



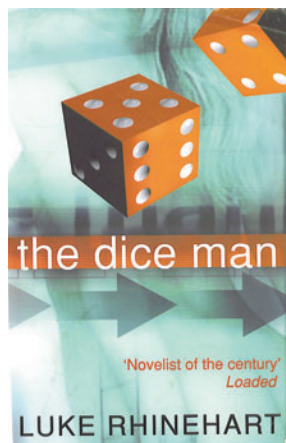
The Dice Man, Deià, and Chance

By Luke Rhinehart

The *Dice Man* is a novel that in most all possible universes would never have been finished and never published. But Chance, ever busy, created a series of accidents in 1969-70 in Deià, Mallorca, that allowed a 222 page manuscript written over four years by an un-ambitious, unpublished 37-year-old college professor to be discovered and finished.

A young Englishman starting a new publishing house discovered the book in a Deià café and signed me up to publish it. I was thus encouraged to complete the final 500 manuscript pages in less than six months—after averaging only 50 pages a year over the previous four years.

As a result, Deià in that year has always been for me the most special place in the world. Its beauty, ambiance, and gathering of interesting artists and writers made it special in the summer and fall of 1969 even before my barely begun manuscript was unexpectedly discovered. The events that brought me and my family to Deià and then led to my life being transformed from college professor to novelist are worth describing.



Deià, a small coastal village on the northern ridge of the Spanish island of Mallorca, is known for its literary and musical residents.



Jay Linthicum and Luke at Sa Fonda Cafe, Deià, 1969

It began when a friend at the college I was teaching at in 1969 decided to create a study abroad program in Deià. He asked me to be his Associate Director (after another friend had decided he couldn't do it). The Mediterranean Institute enrolled twenty-five students from all over the U.S. to study art and literature. We invited some fine guest writers to stay and give lectures, including the English novelists Colin Wilson and Anthony Burgess and the American poet Galway Kinnell.

And Robert Graves, then still living, was also to grace us with a brief talk.

In the summer of 1969 I and my wife and three sons arrived two months before the Institute was to open. I became friends with Jay Linthicum, a young poet and novelist (then 23) who was fiercely ambitious. He and I soon began collaborating on a pot-boiler novel about sex and drugs in Deià. Jay persuaded me to let him read the manuscript pages of *The Dice Man*. He was the first

person to see the novel other than my wife. How Jay felt about the book I no longer recall, but clearly he neither panned it nor raved about it or I would remember.

In any case, in early November 1969, when Jay was sitting in the Sa Fonda Cafe, an Englishman, Mike Franklin, who had just created a publishing company with a rock impresario named Talmy, happened to be passing through the village. Jay and he met at the café and began talking. Jay

eagerly mentioned the fact that he had a finished novel and that he and I were collaborating on a potboiler that would make us all a lot of money. As an aside he mentioned that I was also working on a novel. Mike Franklin asked us to give him the manuscripts of all three books.

Weeks later Mike wired us (ah, the quaint old days of Western Union) that he'd like to publish both the potboiler and *The Dice Man*. He suggested modest advances for each of the two

THE DICE MAN, DEIÀ, AND CHANCE



Colin Wilson, center, with Institute students



Luke's family picnics in mountains above Soller.



Luke's sons Corby and Powers on Catina off French Riviera

books. To our surprise, he offered more for *The Dice Man*, an intellectual book that had no commercial potential (in our eyes) than for our potboiler, which was so au courant we were convinced it would become a bestseller.

So Chance had intervened to get my book first a reader, and then a publisher. Next it intervened to give me the time actually to write the book.

In 1969 the hippie revolution was at full tilt. Bob De Maria found that smoking pot made him feel he was about to have a heart attack. He much preferred alcohol. As Director of the Institute he felt he had to be strongly anti-dope. I would sometimes smoke dope with a few of the students. As a result, he asked me to take an early sabbatical—in the spring of 1970 rather than later that fall as I had planned. He would find someone else to teach my courses. I happily agreed.

So in the winter-spring of 1970 I and my family continued living in Deià and I began finishing *The Dice Man*. At the same time I continued work with Jay on the potboiler. Each morning I would go merrily up to my study in Ses Figueres, (the name of the house in Deià we were renting), work for three or four hours on *THE DICE MAN*, take a break, and then work for a couple of hours on my sections of the potboiler. Sometimes I would let the dice decide which book I should work on or which new scene I should write. By late May I had finished *The Dice Man* and my half of the potboiler, and both completed books were sent off to Mike Franklin in London.

To my surprise Mike announced that he found that *The Dice Man*, although needing a bit of work, pretty good. (Later he would refer to it as a "near masterpiece"), but about the potboiler he had some concerns. My style was simple and direct and I took a comic look at everything. Jay's style was convoluted and poetic and he took a serious look at everything. Our collaboration was probably doomed from the

beginning, but we were too inexperienced to know it.

Then Chance intervened again. I had decided to invest my lifetime savings (\$11,000) in a sailboat to cruise the Mediterranean. I bought a 30-ft. Catalac catamaran lurking in Antibes and I and my family boarded in June to begin cruising a bit before sailing onto Mallorca in time to meet Mike Franklin in late July to discuss possible revisions of *The Dice Man*. The day before we left to go to the boat Lloyds of London wrote me a note to ask if I wanted to continue the insurance on the boat of the previous owner. Being the author of a new novel that celebrated chance, I felt it was my duty never to insure anything.. At the last second, however, I decided that perhaps just this once, being the first time I would have sailed a boat in the open sea, I would go against all my principles and get a little insurance. So I dashed off a note to Lloyds simply saying "yes."

