

Moonlight Massage.

Tea Break Travels, No 3

This is one story from a collection of travel related stories called “Tea Break Travels”. They are designed to be read in a short break from work or whatever and cost around the same as a biscuit! Some are true, some embellished, and some fictional. Some are from near 20 years of too much business travel, or our holidays, others are relayed from friends and acquaintances, yet others are just plain made up! This one is relayed from a colleague after a few too many “pops” about a massage she ‘accepted’ while being very overstressed. I’ve omitted names and changed a few details – including the location of the tattoo – to protect the guilty.

Enjoy.

The pounding rain had woken her.

The much needed early night had been lost when the tropical showers started to push in from the ocean. Finally she put on her silk gown, a little indulgence from the Singapore shopping mall and went onto the balcony of her cottage style suite, just to see the deluge that was denying her sleep.

The humid night wrapped around her as she listened to the rain drum beat on the roof, the path and, louder than both of those, the palm leaves around her hotel room. In a way it was release from the tension of the week. Sunday had been the 12 hour flight from London to Singapore. She could now only vaguely remember arriving. The flowers and no graffiti or litter stuck in her mind’s eye. But then was the punishing schedule of client and team meetings, the late nights with full-on jet lag, and the intense negotiation, pushing hard, compromise, defeat, victory, or was it? She still didn’t know.

By Friday the week was a blur. Deprived of sleep, the “come back next Tuesday for the answer” had hit her like a hammer. Still, her potential clients were polite to the extreme. She had asked if there was a special place to stay, out of town, that they could recommend and they had all said “La Retreat” was it. Despite thoughts she should be with her bid team she had made the call and booked the suite.

It was 11 pm now on the Friday and she stood on the barely light balcony of her suite, watching and hearing the rain, while wrapped in the expensive silk gown bought hurriedly in the only time that week she had not been in a hotel, an office or a taxi,.

As suddenly as it had started, the downpour stopped, leaving just the sound of dripping from the roof and leaves, and an almost suffocating silence.

“Did the rain wake you?”

She started, surprised at the voice in the night. Her eyes darted right to see a man standing on his balcony some 30 metres away. By the dim light from his room she could

see he was of Chinese features, wearing only a dark sarong. But there was no malice, and her rush subsided quickly.

“Yes, the noise. I’ve never heard rain like it.” she responded, looking over to him. Around his neck was a belt, looking like a bandolier but with no bullets.

A distant flash of lightning lit the sky causing her to turn her head sharply. The pain hit like a knife into her neck. Her hand flew up, grabbing at the spasm that was the seat of the pain. She tried to move her head, rotating it on her neck to loosen the bond, but it only made it worse and she let out a cry of pain.

“Don’t move I can help,” came a call in the dark. Then she became aware of the man climbing over her balcony railing. Despite the pain she gave him a hard stare, her hand not leaving the seat of the pain in her neck. His hands came up in immediate gesture, and he declared he was no threat but would leave her if that was what she wanted.

“Sorry, I work in the spa. I’m a remedial masseur, I really can help you. It’s tension. You’ve worked too hard, you’re too tense.” She relaxed a little but kept the eye contact. His bare feet left water marks on the polished wood floor as he stepped closer.

“I can help, please let me touch your neck. If you don’t want it just say no and I’ll go. I assure you. Please, may I?”

The pain raged again and she nodded her compliance to the offer. Her neck had now locked, holding her head to one side and any movement nearly made her faint. He approached carefully and placed a hand on each shoulder. A calmness streamed from his touch through her body.

“Please turn round, you have terrible tension in your shoulders.” She did and immediately his fingers dug deep into the shoulder. So deep she winched.

“Sorry, but you are so tense. It is hard to help you.” But she did not move and soon the kneading was unlocking her neck.

The massage made it difficult for her to speak, but she managed to whisper, “You work in the spa?”

“Yes I’m there all the time. You are most badly tensioned. It will take a full massage to even give you any help.” She was aware that he was looking around the balcony, but oddly for a worldly woman she felt no malice, no ill feeling. Just a consuming feeling of relief that help had arrived.

“Your entire back is a knot.” Through the silk gown she could feel his palm run down the curve of her spine. “I can massage you if that’s OK?” The question hung in the humid night air, the dripping water the only mark of passing time.

“Yes.” She heard herself say, not knowing why and to be honest not caring either.

“You’ll need to lie flat, let me see...” She stood with eyes only just open as he walked to the large teak table on the balcony and cleared the fruit bowl to the floor. Returning to her he gently guided her by the shoulders to the table.

“It is pleasantly warm,” he said taking her hand and brushing it across the thick table top. “Please lie face down for me to help.”

She was sitting on the table before any kind of thought came to her. But again an inner calm spread through her and she stretched out, face down on the hard but warming table, her face turned to the left and resting on her hands.

