

SPRING REFLECTIONS



*Reflections on Life and Literature
From the Students of ENG 102
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WORKING AS A HOUSEKEEPER IN THE U.S., I DISCOVER HOW REAL LIFE AND STUDENT LIFE ARE *TOTALLY* DIFFERENT!!

By Ploypailin Ariyapakdee

Four years ago, I first came to the United States as a student in a program of work and travel for four months. Many students in my college have wanted to have a new experience like this in another country. When I first learned about it, I didn't care, but my sister wanted to go abroad to a big American city. It was her dream that she couldn't let it go.



She talked to our father, until he gave his permission and agreed to support her budget for the program. But my father was a little bit worried about my sister going alone by herself so he tried to convince me to go with her.

I did some research on the Internet with Google and it showed that a "work and travel program" lets students go to work during the summer break for four months and then after they finish their work, they can travel around the United States for one month.

Everybody earns a paycheck at the standard pay like an American worker. A student would get a chance to speak English with native speakers.

"Wow, what a good deal!" I said to myself.

I ran to my father, explained it to him, and he said yes! We prepared ourselves by shopping and buying the stuff that we thought they would not have in U.S., such as Thai delicatessen food, Thai medicine and noodles.

We packed it all in a traveling bag. Before we booked the tickets to the United States, we had to pick the city where we would like to go. At that time, only cities in two states were available -- Texas and Louisiana. We chose Louisiana because it offered jobs as servers in a hotel. We thought this job would allow us to develop our speaking skills.



We kept waiting for the day of our flight to come along and finally, we got to fly overnight from Bangkok to San Francisco, then transfer and fly from San Francisco to Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

When I first stepped off the airplane, the air was so cold! Fortunately, I was wearing my big jacket, the one that my mom bought it for me from Thailand. It was so useful! We took a taxi from the airport to apartment that our agency provided for Thai students. When I stepped out of the car, I saw the pool in the front of our apartment. Our place was in the

downstairs of the building. The apartment had two bedrooms, one bathroom and a living room with the kitchen.

My sister and I lived together in the same



room, and my two Thai friends that we met there lived in the other room. We were so tired after

the long trip travel from Thailand to Baton Rouge that we had not taken a shower or brushed our teeth. We just unpacked our stuff and went to sleep early to save our energy for the first day of working in the hotel.

At 8 a.m. the next morning, we had an appointment to meet with the manager of the banquet section so we woke up a little bit early. It was a 15-minute walk from our apartment to the Crown Plaza Hotel.

We had to use the back door to the employee entrance. We could not use the same entrance as the customers. This was one of the rules that employees have to follow. We walked through kitchen to the meeting room past other employees. I was smiling to them and said hello! Some of them said hi back to me.

Finally, we found the meeting room and the manager was sitting right there waiting for



us. He was a small guy with a nice suit and blond hair.



He started with “Good morning,” and said he wanted everybody to introduce themselves by saying his or her name and describing their previous experience. After we all told him, he said:



“Give me a few minutes.”

Then he came back to us.

“I’m sorry. The server position is already filled.”

We were shocked! Nobody said anything. We only looked at each other.

He explained that we would have to work as housekeepers cleaning rooms. It was the only job that was available. We didn't have any chance to say no, and we didn't want to return home with nothing. He told us to come back tomorrow and the hotel would train us.

The next day was my first day of training. My trainer was a big girl who was a little bit mean with a serious face all the time. She showed me how to set up the bed, vacuum the carpet and clean the bathroom. Even though I didn't understand all the words that she said, I nodded and said yes, trying to act like I could do it! -- which really meant I wanted to go back to my apartment and rest.

"Tomorrow will be your first day of the job, so prepare yourself!" she told me at the end of the training.

The next day I woke up, ate breakfast, clocked in at the hotel at 8:00 a.m. and waited for the job order from the supervisor. My order was to clean 10 rooms before 4:30 pm.

I opened the door of the first room to clean -- and I had to take the big breath and tell myself, "Don't give up!!" I wanted to scream out loud. There were snacks spread out all over the floor. The pillows were on the floor and the room was smelly. I guessed they smoked in here. It was so messy!



I spent almost two hours cleaning that first room. I looked at the time on my watch. I didn't

We understood and communicated on a standard level of English, saying, for example,

think I would be able to clean the rest of the room, but I did finish by 6:30 pm. I was super tired!!!

I came home and talked to my friends and my sister about our jobs. We talked about how to finish on time even though the bed was so heavy. We wasted time setting up the bed more than anything else, so we came up a good idea. Our idea was that if somebody in our group finished first, they would come and help the others.

Next day, it seemed like everything was going according to our plan. It was a team effort. After a couple weeks, we were full of skill. We could do the work faster and sometimes go home early.



We spent the time after work jumping in the pool, swimming and cooking Thai food. Our English skills improved by listening more than speaking because every day we were in the rooms, setting up the beds and pillows. The only one who we talked to was our supervisor who took care of housekeeping staffs.

She would give the order, and we would only say, "Yes, Ma'am," and "Thank you."

yes, no, and ok. We learned to ask for the supplies we needed and how to introduce ourselves.



I remember when I came to a fast-food restaurant and they asked me what size I would like to order. "Chocolate sauce," I said. The cashier asked me more than twice and people who were standing next to me had to point to the menu until I realized they were asking me, "What size?" Not "What sauce?" Another time, when we wanted the catsup, we asked for the "tomato sauce," and the server was very confused!

I'm so thankful to my sister and my family for giving me the chance of working as a housekeeper in U.S. It was a hard job.



I learned that real life and student are totally different. When we worked, we had to concentrate and set our heart on it. We had to take responsibility and take of the job. We had to come to work on time and follow the rules. I improved my English skills a little bit, but I also got to see the new world outside of the box of my usual life.



Was I Willing to Become a Killer?

By Woo Young Kang

*“TO EVERYONE:
Unidentified things penetrated
through the DMZ.
The whole unit needs to go to
each cannon and wait.
REPEAT: This is a real
situation.”*



On an ordinary sunny winter day, I was a Korean soldier stationed near the demilitarized zone between North and South Korea and received this message. The superior military officers reported that one North Korea squad had penetrated through the DMZ, and they would pass our barrack very soon. All of us were ordered to be armed and wait for them.

My squad got a command to conceal ourselves around the area where the squad might pass. I dug a trench in a concealed place inside the deep forest with my partner.

We were supposed to spend three nights together in the trench until the mission was done. For the first night, I stayed in absolute silence. During this silence, I could hear every sound, even the sounds of a bug's footprint.

All night, the dark atmosphere around the trench made me extremely scared. The wind would constantly make horrible sounds through the branches of the trees and bushes, and I continuously had the illusion of seeing something moving in front of me, even though the branches had stopped moving.

I felt as if something was staring me and approaching me from the darkness. I spent the whole night with these kinds of thoughts until sunrise the next morning. It was absolute torture for me.

After waiting in fear all the next day, the night gradually began to fall again. I was still on guard duty with my partner in the trench as usual. Around three o'clock in the morning, the freezing wind was as sharp as needles, and the wind was so cold that it felt as if sharp needles were not only scratching but also puncturing my body incessantly.

It made it hard for me, because I was too exhausted to bear my duty. When I was shivering in the cold, my partner suddenly got my attention quietly and indicated a

certain location carefully. My partner refused to lay his eyes upon the suspicious area. "Sergeant Kang," he whispered. "Look over there. Something is moving... Watch out, sir."

Because of the darkness, I could not see anything at first. A moment later, I saw an unnatural movement of branches and the small sounds of steps on fallen leaves. We had to decide to take action as soon as possible. We had to decide, whether or not to attack, because it was approaching us so directly. I told him very quietly:

"Fuck, if it steps a foot closer, I will shout and fire so stand by the radio, okay?"

I was waiting for the intruders when finally I heard them step by the tree in front of us. I shouted to the complete darkness imperatively and strongly:

"Freeze!! Say who you are immediately! YOU HAVE ONLY THREE SECONDS!"



After that moment, I just prayed to God that the strangers would not throw a hand grenade toward us. Thankfully, they did not throw anything, but they did not respond either. The next few seconds felt like an eternity, but then the steps began to come towards us faster.

I instantly fired my machine guns toward the suspicious movement in the darkness and my partner called on the radio. At that moment, I felt neither the silence nor

was it cold because the intensity of wanting to survive had replaced everything. After countless of bullets shot, we stopped, and the forest fell back to the silence and coldness. There was only the smoky scent of gunpowder left.

A few minutes later, we confirmed that nothing was moving around us and the other soldiers came to our bunker. We began to look for the corpses, then heard someone shout:

"I FOUND IT!"

When I went to the area where the soldier was, I saw a corpse. It was not a human corpse, however, but a big, bullet-filled boar. It was just a wild animal, a wild boar.



When I realized that I did not kill a human being but a boar, I heaved a big sigh of relief. Although I killed an innocent animal, it saved me from having the guilt of murdering a person. The next morning, I had a brief interview with my commander.

"Hey, what happened last night?" he asked. "Explain to me why you killed a wild boar, Mr. Boar Killer."

I explained to the commander what happened in detail, and ironically, he praised me a lot. He recommended me to get a prize from the head commander. After this, I was nicknamed Mr. Boar Killer. My partner, who was much lower in rank than me, began to tell everyone this story, even though it

was a bit exaggerated. I was very proud of myself when my partner and I was praised as a very brave soldiers because of what happened, but I felt a bit sorry for the wild boar.

However, if I had not killed the boar, my partner and I would have been badly injured because boars are still very dangerous, especially wild ones.



Two weeks later, the superior military officers said told us that the mission was over and we could go back to the base. As I walked back to there, I thought that not only my team was lucky, but also the North Korean squad as well, that they weren't the boar.

Back then, and even now, I imagine what would had happened if I had met the real North Korean squad at that time. It definitely would be much worse than shooting a wild boar.

~●~

My Uncle Learns Gandhi's Truth: *Live as if you were to die tomorrow*

By Jessie Wilaiwan Phaphithak

Time is the most precious commodity that most people don't realize. The most important thing in a relationship is time because we don't know how much time we have to spend with each other.

This story is related to my uncle who passed away last month. I think that his story is very interesting. My uncle was the youngest of five siblings.

