



# La Habanera

**The Escape From The Rat Race**

Written by Päivi & Santeri

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## For Reader

This is a travel story of three different journeys. All of them are tied to each other and happening in the same place, at the same time. They are: the journey into ourselves, the journey to the other side of the world, and the journey to find the meaning of life outside Rat Race. In this book we will define the concept of Rat Race and use it to describe our current thoughts regarding the meaning of life. We have included some photos taken from our journey, and some song lyrics. Those lyrics have got a whole new meaning to us in our current reality outside Rat Race.



This book was born by chance. We discussed about writing it but soon concluded that we should not waste our time to such rat-race-like effort. Later some of our friends decided to make changes in their lives. That made us to change our minds and write the book.

We hope this book will initiate an internal discussion in the reader about one's own personal goals in life. And lead to examining personal motives from a bit more selfish perspective. In the beginning and at the end of the book there are tests that can be used for measuring personal happiness.

This book is dedicated to Raido, Päivi, Nana, and Kati.

The English translation is dedicated to Bill, Marina, Maddog, Pedro, and Tom.

## Happiness test A

Let's start with a test you can use to find out how happy you are. Please answer the following questions frankly.

1. The most important things in my life are (please give numbers in the order of significance from 1 to 6 to each, where 1 is the most important):

\_\_\_\_\_ success

\_\_\_\_\_ challenging job

\_\_\_\_\_ house, car, summer cottage, and all other things

\_\_\_\_\_ family, friends, colleagues

\_\_\_\_\_ free time, vacations, hobbies

\_\_\_\_\_ money, savings, investments

2. If I won big money in lottery I would:

---

---

3. I would be even happier in my life if:

---

---

4. After my retirement I will do:

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5. The most important things I own are:

---

---

6. I value most the following public services:

---

---

7. I can not end up being homeless because:

---

---

8. The meaning of my life is:

---

---

*Thank you for your answers. Let us return to them at the end of the book.*

## Introduction

**A** *smoke*  
*curl*  
*passes quickly*  
*my eyes like*  
*the first*  
*swallow right*  
*after the*  
*sunset. Smoke*  
*disappears*  
*soon and I*  
*sense the*  
*strong aroma*  
*of Cohiba*  
*cigar. Fidel*



*Castro and Che Guevara are staring at me, cigars in their mouths and with the look of statesmen, from dusty photographs hanging on the wall. Waitresses circulate around serving coffee to the customers. In the middle of the room there is a glass desk holding chocolate, vanilla, and banana cakes. In the next table there sits a long haired, bohemian man of about 50 years of old, smoking the cigar. He is reading a book about socialism. The calm atmosphere is harshly violated by a disheveled-haired boy appearing to the door. He is wearing rags and begging for a coin, a piece of cake, a smoke. Suddenly two flies end up to my coffee cup. I lift them tenderly up and put them to the ashtray. The other fly stumbles up, climbs on top of the tray, and starts to dry his wings. I am happy for him. The other one lies dead in the middle of the tray on top of ashes. His meaningless death makes me feel sad. I might have been able to save his life if I had lifted him up faster from the hot coffee. Or if I had laid him on top of the tray. I feel myself peaceful and balanced. I am not hungry, I do not need anything, and a warm hand in my hand provides calmness and security. Everything is finally well. I am happy.*

We use the term 'Rat Race' to describe the dominant, modern lifestyle. The Rat Race works like a hamster wheel: no matter how fast you run, you still will not get anywhere. The Rat Race is an entity which is formed by factors that make us feel safe, such as work, belongings, family and social relationships. Most people live in the Rat Race. Its effects are seen everywhere. Even so that only actions of those who participate in the Rat Race, are perceived to be rational and normal.



Everybody feels from time to time insignificance in his life in the Rat Race. It appears as anxiousness of the present time, longing to the past and, first and foremost, longing for a better future. Happiness here and now seems to be unachievable. However, we dare to suggest that happiness is one's own choice. When one makes this choice consciously and pursues it persistently, one simply can not fail. Why is that so?

We have had a good life. Santeri worked in his own terms in a field that he had been dreaming of. He achieved everything he wanted. However, he lost the most essential thing in doing this. After achieving all the

expectations and aims the Rat Race had set to him, he did not know what he himself wanted of his life. After spending months in an aimless and frustrating state of mind, a sudden change occurred. Santeri remembered one of the most important values of his ex-



firm: happiness. He dared, against his values and comprehension of that time, to think about happiness and try to figure out what would

make him happy. However, he did not find any answers to the question. Instead he discovered that the only sources of happiness he could think of were not his nor originating from his personal needs. They were based on general conceptions of happiness and they were exterior to him.

Finally Santeri found out that to be happy he needs beside him a person whom he can love, and who loves him. He started to work for the aim pedantically as an engineer, and this is the result: we are sitting together in Fortaleza, Brazil, in a cigar café. We have expressed our love to each other already twice today. And the tender moments of the morning still please us. We have no aims, timetables nor obligations to do anything. We live like gypsies circulating around the world without permanent residence. From Santeri's previous frame of values we could be classified as spongers who do not buy or consume materia to keep the Rat Race running. In spite of that we feel ourselves happy and fortunate.

The change in Santeri's life happened in the spring 2004. Most of his life he had been thinking that the meaning of life is all about reproduction and dying, in Päivi's words proceeding. Santeri understood the meaning of happiness and the existence of the Rat Race only after his second divorce, and recognized that he had been accomplishing his life for no

other reason than proceeding. He was expected to do so and he genuinely thought that happiness would arise from safety, wealth and success. This, however, led him even farther away from true happiness.

Päivi had been work oriented and searched meaning to her life through challenging jobs. She changed work rapidly to advance her career but realized that none of them met with her expectations. She could not accomplish her real interests, and working became just a means for earning money. Päivi tried to adjust to the fact lowering her expectations by thinking that work is just work, but soon she realized that she did not have enough free time to do all the things she really wanted to do.

Like Santeri, Päivi longed for a companion with whom she could share everything. In July 2004 things clicked when we started to date. We wanted the same things of our lives and our chemistries matched. It felt great to have found each other after such a long search.



What would you do if you only did what you really wanted? Why would you not do that in any case, and at all times? And what is perhaps the most important question: do you know what you would like to do to be truly happy? The biggest hindrance in achieving happiness is our own thinking. It is alienating us from our personal goals and from the happiness of achieving those goals. It makes us to see happy people as butterflies, who wander around without any targets. We too have been guilty of this kind of thinking. We also understand why people want to defend their own aims that are actually creating dissatisfaction. However, we do not want to believe that anybody would consciously choose to

have an unsatisfactory life. That is why the awareness is the first step toward happiness. Everything starts from answering the question: “What do I personally want from my life?”.

Happiness is subjective. It is not possible to find its source nowhere else but in oneself. The process is demanding because our thinking is based on achieving happiness from exterior sources. What makes us to think this way? The answer can be found in the following stories where we tell about the reasons we escaped from the Rat Race.



We both had different paths and rationale. For Santeri, the most important thing was the disappearance of the feeling of security the rat race had provided to him. For Päivi, it was losing her interest to working and proceeding.

