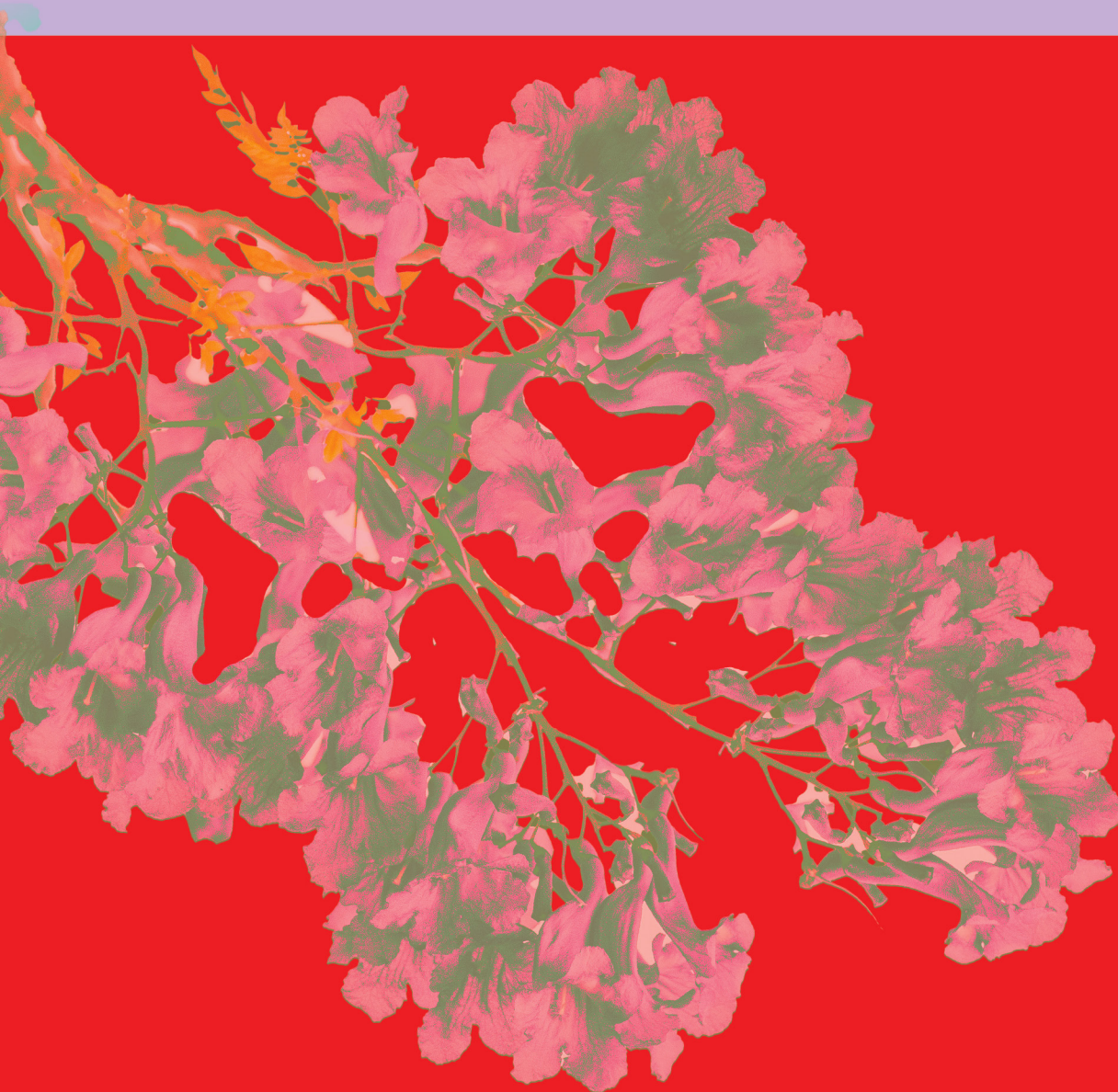




JACARANDA
Literary Agency



Catalogue
Fiction
London
2025

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The Queen, The Soldier and The Girl

by

T.A. Morton

(Genre: Literary fiction)

World rights available

Blurb:

In the picturesque village of Lirworth, Charlotte Wells, driven by her passion for the theatre, strives to uplift her brother Dan, grappling with PTSD after serving in the military. But when the grave of an ancient queen surfaces close by, Charlotte's life takes an unexpected turn. Eager to escape the confines of their small village, she seizes the opportunity to volunteer at the local theatre as they premier a new play - an epilogue to King Lear, by famous local playwright, Will Butler.

Charlotte soon finds herself navigating a complex web of love, loyalty and self-discovery. Her journey takes on a profound turn as she seeks comfort at the queen's grave. With the opening night looming, Charlotte confronts not only the queen's legacy, but also her own unresolved family issues, prompting a soul-searching quest to define her role in her family and in society as a whole. Charlotte must summon all her strength to challenge uncertainties, confront societal expectations and forge her own path to success.

Synopsis:

Set in the 2010, twenty-two-year-old Charlotte Wells lives in Lirworth, caring for her brother, Dan Wells, who has returned home after serving for the military in Afghanistan. He is suffering PTSD and is heavily medicated. Charlotte is left to deal with the day-to-day struggles as their father is working elsewhere. With their father absent and emotionally distant, Charlotte and Dan carry the weight of unresolved past traumas, stemming from their mother's tragic suicide when they were young.

As Charlotte navigates the challenges of her brother's condition, she feels drawn to the queen's grave and finds solace in her love for the theatre. She dreams of becoming a successful director, hoping to escape the confines of their small town and provide a better life for herself and Dan. However, when news of the unearthed grave spreads, it sparks a series of mysterious events that will test Charlotte's strength and resilience.

Inspired to start her life again Charlotte volunteers at the local theatre premiering a new play—an epilogue to King Lear about Queen Cordelia by the renowned local playwright. She tells Dan and he is not happy about it, but, defiant, she decides to go. As Charlotte arrives at the theatre, she is instantly captivated by the creative atmosphere.

