



The Queen of Patpong

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For American travel writer Poke Rafferty, life finally seems to hold some semblance of stability. He and his longtime love, Rose, have gone through with their much-deferred marriage ceremony, their adopted daughter, Miaow, a former street child, has become a loving—if sometimes difficult—part of the family, and the three of them live in relative comfort thanks to Rose's housekeeping business and Rafferty's writing.

Then a nightmare figure from Rose's time as a Patpong dancer barges into their world, shattering the peace they've worked so hard to obtain. His appearance threatens everything they cherish: their love, their home . . . their very lives. As a foreigner who's seen some of the worst Bangkok has to offer and survived confrontations with Thailand's most powerful and dangerous elements, Rafferty feels equal to most of the challenges Bangkok can throw at him. But now his only hope is to discover the whole truth of Rose's past—a journey down the dark and twisting road that turned a shy, awkward village teenager into the queen of Asia's most lurid red-light street: Patpong Road. And just when Rafferty thought life was looking good, reality comes crashing in as he learns that the secrets from Rose's former life are almost impossible to accept—and even harder to survive.

The Queen of Patpong is a terrifying, heart-breaking, electrifying story of peril, love, and, ultimately, redemption in modern-day Thailand—and the most ambitious, affecting novel yet from thriller master Timothy Hallinan.

The Queen of Patpong Details

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Author : Timothy Hallinan

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From Reader Review The Queen of Patpong for online ebook

Sheila Beaumont says

This fourth installment of Timothy Hallinan's Poke Rafferty series, set in Bangkok, is such a stunning, magical thriller that it will be a real challenge to do it justice here. But I'll give it a try.

American travel writer Rafferty, former bar dancer Rose, and their adoptive daughter, Miaow, have at last become a family. They are enjoying dinner in a restaurant one evening, when a dangerous, evil man from Rose's past whom she thought she had killed in self-defense suddenly appears, threatening their newfound happiness and their lives.

A section of the book called "The Sea Change" takes us back into Rose's past, in 1996, when the innocent teenage girl is coerced to leave her village and become immersed in a radically different sort of life as a bar dancer in Bangkok's red-light district Patpong. It's there that she meets the handsome man who very nearly ends her life.

The whole story is ingeniously interwoven with scenes from a school production of "The Tempest," in which Miaow is appearing as Ariel.

This compelling, beautifully written novel is not only suspenseful and filled with twists and turns; it's also deeply moving, with vividly drawn characters, and it comes to an unexpected resolution that's very, very satisfying. Strongly recommended for anyone who enjoys a terrific thriller of high literary quality.

Lynn says

The Queen of Patpong is the 4th book in the Poke Rafferty series. I have enjoyed very much the previous books but this is my favorite book so far in the series.

There are many reviews with a synopsis of the plot. I am late to reading this series. So I will relate what made this book one of my best reads of 2017.

First, overall the series is about the love of family. Poke, a travel writer, living in Bangkok has married Rose who was a bar dancer in the red light district of Patpong. They have adopted a street child Miaow. The family scenes show love and humor. Poke is usually on the losing end trying to do and say the right thing. Also, his friendship with Arthit, a Thailand policeman, who is honest is a theme that runs through out the books. The characters are not static. The reader learns more about each character as the series progresses. Poke's relationship with Miaow makes me smile as she is a spunky teenager. He just can't figure out what she does to her hair or why the name change as he loves her as she is.

This book was about Rose. She is threatened in an opening scene by a very dangerous man who she thought was dead. The family's existence is under a real threat. Poke plans on protecting his family. The story goes back to when Rose, then named Kwan, lived in a village. It tells her story of leaving the village and arriving in Bangkok. She had to leave as her father was planning to sell her into the sex trade. She is a naïve teenager who thinks she can just serve drinks in the bar and not become a dancer. The book's description of the bar scenes was so well written.. You could see the inside of the bar and the men visiting the bar. One of the

visitors becomes very special to Rose and that is when the extreme danger arrives in Rose's life I should mention also, that Rose stands out due to her beauty and height. The title of the book is the name that some call Rose.

