

THE LITTLE MAMAK

# LOST IN BAGAN

BY AZMI HUSSIN

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**LOST IN BAGAN**

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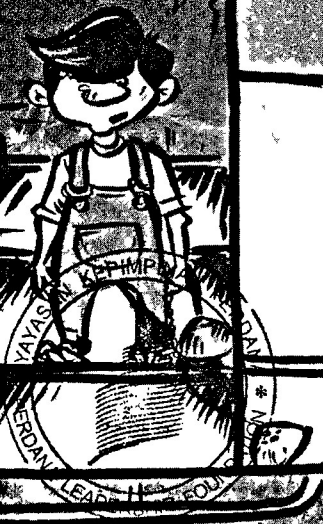


PERDANA  
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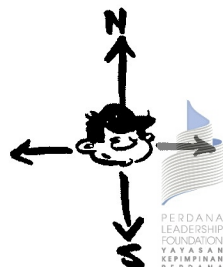
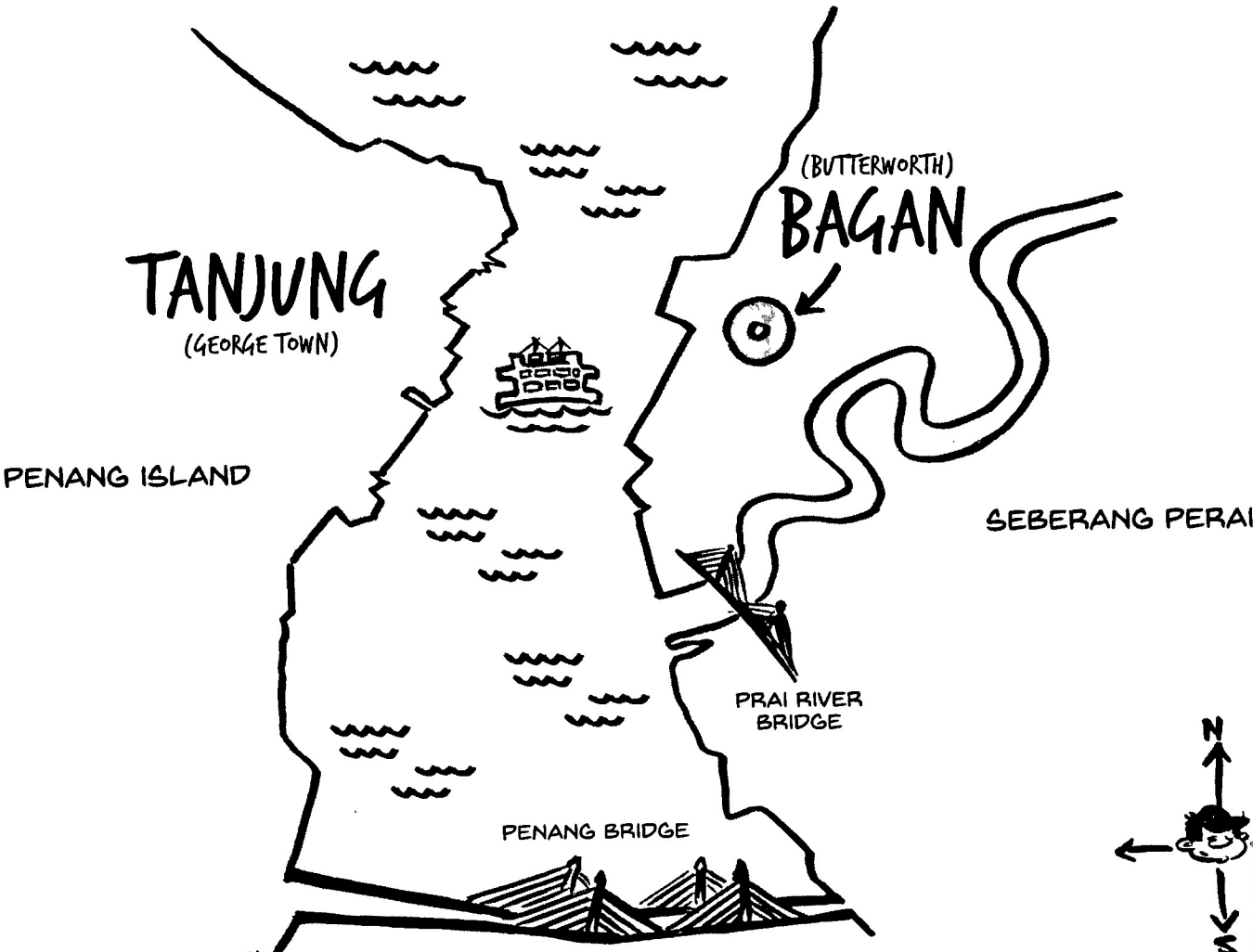


