







Mr. Saengchan was travelling with Uncle Chai and four friends to trade buffaloes. On the way a storm blew up. He became ill with diarrhoea, caused by cholera.

His friends travelling with him were afraid they would catch the disease so they left him behind.



They left him lying there,  
with some rice and water  
in containers made from  
banana leaves.





Mr Saengchan died alone under the moonlight. Flocks of vultures flew down and started to devour his body. Crows came and picked at his belly and insides.



His spirit then floated off  
until he met a cart trader.  
He said to the trader:  
“I’m so hungry. I’d like  
a drink of water and  
something to eat. I would  
like to be reborn.”



*I was still a child, two or three years old, but I have always felt I wanted to return to my old home, my home from my previous life.*



When the two arrived in Sakon Nakhon at 11.30 am the guide gave each of them fried rice and a bottle of water.



They both ate their meal  
calmly before being tied  
to execution stakes and  
blindfolded.



They then became victims  
of Field Marshal Sarit  
Dhanarajata's Article 17.





Before the sound of ninety rounds of gunfire rang out, Kru Krong proclaimed: "May dictatorship be destroyed, long live democracy."

*Ghosts will appear under certain conditions, when it is not quite light and not quite dark (at the break of dawn and at twilight).*





At first the dead don't realise that they are dead. When they pinch themselves, it still hurts. They think they still have their bodies; it's just an illusion however, all in the mind.

They walk around, talking normally to people, but no one takes any notice of them, no one can see or hear them.



PRIMITIVE



The night before setting out on the trip, Teem called me from Chiang Mai. He said that earlier that evening it had rained very hard and later, when the rain had stopped, he had cooked a meal. While he was eating, a firefly flew into the room so he switched off the light to watch it. When he looked out over the field beside the house he saw hundreds and thousands of them flying around. Teem said he had never seen so many fireflies before.

When I was with him in Chiang Mai, we stayed in a two-storied wooden house in Mae Rim. There was a fishpond with several species of fish and there were many kinds of trees: bananas, lychees, longans, coconuts and pomelos. There was a kitchen garden with vegetables and herbs. You could just walk out and pick them to make a Tom Yam. In the field next door were four or five thin cows that the villagers kept there. Sometimes in the late evening, we would walk out along the fence to look at the fireflies in the field.

Late that night, as Teem was reading, a firefly flew in and settled on the bed. He caught it and it didn't fly away. It cast its green light onto his hand. I said that it was probably tired after sex. Teem filmed it with a video camera and later edited the tape and set it to music. He emailed me the clip and called it 'The Overtaxed Firefly'.

Every Province we intended to visit in upper Isan (north-east Thailand) was flooded. Many people blamed the giant dam in China, saying it was controlling the water level. The Thai government, always subservient to China, announced that the dam in question was not the reason for the flooding; it was because of the condition of the environment. They admitted though, that there was very little information about the operations in China as the country was not a member of the Mekong River Commission (MRC).

Aunt Jen (an actress who plays regularly in my films such as *Blissfully Yours*, *Syndromes* and a *Century* and other shorts) is travelling with us this time. We plan to take her to visit her birthplace. She had been calling her father regularly at home for several days now. He has been living on the second floor of his house to escape the flooding. "Which step on the stairs is the water up to now?" "Can vehicles enter the village yet?"

We decided anyway to travel to Khon Kaen for several reasons. One of the most important being that the 17th August was the 5th Anniversary of my father's death. At home there was to be a merit making ceremony with offerings to the monks. My mother, who is seventy-six years old but still strong, had been preparing for the occasion for months now. Another reason was Uncle Boonmee. Several years ago the Abbot of Wat Saeng Arun Forest Temple, which was about ten minutes from my home, had given me a small book that he had written called "A Man who Could Recall his Past Lives". It was the true story of Uncle Boonmee who, while meditating at the temple, had been able to recall several of his past lives.

# คนระลึกชาติได้

- เป็นนายพราน - เป็นเปรต
- เป็นกระบือ - เป็นเปรต
- เป็นโค - เป็นนายบุญมี

โดย

พระศรีปริยัติเวที (สมาน ป. 9)

วัดบ้านแสงอรุณ ขอนแก่น

พิมพ์ที่มณฑล

โครงการ “วันธรรมสวนะสังสรรค์”

ณ วัดบ้านแสงอรุณ

วันอังคารที่ 23 สิงหาคม พ.ศ. 2526

คำนำ

วัดป่าแสงอรุณ ไก่รับพิจารณาจากเอกสารทางราชการให้เป็นสถานที่ รวมทำนุ  
ศึกษาทรัพย์สิน ของข้าราชการ พ่อค้าประชาชน นักเรียน นักศึกษา ตามโครงการ  
" วันธรรมสวนะสังสรรค์ " ซึ่งตรงกับวันอังคารที่ 23 สิงหาคม 2526  
นับเป็นอันที่ 4 ในจังหวัดขอนแก่น  
หน่วยงานหลักประจำวัน ได้แก่ อัยการจังหวัด อัยการศาลแขวงจังหวัด การประ-  
ถมศึกษา  
สถานศึกษา ได้แก่ เทคโนโลยีและอาชีวศึกษาวิทยาเขตเทคโนโลยีขอนแก่น โภ  
ษานักงานศึกษาธิการจังหวัดเป็นแกนกลางในการดำเนินงาน  
ทางวัดขอนแก่นมีโครงการดังกล่าวนี้ด้วยใจจริง ทั้งนี้ได้จัดพิมพ์หนังสือ  
คนมีบุญระลึกชาติได้ แจกเป็นที่ระลึกแก่ผู้มาร่วมทำบุญ เป็นส่วนแห่งธรรมทานด้วย หวัง  
จักเป็นประโยชน์แก่ผู้สนใจความสมควร.

พระศรีปริยัติเวที .

สารบัญ

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และได้เกิดเป็นมนุษย์

อายุ 3 ขวบ จึงทวนระลึกชาติหลังแท่งปางก่อนได้

บทเริ่มต้น

เรื่องคนระลึกชาติได้ ส่วนมากไม่ค่อยมีใครบ่งใจเชื่อกันจริงจัง-  
เท่าใดนัก เห็นเป็นเรื่องละเมอเพ้อฝันไร้สาระเสียส่วนมาก เพราะเมื่อ  
ตายแล้วก็ถูกเผาหรือฝังทิ้งเสีย ไม่มีอะไรจะไปเกิดต่อไปอีก

เรื่องดังกล่าวนี้ ผู้ที่มีประสบการณ์และได้ศึกษาค้นคว้าจนถึงแก่นแท้-  
แล้วเท่านั้น จึงจะยอมรับได้ แต่สำหรับผู้มีเหตุผลชอบความเที่ยงธรรม  
จึงไม่นิยมปฏิเสธสิ่งที่ตนยังไม่เห็นและยังไม่ทันคล่องตัวการพิสูจน์ จนเสีย-  
มรรยาทอย่างที่ปรากฏอยู่โดยทั่วไป

ขอให้ท่านได้วางใจเป็นกลางอย่างเที่ยงธรรม ค่อยพิจารณาด้วย-  
สติปัญญา เรื่อง คนระลึกชาติได้ ที่กำลังอ่านอยู่นี้ บางทีอาจเกิดประโยชน์  
ต่อท่านได้บ้าง.

