Headhunting in Kansas

by [Lawrence Winkler] (February 2025)

Fisherman (Affandi, 1972)

> *Fear grows in darkness; if you think there's a bogeyman around, turn on the light.* –Dorothy Thompson

***Welcome to Kansas*. That's what** the sign said, anyway. And underneath the cigarette packet on the poster, was its Indonesian slogan, 'Langkah Pasti.' *Definite step*.

Robyn and I had taken a definite step onto the Silk Air flight

that got us here, and then we took another one, getting off in Ujung Pandang. It wasn't called Ujung Pandang much before we got off the plane, and it wouldn't be Ujung Pandang much after we left.

The island we landed on was a large orchid, suspended in the Southern Sea by one of its twisted elongated sepals, draped over the equator like a necklace. Its original Portuguese name, Celebes, had been displaced by the rich Lake Matano deposits that retitled it Sulawesi. *Iron Island*. But when they pitched up in 1511, the Portuguese found a thriving cosmopolitan *entrepôt* where Arabs and Chinese and Indians and Siamese and Malays and Javanese came to trade their metal hardware and textiles for gold, copper, pearls, camphor and spices– cloves, nutmeg, and mace, imported from the Spice Islands of Maluku. The Gowa and Tallo sultanates had become powerful enough to build a fortified sea wall along the coast, punctuated with a series of eleven fortresses.

The smell of clove Kretek cigarettes, and frying fish and chili *sambal* hit us, like the heat. If Toto had gotten off the plane, he would have been lunch before he cleared immigration. It wasn't Kansas.

More like the Latinesia archipelagos of Juan Fernández and Chiloé, Sulawesi had iconic sailing ships and terrible earthquakes. And stilt houses and volcanoes. Its history had come out of pirates and castaways.

The Dutch had negotiated a treaty with some of the most feared marauders and freebooters in the Pacific. Stories of their legendary ruthlessness found their way back to the homes of European sailors. Stories of the Bugis of Bone. Stories of the Bogeymen.

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The South Peninsula, separating the world's eleventh largest island from Borneo, is only one of four large narrow rugged

mountainous, long forested natural barriers that dominate three major gulfs, and almost five thousand kilometers of coastline. No point on the Sulawesi orchid is more than ninety kilometers from the sea, and tribal connections between its petals had traditionally been more accessible by boat, than overland. It was here, beside the verdant wet rice-growing plains along the western Strait of Makassar, that the fierce Buganese pirates boogied. They called themselves *Orang Laut*, People of the Sea. Around 2500 years BC, the Bugis began their southern migration from Taiwan down the Austronesian trail, like the Polynesians would do much later. But they weren't Polynesians.

In 1605, their animistic *Tolotang* beliefs were converted to Islam and fifty years later, at the end of a long civil war, they were scattered, in a diaspora that took them as far as Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula. They traded of the coasts of New Guinea and Australia, where they exchanged medicinal bark, and the skins of birds of paradise and mother of pearl, for knives and salt from the Yolŋu people, and other Melanesian tribal groups. They would sail the trades, and return laden with *trepand*, dried sea cucumber, before returning to Makassar on the dry season offshore winds.

By the time Joseph Conrad arrived on the 204-ton steamer *Vidar*, in 1887, hauling coal and resin from Borneo, Makassar was 'the prettiest and perhaps, cleanest looking of all the towns in the islands.' In *Lord Jim*, he wrote of 'a Bugis of Tondano only lately come to Patusan, and a relation of the man shot in the afternoon.' He wasn't as ebullient about the outskirts of town. 'They were a numerous and an unclean crowd, living in ruined bamboo houses, surrounded by neglected compounds…' Which is just about where Robyn and I came in.

The becak pedicab that sounded the loudest bell, got to take us through the clay dust yellow brick road, through the breeze and the beggars, and what had been the gateway to the Spice Islands. The Bugis that didn't live in pole houses, nine feet

or more off the ground, with plank floors and walls, were in low concrete bungalows with corrugated tin roofs, radiating outward from the old Dutch fort.

The Quality Hotel we docked at, was still the Radisson, but wouldn't be, after we left. I negotiated a fifty per cent discount off their rack rate, without breaking any more of a sweat. We ate *Konro ribs*, and *Coto Makassar*, a stew of beef brain and tongue and intestine, mixed with nuts and spices, in the order it left the cow, with delicious glutinous Burasa coconut rice, washed down with an Anker Bir. In our *pisang epe* dreams, of pressed bananas and durian drowned in palm sugar sauce, the durian won.

The next morning, we took a *pete-pete* minibus to Fort Rotterdam. The original fortress had been constructed out of clay by the Gowa sultan, I manrigau Daeng Bonto Karaeng Lakiung Tumpa'risi 'kallonna, in the shape of a turtle, as a metophor for the ability to live on land and sea. The Dutch were having none of it and, in 1667, ran him out town, and took over the trade in copra, rattan, pearls, Bêche-de-mer, sandalwood, and a famous oil made from bado nuts, which no European gentleman could groom his hair without. John Byron's grandson, the inestimable Lord, called it 'thine incomparable oil, Macassar.' The incomparability required the invention of the *antimacassar*, the small elaborately embroidered white crochet cloths used by the Victorians to cover the backs and arms of their chairs, to protect the upholstery from its oiliness.

The white stucco walls of the fort caught the early morning sun, and the steep pitched roofs covered in russet tiles were Dutch. It could have been Amsterdam or Capetown or Curaçao, but for the refuse and cockfights outside, and the 'Hello Misters' from the gangs of little urchins seeking *gula-gula* sweets. And the use the Japanese made of it as a prisoner of war camp in the war.

Not that the Dutch had treated the Bugis much better, after the Japanese left. A counter-insurgency expert named Ray 'The Turk' Westerling took only three months to eliminate local support for Republican aspirations, by eliminating local support. The 'Westerling Method' consisted of surrounding villages during the night, separating the men at daybreak, and summarily executing those he suspected of working for the independent movement. He may have been responsible for tens of thousands of deaths. His actions were not surprising, given how he had previously dealt with a gang leader in North Sumatra.*'We planted a stake in the middle of the village and on it we impaled the head of Terakan. Beneath it we nailed a polite warning to the members of his band that if they persisted in their evildoing, their heads would join his.'*

Robyn and I walked past the sea wall, followed by young boys who hadn't yet decided if they want to antagonize us, or try for candy.

"Hello, Misters!" They shouted.

