

Literary-commercial crossover fiction

95,500 words

OAHS

By

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This story transpired during the biennium of Covid-19

As I, in the midst of pursuing OAHS, looked back on my soul-searching journey

But this is not a Covid-19 story, nor is it a story about Covid-19.

Prelude, not Prologue

Chapter 1

THE STORY OF MY JOURNEY UNFOLDS IN THAILAND.

Ch-Whooooosh. The taxi's rear door burst open, albeit only with a sliver of sound; I did not discern what it was but my senses perceived 'ch-whooooosh': a disturbance of energy in the air.

'Get the FUCK out of there!' he yelled at Hannah, my girlfriend.

He was a man who she and I both recognized. The man did not yell at *us* – only at *her*.

I saw pain, fury and vengeance in his eyes.

Shuuush: she fixed her skirt.

His arm grabbed her hand. The man metamorphosed into a giant vacuum cleaner.

Shuuush: he sucked her out of the backseat of the taxi.

'You stay there,' he told me, pointing a finger at me – he did not yell, bark or scream at me still.

Whump. The man slammed the door in my face.

I wish I could tell you that this theater of drama played out at lightning speed ergo I did not have the slightest chance of merely reacting to it, but no, that was not how it happened. I had enough time, to react, but I was too bewildered, dazed and confused to string together even a thought, forget reacting.

Stup, stup, stup. I heard the sound of Hannah's feet getting dragged away to the inside of the house by the man. I watched her from behind the taxi's rear door window.

'Finally.' I lay my head against the back of the seat. 'The man caught us red-handed.' *I put together a thought.*

Did we indeed get caught *red-handed* though? Both yes and no. Yes, Hannah and I were kissing in the backseat when the taxi's rear door burst open but no, at that specific point in time we were not having sex. She had her underwear on at that point.

A few minutes earlier she had not had her underwear on, exposing not only *her big tits* in full view of her audience but even her lower body. She had her panties pulled down.

Hannah: 'Hm, hm, hm.'

Hannah: 'Hmm, hmm, hmm.'

I was giving her oral pleasure. From which she was indeed receiving immense pleasure. No, no, I am not exaggerating.

'Huf, huf, huf.' My heart was racing. I only realized that after the man shut the entrance door of Hannah's house.

I sat in the backseat of the taxi still. I had yet to move an inch.

Pitch black outside. Ya-mi ga yo-ru wo shi-ha-i-shi-ta – darkness ruled the night. Then:

'Hannah and I got *caught in the act*' – it hit me.

Getting caught red-handed suggests that we had just copulated or were copulating right at that specific point in time. We had not, not in the backseat of the taxi, we were not, not at that point anyway, but getting caught in the act suggests that we were in the process of committing a crime if we define that having an extramarital affair, i.e., a married person's having sex with someone other than their spouse, is a crime. According to experts, kissing is a process, not an act, but in this case the act was indeed 'kissing' and it was also a process. We might have looked like we just had or were going to start copulating within the next three minutes but at that specific point in time, we had not, we were not.

More than a few minutes passed by.

'Tesco Lotus, Pathum Thani,' I said to the Thai taxi driver – Tesco Lotus in Pathum Thani was a landmark in the province and I lived in an apartment nearby.

The taxi driver pressed the accelerator, gently.

The car moved.

We drove off.

We hit the road.

The sun had yet to rise to light the sky at four-thirty in the morning when we left the Chaiyaphum Village, a gated community, but as the taxi approached halfway between Hannah's house and my apartment I saw the dark blue sky. I could not see the sunrise yet but the day was breaking out. Out of the blue:

'U-turn, U-turn!' I said to the taxi driver, with a hand gesture, so that he could understand me.

'What?' he protested.

'U-turn!' I said. More protests from the taxi driver followed.

Me, only at that point: ‘The man might be threatening Hannah. No, forget threatening her. He might be beating her up at this very minute!’

Let me make a correction. Yes, I was indeed too stunned to react when Hannah was dragged out of the taxi by the man, but I also acted ... No, not *acted*. I *was* a coward. I knew right then that she could be in danger but I did not do a thing.

Ch-Whooooosh. Her husband was livid. *The man* that I referred to as a giant vacuum cleaner earlier that sucked her out of the taxi was her husband from some country called ‘the United States of America’.

Ch-Whooooosh. Up until this day he’d never caught us incisively in the middle of having intercourse, in person. He must have now realized that was what we had been doing for the last several weeks.

Let me make another correction. I do not like using profanities. When I speak in English I never use any profanities. We were having oral sex in the backseat of the taxi while the taxi driver was still there in the driver’s seat and that was just a natural extension of what we had been doing so you can understand only one word can describe what we had been doing for the last several weeks: FUCKING. Well, we were also making love, I suppose.

The taxi approached the Chaiyaphum Village in Nonthaburi for the second time that day – Nonthaburi is Pathum Thani’s neighboring province.

Dokku. *Pounding*. Dokku dokku. *Pumping*. Dokku dokku dokku. *My heart was in my mouth, ears, nostrils and eyes*. Kiiiii. *Acid pierced*. Kiiiii kiiiii. *And burned my stomach*. Kiiiii kiiiii kiiiii. *I crunched and rubbed my abs to suppress the pain*.

