

Me

a novel in verse

Like

by c john holcombe

YOU

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Me Like You

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Colin John Holcombe

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Me Like You

Spread in the brightness of morning, as ever
entangled and pounced on in a strange bed,
Mae-Ying the beautiful is laughing and playing
with her small heart pounding as on plate glass,
and her bought legs beating and beating as a bird does
for the lift and for the fervor till we are dropped,
all of us, into the quiet breath of lives passing,
dissolving as refuse into the strong Chao Phraya.

Before I was small girl only, a simpleton
working in the wet fields and the far
plantations of the Pha Mieng Hills:
long distance it is by bus and days taking me
on from sister and father, sick sometimes
in Baen Pang Mai Daeng, with its four
pagodas and bewildering with its festivals
and laughing everyone in wet drench of clothes.

Why should I care what they do to me,
rut as a dog does or if afterwards they
spend into me? I have been careful
and clean in the cleft part, water-making
in the streams only or in the standing
thicknesses of the forests and what they
pay to me after is what I launder or buy being
fragrant again in my neat shoes and briefs.

I am Mae-Ying of the bright eyelids and of
adulterous attachments seeking the soft
dust that is trafficking the evenings with
regret as the trees press into the back yard.
I am the compositor of bright lights and
and denizen also of the night lands of rest.
Laughing and more rapacious than is the
mantis, I extend an unruffled impudence

that smokes on from behind me I
in my hot cauldron of pants, which
are not scanty or voluminous but
intricately fashioned to the machinery
of my shaping. So I am always
Mae-Ying of the village of four pagodas
who is known walking through Patpong
or Pratunam market and big hotels.

And if there is something unmitigatingly
sad in this going away saturated in
what have been or sinned with O my Lord
Buddha I will pay you a golden offering
of six prayers if you find me a husband
among rich farangs and truly I will
be faithful for a while if he take me to Milwaukee,
or Chicago, be a good wife pushing the trolley

round with children in the tree-lined and obedient
small streets anywhere I have seen in films but
have come temporary visa on to London with
Glen who no is American but kind to me, cares
for mother also in small place where I do
beds, shopping, cleaning, cooking. It is
bare in winter, true, and different and sometimes
I see flowers respectable look hard at me.

I ask to Glen he make me real wife when I
would be happy but he tell me next year, but
no am sorry if night-time he call me his
sweetheart and hot stuff as big men they show me
but Glen he not like that I ask for money
for the family who write say please forgive
us Mae-Ying but you no forget who in
Pha Mieng Hills need and still send love to you.

One whole year pass already in this country
that is clean but not forgiving with its
its summer sun cold on green park-benches
where the ladies they ask me but I do not say
as Glen has told me but am as clouds passing
indifferent and beautiful but not the same
now father he tell me can no come back
to Baen Pang Mai Daeng with its four pagodas.

No can now can sport in deep pool of river
with other women who are laughing and playing,
as I did when young and was pretty, always
the prettiest. Why is the wind in the leaves
and the summer not listening but talking
as though through me into somewhere else?
Breath in my body is as small things in house
on stilts by river but a long time back.

Because you were first and if then willful
we ask you that you do not forget us, ever
Mae-Ying, but learn English, make money
for father and Sompong who sometime ask
you not Glen make angry but always be
smiling and patient and do not cry,
but composed as he is our Lord Buddha:
who teach us respect and be always kind.

So Glen he must take me nighttime to classes
with no one to talk to but I will learn.
Be modest and diligent and if
they do not like me I cannot mind. But
maybe something is special where I sitting or
maybe I too have different smell. Boys
ask where you come from, what name mean and
if Mae-Ying you happy. I am always so.

Glen he my boyfriend I tell them and for
the friends I try mostly other girls, but
not Goyko I like him he naughty but funny
and afterwards I sit and am only quiet.
Serb he tell me have brother, with garage,
good business he say but not for me. He
ask me come pictures, I do not go, and
show me his photos, I only smile.

But Glen find me much talking and then
angry he take me to room, not let out
but for cleaning, cooking and spend my penny.
My father he know this but tell me no leave him,
not now, Mae-Ying, that can never pay. I
know that and cannot, for where I go?
Glen he have passport and keep in place
locked up and secret as is the heart.