"Apa Kareba?" I asked. *How are you*.

"Kareba melo!" They said. And we were friends.

The Paotere Harbour seemed deserted at first, but then we saw movement on the schooners, and a row of women sitting along the pier. Their caftans, white in the sun, and their faces, white with rice powder, were contrasted by the scarlet of their lips, stained from betel nut. They appeared like ghostly vampires, in a crude Kabuki play. One planted a splotch of orange saliva behind us as we passed. I interpreted it as an expression of territoriality. We stopped in front of a magnificent sleek ketch rig named *Kota Bersetia*. Devoted City. I'd seen these Bugis *pinisi* ships before, at the Ujang wharf in Surabaya. This one was two hundred tons, if she was an ounce, and the seven sails on her eighty-foot twin masts plied the Makassar Strait, one last majestic member of the world's

last commercial sailing fleet.

Just after noon, we boarded a *Litha* bus to Sengkang, the epicenter of Bugi origins and culture. It hugged the coast for a few miles, through open countryside of grazing land and irrigated rice fields. A jagged range of limestone mountains, ten thousand feet high, rose to the east, and we turned towards them into the highlands, crossing and recrossing the Sadang River, until we left it behind, a brown line in the gorge below. It began to rain, swelling the streams that flowed into the light-shimmering rice terraces below. A man with his sarong flung over his right shoulder, smoking his *Kansas* in the middle of nowhere, waved as we passed.

At dusk we reached the shore of Lake Tempe, and the small Bugis kingdom capital, buoyant bungalows on stilts. The last Buginese princess had lived in a cottage, now run by her nephew as the Apada Hotel. 'For its princely cockroaches.' Read one of its later reviews. Robyn and I were shown to our room by a handsome mature woman in sarong and blouse, her hair tied neatly in a bun.

"The feast is at seven." She said, bowing as she withdrew. And at seven we descended into a splendid courtyard; a royal refectory of dishes raised up on their lit burners. Flush-cheeked young women with red lipstick and long jet-black hair, in sarongs and sashes woven with silver and gold, and pearl necklaces, presented us with flowers, as we sit cross-legged on the silk floor cushions. They served us soup and goat meat and rice and vegetables, and fried crab in banana leaves and fresh grilled lake fish, and bir bintang. *Bugi board in a Bugi night*.

Our descent next morning, downstairs floating into the lake, was rescued by a hardwood boat, with red, yellow, blue, and white triangular string patterns on its curved prow. We passed under towering Cambodian palms, their own trunks submerged under the Tempe surface, past Chinese fishing nets,

elaborately woven carpets draped over railings, reed houses on pilings with thatched roofs out of which protruded yellow flags high and crooked, flocks of flying foxes, and an old mosque suspended over the water, with a disintegrating cupola and short minaret. We visited silkworm factories, still marveling at how the Chinese first thought of using these ugly grubs to make such beautiful fabric, and we visited the looms, where the hand-weaving tradition continued. A Bugi family entertained us for the rest of the day, with stories of their recent history, and a remote epic. The *Sureq Galigo* is a Buganese legend, written between the 13th and 15th centuries, in a language that can now be read by no more than a hundred people. Its 300,000 verse lines outnumber the *Mahabharata* Indian heroic poem, commonly regarded as the longest in the world. It may never have been read in its entirety, so fragmented are the manuscripts that have survived the ravages of insects and humidity and decay and Islamist fundamentalism.

According to Bugis tradition, humanity is comprised of five distinctive genders– female *makkunrai*, male *oroane*, feminine male *calabai*, masculine female *calalai*, and finally, the *bissu*, a transvestite priest, possessor of spiritual knowledge. On the gigantic Bugi schooner of life, the love that Sawerigading had been seeking, may have been a Bugi man.

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If you can keep your head… –Rudyard Kipling, *If*

It was an eight-hour journey from the ochre world of the Bugis. Past the port town of Pare-Pare, our bus began a winding climb, through forested mountain passes patched together with gray cliff faces. The road leveled out onto a misty plateau, before crossing the verdant valley verge of

Tanatoraja. We entered the world of the water buffalo, symbol of wealth in this life and the next. The boys that rode them across the high-country rice field dikes, greeted our arrival in Rantepao at dusk. Even the houses were shaped like their horns.

As was our immediate destination, the Hotel Indra Toraja. Robyn and I stowed our bags, and went down the road to the Mambo, for gado-gado and markisa juice, returning with the fog, to dreams in peanuts and passion fruit.

We awoke into a serenity of limestone and ebony groves and bamboo soaring sprays. The young formula one drivers outside the hotel had made excellent use of both latter in the construction of their racing vehicles, with intricate steering mechanisms at the top of long bamboo poles, and highly responsive multiple little ebony wheel assemblies on the bottom, more like B-70 bombers than Bugi Bugattis.

Their progenitors were believed to have migrated from what is now Vietnam, over three thousand years ago. Between their arrival in upland Sulawesi, and before the Dutch finally took an interest, the tribes the Bugis had referred to as the *To riaja*, People of the Highlands, were strong adherents of their own brand of animistic religion, the *Aluk To Dolo*, Way of the Ancestors. Some of it was pretty.

Their cosmos was divided into the upper world, the world of man, and the underworld. Heaven, covered with a saddle-shaped roof, had been married to earth, before the darkness, the separation, and finally, the light. Like a divorce lawyer would have promoted it. Animals lived in the underworld, a rectangular space enclosed by pillars, and a similar metaphorical minefield.

Mythical ancestors had descended from heaven down the same kind of floating stairs that had carried Robyn and I onto Lake Tempe. They were the connection to the Creator, *Puang Matua*.

Other gods in the Torajan pantheon included the Goddess of Medicine, *Indo' Belo Tumbang*, the Goddess of Earthquakes, *Indo' Ongon-Ongon*, and the God of Death, *Lalondong*. The Torajans were big on death, and their language was intricately nuanced to express the subtleties of the sadness, longing, depression, grief, and mourning they experienced and, as we will see, shared around.

If death was mainly about funerals, life was all about agriculture, and *Pong Banggai di Rante*, the God of Earth. The earthly representative of both extremes was the *minaa* priest, responsible for how much beyond belief that Aluk controlled- law, habit, social life, ancestral rites, agricultural practice, and the imperative separation of death and life rituals, in the assumption that Torajan corpses could be spoiled by combining the two.

