

UPSCALE WATER



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Translated by
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FOREWORD

The year 2015 was eventful and memorable for the people of Myanmar, and that year was also the fifteenth milestone of my literary career. Besides, in that year I had made a determination to create new forms of literary creation for my fans and readers which are mostly young women. Although I am just a romance novelist, I could hardly ignore the various lives and the issues that are being faced by Myanmar womanhood.

With Cetana (goodwill) I have written such stories, like "Broken Mirrors" and "A Biography of a Woman" that might somewhat render a notion of awareness for my female readers. And now at the time of reaching the fifteenth landmark of my creative writing I come to think of portraying varied lives of young women, who form the core readers of my novels.

In our country, how many young women are helpless, how many are leading insecure lives, how many owing to some force of circumstances have become "fallen" in their lives? And these painful thoughts make my eyes well up with tears. Thus, I write this novel, "Upscale Water", with sincere emotions to lend a helping hand to those "hapless" young women, and though the theme centers

on them, their parents and their lovers will necessarily be involved in developing the storyline. Moreover, every country, its laws and social environment will also be the inalienable setting in which the young woman protagonist move along the line of the story.

If this novel could inspire any sense of appreciation and knowledge, all the time and endeavours which I have put into this book have done a service. I also hope the readers may appreciate my new form of literary creation, and may all the readers enjoy both mental and physical well being.

**With love and respect
Ponnya Khin**

Chapter (1)

The winter evening of the small town was gloomy and chilly, and the Sun disappeared early through the thick mist. And it seemed that everything was numbed under this chilly gloom. "It's freezing...I should close the shop early today" muttered the tattooist while gazing out at the dim alley and rubbing his cold hands against each other for warmth. "I don't think there'll be customers at this time dad! Let's close and turn in early. Should I close the doors?" said the son from behind the curtain while doing his schoolwork.

A little hesitant, the tattooist once again looked out to the small alley and answered: "I think we'll wait a bit more. It's not bad if someone might stray into the shop; there are those who do come around at these times. "It won't work under this weak light; the bulb is just a tomato, the lines of the tattooed figure may twist like an electrocuted monkey...ha...ha "You fool; I'm a veteran in this profession! I can do my work with my eyes closed" Please don't do that even if you really can ... use my lamp. I've been relying on that for my studies ...I'll show the light for you but you'll have to give me some pocket money"

The tattooist Smiled at the shadow of his son. The light bulb s

urely gave out a dim aura casting fading yellowish light into their room. In no time, evening had set in and night had risen. A curtain partitioned off the dimly lit work-room and the back place where there was a study desk and a sleeping couch on which the father and son slept together. The two were talking through the curtain, and the shadow of the son, probably doing maths, reflected on the curtain. With hope, the tattooist eyed toward the silent alley. Night had started to envelop the little alley and the light from the street lamps were the colour of cherry-tomatoes as his son had said. The foggy mist had made the night jet black.

He had been hoping for some customers as the business wasn't flourishing these days. Actually he was an artist; a painter to be exact. People in this small town considered a painter as someone who only drew commercial signboards. He hated being regarded as thus, and he put out of his mind the designation of painter with bitterness. He did not want his life just drawing signboards.

Later, he found out about Body Art, and attachment grew in him as he started tattooing one or two. But his pride did not let himself to tattoo random people at pagoda festivals. He did not like to tattoo cheap designs without a touch of art, and people would be impressed once they were inked by him.

With his savings from a score of years, he finally could Open his own tattoo shop. The shop was his workplace and also home for

both the father and the son. The wife who left this penniless painter was nowhere to be found. The two were doing fine from it till now. He was not earning much but his passion kept him continuing. How many people in this small town wanted to get tattoos? And he had never had a female customer before. How would the conservative parents react when their daughter wanted a piece of design on her body? Would they kill her out of shame in their society in which they were scared to death even when their adolescence son had tattoo on his skin? He would like to think with much distaste.

In this provincial small town, tattooed men with visible designs on their arms and hands were looked down upon with scorn as tishaw peddlers, and were even considered as Vagabonds, thugs and of low birth. And they were looked upon with distrust as shady characters.

"If it's like that, then what about David Beckham'? A mad vicious mafia gang leader?, he would reason with anger."

However, almost every criminal under police custody of this town had tattoos, so the majority of the people's assumptions might hold water. In the eyes of the majority, the tattooist might be an unloved person, but among tattoo-crazy youths he was a hero, adored and relied upon.

Those youths who did not grow up under parental care and w

ere not being prohibited by such parental words: Rather kill us than getting yourself tattooed; youths who had no bleary-eyed grandparents to remind their grandchildren that if such things, as the Myanmar Saying goes, like marriage, constructing a pagoda and getting tattooed are not done well from the start, it is hard to repair them later and those youths who struggled for their lives- such youths used to come to the tattooist to have the designs. Getting tattooed would not wear off from the skin, it would be with one till one's death. And the ink-able space was limited just to a body-wide skin for a single person. So the tattooist could not earn more than ten thousand kyats from the available skin space. In this small town, no matter how much his designs were of artistic quality he would not earn much.

Despite that he would not give up. He would put all his passion and dedication into his work even if only one customer visited his shop a month. He wasn't a type of person who would persuade someone to buy his tattoo. He would ask and discuss with his customers if they were dead Sure of getting inked as they could not turn back after. Only if the customers were determined, he would start the tattooing.