The book starts out with two different scenes that brings the reader right into the story. The place Bangkok is a character too. You feel like you are there when you read the narrative. This was a very good book and is one of my best reads for 2017.

Sue says

I put off reading this because of all the reviews that said it was 'not a Poke Rafferty book.' Yes, it focuses on Rose, but it most certainly is a Poke book. And while it tells the story of Rose it's still very much the fourth tale of the characters--i.e., Miaow is dealing with growing older and being a grade ahead in school, Arthit is reeling from his loss of Noi, etc.

This book is amazing, Rose's story is gut-wrenching, Poke is an incredible husband/father. You'll laugh (the chile scene is fantastic!!), you'll cry, you'll cheer. What else could you want from a book?

Trish says

We had a heat wave in the Northeast U.S. this week, but I didn't mind—I felt completely simpatico with the characters in Timothy Hallinan's new *Poke Rafferty* thriller set in Thailand. Hallinan did such a good job getting us inside his characters and their lives, I felt as though I'd just spent a week in Southeast Asia. In this latest offering, Hallinan describes how one comes to live the life of a bar girl in Patpong, Bangkok. While undoubtedly fiction, it sounded plausible enough to describe the experiences of many country girls sold to the meat markets of the city, making their way the best they can.

Hallinan has the good sense to be matter-of-fact about life in Thailand. He is no apologist for a whole country or way of life, but he has a depth of sympathy for the reality of people's lives and a deep and abiding love for people of honor, wherever he finds them. And he describes Thailand with the splash and fizz it deserves—one can smell the markets and hear the traffic. In *The Queen of Patpong*, Hallinan succeeds on many levels: Poke Rafferty daughter is acting in a school play, and it is described with such skill, one feels one has just read a particularly good newspaper review. One wants to race right out and book a ticket. The central mystery of the novel circles and mirrors the play ingeniously, and the play itself is central to a final resolution of the mystery. Hallinan deserves very high marks for this wonderful warm and friendly novel, and for sharing his imagination and his life with us.

I asked a friend once what was the draw of the TV serial *Sex in the City*. She replied that, for her, the strength and depth of the female friendships was the draw. She knew it was fiction, but it presented such a wonderful fiction that she watched it whenever she could. Hallinan has a little of that specialness in his books. There is such friendliness, such sincere human-to-human contact, one wants to be in that place. Kudos, Hallinan.

Maddy says

PROTAGONIST: Poke Rafferty

SETTING: Thailand

SERIES: #4 of 4

RATING: 4.5

One of the most fun things about following a series is the anticipation of waiting for the next book. In some cases, “fun” may not exactly be the right word; for a favorite series, it may be more accurate to say “torture”. In the case of Timothy Hallinan’s Poke Rafferty series, I find that the torture begins immediately after I complete the last word of the current novel. He always defies expectations, even more so in the case of **THE QUEEN OF PATPONG**. Instead of focusing on the adventures of the protagonist, he has instead chosen to concentrate on the background of Poke’s wife, Rose. Certainly, this was a risky choice but Hallinan pulled it off flawlessly.

Poke and Rose and their adopted daughter, Miaow, have settled in to a relatively harmonious domestic life. Miaow is in that challenging pre-teen stage, and the main issue that the family is dealing with is her little rebellious spurts. At the moment, she is quite anxious about her upcoming role in a play being put on by the school, *The Tempest*. Although she is a bit perturbed that she hasn’t gotten the glamorous lead, her casting as Ariel is a stroke of genius.

Domestic bliss has a way of not lasting very long. One day, Poke and Rose are eating at a restaurant when a boorish man and his friend approach their table. As it turns out, the man, Howard Horner, is a man who was once part of Rose’s past. She is terrified at seeing him again, and he begins to threaten the family. Poke follows his partner, John Bohnert, and is aided by a bar girl named Pim who soon joins the Rafferty family since she is now in danger as well. In order for everyone to understand what they are dealing with, Rose explains exactly what her relationship with Howard was—basically, he is a killer who masquerades as a generous lover to the bar girls of Bangkok.

