



Set in Jakarta,
Singapore and
Bangkok

The General's Daughter

Plus the sequels
**Heading North &
Love Lost - Love Found**

The New Travel-Romance Trilogy
by Micky Vann

THE GENERAL'S DAUGHTER

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The General's Daughter

Plus the sequels

Heading North

&

Love Lost, Love Found

The New Travel-Romance Trilogy by

Micky Vann

“The test of a first-rate intelligence is to hold two opposed ideas in the mind at the same time and still retain the ability to function well.”

F. Scott Fitzgerald

“The rate at which a person can mature is directly proportional to the embarrassment one can tolerate.”

Douglas Englebart

A truth passes through three stages. First it is ridiculed. Second, it is violently opposed. Third, it is accepted as being self-evident.

Arthur Schopenhauer

Prologue

Born in 'remote' Venezuela, Rodney had — from his early teens onward — developed a gusto for foreign shores as his father, a career diplomat, was being posted to different missions around the world. His university years coincided with his dad's appointment in Australia, meaning that he had the opportunity to study at one of the world's better-known universities.

At uni, he made friends with a filmmaker, who, enthused by his wife from Sulawesi, entertained the idea of making documentaries in Indonesia, where her *uncle* was the *personal* Chief of Protocol of President Suharto.

Near the end of his studies, Rodney and his friends had started to get serious about *giving it a go*. Although the doco project never got off the ground — the prerequisite tea money 'contribution' amounted to more than 40,000 US dollars, despite the so-called excellent connection —, Rodney, who was a keen photographer, rather than a filmmaker, had seen enough of Indonesia to know that there were sufficient job opportunities in order to make sticking around pay off, albeit in another field — teaching specialised ESL and TOEFL English. Rodney's arrival in the archipelago coincided with the much heralded — anticipated — ascent of *The Asian Century*, the harbingers of which could already be felt. The unexpectedly fast growing economies — of Southeast Asia in particular — found themselves overwhelmed by their own 'boom' as they were scrambling to fill a whole array of vacancies, such as in engineering, advanced telecommunications, state-of-the-art computer technology and qualified English-language instructors, to name a few.

At the same time, the West was going through an economic slowdown, resulting in massive lay-offs, asset stripping, restructuring

and moving plants to less expensive environments — such as in Asia. It meant that if you had just graduated, you'd be well advised to “Go East young men and women!” instead of joining the long queues of *serial job applicants*.

**PRE-PRINT REVIEWS OF 'THE GENERAL'S DAUGHTER' AND
SEQUELS.**

Dialogue blunt and direct

Having spent the past 20 years in the film industry, I have read my fair share of film scripts as well as novels. Micky Vann's roller-coaster trilogy *The General's Daughter* held my attention immediately. I particularly enjoyed and appreciated this newcomer's style of directness and bluntness of the dialogue. I would also add that anyone who has traveled or plans a trip to the area, will immediately feel the overall quality of living amongst the natives. No matter how much a person travels or feels they have an understanding of other cultures, customs and beliefs, we are reminded in *The General's Daughter* that our minds certainly don't work or think in the same manner. The story may be a novel, but it translates into my mind as a movie script.

Craig Prater.

*Craig Prater Productions, Inc.
Palm Springs, California, USA*

Through the loupe of cool consideration

As a person with a perpetual interest in South-east Asia (particularly Thailand), I greatly enjoyed the fascinating narrative of *The General's Daughter*.

The 'insight-info' that numerous encounters – such as experienced by the protagonist – bring to the fore, has helped deepen my overall understanding.

For instance, the incorporation of the mysterious – held under the loupe of 'cool' consideration – has reconfirmed my observations that, in these parts, spirits and intuition play a far more tangible and prominent role than many non-Asians would believe.

Uwe Solinger.

