Slowly but surely, fiction from and about the island nation of Singapore is making its way across the world. Three years ago, Kevin Kwan’s *Crazy Rich Asians*, chronicling the escapades of the country’s elite, became a *New York Times* bestseller, and is now on its way to Hollywood. Ovidia Yu’s *The Aunty Lee Series*, starring a chef turned amateur sleuth, is published by William Morrow Paperbacks. The North American rights for the Sherlock Sam children’s book series by A.J. Low (the husband-and-wife team of Adam Jimenez and Felicia Low-Jimenez) have been acquired by Andrews McMeel Publishing.

Over in China, publishers have bought the Simplified Chinese rights to Eliza Teoh’s *Ellie Belly* children’s book series and Gabby Tye’s *Run Hide Seek* young adult series. In Hong Kong, Yeng Peay Ngor’s most recent novel *Opera Costume* was ranked one of the top ten Chinese novels of 2015 by *Asiasweek*. In India, Indrajith Jayanthi Sankar, Latha and Krishnamurthi Mathangi have been published by leading Tamil publishers, while Singapore was the Guest-of-Honour Country at the 2016 Chennai Book Fair. In neighbouring Malaysia, titles by Isa Kamari and Suratman Marakas have been published to critical acclaim.

Some works have made headlines long before they’ve even seen print. Last year, Clarissa N. Goenawan won the Bath Novel Award 2015 for an unpublished manuscript, beating out 805 other submissions from 41 countries. At the London Book Fair earlier this year, Balli Kaur Jaswal inked a six-figure, two-book deal with HarperCollins. And in May, Sharlene Teo became the inaugural winner of the Deborah Rogers Writers’ Award for unpublished manuscripts, besting 884 other entries from the British Commonwealth and Ireland.

But although readers elsewhere are only now starting to discover Singaporean fiction, here in the city-state we have long enjoyed the fruits of our small but spirited literary scene. English has been the language of education and government in Singapore since Independence in 1965, and it did not take long for the first English-language Singaporean novel to appear: Goh Poh Seng’s *If We Dream Too Long*, a bildungsroman published in 1972. In the decades since, the rise of literary presses and the establishment of local awards such as the Singapore Literature Prize and the Epigram Books Fiction Prize have helped nurture more writers and writing.

We also have authors writing in Chinese, Malay and Tamil - the three other languages used amongst Singaporeans in their homes and communities. In order to share these stories with a wider audience, we have increased our efforts at translation across the country’s four languages. The varied tongues each tell different, essential tales about a multi-cultural society situated in one of Asia’s most diverse regions.

The twenty novels and prose collections showcased in this catalogue are some of the best fiction to come out of Singapore in the past year. The stories are told across four languages and feature characters from all corners of society. The settings range from ancient times, when the sleepy isle went by another name, up to the present day of glittering skyscrapers and prefabricated housing. The drama ranges from the chaos of war to the intricacies of domestic conflict. We are proud to share these finely wrought works with the rest of the world.

**STEFANIE YE**
Criticism editor, *Quarterly Literary Review Singapore*
The National Arts Council (NAC) aims to nurture the arts in Singapore, and to make it an integral part of the lives of all Singaporeans. We celebrate excellence in the arts and work to make it accessible to all. We believe the arts to be a vital avenue for self-expression, learning and reflection, and are constantly striving to create a sustainable environment within which the arts can thrive. We spur local artists on towards entertaining, enriching and inspiring Singapore, and the rest of the world as well.

Through its Grants Framework, NAC supports:
- Developing of new and existing arts organisations
- Encouraging production of, presentation of and participation in the arts
- Training, research & development; market and audience development needs, both locally and internationally

International publishers and literary agents can tap on grants and other assistance to bring original Singaporean literary works to the world.

The Singapore Writers Festival is one of Asia’s premier literary events. It is one of the few multi-lingual literary festivals in the world, celebrating the written and spoken word in Singapore’s official languages – English, Malay, Chinese and Tamil. Visit www.singaporewritersfestival.com for more details.

For more information on NAC’s grant schemes and initiatives, please visit the Council’s website at: www.nac.gov.sg or email: nac литератур arts@nac.gov.sg

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SUGARBREAD

SYNOPSIS
A Punjabi-Sikh girl aged ten, Pin is the shortest in her class, the recipient of an embarrassing monthly bursary, and the target of her racist bus driver’s slurs. Her father is obsessed with winning the lottery, so her graceful and secretive mother becomes the focus of Pin’s juvenile observations. In Ma’s cooking, Pin learns how to distinguish the subtleties in her mother’s moods, and realises that she knows very little about who her mother really is.

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Balli Kaur Jaswal

AUTHOR

Balli Kaur Jaswal
Born in Singapore and raised in Japan, Russia and the Philippines, Balli Kaur Jaswal studied creative writing in the United States. Her debut novel, Inheritance, was published in 2013. She has received writing fellowships from the University of East Anglia and Nanyang Technological University, and was named a Best Young Australian Novelist of 2014 by the Sydney Morning Herald. Her third novel, Erotic Stories for Punjabi Widows, will be published by HarperCollins UK and William Morrow USA in 2017.
I opened the fridge. There was a plastic container with a small stick of butter, a water pitcher, a carrot and an eggplant in the vegetable rack, and a few small bottles of ground spices. I spotted a loaf of bread on one shelf and checked to see if it was mouldy, relieved to discover that it wasn’t. I took out the butter and switched on the toaster. We had learnt in science class that humans could go for days with just water, so I could do just fine on bread and butter until Daddy came home with some food from the hawker centre. I wondered about Ma. How did she go on all day without eating? She was getting thinner. I saw for the first time today that her bangle could almost slip off her wrist if she shook it a little.

Then I had an idea. I opened the closet door again and pulled out a packet of sugar. Tiny black ants scrambled away as I unwound the rubber band that was tied over the mouth of the packet. I spread the butter over the bread, then sprinkled sugar over it. Then I sprinkled a bit more. I wasn’t sure how to turn on the stove but I had seen Ma do it tonnes of times. I pushed then twisted the knob and heard the short clicks before the flames appeared with a gape.

“Pun? What are you doing?” Ma called from the living room.

“Making lunch,” I replied. “Sugarbread.”

“Making what?”

“Sugarbread,” I repeated. Ma was not the only person around here who could make up recipes. I placed the bread on the pan and pressed it down with a fork, watching as smoke curled up from the browning edges. Ma did not say anything after that. She continued cleaning. “Do you want some?” I asked. There was a pause and again, I panicked, fearing that Ma had fainted from hunger. I could not push these horrible thoughts from my mind. God was bound to punish me soon.

“Yeah, leave one for me.” Ma’s voice brought me some relief.

I made three slices and there was only one slice of bread left in the packet. I placed it on the table to remind Ma of our food shortage in the flat. It worked. “Is this all we have in the house? Butter, bread and sugar?” she asked me. I nodded.

“I’ve been very busy with your grandmother,” she said defensively.

I pushed the plate of sugarbread towards Ma as a peace offering before we began an argument. “Try it,” I said. The kitchen smelled like smoke and caramel. I had made sure to turn off the stove and soak the pan so the crusty bits of burnt sugar wouldn’t cling to the surface.

“Who taught you to make this?” Ma asked. She gave the bread a wary look.

“Nobody. I thought of it on my own.”

Ma took a bite and chewed. She looked like she was thinking or concentrating on something. “Nice,” she finally said.

I took a slice of my own and bit down on it. It was sweet and crunchy. I took another bite. Although I didn’t dare say it out loud, this was better than any dish Ma had ever cooked because I had invented it. I had made it on my own. I felt smart and satisfied, like I had done something right for once, even if it was a small thing like making sugarbread. After I finished my slice, I offered Ma the last one. “Let’s split it,” she said, tearing the bread in half. When she was done, she said, “You know, my younger brother Bilu would have loved this. He loved anything sweet. There was a point when the only way to get him to eat was to give him something with sugar on it.” She smiled and shook her head. I stopped chewing and waited for her to continue but then she dusted the crumbs off her hands and took the plates to the sink without uttering another word.

REVIEWs/awARDS

Finalist for the 2015 Epigram Books Fiction Prize.

“This novel is sensitively written, and raises important issues subtly: racism and racialisation; religiosity and its relation to identity; patriarchal values; class and the intersection of Christianity and capitalism in the wonderful speech about ‘spiritual bank accounts’. All the characters have depth and complexity and the two layers of the narrative (the experiences of Phin and of her mother Lin) are skillfully blended. There are some beautiful descriptive passages, and I like the way in which metaphors are used sparingly, but to good effect.”

Philip Holden, Epigram Books Fiction Prize judge
SYNOPSIS
This coming-of-age tale follows Skinny and his friends as they grow up in a self-sufficient kampung along an unnamed road in 1950s Singapore. Lessons about love, death and forgiveness take place in the midst of a city transitioning from rural to urban living - a city still raw from a recently concluded war and alive with student riots and social movements.

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David Leo has published works of both fiction and poetry. His short story "Soup of the Day" from his collection News At Nine (2003) was one of four works made into short films for the Singapore Writers Festival in 2013. Two other stories were adapted for MediaCorp's award-winning TV series The Singapore Short Story Project: "Picnic" from Wives, Lovers & Other Women (2012) and "The Story of a Good Man" from The Sin of the Fathers & Other Stories (1993).
EXTRACT FROM CHERRY DAYS

The road led to nowhere. A road that I remember most vividly. But that road, our road, is no more. The physical landscape has changed drastically, traversed by new thoroughfares that are immeasurably wider. Our kampung has been eradicated, buried beneath a busy highway. No one will know that it ever existed, because our road had no name. Who needed a name anyway, when the mail always reached us? Of course, we were blissfully ignorant about any letter that might have gone astray. The postman, riding a bicycle, was a rare sight; oddly, his oversized khaki top seemed heavier than his brown canvas mailbag. My cousin, whose family had moved to Christmas Island, somewhere near Australia, said nobody on the island needed a house address, just his or her name to receive mail. And that was talking about a whole island which, I imagined, must be larger than our little kampung. I would not have known about migratory crabs crawling uninvited into their home had we not received the photos she sent. Surely, if creatures can always find their way across the land, man can do a better job.

Perhaps our road was not meant to be a road, just an open space between two rows of terrace houses – seven on our side and six across. Occasionally, a straying motorist brought some excitement, only to back away hastily from our awkward glares, the wheels of the cars stirring up dusty plumes as they screeched and scratched the gravel. Numbers made us intimidating, and we must have looked like hostile aliens on a different planet waiting to devour an unfortunate earthling intruder, whose encroachment only drew us closer together to protect our enclave and preserve our privacy.

This is our place.

And this, our road, that ended abruptly at the verge of a field of overgrown lalang; where, we were warned, snakes lurked in the tall grass. On wet nights after the rain, when the air became suddenly still and the cool relief hung like soaked blankets on a sagging clothes line, we could hear the frogs croaking choruses of gratification. Frankly, I couldn’t tell if they were frogs or toads. My brother Lion said toads were the poisonous ones, but that didn’t help just by listening to their hoarse, throaty croaks. He also said toads had warts, but I never saw them close enough to notice the difference. It was amazing how they survived attacks from the snakes. I would feel the tension in the air, as if I were out there. Late into the night I stayed up listening to the monotonous, held in the suspense of expecting a dramatic shift in the deadly stale of play, wondering when those imaginary soaked blankets would break loose and stir the still air from its complacency. However, the croaking turned out to be strangely killing, and I slept without knowing.

You could literally lie flat in the middle of our road and not worry about being run over by a vehicle 99.99 percent of the time. You must be very sauy if it happened. So few were the occasions when a vehicle came up the road with a purpose that I could count on them one hand plus a finger or two: the day that Cousin Soon and then Wang Bao got married, thrice when an ambulance flashing a rotating blue light responded to an emergency and – that one, most exciting time of all – when a fire truck screamed its way to an abrupt halt at the dead end. The urgency sounded by the siren was enough to thrill. Unless he is stone deaf, no one ignores the wail of a fire truck. We spilt onto the road and raced alongside the truck. There was no blaze, only some grey rings of smoke dancing between the blades of grass, smouldering, rising and soon afterwards dissipating. The firemen in their distinguished bright yellow helmets stood around and puffed on Lucky Strike and 555 cigarettes. They were strangely composed, completely unruffled, while we gathered around and waited with them, as if half-wishing the fire would resuscitate. It would be a treat to see the rescuers raise the giant water hose and watch the gushing stream, though I couldn’t be sure from where they would draw water. There wasn’t any fire hydrant where our road ended, nor anywhere nearby. I was told the truck carried a tank of water. If so, it couldn’t be much. If the lalang field were engulfed in fire, we would need many more trucks.

