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Dear Jerry,

I am now settled at my new home in Indonesia, and last week returned from my first research trip to Ponorogo. I'm sorry I have not written to you before now, but it took me longer to get to Yogya than I thought, and I have adapted to the slower pace of life so things just take longer to get done. In overview, I feel incredibly happy here, and I love Java very much. These last few months since I left Los Angeles have been some of the most fascinating times of my entire life. Everything was incredibly rushed before I left, but it has been much better since then. I first went to Northern Illinois University, for the Fulbright professor orientation program. Then to Chicago, where I gave a presentation and a book signing. Also there, I received the good news that *The Spirit and the Flesh* has received this year's Gay Book Award from the American Library Association. I could not attend their awards ceremony in San Francisco, because at the same time I was going to Germany to receive the award for Outstanding Scholarship from the World Congress for Sexology, meeting in Heidelberg.

The Congress was very interesting, and besides getting the award I also gave a paper and chaired a session. As luck would have it, that weekend was the Gay Pride celebration in Heidelberg, and the organizers found out that I was in town so they asked me to speak at their rally. Though I spoke in English (mein Deutsch ist nich so gut), they seemed to like it a lot. There were several Americans there from Frankfurt, and afterward they asked me if I could come speak to their group in Frankfurt. That was terrific, because I needed to go there to meet my Mom and sister June when they arrived to visit Europe. So that evening, they drove me to Frankfurt and put me up in a nice flat with a teacher. The next day I left my baggage at his house, and he took me to the airport to meet Mom and June. They arrived safely, for their first time overseas, and we took off on a Eurail train pass for Switzerland. The Swiss Alps were beautiful, and after two days there we rode to Italy. In Venice we saw all the sights, and had a really wonderful visit. A few days later we arrived in Munich, and spent time in nearby Dachau, visiting the Nazi Concentration Camp. We saw the prison where Jews, Gays, and others were tortured and killed by Hitler's SS, and it was a sorrowful testimony to human intolerance and bigotry. Later on, in Amsterdam, we visited the Anne Frank

house, where she and her family hid from the Nazis for years and where she wrote her famous diary. Together, these two visits were the most emotional times of the trip. It reinforced my determination to oppose discrimination wherever it exists.

The next day we went to Berlin, where I spoke at a meeting at the gay bookstore and the next day marched in their Gay Pride Parade. After that, we toured East Berlin (our first time in a Communist country. It did not seem as oppressive as I would have thought, and in fact there is a rather open gay community there). We visited a wonderful museum, with the best collection of Assyrian and Babylonian art that I have ever seen. After a few days in Berlin, we took an overnight train to Amsterdam. Poor June caught a cold, so she stayed in the Guesthouse while Mom and I ate dinner aboard a canal boat cruise. The next day I was interviewed for the Dutch gay magazine Homologue, and visited one of Amsterdam's many gay nightclubs. We did not have enough time there to see much of the city's fine museums, but I was not sorry to leave it as it seemed much dirtier than I previously remembered it, with a lot of scraggly youths hanging around. We returned to Frankfurt in time for me to speak about my book to the gay group there. After royal treatment by our hosts, the next day I said goodbye to Mom and June as they ended their adventure to return to the US, while I began another leg of my trip -- on to Asia.

I arrived in Bangkok, and spent the first day with my own private tour guide. She offered to take me to a place where I could have sex with "a beautiful girl". When I told her I was not interested, she then offered to get me "a beautiful boy"! When I spent the whole day touring Buddhist temples, she told me I was the first tourist she had met in a long time who wanted to do that rather than spend the day going to the sex palaces. I cannot imagine people going to Bangkok and missing the incredible sights there, yet planeloads of Japanese, Chinese, and European businessmen pour into Bangkok to spend all their time in bed.

I really do feel that Thailand is one of the most fascinating places I have ever visited. The people were quite friendly, always smiling whenever I smiled at them (in contrast to the dour Europeans). One day after I arrived, I met a boy near my hotel, and he offered to go with me to be my guide. The price was so low that I accepted, and he proceeded to move in with me for my entire two weeks in Bangkok. Later I visited his living quarters, a room in a boarding house that he shared with three other boys, with them rolling out their sleeping mats at night. It was quite clean, but I was amazed at the tight living situation. When he slept with me at my hotel room, it must have seemed a vast space to him. We had a wonderful time, going everywhere together, attending incredibly ornate Buddhist temples, talking with monks (beautiful young monks surrounded me in fascination as I spoke with some of the English-speaking monks), and attending Buddhist meditation sessions. Most young

Thai men become monks for at least three months (usually right after they finish high school), but some become novices as young as 8 years old, and then may remain in the all-male monestary for the rest of their life. They are forbidden to touch a female at all, even on the hand. I saw some female nuns, but they remained quite separate from the males.

