

A n a k S a s t r a

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Contributor Bios

Chit Win studies history and religion in Northern Ireland. He knows there is little hope of actually getting a job with a degree in either of these fields but is stubborn like that. One day his parents will understand. Maybe. In the meantime, he hopes to make them proud with his writing, yet another something he can't get a job doing.

Jennifer Anne F. Messing (Twitter: [@JennyAnnMessing](#)) is an author, poet, and creative writing teacher who has a bachelor's degree in religious education and journalism. She has over 200 articles, short stories, and poems published in 60 magazines, including *The Storyteller*, *The Gem*, *LIVE*, *Story Shack*, and *Mocha Memoirs*. Originally from the Philippines, Jennifer Anne and her husband have three children and reside in Oregon, USA.

Kim Farleigh has worked for aid agencies in Kosovo, Macedonia, Iraq, Palestine and Greece. He likes to take risks to get the experience necessary for writing. He also likes painting, wine and bullfighting, which might explain why this Australian lives in Madrid. 146 of his stories have been accepted by 86 different magazines.

Several years ago **Don Adams** was a Fulbright scholar in Vietnam and he has been returning to live there every summer since because he loves the city of Saigon (Ho Chi Minh City). Nine months out of the year he is a Professor of English at Florida Atlantic University in South Florida, where he teaches modern literature.

John C. Mannone has work in *Blue Fifth Review*, *New England Journal of Medicine*, *Peacock Journal*, *Amsterdam Quarterly*, *Gyroscope Review*, *Inscape Literary Journal*, *Baltimore Review*, *Pedestal*, *Pirene's Fountain*, *Event Horizon*, *Syzygy*, and others. He's been awarded two Weymouth writing residencies and has three poetry collections: *Apocalypse* (Alban Lake Publishing, July 2015), nominated for the 2017 Elgin Book Award; *Disabled Monsters* (Linnet's Wings Press, December 2015) featured at the 2016 Southern Festival of Books; and *Flux Lines* (Celtic Cat Publishing, Spring 2017). He's been awarded two Joy Margrave Awards for Nonfiction and nominated for several Pushcart and Rhysling awards. He edits poetry for *Abyss & Apex* and other venues. He's professor of physics near Knoxville, TN.

Chris Luppi is from New York. He now lives in Thailand and has for many years. His short stories have appeared in *Elimae*, *Pequin*, *Asian Cha*, *Bureau 39*, and *Eastlit*.

[Karlo Sevilla](#) is a freelance writer who lives in Quezon City, Philippines. His poems have appeared or are forthcoming in numerous publications, including *Philippines Graphic*, *Eastlit*, *Kitaab*, *Rambutan Literary*, *Eunoia*, *Sub-saharan Magazine*, *Antarctica Journal*, *The Wayward Sword*, *Jazz Cigarette*, an Origami Poems Project microchap, and in the respective first anthologies of *Peacock Journal*, *Riverfeet Press*, and *Eternal Remedy*. He also coaches wrestling, trains in Brazilian Luta Livre, does volunteer work for the labor group Bukluran ng Manggagawang Pilipino (Solidarity of Filipino Workers), and blogs at *Karlo Sevilla of Quezon City*.

Hailing from the island state of Penang, Malaysia, [Jessica Quah](#) currently resides in Texas. When not working/writing/researching, she also enjoys playing the piano, cooking, and reading fantasy anthologies.

Dr. **Leon Miller** is presently an international consultant for “Value Based Approach to Sustainable Social-Economic Development” (primarily working in behalf of The Asian-Pacific Branch of The International Peace Research Association). He also has spent many years working as a lecturer of ethics, comparative religion, intercultural communications, and international relations. In addition he teaches tai chi, yoga, and meditation in the community. He has a number of peer reviewed publications in the areas of the philosophy of religion, intercultural relations, and corporate social responsibility. He also has a number of published poems and now, as well, has two musical singles.

Carl Wade Thompson is a poet, Buddhist, and the graduate writing tutor at Texas Wesleyan University. A Pushcart Prize nominee, his work has appeared in *The Mayo Review*, *The Red River Review*, *The Blue Collar Review*, *The Concho Reivew*, *The Galway Review*, *Blue Minaret*, *Cenizo*, *Piker Press*, *Junto Magazine*, and *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas*.

[Gerard Sarnat](#) has recently been nominated for a Pushcart Prize. He’s authored four collections: [Homeless Chronicles](#) (2010), [Disputes](#) (2012), [17s](#) (2014) and [Melting the Ice King](#) (2016), which included work published in *Gargoyle*, *Lowestoft*, *American Journal of Poetry*, *Main Street Rag*, *New Delta Review*, *Tishman Review*, plus was featured in *New Verse News*, *Songs of Eretz*, *Avocet*, *LEVELER*, *tNY*, *StepAway*, *Bywords*, *Floor Plan*. *Dark Run*, *Scarlet Leaf*, *Good Men Project*, *Anti-Heroin Chic*, *Winamop*, *Poetry Circle* and *Tipton Review* feature sets of new poems. Mount Analogue selected Sarnat’s sequence, *Kaddish for the Country*, for distribution as a pamphlet in Seattle on Inauguration Day 2017 as well as the next morning as part of the Washington, DC and nationwide Women’s Marches. Harvard/Stanford educated, Gerry’s worked in jails, built/staffed clinics for the marginalized, been a CEO of healthcare organizations and a Stanford Medical School professor.

Christine Kelly is a seventeen-year-old student who loves to read and write. She lives in Jakarta, where she is inspired by her surroundings in the city. Indonesia is the sixth country she's called home. Christine tries to capture the vibrant street life that she sees every day in her writing.

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"Bagan to Belfast and Back"

by Chit Win

Kyaw sat on the edge of the flimsy single mattress. The room was musty and dark. The dampness of the air in the small room was suffocating. It was cheap, and he had nowhere else to go. At least, he didn't think so.

He didn't yet have a sim card. His old number had long since expired, and he wasn't sure spending what little money he had left on a new phone number was the best use of his cash. In fact, he couldn't think of anyone who he wanted to talk to.

His friends back in Belfast would not know what happened to him. He had left so abruptly. His social media accounts would go silent in the meantime, the only activity being a few messages asking of his whereabouts. Those too would cease eventually.

Kyaw's family, despite being only a few-hour's drive away now, thought he was still in the UK studying to become a doctor. That was all his parents and even extended family could talk about from the moment his acceptance letter arrived in the mail complete with a sizeable scholarship.

The money was the important part. Without it, he would never have been able to afford to study in Britain, let alone travel there. Everywhere was expensive when compared to the kyat. But Britain had a reputation for being pricier than most places. Kyaw learned that it truly was.

That scholarship was his passport to a different life. Back home in Bagan, there was not much to do. He stayed at home most of the time. Occasionally he would bump into Western tourists and practice his English with them, but there weren't many of them who came. And competition from his fellow classmates for getting one-on-one English practice time was high. It wasn't Kyaw's style to be so assertive, at least in comparison with some of the other guys in his class.

But it was he and he alone among his peers who had been awarded the scholarship to study in Belfast. Some of his classmates were genuinely happy for him; others seethed at his success. A few couldn't have cared either way. Going back to Bagan and having to face his friends was unappealing. Facing his family, however, would be worse. They would be humiliated that he could not finish his studies.