REVIEWS/AWARDS

"The unassuming, deceptively simple prose of Cherry Days belies its big-hearted, emotional core from which the characters are vividly, lovingly and empathetically drawn. The book draws the readers in steadily, keeping them entranced in the bucolic kampung life and shenanigans of its inhabitants. Yet, layer by layer, it peels away the patina of innocence, revealing the loss and poignancy that comes with growing up. Cherry Days is a treasure trove of precious memories and epiphanies of neighbourly love."

★★★★ William Phuan, The Select Centre
SYNOPSIS
A woman fleeing her previous existence meets a fellow Singaporean on an overnight train in Norway. A foreign worker is decapitated in an HBO building site accident. A Singaporean wife must negotiate Beijing as her British husband awaits a heart transplant. And in different corners of the world, Singaporeans and exiles mark National Day in their own ways. Jeremy Tiang’s debut collection weaves together the lives of its characters across the world – from Switzerland, Norway, Germany, China, Canada, Thailand, New York City and back to Singapore – in stories that ask how we decide where we belong... and what happens to those who don’t.

It Never Rains on National Day

Language | English
Publication Year | 2015
Format | Paperback
ISBN | 9789814655644
No of Pages | 200
Form | Short Stories

AUTHOR
Jeremy Tiang’s writing has appeared in The Guardian, Esquire Singapore, Brooklyn Rail, Drunken Boat, Meanjin, Ambit, Quarterly Literary Review Singapore and the first two volumes of The Epigram Books Collection of Best New Singaporean Short Stories. He won the Golden Point Award in 2009 and has been shortlisted for the Iowa Review Award and the American Short Fiction Prize. He has also translated more than ten books from the Chinese, including works by You Jin and Wong Yoon, and has been awarded translation grants from PEN American Center, the National Endowment for the Arts (US) and the National Museum of Taiwanese Literature. His plays have been performed in Singapore, London and New York City.

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Mrs Chen turned out to be older than I imagined, or perhaps she hadn’t slept since hearing the news. She had come directly from the airport and was still clutching her luggage, an old trolley bag and various parcels. I hadn’t had time to prepare for this, and found myself running through my repertoire of condolences far too quickly. My Mandarin vocabulary was mostly culled from local TV serials, fortunately replete with many death scenes.

In the face of her eerie silence, my monologue sputtered and stammered to a halt. Had she even understood me? People talk differently in China. In desperation, I started to ask if she wanted a glass of water when she said, not looking at me, “I want to see his body.”

“I’m sure that can be arranged.” I said unsteadily, then remembered we were supposed to promise nothing. “I mean, possibly. I don’t know if they need to carry out an inquest.”

“Where did he die?”

I mechanically pointed at the block where it happened, and described the circumstances in some detail. Fault could not possibly be attributed to our organization; we operated under the most stringent safety regulations and he should never have been up there on his own. Searching for a positive note to end on, I managed, “He died without any pain.”

“How do you know? Were you there?”

“No, of course not. Mrs Chen, no one was. That’s why it happened.”

“So he died all alone.”

“Unfortunately.”

“What will happen next?”

Glad to be on safer ground, I began to explain about the compensation structure. He hadn’t been working very long for us, so it wouldn’t be as high as it could be, but there would be some provision for his family.

She interrupted me. “I’m talking about his body.”

I blinked, finding this in bad taste. “He’ll be burnt” – I was momentarily unable to remember the Mandarin for “cremated” – “in the next few days, once the coroner is satisfied.”

“No.”

“We have to follow the procedure.”

“He will come with me.”

“Mrs Chen,” I tried to soften my tone by imagining she was my mother. “You can’t possibly bring the body back to China. It would cost far too much. Let us deal with this, and you can take the ashes back with you.”

“You can’t do this to him.”

“It’s out of our hands.” And that seemed to be the end of it. Once the conversation moved onto ascribing blame, it was relatively simple for me to deflect it in other directions. The lift manufacturers, the various Ministries with a hand in this – though I stopped short of pointing the finger at Chen himself, even though to my mind he was every bit the author of his own misfortune.

She continued to be silent, and I considered that enough time had passed for our interview to come to a natural

**REVIEWS/ AWARDS**

Shortlisted for the Singapore Literature Prize 2016, English Fiction category.

“Tiang’s fiction oeuvre refreshingly goes beyond cliché heartland preoccupations, opting instead to step beyond the physical and psychical borders of Singapore to examine what makes its people here... A translator and playwright, Tiang reaches for the right word, like a jeweler examining stone after stone under a loup to find the best one for his setting.”

—— Clara Choe, *The Straits Times*
end. I stood up and headed purposefully for the door.  

"It was good of you to come and see, Mrs Chen. I'm glad I had the chance to speak with you. Do you know where you're putting up?"

Without answering, she walked through the door I was holding open for her. I said something to cover the silence, and watched as she marched into the blazing sun, her bag trailing on the uneven ground. I thought of shouting goodbye, but it was far too noisy – all the machinery was once more going full pelt, the pile-driving for Phasers 3 and 4 thump-thumping away even as we put the finishing touches on the first two blocks.

"How was it?" While I was preoccupied, Li Hsia had come up behind me. I knew it was her before she spoke – unlike the sweaty bodies on site, she smelt faintly of oleander all day. When I turned, she was looking at me with an expression halfway between amusement and concern.

"Not too bad. She's upset, of course."

"I'm sure it's all right. We just needed to meet her, to show we care."

"I guess I'm not used to dealing with members of the public."

"Public?" She smiled. "Wait till you're really dealing with the public, then you'll know the meaning of the word "difficult". Foreign workers don't count. Who are they going to complain to?"

"I don't think I was very helpful, though."

"What are you going to do, bring her husband back to life?" She looked narrowly at me. "Calvin, you mustn't care so much. You didn't cause the accident, I don't understand why you're feeling so guilty. These things happen."

Her callousness was bracing. I found myself wanting to be like her, with her certainty and her confidence. Everything she said was true – I couldn't argue with her. It wasn't my fault.
SYNOPSIS
Based on the founding legend of the kingdom of Singapura – the Lion City – 3 follows the adventures of the young prince Nila Utama, sailing the high seas after the fall of his family’s dynasty. The voyage across turbulent waters brings him to a fishing village where the headstrong prince, a youngest son insistent on keeping to the shadowy, is forced to step up to his responsibility, face his old demons, and discover what it truly means to be a king.

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I can never forget those eyes, and though the years have taught me the words to describe what I saw then, nothing I can say captures the amber flame, the golden storm of restrained power, that drew me close, closer still to the creature, till I saw myself: a boy, reflected in those quickly darkening orbs. He was a beast, a fact that those who had kept him here had known, though I had not. To me his cage was cruel, the fetters on his feet inhuman.

The bars that stood between us had been made with him in mind, not me. I slipped in – because I could. I cannot pretend it was compassion, or even a fool’s courage, that commanded me. It was curiosity, most of it misplaced in the darkness around us.

He watched me by the single shaft of sunlight that entered the ship’s hold, the rumbling giant of moments ago now silent with wonderment, perhaps from ill humour born of his unnatural confinement. I was close enough to feel his hunger and rage, the heat of his pulsing body. Fear flickered through my gut and was swiftly gone, dismissed as futile against the majesty of this being, the unbridled vigour of each limb and the strong strum of his heart. I watched, undrinking, as he began to draw forward, coming closer with step after self-assured step. I saw myself, an image in his eyes, grow larger and larger till it felt as though my reflection was the true me, the only me, and that my existence was just a figment of this beast’s imagination or, at the very least, an act of his will.

I named him and, thus, surrendered to him, with a borrowed but insufficient word: “Beauty”. It is what my father says of my mother, my sister of the evening sky, and my brother of his first and, so far, only countenance.

None of them knows what it means, for death is beauty, and those who bring it to us free of its companion, fear, are the most beautiful of Creation. He was such. He made me, in all my inexperience, unafraid to die.

I bowed my head as he came to stand towering over me, and a noiseless sob rose in my throat at losing sight of all that mattered. His breath, a welcome hot gale, was my only solace as I waited for the end, the only just and logical conclusion to our twin existence, our shared purpose.

He did not move. His blow did not fall. If the instant had lasted longer, I may have spoken, he may have struck. But a shout filled the air before either of us could stir. I do not know exactly what happened next. There were voices, there was noise, there was fear and frenzy. I felt my father’s firm grip on my shoulder as he dragged me away, while his men set upon my would-have-been attacker.

Roars thundered into the dark night as my father rushed me off the ship, fingers pressed so deep into my flesh that the bruise would take weeks to fade. The mark the beast left on me, the mark of his eyes, never will.

I bear it still, in secret, with pride.

In my dreams I see him again, often and always on a ship. But in my dreams our story ends otherwise. In my dreams I tame the beast.

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**REVIEWS/AWARDS**

“... the storyline of 3 does a Hanaiki Murakami with an LED focus...”

***Bangalore Mirror***
SYNOPSIS
A boy exercises the domineering spirit of his very-much-alive grandmother. Old friends achieve the Singapore Dream and are now unsure of what future they’ll wake to. A senior civil servant runs a massage parlour to raise the Total Fertility Rate of Singapore. This collection of short stories comes in two parts: First depicts the Singapore of the 1990s, when old ways of life began to lose their hold amidst a fast-changing society; while Middle examines the lives of Singaporeans who were born in the first years of the young country’s independence.

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"What do we know? Grandfather was taken by the Japanese, tortured and died. But who ever saw the body or a certified record of his death? Not just you or me, or our fathers, but not even Grandmother herself. When the Japanese occupied Penang, they destroyed half the records and when the allies returned, their bombing destroyed the government secretariat and took out the other half. Truth is a victim of war and crisis. Both sides kill it.

"A toast to truth.

"Who was our grandmother? No, I don’t mean as we knew her, as the matriarch who held everything and everyone together. Who was she when she was young, really? A young girl from a coolie father, recently arrived from Canton via Taiping, who had to teach herself English. Look across the street at the kopitiam; see the young girl taking drink orders? Replace her T-shirt and jeans with a working-class sarong, and keep the country girl upstarts; that could be Grandmother.

"Who was our grandfather? The middle son of a rich family, one of the richest, an old Peranakan family, more used to sambal belacan and English manners than anything to do with China. His people – our family – crossed borders, traded between empires and knew how to hold silver fish knives at the dining table while bartering for coconuts and sijam. You know the old man there with his FT, the owner? The Merc limo is his – I borrowed it. He studied in England before the war, finished with a first class in law from Oxford. He could be our grandfather. He’s about the right age.

"To our forebears, whoever they really were. A toast!

"They were married early. Grandmother and Grandfather. An arranged marriage when she was already pregnant. What if everything we were told and thought we know is a lie? Not only that some things were never said but that other things were outright fabrications? Not just small things, like furniture in a house, but the very foundations and pillars of the whole building? Look at Georgetown. Some buildings must be taken down. Others can be saved, renovated.

"To renovations of the past. Drink up!"

I look at Tim. He smiles, the intensity around the eyes remaining even as he reaches down for his beer. He drains the glass and puts it down with a slight thud. My cousin has played elaborate tricks on me before. He has also been under a lot of stress from the business and crisis. He is drinking. But something tells me this is no prank. He wipes his mouth and begins again.

"I got you here by saying that there are matters of life and death. Well, here they are, Eddie. Here are some things that should die. Our grandfather’s death by Japanese torture. Our grandmother as long-suffering widow. Our family moribund about triumph over humble beginnings and sudden reversal by discipline and sacrifice.

"All lies. We were rich and some branches of the family still are. Our grandmother never fit in with them and she decided to pack up and go back to Taiping. She wasn’t a widow. Our grandfather wasn’t killed by the Japanese.

"What? Tim, what are you saying?"

"He was taken away for questioning, true. Also true that he was roughly up and feared they might kill him. But no, after three days, they released him.

"Just like that? No reason?"

"Ya, just like that. No reason to detain. No reason to release."

"Then what?"

"In that early dawn he started walking back to the house. Then it struck him."

"What? What, Tim?"

"He was so overjoyed to be alive that he started crying there in the street. See that corner? Right there outside this restaurant? It was at that junction that our grandfather looked up and cried. He realised that he didn’t need to walk the next hundred steps back to the family company, the Teh clan house, or to our grandmother."

"What?"

"Having been in fear of death and then released, he realised he didn’t want the life he had before all that happened. He didn’t know what to do at first. So he just sat there for a while, hoping and also fearing that someone from the house would see him and call out his name, and bring him back in."
“And?”

“No one did.”

“So?”

“So he turned around and walked away, and kept on walking.”

I look up from my umpteenth glass: wine had followed the beer shandy and vodka, and then the caperchitos. I look at Tim, across the table of dishes, many emptied but some with remnants of fish, meats, oil and chilli. I feel confused and not a little queasy.

“How do you know this? I don’t mean about the Tehs being rich, or Grandmother’s father being a coolie, or records being destroyed in the war. How could you know what Grandfather did, what he thought about? If he walked out and never went back, how do you or anyone know?”

