

The Gold Chain

With the Jade Monkey Pendant

Hugh M. Lewis

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By

Hugh M. Lewis

Lewis Micro-Publishing



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For Kindred Spirits, my Nonyas and little Baba

Malaysian Words to Know

Ang pao: Little red packets given as gifts with money, always in pairs, inside.

Bee Hoon: Fried Chinese rice noodles.

Casuarina: A pine tree that grows along the coast of Penang Island, with beautiful filigree.

Cheng Beng: Annual Chinese festival honoring one's ancestors, usually celebrated at the graveside

Durian: A large, and very pungent tropical fruit that is the favorite of Malaysians.

Kachow: To tease or bother someone.

Kampong: A Malay village, sometimes also Chinese.

Kebaya: A traditional Nonya-Malay blouse

Kopi: Malaysian coffee, either black or sweetened milk.

"Kopi Susu": "Coffee with Cream" connoting a mixed race child.

Kueh: Nony Chinese sweet rise cakes

Langchang or **Lanchai:** A trishaw, especially a Chinese one.

Lau-Mak: "Old woman (mother)."

Makan: Malaysian term for food, or a meal.

Nasi Lemak: Rice cooked in coconut milk.

Nonya: A Peranakan or creole Malaysian Chinese woman, known as the "Babas & Nonyas."

Pasar Malam: Malaysian night market.

Sari: Beautiful dress of the Malaysian Indian women.

Sayang: A Malaysian term of endearment, meaning "my love."

Sinseh: A traditional Chinese doctor.

Taukeh or **Towkay:** A Chinese big man or boss, usually denoting a business owner.

Taukeh Soh: The wife of a towkay, or the "Mistress" of the house.

Penang is a beautiful island off the west coast of Malaysia, noteworthy for its natural beauty, its colonial history and architecture, the mixture of many ethno-cultures, particularly traditional Indian, Chinese & Malay, and the yearly practice of diverse religious festivals.

Foreword

The chain was long and heavy to hold in the hand. Its links were thick, fashioned with a curious double twist on both sides so that one could not easily see where or how the loops were joined. The jade monkey pendant was set in the same gold, and the chain link itself was fastened to the pendant so that its hook was part of a link of the chain. In the entire world there must have been only one like it. The anonymous craftsman who had fashioned it must have been a very clever fellow with fine hands. The pendant was also unique in appearance--mockingly handsome, almost human, with a curious smirk of the face, and the jade was of a superlative grade. The chain and pendant was beautiful to look upon and everyone who saw it found themselves admiring it and even secretly coveting it. No one could say how old it was, and though many necks it hung from became wrinkled and stiff, its gold never rusted or tarnished and its jade pendant never lost its mysterious luminescence.

The Amah

She did not know how old she was. Her mother had never told her, her birth-date and she never asked. There was no birth certificate, and she was illiterate, so it would have been no use to her anyway. Now she only knew how old and tired she felt, and how she didn't want to think about the past. It is not good to think too much about such things.

She came from China as a young woman. There were several young ladies all from the same province in Kwantung. They did not know anything about the world beyond their small villages, and were frightened to death during the journey. When they arrived at their destination they had made a pact among themselves never to get married or start a family, so that they might look after one another until the end. They were sworn to each other as Swan Sisters, and were never to cut their hair unless they got married.

Now there was only Lau Mak ("old mother")--bent over and withered and shrunken to half her adult size. She was nearly blind with cataracts over both eyes, and several times lately she had fallen into the gutters as she was going out to beg at the temple.

Two had returned to live in China in their natal villages, the rest had passed away. She couldn't remember how long ago. There were only three other old women left, but all of them had long since cut their hair and had grown children

and grandchildren. She had only two goddaughters who never brought her anything good to eat except the youngest one. Her only concern now was that she would get the proper burial when the time came, that she would not be cast anonymously into a pauper's grave without the proper rituals having been performed.

She was always a stickler for the proper rites. Many people used to come and ask her to pray for them, as she knew the proper way to do these things and she never asked for a lot of money. She still remembered the proper way of praying and she prayed everyday.

The black smoke of the charcoal curled up as she fanned the flames to the ceiling beams that were tar black from the many years of cooking. The walls were all darkened too, and diffused sunlight put everything in the kitchen in a world of shadow. She had lived in this old house all her life, since she was a young woman. Her goddaughter had wanted to put her in a home but she wouldn't know what to do there or how to cook for herself.

This house was the center of her life and her world. For more than twenty years she had slept with the others in the front hall on tables made of wooden planks set upon old saw horses. She kept her possessions stacked on the table against the wall, or hung in plastic bags from nails driven into the concrete wall. Tins and food were stacked on the planks beneath her bed, and she used clothes in a plastic bag for a pillow. Her valuables--her gold and jade jewelry--she had hidden in a small tin in the very corner of a pile of odds and ends. But her gold chain with the jade monkey

pendant she always wore, and whenever she took it off she had a secret hiding place in the wood beneath the planks of the table which nobody knew about.

She had bought a lot of gold over the years. She only bought the purest, 24-carat gold. The tin box was now too heavy for her to lift. But of all her valuables, her gold chain was the most precious to her.

Many people knew about her tin full of gold, but nobody even knew about the necklace, as it was long and always lay hidden beneath her blouse.

She had found it many years ago at the home she had worked at just after the War. She had kept it close by her side all those years and hadn't told a single person. It was a newly constructed terrace house and directly behind it in the compound was a small heap of rubbish.

The master of the house was a Chinese businessman who had wanted one sunny day to plant a garden on the spot. He figured he could get rid of the rubbish heap and transform the spot into a nice garden patch. He bought a spade and had his Amah dig up the ground to plant seeds.

She remembered how angry she was at how she had to get her hands so dirty. But planting the garden gave a great sense of satisfaction. It was after she had dug up some earth that she noticed something in the dirt. It was half buried in the fresh mud and rubble that had been turned over with a spade. At first she thought it was a worm but it didn't move, so she crouched down and pulled it up anyway. It was

heavy as it hung from her hand. She brushed off some of the dirt and saw it glint golden in the sun. She didn't think what to do then but she quickly put it into the inner pocket of her blouse.

She dared not think about it until she went back home. That night, she locked herself in the shower and took off her clothes and washed it off. From that day forward it rarely left her body.

Not long afterward, just as the seedlings were beginning to sprout up through the dirt, the mistress of the house had become angry with her. She did not know why she had gotten so angry. But she was sent off without her final pay.

She never saw the family again, and remembered hearing that the businessman suddenly dying of a heart attack one day, leaving his wife and children with many unsettled debts.

But that was many years ago and now she could only smile as she pressed the necklace to her chest through her blouse. The water in the rice pot was beginning to boil and she just barely managed to slip a small piece of potato and a chicken neck to steam in the large cooking pot of rice.

Her goddaughter came to visit her just as she had finished her bowl of rice with the potato and chicken-neck. Her goddaughter had brought her two steamed dumplings. She told her goddaughter that she had just eaten and was not hungry. She called her goddaughter affectionately "*Si Lok*" (dead prostitute) and asked why she came. She took the

broom and began to sweep the kitchen floor, pretending not to notice the goddaughter's little girl child. The goddaughter went back to the front room and sat down and began fanning herself as she talked with the other old ladies.

Lau Mak remembered the first family she worked for before the War. It was a big family. The Towkay was a middle-aged businessman who was always out. She liked the children, all young girls, but not the mother who was strict and mean.

One day the father came home early when the mother had taken the children out for the afternoon. He was drinking a bottle of stout and smoking a cigarette. He started getting fresh with her, touching her on the legs and behind when she was standing nearby. She was frightened but didn't know what to do. She acted like she didn't notice anything as he asked her to go upstairs with him. She told him she left something boiling in the kitchen and fled out the back door, never returning.

The next family was the best. It was a large four-storey home. The floors were of marble tile that she loved to keep clean because of the way they shined and looked so beautiful that she was afraid to walk on them. They had three children. The youngest was a little girl.

She worked for this family many years and the youngest girl became quite attached to her because her own mother paid her little attention and her brothers always scolded her. Lau Mak grew to favor the little girl as if she was her own

daughter, and the father one day decided to make Lau Mak the girl's god-mother. Her first god-daughter

One morning the sirens sounded. There were rumors that the Japanese were coming. They all ran outside and could see the planes like little birds in the distance. They got closer and people were running all about in the streets. There was a pop, pop, pop of guns firing and then a loud explosion. So loud and deafening it was that she had never heard such a terrifying thing before. They all ran back inside and grabbed the children and hid in the back of the house. Several more explosions, one sounding very close by, and then it grew quiet again.

They were all too frightened to know what to do. They slowly opened the front door and there was smoke from a fire that filled the street. People were running all about and shouting. Bodies lay in the street. People shouted to them to run to the hills. Not knowing what else to do they quickly grabbed the children and ran out into the street toward the hills. They did not think to take food or clothes with them, and left the front door open. Lau Mak carried the little girl piggy back, and the mother held her two sons by the wrists as they hurried along the main road with all the other people. They saw people bleeding and lying dead in the gutter along the way. Buildings were on fire and black smoke filled the air.

Lau Mak didn't know what to do after that. People were saying that the Japanese were coming and would rape all

the young women. She and the others grew frightened and they went off into the jungle to hide. They stayed there several months, too afraid to return. They found other people there. Mostly there were young women like her self.

At first they had no food, and after a few days they began to get quite hungry. Someone had shown them how to dig roots to boil and to pick some leaves with which to make a bitter tasting tea. People began catching little lizards to boil also, and someone else had brought a small bag of sugar that everyone mixed with their foul tea.

Then a man came and told them about a place where there was food. It was over the hill on the other side of the Island, and he would show them the way. They gathered themselves and walked through the jungle until they came to a small trail. They followed this trail as it wound back and forth over the crest of the mountain ridge, and down again.

She remembered being tired, and hungry, and hot. She remembered being thirsty but there being no water to drink. She recalled stopping shortly on top of the hill to see the beautiful blue ocean and white clouds, and the southern half of the island and the fishing boats and the water glinting in the sun. She had never seen anything more beautiful or peaceful before or since. But she hurried on to catch up with the others.

It was a small clearing by a large stream. She remembered staying there for several months and eating only tapioca and bananas and coconuts. Once in a while someone would

bring a few small fish, but it was never enough. They grew quite skinny and many people began to fall sick with fever and the runs.

They heard rumors as new people came and told them that the Japanese had come and taken control and everything had settled down. Finally one day another man came and told them to return to the town because everything was peaceful and they would be safe. The Japanese would not harm them.

So they all took the trail again and she couldn't wait to get to the top to see the ocean again. They rested on the top of the hill for almost an hour, and then came down the other side.

Lau Mak heard her goddaughter's voice calling to her from the front hall. She finished sweeping the kitchen floor and put the broom away. She came back into the front room and pulled a small basket down from the wall. In it she kept some apples and oranges someone had given to her. She gave her god-daughter's little girl an apple and an orange and a couple of pieces of hard candy she found at the bottom of the bag. She smiled at the little girl and called to it. "Come, come," but the little girl was too afraid of her and hid behind her mother.

She was afraid of the Japanese and avoided them as much as possible. She went to work washing clothes for the Japanese officers. She worked everyday from early in the

morning until late at night. She ironed and starched the uniforms with heavy brass iron heated with charcoal. She was unscrupulously clean and the Japanese soon came to prefer her to wash their clothes, and they even came to show her respect and bow their heads to her. While she worked for the Japanese she had rice and fish to eat, while most people had only tapioca. She remembered working hard everyday until her hands were raw and red and her *samfoo* was drenched with sweat.

After the Japanese left she went to work for her second goddaughter's family. They had only one girl child and the mother was too lazy to cook or clean. The parents asked Lau Mak to become the girl's God Mother—Lau Mak's second god-daughter. The father was a young lawyer and they lived in a large two-story home. She only worked a few years for this family, until one day the mother of her second began scolding her and accusing her of stealing her things.

Her first and second goddaughters never came to see her anymore. Several years ago the first goddaughter started coming to see her every week, bringing her food to eat. Then she came every day for about a week, until one day she asked her if she could borrow some money from her godmother. She knew her godmother had saved all her money and had kept more than twenty thousand dollars in an account.

Lau Mak had saved every penny she earned and never bought anything for herself. She ate simply every day. She had never earned very much but managed to save enough to buy a grave plot and to give herself the proper funeral when she died. Now her first-god daughter was asking for half of her life-savings so that they could start a hawking business. She gave her the money and the Goddaughter thanked her and made promises to her that she would see to her burial when she died. She visited a couple of more times and then the visits stopped.

The same thing happened with the second goddaughter. She came and told Lau Mak that no one would arrange her funeral after she died. Lau Mak should put her cash account in both their names so that the second god-daughter would be able to take the money out when the time came.

After that she did not see her second god-daughter for several weeks, until one day she found out that her second god-daughter had taken most of the other half of her savings out in order to put a down on a new flat for her family. She did not see her second goddaughter for over a year. Then one day she came with food and acted very proud, and told her she would pay the money back into the account. She left and came to bring her food only a few times afterward.

But her third, youngest goddaughter came to see her almost every week, and always brought something good for her to eat. Now she had her own daughter and Lau Mak got out her tin of gold and opened it. Lau Mak took out a little red purse. Inside there was a gold pendant and chain she had

bought for her third goddaughter's girl child. She gave the little girl the purse and the mother made the girl fold her arms and thank her Lau Mak for it.

She worked for her third goddaughter's family the longest. Those were the happiest days of her life and she remembered when the mother brought her goddaughter home in a *Langchai* from the hospital. She raised the goddaughter everyday like she was her own. She was now too old to think of having her own children anymore.

The *taukeh* was an accountant and was quite successful. The *taukeh soh* (wife) was *Nonya-lang* and always had people visiting her house, staying with them and eating meals with them. The family had made Lau Mak feel as if she belonged as a member, and she was never scolded or reprimanded or ordered about like in the other houses where she had worked.

They were good to her and she worked many years for this family and watched her goddaughter grow up. Lau Mak was made her godmother at her first birthday. The occasion was the proudest day of her life.

The goddaughter used to make her Lau Mak carry her piggy-back whenever they would go to the market. Lau Mak didn't mind at all. Lau Mak watched her god-daughter grow up into a young woman in that Kampong house.

Things changed after the father suddenly died of a heart attack. The goddaughter was then in secondary school and there was little Lau Mak had to do any more. A few years

later the mother died of cancer, and the house was sold off to developers who built a large office complex on the spot.

After that Lau Mak worked occasionally for a few homes, but never for very long. She was getting old and mostly remained close to her own home. People would come to her and pay her a little bit so that she would show them how to pray, to exorcise evil spirits and cure sickness.

Now she would spend her days begging at the temple close by. Since she had no more savings left, she begged for money to buy her food with. Twice a month she and her friend would go down to get the rice and canned food distributed to older people. They would have to wait in line in the hot sun several hours, and would walk all the way.

She loved to see her third goddaughter and her girl child when she came to visit. It made her happy so she beamed from ear to ear. But she acted as if she didn't care, and would go about her business cleaning the house and hanging her clothes outside to dry in the sun. Soon the goddaughter left, and Lau Mak felt alone once again.

A young Indian street-boy had found her body slumped over the gutter by the temple early in the morning. The day before she had taken off her gold necklace with the jade-monkey pendant and had hidden it away in her secret place under the table. She didn't know why she did it, but only that she felt too tired to wear it anymore. The boy didn't think to check her for her belongings, as he was too

frightened by the sight of her death. A crowd had soon gathered around and someone eventually called a policeman, or else a policeman had just happened by. He cleared the crowd back from the body and called into the station. Detectives arrived and some of the people who recognized her long gray hair and black silk pants and blue blouse, identified her.

By the time the third goddaughter had heard the news and went to take care of her god-mum's valuables, the second goddaughter was already there and the tin of gold was already missing. The second goddaughter had her husband and her son with her. They would not look at her in the face but only said that they did not want any of the godmother's old belongings and that they did not have enough money to cover the cost of the funeral arrangements. They gave her fifty dollars and left without saying anything more.

The third goddaughter rummaged through Lau Mak's old things. She couldn't find the tin of gold, and discovered that someone had already taken it. The other old women, who shared the front hall of the old shop-house, said that the second goddaughter had put it in her purse. One old woman was asleep, turned toward the wall, the other one sat upon her table looking very old and sad. The third, youngest woman busied herself in the kitchen and would not come out to talk.

The god-daughter did not know what to do with all these old things. She gave the clothes and tins and plastic things to the other women of the house. They said nothing but thanked her for them. She found Lau Mak's old wooden-

tooth comb in another small tin, along with a few odds and ends--buttons, a key, a pair of scissors. This tin she put into her purse. She threw away the old bags and straw basket that always held the fruit.

Once she had cleared off the tabletop, she began to take boards off the sawhorses and stack them against the wall. It was then that she discovered in a hole in the edge of a plank the secret hiding place and the gold chain wrapped in a silk handkerchief. She unwrapped the silk and saw the beautiful necklace. She had never seen anything like it before and never knew that her Lau Mak kept it on her body most of her life. She started to cry. She put it in her purse as well, and finished clearing off the tabletop.

The next day, as her body lay in state and a few old people came to sit and talk, when no one was watching the third god-daughter slipped the handkerchief with her gold chain beneath Lau Mak's pillow as she lay stiffly in the casket.

The goddaughter could not afford much of a funeral. It was all she could do to take a couple of day's sick leave from her factory job and to take money out of her own savings to cover the balance of the cost of the casket and the funeral, but the third goddaughter didn't mind as she loved her Lau Mak as if she were her own mother. Lau Mak had already bought a grave plot for herself. She bought a simple casket and hired a small band and troupe of young men to help carry the casket.