### ปัจจุบันชาติ

นายบุญมี ศรีกุลวงศ์ เกิดเมื่อวันที่ 4 ขึ้น 15 ค่ำ ปีชวด ตรงกับ พ.ศ. 2454 อายุ 72 ปี เป็นบุตรของนายสมศรี นางจอมศรี ศรีกุลวงศ์ พ. บ้านเม็ก พ. บ้านเม็ก อ. บ้านเดื่อ จ. อุตรดิตถ์ มีน้องสาวร่วมมารดาเดียวกันเพียงคนเดียว (แต่ต่างบิดา) ชื่อ นางสุกียังมีชีวิตอยู่ ปัจจุบันอยู่บ้านหนองบัวน้อย ต. นาค่าน อ. สุวรรณหงษ์ จ. อุตรดิตถ์ เมื่ออายุได้ 3 ขวบ มารดาได้พาอพยพจากบ้านเม็ก ไปอยู่บ้านหนองบัวน้อย ในเขตอำเภอหนองบัวลำภู จังหวัดอุตรดิตถ์ ซึ่งเป็นภูมิลำเนาของน้องสาว ในปัจจุบัน

### การศึกษา-อาชีพเบื้องต้น

จบชั้นประถมปีที่ 3 จากโรงเรียนบ้านกุดลิ้ม อำเภอหนองบัวลำภู จังหวัดอุตรดิตถ์ ๓ ปี ๓ เดือน ๓ วัน รับราชการครู เป็นเวลา 3 ปี ที่บ้านหนองบัวน้อย ต. นาค่าน อ. หนองบัวลำภู จ. อุตรดิตถ์

ช่วงระยะหนึ่ง เข้าไปทำงานที่เวียงจันทน์ประเทศลาว ได้รับแต่งตั้งเป็น ตาส่ง (กำนัน) อยู่หลายปี

### การอุปสมบท-การศึกษาทางศาสนา

เมื่อลาออกจากราชการแล้ว เพราะการเจ็บป่วยได้บวชเณรอยู่ 4 ปี ที่วัดบ้านข้าวสาร พระอุปัชฌายะ ชื่อหนู พระครูสาธุชื่อ ขัย และมุข ตามลำดับ สอนได้

ภายหลังกำลังนึกอาวรณ์เข้ามาใกล้อยู่ทุกขณะ และได้ตั้งสัจจอธิษฐานว่า เมื่อสร้างอุโบสถ ที่วัดบ้านเสร็จเรียบร้อยแล้วพร้อมกับการผูกพัทธสีมา จะขอมสละชีวิตอุทิศถวายไว้ต่อ พระพุทธศาสนาอย่างแนบแน่น เรื่องทั้งหมดจะเป็นจริงอย่างไร ขอได้ติดตามข่าวความ เคลื่อนไหวของบุคคลบุญมีบุญ ที่ชื่อว่า บุญมีกันต่อไป.

### อภิศักขาติ

นับย้อนถอยหลังจากปัจจุบันนี้ไปประมาณ 100 ปี นายบุญมีถือกำเนิดเกิดเป็นนาย- พยาน ที่อำเภอเขมราฐ จังหวัดอุตรดิตถ์ เป็นพยานผู้ศักดิ์สิทธิ์ มีคาถาอาคมขลัง เป็นที่เลื่องลือกันทั่วไป เป็นผู้มีความกึ่งใจอันเกิดเกี่ยวกับการสิ่งใด เป็นต้องได้สิ่งนั้น ทุกครั้งไป อาชีพหลัก ออกค่าแรก ยิงช้าง เาขอและงามาขายเลี้ยงชีวิต โดยเริ่มมา ตั้งแต่อายุ 30 ปี กระทั่ง อายุ 60 ปีเศษ

อยู่มาวันหนึ่ง ได้มีหมอกสองข้างถนนหนึ่งมีช้าง 3 เชือก (3 ตัว) ไก่มาชักชวนว่า "นี่หมอพยานข้าพเจ้าได้บังเกิดศัพทของท่านมาช้านาน ท่านมีความรู้ความสามารถ สามารถ เป็นเยี่ยม รู้แหล่งสัตว์ที่อยู่อย่างชุกชุม ข้าพเจ้ามีความสามารถในการคล้องช้าง หาก ท่านกับข้าพเจ้าได้ร่วมมือกัน ในการล่าสัตว์ เาอาจช้างบ้าง เาขอและงาบ้างมาขายแบ่ง ส่วนกัน จะไม่เป็นการถือคอกหรือ อาชีพของเราจะมั่นคง และประสบความสำเร็จอย่าง แนบแน่น"

หลังจากได้ทำความเข้าใจตกลงกันเป็นที่เรียบร้อยแล้ว จึงเตรียมข้าวตอก ข้าวให้



หมอมอาหารแห่งสะเปียงกรังให้เพียงพอกับความต้องการ ประมาณว่า อยู่ได้เดือนหนึ่ง  
ก็พออยู่ได้ให้แล้วน้ำขึ้นในสังขางเตรียมออกเดินทางร่วมกัน กำหนดเอาวันขึ้น

๑๑ ค่ำ เดือน 4 เป็นวันมงคลในการออกเดินทางเป็นปฐม

ทั้งค่ายพักกลางกอง สะมาพันสะมา

หมอพราน หมอล้องช้าง เดินทางรอบแรมบุปผาคงพงไพรลึกเข้าไปเรื่อย ๆ  
ไม่ได้หยุดล่าเนื้อ ล่าสัตว์ที่แห่งใดจนกระทั่งถึงกลางกองใหญ่แห่งหนึ่ง มีชื่อว่า

กองสะมาพันสะมา เป็นกองที่ยืนเข้าไปไม่ค่อยถึง เป็นถิ่นที่อยู่ห่างไกลจากหมู่บ้านเป็น  
อันมาก แม้แต่ผู้มีสิโหร บัณฑิตผู้แสวงหาความสงบ ก็ไม่น่าจะมีในกองแห่งนี้ ชาวอุษาค-  
ษารแห่งสะเปียงกรัง ที่นำติดตัวไป ต้องขังแย่งกันกิน หากกินตามความหิวความอยาก  
ก็ร้องไม่ไ้ดกสับบ้าน ต้องเป็นผีเฝ้าคงแน่ ๆ

สองหมอดึงค่ายพักที่กลางกองนั้น ยึดเอาที่นั้นเป็นศูนย์กลางในการล่าสัตว์ โดย  
และพากันออกไปกันคนละสาย บางครั้งผ่านไปหลายวันจึงกลับเข้าค่ายพัก สำหรับ  
หมอพรานไปตามล่าพื้งมากกว่าที่จะนำเพื่อนไปด้วย แต่สิ่งที่จะลืมเสียไม่ได้ ซึ่งเป็น  
เพื่อนที่ดีที่ซุก คือปืนเพลิง มีคและธนู อาวุธประจำตัว นอกนั้นก็เป็นเครื่องของรักษา  
ตัวซึ่งพรานทุกคนจะต้องมี