But later in supermarket if Goyko there
I tell him you go, please you go away. But
Goyko clever, he call me his pretty warm
sunshine his colour for him out on every day.
I tell him think Glen and his house-bound mother
who try make trouble and no like me.
Mae-Ying you are beautiful and I only
want you and me stay as always friends.

You have laughter in your walking and all
the day looking as somewhere to go. How you
fill out your clothes, and what is the wind
that lifts up my heart, my little Mae-Ying?
My name is a beckoning and he say only
my fingers are sowing in him a softness,
that even his eyelids at night are smiling
to think of me sleeping wherever I am.

Please, you must hear me, listen Mae-Ying:
Important I find you and show you help.
Mae-Ying of the four pagodas and peepshow
places ask what it is that Goyko want.
You, he tell me, you always from first when
you were sitting so small and distant quiet
as cloud not moving and even men like
Drago my brother could not hurt your face.

Remember, Mae-Ying no good my English but whatever you want I will do for you. Then you go I tell him that Glen no hurt me or keep me in room with nowhere to go. Marya, his sister, she help me and I no need money. What does that mean? Goyko, remember that never can Mae-Ying be girlfriend though maybe she like you, and stay friends with you.

But brother already take passport. Glen he fight with and take my clothes. Why he do that? Drago he strong man and will tell police. But why, I am good girl who want independence and no cause trouble but live alone. No. Goyko always he want me, be fully belonging, to your small ways, he tell me, your pout of voice: you laughing I remember and look of mouth.

It ache where you touch me, stay burning for days like a watermark etched on skin. Attentive each evening I would be happy to soak up your body as a fragrant breath. Why he say that? He funny this Goyko, maybe he truly be man for me? I go back house but find now his mother she shout and Glen he angry have bruises and no speak to me.

Maybe I tired to be the coloured longing, the
sweetness burning, a smoke without clothes?
I am Mae-Ying the schemer, the great magician,
will swallow you up like a hooded snake. Why then
Goyko he not pound and pound me a hundred times?
Like clouds I am silent and distant am sorry,
weighted my eyelids all night no sleep. Why
he not thankful and happy in body there?

Months pass and Spring come. Drago he watch me:
Does Mae-Ying want money and proper man?
Money must have for father and Sompong,
maybe the once then but no tell Goyko
He say all right then and smile but then he hurt me.
Afterwards nothing, no money, he only laugh.
Laugh at Mae-Ying who is stupid, so stupid.
She lose her position and no can smile.

Marya I try if she no tell Goyko, say
where is the money, the money I need?
She tell me go work and be peasant again,
that Drago make meeting, Mae-Ying though sorry
but secret from Goyko and she nod her head.
If that's want you want, love. It's cash and no
questions, ten quid for the transport, the
rest you can pay us when you're settled in.

Goyko he furious but Marya she tell him
Mae-Ying not honourable and she must go.
What can I tell him who is only boy?
Mae-Ying too crying and now inward praying to
always Lord Buddha that in the heart
the butterfly trembles but is never broken,
for all that she sit there with eyes still looking
always there inward and to the dark.

It sad how the day dies and also in evening
how the trees press to window their little palms
without benedictions and can only be silent
as Mae-Ying is always as the passing clouds.
Father will die and Mae-Ying know Sompong
can only stay living a little time. Why
you not tell me my own Lord Buddha that
she not be needful that Mae-Ying work?

It dark in lorry and throughout the night-
time I know that big girls they laugh at me.
But Mae-Ying say nothing, take dormitory bed
and be all day thereafter in the wet fields bending
cold over cabbage and ragged kale.
Lights out at ten and no smoke or shower,
But Mae Ying she peasant and never forget.
Mae Ying are you happy? I am always so.

But Mae-Ying she know she wake in morning
with back that ache she hardly stand. She
stand in the cropfields as the grey sky lightens
hurt to bend over and is still more hurting
as rain it enters and drenches clothes. In
the wind she shiver and she hear the trees
ask if this is her country, the streams
and paddi that lift to the Pha Mieng Hills?