Because of his strong will, he would not follow anyone's advice, including his father. He decided to leave Thailand when he was 20 years old, because of all



the confrontations with his family. He decided to come to the United States for a better future. When the reality set in, he realized that it was not as easy as he thought. For the first few weeks, the only thing that he could do was to look out the window and watch people walking by.

His friend helped him get a job at a Thai restaurant as a dishwasher. He had to work hard, because he has many responsibilities. He worked six days a week for many years to support himself.

He moved from the position of dishwasher to head chef even though it took 11 years. My uncle got married with a woman who was working in the same restaurant. Both of them had the same dream of owning their own restaurant.

Five years later they opened a restaurant, but the business was not going well the way they expected. My

uncle wanted to sell it but she didn't agree. They got divorced, and he moved to Los Angeles and started his life from the beginning again, as a dishwasher.

One day he met a woman who had come to eat at the restaurant. They fell in love, got married and decided to open a restaurant together. Their goal was to have a nice big house and a sport car. The business was doing very well, but he began to suffer. A few years later while he was working, he felt tremendous pain in his stomach. He went to the hospital immediately and stayed there for two nights.

The doctor told him that he had Stage 4 cancer in his intestine. He had surgery to remove the cancer, but at the same time, they found out that it had gone into his liver, too.

The doctor told his wife that he could stay for two weeks or longer, but not over two months. After he had a surgical operation for one week, his condition changed for the worse.

His wife asked me to come visit him because I was the only relative he had. When I met him, I was shocked. He looked very thin and his eyes looked very sad. I walked closer to him and held his hand. He looked at me and said:

"Is this it? Is this my life? Life is very short, so you have to do what you want to do before it is too late, because you will regret it just like me."

Three days later, he passed away. Now I really understand what Mahatma Gandhi once said: "Live as if you were to die tomorrow. Learn as if you were to live forever."

~•~

***Jon Jandai:
“Life is easy.
”Why do we
make it so hard?”***

By Pa Praewnapa Ariyapakdee



Jon Jandai is a farmer from northeastern Thailand. He founded the Pun Pun Center for Self-Reliance, an organic farm outside Chiang Mai, with his wife Peggy Reents in 2003. Pun Pun doubles as a center for sustainable living and seed production, aiming to bring indigenous and rare seeds back into use. It regularly hosts training on simple techniques to live more sustainably. Outside of Pun Pun, Jon is a leader in bringing the natural building movement to Thailand, appearing as a spokesperson on dozens of publications and TV programs for the past 10 years. He continually strives to find easier ways for people to fulfill their basic needs.

One day he came to give a TEDx¹ talk and he picked the topic:

“Life is easy. Why do we make it so hard?”

¹https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=21j_oCNLUYg)

He said that there is one sentence that he has always wanted to speak to everybody: “Life is easy.” It’s so easy and fun, he now says, although before he never thought like that. When he lived in Bangkok, he felt like life was very hard and complicated.

He was born in a poor village in northeastern Thailand. As a child, everything was fun and easy, but when the TV came, many people came to the village, they said, “He is poor now, but he needs to follow success for his life. He needs to go to Bangkok to pursue success in his life.”

He felt bad, he felt poor. So, he went to Bangkok. When he got to Bangkok, life was not very fun. He needed to learn, to study a lot and to work very hard. Then he could get success.

He worked eight hours per day at least, but all he could eat was just a bowl of noodles per meal, or a dish of fried rice. He stayed in a small, very bad room where a lot of other people slept. It was very hot.

He started to question a lot. When he worked hard, he asked: Why is my life still so hard? There must be something wrong, he thought. He produced a lot of things, but he could get enough. He also tried to learn and study in the university, but it was very hard to learn there. It was also very boring. When he looked at the subjects at the university, most of them involved destructive knowledge. He didn't find productive knowledge in the university.

"When I look at something like learning to be an architect or engineer, that means people will ruin more," he said in his TEDx talk. "The more these people work, the more the mountains will be destroyed. More and more good land in Chao Praya Basin will be covered with concrete. That means they learn how to poison, to toxicate the land, the water, and learn to destroy everything."

He felt like everything we do is so complicated, and we just make everything hard. He began to think that life was so hard and he felt disappointed.

He started to think: Why do I have to be here in Bangkok? When he was young, nobody worked eight hours per day, everybody worked two hours, two months a year, planting rice one month and harvesting the rice another month. The rest of the time was free -- ten months of free time.

That is why we have so many festivals in Thailand during the day. Everybody takes a nap and after they wake up, they just gossip. People have a lot of time so they have time to be by themselves and to understand themselves. When they understand themselves, they can see what they want in their lives. Many people see that they want happiness, they want love, they want to enjoy their life.

So, Jon decided to quit the university and go back home. Then, he started to live like when he was a kid. He started to work two months a year and he got four tons of rice. His whole family of six people ate less than half a ton per year, so he could sell the rest.

He also dug two fish ponds so he could have fish to eat all year round. He started a small garden of less than half an acre and spent only 15 minutes per day taking care of it.

"I have more than 30 varieties of vegetables in the garden," he said in the TEDx talk. That actually was too much for the six people in his family so he had a surplus to sell in the market and make some extra income.

This was so easy that he wondered: Why did I have to be in Bangkok for seven years, working so hard and not having enough to eat? Here he worked only two months a year and 15 minutes per day and

yet he could feed six people and take care of his family.

He was always told that stupid people like him who never got good grades in the school could never have a house. But people who were smarter than him and were number one in the class every year got good jobs, but they needed to work more than 30 years to have a house. Someone like himself who could not finish the university, now had a house! This made him question himself.

After this, Jon started to do earthly building, which was also easy. He spent only two hours per day, from 5 o'clock in the morning to 7 o'clock in the morning for three months to make a house. One of his friends, who was the cleverest in the class, spent three months building his house, but he ended up in debt that he will have to pay for the next 30 years. So, compared to his friend, Jon has 29 years and 10 months of free time in his future. From now on, life will remain easy, he now thinks.

Jon never thought that building a house would be easy like this, so he kept building houses every year. Now he has no money, but he has many houses. His problem is



now: Which house will he sleep in tonight?

"Anybody can build a house," he said in the TEDx talk. He can teach children who are only 13 years old at the school, how to make bricks and after one month, they will have a library.

People asked him about what he would do when he gets sick. In the beginning, he was really worried about this because he had no money. Then he started to contemplate more and saw that sickness is a normal thing, not a bad thing. We get sick to remind us that we did something wrong in our life. So, when he gets sick, he needs to stop and come back to himself and ask, What I do wrong?



Jon also learned how to use water to heal himself, how to use earth to heal himself, and how to use basic knowledge to heal himself. He can rely on himself now in these four things, making life very easy and free. He feels like he doesn't have to worry about anything much and can do whatever he wants to do in life.

Before, he had a lot of fear, but now he feels very free, like a unique person on this earth. Nobody is like him so he doesn't need to make himself like anybody else. The lesson in the end is this:

***“If anybody wants to have a choice,
you can have a choice.
The choice to be easy
or to be hard.
It depends on you”***



Jay's Dreams - and Mine

By Blue Pannitcha Chongpanyawat

I believe everyone has a dream to succeed and achieve the goal that they set before themselves. I dream of seeing myself owning my business and doing something that I love without pressure. I dream about freedom. My dream is big. My dream is hard to achieve, but dreams are extremely important.

Mahatma Gandhi said, "You may never know what results come of your actions, but if you do nothing, there will be no results."

Jay is my international Thai friend, who is one of the greatest example of life in the United States. Jay is my classmate. We are international students from Thailand. We did not get along the first time that we met. Jay is gay. He is a little mean and acts super confident. That was my first class with him and my first class in San Francisco. One day, we were gossiping about someone, but finally we became best friends.

Jay is a young man, trendy, fashionable and creative. He was a student in San Francisco for about four years. He received some luck from a woman who owned a Thai restaurant when she decided to sell the restaurant to Jay. Jay went to her restaurant many times, and they talked, so she gave Jay an opportunity to own the restaurant even though Jay was still young because he's smart.

Jay discussed this with his family. He was also thinking about how to manage a restaurant by himself and questioned what obstacles he would have to go through after he takes over the business.

Jay has a dream to own something, and he imagined himself to be the owner. His dreams were about to come true. He thought, "I might succeed or fail but if at least I have

to try." This is time to start a new life. Jay has taken over the restaurant business and has a lot of things to do. He working on visas, restaurant permits, employee management, payroll, menus, recipes and decoration. He learned all those things day by day -- a lot of work but it has been good to challenge himself.



During the six months that he has owned the business, he has become the one who fixes all the problems, both in the front and the back of the house. "Working with humans is the most difficult part of the job," he says. This means the employees, customers and even vendors.

He is still happy with his work, his business, and his challenges. He is thinking of continuing with the restaurant and dreams of becoming a millionaire.

His life was hard and he overcame the obstacle by his own dream and his motivation. I admire him. We always talked, shared our situation while we are living in United States. We gave each other our own perspective. I'm so glad I had the best friend who has succeed in life.

~•~

My Friend Deato and His Sad Story



By Mint Wipawee Lowchai

On a Sunday with nice weather, I had a meeting with one of my friends who I met in the U.S. one year ago. It was around 2 o'clock in the afternoon. We went to one of a small local coffee shops on Valencia Street, and we ordered a cup of coffee and found a place to sit down.

I really excited to meet him because I had not seen him for long time. He name is Deato who is working in genetics.

We just started from the beginning, and I asked him about his life. It seemed as though everything was going well for him. As we were drinking and chilling, we saw a young homeless man who was playing a guitar and trying to panhandle for money.

My friend pointed to the young homeless man and started to talk about his life.

"I remembered when I was about six years old," Deato said. "My mother and father got a divorce. My parents didn't have a good relationship after the divorce. My brother, who is one year younger than me, and I had to move around sometimes between my aunt's, my uncle's, my mom

friends' and my dad friends' houses. They all had full obligations so I didn't get the good care that I suppose to get."

One day Deato came back to live with his father who had remarried by then. He had a new wife and a daughter together. For some reason, his stepmother didn't like Deato and his brother that much. However, his father had really fallen in love with the new wife and believed her, no matter what Deato said.

Finally, he had too much of what a human being can endure. His stepmother blamed him for something wrong that he did. She told his father who believed her without doubt and they tried to put his son in jail. However, his teachers from middle school who taught psychology and worked with the police officer helped him. They proved that he didn't do it and said his behavior was good, and he had great grades in every class.