The young men shouldered the heavy pole holding her small coffin as they walked up the hill road leading to the cemetery. The musicians in front played their drums and horn and cymbals and a boy cast hell money out to the wind. The going was not so rough as the coffin was small, like a child's, and not heavy. Only one goddaughter walked behind, with her young daughter and her husband. She didn't know why she was crying, only that's what she felt like doing. Dark clouds had rolled up from behind the hills and it had begun to rain lightly by the time they had reached the open grave. Old people say that when it rains the ghosts are crying. The casket was lifted into the grave and it was covered over.

The goddaughter would return every year during *Cheng Beng* to clear off her Lau Mak's grave. It was a small modest plot set up high upon a hill in the middle of the cemetery. She would bring food, a few dumplings in the shape of turtles, some tea and some paper articles to burn and send to heaven so that Lau Mak would have things and be happy there. She would sit with her daughter and tell her stories about her own childhood and her Lau Mak, and they would sing songs and laugh and joke together.

The Robber

It was dark and quiet. He worked fast with his spade, careful not to make too much noise. It struck the top of the casket and he worked quickly to remove all of the soil off of it. He used the spade head to pry the top off the casket. First looking around to make sure no one could see, he struck his lighter to see what was inside. He found a small skeleton with long gray hair, covered in a blue blouse with black silk pants.

He had never done anything like this before and was a little nervous. He didn't know why he had chosen this particular grave of all the graves he could have done, except that it was particularly well hidden from view, especially from the main road at the bottom of the hill. In the dark it looked like an old grave and he knew that old people used to bury things with the casket in the grave.

A dog was barking somewhere in the distance. He heard a bat fly by overhead and then the strange cry of an animal he had never heard before. It was almost like a child crying, or a cat. It made him feel funny inside and he almost began to vomit. He recovered his nerves and quickly checked all inside the casket for anything. He was becoming quite angry at finding nothing when his hand swept beneath the pillow and touched the silk handkerchief.

He brought it out and held it up and struck his lighter again. He had found the gold chain with the jade monkey inside.

He quickly put it into his pants pocket along with his lighter, and walked quickly down the hill to where he had stashed his motorcycle behind some bushes.

There were no cars on the road that early in the morning and as he made a few turns and got further away from the cemetery he began to relax a little and feel the cool wind against his face and body. He never wore a jacket when he rode his bike. He always wore only a thin white cotton t-shirt and black shorts with slippers.

He did not know exactly where he was going, or what to do with what he had found. He was beginning to feel pretty happy, though, and just kept driving here and there around the island until the sun began to break over the horizon.

He finally pulled in at his favorite coffee shop that opened at six every morning. The shopkeeper brought him some hot coffee with cream without speaking. The people there all knew him, as he had grown up on that corner. But no one dared talk to him or cross him as they were all now very afraid of him.

He was a big and rough and crude man. He liked to drink warm stout in the afternoon and curse and laugh and make fun of people. The shopkeepers were too afraid not to serve him or to tell him to leave. He was fond of frightening little children away. He sometimes liked to catch a cat prowling around the coffee shop for food. He would tie its paws up and watch it struggle to free itself.

He had never married and his father died when he was young. His mother had been a vegetable seller at the morning market, and all his relatives worked at the same market selling vegetables and fresh fruit and cassette tapes. He would help out sometimes when he was young, otherwise his mother would beat him with a cane. But he didn't mind the pain too much and would run off to play and gamble with his friends the first chance he got. He was always big for his age and would lord it over boys several years older. They would throw coins or gamble in the back lanes, steal fruit, sneak into the movie theaters by the side door and walk the whole day to go swimming up in the hills.

He had seven brothers and four sisters anyway, and so no one ever missed him much. He went to school for just a few months but found that the teachers were too strict and didn't like him. So he stopped and helped his uncles with their vegetable stalls.

He remembered the Japanese as a young boy. He would make extra money from them by running errands for them. He didn't mind them much and they seemed to like children, although they would thump him hard on the head if he ever made them angry or fail to bow to them.

After the Japanese left he fell in with an older group of boys who would make money by selling and buying contraband from the foreign ships that would dock in the strait.

He remembered the night they stole their own sampan from a pier by the docks. They had found an old, half-empty can of red paint. They rowed it all night around to the other side of the island, beached it, scraped off its numbers, made a few changes in boards on the floor of the boat, and painted the whole boat bright Chinese red. They waited there until night again, and, feeling pretty hungry, rowed back again to a special hiding place in the docks.

They bought and sold cigarettes, fruits, lighters, pens, beer, sodas, clothes, anything, to the sailors and merchantmen of the ship for about a year, and made quite a bit of money, which they always managed to gamble away.

One night a marine police boat came upon them and gave them chase. They narrowly escaped the searchlights of the craft and just floated quietly in the water. The water was pretty rough and it didn't take them long to drift away and into the shore.

The next day they scrapped the paint off the boat again and then rowed it down to the Jetty and sold it for fifty dollars.

After that, his band of young men broke up and went their separate ways. He began meeting people who introduced him to other people and he was then told by a couple of men to join the Triad.

He was nervous at the initiation ceremony. They blindfolded him and took him to a place in the middle of the night.

He walked through a warehouse door and a line of bare-breasted men held broad swords above his head. He was told the rules of the society. He killed a goat with a sword and drank its blood from an urn, and he made his blood oath on pain of death always to do the bidding of the society and to never reveal its secrets of initiation to anyone or become a rat to the police.

Sometimes someone would come and he would have a job to do. They would have fights with other gangs or help a member out of trouble. He got the scar across his right cheek in one of these fights. But they always won the fights, because he was always bigger and stronger and quicker than the others, and he would fight fiercely--chopping off people's fingers and even a hand, and breaking open skulls. He knew of at least one man he had killed that way, according to reports he had read to him from the newspaper the following day.

He was still a young man barely in his thirties and he was already a legend in his part of town. People knew of him and feared him. Everyone was always respectful towards him, and everyone steered a wide berth around him and avoided talking to him when they could.

He never married. He had plenty of women. Whenever he had a lot of extra cash he liked to go up to Thailand. The girls there were much nicer, younger and prettier than the bar-girls in town. The Thai girls knew how to take care of a man. But he never had a steady partner. Once there was a woman he had taken a liking to, but one day he scolded her

and slapped her for spending money he had given her on clothes and she left him.

Now he was too old to care. He enjoyed his freedom too much and liked coming and going when it suited him. He finished his second cup of coffee and decided to get back on his motorbike and ride for a little while longer. He was feeling hot and thought the breeze from the ride would cool him down again. He was not sure what he wanted to do with the necklace yet. He could think best while he was riding his motorbike.

He headed for the back roads leading up to the hills. It was his favorite place when he wanted to be by himself awhile. He knew the island like the back of his hand--all the places to duck away at, all the routes to escape police, shortcuts to get somewhere in a hurry. Now he was climbing up the small winding hill. Soon it became too steep for cars and his motorbike went slowly.

It was a fast and powerful motorbike. He had won one in a lucky bet, sold that, and bought himself a brand new one with some protection money he had earned. He crested a small hill and turned into a small trail along the side of the road. The trail led up a small ravine and came out on top of a small hillock. Huge durian trees cover the spot from above and hardly anyone ever came by there. It was his own secret place and from there he could survey the town, his town, below.

Sitting astride his motorbike, he decided that he would sell the chain for a good price to a broker he had dealt with

before. He wanted to keep the chain for himself but knew he needed the extra cash at the moment to pay off some money he owed for gambling. He knew that there might be trouble if he didn't soon come up with the money, and it worried him a little.

He only began robbing people after he began having debts from gambling. He didn't like to do it. He only did it if he felt really worried about his debts. He would take a lot of time figuring out how to go about it and in choosing a victim. At first he used a knife that he tucked in his pants. He would come up to someone on his bike at night in a lonely spot, at a bus stop or by an alleyway. He would stick the knife in their ribs and take everything they had.

He was so big and frightening that his victims never fought him or yelled out or try to escape. It never took long. He was fast and he always planned his escape route so that he would be well away from the scene in no time. Most of the time he only scored small--a few twenties or a few small pieces of jewelry. But once in a while he struck it big.

One night the young man he tried to rob pulled a knife out of his pocket and lashed him across his wrist, almost dropping his own knife. He punched the man with his other hand, and fled away. He bled a lot and had a hard time stopping the bleeding.

After that he bought himself a little gun and four rounds of ammunition with money he had won at the races. He liked to go to the races on weekends and watch the horses run. It was an old police revolver that had been stolen. He hid it in

a box he kept hidden beneath the floorboards of his small room he rented above an old shop house, and only took it out when he intended to use it.

He had already used one of the rounds when he shot a man he was trying to rob. He wasn't intending to do it--the old gun just went off accidentally in his hand and the bullet grazed the old man's temple, bringing him down. The report of the gunshot stirred the sleeping neighborhood so he sped off before anyone came to investigate.

He had only three bullets remaining when the police came to raid his little apartment. They called out and bashed down the door, but someone had tipped him off before hand and he escaped out the window and across the red-tiled roofs without firing a single shot. He took his revolver with him.

The sun was now already overhead and he turned his bike around and rode back down the hill. It was growing hot upon his back and shoulders and the traffic in the streets was already heavy.

He got stuck behind a big blue bus that was belching out black choking smoke. He grew impatient and swung around the bus upon its left as it was pulling up to a stop, almost hitting a woman coming off the bus. He accelerated and wove in and out of the cars, dodging out of the way of the oncoming cars.

He turned a corner and pulled up to a small shop house where the pawnshop was. The small man inside had no shirt on and was behind a wire mesh. He showed the man the necklace and asked the man to weigh it for him. The pawnbroker weighed it and set a price at \$1,200 dollars. The robber figured he could get at least \$2000 for it and became really angry. They began bargaining and his voice grew louder and louder until he began shouting at the little pawn broker. But the pawnbroker held firm at \$1,500 and finally the robber gave in. At least it would be enough to cover the debt, he thought as he pocketed the money.

He rode back to his coffee shop again at the corner. By now it was close to 2:00 o'clock in the afternoon and he was getting thirsty. He ordered a beer from the timid shopkeeper.

He knew that gambling was his undoing. All the money that had passed through his hands during his lifetime would have made him a rich man if he hadn't gambled it all away. At times he would get really disgusted at himself and then would stop gambling for a few weeks, but he always went back to it. Most of the time he lost, and he frequently had sizeable debts to pay off. The people who dealt with him were more unscrupulous than he was, and they knew where to find him, so the one thing he never did was welsh out of his debt.

He had made a big *Towkay* mad one time. This *Towkay* sent eight men after him to punish him for failing to pay

back his debt. They caught him outside of the coffee shop one evening and pulled him into an alley. They tried to hold him down and poke his left eye out with a metal rod, but he managed to free himself and beat off his attackers. They fled at his rage after he managed to catch the hand of the man holding the poker and thrust it back into his cheek.

Because he was angry at what had happened, he decided not to pay this *Towkay* back what he had owed him. It was after that incident that he decided to buy the revolver with the money instead. He knew that one day this *Towkay* would try to get his revenge, but he didn't know how or when it would come about. And as he didn't like waiting for things, he decided to quit worrying about it and forget about it for the time being.

He had already scoffed three bottles of stout and was beginning to feel really relaxed. The only time he felt good any more was after he had a couple of beers. He ordered another stout and the reluctant shopkeeper brought him another beer and removed all the bottles from his table. It was approaching evening when he decided to go down to his favorite bar and hang out for a while. There they at least talked to him and gave him news of what's been going on around town.

He rode down the road to the bar and parked his bike by the door in the alley in back of the bar. He went in and everyone knew him. He sat down at the bar and the bartender served him a bottle of stout. The bartender told him that someone he hadn't recognized was asking about for him. It was a short, well-dressed young man. It made

him start wondering who it could be. He thought of all the people he knew who fit the description but came up empty.

He drank another beer and was beginning to feel the affects of all the alcohol on an empty stomach. He was also beginning to get angry again and scolded a girl sitting next to him. He got up and left when he realized everyone was staring at him through the darkness.

Outside, the breeze blew. He met a couple of people he knew coming into the bar. They had been in a few scrapes together and were the only people in whose company he felt comfortable any more.

They decided to ride out on their bikes together to the nightclub along the north coast. The long ride would feel good and they liked the action, the music, the lights and the well-dressed women at the club. He didn't go down there very often because it was a \$10 door fee and beer was \$30 for a pitcher. But that night he had extra money and so he didn't much care, forgetting about his debts, his past and his enemies all at the same time.

Together they had about three pitchers of beer and were getting very boisterous when a man at the table next to them with a young lady told them to quiet down. This led to the exchange of a few nasty words and finally a fight broke out. They beat the poor man up and left him lying unconscious on the floor and the girl crying. They figured they'd better leave and went their separate ways again.

When he got back to his room he remembered he had left his gun outside on the bike. As he opened the door he found three men inside. They said that they were detectives and that he was under arrest. Two more men came up from behind him and stuck the barrel of guns into his kidneys. They led him outside and into a dark sedan car that was waiting outside with its motor running and lights off.

The brief article in the news the next morning reported that a notorious and wanted criminal had been arrested in an afternoon raid. He had been killed trying to escape when he fell off a bridge three-storeys high.

Some rumors at the corner coffee shop surrounding his death held that the police had beaten him to death and then tossed his body over, breaking his lower right leg completely in half. Other rumors held that he had been picked up by a gang who pretended they were the police and then killed him. No one seemed to know the whole truth, and no one felt very bad about what had happened.

The Student

The short, round pawnbroker knew he had made a steal when he gave the man \$1500 for the gold chain with the jade elephant. In all his life he had never seen anything like it before, and could see at a glance that it could be a priceless treasure.

The man had been to sell him things before and he knew that he was a dangerous, no good person and that the necklace was probably stolen. He was an honest businessman and he knew better than to ask too many questions. It was strictly business, one that he had been doing for over thirty years, and that he had learned from his father who ran the shop before him.

Instead of laying the gold chain out for display, he put it into a small safe he kept hidden behind the wall connecting the front hall to the back of the house. It would be safe there the rest of the day until after he closed the shop when he could study it better.

It had been a slow day, with only a couple of usual customers, and he had even managed to fall asleep for about twenty minutes while sitting upon his stool behind the counter. He awoke abruptly when his daughter called down to him from upstairs to come and eat some rice she had made them.

He loved his daughter more than anything else in the world, especially after his wife had died of cancer a couple of years back. His daughter was the best student in the entire school, always did what she was told, and studied hard every day. He wanted her to go on to the University, though he knew she would find it difficult to get in because she was Chinese. He wanted to give her all the incentives he could to work hard at her studies and to pass the examinations at the close of the year.

She called down to him again, and then came down with a bowl of rice and chicken curry she had cooked up. She set it on the counter in front of her father and told him "Eat it all or else you will fall sick." He could only smile at his daughter as she went quietly back upstairs to get ready for school.

He didn't care that she was a girl--he only wanted her to have a better life than he had known as a "prisoner" behind the bars of the pawnshop. He ate his rice slowly as he thought about how he missed his wife's hot curry.

His daughter was a good student, but she was not yet a very good cook. Soon his daughter came back down again dressed in her blue and white school uniform, carrying her large bag full of her textbooks, and she was out the door to wait out upon the street for the school bus with the other girls her age from the street.

He didn't let his daughter mix with these other girls very much, as he knew they were not very serious in their studies and would lead her astray. He wouldn't let her

watch any television either except on weekends after she had finished her homework. But she never once complained and was always of a cheerful disposition.

That evening, alone in the shop, he decided to close the shop early. He locked the front grill and pulled down the metal awning protecting the front windows, and he retired to the backroom to reopen the safe and take a better look at the necklace.

He admired it for its beauty and looked at the jade through a magnifying glass. He held it up to the light and could see how clear and translucent the monkey appeared, when he noticed the sparkle of tiny little diamonds set in the jade in the eyes of the monkey. He wondered at its craftsmanship and how old it could be. He had never seen anything like it before and so knew nothing comparable to it.

He looked at it a long time until he decided he would like to give it to his daughter as a gift. He had never given her very much and she never asked for much and never complained. He felt bad that she could not wear the nice new school clothes that the other girls always wore to school.

When she got home from school that night he presented it to her in a small red *ang pao* envelope. He had burnished it up a little and laid it in a small plastic box with a sheet of cotton batting beneath it.

She smiled and asked "What's this? What's the matter?" He said nothing and she opened it. She did not know quite

what to say except that she hugged her father and kissed him on his bald head. Tears came into both their eyes as they thought about her mother at the same moment. Then she ran upstairs with the necklace and the box and her book bag slung over her shoulder. He sat down again in silence as he thought back to her childhood. He remembered her as a small baby. He would lay her upon the pillow to sleep.

She had actually been their third child. The first one was a boy who had died soon after childbirth. The doctor told them it had a weak heart and would have not lived very long anyway. The second child was another boy who fell off a stool when he was five years old, trying to reach something hanging on the wall. He hit his head and was knocked out for a while, but soon came to and aside from a little bump, appeared to be O.K. A couple of days later, while walking to school, the boy appeared to be staggering and walking funny. He died by that afternoon.

Now this wonderful, beautiful daughter was all he had left and he wanted her to have the best life she could. He got up and took out six joss sticks from a small bundle in the corner and lit them over the candle burning at the small red altar. He made a prayer for his deceased wife's comfort, and his daughter's fortune, and his deceased son's happiness. He stuck three smoking sticks in each of the two ears, pointing straight up to heaven.

The girl took to wearing her gold chain under her white blouse every day to school. She had been making good grades and felt that somehow the chain and monkey pendant was bringing her good luck. She was fond of her

chain and every night admired herself in the mirror with it around her neck.

