

KOTTU

the best of the sri lankan internet



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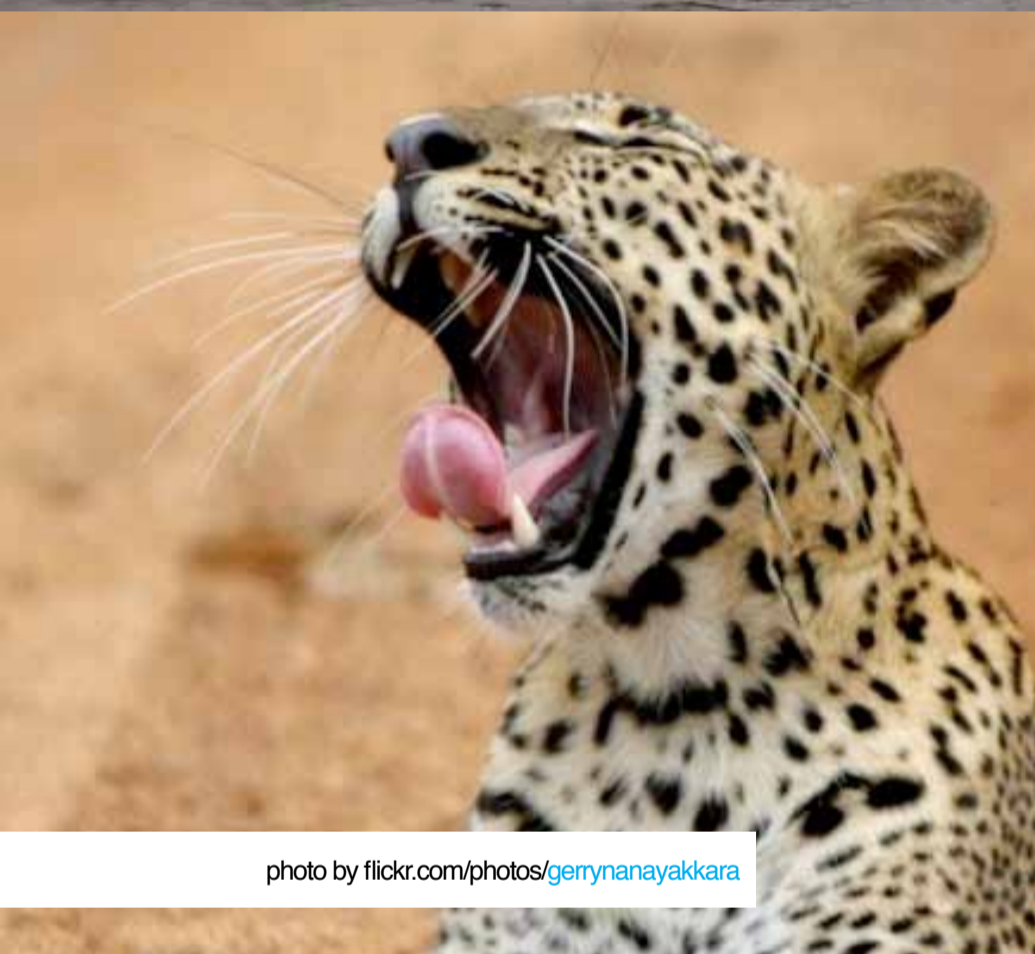


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The Grapes Of Visa Wrath

The thing with being rude to the west is that they can be rude right back. The Sri Lankan government has had a lot of fun denying visas to western muckety-mucks and calling them terrorists, but now their own sons are having trouble getting their visas approved. For all the dross about western conspiracies and their tacit support for the LTTE, Sri Lankans of all stripes still do most of their travel to western countries. We still educate our kids there. Gotabaya Rajapakse and Sarath Fonseka are US citizens and permanent residents, respectively. Mahinda Samarasinghe is married to a Swiss woman, Palitha Kohona (the Foreign Secretary) is an Australian citizen. Goes on and on.

For all the points our politicians try to score against the west, they still have one foot over there. The flip-side of asserting 'sovereignty' and rejecting visas for them is that they reject visas for us. This applies for average Sri Lankans and especially for members of the government.