The taxi passed the gated community’s gate. I directed the driver to her residence – despite that he probably remembered pretty clearly what was taking place only three-quarters of

an hour ago in the backseat of his vehicle and what took place subsequently, or precisely because he was paying too close attention to a certain carefree couple in the backseat, he could not remember exactly where the house was. I of course knew where because not only had I been there but Hannah and I had sex so many times in that house – That sounds better, right? Sex?

Her residence stood at the outer edge of the gated community.

‘There, there, there,’ I said to the taxi driver, pointing at the white house. At around five in the morning, the color of the sky turned blue.

As the taxi approached *the* house her husband opened the front door. He who just arrived there by taxi, which happened to be of exactly the same model and same color as the one that was parked right outside of the house compound only half an hour ago, could not have been anyone but me.

He took steps toward the yellow-green taxi.

I got out of the taxi.

‘What are you doing here?’ Brody’s voice fumed in anger. He might have said, ‘What the fuck are you doing here?’ but I could barely hear the f-word, to my surprise.

‘Is she okay?’ I asked.

‘Is she okay? None of your fucking business!’ he replied – yep, this time he said ‘fuck’.

That was when:

She showed her face from behind him.

‘I’m okay,’ said Hannah, calmly, to my surprise.

Phew, sighed I in my heart. She did indeed look okay albeit I could see that she was feeling a bit worn out, understandably.

Teaching English, et cetera in Thailand

Chapter 6

“I don’t know what it is about Thailand, but it seems to destroy people. Sucks the life out of them. I don’t know if it’s the climate or the bars, but there’s something that seems to magnify the faults of people who go there.” – ALISTAIR, ‘Private Dancer’ by Stephen Leather

O.N.: But first I’d like to share with you the readers my account of what it is like to be an expat foreign language teacher in Thailand. Because that’s how life started for me in Amazing Thailand.

‘LEO, neung kuad.’ Ron gave an order: ‘[Bring me] A bottle of LEO [beer].’

Ron took a swig of LEO. It was lunchtime. He and I were looking over the Chao Phraya River from the table set up right by the waterfront in a pretty nice Thai restaurant; it was not exactly a HiSo restaurant though.

I was not drinking beer. We were *supposed to be* schoolteachers. We were still going back to Pathum Kallayanee Secondary School, a.k.a. *the Professional Asshole Training School* in Pathum Thani province to teach afternoon classes. The teacher should not show up in the

classroom, permeating the smell of beer, right? In any country? Including Thailand? – *O.N.:*
Both Pathum Thani and Nonthaburi are neighboring provinces of Bangkok while both provinces are part of the Bangkok Metropolitan Region.

Ron drove his ISUZU truck to get us there. He'd be driving under the influence when we headed back to the school. He'd be committing another offense right there but showing up at high school inebriated would be worse, right? Or not?

This man Ron from Leeds, England resembled a bulldog but not like Winston Churchill, the British Bulldog. Winston Churchill was a handsome young man – at least before the hair started receding from his forehead and his hairline began high up on the crown of the head and beyond. Churchill in the military dress uniform of the Fourth Queen's Own Hussars at Aldershot in 1895 at the age of twenty-one was indeed a young proud veritable aristocrat. Churchill transformed himself into an aged aristocrat bulldog.

How about Ron? I'd venture to guess Ron in his youth was only a slimmer version of Ron today: a slimmer bulldog. Ron transformed himself into a rough and gruff heavyweight bulldog in his mid-40s. He was six foot three/one hundred ninety centimeters tall and weighed like three hundred ten pounds/one hundred forty kilograms. Maybe he counted on that. In the eyes of the average Thai person Ron was colossal, a Goliath. At least in Thailand no one would come up to him and tell him: 'Hey, Ron, you smell like beer, you need to go home now.' He waited until lunchtime to drink his first beer of the day though.

Ron showed up at work once, hammered – the day after Yorkshire Day. Blood vessels on his sclera were dilated. His Caucasian white skin was whiter than white. Cold oily sweat seeped out from his eccrine glands. He arrived at the school. He only drove, he did not come to Pathum Kallayanee, walking but his breathing was heavy, labored: Hphuuuff, hphuuuff, hphuuuff – his

lethargic lungs huffed, puffed and heaved. Most days he showed up at the school more or less sober though.

In case you did not know like me, Leeds lies within West Yorkshire County, part of Yorkshire, which is a historic county in Northern England. Which was why he celebrated Yorkshire Day.

There was this guy Bruce D. who I used to work with, alongside Ron. Bruce D. was an esteemed NES, Native English Speaker teacher, standing equal to Ron. He did not wait until lunchtime.

Bruce D. personified the typical English teacher in Amazing Thailand. He'd never attended college. He only had a charlatan degree from the Western University of Washington – the name of the university sounds falsified because no such university exists. He'd never held a real job in his life. He was absolutely incapable. Bruce D. was a certified, bona fide, genuine alcoholic.

Alcoholism is a disease; it's not a crime to have that disease, akin to having any other disease is not a crime: malaria, dengue fever, yellow fever, et cetera.

