



# **A Collection of Short Stories for Thai Learners of English**

Forty short stories

By  
John Thasai

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# Introduction

Let me tell you briefly about myself. I am a university teacher and my real name is Janpha Thadphoothon. In this book, the name John Thurstone has been used as my pen name. I have been teaching English to Thai students, mostly at the tertiary level. My special interests vary, including creative writing and robotics. I also believe in the power of reading and a book lover, which some may say that I am a bookworm. I often encourage my students and the people I meet and know to read and develop useful reading habits. I have faith in education and reading.

I enjoy reading short stories, as they are not too long. My conviction or personal belief is that - literature is an expression of human civilization through writing. The invention of writing itself marked the birth of human civilization, as they say. Traditionally, any written work, prose or verse, considered artistic or intellectual, is considered a literary work. Literary works are records of great minds, enable us to ask questions and seek answers to many important questions. I am not saying here that the

stories I wrote are considered ‘literature’. I intend them to be stories for language learning and some food for thought.

People write stories, or rather tell their stories for a variety of reasons. Some do it to mark their existence in the universe of time and human civilization. Many do it to heal their souls and to define and redefine their identities and existence. Writing can be existential, indeed.

I would like to end this introduction with what an author by the name of Joan Didion has written on the topic ‘Why I Write’. She wrote this:

“I write entirely to find out what I’m thinking, what I’m looking at, what I see and what it means, what I want and what I fear.”

What I would also like to say here, at the very beginning of the collection is this: If you do not write it down, somebody else will. Writing is one of the surest ways to

represent yourself, your cultural identity, as well as personal one. Writing has some therapeutic benefits, too. It is reported that writing is a way to fight against dementia. As we get older, we tend to forget things or events in the past. Writing is a form of meditation, as when people write, they are forced to set their ideas and emotions in order and reconceptualize them. In other words, putting what is hanging here and there in their proper cabinets.

Reading also allows us to be free, not getting stuck in a certain mode of thinking or feeling. It allows us to better understand ourselves and the world around us. Indeed, reading boosts our memories and enhances our imagination, not to mention its language learning benefits.

Enjoy reading!

John Thasia

Bangkok, Thailand, 2021

# 1. The Last Warning

Professor Manus Dumrongkiatpaibool picked up his old smartphone. Someone called.

“Who could it be? He told himself. He felt a bit annoyed.

It was a call from a young journalist. This time it was not an old journalist or an intern, but a newly graduate TV journalist, good-looking, attractive, and confident. Gina was as sexy as sexiness could be. Her voice was not too sweet, calm, and firm, if anything, it revealed her training and professionalism – her charm. Gina had her personal charm, and her voice could launce a thousand ships. In short, she had a charming voice, which could be inferred as someone with a great personality. She was attractive and charming, even from her voice.

“Would you be kind Sir, to offer me a chance for a *personal* interview?” she said on the phone. She was exceptionally polite. The word personal was seductive to the professor’s ears. Manus was stunned by the command of her voice. He was ordained as a Buddhist monk once

when he was in his early twenties. One teaching he could still remember well was the one of the power of women. “The sun and the moon are powerful, but women are more powerful.”

Prof. Manus was nicely asked for an interview. He knew that it had to be in his place, he disliked the practice of doing it online. Earlier, he declined a dozen of online or remote interview requests. He disapproved of the lockdown measures, arguing that those would not help anyone. “I would kill more people than the actual virus” he often told them. After all, people respected him highly. He was a former professor of medicine. A retired professor like him declined an offer to serve in the past government.

He was known as a UFO advocate. He was smart enough to hedge his personal belief, “it’s just my personal belief, and I don’t want anyone to believe me or believe what I have said.” You would be fooled to believe him, as a matter of fact.

His popularity surged after the video clips showing strange flying objects went viral. The Pentagon came out and announced that the clips supposedly leaked to the public were real, admitting that they too did not know what they were and where they were from. This created a widespread set of speculations. Some came out and said those things or objects were alien spaceships. Many people still cast some doubts on the intention of the footage, not to mention the credibility of the US president.

In Thailand, Manus had been a proponent of the UFO and aliens' movement. Yet, his belief was unlike those of the US, Russia, and Europe. It was based on the combination of Buddhism and Animism, some critics said. Less to do with science, more with spirituality. His theory was that we could only communicate with those aliens if they allowed us, humans, to do so. Of course, Manus urged the public to practice moral codes. "Only moral people will survive," he said.

A religious sect promoting vegetarian food consumption was quick to point out the end of the old world, and the coming of the new age. The new age for them was the age of true equality. The world where all animals are respected. In short, your chance of surviving depends on your dietary habit.

Prof Manus was also an expert in the so-called fuzzy logics. The theory is ambiguous, which is all about the possibilities occurring between zero to one. He was regularly invited to give a special lecture at some universities in Thailand. He did not care much about the money he would get from his talks, but he enjoyed chatting with youngsters. He told the media that there were three things in the universe.

“The first is the things that you can observe, you can see, like this table. Then there is a thing that you cannot see with your naked eyes, like corona viruses. The third is the things that exist but humans are not capable of seeing even with scientific equipment.”

Now, let's talk about the sexy journalist. Her name was Gina, and she just graduated from the Faculty of Communication Art, majoring in modern journalism. She was the rising star, partly due to her professional look and wit. Some news anchors called her '*the real killer*'. Her charm was indisputable, and her look was almost perfect. She was good-looking with a brain power.

“Stop following Manote,” Winai Raktham, her boss said, “Leave it to Helen, a new intern. I would like you to work on the UFO assignment.”

“Me? UFOs?” Gina exclaimed. “Are you kidding me?”

Gina had been following a businessman-turned-politician in the past two months, interviewing him, documenting his assets, including his little secrets, including his mistresses and minor wives. It was as boring as a job could be. She was relieved to have an intern to take it off her shoulders.

Gina was assigned to interview Professor Manus Dumrongkiatpaibool . For her, it was simply this grandpa.

Gina was only 23, young and lively, and charming. She was young enough to be his daughter.

Winai, her boss used to make a sarcastic remark that Gina was the only one in his media company who could easily get people to say ‘Yes’.

After making an appointment, Gina felt energetic. There was something soothing and enchanting about talking to Manus. The next morning, Gina and her cameraman travelled to his house. Gina was early. They entered his house and the interview took place outdoor in front of his traditional Thai wooden stilt house, under the shade of the mango tree. Gina was not alone in meeting this old man. She wondered if he would turn out to be a dirty old man like her informant, Manote who was not only cunning, but a Trump-like personality. She came with her camera man, a middle-aged man by the name of Thongchai. The interview was the first of the series, that was what Winai, her boss, and her team had planned.

Gina was not too shocked to be told by the old professor that it was not the Chinese laboratories and the bat eaters who started the virus, but a mob of aliens.

“Go back and watch my interview three years ago,” he said. “I have told the world everything.”

“Few people actually listen to you,” Gina said.

“There you go, see what is happening?” the old professor said.

Most of his theories were controversial if not crazy. For some, he was a genius, but for many an eccentric old man, long past his glory. He was dubbed the mad professor by the Thai public. To start with, he believes in the existence of aliens and UFOs. Three years ago, he gave an interview to a TV program. He told the public that in the near future several years from then, the world would be invaded by viruses. He also said that the way to survive the attacks was to combine the scientific principles and follow the moral standards. He also added that diets were necessary, we all needed to be vegetarians – do not eat fresh. For Manus, the only way to communicate with the aliens was

meditation. The mind well trained would be able to enter another realm of reality, he said.

“Why are they attacking us, I mean our planet?” Gina asked Manus. She knew it sounded kind of weird.

Manus took a deep breath and looked at Gina into her beautiful black eyes. “They did not start the pandemic. They have been trying to warn us and communicate with human beings.”

Should I believe him? Gina whispered to herself. Only time could tell, she told herself.

Prof. Manus could read her mind. He paused for a while and continued. She looked straight to his face. Manus smiles.

“It is their last warning,” the professor said.  
He repeated himself, “yes, their last message.”

“Are you serious?” Gina was stunned, couldn’t believe herself of what she had heard.

“I never bluff,” he smiled, trying to lessen the severity of the issue.

Professor Manus told Gina that, several years ago, he and his students, had concrete evidence to confirmed that the discovery of an alien flying saucer, aka UFO.

“They actually were here in Thailand,” he added.

“Why Thailand?” Gina protested.

According to manus, they came here to Thailand because there were meditation masters in Thailand. He mentioned a specific mountain in the north of Thailand. He added that it happened on that mountain because of the past.

“Tell me more,” Gina said.

“By the way, would you like anything to drink, like coffee?” Manus offered her something to drink.

Gina admired his taste for coffee. Manus handed her a cup of Americano. She thanked him. He smiled.

“There are many people who can communicate with aliens. They found that that place is the center of an alien spacecraft.”

“You mean like a hub or an airport?”

“Something like that,” Manus said.

Prof. Manus was among the first discoverers who reported the existence of the UFO mountain in Thailand. There have been many believers who were unable to travel anywhere coming to practice Dhamma at the meditation center on that hill.

Using the principle of meditation to communicate with aliens? Gina could not believe her ears.

Only people who practiced dharma could use Dharma to communicate with aliens, Prof Manus declared. He told Gina that he himself, when meditated, could communicate with aliens.

“Can I do that too?” Gina asked.

“Everybody can if they have attained a certain stage of spiritual development.” Manus said.

Gina began noticing that today the respectable professor was strange. He kept looking at her face and her. She could sense his feeling.

“Are you alright?” she asked.

“You have made me nervous,” he said.

“Me? How?”

He did not answer her. They continued. Manus said he could not rule out the fact that Covid-19 viruses were partly the result of alien interventions. He and many masters had been watching the new development. Lately, they started calling for mass mediation across the kingdom.

“We started building more centers for Dharma practice. So that people can travel to meditate and save themselves and their love ones.”

Gina began to notice Manus’ body in return. He was smart, despite his advanced age.

“Must be the effect of Covid-19” she kept telling herself. She was trying to figure out her strange feeling, how the old professor had managed to sensually attract her attention.

Anita asked her friend, Gina, about her first encounter with Prof Manus. Gina said she was not sure about anything. Anita was against the UFO stuff. She said that she did not believe we've ever been visited by beings from another world.

“Don’t be too sure about anything,” Gina told her friend.

Anita said: “When we have been to other worlds, we have left flags, posters, tracks and other items and identified ourselves as having come in peace. Why would beings coming here, sneak around, hide out and secretly do stuff? “

She continued: “Wouldn't they think we wouldn't like that. Wouldn't they think they're going to start something? No they've never been here, not yet anyway.”

Gina was 50-50 about the UFO stories. She herself had never seen one. The second time she interviewed Prof Manus, she told him that many people were skeptic about aliens and UFOs.

The professor gave her a warm smile. “I know exactly what you have been through. “I have had it all the time.”

He then said: “Just because you don't see them ... that doesn't mean they are not there.”

“There are special people in this world that do things, others cannot. Open your eyes find the truth and you will be set free.”

“If you cannot then you are not meant to see. Is that what you mean to say?” Gina argued.

Gina and the professor both agreed that we could not always trust the government, not just *this one*, they referred to governments in general.

After two interview sessions, the relationship between the two became closer. Manus, too, was astonished by Gina's ability to enter his very personal world. He knew he was in trouble the moment he saw her face and heard her voice on the phone.

The third interview was personal. Gina came to ask the professor about mediation and the ability of communicate with aliens. The first two interviews were nothing but a blockbuster. Their conversations aerated a lot of public discussions among the Thai public, ranging from abbots, rectors, down to ordinary housewives and lottery sellers.

Many Thais, according to Prof Manus, were convinced they had encountered a UFO and later reported the sighting to the media. “Most will think they were crazy or hallucinated.”

“Some maybe, but many were not.”

“How do you cope with those negative and personal criticisms?” Gina asked.

“I simply ignore them. Except for some.”

He did not tell her what those ‘some criticisms’ were. She did not push for the answer either. For her, people need to be given room to breathe.

At first, Gina said she too was skeptical, and by nature, she as a journalist was trained to be so. It was only when she met with Manus and saw some photographs and some artefacts that Gina changed his mind. She sometimes wondered why she had radically changed. Was it love? Was it lust? Maybe she had found her soulmate.

Gina wondered about her life and he purpose in life. Manus told her that, for him, life is a magnificent and sacred. He said: “Let your life have many different purposes.” Gina and Manus often discussed life issues and cosmological topics such as the boundaries of the universes. Sometimes, he gave Gina a lecture on research and physics. Gina often told him that she was not her MA or PhD student. They got on well like a bush on fire. Time seemed to ne moving too fast when you had a great time.

Three months later, Gina and Manus met in a restaurant by the river, the river of kings. It was in late January when the weather was usually perfect for eating out. Tonight, Professor Manus Dumrongkiatpaibool looked ten years

younger with his blue jeans and a white T-shirt. He also wore a pair of sneakers, not a *Nike*, but something on that league. He ordered them from the Internet.

Were they having a date? The waiters would say yes. By the look of it, one would have thought so. Any fool would say ‘Yes’.

“Doc, are you sure you want to marry me” Gina asked. Instead of answering her question, Manus smiles and gave her a kiss on her left cheek.

He whispered something to her ear. He kissed her again. This time it was so intense.

He put his arms around her, too. “It’s been a while”, he said.

She smiled. A beautiful and sincere one. Something would happen tonight, she thought. Manus started acting like an 18-year-old stud, Gina observed. From her reaction, she seemed to like it big time. Let me see your true color, she smiled to herself.

The pandemic might be the last warning, but this love was their first.

## 2. The Three Lessons

Boonmee Chaichana was an English teacher, and he had been teaching English as a foreign language in a small school in Buriram, a province in the northeastern part of Thailand. The province has the border with Cambodia and the majority of the population communicate well in spoken Khmer.

Most of his students would speak Khmer dialect. So far, life was fair to him. The teacher was dark tall, but not too handsome. He was in his late forties – still single. There were gossips that he might not like women. He denied the rumor. Yet, he was a bachelor man. As a matter of fact, he had a few suitors.

As an English teacher, he could recall the first statement of *Pride and Prejudice*, which says “It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife.” He often recalled this

every now and then and often smiled to himself. He loved this sentence of *Pride and Prejudice*.

His only wish, it seemed, was to be a better language teacher. This summer was special. Why? He was asked to organize a field trip to Thailand's east coast. "It is the policy of the government," said the director of the school. He was drafted as the leader of the team. There would be him and two other teachers joining the trip.

Of course, he was chosen as the head of the east coast field trip. He liked the idea, as most of his students, aged between 9-11 had never been to the sea. He himself was born inland. He loved the sounds of the waves and the smell of sea water.

As expected, he was accompanied by two other teachers, Kai and Nongyao. They both were math teachers. Kai was married and now had two children herself. Nongyao was single, like Boonmee. Her boyfriend was an army officer,

and Boonmee was aware of the fact. He dared not cross the line, knowing well that his chance was slim.

At first, they had a bigger plan – to travel to Phuket, down the south of the country. The budget was an issue and a big and significant one. “With the small budget we have this year, we can only afford Rayong or Chanthaburi,” the school director told the organizing committee.

They had a consensus that Chanthaburi province was their best choice, all things considered. Now, let us pause. Let me tell you something about this province. Chanthaburi is a lovely province with several nice beaches and several kinds of fruits. Chanthaburi a province, not too far from Bangkok and Buriram, it is near Rayong and Pattaya. Chanthaburi is another great city where you can travel all year round. Holidaymakers loved this province. Many durian orchards exported their produce overseas, mainly to China.

The team, led by Boonmee, did this presentation to the school committee. They mainly did it as part of the normal procedure, you know, that kind of bureaucratic procedure. It was a success. Boonmee was serious about every small details. They got the bus, a good driver, and the budget needed. The told him to be careful and he promised he would. In fact, he would like to ask for more money, but he abandoned it on his second thought. Some experts told him that budgets are meant to be cut.

“You are the leader of this fieldtrip. You need to look after the students and everybody in your trip.” The school director, soon to retire patted his left shoulder with a grim. Boonmee could smelt cigarettes. He coughed and left the room.

Boonmee bowed and promised that he would do his best.

Like any other enterprises, a lot of preparation must first be done. The trip had, if anything, all that matter in a perfect holiday. If you want to travel to chill down and get the sea breeze, there are many perfect places, and

Chanthaburi is one of them. Why? It's mainly because it is a province next to the sea and the magnificent mangroves there are nothing but pristine. As a matter of fact, it is a fertile province. If you love fruits, tropical fruits, you cannot miss coming to visit Muang Chan, as the local call it.

It took them almost 8 hours to get to Chanthaburi province from the village. They were on an old bus and the driver was in his late 50s. The bus driver was instructed to be vigilant and extra careful. The bus moved slowly. Safety comes first, the driver was told, or rather ordered. There were 24 lives on the bus, twenty students, Boonmee, the two math teachers and the driver.

They stayed at a resort by the sea. The resort was called *Beachside* Resort, and it was right on the beach as its name suggested.

They arrived late in the evening. They had a quick dinner and had a campfire to get to know each other. In other words, to break the ice. Everybody was sitting around a burning fire, organized by the resort. This is one good thing about booking with the resort. They arrange things for you. The activities included dancing and singing. They went to bed before 10 PM. Everybody was having fun, including Boonmee.

On the second day, they walked around the neighborhood looking for birds and plants. In the evening before dinner time, Boonmee invited his students to take a walk on the beach. The first lesson began.

“Let’s take a walk before dinner,” he said. This was the beginning of the first lesson. A life lesson can occur in an unlikely place, on the beach, for example. Kai and Nongyao helped look after the students.

After strolling along the sandy beach for a while. He asked ten students to sit in on a sand dune and look at the sunset.

He said, listen to me carefully. “I have a story to tell and I want you to pay special attention.”

The teacher began his story. “There’s an old riddle that says five frogs are sitting on a lily pad. One decides to jump off. How many are left?”

Boonmee said it again for the second time.

Most students were quiet, except Jariya, a talkative girl from Grade 5.

“Four?” she shouted. Everybody else was quiet.

“If your answer is 4, thank your math’s teacher for your excellent math’s skills.”

Kai and Nongyao smiled. They shook their heads in unison.

