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Kiss & Die

Written by Lee Weeks

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Kiss & Die

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1

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Fourteen Days in Summer

Chapter 1

August 2006

He would be beginning to feel the pain now, the dehydration. In a few seconds he would try to move his arms but he would not be able to – his tendons were cut. He would try to lift his legs but she had strapped them to the bed whilst she cut through his hamstrings. Now he would feel the panic. Now he would feel the true meaning of pain and pleasure. Now he would understand the price he had paid for it.

He would open his eyes and look around the room and then he would understand he was just waking to die.

'Hello, Mr Big Businessman.' Ruby pulled up his eyelid. 'Wakey, wakey. Feel that?' Ruby twisted the scalpal into his shoulder joint and scraped it against bone. His body was covered in lacerations. His flesh was sprayed across the walls and ceiling.

He groaned in pain behind the ball gag. His eyes rolled in his head. He tried to move. He wasn't going anywhere. 'You're as helpless as a baby, aren't you, big man?'

His eyes were locked on hers. He was fully awake and terrified. He stared at Ruby, wide eyed, not understanding

how or why he had ended up in hell with this angel. His eyes pleaded with her. He looked back and forth from her to the door. They could hear noises outside in the corridor. There were people passing. They heard a man mutter and swear as he made his drunken way down to his room.

She followed his eyes as he looked desperately at the door, so near to help but so far. She swigged from the champagne bottle and then turned back to stare at him, a cynical smile on her face. 'What? You're not having a good time? You want to leave? You want your money back?'

She picked up his trousers from the floor and took the wallet out of the pocket. She came around to the side of the bed and leaned over him; her long black hair fell in his face as she tilted her head one way and then the other and tutted. 'But we're not finished yet.' She flipped open his wallet and took out his money. 'Now, how much am I worth? I'll tell you: more than the champagne.' She started taking out the notes. 'More than the cost of this room.' She took out more. Then she opened the wallet out fully and pulled out a photo. 'Nice family you have.' A pretty blond woman was kneeling between two pretty blond kids, a boy and a girl. A golden retriever sat in front of them. The little girl had a tooth missing at the front. The boy was lean, strong, with broad shoulders and freckles across his nose. She turned the photo over. *Love you Daddy from Belinda and Ben. P.S. Goldie says woof.* 'Very cute. Very sweet, your kids.'

Ruby removed the protective cup from his cock, lifted his limp member and injected into the shaft's base. 'We're still having fun, aren't we big boy? You ready for more?'

He groaned.

She leaned closer and watched his cock grow hard. The process never ceased to amuse and delight her. She went over to the cloth she had laid out on top of the mock-leather writing desk. Her instruments were neatly lined up. There were two left that she had yet to use. One was a butcher's knife that she would need afterwards; the other was a long, thin spike. Ruby came back to him and tightened the length of thin wire she had tied around his testicles. She twisted it until they bulged purple. He whined in agony. She ran her fingers over his body, and poked her fingers into the deep cuts in his flesh. He rolled his eyes and snorted in pain. Ruby climbed on top of him, her sex already eager, wet. She talked to him as she slid herself over him. Her palms outstretched on his chest, they slid beneath her. Ruby rocked back and forth, her pelvis sliding on his blood.

He turned his head from side to side, aware of the pain, not aware of the pleasure. Each of his joints was cut to the bone, his tendons, his muscles sliced through. She took him inside him like a child sucks a thumb – for security, comfort, familiarity. She was addicted to the sensation. It always made her feel special, wanted, loved. She closed her eyes and allowed herself to forget everything else and concentrate on the pleasure. For those few moments as she rocked back and forth on him and rolled her hips to take him deeper, she felt contented.

But it didn't last long. She reached behind her and picked up the end of the wire attached to his testicles and wrapped it around her hand and pulled so hard that his scrotum tore open. His body went into spasm with the shock and the pain. She picked up the scalpel from the

bedside table and sang to him as she began to make deep cuts over his heart, 'Cross my heart and hope to die . . .'

She reached across him and picked up the photo, now bloody with her prints. 'Nice wife, nice kids. A dog even. You have everything.' She leaned forward and ran her fingers through his hair.

He groaned, his eyes rolled back.

She held the photo in front of his face. 'But it wasn't enough was it, Mr Big Man? You wanted Ruby didn't you? You wanted big fun.'

She twisted the point of her scalpal into the wounds on his chest, deep bloody slashes that now exposed his rib. She scraped it along the bone. He squealed with pain. Ruby giggled. She rocked until she lost herself in ecstasy. She sat for a few minutes to recover, head down, body spent. Then she tilted her head and looked at him as she smiled.