Later, when he was a teenager, Deato lived with bad people on the street and did many illegal things, like gangsters.

Sometimes, he had no food and lived on one or two dollars per week. However, the people that he used to live with really liked him because he was honest.

One day they gave a lot of money to him to give it to another person. Deato worried that “if someone else came, they might take all the money away.”

It’s risky to live with bad people and be a good man. He was a hard working as a teenager doing work like construction. Sometimes, he had no home at night so he found abandoned houses and hid to sleep there. Life was such a nightmare for him.

However, his life got better when he decided to go to a university. He applied for one semester. In his country, education is free and can lead to freedom to get a better life. If he studied and lived in the university, he thought he would get a better job in his country.

And yes, he did that. He studied in a medical school for two years. During the summer break in his four semesters, his mother came to America because she won a green card lottery.

This green card has a lottery every year with a quota for all of the world who want to come USA to live. When Deato knew that his mother had won the lottery, he asked her to come America for just summer break, but it seemed like his mom didn’t want him to come on that time

“I didn’t answer my mom's phone calls or contact with her about one year just because she didn’t help me to come USA,” Deato told me.

In the end, his mother and his brother helped him come to the USA for vacation during summer break. He felt like he wanted to live USA and study here, so he didn’t go back to his country last summer. But he also didn’t finish his degree.

He started a new life and studied at city college. He supported himself by working in delivery with Uber. He also worked in a part-time job at city college for two to three years.

Later, Deato applied to work at a good company in South San Francisco. It seemed like everything was going well. They gave him a big project to take care. That isn’t all his work. He also has to keep working in delivery every weekend for extra money. He is working every day with no day off.

I feel sad and pitied him when I listened to him about his life, Life isn’t fair sometimes, but he never gives up. We should live life by thinking of others. Sometime, our problems are just nothing if we compare them to someone who has no food, no home, and not even knowing what his life is.



~•~

A Bad Boy Became Thailand's Youngest Billionaire

By Pimtidaruk Buayen

Everyone has goals and wants to succeed in life. Nowadays most Thai people begin their own business, so many people succeed in business at a young age. Many businessmen get attention. Both TV and online media present their life story and their work story.

There is one person that I have followed in his life and his work: Itthipat Peeradechapan, nicknamed Tob. He is a Thai entrepreneur and is most well-known for his product "Tao Kae Noi," a fried seaweed snack, which is sold around the Asia-Pacific area. When he was in high school, he was a bad boy. He ignored his studies and became hooked on online games. However, his game made money for him by trading items. He played till he was a richest in the server and he very famous in this game. He had a lot of rare items so everybody wanted to buy items from him.

And he was a tester before the game was updated. He made money from first job when he was 16 years old.

After he entered the university, he began to earn money another way because his game was not as popular as it used to be. He went to a business fair and had a business of selling chestnuts because he liked to eat them so much. He tried to contact that brand of chestnuts to set up a franchise, but the price was too high so he decided to rent chestnut roaster machine



then sell his own franchises under the name "Tao Kae Noi." He first opened in the shopping malls in Thailand. In just over one year, he extended the franchise for chestnut-roasting to more than 30 branches.

After that, he began selling more products like peaches, dried fruit, and fried seaweed. But the best-selling items at that time was not his roasted chestnuts but his fried seaweed. That was the inspiration that made him want to build a business of making fried seaweed.

His target was to sell in in the 7-11 convenience stores that are popular and have many branches nationwide in Thailand. At first, 7-11 rejected his fried seaweed because the quality of the product was not standard and the packaging was not interesting. So, he improved it and 7-11 wanted the products to be ready for release within three months. He accepted this offer from 7-11.



Then his biggest problem was to build a factory, and acquire the capital, raw materials, and the machinery. He tried to get a loan from a bank but was denied because at that time he was only 20 years old. So, he decided to sell all the chestnut franchises and invest the money in the fried seaweed business. His main staff was

his family and six to seven employees, so everyone had to work hard. Finally, he was able to deliver to 7-11 in time.

Since then, his product "Tao Kae Noi" went into the teen market and to consumers who like the crispy seaweed. His business quickly became successful in Thailand and was exported to Indonesia, Japan, Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia, and the United States. Tob became a successful businessman at only 23 years old, and nowadays, he is a famous person. In 2011, Tob's life story was made into a film, entitled "Top Secret: Wai roon pun lan." Which means billionaire teenager.

I believe he will be an inspiration to many people, including me, because even though he was a bad boy when he was young, he became committed to success and followed his dreams and succeeded at a young age. The way of his business also can expand and develop for a long time. I think he has the personality of the master and also a good role model.

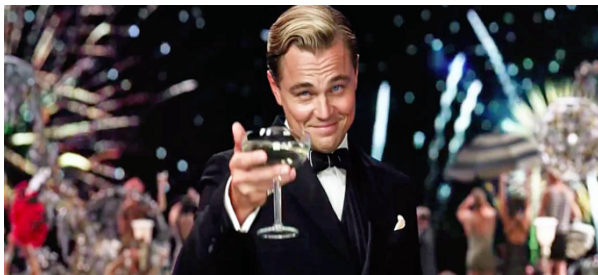
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My Friend Jason Told Me His Secret

By Jerry Jaehark Yang

I met Jason about 10 years ago at a wine club. At first, I only wanted to make contacts and network to develop clients for my company's luxury town houses. Jason was the club president and seemed to be the very epitome of success -- until he told me the real story of his life.

He was very handsome and sociable as well as highly educated and smart. He was an executive in the biggest fashion company in Korea and had many friends. He enjoyed spending money on his friends and looked like Jay Gatsby, the wealthy, mysterious character in *The Great Gatsby*.



Jay Gatsby, protagonist in *The Great Gatsby*, 2013.

He welcomed me with open arms when I attended the first meeting. There were about twenty members. He introduced me to others and tried to help me not feel awkward. He told me many interesting stories about wine and gave me many chances to taste samples. I was very impressed by his kindness and knowledge of wine.

After the first meeting, I attended the club regularly. I started to know more about wine and people. It was very helpful and funny time. I enjoyed it. Whenever I attended the meeting, he told me very useful stories and shared information. So I wanted to get

close to him, and we became friends soon. He loves to drink good wine, and I love to eat good food, so we met together frequently. I liked him because I thought he had everything I wanted to have, and he was the person whom I wanted to be.



One day, we met at a wine bar as usual and started to drink wine. He was always bright and funny, but he looked so different on that day. He was smiling but looked a little lonely.

After drinking two bottles of his favorite Chardonnay and Pinot Noir, I asked him whether he had some problem. He said no, but looked sad. I couldn't ask him more, so I started to tell him my stories to change a topic.

Actually, I had heard many funny and dramatic stories about rich people because I worked for a development company which was selling luxury houses to them. The first story was about a man who was the CEO of a famous investment company in Korea. He had several wives and they lived in many different countries, so he visited them regularly.

Another story was about a professor who had a very smart son. His son killed himself because of depression, so his father, the professor, started to gamble and finally went bankrupt.

When I started to tell another story, he suddenly interrupted me and started to tell his story of his divorce three years ago. He had married a very beautiful woman but they had been unhappy.

After saying that, he sighed deeply and drank a glass of wine. Actually, he continued, he didn't want to get married to her, but he did because his parents chose her and wanted him to get married to her.

At first, he tried not to follow his parents' decision. However, his parents were very old, and they really wanted him to marry her, so he did. After he got married, he tried to give her everything he could do. He worked hard to make money for her. He planned many interesting events like a romantic dinner night, biannual overseas trips, and surprising presents to make her happy.

However, he couldn't make her feel that he loved her very much because the truth was that he didn't love her. Despite his efforts, she couldn't be satisfied with him and realized he didn't love her, so they got divorced.

After saying that, he asked me if I could keep his secret.

"Yes," I said.

"I'm gay," He told me in a low voice.

For a few moments, there was silence. I didn't know what I had to say. I was surprised to know his secret, but I was also happy for him to tell me his secret. I wanted to break the ice. Then he said with a smile.

"You're not my type."

Then he told me that he thought I had everything that he wanted to have.

"My parents might know my sexuality and they believed I could live with my wife because she was very beautiful and good, so they tried to get me married to her."

"I wanted them to believe that I'm not gay," he continued. "I wanted to show my

picture-perfect life to them. So I got married and tried to do everything making us happy, but we were just a show window couple. I also didn't want my kid to grow up in a loveless household, so I got divorced."

I was surprised because I never suspected he thought like that. Then I realized that I really had not known who I was and what I had. I had envied him very much. I had wanted to be like him. Now he was telling me that I was the person whom he wanted to be. Suddenly, I realized I was the happiest person in the world.

After that night, we became better friends and shared more. We get together more often before. Sometimes my wife doubts our relationship and says,

"Do you guys love each other?"

I say, "Are you jealous of us? He is just my best friend."

My wife doesn't know his secret. I'll keep it forever because he is my best friend Jason.



~•~

How Love Overcomes All the Differences in Thailand: *The Story of Panward and Niti*

By Celine Thunchanok Pankaew

Buddhism is the religion that the Thai people have believed since long before I was born. Although the Thai people have been Buddhist, that doesn't mean everyone in Thailand, known as the "Land of Smiles," believe in only one religion. Some people are Christian, Hindu, Muslim, Brahmans, and others.

In Thailand, people can live together even if they believe in different religions, because I believe that all religions teach god to be love -- to have love in life, to love each other and to love without a reason.

Sometimes, we have a problem between the religions, but we always try to find a way to resolve problems peacefully and go back to living together. We find the middle way to be together and love each other.

I want to tell you a story that will show you how the Thai people can overcome their differences in religion and have love.

In 2006, Panward Hemmanee was a famous Thai actress who grew up in a normal family, neither rich nor poor. While she was growing up, she tried to do everything to help her family become better, so she was working every day and accepted every job. When she became famous, she was known as one of the sexiest movie stars. She won the Sexiest Star Award. She always had the role of the bad woman, and she always succeeded in that role. She modeled and dressed in a bikini swimsuit in magazines like FHM, Women Health, and Playboy.

However, in Thailand, it is not a good thing for a Thai woman to be known as sexy or to show the body in public. In Thailand, women who aren't modest and reserved are judged. Most people thought that she was not a good woman. But some in the new generations have more open minds and are fine with women who are known as sexy and do not think it's weird if she becomes successful in her career.