Immediately, she encounters local flirty handyman, Johnny, who shares a common interest in films. But it's when she finds out that her favourite theatre director, Stephen Wyler (award winner), and the local born celebrated playwright, Will Butler, are also involved in the play, that her whole world starts to alter.

The new play is the epilogue to the history of King Lear, and the whole town begins to believe that the ancient grave is the burial site of Lear's daughter, Queen Cordelia. Charlotte becomes promoted to assistant director and befriends the actress playing Cordelia.

Dan begins to feel better and looks for work at the theatre, where he meets Cordelia, the actress, and they begin to flirt. Charlotte, however, is unable to help but feel conflicted between her developing feelings for Will and the attention Stephen is giving her. She finds herself battling contradictory emotions and unsure of what to do, she keeps going to the queen's grave site for solace. In contrast, Dan's infatuation with Cordelia gives him a fresh

sense of enthusiasm and hope, and he starts to reveal what happened to him during his military service.

Charlotte and Dan's father unexpectedly returns, unhappy with this new situation. He is ashamed of them and their lives, and he doesn't believe in Dan's PTSD condition. Dan and Charlotte stand up against him long-held resentments and buried emotions resurface, leading to heated arguments and painful revelations.

Charlotte, still burdened down with her past, finds it difficult to handle the new romantic attention. The allure of Will's intense passion for her and Stephen's unwavering devotion tempt her, but deep down, she wonders if she can truly find fulfilment in a relationship outside of her obsession for the stage.

But as the Queen's identity and her death are revealed Charlotte decides to move forward with her life and no longer be tied to the restraints of her father. She stands up for herself, her career and allows herself to finally be loved by Will.



About the Author:

T. A. Morton is a Singapore-based Irish/Australian writer and podcast host of The Asian Bookshelf. Previously, she worked as an editor for Longman Pearson in Hong Kong. Her short stories have appeared in the Lakeview International Journal of Arts and Literature and The Best Asian Short Stories 2019. In 2020 she was shortlisted for the Virginia Prize for Fiction and the Bridport Prize.

She has a Masters in Crime and Thriller Writing from Cambridge University. In August 2022, her novella, *Someone is Coming*, was published by Monsoon Book and has been optioned for television. She has taught crime writing at the Singapore Book Council Academy and 1880 Singapore. Her forthcoming literary novel, *The Coffee Shop Masquerade* will be published April 2025 by Earnshaw Books.

The Black Lake

by

Tunku Halim

All rights available

Thailand from a Malay writer's perspective



Although Tunku Halim is a Malay writer, he has based his book in Thailand, a country that is known and understood thoroughly, not only because he visits it often and is familiar with its culture, traditions and folklore, but also because as a Malay he can identify with a lot of these cultural contexts. Through trade, conflict and other historical connections, Malay and Thai culture, its society and beliefs are deeply connected. For hundreds of years the northern Malay states were under the suzerainty of Siam and today parts of southern Thailand are Malay in both population, culture, and heritage. This can be seen in names of places. Phuket's original name was *Bukit*, a Malay name for hill or mountain. The name of the southern town of Trang means *bright* in Malay. The province of Pattani means "this beach" in Malay. Of particular significance, that province was once the

Malay state of Patani with its female royal rulers and was never passed to the British to form what was called British Malaya and now remains in the restive part of southern Thailand.

Not surprisingly legends, myths, ghosts, and spirits are shared by both cultures and so, as an author of several Malaysian novels, slipping across the border to pen a narrative was a most natural step.

The importance of Thai myths and legends in the country's culture

Thailand is a treasure trove of folklore and supernatural beliefs. Whilst resplendent Buddhist temples dot the landscape, ancient animistic beliefs are still closely held. Spirits, ghosts and demons seemingly lurk in the shadows of every Thai village, town and city. These entities are shared south of the border with the Malay peninsula where they possess similar characteristics but with different names. A macabre tradition once existed in Thailand where dried foetal remains were kept as talismans for luck and dark magic. This practice evolved into the popular *luk thaep*, life-like plastic dolls believed to be inhabited by spirits and conferred blessings upon their owners. In the Malay world, dolls known

as *toyols* are used for similar purposes. The most famous Thai legend though is that of Mae Nak which has been made into several horror movies. A loving wife's husband had gone to war and she died giving birth. Upon his return, her husband found her alive and well, unaware she was a ghost. When his neighbours warned him, he refused to believe them. One day, Nak's ghostly abilities were revealed, forcing him to flee. Nak, enraged, terrorised the village before being captured, sealed in a jar, and thrown into a canal.

With such vibrant supernatural beliefs, it is no surprise that the Thais often wear amulets or carry charms for protection against evil spirits. These may be in the form of bodily tattoos that may cover a person's entire back and limbs. Such talismanic protections have found their way across the border and just as in Malaysia, the southern Thais have their own *bomohs* or shamans who conjure spells that may be used for good or evil.

Why this story?

An urban gothic fiction set in present-day Thailand, *The Black Lake* tells the story of Englishwoman Lousie and her desire to escape from the pain she's consumed by after the sudden and unexpected death of her Thai boyfriend, Daw. Running away from the noise and chaos of Chiang Mai in northern Thailand to the peace and quiet of Baan Sursee, a hidden verdant oasis a mere two-hour drive from the city, Lousie is looking forward to resting and crocheting. What she finds instead is a dark brooding lake, a mysteriously disappeared tenant, and a terrifying secret that sets her on the course of certain death. What secrets does Baan Sursee's hauntingly beautiful lake hold? Who are the two little girls that only Lousie can see? Do the lake spirits really want her? Why? *The Black Lake* is a deliciously thrilling journey into a world that is both hauntingly charming and deeply horrifying.

The idea of Baan Sursee came to Tunku during a stay at a small cottage at an isolated bamboo resort on the outskirts of Chiang Mai where several homes surrounded a serene yet mysterious lake where insects and dragonflies made ripples upon its dark waters. Filled with tall bamboo, the resort provided a welcome refuge except when it took on a gloomy aspect on a cloudy day. In this quiet place, with its British neighbours, a German landlord, and an ever-present murky lake became the ideal setting in Tunku's mind for a horror book, leading to the conception of *The Black Lake*.