Tim looks across at me, and nods his head, gesturing to the left of my shoulder. I turn, with a start realising a presence; someone has been standing there for some time while my attention was focused on Tim and the story. The figure is tall and stands very still. It is the man from the corner; the old man Tim had nodded at, the owner of the restaurant, reading the PT, who lent us his limo.

“Ask him yourself.”

I stare. I stand up, bolting from the seat.
SYNOPSIS
A wife returns home to find that her husband has remarried. A retiree in a nursing home is visited by a mynah singing a Beatles song. An artist remembers the time he was harangued by fruits in his studio. A middle-aged woman finds herself shadowed in airports by a watchman from a brief encounter in Prague many years ago. A child steals a family heirloom to prove a point. In this debut collection of short stories, secret hopes, desires and regrets are revealed through obsessions and events that collide and merge with everyday life.

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I was looking in all the windows going from floor to floor until I found what I was looking for in one of the antique shops on the third storey. An ivory carving of three apples on a branch. The yellow light in the display bathed the carving in a buttery glow. One, two, three – three life-size apples with faint pink shadows on a pale green skin. Father had a carving of an apple branch that looked just like this. With a gentle twist, each individual apple could be detached and cradled in an admirer’s palm. There was something about them that might make you think of an insolent child. They were heftier than real apples, of course. But I’d had the impression since the first time I saw them in Grandfather’s Room that if they were submerged under water, they would not stand for it, they’d float to the surface.

One of the apples on Father’s branch disappeared from our home twenty years ago and was never recovered, not even when Father passed away a year ago. I was twelve when the apple went missing. It was the year my period began. Around that time Mother made me wear a singlet under my school blouses. Some days were suffocatingly hot, but she insisted that I keep the singlet on. Not wearing it was indecent. That year I had even more reason to wish I was a boy.

My hair was very short and many people mistook me for a boy. Once, an auntie told me off when she saw me in the Ladies: “No boys in here!” I remember wondering if I should have used the Gents instead. The first time I saw a urinal, I couldn’t understand how anyone could sit on it to pee.

Mother had me when she was forty-two and Father was nearly fifty. They married late. I don’t know what life would have been like if I wasn’t an only child. Probably I would have moved out by now. And maybe I would have travelled or lived abroad. Who’s to know? I was an only child who had the full attention of both parents and I couldn’t imagine things being any different. I still can’t.

The year I turned twelve was also the year Peter first showed up. Peter and I never talked about his family or where he lived. He wore the same clothes every time. From young I’d hung out with the boys in the neighbourhood, cycling to East Coast Park and kicking pong pong and coconut husks around. I was a fast runner and I scored most of the goals. One of them, I forget who, started to tease me about wearing two layers of clothes and the others ran with it like a ball. After Peter appeared in my life, I became indifferent to their teasing. I didn’t care so much about being left out of matches. I was unaffected on Saturday mornings when nobody told me where they were all going and I saw them, my ex-friends, on their BMX bikes zipping down the street past our house.

I spent more time at home after Peter came. He knew how to make all sorts of things with paper. He made frogs that leapt when you pressed on their backside, cranes with pointy beaks and wings, paper balls that looked like flat diamonds until you blew into a small hole and the sides filled out.

We played in Grandfather’s Room because it was a spare room with a bed that nobody slept in and also because it was where the carving was kept. Peter said that it looked just like a real apple branch. The first time I let him hold one of the apples, I got him to close his eyes first so that he would not know what I was doing. I placed it in the heart of his palm and closed his fingers around it. He held the apple close to his face and opened his mouth wide. His eyes glittered like shiny foil confetti fluttering in the sun.

I remember that it was that year, when I turned twelve, that Father started to talk about China. “Things have changed. They are now saying, black cat or white cat, doesn’t matter as long as it can catch mice.” He said to Mother one day. He went back to our ancestral village in Fukien and after he returned, he told us about visiting the house where Grandfather was born and meeting Grandfather’s youngest sister, the only one of his siblings who was still alive. She was in her eighties and she had lost all her teeth, but she could still tell stories about Grandfather’s pranks when he was a boy and his favourite food.

**REVIEWS/AWARDS**

“The past in Singapore in the last ten years has become a contested country that we seek to map out, to know things that have been forgotten, often willfully. Yeo’s collection reminds us that the pain of forgetting, or at least the partiality of memory, is as central to identities, whether personal or public, than total recall.”

— Philip Holden, Quarterly Literary Review Singapore

“The stories range from poignant nostalgic vignettes to modern-day tales of love and yearning. The prose is elegantly constructed and her profound narratives make what should be a breezy 144-page read into one that is at times heavy and thought-provoking.”

— Walker Sim, The Straits Times
SYNOPSIS
This novel tells the stories of several generations of Chinese families living in the Malay village of Shuang Kou Ding, charting the village’s development over years of hardship into a prosperous satellite town. Based on the author’s own colourful childhood memories, Shuang Kou Ding Village presents portraits of village folk whose lives aren’t as simple as they might appear on the surface.

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AUTHOR
CHEONG HUI
(CEONG WENG YAT)
Cheong Weng Yat, pen name Cheong Hui, was born in 1942 in Fan yu county in Guangdong province, China, and is now a Singaporean. His publications include novels, essays and poems. His novel 45-45 Secret Meeting was awarded the Singapore Literature Prize in 1992, as well as the S.E.A. Write Award. Cheong has served as a judge for literary competitions such as the Golden Point Award, the Golden Lion and the Fang Xu Literary Awards. The current president of the Singapore Association of Writers, he worked as a teacher for forty-three years before retiring in 2006.
Ah Ri’s inner world had always been a noisy place. This was because, in the depths of his heart, there was a horse that brayed constantly. The condition was difficult to describe to other people. But he was very certain that the horse made a lot of noise inside his heart had been with him throughout his life.

When he was little, he found out that he was born in the Year of the Horse when he overheard his mother, Auntie Guangfu, talking to someone:

"This silly boy of mine was born in the Year of the Horse! What a pitiful baby he was, born in noisy wartime!"

He was around five when he heard his mother speak of him in this way, and after that day, he began to sense that there was a horse living inside his heart.

From then on, his inner world became a very noisy place.

The horse told him what to do every day, from the moment he woke up. He followed the horse's every instruction. If the horse told him to run, he would run; if it told him to jump, he would jump. They spent all their days running and jumping, having a great time.

extract in CHINESE

Ah Ri’s inner world had always been a noisy place. This was because, in the depths of his heart, there was a horse that brayed constantly. The condition was difficult to describe to other people. But he was very certain that the horse made a lot of noise inside his heart had been with him throughout his life.

One day, the horse told him to climb the jackfruit tree by the well in their backyard. There was a ripe jackfruit on the tree. He did as he was told, climbed the tree and picked the fruit. Next, the horse told him to jump from the tree, some five or six feet above the ground. At that very instant, Auntie Guangfu's voice rang in the air behind him: "Don't jump! Ah Ri, you'll hurt yourself!"

Ah Ri didn’t pay his mother any heed. He listened only to what the horse said. He jumped and landed on the hard ground. Auntie Guangfu was furious. She rushed over with anger written all over her face, intending to slap Ah Ri. But she couldn’t bring herself to strike him. Instead, with tears rolling down her face, she scolded him: "You always disobey me, you’re going to be the death of me!"

Ah Ri didn’t die from the fall; he merely twisted his right ankle. He blamed his mother, not the horse. If his mother had not called out from behind and distracted him, he would have been fine. His mother’s scolding had caused him to land poorly and twist his ankle. After that day, he was even more determined to ignore his mother and to follow only the horse’s instructions.

Ah Ri’s inner world had always been a noisy place. This was because, in the depths of his heart, there was a horse that brayed constantly. The condition was difficult to describe to other people. But he was very certain that the horse made a lot of noise inside his heart had been with him throughout his life.

Review/Awards

**SYNOPSIS**

The devastating Bukit Ho Swee fire causes the lives of two childhood friends, Ah Chang and Lin Huowang, to diverge. Ah Chang loses everything in the fire and falls into a life of crime to get by; Huowang works hard and joins the police force. The two men meet again in 1963 on the prison island of Pulau Serang, where Huowang is a warden and Ah Chang is a prisoner. Little do they know that a riot is on the horizon...
It was one forty in the afternoon.

Another group of inmates barged into the office of the head warden Lin Dun, grabbing hold of him. Two of the guards tried to stop them and were fatally slashed by parang knives. The head warden managed to get away from them by firing a few shots, but he could tell things were getting out of hand. He ran upstairs to call the Singapore mainland for help.

He was mid-sentence: “Help, we are in trouble, here at Pulau Senang...” when he suffered a blow and almost lost his hand. The telephone was smashed to pieces. The inmates were like beasts, destroying everything in sight: radios, displays, bookcases, the bar, the pool table, artworks. Then they set fire to the office, and soon the whole place was filled with huge flames.

They held the head warden hostage. Although his hands were covered in blood, Mr Lin harangued his captors in English: “You devil! You’re going to pay for this! Just you wait, you’re going to pay for this big time!”

Liu Tianzhu replied in English, coldly: “We can’t wait...”

***

At two o’clock, they seized the head warden.

They waved their knives madly at him, cut off his genitals, and stuffed them into his mouth.

They poured petrol all over his body and set him on fire.

Mr Lin was still alive, and his cries filled the air. But the inmates laughed even louder.

***

At two fifteen, the convicts searched for any remaining guards, intending to kill them all.

As Huowang flew the office, he was slashed and almost lost an eye. Blood covered his face and his arms had knife wounds. In a dazed and confused state, he ran until he reached the vegetable garden.

Ah Chang saw with his own eyes the horrific sight of Old Xian hacking prison guards to death with an axe.

He was still reeling from this when he heard the inmates swearing and yelling to each other: “We’re free! Kill those motherfuckers, kill them all!” He saw the fire raging everywhere around him, and he was struck by the violence of the entire revolt.

- But he couldn’t hide here, could he? Surely he should go and look around the grounds to see what was happening.

- At that very moment, he ran into Huowang, who was badly injured. Ah Chang didn’t have time to think: he hid his childhood friend in the tapioca Underground.

“Stay here and don’t come out, otherwise you’ll be killed for sure.”

“They’re all gone mad, all of them...”

“That’s right. So you’d better hide here. If they find you, I won’t be able to help you.”

***

At three o’clock, the entire island was submerged in a sea of fire.

Ah Chang arrived at the campsite, his nerves in shreds, where he found the corpses of three prison guards and the charred body of Mr Lin. The inmates were gathered around the bodles, drinking the fine wines they’d looted from the main office, passing the bottles around. It was like a carnival. Someone was playing a guitar, there was singing and laughing and dancing. They started to sing a Hokkien song they’d composed during their time in prison:

“XXX was inhumane, caught my 55. Sent us to Pulau Senang. I lost my freedom, the freedom to play, to play. All three meals are no good, all three meals are no good. Pulau Senang’s pain, everyone knows, angmoh pigs are mean to me, treating me like a brute animal.”

Ah Chang took everything in and thought he was back inside the ‘magical forest’. The people around him were like beasts, killing each other without a thought. And revelling in it all.
下午一点四十分。

另一队则冲向军管区。陈振的办公室，聚集在总管、两名秘书的身后，被敌人刀枪乱砍杀！总管W. 林枪击
了几发，击倒两名，总管吓得左手抱住身上电话
去木板教，到达聂晓梅电话，只等了半晌，“引事了”，
安乐岛也参了！已经被警报一声下，干机
通断，话机、话筒、话机、电话、电话，全被
按住，然后放火，行政楼很快地在熊熊大火中。

总管W. 林枪击在四周射杀，于朱晓梅、仍然不断用英语
说着。“你们这些魔鬼，你们一一你们将付出代价！你
们付出代价吧。”

刘大栓以英语冷冷回应：“我们都要…”

总管W. 林枪击被崩出来！

囚人们刀枪乱杀，还烧了他的女秘书，惨死在牢房里。

他们在舱内夺空间，然后点火。W. 林枪击被愤怒，
惨叫哀鸣…

囚人们的愤怒笑声。

下两点十分。

囚人们到处搜索报复，全身起火杀绝。
SYNOPSIS
This collection of fifty flash fiction pieces and seven literary essays cover a wide range of subjects and settings, from sleepy village life in pre-independence Singapore to the alienating urban jungle of today. Zero Teacher presents stories of humble folk afflicted by conditions of our modern, troubled world such as the loss of traditions, language and human interaction. At the same time, these stories also reflect the author’s longing for a world where empathy and kindness can still continue to reside.

AUTHOR
LIN JIN
(LIM BOON GIM)
Lim Boon Gim, better known by his pen name Lin Jin, was born in 1948 and has published actively since the 1970s. His Chinese-language works have appeared in literary journals in Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong, China and Taiwan, and include essays, flash fiction, poetry and literary reviews. He is a committee member of the Singapore Association of Writers and a part-time lecturer at UniSIM.
Old Chen had lived in that neighbourhood for over twenty years, and after he moved away, he rarely returned. The last time he'd been back had been only five or six years ago. His first impression now was that the place had changed. In fact, it was an old HDB estate and apart from the upgraded lifts, everything had remained the same.

