

Thursday is our days for lessons. But I am not comfortable when her mother is around. I have a clever idea. We go on “field excursions”. We go to Park ‘N’ Shop, to the wet markets in Kennedy Town and Sai Ying Pun. I point to objects and name them. We pretend to buy, and give change. In the Chinese areas, away from prying *gwailo* eyes, we walk hand in hand, even kiss quickly, deliciously, in convenient alleyways. We are soon conversing in Cantonese.

Then, one Thursday, she tells me to go straight to Felix Villas. I soon found out why.

“Everyone’s out. Mummy’s gone to some Faculty Wives thingee, so let’s go to my bedroom. It’s nicer there.”

Her room is the prettiest room I have ever seen. She has big, colourful posters on the wall, scatter rugs and bean-bags on the floor, a bed with a bright, sky blue and yellow doona. A big yellow teddy bear sits on her pillow. Yes, I was right. Her colours are blue and yellow. Through a glass door is a balcony looking out to sea, with a little round table and two chairs. She motions me to sit beside her at the table.

As she talks she keeps touching me, a mannerism of hers, but now her hand is on my arm always. Something is going to happen. I feel excited, but I am anxious too. A breeze ruffles her silky golden hair, she flicks it, and a golden strand rests on my face an instant. She turns to me.

“Chris.”

I can barely hear her.

“Kiss me *properly* this time, Chris.”

I think of Ah Ying’s tongue, and how it led me to taste shame. But Flic is as different from Ah Ying as it is possible to be. It is time I learn that proper kissing is about love, not shame.

I turn to meet her, my hands behind her back, drawing her close. I brush her lips with mine. I open my eyes. There, an inch away, are her black eyelashes, looking down the moon-dust on her nose. This is right! Then my hands on her back tell me something. She is not wearing a bra. This is not right.

I am now confused. Is this sex or is this love? My feelings for Flic were so pure, and now we seem to be getting towards the sort of experience I had with Ah Ying, after which I felt so dirty. Flic turns slightly, so that my wrist is pressing the soft bulge of her breast. This is maybe not the sort of experience I want with Flic.

She murmurs, “Chris, oh Chris.”

“Flic,” I whisper. I can’t stop now. I slip my tongue between her lips.

A door bangs. “Miss Felicity, are you home?” A Filipino accent calls up the stairs. She starts back. “Oh – *fuck!*” she hisses. “Bloody Maria’s back.”

I am shocked at the ugliness of her sound, and at what she says. It must sound even worse if I were English.

She gets up and walks loudly, talks loudly. “Yes, this is my room, Chris. Lovely view, don’t you think? YES MARIA, we’re just coming down.”

We walk downstairs to the small room where the books of Sidney Lau await us. Passing Maria on the way she says, “Just showing Chris the house before we start our Chinese lesson. This is Maria. Chris.”

I nod at the maid, a pleasant looking girl.

Safely in our lesson room, Flic reassures me. “She’s okay. I’ve got a thing or two on her she doesn’t want Mummy to know about. She won’t say anything.”

As she lets me out, I notice that her eyes are bright, like stars again, and her cheeks are pink. “That was probably just as well, Chris. I think I know now what you feel about me. I know what I feel about you. And I would never have believed it!”

I too cannot believe it. A Chinese boy, a perfect English angel, and the impossible has happened.

Their love is mutual.

The next Saturday, Ah Ba asks me to take some orders to a customer in Central. I walk down the steps from Wyndham Street to Lan Kwai Fong. The expats are taking over this part of Central. Coffee bars are everywhere, some spilling out onto the pavement.

I am walking past one group of Western teenagers, when I hear a familiar laugh. I look up. Yes, it is she! She is sitting at a table with two boys and a girl. She is wearing a tank-top, too daring for my liking, exposing her shoulders and even the tops of her breasts. She is sitting beside that tall boy, who had been to the shop with her. I look at him more closely. He looks so arrogant in that English way, with his fair hair flopping over one eye, head tilted back, looking at the world down his long nose, long even for a Westerner. I am shocked to see that his arm is around her shoulder, a long finger trailing suggestively towards the visible parting of her breasts. I hate to say this, but there she is, looking like so many other Western girls look – common. All those stories about the girls at Island School come to me. No Flic, not you! Surely not you? Our eyes meet. I try hard to remove the distaste from my face, and smile pleasantly.

