

Tiggy

By Ian Thomas Healy

“Honestly, I don’t know who she is. I got home from work, threw my coat on the chair and went to the kitchen to fix myself a sandwich when I spotted her under the table.” Mr. Arnold F. Gernsbeck brushed a hand nervously back through his thinning hair.

“And you have no idea how she got into your house?” asked my partner, Grimes, who stared curiously at the strange girl huddled underneath the table. We’ve seen a lot of strange things over our six years patrolling together on the force, but a naked, hairless woman with green skin crouched under a table in middle-class suburbia, eating peanut butter by the fistful ... well, that probably ranked in the top two or three.

Gernsbeck shook his head. “My alarm was still armed when I came home. I haven’t gone through the house yet, though. I was afraid to go where I couldn’t see her.”

I hunkered down beside the table. My knees popped, reminding me that forty was only a fond memory and fifty not too far away. “Miss? I’m Officer Harry Blaine. Would you mind coming out from under the table?”

She petulantly flicked a bit of peanut butter at me.

Grimes knelt down beside me.

“Easy, rookie. You don’t want to spook her.” I called him *rookie* out of habit – he was ten years younger than me and only had ten years on the force to my twenty-five.

“Stuff it, geezer.” Grimes always gave as good as he got. “Miss? Are you hurt? Are you lost?”

No response except for a baleful glare from yellow-tinged eyes. Fingers dipped into the peanut butter, then into her mouth over and over.

“You think she’s a parahuman?” whispered Grimes.

“How should I know?” I replied.

“Well, I just figured ...”

“Look, it’s not like we all have a secret handshake or something.” I happened to be a parahuman myself. I never had any grand designs on wearing colorful spandex and beating up A-List bad guys like they do in *Just Cause* or *the Lucky Seven*. All I ever wanted to be was a cop. I’d managed to keep my own powers secret for fifteen years. Nobody had known that I was strong enough to bench press a city bus or tough enough to shrug off bullets at point blank range, and that had been good enough for me.

But then I’d been put into a situation where I’d had no choice but to use those powers publicly to protect a classroom full of schoolchildren from a gunman. I figured I’d be expelled from the force after that, but when the captain had called me into his office, I was given an award for bravery in the line of duty instead of my walking papers. I’d asked the captain about it and he’d told me that he didn’t care about parahuman powers. He was glad I was a good cop and as such, thrilled to have me stay on the force.

There’d been a bit of a flap about it in the papers and the ACLU made some threatening noises about parahumans, namely me, using their powers against normal humans, i.e. criminals, being an infringement of their rights. Ultimately, a sympathetic judge declared it legal for me to continue to work in my capacity as a police officer, and that’s why five years later I found myself crouched under Arnold F. Gernsbeck’s kitchen table having peanut butter thrown at me.

“I think I can get her out,” said Grimes, and reached for her.

Her eyes flashed like golden coins and Grimes flew backward across the kitchen to fetch up against the dishwasher with a crash and a groan. Gernsbeck yelped in surprise, tripped over a chair, and fell backwards to end up sitting on his rump facing the girl under the table.

“Fred!” I yelled, unmindful of any risk to the homeowner when my partner was possibly hurt, and slid across the floor next to him. “You all right? Don’t try to move.”

Of course, he moved right away; Grimes was no parahuman, but he certainly was a tough old bird. He sat up, pieces of the shattered plastic facing of the dishwasher door spilling down his uniform, and groaned. “Oh-h-h ... I think she’s a parahuman all right.”

“Figured that out all by yourself, rookie?” Now that I could see he wasn’t seriously injured, I could tease him once more. “She never touched you. Some kind of whatchamacallit. Tele-something.”

“Telekinesis,” said Gernsbeck behind me, an odd timbre in his voice.

I turned around to see him floating six inches above the floor, slowly rotating like somebody strapped to a wheel.

“Crap,” I muttered. I hadn’t dealt with many parahumans in my time on the force. That was more my daughter’s style. She’d inherited all of my strength and toughness and none of my common sense. She ran around with a group of like-minded incredibly young twentysomethings and fought what she liked to call The Good Fight. They called themselves the Young Guns and were loved by the young, fresh, hip kids of the Bay Area and only tolerated by the rest of us. If I’d have been a weaker man, I might have pushed off this problem on them. Let the superheroes deal with the weird green telekinetic girl.

