

Thailand

John Says This

About Being Inside the DR Congo

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Sent: Saturday, August 24, 2002 5:13 PM

Subject: all quiet on the eastern front



I could start this by telling you about the crazy, beautiful, polluted river that is the heartbeat of bangkok. or I could tell you about the two hours I spent wandering the labyrinth of the back streets trying to find a guest house that had been recommended as a must stay. or a few accounts of the inevitable near misses with motorcycles and tuk tuks could give you a bit of an insight into the first few steps into this place. no matter how much you prepare for arrival in places like this, it still hits you, well, like it hit me. the best way to start this is to tell you about my first three steps outside the airport. you see I had been in airports or airplanes for about 35 hours-preconditioned, sterilized air. then I had to get moving to catch a train into the city. bamm, whap, biff (just like a bad episode of batman) I got hit by two things at once: an amazing, haunting smell that is thailand-and right away I remembered that from 20 years ago; at the same time was the immediate feeling of being surrounded, choked and tackled by the hot humid air that feels more like it breaths you than you breathing it. anyways, in one moment I knew exactly where I was. sometimes on the road you have to use that energy to keep your feet moving. the train ride was a sauna with bad air: kind of an initiation into a new world where none of the signs make any sense, where people genuinely smile while speaking a language which seems more foreign than klingon or ferengi, and where traffic moves on the left (something I had forgotten, but quickly remembered just in time). quests always make travel more interesting and eventful. my quest



Bangkok

yesterday was to find an obscure (and I now have a deeper appreciation of the word "obscure")

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guest house. I had several hours of daylight left and more or less used them up in the back streets where every form of human activity has set up camp in a space the size of your closet (the small one with just enough room for a couple of towels, a washcloth and your vacuum cleaner). my cousin tim (who had lived in this place for a couple of years and who will be my tour guide on a visit here next week) said the river view guest house is the place to stay. fortunately I trusted his judgment because it is. guest house it is not; but like many things that are not properly named, it has a quality that supersedes an inappropriate moniker. it is an eight storey hotel that indeed overlooks bangkok's great river. I'm on the sixth floor, which is great because it creates a space to soften the noises of the river and the street. and there's a restaurant on the top floor that gives a view of everything you need to see and a few things you don't. all this for about twelve bucks a night. it pays off to trust those who have been further out in the field than you have, and indeed tim has been out there. I thought i'd write a few notes before I get lost again in the puzzling back streets. the idea of getting a few large balls of string did cross my mind, but then I realized that the huge number of dogs and cats in the labyrinth would quickly readjust my lifeline into an enigma inside a riddle. my main problem is one I had forgotten about. while I am over on this side of the planet, to me east seems west. I'm working on it. once again, I'll sign off by saying "everybody loves somebody sometime."

Sent: Sunday, August 25, 2002 4:22 AM



before I tell you of the bust by none other than the Thai fashion police I have to offer you some options. you see, these are my notes of this trip and whether or not you want to be confronted

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by these thoughts is your choice: "if you want to delete, press 1; if you want this translated into thai or Swahili, press 2; if you want to receive travel reports from real travel writers, such as paul thereoux, or bill bryson, press 3; if you want to continue, well then just continue..."

right now I'm sitting in the calm before the storm. one thing I learned (and then have relearned several times) is that when arriving at a strange country it's best to relax for a few days, get into the flow, then set out to see what it is you expect to see. as one of my friends quipped, "no hurry, no worry, no sorry." perhaps the best travel advice ever given. so these days are my days of no worry, no hurry. the road show will start soon enough.

and speaking of road shows, I can tell you of one that just about ended my days, today I was a half step from oblivion, taking the good from the bad, I have developed a new theory from this experience. it is the concept that each of us should instill in ourselves an "assumption alarm." that's right, you heard it right, an "assumption alarm." you see, I made an assumption (a simple one and justifiable given the circumstances, but wrong nonetheless). the "assumption alarm" would be a little ringy dinky thing that goes off in your mind to remind you that you are making an assumption. what I realized today is that I had made an assumption without actually thinking about what peril might lie in making that assumption. hell, I hadn't even realized I had made an assumption. what I figure each of us should do is preprogram our mind to send us a signal when we make an assumption. then, we can think for a second to reassess the scenario, and perhaps even save our lives in the process. we get our cell phones to ring such absurd tunes as vivaldi's four seasons in stacatto electronic biorhythms, so we should be able to tell our brains to at least go "ding,"