“I need to use oil. Is sandal wood OK?” She nodded consent and he started to ease her gown down from her shoulders. The oil was in a flask attached to the belt over his shoulder.

“This is the finest silk.” he said. She was pleased to hear the confirmation of her purchase. “I cannot risk getting oil on this, it will ruin it” There was a moment’s silence, and then he continued, “Please let me cover you with this cloth and take off the gown.” As he spoke she felt a cloth drift down over her waist and upper legs. While he held the cloth firmly in place she raised herself and released the gown. Never letting the cloth move he took the gown, folded it carefully and placed it on the chair. The oiled hands started work on her back and within seconds she was transported to a half world between sleep and heaven.

She had no idea how long the massage had been. She had almost certainly fallen asleep. Now his fingers were working deep into the back of her left calf and a slight pain had brought her back.

“Sorry, you are just so tense. Every muscle is knotted. To help I must go deep.” She didn’t reply and left him to interpret her agreement. He massaged again, this time bringing a deep feeling of relaxation to her leg. The massage progressed from calf to thigh, then to the right leg, and this time she was braced for the pain and the relief came easier and quicker.

“If you want me to finish your legs and do your shoulders you must turn over. I’ll hold the cloth.” She wanted.

She turned and as she did so she noticed the dripping water has stopped and balcony was now bathed in silver moon light. She was lying on her back as he gently slipped a chair cushion under her head and shoulders, when she realized the cloth did not cover her breasts. Her hands instinctively went to cover them, but no sooner had they achieved their mission than she thought of the many beaches she had lain on, walked along even run across with no top on. Suddenly it seemed no big deal and she placed her arms by her side and relaxed with eyes shut.

The shoulder and arm massage was a transport to delight. The pains of the week, the flight melted away and she felt at peace. He moved gently to the foot of table and lifted her left knee, adjusting the cloth correctly as he did so. The massage from knee downwards was bliss, and she opened her eyes to watch the healing strokes of his hands.

A warm breeze had come up and was now moving the palm leaves causing a swishing noise interspersed with an occasional slap as fronds clashed together. In the silver light he placed her left leg back flat and moved to the right hand side of the table to repeat the treatment on the other leg. It was only then she realized the cloth covering her was his sarong. A thought of objection flew into her mind, but she was lying all but naked on a table and had been for may be an hour, and he had been dressed, or undressed that way all that time. So why complain now? With the vision of his body detailed by the moonlight she closed her eyes and relished the long stroking moves that soothed her leg.

She may have fallen asleep again. All was still when she awoke. He noticed her eyes flicker open and stood from the chair beside the table.

“Is there any where that needs more treatment?” he asked softly.

“Uhm, neck, please” she replied almost automatically. He started to dig deeply into the neck muscles again, turning her head to the left and then the right. His body was just inches from her, dark, relaxed, with a sheen. She was so tempted to reach out and touch, to feel the texture of his skin, but then he moved his hands to her upper arm. In the pale light she saw clearly that his wrist was encircled by the most intricate tattoo, like a lace cuff. He moved back to her shoulder and neck and this time a deep slumber overcame her.

It was well past one a.m. when she awoke. She was covered loosely by her silk gown, and the balcony was deserted. She moved slowly, savouring the scent of sandal wood, wrapped the gown around her, walked inside and fell into a deep sleep on the bed.

After a light breakfast of fruit, she spent the morning walking through the grounds. Set on a slight hill, the views to distant Singapore town were delightful. Only once did a thought of the work she had done there last week creep into her mind. Just before midday she went to the hotel spa. The receptionist began taking her through the optional treatments. Facial sounded good, and a full manicure. After last night the massage was irresistible. A full hour was added to her agenda.

“Do you have a favourite masseuse? If they are available I will arrange for them to treat you,” asked the receptionist.

She thought for a moment, refraining from what she wanted to say.

“Yes, but I’m afraid I don’t their name. He has a lace tattoo on each wrist, you must know him.”

The receptionist looked puzzled.

“Sorry madam, we only have ladies here.”

She was the puzzled one now, but agreed that Su Lyn would do just fine.

“Follow me, please” the receptionist said, lead the way through the double doors, and on into the massage room where Su Lyn greeted her with a broad smile. The room was light and airy, with potted palms all around the walls, making it look like the couch was set in a small clearing in the jungle. Between two of the biggest palms a wooden carving grabbed her attention immediately. It was of a native man holding a large knife in one hand and hoe like implement in the other, but otherwise splendidly naked.

“Who’s he?” she asked Su Lyn, while pointing at the figure.

“Oh, the spa designer had a big thing about the local native tribes. Each room is dedicated to one of them. I don’t remember which one this is. He do you no harm!” Su Lyn said as she prepared the towels on the couch. “I think the owner and his wife posed for many of them,” she continued with a little giggle and gestured for her to lie on the couch.

As she accepted the invitation she noticed the lace-like tattoo around the carved figure’s wrists.

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