Not that there was much of a shared broad sense of identity, before the Dutch came up into their hills. Untouched by the outside world, the Aluk tribes functioned inside their autonomous highland villages, each with its own dialect, social hierarchy, and ritual practices. Interfamily relationships were codified by the exchange of buffalo and pigs on special occasions, and specified an individual's place in the social strata- who wrapped the corpses and prepared offerings, where a person could sit, who poured the palm wine, what piece of meat constituted one's share, what dish they could eat it on. The Torajans were matriarchal, and extremely class-conscious. Nobles lived in the large iconic buffalo horn-shaped *tongkonans*, commoners in bamboo shacks called *banua*, and slaves in small huts surrounding their owner's tongkonan. Slaves could buy their freedom, but their children still inherited slave status. Slaves were prohibited from wearing bronze or gold, carving their houses, or eating from the same dishes as their owners. Having sex with a free woman was punished by death.

The Dutch had ignored the Torajans for two whole centuries

because access was difficult, they had little productive agricultural land and, behind well-defended walled hilltop fortresses, were serious slavers and headhunting warriors. What finally provoked the military colonial response was increasing Dutch concern about the spread of Islam in South Sulawesi, especially among the Bugis and Makassarese. In 1909 they drew a line around the Sa'dan area, and called it Tana Toraja, the 'Land of the Toraja.' They sent in the Reformed Missionary Alliance of the Dutch Reformed Church, to Christianize the Aluk tribes as a counterbalance. They angered the Torajans by abolishing slavery, by moving them to the valleys, and by taxing them severely. Despite, or because of, all the love, only about ten per cent of the Torajans had converted to Christianity. What got them the other ninety percent was the Darul Islam separatist attacks that forced them to finally ally with the Dutch for protection. In 1965 the Indonesian government recognized five religions. It took four more years for the Torajan *Aluk to Dolo* ancestral way to join the list.

"You should go to a funeral." Said the clerk at the desk next morning. "I will find you one." And she picked up the phone and began speaking to girlfriends in the same whiney lilt that sails on Malay lips, from Singapore to Mindanao.

"OK." I said, looking at Robyn. She looked back the same way.

"Go and have some breakfast, and some *Kopi Toraja* coffee." Said the clerk. "Then come back to see me." We went for breakfast and some *Kopi Toraja* coffee, across from a Bugi businessman. Something upset him about having to be here.

"The Toraja are infidels." He whispered. "Be careful not to attend any of their celebrations. They will slaughter pigs and serve you alcohol." We thanked him for his advice and returned to reception.

"You must go by Kansas." Said the desk clerk. At least that's

what we thought she said.

“You must go buy *Kansas*.” She said, again. “Or a carton of Kreteks. Cigarettes.”

“Cigarettes?” Robyn asked.

“Yes.” She said. “As a gift to the bereaved family.” So Robyn and I bought a carton of *Kansas*, and went to the funeral.

“Follow the smoke.” She had said, when we asked how we would find it. *Follow the smoke*. But it wasn’t from Kansas. It was from the food fires, inside the large *rante* compound. Robyn and I presented our carton of *Kansas* and were quietly welcomed onto a grassy field of shelters, rice barns, and other ceremonial funeral structures by beautifully costumed young women with beaded antimacassars. I looked back to find our cigarettes already in circulation. The guest of honor was lying prone, wrapped in layers of cloth, atop the highest pavilion, supervising the preparations for his forthcoming long trip to *Puya*, the Land of Souls, from the treetops. One of his disciples instructed the proceedings through a microphone connected to the megaphone under his arm by a coiled serpent. A line of women in rose-peach dresses arrived and passed us, leading with the food bundles in their outstretched arms, crossing yet another in equally colorful garments, serving coffee and cakes, like competing teams of the half time show at the funerary Olympics. Our own contribution to the observance paled in comparison to the endless procession of gigantic, trussed pigs, suspended from horizontal bamboo poles under their necks, steered by a man on each side that joined hundreds of others, left squealing and shitting in the muddy antechamber of their fate. There were scores of water buffalo, tethered by ropes through their noses, others wandering randomly and others yet, fighting, prodded on by the chili up their backsides.

Robyn and I entered a sea of conical hats. We joined hundreds

of sarongs, spread on the pavilion floors, or the ground, eating chunks of seared pork and vegetables and glutinous *burassa* rice out of bamboo tubes, and drinking glasses of fermented *tuak*. Some were watching a *bulangan londong* cockfight, a sacred requirement to spill blood on the earth. Robyn knows how stimulus-averse I am to animal cruelty, and we quickly turned our eyes away.

But away didn't work so well either. Torajans think of the dead as being sick, and stuck in the living world, until their real demise is actuated by a *tomabalu* funeral specialist's dispatch of a buffalo. They believe that the deceased rides this buffalo to Puyo, and so it must be strong for the coming difficult journey over hundreds of mountains and valleys. They believe he will get there faster if he has many buffalo, although the biophysical logic of this is highly disputable. It didn't matter much to this man's tomabalu, who pulled the animal by the rope through his nose and, with a sharpened machete, quickly slashed the animal's throat. Young boys ran to catch the spurting blood in long bamboo tubes, which were then cooked as a sort of blood pudding over an open fire.

The butchering was done fast, the horns removed for the vertical collection attached to the pole on the front of the family house, and the buffalo roasted and eaten by the funeral guests. The boys who collected the blood clapped their hands and performed a bizarre cheerful *Ma'dondan* dance.

The number of animals slaughtered is proportional to the man's social status in life, and his age at death. At some funerals, up to a hundred have been immolated. Before the Dutch arrived, slaves or prisoners were also sacrificed, to provide servants in the afterlife. Inheritance goes proportionately to the child who slaughters the most buffalos. Sacrificed animals that had been given as 'gifts' by guests, are carefully noted as a debt to the lamented's family. I figured we were square.

Several buffalo carcasses, as well as their heads, were lined

up on the field waiting for this owner. And then began the *Ma'badong*.

A company of men in black sarongs assembled in a ring, shoulder to shoulder, and began a slow circular dance and monotonous chanting. A reenactment of the cycle of life and the life story of the deceased brother, the Ma'badong would go on all night.

But Robyn and I left the ceremony. We took one last look at the shrouded pupa in the tall pavilion, and the beheaded water buffalo on the grassy knoll. It teemed down with rain. *Follow the smoke.*

We separated from Torajan death traditions next morning and concentrated on some of their more life-affirming rituals, aware of how corpses are spoiled by combining the two. At least we thought we were being aware.

