

Her Possession

By Brian Dainese Adams

She was the companies ideal flight attendant because she looked Korean but could speak Thai. Also, she could speak just enough Korean. Her name was Maneerat. She asked that I call her Marty. She did not laugh when I told her Marty was a boys name. She did not like jokes about her name. Marty did laugh at most of my attempts at humor. Of all the girls I dated, five and a half, she was easily my favorite. Alas, dating a pretty flight attendant requires your full effort and creativity. I look back forlorn that I was too prideful to not gravel more for her.

I had met her in July 2007, while waiting in a five hour layover in Tokyo. After experiencing my first foreign airport I decided I would sit and read. There were only two seats open near my boarding gate. I had to choose between sitting next to a beautiful flight attendant or an elderly Japanese man. A decision that seems easy on paper, but in practice I wanted to finish my book, and did not want to feel creepy or self-conscious. I sat next to the elderly Japanese man. This particular old gentleman felt compelled to inform me of vital information in Japanese. I quickly changed seats and sat next to her. Marty and I exchanged eye contact and a smile. I pulled out the very heavy *War and Peace* and began reading. She tapped me on the shoulder and asked if I would not mind watching her bag for a minute. When she returned I asked her what brought her to Tokyo. She pointed to her uniform and laughed. I made a difficult to understand joke about her uniform possibly being a halloween costume. She kindly laughed. I told her that I was starting a job as an English teacher in Seoul. She told me she flies to Seoul like four or five times a month. She pulled out her laptop and *Facebook* friended me. I was her twenty third digital friend. She was far more popular in the real world.

We messaged each other every day for a month. She asked me about my day and what I would do that night. I asked her the same questions she had just asked me. I was not sure I wanted a girlfriend at that time. But you have no choice when a girl that pretty falls in your lap. This was my first time abroad. When everything is a revelation it is hard to cipher out the future ordinary. If we had met a year

later we likely would have been married.

During the week I would inundate myself in Korean culture. Other westerners were my conduit. It was difficult to establish friendship while I was preoccupied messaging Marty during the week and seeing her most weekends. The foreigners in my large apartment building were all close friends. They bonded over the shared special experience of being of one culture together in a strikingly different culture. Despite my good fortunes of dating a woman I found exquisitely beautiful I was still, unfortunately, a little jealous that I had not made any friends. The jealousy was stupid. I knew I could not have both, and I knew I preferred to have what I had. I told myself I was an independent person. I reminded myself my history of getting bored in social groups where the only bond was a shared history. Still I stupidly thought it was possible to have it all.

One perfect Autumn evening, at my insistence, we had again forewent staying at my place to finally finish watching the Pixar movie, *Up*. To instead go out to a western bar to drink and make sharable memories. Marty and I went in to one of Korea's identically efficient buildings and took the elevator up to the 8th floor. I chose a bar that was popular among English speaking foreigners. As we entered the dimly lit wood paneled walls we were met with a cacophony of American icons: a cowboy and Indian statues, a mural of an old western town, a pool table, vintage iconic American corporate advertising logos, black and white pictures of 1950's era celebrities, an electronic dart machine, a framed poster of the movie *Rain Man*, who framed Roger Rabbit and *Look Who's Talking Now*, a computerized karaoke machine, a Bob Dole campaign poster, a children's poster of a New York Yankees Baseball player wearing a pinstripe suit and holding a Tommy Gun that read *Hit Man*, and a three quarter sized animatronic Ronald McDonald in front of life sized cardboard cutouts of the Ronald McDonald gang that included Ronald, Grimace, Birdo, Mayor McCheese and the Hamburglar. An elderly Korean woman, presumably the owner, was pouring a large pitcher of beer behind the bar. The bar was nearly full. Comprised half of Korean's and half foreigner clientele. The only place to sit

was a large rectangular table in the middle of the bar that had a large group of Korean guys on the other half. We sat and then I ordered us both Mojitos. We drank them quickly and I ordered another. At my behest we drank those quickly and I ordered another. Then we drank another.

“Do you like this song?” I asked.

“It’s not bad.”

“Yeah.”