Hold on a second. You do not *develop* these tropical diseases, do you? You *catch* these particular diseases, right? So we need to rethink alcoholism. All the same even if your health is your responsibility, some people are more genetically inclined to develop alcoholism. So does that imply that you do not voluntarily develop alcoholism, akin to how you do not voluntarily develop tropical diseases? So the process of developing alcoholism is all involuntary? So Bruce D. was destined to become an alcoholic no matter what? So Bruce D. should not be blamed for having become an alcoholic? Well, maybe.

BUT he was a schoolteacher. He very much made the choice to come to Thailand and become a schoolteacher, didn't he? He cannot argue that he was genetically inclined to become an alcoholic English teacher in Thailand, can he?

Bruce D. should not be showing up at work, i.e., showing up at the school with a blood alcohol level higher than 0.08, should he? *Be that as it may* – reminiscent of Bukowski – was his philosophy. Beer was his breakfast, and lunch and dinner and a late-night snack. He lived in a permanent state of inebriation. *How did he teach? What did he teach?* You might wonder and ask me.

'LET'S GOooo ...,' Bruce D. hollered at his students, with full enthusiasm of his intoxicated soul, '... play SOCCERrRrRr!' – his voice slurred. There were only five of them in the classroom though. Bruce D. had no idea where the rest of them – over thirty students – were. Pathum Kallayanee was an embodiment of freedom. The school resembled an open prison.

But there were only five students in the classroom? You might wonder and ask me. *You tell me it was a rubbish public school but five out of forty students? That's too few.* You might say. Bruce D. showed up *at least* fifteen minutes late. That was *partly* why. Other inmates decided that their prison guard was not going to show up that day. Anon the free souls disappeared into the abyss, wherever that was.

O.N.: Well ..., their behavior, from the viewpoint of scientific observation, simulated more of disappearing into a black hole.

There were days fewer than five inmates showed up in *my class*, out of the total headcount of forty.

O.N.: Inmates did indeed disappear as if they crossed the event horizon. No one could find them. The black hole itself disappears one day, evaporates. Upon evaporation the black hole

emits radiation. Inmates, mirroring radiation on black hole evaporation, popped up at random places at random times thereafter in the Space called Pathum Kallayanee. Upon entering the black hole all the information converges to nothingness. Indeed when disappeared inmates reappeared their memory was a clean slate. Not a single equation was stored in their memory. Not a single event in history. Not a word of English. Certainly not a word of Japanese.

I reached my classroom on time. If not, I got there way ahead of time, more often than not thirty minutes before the class started. I am not bragging or claiming that I was a model teacher. I was far from it but being punctual was and still is in my genes.

I even arrived at work, i.e., Pathum Kallayanee Secondary School on time on the day that Hannah and I got caught in flagrante delicto. The man named Brody found out about us. The subsequent drama took place. I went home. I took a shower. I got dressed. I came to work. A living dead stood in front of the students as they gathered together for the morning assembly. That was I.

O.N.: Oh, sorry, let me step back a bit. I exaggerated. Not all students vanished from the face of the earth. Some vanished, seemingly. Others stayed in school. School activities kept them busy.

Chit and his buddy Beer scurried to their teacher Connor from behind, on tiptoe, in the toilet.

Connor's eyes were closed.

He released urine.

He moaned: 'Ahhh ...' A heavenly smile appeared on his face, but only for a second.

'WOW!' Chit burst out, a million-dollar smile on his face.

‘Huaaahhh ...,’ Connor uttered a startled choking sound, perceiving the presence of a trespasser. His eyes were wide open now.

His urine missed the urinal. Pichi pichi. His golden urine hit the floor.

He cast a glance over his shoulder.

He saw Chit. His eyes did not meet his student’s. The gleeful teenager’s eyes were glued to ...

‘Check out his Dick Hair!’ Chit yelled with delight: ‘Wow, BLOND Dick Hair!’

Connor’s penis was shooting urine still. O-shi-kko, shuuuh, shuuuh. Pichi pichi.

‘FfffFuck.’ Connor, a qualified, college graduate NES teacher, put his hand on his penis. O-shi-kko, shuru shuru, shuru shuru. From which urine was dribbling out.

‘Check it, check it, check it! His dick hair is trimmed! Wow!’ hollered Beer, pointing at Connor’s handsomely clipped and snipped curly blonde pubic hair.

‘You’re an amateur! My dick is WAXED, man!’ Chit guffawed: ‘GaHa, GaHaa, GaHaaa!’

‘Fuck!’ Connor zipped up. He washed his hands without using soap – there was no soap.

‘Fuck!’ Connor left the toilet, red-faced, condemning himself in a muted voice, ‘I AM an amateur. I need to WAX it, not trim it.’

Dick Watch was the students’ favorite activity.

‘Tohk chai!’ Chit burst open the toilet partition: ‘Surprise!’ No, Connor was not in there. It was some poor kid, a Pathum Kallayanee student.

Poop Watch was another one of their favorite activities. Students dismantled, destroyed and demolished all toilet partition door locks in the entire school. This *activity* Poop Watch could

now take place anytime anywhere, except for the school principal's toilet. Which was why Connor could not hide himself inside the toilet partition in the first place.

Students set aside half of the time they spent at the school for *Dick Watch*. Half of the rest of the time for *Poop Watch*. And the rest for other activities alike. That's all they were doing: *activities*.