PUSTAKA PERDANA



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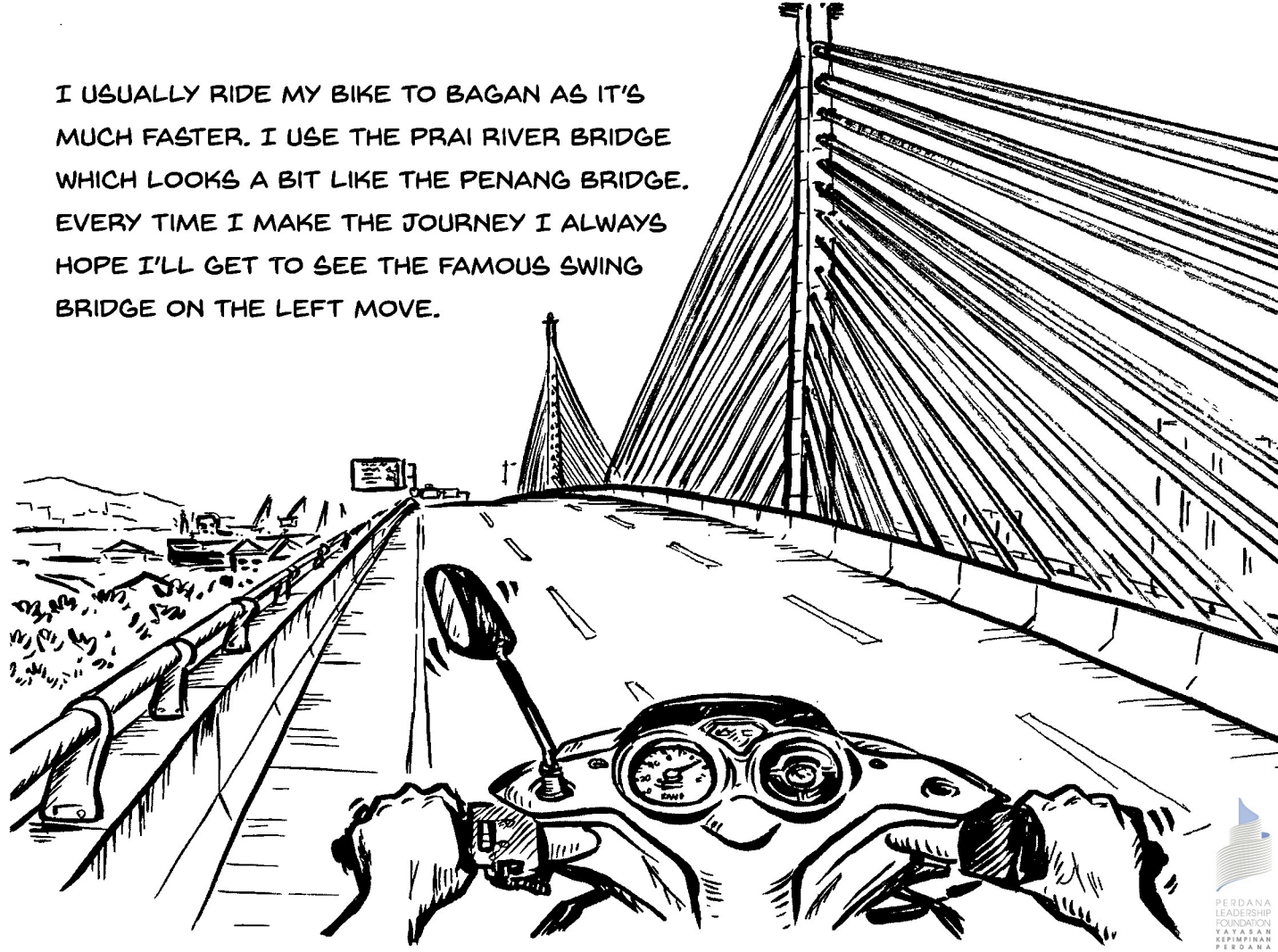
RETURNING HOME AFTER A LONG DAY'S WORK OR JOURNEY ALWAYS LEAVES ME WITH A FEELING OF SECURITY AND PEACE OF MIND. I STILL FEEL THE SAME WAY EVERY TIME I RETURN TO MY HOMETOWN - BUTTERWORTH. BUTTERWORTH IS THE LARGEST TOWN IN SEBERANG PERAI AND US LOCALS CALL IT BAGAN (WHICH MEANS JETTY IN MALAY).

WHEN I WAS GROWING UP, BAGAN WAS A BUSTLING TOWN AND THE ADMINISTRATIVE CENTRE FOR MAINLAND PENANG AS MANY GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS WERE BASED IN THE TOWN. TODAY, MOST OF THESE GOVERNMENT OFFICES HAVE MOVED TO SEBERANG JAYA, BANDAR PERDA AND KEPALA BATAS.

