

A photograph of a person from the waist down, wearing a white, flowing dress with a subtle pattern and standing barefoot on a stone path in a garden. The background is a soft-focus view of a garden with colorful tulips in shades of pink, red, and yellow. The overall mood is peaceful and natural.

Daniela Cortolezis

**STAYCATION
OR
THE JOYS OF
GARDEN
HOLIDAYS**

**BECAUSE GARDENS
MAKE US HAPPY**

DANIELA CORTOLEZIS

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OR THE JOYS
OF GARDEN
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BECAUSE GARDENS MAKE US HAPPY

The greatest danger when spending your holidays at home is that you just keep on doing what you always do. But there is another way. A road movie on the brink of madness, en route to the most beautiful holiday destination on earth and the utter bliss to be found amongst deckchairs and secateurs.

German edition August 2019

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www.garteninspektor.com

German title: Über die Lust am Urlaub im Garten

Translated by: Gitta Wolf, www.allice-wolf.com

Published by: Daniela Cortolezis, Rosenhang 26,

A-8010 Graz

Layout: Petra Schmidt, www.lektorat-ps.com

Photos: Daniela Cortolezis

Cover design: Candidus Maximilian Cortolezis

Publisher: tredition GmbH, Hamburg

978-3-347-33783-1 (Paperback)

978-3-347-33784-8 (Hardcover)

978-3-347-33785-5 (eBook)

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For

*Candidus, Sebastian, Vilja, Julia, Georg, Nikolaus, Giulia, Candidus
Maximilian, Leander, Filippo, Livia, Anna, Charlotte, Helena, Nora.*

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Holidays at Last – The Eternal Dilemma

“I wish I had ...

I wish I was...

I wish I could...”

Holiday-time is the best of all times, unless you’ve caught the gardening bug. Then you’ll be all too aware of the annual dilemma. It’s the same drama every year:

Holidays at last. The family is all excited. Chaos descends days before departure. Who is taking what, where and how, and when to leave to ensure the greatest possible holiday experience. On the day, the car is crammed full of suitcases, holdalls, carrier bags. By the time the food for the journey is stowed away, cleaning wipes are within easy reach, bicycles are in their respective slots on the roof rack and cuddly toys and plastic animals are jammed into all available spaces, you know there’s no chance of leg movement until the first stop at a motorway service station. The children are strapped in and settle into their habitual whining. The driver programs the satnav, tears his hair out, supervises the loading of his vehicle, starts to throw fits and casts severe doubt upon the mental state of his loved ones who appear to be unable to conceive of a holiday without this veritable flood of stuff. All are getting into their customary best-time-of-the-year mood.

All, except for one: the lady gardener, the mother, the tormented one. She stands by the gate, aghast, turns to look at her garden one last time and surreptitiously wipes a salty tear from her cheek. Finally going on holiday, finally setting off, that’s great. Wonderful, in fact. But who will look after the garden?

And she begins to dream.

Of an alternative kind of holiday, at home, in her own garden. How amazing it would be to be able to revel in nothing but garden time, concerned with nothing but gardening matters. And herself. Taking time out from everyday stress in her green oasis, leisurely reading all those new novels and maybe even doing something creative again.

Wouldn't it be lovely to walk out every morning across the dewy meadow, barefoot, still in a nightgown, holding a deliciously aromatic cup of coffee, to check on the roses. To fish the newspaper out of the letterbox and read it in comfort beneath the apple tree, lingering over the news, and then to take your first stroll around the garden to water the plants. To roll out your yoga mat in the shade and salute the sun surrounded by all this nature. That would be amazing!

And I continue to dream for a moment longer... because the lady gardener by the gate, that 's me!

A slave to my garden. No wonder worrying about the garden always puts a considerable damper on the joys of travelling just before we are due to leave. Which, depending on the lady gardener's temper and emotional state, might at times degenerate into hysterics. And yet, it could be so wonderful!

When summer days become endless and feel like an excursion into Alpine pastures, when a refreshing immersion deep into the forest enables us to breathe more easily, or our gaze magically lingers on marguerites and poppies. When a hint of freedom is in the air and we are suddenly released from everything that usually weighs us down. Those are the days that sadly pass much too quickly – days I would love to last for the entire year.

That can't happen, though, which is why I'm somewhat fussy when it comes to going away just when everything is at its most beautiful.

But now – I'm almost waking up from my daydream – holiday-time is mercilessly upon me.

It's time to close the garden gate behind me, allow myself a few days of rest and, like every year, take to the road because, as Kurt Tucholsky said: Travelling is a longing for life.

He didn't, however, mention anything about a longing for gardens. Not that I'd want to give the impression that we gardeners don't ever want to travel. Quite to the contrary. In fact, we all want to use our precious holidays in the most meaningful ways possible. Which, for most of us, brings to mind images of a relaxing time-out. We want to spend those days in inspiring and exciting ways, we want to regain our strength and get some peace. We dream of finally having enough time for ourselves, so that we can recharge our batteries. Then again, we also want to be active and to feel centred and alive. Like we do when we move around our garden, tirelessly and full of energy. We want it all, and we want it all at once. Except for one thing: we don't want to neglect our garden.

Whichever way I look at it: as a dedicated gardener I have to confess that I would prefer to stay home during the summer. I would prefer to holiday in my garden, and not just so I can enjoy it. The mere thought of being away during the height of the flowering season is enough to turn me into a bad-tempered nervous wreck.

I startle awake for a moment to ask myself why on earth the hydrangeas have to flower so beautifully now that we are about to leave, why today has to be so hot that it won't be long until the garden turns into a desert of hard-baked clay in the scorching heat, and why I have to leave today...

Who on earth will water the garden while I'm away?

I know hardly anyone who'd go on holiday without a care and leave their garden to its own devices, without even a whiff of a guilty conscience.

Even if there is the back-up of helpful family members or a lovely gardening friend prepared to do their best.

Because even then, it's not always easy to hand the garden over. At least not without having made a comprehensive list to cover all eventualities of