We went on boats on the canals, observing the lifestyle of the common people. Though there is much poverty in Thailand, the people seem quite cheery, and their gentle Buddhist religion promotes a happy outlook on life. Gay life in Bangkok is the most open I have ever seen. I attended a gay nightclub, that had about twenty young men on stage performing various sexual acts with each other. That really surprised me, since I had never seen anything like that. I attended a gay-themed play that was being performed at one of Bangkok's finest theaters, and afterwards I arranged an interview with the play's producer and star performer, Dr. Seri Wongmontha. He is also a professor of Mass Communications at Thamassat University, and has his own TV talk show as well. I don't know how he has time to do all this, but both he and his lover (who is a student at Thamassat U.) were most gracious to spend time with me.

A handsome policeman (quite gentle and friendly, unlike many US macho police) spent his holiday with us, and took us to a special ceremony at the National Palace. It was so beautiful I could hardly believe I was seeing it with my own eyes. The King of Thailand appeared with his retinue, and what a splendid sight it was. The love that the masses of Thai people poured out for him was really touching. He is known for his concern for the people, as was evident from the amount of time he took to touch as many people as he could in the crowd.

I left Thailand quite reluctantly, and want to come back when I will have more time to see others of these beautiful people outside of Bangkok.

From there I flew to Singapore, which was something of a letdown after exotic Bangkok. Though it is spotlessly clean (littering can get you a \$200 fine!) and modern, its people are not so friendly -- more like Westerners. Nevertheless, I enjoyed my visit there because of staying with my friend Darren Sun, whom I met in Los Angeles in 1983 when he was a graduate student at UCLA. He took me to some great restaurants, a fun beach and resort island, and practically every night we went dancing at discos. That was great fun, but all that dancing made me sweat too much, and in the tropical climate I got a heat rash over much of my body. Though it went away after several days, that was my warning not to exert myself too much in this climate, so I have been going a slower pace since then.

In Singapore we visited a beautiful Botanical Garden, but it is the shopping centers for which this island city-state is most noted. I bought a computer, on which I am printing this letter,

and got a great deal. I lugged computer and my luggage to the airport, to take off for my final destination of Indonesia. In crowded Jakarta, I spent most of my time at the US Embassy, being chauffeured around in a government car and meeting American officials and University of Indonesia professors. I got a battery of medical tests, shots, and malaria tablets, so I am fortified against all kinds of tropical diseases. I have been very fortunate not to have been sick at all, and am hopeful that I will continue in good health. For a couple of days the heat seemed somewhat oppressive, but I have gotten used to it just fine. In fact, I love the warm climate.

I feel that everything that has happened to me recently is a great benefit for me. I have dreamed of having a nice house, but knew that on my professor's salary I could never afford one in expensive Los Angeles. However, in Yogyakarta housing is so cheap that I have been able to rent one of the nicest houses in Yogyakarta. It is within walking distance of Universitas Gadjah Mada, where I am teaching this year, and is right across the street from the University Rector's house. For the sum of \$400 a month (very high by local standards) I get a beautiful 4 bedroom, 3 bath house, with three rooms for servants' quarters, and a gorgeous private walled garden filled with lush tropical plants. It is nicely furnished, with everything down to linens, china, and silverware. They installed ceiling fans in every room, and an air conditioner (though I hardly ever use it).

In addition to the house, I also have hired two servants. Both are wonderful young men who were unemployed. They live here around the clock, only leaving once a week for a one-day holiday. "Kedah" does the cooking, shopping, and driving when I want to go anywhere in the car I rented from the university. He speaks pretty good English, and has done translating for me when I am interviewing people. Though I have done some bicycling, I would not dare to try driving a car on the streets, which are a cacaphony of speeding buses, cars, motorcycles, bicycles, horse-drawn buggys, and an occasional oxcart. There are also these wonderful three-wheeled bicycles with a two-person covered seat in front and a man to pedal you around town in a slow version of a taxi. There are few autotaxis here. "Narto" does the cleaning, gardening the yard, washes dishes and clothes (by hand), irons everything, and falls all over himself trying to please me. Boy am I getting spoiled to this really fast!

Each of them has a room, and I pay for the food we eat (which is very cheap by US standards) and pay them a salary of about \$30 a month (which is considerable higher than what they would make if they worked for an Indonesian family). I have brought some of my American democratic style with me, so instead of the servants eating separately we all eat together like a family. Often we eat a delicious candlelight dinner outside in the back yard, next to the fish pool with the sound of the waterfall as background music. Javanese like to laugh a lot, so we sit around joking, mostly about my mistakes in trying to speak

Bahasa Indonesia. All this relaxed lifestyle makes me so happy I can hardly believe my great fortune, and every day I express my thankfulness for the great benefits I have received since coming here.