Book synopsis

Tunku Halim's *The Black Lake* is a masterly crafted urban gothic/horror story that takes readers from the crowded, noisy by-lanes of Chiang Mai to the rustic interiors of Thailand where everything and everyone – from the clairvoyant at the Buddha temple to the som tam seller in the village – fill the reader with a fear that is deeper and darker than you can imagine.

A gripping tale of cold horror and spine-chilling events, *The Black Lake* is the story of Englishwoman Lousie who runs away from her life in England, her mother, and the horrors of her childhood to find escape in faraway Thailand. Here, she meets Daw, a handsome Thai with whom she falls hopelessly and inexplicably in love. But when Daw dies suddenly of a drug overdose, it seems like the end of the road for Lousie. Distraught after his death and unable to find closure, she's ready to fling herself into the Ping River when something stops her. She decides she cannot live in Chiang Mai anymore; wrapping up her life as an instructor of English language in this northern Thailand city she flees to the relevant calm and solitude of Baan Sursee, a verdant haven complete with its own bamboo forest and a stunning lake. Lousie believes it is a place where she

can rest, recoup, and recover from her loss, but Baan Sursee and its magical lake seem to have other plans.

Within days of moving in she finds that someone has been rifling through her clothes. She is accosted by two beautiful little girls in pretty lace dresses whom no one else can see. And then the dreams begin. Before she knows it Lousie's dreams take her to the lake, at the bottom of which she believes lies the bloated, rotting body of Slatko, the previous occupant of End Cottage where she is currently staying. The reasons for Slatko's sudden and mysterious disappearance take over her mind and imagination and she sets out to try and learn the truth. Unknown to her, there are supernatural forces both warning and petrifying her and one night she dreams of how Slatko was drowned in the lake by none other than Baan Sursee's mild-mannered Swiss owner Daniel and his Thai boyfriend Plong.

But even before she's able to wrap her head around why they did this, the lake begins to extend its malevolent influence on her. After she nearly drowns in it herself and is rescued by Elise, another resident of Baan Sursee, she cannot help noticing how its appearance has changed – the clear serene waters now look dark, brooding, and ominous. The insects and birds seem to have disappeared and the air is pregnant with an eerie silence. And then come the crows. A large murder descends on Baan Sursee, adding to its now sombre ambience and filling the hearts of its residents with a deep foreboding.

What do the lake spirits want? Why has the serene lake taken on such a dark forbidding hue? Soon her nightmares cross the blurred lines between dream and reality as she finds herself dream walking towards the lake and a rotting Slatko emerging from the dark waters and asking her to 'Leave!' Unnerved and scared out of her wits, Lousie decides to pack up and leave her sanctuary and new friends at Baan Sursee. However, when she walks into neighbours Brett and Maria's cottage to bid them adieu, she realizes she has walked into an ambush. Maria, Brett, Daniel and Plong admit to having sacrificed Slatko's life to appease the lake spirit, who seemed greedy for more human flesh after having already devoured the lives of several others, including Daniel's own two daughters, whose apparitions Lousie had been seeing regularly since her arrival. They tie her down and after ensuring that everyone else has left Baan Sursee for the day, Daniel and Plong begin to carry Lousie to the lake where they intend to drown her. But then something strange happens – Daniel's dead daughters appear once again, just as the men are dumping Lousie into the boat to row her to the centre of the lake. Startled by their sudden appearance Plong loses his balance and falls into the lake. He cannot swim and in trying to rescue him Daniel jumps in too and they are both drowned.

When the others return, they rescue Lousie from the boat and for a while all things return to normal. The lake seems to have accepted the flesh of Daniel and Plong and is once again beautiful; the birds and insects return, and the crows leave the residents of Baan Sursee alone. Within a few months, however, the nightmare returns – all residents see the same dream once again. The lake is calling out to Lousie, eager for her flesh. Everyone decides they must leave for no one wants to be responsible for more death and misery. They know that if the lake does not get Lousie, it will force each of them to walk into it and drown. Lousie decides to return to Chinag Mai with Zain, with whom she has been romantically involved since her stay in Baan Sursee. They decide to start a new life there, but first Zain who has overstayed his visa in Thailand, must return home to Malaysia and face his own demons. Lousie bids him adieu, eager to see him in two weeks' time and looking forward to her new life with him. Within days of his leaving, however, news arrives of Zain's brutal death and Lousie finds herself once again where she had started – on the banks of the Ping River, grieving the loss of another lover and wondering whether it is time to end her own miserable life...

About the Author

Tunku Halim, known to be among Thailand's top 10 authors, has lived in the UK, Australia, the Philippines, Thailand and Malaysia. He has lived in the UK, Australia, the Philippines, Thailand and Malaysia. He worked as Legal Counsel for a global IT company before turning to writing. Twenty books later, he is dubbed Asia's Steven King. By delving into Malay myth, legends and folklore, his writing is regarded as 'World Gothic'. His novel, *Dark Demon Rising*, was nominated for the 1999 International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award whilst his second novel, *Vermillion Eye*, was used as a study text in The National University of Singapore's Language and Literature course. His short story won first prize in a 1998 Fellowship of Australian Writers competition. In Malaysia, he has had three consecutive wins in Malaysia's Star-Popular Readers' Choice Awards between 2015 and 2017.

Some praise for the author

'Malaysia's most prolific horror fiction writer'

-The vibes.com

'A Malaysian with an undeniable gift for the narrative' and 'Prince of Darkness'

-New Straits Times

'He's really the leading figure in what's known as Malaysian Gothic literature. And it's not only that he's part of popular culture, and such a suave gentleman, but he does push the genre into humour and satire and draws so well on the curses and cures of the *bomoh*, our medicine man, who is so intrinsic to Malay society.'