“Unfortunately, this is not a test of your math’s ability or calculation.”

“It’s a life problem.” Boonmee began his lecture.

Most students were quiet, waiting for the teacher to give them the answer. Boonmee preferred that they were proactive. He had tried to urge them to be exquisite and skeptical, but it was hard. He failed a big time.,

“The correct answer is ‘five’,” the teacher said.

“Five?” Why five, Sir?” Jariya asked.

“Why? All five are still sitting there on the same lily pad.”

“The thing is that – the one frog only decided to jump but hasn’t.”

“What lessons can we learn from this story?” Moonmee asked the students. Some were not listening and began

scratching the sand for seashells. After all, it was a lovely evening.

One lesson I would like to teach you this evening is that Mona, another clever school girl, was the first to answer, she said, “we should listen carefully.”

Boonmee said, ”This is one good answer.”

“That’s all? Any other lessons?”

Another student responded, ‘Thinking is not doing’.

“What do you mean by that?” Boonmee asked the student.

“Well, the frog was just thinking right? It did not do anything. So, thinking is not an action.”

The answer was a clever one, Boonmee thought. “Not bad for rural students,” he told himself. The other two teachers smiled. All were clapping hands.

They did a few fun activities on the beach and headed back to have dinner.

Dawn was breaking the next day. It was a lovely morning. A beautiful summer morning with blue sky.

It was the beginning of the third day. They had five days to spend on the beach. After breakfast, the two math teachers began teaching students. They were on the bus to the waterfall. It was about an hour by bus up on the mountain.

Along the way, the students and teachers enjoyed the beautiful views along both sides of the road.

They reached the waterfall, and they went hiking up the mountain. Nothing was left to chance. They were told to follow the walking track and not to walk on their own. Stick to the group.

After two hours on the mountain. They were sitting on the camping ground, overlooking the mountain. They had about an hour before lunch. They were given the second lecture by the two math teachers. One of the math teachers, the taller one, began her activity. On the ground, she used a stick to make two straight sticks. The two lines were parallel. The length was different. The first line was 2 feet long, but the second one was 4 feet long.

Boonmee noticed that many students looked puzzled.

The second math teacher, Nongyao, stepped in. She asked loudly.

"Can you make the 2-foot line longer than the 4-foot line?" It was a simple question. But Boonmee knew the moral behind the question was not so simple.

This was a group activity. The students were divided into four small groups. They each had 10 minutes to discuss

ways to address the question. have been thinking of finding a way for a while.

“So, Group A, what is your solution?”

The representative of Group A used his left hand to erase the 4-foot line, shortening it to just 1 foot, making the 2-foot line instantly look longer.

Then the representative student asked the teachers:

"What do you think about our solution?"

Kai, the taller math teacher, smiled and said, “You can do that, but it may not be the best solution.”

Nongyao explained: “It is like stepping on someone else's head in order to make yourself higher. ”

Kai, the tall math teacher said, "The person who will raise himself higher By hurting other partners Not the right way If you choose to use this method.”

She continued: “Your life will be full of curses. And in the long run, life often fails. It is best to choose a way to lift yourself up. Without lowering others. “

“What about you Group B?”

The representative came forward. She was lanky, wearing thick glasses. She looked smart.

The teacher used the same stick to draw two lines again - 2 feet and 4 feet in length.

“Our solution is this,” the representative of Group B said. She used the stick to draw a 2 foot line to five feet.

“What do you think about our solution?”

Kai smiled and said, “Don't think your rivals are enemies.”

“But think of them as your teachers,” the teacher added.

“You have to develop yourself to be equal or better. It will allow you to move forward with grace and sustainability.”

“Those who move themselves up by destroying others, suing the master, and selling his friends, even though they made themselves successful, were a disgrace. It is an achievement without honors. “

Boonmee was amazed by the wisdom of the two math teachers. He

Cannot speak with full pride To raise oneself by  
unrighteous means With moving myself up By allowing  
others to take their way freely Inevitably yields different  
results.

It was too complex for the students, Boonmee thought.

.One student asked, “If there are no competitors, how do we know that I have the potential to work. If there is no loser, how can there be a winner?”

Good fighters admire good opponents. Because of a weak opponent Will make his victory unsustainable and not proud. Therefore... when meeting with a strong and brilliant competitor Will encourage us to develop ourselves better.

“By moving yourself up while lowering others, you might win, but there are also enemies to follow.” The teacher said.

But moving himself up without lowering others She will win Along with more friends And one of them may have been her own rival.

“That’s the end of the second lesson,” Boonmee declared.

“Thank you teachers” the students thanked their teachers in chorus.

Let’s have lunch. See you on the bus in 30 minutes.

What about the third? The two math teachers had done their part. They were responsible for the second one. Boonmee was the one responsible for the last lesson.

After lunch, the bus took them to the mangrove forest. It was by the sea, an estuary. Chanthaburi has a lot of them. The province is fertile and full of kind people.

The fourth day began at 6.30 AM. They had this full day before heading off early in the morning on their fifth day.

### 3. The Bay of Love

Kloyjai and Aree were best friends. They had been friends since high school years. Now, they were working in the same school. Kloyjai, in her late 20s, was a physical education teacher. Aree was twenty-seven years old, and she was teaching English. Life had been kind to them. The principal was kind, a soon-to-retire bald man. Other teachers in the school were great colleagues. But they all were married.

One Friday evening, Aree told her friend, Kloyjai this: “I don’t want to be an old maid.”

“Are you kidding me?”

“I’m dead serious.”

“Neither do I,” Kloyjai said with a smile. They both laughed. Both were born on the same year and now they were in their late 20s.

“Thirty is a curse,” Aree said.

But soon, both of them would have to unless something drastically happened. They realized that they needed to change. But how? They could not ask for advice from their parents either. In fact, they were pressured to start a family.

First, they changed their outfits. Aree ordered three bottle of perfume from the Internet. Kloyjai cut her hair short, reasoning that: “I would make me look ten years younger.”

Yes, something miracle or close to magic needed to happen, like a meteorite strike the earth or a nuclear war.

“I am not too old and ugly to get married or to have someone by myside at night,” Aree told herself as she was lying awake late at night.

The fact was that, around her village and her school, no one dared asking them out. Kloyjai used to work as an accountant in Bangkok. On the weekends, she helped her aunt and uncle who ran a small coffee shop by the road – on the way to Khao Yai National Park in Thailand.

Kloyjai was a light-skinned woman and the only daughter of a village head. Aree's father was a school teacher, too.

Today, Aree was visiting her friend, Kloyjai, and she was sitting on a high stool chatting with Kloyjai.

“An Americano, please” the handsome man placed his order with a sexy smile.

His name was Paul, let just know only his first name. Paul was a Thai man in his mid-forty. He came with his close friend – Preecha. Preecha and Paul were on the way to spend a few nights on the east coast.

“We were heading to Satha Heep,” Pau said.

For those of you who have never been to Thailand, let me tell you a bit about this seaside resort.

Sattahip Bay is a bay in the east side of the Gulf of Thailand. The bay is in Sattahip District, Chonburi Province.

After coffee and a chat, the two men drove off with the two ladies telephone numbers.

Aree and Kloyjai said they would like to join the two men. They wanted to make their lives more exciting. At the back of their minds, they were scared that they might get screwed up. There had been news on TV about handsome con men. “But life is also about taking risks,” Aree told Kloyjai. They shared the same mentality regarding dating before thirty. “Yes, serious situations require drastic measures,” Kloyjai said.

They were heading to the resort – the same one told by Paul and Preecha.

“Would anything romantic going happen to us?” Kloyjai asked Aree. Were was quiet for awhile. Then she said:

“I don’t know.”

“Life is about taking risks. Maybe, this time it will happen,” she added with a half smile.

## 4. An Old Beggar's Dream

Every good story needs to have three moves or parts – the beginning, middle, and the end. As the ending, it can be a sad, happy, and surprise one. Most prefer a happy ending story, where the hero and the heroine lived forever and happily ever after.

This story begins by telling the readers the life of Sunai. He was born to a rich family, and the only child of this well-to-do family. His parents were considered well to do in the standard of their small district.

As one might expect, Sunai was spoiled. He was given too much love – too much attention and too much money. Love has hurt him.

He did not finish his high school. He dropped out before he turned sixteen.

He used money to make himself, the people around him and his family miserable.

In this small town, people and places that somehow always manages to float outside of time, where people don't seem to change. But many things changed.

His parents passed away last year. Sunai spent all of the money – their wealth- in just one year.

Sunai missed his friends. Now, they had abandoned him. “I am busy Sunai. I have to look after my family.” One of his best friends told him.

He was now in his early twenty. Many things had changed. He was depressed and alone. Soon, the house was taken by the bank. He was forced to move out to live in a small plot of land in a hut alone. He would beg for food. Yes, he turned himself into a beggar. He had been

begging for two years now. He stayed with another beggar. The old beggar was called Uncle Pongpan. He used to own many shops. He was a successful entrepreneur. He got into two unbecoming things – women, alcohol (he drank too much, and gambling.). The two men from two different generations got on well.

Uncle Pongpan told Sunai that his wife filed a divorce and remarried with a retired army officer. Now they lived in Lopburi.

“You need to change,” the old beggar told Sunai.

“You are still young. Time is on your side,” the old man continued.

Three months after the incident. Sunai quit begging and gaming. He started reading books. He missed his parents.

The town people were happy to see him changed. Soon, Dubai finished his high school. He started planting durians in his small plot of land.

New life is possible if you dare to change.

## 5. The Passing Time

This story addresses one big question – time and what should we do about it. Time is for free? It is the fact that everybody has the same time. Time is always fair, but life is not.

What should we do with the passing time?

What am I thinking? What good will this do if they are going to burn the entire store? Should I not be moving stuff outside instead? Should we not be running for our lives?

Hasim had called from the airport last night, telling me to leave the house soon. Leave town if you have to, find somewhere safe, I remember him saying.

“I am not mad and you must believe me,” Jason’s voice was serious and commanding.

“What about the stuff in the shop?” I asked.

“Leave them. We left everything behind. We only packed one suitcase for the entire family.”

After a brief pause, he added: “I will pick you up in three hours.”

I said I would wait for him in front of the store.

When we were in the car, Hasim said we needed to travel up north.

“There are remote villages in the north,” he said.

My memory took me back to the time when we were in high school.

During the ages of life, no one can deny that school age adolescents are the most fun. Because when we are far away from home, it means that there are no more adults to limit our imagination. When you are living alone, there are many tests to try and error, it all depends. We judge all our own paths, so the people we know are by chance.

Hasim was a very good boy, well raised, he was the only child. Indulged in everything after elementary school, then secondary school when going out to the outside world.

He was enthralled by the new environment, could not learn for years, his life changed. Everything that is not good, does not pay attention to study, addiction for a long day is becoming more and more problematic.

That society did not want the way home, therefore sent to abroad in case of improvement, but Became violent again when the house heard the news of what he was hoping for, so he finally lost his way He was sent home, after which he did nothing, no one cared until he felt Comforted one day, he was involved in a car accident.

Dying while he was in a coma, he had realized the dire deeds he had passed. Promise yourself that if he has recovered, the first person to apologize is his parents and will be Good people for life, if life is back to normal again.

“Indeed, time and tide wait for no man,” I said.

“Let’s get something done,” the Hasim said.

## 6. Why Pimpilai Loves English

A university student sat on the steps of a building, the library. Pimpilai was waiting for Ratre, her close friend.

She was wearing a uniform, but her white shirt was a bit too tight, not to mention her skirt.

In the age of freedom, she could wear casual clothes. But she decided to wear the uniform.

“I love wearing the uniform,” she used to tell her friends.

Soon, Ratre arrived, "You are late, as usual" Pimpilai said in a lighthearted tone.

"I'm not so excited to go into the library," Ratre said.

“Neither am I.”

But as they say duty is God. They had something to get done.

After spending an hour and a half in the library, both students went to a shopping mall not far from the university. They took a Songthaew, a pickup of two rows. They did not earn much money as part time workers in a restaurant, but certainly enjoyed window shopping. Ratee was wearing blue jeans and a nice T-shirt.

As they were about the walk up the pedestrian bridge, they saw a beggar boy with only a few coins in the hat.

Before walking by, Pimpilai paused and said: “Oh, the poor thing, let me give you some money.”

“Are you crazy, Pim?” her friend protested.

“I am not rich, but there are many people in dire need.”

Upon saying that, Pimpilai took a few coins from her pocket. And dropped into the hat.

“Thank you. May you have a great life,” the beggar boy gave her a wish.

“Can I have a handsome boyfriend?” asked Pimpilai in a zestful manner.

“Sure, you will have a young and handsome husband.”

Pimpilai smiled and laughed.

Both girls were now inside the mall.

David was an American university student. He was visiting his mother who was working in Thailand as an

English teacher. Today, he was in the mall alone. His mother had to teach. He was looking for some books to read.

## 7. Summer on the Island

"Ibu, they're getting closer," my 7-year old daughter screams. Anxiety in her voice.

"They're setting fire to the car showroom," she shrieks not a minute later.

I had asked her to watch from the window on the upper floor and to report any new developments she sees on the street. I had shifted the sofa to near the windowpane so she could stand on it and get a full view of the main street lined up with shops, including our own. Her brother, three years younger, joins her on the sofa but he is quite content sitting and keeping quiet.

Today I am a nursing student and I did an internship at a cancer hospital. One day, I was faced with a patient with cancer. None of the patients smiled, not even their relatives. Every day someone is treated with chemo and

chemotherapy. Even though it healed the disease, the side effects of the drugs had to torture them. Every patient has a slim body. I met a grandfather who was a patient, a bed near the nurse's counter, lying on the bed alone. I try to look for your grandfather's relatives. But there was no one. But the next day I saw Grandma standing by the bed. When the nurse made a wound for Grandpa, Grandpa screamed in pain, but on the other hand, there was Grandma's hand holding the hand to comfort Grandpa. All the time when Grandpa was crying, no one should fight cancer alone, my friends and I turned to smile at each other. On the second afternoon of the day, Grandpa's pulse was fast, which was not normal, so my friend hurriedly called the Master to come and see, while the friend and Master were taking another look at Grandpa's vital signs. Holding Grandpa's hand all the time, the mouth kept telling Grandpa that it was okay, and then ... talked in a circle while stroking Grandpa's hand lightly, the gaze of Grandma, who looked at Grandpa like I wanted to tell you. It's my turn .. I'm still next to you .

## 8. Another Day in Bangkok

Her big smile somehow eclipsed her small and slouching figure as she extended a greeting hand:

“My name is Rose. I’ll be your neighbor.”

We could not have asked for a warmer welcome after a long and tiring journey as we were to begin a new life far away from home.

Has anyone ever felt that It's so bad today Why is this life so cruel? No good things Happened to us at all Then that sadness settles in our hearts. Constantly piled up into a large lump Waking up early the next day, we had a bad day as before. Others told us to be optimistic. Learn to be happy But we can't do this Well, we're not really happy. And the world is not a little beautiful ... We are the ones who have always felt that way. And felt that they were being crushed by that negative feeling themselves to the

point of being able to do anything else Until I met a clip from TED, one talk about the joy of work. Which is just a short time mentioned in there Regarding how to adjust the brain system to be more optimistic, we need to write down three things that we truly appreciate every day, three new things per day for 21 consecutive days. Doing this every day Will help our brain learn patterns to look for good things Instead of looking for the bad And trying to review good things That again In simple terms, it is Keep practicing this and you will gradually get used to looking for the good things in life by writing down the things you are grateful for every day, no matter how small. Now that we have succeeded and will continue to do so, let's do it. We encourage everyone to succeed.

Rose was in her mid-60s, a little younger than both our mothers back home.

The second-floor apartment, where we would live for the next 10 months, shared a landing with Rose's. It was late in the evening. My wife and I were struggling to move

four big heavy suitcases up the two flights of stairs. She must have heard the commotion before she came out to greet us in the dimly lit corridor.

“How do you do?”

We gave her our names, going through one syllable at a time to make sure she would be able to pronounce them correctly. She got them right the second time. I was impressed.

## 9. The First Element of Love

Love is something we all need. But love is elusive and not so easy to define. No wonder an artist often finds it hard to paint a picture of love. A writer never gets bored of writing about love, happy or sad one.

What does it take to fall in love? Why do we love as we do, I mean romantic love, including poppy love, of course.

Somchai never knew why he was so bothered by his Pranee's boring question. He paced the room, in his studio, unable to sleep. After two coffees, it was harder to close his weary eyes. "Come on!" he told, himself.

Lighting another cigarette, he glanced at the ashtray now full with cigarette butts, all standing upwards as if mocking him for his inability to calm down.

Just a few hours earlier, Somchai and his wife, Dina, were having dinner in silence. Just the two of them. Their three cats slouched around the dining room, blissfully unaware of the tension.

“So, I hear that you have a secret down in your studio,” Dina said, her voice tight and cold.

The amount of love cannot be measured with a measure of weight. Because love is an abstract, intangible matter But can touch and perceive feelings How much love is it? Therefore unable to estimate the number Only two people will know how much love will fit. Just love it requires elements of love and reason. Love the fit of one person It doesn't always have to be the same as that of another person, and no one can define it instead. Because of this, people who love school age have to be themselves.

By looking at factors such as How much responsibility At what level is the academic result? The relationship

between those around you, and so on, if these factors are in the satisfied stage Take full responsibility The study is at a good level. There is nothing to worry about The kind love of these people can pass half a glass (water).

## 10. The New Teacher

“Someday, if you see your dad walking out at night, don’t ever follow him and never ask him anything. Just act like you don’t see anything,” Grandma said to me, years ago.

That’s how I have been living my life all this time: pretending to be silent and acting as if I’m not curious. It’s been five years since I discovered Dad’s strange habit. Every twentieth night of the month, Dad will come out quietly carrying plates of a boiled chicken, fruits and other food. Then, he will return at 2:30 a.m.

I’m Alan, by the way. Alan Mandigula. I’m 11 years old. I live with my dad. My mom died when I was little. Our family owns a citrus plantation, which is also our source of livelihood. I always play there with my friend. But my dad always forbids me from playing in the southern part of the plantation. He said the place is dangerous.