"Dad you say you gonna close the shop" "Oh, right! Will do it now" "I will shut the doors for you" "I'll do it! I'll do it! Just focus on your studies." "Dad, Let me watch TV afterwards. They will air a programme I like today." "Alright alright! You never miss it, do you

u?" "No, I want to be on TV when I grow up. I am goodlooking and a smooth talker. That's what my friends comment about me! They also say that I can be an actor! "So you wanna be a star then " Not really. Just Wanna be some kind of presenter or a show host "Try hard and be your best and you will achieve your goals You're already one smart kid!" With that being said, the tattooist headed to the front door. It was near 8pm and it should be closed. The cold breeze dashed toward him as he stood near the open door. He felt a shiver and his finger tips were numb. He took a last glance towards the Small alley which was clear and silent under the dim light.

"Oh well...My son's right! Who would visit the shop at this late hour and in this chilly weather!

He shut the door and walked towards the fire stove at the corner. He had built the fire stove with a chimney to resist the bone-chilling weather of the town. He lit the stove and called out to his son while warming his freezing hands.

"Son! Come over here and do your work." "Will be right there Dad! Just let me finish my math.'

He smiled at his son's shadow behind the curtain. He was ecstatic whenever he watched his son studying. He didn't Want his son passing his life in this small town like him. He wanted him to soar like a bird and he would be pleased even if he could not see him

m so high flying in the sky.

"Knock ... knock Two knocks disrupted his dream while gazing at his son. He strained his ears and wondered who that would be at this time."Knock ... knock ... knock ... knock..."The knocks were fast as if it was an emergency. "Dad, someone is knocking"I hear i t son. Who would that be? I don't think it's the Customer"

"It's dark outside Dad, take the lamp' "Oh, yeah yeah'

The tattooist took the lamp from his son's desk and went to open the door. Being far from downtown, the place around the shop was quiet and the neighboring houses were closed; no one would wander on the streets enveloped with thick mists on this winter night. Not even his friends would visit at this unholy hour of the night.

"Knock ... knock ... knock

The banging continued. The tattooist half-opened the door and the chilly winter breeze struck his face; he felt his face froze and numbed. He raised the lamp and looked outside but there was no one. All he saw was the fluttering Euclid leaves near the dimly lit lamp post.

"Who is it?"

A shadow moved from the corner of the door as the question was asked.

"Who is it? Why are you here?" "I Want to have a tattoo", a whispering icy voice of a girl came out of the dark, the girl stood in front of the tattooist. "Oh God," he exclaimed in his mind.

With the light from the lamp, the sudden look on the face of the girl seemed to have no fear, no feeling, and he felt her mind was painfully Wandering. But that cold face was stunningly beautiful.

Her clear wide eyes, distinct lines on the eyelids, her long upturned eyelashes-all made her eyes beautiful, but it seemed that there lurked something painful and frozen in it.

The girl appeared to be of the same age as his ninth son, but his worries, but | lade Son. However, his son's clear eyes manifested the girl's were not. He wondered how the young girl came to get the tattoo at this time.

Please let me in

Oh, yes, yes, come in'

He let the girl in after he returned from his thoughts. With the light of the flame from the fireplace, he saw her face clearly. He placed the lamp on the low desk and observed the girl. She was neither short nor tall; the clothes on her

seemingly developed body were old and rumpled. She wore a bluish checked flannel shirt and black trousers, but her old clothes

s could drench her, on her hot skin her beauty. Her hair tresses fell on her forehead and cheeks, and were wet with mist and covered forehead.

She had no overcoat on, and she was a bit shivering that made the tattooist feel a sense of compassion as if the girl were his own daughter. "Kid, you must be cold without your jacket, come sit near the fire stove. The girl sat as instructed. Behind her was the desk, the tattooist's son pushed the curtain a little and was glancing at her through it.

"I want to be tattooed, please give me one," she told him coldly.

tea and said: "Here, drink this green tea to warm you up."

The young girl took the cup and was about to drink, the tattooist interrupted:

"Hey, wait, it's still hot, you seem like you are beside yourself."

She put down the cup and asked curtly: "Can you ink me a tattoo or not..."

The tattooist sighed and answered, "I am a tattooist, I like to tattoo. When I tattoo, I feel happy and I also get money. If you want to have a tattoo, I can make it for you. But you need to be sure, have you really made up your mind? A tattoo is not a thing to be done on an impulse; you can't get rid of it whenever you want it.

You will regret later if you want to remove it. Some boys come and get tattoo of their sweethearts names but later they break up and end up in marriage to another; then there will be problems with their wives. That's why you have to think calmly and clearly, what design do you want and with what meaning? Tattoos stay forever, that's why you have to think carefully. There's even a saying: if such things like marriage, constructing a pagoda and getting tattooed are not done well at the start, it's hard to repair then later." "Ha ... Ha..."

The girl laughed with a little scorn that made him raise his brows at the girl. It was not a simple laugh. It was a laugh with a painful ridicule; it was the first time for the tattooist to see such a laugh that resembled a weeping.

"Uncle, marriage can't be repaired; that may not be true, for my parents repaired it easily."

