

Excerpts

Excerpt 1

It's time I settled down. I'm tired of eating breakfasts alone. Spending my days alone. Spending my birthdays alone. Spending my Christmases alone. Spending my holidays alone.

For a decade or more Michi has been trying to find me a wife, so she says.

Well, Michi, I found one!

No more Mr. Playboy!!

Her name is Ah Poo. She is Chinese. Aged fifty. Practicing physician. With one son at University. I met Ah Poo on an Internet Asian dating site.

We communicated for several months.

Then she came out to Australia with a Chinese tour group and I met her on the Gold Coast,

After Ah Poo returned to China, we continued to communicate daily via e-mails and spoke together every night, over Skype.

One year later I flew to Guangzhou.

Arrived on Monday. Proposed on Tuesday (silly boy—but always the romantic) and we were married in a brief civil ceremony on Friday.

I am still suffering the consequences.

We strolled around tiny cobblestone alleyways leading from one to the next. The toilets were two planks over a ditch, which led to suspiciously thriving veggie patches.

That day we had lunch at a restaurant where we chose our chook from the chookyard. And the Chef Lady chose our vegetables from the veggie garden, which was fortunately not too close to the hole-in-the-floor loo.

Ah Poo says it isn't safe for me to walk alone as the pickpockets work in gangs and they carry knives. The press-stud rear pockets on my trousers are often open by the time I get home.

Jade bracelets protect the wearer, keep her safe, and stop bad things from happening. And keep away ghosts. So far, Ah Poo hasn't seen a ghost, so the bracelets are obviously working.

Ah Poo's apartment is on the sixth floor. No liftAh Poo and I were walking down a row of stairs. Ah Poo took my hand.

I said, “Ah Poo! I’m not seventy years old!”

Then I suddenly realised, wait a minute, I AM seventy years old!

Late at night a man tinkling a bell collects rubbish[outside her door].

Day and night the noise in Ah Poo’s apartment is never-ending. Kids crying. Dogs barking. Cats howling. Men building tea chests until after midnight on the ground floor. Phones ringing. People shouting loud conversations with each other. Neighbours having showers or cleaning their teeth. Diesel engines being revved. And Ah Poo has lived with this for fifty years. I doubt if she’s ever had one completely undisturbed night’s sleep.

Ah Poo has a favorite saying—“Hoa Hoa!”—which means, “It doesn’t matter!”

Over the last nine months, Ah Poo rapidly spiraled down into insanity. She had screaming tantrums and crying fits, rolling around on the living room floor. Time after time, she said she was going to kill me and burn the house down. Or burn the house down and kill herself. Many times I had to hide the carving knives and barricade myself in my bedroom so that I could get a few hours’ sleep.

I would hear her crashing around at 3:00 or 4:00 a.m. and have to get up and make sure that Ah Poo wasn’t building a bonfire in the living room.

I took out extra fire insurance, just in case.

Ah Poo had three sisters and one brother. They were all very loving and supportive of her. So I concluded that it would be best for Ah Poo, and best for John, if she went back to China to get herself together.

She left on January 21 on a one-way ticket

Excerpt 2

What a way to live! How had it come to this? My life was in CHAOS!

Bugger me! Something had to be done!!!!

I’m a modern man, so I climbed back on the Internet. Fired up “Asian Love Links,” “Thai Love,” “My Asian Bride,” and “Poor, Lonely, Unfulfilled, Old Bastards Who Need a Woman.”

I perused thousands of photos and profiles.

I wasn’t looking for sex.

Honest!

Despite my past experiences, I was looking for a partner to share the remainder of my life

After weeks of e-mail and Skype calls, I decided, What the hell! And decided to visit her...

I have found a wonderful Tonkinese (Northern Vietnamese)

restaurant.. A petite, absolutely delightful waitress who, like everyone else, doesn't speak one word of English. But her smile is multilingual!

Some of the sights one sees around town (Pattaya in Thailand):

An older man, probably Russian, walking around town in his underpants; a falang, in his fifties, on a motorbike, wearing a dress.; a normal looking man, trousers and shirt, and when he turns around a Face – completely made up, lipstick and the works One sees several of these...and everywhere: Ladyboys. Some with phenomenal boobs and protruding nipples from plastic surgery; falangs with shaven heads and pigtailed; short, fat, older guys with beautiful, young bargirls; or tall, exotic, beautifully-dressed ladyboys on whom older guys lavish money in return for feigned affection.

Pattaya is what the end of civilization will look like.

Thousands of prostitutes line the streets,

You can have your photograph taken with a protected jungle animal for Ten Baht.