Stepping out of the lift onto the eighth floor, Old Chen heard someone mumbling to himself. He saw an old man at the entrance to the corner flat, struggling to unlock the door. Wasn't that his former neighbour Old Huang?

"Old Huang, I heard that recently your health hasn't been good, so I've come to visit you."

"Who are you?"

"Have you forgotten? I am Old Chen. We used to be neighbours. My flat was over there," Old Chen said, pointing to the flat at the other end of the corridor.

The old man did not say anything. Old Chen felt a knot in his heart. Old Huang is so ill he's forgotten who I am. He walked towards Old Huang and took the bunch of keys from him. There were five keys and Old Chen tried them all, but none worked.

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The police posted was nearby. The police responded quickly and upon discovering the problem spent a long time coaxing Old Huang to give them his son's number. They called the son, who soon appeared, looking haunted.

"How could you do this to your father? So unfilial!" Old Chen scolded the young man.

"Dad, you're mistaken. We live in the block of flats opposite. Come, let's go home," the young man said, paying no attention to Old Chen. He took Old Huang by the arm and helped him into the lift. Then he turned to Old Chen and said: "Uncle Chen, we were neighbours. Have you forgotten where you used to live?"

Old Chen patted his forehead, feeling a fever in his body, staring blankly at the end of the corridor, at the end of life.
SYNOPSIS
In post-World War II Malaya, the British colonial government is fighting against communist guerrillas – and winning. As the communists begin retreating to the northern border, a party member, Lan Guoduan, is captured by the British. They successfully bribe him to spy on his own comrades. Lan joins a band of guerrillas, the Sixth Company, and accompanies them on their journey up north...

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On 6 October 1951, the British High Commissioner, Sir Henry Gurney, was assassinated by guerrillas from the Malayan Communist Party. The news shocked the world, and was applauded by the MCP’s comrades in other countries. The BBC reported on the severe threat posed by the MCP to the British colonial government, particularly at Kuala Lumpur, its headquarters: the MCP had twelve companies of armed men and an intelligence network of special agents that had infiltrated all parts of the administration. General Navarre, the French military consultant who had taken part in the battle of Dien Bien Phu, commented that Chin Peng, the General Secretary of the MCP, had control over much of rural Malaya, and that the British Empire’s days were numbered. With such thunderous recognition of their advantage, the MCP’s morale was high and strong. Some leaders felt that it was time to expand their military capabilities, set up more base camps, advance more rapidly towards their goal of emancipating Malaya...

But had the MCP truly wrested control from the British? Was the Empire’s power over Malaya truly on the wane? Perhaps Sir Henry’s assassination was, in fact, just a lucky fluke. Perhaps the talk among the MCP leaders was just a wishful expression of what they desired.

1961年10月26日，英国驻马来亚最高专员葛莱爵士在赴吉隆坡出席新加坡与马来西亚会谈前，在交通要道内，曾遇“兄弟会”（共产党）枪杀未遂，仅惊险
生还。他有世界广泛影响的英国电台播音员 宣称马来西亚民族政党并不像这有二百位党员，他们内部斗争无孔不入。情报披露无丁，阴谋连环已发动到政府吉隆
坡、英国殖民政权如履薄冰，警惕而紧张，政府连忙加强戒备。英国统治者已数年，马来西主党人 партизанов — Ленинградская партия,与其中
关键性活动，有组织有领导有战斗员有牺牲，加强政
府力量。在大选前会战中，加强政权军备与政治...

马共已控制大片乡村土地了吗？英国殖民政权如果即
使“兄弟会”已经行动化了吗？这样的问句是正当的，敌人答
案是坚定的。马共组织已被认为是民族派的武装力量，这与自
己的武力，自我维持的形态，因为是游击队上层阶级或被压迫者。

不过亦非全是偶然，葛莱爵士乃英国驻马来亚专员，
领兵派兵，外间对马来有警。华民三人扛刀时
持枪便拿枪投降的，单兵单独出动的特务是与马
共在合作，根据英的建议，在吕宋三项的三个特殊人
数，使用的武器如是如此这般。在印尼海军的
他，有组织有领导有战斗员有牺牲，加强政
府力量。在大选前会战中，加强政权军备与政治...

与英共游击队使用武器的研究后，英国殖民政权的“
机枪”仅三十支，未配备的能配出者希有三支机
枪之别。然而，马共在严密的保护下，还要想法子
来，这说明马共自给自足之本能。他们在训练、
有计划，有组织，有战斗，有牺牲。

Yet it could not be dismissed as simply talk. Sir Henry was
the most senior representative of the British Empire
in Malaya; his entourage included bodyguards and a
motorcade of military policemen. His assassination
had required meticulous planning. The guerrilla leader
in charge of the company that carried out the attack
was Ma Chaoying. In his account, he stated that thirty-six
of the best guerrilla fighters were involved in the ambush
that day. The weapons they used were left over from
the war, weapons formerly used against the Japanese;
mostly rifles, two Bren light machine guns, one Sten
sub-machine gun and six hand grenades. The guards
who escorted Sir Henry rode in an army jeep and a huge
lorry; there were over twenty of them. They were white
men and Gurkhas.

The guerrillas’ weapons were inferior to those of
the British. Their machine guns were left at fifteen years
old. And yet, despite obvious disadvantages, they
succeeded in their ambush of Sir Henry. This alone was
proof of the guerrillas’ prowess: they had tactics, they
had courage, they were well-organised; they could fight,
and they could fight to the end to achieve victory.

EXTRACT FROM THE STORMY FOREST TRANSLATED BY YEO WEI WEI

THE WEAPONS THEY USED WERE LEFT OVER FROM THE WAR. WEAPONS FORMERLY USED AGAINST THE JAPANESE: MOSTLY RIFLES, TWO BREN LIGHT MACHINE GUNS, ONE STEN SUB-MACHINE GUN AND SIX HAND GRENADES.

REVIEWS/AWARDS

* Even though the subject of the Malaysian Emergency is not widely known, the author manages to bring the story to life through his skilful rendering of events, characters, and emotions. This novel is definitely worth reading.*

---

*Wong Wenian, Lianhe Wanbao*
SYNOPSIS
From a village in Guangdong, China in the 1930s to present-day Singapore, fifteen-year-old admirer of Cantonese Opera, Liang Binghong, and Ah De, arrive in Singapore full of hope and desire. But as the talented Ah De rises to fame, Liang Binghong’s aversion towards hard work causes him to be rejected by the Cantonese Opera school. In his old age, he encourages his grandson, Liang Jianqi, to pursue the popular art instead. By the sixties however, the decline in appreciation towards Cantonese Opera in modern Singapore leaves Liang Jianqi in despair, and he finally vanishes without a trace...

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EXTRACT FROM OPERA COSTUME
TRANSLATED BY YEO WEI WEI

That evening, after they had watched Happy Together, starring Leslie Cheung and Tony Leung, Jianju had walked with Mengxiang to Jordan, back to Mengxiang’s hotel.

“I would like to return to Singapore. I can’t stay here anymore,” Jianju said.

“I would like to go back too. Why don’t we start over again?” Mengxiang said suddenly.

“You want to start another truc?” Jianju replied with a bitter laugh. “I don’t think you have the resources you had before.”

He was being honest, for although he didn’t know the details of Mengxiang’s life in Canada, he could tell from his frail and withered face that he had been through tough times (if his life was the way it had been in the old days, he would not be staying at the Prudential).

Now, Jianju wonders if perhaps Mengxiang had already been ill at that time. Had he known about his condition? If so, he had come to Hong Kong to see him, a sick man, for what would turn out to be their last meeting. Jianju feels bad for having treated him with such cold indifference. But back then, he’d been angry at Mengxiang for suggesting that they could start afresh. It was utterly impossible: why did he say such impractical things to him?

He’d said in a cold voice to Mengxiang: “Our time is over, I’m old now.”

But Mengxiang had stared at him, his manner firm and calm. “I know you know that I’m being serious.”

Jianju can vividly recall Mengxiang’s face, his facial expression, a gaunt face with frighteningly large eyes.

He feels a twinge in his heart. Yes, Mengxiang was already a sick man then, I was cold and heartless towards him. Jianju can still hear his own sharp response: “I am serious too, our time is already over.”

They were at the entrance to the hotel when they stopped talking. Jianju didn’t stay the night at the hotel; he returned to Yau Ma Tei. He still remembers the last thing he said to Mengxiang before they parted ways:

“Remember to ask after Lili for me.”

***

“What did he say to you?”

Jianju, stroking the opera costume as if it were a kitten, is roused from his nostalgic reverie. Lili, who is sitting on the edge of the bed, had suddenly spoken.

“Are you referring to Brother Xiang?”

While Jianju was deep in thought, Lili’s eyes had been fixed on the photograph hanging on the wall facing the bed, so that when he finally answered her, she had to scramble for a response, like a daydreaming student caught unawares by her teacher’s question.

Ruxiu has also noticed the photograph of Older Brother and Mengxiang. In the picture, Older Brother is wearing the traditional warrior costume with its appendage of triangular military flags on the back, whilst Mengxiang is wearing a suit and tie; both look handsome and in high spirits. Ah, Older Brother does indeed have some old photographs: just as Grandfather had said, not all the old photographs had been lost. What about the photographs in Grandfather’s photo album? Perhaps

AFTER A LONG SPELL, RUXIU HEARS LILI SPEAK UP, TENDERLY AND NATURALLY: “A WOMAN NEEDS SOMEONE TO TAKE CARE OF HER, AND BE SIDES I AM NO LONGER YOUNG.”

REVIEWS/ AWARDS

Mark for the Singapore Literature Prize 2016, Chinese Fiction Category.

One of Asiaweek’s top ten Chinese novels of 2015.

“Key events in post-Independence Singapore’s history provide the backdrop for the novel, but the author’s focus is always on his characters and their inner worlds. The individual narratives interweave to form an all-encompassing tapestry reminiscent of a historical epic, but there are no heroes in this story. Yang’s protagonists are believably human: they are never larger-than-life figures of heroic action, nor are they caricatures of victimhood. They are individuals who struggle as they are buffeted by forces beyond their control, facing challenges in love, threatened in their hopes and dreams for a better life.”

--- Li Qingxiang, Lianhe Zabao
they'd been sold off, at the same time they'd sold their rosewood furniture.

Jianqiu does not answer Lili. Neither of them exchange a single word until finally, Lili speaks, biting her lips: "I understand." She pauses and then continues: "I've known this for a long time."

Jianqiu remains silent. When he finally speaks, his eyes are still looking at the costume in his hands, and his voice is low, as if he were being squeezed from his throat: "How did you fool him...? Then he freezes like a still from a movie. A minute later, he sighs and continues to stroke the costume.

**extract in EN**

So he went to see the New York-based sculptor, Lin Xiaoqiu, who he was told was the best in the business. He was curious to see what she could do. He took her to dinner at a Chinese restaurant in the city. They talked about art and life. Lin Xiaoqiu was fascinated by his stories. She wanted to know more about him and his family. They talked late into the night, and the conversation flowed easily from one topic to another. It was a warm and friendly atmosphere.

"You're really good at sculpting," Lin Xiaoqiu said, admiring his work. "But you've never told me about yourself. I'd like to know more about you." She was eager to learn more about Jianqiu and his family, and she didn't want the conversation to end. She was interested in his life and his experiences. She wanted to know about his past and his future. She wanted to understand him better.

"I understand," Jianqiu replied. "I appreciate your interest. I don't want to bore you with details, but I'll tell you about myself if you want to hear."

Lin Xiaoqiu nodded, smiling. She was touched by Jianqiu's sincerity. She wanted to hear about his life and his family. She was interested in his story and she wanted to know more about him. She was eager to learn more about Jianqiu and his family, and she didn't want the conversation to end. She was interested in his life and his experiences. She wanted to know about his past and his future. She wanted to understand him better.
PAGI SEMERAH DAUN MOMIJI
(MORNING OF THE RED MOMIJI)

SYNOPSIS
During World War II, a young Japanese man named Masatoshi is forced to join the Imperial Army and ends up in Ketantan, Malaya, where he is stranded in hostile territory. Meanwhile, a young girl named Midori is left orphaned after the atomic bomb is dropped on Hiroshima, and she must find ways to take care of herself and her little brother.

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LEYLA SHURI
Hualea A. Razak, pen name Leyla Shuri, is a Singaporean living in Okinawa, Japan. She has published two collections of haku in Japanese and three novels in Malay. Her Malay short stories have been published in Berita Harian, Singapore’s main Malay newspaper, while her Malay articles on cultural themes have appeared in Dewan Sastera in Malaysia. Her second novel Pagi Semerah Daun Momiji won the Malay Literary Award in 2015, while her latest novel Terbelah Bintang Sabu has been shortlisted for the Singapore Literature Prize 2016.