Then, one day, the life of Panward Hemmanee changed forever. She went to an event, and her friend introduced her to Niti. He is an upper-class man, and his family is famous in Thailand because his roots are among the old aristocratic families, and his father is an important general military in Thailand. They fell in love with each other at the first moment they saw each other.

Because his family was aristocratic and his father was a famous politician, his



family was very rich and well-known in Thai society. In Thailand, the rich and upper class usually marry someone in their same

class, and their family will decide if the woman's family can be a part of their family, too.

Actors and actresses are not acceptable as girlfriends or boyfriends among the rich and aristocratic families, so Panward and Niti started to date secretly. They had many special times together, although they knew that they were going to have many problems in the future. They didn't mind because they thought they would overcome all their problems together.

The bigger problem was that Niti and his family were Muslim. His family would not accept a woman from a different religion, especially if that woman didn't have a good social profile or a good career, like his family.

Panward and her family were Buddhist for many years, and she could not change her past or her career. Although it doesn't mean everything that she did it always bad, she always had a reason for everything she did -- and Niti knew it. She didn't want to be a woman only known as a sexy star. She didn't want to model the dress in magazine, but she did it for her family to become better.

However, his family didn't know. To stay together and marry, she changed her entire life. She stopped acting, started her own business and changed her life styles, including following a different routine and wearing different clothing. Then she made the most important decision in her life: She became a Muslim like Niti, her boyfriend. Finally, she was accepted by his family and they were married. In 2012, they gave birth to one lovely son, Prod, and she became a polite woman accepted in society. Now, she does everything that Muslim women do. She is the model of the good mother and good wife.

So, you see, all that I've told you shows that everything is possible if you have love. All religion teaches the same: Be a good person and be a good love.



~•~

FICTION: How Strong is Your Love?

By Jeab Angkana Wattanadumrong

Bella came from an upper middle-class, sophisticated family who sticks to acceptable manners and behaviors, so Bella has to be in control of whatever she does. She never let her family know about her homosexual love affair with Benz who was Bella's roommate when they were in the university.

Before falling in love, Bella and Benz were rivals. Bella didn't like a lady, who was a tomboy or lesbian. In fact, she moved out of her first room at the university because her first roommate was a lesbian. Then after she asked to change to a new room, she discovered that her new roommate, Benz, was also a tomboy. So Bella was upset and didn't get along well with Benz.

However, Benz was a polite lady and likes to be peaceful, even though Bella didn't like her at first. She thought Bella always had too much self-confidence. On the other hand, Benz was beloved by everyone in the dormitory. That is why Bella felt jealous of her. Also, Benz carries herself with maleness that makes her different from other women. Even though both of them had many problems at first and had to learn how to be friendly in the room together, later they felt something deeply in their hearts.



Finally, Benz could not be patient and keep it a secret anymore, so she started telling her feelings to Bella. Fortunately, Bella also felt in love with her, so they decided to make a relationship together.

Later, when Bella and Benz needed to get summer internships, Bella tried to find a place where they could move together, but Benz accepted another place in Nan province, in the northern Thai region, without mentioning Bella. So, they both separated to follow their internships.



After Bella and Benz moved to their internships, they still kept in touch all the time until Benz met another woman, Yam, who became part of her life. Yam, Benz's colleague, liked Benz when they worked together at the internship, but Benz never knew whether Yam knew how much Benz loved Bella, since Benz always called Bella on her cell phone outside her room away from Yam.

One day, when Benz had so many jobs to do, she called Bella late. Bella got very angry with her and whenever Benz tried to explain, Bella did not listen. Bella hung up her phone. Yam stood by, ready to ruin their relationship.

"Did Bella treat you like this?" Yam said. "She wasn't fair to you!"

Benz was confused in her mind. She still loved Bella, but she knew she was cheating on Bella to make a relationship with Yam. Although Bella felt mad at herself and her mistake with Benz, she decided to go to visit Benz in Nan for Benz's birthday. But Bella was very hurt when she saw that Benz and Yam had a

relationship. She cried and gave her gift to Benz with sadness and said:

“We are through.”

Back then, Benz always thought of Bella and never forgot her, so Benz decided to tell Yam about her feelings. Yam realized that Benz wasn't happy with her relationship with Yam, so Yam encouraged her to return to Bella.

At that point, Benz began to try contacting Bella, but Bella never answered anymore. Benz even tried to see Bella at her home to ask for one more chance, but Bella was still hurt and refused to make up.

One year later, both Benz and Bella were working in their own businesses, Benz with her interest in trees and plants and Bella with fish in a fishery. The next time that they saw each other, Bella and Benz were at an agriculture exhibition, and Benz realized that she had always loved and missed Bella all the time. When she saw Bella, she said:

“Is it possible if we come back for love again?”



Finally, they got back together.

From that time on, Benz and Bella lived together and promised each other that they both would not give up on their relationship,

no matter what, even if they had a fight together. In the end, their families get along well and both families quietly accepted their relationship as girlfriends.

The story of Bella and Benz shows that whatever your love is, you should keep and nurture it carefully. There are not many chances to find your true love.



If you have a trouble with your beloved, I would like you to think about the situation that make you love each other when you see together at the first time. I believe if you still love each other, you won't give your love away.

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Fiction: Eyes Tell the Truth

By Jay Jaigon Yoon

While a big crowd of people hastily walked down the street to their work places, a young man in his early twenties, Jeremy, had been standing in front of a wooden door for the past 15 minutes, hesitant to walk into the café. “I can’t believe what I am doing right now,” Jeremy mumbled to himself in disbelief. The awkwardness of the smile on his face hinted that he was afraid he was about to have an unpleasant encounter.

Jeremy was about to meet his father for the first time since Jeremy left his family's home after a devastating event. The unfortunate bankruptcy of his father’s business from a few years ago brought abrupt and pessimistic changes to his family. They had to move into a smaller house and could not maintain the same kind of living as before; however, there were even worse and more hurtful changes as well. Jeremy’s father became despondent about his failures and tried to escape from reality by depending on alcohol. He would just sit on the sofa with empty eyes that had lost direction and hope. His personality changed, and his irresponsible behavior put all the financial burdens on Jeremy and Jeremy’s mother. A year ago, Jeremy lost all hope in his father and left.

As he was debating whether to go into the café, his head was filled with massive confusion and interwoven emotions. Initially, he was very angry toward the person who had unintentionally taken away the family’s happiness. But there was also a feeling of grief. Jeremy could not remember the last time that his family had a meal together like a normal family. Before, Jeremy had taken for granted having a meal together and had never realized what a fortunate thing it was.

Jeremy also felt fear. He did not know how he would react when he saw his father. He was afraid of how he would feel and what he would say to him. However, it was clear to him that he could not avoid this encounter forever. This was the time.

Jeremy slowly opened the door to the café and made eye contact with his father, sitting at a small table. It was very noticeable how much weight his father had lost; the old suit which his father always had worn to important meetings seemed too big now. Even though physically he seemed weak and pathetic, the smile on his face was never so bright. Jeremy could easily read his father’s happiness as well as the concern on his face. Jeremy hesitantly walked over to the table and sat down, avoiding his father’s eyes.

Jeremy could not follow the conversation they were having. His father kept repeating that he was sorry and gave excuses for his past actions, but nothing came into Jeremy’s mind. Instead, he focused on his father’s eyes. Jeremy still remembered his father’s eyes when he lived day by day, drunk. Those eyes had contained no spirit and no hope whatsoever.



Today, however, they were different. Even though it was obvious that his father had aged a lot past few years, they were never so ambitious and bright. When his father mentioned that he had quit drinking, he promised Jeremy that he would send him back to the university and fully support him to continue his studies. Again, his father apologized for all his past actions, and his eyes stayed sincere throughout the conversation.

The moment that Jeremy realized how truthful his father was, his tears started falling. It was as if all his bitterness and hurt started washing away. The pain and consequences of his father's actions might never disappear or become nothing, but Jeremy could see that his father had really changed and that made Jeremy unable to hold back his tears.

Even though it may not mean much, this was what Jeremy was waiting for. All the excuses and saying sorry did not touch Jeremy's heart. What broke him the most before he left the house was that his father had lost his dignity, pride, and role as a father. However, the bright eyes were enough to explain that the father who had once been so dependable had returned.

After Jeremy left the café, he did not clearly remember any conversation that they had or how his father reacted to his tears. However, he walked out with warmth in his heart as well as hope that his family may reconcile and heal. Even though it may take some time for all the hurts to melt away and their relationship to fully recover, Jeremy realized he now was witnessing the beginning of hope.



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Fiction:

GINGER'S CHRISTMAS

By Temsiri Chaiareekitwat



Ginger is a typical skinny Asian girl, she grew up as a middle child with her sister and brother. She was born in Thailand where the majority is Buddhist, she likes to travel around to see things she has never seen. After Ginger graduated her college in Thailand, she came to the United State and lived with American host family in Virginia and that was the first time she had a chance be a part of Christmas party with host family. She picked up one present each for all family members. But when it was time to open the presents on Christmas's eve, she ended up open numbers of presents and it was many more than she expected. She remembered the feeling of tearing the paper wrap and opening the box again and again with her curiosity

what is in the box. It was very fun and made her happy from deep inside.

Talking about Christmas, Ginger doesn't remember celebrating Christmas in her childhood because her family is Buddhist. What people do in Thailand is they exchange gifts for New Year. Her family doesn't celebrate and give a present on special events such as New Years, Christmas, or even on birthdays. When she asked her parents why they don't celebrate and give any presents in their family, her parents replied that they can give her a present any day, and any day can be a special day for them. And that's how her family is. Sometimes she feels like it takes too long to make a special day happen in her family.



The next year after living in Virginia, Ginger decided to move to San Francisco and she was surrounded by people who do not celebrate Christmas because they are Buddhist. First five years in San Francisco during Christmas, it was more like shopping season for her because everything was on sale and she worked long hours every day. When



Ginger saw people with their family at Christmas party that she worked for, just remind her of happiness of opening the presents and warmness of being with family. That just made her realized how empty inside of her living abroad alone without family and all of her friends just don't celebrate Christmas.

