

Mida Malena

Days and Nights of Vietnam

~ The Puzzle of My Soul ~

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Days and Nights of Vietnam: The Puzzle of My Soul

MidaMalena
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Typesetting and stylization: *Adina Ciunca*
Cover design: *Alexandra Ciunca*

ISBN 979-8303117099

Tel.: +40 0740.010.119
Email: midamalena@yahoo.com
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**“What magic unfolds within us when the dream,
once imagined, becomes a part of who we are?”**

Mida Malena

“The Key to the Unknown”

A few months ago, I left Romania, and with each passing day, I feel further away from everything I once knew. Now, I'm adrift in a foreign world, enveloped in uncertainty, trying to find my footing. I sometimes feel like a ship lost on a vast ocean, drifting without direction. Other times, the winds of change hit me from all sides – vulnerable, but not without hope.

I carry the weight of memories and doubts in my heart, feeling like a prisoner of my own mind. But somewhere deep inside, a spark of determination still burns. Despite the fears that follow me like a shadow, I know I must move forward, push past my limits, and find my place in this vast Universe.

“But how can I move forward when the past keeps pulling me back?” I feel trapped in a web of fears. “The book...,” I whisper – “this project is my key.” It's strange how a single thought can become a golden thread, capable of pulling you from the deepest labyrinths of your mind.

Writing is my compass. With every word I write, I discover a little more about myself. Each page becomes a mirror reflecting my soul. Sometimes the image is blurry; other times, clear as a mountain stream. Words are my only tools in this inner exploration, and my potential unfolds as I keep writing, digging, looking beyond the surface.

I often wonder: “Does my story matter to anyone else?” This question haunts me. And yet, I understand that each of us carries an entire world within – a unique story worth telling. I’ve decided not to let doubt hold me captive.

Like a detective of my own existence, I look back, examine clues, and recover pieces of myself. In every experience, I find a lesson, a hint that propels me further. My writing becomes a bridge between past, present, and future – an attempt to make sense of the chaos.

In this process of self-discovery, I’ve realized I’m not alone. We are all threads in a cosmic tapestry, each story contributing to something greater. Maybe my questions are also someone else’s questions. Maybe my uncertainties reflect the struggles of other souls.

Curiosity, that invisible force, pulls me forward. It is the key that unlocks the door to the unknown, to those uncharted territories within me. Every word I write brings me closer to my true essence, to that deep mystery that surrounds me.

My journey is one of evolution. I’ve learned that you can’t look forward without understanding what you’ve left behind. The past isn’t a burden, but a compass that guides me through the unknown.

By looking back, I extract the lessons that shaped my becoming. With each decision, each encounter, and each step, I draw closer to the meaning of my journey.

And perhaps, through this story, I’ll be able to inspire others to discover their path.

“The Step Into the Unknown”

December 21st, 2022

“I look at the past with my mind’s eye...”

I landed at Bucharest's Henri Coandă Airport at 8:30 p.m., freshly returned from a 30-day journey through the Philippines. It was a cold evening, minus 3 degrees in the capital. The winter holidays were approaching, and I had planned my return so I would be home by Christmas.

But something had profoundly changed within me. My loved ones were waiting for me, yet I felt detached from their world, as if I no longer belonged to that familiar Universe.

I kept asking myself: “Can a single month change everything?”

It seemed absurd.

I had everything I’ve ever wanted: a beautiful apartment in the capital, a luxury car, a successful business, and money in the bank. But now, coming back to Romania, everything felt weightless, as if every material possession had lost its meaning. I remembered the beaches of Palawan, the overwhelming silence of the ocean. I wished I could have stayed there and never returned. I felt like Asia was my home. But Romania was pulling me back, with invisible, unshakable roots.

“What unfinished business do I have left here?” I wondered. The question floated in my mind, like a smoldering storm without a clear answer. I had gone through all those stages in search of “something”... but I didn’t know at the time what I was truly seeking.

I saw him among the crowd at the airport. His face felt like an anchor to reality, a piece of familiarity in a sea of uncertainty. When he hugged me, I felt warmth wrapping around my body. It was a strange sensation – like I was no longer myself.

“I didn’t recognize you at first; you look younger, more beautiful,” he said with a smile.

I wanted to believe him, but deep down I asked myself: “Who is this Yda that landed at Otopeni?”