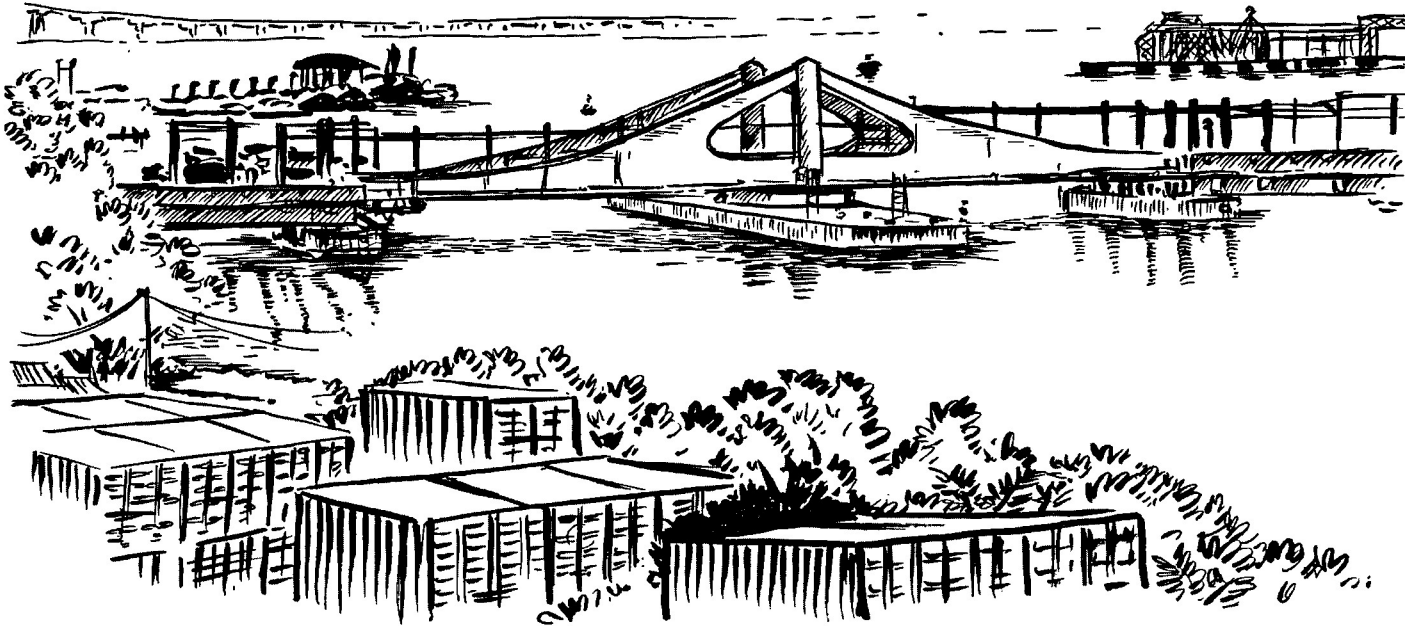




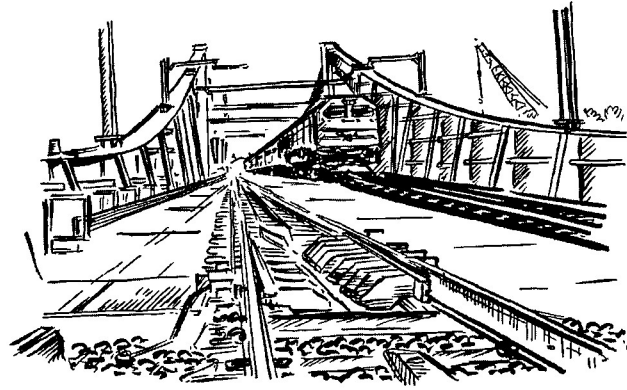
I USUALLY RIDE MY BIKE TO BAGAN AS IT'S MUCH FASTER. I USE THE PRAI RIVER BRIDGE WHICH LOOKS A BIT LIKE THE PENANG BRIDGE. EVERY TIME I MAKE THE JOURNEY I ALWAYS HOPE I'LL GET TO SEE THE FAMOUS SWING BRIDGE ON THE LEFT MOVE.



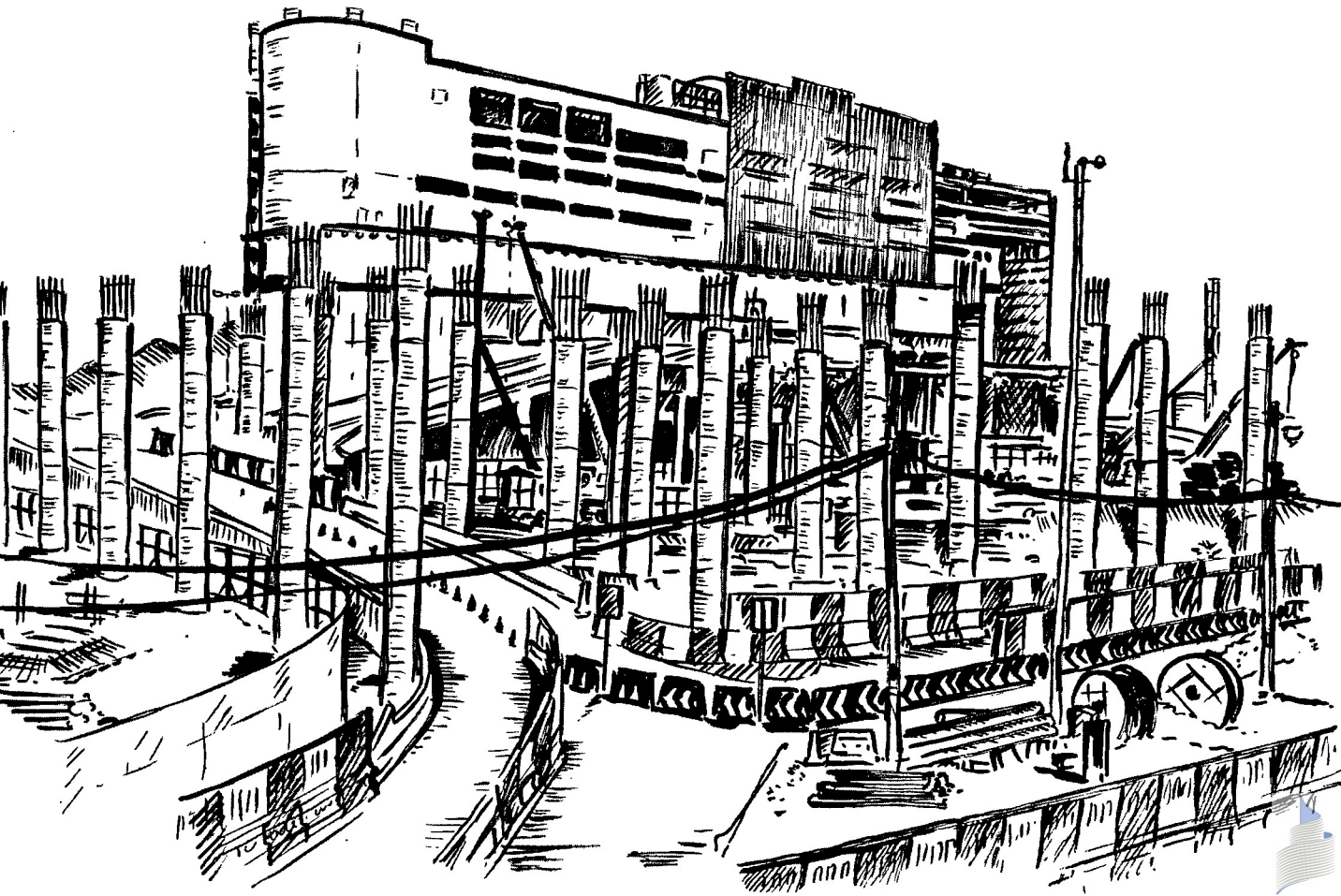
THE SWING BRIDGE WAS BUILT TO CONNECT TRAINS FROM THE BUTTERWORTH RAILWAY TERMINAL TO THE MAIN LINE THAT RUNS UP AND DOWN PENINSULAR MALAYSIA.