Grimes and I could go on to answer a noise complaint that had come in half an hour ago and, as usual, got kicked aside in favor of higher priority calls.

In this case, criminal trespassing.

“Mr. Gernsbeck, do you have a robe or blanket or something you could loan to this young lady?” I asked as quietly and non-threateningly as possible.

“Bathroom,” he grunted, at the moment upside-down with his tie hanging across his chin. He continued to spin slowly around.

“Grimes, go get it, would you?”

“And leave you alone with this freak? No way.”

“Grimes,” I repeated. “It’s a parahuman problem. I’ll handle it.” I hated pulling out that card, but desperate times call for desperate measures, and we needed to get this girl out of the house and away from civilians before somebody got hurt. I heard him grumbling as he left the kitchen in search of Gernsbeck’s bathroom.

I hunkered down as much as I could – I’m not exactly a small fellow and nowhere near as fit as I was twenty years ago – and smiled at the girl while studying her features.

Her skin really was green, I marveled. It wasn’t body paint or even a tattoo. Most of her smooth, hairless skin was the color of new grass, but it lightened on her palms and soles of her feet to a faded celery color. Looking closer, I realized her skin was covered with tiny scales, like those on a gecko. Her fingers and toes had no nails, but sported dark spots at the tips where claws might extend. Her eyes were human, although the brown irises swam in a sea of gold instead of white, and they were just a bit too large for her head. High cheekbones, a slender aquiline nose, and dark lips added an exotic flavor to her mostly-Caucasian features. The upper tips of her ears came to points.

“Miss,” I said carefully. “Can you understand me?”

Her hand stopped partway to her mouth, fingers coated with peanut butter. Was that a brief nod? I decided it had been.

“My name’s Harry. What’s yours?”

“Tiggy.” Her voice was smooth as silk and sweet as honey and every other lame metaphor I could think of.

“Tiggy,” I repeated, hoping more might be forthcoming, but to no avail. “It’s nice to meet you, Miss Tiggy. Would you mind setting Mr. Gernsbeck down gently? This is his house and you gave him quite a scare.”

“Sorry.”

Gernsbeck grunted as he settled to the floor next to me. “Back away slowly,” I whispered at him. “Make no threatening moves.” He scooted away, never taking his eyes off Tiggy.

“Harry, robe,” said Grimes from somewhere behind me. I glanced back to see him holding up a large fluffy white robe with the *Hilton* logo emblazoned on the breast.

“I didn’t steal it,” Gernsbeck said quickly as he followed my gaze.

“I don’t care if you did. Toss it here, rookie.”

Tiggy hissed as the robe fluttered through the air to me. I caught a sparkle of ivory teeth, sharp like a cat’s.

“It’s all right,” I said, trying to soothe her. “It’s just a robe. See?” I opened it up and held it out to her. “It’s pretty chilly out today. Damp, too. You can’t be very warm. Why don’t you put it on and come out where we can talk?”

The robe tore out of my grasp to flutter across the floor to her. She grabbed it, unmindful of the peanut butter smears she left on the snowy fabric. After examining it, she shrugged into it. Did I watch? You better believe it. I'm happily married, but no way was I going to take my eyes off this girl while I tried to gain her trust.

"Thanks," she said in that lovely low voice of hers.

"Miss Tiggy, I'm a police officer. I'm not going to hurt you, but you're someplace you're not supposed to be. Would you please come out from there so Mr. Gernsbeck can make himself some dinner?"

"Okay," she said without hesitation, and unfolded her lithe form to stand beside the table. She was a full foot shorter than me, and slender enough she seemed lost in the oversized fluffy robe.

"There. Isn't that better?" I asked, as bright and cheery as I could be. Behind me, I could hear Grimes requesting a female officer.

"Mr. Gernsbeck, may we borrow your robe until we can get some clothes for Miss, uh, Tiggy?"

"Yes. Yes, of course." Gernsbeck's eyes were so wide as he stared at the strange girl in his kitchen, I thought they might fall right out of his skull.

I asked Tiggy the usual litany of information-seeking questions, but was either met with stony silence or one-word answers that were mostly unhelpful. In the end, all I could get out of her was the name *Tiggy* – which didn't match as a first or last name in the law enforcement database – and that she wasn't hurt. Grimes thought her name sounded like an alias or nickname, and I agreed, but she wasn't forthcoming with anything else.