“Do you liked it?” She asked.

“I think its funny. What is a Duggy? How do you teach someone how to do a word you just made up?”

“It is kind of stupid.”

“Yes.”

“Remember you said you do the hip hop music?”

“Just for fun.”

“Can you write me a song?”

“I would love to.”

“Do you love me?”

“I do.”

“That is sweet?”

“Do you love me?”

“No. Not at all.” She said that with a laugh.

“That’s not nice.”

“I am just kidding. I do.”

I sat and absorbed the words. I felt warm. I ordered another round of drinks.

“What do you think about the decorations?” I asked.

“They are nice. Why do you ask?”

“The decorations seem kind of ridiculous. There doesn’t seem to be any dominant theme.”

“They are all American. It is kind of American bar.”

“Sure. It is just it all seems very random.”

“What do you mean? Like why is there a cardboard cut out of the Hamburglar?”

“It is McDonald’s characters, no?”

“Yes.”

“McDonald’s is American company, no?”

“Yes.”

“So it should fit in American bar, yes?”

“No.”

“Why, no?”

“The big stupid purple thing. That thing doesn’t even fit inside a McDonald’s.”

“Because he is too fat.”

“No because what the fuck is it?”

“Why did you curse at me.”

“I wasn't cursing at you?”

“You said what the fuck to me?”

“No I didn't say it at you. I said it at Grimace or about Grimace.”

She nodded her head and didn't answer. She remained silent and sullen.

We spent the next ten minutes in silence. I tried to understand how we got in a legitimate fight over the McDonald’s happy meal characters. Later I would repeatedly ponder why I was so insistent on us getting drunk. Why was I so sure alcohol would result in a spectacular night. Why did I want sharable memories when private memories are almost always superior?

A few more Korean guys joined their friends at our large rectangular table. There was now not a gap of open seats between us. In the midst of our silent standoff a skinny Korean college student started

talking to us in English.

“Where are you from?”

“I am from the US.”

“Oh American—very good!”

“Where are you from?”

“I am Korean.” He said with a hearty laugh.

“Do you like Korea?”

“Yes of course because I am Korean. Do you like Korea?”

“Yea it been great being here.”

“What is your favorite Korea food?”

“I’m not sure. Kim Pop?”

He laughed.

“What is your favorite thing about Korea?”

“I’m not sure.” I really did not want to talk to this dull young man. I had only been in Korea a few months but had seemingly been asked “Where I was from?” and “My thoughts on various Korean topics millions of times.” Young Korean men also had a strange habit of coming up to me and telling me how handsome I am.

The Korean young man, who had a young and somewhat feminine looking face, continued,

“You must like Korean women? They are very beautiful.”

“Yea they are.” I can not remember exactly why I responded. In my embittered state of my mind it was most likely to make Marty jealous. I guess I wanted her to think that there were plenty of beautiful women here. The innocence of this answer also allowed me to deny any wrong doing. I was angry with her. I wanted her to be jealous. When I was presented with a chance to subtly flex some muscles in this cold war duel I took it without considering the consequences. Why did I want to escalate tensions when she clearly had the superior arsenal?

“Yea Korean women are the most beautiful women in the world. They love western guys. You are very lucky.”

I was caught off guard by this comment. Was he an ally or an enemy. I was pretty sure knew what he was inferring, yet I asked, “what do you mean exactly?”

“You are not understand. In Korea you are, what’s the word—exotic. You are rare bird. You are lucky because it is easier for you to meet Korean women.”

Only later did I see how stupid I was. Why did I care at all about this insignificant fucking guys opinion. He thought she was Korean. This friendly, and dull Korean young man was trying to covertly flirt, to sabotage things with my girlfriend. My epic stupidity came from thinking Marty would take his comments as a compliment. That she would find his whiny advances a turn on—even if she were Korean. He was stating the injustice he felt for being a Korean pretty boy and having to unfairly compete with a western prettyboy. The injustice of white social imperialism. Access to Korean women were his birthright as an attractive Korean male. What woman wouldn't want to feel that she was a man's entitlement? All of which is easy to see as an entitled white man.