I have already met a circle of gay friends here, and one of them has moved in with me as a roommate. His name is Yana, and he is a Chinese student in accounting at UGM. His English is quite excellent, and he has done some translating assistance for me as well. His only limitation is that he only knows a bit of Javanese, so I cannot use him in the rural areas. But he is very helpful for urban gay interviews. In the Javanese style, there are often visitors in the evening, and places to go together. I don't feel lonely at all, and I have to say that I don't feel homesick at all. Certainly, there are problems here, but not as much dire poverty as I expected, and all in all the people seem happier here than in the frantic rat-race in America. Maybe I will change my attitudes later, but for now I feel so at ease here that I am awfully glad I came.

Now let me tell you my news of Ponorogo. I met a gay friend here in Yogya, a wealthy batik factory owner who got interested in my research and asked if he could come with me. We took off in his minibus (he brought along a contingent of seven of his young men, and offered me my choice of which one to sleep with at night). We happened to arrive the evening when there was a huge Reog festival going on in the square of Ponorogo city. We caught the last part of the performance, and what a spectacle it was. It was almost like a circus, with tightrope performer high above our heads. There were thousands of people there, mostly beautiful young men. I had a great time.

Some of them told us that a place to find "homosexuals" (their words) was in the village of Bancangan, in the Sambit district, so the next day we went there. We were directed to the head man of the village, who is also active in their Reog group. The man who directs the Reog was there, so I spent the afternoon talking with them. They dressed up their jatilan dancer, a 12 year old boy who serves as their gemblakan. He was beautiful, and I got some great slides of them dressing him. They were obviously very proud of him, and even hugged him in front of me. I told them about my gemblakan in America (I forgot if you met Joey when you came to visit me or not), and they seemed very comfortable discussing the subject with me after that. They promised to write me when their next performance will be, so I can come back to see it.

Later, that evening we went to meet Bu Soetji, at her home on Jl. Anjasmara 22. When I told her I know you, you should have seen her face light up in amazement. Her family all remembered you quite fondly, and they have your pictures proudly displayed in their photo album which they showed me. It was really interesting seeing the photos of you. They asked me how you had changed, and I told them not much except for less hair now. They

want you to write them and send a current photo. Bu asked if you still have the carved wood Reog set? She said today it would be worth about Rupiah 300.000 (ca. \$180 US) in Ponorogo. She and her husband look about the same as in the photos with you, only older of course. She has some grey hair now, but is still tall and thin. She and Pak have both retired as teachers, and they are saving their money to build a retirement house in Surabaya. Her oldest boy is now a college student in electrical engineering in Surabaya, and the daughter is also a student there. The youngest boy, Teddy, is now a wonderfully good looking 16 year old high school student, who loves motorcycles. When he finishes high school in two years, they will plan to move to Surabaya.

Bu Soetji said when you were here she had two babies -- Teddy and you! She told me how sick you got, and how she nursed you back to health. I hope I don't get sick, that is my main worry. They obviously all have extremely fond memories about you, and she said she had just that day been thinking about you, and wondering how you are. She said she felt the presence of someone in Ponorogo who could give her news of you, even before I arrived there. I took a photo of them, which I will send to you later when I develop the film.

They were so gracious to me, and invited us back the next day for lunch. I led one of her English classes, and talked with some of her students. She took us to visit a bamboo/wood furniture factory, then a batik production center (there are not many left in Ponorogo now), and a home where the Reog costumes are made. They are anxious for me to return, and she will write me when there will be another Reog performance. I told her about the Amerind berdache, and she seemed quite interested and willing to talk about the relationship between the warok and the gemblakan.

After that, we returned to the furniture factory to pick up some things we had bought, and the manager (who seemed quite gay to me) introduced me to a jatilan dancer. We took him home to his father's house in Sumoroto, and talked with them about gemblakan. They offered to introduce me to some when I return, and were quite helpful. We drove from there west through Badegan, and beautiful mountain scenery, then back to Yogyakarta.

I want to return soon, and I thank you so much for your helpful tips and contact persons. I hope you can look over these fieldnotes, and also that you have by now had a chance to read my book *The Spirit and the Flesh* and can offer comments about possible comparisons and contrasts between the Indian berdache and the Javanese gemblakan tradition.

The gemblakan tradition seems alive and well in the villages, so I definitely feel there is much research potential here. I look forward to us working together on this project, and hope to hear from you soon.

I wish you all happiness, and send my warmest regards.

Sincerely,