THE GHOST OF PRA KHA NONG

an interactive story by Mark White

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1. The Woman on the Bridge ("be" verb patterns)

It is a warm night in Bangkok. Is Bangkok the capital of Thailand? How many people are there in Bangkok?

A woman is on a bridge. She is in her twenties. How old is she exactly? Is her hair long? What color is it? Is the woman attractive? Is she intelligent?

The bridge is a footbridge. The street below is very busy. There are a lot of cars. Is there a traffic jam? The woman looks at the traffic.

A man is in the street below. He is from New Zealand. Is he from the north island or the south island? How many people are there in New Zealand? What is the capital of New Zealand?

The man walks along the street. Is the air bad? Is he tired? The man is in his thirties. How old is he? Is he bald? Is he good-looking? Is he a nice guy?

The man climbs a flight of stairs to a bridge. It is a footbridge. There is a woman on the footbridge. The man walks on the bridge. He looks at the woman. She looks at him. He smiles at her. She smiles at him. He says, "Hello". She says, "Hello". The man talks to the woman. The woman talks to the man. Is the conversation interesting?

The man and the woman talk for about five minutes. He likes her and she likes him. He invites her to drink coffee with him. They go to a coffee shop. What is the name of the shop? Is it crowded? How many people are there in the shop? Is an expensive shop? Is there a bathroom?


The woman asks the man about his life. He is an English teacher in Japan. Is his salary high? Is he a good teacher? He is on vacation in Thailand. Is his vacation long? How long is it?

The man asks the woman about her life. What is her job? Is it a good job? Is her salary high? Is she happy?
2. The Second Meeting (present simple)

A man and a woman are at a coffee shop in Bangkok. Is it Starbucks? Is Starbucks any good? Is it expensive? Is it an American company?

The man is from New Zealand originally but he lives in Japan. Where does he come from in New Zealand? Where does he live in Japan? How many people are there in Japan?

The woman is from Isaan originally but she lives in Bangkok. Where is Isaan? How many people are there in Isaan? What part of Isaan does she come from? Is she from a big city or a small village? Does she speak Thai with an Isaan accent?

The man wants to know more about the woman’s life. The woman wants to know more about the man’s life. There is no time. It is late. The man goes back to his hotel. Is it a big hotel? Is it expensive? Does it have a pool? Is there a fridge in his room? Is there a TV?

The woman goes home. Does she go by bus? How long does it take? Does she live in a big house? Does she live alone? Is there a fridge and a TV in her house? Is there an air-conditioner? Does she have any brothers and sisters?

The next day the man and the woman meet again. Do they meet in a coffee shop? What time do they meet? They walk around for a while. They go to a restaurant. They eat a meal together. The woman orders a chicken dish. Is it hot? Is it good? What does the man order? Is it good? Is it hot? The man and the woman both drink something. What does the man drink? What does the woman drink?

After the meal the two friends walk through a shopping center. Is it crowded? Does it have a food hall? Does the man buy anything? Does the woman buy anything? The two of them go to a bar. They talk for a long time. The woman tells the man a story. She tells him about her childhood. She talks for a long time. The man listens. It is a very good story. The man likes the story. Does he tell her a story too? What does he tell her about?
3. The Woman’s Story (present perfect tense)

This is the true story of an Isaan woman’s life…..

A young girl lives with her mother and father in Isaan. She has seven brothers and sisters. She has never left her village. She has never been to Bangkok. She has always lived in her village. Has she been to Korat? Has she been to Burilam? Has she been to Udon Thani?

The young girl’s father is very sick. What disease does he have? How long has he had it? The father dies. The family is very poor. The mother sells things in the market. How long has she done that? Has she ever been to Bangkok?

The young girl goes to school. How many students are there in her school? Her teacher is a woman. What is the name of her teacher? How long has she been a teacher?

The girl studies hard but her family is poor. They have no food so the young girl works in the fields. She gathers wild vegetables and she looks after buffalo. Every day she takes the buffalo to the fields. She stays with the buffalo every day. She stops school. She does not go anymore.

