



ESA KINNUNEN

The Desert Wind

FREE TIME ADVENTURES

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United Arab Emirates, Ruwais 1.9.2007 –
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PROLOGUE

This story is a documentary about my experiences in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) (September 1, 2007 - December 31, 2014). This book focuses on leisure time. Only the most major events that complement this story are told about the work. The stories are based on true events that I have handwritten daily in my notebooks, those I have used as a source for this book. Daily events are told as accurately as they are documented in my diaries. At the same time, I have mentioned excerpts from Islamic culture and world events that interest me. I also tell in this book how I fell in love with a Filipina girl, and I tell how we celebrate the weddings in Dubai and the Philippines, and about the birth of our child.

This book is an English translation of the author's the first published book, Ruwais. In this translation, he has edited the text, combining the phases of building a house and visits to the Philippines into his own paragraphs, and added or removed relevant or inappropriate events and gossips about some subjects

The book can be called a hybrid because it consists of a travel event, documentary parts, life in an Islamic country, and reflection on human values.

In 2007, I was contacted from Ruwais. I was offered a position of a Laboratory Technologist. The production manager of the Borouge plastics plants (Staf Faes) called from Ruwais and announced this vacancy in the construction project of a new laboratory related to the second phase of Borouge. My area of responsibility would include acting as an expert in the construction, installation, and start-up of a new laboratory project. Yes, I knew about this task, but I thought it was too demanding in terms of the job description. I told the application manager of the Ruwais plastics plant that the application period had already expired.

Staf Faes said, "Just put in the application." I did the work as instructed and sent the application by e-mail and my CV as an attachment. The following week, I received a response asking me to come for an interview in the Austrian capital, Vienna, at the Borealis Head Offices. I told my secretary. Together with the Secretary of the Head Offices, she arranged a meeting for May 2007 in Borealis, Austria. I did not feel any pressure because I thought there was nothing to lose if I did not even get to Ruwais. One week after the application was given; a proposal for the date of the interview came. I accepted it. All details were agreed on for the flight tickets, the booking at the hotel and the date for the interview. The trip to Vienna went well, even though I had not been there before. On the Borouge side, the interview was attended by Karl Ebner, an Austrian

laboratory manager, and Staf Faes, a Belgian director of plastic production. The interview lasted about 1.5 hours with a relaxed conversation. Finally, the interviewers said that it would take two days to make the final decision. There were other applicants. The interview was on Wednesday. The phone rings on Friday of the same week. Staf Faes from Ruwais announced that they have chosen me for the position. I said thank you for your trust. I showed my desire to make a “previsit” before making the final decision. This was agreed.

The date for the Previsit was agreed to be in June 2007. I flew via Frankfurt, Germany to Abu Dhabi. I had a room booked in the Rotana Beach Hotel, near the Abu Dhabi Mall. In the reception the service was good and friendly. The next morning, I contacted Tor Johannessen from Norway; he is Borealis Abu Dhabi’s HR Manager. Everything was pre-arranged for a factory visit. A temporary oil passport had been arranged for me. Without it, you cannot enter the factory area. Later, I learned that a visit to the factory site had hardly ever been arranged as part of a tour. In the morning I left with the HR manager Tor Johannessen, he was driving his SUV (BMW 5) towards Ruwais. The scenery before the Ruwais was gloomy, for the most part a mere sandy desert. A row of palm trees had been planted near the road to protect it from the sandstorms. After reaching Ruwais, we went through Hospital Gate to the factory site. I had a cell phone called Siemens in my pocket with the camera deactivated.

The guard did not believe my explanations, that I could not take pictures with my mobile phone; therefore, it was confiscated before the factory visit.

I must keep it at “Hospital Gate” inside the guard booth. This episode took at least half an hour. We finally got to the lab. There were old acquaintances at work, e.g., Anwar Ghasali, Wawan Ruswandi, Akhlak Divan, Mahimi Ibrahim and Mohamed Salahuddin. The men introduced the laboratory. Seems promising, I thought. At the end of the factory visit, the guard returned my cell phone.