the scenario is this; I'm on one of the endless busy street corners in bangkok; to the left is a one-way street with six lanes; to my right is the same six lane street; I look to the right and see no vehicles coming; I make the assumption that the street to my right continues the one-way going from my left to right (wrong); I watch the traffic to my left come to a stop and figure I'm safe to

step out and start to do so--'boewifaoilajfi' is what ii hear from the bus thats speeding down the lane I'm stepping into (traffic's on the left.. I keeu fcraettino); it turns out that some traffic control

genius has designed a street that has five lanes going one way, but one going the other. the other lane was the curb lane that I assumed I could step out into, half a step more and I would have been a thai patty. anyways, enough of my theorizing. but before I leave this thought, I should pass on to you another bit of shrewd travel advice: "if its bigger than you, or harder than you, then it has the right of way." so now to the feature presentation. the foolish tale of me being busted by fashion police.

sometimes its pleasant to visit the posh hotels, if for no other reason to use their washrooms. in this instance, I had heard that the hotel in question had a cigar shop worth sniffing. on my way up the elaborate walkway and wearing my usual logo-impressed, high action, ready for anything (except this) gear, I strolled anticipatngly up to the hotel. but no. an officer wearing full fashion police regalia, which includes epaulettes and other such militaria to instill an immediate fear in anyone not fashionably equipped, says to me "no go here." that's it. that's all he said. I guess the fashion police have an hemingway type of vocabulary simply because they're so damn well dressed. then he pointed to a sign that immediately showed that I was in breach of not one but two parts of the fashion police code: I had short pants and I was wearing "not closed toe shoes." that was it. I was busted. I didn'thave time to see if the statute on fashion had any clauses about wearing obvious corporate logos, but I assume that there were. I had to go. no choice. either that, or risk immediate arrest for wearing sandals and shorts in a no sandal/short zone.

then I had time to reconsider all of this and suddenly... "zoink, bing..bangalooly" I remembered something I had learned some years ago while travelling in these parts. silk is the ultimate fabric. these new-fangled nike no drip products are good, but silk is the ultimate high ground. many times in my life I have suddenly realized that I have just relearned a lesson that I learned some time earlier. this is one of those times. it's always refreshing to relearn that "nature always wins." so what happened is this: I went out and replaced these high-tech, corporate--logoed bits with thai silk. so the advertisement would read something like this: two pair of silk boxer shorts: 200 baht two silk shirts (one floral pattern, one not): 500 baht one pair of silk pants (cargo style): 400 baht not having to wear corporate logos while cruising asia: priceless well that just about wraps it up for today. "everybody loves somebody sometime,"

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Sent: September 05, 2002 5:25 AM



this bit comes to you courtesy of the rainy season. indeed, during this time of year, in this particular place, when it rains, it pours. thus, instead of getting my new tag heuer watch wet in the rain, I am writing this to you. you see, in thailand everything is available for a price. I guess that's the same with your neck of the woods. the difference is that here the price is pretty low. back to the watch: I had an interview today with an accounting firm about doing some problem fixing for them (this is getting stranger isn't it?). and I figured that the cheapo scuba watch I wear wouldn't cut it. so just like that I got a high-end, extra-styling, and what would appear to be very expensive swiss watch. "everyone has their price bob, but yours was pretty low." that's the way it works in the streets of bangkok. for \$15 I got what looks like a real tag heuer; but unlike the well-built original (which says the wearer can take it down 200 feet under water), this one (I suspect) won't take a moderate to severe pelting of rain. as a result, I'm stuck in this internet joint making up stuff until the rain stops. by the way, safe scuba diving says that you shouldn't go below 130 feet. so I wonder why they make a watch that taunts you by saying it can go to 200 feet, while you are wimping out at 130. just like cars, I guess, that have speedometers that say "I can go really fast, but you're clearly not up to it."

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just about forgot about the title of this bit, since I got so carried away with explaining the watch thing--once a logoman, always a logoman, I say. this city has so many fakes for sale, you can't tell what is real.