Well that's alright love, but if you want something
different and not killing then you let me know.
Mr. Matthews the foreman I know he like me
who always am working and smiling to others.
Look it's no fun to be out in all weathers and if
you are game for it the missus can help.
Before it all goes, love, so make it smartish:
you haven't got papers and inspectors will call.

So life change for Mae-Ying, but what is option?
Inward no laughing but she turn around,
walk and be glamorous when Mrs. Matthews
say I am natural, but Mae-Ying want
only the money they do not give. Alright,
alright, little madam, we will send the money
never to you though who must work and work,
you understand us, now do you, to pay us back?

Always they cheat you I remember. Hey
little Mae beautiful not so fast. Only
if I liked them did I go on staying, and
what we agree on is what I take. Whatever
Mae-Ying is she be always honest, look what
they do and not they say. Even old men
and monks they want her, this girl so pretty:
Mae-Ying see thoughts, she always know.

So she must work and work on tapes
and also go college two days a week.
Mae-Ying she change name to Chirawan
have family in Bangkok now very rich.
She learn how to talk and hold spoon and fork,
especially the knife as English do.
Be calm and reserved and expect prompt service
with a lift of the eyebrow and courteous smile.

But Chirawan is comfortable with her clothes
and do as they want if she sometimes sad.
Old men are kind but they only take her
wheezing and trembling but give her present.
It is money she want though, an extra she tell
them, money for family a long way home.
Work permit come she write in letter
but passport they keep, maybe always will.

Chirawan I am of the high fashion dressing,
a slow way of moving and with softening eyes
kind with waiters but insisting on service,
doors opened, seats booked, gracious becoming
Chirawan a woman who is very expensive
that never at the first time will she sleep with men
but laugh and be mischievous and always knowing
for discretion they will pay and with respect.

This her possession and the faint sharp smell
she know as she wash and will always change.
Her perfume of dressing after stretching herself
around what is feral and feminine centre:
a squat, obsequious, a spreading dampness
of sphincter, the sweat of body, all
this is nothing but a passing as in the air
which the Lord Buddha say, or the Chao Phraya.

I sit in my chair and think of the river
glittering with darkness and many reflections.
I think of the body and the outward attentions,
how brilliant are lives though they soon go out
like the windows in houses across the street.
Mae-Ying have the body and the full attachments
have men to men reach in her impenetrable blackness,
a delirium of wanting that gives no rest.

Days pass, the months, I go come back
from Paris no passport but everything fine.
Girls of agency smile at officials, look
impudent at men who try their passes, eat
at best places and are stuck up with waiters.
Dressed like flamingoes we sit in foyers
we let men be stupid and insist they pay
for shopping and taxis: we only laugh.

Two years now and Mae Ying established
with passport and permit and new apartment.
Sometimes she lonely in only meeting women
of Ace Escorts of whom Chirawan best.
She above all with her high-bred demeanour
her impudent walking that make men notice
get her a drink which she always refuses,
waving them past with a mischievous laugh.

Sometimes she is sat in an hotel waiting
the waiters attentive and eyeing her up.
she who is the mantis with long legs folded,
the blossom of evening caressing her skin.
Sometime she sit there like the high Lord Buddha
the candles amassing and smoky sealing
the long fall of hair in its shoulder length tangles,
and held-in, bewildering, her shadowy eyes.

Hers in the top piece that is hardly lifting
but breathes in the splendour of the amber skin.
Hers in the sombre and insolence asking,
as the fingers reach backward into fluted nails:
an imprint on the arms as the winds in passing
a foot-trail of birds over delicate membranes
a shiver that will hold them as at nightfall dreaming
they think of their soft parts and little genders.

I am a haze in the mind and still more mournful
are the lips in their glistening and crimson pout.
Always they think of silk-straining attachments
of promises in breath as I sigh their name
and the body then faltering and in the fragrance
of urgency opening to an exhausting tussle,
the legs moving, the buttocks, the clench of passion
in gasps that trail out to a little death.

I am Mae-Ying the enchanter the first one
the last one, Mae-Ying to others will never bow
Why should she work with rough sun coarsening
and thickening hard body, making old the muscles
in stooping and labouring over furrowed rice?
Childbirth on hard planks the blood then running
and rotting the clothes and in heavy labour which
an hour in the river can never wash out?

