

A Wet-Garbage Kid's Taamlie

By Prapt

Translated from the Thai and Isan by Peera Songkunnatham

O Siam Alangkarn, auspicious be thy name.
We proffer at Your Excellency's feet
This *taamlie*, reconstructed beat for beat,
For your review an' approval to proclaim.
This heedless child who caught the plague lies prone,
Skin flushed with fever in every pore;
He's from wet-garbage class: the phrase stands for
Poor folk who lives far from the dry-waste zone.
The boy's in second grade, aged barely nine,
He's literate, can tell a story fine;
So we bade him give his daily whereabouts,
Then I provided comments and crossouts.

To clarify my part I shall now turn:
As he can scarce command the written word,
I did purge foreign terms the child had slurred
To curb what higher-ups find of concern;
The manuscript: it was a crumpled mess
Of writing on used plastic plus some rags,
So words came warped in strokes of zigs and zags
And bleeds of ink I could but dumbly guess.
Your servant did blot out confusing parts:
Their writing style was dense beyond my smarts,
So Your Excellency can read this with ease,
And, with your keen mind, judge it as you please.

Disease Screening Unit, Siam Alangkarn Trash City
Thursday, 9th Night of the Waxing Moon, 6th Lunar Month
Mouse Year that Ends with Number 3
(30 April 26xx BE)

5th Night of the Waning Moon

At 7 in the morning went to get supplies with Mom, had to wait for bus until 8.
9-10 in the morning the market was dead silent. Fragrant water shop ripped us off and refused to give us money back, no other shop for Mom to go to, buncha scammers she toll them off, the Law is no help can't do nothing to them.
Waited until 11 in the morning for bus, same bus it is, the Fare Collector said only one running today.
Got Home at noon, Daddy toll Mommy off saying she should of bought Weapons. Mom used to tell Dad why don't you stop arguing with Uncle Kip next door so there's no need

for them. Been three days in a row that we come home and they argue, but today Mom said she wanted Weapons now to go teach that fragrant water shop a lesson.

6th Night of the Waning Moon

In the morning somebody called Daddy about lab results from the test the other day. Dad got Big Mad, Doctor toll results to Mom too but she didn't get mad. Mom toll me stay away from Daddy, Daddy's mad cause his head hurts and he's mad at Uncle Kip for piling on us buying all that fragrant water for nothing cause the lids of the barrel that Dad's a fan of ~~canceled~~ *khaensern* Songkran festival at one A.M. So there's Nobody out waterplaying today.

At noon Daddy beat Mom, Mom did do as Dad toll but he beat her up all the same. Dad wanted more power, so Mommy took me away to Granny Nong's shop. I got me a bag of Refried Bones at no cost at all, now This is what buying something for nothing actually means.

7th Night of the Waning Moon

8 in the morning, asked Mom to go waterplaying with Me, Mom said her eyes embarrassed her. Mom never had a black eye like this, ever since she moved here it's become a usual thing, her eyes misty like someone who's about to cry, it's like a contagious disease because I want to cry too, but Mom doesn't cry.

Mom didn't want to go outside. Maybe she didn't want to hear people telling her to ask for help, All our neybors ask for help, but Mom believes that Daddy will have Mercy.

I went to hang out at Teacher Thua's house by myself, nobody to play with, Teacher's grankids were busy doing homework for dry-waste kids, Teacher's grankids got paid for that so couldn't play with Me. Teacher Thua said those kids got so much homework they couldn't do it in time, so when they hired his grankids to do it he got some money too, now he could buy medicine and masks for protection. Teacher said if I wanted to have money I must study and ace the tests so I would get paid like him. When Teacher saw that I kep looking at the stinky puddle, he asked me what do you want to be when you grow up, Teacher probably thought I wanted to be a rich man, but no, the lakorn on T.V. says rich folks are less happy than poor folks who know Sufficiency, I want to be a construction worker like Daddy and Mommy, but one time I said this to Teacher Kob and she kep asking me why don't you want to be something else, I didn't want Teacher Thua to ask me that, if Mommy was with me she'd probably give me the Evil Eye, so I said I want to be a Movie Star, so that I get to have the vaccine *waksila* first and then ask others to go get it.

At one in the afternoon I went waterplaying with Bak Jiw, but some grownups over there didn't let us play. Teacher Thua said if I quit insulting them calling them Leper Bitches he would take me to watch the fireworks. The Leper Bitches argued with Teacher saying the lids of the barrel called off the celebration, but I believed Teacher so I quit insulting them. Late afternoon, Teacher took us to an inn near the Chinese's shopping mall. The mall actually went thru with the celebration and fireworks, they're dumb those Leper Bitches, I asked Teacher why don't we go in the mall, Teacher said well they're a lot of people in there we might get infected, let's go to the inn and play fun games together the two of us and I'll give you money too, but I must not tell nobody.