พบโขลงช้างใหญ่

หมอพรานจากค่ายพักไปหลายวัน ได้พบโขลงช้างใหญ่ จึงออกติดตามไป

เพื่อจะจับค้าย้างเชือกที่มีงาอันยาวและสวยงามที่สุด กับมีว่าโชคดีมาก หมอพราน  
ก็ใจจนเนื้อเต้น เมื่อเห็นช้างตัวหน้าโขลงมีงาทั้งคู่สวยงามและยาวมากมีปลายโค้งงอขึ้น  
โค้งประมาณ 1 ศอก ความใหญ่ของงาช้าง เวลาเดินดูเหมือนลากดินไป หมอพรานตกตะ-  
ลึงงอกกับตัวเองว่า "โอโฮ่/ช้างอะไรใหญ่โตพิลึก/น่าอัศจรรย์จริง ๆ ตั้งแต่เกิดมาก็เพี-  
ยพบเห็นเป็นครั้งแรก ในเขตแขวงอันกว้างใหญ่ไพศาลนี้ ถึงจะมีตัวเกียวยิ่งใหญ่และ ห่าราคาง  
ต้องเป็นเรือนหมื่น มันต้องเป็นของตัวแน่ "

หมอพรานติดตามโขลงช้างไปห่าง ๆ ได้ 5 วันก็ไม่มีโอกาส เพราะฝูงช้างที่เป็น  
บริวารขึ้นในสุก ประมาณ 30 เชือก ล้วนเป็นช้างหนุ่มกำลังตกมัน แต่ละเชือกมีงาแต่ละ  
ข้างยาวประมาณ 1 ช่วงแขนไม่ยอมหันห่างตัวหัวหน้าโขลงเลย คอยปรนนิบัติมิได้ขาด  
เข้าอารักขาเป็นอย่างดี คอยหาอาหารบำรุงบำเรออยู่ตลอดเวลา โคนไม้ ธอนไม้  
ที่ใกล้ล้มก็กวางหางบ้าน จะต้องถูกกัด ถูกลาก ถูกคัน ออกอย่างเรียบร้อย เพื่อหัวหน้า  
โขลง จะไ้ผ่านไปอย่างสะดวก งาจะไม่ติด

หมอพรานเห็นท่าจะตามไปอีกไม่ไหว สะเปียงทางเริ่มจะหมกลง อึกอ่อนเมื่อยล้า  
เหลือกำลัง พังไม่เห็นว่าจะมีโอกาสเมื่อใด จึงตัดสินใจที่จะทำลายช้างที่เป็นบริวารก่อน  
แล้วเริ่มจะกอบพิธีไสยศาสตร์ ร่ายเวทย์มนต์คาถาขลัง ทำเป็นเคราะห์กำบังตนดีถูกตาม  
วิธีแล้วจึงลงมือใช้อาวุธ ครั้งแรกถล่มร่างได้ 5 เชือก ส่วนช้างบริวารอื่น ๆ ก็พากันบ๊-  
นหันหน้าจนสุดฤทธิ์ วิ่งวุ่นวุ่นไปหมด ครั้งที่สอง ถ่มได้ 3 เชือก ตอนมีช้างที่เป็นบริวาร



บิ๊ว เริ่มมีอาการแตกกัน หันรีหันขวาง แต่ก็ยังไม่ยอมทอดทิ้งผู้เป็นหัวหน้า ส่วน  
 พวกอื่นเกาะกลุ่มกันอยู่ มีอยู่หลายครั้งหลายหน ที่ช่างบิ๊วว เรือคนก็สู้และเสียสละ  
 แสดงว่า โมโหสุดขีด วังบูรพา ขุนวงกระจะเข้าขี้นมอพรานให้ตกลงเสียคสมใจ  
 แล้วมันก็ทำอะไรไม่ได้ มีหน้าจายังถูกหมอพรานมือฉมังยิงจมไปกองกับพื้นอีก 5  
 เรืออย่างน่าเวทนา

ลมพระยาข้างใต้สำเร็จ

เมื่อช่างบิ๊วว ร่นหน่นถูกหมอพรานจมไปหลายเชือก ความรักทั่วหัวกายทำ  
 ให้ช่างบิ๊วว ที่เหลือแตกกันไม่เป็นขบวน หมอพรานโคโกลาตเหมาะ ยกปืนคู่ขึ้น  
 เจาะอย่างเหมาะเหม็ง หับปลายปืนสู่วางอันใหญ่โตของพระยาข้างซึ่งเป็นเป้าหมาย  
 โขงเริ่มคาซึกเจนที่ ชั่วพริบตา ปืนคู่ซึกแตกเสียงดังสนั่นขึ้น (ไขประกอบกับไสย-  
 ลาศร จึงสามารถล้มช่างที่ใหญ่โตได้ทั้งหลายเชือก)

พระยาข้างร้องสั่น เพราะความสะอึกตกใจและความเจ็บปวดอย่างแสนสาหัส  
 พยายามรวบรวมกำลังที่มีอยู่วิ้งหนีสุดขีด แต่ไปไม่ได้ไกลนัก กำลังชาอ่อนลง ทุบติดไป  
 แล้วเพราะลมพัดลง หมอพรานรุ่มมองดูอย่างกระหยิ่มใจ แก่ก็อกสุมเพทเวทนาไม่ได้  
 เมื่อเห็นช่างบิ๊วว ที่ยังเหลืออยู่ส่งเสียงร้องแปรแป้น วิ่งกรูกันเข้าไปถูก ไปลาก  
 ไปมัด ทำอะไรสัก เหมือนจะบอกให้รู้ว่า " แรงใจลูกขึ้นวิ้งหนีไปเถื่อนาย เราจะ  
 ยอมไม่ได้ นายจะต้องไปจากที่นี่ ไปกับพวกข้าพเจ้า นายจะต้องไม่ตาย นายจะ

ต้องอยู่กับพวกข้าพเจ้า ลูกขึ้นเถื่อนาย...ลูกขึ้น " พระยาข้างเลือกให้ท่วมหัว  
 ฟ้าไหลอาบหน้า คืนคืนใจที่เห็นช่างบิ๊ววมีความจงรักภักดีไม่ยอมปล่อยทิ้งในยามคับ  
ขัน เทบอปากขึ้นคล้ายบอกว่า " ฟ้าไม่เสียเถื่อนบิ๊ววของข้าเอ๊ย ข้ารู้ทั่วว่า ข้าไปไม่  
 ไหวแน่ ข้าคงตาย ...ตายเพราะน้ำมือของมนุษย์ตัวน้อย ๆ แต่ใจมันโกลาเลียมเศร้า  
 ทรนเหลือที่สุด มันมีอาวูที่ร้ายกาจมาก พวกเจ้าทำอะไรกับมันได้แน่ อะก็คิดสู้มันเอ  
 ลายเปล่า ๆ ความจริง มันถ่วงการเจตนาข้าเพียงชั่วแวบ พวกเจ้าก็ ให้อภัยมันไป-  
 เอะ อย่าห่วงข้า ข้าจะตายอยู่แล้ว ไปรักษาคุ้มครองบิ๊ววที่เหลือแทนข้า ข้าตายแล้ว  
 เสียดีกว่าที่ข้างทั้งโขลงจะต้องตายไป ไป...รีบหนีไป..."