Open train After a moment, the train began to move off the platform. Phongchan, his heart was thrilled for a moment For a long time I haven't returned home by train. Coming home from home this time He has to open the course of the subjects taught Being a new professor at university was a lot of pressure on him. He felt that he was still a new face in academic circles. When thinking of his own career Father's picture seemed to suddenly flash. And it's another father that made him go home now. The house said it was election day. He had to clear all teaching and activities to make the day free. Even in a small local election

But when his father signed up as well It is therefore imperative that he go down and help choose a father to have one more voice. Recall that he formed a team with more than ten of his peers. To go down to help his father in the election campaign On the last night before the election day, the team made a final appointment to assess the situation. And saw that the chances of his father winning were quite high Pongchan was stunned with the

results of the election, all soft hands. His friends, too, didn't believe their eyes. His father hid into the house. He doesn't believe the election results will come out in a way that his father lost. Dad was furious and didn't want to talk to or listen to any reason from the staff.

The train ran into the platform of the district. While riding a motorcycle He noticed all the campaign signs along the intersection. And soon realized that his father had to be strong with the same people again He felt compassionate for his father. When he arrived in Bangkok, Phongchan hurriedly called back to his father. And know good news from my father's mouth that this time you won Father's voice seemed happy that he had never heard before.

And his father told him that the win was based on the policies and tactics he and his friends did four years ago. But adjust to keep up with the hard match game only He pointed out that four years ago we lost in part because of our carelessness.

Father would also be amazed at the success that this has happened. And what should I understand better when what he and his friends have done four years ago has returned to blossom and yield to you to consume. Something like faith will return. The scene of events four years ago that seemed to flash clear. At the same time, the scene at dusk on the train home was also overlaid.

# 11. The Last Assignment

A large tour bus passed through the winding road to Phu Pha Mek, the cliff overlooking the hills and monurains.

The moon shadow shines through the night clouds. The bus went slowly. At one night in May, something happened.

The S-1932 tour bus number 22-5-14 goes through Route 009, it is a non-bus tour bus of Lung Chat. Will run only when there is an employer And this time it is again Who hired an uncle's bus to drive through "Transitional road", which is a line that Uncle himself is not familiar with because it was a long time to drive through this line, but in the past 10 years, Uncle Chat has driven through this road many times

"The same group again Don't you think to change at all?

"Uncle Chat turned to me. To the customer group who hired uncle's tour bus

"Where are they going this time, Uncle?"

"You should know. Their path has one line. Never change "

I recently served food, drinks and snacks for 67 passengers. As a receptionist on this car Now it was time for recreation I reached out to pick up a familiar film. "Story 13" was the highlight on this car. That is always on loop The secret to keeping it from being boring is: Changing the title to a number It also allows us to count how many times it has been opened. So in fact, stories 1-13 are the same story.

Originally, I didn't really understand what my uncle said. Why do you have to keep opening the same story over and over? Because I just worked with your uncle this third time. Even though I know the reason for the

repetitive screenings of movies like this, I still can't help asking questions.

"When will I show another story, Uncle?" Uncle Chat lightly smiled and said,

"Stay at the passenger On this matter, my uncle really has no right "

"He's not bored, uncle? Look at the same story for 13 times each "

"Who said that the same story This one is the 13th story "

I cut annoyed my uncle's reply. By reaching out to get the CD out of the envelope and place it on the tray in the video player.

"Can you change the story this time, young man?" A loud voice came from the left passenger. The words I never expected to hear caused me to halt. He didn't like the movie or how, I pulled my hand out, glanced over to see the pale cover film close to my hand. If no one

greeted me, I would have forgotten that I had this disc.

"It's time to show this story now," I thought to myself.

"Yes, yes," I yelled as I pulled the CD from the pale envelope.

"The same story is good. Why do you change?" A voice from the other passenger shouted behind him.

"What story to watch?" I turned to ask the passenger to be sure again. Even in the hand holding the pale envelope tightly Because I thought it might be time to look at this

"I think it's good to watch some new stories. I have seen it twice. Nothing will change I would like to see some new stories. Will our journey have something new? Can that pale cover, young man?" Added another left passenger.

"Hey, what? Want to see another story? Didn't we agree that if you get on this car, you have to watch this story. How many rounds will it look at? Our grandparents have seen each other. I haven't seen anyone complaining that it's not fun or bad. Please don't worry too much. Don't create a mess Who would guarantee that it was better than this? If opening a new story, will it be a waste of time to watch? We didn't ride in the car for ten hours. Looks not fun, it can't be changed in time We pay more for the car than you guys. In any case, please let us choose. "The passenger on the other side yanked the final position. About the cost of the ticket to claim justice

I really want to indulge myself, I want to pick up the faded cover and open it and let it know.

"The movie is pale? Uncle, I have never watched it. Friends brought them as souvenirs from England. Voice is now in Thai I don't doubt the same tastes of the same

passengers. "Uncle Chat used to tell me like that, and that's it, I want to see it, but, okay, my uncle is the driver, I opened 67 passengers who paid the bills. Let them agree with each other.

On both sides of the road is a forest. The shadow of the dark The moon hides behind the veil of clouds. There are only flashing lights and sounds from the TV screen that is showing the movie called Story 13, left-right passengers sit in their own seats. Stare at the entertainment on the square screen Hope to relax Before arrival I sat in the back seat, picked up snacks from the envelope. Sit back and watch the same movie for the third time in your life.

It has begun. Indeed, it has started.

"You know I don't love you. But you're still forced to molest me. You're not a man's son." The peasant heroine is blaming the dark and noble hero.

"I love you, I'm sorry to have to do this. I do this because I love you. Please trust me I promise I won't hurt you again. I will take good care of you I'll follow through on my promise." The man with three elbows turned and wiped away the heroine's tears. Soon he will do everything better. The girl's life will definitely improve.

"What is the hero of raping the heroine of Thai movies? This is still around, but the same story is boring. Change now, still in time Began to grumble in the throat Probably fearing the right side of hearing Not sure if the right bank has heard it. But I hear carefully

"Look at how many times the male protagonist is still handsome and dark as before. Where is the heroine going to play? There are good men, handsome, rich, come to be interested in style again. I really don't know

any good things. Lose everything. ”The right side started loudly cheering. Like wanting to announce the victory of choosing a movie Let the left side hear rather than be delighted with the play

The car drives through the forest. Entering the city, seeing the lights of the night Summer rain falls The storm raged Uncle Chat slowed down the speed of the car.

Suddenly, the car brakes suddenly. Pickup truck ran and Fa came again, intersecting in front of our tour bus. Fortunately, Uncle Chat is a professional driver. Therefore supporting him to continue to balance The transition path is really difficult.

"Phia", a noble man was hit in the face very seriously

"How are you going to fulfill the promise you gave me, three years ago? Look at my life. What's better? Rice

fields or not let me make claims that the water is not enough. The banana trees that were planted should be cut off telling the bad price. So what do you want me to do? When I argue, I tell you to go carry it and sell something.

## 12. Ratre'e's Dream Job

“What is your dream job?” Ratre'e's closest friend, Mai, finally asked.

“I don't know, thinking about it, not yet.”

Mai told Ratre'e hers. “I want to be a nurse.”

Ratre'e said nothing. She simply smiled and urged her friend to eat more hot papaya salad.

You could begin your answer by discussing your current strengths and skills and how they relate to the job. If you mentioned this earlier in your interview, you can still go into more detail when asked about your dream job. The employer will likely not expect you to currently have every skill you need for your ideal job, so this question

also gives you the chance to mention areas in which you would like to grow.

200 mm thick, its cover looks very pale Indicating its old age The black of the cover is scratched off to reveal the inner white paper 11 years ago, but I still keep it. As well as red, white, brown notes that are placed in the drawer. These are all my plot archives. I always pick up old diaries and read them to find things to write about. The black record is the third year of ordination. I picked it up again. To revisit the memories Killing time while waiting for my female friend to take a shower. She usually takes a shower no less than an hour and a half. Maybe it was because she was singing in the bathroom. Therefore making her shower slowly I crossed over to the page that I thought was the first incident of smoking.

On February 13, 2005, at 2:35 p.m. I wrote this memo with my guilt.

Today many things happen in the temple. The Reverend Father rung the bell to call a meeting in the middle of the night, asked for the guy who had disappeared from the room. I have to tell it here in case I forgot that Kwan and the day Are close friends When I have an issue with the senior monk Kwan came to help without hesitation. If it were me, I would definitely not dare to do so. What would it take to get a fist instead of someone else?

Luang Pho Xai asked one by one if anyone had seen two bastards or not. But no one can answer the monk It is difficult to answer. The second cubicle is located Farther than friends, the pathway was dark, only the monk who dared to walk that way.

During that time, Reverend Father Picked up the pack of cigarettes found from the room of Songkla. It is evidence that the two people must have secretly smoked cigarettes. In fact, before that, the villagers beside the temple frequently came to sue Luang Pho that they saw a

novice smoker behind the hall. But I don't remember which picture it is, how do I remember it? There are more than 70 monks in the temple, shaving their heads, shaving their eyebrows, wearing the same color robes.

The Reverend Father put his hand into his pocket. Picked up another pack of cigarettes. With a strong announcement that

"From today I won't smoke anymore. I will stop. So as not to let anyone claim that I smoke Since tomorrow If someone else smokes I won't take it for granted. "

I sat reading this journal with a smile. I laughed at myself that I had been writing since I was a kid, but this was not the beginning of smoking. I remember briefly that I started smoking. Before the day that Luang Pho

announced to quit smoking again, I slowly turned back to the page I thought was the starting point of smoking.

"Miss, please pick up the shampoo in my backpack for me." The sound of Sarini came out of the bathroom. She always carries her own things. I told her to leave it in my room, and she wouldn't because she said She didn't sleep in my room alone. I put down a notebook Before getting up to pick up a blue bottle of shampoo for her I sit back and read the notes again. But the wind from the window probably blows in and changes the page. So I bent down to read

On January 3, 2005, at 12:30 AM, I wrote this memo after hearing two bad news.

The first story today, my parents called to inform us of the bad news, "Ya Nuan". I remember when we were in Shan State, Burma, when we had not yet immigrated to

Thailand. Ya Nuan was both a father and a mother and at times as a friend of our grandchildren like us. My mother had to come to Thailand as a construction worker for a few months at a time. I remember this well after the fighting situation in Burma was still fierce. My father decided to come and pick me up and my two sisters immigrated to Thailand together. Every villager knows the reputation of the war well. War has taken everything from us. Parting from father Remove the buffalo from the fields Take my grandmother from us

Ya Nuan refused to emigrate with us. You said that you are old. I do not want to be a burden to the children. Since that day, our grandchildren have never heard of Ya Nuan's news again. My father said that I would go back to help with the funeral. Grandma was very angry with my father for not letting me go, even though Grandma Nuan was my grandmother. I also love Grandma Nuan No less than anyone The other mother always saw the

grace of her father. I regret not going to Grandma Nuan last time! I can only record Ya Nuan's story in this journal only.

Today I still received another bad news. Unexpected before, Teacher Supan told me that he could not issue a qualification to me. Because I don't have a Thai card

I could not understand the meaning of my teacher, why I didn't get the same diploma as everyone else, even though I finished my studies like everyone else, I just knew today. That the fact that I was born differently Will prevent me from studying I felt that my personality was not equal to that of my friends even though I studied hard. Never miss a class Score higher than others But I did not get a certificate. These fists never intend to study the day, secretly smoking in the back of the hall. Why do people

like this have a chance? Why would someone like this get anything better than me?

Today, many questions arise in my head, and my friends and I have been ordained to study. We have a dream of having to complete at least a bachelor's degree in order to feel Right now, I'm the only one who can't follow our dreams.

"Hey, what are you reading?" Sarini walked in, put her hand around me from behind. She is still damp, her hair is still wet. So I took the record off and put it in the drawer as usual. Afraid that the water from her hair dripping on the paper

"I am also reading my first smoking journal, lady."

"Really serious? Haha. Can I read some?"

"No, it's not fun, I'll tell you better." I stood up while her body was still hugging my neck. I carried her and threw her on the bed. I lay next to her and told me about the record I read a moment ago.

"Your life is like a novel. And after that what do you do with your life? Okay, when did you start smoking?"

"Sarini seemed quite interested in the story in my black journal.

"After I found myself Run out of opportunities for studying My life has changed I didn't know what to study for.

## 13. That Old Boat

A young man buys fish from the market. He told his wife, "Honey, I bought some fish. Would you fry it?" I'll go see a movie. And will come back to eat "

When the wife heard that her husband was going to the cinema Said "I went to see too!"

The young man replied, "Don't go. You are cooking here, the ticket price is expensive. I went to see it alone. I'll come back and tell you about it. Ready to eat the fish you made "

When the young man returned from the movies Went into the kitchen And asked his wife, "You! Where is the fish fried? "

The young wife sat calmly reading a book and replied,  
"I've eaten up! Come sit near me, you I'll tell you how  
delicious the fish is? "

## 14. The Woman Who Hung Herself on the Neem Tree

Her neighbors and the local police, including the village headman all shared the same conviction, which was that Buala, 45 years old, was depressed because of the virus and the lockdown. The media reported that she was probably infected with the deadly virus, broke, and deeply depressed. They cited her case as an example not to follow. Yet, no one knew her motive behind the extraordinary attempt on her own life, except one of her two children.

COVID-19 was probably her excuse to get herself out of the mess, including debts. Two months ago, some terrible things happened to her, casting doubt on the cause of her failed attempt. It was later revealed by the media that she just had a divorce. Well, some months ago, right after the new year's celebration, her husband took all the saving money and ran away with a young girl from the nearby

village. She was left penniless with two kids, five and seven, to look after. Terrible for her. Her parents were long gone and her relatives tried to avoid her. No one would like to have a poor relative. She only had a small plot of land and some coconut trees left. That would be a sufficient story to sell to the public.

The media was quick to put on the headline that Buala was another victim, poisoned by the Covid-19 pandemic. The lockdown and curfew announced by the military-backed government made things worse for her. She found out that she was unable to feed herself and children. She could not sell her produce, coconuts and neem leaves and flowers, and some green vegetables she could gather from the nearby bushes. Besides, the opposition of the government was quick to put all the blame on the incumbent government. They pointed out, supported by the media, that the poor woman was denied the relief money from the government. The government had a policy to hand out five thousand baht as a relief to remedy the effects of the pandemic.

It was also revealed by the media that Buala, due to her poor reading skills, was helpless, she could not register for the handout of 5 thousand baht. Buala was among the many in the country who were considered poor and semi-illiterate, as she did not finish basic education or Grade 6. On a fine morning, she was found trying to take her own life. The pictures that went viral across the media were those of the woman with a loin cloth as a rope trying to hang herself on a branch of a small neem tree.

Police and health volunteers came as quickly as they could, including local news reporters. She was saved. Buala was admitted to a provincial hospital for treatment. She was later declared out of danger. With two of her children by her side, she was crying sobbing and tears were coming from her eyes like waterfalls in the rainy season.

“I had no money and no food to eat. All the money had been spent. I have nothing left.” She told the media.

The bruises around her body were covered with gauze tapes and betadine and soft white cotton. Bruises were not too deep, but bad enough to make her feel uncomfortable and cry. She was a middle-aged woman, poor, a single mom with two kids, and broke.

“ All the coconuts and vegetables couldn’t be sold. Markets and shops were all closed, as you know. “, she continued.

With other two young children, she had no money to spend. Depressed after the divorce, the virus was her last straw. The young, probably an intern journalist, concluded. A

“Next time, don’t be hopeless. We are here to help. No one is left behind” said the governor, speaking in front of the camera. Bualua nodded her head and paid respect to the authorities. She had learned from childhood to obey, and being obedient is a virtue, especially to those in power and the authorities, especially those with guns.

Buala would like to tell them that, indeed, she had been under stress. In her mind, she was telling herself - I have to resort to this measure as a way to survive. How can I die when I have two children to feed? She told herself. The media reported sympathetically that she was trying to take her life by hanging herself on a young neem tree. Details of the news coverage revealed that she could not get the help from the government. “She had to resort to death”, reported one newspaper. Had she died she would have left two of her children behind, an old woman with her grandson behind told the reporters.

Now, things had changed. She survived the ordeal. The media was begging for help and a lot of donations came pouring in from across the country. A lot of philanthropists emerged.

At 7:00 am on April 18, 2020, three police stations received telephone calls. The news reporters, local outlets, hungry for news, sprung from the quarantine. All received the same message – an attempted suicide. The story was that a woman was found hanging from her neck from a branch of a neem tree. Police officers and medics, including news reporters went to the scene. Ambulances arrived. First aide was performed. Rumor had it that the woman had died. The governor of the province and another rescue team rushed to the scene, too.

Kinkaew, her neighbor came to talk to her the evening before the incident happened. She came with a

smartphone and the amount of 5,000 baht on her bank account, Prompt pay.

“What about me? How come I don’t get it?” Buala asked her neighbor.

“You do not have a smartphone. And you did not ask for it.”

“I am a farmer, a poor one too. “ Buala insisted.

Silence was the only answer from her neighbors. They could not figure out what went wrong. Some got it, some did not. The government said on TV that the AI system was reliable and fair as fairness could be. It was not for her.

“This isn’t fair,” Buala lamented. She looked sad, sadder than her two children standing by her side, crying.

Each day was a pain for her and the children. One fine morning Buala woke up late, gave food to her children, asking them to stay in door. She asked Lek, a grade 1

kid, her elder daughter to follow her to the tree. “Do as you are told if you don’t want me to die,” she told her daughter.

The scene in front of the thatched bungalow was exactly what Buala had in her mind. Leo ran to the neighbors and asked them to help save her mother. Buala pretended to appear dead, hanging on the neem tree branch. The frightening scene was scary even with Lek who knew that it was all made up.

Ratree Jaidee, 38, reported as the closest neighbor revealed that her son was the one who went up the tree and saved Buala’s life. Ratree was also a poor villager, but she got the subsidy from the government.

“Last night, Buala told me that she wanted to die.”

Ratree told the media.

She was less stressed than Buala. She told Buala to take it easy before she went to bed.

When waking up in the morning, Lek, Buala's elder daughter came shouting and crying "Mother is hanging herself!"