The girl's words hit the tattooist's bosom squarely; the ino. Litt oost's wife had changed his marriage, didn't she? This Saying could not be said to his prospective customers.

"Aha"

This time the exclamation came from the tattooist's lips.

"Yes, that's correct; I've given you a Wrong example, by the

way, how old are you?

"I'm fifteen

" --- 4. *Hmm, you're still young, from my view, it's not good to have

a tattoo, why do you want it?

The girl was a trifle confused and quiet for a while, her upcurled eyelashes drooping down. With her right fist hand putting

on her left bosom, she spoke painfully and coldly word by word.

"I want to get hurt physically to forget the pain in me and I don't want to forget all my life how I get hurt. I want to struggle

ahead from the strength of my tattoo."

The tattooist's mouth went agape, and it was unbelievable that such painful words came from a fifteen year old girl.

After her words ended, the tattooist saw a drop of tear falling down

and her eyes were lit up. What had she suffered? Why such pain in

her at this young age? She should be studying peacefully at her home, like his son doing on this night. The little shop was quiet for a moment and the tattooist heaved a sigh:

"What design do you Want to get?" "A Phoenix

"What

"Phoenix bird'

Oh Phoenix Phoenix bird is a symbol of bravery and pride. Why she wanted a Phoenix.

"With what meaning do you want a phoenix design, kid?" "Phoenix bird represents might and pride. The falling out of a single feather gives the bird pain and shame all its life; it fights against the enemy without losing a single feather. That's why I love the bird.

He was surprised at her having such knowledge at the age of fifteen equal to his son.

Tattooing such a Phoenix design takes three or four hours; it's an intensive work. Now is 8 pm and it will take you to 10 or 11 pm deep in the night. Come tomorrow" "I must have it now'

She fished out a wad of thousand-kyat notes from her trouser pocket under her checked flannel shirt. She put a hundred thousand kyats on the table.

Take it and tattoo me now", the girl said with determination.

The tattooist, taking a glance at the wad of notes, said:

The amount of money is tempting. But I do it not only for money, for I feel a sort of reflection of your emotions, though I don't know why you are feeling like that. So, where do you want to ink the tattoo?

"On the legs"

At this hour, the tattooist did not think it proper to tattoo inner parts like bosom and shoulders of a girl.

Well, let us start doing it; son come and hold a light for me'

The tattooist's Son, who was taking a peep at her, came out in an instant and held the lantern. The tattooist could not clearly see his son's face as his son stood back against the light, but he was sure his son would be much interested in what was happening tonight. The tattooist made himself ready with his paraphernalia, and the girl's trousers were rolled up to her knees. The small shop was quiet except the whirring of the tattoo machine, and the girl's outer skin of her legs received the puncturing of the tattoo needle. The girl did not respond with a whimper from the workings of the tattoo needle; it was surprising that she was quiet without pain, for even men cried out a little with pain from tattooing without an anesthetic.

But he felt her shivering a little. The tattooist was working, taking brief intervals and his son was also holding up and putting do

wn the lamp. Though the night was cold the tattooist Was sweating a little. Whenever the tattooist looked at the girl's face during brief stops, he saw the girl's face was a mystery, gazing deep, frightful and beautiful as well. The lamp light fell on the part of the leg where tattooing was done, while the flame from the stove reflected on her red-tinted face.

Time ran on hour after hour, and the night much colder with time. The tip of the beautiful tail of the Phoenix reached her ankle, and the head of the bird went up the leg. The feathers Were inked with green and red; the design of the bird came to life as if it were about to fly out.

He dared say that throughout his life this Phoenix bird tattoo design Was perfect, most beautiful and alive; that was on the misty and cold night of 30th December, 2004.

After receiving the tattoo, the girl left the shop without saying goodbye to the tattooist and his son; the two gazed at the back of the girl who gradually disappeared in the mist. Both the father and Son heaved a sigh looking at each other, and the tattooist would at last forget his design and the girl all his life.

Chapter (2)

Yangon, 2010 The sounds of clapping resonated in the hall. "Congratulations, Ko Htut Khaung Loon"

Under the light the little glasses sparkled, and there were sounds of clinking glasses and laughter.

Not enough with this little feast: must treat us at the plush hotel. Parliamentarian', someone put in with a joke. This night the guest hall at Lin loon's house was a bustle.

Lin Loon, sitting on the sofa at the corner of the room, was looking at the beaming face of his father through the crowd, sipping his glass of orange. And around his father were friends and associates from the world of business and politics.

The din of conversation was punctuated by the laughter of his father, full of pride and contentment, and the laugh of his father was the most spirited among them. Htut (peak)- Khaung (top)- Loon (much), as the name implies, gains success in every sphere of activity, and his father wished to hang on to the top and to be smart and rich as well.

On Such a night when election results were announced,

Lin Loon wished his father to be more calm and serious and to hold the belief that being a parliamentarian and receiving a mandate from the voters his father's duty was to serve the people.

