

Once Upon A Time

Once upon a time when I was young and when we were still living in our old house. It was the time when the sky of Bangkok was still blue, it was really blue. We used to own a house; we used to own trees too. We had mango trees and papaya trees, I remember well, when life was happy and we were together as a family. I can't think of a single bad thing that happened when we were living in our old house and when I had nature as my best friend.

I remember bird watching with my papa at the porch of our small house. The birds here were tamed by us. We would see sparrows and crows and magpies and constantly we would see squirrels, they like the mangos. Sometimes when we feed the birds with seeds and crumbs as their special treats, we would see the fantails flutter their cheerful wings with glee, they love cornflakes and all sorts of biscuits. Or when we put out the bird bath, I would always be excited to see the Golden Weavers dipping their yellow feathers into the fresh cool water.

I remember the Fighting Fish I used to have, not for fighting though. Papa used to bike me to the end of our neighborhood, where there was a big beautiful pond with millions of Indian Lotus shooting up with light mauve flowers. And there were many tall rain trees surrounding the pond. The soft spongy grass paved over the soil, waiting for the dying leaves from the rain trees as it sways to the rhythm of the breeze. This pond was my playground and my place for refuge.

I remember catching Fighting Fish here in the pond in the rainy season, I had a great big Fighting Fish and I named him "Supab", it means polite in Thai because I didn't want my Fighting Fish to fight, but I wanted him to be humble and polite. He was strong and firm and he was as black as a moonless sky. I fed him fish eggs and mosquito larvae and he lived in a water jar on my porch. There were other kinds of fish in the pond too. There were big carps, Sand Goldies, and also fresh water crabs. There were also dragonflies, red ones; they would be sweeping the water surface with their crystal wings tempting the fish underneath.

I remember picking big lotus flowers here as well; I pick them for Mama. Every night she would prepare food, a little money, and fresh lotus flowers for her morning offering to the monks. It is a beautiful scenery to see and I would do the offerings with her on the weekend mornings. You have to get up really early, even before the first beam of light can shine through the soft white clouds and even before the rooster's crow. The monks would walk in a line into our neighborhood, their eyes fixed on their feet and their faces filled with peace, stopping at every house for the morning offering, my mama would offer the monks a portion of rice, vegetable soup, some fresh seasonal fruits, a little amount of money for the temple, and the most gorgeous lotus flowers. We would place our food bags into his silver bowl without touching it then kneel down, he would chant us a prayer for good luck as the first ray of light had found its way through the misty clouds to the world.

I remember playing under the rain trees in summer on the lush green lawn. There were butterflies everywhere, black ones with orange paintings on their elegant wings. I would look up to the clear blue sky and the milky rich clouds; I would look up and let my imaginations run wild. I used to see eagles and doves in the sky, flying so carelessly and I used to wish to be able to fly, just like my friends.

But as I grew older, things changed, little by little that you hardly notice. When internet, cell phone, and I pod became my closest friends and had replaced the love of nature in my heart. These days I never look up to see the doves in the sky or chase the black and orange butterflies. I spend my days shopping in the mall that I had forgotten the beauty of the trees and the paved grass floor. And life went fast; I soon graduated from a famous university and was ready to move on. I was so excited about my life and future and I had slowly forgotten my graceful past, my good old days. And I moved away to another part of the city, somewhere far, far away from home.

And I remember the day when life suddenly seemed hopeless, the day when I realize that everything had turned ghastly and grey, except for the traffic lights. It was when life got tough and there was no way out and I was running out of breath. So I drove off to that beautiful pond I remember, my only refuge, the pond was so far, far away. I drove away to search for some other colours in life, I wanted to seek somewhere that had other colours other than grey and white. But as time has passed during those years, everything had changed just like I had changed, even the pond. It had become just as grey and white as everything else and had transformed itself into a garbage dumping place, with plastic bags paved on the floor. There were no more trees or spongy grass or mauve coloured lotus flowers. The place where I used to lay my head and dream had become a filthy hump of rubbish and junk, giving out a sordid scent. And there was no single trace of beauty left behind.

I looked up wanted to see at least a teal blue sky, but the sky had also turned grey. It was the day when I felt pity for the world and the day that I really miss my past, my once upon a time.

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