Ratree told the media that her son climbed up the neem tree to take Buala down. At the same time, other neighbors called the police and the ambulance, and the media. They came within half an hour, crowding the small area, jammed with cars and people. All the neighbors came, the police, the ambulances, and the journalists, and cameramen – onlookers.

Help was pouring in from all corners of the country. Soon, Buala had the 5000 Baht. Moreover, many people would like to help her and her two children. Buala later revealed that she didn't think about taking her own life. It was just a flash of thought. Death can wait, I have to look after my two children first, she said.

Five thousand Baht was so inviting for Buala and many low-income earners. The fact that the offer would last for

three consecutive months was irresistible, strong enough to make many people fight to get it. Every morning, dozens if not hundreds would jam in front of the Department of Finance to file their complaints – what about me? The premier repeatedly told the public that the money belonged to all Thais. It was a part of the government’s attempt to alleviate the impact of the pandemic. There’s no such thing as free lunch.

A week later, Buala checked her bank account and found that the amount of 20000 Baht was there. The local public servant came and talk to her. Along came two news reporter from TV channels.

Two weeks after the incident, Buala talked to her daughter, Lek.

“We were poor. I couldn’t read or write” she told her.

“I was smart enough to get the money that we wanted.”

“Please don’t do it again, Mother” Lek said to Buala.

## 15. The Bridge of Love

“Pimjai has gone to heaven”, said an old man. His eyes were red, brimming with tears. He looked away when I tried to catch his eyes to make sure that he meant what he had said. I was sad and everybody who knew the story was sad, too. Like many others, tears were brimming on both of my eyes. It was my honest feeling and I was lost for words. The death should not have happened. I always believed in the sacredness of life, but the event had, if anything, shocked me and many others. Pimjai carried with her a series of tragedies. Her father died two years ago. The mother, pale and thin, wept and bereft --- the family’s great lost. I was an outsider, yet the lost made me really sad. No one really knew what was happening, and the police were busy looking for clues. It was easy to assign some lofty stories and construct the narrative. After all, the tragedy was only among the many popping up in the Thai media.

The third day of the merit-making funeral would end with the creation. I looked at the crematorium and the four monks changing the Pali scripts with an empty heart. Such is life, I told myself. The abbot, the leader of the assembly, gave us the last sermon, asking us to accept the death is a normal part of life and we all should do good deeds. The cremation would start soon. The chanting of the monks was in Pali and most people in the pavilion could not understand what it was all about. I read somewhere that the message was that we would have to follow the consequences of our deeds, be they good or not so good. The message, I was sure, has nothing to do with mad people and those who tried to take their own lives.

The body in the coffin was one of the two Rayong girls – not really girls, more of the like teenagers. They both were university students in their late teens. Pimjai was eighteen years old and Lalita was a year older. They were found dead in the water, not far from an old bridge in Bangkok. The bridge was known among the locals as the bridge of love, a place where lovers come to commit suicide for

their love and broken hearts, among other reasons. News said that they committed suicide in duo, one after another jumping off the bridge down twenty or so meters to the river.

As I was laying the paper flowers in front of the coffin, a flashback occurred to me. Her face appeared again in my memory. This episodic memory was as vivid as the morning sunshine.

Pimjai called me late at night. It was on Sunday, four days ago. I was one of her best friends. She asked me to go out and join the party. I told her I could not as I had to complete my assignment. It was a lie. I just was lazy that night. It turned out that Pimjai and Lalita had a meeting and they drank beer. I sent her the amount of 1,500 baht last week to pay for the room. I did not expect her to spend that amount on beer or any other alcoholic beverages as such. I regret what I did. I should have gone out to meet her.

Several witnesses were interviewed by the media. The tragedy was that Pimjai jumped off the bridge first, followed by Lalita. Their motive was unclear. Pimjai was depressed, I knew. She tried several times to end her miserable life. She had been working at a beer garden as a receptionist, trying to earn money to support her aging mother and two younger sisters. The media concluded that they two were the victims of COVID-19. Her mother and sisters were interviewed by the media and the money were pouring into their bank accounts. Politicians, especially those from the opposition parties took the opportunity to cite her case an example of the performance of the government in helping the people badly affected by the pandemic.

“Killing oneself is sinful”, said the undertaker. “I hope they could find a better place to live in the other side of reality”. Meanwhile, the abbot was interviewed by an

army of TV crews, asking him about the sin of ending one's life.

The family, especially her two younger sisters, knew very little about their sister, what she did and her love stories as well as her life problems. Her mother was weeping on front of the camera. The landlord, a fat lady in her late fifties, was interviewed by two or three journalists from the local tabloids.

The cremation lasted an hour. A handful friends and relatives left the pavilion as soon as they finished laying the flowers. The next cremation would start soon. The next coffin was ready to be placed in the crematorium. The two undertakers were busy this afternoon.

As I was walking out of the temple, I stopped at the food stall to buy some water. The seller, an old man, told me that a moment ago he just listened to the news from the

radio. The news was about the case of three young teenagers jumping into the water to commit suicide. The incident was similar to Pimjai's case. It was happening again at the bridge of love. This time, however, two were saved but one perished. They were also college students in their late teens. All of them, I found out later, were close friends and were staying in the same dormitory not far from the university. The media only reported that they tried to committed suicide because of their personal life problems. Luckily, two were out of danger and only one was killed. The most recent girl who died from drowning at the bridge was cited by the media as a victim of COVID-19 disease pandemic.

I could not sleep well that night. I watched TV and stayed up until midnight. My mother called and asked me how I was. I told her I was fine.

The next morning, I went to the same temple. My plan was to give alms to the monks to make merit for Pimjai. I

expected a quiet time to reflect on what was happening. To my dismay, it was chaotic. I saw many cameramen and the media inside the temple. The body of the girl from the bridge of love was at one of the pavilions. The atmosphere inside the temple was mixed. The event was filled with grief, especially the father and mother of the girl. I could not help but peeking into the pavilion. I saw the parents were crying, and some relatives were fainting all the time. One journalist said that the mother of the deceased must be closely monitored. The girl was the only child of the family.

As I was walking out of the pavilion, the telephone rang. I answered it. Sakchai, one of my closest friends called. It was another sad story. A male student of a well-known private university was seriously injured after jumping from the 4th floor of a dormitory. He was among the many who tried to take their own lives, seriously affected by the pandemic.

## 16. The Real Treasure

Everybody wants to get rich. We want to have treasures like gold and money – the more the better. The drive to seek more properties and fortunes may lead us to the blind alley. This is a story of the real treasure. What do you think the real treasure is?

Relive the gold rush in the treasure trove of Lijia Cave and the 'secret' of 'Koborin'.

This is the headline of the Thai Rath newspaper, dated December 18, 1995, with the content stating that There was a rumor. Both Thai and Japanese pilgrims flock to the forest to dig treasure for the Thai consul. Is a gold bar and an enormous valuable treasure That the Japanese soldiers of World War 2, buried in the cave in the mountains, to the point of having a general commander to shut the villagers from speaking

The story is that ... the entire forest of Kanchanaburi becomes a "manuscript" forest, hidden treasure. Thai and foreign pilgrims have been digging for tens of thousands of years since Japan lost the Allied war. Began to dig together

The Japanese army under the leadership of Major General Shimoda and Major General Kashi led soldiers and captives to build the Death Railway. But when Japan lost the war Then it was necessary to withdraw the force back There are rumors that Japan has taken the treasures that have been hidden in the forests in Sai Yok District, Thong Pha Phum District, Sangkhla Buri District, especially "gold bars" that are believed to not be brought back to Japan.

Mr. Nithat Chansiri is 61 years old. Mrs. Boonyom Chansiri is 65 years old. "Art Gallery and War Museum of Asia Burapha" which collects more than 2 thousand war weapons and world war things, told reporters at that

time (year 1995) that some young people were young to see Japanese soldiers. Bring treasure and items to hide in the cave. Death Railway Train Line With Japanese soldiers vigorously guarding Which claimed to be afraid of the train tracks being destroyed

There are also reports that Have "green" civil servants at the general level participate in the role too Especially one place The general attention to this is "Tham Lijia", located at Village No. 4, Prang Phle Subdistrict, Sangkhlaburi District, where the former Phra Yantram Tamro Temple To pioneer Later, this person appeared. This man was Lieutenant Colonel Chaowarinthin. Latthasak Siri By interviewing with Thai Rath newspaper on December 17, 38 that

"Has received a credible confirmation that this is probably the truth Which if according to hearsay Thailand will have a budget for another 20 years because knowing that there are as many gold rings as a train. "

Open legend. Why do you believe that there is a Japanese treasure?

This story has been revealed from the pocket book. Lieutenant "Chaowarin" the "madman of the land" claimed that before the excavation A group of people submitted a petition to "dig treasure" in Kanchanaburi province. After that, the Bureau of the Royal Household There was a book out To be inspected Why there are groups of people wanting to dig in that area, and this is the source of confidence for Police Lieutenant Colonel Chaowararin

10,000% confident, will definitely find the treasure

After that, Lieutenant Colonel Chaowarinthin In position Deputy Minister of Education Ordered a large committee to come and see this story Along with the interview that "I believe ten thousand percent Must definitely find gold.

Because no one is mad, dig the soil to a depth of 6 meters and then take 3 locomotives with stones to bury. (It was reported that the railway tracks were buried buried deep 6 meters deep near Thong Pha Phum School.) Previously, villagers had collected 1 gold bracelet and sold 8 million baht. "...!?!"

As for the said treasure Is believed that Japan brought from India and Myanmar before preparing to bring the boat back to Japan.

2 days passed the survey team into the area ... it became a joke!

After the big action, plan to decide whether to bring the gold collected into the land ...? But from entering the survey area There are more than 100 search teams, with a 83-year-old nun who is said to be Angsumalin ...!?!), Who used to have a husband as a Japanese soldier. Along with

stating that had seen 3 locomotives parked to point But when searching for more than half a day Didn't find anything There is only an empty land. Until the journalists who were waiting to make news criticized that This may be a joke story. That is humiliated throughout the world Because even Japanese journalists are waiting to make news!

And despite the heavy pressures from the media, "Chaowarin" did not give up and announced that he would search until found, with a new "manuscript", which Lamai Khoi Ban Khok, 39 years old, Li Jia House said that in the year 2532 had heard the news that people have found hidden treasure in Japan. Consists of a friend of the province, S.S. Pitsanu, cannot remember his last name Get the treasure manuscript Which is in the aluminum cylinder in this mountain corner of Ligia Is an inscription on the purple velvet Specify hidden access paths. By having to descend from the cliff of Ligia in the crater of the mountain top

"So he took a long rope 80 meters down to the bottom Inside is a toilet room, with 1 locomotives with 3 MacArthur Jeeps. In addition, metal crates are found, which are expected to store valuables. But was unable to bring anything out because going into 6 o'clock in the evening before finding a way out was 6 o'clock in the next day By walking through to the other side "the local people claim

Later, Mr Henwich, a German engineer Along with a group of 10 dam construction experts, who had previously built a bunker for Iraq's President Saddam, flew straight for inspection, Henwich said, based on two inspections of treasure excavations at Temple Temple Chan. States that the cave is "probably a train station Or air raid shelters for Japanese soldiers only. "

Over ten days passed Spread the news claiming found treasure Helo villagers go down to the area

After digging in the "Li Jia" cave area of more than 10 points and more than 50 points, there is news that the excavation team has found the treasure. Claimed to be a diamond The enormous value of gold by "Thom Mi Siri", the owner of a private company that has entered Made an appointment to confirm that the cave will be opened on January 9, 1996

The news caused villagers to invade the area. Until being arrested by many officials But before the opening of the cave, Mr. Otobotani, 70 years old, a former military doctor in Japan Stationed in Myanmar Who got married, created a family in Thailand, told Nong

## 17. The Man Who Saw Three Naga Fireballs

Nong Khai car started to get stuck People flock to the area to watch the Mekong River. "Naga fireballs

Nong Khai people and tourists Flocked to hold a seat waiting to watch the phenomenon "Naga fireballs" and see "Bella" dance spirits in the heat of the air By laying mats along the Mekong River As the car entered the area, began to jam

On this afternoon (13 Oct 19) the atmosphere of the tourism spectacle. "Naga Fireballs" in Nong Khai Province Tourists poured into the Phon Phisai district, resulting in traffic on the Nong Khai-Rattanapi road. Crowded cars The police officers have to wait for the traffic along the intersection. The first part will be the car heading from Nong Khai town to the area of Naga fireballs.

While the multi-purpose area in front of Thai temple, Chumpon Subdistrict, Phon Phisai District, Nong Khai Province, there are tourists laying mats to sit and watch the phenomenon of Naga fireballs. In the midst of very hot 32 degrees Celsius, even if the weather is hot, it's not discouraged. Sat in an umbrella in the sun, waiting until the evening There is also a worship of Naga worshippers, with actress Bella Raneer sharing a dance with the Phon Phisai people in the evening (17.00 hrs), causing the fan club to wait to see the stars doubled.

For Naga fireballs in the past year, there were 2 Naga fireballs in 96 districts, Phon Phisai District and 783 Rattana Wapi District, including 880 children. Most tourists travel to both districts continuously. Hoping to see the phenomenon of Naga fireballs on this evening

"Rattanapee" stands one, found "Naga fireballs" risen the most in Nong Khai province

The phenomenon of "Naga fireballs" which occurred in Nong Khai province Data from the National Broadcasting Station of Nong Khai Province, Wat Pho Chai, Phra Aram Luang, reported by Nongkhai Amateur Radio Association Found that the number of Naga fireballs occurred in the number of 411 children, less than the previous year with 880 children.

For the cause of the Naga fireballs rise May be caused by water years, the water level in the Mekong River is low, less than 2 meters, and the district with the most fireball is the Rattanapi district, 327 balls, the second is the District Phon Phisai, with 84 fireballs, the highest point is home. Nong Kaew, Rattanapee District, 86 children, followed by Ban Nam Peer, Rattanapee District, amount 77 children.

It was reported that thousands of people came out and created an unusual atmosphere along the Mekong river.

watching Naga fireballs on the full moon night of October.

It was two days ago. On that night, tourists from all over the country came to see the special phenomenon. Many "Naga fireballs" are mostly seen in some districts where Naga fireballs have been occurring every year, namely Phon Phisai District and Rattana-wapi District.

By entering to occupy the area along the Mekong River The spots that many tourists come to see are at Ban Nam Pae, Ban Tha Muang, and Ban Tan Chum, Rattana-wapi District, Ban Nong Kung, Ban Nong Kaew, Phon Phisai istrict, where more Naga fireballs have occurred.

"I actually saw three fireballs last night," Wichai told his wife, Metta. Her face was a big question mark.

"Did you take the pictures," she asked.

"I did, but I could not see them on my smart phone," Wichai explained.

“Really? Why?”

“I don’t know. It’s kind of strange,” said Wichai. “I took many pictures of the river. They all came out nice and lovely. Except the ones I took of the Naga fireballs.”

No one would believe me,” Wichai told himself. “Even my own wife.”

## 18. A Fine Saturday Morning on Ko Kret Island

Ko Kret island, a man-made island about twenty-five kilometers north of Bangkok, looks calm, and the atmosphere is inviting, as there are not many visitors, thanks to the pandemic. The faces of the locals are not full of smiles, most of them look worried, like many others. Looking at the pier and water, one cannot help but thinking about the busy days in January earlier this year. I used to express my angst over the issue of over-tourism. I complained to the abbot and local administrators that the island was too crowded. Things change. Ko Kret is quiet and the sunshine this morning is magnificent. A few commuters on the ferry are disembarking. The ferryman, old and slow, looks indifferent.



Two days ago, the government announced the partial lifting of the lockdown. Kret island began opening up for visitors, both locals and foreigners. Many shops began to open for business. As I was riding my foldable bike to the coffee shop, I saw a German couple riding bicycles to the opposite direction. We exchanged smiles. I thought to myself, soon, it would be crowded as usual, back to normal. This morning, however, there are a handful of visitors, including me. I just ordered an Americano and

sat down on the table by the small creek. The water begins to recede, as it is the time for the low tide. Some small fish are swimming joyfully, and the water lilies reveal their natural beauty. The birds are singing and the sound of the motored boats at the distance. The lady brewing me this nice coffee just brought me a cup of hot Chinese tea as a complimentary drink. She smiles at me as I says ‘Thank you,’

*Saturday morning*

*Alone, having nice coffee*

*Sunshine and low tide*

This is not my first visit to Ko Kret. As a regular visitor and a teacher, I sometimes, take my students here to do some assignment. Many locals know me and I know them well. I lost counts how many times I have been here. The small island in the middle of the Chao Phraya river, known to the foreign visitors as the pottery island, has several attractions. The fact that the Mon culture is highlighted and well-preserved makes it a unique place to

visit. The locals try to create their own cultural identity by making many of the utility signs in three languages, Thai, English, and Mon, reflecting that the majority of the people (the island has about five thousand people) are the ethnic Mon, fled the wars with the Burmese several hundred years ago. They brought with them hope, Buddhism, and their craftsmanship, especially the pottery skills. The headland, the highest point of the island stands a small pagoda, a fifteen meter-high one a replica of the Great Shwedagon Pagoda.

A Mon intellectual guide told me many years ago that the pagoda was built several hundred years ago to remind themselves their cultural heritage and their faith in Buddhism. Eroded by the flowing of the river of kings, years after years, the small pagoda has lost some of its foundation and appears leaning to the water, but the pagoda is still standing. The local community decided to renovate the and fix the damage. They still keep the leaning posture of the pagoda and it is unique and full of memories.

*A white pagoda*

*Leaning towards the water*

*For the last stand*

As I am sipping my coffee, over the wooden bridge, I notice an old woman with her cart carrying some fresh produce, fruit and vegetables from her farm, to the food stall near the pier. I know her name and am amazed by her consistency. She does not have to do this. She seems enjoy doing it, growing fruits and vegetables, and selling them with low prices for other people. In her late 70s, she is still active and strong. After coffee, I plan to go and get some fresh mango and rose apples from her.

*On the wooden bridge*

*An old woman with her cart*

*Plodding against time*

## 19. A New Jack

Jack was tired. The young man had been traveling in the wilderness for days. He had struggled up craggy trails, passed through lush woodlands. He had seen endangered animals such as bears and elephants. He had slept under breath-taking starlit skies.