และแล้วพระยาข้างก็ซัดใจ เพียงเท่านั้น กลุ่มช่างบิ๊วว ทั้งหมดก็แตกเสียงร้อง  
ระหวั่นแปร เหมือนนัดหมายกันไว้ เสียงกึ่งกองกัมปนาทพ่นไหว ประเทืองก้องสะเทือนสะเทียว  
ระหวั่นระหวั่น กระจายก็ปานกันเป็นเสียงร้องแห่งความกริ้วโกรธ...เสียใจ...และจะดังไป  
ตามตัวมัน เพราะเมื่อสิ้นหัวหน้าแล้ว...ความอ่อน...ความรุ่มเย็น...ความกล้าหาญ...  
ความสามัคคี...ก็วังมไต่ในอากาศข้างหน้า และไม่นาน กลุ่มบิ๊วว ก็พรางหายเข้าสู่  
ไม้พุ่ม ปอดยหึ่งร่างของพระยาข้างให้นอนแน่นิ่งอยู่แต่ลำพัง เพราะพวกมันรู้แน่ชัดอยู่ว่า  
มันรออยู่ ผู้ที่จะหยิบยื่นความตายให้แก่พวกมันกำลังแอบซ่อนอยู่ไม่ไกลจากที่นี่มากนัก  
 หมอพรานออกจากที่ซ่อน ปรากฏตัวต่อหน้าพระยาข้างซึ่งนอนสิ้นใจอยู่ พิจารณา  
 ลมพัด รูปร่างพระยาข้างเกือบหมดปัญญา มันเป็นร่างที่ใหญ่โตลึกลับที่มัน น่าสะอึกสัว





7) EXT. THE JUNGLE - EVENING (FLASHBACK)

BOONSONG

Walks in the jungle with a camera in his hand. The cicadas are screaming all over the place.

BOONSONG THE MONKEY GHOST (O.S.)

For several days I searched for that thing in the photo.

BOONSONG

Notices something high above. He quickly takes a photo. The camera flash illuminates the surrounding trees. There is a strange cry from above the tree.

BOONSONG

follows that sound from branch to branch, deeper into the jungle.

The sky turns dark. The jungle is immobile.

BOONSONG THE MONKEY GHOST (O.S.)

I finished a roll of film the next day. Like a hunter who never had the chance to tell his tale, I have never shown anyone this documentation of my discovery. In fact, the film was not even developed. I was immersed in my curiosity about this new species. Days and nights passed while I was hopping from one tree branch to another, communicating. I was, of course, talking about the Monkey Ghost.

HUAY (O.S.)

The Monkey Ghost...

### BOONSONG THE MONKEY GHOST (O.S.)

Yes, the one you heard when you were young. I was lured towards the in-between world of man and nature.

There are two pairs of glowing red eyes moving from tree to tree.

### BOONSONG THE MONKEY GHOST (O.S.)

It was Utopia, closest to that form of happiness you have dreamed of when you see limbs in their perfect form and minds that can move between realms. Your senses are transformed and freed from earthly concerns. At one point, I thought these creatures could have ruled and perfected the world if it hadn't been for the evolution of ordinary monkeys. Of course, I couldn't have experienced this if I hadn't already mated with a Monkey Ghost.

Through the tree leafs and vines, the sun is slowly setting on the horizon. The image slowly becomes darker.

15TH AUGUST 2551

*By the time we arrived in Khon Kaen from Bangkok, it was late evening. We found a place to stay and ate a meal, after which we bathed and rested. Tomorrow Joe plans to go to the Saeng Arun Temple to visit and pay his respects to the Abbot, also to ask for information and bother him with questions about "A Man who Could Recall his Past Lives". On the way here, Joe asked me to record anything that I could remember about my past. I found though that we tend to forget so much, even from our present lives, let alone any past ones.*

*I thought back to my two older brothers who had died when I was a child in Nong Khai. They had died together in a motorcycle accident. Uncle Liam had walked over to fetch me and led me to the two coffins which were still open but covered over with a white cloth. Uncle said to me: "Pull back the cloth and look, child. Don't be afraid, they are your brothers."*

*I opened the coffin on the left first, it was my older brother Triam. His face was very pale and there was cotton wool pushed into his ears and nose. I turned and opened the coffin on the right, it was my brother Dud. His face was all bruised and he had cotton wool in his ears and nose too. I couldn't speak. I had no tears, I couldn't cry.*

*During the cremation ceremony Uncle split open a coconut and poured the coconut juice over my brothers' faces.*

*My Uncle spoke to me so that only I could hear: "I will smear black soot behind your brothers' ear lobes, so that you will know them when they are reborn." Uncle then smeared soot on the left ear of brother Triam and on the right ear of brother Dud, saying: "Always remember now, don't forget."*

*After that, they lit the fire and it swept over the coffins. It was at that moment that I realized my brothers were really dead and that I would never see them again. I don't know where the tears came from then. As fast as I wiped them away, the faster they flowed and would not stop. My tears flowed as the fires burned. Almost everyone had left by now, only close relatives remained, waiting to collect the ashes.*

*From that day on, every time there was a birth in the village, I would go to the house, not just to visit, but to look behind the baby's ears. I did this for several years but I never saw any babies with black ears.*

*I dreamt only once of my older brothers, of brother Triam. I dreamt he was sitting washing clothes under the house. I ran over to him happily and shouted: "Brother Triam is here, Triam is here."*

*Then my brother said to me: "I've only come to wash my clothes and as soon as they are dry I'll be off."*

*I asked after brother Dud and Triam said, "They wouldn't let him come, he tried to sneak off once to visit you but they caught him. I have never tried to escape, so they let me come".*

*Later when I grew up, I moved to study in Korat. I wasn't close to anyone there; I didn't want to get close to anyone. I was quiet and didn't say much, a little introverted. Weekends I would go to the horse race track in the Suranaree Army camp. Sometimes I would bet on the races, sometimes just watch. If Saturday or Sunday fell on a Buddhist holy day there were no races, so I would go to watch the country singing contests instead.*

*There were many young soldiers there but most were lowly draftees. One day a young lance corporal greeted me, I noticed he was an officer so I spoke to him. Normally when the draftees spoke to me I would ignore them, but Lance Corporal Narong Jansuda had a nice appearance and he spoke politely. He was not really handsome but I decided to date him. He was the perfect gentleman. When he spoke, he always used the polite forms. In a few years he would probably be promoted. He had a bright future. When we went out to eat he would pull out the chair for me; when crossing the road or stepping up into the bus he would hold my hand. He seemed to be perfect in every way. I decided that he was the one for me.*

*After finishing higher vocational school I started training as an accountant at the Tara Ying Yuat department store. My love life was going smoothly and my boss was kind-hearted. I took leave and went with Lance Corporal Narong to visit my family.*