Anecdotally, people say that UK visas are more trouble now and more trouble to get. I also hear of various ministers sons who can no longer study abroad cause their visas are getting booted. I feel bad in the sense that I think Sri Lankans (fortunate sons included) should be able to travel, but I don't see how this is a surprise. The Sri Lankan government has rejected visas for Swedish, Canadian and British officials, journalists, etc. They publicly talk about international conspiracies and describe westerners as terrorists.

Personally, I don't think this is even good for local politics as most 'locals' are pretty nice to western guests, but it is what it is. At some point the government has to realize that if it says buzz off to the west the west can just say buzz off right back. This is something the politicians will feel because they enjoy the luxury of western travel and education, but average people feel it as well. Personally, I don't think this is a contest worth having and I wish everyone would chill out. However, it is interesting that the politicians are feeling the effects of their policies for once. If they want to demagogue against the west that's fine, but they may have to send their kids to school in China.



photo by flickr.com/photos/indi

19 COMMENTS

amused: People from pariah states should be treated like pariahs.

Sam: Taking it over kids and family? That not sound like Downing Street, that is little Italy. Whats next? A cow head on the bed?

DD: Indi, interestingly enough the ceiling on tuition fees in the UK will be removed from 2011. Following the US example where international students who can pay for their education actually is a thriving business amongst college's in the US, UK too is gearing up for this. Especially to cater to the rich kids.

Universities in UK already have agents working for them in Sri Lanka. I worked closely with UKCOSA, UKCISA and NUS in London not too long ago. So whatever problems the two governments may have with each other, denying international students from SL a visa to study in the UK will not happen. Rest assured. It's a huge revenue generator Mate, huge...

Ahamed Nizar: Er. I know so many people who have been rejected educational visa's on rubbish grounds. A lot of people have been rejected. The weird thing is that UK universities have a large income from international students. And a lot of Sri Lankans go to England for education e.g my dad. But still they are not letting us in. They're punishing us for what the government did. And thats just wrong.

Acromantula: Indi ur just worried that they'll cancel visa's for half Canadians (or w/e u are) I'm sure the "average" Sri Lankan doesn't [care] about Visa's in to UK/USA..

Anne: ahem, which Sri Lanka do you live in ? Of course they do. They value their foreign visa very much. Look at the bunch that go to Italy each year !! They are fairly average. So are the students. Did you know LOTS of banks now give loans for students to study out of the country ? Parents can take the loan on their behalf and th interest rates are fairly manageable. Gone are the days when only privileged class sent their kids to foreign universities. It is now fairly mainstream in the middle class families. Try to get flights to Australia in February or in July from Sri Lanka and you will see the reality.

read more at indi.ca/2009/10/the-grapes-of-visa-wrath/

Silly Radio Commercials



photo by flickr.com/photos/indi

19 COMMENTS

Lady Divine: talk about it! Some of the radio commercials reflect badly on agencies and companies and honestly sometimes I wonder what the minds behind these projects were thinking..

Some radio commercials - a story of a kind I tell ya.. the Dulux one was so..... I don't even know what to say..

BUT some brands do have some good ones too..)

Sach: "100 times lower than the lowest price"? LMAO that kept me laughing! Hahahahaha!

And, I'm not marketing expert or anything, so pls enlighten me, what's the problem with half a litre free with four?

Jack Point : Sach, thanks for dropping by. It was actually 100 items lower than the lowest price.

The commercial goes like this: one guys keeps repeating "100 items lower than the lowest price" then another guy asks him what he is talking about.

Then he says there are a 100 items lower than the lowest price.

Then they both keep chanting "100 items lower than the lowest price" until the commercial fades off.

thekillromeoproject: Very often such ads are a result of the agency creative guys having to 'dumb down' their original concepts cos the marketing guys don't get the ideas. I'm personally in the position of having to do that with a client that's launching a new 'service'.

ViceUnVersa: Just saw the Uthuru Mithuru commercial done by Triad. What on earth possessed them to do that? Mikey I thought would ensure better executions.

Who's the Tritel Agency?

KRP - Machan can't blame clients all the time no? I believe the agency also must be responsible for ownership. You know I practice what I preach. I am not saying ask them to f'off but a proper mix of agency business that keeps the billing ticking and the other to highlight the agency creative is important. I strongly believe that relationships and understanding the client at management level is important. BTW: why the silence?

Pissu Perera: the dialog ads are terrible. right now i hate the one where two women discuss another woman's latest catch being from india. surely whoever was responsible for it could've found a pleasanter way to advertise lower idd charges.

and that stupid commercial bank debit card ad - "all i ever wanted, all i ever dreamt about was a debit card". wtf?