I think of those bodies, a thing of wonder
wound up in rags or a wrapped around breasts.
I think of the men in their everyday working,
buffalo in field and the patchwork rivers
the winds in the fields of harvest and singing
the rice as it blows against river willows.
Maybe I traitor, Mae-Ying is asking, not
now to come back to my village again?

A long time ago that and in the distance
a brilliance that burns through these northern lands.
Immaculate in sportscar, Mae-Ying is touring
the soft wind in hair and laying it flat.
Continual are the seasons in this orderly country,
its fragmentary contentments of quiet clouds:
the trees I pass must lean into evening,
the long sky is blue with my childhood days

Occlusions of content in many colours, a scatter
like paper the small churchyards and market
and garage, and fish-shop and tourist mill:
cottages with gardens and lives that are intricate
and no doubt much careful and self-denying
are not for the resplendently groomed and now
imperturbable woman called Chirawan
who smiles and drops casually into best hotels.

What of the clients, but have learned not to care
but take off clothes slowly as voices tremble.
Afterwards I wash and my prodigal figure
glistens as I slip on a further attire of feature,
my private dimension in other clothes.
Mae-Ying of Chakraphong are you truly happy?
In my letter to father I am always am happy.
Then why you no visit? I almost cry.

Must take plane and taxi and two days later
am sitting with Sompong in old time hut
disordered, bad smelling and bending to river.
Father disagreeable and call me changed.
Grown up he tell me and now am different.
The little girl laughing has farang ways.
No, no, I tell him, for underneath still
her heart and the body are same as his.

No, Mae-Ying you have something only
of officious bustle that have city folk.
Even head abbot no give you lecture but
ever be bowing with his offering bowl.
He want donation as all want donation. We
also need money, and little Mae-Ying
be compassionate and help us. The hard path of life
has stumbles and needs of which we do not ask.

So Mae-Ying pay and that is purpose,
my destiny say abbot when take back bowl.
Mae-Ying respectful but must make her money
for all that she does which is still a defiance
and not a true footprint on enlightened path.
Maybe it true she disclose herself also
why she is pretty and always laughing at
those who must work in shop or factory.

But no for ever she do that or cleaning
and cooking and housework. Mae-Ying want
something to hold her when Sompong go.
Maybe it wicked what she give to others,
maybe in wind of forest and whispering rivers
the sound of bamboo with its dried-up leaves
tell her that and the harsh breath sighing
in this dancer of small days will let her go.

So it hurt her now that helping Sompong,
to dress her with clothes from spread-out bushes
she see her sister so smiling and trying
to unbend the leg folded which is short and twisted.
Trying forever though she will not. Where
do the days go and why does it seem
the wind is from somewhere, another country
speaking to the small place that is the heart?

Who is Mae-Ying to have these reflections,
Mae-Ying the foreigner who cannot stay?
Sompong is crying and waving and Mae-Ying
she cry too all the way back to collecting
the sports car and drive round respectable streets
a stillness there spotting and autumn leaves turning,
the tarmac, the houses with their tended gardens,
the drives well-swept with their ordered lives.

Mae-Ying could move but she know the city
is noisy impersonal and here is closer
to the winds off the wheat-fields and tousled elms
the kale and the rapeseed, the hard yellow shining,
the furze-covered hills and forest plantations,
the small towns opening with their filling station
bus stop and Safeway and their ordinary lives
no hoping for heaven but doing their best.

Sometimes I look down on what this body
is by the mirror with nothing on. I see
the supple and soft, almost honey complexion,
the breasts that are warm and yet part of me.
How flawless the eyebrows with their balance over
eyes that are dewdrop and seem distilling
the exotic of longing and of distant collusions
in immeasurable blackness I can't unlock.

Why, my Lord Buddha why have you made me
this handful of smoke in a moving dream?
Same my apartment in the latest fashion,
this bed with its linens where I only sleep. Girls
from the agency they look astonished, see
round, so beautiful, ordered, neat.
How do you manage it, and where is the boyfriend?
Nowhere. I never bring clients here.