It hadn't even been a full year that he was away. The first semester had been a challenge. It wasn't the coursework or the English really. He struggled with that—for sure—but not nearly as much as the change of lifestyle and the weather. Belfast followed its own rhythm, something he found out was cacophonous to his own internal beat. But he accepted that, with time, he would slip into the local groove.

As for the weather, Kyaw wrote that one off as something that he knew he would never like, appreciate, or even tolerate. Sitting in the stuffy rented room in Yangon, he recalled rarely feeling warm in Belfast. He imagined that it would only be a few weeks longer before the leaves started to change color and fall from the trees. Autumn.

Having been away for only a few days, he admitted that it was premature to feel a sense of longing for his days in Britain. In fairness to the memories, though, there were some good times. The road trips around Ireland; budget flights to less budget-conscious cities like London, Paris, and Vienna; and traipsing around Scottish castles with his new European friends. He lived each day to its fullest, though often at the expense of his homework.

And at the expense of his scholarship. It covered his living expenses and tuition and was set up particularly for students from underdeveloped countries who were underrepresented at British universities. Charity or pity—whatever it was—that was his only source of income as his family had little to spare.

The problem came from the “living expenses” part of the scholarship. Kyaw shared a two-bedroom flat with three others who he had met through the Myanmar Students Association. He followed them around as they had already been living in Belfast for several years. But after a while, he decided that he wanted to have a European experience, and not simply spend his entire time with his compatriots.

His new friends came from all over Europe and even Canada. They enjoyed traveling, trying different foods, and drinking as many different types of beer that were

available. There were many. Kyaw liked their happy-go-lucky attitude and joined them in their travels and nightly carousing. Life was good.

Until it wasn't any longer. After several months of spending like he was on vacation, Kyaw ran out of money. What's more was that his scholarship for the following year had been rescinded due to his low marks. The world had fallen down around him all because he had lived the kind of life he had always dreamed of having.

And as he sat in the musty room in Yangon, knowing that he would eventually have to go back to Bagan and face his family and friends as a failure, there was a little piece inside of him that said, *look at all of the dreams you have accomplished this past year.*

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“Wanted: A Loving Babe for Marriage”

by Jennifer Anne F. Messing

Anjelica Cruz sat reading the *Manila Metropolitan Times* while having her breakfast on a sunny morning in January of 1987. She was leaving for work shortly, and while finishing her coffee took a quick glance through the Personals section.

Her interest in looking there puzzled her. She never read the personals! Wasn't that the part of the newspaper that only females who were desperate for love looked at? Or, worse, that poor and undereducated Filipina gals read in hopes of finding a Prince Charming from abroad who'd take them away from their wretched life in the Philippines?

But I'm *not* desperate, she told herself. I'm college-educated, have a promising job as an executive secretary, love all my dear friends...why, the whole world lies before me! And while she pondered these things, her gaze suddenly fell on one of the ads:

WANTED: A LOVING BABE FOR MARRIAGE

Are you between 23 and 27, pretty, educated, fun and outgoing, tired of playing around with love...and ready for a serious relationship? Maybe it's me! I'm 29, tall, college grad, hardworking, love bowling, Balderdash and classic movies. Here on business, flying home to Seattle soon. Can we meet for dinner at 6:30 on Friday night, January 10, at the Oceanview restaurant, Hilton Hotel? Call me 59-35-88. Redford.

Anjelica stared at the ad for several seconds. Why was she drawn to it? Was she crazy? Why would she want to meet a total stranger? She quickly jotted the phone number down in her notebook, then tucked it away in her purse. Then she closed the newspaper, folded it in half and set it back down on the table. She knew her dad and mom would browse through it later, and she didn't want that personals ad in their sight.

Well, it was Friday! As Anjelica thought about her workday ahead, she wondered what type of man Redford might be like. Actually, she had been to the Oceanview restaurant, only once before, but she remembered it vividly. Elegant, dimly lit, with fine

linen tablecloths.

I'll call him later on my lunch break.

She stood up and went to her bedroom and re-brushed her long and wavy, black hair. She put on a cherry red lipstick, smoothed her navy blue business suit and then picked up her purse.

"Bye, Mom and Dad. Kiss Isabella for me!" Anjelica called out, as she made her way out the front door.

She walked a couple of blocks and then hopped on the bus that would take her to Ayala Avenue—a busy street full of high-rise buildings where she worked.

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Anjelica arrived promptly at 7:45 and started work at eight. Her boss, Mr. Ramos, had left a very tall pile of paperwork on her desk. That was typical on Friday mornings. Mr. Ramos always wanted the letters and invoices from the past week to be filed away. He was organized and meticulous, and he hated clutter.

Anjelica quickly got to work filing. She was fortunate that Mr. Ramos was in a series of meetings all day. It made her day a bit more relaxed. The rest of her morning was taken up with typing some business letters as well as answering and routing the never-ending phone calls.

Noon came quickly. Mr. Ramos was out to lunch, and most of Anjelica's coworkers walked over to the cafeteria on the second floor to buy lunch. Anjelica ate the packed lunch she had brought: a chicken salad sandwich, potato chips and boxed mango juice.

Next, she took out her notebook where she'd written Redford's phone number. Nervously, she dialed the number.

"Hello?" said a pleasant, deep male voice.

"Hello," she said. "I'm Anjelica."

"What a lovely name," he said.

"Thank you," Anjelica replied. "You probably know why I'm calling—"

"Did you read an ad in the paper?" he asked.

"Yes."

"And, what makes you think you'd like to go out on a date with me?"

"My Dad taught me to play bowling," Anjelica answered. "And I love classic movies,

too.”

He chuckled. “I’m sure we’ll have lots to talk about. So—would you like to join me for dinner tonight at Oceanview restaurant?”

“I’d like that, Redford,” she answered, then paused. “But I...don't you...I mean—aren't there other ladies who have called you?”

“I guess I have to take a chance when I think I’ve found the right one,” he answered. “Can I pick you up somewhere?” he asked.

“Uh—you know what? Why don't we do this?” Anjelica replied. “I’ve been to that restaurant before. I can meet you there.”

“6:30 it is, then,” he answered. “Tell them you’re Redford Piercey’s guest.”

“All right, I will,” Anjelica answered, feeling a sweet sense of anticipation. “See you tonight.”

* * *

“So, who’s your new Prince Charming?”

Anjelica turned and saw her coworker, Carlos Recto. She frowned. “Eavesdropping is rude, you know,” Anjelica said.

“I wasn’t eavesdropping,” Carlos said. “Lunch break is over. I was walking back to my desk. I couldn’t help overhearing.”

“Oh, I see,” Anjelica said evenly. “Well, my new Prince Charming is none of your business.”

“I happen to think it *is* my business,” he said. “You know how I feel about you.”

“But I don’t feel the same way,” Anjelica said. “Love is a two-way street.”

“But love can grow,” Carlos said. “You’ve never given me a chance, Anjelica. I love everything about you. I know about your past...and I’d love your sweet little Isabella, too! Do you really think you’ll find another man who can accept your young daughter as his own and love her too?”

