



Ressort: Reise & Tourismus

## The Hong Kong Story - Part 1

Hong Kong, 16.01.2022 [ENA]

You spend the late evening in your cosy hotel room watching Hong Kong gangster films and get into a weird and mystic mood. It is amazing how those films can draw you in, grab your attention and take you away from the real world. Suddenly you feel like you are part of the film, you believe that you live in a place of murder, robbery, drugs, prostitutes, martial arts fighters, etc.

You feel that you live in a dark place where the sun never shines, never rises, where it is always night and where terrible, illegal things happen. A place where it is best to stay indoors, rather than to put a foot outside the front door and risk to get killed, robbed or attacked. Everybody could be a murderer, a trafficker, a drug dealer or an innocent victim.

Suddenly you hear noises around you and every noise you hear, whether real or unreal, sound very suspicious and you believe that someone is after you, wants to harm you or that something is going on and you're about to discover something illegal. The cleaner in the corridor is actually not a cleaner, but a serial killer and carries well-hidden guns inside the trolley.

The gentleman in front of the door opposite your room is a drug dealer, the waitresses at the bar and the restaurant are prostitutes and are held hostage and made to work against their will and the hotel is not an actual hotel, but a different kind of business as you will soon discover.

Those images and thoughts hunt you in your dreams so that you can't sleep. The film continues in your brain until a noise wakes you. You raise your upper body from the mattress and open your eyes, but everything around you is pitch black. The thick curtains don't let any light fall inside. You don't know what woke you. Was that noise real or was it just in your dream?

If it was real, what was it and where did it come from? Because you feel tired after only a few hours of sleep and all that walking you did the previous day, you decide that it is best to go back to sleep. That is a good idea, but it doesn't work that way. Your mind is running wild, you imagine many things at the same time and can't put your thoughts in order. You have visions, you hear sounds, people speaking. You turn around in bed a few times trying to find a comfortable position and finally sleep. You need and want to be fit for the following day in order to walk for hours and hours and see many things of this unknown place.

Sometime later you manage to calm yourself down, free your mind from all the thoughts that didn't let you sleep, count some sheep and finally drift off into the realms of Morpheus. But there it is, there is this noise

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again. It sounds like a scratch, a scrape at the door. You open your eyes, but remain in bed, you don't move and wait to hear it again. Nothing happens and the seconds pass very slowly. You think to yourself that it was in your imagination and try to fall asleep again. Your eyes are heavy and as soon as they close, the noise at the door reappears. You open your eyes again, try to locate the noise, put the blanket slowly away and move silently out of bed.

You walk to the end of the bed from where you have a view over the small corridor and the door of your hotel room. You can see some light falling into your room from the gap under the door and while you're walking towards the door, you hear the noise again. You walk slowly and silently like the Kung Fu fighters in the films and when you reach the door you first look through the spy hole and then place your ear on the cold door. Nothing happens.

As you feel wide awake now and think that it is impossible to go back to sleep, you get dressed in the dark, grab the room key card, slowly unlock and open the door, peep outside and make sure that nobody is in the corridor, you open the door a little more, step outside, close it behind you as silently as you can and walk towards the lifts. Just before you are about to turn right to the lifts, you hear the noise of a closing door. You turn right and see how the door to the stairs closes. You don't think twice about what you're going to do now, you don't listen to your gut feeling and you run for the door, open it with force and run to the stairs and look down.

There you see a piece of a jacket moving downstairs and you decide to follow that person and find out who it is. You run, run, run and jump the stairs, but the person ahead of you is faster and you hear a door slam. When you reach the ground floor, or the first floor as they say in China, you open the emergency exit door and step outside into the cool night. You look left to the main road and right to the stairs that lead to First Street, but there is nobody. You take a few steps towards Queen's Road West and continue to look around you, but there's still nobody. A look at your wristwatch reveals that it is almost 4am.

You abandon the pavement and walk in the middle of the street to have a better overview of the surrounding area and because you think it is safer to walk in the middle of the road.

You walk until the end of the street and turn right and follow the route you took a few times that leads you to SoHo. This way you won't get lost, as the route is familiar. However, you feel that someone is following you, but you turn around and see nobody. You feel somebody's eyes on you, but you don't know what to do. Then you have an idea. You pass a building site and decide to climb up the bamboo scaffolding and wait there for a while. This you do.

You climb up two levels and hide in a corner from where you have a great overview of the crossroad and the four streets. Ten or so minutes later the only thing that passed is the waste collection truck. So, you give

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up and climb down again.

You continue your walk to SoHo and hope to find a bar that is still open to drink a cold beer. To your disappointment SoHo is quite dead at this time, but you manage to find a bar to sit in for a bit and enjoy your cold western beer. The owner kicks you out after a quarter of an hour because he wants to close and go home.

