

The Passport

by Gopikrishnan Kottoor (July 2015)

The blue cloth hyacinths that father brought home from Bangkok

Stood heady on the carved round table in the black earthen vase.

Father said, 'Bangkok... is heaven.'

It was the only outside place he had been to.

Perhaps he had also been to the blind prostitutes

Pushing their pubic dark canoes into the night river

In Damnoen Saduak.

But if that, he did not tell mother.

Edge purpled, his kind of heaven,

The hyacinths blossomed in a dream of colored fireworks,

Khlongs wet as lusty lips, and the great gold leaf Buddha

Lying like a fallen New York skyscraper.

Father had earned all that for himself, at last.

Every night he was at our carved round table

Dreaming of Bangkok.

Smoke curls from his Player's cigarette chain

Roped the hyacinths in thick mist, till

They reeked entirely of tobacco dust.

Father adored his hyacinths. He watered them

With that longing look in his eyes, until,

They closed into coma.

As he lay in the hospital, turning red- yellow,

the blue petals back home began to lose their shine,

thirsting for the water of his eyes, his tobacco mouth.

They seemed quite prepared for what would be.

The day death encircled father in Easter mist,

mother glued his best looking photograph

among the hyacinth petals, and laid his passport below,

in one last signature of love's quietening meridian.

It was as though, mother, she knew it all.

Of purple edged hyacinths

perpetual in father's watering eyes,

and of blank pages, sailing lost winds back home

to where the public dark canoes pushed upon night rivers

of the blind girls in Damnoen Saduak.

Gopikrishnan Kottoor recently brought out his eleventh collection of poems, *Tell Me Neruda*. He'll shortly bring out his novel *Hill House*. He is working on his fourth play, *King Marthandavarma and Devasahayam*, set in the socio historic context, Kerala, South India, that focuses on the life and times of a Hindu nobleman executed by the king for his conversion to Christianity.

Kottoor's awards for poetry include the All India Poetry Society- British Council Special Prize for poetry. He won three more leading awards of the All India Poetry Society- British Council Poetry Competitions from 95 to 98. His poetry has appeared in *Bloodaxe*, *Fulcrum*, *Orbis*, *Ariel*, *Plaza*, *Toronto Review*, and other magazines. He edits the poetry ezine www.undergroundflowers.com, a poetry quarterly. His book of poems *Father, Wake in Passing*, translated into German, was read on invitation across universities in Europe.

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