"So Ko Htut Khaung Loon, you've to be in Naypyidaw when the Hluttaw (parliament) is in session"

"I've built a house there, and I'll attend the Sessions from it, Ko Min Zaw"

Ha Ha, So you know you'll win and you build the house in advance

"No, my elder son and my Work are there; as I'm plying back and forth, so built a house to put up the nights whenever I'm there"

"It's good, in a way, you rich businessmen entering politics, as the Myanmar saying goes: All is as smooth for His majesty (Min pa soepoeyi be). With such solid economic background, you can devote your attention to politics; but you can no longer direct your attention to your business in Yangon." "I delegate all my business interests to my younger Son, Lin Loon; he also has to act as the guardian of two children of his elder brother; my elder son and my daughter-in-law have little time to spend in Yangon for they have much Work at Naypyidaw

There was full of satisfaction in Father's tone.

Lin Loon, sitting in the corner of the living room, met

|GCALE WATER 21 lithful but a bit plump: Mother passed away four years ago when it was fifty and after that his mind bent on the affairs of politics.

Sometimes the sound of laughter rose above the chatter of father and his circle of friends; it's in a way good to see rich men entering politics - that was the talk of the moment. It made Lin Loon smile and shrug his shoulders.

Father had deep-pockets so he could spend much in his electoral campaign; in his constituency he could deliver any promise, nothing should be lacking: paving roads, building Schools, giving loans to farmers, supplying electricity and connecting phone lines to the villages. Thus, he won overwhelming mandate from his constituency.

Father knew full well how to bargain to get his wish done, and with this strategy he had achieved success in the world of business.

"Uncle Lin, Uncle Lin" "Uncle Lin ... Uncle Lin"

His two nieces, fallen asleep somewhere, ran towards Lin Loon and embraced him. Playfully one climbed onto the Sofa, the other grabbed the orange juice glass from her Uncle's hand and gulped

it down. The two little playful-devils most of the time intimately grew up and holding a cup under Lin Loon's care, so they were fond of the uncle. The other of Lin Loon, could not give much glass

s of wine. His father raised the wine glass as if asking him whether young girls' father, elder brother he would like to drink it; he in return raised his own Orange glass shaking his head in refusal. His father shrugged his shoulders and went back to join his friends. He came to his young daughters in Yangon, and the girls' mother was playing between Nanyidaw and Yangon. Growing up in this way, now Kye Sin Loon (Miss Stellar Loon) was three years old, and La Yeik

Though Father was over fifty years of age, he looked Loon (Miss Moonshade Loon) was five. "Uncle Lin ... Uncle Lin ..." "Yes ... Miss Moonshade (Mai La Yeik, a fond term) "Giggling", "Uncle calls me Mai La Yeik, it's La Yeik Loon uncle" "Yes, yes... what do you want to tell me" "Why is Grandpa happy?" "My dear, Grandpa wins ..." "What does he win? "He wins the vote in the election" "What does it mean?" "Well, how can I make you understand, it's like you getting more marks in the exam at your school "Really? ...

After pondering like a grown-up, La Yeik Loon said: "My teacher gives me marks, does Grandpa also have a teacher" While patting LaYeik's head, Lin Loon said with a laugh: "Grandpa has no teacher, the people of the place give him marks'

"Grandpa is given marks cause he studies hard?" "Dear child, Grandpa doesn't need to study hard" "Giggling "then Grandpa cheats; that's why he gets So many marks?"

Wanting to laugh at her young imagination, Lin Loon

said:

"It isn't like that, little Miss Moonshade; Grandpa is already Smart, and that's why he gets so many marks' "Grandpa is so clever, I want to be like him"

Ma. Ma. Ei Kalyar, the two sisters' mother, came towards

Lin Loon and the children, and said with a smile. "You two, why are you messing around your Uncle'

Ma Ma Ei Kalyar, the sister-in-law of Lin Loon, was a woman of good heart and of mature mental disposition; she was intimate with her brother-in-law who regarded her as his elder sister. "No messing around, as usual your daughter Mai La Yeik is asking questions, I've to make her understand ..."

Patting her daughter's head, Ma Ma Ei Kalyar said with Smile:

"Well, because of you, I don't need to have worries about my daughters; your elder brother spends much time at Naypyidaw: Father's hands are full with his politics, and I myself have to manage the hotel there. Honestly, I rather keep your brother in check than managing the hotel. As you know it's not easy to let your brother on his own, isn't it?"

Lin Loon laughed as he looked at Kaung Myat Loon, his elder brother, who was having a fine time with his friends in the corner of the living room.

Though his brother was not a skirt-chaser, if chance permitting, he was such a man not hesitant to take liberty of it. And that was why his wife, MaMa Ei Kalyar, termed her husband "KyoneDya w-Thar (Mr. happy-go-lucky at a chance).

Of the two, the elder was tall, brown-complexioned and well-built, and though his face could not be called handsome, his ordinary looks and well-heeled Status attracted many a girl, who was searching for a safe berth in life.

The father himself was worried about his elder son, and he made his son to be married to Ma Ma Ei Kalyar when the two were just lovers. She descended from a family of prestige and was a good , dutiful daughter, though her family was not rich enough like that of her husband. And her family could boast its distinguished members: doctors and physicians; she was the only one who graduated

from the Institute of Foreign Languages.

The "Loon Family" was well known among the affluent community, and Htut Khaung Loon and his two sons were also the centre of attraction.

Kaung Myat Loon, the elder, was true to its social status: Smartly dressed, travelling in expensive cars, frequenting nightclubs, throwing parties and shopping abroad. He was a smooth talker and could follow the footsteps of his father in business as well.