Carlos’s words stabbed Anjelica’s heart. She knew what he was saying was true. Anjelica’s precious three-year-old daughter, Isabella, was the love of her life—the center of her existence. But she’d been born out of wedlock, and Anjelica had later decided she didn’t want to marry Isabella’s biological dad because he was a player. Indeed, he’d played around with her heart too many times and hurt her badly!

So, Anjelica had made the brave decision more than three years earlier to move on into her future with darling Isabella—but without Isabella's dad. And she never regretted the choice she made. The one thing, however, that Anjelica found difficult to deal with was the fact that most eligible Filipino men didn't want to pursue a serious relationship with a single mom. Not only did they not like a woman with a past, many of them even looked down on a woman like that.

So on more than one occasion, when Anjelica had casually dated a man whom she thought she might be interested in pursuing a long-term relationship with—the moment she mentioned Isabella, the man suddenly lost interest. He'd politely let her know that perhaps they weren't meant for each other and would stop calling.

* * *

At 5:30 Anjelica cleared her desk and put her notebook and pen into her purse. She made a quick call home and talked to Isabella for a short bit. Hearing her daughter's sweet and tender voice melted her heart, as always. Then she told her parents she was going out for dinner and that she'd be headed to the restaurant straight from work.

Her mom told her, “Have a good time! And don't worry about Isabella.”

Anjelica waved goodbye to her coworkers and then walked out of the office and down the hallway to the ladies' room. She brushed her long hair and put on a fresh coat of red lipstick. She took off her navy blue blazer and straightened out her dressy, red silk blouse. From inside her purse she pulled out a pair of dangling pearl earrings and put them on. She decided she'd leave her blazer off for the dinner date.

Outside the building she stood for a few minutes, waiting for a taxicab. It was Friday evening, and, as usual, the traffic was bumper-to-bumper. Fortunately, the Hilton Hotel was only a few minutes away, so Angelica knew she could easily get there before 6:30.

A taxicab pulled up beside where she was standing. When she mentioned the hotel, the driver nodded and she climbed into the back seat. She was glad the cab was air-conditioned; the cool air blowing against her face relaxed her. Ten minutes later, after pulling into the hotel's entryway, she handed the cab driver a fifty-peso bill and was promptly given the correct amount of change.

The concierge opened her door and greeted her with a smile. She thanked him, and then walked into the door that led to the lobby. She'd been to this hotel many times, and its

familiar, elegant surroundings looked as beautiful as ever. She glanced at her watch and saw that it was 6:25. *Perfect, I'll be right on time.*

She walked over to the Oceanview restaurant and saw that it was already quite crowded. While standing in the entryway, the hostess greeted her.

“Do you have a reservation, ma'am?” the hostess asked.

“I'm Redford Piercey's guest,” Anjelica answered.

“Oh, good timing! Mr. Piercey just arrived a few minutes ago,” the hostess informed her. “Will you wait a minute, please?”

The hostess disappeared for a couple of minutes, and when she returned a tall, well-dressed man with wavy, light-brown hair was walking beside her. He smiled as he approached Anjelica. She caught her breath for a moment. He was so good-looking!

“I believe you're my special guest tonight,” he said, as he quickly looked her over with approval.

“Hi, I'm Anjelica Cruz. I'm pleased to meet you, Redford,” she said, extending her right hand.

He took her hand and shook it gently. “Glad to meet you, Anjelica.”

Together they walked over to the table for two he had reserved. Redford pulled a chair for her and she sat down. Anjelica thought he looked like someone she had seen in her dreams.

“Thank you for coming to dinner with me,” he said. “I've been looking forward to this—ever since I first heard your sweet voice on the phone.”

Anjelica smiled. How friendly and warm he seemed to be! “I love this restaurant,” she said. “If you haven't tried their food yet, you're gonna love it. And I'm glad I saw your ad in the Personals.”

“I wasn't even planning to put that ad out. That was a spur-of-the-moment thing,” he said.

The waiter came then and took their orders for drinks and dinner.

“What brings you to Manila?” she asked.

“I'm here on business with my partner, Jack Jenkins,” he said. “We're architects, and we have a lot of clients in Seattle who are Filipino.”

“Oh, I see,” she replied. “And is this your first time in the Philippines?”

“Yes,” he answered. “We've been here for over a week and are flying back home this Sunday. But I've enjoyed my stay. I love Manila, and I feel at home around Filipino people.”

The waiter arrived with their orders and set them down.

“This looks delicious,” Redford remarked, eyeing his seafood dinner.

“Bon appétit,” Anjelica said, smiling.

A live pop band started performing while they ate their dinner. Their energy and bright music added to the enjoyable ambiance of the evening.

“So what made you decide to come and meet me?” he asked.

“I liked what you said in your ad,” Anjelica replied.

“There were a few different things I said in it,” he winked. “What in particular was it that drew you in?”

“You mentioned you're looking for someone interested in a...” Anjelica paused, “...a serious relationship.”

“It was a little more specific than that,” he remarked. “The ad said: *Wanted: A Loving Babe for Marriage.*”

Anjelica blushed. “Yes, I remember.” She sorted out her thoughts for a few moments. “You also said you're a businessman, you're hardworking, and—”

“And?”

“You're searching for a woman who's tired of playing around with love—” she answered.

“Does that describe you, Anjelica?”

“Yes,” she answered.

“And, why do you want to marry someone who isn't a Filipino?”

“I never thought that marrying a Filipino was my only choice,” Anjelica answered.

“And I've always loved travel and adventure.”

“Could you see yourself living in the United States for good?”

“Easily,” she answered.

“What about your parents, friends and family here? Wouldn't you miss them?” Redford asked.

“Oh! I would miss them, of course,” Anjelica answered. “But I have traditional values. I've always felt that when I marry, I'm going to go and live where my husband lives.”

Redford looked into her eyes. “Can you tell me what you want in a husband, and what you hope for in marriage?”

“I want a man who is committed and faithful, a good provider, naturally—who wants kids and will be a devoted father,” Anjelica said. “And I want a man who is tender and romantic, and who loves bowling and classic movies, just like me.”

Redford chuckled softly. “I like you, Anjelica,” he said.

She looked into his eyes. “Really? Why so?”

“I feel comfortable around you,” he said. “You're sweet, intelligent and beautiful.”

Anjelica was thoughtful for a moment. She wondered if she needed to say something more. “Redford, there's something—”

He looked at her. “Oh?”

“Maybe I should have said this when we were talking on the phone...” her voice faded away. Suddenly Anjelica thought she might not be brave enough to say it. She folded and re-folded her dinner napkin. “I have a three-year-old daughter,” she said, at last.

Redford looked at her for a long moment. “Were you married before?”

“No, I've never been married,” she answered. “My daughter's dad was a charming womanizer, and after she was born, I decided to press on and make a life for myself and my daughter—without him.

A look of understanding and compassion slowly came into his eyes. “I'm sorry,” he said. He reached his hand across the table and lightly brushed hers.

“Thank you,” she whispered softly, her head bowed low for a moment. Then she raised her eyes and looked at him. “And I do like you, too, by the way.” Once again she fidgeted with her dinner napkin, feeling nervous.

“It's okay, Anjelica,” he said.

“Okay?” she asked, a bit puzzled.

“It's okay with me, I mean, that you have a daughter,” Redford said.