We walked out of the airport together, chatting cheerfully. The snowflakes were falling softly, wrapping the city in a strange silence. I didn’t feel the cold. My green jacket, the one that had been such a hassle in Asia, was unbuttoned.

“Aren’t you cold?” he asked, looking at my thin T-shirt.

“No, I’m not cold,” I smiled, enchanted by his presence.

At that moment, nothing else mattered. No cold, no fear, no worries. It was a moment frozen in time, one I wanted to hold onto forever. The morning found us still together, talking about trivial things that seemed to matter, as if we wanted to stretch that moment infinitely. “Could we do this?” I wondered.

But reality slipped in subtly. In the quiet of the morning, I woke up from the dream. I was alone. Alone in the airport. The taxi took me home, to a house that felt colder and emptier than ever. I turned on the heating, unpacked carefully, placing each item back in its place, in an order I wasn’t sure belonged to me. I smiled. I spoke to myself, just to hear my voice in that silent space. It felt strange, as if it was no longer my voice.

I fell asleep thinking about the Philippines, about everything I had experienced there. “Did I find a portal to something new in the Palawan?” I wondered.

I had thought I was just going on vacation, but the truth was I had been carried by a destiny I didn’t yet fully understand. It opened a door to myself, to a transformation.

I came back with an unexpected urge to write, to create. I felt that the experience had been just the beginning of a change that would overturn everything I knew. Those 30 days left a deep imprint, and I knew I would never return to my old self.

“Freedom.” That was the key that I gained in Asia, though I didn’t know it at the time. I thought of the people that I met there, each leaving a mark on me. Yow taught me that we are never truly alone, no matter how isolated we feel. Essra showed me that freedom comes from small but radical decisions. Lina was a quiet support, and Ej... Ej was the cherry on top, a presence that opened my eyes to everything I didn’t understand. In fact, they all showed me what it means to truly live freely, each in their own way.

And during that time, I started to wonder if I was really ready to embrace this freedom, even if it meant letting go of everything I had known until then. Each of them gave me a “piece” of a puzzle. And now, looking back, I could almost see the whole picture.

“But what’s holding me back from being free? Why is it so hard to take that big step?” On cold nights, I would toss and turn, unable to sleep, tormented by questions.

A Romanian proverb kept echoing in my mind: “Don’t trade the bird in your hand for the crow on the fence.” But did the bird in my hand offer me anything anymore? Had it not just become a burden?

The truth was, I didn’t know what awaited me if I took that step into the unknown. I couldn’t see clearly, but I couldn’t remain in this void either.

The decision came gradually, like a revelation, slow and inevitable. I had to make room for something new. That meant letting go of what I knew, of comfort, of security. Let go of love, of money, of friends. I decided to leave the capital and everything it represented. I lost my only source of income. I felt betrayed by people and situations, but each loss was necessary. It was no longer about what I was losing, but about what I was leaving behind in order to move forward.

“If I don’t try, I’ll never know what could happen!”

But who could I possibly talk to about all of this? It was just me and my own thoughts: the old me and the new me, freshly returned from one of the most beautiful islands in the world. “What a mystical resonance that name has: Palawan!”

In the following months, I lost a worrying amount of weight. At one point, the scale showed 47 kilograms. I lived for days on just coffee, lost in thoughts and worries, consumed by the labyrinth I was in, until, finally, I understood: I was fighting a battle of transformation. I had to free myself from everything that no longer served me.

The hard decisions weren’t about loss but about making space for a new reality. I realized it was all a process. A one-way road, and though the losses were real, they weren’t permanent. I left behind everything that weighed me down. The doors I closed opened new paths.

Now, with all that behind me, I’m almost ready. I postponed my flight to Asia three times, but this time I know I have to leave. I know it’s no longer just a journey of exploration, but a conscious choice for my future.

And yet, one question lingers: “What happens to the dream when you finally live it?”

It’s a question that haunts and intrigues me at the same time. I dreamt of freedom, of the unknown, of a life lived without constraints.

But now, as I stand on the edge of fulfilling that dream, I’m beginning to understand that the real challenge isn’t just getting there, but keeping the courage to live in this new reality.

Maybe dreams aren’t final destinations, but steps toward continuous evolution. And when the dream becomes reality, it doesn’t end – it simply changes shape, opening new doors to other unknowns.

