

A Goodbye To Loss

"Just because you know how the story will end doesn't mean you can't cry during the sad parts."

As I sit in the Chiang Mai airport lounge a couple hours before my flight, I am not sitting alone. Seated with me is a mix of emotions as real as any person.

Leaving Thailand, specifically Chiang Mai, that has been my home for the last 5 months is bittersweet. It is time to go for many reasons. I know this as surely as I know anything. If I stayed, it would not be the same and yet I would be. Comfort is the enemy of growth and there are steps yet to be taken.

Many of my friends are leaving or have left. I am now one of the latter. This place is transient. This life is too.

Impermanence is a theme I have come to understand all too well. We can't hold on to the past. The road is forward — always.

Sitting with a good friend in the final hours of my last night here, he asked me what was the best part of my time.

I responded without hesitation. There is only one answer — the connections I have made.

For the first time in my life I have come to truly understand the value of the relationships I have and the people I have them with.

Good people. Kind people. Wise people.

Ones who are able to put to words how you feel before you speak.

Ones who don't complain when you pour heavy a bottle of Sangsom, toasting to good times and better days.

Ones who refuse to shy away from sharing the deepest part of who they are in hopes it will offer guidance, benefit and connection.

Ones who have chosen to give the greatest gift we have to offer one another — sharing the moments that make up our lives.

I have learned many lessons in my time here. Challenging ideas and practices of how this thing called life works and how I can best live it. Perhaps foremost, I am slowly letting go of the belief that I have to be strong enough to do "this" alone. It is a misguided hero complex that needs to be laid to rest and serves little use compared to a bond as strong as community.

I am sifting through the concept of purpose and realizing that meaning is given to what we do through the people we share it with.

I am holding strong to the belief that who you are matters, that making yourself a better version not only benefits you but all areas of your life including your relationships. In this I believe I have made the most strides in the past few months, as I now have practical tools to use and foundational pillars to base myself upon.

And, most recently, I am learning to trust both myself and the journey in equal parts, having faith that if I happen to take a left instead of a right, the universe in its infinite wisdom will course correct. This is still the hardest part for me, but I'm working on it.

All of this would not have been possible without those I have met, the conversations we've had, and the moments we shared. Gratitude, yet another lesson.

And heavily mixed in is the feeling of loss sitting close by as I wait for the next flight to a new place.

I am off to Seoul for four days, then the US for a month, then quite likely India. Yet I am taking all of the experiences with me and doing my best to look at this as not an ending but a new beginning, the next chapter, a blank page with pen in hand.

This too is challenging.

All the best to my friends and family, near and far.

This is not goodbye.

It is forever "see you soon."

David N Carson

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