## **Santeri's entrepreneurship and longing for security**

*L*ight brown skin was filled with small drops of sweat. Sunshine reflected from the drops and revealed the stress hormones floating under her skin. Her hair was covered with black net and she was wearing a brown skirt tied with strings from the back. Under the skirt she had a t-shirt and in otherwise bare feet there were little red sandals. The cafeteria was crowded with customers who eagerly waited for their orders to be fulfilled or who placed new orders. There were tall German men with tattoos, a few local 30-year-old women, a group of Swedish or Norwegian tourists, and three local families with their small children. The waitress shuttled between the tables delivering orders to anxious customers. She told everybody the same calming mantra to calm them down: you will receive your coffee in just a few minutes. While she turned her back to one of the customers, she mumbled that there was such a hurry, for Christ's sake, and made a small leap towards the bar desk to fetch an ashtray. The air was electrified by this unexpected invasion of customers during day time. I was thinking about where had all the beggars gone. I had not seen them today. Suddenly I felt a touch on my shoulder and blocked the intruder instinctively with my hand. It was a child beggar who was no staring at me amazed and holding his apparently hurting hand. He stood there beside me for quite a long time. When he finally walked away from the cafeteria, he went behind the fence to show me his middle finger. The hassle in the cafeteria continued half an hour more and after that we were alone again. We sat at our table thinking that it would be a good time to order one more round of coffee. Our mind changed after noticing that the waitress was wiping her sweat and eating a little salted pie behind the bar. It would have been a sin to interrupt her well deserved break.



I moved away from my home in Helsinki to begin my studies in 1989. I had chosen the University of Technology of Tampere over the Sibelius Academy and a career as a musician. I had high hopes of an economically prosperous future. This was the beginning of my life as an adult. The first months I slept in the sofa of a family friend and went to school from downtown to Hervanta. Student dormitories were scarce and I was to get an apartment only in the next term, at the earliest. The alternatives I had were renting from the private market or buying my own flat. The real estate market was at that time overheated, and there was hardly no offering in the private rental market. I opted for buying. It was cheaper in the long run and I considered the flat to be a secure investment.



I bought a studio with 100% loan near the university. I dared to take the loan even though I had not served in military yet. The army promised to me that I would not have to make payments on the house during the service. In addition, my wife, who studied social sciences, told me that we could also have other subsidies from social security if some unresolved money problems should arise.

While I was in the army I found out that there would be no subsidies for the loan interests before using all my savings first. That ate all my savings, that had originally made it possible for me to buy the flat. When my first wife moved to the flat together with me and we bought a dog, we had to move to a bigger flat.



After that the bank crisis began. I got a letter from my bank stating that they are bankrupt and that they demand me to pay the loan back immediately or to submit more warranties because at the same time the prices of the flats had fallen.

I sold the flat to resolve the problem. I had more than 100.000 Finnish Marks of loan with no mortgage or any realistic possibilities to pay them back because I was still a student. Later sense proved this was all my fault. I had been a fool when trusting that the social security system would help me. One has to stand on his own feet if he wants to succeed.



In 1991, the employment market was dead so I had to start running my own business to pay back the loan. The solution was both good and bad. In 1995, I had paid back all my loans, I had succeeded as an entrepreneur, and I was doing a job that pleased me. The flip side of the coin was that I was married with my work and my company, in result of which my marriage ended up to divorce in 1996. My second marriage

also led to divorce in 2003, and for the same reason. Double marriage did not work. When I got married for the third time with Päivi I first divorced from my company to solve this problem.

I had raised a fortune but it was causing me all the time more troubles. When I had been poor, I had worried about paying everyday bills and house payments. I dreamed of being so rich that I would not have to care for money at all. Finally, when I had money, I started to worry about it and how not to lose it. I asked myself how much money one should have so that the future would be completely secured? What amount of money makes you feel that you have enough? What if one then loses the money for some reason? How one should guarantee the security, anticipate all the possible problems that might arise, and to prevent oneself from running out of money?

With wealth came the fortune seekers. Some people sent fake bills to my company and stole money from the cash box. I, on the other hand, was sued various times for various reasons. Plaintiffs knew that settling down the cases by paying the demanded money would anyway be



less expensive to me than going to court, even when all the cases were pure bullshit. Lawyers consulted me to always settle down the cases with money right in the first meeting. Dire Straits is discussing the dilemma of wealthiness in their following lyrics.

Dire straits: Money for nothing

Now look at them yo-yo's that's the way you do it

You play the guitar on the MTV

That ain't workin' that's the way you do it

Money for nothin' and chicks for free

Now that ain't workin' that's the way you do it

Lemme tell ya them guys ain't dumb  
Maybe get a blister on your little finger  
Maybe get a blister on your thumb

We gotta install microwave ovens  
Custom kitchen deliveries  
We gotta move these refrigerators  
We gotta move these color TV's

See the little faggot with the earring and the makeup  
Yeah buddy that's his own hair  
That little faggot got his own jet airplane  
That little faggot he's a millionaire

We gotta install microwave ovens  
Custom kitchens deliveries  
We gotta move these refrigerators  
We gotta move these color TV's

I shoulda learned to play the guitar  
I shoulda learned to play them drums  
Look at that mama, she got it stickin' in the camera  
Man we could have some fun  
And he's up there, what's that? Hawaiian noises?  
Bangin' on the bongos like a chimpanzee  
That ain't workin' that's the way you do it  
Get your money for nothin' get your chicks for free

We gotta install microwave ovens  
Custom kitchen deliveries  
We gotta move these refrigerators  
We gotta move these color TV's, lord

Now that ain't workin' that's the way you do it  
You play the guitar on the MTV  
That ain't workin' that's the way you do it  
Money for nothin' and your chicks for free  
Money for nothin' and chicks for free



The security, that was to be warranted by the wealth, required hard work. Because of continuously growing taxes I had to run faster and faster in the Rat Race. I had to take more salary to be able to pay the tax advances, and as a consequence, income taxes rallied sky high. My efforts to maintain the wealth required ever growing effort.

Taxes ensure, naturally, the high standard of public services such as public health care. My grandfather was hospitalized many years ago. He was treated for a virus-based influenza for several weeks. I visited him in the hospital every day and wondered why he got sicker in spite of the treatment. He started to hallucinate, which i thought was a symptom of going senile, but then he suddenly died. In the autopsy they found out that his death was caused by a bacterial infection. Antibiotics costing one euro would have been enough to save my grandfather but the public health care system wasting hundreds of millions of euros every year could not prescribe them for him. For the defence of the system I do have to say that he was more than 60 years old and thus no longer a tax payer, an important member of society.



When society's institutions let me down, it was time to seek security from family and friends. Family provided continuation in life as I believed in a Darwinistic way. I have two children, one with both of my ex-wives. I found out, however, that this source of security existed only as long my wives stayed with me. Both of them left me like Bill Clinton left politics after the famous cigar games with Monica Lewinsky. In a divorce the

children became pieces of child support game. I had many friends, but most of them were just after my money. In general, it seemed that the friendships from my poorer times were better.

There is good and bad in everything. After all that happened I did not become an alcoholic. But all the before mentioned things led me to wake up from the illusion of security. Giving up this illusion made it possible for me to rely on insecurity. I felt that I have nothing to loose. The things I had previously valued, suddenly lost their value, and, vice versa, some things that had earlier been worthless to me, became important.



I dare to challenge Socrates' saying "Know yourself". It is not enough. It is more crucial to know what you personally want from your life, and to focus all your efforts to achieving it. I wanted to be happy and realized that I need a person who loves me and whom I love to be truly happy. Before this change, I was not able to recognize the existence of the Rat Race. I would rather say: "Know what you personally want and then do it".