We cruised from Antibes along the French Riviera to Genoa and then south down to Pisa and then across to Corsica and Sardinia. On the day we were to set sail in clear calm weather for Mallorca, my wife had an overwhelming premonition of disaster. She first tried to see if she and our two youngest boys could get a boat or plane to Mallorca, but when that proved impossible she (who hadn't been inside a church in several years) went into a little seaside chapel to pray.



Luke at the helm of the doomed Catina



Ses Figueres, the house in Deià where Luke penned *The Dice Man*

Eight hours out from Sardenia, motoring all the time in the dead calm waters, our engine broke down. I couldn't fix it.

But then the wind arrived! How wonderful! We began sailing. The wind became fresh. We sailed faster! The wind became stronger. We reduced sail. The wind became a gale. We lowered all sails. The wind became a huge gale, a mistral blowing down off the Alps in fine sunny weather, waves ten feet high and breaking on top.

The morning after the storm had first hit us we awoke to find one of our two rudders sheered off. Later that second day, we lost our rubber dinghy, our only life raft, which I had rigged as a sea anchor to hold the catamaran's bow into the wind and seas. We lost our main halyard up to the top of the mast. We were thus without power, without steering ability, without a life raft and no way to raise a sail unless someone climbed to the top of the mast in a gale.

The storm increased. We knew that if our catamaran capsized that we would all die. For three nights I and the boys lay in our bunks and heard the huge rollers hissing towards us and then crashing into the side of the boat, the boat tipping, tipping . . . All three nights, although there was nothing she could actually do, my wife stayed on deck, willing the waves not capsize us. At some point I apologized to her for killing her and the boys, and said I would never make the same mistake again.

On the fourth day, we saw a freighter in the distance and shot off flares to attract its attention. We were rescued. The Scottish

freighter had been blown 200 miles off course by the gale and thus appeared to rescue us. We were less than forty miles from a deserted section of the African coast where within ten hours our little boat would have been dashed to pieces on the rocks .

I wanted to stay and try to save the ship, but the Scottish Captain knew a fool when he saw one and pretty much ordered me to stay aboard his freighter while he tried to tow our boat to his next port of call. I asked him where his next port of call was, and he said Hong Kong.

Actually it was O Porto, Portugal. He tried to get a message to Deià to tell people that we were alive and well but no one in Deià ever got the message (primitive times back then, no cell phones, etc.).

Mike Franklin arrived in Deià to meet the author of the novel that he thought was quite promising and found I hadn't arrived as expected. Nothing but the huge waves crashing all along the coast. My brother and his family arrived to vacation with us and found we were nowhere to be found, only huge waves crashing along the coast. Mike began to wonder if *The Dice Man* would sell better if he could promote the story of the author's tragic death.

Eventually we arrived back in Deià, our progress slowed by our having lost our money and passports when the catamaran sank within a half hour of being towed by the freighter. Mike had long since gone back to London. And with him any chance of our working together to make the novel better. (I did revise it a tiny bit in August but without much input from the publisher).

With the loss of our catamaran, we were essentially penniless. I checked the piles of mail awaiting us and found nothing from Lloyds. Penniless. The next day I checked the mail again. A letter from Lloyds. They wrote that they would be happy to insure the boat and would I please send the first year's premium of one hundred and ninety pounds. I

sent off a check for one hundred and ninety pounds. Ten days later I wrote them to sadly report that the boat had been lost in the Mediterranean and would they please send me a check for seven thousand pounds.

Within a couple of months Mike sold American rights for a large advance and I was able to retire from teaching, and, after a year back in the States, Mike sold film rights to Paramount, who had signed up Academy Award winning director John Schlesinger to direct. (Forty years later and a dozen screenplays later, still no film). In any case, such temporary wealth let us return to Deià in 1972-1973.

There is one footnote to this long story. What happened to the pot boiler? When *The Dice Man* turned out to make me some money and Mike Franklyn said he really didn't want to publish the potboiler, I decided to share some of my success with the man who Chance had used to get me to finish the book. I bought all of Jay's rights to the potboiler so I could make a novel of my own out of it.

Once in the seventies and once in the eighties I took it up and

tried to create a coherent and amusing story out of the disparate stuff Jay and I had wrought, eventually throwing out ninety-nine per cent of what Jay had written, not because it was bad but because his sensibility was so different from mine. However, I was still not creating a novel I was happy with. Then in 2004 my wife urged me to try again: the book contained so many delightful comic scenes written literally at the same time as and in the same manner as scenes in *The Dice Man*. So I revised it yet again and this time was pleased with the result: *Naked Before The World: A Lovely Pornographic Love Story*.

And that comic novel, set entirely on Mallorca and mostly Deià, about an Institute and its students and professors and hippies, is now being made into a film, based on my screenplay. So we hope again, within the next six months, to return for the filming to our lovely Deià.

But as the novelist Thomas Wolfe so famously said: "You can't go home again." Deià will never again be what it was for me in that one year of 1969-70: the place where a writer, thanks to many accidents, was born.

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Naked Before the World

1969. Sex. Drugs. Rock 'n' Roll. And a Whole Lotta Love.

A darkly comic and very sexy love story, the movie *Naked Before The World* is based on the novel by Luke Rhinehart, author of the international bestseller *The Dice Man*.

The original pot boiler started with Jay Linthicum eventually becomes a comic novel, *Naked Before The World*, and is now being made into a film starring Kristanna Loken.