

# A Feast of Words

*Minoli Salgado*

The writers were at the table, eating each other's words. Delicate morsels of sliced crime, tangy segments of romance, silver spoonerisms washed down with a glass of iced humour that turned the lips green.

"How delightful", one cooed, "I must try this at home."

The wine critic was not sure. She would like to have sampled some rough shreds from a local saga of lost lives, but didn't want to be first. She settled for some pickled irony instead. She might fold the saga in her napkin and eat it later in the leisure of her hotel room.

The book feast had been almost everything she'd hoped for. An orgy of words, with whale watching, devil dancing, and fire walking between meals. The initial fuss that the feast was inappropriate, when the rest of the country was half-starved, had died down. Only a Nobel Laureate and a Booker Prize Winner had cancelled their meals. It was not much of a loss. She had tried their work and found it went poorly with Bordeaux.

But the local saga with its siren-red chunks was a different matter. And so were some of the short shots of poetic violence that she'd tried that morning. A caffeine kick, those poems made her wake to where she was.

She was about to reach for the saga when someone staggered forward with a dish too bizarre for words. A giant black and white cartoon of a man's face slashed by a cross of two chillies upon the lips.

"My husband," said a woman, proffering the placard and a sheaf of printed leaves. "This is about my husband

who's gone. Please take and read. Read and eat at the same time. It is possible, no?"

"It's inedible." "It's uncooked." "Where's it from?" They all asked.

"My husband," she repeated with a hunger they did not understand. "He was a writer like you but disappeared last year. He wrote words the government did not want to hear."

A plate of silence was served that made them feel hollow inside.

"What words?" offered the wine critic. "What words did your husband say?"

The woman shook her head.

"His words have gone with him. That is why I am here. I am looking for him in your feast of words."

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