He was travelling alone. He had a backpack and his old boots.

As his journey was nearing its end, he passed by the only bar he'd seen. Not wanting to forgo the opportunity to slake his thirst with an iced cold beverage, he opened the door and stepped inside.

As Jack approached the bar, the bartender looked at him and said "You have to leave, we don't serve vagabonds here!"

Jack was dejected and disheartened. “Maybe it was my appearance,” he said to himself. He turned around and walked out.

But Jack was not a quitter. Certainly, not someone who would quit without having another go. He wanted to try again.

He stood outside thinking for a moment.

Then he hastily fluffed up his hair, looped himself a few times and walked back in.

When the bartender saw Jack again, he could not recognize him Jack had completely changed his appearance. His new clothes changed his look.

Looking at the new customer, the bartender asked, “What would you like to drink, Sir?”

Jack replied, “Yes, a glass of beer would be nice.”

Jack was directed to the table by the window. He sipped his beer with himself.

He ordered a hamburger and some French fries. He also ordered a bowl of Caesar salad.

Soon, he paid for his beer and left the bar.

## 20. In Search of the Origin of Turkeys

My family has many weird traditions, on reflection, like wasting money on lottery and believing in superstition, despite the fact that we all consider ourselves Buddhists. One tradition that still stay in my memory, and it's hard to chuck if off is the turkey-keeping tradition. Turkeys, you probably can imagine their features, are big birds, which means that they can fly. They are huge birds and are not scared of small beings like hens or children. Their decisive weapon is the kick with their long legs, especially the males. As we are all under the species of moderate height, it has always been perplexing for me why they decided to somehow adopted turkeys as the family's domestic animals.

When I was young, one vivid memory was this - the turkeys. Later on I have learned that Turkey is also a big country in the Middle East, which is quite far away from my country. I remembered having to avoid walking close to them as I am a small person myself and I often

saw my grandfather feeding these birds with rice. They love to stay in a small flock.

The last time, about a year ago, I visited my parents was an opportunity to make an investigation. I often told my students that a systematic way of finding out about something is what we call 'research'. I have been lecturing at a private university on the outskirts of Bangkok for almost ten years now. This visit to Roi Et, a province, in the northeast of Thailand, was no ordinary one, as I was alone. My wife and the two children were not with me as in the past. The kids were in school and my wife had to teach. Tim and Tam, our two children, asked me to say hi to their grandparents and the Turkeys. I had a week to look after everything.

I arrived by plane, which took me only an hour, too short to finish reading anything, I often felt. Then I would rent a car right at the airport and drove it to a small village just five kilometer east of a small district. In the past, before I got married and had kids, I used to take a bus, traveled across the region overnight and arrived at the province in the morning. After that I continued the journey by another

bus, a local one to get to the district and from the district you took a motorcycle taxi. All of these made one realize that life was hard and memory precious. But if you ask me today whether I miss those good old days, I am sorry to say that I am not. I prefer the comfort of today's technology, with respect to transportation, of course.

My feeling, as I was driving through the city center, was mixed. I missed my parents, worrying about their health and at the same time I missed my children and my wife, in short, my own family, and of course, the two cats. I stopped the car and bought some food and groceries at a small market on the way to the district, which is 35 kilometers from the province. I did not forget to buy two kilos of tangerines, as they were my mother's favorite, even though she was diagnosed a few years ago with diabetes, she still loved the fruit.

It was a flock of turkeys that blocked my car from entering the house. Sunee, one of my younger sisters who had been staying with mom and dad, came chasing them away. She helped me carry my shopping with smiles.

“And this is for you,” I said as I handed mom the bag of tangerines.

Mon thanks me and gave me blessing as usual, citing the teaching of Lord Buddha, and I felt like the three planes and the universe were noting my good deed. This is something about humans. They rely on faith and some unknown and unproven interventions, but in the harmless way. Dad was busy in our rubber plantation and told Sunee that he would be back for dinner together – a family dinner. I gave him a jar of honey from the north, which I bought at a shop in Don Muang International airport. “With this price, a bit costly, and the location like this, it’s got to be real honey” I told myself as I handed the 500 Baht banknote the shop assistant.

“Just because it’s from the shop like that doesn’t guarantee that it’s real,” dad argued, trying to show his IQ. It seemed he always tried to outsmart his children, including me. He took it anyway and had a taste with this comment: “Taste is a bit too sweet. Too hygienic. I prefer

taste of nature, and the smell of nature”. Arguing with Dad was futile, a self-centered like him was hard to convinced with reasons or evidence. Mu strategy was simply acknowledging his opinion. Expressions like ‘That may be true’, or ‘that’s one way of looking at it” were my usual responses. Mom was less diplomat about Day, so her usual reaction was ‘Don’t listen to him -old and stubborn”, or something along this line.

Dad was glad that I took interest in turkeys. When I announced that I would look for the history of these big birds. “I don’t know myself. They were there when I was young. Everybody raises them.” He, however, recommended that I asked for help from some of his relatives in the village where he was born. I took his advice and listened to him more when he talked about turkeys. I remembered when I mistook Kai Tok (Tok chicken) as an informal name for turkey (Kai Nguang), he laughed out loud. Kai Tok is much smaller than Kai Nguang, he told me. I trust Dad when it comes to local knowledge and wisdom. My plan was to drive about twenty kilometers north of our house to another village.

Uncle Sanit was mentioned and recommended by both Mum and Dad to be a reliable informant. His house was to the left of Uncle Boonchan, which I could only vaguely remember where it was.

After breakfast, I left with a mission. Mum told me to get some gifts from the market and give some to the villagers, she told me it's a practical thing to do. I believed her. I bought three bottles of rice whisky and some grilled chicken with me. It took me about half an hour to get to a small village. I would say in the middle of a great rice plain. The gravel road leading to the village full of bumps and bogs. I was worried that the rented car might be damaged, so I drove the car slowly with great care. Sunee and Dad said they were busy with work. I had to take the journey on my own, a little adventure won't hurt, I told myself.

The first house I asked for directions was the one located on the left side of the entrance to the village. It was a bit isolated, like our house. After pulling over, I got out and, immediately, was greeted by a barking dog. Upon close look, it was not a fierce-looking dog; and, certainly, it was

not a big dog, and it looked unhealthy with a sign of famine. “Sawasdee krab,” I was greeted by an old man. We exchanged greetings in our local dialect. The owner of the house looked at my face as I sat down on a wooden chair in front of the house. “I am looking for...” I could not finish my sentence.

“You look like Uncle Pong. Are you his son?” I allowed that I was, looking amazed.

“You must be his eldest son working as a teacher in Bangkok,” he continued.

“Don’t you remember me?” I didn’t know but his face and his way of talking looked familiar.

“I’m Ken, your father’s close friend,” he told me before I opened my mouth to ask.

I told him my name and we had a bit of chat. I went to the booth of the car and bought with me a bottle of rice whisky and a big bamboo stick of friend chicken. I gave

him some presents – “Here’s something small from Bangkok and from my family,” I said.

Uncle Ken thanked me. “Are you looking for someone in our village?” he asked. I told him that I was looking for Uncle Sanit. He said that he knew where the house. “I met him yesterday at the temple,” said uncle ken. He then gave me the directions.

“Why are you looking for him?”

“I’m going to ask him about turkeys” I said.

“Turkey?” the man looked puzzled. “You want to buy some from him?”

No, I told him. As we were chatting a few checks came to search for grains near us. A few seconds, a few turkeys came chasing them. “You’ve got some turkeys, too?” I asked.

“Of course, we did. It’s traditional that we kept turkeys. Everybody around here does.” Uncle Ken told me.

As we were talking, a young boy and an old woman came to join us. The old woman was his wife and the boy, ten

years old, their grandson. “Where’s the father or mother?” I asked myself.

“His father passed away last year,” Uncle Ken told me. He told me that his daughter, the mother of the boy, went to work as a factory worker in the central region. She left the boy with them. The boy was in a school uniform and was about to ride his bicycle to school. The mother only sent them some money every month. Sometimes, she did not send them at all. After the boy left, Uncle Ken told me that his daughter might have found him a new father. They did not tell the boy this story. When he was more mature, we would tell him. We had a few minutes of exchanges. Then I bid him farewell. I told him that I would drop by the next time I came around the village. He bid me good luck.

The directions I got from Uncle Ken were not accurate. Did he lie to me? I began to ask myself. On the other hand, could it be my aging memory. It seems to be running away from you as you are aging. seemed to lose it. He told me to continue driving for 300 meters and turn left. I did follow the directions and found myself at the dead end of

the dirt road. In front of me was nothing but a green rice field with a few water buffalos looking at me and my car. I had to make a U-turn in an awkward maneuver. I kept on driving. The house on my left was what I had in mind. I'd better stop and go inside to ask for the directions to Uncle Sanit or Uncle Boonchan.

I saw a small flock of hens, roosters, and small two turkeys grazing grass nearby. I was glad as I found that there was not a single dog in sight. Walking toward me, slowly, was an old woman. I greeted her with a Wai gesture. "Looking for someone?" and I answered "Yes, is Uncle Sanit's house around here?"

"By the way, you look like someone I know," said the old woman.

"I'm Uncle Pong's son, his eldest"

"That's what I thought. Yes, indeed, you look like him when he was younger," said the woman.

“Don’t worry I will walk you there.” She invited me to have a seat at a wooden bench under a mango tree.

I began to notice that the old woman looked a bit like my mother. She saw me staring at her face. It must have been obvious to her that I was staring at her. “Your face look a bit like my mother,” I told her.

She laughed. “Of course, I am her older sister,” she told me.

“You are kidding me!” I was stunned by this news.

“No, it’s true. But I was born from the first wife of your maternal grandfather,” she said.

I began to adjust my language and addressed her as my aunt, one of my relatives. My mother told me once that she was born into a big family. I knew only some of them. In fact, I could remember only some of them and could not remember their names. I could vaguely remember their faces. She told me that her name is Buala, and I called her Aunty Buala. Her husband passed away five years ago. She’s got two children. They went to live in other villages, and occasionally that would come to visit

her. She was alone in this house. I went to the booth of my car and took out a small bag of cookies I bought at the market. I gave it to her and she thanked me.

“I met your mother at the temple last month,” she told me.

Aunty Buala was ten years older than my mother. She looked old but still healthy. She kept two cats and some domestic animals like chickens and ducks. “I saw a few turkeys” I told her. “Yes, they were given to me by Uncle Sanit”, she told me. Her eyes looked hopeful when she mentioned the name of the man I had been looking for. As I was with an important relative, I took time to talk to her. I did not feel the need to rush out to seek the truth about the history of turkeys.

“Your mother and father met each other in this village. It was me who helped them to get married.”

“As a match maker, I was helping your father, Pong, to get closer to her,” she added more detail to the story.

I sipped the water and listened attentively at the story of my parents. To be honest, I had never asked them how they met. I knew so little about their romantic relationship,

their personal stories. We talked for almost an hour and got on well with each other like a bush on fire. I felt truly connected to her. The story told to me by Auntie Buala opened more windows into the story of my own family.

“My father kept turkeys and other big birds as domestic animals. We domesticated them for food,” she said. “Look, I still keep some around,” she pointed to a few turkeys next to a small haystack. The presence of a haystack implied that Auntie Buala was planting some rice. She told me that she was too old to ‘tam na’ or grow rice, so she asked some relatives to do it. I did so to consume myself, she told me.

She told me that the practice of raising turkeys was not a recent one. It was certainly before the Vietnam War era. During the war, she said that turkeys were common in many villages around the province and the northeastern region of Thailand. She said that there was a new village just across the field from hers, and its name was B52.

“B52?”

“It’s where the big plane clashed,” she said. “Named after the airplane that clashed when we were young,” she added.

Now, I began to gradually recall the story told to me, several times, by my father. He told me that somewhere in our district, near his birthplace, the airplane was clashed. Aunty Bula told me that she and many other children ran to the site to witness the tragedy. No one survived, she told me.

I was not in a hurry to meet Uncle Sanit. I enjoyed being with this old woman, partly because she looked like my mother. Like they said, all good things must eventually come to an end, I bid her farewell. I promised her that I would come and visit her the next time I could come. As I finished saying that I felt hurt, blaming myself for not coming to visit my relatives. She gave me a 5-minute long blessing, citing the power of every god in the universe.

The direction she gave me was clear, as clear as the blue sky above my head. I declined her offer to walk me to Sanit’s house, located at the other end of the village. I

drove slowly along a small dirt and gravel lane. Along the way, I saw children walking after their cattle, barking dogs, roosters and chickens, and, of course, big and small turkeys here and there. I started to think that this village might well be the birthplace of all the turkeys in Thailand.

As I was about to take a left turn, I saw a sign posted in front of a house on my left, and the sign said “Boonchan Maneechai”. I realized that I had arrived at the house next to Uncle Sanit. Even though, my destination was not there, I decided to drop by. I started to feel at home around this village. It’s amazing how small and close-knitted everybody was.

As I was walking inside an open field leading to the wooden house, an old man with grey hair and an old woman about the same age as the man, must be her husband, appeared from a bamboo grove with a spade and a bamboo basket. Running to greet me were a small dog, looking harmless. Two adults and a few kids came out of the house. All eyes were on me. I gave the old man a big smile and said: “You must be Uncle Boonchan, right?”

## 21. The Student Who Knew Too Much

The story was told by a 59-year-old school teacher. His name was Decha Monkoltham or Kru Decha. He was a school teacher in Saraburi province, about 100 kilometers north of Bangkok, capital of Thailand.

Yai was a student. He was in his Grade 9. He often carried a lot of books, esp. Chemistry in English. He came and asked many questions.

Other students and many teachers got sick of him

They said Yai was crazy and a bit of trouble maker.

‘Sir, how does an electro rund around an atom’

“How come the color of the substance change the color?”

Chemistry Olympic

He won the award.

Too clever for the school

Her aunt was a lecturer at Chula. The aunt retired due to poor health.

“You are not an inter program” Why do you carry English books, not Thai books”

Thai books are not interesting. Many things in the books are not accurate”

The books he carried along

Autistic

Hyperbolar

Attention

A weirdo? Not sure.

I was an English teacher. I noticed his hand writing.

“You are a strange person. Your hand writing is untidy,”

I said.

Decha stopped talking.

## 22. A Reluctant Tour Guide

Helping strangers is not Suwanna's idea of having a good time. She often said she preferred watching TV at home or net surfing. Lately, after she was given a new smartphone, she was glued to the screen. This was obvious as on average Thai youths spent 10 hours using the Internet.

Savanna has a few close friends. Often, she did things for no particular reason, just to kill time. Several handsome boys came to greet her loneliness and beauty, but she had not made any decision. Her friends, Darawan, in particular, often teased her as being a snob.

"You are too picky," Darawan said.

"I'm beautiful. I can choose," she said.

"I'm afraid you will end up being an old maid, you know, no husband."

Suwanna or Su was a fourth year English major. She studied at one of the top private universities in Thailand. She has a younger brother. He too was a university student.

Suwanna's classmates often had to wait for her to arrive. Today was another day that they all had to wait for her to arrive. Dr Pete, the teacher, told the van driver to wait for a few more minutes.

“She will make it,; he was confident.

Yes, finally she did arrived.

She gave him her line ID.

They met again in Sydney. She said she loved him. Ken also said that he really loved her. In short, they were lovers from two different continents.

Suwanna explained:

“For a fun way to travel around the island, I would like to recommend cycling around the island because if you want to try walking around the island, it would be too tiring.”

“So, we should be riding those bicycles.”

She said yes and smiled and looked at his face, asking permission to continue:

“. There's hope for sure. Bicycle rental is not expensive, 40-50 baht for the whole day, per person only. And do not have to be afraid of being lost Because it is already a forced way Any way you can ride, you can return to the island as usual. Then the main thing is We do not have to be afraid of the big cars. Because here they use only bicycles and motorcycles to get around.

What else did they do? Let me tell you this.

Next a little bit will be Poramaiyikawas Temple Ancient temple Expected to be built after the Lord's end of the pond, please dig a canal in 2264, it was originally called Pak Wa Temple.

A French man called Paul came to the island for the first time. He came alone. After walking out of the pier and paid the fare for the ferry, he was greeted by Su.

“ Hi, are you a tourist?”

Paul looked at her with a big puzzle. He might have thought what happened to him or who she was.

“I am, as you can see,” the man from France answered with some French accent.

After the first

Paul was in his thirties. He just left Paris to heal his wound. He was betrayed by his best friend Stephen.

The day he met Su was another boring day. He was looking for somewhere to drink beer.

## 23. The Hermit

On his 40th birthday anniversary, Manas burned all of his Western-style clothes. He took them from his thatched roof hut, piled them up on a pile of dried leaves and bamboo sticks in front of the hut. Without a match, he had to ignite a fire using a primitive method of wood rubbing. He rubbed a hardwood shaft against a softer wood base. His plowing pushed out small particles of wood fibers. When he applied more pressure, the friction ignited the wood particles. The fire was created and the burning was rapid.

The only witness was a dog. He called it 'Pai'. Pai was a Thai dog, red & brown. It was named after their first encounter. Manas tried to chase the dog away. The word "Pai" means "Go Away." Pai refused to go away as commanded, and now Pai was the only friend Manas had.

Pai was barking as the fire was burning the clothes, sending off thick smoke. Manas was silent; his eyes were

fixed on the ground, sitting on the second step of the wooden stairs. He seemed to be paying tribute to his clothes or his past. After awhile, Pai stopped barking and slowly made his way to sit on the second step of the stairs. Both Manas and Pai were silent. Manas scratched his back. He felt a bit itchy, as he now was wearing outfits that he made himself from jute fabrics.

During the past several month, Manas planted jute on a plot of land not far from his hut. He spent the whole summer weaving the jute fibers, spinning them into coarse, strong threads. He then weaved them into fabrics and used threads to shape them into shorts and shirts. He also weaved a big jute blanket, a few jute sacks. He spent almost the whole year preparing the coming of tonight, his 40th anniversary.

He told his dog, “I don’t blame you if you don’t follow me. Tomorrow morning, I will go...to the forest...to the mountain.”

Pai responded by wagging his tail. Manas lightly patted his head. “You still have a choice.”