*Former Advisor to the Secretariat of the House of
Representatives, Bangkok, Thailand (1997- 2002)*

One revelation after the other

Right from the opening line of *The General's Daughter* I was intrigued by the narrative, including as a treasure of insightful information of the real and surreal that apparently run parallel (and often get mixed) in places like Indonesia and Thailand... about which I never had the foggiest idea existed! I could not and *would not* stop reading, until I had absorbed what I experienced as one revelation after the other.

It may be fiction but definitely not fictitious... much so because of the trilogy's ongoing correlation to what transpired during the 1980s and 1990s on the world stage.

Rudi Redelaar.

Hotelier.

Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

A 'thriller' played out on the battlefield of the sexes

Micky Vann's Romance-Travel novel *The General's Daughter* strikes me not only as refreshingly original in style of writing but also in the balanced way it exposes the deep-seated cultural chasms between Westerners and Asians, played out on the battlefield of the sexes - not just between (heterosexual) men and women, including as it does interaction with 'the third sex'.

Reads in many ways like a thriller (for its numerous, unexpected twists), enhanced by a witty – sometimes dry – sense of humour. Furthermore, not unlike the best of fiction, *The General's Daughter* feels to me far more intimate than non-fiction.

Professor Roberto Lemm.

Hispanic historian, author.

Madrid, Spain.

Dedication

Thanks to:

All Five+ Billion of you great folks out there! Why else would I almost have *written myself off* writing in the crazed daze caused by continuously overdosing on black espresso coffee, whiskey and nasty smokes for four months at a thousand words per day with two fingers in stead of five per hand. I did use my thumbs, but only to stop them from going numb', like my feet and everything else my body once was allowed to throw around for exercise!

Now, if I were the Picasso of literature, you'd be forgiven for thanking *me* instead of my thanking you. Whatever the case, please don't, because I'd die from embarrassment, unless you do so for my promising you that next time, I'll write something more useful, such as on tissue paper.

The truth is that if it were *not* thanks to *all* of you, say only *Three Billion*, I would have felt far too guilty from the fact that *The General's Daughter and Sequels*, caused the felling of at least two or three beautiful big trees — since I refused to post it on the Internet — it's *de rigueur* these days, I suppose you know. So why didn't I?

Because I would not be able to show-off with it, that's why. You can blame it on Jake, who one day, a couple of years ago, proudly and beaming with happiness held up the three books he had written, with the words, "See this? I like writing books because you can hold them in your hands, take 'em anywhere, never get bored in a long queue, even learn something. And they are *interactive*, unlike the TV sit-coms."

That's why many of you out there call books *friends*, right? Furthermore, books give their creators the wonderful illusion that it makes them immortal, *heaven forbid*. Do I think that too? Let me

put it this way: My first book cut at least ten years off my life (my so-called friends reckon I have leprosy combined with consumption), while just before the *dead*-line I had to use the (typically) wheeled office chair located at my desk, to get to the other side of this dump (a really nice room before I started on my book project) because my legs had gone on strike for all the obvious and politically correct reasons.

Now that I am spilling the beans, I might as well admit that, to me, books are like (theatre) plays in that they give the reader suspense-of-disbelief accounts of the experiences of others, which you can apply to your own. In other words, if you wanted to become a window cleaner and you read how awfully dangerous it was and how the protagonist fell to the pavement from the 77th floor on his first day on the job, you'd probably wise up and join the army instead.

But seriously... without, say, telephone *books*, you wouldn't be able to *let your fingers do the shopping* or know how to make *real* bombs at home without the appropriate instruction *booklet*.

Anyway, now that you have made it this far, and thus have shown your mettle, I'll let you in on a carefully kept secret, namely that reading a book (especially *real literature*) is often referred or compared to as *a war of attrition*. Howz-that? I can hear you wonder. Look behind you, aren't you the only one still reading? All the others have gone for their midday hamburgers... but guess what, they all bought a book.