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Form | Novel
"Midori-chan, turn on the radio. I'd like to hear the news!" Yukichi instructed his daughter.

"Hai!" Midori set down her book and moved towards the radio. She switched it on and carefully turned the round frequency knob, eventually finding the right wavelength for the local station.

"Come here, Midori! Help me with dinner!" Sayaka called from the kitchen. "Midori, take two pieces of cucumber from the pickle jar. Wash them thoroughly, careful not to leave any rice husks. After washing, slice them and take them outside," her mother instructed.

Midori lifted the cover of the large earthenware jar, filled to the brim with rice husks. The rice husks, mixed with some salt, were what enabled the fermentation process. Her hand groped around the jar, plunging as deep as it could go until it touched something solid amidst the husks.

Midori pulled out her find. Two pieces of cucumber. She continued to grope, and also unearthed some carrots and a few pieces of brinjal. After washing and slicing the vegetables, she arranged them on a plate and brought them out to the dining table.

Midori’s father extended his arms to get the chopsticks, then picked up a slice from the dish. Midori’s ears caught the crispy sound as her father chewed on a slice of the pickled cucumber.

"Father, when will they end this war?" asked Midori. Like him, she was following the development of the war closely.

"I don’t know, Midori. Our nation has colonised some parts of Asia as of now. I wonder how long this war will go on," Yukichi sighed.

"That’s enough, Father! Better not talk about war with the children. I don’t want to hear it," muttered Sayaka wryly.

"Taiyo, keep the comic. Let’s eat now," said Yukichi, calling to his son.

"Today’s dinner is stir-fried tofu with green beans and brinjal soup with some pickles," Sayaka announced, determined to change the topic of conversation away from the war.

"It’s quite some time since we’ve had fish," said Yukichi as his chopsticks conveyed rice to his mouth.

"It’s not easy to get fish now. On hot days of summer like this, the river is shallow. Of course, fish from the sea is hard to come by. But, from our garden patch, we’ve been lucky to get some vegetables. Let’s eat. Father!" exclaimed Sayaka as she passed a rice bowl to Midori. The mother added, picking at her own rice: "The harvest season is still far off. It’s only August now. We have to be careful with rice. It is not easy to get rice right now. This war seems endless."

By law, farmers now had to supply the army with the harvest of the land. They had to meet a supply quota. Whatever was left after the army took its share was barely enough to feed the farmers’ own families, let alone the rest of the population. Each household was assigned a rice ration, based on the number of heads. But the rice merchants kept any good stocks of rice for the black market, mixing stale rice into what they supplied the population. Complaints were ignored. If you wanted good rice, you had to go to the black market. But not everybody could afford to pay the higher prices of the black market.

Yukichi was not from a farming family, but his household had never wanted for rice before the war. Now, it was his literacy that helped him feed his family, as friends and neighbours gave him rice in exchange for his help reading and writing letters. These letters were from Mongolia, the Philippines, and once in a while from Malaya and Indonesia. They were written using all forms of writing implements, not just pen or pencil; on one occasion, Yukichi was presented with a piece of worn...
“Midori-chan, pasang radio. Otousan nak dengar berita!” Yukichi menyuruh anaknya.

“Hai!” Midori meletakkan bukuannya dan bergempas bangun menuju ke arah radio. Midori menekan pustuk suis elektrik dan memutar pustuk bulat untuk menangkap gelombang pembawa isyarat dan menetapkan frekuensi stesen tempatan itu.

“Mari, Midori! Tolong Okaasan hidangkan makanan!” panggil Sayaka terdengar dari dapur.

Selepas mendapatkan frekuensi stesen radio, Midori masuk ke dapur.


“Otosan, bila mereka nak hentikan perang ini?” Midori juga mengikuti dengan penuh minat perkembangan yang berlaku di negara itu.


“Sudahlah Otousan! Jangan cakap hal perang depan anak-anak kita. Saya tak mau dengan!” gumam Sayaka, bibir mengeringkat.

“Tayo, simpan buku komik itu! Mari makam!” ujar Yukichi kepada anak lelaki itu.


“Dah lama kita tak makan ikar!” Yukichi menepit nasi ke mulut.


NOSTALGIA YANG HILANG
(THE LOST NOSTALGIA)

SYNOPSIS
This collection of short stories revolves around the themes of identity, oppression, isolation, struggle, and hope. Several of the stories were written at a time when Singapore was going through post-independence modernisation, and they highlight the displacement experienced by the Malay community as old ways of life had to give way to the new.

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He remembered when he was taught the attributes of God by a teacher who was extremely orthodox and intellectually shallow, some time ago. He had listened to it all with an air of mockery. God is Everywhere. God is All-Knowing. God Listens. God Watches. God is All-Compassionate. God is All-Loving. He smiled as he heard all of it, the attributes of God as explained to him then, when he was brimming with questions and he was fed these barely intellectual scraps and it made him conclude that the teachings of all these religious teachers were merely ancient fairytales.

But now when he watches the television, he is reminded of how the images and voices of men could be seen and heard from millions of kilometres away, just by using an instrument capable of transmission. How these voices and images, which moved with such perfection, could be screened simultaneously and were watched by millions of other men. How this miraculous human invention was not much different from the omniscient Listening and Watching of The One True God. Listening and watching the actions and behaviour of every single man, every single creature that was created in this world, with the Essence of God The Ever Perfect. With the Omnipotence of God. The Ever Perfect and Ever Sublime. Now he could compare human advancements in science and technology and its logical associations with the Essence of God and His Power. How, when he spoke on the telephone, his voice could be carried by connecting wires, millions of miles in length. It was not impossible for God’s attributes to be more Perfect than the inventions of humans with all their shortcomings; but these images, their substance, their likeness, they were all reflecting, were representing the omnipotence of The Ever Powerful. The Ever Perfect.

When he spotted a single moon, and reflected on how it could be seen by millions of men, in thousands of cities, that was how he began to associate it with the teachings of the attributes of The One True God, The Monothestic God. And it was the same for the sun, which was single in number but whose substance could be felt by millions of men. All humans who lived in the world could testify to the presence of its power and substance. And all of this to him was no different from the attributes of God he’d learnt about the last time, but which he had not believed in and appreciated due to the shallow and trivial teachings of his tutors.

He witnessed the rise and fall of human beings who had claimed their might and power over the world. He witnessed how a politician, whose followers numbered more than six million, finally expired and was mourned and grieved by them. He, who had not believed in the existence of God, finally collapsed onto the earth and died. However mighty and powerful he was, however numberless his followers, there was not a single one who could extend his life by even ten minutes. He witnessed how the richest politician of overwhelming wealth, whose toilets were burnished with gold, whose aeroplanes were numerous, who owned private islands as retreats, whose assets were worth millions, could not be given life by his own personal physicians. He sensed all this, and his heart whispered: The Ever Sublime. The Ever Great and Ever Perfect God. Human beings were such weak and small creatures.

A frangipani flower fell onto his breast. The colour of the flower, white and tinged with violet, was magnificent and enchanting. He stroked the petals of the flower, which were as soft as the cheeks of a newborn baby. He inhaled its sweet scent and his heart whispered: How Exquisite The Creation Of The Almighty. Which human being could design a flower as beautiful as this? A flower that could bloom and could close its petals. Who could design a scent that was this intoxicating? Oh God, how marvellous the secrets of Your creation. How ignorant the human beings who could not cherish the splendour of Your creations, how deprived they were.

A few dazzling butterflies landed on the frangipani flowers. The colours that alternated in the wings of the butterflies were combinations of hues that were deep and entrancing. Each layer of colour that was created contained a secret beauty that could not be comprehended and contemplated by human beings. He recalled his wife questioning him the night before:

REVIEW/ AWARDS
Amsyarah Puisian Melayu (Malay Literary Award), 2015.
"When will you start performing your prayers? Our son is all grown up now; next year he will start school, when will you lead him by example, when will you start guiding him? I'm sure that when you start performing your prayers, our son will take after you, so when will you start?" And he replied: "Praying is easy, it's basic, you just have to bow and prostrate yourself, but that's just the outward gestures, so what is its actual meaning? If it's not internalized, if it's not performed with conviction! I am searching for something that I believe in. I'm searching for something eternal, I feel that I am close to finding it, please be patient."

His wife was displeased with his answer. But as a wife who was patient and who understood her husband's behaviour, she felt that there was a great transformation in his soul was experiencing, there was the radiance of faith in his complexion, his husband had begun to immerse himself in religious literature. He had begun to watch the religious programmes on Channel Three. He had begun to read exercises of the Quran with concentration and diligence. She believed that her husband was heading towards the path she had always wished him to take. "Those who are forty years and older and still set in their habits, it means that the doors to the heart have been locked. If the person is older than forty and still drinking alcohol, still lusting after women, still gambling, still negligent of God, it means that the doors to his heart have been shuttered tight, it means at his death he will fail to recite the Islamic creed..."

He remembered the words of his religious teacher from fifteen years ago. How true were his words and opinions? That God was All-Compassionate, All-Loving, All-Merciful, and how everything that happened was a result of His will.

A frangipani leaf fell and hit his eye. He rubbed his eye vigorously. He whispered: How powerful a God that created humans and a human eyeball of such complex and intricate design. With these eyes human beings could see, appraise and appreciate the greatness of God the Almighty Creator.

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Extract in Malay:


Dia melihat jatuh bangunnya manusia-manusia yang mendakwe lama kuat dan berkusa di dunia ini. Dia melihat seorang pemimpin yang lebih lapan ratus juta umat manusia terkapar mati ditangisi dan diratapi oleh...


Beberapa ekor kupu-kupu yang amat cantik terbang hinggap di kelopak kemboja. Warna demi warna yang berelang-seti di kepal kupu-kupu adalah adunan warna yang amat indah lagi mempesonaikan. Setiap lapisan warna yang tercipta punya rahasia dan keindahan yang tidak dapat diduga dan ditelusuri oleh manusia. Dia kembali teringat pertanyaan isterinya semalama. “Bila lagi abang nak sembahyang? Anak kita tua dulu mula besar, tahun depan dah sekolah pun dia, bila lagi abang nak contohkan padanya, bila lagi abang nak pimpin dia?” Saya percaya kakal abang sembahyang. pasti anak kita tu ikut sama sembahyang, bila lagi bang?” Dan dia menjawab:


“Orang kalau dah ke atas empat puluh tahun masih tak berubah-ubah perangaianya, alamat pintu hatinya dah terkunci. Kalau dah lebih empat puluh tahun masih muka arak, masih gla perempuan, masih berjaya, masih belum ingat Tuhan, alamat pintu hatinya dah terkunci rapat, alamat matinya nanti tak mengucaplah tuu…”


DI BUMI MANA
(ON WHICH EARTH)

SYNOPSIS
A student demonstration championing the freedom of speech, greater press freedom, the liberation of political detainees and the abolition of the Internal Security Act ends in chaos. Subsequently, several student leaders are arrested in the dead of the night and imprisoned without trial. But despite mistreatment and torture, four young men hold fast to their beliefs.

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A moment later, Senja raised his hand, asking for permission to speak.

“DSP and Commandant... as a gesture of compromise, we agree to it in principle. Those two conditions will be dropped while the two other conditions will be retained. However, there is an issue we raised during our interview two weeks ago. We want to be released according to the conditions that were laid out by our fellow detainees, since we are all engaged in a common struggle. Firstly, we want political detainees to be tried in a court of law, or otherwise freed. Secondly, that Singapore should practise the separation of powers among its branches of government. And thirdly, that undergraduates be allowed to engage in political activities on campus. So we demand that they be released along with us, or else we do not wish to be released.”

“That is a separate issue,” said DSP Abdul Kadir.

“No, that is not a separate issue. That is a fundamental issue and we want it to be the condition of our release. We told Inspector Ismail and Sergeant Juki, during our meeting,” replied Senja firmly.

The officers whispered among themselves. Then DSP Abdul Kadir looked directly at the political detainee.

“Yes, yes... of course, they will all be released soon.”

“We want it to be recorded in the statement that you want us to sign.”

DSP Abdul Kadir glanced at Inspector Ismail. And he was nodding.

At this time, in the parking lot outside Changi Prison, a bus painted with the sign of the University of Fine Arts had been waiting for two hours. Inside the bus were some of the leaders of the Federation of Singapore Student Unions: Marry Lim, Salih, R. Gophinathan and Tan Pong Kau. The other leaders were outside the bus, standing in the shade of the trees.

“They promised to come at four, now it’s already past five. How now, Marry?” Salih asked anxiously.

“I don’t understand why they’re taking so long?” Marry replied in her American-accented English.

“We’ve been here for more than two hours, brother!” added Pong Kau.

“Could it be that they won’t be released today?” Salih asked. “If they’ve cancelled the release then they should inform us, then we can take action!”