- Professor Malachi Edwin Vethamani, Head of the English Department at the Malaysian branch of Nottingham University in Nikkei Asia

Tunku Halim's Blog:

<https://tunkuhalim.wordpress.com/>

In the Press and media

<https://www.straitstimes.com/lifestyle/arts/stephen-king-of-malaysia-tunku-halim-will-talk-about-horror-writing-at-at-singapore>

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<https://www.nst.com.my/lifestyle/sunday-vibes/2022/12/861889/more-dark-ales-tunku-halim-malaysians-very-own-prince-horror>

-New Straits Times

<https://asia.nikkei.com/Life-Arts/Arts/Malaysian-horror-writer-screams-from-the-shadows>

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<https://www.thestar.com.my/lifestyle/culture/2022/12/18/how-the-pandemic-and-penang-inspired-tunku-halim039s-new-horror-collection>

-*The Star*

<https://apex-magazine.com/interviews-2/interview-with-tunku-halim/>

-*The Apex Magazine*

<https://www.melisten.sg/podcast/playlist/Page-Turners-488631/When-Malaysia-s-%22Prince-of-Darkness%22-is-really-a-prince---a-chat-with-Tunku-Halim-1681906>

-*Page Turners, Podcast*

Once Upon a Summer

by

Manjul Bajaj

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About the book

The book opens in New York in the year 1959. Publisher Alfred A. Allys is pondering over how the publishing industry has changed post World War II. Alfred has recently lost his wife and business partner Rose. He reminisces about the past, of how he and his wife had met on a voyage from Lisbon to America in the year 1907 and married after a whirlwind shipboard romance. Alfred, or Alfred Ashgar Ali as he was known then, hailed from a princely state in India while Rose Eliot was a British governess heading towards New York to work for a wealthy American family. Alfred's thoughts go back to a boy called Azeem to whom he is deeply indebted in some way.

The second section of the book is set in the princely state of Rannpur in India. A young boy named Azeem is rudely plucked out of his happy and indulged childhood as a wealthy nobleman's son. He becomes an orphan and is sent to a charitable school for poor boys. After a few hard years at school, he gets a job as an apprentice clerk at the Royal Library in Rannpur. Restless with his lot, Azeem decides to leave Rannpur and seek his fortune at a horse breeding station in British India.

Section three of the book tells the story of the family of Norman Evans, a British Engineer stationed in Jaunpur, a small town in India in 1906. His daughter Madeline and wife Martha set sail from Southampton to India to spend a year with Norman, after which Madeline is to attend college at Oxford. Madeline is a gifted girl who knows six languages and is very eager to travel to India. Martha is a schoolteacher, a suffragette, and a very proud mother. On the ship, they meet Rose Eliot, a girl who has spent her childhood in India. Madeline and Rose become friends and Rose teaches her Hindustani. On reaching Jaunpur, Madeline becomes friendly with her Indian maid Mariam. Martha, on the other hand, finds it very difficult to adjust to the colonial way of life and the approaching summer season. Norman decides to move with the family to Nainital, a hill station popular with the British, to escape the heat. In section four, Azeem has become a horse trainer at a British Army Depot for breeding horses. He is now an accomplished horseman. He travels to different parts of the colony as part of an equestrian gymnast team performing for the Prince and Princess of Wales touring through India. He still loves books and is obsessed with a book called *Umrao Jaan Ada*, India's first novel.

In the next section, the publisher Alfred A. Allys is dreading the imminent holiday season, his first Christmas since Rose's death. His family is determined to celebrate the occasion as per her wishes. His granddaughter Serena comes to help him with wrapping the Christmas gifts Rose had been putting away for each member of the family. The gift Rose has left for Serena is an envelope with two very old books, a school atlas with Madeline Evans' name on it and a novel in an alien script, that had belonged to Azeem.

In section six, the Evans family arrives in Nainital and is enchanted by it. Norman is heading a survey team to advise the flood and landslide-prone mountain town on averting future disasters.

He is assigned an able team of two horse grooms to assist him. Martha enjoys being in Nainital and gets involved with the local library and girls' convent. Madeline develops a crush on her father's Indian horse groom, Azeem. She embarks on a project to teach him English with the maid Mariam's help. The two young people are drawn to each other and end up spending a lot of time together. The maid Mariam, realising the danger in this situation advises Norman to send Azeem away.

The next section explores Azeem's thoughts and his growing love for Madeline. The lovers meet in secret and Azeem promises to visit Madeline in Jaunpur, where the Evans family is headed next.

Section eight is set in New York in the year 1990. Serena Walker, granddaughter of the founders of AAA publishing, Alfred and Rose Allyn, has just tendered her resignation from the erstwhile family-owned firm after a path-breaking career spanning twenty-five years. The firm is now part of a corporate conglomerate and Serena has creative differences with the top management. She also reminisces about her failed marriage with Ben and how she has not seen her son Arthur through his growing years, having surrendered custody to Ben and his second wife.

The next section starts with the Evans family back in Jaunpur and enjoying the onset of the pleasant and busy winter season. A grand Christmas party is planned at the Evans' home and the maid Mariam is overseeing the arrangements. The day of the party is eagerly anticipated by Norman as he gets ready to celebrate Christmas with his family in India for the first time. Madeline is also excited as she is secretly hoping to meet Azeem again. Madeline disappears on the afternoon of the party. She is missed as evening sets in, and a worried Norman goes out to look for her with a party of policemen. She is found trysting with Azeem in the ruins by the river. Norman shoots Azeem in the leg and the boy is arrested. Madeline remains stubborn in her devotion to Azeem, and she is put under house arrest while Azeem is posted far away to a regiment in the cold desert region of Baluchistan. The relations within the Evans family reach an impasse as Norman, Martha and Madeline stop speaking to each other. Finally, Madeline convinces Mariam to help her send a telegram to Azeem, communicating the details of her journey back to England.