Anjelica sat quietly, letting the full meaning of his words sink in. In those brief moments she felt like a heavy weight had been lifted off of her shoulders. How incredulous that an attractive bachelor like him would be willing to forgive and overlook her past—especially when he could probably have his pick among many beautiful Filipina women who weren't single moms!

Could it *really* be possible? She'd almost gotten to the point of losing hope...but maybe, just maybe a bright new beginning for her—and for Isabella—loomed somewhere on the horizon.

“I thought you should know, before we go any further,” she said. “If perhaps you felt my daughter stood in the way—”

“She doesn't stand in the way of anything,” he said, again. He looked at her intently.

“Well, if that's how you feel, then... ”

“Are you ready to open your heart to love again?” he asked.

“I'm ready,” Anjelica answered, gazing deeply into the eyes of the wonderful man whom she felt in that moment was going to be a very important part of her future.

* * * * *

“Manhorse”

by Kim Farleigh

Vines, leaves, and trunks upon a volcano's slopes bordered rice paddies. The docility of water buffaloes being whipped by conical-hatted farmers matched, in lackadaisical abeyance, the sheath of languor that heat had placed over the world. The vegetation's flourishing, guiltless liberation mocked man's toiling. A horse, pulling a carriage along a road that passed by the farmers, clip-clopped like a giant clicking its tongue. The carriage's redness, with its painted yellow-and-blue flowers, made the farmers stare up from below.

The driver leapt down from his seat and ran, holding the reins, farmer eyes upon him as the carriage went downhill, the driver's ostentation bereft of the volcano's unassuming salience. The carriage rattled and clattered. The road smoothed out; the shaking stopped.

The sun, moving in the paddies below the carriage's occupants, erupted like a revelation as it hit a ripple, vegetation's reflections in man's mirrors creating false, gorgeous impressions of depth. Frilly laces hanging from the edges of the carriage's ceiling swung with the carriage's movement, Hindu sun symbols decorating the carriage's walls, a Goddess on a string swinging beneath the carriage's ceiling, easy belief above the rocky road.

“Imagine the culture shock,” Ted remarked, “if an Indonesian wound up in Sydney or New York.”

Ted was clutching a pole that was holding up the carriage's roof, water buffaloes moving slowly through watery grass below. Small temples stood on the paddies' edges.

"It'd be worse," Mary replied, "than the shock we receive by coming here."

Temples indicate faith in permanency.

"Not necessarily," Mark said. "What about people in Jakarta and Surabaya?"

Mark's green eyes of ocean water floated under his sandy hair. Revealing poignant perceptions gives one recognition, and recognition is vindication, eliminating doubt.

"But people all over this country are religious," Peter said.

He left the implications unsaid.

They started going downhill again. Greenness stretched to the volcano, one implacable force being born upon another. The driver continued whipping his horse. The road levelled out. Their speed decreased. The bumping and jolting lessened. The driver increased his barrage. The jolting returned. The horse's sweaty flanks shone with a misleading impression of health. Green mucus dangled, horribly, from its lips. Its owner yelled at it and whipped it, like an employer who thought rights were fanciful abstractions.

"This," Ted remarked, "is bad."

The openings in Ted's grimacing face resembled dark cracks in arid earth. His lips tightened against his teeth. The road steepened. The horse started working harder. Clip-clopping clattered closely. The driver's arm became frenetic. The carriage rattled; its roof shook like an earthquake. Ted leaned out of the carriage and tapped the driver on the shoulder.

"*Beres, beres,*" the driver said. "*Ini biasa. Ini biasa.*"

“Normal!” Ted said. “The poor horse!”

The lengthening mucus, dangling from the horse’s mouth, was swinging so violently that it ended up clinging onto one of the horse’s flanks. The sweat glistening on the animal’s sides gave the creature’s hide a false look of embedded silver, of value, of untarnished youth.

“Ahhgrr,” Mark groaned. “This is disgusting!”

“He has to make a living,” Mary commented.

“There are other ways,” Mark replied.

“He’s limited in what he can do,” Mary said.

“He doesn’t have to make that animal suffer,” Mark replied.

“The faster he goes,” Mary said, “the more lifts, the more money, otherwise *he* suffers.”

“He could learn to drive a mini-van,” Mark said.

“You need money to buy one,” Mary replied.

“He could borrow it.”

“If all these carriage drivers did that, there’d be more mini-vans than people. Then what?”

“He could be employed by someone else. He’s got choices.”

The horse was now dragging them uphill, its flanks heaving, the driver yelling and whipping, the horse's nostrils opening and closing, like caps on steam-engine funnels.

Ted tapped the driver on the shoulder again. The driver opened his hands out with mystified surprise—with an unfathomable impulse that seemed disconnected from the simplicity of his existence; but Ted persisted so the driver stopped thrashing the horse and the shaking lessened.

They stood motionless on a flat stretch while negotiations transpired. The driver's flailing limbs were like wiry vines, the sculptured protrusions of his drawn face like the gnarled uprisings you see upon the trunks of tropical trees.

Ted suggested that they could walk the rest of the way, but the driver pleaded that they stay in the carriage. His perplexing ambition appeared cruel; a mysterious, uncontrollable motivation gripped him in its clutch, imploring, brown fires alight in his sharp, angular face.

"Ini biasa," he reiterated.

"This isn't normal," Mark said. "Let's pay and walk."

"If he doesn't take it easy when we start again," Ted said, "we'll do that."

The driver continued punishing the heaving horse, its nostrils expanding and contracting like lungs.

"He isn't going to stop," Mark said.

Downhill, the driver ignored the whip and the horse trotted comfortably. The carriage swayed with a nice rhythm, now not shaking like a rattling can.

"It'd be unfair to stop him now," Mary said.

"Unfair!" Mark replied. "He'll be able to get to the village more quickly without straining the horse! And he'll get the same amount of money!"

"He wants the kudos," Mary replied. "It's better than driving in empty."

"That's pathetic," Mark said. "Inflicting punishment because of that!"

"There's some reason," Peter said, "why he's keen to have us on board."

"And also," Mary said, "the markets will be closing soon. He wants to be there for the home rush."

"In Poah Motong," Peter said, "there'll be stacks of competition. He wants to be seen by all."

"That's pathetic," Mark reiterated.

"No more pathetic," Peter replied, "than painting his carriage to make it look beautiful."

Red, woollen pom-poms sat over the horse's eyes. The eyes of that other world, from within the chaotic order of plants, were observing the vanities that were so irrelevant to that other world's charismatic, amoral wildness.

The driver continued whipping, mucus still hanging from the horse's mouth, the creature's mane soaked with sweat.

"This is disgusting," Ted said. "Let's walk."

"I agree," Mark replied. "He couldn't care less about the horse."

"I can't handle seeing it suffer like this," Ted said. "Stop! Stop!" he yelled.

"*Beres,*" the driver screamed. "*Biasa!*"

"Stop! Stop!" Ted and Mark yelled. "Steeeeeooooo!"

The driver stopped whipping. Mary asked him not to do it again. She snapped out her request with the fury that only broken promises can yield.

"It's absolutely unnecessary!" she barked, her eyes like livid glass.

"He's going to drive that horse," Mark emphasized, as if hurt, "into the ground."