The tale that she has to tell is poignant, heartbreaking and serves to provide a complete background of Rose, originally named “Kwan”. Unfortunately, outside of the glittering cities of Thailand, many people live in extreme poverty. What often happens is that the father of a family will sell his daughter to men who will introduce her to the bar scene, which usually ends up in prostitution. One of the women who left Rose’s village succeeds in spiriting her off to the city before her father can finalize his plans to sell her. Although she is still being sold, at least Rose has not been raped by her “kidnappers”. She goes on to explain about life in the bars, about the daily lives that the bar girls live and how they form strong alliances despite a spirit of competition. She also tells the story of Howard, who tried to kill her and failed. The story that Rose has to share comprises over one-third of the book. However, it is a very important and illuminating tale and reveals much about what has made Rose the person that she is today. Of course, Poke is determined to stop Horner. He is aided in this by his police friend, Arthrit, who is still struggling to cope with the death of his beloved wife, Noi, and a surprising group of helpers.

Hallinan is what I like to call a “5 star” writer. He is an author who does everything exceptionally well,-- characterization, plotting, setting, dialogue and pacing. In addition to his technical expertise, he never loses sight of the humanity of the characters who people the book, resulting in a feeling of deep emotional resonance on every page. There is no way that you can read any of the books in this series without becoming entangled in the wonderful web he has woven. The characters are real; you care about them and pull for them to overcome the tremendous challenges that are thrust upon them.

The Poke Rafferty books have become my very favorite series. With the amount of reading that I do, I often forget the details of books shortly after I read them. Not so with the Rafferty books—even over a year later, I have the same intense feelings about BREATHING WATER as I did when I read it. I wasn't expecting the approach that Hallinan took in THE QUEEN OF PATPONG, but I have come to see it as essential in the story arc of these characters. Now back to the torture of waiting for the next book to come along....

Gea says

This is a highly entertaining book. I could not put it down even though I sometimes dreaded turning the page. Hallinan's pace never lets up. He creates a wonderful sense of place. I could see and hear and smell his locations. And, his language shines with spot on metaphors.

I have recently read John Burdett's Bangkok 8, which I also enjoyed. Yet, I found Hallinan deeper, subtler and more realistic. He has a different view of the bar girls than Burdett. When I finished Bangkok 8, I felt that the girls didn't seem to mind their jobs much at all. I wondered if the West projected our own views of purity and shame upon them. But after reading The Queen of Patpong I'm not so sure that's true. Hallinan's version is sadder and more painful to read, but he also captures the strength, street smarts and resiliency of the girls. The girls may sometimes bicker and squabble, but ultimately they stick together, creating their own new families. They have all come from the same place and now work in the same world.

John Burdett is funnier, but I imagine Hallinan is more realistic.

Beth says

← THE FOURTH WATCHER – Timothy Hallinan

Posted on August 17, 2010 by Beth

THE QUEEN OF PATPONG, A POKE RAFFERTY THRILLER is a title that is something of a misnomer. It is the fourth book in the Poke Rafferty series by Timothy Hallinan, but while it is definitely a thriller it isn't really a Poke Rafferty book. The book belongs to Rose, Poke's wife, a former dancer in a bar, whose outstanding beauty made her the queen of the red-light district of Bangkok. And that isn't quite right either. Would any woman be happy with a title that describes "what" she is when the "who" she is goes so far beyond that sad bit of geography that has come to define, in many minds, Bangkok?

Rose is extraordinary and so is her story. Both owe their existence to the great talent of the author who has written a book that defines the experience of the brutally poor young women who are forced to sell their beauty and, in many unfortunate cases, their souls so that they can support their families and perhaps, hopefully, keep their younger sisters from having to make the same deal with the devil.

