

# VILLAGE VIEW

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Spread your blanket. Kick off your sandals. Flop down full length and wriggle your perfect mold in the yielding sand. Smooth on tanning lotion covering every exposed inch of skin. Soak up the sun.

Warm? Head for the water. Splash in the surf where the small waves break and roll up the shingle only to run back, foamy and tugging at your ankles. Go deeper. Get wet to your knees, thighs, tummy, waist. Now, like a porpoise, dive below the surface. Come up breathing out and tossing back streaming hair. Swim a little. It feels marvelous.

Roll over on your back, keeping hands and feet moving easily in fishlike horizontal motion. Rest there, gazing up at the immense and endless sky. A gull floats on an invisible current, high overhead. A wave splashes saltily across your face. Turn again in the water and swim back to the beach.

Now back on your blanket, feel the grit drying between your toes and the salt clinging to your skin. Sift through your fingers the shimmering grains. Pick shells, some whole, some fragments, from the little heaps your siftings form. Lick your lips free of salt.

Hungry? Unwrap your snack after dusting the sand from your hands. Uncork your thermos. What could taste better? Or where? Stretch out and snooze a bit. Take another dip. Replenish the tanning lotion. Enough sun? Cover up or gather your possessions and head for home. That's midsummer.

Pull the dinghy alongside the mooring and make fast. Transfer your gear to the cockpit of the shallow little cat-

boat. Step carefully aboard. Hang the rudder at the stern and slip the tiller into its slot. Thread the sail to boom and mast; release the boom and let the mainsheet run. Haul the sail to the tip of the mast. Drop the centerboard, slip the mooring, grab the tiller and pull in the main. You're under way.

Come about, now, and tack across the bay, close hauled. Watch the peak. She's luffing a little bit; ease her off a notch. Now on the starboard tack, the long reach, watch the shoreline slip silently away, hear the gurgling under the stern, feel the pulling force of wind and water working on opposite planes to send you on your way. Your right hand controls the resisting tiller; your left grips the mainsheet with a single loop around the cleat.

Closing in on the lee shore? Get ready to come about again. There you are, the boom safely on the port side, filling again with a good breeze carrying you towards open water.

The swells grow larger. Spray flies over the coaming and spatters coolness of your bare shoulders and legs. The wake bubbles and twists astern. Beyond the protection of the bay, the wind strengthens. The tiller trembles under your clenched fingers and palm. The main yanks as the craft springs forward like a caged bird, set free.

On your sail, watching the shore recede in the distance. The only sounds are the creaks of mast and ropes, the foaming curl of cleft water at the bow, the cry of terns diving for minnows. Alone on the big big sea. Almost alone. Other sails, fishing boats, a ferry making for the islands are also there.

Time to head for shore with a fair wind. Come about carefully; don't want to jibe. Let out the mainsheet now, pull up the centerboard, and let her run before the wind. She fairly flies, planing. The houses on the beach grow larger as your boat approaches the entrance to the harbor. Soon the waters quiet as you glide, more slowly now, down the bay toward your patiently bobbing dink, swinging with the tide.

Let it slip behind as you drop the centerboard again; then immediately come up into the wind, letting your momentum carry you back to the mooring. Let go the mainsheet, grab for the painter and make fast. Drop the sail, release the tiller, ship the rudder, unthread the billowing nylon from mast and boom, cramming it into the duffle as it comes free. Lash your boom, up centerboard, secure your lines and coil them neatly. All shipshape and ready for another day's sail? That's midsummer.

From the terrace as the shadows lengthen come sounds of laughter and the murmur of conversation rises, falls; friend greets friend, meets someone new, shares a joke, a reminiscence, asks about children, grandchildren, parents, mutual acquaintances. While you prepare cool refreshment, arrange tiny crackers, cheeses on waiting trays, add the dip, the sauce, spread boiled shrimp artfully, you rejoice in bringing together these friends.

Later, after a good meal, you join a crowd lined up outside the theatre, present your tickets and find your seats. The lights dim. The play begins. Music swells, hilarity rocks the rafters, the actors seem to become yourself and those you love; the mood carries through intermission. And once again you're one with those on the stage and the rest of the audience, caught in the story-web, enriched by shared experience.

The final curtain falls, applause rolls to the footlights, and the players beam joyously, taking their bows. You make your way home with a refrain singing in your head and a line repeating itself, bouncing around your brain like a ping pong ball. A good show. And that's midsummer, too.

Heat, humidity, not a leaf stirring in the green canopy overhead, it's too hot outside. Cooler here on the porch where a fan moves the sultry air, humming softly without disturbing your reading. A rustle in the blueberry bush, and your eyes move from page to swaying branch. There, busy among the twiglets, is a bright-eyed cinnamon-colored rodent, it's dark-striped furriness acrobatic and agile. A chipmunk harvesting blueberries. A chipmunk.

In the garden, peas are ready, lettuce is gone, peppers are blossoming, radishes have been pulled, cucumbers are starting their sprawl, pole beans are clambering skyward, and the tomatoes! Those spindly little transplants you set out a month or so ago are now waist-high, still in bloom, and the earliest blossoms have become green globes. Each morning and each evening you're out among your plants. Pull a weed here, pinch a sucker there, fertilize, water if it doesn't rain, mulch, watch for tomato worms, and mostly admire the vitality of your tomato plants.

Think of it! A single tomato seed produces this rampant foliage, this burgeoning crop that in a week, two at most, will be ready for first picking. The rich ruby succulent fruit will mature about the same time the first cuke is ready for taking. You can, with but slight difficulty, recall the flavor of garden-fresh home-grown tomatoes and cucumbers. You can, with greater difficulty, wait. But only just.

Midsummer is many things; most are good and fulfilling things. Little wonder people yearn for summer, hate to see it end no matter how perfect the autumn that follows, wish away the gentle spring to hurry in the summer.

Ah, midsummer . . .