

EKSEMPEL-ORGAVE 1

Assignment 5A

1

5 "Only You Farang Are So Easy to Come and Leave" tells the story of a young half Thai girl named Lara. In the short story, written by Mai Nardone in 2017, the economy in Thailand has crashed. Because of this Lara's father, an American, is now unemployed and the family is a lot poorer. Her parents miss the times, when they had everything, and the change in their daily lives has created a gap between them.

They decide that it would be better if her father goes back to the US, where he can get a job and send money over until things improve Thailand. The mother is very suspicious of this, but there is nothing she can do, and he leaves.

10 Some time later, Lara visits him in America. He now has a desk job and a nice apartment and doesn't want to go back. The story ends with Lara telling her mother this over the phone, who cries when she hears it.

2

15 Everything comes and goes. Love, wealth and life can be taken away from you as quickly as it is given. In "Only You Farang Are So Easy to Come and Leave" the girl Lara experiences first hand how your life can change from idyllic higher middleclass family life to a family life plagued by growing distance and a lack of communication without you having any say in it. The title also symbolises this, as her father, the "Farang", and the one who gave her the perfect family life she used to have, is now leaving.

20 Lara's parents were not always in borderline divorce territory. The story chronologically starts with the beginning, where the family has just moved in to their old home, because they can't afford there other one anymore. "The townhouse had a plot of earth in the back that Dad used to call a garden, and it had once charmed Ma to pot plants, indulge the mud patch"¹ They used to have a much more optimistic outlook on life but have now lost it. What was once a garden is now just a plot of earth and what had once charmed the mother into potting plants is now just a mud patch. The father also used to call the mother "KitKat"², but she has stopped responding to that. This is a sign that their love might be dying and they are only together, because the

¹ Page 1 line 3-4

² Page 1 line 40

mother doesn't want to work herself, because she can't let go of her previous life. She also wants him to leave for the US to make money, which further shows that their marriage now exists for financial reasons instead of romantic. The father can tell that this is the case. When he buys the girls a cake, and the mother just gets angry and shouts, because cake is expensive and they are poor, the father explains that he wanted to brighten the mood, as it had been suffocating, but the mother has shut him down and he instantly changes the subject to deciding whether or not he should leave. At this point the father has already decided that their relationship is not working, and he needs to leave.

The story is set in Bangkok, the capital of Thailand, in 1997. The country is going through an economic crisis and many unfinished building projects and offices have been abandoned and now form empty "graveyards"³. The word graveyard is very negatively loaded, and the use of this simile makes the reader paint a very depressing picture of Bangkok in their mind. Bangkok's tragic situation is also described through the rumors that Lara hears at school and the newspapers she reads. Unemployment is increasing, happiness is decreasing, and people are killing themselves because of it.

The desperation and despair, which is enveloping Thailand, has made Lara more cynical and less optimistic. *"This is Thailand. 99 percent working class. We'll be fine."*⁴ Her father is telling her how the workers would rule a postapocalyptic world and she just jokes about both the end of the world and the nationwide poverty. This also shows that she is very mature. She understands the situation in Thailand and later on in the story she also seems to understand why her parents are growing apart and even suspects her father having a secret lover.

The story is told from Lara's point of view, this means that we have an insight into what goes through her mind and we know her thoughts, because of this we can also see how Lara's character develops throughout the story. In the beginning she is also very emotional and uncertain. At first it seems as if she feels sorry for her father for having to deal with her mother's attitude. She also metaphorically describes her mother as a bird of prey, biting into him, making her seem bad. In the end of the story though, when Lara is certain that her father won't be coming home, she thinks of him as *"just another foreigner passing through"*, *"an imperialist"* and *"a cultural bigot"*.⁵ This is probably because she initially had hope and trusted that he would come back, but now knows that he has abandoned her mother. When her mother then calls, she tells her that her husband doesn't want anything to do with her. Lara has lost her uncertainty and is decisively cutting herself and the mother off from the father.

³ Page 3 line 118

⁴ Page 1 line 28

⁵ Page 4 line 152

Decisions is also an important theme in the story. Her father has the decision of staying with his family in a collapsing country or abandon them in favor of economic stability and better living standards. Her mother has the choice between staying at home, maintaining a tiny bit of their precious, luxurious lifestyle, or getting a job so they can pay for Lara's tuition. Lara is desperately trying to make her parents choose the right thing, but as both of them don't. Lara is also forced to make a choice. Her mother or her father. This is a very hard choice to make as a fifteen-year-old girl, and that is the main theme of the story. Life is not always a highway. It is also at times a bumpy road going through a barren desert and you can't always control where it is going. The choices you make can steer both you and those around you in directions you never intended, and it is all very depressing and deep

"Only You Farang Are So Easy to Come and Leave" is a short story about a young girl called Lara, whose family is falling, parallel to the country they live in, into disarray. Through the choices they each make; her parents grow distant from each other and eventually break apart. Lara is then faced with the decision of staying with her mother or leaving with her father. Life has given her lots of lemons but depending on the mindset of whoever is reading the story, it is arguably not all bad. She is still alive and what doesn't kill you makes you stronger.