She did give us one more impromptu demonstration of her telekinetic powers – floating the empty peanut butter jar lazily around the kitchen before letting it drop into the trash.

An unmarked car pulled up behind Grimes' and my black-and-white. The quiet, authoritative voice of Detective Susan Lukasz announced her arrival on scene amid the mishmash of radio traffic from the unit clipped to my shoulder. I smiled at Tiggy in the hope it would keep her relaxed. "Miss Tiggy, would you mind coming outside with me? I'd like you to meet a friend of mine."

For several seconds, the only sound in the kitchen I could hear was the ticking of the clock on the wall. Then Tiggy said "yes" and Grimes blew out the lungful of air he'd apparently been holding.

"Lead the way, rookie."

"Why me? What if she ... goes off again?"

"I'll stop her," I said with a confidence I certainly didn't feel. Besides, we needed to handle her with kid gloves. She may not have trusted either of us, but at least I'd build some rapport with her and that might make her comfortable enough for me to follow behind her.

Despite his complaints, Grimes headed for the front door of Gernsbeck's town home. Tiggy followed, her lean limbs unfolding with serpentine grace. I brought up the rear, murmuring "stand down, Lukasz" into my radio.

Lukasz waited for us outside, her hands in the pockets of her overcoat to ward off the chill of the rain. "Well there's something you don't see every day," she said cheerfully. "Are you arresting her?"

Grimes turned to Gernsbeck, who'd followed us and now stood in his door, blinking stupidly at the cold rain. "How about it, Mr. Gernsbeck? Do you want to press charges?"

"N-no," said the man, shivering. "I mean, she didn't really do anything except eat all my peanut butter." Grimes snickered at that. "I think she'd be better off if you could find someone to help her."

"We'll do our best, Mr. Gernsbeck," I said, and then turned to face Tiggy. "Miss Tiggy, we're not arresting you, but we'd like you to accompany us to the station. We're concerned about your well-being.

I talked her into getting into the back of Lukasz's car. Then Lukasz, Grimes and I huddled together and discussed what to do with our mysterious parahuman. The most important thing was for us to get a positive identification so we could determine if she was wanted or listed as missing or something like that. Grimes suggested I call Dannan – my daughter – to see if she could put out the word through the costumed hero community about our unidentified telekinetic.

That's when Lukasz noticed Tiggy was gone from the back seat of her car.

"How'd she get out?" she asked. Her car had a secure back seat, with no handles inside the doors. Gernsbeck's robe lay crumpled on the seat.

We spread out, searching up and down the street in the rain, even going so far as to ask some of the neighbors who'd been peeking out their windows and wondering about the police car in front of Gernsbeck's place. Nobody saw anything. Tiggy had simply ... vanished.

I lost to Grimes two out of three in *rock-scissors-paper* so I had to write the report. At least there wasn't much to write: unknown perpetrator – presumed parahuman, unknown method of entry into the residence in question, unknown method of escape. Far more questions than answers.

On my way home, I called Dannan. Just when I thought her phone would go to voice mail, she answered.

“Hi, Daddy!”

“Hi there, sugarbear. How'd you like to come have dinner with your uncool parents tonight?”

“Oh, that sounds great, except we're out of town. We got a lead on Mr. Macho and we're following up on it. We're in San Diego – drove down last night.”

I had no idea who Mr. Macho was. “Sorry to hear that. Alisa would have loved you to stop by. She's making spaghetti tonight.” Spaghetti was Dannan's favorite. If she could have come by, she would have.

“I'm really sorry, Daddy.”

“That's all right. Listen, Dannan ... have you ever heard of a weird telekinetic girl with green scaly skin?”

“Doesn't ring a bell. Why? Did you run across her?”

“Yes. Could you maybe ... I don't know, ask around?”

“Sure. Oh! I have to go ... it's going to drop in the pot. Love to you and Mom. Bye!”

Drop in the pot meant she and the rest of the Young Guns were about to get into a fight, presumably with this Mr. Macho character. I was sure I'd hear all about it in the

morning – if not on the news, then from the other officers at morning roll call who liked to follow Dannan’s exploits.

oOo

The next day, Gernsbeck called to report Tiggy had returned to his house. He’d found a brand new jar of peanut butter on his table and the green girl sitting in his study, wearing his robe, and slowly paging through a *Calvin and Hobbes* collection. Guess who got dispatched to respond?