The year sixth of living in San Francisco, Ginger met Matt on the bus on her way home from work, they sat next to each other. Matt started conversation to Ginger, and they made friends, and they started a relationship as boyfriend and girlfriend a few months later. Matt took Ginger to meet his family and she get along with them. Ginger joined Christmas party with Matt's family since the first year they were together, and

that just brought her back the happiness and warmness during Christmas just like Christmas in Virginia. Somehow, she also missed her family because it has been long time being away from her own family in Thailand.

It has been a few years now that Ginger be a part of Christmas party with Matt's family. The last Christmas, Ginger found herself having fun with finding good presents for everyone and more happiness when they are opening their presents from her with smile. Ginger thinks that giving is another level of happiness more than receiving. And spending time with Matt's family is the most important, they just warm her heart which is lonely and far away from her family. For Ginger, Matt is the best gift for Christmas and Christmas became her favorite time after all.

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FICTION: Bon's Family Learns Their Real Happiness



By Kate Ratsameedara Nunkliang

Sweat dropped down Bon's face and hands. He stood in front of his parents' house, the cool air in the late evening not helping at all to lower his anxiety.

Today was his birthday. He was turning 25 years old. It was the day he decided he was old enough to tell his parents something important, the truth that he is a homosexual. This thing had been Bon's secret since he was a young man. So this wasn't an easy thing for him to do, even though he already made a decision.

Bon adjusted his blue jeans and white shirt. He wanted to look good in his parents' eyes for the birthday dinner. After everything was fixed, he took a deep breath and knocked on the door.

With a big smile, Bon's mom hurried to come and hug him. She was so proud of her only child. He has been a good child for his parents. He has always had good grades and ranked in the top five students of his classes.

He was accepted at a famous university and finished it with a first honor. He was now an employee at a government agency with high salary. She always liked to praise her son to all of her friends.

"Did you lose weight?" his mom asked. "See! I already told you living by yourself is not good. There is no one cooking for you."

His mom didn't wait for the answer but kept talking about what was on her mind. She was still upset that last year Bon moved into his own apartment to live by himself.

Bon avoided replying. He gave her a small smile instead.

His dad tried to break the awkward moment.

"Hey! How are you doing?" he asked.

Bon thought that his father looked a little older than three months ago when Bon saw him last, but he was still calm and prudent as usual.

Bon looked at his dad and answered:

"I'm doing well. Work is not too stressful lately."

"That's good. Are you hungry?" his dad continued asking.

"Yeah!!!" Bon said and tried to lighten the mood. "I'm so hungry, that I think I can eat a whole elephant."

Everyone started laughing. They felt they were so lucky to have him.

When they were eating at the dining table, his parents wished him well:

"Happy birthday!!!" they said to him.

"We hope all of your wishes come true" said his mother.



It seemed like a really happy evening, but no one knew that inside, Bon was so sad and so confused. He didn't know any more whether he should tell them that he was gay.

He worried that he was going to break his parents' hearts.

While there were having dessert, his mother asked him:

"Bon did you have a chance to meet Aunt Goy's daughter lately? She just graduated from the same university as you. What a smart and super sweet girl."

Again, his mom was trying to match him with one of her friends' daughters. Bon thought it would be a good time to actually say something.

"Mom, Dad," he said. "I don't think I can have a girlfriend."

"Hmm..., I mean I don't think I like a lady to be my girlfriend."

"What?!" his mother exclaimed.

She didn't understand what he meant, and was so confused even though his father seemed to understand everything and became even more quiet.

"I'm gay, Mom."

The silence filled the whole room -- and then his mom began to cry.

After that night, the family members avoided each other and didn't really talk to each other for months. The parents didn't know how to react to this because throughout their lives they hadn't had any experience with gay people. When their only son who they had been taking care and nurturing told them he was different from what they thought or from the path that they were familiar with, they became freaked out and didn't know how to respond.

Finally, Bon's mother told her mother, Bon's grandmother, because she was still confused and couldn't keep that to herself anymore.

"What should I do to my gay son?"

The elderly grandmother didn't seem to be surprised. She replied calmly:

"Well, he is still your son, so just take care of him and love him, because he will always be your son."

"My dear daughter, always remember that your real happiness in life is your family."



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FICTION: A Vision Saves the Life of Sisi

By Mee Dhanasetii Chodvorapan

Maha was born and raised in a farmer's family in the rural area of the northeastern in Thailand. He is the oldest son of four children in his family, having one brother and twin sisters. Being a big brother is not easy because it comes with great responsibility in the society of his family. His father is a tough man and strongly believes in honesty and integrity. His mother is a kind-hearted, patient, and loyal person.

Maak Maha's father always taught his children to treat others fairly with respect. Even though they were not a rich family, whenever their neighbors got in trouble especially financial crisis, he always gave them a hand as much as he could.

In a cold winter night, Sisi, a little girl in the village, was barely to breathe. No one knew what was wrong with her. Her father ran toward Maha's house and knocked at the door. His father opened the door and asked what happened.

Sisi's father rapidly answered in a mumble. His face was alert and pale and his entire body shaking.

"My daughter wasn't feeling well and can hardly breathe," he said. "

Maak didn't hesitate to offer his help. He went back to the house, grabbed his wallet and a car key then ran toward the garage with Sisi's father to start his car. It took a little while to get the engine going, since it was a cold winter night.

The poor little girl Sisi was lying on her bed, and her mother was crying beside her, hoping that nothing bad had happened to

her daughter. Once she heard the car outside, she was relieved. Maak arrived with an oxygen mask in his hand, that he got it from a First Aid Kit which in the trunk. He hurried to put it on Sisi's face, then picked her up, and took her to the car. Sisi's parents accompanied her, holding her hand while the vehicle was heading to the hospital.

Unfortunately, on the way to the hospital, the rain started pouring so hard that the road became muddy and in a terrible condition for the car. Maak had to slow down and pull over under a giant tree. There was no sign that the rain was going to stop.



Not far from the giant tree, there was a statue

of a snake and it seemed like that giant snake was staring at Sisi's mother. She prayed silently to the snake:

"If you cure my daughter, I will offer my daughter to you as yours," she prayed.

The rain stopped immediately after she finished her prayer. At that moment, Sisi started to breathe again and gradually opened her eyes. She spoke her first words:

"Mommy, I'm thirsty."

Everybody was amazed.

Her mother looked at the snake again, but she saw nothing. She did not tell anyone what she had seen and kept it as her secret. Though she knew exactly why her

daughter was cured.

Since it seemed that Sisi had recovered, Maak asked her parents if they still wanted to take their daughter to the hospital. Both shook their heads to say no, thus he decided to take the family home.

On the way home none of them spoke except for Sisi. She seemed lively and happily sang a song.

Not long after that, there were other girls had the same symptom as Sisi. Unfortunately, none of them had survived because they incapable to breathe. Maha had noticed the bizarre condition that occurred in his village.

He questioned himself that, “why did it happened only to the girls? There might be something intriguing hidden behind the mystery which needed to be discovered.” This situation had inspired him to become a doctor. He had recently just graduated from high school and thinking about his future career. However, in order to get into a medical school. It required the candidates not only outstanding in their academic record but also it obliged by the school to pay a huge money for the tuition fee.

Maha was doing great at school, he got straight A's in his last school year. Sine his family was a famer; he could see obvious that his family was not able to support him. However, he had never lost his hope. He was determined searching for a scholarship, even though it was challenging to get one. He sent out his personal statement to all top medical schools in Thailand. With his perseverance to be a doctor, he finally got accepted from one of the greatest medical school in Bangkok.

The villagers congratulated to Maha and his family, hoping that Maha to come

back and help them to disclose the mysterious which had happened to the girls in the village. Maha said good bye to everyone and headed to a medical school in Bangkok.



I personally, don't really believe in the mystery of the snake, but I do respect people who believe in it. I admire Maha who has a kind-hearted like his mother. He is determining to his dream and willing to help others.



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Many Thais Believe in the Naga -- And So Do I!

By Patty Panudda Nampradit

If you haven't been to Thailand, you may never have heard of the Naga but for the Thai people there are many Thai important folktales that they believe are true. One of the best known is Naga in Thai has the same meaning as Ngeuak or Luang: a big, magical snake with a red crest and the ability to change form.

Many Thai folktales depict Naga as King Naga from the Mekong River. He fell in love with a human woman. They got married, lived by the river, and had nine children, who are believed to be the ancestors of Thai people. In Thai, the word for nine is Kao. Therefore, the Mekong River is called Kao Loang in Chinese,

Kao Luang meaning nine Nagas. Thai people who live near the Mekong River still believe that King Naga and his nine children protect them.

When boatmen travel along the river, they pray to the Naga water spirits. Every year on the night of 15th day of the 11th month in the Thai lunar calendar, in the area of the Mekong river, an extraordinary phenomenon occurs stretching over 20 kilometers between Pak-Ngeum district, about 80 kilometers south of the Lao capital Vientiane, and Phonphisai district in Nong Khai province; that is, hundreds of red, pink and orange fireballs spew up from the river. While scientists attribute this occurrence to the emission of natural gasses from the plant and animal life decomposing at the bottom of the river, but villagers on both sides of the river

have their own ideas as to the origin of the fireballs. They refer to this phenomenon "Naga's Fireball," and believe the Nagas under the Mekong River is shooting fireballs into the air to celebrate the end of the annual three month meditation retreat known in Thai as "Phansa" (Buddhist Lent), At the end of the retreat, there is a two day celebration involving a boat race as well as light and sound shows now accompanies the yearly spectacle.



King Naga from Mekong River

According to Thai mythology, the Nagas had so faithfully served the Buddhist truth that their symbols that they were given key positions in Buddhist temples in various forms. Naga symbols usually appear on the gables, arches and along the edges of the finial, gable board, arch, balustrade, along the tiers of the temple roof, and especially on skillfully carved stairs leading to the main shrine (*Viharn* in Thai). Most of the Naga significations in Thai architecture, however, possibly find their origin in ancient Hindu Brahmanism which Theravada Buddhism had assimilated. Naga decoration along the tiers of temple roofs represents the cosmic river of life which springs from Mount Phra Sumen and streams down to the human world. Nagas are capable of

using magic powers to transform themselves into a human semblance. Accordingly, in some Buddhist paintings, the Naga is portrayed as a human being with a snake or dragon extending over his head. In these anthropomorphic forms, cobra heads often spring from the neck. The Buddha is often shown conquering the Nagas, probably a suggestion of his unsurpassed ability to overcome the natural world by way of his perfected virtues.¹

Thai people who believe in Naga will pray and worship them. The legend of the Naga is a belief strongly held by the Thai people living along the Mekong River. In Thailand the Naga is a wealthy underworld deity. They pay their respects to the river because they believe the Naga still rule over it, and river folk hold annual sacrifices for its benefit. Local residents believe that the Naga can protect them from danger, so it is not uncommon for them to make a sacrifice to Naga before taking a boat trip along the Mekong River.