My girlfriend was no longer my opponent, she was an ally against a bigger threat. Or at least that's what I thought when I was drunk. Being drunk with a beautiful women makes every advancement a potential threat. Especially when I found the opponent to be an attractive guy. I escalated tensions quickly, recklessly.

“What the hell does that mean?” I asked with an aggressive tone I was only ever brave enough to use when intoxicated.

“Calm down, dude. Why do you have problem?”

“My problem is I am sick of Korean men giving me shit. Do you know how many old men on the subway stare with blatant disgust as they see us holding hands.”

“You are a whiny.”

“You are fucking whiny.”

“No you are fucking whiny.”

“You are a whiny bitch who thinks women are your property.”

I stood up and said, “Fuck this guy. Me and my lady—not your lady, are going to go home together. While you are going to stay here alone.” I grabbed her hand to leave. She didn’t get up. I said,

“Please lets go Marty?”

“You were the one who said you wanted to go out drinking.”

“Please baby, not now. Let’s go.”

“Let me finish my drink.”

“Please can we go.”

“Calm down.”

“Please can we fucking go.”

“You curse at me again.”

“You want to go home with this fucking guy.”

“I didn’t say that.”

“Fine. If you want to hang out with these fucking assholes then I’m going to leave.”

“You can do what you want?”

“I am leaving now.”

“If that is what you want to do then you can do it.”

“I got up and left.” I was the angriest I had ever been in my life. At that moment I was hoping the tacky bar and everyone inside would burn to the ground. How can the combination of alcohol and a woman so easily turn me in to a psychopath. I was ordinarily so agreeable. I spend most of my days reading and reflecting quietly to myself. I often meditate. Who is more to blame the alcohol or my emotions. I never get angry drunkenly arguing the meaning of life. I never get angry when I am with sober and with a girlfriend.

I stood outside the bar and started smoking my last cigarette. I tried to fight my anger. I tried to

think clearly. The only plan I could come up with was to go back upstairs and punch my tormenter in the face. Who exactly was my tormenter? Was it the Korean guy? Was it Marty? Was it me? Was it Grimace? Without believing it I assured myself that I was now calm. Before even the finish of a single cigarette I was now ready to senselessly rejoin the party.

I took the elevator back upstairs to the bar without a plan. As I entered the bar I could see she was still sitting there but could only see the back of her head. The Korean man stared at me with a satisfied grin. Had he believed he had won? Had they been flirting? As I rounded the table's corner I could see she had been crying. I felt like such an asshole.

As I sat down she said, "asshole. Why you such an asshole?"

I was angry again. I was again in a battle. I was stupid again.

"Fine maybe I was an asshole, but you were an asshole too."

"You think I am an asshole."

"You called me an asshole."

"I can't believe you called me an asshole."

"Again. You called me an asshole."

"I said, why are being an asshole. I didn't say you were asshole."

"Can we go back home."

"Whose home?"

"My place. Where your bag..."

"You think you have power over me. You think you own me."

"Where did this come from. What the hell are you talking about?"

"More cursing at me."

"I didn't curse at you and also hell is not really a curse word."

"You always know more then me. You think you have all the power."

"I don't think that."

“I think you do.”

“We don’t have to go to my place. We can go anywhere. Can we just leave here.”

“I don’t want to leave with you. You curse at me. You are mean to me.”

I took a big deep noticeable breath. I was enraged. I wanted to say mean things. I also did not want to lose her. I tried to think how I could reconcile these competing interests. I sat in silence trying to think, but unable to think.

The Korean group of guys was still there watching the enemies civil war.

She finally spoke up and said, “Do you have anything to say to me.”

“I can’t think of anything.”

“Nothing then?”

“Maybe it would be best if we talked about it tomorrow.”

“I don’t want to talk about this again tomorrow.” I said.

“That’s fine.”

“You do not want to come back with me.”

“No.”

“Where will you sleep?”

“See you think you have all the power.”

“I don’t think that all. I was just curious.”

“I can find somewhere.”

“You don’t want to finish *Up* tonight?”

“No.”

“Do you want me to just leave.”

“Maybe that would be best.”

