

The offering

The tropical night air is thick with solemn expectation and the heady fragrance of Frangipani, Tuber Rose and Lily. Dawn is soon to come.

Kadek has already been to the market to purchase the offerings: packages of sweet rice, sticky rice and fried banana wrapped in banana leaves, as well as fresh bananas, pineapple, mangoes, oranges, limes, flower arrangements unique to Bali, incense and a fresh coconut.

I see her arrive, lit only by the setting moon and a few low slung foot-lights. I watch her approach the wooden enclosure at the far end of the garden. I keep my distance as she silently arranges the offerings at the feet of a reclining Ganesha. I'm excited and fearful at the same time. She has already told me not to cry and I dread she'll tell me to let him go.

Outside the compound, on a staircase overlooking the scene, the shadowy outline of two dogs catches my attention. The pair seems to be watching Kadek light incense and arrange the flowers.

James, my American soul friend appears out of the darkness, dressed and ready.

I've been told I'm not allowed to cry, I whisper.

That's fine, he says. I'll do enough for both of us.

We hug and take our places for the ceremony.

Kadek skilfully cuts the young, green coconut and inserts a drinking straw.

He loves fresh coconut water, I say, my voice dry and husky ...
And beer, as she loosens the top of a beer bottle.

Kadek is a daughter of Ubud, twenty two years wise. When I make offerings to my grandfather, she says, I always light his cigarettes for him. They burn down very fast. She giggles. When you offer the beer to your son, he may want to drink it. Are you ready?