THE BRIDGE CAN 'SWING' OPEN TO ALLOW LARGE SHIPS, FERRIES AND BARGES TO PASS THROUGH.



NOT FAR FROM THE BRIDGE IS A LARGE PROJECT CURRENTLY UNDER CONSTRUCTION. THIS IS PENANG SENTRAL AND IT'S SET TO BECOME PENANG'S MAIN TRANSPORT HUB. I HAVE NO IDEA HOW MANY BILLIONS THIS WILL COST, BUT I DO KNOW IT WILL HAVE A HUGE IMPACT ON BAGAN IN THE NEAR FUTURE.



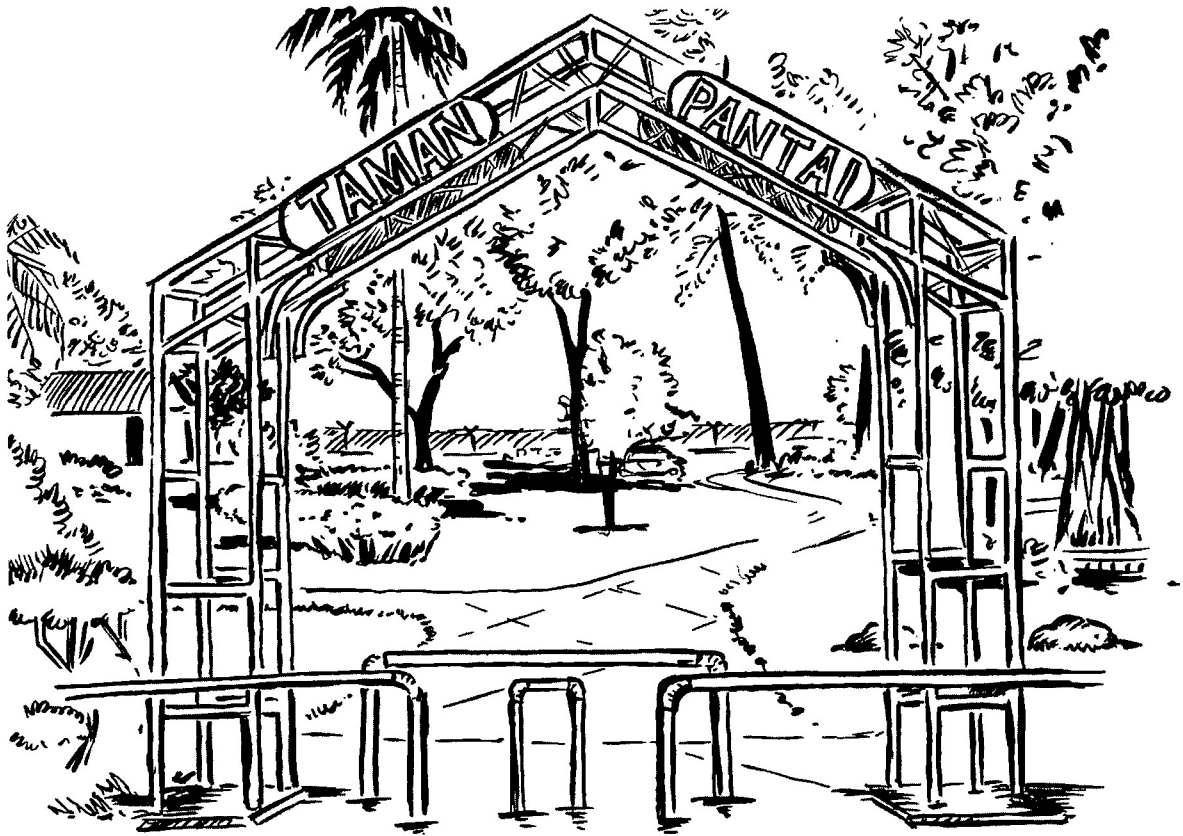
THE CONSTRUCTION SITE IS ON THE ORIGINAL SITE OF THE SULTAN ABDUL HALIM FERRY TERMINAL OR JETI BAGAN. I REMEMBER NANI (MY GRANDMOTHER) COMING HERE TO COLLECT HER PENSION FROM ONE OF THE BANKS.



WHEN I WAS IN SCHOOL, I SPENT PLENTY OF TIME HANGING OUT HERE WITH FRIENDS WHEN WE USED TO CUT CLASS AND LEPAK.