Her eyes are blank, but a tiny head movement tells me: *Don’t let on you know me!*

I am devastated. I lower my head and start walking down Lan Kwai Fong. Then I

am angry. Very angry indeed. Flic, with whom I had nearly been intimate! Who as good as said she loved me, only a few days ago. So, why is she denying my existence? Is it because all the time she had this other boyfriend and she doesn't want him to know about me? Or is it simply that she thinks she is too superior, in front of her smart Western friends, to acknowledge that her Chinese boyfriend even exists. I exist, Flic, and they shall know it!

I walk back. I lean over the little low fence separating the coffee drinkers from the pavement.

"Hello, Flic. Don't you recognize me?" I am barely able to control my rage, but I try hard to look relaxed and friendly.

She looks startled. She colours up. "Oh sorry, er, er, Chris. No, I didn't see you." Her face is bright scarlet, distress written all over it. "Um, meet my friends. Jeremy, Lucy, and Donald. This is Chris Wong."

I nod to each, they nod coolly back, and I immediately withdraw. I have made my point. But I walk only a couple of steps, when I hear a superior British voice:

"Well, well, Flic. You should see your face! I didn't know you had a *Chinese* boyfriend. Where did you drag him up from?"

"He's not a boyfriend. *He's only my Chinese teacher.*" Her voice is low and urgent.

Although she speaks quietly, those words are so loud they keep me awake all night.

Somehow I crawl out of bed and dress for school. I have been in agony all night, quite unable to sleep at all. I have to make up my mind between two possibilities. There are only two. Either this Jeremy has been her real boyfriend all the time, or she refused to recognize me because I am Chinese. One or other must be true. Which?

Ah Ma is unsuccessful in finding out why I look so dreadful, and why I won't eat breakfast. Ah Ba is too wise to press me, but he has no need to do so. He understands the ways of the *Wu Lei Jing*.

I step outside onto the pavement. I hear my name whispered.

"Chris."

She moves away from the wall where she has been waiting for me. She comes up to me and puts her hands on my shoulders. Her eyes are as tired and bloodshot as mine, but there is a difference. Hers are swimming with tears.

"Chris, oh Chris, what can I say? I did the most terrible thing. I'm so sorry, so

sorry.” She buries her head onto my shirtfront and cries her foxy, little heart away. I hold her tightly. I find I love her more than ever, but I will not let her know this. Not yet.

“It is okay. Don’t cry, Flic.”

It is strange. Now I feel in charge of her. It has been the other way round before. Now I surge with longing, a fierce, physical longing. This is something I have never felt before with Flic. This is both sex and love! I am more urgent than I was even with Ah Ying. I want Flic to feel my longing, as she presses against me. But not yet. I need to know something first.

“But why, Flic? Why?”

She is silent, her head bowed. Tears drop.

“This Jeremy. Tell me about him.” I lift her chin with my finger, and force her streaming eyes to meet mine.

“Oh, er, Jeremy’s more like a family friend. And he’s a prefect, and, well, everyone thinks that he and I are just so *suitable*! They should have asked little me! No, he’s okay, but not in *that* way.” She lowers her eyes, and a little smile appears. “It’s *you*, Chris. I did mean it when I said it. Really I did. Ngor oi lei.”

I pull her tightly to me. Now her body may feel how hard I am. See, Flic, *this* is how you make me feel for you! I whisper: “In English, Flic. Say it in English.”

“I love you.”

All the pain, the heaviness, drain with a rush into the cracks in the pavement. I kiss her fiercely, in broad daylight, hard and proud, outside Ah Ba’s little bookshop in Sai Ying Pun.

And now I know. It was the other reason.

It was because I am Chinese.

But that was then and now is now. The now when we discover that sex and love are one. Nothing will separate us now.

“You’ll be late for school, Flic. You better hurry. The Island bus went long ago.”

“*M’ganiu!* Is that right?” she asks shyly.

I press her hand to confirm that, yes, that is right. It is not important.

She smiles, looking as happy as I am feeling. “I’ll walk with you to St. Paul’s. I’ll catch a 28 minibus to Island.”

She then stops walking. She steps in front of me, her hands again on my shoulders, her lovely, blue eyes stare straight into mine.

“I want to make up for everything, Chris. Can you come to dinner at home next Saturday? I’ve already asked Mummy and Daddy! Aren’t I naughty? *And* they said they would be happy to meet you.”