When the girl is fifteen, she runs away. She goes to Bangkok with two friends. One friend is a friend from her village. She has known her all her life. The other friend is a friend from school. How long has the girl known her? Has she ever been to Bangkok before? The three friends are all girls.

The three girls go to Bangkok. They walk around. They do not know anybody. They see a factory. They go inside. They have never been inside a factory before. They see a man. How long has he worked there? They ask for a job. A man gives them a job. Have they ever worked in a factory before?

The work at the factory is hard and the pay is very low. The factory is a clothing factory. The girl makes clothes. Has she ever made clothes before?

After a week the girl wants to leave but she cannot leave. She is a slave. She has to stay in the factory.
4. The Factory (present continuous tense)

It is a hot day in Bangkok. A young Thai woman is working in a factory. How long has she worked there? What is she wearing? She works long hours and her pay is very low but she cannot leave. She is a slave.

It is almost lunchtime and all the workers are working hard. Some of them are making pants. Some of them are making shirts. Some of them are making jackets. The young woman has two friends. What are they doing? What is the young woman doing?

Lunchtime comes. The workers sit down and eat. What do they eat? The young woman goes to the bathroom. She comes back. She sees the boss. What is he wearing? He is talking to the workers. What is he talking about?

The woman sits down and eats. She thinks about her mother. Her mother is in Isaan. She is working in the market. She is selling food. What is she selling?

The woman goes to the boss’s office. He is talking on the telephone. Who is he talking to? The woman waits then she talks to the boss. She says she wants to send money to her mother. The boss says ok.

After work the woman goes to a big room behind the factory. All the workers sleep in the big room. The workers are talking and cleaning their sleeping areas. Is anybody eating? The woman cleans her sleeping area. The foreman is watching.

The foreman says, “I want to sleep here.”

The woman says, “It is my sleeping area. You cannot sleep here.”

The foreman runs at the woman. She grabs him and she throws him to the ground. Normally she is not strong but right now she is very strong. She is shaking. Is she crying?

The foreman is afraid. He goes to the boss’s office. What is the boss doing? The foreman complains about the woman. The boss laughs. He goes to the workers’ quarters. He says to the woman, “Now, you are the new foreman.”
5. The Island (future “going to”)

It is late at night in a Bangkok coffee shop. A woman is talking to a man. The woman is from Isaan. The man is from New Zealand. The woman is telling the man about her life. Is he going to tell her about his life? Are they going to fall in love?

The woman looks at her watch. It is very late. She has to go home. She arranges to meet the man again tomorrow. Are they going to meet in the same place? What time are they going to meet?

The woman is going to go home by bus. Which bus is she going to take? How much is it going to cost? How long is it going to take to get home? Is she going to shower when she gets home? Is she going to eat? What is the man going to do after she leaves?

The next day the man and the woman meet again. The man wants to learn Thai and the woman teaches him a little. What phrases does she teach him?

The man is going to travel to an island in the south of Thailand. He is going to relax on the beach. Which island is he going to go to? He wants the woman to go with him. He asks her. She agrees to go with him.

The next day the two friends catch a bus. They are going to go to Koh Samui. How long is it going to take to get there? How long are they going to stay there? Is the woman going to continue the story of her life as a slave in the factory? Is the man going to go back to Japan or stay in Thailand?

Koh Samui is a big island in the south of Thailand. It is very beautiful. The man and the woman take a bus and a boat to the island. They get a bungalow near the beach. They are tired and hungry after the bus trip. Are they going to eat straight away or rest first and eat later?

That night the man and the woman walk on the beach then they go to bar. What is the man going to drink? What is the woman going to drink? The woman continues the story of her life as a slave in a clothing factory.
6. The Continuation of the Woman’s Story (will)

It is a cool night on Koh Samui. A man and a woman are sitting at a bar on the beach. The woman is telling the man about her life as a slave in a clothing factory……

The young woman is a slave in the factory. She is only fifteen years old. How long has she been in the factory? Will she stay there forever? Will she see her village again? Will she see her mother again?