Hallinan choreographs chapter one so that readers who are just discovering the series with THE QUEEN OF PATPONG have enough information to understand the underside of Bangkok. For those who are familiar with the characters, chapter one is funny and a bit reassuring after BREATHING WATER. Chapter two lulls readers as they go to dinner with Poke, Rose, and Miaow who is caught up in her role as Ariel in her school's production of THE TEMPEST. It is a glimpse into the life of a happy family until, suddenly, it isn't. A man

approaches and places his palms flat on the table in front of Rose. Rose is terrified. Rose was sure he was dead because she was sure she had killed him.

Howard Horner is a nightmare from Rose's past. The next day, when Poke discovers evidence that Horner knows where they live and when Miaow spots Horner's associate, John, stalking them, the stakes have been upped and Poke has to become proactive in protecting his family.

Poke leaves Miaow in the cab and follows John to the Beer Garden, where he runs, literally, into Pim, a girl from the north who is following the same path from poverty as Rose did. When Poke asks Pim to see if John is inside, things go badly, and Pim becomes a hostage. Poke takes care of John; Poke takes Pim home. Emotions are unbridled, glass breaks, doors slam, voices are raised, tears flow and, because Pim reminds Rose of herself, the girl whose name was Kwan, Rose talks about her past to save the girl and to save her family.

It is in this part of the book that Hallinan's writing soars. As Rose tells her story, she disappears and becomes Kwan, the very tall village girl called, disparagingly, Stork. Kwan is beautiful although she does not know it. She is very bright, something she does know. Her teacher and a man from the Children's Scholarship Fund come to her home to offer her father money to allow Kwan to stay in school, to even move on to college. But her father refuses and with that refusal Kwan realizes that he has already sold her to a brothel in Bangkok. Rather than becoming a virtual slave, Kwan decides to leave town quietly with Nana, a village girl who has been working on Patpong. Rose continues her story....

When she is finished, Poke knows that Rose and Miaow will not be safe as long as Howard Horner is free to roam Bangkok. His claim that Rose broke a promise is true and for a man with Horner's ego, she needs to pay for that with her life. Poke brings Pim along as he hides his family in Arthit's house. Once the women are safe, Poke begins to put into action a plan borrowed from *THE TEMPEST*.

The author makes frequent references to *THE TEMPEST* throughout the novel. The first section is entitled "Caliban" after the half-man, half-monster in the play. Horner is Caliban, who believes himself the victim of gross injustice. The second section, the story of Kwan/Rose is entitled "Sea Change". In the play, Shakespeare writes: "Of his bones are coral made:/ Those are pearls that were his eyes:/ Nothing of him that doth fade/But doth suffer a sea change." A sea change is transformative, it alters the nature of the person who undergoes the stress that creates the change. Kwan becomes Rose. The simple, innocent child of poverty becomes the queen of Patpong Road. The last section is "The Storm". In the play it is a storm, the tempest, that throws the characters onto the island. In Hallinan's hands, the tempest created by Horner seems at first to wreak havoc on the family bonds that have been forged among Rose, Poke, and Miaow. But the sea change applies to the family, not just to Rose. At the end, there are no longer any doubts.

THE QUEEN OF PATPONG seems to be transformative for the author as well. For the nearly one hundred and forty pages that are Rose's story, Hallinan is writing from a woman's perspective and the result is natural, flowing. I read it, it seemed, without taking a breath.

In the end, *THE QUEEN OF PATPONG* is laid to rest. In the telling of her story, Rose proves to herself, and to Miaow, that the bar girl no longer exists, perhaps she never did. Rose was a victim of circumstances and the sins of others. Because Rose had to live the life of the bar girl on Patpong Road, Miaow will not have to do so. The street child has been saved because the bar girl had the strength to bring about her own salvation.

She saved Poke when they met.