But Lin Loon was of a different cut, and he was not impressed with the girls who approached him, and he did not let himself become intimate with them. He was a man of few words and quite reserved, thus ordinary run of girls dared not approach him. His character and discreet behavior deterred many a flirtatious girl who might fall for him. But for the mothers of the possible suitors he was as a prized prospective son-in-law.

Yet he had some female friends, coeds returning for holidays from the United States and young successful WOLA entrepreneurs. They shone in their own stations of life and needed not to bask in reflected glory. Though they might have enjoyed dating someone in their lives, they kept their own dignity without following their dictates of their hearts. And Lin Loon's disdainful look might

have shattered a girl who had a crush on him.

"My dear brother, the days of prude are gone nowadays, some girls like to have ready-made solutions in life. It's not a fault to escape from their unhappy lives, but they shouldn't get involved with rich married men, like your dad and your brother. Though you're a bachelor and quite discreet in your actions, you are not so vulnerable. But I'm worried about your brother, he's quite sociable.

"Don't worry too much sister, my brother is a happy-go-lucky man; he values and loves his family. He won't do anything that would damage the honour of 'Loon' family.

There's nothing in the air that smells concerning Dad Indiny brother, but for some there are rumours coming out associating

lein with models and actresses

"Hmm, it's true"

While having a conversation, Lin Loon and Ma Ma Klyar shot occasional glances at Kaung Myat Loon and he noticed that coming towards them.

"You two having a good gossip about me, isn't?"

"Ha, no ..." "Why not ... whenever you two meet, the topic is always me" "Not gossiping ... just little truths" "About you Ko Myat, not to put too much trust in you" "That's it, Lin Loon; she's obsessed with it. She says she has to ply between Naypyidaw and Yangon to keep me in check. But actually she cannot live without me, she misses me much. That's why she is following me." "Dear, you're trying to win with words. See, your brother, a glib talker" "Ha, the gift of the gab is an asset: see, Dad's eloquence has made the people respect him. That's why he gains success in both fields: trade and politics. For a man, Smooth talking is one of the facts in the recipe for success." "In my opinion, one needs to have a good heart besides being eloquent, my elder brother" Kaung Myat Loon raised his eyebrows when Lin Loom joined in.

"Go on . . . "It's worthless having the gift of the gab without having a good heart; it's good to have this gift winning people to you

r side. But it shouldn't be: saying what you do not mean; in time the listeners will come to realize that the speaker is just Speechifying, coming from the lips, not from the heart." "As brothers, don't contradict me; according to you, during the election campaign Dad seems to say what he doesn't mean" "I know Dad follows with money what he said "Well, well. I'll report to Dad what you've said about him" "Ha, ha, go ahead, I dare say in front of him what I've said, I've to wait and see whether his words are followed by his actions" It seems, from what you said, that during their election Campaign Hluttaw members are saying what they do not mean" "No, I don't suggest that, the people will decide whether they mean what they say, and I'm one of the people

Lin Loon told him with a laugh, and Kaung Myat Loon just shrugged his Shoulders, took a swig of wine and glanced at the orange glass in Lin Loon's hand:

"On the night like this, you should celebrate it with wine, why orange?" "I'm feeling a little headache, and the two kids are coming to me. And I don't want them to get familiar with the smell of liquor" "See, Ko Myat, Lin Loon is considerate of his nieces, and you as a Father want to sleep with your daughters, embracing them with liquor smell from your mouth."

Kaung Myat Loon scolded his brother, but Lin Loon took it with a laugh and when he glanced at the children they were sleeping

on the sofa in abandon.

"Let's carry the sleeping kids into the bedroom; Ko Myat you pick up the elder one ..." "Ok, don't carry the younger one, you are having a backache, just call the maid..."

Lin Loon looked at the back of the living room and found Daw Than and Aye Yin standing at attention. Those two women grew up with the family and were indispensable in keeping the household in order. Besides, Daw Mu Mu Myint, a first-cousin Aunt, managed the house to keep it neat and clean.

Lin Loon signaled with his hand to fetch the younger one and she carried the child gently to the upper room; Kaung Myat Loon put the elder into his embrace with the help of his wife and went up to their upper bedroom.

Lin Loon watched his brother's family go to their bedroom with a smile. Except their late Mother, the Loon family was a happy one with hardly any want left unfulfilled.

Under the yellowish light in the spacious living room the Sound of faint music, laughter, clinking

glasses and chatter reigned Supreme, and on this night everything was lit up by joy and Contentment.

Chapter (3)

Yangon, 2014 The sun rays of the early summer of 2014 fell warmly in Loon's face through his bedroom window, and he loved being woken up by the warm rays so much that he had chosen his room facing east. From his window, he commanded the view of the gate, precious lawn and the glistening blue surface of the swimming pool in the front yard of his home which also faced the eastern horizon.

Though he was awake, he did not get up, enjoying the warmth of the early sun. Then, he heard the knocking and the shrill all of the two cheerful charms of the house, the little bells of the lonne.