She was short and a little on the heavy side, though she had a very fair complexion. She wished she could be a little taller so that more boys on the bus might take notice of her instead of the other girls they were always teasing. But the teachers all seemed to like her and they all gave her encouragement to do extra activities after school.

She missed her mother a lot and began to cry whenever anything happened that reminded her of her mum. Every night she prayed for her mother's happiness in heaven.

Several months passed hence, and the old man, feeling tired all the time and not too well, decided to go to get a check up with the medical doctor. He had been to a Chinese *sinseh* but the herbal tea he had been given didn't seem to help very much.

He was happy and proud because his daughter had passed all her exams with high marks and was told that she would be admitted to the National University the following year.

Now he was sitting in the little hall of the clinic, waiting for his name to be called. It was crowded that day. A baby was crying and the mother looked desperate with it in her arms.

A young woman and a young man sat quietly, almost embarrassed, in one corner and an older woman who looked quite pale and feverish sat on the other side. No one spoke or even smiled. The receptionist took the couple's

identity cards and found their file. Then he heard his name called and he went inside the little doctor's office.

By the time he emerged five minutes later, his whole demeanor had changed. He looked deeply worried and said nothing as he paid the bill. He was being referred to the general hospital for treatment for cancer. The doctor said he thought that his chances of survival and complete remission were good if they could go in soon and get it all out.

He did not worry for himself so much as he worried for his daughter. He did not know what to tell her, or how, or even if he should tell her. Then he began worrying about the cost of the treatment and how he would arrange his finances. He had saved money to send his daughter to the University, but now it looked as if all his plans and dreams would be dashed.

He returned to his little shop and took the medicine the doctor had given him. He was to report early the next morning for admission to the hospital to undergo an operation. He hated the thought of having to leave his daughter alone by herself. He sat up downstairs until very late, thinking and worrying and planning what to do.

His daughter had stopped studying upstairs and called down to him to ask him when he was coming to bed. He told her in a little while and to go to bed because they had to get up early the next morning. She turned off her light and soon all was quiet upstairs. There was only the sound of the motorcycles and cars from the front outside.

He decided to tell her the next morning and thought how he would explain it to her to make her understand. In the morning he would call his brother to have him and his sons come over and take over the shop for him in his absence. He and his brother didn't get along very well but he felt like his brother owed him that much.

He thought back to the times he would take his family out on weekends across to the mainland and they would go on a picnic together. He thought about the Sundays when they would go down in the afternoon to have a good dinner at their favorite restaurant downtown. He always ordered the same thing. It now seemed so long ago and now everything had changed. Soon he was asleep.

When he awoke the little lamp was still on and everything was quiet. There were no more traffic noises outside, and the only sound came from the clock that was ticking above the door. In an hour he would have to go and wake his daughter up to break to her the news and get ready to go to the hospital.

He went to the back and took a shower. The water was cold and refreshing, helping him to wake up again. He heard a baby crying through the walls and knew the infant next door wanted to be fed. Then he took some small pieces of charcoal out of kerosene in which they were soaking and made a small pile in the stove. He lit the charcoal and began rapidly fanning the flames. Then he drew water from the faucet into a large black water kettle. He was going to heat some water for tea and for his daughter to bathe with when she awoke.

He went up stairs in the morning twilight and pushed the door of his daughter's room ajar. She was asleep on her bed without a cover on and the dirty old bolster between her legs. He remembered her as she slept there as a small baby--her whole body fitting upon the pillow. She had grown so fast. He didn't know where all the years had went.

He called softly her. She slowly awoke. She was drowsy and tired and needed a few more hours of sleep. Then he walked in and sat on the end of her bed. He told her that they had to go to the hospital, and that he had cancer and had to have an operation today. Her eyes opened more widely as she gave him a serious, questioning look, but she said nothing. He told her that he would be fine and that he would return in a couple of days.

Now she had to get up quickly and go take a hot bath and get dressed so that they could be at the hospital within the hour. She obeyed without saying anything, too stunned to know what to say, feeling only afraid for her father and herself. Before she dressed she remembered for good luck to put on her necklace which she had slung over the post on the end of her bed, and when she did so she made a secret prayer that her father would get well again.

The operation went smoothly and the doctor was pleased by the prognosis. He thought that his chances for full recovery soon after the surgery were very good. He would be returning home tomorrow.

The girl sat downstairs in the front hall with her uncle. It was quiet and hot as usual, and the only noise was the little fan as it turned on its axis. She sat thinking about the last couple of days and how worried she had been during the operation. But now her recovering father was smiling and she thanked heaven for his good health.

She figured out that the operation had been fairly expensive because she studied his account books and his savings book. She called the hospital herself to inquire about the payments. It was then that she decided to sell off her gold chain and pendant so that he would have enough money to pay for the medical bills. She wanted to do it before her father returned, without his knowing about it.

At first, she didn't quite know how to go about selling it or how much to ask for it, so she asked her uncle. She showed it to him and told him how much her father had paid for it. Her uncle held it in his hand, amazed by its weight and craftsmanship, and then weighed it. He took out his little calculator and told her that she could easily sell it for \$3000 dollars if she just put it on display in the window, but that if she took it to the gold shops she wouldn't get her money's worth from it.

So taking a chance she placed it in the box her father had given it to her in and put the open box in the glass case in the window. She thought that if she couldn't sell it that day for cash, then she would take it down to the gold shops tomorrow to see what she could get for it.

She sat waiting for people to notice it. Quite a few people who walked by did notice it. The first person to come in was a fairly tall young man. He had seen it through the window and had stopped short to stare at it awhile. He asked the girl what it cost and she told him \$3500.

It was expensive but he was not thinking too much about the cost. The beauty of the necklace and the thoughts of the person he wanted to buy it for distracted him from haggling too much over the price. He now had a lot of money in his savings and it was important to him because he had someone special he wanted to give it to.

He stood there for a few minutes indecisively, but the more he looked at the necklace with its jade monkey pendant, the more he wanted it. Finally he asked the girl if she would keep it safe for him if he gave to her a \$100 dollar deposit while he went to withdraw the balance from his bank account. She quickly agreed to the sale and wrote out a receipt for the deposit.

She was surprised that she was able to sell it so quickly and that she had gotten her full asking price out of it. Sometimes she would tend the shop for her father and would deal with customers, but never had she done so well as this.

But she hesitated to put the necklace back in its box and to put the box into the safe. She lingered with it in her hands as she held it there. It was almost warm to hold, and she wanted so much to put it back around her neck once again.

It was so close to her that she felt almost as if it were a part of herself. For some strange reason when she held it like that she would always remember her mother. She would think back on all those good times when she and her mother would joke with each other and go shopping together.

She gave a sudden start when a little boy opened the door and peered in and then went out again. The bell on the door tinkled and she quickly put the necklace back upon the cotton, closed the lid of the box and set it inside of the wall safe.

An hour or so later the young man returned. He seemed much happier than the first time she had seen him. He thought to renegotiate the final price but after he looked at the necklace he was again spellbound and forgot all about haggling. He paid the girl the balance and slipped the necklace, box and all, into a bag he was carrying. The girl told him to be careful with it and he agreed and thanked her and quickly left the store. The girl never saw the necklace again, though she often thought about it with great fondness.

The Lovers

[by Hugh M. Lewis](#)

The young man stepped out into the busy street. He felt the box with the gold chain and monkey pendant to be quite heavy. He could not wait to get back to his room to get a better look at it. He waited impatiently at the bus stop by the side of the road that was just in front of the pawnshop where he had bought it.

While he waited he couldn't but help thinking how happy she would be when he gave it to her, and how she would certainly then be persuaded about his affections. He was now in his late thirties and had never dated or been with a woman before. He was very shy but hid his shyness by being very serious and polite to people.

He thought back on the first time they had met each other. Actually, they had known of each other before for a long time, but never had the occasion to talk together. They had been working together in the same factory for almost seven months. She had been a new line-worker who had been assigned to his section but who was trained by another Malay woman from his section. He would observe her work while on the floor, but had never talked with her before. She was a good worker and had done well in her first probation period.

It was on the bus they both took home in the evenings that they first began to notice one another. Both of them rode the same public bus home instead of the factory bus. She would don her baju kerbaya and her veil, which she always wore on the line, before she left the factory. The first time it happened the bus was getting crowded and there were only a few seats along the middle-isle left open. He had found a seat by the window and she was one of the last to come up on the bus. She did not look at him and he did not even notice her until she sat down next to him.

They road together for a few minutes and as the bus would swing around the sharp corners she would lean against his side and thigh. At first he didn't pay attention, but each time she was closer to him, until their whole sides were in continuous contact. She did not look at him and he felt too embarrassed to look at her. Because the bus was crowded and many people were standing in the aisle no one noticed how close together they were. He thought that maybe she was being squeezed from the other side by people standing in the aisle.

After a few minutes he couldn't but help thinking about her, about what she looked like beneath her veil and dress, what her figure was like, the complexion of her skin, the length and cut of her hair. He would glance sidewise at her face. She had an attractive profile and a very smooth but dark complexion. She was on the short and small side, and she almost reminded him of a young school girl.

He knew that a man should not be caught touching a Muslem woman and so felt quite helpless and unnerved by

the whole situation. He just sat squeezed against the window of the bus, frozen stiff and ashamed of himself for his uncontrollable thoughts.

After a little while, the bus began to empty of people again as it was reaching the end of its route, and now she did not squeeze him as she had been doing, but her thigh and leg and side still were in contact with his own side. Then the bus pulled up to another stop and she got up and came down off the bus.

That night he couldn't help but thinking about her and fantasizing of a relationship with her. He didn't even know her name or anything else about her, except that she was a good steady worker.

The bus he had been waiting for in front of the pawnshop almost drove past him because he hadn't been paying attention lost in thought. But at the last moment he stuck his arm out and it stopped short a little ways past him. He ran to get on it and as he stepped up and grabbed the metal handle it began to move off again.

The bus was not too crowded and he found a seat near the back of the bus. He did not have very far to go before he would come down.

He looked out the window and saw the shop houses, the people in the streets, the hawkers and the motorcycles. He had seen the same scenery countless times before, but there was always something about it that he found interesting.

The first time it happened on the bus left him feeling awkward and funny, but he dismissed it and after a couple of days did not think about it anymore. A couple of times she had come up on the bus before him and there was no seat available next to her. But even if there had been he would have been too embarrassed to sit next to her. When he would come up then he would look quickly at her and their eyes would meet. She would have a curious, questioning sort of expression in her eyes and a slight smile upon her lips.

It was the next time when she came up on the bus after him as the first time, and there was a seat available next to him and other seats still open on the bus, that she quickly sat next to him anyway, and when she sat down she sat close to his side so that the thigh of her leg rested against his thigh and the edge of her leg rested against the edge of his. Then his mind began racing and he felt even more embarrassed, as there were no crowds in the aisle to push them close together, but there she was, right next to him again.

Even more than before he tried to imagine what she looked like beneath her veil and her dress. He glanced down without turning his head and tried to see how round her legs were through the contour of her skirt. He looked at her hands and saw that there were no rings on her fingers. Her fingers were long and delicate and smooth and soft.

He looked out of the window and saw the people and the lights in the street. It started to rain and the rain drops splashed against the window, and he could make out the reflection of the window's surface and see her veil and the

outline of her face next to his. He was too embarrassed to turn and look the other direction.

No one else seemed to be paying any attention to them, as everyone seemed lost in their own world of thought. Beside the rain and the shifting gears of the bus and the sound of the bell and the honking outside, the bus was absolutely quiet and still inside.

He knew where she always came down now, but when they came up to the stop she didn't get up from her seat and the bus slowly pulled away with her still sitting next to him. She sat next to him that way until he came down a few bus-stops later, and as he got up to get off the bus she glanced at him and gave a knowing smile.

When he came down off the bus in the rain he stood and looked at the window where he had been sitting. She had moved over to the window and was looking out at him and she smiled again as the bus pulled away.

He did not know what to do or to think. He did not go directly home, but stopped by the hawker stalls along the way and drank a cup of hot black coffee. The rain was falling steadily now as he was sitting beneath the large umbrella at a little round metal coffee table. No one else was there and the rain gave him an excuse for stopping and thinking about what had just happened.

Did she really like him or was she just teasing him? What should he do? How can a Chinese man have a relationship with a Malay woman? He knew his mother wouldn't like it

at all and that his brothers and sisters would all mock him for it. It seemed so impossible that he couldn't believe it and yet just the same something was happening, something wonderful, strange and unimaginable at the same time. How could he even be seen with her that some Malay men or authority would discover them and cause trouble. The entire thing seemed doomed for trouble.

He had never even spoken to a Malay woman before, except those ladies who are always behind the counters when you mail a letter or pay a bill or very briefly in the factory. He would sometimes wonder what they looked like beneath all those clothes and veils, and how hot they must feel, but he never paid serious attention to them. So many young Chinese women and girls dressed so freely and seductively that he never thought of Malay women in the same way.

The rain was coming down harder and he ordered some *kueh* and another cup of coffee. He was reluctant to hurry home now, not because he was afraid of getting wet, but because he was embarrassed and afraid that someone might figure it out by the way he was acting or the look on his face. He watched a Malay couple sitting at the table next to his. They had two children and he was handsome and she was attractive, but all of them looked like they didn't have much money. He tried to picture himself sitting there. He tried to imagine himself converting to Islam and praying at a mosque. He wondered what it would be like and how hard it would be and whether the other Malay men would accept him or not.

Then he thought about the girl again, about how she felt next to him and her neat smile that seemed to melt every pretense away. He fantasized about what her legs looked like and wondered how long her hair was. He sat there for almost an hour like that until he grew tired and finally made his way home in the rain.

The bus jerked roughly to a stop and he looked out the window and realized he had missed his stop by one. He got up hurriedly and got down off the bus and started to walk back the other way to make his way back home. He thought again of the golden chain he had bought as a gift for her and wondered whether she would like it. He knew she would, but he wasn't quite sure of it. It was a lot of money to pay but it was the best way he could show to her the seriousness of his intentions. He stopped to cross a road and a car honked at him from behind and startled him. He stopped short and the car sped around the corner.

He wondered what she would say and do when he gave it to her. It was late afternoon and he decided not to go straight home again. He wanted to think about things a little more and decided to get himself some rice at the stall close by. He crossed the road again and sat at the same table he had sat at that night in the rain. No one else was eating but he didn't mind because he wanted to be alone with his thoughts for a while.

He ordered some nasi lemak and a fried fish and an egg and some vegetables. He was quite hungry. He ordered a cup of black coffee. The fish was stiff on the outside but the flesh was delicate.

After that incident during the rainy night things began to move more rapidly. Now almost every time they got on the bus together she would wait next to him and get up behind him and then sit down next to him if she could, or directly in front or behind him in the same row. But she still didn't look at him or speak to him. When she would sit behind him he felt as if she were staring at him from behind, and when she would sit in front of him he knew that she knew that he was thinking about her. And when she managed to be next to him she always allowed her leg to rest next to his and her shoulder to lean against his arm.

One time they were both left standing next to each other in the aisle and she leaned against him with her hip against his thigh. And another time he had gained the aisle seat first and she was left standing next to him and he offered his seat to her without saying anything and she accepted it and smiled. When she sat down she touched his hand as he held the handle of the seat in front and held the bar next to his hand. By then they were looking at each other more and always smiling to one another. She was always cleanly dressed in pretty flower patterned *kebayas*. There was a faint hint of perfume, almost like jasmine, when he was next to her.

It had gone on that way for several months. Whenever she was next to him she would miss her usual stop and ride on next to him until he came down. It got so that one day she got upon on the bus before him and he came up on the bus after her. Though there were a lot of seats available, he was left with a decision to sit next to her for the ride or to sit

somewhere else. She gave him that questioning glance but she was not smiling at him. He felt awkward and didn't know what to do. But he had no time to think because people were pushing from behind and so he did what he really wanted most to do and sat down next to her. He felt as if everyone on the bus had just taken notice of what he did and were staring at him. But when he looked around he saw that everyone was looking out the window or straight to the front of the bus.

He did not sit with his leg touching hers, and he felt quite uncomfortable where to put his hand. It was then that she shifted a little towards him so that their legs were touching once again and she let her hand rest so that it was touching his leg and his hand. He rode the whole way back like that, afraid to move, afraid to look around, and afraid to look at her or say anything to her. She did not make a move when they came to her stop, and he let the bus go one stop further before he himself came down again.

From that day on there was no question that they would wait for one another to go up and sit together on the bus on their way home, although they still did not talk to one another. The next time after that the girl slipped a note in his hand, while they were sitting together. He slipped it into his pocket and hurried home to read what it said. It was written in Malay and read:

Dearest Sayang,

I miss you every day and I dream about you every night. I see you at work and think how handsome you

are. I am desperate to talk with you so that we may get to know each other better. Tomorrow I want you to remain on the bus until it comes to the end of its journey. There we will both come down together. Walk far behind me and I will lead you to a secret place where we can sit together. We can then catch the same bus an hour later and return back to our homes.

The next evening on the bus she did not sit with him but stood in the aisle in front of him. He noticed that she did not come down at her home and when the bus came to his usual stop she gave a knowing glance at him. He did not move, but sat frozen in his seat. He was petrified and excited at the same time. When the bus reached the end of its line, she was waiting by the front door of the bus. He moved toward the rear door. They were the only two left on the bus, beside the driver and the conductress, and he felt ashamed of himself and embarrassed.

When the bus moved off they were both left standing there. He was not familiar with this part of the island and wasn't sure what to do next. She looked at him and then turned and began walking up the road. He waited a moment and then began walking the same way. She was walking pretty fast for her size. She turned up a small dirt lane that lead away from the houses and went toward the hills in back. She walked up over a little ridge and down the other side and then he lost sight of her, so he hurried along even faster.