*My mother and father were not very impressed with him. Father said to me:*

*"Not this one child, he's not dependable"*

*In my mind I argued with him, how could he not be dependable; he's always so good to me.*

*After arriving back in Korat, Lance Corporal Narong asked me if I would go with him. He was about to be transferred to Ratchaburi. I didn't hesitate. I had finished my studies and I had never done anything to disappoint my parents. So yes, I would go. I resigned my job even though the owner did not want me to leave, but my heart wasn't in it anymore and I had sweet dreams of a happy family.*

*When we arrived in Ratchaburi it was almost mid-day. Relatives rushed off to tell his grandfather. The first words his grandfather said to me were:*

*"So this is Dtid's wife, she is as thin as a kratung heow fish."*

*"What's a kratung heow fish?" I thought, but his family welcomed me warmly. His parents had built the house we went to live in, but they didn't live there themselves. They were working as hired hands cutting sugar cane and were living in another village.*

*I lost my virginity on 15th June 2522. It was on my birthday. I didn't mean for it to be like that, it was just coincidence. I became pregnant soon after. I stayed at home and was looking for something to do. I started to look for extra work. My husband's Uncle recommended that I buy a Singer sewing machine and work patching clothes. But I applied to be a teacher, and taught the handicrafts that I had learnt earlier. When I had free time I used to sew too.*

*It was then my husband started to show his true colours. But I accepted it. A few months after giving birth to our first child, Cherry, Lance Corporal Narong started to beat me. When our child was born, I sold my gold to pay the hospital bills and what was left over I saved in the bank. He beat me and forced me to withdraw the money to give to him. I didn't usually swear but I could not help it then. There was not one of the ten items left that make up the criterion of the perfect gentleman. He was cruel and violent. I couldn't really take it anymore but didn't dare return home. I couldn't face my mother and father and I was ashamed to return, so I put up with it. On the days when he didn't return home my daughter and I slept peacefully. When he did return, however, my child was miserable.*

*Sometimes he would grab my hair and beat my head against the sewing machine until blood covered my face. Sometimes he would use a stick to beat me, sometimes on my head. He was like an animal really. I was so angry with myself, that I had been so stupid. I was beaten, I don't know how many times, until I was terrified and frantic the whole time. When he disappeared for years, we were so happy. We ate our fill and slept soundly. I read my child bedtime stories. I would go to see her on her sports day. I made her a beautiful costume when she was a drum majorette.*

17 AUGUST 2008

*We arrived back in the evening and spoke to the Abbot. He picked up an original version of Uncle Boonmee's book "A Man who Could Recall his Past Lives". It was the oldest version, with no pictures as yet. The edges were frayed, eaten by termites. He was very kind and gave me the book. I promised him though, that when I came back to Khon Kaen again, I would return it together with a copy.*

*He then told us a story of two orbs of light that would float out from the temple chapel. They usually came out at eight in the evening or around ten at night. They would float around the bodhi tree and move along the roof of the temple, lighting up the roof tiles. They would then return to the chapel and sometimes not come out again. At other times, the orbs of light would play with the young novices, who would try to pounce on them, but they were never fast enough. The orbs looked like glass balls, similar to a child's toy. But one day they broke and after that they couldn't move around. So the monks put the glass balls on top of the temple spire.*

*The Abbot also recommended that we make a film, that we follow a wandering monk through the mountain ranges.*

*"You will see things that you didn't know existed in this world."*

19 AUGUST 2008

*In the afternoon we left Khon Kaen and travelled to Udon Thani going on then to Banpue district, to find Uncle Boonmee. It took us about two hours to get to Jampamong village. The surroundings were similar to Chumpae, with green rice fields and mountains in the distance. The clear waters were like a mirror, reflecting the coconut trees. When you stepped out of the car you could feel the silence. It was as if time stood still.*

*We had no house number for Uncle Boonmee so we asked an old man who was shaving bamboo at a house on the roadside. He used to be the village headman so he knew all the villagers who came and went, who was born, and who had died. He insisted that there wasn't anyone called Boonmee Srigulwong living there, nor any of his family. I was surprised because Uncle Boonmee should not be so old, that no one knew him there. Maybe the book contained the wrong information? Did Uncle really exist? Later, we met another old man in his eighties, living a few houses down. He said that he had never heard of Uncle Boonmee either, but he knew an Uncle Saengchan who could recall his past lives.*

*That night we drove back to the town of Udon Thani to stay at the Chareon Hotel. It was a hotel that had belonged to an Aunt of mine, who had since died. It was now run by her children. I hadn't been there for about fifteen years and it brought back memories. The first thing that stir-*



*red up recollections was the smell. It was the very familiar smell of the lift carpet and of rattan furniture. In one corner of the lobby there was a photo of a group of American soldiers. Udon was used a base for the American Army during the Vietnam War. It was the heyday of this hotel. I remember the bar, the discotheque...*

20 AUGUST 2008

*We were about 40 minutes from Udon on the way to Sri Chiang Mai in Nong Khai Province. Out of the car window, the villages were surrounded by water, houses submerged. Furniture rescued from the floodwaters was lying along the roadside.*

22 AUGUST 2008

*I saw something interesting today.*

*More than sixty years ago, Mr. Boonluer (his name translates as 'a surplus of merit'), an estranged kid in a family, had run away from home to Laos. Eighteen years later, he returned home a sort of Buddhist guru. He had spent decades after his return attracting swarms of worshippers, not unlike the Indian Sathya Sai Baba. His charisma captivated the villagers who helped build gigantic concrete monuments to venerate his beliefs. They occupy a vast terrain within a temple Mr. Boonluer founded called Geowgu. These sculptures depict among other things, mythical creatures, angels, and landscapes of heaven and hell. It is a Buddhist - Hindu Disneyland.*

*Inside the main monastery, we saw hundreds of photos of him hung around the walls. On them his eyebrows and lips were painted or drawn in, just like those of a beautiful model. It was here, with these images of his good-looking male followers/companions, that I started to have doubts about the sexuality of this 'venerable' uncle. It was not clarified in the temple booklet. At the end of the hallway, there was a small room full of artificial flowers. At the center, you could see Mr. Boonluer lying there, in a dome-shape throne made of glass, decorated with coloured bits of glass and sparkling lights. His body had not decomposed inside this spaceship coffin, even though it had shrunk considerably.*

*Mr. Boonluer's empire is an unusual place for Thailand, a society where we are taught to follow the norm. The role of creative inventor is not one readily undertaken by ordinary folk let alone by a strange kid from a small province.*

24 AUGUST 2008

*We planned to set out to go to Nabua Village in Renu-nakhon district in Nakhon Phanom. In the field somewhere there is the spot of "siang puen taek" ('exploding guns'), where there occurred the first 'official' battle between the Communist Party of Thailand and Government forces.*

*To go there we had to telephone Mr. Nibondh Saewta-gul, as recommended by a former communist in Bangkok. However, Nibondh was in Mukdahan Province and was on his way to Laos. Nibondh invited us to go with him, arguing that going on an unplanned journey would be very interesting.*

*So we set off for Mukdahan, arranged our border pass, and crossed the Mekong. Within a few minutes, we were in a small town in Laos which we Thai called Suwanakhet. Here, the town's name is changed to Sawanakhet (the meaning is also changed, as it's now translated as Parameter of Heaven). Immediately I thought the sun was hotter here than in Thailand a few moments ago. Even though it was one of the largest sub-districts in the country, it was still a small town. This was Laos however and there was no point in making comparisons. They are not competing with anyone.*

*Nibondh was one of the founders of a local newspaper in Sawanakhet in 1993. Today was like a return home for him. The newspaper office was in a small room where they*

produced the weekly newspaper, 'Sawanpattana' (Developing Heaven). As you cannot criticize or question the authorities, it has become a government mouthpiece. Nibondh seemed to be happy about this state of affairs. "You cannot de-stabilize the country without concrete evidence in the paper," he said.

