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When I woke up in the morning, I still didn't know what I was looking for. No longer on an alcohol-driven high, I realised what I'd done. I'd committed myself to behave as if Wai Yee and I were definitely finished. I could ring Connie and plead sudden illness, but no, that was cowardly. I finally told myself the obvious, why hadn't I thought of it before? Simple: there was nothing wrong with taking Connie for a drive! Just for a drive. Particularly as Wai Yee was in China on very suspicious business with a man who kissed her and called her *darling*, I added to myself as I started the car. I drove towards Central seething with anger, defiant righteousness and wondering anticipation.

15 Sunderland Court was a big old house, once very posh, but now subdivided into flats. I pressed the button for 15F: 'C. Yip' was inscribed on a nameplate beside it.

A tinny speaker asked: 'Peter?'

'Hi, Connie.'

The front door clicked open.

Her flat was on the third floor, on the street side. She opened the door, and held it back for me to enter. She was wearing a tight, creamy-satin bodice bound under breasts that were fuller than had appeared under her uniform, some brown tummy on display, and red shorts that revealed very well developed calves and thighs just the right side of plumpness. On her feet she wore stylish running shoes. God, she was sexy! How could I have ever thought otherwise?

She turned her face sideways, lifted an eyebrow, and dabbed an index finger on her left cheek, as if to say: Stop perving. Just give me a brotherly kiss.

Which I did. She then turned, dabbed her other index finger on her right cheek. So I kissed that cheek too. She then ducked her head and tapped her forehead. I laughed, and obliged yet again.

'I admire your company loyalty,' I said, gently touched her shorts. 'Cathay shorts.'

She laughed delightedly. 'What you think of my house, ah?'

It was a pleasant well-lit room, nicely furnished Western style. There were two doors at one end, one open, revealing a small kitchen, the other no doubt contained bathroom and loo. Through the door at the other end of room, I saw an unmade bed.

'Very nice. You live here on your own?' Now I shouldn't have needed to check that out, should I?

‘*Haiyaa*, all on my own.’ I wasn’t sure if the look she was giving me was adding something more than just that bit of information, or not. She shrugged. ‘It is easy to manage, secure, and five minutes to Kai Tak. Ideal.’

‘Goodo. Now, where would you like to go?’

‘Anywhere. I love you drive me around.’

‘How about I surprise you?’

She laughed and clapped her hands. ‘Please do that, Mr. Harris.’

Oh God, I had a strong urge to hug her tightly, and not in a brotherly way. That would have been a surprise. Or maybe it wouldn’t. I honestly had no idea what she expected from this encounter. Anyway, I didn’t hug her. To make an obvious pass could be moving too fast for a person I’d only met twice before, under public circumstances. I also guessed her coquettishness did not mean the same as it would have done had it been coming from a Western girl. *Jar giu*, isn’t that what Wai Yee had mentioned? Children trained to be cute, boys too, but in adolescence the boys drop it, and the girls don’t. Well, most don’t. Poor old May, for instance, is one who did—that is if she’d ever learned it, which I doubted.

But this gorgeous creature here! She seemed to be asking for it, fully expecting to be rogered sometime in the course of today’s proceedings. But I’d better not assume too much. And I’d better stop thinking along those lines, after what I’d promised myself this morning. Just a drive, mate, just a drive.

She stooped to pick up a furry backpack, made in the shape of Yogi Bear. A teenager’s accessory. Okay, I’ll keep thinking of you along those lines: You are a *darling* girl and I wouldn’t shock you for worlds.

‘Oh, what a cute little car,’ she gurgled, when we stepped onto the street, ‘what do you call her?’

‘It’s a he, and his name’s Ah Chung. That’s because he’s very reliable.’

She swung off her backpack and held it up. ‘And he is a he also. His name is Ah Hung. And that’s because he is a very cute little bear.’

I opened the passenger door for her, and kneeling on the front seat, she leaned over and placed Ah Hung in the back. As she did so, her voluptuous bum, the perfect arch for those rich thighs, was almost in my face. She then backed out, turned, and evidently guessing what I had been admiring, wagged a finger in mock censure.