Whacko: Dumbing down does tend to happen. Also, you've got to keep in mind that all these ads represent extremely competitive industries and with the market taking a fresh outlook and spending going up, mass use products like these HAVE to use penetrative strategies like this in order to entrench oneself in the market.

Also, repetitive and 'boring' does often succeed in creating a mass impact especially in a market such as hours where 'creative' English ads may usually pass over the heads of the people listening in

Sweet Idiot: the dumber commercials are also due to equally dumb clients dude...sometimes they just INSIST on certain things. dialog - they do most of their ads inhouse pizza hut, born free - tis the voice of the better half! :)

Serendib Isle: Our radio ads suck. Big time. Doesn't matter who's to be blamed, the result is pretty dumb and annoying. The advertising great Jeremy Bullmore once taught us: "If you don't know how to be creative on radio, just sing it..!" and that's exactly what he never wanted us to do as creatives.

In terms of ingenuity, we haven't gone far from age-old "viridu kaaraya" - have we?

And where are the morals? Where's the truth (100 times lower than the lowest price)? Where's the integrity? Where's the respect for the consumer? Sad to say but we haven't cracked the radio yet.

Angel: Sigh... I have to take these everyday because whoever is giving me a life (dad, Bro, Hubby) all listen to stuuu..pid yes fm. I suppose other stations air the same commercials...

sigh...

read more at jestforkicks.blogspot.com/2009/10/silly-radio-commercials.html

My mind is being assaulted by a number of very silly radio commercials:

1. The wheels of the bus go round and round (Arpico advertising some promotion)
2. 100 items lower than the lowest price (Keells claiming they have lower prices)
3. Dulux half a litre free with every four litres.
4. Airtel's long cock-and-bull story about a marriage proposal (international phone calls).

These tell me a few things:

1. Sheer desperation on the part of the companies, some gimmick, any gimmick to try and push sales. The reasoning seems to be: 'the war's over, lets tap the optimism and get the sales up'.
2. A complete lack of ideas as far the agencies responsible for the production of the ads. Reasoning on the lines of 'we need to get the ad done by xx, whats the first thing that comes to mind....'

Incidentally, all the above have to do with price. I keep telling marketing guys if cutting prices is the only way you can grow, then why do we need you???

TGIF.

Trekking Dos and Don'ts

by [The Puppeteer](#)

What not to do when going on a Trek (through hell :P).

DON'T wear sneakers!

Don't be deceived by the image. These shoes aren't designed for rough terrain. They're no different from Sam Vimes's cardboard sole shoes. Yeah sure, Sam likes it that way 'cause he can tell where he is just by feeling the cobblestones on the street, but when you're legging it through a trail, and a rough one at that, the last thing you want is to feel the ground!

With sneakers on you'll first feel EVERY single stone. A bit later each stone will feel like a sudden spark of electricity shooting up your foot. If you press on, eventually, your foot becomes numb. Yup, sneakers are a definite no-no! If you've got nothing else when taking on a trek, go buy yourself a proper pair of trekking shoes.

Do eat and get plenty of rest before your trek. You need to be charged up for it. 'nuff said.

Do take water and food along with you. If you think you've got enough food and water, you haven't. Take more. And then some...

Do's and Don'ts aside, I got a fair share of cuts, scratches, leech bites and bruises.

Got a cut on my wrist trying to fish for some mackerel... out of a tin can. Yeah, alright that may not seem very 'rough n' tough', but when there's nothing else but can of jack mackerel, and 10 people share it right out of the can... THAT'S... ok, pure desperation caused by hunger. Heck, if we didn't have that tin can we would have resorted to cannibalism and eaten each other by night fall.

The leeches weren't too fond of me though. I had only two of the little blood suckers bite me. One at my ankle and the other on my clavicle (shoulder blade). St.Fallen and Little_Boy_Blue on the other hand... The leeches were drawn to them... possibly the effect of the weed in their blood :P



Here's how leeches suck blood: *A blood sucking leech attaches itself to the skin of its victim using its suckers. It makes a small wound in the surface of its hosts skin using three serrated jaws just inside its mouth. It then releases saliva into the wound, which contains the anti-clotting agent called hirudin. This keeps the blood flowing freely. The saliva also contains a substance that blocks nerve transmission from the pain sensors in the skin, so that the victim does not notice its bites.*

It may sound like something out of a horror flick but it's fine. You don't feel it. You've got nothing to worry about 'cause the only superficial blood vessels are your veins. So at the very most you'll just have a bit of a scar for a few days.

