

Tales From Joy #6

2024



Hello, dear readers.

The Sweet Dream,
Fahn Dee
continues...

Last night, Nawng Joy said that she had checked every item off on her fantasy list.

Some of them might surprise you:

**We four women (Nawng Joy, Aey, Ur and I) have been singing.. A LOT!
Mostly sweet oldies like :

*How could anyone ever tell you
You were anything less than beautiful?
How could anyone ever tell you
You were less than whole?
How could anyone fail to notice
That your loving is a miracle?
How deeply you're connected to my soul.*

One night, Nawng Joy requested that we all hold hands and asked her nephews to listen while we sing them the song, in the dining hall. She has more courage than I....to withstand the teenage rolling of eyeballs 🙄 🙄.

Our repertoire includes a refrain in Swahili about Mother Mary, poems composed by Hafiz and Rumi.... medieval Persian poets -

We often wandered around singing 🎵🎵

** Chinese Spa:

Aey packed many tools and Chinese healing techniques in her bags. As a vocation, she spends her time doing commerce on behalf of older Chinese residents in Bangkok who never learned to speak Thai.

These practices involve healing herbs and fire (literally) to bring heat to the afflicted area.



**Looking at Boxes

Aey herself is torn between the ancient Confucian values of fidelity and obedience to family versus the desire to find her own way in a modern world. Perhaps there is, currently, a similar internal debate for billions of young folks in the Third world?.

She and I have spent years looking at our respective cultural “boxes,” sorting out which are useful, and which are hindrances to living our fullest lives.

For instance, everyone else in our posse felt the need to lock their doors and close the windows at night, even in the most peaceful of settings. There is, apparently, something malevolent lurking somewhere. Aey and I kept the window open, to enjoy the ocean breeze.... but she couldn't sleep, waiting for “it” to invade.

The mutual egocentricity of both our cultures, the implicitly rigid caste system, the preferences around skin color, the importance of prestige and occupational status, are all shadows lurking nearby. They silently constrain our daily responses with subtle chains . Even the ability to fully breathe is impacted.

Dear Ur is another marvelous playmate. She is an industrial quality-control engineer, and has known Nawng Joy since their days as engineering majors in college. Ur spent most of her nights completing her office work, writing memos and participating in conference calls. Aey also worked late into the night.



**FOODIES!

Every few hours, or twice a day when we were out on snorkeling expeditions (Ram Ramen, candy and potato chips were always close by, on the boat) the hours-long ritual of The Banquet occurred. I will never figure out how Aey, Chris and Nawng Joy remain rail thin and yet consume unimaginable quantities of food. Here is Aey at breakfast the last morning...she refilled each plate and bowl two or three times...



Ur (on the left, below) is diabetic and asthmatic, but she also consumed massive quantities of baked goods, ice cream, and fried foods, like everyone else. Her mom, she told me, would be so disappointed, and might even cry if Ur hesitated to accept these daily love offerings. I couldn't resist pointing out the tragedy of

latter-stage diabetes and whether the equation was a profitable one... but I soon released my suggestion and tried not to flinch at the Pepsi Colas.

I myself am a real dud during these feasts, due to my squeamish aversion to hot peppers and my own

cultural ego-centricities.



I try not to eat friends.

I explained in Thai, regarding the multitude of specially-prepared local dishes involving octopus and squid, beef and pork.

Nawng Joy has also pulled back from the sticky rice, iced drinks and sweets. Her healing continues!

**Photo Ops

Many of the events in Nawng Joy's *Fahn Dee* (sweet dream) involved the photographic opportunities she had meticulously sewn into our days, after much research. I have grown more tolerant over the decades, and don't even hate these inevitable moments any more. I even enjoy them. Nawng-



Joy sent each of us a huge and personalized batch of photos every evening. She arranged for the tour operator on our final expedition to take underwater photos of us.

She took charge of EVERY detail: finances, scheduled the private tour boat operators and vans. She carried all equipment and toys from place to place.



We were her children and we acted like it.

Hiking**

Aey and I were enthusiastic hikers. We gleefully climbed every mountain we could find, on the three islands of the Tarutao National Park that we visited and were sometimes joined by Genjahn our youngest member of the posse.

Nawng Joy had asked me to share my perspective on life with this slightly surly, but beautiful nephew, Genjahn, age 15.



I did my best. And I earned some cultural cachet when he saw me scamper straight up a rock cliff, having practiced this quite a lot in the Baja. (And hey, I'm a Capricorn!) I overheard him telling his brother Chris about it later. In the photo below, we are trying to repair his





broken sandal with jungle vine. Multiple times...

**Tarot readings

Ur brought a deck of Tarot cards, and we sat around the supper table one night and drew cards...and then looked up their significance in the book. Each one was astonishingly precise and accurate!

