

# SIGHTSEEING

*Stories*

*Rattawut Lapcharoensap*



VIKING  
CANADA

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For my mother,  
Siriwan Sriboonyapirat

## FARANGS

This is how we count the days. June: the Germans come to the Island—football cleats, big T-shirts, thick tongues—speaking like spitting. July: the Italians, the French, the British, the Americans. The Italians like pad thai, its affinity with spaghetti. They like light fabrics, sunglasses, leather sandals. The French like plump girls, rambutans, disco music, baring their breasts. The British are here to work on their pasty complexions, their penchant for hashish. Americans are the fattest, the stingiest of the bunch. They may pretend to like pad thai or grilled prawns or the occasional curry, but twice a week they need their culinary comforts, their hamburgers and their pizzas. They're also the worst drunks. Never get too close to a drunk American. August brings the Japanese. Stay close to them. Never underestimate the power of the yen. Everything's cheap with imperial monies in hand and they're too polite to bargain. By the end of August, when the monsoon starts to blow, they're all consorting, slapping each other's backs, slipping each other drugs, sleeping with each other, sipping their liquor under the pink lights of the Island's bars. By September they've all deserted, leaving the Island to the Aussies and

the Chinese, who are so omnipresent one need not mention them at all.

Ma says, "Pussy and elephants. That's all these people want." She always says this in August, at the season's peak, when she's tired of farangs running all over the Island, tired of finding used condoms in the motel's rooms, tired of guests complaining to her in five languages. She turns to me and says, "You give them history, temples, pagodas, traditional dance, floating markets, seafood curry, tapioca desserts, silk-weaving cooperatives, but all they really want is to ride some hulking gray beast like a bunch of wildmen and to pant over girls and to lie there half-dead getting skin cancer on the beach during the time in between."

We're having a late lunch, watching television in the motel office. The Island Network is showing *Rambo: First Blood Part II* again. Sylvester Stallone, dubbed in Thai, mows down an entire VC regiment with a bow and arrow. I tell Ma I've just met a girl. "It might be love," I say. "It might be real love, Ma. Like Romeo and Juliet love."

Ma turns off the television just as John Rambo flies a chopper to safety.

She tells me it's just my hormones. She sighs and says, "Oh no, not again. Don't be so naïve," she says. "I didn't raise you to be stupid. Are you bonking one of the guests? You better not be bonking one of the guests. Because if you are, if you're bonking one of the guests, we're going to have to bleed the pig. Remember, luk, we have an agreement."

I tell her she's being xenophobic. I tell her things are different this time. But Ma just licks her lips and says once more that if I'm bonking one of the guests, I can look forward to eating Clint Eastwood curry in the near future. Ma's always talking about killing my pig. And though I know she's just teasing, she says it with such zeal and a peculiar glint in her eyes that I run out to the pen to check on the swine.

I knew it was love when Clint Eastwood sniffed her crotch earlier that morning and the girl didn't scream or jump out of the sand or swat the pig like some of the other girls do. She merely lay there, snout in crotch, smiling that angelic smile, like it was the most natural thing in the world, running a hand over the fuzz of Clint Eastwood's head like he was some pink and docile dog, and said, giggling, "Why hello, oh my, what a nice surprise, you're quite a beast, aren't you?"

I'd been combing the motel beachfront for trash when I looked up from my morning chore and noticed Clint Eastwood sniffing his new friend. An American: Her Budweiser bikini told me so. I apologized from a distance, called the pig over, but the girl said it was okay, it was fine, the pig could stay as long as he liked. She called me over and said I could do the same.

I told her the pig's name.

"That's adorable," she said, laughing.

"He's the best," I said. "*Dirty Harry. Fistful of Dollars. The Outlaw Josey Wales. The Good, the Bad and the Ugly.*"

"He's a very good actor."

"Yes. Mister Eastwood is a first-class thespian."