Section ten follows Azeem as he is deported out of India and sent to the cold desert of Baluchistan. Here, at the military camp, his commanding officer, an Anglo-Indian nobleman named Alfred Asghar Ali takes him under his wing. Azeem receives a telegram from Madeline and plots to meet her in Aden. Alfred turns a sympathetic blind eye allowing Azeem to steal his identity papers and horse. Azeem assumes Alfred's name and after an adventurous journey reaches Aden. Madeline jumps ship at Aden. The lovers travel to Alexandria and from there to Lisbon. Madeline gets false travel papers to avoid being traced and takes Rose Eliot's name as her own. The couple travel to New York, as Alfred and Rose, pretending they are strangers to each other. They are resolved to make a new beginning on a new continent, their life a story they will tell together.

The last section of the story is set in Los Angeles in 2015. Serena Walker is now Serena Streep. Aged 75, she is a senior actress and film star. Serena has just been contacted by Tara, her son Arthur's daughter, who is determined to reclaim her grandmother back into the family fold. Serena first resists and then gives in to Tara's wishes. Serena and Tara revisit family history and the story of Azeem and Madeline. Tara goes on to make a film on the story of this runaway romance.



About the Author

Manjul Bajaj worked in the field of environment and rural development before she became a writer. She is the author of *Come, Before Evening Falls* (2010) and *Another Man's Wife* (2012), *In Search of Heer* (2019) and *The Book of Bullab* (2024). She has also written two books for children— *Elbie's Quest* (2013) and *Nargisa's Adventures* (2016).

Awards and Recognition

Come, Before Evening Falls (Shortlisted for The Hindu Literary Prize 2010)

Another Man's Wife (shortlisted for The Hindu Literary Prize 2013)

In Search of Heer (listed for the JCB Literature Prize 2020, The Matrubhumi Book of The Year 2020, The Times of India Women Author Award 2020, the Atta Galatta Bangalore Literature Prize 2020)

Optioned for screen adaptation by a leading production house in India.

CACHE '22

by

France Pinzon

An archaeologist... A boy... Some hundred-year-old letters....

In the year 2122, Issa Lagman, a down-in-the-dumps sixty-year-old archaeologist, breaks into an old, partially burned-down library despite an impending snowstorm. She has until the end of the day to deliver, in order to survive for the next six months.

Now more than ever, Issa contemplates her entire career...her life. The world has relied heavily on artificial intelligence and augmented reality in recent decades, climate change has irreparably altered the Earth and its population has steadily dwindled due to cataclysmic birth rates—what relevant contribution can she still make at this point?

In the middle of her unlawful dig, Issa encounters a mysterious boy, holding a black dossier in his hand and refusing to talk. Despite her initial reluctance, Issa finds herself intrigued by the mute boy's real identity and his connection with the dossier which turns out to be a time capsule of old typewritten letters from a hundred years ago. Issa must now make a choice between making quick bucks or uncovering the truth about the century-old anecdotes, which can spell the child's future and hers.

Cache '22 is a thought-provoking yet sentimental story that implores us to stay in close contact with our past so we can move forward.

The inspiration behind *Cache '22*:

What started out as France Pinzon's personal project to initiate more interaction with other typewriter enthusiasts like herself, turned into an adventure novella that celebrates the love for simpler times.

France created book about typewritten letters which she invited her followers to be part of.

She invited people to write typewritten letters to be read in a hundred years time, posing the following questions:

If you had the chance to say something to your hypothetical future great-great-grandkids, what would you tell them?

Would you narrate your journey to adulthood, share your recent proud moment, and/or talk about your current favorite typewriter?

Would you tell them your frustrations or focus on your biggest dreams? Would you mention the weather or describe your ideal date?

You could talk to them about anything, as long as you write authentically about your own feelings. The project is not going to pretend to be a know-it-all. It only wishes to add to the typewriter resurgence in the last decade by perpetuating raw outcomes of the typewriting experience. That we contributed, for starters, something as insightful as communicating from our own 21st-century perspective, through mechanically impressed thoughts on paper, as our forebears did many decades ago. Being human is feeling a sense of obligation to keep certain traditions so the memory does not die with us. After all, we are guilty of being admirers of a forgotten instrument and now it is time typewriter fans keep typewriting alive.

(For more information, visit: <https://sites.google.com/view/typewrittentoday/project-background>)

About the Typewriter Community:

In recent decades, the typewriter community has grown exponentially. Thanks in part to the Internet, collectors, writers, poets and hobbyists from around the world who have banded together to keep the culture alive through various means—from books to type-in events, impromptu poetry, and even typewriter art.

Antique Typewriter Collectors, a prominent group on Facebook with over 22,000 members, remains active by sharing their typewriting collecting pursuits on a daily basis. Meanwhile, the Hollywood actor Tom Hanks, who currently is currently the most famous typewriter enthusiast, has become the official ambassador of this community, pulling in his own weight with his typewriter app, called Hanx Writer, as well as publishing *Uncommon Type*, a collection of short stories dedicated to typewriters. Other prominent figures in the "typosphere" include college professor Dr. Richard Polt, artist James Cook, and novelist Danielle Steel.

The typewriter community might not be as large as other pop culture fanbases today, but we are just as dedicated to our craft as any other. In a way, *Cache '22* is a celebration of this community and the activity we all love—discovering a hopeful world conjured up by the staccato beat of metal keys striking paper.

About the Author:

Born and raised in Manila, Philippines, France Pinzon was a magazine writer and editor in the Philippines for multiple titles for fifteen years, before shifting industries in 2018 to provide marketing services for small businesses in Singapore, Malaysia, the United Arab Emirates, and the Philippines. Now, she is back to her first love: writing, determined to bring the Filipina voice into the mainstream stage through her stories. She is currently based in Southeast Asia.

Instagram: @francepinzoned

SHOWA

by

Roger Pulvers

(Genre: mystery thriller)

(approx. 187,000 words – three parts)

World rights available

Synopsis:

Written in three parts, SHOWA traces the broad sweep of history over the more than sixty years of Japan's turbulent and earth-shattering era of Showa—1926 to 1989.