The marvelous temple of the Naga exists in Thailand. Thai people who believe in the Naga serpent worship Naga sculpture and ask for wealth and health. We can not prove that the fireballs come from the Nagas on the Mekong River or why they have fireballs on Thai lunar calendar. Scientist might be able to prove that the emission of natural gasses come from the plant and animal life decomposing at the bottom of the river, but they can't explain why fireball have just only that day every year?

I believe in this folktale because I went to the Maekhong river and saw the fireballs spew up from the river at the night of 15th day of the 11th month in the Thai lunar calendar.



Viharn in Thai



The Nagas and their child



¹ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/naga-Hindu-mythology>

Money isn't everything

By Kwangmin Kim



As I been living my life, and as I have been aging, I started to realize that there is actually something important in life. To a person who is so self-centered, the realization that I made was really shocking.

My priorities in life so far has been a tangible success, or a dream that I have been chasing. For example, I really wanted success in my life that I can get anything I want and can help people. For the longest time, I have been chasing after money. I wanted to buy expensive clothes for showing off. I just work hard to get money at the restaurant and play hard so that I couldn't care about my health. As a result, I got too much stressed out and got feeling bad for my stomach.

Having a strong fantasy over hip hop and famous people on social network, buying expensive clothes what famous stars wearing on the TV. And shoes meant a huge portion in my life. Some other times, I had deep obsession with pleasure. Whether it is social or emotional pleasure, I have lived to fulfill my pleasure.

I had relationships with people that I liked, spent time with them, and partied, drank, and smoked with my “friends” for the pleasure. I cannot deny that I was also in slight obsession with lust. I really liked having party with people especially I really like hanging out with girls.

However, I started to realize how futile those momentary pleasures were. I was feeling that my health condition was getting bad from working to get money to satisfy for my life.

Even money could not bring me the satisfaction in life. I didn't care about my health and I was just living like a little boy who doesn't care about other things that I have to care.

My daily routine, hanging out with the same people, wasting my time exploring the new trends in fashion, and living half sober half drunk, seemed so meaningless. (It was. You were throwing away your life.) What I realized was that my health and something more valuable are more important.

Last week, I had enteritis and could not eat or drink anything, including water. I just wanted to save my money from work and I was working almost every day and I didn't care myself so that I got sick which is enteritis and headache. Suffering from the massive pain and loneliness as I was simply lying down in my bed with no one around me.

Even if I make so much money and have so many popular people around me, I would not be enjoy my life or even do anything without health. I suddenly realized how I was chasing after the wrong things instead of what really means in life. Basically, I don't like to talk about my story to other people but, there is one person who I can tell my hard story what I having hard time. He is my friend since elementary school. I was calling to him to get advice and he told me that I have to care my health first and stop make money and check my body so that I just checked my body and I could recognize that I have some bad things in my body such as enteritis.

Also, the superficial relationships that I have been forming with the "popular group" felt so inane. I could have come to this realization because I felt the loneliness while I was in bed, but the relationships and friendships that I believed to have formed resulted in nothing when I really needed someone next to me.

Instead, there was guy who came to help me and care for me was Haksoo, my mentor. When I got here in Bay Area I met this guy from my friend and he was saying to me a lot of times and whenever I was having hard time he always tried to help me out.

Even though he would time to time scold me and tell me harsh words like realistic advice I could not deny that my relationship with him was the most valuable over any other relationships I have formed in the United States. Enteritis could have been a simple incident or sickness for me, but it was actually a valuable event that

enabled me to think about what is actually important in my life.



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Dream & Inspiration in Golf

By Pardol Sawatdee

Pratima Sherpa recalls growing up in a hut next to a golf course in Kathmandu, her first taste of international competition this summer and her dream – to become Nepal’s first female professional golfer. The girl who grew up in the hut where beside the Royal Nepal Golf Club (RNGC) course, which is just next to Tribhuvan International Airport, in Kathmandu. I guess golf has always been in her life. Her parents met on the golf course, where they are employed as laborers. They share their home with lawnmowers and other equipment they use for their work. One of the first sounds her ears must have heard was golf balls being hit by clubs.



She took up golf properly eight years ago, when she was 11, but before then she’d just hit a stone around with a stick, playing make-believe with the other kids, copying the adults. Until this year, when the government changed the regulations, Nepal’s national game was dandi biyo: you have to hit a wooden pin that’s about six inches long up into the air, and hit it again before the other players can catch it. I’ve heard the British play a similar game called tip-cat. It’s not all that different from golf. But dandi biyo was something everyone could play, whether they lived in the hills or the towns, rich or poor. Now the national game’s volleyball.

She started learning to play (golf) properly with a juniors program run by the club. One of the coaches told her she had a natural talent, and took her under his wing for free. He also persuaded a member to give her a set of old clubs. At first her parents thought it wasn’t quite right for someone from a background as humble as her to play golf, and a girl at that.

But now there are about 40 trophies in her home, so they are quite proud of her. She’s the top-rated female player in Nepal, though she doesn’t want to say that as it sounds like boasting. She practices for at least two hours every day. Quite often people come and watch her, hanging onto the perimeter fence. Playing here is different



to other courses: monkeys sometimes steal balls as they think they are eggs, and if you see a leopard you need to leave quickly.

This year 2018 is golf’s centenary in Kathmandu. It’s not a game you would automatically associate with a mountainous country like Nepal. Back in 1917, the prime minister came back from a trip to Scotland with a bag of clubs and set up a basic course, but for a long time only the aristocracy and expatriates played. The RNGC was opened in 1965. There are nine holes now, but the course might disappear if

the rumors about expanding the airport turn out to be true. She does not sure where they'd live if that happened. She also play at the Gokarna course in the Kathmandu Valley. There are two more, in Pokhara and Dharan – so only four courses in the whole of Nepal. She was (at home, in Kathmandu) when the earthquake struck in April 2015.

The damage in the city was pretty bad, and a lot of people came out here – the course was turned into a temporary refugee camp, with

hundreds of people living in tents and they didn't leave for months. The road from Kathmandu to California, her Dad used to work as a trekking guide, like many Sherpas do as they are used to operating at high altitudes. Everyone has heard of Tenzing Sherpa, who was the first, with the New Zealander Edmund Hillary, to reach the top of Mount Everest, in 1953.

For a long timeshe couldn't travel overseas as she didn't have a passport, and she couldn't get a passport as my dad didn't



have a birth certificate. When he was born, about 50 years ago, bits of paper really weren't so important – besides my grandfather would have had to go to a government office and hang around in a queue and he didn't see the point. So for ages we had to try to figure out a way to persuade the bureaucracy to make an exception and issue her a passport. An American member of the club offered to adopt her, but there is no way she would even dream of leaving her parents. In the end, with the help of some

relations they managed it and she was able to travel to California.

After that, she was hosted by a Nepali software engineer and his family, and she played at Los Robles, which is northwest of Los Angeles. It was amazing, so different. She competed against other players her age from all around the world, so it was wonderful to mix with them and compare experiences. She was incredibly nervous at first. She played seven tournaments, finished in the top six in two, and won one. The next step – and she is not sure if this will go ahead, as it depends on sponsorship (a Hong Kong sponsor has expressed an interest) – is to return to the States to take golf classes at Santa Barbara

City College. I'd also like to get into the Faldo Series China Championship – it's the same tournament that launched Rory McIlroy from Northern Ireland and the Taiwanese player Yani Tseng. Right now, she play off a five handicap. Ultimately, I want to become Nepal's first female professional golfer.

Of course, she can't say how far her golf career will go. She was told she could play golf or help feed her family, but she doesn't see why she can't do both. In the meantime, she's taking a four-year business studies course at Thames International College, in Kathmandu. Nepal although we still follow our traditions.

The Kumari, the "living goddess", was anointed in September. She's three now, and she'll be worshipped and live a totally pampered life in a palace in Durbar Square, in Kathmandu, until she reaches puberty, then she'll get a pension and go back to a fairly normal life. But the royal family is gone, we have a new government, and there are more opportunities for women. There's a Nepali proverb – fruits of labour are always sweet – so now I've been given the opportunity to play golf I am going to try my hardest.

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Why Do People Fear Cops & Court?

By Jukreewat Suthon



Hi, my name is Wave. To be honest I will tell you first that I have only written in English just a couple times, because I do not like to write in English. But I will try my best.

This is my real story from my life and I have never ever forgotten it. I bought a Volkswagen car around two years ago and I had a lot of problems with that car. At that time I was driving this VW to my ESL school in Oakland every day. One day while I was driving a car. I was stopped by a police officer. It was my first time in trouble like that.

At that moment, I was shocked and scared because I did not know what I did wrong. I did not know what I should do. I have seen some clip videos on YouTube of police officers shooting black people who have died in their cars. The black person had just moved his hand to open the door to show his driver's license to the police officer. This is why I was scared. The police officer knocked on the car window, then told me to roll the window down.

"Do you know what you did wrong?" he asked me.

"No, I do not know," I said.

He told me that I had three violations. First, the car had an expired license plate. Second, I went to the wrong way on a one-way street, even though there wasn't any traffic light or wrong way sign. And the last one was I did not have US California driver's license. I tried to tell the police officer that I did not do anything wrong or make any mistake, except the car had an expired license plate. And I

wanted to explained him about my trouble when I bought the car was illegal car. That is why I had expired license plate.

He told me to stop talking and told me "You just remember what you want to say in court," he told me.

So I stopped arguing and gave him my international driver's license. Finally, I got a temporary ticket from him that ordered me to go to court. I was so stressed because I was afraid to go to the court since my English was not good. My friend told me that they have some translatorisch to help people with English. That made me feel more comfortable.

Three months later, I got mail from the court that I had to go to the court to hear the judgment. When I saw the ticket, I was shocked: I had to pay \$1,058!!

Finally, the time had come. I went to the court and met the translator. He helped me to translate Thai to English in front of the judge. The judge asked me: "Did you break the rule?"

"Yes!!" I said. "But not a 100%."