One interesting thing though: this old building was next door to a cinema. The cinema had once been a flourishing business. The government had organised the showing of Indian, Thai, Chinese and other films. It had been a public utility, run like the electricity and water, until the last decade when video and television became more popular and the cinema declined. It became a hall used for whatever was appropriate. Film projection has become less frequent. The last film to be shown there was Sabai Dee Luang Prabang (Luang Prabang is Fine), a recent Thai-Laos co-production. Luang Prabang used to be the country's capital before communism. The movie is part of a marketing campaign to promote this city as a tourist attraction. The film was popular in both countries, with Thailand's heart-throb male lead playing a photographer and Laos' leading female beauty as a tourist guide. Mr. Lamgnung, the newspaper's administrator (and our driver) said he had been to see the film twice. He said this film was very respectful of Laos. It presented the country in the correct way, just as the government wished.

Nibondh's wife, Nittaya, was from Renunakhon. Her relatives had been members of the Communist Party. She was sent to 'study' in Vientiane with about twenty other Thais. Nittaya was a new name given to her in Laos for

political reasons. The Thai students there were taught with the intention that they would eventually go on to study in Soviet Russia or Eastern Europe. Nittaya was in the medical corps, specializing in acupuncture. She is now an accomplished acupuncture doctor who has cured many patients: "Some were paralysed but now they can walk again."

During dinner, she asked: "If there isn't anyone 'who can recall past lives', would you be interested in someone who can see the future instead?"

"Yes, of course," I said. She then told us about the time she was in Sawanakheth. She often dreamt about something that was about to happen in the future and it would actually come true. She had dreamed about meeting Nibondh before actually meeting him. These predictive dreams usually occurred in the afternoon; she would become very sleepy around 1.30 pm. She would drift away from the outside world to the extent that if you poured cold water over her she would not wake up. The important thing was that she would always dream one day before the lottery.

In her dream she would see a beautiful woman in her twenties wearing old fashioned local dress. The woman would walk up to her and recount numbers to her, telling her which to buy and for how much. Every time she bought these numbers, they came up in the lottery. If she bought more than or less than the amount she was told by the woman, she would lose. When this first happened Nibondh did not believe her, but after it had occurred several times,

he had to, while being unable to find an explanation.

A fortune teller had told them later that the woman in her dream was neither Thai nor Laotian. The spirit had the special name of Bangbot. She said that Nittaya had once been born as the child of Phaya (a royal rank) Bangbot. His empire was no longer in existence. So it turns out that this story also involves former lives.

When Nittaya moved back to Renunakhon she stopped having the dream. The fortune teller told her that there was a ritual she could perform to bring the woman in her dream over into Thailand. I don't know how much it would cost to get a visa! However, Nittaya decided not to bring her over.

There was another story Nittaya told us, telling it as if it were a quite normal occurrence. She said that she could see ghosts, particularly during the time she was in Laos. There were a lot of them there. One was sitting in a canal and another was standing looking at her. She said there was no messy blood like in the movies: they were just much paler than a normal person. There was however one incident that particularly struck her. This was when she saw a foreign ghost standing at the window and suddenly his head just fell off. She stood still, watching him until he disappeared in front of her. A few moments later she heard screams coming from her neighbours. They were shouting: "A headless ghost! A headless ghost!" It was probably an American ghost playing games, trying to start another war.

CONVERSATION BETWEEN MRS. DAMNUAN (NIT-TAYA'S MOTHER), AUNT JEN, APICHATPONG (AW), GOH, AND AKE

25th August 2008, Nabua

**AW:** 'Exploding Guns' - the first time fighting broke out - was in 1965 and one person died?

**MOTHER:** *Forty soldiers together with the police, and they landed a plane. Oh.... the second time they shot down a plane. Those in the jungle shot it down. They were attacking and fighting all around. The soldiers came and stayed here then. Half of them made camp at that school there, the other half were at the temple. When we went to work we had to give them our cards. They searched everything. They were afraid we were delivering supplies.*

**AW:** *How was it then, when the soldiers were living together here with the villagers?*

**MOTHER:** *It left a bad taste in the mouth; it was scary. If they caught anyone they would threaten to hurt us. Two or three of us could not get together and talk. If we gathered together they would take us away. We were dead for sure. There was a troop of soldiers there. When they came to take away my older brother and father, they said this family was communist, er well... yes. At one in the morning they surrounded us and when they captured them, they kicked them. My brother died in Udon. He was beaten and died of his injuries. I had three brothers. They all went into*

*the jungle. If they hadn't gone into the jungle then they would have been killed. They had no choice.*

**AW:** *So what about Nabua, did all the villagers side with the communists or not?*

**Mother:** *No, grandmother in that house over there didn't. She didn't think the communists were trustworthy, but actually the communists were honest. They always condemned the communists saying they were thieves and robbers whose only intention was to hurt us. In reality they weren't thieves. If you gave them food they would eat but if you didn't, nothing happened; they just left. The police and soldiers though, they were brutal. If they came to your house and wanted a chicken, you had to kill one for them, it was like that.*

**AW:** *When you were in the Communist Party? What did you do?.*

**MOTHER:** *We didn't feel like doing anything. We couldn't plant the rice, it was far too troublesome. We were afraid they would take it away to eat. They followed us around all the time.*

**AW:** *How did you help those in the jungle?*

**MOTHER:** *When they came down from the mountains, they would have units in the village and the jungle, they would co-ordinate with them and let us know when they were coming down. We would smuggle rice to them, we did it secretly not openly.*

**AW:** Were you ever afraid that you might be discovered?

**MOTHER:** *Hmm! What can I say...sometimes yes, sometimes no. We could only fight on. In the fear is courage. Had we been afraid, everything would have been ruined but if we stayed strong our lives would be better in the future. My father told me this.*

**AW:** Was it in the 80s, when it became somewhat more peaceful and the soldiers had left?

**MOTHER:** *They were still fighting in 1985 -1986; soldiers were still here. [note: Other sources in Nabua and research documents state that the town had become 'stabilised' around the early 80s - AW] They came every day. At first there was no camp but later they made camp here. It was difficult for us. Many died. They would take us and tell us to fetch a piece of wood. Then at night they would call us out and beat us. If you were a woman, they would take you and rape and abuse you. My brother-in-law was shouted at, "You're a communist, aren't you?"*