Bert, who ran a bookshop in Phnom Penh of all places, once told me, "You don't look half as daft with *a book under your arm*." Getting the picture? Let Rob, a writer held in great esteem far and wide, give us his observation on this fascinating subject: "The fact that people buy books, doesn't necessarily mean that they are actually going to read them. And even if they do, it does not prove that they have understood let alone absorbed it and incorporated into their 'system' ... you know, like made it their own, knowing what to do with it, allow the new information to enrich or even change their mindset."

Maybe this is merely water off a seal's back to most of you guys out there, but to be frank, I was really distraught by Rob's account, especially since I had no reason or excuse to doubt or ignore his words — couldn't, not after thirty years of his acquaintance.

Now I guess you want to know my political or marketing motive regarding the above dissertation. Well, it's like this... I wish I had one, but unfortunately I don't. If I indeed *did* have such motive, my parting shot would sound a heck of a lot more structured as well as purposeful, say, with a bit of help from 'our' PR department.

No such luck, sorry guys.

Hey! Would I beat around the bush vis-à-vis all five billion of you? No way, José.

I'm not even a member of *Save the Trees* any more, since they found out about my real (versus virtual) publishing plans.

So here it is: Thanks all of you for allowing me to render one more entire leaf of expensive real-tree paper of no further actual use... Thank you, José, for sticking around... and... since I am presently becoming a bit emotional from all the attention I have been getting *as a writer*, I would like to finish with a quote from Pablo Picasso himself, who having reached certain dazzling heights as the number One painter on the planet, told his audience that he had begged his Maker — without a hint of intended blasphemy (by contrast, *on his knees* and with great *humility*),

“Oh God if only I never had to paint again!”

For Anna Maria

Part 1

Vocabulary, *et al*

AA: Alcoholics Anonymous.

Ancol: Jakarta's own luxury seaside resort.

ASEAN: Association of South East Asian Nations.

Bagus: Good, OK.

Bahasa (short for Bahasa Indonesia): The Indonesian language (very similar to Malayu).

Bintang: Star (Heineken in this case).

Black May: Uprising against the government of Suchinda Krapayon (Bangkok 1992).

Buleh: Foreigner (Westerner).

Coucher au poile: Going to bed naked.

Dangdoot: Pronounce 'doot' short, almost like 'dut'. Syrupy romantic music .

Dorm Perempuan: Dormitory for working girls.

Exchange rate : 2,000 rupiah = US\$1.

Feuilles-de-rose: Rose petals. In Kamasutra parlance the phrase itself sufficiently describes what it feels like getting kissed from top to toe.

Gambling: Goat

Gang: Alleyway, narrow street.

Grobak: Vendor's cart in local *argot*.

Gudang Garam (literally salt warehouse): Renown Indonesian brand of cigarettes. Available in packets of 12 or 16.

Jakarta Pusat: Central Jakarta.

Hysteron proteron: Sentence or phrase in which the logical order is reversed.

Jalan: Road, street.

Kampong: Village, or a village-like neighbourhood of a city.

Kijang: Deer. First introduced in 1977, the robust Toyota Kijang became Indonesia's most popular multi-purpose family minibus.

Kretek: Cigarettes enriched with cloves that upon ignition tend to noisily spew sparks as in *krretek!*

Kris, Keres: Javanese dagger. Upon its deadly blade rest a thousand mystic tales.

Losmen: Guesthouse.

Merdeka: Freedom, independence.

Misopenist: Men-hater (bad try, as no satisfactory translation from Ancient Greek could be found, despite extensive reading — see also Virago).

Misogynist: Woman-hater (no trying required; the perfect match was found in seconds). No further comments.

Nasi goreng: Fried rice.

PA system: Public Address system (here) using *loud* speakers.

Pancasila: Indonesia's philosophical foundation, closely linked to its political gestalt.

Panti pijat: Massage parlour

Partir est mourir un peu: To depart is to die a little.

Penbantu: Attendant.