When he came down on the other side he was startled to see her standing by a trail by the edge of the wood. Lights

from some kind of homes were up the road, but this trail lead into some forest. She then turned and walked up the trail and he, hesitating at first, decided he better not again lose track of her. It was not long before they came to a small open area where a few half-buried boulders stuck up from the ground. He found her sitting on one of these. She had removed her veil and let her hair fall freely about her shoulders. There was only the light of the full moon that was reflected in a small stream of water that ran beneath the boulders, and so he could not make out very well what she looked like without her veil on.

He did not know quite what to do next. He sat quietly down upon a boulder next to her and looked at her silhouette against the moonlight. There was an awkward moment of stillness when neither one spoke or even moved, until at last she asked him what his name was. He told her his name and then asked for her name.

Then he asked her "How do you know about this place" and she then told him that she used to play here as a child and that her father's relatives lived just up the road. She told him that she would return and tell her parents that she had worked overtime and so missed the bus to return. He asked her how old she was. "Thirty-seven years old." My parents are getting worried for me, she said, because I've rejected any proposal or match they've tried to make for me for other boys. But I just don't want it to be like that" she said. Then there was another awkward silence as he was trying to figure out what to say next.

The night was cool as there was a wind up. He was afraid it might rain upon them. Then he began to hear the chirping of crickets and the croaking of a frog. Something moved in the trees overhead. She continued, "I've watched you at the factory and asked the girls about you and I know you are a good and dependable person. I do not know about what your parent's or mine would think or say, I only know that I like you and always think about you.

He too knew that it was wrong, that it would never work, that it would be impossible to get his or her parents together or to go along with it. And yet he was immensely satisfied that someone would take a personal interest in him and like him, and he was intrigued by this mysterious woman whom he hardly knew at all.

They talked that night together for a half-hour. They found out about each other's feelings, tastes, interests. They were so caught up that they had lost track of the time and almost missed the last bus going back to town. They had to cut short their conversation after he glanced at his watch and realized what time it was. They both hurried together back to the main road and waited at a distance apart for the bus.

They walked together until they reached the main road. They made arrangements when and how to meet each other again at the same place the following night.

When they got back on the bus it was the same driver and conductress as before. The conductress looked at them and smiled, and when she took the ticket from the man she

kidded him in Chinese about getting married. He felt quite embarrassed and could only manage a polite smile.

They did this for several days in a row, their families thinking that they were doing a lot of extra overtime. They did it every day until a motorcycle drove by while they were walking down the side road together and stopped after it passed them and the driver looked at them both for a while, and then drove on. After that they became frightened and decided to leave off meeting together for a week. From then on they meet like that at least once or twice a week, after finding another way of getting to the same spot without taking the side lane.

They found that they both liked each other even more and wanted to spend more time together. From then on that sat together on the bus without much restraint or embarrassment, even if some older people would occasionally cast a sidewise glance at them if they began talking to each other.

They had found it difficult to arrange a rendezvous together that would preserve the secrecy of their relationship and yet at the same time allow them as much time together as possible. They began going to different movies together on their days off, where they would sit inside the theater next to one another, and if no one was nearby, they would sometimes hold each other's hand during the movie.

They had carried on that way for several months and now he wanted the whole thing to get more serious. That was why he had bought her this necklace. He had been saving

most of the pay that was leftover after his *makan* and the money he gave to his mom to help support the family, and so he didn't mind buying her such a nice gift. He liked her very much, he thought, even loved her, and the necklace would be his way of showing her how much he felt for her.

He had never even kissed her and the most they did while they were together was to hold each other's hands. Both were too shy or embarrassed to do more than that.

He walked home feeling how heavy the box with the gold chain inside was. When he got home his mother was in the back cooking. His younger brothers and sisters were all sitting in the front hall watching a movie on the television. His older brother was out working. His father had died a few years back of a tragic accident. He was walking down the steps of an office building and he slipped off one of the steps and tumbled down to the bottom, breaking his neck. His portrait painted from a photograph from his younger days hung above the hallway entrance, next to photographs of his paternal grandfather and grandmother who were also now deceased.

Since his father's death his mother came to depend upon him and his older brother a great deal. They both held steady jobs and between them they were able to meet the monthly payments and give their mother extra money for food. The mother was now getting older, but she still went out hawking everyday, and woke up early each morning to prepare the food to start selling. His mom had tried to arrange matches for him, sometimes dragging him to her friends' homes to introduce him to an unmarried daughter.

But it never worked for him. There never seemed to be the same chemistry or mystery as he felt for the Malay woman.

But he wondered now whether his mom had figured out that he had a girlfriend on the side. She would sometimes tease him about staying out too late or always getting all dressed up just to go out on his days off. But he hesitated bringing the whole subject up and avoided conversation whenever it seemed to be drifting in that direction.

He knew that if his relationship were to continue, he would have to break the news to his family some time or another. He was not sure of when that time would be or how to do it, but he was sure they would not like it at first.

He went straight into his room without saying anything to anybody and latched the door behind him. Then he pulled the box out of his bag and opened it up. The gold chain sat coiled up on the soft white cotton pad. It was glistening in the yellow light of his lamp and he picked it up in his finger and let the pendant dangle in the air. It was so wonderful that she could not help but love it, he thought to himself. The next day he went to work. He had hung the chain around his neck and tucked it beneath his shirt so that no one could see it. He would take it off and give it to her when he met her that night.

He didn't see her at work, and was anxious and disappointed. When he waited at the bus stop she wasn't there. It wasn't like her to be absent from work.

The next day was the same thing. It was only on the third day that he saw her again at her usual place on the floor. He waited impatiently at the bus stop for her. She came up to him and smiled. They got on the bus together and then he asked her where she had been. She told him that something had happened in the family and she had to take sick leave for a couple of days. She did not say much else and they waited quietly. He was afraid to ask her if she wanted to rendezvous with him that night, but when she came to her usual stop she got up, smiled to him, and went down from the bus.

He was not able to give her the necklace and his heart fell a little. He didn't know what to think. The next day was the same. While on the bus they exchanged a few words and she managed to put her hand in his without anyone on the bus noticing, which reassured him a little. On the third day she did not come down off the bus and so he stayed on past his stop too. They both came down at the end of the line again and made their way quietly to their secret place.

She started to speak but he cut her short and told her he had something to show her. He unbuttoned his collar and took the chain off from around his neck. Even though it was dark out, the moonlight caught the gold of the chain and the girl could make out that it was a very beautiful and very valuable piece of jewelry. She didn't know what to say as tears came into her eyes and she began crying, holding the necklace to her chest.

He felt confused by her sudden outburst and didn't know what to think of it. Finally he put his arm around her as she

sobbed and asked her softly what the matter was. It was then that she told him that her family had somehow found out about them being together and they had punished her and told her she couldn't see him anymore. She was desperate not knowing what to do because she loved him more than any thing and did not want to end it with him in this way. She didn't know how to make her family understand that he was a nice man and would make a good husband.

He sat on the rock stunned, not knowing what to say or think. He listened to the insects and the water trickling. He heard a motorcycle on the main road below. He looked up at the moon and saw that clouds were beginning to form and cover it. He felt very tired by everything and wondered why these things had to be so difficult, so impossible. He became angry as he looked at her bent over in his arm still silently crying.

Her family did not know that she worked in the same factory as he did and came home together on the same bus. She had lied to them about who he was and how they met and they made her promise them that she would not see him anymore.

It meant that they would not be able to see each other on weekends anymore, at least until they resolved this problem with their families. She said that they still hadn't figured out about the overtime and their rendezvous, so that she could still meet with him here once or twice a week.

She loved the necklace and wanted to wear it. But she would not take it for fear that her family would find it with her and then really punish her for it. So she asked him to wear it for her until things got better between them, so that he might always think of her when he wore it. They sat like that for about a half an hour, and then returned home early that night.

He wasn't sure quite what to expect when he told his mother the next night that he was in love with a Malay woman. At first she said nothing and there was no expression on her face at all. She just looked at him in a funny sort of way. After a long silence she asked her son who she was and how he had met her and if her parents knew about it. At first he thought she was understanding and might even accept the arrangement. She only told him that he didn't know how hard it would be, and said nothing else to him. They let the whole matter drop without saying anything more that day.

From that moment on his brothers and sisters began treating him strangely. They stopped talking to him and acted like he didn't exist.

A couple of days later he rendezvoused with his girlfriend again and again had tears in her eyes. She told him that while at work a Chinese woman had come up to her and warned her away from him. She said that some ladies were waiting outside the factory. There was an old Chinese lady who told her to stay away from him, that his mother did not want the arrangement because his son worshipped his ancestors and would not convert to Islam. Then this lady

warned her not to have anything more to do with him or else there would be trouble.

She said she was frightened now and felt very sad in her heart. She did not know what to do any more because her own family began to be mean to her and treat her like she didn't belong to them anymore. People in her Kampong began to talk behind her back and tease her when she walked by. She began to cry again as he held her in his arms and they just sat there like two lost children, she sobbing and he with tears in his eyes, feeling very sad and helpless.

Neither of them wanted to leave each others arms that night or separate from each other ever again. They didn't know what to do or where to go for help. His mind raced without stopping. Perhaps they would run away. He could take his money out of his account and they could go and get married and he could find another job somewhere where their families wouldn't bother them and then they could forget about their troubles and live together in the open.

He wondered if she could forsake her religion and her family as well. He knew that even if he converted to Islam his own family would cut him off and her family would not take them in anyway.

There was no moon that night and it was very dark and quiet. He took off the gold chain he had been wearing for her and put it around her neck and made her promise never to take it off again. She promised him and tucked the necklace under her veil.

It was late when he looked at his watch. The last bus would be coming soon and they would have to go back without any answers, not knowing what tomorrow might bring. They didn't want to separate or to go back at all as they hung on to each other.

They walked arm and arm to the bus stop and waited there in silence. They had no plan or purpose anymore. Both of them just felt sad and happy to be in each other's arms. They got on the bus without saying anything and sat in the back together holding hands as the bus rode empty back to town. Neither of them knew where they were going. They did not want to separate and did not come down by their homes. They rode the bus all the way down to the central bus station. The shops at the mall were just beginning to close and a lot of people were still milling about inside. No one seemed to notice them as they crossed the main road against the traffic and walked together up the steps outside.

They walked all the way to the top of the fifth floor and sat on the edge of the fountain looking at the lights of the city below. The traffic was as heavy as always in the road, with honking horns and motorcycles weaving in and out. They looked up to heaven and could see a few faint stars twinkling above.

They must soon separate forever and yet they loved one another more than anything else in life. They hadn't even kissed each other and yet they felt ashamed of their feelings and intimacy.

Suddenly they felt totally alone together in the world--a feeling neither of them had ever had before. They were the last people on earth and the city below them was crowded and empty. No cars moved on the streets below. No lights flashed. Neither of them spoke together, neither of them said a thing to one another. They were afraid to look in each other's eyes for what they might see in them.

They were standing close to the edge. A strong wind had suddenly come up. In each other's arms they lost sense of where they were or what they were doing there. Suddenly he felt very angry and frustrated. He began to hate his family and himself. He began to hate his life and the city that sprawled below him.

No one saw them fall or hit the pavement. It was only the double thud that made a couple of people look around and notice that something very strange had happened. There on the ground were two bodies with arms interlocked. One was that of a young Chinese man who bled from the mouth and nose, and the other was that of a young Malay girl whose veil had come off during the fall. The veil had been caught by the wind and was carried off down into the street where the cars and buses ran over it.

The first policeman on the scene was a detective who had happened to be in the area and heard some cries and people calling for an ambulance. When he got there he moved people back and could see that both the victims were clearly dead. They made an odd looking couple. He bent

over the girl to see if she was breathing when he noticed the gold chain she was wearing. Bending over so no one could see, he managed to quickly slip the chain off her neck without anyone noticing and bunch it in his hand and put it into his pocket.

No one knew what happened. Some people thought the boy was trying to rape the girl and they both fell off the top floor by accident. Others conjectured that maybe the boy was trying to push the girl off when he was pulled over also. The next day the newspaper had a small column at the bottom of page 24 that read only "Local couple fall to their deaths at...."

The Detective

The police detective who had slipped the chain from off the dead girl's head and into his pocket took it out again as he sat alone in his car. He held it up in the palm of his hand and figured he had made quite a bit of money that night. It was his way of making ends meet between paychecks, and anyway, he figured they owed him for passing him over successively for promotion. Plus he had extra expenses of his own that he needed to take care of.

He went back to the station and the girl was waiting quietly for him sitting at his desk. He said nothing to her. The pictures of his wife and children were there on his desk, and it bothered him to have to see them while the girl was present. He had this young Indonesian woman wrapped around the end of his fingers.

He used her sexually when he wanted her, and kept her from talking with anyone, frightening her by threatening to turn her into the authorities and have her and the rest of her family deported back to Indonesia. He didn't allow her to talk to anyone and she only went to her job and came straight back to wait for him at his office. Anyway, he gave her a little spending money when he scored a little extra in order to help keep her quiet. The other policemen looked knowingly at her, but they all looked the other way. As long as there were no repercussions everyone acted as if nothing was going on.

Of course his wife knew about the situation and was angry with him, but she was a good wife who could say or do nothing about it. He visited his family on his day off and sometimes stopped in to see them between times while on his job.

He was also irritated because he hadn't figured out what to do with the necklace as yet. He didn't want anyone around the station to see it in case it was reported missing. He wasn't sure whether to sell it for cash or to give it to the girl as a gift. He liked the girl a little bit and felt sorry for her, but the necklace would bring a lot of cash in and he could do a lot more with the cash. That's why when he saw the girl sitting there dumbly he became angry at her and purposefully ignored her. He didn't want to bring the necklace out in front of her and he wanted to see it better in the light to figure out how much he might get for it.

He sent the girl out to buy some *makan* for them so that he could get a better look at the necklace. When the girl left he pulled it from his pocket and inspected it in the light. He was amazed at the intricacy and delicacy of its design. He knew right away that it would be too much to give to the girl and that he would get a pretty good price tomorrow from someone he knew on the streets. So he put it into a small pouch that he hung under his shirt and quickly buttoned his shirt back up.

When the girl came back with the rice they ate on the table. He asked her if she had spoken to anyone that day. She was terrified of him and told him that she only spoke with the people she usually talked to. When he wasn't too busy he

would follow her down to her work and then pick her up when she was finished.

He liked the girl because she was like a helpless child to him. She was much younger and thinner than his wife and more attractive. He made her go to the department store and buy the sexy lingerie that he made her wear every night. He kept her in a small flat that he rented from a connection. No questions were asked, no papers signed--as long as the rent and bills were paid every month.

The money that she earned from her own job during the day he let her do with as she pleased. She used it to support her family who had come illegally to work, and to send back to her own country. He bought her food and clothes to make her look good, and he paid for the small flat where they stayed nights. He made her clean the flat, and when he was out and she was there, he would lock her in so that she couldn't leave without his knowing it.

They finished eating and threw the wax paper into the trash can and washed their hands at the sink outside. Then he called his wife and asked after his kids and told her that he wouldn't be coming home that night because he had to work late. The wife said nothing and he hung up. Then he and the girl walked out to his car and they drove to their flat together.

The first time he saw her was when he went to arrest the family after being tipped off by someone who called him on the phone. Instead of having them arrested he figured he could swing a deal with them. When he saw the young girl

he decided that he liked her. After talking with her a little he knew he had them in the palm of his hand. He brought the girl with him down to the station and found her a job while he let the others off the hook.

Their flat was on the eleventh floor of a low-cost housing scheme. He hated it. At first they checked in to some nice hotels who gave him a special discount because they knew him. But it was too expensive and risky to spend every night in a hotel, even if he liked the accommodations better. He parked the car beneath the building and they took the elevator up from the ground floor. The flat was dirty and crowded. Things were always falling from above and the air smelled of durian fruit. Kids were still playing up and down the corridors as he unlocked the grill door and opened the door of the flat.

He opened the glass door that gave access to the small balcony. The wind was still blowing and it cooled the place off very well. She turned the light on to the kitchen. He always had her go out and buy beer in the mornings so that he could drink one when he came back at night. It helped him to relax and he liked the taste of beer, even if he went to the Mosque every Friday. He told her to get him a beer and he took off his clothes and went to take a hot shower.

He laughed to himself when he thought how his wife still had to use cold water to wash herself with. He thought how odd the dead couple were that night lying limp and lifeless arm in arm. He did not understand their motives. It all

seemed so strange and unbelievable. He hadn't seen anything like it before in his seventeen years as a detective. And the girl was strange and pretty, even in death.

The girl went to clean up and he sat down on his couch to watch a video. He had gotten a deal on the tape player. Sometimes he liked to watch foreign movies when he had the extra time to go and rent them and sometimes he liked to watch his special collection of blue movies he had gotten when they had made a raid on and confiscated a bunch of blue movies downtown. He had put all the tapes they had raided into several plastic bags and put the bags into the boot of his car. When he took them back to the station he left one bag in the boot of his car while he took the rest in to be used as evidence. He figured there was more than enough to make a case.

Tonight he put on one of his special tapes. It was a Japanese tape. He liked to see the naked women making love to each other. The girl came out dressed in a light nightgown with skimpy lingerie underneath. She looked embarrassed as she sat down on the couch next to him to watch the start of the tape. She was dark, tall and attractive. She had a nice figure and was on the slim side. She had let down her black wavy hair and it covered her shoulders. Her breasts were large and her black hard nipples pointed through the thin material of the nightgown. He could smell the perfume he had bought for her to wear, and she had rubbed lotion over her body.