'Check it, check it, check it! His poop is dog-shit dark! Wow!' Beer rapped *at the poop*. He was an aspiring musician, an aspiring rapper.

'UuWaaan, uuWaaan, uuWaaan.' The poor kid got caught with his pants down, quite literally. 'UuWaaan, uuWaaan, uuWaaan.' He cried his heart out.

Tears, mucus and saliva poured out of him like a flash flood and inundated the toilet bowl. His arse was now submerged in the poop soup. He was in poop torture.

'UUWAAAN, UUWAAAN, UUWAAAN.' The sound of his cries was now heard even in the corridor. It turned, twisted and gyrated my stomach. 'La, la, la, la, la, la!' I had to cover my eyes and ears. I could not take it.

'Huaaahhh ...' I uttered a startled choking sound. My hands were wet. My own tears wetted my hands. I cried out: 'Help meeee! Help!! Help ussss!!!'

O.N.: I did not see the poop-watched kid the following semester. I pray the warden allowed him to be transferred to a minimum-security facility.

'GaHa, GaHaa, GaHaaa!' Chit and Beer rapped in unison with pure joy: 'Dog-shit, dog-shit, dog-shit ARSE!'

Anyway Bruce D. then took the five students to the school grounds. Just to clarify he was not a P.E. teacher, nor was he substituting for a P.E. teacher. He decided right there and then that

he just wanted to kick a soccer ball and run around the school grounds with high school kids. Why? Only God knew. Maybe because he was drunk? Oh, he used the word ‘soccer’. He was an American.

He woke up. The first thing he did was to go to the fridge, take out a can of LEO and have a sip – LEO is a very popular Thai beer. How did I know that? I knew not if he drank beer first or got dressed first or went to the washroom first or fondled his wife's boobs first thing in the morning. He was married, had a wife and they even had a baby daughter. It mattered not how he spent his morning. HuLEOWaaa, huLEOWaaa. Every morning the unmistakable smell of LEO spewed out of his breath.

Bruce D. was already showing signs of alcohol abuse – blackouts, hallucinations and slurred speech, to name a few – but he was not a bad-looking man. He was not overweight, another contrast to Ron the Rough and Gruff Heavyweight Bulldog. Bruce D. was pretty tall too, six foot one/one hundred eighty-five centimeters tall. He met his now-wife at a bar in Pattaya.

Bruce D. at the bar, sitting next to his future wife: ‘Auesomnnnn, auesomnnnn.’

He could no longer correctly spell ‘awesome’ at that point in his young life. She agreed to marry him. He must have looked presentable enough to her. Bruce D.’s appearance does not have any cultural or socio-economic significance but I thought it’s only fair to describe how he looked after I provided a written profile picture of Ron.

Was he this dysfunctional when he was back in the States? I think not. Say, he was cleaning toilets in a motel back in the States. That was his job, let’s say. Americans let Mexicans and other illegal immigrants handle the custodian's duties and responsibilities but let’s say that Bruce D. was a toilet cleaner. I don’t think he was able to show up at work every day, boozy, tipsy, toasty and clean toilets. They do not let you behave like that in America, do they?

‘Malaria struck me yesterday. I had a fever above 200 degrees (Fahrenheit/93 degrees Celsius)!’ Bruce D. took a day off one random week to recover from malaria.

‘Dengue fever almost killed me. I must have gotten it from a snake bite. Yeah, right in front of my apartment! King Cobra bit me!’ He took another day off the next week to heal his wound. King Cobra bit off a chunk of meat from his leg.

He took yet another day off the following week. Bruce D.: ‘I got yellow fever, in Thailand, this weekend [which was a long weekend, during which he said he meditated in Ao Mai Ngam, Ko Surin Nuea, the remotest jungle in Indochina]! Can you believe it? I DIED, my heart STOPPED BEATING for twenty-four hours! But I was RESURRECTED! See [pointing a finger at himself]! I became a BUDDHA, a KRISHNA! I became a JESUS CHRIST!!!’

O.N.: I'll come back to the subject of 'Bad Teachers in Thailand' ere long. Bruce D. was far from the worst teacher that I'd ever had the honor and privilege to meet in Amazing Thailand.

I had yet to start performing Urdhva Dhanurasana/Bridge in the little space available in my studio apartment on the sixth floor of Rangsit Habitat. Handstand was beyond my wildest dream.

Chapter 8

IT TURNED OUT THAT WAS HOW I LEFT THE PLACE FOREVER

‘DEAD, DEAd, DEAd, Dead, dead.’ DEAD echoed in my auditory cortex. ‘H e l p ...,’ I wanted to say but making an attempt at moving my lips to spell ‘H E L P’ depleted all my energy.

Bam. *Bombs*. BABam. *Went Off*. BABABam. *Inside*. BABABABAM. *My Skull*.

‘Arghhhh!!!’ My head was a volcano now, ready to erupt. ‘Help meeee!!!’ The volcano erupted. ‘Arghhhh!!!’ Fountains of lava spurted up into the air. ‘Arghhhh!!!’ My mouth was wide open, in the shape of *Scream* but the voice did not come out.

I mouthed to myself: ‘Lie down, Lie Down!’ I did.

Correction: I crashed into bed – the sun was yet to set.