If THE QUEEN OF PATPONG is made into a movie (and a really good movie it would be) the climax will leave audiences cheering.

glenn boyes says

A great thriller, but what is even more important is the humane treatment of the Bangkok sex workers as real human beings. Thank you for doing so, Mr. Hallinan.

Rogue Reader says

Poke Rafferty's settled in Bangkok, and for an ex?pat, he's a surprising insider. Poke's familiar with the underbelly, and the belly of the underbelly too. He's assembled a family—a waif named Miaow and Rose, the former and legendary Queen of Patpong. This is Rose's backstory: a frightening, courageous journey to adulthood, facing terrible challenges yet never losing her essential integrity.

I can't get enough of Timothy Hallinan.
Read him. You won't be sorry.
You'll want more.

Can't wait to host Timothy Hallinan here in Ashland on May 11, 2012. To hear his backstory, to ask him questions, to listen to him read!

--*Ashland Mystery*

Sarah says

This book was easy to get into, the characters and setting are interesting and pretty unique...but, man, is it dark! Not dark in the sense of gloomy and tortured, just dark in the sense that reading about the reality (or something similar) of women on the streets of Bangkok is...heavy. I find myself curled up in bed thinking, ugh, what nightmares is this going to bring tonight...or even physically cringing at the situations of extreme poverty and degradation that the characters face. And yet I keep reading - probably out of a mix of liberal guilt (it's important that I torture myself with the TRUTH of what life is like!) and also just an appreciation of a well-written story.

Julie says

First line: Old cigarette smoke, cheap perfume, sweat.
Okay, this slightly nudged out the Craig Johnson for best book read this year.
I was trying to stretch it out because Tim says the next Poke won't be out until

next year. But I hit the halfway point this morning and I read straight through until I finished it. Best Poke yet.

An old flame of Rose's, one she thought she had killed years before, shows up to let Rose know he intends to finish where he left off. The middle third of the book is Rose's backstory, how she went from Issan village girl to a working girl in the Patpong district. Hallinan does a wonderful job portraying the sex workers as three dimensional people. And by the end of the book we also get to see Poke, Rose and Miaow finish gelling as a family.

Rachel Brady says

Timothy Hallinan delivers another gripping page-turner in his latest Poke Rafferty novel, *The Queen of Patpong*. There's a new man in Bangkok--pure poison, evil to his core--who has it in for Rafferty's wife, Rose. And in typical Rose fashion, she's too stoic and independent to tell Rafferty just what the hell is going on.

The novel switches between Rafferty and Rose's present day danger and Rose's private history, which we learn was both tragic and heroic. Readers will come away from *The Queen of Patpong* with a whole new respect for Rose, guaranteed. Other favorite characters--Arhit, Kosit, Miaow--are back too. Fans of the series who remember Miaow's obsessively parted hair will smile when you see what she's done to it now. :)

In this beautifully written story, Hallinan once again uses brilliant characterization and the backdrop of an amazing city to subtly show us another perspective of a misunderstood community in the streets of Bangkok--the girls and young women who dance in bars and support their families via prostitution. As he says in his author's note, and portrays through Rose's story, many of these women have done the best they can with a very limited number of choices. What Hallinan does here is strip away the collective grouping of "bar girls" and "hookers" and instead let us spend a few hours with Rose, Fon, Oom, and Nit. I found that, just like in real life, once you know people as individuals and begin to understand where they came from, a situation you thought you understood can appear in a whole, new light.

That's Hallinan's hallmark--making huge statements through the lives of his characters. This is an entertaining, tense thriller with sophisticated prose and characters about as human as they come. Fans of Poke Rafferty won't want to miss it, and new readers can start here if they like. There's enough back story to bring everyone right up to speed.

CoffeeTimeRomance and More says

A thriller and suspense with the strength of a family unit at its core, *The Queen of Patpong* is as rich as the culture and people that make up its multiflavored cast. From the bright lights and seedy streets of Bangkok's dangerous Patpong Road to the quiet country life of a young girl, this story takes the reader on a journey to a far off place to find out that love is the same regardless of how far from home you may roam.