They sat there watching the movie for about a half-hour. He had put his arm around the girl and drew her close to

him. He figured these movies were educational for her as it would teach her things to do in bed. At first she was very timid and would just lie there stiffly and moan a little. Only lately she was beginning to get used to it and break out of her shell a little more. She was beginning to get into it more and even seemed to be enjoying and wanting to do it more. He wanted her to do things like in the movies but was too embarrassed to ask her openly. She always turned the light off before she got into bed, but he wanted to leave the light on so that he could see her in the mirror he had hung on the wall while they made love together.

They sat on the couch like that together and finally they were kissing and he slipped his hand beneath her nightgown and could feel her soft smooth skin. They made it on the couch for a while, until the tape ended. Then they got up. He rewound the tape and then they went into the bedroom. Tonight he insisted that they leave the light on and she acquiesced. He had forgotten all about the golden chain with the monkey pendant.

The next afternoon he went to see someone downtown he knew who dealt in stolen merchandise and contraband, so that he could swing a deal with the necklace. He didn't really know its net value and asked for at least a thousand dollars for it. He had already made plans for how to spend the extra money. The man he was dealing with didn't make much of an argument and gave him his full asking price. No questions were asked and he did not think twice about having done it.

On the way back to the station that afternoon he thought about his wife. He sometimes missed her and his children, and thought that he would go and stay with them this evening after he took the girl back to the flat. When he went like that he never said anything to the girl. He never told her where he was going or what he was doing. He just locked her inside and told her to not answer the door if anyone came to call.

When the detective went back to the station the head of the department called him into his office. The department chief told him that there had been some complications. The girl that worked for him had fallen ill at her work and had been rushed to the hospital. There they had to do an emergency blood test on her because she had an acute appendix rupture and the hospital wanted to perform an emergency appendectomy.

The problem was that the results of the girl's blood test had indicated she was HIV positive. The head of the department asked the detective if he knew what this all meant. He asked him if he had any sexual relations with the girl and who the girl's family were, because they had to be told of the situation.

The detective was dumbfounded and just sat on edge of the chair without moving. He was staring through a window into the work area outside and the chief's words were droning in an incoherent fashion. All the implications of

what the chief was saying didn't really sink in. Just a mild infection like the flu or something, he thought to himself.

He did not really know much about AIDs except that there was no cure yet. He didn't really know whether he could have picked it up from her or not, or whether he could have given it to anybody else.

His mind flashed to the dark girl in her silk lingerie. He thought about his wife and his children. He counted the months back to how long he had known the girl and then he thought how many times he had had intercourse with his own wife since then. He thought that she was a young virgin because the first time they had intercourse there was blood.

Then he heard the chief's words again. He was himself to go down to the hospital to get a blood test done and a shadow began to rise slowly over his heart to engulf it in darkness.

The Tourists

The couple had brought out the hotel's wooden folding lounge chairs to sit under the casuarina pines in the white sand. White billowy clouds filled the sky and it was a warm day with a nice wind that took the edge off the heat. They were a young and fashionably dressed couple. The man had spied them from the edge of the beach and watched them put the suntan oil on each other and lay down on the chairs. After a couple of minutes he made his move. He was not a big man and he had recently become lost weight.

Wearing his slippers and his tourist t-shirt, he carried his little old leather briefcase over to the couple and stood there for a moment looking out at the waves. They were a little uncomfortable at first, afraid to look at him until he spoke to them.

"It is a beautiful day today. One can see all kinds of animals in the clouds. Not too hot with the wind blowing so early."

"Yes, it is wonderful today" the young woman said.

The man said nothing nor did he look at the man with the suitcase.

"Ah, you speak English, where are you from" he asked them.

The women told them "We're American. We've come from the U.S. on holiday."

"What part of the U.S. are you from" he then asked them.

"New York" she replied.

Then he asked them if they would like to see his nice souvenirs and jewelry. He told them he had very special things that couldn't be found in any stores. He opened up his briefcase and the girl looked surprised by all the fancy things inside.

At first she was suspicious, disbelieving that they were authentic. But as she studied them and held them, she began to recognize the qualities of real gems and gold and silver. It was an odd assortment, and they were held in place with raffia ties on a purple and pink velvet backing that was already worn and soiled and torn from years of use.

They had come for a holiday for a couple of weeks and were at the end of their stay. Beside the hotel that was part of their initial budget, they hadn't spent anything much at all, and she wanted to take some souvenirs and gifts back to the states.

At first the man didn't appear very interested, but when he saw his mate become so excited over the contents of the briefcase he decided it might be worthwhile to look it over more seriously. The girl was holding the golden necklace with the monkey pendant. Of all the jewelry in the case, it was by far the most beautiful and eye-catching. She had

never seen anything like it before and she knew that it must be a very valuable piece of jewelry.

She showed it to the young man and asked him if he liked it. He became more enthusiastic when he thought she really liked it. He had been wanting to get her something to make amends to her, to make it up to her, but he had so far seen nothing adequate to the task. Everything else had seemed so cheap or overpriced or commonplace.

The confidence trickster knew he could get more for it on the market, but he also feared it might be stolen. He already carried it for a week and wanted to recoup the thousand he had paid for it. He told the girl when she asked him how much he wanted for it that normally it was priced at \$2000 dollars, but for her he would ask only \$1,500 dollars. He liked to deal with the Europeans and knew not to ask too much from them. He hated to deal with Chinese or other locals, or with people from the Middle East who counted and quibbled over every penny. But the best customers were the Japanese, who paid in cash almost any price he asked of them.

The girl didn't say anything but looked at the man for a moment. The man had about \$6000 U.S. leftover from the original \$7,500 he had saved for expenses for the trip. He was keen to bring some of it back with them, but at the same time he wanted to get something while they were there, especially something that might make both of them more happy together. They were leaving on the plane the next morning and he was growing desperate to try to patch things back up with his wife.

They hadn't any children yet, though they had both been trying for several years. Their marriage seemed to be falling apart, especially when she had found out that he was taking a woman he worked with at his office out to lunch almost everyday. He told her that the other woman was just a good friend whom he liked to talk to about things, but this didn't matter much to his wife. His wife hadn't spoken to him for a week after that and was threatening to leave him and move back in with her sister.

They had arranged the vacation as a way of giving their marriage a second chance. It was supposed to be like a second Honeymoon, although it hadn't yet quite worked out that way.

He had changed two thousand five hundred dollars in traveler's checks the day before and had the cash in his wallet. They were planning to go downtown to buy some jewelry in the gold shops that afternoon, and to buy some batik cloth and other souvenirs.

The young man asked his wife if she liked the necklace. He could easily see that it was a very valuable piece of jewelry and that the \$1500 dollars was not too much to pay for it. Plus he didn't like spending too much time shopping around with his wife and it would save them a couple of errands that last day. They talked for a couple of minutes like that between themselves, forgetting the man who was standing quietly and politely waiting in the sand. They knew that there would be no receipt and no possibility of returning the item if they found it defective or fake.

Finally they agreed and he took out his fat wallet and paid the man the full amount in fifty-dollar bills. The man was beside himself that he made a sale, but hid his feelings well.

The American woman put the necklace into her purse and it was not very long before they decided to go back to their room to get ready to go shopping downtown.

The hotel room was dark and quiet. They clicked on the overhead fan and she pulled the curtains over window. It was the second floor and it had a small balcony that overlooked the beach front with the casuarina trees. It was an older hotel and the furniture was old and wobbly, but the room was spacious and the wind blew into the room and made it cool enough that they didn't require the air-conditioner.

They got a couple of cold beers out of the small refrigerator and sat on the chairs in the balcony. She brought the necklace out of their purse and they both admired what they had bought. It was a silly, impulsive thing to do, but it was their last day and they felt like being a bit silly about things. The entire time they had watched their money and now they were leaving and they still had most of the money they had worked so hard to save just for the vacation.

Neither of them had ever traveled abroad before. It was their first time to the Orient, and they found it strange and in many ways disappointing to their expectations. Everything was dirtier and less friendly than they realized. The local people were courteous, but reserved and even

unfriendly. For almost the entire two weeks the only other people they were able to really talk with were a young German couple that they met the third day but who soon left.

The two weeks together seemed to have had a warming effect on their marriage. They were at least talking with one another more without arguing, although a couple of times they went for a whole day without speaking to one another. They talked of small and trivial things. They talked about the experiences they had, and things they remembered about their life back in the U.S. Both had their own careers that took them away from one another quite often, all it seemed they ever did anymore was just work and pay bills in a non-stop daily round. They were usually too tired by the end of the day to do much with each other when they were both home.

They were talking with each other again, about little things, and they didn't once bring up or discuss the woman or their marriage or the virtues of having children. Last night they even had a great time in bed together, and it was the closest thing to being like their honeymoon that they had yet experienced on their vacation. It seemed like the wounds were slowly healing over, but they were leaving tomorrow and all this peace would soon come to an end and in a couple of days they would be back in their routines in their lives in the States.

Both of them felt like it was over too quickly. They hadn't enough time to work everything out yet. And even now, there was no more time to worry about it or to just sit and

relax, as they needed to catch the early afternoon taxi service from the Hotel to downtown so that they could take care of all their last minute shopping.

He went to take a shower and get dressed and she sat on the balcony looking at the gold chain. The monkey was sitting in a curious position, cross-legged like a human, and it had a funny expression on its face--not quite a smile upon its lips and human like eyes. Perhaps there was hope for their marriage after all. He had been really good to her the entire vacation, and she thought that maybe he could actually be trusted and he was telling the truth about the other woman after all.

She thought that maybe they should go to a counselor or something like that when they got back, or to a doctor to see if there might be a problem why they were not able to conceive a child. She was already in her mid-thirties and she was becoming a little worried about it. She always wanted just a couple of kids--a boy and a girl would be best. It would be good for him too, making him think less about himself and becoming more responsible for their relationship. Not that he was never responsible, but he just liked to enjoy himself sometimes and have fun with his friends and the people at his work, none of whom she knew very well.

She admired the chain and the intricacy of its design. She held the chain in her hands and thought that it was very heavy. She wondered how pure it was. The pendant was unusually large too. She didn't really know that much about jade or gold or such things, but she had priced the jade and

gold at the shops downtown a couple of times and realized how expensive even a small piece could be.

Yes, there might be a chance to patch things up and get started on a new footing in the relationship. She cherished the last few days together and was quite sad that now it was coming to a close so quickly. She didn't want to go back so soon to her old routine. She had grown tired of the drudgery and the same old faces. She didn't really care for the people whom she worked with and secretly envied her husband who seemed to make friends so easily with all his coworkers. He was basically a nice person. She had never known him to ever be mean to her or to deliberately hurt her in any way.

Perhaps she was being unfair to him in making more out of the incident than was actually there. She had felt confused and didn't know who or what to believe anymore. She often felt like she was being pulled in a hundred different directions and didn't have enough of her self left over.

He came out of the shower dripping wet with a towel around his waist. He finished off his now warm beer and tossed the can into the waste-basket by the small television set. He got his clothes and began to put them on.

She still loved him but only felt angry at him because he didn't seem to be paying any attention to her anymore. Either he was too busy with his job or he was talking and having a good time with his friends. Somehow things hadn't seemed to be going in the way that she used to think they should be. She wanted a family sitting around the

dinner table in a comfortable house, like she remembered when she grew up. All it seemed to be anymore was one unexpected problem or headache or phone call or dinner date after another.

The hotel van drove them down to the shopping complex in the center of the town. He had worn the gold chain around his neck and tucked it under his shirt, because they thought that would be the safest place for it, short of putting it in the hotel safe. But they were hesitant to do this because they thought it may have been stolen or that people might start asking questions about where they had gotten such an expensive piece of jewelry. The van was air-conditioned and was comfortable to ride in. There was only an older Japanese couple riding with them.

They went down a few streets and bought some beautiful batik cloth and she bought herself a pretty dress. They picked up a few things for gifts and stopped at a nice Indian restaurant to have an early dinner. They liked the Indian food the best, and found the Chinese food strange. They didn't try much of the Chinese food, because they didn't know what it was or how to order it.

They decided to go back to the hotel early and spend the evening on the beach. They thought they might try walking down to one of the bigger hotels and having a drink there. They waited for the bus at the bus depot by the shopping complex, and got on a crowded bus.

The sun was beginning to set by the time they got back to their room. They hurriedly packed the things they had

bought into their suitcases along with the clothes they had neatly folded there, and they changed into their swim suits and put T-shirts on. They didn't know what to do with the necklace but she put it into her purse to carry by her side while they walked.

The usual feelings and distance had given way that evening. They were close together once again. They didn't know how long it would last, but at the moment they didn't really care. They walked along the beach for about half a mile, the surf and coarse white sand feeling cool beneath their bare feet. The sun was just going down against the distant horizon of the Indian Ocean and the high clouds blazed red and orange. It had rained for almost the entire first week they were there, and the heavy surf had cut heavily into the sand of the beach. A few fishing boats were making their way back in the distance, otherwise the sea was quite calm and serene and the beach wide and flat at low tide. A horse with a young white girl on top trotted past them, kicking up sand in its tracks.

Darkness fell quickly. They turned and made their way back down the beach. They came to the fancy hotel that had a small garden with tables by the beach. They stopped there and ordered some drinks. The girl slung her purse over the back of her chair.

She got up to go to the restroom, forgetting her purse behind her chair. While she was gone her husband, also forgetting the purse, walked up to the bartender to pay the bill. When he returned to the table to wait for her, he

noticed that the purse was missing. It was too dark to see beyond the lights of the circumference of the garden.

When she got back and discovered what had happened she began to cry. They reported the theft to the bartender who called the hotel management and security. Luckily for her all she had of any value in the bag was the gold chain. She kept her spending cash in a little change purse she wore around her neck and he kept their documents and airline tickets in his wallet. There was little else they could do except to go back. They had to get up early the next morning to catch their plane flight out and they decided not to make a big fuss over it.

They walked back to their hotel room, somewhat frightened by the dark shadows of the night. He was feeling angry at himself for being so stupid. They got back to their room and locked the door. The maid had been in and cleaned the place for them. They put in an early wake up call and ordered for a taxi to pick them up the next morning and take them to the airport.

They packed their things without saying too much to each other. They turned on the TV but there was not much on, so they both sat out on the balcony in the dark and drank a beer while they listened to the crash and thunder of the waves as they pounded the beach beneath the casuarina trees. She told him to forget about the necklace. What was more important was that they were both talking to each other again and nothing else mattered at the moment.

Other than the loss of the necklace, the rest of their return journey went without a hitch.

The Thief

He had walked through the back of the hotel earlier in the afternoon. He acted as if he were crippled and had leaned on a stick he had fashioned out of a branch of wood outside the hotel. As soon as the hotel staff saw him they ran him off the premises and he went back around to the side of the hotel along the drainage channel where none of the guests would notice.

But he had hung around the back along the side behind some bushes and watched as guests would come and go near the bar area by the beach. After darkness had fallen he saw the young white couple walk up from the beach and order some drinks from the bar and sit at the table near the corner of the area. He watched as the young woman slung her bag across the back of the chair. He could see them clearly in the lights, with all the bugs flying around, but he knew they could not see him in the shadows of the bushes beyond the reach of the lights.

When he saw the young woman get up and leave after a while with her purse still hanging on the back of the chair, he edged a little closer to the grass edge that was closest to the table. When he saw the young man get up and walk toward the bar with the bag still hanging there, he made his move. Without looking around he marched quickly under the lights straight to the table, he unslung the bag from the table and marched right past into the darkness on the other side. Once in the safety of the night he made haste to empty

the contents of the bag into his own bag he carried slung with a string over his shoulder.

Inside the purse he found a comb, a bottle of suntan lotion, some old bus stubs, some hair clips and the gold chain with monkey pendant wrapped in a small handkerchief. He threw the bag into the drainage stream that flowed by in the bushes, and he stalked away along the side of the hotel to the front where he walked down the road to the third bus-stop down and waited for the bus to carry him back down town.

There were only a handful of people getting on the bus and he hung back in the shadows beyond the edge of light of the bus stop. As the rear bus doors opened to let down a couple of passengers he quickly and quietly slipped up the steps first in front of the passengers and then sat down in the far backseat corner of the bus without the bus conductress, who was busy attending the people coming up, noticing. He pulled an old bus stub from the back of the seat in front of him where someone had stuck it.

When the conductress walked to the back of the bus she eyed him suspiciously and then asked him if he had yet paid his fair. He showed her the folded up stubs he had picked up, confidently looked her in the eyes, and told her “yes. She returned to the front of the bus where she sat down.

As the bus lumbered shakily down the road, he quietly eyed the passengers around him. He saw an old Chinese man with a cane and a young Indian mother with her small boy

sitting next to her directly in front of him. Two young Malay men were sitting beside him and a couple of young Chinese girls were sitting in the seat just in front of the back door. He shifted away from the window toward the center of the seat where he could look up the aisle.

Two young white tourists were sitting near the front, and a couple of Indian women with their flower patterned *saris* were sitting in the middle. One of these women had her billfold in her right hand on the seat beside her next to the aisle. She was busy talking with the woman just in front of her and was not paying attention to what was going on around her on the bus. When the bus would jerk forward or brake or turn, she would let go of her billfold on the seat and hold onto the handle with her free hand.

As they got closer to town, a few more people had come up and the bus was beginning to fill. At one stop while a lot of people were coming down and others were coming up, he quickly shifted seats to the empty seat directly behind her that was just vacated by an old Muslim couple. He softly slapped the seat near the window and plopped down. The Indian woman in front of him was too busy to talking to even notice he was there.

At the next bus stop the bus jerked to a sudden stop next to a group of noisy school girls coming home late from school. Everyone had their eyes on the girls when the young man quickly and quietly slipped the Indian woman's billfold off her seat and into his open bag. Then he quietly got up and exited the back of the bus the way he came. He

was the last person down and the bus lumbered off blowing off black smoke as he stepped on the pavement.