"You want to have Christmas dinner?" Asked our desk clerk. Yes, indeed, we replied, realizing that it was Christmas Eve. That would be fine.

"Better you have Christmas dinner at the Toraja Coralia." She said. So, we thanked her, and booked in for that evening at the Coralia, on our way to the market. It was market day in Rantepao, with hundreds of huge pigs bound with green cords on green pallets side by side, rows of vendors with multicolored peppers, roosters, kreteks, green bananas, and long beans, more water buffalo with ropes through their noses, and firewood. When Robyn bought a finely made conical hat off the head of one of the elderly ladies in the clothing bazaar, I had the same shiver go up my spine as my purchase of an apron from a lady in Dali, many Chinese moons before. We drank Torajan coffee in glasses, and then I took her picture wearing her new headgear in a nearby bamboo grove, with shoots as wide as my arm.

The bemos near the market followed the universal general rule

that the cheaper the fare, the more crowded and slower the ride. The boundary conditions for Robyn and I had been in a market in Nha Trang in the old Vietnam days, where two cents got us a ride to nowhere, all day long. The ten cents we paid in Rantepao got us almost nowhere in less than half the time.

Where we got to were some of the best examples of tongkonan architecture in Tanatoraja, immense thatch and woven bamboo houses with tremendous upswept high gabled buffalo horn roofs, facing north toward the home of the old gods, with a carved buffalo head talisman at the front. Large boulders loomed out of the mist at the base of each of the pilings. The long poles in front were nailed with a long column of water buffalo horns, arranged from the biggest at the bottom, to the smallest at the top.

The colors were Torajan colors of black death, yellow blessings from the gods, white purity, and red human life. The last also took the form of barefoot boys and their puppies playing on the thick tongkonan floor planks, or little ones peeking out of secret small window spaces above us, the tiny doors carved on the inside with roosters and an all-seeing eye.

Downhill on the right from this cluster of tongkonan, in another bamboo thicket, was a large tree with more small doors cut in it. Behind these doors, however, pegged shut, were the remains of children who died before their teeth had come in. The tree had absorbed these children and, when cut with a knife, it dripped white sap.

“Like milk.” Robyn said.

“Like milk.” I agreed.

We continued down the track past rice paddies and arching spumes of bamboo, into a forest across bamboo bridges. Half split bamboo canes, lain end to end within each other, brought water splashing into a bucket beside an isolated house a

hundred meters further down the trail. We emerged at a crystal pool surrounded by limestone boulders and silence. Silent night. We made the bemo back to Rantepao in time for Christmas dinner.

“Today you go see Tau-Tau?” she asked, next morning. Robyn and I nodded our head affirmatively. Today was Tau-Tau Day.

“See them now.” She said. “Soon all gone.” And she was right. The Tau-Tau were life-sized wooden effigies of noble takapua dead, sacred to living relatives who believed that they could bestow blessings and grant favors. Costing a year’s wages to bring into being, Tau-Tau were also worth a year’s wages to unscrupulous purveyors for the primitive art market, who stole more of the remaining figures every year, and caused many families to remove them into their homes.

The Makale bound bemo dropped us off at the Londa turnoff, and a two-kilometer stroll the caves. Small boys were waiting with lanterns and entrepreneurial spirit. They were determined to give us our money’s worth and dragged us crawling through the claustrophobic warren of tight tunnels of skulls and long bones, spilling out of piled up coffins, some shaped like boats, intricately carved, and decayed. Sartorial sarong-garbed Tau-Tau statues guarded another part of the vault.

“Romeo and Juliet.” Said one of the urchins, pushing the maxillary teeth of two of the skulls together for additional effect, and earning a ripple of nervous laughter from his other colleagues. They walked us back out along the checkerboard mud dikes of rice terraces to a waterworn limestone cliff face wall. Gazing out from a vertiginous height, was a row of weathered mannequins. One had his sarong flung over his right shoulder. Something protruded from his lower lip, even at a distance. *Welcome to Kansas*.

We paid the boys their rupias, and flagged down the same Makale bemo, this time to disembark at the Lemo turnoff, for

another two-kilometer trek to another sheer rock face. Big black butterflies with turquoise tails followed behind us. High above were two rectangular cut cave balconies with packed rows of effigies, eyes wide shut looking down, wooden hands with outstretched palms extended to receive offerings, and bestow blessings in return.

They were different carved heights and painted skin tones. One man wore a faded green shirt and jodhpurs. Another woman had a black dress and a red bandana. But there were common qualities to all the Tau-Tau. Their bags for traveling into the next world may have slung over their shoulders, but their clothes were tattered, and their expressions were emotionless, vacant. They looked tired.

They should have been, for the sights they had seen on their horizon. And the songs they had heard.

From the time a raid was planned, the expedition members were placed under a strict prohibition against eating foods made from palm or bamboo. The men commonly wore necklaces of octopus shells, which had to have been imbued with efficacy by a woman or no heads would be taken. The shells must have still been dripping with seawater at the time of the rite. The Toraja equated the dribbling seawater with the ejaculation of semen.

All warriors carried presents from a woman—a piece of cloth tied around the hilt of his sword, a penis-sized piece of wood, sucked during the raid, menstrual blood obtained by the man inserting his finger into a woman’s vagina, and a tobacco quid taken from between a woman’s breasts while she is sleeping. Sexual interest of any kind during the entire period of the raid was forbidden and would likely result in death. Without the presents, the warrior might not only obtain no heads, but also possibly die. Each man carried special rice prepared by a woman, alone in the middle of the night. The rice must be pure white and none of the grains should be

broken. Any breach of protocol would abort the raid.

The departure of the expedition was always at night. From an assault camp men crept into the enemy village and placed ash in a mortar there. They tried to get near enough to a sleeping member of the village to drop ash into their mouth. Under no circumstances was the head to be taken at this stage. The actual assault took the form of a general scrimmage, free of all ritual and rules, but one- it was absolutely forbidden to look at, let alone touch, the genitals of an enemy. This would bring misfortune.

No relative value was placed on male, female or children's heads, but if too large a number were taken, the surplus was simply thrown away into the bush, on the return journey. (If a warrior lost his own head during a raid, his body was abandoned, and his soul became a dangerous wandering spirit luring other headhunters to the same end.)

The remaining heads on the return trip, carefully carried in the warriors' arms, were caressed, sung to, addressed, and fed pre-chewed banana and other such foods. The warriors, prevented from re-entering their own village, because of their contamination, were fed with ginger by a woman directly into their mouths, and showered with dry rice.

