

# The Blistering Continent

by G.E. Simons

Marvin glanced up at me. My urging had been physical rather than verbal. I had wanted to urge in voice but a mixture of lethargy and a sudden feeling for anonymity had reduced my attempts to hasten the deal to a single click of my greasy fingers.

The problem with that was, I instantly felt less anonymous and more like a man in a collar at the Peppermint Lounge beckoning for another Manhattan from a waiter in tails. I thought about the kind of waiter I would like to beckon if I was the kind of man who was capable of that. I settled on a blur of a man in a crisp dress suit who would leave a vapour trail of pomade as he skirted the busy dance floor in response to my finger clicking.

Just the fantasy of simply clicking my fingers to make a waiter fetch me a mixture of sweet Vermouth and bourbon made me feel better.

I'm not sure that's how Marvin saw me through the heat haze though. I'm not sure if he could see me at all for that matter. His right eye was almost completely closed now with livid, marbled bruising and his own pomade-free fringe pretty much covered his left eye completely.

Marvin and I had first met four years ago on an iron train peeling through the seething Asian night on rails between Bangkok and Chiang Mai city.

Travel was still new to both of us back then as we bonded over the compounding impact of sweet, warm Chang beer. In bottles that rolled the length of the carriage floor every time we dropped them, following final swallows and the backs of hands wiped across our beery lips.

We had experienced the country alone so far, but shared similar night splintered smears of blitzzy, grinding neon, the breaking of fresh white lobster meat by fingertips jeweled with beach grains and bloody knees keel-hauled on submerged crags in the Gulf of Thailand.

So as the train thundered through a backdrop of palms, skewered yellowish squid on grills and Wi-Fi leaking out into the jaws of the 76 provinces, we became friends that night and basked in a tropical frost that would freeze us to the bones and join us at the marrow forever.

Like poppy birds we had begun our flight towards jet streams, migrating together like foam on flight paths from bedsit rooms, darkened into blue sulphurous light by window blankets.

So that now in Asia, the blistering continent, we believed that this really could be our time to hold back the oceans, as our feet touched the burning station platform, still unraveling and dismantling the conversations that had taken all night.

And then we dared each other to travel much further.

