

Dog Lazarus

By Edeltraud Schult

The dog lives, Christ is no more and the natives are all sent to heaven.

I am in Havana. A friendly young woman gathers our tourist group and points at a building on the corner of the market street. The window frames are painted with an off white color and I see a large group of tourists squishing through the not so wide door. This building is very special.

"It is the bar where Ernest Hemingway used to do his drinking and socializing," the young woman explains to us, "Let's go and have a beer."

That was a good idea, but not for me, because I am very short and do not feel good among groups who scuff and push.

For this reason I walk into the market place. I am alone among many people and now I am able to notice what is going on around me. Also, I do want to see with my feelings, not only with my eyes.

To the east of the market place a great Cathedral with glorifying beauty makes me humble and even smaller. As I lift my face to find the end of the great towers reaching up to the sky, a song comes into my mind, "Glory to God, the Almighty". My eyes rest on the huge wooden door, covered with magnificent carvings. Angels, saints, people, hell fire, calla lilies and so much more for me to concentrate more intensely. What I discover here, is a warning for me and all the other unbelievers. Now I know where I am going, if I do not obey.

To the left and right at the gathering place, well-kept gorgeous buildings painted in bright colours make me feel good, because I love vivid colours especially those adopted from the sun.

I drift around the corner. A dog captures my attention. A strange looking creature. Light colored, legs spindly, no hair to be seen on his body except a small brown strand of pelt starting from the hairless tail up to his neck. What a strange race would that be? I ask myself. I try to remember all kind of dog types. Never have I seen one like this.

As I drift from one art display to another, I remember my work at home. "Yes, I say to myself, these people here are indeed great artists," and I keep on walking.

Here, there is that dog again. He or she is pawing the ground. The animal is scratching, searching and sniffing.

"Oh no, do not get involved. This is not my business." And as fast as I am able to do so, I rush to another stand and hope he or she does not find me. In this town balconies fall off buildings. They are pulling houses down and I worry about a mongrel? So what, our house fell down too. How do I get rid of that darn dog? I hide behind this big man in front of me. It does

not matter what I do, the four-legged animal is close on my heels. I asked myself, "How does this one find me among all these people?"

OK, I buy a bun for the creature. It cost me \$ 1.00. I want only a dry one. I point to the elongated baked goods. No, you can't, the man says, only bun with pork.

I walk over to the dog, break off part of the bun, reach out to him but the canine does not eat, does not even take a sniff. All right, I give you pork, but I got to get it first out of this bun. He lifts up his face, sniffs and gobbles the meat out of my hand. Now I realize, this one is nearly blind. He is not able to smell anything either and I give him more to eat.

His head he lifts up, one eye tries to find me,
the other one is covered with slime which drips down to his neck.
Our eyes meet for a second

He is skinny, covered with scales over the tiny body
the ears are eaten away by some disease
one eye gives Thanks
for the meal

I hate my full stomach, the huge church, and the pink facade of the Hotel Hemingway used to live in.

"Dog," I say, "it is okay when you go to heaven.
I hope you go today.
Scratch at the not so fancy door and say

'My Name is Lazarus'

If they don't let you in, wait for me till I come.
We will go together."