



Patong Beach: An American Death

Description

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# PATONG BEACH



# AN AMERICAN DEATH

*siamese skin  
mobbing-throbbing-bobbing  
patong beach  
snearing-leering-blearing*

On December 19, 2019 James Daniel Thompson, age 25, choked down enough barbiturates in a cheap Patong Beach hotel room to make sure he wouldn't wake again. And he didn't.

He had traveled alone to this bawdy beach town where Thailand's vaunted sex industry goes full throttle. His family didn't even know their son was in Thailand until a call from the Thai Coroner's Office telling them Jame's body was in their cooler.

James was a polite boy, a college kid, with good manners and good parents, raised Christian from West Virginia. Blue Ridge Mountain hard scrabble. Country Roads on the radio. Fentanyl and strip mines. Sunday morning gospel. Dogs. Lots of dogs. Small towns and local folk.

In Patong Beach he found bar girls dabbing inner thighs with vanilla. Crystal meth and yaba pills. Tropical heat. Cocktails kicked up with a dash of insecticide served with a smile. Booming bass notes and sleazy neon. A place where you can't tell the boys from the girls.

No one ends up in Patong Beach by coincidence. Not James. Not anyone. The devotees of Patong Beach answer a siren call for the lonely, the discarded, the empty, the broken toys, the alienated. But I digress. This is James's story, or at least the end of it.

James's good upbringing was evidenced by a polite suicide note found on the bed stand next to his body. The suicide note left detailed instructions that his remaining cash, also left on the bed stand, should be divvied as follows: \$24,000 baht (about \$775 US) for his cremation; \$20,000 baht (about \$645 US) to reimburse the police for their work; and the remaining balance given to the housekeepers as an "apology".<sup>1</sup> His farewell note added, "I peacefully and painlessly ended my life. There was no foul play or coercion involved."

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Death be not proud. Paramedics taking James to the morgue.

Of course the death of James went wholly unnoticed in Patong Beach. White people routinely kill themselves here, usually old men jumping out the 10th floor of their hotel room. A young man's suicide in West Virginia might give some pause for small town reflection, but not here.

For his mom, dad, sister, and brother, James's suicide left them cursed with emptiness and guilt that they will take to their grave. And questions with no answers. His trip seemed spur of the moment and no one knew. Why did he come here? By himself? To find what? To do what? You don't have to fly halfway round the world to cavort with whores. I'm sure there's whores in West Virginia. Why Patong Beach?

James's hometown newspaper published a brief obituary which read in part:

“James Daniel Thompson, 25, passed away suddenly on December 19, 2019, while traveling overseas. He was born in Madison, West Virginia on September 12, 1994 to Randolph and Gail Thompson. James lived his life with a deep desire to help and serve people. His family grieves the loss of their son, brother and dear friend, but rejoices that he is now resting in the arms of Jesus.”

*While traveling overseas? Passed away suddenly?* Did I read that right? I guess the truth and it's painful facts are better left untold for a young man's obituary in the hometown newspaper. And trust me, no one, let alone his family, is “rejoicing” that he's “resting in the arms of Jesus”.

James killed himself in a whore-riddled hotel in the very middle of Patong Beach's red light district. On the street below his room, there were more bar girls, thumping music, booze, pimps, yaba pills, and

grinding thong-wrapped asses than a hellfire and brimstone preacher could ever dare imagine.

And dizzy stiletto heels with opium perfume intoxicating  
snake & orchid tattoos crawling up soft tropical thighs  
almond eyes offer cocktails of despair  
mixed by Andaman breezes

James's mind had been riddled for some time with suicide demons as evidenced by his writings on his personal web blog. And that gives a clue to why he ended his life in this tropical trash can set along the azure waters of the Andaman coast. If you're lonely, desperate and suicidal, Patong Beach might be the magic cure. Pretty girls waving at you. Smiling faces beckoning you to join the party.

But Patong Beach is really the Trojan Horse of hope. Inside hides desperation. For the suicidal James, coming here was like playing Russian Roulette with a bullet in every chamber.

There is no doubt that James came to Patong Beach trying to escape the demons that hounded him. It was a fatal decision. The demons won. In a dank hotel room on a hot, humid night, his demons mixed a deadly cocktail of alienation, depression and ladyboy laughter with a pile of barbiturates, then offered this tonic to a young suicidal soul. It wasn't a fair fight. James never stood a chance.

Hot jungle nights with his barbitol tonic seducing  
Bar girls grinning, groping, oozing, inducing  
Young James leaped into a cold abyss of eternal soothing

If James thought he could fuck himself to happiness with bar girls and ladyboys, he was surely disappointed. If he thought Patong Beach would cure his loneliness, he was soon to realize the opposite. Maybe if Patong Beach came with a warning label, James would be alive today.

God tried to destroy Patong Beach a few years back with the Great Tsunami. He drew back the warm waters of the Andaman Sea and then with righteous fury unleashed His Wrath upon this contemporary Sodom & Gommorah. And Lo, Patong Beach with it's bordellos, bar girls, and bad Thai food was washed away. Thousands dead.

But God underestimated the strength and tenacity of Patong Beach's pornocracy. The town was quickly rebuilt bigger, better, more cold and calculating than before. A monument to debauchery, that unlike James, will never die.

Patong Beach is not Thailand. Never was.

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## A Requiem

At times I think of James as I walk down the dusty, rural roads of Esaan<sup>2</sup>, far from the madding crowds of Patong Beach. Esaan and Patong Beach are intimately linked. The bar girls and ladyboys of

Thailand's sex industry mostly come from Esaan-the poorest region of the country.<sup>3</sup>

Eating at roadside noodle shops, cradling their babies on weathered front porches, reclining on a Thai pillow as their grandmother weaves pure silk, I see the young, coconut brown women with snake tattoos slithering up their thighs. The scent of vanilla between their thighs. They have returned to village life from a tour of duty in Patong Beach, Soi Cowboy, or Pattaya. And like soldiers who witness the carnage of battle, they speak little about it.

James never returned to his home in small town West Virginia. He was lured into death's abyss instead. His mother prays for his lost soul and tells those foolish enough to ask that he died unexpectedly overseas. She doesn't know about Patong Beach and has no desire to know.

Patong Beach was an accomplice in Jame's suicide. An active accomplice. It seductively whispered in his ear to jump. Pull the trigger. Put the noose around your neck. Gobble down the bottle of barbitol pills. And he did.

Good night James.

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