At *The Polite Pub*

that driver tried to rip us off a dollar soup at Paradise
is just packet noodles she couldn't understand
the toilets the black-out
meant the party finished early I love all those tiny
tiny houses fucking on the temple bridge
was such a buzz try chapter six of The Lonely
Planet they cut her leg off but it wasn't
necessary drinks at the Apocalypse

cost much more than you think his camouflage looked
a bit extreme we went all that way but it was full
of tourists the poverty depresses me
a bit I wasn't sure about those snails
at the border in the mountains it's very
ethnic he told her he'd come back one day
for sure pissing in a bomb crater is
sort of weird perhaps historical the main thing

is to have a laugh the cheap material fell apart my
photos make it green that pig on the bike
was it really dead he smashed the furniture
but always paid the Heavenly waterfall
wasn't worth it they say
that beggar's got gold teeth I wore the cute
little black and my hair was wild she
actually believed the little turd those monkeys
were a disappointment the Happy Café has good
eggs that train crash story's just a scam her orphans

make some lovely cakes great tea spoons
out of fuselage is that Renoir above
the bar the Rough Guide tells you
all you need to know his bike's a total
bloody write-off the dog meat tasted
almost normal we're off to Laos, they say
it's cheaper they found the fingers
but it was too late those buddhas were bigger
at the airport I really want to see a lot

New Management

(Hỏa Lò Prison 1896-1996)

The 'Hanoi Hilton' has changed its core business.
A real hotel and business centre now blot out sky.
No longer, after a good lunch, do I cycle the street
in a dream and startle awake, sobered by a concrete
presence, high walls, barred windows, and by thoughts
of those locked a wall away. (The recent case of X....
is whispered. His discussion group landed in a cell.)
The old section remains, showpiece of colonial rule –
distant history is much safer. Here, tourism rules,
with its dummy figures frozen in poses of shackled
misery. And outside, a lesson in art – stories in stone,
celebrating a bas-relief world: Good Fights Evil;
Heroism Triumphs; the Perfect State is installed.
Opposition and free speech are no longer needed.
And prisons now lie far removed from the city centre,
in the deaf mute distance. Elsewhere, the mind cage.

From '*View from the Lucky Hotel*' © Sandy Fitts 2008