In Ruwais we stayed overnight at the new Danat Hotel. It was two years old, and it had been completed in 2005. The next morning, we returned to Abu Dhabi. The flight to Germany was at night, so I stayed at the hotel for the evening. The hotel arranged its own limousine transfer to the airport. When I left, I said I would announce the final decision when I returned from the trip; the decision still needs to be considered. After arriving in Finland, I announced the next day that I would accept the assignment and all arrangements for this assignment could begin.



Previsit in Abu Dhabi, June 2007. On the road with Thor Johannessen, Borealis Middle East HR Chief somewhere between Abu Dhabi and Ruwais.

Philippines, Cebu 30.05.2018.

- I dedicate this book to my readers as a therapeutic reflection on religions and the way the world goes, and as a reminder of how a posting abroad went from day to day in both good and evil. Writing was a project of unifying my mind.
- This book is based on my diaries, that I handwrote every day, and This English-language book is based on the original Finnish-language book, “Ruwais Travel Story.”
- Special thanks to my wife Neng. She has enabled my experience and acquaintance with Filipino culture.
- Thanks to my colleagues for Borealis Polymers Oy and the Abu Dhabi Polymers Company for the opportunity to work on projects for the multinational company Borouge and at the same time to get to know the Middle East as a workplace as well as Asians and Arabs as colleagues.
- Thanks to my sons for waiting for me to come home to Finland after my assignment ended.
- The warmest thanks to MSC Henna Iivarinen for careful proofreading of this book.
- Many thanks to BSC Roselyn Minorias for proofreading house build section.

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES, UAE

Ruwais Here I Come 2007

1.9.2007 Last night I slept restlessly with Laura. The alarm clock rings at 06:30 a.m.. I woke up in the morning when the departure for a business trip to the United Arab Emirates had come. My mind was filled with a tense feeling, as if the hunter sees the prey after a long wait. A new adventure begins and the freedom to be as I want without controlling of anyone. This idea seemed fascinating, but at the same time contradictory. I felt emotional when I knew I had to leave Finland and my friends and loved ones for a long time. Laura was still sleeping sweetly. I watched her, admiring, and recounting in my mind the journeys we experienced together, as well as the fruitful candlelight conversations we had in the light of the candle about what happens in the world. I slowly descended from the bedroom down the narrow creaking stairs of the old house, careful not to wake Laura.

I looked out the kitchen window at the garage that I completed yesterday. I thought, "It took one year to build it." I made tea. As I drank it, Laura had woken up and she came to the kitchen with me. We played CD's of Virve Rosti and Petri Laaksonen together. The choices were sad love songs appropriate to the situation. We did not talk much because we were trying to cover up our feelings. We knew what was to come. A long time not seeing each other and uncertainty about whether our relationship would last beyond that.

Laura brought me by car to Helsinki-Vantaa Airport. We arrived there at about 07:50 a.m.. There was a long queue at Finnair's counter for check in. The queuing took about an hour. Laura waited there to help me with the security check. She occasionally went to put money on the parking meter. My bag weighted 30 kg, which mean 10 kg overweight. As a result, I had to pay 470 € two floors down from Finnair's special check in counter. Yes, it annoyed me, and I complained this was an outrageous rip off. There was an avid inspector at the security check. He also performed a pat down. Finnair's plane left the gate at 8 a.m.. We were allowed to leave about 30 minutes late due to the maintenance of the plane. I visited at the counter number 26 to check the connecting flight, if the departure from Helsinki will be too late. Fortunately, we were able to leave without further delay. From Helsinki to Munich, I watched the clouds from the plane window and tears were dropping down my cheeks. Laura is a good girl after all, even though she put me down at some times. While watching the clouds, I also thought about all the adventures my trip might bring. I sometimes think that I do not like to bring a souvenir girl to Finland after my trip, and I was less interested in having

This book is an English translation of the author's the first published book, Ruwais. The Desert Wind focuses on leisure time as bachelor boy, until he finds Filipino girl. The stories are based on true events that author have handwritten daily in his notebooks. Daily events are told as accurately as they are documented in his diaries. At the same time, author have mentioned excerpts from Islamic culture and world events that interest his. Author also tells in this book how he fell in love with a Filipino girl and tell how they celebrate the weddings in Dubai and the Philippines, and about the birth of their child.

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