When the men were finally allowed back into the village, they were met by jealous and possessed women, who tried to steal or bite the heads.

Before they returned to their homes, the men were required to sit down with the women seated opposite them and sing various appropriate chants in antiphony, like Pacific Chorus frogs in the spring.

During the festival which followed, the heads were referred to as 'Gifts from the Wurake,' a category of very high spirit, capable of ending a period of mourning. After 'The Feast of Bamboo Knives,' in which the villagers attacked and cut the

remaining flesh off the head with bamboo knives, the skull of the dead was installed in a special building.

“They look tired.” Said Robyn.

“They are.” I said.

“And some are missing their heads.” She said.

We had an early start in the morning.

“You leave today?” Asked the desk clerk. We nodded in the affirmative.

“You have fun in Tanatoraja?” She asked. We nodded a little less, to keep our heads on.

The name of the bus line ran the entire length of its fusilage. *Batutumonga.* We left the pristine cultivated valley of cassava and maize, wet rice terraces on the surrounding slopes, and climbed the cloud-covered eastern range of the central mountains. Our driver wove around the cloves and coffee drying in patches on the road, and Robyn and I opened our window to catch the sweet spicy scented alpine air, and views, and the most beautiful butterflies in Kansas.

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The Trans-Sulawesi Highway was a little like the Trans-Canada Highway. Not much, as it turned out. There were violent forces of chaos on the Trans-Sulawesi, just over the horizon. I swear I had no idea, or I would not have brought Robyn.

The first clue should have been the absence of foreign tourists on our Batutumonga express. The second should have been the absence of locals. There was Robyn and I, and a couple of official looking government types from Jakarata, sitting in the front of the big multicolored Mercedes, making the ten-hour drive to Tentena, a town on the northern shore of Danau Poso. They weren’t making any money from us.

Lake Poso is the third largest lake in Indonesia, over half a kilometer above sea level, and famous for its profusion of wild orchids, including a black one. Tentena was also renowned for two-meter-long monstrous eels and, after ten hours inside the Batutumonga Express, we were ready for a feed of several centimeters. We entered the small town on the Poso River, both sides of which were connected by a blue and yellow bridge. Blue and yellow horizontal stripes decorated large vertical flags outside each household, and blue and yellow and red outriggers lined the sandy lakeshore. It was a blue and yellow kind of lakeside resort town.

There were V-shaped eeltraps, and where there were eeltraps, we reasoned, there were eels. Robyn and I checked into the Hotel Intim Danau Poso and went to the Lotus restaurant. They were eelated to see us and served up eelongated eels by hurricane lamp.

On returning to the Intim, we asked the owner what time the bus left for Poso next morning. He looked like we had just hit him with a shovel.

“No bus.” He said, extending out his palms, like a tired Tau-Tau.

“No bus?” Robyn said. “So how do we get to Poso?” Now he looked even more tired.

“No bus. No bemos. No fly. No go Poso.” He said. Robyn and I tried to understand the concept of how it was not possible to get from one place to the next. His wife emerged from behind the curtain.

“Maybe one way, but not stop in Poso.” She said.

“Where then?” I asked.

“Palu.” She said. “You must go all the way to Palu.” My head, still on my shoulders, was beginning to hurt. We could get to

Poso, but couldn’t stop in Poso, and had to go all the way to the west coast town of Palu, another 220 kilometers.

“How do we get to Palu?” I asked.

“Toyota.” She said. I nodded. She picked up the phone. Ten minutes later a young man with a ponytail and flipflops, and a packet of Kansas, appeared in the dimly lit reception. He didn’t look Indonesian; he looked Cheyenne. He was with two other flip-flops, a thick tough Chinese wearing a blue and white baseball cap, with a fish-in-mouth raptor emblem on it, and a thin dark younger one, with a single eyebrow. It was Boxing Day, and I heard the bell for the first round. These kind gentlemen would drive us to Palu. It would take all day. We would pay for the trip, and their trip back.

“How much?” I asked.

“Sixty dollars.” Said Cheyenne. And I thought the eels in this town were slippery.

“Forty.” I said.

“Fifty.” He said. “Very dangerous.” Cheyenne’s accomplices shifted ever so slightly on their flip-flops.

“OK.” I said. Whatever. I should have offered them more. Spectacular stars and meteors painted the black out of the dark sky that night and shimmered on the lake.

The black Land Cruiser was waiting outside the Intim at daybreak. Cheyenne was clearly anxious to begin. His associates sat in the front beside him, and Robyn and I piled into the back seat. We had arranged to stop at the Salopa waterfalls, a diversion that would take valuable time, but we didn’t want to miss it. There were white sandy beaches and butterflies, and then a long walk through rice fields and winding lanes, to a crystal clear series of pools, cascades, and falls, in a beautifully serene and unspoilt forest. We had

paradise to ourselves.

Cheyenne turned the Toyota north, towards Poso. There were far too frequent roadblocks, and conversations with paramilitary officers checking documents, that seemed longer than necessary, for a simple chartered vehicle hire.

As we passed through one small town, there was a kind of street commotion we hadn't seen before. Shirtless men, wide-eyed with anger, carried machetes in threatening poses, and shouted even more incoherently than they should have been, if we could have understood the language. Some appeared to be drunk. The smell of fear and blood and diesel was in the air. Cheyenne put his right foot down. I looked back to see a dark ridge of mountains, towering palm trees, and burning houses. Two bamboo tubes of sweet glutinous Burassa black rice came over the front seat, from the flip-flop friends.

"Very dangerous." Said Cheyenne. He was driving us through the opening salvos of the Poso War, and Robyn and I had no idea what that even was. We knew about Muslim-Christian violence in the Moluccas, but not what had just roared into flames behind and ahead of us, on the Trans-Sulawesi. Tentena was *red zone* Christian; down on the coast was the enemy. The *white zone* Muslims controlled coastal Poso town and much of the lowlands. The substrate for the conflict began, as in Tanatoraja, when the Dutch established colonial control of Tentena's Pamona headhunters in 1892 and offered them free lifetime membership in the Central Sulawesi Christian Church. But this also opened the door to nearby coastal settlement by Muslim fishermen from other parts of Sulawesi. After independence, the Indonesian government compounded the problem by transmigrating Balinese Hindus, and granting tracts of local farmland to Muslims from Java. The demographic tectonic plates began to grind against each other in the corrupt competition for local administrative control and employment, with the Muslims outflanking the Christians for all the choice positions. The flashpoint ignited by an argument about Christian youths drinking alcohol

near the mosque in Poso. And Robyn and I hadn’t even got there yet.