The real mystery isn’t what you find at the end of the road, but how you keep moving forward, how you continue to dream, even

when you've reached the place where you thought all the answers would be.

So, I'm no longer afraid of the unknown.

I understand now that it is part of us, that it is the space where we grow, discover, and transform ourselves.

And happiness doesn't come from security or from achieving a dream, but from the courage to venture every day into mysterious terrain, from the strength to be carried by what we cannot fully control.

“The greatest discovery any traveler can make is that every time, they find themselves.” – Lawrence Durrell

“On the Threshold of a New World”

June 19th, 2023

Bucharest, Romania

Bucharest is just as I know it: the same dry air and concrete scorching in the relentless sun. I walk slowly, preparing to say my goodbye in my own way, not knowing when – or if – I will return. I wander around the North Train Station and Calea Griviței, casually looking for a battery for my wristwatch – an old watch that worked perfectly for exactly three weeks.

The heat is almost suffocating, and my steps, without a clear direction, are carried by time. The plane doesn't leave until late tonight.

My knees feel weak from fatigue, and my throat burns with thirst, like I'm walking through a desert. I stop to buy some water and two cheese pastries, even though I'm not hungry. But the familiar taste of the cheese pulls me in, like a memory of home, so I give in.

I sit on a bench in the shade, slowly munching, my thoughts drifting far away to distant corners of Asia, unexplored places, and dreams just starting to take shape.

A deafening noise suddenly jolts me back to reality. A machine is drilling nearby, violently shattering the morning's quiet. I get up slowly from the bench – my legs are sweaty, like after a hot sauna.

There are a few more things I need to do before I leave. I have to go home and finish the last details – online check-in, a call to

Turkish Airlines about those tricky cosmetics, and the luggage... ah, the luggage, still giving me headaches. But these are all trifles. I just want time to pass so I can be in the air already.

“And yet, why am I always waiting for time to pass? Do I do this out of some automatic habit, deeply ingrained in my mind?” Or maybe it's a primal setting, telling us all that this is how it should be. Or maybe time itself doesn't exist. It's just something we invented, a safety net to organize our lives. I shake off these thoughts – too many questions, too few answers.

I get home and gobble up a few cherries. The cat is sprawled across my spot on the bed, purring and looking at me with her big, round eyes. I nudge her aside, and she grudgingly meows, lazily jumping down, as if I had interrupted some important dream of hers. I ignore her and continue my phone conversation.

I can't believe it! I'm really leaving! “I'm going to Asia!” A new beginning is waiting for me – a different journey, an unexplored path. I can feel it in every fiber of my being – a new chapter is being written. I've been through so much in the past few months, and now I've received the green light. All the formalities are complete, my work was done impeccably, so there's no turning back.

Soon, it's time to call a taxi. I stand outside the gate with Ralu, waiting, when the rain starts to fall. Without hurry, we retreat under the house's eaves, listening to the heavy raindrops splattering on the asphalt. A small summer storm, of course. Bucharest won't let me leave without a little rain.

Suddenly, the taxi cancels the ride. We request another one...

“They're giving you heart palpitations before you leave...” Ralu says with a tender seriousness.

I chuckle briefly, but the truth is, I'm already feeling those palpitations. Inside, my thoughts are racing in all directions. Something tells me Ralu senses this.

“Yes, you’re right... but I know everything will be fine,” I repeat mechanically, as if I’m clinging to the words like a lifeboat in the middle of a storm. But a small tremor in my voice betrays me.

Ralu takes my hand and squeezes it, looking me straight in the eye. Her blue eyes always have a calming effect on me.

“Listen to me,” she says, her voice a mix of care and confidence. “It’s going to be okay, Yda. You always find your way. Just trust. In yourself. In everything.”

I stay quiet for a moment, letting her words settle inside me, like a soft blanket over an agitated heart. I truly feel them, and I believe her.

The taxi finally arrives. It’s pouring rain now. I gently roll down the window and notice how a few warm drops sneak into the car, brushing against my skin like delicate feathers. I allow myself a smile.

The driver glances at me through the rearview mirror, as if trying to decipher the story behind my smile. I feel his gaze, an intense curiosity. “What does he think? What does he think he sees?”

At the airport, it’s the usual chaos. A sea of people, each with their own story, and me, alone in the middle of them, because that’s what I’ve chosen. I make my final phone calls, not rushing. I arrived early.