I got lost in the crowd so I didn't get to the inn with Teacher Thua. I went to sit and wait in front of a Convenience Store because Mommy told me there'd never been a report of infections inside, they must have some good luck charms in there.

Eight in the evening Teacher Thua found me, but he didn't want to play games no more, at the inn somebody coughed on him, so he took me home.

Got home at nine, Dad didn't yell at me one bit, he must of been tired, Dad looked more tired every day. He divided his side of the room from me with a cloth. I thought Mom was there on Dad's side, I started walking over but Dad told me Do Not Cross, said Mom's away visiting Brother Thiang.

8th Night of the Waning Moon

All day Daddy chased me out the house to go play at Teacher Thua's, but Teacher looked tired like Dad.

9th Night of the Waning Moon

8 in the morning, first day Back to School after Songkran, so I had to go pay respect to the National Flag in front of the electric board in front of Teacher Thua's house, had to rely on the electric board at Teacher's house to do ~~online~~ *ornlie* classes because we don't have it at home. But Teacher wasn't home, he went to see the Doctor.

10th Night of the Waning Moon

7 in the morning, Dad asked me to go tell Teacher Thua to call an ambulance, Dad's phone ran out of credits, Dad didn't want to go outside. Teacher Thua's siblings gave me a good scolding saying Dad got infected and then I carried the disease infecting Teacher, I said Me and Mom aren't infected, we have the good ~~vaccine~~ *waksila* and do as the Doctor said, to wear masks and wash our hands, I also prostrate myself before the masks every day because they belong to the lids of the barrel, but they didn't listen, they said everybody spent their own money for that stuff. Teacher Thua also said I infected him, I wanted to say no he got it from people at the inn coughing on him, but I couldn't say it because I promised him to say nothing about the inn, you see when Teacher scolds you he gets so scary he's been given the name Wide Open Mouth. Then an ambulance came to pick Teacher up, so I asked them to go pick Daddy up too, but they refused, even when I told them Dad got tired Days before Teacher they still refused. I got chased out of there, told to never show my face at Teacher's house again, but I didn't want to be home no more. It smelled bad.

12th Night of the Waning Moon

10 in the morning, an ambulance came to pick Dad up, the one who picked him up said our family had fled from the construction ~~camp~~ *khai*, that's how all the nosy neighbors knew. I wished Mom had been there with me, she could of given that mouthy man an Evil Eye like she did me when I let something slip. Everybody asked him why not take Me and Mom too, the driver said the two of us didn't have the sickness, but them busybodies still told me not to leave the house.

I didn't want to keep sniffing the bad smell in the house, so I went to the window looking outside. Uncle Kip asked me where's your Mom why are you all alone. I wanted to be

Strong like Daddy, but tears came out of nowhere, I didn't want to sob it would take too much energy, so I told Uncle Kip that Mom went to see Brother Thiang. Brother was arrested and put in jail because he was protesting against the lids of the barrel. Uncle said he wanted to go too, but them lids don't let people stage a ~~mob~~ *chumnum* because it would spread disease. I said Brother Thiang was really not infected.

13th Night of the Waning Moon

Nothing to do at home but sniff the bad smell all day. It was coming from Dad's side. I was too scared to lift the makedo curtain, Dad said there was disease under the blanket. I actually saw Maggots, so I took the fragrant water Mom had bought for nothing and poured it around the house. I missed Mom, but I had to live with the stinky disease. Daddy called saying he's O.K. But he sounded so very bad I got scared, he said he'd recover soon because they carried him out to the street to lie down and bide his time just like the infected nurses now on the road to recovery. When Daddy recovers he'll be immune, no need to wait for vaccines *waksila*, won't be long now we'll see each other again, I want to see Daddy and Mommy so much, but when I asked if Mom's black eye was already gone when she went to see Brother Thiang, Dad just broke down crying and said nothing.

14th Night of the Waning Moon

9 in the morning, I walked to Granny Nong's shop because I'd seen Mommy there in a dream, but Mom wasn't there, Mom still didn't come home. At noon, Dad didn't call, the house smelled very bad, no fragrant water no more. I was afraid Mom would come back and give me a good scolding so I thought of going to see Daddy, I remember the hospital he got tested at, so I snuck away and got on a bus.