The Christian retaliation would come behind us, five months later. A group that claimed to be defending its ancestral home, would launch itself in Tentena. They called themselves the Black Bats, because ‘the black bats move at night, black is the color of war, and bat soup is a local delicacy.’ Dressed in black masks and capes, they terrorized Muslim cocoa and coconut plantations, kidnapped and executed hundreds of young Muslim boys, and left their bodies in local rivers and creeks. Many were missing their heads. Poso’s Muslims would not eat fish for months.

The two sides fought with spears and bows and arrows, and homemade guns welded together from bits of spare piping, deadly to a range of over 250 feet. Paramilitary police weighed in on the Muslim side, with more automatic weapons. Over 1,000 people were killed in the violence, riots, and ethnic cleansing. And they were only warming up. In August of 2001, a branch of the *Laskar Jihad* ‘Warriors of Jihad’ declared open warfare, and dispatched fighters to Poso, equipped with AK-47s, grenade and rocket launchers, bulldozers and tanker trucks. The resultant scorched-earth campaign destroyed dozens of Christian villages and pushed fifty thousand refugees into Tentena. In a supreme contest of eelimination, they would become a vigilante mini-state fortress, hemmed in by Muslims from the north, and from the south.

But this was still 1999, and Cheyenne and his two flip-flop friends were still high on Kansas in the front seat, guiding two foolish foreigners, through a war zone they hadn’t even realized existed, to a refuge they didn’t even know they needed.

Our Land Cruiser, the color of war, passed through the life-affirming montane forest of Lore Lindu National Park,

containing birds that laugh like people, others that lay their single egg in hot sand, pigs that look like hippos, the largest snake in the world, and midget buffalo. I asked Cheyenne whether there was a chance of seeing any of these creatures.

“We may see one, or we may see God.” He said. “The odds are about the same.” The reason for that presented itself in the form of illegal new settlements we drove through, squatters clearing large patches of forest for agriculture. The National Forest was being destroyed by the National Migrants from Java and Bali. We stopped to admire the Balinese Aging Jagad Raya temple complex in Toini village, seven years before it would be pipebombed by Muslim terrorists. It seemed that Hindus would have the same chance as the other creatures of Lore Lindu, of seeing God.

Even though we had transmigrated the Poso War, we still had 170 kilometers of Trans-Sulawesi highway before we would arrive in Palu. Cheyenne and his flip-flop friends chain-smoked Kansas, and jabbered away in Bahasa, while Robyn and I watched the unpaved mountain roads getting narrower, and more precipitous. Just when we thought it couldn’t get more treacherous, the violent forces of chaos returned once more, to prove us wrong. As Cheyenne negotiated a particularly tight turn around the track, cut out of where the mountain once was, the road disappeared. We stopped in disbelief. It hadn’t disappeared, but it had appeared that it was buried beneath a landslide. No ordinary landslide, it was more like and tropical soil avalanche, come to reclaim the profile it had been born with. No one was going anywhere. We weren’t going forward, and Robyn and I were determined that there was no way we were going back. Cheyenne and his flip-flop friends squatted on the edge of the universe, smoking their way through the rest of Kansas. Robyn and I kept an eye out for rare creatures, or God. We waited on our side of the mountain road, for all of three hours, before we heard deliverance.

What finally broke through the earthen wall with a mighty roar, made us pinch ourselves, and rub our eyes. A brand new bright yellow D9 Caterpillar bulldozer, Kansas hanging from the operator's lower lip, tore through the topography like the US Corps of Army Engineers. It took another hour before anything like a roadbed was deemed safe enough for us to pass, but when it was, we did, and the last roadblock was behind us.

The elation we all felt, as the black Toyota pulled into Palu, was electric. It was like driving down the Champs-Élysées in Paris, if Paris had been in the middle of a drought and bombed by the CIA. Cheyenne motioned to us in the rear-view mirror.

"Golden?" He asked. That sounded good to both of us, and we nodded in unison. A few minutes later, down Jalan Raden Saleh, we pulled up outside the Hotel Palu Golden. There were no words.

We paid Cheyenne and shook hands, and wished them well, on their road back to the Poso War. Inside the magnificence of the Palu Golden, none of what we had experienced was on any radar screen. We were checked into one of fifty-five of their three-star rooms, with quiet refinement, and invited to dine in their Ebony restaurant before it closed at ten. We had *koktel udang* prawn cocktails and Guinness, before returning to our room. There was a stick man sign in the bathroom. Penggunaan kloset yang benar perawatan. *Use proper toilet care*. I wondered about some of the clientele.

Robyn and I awoke to the sun's diffused dawn glow on the two swimming pools below, and Palu Bay and the mountains beyond. And the dilemna we had avoided all night. Where do we go from here? How the hell do we get there? And how long would that take? It was still a thousand kilometers from where we were, to our other area of interest in Manado. We needed to fly, if we could, and soon.

Robyn and I tripped over each other, down the open marble

staircase to reception, to find out. Our desk clerk made several telephone calls. Yes, there were flights to Manado, but only once a week. Yes, it appeared it was today. Yes, there were seats left, but only two. On Robyn's ticket, she was identified as 'Robun.' No one cared.

The Merpati plane was an old Spanish Casa C-212, which had been put together by Dirgantara Indonesia, *Indonesian Aerospace*. I had never seen those two words nailed together before and, looking at the thing, had to agree that the original Spanish name, *house*, not only more than described its appearance, but its probable aerodynamic properties as well. And we were not to be disappointed for, even though our only way out of this part of Kansas was in this flying garage, it soared exactly like the box it was. The first hundred kilometers wasn't terrible, but when we flew into the mountain ranges of North Sulawesi, we almost flew into the mountain ranges of North Sulawesi. It probably didn't help that that plane was full, and that no one had weighed the luggage. It probably didn't help that we had entered a patch of particularly inclement weather and heavy turbulence. But it definitely didn't help that the lone pilot was making an effort to meet and greet the two foreign passengers, who had chosen to grace his route that very day. He lit up a cigarette in the aisle, while his aircraft played handball with the sky outside. He wanted to know all about us. I wanted to know who was flying the house.

"Autopilot." He said proudly, blowing Kansas from between his yellow teeth. We entered the tornado in the Wizard of Oz when he excused himself for 'something important.' To our relief, he headed back to the cockpit, and we slowly, very slowly, found level flight.