And here's the bruise I got after a buffalo pulled a Zinedine on me... The picture was taken this morning, it's turned a ripe shade of deep purple now.

It was a crazy trek but the guys were awesome. All the rest of you girls should join them on their next adventure. You'll be in safe hands :) I can vouch for that.

As for me, I'll be sitting out the next one. My parents weren't too pleased that I hadn't kept them up to date every second of the day about where I was and whether I was still alive. So I'm going to have to wait for this to fizzle out before I can go anywhere with friends again

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Whacko: ah haha, quite an adventure eh, i should have read up on that leech science before, i found one of the buggers on my ARM when i got back home. had to sleep with a bandage cos it bled without a stop.

DilsiriW: hey, we are thinking of an off season adams peak climb via ratnapura. interested? let me know. you know, i've learnt that bata's are much better than wearing hiking shoes.

purplesocksismine: Haha. Naice adventure. Ill join in with u, having an ultra sensitive skin that mosquitos feed on me. =S

The Puppeteer: @ DilsiriW- Thanks :). I climbed Adam's Peak in December last year. Swore it was going to be a once in a life time thing 'cause the ascend was much worse than this trek. My legs felt like jelly the next day. But heck, it was awesome at the top! So lemme know when you're heading off... :) I've a blogged about it, check this out, it's got good pictures – <http://messiahofmadness.wordpress.com/2008/12/23/ooooo-the-sun/>

@ PSIM- Er... sensitive skin has nothing to do with mosquitoes biting you...

Hisham: So many smokers on tht trip and none of decided to use the cigarette ashes to get rid of the leeches? NVR PULL THEM OUT!

read more at messiahofmadness.wordpress.com/2009/10/04/dos-and-donts

Lankan Advertising - Bloggers Are The Answer

Talking about advertising in the Lankanosphere's a risky business. One wrong word and there'll be a gang of creatives chasing me down the street brandishing their MacBooks in a threatening manner. Hair dye and tattoos will be flying all over the place and it'll be the only time the many pairs of Nikes ever get a run.

Comparisons, like I believe a good buriyani should be, are fruitless. I know that people chuck raisins and all sorts on a proper buriyani but, as far as I'm concerned, fruit is for fruit salads and desserts. And I try not to compare so many things in Lanka with things in the UK, it serves no purpose and does no good. It's far better to try to accept things in each country as they are, with none of that getting hung up on why x might cost so much more in Serendib than it does in London yet y costs so much less.

Sometimes though, I just can't help it and the world of advertising is one such instance. I peer, gaze and observe the Sri Lankan above the line advertising with curiosity and interest. I wonder why, how and what makes the press, billboard and TV ads work there (here) compared to how they'd work in the UK. Is it unfairly patronising to say that the Brit consumer is more advanced in terms of his exposure and mindset towards advertising?

The great love God Jack Point wrote this post only the other day about some of the radio ads hitting the Serendipitous airwaves at the moment and I think many feel the same about ads on other Lankan media.

If it is patronising then I offer my apologies, but it is what I feel. It's also coupled with my feeling that the UK has one of, if not the most, innovative and imaginative ad industries in the world.

There are two distinct and segregated markets within Sri Lanka. For the sake of convenience I'll call them the rich and the poor.

The rich, that Colombo 7 international crowd, often educated overseas, well travelled and with more disposable income than the entire population of Monte Carlo, are well used to Western consumersim and advertising. When they have to they shop at Odel and

wouldn't be seen dead in Majestic City unless it's to go to KFC.

There is one fellow, who used to live in Dehiwala but hasn't been seen for a few months, who makes up the entire Sri Lankan middle class. The rest of the people are the poorer and lower class chaps, the "man on the street" who the advertising on the street is aimed at.

Looking at the Lankan ads made me realise that, if the agencies have got it right, an assumption I'm happy to make but many might argue with, the man in the street is a sucker for the celebrity endorsement. Every other billboard seemed to feature the image of a cricketer beaming at me and wagging a chicken sausage temptingly. The next one would be the same cricketer swigging a bottle of Coke or any other soft drink you care to name, the next would be noodles, oodles of them.

