AdvCompS20 - Lee Dae Ho - 8675309 - Best Day V3

“An Unforgettable Day”

I have never felt so tired, so full, and so happy at the same time. As I walked along the beach watching the last rays of the sunset disappear over the sea I thought about the nature of memory. It always seemed to me that bad memories stayed with me longer than good memories. I knew that the day I had just experienced was one that I would like to remember for a long time, so I decided to spend a few moments trying to commit every detail to memory. I wanted to remember it forever because the day I spent in Phuket Town with my girlfriend was my best day ever.

The day began, many hours earlier, with a delicious breakfast at our five-star hotel’s amazing breakfast buffet. The buffet included a great variety of Thai and Western breakfast foods, including spicy Thai noodles and curries, piles of sweet, fresh croissants and muffins, and a huge pile of crispy bacon. However, I knew that I would be eating a lot later in the day on the food tour I was taking so I just had some sweet golden mangoes, vanilla-scented baby bananas, and fresh pineapple from the fruit bar. My girlfriend and I sat at a table in the hotel’s lush tropical garden and drank hot coffee and read the newspaper while we ate.

After breakfast, it was time to head down to Phuket Town’s central market to meet our food tour guide. Her name was Pow and we loved her immediately. She was so excited to show us all of the wonderful treats available in the shops and restaurants in her hometown. First, she took us through the crowded and noisy traditional market. The narrow alleyways of the market were like a maze lined with vendors selling everything imaginable: food, clothing, and household items like baskets and pottery. Huge piles of strange smelling fruits were everywhere. Pow seemed to know all the vendors and when they saw us with her, they offered us samples of the exotic fruits they were selling, like durian and dragon fruit. Some of them were like nothing I had ever tasted before.

After visiting the market, it was time for the food tour to really begin. Our first stop was the former mansion of the colonial British governor, a huge yellow brick house with wide covered porches on all sides. It sat in the center of a beautiful garden full of perfume-scented flowers and palm trees. We sat in the cool shade of the veranda and the waitress brought us each a small silver dish and gave us each a tiny silver spoon. On each dish, nestled on a circle of banana leaf, was a small mound of coconut sticky rice with three slices of ripe golden mango. I quickly realized why they gave us such tiny spoons: it was so sweet, and the mango was so flavorful that you only needed to eat a tiny spoonful to appreciate the amazing tastes. For the next three hours, Pow took us from shop to restaurant to street stand, at each stop giving us a sample of the specialty of each place. We had foods I had never tasted before, like balls of rice steamed in a banana leaf with thick slices of pork belly, golden onions, and sweet carrots. We also had Mohinga, a thick, salty Burmese fish soup served with crunchy twists of fried bread. The last stop was a street vendor selling coconut ice cream, which was so sweet and creamy that it felt like a cloud on my tongue. I remember telling Pow that if I ate one more thing I was going to explode. We said goodbye to Pow and promised to meet up with her later that day.

By now it was midafternoon, and it had become really hot so we decided to do what most Thai people do in the hottest part of the day: take a nap. When we arrived at the hotel the air conditioning was a wonderful shock after spending most of the day outdoors. We took cold showers, pulled the blackout curtains to darken the room completely, climbed between the cool sheets of the bed, and were both asleep almost instantly. When we woke up, we put on our swimsuits and headed down to the pool. I relaxed on a beach bed sipping a frozen mango smoothie and reading while my girlfriend splashed around in the pool with some Thai children.

After swimming, we got dressed and walked down to a restaurant by the beach that Pow had told us about. Every night they had a party, and they cooked a whole pig and served it to the guests. She said that the restaurant had live music and entertainment as well, but she wouldn’t tell us what it was because she wanted it to be a surprise. When we arrived there, we told them that Pow had sent us, as she had instructed, and we were taken to one of the best tables. It was right by the beach and it had an unobstructed view of the sun, which was just beginning to sink below the horizon. Shortly after that our waitress brought us tall cool drinks, the house specialty, a blend of pomegranate and pineapple juice they called the Phuket Sunset, a name we quickly saw as perfectly appropriate as the real sunset began to flower across the sky in a bouquet of red and pink and yellow and orange that was perfectly mirrored in the colors of our drinks. Although we were both still somewhat full from the food tour, we couldn’t resist trying the juicy roast pig from the buffet. It was incredible, as Pow had said.

After the sun had set and we had finished eating we suddenly heard drums behind us. As we watched a group of male musicians playing a variety of drums came through the restaurant. Their faces were painted in wild colors of red and black and they had feathers in their long hair, and they were wearing short skirts made of what looked like palm fronds and nothing else. They marched through the restaurant and out onto the beach and began playing faster and faster. The beats were hypnotic, and I felt myself becoming captured by the rhythms, my mind carried away by them. Suddenly, one of the drummers stepped into the middle of the group and lit a pair of torches, which he began to whirl around in amazing patterns, throwing them and catching them, spinning them over his head, jumping over them, and performing amazing acrobatic feats. Soon another drummer took his place and the first one returned to playing the drums. One by one each of the drummers took their turn with the torches. Sometimes two or three would dance, throwing the torches between them in a death-defying dance of fire. Just as suddenly as the dance had started it stopped. One of the drummers went from table to table with a coconut shell soliciting tips. I gave generously, paid our bill, and we left the restaurant, deciding at the last moment to take a walk along the beach before returning to our hotel.

As we walked by the ocean holding hands, we talked about how perfect this day had been. Small things stuck out in my memory: the smile of the young Thai girl who had offered me a baby banana; the laughter of the birds in the trees of the garden at the colonial mansion; the rhythmic drumming and the wild performance of the fire dancers. I tried to store each memory away carefully because I knew at that moment that it would be a day I would never want to forget.