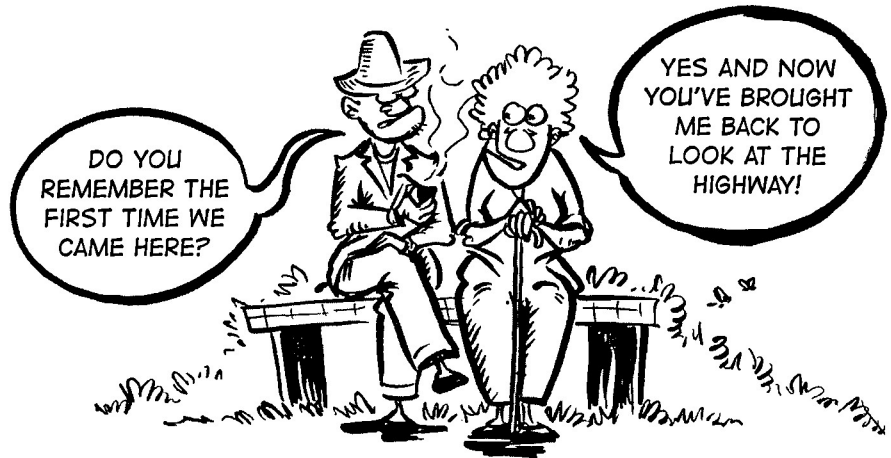
WE'D HANG OUT ON THE PARKSON SUPERMARKET STAIRS, CHATTING ,WATCHING PEOPLE AND LISTENING TO MUSIC. ANYTHING, AS LONG WE COULD AVOID SCIENCE AND MATH CLASSES.



I RODE OFF TO MY FAVOURITE SPOT FROM MY EARLY DAYS - TAMAN PANTAI ON PANTAI ROAD.

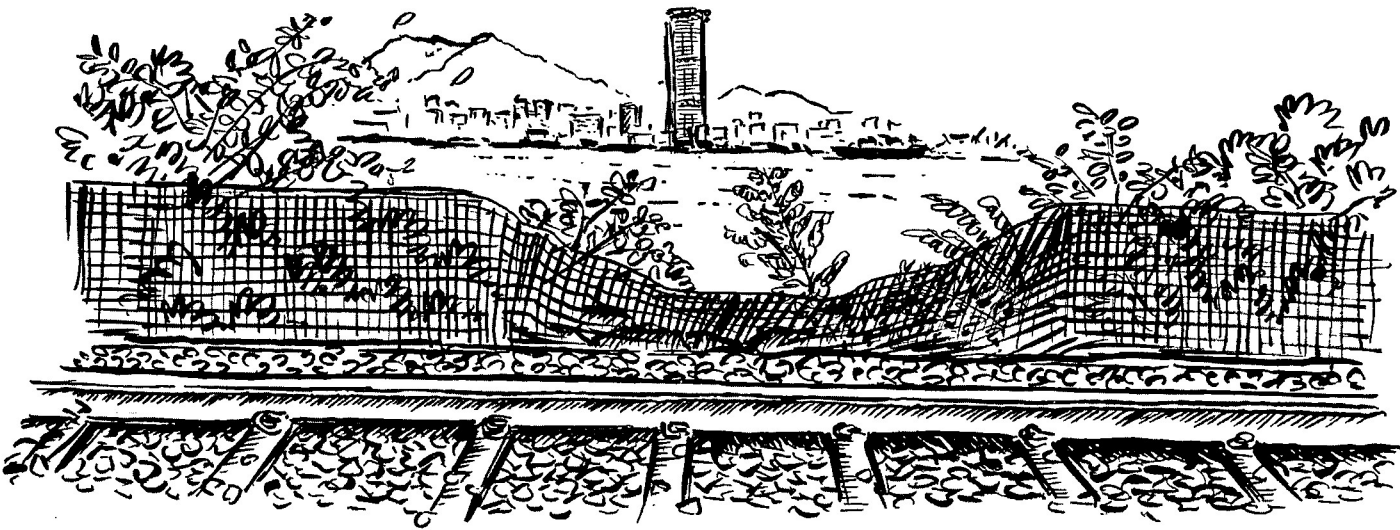


THIS IS THE PARK WHERE I SPENT MANY  
HAPPY HOURS PLAYING WITH MY SIBLINGS AND  
CHILDHOOD FRIENDS. TODAY THERE AREN'T ANY  
KIDS AROUND, JUST OLD FOLKS. I GUESS THEY'RE  
ALL AT SCHOOL.





THIS SECTION OF THE RAILWAY TRACK WAS BUILT ON RECLAIMED LAND AND OVERLOOKS THE SEA WHERE I USED TO SWIM AS A KID.

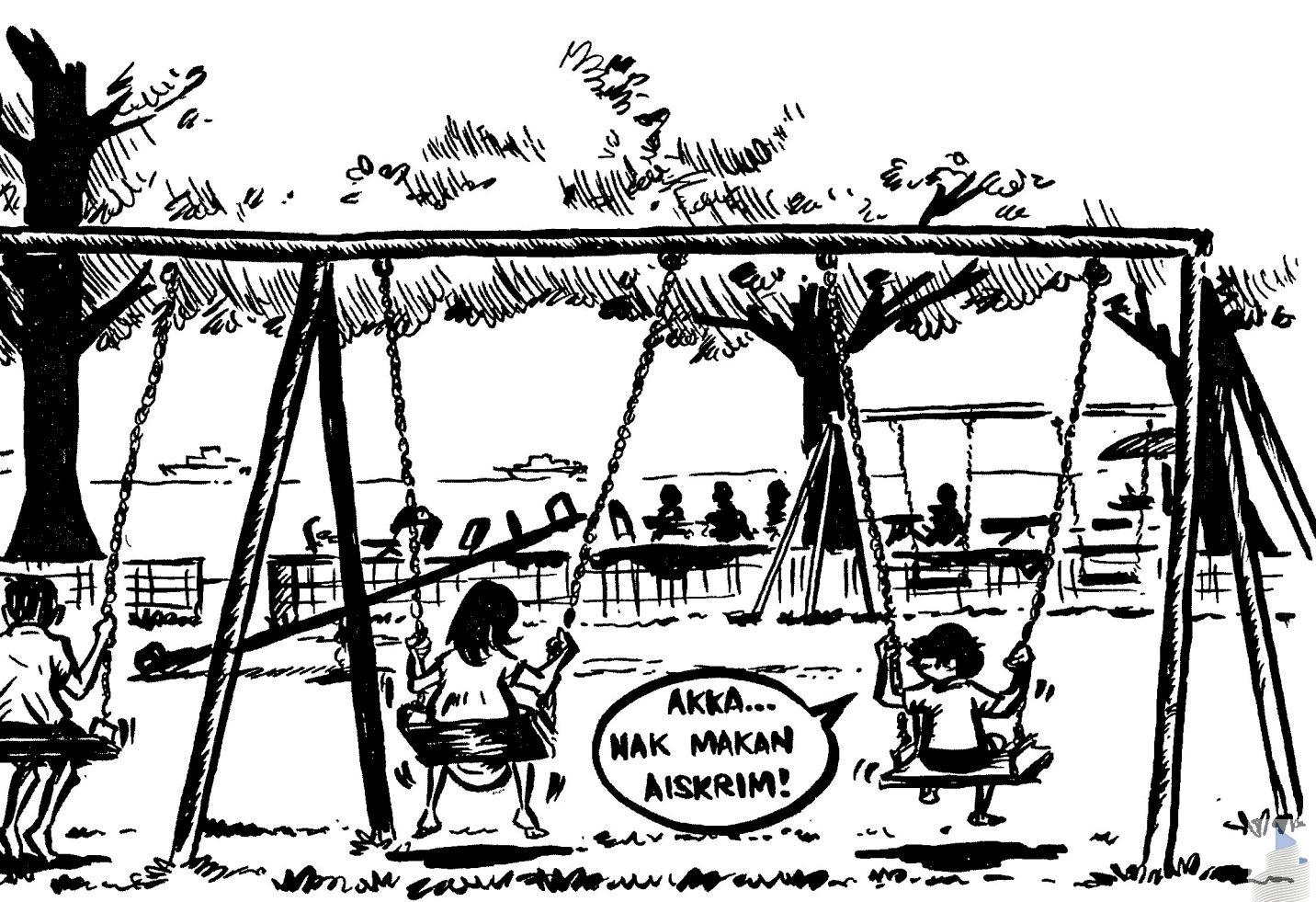


THROUGH THE FENCE AND I CAN SEE PENANG ISLAND ... IT'S SO CLOSE,  
YET IT SEEMS SO FAR AWAY.

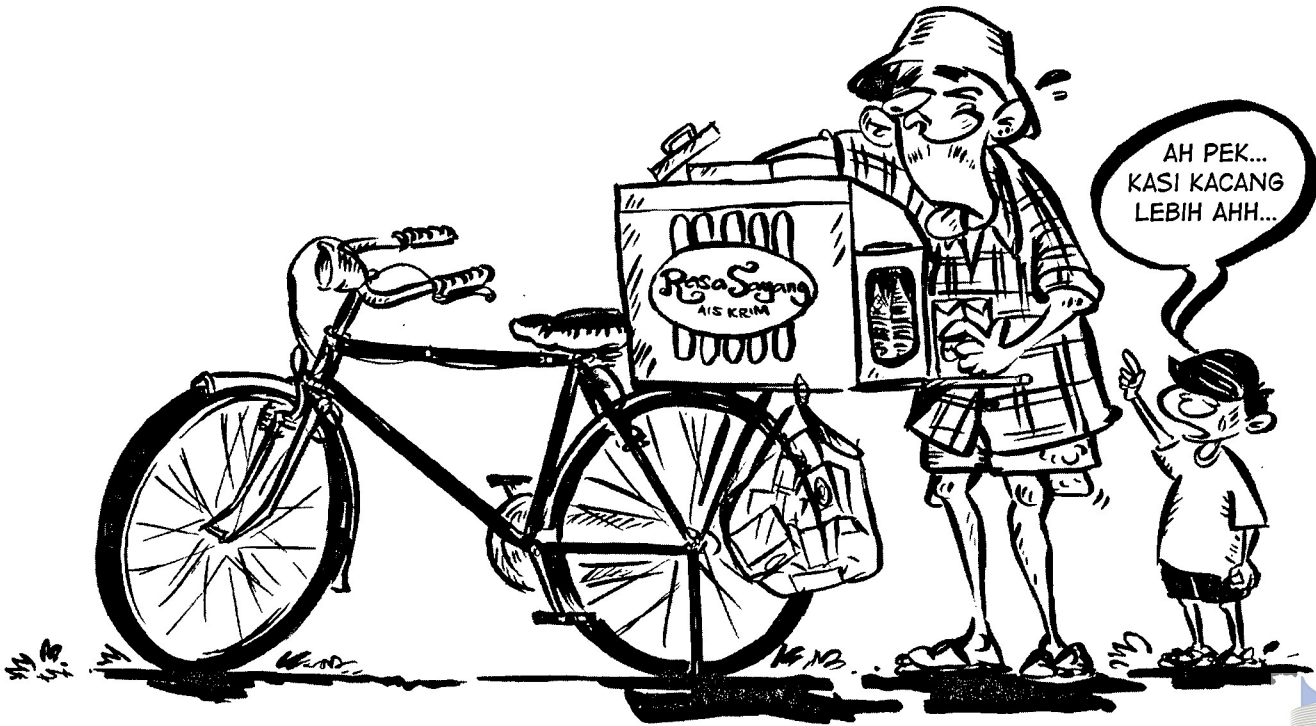
I HAVE SO MANY MEMORIES OF TAMAN PANTAI AS MY FAMILY USED TO LIVE CLOSE BY. MY ELDER BROTHER AND SISTER - ANNE AND AKKA - WOULD WALK ME HERE EVERY WEEKEND.

IN THOSE DAYS, THE PLAYGROUND WAS ALWAYS FULL OF KIDS HAVING FUN. THERE WERE ALSO MANY FOOD STALLS ALONG THE BEAUTIFUL BEACH SELLING ROJAK, CENDOL, MEE REBUS AND MY FAVOURITE - AH PEK AISKRIM!



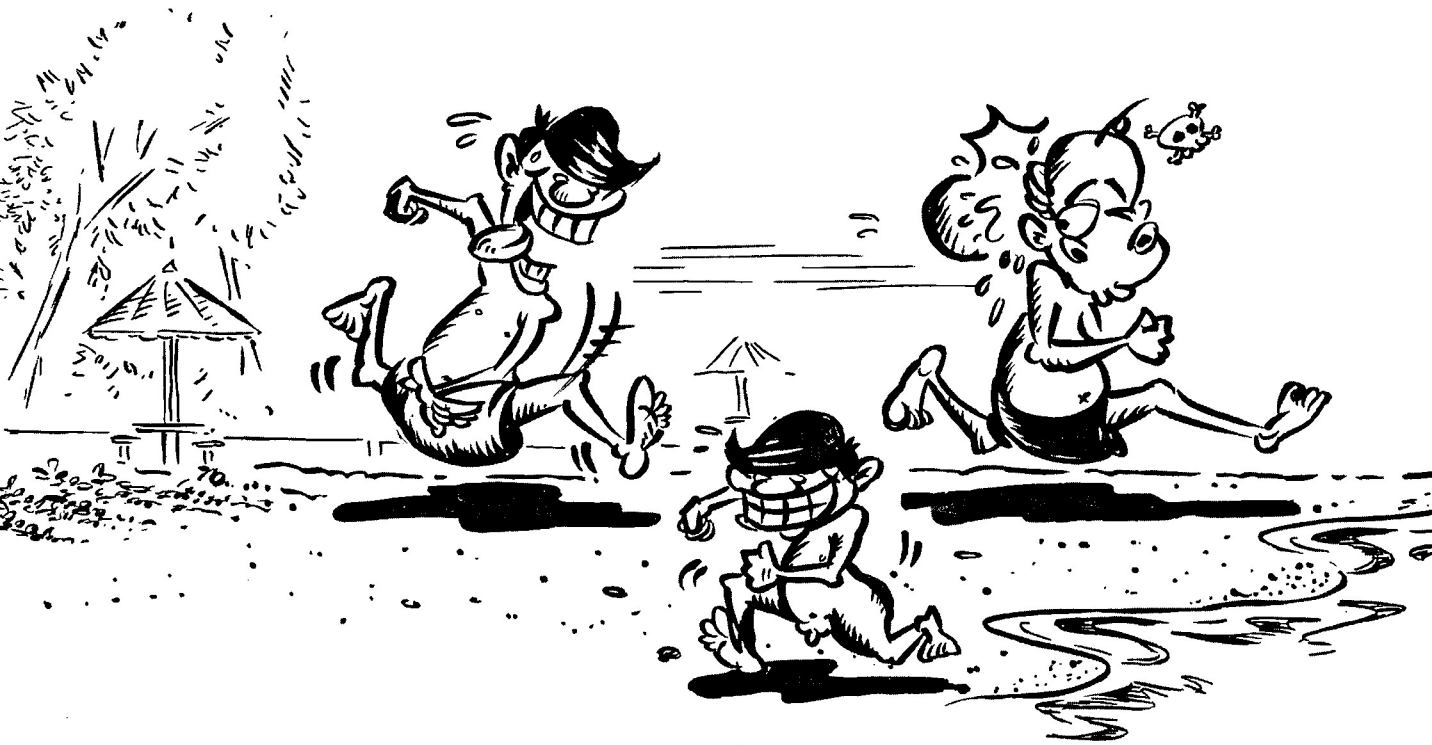


AKKA...  
NAK MAKAN  
AISKRIM!



AH PEK...  
KASI KACANG  
LEBIH AHH...

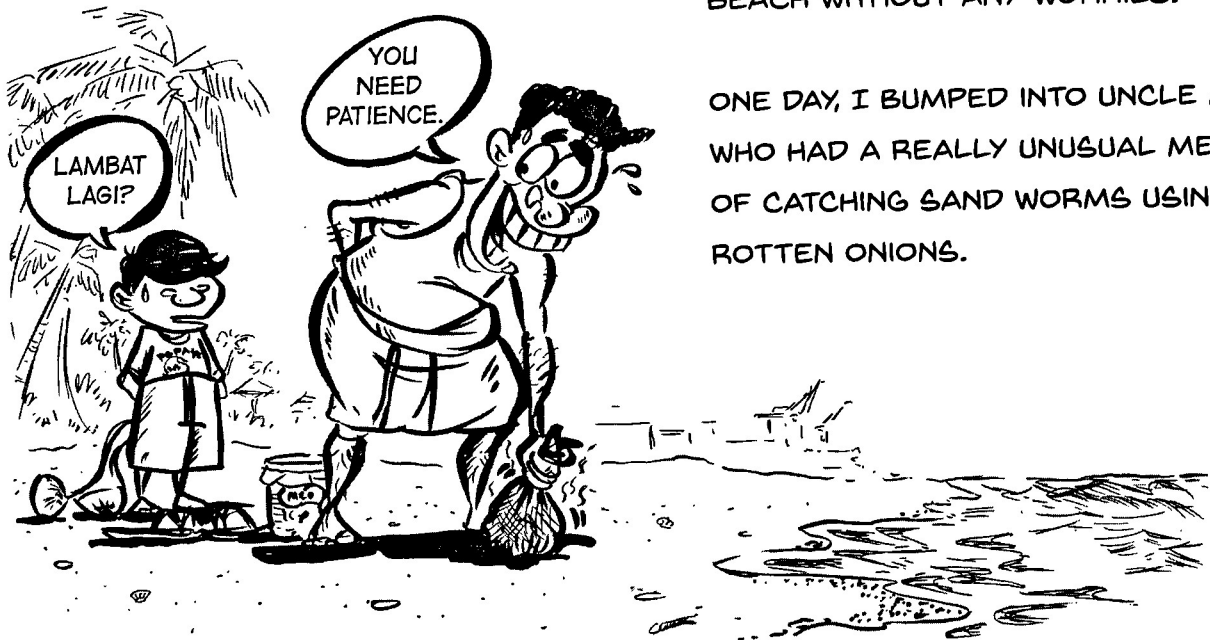




WE ALSO SPENT PLENTY OF TIME AT THE BEACH IN FRONT OF THE PARK  
HAVING SAND BALL FIGHTS ...



... COLLECTING SHELLS AND SWIMMING.



BACK THEN, WE'D WALK FROM ONE KAMPUNG TO ANOTHER ALONG THE BEACH WITHOUT ANY WORRIES.

ONE DAY, I BUMPED INTO UNCLE APPU WHO HAD A REALLY UNUSUAL METHOD OF CATCHING SAND WORMS USING ROTTEN ONIONS.



UNCLE APPU WOULD GATHER HIS ROTTEN ONIONS IN A SMALL SACK AND DIP THIS IN THE SEAWATER. I REMEMBER THE SMELL WAS TERRIBLE!





HE'D PLACE THE SACK ON SMALL HOLES IN THE WET SAND AND WAIT FOR A FEW SECONDS. WHEN HE REMOVED THE SACK, THE WORMS WOULD COME WRIGGLING OUT OF THE HOLE. I GUESS THEY LIKED THE SMELL!



I THOUGHT IT WAS REALLY DISGUSTING BUT FOR UNCLE APPU THE WORMS WERE A SOURCE OF INCOME. HE WOULD COLLECT ALL THE WORMS IN A TIN AND SELL THESE TO FISH SHOPS. WHAT A BUSINESS MIND.

UNCLE APPU USED TO GET THE ONIONS FROM A WAREHOUSE NOT FAR FROM THE BEACH.

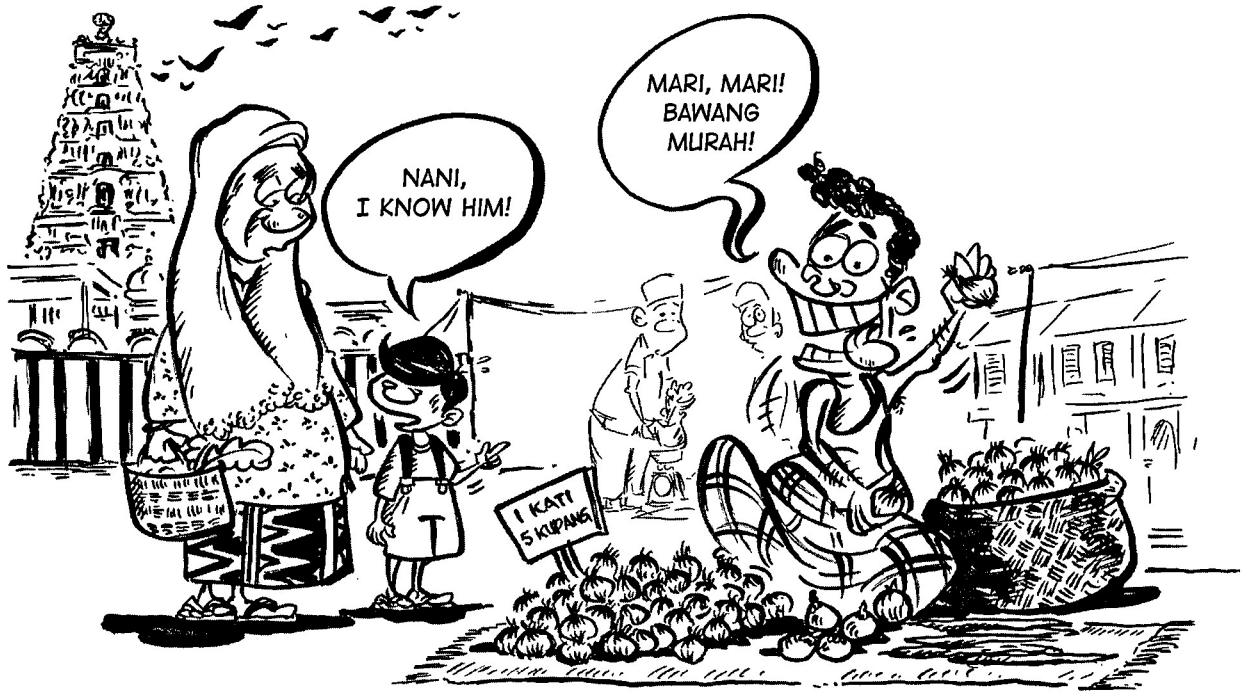


ONIONS CAME BY BARGE TO THE GUDANG WHERE THESE WERE STORED AND PROCESSED BEFORE BEING SENT TO MARKET TRADERS.



THE WORKERS IN THE GUDANG SEPARATED THE GOOD AND THE BAD ONIONS BY HAND. EVEN SLIGHTLY BRUISED ONIONS WOULD BE THROWN AWAY AND UNCLE APPU USED TO COLLECT THESE REJECTED ONIONS.





SURPRISE, SURPRISE, HE'D SELL THE ONIONS AT THE MORNING MARKET.



JOURNEY WITH THE LITTLE MAMAK  
THROUGH BAGAN'S URBAN SPRAWL IN  
SEARCH OF ELEPHANTS, LEPAK SPOTS  
AND HUNGRY GHOSTS.

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