Things didn't go much better on the ground, after Robyn and I left Central Sulawesi. In 2003, 'unknown masked gunmen' killed thirteen Christian villagers in Poso District. Two years later, Palu suffered both a 6.2 Richter scale earthquake, and

a Muslim nail bomb at a market stall selling pork to Christian Minihasa for New Year's Eve celebrations, killing eight people, and wounding another 53. The same year someone killed another 22 Christians with a bomb in Tentena's public market, and Islamic militants in Poso beheaded three Christian schoolgirls.

The message found next to one of the heads was clear. *A life for a life. A head for a head.*

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What Darwin had been to Chiloé, Wallace was to Sulawesi. It was the line on either side of this orchid of the Southern Sea, that separated the species of Asia from those of Australia, and made Sulawesi, as a distinct biogeographical entity containing marsupials and mammals, part of what is known as *Wallacea*. It was the finish line of the theory of evolution, which Wallace had crossed first.

Robyn and I could see Manado Bay in the distance, as our Merpati flying house made its final approach. Volcanic cones rose out of the Celebes Sea from great submerged monsters, and puffs of cloud hovered over the surface of the water like steam from their nostrils.

We thanked the pilot for his hospitality, and marveled at his longevity, once we were safely on the tarmac of Sam Ratulangi. We passed Sam's statue on the way into town, six giant clay garden gnomes in gray cubscout uniforms. The musical creole of Manado Malay greeted our exit from the bemo, with numerous borrowed words, like those for horses and chairs and enticing women and bad men, from their Portuguese and Spanish and Dutch *Stranger Kings* history. But there were also Chinese shops and Kung Fu movie houses, and ice cream banana splits at the News Café on Jalan Sam Ratulangi. It was a lively place.

Robyn and I had been spoiled by our night at the Palu Golden, and our search for truth took a degenerate detour towards

beauty. We checked into the old colonial feel of the Hotel Minihasa, and checked out its tiny infinity pool, with the plump juicy cloud-covered volcano hanging on the water's edge. In Minihasa, there was one church for every hundred meters of road. We dropped into a few hundred meters worth, and then stopped by the red and kaleidoscopic colors of the three-hundred-year-old Ban Hin Kiong Chinese temple, whose pamphlet description excused the fact that 'there is not much to buy in this complex because it is basically a house of worship.' We ate more koktel udan, and smoked fish *tinutuan*, a rice porridge containing corn, greens and chilies, at the Dolpin Donut restaurant.

The next day we pushed it further, and traveled twenty miles down the southwest coast, to Tangawangko Bay, and the Tasik Ria. *Where comfort is paramount*. It was two days before New Year's, and the entire resort was empty. We got our choice of cobalt blue-tiled roofed Chinese bungalows, with white pillars, and a view of palm-filled gardens and expansive pool, and dined on delicious Tasik Ria fried chicken with chilies and kecap manis, in the Bunaken coffee shop. For the New Year's Eve that would welcome in a new millennium, we flagged down a bemo back into the city, and checked into the Novotel Manado. A Minihasan orchestra of wooden marimbas was playing in the lobby. There were 'Happy Third Millenium' cards, with a picture of the solar system, on our pillows and, later, under the door, as if in answer to the Y2K paranoia of the age, a friendly note from the manager. 'To prevent any problems at midnight we will stop the operation of all elevators at the main lobby between 23:50 to 00:10.' The fireworks display outside was more of a threat. It should have incinerated the entire city.

On the last night of the Twentieth century, Robyn and I ate at the Rumah Mkan 'Bahari.' We had heard that Minihasa food could be all 'bat, cat, and rat,' not to mention *rintek wuuk* dog, so we stuck to the *rica-rica* spicy fish and *dabu-dabu* sambal

beef, with *sayur bunga* sautéed papaya flower buds.

On New Year's Day, Robyn and I took a boat across Manado Bay, to Palau Bunaken, an eight square kilometer island of jungle known for its marine biodiversity. It had seven times more genera of coral than Hawaii, seven of the eight species of the planet's giant clams, and seventy per cent of all the known fish species of the Indo-Western Pacific, including over thirty-three species of butterfly fish, and graduate schools of groupers, wrasses, gobies, and damsels. I paddled mine in an outrigger along the eastern coast, until we found a small beach. Robyn was content to check into one of the small bungalows, but I had heard that the accommodation was better on the other side of the island.

"I'll go check it out." I said and left her with half the water. There was a scarcity of fresh water on Bunaken, and drinking water had to be imported from Manado.

"How long will you be?" Asked Robyn.

"Not long." I said. "It doesn't look that big on the map." Unless you got lost.

I started up the bushtrail to what I thought would be the most direct route to the other coast. The path grew steep and started to meander through the tropical forest, as the heat of the day began to penetrate the canopy. The streams of perspiration were the only streams on the island and threatened to outpace my water supply. I trudged on and off the path, in the direction I thought should be due west, but I couldn't see the sun above the green maze and, even if I could have, it was midday. Two and a half hours later, heat prostrated and parched with thirst, I finally punched a hole in the jungle, and onto the western coast. I almost collapsed onto the first two Bunakenese boys that I encountered, and they quickly revived me with water and reassurance. I explained that Robyn was still around the island on the

eastern shore, and asked if there was a way we could rescue her from what, by now, must be a similar degree of dehydration. One of the boys disappeared down the mangroves. Not five minutes later he was back at the wheel of a deafening noise. It looked like a World War II American PT boat, and it was, except for the lack of torpedos, and the fact that it had been constructed of local hardwoods. But it had the same shape and displacement hull, and two seventy-horse Johnson outboards on the stern. It flew like a Sulawesi horeshoe bat out of hell, and we were around the northern tip of the island in no time. I pointed to the beach that Robyn should be waiting on, and they cracked open the outboards to warpspeed. I crawled onto the large, curved bow, and stood up with my arms crossed, for added effect. As we roared into the shore, I saw Robyn emerge from the tree she had sought shade under, and I straightened my profile and pose, like MacArthur would have, if this had been the Philippines. I caught the first terms of endearment from my rescued damsel, just as the boys shut down the Johnsons.

“Where the hell have you been?” She demanded. I wasn’t so much offended, as startled, by what I thought was the rather inappropriate ingratitude that had been demonstrated, considering the lengths I had gone, to ensure her salvation. She piled onto the PT boat, and the boys roared us back around the island, to a small homestay, which was also ultimately deemed to be anything but an improvement on what I had initially paddle our outrigger to.