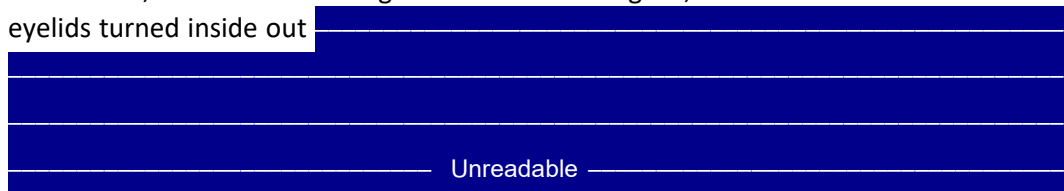
2 in the afternoon, the bus broke down cause someone jumped from the overpass and landed on it, I had to go sit in front of the Chinese's mall. At first people were all spooked, but when they took away the jumper nobody said nothing. Me and Bak Dam were toll to get off, so we made friends, Bak Dam liked to lick my hands. I took him to wait in a corner next to the mall.

3 to 6 in the afternoon, kep waiting for a bus that never arrived, so I walked there myself with Bak Dam until my feet hurt. We went looking for food in a trash heap on the roadside, but big folks came driving us away from they're stuff. We fled to another trash heap that had no food in it.

1st Night of the Waxing Moon

8 in the morning I managed to get on a bus, but they chased me down because they wouldn't let Bak Dam get on. I felt sorry for him so got down to walk. Feet hurt.

2 in the afternoon, someone was giving out free Refried Bones so I went to ask for some. He was giving them to folks who joined the ~~mob~~ *chumnum*. I tried going in there, but it was no fun, Me and Bak Dam got shot with water guns, rubber bullets too. Bak Dam's eyelids turned inside out



Unreadable



7 in the evening, the Brother who'd been giving out Refried Bones took me to get my wounds dressed at his house. I couldn't stop crying, it hurt so bad, had a fever too. I missed Bak Dam, I dreamed that he was still walking with me to find Dad and still licking my hands.

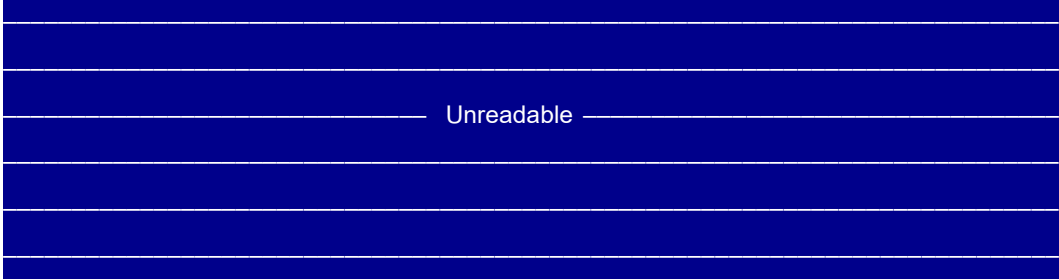
2nd Night of the Waxing Moon

2 in the morning Brother and his friends woke up because



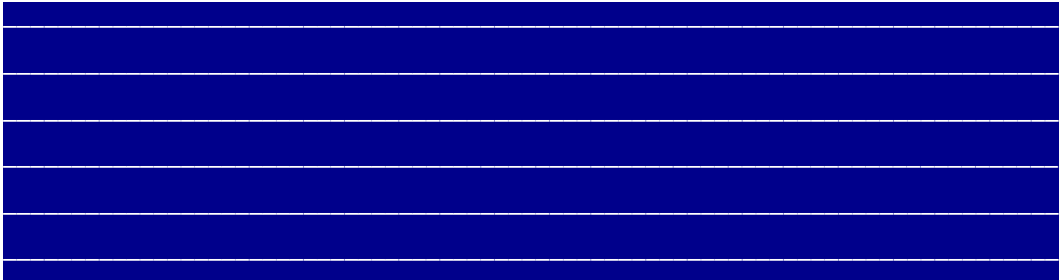
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4 in the morning I couldn't run no more, that's why Brother got arrested




Unreadable

3rd Night of the Waxing Moon



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4th Night of the Waxing Moon



Unreadable

9 in the morning, they woke up me saying we're at the hospital now. Doctor gave me bitter medicine, but I puked all of it out. Doctor asked me to write my Taamlie. I don't really have the energy to sit up and write, but He toll me if I do it I'll get to see Daddy. I'm so happy I'll get to see Daddy soon.