Manas walked up a few the steps into the room. There was nothing much inside the hut. Even when he was inside, Manas could smell burning nylon and bad smell of plastic. He lied down on the mattress; his head was over an old pillow.

That was the end of the night.

That night Manas had a dream. It was the same dream he had had for years. In his dream, he was happily living with his wife, Buala, and his son, Chatree. They were having dinner together, talking and laughing in a big house. He then found himself in the train. He dream ended when he saw a burning railway. The rail was on fire.

He woke up from the dream, the same dream he had been having for many years. It was still the middle of the night. He rose up from the room, walked to the porch, feeling thirsty. He looked into the sky. There were plenty of stars. The crescent moon allowed more stars to shine. The stars looked so closed to him; he felt that he could touch them all. It was a chilly night.

He found Pai standing in front of the hut, looking at him.

“Do you also have problem getting to sleep?” he asked the dog. Pai answered by wagging its tail.

He looked to the west. From his hut, the mountain range looked majestic. He went to pick a few chicken bones from the bamboo pantry and threw it on the ground. Pai picked up the chicken and ate them. He used a dipper made from a coconut shell to drink some water from a large earthen jar. Next to the jar was a pot of crown of thorns. There were also pots of herbs such as basil and mint. He used the dipper to water his plants.

He talked to them. “Tomorrow I will have to abandon you here. This is the last time I shall water you. Look after yourselves.”

The hut was the frontier of the remote village, and beyond this was the jungle. His hut was between the border between civilization and nature, the two planes of existence. He has already packed up his stuff, ready for the journey to the mountain. There was nothing much in the small hut.

He went to sleep again. The sounds of the night continued: the chirping of crickets and other night insects.

Manas woke up earlier than usual. He got up and made a few stretches. He could hear the crow of the cocks from the barn made from bamboo. He somehow felt calm and free. He went to have a look at the burning spot. There was nothing but a pile of black ash. He poked the pile with his left foot. Pai was standing next to him.

“You’re dead,” he said. He did not care to clean it up.

He kept a few hens and chickens, and a few ducks. The only outfit he was wearing was a loincloth. He walked around the hut and found a few eggs lying in a banana grove. He took them and boiled them in an aluminum pot after cooking sticky rice. He used banana leaves to wrap rice, gave some egg and rice to Pai, and ate it himself.

After eating, he went to take a bath at the jar under a tamarind tree. He did not apply any shampoo and neither did he rub his body with a small bar of soap. However, he did brush his teeth with salt and used his index finger as a toothbrush.

He and Pai were ready. He wore a pair of leather sandals that he made himself. They were made from buffalo skin and were tough. His backpack was made from bamboo and jute fiber. Inside the backpack were salt, an axe, a moderate-size knife, a bunch of bananas, and some sticky rice wrapped by banana leaves. This kind of backpack was common in the past before the invention of plastic. He packed a few clothes he made himself, including a stick and a bamboo hat. They were ready for the journey. They abandoned the hut when the sun began to get too warm. They headed west to the mountains.

There was a small creek they had to cross in order to get to the foot of the mountain. They needed to cross it to get to the other side of the creek. He recalled that the last time he was here the water was low and he could easily

cross it. Now, it was full of water and it was flowing fast. After walking up the creek searching for the right spot to cross the creek, Manas and his dog seemed to get tired. They stopped to rest at a big rock. The rock was flat with a few smaller stones to climb up.

He placed the backpack on the rock, lay it next to him. The water looked clean for drinking. He took out his bamboo water container to get some water and drank it. He felt hungry now. Sitting on a big rock, he took out his rice and egg.

As he was about to eat, his dog barked loudly. He took an axe from the backpack and jumped down the rock to the ground. When he was standing next to Pai, he saw an old monk approaching him. The monk might be at least 65 years old. The monk carried an umbrella mosquito net on his right shoulder. He also carried a bag, wearing no shoes. Manas knew at once that the monk was a wandering monk. The monk was old and looked skinny. He put his axe on the ground and kneeled down in front of

the monk. He put his hands together in front of him to pay respect to the monk.

“Are you also trying to cross the creek?”

In stead of answering his question, the monk said, “Why are you wearing these strange outfits? Where are you from?”

“My name is Manas, and I am not crazy,” said Manas.

“I guess you once have been a monk. Am I right?” said the monk.

“How do you know?”

“It doesn’t matter how I know.”

“May I invite you to have something to eat? Please follow me.”

“Thank you,” said the monk.

The monk and Manas got up to sit on the big rock. Manas gave the monk half of his food. He also gave him water contained in a bamboo trunk.

Manas and the monk sat down and ate on the same rock. After eating, the monk gave Manas his blessing, saying “May you live and long and healthy life.”

“Thank you.”

“Are you trying to get to the other side of the creek?” asked the monk.

“Too much water and the water are coming down too fast.”

“I also get stuck here,” said the monk. “As a way to say thank you, I have nothing to give you apart from some blessing. But as you also get stuck here, tell me, what would you like me to do to help you.”

“I would like you to teach me everything that you know,” Manas told the monk.

“Can you?”

The monk smiled and said, “I’m sure I can do that, but I have to ask you to meditation with me on this rock.”

“No problem. I can mediate. It’s not difficult, isn’t it? Just sit and close your eyes and think of nothing.”

The monk gave Manas his kind look. The eyes of the two men met. It was a challenge.

Manas sat on a meditation posture as instructed by the old monk. The monk closed his eyes. Manas followed him. Manas told himself, “It’s nothing, just close your eyes and think of nothing.” Pai was lying on the ground. The rock was now shady. The wind was blowing softly. There were sounds of birds and the flowing of the waterfall.

Manas slowly opened his eyes and when he came back from his meditation. He did not know how long he had been on mediation. As he came back to his consciousness, he found that the old monk had gone. The whole experience seemed unreal. He, however, felt something deep inside him, but he could not describe what it really was.

He put on his backpack, got down from the rock. Pai came to greet him on his legs.

Manas continued his journey. This time he walked back, waking towards the east, heading towards his hut. From the hill, he could see the nearest village.

## 24. Ron's Last Wish

The story was told to me by Kru Daeng, an art teacher. He was telling, a new teacher, the story of a small teacher. His name was Ron and he was an artist. Ron was pretty good at teaching young kids at a high school in Bangkok .

Ron was 39 years old, and single. He fell in love with Kru Joy, an English teacher at the same school. But his love was blue. Joy left the school and married a millionaire. She left the school and quit teaching.

After that, Ron went crazy. He had turned to alcohol. He spent his life as a drunkard, loved drinking alcohol. Besides, he smoked.

He drank and smoked every day, after school. Later he quit teaching and opened a small gallery near a canal.

He was found unconscious one day. Kru Daeng and his friends called an ambulance. They took him to the hospital.

The doctor diagnosed that his condition was critical. His health condition was very serious. Hence, an urgent heart operation was required. The doctor said that he only had 40 percent chance of staying alive.

“If I could make it back,” said Ron, “I would quit drinking and smoking.”

After the operation, Ron remained unconscious for 5 nights. Everyone thought he was dead.

On the fifth day, Ron opened his eyes to the world. He was reborn. Miracle was real. Ron survived.

“He told me a moth after that his mission in life - his

wish was to look after his parents and sister.

“I want to live a normal life,” Ron told Kru Daeng.

“Living the same life is drinking and smoking” – Ron said he would ditch such a careless life.

He started travelling by riding his bicycle and writing books. He asked his sister to look after his gallery. He also painted. He sold his paintings and published a few memoirs.

Seven years later, things changed.

One day, he came to see me,” said Kru Daeng.

His look surprised me. Ron looked good. He looked younger and his face was full of energy.

He told me that he had just bought a new house for his parents and his younger sister. He opened another art gallery.

“I forgot to tell you one thing,” Kru Daeng said.

“What’s it? Please tell me.” I said.

“Standing next to Ron was a good-looking woman.” Kru Daeng paused.

“The most beautiful woman I have ever seen,” he said jokingly.

“So, he finally found his woman,” I said. Kru Daeng nodded in agreement.

I thanked Kru Daeng for his story. Indeed, people can change, for the better.

## 25. A Scarf for Mom

“This scarf, “ said Ting Wang, a Chinese student, “is made from soft Chinese silk.” She then translated the instructions to him. Kampol said that her English was much better and reassured her that her English test scores would be okay.

“Don’t worry, you’ll be alright,” he said it again. This time it was louder.

Ting Wang’s face was filled with hope. He gave her a lot of smiles. He could feel that his assurance had alleviated much of her anxiety. He did not say it simply to compliment her. “She’ll be alright,” he trusted his judgement.

“ When you clean it, use warm water, and do not use a brush,” her English was better when she used it this way,

in the real world and personal. She had her reasons to utter it.

“ Even though you are a man, I can give it to your girlfriend, “ she said light heartedly.

“Give it to whoever you think is deserve it, ” his adult student added.

He thanked her. His consciousness asked him to picture the face and body of his loved one by the name of Wanna. She looked so beautiful when she wore a traditional Thai dress. In his eyes she looked like an angel coming from heaven. For him, she was the only woman who rightly deserved the scarf.

Whenever he thought of her, he felt so good. This is the power of the thing called love. Every detail of her was well recorded in his memory.

As soon as he met Wanna, about a year or so ago, he knew he wanted her to be his wife. Though he was not a true believer in destiny, regarding this he embraced it with glee. And that love was for him forever. It wasn't his first love and it wasn't at first sight either. At first, he admitted that he found her annoying. In fact, he knew so little about her. But for this kind of love, he didn't care who she was. He often wondered about it too. Somehow a cupid just made it happen. Occasionally, love just comes and knocks at your heart, and enters the room uninvited. He got caught unaware. The next thing he knew was that he would be so happy to hear her voice, to look at her eyes, two lovely black eyes. He dreamed about the wonderful future. But he was happy and ready to take that risk. Repeatedly rejected by her, he persisted and took an optimistic view of life. This year's Valentine's Day, things would be better, he encouraged himself. He felt much better than the year before.

“Hopeless, it takes two to tango,” his sister used to warn him. She thought she looked too skinny. He was well aware of that. Yet his love for her was so intense. As they say, when you are crazily in love, an elephant can’t stop you. In his mind, his life wouldn’t be complete without her.

“It soon will go away. This is just puppy love,” his friend, an experienced stock broker but luckless in love, told him.

He could hear, but did not heed any of them. He preferred listening to his own heart.

“Call me crazy, “ he said, “but I can’t imagine my life without her.” Past failures were valuable lessons he supposed he should learn. Repeatedly, he had been led down. It did hurt, terribly hurt. It could happen to anyone in love. Some die from it; many survive. Some have

been transformed beyond recognition. He was not ready to abandon worldly sensual experiences like many monks.

Love is blind as they say. When you are crazy about someone, your perceptions do not function properly. Kampol was less critical about his view. He listened only to what he wished to hear. His conscience told him to be careful with this sort of feeling. It's just like an addict. When you are addicted to something, you know its negative consequences, but somehow you just can't give it up. Maybe you are not ready. It's just a matter of time. Psychologists would, without hesitation, blame it on your upbringing. He refused to accept it was that kind of love. He felt so good, and deeply warm inside, when he thought of her and he enjoyed thinking everything about her.

It was February 14. Kampol got out of bed early, much earlier than his usual time. He had hardly slept,

anticipating the best and the worst of his love. He dressed up wearing his favorite jeans, and a jacket. The sneakers were clean and looked and smelt nice. He was in his early thirties when he found himself deeply in love with a woman. It was his first true love, at least in his somewhat boring life.

After breakfast, he left home. “You look handsome this morning,” his mother gave him a smile as he left the house. It took him about 20 minutes to reach the nearest bus stop. This traffic was as bad as it could. He felt sleepy on the bus. He wanted to surprise her, so he did not give her the call. He had only been to her house once in his life. The problem started with the sluggish traffic.

The bus was too slow, not to mention the number of passengers on it. He couldn't wait to see her. He would ask her out to dinner. And at the dinner table, he would give her the scarf as a symbol of his true love. Then they would spend every day and night together forever.

Walking towards her house, he had to fight his way through a group of dogs. Surely, there were big and small dogs. It seemed every dog in the universe wanted him dead.

Indeed, he was very nervous.

February 14, Bangkok was full of love. Young lovers were in town, jammed in every shopping mall. Even sky train stations were crowded. Love is in the air and lots of money was spent on flowers and gifts. Successful stories he had read convinced him that things would be lovely. How lovely it would be to wake up with her. He sang his favorite song in the bathroom, often silently:

“I want to wake up with you.

I want to lay by your side, baby.

All of love inside me has been sleeping, waiting for the right one to come along.

You can share the love I've been keeping.

You can put your music to my song.

I want to wake up with you.”

It was Valentine's Day and, like many others, he was following this new trend. This year it was not the same. His heart never beat this hard. His eyes sparked with hope. With the silk scarf, she would accept his love. And things would be as he had planned. Nevertheless, deep down inside, he felt worried. There was something bothering him. It kept coming and didn't seem to fade away.

He did not have red roses, lilies, pink carnations, or white roses. He had something much better for her. The scarf, a silk scarf from China, would be a perfect token of his love for her.

“ This is a small gift for you,” he would say and he would hand her the scarf.

She would say thank you and accept it. She would put it on and it would make her look wonderful.

It was a hot day. He wiped the sweat off his face as he was ringing the bell. The heat was perhaps less troubling than his anxiety. The bad sign began when he saw two new cars in front of her house. The two forces hit him really hard.

There were two cars parked in front of her house, and he could see several more were jammed inside. He could see many people. Was it a party? He asked himself. Of course, it had to be.

He took the scarf out of his backpack. It was neatly wrapped in pink paper. “I’d like to give this to you, my

sweetheart,” he was trying to say it out loud and clear. But words just stuck in his throat.

Standing in front of him was Wanna. Her face was indifferent when she saw Kampol. Standing tall next to her was a man. He couldn't understand it, but he was trying to make sense of what was happening.

“Pol, this is Tatree.”

She introduced Kampol to her man as her friend. A few minutes of small talk, Tatree said he had an errand to run and left her house.

He couldn't believe his ears when she introduced the man to him. Wanna looked beautiful. When he saw the ring, his face was bloodless. That's right, it was her engagement day. He was stunned when Tatree came and

held her hand. “Are you alright darling?” he said and kissed her forehead.

“Congratulations on your engagement day,” said Kampol calmly.

“Thank you,” said the man and her woman. Her husband-to-be politely excused himself, and disappeared into the house.

His hands were sweating. “And here’s your present,” Kampol handed Wanna the scarf. He was shaking and looking at the floor.

She looked at it carefully. When his silk scarf touched her diamond ring, his heart was empty. She gave it back to him.

“Thank you, but I couldn’t accept this.” You should give it to someone else.”

“Will you come in?”

“No, thank you.” He said looked at her eyes.

“It’s your day,” he said and left.

His head dropped like a defeated world champion. He lifelessly took a taxi home. It took him about an hour to get home. It didn’t take too long for the driver to notice that something was wrong. So he was asked, “ Are you alright?” He said nothing, and signaled to the driver that he wanted a quiet drive. He was thinking of getting drunk like many people who had experienced this broken heart phenomenon.

That was what had happened. The rejected scarf was still well placed in his backpack.

He walked home broken-heartedly. Though his head was as empty as a blackhole, he was trying to hide it. When he walked into the house, his mother was still busy cooking dinner for the family in the kitchen. The TV was on. The evening news was full of stories of love and flowers. His sister was probably singing in the shower.

When his mother saw his face, she said nothing. The big spoon she was holding did not drop on the floor.

“ It was very crowded and hot,” he told his mother when she asked him how the day had been. He did not tell her what was happening.

“ Did you give any red roses to her.” He swiftly glanced at her face, then looked at the TV for awhile. He took a deep breath before he attempted to say something.

“Well, I did, yes, I did, and she really liked them.”

Rarely had he told her a lie. But he just wanted her to be happy on this special day. He knew it meant something for his mother. he told her a pointless lie. As Kampol sat down, he slowly took the rejected present from his bag and put it on the small table. He began to unwrap it. His heart was brimming with tears. He broke the silence by handing her the scarf.

His mother looked at the scarf. She handled it with care as if it were a precious gift. She then gave him a big smile, “How do you know I love wearing scarves?” Her voice was casual, but her tone was deep.

He said nothing. In stead he pointed to the black & white photo on he wall. In the photo, she was wearing a scarf and standing alone in front of a rose garden. She looked young and happy. The photo of his mother wearing a scarf had captured his mind ever since he was a boy.

“Your father took it, ” his mother once told him.

She walked to the window. It was a lovely evening and behind her the moon was shining. He looked at her. Suddenly, his heart was lifted. The feeling was different. It wasn't easy to tell why. She slowly put it on. He was amazed at her skill.

He looked out of the window and mentioned something about the mango tree's flowers blooming in front of him.

“How do I look?”

He looked at her and walked to give her a hug. He said nothing. He could not remember the last time they hugged each other like this. It was probably more than five years ago.

“Don’t cry you great lover. You’re going to dirty my scarf,” she said laughingly.

He stepped back and looked at her again. The evening wind was quite chilly. The scarf around her neck was dancing with the wind. She walked out of the room with her last words: “You’d better hurry up. Dinner is ready.”

He thought she indeed looked lovely wearing the scarf.

## 26. A Tribute to the Summer Break

Henry was an English teacher, an expat working in Bangkok, Thailand.

After teaching at a private university on the outskirts of Bangkok for five years. He started to complain. His Thai wife began to notice his change.

One evening, in March, when the mercury went too high.

“We should all mourn the end of the summer break.”

“You would like us to do this - mourn an event like the summer break?” Jenifer asked her husband.

He did not answer her question. But said: “You’ll find out soon.”

Arrived at work this morning Many things have changed  
What has changed the most is the feeling of not being  
there anymore. The thing that leaves us forever is a  
summer vacation or summer break / holiday. On the way  
to work, I can't help but think that this vacation is the last  
time. Because from now on We, referring to Thailand,  
will begin the first semester in August. The original  
summer vacation will change to one stop in early May.  
Which is the rainy season We may switch to the term  
Rainy Season Break / Semester Break in the future.