## ***Päivi and meaningful work***

**M**<sup>y</sup> eyes  
are  
wondering  
on stained  
wooden  
walls. The  
paintings on  
the walls  
are vertically  
lined up,  
very  
accurately,



*and their order pleases my eye. A wooden shelf at the end of the hall has some bottles, an old coffee mill, and a wooden watering can on top of it. The watering can is decorated with some paintings of flowers. In the shelf some coffee mugs, that all different, catch our attention. We think that they maybe belong to VIP customers. They look like new and have stayed over one month on exactly the same place. Our conclusion is that they are part of the decoration. Would it be possible to have our own labeled mugs on the shelf for our regular visits? At least it would be in case we acquired the cafeteria. My mind is filled with all kinds of ideas and business models for developing the cafeteria until the voice of ration dampens them out. Why should we return to the rat race just for two coffee mugs? On the other hand ,there is a lot more stupid things happening in the world, and due to less rational reasons. A loud noise of car engine interrupts my flow of thoughts and wakens me up to this reality. A beach buggy passes by rapidly. It is loaded with half naked, brown teenage girls who filled with the happiness of life.*

I began my studies in the Department of Arts in Tampere University. During my first year I got only six credits. This happened, because I only selected those courses I was really interested in. Eventually I understood that I needed to study other courses as well for getting my academic degree. After that I started to proceed courses one by one.



I noticed that my student colleagues, who were a couple of years ahead of me, graduated in the middle of the slow down of Finnish economy. They had troubles in finding work while unemployment rates hit the all time highs. I had made a butterfly-like choice. After finishing my studies and graduating, I ended up working as a researcher in the Academy of Finland. There I would have had a chance to enjoy a bohemian lifestyle, but I selected achieving instead. I made a tight schedule and defined clear goals. When I was 27 years old I hurried from sheltered work, as I was naming University, to the real work life with one PhD degree and two Master's degrees.

I had studied human sciences but also economics and journalism. I knew that those would speed up my run in the Rat Race. I wanted to earn more money than Academy or University could afford to pay me. What more, I was not ready to agree on short or temporary employment contracts, and to wait for a professorship for the next 20 years.

After four employers and half a decade of working I started to ask myself what is motivating me. I had fulfilled all the requirements of middle class life including a flat, a car, and a bank loan. I also enjoyed various fringe benefits. The work itself, however, felt meaningless, and days passed by for nothing. In free time there were too many things I wanted to do: read, write, study Spanish, travel, and exercise.

Traveling was my true passion. I lived every one of my work days for one month vacation, when I could travel to the end of the world and abandon my mobile phone. I traveled in Asia and South-America. The culture of those countries inspired me. Similar passion was writing. After leaving the university I was happy to have a break in writing. However, soon I discovered that it was the most interesting thing for me to do. I wanted to develop further my writing skills.



In the work life most challenges ended up being survival skills, like pleasing your superiors and colleagues. A forward looking employee had to boast loudly with a full calendar and run from one meeting to another meeting in well ironed suit and a hands free button in the ear. There was also training of these survival skills. The message was simple: just follow the orders, because one can not question them in a war either. The comparison to warfare was a bit far fetched, but on the other hand it was as pathetic as the message itself. The goal was to earn respect from the other people being successful and famous, and earning big money.

I began to think that life is too short to be wasted for doing something one does not personally want to do. The worry of having enough money for easy living – or in current thinking accepting a bit lower living standard – was too overwhelming. I did not dare to quit my job.



On winter 2004 the corporation I worked for started a mass dismissal. Labor union negotiations continued almost a year. In the first round that concerned my business unit 2/3 of our 12-person team left. Some voluntarily and some fired. At the end of the year there was another round in which our unit took part again. In my day of dismissal I was phoned to go downstairs to the meeting room to sign the termination papers.



Two weeks later I started to work as a management consultant in a small consulting company. I was able to accomplish more, and the work itself was more meaningful. However, the hope of having a different kind of life never died. When we started to date with Santeri all pieces of the puzzle found their places. With the words of Ozzy Osborne's Dreamer:

Ozzy Osborne: Dreamer

Gazing through the window at the world outside  
Wondering if mother earth will survive

Hoping that mankind will stop abusing her, sometime  
After all there's just the two of us  
And here we are still fighting for our lives  
Watching all of history repeat itself, time after time

I'm just a dreamer, I dream my life away  
I'm just a dreamer, who dreams of better days

I watch the sun go down like everyone of us  
I'm hoping that the dawn will bring a sign  
A better place for those who will come after us this time

I'm just a dreamer, I dream my life away, oh yeah  
I'm just a dreamer, who dreams of better days

Your higher power may be God or Jesus Christ  
It doesn't really matter much to me  
Without each other's help there ain't no hope for us  
I'm living in a dream, a fantasy  
Oh yeah, yeah, yeah

If only we could just find serenity  
It would be nice if we could live as one  
When will all this anger, hate and bigotry be gone?

I'm just a dreamer, I dream my life away, today  
I'm just a dreamer, who dreams of better days, OK  
I'm just a dreamer, who's searching for the way, today  
I'm just a dreamer, dreaming my life away  
Oh yeah, yeah, yeah

## The Rat Race

**D**arkness falls quickly like the rain in the Amazon rain forest. Cool sea air is blowing in from the open doors of the cafeteria. It gives a welcomed, gently touch to our sun burned,



slightly red cheeks. We are sitting at our customary table, others being still empty. I do not remember what day of the week it is. After a bit deeper consideration I realize it does not make any difference. It is all the same which weekday it is. I just wonder why the cafeteria is so empty. Maybe there is a mass in nearby church. Or maybe today is Wednesday which is the least active day in the city. Three men in Bermudas enter the door. They are wearing t-shirts and sit down to a table near us to order sizable cigars. We are surprised when one of the men starts to speak Finnish. They have not probably recognized us to be Finns as well because they start discussing about their sexual experiences with local prostitutes. They first compare girls' measures and colors of their hair, and then start talking about reimbursements and motels they had used. The men appear to emphasize that this vacation in the middle of hard working is true quality time for them. Now they have time to meet girls and enjoy sex. According to the men, girls have also enjoyed. One of the girls had even started to cry when the man had left the motel. I ask if we should order two more coffees. The men are surprised, jump up, and leave the cafeteria quickly, cigars hanging out from their mouths. We are again alone and have all the time in the world to our own thoughts.

We discovered, through our own experiences, that running in the Rat Race is easy. It is simply enough to do everything just like everyone else. You do not need to know yourself. On the contrary, if your own aspirations would lead you to question existing authorities, your life would become right away quite unpleasant. It is way easier to adapt to the current, dominating ideals. No matter if they make sense as little as the words of a well known song: "Life is life".



Next we will discuss what is fueling the Rat Race. Themes covered are success, work, property, social relations, free time, and money.

## Success

The faster we managed to run in the Rat Race, the more successful we were perceived to be. Success brings respect from others and it helps to enhance one's self image. It also helped us climbing up career ladders, to get more friends, and to generate wealth. However, success itself did not make us happy because the goal to success was not originating from ourselves. Success is actually measured by other people against other people. It encourages continuous comparison. Therefore it is very hard to believe that success could help someone to feel true happiness.



Success is relative. Someone can be more successful than others without feeling any happier. One strives for success primarily to make oneself feel more secure. The downsides are envy and accelerating the Rat Race of other people.