*"No sir, I am not" and then: 'Thud!' They beat him. Those sticks were so long and they had thorns.*

**Aunt Jen:** You would confess to accusations because you were tortured?

**MOTHER:** *If they asked whether or not we were communists and you answered: "No. I am not" or "I don't know", you were beaten. But if you admitted you were, you were taken away and killed.*

**AW:** When the soldiers were in control here for over twenty years, was it only in Nabua or elsewhere too?

**MOTHER:** *No. They controlled all of Thailand then in the 60s, but it was not as well known elsewhere as here in Nabua. This was where the 'guns exploded' for the first time. It is an historical place. There was heavy fighting. When they were shooting it would light up the sky. We didn't have anything to eat then. The soldiers surrounded us; they were afraid we would take rice to the communists. The communists were in the mountains then, so the soldiers flew up and down during the day looking for them. They would fire down on us, strafing us, and we would run and hide. There were four planes that were used, until one day a helicopter was shot down by the stream.*

**AW:** Did the authorities come in and take away the helicopter remains?

**MOTHER:** *No they didn't come, we sold it. (Laughing)*

**AW:** When the soldiers were here at that time, what was your daily life like?

**MOTHER:** *We would go out looking for food; work the rice fields and harvest. We were afraid to get up too early. We had to wait until it was daylight before we could cook a meal. When it was four in the evening we ate our meal of rice with fish or frogs, then we would close and lock the doors.*

*The soldiers, police and volunteers would threaten us: "to-*

day we are coming to kill you.” How could we live like that? They would really have killed us. The soldiers came to our neighbours; they walked around the house, shouting and swearing at them, just walking and swearing. The first time they came, they would always be pleasant to us. Sometimes they would disguise themselves as someone crazy. We would look at their fingernails and toenails and know that they weren’t crazy.

Sometimes the soldiers would torture and rape the women; some became pregnant and had children. At Nong Hee they raped two hundred. Men and women were rounded up and thrown into jail together. I did not go. There were three from our village who died. They were beaten to death. I don’t know how many died from the other villages.

**AW:** How come you survived, Mother?

**MOTHER:** Oh ... I don’t know, they would ask me: “have you seen any communists?”, I would say “yes”, er... And that was it. It was as if I was giving them information and they let me pass.

**AW:** After 1986, did the soldiers ever come back here again?

**MOTHER:** They came to our ‘Exploding Guns’ celebration. General Prem Tinsulanond came himself to initiate what he called the ‘Silencing Guns’ celebration. [Gen. Prem visited Nabua as early as 1977 - AW]. Our celebration was on 7th August every year. So they came to arrange their celebration. Paratroopers came. There were a lot of peo-

ple. Before the guns fell silent, General Prem announced: “come in and surrender” from a plane overhead. They said they would give us everything we needed, including land to work. It was only natural then that they came in and surrendered. They were given everything as promised.

**AW:** Has the King ever been to Renunakhon?

**MOTHER:** No, he hasn’t. He has never been here. Oh, not with the history of Renunakhon. As far as I know there are widow ghosts, he couldn’t come here. There are many women here, the men all died. It’s a widows’ village.

**AW:** All the men died?

**MOTHER:** They all died. It was very mysterious.

**AW:** What happened? Why did all the men die?

**MOTHER:** The widow ghosts,... they took them all, boys and infants too. It was because earlier the men had abused and raped the women. When the women died, they swore they would come back for them in every lifetime. The rumour goes that it doesn’t matter how old the males are, they take them all. It’s time to take them now; they said 2007-2008 was the time. This village has ghosts too, what day were you born?

**AW:** Thursday.

**MOTHER:** Hmm... Thursday. Go and buy nail polish, child.



*Paint three nails, your thumb, your middle finger and little finger: red, yellow and dark pink. Paint them before you go to sleep, powder your face too, everyday...your toenails too. Paint them alternate colours. This is for those born on Thursdays.*

**AKE:** *What about Wednesday?*

**MOTHER:** *Dark blue, blue thumb, black on the little finger. In the morning you can clean it off. Just paint them at night, powder your face too.*

**GOH:** *I was born on a Monday.*

**MOTHER:** *Are you married? Mondays are flirtatious, with several wives. They are always charming. The colours are pale pink, olive green and honey. You look fed up with the world. You don't want a family or children, do you? That's because in your former life you had many offspring.*

**GOH:** *I was a dog in my former life?*

**MOTHER:** *A minute ago you said you were twenty-nine years old, didn't you? Be careful, it's an unlucky year. There will be a beautiful girl with a straight nose and bodhi-leaf shaped face.*

**GOH:** *A bodhi leaf? Is that beautiful?*

**MOTHER:** *The girl will come and try to seduce you. Be careful don't sleep with her and don't have sex at all for*

*one year, not until October next year. Goh listens somewhat apprehensively and nods his head determinedly.*

*In the end, I gave up my pride and run away from Lance Corporal Narong. I left my children with my parents in Isan and headed to Bangkok to work as a seamstress. One day during a visit home, my mother said I was to go and stay with her relatives in Bangboo. "I have found you a new job," she said. She had already spoken to them and arranged everything. I wasn't very close to them. He had grown up in Laos and was married to a Laotian woman. He worked as a motorcycle taxi driver in Bangboo, in Samutprakan. After I had been there for about three or four days my sister-in-law, whose name was Pailin, took me to apply for a job as a caddy at Bangboo golf course. She said this was better than most anywhere else. It didn't matter whether or not you were pretty. As long as you were young, they accepted you.*

*There were almost ten others who were applying at the same time as me. They sent two professionals to train us, starting from the first hole up to the eighteenth. We practiced this and practiced that for one week, then we drew lots to choose our number. Mine was 49.*

*My sister-in-law helped me out, buying two outfits for work beforehand. We didn't call each other by our names there; we would remember each other's numbers and call each other by the number. Therefore I couldn't remember anyone's name. In the canteen there were many caddies.*

We would watch TV or sleep, some would crochet or sit around and talk in groups, others would read novels. We did all these things just to kill time. We would wait in the queue to be called and for regular customers. My sister-in-law had regulars so her earnings were stable. Those that didn't have them had to draw lots. At the end of the week, we would draw new lots and hang up the numbers. It had been months and I still hadn't been out on a round. Those who didn't have regular customers would listen enviously when those who did were called out.

One day they announced that they needed a caddy who could speak English. My sister in law pushed me forward,

"Go on, 49".

"But I can't speak English," I protested.

"Oh... just go, go on quickly. Don't you want the money?"

So without hesitating, I hurried off quickly. My heart was beating wildly. What would they want me to do? The pro was waiting there. He said to go fetch folding chairs and umbrellas to keep off the sun and that we were to take good care of the golfers, as they were quite old and were guests of the owner. There was another caddy to carry the golf bags and it was my job to walk along holding the umbrellas for them. I would put out the chairs for them to rest while they were waiting. I only needed to say three words of English: "sit down please" again and again.

They played nine holes so I received 100 baht (3 USD).