Clint Eastwood trotted into the ocean for his morning bath then, leaving us alone, side-by-side in the sand. I looked to make sure Ma wasn't watching me from the office window. I explained how Clint Eastwood loves the ocean at low tide, the wet sand like a three-kilometer trough of mud. The girl sat up on her elbows, watched the pig, a waterlogged copy of *The Portrait of a Lady* at her side. She'd just gone for a swim and the beads of water on her navel seemed so close that for a moment I thought I might faint if I did not look away.

"I'm Elizabeth. Lizzie."

"Nice to meet you, Miss Elizabeth," I said. "I like your bikini."

She threw back her head and laughed. I admired the shine of her tiny, perfectly even rows of teeth, the gleam of that soft, rose-colored tongue quivering between them like the meat of some magnificent mussel.

"Oh my," she said, closing that mouth, gesturing with her chin. "I think your pig is drowning."

Clint Eastwood was rolling around where the ocean meets the sand, chasing receding waves, running away from oncoming ones. It's a game he plays every morning, scampering back and forth across the water's edge, and he snorted happily every time the waves knocked him into the foam.

"He's not drowning," I said. "He's swimming."

"I didn't know pigs could swim."

"Clint Eastwood can."

She smiled, a close-mouthed grin, admiring my pig at play, and I would've given anything in the world to see her tongue again, to reach out and sink my fingers into the hollows of her collarbone, to stare at that damp, beautiful navel all day long.

"I have an idea, Miss Elizabeth," I said, getting up, brushing the sand from the seat of my shorts. "This may seem rather presumptuous, but would you like to go for an elephant ride with me today?"

Ma doesn't want me bonking a farang because once, long ago, she had bonked a farang herself, against the wishes of her own parents, and all she got for her trouble was a broken heart and me in return. The farang was a man known to me only as Sergeant Marshall Henderson. I remember the Sergeant well, if only because he insisted I call him by his military rank.

"Not Daddy," I remember him saying in English, my first and only language at the time. "Sergeant. Sergeant Henderson. Sergeant Marshall. Remember you're a soldier now, boy. A spy for Uncle Sam's army."

And during those early years—before he went back to America, promising to send for us—the Sergeant and I would go on imaginary missions together, navigating our way through the thicket of farangs lazing on the beach.



"Private," he'd yell after me. "I don't have a good feeling about this, Private. This place gives me the creeps. We should radio for reinforcements. It could be an ambush."

"Let 'em come, Sergeant! We can take 'em!" I would squeal, crawling through the sand with a large stick in hand, eyes trained on the enemy. "Those gooks'll be sorry they ever showed their ugly faces."

One day, the three of us went to the fresh market by the Island's southern pier. I saw a litter of pigs there, six of them squeezed into a small cardboard box amidst the loud thudding of butchers' knives. I remember thinking of the little piglets I'd seen skewered and roasting over an open fire outside many of the Island's fancier restaurants.

I began to cry.

"What's wrong, Private?"

"I don't know."

"A soldier," the Sergeant grunted, "never cries."

"They just piggies," Ma laughed, bending to pat me on the back. Because of our plans to move to California, Ma was learning English at the time. She hasn't spoken a word of English to me since. "What piggies say, luk? What they say? Piggies say oink-oink. No cry, luk. No cry. Oink-oink is yummy-yummy."

A few days later, the Sergeant walked into my bedroom with something wriggling beneath his T-shirt. He sat down on the bed beside me. I remember the mattress sinking with his weight, the chirping of some desperate bird struggling in his belly.

"Congratulations, Private," the Sergeant whispered through the dark, holding out a young and frightened Clint Eastwood in one of his large, chapped hands. "You're a CO now. A commanding officer. From now on, you'll be responsible for the welfare of this recruit."

I stared at him dumbfounded, took the pig into my arms.

"Happy birthday, kiddo."

And shortly before the Sergeant left us, before Ma took over the motel from her parents, before she ever forbade me from speaking the Sergeant's language except to assist the motel's guests, before I knew what "bastard" or "mongrel" or "slut" or "whore" meant in any language, there was an evening when I walked into the ocean with Clint Eastwood—I was teaching him how to swim—and when I looked back to shore I saw my mother sitting between the Sergeant's legs in the sand, the sun a bright red orb on the crest of the mountains behind them. They spoke without looking at each other, my mother reaching back to hook an arm around his neck, while my piglet thrashed in the sea foam.

