



Arrival at Don Muang at 9am. I was up at 2:45am in Medan to catch the flight. A train ride from Medan to Kuala Namu at 3:30am. A 2-hr flight to Don Muang. A bus trip across Bangkok awaits me to get to Suvarnabhumi. I know the hotel won't let me check in that early, so I'm in no rush. And I want real Tom Yum and Som Tum for breakfast, zero shits given. There's a food court at the end of the small, regional airport and it's full of airport employees having breakfast before work. Perfect, food must be good or they would be somewhere else.

An old guy walks up to me: a wormy Murican, mid-sixties, with a field jacket and cap on, like he just hiked out of the jungle. A bit goofy, a bit weird, he asks me if he needs coupons to purchase food. Yes, I say, go get them over there. I am at the very far end of the food court from the entry, I realize he came to ask me because I am also the only Caucasian in the entire joint. Whatever. I grab my Tom Sum and rock on.

Five minutes later, he sits down across from me without asking if he can join me. I am really not in the mood for discussion. I am sitting next to a group of women who work at Air Asia and perfectly content in the non-comprehension of their laughing and joyful sing-song Thai.

“So, where were you visiting in Thailand? You backpacking?” I look like a backpacker, so that question is understandable.

“No,” I reply, “I’ve been out in Sumatra for months, I need to go back to Cali for a month, and my ticket is routed via BKK.” End of discussion. I want him to go away. There is nothing interesting about him. But that’s not gonna happen...

“Well, I’ve been living in Pattaya for two years – “

“What? Since you retired?”

“Yeah.”

“Oh. That’s unique.” Laugh under my breath. Air Asia women tune in to the conversation.

“Yeah, I really like the place because the girls in the bars are so nice to me.”

“Of course they are. They are paid to be nice to you.” Air Asia women giggle.

“Yeah, so I went to the Philippines to go check that out, because I’d heard the girls were really nice there, too. But they are way too conservative –“

“Well, they are staunchly Catholic...”

“So I’m in this bar in Boracay and there’s 5 girls at a table (O really?) and one really likes me (O really?). So, as I was leaving, I kissed the top off her hand and she pulled it back. Way too square for me. What’s wrong with those girls? I was being gallant.” There is not one aspect of this man that is gallant, all said.

“O really?”

“Yeah, she said that public displays of affection are highly condemned in the Philippines.”

“Exactly. That’s the case across most of Asia, by the way. After two years here, you didn’t get that one? Maybe not in Pattaya, but Pattaya is the cesspool-armpit of the universe, which is maybe why you like it so much. Did you understand that those 5 girls weren’t just sitting alone in a bar in Boracay? There was a pimp somewhere watching and you’re lucky he didn’t charge you for a night of services for that kiss on the hand. You get that, right? You touched her.”

“I was just being polite.”

“No, you weren’t. You were just getting in the way of their business if you’re eating up their time at the bar and don’t pay for the kill. It’s rude and obnoxious of you. After two years, you must’ve understood the rules, right? Do you speak any local language? If you answer “Sawadee,” I might punch you. I’m already tired and you’re tiring me more.” Air Asia girls laugh out loud.

“What do you do in Sumatra?” Him to me.

“I’m a writer, and this conversation is not escaping me,” I answer.

“How long have you been in Asia?”

“Long enough to know better. What are you doing in the sexual tourism epicenters of SE Asia? Wait – don’t answer that question...”



“I came here looking for companionship, mostly.”



“Have you found it?”

“No. These girls are so hard.”

“They need to be. That’s their job until they find someone with the resources and stability to take them away from it,

and trust me, they have their choice. Sounds like you don't have the cash flow to viably support one of them and their families and they know it. It's not you choosing them. Don't be fooled."

"I'm just looking for female companionship."

"Well, you're looking in all the wrong places, as far as I can see. Why couldn't you find that at home where you speak the same first language and share the same culture? THAT is the question you need to ask yourself. Did you think it would be easier here? Why? You're a deer caught in the headlights in Thailand with that old penis of yours and your supply of African black fly. Why don't you go looking for companionship in Chiang Mai? Go find one of the beautiful country women before they get sold into the city mill and spare her the pain? You do know how that works after two years here, right? She won't speak English like the city girls do, but it would appear you don't have much to say, so that should be fine." Air Asia women chuckle into their hands.

"Where is Chiang Mai?" he asks. The Air Asia women laugh so hard the rice porridge hits their noses. They grab for napkins. I look to them for support. I have it.

"Can we end this discussion? I didn't invite you to sit down, and you didn't ask to sit down. You have nothing to say that interests me. Can you go away so we girls can finish our brekkie in peace?"

"Yeah. I don't want to be sitting here with you anymore."

"Yeah. That doesn't amaze me. Best of luck with your endeavors."



As soon as his presence evaporated, the conversation between the Air Asia women and me was all-time, hysterical-laughter women-talk. I won't divulge the contents.