‘Oh, what time ... is ... it ... now?’ I asked myself, in a frail and hoarse voice. I could produce a voice. I spoke one sentence. That much energy was restored in my body, but no more.

‘I must have slept more than a couple of hours’ [in silence]. My room was dark. The sun had set already.

I went back to bed.

I went back to sleep.

‘Oh, what time is it now?’ It was noon the next day. ‘I must have slept more than half a day.’

I did not want to get out of bed but the hunger struck me. ‘I haven’t had anything to eat for the last twenty-four hours.’ The last meal I had was the lunch I had the day before.

‘An nii?’ Translation: ‘This one?’ The lady asked me if that was what I wanted. I pointed at the pre-peeled pomelo with my finger and nodded in confirmation: Yes, that is what I want. I bought it at the market right next to my apartment building and went back to my room. Pre-peeled pomelo cost me fifty baht.

I ate pomelo and drank orange juice that I bought at the same market. I went back to bed.

I woke up the next day. I felt okay at last. Only then I realized Pathum Kallayanee Secondary School drove me to the verge of a psychotic breakdown. I remembered a line from the bible [1 Samuel 20:3]: ‘I was only one step away from death.’ The stupendous stress accumulated over the last ten months turned into multiple hydrogen bomb explosions inside my skull. BAM, baBAM, babaBAM: the explosions decimated half of my brain cells. ‘Urghhhh!’ That was when my survival instinct kicked in; I swore an oath to myself: ‘I WILL NOT plunge into clinical and official insanity!’ I REFUSED to lose myself. ‘Stay, stay away from meeee!’ I defied the Devil of Madness but that exhausted me, to the core and beyond.

Forty-eight hours had passed since I escaped from Pathum Kallayanee. My stomach was empty but the exhaustion was gone now, and no more headache.

O.N.: I’d later learn that 98.5% of the expat foreign language teachers who served in one or more Thai public schools suffer from the psychiatric disorder called PATSSD, Post Asshole Training School Stress Disorder.

I put on shabby clothing. I resembled a bum at the old Hua Lamphong station.

I left my room.

I took the elevator.

I reached the ground floor.

I walked to a neighborhood Thai restaurant. I had a proper meal this time.

I went back to my apartment room. I wrote an email. I sent it to the coordinator, the guy who acted as a liaison between the expat foreign language teachers and school officials at Pathum Kallayanee.

I apologized to him first. I knew there was no Japanese class scheduled after I taught my last class but I said: 'Sorry for skipping the last two working days left in February.' The school was going to break up for the summer holidays in *April*. There would not be any more class meetings from the end of February to the end of March. *What did the students do in between?* You might wonder and ask me. Run around in and around the school complex, mirroring the behavior of wild animals, for like one whole month.

I went to practice handstand at *my spot*: my daily routine – *O.N.: Allow me to go off on a minor tangent; you might be wondering what the year 2020 was like for Thai school kids*. I was on my way home, walking. It was a tranquil early evening.

Halfway between my spot by the putrid, smelly and totally polluted canal and my apartment stood the Pratunam Rangsit Police Station – *O.N.: Once upon a time canals were an integral part of the transport network in and around Bangkok and canal piers 'pratunam' were a key public space and vital piece of infrastructure in the community. Today the name of the police station only evokes the memory of that bygone era.*

I passed by the silent building.

‘Aaaahhhh!’ A scream pierced the serene evening air. I swung my neck around.

‘Aaaahhhh, Aaaaaahhhhhhh!’ A banshee boy on methamphetamine entered my vision.

‘Aaaahhhh, Aaaaaahhhhhhh, Aaaaaaaaahhhhhhhhh!’ The banshee maniac boy drove a motorbike, rushing from behind me. ‘Is he on cocaine as well?’ I wondered.

Vroom, Vroommm, Vroommmmmmm! The boy’s Japanese motorbike roared.

‘Haaaahhhh!’ The Doppler Effect morphed the boy’s scream into a high-pitched shriek. The motorbike got closer. ‘Haaaaaaahhhhhhh!’ Closer and closer. ‘Haaaaaaaahhhhhhhhh!’

The 110cc engine shrilled. Proom, Proommm, Proommmmmmm – *O.N.: To recap, in mid-March, 2020, to prevent the spread of Covid-19, the BMA ordered the closure of all schools at least until the end of March, i.e., for the remainder of the second semester.*

The boy’s smile was the smile of the possessed. He rode a Honda Wave 110cc – he was not riding a Triumph or Harley-Davidson. He topped the speed of 60 miles/100 kilometers per hour – *O.N.: Thai public schools have a two-semester system. The second semester begins in November and ends in March.*

Swoosh. The boy and his two pillion riders passed by me.

‘Huf.’ I huffed. My heart rate went up an extra beat per minute.

The boy did not wear a helmet. His destiny was written; he’ll get into an accident one day, his skull will be cracked open and his brain matter will spill out like smashed Mangosteen.

The same destiny awaited his two pillion riders. No helmet protected their skulls.

I prayed in advance for their souls in the netherworld.

East Asians and Southeast Asians look younger than their age but he was no older than fifteen – *O.N.: The minimum legal age to drive a motorbike in Thailand is fifteen.* The police at the police station on that very road paid no attention whatsoever.

The boy did not wear a face mask. He was not going to die from Covid-19. Nor were his two pillion riders; no face mask covered their faces.