Perewet: Empty talker, gossip.

Pisang: Banana.

PMT: Pre-menstrual tension.

Rodrigo: Spanish, Christian name of central character.

Rodney: English version (first nickname)

Rod: Short version (second nickname)

Selatan: South

Salembah Raya: Central Jakarta, 10 minutes from Kebon Sirih

Sarong: Wrap-around cotton cloth, typically batik.

Sombong: Proud, aloof, impolite.

Théh botol: Tea in a bottle, usually chilled.

Tukang: Tradesman, vendor, operator.

Tanamur: Acronym derived from Tanah Abang Timur. Its *hormonal ambience* earned it the title, 'Queen of Jakarta's night life'.

Virago: Xantippe. The prototype of hard-line feminist, anti-men crusaders circa 2,000.

Warung: Shop, store.

The General's Daughter

That corner

As soon as it got dark, the steamy labyrinth of the kampong exacted sharp recall of its daylight features, lest it take you until the morrow to find your way out. However, that was a bagatelle compared to the more serious nighttime hazard caused by the kampong's mostly open sewerage system. Its softly glimmering black surface resembled newly laid asphalt to the untrained eye, turning it into a vicious trap wherever the three-foot-deep channels were bereft of concrete slabs. Getting lost was, of course, linked to stepping on the *wrong pavement*, since the longer you wandered around the more likely it became to fall victim to hazard number two as well.

Nobody knew whether the missing covers ever existed or that their gaping absence had been caused by thievery (spontaneous or organised).

Over the years, the black ooze had claimed numerous victims (fortunately there had not been one fatality so far), most of them while under the weather at the time. Naturally, their misfortune was an ongoing source of gossip and dirty (smelly) jokes. Furthermore, *the black serpent* (as the sewage system was known in infant parlance) presented an ongoing worry for the kampong's mothers, as they knew only too well that it was capable of swallowing any child of toddler age.

However unsettling such pestilent baptism would be regardless of religion, age or inebriation, it shrivelled in significance vis-à-vis a less obvious, though more lethal danger that lurked in the dimly lit alleyways...

The kampong had been Rodney's residential neighbourhood for

several years. One of the things he did not like about it was the awful smell from the primitive sewage system. However, it provided an advantage in that his rather sensitive nose kept him from getting near its source, let alone take an unplanned bath in it.

To be sure, he had a mental map of the area so as to avoid *that smell* on his way home. Especially after dinner in a restaurant, it came in handy to have that map in his head. Ergo, the aftertaste wasn't ruined by aforesaid smell, even if it meant having to make a bit of a detour.

Besides, he preferred a reasonable level of sobriety at all times. That did not mean that he was a teetotaler, rather it was a leftover of his past, dating back to his late teens, when he usually was the driver, often of someone else's car, on party night.

He would have one pint of beer or one cocktail on arrival at the party and tomato juice for the rest of the evening. But once in the party mood he raged just as much as his friends. However, since the tomato juice looked the same as the typically potent cocktail *Bloody Mary*, people who did not know him often took it that he was 'as drunk as a skunk' (the more so as the night wore on).

Some of the guests and sometimes the hosts would express concern regarding his friends' safety when Rod readied himself to drive them home. However, the only indication that he had been 'drinking' was that he smelled of tomato juice, reinforced by the mixed-in garlic salt.

The English teachers Rodney knew in Jakarta were either alcoholics or teetotalers, exceptions notwithstanding. The archetypal teetotaler was a person with a history of alcoholism, who had joined Alcoholics Anonymous before it was too late. One of the principles of AA membership (it had branches in many countries) was that one was committed to *stay dry* ever after. It was accepted doctrine that the smallest amount of alcohol ingested would in one instant annihilate all efforts, so far, to kick the habit. At the beginning of every AA meeting each participant would (in turn) stand up, solemnly declaring, "My name is John (Dick or Harriet) and I am an alcoholic."

It was thus that the appropriate kind of humility was inculcated, understood by AA's founding fathers to foster a certain willingness on behalf of AA members to listen to their mentors.

Many alcoholics saw themselves (arguably for valid reasons, at least in certain cases) as far too intelligent for their peers. To them the most effective remedy was the consumption of alcohol in copious amounts. It soothed feelings of frustration as well as any lingering pain that life's tribulations seemed to deal out to them in disproportionate quantities. Rod (he adapted his name from Rodrigo to Rodney or Rod, to suit both location and situation to facilitate it being easily understood and remembered) was a bit of a rarity in that he did not allow himself to come to any quick conclusion in a hurry on whatever subject or issue that seemed worth pursuing. If that was not the case, he nevertheless refused to copy popular opinion.

"That's for the sheep amongst us, I don't need it," he'd respond to questions about matters he didn't feel he knew enough about. By contrast, he often went out of his way to look under the surface of appearances with the aim to come to an understanding of what the essence of whatever might actually be.

It was thus that he had asked an AA member to take him along to their next meeting, so he could see for himself what went on as well as doing his usual 'personal research' as he explained as his motive for nosing around.

That meeting had been in Bangkok, where a branch of the Baptist Church provided a venue for alcoholics to meet up. For Rodney, the most revealing part of that visit was that alcoholism apparently ran in families, a facet that put an entirely new angle on it. Instead of being stigmatised and written off as anti-social and being prone to violence, the majority of alcoholics had to be seen as the victim of a genetically passed-on affliction (if not a serious disease) which begged tolerance and help (though preferably not in a patronising manner) rather than instantaneous, negative judgement.

The session's orderly proceedings reflected a high level of self-effacing honesty and sincerity all-round, another aspect that contributed significantly to his deepened understanding. Armed with his newly acquired knowledge, he anticipated that he'd fare better whenever he'd find himself in the midst of raunchy hard-drinking colleagues. Not that he'd suggest everyone present to join AA, as he did not see himself as a proselytiser.

Among the hordes of before-and-after-AA teachers Rodney was

one of few exceptions. Not that this occurred to him just then. He had long forgotten all about those halcyon no-drink driving days. It finally hit him (right here in Jakarta) just after seeing unsteady partygoers (locals) literally fall into their cars and speed off. Contemplating the awesome risks involved and wondering why people preferred hangovers over learning to cope with something resembling reality, triggered off his recall. It had hitherto never occurred to him that his aversion to inebriation (embedded somewhere in his subconscious) was actually still with him. Associated issues such as why people wrote themselves off through their addiction to alcohol had been submerged alongside.

That suddenly took *gestalt* again when a week after his first recall (having *a few* after work) a director of his school fell (chair and all) backwards hitting the back of his head so hard on the tile floor that Rodney thought the man had cracked his skull. What apparently had softened the blow, was that the man had become unconscious *before* he keeled over. That experience took Rodney back to what had happened to his party night friends (of the distant past) when he had been skiing across the Swiss border instead of being the driver. His temporary replacement had looked much deeper in his glass than appropriate, so it was no wonder that he crashed the vehicle (a Volkswagen minibus). It was a total write-off, but none of the eight or nine passengers required hospitalisation, apparently because everybody had been so intoxicated that they had sunk into a state of slumber shortly after they had hit the road. Consequently, they had been profoundly relaxed when the minibus ran off it. Had they been sitting up and realised what was about to happen, the crash would have yielded several dead, since rigid bodies were far more breakable.

It seemed thus suitable advice to get intoxicated to the max, if you were driven home by someone who had been drinking, too.

That's the kind of fun I missed out on!

Not logically... As a passenger, Rod would have been the only fatality!

Actually, the main difference between him and his mates was that he didn't need alcohol to enjoy a party. And, now like then, he took it in his stride when people thought he was as much under the weather as everybody else.