I have realized that I have two great fears in this town and they are real. the first is a fear of falling into one of the nasty, fetid canals. pollution probe or greenpeace clearly haven't visited this city. grey water is the most vile of all human creations, I figure. can't imagine what a swim in that muck would do to my watch. the other fear is of meeting what appears to be an attractive woman, only to find out that indeed I have met another fake. "not that there's anything wrong with that." it's just the surprise of the whole thing that I fear, I guess. apparently the fake woman business is as booming as the fake watch and other desirables business. it's still raining, so I guess I'll have to explain the title. kept my feet moving for a few days getting cambodia and vietnam visas. anyone who thinks travelling is always a breeze oughta try walking the streets of bangkok while dodging traffic for a few days, I've seen perilous and have even been in it a few times, but these motorcycles that come out of nowhere are quite a novelty. met an accountant who is working on a big insolvency problem here and needs a problem fixer for awhile. seemed to be the right job at the right time, so I'm hoping it pans out. you gotta admire an accountant who's into the problems enough that he arrives with a couple of bodyguards. I may get the job and I may not, but I'll hang in bangkok long enough to find out. thus, I have the visas, but won't be travelling for awhile.

I'll let you know how long this tag heuer stays on my wrist. john

Sent: Saturday, September 21, 2002 10:31 AM

Subject: THEY ARRESTED THE SANDWICH MAN!



and that's how this whole thing starts: an oblique headline that notes a scuffle on the street between four bangkok police and the poor sandwich vendor, who hung on intensely to his tray of sandwiches in spite of the efforts of the Four to wrestle from him his sandwiches, which were intended for the many office workers scuttling (as I was) to their offices in the overblown financial district of bangkok, a city full of random enforcement of the law, a law, an unknown law that somehow allows police to arrest a mere sandwich vendor for peddling his wares to the hungry but paying crowds. with a few flashbacks to my meagre flays as a cub reporter and with a short deadline (which was the norm then) to finish this iii but a few minutes before this place closes, I have decided to see how long I can stretch a sentence (but keep grammar) and tell you a tale or two in a few brief dispatches with the various headlines I considered for this bit--obviously the sandwich man won (here he did, but not with the police).

GREYMAN, GREY SUITS, NON-JOB

the world of corporate sculduggery here in bangkok is rife with plots, counterplots and plots where they clearly forgot to hire a writer. everyday in the newspapers there's stories about corruption this and embezzlement that, for example, a good friend of mine described the difference between the army and police hierarchies this way: with the army, the generals are making big money through drug and weapon sales, along with other forms of obfuscation--and they benevolently pass down some of their loot to their troops: but with the police, its the opposite--the higher-ups demand that those below them pillage what they can and pass it up the line, thus, there's the not uncommon case of a police sergeant shooting his lieutenant, because the demands just got too great. the army has good morale. welcome to bargkook. in this mess I slip in, hired but not working until my "work permit" passes bureaucratic scrutiny, yet

there's work to do aplenty, but I'm not yet working--that's the official story (by the way I just heard a eeeeyyyyupppp, and I'm not making this up, which was the sound of a poor elephant making his beleaguered way down the street--to entertain the tourists), thus, when "not working" in bangkook, the best disguise is to grey cut in grey suits.

ULTIMATELY ENLIGHTENMENT IS TO LIGHTEN UP

that's not my quote, but one of our good friend lenny cohere, sent to me by my bangkook survival coach. not much to add to this headline, except to say that in spite of the serious realm I've put myself into, it seems the aussie blokes I'm "not working" with have seen this light.

BUDDHA'S HEAD GETS DELIVERED

no kidding, but some background first, there's now a major protest by buddhist monks in bangkook. they are doing a sit in at the parliamentary headquarters to insist that a new ministry should be formed: the ministry of buddhism and culture. the government says it should be called the ministry of religion and culture (so as not to rile other religions-malaysia and indonesia are islamic, by the way) hence the sit in (I figure those guys could be there for awhile), anyways, the grand poobah of monks here says about the sit in monks that they're behaving like a bunch of "dogs with scabies." he says that Buddhism is not secular and that the only ministry of buddhism is from buddha himself. further, the poobah says that the only ministry worth pursuing is the wisdom that comes through meditation. I think the poobah is a pretty schrewd tomale. but in the mean time, the news has it thattaiwanis sending back to china a 1300-year-old buddha head that was decapitated from a large statue in 1997. some "collector" paid for the job to be done, but somehow the taiwanese caught up to the fellow. I guess its hard to hide a large buddha head: you might try to disguise it as something, but what? I figure that the buddha may finally get his thoughts together now that's he'll have his head screwed on straight.

COW TONGUE HEALS MASSES

again, not much to add to this, except to say that folks in cambodia are flocking (herding) to a place where a reputed cow is reputedly healing people with a lick or two. I phoned mcdonalds executives for comment, but they refused any.