He quickly crossed the busy street in the middle of the traffic, having to wait in the middle of the lane for an opening before he could get completely across, and then he began walking quickly along the side of the road toward town. The bus was just four stops away from the main depot area at the shopping center, so he was fortunate that he didn't have very far to walk.

Along the way he ducked into a dark corner behind a building where there were only a couple of stray cats pawing in the trash. There he pulled out the billfold he found and opened it and took out the money and coins and then he threw the rest of the billfold into the trash pile and he walked back out to the main street. As he reached the second corner he noticed that just up the side road was the Pasar Malam. He turned up the road and walked into the lights of the market area.

Because it was still fairly early the market was pretty crowded. The hawkers were doing a brisk business. The noise of the music from the cassette seller was fairly loud. He noticed that a hawker selling shirts and underwear was busy with three Chinese women and had his back turned away from the other side of his table where some T-shirts were sitting folded neatly in rows. The Indian boy quickly opened his bag and grabbed two T-shirts from the edge of the table and slipped them into the bag, then he walked off again into the crowd.

He walked by a hawker selling fresh fruit next to the cassette seller that was crowded all around by a couple of Chinese families. He reached in behind a couple of kids and grabbed a couple of Sunkist oranges off the table and plopped them into his bag.

He walked further down and came to a gap along the side of the market where there was a tent set up selling clothes inside and where there was an alley-way leading to a back road behind a row of shop houses on the side of the street. He stood there for a moment and then noticed an old Chinese woman walking alone with her handbag slung over her shoulder. She was wearing large gold earrings and a necklace and bracelets and a couple of rings on her fingers, and she was quite bent over and walked with a cane in her other hand.

As she slowly walked by him he quickly looked around and noticed that no one was looking that way. He quickly pulled a pocketknife out of his pocket and then with his other hand he grabbed the strap of her purse from behind and cut the strap. He was so swift and smooth in the motion of this action that she didn't even notice anything until after he pulled the bag with his free hand from behind her and her strap gave way. He quickly dodged into the darkness of the gap and into the alley behind the shop houses. He ran the length of the back road until he came to the main street from which he had originally turned up. There he stopped for a moment to catch his breath. He emptied the purse directly into his now full bag and threw the purse into the

corner of the back street. Then he crossed the road again and continued walking quickly to his final destination.

He laughed quietly to himself when thought about how strange it was that the lady didn't start screaming until he was already in the alley. He heard a couple of men shouting behind him, and how by the time he stopped it was completely quiet.

At last he came to the main boulevard where the shopping center was. It was all lighted up and all kinds of people were shopping and ambling about.

He crossed the boulevard in the middle of the road, just before the pedestrian crossing at the light, and he had to run to dodge a truck that honked it's horn at him.

When he got to the other side he sat for a moment to cool down and to rest for a minute. He watched all kinds of people walk by. There were groups of young girls and groups of young boys, young couples, older Chinese folks, Chinese and Malay families, rich looking white couples and a dingy looking young white man. A couple of the shopping center guards ambled slowly by and stared at him as they past. He looked at them and then looked the other way as if he didn't even notice them.

When they got out of his field of view around the corner of the building he reached into the bottom of his bag and put on his jacket and then he decided he'd better walk around and start from the other side. He walked around the outside of the complex and then went up the escalators to level

number three. The inside of the mall was crowded with shoppers as there had been a holiday sale promotion at the department stores.

He zipped up the bottom of his jacket and slung his bag over his left shoulder. It was a fancy looking brown leather jacket, and with it on people didn't notice his dirty T-shirt or pants so much.

Inside the mall he walked carefully behind the throng of people as it slowly made its way down the main corridor. There was a promotion of gaudy costume jewelry going on with loud speakers playing music. A lot of young girls were there browsing on the shelves and all the sales girls were too busy with their customers to pay much attention to him as he grabbed an handful of fake gold jewelry off a shelf and slipped them quickly into his jacket. He zipped up his jacket a little more as he quietly exited the store. He made his way into the main department store on the other side of the mall and went up to the top floor. He enjoyed walking the floors on the different levels, and then coming down by the store escalator to the next floor.

He would act as if he were a customer shopping. It was a busy night and the store personnel in their blue uniforms were all so busy with customers or talking to one another by the cash register or bringing out more merchandise to arrange on the shelves. So they didn't notice when he slipped into his jacket a total of three new blank cassette tapes, some three way electrical plugs, an expensive set of women's underwear, and four pairs of black dress socks.

He didn't exit the store at the ground level where they sold groceries and most of the store security hung out around the entrances. He waited around the entranceway of the second level acting like he was interested in buying some new shoes until he noticed a group of Indian women leaving at the same time that a large Chinese family was entering. He got just behind the group of Indian women on the opposite side of the security guard at the door and quietly slipped through and then made an abrupt turn to the right and walked outside of the shopping mall where the outside stairs led down. He stopped to sit on the steps halfway down and when he saw that no one was coming up or down the steps he quickly opened his bag and put the contents of his jacket into his bag one thing at a time, taking stock of his booty.

His shopping bag (as he called it) was stuffed full and so he began quickly rearranging its contents without taking his hand or anything outside of the bag. Then he put the two oranges into the pockets of his jacket and slung the bag under his left arm without closing the bag. By this time a young Malay couple was ascending up the steps. He walked down the steps. He noticed that the young man was pretty small and the girl was cute so he brushed against the girl on purpose as he descended the steps past them.

He waited under a tree at the bottom of the steps out of the light of the street lamps. He was watching a tourist couple who had a VCR and a camera bag taking video pictures of each other near the ground floor entrance of the mall. When they finished they walked out his way and sat under the

bench under the tree next to his. As he was already sitting there and had a bag under his arm they did not notice him. The old white woman then got up and walked by a tourist promotion billboard and wanted her husband to take a picture of her there. The old white man in white shorts with hairy white legs got up from the bench with his VCR in hand and left the camera bag on the bench.

He moved fast in the shadows, grabbed the bag off the bench and then walked quickly toward the bridge around the back of a row of phones. The couple hadn't noticed the bag missing until he reached the busy one way road. He slung the whole camera bag over his left shoulder as if he were a tourist and hopped over the planter with the yellow marigolds. He waited a second for an opening in the traffic and then crossed against the cars, stepping between them as they veered to avoid him.

He walked down the main thoroughfare where the tourists always shopped. A lot of tourists and locals were out. He went down a few blocks, brushing against people along the way. He stopped and waited at a corner where he had just passed two young tourist men wearing shorts with loose pockets. They had their backs turned to him as he stood there. He saw the tourist's wallet in his back pocket as he was looking at some leather bags and talking with the other man. He quickly pinched at the wallet with his forefinger and thumb, but just then the tourist began to turn around the other way. He withdrew his hand for a moment and waited. The tourist had noticed nothing.

He turned back the other way and then the thief quickly pinched his wallet and stepped out across the street just behind a car and in front of a motorcycle making a turn. As he turned and walked across the road he quickly put the wallet inside his jacket. He walked quickly across the road and moved down to the next corner where he slipped a couple of caps off the table as he walked by when he saw the lady hawker trying to sell a hat to a young Japanese tourist couple.

He reached the intersection with the traffic light at the other end of the boulevard. He did not wait for the light to change but just stepped out into the road against the oncoming cars. A car honked at him and another car honked at the first as it's brakes screeched. He stopped and waited and then walked in the gap behind these cars. Then he stood in the middle of the road and waited for a couple of more cars to pass.

As he gained the other side he turned and walked up the dark side street where he always hung out, transferring the caps and wallet from his jacket to his now fat bag. There were no streetlights except on the corners, and there were a few alleys and side-walks along either side of the rows of shop houses. One of the rows of shop houses had been abandoned from a fire that occurred in one of them a year ago. He slept inside one of these abandoned shop houses. It was locked with a grill and padlock but he gained access by the back through the demolished shop house just next door.

Inside the backroom he had made himself a small bed with some cardboard boxes and newspapers he had scavenged.

He had a small set of candles he would light and he hung his three bags with clothes on nails from the walls.

He would sleep here at night or during the day when he was tired. Or he would just wait hiding in the rubble next door for young drunk tourists to come staggering by in the middle of the night. That happened quite frequently as just up the road there were a couple of open air discos, and a few low priced tourist hotels.

He lit one of the candles with his plastic cigarette lighter. He had stolen the candles and the lighter at the same Chinese sundry shop just down the road. He lit two more candles and propped them up on a piece of wood. Then he sat down on his cardboard bed and opened up his bag with all his booty in it and dumped it all out on the ground, spreading it out before him and then taking the time to arrange it all very neatly. He looked inside the camera bag and there he found an old Nikon 35 mm SLR and two sets of lens with some lens cleaning equipment. He looked through the camera window as if he knew how to take a picture and acted like a professional photographer. The view window was very dim with only the candlelight.

He put the camera back in the bag and looked at the wallet.

There he found \$138 dollars and a couple of U.S. traveler's checks. He took out the passport of the person and an American Express card. Inside the wallet was a couple of photos. One was of a young white woman in a two piece bathing suit standing by the beach. A lot of people were there, walking by or swimming in the waves. The girl in the

picture was attractive. He pulled the picture out of its plastic pocket and stuck it in a crack on the board on the wall. He took out the other pictures and tore them all up.

He put the money into a pile on the floor underneath a rock. Then he looked at the passport and the card and wondered what he could do with them. He put them into another pile under another rock. Then he laid the wallet back down on the floor. It was fairly new and nice.

He pulled out the other things in his bag. The pairs of dress socks, the T-shirts, the caps, the electrical outlets, the cassettes, the things from the old woman's purse, which included a small change purse with fifteen dollars inside, two bottles of medicine and a pair of glasses, and the things from the purse he stolen at the beach. He looked at the gold chain with the monkey pendant and figured he might get one or two hundred for it.

He didn't really know why he was such a successful thief. He had been doing it for only a couple of years now. He thought that it was perhaps because he had such a young face that everyone thought him innocent--he was only fifteen and on the short side for his age.

He decided to keep a couple of the T-shirts and one of the pairs of socks, a cap he liked and the hairbrush. These things he put into another bag that was hanging from a nail on the wall. The rest of the stuff he carefully arranged back inside his carrying bag.

By the time he was finished the candles were getting low and flickering. One had already gone out. He felt tired and decided to rest because he wanted to get up early before the sun to carry his things to thieves' market.

He lay down and heard a rat scratching among the rafters overhead.

He awoke with a start when he heard the young drunk Australian singing and yelling and kicking things outside on the street. He got up fast and ran around to get a better look at the person. The young Australian was big and had a short haircut. He was staggering in the street and appeared to be angry. He could see that the Australian had a change bag slung around his waist. He began kicking the tires of a car parked along the street and then staggered back and fell over onto the ground. He sat there in the middle of the street ranting and raving. It was late and dark and no one was noticing him.

He quickly picked up loose brick from the ground and ran out into the street behind the Australian. He came up directly behind the Australian and clobbered him over the head with the brick. The Australian bent over holding his head and moaning. He quickly unzipped the change purse and took out a handful of cash and a wallet inside. Then he ran off into the shadows around the corner and made his way back to his room where he lit a burned down candle and counted the cash. He could hear the Australian still moaning and groaning outside. He counted 34 dollars. He opened the wallet and found another 100 dollars and the Australian's passport that he put with the other one. The

wallet was old and so he flung it out the back door into the rubble. The drunk Australian outside started shouting again and cursing real loud, but soon he heard the voice get fainter as the Australian moved off down the street.

When he woke up again he could see that the sun was beginning to break on the horizon. He quickly jumped up and gathered his bag of things and made his way down the street along the back alleys. He came to area known as thieves' market. A few men had their things laying out on old blankets. He didn't have a blanket so he found a spot along the curb and laid his things out on the ground, including the camera, bag, lenses, the brush, the wallet and the gold chain, along with some things he had previously stolen but had not yet sold.

It was morning twilight and things were not yet very light. Just then a large black Mercedes-Benz drove slowly up the road. When it passed by the boy the driver slowed down and looked at his things. Then the driver backed up a little and pulled over to the side so that the view of the boy from the road was blocked by the car. The driver got out of the car and asked the boy what he wanted for the necklace, the wallet and the camera and equipment. The boy told him 500 dollars. The man said 100. The boy said 400. The man said 150. The boy said 350. The man said 200. The boy agreed. The man took some cash out of his pocket and counted out 200 dollars in 10 dollar bills. He gave it to the boy. The boy put the things into one of the old plastic bags he kept extra for that purpose. The driver got back into the car and drove off.

He didn't sell anything else that morning and after about an hour decided to put the things back into the bag and move off. Besides, he now had plenty of cash and was really feeling anxious to go find his dealer and buy some heroine. He walked in the cool air of the morning. The streets were not busy with cars yet and so he quickly made his way to an old shop house on the other side of town. Below was a coffee shop that was already full of people going to work at the offices nearby. He went inside and up the stairs and knocked on a door. The door cracked open a little and a face peered through and told him to go outside for a few minutes and wait until called.

He went back down and waited beside the curb. While he was waiting he didn't notice three young Malay plain-clothes police officers walked up behind him. One of them offered to sell the boy some drugs and the boy agreed and took money out of his pocket. The other two then grabbed him from behind and twisted his arm behind and put handcuffs on him. They were so swift and quiet that hardly anybody inside the busy coffee shop noticed what happened. They led the boy down the street to a car waiting by the curb, got into the car and drove off.

The Towkay

He put the plastic bag with the things he had bought from the Indian boy at thieves' market that morning behind the driver's seat of his car. When he got to his office that morning he carried the bag into his room.

His secretaries and all other agents acknowledged him as he came in and he went straight into his office-room and closed the door behind him. There was already a note on his desk to return a call to a client as soon as possible. He looked at the camera and found that it was in good condition and the lenses were of good quality. He held the gold chain in his hand and was surprised by its beauty and weight. He held it up to the light and estimated that it was indeed pure gold. He put the gold and the camera bag and equipment into the wall safe in his office, and then he set about his business.

Shipping and forwarding was a competitive business. He had worked hard and had built up the business over the years since he had taken it over after his father's sudden and tragic death. He had been lucky to cultivate the right connections with Taiwanese, Indians, and more lately, with Japanese clients and other agents. The Japanese had especially brought in a lot of business and profit, and so the last couple of years were successful for him. He liked doing business with them because they paid the asking price up front without any questions, so unlike the Taiwanese.

He got up early every day, Monday through Saturday, and worked until late each night. He liked to keep his new Mercedes-Benz spotless because he frequently drove his clients and other businessmen in it. Some mornings he would drive by thieves' market on the way to his office because he frequently got good deals there.

He had six children all in a row, and the oldest was now entering secondary school. He was hard on his children and would not tolerate any nonsense from them. He hardly had any time to talk or be with them, and he expected his wife and his house-keeper to handle the lot.

He had been arguing with his wife a lot lately. He would scold her or exchange a few harsh words with her. His wife would not fight back very much, but just break down and start to cry.

Someone had told his wife that they had seen him getting fresh with a young secretary who worked in his office. The girl was nice and very attractive and he liked to go out to lunch with her sometimes. The girl dressed very seductively and she had long slender, shapely legs.

The phone rang and it was someone from the Chinese Swimming Club inquiring about his application for membership. He said he was happy that he was being considered for membership and would pay the initial fees when they billed him.

In the evening he had a dinner date to take a client to one of the nicer hotels in town where they were offering a buffet

special. The client could bring in a lot of money and he was anxious to see that everything went smoothly with the appointment.

At noon he went out to get something to eat at the corner coffee shop. It was his favorite coffee shop where he worked. Soon his secretary came in and ordered some food and sat down at the table with him. They talked and laughed together about things. She was young and fresh and fun to be. He liked her and enjoyed her company. She wore a pretty dress and had an attractive face. Also she was pretty smart and he liked intelligent women.

He knew his wife was put out with him over her. He had not been serious with her at all, though she sometimes stayed over time to help with the books after everyone else had gone home, and he would then take her out again in the evening to buy some dinner. They had spent a lot of time working together, and she was getting to know the ropes of the business already.

They walked back together to the office and went back to work. He had to go out to take care of some cargo waiting on the docks. Before he left he opened up the safe again and looked at the gold chain with the monkey pendant. He couldn't make up his mind what to do with it.

While driving down to the docks in his car he talked with his secretary on the phone and then called his wife to see

how she was doing. After hanging up he was debating whether to give the chain to his wife or to his secretary. He felt like he ought to give it to his wife, though secretly he desired to give it to his secretary. His wife had stuck by him through all those lean years, and the six kids had not been easy to raise. He loved her a great deal. His secretary had really been helping him out with his new clients and business was doing better than ever lately. She worked really hard and he also really liked to have her around. He couldn't get her out of his mind and wanted to do something for her.

He worried though that if he gave it to his secretary then it would signal something more serious between them, a commitment of support that would cause a great deal of friction with his wife. On the other hand if he gave it to his wife what would it matter, he thought. She had so much jewelry and a little bit more wouldn't make much difference to her.

That night he picked up the clients at their hotel in his Mercedes-Benz. He had invited his secretary along because she was good socially and helped to break the ice. Plus she was attractive and he felt good when he was with her in public situations, as everyone seemed to treat them better. He was carrying the gold chain in his pocket but he still hesitated about whom to give it to and so it stayed where it was the entire evening.

His secretary performed very well that night. She knew all the right things to say and all the right things to do, and his clients seemed really relaxed and to be enjoying themselves with her. They had had a couple of drinks with their dinner, and because he hardly ever drank much, it had affected him quite strongly.

