

## *Black Dog*

Meantime, I had to do whatever I could to convince Susan that we were back on track, she and I, as made for each other as we ever were. In retrospect, it would have been better even at that late stage to have admitted my treachery. Susan's eyes and ears were confirming what her intuition also told her: I was screwing Oi Mei. Oi Mei had cunningly hinted so. That remark on boarding the junk hadn't been thoughtless; I could now see that it had been a deliberate attempt by Oi Mei to sow a nasty little fast-growing seed of doubt. That seed was now a flourishing plant. My own cowardice in not coming clean had confused Susan. Her long soul-mate's denials and her own intuition and the information delivered by her eyes and ears were in stark conflict. And she wasn't handling it at all well.

I thought back over our happiest times together. Probably walking in Hong Kong's beautiful hills. That peaceful, soul-healing activity was just what was needed now I thought. Over breakfast the next day, I suggested we get Maria to cut some sandwiches and spend the day walking one of her favourite spots.

'Susan, it's a beautiful day. Let's walk to Lion Rock National Park and then to Eagle's Nest, you know where it overlooks Kai Tak. We haven't been there since the airport closed. Remember, the flight path went right overhead. We used to watch the planes land.'

She stared at me with expressionless eyes.

I prattled on: 'We could go via Amah Rock, and from there ...'

At that her eyes filled with tears. 'At least she had a baby, if not a husband.'

How sensitive and vulnerable she now was. I was devastated to see how low she had become since last night's dodging with the truth.

Amah Rock, an impressive sight on the Sha Tin side of Lion Rock, comprises a large human-shaped stone with a smaller stone balanced as if on its back. There is a legend that the rock was originally a fisherman's wife whose husband had died at sea. Each morning she climbed Lion Rock Mountain with her baby on her back and stand, watching out to sea, waiting for her husband. Tin Hau, the Goddess of the Sea, finally took pity and turned her and the baby into stone so she could be reunited in spirit with her dead husband.

'At least you have a husband,' I replied.

'Do I? Do I really?' She sighed, a tear ran down her cheek. She looked at me, tried to smile, 'Oh all right Tom if you'd like to go.' She wiped her mouth and stood up.

Once we were up in those glorious hills, I was sure she would cheer up. We avoided seeing Amah Rock by going to Lion Rock Park from Broadcast Drive in Kowloon, the Lion's Head looming ever larger as we climbed upwards to the saddle separating Kowloon from the New Territories. I suggested we climb to the top of the Lion's head where, after a short steep climb, Kowloon would be a toy town at our feet and Lion Rock Tunnel a two-way stream of thousands of dinky toy cars and trucks. We had done it before and she had loved it. But as I spoke, her eyes widened. She looked terrified, shaking her head vigorously.

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So we turned away from Lion Rock towards Beacon Hill. There are lots of wild monkeys there and there are warnings: do not go close, they can be dangerous. I'd thought of this – and thought it would be fun to distract the creatures by throwing scraps of food behind us if they came too close. Their antics, swinging through the trees and scampering beside us on Beacon Hill Road brought a smile to Susan's face.

Eagle's Nest Trail overlooks the Kwai Chung container port. The trail then swings round to take in the whole of the Kowloon Peninsula, the trail running beside a steep drop on the Kowloon wide, Kai Tak airport in the distance.

'No planes there now. Isn't that a shame?' I smiled.

She didn't answer. She seemed to be getting more and more uneasy as we walked.

She stopped dead, her body leaning forward, her legs stiff like those of a baulking donkey. 'No Tom, no!' Her voice rose until she was nearly screaming. 'No, no. The edge, the edge! Don't let me go near the edge!'

She'd always had a good head for heights. I was totally nonplussed.

'Keep away Tom, don't do it. Don't push me, please don't!'

Her face contorted into grimace of sheer terror. My God, she sounded like she thought I was going to *kill* her!

'Suzie darling, I'm not going to do anything. Please darling, trust me!' I held out my arms to her, as if coaxing a child to walk. 'Come Suzie, Suzie, please. Come to me.' If she would come into my arms she would be all right. I sensed that I must not move towards her.

She stared at me imploringly, her face frozen in terror, her body taut. Suddenly she relaxed and with a rush she fell into my arms. She buried her face into my neck, wailing like child having woken up after a frightful nightmare. 'Don't ever leave me Tom. Remember, you promised. You promised. Remember?'

I remembered that promise. I meant as much now as I had done before although there was a massive difference between then and now. I was not the reason for that depression but I certainly was for this one. Now this panic attack, based on the fear not only that I would leave her, but unimaginably worse, that I would kill her! I suppose she was thinking ...

I'd rather not try to think what she was thinking.

'Yes, darling, I promised. And I mean it even more today than I did then. Susan, you are what gives meaning to my life. I love you and only you.'

Which was the absolute truth.

We took the shortest way home, down the path to the nearest bus at Kowloon Reservoirs. She clung to my arm as if I was now the rock on which she depended not her would-be murderer. We spoke

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little. I took her out that night to a new oyster bar in Central for dinner – I thought it better to steer clear of Chinese restaurants – returning home for a quiet night watching television. We went to bed together but her body language signalled: not tonight, Tom. Not yet.

Sunday we went to a movie and had a drink with friends in a neighbouring apartment. Things seemed to be heading in the right direction for her. Although there was a way to go yet, I was confident we'd get through this crisis. The Oi Mei affair was over. My top priority Monday was to get Oi Mei out of my – out of our – lives for ever.

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