VAGABOND HITS A DUMMY

to call myself a vagabond anymore is really stretching it. I have gone from one pair of pants to seven (they sell suits here with two pairs and I bought two suits...) however, "vagabond" made for a better headline (the fuckin' elephant just walked by again, but this time he really gave me the "eefhfsodfosdifasd"). so the scoop is this. had to join a gym, just to survive the thick air of bangkook. my bangloop coach suggested that I join a high-end club, since the costs are not really costs. thus, I gots this great place to play in. muay thai (thai kick boxing) is popular amongst the clubbies, so there's lots of fight-training gizmos. my favourite feature is a punching dummy who I call jimmie. he is anatomically correct. don't worry, he's only "present" from the waist up. but he's weighted with water just like those bob-back, but never-fall-down clown punching bags we had as kids. except that jimmie is as heavy and the rubberized face and

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torso are as real as any thug I've met. he even has a Scowl on his face. I haven't been able to knock it off yet. don't get me wrong, I don't play with rubber dolls. however, jimie is a great teacher of targeting. you see, in spite of my grey suit and mild demeanour, I am playing in a field where targeting (both physical and philosophical) is massively important.

HOW TO BUY A SUIT AND MEET A SPOOK IN BANGKOOK

there are only tailor-made suits in bankloop. sure, you can score a designed-for-a-thai-physiology suit off the rack, but why? you see, there's this place where the american military dudes, senators and congressmen, ambassadors and even those grey, obscure characters who haunt the halls of important spook-central embassies such a bangkook all arrive at some time to get a tailor-made suit from a father and son team that have been doing this since the vietnam war. the other day, while not attending a meeting while I was not working, I had the chance to have an overview (from 20 stories up) of theu.s.embassy compound in bangloop. you might not know that the vietnam war was run, in large part, from that compound. it's still humming. back to buying a suit. one thing you notice about most thai stores is that there are huge amounts of staff. for example, in the clothing sections of department stores there are soooo many people working. how many, you say? there are so many that they each have their own section where all the shirts and pants are ironed, each person with with an individual ironing board. so the father and son team at raja's (almost all tailor's here are from india) has a show that is unbeatable: they have staff pulling bolts of cloth -high quality wool from england and italy for the suits and equally fine cotton for the shirts--just as you pick them out, while at the same time others slip a beer into your hand and others pin and cut the fabric you thought you might like, but alas have already just chosen since it has already been cut, slick, while all of this is happening you hear bits of conversation from "expats" that reflect an american overtone, unmistakably camouflaged in



Sent:

Subject: "IN THE YEAR 2545..."



doublespeak. overseeing this show are numerous photos and letters from the marines, senators, ambassadors, presidents (yes, billclintonhas his signed photo on the wall, and the bush family smugly smiles on the scene), these walls of memorabilia go back to the 60s and date to the present. bangkook was and remains spook central, if you don't believe me, then just watch the film version of john le carre's "the tailor ofPanama."

NO MORE HEADLINES

betting late in this town, so I'll just say thanks for tuning in, and don't forget, "everybody loves somebody sometime." -john

Do you remember that song from the 60s? went something like "in the year 2545, if man is still alive, if woman can survive...." well, we are and we did, at least here inthailand. that's right, the year here is indeed 2545. it's kinda weird reading legal documents dated 2545. even stranger is that the date is the only thing I can understand, since the rest is thai to me. why is this? well, they start their calendar 543 years before our "normal" calendar. there's lots of Buddhist spin to this culture and living in the future is just one of them. "I'm living in the future, and I'll tell you how I know. I read it in the papers fifteen years ago." that's what my favorite song writer john prine would say about this. he did say that, but not about this. it's me that said this about that. then he says something about " people wearing turquiose jewelry and standing in soup lines." sometime rhymes are great just because they rhyme. "exactlyoto quasimoto." prine would say that about this.