No one at all not even student, someone
to wait for you, cook for you, clean the place,
afterwards in smiling turn down sheets?
I want men to like me but have them pay
with things that I need, and not their tantrums,
the silly possessiveness, empty words.
Mae-Ying is honest and she give her body
only for the night-time if daytime free.

We'll find you a husband who is rich enough
to know what the world is and never afraid
of what others can say or what is past.
If we find will you try it? It may be difficult
with large house and family and former wife.
If I have freedom, my own life and all
my family and girlfriends, can lie in bed
or get up and go driving all day and more.

Men they want change, are ever restless
as creatures wanting a new one like little boys.
So there were suppers and evenings in houses,
Mae-Ying the gracious with her sultry airs
as Chirawan is smiling and bowing and out of her mind
with paintings, tapestries the past wife's garden.
She is lost in the luxury of the heavy sheets and
fearful in restaurants she will meet the past.

Long months I take to find this Bernard Flowers
businessman he tell me and dine me over
the county in restaurants and in big hotels.
The house we can change, just as you want
but I tell him it OK, it is fine by me.
What should Mae-Ying the peasant and worker
in the rice paddy wetness and the far plantations
want with the kitchens, greenhouse, the boating lake?

Her face framed by windows that are Jacobean
he tell me at tea-time with the silver tongs
threadbare the carpets, aching the galleries
where Chirawan is light with her leather on wood.
Softly she sink into the vast upholstery, the
large flowered sofas that were his wife's.
Mae-Ying, you think now: is this you want,
an old man more attentive than father is?

How distant again is that small wood-stilt village
of four pagodas that is Baen Pang Mai Daen!
Chirawan transported to an ancient country,
there the rich woman and soon gracious wife.
Everyone courteous to the exotic mistress, hers
the imperturbable and unmoving fullness
of a body that hovers as the mist fills air:
cool and irreproachable in her couture clothes.

How slowly she will turn to this small boy Richard,
this son that by another she must entertain
as mistress of manor with its great dark cedars,
mill-boards plashing and peacocks screeching: endless
the galleries, the windows, the warm-panelled rooms,
the light falling dimly into heaps of clothes:
here she will rule and will decorously smile at . . .
just for a week, love, he is much your age.

Mae-Ying, Mae-Ying why must you linger
distant and astonished and in hidden fury?
Such the consternation in those quiet features,
almost of horror in those clear blue eyes.
Well, lad: don't just stand there gawking,
show some manners. Well, that's how he is.
The housekeeper will cook or you can take him out.
No, lass. Just look after my son, that's all I ask.

Terrible the pain we both take breakfast. Nothing
to say as we walk through the garden, nothing
to answer where we eat or go. Mae-Ying
the sorcerer, the expensive mistress, Mae-Ying
the magician must not to lose her head:
But all that day awful, she so nervous, say
nothing and everything and crash the gears:
Mae-Ying is exhausted at day's end and dying.

So, will you marry my father? He hasn't asked.
But you like him, I mean, in his sodding ways.
I ask you Richard to remember position
the kindness I owe him and not speak badly.
Do you? Well, lucky old bastard, he and his money.
God knows he has used it to good account.
Everyone does that and we all need money.
I as his mistress and you can't change that.

Yes, but needn't be. I could give you money,
help you to live and be a girl again. Inside
and out you could follow your instincts,
make up your story as you go along. Richard
be man and make your own life's journey,
women you will win but not this one.
You I must have so forever to hold you,
a life that is lost under unfathomable breath.

How angry the mistress, the exotic temptress,
she turn away quickly and cannot smile.
Where is the courtesy, the good school manners,
what is this Chirawan that you can ask her so?
Because he has money, we all have money.
How could you do that with your small book business
with bank loans and credits as your father says?
The world is a hard place and you must not dream.

Dreams I must have when I walk with you,
dreams that pour smoke into moving air,
that hangs in the memory of the smallest feature,
the clothes, the small shoes, the handbag even
that perched on the seat has abundant life
drawn from other into kindly leather, its
clasp fragrant with you, the extraordinary fingers
moving with fire from their owner's life.

