatte*, *shiposatte* and beyond – looking forward with hope and joy.