You step outside into the cool night, close your eyes, breath in, breath out and take the route back to your hotel. A few yards down the road, light falls from a side alley onto the main road and arises your interest. You walk closer and see a foot massage sign on top of the alley. "Are they still open?" you wonder and walk closer. You go to the door of the building, push it open and it makes a creeping noise, you step inside and go up a flight to the foot massage place. To your surprise, the business is still open and there are a few customers. You try your luck with your basic Mandarin, but the person at the front desk replies in Cantonese, which you don't understand.

You manage to negotiate and are asked to follow that person into a room. There you are asked to take off your shoes and lie down on a bed. A minute later a lady appears, washes your feet and starts massaging them. Oh, this is good! Exactly what you need after those long walks. It has a soothing effect, and it calms you down. The kneading, the scents, the low lights and the soft humming of the lady who massages your feet make you sleepy. You close your eyes and fall sound asleep.

Sometime later you feel something cold on your nose that irritates you and brings you back from the realms of Morpheus. You open your eyes slowly but a second later you're wide awake. Why? You look directly into a barrel of a gun....

There you are, lying on a bed in a foot massage parlour somewhere in SoHo. The soft humming of the nice lady who massaged your feet is not there anymore, nor is the lady. You look directly at the barrel of a gun that touches your nose. The metal of the gun feels cold on your nose, and it smells like gun powder. You look up to have a look of the person holding the gun, but the only thing you can see is a shadow. You see a shadow because the naked light bulb is hanging right behind this person. You don't know what to make of this, you are not sure whether you are dreaming or not. You close your eyes and wait for a bit. Nothing happens in the meantime. But then you hear a noise and a whisper. Then you hear a second whisper.

Two people, two men to be more precise are talking in Cantonese. You hear a 'click', the noise of the trigger of a gun and open your eyes again. A second person is standing next to the first person, also pointing a gun at you.

'WHOA!' You think to yourself! No, no, no, this can't be really happening! What the hell is going on? Your thoughts run wild, and you start to shiver a little. Cold sweat is suddenly running down your spine. You close your eyes again, take a deep breath with your eyes still closed. You breath in and you breath out. This

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could be just a nightmare and when you open your eyes again, the two men pointing guns at you won't be there and you'll be in your cosy hotel room, in your bed, in your pyjamas, etc.

Or this could be a real nightmare and you're about to become a victim of a crime, possibly risk your life and never see the daylight, your friends, your family and your beloved one again.

While you have your eyes still shut, the whispering continues, and you have the impression that more people have joined the little gathering. You still refuse to open your eyes, and you hear a melody coming from somewhere. The tune sounds familiar, but you are too nervous to realise which song it is. A little later the lyrics to the melody appear out of nowhere.

'Me and my monkey,  
With a dream and a gun,  
Hoping my monkey,  
Don't point that gun at anyone,  
Me and my monkey,  
Like Butch and the Sundance Kid,  
Trying to understand,  
Why he did what he did,  
Why he did what he did'.

And the song continues in your head. But why are you hearing this song? Is it because of the year of the monkey? Is it due to certain hallucinogenic substances? This is really weird; it is too weird to be true. But on the other hand, it must be true. You can't be imagining all this. You haven't smoked anything, nor today, nor in a long while, nor have you taken any drugs. You start humming the melody and whispering the lyrics: 'And at the elevator I hit the 33rd floor...'

The guys in front of you get confused and are not amused with your humming and singing. The barrel moves from the tip of your nose and hits your cheek. One of the men tells you in a harsh voice to wake up. Then you open your eyes again and see three men standing in front of you. This is getting wilder and wilder! It's like being in a film. You and three gangsters and God knows what's about happen. It could all be a mistake and they are after somebody else, it could also be a 'Hidden Camera' joke, or this is real and you're about to get hurt and land in a dungeon.

Suddenly you remember an article issued and published by the Chinese government warning locals from falling in love with foreigners, because they could be spies. Do they really believe you're a spy? You are still not able to see their faces and the only things you see are shadows and shapes.

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??????Ni huì shuo zhongwén ma? Can you speak Chinese? Asks one of the men.

??Shì. Yes.

????Wèishéme? Why?

????Zhishì yinwèi. Just because.

???????Zhè shì cuòwù de dá'àn. This is the wrong answer.

And one of the three men hits you with something and you fall unconscious.

You slowly leave the world of unconsciousness and return to the real world. You feel dazed and confused and you are not really conscious yet. You feel that you are in a parallel world, somewhere distant, somewhere far away. Images, voices and sounds fly around you; they come and go and make you even more confused and dizzy. You see your entire life passing before you. Images from your childhood, images from your time as a teenager, from university and your working life afterwards. You see places you have been, people you have met, you see your parents, your previous relationships, scents and smells go up your nose.

Two things however keep appearing and disappearing. The first one is Mi, a Chinese colleague and dear friend with whom you understand each other blindly, intuitively. She doesn't say anything. She comes and goes, but there's something in the expression and the way she looks at you. Shall this be a sign of warning or relief? Why is she appearing anyway? Has she got to do anything with this here?