Why do we have to change I ask myself often, the main  
reason is Synchronization Or make it the same across  
ASEAN, although I have been doing research on  
ASEAN for many years, I'm not sure if Other member  
countries in ASEAN, are they changing the way of  
Thailand? Doing similar things has both advantages and  
disadvantages.

In any case, we cannot do anything, and we can only  
mourn for an old friend. Friends who have been together  
since the death of "Summer Vacation"

On the April holidays I find leaves to lay down Under  
the shade of the mango tree

Leaning down to lie down with the head loincloth.

I was blowing coldly against the skin of my body.

My mind drifted so far

We should all mourn for Summer Break.

## 27. A Tale of a New Veggie

You may wonder about the title and question: What has it got to do with me? You may ask. Are you going to persuade me to become a veggie? Forget it. Bearing well in mind that talking about oneself is considered narcissistic, I humbly accept your criticism. I should like to make my stance here at the very beginning that being a vegetarian or not has nothing to do with being a good person (whatever this may mean!).

Well, just be patient with me, and wait until the end, there is something I would like to share with you people.

First of all, please allow me to say here that it has never occurred to me, even in my deepest dream that would one day change my eating habits. My story may not be the most interesting one, but I should like to share.

Three sources motivated me to write this article on vegetarianism. First the questions asked by many people I have met. After they know that I am a vegetarian, people

usually inquire about my motive. One of the frequently asked questions has been: Why do you become a vegetarian? It seems to me that eating veggies is a strange thing to the eyes of the majority. Second the article by a Nepali journalist called S. Pandey inspired me greatly. That guy told the reader, including me, his odd reasons of his becoming a veggie. Thirdly, it was from the book *Your Heart Your Planet* by Harvey Diamond who wrote the excellent book. In a nutshell, he tells the world that vegetarianism can help fixing many environmental problems, which I doubt if it is that revolutionary.

People become vegetarians for various reasons. Vegetarians refer to people who eat only vegetables, bread, rice, fruit, eggs etc and they do not eat meat or fish. It could be for health reasons. Their cholesterol level maybe too high, and maybe they think that vegetarian food will cut it down or lower it. Perhaps it is because they believe in certain doctrines, which value all beings, including the animal world, and happen to suggest that eating animal meat is sinful. Or it could be that meat and fish are a risky diet in these days of

various diseases e.g. foot and mouth disease, mad cow, etc. and pollution. It may be just that the ever-soaring cost of fresh food is so exorbitant.

Stop that now! You may argue that there is nothing new. We have already heard about those stories. But what about you? You may ask. Here is my story. Well, I proudly declare that originally it was for the love --- love of my mother and later I have slowly developed the love of animals, esp. the tame and friendly ones.

I have just become a veggie for a year and eight months. It began in April 2000, the hottest month in Thailand. The story began when I was still in my monkhood. A few days prior to my disrobement, my mother came to offer before-midday food to the monks at the village temple. It was a few days before I returned to the layman life. Among other things we discussed e.g. weather, good deeds & bad deeds, hell and heaven, my mother expressed her worry about one of the traditions --- the celebration by drinking alcohol right after the disrobement (the return to the layman), which, according to her, is not a very clever tradition. In short she would

not want me to behave like that, for she also believes that a great deal of merits I have accumulated by being in the yellow robe would be lessened or tainted. The abbot and I could not find any reasons to object her.

She asked if I would be kind enough to refrain from drinking alcohol right after I was disrobed. I replied that I could not guarantee because the social pressure was so strong. Out of the blue I remarked: “ Maybe if I became a vegetarian like you, people wouldn’t insist that I drink alcohol.” My mother’s eyes sparked with hope like the shiniest star in the universe. She only wished that at least I ate no meat until my 31st birthday, which was only 20 days. I agreed and the abbot was there too so he had to be the referee. There of us were actually made the agreement in front of the old chanting house. And apparently inside that house was the statue of the Lord Buddha. At that time my only wish was to make my mother happy. I was unaware that the promise I made on that day would significantly change my eating habits.

Like the majority, I used to enjoy eating all sorts of meat e.g. chicken (my favourite), beef, pork, fish, and etc.

I always keep my promise. So I forced myself not to eat any meat as soon as I was disrobed. It was no easy task. To keep my promise, I had to struggle finding it hard to resist my temptation of eating meat. However, I managed to survive without the taste of any meat. I repeatedly reminded my self that it was only temporarily --- only for 20 days.

20 days passed. The last day arrived. And it passed without me wanting to eat any meat. It was such a surprise to me because I felt indifferent toward meat. I was trying to avoid smoke coming from grilled pork or chicken. I found myself unable to return eating the things I used to enjoy them so much.

Consequently, my attitude toward animals has changed as time goes by. I enjoy looking at birds flying. I think they are lovely and their singing in the morning is enchanting. Buffalos, oxen, and cows grazing in the field are to be our friends. Piglets, kitties, and young dogs are so cute. It is delightful to look at a hen and her small children in the back yard. All animals are living things, so they have the right to live in this earth. You may think

I am too sentimental, but it is how I perceive the world. Being a vegetarian has opened my eyes to another dimension of life.

Whenever I look back, I am amazed how I could change myself and become a vegetarian. One thing I have learned from this extraordinary experience is that: “ Do not underestimate your own determination.”

## 28. My English Teacher

I met Anun again in a reunion night. He told me he was an English teacher. I was amazed, as he was not a language person when we were close friends in college. In fact, he hated it.

“I, as a matter of fact, teach English.” Anun smiled.

“To who? May I know?” I asked, jokingly.

“Thai students, of course,” Anun answered.

“Tell me, if you don’t mind, about your favorite English teacher,” Pranee, a Thai English major, asked Saksit or Kru Saksit. It was an appropriate question for a session on ELT methods.

Other students in the classroom agreed.

Saksit was amazed to learn that many of his questions would like to listen to his stories, including this one.

“If you care to listen. I will tell you,” Saksit told his students.

Let me tell you about my favorite English teacher. His name is Thongdee.

The middle of five children, little Thongdee, known by all in his village as ‘Tong’, was born to agricultural parents in rural Nakorn Si Thammarat province during the reign of King Rama VII.

“That was a long time ago,” Saksit emphasized.

“He was four years old when Siam, which is Thailand’s former name)became a constitutional monarchy.”

Now, Saksit thought he needed to elaborate on this.

“A constitutional monarchy”, Saksit paused, “ is a form of government in which a monarch—typically a king or queen—acts as the head of state. And we have a parliament with the representatives.”

“Like what we are having today?” One student asked.

“Let me continue,” the teacher insisted.

For Tong, the winds of political change were far away. And *The Great Depression of the 1930s* and the build-up to the Second World War were even more remote.

His little village of twenty families had no radio and was a half-day’s walk from the nearest road.

Life was happy then.

Even though the world was in turmoil, Tong's childhood world was happy and carefree. There was plenty of food. The tropical weather was mild. Family and friends were abundant, near and caring. Tong grew up without even noticing it.

He naturally assumed that life would continue as he knew it, and that he would follow the footsteps of his father and his father's father before him. He sometimes attended the temple school in the village on that road a half day away, but he did not see, nor care much, that what was being taught there had much importance for him and the good life he knew. He never finished his studies.

In 1952, at the age of twenty, he and a friend set off on a lark to see what life was like in the big city. He did odd

jobs that came his way to support himself in Bangkok. The following year he had to make the first real decision of his life. Rather than being drafted into a military unit that he might not like, young inductee Sakorn decided to enlist and was sent to the Army Infantry School in Lopburi.

During his eight year military career he gained maturity, discipline and self-confidence and rose to the rank of sergeant. But something even more important happened to Sergeant Sakorn during that time. His unit was working with the Joint United States Military Assistance Group (JUSMAG) and he found, to his surprise, that he remembered quite a lot of the English he had learned back at the temple school. He also found that he was able to learn and imitate the language and accents of his American counterparts quite easily and naturally. He had always been a mimic. Even from his early childhood he was able to copy the language and mannerisms of the people around him. Now his ability to copy others began to payoff. He was made interpreter

by his unit commander and played a pivotal role in ensuring communications between the Thai and American military forces in Thailand.

By the time Sergeant Sakorn retired from the army, he knew he liked the English Language, had a real facility for it, and was rather good at it. But he didn't know what to do about it. As luck would have it, he met some Australian missionaries and, after receiving training, was invited to go with them as an English Language Teaching Assistant to Laos. It was there, during 1963, at the age of thirty, that he found his calling: "This is what I want to do. I'll become an English teacher."

Teaching Assistant Sakorn knew he was getting a late start on making a career, but he also knew he would do whatever it took to succeed. Since he hadn't finished secondary school, he had much to make-up. Starting in 1965, on his return from Laos, he studied for and passed his Lower Certificate of Education, Higher Certificate of

Education and the College Entrance Exam, while at the same time teaching English in private schools in Nakorn Si Thammarat.

When Acharn Sakorn completed his B. A. in Education in Bangkok in 1977, he already was a seasoned English Instructor. He continued practicing his trade in public High Schools and as a private tutor. Then in 1982, he got lucky again: he met a student from Dhurikijpundit University. One thing led to another and quickly Acharn Sakorn joined the faculty at DPU, where he taught English until his retirement in 1998.

Acharn Sakorn still teaches English at DPU on a contract basis and cannot imagine himself doing anything else. He says that DPU allowed him to finally ‘establish’ himself. He adds, “DPU is like home.” Although Acharn Sakorn has had a rich and interesting life, he underlines that DPU is “the best work-place” he has ever found.

Looking back on his calling, Acharn Sakorn reflects, “I wanted to help others and make myself useful.” With a little thought, he adds, “What I teach, I must be.” A generation of DPU students remember Acharn Sakorn for his gentle dedication to his calling and are thankful that he was kind enough to make himself useful in their lives. Colleagues also recognize Acharn Sakorn for his dedication and appreciate that they can always count on him for a positive word and a shining smile.

As with most people who have a public persona, these people also have hidden talents. Acharn Sakorn is no exception. He sees a parallel between the finding and realizing of his calling and the discovery and nurturing of his long-time hobby: portrait sketching. One day back in Laos, he decided to try to sketch a picture of President John F. Kennedy from a photo. He was pleased with his first effort and ever since has worked to improve his technique. For Acharn Sakorn, portrait sketching is a hobby that not only provides him with personal satisfaction, but also entertains and often honors his

friends and colleagues. As with English, his skill with a pen or pencil is the direct result of his natural ability to copy things around him. He has a large portfolio of portraits and is kind enough to share a few with the Bamboo Forum.

Based on a wealth of life experiences, Acharn Sakorn offers this message for students: “You need to see the importance of education early; appreciate the natural abilities you have and the facilities you are provided; and make the best of every opportunity.” Good advice from a man who came a long way to his calling.

## 29. Human Errors and Technologies

“What do you think about this, Ken? Should I buy a self-driving car?” George asked Ken, an English teacher.

“You mean a car that can drive itself for you?”

Yes,” George said.

“I don’t know. Ask Elon Musk,” Ken sounded amused.

“Is it on the market somewhere? I would like to get one, too” Ken said.

“I saw it on the Internet. As you know, I like new things, including new technology,” George said. He was in his early fifties. George looked much younger than his age.

Ken thought to himself. He had a heart for the automatic car. For him, it would be a great idea to reduce

unnecessary accidents, injuries, and deaths. For him, every life matters, including a human life. “I am on your side.”

“It would be safer for us humans to turn to this technology,” Ken added.

George protested, “Thank you Ken. I don’t want your lecture on how to live if you don’t mind.”

“I thought you enjoyed my lecture.” Ken said, jokingly.

“By the way, did you watch TV last night?” Ken asked George.

“No, what’s new?” George said.

Another tragic accident, George thought.

Ken said: “It was another bad accident.”

George smiled to himself. His guess was always the correct one. He was thinking about the automatic driving cars as a solution.

“That’s why need to reduce human errors,” George said.

“We have to thank Elon Musk.” George added.

A self-driving car, also known as an autonomous vehicle (AV or auto), driverless car, or robo-car is a vehicle that is capable of sensing its environment and moving safely with little or no human input.

“Tell me about the accident,” Ken asked George.

“Do you really want to listen to my story?” George asked.

Ken nodded his head. “I know you are a great storyteller.”

The story of the accident, told by George, was not a boring one. Ken thought it was one of his best.

A Sedan collided with an electric pole. Then the car caught fire. It was completely destroyed by a severe fire on the road in front of the factory in Pak Kret District.

“That’s terrible,” Ken exclaimed.

“Indeed, a tragic accident.”

Some good Samaritans tried to help the driver, but the fire was severe. They had tried, but failed to get the driver out.

“Did he die?” Ken asked.

“The driver died in the wrecked car, unfortunately,” George sipped his coffee.

“It must be because it hit the concrete pole.”

According to police, the car was coming at a very high speed. Some parts, small broken pieces, were found near the pole.

According to George, the accident happened in the morning on February 1, Police Lieutenant Colonel Warin Jaiyai of the Pak Kret Police Station, in Nonthaburi province received notification of a serious accident.

The communication was that a sedan car crashed into an electric pole causing a fire. And a dead person was trapped inside the car.

“Driving too fast is not a wise thing to do. It can cause an accident?” Ken asked.

“I couldn’t agree more” George said.

What was so sad was this. By the time rescue teams arrived, everything was too late.

They put out the fire by using a chemical tank to extract the fire in about half an hour, the fire was calm.

Inspecting the driver's seat, one of the dead bodies were found trapped inside the car in a charred black chloride condition. About 10 meters away from the scene, the engine and parts of the sedan were scattered in the middle of Petchkasem Road. As a result, a gray Toyota Fortuner, registration number Kor Kor 2977, Chumphon, has Mr. Thongchai Saengpratun, who drove past it, broke away until it crashed, crashed, the engine has been damaged 1 other car.

Mr. Jessada Chanprasert Staff of Petch Siam Factory Witnesses said that while he was going to work, he heard a violent noise and ran out to look with two other friends and saw the sedan hitting the electric pole. And there was one woman trapped in the car while he and his friend were rushing to help.

Initially, the police officer checked the registration number of the sedan car. Know that the owner of the car is Mrs. Panya Kaewphalek, a villager in Moo 3, Tha Raeng Sub-district, Ban Laem District, Phetchaburi Province, who have to wait for their relatives to confirm that they are the same person or not due to the condition of the body and various evidence It was totally destroyed by fire.

George and Ken looked at each other. “We surely, need the welcome the technology that can reduce human errors.” George concluded.

“Thanks Ken” George said.

“Don’t just thank me. Thank Elon Musk, too.

So many people were killed because of car accidents.

Maybe, it’s time we do something about it.

## 30. The Great Pandemic

I am alone in place alone, but not lonely. I miss my Mama. She passed on Friday, January 24, 2020, after five weeks in the hospital. Besides being my mother, she was my housemate and best friend. The eldest of her six children (two boys and four girls), I am her next of kin. I am the one everyone looked to when it came to making decisions. I am the facilitator and advocate on behalf of our family. Now, walking through the house we shared and where I grew up, her presence is all around me. I hear her voice and see her everywhere. Mama left me with many wonderful, sunshine memories. As I grieve her, I am sheltering in place alone, but not lonely.

Then, on April 5th, a Sunday afternoon, I get a call from my number two sister, Debbie. Our baby sister, Sherill, has been rushed to the hospital. As her legal guardian, I immediately think to go there. Debbie reminds me, “Freda, we can’t go there.” Right, no one is allowed!

The hospital is restricting visitors. Sherill lives in a skilled nursing facility, and we have not seen her since March 11th. She has never gone to the hospital alone, without family. We have always been there to support her in navigating through her healthcare concerns. She has many underlying conditions: diabetes, lupus, missing a spleen, high blood pressure, and blindness (caused by diabetic retinopathy).

Sherill is diagnosed with COVID-19 and placed in an intensive care unit (ICU).

This begins a “new normal” of caring for my sister from afar. First, I fight for 24 hours to change her “do not resuscitate” code status. Her paperwork showing me as her legal guardian has not been sent with her. When she arrives at the hospital “nonresponsive,” she is asked if she wants to be incubated, if necessary. According to the emergency room attendants, she said, “No.” I was livid, yet victory comes when her code status is changed to

resuscitate. That same night, I am asked for permission to incubate her. I say, “Yes.” This is the first of many requests I grant on Sherill’s journey towards surviving COVID-19. There’s victory in every step.

My days begin with me calling the hospital for an update report from the night nurse. In the early evening, I call to speak with the day nurse before that shift changes. Then, I text my family members to update them on Sherill. I advocate for her, remembering my promise to Mama that we would take care of Sherill. No matter what the report, I look for something that will encourage my family. As the family matriarch, I resolve to be strong for them. Each day, with every step forward on the journey to healing and restoration, I count as another victory.

I learn so much about different medical terms and procedures. The pulmonologist declares, “Your sister is young. I am not leaving any stone unturned.” The nurses and doctors exemplify the best of care and empathy for

patients when their families cannot be with them. The many dedicated healthcare professionals wear multiple hats. We have telephone calls and Zoom meetings with Sherill where we speak life, love, and prayers into her ears. Each day she is still with us we count as a victory.

Finally, on a Friday, May 8th, Sherill leaves the ICU. Within the hospital setting is a long-term facility just 50 feet away. There she will be supported in weaning from the ventilator. Thirty-three days later, Sherill is still here. We count it as a victory!

Another one told this story:

Just a month ago, I was with my parents in India. The start of the year 2020 brought a strong urge for me to spend time with my parents, and I had decided to listen to my heart and gut and visit them in March.

In the two weeks I spent in India, we witnessed the world change dramatically. It became obvious to me that the virus knew no boundaries of immigration, economy, caste, religion, walls, electric fences, or borders of the human mind. It spread, and spread, and spread, and literally has forced us to question our entire being, and hold on to anything and everything that gives us hope and faith to carry on.

As my return date to the U.S. approached, a connection in Europe was no longer safe. Some suggested I delay my return, but most just wished me well. My friend V. handed me a tiny cloth pouch bag containing a mauve colored garnet stone which I didn't know was my birth stone. My friend A. gave me a horseshoe that he had found on a Himalayan trail. My dear mother, a pious Muslim, made another little pouch of nazrulmukam (an assorted mix of money, a prayer and a photo of the leader of the community that is believed to keep the evils away). I picked my own good luck charm, a heart-

shaped leaf that I had found in my mother- in- law's garden!