“This is just plain weird,” Grimes complained as we stared at Tiggy in Gernsbeck’s study. “It’s like she thinks she lives here.”

“Or she’s stalking him,” I added thoughtfully.

“Stalking me? That’s crazy talk!” cried Gernsbeck. “Why would she stalk me? I’m nobody – just an account manager for an insurance company.”

“I don’t know,” I admitted. “The reason we call them crazy is that they don’t operate rationally like normal people.”

“Well that’s just great. How do I stop her?”

Neither Grimes nor I had an immediate answer for him. Tiggy was a fairly strong telekinetic and apparently could either teleport or use some other method to pass through walls. I wasn’t sure how we could even hold her if we arrested her. But we’d have to try, because the civilian had a valid complaint against her and it was our job.

“Tiggy,” I began. She ignored me. “Tiggy, you’re going to have to come with us. You can’t be here. You’re trespassing, and you’re disturbing Mr. Gernsbeck. Please put down the book and come with us.”

“No.” She didn’t even look up from her book. Any rapport I might have had with her the day before was clearly gone.

“So much for Plan A,” grimaced Grimes. “Now what?”

“Tiggy, if you won’t come voluntarily, I’m going to have to physically remove you from the premises.” I tried to sound authoritative.

She didn’t reply, but shot me a look that plainly said *you and what army?*

“Fred, get Gernsbeck out of here for his own safety. And for yours,” I ordered. “And Mr. Gernsbeck, you might want to get your homeowner’s insurance policy just in case she doesn’t come quietly.”

“Christ in a sidecar,” said Grimes under his breath.

“Oh God, please be careful. My book’s in here,” said Gernsbeck as Grimes escorted him out.

“I’ll do my best to avoid damaging your property, sir.” I focused on Tiggy as they left the room. “Last warning, Tiggy.”

She made no move to comply, so I took a step toward her and, as Dannan would have said, it dropped in the pot. Her eyes flashed golden and suddenly I had the unique sensation of pitting all of my strength against an unseen force. Her telekinetic wall wasn’t solid like a brick wall. It felt more like I was trying to force my way through a barrier of strong but flexible rubber. It gave in some places while pushing back harder in others.

For all the progress I wasn't making, I may as well have been trying to divert a river of mud with a shovel.

Gernsbeck's telephone rang, and in that moment, Tiggy vanished. With nothing to push against, I over balanced and staggered heavily into his desk, sending a stack of handwritten pages flying.

I groaned inwardly, and knew yet another report awaited me. Two appearances by this odd parahuman, and twice now she'd made Grimes and me look like fools.

Somehow, I suspected we'd see a lot more of Tiggy before we solved the quandary of who she was and what she wanted.

I spent that evening sprawled in front of my laptop on the bed, surfing various parahuman forums and trying different search parameters to see if I could find any mention of Tiggy online. Alisa, good sport that she is, sat on my hips and rubbed my shoulders while search after search turned up nothing.

"Maybe Dannan has had some luck," Alisa said as she dug an elbow into a stubborn knot in my lower back. "She's probably done with that Macho guy by now."

Dannan and the rest of the Young Guns had fought Mr. Macho and some of his henchmen on a stretch of beach north of San Diego the night before in a struggle which ended with her pounding him into unconsciousness. Then she sat on him until the authorities arrived to take him into custody. The morning news had reported he was wanted for a string of smash-and-grabs on Oakland. I still feared for Dannan's safety every time she fought other parahumans, but I was awfully proud of her nevertheless.

Unfortunately, my call to her proved fruitless as well. She'd called a friend in Just Cause, the country's premiere team of heroes, who had in turn called a contact at the

Department of Parahuman Affairs, which maintained the world's most thorough database of information on parahumans. No luck. *"It really sounds like you've run across a brand new parahuman, Daddy,"* said Dannan. *"I wish I could be more help."*

"It's all right, sugarbear. Thanks for asking."

She promised to come by for dinner on the weekend.

I closed the laptop. Alisa slid off my hips to stretch out next to me. "I don't know what to do next," I said to her. "I'm worried that she's going to keep coming back to that guy and sooner or later he's going to get hurt. And I don't know how to stop her."