"Knock knock "Bang bang" "Uncle Lin.... Uncle Lin.... Open the door" "Uncle Lin, you sleepy head" "Coming.... Coming Smiling, he got up, opened the door to his nieces, and two chubby kids dashed into the room, turning around to show off their brand new swim suits and said:"Uncle Lin, am I pretty, am I pretty? KHIN CALE WATER is pretty? "Uncle, I'm prettier right?" "Is our Swimming teacher pretty?" "Yeah, yeah... you both are pretty "I don't know. I haven't met her. Your mom hired for you two "No! I'm prettier, tell me I'm prettier." The younger Stella was clever in her talk and Lin Loon

GG fill her hair with a laugh. If I Say you're prettier, your sister will Sulk" 5 GG s - 'It'll be fun to swim with a pretty teacher and I don't want to be

No... I'm prettier pretty

KK With an ugly one,

Uncle, just say it, she'll keep nagging on until you say it, my Uncle, do you want to be with such a teacher?" ears can't bear the noise"

GG " Ha ha, how could I, with Such a one?" Well, you're prettier, Okay..." - - - - -

O True to their nature as playful child-devils, they amused only When Lin Loon yielded to the younger Stella Loon SeVe liciselves on their Uncle's bed and went downstairs. Lin Loon in years old, he got a respite for his ears; he was also pleased with th leaned himself, went back into his room and pressed the intercom. Ith the elder girl, Moonshade Loon, now nine years old, who

"Daw Than, are you there?" pampered to the demands of her younger sister.

"Yes Akolay (young elder brother), I'm Aye Yin, Daw Than is in the kitchen

"Okay, send up my coffee' Your Swimming lessons Starting today, right?' "Yes.. 5 "Hast ,

he coach arrived? "Any snacks?

Nope, but we're too anxious to start..."

Glancing at the clock, he said: "Tuna sandwich and a golden banana will do"

"Yes, kolay"

It's only 7:30, your lesson is from 8 to 9 isn't it? Most of the mornings, Lin Loon had his breakfast alone, "It's the first time We're wearing Swimsuits, so we put it on but when the whole family was present, he joined the family in the

Since, early morning, Look, we also have goggles" lining room. But these family reunions became fewer as his father Lin Loon Smiled at the younger niece who and elder brother were in NayPyi Daw most of the time, and MaMa

Soposed with a pair of goggles. Kalyar was plying back and forth between her hotel in NayPyi Daw

"Now, just go back to visit her home in Yangon. She'll be happy our room, put on an over-wear and wait, When the Htuttaw (parliament) was not in session, Father there Soon "Uncle Lin, Uncle Lin..." toured his constituency near NayPyiDaw, so he could not spend his "Yeah?' days in Yangon for a considerable amount of time but he did take flights for lightning visits to his home in Yangon.

In the mornings, Lin Loon took his Coffee alone in his room, for

r the two children had their two bottles of ready-made milk and snacks. When he drew up the curtains to the hilt at the head of his bed, the morning rays of early summer warmed his room.

His bedroom was awashed in white, for he decorated his room with his favorite white color bed sheet coverlet and pillows. When the house was built, Father painted the building white conceding to his son's favorite.

Lin Loon gazed at the lawn, sitting in the rattan chair beside the window and the Sunlight streaming through it. In the mornings, he enjoyed sitting and having coffee at this place at the rose bushes at the edge of the lawn where it was sprinkled with drops of water under the weak sun.

Gazing aye by Knock... knock. Breakfast is ready, Aye Yin" "Come in When the kids went out, they did not lock the door, So Aye Yin opened and placed the coffee, sandwich and the banana on the coffee table.

"Anything else, Aye Yin?" "Where're the kids?" "Back in their room" KG.

Okay, you can leave" After Aye Yin left, he sipped the steaming coffee under the sunlight, and the phone rang,

"Hello showing MaMa Kalyar's number.

Hello, morning Maung Aay (younger brother)

"Morning Ah Ma (elder sister), so early

"I las the coach arrived?" "Not yet, Ah Ma, but the kids are too eager to learn, by the way, is the coach your colleague?" "Not my colleague, she's one of my staff's acquaintance. My staff is a gym t rainer and had once worked together with the swimming coach. S he is expert in both gymnastics and Swimining. I haven't seen her yet, I only talk her on the phone; she's a smooth talker. If the coac h comes, go and talk to her, Daw Than and Aunt Myint may not k now how to judge her" "Yes Ah Ma, I'll go and meet her, rely on m e, your kids are asking me if the coach is pretty or not" "Haha, the se kids only like it when the coach is pretty, I heard she's pretty. S o that's it Maung Lay, take care of your nieces"

"Yes, Al Ma"

After Ma Ma Kalyar hung off, Lin Loon took the coffee up and g azed out the window at the front lawn. Then, he saw a girl oming into his view. The girl entered through the manhole of the late an d stood gazing at the fence from the edge of the lawn.

Even seen from afar, she had a perfect proportion with a (ht s hort-sleeve Sport shirt, tight jeans and a backpack.

She could not see Lin Loon who sat by the window but the wa y she was glancing at the house was in Some way Strange. Lin Lo on looked at the girl with a bobbed hairstyle, standing erect like . She stood for a while, then Walked towards the house. She walke

d with quick footsteps along the central path that divided the lawn. The nearer she came to the house, the more clearer was her large white belt.

Lin Loon changed his night dress into his usual WC - II. white linens, bag

gy trousers and a Tshirt, and came downstairs. When at the top of the stairs he saw the girl sitting with Aunt Myint in the living room.