"*Pergi pelan pelan,*" Ted told the driver, who obeyed, letting the horse trot down the hill.

* * *

At Poah Motong, the horse's head hung in a long line of hanging horses' heads, all the heads adorned with red pom-poms. The horses, in their sterile servitude, were oblivious of their vainglorious decoration, the competition so great that it looked unlikely that the driver would get another lift that day. He was lying in his carriage, addressing an audience of other drivers, his teeth, flashing in the light, surrounded by the silent awe of fascinated listeners whose lighthouse dentures, in brown face-cliffs, shone with intrigue. Controlling and destroying—the basic instincts—yield prestige. We're technological cavemen, hunting acknowledgement, and often we don't care how we get it.

"He doesn't look too worried, does he?" Peter said.

"Maybe," Ted replied, "he just wanted to get here as quickly as possible to relax again."

“Then,” Peter replied, “he would’ve wanted us out when we offered.”

“True,” Ted agreed, nodding.

“Although,” Peter said, “he might’ve also felt guilty about us getting out.”

“I probably would’ve been,” Ted agreed.

“Maybe there’s some guy here he hates,” Peter offered, “and he wanted to piss him off by being seen with prized tourists?”

“Revenge is possible,” Ted replied.

That night, the driver would have eaten the same rice dish that he had been eating for his whole life; but he wasn’t truly poverty stricken. He could still compete. Vanity and prestige were still possibilities—within his group—giving him inspiration and individuality—that feeling that something positive could happen.

Mark and Mary were coming back across the road, carrying the water that they had just bought. They were morose with disagreement, both looking at the ground. Their agitation looked as if it had been stirred up by a moral principle.

“The reason,” Mark said, while Mary *listened*, “why you said he had no choice didn’t have anything to do with that. You weren’t concerned about the horse.”

“I think about people,” she said. “Sorry.”

They were in Poah Motong because Mary wanted to visit a woman who was well-known for her basketry. The glass that sat upon this woman’s house’s exterior walls reflected the surrounding world, images changing as they approached the door. Beads were hanging in front of fabrics in the doorway. The fragrance of incense floated within the

aroma of burning flowers and oil that sat on the porcelain dishes that lined the street, that oil and those flowers sacrifices to the Gods, the Gods apparently narcissistic enough to adore unceasing testimonies to their greatness.

The woman was wearing a floral dress that was patterned with swirling petals. Her eyes, like polished mahogany, glowed with friendly expectation. They sat on cane chairs. The batik fabrics on the walls symbolised undisturbed consciousness. A plant rose up a wall from a cane pot; its agenda to attain ever-increasing height was clear and unscrupulous. Bamboo shoots, with leafy tops, flourished in an interior garden in an adjoining room.

A teenage girl, with a shy smile like a contented slave, placed a tray on a table. The cups she poured tea into were shaped like flat-bottomed eggs: a drink yielding flourishing minds.

Baskets were sitting on the floor. The woman picked one up and started explaining something to Mary in Indonesian. The women's voices harmonised like melodies of intertwining counterpoint; in the compacted quietude, those melodies started sending tingles up Peter's neck. His feet throbbed with oscillating pleasure. Sensory information had become priceless. Unlimited patience overwhelmed him as he listened and watched. Basket after basket passed through the women's hands. A sensation like languor with alertness hummed through Peter's body. There was no feeling of inferiority or superiority, no agitation or displeasure, just the absence of discomfort, as if he had achieved uncomplicated satisfaction; no effort or energetic pretension seemed required.

More baskets passed between the women's hands. More words made tunes.

Mark started leaning forward, clutching his hands together. The women talked and talked. Mark's eyes became hard and focussed. The tingles kept running over Peter's neck. To Peter, the women's voices were so musical that he felt that the house had found a way to exaggerate his sense experience.

“Are you going to buy anything?” Mark asked.

His hands shook, his inquiry like a rock fired out from the sling-shot of raw justice.

“Just a minute,” Mary said.

The dimples in the basket weaver’s face got stumped into cemented shock. The tone had been unexpected.

“How much more time do you need?” Mark asked. “Are you going to buy anything?”

His spread-finger hands, going up and down, resembled the smoky aftermath of a fireworks display.

“Well?” he asked.

“Okay,” Mary said, “let’s go.”

She stood up. A glare hit the chocolate peaks of the basket weaver’s face, her facial valleys darkening and turning to ebony indentations of outrage. Her time had been wasted! The time of a great creator! Those fools didn’t realise that her soul had already permeated the sky! Those who knew nothing about craftsmanship had stripped her of precious moments of creativity! God’s mystery was irrelevant in comparison to her existence. Her shocked mouth shot open, but nothing came out, not a thing—just a silence that expressed the depth of her astonishment, her eyes hardening into dense balls of scorn.

She swept aside the hanging beads and fabrics and indicated that the street was for the lower forms. We have fixed ideas on who should be competing for higher rewards; we’re as prejudiced in this respect as we are in all others.

Outside, Mark said: "I thought you were going to take all day!"

Being a slave to other people's immodesty wasn't his style.

Mary's silence was antarctic. Not understanding Mark's inspiration, she saw his actions as revenge. She had yet to kill off the *aged unnecessary*. Fatherly criticism was still blurring her perception of deeper, male motivations.

The basket weaver returned to her garden—to her verdant cauldron of creativity—where she was free of guilt's restricting analysis, free to create and to recreate herself.

* * *

Mark and Peter were on a losmen's verandah, palms black against stars that were glowing with peaceful assurance. Waves were whispering in a nearby lake. Moonlight on water defined the horizon. A far-away-village's lights were gleaming within an ebony infinity of invisible air and liquid. Only gilded protons remained in this absence of solid forms—in this nothingness in which indiscriminate, elongated, widely-spaced flames of acquiescence were glowing, like long candles, in the vastness of space, each flame separated by black infinity.

"What did you think," Peter asked, "about that horse incident?"

His voice was calm in the immensity of atmospheric silk that the sky had placed over the earth. Mark's head jolted with surprise.

"Nothing much," he said. "Why?"

Peter was surprised by Mark's surprise. Mark stretched out, yawning, arching his back.

"I think," Peter said, "it wasn't just showing off."

Mark's eyes whitened with alertness. The voice that came to him through the balminess of the atmosphere was like a whip of conviction. "Wasn't just" blew open a door in his mind.

Peter swung his legs off his easy-chair. He sat on the chair's edge, leaning forward. Phosphorescent realisation had flashed across his mind. The building-up of compacted considerations had finally exploded.

"We think," he said, "that poor people don't suffer from our vain substitutes for authenticity—but they do."

Mark put his book down. The verandah's light was gaseous gold against ebony, like star birth in a black cosmos.

"He had some strange inspiration," Mark said, "that's for sure."

"Pain," Peter replied.

The single syllable cracked in the air's silken humidity like a drumbeat.

"Pain?" Mark asked.

"Traumatic pains," Peter replied, "overwhelm us so we have preventative overreactions that come across as parodies of existence; and because these parodies aren't representative of our real state they look trivial and ridiculous."

Mark's marine eyes shone with fresh clarity.

"Like forms of incompetent relief?" he asked.

“Yes,” Peter replied. “I couldn’t have said it better if I’d tried.”