Alisa kissed me on the forehead. "Well, who's this guy? Maybe if you could figure out why she's targeting him, you could get to her that way."

And just like that, an idea occurred to me.

I smiled at my wife. "You're brilliant, you know."

"I know." She smiled back. "You thought of something?"

"Yeah." It was crazy, but I figured I'd run with it.

Tomorrow, I decided, as Alisa rolled into my arms.

oOo

"You look like the cat that swallowed the canary," remarked Grimes the next morning. "Geezer get laid last night?"

"Quiet, rookie. Respect your elders."

“If you were any elder, I’d be stealing your social security check and hiding your false teeth.” Grimes looked out the cruiser’s window at the nondescript office building as I parked. “What’re we doing here?”

“Following up on a hunch. Watch and learn.”

The receptionist stiffened when we walked into the lobby. “Can I help you?” she asked. Most people get nervous when uniformed officers approach them. Some guys love the power it conveys – you can see it in their swagger. Not me, though. I’d much rather people would see me before they see the badge, but habits are habits.

I’d called Dannan back late the night before and she’d given me a name. “May we speak to Dr. Wyler please?”

The receptionist stabbed at a button on her phone. “Dr. Wyler? There are some co—some *police officers* here to see you.”

A few minutes later a bespectacled young man with fine features and an earring came from the back offices. He wore a white lab coat over a T-shirt emblazoned with the logo of some band I faintly remembered hearing about a couple years ago. “I’m Dr. Noah Wyler. What can I do for you guys?”

“Harry Blaine, and this is Fred Grimes. Bombshell of the Young Guns gave us your name.” *Bombshell* was Dannan’s superhero name, bestowed upon her by the Chronicle when they first reported upon the “Blonde Bombshell of the Bay Area.”

Recognition flooded his face. Apparently he was a graduate from the Parahuman Medical Institute in Paris and had come to San Fran to set up a low-profile research facility. He had examined and occasionally treated all the members of the Young Guns as well as the New Guard from Los Angeles at some point or other. Among the parahuman

community, he was recognized as the leading authority on the West Coast. I found this a little hard to believe, given his appearance, but I reminded myself that this was a different generation from my own and not to make assumptions based solely upon what I saw.

“Of course.” He stared me up and down and although he tried to hide it, I knew he’d seen the family resemblance between Dannan and me.

“We’ve encountered what I believe to be a new parahuman here in the Bay Area and Dan—*Bombshell* said you had a gizmo that could do a rapid MK test.” The Musashi-Kitaro test identified the genetic markers common to all parahumans.

Grimes raised an eyebrow but didn’t say anything. I was rather enjoying keeping him in the dark. It made me feel just a bit superior – something that happened far too infrequently these days.

“Oh, are you the officers who’ve discovered the new teke? I was hoping to get a chance to meet her.” Wyler’s face lit up at the notion.

“I think we might be able to arrange that. Would you mind packing up your little black bag and taking a trip with us?”

“I’d be thrilled. Give me fifteen minutes to collect my gear and clear my schedule.” Wyler ran back into the rear of the building.

Grimes turned to me. “You’re onto something. Care to share?”

“I’m running on a hunch here,” I said. “I did a little background research into Mr. Gernsbeck. Did you know he’s a published writer?”

“Nope.”

“He writes speculative fiction. Aliens and magic and stuff like that.”

“I see.”

“His last book was about magical lizard people.”

“Magical lizard people,” repeated Grimes. “Sounds fascinating.”

“It sounds a lot like Tiggy,” I emphasized.

His eyes widened. “Oh, so you think she’s obsessing over his book and that’s why she keeps coming back to him?”

“Something like that.”

Wyler returned with an honest-to-God black bag and a leather jacket instead of a lab coat. “Okay, I’m all geared up.”

“If you’ll follow us, please.”

Wyler went to his car and soon we were leading him across town. “Go to Gernsbeck’s place,” I advised Grimes.

“You going to let me in on this or what, Perry Mason?” he complained as he checked the rear view mirror to make sure Wyler hadn’t dropped behind.

“Soon,” I said evasively. I dialed Gernsbeck’s work number. When he answered, I identified myself and asked if he could meet us at his house.