“I am going to go smoke another cigarette and come back see if you still feel that way in a few minutes.”

“Okay.”

I went to the 7/11 at the ground floor of the building and bought another pack of cigarettes. I went outside and lit a cigarette. I was no longer angry. I was now apprehensive that she might be forever lost to me. My instinct was to go back upstairs and gravel before her. I was now sober enough to think that wouldn't work. I fought my instinct and stayed and finished my cigarette. I went inside the 7/11 and bought her the fanciest chocolates you could find in a convenient store. My plan was to go upstairs, present her with European chocolates and say, “these are for you baby.” I was confident this would work, yet terrified at the possibility that it wouldn't.

As I pushed open the glass door that in English read, *American Bar*, I could not see her. A panic had overcome me. The Korean guys were all still sitting there. I sat in my seat and hoped she was just in the bathroom. Her Thai cellphone did not work in Korea. I sat and waited as my anxiety grew. I stewed in my seat thinking about how much I hated Korean guys. After ten minutes, I ran outside and walked around trying to find her. I started doing a half-jog around all the neon lit streets of my neighborhood. I saw my Korean enemy leaving with his friends. I went up to him in a desperate plea and said, “I am sorry, but have you seen my girlfriend.” The instigator told me, “she left with some other white guy.” I felt my blood turning to hardened cement and sinking in my body. I tried to tell myself that they were possibly just giving me a hard time. They were not reliable. I walked around the entire night sad and alone. I went back to my apartment hoping to find her. She was not there. I sent her a long message on *Facebook*. Five hours after compulsively hitting refresh on my web browser, I fell asleep at an unbeknownst period of time. When I awoke I saw a little red 1 over the message bubble. A mixture of giddy adulation at hearing from her and a mortal fear that she would tell me she was dead to me swelled up in my body. I nervously clicked on the box and read. She asked me to meet her at noon at a nearby *McDonald's* and to please bring her bag. Fearing the worst, I searched her bag looking to find a possession of her's that would force her to come back one last time. I removed her Thai *iPhone*. I got to the *McDonald's* fifteen minutes early. I was trying to think of the right things to say to win her

back. When I saw her the first thing I said was, “I am so happy to see you.”

She responded only with, “Thank you for bringing my bag.”

In front of a giant wall sized mural of the *McDonald's* land gang eating hamburgers on a pirate ship we stood waiting for the other person to speak first. I finally asked, “Where did you end up sleeping last night?”

“I found some place.”

“Did you go home with a guy?”

“Let’s not talk about it.”

“It doesn’t matter. Let’s just start over.”

“After last night I think it is best if we move on.”

“Don’t punish me for one bad night.”

“I’m not punishing you.”

“Let’s not end it yet.”

“This is my decision. I am sorry.”

I did not say anything. We stood there awkwardly. She finally said, “bye,” and left.

I stood there trying not to think about what was causing this sinking sadness. I stood there wanting only for the sadness to go away. I went for a ten mile jog that became a 15 mile jog. A half-hour later I was restless again. I took a shower and put on nice clothes. I could feel the exhaustion but I refused to sleep. I went out that night. I went to a motel and had sex with a Korean girl I was not at all attracted to at all. The next morning I had an awkward lunch with this girl I had no interest in. I left her on pleasant terms, but never saw this random girl again. I spent the next month sad, but determined to go out and do what I had originally wanted to do. One of the women I met that month is a woman who is now my finance.

I often look at my own reflection on the screen of her old *iPhone* and reflect on the most embarrassing night of my life. I recall hating Korean men only to be fucked over by sneaky, scheming

white man. I learned that you should not hold racial prejudice. A lesson I already knew and believed in. I also learned that absolutely nothing can be gained from getting really drunk in public with a girl you are already involved with. I learned that one terrible mistake can alter the entire trajectory of your life and that even with hindsight and a positive spin that this alteration might not be for the best. Despite it being an unequivocal bad decision, it is done and can not be changed. That it is best if you just accept, without regret, that this change is the new status-quo. Changing the past is obviously futile, you should instead only reflect upon it and try to improve the future—despite just how shitty the consequences of past decisions turned out to be.