Every day the woman works hard. She is the foreman in the factory. She is only fifteen but she is the foreman. She works hard but her pay is very low. She wants a raise. Will she ask the boss for a raise? Every month the woman gives money to the boss to send to her mother. He says he will send it. Will he really send it?

The woman wants to escape. Will she be able to escape? She talks to her friends about it. Will they try to escape with her?

Every night the woman puts the garbage out. One of her friends helps her. They decide to run away after they put the garbage out. They will do it tomorrow. What time will they do it? Where will they go?

The next day the two friends put the garbage out. There is a big fence around the factory. They have to go outside to put the garbage out. They take it out then they run away.

Will the boss be angry? Will he follow them? Will he call the police?

The two girls are free now but they do not know anybody and they do not know the city. They walk around the city. They see a temple. They go into the temple. They hide in the temple. They see a monk. How long has he been a monk? Will he be a monk forever?

The two girls sleep in the temple and the next day they walk around again. Suddenly one of the girls recognizes the name on a factory sign. Her brother works in that factory. She goes inside and finds her brother. She tells him everything. He calls the police. Will the police close the factory? Will the boss go to prison?
7. The Two Lovers (would)

A Thai woman and a New Zealand man are staying in a bungalow on Koh Samui. Would go to Koh Samui? Would you go to New Zealand? The man and the woman fall in love. Would you be able to fall in love with a person from a different culture?

The two lovers travel to Koh Phangan. Where would you go? They are very happy together. The man has to go back to Japan because he works in Japan. Would you go back or quit your job and stay in Thailand? The man works as an English teacher. Would you work as a language teacher?

The New Zealander goes back to Japan and the Thai woman stays in Bangkok. He misses her and she misses him. He comes back to see her a month later. Would you come back? He only stays for a five days. The two lovers telephone every day. How often would you telephone?

The Kiwi returns to Japan but a month later he comes to Thailand again. He proposes to the Thai woman. Would you marry a person from a different culture? Would you live in a different country?

The Thai woman wants to go Japan but she cannot get a visa. Would you go to Japan? Two months later the New Zealander returns to Bangkok again. He marries his girlfriend. They have a long vacation in Thailand and Laos and Vietnam. They are very happy. The woman gets pregnant. Would you have a baby with a foreigner?

The man returns to Japan but the woman does not have a visa. The man comes to see her again. She wants to have her baby in Thailand. Would you have a baby in another country? The man visits four times a year but the woman will not leave Thailand. Would you have a long distance relationship?

Finally it is time for the baby to be born. The man cannot stay in Thailand because he cannot earn enough money. He returns to Japan just before his daughter is born. Would you miss the birth of your child?
8. The New Family (gerund)

It is a cold night in Japan. A man is thinking about his wife and daughter in Bangkok. He is in Japan but they are in Thailand. What do you think of the idea of having a long distance relationship? The guy walks around his apartment. He picks up his guitar. Is playing the guitar difficult? He tunes it. Is tuning a guitar hard? The man strums the guitar. He makes up a song. Have you ever written a song? Is writing songs easy? The man writes a song about his new baby. What is the name of the song?

A month later the man goes to Bangkok. He takes a plane. Is flying dangerous? He sees his wife and he meets his new baby daughter for the first time. Is having a child expensive?

Every day the man stays at home with his wife and his daughter and he plays with his baby daughter. Is playing with children fun? The wife cooks delicious meals each day and the young baby is happy and healthy. The little family is very happy.

One afternoon the guy goes in to a supermarket on Sukhumvit Road to buy some bread and cheese. Usually he eats Thai food but sometimes he wants to eat bread and cheese. Bread and cheese is common in New Zealand and he misses it. What food would you miss if you lived in another country? Do you like the idea of living in another country?

As the man leaves the supermarket he runs into an old friend. His friend is a musician. He plays the piano in a big hotel. He plays jazz. Is working in a big hotel well-paid? He has not seen his friend for a long time. Is running into old friends pleasant? The New Zealander gives his old friend his address and phone number. They drink two beers at a nearby bar and then the Kiwi goes home. He takes the bus. Is taking the bus cheap? Do you like drinking beer in the afternoon?