Half-way down the stairs he saw the girl's eyes looking up. Oh, god those beautiful eyes; wide, Sparkling eyes that provoke a flutter in his bosom. The girl diverted her eyes and continued talking with Aunt Myint, who saw Lin Loon coming into the room "Maung Lin Loon, this is the Swimming coach. Coach, this is the kids' uncle; the youngest Son of the house. Uhmm. I forget your name, it has May in it, as my age advances, I forget quickly and it's a little difficult to remember" "It's ZaMaNi May (Phoenix Woman), Aunt Zarmani May, Phoenix (Zarmani May) stands for bravery and pride, thought Lin Loon. He wondered if that was the reason behind her name.

"Oh yes, Nice to meet you, Zarmani Mayo

Lin Loon Stood and Shook hands with Zarmani May Yes, Nice to meet you'

Her voice was not Soft, but a little hard and husky. There was

a shade of sorrow in her beautiful eyes, bordered by long upturned black eyelashes; he felt it when their eyes met closely

Behind those beautiful eyes there seemed to lurk some emotions and ideas that suggested something about her life. Indeed the eyes of the people are the index or the doors that somewhat renders a hint about their mentality, their past and their present lives. Beauty: brown-complexion, red tight sport-shirt, blue jeans with Lin Loon believed that people's eyes were the doors that hinted at their mentality, their past and present lives; if he finds were simple, their lives and thoughts were simple, and it seems either and their eyes were clear and sparkling. But if they hit the secret pangs of Sorrow somewhere deep in their minds, then it would be wistful.

When Lin Loon's and the girl's eyes met, the girl did it break in to a smile, she just slightly pursed her lips; that was not an idle but just a mere acknowledgement of their introduction.

The girl was tall, lean, long waist and had erect shoulders, like the physique of a Swimmer, and Lin Loon had never seen a beauty of a girl with such short-cropped bob hair.

It was generally accepted that the color and the hairdo would grace the beauty of a girl, but it seemed not applicable to her. Her hair was short at the back and on her forehead a bit bushy if compared to her beautiful eyes. And as her beauty did not depend on her

er hair, she would still be a beauty even if her head was shaved.

Her beautiful long neck was more prominent because of her short-cropped hair, and her long neck and strange look of her eyes made Lin Loon a little breathless but he kept his composure.

"My lips slipped by calling you your name, Sayama (female teacher), your name is nice to call" "It's quite okay, no need to call me Sayama; I like calling me by my full name and it's not smooth to prefix Miss to my name"

Sitting on the sofa face to face, the two started the conversation. And Aunt Myint, glanced at the clock, and said: "Lin

Loon, go on with the conversation with Sayama, I'll go and call the children"

Though she was alone in the spacious living room with Lin Loon, she showed no form of embarrassment, sitting upright and calmly on the sofa. Lin Loon continued: "My nieces are a bit naughty, it means they just push through what they want to do, and very demanding in what they want. If you have some difficulty in handling them, just tell me or Aunt Myint"

"It's okay, even if there's a problem, I'll handle it myself; I'll try to make it smooth through the course of my instruction" "Oh, it's good to hear it; I just tell you in advance, in case you meet some problems. By the way, how long have you been a Swimming instructor?" "It's a long time; I've been a champion once, later I quit a

nd been working since, I assure you about my competence..." "No, not that case, I'm interested in your work, for I've never met a swimming coach. That's why I ask about your work"

At that time the two kids rushed in and the conversation stopped, then Lin Loon stood up and said:

"Now come kids, listen to your teacher carefully, and try hard, do you hear me?"

"Yes"

"Ha ha, he he, teacher is pretty"

The two kids approached near Sayama; Lin Loon took a glance at her, made a quick nod and went upstairs.

Lin Loon prepared to take a bath before going to his office, and when he stood under the shower, the work schedule for the day came into his head. First, he would visit the condominium

built by the Loon family, next, to the hotel where room sales would take place, and then to his office. And then to inspect the new room decoration materials, after that, back to the office to meet the guests.

Tomorrow he would see the bakery shop under renovation.

When he stepped out from the bath, Ma Ma Kalyar's

phone came in:

"Hello Sister

"Have you met the Sayama, how about her? Going Well? "Not so bad, seems physically and mentally fine, she is so beautiful that the actresses would beg to cry, favorite of your daughters'

"Later on, she might change from my daughters to yours "Haha, very funny Ah Ma, so that's it? I have to prepare for my work, don't worry about the kids'

"Okay, Okay"

Lin Loon prepared for his work after the phone call and pressed the intercom: "Has the car arrived?"

"Yes, it's ready"

Lin Loon took his phone and his wallet and went out of his room; his driver U Thein Aye was waiting for him. Lin Loon did not drive as he was busy checking news on the way to Work.

On his way out, the car had to pass the swimming pool and Lin Loon took a glance at the pool and saw her back and the blue Swimming cap. Even though he wanted to just gaze at her, he diverted

his eyes and looked down at his i-pad instead.

Chapter (4)

Two weeks after the start of the Swimming course, Lin Loon On heard strange words from the children when he returned from work. Greeting their Uncle the children Said: Uncle Lin, there's a design of a rooster on Sayama's legs;

Tha-mee (fond term used by young girls themselves) has seen it on her legs

"What?' girls to express

There's a figure of a rooster, big on her legs" Meelav (also a fond term) also has seen it:

"He's a green long tail, colours red and green

"Yes, Uncle Lin, it's Sticking on Sayama's leg KG. S.