O.N.: Following the BMA's announcement the Thai government imposed a national lockdown soon afterward. The Thai authorities introduced stern preventive measures and ordered the schools throughout the country to reopen only in July. (During the normal academic year the first semester commences at the beginning of May.) Which meant that Thai school kids had no school from mid-March to the end of June. What were they doing while they were on school break?

‘Haaaahhhh, Haaaaaaahhhhhh, Haaaaaaaahhhhhhhhh!’ Proom, Proommmm, Proommmmmmm. The sound of the fruitcake boy’s devilish scream and his thundering demonic motorbike echoed through the City of Rangsit.

O.N.: Back to my last days at Pathum Kallayanee Secondary School.

I told Jake in the email: ‘I felt so sick. No sooner had I come back to my apartment than I practically collapsed on my bed. I spent the next two days lying there like a corpse.’ Which was basically true; I did not embellish – the coordinator’s name was Jake.

‘I have to go home. I feel like my head’s going to blow up like a grenade,’ I spoke to him briefly two days earlier, right before disappearing from the school for the day. I was going to leave the school permanently at the end of February and Jake knew it – it turned out *that* was how I left the place forever. ‘All is good,’ he replied back to my email and said. ‘You need not worry,’ he reassured me. I knew he meant it because in the same email he said: ‘I invite you to go to a massage parlor in Bangkok together!’ – he was talking about massage parlors set up as a brothel. He was not at all fooling around.

Valent D. Soisuvarn, the Founder, CEO & Editor-in-Chief of *Danshi* Thailand stood with legs wide apart in front of what they called the fishbowl.

O.N.: The word 'danshi' means 'adult male' in Japanese. The name of the magazine 'Danshi' is a fictitious name. I used a fictitious name to avoid any legal issues but the real magazine does exist (by a different name). You've not only heard of it before but seen it somewhere. Let's just say that it's a major men's lifestyle brand, globally recognized.

'Come closer, Jake,' said Valent to Jake. Valent was a friend of Jake's from his college days – Valent and Jake both attended the University of California, Riverside.

The founder of *Danshi* Thailand waved his hand and motioned and directed Jake to stand a few steps away from the center of the fishbowl. Jake: 'O-h, m-y f-u-c-k-i-n-g p-u-s-s-y g-o-o-d' – *O.N.: 'I know, it sounds like right out of cheap literotica,' Jake the Narrator narrated the story to me.*

'Check them out,' spoke Valent in a voice of authority.

Sat right in front of Jake were over one hundred adult female models, all wearing skimpy bikinis or racy lingerie. The half who sat in the back row were risqué-look R-rated females; 'R' was written on their number tag: 'R-#'. The other half who sat in the front row were extra-risqué-look X-rated females; 'X' was written on their number tag: 'X-#'.

Valent: 'R-rated girls, X-rated girls.'

Jake [to himself]: 'R-rated *models*, X-rated *adult* models.' He spotted XXX models here and there. 'The word "risqué" does not apply to them, does it? They are *vulgar*.' Jake's eyes did not disapprove of their vulgarity.

Valent grinned at Jake as if to say, ‘Your cock is already getting hard and stiff, isn’t it? – *O.N.: ‘I know, it sounds like right out of cheap literotica,’ repeated Jake the Narrator.*

Valent was his buddy – at least Jake thought so when he was in college – but Jake had to shy away from Valent’s gaze, and yes, blood was accumulating in his groin area.

‘Can he see that? Can the girls see my Anaconda?’ wondered Jake.

His full erection embarrassed him. ‘Calm down, calm down,’ said Jake to himself. ‘Jesus Christ, this place is all about that, right? Sex! These girls not only see but keep sucking cocks all day long! They know it. I know it. I’m just getting ready, aren’t I?’

He was not a monster-sized man but his pants felt Rambutan skin tight. ‘What’s up with me? I haven’t even seen a tit!’ He swallowed hard.

‘Hwee, hwoo, check her out. Tits she has! Whatcha think about her?’ said Valent, pointing a finger at the girl who had a set of watermelon breasts on her slender body. Valent was a child, all smiles, practically jumping up and down. *Tits*, to Valent, went far above and beyond Xbox, PlayStation, Nintendo and pony put together – *O.N.: ‘But it was real, you see,’ Jake the Narrator narrated the story to me.*

‘Uhhhh, uhhhh.’ That was Jake’s only response.

‘Did I misunderstand him? Back when we were in college?’ wondered Jake. Valent whom he remembered was a reserved young man, a little bit shy even.

Jake tried to make close observations. He tensed up.

He heard and read about places like this. For the price of a mere 2000, 3000 baht he’d be able to have sex with a gorgeous model-like girl. Not just that, she’d give him a blowjob. Not just a blowjob, what they called BBBJ which stands for Bareback BlowJob, i.e., blowjob without a condom.

‘I think I’ll be cumming inside her mouth. I don’t think I can hold it,’ Jake pressed his lips tight, trying to conceal the mixture of fear and lust but his eyes did not obey. He was not staring at them. Jake’s eyes were superglued to the enormous set of *Tits*. Which Valent saw. Once again Jake shied away from Valent’s gaze.