The New Zealander wants to stay in Bangkok with his wife and daughter but he cannot because his salary is too low. He has to go back to Japan because he can earn a lot of money in Japan. Is earning a high salary important?
9. The Empty Apartment (comparatives)

It is an Autumn night in Japan. An English teacher from New Zealand is alone in his apartment. Is living in an apartment better than living in a house? His phone rings. Is having a mobile phone more expensive than having a land line? He answers it. It is his old friend the piano player. Is playing the piano easier than playing the guitar?

The friend is working at a hotel in Japan for three months. Is working in Japan better paid than working in Thailand? The friend wants to meet up. The kiwi meets his mate at a pub. They talk a lot and they drink a lot. Is drinking in Japan expensive? Is it more expensive than drinking in Thailand? How about eating out? What about accommodation? What about the cost of living in general?

The piano player says he went to the Kiwi’s apartment in Bangkok. He says he called many times but there was no answer so he went there once. He says the apartment was empty and the apartment building was derelict.

The New Zealander is shocked. He cannot believe his ears. He calls his wife. He talks to her. She is ok. Everything is ok.

Six weeks later the guy visits Bangkok briefly again. His wife is there. His child is there. Everything is ok. His friend says nobody lives in that apartment but he can see his wife and child with his own eyes and he can see the beautiful little apartment. It is very clean and neat. Is believing your own experience more sensible than believing what your friends tell you? The guy thinks his friend must have the wrong address.

A week later the guy goes to Seven Eleven. He buys a couple of bottles of beer and some milk. The cashier looks at him in a strange way. He says “What are you looking at?” The cashier says nothing. He thinks something is strange but he does not know what it is. A week later he has to go back to Japan. He goes to a travel agent. He books a ticket. Thai Airlines tickets have gone up in price. Is Thai still cheaper than JAL? How does it compare to Singapore Airlines?
10. The Apartment  (sound, smell, feel, taste, look good)

This is a story about a New Zealander and a Thai woman. They are married and they have a child but the guy works in Japan and the woman lives in Thailand. He has a high-paying job in Japan with long holidays and she stays in Bangkok with the child. He visits regularly. The guy has known his wife for three years and he is happy but he feels strange. Something is strange.

The guy goes to his wife’s apartment building. It looks normal. He goes up the stairs. Do they look normal? He knocks on the door of his apartment. She opens the door. How does she look? He kisses his child. How does his daughter look? She talks a little now. Does she sound happy? Does she look happy?

The guy looks around the apartment. Does it look normal? He turns on the TV. There is a music program on. It does not sound good. He turns the TV off. He looks at the stereo. It is two years old but it looks new. He turns it on. Does it sound ok? The guy goes to the fridge. It is two years old too. Does it look new? He opens the fridge and looks inside. Does it look clean? There are some tomatoes in the fridge. Do they look fresh? There is some beer too. The guy touches the bottle. Does it feel cold? He opens it and drinks it. How does it taste? The guy sits down in a chair. Does it feel comfortable? His daughter comes up to him. He strokes her hair. Does it feel soft?

While the guy is drinking, his wife cooks some food. He watches her. How long does it take? Does the food look good? Does it smell good? Does it look spicy? When it is ready the woman puts it on the table. The guy sits down and eats. How does the meal taste? How does it look?

After dinner the guy watches TV. He is happy but he feels strange. People in the street look at him in a strange way. His friends never come to his house. They say they will come but then they cannot find it. Everything looks normal but something feels strange. How does the woman feel? How does the little girl feel?
Five airlines fly from Osaka to Bangkok. What are they and which is the cheapest? Which is the most expensive? A guy from New Zealand is at a travel agent in Japan. He is booking a ticket to Bangkok.

When he arrives in Bangkok he has a choice of taking a taxi or a bus to his wife’s apartment. Which is cheaper? Which is faster? What is generally the fastest way to get from A to B in a big city?

The guy arrives at his wife’s place. He is happy to see his wife and his daughter. His wife is a great cook. She can make Thai food, Italian food, Lebanese food, Chinese food and Indian food too. Which is she able to make best? Which is quickest? Which is the tastiest? Which is generally the hottest? How does her version of Italian food compare to real Italian food?