Living through this era are three generations of the Kato family. Kato Mamoru, a policeman in Kyoto who uncovers a heinous crime in the highest echelons of power ... his daughter Akiko, who strives to maintain a sense of justice during and after a brutal war ... and his grandson Kazuo, a radical university student who becomes a corrupt businessman in the Post War era that saw Japan rival the United States in economic power.

Many other major characters figure in this modern historical trilogy, a stunning portrait—with political intrigue, crime and romantic love—of the era that shaped modern Japan

Book 1 – Sparks from the Sun

太陽の火花

ロジャー・パルバーズ

On the night in November 1928 that the young Emperor Hirohito is transformed in his Empowerment Ceremony in Kyoto from a man to a God, six-year-old Watanabe Saeko is brutally murdered in a field not far away. The murderers are two young boys—brothers—whose father is a prominent official in the Imperial Household Ministry. The crime is blamed on the dead girl's father, a leftist, who, despite his solid alibi, is arrested.

The story follows a young Police Inspector, Kato Mamoru who in his quest to identify the real killers finds himself drawn into a dark world of political intrigue, involving powerful entrepreneurs and radical agitators. Kato finds his search for justice thwarted at every step. Meanwhile, three romances blossom amid the heightening social tensions. *Sparks from the Sun* is set against a backdrop of turmoil, as democracy is slowly crushed at home, whilst Japan builds an empire in Asia that will eventually lead to the loss of millions of innocent lives.

But who will take responsibility for the crimes committed in the World War that forever marked this era known as 'Showa' ... or 'Radiant Peace'?

Book 2 – Whirlpool of Fire

火の渦巻き

Whirlpool of Fire takes up the story of this tumultuous era in 1931 and courses through the war years to 1955 when the Japanese government proclaims the Post War era over.

The sweep of this second volume introduces many new characters. It takes us through the assassination of prominent Japanese politicians in 1936, the battlefield of war and the Post-War chaos after the carpet bombing of Tokyo. But the major focus is on the stories of the characters who fight against repression as well as those who commit crimes as part of what they consider their ‘patriotic duty.’

The story of a new family, the Ogawas, is a key part of the narrative of this volume. The father, a journalist, is murdered, and his daughter takes it upon herself to pursue the killer. She is also on the track of the people who killed a young Korean girl forced to work in a brothel. The trail of both crimes leads to Wada and Araki, both now making a fortune from lucrative contracts with the Japanese military in China.

Meanwhile, we find Kato Mamoru living in Tokyo after the War. His wife has died of cancer, leaving him alone to bring up their daughter, Akiko. They have taken in a repatriated soldier, Shigeo, found starving on the street. It isn’t long before a romance buds between Akiko and Shigeo. Mamoru meanwhile is working for the American occupiers, managing clubs for GIs, but at the same time providing information on troop movements to the Japan Communist Party.

Caught up in the sweep of history, the lives of these disparate people, determined to settle old scores, come together in Tokyo in 1948 in a thrilling and dramatic conclusion.

The story of how Japan buried responsibility for its wartime crimes and started on the road to becoming an economic superpower forms the backdrop for the narrative of *Whirlpool of Fire*.

Book 3- The Unravelling Scroll

紐解かれる巻物

The unravelling Scroll covers the final years of the Showa era 1956-1989. The very same elites who controlled Japan before the War are back in power. But who is behind the phrase ‘Make Japan Great Again!’?

In 1968 medical students at the University of Tokyo are rioting. Among them is Mashimo Kazuo, the son of Akiko and Shigeo. During the riots Kazuo meets fellow student protestor Kazuko, and the two fall in love. Both are aspiring doctors, but as Japan surges towards its target of over-taking the GDP of the United States, Kazuo decides to quit his medical studies and enter the burgeoning real estate business.

The ensuing decades are a period of rapid growth. Corruption in government and business is rampant. Kazuo, now married to Kazuko, has become rich. One night he encounters a beautiful woman in a night club and falls head over heels in love.

The identity of this woman and how she brings together these and many other characters from Japan’s booming years of Showa, forms the intriguing story of this third and final portrait of the most turbulent and dramatic era in Japan’s modern history.

Historical note – The Showa Era, Japan:

The Showa – or Radiant Peace – spanned the years from 1926 to 1989 and was the most dramatic and tumultuous period in Japan’s modern history. It corresponded with the reign of Emperor Hirohito. Earlier in the century Japan had already embarked on the establishment of an Empire, occupying Taiwan and Korea. But in the 1930s the Japanese military, with the full cooperation of the country’s largest corporations reached into China.

At home, the repression of all progressive forces was in full swing. The first years of Showa are thrown into stark relief in Roger Pulvers’ *SHOWA*. It is then that the rule of law was eroded, and the freedoms enjoyed in previous eras were curtailed. It was also during these few years that the stage was set for Japanese aggression and the war in the Pacific.

About the Author:



Roger Pulvers is an acclaimed author, playwright, theatre and film director, translator, and journalist. Born in America, he has lived and worked all over the world, including many years spent in Japan. He now lives in Australia. He has published more than fifty books in Japanese and English, including novels such as *The Death of Urashima Taro* (Angus & Robertson, 1981), *General Yamashita’s Treasure* (Harper Collins, 1993), *Star Sand* (Amazon Crossing, 2016), *Liv* (Balestier Press, 2018) and *The Dream of Lafcadio Hearn* (Kurodahan Press, 2010, Balestier Press, 2019).

In 2017 the feature film of *Star Sand*, written and directed by him, had wide release throughout Japan. His two memoirs—*My Japan: a cultural memoir* (Balestier Press, 2020) and *The Unmaking of an American* (Balestier Press, 2019)—have been praised as forming a unique record of cultural life in Japan in the past fifty years.

Roger has worked extensively in film, television, and theatre. He was assistant to director Nagisa Oshima on the film *Merry Christmas, Mr. Lawrence*, starring David Bowie, Tom Conti and Ryuichi Sakamoto. He also co-wrote the script for the Japanese film *Ashita e no Yuigon* (Best Wishes for Tomorrow), for which he won the Crystal Simorgh Prize for Best Script at the 27th Fajr International Film Festival in Tehran.