Many people in the room started laughing, including the judge.

Then the judge asked me again:

"Are you guilty of breaking the law?"

"I am not guilty," I said.

I just wanted to explain my reasons and my situation, but the judge did not let me say anything and ordered me to return to the court two weeks later. In that moment I thought I would fight this case as much as I could to protect myself and save money. I thought they were overcharging me. It was so expensive!

Two weeks later, I went to the court with the confident feeling that I was going to explain everything to the judge. Then the judge called my name and called the police officer's name. There was no response from the police officer. He had not come to the court that day. That meant my case was dismissed! I was not charged as an offender. I was so lucky.

This story taught me a lot of things including how to be brave when you do something that you have never done before, how to talk and stand in front of a judge with many people watching you. I also learned how to drive a car more carefully.

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Why I Love Camping

By Pang Panida Chanmai

Summer break is a wonderful time to pack up the car and hit the road with your family or your friends because of the good weather, especially in California. The great thing about camping is being outside all day long. If you don't have anything to do on the weekends, camping is a good hobby. Most people go on camping trips because they are tired of the city and ready for an adventure, whether you enjoy biking, hunting or any other outdoor activity. I thought I would share some of my favorite camping spots in California. This is my favorite campsites in California; Malibu Creek, Ventana in Big Sur, Leo Carillo, Jumbo Rocks in Joshua Tree and Glacier Point in Yosemite.



I have gone camping four times in my life. Last summer I had a bad experience at Lake Tahoe when I went there with my friend, Nita. She said she would bring everything, so I would not need to worry about the stuff.

The problem was that it was so hot during the day but cold at night – and she brought only one blanket! We needed to share but we were still cold. I could not sleep and I kept waking up every half hour. During the night, we talked about why the homeless people died on the streets. We

both felt that way and talked all night. We agreed that the next time we would rent a hotel room or prepare better. This experience taught me that I could not trust anyone to prepare the supplies. I felt terrible when my body was freezing.



There is something to be said about sleeping in outdoors with the sky so full of stars above you. It's amazing when you are sitting around the campfire at night and smelling the burning wood. I love going to go on hikes and see the beauty, feel the fresh air and smell flowers and trees. When the chirping birds wake me up before the sun comes up, it is so good. It might seem simple or silly, but when I go camping, I turn off my cellphone so I can relax. I don't need to check email, answer phone calls, or update my status on Facebook or send Instagrams. I do not need to post photos and tell the world everything I'm doing and seeing. If I want to share my camping experience, I will do it when I return home. During my trip, it's time to turn off the all these forms of communication.

As I spend time outside in nature, I develop new ideas and become more aware of the world around me. When you spend time near a lot of trees, you take in more oxygen. I think the camping is one of the best ways to connect and bond with your family and friends.

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The Hanok house: Living in Harmony with Nature – and People

By Sangmi Park

On the day when I quit my company, I was heavy in heart on the way home in the bus. I was worried about what I would do in the future. The television in the bus was broadcasting a show introducing the Seoul the Hanok Village. The Hanok is a traditional Korean house that is usually not found in the city center of Seoul.

The TV show explained various aspects of the excellence of the the Hanoks. First of all, the Hanok is practical and uses scientific building methods. It has a heating system which are “*Ondol*” of the The Hanok. It showed examples of nature-friendly structures that can naturally communicate with nature or people.

I had been listening to the story of the the Hanok through television, forgetting that I was now out of job. So, I decided to go to the the Hanok village to take a load off my mind and for a relaxing change of pace. The trip to the Hanok made me to think of old memories.

As soon as I entered the Hanok Village, the first thing I noticed was the “*Ondol*.” When I was a child, I remembered watching the TV with my family in the *Ondol* room in winter. *Ondol* is a typical scientific building method of the Hanok. When we heat the floor made of stone, the stone becomes warm and the heat of the warmed stone spreads the warmth throughout the house through convection.

I remembered that when I came home from the school in winter, as soon as I came back to my house, I threw my bag down and lay in the *Ondol* room. It was a time when the floor was too warm, and no bed was needed. In those days when there was no electric rice cooker or microwave, my mom used to put a bowl of rice on the floor of the *Ondol* with covering blanket so



that it would not get cold and I would get warmed rice after school. It is a memory filled with warmth that cannot be found in this era when everything is convenient and fast.

I stood on the floor of a the Hanok in the Hanok village and watched the yard . I remembered an episode with my father when I was a child. I envied my friend who lived in the apartment and asked my father if we could move to an apartment. My father said if we live in a house made of straight lines, the mind of the person could also be angled. He can only live in the Hanok where he can live with nature. His words were too difficult for me to understand at that time. This time, when I looked at the the Hanok yard again, I could understand my father 's words. The Hanok 's yard rejected artificial things and regarded harmony with nature as important. The courtyard of the Hanok is not decorated with a garden but rather is often left empty because it is thought that the natural environment surrounding the Hanok is a garden. It shows that the pure beauty of empty space.

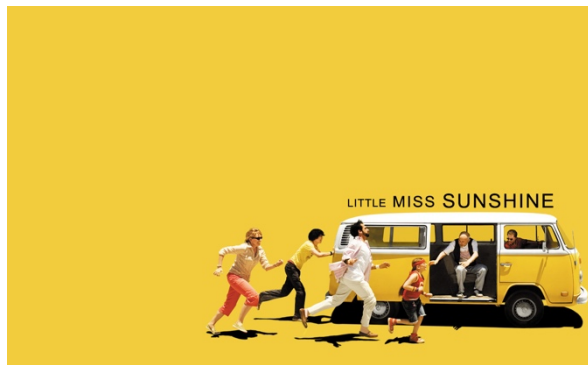
I looked around the Hanok Village and by the time I came back to home, my steps were still heavy. I was able to learn one thing though: just as the Hanok has been harmonized with nature, I wanted to try once again to live harmoniously with people again, starting tomorrow.

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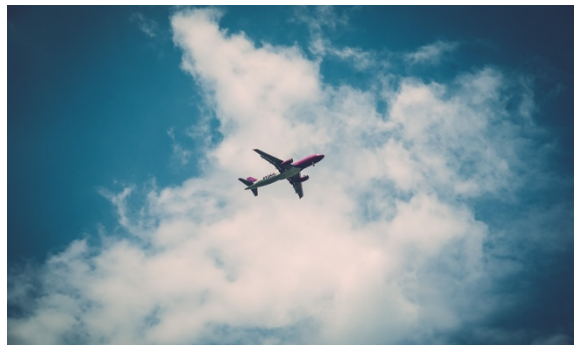
Desires Come Easily -- but Dreams are Difficult!

By Tha Khanittha Kraithong

Little Miss Sunshine -- dreams vs. desires.



When I was little, my dream was to become a flight attendant or I used to say “air hostess” at that time. I watched the planes flying over our small town many times, and I loved watching the parts of movies with flight attendants in it. I thought about how nice it would be to travel around the world for work and to be able to speak English very well. I talked to my parents and my teachers in school about this dream all the time.



My parents did not take my dream seriously because they thought it will be gone when I grow up, I have not received much guidance or encouragement from my teachers neither. And of course I have not done much to pursue my dream neither. When I thought back to that dream I feel that it was more of a childish desire and not really a dream of my life.

During college I had another dream about my life and profession again. This time I dreamt to become a nurse. I had to study hard in order to get admission to the nurse school. When the time came for the test, it turned out my efforts were not quite enough. I had failed.



I went through a period of depression, feeling really down and not wanting to do anything anymore.

I was grateful to have my parents by my side supporting me in this difficult time of my life. They kept telling me to not to give up, and “no matter what you are doing,



you are our daughter”. I love my parents very much. My dream was gone again, but my life had to continue. I planned to go to the university to get a Bachelor Degree like everyone else and get a job with good company.

I went to study in Bangkok at a different university, to get out from my small town and live by myself. Of course it wasn't as easy as I thought it would be. I lived by myself and I had to take a part time job to pay rent and tuitions. I studied there for 4 years.



After graduating I took a job at a hotel, waking up very early mornings and working long hours. I wasn't happy with that life, and I found it to be boring. I dreamt again of a better life somewhere maybe out of my home country. After some research and



advice from my friends I travelled to Korea to take on new challenges and try life there. It wasn't easy neither.

A few years of life in Korea and I needed a change again. I started dreaming

about coming to the US, since I heard a lots of good things about it.

Many people told me the USA it is the best country, and I should visit it once in my lifetime. They said that the United States it is full of opportunities, everything is possible to happen and you can enjoy the freedom it has to offer.

I am currently living this dream, I traveled around the country a little bit, made new friends, study English.

Since I like learning new things and I didn't know much about the Christian religion, I choose to also study Theology.

It is a very challenging experience to be alone here, far from home and my parent, living a new life on another continent.

I recently came to the conclusion that life is not easy and dreams are hard to achieve. It is up to us how high we set the bar, what we dream of and how hard we work to achieve that dream, and would like to finish my story with this photo I saw in San Francisco on the side of a college campus.



“Diligence is the path up the mountain of knowledge.”

"Hard work is the boat across the endless sea of learning”

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Loser or Winner: What's the Difference?

By Bee Sirirat Yoocharoen

What does it mean to be a loser? *Little Miss Sunshine* is one movie that I have picked and viewed many times to get an answer. So I will ask you: How do you



interpret the meaning of the words, loser and winner? What does it mean to be a winner or loser in your opinion?

I watched *Little Miss Sunshine*, one of best movies of 2006, for my answer. I think films can be a mirror image of society because they can show us American values in people's lives.

In this movie, the story focuses on the family of a little girl, Olive who wants to compete in a beauty contest. **Olive** (Abigail Breslin) is seven years old and adorable with giant glasses and chubby. Olive, as an innocent child, doesn't seem to give into the negativity around her. She does not look like a girl who would join beauty pageant, but she is so adorable, innocent and determined that you can't help but love her.

She is cannot contain her excitement after she hears that she has qualified for the finals of the *Little Miss Sunshine* competition. But she is too young to fly to California alone so if she wants to

participate in this pageant, the whole family must travel together with her. Her family has five characters: Her parents, brother, uncle and grandfather.

Sheryl (Toni Colette), the mother of Olive, is the matriarch of the family and is the main person who supports Olive going to contest even they are have a small budget. She brings her brother Frank to live in their home and comes off as more normal and reasonable than her husband.