I closed her door and walked to the driver’s side, heart hammering. This girl was astonishing. She knew exactly how to arouse me. So unlike Wai Yee! Our attraction had just happened, as natural a phenomenon as any other that was written in the design of creation, like any law of nature. Connie’s attraction was the exact opposite; it was all art. As I eased into the

driver's seat, my throat hurt. Connie's art was beginning to convince me of Wai Yee's innocence. If she and I were designed for each other by the Divine Architect of the Universe, then she must have been completely faithful. But how could she have been given everything? With a sigh, I flashed *Stop!* Back to that little strategy. It worked, as it usually did.

I decided to drive in a large circle, north to the end of the New Territories, through the village of Sheung Shui, then along to the border town of Sha Tau Kok, down to Luk Keng, then back through Plover Cove and Tai Po. All places I had intended to visit with Wai Yee and hadn't yet. Except Tai Po. Okay, so fast through Tai Po, no stopping.

Driving north, we chatted easily. I asked a question that was a bit cheeky, but I really wanted to know.

'Do you date many of your passengers? That is, if they ask you nicely.' I turned to look at her.

'Only special ones, off duty. You are a special one. You have a look that tells me that. I saw your look on your flight to Hong Kong.' She was smiling at me, eyes half closed. They looked for all the world like the eyes of a happy kitten, a very pretty little kitten.

'I suppose you hosties go out with pilots? Like nurses with doctors,' I added to soften what she could take as an accusation of promiscuity. I was fishing still, and I hated myself for it.

But she didn't seem to mind. 'Oh yes, cabin crews and flight crew become very friendly.'

'Ah, so you have a special pilot in mind?'

'Maybee,' she lilted. But now it was her turn. 'And *you*, Mr. Harris. Have you a nice little secretary in mind?'

'Had. But I was more serious than she...' Oh God, she'd hit me for six there. My voice broke. I couldn't finish the sentence.

She looked at me, wide-eyed. 'It was recent then?'

'Very recent.' My eyes filled with tears, but I was glad I'd told her. It made our date more honest.

'Poor Peter, I'm so sorry.' She touched me lightly on the arm. 'So did you ask me out to take your mind away from her?'

'In a sense, yes.' I looked at her guiltily. 'Forgive me, Connie, but I have to be honest. But I do like you, very much!' I was messing this up big time, but I felt a whole lot lighter now it was out in the open.

To my surprise, she leaned over and kissed my cheek as I drove. 'I like men who are honest. *Aiyaa*, and here's me, so happy, such a lovely day, with my special passenger. And me, am I *your* special passenger?'

‘Of course you are.’ Of course she was, but this was heading where I promised myself it wouldn’t. ‘Do you know this part of Hong Kong?’ I asked.

She leaned forward in her seat, squeezing her hands between her knees, and giggled. ‘You believe I have not yet been further than Tai Po? This is all very new for me.’ She settled back to admire the view.

Conversation lapsed. We ate a simple lunch at a *dai pai dong* in Sheung Shui. We prowled around the old village, taking photos, then drove along a road fringed with fish ponds, duck ponds, goose ponds, buffaloes, vegetables, and old, old houses. I wanted to drive to the politically cloven Sha Tau Kok, British one side of the main street, Chinese the other, but there was the inevitable roadblock, and the polite but firm Ghurkhas. No, no entrance. You must go back.

So we turned south, down a one-lane track fringing Starling Inlet, leaving Sha Tau Kok behind at the northern end. The lane ran beside a large shallow bay, where a huge tree stood off shore, alone, on an islet, with thousands of large white birds for leaves. I told her they were egrets and it should be called Egret Inlet, but she disagreed with a giggle, ‘*M’hai, Bak Hok Wan*. White Crane Bay, la!’ White cranes are in just about every Chinese painting. I thought egrets were different but what the hell.

Just outside the pretty village of Luk Keng, we drove past a huge fish pond. A large, clumsy PRC Pigeon bicycle was parked on its stand by the shore.

‘Stop, la! Take my photo on the bicycle!’

We stopped. She ran to the bike and sat on it, gripping the wide handlebars, smiling like a cheeky starlet into the camera. I took her photo then moved over to help her off. Her head fell onto my shoulder, deep, brown eyes looking up at me. My arms encircled her, I bent and kissed her on the lips, my hands automatically cupped her breasts. I didn’t mean to. It just happened. And she wasn’t wearing a bra.