Roger was awarded the prestigious Miyazawa Kenji Prize in 2008 and the Noma Award for the Translation of Japanese Literature in 2013; in 2018, Japan’s highest honor, the Order of the Rising Sun; and in 2019, the Order of Australia. Over the past fifty years he has translated prose, drama, and poetry from Japanese, Russian and Polish.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roger_Pulvers

Press/Reviews:

Praise for *Liv*:

"LIV is a gripping mystery, of a present haunted by the past, but also a profoundly moral book, asking of the reader: what would you do? In this, LIV deserves comparison with novels as great as An Artist of the Floating World by Kazuo Ishiguro and The Reader by Bernhard Schlink."—**David Peace, author of Tokyo Year Zero**

Praise for the Japanese edition of *Star Sand*:

"The beautiful image of star sand in this novel rises up from the depths of history and deeply touches the hearts of readers." **The Toyko Shimibun**

"This novel is a masterpiece of the highest order with its radiant messages sent from the tragic past of Okinawa and beautiful star sand by a 'genius who overcomes borders' who has lived his life between Japan and the United States".
University Tokyo Professor and author, Mitsuyoshi Numano

"This work is extremely dramatic, and what underlies the drama is a worldview based on multicultural tolerance. At the end, that dramatic stage is brilliantly turned topsy turvy. This is just the sort of stylistic tour de force that can be achieved in the genre of the novel." **Bungakukai Magazine**

"Star Sand is a very fine work of fiction that I recommend to middle and high school students. It brilliantly links the story of the American and Japanese deserters with that of a female university student today." **Minako Saito, Asahi Shimibun**

"Roger has found an air pocket that we Japanese never noticed." **Hisashi Inoue, author of Tokyo Seven Roses**

Praise for 'My Japan':

"Roger Pulvers' life reads like an adventure story. His recollections of life in Japan in the 1960s are bound to become part of Japan's national heritage."

Composer/musician Ryuichi Sakamoto

"This book is a delight. Few Japanese intellectuals have absorbed Japanese culture to the extent that Pulvers has. If there were no Pulvers, Japan would be a much less interesting country!" **Author/editor Seigo Matusoka**

Praise for 'The Honey and the Fires':

'Every story is witty, beautifully written and encourages deep thought. Race out and buy this truly beautiful book.'
INSIGHTS, magazine of the Uniting Church of Australia

'Open-hearted parables that reflect today's world' **Tokyo Shinbun**

'Extraordinarily fascinating tales that transcend time' **BRIO magazine**
'Brimming with a gentle gaze on the individual yet having a wide vision ... resoundingly powerful.' **SHUKAN ASAHI, (mass circulation weekly magazine.)**

The Scent of Fallen Stars

by

Aishwarya Jha

About the book

A scholarly loner and a musical prodigy come to India for answers, over twenty years apart...

In 1995, thirty-six-year-old Will arrives in newly liberalized India. Smarting from the collapse of his academic dreams, he finds little fulfilment in his well-paying telecommunications job or the social confines of New Delhi's expat community.

One monsoon night, he encounters young, enigmatic Leela, who blazes into his world and unleashes a storm of passion and devastation that will alter it forever.

Twenty-three years later, Aria lands in the city on a quest to find the mother whom she believed to be dead. Estranged from her convalescing father, her journey leads her to unravel the mysteries of her parents' story and her mother's life—from her childhood in an orphanage to a doomed love affair and finally, the remote shores of asceticism.

As she searches for answers and a sense of belonging, Aria stumbles upon lost worlds, haunting memories, and the explosive secret that torpedoed her father's life, the reverberations of which will be cataclysmic for her own.

About the author

Aishwarya Jha is an award-winning author, designer and entrepreneur from New Delhi. Her



debut novel, *The Scent of Fallen Stars*, was published by Penguin Random House in April 2024, garnering considerable critical and commercial acclaim, and earning her the prestigious Ram Nath Goenka Sahitya Samman for Fiction. She has been or is scheduled to be a speaker at multiple high-profile events, including the Jaipur Literature Festival, the Alliance Literary Festival, The Write Circle (hosted by the Prabha Khaitan Foundation) and FICCI Flo Fest.

Previously, Aishwarya's writing has appeared in several literary journals as well as a digital anthology at Oxford University. She is a

mentee at the Asian Women Writers programme.

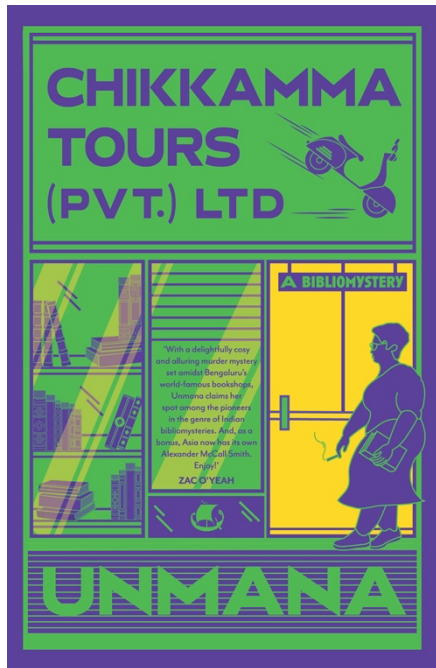
Aishwarya has also won numerous accolades in the world of theatre as an actor and director, and as a writer of award-winning one-act plays, many of which have performed in cities around the world in addition to being taught at workshops. Aside from her creative pursuits, she has worked extensively in the fields of beauty, wellness, luxury brands, events & interior design. Most recently, she co-founded Indophile, a venture focused on developing unique cultural experiences.

CHIKKAMMA TOURS (PVT.) LTD

by

Unmana

ABOUT THE BOOK



When the owner of the bookshop above Chikkamma Tours gets stabbed to death in the building, grumpy, book-obsessed, wise-cracking, whisky-drinking Nilima jumps at the opportunity to play amateur detective. What's more, it seems like the perfect excuse to get close to her alluring boss Shwetha. But to successfully investigate the murder, Nilima also needs to learn to work with her annoying colleague Poorna and with Inspector Sharmila Lamani, who is in a relationship with Nilima's ex-girlfriend.