The Fernandes family sent me prayers from the church, neighborhood aunties and uncles sent me prayers from the mosque and a temple. An invisible angel was requested specially for me by a friend who had had a word with someone up above. I've run away from religion all my life, but I embraced and welcomed it all. V., K., and A. kept me safe and cheerful 'til I was on my own. I took my bags, which by now were definitely overweight, with all these newly added wishes and prayers of safety, hope, and faith, and headed to the airport to board the flight.

With flight cancellations and a long layover at one of the busiest airports in the world, my search for a quiet and calm space drew me to the multi-faith prayer room, a 12 X 12 foot room, half of which was carpeted for our Muslim communities to say their namaaz on, and the

other half which had tables and chairs with bibles placed neatly on them. I put a scarf over my head, something I normally don't do, took off my shoes, placed my backpack in a corner, and spent most of those layover hours sitting cross legged in the women's section of the Muslim namaaz area. The chaos and looming fear made me sit in stillness, and tap into my own reserves of hope, faith, compassion, and empathy. It allowed me to cope with my fear and brought me back to San Francisco, where my second home and community awaited me.

In my 36 hours of traveling from India to the US, I tightly held onto symbols of faith, hope, and love, and in the last month, we've all been forced to find it in the nooks and crannies of our homes, and deep within. May we continue to find hope and faith - in nature, in our communities, and deep within. And then may we continue to use our privilege and awareness to give a voice to the voiceless and make the invisible, visible.

## 31. How Mudmee Won His Heart

Mudmee was fat, big time. She weighted over 80 kilos with the height of only 165 centimeters.

The problem was, the first one only, that she was not born into a well-to-do family. Her parents were farmers in Surin.

After M.6, finishing her 12<sup>th</sup> grade, she left for the capital, Bangkok.

She was a part-time worker and was pursuing a degree in English at one of the many private universities in Bangkok. As her family was still struggling with making an end meet. Mudmee was diligent, a hard-working student.

30 destiny of the sky 70 must fight 5 stars smile to fight  
life Even more real life than drama

There is a saying that Real life is more than drama Which is not an exaggeration Because plays or novels that we read are all taken from real stories that happen Some lives are so dire that we can hardly believe how they have passed through those times. Just like celebrities in the industry, they have a hard time struggling to survive. Until finally being able to notice becoming a star that illuminates the industry until today

How to lose weight 28 kg in a few months, change us like a different person!

Now, over a year ago, the weight is still stable. In the past, there were health problems and the pressure was greatly improved. I'm happier too. Therefore wanting to encourage and share information with many people who

want to reduce Who wants to lose weight in the sky?  
Let's look at the best tips on how to lose weight of the  
sky.

Fa believes that many people try to lose weight by  
various methods. Which is certain that many methods do  
not work Fa is the one who tries to find ways to be in  
good shape with him. I want to buy some fashion clothes  
at the night market with others. Tired of asking the  
merchant if she has a child, and the same answer is no  
(Not to mention the eyes of some merchants who seem  
like we went to waste time) Oh, I forgot to tell you that  
the sky weighs up to 92 kilograms to try to console  
yourself as a tall woman (168 height) but that It didn't  
make anything better when its weight was thrown almost  
a hundred! However, how can Mai Fah get fat when the  
sky's favorite item is pork leg rice! Oh, I ordered a  
special order, add a filling, add eggs, pour a lot of water.

Very fat 100 Kg. If thin, will someone really like it?

Personally, he has been single for a very long time.  
Because fat is not afraid to tell someone he loves The  
sadest thing in life is that the relatives have very low  
immunity to love.

Now I work well, I have debt, I can be responsible for  
myself and my family. As a working person

Like to live a life without negligence Drink some for  
your health, don't smoke, take a night out Like traveling  
in nature, like taking pictures, likes to play music

Life looks very boring in the eyes of others, haha (but  
personally I'm satisfied).

Parents keep telling me Work first and find a girlfriend

The point is, we have been single for a very long time  
since birth. Just secretly liked the episode in Grade 4,  
secretly loved at the 2nd grade.

Because he never said the word "love" to anyone except  
parents

The next point is that we actually intend to lose weight.

Consulted a doctor

Later, if we are really thinner What is the joy of having a boyfriend?

How do we start? People never.

He will like us for their appearance or like us for being who we are.

## 32. My Sunshine

It was a vague memory. Thanachart was trying to recollect those memories. All he could recall was a smattering set of bits and pieces. Memories are like scattering broken glass – here and there. He could still hear the sound of himself singing the lines from the famous song – You are My Sunshine.

*You are my sunshine, my only sunshine*

*You make me happy when skies are gray*

*You'll never know dear, how much I love you*

*Please don't take my sunshine away*

The singers and the song kept echoing in his head for many decades. They became his body. The experience had become his body.

As he was thinking back about those memories, he could see faces of four people, members of the Smith family – the father, mother, Kate and Peter. All were in a car heading to Auckland. It was in New Zealand, back in the late 1980s.

Thanachart sipped his black coffee. It must have been a defining moment to sing that stanza. Wasn't it the stanza? He could hardly tell. The lines was still vivid in his scattering memory. The black coffee could calm him down a bit in his agitation to bring back those memories.

Yes, there was a green hill and rows of trees. The green paster of Waikato. The Kaimai range and the road where he had stayed for twelve months.

Talking about the Kaimai range, Thanachart could recall the time when Phil, his host father, took him on a hiking weekend on the mountain.

The Kaimai Range lies west of Tauranga and separates the Bay of Plenty from Waikato. Of volcanic origin, it has many valleys and is mostly forested, with summits between about 550 and 950 meters. He remembered standing at the edge of the cliff, looking north at the peak of Mt. Ruapehu.

The song itself did not reflect the weather of that day, however. The last day he was to stay in New Land. It was overcast and a bit chilly - wet

As he was in the car, and his host dad was the driver, his mind went back and forth, jumping like a kangaroo in Canberra. He remembered Mrs Kate Williamson - a lovely teacher of in Tauranga who saw his talent for story-writing. She encouraged him to share his personal writings, comics and journals with his and the class to read. She was a mentor throughout his time at the boys' college. In general, Thanachart thought Kiwi teachers really engage with their students' true potential, and they

believe students are all different individuals with different ‘gifts’ to share with the world.

Nancy, his host sister, three years younger than him, looked very sad. She said she would fly to Thailand to meet him. Nancy asked if Thanachart would come to visit the Brown family again.

“I would come as soon as I could, I promise,” he said.

He began singing his favorite lines again:

*You are my sunshine, my only sunshine*

*You make me happy when skies are gray*

*You'll never know dear, how much I love you*

*Please don't take my sunshine away*

### 33. The Lucky Shrine

Anyone happened to be passing through this small village would notice a shrine with a lot of offering like flowers and small portion of foods on banana levels containers. Some burning incense sticks made the shore look more sacred.

The caretaker of the shrine was a 65-year-old man by the name of Thongmee. Villagers would refer to him us Uncle Thongmee. He was a farmland, a big plot of rice field in front of this sacred place. Looking from the shrine, he could see almost every corner of his rice field. He was considered a respectable elderly man in the village.

Behind the shrine was a several bamboo groves. A kilometer down the south was a local temple.

His wife Kanda often teased him about the shrine. “Are you going to build a bamboo hut next to the shrine?”

The shrine was like a big spirit house. The wood looked pale and dried leaves were scattering around the lawn in front of the shrine.

## 34. When Good Luck Hurts

Everybody wants to win the lotto and have a lot of money. For me, I Do not want to. Why? Sometimes, good luck in lottery may turn out to be bad luck. In fact, there were plenty of cases, serving as examples.

This is one of them. Ratreer was a factory worker. She was 25 years old when luck struck her. The factory worker won 67 million Baht winning the first prize. After the big win, her life was a series of bad luck. She was indirectly robbed by the ex-husband's relatives.

Back on March 18, 2001, Ratreer was 25 years old, a woman washing beer bottles in a factory in Rayong Province, She won the 1st prize – the lottery prizes of the 8 lottery pairs. Her luck made a big headline across the country. Her humble education made it hard for her to manage her money.

What happened was that she received a total prize money of 66 million Baht. This made her a millionaire within the blink of an eye. But then the luck that came back brought suffering as well.

After winning the lotto, she had used the money to pay off debt to relatives. Suddenly, she was visited by many relatives. She bought a mobile phone, a watch for more than 300,000 baht and gave the money to 4 people, 1 million Baht each, Besides, she bought a 4-door Isuzu car for his brother worth 700,000 baht.

She had prepared five hundred thousand money to prepare to give away to relatives in Chiang Mai. Roi Et, but was stolen, suspected by her husband's relatives.

And the daughter's ex-husband's father claims to be owed 4 million by the lottery-winning daughter-in-law was not the one. But had to help The former husband's relatives.

Before this came to ask for five hundred thousand, so gave 1 hundred thousand in total, and had to spend more than 10 million baht with relatives, both of themselves and of the ex-husband's side, although the prize money was remaining several million, but a lot was gone With giving someone else

It is unbelievable that the fortune that has been returned has turned into every halo that has been brought to him. In fact, it is the desires and greed of the person who brings all the kings of heaven. Because other people's appetite causes problems.

Ratree won nothing, but lost almost everything in her life.

## 35. Longblack 16

Tim was a coffee lover and no one dared arguing that he was not. His usual seat was a table for two and the number of which was 16. His favorite coffee was Longblack, or what most people would call Americano. Tim was a doctoral student in one of the government universities in Australia. Tim was from Bangkok, Thailand. He was in his mid 30s.

His office was in Building 5, near the concord. The concord is a hub, where one would find shops, co-op bookstore, cafes, banks, chemist, and travel agents on campus. Many students would come and chat and for Tim, he enjoyed reading newspapers. He would get one from the bookstore and grab it to read with his morning coffee. He loved the Australian, it's traditional, a bit old-fashioned. Tim never admitted that he voted the Liberal.

His favorite was long black. Long black is not actually another term for Americano as many would believe it to be. For many long black lovers, a long black is a not simple black coffee, but a specialty coffee with its taste and aroma. For Tim, sipping a Longblack and reading the Australian were like sitting in heaven.

It was the first day of spring and Tim has waiting for Teresa to join him. Teresa was from Taiwan, and her English was great, and she was doing her MA in Education. Tim was a Thai student, working on his doctoral thesis. The sun was shining and the temperature was perfect, as perfect as spring could offer.

After talking and having coffee with Teresa, Tim walked up the concord to the front of the student union. He was greeted by Adam, a janitor who had been wiping the room.

“You had your morning coffee at the Iguna already I suppose,” Adam said.

“Yes, but I will come and get some coffee here later this afternoon,” Tim said.

“Well, the coffee is free of charge here. It tastes great, too.” Tim smiled.

Sometimes, Tim would buy used books on the lawn between Building 5 and Building 1. They would come to sell used books, serious stuff, every first Wednesday of the month, in short, once a month.

The library was a stone’s throw away from the concord. Tim had an appointment with a Taiwanese student, an MA student.

## 36. Money for Something

Tina was annoyed when she was told that money is not everything. For her, money is everything.

“Why do you say that money is not important?” Tina asked Jomchai, her English teacher,

“I didn’t say that it is not important. I only said that it is not everything.”

“For me, money is everything.” Tina maintained her conviction. She had her online store and her business was considered a success. He made a lot of profits from her online business. Indeed, she was a successful startup.

“You’re still young,” said the teacher.

“ Even when I were ten or twenty older, my conviction would remain the same,” Tina said.

Her teacher only smiled.

Last week, the class has an interesting and engaging session. Jomchai asked the students taking a course on *English for Startups* to do a debate under the motion: “Money or Love?” Tina was the leader of the money team.

The debate went well.

## 37. Fake News

“Pilai’s gone. She passed away last week.” Our neighbor Wanna broke the news. Wanna was an overweight and chatty old lady. We were shocked to hear about Pilai’s death.

“ The virus got her.” Wanna added.

We could do nothing, so we thanked Wanna for informing us. Then we went to Pilai’s house to ask about the funeral. As we were walking to her house, which was only a bout a hundred meters north our garden, my wife lamented that the family should have told us about Pilai’s demise.

We saw Pilai at her house, alive. She said, “Heard the news about Wanna? – She’s dead!”

## 38. The Fruit Seller

Jundee was a villager in the northeast of Thailand. His village was a small one. Most of his fellow villagers grew rice during the rainy season and grew vegetables of different kinds during the remaining months of the years.

The village had a small temple, an old one. Only a few Buddhists monks looked after the temple affairs.

Jundee's parents were devout Buddhists. They were poor too, so they encouraged Jundee to go to the temple with them. Little by little Jundee was positive about the temple. He was ordained as a novice when he was five years old. He did not plan to disrobe any time soon. Being a novice was the only chance for him to be educated.

He had to help his family. His novicehood would send his parents to the better places after their health. This was the

belief they long held to be something that mattered in their family.

As a Buddhist novice, Jundee was an earnest learner. His master, Laung Phi Chamnan was keen to take him everywhere, including the deserted temple deep in the far end of the hill. They found many ancient ruins, including palm leaves with manuscripts. They were not in Thai, but ancient scripts. Jundee's master said he too could not read them.

“You want to learn how to read these Dhamma scripts?”  
Laung Phi Chamnan, his mentor, asked him.

“Yes, Sir” Jundee answered.

“Then you need to go to see the guru, a hermit, living on the mountain.”

On the mountain, there was a village there. The village of heaven, for Jundee, sounded like a mystical place.

Laung Phi Chamnan said that he was told when he was a boy that it was a very hard to find place.

“You need to cross three rivers and two mountains to get there.” An elderly woman told him over the fire.

## 39. The Waiting Room

Covid-19 has changed almost everything. On TV, there was news updating scary stuff like the number of new infectants and new deaths. Experts warned that the Covid-19 pandemic could last for many years.

“The best way, in my expert opinion, is to stay home, quarantine yourself,” said one medical professor.

Five minutes later, the director of the Disease Control, was shown giving an interview on one of the popular TV channels.

“Anyone infected with the viruses must stay in the hospital. Should not come around and stay with non-infected people.”

“Home or hospital??” Sakda asked himself. He was one of the hundred citizens standing for hours in line. The people waiting to be tested in front of the hospital looked at each other face. Sakda looked again at his wristwatch. It’s late in the afternoon.

“Who is right?” an old lady in front of Sakda turned around to ask him.

Sakda said he had no idea. He was thinking of his wife and two children. As a taxi driver, he had to make sure that he was safe and the passengers trusted him.

“Not sure who’s right?” Sakda said. The two looked at each other.

“What should we do?” the young man two meters behind Sakda said.

“I don’t know,” Sakda said. Everybody looked unsure and uncomfortable.

“I read the newspaper yesterday. The government said that anyone infested with the virus must be admitted to the hospital.” The woman in her late fifties said.

“I heard that too,” another old woman said.

“I also watched TV a week ago, and some doctors said to isolate yourself by staying home and the virus will go away,” the same old woman continued.

A few minutes later, a frail looking nurse came out of the waiting room. She said, “Hello, I am so sorry to inform you that we have run out of the Covid-19 test kits. No more for today.”

Many people standing in the long queue started whining and groaning. “This is not fair. We have been waiting for five hours. What happens to the queue?”

“You can come again tomorrow morning. The queue that you have remains yours. No one can jump the queue.” The nurse made another effort to make the announcement. Then she left.

Sakda was full of worries. He had to stay quarantined – alone in his tent in the garden. He did not want to be around his family. That’s the best he could do. He was not sure if he could undergo the swap testing tomorrow. He knew well that the queue was only going to be longer.

His wife gave him a dinner box and a bottle of water. He was alone in his garden inside his tent. Luckily, the night sky was clear.

As he was lying down in his tent, he remembered an old woman saying, “I’m not afraid of dying, I am this old. Death can come to take me any moment. But I am doing this to lessen the burden of others.”

## 40. Grandma's Lizards

Grandma Pranee was not a Christian, but a devout Buddhist. She, in her late 70s, was an ordinary old woman. But when she turned 80, something was happening to her. She suffered a stroke one day. After the incident, she stopped being chatty. She spent time alone, sometimes, her grandchildren saw her talking to herself in the language they did not understand. Besides, she could not walk very well like she used to be.

“Doctors said you need to take medicine,” her daughter said to her.

Grandma Pranes was stubborn- she hated taking medicine. She lost her faith on the modern day medicines after the loss of her husband.

Pranee hardly said a single word when it's time to take the medicine. She just swallowed the tablets.

Then she just gave her youngest daughter, Ratree, who was in her 60s, some kind smiles.

“I'm getting older myself and I have to take my own medicines, too.”

Pranee's favorite dish was grilled butterfly lizards. She loved to eat it with fresh steamed glutinous rice. Her husband, who had long passed away, knew all about this.

Without her husband's support, she talked less. At the age of eighty, five years after the death of her husband, something happened to her. Being an old woman, after the stroke, she found it harder to move around.

Her choice of favorite diet had changed, too. Instead of buying lizards for food, she redeemed her life by raising them as pets. It was a big change. This surprised everybody in her family.

Her radical change of attitudes and behavior amazed all the villagers. She would spend her savings on merit making.

What was unusual was that she stopped taking meat and grilled lizard. Grandma Pranee paid other villagers 10 baht per lizard. Then she left them, or rather set them free, in front of her house and around her backyard garden.

She did not tell anyone why she changed her action.

There were more than 30 lizards around her house. She told her daughter and grandchildren to feed them with leftover food. The lizards often came to greet her – they built holes around her house.

Miracles happened. A year after raising the lizards around her house, Pranee's health started improving. Gradually, she began walking again without any aid from her grandchildren.

## About the Author



John Thurstone is a pen name of Janpha Thadphoothon, a lecturer at the Faculty of Arts at Dhurakij Pundit University, in Bangkok, Thailand. He is now an assistant professor in ELT. His research interests vary, including L2 acquisition, creative writing, CALL (TELL), and the practice of co-operative learning. He graduated with a BA in Education (Secondary Education) from Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand. He graduated with an MA in Industrial and Organizational Psychology for Thammasat University in 1999. He went to do his doctorate in the year 2001 and graduated with a doctoral degree (Ed D) in 2006.