In fact it's a surprise that Mahela and Sangakkara aren't a couple of fat blokes who permanently need a runner, what with the amount of Coke, chocolates and general crap they quite clearly eat all the time. A diet of all that rubbish is evidently not helping Mr Sangakkara at the moment, that's for sure.

In other places there's a smiling old bloke persuading us to buy a biscuit that he loves, or a harrassed housewife struggling to juggle the demands of a busy worklife with feeding a couple of insanely happy, smily and unmoody kids. Of course the answer to all her woes is chicken sausages, noodles and salad all washed down with Coke and chocolate. How ridiculous is that? I ask you, who eats salad these days?

You Lankans are yet to find out about the perils of salad, what with all the censorship and all but, in some parts of London, possession of salad is a serious offence. Some burger places try to hide it in between the burger and the bread but it's rare and discouraged.

But, criticisms aside, people are the attraction in Sri Lankan advertising, unless of course these ads don't work. So I reckon the time has come to get bloggers involved, to decide which bloggers would suit which products.

by [London Lanka and Drums](#)

For starters I think the combined power and sheer wordiness of the Lankan blogging diaspora, yes me included, should write about ninety nine per cent of the tourist board's copy. Ask DD to write some prose to get Suddhas to Serendib. In fact, forget Small Miracle and Land Like No Other, let's use Suddhas to Serendib as the slogan. They won't know what it means until they've been anyhow.

And there are other products that are crying out for the endorsement of the more well known members of the Lankanosphere.

If you sell maps, or own a small search engine with lots of Gs and Os in the title then you need..... Cerno to endorse your product, though many think that this has been going on for a while as it is.

There are vacancies that need your input. I'm thinking condoms, the extra large ones as well as the extra small. Who could step up to the challenge in the blogosphere?

Dodgy clothes, any suggestion?

For a small fee, perhaps a lifetime's supply or similar, I'd be willing to advertise Barefoot sarongs. I just thought I'd mention that one now.

Ladies' products of the, ahem, you know, feminine variety, who'd appeal to you women, who'd make you switch brands?

Drug awareness campaigns, who could be the figurehead, the person who'd make kids want a clean and drug free life? Ideas would be most welcome. Have a spiffing Monday and an even more fantastic week.

read more at londonlanka.blogspot.com/2009/10/lankan-advertising-bloggers-are-answer.html

Sri Lankawa, uthum desha-ya/divaina (Sri Lanka, the paradise isle...)

A golden age has finally dawned on Sri Lanka to herald a new decade from 2010. From 2,500 years ago this beautiful island in the Indian Ocean has stood triumphant through the ravages of foreign invasion, more recently terrorism from within its borders to natural disasters such as a tsunami.

500 years ago we survived victoriously over our northern neighbours invasion. We survived the plundering and ravaging of our country by the Portuguese, Dutch and finally the British. Known then as Ceylon, finally in 1948 our beautiful island finally gained independence from the British to become a democratic country.

The past 30 years have seen Sri Lanka's past thriving industries of tea and tourism suffer due to internal conflict with the LTTE, internationally known as the Tigers, Tamil separatists who fought for their own homeland threatening the sovereignty of Sri Lanka. Through all this the nation emerged victorious this year with the final annihilation of the LTTE and the killing of the elusive tiger leader.

Most importantly the nation has survived in pride. A new garment industry serving global renowned brands, notably GAP clothing and Marks and Spencer has provided much need foreign exchange. The nation despite the tsunami has now recovered to boast of 800,000 rooms all over its beautiful coastlines and other areas of mountainous beauty and wildlife parks. From three stars, the hotels in Sri Lanka offer international brands in the calibre of the Hilton, and now growing in popularity, exclusive boutique hotels that offer an experience rivalling any other globally.

A 90% literacy rate with international recognition of their education ethic. Every year Sri Lankan students leave for the hallowed halls of Oxford and Cambridge in England. Many walk the corridors of the Ivy League

college's in USA. Minimum of 500 students leave every year for further education in the west. For a country of 20 million people this itself is indeed a feat.

Post LTTE, people of various ethnicities and religions live in harmony within the sovereignty of this beautiful paradise island. Despite heavy pressure applied by some Diasporas who migrated to the west using the ethnic war as their platform, Sri Lanka has prevailed in their war against terror. This decade has seen the strong emergence of the terrorism all over the world; Sri Lanka has proudly managed to emerge victorious.