Braving the incessant rain, a local gangster and sundry other shady characters, as well as the police, who seem intent on charging an innocent man, Nilima, Shwetha and Poorna are soon hot on the trail of the murderer. A deliciously bookish mystery set in Bengaluru, *Chikkamma Tours (Pvt.) Ltd* is the very best kind of cosy novel, featuring wry humour, keen observations of city life and a cast of colourful characters.

“With a delightfully cosy and alluring murder mystery set amidst Bengaluru’s world-famous bookshops, Unmana claims her spot among the pioneers in the genre of Indian bibliomysteries. And, as a bonus, Asia now has its own Alexander McCall-Smith. Enjoy!”

- Zac O’Yeah

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Unmana lives in Mumbai with their husband. Their novel *Chikkamma Tours (Pvt.) Ltd*, published in India by Westland Books in 2024, is a bibliomystery set in Bengaluru that features India's first fictional queer detective.

Unmana's short stories have been nominated for the Best of the Net and the Deodar Prize. Their work has been anthologised in *Funeral for a Demon and Other Short Stories* and *Skin Stories: Essays on Sexuality, Disability and Gender*, and has appeared or is forthcoming in Scroll, The Roanoke Review, The West Trestle Review, In Plainspeak and The Ladies Finger. They are on Twitter [@Unmana](#) and on Instagram [@unmana_bombay](#).

Reviews

"Its richly drawn descriptions, lively characters, and gripping mystery make it a novel that lingers in your mind." – [Scroll.in](#)

"Hopefully, this is just the first instalment in a long-running series. The Chikkamma gang need to keep solving murders in many more future books." – [The Hindustan Times](#)

BONNIE BAKER IS HAVING A PANIC ATTACK

by

Maán Jalal

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About the Book

Bonnie Baker is an Arab millennial who hates her job as a junior associate at one of London's most prestigious law firms. She prefers fashion, is passionate about baking, loves pop culture and has a particular Britney Spears obsession.

Bonnie also suffers from panic attacks. It all started when her now-ex fiancé cheated with She Who Shall Not Be Named—a person and situation she refuses to think about. Bonnie tries to move on by attempting to bake the most perfect pistachio cake for her baking group which she documents on her blog. But it's more difficult than she imagined with panic attacks getting in the way, her hilariously inappropriate grandmother trying to set her up, her perfect sister acting erratically, and friends harbouring secrets. And of course, snobby, snarky, sneaky D4, the partner at her law firm who wants Bonnie fired... or does he?

Bonnie soon understands that to get the recipe for life (and the perfect pistachio cake) just right, she'll need to stop making a complete fool of herself and face some harsh truths about her past and herself.

This irreverent and intensely relatable adaptation of Bridget Jones's Diary also indirectly plays on Pride and Prejudice in a bright and snarky way by weaving in Britney Spears lyrics and pop culture references.

Bonnie Baker Sequel: Bonnie Baker is Literally Losing her Mind

Bonnie Baker is living out her perfect happily ever after. She has the perfect man, is launching her perfect business, and is posting perfect snippets of her perfect life on social media. So why can't she breathe when everything is supposed to be absolutely, wonderfully, picturesquely perfect?

Because... it isn't.

After months of ghosting them, Bonnie's panic attacks are back with a vengeance. It's a total mystery! Or is it? Bonnie's best friends, Amal, Dana, and Rania should be happy for her, yet Bonnie feels judged and unsupported by them. Bonnie's ex-best friends are also complicating her life. Ahmed is galivanting across the world, seldom replying to her and seems not to care about their lost friendship. There's also She Who Shall Not Be Named whom Bonnie refuses to think about. This impossible since the best friend who broke Bonnie's heart is now officially famous, and literally everywhere. Then there's her boyfriend, best friend, the love of her life. Wonderful, amazing, intelligent D4 is practically

perfect in every way... until Bonnie discovers his deal breaker, his strangest, saddest, secret.

And now, nothing makes sense.

At least Dana's epic, extravaganza wedding in Dubai is the perfect distraction. From chic parties, amazing fashion, delectable food, to the beautiful desert, Dubai is offering Bonnie what she never knew she needed. Including, handsome, wholesome Saif, an old high school flame who is helping her make sense of her life while also complicating it. Bonnie's only source of refuge is writing in her blog and her interactions with one of her readers - the funny, profound and mysterious Mr. M who desperately wants to meet Bonnie. Between trying to make her baking business go viral with a new perfect desert, avoiding telling her parents that she's no longer a lawyer, Bibi trying to match her with eligible bachelors, and blaming everything on Oprah Winfrey (yes, that Oprah) Bonnie Baker is literally losing her mind.

About the Author

Maán Jalal is a writer of mixed Arab heritage who grew up between Auckland, New Zealand and Dubai, UAE where he is now based. He has spent a lot of time in the UK visiting family and friends. For the last decade he has worked as a journalist covering arts, culture and entertainment regionally and internationally for the Middle East. His work has been featured in many national and international publications. His writing has also been published in Anthologies such as The Fish Anthology where he was selected as a winner of their Short Memoir Prize in 2020. Maán holds a Masters in Creative Writing from the University of Auckland where he spent a year interviewing survivors of the 1991 Iraq Gulf War. He also co-founded and launched The Arab Edition a volunteer online portal which covers stories from Arabs across the world. A manic bibliophile, obsessive reader and lover all forms of media from art history, classic films, romantic comedies, and a fascination (that some may deem unhealthy) with reality television.



Apart from writing fiction and non-fiction about love, war, humour, identity and the immigrant experience, Maán delves into the many facets of contemporary pop culture as well as the books he's fanatical about and currently reading on his Instagram account and website www.maanjalal.com.

Bonnie Baker Is Having A Panic Attack will be Maán Jalal's debut novel.



JACARANDA
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