"Ma," I asked a few years later, "you think the Sergeant will ever send for us?"

"It's best, luk," Ma said in Thai, "if you never mention his name again. It gives me a headache."

After I finished combing the beach for trash, put Clint Eastwood back in his pen, Lizzie and I went up the mountain on my motor-

cycle to Surachai's house, where his uncle Mongkhon ran an elephant-trekking business. MR. MONGKHON'S JUNGLE SAFARI, a painted sign declared in their driveway. COME EXPERIENCE THE NATURAL BEAUTY OF FOREST WITH THE AMAZING VIEW OF OCEAN AND SPLENDID HORIZON FROM ELEPHANT'S BACK! I'd informed Uncle Mongkhon once that his sign was grammatically incorrect and that I'd lend him my expertise for a small fee, but he just laughed and said farangs preferred it just the way it was, thank you very much, they thought it was charming, and did I really think I was the only huakhuai who knew English on this godforsaken Island? During the war in Vietnam, before he started the business, Uncle Mongkhon had worked at an airbase on the mainland dishing lunch to American soldiers.

From where Lizzie and I stood, we could see the gray backs of two bulls peeking over the roof of their one-story house. Uncle Mongkhon used to have a corral full of elephants before the people at Monopolated Elephant Tours came to the Island and started underpricing the competition, monopolizing mountain-pass tariffs, and staking their claim upon farangs at hotels three stars and up—doing, in short, what they had done on so many other islands like ours. MET was putting Uncle Mongkhon out of business, and in the end he was forced to sell several elephants to logging companies on the mainland. Where there had once been eight elephants roaming the wide corral, now there were only two—Yai and Noi—aging bulls with ulcerated bellies and flaccid trunks that hung limply between their crusty forelegs.

"Oh, wow," Lizzie said. "Are those actual elephants?"

I nodded.

"They're so huge."

She clapped a few times, laughing.

"Huge!" she said again, jumping up and down. She turned to me and smiled.

Surachai was lifting weights in the yard, a barbell in each hand. Uncle Mongkhon sat on the porch bare-chested, smoking a cigarette. When Surachai saw Lizzie standing there in her bikini, his arms went limp. For a second I was afraid he might drop the weights on his feet.

"Where'd you find this one?" he said in Thai, smirking, walking toward us.

"Boy," Uncle Mongkhon yelled from the porch, also in Thai. "You irritate me. Tell that girl to put on some clothes. You know damn well I don't let bikinis ride. This is a respectable establishment. We have rules."

"What are they saying?" Lizzie asked. Farangs get nervous when you carry on a conversation they can't understand.

"They just want to know if we need one elephant or two."

"Let's just get one." Lizzie smiled, reaching out to take my hand. "Let's ride one together." I held my breath. Her hand shot bright, surprising comets of heat up my arm. I wanted to yank my hand away even as I longed to stand there forever with our sweaty palms folded together. I heard the voice of Surachai's mother coming from inside the house, the light sizzle of a frying pan.

"It's nothing, Maew," Uncle Mongkhon yelled back to his sister inside. "Though I wouldn't come out here unless you like nudie shows. The mongrel's here with another member of his international harem."

"These are my friends," I said to Lizzie. "This is Surachai."

"How do you do," Surachai said in English, shaking her hand, looking at me all the while.

"I'm fine, thank you." Lizzie chuckled. "Nice to meet you."

"Yes yes yes," Surachai said, grinning like a fool. "Honor to meet you, madam. It will make me very gratified to let you ride my elephants. Very gratified. Because he"—Surachai patted me on the back now—"he my handsome soulmate. My best man."

Surachai beamed proudly at me. I'd taught him that word: "soulmate."

"You're married?" Lizzie asked. Surachai laughed hysterically, uncomprehendingly, widening his eyes at me for help.

"He's not," I said. "He meant to say 'best friend.'"

