



**PARADISE
IN
LIMBO**

everyday
stories
of
pattaya
folk

TIM COXON

PARADISE IN LIMBO

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ALPHONSE'S AWAKENING

It was Alphonse's first trip to Thailand. Alphonse, or Al to his friends, had come in an attempt to recover from a long, harrowing divorce in England. Having suffered the rigours of a solitary existence for a year, he'd found any English women he'd pursued similar to his preferred temperature of lager – ice cold!

He was still incredulously relishing the delights of his sultry Thai nubile. Seven days of unmitigated bliss confined with his “sanooky” in their hotel room, virtually unable to leave their love-bed. On his second day, he'd met Cat in Salacious Sirens A-Go-Go, where he'd bar-fined her 3 minutes after seeing her pirouetting around the chromium pole. Incredibly, she'd agreed to spend the remainder of his fortnight's holiday with him alone. OK, so he'd had to pay the bar fine for 13 days and pay her 1,500 baht a day, but what was mere money compared with the indescribable pleasure she'd brought him?

A vision of ecstasy she was; a veritable “*hourī*” – wasn't that what the Arabs called the nymphs of their Muslim Paradise? At 19, she was half his age, firm, voluptuous and drop-dead gorgeous; unlike any other girl he'd ever met, let alone spent 84 hours locked in unrelenting pleasure with. If love was a drug, he was totally addicted – hook, line and sinker! He'd been treated like a king, every whim satisfied to the nth.degree, sensations evoked that he'd never even dreamt of, let alone experienced. His whole being ached from their revels.

Cat made the English girls he'd previously been with seem like unworked clay. She fed him delicious titbits of fruit and Thai food, fingerful by fingerful, just like in the concupiscent scene from “Tom Jones”.

“Aloi mai?” was her constant query. Consulting his English-Thai phrase book, he'd learnt that meant “Is it tasty?”

“Yes, darling”, he invariably replied, “just like you!” The food was often excruciatingly hot too; likewise, just like her. He smirked as he recalled what the friend who'd advised him to come to Pattaya called this country – “Pratet hoi lon” – the land of the hot pussy!

But now it was his eighth day and he'd reluctantly consented to accompany Cat and her friends who'd phoned and invited them for a banana boat ride. “They might have at least warned me what I was going

to let myself in for”, he thought dispiritedly as they sped across the waves of Jomtien Bay at breakneck pace driven by a totally sadistic Thai speedboat desperado. By now, his fingers were red-raw as he clung on desperately to the plastic-stripped rope and every few minutes the angle at which he sat and the oscillation of the banana boat plunged the side of his face into the skin-lashing water. Then, “Oh, great! Deep joy!” he thought as the manic speedboat torturer whipped the boat sideways and yet again plunged his victims, screaming hysterically, into the surging surf for the sixth time.

“Will this ordeal never end?” he implored. “Thank God I didn’t take a parachute-speedboat trip like that poor Japanese bastard!” he exclaimed, recalling the horror story he’d heard in the bar about the Japanese tourist whose rope tying him to the speedboat had parted, letting him ascend majestically on the thermals, only to be found washed up 2 weeks later, partially devoured by sharks.

After what seemed an eternity, the banana boat was finally beached and Al and his companions staggered dripping onto terra firma.

“Sanook mai?” – “You enjoy?” one of Cat’s delectable friends enquired, laughing.

“Yea, great, if you’re completely bananas!” retorted Al, wondering desperately how he was going to dry out his sodden passport, wallet and ATM card. He’d naturally expected consolation from his beloved Cat, but lo and behold, what was this? Completely ignoring him, up the beach she went, whispering conspiratorially, arm in arm with one of her male “friends”.

The first cut! His anguish was further deepened as the ensemble sauntered nonchalantly into a beachside café, leaving him to trail dispiritedly behind them. Totally absorbed, Cat and her companions spoke Thai exclusively, not even deigning to glance in his direction, as they ordered what seemed to be the whole menu and 3 bottles of Mekong to boot!

Cat didn’t bother to ask Al what he wanted, just plumped one of the myriad plates before him.

“Fantastic!!” he exclaimed, confronted with a plateful of fried grasshoppers, scorpions and maggots.