All this is nonsense, do not play with me.
The denizen of darkness, the midnight magician, I
am a snake that could swallow you whole.
No, go away, you will burn your fingers,
this woman is Chirawan and is always expensive.
Breath in the morning and breath in the
evening, forever my needs in your knitted limbs.
No, go away, I am not for you.

If only that true, as Mae-Ying she know that
sleeping in the long bed she think of his sleeping,
near, far away, with his bustling manner
the freckles on the hands and honest eyes.
What are you doing, all night and passing,
pressing to someone who is never there,
but melting to distance and my own Lord Buddha
without your blessing I have no home.

Would you be deeper in me than my belonging,
the imbiber of sweetness at my soft breasts?
I will be a woman who is always remembering
the summertime wetness and the far plantations.
The aching of harvest in her reeking body
arches her back and bends her still yielding
in a thousand small pieces the flooding joy
that reaches through happiness to airy toes.

I was astonished and still more falling as
to a tumbrel of fire and still more wanting
that opened to a deeper and fuller fire.
I who was nightshade am belladonna, the smoke
that stirred others now burnishes me. I am
the morning as you are the evening, the
fury of body which is yearning and lifting,
a cauldron of having in which I lose my heart.

Afterwards I float though I am sinking further
into promises that hurt and are hungering still.
No longer the temptress, the great romancer,
no more the mistress of the gracious ways,
but hungry and abandoned, a little girl crying
for the far away mists of the Pha Mieng Hills:
where is the comfort to seep in and crumple
and where are his hands, O my little Mae-Ying?

Chirawan is done for without her possession of
money and intelligence that returns in fear
that he will disown me as the seasons
are passing from comfort and into grief.
Chirawan will not tremble but always be smiling
her body not smoking but only delighting
in the thousand small kisses that return collecting
the day coming breezily from out of doors.

Secreting like a limpet Mae-Ying is kept
large to herself how the inner parts feel.
Bridal the body but she keeps on turning,
shivering and glittering she wakes each day.
She is the goddess, the golden performer, kissed
a thousand times hungrily over the skin.
Here is the morning and here is the evening,
but all time the harmony of her small arms.

All that she drinks is ingested pleasure,
the fire that spurts out of her extended hands.
Hard into her is his manhood opening, fierce
is the wound that spreads itself wanting.
Mae-Ying in sitting or walking is only
a burning shut up into inner sweetness,
a honey from soreness and still it hurts,
Mae-Ying is held by a golden hook.

What will it lead to and how will it last? Always
I ask him but he only say: Let him be angry,
words will not hurt us, we'll marry soon.
Perhaps he can do that but Mae-Ying uncertain,
Bernard she know and he won't forgive. She
say yes to engagement and yes to their moving
while still she have doubts but only smile as
Richard he begs her and she nod her head.

Joy is a passing and a strange delirium.
Love is the black face of the moon. What
was destiny my own Lord Buddha, you
who I prayed to, didn't you hear? Continually
I call on you through this world of shadows,
further than knowing not only at night-time,
Mae-Ying must opening and close her body,
be streaming with wetness like a child.

I am the dancer of the shuttered entrapments,
of small days that press into my own back yard.
I the enchanter and the skilled romancer,
brilliant compositor of night-lands to rest.
Why should she care if old man difficult,
and sit there so angry with bloodshot eyes?
In all my soft length on the flowered sofa
it's slowly and cautiously I begin.

Don't kid yourself, Cherry, he so loud and angry:
The boy's lost his head, we can all see that.
I asked you, I told you, Bernard a moment
not to so leave us but you wouldn't listen.
I take all the blame but Richard is yours.
Pig's arse to that! and even the house keeper
say now don't you too fret love. He's always like this,
threatening the worst but he comes around.

A single room for Mae-Ying at bookshop
where she sit to sell maybe nothing all day.
Idle and lonely but she think of evening
with Richard there smiling and kissing her.
At sales or at auctions Mae-Ying stay modest,
to know what men mean but never say.
Always they pretend and she too in smiling, say
you come bookshop to see me again.

So always good salesperson always she promise
change if they ask me to make one more sale.
So it go on, month and month and always
we make out, though she see Richard worry,
weekends and night-times he doesn't sleep.
Dad has taken it badly. I knew he might.
Then why you not tell me, but promise it easy?
Would you have left him, if you had known?