Less than an hour later, the four of us met at the townhouse. Gernsbeck looked nervous and Wyler looked interested as he pulled a football-sized device from his bag. He introduced himself to Gernsbeck, who blinked in confusion. “But you already know she’s a parahuman, right? So why is he here?”

“Just open the house and go in, please. We’ll be right behind you,” I said as soothingly as possible.

Gernsbeck opened the door. He glanced around cautiously and then stepped inside. I followed behind him along with Grimes and Wyler bringing up the rear. We

could all hear the sound of water running. Steam drifted out of a hallway. Gernsbeck's white robe lay in a crumpled pile on the floor. "Somebody in the shower," whispered Grimes.

"Go check who it is," I suggested to Gernsbeck. "Don't worry, we're right here. You'll be perfectly safe."

He padded down the hall and peeked into the bathroom. "It's her," he confirmed a moment later. "She's in the shower. Why is she in my shower?"

"Ask her to come out, and emphasize that we're not here to harm her or to take her away." I turned to Wyler. "Got your thing ready?"

He nodded. "I'll need a blood sample."

"We'll get you one."

A moment later, a dripping Tiggy wrapped in a towel followed Gernsbeck out of his bathroom. She glared at us but made no move to harm us or escape.

"Tiggy," I said carefully. "This is Dr. Wyler. He helps people like you. May he take a sample of your blood to help answer some questions?"

"Yes," she decided.

Wyler worked quickly, professionally. He slipped a band around her arm, swabbed the inside of her elbow with an iodine pad, and carefully stuck the syringe into a vein. We all saw greenish blood fill the tube. He bandaged the needle hole and plugged the syringe into his machine. It beeped at him. He frowned and adjusted the controls. It continued to beep.

"What's the matter?" I asked, pretty sure I knew the answer ahead of time.

“Something’s wrong. The machine isn’t registering her blood at all. It says it needs a sample before it can run the tests.”

“Maybe it’s broken,” Grimes offered.

“Try taking another sample,” I suggested. Wyler unwrapped another syringe and moved toward Tiggy. I stopped him. “Not her. Him.” I pointed to Gernsbeck.

“Me?” Gernsbeck’s mouth dropped open. Tiggy vanished instantly, which made Grimes jump and curse. The towel fell to the floor, as did the unwrapped bandage Wyler had used on her arm.

“Will you humor us, Mr. Gernsbeck?” I asked.

He shrugged. “I guess so, but I don’t see what’s the point.” Nevertheless, he stood still and quiet while Wyler carefully withdrew a vial of his blood and fed it into the analysis machine.

The scanning process only took a few minutes to complete, and the results didn’t surprise me in the least. “Congratulations, Mr. Gernsbeck,” said Wyler. “It’s a positive match. You are a parahuman.”

“I’m ... wait, what?” Gernsbeck sounded aghast.

“A parahuman,” repeated the doctor. “And from what I’ve seen just now, I suspect you’re capable of creating extremely convincing illusions as well as some telekinetic ability. If you’d like to come down to my offices, we can run a full battery of tests to help you positively identify your abilities.”

Grimes punched me in the shoulder and then rubbed his knuckles where he’d bruised them. “You knew all this time,” he sulked.

“No, but I suspected. He’s a writer and he made one of his characters come alive. I’m surprised he never made the connection.”

“I ... I did make the connection,” admitted Gernsbeck. “But I thought she was ... was an obsessed fan or something. I never thought I could be the cause of this.”

“Try to bring her back,” suggested Wyler. “See if you can consciously utilize your ability.”

The air before us shimmered and Tiggy winked into existence. She bent down to retrieve the towel from where it had fallen and held it modestly over her front. She smiled at us, winked, and strolled up the stairs.

“Amazing ... amazing ...” whispered Gernsbeck.

I looked at Grimes and he looked at me. “Well, gentlemen, it appears our job here is done,” I said cheerfully.

We retreated back to our black-and-white.

“Thai?” suggested Grimes.

“Sure, why not?”

“It isn’t every day you get to meet a new parahuman,” he mused as he pulled the cruiser out into traffic.

“I guess not,” I replied.

Grimes snickered suddenly. “I’ll bet you lunch he turns up in three months in some ridiculous costume committing pathetic crimes.”

I shrugged. “If he does, we’ll do what any cops should do when faced with a dangerous opponent. Call the Young Guns.”

We laughed all the way to the Thai place.