

University of Western Sydney

Hoa Pham

Wave

(novel extract)

Biographical note:

Hoa Pham is an author and playwright. Her novel *vixen* won the *Sydney morning herald* young writers award and her play *silence* was on the Victorian certificate of education list in 2010. Her next young adult novel is titled *the other shore* and her work can be viewed at www.hoapham.net

Inside it was warm like greenhouse flowers. Outside it was the end of the world.

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Midori

They breathe heavily, and fly at each other's touch. Her back arcs as she feels the sensation of flying. Her lover's fingers caress the petals of her inner self. She brushes her hands over her nipples for the fleeting sharp sensation. Then it is her lover's turn, and they sigh together, moisture mingling. From their union, a pearl is birthed from her throat. Her lover plucks the sweet gem from her mouth with her fingers. Slippery and wet the multi coloured rainbow goes into her mouth and she swallows. They know that if anyone finds out about the gems they birth, they would no longer have the pleasure to themselves.

This is her memory – a reconstruction as she surges forward on her fingers remembering how to feel. She is gone now over the seas, exiled far away from all that is familiar.

I still love you. Even though they have separated us. I will never forget you.

Everything is a construction.

*

She wishes she was other than what she is. Tenses turn and twist as she remembers, sometimes she remembers the here and now, other times the past as she recalls it, in the quicksilver light of her teenage years.

When she orgasms she remembers the most. Memories flick by like comic book frames, the neon lights of Shinjuku out of a love hotel window, the fleeting kiss of loves that never were.

She would not exchange what she is for something else, she tells herself as she sinks into the hot bath scented with pink ginger. Her skin dissolves when she is in water and the warmth penetrates her core.

When she was younger she and her first love would don costumes on Sundays and join the cosplay parading. She was slim and flat chested and would go as Dragon Girl, a warrior in pigtails that had dragons slithering down her arms. She yearned to fly like Dragon Girl and her lover would go as Dragon Boy. That way business men would not try to proposition them like they did when her lover stayed true to her gender which was the same.

Others cannot forgive that she still holds memories of her first love dearest to her heart.

*

She only began to play piano for herself once she was in Australia. There was an old upright piano in the corner of the multipurpose meeting room in the apartment complex. No one could hear her, she did not have to think about what other people

thought and felt. The sound bounced on the wooden floor, and the touch was uneven. Clunky though her renditions were, she lost herself in the tangled notes of her memory.

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She has a younger brother. He is the only reason that she would not wish death on her parents. She had prayed to the old gods, the dragons of earth, water, fire and heaven.

When the dream came true she was terrified by the freedom she felt, falling into empty space.

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Brother

He was waiting. Waiting for his mother to come. In his favourite yellow hat with the cosy ear flaps on and wrapped up in his red puffy parka.

They had just had open play time when they could do anything they liked. He made a picture for his mother out of autumn leaves. The brown foliage crunched in his hands and littered the paper with broken remains.

Usually mummy would be on time. She would arrive and take her hand in his and give him a kiss on the cheek. She smelt of perfume and newly applied lipstick. Then they would go home and have a hot chocolate while she cooked dinner.

He hoped she would come soon so he could give her his picture of leaves. He had made her a giraffe and a horse.

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Outside was the distant roar of the ocean. Today he could hear the waves. It sounded like the beach had crept right up to their doorstep.

Next to him the other children were waiting too. No one's parents had arrived yet.

He was looking at the clock.

Soon they were all looking at the clock waiting for their parents to come.

The red digital numbers on the stark black clock told no lies.

Their parents were late.

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He found himself thinking of his sister. Before she left for Australia she had been crying a lot in her room. She did not cry when their parents were home, she had been stiff of face. But when neither of them was there and she was supposed to look after him, she would retreat into her room and cry. He would sit in front of her sliding bedroom door and wait for her to come out for a cuddle.

His sister was beautiful, with cherubic short hair. She used to go to her friend's apartment a lot, but that stopped when the crying began. He missed his sister smiling and talking to him.

He looked back at the closed door to the children's room. No one's parents had arrived. That was strange. Sometimes one parent would be late. But all of them?

The children began whispering amongst themselves.

One child began to cry, snuffling softly.

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Mother! He thinks into the ether, hoping that she can hear him shouting in his mind. Sometimes she does know, the hiccup before he cries out aloud that brings her running into his room. Other times she is deaf to him even when he is in her arms, warm and snug.

Where are all the mummies? Where have they gone?

A child care worker opens the sliding door and is greeted by the silent anticipation of the children sitting in rows cross legged on the floor.

She shakes her head, and now he can see how white she is and the deepest frown on her face close up. Something is wrong.

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He vanishes inside his mind then.

A photographer taking their pictures, a flash of light over the children sitting in rows like temple statues. Then a red headed white woman speaking a foreign language gives them soft toys.

He balances the brown soft toy kangaroo on his crossed legs. Outside older children are playing.

He remembers thinking – they have not suffered. They do not know anything.

Seriousness was pressed into him that day.

I'm not like them. I cannot be carefree.

*

He had the ever present filial obligation to look after his older beautiful sister. Even though she had abandoned their ancestors and the family shrine.

Now the soft toy kangaroo is worn from where his hand had clutched it every night in his foster home. One eye is missing but somehow the kangaroo yields to being squeezed in between his shirts and shoes in his suitcase.

What do you call the hopping mouse with a bag?

Kan-ga-rou.

*

In Zen Buddhism the circle is emptiness and completeness. In Japanese literature, a mood is captured, a fleeting feeling. It is not so important unlike Western literature, for the hero to conquer all.