MAN FANS DOG

that's my latest (but perhaps not greatest) headline and you might recall the old newswriter adage that says "dog bites man" isn't news, but "man bites dog" is. so I figure "man fans dog" just about makes it. you see, the people here treat dogs relatively well. at least better than the folks do in central america. don't know whether it has something to do with the difference between Catholicism and Buddhism, or whether it's just the way it is. recently there has been a backlash against the government of the "metropolis of bangkok" (that's what they call it) . the outrage is from the "owners" of stray dogs (and by extrapolation we can presume from the strays themselves). the plan is to licence all dogs and what the "owners" of strays are saying is

that they can't afford to pay these extra expenses. thus, things are looking bleak for the homeless dogs. the tradition here is for people to have a pet or two, but in addition provide some food and perhaps a porch for one or two strays. in turn the strays do duty as front-line guards, the other day I walked by a store I often pass and saw the store's stray dog lying peacefully beside the owner who was sitting outside in the heat and fanning not himself, but his dog.

SWEAT IS BAD KARMA

I've adopted a new technique while walking the streets of bangkok on my way to work. the first day I made the mistake of wearing my suit jacket for awhile, in addition, I allowed myself to get frustrated at the slow pace most people take while walking through, around, beside, into, under and on top of the many obstructions that make up the so-called sidewalks of this city. the u.s marines could run their obstacle course training here; and with the motorcycles zipping by at curbside, they'd probably sustain a few casualties. thus, arriving drenched at the skytrain after just 10 minutes on the street, I realized something had to change. if you're looking around for something to change and you realize that you have changed everything you can think of (your hair, your clothes, your friends, your job) but you still can't quite get it right, then you can turn to that last refuge of change that's the hardest, and yet the easiest to deal with. you can change your attitude. that's what I did, now when I walk to work I relax in the process and try to flow through the mess. the test is whether or not I can arrive at work without a drop of sweat. kind of the opposite of working out. I get a short "breather" on the skytrain, which is air-conditioned, but then its back on the street and a couple of staircases before once again hitting the refuge of air-conditioning. don't get me wrong. when the really loud motorcycles zip by me at close range I still mutter 'asshole" to myself, but I do so in a kinder, gentler way. nobody's perfect.

HOW ARE YOU TOMORROW?

sometimes the idiosyncrasies of language teach the most. like that little mix up courtesy of a well meaning thai fellow, who ended up asking something much more philosophical than I'm sure he intended. apparently there's a phrase in thai to describe something that it not likely to happen. it goes something like this: "that may happen in the late afternoon in my next life." implicit in this is the buddhist belief in reincarnation.

MEN BUY TIES. WOMEN BUY STYLE

that's why you can tell who picked out the tie. if it doesn't match the suit and shirt, then the guy picked it out, the way I figure it, guys look at the tie and if they like the tie they buy it without really considering how it works. women, on the other hand, have a better concept of the point of the exercise: to create an outfit. thus, they can pick what doesn't look like a winner tie, but understand that as part of an outfit it flies, now is suppose you're thinking that this is just about the goofiest attempt at understanding the difference between the sexes that you've ever read. however, I think I'm onto something. by the way, the ties I wear here in bangkok look great, that's because at the tailor shop the tailor is so experienced that he has one of his female staff do the tie selection.

TOILET PAPER PILLOW

there are many reasons why people hit the road: to escape, to seek, perhaps to find. but a guy from canadal met recently attributes his trip here to a toilet paper pillow, he was going through one of those "contested" divorces which alternatively set the priorities between custody and money. according to him his adversary discovered that a call to police could give her the upper hand, and that it did. as he lay in his cell over the weekend (facing an allegation of assault which resulted in no injury) he contemplated the situation and promised himself that when out he would scam to thailand. amazing what a bad night's sleep and a cheap pillow will do.

'BUDDY GOT SPICED'

that's what I say when I see somebody suddenly struck with sneezing and gasping fits as they pass by one of the many food stalls at street side, sometimes if your timings just wrong you get a lung full of the fumes hot off the grill, the spices are intense and before you know it they're right through your lungs. eating this stuff is one thing, but breathing it quite another, there are many tests along the karmic walk.

PNG SPELLS TROUBLE

that's the short form for papua new guinea, a place full of violent crime. realized the other day while at an ex-pat bar, that the real travellers out here are guys who work overseas, I sat with a couple of engineers hearing their tales of living in such places as nigeria, china and even ghickutalikookistan (or whatever "istan" it was) . the backpackers do their trips hither and yon for a jot or two of time, but these guys really get out there. one of the guys told of his tribulations in finishing the final few feet of a high-tech fibre optics cable. the cable went many miles under a bay and was worth millions, after weeks at the project they were ready to do the final hookup, but the cable was ten feet short. the end had been cut, cost of getting a replacement section from england about \$100,000 (this was specially -made). a trip into the local village (in nigeria, I think) proved useful, since one of the local mobsters just happened to have a ten-foot section of cable that matched perfectly, the ex-pat got head office approval for a \$20,000 payout to the local version of fred sanford, flew in two technicians to splice in the "lucky" find and the project was done, just a little over budget.

