

LOSING VENICE, A NOVEL

BY SCOTT STAVROU

MEDIA KIT

ROGUE DOG PRESS



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LOSING VENICE

Surrounded by beauty, can you learn to live beautifully?

Travel marketing executive Mark Vandermar leads an itinerant life. Elsewhere is where he calls home, so it's no surprise when he's called to Venice to help craft the Venice Tourism Council's new campaign to attract skittish post-September 11 American tourism dollars.

As he gets to know Venice's colorful campos and canals, his relationship with Venice grows more complex, and its fascinating history both influences him and becomes a mirror reflecting the turbulence of the early twenty first century. In addition to Venice, Mark's journey of discovery unfolds among some of Europe's most captivating locales, including Prague, Budapest, and the Greek islands, where he encounters a cast of compelling characters that lead to life-changing consequences.

The geography of his new life is marked with discovery and reinvention, but what he really seeks is to learn to live beautifully, to find a place and a person, to call home.

Like the finest expatriate novels, Losing Venice is as richly textured as its fabled locales and dives deeply into the possibilities, perils, and pleasures of learning how not to be lost.

"This funny, poignant account of failure that turns to success is beautiful...it captures a moment and place that, though in the recent past, seems as distant as Hemingway's Paris—and as important. A reminder of what the business of literature, of loving is. All lovers of the art of writing and romance should read it. A truly wonderful novel."

George Crane, best-selling author of *Bones of the Master* and *Beyond the House of the False Lama*

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SCOTT STAVROU

Scott Stavrou was born in Chicago then raised in San Diego and Las Vegas before graduating from Georgetown University. Since then, he has lived and worked as a writer in San Francisco, Venice, Prague, and the Greek islands where he and his wife presently call home.

Stavrou has written fiction and non-fiction for numerous publications in the U.S. and Europe. He is the author of the award-winning travel book *Wasted Away*, the original stage play *Picketing with Prometheus*, as well as two original screenplays. He is a long time member of the International Food, Wine & Travel Writers Association and the Georgetown Entertainment & Media Alliance.

He was awarded the PEN America International Hemingway Writing Award for his short fiction "Across the Suburbs"

In addition to writing, he serves on the Board of Advisors for Write Away Europe, where he is also a Creative Writing Instructor.

Published in *GQ*, *USA Today*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *International Herald Tribune*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Huffington Post*, *LA Weekly*, *Wine X*, *Hemispheres*, *Orange County Register*, *Venice Today*, *Prague Post*, *Olive Oil Times*, *Cigar Aficionado*, *Drink Magazine*, *Munich Found*, *Spain for Visitors*, *Georgetown Voice*, *Trips Magazine*, *Concierge*, *Frommer's* and more.



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BEHIND THE BOOK

In an itinerant life of crossing countries and continents, I have loved many places. Just not for long. The song of elsewhere was always stronger. But special places and experiences become not only a part of our past, but a part of ourselves. Things we carry with us forever. Living in Venice was one of those.

In all my moves, the main constant has been books. When you're always going to new places where you won't know anyone, you develop a hearty affection for the wonders and the reliability of the written word. Things like cars and furniture were easy to let go; books demanded a return on the fidelity they had given me. I've crossed back and forth over the oceans with fewer clothes than books. And though the weight of the pages was greater than a few pairs of pants, so were the rewards.

My itinerant lifestyle developed a certain flavor, an accidental serendipity that found me living in the right places at the right time: Las Vegas when it was the fastest growing city in the U.S., Prague when it was freshly opened to the West in the early '90s, San Francisco during the dot com boom.

While most everyone else I knew was upwardly mobile, I was content just being mobile. I fine tuned my timing, learning to stay just the right amount of time in any one place. Long enough to get to know it and acquire some intimate awareness and some people that might be sorry at my departure. But not long enough for them or I to grow too accustomed to one another. Then a quick visit back to somewhere where they might be happy at my return, however briefly, while I mustered up the funds and the restlessness to go again.

When the routine developed a bit too much familiarity, I began to seek out places at the wrong time. Venice in the winter is one of those. A love affair in Venice with summer is something you can't help, but it brings with it the realization that others, many others, have done and seen and felt what you're seeing. But get there in winter when the Piazza is still quiet, when there are less tourists and Texas than there are flood ramps and pigeons, when you can still get a table easily at Harry's, when the small streets and canals are not so busy and you see more gondoliers in the bars than on their black boats, and you start to realize you're having a whole different type of affair. Something a bit special, something that seems secretive, more seductive and maybe even unique. Maybe something profound you can't get over. And then there comes a time when you pack up your books and depart for less enchanted shores.

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BEHIND THE BOOK

You find yourself reading everything that has been written about Venice, like some sort of besotted lover clinging to old love letters. And if you read and write incessantly, at first you try and fight the urge to write about someplace like Venice, somewhere so well chronicled in poetic prose. Then comes a time when you pine for your Venetian life and, against your better judgment, you give in and write your own love letter, come what may. Maybe you truly had seen some things different than anyone else had or maybe the allure of Venice, La Serenissima, is boundless enough to sustain everyone's affection, to make everyone's story true. Perhaps there were others that were thirsty, too, for a taste of how sweet and magical life could be, others who wanted to escape to a life more beautiful.

But in fiction and in fact, Venice is so sublime that you find yourself in a predicament. You can fall in love with Venice, sure, and you can even make someone else do so if you string together the right words. But then what? Where and why would one leave Venice if they didn't have to? Where would they go? Fortunately, I had someplace in mind – a spot I had visited while doing some travel writing some years before and which had stayed with me, a spot that seemed almost the embodiment of perfection. A little nook in the Saronic Gulf that was at once right at the very center of things and deliciously far away from things. That type of place.

Indeed, why leave Venice? Maybe loving Venice rings with the dull throb of cliché but then clichés become so because so many people understand the feeling. If you loved Venice, what would it take to make you leave and where would you go, and why? I guess that's the story, really, and somehow writing about it makes you feel closer to it even as time and distance draw you ineluctably farther away.

Even as you write about some of the tragedy inherent in life, you find that you get to like mankind a little more, you feel a growing bond of appreciation for the people who saw something in those little shallows in the upper reaches of the Adriatic and decided that really those murky mud banks might like to be something great. And they could be.

If people could do that, there, then what couldn't they do?

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DETAILS & CONTACT LINKS

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