The lake’s music flowed with laid-back persistence. Peter lay back on his easy-chair. The lemon light made a perfect contrast with bottomless black, the two beautifying each other, like stimulating components of an alluring whole. The faint whispering had an indistinct source, as if it was being fanned out by the silky air.

Peter continued: “We hope our lives will improve. Maybe we’re deluding ourselves, but the possibility of positive change still exists for us—we think. But imagine you’ve lost faith in God and you know that change, due to your cultural and economic circumstances, is impossible; imagine, under those circumstances, if you think that God is no more important than you are—or that you think that you’re even better. And why not? What’s God done that’s so fantastic—I mean morally? And you’re trapped in nothing but unchangeable reality. And the pain of this entrapment—without a real God—becomes unbearable so you engage in wayward acts of exaltation to get attention—to be exalted. But you need a constant audience, and this is difficult to get because these acts of exaltation are irrelevant to the majority, so the pain is irrepressible. You’re swamped by your own imagination. The mere threat of annihilation guarantees vanity. It has nothing to do with money.”

“Amazing,” Mark said.

His chortles boomed in the compacted air. He was amused by insights, by ironic truths, by discoveries, for these things produced alleviation from the life-crushing predictability of normalcy—from the possible future that frightened him.

The “simple” driver *had* just been a poor, God-fearing soul. Now he was another reflection in that dark mirror of space.

* * * * *

“Saving Face: Learning Vietnamese (or Not) in Vietnam”

by Don Adams

When I returned home to the U.S. after my first year spent living in Vietnam a decade ago, a repeated question I received was, “Have you learned the language?” – to which I sometimes replied, “It depends what you mean by learned,” and other times said, “Một chút,” meaning, not much. I learned enough to order food and drink, to summon a waiter, and to ask for a check – although I admittedly was occasionally reduced to hand gestures and pointing. The gesture of signing a chit in the air as a way of asking for a bill would seem to be universally acknowledged.

Although the Vietnamese language was long ago transliterated from Chinese style characters into a Roman alphabet with diacritics, Vietnamese words to Western ears are not pronounced precisely as they are written. For example, the phrase for a check or a bill in Vietnamese is “tính tiền,” but the t’s sound more like explosive and staccato d’s. Also the seeming accent marks are actually tonal marks indicating that the first word must be pronounced in an upward manner and the second in a downward manner, like a sigh. Of course when one asks for a check in English, one raises one’s voice at the sentence’s end, indicating a request. But in Vietnam one *orders* a check, with a sigh. This is all very hard to get used to, and with the universal hand gesture handy, why bother? Out of self-respect naturally, or to translate the concept into cultural Vietnamese, to *save face*, which implies both respect for oneself and respect for the hierarchical social situation in which one finds oneself – the importance of which, in a Confucian culture such as that of Vietnam, can hardly be overstated.

And so upon returning to Vietnam, I enrolled in an intensive five-day-a-week Vietnamese-for-foreigners course. My intent was to be a back-row student, to attend about half of the time and pay about half attention. Unfortunately there was only one other student in the class, a Chinese businesswoman from Thailand who was an importer of

Vietnamese shrimp. She wanted to know Vietnamese yesterday, and already knowing Chinese, a closely related language, she was well on her way. The instructor could not proceed fast enough through our beginner's workbook to please her. At first I was sympathetic with the situation, being a teacher by profession myself. I stumbled along apologetically, humorously, the class clown, occasionally taking advantage of my native speaker status to point out errors in the workbook and in my companions' English – vainly attempting to save the face I was so rapidly losing.

After a few halcyon days possible at the beginning of even the worst of classroom experiences (as one learns in the school of hard knocks), the instructor abandoned entirely his original casual and genial manner and began grimly plowing us through the workbook, goaded on by my classmate's impatience. Falling further and further behind, I too lost my initial good humor, until the point at which I became positively surly. When the instructor asked me a question, I responded promptly, "Tôi không biết" – I don't know (one statement I was certain of) – with the straightest of faces. I even lost interest in correcting his English.

So I quit, and just in time. Because I had begun instinctively attempting to try to decipher what people were saying around me in coffee shops and restaurants and beer joints and sometimes almost succeeding. What could I have been thinking? In a vigorously communicative and curious culture like that of Vietnam, in which a likely interrogative to the foreign stranger is, "Anh đi đâu?" (Where are you going?) or "Anh đang làm gì?" (What are you doing?), my ignorance had been both shield and shelter. I could not forget my beginner's Vietnamese fast enough. My deniability was at risk, that which had allowed me to look hopelessly blank when someone asked me for the hundredth time, "Anh có vợ chưa?" (Are you married yet?). The "chưa" – yet – is all too telling; in standard Vietnamese usage, one cannot simply ask if one is or is not married, but must ask, "Are you married yet?"

But even with the most scrupulous care, some comprehension is bound to insinuate itself into the not altogether addled mind. It is unavoidable. The best that one can do is to adopt a critical attitude toward it. My Vietnamese friend Hiếu said to me back then, "You complain a lot," then added, "but generally for good reasons." To which I responded, "Well I am not a cat or dog after all. I have opinions." "That's all right," he said, "Vietnamese people

complain a lot too. They just don't like to talk about it." Which is something like the sound of one-handed clapping I supposed.

To the native English speaker attempting it for the first time, Vietnamese seems mainly about vowels, although there are some notably unpronounceable consonants for the beginning speaker, such as the "ng" cluster at the beginning of the name "Nguyễn," the family name of one-third of the Vietnamese population by some estimates. The "g" in Nguyễn is not quite silent. But neither can it readily be heard by the non-native speaker, for whom it is yet another mystery of the East.

There are five to seven tonal possibilities for each vowel and vowel combination, depending on the regional dialect. Although it is tempting for the native English speaker attempting to learn the language to ignore tonal marks as superfluous, one must, on the contrary, pay particularly close attention to them in pronunciation. Otherwise instead of ordering a bottle of drinking water, one orders boiling water, that sort of thing.

These subtle but vital tonal distinctions naturally create confusion and misunderstandings even among native speakers. And one consequently witnesses Vietnamese arguing vociferously in pairs and groups at all times and places. Or perhaps they are simply discussing the weather. The language is so melodramatic in its tonal shifts and vigorous enunciations that even a casual conversation appears to a mush-mouth English speaker like a terrific row.

When I first arrived in Ho Chi Minh City (commonly referred to by its former name of Saigon), I kept waiting for the fists to start flying. A conversation in America spoken with even a fraction of the animation innate in Vietnamese discourse would send wary onlookers running for cover. In their energetic speech, the Vietnamese seem instinctive drama queens and tragic heroes, when they are not being blankly and darkly silent. "The word is 'inscrutable'," my American friend said to me with a wink.

No doubt the most disconcerting of differences in any foreign environment is language. On my many nights of coerced sociability at a wide variety of Karaoke bars throughout Saigon in my first year there, the most disturbing behavior I witnessed was not the unfathomable compulsion to make a spectacle of oneself in public, but the fact that this performance was conducted through a series of tonal and verbal utterances that were to me, in those early days, the merest gibberish.