'I'm finished.' Ruby picked up the spike and positioned it above his open heart. 'You ready to die?'

He thrashed his head wildly back and forth and screamed into the gag.

She looked across at his family photo. 'Hello Belinda . . . Hello Ben . . . Hello Goldie . . .' She pushed the spike into his beating heart. 'Say goodbye to your daddy.'

Chapter 2

'Yap, yap.'

A toy puppy turned somersaults in the air. It was ten p.m. and the night market was heaving. A tall man, athletic build, broad shoulders, wearing a black t-shirt and jeans was making his way through the market stalls. The height came from his mother's side. He was half English, half Chinese. He had a face that reflected his soul: scarred, but with a beauty beneath the sadness. His eyes were always searching. He was thirty-seven but looked older. He had seen a few hard winters. He pushed his ragged fringe back from his eyes, pulled his shades back down and kept walking, weaving his way through the stalls in Mong Kok's night market. He could have been mistaken for any other tourist except he wasn't sweating; he was used to it, this was his home. He wasn't shopping for knick-knacks either, Detective Inspector Johnny Mann of the Hong Kong Police Force was tracking the Triads that were moving through the market. Every few seconds he stopped to listen. Above the noisy bang and beat and Cantonese barking he was listening for one sound: signature whistles. Triads were calling to one another with their high-pitched beeps that

varied in length, in intensity. Each society had their secret signs. One society was moving as a pack tonight.

Mann signalled to his officers to fan out. He turned the corner onto Saigon Street where the night market spread into seafood restaurants and noodle bars and spilled out over the roads and pavements. It was August 2006. It was the twenty-fifth day of the Chinese month. It was the chosen day. Beneath the feet of the unsuspecting tourists, a Triad initiation ceremony was being held.

Eight young recruits stood nervously waiting to pass beneath the sacred archway of crossed swords. Amongst them were five young women and three boys, all of Indian descent dressed in their plain sackcloth robes, ready for the ceremony. Their feet were bare and their faces smeared in dirt. They had come to give themselves as penniless urchins to the society and be reborn as brothers and sisters, committed forever to the family; *49s* in the Triad order. Amongst them was fourteen-year-old Rajini. She waited nervously with the others in the corridor outside. She looked at her hands, there was no ring but it was not a bad age to get committed to someone or something. She looked at her feet; she was barefoot. She didn't mind that. Her family had walked many miles barefoot on the way to Hong Kong. They had crossed through China and joined the thousands of others making their way to paradise. But paradise was not the place she thought it would be. For twelve hours a day she sat at a machine and sewed. She dreamt of being a doctor, a teacher. But if Hong Kong had taught her anything it was that if you had money you could be anyone you wanted to be. She would become a *49*, the rank of a triad foot soldier, and climb the ladder

and earn good money doing whatever they asked her to; she knew there would be risks but she also knew there would be big rewards and then she could pay for herself to go to college and then she could be anyone she chose.

She followed the others under the archway of crossed swords and into the airless, dark room, filled with people, pressed in, hiding in the shadows. The heat in the room took her breath away. There was the sound of a chicken flapping its wings against the side of a crate. The incense smoke was thick in the dark room, which was lit only by the candles on the altar. In the gloom she could make out the Incense Master. He was old, tortoise-like, dressed in the robes of office, a long crimson silk stole over a cassock of white. He wore only one grass sandal, the other foot was bare. On his head was a three-pointed knotted scarf.

'Who is your sponsor?' asked the Incense Master. He stood with his index fingers curled into his palm to denote his rank.

'I am.' A young woman stepped forward from the shadows.

'Call forth your recruits.' The Incense Master lit the joss sticks on the altar and began reciting the sacred poems that had been handed down since the beginning:

'"I passed a corner and then another corner. My family lives on the Five Fingers Mountain. I've come to look for the temple of the sisters-in-law . . ."

You are children of the Wo Shing Shing. You are a group born from its spirit. But now it is time for you to stand alone. You are the Outcasts.' He finished with a warning. 'Break the sacred oath you are about to take and you will die as this rooster now dies.'

The sound of the chicken panicking reached a crescendo, the noise of flapping wings and the gurgle of blood escaping from its cut throat rose above the squawking. Its twitching body was held above a brass bowl on the altar.