The guy sits down with his wife and has a meal. His daughter is almost two years old now. As he sits on the couch he hears a crack. The leg breaks. It is an old couch but it is very comfortable. His wife does not want to buy a new one. She wants to keep the old one. Which is cheaper, getting a new one or fixing the old one?

The guy wants to get a new couch. There are three big furniture shops near their house. One is at the Tesco-Lotus shopping center, one is at the Carrefour shopping center and one is at the Seacon shopping center. What is the name of the biggest one? Is the biggest one the cheapest one? Where is the smallest one? Which one has the best quality furniture? Which one has the biggest selection?

The guy wants to get a new couch but his wife wants to keep the old one. She wants to fix it. She insists. Would you fix it or get a new one?
12. The Hardware Store (sound, feel, smell, taste, look like)

A guy from New Zealand is in Bangkok. Does he look like a Maori? The guy has to get a piece of wood to fix a broken couch. He goes out to get the piece of wood. There are three hardware stores near his house. One has a Chinese owner, one has a Bangkok owner and one has an owner from South Thailand. Which one is the cheapest? Which one is the most expensive? Which one is the oldest? Which one has the largest selection of wood? Which one is the closest?

The guy goes to the one with the owner from south Thailand. How long has he been in Bangkok? Does he speak like a Bangkok Thai? Does the southern Thai accent sound like the Bangkok accent? Does the southern Thai accent sound like the Isaan accent?

The kiwi goes into the hardware store. Does it look like a hardware store? Can he speak Thai? He looks at the wood. There are three types of wood in the size that he wants. One is pine, one is eucalyptus and one is teak. Which is the most expensive? Which is the cheapest? Which is the heaviest? Which is the lightest?

The guy chooses a piece of pine. He picks it up. He weighs it in his hand. Does it feel heavy? He smells it. Does it smell like pine? Does it smell good? He examines it. Does it look like pine? Does it feel smooth or rough? The guy buys the piece of wood then he goes home. He goes by public transport. A truck comes along. It does not look like a bus but it is a bus. The guy gets on. A man on the truck/bus talks to him. Does he look Thai? Does he sound like a Thai? They talk about Bangkok. The man has kind eyes. He looks like a monk.

The kiwi gets off the truck/bus. He goes to his apartment. He gets under the couch to fix it. As he does this he hears a sound. It sounds like his daughter. He looks back between his legs at her. It is his daughter but she looks like a skeleton. His wife comes out of the shower. Does she look like a skeleton too? The apartment suddenly looks old and dusty. It looks like a derelict building.
A guy from New Zealand is in a dirty old apartment in Bangkok. The apartment is a ruin. His wife is a ghost. His daughter is a ghost. He has looked backwards through his legs and seen the world as it really is. His life is a dream. He runs away in terror.

The guy goes to a temple. How many temples are there in Bangkok? Are any of them Chinese? Are any of them old? Are any of them new? Are any of them closed to the public? Are any of them famous?

There are a lot of monks at the temple. How many of them are there? Where are they from? Are any of them from other countries? The guy walks into the main building. He sees a man. He recognizes him. It is the man from the truck/bus the previous day. The man is a monk. He is also an exorcist. He has driven many ghosts away.

The monk conducts a ceremony at the old apartment building. Nobody lives there because it is old and haunted and ready for demolition. A lot of people come to the ceremony. Are many of them monks? Are many of them exorcists? He talks to the ghost of the kiwi’s wife. She has been dead for two years. Her daughter is dead too. They are dead but they cannot let go of the New Zealander because they love him too much.

Finally the monk drives the ghost away. The man from New Zealand is alone now. He has lost his wife and his child. He has some friends back in New Zealand. A few of them are old school friends. Most of them are friends from university. Some of them are friends from work. One of them is the guy next door. Are any of them Asian? Are any of them women? He has a lot of friends in Japan too. Who are they? Are any of them women? How many of them are Japanese?
The guy does not know many people in Bangkok. He has lost all his friends because of the ghost. They thought he was crazy. Was he crazy? He has to start his life again. What does he do?