"Yes yes," Surachai said, nodding. "Best friend."

"You listening to me, boy?" Uncle Mongkhon got up from the porch and walked toward us. "Bikinis don't ride. It scares the animals."

"Sawatdee, Uncle," I said, greeting him with a wai, bending my head extra low for effect; but he slapped me on the head with a forehand when I came up.

"Tell the girl to put on some clothes," Uncle Mongkhon growled. "It's unholy."

"Aw, Uncle," I pleaded. "We didn't bring any with us."

"Need I remind you, boy, that the elephant is our national symbol? Sometimes I think your stubborn farang half keeps you from understanding this. You should be ashamed of yourself. I would tell your ma if it wouldn't break her heart.

"What if I went to her country and rode a bald eagle in my underwear, huh?" he continued, pointing at Lizzie. "How would she like it? Ask her, will you?"

"What's he saying?" Lizzie whispered in my ear.

"Ha ha ha," Surachai interjected, gesticulating wildly. "Everything okay, madam. Don't worry, be happy. My uncle, he just say elephants very terrified of your breasts."

"You should've told me to put on some clothes." Lizzie turned to me, frowning, letting go of my hand.

"It's really not a problem," I said, laughing.

"No," Uncle Mongkhon said to Lizzie in English. "Not a big problem, madam. Just a small one."

In the end, I took off my T-shirt and gave it to Lizzie. As we made our way toward the corral, I caught her grinning at the sight of my bare torso. Though I had been spending time at the new public gym by the pier, I felt some of that old adolescent embarrassment returning again. I casually flexed my muscles in the postures I'd practiced before my bedroom mirror so Lizzie could see my body not as the soft, skinny thing that it was, but as a pillar of strength and stamina.



When we came upon the gates of the elephant corral, Lizzie took my hand again. I turned to smile at her and she seemed, at that moment, some ethereal angel come from heaven to save me, an angel whose breasts left round, dark damp spots on my T-shirt. And when we mounted the elephant Yai, the beast rising quickly to his feet, Lizzie squealed and wrapped her arms so tightly around my bare waist that I would've gladly forfeited breathing for the rest of my life.

Under that jungle canopy, climbing up the mountainside on Yai's back, I told her about Sergeant Henderson, the motel, Ma, Clint Eastwood. She told me about her Ohio childhood, the New York City skyline, NASCAR, TJ Maxx, the drinking habits of American teenagers. I told her about Pamela, my last American girlfriend, and how she promised me her heart but never answered any of my letters. Lizzie nodded sympathetically and told me about her bastard boyfriend Hunter, whom she'd left last night at their hotel on the other side of the Island after finding him in the arms of a young prostitute. "That fucker," she said. "That whore." I told Lizzie she should forget about him, she deserved better, and besides Hunter was a stupid name anyway, and we both shook our heads and laughed at how poorly our lovers had behaved.

We came upon a scenic overlook. The sea rippled before us like a giant blue bedspread. I decided to give Yai a rest. He sat down gratefully on his haunches. For a minute Lizzie and I just sat there on the elephant's back looking out at the ocean, the wind blowing through the trees behind us. Yai was

winded from the climb; we rose and fell with his heavy breaths. I told Lizzie about how the Sergeant and my mother used to stand on the beach, point east, and tell me that if I looked hard enough I might be able to catch a glimpse of the California coast rising out of the Pacific horizon. I pointed to Ma's motel below, the twelve bungalows like tiny insects on a golden shoreline. It's amazing, I told Lizzie, how small my life looks from such a height.

Lizzie hummed contentedly. Then she stood up on Yai's back.

"Here's your shirt," she said, tossing it at me.

With a quick sweeping motion, Lizzie took off her bikini top. Then she peeled off her bikini bottom. And then there she was—my American angel—naked on the back of Uncle Mongkhon's decrepit elephant.

"Your country is so hot," she said, smiling, crawling toward me on all fours. Yai made a low moan and shifted beneath us.

"Yes, it is," I said, pretending to study the horizon, rubbing Yai's parched, gray back.