Virginia
Reviewer for Coffee Time Romance and More

Full Review: <http://www.coffeetimeromance.com/Book...>

Dana Stabenow says

The fourth in Hallinan's Poke Rafferty series and the first one I've read. I've been missing out.

Poke is a travel journalist living in Bangkok, married to Rose, a retired bar girl with both now adopted parents to Miaow, a precocious prepubescent rescued from the Bangkok streets with hormones and attitude both kicking in in full measure. A very scary ex-lover resurrects himself from Rose's past, a neat trick since she thought she'd killed him.

Part of the story takes place in the present, as Rose's ex is doing his best to kill her, and part in Rose's past, the story of her father's attempt at selling her into sexual slavery and her subsequent rise to become the queen of the bar girls on Patpong Road, the reddest of Bangkok's red-light districts. Rose's story is almost unbearably painful to read but Hallinan's craft is such that you can't tear your eyes from the page.

You can smell the setting, the plot is twisty enough to keep a sidewinder happy, and the characters are people you'd like to meet, especially Miaow, so long as you didn't have to babysit her. There is also a school production of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, which is fun in and of itself

...the play's eternal second scene, in which Prospero explains the whole backstory to his daughter, starting before she was born. It seems to take as long to tell as it did to happen.

but which Hallinan has interwoven into the main plot. I'm not sure I've ever read a crime fiction novel before this that used Ariel and Prospero to catch a villain.

And the icing on the cake? The most satisfying takedown of a bad guy ever. I'm going to have to go back and read the first three.

Will Byrnes says

If you have not read the prior books in the Bangkok Series, put your copy of *The Queen of Patpong* on your night table until you have caught up....I'll wait...ok, read the first three? Great. So, in this fourth volume of the series the focus is on Rose's back-story. Rose is, of course, the wife of Poke Rafferty, the primary character in the series. Of course, Hallinan writes thrillers, so there is plenty of action to begin. A dark force from Rose's past is in town, wreaking havoc. A dust-up or two in, Rose tells her story. That makes up the bulk of the book. And it is a pretty interesting yarn. We learn how she went from her life in a small village to a very different experience in Bangkok. There is a lot of detail in this aspect of the tale, so we learn what really is involved in that transition, how a girl might be coerced into such an action. Fascinating, nuanced and very informative. There is plenty going on during Rose's telling, but it did sag a little. No matter, back in the present the action picks up again.

When Hallinan was initially writing the story, he had it in mind that the revelations about Rose's past would cause major upheaval or at least soul-searching by Poke and Miaow, Poke and Rose's adopted daughter. That must have gone by the boards, as there is little evidence of that intention here. And that is too bad. The family is a core motivational element in the series and there could have been more attention paid to how the family members deal with Rose's story. It seemed as if once Rose's story was told, complete with revelations, everyone muttered a "whatever" and carried on chasing or being chased.

An additional element here is references to Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. Miaow is in a school production and that offers some opportunities for lit references, foreboding, mirroring, nice bits of fun. In particular, elements of the school-production summon the images of Roses' travails way back when. I do not know if Hallinan has employed such in the past, (I am quite dull enough to have overlooked it, if it is there) but this is the first time I noted it. We likee. The book was initially supposed to have been titled *The Rock*, relating to a significant location in Rose's back-story, connected to Prospero's locale in the older bit of work. I suppose one might see Rose as a rock as well, but the title that *was* chosen makes it clear that this episode in the series is all about Rose.

Finally, Hallinan includes an entire chapter called "An Indigestible Lump of Exposition." The ostensible target of this is Shakespeare's play, but one must wonder if he is poking a stick at himself.

The Bangkok series is pretty good stuff, and if you have been reading the series to date, this one will not disappoint. Hallinan has taken a nose-dive into a major character's thorny past, makes some magic and comes up smelling like a Rose.

P.S. - For an informative interview with Hallinan, check out <http://www.grubstreet.ca/articles/ind...>