“Maybe... somebody has to go inside and find out what’s the problem?” Gophinathan suggested.

“I think you should go, Marry!” Pong Kau interjected.

Marry looked at Salih, who had raised his head. The two of them stood up and walked out of the bus, heading towards the gates of Changi Prison.

Peering through the small window in the prison’s façade, Marry greeted the warden on duty.

A few minutes later, Marry and Salih walked back towards the bus. The student leaders who were sheltering under the trees observed them.

“How long must we wait, Marry?” a voice asked.

“Wait a while!”

“It’s been almost two hours here, Marry, and you’re asking us to be patient!” another said.

“If we can wait for two hours, what’s another fifteen more minutes, brother?” Salih said.

“What happened!” Gophinathan asked.

“A meeting between detainees and the ministry man is still on,” said Marry as she wiped her forehead with a scented handkerchief.

“Bullshit!” blurted Pong Kau. “This is actually a delaying tactic,” he continued as he stared at the gates of Changi Prison.

“Patience, brother. patience. We’ve only been here a little more than two hours and you’re losing patience. Imagine Senja, Bujang, Rahmat and Paul Cheong who’ve been inside for more than three years... not just three days or three hours. Crouching inside,” Salih said calmly. “I know how it is with Senja and Bujang, they’re very stubborn. This must be because they won’t compromise. I believe that the police have placed conditions on their release. Senja and Bujang must have rejected them.”

And Senja’s words, uttered once upon a time in the campus canteen, now echoed in Salih’s head: “What's
the meaning of freedom, if as human beings we’re not allowed to speak and state our opinions freely? We students are the future leaders but we’re not allowed to be involved in the politics of our country. What, then, is the meaning of freedom? What’s the meaning of life, if other people are forcing their ways of life onto us, when even our religion does not force its own followers?’

Salih also remembered Bujang’s words: “To achieve true freedom, we have to sacrifice. And the ones who must sacrifice are the leaders. So to be a true leader is not easy, because one must sacrifice three things. The first thing is money. The second is time, and the third is status. For the first and second things, many leaders are willing to sacrifice, but the third sacrifice involves losing one’s position, one’s status, one’s comfort because of detention. And also the crushing of one’s spirit while one is defending his struggle; many people are incapable of this. And if this third sacrifice cannot be performed by one who calls himself a leader, then he is not a leader but merely a ‘radio’, according to the poet Rendra.”

“Freedom!” The shouts were coming from afar. “Freedom! Freedom!” The shouts grew louder.

And from the gates of Changi Prison emerged the figures that they’d long been waiting for.

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Sebarang kemudian, Senja mengangkat tangannya meminta izin untuk berbincang.

“Tuan DSP dan Komandarn... sebagai tanda b Bertolak ancaman kami setuju pada dasarnya. Dua syarat itu digurunkan dan dua syarat lain dikeluarkan. Akan tetapi, satu hal yang telah kami sebutkan dalam interview kami dua minggu yang lalu, bahawa kami mahu dibebaskan dengan syarat orang-orang tahanan yang ditahan kerana sama-sama memperjuangkan matlamat kami, kami inginkan pertama, bahawa tahanan politik harus dibebaskan kerana memperjuangkan hak maklumat atau dibebaskan. Kedua, bahawa Singapura harus ada separation of power. Dan ketiga, bahawa mahasiswa harus dibersihkan berpolitik di dalam kampus. Jadi kami mahu mereka dibebaskan bersama-sama kami, jikalau tidak kami tidak akan mahu dibebaskan!”

“That is a separate issue!” sebut DSP Abdul Kadir.

“No, that is not a separate issue. That is a fundamental issue and we want it to be the condition of our release. We told Inspector Ismail and Sarjan Juki, during our meeting,” balas Senja tegas.

Mereka berbincang-bisik. Kemudian DSP Abdul Kadir memandang ke arah tahanan politiknya.

“Yes, yes... of course, they all will be released soon!”

“Kami mahu dicatat dalam kenyataan yang akan kami tandatangani!”

DSP Abdul Kadir memandang ke arah Inspektur Ismail. Dan orang yang dipandang mengangguk-angguk.


“Jangan mereka pulak 4:00, sekarang sudah pulak 5:00 lebih! Bagaimana Marry?” tanya Salih gelisah.

“Saya pun tak faham, kenapa begini lama sekali!” balas Marry Lim dalam bahasa Inggeris aksen Amerika.

“We have been here for more than two hours, brothers!” celah pula Tan Pong Kau.


“Maybe... somebody has to go inside and find out what’s the problem actually?” Gophiathan menyaranakan pula.


Dua tiga minit kemudian, Marry Lim dan Salih bergerak semula menuju ke arah bas. Beberapa orang memimpin
mahasiswa yang berteduh di bawah pokok memerhatikan mereka.

"Berapa lama lagi kita harus tunggu Marry?" tanya satu suara.

"Sabarlah sekejap lagi!"

"Sudah dekat dua jam kita di sini Marry, sunuh sabar lagi!" sambut yang lain.

"Kalau dua jam boleh tunggu, tak kan 15 minit tak boleh tunggu, brother!" sambung Sahih.

Mereka terus menjuku ke bas dan kemudian naik dan duduk.

"What happened?" tanya Gophinathan.

"A meeting between detainees and the ministry man is still on!" sebut Malay Lim sambil mengesat dahinya dengan suap tangan yang berbaur harum.

"Bullshit!" cemuh Tan Pong Kau. "This is actually a delaying tactic!" sambungnya sambil berdiri dan melihat ke arah pintu gerbang Penjara Changi.

"Sabar brother, sabar! Kita di sini baru dua jam lebih dah tak sabar, bawarkan Senja, Bujang, Rahmat dan Paul Cheong sudah tiga tahun lebih... bukan tiga hari bukan tiga jam tahu Meningkuk di dalam sana tahu?" sahut Sahih tenang. "Itu tahu betul perangai Senja dengan Bujang, dia orang tu keras kepala... ini mestri dia orang tak mahu takol ansur... I percaya pihak polis mestri meletakkan syarat untuk mereka bebas... dan Senja, Bujang tentu tak mahu!" sambung Sahih sambil memandang ke arah pintu gerbang Penjara Changi.

"Apa maknanya kebebasan, kalau manusia tidak dapat bercahak dan memberikan pendapatnya secara bebas? Kita mahasiswa adalah bakal mewaris pemimpin hari ini, bakal mewaris generasi hari ini, tapi kita tidak boleh campur politik negeri kita, apa maknanya kebebasan?" kata-makanya hidup, jika orang lain memaksa akan cara hidupnya ke atas diri kita, sedangkan agama tidak memaka pengikutnya?" Kata-kata Senja pada suatu ketika di kantin UFA itu masih bermain-main dalam benak Sahih.


"Merdeka! Merdeka!" pelik mereka berempat.

"Merdeka! Merdeka!" disambut dengan gemuruh oleh kira-kira dua puluh orang pemimpin GAKEMAS.
SYNOPSIS
A young man named Anbarasan arrives in Singapore from Tamil Nadu during World War II. Stirred to take up the struggle for India’s independence by the charismatic Indian National Army leader Subhas Chandra Bose, Anbarasan ends up fighting alongside the Japanese against the British in South-east Asia. A novel about an early immigrant’s political and sexual awakening, Vakani Poikal depicts a little-known period in Singapore history.

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M. Balakrishnan, pen name Maa Elangkanan, is a renowned Tamil writer in Singapore. He has published several novels and short story collections that depict the lives of Tamil immigrants in Singapore. His works have been published in Tamil language and multilingual anthologies in Singapore, Malaysia and India, and have also been broadcast on national radio and television and appeared on the Singapore school curriculum. Among the awards he has received are the S.E.A. Write Award (1982), the Singapore Literature Prize (2004) and the Cultural Medallion (2005).
The boats and ships spread golden flowers and planted shining diamond pillars in the sea. Singapore was a beautiful young woman wearing golden garlands and sitting on these pillars, displaying her beauty. The stars of the sky winked at her.

Anbarasan reflected on the beauty of the light-drenched Singapore for the first time.

He stood on the ship from Chennai, now anchored in Singapore waters. To his eyes, Singapore was like a float on a sea of milk. It had such newness and brilliance.

A cool breeze blew into the ship and cooled his distracted mind.

He stood like this for a while, then turned back, his eyes running over those still asleep in the ship. His mind churned to see people curled like leeches, some with caved-in bellies after they’d spent five to six days housed in the dark, windless cabin, vomiting their guts out.

He looked at Muthaiyah, lying on a palm leaf mat in a corner. It was Muthaiyah who was supposed to take care of Anbarasan. However, now Muthaiyah could not even lift his head, having vomited so much. Anbarasan had ended up taking care of Muthaiyah instead.

Muthaiyah had married just six months ago. Despite this, he had still decided to come to Singapore. His poverty compelled him. His wife had started crying the minute she heard the news. She did not stop crying even after her eyes had turned red and her cheeks had swollen up.

Muthaiyah, too, had cried as he looked at her. His tears had followed him to the bus, travelled with him on the train, and was now with him on the ship. Besides his tears, he was racked by nausea. He lay curled up, his body wasted by grief and poverty. He looked skeletal.

The man next to Muthaiyah was lying on his side, his hands tucked in, his head resting on a metal trunk. A metal mug lay near his feet. The man had bought the mug before boarding the vessel at Nagapattinam.

He was from Madurai. He had boarded the ship because he could not bear to see the suffering of his father, who had consumption. He needed money to buy medicine. He cried as he recounted how he had mortgaged his property. He could only afford the medicine for his father if he earned something in Singapore.

Anbarasan looked at each person in turn. Their miserable stories rose in his mind.

He looked out of the ship again.

“We cannot progress as long as the British are here in our homeland. Our poverty will not be eradicated as long as they are here.”

He remembered the freedom fighter, the one who wore a white cap, saying these words during a rally in Chennai.

“Don’t you ever sleep?” Muthaiyah asked.

“We’ve been sleeping in the ship for the last five or six days. Are you still sleepy? How can a person sleep so much?” Anbarasan said with a laugh.

The words he’d heard at the freedom rally in Chennai echoed in his mind: “You have slept enough. Arise! Go forward to free our motherland!”

“What you say is correct. But people with nausea need to sleep. One cannot even lift one’s head if dizziness sets in.”

“That’s true. It’s because of our dizziness that we are still sleeping without being able to lift our heads. The British who came from somewhere else are ruling us – and we have become esquires.”

“What’s that to us?” said Muthaiyah.

Both of them looked out of the ship.
பதிகம் அனுப்பும் மூலக்கூறு பெற்றது வரை கல்வி குழுப்பக்கத்தில் கல்வி குழுப்பானைக் கல்வி பெற்றது பழக்குக்கடும் விளக்கங்களைக் குறிப்பிட்டு, கல்வி பெற்றது கல்விக்கு வந்து வரும் வகையில் கல்வி பெற்றது கல்விக்கு வந்து வரும் வகையில் கல்வி பெற்றது கல்விக்கு வந்து வரும் வகையில் கல்வி பெற்றது கல்விக்கு வந்து வரும் வகையில் கல்வி பெற்றது கல்விக்கு வந்து வரும் வகையில். அதற்கு அனுப்பும் மூலக்கூறு வசதியாக கூறுக்குள்ளான விளக்கத் தொகுப்பானைக் குறிப்பிட்டு, கல்வி பெற்றது கல்விக்கு வந்து வரும் வகையில் கல்வி பெற்றது கல்விக்கு வந்து வரும் வகையில் கல்வி பெற்றது கல்விக்கு வந்து வரும் வகையில் கல்வி பெற்றது கல்விக்கு வந்து வரும் வகையில் கல்வி பெற்றது கல்விக்கு வந்து வரும் வகையில் கல்வி பெற்றது கல்விக்கு வந்து வரும் வகையில் கல்வி பெற்றது கல்விக்கு வந்து வரும் வகையில். அதற்கு அனுப்பும் மூலக்கூறு வசதியாக கூறுக்குள்ளான விளக்கத் தொகுப்பானைக் குறிப்பிட்டு, கல்வி பெற்றது கல்விக்கு வந்து வரும் வகையில் கல்வி பெற்றது கல்விக்கு வந்து வரும் வகையில் கல்வி பெற்றது கல்விக்கு வந்து வரும் வகையில் கல்வி பெற்றது கல்விக்கு வந்து வரும் வகையில் கல்வி பெற்றது கல்விக்கு வந்து வரும் வகையில் கல்வி பெற்றது கல்விக்கு வந்து வரும் வகையில் கல்வி பெற்றது கல்விக்கு வந்து வரும் வகையில். அதற்கு அனுப்பும் மூலக்கூறு வசதியாக கூறுக்குள்ளான விளக்கத் தொகுப்பானைக் குறிப்பிட்டு, கல்வி பெற்றது கல்விக்கு வந்து வரும் வகையில் கல்வி பெற்றது கல்விக்கு வந்து வரும் வகையில் கல்வி பெற்றது கல்விக்கு வந்து வரும் வகையில் கல்வி பெற்றது கல்விக்கு வந்து வரும் வகையில் கல்வி பெற்றது கல்விக்கு வந்து வரும் வகையில் கல்வி பெற்றது கல்விக்கு வந்து வரும் வகையில் கல்வி பெற்றது கல்விக்கு வந்து வரும் வகையில்.
வாழ்க்கையில் அவ்வாறு நிறைந்து வந்த முக்கியமான வினாக்கள் வழிபடுத்தியுள்ளது. எனவே கூறும் வரலாற்று விளக்கம் முன்னிலையாக வைக்கப்பட்டுள்ளது. வரலாற்று விளக்கம் என்ற கருத்துக்கு வைக்கப்பட்டது என்பது, கூறு முன்னிலையாக வைக்கப்பட்டுள்ளது. கூறுகளை வைக்கணும் வரலாற்று விளக்கம் என்பது நேர்ந்து முன்னிலையாக வைக்கப்பட்டது.
SYNOPSIS

The short comprises a novel and short stories written by one of Singapore’s well-known Tamil writers, the late Na Govindasamy. The critically acclaimed collection considers the social, political, and spiritual issues that the Singapore Tamil community faced in 1970s Singapore with fresh perspective and candour. This collection includes Govindasamy’s meditation on the meaning and importance of leadership for the Tamil community in the light of change and progress, displaying a rare force and sensitivity of language as well as deep insight that continues to challenge the reader across the decades.

