

The Monkey Bar by M. Shafik Gabr

The weather, the ocean, and the sound of the waves brought a unique and sweet relaxation. Dinner followed and was a real treat. The Dover sole was magnificent, and the five-layered chocolate dessert made me feel beyond happy.

As I signed the bill ... I felt good ... I left a generous tip as the service was impeccable, with true attention and a smile.

As I headed to my room to prepare for tomorrow, I decided to stop in at the Monkey Bar. It was busy and crowded, very different from when I stopped by there before dinner when it was quiet and serene.

Now it was a zoo and reminded me of the world we find ourselves in today. On one side, a group of approximately fifteen individuals were shouting rather than speaking. All the men on one side were drinking heavily, as one beer came after the other like a train. On the other side, women were gossiping and competing to control the narrative. It was irritating the tables next to them. The manager of the bar came to have them lower their voices but to no avail. It reminded me of the UN Secretary-General demanding a ceasefire in Gaza and getting nowhere.

Two men entered and were setting up their musical instruments, struggling to bypass the busy tables. At one table, four ladies were literally screaming some form of weird laughter. They were joined by a mother with a child who must have been no older than two. The noise was so loud that the baby's eyes were bulging.

With the exception of one quiet table of three, the other six tables and the patrons at the bar were competing in shouting matches and acting like fools. One person at the bar started shoving another, and the manager panicked and moved toward them. When they saw him approaching, they smiled and started clapping.

I witnessed the poor musicians, who had successfully set up their instruments, as they tried very hard to shout their lyrics, but it was a tough competition with the noise in the background.

I wondered and witnessed—it was like the world of today. The violence was transposed into screaming as three women were literally screaming above the singer's voice, directing their gestures and voices towards a man who was smiling and drinking as if he could decipher what was being said.

Wine was being poured left and right as patrons started to show signs of drunkenness. The singers reminded me of the Russian-Ukraine war and the genocide in Gaza as they sang, "...Because we are living in a world of fools, breaking us down." The other tables were loud, and the singers were attempting to regain a quiet audience to no avail. The noise was stunning to me but not to all the persons in the room, including the singers and other patrons. It reminded me of the immense killing in Europe, the Middle East, and Africa without any serious leadership batting an eye. While in the movie "Planet of the Apes," Caesar says, "Ape not kill ape," we humans continue to watch humans kill humans and do nothing.

There was some soft clapping by a table of four that made the singers crack a small smile, but the screamers were winning hands down.

The words of Simon and Garfunkel's "Sounds of Silence" were drowned in a total world of noise. So sad, I felt. But why should I be surprised? That was the state of this leaderless world. I spoke to the server and asked why patrons would come to the Monkey Bar to scream, laugh in a crazy manner, and compete in shouting at each other instead of listening to the beautiful songs and great words.

He looked at me and said, "You are right, but this is the Monkey Bar, and all those here are monkeys, and you are the odd person out."

I left the Monkey Bar and walked slowly to my room to prepare for tomorrow, so sad at the state of the world.