A new decade emerges as 2010 beckons. Already many of the Diaspora is enjoying the providence of peace with the people of Sri Lanka. Holidays for December from the west have been so popular that many airlines flying from the west to Sri Lanka are fully booked. Tourism is set to boom with the liberation of beautiful beaches in the north and east. Investment in new projects is many. Many Diaspora have already outsourced their business operations to Sri Lanka enjoying the fruits of an economy well set to serve them. The Board of Investment in Sri Lanka is one of the best in the world and follows best practices of developed nations. In a world of recession this has been welcome to many global investors. Investors favour Sri Lanka as a country of choice for investment both in our people and infrastructure.

The golden beaches glisten, Sri Lanka awaits. A race of people as old as time, ever smiling, ever obliging. Sun, sand and sea. Culture. Adventure. The perfect pair of matching pink sapphires for earrings. The dream golf holiday. Go to Sri Lanka... The waves, they are calling. The wild elephant trumpet, the leopards roam the jungle, the peacock is in mating season, their mating calls ring through Sri Lanka, the paradise isle. Please come. You are always welcome.



photo by flickr.com/photos/robysaltori

Loves

by [David Blacker](#)

So. Tagged again by DD. This time it's love; something I've been told lately that I know very little about. And to avoid the usual barrage of "how come I'm not mentioned" and "who's that one about" that these things usually spark, I'll avoid the whole thing and treat you to some of my favourite quotations on love, by people who can write way better than me.

Though it be broken—
broken again — still it is there:
the moon on the water.
— Choshu

"True love is boring," Roland repeated. "As boring as any other strong and addictive drug. And as with any other strong drug..."
— Stephen King. Wizard and Glass

Yet each man kills the thing he loves,
By each let that be heard,
Some do it with a bitter look,
Some with a flattering word,
The coward does it with a kiss,
The brave man with a sword!
— Oscar Wilde. The Ballad of Reading Gaol

...She turned to me and said, "Philsan, I will spend two days with you and you will not have to pay me. I will love you for two days and then I will not love you."
— Philip Caputo. A Rumor of War

"Do you know that until I met thee I have never asked for anything? Nor wanted anything? Nor thought of anything except the moment and the winning of this war? Truly I have been very pure in my ambitions. I have worked much and now I love thee and," he said it now in a complete embracing of all that would not be, "I love thee as I love all that we have fought for. I love thee as I love liberty and dignity and the rights of all men to work and not be hungry. I love thee as I love Madrid that we have defended and as I love all my comrades that have died. Many. Many. Thou canst not think how many. But I love thee as I love what I love most in the world and I love thee more. I love thee very much, rabbit. More than I can tell thee. But I say this now to tell thee a little..."
— Ernest Hemmingway. For Whom the Bell Tolls

Don't tell me it's not worth dying for
I can't help it, there's nothing I want more.
— From the Bryan Adams song Everything I do I do it for You

The heart is an organ of fire.
— Michael Ondaatje. The English Patient

It is better to love many things a little than one thing too much.
— Daniel Carney. The Whispering Death

I vow to thee, my country — all earthly things above
Entire and whole and perfect, the service of my love...
— Sir Cecil Spring-Rice. I Vow to Thee My Country

She smiled and closed her eyes again. "Bird and bear and hare and fish..."
Smiling, Roland finished, "Give my love her fondest wish."
Her eyes opened. She smiled. "You," she said again, and kissed him. "Still you, Roland. Still you, my love."
— Stephen King. Wizard and Glass

And my all-time favourite:

"My life is very monotonous," he said. "I hunt chickens; men hunt me. All the chickens are just alike, and all men are just alike. And, in consequence, I am a little bored. But if you tame me, it will be as if the sun came to shine on my life. I shall know the sound of a step that will be different from all others. Other steps send me scurrying back underneath the ground. Yours will call me, like music, out of my burrow. And then look: you see the grain-fields down yonder? I do not eat bread. Wheat is of no use to me. The wheat fields have nothing to say to me. And that is sad. But you have hair that is the colour of gold. Think how wonderful that will be when you have tamed me! The grain, which is also golden, will bring me back the thought of you. And I shall love to listen to the wind in the wheat."
— Antoine de Saint-Exupery. The Little Prince

read more at blacklightarrow.wordpress.com/2009/09/08/loves/



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