Olive's grandfather, Edwin Hoover (Alan Arkin), is the typical "dirty old man" who takes a lot of drugs and acts very obnoxious most of the time but he cares for his niece and nephew. He helps Olive prepare for the beauty contest... the idea for the beauty contest comes from her Grandpa who is the choreographer for Olive's dance during the contest. He is a sex-obsessed, heroin-happy grandfather with a penchant for creative profanity.

Uncle Frank (Steve Carell) says he is the second-ranked Proust scholar in the world whose life crumbles when a young student he was in love with becomes lovers with Frank's academic rival, leading to Frank try to suicide. But in the end, it is the bond of love in the family that helps him forget the reasons he wanted to commit suicide.

Dwayne (Paul Dano), the brother of Olive, who has taken a vow of silence from the beginning of this film, wants to be a

fighter pilot. Later, Olive tests him and Dwayne learns he is color blind. This unexpected disappointment of being colorblind means he can't achieve his dream. He gets very angry when he learns this,

Her father, Richard (Greg Kinnear) is obsessed with winning and doesn't want anyone in his family to be loser, but he doesn't get along well with Frank because he thinks Frank is a loser for trying to commit suicide. Richard also tries to teach Olive about the importance of winning. He asks Olive how confident she is that she would win.

"I think I can win because some of the other they've been doing it longer but I practice every day," Olive replies.

When her Uncle Frank says, "Good luck," Richard responds: "It's not about Good luck, Frank !! Luck is the name of losers give to their own failing."

Richard is the one character, which brings me in a roundabout way to this question about winning and losing. He is obsessed with the values of public life status, rank, and "success." He tries to teach a program called "the Nine Steps of Life," that is divided into people who are winners and those who are losers. These values have become seemingly inescapable, and he judges everyone including himself.

At the hotel, I was impressed when Olive was showing signs of weakness and Grandpa said:

"You know what a loser is? A real loser is someone who's so afraid of not winning. They don't even try."

And that's where I got the answer for my life!!

After I finished watching this movie, I realized my life is almost like Olive's. I was born into a family with inadequate financial resources because my father had an accident and died when I was young. My grandfather was always beside me and compassionate toward me, and he is my great memory and still is in my mind.

Grandpa, you made a good fighter most of the time. When I want to give up, I think of you. You already changed me from a loser into a winner. The great boxer, Muhammed Ali, used to say: "Float like a butterfly, sting like a bee."

I am ready to sting and sting like a Bee too!



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Little Miss Sunshine

By Ahmad Snono

It's my first time watching this movie and it's awesome. It's a roller coaster. First, it makes you laugh then it makes you cry within a meter of second. This movie leaves me a lot to think about family love, I like that they always rely on family to get to fulfill their dreams as they do with their daughter, the teaching that leaves me is always necessary to get ahead regarding everything pass. I liked the movie because it leaves you with a beautiful teaching that the family will always be first of all things, and that we must do what is necessary to always be united. I didn't like that the grandfather was dead. I didn't like the use of drugs since it is a family movie and should not have that context.

Somehow, I liked father Richard, he is desperately trying to sell his motivational success program... with no success. Meanwhile, mom Sheryl lends support to her eccentric family, including her depressed brother Steve, fresh out of the hospital after being jilted by.

The character I picked is the wife Sheryl. She's by far the most normal member of the family. She's a "take no crap" kind of woman. She is the matriarch of the family. She comes off as more normal and reasonable than her husband. Sheryl is a firm believer in the importance of family and is doing everything she can to make sure that the Hoovers stay together – but her best efforts don't seem to be enough. She fights constantly with Richard, her son Dwayne has taken a vow of silence and won't speak to her, Richard's live-in father Edwin won't stop doing heroin, and her brother Frank has just been released into her custody after he tried to kill himself.



The difficult work of maintaining peace in the family becomes even harder when she discovers that due to a combination of

logistical and financial issues the entire household will have to travel 700 miles to California so Olive can compete in the Little Miss Sunshine Beauty Pageant.

The trip will test each member of the family and maybe even give them the opportunity to fix their family – or give up on it for good. Her character implied to my family and I because without her actions the family will split and not being attached



together.

I would like to relate that story to a real life story, A strong family gives its members the support they need to make it through life's toughest spots. I believe my family is an example of a well connected, attached committed happy family. With commitment comes the desire to help family member to reach their potential. Healthy families are not problem-free, they just admit to problems and get the help they need to solve them! The longer a problem drags on without a solution, the more discouraging family life becomes and as a family, we do not allow this to happen.

Love is at the heart of the family. All humans have the need to love and to be

loved because the family is normally the place where love is expressed. Love is the close personal blending of physical and mental togetherness. It includes privacy, intimacy, sharing, belonging, and caring.

Nevertheless. The atmosphere of real love is one of honesty, understanding, patience, and forgiveness. Love does not happen automatically, it requires constant daily effort by each family member. Loving families share activities and express a great deal of gratitude for one another. Love takes time, affection, and a positive attitude.

It's important to mention at the end I love how in the final scene the adults do what they are supposed to, protect their children from harm. Besides the winning-losing message, I think the film also brings the idea that family is so important, perhaps one of the keys to happiness.



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In "Sunshine," Richard Recalls My Old Days

By Sam Pasakon Kaboonkun

Richard is one of my favorite characters in *Little Miss Sunshine*. He makes me think of myself and inspires me to keep on going to reach my goals in life.



He is the head of his family who is always works hard because he thinks that success in working will make his family happy and more comfortable. There are so many difficulties in his life that make him upset, but he keeps on fighting and doesn't give up.

Back when I was young, I felt I was so lucky because I was born in a warm and loving family. My parents had good jobs



which paid them well, so we were kind of rich and doing great.



When I was 15 years old, my dad lost his job because of the bad economy. Moreover, my mom had cancer. She couldn't get over it and passed away fastly. It was the most difficult time in my life. My dad didn't have enough money to support our family like before. With all of that I gave a promise to myself one day I will have a warm and loving family again.



After setting up my goal, I started to work since I was 16 years old to pay off my school tuition. I had been working hard for 6 years until I got my bacheloR's degree. After that I had a chance to work as a chef at a famous hotel in Thailand. I found out that I like to be a professional chef in an international field to earn more experiences and make more money. So I was saving up for about 2 year and finally made a trip across the world to America.



Working here, in the US makes my saving grow faster. It's a lot easier for me to help out my dad in Thailand.



Now my next step to reach my goal is that I want to have my own restaurant because it's not only make me have a stable income, but I also enjoy working in food field and I hope I can succeed like Richard.

One important thing I got from this character is that if we have someone we love to fight for we will always have energy to overcome all obstacles.



How a Mother Holds a Crazy Family Together

By Yohko Iseki

The movie *Little Miss Sunshine* is about a girl who dreams of entering a beauty pageant while being raised in a very dysfunctional family. Her father Richard is trying to develop a business as a motivational speaker, but his company is failing even though he tries to come up with ways to succeed. Her uncle has attempted suicide after being rejected by a young student with whom he has fallen in love.



Her brother Dwayne has not been talking for almost a year as a way to show that he is committed to his goal: becoming a test pilot. Her grandfather is a heroin addict and was kicked out of a nursing home for bad behavior. And the girl herself, named Olive, dreams of winning a beauty pageant that will be hard for her because she is overweight and wears glasses.

The movie poster for Little Miss Sunshine

In spite of all the craziness in the family, the mother Sheryl is the one who doesn't let the family fall apart. Even though the main character in this movie is Olive, the real center of the story is the mother who supports her family.

At first, it seems Sheryl is not good at doing her chores. For example, she buys fast food chicken for dinner. But we soon discover that she is the most hard-working member of the family. Her husband Richard does not earn much money, so she has to financially support her family. She argues and fights with Richard about failing at his job and about financial issues, but as the story progresses, we see that she loves her husband and family.

We can see that in the movie Sheryl does not give up on her family, even when the family looks like it is on the verge of falling apart. She shows her love in many ways.

For one thing, even though Olive does not look like the usual contestant in a beauty pageant, Sheryl still supports ambition. Sheryl gets the whole family to drive 700 miles to Los Angeles just so Olive has a chance at winning the Little Miss Sunshine contest.

Sheryl knows that Olive might not win because of her looks and talents, but she still



encourages her to experience many things and do things.

For example, she insists that Olive participate in the Little Miss Sunshine beauty pageant when Olive first gets the call to enter and before Olive's big performance when Olive loses a little confidence.

Sheryl shows her love for her family in other ways, too. At the beginning of the movie, you see that Sheryl's brother Frank is in the hospital for trying to commit suicide, but Sheryl takes him in and cares for him because he has nowhere to go. Second, even if the grandfather is a heroin addict and complains about many things, like the food served by Sheryl, or complains about how tired and bored he is on the trip, Sheryl is kind and keeps her mouth shut and does not start a fight with him.

Also, as her husband's company is failing, she comforts him during his disappointment for losing an important deal to sell his success program. Also, she doesn't ask for a divorce from him when he is failing.

Lastly, when Dwayne becomes furious that he is color blind and cannot be accepted as an Air Force pilot, Sheryl supports her son by not forcing him to talk about how angry he is. Dwayne learns that there are obstacles in life he has to get past so his dreams come true.

Also, even if she knows her family is not rich and can't afford air plane tickets to Los Angeles, she knows she can spare a little money to take care of her brother who attempted suicide and think of a cheaper alternative than riding the plane to Los Angeles. Sheryl is always there to support her family when something went wrong.

You can see that Sheryl has a kind heart. She loves her family very much and desires

and dreams for Olive and her family to be happy. Clearly, Sheryl is not perfect, but that is why I can relate to her. I am also very like her. I fight with my husband a lot but at the end of the day, I still love him.

I also like to encourage my daughter to experience new things and do as many things as possible, such as going surfing in the ocean, snowboarding down the Black Diamond Hills, and learning to horseback ride.



A family picture of the Hoovers.

My desire and dreams for her is to make sure that my daughter's dreams come true, which is to become a veterinarian. I also sacrifice many things so I can make sure my daughter is happy. Just like when Sheryl decided she was going to take the whole family to Los Angeles for Olive, I took my daughter to the United States, so my daughter would have a good future and she could be happy.

As a mother, my dreams and desires are for my family to be happy. When they are happy, you know your dreams have come true.

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SPRING REFLECTIONS



THANK YOU!

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