He drove his clients back to their hotel and then drove the girl to her apartment flat she shared with her family. He let her off outside and she was hesitant about asking him to come inside for a little while. He said good bye and moved off.

He thought about his wife and children. He really loved his children. Every Sunday they would do things together as a family, and this had become the most enjoyable time of the week for him.

After dropping her off he didn't feel like going straight home. The drinks he had with dinner had made him relax and loosen up a little. He turned on his stereo and played his favorite Elvis Presley songs as he rode across town.

He rarely had much time to himself just to think about things and the problem about what to do with the necklace was bothering him.

As he drove down the coast road he saw the lights of the local nightclubs up ahead and as he came closer he impulsively decided to stop and have a drink at the place he usually frequented with other businessmen.

Inside it was dark and filled with cigarette smoke. The red tiles of the floor shined in the sparkling of the multi-colored light that rotated, suspended from the ceiling on center stage. A few couples were doing a slow dance on the floor and the Filipino band was playing an old mellow 60's number.

He found a seat at the bar and ordered himself a beer. He sat there listening to the music and thinking about the day. The gold chain still bothered him, as he was debating between giving it to his wife or his secretary. He began thinking about his business. He had started with very little. His father started the business when he was young but he had never learned much while his father was alive. His father's business just fell apart after his death because no one wanted to step in and take it over for about a year. His father's old partner wanted to buy their family's shares of the business from his mother, but he had told his mother that he wanted to give it a try instead.

He owed a lot to his dad, he thought. His father had died unexpectedly after he had gone to the restroom after finishing dinner. He slipped inside the bathroom and broke his neck. He died on the spot. He somehow felt responsible for his father's death, as he had insisted that his father go to the restroom just as they had been leaving. His father had been an inspiration to him. He was not only a successful business man, but he had also been a national champion badminton player in his younger days and playing badminton was his whole life. He had always been a

straight and honest man and had given to charities and worshipped properly all his life.

Now he had been dead over ten years, and he still missed his father and thought about him a lot. His mother never really got over his father's death, and she turned more seriously to worship almost every day. His brothers did not want to be bothered with the business and all had advised their mother to sell off the father's shares to the partners. Now they looked enviously upon his wealth and success and were demanding their own share of the profits of the business.

He ordered another beer and the band had started on an old Elvis Presley tune. Elvis Presley was his favorite singer and he listened intently to the music, not noticing the poor English of the singer or the music that was out of key. He forgot about his daily worries over his wife and his business and just listened to the music for a while.

Since it was still not too late he decided that he would have another beer and listen to the music a little longer. It was then that the girl came up to sit next to him at the bar. At first he didn't pay much attention to her except that she was on the small and thin side. She had a funny appearance. She was a Malay girl but she was not wearing any veil and her hair had been styled and permed.

He couldn't tell her age although she looked pretty young, too young he thought to be in a bar like this.

The girl smiled at him and sat there a while without ordering any drinks. Finally the bartender came up to her and asked her if she wanted anything. She told him not yet and the bartender told her she would have to leave if she didn't want to order anything.

He did not know why he did it. The impulse came over him to order her a drink and he asked her what she wanted. Maybe he just wanted to see the site of a Malay women drinking. "A Roman Coke" she said and the bartender went to work.

She smiled again at him and asked him his name and what he did. He told her and then asked her what her name was. It was hard to hear each other because the music of the band was so loud. At first they were shouting to each other, until the girl leaned over and began whispering into his ear.

She was a mysterious creature. She reminded him of an oversized black cat without any hair, sitting on a stool too high off the ground. They began talking about music and what kinds of music they liked to listen to. He enjoyed the triviality of the conversation. He began telling her of the music he liked to listen to when he was younger.

Very soon he ordered another beer and another drink for her.

He didn't know why he did it. It was all a vague memory. Something about the girl got him really worked up and he ended up going up to a hotel room with her. He paid the

hotel desk clerk some money and they went inside the room. It was an old Chinese style hotel and the furniture was very dilapidated. There was a large square mirror that had been hung low almost the entire length of the bed.

The girl went into the bathroom to shower and he just sat there on the bed, his head buzzing with the tunes from the nightclub and not quite sure what to do. She came out naked except for some long silk stockings tied at the waist with a black elastic garter belt. She was pretty skinny, and looked even younger than in the nightclub.

When he woke up it was dark. The girl was not there. He looked at his watch and realized that it was not too late to get back home again. He was lying on the bed naked, and his trousers were slung over the other bed and his shirt was hanging in the little closet. He wondered where the girl had gone to and then he thought about his wallet and remembered the gold chain he had left in his pocket.

He had never done anything like this before and felt quite ashamed of himself. He searched through his pants and found his wallet. His IC card and cards were all there, but all his cash was gone. Then he searched the front pockets of his trousers and realized that the gold chain was also missing.

He quickly got dressed, and looking a little sheepish, left the room. The hotel lobby was dark and the night watchman had fallen asleep on a cot blocking the hotel

stairwell. He shook the old man quietly on the shoulder and the old man slowly got up and went downstairs to let him out through the grills of the front entrance.

He drove back to his house and found all his family already asleep as he snuck in quietly. He had never done anything like that before and vowed to himself never to do it again. He went and showered and then went to bed himself. He could sleep more easily because he didn't have to worry anymore about whom to give the gold chain.

As he lay down on the bed next to his wife he thought how much he really loved his family most of all.

The Pimp and the Prostitute

[by Hugh M. Lewis](#)

The girl got dressed as soon as the Towkay had fallen asleep on the bed. Once dressed she quickly went through the pockets of his trousers and found the gold chain and took all the cash he had out of his wallet. Then she quietly left the room and went out the rear exit of the hotel. Her pimp had been waiting outside for her the entire time since she had first gone up with the man.

Her pimp grabbed her by the arm and scolded her for taking so long. She showed him what she had gotten and he became silent, pocketing the money and the gold chain. They walked back to their own hotel as it was too late now to get any more business that night. They rang the buzzer of the bell for the night watchman to come and open the gate so that they could go up. The night watchman was asleep and didn't hear the bell. They rang and rang and shouted up the circular stairway. About five minutes of this the old man was finally roused and, still in a drowsy state, he went down and opened the grill for the young Malay couple. The young Malay man scolded him and cursed him for taking so long. Then they both ascended the stairway and went up to the top floor and locked themselves in their room.

He was as short and small as she was and he dressed in fancy clothes, though between them they hardly made enough to eat or to pay the hotel bills. They were hoping to

strike it really big one night and then make enough to skip out of town without paying the balance of their hotel bill which they hadn't paid in over a week.

She was only 17 and he was only 19, though to her he acted much older and mature. Both had come from outstation. They had stayed at the capital for a while, and, leaving there in a hurry, had come to this city to make more money. She liked him because though he was small he was tough. Sometimes he was real mean to her, especially when they weren't making any money, but otherwise he bought her clothes and made her feel like a woman. He was the first boy to pay any real attention to her or to make her feel like she was someone. After she ran away with him to the city, he began to change and threaten her and forced her to do bad things.

They would go out every night to try to make business. She was young but not very attractive. He had her make herself up and dress up, so that in the dark of the night she looked prettier. She already began looking older than her years.

They had been in the hotel now for two months and owed a total of 16 days back rent to the hotel management. Whenever the hotel manager or manageress were about during the day they would try to avoid them as much as possible, because they were always kachowed for the money. He would only pay one or two days at a time, because they were planning to skip out of town at the first opportunity they had to make a lot of money.

Mostly they got local young Malay men or sometimes middle aged Chinese men for business. Usually they would arrange a room at a special rate with another hotel, the night watchmen of which they had befriended. Every evening they would go out to get makan and wait outside of certain hotels. Last night was only the second time they had tried the nightclubs, the management letting her come in the back way without charging any door fee.

When they came back to the hotel it was usually 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning. They usually scolded the old uncles of the hotel who opened the gates. They would go up to their rooms, first walking through all the corridors to see if any doors were open or if anything was going on.

He wouldn't let her talk to anyone in the hotel without his presence. They would sleep until noon, and then get up and go out and eat and snoop around the town.

One afternoon a young American traveler checked into the hotel room just next door to them. He was a very big fellow who looked like he lifted a lot of weights, and he was very friendly. He had just come from Thailand. The young Malay man was by the front desk arguing with the manageress over payment of his debt, when he saw the American carrying his backpack. He got the room next to their own and he pulled out a big wad of cash he had in his pocket to pay.

He followed behind the American as he went up to the room. The American went inside and left the door wide open. He went to his own room and told the girl about the

guy next door. He told her to get fixed up, then he went out and started talking to the American.

The American had thrown his pack down in the corner and was going to take a shower. He noticed that the American had a fat wallet that he had put on the little night table by the bed. Bills were sticking out of its side. Then he told the Malay man that he was going to go over to the bar across the street to have a beer. The Malay man left and went back to his room and told the girl to go over to the bar and wait for him to come in.

She went over to the bar and ordered herself a coke. She waited about a twenty minutes like that until the American came in and ordered a beer and sat down at the bar. He was laughing, talking with the female Chinese bartender. She was sitting at the end of the bar and looking at him through the mirror. The American noticed her looking at him and he said hello to her.

He scoffed his first beer in almost a single swallow, and then he ordered a second one which he still drank fast but more slowly. She didn't know English and he didn't know Malay, so they couldn't say much to each other, but she could tell that he was interested in her and was behaving very friendly toward her. He went and put some loud music on in the jukebox against the wall. It was hard rock music.

Barely a half-hour had elapsed and he had already finished his third beer and ordered his fourth. She felt very awkward but now he was sitting next to her at the bar. Finally he asked her if she would like to dance. Not understanding

him, she just smiled and shrugged her shoulders. She was nursing her now flat soda, in which the ice had all melted. He led her by the hand to the center of the room between the tables and he began moving his hands and legs in a funny way. She smiled and started slowly, seductively moving her hips and arms back and forth.

The song finished and they went back to their seats at the bar. The bartender was laughing at the American and having fun teasing him in English and then in Malay with the girl. The girl would smile and joke back with her. The American didn't know anything what was going on. He ordered another beer and another drink for the girl. When he pulled out his wallet to pay for it the girl noticed that he had quite a few hundred and fifty-dollar notes haphazardly shoved into his wallet.

They sat in that bar for several hours like that. She nursed her coke and he drank close to eight bottles of beer. He was acting very strangely and wildly, and he was frightening to her a little, but funny as well.

Finally she excused herself to him, translating through the bartender that she had to go to the restroom. As she got down from her barstool she put her hand on his and brushed by his side with her body.

She stepped outside and her boyfriend came out of the shadows. He asked her what was taking so long and she told him that he was really drunk and had a lot of money in his wallet. She told him that he was really falling for her and that she would try to lead him out. He told her that he

had a plan, and would try to lead him down the street. He had talked to an acquaintance at a Chinese medical clinic down the street and that man told him he would sell him some drugs in a hypodermic needle for a price.

She went back inside and sat back down with the American. At first he didn't notice her, almost as if he had forgotten about her, but then he turned and recognized her and laughed. He asked her if she would like to leave the bar and go with him somewhere. She didn't understand but the bartender told her in Malay what the American had asked. She had the bartender tell the American that she knew where they could go. Then the Malay girl led him by the hand and they walked out into the nighttime air. He smelt of beer and could hardly walk.

When they got outside she grabbed his hand in hers and she led him down the street. Her Malay boyfriend was walking ahead of them on the other side of the road as they walked up the road nearby where the clinic was. She led him up to where the Malay boyfriend had thrown his cigarette upon the ground and she waited there a couple of minutes.

The American was growing restless but acted unafraid. She saw her boyfriend motioning to her from the alley across the road and then she led the American into the shadows of the alley. The Malay boyfriend came up behind the American in the shadows and quickly injected the shot into his rear end. He hardly noticed anything and he turned around to look at the man standing behind him. He started looking real dizzy and heaving. He sat down on the ground

and was having a hard time breathing, then he laid down on the ground and closed his eyes, holding onto his chest.

After a couple of minutes he was silent and still and out cold on the ground. The Malay boy and his girlfriend didn't know what the drug was or what its effects were. They didn't know if he was dead or just knocked out. But soon he stopped breathing and they feared that he had died. They quickly went through his pockets and took the change in his front pockets and the money out of his wallet, putting the wallet back into his pocket. Then they laid another, empty hypodermic needle beside the American and they quickly walked off.

It was now pretty late and no one was nearby on the street. They quickly walked back to the hotel and packed their things. She had hidden the gold chain she had stolen from the Chinese Towkay a few nights ago from her boyfriend because she liked it and knew that he would take it from her to sell for cash.

She had secretly hung it behind the wardrobe on a nail. He never looked behind things or under the bed, and never really cared much if the room was clean or not. But now she was nervous and they were in a hurry, and so she had completely forgotten about the gold chain. They counted out the cash and found they had over 2000 dollars. They packed their things in their small shoulder bags and left the key in the room and the door unlocked. They *kachowed* (harassed) the nightwatchman to let them out through the gate.

They stalked off into the night like two alley cats, and they were never seen again. Agents from the American Consulate visited the hotel the next day to investigate the mysterious death of the young American down the road, whom the Malay authorities had attributed to drug overdose and left it at that without further investigation.

The Ex-Pat

Now it happened that the next person to rent the room after the police had come to search the room next door where the American had stayed who had died, was a British ex-pat who frequently came to stay at the hotel because he knew the manageress and liked the old 1920s style of the hotel. Also he liked the fact that it was inexpensive and yet had air-conditioning and hot water and a private balcony.

When the Malay couple had skipped out without paying the debt the Management was angry, but the incident was soon eclipsed in importance by the discovery of the body of the American down the street and the tracing the American to the hotel where he had rented a room. The police had come up and checked the room and the hotel register two times, and officials from the American embassy had also come to inspect the register and to gather his belongings in the room.

The management did not make the connection between the Malays leaving and the American's sudden and mysterious death. Everyone dismissed his death as drug related when they found the hypodermic needle by the body, and the police did not bother to investigate the death further than that. It was surprising that no money was found with the body, as the manager remembered seeing a lot of cash with the American when he had checked in. The manager only figured that a policeman may have taken the money. They didn't tell the police about the Malay couple leaving the

night before as they didn't like to involve the police in hotel matters.

So nothing more was made of the affair, except that they all speculated about how it was that the American had suddenly died under such capricious and strange circumstances. Rumors soon circulated that a young, bit American had died of a heart attack.

When the management found that the Malays were not coming back two days later, they found that the door was unlocked, and the key sitting on the side-table. The hotel maid and an old uncle went in to clean the room thoroughly, as they had left it a mess, with one bed frame broken and the mirror all messy with fingerprints and lipstick. They cleaned the room and mopped the floors, changed the linen and then left.

That evening, the old British ex-pat, Tom, had arrived with his son, who was a teenage Anglo-Asian boy. The mother had died several years earlier and Tom was trying his best to raise his young son as best he could, even though he was now in his late seventies.

They checked into the very room that the Malay couple had occupied. They each carried a small suitcase and they laid their things on the bed. Tom was the first to notice that there was a little trash underneath the beds and a lot of dust. He decided to look behind some of the furniture to see the state of the room's health. He and his son moved the large closet away from the wall to reveal an empty whiskey

bottle and a couple of clothes pins, and then they noticed the gold chain hanging from the nail.

They took it down and admired its beauty. Tom's first impulse was to take it to the hotel management as he thought that the person who had left it behind might come back to reclaim it. But then he thought about it a little while. He reasoned that the person who had left it behind would have already come back to reclaim such a valuable thing if it had been very long ago.

Then he thought that any other occupant of the room between that time and now might just as easily have taken the chain. He looked at the chain and saw how beautiful it and the pendant were, and the more he studied it the less he wanted to give it back to the hotel management, whom he suspected might just keep the chain for themselves anyway.

His son, who was a more than a little superstitious about such things, thought it was a good omen and that they should hold on to their lucky treasure.

Tom was not quite sure what to do with it and so wrapped it up in a handkerchief and put it into his pant's pocket. He would hold on to it until he could figure out the best thing to do with it.

His son went to take a shower and Tom sat down in the low legged Chinese chair next to the round table to feel the cool of the air-conditioner and ceiling fan at the same time. Though he was now getting old his memory was still good

and he liked to think about the events that happened to him in his long life.

His dear wife had died several years earlier of breast cancer and since then he took it upon himself to raise their son well. She was a Malay woman and he had loved her dearly. He had lived in that country since before the war and had nominally converted to Islam though he still liked his scotch.

He had come as a young university educated man during the mid-thirties. He was teaching English and Math to the secondary school students of the British administrators and officers there. He enlisted before the war when war looked eminent and had been commissioned an officer.

He remembered fighting the Japanese when they invaded from the North, and of fleeing into the jungle to hide and fight a guerilla war. Then he had been captured by the Japanese and he was sent north to Burma to work on the railroad there.

Many people had died on that railroad and he wondered how he had survived it all when so many he knew had perished. He had contracted a case of acute malaria and was on the edge of death when the war ended and he was liberated by the American forces.

He made his way back to Malaysia and regained his health and strength in the military hospital there. The government was then in the emergency state and they needed his skills in the jungle to help fight the communist insurgents, some

of the same people with whom he had been fighting the Japanese during the war.

He was older by then and had been put in command of a company of forces who patrolled the interior and that had frequent skirmishes with the guerillas.

He remembered the night he had almost been killed when they came up to the window of his hut and fired their submachine guns into the room. He rolled off the bed and threw a couple of grenades he kept under the bed out the window. Then he slipped out another window with his revolver and shot two more Chinese men dead as they came around the corner of the building after the grenades exploded.

His units had been ambushed several times, but each time he had used a special tactic of a small group of men to follow the main body of soldiers and to attack the ambushers from the flank and rear with machine guns so that the main body could escape.