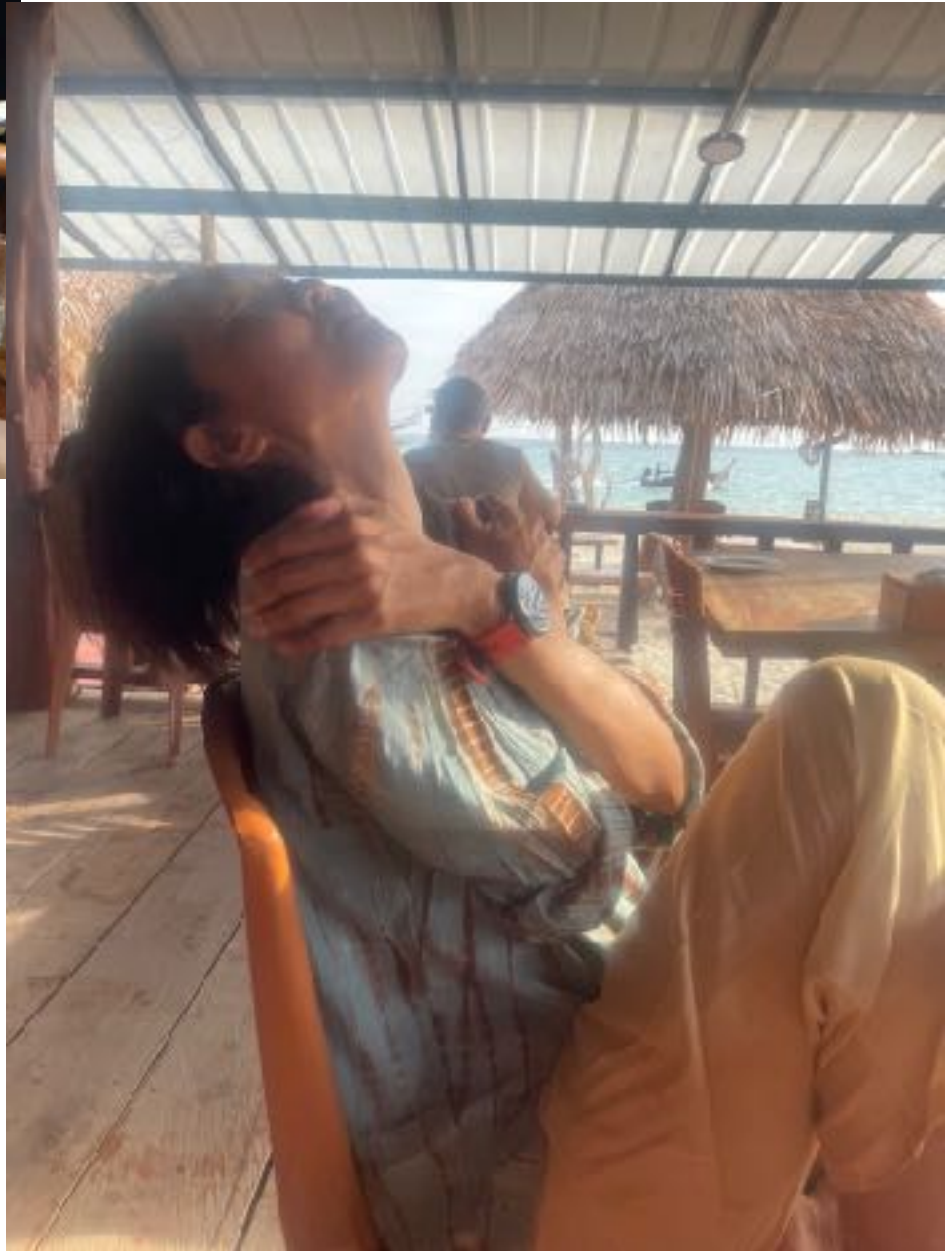
For instance, Nawng-Joy's suggested that she was currently undergoing a major challenge in her life, but that she would ultimately come through it successfully and feel enhanced.

Aey's card was about learning to love herself and accept the adoration of those all around her. She does have issues with self-esteem.

Chris' tarot reading was about becoming more decisive and not always putting others' needs before his own, a tendency of his.

Mine was basically about everything I described in Tales' #1: the huge current possibilities of evolutionary growth. And it suggested that I be prepared for surprises, and to change direction at any moment

We referred to these predictions often after that evening...



And here is Aey, passionately declaring her love for herself on the final day. That was perhaps my favorite moment of all....

** Playfulness

A national park sign stipulated that anyone who steals a rock from this little island will be cursed forever! Here is Ur trying to deter me from that fate.

And then we all started riffing on the theme...except for Chris, who actually has a rock in his pocket and took it with him.

I well understand the temptation, having often succumbed to gathering the gorgeous smooth rocks at Torrey Pines State Park in La Jolla, California.





I watched other tourists get off their tour boats
And be quite concerned with their bikini
-perfect bodies, or checking email, but our
group did not miss an opportunity to be silly!



Well, dear readers, our dream came to an end yesterday.

I don't think any of us will ever be quite the same.

Thanks for joining me, dear readers. Writing these Tales helps me digest the experience on another level.