Having time at my disposal in these extended evenings, I attempted to analyze the social meaning of karaoke, which seemed to me to be in almost every possible manner a shameless activity. First of all there is the shamelessness of the performers themselves who, far from needing to be prodded, follow each other eagerly onto the stage, as cattle off of a cliff. Then there is the shamelessness of the audience which, when witnessing these generally awful, off-key performances, is afforded the questionable pleasure of watching a martyr be shot through with arrows. Only, as the case may be, it is the embarrassed, chagrined, self-conscious non-native such as myself who is the victim of the spectacle. The abused native audience and self-flagellating singers all appear miraculously unharmed at the end of the performance, like so many magicians' assistants.

Apparently habits of self-consciousness are not universal. I had suspected as much on a recent visit to Paris, where the shopkeepers and restaurateurs seemed so embarrassed *for* me when, having utterly failed to communicate to them with my execrable college French, I endeavored to speak to them slowly and loudly in English, as one speaks to a child, which was to add insult to injury, since they all quite naturally understood English perfectly well and even condescended to speak it when given no alternative by an inept interlocutor such as myself.

I understand their preference. French is a nicer language than English to converse in. It is rather like listening to a mellow reed instrument or perhaps a French horn. The sound of Vietnamese in those early days, on the other hand, too often recalled, to my callow beginner's ears, the gratingly off-key trombone-playing days of my youth.

I think that this language aversion bespeaks of the acute vulnerability of the obvious alien freshly embarked in an ethnically homogenous culture. When I heard Vietnamese being spoken by fellow customers at a department store in Florida soon after I returned home from my first Vietnamese sojourn, I experienced a wave of pleasure and nostalgia and lamented my bad-student ways that prohibited me from striking up a conversation with them in their native tongue. *That* would be a pleasant surprise for them I optimistically fantasized, and immediately it occurred to me that that is how Vietnamese English speakers must feel when they endeavor to strike up a conversation with me in Saigon, an endeavor I had found myself more and more avoiding and repulsing after my initial tourist's thrill of being of interest to the locals. Sensing my wariness, one would-be

interlocutor at the public swimming pool sought to reassure me, “I don’t want to *know* you. I simply want to practice my English.”

I have been told that native-speaking English teachers and tutors actively encourage this type of behavior. I can only too well imagine them instructing their young, eager, and credulous pupils, “You must take every opportunity to talk to native speakers. Don’t worry about bothering them. They’ll be flattered.” Perhaps it is the English teachers’ way of getting back at the rest of us who are posted abroad on legitimate (or illegitimate) business, and who tend to look upon these peripatetic English-teacher types as hardly more to be regarded than the backpacker hordes on their continual migration from beer ghetto to beer ghetto throughout the more economical tourist destinations of the world.

Native English speakers have it so lucky. It is the great dream of much of the world to speak the language that one learned from infancy *without even trying*. “Do you know what is the most spoken language in the world?” a Vietnamese university colleague once asked me. “Mandarin?” I hazarded. “Bad English,” he said triumphantly. Being a native English speaker is a tremendous disincentive when it comes to learning another language and it is bad for the character in general in an environment of would-be English speakers, prompting an unearned sense of primacy and entitlement.

An expat acquaintance in Saigon once told me, “It is my fixed belief that all people everywhere are innately capable of understanding English if they only try hard enough.” If a Vietnamese person learns English, he/she is in many senses given a passport to the world. On the other hand, an English speaker who learns Vietnamese is enabled to converse (generally badly, given the difficulty of the language) with a native Vietnamese speaker who would probably rather be practicing English.

Cultural differences between Vietnamese and American attitudes toward personal contact are reflected in our respective languages. In Vietnamese, there is a polite manner in which to address any stranger one meets, according to sex, relative age, and perceived social rank. One addresses a figure in authority in a different manner than one addresses a friend or colleague, and an elder in a different manner than one addresses someone who is younger, which accounts for the Vietnamese obsession with asking one’s age – an alarming interrogative for the youth-obsessed American, who is embarrassed to be older than 25, or 30 at the most!

In English, there is no really adequate manner in which to address perfect strangers. The deficiency of the language in this respect is made evident when the foreigner walks down the street in Saigon and is hailed by the street vendors, cabbies, and hawkers as “You! You! You!” – which is their hopeless attempt to translate their complex and polite manner of addressing strangers into uncongenial English. I have noticed lately that in the more tourist-frequented areas of Saigon, street-sellers have begun addressing potential foreign customers as “my friend,” which, though smarmy, is certainly more congenial and less alarming than shouts of “You! You! You!”

When I returned to America for a visit after my first year in Saigon, I several times instinctively attempted to hail a waiter at a restaurant with the polite, “Em oi! Em oi!” Vietnamese method of getting a server’s attention in this situation. Of course it didn’t work. But what substitute should I have used? “Excuse me” is so inadequate and insincere, an apology that is more often really a complaint. And so tongue-tied by the language itself, one strains to catch the server’s eye, growing increasingly frustrated and impatient.

The truth is that the master-servant implication of the relationship of patron to server (as with all hierarchical social relations) makes Americans instinctively uncomfortable. It would almost seem that we are most at our ease when having the least to do with one another, as at self-service establishments, or ensconced with our entertainment systems in our hermetically sealed dwellings. In the Western world of the future, it may well be that no one will have to ask anyone for anything, and public-space discourse itself could become as obsolete as the appendix. In America today, it is almost possible to contemplate such a future world with pleasure. But should one have the temerity to attempt to explain such a sentiment to the endemically interactive Vietnamese, its logic and appeal would almost certainly be lost in translation, and thank goodness for that.

After ten years of admittedly lackadaisical and sporadic attempt, my Vietnamese remains very much a work in progress, but I have learned at least to value the luxury of living in a radically different cultural environment and to appreciate alternative cultural viewpoints that require an earnest effort at understanding. Even when it is a complete failure, the effort of understanding in and of itself usually is enough to save the face of

everyone concerned, and we can carry on with respectful incomprehension and enhanced tolerance in our multifarious multicultural world.

* * * * *

“Castaway”

(Somewhere among the 18,000 Indonesian islands)

by John C. Mannone

Who doesn't dream
of being on a remote private beach—
the smooth white sand to caress toes,
the deep blue and emerald sea to cast away
your dreams
and set them afloat on the clear, salty truth
of loneliness? Seclusion
sometimes is a good thing, but maybe not
like this.

We suborn our own testimony
just because our shadows say so. Even in the moonlight
filtering through the palm trees. The rest as starlight glitter
on momentarily sedate waves.

What about those stars,
do they sparkle lies too? I can see you right now
in that gown, its reflecting sequins
brighter than hot tropical stars,
I want to lie
next to you, right now, on this desert island. No
not here, but where I am in my mind, your mind.

John Dunne said *No man is an island*
but I *am* an island,

water lapping at my shore.

I hear your voice in the waves.

Like the stars, water cannot express
itself, nor I, the way I feel. Your skin is soft
in my memory, my skin is parched
and my tongue cleaves to the roof of my mouth
even as I call out your name. Every night,
my dreams don't waver
from the grief of your absence.

My heart is eaten
with worms, and beetles
of loneliness. But before the flies come
or the crabs sidle up the shore to my exhausted shell,
and claw
at my final breaths,
I'll leave a message in this bottle that I found washed up,
tangled in seaweed.