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AUTHOR

NA GOVINDASAMY

He should never have gone to the meeting!

He'd went at his friend's insistence. He only realised after he arrived what he'd gotten himself into.

This was a new experience for him. He did not usually attend such events. The last time he'd attended such an event was two years ago, when he'd presented a paper on Tamil literature and society at a university seminar. He'd had no desire at all to attend this meeting.

However, his friend Raghun managed to trap him this time.

He tried to leave two or three times in the middle of the meeting. However, there was a sadness in the hall that compelled him to stay on until the conclusion of the meeting. Just to find out how it would end. It was a discussion. Anyone could share their opinions freely. He knew most of the people at the meeting. They were representatives from various Tamil organisations in Singapore. He had earned their ire previously by presenting a research paper that had assessed the achievements of their organisations.

He felt isolated sitting in their midst.

They began the meeting after garlanding and paying respects to the picture of a man who had been considered the leader of the Tamils in Singapore.

The moderator stood up. He cleared his throat and spoke into the microphone.

"Friends! For the last six years, darkness has engulfed the lives of the Tamils of Singapore. The head of the table has remained empty since the death of our late leader. We don't have a leader to guide us."

"Our godly leader was very active in representing our interests to the government. But we are orphaned after his death. It is not easy to find someone to replace him. But we have to find a replacement. If not, our problems may never reach the government at all and they may never be solved. So the first thing to do is to elect the right leader for ourselves. We have to give him total responsibility for leading and guiding us. He should be a man worthy of our complete trust. This is why we have called the representatives of all the key Tamil organisations in Singapore to this meeting. We ask each of you to share your thoughts on this matter."

The moderator's voice was breaking with emotion.

"We are like a ship without a helmsman. We need a leader to guide us. We urgently need to identify a leader who can represent our needs, a leader for ourselves. If not, our descendants will accuse us of negligence."

His words roused the audience.

Many people spoke after him. Each speech centred on the importance of the search for a leader.

"The people we had considered our late leader's disciples have disappointed us. We had been confident that they would lead us. But they forgot us once they went on to take important government posts."

"So we are lost without a guide after the death of our late leader. The person we choose must not be like our late leader's disciples."
இதுவே காணும் படிவத்தின் விளக்கம் இதுவே காணும் படிவத்தின் விளக்கம்

"இந்த படிவம் குறிப்பிட்டியது என்ன என்றால், அதைத் தவறாக படிம மூலம் குறிப்பிட்டியது. அதில் குறிப்பிட்டியது

"முன்னிலை படிவம் குறிப்பிட்டியது

"மூன்றாம் படிவம் குறிப்பிட்டியது

"செருமான் இல்லை, கூறுகிறேன்

"செருமான் இல்லை, கூறுகிறேன்

"செருமான் இல்லை, கூறுகிறேன்

"செருமான் இல்லை, கூறுகிறேன்

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"செருமான் இல்லை, கூறுகிறே
SYNOPSIS
Gnanapongkothai is a teacher with a passion for the Tamil language. But her students have grown up speaking English at home, with little interest in their ancestral tongue. With the help of her former lecturer at a training college, she sets up a Tamil Club, determined to foster a renewed appreciation for the ancient language. Through the many activities that they organise, even non-Tamil speaking students eventually learn to speak Tamil.

AUTHOR
RAMA KANNABIRAN
Rama Kannabiran, born in 1945, is Singapore’s foremost Tamil-language fictionist. His notable works include Irupathainthu Aandukal (1980) and Bondan (1992). He has received the SE Asian Write Award (1990) and the Cultural Medallion (1998).
“May I speak English in your Tamil class?” Granapoongkothai stopped marking and looked up. Murali was standing before her, a smile on his face. She’d been at Kensington Primary School for just a few weeks. Back at the start of her teaching career, while she was still on her two-year training course at the National Institute of Education, she’d done her teaching practicum at an inner-city school. Those days had passed uneventfully, her attention focussed on her monthly and yearly assessments and her lectures. After graduation, she was posted to another neighbourhood primary school. The majority of her students there came from Tamil-speaking families. She had assessed their various academic aptitudes and crafted her lessons for each group based on the principles she had learned at the institute. She worked there for a year before getting her new posting to Kensington Primary School. It was only here that she began to encounter students like Murali.

“You did not answer my question, teacher. I am in a hurry for recess.”

“Oh, I was thinking of something else. You can use English in class only when you have difficulty expressing yourself in Tamil.”

“Thanks, teacher,” said Murali, before walking off towards the second-floor stairway.

There were several students like Murali in Granapoongkothai’s Primary Five class. They were intelligent but had trouble conversing in Tamil since their families largely spoke English at home. The situation was the same with her Primary Two and Four students. She regularly had to translate her Tamil lessons into English. She could converse fluently in English, but her job was to teach Tamil.

“Isn’t it going to the canteen?” William called to her as he walked past her classroom.

“No, I have a half-hour free period after recess as well. I have to mark these essays,” said Granapoongkothai. She drank some coffee from her flask and continued her work.

William was the other Tamil teacher at Kensington Primary School. He taught Primary One, Three and Six. The previous week, Granapoongkothai had spoken with him about the challenges she was facing teaching Tamil at this school.

William had responded: “Out of the one thousand one hundred Chinese, Malay and Indian students at this school, only sixty-six learn Tamil. Out of the forty-five teachers, only the two of us teach Tamil. The people who live in the private estate around the school are largely doctors, engineers and lawyers. The parents of our Tamil pupils are only allowing their children to learn Tamil because our education policy requires students to learn a second language. The children study English as a first language, with maths and science also taught in English. Their parents have succeeded in life due to their proficiency in English. They spend a lot of money on private tuition and expect their children to become graduates like themselves. The Tamil pupils are here are not dull. They are higher-than-average achievers. They have trouble speaking Tamil only because they come from English-speaking backgrounds. However, they are hardworking and will do well in exercises given in Tamil class.”

The bell rang for the end of the period. The Primary Four students were waiting outside her classroom. Granapoongkothai stopped marking and told them to come in.
விமானாவியன் செல்லும் வழியில், மலையாளி விளக்கம் வழங்குவதற்காக பதிலிட்டு முடிவு.

புது விளக்கத்தில் குறிப்பிட்டு விளக்கம் வழங்குவதற்காக பதிலிட்டு முடிவு.
SYNOPSIS
A collection of fifteen short stories spanning the 1990s to the present, Maavilag's characters are ordinary Singaporeans trying to make sense of the rapid changes around them. Caught up in the intractable battle between old and new, they struggle to find out what ideas and values truly endure over time. The stories reveal that even the most minute events impact human emotions extensively, sending them into turmoil.

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The self-pity, deep desire and expectation on Rasu’s face touched Raghavan deeply. Raghavan stood speechless for a moment and would have turned towards the lift. But then the thought struck him suddenly. He needed money urgently to settle his headphone bills. Why not sell one of the two clarinets he had at home? Which one should he sell? Father would kill him if he were to sell the instrument he’d bought for him. Why not sell the instrument Venugopal had given?

Raghavan turned and walked slowly towards Rasu. Rasu was writing in the security register before him. Sunlight was spread across his shoulders.

“Uncle, I have a friend who has a Yamaha clarinet. He doesn’t play anymore. In fact, he has given me the clarinet and asked me to sell it for him. Would you like to buy it?”

How would a lame man feel if he suddenly received the gift of walking, or a blind man the gift of sight? The happiness on Rasu’s face was beyond description.

“May I see the clarinet, thambi?”

“I will bring it down right now.”

Raghavan was in a hurry to sell the clarinet to pay his bills. He was also afraid that Rasu might change his mind. His dread increased when Rasu hesitated, looking around furtively.

“No, thambi. The supervisor will scold me if he sees us talking during work hours. Bring the clarinet to the security guard room at the back of the building at five thirty this evening. I will look at it before I go home.”

Just then, Gopal, the security supervisor, arrived. He was very tall. He was bald in the front. Hair stuck out of his ears. He did not say anything while Raghavan was there. He stood silently, rolling a paperweight across the security counter. Rasu lapsed into silence. Raghavan said goodbye and walked to the lift. Behind him, he heard Gopal chiding Rasu. “Useless fellow! Why are you talking to all these people instead of working? I will dock your pay!”

Raghavan spent the whole afternoon waiting for five thirty to arrive. He did not even have his usual afternoon nap. He was worried that Rasu might change his mind after seeing the clarinet. He cleaned the instrument twice and polished the faded silver keys with Brasso. He paced around the house until his mother grew irritated and scolded him. Raghavan ignored her.

But he needn’t have worried. At five thirty, he found Rasu waiting for him in the tiny guard room. He had changed out of his uniform into his home clothes. Unwashed security uniforms were thrown haphazardly over plastic chairs. The previous year’s calendar and an outdated duty roster were stuck to the wall. The room smelled foul.

Rasu did not seem to notice any of this. His attention was entirely on the square box in Raghavan’s hands. He did not even greet Raghavan as he normally would have done. He took the clarinet case from Raghavan and put the dry reed in his mouth to wet it. His hands swiftly assembled the different parts of the clarinet. He put the reed into the mouthpiece after wetting it for about five minutes.

When he finally played, music filled the small room like a dancing forest stream, a young woman, a rain-bearing cloud.

“I will buy this, thambi. How much is it?”

Raghavan said six hundred dollars. He knew the price was very high for a second-hand instrument. You could buy a new clarinet for that price. Rasu would have known the prices. Yet he agreed without the slightest disagreement. There is a visceral connection between the musician and the instrument he has handled. It is difficult to understand this.

Rasu said that he would buy the instrument the very next day. Then he got onto his 50cc Honda motorbike and went home.

But Rasu did not come to work the next day, or the following day, or the day after that. Raghavan walked past the security guard counter many times over those three days, sometimesfurtively like a cat, sometimes boldly, sometimes whistling. The counter remained unattended.

Just as Raghavan was about to console himself by saying that people like Rasu were just like that – untrustworthy...
- Rasu appeared at his doorstep. Luckily, no one else was at home. Raghavan gave Rasu the clarinet and took the money.

"Sorry! I’ve been missing these past few days. You see, they called me for a radio audition. Tch! I went on urgent leave for this, even though I meant I’d lose three days’ pay. A Malay friend lent me his clarinet. You know the radio producer doesn’t usually call us to play. He usually supports the other band. That’s why I did not want to miss this opportunity."

His cheeks shone at the recollection of this achievement. His fellow bandmates, daily wage-eaters at the harbour, post office and electricity board, had also taken urgent leave. Their passion stung Raghavan.

Raghavan was quite sure that he would not need to see Rasu again. But Venugopal chased him for the clarinet. When he could not evade Venugopal anymore, Raghavan went to Rasu and told him he wanted to buy the clarinet back. He told Rasu that his friend’s dad had been angry to hear that the clarinet had been sold. Fortunately, Raghavan had the money to return to Rasu.

Rasu returned the clarinet without a word. Raghavan walked back to the lift with the case. He knew that Rasu was watching him until the lift doors closed.

Forests of jasmine usually bloom and spread their scent in unexpected places. The clarinet seemed heavy in his hands. His heart, too.