probably the best way to see the world is to become an engineer in the mining or refining businesses. a guy I work with has been an accountant for mining companies in several far off places, including papua new guinea (png). there, he says, the ex-pats who arrive at the average Saturday night party look for the highest place in the room and stockpile their assortment of handguns (away from the children). two of his friends were shot (but survived) by locals with home-made shotguns. strange thing to do, seems to me, to make shotguns at home. I imagine two kids I think the fates decreed that I should just stop writing. accidentally hit the wrong key and sent that last email mid sentence. I don't think I've ever interrupted myself before.

I think I was talking about guns in png. what I can imagine are two kids there each bragging to the other about how good their mother's home made shotguns are: "especially when they're hot out of the forge." while the ex-pat was getting the pellets dug out of his forehead, the doctor

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bragged at how good he was at removing pellets, because he had worked for many years in the hills, where people shoot each other with shotguns all the time. port moresby(png) was voted as the worst place for expats to live, according to a study by the economist. vancouver and melbourne were rated the best. must have something to do with the number of gunfights (or the lack thereof).

IS THAT ONE BILLION OR ONE MILLION? OR ... ALL'S WELL THAT'S HID WELL

can't talk too much about the work I'm doing. but I can say that we're busy trying to track down a whole bunch of money. our guys have a claim going against three companies on what could be called insider dealing for \$200 million u.s. what gets confusing is that's 8 billion baht. I'm looking around for a mere 2 billion baht that went sideways some time ago. "oh where, oh where could those little baht be? oh where, oh where could they be?" almost every day in the papers are stories about various forms of corruption in business and government. I figure the same thing goes on in north america(enron ring a bell?) but because the legal and reporting systems are more stringent, the crooks have to be more covert. today a buddhist solution was reported in the paper. apparently people here are getting frustrated with police who they say don't bust rich people. seems payoffs are preferred over prosecutions. several police forces are trying to send some officers to buddhist monasteries to live the life of a monk for awhile. their hope is that meditation and sermons will lead to a higher level of morality in the police force. worth a shot, I figure. pretty soon we may have here guys wearing orange robes, shaved head, holster, handgun, handcuffs and an alms bowl. I told you that buddhism adds a strange spin to this country.

DON'T TRY TO COVER YOUR ASS

you've probably received the email joke about the farmer whose donkey falls into a well. if not, then here's the short version: since the donkey is old and rescue difficult, the farmer thinks the best solution is to get his fellow villagers to help him bury the donkey in the well. they start throwing dirt down the well expecting to bury the poor creature, but instead find that the donkey is slowly rising to the top. as each shovel full lands on the donkey, it walks out of the well, calmly bites the farmer and goes away. there's two morals to this tale. the obvious one is that if you try to cover your ass it will come back and bite you. the second is the one (or one's) I like better: whatever life throws at you, be prepared to shake it off and stand upon the wisdom gained from that experience, further, the email offers the following "free" advice: free your heart from hatred; free your mind from worries; live simply; give more; expect less, on that note I'll sign off (finally), with the simple reminder that everybody loves somebody sometime. johnthekookinbangkok

Subject: test run from Bangkok

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trying to get this intergalactic system up and running. there's a category for "every-one" so I thought i'd test it to see if it works. last time I tried this some guy walked into the internet shop, asked me if I was catfishaway, then popped me one in the chops for using this network. I am now more careful. just so this test run is not a complete waste of your time (in case this actually works) I'll tell you one response to the question "what is it like to do business in bangkok?"

friend of mine hired some guys to build a fence around his swimming pool. (there is money to be made here). when he came back from work he saw a solid and formidable fence. he and his kids will be able to use their pool once again when the fence builders return to put in a gate. this is business in Bangkok. and you wonder if its true that I'm chasing \$50 million u.s. seems the test worked, so we may be online. if not, this is a waste of my time, not yours. however, if you receive this, then whether or not its a waste of your time is up to you. don't forget, this is not like real conversations, because there's a delete button right at your fingertips.

unlike news stories, where its quite clear where to start, this missive has an indefinite starting point. like the star wars series, I decide to start in the middle and work back.

since we're into sci-fi