‘Hey! Stop, Mr. Harris. So *public*, la!’

I stared into those mischievous eyes, kissed her again, and with a gallant bow, held her hand as she stepped off the old machine. We returned to Ah Chung.

I paused behind the wheel, forcing myself to breathe slowly, deeply, to avoid drowning in her sexuality. This was not how I meant it to be, honest to God. I turned to look at her. She had wedged her body into the corner formed by the passenger seat and the door, a position that allowed her to stare at me while I drove, staring, staring, with smiling, goading eyes, not now those of a happy kitten, but of a lustful cat, who was beginning to drive me crazy. How could I drive under these conditions? I was nearly frantic.

‘Home, la! Time to drive me home. I might have a plane to catch tonight.’

‘Really? You have to work tonight?’ Disappointment fought relief.

‘I might. Seriously. At least I have to be by my telephone. I’m on call.’

‘My God, they work you hard.’ Yes, it was better this way, after all. I’d just discovered that Connie could take my mind off Wai Yee much too easily. Perhaps she was in her own sweet way deliberately doing just this. Not flirting as a prelude to an affaire, but simply to make me feel better. If so, she was succeeding brilliantly. But Wai Yee. Just thinking of her tore me apart. I could be quite wrong about her, I could. In this case, what was I doing with this wonderful, gorgeous girl, seemingly so innocent, yet so knowing? What might I even be doing to her?

I started Ah Chung with a deep sigh and we took off towards Bridespool Road. We’d be back in Kowloon Tong in an hour and a half at the most. It was now 4.30 pm. ‘Home by six okay?’

‘That would be wonderful.’ She was still leaning back into the corner of the passenger seat and the door, her eyes washing me with tender promise.

Her hand moved to my knee. A finger traced a tiny, creeping spiral, starting at my kneecap, moving fractionally up my thigh. Instantly, I was incandescent again. I couldn’t help myself. I flicked the left indicator, slowing to park beside the road.

‘Mr. Harris, what *are* you doing? We mustn’t stop; I have to return home. Please,’ she leaned over, kissed my cheek, whispering into my ear, ‘Peter.’

She was fermenting an impossible brew inside me. It churned up my stomach, surged up my throat, exploding in a loud laugh. It broke the spell. Shaking my head, grinning like a crazy old man, I accelerated. We didn’t talk very much on the drive back, but she continued the torture, her hand on my leg, moving microscopically now and then. The pressure was building up again. I kept glancing at her. Every time I saw her sweet eyes glowing at me. I then saw Wai Yee sitting there, where she had sat so often. My heart breaking, I took Connie’s hand, gently squeezed it, and with an effort than nearly killed me, I placed her hand back in her own lap. I glanced quickly at her. She was staring out the window, a tear trickling down her face. I could feel tears starting in my own eyes.

‘Connie, oh Connie, I’m... I’m... so *sorry!*’ I muttered. She turned her head and stared back at me, her eyes huge and wet, a child who’d just been punished and didn’t know why.

We had arrived. I parked the Hillman. She opened the door, looking over her shoulder with a hesitant smile. ‘Would you like to come inside?’

‘Oh, Connie, I’d love to, I really would. But I have to go. I’m so sorry. It’s been a wonderful day, truly, but ...’ I stopped. No speeches. I knew, she knew. And I was so sorry, so desperately sorry. Sorry to have hurt this delightful, generous girl who attracted me so much.

I drove back to Waterloo Road. While waiting at the traffic lights, I glanced over at the back seat. Yogi Bear, Ah Hung, was sitting there, looking at me. Shit, I'd have to take it back.

I pulled up outside yet again, got out with her backpack. I pressed the buzzer.

'Wei?'

'It's Peter. We forgot something.'

'Hai!' I heard a delighted squeak as she pressed the lock for me to enter.

I climbed the stairs two at a time. She'd opened the door, her head poking deliciously out, watching me. I reached her, Ah Hung held behind my back. She opened the door wide and stood there, grinning with happy relief.

'Oh Peter.' She moved forwards, arms outstretched.

I held up the backpack. 'Ah Hung, you forgot Ah Hung.'

'Oh.' Her face crumpled. She snatched Ah Hung, giving me a heart-piercing look, the look of one who had been deceived and deeply hurt.

She slammed the door.