‘Silly, I know, but,’ he had to ask himself. ‘Is this not a dream?’ ‘I feel like I’m in a cheap literotica,’ no sooner had he said that to himself than he corrected himself, ‘No, a *fantasy literotica*.’

‘The one on the far right? She is kind of cute. I like the innocent look she has,’ said Valent, his voice calming down a bit. He continued making comments about the rest of the girls, imitating Donald Trump commenting on Miss World contestants. Valent idolized Trump who was yet to run for the office of the U.S. President.

‘Valent speaks like a king,’ reflected Jake. ‘More like a spoiled prince perhaps.’

‘But he speaks with a commanding voice,’ reflected Jake. ‘He is definitely not shy.’

Proom [a high-pitched echo], Proommmm, Proommmmmmm. *Tits* shook! Vroom [a deep, low-pitched rumbling], Vroommmm, Vroommmmmmm. *Tits* roared and vibrated now! ProomVrMVrMVrM. The tits’ sound of shaking and vibration engulfed the whole space.

‘No, I’m imagining things,’ said Jake to himself, shaking his head.

‘What?’ said Valent to Jake, frowning puzzled.

Jake: ‘Doppler Effect ...’

Valent: ‘What?’

‘Oh, my God, precum! Hold it, hold it, hold it!’ Jake willed his glans, ‘Don’t let Rambutan rapture, I mean, don’t let it rupture! Tighten up the entrance!’

‘What?’

Jake: ‘She is waiting for my mega Rambutan to burst right inside her mouth. I’ll cum, she’ll cum and I’ll cum! So much cum, her watermelons will float in my cum! We’ll be swept away in the ocean of love! She and I will write poetry! We’ll become poetry! Poetry of exultation! Don’t let her down! She wants my cum and precum both! Hold it!!! Oh, my God, my precum is ... my cum is wetting my pants! Urgh, Urghh, Urghhh!’

‘What?’

‘I mean, I think, I think I’ll take *her*,’ said Jake with a trembling voice and pointed at *the tits*.

The story went that Jake went to a brothel for the very first time in his life with his college friend Valent. Valent came from real money and that was how he ended up attending a university in the U.S. and that was where Jake, a fellow Thai, met him and became friends.

Soon after he came back to Thailand, thanks to a generous investment from his family, Valent founded *Danshi* Thailand. He was a real big shot now.

The story went that Jake was so reluctant to even go *see* a brothel from *outside*, forget walking inside the place and having sex with one of the girls but Valent was insistent and persistent and Jake gave in. *Valent convinced* Jake to go with him.

That was how the story went *according to Jake*. Valent was the one who opened the door to the world of lust and debauchery to him and Jake plunged into that world. Jake was a mere apprentice. Now he was a connoisseur.

‘Hmmm,’ Jake the Coordinator with a crooked jaw and beady eyes would say, hanging on the ‘m’ forever. ‘How about the one in the middle? I’ll ask Mama-san if her pussy is shaved.

You like eating shaved pussy? How about licking the girl's ass? I mean, licking the girl's shaved asshole? Or hairy asshole? I know you like it, I can tell' – he'd go on like this forever.

Jake was a baby, not figuratively but literally when he arrived in the U.S. but both his parents were Thai and they taught him how to speak the language. Jake the Coordinator grew up in Texas and later in California. He was able to ask Mama-san if the girl had shaved off her pubic hairs, etc., etc., etc. in the Thai language. He was mighty proud of that.

I was not going to the massage parlor with him, not because I was morally against it but because Jake was a *creep*. Please do not get me wrong. I think about sex too – and you know this already – but Jake was *25/7 always* thinking about and talking about sex. Sex was the foundation, pillar, beam and buttress of his life. There was something repulsive and unsettling about that. You do not want to get too close to him; he was that kind of guy.

Jake was on those mobile apps to find local sex partners *during his entire waking hours*. Even during morning assembly in high school, standing beside one thousand teenagers and pre-teens, he was looking for someone to have sex with using his mobile phone.

I did not reply back to his email. I did not phone him. I did not send him a message and tell him, 'Leave me alone, will you?' I waited until I received my last salary. It was deposited in my bank account. No sooner had I checked my account balance and confirmed it than I deleted the said email and all other emails that Jake sent to me over the past several months. That was that – I never saw him again.

I spent two long years at Pathum Kallayanee Secondary School. Ron and Bruce D. the Alcoholic were with me for the first six months. Jake the Coordinator was with me for the last six months. I met Joe Northam in between.

*You spent two long years at this s*** school, why?* You might wonder and ask me. Two years earlier, I in the Future said to I in the Present: ‘You should spend at least a year or two teaching at a public school. That’ll give you much-needed insight into the Thai education system and the Thai society at large.’ Was it an educational experience? Yes. Was that the only reason why I spent two years at Pathum Kallayanee? No. It was an adventure, to me, but the end of the two years was the end of this adventure.

Chapter 32

I SAW AFFIRMATION IN HER EYES

Bzzt Bzzzt Bzzt Bzzzt. My Nokia phone vibrated.

I knew it was Hannah; I need not look at the caller ID. Not because I knew for certain she was going to call me but only because so few people called me.

‘Hello,’ I answered the phone. Mathematically speaking it had to be her. It was.

‘Hey, do you want to get together tonight?’ she asked me. No preambles, she got right to the point.