What does success matter if one despite of it feels unhappy? How successful must one be so that his success can never disappear, like what happened to Mr. Michael Jackson in his child molestation trial? How successful one must be to be utmost successful?

A successful person is alone with his success. He is surrounded by ass-licking people who are enhancing their own social status. Fine example of the utmost successful people are the Formula 1 drivers.



Outside the Rat Race we do not care about success. We feel no need to prove anything to anyone. However, we are happy for someone who is valuing success and gaining it.

## Work

We both felt that it is important to have a meaningful work. The true meaning, however, was at the end of the day getting more success and money. Would you work without salary? Or would you go to work every morning if you would anyway enjoy similar success, respect, maintain your work related social contacts, and live financially secured life to the end of your days? We bet you would not, because the feeling of security that work provides would become meaningless.



The true essence of work is proceeding. Things are not done because one enjoys doing them, but because one has to do them. Proceeding is justified with future material rewards. Being continuously in a hurry prevents one from more profound thinking, because if there is no hurry one is not important. Showing a full calendar to colleagues provides great satisfaction and gives the perception of highly qualified and respected member of the work group, a true professional.

What kind of memories does this never-ending proceeding produce to be remembered when one is retired? Childhood, school, studies, working, retirement, death – which will be the highlight of your life?

The protestant work ethic, which is highly valued in Northern European countries, emphasizes the meaning of work. By working you provide meaning to your life and material for building your own identity. When meeting new people the essential question usually is “In which company

are you working?” instead of asking “What makes you happy”. Work is assumed to depict what one truly is: what he can do, what he can accomplish, how respectful he is.

The fundamental insanity of work became concrete, literally, in the Germany during the second World War. We hope this comparison does not cause to the reader same kind of shock that Britney Spears' smelling feet did in the airplane. Above the iron gate of Auschwitz concentration camp



it is written "Arbeit Macht Frei". It means in English "Working sets you free". This is actually what happens in the Rat Race. Working makes us free from thinking what we really want and what makes us happy.

Another way to achieve freedom is to become aware of the Rat Race and find out what one personally wants from life. If we were created for working only, we would have born without heart and soul.

Outside the Rat Race we are ready to work only if we must. We do not disrespect other people´s working, because it makes our easy and selfish lifestyle possible.

## Property

Fine examples of success feed the Rat Race, and envy – the continuous comparison of other people's success. The easiest way to compare is through material possessions. That is why the value of a human being so often boils down to what he possesses.



Purchasing goods can become the meaning of life in the same way as struggling for a better salary and a bigger apartment. Material things are something we hung ourselves into like George W. Bush did in justifying the killing with spreading democracy or at least the US perception of democracy to the Arab world.

In the Rat Race we were never happy with the property we had, and longed for something better and something more. When one need was fulfilled there were always new, bigger needs waiting for fulfillment.

The logic of buying and possessing ever more is the same as in the economics, where growth is assumed to continue forever. But one can ask, what is continuous growth good for? If you win in the lottery, what would you buy to yourself to become more happier?



Property brings happiness and enhances the feeling of security only for a short term. Instead, it binds the proprietor for good. In the worst case a bank loan of 30 years does the same to the proprietor as a



small piece of land to a peasant in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The focus of life will be shifted to the future while the present becomes work and money oriented proceeding. Property brings along with it duties. A real estate, for example, requires furnishing, renovating, fire inspections and tax paying. Cars require regular technical inspections, service, paying taxes, and filing forms. Furthermore, there is always the worry of losing the property and protecting it from fire and thieves.

Outside the Rat Race property has lost it's meaning to us. We only need property to satisfy our primary needs, nothing more.

## Social Relations

Family and friends create a stronghold in life. However, if they are acquired just to be the facade for advancing career ambitions or social eligibility, they also bind oneself to the Rat Race. Children can be a mere extension of oneself, which make one stand out as a good mother or father.



Many personal relationships became a must for us in the Rat Race, although they appeared to be self chosen. These were primarily work relationships, such as clients, employees, colleagues, and superiors. These acquaintances supported our self-esteem. Friends in remarkable positions and even celebrities made our social status higher. These personal relationships were not free of charge, though. Cherishing them caused as much trouble as taking care of property. We had to do smalltalk, assist different kinds of cocktail parties, try to please everybody and stay friends no matter what.



Outside the Rat Race family and friends are an altruistic resource to us. We do not expect anything from them. And we do not want them to expect anything from us either. This way the relationship remains pure and unburdened.

## Free Time

Just like our work time, free time was also tightly scheduled. It was quality time with high expectations. Free time was proceeded in a goal-oriented way, according to the schedule. In holiday trips all tourist attractions had to be visited, everything was recorded with photos and post cards were sent to friends, and souvenirs bought to decorate the house and the summer cottage. With photos and souvenirs it was possible to brag with travels and to gain respect and cause envy.



Hobbies in the Rat Race are selected so that they support more noble causes like work and gaining respect. They are goal-oriented proceeding. This is simply the natural consequence of a need to have the whole life scheduled. If the hobby was something you genuinely wanted to do, why would you not do it full time instead of sacrificing your time to work and other secondary functions?

In ideal situations work can be a former hobby. However the concept of work includes such components of the Rat Race, that make it often unsatisfactory, eventually. The hobby becomes forced, if you must do it all the time even when you would not want to do it. Or if it forces you to do things you do not fully enjoy, like filing tax reports, managing people, and selling.



Outside the Rat Race the concept of free time is absurd. We only have free time which is free from expectations, schedules, and milestones. If we like to do something and it makes us happy, we focus completely on doing that; without making it a work or a business.

## Money

With money there was always the worry of safeguarding it and making more of it. It is possible to make more money by taking higher risks when investing it for example in stocks. However, with no risk money slowly disappears thanks to inflation and property taxes. Because of this, one must make more money all the time to keep the level of wealth and accept the worry and work it takes. The worry and work did not make us happy, does it make you happy?



Making more money and saving money are based on the same assumption as network marketing; there is an indefinite amount of people in the world. The Rat Race keeps going because people assume that there is an endless amount of money in the world and plenty of it for everyone to make more. The fact is, however, that there is only a limited amount of money and it is distributed unevenly. There is always someone who has more of it .

Outside the Rat Race money has become a necessary evil. You can not eat it but you can use it for buying food. It allows us to make what we want, in case that happens to require money. Still we are not willing to work for money unless we have no other option. Investments are for us an insecure waste of time. There can not exist any fool proof security to conserve money. Simply nothing can be enough and still it is not possible to leave your property behind with any care and worries.

## Summary

We have been discussing the most fundamental elements of the Rat Race. They are able to provide continuity and feeling of security in life. However, if everyone of us had always thought the same way, the world would still be flat and no one dared to be happy. We hope that telling how we escaped from the Rat Race can bring a message from the reality outside the Rat Race. A task similar to the one Mathias Rust did when he defected to Soviet Union with a small airplane and landed to the Red Square in Moscow.



Being different is not accepted in the world of mediocrity, dominated by the masses. Everyone should be in the same boat for the sake of loyalty and community spirit. For example renting a flat, self-inflicted unemployment, or accepting a modest work compared to one's competence make others feel pity without exception.

We claim that by making things differently and fulfilling selfish goals it is possible to be happy. There is no universal truth defining how you must live your life. You have to define it by yourself.