After *Rambo*, lunch with my mother, and a brief afternoon nap, I walk out the door to meet Lizzie at the restaurant when Ma asks me what I'm all dressed up for.

"What do you mean?" I ask innocently, and Ma says, "What do I mean? Am I your mother? Are you my son? Are



those black pants? Is that a button-down shirt? Is that the silk tie I bought for your birthday?"

She sniffs my head.

"And is that my nice mousse in your hair? And why," she asks, "do you smell like an elephant?"

I just stand there blinking at her questions.

"Don't think I don't know," she says finally. "I saw you, luk. I saw you on your motorcycle with that farang slut in her bikini."

I laugh and tell her I have hair mousse of my own. But Ma's still yelling at me when I go to the pen to fetch Clint Eastwood.

"Remember whose son you are," she says through the day's last light, standing in the office doorway with her arms akimbo. "Remember who raised you all these years."

"What are you talking about, Ma?"

"Why do you insist, luk, on chasing after these farangs?"

"You're being silly, Ma. It's just love. It's not a crime."

"I don't think," Ma says, "that I'm the silly one here, luk. I'm not the one taking my pet pig out to dinner just because some farang thinks it's cute."

I make my way down the beach with Clint Eastwood toward the lights of the restaurant. It's an outdoor establishment with low candlelit tables set in the sand and a large pit that the bare-chested chefs use to grill the day's catch. The restaurant's quite

popular with the farangs. Wind at their backs, sand at their feet, night sky above, eating by the light of the moon and the stars. It's romantic, I suppose. Although I'm hesitant to spend so much money on what Ma calls second-rate seafood in a third-rate atmosphere, Lizzie suggested we meet there for dinner tonight, so who am I to argue with love's demands?

When we get to the restaurant, Lizzie's seated at one of the tables, candlelight flickering on her face. Clint Eastwood races ahead and nuzzles his snout in her lap, but Lizzie's face doesn't light up the way it did this morning. The other customers turn around in their seats to look at Clint Eastwood, and Lizzie seems embarrassed to be the object of his affections.

"Hi," she says when I get to the table, lighting a cigarette.

I kiss one of her hands, sit down beside her. I tell Clint Eastwood to stay. He lies down on his belly in the sand, head resting between his stubby feet. The sun is setting behind us, rays flickering across the plane of the sea, and I think I'm starting to understand why farangs come such a long way to get to the Island, why they travel so far to come to my home.

"Beautiful evening," I say, fingering the knot of my tie.

Lizzie nods absentmindedly.

"Is there something wrong?" I finally ask, after the waiter takes out order in English. "Have I done anything to offend you?"

Lizzie sighs, stubs out her cigarette in the bamboo ashtray.

"Nothing's wrong," she says. "Nothing at all."

But when our food arrives, Lizzie barely touches it. She keeps passing Clint Eastwood pieces of her sautéed prawns. Clint Eastwood gobbles them up gratefully. At least he's enjoying the meal, I think. On weekend nights, I often bring Clint Eastwood to this restaurant, after the tables have been stowed away, and he usually has to fight with the strays that descend on the beach for leftovers farangs leave in their wake: crab shells, fish bones, prawn husks.

"Something's wrong," I say. "You're not happy."

She lights another cigarette, blows a cloud of smoke.

"Hunter's here," she says finally, looking out at the darkening ocean.

"Your ex-boyfriend?"

"No," she says. "My boyfriend. He's here."

"Here?"

"Don't turn around. He's sitting right behind us with his friends."

At that moment, a large farang swoops into the empty seat across the table from us. He's dressed in a white undershirt and a pair of surfer's shorts. His nose is caked with sunscreen. His chest is pink from too much sun. There's a Buddha dangling from his neck. He looks like a deranged clown.

He reaches over and grabs a piece of stuffed squid from my plate.

"Who's the joker?" he asks Lizzie, gnawing on my squid.

"Friend of yours?"

"Hunter," Lizzie says. "Please."