You can have a whiff of Laughing Gas for 100 Baht. Which is about \$3:00.

There is a Walking Street.

A Drinking Street.

A Boy Street.

Don't ask!

I saw an ad offering a leopard cub for \$10 US.

Bert Bogun is the agent for my apartment.

He has a key. He can let himself in at any time.

Bert Bogun also has a key to my apartment safe, in case a tenant forgets his password.

Bert Bogun can open my safe anytime.

It gets worse. . . .

Bert Bogun is computer literate.

Bert Bogun helped me set up my Thai bank account and money transfers from Australia. Which means he learned all of my passwords and can empty all of my accounts, anytime. The only problem is that Bert Bogun would know that I would know who did it.

I became convinced that Bert Bogun was working out the best way for me to permanently disappear before he cleaned out my life savings.

Life is cheap in Thailand.

It would appear that I should vacate the premises immediately, and that I was about to lose my bond and my scooter too. A total of 42,000 baht.

I leapt out of bed and spent the next few hours changing my passwords. This time, not writing them down or saving them in my safe. I should say, all passwords except one. O-Bank's Internet banking system is unworkable and I'm still trying to reset my password there. I have \$33,000 on deposit at O-Bank.

Bert Bogun and Sha Sha dropped in the next day. Bert Bogun went straight to my tablet without asking.

Tap, tap, tap. Bert Bogun let out a snarl. He turned his face to me and I saw the face of the real Bert Bogun.

He had been thwarted and was furious. Nothing was said. He knew that I knew.

Bert Bogun stormed out of my apartment with a perplexed Sha Sha trailing along behind.

Excerpt 3

I was born at the beginning of World War II I am a war baby.

After high school, I worked as an office junior. One of my duties each Thursday was to have a briefcase handcuffed to my wrist, whereon I would wander down to the Sydney Post Office at Martin Place, who then placed a huge amount of cash in the briefcase for the company's weekly payroll. I would then wander back. There was never any thought of security, or how I would get through life with only one hand.

I couldn't wait to get out of Australia. I eventually did when I was twenty-one and happily sailed as far as my boat fare took me, which was to Hong Kong with £65 (about \$200 US) in my pocket. Such is the confidence of youth

In Southern California I owned a three-bedroom house, a TR-4 sports car, a twenty-seven-foot cruising sailboat, and a cat and a dog. And was as miserable as hell. Orange County has a dreadful lifestyle "For some reason, at that moment, my career took off. I won seventeen awards for my TV commercials and magazine ads, but couldn't stand the place. [Australian born, John returned home to become a papaya farmer and a dabbler in real estate]

[And many more adventures:]

My wish was to sail my boat up to the Whitsunday Islands in Queensland. *Mistral*. My crew was George. Amiable on the surface. But with a tendency to panic

When I turned sixty, I purchased an old Hi-Ace campervan and drove 7,500 kilometres alone, up to Darwin at the northern tip of Australia, and returned,

A nice experience at the slide show [in the open air run by park rangers on a dark night in the Outback]. There we were, with a mosquito coil in one hand and slapping mozzies with the other, when two little aborigine boys about five and seven came out of the bush. They crawled straight up onto my lap, where they stayed for about half an hour. They were named Ritchie and Russell. One had a runny nose.

There were other people around. Why did they choose me? Why don't I have this same effect on mature women?

A Special Seventeen-Year Continuing Friendship

Where do you think I met Michi?

I first met Michi at a dance.

I asked her to dance.

She said no.

The next week, I asked her to dance again.

Again she said no.

Several weeks later she eventually said yes.

We are still dancing together.

And she is still saying no to everything else. ("Damai!" in Japanese.)

Dear John,

Okay John. You are good to go. Congratulations on completing your radiotherapy treatment,

Lee Evans

Medical Typist | Oceania Oncology

Great! I was hungry as hell.

I hadn't eaten since 7:00 p.m. the previous night; doctor's orders. It was now 5:30 p.m. the next night.

I was due to be picked up.

"John, Michi is waiting for you in the next room," the head nurse said.

Michi had thoughtfully brought a large selection of sushi rolls. Plus a mango. And grapes.

I couldn't wait to get home.

Michi got it into her head that my graduation from the oncology clinic must be suitably celebrated.

So she invited me to the famed Buderim Tavern (internationally renowned for its wagyu steaks) for lunch.

My steak was 530 grams, although how would you know?

Between us we emptied a bottle of bubbly.

It has been a long time since I have driven home worried about getting breathalyzed on the way.

Friends are true riches [Last line in the book]