## ***An Example***

Let's play a mind game: what kind of a man would a happy Finn be? We will illustrate two imaginative scenes of a happy person's life. One is inside the Rat Race and the other outside of it.



### **Scene A:**

The happy person has a good and challenging work. He lives in his own house and drives to work with his new car. The house is decorated with beautiful design decorations offered by all high class boutiques. In the same place there are also living a gorgeous spouse, two beautiful children, and a handsome, purebred dog. The happy man is surrounded by many good friends, who help prospering in the career path and give good investment hints to grow property. The man's hobbies help him to succeed in work life and bring new good friends. On holiday the man has a privilege to travel to the capital cities of Europe and to make trips to distant exotic countries. Thanks to that, our man can return to work even more refreshed and full of efficiency, energy and new ideas. The happy man is taking care of his future by cherishing actively retirement fund and saving money. They will provide the means after retirement to fulfill long time dreams and a good heritage for the children. Thanks to the generous salary the employer is paying to the man he is able to purchase long term investment property like a summer cottage. Weekends in the summer cottage are true quality time together with his family and friends. The man is also pleased to pay his share of the production costs of a welfare state in the form of taxes.

As reward the man gets one of the best public health care systems for free, high quality education for the children, and increased security in the form of a more equal society. It is like winning in the lottery to be born here, the man is thinking while he is driving to work early in the morning with his brand new car.

### **Scene B:**

One month later the third round of dismissals ended in the man's working place, and all employees who were enjoying excessive salaries were terminated because of decreased profits. Unfortunately the man belonged to this group. The mold damage discovered from the house forced the family to move temporarily to live in the summer cottage. Insurance company refused to pay compensation because additional mold insurance was not subscribed. A bit later the bank had to sell the house to recover half of the mortgage. The beautiful decoration of the house had to be sold in a flea market because the summer cottage was too small for storing them. Winter was drawing closer making the life harder in backwoods. Water pipe froze and roads were blocked because of snow. The retirement fund had to be cashed out for financing moving to the cottage. Additionally some extra taxes incurred because the laws were changed. The new car ended up to the junk yard after crashing with a moose. Unluckily it happened in a moose warning zone and compensation was refused. Friends alienated because of a too long distance and a lower social status. Because of that, the happy man started to spend time in a local bar drinking beer. The spouse moved away and took the children and the dog with her. I did not have to wait for the retirement, the man thought when he was playing the flute in the balcony of the cottage. Now the man had all the time in the world to make his dreams come true.

In which scene the happy man is happier? Probably in both, or then again, in either one. Happiness is not a competitive element basing on external meters, like work, money, friends, and property. The following song pictures quite well the happiness in the Rat Race as we see it.

### Nine Days: Keeping up with the Joneses

#### Keeping up with the Joneses

keeps you keeping out  
as long as you have the will to get along  
and what you do for you is never wrong  
so don't you worry  
don't you worry

and I was never keen enough  
as long as this time is still ticking on the clock  
but when your pretty face won't be enough  
then I won't you want you won't to want to

you're wearing your corduroys and your diamond tooth  
but you couldn't relate to the girl with the silver spoon  
the lies that you're telling me are always true  
it's true  
you made a fool of me for believing you

so keeping up with the Joneses  
keeps me hanging on  
as long as I have the will to get along  
and what I do for you is always wrong  
but don't you worry  
don't you worry

cause I would never give it up  
as long as this time's still ticking on the clock  
but when your pretty face won't be enough  
now won't you want to won't you want to

I love you the most when you are fast asleep  
and whatever I do for you I'm still the creep  
I realize that I'm not good enough  
it's tough for sensitive men in a world that don't give a fuck

so keeping up with the Joneses  
keeps me hanging on  
as long as I have the will to get along  
and what you do for you is never wrong  
but don't you worry  
don't you worry  
cause you would never give it up  
as long as the time's still ticking on the clock  
but when your pretty face won't be enough  
then I won't you want to won't you want to

now even your corduroys are faded through  
and when you're walking away  
well I think it's a better view  
the lies that you tell yourself  
are always true  
so true  
and you keep on talking till your face is blue

keeping up with the Joneses

keeps you hanging on  
as long as you have the will to get along  
and what you do for you is never wrong  
so don't you worry  
don't you worry  
and I would never give it up  
as long as this time's still ticking on the clock  
but when your pretty face won't be enough  
now won't you want you won't you want you don't you want  
you don't you want to

## Escape

**F**lies are circulating around us. They jump, tumble, and walk on us with their dirty little feet. How on earth can there be so much of them today. Or maybe we are



unusually delicious with our sweating limbs. That reminds me of an old saying concerning flies. According to that, shit does not have to be delicious even though 10.000 flies like to eat it. This time none of the flies ends up to my coffee cup, but I sip all of it just to assure they will not do that later. It is evening. In the nearby alley there is some fuzz. A group of children dressed in rags move wildly around and swing their hands up and down recklessly. We are watching them behind metal fence that is painted black and made from spears sticking to sky. It is around two meters high and creates a feeling of secureness. From time to time we can see plastic soda bottles in the children's hands. They raise bottles to their small noses, grin, and shake from pleasure. There is some sticky yellow stuff in the bottom of the bottles. It must be glue. Also the beggars that regularly invade the cafeteria have joined them and are seemingly receiving their share of the fun. The bacchanalia is interrupted by a police car rushing to the alley. The policemen run out from the car and return with one big plastic bag full of confiscated glue bottles. None of the children is arrested. The police car drives away, and a bit later social workers arrive by car. The disheveled-haired boy is gone, permanently.

Escaping the Rat Race required us 1) to be conscious of the existence of the Rat Race and 2) to know what we personally want. After that it was simply a matter of choice and of making it happen. This chapter will describe in detail how we left.



Preparing our departure took months. During that time we questioned all the time our solution and considered consequences. Despite of that our goals were clear. Santeri wanted to concentrate on love and cherishing the relationship, and Päivi wanted additionally to travel to South America and develop her Spanish skills. These goals become one unified plan.

We scheduled the departure date of 29. October 2004 three months ahead. The first leg was the capital of Brazil. One of Santeri's former employees and friend Pedro lived there together with his wife. This was the first and only point of the compass. We made no other plans.

Two months before the D-day we did a final check from each other, and decided that now we have crossed the point of no return. After that the most radical activities begun including terminating working agreements, selling all property, and telling our friends and families about the plan.



When terminating work relations we received contradictory feedback. Santeri's employees were joking that he is going to work for Microsoft and turn his coat. There was a great worry concerning the future of the company. It was personified to him and he was also the public figure and spokesperson. In Päivi's case the small working community was worried about securing continuity and finding a new good employee. Our decision seemed to make both of our working communities deceived in some way. To us, work was no longer the meaning of life.

The fear of future and the leftovers of longing for security made leaving a some kind of journey into the unknown. We were thinking all kind of nightmare scenarios that could cause troubles later. Those included for example tax reports.

Society, officials, and bureaucracy do not take into account the persons who leave the Rat Race. The first real issue was the lack of any permanent address. We could not inform post office, magistrate, and other



public registers of our future address. Our decision was to wonder around the world without any points of the compass. The permanent residency appeared to be the corner stone of the eligibility in the society. We could not find any other solution to our problem but redirect all the mail temporarily to the nuisance of our parents.