EXTRACT IN TAMIL

"அருந்து நிற்கும் தூய்மையை கொள்ள வேண்டும். வாக்கில், ஒசுங்கறையில் கூவச்செல்வது, வாக்கில் பன்முகங்களை கொண்டு வந்து கொள்ளும் செயல்களை மீண்டும் செய்வது வேண்டும். அதன் பின்னர் இப்போது வார்த்தையைக் கொண்டு வந்து கொள்ளும் செயல்களை மீண்டும் செய்வது வேண்டும். அந்த பக்கத்தில் பன்முகங்களை கொண்டு வந்து கொள்ளும் செயல்களை மீண்டும் செய்வது வேண்டும்.

"உண்மையாக கூவச்செல்வதற்கு எஞ்சியும் செயல்களை மீண்டும் செய்வது, கல்வியான கூவச்செல்வதற்கு எஞ்சியும் செயல்களை மீண்டும் செய்வது, கூவச்செல்வதற்கு எஞ்சியும் செயல்களை மீண்டும் செய்வது, கூவச்செல்வதற்கு எஞ்சியும் செயல்களை மீண்டும் செய்வது"
அன்றி அவர் இந்தக் குறிப்பிட்டு சொன்னார் என்பது கூறப்பட்டது. அவர் அவர் வேலச்செய்யப்பட்டு வருகிறார். அவர் அவர் வேலச்செய்யப்பட்டு வருகிறார். அவர் அவர் வேலச்செய்யப்பட்டு வருகிறார்.

நல்லோர் செய்தோரிலிருந்து வெள்ளியார். அவர் அவர் வேலச்செய்யப்பட்டு வருகிறார். அவர் அவர் வேலச்செய்யப்பட்டு வருகிறார். அவர் அவர் வேலச்செய்யப்பட்டு வருகிறார்.

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SYNOPSIS
Professor Pak Karman, a former political detainee, loses his wife in a car accident. The intensity of his mourning causes him to become untethered from his sanity. As reality, memory and fantasy blur, he must come to terms with his past actions before his grief overwhelms him completely.

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AUTHOR
MOHAMED LATIFF
Mohamed Latiff Mohamed’s many accolades include the Montblanc-NUS Centre for the Arts Literary Award (1998), the S.E.A. Write Award (2002), the Tun Seri Lanang Award (2003), the National Arts Council Special Recognition Award (2009), the Cultural Medallion (2011), and the Singapore Literature Prize (2004, 2006 and 2008). His works revolve around the life and struggles of the Malay community in post-independence Singapore, and have been translated from the Malay into Chinese, English, German and Korean.

TRANSLATOR
ALFIAN SA’AT
Alfi An Sa’at is the resident playwright of Wild Rice. He is a two-time winner of The Straits Times Life! Theatre Award for Best Original Script and a recipient of the Golden Point Award for poetry and the Young Artist Award for literature. His works include collections of plays, the poetry collections One Fierce Hour (1998) and A History of Amnesia (2001), and the short story collections Corridor (1999) and Malay Sketches (2012). He has also translated two novels from the Malay into English, both by Cultural Medallion winners: The Tower (2013) by Isa Kamari and The Widower (2015) by Mohamed Latiff Mohamed.
Three-quarters of his wife’s grave was now swallowed by the darkness. The sun had sunk half its body below the horizon. But the scent of roses was still fresh, permeating his heart and his brain. He tried to illuminate the darkness of the lower reaches of his wife’s grave by pouring out the light of his love.

Several times he was chided by the wind in a mocking voice, but he did not pay any heed to its taunting: “The one who has left, let her leave; the one who is of flesh should seek out another of flesh; the one who is no longer moving, let her rest in her realm. Don’t challenge the will of nature and the ordinance of fate; the one who has gone is gone. Come, seek the ones with flesh to meet with other ones with flesh as well.”

The rose tried to defend him: “But he has placed love’s loyalty and his everlasting memories on a pedestal; he does not feel that there has been a separation.”

“He has not given any meaning to death,” added the potpourri, also in his defence.

He did not bother with the colloquy of the graveyard. He adjusted his legs and sat cross-legged. He again opened his copy of the Quran. He started reading. His dulcet voice filled the space around the grave. The whole site seemed as though it was savouring the melodiousness of his recitation. The jasmine, the rose, the cananga and the orchids that were scattered over the ground unfurled their petals as they were touched in turn by the lift of his voice reading verse after verse after verse.

On the night before the accident, his wife told him to look after his health, as she always did; she advised him to continue playing badminton twice a week. Then, six months down the road, he would be able to retire from his job as a college lecturer, and they could both travel the world after visiting the Holy Land for the third time. She wanted him to be calm and not to always be thinking about the problems that his people faced.

The problems of our people have existed for hundreds of years. You cannot solve them on your own. The problems of our people are like worms that crawl over faeces, there are just too many. Don’t bother too much with those problems, rest more, do more good deeds, do extra prayers. We are in love. I will always be loyal to you until the end of life, until the grave pit, until my migration to another realm.

He continued reading the Quran all night until the dawn, until his voice became hoarse. He swallowed a few drops of dew from the leaves of the rose bush. He resumed reading, but his voice snaked inside his body, crept into his stomach, seeped into his heart, entered his mind, and then settled into his soul like silt on the bottom of a lake, not projecting outwards but staying within his jaw. It was like the waters of a pond, cool and refreshing and bathing the skin of his dreams. With

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**REVIEWS/AWARDS**

Shortlisted for the Singapore Literature Prize 2016, English Fiction category.

*The Widower* marks a significant milestone in the development of the contemporary Malay novel.”

---

Dewan Sastraa (Malaysia)

*The novel is dense, fervent and emotional - and it probably speaks most clearly to someone who's suffered a similar loss... Lotif takes a slice of history and haps into the rabbit hole, that strange and wonderful place where creative imaginations are fed.*

---

Helmi Yasif, *The Business Times*

*The Widower also effectively critiques present-day society - specifically (without getting overtly specific...) in Singapore, but also in countries that have modernised (and not) in similar fashion. By making it a very personal tale, about loss at its most personal and intimate, [the author] can unobtrusively stretch his subject matter and make it a much more far-reaching tale. Stylistically impressive and compact, The Widower is a striking little work.*

---

M.A. Orthefer, *The Complete Review*
his forefinger, he scraped at the soil of the grave, creating a hole as wide as his fist, and he pushed his left hand into it up to the wrist.

The voice of the red soil at the edge of the grave tried to persuade him: "Go home, find one who moves and whose blood is still flowing. Allow your wife to meet The Silent One. Give her permission to migrate to another realm where she can meet with He Who Loves Her Most. Go home."

Droplets of rain were now speaking: "Love this pure cannot be separated by nature; there are no two different realms for a love so sacred."

He picked up a single rose petal, put it in his mouth, and chewed it slowly. The taste of the rose overpowered his throat. He could not remember how many times he had read the Quran or how many prostrations he had made at his wife’s grave in the weeks and months since her death. A light drizzle had begun, drifting underneath the yellow tent and moistening his face. The other graves surrounding him appeared as though they were freezing in the morning dew. He looked up at the sky; a cluster of clouds that looked like a light blue shawl was drifting in the morning breeze. He promised his wife that he would try to forget about the problems of his people, that he had actually realized now that these problems were extremely complex, that he completely understood that they were not something he should face by himself. He was very conscious that his people had suffered for hundreds of years, but understood now that there was no use in thinking about this day after day.

The dawn sky darkened, and the fine drizzle turned into heavy droplets of rain. Masses of cloud turned a dark grey and drifted nearer to the mountain peaks nearby. Lightning forked down.
SYNOPSIS
In the late 1970s, a young Singaporean writer arrives in Jeddah with an infant son. She encounters a strange and often hostile environment with curiosity, empathy and good humour. In this collection of linked stories, the narrator confronts, among others, a bored expat wife with dangerously extravagant tastes, a divorced engineer with the face of a camel, and a desperate security guard who finds solace in downing bottles of perfume.

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Each summer, the desert air coagulates. No matter how hard you try fanning it into motion, there seems no way to dredge up any coolness. One day was different. In the morning, as I hung out our laundry, a breeze actually rose up around me, bearing heat and sand. I didn’t think anything of it at the time, and only later realised these were the advance troops of a sandstorm’s assault.

That afternoon, while Danny had his nap, I curled up on our long sofa, immersed in a book.

As I read, our light-filled living room grew steadily darker, dimming so quickly I couldn’t help throwing down my book and rushing to the window to see what was going on. One look was enough to startle me into senselessness: tiny grains of sand were dancing wildly in mid-air, while violent gusts of wind whipped the sky and land into confusion. The wooden window shutters and screens were rattling so hard I thought they would be prised from their frames at any moment. Even more unnervingly, numerous grains of sand, fine as dust, were insinuating their way through cracks in the windows and doors. In an instant, the stench of earth wafted through the entire house.

Startled awake, Danny began to bawl. I picked him up and tried to soothe him, my mind quivering with helplessness. There were stories of aggressive sandstorms plucking entire houses from their foundations, hurling cars high into the air. At this moment, stuck in a wooden house with my two-year-old child, a sense of isolation threatened to overwhelm me.

Only after our makeshift dinner did the wind gradually die away.

James stayed late at the office. Hearing his car come up the hill, my poor heart finally began to calm down. He pushed open the door gingerly and darted in. Seeing his hair and beard, hoary from the sand, I thought of the Song Dynasty couplet that goes, “The green water was not worried, but wind has wrinkled its brow; the green hills were not old, but snow has whitened their heads,” and couldn’t help laughing at his appearance. He was too tired to speak, though, and exhaustion had swirled red threads through his eyes. After a quick shower, he bowed beneath the covers and began snoring.

The next day was Friday, so James had the day off. Outside the window, the sunlight was dazzling, even though the air remained murky. At least it was clear that the terrifying waves of sand had retreated.

After lunch, we went for a drive to the water tower, intending to buy some new-season persimmons from the market there. As we passed a vacant piece of land, Danny shouted from his backseat perch, “Mummy, look, look! All those houses fell down!”

The field usually had many tents, mostly inhabited by indigent Pakistanis who’d come to Saudi Arabia for work because of the higher wages here, having paid the employment agent’s fee by mortgaging farmland, selling off livestock or pawnning their wives’ dowries. They’d travelled all the way here only to find the jobs they’d been promised didn’t exist, while the gigantic sum they’d paid upfront simply vanished down the gutter of the remorseless agent. These poor souls, adrift in a foreign land. With no money left even to travel home, their only choice was to beg everywhere they could for the mercy of work. Some employers took advantage of their desperation to push their wages as low as possible, providing neither food nor accommodation, leaving them with no alternative but to seek shelter in a tent. Impossible to imagine how they could possibly survive in this desert land, with its blazing summers and cruel winters.

Each time we passed by, the sight of these poor wretched faces filled me with pity and sorrow.

Now that I saw something even bleaker: the sandstorm had laid waste to the settlement, knocking tents over every which way. Their faces full of worry, the multitude

**REVIEWS/AWARDS**

*With a flair for distilling emotional nuances from the humid, routine life, the author delivers a profound insight into the lives of migrant labourers as they grapple with temptations of comfort, where many eventually succumb to taking the easy way out.*

---

*Tribune.com*
of Pakistani men knelt beneath the scorching sun, silently clearing away the wreckage.

James slowed down the car, shaking his head at the sight. "What kind of life could they have," he said mournfully, "after being fleeced like that."

When we'd passed the encampment, he continued. "Yesterday afternoon, one of them came to see me, begging for a job. He was called Sulaiman, one of those tricked by an agent. After two weeks here with no income and nowhere to live, he'd been sleeping in the streets..."

"Did you hire him?" I interrupted.

James nodded. This was the first time I heard Sulaiman's name; it would be some time before I met him in person.
GRANT SUPPORT FOR PUBLICATIONS OF SINGAPORE-AUTHORED WORKS

NAC offers the Presentation and Participation (Publishing and Translation) grant which supports the publication of Singapore writing and corresponding marketing efforts.

International Publishers are eligible to apply for publications featuring or comprising Singaporean-authored work (at least 50% of total content). Support can be granted up to 50% of the budget and up to SGD$20,000 for each application.

NAC also offers the Market and Audience Development grant which supports the travel of Singapore writers to participate in international festivals, trade fairs, etc., promote their own book launches overseas and undertake international touring. More details from: https://www.nac.gov.sg/whatwe.do/support/
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NAC provides information to international publishers and media producers who may be interested to translate, publish and/or adapt original new works from Singapore writers.

There is a steadily growing pool of literary works in Singapore whose rights are available for sale. These include the works featured in the following resource and marketing collaterals published by NAC:

- Literary Singapore 2011, a directory of 139 Singapore writers;
- New Voices of Singapore 2014, a directory of Singapore’s young and upcoming literary talents, writing in English, Chinese, Malay and Tamil;
- Fiction Singapore 2013-2015, a series of rights catalogues which showcases selected recent Singapore English, Chinese, Malay and Tamil fiction;
- Once Upon A Garden City 2012 & 2015, a series of rights catalogues which showcases Young Adult and Children’s Literature from Singapore.

All directories are available for download at: