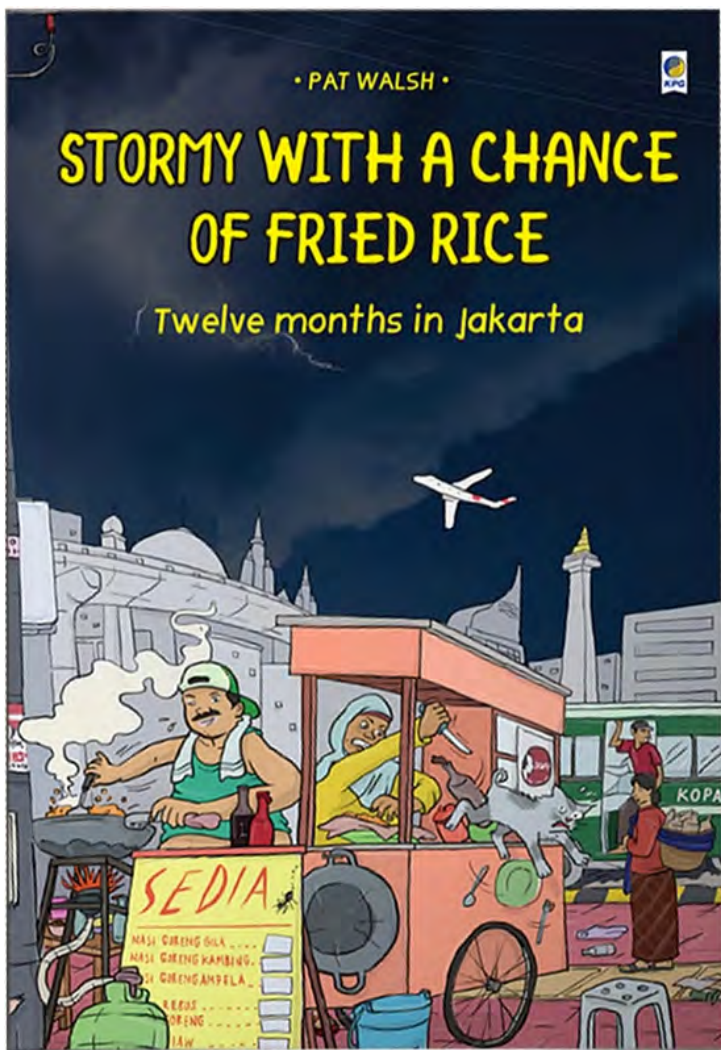


• PAT WALSH •



# STORMY WITH A CHANCE OF FRIED RICE

Twelve months in Jakarta



**EXCERPTS**

## Excerpts from *Stormy With a Chance of Fried Rice: Twelve Months in Jakarta*

It was a masterly performance delivered dramatically and without notes. Bung Karno, a renowned orator, would have been proud of him. The speaker didn't even miss a beat when a flag, propped in front of him, fell over and struck my Reno on the head making him cry and causing a flurry amongst officials and parents, Sumiati and grandma included. At least Reno won't forget today, I thought, and imagined him telling other kids how the flag had kissed him first.

*p. 5 Kissing in public*

My street had no such amenities. Crossing it was like running the bulls in Pamplona. Hordes of grim-faced motorcyclists, darkly helmeted like ancient knights, stampeded along its length. Revving and pawing the ground, they would mount the footpath, butt pedestrians out of the way, and even navigate through goods displayed out the front of shops to gain that extra metre. But chickening out was not an option. It would have meant never going to work.

*p. 28 Crossing the street*

To correct the widely held belief that there was only one massacre in Timor-Leste, that at Santa Cruz in 1991, I grouped all the massacres I could find under a heading of that name. The entry lists 101 massacre sites.

*p.77 Two sharp eyes*

I sensed the *pembantu* was intensely curious about who I was, where I had come from, and why I was visiting but nothing short of torture would have persuaded her to take the initiative and ask me. The most I could get when I thanked her or moved my legs to let her mop under the sofa was a quick smile that flickered across her face like a faulty connection.

*p. 109 Maid in Indonesia*

To flush the squat toilet one bombs its contents with dippers of water, a process that usually requires several depth charges being launched in quick succession and can result, particularly in the hands of the unskilled, in what are called wides in cricket, that is deliveries that miss the target.

*p. 126 Secret men's business*

Pujiati was my favourite. Now in her late 70s, she is short, bespectacled, to-the-point and has a face like Grumpy, one of Snow White's seven dwarfs. Each time her image appeared on the screen she chuckled loudly and enjoyed the moment with the other women. Despite ostracism and fourteen years of imprisonment, she seemed thoroughly chipper and unintimidated, anything but diminished.

*p. 161 Cycles of political leprosy*

Every workplace has its own particular rhythm and soundtrack. KPG's lurched from dead quiet to raucous. For long periods each day the place resembled a library. The only sounds were

rapidly tapped keyboards, soft like rain in a downpipe, the hypnotic ticking of the photocopier and, occasionally, the playful gurgle of the water fountain.

*p.176 The book makers*

Though montages, the photos have taken in lots of Indonesians because they look so real and depict exactly what they would have expected of Sukarno. They continue to spark *gossip selebriti*. Did the CIA set up the encounter? Was Marilyn Monroe a CIA agent? Did they spend the night together?

*p. 193 Flirting with Marilyn*

The trauma of their ordeal shows in the bodies and demeanour of Jakarta's cats. Their heads are small and elongated and they have eyes that bulge and project like the headlights one sees on fancy cars. I never heard them purr. They are timid. Those that approached when I was eating out at a *warung* skedaddled quickly the moment I reached for my knife. Having no tails to speak of, I wonder what sort of tales they whisper to their kittens at night.

*p. 197 A cat's tale*

Only a road separates the Catholic gothic cathedral in Jakarta and Indonesia's national mosque. The two institutions co-exist but such is the centuries old backlog of conflict, competition and ignorance between the belief systems they represent that the road might as well be a valley of steep cliffs and gorges, nigh impassable. One evening, however, I decided to attempt a personal crossing. At mass in the cathedral, the call to prayer reached me faintly from the mosque. It was, I decided, an invitation to read the Koran.

*p. 204 Reading the Koran*

*ENDS*