We tried to avoid all kinds of troubles that could occur after leaving because those would automatically fall into our parents hands. We visited taxation office and informed them about our plans and the end of receiving salaries. They were a bit astonished and we felt that they questioned our sincerity. The challenge to be were the tax reports of the year when we still had income. Päivi had semiautomatic taxation but for Santeri it was practically impossible to file that because of his absence.



People are slowly removed from official databases. To taxation we should not be responsible after the year 2005. Or to be realistic, at least after the year 2006. This naturally requires that we have managed to get

rid of all our property in Finland. Naturally we are not any more eligible to public services in case we visit Finland. In the public health care the transfer period is one year. We will keep the Finnish nationality unless we want to take some other nationality. Finnish law forbids double nationalities.

Getting rid of all the stuff we had gathered was quite an effort. It did not make a big change that both of us had a tendency to Spartan simplicity instead of herding goods. The biggest effort was selling cars. Cars of a couple years of old were extremely hard to sell. The



value of a car collapses to half immediately when it is driven for the first time out from the shop. The same applied to things as well. The bid for Päivi's CD collection was ridiculous, and we should have actually paid money for getting rid of our furniture. The joint decision was not to purchase anything ever again. Our parents were very helpful in placing, selling and destroying things. Otherwise the three months we had reserved for the preparations would have been too short. Some things we kept so that we could give them away to our friends in our farewell party.

Preparing the escape was nothing but hard work in the Rat Race. We made notes and to-do lists of things that would still have to be taken care of. After accomplishing something we crossed it out from the list feeling great satisfaction. One of the most pleasing experiences was burning all the remaining documents in the fire place and cook some sausages in the fire together with champagne we had received as a wedding present.

The elimination criteria was to leave only as much things as we could carry in our backpacks. Santeri took a few clothes, a sleeping bag, and a tent. With Päivi it took quite a many iterations and strict classification of the most necessary things to achieve the same result. Now our property fits to two backpacks and still we feel that we are carrying some unnecessary things. Getting rid of property felt good and our hearts felt lighter, too. Now it is not a problem to change a place whenever we want. Everything we posses is easy to carry with us.



We took money with us in cash and in the form of credit card. Getting a reasonable amount of cash was rational because VISA is robbing a hefty 2.5% fee for all cash draws. To our astonishment one of Nordea's branches in Helsinki city center only accepted to give us 5000 euros in cash. They claimed not to have enough money to pay more and said we should have reserved the money in advance. Our conclusion was that the money is probably very safe in that bank when even the owner can not access it. Luckily the airport bank was more co-operative.

While practical things kept us busy we made sure to have time to meet our friends before leaving. When we told them about our plans we received sincere wishes for good luck, but we quite often also caused a flood of excuses why they could not do the same. A few of them felt themselves a bit betrayed by us when we were abandoning the system and country. Our solution made them to defend their own choices of life and telling the excuses that lay behind them. Those were, for example, a new house loan, new summer cottage, small children, and insecurity of income. In our case the apparent wealth, which was in reality quite fixed and tied, gave them an understanding of what made our leaving possible.

We felt sad to leave our friends and families to Finland. Santeri's children stayed with their mothers. Luckily the daughter was allowed to participate in our wedding and farewell party. Santeri is naturally longing for both of his children and keeps in touch by email with the daughter. The son can not yet read or write so keeping in touch with him without the help of a reluctant mother is not yet possible. We do not expect that the children will be allowed to travel to see us abroad as long as they are under aged.



We were thinking quite often why it is for some people so hard to accept escaping from the Rat Race. One reason might be that it is so rare. As long as there are no examples in the family or among friends, it is hard to imagine somebody doing such. It appears that only the rich and the famous can do so – all those people that others admire and want to be like, but do not dare. This kind of a polished impression makes the escape unreal. The other extreme is condemning the leavers to be social outcasts and losers. Black and white setup is due to the fact that inside the Rat Race leaving is defined with the concepts of the Rat Race. It can be either a reward of a great performance, or a punishment of not being able to keep the pace of the Rat Race.

We started to consider escaping from the Rat Race based on our own needs and feelings. In numerous discussions we had, we searched for new points of view by questioning. Next list contains some of the questions and thoughts that led to the escape.



- Existence is meaningless without knowing the meaning of life.
- There is always someone better or richer than you, but everyone can be the happiest.
- Do I dare to reach for happiness?
- Happiness can be simply loving and being loved; it has nothing to do with work, property, or money.
- There is only one correct path in life, it is exactly the one you are walking.
- Don not trust anyone or anything except yourself when you are thinking about your happiness.
- Change can only start from yourself, because others preach you what benefits them.
- Yes and no together are the best answer to all questions.
- If you do not know what you personally want from life you should halt until you find the answer.

We discovered that all our answers winded up to what is important to us and makes us happy. The most important observation was that the Rat Race could not offer us these things. This was a big step to us.

John Lennon describes these thoughts quite accurately in their song "Imagine".

John Lennon: Imagine

Imagine there's no heaven  
It's easy if you try  
No hell below us  
Above us only sky  
Imagine all the people  
Living for today...

Imagine there's no countries  
It isn't hard to do  
Nothing to kill or die for  
And no religion too  
Imagine all the people  
Living life in peace...

You may say I'm a dreamer  
But I'm not the only one  
I hope someday you'll join us  
And the world will be as one

Imagine no possessions  
I wonder if you can  
No need for greed or hunger  
A brotherhood of man  
Imagine all the people  
Sharing all the world...

You may say I'm a dreamer  
But I'm not the only one

I hope someday you'll join us  
And the world will live as one

## Life Outside

*It is noon. The sun is shining right on top of the sky like a red ball of fire. Luckily our table is in the shadows. Otherwise we would burn red like cooked lobsters.. A sneeze.*

*Another sneeze. This can not be true, can one get a flu in this heat of over 30 degrees Celsius? The ambiance is unreal. The sun is scorching and nose is running. On the other hand, it is a luxury to be*



*sick and still be able to go out. The rule of thumb is that one has to keep warm when being sick. And outside is actually much warmer than in our air-conditioned home. Below the horseshoe shaped bar made of dark wood there is a glass vitrine whose door clangs. It is opened by a waitress wearing a hairnet and she has a rag darkened by dust in her hand, as well as yellow rubber gloves. The girl pushes the rag between the cakes and the shelves and cleans them from dust. I am thinking about a cake which has been dusted. Would anyone order those cakes any more if they knew how they are handled. Is it better that there is dust on a cake or that dust has been wiped away. I had been thinking to taste the banana cake which was praised in our travel guide as a local exquisite but I think I will pass after all. Maybe I lie in wait for a new cake delivery and take a piece then. On the other hand, in Brazil, in Amazon, banana is eaten with ash. Dead relatives are burned and the ashes are baked with banana to be served as a feast for funeral guests.*

We wake up at noon. There is no hurry and we can devote time to each other. A few hours later we start walking to the cigar café. A waitress we know greets us at the door and asks “Dois?”. It is almost the only word in Portuguese we know. We nod and receive our standard order to our table. It is two coffees with milk foam.

We are discussing everything possible with each other. Thanks to these philosophical sessions we have found out a perfect solution to one of the ancient questions of mankind: which was first, chicken or egg. The solution was found from the national epic of Finland called Kalevala. The answer is egg. Kalevala states that the world was born from an egg of a bird called Sotka.