Each caddy per person, would receive 150 baht (4.50 USD) for eighteen holes. You were given coupons that you exchanged for money at the end of the week. Every day was just waiting and waiting.

When my children were older they came to study in Bangkok. Namfon, my daughter, had a friend Angie, who was half English but whose parents were no longer together. Angie would earn extra money by working as an extra on TV shows. She persuaded my daughter to enter into this field too. Angie took Namfon to apply for work with an agent. I went along too and ended up unintentionally applying as well.

"Come on Mum, you get 120 baht, it won't take long; it's a handclapping show."

Whatever a handclapping show was, I would go to see. So for the first time I went along with them. There were quite a lot of people there, of all ages. We sat down waiting and when it was time, they came out and called us inside. The air conditioning was very cold... We sat in rows on stands, like you would in a sports stadium. The regular actors on the show would come out and perform and we would clap and laugh and look as if we were enjoying the show. So this was what a hand-clapping show was. It wasn't for long and they gave us a packed lunch too. When it was over, we came out and waited for them to check our names, pay us and then we went home.

I don't enjoy the TV shows now when I watch them, not after I had been to the shows and pretended to laugh and

enjoy them. After that I got parts in soap operas, but only scripted parts so that you didn't waste too much time. It was then that I started to recognise the quite distinct grades between the actors and the extras. I knew we couldn't really compare ourselves to the actors, but even the workers on the sets would talk down to you. When we would break for a meal, we were herded like cattle to a specific spot. You couldn't go here, you couldn't go there, that was for the actors, you couldn't eat that, it was for actors only. At first it annoyed me so much that I would buy my own meals. Those with little money however had to put up with the situation. Anyway, it was far better than working on a construction site.

You were taken much better care of when working on an advertisement. They had drinks, tea and coffee. You didn't need to work long; it was finished in a couple of days. Everyone wanted to work on advertisements.

Once, a friend of mine called Huay and I were cast to play in an advert. We travelled together with several other actors the day before the shooting. We stayed at the Aranyaprathaet Hotel near Poipet, Cambodia. I slept in the same room as Huay. We ate at a small food shop near the hotel. The next day we went out to the film set. It was in Prasart (stone temple) Sadok Gok Thom. The villagers there were to play in the scenes and the atmosphere was busy and bustling. The villagers were very nice and played in their scenes better than professional actors.

It was an exciting place. There were soldiers stationed

nearby who were there for our convenience and protection. They would not let us walk wherever we wished because there were still many unexploded landmines buried in the area. No-one dared wander off too far.

The filming was fun. A famous DJ was the star in the advert, which was for a GSM 1900 mobile phone or something like that. We were paid well.

For the next job, the agent sent me to work on an advert for monosodium glutamate. That was fun. The Burmese lady who was handling this particular job spoke English really well. I was very impressed and I liked to listen to her talking.

The scene was set up like a small weekly market with people walking around shopping in the market. After lunch it was a new scene. We women changed into Burmese dress. They chose six of us. We each held a bag of monosodium glutamate and said: "jamadolay Ajinomoto dongpadey". The actor to the side would smile and hold out a bag of MSG at arm's length. I didn't know what it meant but we had to repeat it several times, over and over all day. The director would say: "That was good, that last time was very good, but just one more time please." The directors before this one said the same thing. So let me tell you, I have been on TV in Burma!

15 AUGUST 2008

*The morning before we left to go to Khon Kaen, which was about 450 kilometres away. We had arranged to meet Ajarn (teacher) Ratchata at the office.*

*Ajarn Ratchata is one of those people whom we had determined could take the people of Isan on a journey into their minds. From our telephone conversation we knew he was a person of strong beliefs. (He had once participated in the burning of the NBT, National Broadcasting Service of Thailand). He had since evolved into a 'professor of hypnotism' and was now a source of comfort and support to those who were broken hearted, addicted to cigarettes, those who wanted to slim down or whose muscles were not working, also those who were stressed and wanted to commit suicide and many others. Today it was the turn of a filmmaker.*

*Ajarn introduced himself by handing me a CD with a video clip. It featured Ajarn talking with 'patients' before and after a hypnotism session. There was one interesting girl who was broken hearted and crying bitterly. We watched her on the screen as she changed for the better. Ajarn commented that at one point she could see into her past. At one stage she was even going back to the time when she was in her mother's womb. (On the screen, she was curled up like a baby on the sofa.) She saw back to when she had been born gay and had fallen hopelessly in love with a*

*young man in Bulgaria and had loved him so much that she had been willing to let him strangle her to death. In another life she had been born a servant, with no freedom, and was often beaten.*

*She was just one of many examples of how, when people looked back into their past, they could solve their problems in the present. She said to camera that she understood life much better now, that the whole idea of 'self' was not important, it was ephemeral, it was just part of our eternal suffering.*

*Ajarn then told a strange story about how he had hypnotized people who would then visit different worlds far away. They witnessed strange things and beings on other planets that ate metal and spoke strange languages.*

*Ajarn said it wasn't possible to know whether or not these things were true, but what was real was that these people did go there.*

That night it rained hard, the lights shorted and blinked. The lid of the electricity box on the fence had been broken off and stolen. Now the fence was not working properly. There are robberies in this street regularly. Not long ago, everything was stolen from a house on the corner about four houses away.

That night I received an email from an actress who had played in my film *Wordly Desires*. She had followed her husband, an elderly Italian, to Sweden. ("Even though he is old, he is handsome," is what she said.) She was now learning both English and Svenska. She had just been to see her husband hunting at his summerhouse. She had prayed that his shots would miss, but in fact it was just the opposite because he came back with animals each time.

She wrote her last email at midnight and ended it with "good night and good morning".

There is an old cinema in Nong Khai called Phet Siam (Siamese Diamond). At the moment it is full of stray dogs. They have made their homes in different corners of the building. The cinema survived the floods there; it was like a heavenly island in the middle of town.





















































Mr. Saengchan's story was recounted by his wife,  
Mrs. Aiy at Udon Thani, 19 August 2008.

Field Marshal Sarit Dhanarajata (1908-1963) served  
as Thailand's prime minister from 1959-1963.

He was known for his economic development  
and social welfare policies, especially in the northeast.  
He's also known as one of the most repressive, corrupt  
and authoritarian leaders in Thai history.

Strict press censorship was imposed and a score  
of Thailand's leftists were executed during his regime  
in the name of national security and his "Thai" ideology.

Diary by Jenjira Jansuda (Pongpas)  
and Apichatpong Weerasethakul

The book of *A Man who Could Recall His Past Lives*  
kindly provided by Phra Thammadolik (Saman Sumetho)

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YEAR II · FIRST ISSUE

# Apichatpong Weerasethakul PRIMITIVE

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The *PRIMITIVE* project is a multi-platform work made of the art installation *Primitive*, two short films, *A Letter to Uncle Boonmee* and *Phantoms of Nabua*, a feature film *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives* and *CUJO*. It is centred on Apichatpong Weerasethakul's researches, collaborations and work created in the village of Nabua and the province of Isan in the north-east of Thailand.

The installation *Primitive* was presented at

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