Why should an old man only with money have
all that I wanted which is you Mae-Ying?
I tell him be quiet, it doesn't matter.
But it does, and he tell me business lose,
without Bernard's word the bank withdraw loan.
Mae-Ying she smile and ask appointment
But Bernard laugh and ask what's on offer
So Mae-Ying be quiet and put down phone.

She come at last this woman once mistress
in short dress and sports car at evening
she know the housekeeper will not be there.
Never was woman so alluringly dangerous with
downcast submissive and still mischievous pose.
So the whore has come back with her prospects
in tatters for forgiveness and extra cash,
forgetting the treachery, which never happened?

I ask not forgiveness but you help your son.
Do you, like that? We can start from here.
How do I know you'll keep the bargain?
How do I know you won't tell Richard? I ask
but now he is roaring and shouting and raging.
Bernard I do this but on one condition that
this is the last time and you write a letter
explaining that now before we go upstairs.

Ah, Mae-Ying she stupid and over-trusting. He
write me the letter but then snatch my arm.
Gross and horrible he is not respecting
the life he once had in the midnight dancer.
Though I am crying he still bend me over,
tear off clothes like a rabid dog. What must
I do to stop the insides burning, what
must I do to keep Richard safe?

So I take him still further and further,
holding out longer than an old man should.
Mae-Ying is the sorcerer, the midnight eluder,
which he has and he hasn't and her legs are beating.
She turn and he turn and is thrusting and hurting,
the breath coming shortly and eyeballs hurt:
Mae-Ying the butterfly is almost breaking but at
last he is lifted and falling and then is gone.

With the body cooling I phone for ambulance,
to police and doctor make simple statement
Everything I tell them except for money.
Mighty conciliatory, the doctor say. True,
with clothes torn off cannot Mae-Ying look modest
but with towel around she go so to Richard
who stares and then shouts and waves his arms
to angrily, how angrily, he shakes me off.

I stand before you as the daylight's protector
of what we two had and is now again.
What did you want but to have the money?
Here, and I show him old Bernard's letter.
He take it from me and tear in pieces.
For you I have done this and what is hurting,
disgraces me further as I know its cost,
that however I wash it will not be clean.

Chirawan you disgust me, just go away,
quietly if you would, we don't want trouble.
Yes, he was grasping, was often difficult
but not such to murder, to lead him on.
He was an old man, failing, holding together
such as life was. You were his only,
the one he most cared for, with you
he was making a long penance for life.

Is this what you tell me with a deportation,
order for Monday in one month's time?
I ask you for pity to think a moment,
speak as you have a thousand times. I am the
breath of the living that was far inside you,
helping you outward to health in me: I
am nighttime of passion, the daylight's sorcery,
when once you lived under my fragrant breath.

Where would you have me in that flame of
movement in consort as we hold together?
I told you always of the heavy entanglement,
Mae-Ying of the passing adulterous eyelids,
a wandering of summertime in a breath of dust.
Must I go back to my homeland working
to be in some bar or become second wife?
Will you not see me, ever, not ever again?

No look, no answer. Mae-Ying returning
at length to the airport, the old streets passing,
asks of Lord Buddha why the days are dreams?
Far from this cold land and its own self-righteous
do and not doing that look strange at me.
Mae-Ying the brilliant, is the butterfly listening
to the wind as it chatters of another country,
one maybe distant but part of me.

I fasten seatbelt, look out of the window, see
the hummingbird colours and the blaze of harvest,
the dazzle of sunlight on the furrowed rice.
Mae-Ying come home and was never thinking
of life to be different but all the time turning
like the strong Chao Phraya with its glittering
pagodas, men passing and the women reflected
in a dazzle of water that is always gone.

True, my Lord Buddha I am the sinner, also
the dancer, the seamstress, the spinner of dreams.
The trees take our hands and the hard days of life
are blessed with our bodies and in my giving
is the small rain falling on the Pha Mieng Hills.
Far as the wind that is always speaking, far
as the farangs and their little lives, I am
Mae-Ying of a brilliance to dance again.

Revised January 2008