Our connection to our subconscious mind has strengthened. Earlier we used to recall our dreams rarely but now we remember them clearly almost every morning. We tell them to each other like movies we have seen. After our departure Santeri has visited in his dreams all periods of his life back to the childhood. In the dreams his identity has been rebuilding bit by bit to reflect the new image of himself outside the Rat Race. It would be interesting to know how Freud would have interpreted these dreams.



Today we will go to buy flight tickets to our next stop, which is the samba carnival of Rio de Janeiro. This way we will realize one of Santeri's old dreams. Spending five days in Cobacabana is more expensive than the two months altogether we are spending in Fortaleza, but we have understood that there is no price for dreams.



We jump from the cafeteria to a bus and head to a travel agency. It is very hot even though it is almost 4pm. We do not have sun blocking lotion with us because there was no intention to walk a lot outside. On the way we stop by in a big supermarket to search for smashed potatoes powder. Our nearby shop had run out of it.

At this point Santeri wanted to write that we walked back from the shop. Päivi felt stressed about possibly exaggerating the distance of walking. Seems that Päivi was afraid that someone would come to check the actual distances and interview witnesses for proving the facts. She also claimed that Santeri was exaggerating in purpose to give overly sporty image of himself. That is of course true.

We arrived back to our neighborhood in Iracema. Let the reader decide whether it happened by bus or walking. We stopped by in an Internet café to find out there was some email to us. Answering the email and

searching for some information took two hours. We have centralized our travel news to a diary which we intend to update monthly. It is available at [http://www.geocities.com/paivi\\_santeri/](http://www.geocities.com/paivi_santeri/)

We read from Internet some news about Finland. They feel quite distant. Much more interesting is a cartoon called Viivi and Wagner. It is published daily and it tells about a woman living with a pig called Wagner. It is just like us. When stepping out from the café we feel quite dizzy and wonder how we had coped with over eight hours of continuous working in the office.



To clear our heads from the information storm we enjoy some more coffee. All clients have changed in the cafeteria while we were away except the old bohemian artist. He is part of the furniture like us. We are going to miss this place when we travel away. A modest infrastructure is quite sufficient for us. It is enough to have a small flat with gas stove for cooking, a good grocery store, butcher's shop, pleasant cafeteria, possibility to use Internet from time to time, and a nice climate.

Life is quite a lot more simplistic nowadays. We go to sleep when we feel sleepy and wake up when we have slept enough. Eating is not tied to lunch or dinner times; we eat when we are hungry. We have all the time in the world without the artificial limitations of daily rhythm. Actually we have discovered that our rhythm follows tides instead of the 24 hour daily period. The most important thing is that we have enough time. We can concentrate on each other and to learn to know ourselves better.

Daily we wake up to realize small things that make us happy. In the morning there is no alarm clock ringing. We do not have to dress to ties, suits, or any other uncomfortable business clothes. Small talk is no more required as well as any other pointless talking,



nor embellishing. The greatest thing is to be able to spend our time with the best possible company. There is absolutely no stress left, partly thanks to the local mañana culture. It is no use to get frustrated because no one else gets. Things will work out well sooner or later, or maybe never. All the options are excellent in their own way.

We stop by in a grocery store and buy food for the next few days. Learning to use free home delivery service was quite difficult for Päivi in the beginning. She felt strange having someone running beside us with a carriage while we were walking back home. However, after testing it a few times she accepted the service. Our groceries are quite heavy because we have to purchase drinking water, then we consume liters of soft drinks, and finally we are fond of water melons.

At home Santeri begins to cook. He is quite a maestro in cooking. But he has not exercised his skills hardly at all in past years because of busy working in Finland. Now Päivi is cuddled with all kind of feasts. Today there is Chinese chicken stew. After dinner we enjoy a siesta and go to walk in the beach boulevard in the evening. We watch some joggers who are passing by, and stop at our favorite beach bar under palm trees to listen to the sound of waves.

At night, when the tide goes out, we walk back to home on the sand of the beach. At the sand there is a colorful crab watching us curiously with his blue eyes. It looks like a toy, Päivi comments. Santeri touches the crab gently with a wooden stick and it quickly digs himself into the sand.

It feels that love is a full time occupation and requires all of our effort. We are ready to contribute that because love makes us happy. Still, it can not provide a long-term and a 100% sure safety in life. Therefore we enjoy every single day we can live with the loved one.



The words written by the Beatles in the song “Let it be” describe quite adequately the new approach to life we have assumed.

The Beatles: Let it be

When I find myself in times of trouble  
Mother Mary comes to me  
Speaking words of wisdom, let it be.  
And in my hour of darkness  
She is standing right in front of me  
Speaking words of wisdom, let it be.  
Let it be, let it be.  
Whisper words of wisdom, let it be.

And when the broken hearted people  
Living in the world agree,  
There will be an answer, let it be.  
For though they may be parted there is  
Still a chance that they will see  
There will be an answer, let it be.

Let it be, let it be. Yeah

There will be an answer, let it be.

And when the night is cloudy,  
There is still a light that shines on me,  
Shine on until tomorrow, let it be.  
I wake up to the sound of music  
Mother Mary comes to me

Speaking words of wisdom, let it be.  
Let it be, let it be.

There will be an answer, let it be.  
Let it be, let it be,

Whisper words of wisdom, let it be

## Shadows In The Paradise

**A** *black*  
*car*

*stops at the  
door of  
cafeteria.*

*Two men  
jump out  
and run to  
the door.*

*One of the  
men is  
small and  
burly, the*



*other one rather tall. They are wearing berets and bullet proof vests. Both have pistols and knives hanging in their belts and the taller one has a machine gun in his hands. The staff of the cafeteria is staring nervously at the men and at each other. Suddenly I remember an incident that happened in Estonia where they had to collect cover money by force. The shorter man is picking at his pistol's button. The taller man says something in Portuguese we can not understand. He draws his machine gun up, locks and loads, and slides a bullet into the barrel starting to shoot the staff hiding behind the mahogany bar. We grab each other and hide under our stone table that is standing on rattan legs. Bullets are ricocheting from the floor and the walls around us while we snipe. I hear a knock and turn to see what was the cause of it. There is a hand grenade beside us ready to explode. Suddenly I feel a touch on my side. I turn to see what caused it and open up my eyes. My love is waking me up from my morning nap and proposes to go for a morning coffee to the cafeteria. We dress up and start to walk toward hot and delicious latte. We arrive to the cafeteria. A waitress we know is singing happily and the bohemian artist joins her in the chorus. Everything is fine again.*

This chapter is dedicated to the side effects we experienced while and after escaping the Rat Race. One of the most important things is that we will carry the scarves of the Rat Race inside ourselves forever. The need to proceed is for example our second nature because we were so deeply in the Rat Race. Santeri frustrated because this book was not ready after writing it for three days and nights without break. He was setting deadlines and milestones to the writing project and agreeing review meeting times. This might sound as confusing as the talks of Tony Blair when he was defending the participation of Britain in the attack to Iraq. Thirteen years of process oriented software engineering is hard to forget.



Santeri was occasionally feeling useless and needless because his identity was almost completely built upon his work. He was longing subordinates for delegating tasks. Päivi had milder detoxification symptoms from time to time. They were mostly related to gathering property and business ideas.

We were seriously thinking about buying a beach buggy built from Volkswagen beetle for a South American tour. After seeing a few buggies and trying one by renting we found out that it would be such a nuisance

to own one. It would be impossible to verify the condition of the buggy, and, anyway, driving thousands and thousands of kilometers would require constant service and changing of falling parts like spark plugs. Moreover, we would have to worry where to keep the car safe and sound, and finally, how to get rid of it.