Here, it's here at the part of the leg

The younger girl patted at the front part of her lower

leg to show the place. Lin Loon could not the Sudden: 9. meaning all of a

"A rooster, is it?"

"Of course, like designs on the bodies of actors and actresses

Oh, I get it; you mean tattoos' yes, Uncle Lin, like many designs on that handsome footballer David Beckham

"Yes, my dear girls, but hardly anyone gets a rooster tattoo design on them, perhaps you girls mistake it for something

Uncle Lin, it's a rooster, it's beautiful but the tail is long reaching Sayama's ankle"

The two girls were rushing to speak out what they thought, and while listening to them a thought flitted across Lin Loon's mind. It might be a phoenix design. The phoenix bird had a long flowing tail and the upper part looked like that of a rooster, didn't

It was on the fourth day after the starting of the swimming lessons, Thursdays and Fridays were chosen for the training as it was, the time of Summer holidays. And there were occasions when Miss May a Kalyar came back on weekend days to fetch her two daughters in Naypyidaw.

Lin Loon had some conversations with the Swimming coach on the day she first arrived, but later he was quite aloof from her, not going near the pool where the girls were taking lessons. When he went to work, he saw her in a black swimsuit covering almost all her body on her first day.

Although Miss Zarmani May (Miss Phoenix) had moved his emotions, Lin Loon had no idea to make a pass at her in a cheap way, moreover, he was not a type of person who approached a Woman

n for her sheer beauty.

"Dear girls, a call from your mom" The two children rushed to the phone with joy at Aunt Myint's call, and Lin Loon, sitting on the sofa in the living room, heard the children's voices jostling into the phone.

"Mom, you know, Sayama wears a swimsuit like us, the limbs are smooth, the teacher is very beautiful" "Mom, when will you come back?" "Mom, we can now swim like a frog (breast stroke)" "Mom, elder sister can only swim like a dog" "Stellar (Kye-sin), don't talk rubbish; you Swim like a dog"

Lin Loon smiled at the lovely manner of his nieces while Aunt Myint walked towards him saying:

"Kalyar says Dad will be back in Yangon to attend a meeting tomorrow morning, and after that he will return to Naypyidaw at once. As your phone is closed he call the residence phone" "Yes Aunt Myint, I make my phone mute as I was talking to a guest, and I forget to open it again" "Shall I clear the reading room as your Dad used to spend time

there?" "No, I'll clear it myself, for there's nothing particular to do"

Lin Loon went to the upper storey, took a bath and entered Daddy's reading room.

The reading room was quite spacy, and when Father was at home he used it as his office. On the three Sides of the Wall there were bookshelves and a table stood near one side of the Wall: and on the large mahogany table were some files and books; a 42 inch LED TV stood opposite the table.

Lin Loon opened the air con which had not been in use for long, sprayed the Air Fresher taken out from the Small cabinet at the corner of the room. And the air of the long unused room seemed to be a bit Suffocating owing to poor ventilation.

Father used to sit long in this room whenever his mind calls, both personal and official, from this room, and so it could be termed his private world.

Though the two were father and son, Lin Loon kept a discreet distance in the relationship with his father, never touching the papers and documents of his father.

Lin Loon dusted the table, the books and arranged them in neat order; then he opened the switch beside the TV, sat on the sofa opposite the table and switched on the TV with a remote.

Lin Loon surfed the Skynet opening the Hluttaw (Parliament) Channel and watched an MP (Member of Parliament) presenting a motion. The footage was not a live broadcast, but a recorded one; and in recent years how many motions had Father presented, how many were permitted to discuss and how many Were passed into

o law?

Lin Loon toned down the TV as the MP's speech was long-winded and went to the book cabinet; Father used to read while lowering the tone and watched news occasionally that interested him. While arranging the books on the shelves Lin Loon heard his father's usual greeting: "Hello, Mingalarbar, my son". That was the usual way of greeting when father and son met after a long while. Lin Loon turned back to look and his Father patted his shoulder saying: "Thanks for clearing my room" Lin Loon smiled at his Father who was wearing a white Taikpon (Myanmar formal overcoat) and a checked design pasoe (sarong) and said: With a full dress, Daddy Parliamentarian"Ha, ha, whenever you meet me you want to poke fun at me it's not a full dress without a Gaung-paung (headdress). I leave the Gaung-paung in the car; as Soon as the meeting has ended I come straight without changing my clothes."

"I don't hear Dad's car coming in

"How can you hear since you're in this room"

Gripping his son's shoulder a bit tighter, Father said:

"This reading room is more sound-proof than others, when you're in this room you enjoy a feeling of quiet privacy"

Father took a glance at the TV and said:

"They are airing last Week meetings; do you always tune in to

this channel

"Not always Dad, Sometimes just to have a glimpse of you presenting a proposal; it's better not to view MPs caught napping" "See, you're at it again, poking fun at MPs; don't shoot from the hip after reading the posts from facebook. Mark it son, I'll explain it later. Now I'm taking a bath and at night we'll talk about it, for drinks just wine is enough."

Father punched lightly at his son's shoulders and Lin Loon remained in the room with a laugh.