“Mangroves?” She said. “You brought us to mangroves?” There was nothing for it, but to admit the truth of her observation. The mangroves were obviously there. We got the last room in the crowded homestay, next to the noisy lounge where the divers drank at night. And then the mosquitoes arrived, just to make it all perfect.

Our trip back across the bay next morning continued south and inland to the rusted tin roofs, donkey drays, and tarp-covered

market stalls of Tonohon. We climbed to the caldera and sulfur smell of the Mahawu volcano, and its crater lake, before continuing to the *waruga* stone sarcophagi of Sawangan. Gnarled frangipani trees contributed to the eeriness of the place. Ancient Minihasa, wearing huge copper necklaces and bracelets, were buried otherwise naked in a fetal position, squatting atop a china plate, inside stone graves shaped like a house. The rooflike lids were carved with scenes depicting the life inside the hollowed out rectangular base. There were almost 150 of them, the oldest dating back to 900 AD. The Dutch outlawed the practice in the early 1800s, because of outbreaks of cholera and tuberculosis, long before they were able to outlaw the practice of Minihasa headhunting. The Minihasans were as fierce as the Bugis and Torajans. Ceremonial *Foso* feasts celebrated successful hunts with accomplished headhunters in their exclusive red garments, dancing their Kabasaran war dances. The novelist Thomas Mayne Reid, who was a drinking mate of Edgar Allen Poe, admired Lord Byron, and was admired back by Robert Louis Stevenson, Vladamir Nabakov, Teddy Roosevelt, and Conan Doyle, not only wrote *The Castaways*, about a party shipwreck in the Celebes Sea, but also *The Headless Horseman*.

“Headlessness seems to be another common theme in the Southern Sea.” Said Robyn. It was not too far wrong.

“Even San Juan Bautista, on Isla Robinson Crusoe, was named after St. John the Baptist, whose head was presented on a silver platter to Salome, at her request, as a reward for the dance she had performed for King Herod.”

We spent the night at a losmen on Lake Tondano, inside four walls of floor to ceiling carmine curtains, chunky faux French Provençal furniture, and tall vases full of pink plastic flowers. But the bamboo lakeside restaurant that supplied our lunch, from pens containing the huge carp we pulled up with nets, was a delicious fresh fish feast of gastronomic grandeur. Along the shoreline north were fisherman pulling up

their oen Chinese fishing nets, and a manufacturer of prefab rare hardwood houses, that looked so much like alien crabs, I expected them to begin moving sideways with us, along the road.

The final stop of our Northern Sulawesi excursion south of Manado, was to the Tongkoko National Park, thirty kilometers from Bitung. We entered a forest of tremendous trees, buttressed with protruding fins like rocket ships, strangler figs, spiraled vines, and subdued light. We were so surrounded by crested black macaques, at one point, that I seriously feared for our safety. Twenty-five of them, baring their long eyeteeth and grimacing, moved in random patterns around us. One female turned to show us her red bottom, not a highlight of our journey, in any sense.

What Robyn and I had really come to see, was a tiny extremely shy nocturnal primate with soft velvety fur, and unusual anatomy. Only ten centimeters long, their hind limbs are twice this length, due to the elongation of their tarsus bones, from which they get their name. Each of their enormous eyes is as large as their brain, and their fingers are extremely extended, with their third finger as long as their upper arm. Considering how fast we are driving them to extinction, it didn’t seem like an inappropriate adaptation. We hired a guide to take us back in with flashlights, in the middle of the night. After scrambling around for what seemed like hours, one illuminating beam caught a small gremlin above us on a branch. It was a tarsier, with a baby, jumping at insects. She was magnificent. We spent the night in the ranger’s accommodation. The locals, including the women, were drunk on beer.

But in the early morning there were swooping hornbills, with large eyelashes. On an island where more than 60 percent of its mammals and more than one third of its birds are found nowhere else on the planet, Sulawesi has lost more than eighty per cent of her forests, from logging, agriculture, and mining. The animals themselves are disappearing because of

habitat loss, hunting for bush meat and the exotic pet market, disease introduced by domestic animals, and the lack of any truly organized conservation measures. The Sulawesi and Knobbed hornbills are some of the most endangered, declining at a rate of forty percent over three generations.

“How does he hold his bill up?” Asked Robyn. His red comb and blue beard and yellow bill made one more pass throught the canopy.

“His first two vertebrae are fused together, and his neck muscles are very powerful.” I said. “It may confer some slight protection against the headhunters.”

We walked to the beach and rested under the huge mimosas. I made a big heart on the black sand with two dozen of its white and red-fringed flowers. On the way back through the ranger’s village, we came across a local marching ensemble made up of elaborately plumbed facsimiles of euphoniums, tubas, trombones, and some that had no comparators. They were made of bamboo. Just before the bemo back to Manado arrived, we were visited by a slow large marsupial Sulawesi bear cuscus, which seemed to have come to remind us of Alfred Russell Wallace. Or to plead for help.

We had three more days left in Kansas. Before we left Manado, I had made some inquiries. There was a place off the coast on an island called Pulau Gangga, that had a resort owned by some businessmen from Northern Italy. It was apparently empty and in trouble, but still open, and we negotiated a favorable discount. A heavy plank boat picked us up late morning and, with Robyn sitting on the anchor in the very bow, holding onto her Torajan conical hat, we plied the Celebes Sea, through pods of dolphins and square sailed outriggers, to the white beach and coconut palms of the last resort. We were greeted by Surat, who took on the role of man Friday. He showed us to a luxurious bungalow and welcomed us every morning with fresh papaya and a Peter Lorre flourish.

“Enchoy you Brakefasst.” He would say. And we would. We spent three wonderful days on Pulau Gangga, eating pasta in squid ink in the Coconut Bar, collecting rare shells and red coral that had washed up on the shore, and playing along the waterline with the kids and dogs in the village on the next beach over. And then it was.

Surat gave us two coconuts to take on the plank boat journey back to Manado. They were carved. In the shape of heads.

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Lawrence Winkler is a retired physician, traveler, and natural philosopher. His métier has morphed from medicine to manuscript. He lives with Robyn on Vancouver Island and in New Zealand, tending their gardens and vineyards, and dreams. His writings have previously been published in *The Montreal Review* and many other literary journals. His books can be found online at www.lawrencewinkler.com.