'You will die as he did. No mercy will be shown. We come together today to be reborn. You leave your last life behind you. You are *49s*. Four for the oceans that our ancestors believed surrounded the world. Nine for the sacred oaths. You belong to an ancient family dating back to the time of the Qing dynasty. You belong to one another. Never forget you are brothers and sisters, forever joined in blood.'

From the corner of her eye Rajini watched the officers close in around the door and secure it. She looked back to her sponsor. The Incense Master swung the smoking silver perfumed ball in the air and chanted the oaths. The body of the chicken lay still on the floor and the bowl of blood was tipped into a cup from the altar. The Incense Master came to each recruit in turn. Rajini waited. He repeated the oaths to each one.

'With this blood we are united. With this blood we are one. Together we remain until death.'

Each recruit replied: 'I will never disclose the secrets of the Outcasts, not even to my parents, my brothers or sisters; I will be killed by the sword if I do so. I shall never disclose the secrets for money; I will be killed by the sword if I do so. I will never reveal the Outcasts secret signs or oaths when speaking to others outside the Outcast society; I will be killed by the sword if I do so.'

The Incense Master passed the cup to each recruit in turn. 'You will be like no group before you. You will kill

without mercy. You will belong only to your new family, cast away the old. You belong to the Outcasts.'

'Bound forever to serve one another.'

Rajini closed her eyes as the blood tasted thick, warm, it touched her upper lip and coated it. She sipped from the chalice.

The Incense Master looked deep into her eyes. 'No one leaves. No one ever betrays.' The blood sat in her mouth like the taste of a nosebleed. 'This is your new family. You will serve no other.'

Rajini bowed her head to him.

'Yes, Master,' all the recruits repeated together. The incense left a plume of smoke overhead as it passed along the line, each one tasting the blood of the killed chicken. At the end of the line the Incense Master placed the chalice back onto the altar. He stood and looked at his disciples.

'You are now *49s*, foot soldiers.. But, one of you here has already transgressed. One of you has spoken of their coming here tonight. One of you gave information away. Now that one must be punished. They will be an example to you all. The Outcasts will not tolerate betrayal. When you leave this place you must do so quickly and disperse fast. Outside now there is one who is coming. He comes because we have a traitor amongst us.'

The Incense Master looked towards the sponsor. She nodded. 'All who are present here must witness the result of your transgression.'

He turned to Rajini. 'You share the fate of the rooster.'

As Mann turned the corner he saw the telltale sign: a red card taped above a doorway. Two girls came out, one

Indian, one mixed race. Mann hung back and watched; an Indian lad was the next to emerge, he staggered out of the doorway and looked about to throw up. Mann hung back out of sight. He signalled to his officers to follow the lad, whilst he headed towards the entrance. It was the same as all the other buildings on the street and yet it wasn't. Above its door was a shirt maker's sign. The night shift should have been pounding away but the place was quiet. To the right a flight of stairs led up to a pink neon sign advertising a woman's services and a massage parlour. To the left was a small Chinese medicine store selling loose herbs, dried fish and centipedes by the scoop. In between was a corridor. A metal grill, unlocked and half opened, gave way easily when Mann pulled it. Mann stepped into the corridor and listened. Further on, a solitary light bulb gave off a stark hue against the black walls.

Mann unclipped the gun holster that was strapped around his waist, but left the Smith and Wesson revolver where it was. Instead, he reached down and took out the knife from his boot. This was not a place to fire a gun. He needed silence, stealth. He needed caution. He held the knife tightly now as he walked on down the corridor and stopped on the door on the left. Above its arch were the symbolic crossed swords. He pushed the door open and stood in the doorway. The room was dark except for the light of one candle at the far right of the room. The air was thick with the smell of incense, smouldering paper and heat of the people, now gone. He heard the scratch of a rat's claws as it ran the perimeter of the room and stopped and the sound of another joining it. Cockroaches scurried over walls and ceiling to watch the rats. He looked

down at his feet; he was walking on the red summoning cards of hundreds of Triads. He crossed the threshold, beneath the arch of swords, and propped the door open with a discarded wooden thread spool. There was little else to show that this had been a garment factory, so far as he could tell the room was empty of equipment: the machines all gone. All that remained were tatters of material and empty crates. The candle on top of a stack of upturned crates: a makeshift altar. Mann walked across to it. Beside the altar were the discarded sackcloth robes of the Triad initiates, left to rot, no longer needed and on top of them a shimmering Indian sari. From the corner of his eye he saw a rat jump into a box, two sticks protruded from its end. Mann got close. They were not sticks; they were arms. He looked down into the box. The rats were already feasting on the young girl's body, the cockroaches tumbling from the box's sides on top of her.