Now he sat under the cool of the fan and looked at himself in the cut-glass mirror that was chipped at the edges. The hotel was about as many years old as he had been in the country, and he felt a certain kind of attachment with the hotel. He first visited the hotel when he had been a teacher before the War, and he remembered that then there were not many hotels in the town and that this was a first-class one where many important people had stayed. Now it was a run-down place, clean but in need of repair. The furniture was exactly the same as he remembered it, though it had

been arranged differently in the room. The tiles of the floor were the same. Now the rooms were painted yellow, but they were originally a light green color. Of course, then there was no hot-water heater or air-conditioner.

He had come back to stay here after the war and he learned that it had been bombed by the Japanese and that later the Japanese officers used the hotel as their residence. After that he came back to the hotel almost every year or so as he traveled between his residence in Thailand and Singapore where he managed some of his finances.

He thought about his wife. He had married late in life. He had met her when he started at a teaching post at the National University.

She was a young student of his. It was a time in his life in which he was feeling particularly lonely. She was a good student but had a difficult time with her English. He began giving her extra tuition outside of classes and they got to know and like each other very well, almost like a father daughter friendship. When she left the school to go abroad to medical school he helped her with her tuition and to gain admission to a good school. They wrote to each other almost every week and he found he missed her more than anything.

When she returned from her studies abroad, she was a mature woman and was one of the first woman doctors in the country. It was then that he asked her to marry him, and she consented. He willingly converted to Islam as religion really never mattered to him as much as scotch did.

He continued with his teaching post while she built up her practice in the capital. She had a hard time at first, but slowly was able to get a private clinic going which specialized in treating pregnancies and women's disorders. She was a woman ahead of her time and she fought for the place of women in Islam and in her own society.

They lived modestly and neither of them had owned a car or learned to drive before. They depended upon the bus to take them to their work, though between them they could easily have afforded a car.

Since she died he had stopped taking care of himself very well. He still wore the old khaki pants that she would hem and hand sewn up the small tears for him. He thought about her often and it made him sad.

Since her death he had lost contact with his in-laws. They had lived in a Kampong and were never overly friendly with him, as they always expected him to help them out and to adopt a stronger Muslim way of life. After she died he bought a few acres of farmland for the family, and since then he had very little communication with them.

Now he was old and living on the pensions that both the British and the local government paid to him. He owned several properties still and he would travel between them. For the most part he educated his son himself, but was worried that his son would soon need to go on in school to gain his certificates. Otherwise they did not have a lot of extra money.

Now he was old and tired and worried all the time about what would become of his son after he died. He had left all his properties and savings as well as his money to his son after he died. He was hoping to send his son back to England for college.

Things had changed a great deal since he had first come to live in that country. He could never have imagined when he was a young man coming down from the freighter that he would spend the rest of his life here. Now it was in his blood and it was all he knew. He would not know what to do if he had ever gone back to Wales, as it had been so long since he had seen it, and his own parents were long since passed away.

He was amazed by all the recent changes that had been happening in the country. He remembered that when he first checked into this hotel there were barely 500 cars on the whole island. Now there were thousands.

He went out to talk with the management. He spoke excellent Malay and they liked to sit around the big table and drink the spirits he always brought as a gift and joke and laugh. He found out that a big developer had bought the hotel and that they were soon going to tear it down and replace it with a more modern hotel. They had been losing a lot of business and the reputation of the hotel had recently gone down hill with the change of management among the shareholders. The original manager of the hotel who took the business over from his father had gambled away most of his shares in the hotel, and now other people had taken it over. The manager and manageress remained to run the

hotel and take care of things, but they were not making much profit from it.

He asked them who had the room before him and they told him all about the Malay couple and their strange behavior and how they had skipped out without paying over half a month's rent. Then they told him about the American who had stayed in the room just next door and who just died mysteriously two days before he had come. Tom felt a little more uncomfortable about the gold chain in his pocket.

The subject of the conversation had switched to the World Cup games that were then playing and they were talking about which teams had lost and which teams seemed to have a shot at the Cup. The games had gone well, but teams expected to win had lost and mostly unknown teams were now in the finals.

Soon his son came down and they went out to get some *makan* and to do some shopping down at the new shopping center. The son liked the new mall and knew his way around it well, but his father preferred to go in the old shop houses and bargain and speak Malay with the shopkeepers. The shops all seemed old and anyway his father was very stingy and almost never bought anything for himself. He just liked to talk to the people and tease all the girls.

Now he was thinking about buying his son a new computer. He knew absolutely nothing about computers and mistrusted them. He didn't believe in all the new sciences and thought them basically impersonal and inhuman. For him Shakespeare had been the beginning and end of all

proper education, and he had published several critical studies of Shakespeare's plays.

But he thought that perhaps his son would do well to get a computer. He had been taking computer lessons from an acquaintance who knew a lot about computers and his son had really become enthusiastic. His son was now dragging him down to the mall so that they could look in the computer stores and find a computer magazine by which to compare and price all the different kinds. It was exhausting and confusing for the old man, and he ended up allowing his son to figure it all out for himself. He would buy whatever computer his son decided upon if it was inexpensive enough.

He loved his son a great deal and would do anything for him. His son reminded him of his wife, as he looked more like her, he thought, than himself. But he had spoiled his son, giving in to him on just about anything, and he was always hesitant to punish him too severely. But his son was a good boy and worked hard in his studies.

Because he was handsome all the young girls were infatuated with him and flirted with him where ever he went, and a lot of young men were jealous of him. His handsome, beautiful "kopi-susu" son was finally growing up, becoming a young man he mused, as he remembered how he looked in his dirty diapers screaming at the top of his lungs.

Now he was old and he didn't talk a lot with people. He liked to go to the barbers once a week and have his haircut

and to sit in the coffee shops and listen to all the aggressive young Towkays talk business.

He used to know quite a few people in this town, whom he would visit whenever he came to stay. But now most of them were either dead or gone away, and there were just a few of them left that he knew about. He saw a billboard for a charity dinner and auction that was asking for donations at the old recreation club. He remembered this place and thought he would like to go to the dinner just to get to look at the old clubhouse where he had spent so much of his time recuperating after the war.

At first he thought about giving cash for the charity fund, but then he remembered the gold chain in his pocket and thought that it would make a fitting contribution to put up for auction.

So he made reservations for two to attend. The next evening he and his son took a taxi to the old club house that had since then been renovated and converted into a Chinese restaurant. Outside there were mostly fancy Mercedes-Benz's and BMW's and a couple of limousines with chauffeurs waiting and talking with one another.

The facade of the building was the same, and the layout of the floor plan inside was little altered, with a small stage for performers and a small dance floor in the center. But otherwise nothing else looked the same. It was all in a modern decor that he detested and it made him feel uncomfortable. When he and his son walked in all the people, mostly Chinese businessmen, stopped and just

stared at them and spoke under their breaths about them. But nobody seemed to recognize or remember him and he didn't seem to recognize anybody there except for one old Chinese gentleman who sat over by a wall and just looked at him and smiled.

After they seated themselves, he took the gold chain which he had put into a nice black jewelry box he had bought downtown for the occasion. He walked up by the stage and gave it to the master of ceremonies and auctioneer who were arranging things back stage and getting ready to do the bidding. The MC looked at the box and opened it and was surprised to see what was inside. He asked Tom who was giving such a nice gift for the charity drive but Tom told him that it was an anonymous donation and walked back to his table near the back wall of the great central hall. A disk jockey was performing and playing music on center stage and people were so busy eating and talking that no one noticed his coming or going along the back wall.

They ate a good Chinese banquet dinner, with fried *beehoon* (Chinese noodles) and roast duck and rice and soup. They were served warm tea for drinks. After a few minutes the disk jockey stopped talking and the MC and auctioneer came on stage to start the bidding. Mostly rich looking Chinese Towkays and their families sitting in the tables nearest the stage took part in the bidding.

Soon the gold-chain in its black box that he had donated was being put up for bid by a person in the audience who wished to remain anonymous. It immediately got a bid of 1000 dollars, and soon was up to 2000 and then 3000. One

older Chinese man was bidding against a middle aged Chinese woman at another table. Finally the bidding stopped at 4000 from the Chinese lady.

Tom felt good that his gift had fetched such a good price and after the dinner he and his son went out and waited by a nearby bus stop to go back to the hotel.

The next day, with the new computer for his son and a new set of clothes for himself, they left the hotel and went back to their home. It was the last time that Tom ever stayed in that hotel.

The Dragon Lady

The woman who had bid so high for the gold chain thought nothing about the money. She saw the gold chain held up on stage from afar and knew that she wanted it even though her vision was now poor and could barely see it. But even at a distance she could see it was something valuable and worth of being coveted, and she usually got what she wanted.

She sat there with her god-son and his wife and their children. She wanted them to take her to the dinner function, though he was busy with his work and could hardly afford the time out.

People called her a dragon-lady behind her back because she was not a very nice person. She was really not a happy person. She had no children and her husband had died a decade ago. She was the second wife of a very successful businessman who had left her with three large homes on the island.

The first wife left her deceased husband two sons but they were not very clever and were not able to take over the business, so that his entire business enterprise ended up in the complete control of a business partner. Her Godson managed her business for her, and she allowed him and his family to stay for free in one of her homes, while she lived with a maidservant in the other.

Actually she was illiterate, and so she could not understand a lot of the legal documents she had to deal with and didn't trust lawyers. Her Godson was dependable and was the only person alive that she could trust. She had used a lawyer once before to settle her husband's estate, and she felt that he had somehow cheated her out of a lot of money, and had even tried getting a house from her, if she hadn't at the last moment gone to seek the advice of another solicitor.

She did not worry about spending money on anything she wanted, but she was very stingy with her money and would pinch every penny when it came to the management of her rentals.

She was ashamed of her illiteracy and a few years back had taken an English course to try to overcome the problem, but it didn't help much and she soon grew tired of the work and the classes.

So now she lived mostly alone and had no friends, and went and bothered her Godson and his family almost every day. After the dinner had finished she went up to write a check for the gold chain and collect her prize. She took it out of the box and admired its beauty and was happy she had decided to attend the dinner after all.

She had gotten into religion more heavily and worshipped the Sai Baba at her home. She had been planning to go to India to attend the Sai Baba's ashram with a few other disciples but was afraid to go so far away.

One day she was returning to her home in her car. Her maidservant had the day off and so she was alone. As she pulled into the drive way a young Chinese man came out from the bushes behind the car. He had a knife in his hand. She quickly rolled up her car window and locked the doors. She was frightened to death as he threatened her and hit the window and told her to open the door.

Finally he broke the glass by hammering it with the end of his knife and the glass shattered and hit her in the face. He reached inside the car and started to cut her arm, and told her to hand him her purse. She did and he took off running. She was frightened and didn't know what to do as she sat there bleeding in her car.

Since then she was afraid to be alone at her home and that was why she liked to spend her days at her God-son's house or go out shopping or walking the Mall.

When she got back, she went into her bedroom and put her new gold chain with the rest of her jewelry. It was by far the most outstanding and strangest piece of jewelry she possessed. She decided she would take it down to the gold shop the next day where she always did business and have them assess its value for her.

The next day she drove down with her maidservant to the gold-shop. She couldn't find a place to park near the shop so ended up parking on another road a little ways away from the shop. Because it was hot out she decided to take a

langchai who was peddling by. She had hardly ever rode in a trishaw but this old man's trishaw was polished and exceptionally clean. She got in and bargained with him over the price as he rode the short distance to the gold-shop around the corner and just down the street.

She told the *langchai* to wait for them and they got out and went into the shop. After about half-hour, they emerged from the shop. She had the necklace in a plastic bag in her hand and another plastic bag with another gold bracelet she had bought to match with the necklace as close as possible.

As they were going back down the road the maidservant noticed some silks hanging in a shop window and they decided to stop the *langchai* and go inside, taking their bags with them. Soon they emerged from the shop with an armful of more bags and got back into the trishaw, who peddled them back to their car. They were talking so much about what they had just bought and seen at the material shop that neither of them noticed that the bag with the gold chain in it had slipped out of the dragon lady's hand. It had fallen down on the side of the seat of the trishaw cart.

They were so busy talking the rest of the way home that it wasn't until they got to their house and were taking the bags out of their car that they realized the gold chain was missing. They guessed what was happening and frantically drove back downtown to where they had taken the trishaw but could find no trace of him. They asked around about his whereabouts but nobody knew him or where he came from. They then drove around the town for over an hour but still could see no trace of him. They saw a lot of trishaws, and

even a few old men who at first looked like the man, but they didn't know where he was.

She thought about going to the police to file a report, but she didn't trust the police either since the incident with the robber, because it looked to her they weren't really interested in what had happened to her.

She came back down to town to look for the man again the next morning, but still couldn't find him. She looked for two more days but to no avail.

Finally she gave up on ever finding the man or of regaining her lost necklace, and she consoled herself that the bracelet she had bought to go along with it was almost as nice. She went back down to the gold shop to buy another necklace that perfectly matched her bracelet. It was not the first loss in her life, and was liable not to be the last.

The Trishaw

When the trishaw had picked up the old Chinese woman and her servant whom he took to the gold shop and then waited in the hot sun to bring back, he had just dropped another person off who had taken him far outside of his usual area, and he was quite hot and tired. And after letting the old Chinese woman and her servant off back at her car he then rode right away back over to his own side of the town to park his trishaw and take a break at his usual coffee stall.

When she had lifted all those plastic bags into the seat, he didn't notice that one small one had slipped down on the side of the seat. He took a couple more customers that day, and no one noticed the bag that had lodged itself further down.

It wasn't until late that night when he was weary and found a place to rest for the night that he opened up the seat to get out his blanket and tarp to cover the trishaw that he noticed the white plastic bag and found the gold chain inside.

It was the most beautiful thing he had ever held in his hands his entire life, and he felt at that moment the luckiest person in the entire world. He had never stolen anything in his life. He did not even know for sure who might have left it there, although he figured that it probably was the old lady who was carrying all the bags.

At first he thought that he might try to find her to return it to her, but then he thought that if she wanted it she could come and find him. He would keep it safely inside his trishaw until someone came to claim it. And if no one showed up to claim it, then he would be in possession of a very valuable piece of jewelry. But he was already getting old and had no idea what he could do with it short of selling it for a lot of cash. He had been peddling the trishaw for so long that he couldn't imagine what else to do.

It had been his entire life since he had been a young man, and now that he was getting old he felt very tired. He had no family except relatives he knew as a small child in China, but he could not remember them very well and would not know how to find them if he ever went back to China. He was alone in this country, as he had always been, and he had grown into it well over the years.

Not having much, he peddled the tri cart around during the day and sometimes in the evening and then he would find a spot somewhere to park it and sleep without too much disturbance. Sometimes he would peddle it all the way out to the river by the Hospital so that he could park it under the shade of the trees and wash himself and his clothes in the stream near by. He did not make much money in a day--mostly just enough to eat a little. If he had much leftover it would afford him a new shirt or something to fix his cart with.

He knew a lot of people in his regular area, which was over by the Jetty and the poorer side of the town. He had a lot of usual customers, mostly middle-aged Chinese women

whom he would take to the morning market and children he would take and pick up from school everyday. People trusted him because he was honest, worked hard and asked for little--the proper ingredients of a successful Chinese businessman.

A few months before he had fallen sick and someone found him half-dead in his trishaw. He was rushed in an ambulance to the hospital where they had performed an operation on him and where he remained for over a month. He was worried what would become of his trishaw when he got out. He did not even know where to go to look for it but found that the person who had discovered him and called the ambulance had parked the trishaw and locked it with a chain to the grill in front of his shop. He was very grateful to this person and whenever he gave him or any of his family a ride in his trishaw he would not charge them anything.

People liked him and called him old man. He was friendly and always smiled and was nice to all the children he drove to and from school everyday, making sure that they didn't have to cross any busy streets and taking care that they went directly home after they got out of his trishaw.

Now it was late and he held the gold chain in his hand as it shined in the light of the street light across the road. He admired its beauty and noticed the humanlike appearance of the monkey pendant. He thought that if no one turned up to claim it from him then he would just keep it for himself, though he didn't know quite what else to do with it.

He had parked in an area that had been demolished and cleared for the construction of a new office building. He had parked there the last few nights and figured he'd get up early enough to leave the area before the workman came in the morning. He knew many different spots around the town that were safe to park and sleep for the night. A few he preferred over any of the others, as long as there weren't any other trishaws in them first.

One of the construction workers who arrived early to the site was the first to find the old man sitting still in his cart with his hand stretched out. His body was stiff and the worker called the police who came and bought a small truck to lift his body into the back and take it away to the morgue at the general hospital. The gold chain he had been holding slipped out of his hand during the night as it was outstretched over the side of the trishaw cart, and it fell in between a couple of pieces of rubble on the ground.

That morning a couple of workers were assigned to shovel up all the loose rubble on the ground and use it to fill in a couple of large holes in the back of the construction area. Neither of them noticed the gold chain with the monkey pendant as they scooped up the small chunks of broken concrete and sand, and dumped it into the hole in the back of the lot. They managed to fill all the holes and then someone came with a water hose and watered the fill down to compact it better in the hole.

Afterword

During its most recent journey on earth, the gold chain with the green jade monkey pendant passed through the hands of many people until it was finally returned to rest in the earth. Of all the many people who saw, coveted and admired it, not a single soul had noticed a lengthy, but minute, inscription barely visible to the naked eye on the back of the pendant which read (roughly translated) in an ancient and long forgotten Chinese script:

"What is firmly rooted cannot be pulled out;
What is tightly held in the arms will not slip loose;
Through this the offering of sacrifice by descendants
Will never come to an end