The second thing that comes and goes is the song you were humming in the foot massage parlour.

"He ran his little monkey fingers through yellow pages  
Called up some escort services and ordered some okay doke  
Forty minutes later there came a knock at the door.."

Yeah, some hookers and some weed would be great now. You would certainly like that.  
All the images, scents and sounds disappear, and you open your eyes. You raise your head and look around. The lights are dimmed, and you can't see much. You see that you are tied to a chair in an empty room. Directly opposite is a door and on both sides are windows with curtains. Directly behind must be a corridor, because you hear some footsteps. You try to move the chair around to see what is behind you, but as you jump a few times and manage to move the chair a few inches, the door opens, and two men step inside.

One comes closer to you and the other shuts the door and places himself next to it.

The man standing in front of you asks you in perfect English:

"Do you speak Chinese?"

"Yes."

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"Why?"

"Just because!"

"That's the wrong answer!" he says and slaps you hard on the right cheek so that your head flies to the left. Jeez! We had this before.

You shake your head and ask: "What is wrong with speaking Chinese?"

"Nothing wrong with it, only peculiar."

You're none the wiser and don't understand what's the problem with it.

"So, why do you speak Chinese?"

"I live in the country and it's obvious to learn it, no? I speak other languages too."

"....." Silence. The man doesn't say anything and you're sure that he knows exactly who you are and what you do. Perhaps you shouldn't have said that you speak other languages.

"You speak Russian, I know, and a few other languages. I know, I know..."

You were right with your suspicion; he knows much about you.

He turns around, goes to the man by the door, gets something from him and returns. He holds up a photograph and asks you:

"Do you know this person?"

You have a closer look and once you realise who the person in the photo is, you put your best poker face on, like you learnt it in the army and say:

"No, I have no idea who this is."

"You're a fucking liar!" he shouts and slaps you again so that your head flies to the side.

"What did you do in Macau yesterday?"

"I'm sure you know what I did there. Sightseeing, didn't I?" you say with a cheeky smile.

The man turns around and says something in Cantonese to the man standing by the door. He opens the door and shouts something into the corridor. A few seconds later, four men and a young Chinese lady with her hands tied in front appear. It's the lady from the photograph. She is slim, has beautiful long black hair, dark eyes, cute face, fair skin and looks like a mixture of Pocahontas and Snow White.

"I'm asking you again, do you know the person?"

"No, why should I?"

"May we refresh your memory a bit?" he asks and snaps with his fingers, and two of the four angry looking men come forward ready to punch you.

You remain calm with your poker face still on and say: "You can refresh my memory as much as you like, I'm telling you the truth, I don't know this person."

The person in question is Mi. Of course, you know her, and you know her very well and you can guess why she is here. She's not only your colleague and dear friend, but she's also your Chinese teacher. You both

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look at each other and she is trying with the use of her fingers to pass a secret message to you, while the men have gathered together and are discussing something. You understand that you shouldn't be worried, and that the situation is under control.

"I will ask you one more time" the man says, "and I demand to hear the truth. Do you know this person? Why do you learn Chinese?"

"As I told you", you say in a calm manner, "there's nothing wrong with it and I don't know who she is." As soon as you finish this sentence, two of the men come forward and start slapping, hitting and punching you.

In this very moment the door is being kicked down and two ladies in sexy suits appear. It's your colleague Milly and your assistant Margaret and together with Mi they are the mysterious group "3". Milly and Margaret kick and punch some of the men standing by the door and throw them to the floor.

Milly jumps over to Mi and with a butterfly knife cuts the rope around her hands and frees her, then Mi bends down, lifts her left trouser leg and produces a knife. With some fast and spectacular movements between the men who are after her, she lands right before you, looks you in the eyes, kicks away a man who is trying to attack her from behind, whispers 'silly boy!' in your ear, reaches behind you and cuts the rope. She jumps back immediately, and you stand up with a quick move, take the chair and hit one of the men with it and knock him out.

"Quick!" shouts Margaret, while kicking one of the men in his balls. Ouch, that must hurt! Mi grabs your hand and pulls you towards the door.

Milly is already in the corridor waiting with a gun in her hands. You look behind and see a bunch of men on the floor.

The four of you run down the corridor and out of the building. There, a black Mercedes is parked, in which you get in. Milly takes the wheel; Margaret sits on the passenger seat and you and Mi take a place on the back seat. All of them look at you before Milly pushes down the throttle and Mi grabs your hair and says again sweetly 'silly boy' and you lean over and kiss her on her head. The car pushes forward with force so that the wheels spin and you disappear into the night and the streets of Hong Kong.

To be continued.

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Redaktion und Verantwortlichkeit:

V.i.S.d.P. und gem. § 6 MDStV: Theodoros Goumas

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