At security, my nerves tense up again – my carry-on bag is full of cosmetics. But the officer is distracted by his phone, and I pass through without a hitch. I exhale in relief. “Just get me to my destination, and next time, I’ll be better prepared.” I promise myself this, seriously.

Slowly, time seems to compress. It feels like I was just here yesterday, but six months have already passed since the last trip. So much has changed. And yet, it’s as if nothing is different. Or maybe I’m the one who has changed.

On the plane, the two seats next to me are empty. I let myself sink deep into thought. I plunge into a quick reflection of the past months – full of turmoil, losses, and hidden victories. Life has tested me, but the stakes have always been higher than anything I’ve lost.

The smile of a little girl, about 2-3 years old, pulls me out of my reverie. She's waving at me from the row ahead, peeking through the seats. We both enter a game of peek-a-boo, and I find myself laughing. A simple, but genuine joy, dressed in a bright yellow blouse.

Then I check my conversation with Sawa again. I've read it twice, but I read it once more. Useful information, advice that makes me feel more confident. I lean on these words like a compass.

The Universe has sent me people to guide me, so I don't lose my way. The trip to the Philippines, six months ago, showed me the path. It showed me that we're never truly alone when we're exactly where we need to be.

Now, everything is real. The flight. A new country. A new life.

I've even forgotten what little English I knew, but... I'm starting over. Like the Aries that I am.

The little girl has fallen asleep, and I let myself be carried by the quiet of the flight, with only the dull hum of the engine echoing the world left behind. I look out the window at the absolute darkness of the night, embraced by the tiny flickers of city lights below us.

My thoughts swirl, just as the sky seems to blend with the earth. I feel suspended in time and space, between who I was and who I am about to become. Usually, flying makes me feel light, free. But now I feel a strange weight on my shoulders, like an invisible cloak of emotions I haven't fully processed.

I think back to the Philippines. That was the first time I realized that paths aren't just geographic – they're personal too. It's a kind of hidden map, drawn inside us, that we only decipher when we're ready. That was the first time I felt I was on my path, no longer lost.

"But now? What awaits me at the end of this flight? Do I truly know what my destination is, beyond the geography of a new country?"

I try to control my breathing, to relax, but my body doesn't seem to listen. It's as if all the fears and insecurities I've buried under layers of reason are now crowding together in this confined space of the plane, demanding my attention. A shiver of anxiety runs down my

spine, but I swallow it, letting it dissolve into the vibrations of the plane.

“Why do I feel this way?” I silently ask myself. I should be excited, happy, eager to start this new chapter. Yet deep down, I feel vulnerable. It’s just me, alone with myself, in a sea of strangers. I realize there’s no turning back. I’ve chosen to leave, to start over. “But who will I be at the end of this road?”

I shake off the thoughts and check my phone one last time. My conversation with Sawa appears again on the screen like a bright compass. His information is precise, calculated, but I feel something beyond these coordinates. Maybe he has drawn a direction for me, but the real path is one I must discover on my own.

“It’s not about places; it’s about you,” I say to myself, repeating it like a mantra.

The flight continues, and I feel half-awake, half-caught in a dream. Ralu’s words come back to me, those last pieces of advice she gave before I left: “Write to me every time you move to a new place...”

They sounded like care at the time, but now I’m starting to understand them differently. They were more than just practical instructions. They were a connection, an invisible thread to keep me anchored to who I am and where I come from.

Suddenly, I feel an overwhelming gratitude for all the small things that brought me here – Ralu, Sawa, Mone, the conversations, the little signs I ignored or gave too little importance to. It’s as if they all show me that I’m never truly alone. I realize that in the middle of uncertainty, I’m being guided, even when I feel like I’m fumbling through the dark.

Finally, we begin our descent...

Through the thick night air, the lights of Istanbul glimmer faintly in the distance. I sink into this final moment of quietness before the plane’s wheels touch the ground and reality greets me again, but I don’t feel unprepared.

In a strange way, I know I’m exactly where I need to be.

My pulse slows. I smile faintly in the darkness of the plane, as if I've made peace with a part of myself I've long ignored. I am ready to see what comes next.

Once on the ground, I step forward with confidence, following the crowd toward the control zone.

The massive airport clock reads 11:23 p.m.

"Another sign?"

Maybe.

Or perhaps I'm just learning to seek signs where I need to find them.