"Hey," he says, looking at me, taking another piece of squid from my entrée. "What's with the tie? And what's with the pig, man?"

I smile, put on a hand on Clint Eastwood's head.

"Hey you," he says. "I'm talking to you. Speak English? Talk American?"

He tears off a piece of squid with his front teeth. I can't stop staring at his powdered nose, the bulge of his hairy, sunburned chest. I'm hoping he chokes.

"You've really outdone yourself this time, baby," he says to Lizzie now. "But that's what I love about you. Your unpredictability. Your wicked sense of humor. Didn't know you went for mute tards with pet pigs."

"Jesus."

"Oh, Lizzie," he says, feigning tenderness, reaching out to take one of her hands. "I've missed you so much. I hate it when you just leave like that. I've been worried sick about you. I'm sorry about last night, okay baby? Okay? I'm really sorry. But it was just a misunderstanding, you know? Jerry and Billyboy over there can testify to my innocence. You know how Thai girls get when we're around."

"We can talk about this later, Hunter."

"Yes," I interject. "I think you should talk to her later."

He just stares at me with that stupid white nose jutting out between his eyes. For a second, I think Hunter might throw the squid at me. But then he just pops the rest into his mouth, turns to Lizzie, and says with his mouth full:

"You fucked this joker, didn't you?"

I look over at Lizzie. She's staring at the table, tapping her fingers lightly against the wood. It seems she's about to cry. I stand up, throw a few hundred bahts on the table. Clint Eastwood follows my lead, rises clumsily to his feet.

"It was a pleasure meeting you, Miss Elizabeth," I say, smiling. I want to take her hand and run back to the motel so we can curl up together on the beach, watch the constellations. But Lizzie just keeps on staring at the top of that table.

I walk with Clint Eastwood back to the motel. We're the only ones on the beach. Night is upon us now. In the distance, I can see squidding boats perched on the horizon, searchlights luring their catch to the surface. Clint Eastwood races ahead, foraging for food in the sand, and I'm thinking with what I suppose is grief about all the American girls I've ever loved. Girls with names like Pamela, Angela, Stephanie, Joy. And now Lizzie.

One of the girls sent me a postcard of Miami once. A row of palm trees and a pink condo. "Hi Sweetie," it said. "I just wanted to say hi and to thank you for showing me a good time when I was over there. I'm in South Beach now, it's Spring Break, and let me tell you it's not half as beautiful as it is where you are. If you ever make it out to the U S of A, look me up okay?" which was nice of her, but she never told me where to look her up and there was no return address on the

postcard. I'd taken that girl to see phosphorescence in one of the Island's bays and when she told me it was the most miraculous thing she'd ever seen, I told her I loved her—but the girl just giggled and ran into the sea, that phosphorescent blue streaking like a comet's tail behind her. Every time they do that, I swear I'll never love another, and I'm thinking about Lizzie and Hunter sitting at the restaurant now, and how this is really the last time I'll let myself love one of her kind.

Halfway down the beach, I find Surachai sitting in a mango tree. He's hidden behind a thicket of leaves, straddling one of the branches, leaning back against the trunk.

When we were kids, Surachai and I used to run around the beach advertising ourselves as the Island's Miraculous Monkey Boys. We made loincloths out of Uncle Mongkhon's straw heap and an old T-shirt Ma used as a rag. For a small fee, we'd climb up trees and fetch coconuts for farangs, who would ooh and aah at how nimble we were. A product of our Island environment, they'd say, as if it was due to something in the water and not the fact that we'd spent hours practicing in Surachai's backyard. For added effect, we'd make monkey noises when we climbed, which always made them laugh. They would often be impressed, too, by my facility with the English language. In one version of the speech I gave before every performance, I played the part of an American boy shipwrecked on the Island as an infant. With both parents dead, I was raised in the jungle by a family of gibbons. Though we've long outgrown what Ma calls "that idiot stunt," Surachai still comes



down from the mountain occasionally to climb a tree on the beach. He'll just sit there staring at the ocean for hours. It's meditative, he told me once. And the view is one-of-a-kind.