‘Yes,’ I answered.

‘Okay, maybe we’ll meet at 7-ish?’ she said.

‘That sounds great.’ *She and I and a couple of other people from work will get together and go have a drink or two and that’ll be it? I guess?* A moment later I wondered: *But doesn’t she sound like she’s asking me on a date?*

‘Okay, I’ll pick you up.’ She had a car. I didn’t.

‘Okay,’ I said.

‘I’ll call you when I reach your apartment,’ she said.

‘Great,’ I said matter-of-factly.

Panorama Thinking put us, Pathum Kallayanee expat foreign language teachers, in three different apartments, which were all in the same area of Pathum Thani. The agency provided transportation for us to commute to the school, but in case of emergencies and so on, Hannah took some of us to the school with her own car from time to time, so she knew where all three apartments were including the one where I was staying, though we'd never run into each other until after we met at English Camp.

'I'll catch you later,' she said.

Girls do homework, i.e., research, before they decide to go out with someone. Hannah was no exception. She'd already known where I was staying. She'd probably known that I went to UC Santa Barbara. The agency had my resume after all; she worked for that agency as a marketing staff. She must have asked her colleagues how they rated my look on a scale of 1 to 10, about my personality, interests, and whatever else she could think of. I am not complaining. I'm flattered that she decided to find out whatever she could find out about me prior to her pre-planned accidental encounter with me.

'Bye now,' I said and hung up.

Bzzt Bzzzt Bzzt Bzzzt. My Nokia phone vibrated.

No need to look at the caller ID, I knew it was Hannah. Reason #1: So few people called me. Reason #2: She said she was going to call me at around seven; it was five to seven.

'Hello,' I answered the phone. Mathematically speaking it had to be her. It was.

'Hey, I'm downstairs,' she said.

'I'll be there in a minute,' I said and hung up.

I was already dressed and ready. I checked myself in the mirror. ‘You talkin’ to me? Then who the hell else are you talkin’ to? You talkin’ to me? Well I’m the only one here.’ Then:

‘Let’s go.’ I left my room.

I fast-walked to the stairs.

I climbed down the stairs. There was no elevator – it was that kind of apartment.

I walked out of my apartment building. I slow-walked to the entrance. I tried not to look too excited. Then:

What the hell? She was nowhere to be seen but ...

As if on cue a car approached and stopped right in front of me.

She rolled down the passenger window.

‘Hey,’ she said.

‘Hey,’ I said.

I opened the passenger door. I hopped into the vehicle.

‘I couldn’t park my car here,’ she said, eyeballing the vicinity of the entranceway to my apartment building. The two mom-and-pop shops with no parking space, and in front of which their respective Japanese SUVs – an Isuzu D-Max and a Toyota Hilux – were parked, sandwiched the entrance. The passageway between the two shops, in the middle of which some people parked their cars sometimes regardless of clogging the way, was so narrow only one car could pass through at a time. So ...

‘I just drove around the block,’ she said matter-of-factly. She was not complaining. She knew it was that kind of apartment.

Me, thinking to myself rather excitedly: *Hey, this is a pretty smooth start. She got here, we met and now we are heading to wherever we are going.*

‘Anyone else coming?’ I asked. No one else was in the car.

‘Jay is going out with his friend so he is not coming,’ she said – a person named Jay was one of our colleagues at Panorama Thinking.

‘So just us?’ I asked casually.

‘Yes.’

Me, thinking to myself rather excitedly: *Hmmm ..., is this like a date?*

‘You look nice,’ I said.

‘Thank you,’ she said. I did not say it just for the sake of it. She did indeed look wow-check-you-out. Her cleavage was more visible than during the day. That was for sure.

O.N.: On our way to the venue of the night ...

‘Jace walks like a girl,’ she said – we chatted about trivial matters.

‘He takes estrogen shots,’ I told her. ‘He says he wants to feminize himself’ – Jace, a gay man, was one of our colleagues.

‘Do you think he’s sexy?’ she asked me.

‘Jace?’

‘Yeah, Jace.’

‘No.’ He did not look sexy, *to me*.

We were gossiping and prattling but hey, we were going out to have a few drinks. We were not heading to the church to cleanse our souls or to the Buddhist temple to meditate, read mantras and spill ghee and other materials into the Agni.

I know now that she did not accidentally take us to the Dutch Garden. She knew that was where we were going that night. She'd already decided before she came to pick me up. I am not complaining. I feel flattered that she'd planned it all ahead of time.

'Is this place okay?' Hannah asked me.

We arrived at the beer hall *Dutch Garden* in Nonthaburi.

'Yeah, this looks ...,' I said, but even before I completed the sentence she was already driving our car to the parking lot of the beer hall. '... all right.'

Our night out was going to turn out to be far more than a laid-back date night.

I'd never been there before. The place looked alright so, 'This is all right,' I said for the second time, as if to reassure her of my approval.

That too, she planned it, I'd venture to guess.

She is a beautiful girl. I had a banal thought: *How lucky I am.*

'What would you like to drink?' Hannah asked me.

I saw a pretty good selection of beers including imported draft beers. I picked a wheat beer and I told her.

'Okay,' she said. She gestured to the waitress that we were ready. She ordered two draft beers for us.