We also considered starting our own business. The cafeteria was such a nice place that we were thinking about buying it. We had talks with the owner regarding the price but luckily we came to our senses. While thinking about buying, we found many flaws and a lot of things requiring reparations and attention in the otherwise so nice café. The Brazilian business environment would have probably offered at least as much troubles as the Finnish one. Moreover, we do not speak any Portuguese.

We are not free from the bureaucracy of the Rat Race here either. Opening a bank account would have required obtaining a local social security number called CPF. Probably we could have received it but the process itself felt complicated and required hard work. The lack of

permanent residence and address is also a problem here. Even a prepaid mobile phone subscription required having a permanent address. Fortunately our Brazilian friend Pedro took care of that for us.

We have tried to avoid all kind of contacts with officials. It is simply frustrating. When we tried to prolong our visas in Federal Police in Fortaleza we were first rejected because of wearing Bermuda shorts, and second time because it was too early to do it. Prolonging did not work out in Recife airport either. They directed us to another police station in the city center. The prolonging is still undone and we might get deported.

The activity or inactivity of government officials in Finland comes to mind from time to time. Will they receive our tax reports in time so that we avoid possible problems? There is still some hard-to-sell property left in Finland causing troubles. This might cause some nasty consequences we can not anticipate. Fortunately the need of thinking these nightmare scenarios reduced a lot already when the D-day came closer in Finland. On the other hand, we are aware that there are no choices that would be right or wrong. One thing we are sure about is this: we do not want to go back to the Rat Race.

The biggest problem right now is the social vacuum we are living in. Communicating with other people is quite hard and not only because we do not speak their language. While talking with the Rat Racers it is hard to find common subjects and terms. After telling about our lifestyle and escaping the Rat Race it is usually followed by a deathly silence or suspicious questions. Other people who have done the same decision we have not yet met. Naturally we miss our friends in Finland and try to keep in touch with them by email. Santeri is also missing his children and his dog. Boris died before we left as if he had had an instinct for the forthcoming severities of tropics.



## Happiness test B

1. Rate the value of the following things in relation to your personal needs. [ 0 = important to you personally, and 5 = important to you because of other people]:

Success in life	0	1	2	3	4	5
Having a meaningful job	0	1	2	3	4	5
House, car, summer cottage and all other things	0	1	2	3	4	5
Family, friends, colleagues	0	1	2	3	4	5
Free time, vacations, hobbies	0	1	2	3	4	5
Money, savings, investments	0	1	2	3	4	5

Answer to the following questions without using concepts of success, work, property, belongings, house, car, summer cottage, family, friends, money, savings, investments, loan, free time, hobbies, and vacation:

2. What makes you happy?

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3. The meaning of life is:

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The more points you earned in the first question, the better you realize the existence of the Rat Race. Maximum score is 30. Compare next your answers to the other answers you gave in the previous test on page 5.

4. In the Test A there were questions "**2. If I won big money in the lottery I would**" and "**4. After my retirement I will do**". What prevents you from doing these things right now?

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5. Do you want to be happy in your life?

- Yes       No

6. If you answered yes, please write in detail what you are going to do to reach happiness and find the meaning of your life from now on:

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How are your values divided into internal (your own, personal values) and external (what other people want or expect you to do) ? Are happiness and the meaning of your life really originating from yourself? Do you know what you personally want from life?

## Never-ending Story

*The wooden doors are always open. In the front door there are thick ropes connected to the doors. The atmosphere is always welcoming when you step in. It is like returning back to home. No matter that the staff is looking bored and tired of working when new people arrive. They are still service-minded, and quite often even too attentive. The coffee cup might vanish while there is still some coffee left, and the same applies to the ashtray. I exclaim to the waiter in Portuguese: "Bom zia, dois cafe con leitz e asugrina e un sinsero e un quorum e dois malboro laitz por favor" and things begin to happen. We receive the stimulants and a welcoming smile flashes on his face when he reads the texts from our shirts. There is written in big friendly letters "Não obrigado!" Yesterday we were searching for a book store to get a Spanish or English book for Päivi to read when we passed by a shirt printing company. The numerous beggars and street vendors in beaches, cafeterias, streets, and buses had earlier given us a thought of making special t-shirts to save us from saying them the same mantra again and again. Now there was a chance to do that. After receiving the shirts we tested them on the beach boulevard. Most understood the message and left us undisturbed with a grin or a smile in their face. Only a few illiterates approached us to sell and beg. Even though the text on the shirt was a humble protest of mere mortals like us, there was a lot more profound meaning in the text than we could have ever guessed. While sitting in the cafeteria and enjoying a cigar I understood that this text summarizes perfectly the truest and deepest essence of the life outside the Rat Race. We should be able to say more often "No thanks".*



We both understand that these thoughts are only current. Both our travels and our internal process will continue. Fortunately we do not even know where it leads to. The permanence of change is obvious because we do not worry about future. We are living one day at a time, seizing the moment, doing exactly what we want.



Returning to the Rat Race does not appear to be possible. The selfishness that led us to leave has changed into unselfish altruism and respect to life. To us, every single day is precious. Our only wish is to encounter others living outside the Rat Race for sharing experiences.



*One could hear Friedrich Nietzsche's Zarathustra say: "Dead is Superman: now we want a divinely happy human being to live" while Machiavelli was turning in his grave. At that very moment the cigar cafeteria La Habanera turned into a heaven on earth.*

The original Finnish edition: In Fortaleza and Olinda, Brasil, on 26.12.2004 – 22.1.2005,

Päivi & Santeri

The English translation: In Buenos Aires, Argentina, on 27.6.2005-31.6.2005,

The same

## Appendix: Rhoughts

The Rhoughts are a collection of Random Thoughts. The collection is in alphabetical order and covers the subjects of this book.

- All living is one and connected to each other. Trying to separate yourself from others is fooling yourself.
- Do you dare to live your dreams or just give up without even trying?
- Dreaming feels good but making dreams come true feels even better.
- How much money is too much for making your dreams come true?
- How much would you be willing to pay for being happy for one day?
- If you can do or buy something it really does not mean you must.
- If you do something why not to do it well or at least as well as you can?
- If you had only one day to live in the Rat Race you would waste only one day of your life.
- If you seek for victory, profit, or gain there are inside yourself even bigger things left to conquer.

- Life outside the Rat Race means making such things that one personally wants.
- Love and sex are united in the same way as happiness and life outside the Rat Race.
- Making decisions is important and there is no right or wrong decisions.
- Sad memories and past things tie you to the past, not to life.
- Selfishness is a good thing but the best is to be selfish openly and without shame.
- The best way to win is not to play at all, because only losers play.
- The chasm between happiness and the Rat Race can be crossed only with pure understanding of personal desires.
- The only absolute truth is your own understanding of truth and therefore you are the only one who can influence to it.
- The only way you can be useful is to make yourself useless.
- The road to hell is paved with things other people want or expect you to do.
- There can not exist genuine, unselfish friendships inside the Rat Race.
- To be what you personally want to be or not to be at all.

- To own or not to own is actually a rhetorical question.
- Traveling is in itself more fun than reaching a destination.
- Why to delay making your dreams come true?
- Why to pimp your happiness for money?

THE END