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In the Pursuit of Happiness

by Vera Gajic

Jake and Theo were sitting on the sand of the impossibly beautiful cove on the island of Kho Phi Phi in Thailand watching the impossibly beautiful sun set for the umpteenth time.

“It never disappoints, so many beautiful shades of pink and orange, I don’t think I’ll ever get tired of sitting here watching the sun go down on another perfect day,” said Jake repeating himself he didn’t know how many times.

“No it doesn’t,” said Theo, “but I think I’ve seen it enough times. I’m going home Jake, I’ve been thinking about it for a few days now, maybe longer.”

“Shit are you serious man?”

“Yes, reckon so, I know we thought we reached perfection when we got here and it is perfect and I’ve loved every minute of it but I can’t do it for ever,” said Theo as he took a swig of this Estrella and gazed at the light display over the ocean.

“Why not? I don’t see any reason to go back, it’s not like it used to be when there was no internet, you can keep up with everything in the world and make a living choosing silly stuff to sell on Amazon, I don’t understand why everyone doesn’t do it. It’s Jules leaving isn’t it that’s brought this on?”

“Well yes maybe I did feel different after she left for Aussie, but it’s not just that, not like we’d been together a long time,” conceded Theo.

“What you need is a local girl, they stay around, look at me and Pim, she pampers my every whim – hah hah. Pursuit of happiness, that’s what we were looking for and we found it.”

Theo winced, he liked Pim but he had his suspicions that she wasn’t that into Jake and was treating it like a job, not that he would tell Jake that, not yet anyway. Let him think she really loved him.

“Yeah it’s alright for you Jake with your girl and your Amazon top seller status, but how many times can I post on Instagram that I have found perfection? I’m losing my followers, it is the pursuit of happiness that is the interesting bit not finding it.”

“Not sure you have found it yet though mate, you haven’t relaxed into it enough to say you have found happiness.”

How do you know when you have found it Jake? It is so fleeting, I reckon you only really know you were happy when you look back and say – yes I was happy then, in the day to day reality you are still plagued by all the little things that annoy you. I was cursing like fuck all night because of the mozzie bites and then there was no water in the tap. I didn’t feel that happy then. Anyway why is the pursuit of happiness so important? Isn’t that a rather privileged aim, most of the local people we met on our way here were not pursuing happiness they just wanted to survive, safety, food, a bit of money.”

“Ooh now your getting all existential on me, Me, I wake up in the morning it’s warm, the sun is shining, I have a woman by my side, what more can I want?”

“That is ridiculously over simplified. Slaves in America, were warm and had women by their sides didn’t make them happy.”

“ How do you know they might have been happy.”

“Well now you’re just being contrary, slavery is one of the worst crimes of humanity, Do you know who said we had a right to the Pursuit of Happiness?” said Theo sharply staring at Jake.

“No, should I?” said Jake, not liking the turn the conversation was taking.

“Thomas Jefferon, president of America, Declaration of independence, said that all men should have the right to the pursuit of happiness.”

“OK – sounds good to me,” said Jake

“But he was a bloody slave owner, even traded them. He had a slave woman, who he kept locked up in the cellar, for when he wanted to use her, how about that and every man having the right to purse happiness. At what cost? What about the women?”

Is it every man's right, what about every person, including Thai people?" Theo stared hard at Jake.

"You bastard, are you saying what I think you're saying? "

"And what is that Jake?"

"You think that Pim doesn't love me don't you, say it, I know you've tried to say it before, why?, because I'm an ugly bastard, you don't think she could love me? You've always wanted her haven't you? Go on admit it? That's why you are really leaving isn't it? Because you can't have Pim?"

"No Jake, I don't want Pim, but really ask yourself does she want you?"