“No understand,” Cat retorted, immediately resuming her Thai conversation and proceeded to totally ignore him for the rest of the meal, apart from occasional pointed references to *falang*, which he assumed

related to him.

He'd been *falanged*! Not an easy lesson to learn that! In this Land of S-miles, whenever 2 or more Thais are gathered together, non-Thais tend to be relegated to the status of aliens and effectively ignored. Al wasn't ignored when it came to *checkbin* time, though. The bill was duly presented to him and he graciously wrung out several sodden thousand Baht notes to pay for a multitude of half-eaten food as his companions exited stage left, leaving him forlornly to follow in their train.

They all duly trooped back to the hotel where Al, feeling somewhat queasy after his insect medley, was praying for Cat's friends' speedy dispatch so he could retire to bed. Sadly, such relief was not to be. Instead, Al was initiated into another quaint Thai custom – the 5 day card-playing marathon. Between bouts of vomiting, Al vaguely recalled phasing in and out of consciousness over the next few days and each time the assembled multitude were totally engrossed in their card game. He did distinctly remember being asked several times for a thousand Baht, though, to pay for food, whisky and Cat's card debts.

When Cat's friends did eventually depart, Al experienced one more day of unbridled lust, was assured he would be loved eternally and duly promised to deposit 30,000 Baht a month in Cat's bank account. Then it was time to catch the taxi to Bangkok and the flight home.

BARMY'S TALENT

Barmy (so called because she was *ting-tong*) was unusual in that she wasn't emotionally or mentally retarded, unlike many of her friends. They were prone to burst into tears, wailing and rending their hair at the slightest provocation. This would normally have been very off-putting, but then Barmy was ultra-cool. She was so used to it she normally paid little attention to her friends' histrionics. They thought she was as cold as ice, but it bothered Barmy not a jot. In fact, she was rather inordinately proud of it.

Her stoicism was not Barmy's only unusual trait, she could also see ghosts. If she attended a funeral, she not only saw the living, but also the dead, who stood in serried ranks behind them. However, Barmy was not fazed by this gift, she used to take it in her stride. Needless to say, her

friends, at the slightest mention of *pe* (ghost), would freak out in grand fashion, so Barmy had swiftly learnt never to mention such things in front of them.

Unlike the majority of her friends, Barmy didn't work in a bar; she was a 'Gypsy Card' reader. Those in the know would have called them Tarot cards, but then being in the know is not the most pronounced of our Thai hosts' traits. Not until after the age of 27 that is, at least for many Thai females. After that age, they're convinced they know everything and you can't persuade them otherwise. Animus-possessed the syndrome's called.

It's not one of the most endearing of female traits, for Thai females are by no means the only nationality to suffer from an animus complex, as this tendency is called in psychological circles. When any woman displays an animus complex, making authoritative statements in a contemptuous fashion, it's like a red rag to a bull for most men and the cause of many murders of wives and consorts! I'm sure you know the syndrome, especially if you're male. Females, it seems, are not too bothered about it. What really gets their goat, is the masculine display of anima, the opposite trait, which usually takes the form of dark moods in the morning. Thankfully, however, Barmy was neither animus possessed, nor unduly concerned by male anima displays, so those were yet more points in her favour.

Boris, Barmy's long-term boyfriend, was Bosnian and like most men in their late twenties was somewhat of a philanderer, especially living in Pattaya, where, as we aficionados of Sin City know all too well, temptation lurks on every street corner, not to mention the bars! However, after Barmy had given him a card reading, describing in great detail the particulars of the female he had recently short-timed, the bar in question and numerous other salient details, Boris had to think thrice before straying. Frustrating, to say the least, but then Barmy was an exceptional ying, and not one to be treated lightly. Boris also loved her to distraction and the feeling was mutual.

Being a modern-thinking farang, Boris didn't believe in ghosts and lost no opportunity to belittle anyone who did. He would proclaim to all his farang friends how gullible Thais were to believe in such things and they usually agreed, if they ever considered such subjects. Their normal topics of conversation revolved around the attractions or otherwise of females and football teams.

Boris had considered becoming mobile ever since he'd come to Sin