"You look terrible," he says now. "Something happen with that farang girl?"

I call Clint Eastwood over. I tell the pig to stay. I take off my leather shoes, my knitted socks, and—because I don't want to ruin them—the button-down shirt and the silk tie, leaving them all at the bottom of the trunk before joining Surachai on an adjacent branch. As I climb, the night air warm against my skin, I'm reminded of how pleasurable this used to be—hoisting myself up by my bare feet and fingertips—and I'm surprised by how easy it still is.

When I settle myself into the tree, I start to tell Surachai everything, including the episode on the elephant. As I talk, Surachai snakes his way out onto one of the branches and drops a mango for Clint Eastwood down below.

"At least you're having sex," Surachai says. "At least you're doing it. Some of us just get to sit in a mango tree and think about it."

I laugh.

"I don't suppose," Surachai says, "you loved this girl?"

I shrug.

"You're a mystery to me, phuan," Surachai says, climbing higher now into the branches. "I've known you all these years, and that's the one thing I'll never be able to understand—why you keep falling for these farang girls. It's like

you're crazy for heartache. Plenty of nice Thai girls around. Girls without plane tickets."

"I know. I don't think they like me, though. Something about the way I look. I don't think my nose is flat enough."

"That may be true. But they don't like me either, okay? And I've got the flattest nose on the Island."

We sit silently for a while, perched in that mango tree like a couple of sloths, listening to the leaves rustling around us. I climb up to where Surachai is sitting. Through the thicket, I see Clint Eastwood jogging out to meet a group of farangs making their way down the beach. I call out to him, tell him to stay, but my pig's not listening to me.

It's Hunter and his friends, laughing, slapping each other's backs, tackling each other to the sand. Lizzie's walking with them silently, head down, trying to ignore their antics. When she sees Clint Eastwood racing up to meet her, she looks to see if I'm around. But she can't see us from where she's standing. She can't see us at all.

"It's that fucking pig again!" Hunter yells.

They all laugh, make rude little pig noises, jab him with their feet. Clint Eastwood panics. He squeals. He starts to run. The American boys give chase, try to tackle him to the ground. Lizzie tells them to leave the pig alone, but the boys aren't listening. Clint Eastwood is fast. He's making a fool of them, running in circles one way, then the other, zigzagging back and



forth through the sand. The more they give chase, the more Clint Eastwood eludes them, the more frustrated the boys become, and what began as jovial tomfoolery has now turned into some kind of bizarre mission for Hunter and his friends. Their chase becomes more orchestrated. The movements of their shadows turn strategic. They try to corner the pig, run him into a trap, but Clint Eastwood keeps on moving between them, slipping through their fingers like he's greased.

I can tell that Clint Eastwood's beginning to tire, though. He can't keep it up much longer. He's an old pig. I start to climb down from the mango tree, but Surachai grabs me by the wrist.

"Wait," he says.

Surachai climbs out to one of the branches. He reaches for a mango and with a quick sweeping motion throws the fruit out to the beach. It hits one of the boys squarely on the shoulder.

"What the fuck!" I hear the boy yell, looking in the direction of the tree, though he continues to pursue Clint Eastwood.

They have him surrounded now, encircled. There's no way out for my pig.

I follow Surachai's lead, grab as many mangoes as I can. Our mangoes sail through the night air. Some of them miss, but some meet their targets squarely in the face, on the head, in the abdomen. Some of the mangoes hit Lizzie by accident, but I don't really care anymore, I'm not really aiming. I'm

climbing through that tree like a gibbon, swinging gracefully between the branches, grabbing any piece of fruit—ripe or unripe—that I can get my hands on. Surachai starts to whoop like a monkey and I join him in the chorus. They all turn in our direction then, the four farangs, trying to dodge the mangoes as they come.

It's then that I see Clint Eastwood scurry away unnoticed. I see my pig running into the ocean, his pink snout inching across the sea's dark surface, phosphorescence glittering around his head like a crown of blue stars, and as I'm throwing each mango with all the strength I have, I'm thinking: Swim, Clint, Swim.