It'll float to you across the Indo-Pacific,
and a small child
as I once was, will find it on a California beach, by the doorsteps
of your heart; he'll cup it in his hands
and bring it to you,
let it unfold
as a butterfly on your lips
while you read
of my waterlogged kisses
sent from my desert island dreams. Let the whole world
speak of it, even Oprah in her purple voice,
that I have been found.

* * * * *

“Five Thailand Haiku”

by Chris Luppi

Bangkok, ten pm

Whiskey handed, pondering

Rainbows. Yes! RAINBOWS!

Urban antennae

Skeletal, drought-dead corn stalks

Scorched trees, things reaching

Monsoons howl sideways

Man cowers, frogs delight dance

Time, water, oceans

Scorpion eclipsed

Postures under lofted rock

Liking her chances

Ants build pyramids

Godless monuments divine

Crop circles, death threats

* * * * *

“Raining on EDSA, Riding on a Bus”

by Karlo Sevilla

Tandem of evening dark

and heavy rainfall swoops

on perfect prey: clueless

congested

chaotic

miasmatic

metropolis.

Past waterfall down windowpane

and through roaring wind and diluvial rain,

metal gorilla heads of transfixed halogen eyes

skim and spray through oceanic highway

branching into rivers of ominous side streets

then into rivulets of clogged alleyways.

* * * * *

“Two years later”

by Jessica Quah

From the coastal highway, you can almost see both
bridges, red taillights stretching across the strait,
factories letting their people go for now.

Air conditioners on full
blast in every car, pockets of resistance;

nights in Penang reach a high of thirty-five
degrees Celsius. I've been caught in the throng
of strangers and sounds between buildings
in the old part of town,
somewhere between the Equator, tradition,

and foreign investments. The chains we make
ourselves are the hardest to break. Both bridges
make dotted lines to the mainland in the dark, invisible
from Gurney Drive and
Flower Bay, the mess

of overpriced tourist attractions and teenagers who want
nothing more than to be someone else. I've seen
the asymmetrical shape of gratitude. Tonight, Penang is
bright and lit up like a fancy paper
lantern. It's Saturday and tonight,

all the water in the world couldn't surround
this island fast enough. It's fashion to start burning
from the inside out. Both bridges snake
over the water, twin pathways
for people trying too hard

to be everywhere at once, keeping Penang
connected, plugged in, in contact with
both reality and reflection. Two cables
carrying a current so human, it's ready
any moment to incinerate its own shell.

“Return”

by Jessica Quah

Imagine falling, to land hands and knees
scraping tarmac awash with heat;
think *home* in another language

even as you remember that asphalt
never comes clean. After meeting the sun
all over again, realize that you have forgotten

how to sleep through prayer, and place
a new value on things you didn't use
to miss. Will away the memories

resurrecting themselves in the room
where you unpack, introducing
new familiars to the old ones,

and as the days wear on, recollect bruises
like a hobby, reopen the stinging
papercuts of long ago. Reach for

the longing you left with your shoes
at the door, the old ache for
directions to a place you used to only

dream of: here is earth, here is
water. Make yourself a new land

to call *she whose ways I will learn to love.*

* * * * *

“Because of You there is more Beauty and Goodness in the World!”

by Leon Miller

I remember the first time I saw you smile,
I saw something I sensed about you all the while;
It was pure, sincere yet expressed a charm that could truly beguile,
And such a smile you gave to an unsuspecting little child.

What you gave was more than friendly, polite, and kind,
It was a goodness and innocence that in our world is hard to find.
Reflecting a character truly gentle and benign,
Something we wish we could see more of in humankind.

It revealed a spirit that's goodhearted and carefree,
An authentic expression of what it means to simply be
To be oneself without deceit or the slightest trace of guile
Pure pristine beauty is what you disclosed to that child,

An aesthetically sublime moment happened oh so naturally,
When you revealed yourself as you truly are and hopefully always will be.
You opened your heart's portals so that the child could see
Your true self shining through explicitly.

The value of what you gave the child could hardly know,
A natural beauty that mere glamor could never bestow.
As if innocence meeting innocence sparks a special kind of glow,
A priceless wonder! That only the innocent can know.

* * * * *

“Procession”

by Carl Thompson

They walk single file
barefoot and garbed in saffron.
Bearing cradled bowls,
the dawn grazes their shoulders
as they take alms, make merit.

* * * * *

“In Celebration of the 50th Anniversary of GI Boots on the Ground”

by Gerard Sarnat

“Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.”

-- George Santayana, *Reason in Common Sense*

For the price of one ounce of gold
and the readiness to eat dead shipmates,
half of the South China Sea boat people
-- thirty monks included --

made it to land.

After which a man named Alexander,
Captain of a U.S. warship, was court-martialed
and convicted of dereliction of duty,
what civilian lawyers deem *depraved indifference*,
for boarding the leaky vessel,
resupplying with thimbles of water,
a handful of tins of other meat and a map

then abandoning

the junk
already drifting
just short of a
Santayana month.

“Summer Sunday Sangha Sitting”

by Gerard Sarnat

No

Longer

Quarter lotus

Floor material

I

Sit,

King

In castle

Chair,

Feet on

Ground,

Eyes closed.

Gazing

Up, I'm

Flooded with

Some vague hope

Emanating

From skylights

Of this old church

We have converted.

Head

On core's

Tentpole turned

Down and inward

Thoughts

Become dark

Til brought back to

Cleansing in-and-out breaths

Severing

Paranoia my broken

Butt bones are wired to

WikiLeaks...Peace returns.

Meditation

Ended by sweetest

Softest, slowest 3 gongs ever,

H. Sapien rejoins monkey chatter.

* * * * *

“Jakarta Sestina”

by Christine Kelly

Too much of the day spent sitting in this *macet*
Reading, studying, sleeping, staring out the window
At the littered streets of this huge busy city,
Or at a sea of helmets, the motorcycles
Whizzing past, taking up so little yet so much of the road
Bouncing in my seat as we bump along, or stop.

People dart across the street, a hand up, to stop
For a brief moment, the endless flow of *macet*.
Others wait on the sides of the road
With expressions of long suffering that I see from the window.
It is not safe to cross with all the motorcycles
Polluting the streets as much as the trash in this city.

Hustling and colorful, this is the true city
That never sleeps, never comes to a stop.
After the bombing, motorcycles
Zigzagged through the *macet*.
Life went back to normal, I saw from my window
Heading home from school that they filled up the road.

Nothing holds people back from the road
For long; people have places to go in this city.
I see them swerve to avoid cats, children, chickens (yes, chickens) from my window

But nothing ever brings it all to a stop:
No *ondel-ondel*, no lightning bolts lessen the *macet*
Not even floods, nothing holds back the motorcycles.

Sometimes they scare me, the motorcycles.
When they surround my car, closing in, there's no room on the road.
Without them would there be as much *macet*?
Even with them, I still adore this city,
With the call to prayers from mosques on every block that never seem to stop,
And am thankful for the craziness I see out the window.

From my seat by the window
I see mansions, apartments, and slums, motorcycles
Lined up by *warungs*, where their riders stop
For a quick bite to eat before getting back on the road,
They have work to do in this city
Homes to return to, they don helmets and head back into the *macet*.

I lean my head against the window, and see the road
With the rushing motorcycles, crowding the city
That never comes to a stop, the constant *macet*.